

UCLA

Other Recent Work

Title

Educational Experiences of Transgender People

Permalink

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/58q1r9sv>

Authors

Conron, Kerith J.
O'Neill, Kathryn K.
Vasquez, Luis A.

Publication Date

2022-04-28

Data Availability

The data associated with this publication are not available for this reason: Licensing restrictions



School of Law
Williams Institute



RESEARCH THAT MATTERS

EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCES OF TRANSGENDER PEOPLE

APRIL 2022

Kerith J. Conron
Kathryn K. O'Neill
Luis A. Vasquez

TABLE OF CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	2
INTRODUCTION.....	5
RESULTS	7
BACKGROUND CHARACTERISTICS.....	7
BELONGING, SAFETY, AND OUTNESS.....	7
BELONGING.....	7
UNFAIR TREATMENT, VIOLENCE, AND HARASSMENT	9
MENTAL HEALTH.....	10
SCHOOL-LEVEL INDICATORS OF LGBTQ INCLUSION	10
FINANCIAL SUPPORT FOR EDUCATIONAL EXPENSES.....	11
DISCUSSION	13
AUTHORS	16
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	16
SUGGESTED CITATION	16
APPENDIX.....	17
METHODS	17
TABLES.....	19

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

There are an estimated 218,000 transgender students ages 18 to 40 in the U.S. However, relatively little is known about the experiences of transgender people in higher education environments. This study uses data collected from a nationally representative sample of adults ages 18 to 40 (N=1,072) on the Access to Higher Education Survey to examine the school experiences and higher education environments of transgender people. Cisgender LGBTQ adults and non-LGBTQ adults are sometimes included as comparators. Information is provided about belonging, outness and hiding, school-based adversity, LGBTQ- and gender-inclusiveness of higher education environments, and sources of financial support.

A small but representative group of transgender men, women, and non-binary people (n=75) ages 18 to 40 answered questions about their experiences in school settings over their lives. One in five (20.9%) transgender people had ever attended vocational, technical, or trade (hereafter vo-tech) programs, 42.7% had been to community college, 59.7% had been to four-year college, and 9.2% had been in graduate school. One in five (20.8%) transgender people chose a school in a different city or state from where they grew up because they thought it would be more welcoming of someone like them. Nearly a third (32.4%) of transgender participants were current students at the time of survey completion.

Transgender adults reported experiences of not fully belonging, needing to hide their sexual orientation or gender identity at school because they are LGBTQ, and experiences of unfair treatment, harassment, or bullying that impacted the quality and quantity of their education. Three times as many transgender people reported lifetime adverse treatment at school that impacted their academic success or educational attainment as cisgender LGBTQ people. Nearly a third of transgender people reported unfair treatment by teachers, staff, or school administrators across all of the types of higher education institutions that they had attended. And more than a third experienced bullying, harassment, or assault in higher education settings. Findings from this study demonstrate that experiences of discrimination against transgender people are not unique to high school and also occur in higher education settings.

More than half of transgender people reported that their mental health was not good all or most of the time that they were in school across all types of higher education institutions. And yet, no more than a quarter reported the presence of LGBTQ-supportive counseling services or LGBTQ-informed health services at their schools. More broadly, LGBTQ- and gender-inclusive resources were reported by relatively few people.

Key Findings

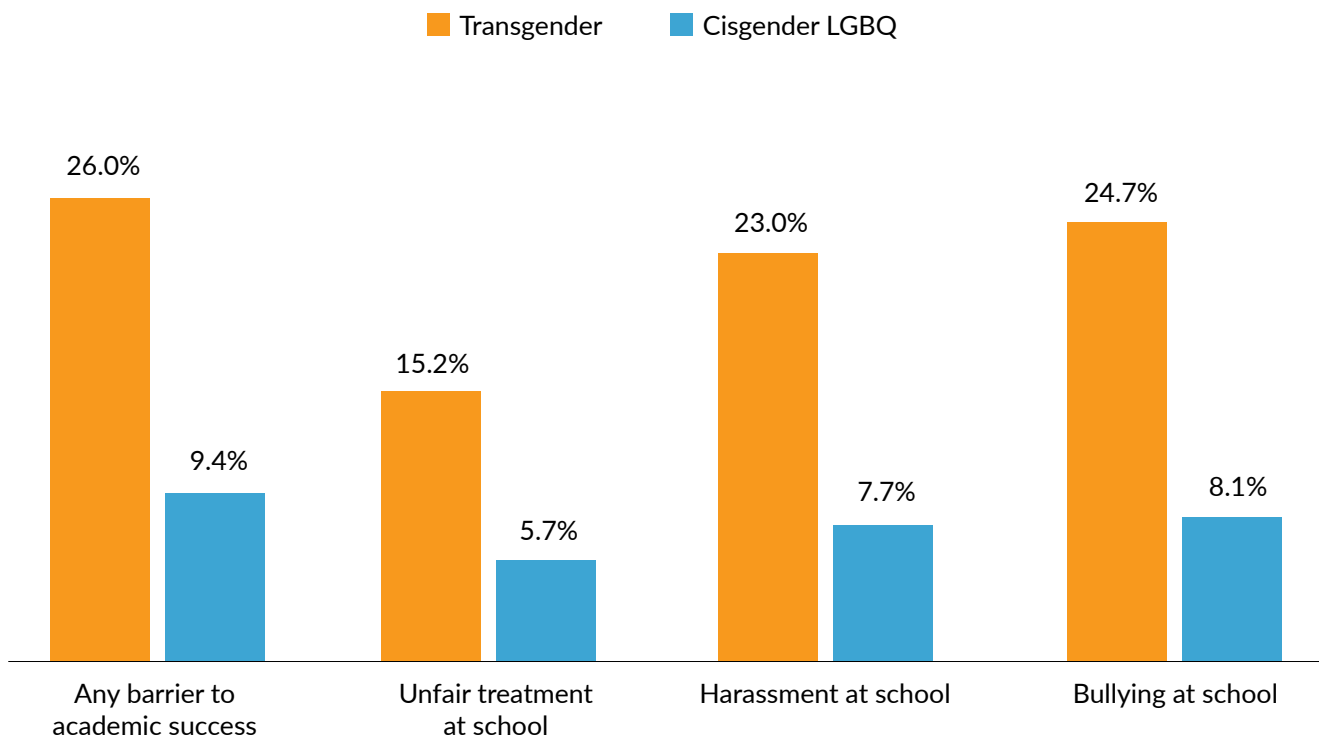
Two out of five (42.5%) transgender people and one of our four (24.7%) of their LGBTQ cisgender peers ages 18 to 40 indicated that they felt they did not fully belong at school at some point in their lives because they are LGBTQ. When asked whether they felt a sense of belonging in specific higher education settings, only three out of five (59.2%) transgender people reported a sense of belonging across the higher education institutions that they had attended. Fewer transgender people reported belonging in vo-tech programs and community colleges as reported belonging in four-year college and graduate schools (44.9% vs. 72.5%, respectively). More than one in seven (14.9%) transgender

people did not feel safe at school across the higher education institutions that they had attended.

Just over half (51.7%) of all LGBTQ people reported ever needing to hide their sexual orientation or gender identity at school because they are LGBTQ. Only one in five (21.4%) transgender people was “out” as LGBTQ to most or all of their teachers/faculty and program staff across higher education institutions that they had attended; 44.1% were out to no faculty or staff. Outness to other students was somewhat higher than to faculty/staff and differed across school settings. Across settings, almost a third (31.5%) of transgender people reported being out to no other students. More transgender people were out to more students in four-year college and graduate schools than in vo-tech and community colleges.

Nearly a third (32.1%) of transgender people reported any unfair treatment by teachers, staff, or school administrators across the higher education institutions that they had attended. More than a third (38.8%) had experienced any bullying, harassment, or assault in higher education settings. Over a quarter of transgender (26.0%) and almost one in ten (9.4%) LGBTQ cisgender people reported that lifetime school-based unfair treatment, harassment, or bullying due to being LGBTQ was a barrier to their academic success.

Barriers to academic success due to being LGBTQ among transgender and cisgender adults ages 18 to 40 (n=572)

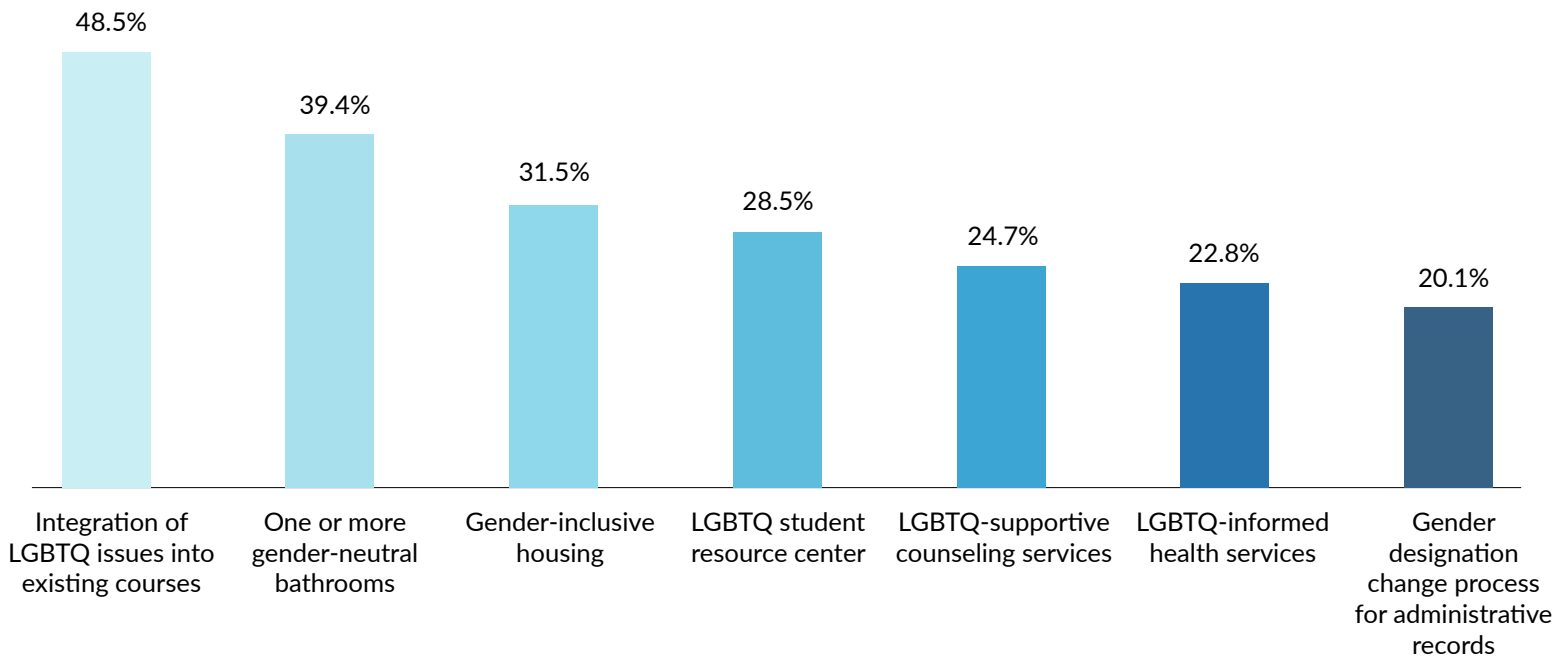


Not surprisingly, more than half (55.3%) of transgender people reported that their mental health was not good all or most of the time that they were in school across higher education institutions.

Access to Higher Education Survey participants were asked about the extent to which their schools

offered LGBTQ-informed and inclusive services and policies. Integration of LGBTQ issues into existing courses was the most frequently reported expression of LGBTQ-inclusion—about half (48.5%) of transgender people reported that LGBTQ issues were part of the curriculum at their school when they attended those schools. The presence of one or more gender-neutral bathrooms was reported by 39.4% of transgender people across educational settings. Across educational settings, 20.1% of transgender people reported that their school had a policy or practice of allowing transgender students the ability to change their gender designation on their program records and documents.

LGBTQ-inclusive resources among transgender adults ages 18 to 40 (n=62, k*=112) across educational settings



*k refers to the number of observations provided by 62 participants. Some participants attended multiple types of schools over their lives and provided information about their experiences in each school setting while other participants attended just one.

Many transgender people relied upon loans to cover their educational expenses—particularly to finance four-year college and graduate school. Transgender people were more likely than their cisgender LGBQ and non-LGBQ counterparts to have federal student loans.

INTRODUCTION

There are an estimated 1.4 million transgender adults in the U.S.,¹ including 218,000 students ages 18 to 40.² However, very little is known about the experiences of transgender students—particularly in higher education. Most prior research has relied upon non-representative samples of youth or adults and has centered on high school and four-year college environments. These studies find that transgender students experience more violence and harassment in high school and college than their heterosexual, cisgender peers.^{3,4} Harassment of transgender students by school staff and administrators has also been noted in these settings.⁵

Discrimination, harassment, and bullying negatively impact mental health, school completion, and earnings.⁶ Not surprisingly, lower levels of education and higher rates of poverty have been documented among transgender people versus their heterosexual, cisgender peers.⁷ And yet, there is no federal law that expressly protects students from discrimination or harassment based on their gender identity (or sexual orientation). While some federal prohibitions against sex discrimination have been interpreted to encompass discrimination motivated by gender identity or sexual orientation in schools, such protections have yet to be formally codified. Transgender and cisgender

¹ Herman, J.L., Flores, A.R., Brown, T.N.T., Wilson, B.D.M., & Conron, K.J. (2017). *Age of Individuals Who Identify as Transgender in the United States*. The Williams Institute, UCLA, Los Angeles, CA.

² The Williams Institute estimates that 218,000 U.S. students ages 18-40 are transgender (range: 153,000 to 327,000). We derive these estimates by multiplying percent transgender (1.0%) among students ages 18 to 40 who completed the 2019 Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System Survey in 32 states that used the optional Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity (SOGI) module by the number of 18-40-year-old students enrolled in U.S. schools in 2019 (N=21,816,266). Ranges around our estimates were obtained by multiplying the 95% confidence intervals for % transgender (0.7%, 1.5%) to the estimated number of students. All estimates were rounded to the nearest 1,000. The number of students enrolled in public and private schools in the U.S. ages 18 to 40 were obtained from the 2019 American Community Survey 1-year estimates of school enrollment (<https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table?q=B14003%20&d=ACS%201-Year%20Estimates%20Detailed%20Tables&tid=ACSDT1Y2019.B14003&hidePreview=false>; Table B14003 “Sex by School Enrollment By Type of School By Age for the Population 3 Years and Over”). See *COVID-19 and Students in Higher Education* at <https://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/wp-content/uploads/LGBTQ-College-Student-COVID-May-2021.pdf> for further detail.

³ Coulter, R.W.S. & S.R. Rankin, *College Sexual Assault and Campus Climate for Sexual- and Gender-Minority Undergraduate Students*. *J Interpers Violence*, 2017; Griner, S.B., et al., *The Intersection of Gender Identity and Violence: Victimization Experienced by Transgender College Students*. *J Interpers Violence*, 2017.

⁴ Perry, J.R. & S. Frazer. (2020). *On All Sides: How Race & Gender Influence Health Risk for Transgender Students of Color*. Washington, DC: Advocates for Youth. [https:// actionnetwork.org/forms/on-all-sides](https://actionnetwork.org/forms/on-all-sides).

⁵ McGuire, J.K., et al., *School climate for transgender youth: a mixed method investigation of student experiences and school responses*. *J Youth Adolesc*, 2010. 39(10): p. 1175-88; Toomey, R.B., et al., *Gender-nonconforming lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender youth: school victimization and young adult psychosocial adjustment*. *Dev Psychol*, 2010. 46(6): p. 1580-9.

⁶ Srabstein, J. & Piazza, T. *Public health, safety and educational risks associated with bullying behaviors in American adolescents*. *Int J Adolesc Med Health*, 2008. 20(2): p. 223-33.

⁷ Badgett, M.V.L., S.K. Choi, & B.D.M. Wilson. (2019). *LGBT Poverty in the United States: A Study of Differences between Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Groups*. The Williams Institute, UCLA, Los Angeles, CA; Carpenter, C. S., Eppink, S. T., & Gonzales, G. (2020). *Transgender Status, Gender Identity, and Socioeconomic Outcomes in the United States*. *Ilr Review*, 73(3), 573-599; Conron, K.J. & O'Neill, K. (2021). *Food Insecurity Among Transgender Adults During the COVID-19 Pandemic*. The Williams Institute, UCLA, Los Angeles, CA.

LGBQ students also continue to face a patchwork of protections under state law. Half of states do not have laws or policies that prohibit discrimination based on gender identity or sexual orientation in schools.⁸ Over half lack legal requirements that schools enumerate gender identity and sexual orientation within their anti-bullying policies, and those that do limit such protections to primary and secondary students.⁹

This study uses a nationally representative sample of adults ages 18 to 40 who completed the Access to Higher Education Survey to examine the school experiences of transgender people in a variety of higher education settings. Information about belonging, hiding, school-based adversity, and sources of financial support is provided. This study also adds new information about the extent to which the higher education environments of transgender students are LGBTQ- and gender-inclusive.

⁸ Movement Advancement Project. *Safe Schools Laws*. https://www.lgbtmap.org/equality-maps/safe_school_laws. Accessed March 2022.

⁹ Movement Advancement Project. *Safe Schools Laws*. https://www.lgbtmap.org/equality-maps/safe_school_laws. Accessed March 2022.

RESULTS

BACKGROUND CHARACTERISTICS

Transgender participants were demographically similar to cisgender LGBTQ and non-LGBTQ participants on many characteristics, including race-ethnicity and lifetime educational attainment (Table 1), and differed on others. Transgender participants were younger, on average, than cisgender LGBTQ and non-LGBTQ participants—as has been observed in other samples.¹⁰ Almost half (47.2%) of transgender participants, 36.3% of cisgender LGBTQ, and 28.8% of cisgender non-LGBTQ participants were ages 18 to 24. More transgender participants were current students (32.4%) than were cisgender LGBTQ (28.0%) and non-LGBTQ participants (18.6%), which is likely due, at least in part, to the younger age composition of the transgender group.

One in five (20.9%) transgender participants had ever attended vo-tech programs, 42.7% had been to community college, 59.7% had been to four-year college, and 9.2% had been in graduate school. Lifetime patterns of school attendance were similar among cisgender LGBTQ and non-LGBTQ participants. One in five (20.8%) of transgender people reported that they picked a school of higher education in a different city or state from where they grew up because they thought it would be more welcoming of someone like them (Table 3).

More than three-quarters (78.4%) of transgender participants reported that their sex assigned at birth was female (Table 1). Many transgender participants (61.0%) selected just one gender identity; however, 39.0% chose two or more identities. About a third (29.7%) of transgender adults selected male, 17.2% selected female, about a third (30.9%) endorsed transgender as their gender identity, over half (54.8%) selected non-binary, and 10.8% chose a different identity. Transgender participants were diverse on sexual orientation identity and half identified their sexual orientation as lesbian, gay, or bisexual (LGB). More specifically, 40.3% identified as bisexual, 39.7% as “something else,” and 9.7% identified as gay or lesbian, and 10.4% as straight.

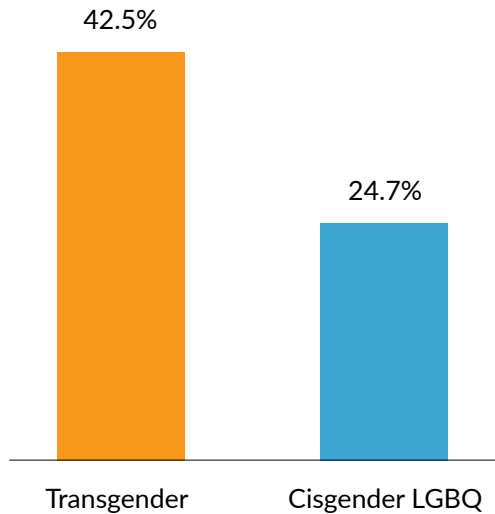
BELONGING, SAFETY, AND OUTNESS

Belonging

Two out of five (42.5%) transgender participants and one out of four (24.7%) of their LGBTQ cisgender peers ages 18 to 40 reported that they felt they did not fully belong at school at some point in their lives because they are LGBTQ (Table 2). Cisgender non-LGBTQ participants were not asked questions about lifetime school experiences related to being LGBTQ.

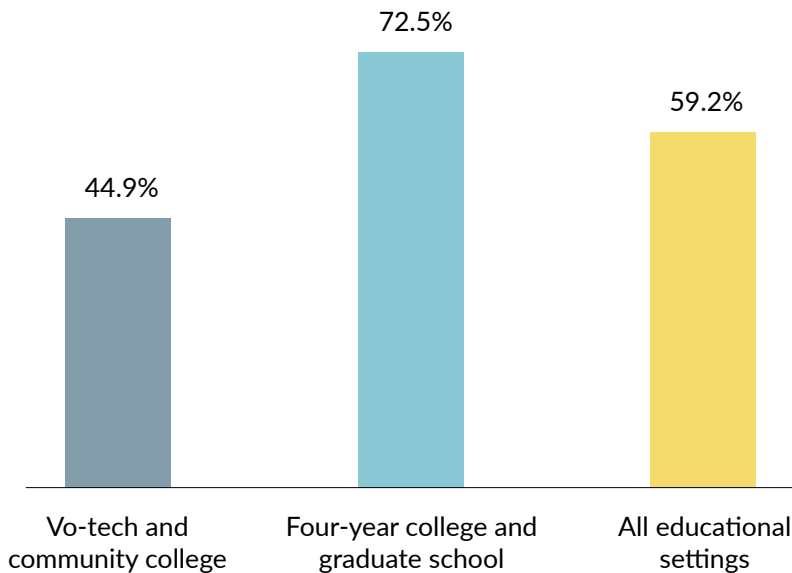
¹⁰ James, S. E., Herman, J. L., Rankin, S., Keisling, M., Mottet, L. A., & Anafi, M. (2016). *The Report of the 2015 U.S. Transgender Survey*. National Center for Transgender Equality, Washington, DC; Meyer, I.H., Wilson, B.D.M., & O’Neill, K. (2021). *LGBTQ People in the US: Select Findings from the Generations and TransPop Studies*. Los Angeles: The Williams Institute.

Figure 1. Ever felt didn't fully belong at a school due to being LGBTQ among transgender and cisgender adults ages 18 to 40 (n=572)



When asked whether they felt a sense of belonging in specific higher education settings, 59.2% of transgender participants reported a sense of belonging across higher education institutions that they had attended (Table 3). Fewer transgender people reported belonging in vo-tech programs and community colleges as reported belonging in four-year college and graduate schools (44.9% vs. 72.5%).

Figure 2. Sense of belonging among transgender adults ages 18 to 40 (n=62, k=112) by educational setting



Safety

More than one in seven (14.9%) transgender participants did not feel safe at school across the higher education institutions that they had attended (Table 3).

Outness

Just over half (51.7%) of all LGBTQ participants reported ever needing to hide their sexual orientation or gender identity at school because they are LGBTQ, including 65.6% of transgender and 49.7% of cisgender LGBTQ people¹¹ (Table 2).

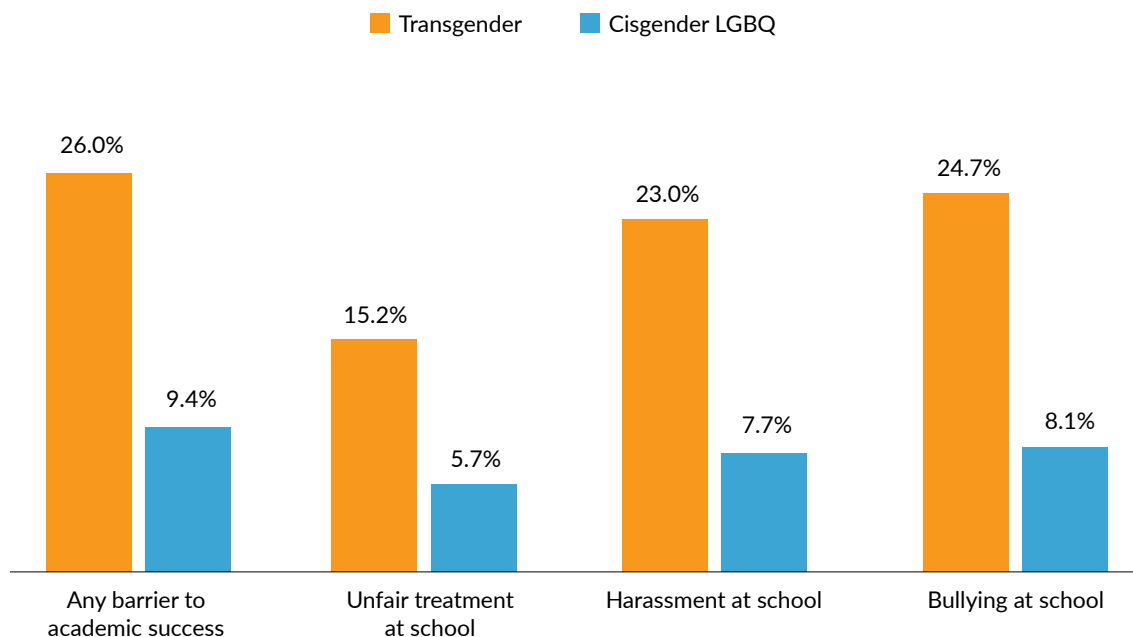
Only one in five (21.4%) transgender participants was “out” as LGBTQ to most or all of their teachers/ faculty and program staff across higher education institutions that they had attended; 44.1% were out to no faculty or staff (Table 3). Outness to other students was somewhat higher than to faculty/staff and differed across school settings. Across settings, almost a third (31.5%) of transgender participants reported being out as LGBTQ to most or all students at their school and the same proportion (31.5%) was out to no peers. More transgender participants were out to more students in four-year college and graduate schools than in vo-tech and community colleges.

UNFAIR TREATMENT, VIOLENCE, AND HARASSMENT

Nearly a third (32.1%) of transgender participants reported any unfair treatment by teachers, staff, school administrators across the higher education institutions that they had attended (Table 3). More than a third (38.8%) had experienced any bullying, harassment, or assault in higher education settings.

Over a quarter of transgender (26.0%) and almost one in ten (9.4%) LGBTQ cisgender participants reported that lifetime school-based unfair treatment, harassment, or bullying due to being LGBTQ was a barrier to their academic success (Table 2).

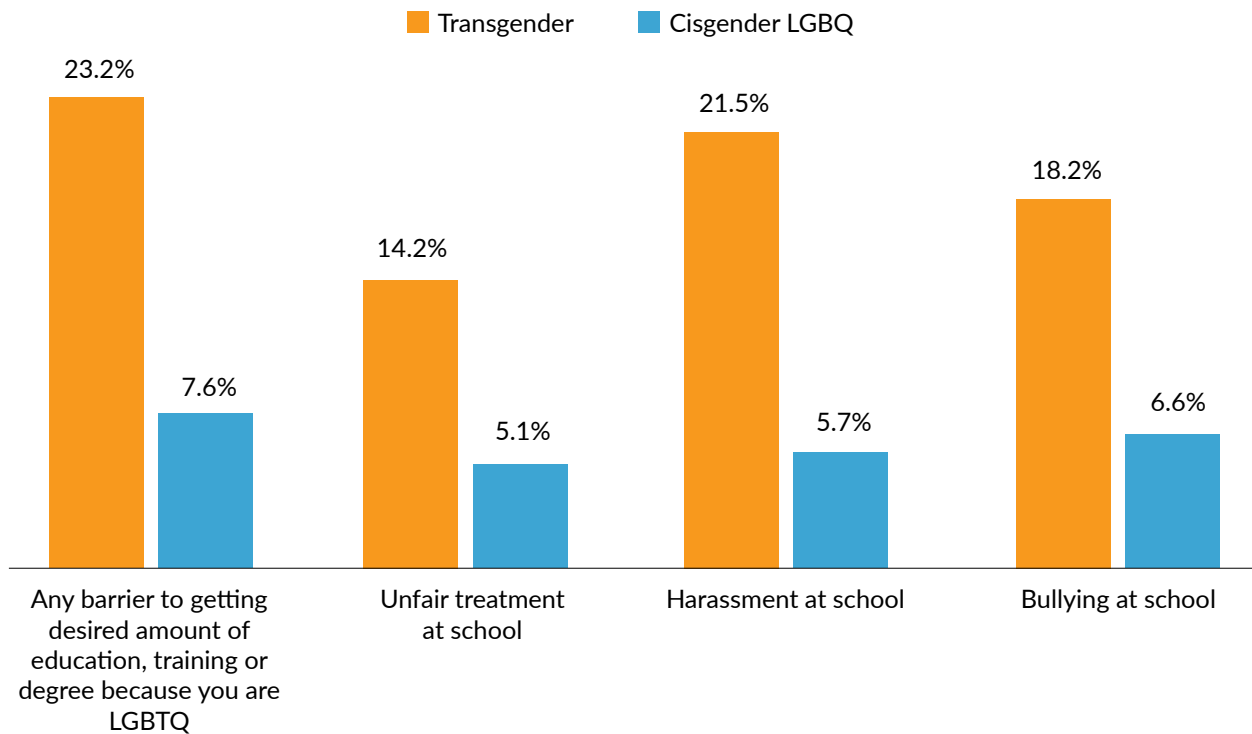
Figure 3. Lifetime barriers to academic success due to being LGBTQ among transgender and LGBTQ cisgender adults ages 18 to 40 (n=572)



¹¹ The difference between transgender and cisgender LGBTQ participants in the proportions that reported ever needing to hide their sexual orientation or gender identity at school because they are LGBTQ was not statistically significantly different at $p < 0.05$.

Nearly a quarter (23.2%) of transgender and 7.6% of LGBTQ cisgender participants reported that lifetime school-based unfair treatment, harassment, or bullying due to being LGBTQ was a barrier to getting the amount of education, training, or degrees that they wanted.

Figure 4. Barriers to educational attainment due to being LGBTQ among transgender and cisgender LGBTQ adults ages 18 to 40 (n=572)



MENTAL HEALTH

More than half (55.3%) of transgender participants reported that their mental health was not good all or most of the time that they were in school across higher education institutions (Table 3).

SCHOOL-LEVEL INDICATORS OF LGBTQ INCLUSION

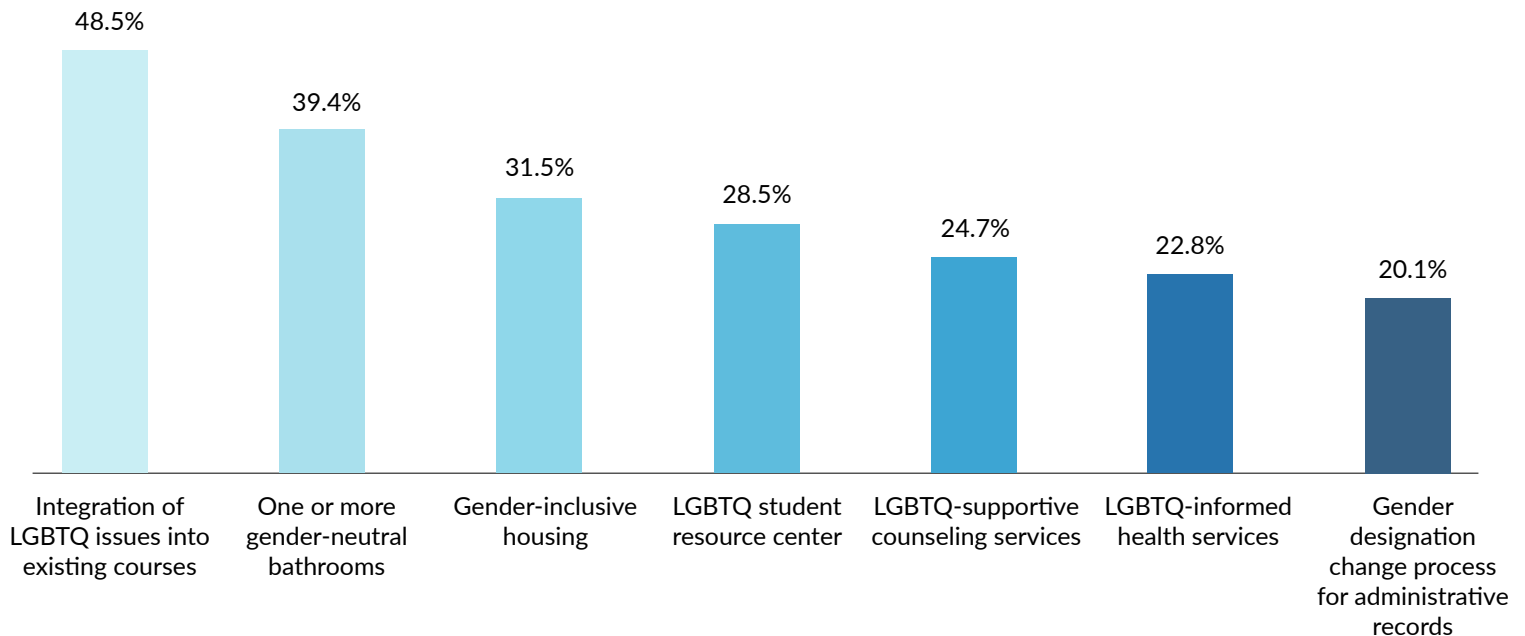
Access to Higher Education Survey participants were asked about the extent to which their schools offered LGBTQ-informed and inclusive services, resources, policies, and practices (Table 4). Integration of LGBTQ issues into existing courses was the most frequently reported expression of LGBTQ-inclusion—across community college, four-year college, and graduate programs about half (48.5%) of transgender participants reported that LGBTQ issues were part of the curriculum at their school when they attended those schools. LGBTQ student resource centers were reported more often at four-year college and graduate programs (42.0%) than at vo-tech and community colleges (13.9%).

The presence of one or more gender-neutral bathrooms was reported by 39.4% of transgender participants across educational settings. Gender-inclusive housing was reported by 31.5% of transgender participants who attended four-year college or graduate programs. Gender-inclusive housing was defined as housing not segregated into men's and women's spaces—including double

and multiple occupancy bedrooms—and welcoming to students who identify outside of the gender binary “man/woman.”

Across educational settings, 20.1% of transgender participants reported that their school had a policy or practice of allowing transgender students to change their gender designation on their program records and documents, while many (57.6%) did not know if their school had such a practice. The presence of LGBTQ-competent health and counseling services were reported by only 22.8% and 24.7%, respectively, of transgender participants across education settings. Roughly half did not know if their programs, college, or universities had such resources when they attended them.

Figure 5. LGBTQ-inclusive resources among transgender adults ages 18 to 40 (n=62, k=112) across educational settings



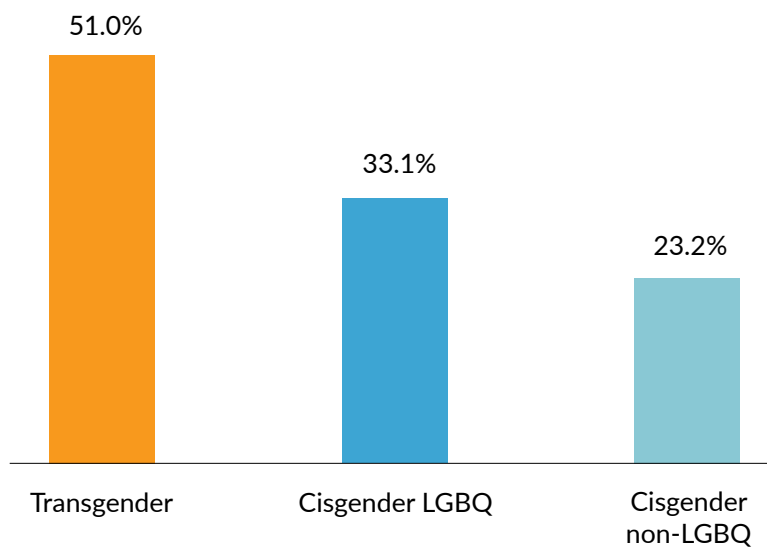
FINANCIAL SUPPORT FOR EDUCATIONAL EXPENSES

Transgender participants reported a range of funding sources for educational expenses (tuition and fees, living expenses), including family resources, savings or work, grants, scholarship, and loans (Table 5). Savings from work, work-study, and other personal income were a source of educational funding for 67.1% of participants across educational settings while family resources were reported by half (51.2%) of participants. Grants and scholarships were reported more often as funding sources for four-year college and graduate school (82.3%) than vo-tech programs and community college expenses (57.4%). Loans were also reported more often as funding sources for four-year college and graduate school (71.6%) than vo-tech programs and community college expenses (33.7%).

Federal Loans and Other Student Debt

Transgender participants were more likely to have federal student loans than their cisgender LGBQ and non-LGBQ counterparts, (51.0%, 33.1%, and 23.2%, respectively).¹² In total, 15.1% of all transgender people owed less than \$10,000, one quarter (25.1%) owed between \$10,000 to under \$50,000, and 10.9% owed \$50,000 or more in federal student loans. Nearly one in five (17.9%) participants, across gender and sexual orientation groups, held other student debt in the form of private student loans from a bank or other lending institution or from credit cards or other loans.

Figure 6. Any federal student loans among adults ages 18 to 40 by gender and sexual orientation (N=1,072)



¹² Differences in the odds of having federal student loans between gender and sexual orientation groups persist even after taking differences in the age composition of each group into consideration (transgender vs. cisgender LGBQ age-adjusted Odds Ratio 2.1; 95% Confidence Interval, 1.1, 4.1; transgender vs. cisgender non-LGBQ OR 3.4, 95% CI 1.7, 6.5).

DISCUSSION

This study reported on the school experiences of a small, but representative group of transgender men, women, and non-binary people ages 18 to 40. Findings from this study show that transgender people experience bullying, harassment, assault, and unfair treatment in higher education settings. About one quarter of transgender people indicate that these types of experiences were barriers to their academic success and educational attainment over the course of their lives.

No federal law expressly protects students from discrimination or harassment based on their gender identity or sexual orientation. However, an increasing number of courts and federal agencies have expanded protections for LGBTQ students under Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 (Title IX).¹³ Title IX prohibits any education program or activity receiving federal financial assistance from discriminating against individuals on the basis of their sex, including that individuals not be excluded from participation in or denied the benefits of covered programs or activities because of sex.¹⁴ The reach of Title IX is broad, and has long been understood to cover all of the operations of “traditional educational institutions” like elementary and secondary schools, colleges and universities, and vocational and trade programs.¹⁵ Title IX has been used alongside other civil rights statutes in support of a wide range of policies and initiatives related, but not limited to, recruitment, admissions, and counseling; student financial aid; athletics; discipline; and enforcement against acts of harassment.¹⁶

While Title IX does not expressly enumerate gender identity or sexual orientation like it does sex, the Departments of Justice and Education and various federal courts have recently aligned in the view that the statute nevertheless encompasses both bases,¹⁷ consistent with the Supreme Court’s reasoning in *Bostock v. Clayton County*.¹⁸ In addition, the Department of Education has expressed its intent to amend its regulations implementing Title IX to be inclusive of gender identity or sexual orientation by April 2022,¹⁹ consistent with recent executive orders.²⁰ These changes are expected to

¹³ Department of Education. *Resources for LGBTQI+ Students*. <https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/lgbt.html>. Accessed March 2022.

¹⁴ 20 U.S.C. § 1681(a).

¹⁵ 34 C.F.R. § 106.2(h)(2); Department of Justice. *Title IX*. <https://www.justice.gov/crt/title-ix>. Accessed March 2022.

¹⁶ Department of Education. *Title IX and Sex Discrimination*. https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/docs/tix_dis.html. Accessed March 2022.

¹⁷ Memorandum from Pamela S. Karlan, Principal Deputy Assistant Att’y Gen., Civil Rights Div., U.S. Dep’t of Justice, to Federal Agency Civil Rights Directors and General Counsels (Mar. 26, 2021); Enforcement of Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 with Respect to Discrimination Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity in Light of *Bostock v. Clayton County*, 86 Fed. Reg. 32,637 (June 22, 2021); see, e.g., *Grimm v. Gloucester Cnty. Sch. Bd.*, 972 F.3d 586 (4th Cir. 2020); *Adams v. Sch. Bd. of St. Johns Cnty.*, 968 F.3d 1286, (11th Cir. 2020).

¹⁸ 140 S. Ct. 1731 (2020) (analyzing a similar provision in Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964).

¹⁹ RegInfo.gov. *Nondiscrimination on the Basis of Sex in Education Programs or Activities Receiving Federal Financial Assistance*. <https://www.reginfo.gov/public/do/eAgendaViewRule?pubId=202104&RIN=1870-AA16>. Accessed March 2022.

²⁰ Preventing and Combating Discrimination on the Basis of Gender Identity or Sexual Orientation, Exec. Order No. 13,988, 86 Fed. Reg. 7023 (Jan. 20, 2021) (requiring the implementation of the *Bostock* decision across the civil rights statutes enforced by federal agencies); Guaranteeing an Educational Environment Free from Discrimination on the Basis of Sex, Including Sexual Orientation or Gender Identity, Exec. Order. No. 14,021, 86 Fed. Reg. 13,803 (Mar. 08, 2021)

expand and strengthen nationwide protections for LGBTQ students, and ensure that they are able to file claims of discrimination and harassment based on their LGBTQ status with the Department of Education and in federal courts across the country. Such changes are needed based upon findings from this study and others.

Recommendations to improve higher education environments for transgender students are to:

- Include gender identity and sexual orientation in non-discrimination policies to protect transgender students, as well as faculty and staff.²¹
- Disseminate information about non-discrimination protections and reporting mechanisms campus wide.
- Include transgender content in diversity and non-discrimination training for faculty and staff.^{22,23}
- Seek input from transgender students on strategies to increase a sense of belonging (e.g., school-supported student activities for transgender students and allies).
- Invest in LGBTQ student resource centers to provide a go-to source of support and mobilizer of campus change.²⁴
- Designate gender-neutral restrooms.²⁵
- Assess on-campus housing needs for transgender students and the availability of gender-inclusive housing and gender-identity based accommodations.
- Communicate processes for changing gender designations and names on program records to all students.²⁶
- Initiate a campus climate survey to monitor change and to identify emerging issues.^{27,28}

(authorizing “additional [Title IX] enforcement actions [against sexual orientation and gender identity discrimination] . . . to the fullest extent permissible under law”).

²¹ Taylor, J.L. (2015). Understanding equity in community college practice. *New Directions for Community Colleges*, 172(Winter), 57-66.

²² Taylor, J.L. (2015).

²³ Robinson, G.D. (2019). *Promoting Persistence Among LGBTQ Community College Students* (Publication No. 1041). Pp. 179-189. [Doctoral dissertation, Illinois State University]. Theses and Dissertations, ISU ReD: Research and eData. <https://ir.library.illinoisstate.edu/etd/1041>

²⁴ Nguyen, D.J., Brazelton, G.B., Renn, K.A., & Woodford, M.R. (2018). Exploring the availability and influence of LGBTQ+ student services resources on student success at community colleges: A mixed methods analysis. *Community College Journal of Research and Practices*, 42(11), 783-796.

²⁵ Taylor, J.L. (2015).

²⁶ Beemyn, B.G. (2006) Ten Strategies to Improve Trans Inclusiveness on Campus. Available at https://www.umass.edu/stonewall/sites/default/files/Infoforandabout/transpeople/genny_beemyn_ten_strategies_to_improve_trans_inclusiveness_on_campus.pdf.

²⁷ Taylor, J.L. (2015).

²⁸ Rankin, S. G., J.C., Duran, A. (2019). A retrospective of LGBT issues on US college campuses: 1990-2020. *International Sociology*, 34(4), 435-454.

- Provide information about on-campus, local, and remote LGBTQ resources, including transgender-competent mental and physical health care, to all students.
- Increase access to non-loan sources of financial aid.

AUTHORS

Kerith J. Conron, Sc.D., M.P.H., is the Blachford-Cooper Distinguished Scholar and Research Director at the Williams Institute.

Kathryn K. O'Neill, M.P.P., is the Peter J. Cooper Policy Fellow and a Policy Analyst at the Williams Institute UCLA School of Law.

Luis A. Vasquez, J.D., is the Arnold D. Kassoy Scholar of Law at the Williams Institute.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This study would not have been possible without the generous support of the Point Foundation and the thought partnership of Jorge Valencia, Executive Director, Ted Farley, Deputy Executive Director, and James Williams, Board Chair Emeritus. The Point Foundation has been conducting surveys of LGBTQ undergraduate and graduate students applying for scholarships for several years, and many questions in this survey were informed by this prior work. The authors thank Andrew R. Flores, Visiting Scholar, the Williams Institute and Co-Investigator of the Access to Higher Education Project for his contributions to study design and survey development. We also thank the scientific advisory board who provided crucial guidance in the development of this survey. The board included Mariella Arredondo (Indiana University, Bloomington), Abbie Goldberg (Clark University), Michelle Marzullo (California Institute of Integral Studies), and Dan Merson (Rankin and Associates Consulting). This team helped to shape the topics covered on this survey, and reviewed iterations of the survey tool. The survey was also reviewed by Willa Mei Kurland (University of Washington, Seattle). Several items on the questionnaire were modeled upon questions used in Higher Education Research Institute (HERI) surveys; we are grateful for their permission to use these items. The authors also thank Jody Herman, Reid Rasmussen Senior Scholar of Public Policy at the Williams Institute for her review of an earlier iteration of this report and helpful suggestions, as well as Brad Sears, David Sanders Distinguished Scholar of Law & Policy and Founding Executive Director of the Williams Institute for his contributions to the lifetime school experiences questions and valuable feedback on the organization of this report.

SUGGESTED CITATION

Conron, K.J., O'Neill, K.K. & Vasquez, L.A. (2022). Educational Experiences of Transgender People: Findings from a National Probability Survey. The Williams Institute, UCLA and the Point Foundation, Los Angeles, CA.

ABOUT THE WILLIAMS INSTITUTE

The Williams Institute is dedicated to conducting rigorous, independent research on sexual orientation and gender identity law and public policy. A think tank at UCLA Law, the Williams Institute produces high-quality research with real-world relevance and disseminates it to judges, legislators, policymakers, media, and the public. These studies can be accessed at the Williams Institute website.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

The Williams Institute, UCLA School of Law
Box 951476, Los Angeles, CA 90095-1476
williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu



APPENDIX

METHODS

The Access to Higher Education Survey was an anonymous cross-sectional survey conducted between January 15 and February 10, 2021 with 1,079 U.S. adults ages 18 to 40 sampled from the KnowledgePanel, maintained by Ipsos, that is representative of U.S. adults. Panelists were recruited via stratified sampling on LGBTQ status, using existing panel demographic data about sexual orientation, gender identity, and sex assigned at birth, to recruit LGBTQ and non-LGBTQ volunteers in similar proportions. In total, the survey was completed in English by 572 LGBTQ and 507 non-LGBTQ adults. Participants who selected one or more gender identity response option, including male, female, transgender, non-binary, or a “different gender identity” that differed from their sex assigned at birth, were classified as transgender. Those who selected only one gender identity option that was the same as their sex assigned at birth were classified as cisgender. The sample was limited to adults aged 18-40 in order to include a higher proportion of adults who may have recently sought or desired higher education.

KnowledgePanel panelists are primarily recruited by address-based sampling with a random sample of households drawn from the latest Delivery Sequence File of the U.S. Postal Service (USPS)—a database with full coverage of all delivery points in the U.S. All persons in selected households are invited to join and participate in KnowledgePanel. Ipsos provides selected households that do not already have internet access a tablet and internet connection at no cost to them. Those who join the panel and who are selected to participate in a survey are sent a unique password-protected log-in used to complete surveys online. Panelists receive reward points or incentives such as cash payments to participate in surveys. Survey participation is voluntary.

The Access to Higher Education Survey was developed to gather data about experiences in various educational settings (e.g., high school, community college, graduate school), including harassment, experiences with services, institutional policies, educational aspirations, support and barriers, mental health, educational financing, student debt, and similar topics. The survey was developed in consultation with an advisory board of experts in higher education and related fields. Where possible, survey questions were modeled on questions used in large surveys of higher education, such as those created by the Higher Education Research Institute, or on other large, federally funded surveys.

Descriptive analyses were conducted using Stata v15.1 statistical software and include design-based F-tests (Rao-Scott chi-square tests) of differences in proportions to assess whether outcomes vary across demographic groups at an alpha of 0.05.²⁹ Confidence intervals (95% CI) were included to communicate the degree of uncertainty around an estimate due to sampling error. Non-overlapping confidence intervals were deemed indicative of statistically significant differences in two proportions at an alpha of 0.05. In instances where confidence intervals appeared close, t-tests were conducted to evaluate whether two proportions were indeed different. For analyses that combined observations across school settings, respondents were treated as the PSU to address the clustering of observations

²⁹ J. N. K. Rao, A. J. Scott, On chi-squared tests for multiway contingency tables with cell proportions estimated from survey data. *Ann. Stat.* 12, 46–60 (1984).

within respondents who attended more than one type of school.

All analyses were weighted using sampling weights provided by Ipsos. Sampling weights account for the probability of selection and non-response, and they adjust for response bias by gender and age, race/ethnicity, education, Census region, metropolitan status, and household income to align with benchmarks from the U.S. population ages 18 to 40 as reported in the 2020 March supplement of the U.S. Census Bureau's Current Population Survey. All sample sizes (n people and k observations) are unweighted.

The study protocol was reviewed and approved by Institutional Review Board at UCLA.

TABLES

Table 1. Characteristics of transgender, LGBQ cisgender, and non-LGBQ cisgender adults ages 18-40 (N=1,072) in the Access to Higher Education Survey

	TRANSGENDER N=75		CISGENDER LGBQ N=497		CISGENDER NON-LGBQ N=501		F TEST
	%	95% CI	%	95% CI	%	95% CI	P-VALUE
Age							
18-24	47.2	31.3,63.0	36.3	30.0, 43.1	28.8	24.2, 33.9	<0.01
25-29	29.4	17.5,41.3	26.9	22.1, 32.3	23.1	19.5, 27.1	
30-34	13.0	3.0,22.9	19.2	15.1, 24.2	22.5	19.0, 26.4	
35-40	10.5	3.3,17.7	17.6	14.0, 21.9	25.6	22.1, 29.5	
Sex assigned at birth							
Male	21.6	10.1,33.2	35.0	29.3, 41.2	50.9	46.2, 55.6	<0.01
Female	78.4	66.8,89.9	65.0	58.8, 70.7	49.1	44.4, 53.8	
Number of gender identity options selected							
1 identity	61.0	45.0, 77.1	100	--	100	--	--
> 1 identity	39.0	22.9, 55.0	--	--	--	--	
Gender identity (select all that apply)							
Male	29.7	13.5, 45.8	35.0	29.3, 41.2	50.9	46.2, 55.6	<0.01
Female	17.2	6.8, 27.6	65.0	58.8, 70.7	49.1	44.4, 53.8	<0.01
Transgender	30.9	15.2, 46.7	--	--	--	--	--
Non-binary	54.8	39.1, 70.6	--	--	--	--	--
A different identity	10.8	0.0, 21.6	--	--	--	--	--
Sexual orientation identity							
Gay or lesbian	9.7	2.5, 16.9	33.4	27.7, 39.6	--	--	--
Bisexual	40.3	25.2, 55.3	52.9	46.6, 59.0	--	--	--
Something else	39.7	25.1, 54.2	13.8	10.3, 18.1	--	--	--
Straight	10.4	0.0, 24.5	--	--	100	--	--
Race-ethnicity							
White, non-Hispanic	66.7	51.1, 82.3	55.8	49.4, 61.9	55.8	51.0, 60.6	0.25
Latino/a	16.2	6.4, 26.0	17.8	13.9, 22.5	21.6	17.7, 26.1	
Black, non-Hispanic	14.2	0.0, 29.2	17.1	12.3, 23.2	12.7	9.6, 16.5	
Asian, Hawaiian or Pacific Islander, American Indian, non-Hispanic	2.6	0.0, 6.8	5.7	3.2, 9.7	8.2	5.8, 11.4	
More than one race, non-Hispanic	0.2	0.0, 0.7	3.7	1.8, 7.5	1.8	1.0, 2.9	
Lifetime attendance							
Vocational, technical, or trade school (vo-tech)	20.9	11.6, 34.6	15.2	11.5, 19.9	13.4	10.5, 16.9	0.36

	TRANSGENDER N=75		CISGENDER LGBTQ N=497		CISGENDER NON-LGBTQ N=501		F TEST
	%	95% CI	%	95% CI	%	95% CI	P-VALUE
Community college	42.7	28.9, 57.8	37.7	31.9, 43.9	32.3	28.0, 36.9	0.23
Four-year college	59.7	44.4, 73.3	57.0	50.7, 63.1	48.5	43.8, 53.2	0.06
Graduate school	9.2	5.0, 16.2	11.3	8.7, 14.5	12.9	10.4, 15.8	0.52
Educational attainment							
Less than high school	1.0	0.2, 4.3	4.3	2.2, 8.5	7.2	5.1, 10.2	0.15
High school	44.8	30.4, 60.1	41.8	35.6, 48.3	39.3	34.7, 44.2	
Vo-tech certificate, license, or degree	14.6	7.4, 26.8	7.8	5.3, 11.3	8.8	6.4, 11.9	
Associate degree	11.7	4.9, 25.6	12.0	8.6, 16.6	12.8	9.9, 16.6	
Bachelor's degree	20.3	9.0, 39.7	26.7	21.7, 32.4	20.0	16.7, 23.8	
Graduate degree	7.5	3.9, 14.2	7.3	5.3, 10.0	11.9	9.5, 14.7	
Current student	32.4	18.6, 46.3	28.0	22.1, 34.6	18.6	14.8, 23.2	0.02
Individualized Education Program (IEP) or other accommodations at school prior to age 18	24.1	12.6, 35.7	11.6	8.6, 15.3	10.5	7.9, 13.9	0.07

CI: Confidence Interval. Bold p-values are statistically significant.

Table 2. Lifetime educational experiences due to being LGBTQ among transgender and cisgender LGBTQ adults ages 18-40 (n=572) in the Access to Higher Education Survey

	TRANSGENDER N=75		CISGENDER LGBTQ N=497		ALL LGBTQ N=572		F TEST
	%	95% CI	%	95% CI	%	95% CI	P-VALUE
Thinking about your entire life, did you ever feel that you didn't fully belong at a school because you are LGBTQ?	42.5	28.8, 57.5	24.7	19.8, 30.3	26.9	22.2, 32.2	0.02
Thinking about your entire life, did you ever feel that you had to hide your sexual orientation or gender identity, either fully or in part, at a school that you attended?	65.6	48.2, 79.6	49.7	43.5, 56.0	51.7	45.9, 57.5	0.09
Any barrier to academic success because you are LGBTQ	26.0	15.7, 39.9	9.4	6.6, 13.4	11.6	8.6, 15.4	<0.01
Specific barrier to academic success because you are LGBTQ							
Unfair treatment at school	15.2	7.9, 27.3	5.7	3.6, 8.9	6.9	4.7, 10.0	0.01
Harassment at school	23.0	13.2, 37.0	7.7	5.0, 11.6	9.7	6.9, 13.5	<0.01
Bullying at school	24.7	14.6, 38.7	8.1	5.4, 11.9	10.2	7.4, 13.9	<0.01
Any barrier to getting desired amount of education, training or degree because you are LGBTQ	23.2	13.4, 37.0	7.6	5.2, 11.2	9.6	7.0, 13.1	<0.01
Specific barrier to getting desired amount of education, training or degree because respondent is LGBTQ							
Unfair treatment at school	14.2	7.2, 26.3	5.1	3.1, 8.4	6.3	4.2, 9.4	0.01
Harassment at school	21.5	12.0, 35.6	5.7	3.6, 9.0	7.8	5.4, 11.1	<0.01
Bullying at school	18.2	9.6, 31.9	6.6	4.3, 10.0	8.1	5.7, 11.5	<0.01

CI: Confidence Interval. Bold p-values are statistically significant.

Table 3. School selection, belonging, adverse treatment, and mental health while attending specific types of schools reported by transgender adults ages 18 to 40 (n=62) on the Access to Higher Education Survey

	ALL SCHOOL SETTINGS K*=112		VO-TECH & COMMUNITY COLLEGE K=50		FOUR-YEAR COLLEGE & GRADUATE SCHOOL K=62		F TEST
	%	95% CI	%	95% CI	%	95% CI	P-VALUE
School selection							
Ever picked a school in a different city or state from where you grew up because you thought it would be more welcoming of someone like you	20.8	11.9, 33.9	20.6	10.2, 37.4	21.0	10.5, 37.5	0.96
Belonging, safety, and outness							
I felt a sense of belonging	59.2	47.6, 69.9	44.9	30.7, 60.1	72.5	55.5, 84.7	0.02
I felt unsafe at the school	14.9	8.8, 24.2	21.9	11.7, 37.3	8.5	3.3, 20.4	0.08
About how many teachers/faculty and program staff were you "out" to about being LGBTQ?							
None	44.1	29.7, 59.6	56.3	37.4, 73.6	32.9	19.3, 50.1	0.10
Only a few	34.5	21.4, 50.5	27.4	14.9, 44.7	41.1	23.7, 61.1	
Most or all	21.4	12.4, 34.2	16.3	6.8, 34.5	26.0	13.6, 44.0	
About how many other students were you "out" to about being LGBTQ							
None	31.5	18.9, 47.7	44.7	26.2, 64.7	19.4	9.7, 35.2	0.04
Only a few	37.0	24.2, 51.9	32.7	18.5, 51.0	40.9	23.7, 60.7	
Most or all	31.5	20.0, 45.8	22.6	10.7, 41.5	39.7	23.9, 57.9	
Unfair treatment, violence, and harassment							
Any unfair treatment by teachers, staff, school administrators	32.1	21.1, 45.4	30.8	17.5, 48.3	33.2	19.2, 51.0	0.82
Any bullying, harassment, or assault	38.8	24.5, 55.3	43.7	25.7, 63.6	34.2	19.4, 52.9	0.35
Mental health							
Thinking about your mental health, which includes stress, depression, and problems with emotions, when you were in this [SCHOOL], how often was your mental health not good?							
All or most of the time	55.3	40.6, 69.0	60.4	41.2, 76.8	50.5	32.4, 68.5	0.68
Sometimes	31.2	19.3, 46.1	29.2	15.5, 48.1	33.0	16.9, 54.3	
Rarely or never	13.6	6.4, 26.6	10.4	3.5, 27.5	16.5	6.7, 35.1	

*k refers to the number of observations provided by the 62 transgender participants who have attended any of these types of schools. Some participants attended multiple types of schools over their lives and provided information about their experiences in each school setting while other participants attended just one.

CI: Confidence Interval. Bold p-values are statistically significant.

Table 4. School-level indicators of LGBTQ Inclusion reported by transgender adults ages 18 to 40 (n=62) on the Access to Higher Education Survey about specific types of schools

	ALL SCHOOL SETTINGS K*=112		VO-TECH & COMMUNITY COLLEGE K=50		FOUR-YEAR COLLEGE & GRADUATE SCHOOL K=62		F TEST		
	%	95% CI	%	95% CI	%	95% CI	P-VALUE		
Did your school have the following?									
LGBTQ student resource center									
Yes	28.5	18.2, 41.6	13.9	6.2, 28.3	42.0	25.7, 60.2	0.01		
No	41.3	29.6, 54.0	47.6	33.7, 61.8	35.4	18.7, 56.7			
Don't know	30.3	19.4, 43.9	38.6	22.8, 57.2	22.6	12.4, 37.6			
LGBTQ-informed health services			n=35 community college only						
Yes	22.8	12.9, 37.2	11.0	3.8, 27.7				30.2	16.1, 49.3
No	22.2	11.5, 38.5	19.6	8.6, 38.6				23.8	9.9, 47.2
Don't know	55.0	39.8, 69.3	69.4	49.7, 83.9				46.0	29.1, 63.9
LGBTQ-supportive counseling services			n=35 community college only						
Yes	24.7	15.2, 37.4	13.3	4.6, 32.5				31.7	17.8, 49.9
No	29.9	17.5, 46.2	26.0	11.6, 48.5				32.3	15.5, 55.5
Don't know	45.4	31.3, 60.3	60.7	39.6, 78.5				36.0	21.7, 53.2
One or more gender-neutral bathrooms									
Yes	39.4	27.8, 52.4	31.9	18.6, 49.1	46.4	29.0, 64.6	0.25		
No	33.4	20.8, 49.0	32.3	18.5, 50.2	34.4	17.6, 56.2			
Don't know	27.2	18.4, 38.1	35.7	21.8, 52.6	19.3	10.8, 32.0			
A policy or practice of allowing transgender students the ability to change their gender designation on their program records and documents									
Yes	20.1	12.4, 30.7	11.9	4.6, 27.6	27.6	15.1, 45.0	0.29		
No	22.3	11.9, 37.9	22.2	11.8, 38.0	22.4	8.3, 48.1			
Don't know	57.6	42.4, 71.5	65.8	44.8, 82.1	50.0	31.8, 68.1			
Gender-inclusive housing[#]									
Yes	31.5	17.8, 49.5	--	--	31.5	17.8, 49.5	--		
No	35.9	19.3, 56.9	--	--	35.9	19.3, 56.9			
Don't know	32.6	19.1, 49.7	--	--	32.6	19.1, 49.7			
Integration of LGBTQ issues into existing courses			n=35 community college only						
Yes	48.5	34.1, 63.1	39.6	21.1, 61.7				53.9	35.8, 71.0
No	23.2	13.3, 37.3	24.3	11.8, 43.5				22.5	10.8, 41.2
Don't know	28.3	17.7, 42.0	36.1	19.6, 56.6				23.5	12.2, 40.5

*k refers to the number of observations provided by the 62 transgender participants who have attended any of these types of schools. Some participants attended multiple types of schools over their lives and provided information about their experiences in each school setting while other participants attended just one.

CI: Confidence Interval.

[#] Gender-inclusive housing is defined as housing not segregated into men's and women's spaces—including double and multiple occupancy bedrooms—and welcoming to students who identify outside of the gender binary "man/woman."

Table 5. Sources of educational financing reported by transgender adults ages 18 to 40 on the Access to Higher Education Survey (n=62) while in school

	ALL SCHOOL SETTINGS K*=112		VO-TECH & COMMUNITY COLLEGE K=50		FOUR-YEAR COLLEGE & GRADUATE SCHOOL K=62		F TEST
	%	95% CI	%	95% CI	%	95% CI	P-VALUE
Any educational expenses covered by:							
Family resources (parents, relatives, spouse, etc.)	51.2	35.7, 66.6	53.0	33.6, 71.5	49.6	32.0, 67.3	0.75
My own resources (savings from work, work-study, other income)	67.1	51.2, 79.9	67.5	48.0, 82.3	66.8	45.9, 82.7	0.96
Aid which need not be repaid (grants, scholarships, military funding, etc.)	70.3	57.1, 80.8	57.4	39.5, 73.5	82.3	69.1, 90.6	<0.01
Aid which must be repaid (loans, etc.)	53.4	39.1, 67.1	33.7	17.6, 54.6	71.6	55.6, 83.5	<0.01

*k refers to the number of observations provided by the 62 transgender participants who have attended any of these types of schools. Some participants attended multiple types of schools over their lives and provided information about their experiences in each school setting while other participants attended just one.

CI: Confidence Interval. Bold p-values are statistically significant.

Table 6. Federal and other student debt among transgender, cisgender LGBQ, and cisgender non-LGBQ adults ages 18 to 40 (N=1,072) in the Access to Higher Education Survey

	TRANSGENDER N=75		CISGENDER LGBQ N=496		CISGENDER NON-LGBQ N=501		ALL N=1,072		F TEST
	%	95% CI	%	95% CI	%	95% CI	%	95% CI	P-VALUE
Any federal loans	51.0	35.6, 66.4	33.1	27.3, 38.9	23.2	19.3, 27.2	29.7	26.2, 33.2	<0.01
Amount of federal loan debt									
<10K	15.1	4.5, 25.7	10.8	6.6, 14.9	7.7	5.2, 10.2	9.6	7.3, 12.0	<0.01
10-49K	25.1	9.8, 40.4	17.3	12.9, 21.7	11.6	8.6, 14.7	15.2	12.5, 17.9	
> 50K	10.9	0.8, 20.9	5.0	2.5, 7.6	3.9	2.1, 5.7	4.9	3.3, 6.5	
None	49.0	33.6, 64.4	66.9	61.1, 72.7	76.8	72.8, 80.7	70.3	66.8, 73.8	
Any non-federal student debt	21.1	9.8, 32.4	18.3	13.8, 22.7	17.0	13.6, 20.	17.9	15.1, 20.6	0.76

CI: Confidence Interval. Bold p-values are statistically significant.