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INTERACTIONS OF LATINA TRANSGENDER WOMEN WITH LAW ENFORCEMENT

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This policy brief examines interactions with law enforcement by Latina transgender women. Two hundred and twenty primarily immigrant Spanish-speaking Latina transgender women in Los Angeles County, California, provided information on their experiences with law enforcement, including police, prison guards, undercover officers and sheriffs. The data reveal a history of negative interactions with law enforcement on the part of a large number of Latina transgender women:

- Two-thirds reported verbal harassment by law enforcement.
- Twenty-one percent reported physical assault by law enforcement.
- Twenty-four percent reported sexual assault by law enforcement.
- Of those lodging a report against the police, two-thirds stated that their report had been handled “poorly” or “very poorly.”
- Almost 60% of those stopped by law enforcement in the previous year believed that this had occurred without their violating any law. Many reported being stopped while doing everyday things like “coming back from the grocery store” and “waiting for the bus.”
- The vast majority (71%) described the police’s interactions with the transgender community in negative terms. Typical responses included comments that police were aggressive and disrespectful and sometimes used male terms or called them “it.”

Those respondents who stated they had been jailed reported high levels of harassment and violence from other inmates and stated that correction officers often failed to protect them or address this abuse.

- Thirty percent of those jailed reported having been verbally assaulted by other inmates, 11% physically assaulted and 10% sexually assaulted.
- When asked to describe how law enforcement personnel responded to their reports of harassment or assault by other inmates, an overwhelming number (70%) of those who had been jailed reported that law enforcement responded in a negative manner (33%) or did nothing about the incident (37%).

These negative interactions with law enforcement result in the underutilization of police services by Latina transgender women needing such services.

- Over half (55%) reported ever having been a victim of a crime by others.
- Of these, only 56% actually reported the crime to the police.
- Of those reporting crimes, 57% reported that they had been treated poorly (35%) or very poorly (22%) by the police when reporting the crime to them.

Recommendations were provided by the participants of how law enforcement's interactions with the transgender community can be improved:

- Increased training on transgender issues for all law enforcement agencies
- Increased communication between law enforcement and transgender women
- Increased knowledge of their legal rights by members of the transgender community

There are a number of actions that can be taken to achieve these objectives. Members of the Latina transgender community should be involved in the planning and implementation of trainings for law enforcement personnel. Each law enforcement agency should have a liaison unit that reflects the concerns of the transgender community. A review should be made of the current written policies that govern police conduct and operation policies for jails. If policy changes are needed, then the transgender community should advocate for new policies. Disciplinary action should be taken against law enforcement personnel who violate those policies and abuse their positions of authority in their interactions with transgender women. Finally, Latina transgender women should continue to participate in different advocacy and educational activities that focus on improving relations with law enforcement.

Respect by law enforcement should be something that Latina transgender women, and all transgender people, should expect from police personnel. Actions that can promote such respect should be undertaken by both police agencies and members of the transgender community. Together these can result in improved relations between law enforcement and the transgender community.

INTRODUCTION

Numerous studies have documented the widespread discrimination and stigmatization faced by transgender individuals.¹⁻⁷ This discrimination can come from various sources, including complete strangers, health care and social service providers, associates at work and family members. It can also come from law enforcement.^{1,4}

The National Transgender Discrimination Survey (NTDS)¹ provides information on the extent of the abuse experienced by transgender people from law enforcement personnel. This survey was conducted with 6,456 transgender respondents from every state in the U.S., in addition to the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, Guam and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

As documented later in the present report, the NTDS participants reported having had a variety of negative interactions with law enforcement. In all cases, the Latino/a transgender participants fared worse than their White counterparts. This occurred regardless of whether the particular type of negative interaction with law enforcement measured was disrespect, harassment, physical assault or sexual assault. Similar ethnic differences were found among incarcerated individuals, with more Latino/a transgender prisoners reporting harassment, physical assault and sexual assault by jail or prison staff compared to White transgender prisoners.

These experiences with law enforcement have negative consequences for transgender people, specifically in their willingness to seek help from law enforcement when necessary. Not surprisingly, given the larger rates of harassment and assaults by law enforcement reported by Latino/a transgender individuals compared to Whites, more Latinos/as reported being uncomfortable seeking assistance from law enforcement when necessary compared to White transgender individuals.

The current study was undertaken in order to examine the extent to which Latina transgender women in Los Angeles County report similar experiences of negative interactions with law enforcement. This policy brief examines interactions with law enforcement among a sample of Latina male-to-female transgender individuals who were primarily Spanish-speaking immigrants, with a

majority reporting undocumented residency status in the United States. In addition, it identifies some consequences of mistreatment and abuse by law enforcement and the participants' overall impressions of police interactions with the transgender community. Finally, reports of what actions the participants have taken to improve relations with law enforcement are provided as well as recommendations to decrease negative interactions between the transgender community and law enforcement.

This information can be of value to agencies working with Latina transgender women in Los Angeles County and also across the United States. It can provide direction to actions that can be taken to improve relations between law enforcement and the transgender community.

DATA AND METHODOLOGY

Two hundred and twenty Latina male-to-female transgender individuals, 18 years and older, were interviewed in Los Angeles County, California, between December 2010 and June 2011. The primary focus of the interview was on the respondents' history of interactions with law enforcement. The participants were recruited through community based organizations, support groups, social events, community outreaches and referrals by others.

Private interviews were conducted at the offices of Bienestar Human Services, Inc., in Hollywood, El Monte, South Los Angeles, Long Beach, East Los Angeles and Van Nuys. In addition, interviews also occurred at two community centers and a bar frequented by Latina transgender women. The interviewers consisted of three Bienestar bilingual Latina females (a master's level social worker, a master's level graduate student in education and a transgender health educator). Only three individuals who were approached refused to participate in the survey.

Face-to-face interviews were conducted consisting of a survey lasting approximately 30-45 minutes. The survey contained multiple choice questions as well as open-ended questions. The quantitative questions were analyzed using simple descriptive statistics. Common themes in the open-ended

qualitative questions were identified and then grouped and quantified so that estimates of the number of times particular themes were mentioned by the respondents could be estimated.

DESCRIPTION OF SAMPLE

The mean age of the participants was 36 years. Ninety-five percent were born outside of the United States, 53% were undocumented, and 91% spoke Spanish as their primary language. Only a quarter were employed full-time, and over half reported less than \$10,000 of annual income. Almost 90% reported being in the United States for five or more years.^a Other socio-demographic characteristics of the sample are provided in Table 1.

Several contrasts can be made between the participants of the NTDS¹ and those of the present survey. The NTDS included both male-to-female (63%) and female-to-male (37%) transgender

individuals, whereas the present study included only people from the former category. Ninety-six percent of the NTDS participants reported being U.S. citizens, and only 2% described their residency status as undocumented. In contrast, 5% of the present sample was born in the U.S., and 53% were undocumented. Finally, whereas transgender Latinos/as made up only 6% of the NTDS, they constituted the entire sample of the present survey.

Of particular note in the present sample were the differences found in the ways in which engaging in “sex work” was described. Whereas 31% described their employment status as “sex worker,” a larger percentage, 45%, reported currently engaging in sex work for money, shelter, food or drugs. It appears, then, that not all of the individuals who engaged in this type of activity described it as a form of “employment.” In addition, a larger percentage (80%) reported ever having engaged in sex work for money, food, shelter or drugs.

Table 1. Socio-Demographic Characteristics of Sample

Variable	Number (%)*
Age	
Less than 30 years	61 (28%)
30 to 39 years	79 (36%)
40 years or older	80 (36%)
Primary Language	
English	20 (9%)
Spanish	200 (91%)
Country of Origin	
Mexico	157 (71%)
Guatemala	20 (9%)
El Salvador	13 (6%)
Honduras	12 (6%)
United States	11 (5%)
Other	7 (3%)
Residency Status	
Citizen or permanent resident	58 (26%)
Visa	46 (21%)
Undocumented resident	116 (53%)
Length of Time in the U.S.	
5 or more years	191 (87%)
Less than 5 years	29 (13%)
Living Arrangement	
Alone	92 (42%)
With others	128 (58%)

Education	
Less than high school	96 (44%)
High school or more	124 (56%)
Income	
Less than \$10,000	115 (52%)
\$10,000 or more	105 (48%)
Employment Status	
Employed full-time	54 (25%)
Employed part-time	61 (28%)
Unemployed (looking for work)	25 (11%)
Unemployed (disabled)	12 (6%)
Self-defined employment as sex worker	68 (31%)
History of Sex Work	
Current	99 (45%)
Ever	176 (80%)

* Totals do not always add up to 100% due to rounding.

HISTORY OF INVOLVEMENT WITH THE LEGAL SYSTEM

Arrest and Conviction

Seventy-one percent of the participants reported having been arrested at least once in their lifetime. Almost half (46%) had ever been convicted of a crime or misdemeanor. However, among those who had ever been arrested, 64% had been convicted of a crime or misdemeanor. When asked to describe their treatment during the detention and search process, 64% of those arrested reported having been treated unfairly (35%) or very unfairly (29%).

Jail Experiences

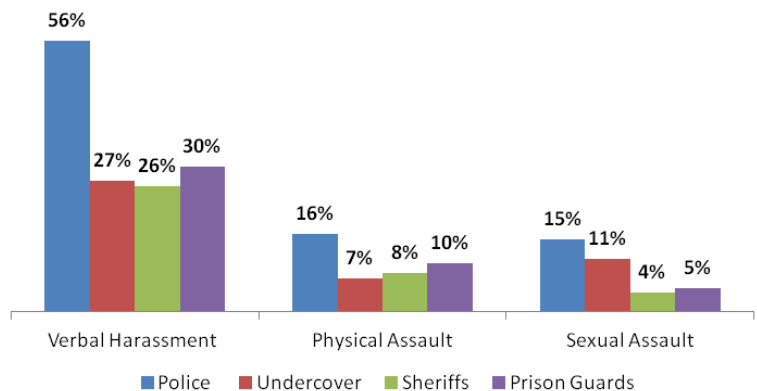
In describing their jail experiences, many reported having had negative interactions with other inmates. Thirty percent reported having been verbally assaulted by other inmates, 11% physically assaulted and 10% sexually assaulted.

When asked to describe how law enforcement personnel responded to their reports of harassment or assault by other inmates, an overwhelming number (70%) of those who had been jailed reported that law enforcement responded in a negative manner (33%) or did nothing about the incident (37%). Occasionally, respondents reported that jail staff would make the situation worse by laughing about the reported incident or even being part of the abuse. However, there were occasions when the jail staff would take a more positive approach by moving the individual to a different cell and away from the assailant.

HISTORY OF NEGATIVE INTERACTIONS WITH LAW ENFORCEMENT: VERBAL HARASSMENT, PHYSICAL ASSAULT AND SEXUAL ASSAULT

Reports of different types of negative interactions with law enforcement were provided by the respondents. These consisted of verbal harassment, physical assault and sexual assault (see Figure 1).

Figure 1. Assault types by law enforcement agency



Verbal Harassment

Two-thirds of the individuals reported having ever been verbally harassed by law enforcement. Most reported having been verbally harassed by police officers (56%), followed by prison guards^b (30%), undercover law enforcement personnel (27%) and sheriffs (26%).

Physical Assault

Twenty one percent reported having ever been physically assaulted by law enforcement. The participants reported having been physically assaulted primarily by police officers (16%), followed by prison guards^b (10%), sheriffs (8%) and undercover law enforcement personnel (7%).

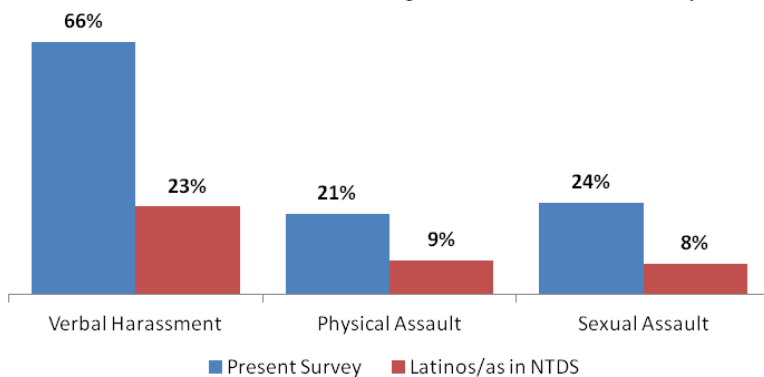
Sexual Assault

Twenty four percent reported having ever been sexually assaulted by law enforcement. This occurred primarily with police officers (15%), followed by undercover law enforcement personnel (11%), prison guards^b (6%) and sheriffs (4%).

Comparisons to Latinos/as in the NTDS

In all three situations just described, the participants of the present survey fared worse than the Latino/a transgender individuals of the NTDS¹ (see Figure 2). More individuals of the present study reported being harassed, physically assaulted and sexually assaulted by law enforcement than the Latino/a transgender participants in the NTDS.

Figure 2. Assault type comparisons to Latino/a transgender individuals in the National Transgender Discrimination Survey



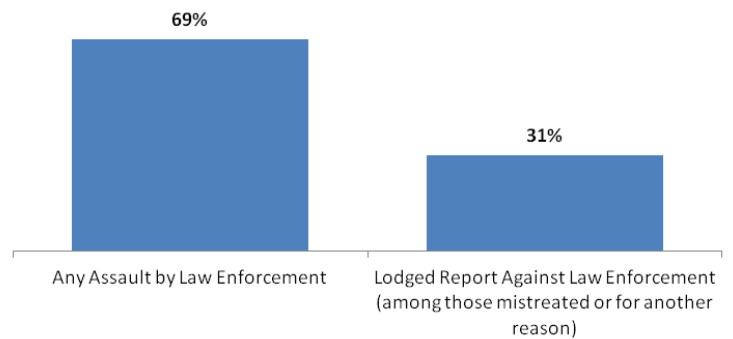
Sexual Solicitation

Participants were also asked if they had ever been solicited for sex by a police officer or other law enforcement personnel. Forty two percent responded in the affirmative. This occurred primarily with police officers and undercover

personnel (21% each) and to a lesser degree with sheriffs (5%).^c No additional questions were asked about sexual solicitation by law enforcement, such as whether this was part of a sting operation or whether any sexual encounter with the law officer had actually occurred.

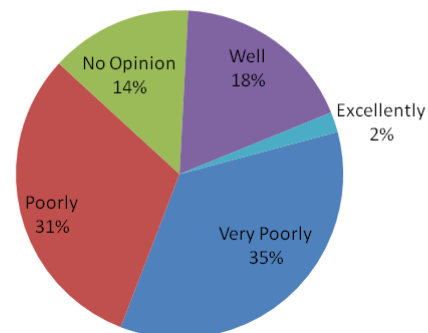
Responses to Reports about Mistreatment by Law Enforcement

Figure 3. Reports of any assault by law enforcement and reports lodged against them for any reason



As seen in Figure 3, 151 individuals (69% of the sample) reported having ever been verbally harassed, physically assaulted or sexually assaulted by a law enforcement personnel. Of these, only 41 (27%) reported that they had ever lodged a report. An additional eight individuals who had not reported ever having been personally harassed or assaulted by law enforcement also reported having lodged a report (apparently for a different reason). The combined 49 people consisted of the 31% of the 159 individuals who reported having ever lodged a report either because they themselves had been mistreated or for another reason. Among this combined 49 people, two-thirds felt that their report had been handled poorly (31%) or very poorly (35%), while a fifth felt it had been handled well (18%) or excellently (2%) (Figure 4). Fourteen percent had no opinion about how their reports were handled.

Figure 4. How reports against law enforcement were handled



PAST YEAR INTERACTIONS WITH LAW ENFORCEMENT

Arrest History

Twenty-nine percent of the respondents reported having been arrested in the past year. Of these, over two-thirds were arrested only one time and one-third two or more times.

Perceptions of Being Stopped by Police Unjustly

Almost 60% of the participants reported that they believed that they had been stopped by law enforcement in the previous year without violating any law. These occurred in the cities of Alhambra, Baldwin Park, El Monte, El Segundo, Fontana, Gardena, Glendale, Huntington Park, Las Vegas, Long Beach, Los Angeles, Pico Rivera, Pomona, San Jose (California), Santa Barbara, Santa Clarita, Santa Monica, South El Monte, South Gate, Thousand Oaks, Vernon, Victorville, West Hollywood and Whittier. Within the city of Los Angeles, a number of communities were identified, including the Adams district, downtown, Eagle Rock, Hollywood, Koreatown, Pico Union, San Fernando Valley and South Los Angeles.

They referred to me as a “Mr.,” but in a mocking way.

They referred to me as a female at first but after they checked my ID, they referred to me as a male.

(They treated me) as a prostitute and told me to leave the area or else I’d be arrested.

They asked me if I was waiting for a “client.”

They told me to go home, that they didn’t want to see me there.

Of those stopped, 31% reported that this had occurred one time, 25% two times, 33% three to five times and 11% six or more times. Many reported that they had been doing everyday things before being stopped, like “waiting for the bus,” “coming back from the grocery store,” “walking home” and “shopping.”

Descriptions of their experiences when stopped by law enforcement included being referred to as male even when they had asked the officers to refer to them as female, being called by various derogatory names or being assumed to be a prostitute.

However, there were also reports that evidenced a more respectful attitude on the part of law enforcement. For example, some officers asked the individual how she preferred to be addressed and then proceeded to use that same form of address when interacting with her.

In the past, they asked me for my real name. Now they ask how I would like to be referred to, and they accept it.

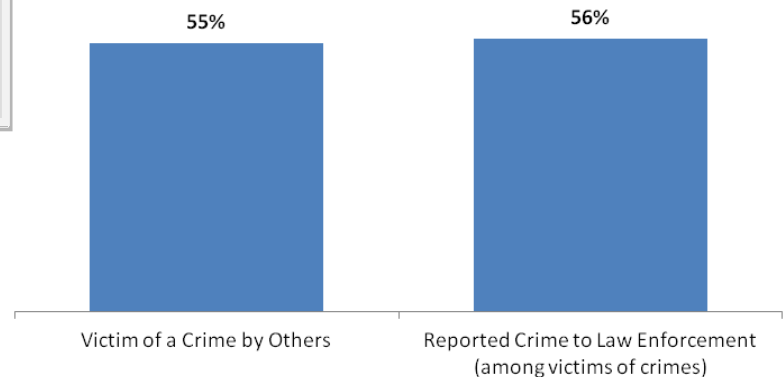
(They call me) “Sir,” but when I tell them to refer to me as, “Mrs.,” they do it.

Nevertheless, when descriptions of interactions with law enforcement were provided, they were for the most part overwhelmingly negative.

REPORTING CRIMES COMMITTED UPON LATINA TRANSGENDER WOMEN TO LAW ENFORCEMENT

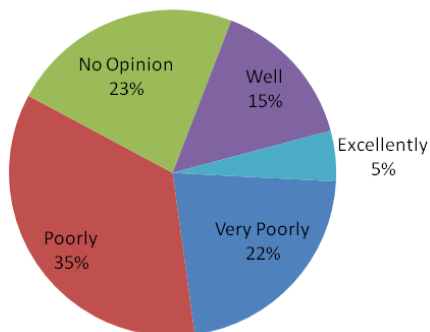
Over half (55%) of the participants reported ever having been a victim of a crime by others (see Figure 5). However, of these, only 56% (or 31% of the total sample) actually reported these crimes to the police.

Figure 5. Victims of crimes by others and reports to law enforcement (among victims of crimes)



Of those reporting crimes, 57% reported that they had been treated poorly (35%) or very poorly (22%) by the police when reporting the crime to them (Figure 6). Twenty percent stated they had been treated well (15%) or excellently (5%). About a quarter (23%) had no opinion about their treatment by the police.

Figure 6. How reports of crimes committed against transgender people were handled by law enforcement



Among those who reported not having reported the crime to the police, a variety of reasons were provided for this. Many of these focused on their impressions of how the police might have responded to their reports. For example, there were concerns that the police might not listen to them, believe them or take them seriously.

Others expressed a belief that the police would not follow up on their report or that they would be blamed for the incident. Still others expressed a fear that they would be discriminated against or ridiculed.

Another reason respondents provided was that they had already had bad experiences in the past with the police and so were hesitant to contact them.

Some of the reasons given for not reporting crimes to the police also reflected a worry about their own personal situation.

A common fear was that being a resident without legal documentation or not having any personal identification could cause a problem for them.

Still another worry was a concern that the police would inform one's family about the incident.

OVERALL IMPRESSIONS OF POLICE'S INTERACTIONS WITH THE TRANSGENDER COMMUNITY

The vast majority of individuals (71%) described the police's interactions with the transgender community in negative terms. Typical responses included comments that the police were aggressive, insensitive, rude and disrespectful.

Police were also described as discriminating against transgender women (especially those who are undocumented), making fun of them and calling them names.

Some reported that transgender women are sometimes referred to by police using male terms or even as an "it." Others believed that the police assumed that all transgender women are sex workers. There was also a belief that police arrest transgender people based on false charges.

They never pay attention to our complaints.

Police make fun of me.

I was afraid of being arrested because I was a sex worker at the time.

I'm afraid to be deported.

Other responses (14%) conveyed a different impression of the police's interactions with the transgender community, recognizing that within law enforcement there are both police who treat transgender women with respect and others who do not.

Some compared their own experiences with those of other transgender women, stating that they themselves had been treated well by the police but that their friends had not been. Some compared the police in one community to those in another.

*They are abusive, offensive and without respect.
They use bad language.*

(They treat us) badly and are dishonest.

*They say they are going to protect us but they
don't. They treat us differently and call us crazy
and say that we all have AIDS.*

*They don't interact with us. When they see us, they
abuse their power.*

*(They're) not sensitive. They want to laugh at you,
and I feel like I have to tell them to act
appropriately.*

Police are not educated, open-minded or tolerant.

*They make fun of us and discriminate (against) us,
especially if we are illegal.*

*Some are very vulgar, others are indifferent and
the rest are good.*

*(It) depends on their prejudices. Some treat you
well; others don't.*

Fewer individuals (8%) described the police in very positive terms.

It was felt that interacting with the police used to be more difficult compared to the present time and that relations with the police have improved.

Police were described as being more open-minded and accepting of transgender people than in the 1990's.

Other comments indicated that interactions with law enforcement were good and that the police treated them with respect, provided that the transgender individual did the same with the police. Personal encounters with police also were described as having gone well. Police were described as treating transgender people just like they treat everyone else and no differently based on being transgender.

Four percent suggested that how the police treat transgender individuals depends on the surrounding circumstances of a particular situation, such as a police officer's prior experience with transgender people or how the transgender person conducts herself. Three percent reported not knowing how the police interact with the transgender community.

*It depends on the area. In Hollywood, they are
more educated and treat you better. In South
Central and El Monte, they are rude and verbally
abusive.*

*The police are good people. They treat the
transgender community right and try to take care
of them.*

*Before it was harder, but now they want to help us
and reach out to us more. It's better.*

They are nicer and more tolerant.

SUGGESTIONS OF HOW LAW ENFORCEMENT'S INTERACTIONS WITH THE TRANSGENDER COMMUNITY CAN BE IMPROVED

The most frequently reported suggestion of how law enforcement's interactions with the transgender community can be improved was for the police to receive more education and training about transgender people. Thirty-six percent of the participants provided this response. Generally, it was felt that, if law enforcement personnel learned more about the transgender community, transgender women would not have to fear the police.

Part of that training would involve instructing law enforcement about how to talk with transgender women and not addressing or treating them as men.

There was also recognition that law enforcement personnel are already receiving such education and training. However, it was felt that more training needed to be provided to police departments. One way of doing this could be to invite members of law

enforcement to visit transgender groups and programs as a way of creating better understanding of transgender people and their concerns.

Closely connected to the concept of education and training was the recommendation that there needs to be increased communication between law enforcement and transgender women. This was stated by 9% of the participants. This would provide the police with an opportunity to see who transgender women actually are, i.e., people who engage in the same activities as others and are deserving of the same rights as others.

(They need to) learn more about us and value the way we live our lives so that we don't have to hide. We hide because of fear of how they treat us or that they will arrest us.

We should have meetings with the police so they can see that we are normal people that work and take the bus.

Police need to treat us with respect and ask us how we want to be treated so that we can feel comfortable.

The transgender community needs to unite and fight for their rights.

(The transgender community) needs to have more information. We need to know more about laws in order to inform or protect ourselves.

Such dialogues would benefit both the police and the transgender community, as each would get to know and learn more about the other. It was recommended that community based organizations working with the transgender community could take a lead in fostering this type of dialogue with law enforcement.

Respondents highlighted the importance of communication at the individual level on the street. For example, it was recommended that a police officer needs to actually talk with a transgender woman before arresting her to verify if she in fact is actually breaking the law and not just assume that she is engaging in sex work.

Respondents also expressed the need for law enforcement to show more respect for the transgender community. Twenty percent of the participants voiced this suggestion.

Showing greater respect for the transgender community could take various forms. One way would be for the police to ask a transgender woman how she prefers to be addressed and then use this same form of address with her. Other ways of showing greater respect would be not passing judgment on the transgender community, being more tolerant of transgender individuals and treating them like everyone else. Police should not resort to stereotypes and assume all transgender women are sex workers. They should also not display rudeness or disrespect in their interactions with transgender women. Similarly, police could show more respect of transgender women by not asking them how they “do it” sexually and what other sexual activities they engage in.

Respondents felt that the police should focus on protecting transgender women rather than ridiculing them. If police were to make the recommended changes, this could help transgender women feel more comfortable in the presence of law enforcement. However, there were also activities that some participants recommended that transgender women themselves could undertake in order to improve relations with law enforcement.

This could involve protesting and reporting grievances regarding inappropriate actions committed by the police when these occur. It could also involve learning more about the legal system.

There was recognition that structural changes on a societal level also need to occur which, in turn, could improve the transgender community's interactions with law enforcement. An obvious example of this is the need for transgender women to have better job opportunities so that those who resort to sex work for their livelihood would not have to do so. It was also recommended that organizations that work for social change for transgender people should be further empowered so that they could continue to bring about more positive changes.

Eight percent of the respondents did not provide any recommendations about how the interactions between law enforcement and the transgender

community could be improved. In addition, three percent voiced their beliefs that either it was too difficult to change the mentalities of the police or that there was nothing that could be done to change the behavior of law enforcement personnel. Typical comments along these lines portrayed the police as being too aggressive and unable to improve or unwilling to do so.

REPORTS OF PERSONAL ACTIONS TAKEN TO IMPROVE INTERACTIONS WITH LAW ENFORCEMENT

The participants described actions that they themselves reported having taken to improve relations with law enforcement. For example, 15% reported having engaged in different types of activist, advocacy or educational activities as a way of trying to improve relations between law enforcement and the transgender community. These included being involved in educational events directed to police officers, attending forums or meetings between the police and the transgender community, participating in public demonstrations, making police reports and serving on commissions.

(I) have done a lot like participate in marches and demonstrations.

If they try to disrespect me, I will tell them to respect me.

I attend groups and talk about my experiences, but I don't think it's enough.

I have tried, but they don't pay attention to me.

(I do) nothing. I'm afraid because of my immigration status.

I try to be polite and cooperative. I try not to get out of character even if they're not treating me well.

(I) try to be give them respect and be nice to them.

Other activities included speaking publicly about grievances with the police, doing advocacy work on behalf of the transgender community and serving on the board of directors of organizations that work on behalf of imprisoned transgender women.

Sometimes these advocacy activities have occurred on a one-on-one basis with individual law enforcement personnel.

Although not specifically related to activities that included the police, 8% felt that they were doing their share to improve relations with law enforcement by working within the transgender community on different activities. This included participating in meetings and support groups of the transgender community, educating them, talking about their own experiences and being a support to other transgender women, giving them advice as needed.

Still others reported working with existing transgender organizations and also trying to develop coalitions among transgender women.

Nevertheless, despite the reports of transgender women who personally felt they were doing something to improve the transgender community's relations with the police, the most common response given (45%) was doing nothing or avoiding the police so as not to have to interact with them. The reason most often cited for not doing anything was fear of the police or feeling that it would be to no avail.

Comments along this line included statements suggesting that respondents felt scared and intimidated by law enforcement or did not trust the police. One reason for this stated fear of the police was some participants' undocumented immigration status.

Twenty-five percent reported being watchful of their own behavior so that it would not serve as a reason for the police to treat them badly.

CONCLUSION

Consistent with the findings reported previously by the National Transgender Discrimination Survey (NTDS),¹ a large percent of the Latina male-to-female transgender individuals in Los Angeles County reported a history of negative interactions with law enforcement that took the form of verbal harassment, physical assaults and sexual assaults. These negative interactions with law enforcement resulted in the underutilization of police services by Latina transgender women needing such assistance. They also resulted in an overall negative impression by transgender women of law enforcement's interactions with the transgender community.

As documented by previous research¹ and substantiated by the recommendations of the participants of the present project, there are a number of actions that can be taken by law enforcement to improve its relations with the Latina transgender community. Chief among these is improved police training on issues affecting transgender people and Latina transgender women in particular. This can be done best when it includes members of the transgender community in the planning and implementation of these trainings.

Each law enforcement agency should have a liaison unit that reflects the concerns of the transgender community. These can provide a voice to transgender people and a way for them to be able to advocate for their concerns. In addition, they can also assist with the trainings offered to law enforcement.

A review should be made of the current written policies that govern police conduct and operation policies for jails. If policy changes are needed, then the transgender community should advocate for new policies that specifically cover police conduct in relation to transgender people. Once the proper policies are in place, disciplinary action should be taken against law enforcement personnel who violate those policies and abuse their positions of authority in their interactions with transgender women. This may be particularly important with regards to staff of jail and prison systems, as transgender people who are imprisoned may feel themselves to be more vulnerable.

There are also actions that can be taken by Latina transgender women that may result in improved relations with law enforcement. As noted by many of the participants, this can involve different advocacy and educational activities. These may best be done in collaboration with other members of the transgender community or organizations working with them. Examples may include organizing educational workshops for police departments, serving on task forces that can be a bridge between the transgender community and law enforcement, advocating on behalf of transgender women who may have experienced harassment by police, and bringing legal action against law enforcement in situations where this is warranted.

Latina transgender women, and all transgender people, should expect to be treated with respect by police personnel. Actions that can promote such respect should be undertaken by both police agencies and members of the transgender community. Together these can result in improved relations between the transgender community and law enforcement.

NOTES

- a. Although the vast majority of the participants reported living in the United States for five or more years, given that almost all of the participants were immigrants to the U.S., it is possible that some of the experiences that they described, either of their own histories (e.g., ever engaging in sex work) or of their interactions with law enforcement (e.g., ever having been sexually assaulted by law enforcement) could have occurred before they came to the United States. Similarly, even if some of these experiences had occurred in the U.S., it is also possible that they could have occurred outside of Los Angeles County in other parts of California or the U.S.
- b. The percentages for those reporting incidents by prison guards were calculated only with those who reported ever having been arrested.
- c. This question was not asked regarding prison guards.

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