

Sexual Violence Against Transgender People

Introduction

“Transgender” is a broad term for people whose gender identity is different from the sex they were assigned at birth. Transgender people have diverse identities, experiences, sexual orientations, gender expressions, and backgrounds, and there is no single way to look or identify as transgender.¹

Transgender people experience sexual violence and other forms of violence at disproportionately high rates. From 2017–2020, transgender people experienced violent victimization at about **2.5 times** the rate of cisgender people.² These experiences can intersect with discrimination in housing, employment, education, health care, and interactions with law enforcement, creating additional barriers to safety and accessing support.³ Additionally, transgender people of color and others affected by intersecting forms of marginalization often face higher rates of violence and discrimination. Support for transgender people should be survivor-centered, gender affirming, and responsive to these barriers.⁴

Research on sexual violence against transgender people remains limited. Many national studies and surveys have not collected enough information about gender identity or included enough transgender participants to provide reliable, detailed estimates. One of the most comprehensive sources is the 2015 U.S. Transgender Survey (USTS), an anonymous online survey of tens of thousands of transgender adults across the U.S.⁵

Statistics⁶

- Overall Prevalence
 - **47%** of transgender respondents experienced sexual assault in their lifetime.
 - **10%** of transgender respondents experienced sexual assault in the previous year.
- Gender Identity
 - **51%** of transgender men experienced sexual assault in their lifetime.
 - **37%** of transgender women experienced sexual assault in their lifetime.
 - **58%** of nonbinary respondents assigned female at birth experienced sexual assault in their lifetime.
 - **41%** of nonbinary respondents assigned male at birth experienced sexual assault in their lifetime.
- Race and Ethnicity
 - **65%** of American Indian transgender respondents experienced sexual assault in their lifetime.
 - **59%** of multiracial transgender respondents experienced sexual assault in their lifetime.
 - **58%** of Middle Eastern transgender respondents experienced sexual assault in their lifetime.
 - **53%** of Black transgender respondents experienced sexual assault in their lifetime.
- Intersecting Experiences
 - **72%** of transgender respondents who had done sex work experienced sexual assault in their lifetime.
 - **65%** of transgender respondents who had experienced homelessness experienced sexual assault in their lifetime.

¹ “LGBTQ+ Definitions.” *Trans Student Educational Resources*. Retrieved July 28, 2026, from <https://transstudent.org/about-2-2/definitions/>

² Truman, Jennifer L., & Morgan, Rachel E. Violent Victimization by Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity, 2017–2020 (June 2022). Bureau of Justice Statistics. Retrieved July 29, 2026, from <https://bjs.ojp.gov/library/publications/violent-victimization-sexual-orientation-and-gender-identity-2017-2020>

³ James, S. E., Herman, J. L., Rankin, S., Keisling, M., Mottet, L., & Anafi, M. *The Report of the 2015 U.S. Transgender Survey*. (2016). National Center for Transgender Equality. Retrieved July 28, 2026, from <https://transequality.org/sites/default/files/docs/usts/USTS-Full-Report-Dec17.pdf>

⁴ Westbrook, L. “Violence Against Transgender People in the United States: Field Growth, Data Dilemmas, and Knowledge Gaps.” (2022). *Sociology Compass*, 16(6), e12983. Retrieved July 28, 2026, from <https://doi.org/10.1111/soc4.12983>

⁵ Westbrook, L. “Violence Against Transgender People in the United States: Field Growth, Data Dilemmas, and Knowledge Gaps.” (2022). *Sociology Compass*, 16(6), e12983. Retrieved July 28, 2026, from <https://doi.org/10.1111/soc4.12983>

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- **61%** of transgender respondents with disabilities experienced sexual assault in their lifetime.
- Perpetrators
 - **47%** of transgender sexual assault survivor respondents reported a friend or acquaintance as a perpetrator.
 - **34%** transgender sexual assault survivor respondents reported a current or former intimate partner as a perpetrator.
 - **30%** transgender sexual assault survivor respondents reported a stranger as a perpetrator.
 - **25%** transgender sexual assault survivor respondents reported a relative as a perpetrator.
- Intimate Partner Violence and Stalking
 - **54%** of transgender respondents experienced some form of intimate partner violence in their lifetime.
 - **19%** of transgender respondents were forced by an intimate partner to engage in sexual activity.
 - **16%** of transgender respondents were stalked by an intimate partner.

Barriers to Reporting Sexual Violence Against Transgender People⁷

- Transgender survivors may have **difficulty finding services that are knowledgeable** about and affirming of transgender identities.
- **Gender-separated shelters** may **exclude** transgender survivors, place them in spaces that do not match their gender identity, or expose them to misgendering and invasive questions.
- **Past or expected mistreatment by law enforcement** may make transgender survivors less comfortable contacting police for help.
- People causing harm **may use a survivor's transgender identity as a form of control**, including threatening to out their gender identity or sexual orientation, intentionally misgendering them, or restricting access to gender-affirming care or community support.
- Transgender survivors **who also experience** racism, disability, immigration barriers, or other forms of **marginalization** may face additional barriers when seeking services.

For survivor resources, please visit:

mcasa.org/survivors/culturally-responsive-services

⁷ National LGBTQ Institute on Intimate Partner Violence. "Support for Transgender Survivors." (2026). Retrieved July 29, 2026, from <https://lgbtqipvintstitute.org/support-for-transgender-survivors>