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# Understanding the Transgender Community

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Transgender people come from all walks of life, and HRC Foundation has estimated that there are more than 2 million of us across the United States. We are parents, siblings, and kids. We are your coworkers, your neighbors, and your friends. We are 7-year-old children

and 70-year-old grandparents. We are a diverse community, representing all racial and ethnic backgrounds, as well as all faith traditions.



The word “transgender” – or trans – is an umbrella term for people whose gender identity is different from the sex assigned to us at birth. Although the word “transgender” and our modern definition of it only came into use in the late 20th century, people who would fit under this definition have existed in every culture throughout recorded history.

Alongside the increased visibility of trans celebrities like Laverne Cox, Jazz Jennings or the stars of the hit Netflix series “Pose,” [three out of every ten](#) adults in the U.S. personally knows someone who is trans. As trans people become more visible, we aim to increase understanding of our community among our friends, families, and society.

## What does it mean to be trans?

The trans community is incredibly diverse. Some trans people identify as trans men or trans women, while others may describe themselves as non-binary, genderqueer, gender non-conforming, agender, bigender or other identities that reflect their personal experience. Some of us take hormones or have surgery as part of our transition, while others may change our pronouns or appearance. Roughly **three-quarters** of trans youth that responded to an HRC Foundation and University of Connecticut survey identified with terms other than strictly “boy” or “girl.” This suggests that a larger portion of this generation’s youth are identifying somewhere on the broad trans spectrum.

## What challenges do trans people face?

While trans people are increasingly visible in both popular culture and in daily life, we still face severe discrimination, stigma and systemic inequality. Some of the specific issues facing the trans community are:

- **Lack of legal protection**– Trans people face a legal system that often does not protect us from discrimination based on our gender identity. Despite a recent U.S. Supreme Court Decision that makes it clear that trans people are legally protected from discrimination in the workplace, there is still no comprehensive federal non-discrimination law that includes gender identity - which means trans people may still lack recourse if we face discrimination when we're seeking housing or dining in a restaurant. Moreover, state legislatures across the country are debating – and in some cases passing – legislation specifically designed to prohibit trans people from accessing public bathrooms that correspond with our gender identity, or creating exemptions based on religious beliefs that would allow discrimination against LGBTQ people.
- **Poverty**– Trans people live in poverty at elevated rates, and for trans people of color, these rates are even higher. Around **29%** of trans adults [live in poverty](#), as well **39%** of Black trans adults, **48%** of Latinx trans adults and **35%** of Alaska Native, Asian, Native Americans and Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander trans adults.
- **Stigma, Harassment and Discrimination** – About half a decade ago, only [one-quarter](#) of people in the United States supported trans rights, and support increased to **62%** by the year 2019. Despite this progress, the trans community still faces considerable stigma due to more than a century of being characterized as mentally ill, socially deviant and sexually predatory. While these intolerant views have faded in recent years for lesbians and gay men, trans people are often still ridiculed by a society that does not understand us. This stigma plays out in a variety of contexts – from lawmakers who leverage anti-trans stigma to score cheap political points; to family, friends or coworkers who reject trans people upon learning about our trans identities; and to people who harass, bully and commit serious violence against trans people. This includes stigma that prevents them from accessing necessary services for their survival and well-being. Only **30%** of women's [shelters](#) are willing to house trans women. While recent legal progress has been made, **27%** of trans people [have been](#)

fired, not hired or denied a promotion due to their trans identity. Too often, harassment has led trans people to avoid exercising their most basic rights to vote. HRC Foundation's [research](#) shows that **49%** of trans adults, and **55%** of trans adults of color said they were unable to vote in at least one election in their life because of fear of or experiencing discrimination at the polls.

- **Violence Against Trans People**– Trans people experience violence at rates far greater than the average person. Over a [majority \(54%\)](#) of trans people have experienced some form of intimate partner violence, **47%** have been sexually assaulted in their lifetime and nearly **one in ten** were physically assaulted in between 2014 and 2015. This type of violence can be fatal. At least 27 trans and gender non-conforming people have been violently killed in 2020 thus far, the same number of fatalities observed in 2019.
- **Lack of Healthcare Coverage**– An HRC Foundation [analysis](#) found that **22%** of trans people and **32%** of trans people of color have no health insurance coverage. More than [one-quarter \(29%\)](#) of trans adults have been refused health care by a doctor or provider because of their gender identity. This sobering data reveals a healthcare system that fails to meet the needs of the trans community.
- **Identity Documents** – The widespread lack of accurate identity documents among trans people can have an impact on every aspect of their lives, including access to emergency housing or other public services. Without identification, one cannot travel, register for school or access many services that are essential to function in society. Many states do not allow trans people to update their identification documents to match their gender identity. Others require evidence of medical transition – which can be prohibitively expensive and is not something that all trans people want – as well as fees for processing new identity documents, which may make them unaffordable for some members of the trans community.

While advocates continue working to remedy these disparities, change cannot come too soon for trans people. Visibility – especially positive images of trans people in the media and society – continues to make a critical difference for us; but visibility is not enough and

can come with real risks to our safety, especially for those of us who are part of other marginalized communities. That is why the Human Rights Campaign is committed to continuing to support and advocate for the trans community, so that the trans Americans who are and will become your friends, neighbors, coworkers and family members have an equal chance to succeed and thrive.

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