

For Immediate Release

April 26, 2022

Media Contact

Rachel Dowd

dowd@law.ucla.edu

(310) 855-2696 (cell)

More than half of transgender students in higher education report poor mental health

Many face bullying, harassment, assault, and unfair treatment

A new study from the Williams Institute at UCLA School of Law conducted in collaboration with the Point Foundation, the nation's largest LGBTQ scholarship fund, finds there are an estimated 218,000 known transgender students ages 18 to 40 in the U.S. More than half (55%) of them say that their mental health was not good all or most of the time while they were in higher education programs.

More than a third (39%) of transgender people experienced bullying, harassment, or assault while they were there. And nearly a third (32%) of transgender people reported unfair treatment by teachers, staff, or school administrators.

Using data from the Access to Higher Education Survey, a nationally representative sample of adults ages 18 to 40, researchers examined the school experiences and higher education environments of transgender people.

Results show that transgender people (26%) were three times more likely than cisgender LGBTQ people (9%) to say that lifetime adverse treatment at school impacted their academic success.

"Experiences of discrimination against transgender people are not unique to high school," said lead author Kerith J. Conron, the Blachford-Cooper Distinguished Scholar and Research Director at the Williams Institute. "They also occur in higher education settings, where they can have a profound impact on the mental health and lifelong potential of transgender students."

"It's clear that universities and schools are not doing enough for transgender students," said Jorge Valencia, Executive Director and CEO at Point Foundation. "When transgender people are reporting high levels of poor mental health, in part because of their mistreatment at the hands of staff or faculty, it's

time for institutions of higher education to make a change. We are advocating for schools to audit their policies to ensure the protection of LGBTQ students, to ensure LGBTQ people are being listened to and supported by funded programming and centers, among other things.”

ADDITIONAL FINDINGS

Financial Support

- More than half of transgender people had federal student loans (51%), more than cisgender LGBQ (33%) and non-LGBQ people, (23%).

Belonging and Outness

- Three out of five (59%) transgender people reported a sense of belonging at the higher education institutions they had attended.
 - Fewer transgender people reported belonging in vocational-technical programs and community colleges (45%) than in four-year college and graduate schools (73%).
- One in five (21%) transgender people was “out” as LGBTQ to most or all of their teachers/faculty and program staff and 44% were out to no faculty or staff.
- Almost a third (32%) of transgender people reported being out to no other students.

LGBTQ Inclusion

- About half (49%) of transgender people reported that LGBTQ issues were part of the curriculum at their school.
- 39% of transgender people reported the presence of one or more gender-neutral bathrooms on campus.
- One in five (20%) transgender people reported that they were aware their school had a policy allowing students to change their gender designation on their program records and documents, while 58% did not know if their school had a policy.
- About one-quarter of transgender students said their school had LGBTQ-competent health (23%) and counseling services (25%).

This study is part of a series of reports that analyze data from the Access to Higher Education Survey. Previous reports examined the impact of [COVID-19 on LGBTQ students](#) and [federal student loan debt among LGBTQ people](#).

[Read the report](#)

XXX

The Williams Institute at UCLA School of Law, a think tank on sexual orientation and gender identity law and public policy, is dedicated to conducting rigorous, independent research with real-world relevance.

Point Foundation (Point) is the nation's largest scholarship-granting organization for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) students of merit. Point promotes change through scholarship funding, mentorship, leadership development, and community service training.