



CRLA

CENTRAL COAST
TRANSGENDER
NEEDS ASSESSMENT



CRLA OFFICES

ARVIN

211 Bear Mountain Blvd.,
Arvin, CA 93203
(661) 854-3839
(661) 854-3940

COACHELLA

1460 6th Street,
Coachella, CA 92236
(760) 398-7264

DELANO

601 High Street, Suite C1 & C2
Delano, CA 93215
(661) 725-4350

EL CENTRO

449 Broadway,
El Centro, CA 92243
(760) 353-0220

FRESNO

3747 E. Shields Ave.,
Fresno, CA 93726
(559) 441-8721

HOLLISTER *

310 4th Street,
Hollister, CA 95023
(831) 724-2253

*Only on Mondays

MADERA

126 North "B" Street,
Madera, CA 93638
(559) 674- 5671

MARYSVILLE 511

"D" Street,
Marysville, CA 95901
(530) 742- 5191

MODESTO

1111 "I" Street, Suite 310,
Modesto, CA 95354
(209) 577-3811

OAKLAND

1430 Franklin St., Suite 103,
Oakland, CA 94612-3024
(510) 267-0762

† Administrative office



OXNARD

338 South "A" Street,
Oxnard, CA 93030
(805) 483-8083

SALINAS

3 Williams Road,
Salinas, CA 93905
(831) 757-5221

SANTA MARIA

2050 "G" South Broadway,
Santa Maria, CA 93454
(805) 922-4563

SAN LUIS OBISPO

1011 Pacific Street, Suite 101,
San Luis Obispo, CA 93401
(805) 544-7997

SANTA ROSA

1260 N. Dutton Ave.,
Suite 160, Santa Rosa, CA
95405
(707) 528-9941

STOCKTON

145 E. Weber Avenue,
Stockton, CA 95202
(209) 946- 0605

VISTA

640 Civic Center Drive, Suite
108, Oceanside, CA 92054
(760) 966-0511

WATSONVILLE

21 Carr Street,
Watsonville, CA 95076
(831) 724-2253

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February 2019
California Rural Legal Assistance, Inc.
Authors: Roselyn Macias and Lisa Cisneros

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I. Introduction

For over a decade, California Rural Legal Assistance, Inc. (CRLA) has worked with and advocated alongside rural transgender communities. This advocacy reflects CRLA's commitment to fight for justice and protect the rights of the most vulnerable members of our society.

In 2009, CRLA began Conexiones, a Spanish-language peer support and leadership group that reaches many lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) individuals—including current and former clients and non-clients residing on the Central Coast. Conexiones provides participants with a safe space to meet regularly, share experiences, learn, and plan activities to educate the public on LGBTQ issues. Conexiones leaders are pushing for greater respect and inclusion for Latinx LGBTQ communities in the Salinas Valley and across the Central Coast. The group is pursuing these changes at all levels of society, from individual families and local communities to the state level and beyond.

Conexiones' most engaged leaders and participants have primarily been transgender Mexican women. Their activities have included attending transgender and LGBTQ leadership conferences, planning film festivals, leading LGBTQ contingents at annual Mexican Independence Day parades, media outreach, and supporting the development of a website. In the past year, Conexiones determined that it was necessary to conduct a needs assessment focused on low-income transgender individuals to increase knowledge regarding the experiences of transgender people on the Central Coast—and particularly Monterey County. This survey was made possible by a grant from the Community Foundation for Monterey County.

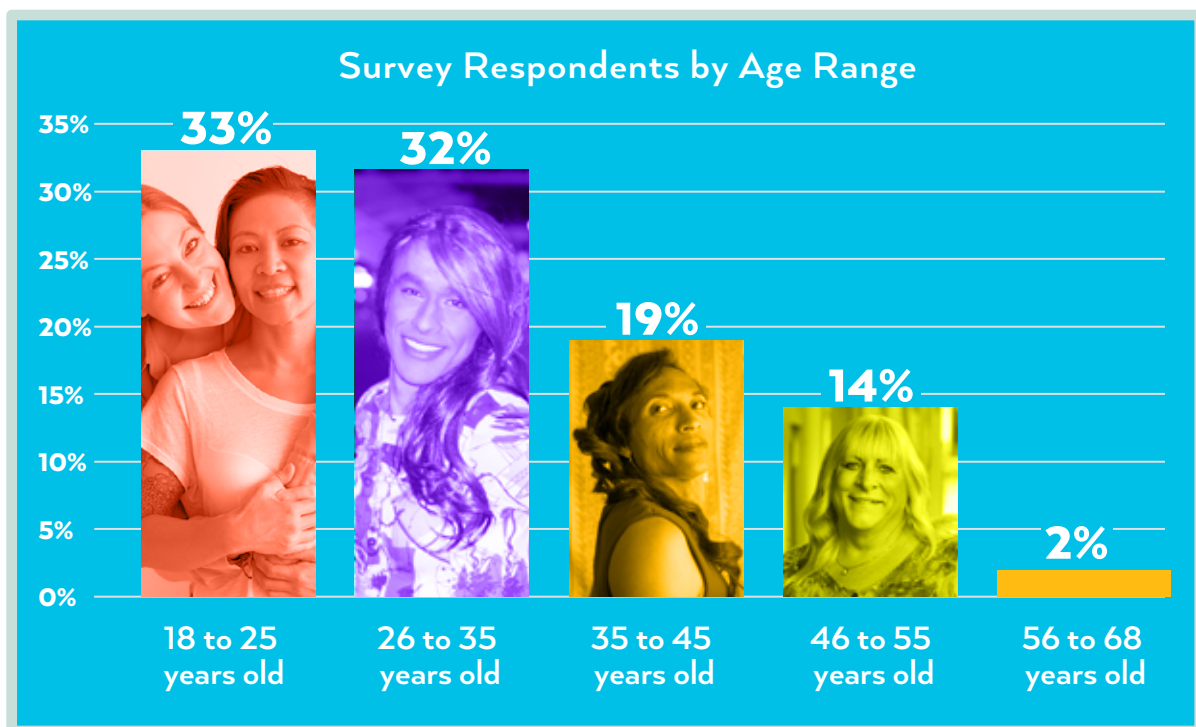
II. Methodology

The survey was conducted from June to November 2018, and led by CRLA’s LGBT Program Community Worker, Roselyn Macias. CRLA worked with Conexiones leaders to determine the questions. The survey targeted transgender and nonbinary individuals residing in Monterey, San Benito, and Santa Cruz Counties. CRLA worked with community partners—including Conexiones leaders, and representatives of The Epicenter and Rainbow Speakers and Friends—to recruit survey participants. Participants were also recruited through social media. The survey was confidential, anonymous, and available in English and Spanish. Participants could complete the survey online or on paper. If a survey respondent lacked English or Spanish literacy, CRLA’s LGBT Program Community Worker conducted the survey orally at a private, in-person meeting. Survey respondents were given a \$50 gift card for their participation. The survey generally took about an hour to complete. Interviewing and technical support was also provided by Ph.D. student Elisa Ocegüera.

II. Demographics

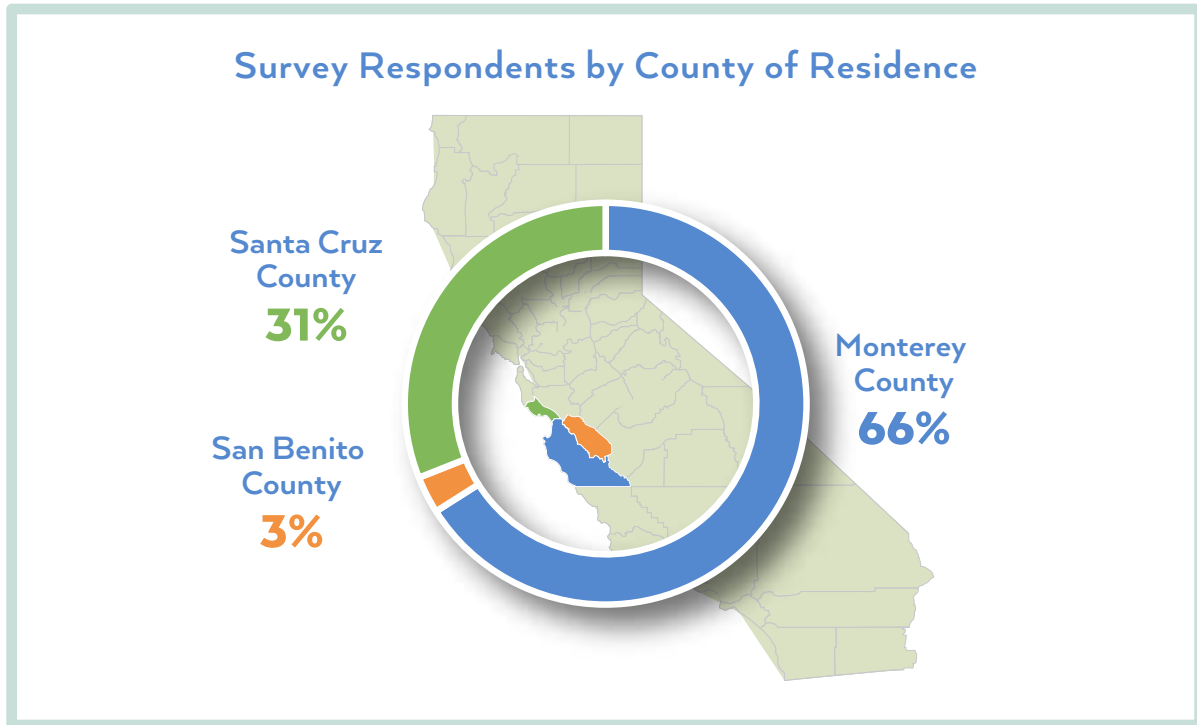
Sixty-seven (67) individuals who identified as transgender or gender nonbinary participated in the study. The median reported age of survey participants was 29 years, and ages of participants ranged from 18 to 68 years. The surveyed population skewed towards young adults under age 30. However, middle-aged adults and seniors were represented in the survey as well.

This study’s methodology does not allow for a determination of why there is a higher prevalence of young transgender and nonbinary adults in the survey population. The results could reflect that: comparatively more young people self-identify as transgender or nonbinary; transgender

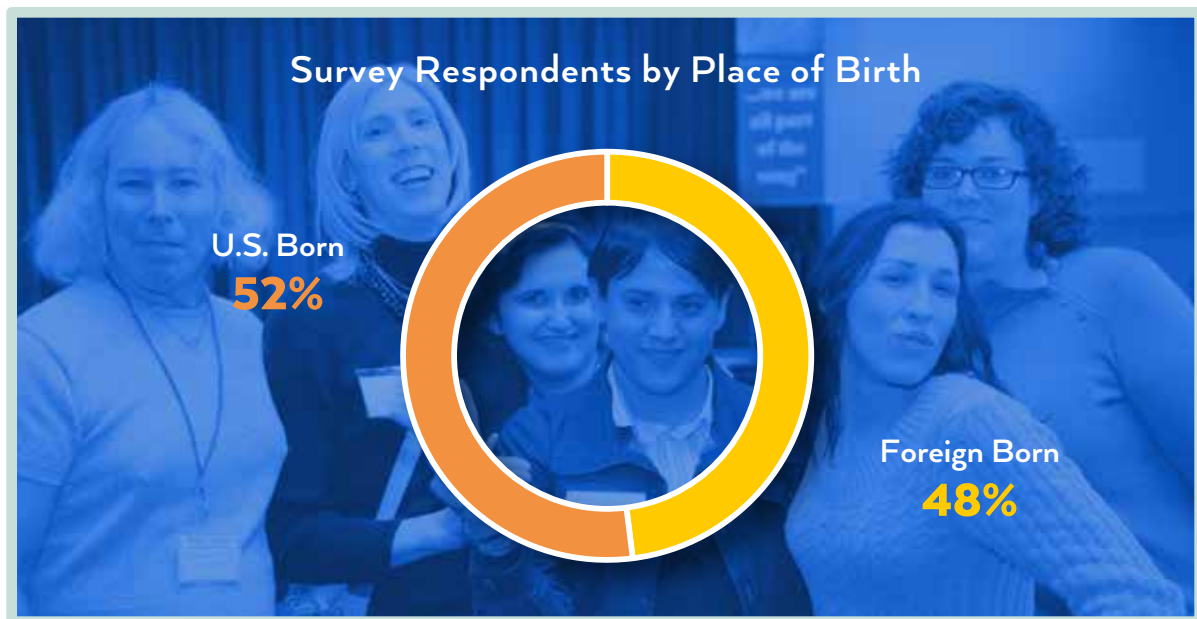


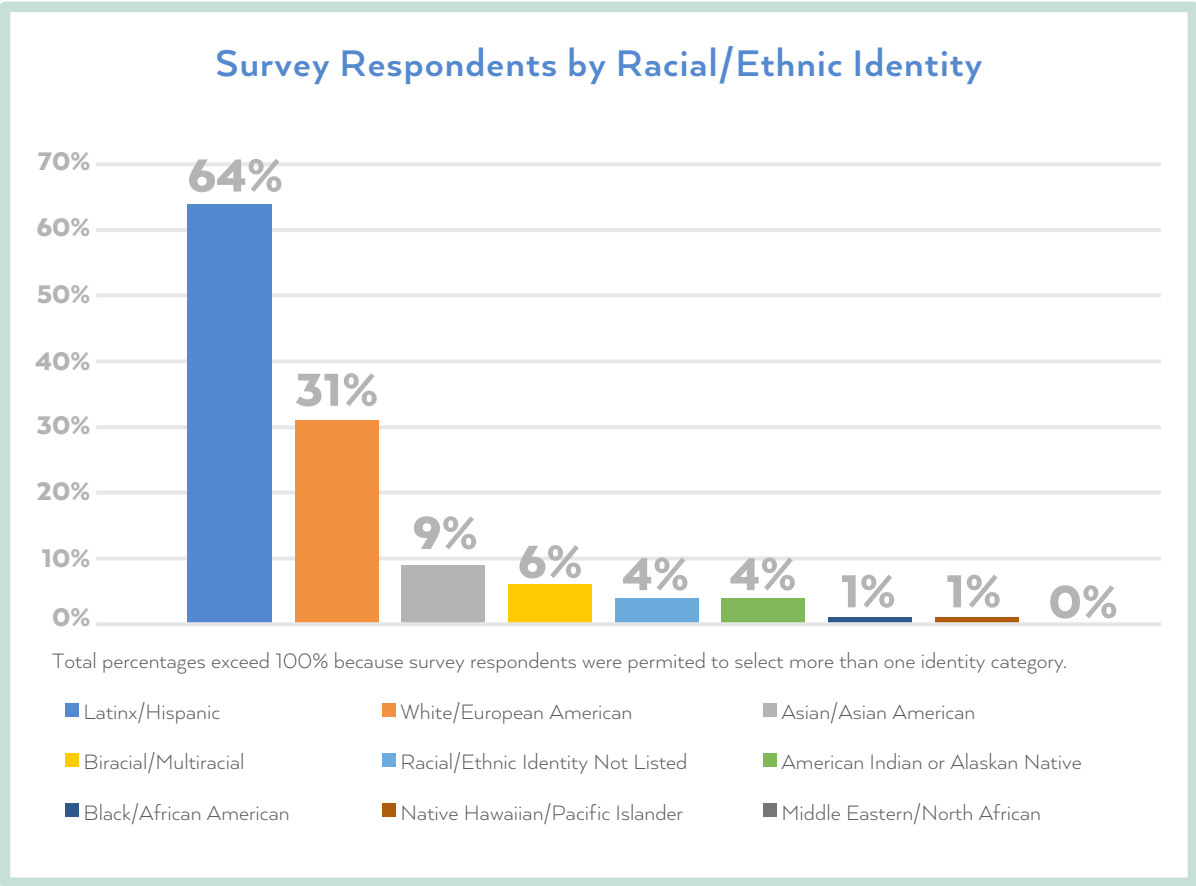
individuals—especially transgender people of color—may have a shorter life expectancy, as stated in some media reports; survey outreach strategies did not effectively reach older transgender and nonbinary individuals; or a combination of factors impacted survey participation.

The majority of survey respondents (66 percent) were from Monterey County, and just under a third were from Santa Cruz County. Relatively few were San Benito County residents (3 percent).



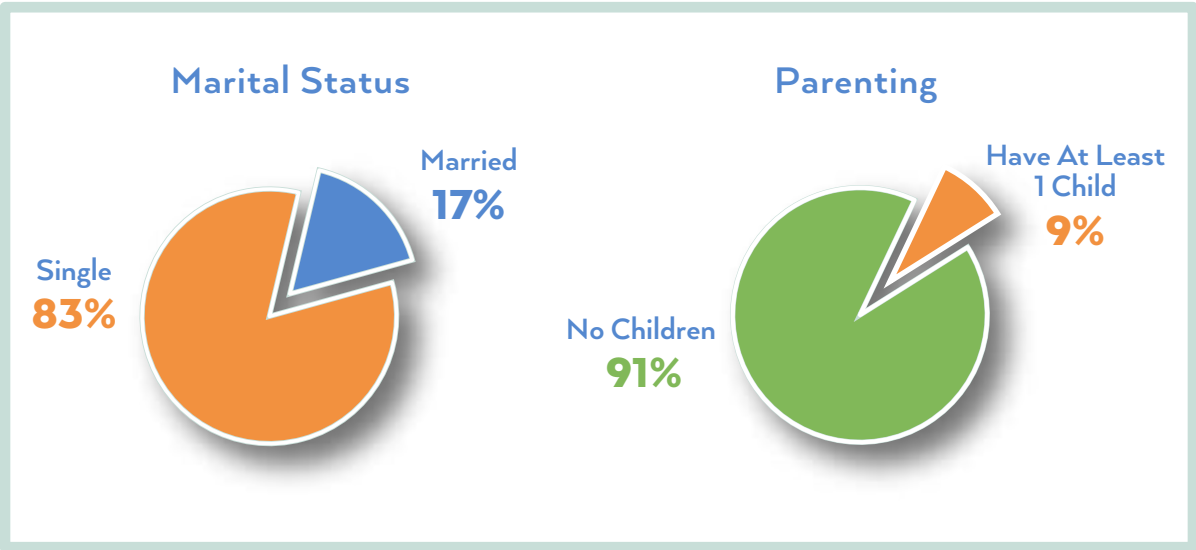
Forty-eight percent of the survey respondents were born outside of the United States.





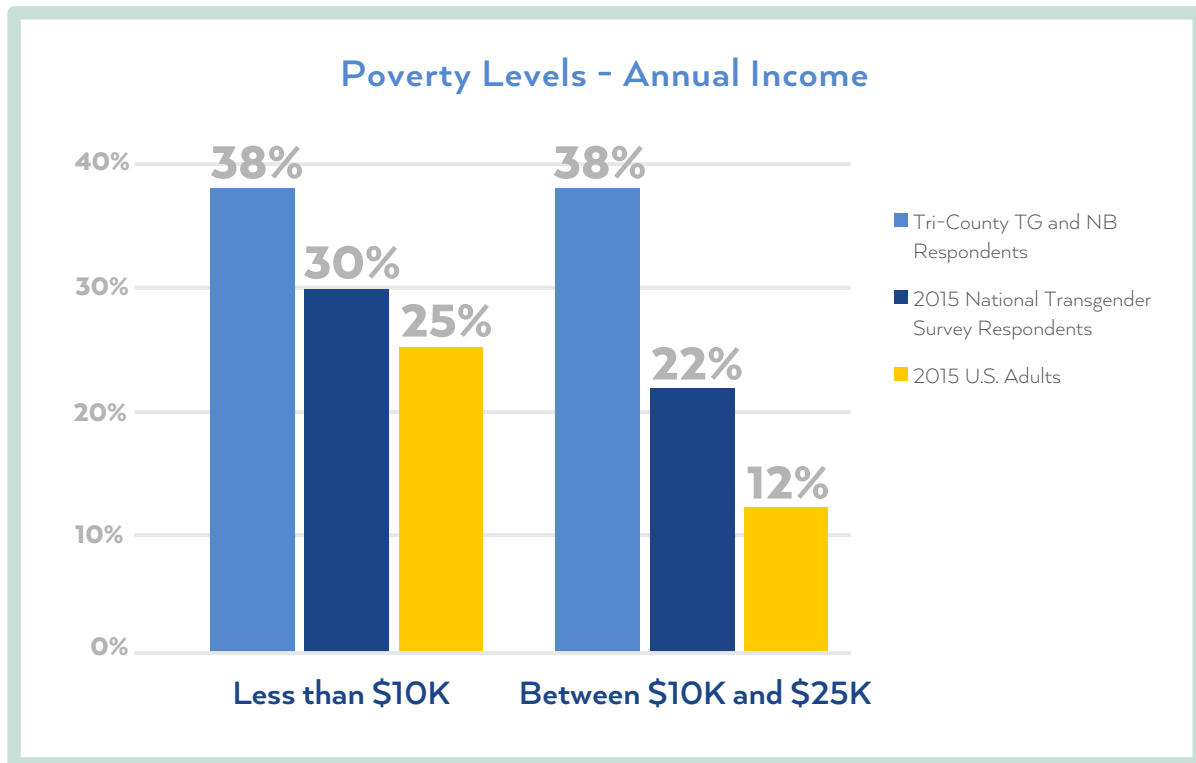
Sixty-four percent identified as Latinx or Hispanic, and 31 percent identified as White. Asian-American, African-American, Native American, and multiracial and biracial individuals were also present in the survey pool, though in lower numbers. No survey respondents identified as Middle Eastern or North African.

Eighteen (18) percent of survey respondents reported that they were currently married. No survey respondents reported having been divorced or widowed. Nine (9) percent of survey respondents had at least one child.



IV. Economic Status (Income)

Survey results indicated deep, pervasive poverty impacting transgender communities in the tri-county region. Seventy-six (76) percent reported earning \$25,000 or less per year. This trend in annual income compares poorly with transgender individuals and U.S. adults nationally. The national data below are drawn from the 2015 U.S. Transgender Survey.¹



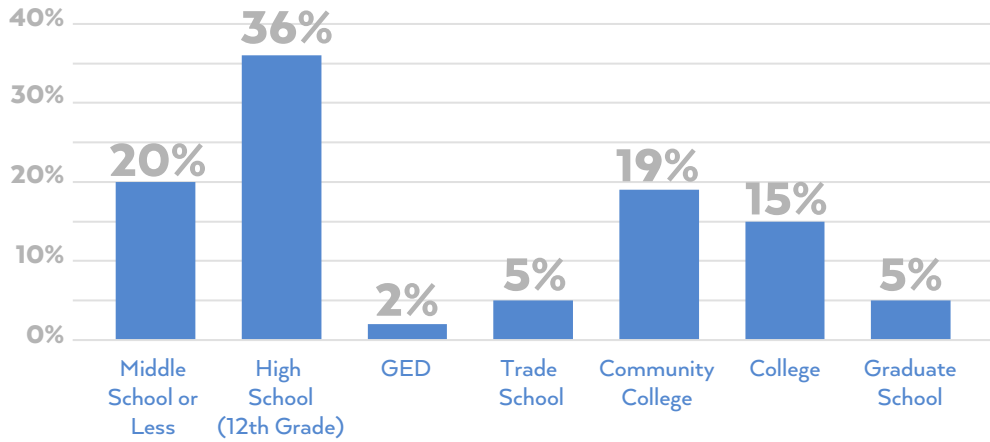
V. Education

The majority (56 percent) of respondents reported a high school diploma or less as their highest level of educational attainment. Nationally, 13 percent of respondents in the 2015 U.S. Transgender Survey reported that their highest level of education was a high school diploma, GED, or they did not complete high school.² In the tri-county survey, among those respondents who had pursued post-secondary education, 44 percent had completed a community college degree, and 40 percent had completed an undergraduate college degree.

1 James, S. E., Herman, J. L., Rankin, S., Keisling, M., Mottet, L., & Anafi, M. (2016). The Report of the 2015 U.S. Transgender Survey. Washington, DC: National Center for Transgender Equality. Hereinafter referred to as the "2015 U.S. Transgender Survey."

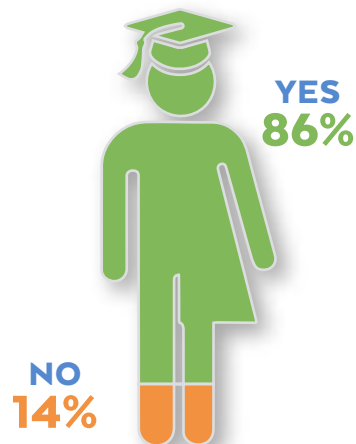
2 2015 U.S. Transgender Survey, p. 56.

Tri-County Survey Respondents



Thirty-four (34) percent of respondents reported being disciplined at school for fighting back against bullies. Twelve (12) percent reported having been suspended, while seven (7) percent reported having been expelled. Fifteen (15) percent left at least one school due to significant mistreatment. A large majority of respondents said that they would like to continue their education.

If You Had the Opportunity and Support, Would You Like to Continue Your Education?





IN THEIR OWN WORDS

Why you would like to continue your education and what would your goals be?

“I love learning new things. My goal is to become a chef or a Pastry chef”

“I want to be a physician and pursue higher education.”

“To be a better person”

“Because I believe you can't ever stop Learning. I would love to learn more about botany and create a skincare line.”

“I currently work for cosmetics, because they are very inclusive, due to me being independent and raising my younger brother due to my mother's and grandmothers death, I have to work full time.”

“I would like to get teaching credentials but due to the lack of income I will postpone it.”

“The reason is that I would like to be better prepared and have a better future in my life.”

“To leave where I am at in the streets.”

“learn more to be able to read and write.”

“To have a better job”

“To learn more to help others like myself.”

“My objective would be to help my family economically.”

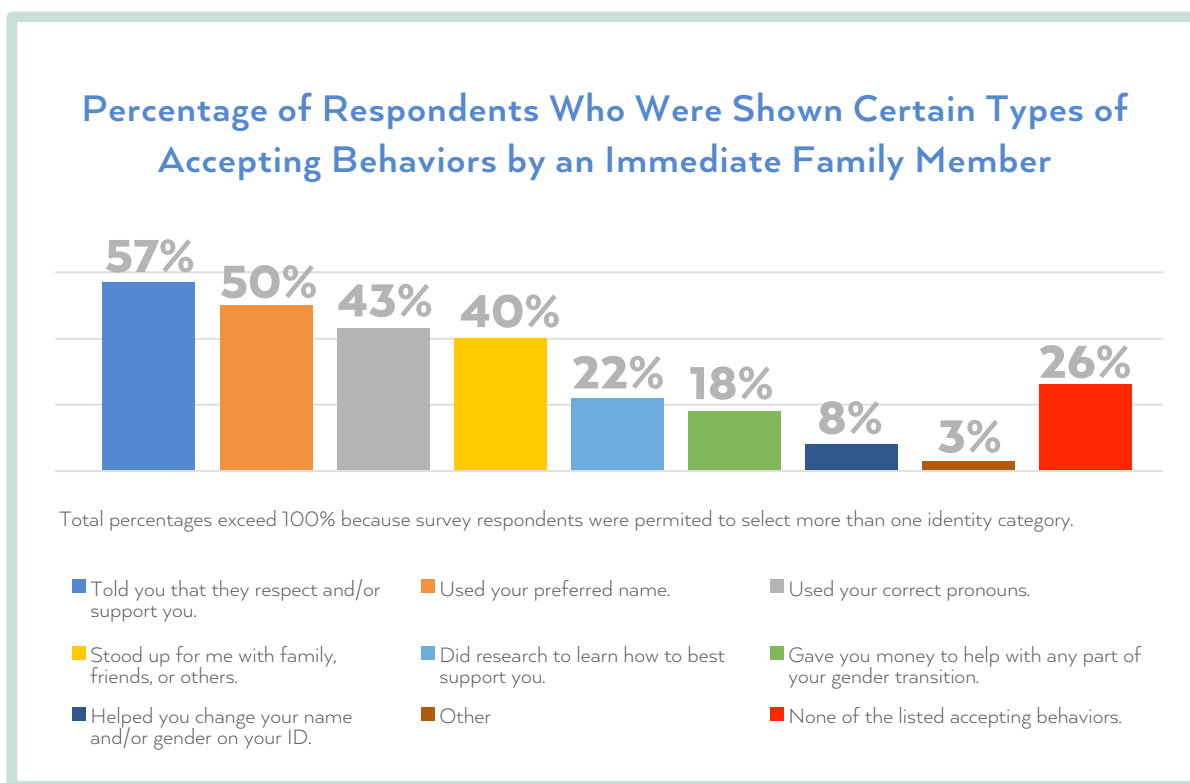
“To continue making my business bigger.”

“Better employment, better pay.”

VI. Family Acceptance and Rejection

Family acceptance and rejection have important implications for life outcomes for transgender individuals. The 2015 U.S. Transgender Survey revealed that those who said that their immediate families were supportive were less likely to report a variety of negative experiences related to economic instability and health—including homelessness, attempted suicide, and serious psychological distress.³

Locally, tri-county survey respondents were asked if their immediate family members engaged in certain accepting or rejecting behaviors. Just over a majority reported that they had experienced some form of family acceptance. Fifty-seven percent had an immediate family member who had told them that they respected and/or supported them. Slightly less than half (48 percent) had an immediate family member who used their preferred name and affirmed their true gender identity. Less than half (43 percent) had an immediate family member who used pronouns that matched their gender identity. Forty (40) percent had an immediate family member who had stood up for them with family, friends, or others. According to these data, while most had an immediate family member who said that they support them, less than half had an immediate relative who had showed their support by using preferred names and pronouns. Twenty-six (26) percent reported that they had not been shown any of the listed accepting behaviors by an immediate family member.

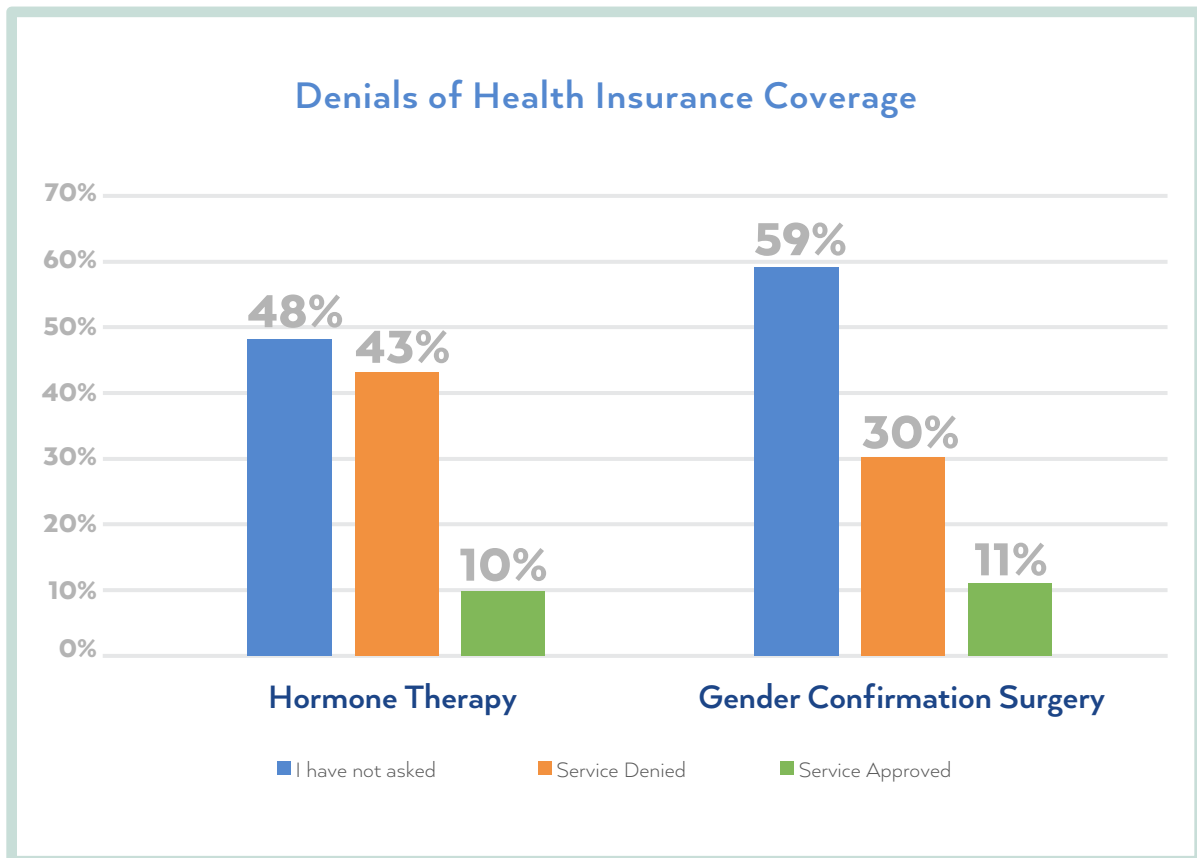


3 2015 U.S. Transgender Survey, p. 8.

Respondents were asked if they had experienced certain types of family rejection—such as violence, conversion therapy, being forced to leave home, silent treatment, or being denied clothing that affirmed their true gender identity. Forty-two (42) percent reported that they had not been subjected to these types of rejecting behaviors. Forty (40) percent reported that an immediate family member did not allow them to wear clothing that matched their gender. Thirty-seven (37) percent had an immediate family member who stopped speaking to them for a long time or ended their relationship. Twenty-two (22) percent experienced violence from an immediate family member. Twenty-one (21) percent reported being kicked out of their home because they were transgender. Thirty-six (36) percent reported running away from home because they were transgender.

VII. Healthcare

This survey has revealed a need for transgender-related healthcare. Gaps in access to care have also been revealed. Sixty-seven (67) percent of respondents reported traveling between 25 and 100 miles for transition-related health services. Fifty-eight (58) percent of respondents reported receiving hormone treatment. Eleven (11) percent reported accessing hormones strictly from non-medical sources—such as friends, online, and other unlicensed sources. Approximately one in ten reported having a health insurance plan that covered their hormone therapy or gender-confirmation surgery. However, approximately half reported that they had not asked about whether their health plan covered transition-related treatment.



VIII. Immigration Experience

As noted earlier, 48 percent of respondents reported that they were born outside of the United States. Thirty-four (34) percent of transgender individuals born outside of the U.S. reported having applied for asylum. Eighty-one (81) percent of these individuals received legal status as a result of their application—two-thirds received asylum, and one-third received withholding of removal. Approximately 12 percent of foreign-born respondents had spent time in immigration detention.



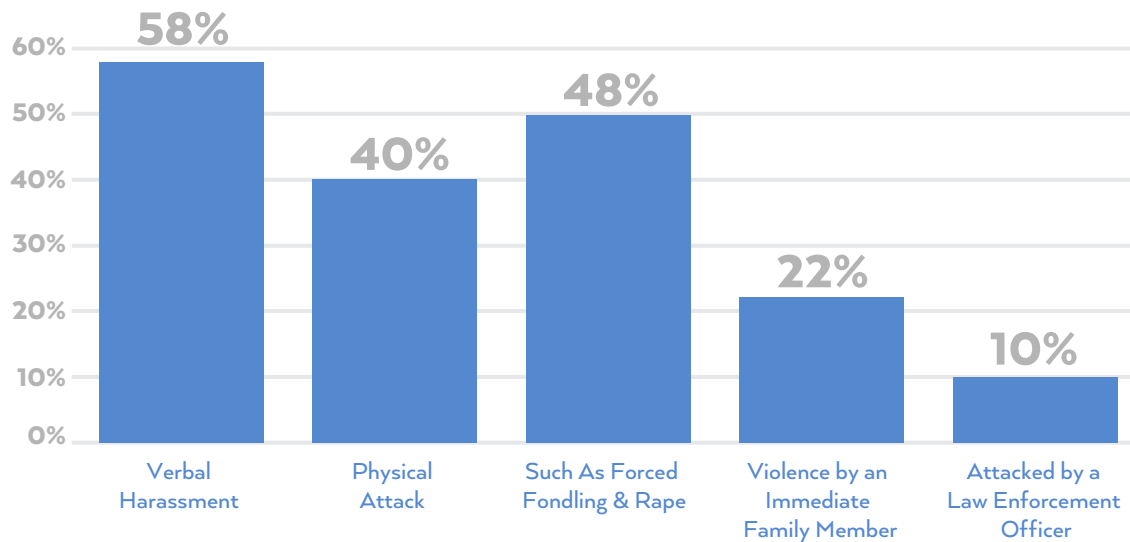
Sixty-six (66) percent of foreign-born transgender individuals reported that they had not applied for asylum. Of the foreign-born transgender individuals who had not applied for asylum, only one indicated that they had access to another type of legal immigration status. Ostensibly, many local transgender community members who are foreign-born and have never applied for asylum remain undocumented.

IX. Personal Safety, Police and Transgender Community Relations

Transgender communities on the Central Coast face a range of safety concerns—including abuse, violence, and housing insecurity.

Harassment in and around bathrooms is also prevalent for local transgender individuals. Fifty-one (51) percent reported that in the past year they had been told at least once that they were using the wrong bathroom. Thirty-one (31) percent reported having been denied entry or access to a bathroom in the past year. Twenty (20) percent reported that in the past year a supervisor or coworker told them that they could not use the bathroom that conformed with their gender identity.

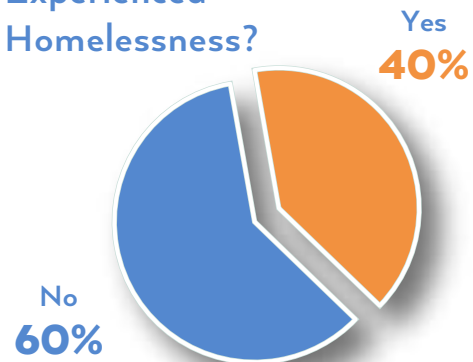
Transgender Survey Respondents Who Had Experienced Mistreatment Due to Trans Status



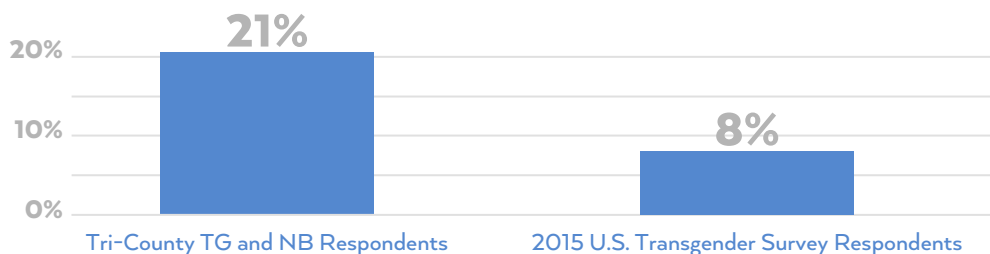
Forty (40) percent of respondents reported having experienced homelessness. The survey defined homelessness to include experiences such as staying in a shelter, living on the street, living in a car, or staying temporarily with family or friends because of the inability to afford housing.

As noted earlier, 21 percent of respondents reported that an immediate family member had kicked them out of their home because of their transgender status. This rate is substantially higher than the national rate of eight (8) percent.⁴

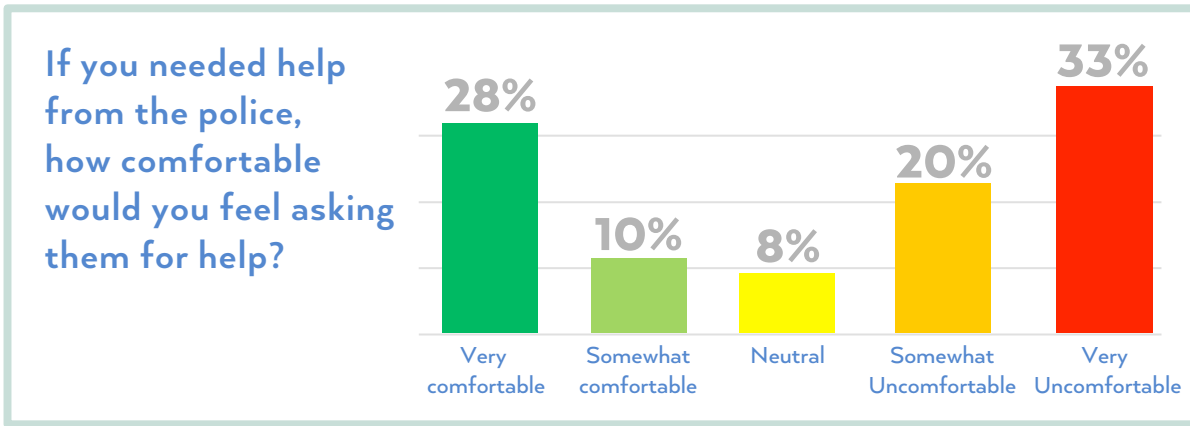
Have You Ever Experienced Homelessness?



Percentage of Survey Respondents Who Reported Being Kicked Out of Home by an Immediate Family Member



4 2015 U.S. Transgender Survey, p. 4.



While transgender communities in the region face serious vulnerabilities, their trust in law enforcement is limited. The majority of respondents (53 percent) reported that they would feel very or somewhat uncomfortable contacting the police if they needed help.

Forty-seven (47) percent reported that law enforcement officers had misgendered them by using incorrect pronouns or salutations. Twenty-six (26) percent reported that law enforcement officers had asked about their gender transition, such as hormone treatment or surgical status. Twenty-five (25) percent reported being wrongly accused by law enforcement officers of engaging in sex work. Seventy-three (73) percent reported that they had never engaged in sex or sexual activity for money or worked in the sex industry—which includes erotic dancing, webcam work, and pornographic films.

X. Community Building

The vast majority of respondents reported socializing with other transgender individuals. According to the survey results, the most popular form of socializing within the local transgender community involves in-person socializing (76 percent). Fifty-three (53) percent reported socializing with other transgender people online and on social-media platforms. Thirty-eight (38) percent reported socializing with transgender people through support groups. Thirty-two (32) percent reported socializing with other transgender people through political activism.

XI. Conclusion and Areas for Further Research

The Central Coast Transgender Needs Assessment Report is the first study in recent memory to investigate the experiences of local transgender communities. This report reveals areas of acute vulnerability for transgender people in the tri-county region—most notably pervasive and deep poverty, low educational attainment, and gaps in access to transition-related care. Data regarding economic security and education for local transgender communities compare poorly with trends for the national transgender population. The results also suggest that most families seek to support their transgender loved ones, but do not understand the importance of gender-affirming language and other forms of accepting behavior. Finally, these data clearly show that many local transgender individuals seek community and opportunities to improve their education and economic wellbeing. Our understanding of the experiences of transgender people in this region could be improved by further research in the areas of workplace conditions; access to healthcare including preventive care and mental-health services; and types of community-building and awareness-raising activities supported by local transgender individuals.



Central Coast Transgender Needs Assessment

