



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

# Injustice at Every Turn

A Report of the National  
Transgender Discrimination Survey

*Lead authors in alphabetical order:*

Jaime M. Grant, Ph.D.

Lisa A. Mottet, J.D.

Justin Tanis, D.Min.

with Jack Harrison

Jody L. Herman, Ph.D.

and Mara Keisling



National Gay and Lesbian  
**Task Force**



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This study brings to light what is both patently obvious and far too often dismissed from the human rights agenda. Transgender and gender non-conforming people face injustice at every turn: in childhood homes, in school systems that promise to shelter and educate, in harsh and exclusionary workplaces, at the grocery store, the hotel front desk, in doctors' offices and emergency rooms, before judges and at the hands of landlords, police officers, health care workers and other service providers.

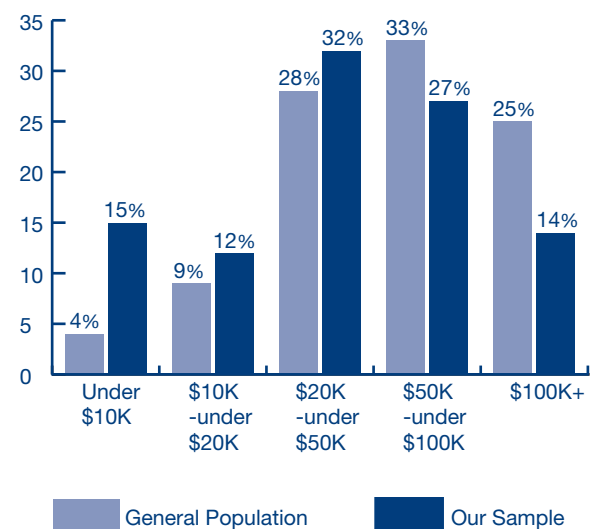
The National Gay and Lesbian Task Force and the National Center for Transgender Equality are grateful to each of the 6,450 transgender and gender non-conforming study participants who took the time and energy to answer questions about the depth and breadth of injustice in their lives. A diverse set of people, from all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, Guam and the U.S. Virgin Islands, completed online or paper surveys. This tremendous gift has created the first 360-degree picture of discrimination against transgender and gender non-conforming people in the U.S. and provides critical data points for policymakers, community activists and legal advocates to confront the appalling realities documented here and press the case for equity and justice.

## KEY FINDINGS

Hundreds of dramatic findings on the impact of anti-transgender bias are presented in this report. In many cases, a series of bias-related events lead to insurmountable challenges and devastating outcomes for study participants. Several meta-findings are worth noting from the outset:

- Discrimination was pervasive throughout the entire sample, yet **the combination of anti-transgender bias and persistent, structural racism was especially devastating**. People of color in general fare worse than white participants across the board, with African American transgender respondents faring far worse than all others in most areas examined.
- Respondents **lived in extreme poverty**. Our sample was nearly four times more likely to have a household income of less than \$10,000/year compared to the general population.<sup>i</sup>
- A staggering **41% of respondents reported attempting suicide** compared to 1.6% of the general population,<sup>ii</sup> with rates rising for those who lost a job due to bias (55%), were harassed/bullied in school (51%), had low household income, or were the victim of physical assault (61%) or sexual assault (64%).

Household Income of Respondents<sup>iii</sup>



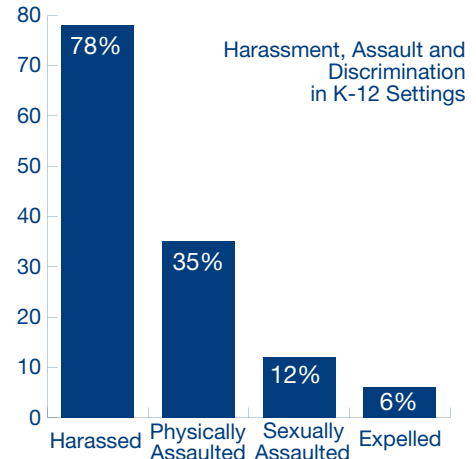
Detailed recommendations are available in the full report on our websites at [thetaskforce.org](http://thetaskforce.org) and [transequality.org](http://transequality.org).

## HARASSMENT AND DISCRIMINATION IN EDUCATION

- Those who expressed a transgender identity or gender non-conformity while in grades K-12 reported **alarming rates of harassment (78%), physical assault (35%) and sexual violence (12%)**; harassment was so severe that it led **almost one-sixth (15%) to leave a school** in K-12 settings or in higher education.
- Respondents who have been **harassed and abused by teachers** in K-12 settings showed dramatically worse health and other outcomes than those who did not experience such abuse. Peer harassment and abuse also had highly damaging effects.

Respondents Income by Mistreatment in School<sup>iv</sup>

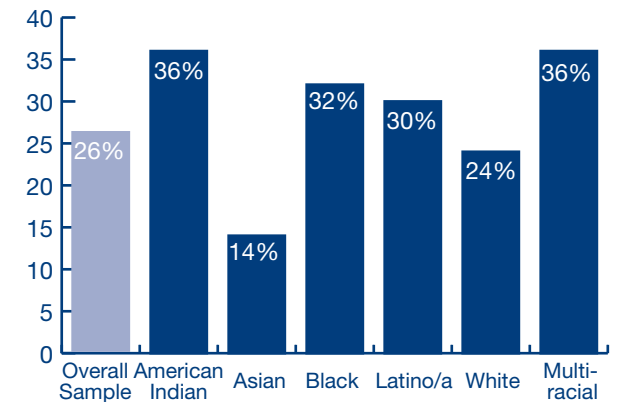
	General Population	No school mistreatment	Mistreated in school
Under \$10K	4%	12%	21%
\$10K - under \$20K	9%	11%	15%
\$20K - under \$50K	28%	31%	33%
\$50k - under \$100k	33%	30%	21%
\$100k+	25%	16%	9%



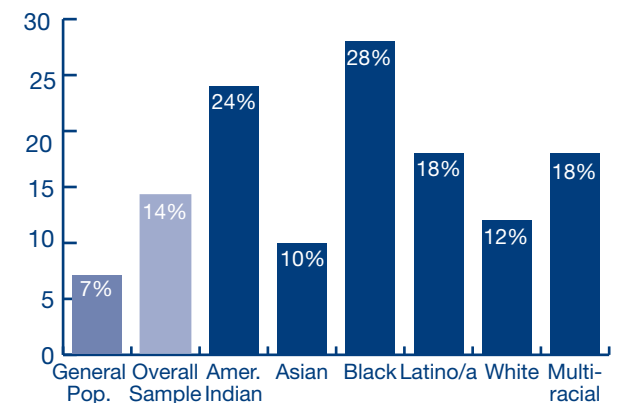
## EMPLOYMENT DISCRIMINATION AND ECONOMIC INSECURITY

- Double the rate of unemployment:** Survey respondents experienced unemployment at twice the rate of the general population at the time of the survey,<sup>v</sup> with rates for people of color up to four times the national unemployment rate.
- Widespread mistreatment at work: **Ninety percent (90%) of those surveyed reported experiencing harassment, mistreatment or discrimination** on the job or took actions like hiding who they are to avoid it.
- Forty-seven percent (47%) said they had experienced an adverse job outcome, such as **being fired, not hired or denied a promotion** because of being transgender or gender non-conforming.
- Over one-quarter (26%) reported that they had lost a job** due to being transgender or gender non-conforming and 50% were harassed.
- Large majorities attempted to avoid discrimination by **hiding their gender or gender transition (71%)** or delaying their gender transition (57%).
- The **vast majority (78%)** of those who transitioned from one gender to the other reported that they **felt more comfortable at work and their job performance improved**, despite high levels of mistreatment.
- Overall, **16% said they had been compelled to work in the underground economy** for income (such as doing sex work or selling drugs).
- Respondents who were currently unemployed experienced debilitating negative outcomes**, including nearly double the rate of working in the underground economy (such as doing sex work or selling drugs), twice the homelessness, 85% more incarceration, and more negative health outcomes, such as more than double the HIV infection rate and nearly double the rate of current drinking or drug misuse to cope with mistreatment, compared to those who were employed.
- Respondents who had lost a job due to bias also experienced ruinous consequences such as four times the rate of homelessness**, 70% more current drinking or misuse of drugs to cope with mistreatment, 85% more incarceration, more than double the rate working in the underground economy, and more than double the HIV infection rate, compared to those who did not lose a job due to bias.

Job Loss Due to Bias By Race



Unemployment Rate By Race

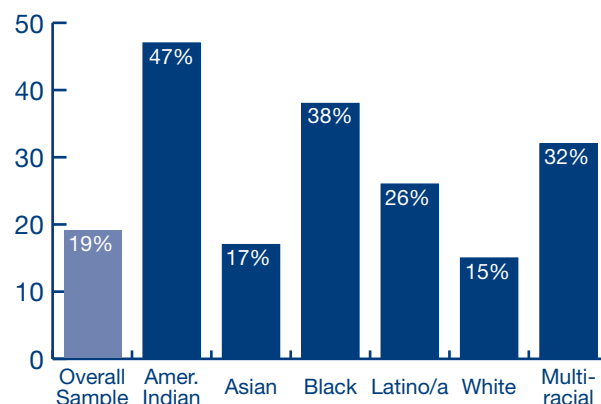




## HOUSING DISCRIMINATION AND HOMELESSNESS

- Respondents reported various forms of direct housing discrimination — **19% reported having been refused a home or apartment** and 11% reported being evicted because of their gender identity/expression.
- **One-fifth (19%) reported experiencing homelessness** at some point in their lives because they were transgender or gender non-conforming; **the majority of those trying to access a homeless shelter were harassed by shelter staff or residents (55%)**, 29% were turned away altogether, and 22% were sexually assaulted by residents or staff.
- **Almost 2% of respondents were currently homeless**, which is almost twice the rate of the general population (1%).<sup>vi</sup>
- Respondents reported **less than half the national rate of home ownership**: 32% reported owning their home compared to 67% of the general population.<sup>vii</sup>
- **Respondents who have experienced homelessness were highly vulnerable** to mistreatment in public settings, police abuse and negative health outcomes.

“I was denied a home/apartment” by Race



## DISCRIMINATION IN PUBLIC ACCOMMODATIONS

- **Fifty-three percent (53%) of respondents reported being verbally harassed or disrespected in a place of public accommodation**, including hotels, restaurants, buses, airports and government agencies.
- Respondents experienced widespread abuse in the public sector, and were often abused at the hands of “helping” professionals and government officials. **One fifth (22%) were denied equal treatment by a government agency or official**; 29% reported police harassment or disrespect; and 12% had been denied equal treatment or harassed by judges or court officials.

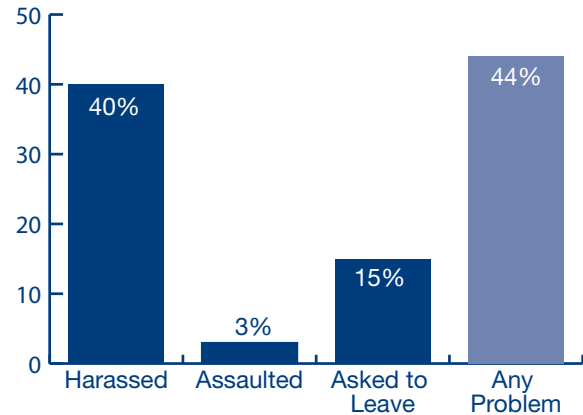
Experiences of Discrimination and Violence in Public Accommodations

Location	Denied Equal Treatment	Harassed or Disrespected	Physically Assaulted
Retail Store	32%	37%	3%
Police Officer	20%	29%	6%
Doctor's Office or Hospital	24%	25%	2%
Hotel or Restaurant	19%	25%	2%
Government Agency/Official	22%	22%	1%
Bus, Train, or Taxi	9%	22%	4%
Emergency Room	13%	16%	1%
Airplane or Airport Staff/TSA	11%	17%	1%
Judge or Court Official	12%	12%	1%
Mental Health Clinic	11%	12%	1%
Legal Services Clinic	8%	6%	1%
Ambulance or EMT	5%	7%	1%
Domestic Violence Shelter/Program	6%	4%	1%
Rape Crisis Center	5%	4%	1%
Drug Treatment Program	3%	4%	1%

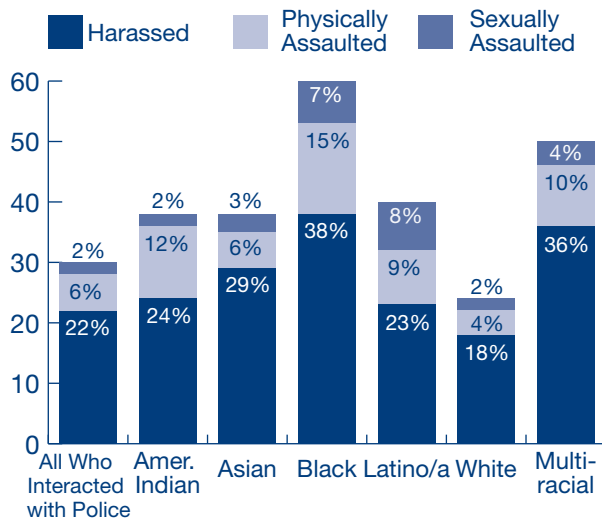
## BARRIERS TO RECEIVING UPDATED ID DOCUMENTS

- Of those who have transitioned gender, **only one-fifth (21%) have been able to update *all* of their IDs and records with their new gender.** One-third (33%) of those who had transitioned had updated *none* of their IDs/records.
- Only 59% reported updating the gender on their driver's license/state ID, meaning **41% live without ID that matches their gender identity.**
- **Forty percent (40%) of those who presented ID** (when it was required in the ordinary course of life) that did not match their gender identity/expression **reported being harassed, 3% reported being attacked or assaulted, and 15% reported being asked to leave.**

Harassment and Violence When Presenting Incongruent Identity Documents



Harassment and Assault by Police Due to Bias by Race



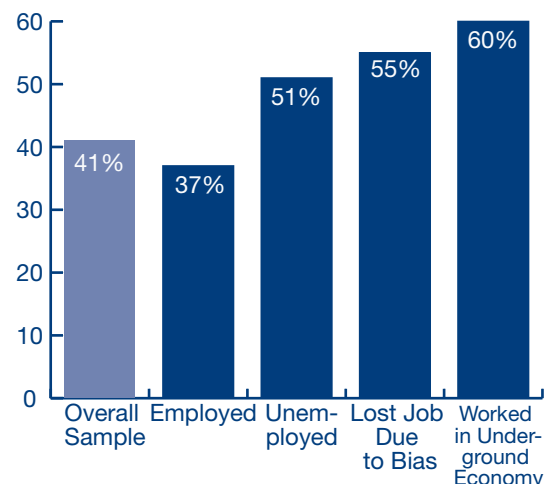
## ABUSE BY POLICE AND IN PRISON

- **One-fifth (22%) of respondents** who have interacted with police **reported harassment by police**, with much higher rates reported by people of color.
- Almost half of the respondents (46%) reported being uncomfortable seeking police assistance.
- **Physical and sexual assault in jail/prison is a serious problem:** 16% of respondents who had been to jail or prison reported being physically assaulted and 15% reported being sexually assaulted.

## DISCRIMINATION IN HEALTH CARE AND POOR HEALTH OUTCOMES

- **Health outcomes for all categories of respondents show the appalling effects of social and economic marginalization**, including much higher rates of HIV infection, smoking, drug and alcohol use and suicide attempts than the general population.
- **Refusal of care:** 19% of our sample reported being refused medical care due to their transgender or gender non-conforming status, with even higher numbers among people of color in the survey.
- **Uninformed doctors:** 50% of the sample reported having to teach their medical providers about transgender care.
- **High HIV rates:** Respondents reported **over four times the national average of HIV infection, with rates higher among transgender people of color.**<sup>viii</sup>
- **Postponed care:** Survey participants reported that when they were sick or injured, **many postponed medical care due to discrimination (28%) or inability to afford it (48%).**

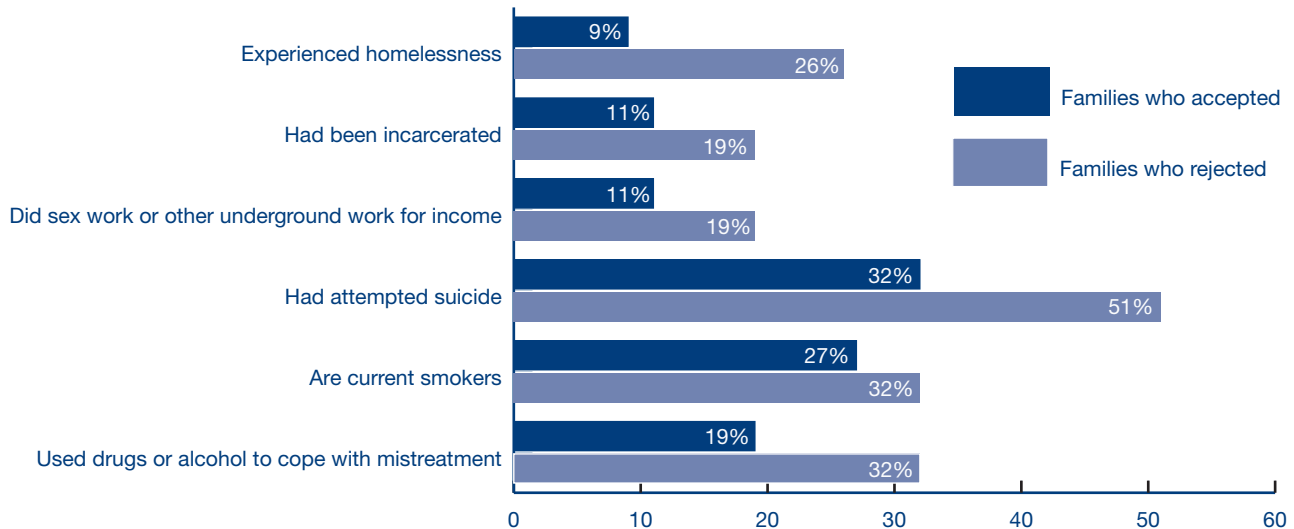
Suicide Attempt by Employment



## FAMILY ACCEPTANCE OF GREAT IMPORTANCE

- **Forty-three percent (43%) maintained most of their family bonds**, while 57% experienced significant family rejection.
- In the face of extensive institutional discrimination, **family acceptance had a protective affect against many threats to well-being** including health risks such as HIV infection and suicide. Families were more likely to remain together and provide support for transgender and gender non-conforming family members than stereotypes suggest.

Impact of Family Acceptance

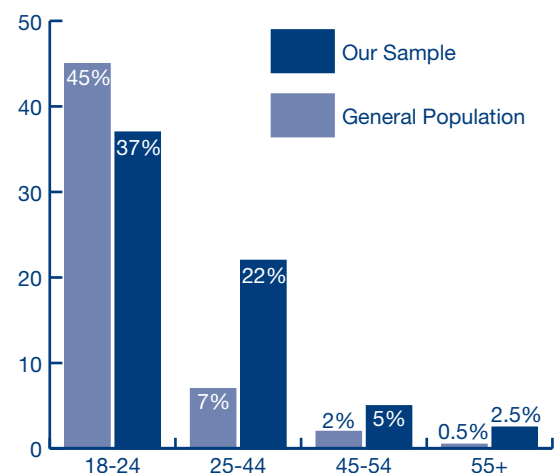


## RESILIENCE

Despite all of the harassment, mistreatment, discrimination and violence faced by respondents, study participants also demonstrated determination, resourcefulness and perseverance:

- Although the survey identified major structural barriers to obtaining health care, 76% of transgender respondents have been able to receive hormone therapy, indicating a determination to endure the abuse or search out sensitive medical providers.
- Despite high levels of harassment, bullying and violence in school, many respondents were able to obtain an education by returning to school. Although fewer 18 to 24-year-olds were currently in school compared to the general population, respondents returned to school in large numbers at later ages, with 22% of those aged 25-44 currently in school (compared to 7% of the general population).<sup>x</sup>
- Over three-fourths (78%) reported feeling more comfortable at work and their performance improving after transitioning, despite reporting nearly the same rates of harassment at work as the overall sample.
- Of the 26% who reported losing a job due to bias, 58% reported being currently employed and of the 19% who reported facing housing discrimination in the form of a denial of a home/apartment, 94% reported being currently housed.

Status as a Student by Age<sup>ix</sup>



## CUMULATIVE DISCRIMINATION

Sixty-three percent (63%) of our participants had experienced a serious act of discrimination — events that would have a major impact on a person's quality of life and ability to sustain themselves financially or emotionally. These events included the following:

- Lost job due to bias
- Eviction due to bias
- School bullying/harassment so severe the respondent had to drop out
- Teacher bullying
- Physical assault due to bias
- Sexual assault due to bias
- Homelessness because of gender identity/expression
- Lost relationship with partner or children due to gender identity/expression
- Denial of medical service due to bias
- Incarceration due to gender identity/expression

Almost a quarter (23%) of our respondents experienced a catastrophic level of discrimination — having been impacted by at least three of the above major life-disrupting events due to bias. These compounding acts of discrimination — due to the prejudice of others or lack of protective laws — exponentially increase the difficulty of bouncing back and establishing a stable economic and home life.

## CONCLUSION

It is part of social and legal convention in the United States to discriminate against, ridicule, and abuse transgender and gender non-conforming people within foundational institutions such as the family, schools, the workplace and health care settings, every day. Instead of recognizing that the moral failure lies in society's unwillingness to embrace different gender identities and expressions, society blames transgender and gender non-conforming people for bringing the discrimination and violence on themselves.

Nearly every system and institution in the United States, both large and small, from local to national, is implicated by this data. Medical providers and health systems, government agencies, families, businesses and employers, schools and colleges, police departments, jail and prison systems—each of these systems and institutions is failing daily in its obligation to serve transgender and gender non-conforming people, instead subjecting them to mistreatment ranging from commonplace disrespect to outright violence, abuse and the denial of human dignity. The consequences of these widespread injustices are human and real, ranging from unemployment and homelessness to illness and death.

This report is a call to action for all of us, especially for those who pass laws and set policies and practices, whose action or continued inaction will make a significant difference between the current climate of discrimination and violence and a world of freedom and equality. And everyone else, from those who drive buses or teach our children to those who sit on the judicial bench or write prescriptions, must also take up the call for human rights for transgender and gender non-conforming people, and confront this pattern of abuse and injustice.

We must accept nothing less than a complete elimination of this pervasive inhumanity; we must work continuously and strenuously together for justice.

*“My mother disowned me. I was fired from my job after 18 years of loyal employment. I was forced onto public assistance to survive. But still I have pressed forward, started a new career, and rebuilt my immediate family. You are defined not by falling, but how well you rise after falling. I’m a licensed practical nurse now and am studying to become an RN. I have walked these streets and been harassed nearly every day, but I will not change. I am back out there the next day with my head up.”*

—Survey Respondent

Our organizations are grateful to the Network for LGBT Health Equity, formerly the Network for LGBT Tobacco Control, for providing \$3,000 in funding for health and outreach workers to reach underserved racial and ethnic populations in this endeavor. Both organizations would also like to thank their foundation funders for their support in making this work possible: Arcus Foundation, David Bohnett Foundation, Evelyn and Walter Haas, Jr. Fund, Ford Foundation, Gill Foundation, Kicking Assets Fund of the Tides Foundation, Open Society Institute and the Wells Fargo Foundation, as well as an Anonymous donor.

## INJUSTICE AT EVERY TURN: A REPORT OF THE NATIONAL TRANSGENDER DISCRIMINATION SURVEY, EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Grant, Jaime M., Lisa A. Mottet, Justin Tanis, Jack Harrison, Jody L. Herman, and Mara Keisling.

Washington: National Center for Transgender Equality and National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, 2011.

- <sup>i</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, “Current Population Survey,” Annual Social and Economic Supplement (Washington, DC: GPO, 2008).
- <sup>ii</sup> “U.S.A. Suicide: 2002 Official Final Data,” prepared for the American Association of Suicidology by John L. McIntosh, Ph.D. Official data source: Kochanek, K.D., Murphy, S.L., Anderson, R.N., & Scott, C. (2004). Deaths: Final data for 2002. National Vital Statistics Reports, 53 (5). Hyattsville, MD: National Center for Health Statistics DHHS Publication No. (PHS) 2005-1120. Population figures source: table I, p.108. of the National Center for Health Statistics (Kochanek et al., 2004), see [http://www.sprc.org/library/event\\_kit/2002datapgv1.pdf](http://www.sprc.org/library/event_kit/2002datapgv1.pdf).
- <sup>iii</sup> General population data is from U.S. Census Bureau, “Current Population Survey,” Annual Social and Economic Supplement (Washington, DC: GPO, 2008).
- <sup>iv</sup> See note iii. “Mistreatment” includes harassment and bullying, physical or sexual assault, discrimination, or expulsion from school at any level based on gender identity/expression.
- <sup>v</sup> Seven percent (7%) was the rounded weighted average unemployment rate for the general population during the six months the survey was in the field, based on which month questionnaires were completed. See seasonally unadjusted monthly unemployment rates for September 2008 through February 2009. U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, “The Employment Situation: September 2008,” (2008): [http://www.bls.gov/news.release/archives/empsit\\_10032008.htm](http://www.bls.gov/news.release/archives/empsit_10032008.htm).
- <sup>vi</sup> 1.7% were currently homeless in our sample compared to 1% in the general population. National Coalition for the Homeless, “How Many People Experience Homelessness?” (July 2009): [http://www.nationalhomeless.org/factsheets/How\\_Many.html](http://www.nationalhomeless.org/factsheets/How_Many.html).
- <sup>vii</sup> U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, “U.S. Housing Market Conditions, 2nd Quarter, 2009” (Washington, DC: GPO, 2009): [http://www.huduser.org/portal/periodicals/ushmc/summer09/nat\\_data.pdf](http://www.huduser.org/portal/periodicals/ushmc/summer09/nat_data.pdf).
- <sup>viii</sup> The overall sample reported an HIV infection rate of 2.6% compared to .6% in the general population. United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) and World Health Organization (WHO), “2007 AIDS Epidemic Update” (2007): [http://data.unaids.org/pub/EPISlides/2007/2007\\_epiupdate\\_en.pdf](http://data.unaids.org/pub/EPISlides/2007/2007_epiupdate_en.pdf). People of color in the sample reported substantially higher rates: 24.9% of African-Americans, 10.9% of Latino/as, 7.0% of American Indians, and 3.7% of Asian-Americans in the study reported being HIV positive.
- <sup>ix</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, “Current Population Survey: Enrollment Status of the Population 3 Years Old and Over, by Sex, Age, Race, Hispanic Origin, Foreign Born, and Foreign-Born” (Washington, DC: GPO, October 2008): Table 1. <http://www.census.gov/population/www/socdemo/school/cps2008.html>. The last category, over 55, was not rounded to its small size.
- <sup>x</sup> See note ix.

