

2015

U.S.

TRANSGENDER

SURVEY

Report on the Experiences
of American Indian &
Alaska Native Respondents



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Introduction

The 2015 U.S. Transgender Survey (USTS) is the largest survey examining the experiences of transgender people in the United States, with 27,715 respondents nationwide. The USTS was conducted by the National Center for Transgender Equality in the summer of 2015. The results provide a detailed look at the experiences of transgender people across a wide range of categories, such as education, employment, family life, health, housing, and interactions with the criminal justice system.

The Report of the 2015 U.S. Transgender Survey documented the experiences of USTS respondents, including differences based on demographic and other characteristics.¹ Among the most important findings was that many respondents were impacted by the compounding effects of multiple forms of discrimination, and transgender people of color who completed the survey experienced deeper and broader forms of

discrimination than white USTS respondents and people in the U.S. population overall.

This report focuses on the unique experiences of the 319 USTS respondents who identified as American Indian or Alaska Native,² highlighting disparities between the experiences of American Indian and Alaska Native transgender people, other USTS respondents, and the U.S. population.³ The findings show dramatic disparities across numerous areas of life, many of which may reflect the impact of colonialism and historical trauma that continue to affect American Indian and Alaska Native communities. While the findings in this report reflect a range of American Indian and Alaska Native transgender people in the United States, the survey likely did not fully capture the experiences of those who were most affected by factors that may limit access to online surveys, such as factors related to education, economic and housing stability, and disabilities. All findings in this report are presented as weighted percentages.⁴

Key Findings

- **23% of American Indian and Alaska Native respondents were unemployed**, nearly five times the rate in the U.S. population (5%).
- **41% of American Indian and Alaska Native respondents were living in poverty**, more than three times the rate in the U.S. population (12%).
- **57% of American Indian and Alaska Native respondents have experienced homelessness at some point in their lives**, nearly twice the rate in the USTS sample overall (30%). **21% experienced homelessness in the past year because of being transgender**, compared to 12% in the USTS sample.
- **21% of American Indian and Alaska Native respondents have lost a job because of being transgender**, compared to 13% in the USTS sample overall.
- **65% of American Indian and Alaska Native respondents have been sexually assaulted at some point in their lifetimes**, compared to 47% of USTS respondents overall, and **17% were sexually assaulted in the past year**.
- **59% of American Indian and Alaska Native respondents said they would feel somewhat or very uncomfortable asking the police for help.**
- **50% of American Indian and Alaska Native respondents who saw a health care provider in the past year reported having at least one negative experience related to being transgender**, such as being refused treatment, being verbally harassed, being physically or sexually assaulted, or having to teach the provider about transgender people in order to get appropriate care, compared to 33% in the USTS sample overall.
- **2.0% of American Indian and Alaska Native respondents were living with HIV**, nearly seven times higher than the rate in the U.S. population (0.3%).
- **46% of American Indian and Alaska Native respondents experienced serious psychological distress in the month before completing the survey** (based on the Kessler 6 Psychological Distress Scale), nine times the rate in the U.S. population (5%).

Portrait of American Indian and Alaska Native Respondents

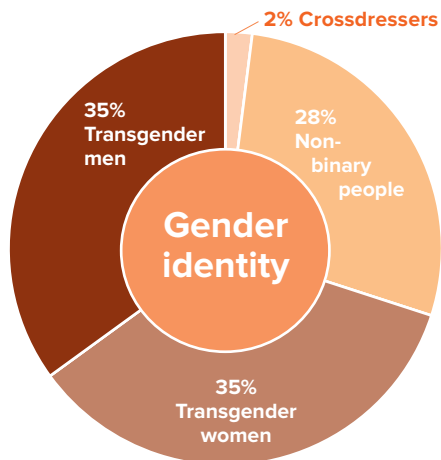
This section outlines aspects of American Indian and Alaska Native respondents' identities and demographic characteristics, such as gender, age, geographic location, and educational attainment, to provide important context for their experiences.

Gender Identity

Respondents were asked to select one term that best described their gender identity.⁵ Thirty-five

percent (35%) of American Indian and Alaska Native respondents were transgender women, 35% were transgender men, 28% were non-binary,⁶ and 2% identified as crossdressers⁷ (Figure 1).

Additionally, respondents were given an opportunity to select one or more gender terms with which they identified from a list, and more than one-half (51%) indicated that they identified as Two Spirit.⁸

Figure 1: Gender identity

Experiences with Transitioning

Seventy percent (70%) of American Indian and Alaska Native respondents were currently living full time in a gender that was different from the one on their original birth certificates, referred to in this report as having transitioned. This included 79% of transgender men and women and 52% of non-binary respondents. Nearly one in five (18%) respondents who had transitioned did so before the age of 18, nearly one-third (30%) transitioned between the ages of 18 and 24, 27% transitioned between ages 25 and 34, and one-quarter (25%) transitioned at age 35 or older.

Respondents were asked how much time had passed since they began transitioning. Nearly one-third (30%) began their transition within one year of taking the survey, 34% transitioned 2 to 5 years prior, 11% transitioned 6 to 9 years prior, and 26% transitioned 10 or more years prior.

Outness

Respondents were asked whether different groups of people in their lives knew that they were transgender to determine if they were “out” about their transgender identity to family members, friends, supervisors and coworkers, classmates,

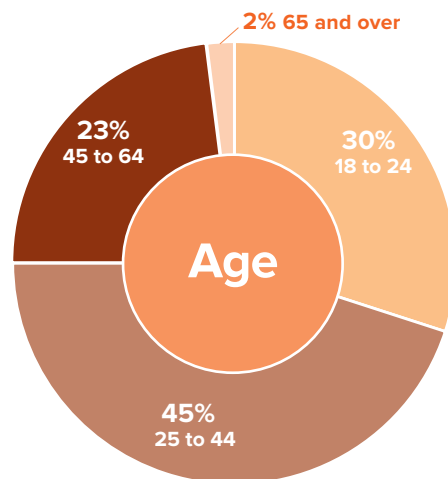
and health care providers. Specifically, they were asked whether all, most, some, or none of the people in each of those groups knew they were transgender.

Results for outness to any particular group reflect only those respondents who had people from that group in their lives. Overall, 12% reported that they were out to all of the people in their lives, across all groups of people, 55% were out to most, 32% were out to some, and 1% were out to none of the people in their lives.

More than two-thirds (68%) of respondents were out to all or most of the immediate family that they grew up with, and nearly one-half (46%) were out to all or most of their extended family. Respondents were less likely to be out to at work or school: more than one-third reported that none of their current supervisors (42%) or coworkers (39%) knew that they were transgender, and 47% reported that none of their classmates at their current school knew they were transgender.

Age

Most respondents were between the ages of 25 and 44 (45%) or 18 and 24 (30%) (Figure 2).

Figure 2: Age

Enrolled or Principal Tribe or Corporation

American Indian and Alaska Native respondents were asked about their enrolled or principal tribe or corporation. Respondents wrote in affiliations with more than 100 unique corporations and tribes, including clans and confederacies. Among American Indian respondents alone, the most commonly reported tribes were Cherokee (25%), Navajo/Dine (9%), Chippewa/Ojibwe (6%), Sioux (6%), Choctaw (5%), Apache (3%), Blackfoot (2%), Muscogee/Creek (2%), and Seneca (2%). Additionally, 6% reported being affiliated with more than one tribe. See *Appendix A* for more information about tribe and corporation affiliations.

Location

Respondents lived in 42 states and the District of Columbia at the time of the survey. The geographical distribution of USTS American Indian and Alaska Native respondents differed slightly

from the distribution in the USTS sample overall but was generally similar to the distribution of American Indian and Alaska Native people in the U.S. population. American Indian and Alaska Native respondents were more likely to live in the West (39%) than respondents in the USTS sample overall (31%), similar to the trend in the U.S. population, where American Indian and Alaska Native people were more likely to live in the West (48%) than the U.S. population overall (24%)⁹ (Figure 3).

Educational Attainment

Respondents were asked about the highest level of education that they had completed. Nineteen percent (19%) had a high school diploma or GED or did not complete high school. Thirty-nine percent (39%) had completed some college but had not obtained a degree, and 26% had received a bachelor's degree or a higher degree (Figure 4).

Figure 3: Location by region

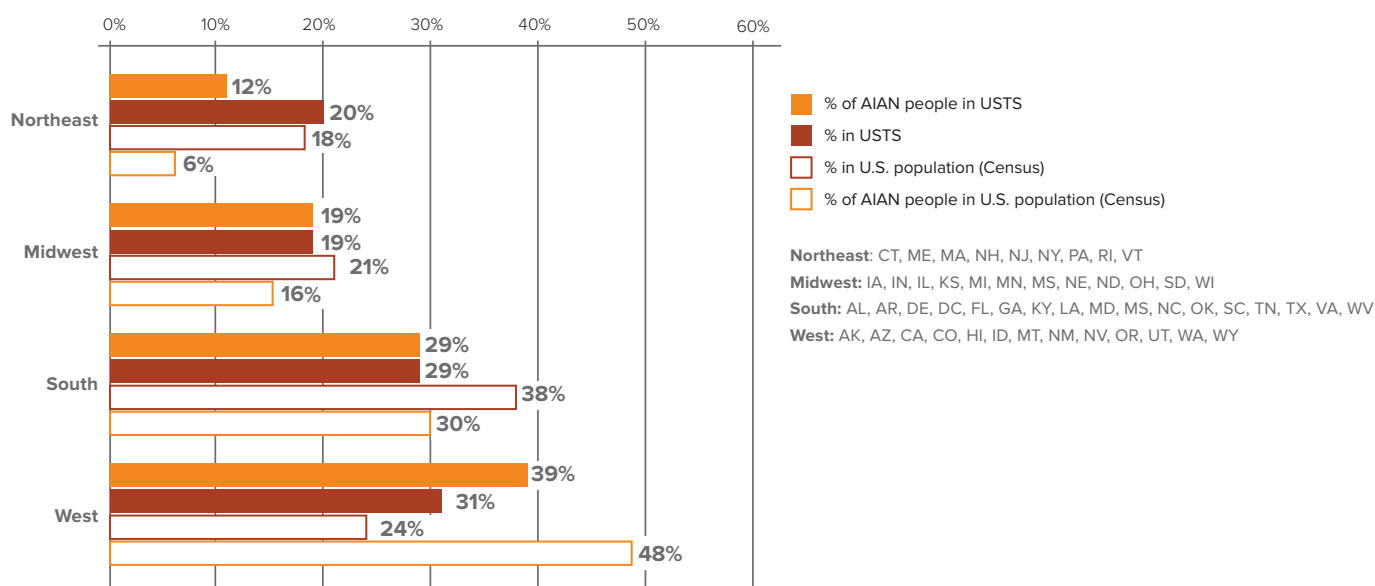
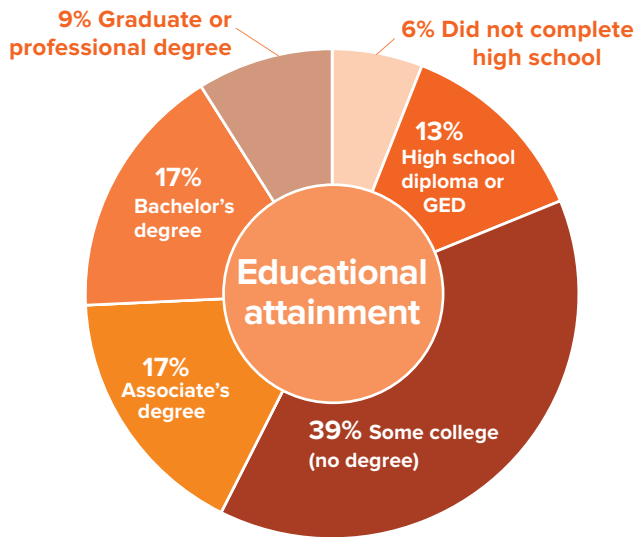


Figure 4: Educational attainment

Disability

Respondents received questions about their disability status based on questions from the American Community Survey (ACS) in order to compare the USTS sample to the U.S. population. Disabilities listed in the ACS included (1) being deaf or having serious difficulty hearing, (2) being blind or having serious difficulty seeing even when wearing glasses, (3) having serious difficulty concentrating, remembering, or making decisions because of a physical, mental, or emotional condition, (4) having serious difficulty walking or climbing stairs, (5) having difficulty dressing or bathing, and (6) having difficulty doing errands alone, such as visiting a doctor's office or shopping because of a physical, mental, or emotional condition. More than one-half (55%) of American Indian and Alaska Native respondents indicated that they had one or more disabilities listed in the ACS, compared to 39% in the USTS sample overall. In contrast, only 15% in the U.S. population¹⁰ and 21% of American Indian and Alaska Native people

in the U.S. population¹¹ had a disability listed in the ACS.

Respondents were also asked if they identified as a person with a disability to better capture disabilities that were not included in the ACS. More than four in ten (41%) American Indian and Alaska Native respondents identified as people with disabilities, compared to 28% in the USTS sample overall. The term "people with disabilities" used in this report refers to respondents who identified as people with disabilities.

Relationship Status

Thirty-five percent (35%) of respondents were living with a partner, 15% were partnered and living separately, 45% were single, 3% were in a polyamorous relationship, and 1% had a relationship status that was not listed. Respondents were asked about their current legal marital status for the purpose of comparison to the U.S. population. Twenty-four percent (24%) of American Indian and Alaska Native respondents were currently married, compared to 39% of American Indian and Alaska Native people in the U.S. population.¹² Sixty-one percent (61%) of respondents had never been married, which is substantially higher than the rate among American Indian and Alaska Native people in the U.S. population (43%).

Sexual Orientation

Respondents were asked which terms best described their sexual orientation. Respondents were most likely to identify as queer (17%), gay, lesbian, or same-gender-loving (17%), or pansexual (16%). They also identified as bisexual (14%), straight (13%), asexual (10%), or with a sexual orientation that was not listed (12%).

Family Life and Faith Communities

Family Life

Ninety-three percent (93%) of American Indian and Alaska Native respondents were out as transgender to a current or former partner. Of those who were out to a current or former partner, 42% had a partner end their relationship *solely or partly* because they were transgender, including 16% who had a partner end their relationship *solely* because they were transgender. More than three-quarters (78%) of respondents who had children were out to one or more of their children, and 31% of those respondents had a child stop speaking to them or spending time with them after coming out as transgender.

Fifty-five percent (55%) of respondents who were out to at least some of the immediate family they grew up with reported that their family was generally supportive, 22% had unsupportive families, and 23% had families that were neither supportive nor unsupportive. Sixty percent (60%) experienced at least one form of family rejection outlined in the survey, such as having a family member who stopped speaking to them for a long time or ended the relationship, experiencing violence by a family member, or being kicked out of the house for being transgender, compared to 44% in the USTS sample overall (Table 1).

Table 1: Forms of family rejection

(of those out to immediate family)	% of AIAN people in USTS	% in USTS
Stopped speaking to them or ended relationship	38%	26%
Did not allow them to wear clothes that matched gender	33%	27%
Sent them to a professional to stop them from being transgender	24%	14%
Were violent towards them	20%	10%
Kicked them out of the house	14%	8%
One or more experiences listed	60%	44%

Additionally, 18% of those who were out to their immediate family ran away from home because they were transgender, with transgender women (22%) and transgender men (21%) being far more likely to have run away than non-binary people (4%).

Although more than half of those who were out to their immediate family reported at least one experience of rejection from a family member, 78% also reported that at least one immediate family member supported them through one or more specific acts, such as using their preferred name or pronouns, giving them money to support their transition, or helping them to change the name or gender on an identity document (Table 2).

Table 2: Supportive family behaviors

(of those out to immediate family)	% of AIAN people in USTS	% in USTS
Told respondent they respect or support them	56%	65%
Used their preferred name	54%	58%
Used the correct pronouns	53%	55%
Stood up for them with family, friends, or others	37%	36%
Did research to learn how to best support them	30%	33%
Gave money to help with gender transition	14%	18%
Helped them change their name and/or gender on an identity document	7%	10%
Supported them in another way	14%	11%
One or more experiences listed	78%	82%

Faith Communities

Nearly two-thirds (65%) of American Indian and Alaska Native respondents had been part of a spiritual or religious community (“faith community”) at some point in their lives. Of these, one-third (33%) left a faith community because they were rejected as a transgender person, in contrast to

19% in the USTS sample overall. More than one-half (54%) of those who had been rejected by a faith community found a new faith community that welcomed them as a transgender person.

More than one-third (36%) of respondents who had ever been part of a faith community were part of one in the year prior to taking the survey, and they reported a range of experiences within their faith communities. Each of these respondents (100%) reported experiencing one or more accepting behaviors from members of their faith community, such as having a community leader or member

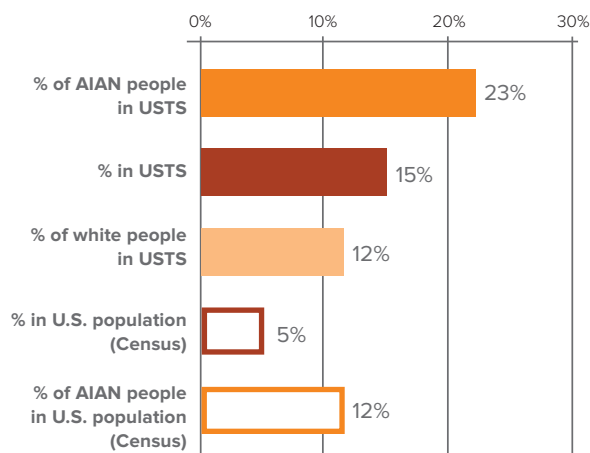
who accepted them or made them feel welcome as a transgender person or being told that their religion or faith accepts them as a transgender person. However, 17% also had one or more experiences of rejection, including being asked to stop coming to services or faith community functions, being asked to meet with faith leaders to stop them from being transgender, and having a community member tell them that being transgender is a sin or that their religion does not approve of them.

Income and Employment

Unemployment

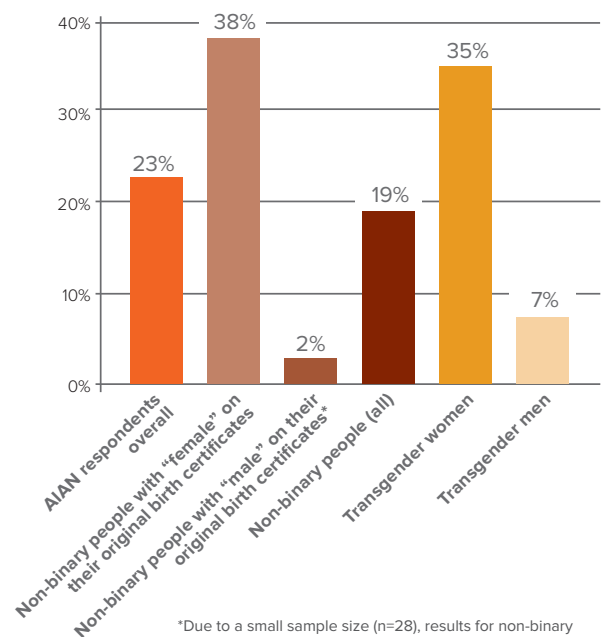
Nearly one-quarter (23%) of American Indian and Alaska Native respondents were unemployed, compared to 15% in the USTS sample overall. The unemployment rate among American Indian and Alaska Native respondents was nearly five times higher than the unemployment rate in the U.S. population overall (5%)¹³ and nearly twice the rate among American Indian and Alaska Native people in the U.S. population (12%) (Figure 5).¹⁴

Figure 5: Unemployment



The unemployment rate differed by gender, with non-binary people with “female” on their original birth certificates (38%) and transgender women (35%) being more likely to be unemployed (Figure 6). Respondents with disabilities (35%) were also more likely to be unemployed.

Figure 6: Unemployment (by gender)

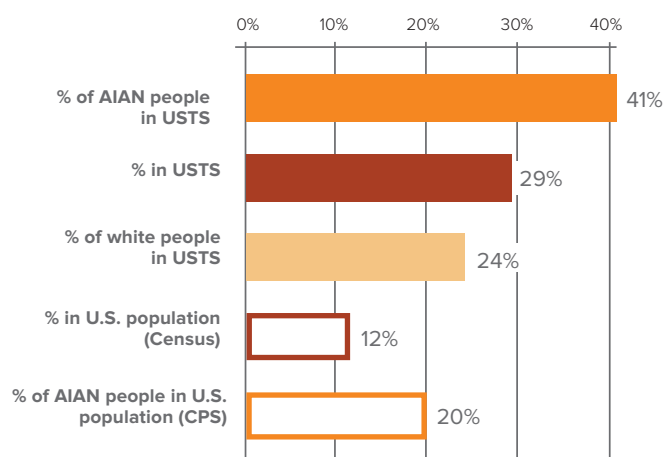


*Due to a small sample size (n=28), results for non-binary people with “male” on their original birth certificates should be interpreted with caution.

Poverty

More than four out of ten (41%) American Indian and Alaska Native respondents were living in poverty,¹⁵ compared to 29% in the USTS sample overall. This was more than three times higher than the poverty rate in the U.S. population overall (12%)¹⁶ and more than twice the poverty rate among American Indian and Alaska Native people in the U.S. population (20%) (Figure 7).¹⁷ The poverty rate was higher among people with disabilities, with one-half (50%) living in poverty.

Figure 7: Living in poverty



Sources of Income

Twenty-nine percent (29%) of American Indian and Alaska Native respondents reported that their only source of income was from their own employment or a partner's employment, compared to those in the USTS sample overall (36%). More than one-half (54%) of American Indian and Alaska Native respondents reported that they received income from multiple sources, in contrast to 45% in the USTS sample overall. Nearly one in ten (9%) American Indian and Alaska Native respondents reported that their sole source of income was Supplemental Security Income (SSI) or disability benefits (Table 3).

Table 3: Current sources of income

Sources of income	% of AIAN people in USTS	% in USTS
Employment only (from their own employment, partner's employment, or self-employment)	29%	36%
Supplemental Security Income (SSI) or disability benefits only	9%	9%
Pay from sex work, drug sales, or other work that is currently criminalized only	2%	1%
Pension or retirement income only	1%	3%
Unemployment benefits or public cash assistance program only	<1%	1%
Other sources only	4%	3%
No income	1%	2%
Multiple sources	54%	45%

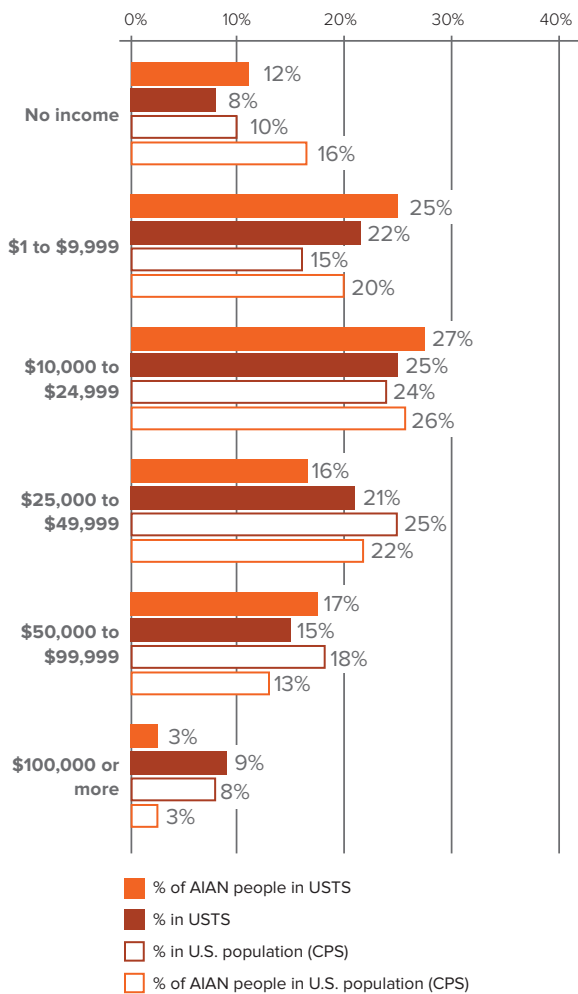
Military Service

One in five (20%) American Indian and Alaska Native respondents have served in the military, including respondents who were currently serving in the military on active duty (<1%) and those who were currently on active duty for training in the Reserves or National Guard (<1%). Nineteen percent (19%) of respondents were veterans, more than twice the rate in the U.S. population overall (8%) and among American Indian and Alaska Native people in the U.S. population (7%).¹⁸

Individual and Household Income

Respondents reported their annual individual and household income levels from 2014, the last full year prior to completing the survey. One-quarter (25%) of American Indian and Alaska Native respondents reported an *individual income* of \$1 to \$9,999, compared to 22% in the USTS sample overall and 20% among American Indian and Alaska Native people in the U.S. population¹⁹ (Figure 8).

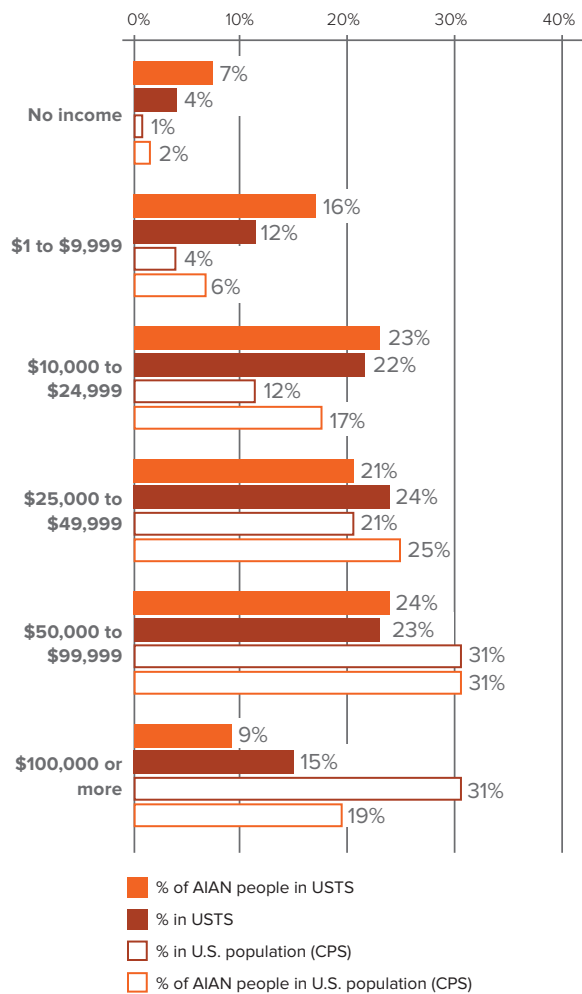
Sixteen percent (16%) of American Indian and Alaska Native respondents reported a *household income* of \$1 to \$9,999, compared to 12% in the

Figure 8: Annual individual income (2014)

USTS sample overall, and nearly three times the rate among American Indian and Alaska Native people in the U.S. population (6%) (Figure 9).

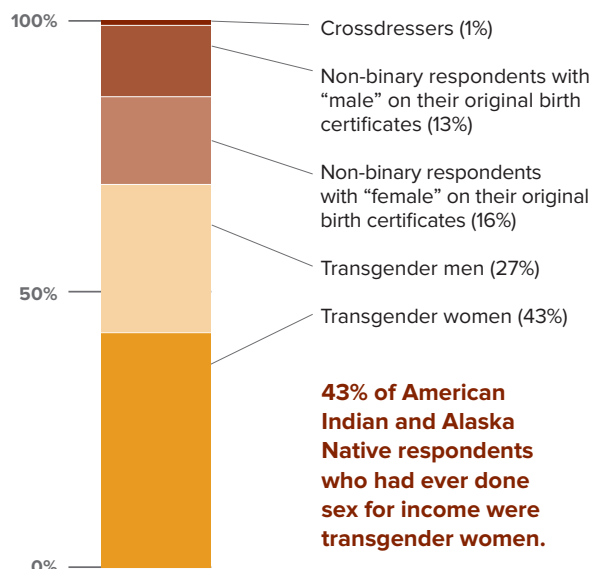
Sex Work and Other Underground Economy Work

More than one-third (35%) of American Indian and Alaska Native respondents have participated in the underground economy for income at some point in their lives, including in sex work, drug sales, and other currently criminalized work, in contrast to 20% in the USTS sample overall. More than one in ten (11%) American Indian and Alaska Native respondents participated in the underground economy for income in the past year.

Figure 9: Annual household income (2014)

Nearly one-quarter (23%) of American Indian and Alaska Native respondents participated in sex work for income, compared to 12% in the USTS sample overall. Examining the composition of those who have done sex work, transgender women represent nearly one-half (43%) of American Indian and Alaska Native respondents who have done sex work for money in their lifetimes. Although transgender women represent a disproportionately high percentage of those who have done sex work, it is also important to recognize that transgender men account for a large proportion (27%) of those who have done sex work (Figure 10).

Figure 10: Gender identity of those who have done sex work for income in their lifetimes



Nearly one in ten (9%) American Indian and Alaska Native respondents participated in sex work for income in the past year.

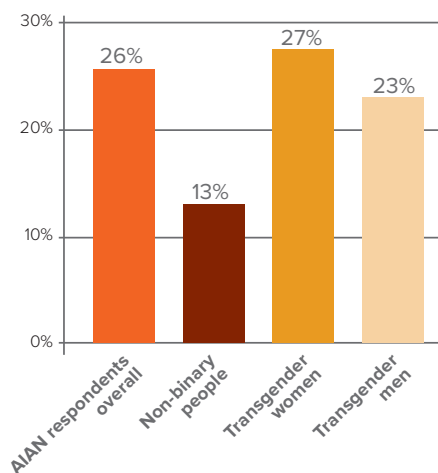
Overall, nearly one-third (31%) of respondents participated in sex work for income, food, a place to sleep, or other goods or services, compared to 19% in the USTS sample overall.

Experiences in the Workplace

More than one-quarter (26%) of American Indian and Alaska Native respondents who have ever been employed reported losing a job at some point in their lives because of being transgender. This represents 21% of all American Indian and Alaska Native respondents, in contrast to 13% of all respondents in the USTS. Experiences varied by gender, with transgender women (27%) being more likely to report being fired because of being transgender, in contrast to non-binary people (13%) (Figure 11).

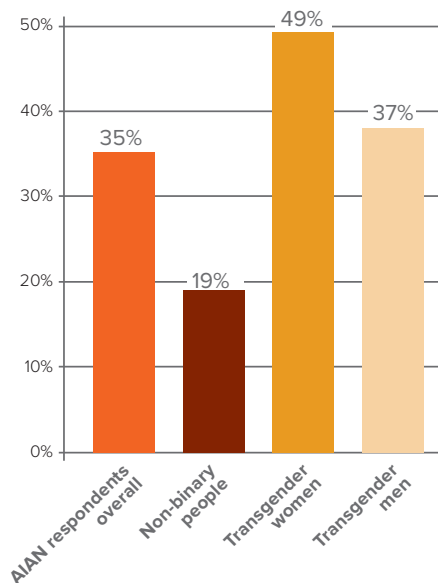
In the past year, 35% of those who held or applied for a job during that year reported being fired, being denied a promotion, or not being hired for a job they applied for because of being transgender,

Figure 11: Ever lost job because of being transgender (by gender)



compared to 27% in the USTS sample overall. Transgender women (49%) were far more likely to report this experience than transgender men (37%) and non-binary people (19%) (Figure 12).

Figure 12: Fired, denied promotion, and/or not hired in the past year because of being transgender (by gender)



In the past year, more than one-quarter (27%) of respondents who had a job during that year reported that they had been verbally harassed at work because of being transgender, compared to 14% of USTS respondents overall. One percent (1%) of those who had a job in the past year

were physically attacked and 2% were sexually assaulted at work during that year because of being transgender.

Additionally, more than one-third (35%) of respondents who were employed reported other forms of mistreatment based on their gender identity or expression during the past year, such

as being forced to use a restroom that did not match their gender identity, being told to present in the wrong gender in order to keep their job, or having a boss or coworker share information about their transgender status with others without their permission. In contrast, 23% of USTS respondents overall reported one or more of those experiences.

Education

American Indian and Alaska Native respondents experienced high rates of mistreatment at school. More than nine out of ten (92%) American Indian and Alaska Native respondents who were out or perceived as transgender at some point between Kindergarten and Grade 12 (K–12) experienced mistreatment, such as being verbally harassed, prohibited from dressing according to their gender identity, disciplined more harshly, or physically or sexually assaulted because people thought they were transgender. Sixty-nine percent (69%) of those who were out or perceived as transgender in K–12 were verbally harassed. Nearly one-half

(49%) were physically attacked because of being transgender, more than twice the rate in the USTS sample overall (24%). Nearly one-quarter (22%) were sexually assaulted in K–12 because of being transgender, compared to 13% in the USTS sample overall.

Nearly four out of ten (39%) American Indian and Alaska Native respondents faced such severe mistreatment as a transgender person that they left a K–12 school, more than twice the rate in the USTS sample overall (17%). One in eight (12%) respondents were expelled from school, compared to 6% in the USTS sample overall (Table 4).

Table 4: Experiences of people who were out as transgender in K–12 or believed classmates, teachers, or school staff thought they were transgender

Negative experiences in school (out of those who were out or perceived as transgender)	% of AIAN people in USTS	% in USTS
Not allowed to dress in a way that fit their gender identity or expression	71%	52%
Verbally harassed because people thought they were transgender	69%	54%
Disciplined for fighting back against bullies	57%	36%
Physically attacked because people thought they were transgender	49%	24%
Believe they were disciplined more harshly because teachers or staff thought they were transgender	40%	20%
Left a school because the mistreatment was so bad	39%	17%
Sexually assaulted because people thought they were transgender	22%	13%
Expelled from school	12%	6%
One or more experiences listed	92%	77%

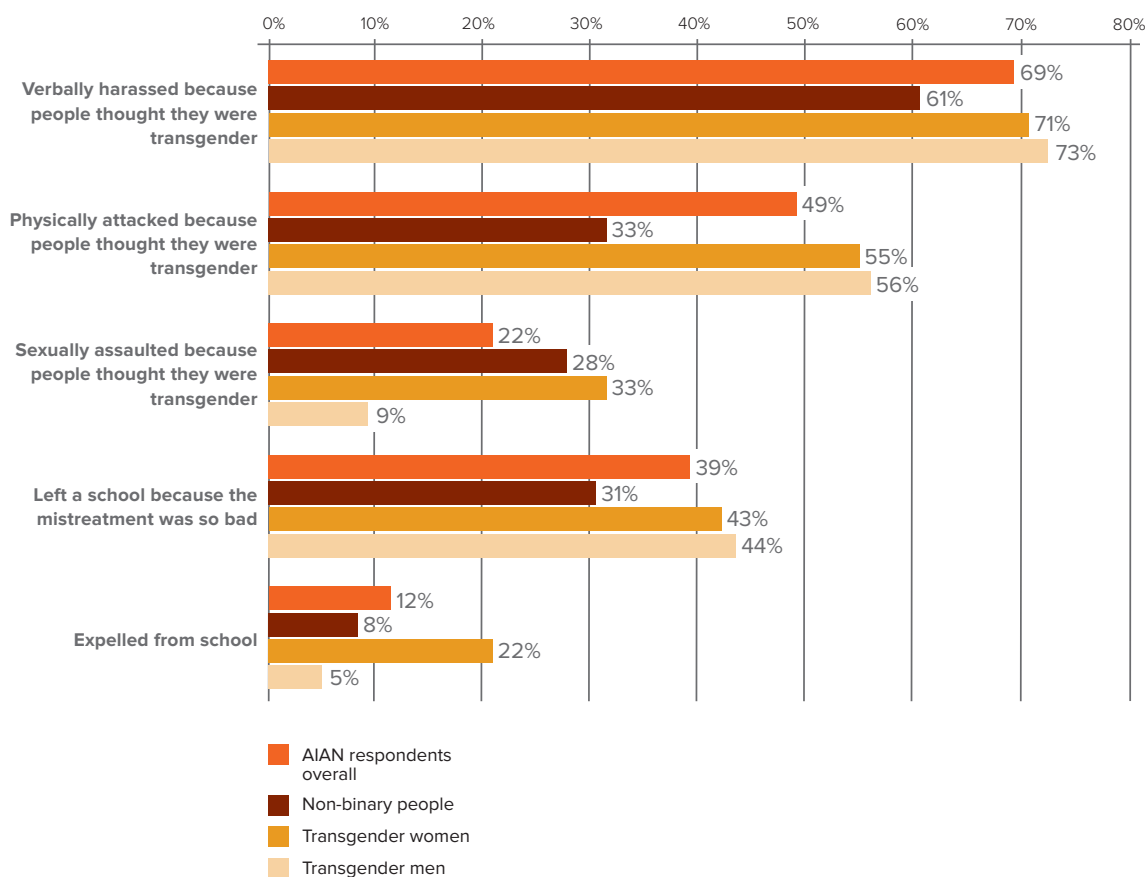
Nearly all (98%) respondents with disabilities who were out or perceived as transgender in K–12 faced mistreatment at school. They reported higher levels of verbal harassment (76%), physical attack (54%), and sexual assault (34%) at school because people thought they were transgender than American Indian and Alaska Native respondents overall. They were also more likely to leave a school because the mistreatment was so bad (50%).

Experiences also varied by gender. For example,

transgender women were more likely to have been sexually assaulted in K–12 because people thought they were transgender (33%) (Figure 13).

American Indian and Alaska Native respondents also reported high levels of mistreatment in post-secondary schools. More than one-third (37%) of those who were out or perceived as transgender in college or vocational school were verbally, physically, or sexually harassed because of being transgender, compared to 24% in the USTS sample overall.

Figure 13: Experiences of people who were out as transgender in K–12 or believed classmates, teachers, or school staff thought they were transgender (by gender)



Housing, Homelessness, and Shelter Access

More than one-half (57%) of American Indian and Alaska Native respondents have experienced homelessness at some point in their lives, nearly twice the rate in the USTS sample overall (30%).

In the past year, more than one-third (36%) of respondents experienced some form of housing discrimination or instability, such as being evicted from their home or denied a home or apartment because of being transgender.²⁰ More than one in five (21%) experienced homelessness in the past year because of being transgender, compared to 12% of USTS respondents overall. Nearly one in ten (9%) were denied a home or apartment, and 9% were evicted because of being transgender (Table 5).

Table 5: Housing situations that occurred in the past year because of being transgender

Housing situation (out of those to whom situation applied)	% of AIAN people in USTS	% in USTS
Had to move back in with family or friends	25%	20%
Slept in different places for short periods of time	23%	15%
Experienced homelessness	21%	12%
Had to move into a less expensive home or apartment	14%	13%
Denied a home or apartment	9%	6%
Evicted from a home or apartment	9%	5%
One or more experiences listed	36%	30%

More than one-third (37%) respondents who experienced homelessness in the past year avoided staying in a shelter because they feared being mistreated as a transgender person, compared to 26% in the USTS sample overall.

Public Accommodations

Respondents reported being denied equal treatment or service, verbally harassed, or physically attacked at many places of public accommodation—places that provide services to the public, like retail stores, hotels, and government offices. In the past year, out of respondents who visited a place of public accommodation where staff or employees thought or knew they were transgender, nearly one-half (46%) experienced at least one type of mistreatment, compared to 31% in the USTS sample overall. This included 21% who were denied equal treatment or service, 36% who were verbally harassed, and 3% who were physically attacked because of being transgender (Table 6).

People with disabilities were more likely to face mistreatment in a place of public accommodation (63%), including 28% who were denied equal treatment, 56% who were verbally harassed, and 4% who were physically assaulted.

Table 6: Experiences in places of public accommodation in the past year due to being transgender

Experience at a place of public accommodation (out of those who believe staff knew or thought they were transgender)	% of AIAN people in USTS	% in USTS
Denied equal treatment or service	21%	14%
Verbally harassed	36%	24%
Physically attacked	3%	2%
One or more experiences listed	46%	31%

Harassment and Violence

Overall Experiences of Unequal Treatment, Harassment, and Physical Attack

Sixty percent (60%) of respondents reported being denied equal treatment, verbally harassed, and/or physically attacked in the past year because of being transgender, compared to 48% in the USTS sample. More than one-quarter (28%) were denied equal treatment or service in a public place and 57% were verbally harassed in the past year because of being transgender. Nearly one in five (19%) were physically attacked in the past year because of being transgender, compared to 9% in the USTS sample (Table 7).

People with disabilities were more likely to have been denied equal treatment or service in a public place (41%), verbally harassed (69%), and physically attacked (25%) in the past year because of being transgender.

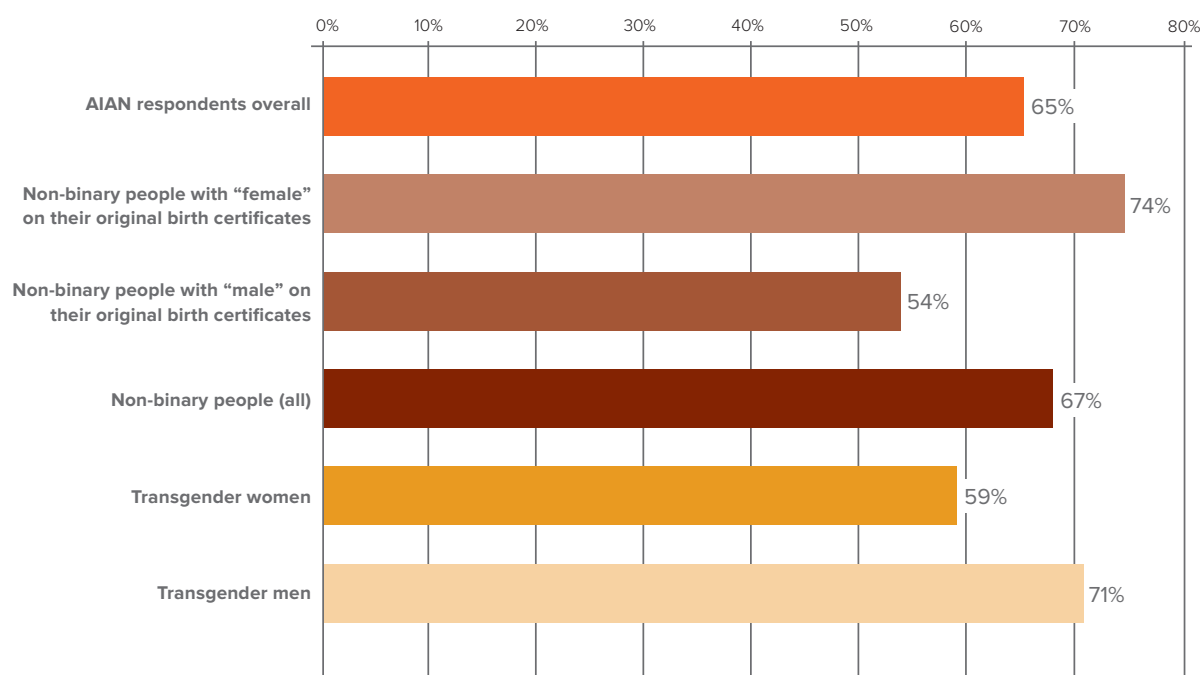
Table 7: Denial of equal treatment or service, verbal harassment, and physical attack in the past year because of being transgender

Experience in the past year due to being transgender	% of AIAN people in USTS	% in USTS
Denied equal treatment or service	28%	14%
Verbally harassed	57%	46%
Physically attacked	19%	9%
One or more experiences listed	60%	48%

Sexual Assault

Nearly two-thirds (65%) of American Indian and Alaska Native respondents have been sexually assaulted at some point in their lifetimes, in contrast to 47% in the USTS sample overall. People with disabilities reported a substantially higher rate of sexual assault in their lifetimes, with more than eight in ten (84%) having been sexually assaulted. Nearly three-quarters of non-binary people with “female” on their original birth certificates

Figure 14: Sexual assault in lifetime (by gender)



(74%) and transgender men (71%) were sexually assaulted in their lifetimes (Figure 14).

More than one in six (17%) American Indian and Alaska Native respondents were sexually assaulted in the past year, in contrast to 10% in the USTS sample overall. Nearly half (46%) of respondents who worked in the underground economy (such as in sex work, drug sales, and other currently criminalized activities) in the past year were sexually assaulted during that year.

Intimate Partner Violence

Nearly three-quarters (73%) of respondents experienced some form of intimate partner violence, including acts of coercive control²¹ and physical violence, compared to 54% in the USTS sample. Eighty-seven percent (87%) of respondents who have worked in the underground

economy and 83% of people with disabilities experienced intimate partner violence.

Nearly one-half (48%) of respondents reported acts of coercive control by an intimate partner related to their transgender status, including being told that they were not a “real” woman or man, threatened with being “outed” by having their transgender status revealed to others, or prevented from taking their hormones, in contrast to 27% of USTS respondents overall. People with disabilities (61%) and transgender women (57%) were more likely to report acts of coercive control related to their transgender status than American Indian and Alaska Native respondents overall.

Additionally, nearly two-thirds (61%) of American Indian and Alaska Native respondents experienced physical violence by an intimate partner, compared to 42% in the USTS sample overall.

Police Interactions and Prisons

American Indian and Alaska Native respondents experienced high levels of mistreatment and harassment by police. In the past year, out of respondents who interacted with police or other law enforcement officers who thought or knew they were transgender, nearly three-quarters (74%) experienced some form of mistreatment, in contrast to 58% of USTS respondents overall and 55% of white respondents. This included being verbally harassed, repeatedly referred to as the wrong gender, or physically or sexually assaulted (Table 8).

Fifty-nine percent (59%) of American Indian and Alaska Native respondents said they would feel somewhat or very uncomfortable asking the police for help if they needed it, compared to 57% of

respondents in the USTS sample overall and 53% of white USTS respondents (Figure 15). Non-binary people (70%) and transgender men (63%) were more likely to be uncomfortable asking the police for help, in contrast to transgender women (49%) (Figure 16). People with disabilities (70%) were also more likely to be uncomfortable asking the police for help.

Seven percent (7%) of American Indian and Alaska Native respondents were arrested in the past year, compared to 2% in the USTS sample. Four percent (4%) of American Indian and Alaska Native respondents were incarcerated—held in jail or prison—in the past year, compared to 0.9% in the U.S. population overall.²²

Table 8: Mistreatment by police or other law enforcement officers in past year

Experience of mistreatment in the past year	% of AIAN people in USTS	% in USTS	% of white people in USTS
Officers kept using the wrong gender pronouns (such as he/him or she/her) or wrong title (such as Mr. or Ms.)	60%	49%	46%
Officers asked questions about gender transition (such as about hormones or surgical status)	35%	19%	16%
Verbally harassed by officers	29%	20%	17%
Officers assumed they were sex workers	13%	11%	8%
Physically attacked by officers	9%	4%	2%
Sexually assaulted by officers	5%	3%	2%
Forced by officers to engage in sexual activity to avoid arrest	3%	1%	<1%
One or more experiences listed	74%	58%	55%

Figure 15: Comfort asking the police for help

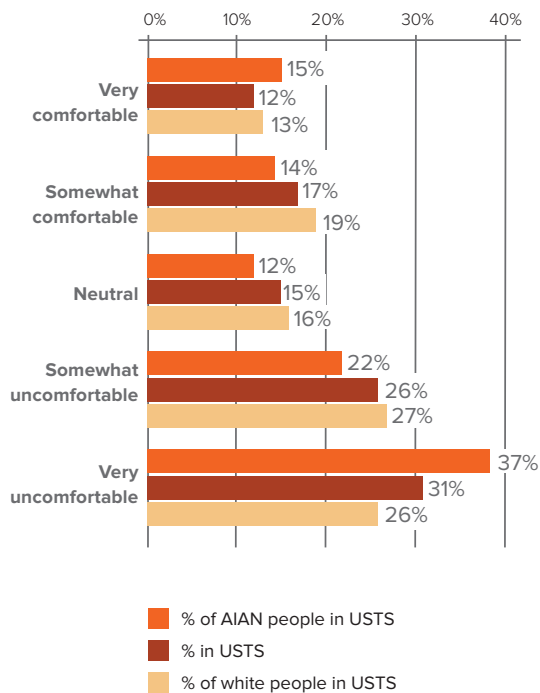
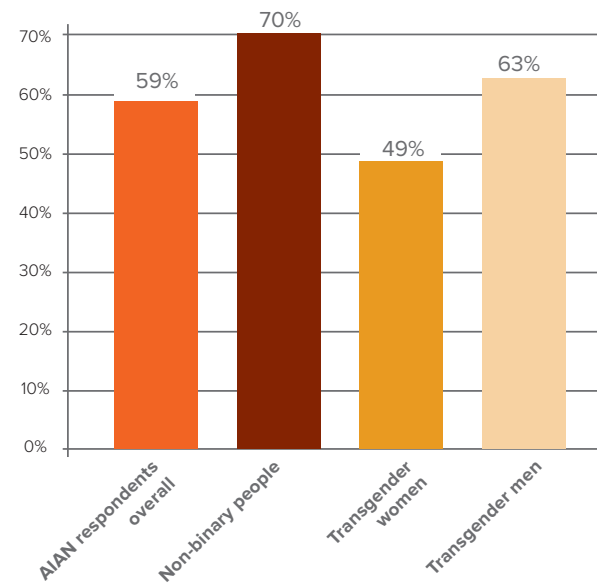


Figure 16: Somewhat or very uncomfortable asking the police for help (by gender)



Health

Insurance

Eighteen percent (18%) of American Indian and Alaska Native respondents did not have health insurance, compared to 14% in the USTS sample overall and 12% of white respondents. This was higher than the rate in U.S. population overall (11%) but lower than the rate among American Indian and Alaska Native people in the U.S. population (23%).²³ The most common forms of insurance reported by American Indian and Alaska Native respondents included coverage they or a family member received through an employer (40%), followed by Medicaid (23%) and the Indian Health Service (13%) (Table 9).

Table 9: Type of health insurance or health coverage plan

Health insurance source	% of AIAN people in USTS	% in USTS	% in U.S. population (ACS)
Insurance through current or former employer or union (belonging to respondent or a family member)	40%	53%	56%
Medicaid	23%	13%	15%
Indian Health Service	13%	<1%	1% ²⁴
Insurance they or someone else purchased directly from an insurance company or through a health insurance marketplace (such as healthcare.gov)	10%	14%	16%
Medicare	8%	5%	22%
VA	4%	2%	3%
TRICARE or other military health care	2%	2%	3%
Another type of insurance	8%	6%	---

One-third (33%) of respondents experienced a problem in the past year with their insurance related to being transgender, such as being denied coverage for care related to gender transition or being denied coverage for other kinds of health care because they were transgender, in contrast to 25% in the USTS sample overall.

Experiences with Providers

One-half (50%) of respondents who saw a health care provider in the past year reported having at least one negative experience related to being transgender, compared to 33% in the USTS sample overall. This included being refused treatment, being verbally harassed, being physically or sexually assaulted, or having to teach the provider about transgender people in order to get appropriate care. Transgender men (63%) were substantially more likely to report mistreatment by health care professionals, in contrast to transgender women (49%) and non-binary people (31%).

In the past year, more than one-third (37%) of respondents did not see a doctor when they needed to because of fear of being mistreated as a transgender person, compared to 23% in the USTS sample overall. Additionally, 41% did not see a doctor in the past year when needed because they could not afford it, compared to 33% in the USTS sample.

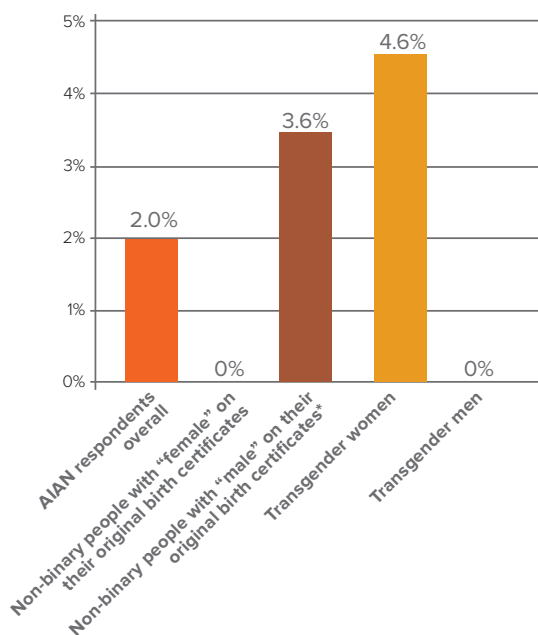
HIV Status

Sixty-five percent (65%) of American Indian and Alaska Native respondents had been tested for HIV, higher than the rate in the USTS sample overall (55%) and in the U.S. population (34%).²⁵

Among those who had not been tested, 87% of American Indian and Alaska Native respondents said that it was primarily because they were unlikely to have been exposed to HIV. This response rate was similar to the rate among respondents who had not been tested in the USTS respondents overall (86%) and those in the general U.S. population (86%).²⁶

Among American Indian and Alaska Native respondents, 2.0% reported that they were living with HIV, compared to the rate in the USTS sample overall (1.4%) and among white respondents (0.4%). This was nearly seven times higher than the rate in the U.S. population (0.3%)²⁷ and twenty times higher than the rate among American Indian and Alaska Native people in the U.S. population (0.1%).²⁸ Transgender women (4.6%) were more than twice as likely as American Indian and Alaska Native USTS respondents overall to be living with HIV (Figure 17). Additionally, 62% of American Indian and Alaska Native respondents were HIV negative, and 36% had not been tested or did not know the results of their HIV test.

Figure 17: Living with HIV (by gender)



2.0% of American Indian and Alaska Native USTS respondents were living with HIV.

- **5X** higher than the rate among white USTS respondents (0.4%)
- **7X** higher than the rate in the U.S. population overall (0.3%)
- **20X** higher than the rate among American Indian and Alaska Native people in the U.S. population (0.1%)

4.6% of American Indian and Alaska Native transgender women were living with HIV, 15X the rate in the U.S. population (0.3%).

Psychological Distress

Forty-six percent (46%) of American Indian and Alaska Native respondents experienced serious psychological distress in the month before completing the survey (based on the Kessler 6 Psychological Distress Scale).²⁹ This rate was higher than that in the USTS sample overall (39%), nine times higher than the rate in the U.S. population (5%), and nearly seven times higher than the rate among American Indian and Alaska Native people in the U.S. population (7%).³⁰

Conversion Therapy

More than one in five (21%) reported that a professional, such as a psychologist, counselor, or religious advisor, tried to stop them from being transgender, compared to 13% in the USTS sample overall.

Suicidal Thoughts and Behaviors

More than one-half (57%) of American Indian and Alaska Native respondents have attempted suicide at some point in their lives, in contrast to 40% in the USTS sample overall. This rate was more than twelve times higher than the rate in the U.S. population (4.6%).³¹ Transgender men (68%)

were substantially more likely than transgender women (52%) and non-binary people (52%) to have attempted suicide in their lifetimes. Respondents with disabilities (66%) were also more likely to have attempted suicide in their lifetimes.

One in ten (10%) American Indian and Alaska Native respondents attempted suicide in the past year, compared to 7% in the USTS sample overall.

This rate was nearly seventeen times higher than the rate in the U.S. population (0.6%), and more than eight times higher than the rate among American Indian and Alaska Native people in the U.S. population (1.2%).³² Transgender men (15%) reported higher rates of attempted suicide in the past year than American Indian and Alaska Native respondents overall, in contrast to transgender women (8%) and non-binary people (8%).

Identity Documents

Only 8% of American Indian and Alaska Native respondents reported that *all* of their identity documents (IDs) had the name and gender they preferred, while 66% reported that *none* of their IDs had the name and gender they preferred. The cost of changing IDs was one of the main barriers respondents faced, with 45% of those who have not changed their legal name and 39% of those who have not

updated the gender on their IDs reporting that it was because they could not afford it.

Nearly one-half (49%) of respondents who have shown an ID with a name or gender that did not match their gender presentation were verbally harassed, denied benefits or service, asked to leave, or assaulted, compared with 32% of the USTS sample overall.

Experiences of Multiracial American Indian and Alaska Native Respondents

In addition to respondents who identified as American Indian or Alaska Native alone in the USTS, 396 respondents identified as multiracial and American Indian or Alaska Native or “a racial/ethnic identity not listed” and American Indian or Alaska Native. This section provides a brief overview of the experiences of these respondents, referred to here as multiracial American Indian and Alaska Native respondents. Additional research is needed to further examine the experiences of multiracial respondents.

- 15% of multiracial American Indian and Alaska Native respondents were unemployed.
- 48% were living in poverty.
- 33% of multiracial American Indian and Alaska Native respondents who have been employed reported losing a job at some point in their lives because of being transgender.

Experiences of Multiracial American Indian and Alaska Native Respondents (continued)

- In the past year, 44% of those who held or applied for a job during that year reported being fired, being denied a promotion, or not being hired for a job they applied for because of being transgender.
- In the past year, 27% were denied equal treatment or service in a public place and 62% were verbally harassed because of being transgender.
- In the past year, 17% were physically attacked because of being transgender and 18% were sexually assaulted. More than two-thirds (68%) have been sexually assaulted at some point in their lives.
- In the past year, out of respondents who interacted with police or other law enforcement officers who thought or knew they were transgender, 68% experienced some form of mistreatment. This included being verbally harassed, repeatedly referred to as the wrong gender, physically assaulted, or sexually assaulted.
- 89% of those who were out or perceived as transgender at some point between Kindergarten and Grade 12 (K–12) experienced some form of mistreatment, such as being verbally harassed (64%), physically attacked (39%), or sexually assaulted (25%) in K–12 because of being transgender. One-quarter (25%) left a K–12 school because the mistreatment was so bad.
- 60% of multiracial American Indian and Alaska Native respondents have experienced homelessness at some point in their lives.
- 25% experienced homelessness in the past year because of being transgender.
- In the past year, 32% of multiracial American Indian and Alaska Native respondents did not see a doctor when they needed to because of fear of being mistreated as a transgender person, and 52% did not see a doctor when needed because they could not afford it.
- 47% of those who saw a health care provider in the past year reported having at least one negative experience related to being transgender, such as being refused treatment, being verbally harassed, being physically or sexually assaulted, or having to teach the provider about transgender people in order to get appropriate care.

Appendix A

Enrolled or principal tribe reported by American Indian respondents

American Indian respondents were affiliated with dozens of tribes, including those listed in the table below as well as numerous additional tribes. The table only includes tribes reported by at least 1% of respondents.

Enrolled or principal tribe	% of American Indian respondents
Cherokee	25%
Navajo/Dine	9%
Chippewa/Ojibwe	6%
Sioux	6%
Choctaw	5%
Apache	3%
Blackfoot	2%
Muscogee/Creek	2%
Seneca	2%
Arapaho	1%
Assiniboine	1%
Chickasaw	1%
Comanche	1%
Cree	1%
Lumbee	1%

Enrolled or principal tribe	% of American Indian respondents
Mohawk	1%
Mohegan	1%
Monacan	1%
Oneida	1%
Osage	1%
Ottawa	1%
Pascua Yaqui	1%
Ponca	1%
Potawatomi	1%
Seminole	1%
Shawnee	1%
Siletz	1%
Tohono O'odham	1%
Zuni	1%
More than one tribe	6%

Enrolled or principal corporation reported by Alaska Native respondents

Alaska Native respondents reported several corporations, tribes, and other affiliations, such as the Tlingit and Haida, Cook Inlet Tribal Council (CITC) and Cook Inlet Region, Incorporated (CIRI), Ahtna, Doyon, Inuit, Koniag, Sealaska, and Kuskokwin. Due to a small sample size (n=17), the percentage of respondents affiliated with these corporations and tribes could not be reported.

Endnotes

1. James, S. E., Herman, J. L., Rankin, S., Keisling, M., Mottet, L., & Anafi, M. (2016). *The Report of the U.S. Transgender Survey*. Washington, DC: National Center for Transgender Equality. Available at: www.USTransSurvey.org.
2. A majority of respondents identified as American Indian (n=302), and a small number identified as Alaska Native (n=17). Throughout this report, respondents are referred to as American Indian and Alaska Native or "AIAN." This differs from the full USTS report, which refers to these respondents as American Indian. For additional information about terminology and conventions used throughout the report, see the *Guide to Report and Terminology* chapter in the full USTS report. The findings for American Indian and Alaska Native respondents in this report reflect the experiences of respondents who identified as American Indian or Alaska Native alone and do not include the experiences of those who identified as multiracial and American Indian or Alaska Native. Some findings for respondents who identified as multiracial and American Indian or Alaska Native are included on page 20 of this report.
3. The USTS American Indian and Alaska Native racial categories are reported as a combined category in a manner similar to that in the U.S. Census and other federal surveys in order to allow for comparisons with the U.S. population. Additionally, Native Hawaiian respondents are not included in this report. For comparability with the U.S. Census and other federal surveys, Native Hawaiians are included in a category with Pacific Islanders. The experiences of Native Hawaiians in the USTS will be reported in a forthcoming report, and as in the full report, will be reported in a racial category with Asian and Pacific Islander respondents.
4. The number of American Indian and Alaska Native respondents (n=319) is an unweighted value. All reported percentages are weighted to allow for comparison to the U.S. population when appropriate. Findings related to income, unemployment, and poverty are weighted differently than other reported percentages. For more information on the weighting procedures used to report 2015 U.S. Transgender Survey data, see the full survey report. Findings from statistical tests are not included in this report.
5. Respondents were given six terms from which to choose the term that best described their current gender identity: woman, man, trans woman (MTF), trans man (FTM), non-binary/genderqueer, and crossdresser). Respondents were grouped into four gender identity categories for analysis and reporting based on their responses: *transgender women*, *transgender men*, *non-binary people*, and *crossdressers*. These gender identity categories are used throughout this report and the full survey report. See the full survey report for more information.
6. "Non-binary" is a term often used to describe people whose gender is not exclusively male or female, including those who identify with a gender other than male or female, as more than one gender, or as no gender.
7. Due to a low sample size, it was often not possible to include the experiences of crossdressers in gender-based comparisons in this report.
8. "Two Spirit" is a term used by some American Indians to describe an experience of gender that does not fall into stereotypical categories of male or female. This includes, among other experiences, genders that encompass both masculine and feminine elements, genders other than male and female, and other experiences that vary from common gender-related expectations.
9. U.S. Census Bureau. (2015). *2015 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates: Sex by Age (American Indian and Alaska Native Alone)*. Available at: https://factfinder.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?pid=ACS_15_1YR_B01001C&prodType=table.
10. U.S. Census Bureau. (2015). *2015 American Survey 1-Year Estimates: Disability Characteristics*. Available at: http://factfinder.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?pid=ACS_15_1YR_S1810&prodType=table. Calculations were completed by the research team.

11. U.S. Census Bureau. (2015). *2015 American Survey 5-Year Estimates: Selected Social Characteristics in the United States (American Indian and Alaska Native Alone)*. Available at: https://factfinder.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?pid=ACS_15_SPT_DP02&prodType=table. Calculations were completed by the research team.
12. U.S. Census Bureau. (2015). *2015 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates: Sex by Marital Status by Age for the Population 15 Years and Over (American Indian and Alaska Native Alone)*. Available at: https://factfinder.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?pid=ACS_15_1YR_B12002C&prodType=table. These findings include adults who are currently married and living with a spouse and those who are married but separated, based on the ACS definitions. See the full report for more information. The percentage of American Indian and Alaska Native people in the U.S. who are currently married and who have never been married include those who are 15 years of age and older, in contrast to the USTS sample, which includes respondents who are 18 and older. Therefore, the comparison to USTS American Indian and Alaska Native respondents should be interpreted with caution.
13. Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2015). *The Employment Situation—August 2015*. Available at: http://www.bls.gov/news.release/archives/empsit_09042015.pdf; Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2015). *The Employment Situation—September 2015*. Available at: http://www.bls.gov/news.release/archives/empsit_10022015.pdf.
14. The unemployment rate by race and ethnicity among adults in the U.S. population was calculated by the research team using CPS data available via the CPS Table Creator (<http://www.census.gov/cps/data/cpstablecreator.html>). CPS Table Creator data utilizes data from the March 2015 Current Population Survey Annual Social and Economic Supplement, in which the overall U.S. unemployment rate was 5.5%. See the full USTS report for more information about unemployment rate calculations and interpretation.
15. “Living in poverty” means living at or near the poverty line. The research team calculated the USTS poverty measure using the official poverty measure, as defined by the U.S. Census Bureau. USTS respondents were designated as living in poverty if their total family income fell under 125% of the official U.S. poverty line. See the full report for more information about this calculation.
16. Proctor, B. D., Semega, J. L., & Kollar, M. A. (2016). *Income and Poverty in the United States: 2015*. (p. 13). Washington, DC: U.S. Census Bureau. Available at: <https://www.census.gov/content/dam/Census/library/publications/2016/demo/p60-256.pdf>.
17. The 2015 poverty rate for American Indian and Alaska Native adults in the U.S. population was calculated by the research team using CPS data available via the CPS Table Creator (<http://www.census.gov/cps/data/cpstablecreator.html>).
18. U.S. Census Bureau. (2015). *American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates: Veteran Status*. Available at: https://factfinder.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?pid=ACS_15_1YR_S2101&prodType=table.
19. U.S. Census Bureau (2014). *Current Population Survey Annual Social and Economic Supplement*. Available at: <https://www.census.gov/data/tables/time-series/demo/income-poverty/cps-pinc/pinc-01.2014.html>.
20. For each form of housing discrimination or instability listed, respondents could select “does not apply to me” if the housing situation could not have happened to them in the past year. For example, those who did not attempt to rent or buy a home in the past year could not have been denied a home or apartment, and were instructed to select “does not apply to me” for that question. The results for each form of discrimination or instability do not include those who answered “does not apply to me.”
21. Intimate partner violence involving coercive control included acts of intimidation, emotional and financial harm, and physical harm to others who were important to respondents.
22. Kaebler, D. & Glaze, L. (2016). *Correctional Populations in the United States, 2015*. (p. 4). Washington, DC: Bureau of Justice Statistics. Available at: <https://www.bjs.gov/content/pub/pdf/cpus15.pdf>.
23. U.S. Census Bureau. (2015). *2015 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates: Health Insurance Coverage Status by Age (American Indian and Alaska Native Alone)*. Available at: https://factfinder.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?pid=ACS_15_1YR_B27001C&prodType=table.
24. The estimate for the percentage of people who receive coverage through the Indian Health Service reported here and in the full USTS report was calculated based on a 2015 statement that approximately 2.2 million American Indian and Alaska Native people were served by the Indian Health Service, representing more than half of the estimated 3.7 million American Indian and Alaska Native people in the United States. See <https://www.ihs.gov/newsroom/factsheets/quicklook>.

25. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2015). *BRFSS Prevalence & Trends Data*. Available at: <http://www.cdc.gov/brfss/brfssprevalence>.
26. Centers for Disease Prevention and Control. (2016). *2015 National Health Interview Survey: Sample Adult File*. Available at: https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/nhis/nhis_2015_data_release.htm.
27. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2015). Diagnoses of HIV infections in the United States and dependent areas, 2015: Table 20b. *HIV Surveillance Report* (vol. 27). Available at: <https://www.cdc.gov/hiv/pdf/library/reports/surveillance/cdc-hiv-surveillance-report-2015-vol-27.pdf>. The HIV Surveillance Report provides data for those who were living with diagnosed HIV infection in the U.S. population in 2014. The U.S. population data includes those who are 15 years of age and older and does not include the rate for adults aged 18 and older alone, so it was not possible to exactly match the USTS sample with the U.S. population data. See the full report for more information on use of the U.S. population figure.
28. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2015). Diagnoses of HIV infections in the United States and dependent areas, 2015: Table 20b. *HIV Surveillance Report* (vol. 27). Available at: <https://www.cdc.gov/hiv/pdf/library/reports/surveillance/cdc-hiv-surveillance-report-2015-vol-27.pdf>. See also note 25.
29. The Kessler Psychological Distress Scale, or K6, uses a series of questions to assess psychological distress based on how often in the past 30 days respondents felt so sad that nothing could cheer them up, nervous, restless or fidgety, hopeless, that everything was an effort, or worthless. See the National Health Interview Survey for additional information about the K6 mental health screening instrument and measure of serious psychological distress in adults (available at: http://www.healthindicators.gov/Indicators/Serious-psychological-distress-adults-percent_50055/Profile).
30. Center for Behavioral Health Statistics and Quality. (2016). *Results from the 2015 National Survey on Drug Use and Health: Detailed Tables*. Table 8.87B. Rockville, MD: Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. Available at: <https://www.samhsa.gov/data/sites/default/files/NSDUH-DetTabs-2015/NSDUH-DetTabs-2015/NSDUH-DetTabs-2015.pdf>.
31. Kessler, R. C., Borges, G., & Walters, E. E. (1999). Prevalence of and risk factors for lifetime suicide attempts in the National Comorbidity Survey. *Archives of General Psychiatry*, 56(7), 617–626.
32. Center for Behavioral Health Statistics and Quality. (2016). *Results from the 2015 National Survey on Drug Use and Health: Detailed Tables*. Table 8.73B. Rockville, MD: Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. Available at: <https://www.samhsa.gov/data/sites/default/files/NSDUH-DetTabs-2015/NSDUH-DetTabs-2015/NSDUH-DetTabs-2015.pdf>.

2015 U.S. Transgender Survey: Report on the Experiences of American Indian and Alaska Native Respondents

by: Sandy E. James, Trudie Jackson, and Mattee Jim
November 2017



The full report and Executive Summary of the 2015 U.S. Transgender Survey are available at www.USTransSurvey.org.

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**Left cover photo by Mel Ponder Photography*

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