

# Improving the Health and Safety of Transgender and Gender Expansive People

While there is no doubt that lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) people have come a long way in recent decades, the full realization of their rights is incomplete. Today, transgender and gender expansive people are experiencing a backlash that threatens their lives and weakens the bonds that hold our society together. On January 20th, the day he was inaugurated, President Trump issued an Executive Order that attacks the concept of gender identity and seeks to rollback existing protections for transgender and gender expansive people in federal programs. This exercise of presidential power not only seeks to negate the existence of transgender and gender expansive people, this and other orders seek to remove the promise of fair and equal treatment in federal programs and other areas of civic life for not only members of the LGBTQ community, but also people of color and others. Reframing the public dialogue around transgender and gender expansive people as part of the evolving story of America, while not a total solution, may allow more people to see that, except for those seeking to exploit differences, there are few fundamental areas of conflict.

By considering how their aspirations are universal (to be safe, to be loved, to be a valued part of a community, to have employment and educational opportunities, to have access to high-quality health care), it becomes easier to see how strengthening their connections to society benefits everyone. While, transgender and gender expansive people make up a very small share of the U.S. population, they are often among the most disproportionately impacted by HIV. Taking action to improve their standing in society offers a critical pathway for making progress at preventing HIV and improving the lives of people with HIV:

**Transgender people** are those whose gender identity (that is, their innate understanding of what gender they are) is different from the sex they were assigned at birth. **Gender expansive** is an umbrella term that includes people who do not fit neatly into an either or male and female, and can include persons with other identities such as non-binary, gender non-conforming, gender queer, gender fluid, and androgynous.

## RECOGNITION AND RESPECT

**Transgender and gender expansive people have been with us throughout history.** There are several actions that can better recognize and respect transgender and gender expansive people in society.

- Improve journalistic standards and expand opportunities for transgender and gender expansive artists and other cultural influencers to tell their stories
- Faith communities need to provide models for embracing transgender and gender expansive people
- Health care providers need to build the skills to respectfully and sensitively treat all people, including transgender and gender expansive people

## RIGHTS OF ALL PEOPLE

**A promise of citizenship is that all people have certain rights.** Much of the backlash against transgender and gender expansive people seeks to infringe on these rights.

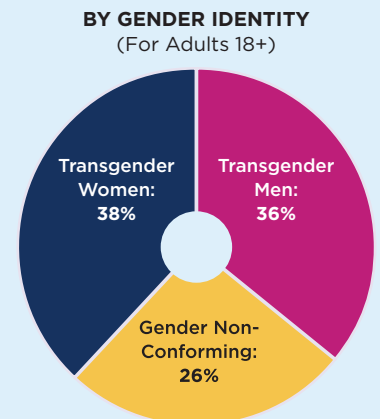
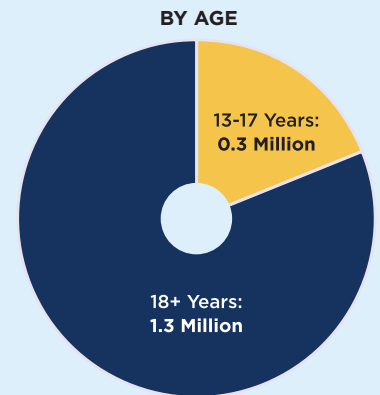
- Law enforcement, schools, workplaces, and civic institutions need to protect the safety of all people, including transgender and gender expansive people
- Employers, unions, and recruitment agencies must publicize and enforce nondiscrimination protections in employment
- Civil society groups need to establish policies that normalize the expectation that transgender and gender expansive people have the same rights as other members

## HIGH QUALITY HEALTH CARE

**Effective HIV prevention and care must be built on a foundation of affirming high quality care:**

- Medical societies, primary care associations, and others need to expand the capacity to provide high quality care consistent with WPATH Standards of Care for Transgender and Gender Diverse People

### GETTING TO KNOW TRANSGENDER AND GENDER EXPANSIVE PEOPLE: THE BASICS



**BY RACE/ETHNICITY**  
For Adults 18+ as a Share of the Population

White	0.5%
Black	0.6%
Latino	0.7%
Asian	0.5%
American Indian/ Alaska Native	0.9%
Multiracial or Other	1.0%

Sources: Herman, J.L., Flores, A.R., O'Neill, K.K. (2022). How Many Adults and Youth Identify as Transgender in the United States? The Williams Institute, UCLA. School of Law.

## AMERICANS HAVE COMPLEX VIEWS ON TRANSGENDER ISSUES

### Most Support Non-Discrimination Protections

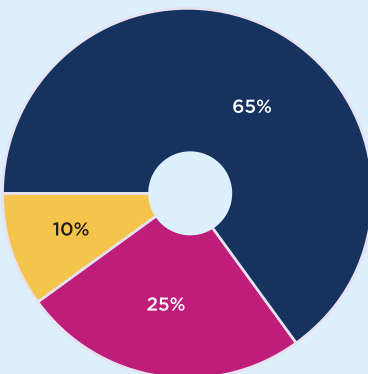
Americans are often divided in their views on transgender and gender expansive policy issues. The Pew Research Center conducted a nationally-representative survey of Americans views in May 2022.

### KNOWING SOMEONE WHO IS TRANSGENDER OR GENDER EXPANSIVE

Respondents reporting that they know someone who is transgender	40%
Respondents reporting that they know someone who is non-binary	20%
Respondents who believe that gender identity can be different than sex assigned at birth:	
• Know someone who is transgender	48%
• Do not know someone who is transgender	32%

### PROTECTION FROM DISCRIMINATION

Respondents support for laws or policies that would protect transgender people from discrimination in jobs, housing, and public spaces:



Legend:  
■ Strongly Favor/Favor  
■ Neither Favor Nor Oppose  
■ Strongly Oppose/Oppose

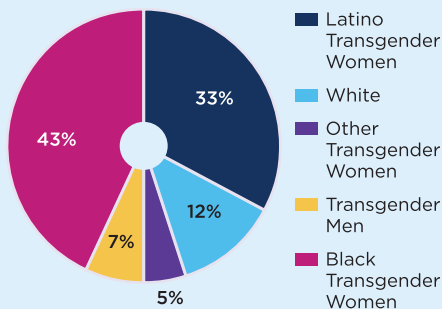
Sources: Pew Research Center, June 2022, "Americans' Complex Views on Gender Identity and Transgender Issues".

## TRANSGENDER PEOPLE AND HIV

### HIV DIAGNOSES IN 2019

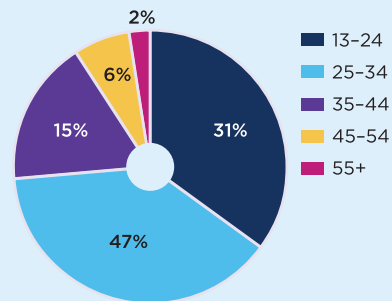
#### By Race and Gender

There were 671 HIV diagnoses among transgender people in 2019. They make up 0.3% of the U.S. population and accounted for 2% of new diagnoses



#### By Age

Thirty-one percent of new diagnoses were in transgender people under age 25 and 54% were among transgender people age 34 and under



### HEALTH INEQUITIES ARE LARGE

A special HIV surveillance report in 7 U.S. cities from 2019-2021 found 62% of Black Transgender women had HIV, 35% of transgender Latinas had HIV, and 17% of white transgender women had HIV

#### CDC's Medical Monitoring Project found (among people with HIV 18+):

- 31% of transgender people with HIV had **missed a medical appointment** in the last 12 months compared to 20% of all people with HIV
- 35% of transgender people with HIV **took all doses of HIV medications** in the last 30 days compared to 62% of all people with HIV
- 29% of transgender people with HIV **reported homelessness** in the last 12 months compared to 8% of all people with HIV
- 26% of transgender people with HIV **experienced symptoms of depression or anxiety** in the last 12 months compared to 19% of all people with HIV

Sources: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, "Fast Facts: HIV and Transgender People," March 28, 2024.

- Health providers, researchers, and funders of research must expand the capacity to collect SOGI data while ensuring that privacy and confidentiality can be protected from forced disclosure.
- Health departments and clinical providers, and community-based organizations should set goals and monitor progress toward improving HIV prevention and care outcomes for transgender and gender expansive populations

### THE TIME IS NOW

Most people in the U.S. report that they do not yet know anyone who is transgender or gender expansive, yet already two in three favor protecting them from discrimination in jobs, housing, and public spaces. By acknowledging their dignity and place in society, extending them the same basic rights as others enjoy, and ensuring that the health system can offer high quality health care, transgender and gender expansive people will be given the freedom to contribute fully to society. Taking these steps will help move us forward toward ending the HIV epidemic in the United States.



CENTER FOR HIV & INFECTIOUS DISEASE POLICY

JANUARY 2025

This brief summarizes a Big Ideas brief that is available at the link below. It is a product of the **Center for HIV and Infectious Disease Policy** of the **O'Neill Institute for National and Global Health Law**. It was informed by a stakeholder consultation held in September 2024 and was developed in partnership with **Tori Cooper** (HRC), **Marissa Miller** (Cornerstone Consultancy), **Elijah Nicholas** (Global Trans Equity Project), **Asa Radix** (Callen-Lorde), and **Maria Roman-Taylorson** (TransLatin@ Coalition). It was supported by a grant from **Gilead Sciences, Inc.** Gilead Sciences has had no input into the development or content of this brief.

<http://bit.ly/USHIVpolicyproject>