

ICPSR 37888

**National Transgender
Discrimination Survey, [United
States], 2008-2009**

Technical Document

Inter-university Consortium for
Political and Social Research
P.O. Box 1248
Ann Arbor, Michigan 48106
www.icpsr.umich.edu

National Transgender Discrimination Survey, [United States], 2008-2009

Jaime M. Grant

Arcus Center for Social Justice Leadership (ACSJL) at Kalamazoo College

Lisa Mottet

National Gay and Lesbian Task Force (U.S.)

Justin Edward Tanis

National Center for Transgender Equality (U.S.)

Jack Harrison

National Gay and Lesbian Task Force Policy Institute (U.S.)

Jody Herman

National Gay and Lesbian Task Force (U.S.)

Mara Keisling

National Center for Transgender Equality (U.S.)

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NTDS Public Use Dataset Technical Documentation

Introduction

In 2008, The National Center for Transgender Equality and the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force formed a ground-breaking research partnership to address the lack of hard data on the scope of anti-transgender discrimination. Over eight months, a team of community-based advocates, transgender leaders, researchers, lawyers and LGBT policy experts came together to create an original survey instrument.

The original survey was made available online and in print and was fielded for six months, from September 2008 through March 2009. Data collected through the survey were analyzed and results were released in February 2011 in the report entitled *Injustice at Every Turn: A Report of the National Transgender Discrimination Survey*, which can be found online at <https://www.thetaskforce.org/injustice-every-turn-report-national-transgender-discrimination-survey/>.

Survey Instrument

Over eight months in 2008, a team of social science and health researchers, grassroots and national transgender rights advocates, expert lawyers, statisticians, and LGBT movement leaders worked together to craft the survey questions and instrument. The survey development team based survey questions — their inclusion, their framing, relevant terms, and literacy level — on the experiences of transgender and gender non-conforming people in the room, their families, and their communities. The desired result was a survey instrument that was relevant and user-friendly.

There were a few places where wording of questions could have been improved, which became apparent during the data analysis phase of this project. See Appendix B (pages 182-202) in the report *Injustice at Every Turn: A Report of the National Transgender Discrimination Survey* for guidance for future researchers who may wish to utilize a similar survey instrument in future research.

The instrument included a variety of demographic questions, a series of questions regarding gender identity, questions regarding which people in respondents' lives know of their status as transgender or gender non-conforming, and questions to collect respondents' experiences in a variety of settings, including in employment, education, health care, family life, places of public accommodation, jail or prison, homeless shelters, housing, and in interactions with police. The survey was made available online and in print and was available in English and Spanish.

The instrument begins with informed consent language, which was required by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of Pennsylvania State University. The survey contains 70 questions, though Question #68 was skipped in the final instrument. There were a variety of question types used throughout the survey, including single-choice items, check-all items, matrices, and some write-in options. Including recoded variables, these questions produced 580 variables for the public use dataset.

For definitions of terms and an exhaustive review of questions included in the survey instrument, please see Appendix A and Appendix B (pages 180-202) in the report *Injustice at Every Turn: A Report of the National Transgender Discrimination Survey*.

Reports from the field varied widely about the time it took to complete the survey. Some reported taking the survey in 20 minutes on a personal computer; while others who accessed the survey through health or homeless services settings and took it with the assistance of outreach workers often took an hour or longer. Before the survey data collection began, some experts expressed concern that respondents who had a high school diploma or less would be unable to complete such a lengthy questionnaire, but the final sample included 806 respondents at that educational level.

Skip logic

The survey utilized “skip logic,” which means respondents to the online survey were automatically skipped past questions that did not pertain to them based on their answer to a particular question. On the paper version of the survey, written instructions were included to direct survey respondents around questions that do not apply to them based on their responses.

Skip logic was triggered by answers to the following questions: Q1, Q23, Q31, Q35, Q38, Q47, and Q65.

Skip logic is described in detail in the codebook for this dataset for all variables that involve skip logic.

It is clear from examination of the dataset that online skip logic did not trigger properly for all respondents when they responded to the questions listed above. In general, skip logic should have been triggered to advance the respondent to the next relevant question based on a response of “no,” “not applicable,” or a non-response. Recodes of the variables based on skip logic were done to remove those respondents who filled out those questions in error. More information on those recodes appears later in this document.

Recruitment and Sampling

The survey was fielded from September 11, 2008 through March 3, 2009. The sample was recruited using convenience sampling techniques to target transgender and gender non-conforming people, including the use of venue-based sampling and snowball sampling. Recruitment for the survey was designed to maximize responses from those who identify as transgender or gender non-conforming in any way. The final sample only includes those who identified as transgender or gender non-conforming in some way.

For purposes of this study, “transgender” was defined broadly to include those who transition from one gender to another (transsexuals), and those who may not, including genderqueer people, cross-dressers, those who are androgynous, and those whose gender non-conformity is a part of their identity. Because the term “transgender” is understood in various ways that may or may not include these groups of people, broader gender non-conforming language was used to ensure broad participation in the survey.

The survey was announced through a network of more than 800 transgender-led or transgender-serving community-based organizations in the United States. The survey was also announced through 150 active online community listservs. Two thousand paper surveys were made available to organizations

that serve hard-to-reach populations — including rural, homeless, and low-income transgender and gender non-conforming people. Phone outreach efforts to these organizations were conducted for three months while the survey was in the field.

The organizations that were part of the network to announce the survey were organizations from across the United States that served a variety of purposes. Organizations who participated were state-level and local-level political groups, social groups, support groups, college-based student groups, groups organized around a particular race or ethnicity, groups organized around a particular religious affiliation, groups organized around a particular gender identity, health organizations, and groups that provide direct service to those who are homeless from the LGBT community. Political and social groups comprised the largest portion of organizations that participated.

The final study sample includes 6,456 valid respondents from all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, Guam and the U.S. Virgin Islands. Our geographic distribution generally mirrors that of the U.S. general population. Exactly 6,021 of these respondents submitted their surveys online and 435 respondents submitted paper surveys.

Cleaning

The data cleaning process removed those respondents that did not belong in the sample. Taken together, our cleaning process reduced our sample size from an initial set of 7,521 respondents (7,057 via online and 464 via paper) to 6,456 respondents. The cleaning was conducted in a 3-stage process. First, respondents were removed whose answers indicated that they were not taking the survey in earnest or were answering questions illogically, such as by strongly agreeing with each term presented in Question 4.

Second, respondents were removed who indicated through their answers to Questions 1-4 that they were not transgender or gender non-conforming. There were a small group of people who were eliminated according to the following rubric: if they were born as one gender (Question 2), and still identified as that gender today (Question 3), and they did not identify with the listed terms (Question 4) and reported that people did not know they were gender non-conforming (Question 5) and they did not tell people (Question 6), they were removed from the sample.

Finally, incomplete surveys, duplicate responses, and those that did not consent to take the survey were cleaned from the sample. Respondents were removed if they stopped before answering Question 5. There were 31 duplicates that were removed.

Recodes

Many original variables were created for use in cleaning and analysis. First, variables were recoded to include write-in responses. Throughout the survey, respondents were able to write in responses to open-ended questions, often worded as “other, please specify _____.” These written responses were examined, and where possible, were recoded into the existing listed answer choices or categories were created or expanded to include these responses.

Recodes were also created to fix errors in skip logic. Skip logic was triggered by answers to the following questions: Q1, Q23, Q31, Q35, Q38, Q47, and Q65. The online version of the survey was designed to automatically direct respondents to the next appropriate question based on their responses to these questions. It is clear from examination of the dataset that online skip logic did not trigger properly for all respondents when they responded to the questions listed above. In general, skip logic should have been triggered to advance the respondent to the next relevant question based on a response of “no,” “not applicable,” or a non-response. In some cases, respondents were erroneously advanced to the next chronological question when they should have been directed past it. Therefore, we created recodes of variables that included skip logic to remove those people that erroneously filled out questions that should have been skipped. In this process, it was assumed that respondents correctly filled out the initial question that triggered the skip logic. For instance, Question 66 was recoded to only include those respondents who selected “yes” in Question 65. The codebook describes the skip logic as it was intended to work for each skip logic question and it is indicated by an asterisk under each skip logic question where skip logic did not work as intended for all respondents. We encourage researchers to utilize the recodes that correct for this problem.

Recodes were also created to collapse variables or variable categories into larger groups. For instance, Question 41 in its original form is a 10-level categorical variable with a write-in option. This variable was recoded into a 3-level health insurance variable indicating those who had health insurance coverage that was private, public, or had no insurance.

Recodes were also created to remove those who responded “not applicable” to certain questions or skipped certain questions. For instance, the matrix of responses to Question 39 were recoded to remove those who selected “not applicable” options that indicated they did not attend that level of school as transgender or gender non-conforming. The resulting recodes only included those who had attended that level of school as transgender or gender non-conforming. Another example is the recoding of Question 61, which removed those who skipped Question 61 altogether and those who also selected “not applicable.” We assumed in that instance that those respondents selecting “not applicable” did so correctly.

The codebook for this dataset gives a description of each variable and its coding, including a description of all recoded variables.

IRB and Hosting

This study was reviewed by The Office for Research Protections (ORP) at the Pennsylvania State University, home of the University’s Institutional Review Board (IRB), which determined the study was exempt from IRB review. The IRB approval letter granting this study an exempt status is included in the documentation that accompanies the NTDS Public Use Dataset.

The IRB process ensures confidentiality and humane treatment of survey participants, ensuring the dataset could be used in published materials and cited in peer-reviewed journals. The questionnaire began with an instruction sheet that told participants their rights and recourses as participants, as well as a variety of other information. The language in the instruction sheet met Pennsylvania State’s standards for IRB instructions.

In compliance with IRB requirements, respondents' zip codes will not be provided for use in research projects that will not be submitted for review by an Institutional Review Board or submitted for review through a similar human subjects review process.

Write-in Responses and Restricted Data

Several questions in the NTDS survey allowed respondents to write-in answers. This dataset was created in an earlier version of Stata that truncated write-in responses after a specified number of characters. The non-truncated write-in responses, plus the essay responses to Q70 and Q10 zip codes are included in a restricted data file that can be requested through ICPSR (<https://www.icpsr.umich.edu>).

Questions?

Questions regarding the NTDS Public Use Dataset and accompanying documentation should be directed to ICPSR (<https://www.icpsr.umich.edu>).