RESEARCH THAT MATTERS

LGBTQ PEOPLE ON SEX OFFENDER REGISTRIES in the US

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Laws requiring registration of individuals convicted of sexual offenses have been controversial since their inception. Although offender management practices have been part of U.S. history for many decades, legislation has expanded the use and accessibility of sex offender registries across the country in recent decades, especially after some notorious cases of child abduction, sexual abuse, and homicide. Registration in general, and the expansion of registration and public notice in particular, arose from a purported attempt to increase safety by informing the public when people convicted of sex offenses live in the community. Yet registries, and the many rules and regulations that apply to registrants, have been criticized as hyper-punitive and largely ineffective.

The United States has the world's largest prison population. Overall, mass incarceration disproportionately impacts people of color, people with disabilities, and the LGBTQ community. LGBTQ people are at increased risk for being targeted for sex crimes, as historical prejudice and stigma have depicted LGBTQ people—especially gay/bisexual men—as sexual predators. Despite this, little is known about LGBTQ people on sex offender registries in the United States.

In this project, we surveyed people who are required to register on sex offender registries (SOR). To date, there are no data on LGBTQ people on SOR. We conducted a national survey that was self-administered, anonymous, and completed online. One purpose of the survey was to identify people who are LGBTQ and straight/cisgender on U.S. SOR. In addition to general demographics, the survey included questions about the following: (a) the offenses that led to registration (what kinds of crimes); (b) the legal criminal process (went to trial vs. settled, served time in jail/prison, how long, etc.); (c) life on the registry, including what kinds of conditions the person must abide by; (d) the impact of registries, referred to in the literature as "collateral consequences," including experiences of discrimination, violence, housing instability, and unemployment; and (e) mental health, physical health, and socioeconomic conditions (poverty, homelessness). Data were obtained through the SORS survey between 3/12/2020 and 11/29/2020.

Respondents also had a chance to write short narratives in response to some survey questions. Excerpts from narratives by LGBTQ respondents are included throughout the report.

> *My husband lives out of state, I cannot live with them, fear living in a halfway house because I am trans, and no apartment will take me because of my record, so I live in an extended stay hotel that costs almost as much as the mortgage on my husband's home.*
>
> **36-year-old, White/Hispanic, bisexual, transgender person**

> *I have two advanced graduate degrees that I am no longer able to use because of my status. In addition, I have applied for over 900 jobs and when the background check is completed, I am turned down or rejected for the position. @ best I can only find entry level positions that pay minimum wage with no benefits."*
>
> **65-year-old, White, gay man**

The report provides data on 964 respondents, with data presented for LGBTQ and straight cisgender individuals. Because of this, specific results for other groups, especially women and people of color,

may become hidden due to aggregation of data where most respondents are men and White. In subsequent publications, we will focus on women and transgender persons and on racial/ethnic differences.

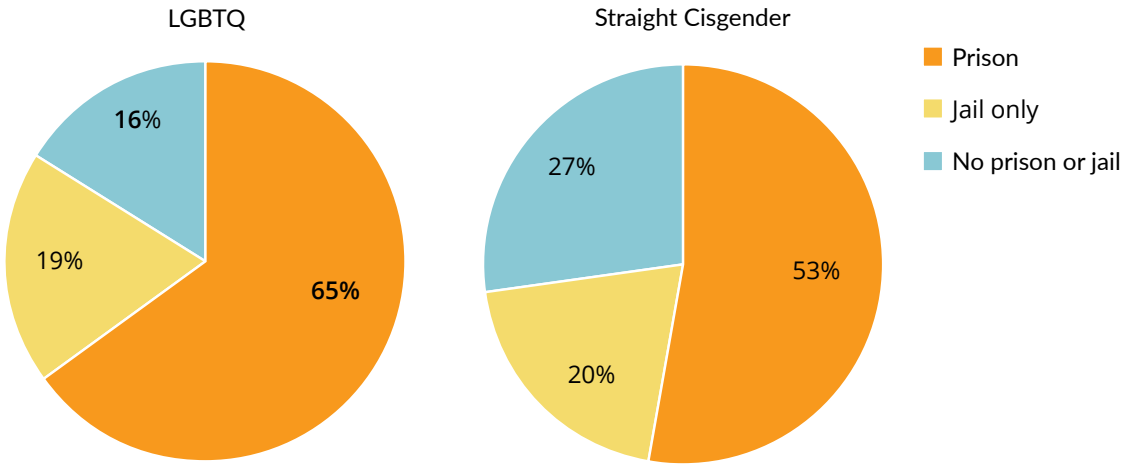
FINDINGS

- The average age among respondents was 51; 87% were White; and 20% identified as lesbian, gay, bisexual, queer/pansexual, and/or transgender (LGBTQ). Most respondents were men, with fewer LGBTQ respondents identifying as a man than straight cisgender respondents (92% vs. 97%); 0.7% of all respondents identified as transgender.

Interactions with the Criminal Justice System

- Almost all (90%) of the respondents had one sex offense conviction; 6% had an additional sex offense conviction following the first incident for which they were required to register. These estimates did not differ between LGBTQ and straight cisgender respondents. Nine percent of LGBTQ respondents had sodomy statutes included in their offense and 2% had a positive HIV diagnosis included in their offense as aggravating factors.
- Compared with straight cisgender adults, more LGBTQ adults had three or more victims (9% vs. 17%), and almost half of LGBTQ adults had victims that were an image, compared with less than one-quarter of straight cisgender adults. More straight cisgender adults had victims who were family members compared to LGBTQ adults (39% vs. 24%). One-third of both LGBTQ and straight cisgender adults had a victim who was under the age of 12.
- Respondents were asked about their interactions with the criminal justice system. Less than 10% of respondents had gone to trial: most respondents pleaded guilty or no contest, and about one-third were convicted of a reduced offense.
- More than half of respondents had been incarcerated in prison for their sex offense conviction, with more LGBTQ than straight cisgender adults incarcerated in prison (65% vs. 53%). Among those who had served prison or jail sentences, more LGBTQ than straight cisgender people reported sentences of 25 years or more (5% vs. 1.6%).

Incarceration history among LGBTQ and straight cisgender adults on sex offense registries



Note: Bolded values indicate notable differences between LGBTQ and straight cisgender adults

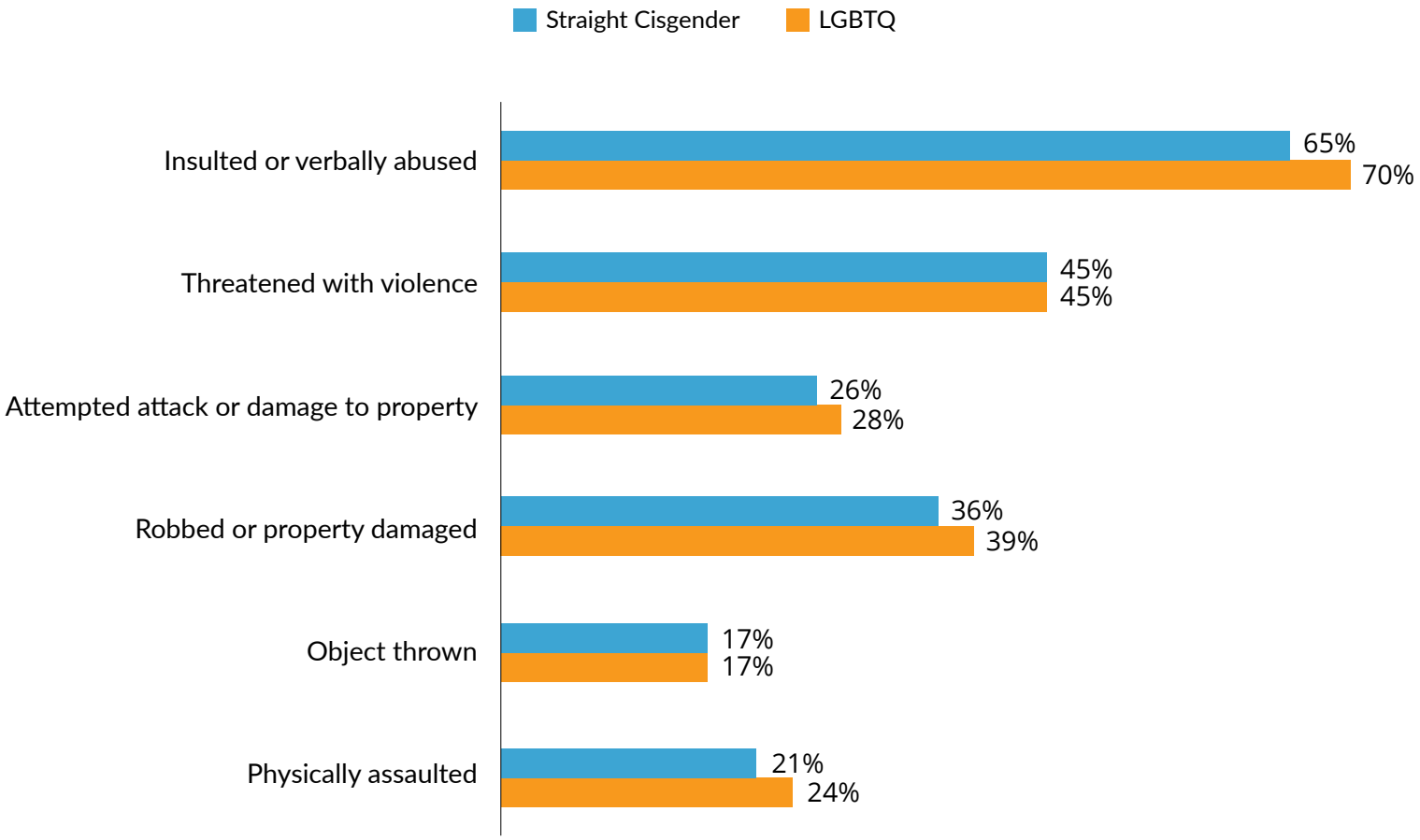
- Respondents were asked if, when they were ordered to register, they were told how many years they would have to stay on the registry. About a third said they were not told how long they would be required to register. In fact, the majority (45%) were required to register for 25 years or more, and very few (5%) were required to register for less than 10 years. Most respondents were required to register in one jurisdiction, but about 30% were required to register in two or more jurisdictions. About 8% had been removed from the registry by the time they responded to the survey.
- Close to 80% of respondents received medical or psychological treatment related to their sex offense (sometimes referred to as "corrective treatment"), including 83% of LGBTQ people and 76% of straight cisgender people. For 86% of people, this treatment was mandated by a court, judge, or parole/probation officer. LGBTQ people were more likely than straight cisgender people to have received treatment while incarcerated (39% vs. 27%).
- 10% of LGBTQ people and 3% of straight cisgender people reported that their treatment included elements of sexual orientation or gender identity change effort (conversion therapy).

Collateral Consequences of Being on the Registry

Barriers to employment and housing and vigilante violence, harassment, and discrimination due to both registry restrictions and stigma are among the collateral consequences experienced by people required to register.

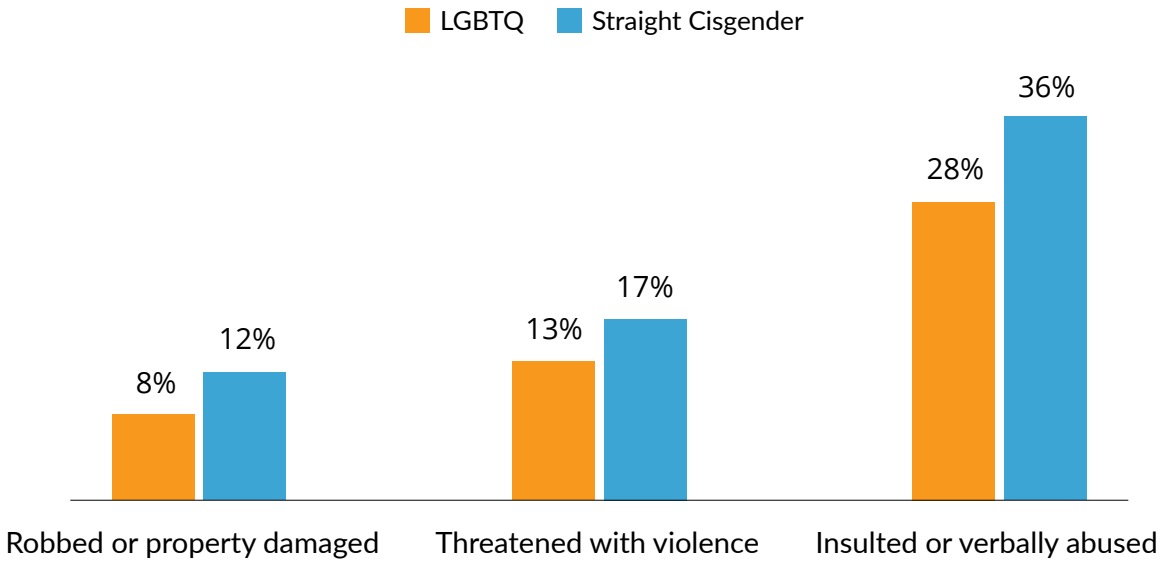
- Most people (56%) reported that they lost a job due to being on the registry, and almost a third were denied a promotion for this reason. Also, more than 30% of the people said they changed jobs once or twice in the two years prior to the survey. Among them, 27% of straight cisgender respondents and 39% of LGBTQ respondents reported that they were terminated from their job due to being on the registry, and about 20% of respondents changed jobs because they were harassed.
- Two-thirds said they had difficulty finding a place to live that was not too close to a school, bus stop, park, or playground. Among the 30% of respondents who had moved at least once in the two years prior to taking the survey, the most common reasons for moving were related to legal restrictions, financial reasons due to the registry, and other difficulties related to the registry, such as harassment.
- Most respondents reported that they had been denied contact with family members and had lost a friendship. Approximately half of respondents reported being harassed in person or via media and said that they were unable to date or have intimate partners.
- Since being on the registry, LGBTQ and straight cisgender respondents experienced similar rates of abuse and violence for the most part, with 21% of straight cisgender and 24% of LGBTQ respondents having been hit, beaten, physically attacked, or sexually assaulted. Many respondents reported being verbally insulted or abused (66%), threatened with violence (45%), or robbed or vandalized (37%).
- Asked about the reason for their experiences of violence and harassment, almost all (90%) of the respondents believed it was due to their being on the registry. LGBTQ respondents also said that violence and harassment were due to their sexual identity (24%), gender expression or appearance (4%), or HIV status (1%).

Violence and harassment in adulthood



- Respondents also reported the impact the registration had on their families. One in 3 respondents reported that a family member had been verbally assaulted, and 1 in 10 reported that a family member had been robbed or had had property stolen or purposely damaged.

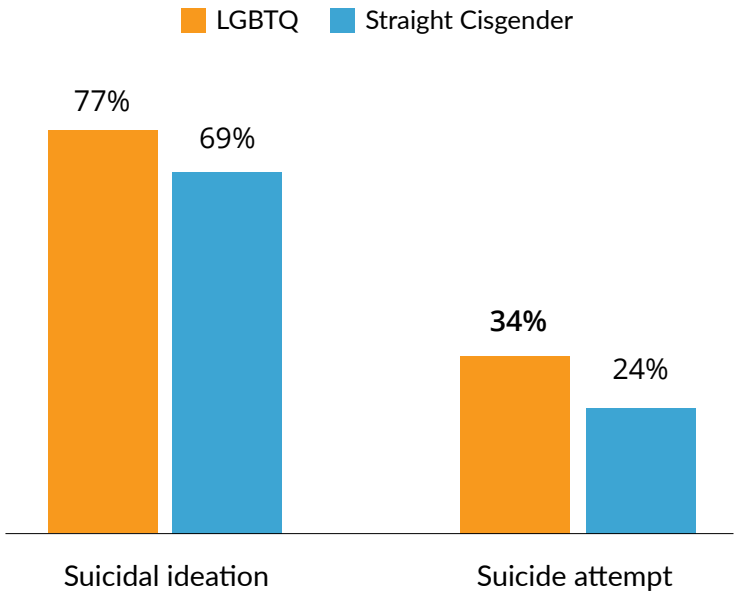
Victimization of family members



Mental Health Status

- At the time of the survey, almost one-third of respondents reported fair or poor general health, and about 40% were experiencing high psychological distress. Lifetime suicidal ideation was highly prevalent (71%), with somewhat more LGBTQ than straight cisgender people reporting suicidal ideation over their lifetime (77% vs. 69%, respectively). Suicide attempts were also highly prevalent among respondents, with about 34% of LGBTQ people and 24% of straight cisgender individuals reporting at least one suicide attempt in their lifetime.

Lifetime suicidality



Note: Bolded values indicate notable differences between LGBTQ and straight cisgender respondents.

INTRODUCTION

Laws requiring registration of individuals convicted of sexual offenses have been controversial since their inception.[1] Although offender management practices have been part of U.S. history for many decades, legislation has expanded the use and accessibility of sex offender registries across the U.S. in recent decades, especially after some notorious cases of child abduction, sexual abuse, and homicide. Registration in general, and the expansion of registration and public notice in particular, arose from a purported attempt to increase safety by informing the public when people convicted of sex offenses were living in the community.[2] Yet state and federal registries, and the many rules and regulations that apply to registrants, have been criticized as hyper-punitive and largely ineffective.[3] While highly publicized violent attacks motivate lawmaking in this area, the resulting policies govern all people convicted of sex crimes. This mismatch between the public image and the more common profile of people on the registry results in laws that do not necessarily perform as intended in terms of promoting public safety, while causing unjustified harms for those who must register. These harms have been referred to as "collateral consequences."[4, 5]

After reviewing the evidence on the impact of sex offender registration and notification (SORN) laws on re-offending, Agan and Prescott (2021) found that "none of these studies—despite different methods, data, and assumptions—detect any reliable reduction in sex offense recidivism as a result of SORN laws, either when evaluating registration and notification combined or when evaluating community notification on its own."[6] They concluded, "Accumulated evidence largely rejects the claim that SORN laws have achieved their goal of increasing public safety."[7]

A BRIEF HISTORY OF SEXUAL REGISTRATION LAWS

In 1947, California became the first state to enact a registration law for specific sexual offenses.[8] However, access to these registries by the general U.S. public did not become commonplace until the 1990s. Ushering in a new era of sexual registration laws, the state of Washington passed a statute that required "[a]ny adult or juvenile residing in th[e] state who has been found to have committed or has been convicted of any sex offense…[to] register with the county sheriff for the county of the person's residence."[9] Washington's Community Protection Act of 1990 was also the first in the nation to include the dissemination of personal information of people on the registry.

On the federal level, Congress passed the Jacob Wetterling Crimes Against Children and Sexually Violent Offenders Act in 1994.[10] Under this statute, states were required to maintain a sex offense registry and annually verify the addresses of all registrants for at least 10 years following their incarceration. States were free to impose additional requirements beyond these minimum provisions.[11] States that failed to reach these minimum requirements faced the threat of a 10% reduction in Byrne Grants, their primary source of criminal justice funding.[12, 13]

In 1996, Congress passed Megan's Law, further expanding notification guidelines and making it easier for the public to access information regarding local registrants.[14] Despite this nationwide expansion, state and local law enforcement agencies still maintained substantial discretion as to how this information was made available and disseminated to the public.[15] By 2006, 40 states had registries that were easily accessible through an electronic format.[16]

In 2006, Congress passed the Sex Offender Registration and Notification Act (SORNA) under the Adam Walsh Child Protection and Safety Act.[17] SORNA was intended to make it easier for local and federal law enforcement personnel to monitor registrants' locations and enforce other local restrictions. The act established a national registration system, expanded the number of registration-eligible offenses, and required that minors be registered in certain instances. SORNA also created a three-tier risk classification system for registrants that states were expected to implement,[18] with states required to follow federal registration guidelines based on offense type and sentence length (e.g., certain sex offenses punishable by over a year in prison are automatically Tier II or Tier III).[19] Each tier has lengthy registration requirements, with Tier I registrants ordered to register for 15 years, Tier II registrants ordered to register for at least 25 years, and Tier III registrants ordered to register indefinitely.[20] Again, states are free to impose additional restrictions or supervision on top of these mandatory minimum guidelines. Most states use a variety of methods to determine risk classifications and related registry requirements, ranging from unstructured clinical impressions to actuarial risk assessment tools.[21] Despite incentives to comply with SORNA, as of 2020, only 18 states had "substantially" implemented SORNA, demonstrating the "legal, operational, and resource barriers to implementation" faced by states and local jurisdictions.[22, 23]

Violations classified as sex offenses vary widely. They include many more acts than the most horrendous crimes that prompted the expansion of registry and notification laws. In some states, convictions for "flashing," "mooning," public urination, or indecent exposure require registration as a sex offender.[24] Other states include child kidnapping and child endangerment as registerable offenses, even when no sexual assault was involved.[25] In Alabama, an individual could be listed for displaying a lewd bumper sticker on their vehicle,[26] and until 2011, a person in Louisiana who exchanged sexual services for money faced a similar threat of being placed on the registry.[27]

> *I was forced to register due to HIV non-disclosure. No transmission. Michigan law has been modernized since then. Ironically, the law that I violated did not require registration under the MSORA, but the judge took the liberty to misapply a catchall phrase. They are disclosing my HIV status on the registry. Seems unconstitutional, but they're doing it anyways. I just got off parole and am wandering looking for work & housing.*
>
> **39-year-old, White, gay man**

The exact number of people required to register as sex offenders in the United States is unknown, and estimates vary greatly. The National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC), which previously regularly published estimates, last estimated that more than 917,000 individuals were listed on registries as of 2018.[28] In their analyses, Ackerman and colleagues have pointed out various methodological difficulties, including double counting and the inclusion of deceased individuals, suggesting that NCMEC's number is inflated.[29] Ackerman and colleagues scraped U.S. registries for data, and after careful checking of the data found that their corrected dataset represented 66% of the 2010 NCMEC total.[30] Applying this correction to the 2018 data would reduce the NCMEC reported count to about 605,000 people. By comparison, there are 2 million people in the nation's prisons and jails, making the United States the world leader in incarceration.[31]

Aside from registration, all states impose a variety of severe civil restrictions on people convicted of felony or misdemeanor sex offenses.[32] Nationwide, there are more than 44,000 legally established

restrictions for felony and misdemeanor convictions: 18,000 of these civil consequences are mandatory following the completion of an individual's criminal sentence, and 26,000 carry permanent restrictions on an individual's activities.[33] Depending on the jurisdiction, registrants face barriers to seeing their own children and family members; accessing housing, employment, public assistance, and student loans; voting; serving as jurors or public officials; and serving in the military. These barriers have been criticized for creating stigma about offenders and counteracting efforts to reintegrate formerly incarcerated people back into society.[34]

Some people convicted of sexual offenses also face involuntary civil commitment.[35] Twenty states, the District of Columbia, and federal law allow involuntary commitment for people convicted of sex offenses following the completion of their criminal sentence, purportedly for the purpose of treatment.[36] Researchers have argued that this civil incarceration violates an individual's constitutional right to substantive due process and to protection from ex post facto laws and double jeopardy.[37] However, the U.S. Supreme Court has repeatedly held that civil commitment does not violate the Constitution.[38] The Williams Institute's research in 2020 found that there were more than 6,300 people detained in the 20 state and federal civil commitment programs.[39] Based on reliable data from 13 states, it was found that Black residents faced a rate of civil commitment detention more than twice that of White residents.[40] In two states with reliable data about the sex of the victim, New York and Texas, men who had male victims were two to three times as likely to be civilly committed than men with only female victims. This difference held for White men, Black men, and Hispanic men. These patterns reflect the classification of gay/bisexual and other men who have sex with men (MSM) as more violent, more dangerous, or mentally ill, and therefore more deserving of commitment than heterosexual men in civil commitment procedures.[41]

RECIDIVISM OF SEX OFFENSES

Contrary to public opinion, most research shows that people convicted of sex offenses are unlikely to be arrested for a new sex crime. In 2003, the Department of Justice published a report studying the recidivism of 9,691 people convicted of sex offenses who were released from prison in 1994.[42] They found that 5.3% of these individuals were rearrested for a new sex crime within three years of their release from prison.[43] Langan and Levin found that during that same three-year period, 13.4% of people convicted of robbery were rearrested for robbery; 22% of those convicted of assault were rearrested for assault; 23.4% of those convicted of burglary were rearrested for burglary; and 41.2% of those convicted of drug offenses were rearrested for a drug offense.[44]

In a sample of 67,966 people imprisoned for any crime, 67% were arrested at least once in the next nine years.[45] Of those serving sentences for sexual assault or rape, 7.7% were arrested again for rape or sexual assault over the nine-year period following release.[46] A 2005 meta-analysis of 73 recidivism studies found an average of 13.7% recidivism.[47] The U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics, reported on 10-year same-offense rearrest records for individuals released from state prisons in 2008. Of people released in 2008 after serving time for the offense of rape/sexual assault, 6.3% were re-arrested for rape/sexual assault (including all forcible sex assault and nonforcible acts involving minors and others unable to consent) over the next 10 years.[48]

DISPARATE IMPACT: INEQUALITY IN LEGAL SYSTEMS

The United States has the world's largest prison population.[49] Overall, mass incarceration disproportionately impacts people of color, people with disabilities, and the LGBTQ community. While Black people make up 13% of the United States population, they represent more than 27% of individuals arrested, 28% of people on probation, and 38% of people on parole.[50] LGBTQ individuals are also overrepresented among people serving criminal sentences. For example, 9.3% of men in prison, 6.2% of men in jail, 42% of women in prison, and 36% of women in jail were sexual minorities (including people who identify as lesbian, gay, or bisexual, and people who reported having had a same-sex sexual experience before arrival at the facility).[51]

Within the criminal justice system, Black defendants are less likely than White men to accept plea agreements, more likely to be found guilty of more serious charges at trial, and more likely to receive longer sentences.[52] Black men are overrepresented among registrants. In a sample of 450,000 registrants, 27% were Black.[53] In every state except Michigan, Black men experienced a higher rate of inclusion on sex offender registries, with more than 15 jurisdictions having representation at over 27%.[54]

Both legal and extralegal factors contribute to the disproportionate rate of inclusion. For example, public perception that Black people are more dangerous than White people means that crimes committed by Black people are more often reported.[55, 56] In statutory rape cases, studies found that White statutory rape victims had higher offender arrest odds irrespective of the offender's race, whereas incidents in which the victims were of minority race/ethnicity tended to have fewer arrests.[57, 58] One 2013 study reviewed 35 different cases where a Black man had been erroneously convicted of rape or sexual assault against a White person and later had a postconviction DNA exoneration. The authors identified the "Black sexual predator" stereotype as a cause of false convictions, in addition to "erroneous eyewitness identification by the assault victim, coerced false confessions, all-White juries, discounted alibis, misconduct by officials, and flawed expert testimony."[59]

LGBTQ PEOPLE ON THE REGISTRY

Criminalization of LGBTQ people has a long history within the criminal justice system as well, dating back to decades of criminalization of homosexuality through sodomy laws. Throughout the 20th century, policymakers have used the stereotype of the gay male pedophile—which research has refuted—to gain support in criminalizing the actions of LGBTQ individuals.[60, 61,62] Such prejudice may continue to lead to an overrepresentation of LGBTQ people within the criminal justice system.[63] For example, LGBTQ youth are more likely to be targets for arrest and to be subjected to sex offense risk assessments for any offense because of their sexual orientation.[64] Another example is that the instrument most used to assess sexual offense recidivism, the Static-99R, gives a higher-risk score to men who had a same-sex victim as opposed to a different-sex victim.[65]

LGBTQ youth are more likely than heterosexual cisgender youth to be held in custody, which may lead them into the criminal justice system as adults at higher rates than their heterosexual counterparts.[66] Non-heterosexual youth also face increased risks for addiction, bullying, and familial abuse.[67] LGBTQ youth report higher incidences of verbal and physical abuse and harassment by peers in educational systems; due to bullying, they also have higher truancy violations.[68] Sexual minority girls, in particular, have higher rates of discipline.[69] Compared to their non-LGBTQ peers, LGBTQ youth face harsher

sentences and are more often prosecuted for consensual sexual activity.[70] Surveys show that a lack of knowledge on LGBTQ issues has led to bias in legal decision making.[71] LGBTQ persons utilizing the court system also note difficulties preserving privacy regarding their sexual orientation, as well as mistreatment and disrespect throughout legal proceedings and overall barriers in access to courts.[72] Within juvenile proceedings, rejection of identities, beliefs that sexuality and gender identity are personal choices, and attempts to use punishment to control and change LGBTQ youth all serve to increase discrimination in the system.[73]

A 2013 study assessed public attitudes toward registering youth due to sharing child pornography while "sexting." The authors found that participants were more likely to support registration as a sex offender if the person exchanging "sexts" was in a same-sex relationship rather than a heterosexual relationship.[74] Another study suggests that moral rejection of LGBTQ people impacts the treatment they receive in courts.[75] In one study, research participants were asked to pass judgment on fictitious accounts of statutory rape. Respondents in the study made harsher judgments when the perpetrator was described as a 16-year-old male who had had sex with a male, as compared to a 16-year-old male who had had sex with a female. The authors concluded that "reading about a gay (versus straight) juvenile made people more morally outraged, which in turn made them more supportive of [sex offender] registration. … [P]eople believed the gay adolescent deserved punishment because they were morally outraged by his actions, not because they wanted to protect society."[76]

Such prejudice impacts the public, legislators, and actors in the justice system. For example, in Texas, only different-sex young couples are permitted to use an age gap of three years or less as a defense in court against statutory sexual assault charges.[77] Although same-sex statutory rape claims account for only 1% of all statutory rape claims, the following statistics highlight the uneven impact for statutory rape cases: For every 10 boys arrested for the rape of a girl that they do *not* have a relationship with, 8 boys are arrested for the statutory rape of a girl that they *are* in a relationship with, 43 boys who are in relationships with boys are arrested for statutory rape, and 83 girls in relationships with girls are arrested for statutory rape.[78, 79]

Additionally, under HIV-specific statutes in six states, people living with HIV—who disproportionately belong to the LGBTQ community—are required to register as sex offenders if they are convicted of any crime.[80] Gender-minority girls of color who are engaged in sex work may be particularly at risk. HIV criminal laws are particularly prejudicial, because most of these laws require no actual transmission, intent to transmit, or even the feasibility of transmission.

PSYCHOLOGICAL TREATMENT FOR REGISTRANTS

Cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) aims to improve interpersonal problem-solving; facilitate communication skills; and correct thoughts, feelings, and behaviors in order to prevent inappropriate actions. Multisystemic therapy (MST) uses a family-based approach to improve monitoring, supervision, and discipline aimed at developing a safety plan. Evidence shows that use of both types of therapies is effective. Studies have shown a 10% reduction in recidivism as a result of these therapies, and studies done from 2002 to 2009 suggest that the reduction could be as high as 22%.[81] Evaluations of CBT alone noted reductions in recidivism of from 13.7% to 10.1%.[82] Though not easily generalized, these outcomes suggest a desirable effect of corrective treatment.[83]

COLLATERAL CONSEQUENCES FOR REGISTRANTS

Registrants face substantial barriers to life and livelihood. Twenty-six states impose zoning restrictions on where registrants can live.[84] In a survey of registrants, 38% reported difficulty in securing affordable housing.[85] One-fifth reported being forced to move because of their registration status; one-quarter said they were unable to return home after serving their sentence; 37% were unable to live with a supportive family member; and nearly a third reported that a landlord refused to rent to them because of their registration status. As a result of the restrictions, registrants note increased isolation, financial insecurity, and decreased stability. In another survey of registrants, respondents noted that they did not perceive residency restrictions as a helpful risk management tool, but rather as a trigger for re-offense.[86]

In addition to registration's strict and difficult requirements, registration and community notification bring about consequences to registrants that come from stigma, community shaming, and societal ostracism.[87, 88] Registrants report experiencing vigilantism, harassment, victimization, and microaggressions, such as being stared at and pointed out in public settings.[89] Registrants in one study cited employment, housing, and relationship difficulties and community harassment and vigilantism as sources of stress in their daily lives.[90]

Harsh collateral consequences of the registry have been described as criminogenic and may contribute to recidivism, as they limit and bar an individual's access to personal and familial support and damage re-entry efforts.[91, 92] The U.S. Commission on Civil Rights issued a report that presented a variety of recommendations for better incorporating people into society post-incarceration. Given that the process to restore rights through a pardon application or a judicial record sealing is complicated and opaque, there are no realistic measures registrants can take to counteract the negative effect of the punitive registry consequences. The commission suggested that there be limitations to the discretion of public housing providers to categorically bar registrants, and it recommended increasing access and eligibility for student loans and for Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) and the Supplementary Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). An additional recommendation was that people awaiting trial be notified of the post-incarceration consequences when they are offered a plea agreement, as notice of these consequences is not currently required.[93]

ABOUT THIS STUDY

The Sex Offense Registries Study (SORS) was first motivated by our earlier research demonstrating that LGBTQ persons are disproportionately incarcerated in prisons and jails in the United States, a phenomenon that was not previously understood on a national scale. We observed that sexual minorities were ascribed longer sentences, experienced greater rates of sexual victimization while incarcerated, and were more likely to have been convicted of "violent sexual crimes."[94] This, together with evidence that LGBTQ persons are subject to over-policing in general, and in particular where sexual matters are concerned, led to our interest in examining whether sex offender registration and notification laws might also be a site of disproportionate criminal justice consequences for LGBTQ persons.

For this project, we surveyed people required to register on sex offender registries (SOR). To date, there are no data on LGBTQ people on SOR. We conducted a national survey that was self-

administered, anonymous, and completed online. One purpose of the survey was to identify people who are LGBTQ and straight/cisgender on SOR. In addition to general demographics, the survey included questions about the following: (a) the offenses that led to registration (what kinds of crimes); (b) the legal criminal process (went to trial vs. settled, served time in jail/prison and for how long, etc.); (c) life on the registry, including what kinds of conditions the person must abide by; (d) the impact of registries, referred to in the literature as "collateral consequences," including experiences of discrimination, violence, housing instability, and unemployment; and (e) mental health, physical health, and socioeconomic conditions (poverty, homelessness).

In this report, we focus on LGBTQ versus straight cisgender respondents. This way of aggregating the data makes it difficult to see areas where women and people of color are distinct; in subsequent reports on survey respondents from this study, we will examine trends among women and among people of color.

RESULTS

DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS

Table 1 shows demographic characteristics for the total sample and separately for straight cisgender and LGBTQ adults required to register on a sex offender registry. Of the respondents, the average age was 51; 87% were White; and 20% identified as lesbian, gay, bisexual, queer/pansexual, and/or transgender (LGBTQ). The proportion of LGBTQ people in our sample is almost four times that of a recent national estimate of LGBTQ identification among adults in the United States (5.6%).[95] Most study respondents were men, with fewer LGBTQ respondents than straight cisgender respondents identifying as a man (92% vs. 97%); 0.7% of all respondents identified as transgender.

More than half of the respondents were educated beyond high school, with 62% of LGBTQ adults and 54% of straight cisgender adults having at least an associate degree. In terms of economic factors, 42% of respondents had incomes below 200% of the federal poverty level (FPL). That figure is higher than the percentage for the U.S. overall, where 25% of the general adult population have incomes below 200% FPL.[96] Additionally, almost 30% of LGBTQ respondents and 20% of straight cisgender respondents reported being currently unemployed, and about 16% of both groups had been unemployed for over a year. The U.S. unemployment rate between March and November of 2020, when we collected data (during the Covid pandemic), ranged from 4.4% to 14.8%.[97] Almost a quarter (23%) of respondents were self-employed, compared with 6% of the general population (among those 16 years or older who were employed).[98] Similar proportions of LGBTQ and straight cisgender respondents were employed full- or part-time, were retired, and were disabled.

Table 1. Demographic characteristics of adults on sex offense registries, by sexual and gender identity

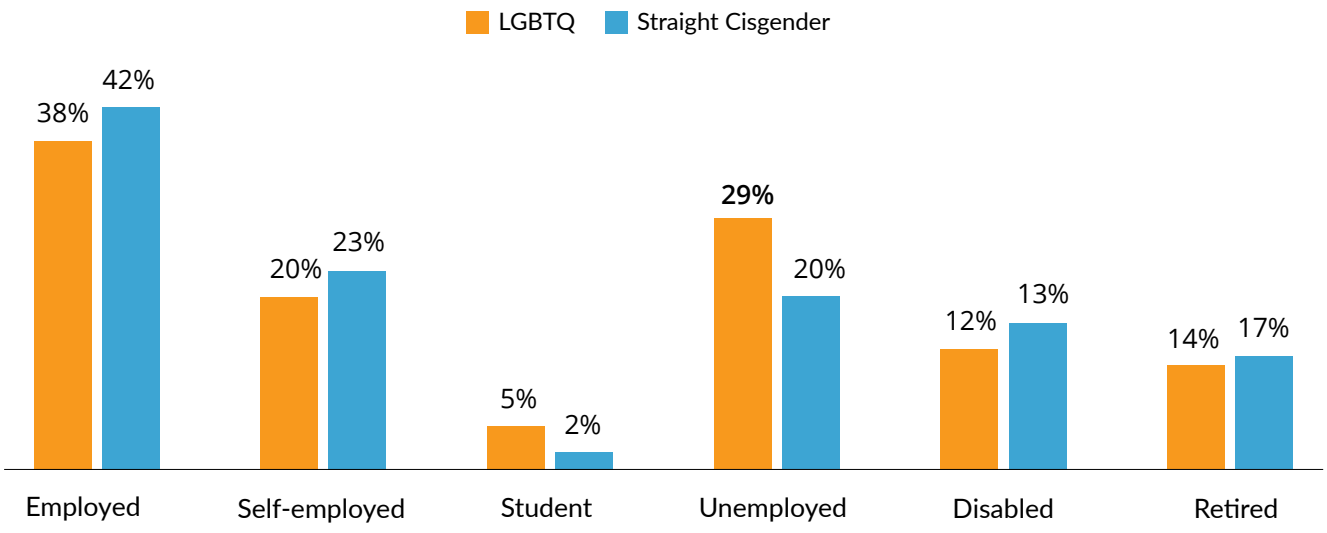
	TOTAL (N = 964)	LGBTQ (N = 192)	STRAIGHT CISGENDER (N = 772)
	MEAN (SD)	MEAN (SD)	MEAN (SD)
Age	50.5 (13.5)	49.9 (13.6)	50.6 (13.4)
	% (95% CI)	% (95% CI)	% (95% CI)
Race/ethnicity			
BIPOC	12.6 (10.6, 14.8)	9.4 (6.0, 14.4)	13.4 (11.1, 16.0)
White	87.4 (85.2, 89.4)	90.6 (85.6, 94.0)	86.6 (84.0, 88.9)
Gender			
Man	96.0 (94.6, 97.1)	92.2 (87.4, 95.2)	97.0 (95.6, 98.0)
Woman	3.2 (2.3, 4.5)	4.7 (2.5, 8.8)	2.9 (1.9, 4.3)
Transgender	0.7 (0.3, 1.5)	3.7 (1.7, 7.5)	N/A
Sexual identity			
Straight	80.1 (77.4, 82.5)	N/A	N/A
LGBQ	19.9 (17.5, 22.6)	N/A	N/A
Education			
Some college or less	44.5 (41.4, 47.6)	38.5 (31.9, 45.6)	46.0 (42.5, 49.5)
Associate degree or above	55.4 (52.3, 58.6)	61.8 (54.7, 68.4)	54.0 (50.5, 57.5)
Received special education	18.2 (15.8, 20.9)	18.2 (13.3, 24.6)	18.2 (15.5, 21.2)

	TOTAL (N = 964)	LGBTQ (N = 192)	STRAIGHT CISGENDER (N = 772)
	MEAN (SD)	MEAN (SD)	MEAN (SD)
Poverty			
HH Income below 200% of FPL	42.0 (38.7, 45.3)	43.4 (36.3, 50.9)	41.6 (38.0, 45.3)
Employment*			
Employed full-time	32.5 (29.6, 35.5)	28.1 (22.2, 34.9)	33.6 (30.3, 37.0)
Employed part-time	8.5 (6.9, 10.4)	9.4 (6.0, 14.4)	8.3 (6.5, 10.5)
Self-employed	22.5 (20.0, 25.2)	20.3 (15.2, 26.6)	23.1 (20.2, 26.2)
Unemployed	21.7 (19.2, 24.4)	**28.7** (22.7, 35.5)	20.0 (17.3, 22.9)
1 year or more	15.7 (13.5, 18.0)	17.7 (12.9, 23.8)	15.2 (12.8, 17.9)
Less than 1 year	6.0 (4.7, 7.7)	**10.9** (7.3, 16.2)	4.8 (3.5, 6.5)
Retired	16.1 (13.9, 18.5)	13.6 (9.4, 19.2)	16.7 (14.2, 19.5)
Disabled	12.3 (10.4, 14.6)	11.5 (7.7, 16.8)	12.6 (10.4, 15.1)
Student	2.8 (1.9, 4.1)	4.7 (2.5, 8.8)	2.3 (1.5, 3.7)

Notes: *Categories are not mutually exclusive and therefore do not add to 100%. Bolded values indicate notable differences between LGBTQ and straight cisgender respondents. BIPOC = Black, Indigenous, Person of Color (includes respondents who identified as anything other than White or Middle Eastern/North African (MENA). "White" includes only those respondents who identified as White or MENA only. "HH Income below 200% FPL" = Combined household income from all sources is at or below 200% of the 2020 FPL and is dependent on the respondent's age and HH size, including the number of children.[99]

> *Its not worth the stress to find a job and constantly worry about being fired because of your past. This is the main reason I started working for myself. Which has paid off because I work hard.*
>
> 37-year-old, White, gay man

Figure 1. Employment status of LGBTQ and straight cisgender adults on sex offense registries



Notes: Categories are not mutually exclusive and therefore do not add to 100%. "Employed" includes full-time and part-time employment. Bolded values indicate notable differences between LGBTQ and straight cisgender respondents.

> *I have to take time out of work every three months to register information that the sheriff department already has access to. I have to pay them $50 a year to stay compliant for them having to process this information. And pay the Secretary of State to upkeep this information every time I pay my car registration, renew my license, and pay my state taxes. Money, money, money… I have to pay the state many times over for the same information every year when computers are the ones doing all the work. Discrimination laws that protect felons apparently don't apply to sex offenders. And no one to enforce what little rights we do have.*
>
> **35-year-old, Hispanic, gay man**

CONVICTION HISTORY

Approximately 15% of respondents had other convictions prior to their sex offense conviction, and about 11% had two or more prior sex offense convictions (note that multiple convictions can co-occur in any one incident). Six percent of respondents had an additional sex offense conviction following the first incident for which they were required to register. These estimates did not differ between LGBTQ and straight cisgender respondents. This number is consistent with other estimates of recidivism among people on sex offense registries—for example, a recent study of people released from state prisons for rape or sexual assault found that 6.3% had an arrest for rape or sexual assault within 10 years of release.[100]

The most common offenses that respondents were convicted of were child pornography (30%), statutory rape (22%), and child molestation (22%). Fewer than 10% of convictions involved lewd behavior, enticing a minor, rape, or sexual assault or battery. Ten percent of cases involved a law enforcement agent impersonating a minor. LGBTQ and straight cisgender respondents had similar conviction types. Nine percent of LGBTQ respondents had sodomy statutes included in their offense as aggravating factors, and 2% had a positive HIV diagnosis included as an aggravating factor (Table 2).

Table 2. Conviction history of adults on sex offense registries, by sexual and gender identity

	TOTAL (N = 964)	LGBTQ (N = 192)	STRAIGHT CISGENDER (N = 772)
	% (95% CI)	% (95% CI)	% (95% CI)
Any convictions prior to sex offense			
Any convictions prior to current sex offense conviction	14.9 (12.8, 17.3)	14.1 (9.8, 19.7)	15.2 (12.8, 17.9)
Among people with prior convictions, % prior to age 18	25.8 (18.9, 34.1)	11.5 (3.7, 30.5)	29.4 (21.3, 39.0)
Sex offense conviction(s)			
Two or more sex offense convictions	10.7 (8.9, 12.8)	13.5 (9.4, 19.2)	10.0 (8.1, 12.3)
Sex offense conviction(s) was prior to age 18	3.5 (2.5, 4.9)	3.1 (1.4, 6.8)	3.7 (2.5, 5.2)
Post-conviction sex offense convictions (recidivated)	6.1 (4.5, 8.1)	6.0 (3.0, 11.6)	6.1 (4.3, 8.4)

	TOTAL (N = 964)	LGBTQ (N = 192)	STRAIGHT CISGENDER (N = 772)
	% (95% CI)	% (95% CI)	% (95% CI)
Reason for sex offense conviction*			
Child pornography (distributing, manufacturing, or possessing)	29.6 (26.8, 32.6)	34.4 (28.0, 41.4)	28.4 (25.3, 31.7)
Child molestation	21.6 (19.1, 24.3)	20.3 (15.2, 26.6)	21.9 (19.1, 25.0)
Sexual contact with a person below the age of consent (statutory rape)	22.0 (19.5, 24.8)	24.0 (18.4, 30.5)	21.5 (18.8, 24.6)
Lewd behavior/indecent exposure	8.8 (7.2, 10.8)	7.3 (4.4, 11.9)	9.2 (7.4, 11.5)
Soliciting or enticing a child (including online solicitation)	8.0 (6.4, 9.9)	7.8 (4.8, 12.6)	8.0 (6.3, 10.2)
Rape or sexual assault	7.8 (6.3, 9.7)	7.3 (4.4, 11.9)	7.9 (6.2, 10.0)
Sexual battery	4.2 (3.1, 5.6)	4.2 (2.1, 8.1)	4.2 (2.9, 5.8)
Voyeurism or illegal recording	1.3 (0.7, 2.2)	0	1.6 (0.8, 2.7)
Commercial sex / prostitution	0.5 (0.2, 1.2)	0	0.6 (0.2, 1.6)
Sex trafficking, kidnapping, etc.	0.1 (0.0, 0.7)	0	0.1 (0.0, 0.9)
Offense involved:			
Police officer pretending to be a minor	10.2 (8.4, 12.3)	10.5 (6.9, 15.7)	10.1 (8.2, 12.5)
Public setting	8.6 (6.9, 10.5)	7.9 (4.8, 12.6)	8.7 (6.9, 10.9)
Sodomy statute	4.0 (2.9, 5.4)	**8.9** (5.6, 13.8)	2.7 (1.8, 4.1)
Being HIV-positive	0.5 (0.2, 1.2)	**2.1** (0.8, 5.4)	0.1 (0.0, 0.9)
Buying or selling sex	1.7 (1.0, 2.7)	1.0 (0.2, 4.1)	1.8 (1.1, 3.0)

Notes: *Categories are not mutually exclusive and therefore do not add to 100%. Bolded values indicate notable differences between LGBTQ and straight cisgender respondents.

Table 3 describes the characteristics of the person identified by authorities as a victim of the sex offense. In more than 70% of cases, there was a person identified as the victim, as compared to no-person contact. For example, child pornography may have child victims who were not in physical contact with the person accused of a sex offense if the person used materials created by others—i.e., a victim who was an image. Compared with straight cisgender adults, more LGBTQ adults had three or more victims (9% vs. 17%), and almost half of LGBTQ adults had victims who were an image, compared with less than one-quarter of straight cisgender adults. More straight cisgender adults had victims who were family members. Bearing in mind that the overwhelming majority of respondents were male, we found that LGBTQ respondents more frequently reported male victims, and straight cisgender respondents more often reported female victims. One-third of both LGBTQ and straight cisgender adults had a victim who was under the age of 12.

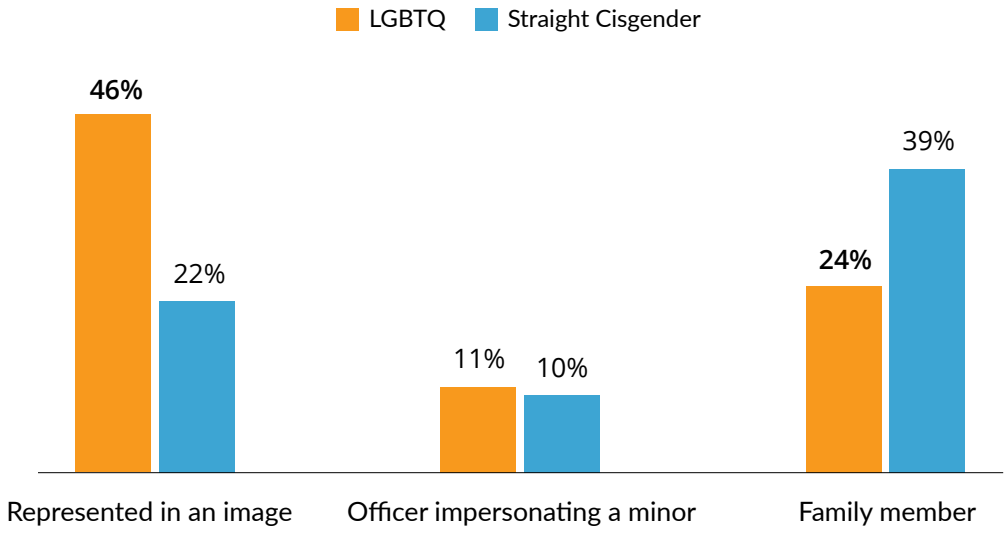
Table 3. Victims of adults on sex offense registries, by sexual and gender identity

	TOTAL (N = 964)	LGBTQ (N = 192)	STRAIGHT CISGENDER (N = 772)
	% (95% CI)	% (95% CI)	% (95% CI)
Person (adult, youth, or child) identified as the victim(s) of the sex offense	72.8 (69.9,75.6)	71.0 (64.0, 77.0)	73.3 (70.0, 76.3)
Number of victims identified			
One	76.9 (73.5, 79.9)	68.7 (60.3, 76.1)	78.9 (75.2, 82.1)
Two	12.9 (10.6, 15.7)	14.5 (9.4, 21.6)	12.5 (10.0, 15.6)
Three or more	10.2 (8.1, 12.8)	**16.8** (11.3, 24.2)	8.6 (6.5, 11.3)
Victim was…*			
Represented in an image	25.8 (19.6, 33.1)	**46.2** (28.3, 65.1)	21.9 (15.7, 29.7)
Family member	36.1 (32.5, 39.8)	**24.0** (17.4, 32.2)	39.0 (34.9, 43.2)
Male	28.4 (25.2, 31.9)	**72.9** (64.7, 79.8)	17.6 (14.6, 21.0)
Female	75.6 (72.2, 78.6)	**30.8** (23.6, 39.2)	86.4 (83.3, 89.1)
Transgender	0.2 (0.0,1.0)	0.8 (0.1, 5.2)	0.0
Under 12 years old	34.1 (30.3, 38.0)	34.2 (26.2, 43.2)	34.1 (29.9, 38.5)
12–13 years old	20.1 (17.1, 23.6)	13.7 (8.5, 21.2)	21.8 (18.2, 25.8)
14–15 years old	27.2 (23.7, 31.0)	29.9 (22.3, 38.8)	26.5 (22.7, 30.7)
16–17 years old	11.5 (9.2, 14.4)	15.4 (9.9, 23.1)	10.6 (8.1, 13.7)
18 years old or older	7.1 (5.2, 9.5)	6.8 (3.5, 13.1)	7.1 (5.1, 9.8)

Note: *This question was asked only of people who had person, youth, or child victim identified (N = 678). Categories are not mutually exclusive and therefore do not add to 100%. Bolded values indicate notable differences between LGBTQ and straight cisgender respondents.

> *I was a teenager who painfully struggled to make some sense of my sexuality in a place and in a family environment that was at best, unsupportive, and at worst, overtly hostile to gay people. My decision to have sex with a 14-year-old exposed us to incredible risk, the ramifications of which were unimaginable to me at the time. I did not fully comprehend that my actions with him would lead to my arrest or potentially lifelong sex offender registration and all that the status has entailed.*
>
> 37-year-old, White, gay man

Figure 2. Victim characteristics of LGBTQ and cisgender straight adults on sex offense registries



Note: Bolded values indicate notable differences between LGBTQ and straight cisgender respondents.

INTERACTIONS WITH THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM

Respondents were asked about their interactions with the criminal justice system and their satisfaction with various actors in that process. Fewer than 10% of respondents had gone to trial; most respondents pleaded guilty or no contest, and about one-third were convicted of a reduced offense. Most reported dissatisfaction with their defense (64%).

Table 4. Trial proceedings for adults on sex offense registries, by sexual and gender identity

	TOTAL (N = 964)	LGBTQ (N = 192)	STRAIGHT CISGENDER (N = 772)
	% (95% CI)	% (95% CI)	% (95% CI)
Trial/pleas*			
Pleaded no contest	23.8 (21.1, 26.6)	22.9 (17.4, 29.4)	24.0 (21.1, 27.2)
Pleaded guilty	66.9 (63.8, 69.9)	69.2 (62.2, 75.3)	66.4 (63.0, 69.6)
Had trial	9.3 (7.6, 11.4)	8.0 (4.9, 12.8)	9.7 (7.8, 12.0)
Convicted of a reduced offense	37.6 (34.6, 40.8)	32.2 (26.0, 39.3)	39.0 (35.6, 42.5)
Court representation*			
Court-assigned defense attorney	33.6 (30.7, 36.7)	38.8 (32.1, 46.0)	32.3 (29.1, 35.7)
Privately obtained defense attorney	68.4 (65.4, 71.3)	63.3 (56.2, 69.9)	69.7 (66.3, 72.8)
Satisfaction with defense			
Dissatisfied (very or somewhat)	64.1 (60.9, 67.1)	59.4 (52.2, 66.2)	65.2 (61.7, 68.6)
Satisfied (very or somewhat)	35.9 (32.9, 39.1)	40.6 (33.8, 47.8)	34.8 (31.4, 38.3)

Note: *Categories are not mutually exclusive and therefore do not add to 100%.

When asked why they felt they were treated unfairly during their interactions with the justice system, respondents described several experiences of discrimination. They were given a list of specific actors in the system and asked to check off all whom they felt had treated them unfairly, with most people (89%) endorsing at least one response (Table 5).

About 60% of respondents felt the prosecutor had treated them unfairly, followed by about 40% who felt law enforcement, the defense attorney, and/or the judge had treated them unfairly. More LGBTQ than straight cisgender respondents felt they had been treated unfairly by law enforcement, and slightly more straight cisgender respondents felt they had been treated unfairly by the defense attorney. During incarceration, one-third of all respondents felt they had been treated unfairly by a correctional officer. About half of straight cisgender respondents cited income level or education as the reason for their unfair treatment, and about one-third cited their sex, age, and race/ethnicity. Two-thirds of LGBTQ respondents felt they had been treated unfairly because of their sexual identity, and one-third cited their sex. Overall, more straight cisgender respondents felt they had been treated unfairly because of their socioeconomic status, race or ethnicity, or disability, and more LGBTQ respondents felt they had been treated unfairly due to their sexual identity, gender expression, or HIV status.

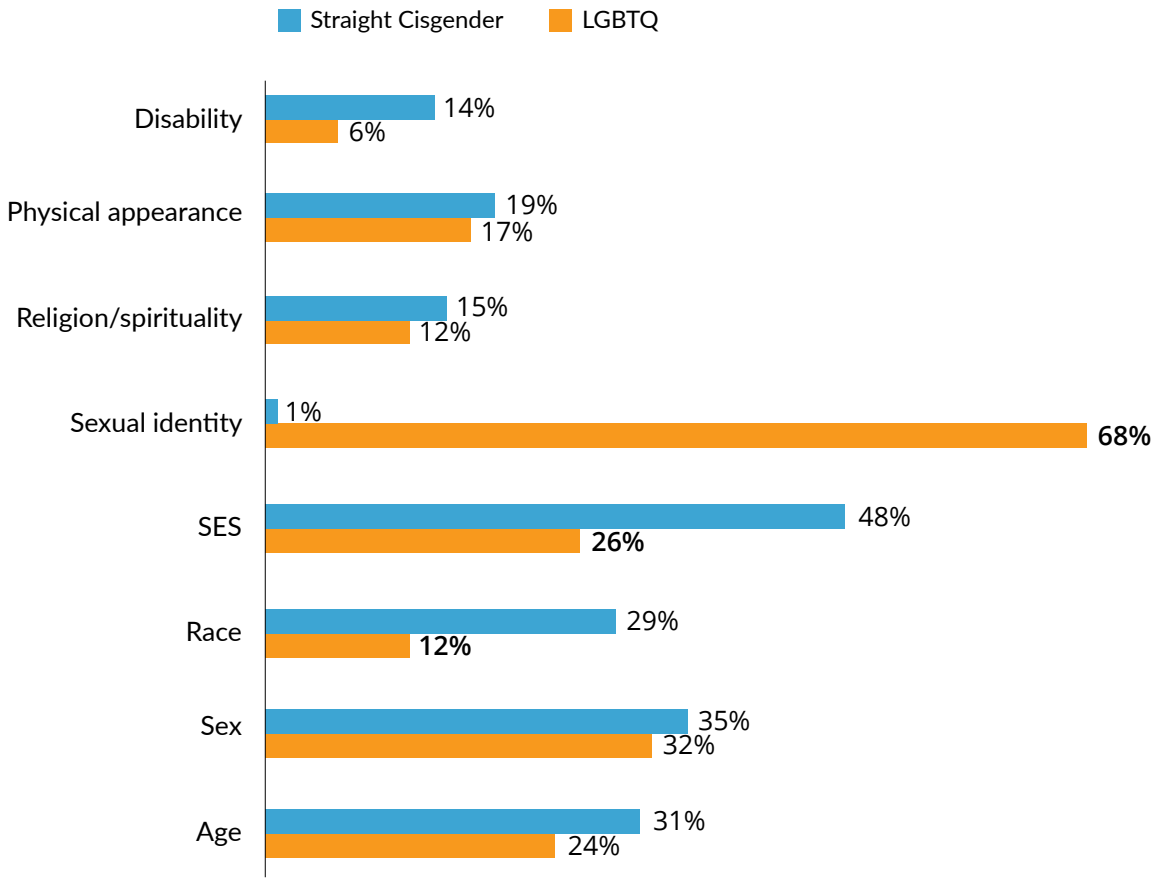
Table 5. Sources of perceived unfair treatment during criminal proceedings for adults on sex offense registries, by sexual and gender identity

	TOTAL (N = 964)	LGBTQ (N = 192)	STRAIGHT CISGENDER (N = 772)
	% (95% CI)	% (95% CI)	% (95% CI)
Treated unfairly by…*			
Law enforcement during arrest	43.4 (40.3, 46.7)	47.9 (40.8, 55.0)	42.3 (38.8, 45.9)
Law enforcement after arrest	38.3 (35.2, 41.5)	**47.8** (40.8, 55.0)	35.9 (32.5, 39.5)
Defense attorney	41.9 (38.8, 45.1)	36.0 (29.4, 43.2)	43.4 (39.9, 47.0)
Prosecutor	59.9 (56.7, 63.1)	60.0 (52.5, 66.5)	60.0 (56.4, 63.5)
Judge	40.1 (36.9, 43.2)	39.8 (33.0, 47.0)	40.1 (36.6, 43.7)
Parole officer	14.0 (11.9, 16.4)	12.4 (8.4, 17.9)	14.4 (12.1, 17.2)
Probation officer (before sentence)	10.6 (8.8, 12.8)	11.8 (8.0, 17.3)	10.3 (8.3, 12.8)
Probation officer (after sentence)	29.8 (26.9, 32.8)	28.0 (22.0, 35.0)	30.2 (27.0, 33.6)
Correction officer	32.7 (29.7, 35.8)	34.4 (27.9, 41.5)	32.2 (29.9, 35.7)
Caseworker	15.3 (13.1, 17.8)	15.1 (10.6, 21.0)	15.4 (12.9, 18.2)
None of these	11.5 (9.6, 13.7)	11.9 (8.0, 17.4)	11.4 (9.3, 13.9)
Reasons for unfair treatment*			
Income level or education	41.5 (36.7, 46.4)	**25.7** (18.3, 34.7)	47.5 (41.8, 53.4)
Sex (being female or male)	33.8 (29.3, 38.7)	32.1 (24.0, 41.5)	34.5 (29.2, 40.2)
Age	28.8 (24.5, 33.4)	23.9 (16.8, 32.8)	30.6 (25.5, 36.3)
Race/ethnicity	24.2 (20.2, 28.7)	**11.9** (7.0, 19.5)	28.9 (23.9, 34.4)
Sexual identity (being LGBTQ)	19.3 (15.7, 23.6)	**67.9** (58.5, 76.0)	0.7 (0.2, 2.8)
Physical appearance	18.6 (15.0, 22.7)	16.5 (10.6, 24.7)	19.4 (15.2, 24.4)
Religion/spirituality	14.2 (11.1, 18.1)	12.0 (7.0, 19.5)	15.1 (11.4, 19.8)
Disability	12.0 (9.1, 15.6)	5.5 (2.5, 11.7)	14.4 (10.8, 19.0)

	TOTAL (N = 964)	LGBTQ (N = 192)	STRAIGHT CISGENDER (N = 772)
	% (95% CI)	% (95% CI)	% (95% CI)
Reasons for unfair treatment*			
Gender expression/appearance	5.9 (3.9, 8.7)	**11.9** (7.0, 19.5)	3.5 (1.9, 6.4)
Being HIV-positive	1.8 (0.8, 3.7)	**5.5** (2.5, 11.7)	0.4 (0.1, 2.5)
Being transgender	0.8 (0.2, 2.4)	1.8 (0.5, 7.1)	0.4 (0.1, 2.5)
Something else	32.6 (28.1, 37.4)	33.0 (24.8, 42.4)	32.4 (27.2, 38.1)

Notes: *Categories are not mutually exclusive and therefore do not add to 100%.
Bolded values indicate notable differences between LGBTQ and straight cisgender respondents.

Figure 3. Perceived reasons for unfair treatment during criminal proceedings among LGBTQ and straight cisgender adults on sex offense registries



Notes: SES = socioeconomic status (income level or education). Sex = being male or female.
Bolded values indicate notable differences between LGBTQ and straight cisgender respondents.

INCARCERATION, PAROLE, AND PROBATION

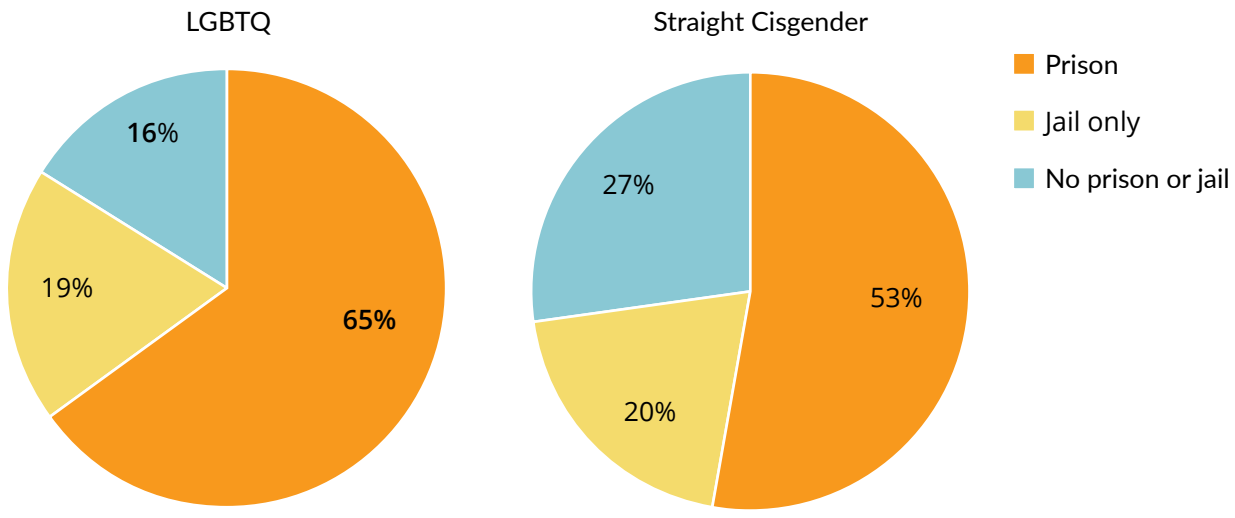
More than half of respondents had been incarcerated in prison for their sex offense conviction, with more LGBTQ than straight cisgender adults incarcerated in prison (65% vs. 53%). Likewise, fewer LGBTQ adults received no prison or jail terms compared with straight cisgender adults (16% vs. 27%). Among those who had served prison or jail sentences, slightly more LGBTQ than straight cisgender people reported sentences of 25 years or more (5% vs. 1.6%).

Table 6. Incarceration experiences of adults on sex offense registries, by sexual and gender identity

	TOTAL (N = 964)	LGBTQ (N = 192)	STRAIGHT CISGENDER (N = 772)
	% (95% CI)	% (95% CI)	% (95% CI)
Incarceration type			
Prison	55.4 (52.2, 58.5)	**64.6** (57.5, 71.1)	53.1 (49.5, 56.6)
Jail only	20.1 (17.7, 22.8)	19.1 (14.1, 25.3)	20.3 (17.6, 23.4)
No prison or jail	24.5 (21.9, 27.4)	**16.4** (11.8, 22.4)	26.6 (23.5, 29.8)
Jail/prison time			
Less than 1 year	31.7 (28.1, 35.4)	26.5 (19.7, 34.5)	33.1 (29.1, 37.4)
2–9 years	49.6 (45.7, 53.5)	50.0 (41.7, 58.3)	49.5 (45.1, 53.9)
10–25 years	16.3 (13.6, 19.4)	18.4 (12.7, 25.8)	15.7 (12.8, 19.3)
More than 25 years	2.4 (1.5, 4.0)	5.1 (2.5, 10.4)	1.6 (0.8, 3.2)

Note: Bolded values indicate notable differences between LGBTQ and straight cisgender respondents.

Figure 4. Incarceration history among LGBTQ and straight cisgender adults on sex offense registries



Note: Bolded values indicate notable differences between LGBTQ and straight cisgender respondents.

Most respondents had been assigned to parole or probation. Almost half were assigned to formal probation, almost 15% were on active parole, and another 13% had been discharged from parole (Table 7).

Table 7. Parole and probation experiences of adults on sex offense registries, by sexual and gender identity

	TOTAL (N = 964)	LGBTQ (N = 192)	STRAIGHT CISGENDER (N = 772)
	% (95% CI)	% (95% CI)	% (95% CI)
Supervision status			
Assigned probation/parole*	91.3 (89.3, 93.0)	94.7 (90.4, 97.1)	90.5 (88.2, 92.4)
Formal probation	47.5 (44.2, 50.7)	50.3 (43.1, 57.5)	46.8 (43.1, 50.4)
Informal probation	3.3 (2.3, 4.7)	2.2 (0.8, 5.7)	3.6 (2.5, 5.2)
Active parole	14.1 (12.0, 16.5)	15.9 (11.2, 21.9)	13.7 (11.3, 16.4)
Inactive parole	2.4 (1.6, 3.7)	3.8 (1.8, 7.8)	2.1 (1.3, 3.4)
Discharged from parole	12.9 (10.9, 15.2)	11.5 (7.6, 17.0)	13.2 (11.0, 15.9)

Notes: *Categories are not mutually exclusive and therefore do not add to 100%. About 10% of respondents said, "Something else" and/or "Don't know."

LEGAL NEEDS

More than a third of respondents reported needing post-trial legal help, and half reported feeling dissatisfied with their ability to get legal help post-trial (Table 8).

Table 8. Legal needs post-trial for adults on sex offense registries, by sexual and gender identity

	TOTAL (N = 964)	LGBTQ (N = 192)	STRAIGHT CISGENDER (N = 772)
	% (95% CI)	% (95% CI)	% (95% CI)
Needs help often/sometimes	35.8 (32.8, 38.9)	37.4 (30.8, 44.6)	35.4 (32.0, 38.9)
Dissatisfied with ability to get legal help since trial (among those with legal need)	51.9 (47.8, 55.9)	49.2 (40.3, 58.1)	52.6 (48.0, 57.1)

SEX REGISTRY REQUIREMENTS AND RISK CATEGORIZATION

Respondents were asked whether, when ordered to register, they were told how many years they would have to stay on the registry. About a third said they were not told how long they would be required to register. In fact, the majority (45%) were required to register for 25 years or more, and very few (5%) were required to register for less than 10 years. Most respondents were required to register in one jurisdiction, but about 30% were required to register in two or more jurisdictions. About 8% had been removed from the registry by the time they responded to the survey.

SORNA law requires states to adopt a three-tier system, but almost half of respondents either did not know of their SORNA tier or were not assigned to one. The rest of the respondents were distributed equally across the three tiers, with about 18% in each. Other risk classifications vary by state and other conditions. The most common classification among respondents was "low risk level" (30%), and one-quarter of the respondents had not been assigned to a level at all. Fewer than 10% of respondents were classified as "high risk" (8%), "violent" (4%), "sexual predator" (6%), or "sexually violent predator" (4%).

Although most people did not see a change in their risk level or time requirement, among those who did see a change, it was more likely to involve an increase in time and risk level (27% and 13%, respectively). No differences were found between LGBTQ and straight cisgender respondents regarding registry requirements or risk categorization.

Table 9. Registration information of adults on sex offense registries, by sexual and gender identity

	TOTAL (N = 964)	LGBTQ (N = 192)	STRAIGHT CISGENDER (N = 772)
	% (95% CI)	% (95% CI)	% (95% CI)
Registration			
Told how long they must stay on registry	62.8 (59.7, 65.8)	62.3 (55.2, 68.9)	63.0 (59.5, 66.3)
Not told how many years	29.5 (26.7, 32.5)	30.4 (24.3, 37.3)	29.3 (26.2, 32.7)
Years required to register			
Less than 10 years	4.5 (3.4, 6.1)	4.8 (2.5, 8.9)	4.5 (3.2, 6.2)
10–15 years	20.7 (18.3, 23.4)	18.1 (13.1, 24.1)	21.4 (18.6, 24.5)
16–25 years	10.2 (8.4, 12.3)	10.6 (6.9, 15.8)	10.1 (8.2, 12.5)
More than 25 years	44.5 (41.4, 47.7)	46.0 (39.0, 53.2)	44.2 (40.7, 47.7)
Don't know	20.0 (17.6, 22.7)	20.6 (15.4, 27.0)	19.8 (17.2, 22.8)
Changes in requirement since registration			
Time decreased	6.7 (5.3, 8.5)	7.4 (4.4, 12.1)	6.6 (5.0, 8.6)
Time increased	27.0 (24.2, 29.9)	26.3 (20.5, 33.0)	27.1 (24.1, 30.4)
No change in time required	66.3 (63.3, 69.3)	66.3 (59.3, 72.7)	66.3 (62.9, 69.6)
Removed from the registry?			
Yes	7.6 (6.1, 9.5)	7.5 (4.5, 12.2)	7.6 (6.0, 9.8)
States/territories of registry			
One	71.3 (68.3, 74.1)	74.1 (67.4, 79.8)	70.6 (67.2, 73.7)
One additional	21.8 (19.2, 24.5)	22.2 (16.9, 28.7)	21.6 (18.8, 24.7)
Two or more additional	7.0 (5.5, 8.8)	3.7 (1.8, 7.6)	7.8 (6.1, 9.9)
Offender tier assignment			
Tier I	18.0 (15.7, 20.6)	16.9 (12.2, 23.0)	18.3 (15.7, 21.2)
Tier II	15.3 (13.1, 17.7)	16.9 (12.2, 23.0)	14.9 (12.5, 17.6)
Tier III	17.9 (15.6, 20.5)	18.0 (13.1, 24.1)	17.9 (15.3, 20.8)
Not assigned tier	31.4 (28.5, 34.4)	30.2 (24.0, 37.1)	31.7 (28.5, 35.1)
Don't know	17.4 (15.1, 19.9)	18.1 (13.1, 24.1)	17.2 (14.7, 20.1)

	TOTAL (N = 964)	LGBTQ (N = 192)	STRAIGHT CISGENDER (N = 772)
	% (95% CI)	% (95% CI)	% (95% CI)
Risk level*			
Low risk level	29.8 (27.0, 32.8)	28.6 (22.6, 35.4)	30.1 (27.0, 33.5)
Medium risk level	8.6 (7.0, 10.6)	11.6 (7.8, 17.1)	7.9 (6.1, 10.0)
High risk level	7.7 (6.1, 9.6)	6.9 (4.0, 11.5)	7.9 (6.1, 10.0)
"Nonviolent"	7.8 (6.2, 9.7)	9.5 (6.1, 14.6)	7.3 (5.7, 9.4)
"Violent"	4.0 (3.0, 5.5)	5.8 (3.2, 10.2)	3.6 (2.5, 5.2)
"Sexual predator"	6.3 (4.9, 8.0)	4.2 (2.1, 8.3)	6.8 (5.2, 8.8)
"Sexually violent predator"	3.6 (2.6, 5.0)	4.8 (2.5, 8.9)	3.3 (2.3, 4.9)
Something else	10.9 (9.0, 13.0)	17.5 (12.7, 23.6)	9.2 (7.3, 11.5)
No level assigned	26.4 (23.7, 29.3)	25.4 (19.7, 32.1)	26.7 (23.6, 30.0)
I don't know	16.3 (14.1, 18.8)	14.8 (10.4, 20.6)	16.7 (14.2, 19.5)
Tier, class, or risk level changed?			
Lowered	5.5 (4.2, 7.2)	5.3 (2.9, 9.6)	5.5 (4.1, 7.4)
Raised	12.5 (10.5, 14.7)	11.6 (7.8, 17.1)	12.7 (10.5, 15.3)
No change	60.7 (57.5, 63.8)	59.8 (52.6, 66.6)	60.9 (57.4, 64.3)
N/A	21.4 (18.9, 24.1)	23.3 (17.8, 29.8)	20.9 (18.1, 23.9)

Note: *Categories are not mutually exclusive and therefore do not add to 100%.

> *What little hope I might have had has vanished since I've registered. I have to register for life and there is no provision to be taken off the registry. I have no hope for redemption at all. That road is a dead end for me, literally, I only get taken off the registry when I die . . .*
>
> 39-year-old, White, bisexual man

PSYCHOLOGICAL TREATMENT–RELATED PREVENTION OF SEX OFFENSES

Close to 80% of respondents received medical or psychological treatment related to their sex offense (sometimes referred to as "corrective treatment"), including 83% of LGBTQ people and 76% of straight cisgender people. For 86% of people, this treatment was mandated by a court, judge, or parole/probation officer. LGBTQ people were more likely than straight cisgender people to have received treatment while incarcerated (39% vs. 27%). About one in 10 respondents reported that they had received treatment while in civil commitment, and 10% of LGBTQ people reported that their treatment included elements of sexual orientation or gender identity change efforts (conversion therapy), compared with 3% of straight cisgender people. In terms of satisfaction with the treatment they received, 50% of LGBTQ people said they were satisfied, compared to about 60% of straight cisgender people.

Table 10. Medical treatment of adults on sex offense registries, by sexual and gender identity

	TOTAL (N = 964)	LGBTQ (N = 192)	STRAIGHT CISGENDER (N = 772)
TREATMENT FACTORS	**% (95% CI)**	**% (95% CI)**	**% (95% CI)**
Received medical or psychological treatment related to sex offense*	77.1 (74.3, 79.7)	83.4 (77.4, 88.1)	75.6 (72.4, 78.5)
Treatment was mandated	85.7 (82.9, 88.1)	87.8 (81.7, 92.1)	85.1 (81.9, 87.8)
Treatment was part of civil commitment	10.8 (8.7, 13.3)	8.3 (4.9, 13.8)	11.5 (9.1, 14.4)
Treatment involved conversion therapy	4.3 (3.0, 6.0)	**9.6** (5.9, 15.3)	2.8 (1.7, 4.6)
Very/somewhat satisfied with treatment	57.2 (53.6, 60.8)	49.7 (41.9, 57.5)	59.3 (55.2, 63.3)
Treatment location(s)*			
In jail/prison	29.6 (26.4, 33.1)	**38.5** (31.2, 46.3)	27.2 (23.7, 31.0)
In state hospital	1.4 (0.8, 2.6)	1.9 (0.6, 5.8)	1.2 (0.6, 2.6)
In private facility	64.3 (60.7, 67.7)	60.3 (52.4, 67.6)	65.4 (61.3, 69.2)
In church or religious center	3.2 (2.1, 4.8)	1.9 (0.6, 5.8)	3.6 (2.3, 5.5)
In parole/probation office	5.1 (3.9, 6.8)	4.8 (2.5, 9.0)	5.2 (3.8, 7.1)
Somewhere else	32.1 (28.8, 35.6)	31.4 (24.6, 39.1)	32.3 (28.6, 36.3)

Notes: *Categories are not mutually exclusive and therefore do not add to 100%.
Bolded values indicate notable differences between LGBTQ and straight cisgender respondents.

STRESSFUL EXPERIENCES

Employment and Job Stability

Barriers to employment due to the registry are among the collateral consequences experienced by people required to register. Most respondents (56%) reported losing a job due to being on the registry, and almost a third reported having been denied a promotion. Also, 30% said they had changed jobs once or twice in the two years prior to the survey. Among them, 27% of straight cisgender respondents and 39% of LGBTQ respondents reported that they were terminated from their job due to being on the registry, and about 20% of respondents changed jobs because they were harassed.

Table 11. Job stability among adults on sex offense registries, by sexual and gender identity

	TOTAL (N = 964)	LGBTQ (N = 192)	STRAIGHT CISGENDER (N = 772)
	% (95% CI)	**% (95% CI)**	**% (95% CI)**
Employment events due to being on the registry			
Lost a job	56.3 (53.0, 59.5)	53.6 (46.3, 60.7)	57.0 (53.3, 60.6)
Denied a promotion	30.8 (27.9, 33.9)	28.7 (22.5, 35.7)	31.4 (28.1, 34.9)
Job instability (past 2 years)			
Changed jobs once	15.0 (12.8, 17.4)	13.7 (9.5, 19.4)	15.3 (12.9, 18.0)
Changed jobs twice or more	15.1 (12.9, 17.5)	16.3 (11.7, 22.3)	14.8 (12.4, 17.5)

	TOTAL (N = 964)	LGBTQ (N = 192)	STRAIGHT CISGENDER (N = 772)
	% (95% CI)	% (95% CI)	% (95% CI)
Reasons for job changes (among those who changed jobs in past 2 years)*			
Moved from area due to registry	8.7 (6.0, 12.6)	5.3 (1.7, 15.2)	9.6 (6.4, 14.2)
Moved unrelated to registry	3.9 (2.1, 6.8)	3.5 (0.9, 13.0)	3.9 (2.1, 7.4)
Harassed due to registry	19.9 (15.7, 25.0)	17.5 (9.7, 29.7)	20.5 (15.8, 26.3)
Terminated due to registry	29.4 (24.4, 34.9)	38.6 (26.9, 51.8)	27.1 (21.7, 33.22)
Terminated not due to registry	9.4 (6.5, 13.4)	7.0 (2.6, 17.3)	10.0 (6.8, 14.7)
Job ended/laid off	24.1 (19.5, 29.5)	29.8 (19.4, 42.9)	22.7 (17.7, 28.6)
Quit job voluntarily	28.3 (23.4, 33.8)	28.1 (17.9, 41.1)	28.4 (22.9, 34.6)

Note: *Categories are not mutually exclusive and therefore do not add to 100%.

Any work I was trained in with technology is now untenable, and the trauma of being in prison as a trans woman, along with horrific treatment on probation and registration, has made functioning in society almost impossible.

36-year-old, White/Hispanic, bisexual, transgender person

I received 6 job offers, all of whom rescinded their offers after learning that I am registered. Extremely fortunate to have the job I have now... I have a strong resume.

49-year-old, Biracial, White, and Native American or Alaskan native; queer/pansexual, transgender person

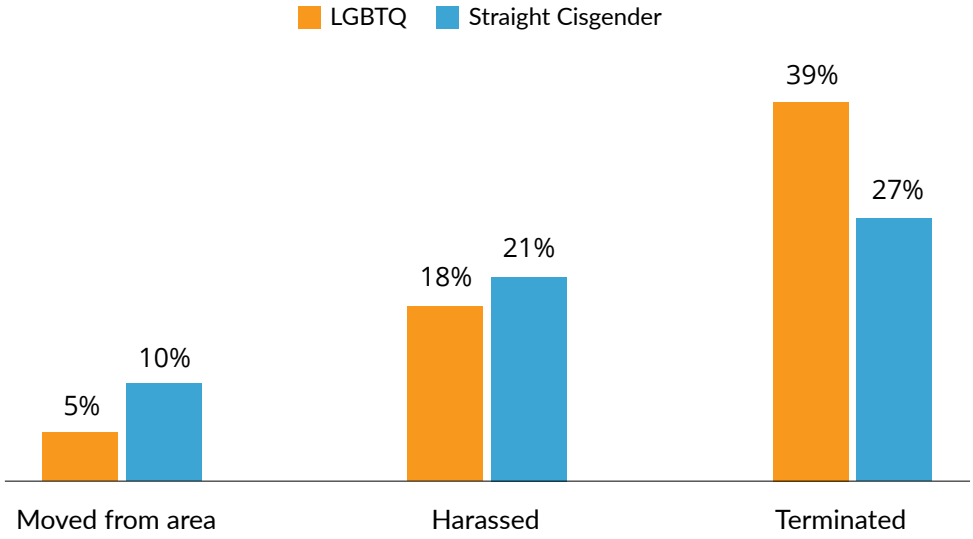
I have applied for HUNDREDS of jobs and have been repeatedly turned down once I informed them of my registration status sometimes even after I had been extended an employment opportunity. I decided to go to school to become a paralegal and the state bar attempted to prevent me from doing so. Once I proved to them that it was legal for me to do so they relented. Four months before I graduated they changed the rules for certification in an attempt to prevent me from certifying. I found a legal method which allows me to certify despite their attempt to prevent such. Now I'm seeking employment.

47-yr-old, White, gay man

MANY places do background checks now. In Utah, it is only supposed to go back no more than 7 years. However, if you have a sex offense there is no time limit of how far they can go back. I have been denied employment several times due to a sex offense conviction that is almost 20 years old. Some of these places include Verizon, Walmart & Amazon.

47-yr-old, White, lesbian woman

Figure 5. Job changes due to registry status among LGBTQ and straight cisgender adults on sex offense registries



Housing Stability

Housing is another known collateral consequence for people on the registry due to residency rules in many jurisdictions. Half of straight cisgender people and 37% of LGBTQ respondents reported living in a residence that they owned alone or with others. The rest (29% of straight cisgender and 42% of LGBTQ respondents) rented a property alone or with others. Sixteen percent of all respondents lived with parents or other childhood family members. Additionally, 12% of respondents had experienced housing instability within the previous year, with many temporarily living with friends or family or living in a park or a car. About half of the respondents said they were not able to live with family due to registry restrictions and that they were refused housing by a landlord. Two-thirds said they had difficulties finding a place to live that was not too close to a school, bus stop, park, or playground.

Among the 30% of respondents who had moved at least once in the two years prior to taking the survey, the most common reasons given for moving were related to legal restrictions, financial reasons due to the registry, and other difficulties related to the registry, such as harassment.

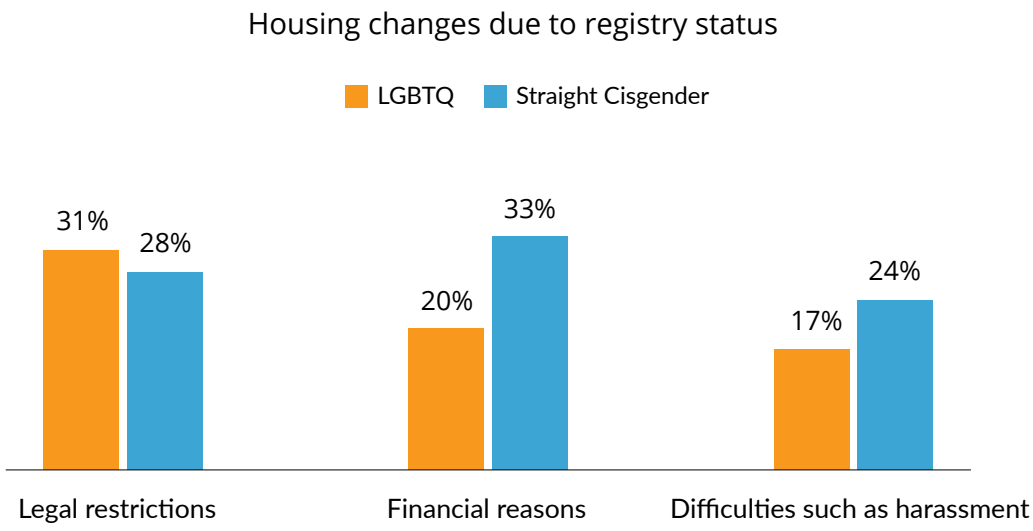
Table 12. Housing experiences among adults on sex offense registries, by sexual and gender identity

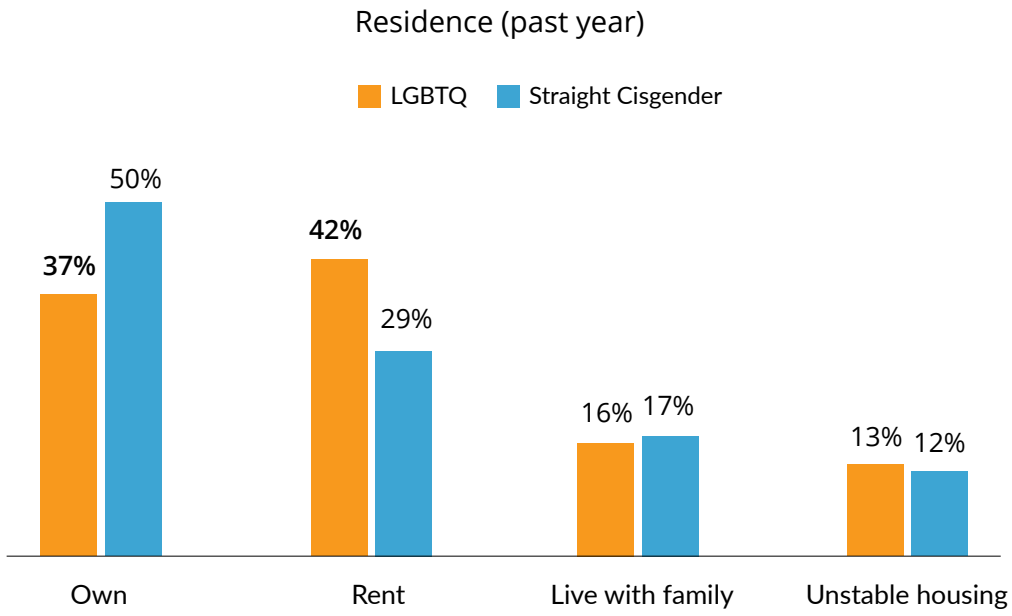
	TOTAL (N = 964)	LGBTQ (N = 192)	STRAIGHT CISGENDER (N = 772)
	% (95% CI)	% (95% CI)	% (95% CI)
Residence in past year*			
Own property (alone or with others)	46.9 (43.8, 50.1)	**37.0** (30.4, 44.0)	49.4 (45.8, 52.9)
Rent property (alone or with others)	31.7 (28.9, 34.8)	**41.7** (34.9, 48.8)	29.3 (26.2, 32.6)
With partner/other pays for housing	10.4 (8.6, 12.5)	9.4 (6.0, 14.4)	10.6 (8.6, 13.0)
With parents/childhood family	16.3 (14.1, 18.8)	15.6 (11.1, 21.5)	16.5 (14.0, 19.2)
Housing unstable	11.7 (9.8, 13.9)	12.5 (8.5, 18.0)	11.5 (9.5, 14.0)
Street, car, park	4.2 (3.1, 5.6)	4.2 (2.1, 8.1)	4.2 (2.9, 5.8)

	TOTAL (N = 964)	LGBTQ (N = 192)	STRAIGHT CISGENDER (N = 772)
	% (95% CI)	% (95% CI)	% (95% CI)
Residence in past year*			
Shelter	1.3 (0.8, 2.3)	1.0 (0.3, 4.1)	1.4 (0.8, 2.6)
Group home	3.0 (2.1, 4.3)	2.6 (1.1, 6.1)	3.1 (2.1, 4.6)
Temporarily with friends or family	5.6 (4.3, 7.2)	6.8 (4.0, 11.3)	5.3 (3.9, 7.1)
Housing events due to being on the registry			
Unable to live with supportive family members due to residence restrictions	47.4 (44.1, 50.7)	49.2 (42.0, 56.4)	46.9 (43.3, 50.6)
Landlord refused to rent because of registry	50.0 (46.7, 53.3)	55.8 (48.5, 62.9)	48.5 (44.9, 52.2)
Difficult to find place to live that was not too close to a school, bus stop, park, or playground	64.8 (61.6, 67.9)	65.9 (58.7, 72.5)	64.5 (60.9, 68.0)
Housing instability			
Moved once in past 2 years	18.5 (16.2, 21.1)	20.8 (15.7, 27.2)	17.9 (15.4, 20.8)
Moved twice or more in past 2 years	12.6 (10.6, 14.8)	16.2 (11.6, 22.1)	11.7 (9.6, 14.1)
Did not move in past 2 years	69.0 (66.0, 71.8)	63.0 (56.0, 69.6)	70.4 (67.1, 73.6)
Reason for housing move*			
Legal restrictions	28.4 (23.6, 33.8)	31.0 (21.3, 42.7)	27.6 (22.2, 33.8)
Financial reasons due to registry	29.4 (24.5, 34.9)	19.7 (12.0, 30.6)	32.5 (26.7, 38.8)
Other financial reasons	8.7 (6.0, 12.5)	8.5 (3.8, 17.6)	8.8 (5.7, 13.2)
Difficulties related to registry (e.g., harassment)	22.1 (17.7, 27.2)	16.9 (9.8, 27.5)	23.7 (18.6, 29.7)
Difficulties not related to registry	4.4 (2.5, 7.4)	1.4 (0.2, 9.4)	5.3 (3.0, 9.1)
Needed to move for work or family	19.4 (15.3, 24.3)	**8.5** (3.8, 17.6)	22.8 (17.8, 28.7)

Notes: *Categories are not mutually exclusive and therefore do not add to 100%. Bolded values indicate notable differences between LGBTQ and straight cisgender respondents.

Figure 6. Housing factors due to registry status among LGBTQ and straight cisgender adults on sex offense registries





Note: Bolded values indicate notable differences between LGBTQ and straight cisgender respondents.

Because of the registry, I have not been able to move out on my own, due to the fact that everyone/where does a background check. Therefore, being 37 years old, it's been quite the burden on myself and my parents having to live with them.

37-year-old, Hispanic, gay man

In New York city anyone that is one placed on the registry for life is banned from applying to New York City Housing, HPD and any other federal housing program.

51-year-old, Black, bisexual man

I have had to sell a home already because a childcare center went into a church that was within 1,000 feet of my home. My current home I am harassed on a weekly basis because of information of my registry status online, to the point that neighbors are trying to use it against me to force me to move.

41-yr-old, White, gay, man

Childhood Stressful Experiences

We asked respondents about adverse childhood experiences and whether they had lived in foster care as a child. Adverse childhood experiences have been shown to be associated with adverse adult mental and physical health outcomes, including alcoholism, drug abuse, depression, and suicide attempts.[101,102] Respondents experienced high levels of traumatic experiences in childhood: 63% reported verbal abuse, 43% reported physical abuse, 42% reported childhood sexual abuse, and 43% reported divorce of a parent. Childhood sexual abuse was elevated among LGBTQ respondents compared with straight cisgender respondents (48% vs. 38%). Additionally, more than one-third of respondents had lived in a household with a depressed, mentally ill, or suicidal person, and between

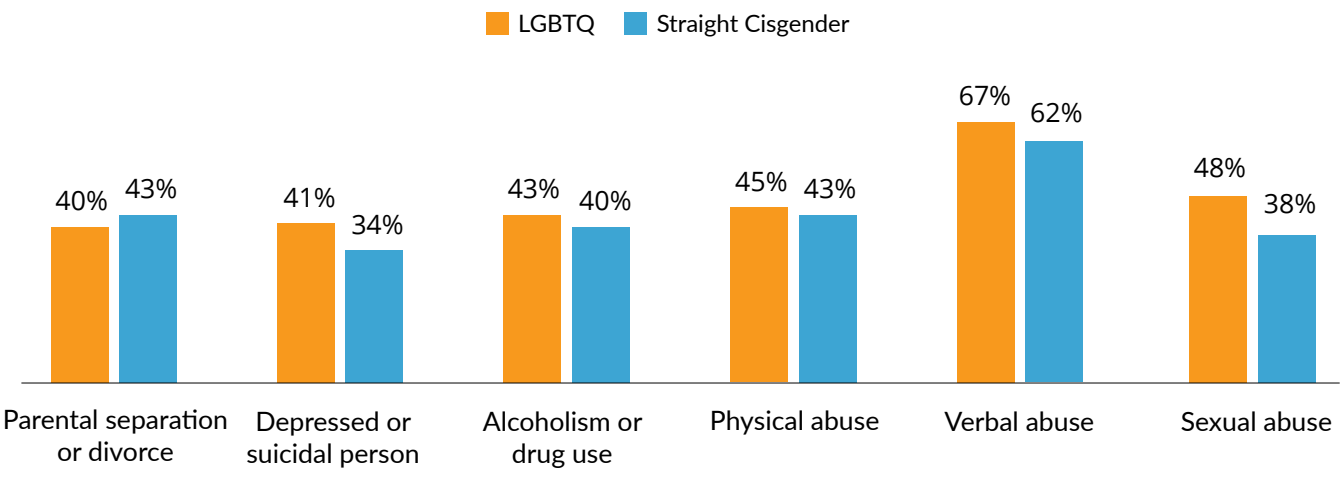
one-quarter and one-third had lived with someone who used alcohol or drugs. The prevalence of adverse childhood experiences among respondents was higher than what has been estimated in the general U.S. population. For example, a 2016 study found that the estimated prevalence of people who reported they had lived with a depressed, mentally ill, or suicidal person is 8% nationwide, and the prevalence of those who had lived with someone who had a problem with alcohol or drugs was 9%.[103]

Table 13. Adverse childhood (before age 18) experiences among adults on sex offense registries, by sexual and gender identity

	TOTAL (N = 964)	LGBTQ (N = 192)	STRAIGHT CISGENDER (N = 772)
	% (95% CI)	% (95% CI)	% (95% CI)
Lived with depressed, mentally ill, or suicidal person	35.6 (32.6, 38.8)	41.4 (34.5, 48.8)	34.2 (30.8, 37.7)
Lived with problem drinker or alcoholic	33.4 (30.4, 36.5)	32.0 (25.7, 39.2)	33.7 (30.3, 37.3)
Lived with anyone who used illegal street drugs or who abused prescription medications	21.9 (19.3, 24.8)	24.6 (18.8, 31.4)	21.3 (18.4, 24.4)
Lived with anyone who served time or was sentenced to serve time in a prison, jail, or other correctional facility	13.7 (11.6, 16.1)	15.6 (11.0, 21.6)	13.3 (11.0, 16.0)
Parents were separated or divorced	42.6 (39.4, 46.0)	39.9 (32.9, 47.4)	43.3 (39.7, 47.1)
Parents slapped, hit, kicked, punched, or beat each other up	31.0 (28.0, 34.1)	29.3 (23.1, 36.3)	31.4 (28.1, 34.9)
Parent or adult hit, beat, kicked, or physically hurt respondent	43.3 (40.1, 46.6)	45.3 (38.2, 52.6)	42.8 (39.2, 46.5)
Parent or adult swore, insulted, or put down respondent	62.6 (59.3, 65.7)	66.7 (59.5, 73.2)	61.5 (57.9, 65.0)
Experienced any childhood sex abuse	42.0 (38.8, 45.3)	47.5 (40.3, 54.8)	37.9 (34.4, 41.5)
Lived in foster or group home	7.6 (6.1, 9.6)	5.0 (2.6, 9.3)	8.3 (6.5, 10.6)
Lived in juvenile detention facility	6.9 (5.5, 8.8)	5.5 (3.0, 10.0)	7.3 (5.6, 9.5)

Note: *Categories are not mutually exclusive and therefore do not add to 100%.

Figure 7. Adverse childhood experiences among LGBTQ and straight cisgender adults on sex offense registries



Adult Stressful Experiences

We asked respondents whether they had experienced a variety of stressful experiences in adulthood. LGBTQ and straight cisgender respondents experienced similar rates of abuse and violence for the most part, with 21% of straight cisgender and 24% of LGBTQ respondents experiencing being hit, beaten, physically attacked, or sexually assaulted. Many respondents reported being verbally insulted or abused (66%), threatened with violence (45%), or robbed or vandalized (37%).

Asked to attribute the motivation for this abuse and assault, respondents overwhelmingly attributed these experiences to their being on the registry (90%); 24% of LGBTQ respondents stated these experiences were due to their sexual identity; 1.4% attributed them being transgender; and 4.4% attributed the experiences to their gender expression or appearance.

Respondents also reported the impact the registration had on their families. One in 3 respondents reported that a family member had been verbally assaulted, and 1 in 10 reported that a family member had been robbed or had had their property stolen or purposely damaged.

Table 14. Victimization among adults on sex offense registries, by sexual and gender identity

	TOTAL (N = 964)	LGBTQ (N = 192)	STRAIGHT CISGENDER (N = 772)
	% (95% CI)	% (95% CI)	% (95% CI)
Violence and harassment*			
Hit, beaten, physically attacked, or sexually assaulted	21.2 (18.7, 24.0)	23.6 (18.0, 30.4)	20.6 (17.8, 23.8)
Robbed, property stolen, vandalized, or purposely damaged	36.5 (33.5, 39.7)	38.5 (31.7, 45.7)	36.1 (32.6, 39.6)
Attempted attack, robbery, or damage to property	26.0 (23.2, 29.0)	28.0 (22.0, 35.0)	25.5 (22.4, 28.8)
Threatened with violence	45.0 (41.8, 48.3)	45.1 (38.0, 52.3)	45.0 (41.4, 48.7)
Verbally insulted or abused	66.2 (63.0, 69.2)	69.8 (62.7, 76.0)	65.3 (61.7, 68.7)
Object thrown	16.9 (14.6, 19.5)	17.0 (12.2, 23.2)	16.8 (14.3, 19.8)
Reasons for violence and harassment*			
Being on the registry	89.8 (87.3, 92.0)	86.7 (79.8, 91.4)	90.7 (87.8, 92.9)
Race/ethnicity	4.1 (2.8, 5.9)	3.0 (1.1, 7.6)	4.4 (2.9, 6.5)
Sex (being female or male)	2.8 (1.8, 4.4)	3.0 (1.1, 7.6)	2.8 (1.6, 4.6)
Income or education level	4.2 (2.9, 6.1)	4.4 (2.0, 9.6)	4.2 (2.7, 6.3)
Age	4.5 (3.2, 6.5)	4.4 (2.0, 9.6)	4.6 (3.0, 6.8)
Sexual identity (being LGBQ)	5.2 (3.7, 7.2)	**23.7** (17.3, 31.6)	0.2 (0.0, 1.4)
Being transgender	0.3 (0.0, 1.2)	1.4 (0.4, 5.7)	0
Gender expression or appearance	1.1 (0.5, 2.3)	**4.4** (2.0, 9.6)	0.2 (0.0, 1.4)
Physical appearance	4.8 (3.4, 6.8)	5.2 (2.5, 10.5)	4.8 (3.2, 7.0)
Religion/spirituality	3.1 (2.0, 4.8)	4.4 (2.0, 9.6)	2.8 (1.6, 4.6)
Disability	4.1 (2.8, 5.9)	6.7 (3.5, 12.3)	3.4 (2.1, 5.4)
Being HIV+	0.3 (0.0, 1.2)	0.7 (0.1, 5.1)	0.2 (0.0, 1.4)

	TOTAL (N = 964)	LGBTQ (N = 192)	STRAIGHT CISGENDER (N = 772)
	% (95% CI)	% (95% CI)	% (95% CI)
Victimization of family members*			
Hit, beaten, physically attacked, or sexually assaulted	4.2 (3.1, 5.8)	2.2 (0.8, 5.7)	4.7 (3.4, 6.5)
Robbed; property stolen, vandalized, or purposely damaged	11.1 (9.2, 13.3)	8.2 (5.0, 13.2)	11.8 (9.7, 14.4)
Unsuccessful attempt made to attack, rob, or damage property	8.1 (6.5, 10.1)	6.0 (3.4, 10.6)	8.7 (6.8, 11.0)
Threatened with violence	16.5 (14.2, 19.1)	13.2 (9.0, 18.9)	17.3 (14.7, 20.3)
Verbally insulted or abused	33.9 (30.9, 37.1)	27.5 (21.5, 34.4)	35.6 (32.1, 39.2)
Object thrown	4.8 (3.6, 6.4)	3.3 (1.5, 7.2)	5.2 (3.8, 7.1)

Notes: *Categories are not mutually exclusive and therefore do not add to 100%. Bolded values indicate notable differences between LGBTQ and straight cisgender respondents.

Figure 8. Violence and harassment in adulthood among LGBTQ and straight cisgender adults on sex offense registries

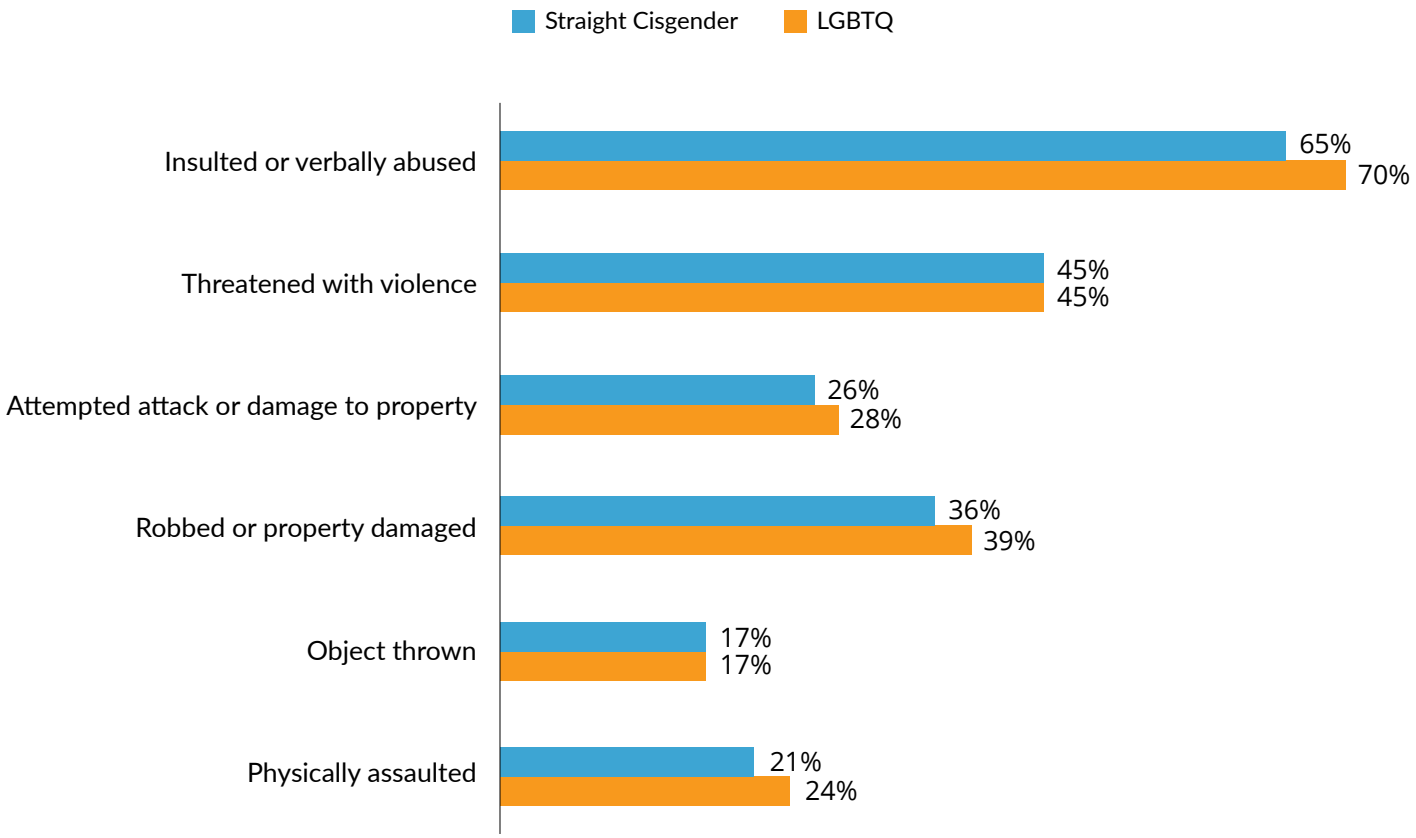
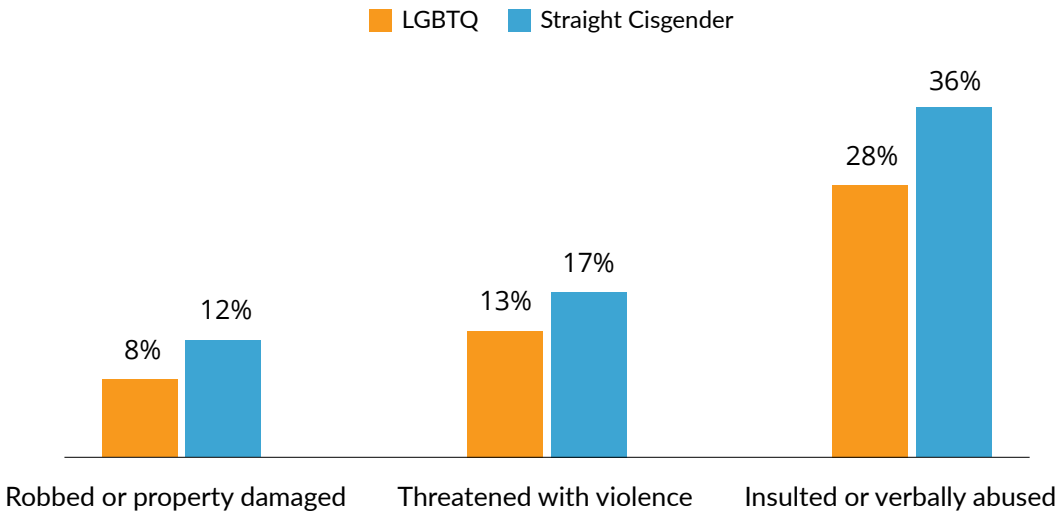


Figure 9. Violence and harassment of family members of LGBTQ and straight cisgender adults on sex offense registries



It's like a hammer hanging over my head every day. I'm just waiting for the day when the hammer falls and someone murders me because I'm on the registry.
37-year-old white; man; bisexual

Someone keyed the word "Petifile" into my new car. Yes it was spelled like that. Also it was difficult to get a decent job. Someone has broadcast my situation to all of my former Facebook friends, including my family. Certain search sites classify me as a "child rapist," even though my offense was an internet sting.
57-year-old, White, bisexual man

An irate housemate, who was being expelled from our recovery house due to multiple offenses there, used my being on the registry to lash out at me verbally, to try to rally other house members against me, and to threaten me with invalid complaints about me to the probation office. He also called the police to our house that night to confront me, for no reason, and left graffiti on the wall of his room denouncing me as a "pedo next door". In this instance, and many others, the stress of knowing that I am vulnerable to personal attacks or spite just by virtue of being on the registry is constant, even though other instances of that happening have not, to my knowledge, occurred.
55-year-old, White, gay man

Just being a sex offender in general is a stigma that you can't get away from I am someone to fear. I'm an honest hard working guy just trying to make it and now it seems that the whole world is against me with the exception of a few (very few) understanding people.
57-year-old, White, gay man

Table 15 shows the prevalence of experiencing other adverse events due to registration. Most respondents reported that they had been denied contact with family members and had lost a friend. Approximately half of respondents reported being harassed in person or via media and said that they were unable to date or have intimate partners.

Table 15. Events caused by registry status among adults on sex offense registries, by sexual and gender identity

	TOTAL (N = 964)	LGBTQ (N = 192)	STRAIGHT CISGENDER (N = 772)
	% (95% CI)	% (95% CI)	% (95% CI)
Events due to registry*			
Harassed in person	53.9 (50.6, 57.1)	51.4 (44.1, 58.6)	54.5 (50.8, 58.1)
Subject to harassing or threatening calls, email, mail, flyers, or notes	45.1 (41.9, 48.4)	40.6 (33.6, 47.9)	46.2 (42.6, 49.9)
Lost a friend when they found out you were on the registry	75.4 (72.4, 78.1)	79.4 (72.9, 84.7)	74.3 (71.0, 77.4)
Asked to leave a business or restaurant	25.4 (22.6, 28.3)	19.9 (14.7, 26.4)	26.7 (23.6, 30.1)
Denied contact with children or family members	62.4 (59.1, 65.5)	55.3 (48.0, 62.4)	64.1 (60.5, 67.5)
Unable to date, have sex/intimate partners	48.2 (44.9, 51.4)	50.0 (42.7, 57.3)	47.7 (44.1, 51.4)

Note: *Categories are not mutually exclusive and therefore do not add to 100%.

As a direct result of my original registration in 2002, I was expelled from the university I had been attending on scholarship and denied entry on campus to visit friends and to continue to meet with a long-term therapist. Finally, my continued registration in Florida has prevented me from visiting family there as often as I would like and has consequently strained relationships with them over time."

37-year-old, White, gay man

Brought back memories of similar harassment during my college years when word got around that I was gay."

56-year-old, White, gay man

Fear and shame controls my life.

31-year-old, White, gay man

MENTAL HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

Respondents were asked about mental health prior to their offense event, including childhood disorders. Most respondents reported a diagnosis of depression, and about half reported having been diagnosed with an anxiety disorder. The prevalence of anxiety was slightly higher among LGBTQ people than straight cisgender people (58% vs. 48%), and more LGBTQ people reported being diagnosed with autism (10% vs. 4%). About 1 in 5 people reported substance use disorder, and about 1 in 10 reported antisocial personality disorder (Table 16).

Table 16. Mental health history prior to offense among adults on sex offense registries, by sexual and gender identity

	TOTAL (N = 964)	LGBTQ (N = 192)	STRAIGHT CISGENDER (N = 772)
	% (95% CI)	% (95% CI)	% (95% CI)
Health prior to offense*			
Depression	65.6 (61.7, 69.4)	69.9 (61.6, 77.1)	64.4 (59.9, 68.7)
Anxiety	50.2 (46.1, 54.2)	57.9 (49.3, 66.0)	47.9 (43.3, 52.5)
Substance use disorder	19.9 (16.9, 23.3)	23.3 (16.9, 31.3)	18.9 (15.6, 22.8)
Antisocial personality disorder	11.2 (8.9, 14.0)	7.5 (4.1, 13.4)	12.3 (9.6, 15.6)
PTSD	5.8 (4.2, 8.0)	5.3 (2.5, 10.7)	5.9 (4.1, 8.5)
Autism/spectrum	4.9 (3.4, 7.0)	**9.8** (5.8, 16.1)	3.5 (2.2, 5.7)
ADD/ADHD	4.1 (2.8, 6.0)	3.8 (1.6, 8.7)	4.2 (2.7, 6.5)
Bipolar disorder	3.4 (2.2, 5.2)	1.5 (0.4, 5.8)	4.0 (2.5, 6.2)
ODD	3.4 (2.2, 5.2)	2.3 (0.7, 6.8)	3.7 (2.3, 5.9)
Personality disorder	1.0 (0.5, 2.3)	1.5 (0.4, 5.9)	0.9 (0.3, 2.3)
OCD	0.9 (0.4, 0.2)	0.8 (0.1, 5.2)	0.9 (0.3, 2.3)
IDD	0.9 (0.4, 2.0)	0	1.1 (0.5, 2.6)

Notes: ADD = Attention Deficit Disorder; ADHD = Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder; PTSD = Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder; ODD = Oppositional Defiant Disorder in Children; OCD = Obsessive Compulsive Disorder; IDD = Intellectual Disability Disorder. *Categories do not add to 100% because they are not mutually exclusive. Bolded values indicate notable differences between LGBTQ and straight cisgender respondents.

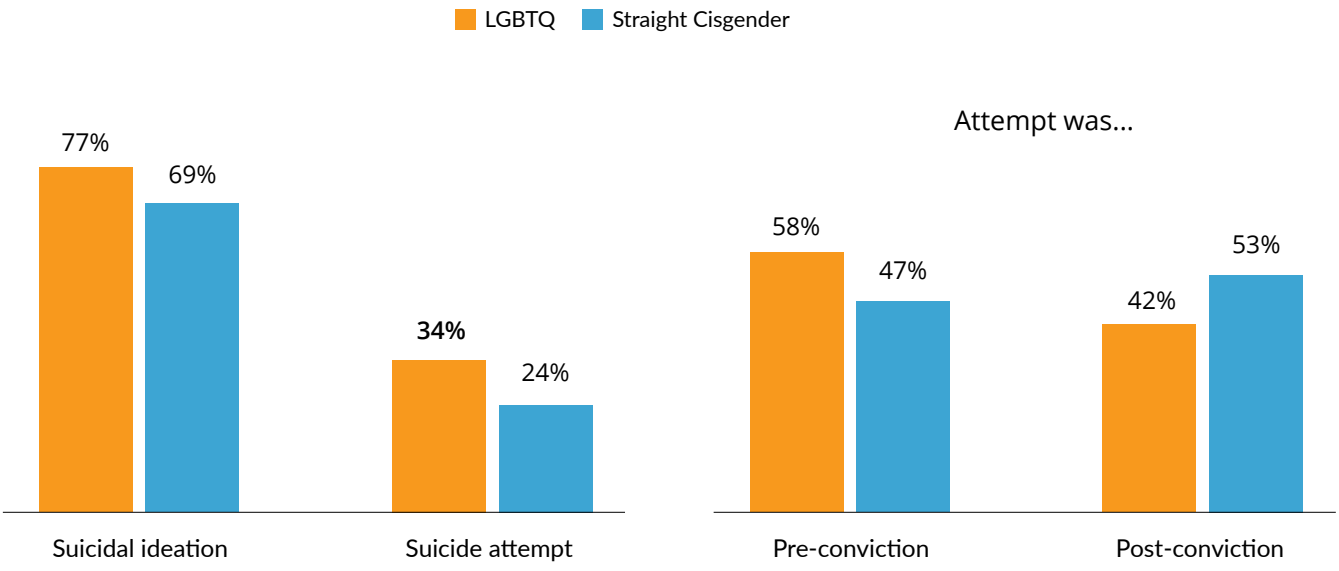
At the time of the survey, almost one-third of respondents reported fair or poor general health, and about 40% were experiencing high psychological distress. Lifetime suicidal ideation was highly prevalent (71%), with somewhat more LGBTQ than straight cisgender people reporting suicidal ideation over their lifetime (77% vs. 69%). Suicide attempts were also highly prevalent among respondents, with about 34% of LGBTQ people and 24% of straight cisgender individuals reporting at least one suicide attempt in their lifetime. Among people who had attempted suicide at some point in their lives, about half occurred prior to the conviction and half post-conviction. Slightly more straight cisgender respondents than LGBTQ respondents attempted suicide after their sex offense conviction as compared with attempts made pre-conviction (53% vs. 42%).

Table 17. Health, mental health, and suicidality among adults on sex offense registries, by sexual and gender identity

	TOTAL (N = 964)	LGBTQ (N = 192)	STRAIGHT CISGENDER (N = 772)
	% (95% CI)	% (95% CI)	% (95% CI)
Current health			
General health (fair or poor)	31.4 (28.5, 34.5)	33.7 (27.2, 40.8)	30.8 (27.6, 34.3)
Probable serious mental illness	38.7 (35.5, 41.9)	31.9 (25.5, 39.0)	40.4 (36.8, 44.0)
Lifetime suicidality			
Suicidal ideation	70.8 (67.7, 73.6)	76.8 (70.1, 82.4)	69.3 (65.8, 72.5)
Suicide attempt	26.0 (23.2, 28.9)	**34.3** (27.7, 41.5)	23.9 (20.9, 27.1)
Attempt was pre-conviction	49.8 (43.3, 56.2)	58.1 (45.5, 69.7)	46.8 (39.3, 54.3)
Attempt was post-conviction	50.2 (43.8, 56.7)	41.9 (30.3, 54.5)	53.3 (45.7, 60.7)

Notes: "Probable serious mental illness" is measured using the Kessler-6 psychological distress scale. Based on national standards, respondents whose scores were 13 or above were categorized as at risk for serious mental illness.[104] Bolded values indicate notable differences between LGBTQ and straight cisgender respondents.

Figure 10. Suicidality among LGBTQ and straight cisgender adults on sex offense registries



Note: Bolded values indicate notable differences between LGBTQ and straight cisgender respondents.

> *it's fucking ended my life I'm sick of this fucking shit I want to die so fucking bad every day because they took my life from me for losing my virginity during consensual sex. fuck america and especially fuck straight America*
>
> 26-year-old, White, lesbian woman

Generally the burden of not being able to travel without extensive research and planning. Always looking over my shoulder for law enforcement. Being gay for 56 years I know stigma but being on the registry is far worse. Housing and job hunting is very hard. Many opportunities for recreation no longer exist or are hard to work around, i.e. movies, museums, state parks. The grief of knowing that the government is always working to make my life worse in many ways with little regard for human life. Feeling like one of the Witches of Salem by society. An outcast, worthless, despised person after living a life in the public eye. The loss of lifelong friends.

66-year-old, White, gay man

SOCIAL SUPPORT AND INTIMATE RELATIONSHIPS

Table 18 shows comparisons related to social support and intimate relationships. Close to two-thirds of respondents were in an intimate relationship, with fewer LGBTQ respondents in a relationship compared with straight cisgender respondents (51% vs. 62%). Also, fewer LGBTQ respondents were in longer-term relationships (six or more years) compared to straight cisgender respondents (52% vs. 71%).

In line with previous findings, respondents reported that most people in their lives knew about their sex offense conviction (57%).[105]

Despite disruptions in various aspects of their lives, close to two-thirds of respondents reported having family and friends who try to help them; however, slightly fewer LGBTQ respondents reported feeling emotionally supported by family (59% vs. 66%). LGBTQ and straight cisgender respondents showed high social support from a "special person" in their life.

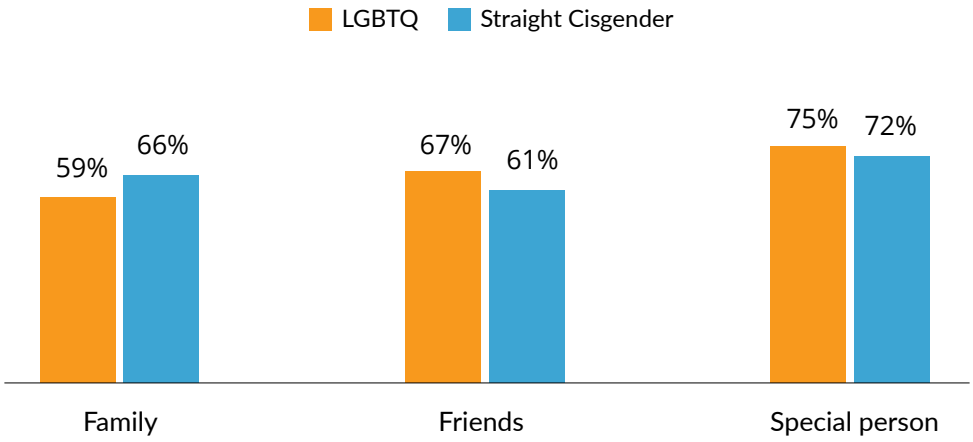
Table 18. Relationships and social support among adults on sex offense registries, by sexual and gender identity

	TOTAL (N = 964)	LGBTQ (N = 192)	STRAIGHT CISGENDER (N = 772)
	% (95% CI)	% (95% CI)	% (95% CI)
Relationships			
Special commitment to someone	60.1 (56.9, 63.1)	**50.5** (43.5, 57.5)	62.4 (59.0, 65.8)
Up to 5 years	32.0 (28.2, 36.0)	**48.4** (38.6, 58.4)	28.6 (24.6, 32.9)
6 or more years	68.0 (64.0, 71.8)	**51.6** (41.6, 61.5)	71.4 (67.1, 75.4)
Family, friends, & coworkers know about sex offense conviction			
None/some	32.9 (29.8, 36.0)	29.8 (23.6, 36.9)	33.6 (30.2, 37.2)
Half	10.0 (8.2, 12.1)	8.3 (5.1, 13.3)	10.4 (8.4, 12.9)
Most	57.2 (53.9, 60.4)	61.9 (54.6, 68.7)	56.0 (52.3, 59.6)
Social support*			
Family			
I get the emotional help and support I need from my family.	64.6 (61.4, 67.7)	58.5 (51.2, 65.4)	66.2 (62.6, 69.5)
Friends			
My friends really try to help me.	62.0 (58.8, 65.1)	66.7 (59.5, 73.1)	60.8 (57.2, 64.3)

	TOTAL (N = 964)	LGBTQ (N = 192)	STRAIGHT CISGENDER (N = 772)
	% (95% CI)	% (95% CI)	% (95% CI)
Social support*			
Special person			
There is a special person around when I am in need.	72.4 (69.4, 75.2)	74.9 (68.1, 80.6)	71.8 (68.4, 74.9)

Notes: *Categories do not add to 100% because they are not mutually exclusive. Bolded values indicate notable differences between LGBTQ and straight cisgender respondents.

Figure 11. Sources of support for LGBTQ and straight cisgender adults on sex offense registries



The biggest impact at this point in my life is participating in my education. They are in the 3rd and 6th grade and I've never attended a single school function. Not one play, teacher conference, etc. Everytime I miss it. Must tell them a lie, "Daddy has to work" and it kills me a little every time. My wife must pull double duty, like a single parent, taking care of everything school related in addition to her full time job. She hides my identity as though she is harboring a fugitive and it is very hard on her.

54-year-old, White, bisexual man

I cannot marry or talk to the person I love he is the only person that supports me emotionally I can't work I doubt housing will work because of the registry All I am is a useless rotting corpse.

26-year-old, White, straight, transgender person

I live seperately from my family on the other end of town. In order to reduce the amount of change in my families life my wife and I decided it best that she and our kids stay in our old house while I stay on my own.

44-year-old, White, gay man

I no longer date because once someone finds out, they lose interest. This makes life very lonely.

54-year-old, White, bisexual man

CONCLUSIONS

Our study of a nonprobability sample of people required to register on U.S. sex offender registries is the first to compare LGBTQ and straight cisgender people on registries. The study shows many similarities between straight cisgender and LGBTQ respondents, but also significant differences. In terms of the sex offenses for which people were convicted, LGBTQ and straight cisgender people were very similar, but there appears to be some increase in the proportion of LGBTQ people whose offense was child pornography and where the victim was represented as an image. LGBTQ respondents were also more likely to have been charged with offenses that included sodomy and being HIV- positive.

Most respondents reported some level of dissatisfaction with their defense attorney, law enforcement, and the criminal justice system. Overall, more straight cisgender respondents felt they were treated unfairly because of their socioeconomic status, race or ethnicity, or disability, and more LGBTQ respondents felt they were treated unfairly due to their sexual identity, gender expression, and HIV status. In terms of incarceration, in our comparisons, LGBTQ people seem to have been treated more harshly. More than half of all respondents had been incarcerated in a prison; however, more LGBTQ than straight cisgender adults had been incarcerated in a prison. Likewise, fewer LGBTQ adults received no prison or jail terms compared with straight cisgender adults. And among people who had served prison or jail sentences, more LGBTQ than straight cisgender people reported sentences of 25 years to life.

Close to 80% of respondents had received medical or psychological treatment, or "corrective treatment," related to their sex offense. Somewhat more LGBTQ than straight cisgender people had received treatment, and LGBTQ people were more likely than straight cisgender people to have received treatment while incarcerated, as well as to have received treatment that included elements of sexual orientation or gender identity change effort (conversion therapy).

Our results confirm some of the critiques of other researchers, including the heavy toll related to so-called "collateral consequences" of the registries. "Collateral" is, to a great extent, a misnomer, because many of these consequences—such as employment and housing instability—are purposefully included in laws and policies. Barriers to employment due to the registry are among the collateral consequences experienced by people required to register. In our study, most people (56%) reported that they had lost a job due to being on the registry, and almost a third were denied a promotion; 30% had to change jobs over the two-year period prior to our survey. Only 33% of people were fully employed, 22% were unemployed, and 16% were unemployed for over a year. As noted, housing is another known collateral consequence for people on the registry due to residency rules in many jurisdictions. Two-thirds of respondents said they had difficulties finding a place to live that was not too close to a school, bus stop, park, or playground.

People on the registry also suffer from stigma-related violence and harassment in interactions with the public, including vigilante assaults. For the most part, LGBTQ and straight cisgender respondents experienced similar rates of abuse and violence, with close to one-quarter of straight cisgender and LGBTQ respondents reporting having been hit, beaten, physically attacked, or sexually assaulted. Many respondents reported being verbally insulted or abused (66%), threatened with violence (45%), or robbed or vandalized (37%). Respondents also reported impacts on their families due to their

registration. One in three respondents reported that a family member had been verbally assaulted, and 1 in 10 respondents reported that a family member had been robbed or had had their property stolen or purposely damaged.

Perhaps related to these stressors, the health and mental health of respondents was poor overall. At the time of the survey, almost one-third of respondents reported fair or poor general health, and about 40% were experiencing high psychological distress. Lifetime suicidal ideation was highly prevalent (71%), with somewhat more LGBTQ than straight cisgender people reporting a suicidal ideation over their lifetime (77% vs. 69%, respectively). Suicide attempts were also highly prevalent among respondents, with about 34% of LGBTQ people and 24% of straight cisgender individuals reporting at least one suicide attempt in their lifetime. This high prevalence of attempted suicide is not atypical for a sample of LGBTQ people, but for straight cisgender respondents this rate is 10 times higher than the 2.4% prevalence found for adults in the general U.S. population.[106]

METHODS

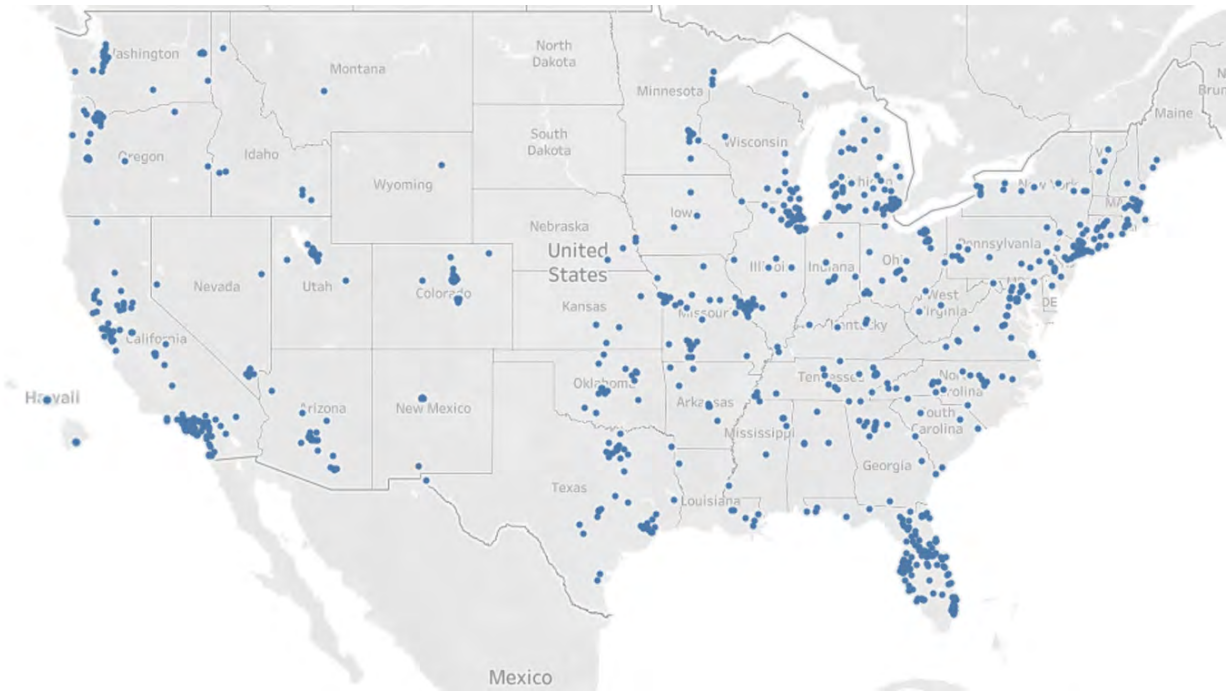
We obtained our data through a SORS survey conducted between March 12 and November 29, 2020. The survey, which was self-administered online, was designed to assess offense types/legal criminal process and the impact of registries on those required to register, such as discrimination, violence, housing instability, and unemployment, as well as mental and physical health and socioeconomic status. To identify individuals who were required to register on a sex offender registry, the researchers sent or posted announcements on multiple platforms, including organizations working with people on sex offender registries and social media. This included announcements and paid advertisements on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram, and emails to criminal justice advocacy organizations, reentry programs, public defenders' offices, and treatment clinics and providers. The announcement included a link to online self-administration of the eligibility screen and survey. Those eligible to participate were individuals 18 and older at the time of survey response who had been ordered to register on a sex offender registry in any jurisdiction within the United States, and who had at minimum a 6th-grade education so that they could comfortably respond to English-language survey questions. An information sheet about the study was provided to respondents before they proceeded to the survey questions online. No identifying data, such as name or address, were collected. To protect the anonymity and confidentiality of the survey responses, no signed informed consent documents were collected; if respondents elected to proceed and answer the survey questions, consent was assumed. The study protocol was reviewed and approved by the UCLA Institutional Review Board.

The final analytic sample size included 965 respondents from across the United States (Figure 12). This report includes 964 respondents; one other respondent's sexual orientation/gender identity status could not be determined and thus is not included in this report. We provide descriptive statistics for the entire sample by sexual and gender identity. We provide point estimates and 95% confidence intervals for proportions and means and standard variation for scales. We bolded some results to indicate notable differences between LGBTQ and straight cisgender adults. Confidence intervals that do not overlap or that overlap only marginally were used to assess which of the differences were notable. This method is similar but not always identical to testing statistical significance.[107] Statistical analysis was conducted in STATA, version 17.

In addition to closed-ended survey questions, participants were given several opportunities to respond with a narrative account of their experiences. This was either in response to specific questions, where they were asked to explain a specific response item (e.g., when a participant selected "something else" as their answer), or, in a more general way, at the end of a section (e.g., housing, employment), where they were asked if they had anything more to say on the topic. In this report we have provided some of the narrative responses given, focusing on our LGBTQ respondents.

The report presents data on all respondents by sexual orientation and gender identity—that is, data for LGBTQ and straight cisgender individuals. Because of this, there are groups—especially women and people of color—whose specific results may become hidden due to aggregation of data where most respondents are men and White. In subsequent publications, we will focus on women and transgender persons and on racial/ethnic differences.

Figure 12. Residential location of 965 SORS project respondents



STUDY LIMITATIONS

The study recruited individuals who were required to register as sex offenders in the United States. We sought volunteers to complete the survey by advertising in multiple venues. People volunteered to respond to the survey anonymously. Because this is a nonprobability sample, it is not representative of the overall population of people required to register. Nonrepresentative samples are useful for collecting information that provides insights into the population of interest, but such studies cannot be said to be an unbiased representation of the population. We know, for example, that our study underrepresents non-White people on the registry. Even though the majority of people on the registry are White, an estimated 22% are Black, and in some jurisdictions, the proportion of Black registrants is even higher.[108] Our proportion of non-White people is only 13%, including all non-White race/ethnicities. In some areas, for example, by having a minimum education requirement, we biased the sample by design and out of necessity, as this was a self-administered survey. Also, by design we did not include people who did not have access to a computer, tablet, or smartphone; had no internet connection; or who were barred from using the internet due to parole requirements or other reasons. Similarly, we did not include people who were required to register but were incarcerated. For these reasons, our results must be interpreted with caution, as there is no assurance that a study of a probability sample of people on the registry would yield the same results. Still, for a long time, nonprobability samples have contributed significant knowledge about hard-to-reach populations, including LGBTQ populations. Often, insights from those studies, such as the high rate of suicide attempts among LGBTQ people, were later confirmed by probability samples.

Since the survey was self-reported, we relied on the respondents' understanding, recollection, and willingness to report. All of these factors can be problematic, especially in issues related to the convicted offense, as there may be different interpretations and understanding of relevant laws that are both complex and varied by jurisdiction.

Despite these limitations, there are many strengths to the study, as it includes for the first time comprehensive information on both straight cisgender and LGBTQ people on sex offender registries nationwide.

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ENDNOTES

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