



ACLU RESEARCH REPORT

Policing Progress

Findings from a National Survey of LGBTQ+
People's Experiences with Law Enforcement

ACLU

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Executive Summary

The national conversation on policing continues to wrestle with some hard truths about injustices associated with law enforcement. Often missing from this dialogue is a group that faces disproportionate harm from the criminal legal system: lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer+ (LGBTQ+) people. Despite successful mobilization by LGBTQ+ communities and their allies, and efforts by law enforcement to improve relations with LGBTQ+ communities, LGBTQ+ people continue to be over-criminalized.

In the United States, we are increasingly witnessing new efforts to criminalize LGBTQ+ people, including bans on gender-affirming medical care, transgender people's use of public bathrooms, drag performances, and books with LGBTQ+ content. Furthermore, LGBTQ+ people continue to have disproportionate contact with law enforcement,¹ endure disproportionate harm from the criminal legal system,² and are incarcerated at three times the rate of the general population.³

Taking this background as a starting point, this report advances an evidence-based understanding of LGBTQ+ people's experiences with and attitudes toward police. It does so by utilizing a first-of-its-kind survey that drew on a national probability sample of both LGBTQ+ and non-LGBTQ+ people from across the United States. Adopting an intersectional lens to examine differences between LGBTQ+ and non-LGBTQ+ people, as well as within the diverse LGBTQ+ community, this report reveals that unique intersections of gender, sexuality, race, and socioeconomic status are associated with very different experiences with and attitudes toward law enforcement.

Methods

The findings presented in this report derive from the Policing the Rainbow survey, a nationally representative probability sample of 1,480 adult respondents ages 18-94, including both LGBTQ+ (N = 798) and non-LGBTQ+ individuals (N = 682), with a deliberate oversample of LGBTQ+ people. The survey was developed by report co-authors Stefan Vogler and Valerie Jenness and fielded through the AmeriSpeak panel at NORC at the University of Chicago. The online survey consisted of approximately 50 questions that asked respondents about their experiences with and attitudes towards the police. Respondents were asked questions related to their experiences with and fear of crime victimization, most recent and most memorable police interactions, willingness to engage with the police, and views on various types of police reform.

Key Findings

The results reveal significant differences in respondents' reports of interactions with and perceptions of the police between LGBTQ+ and non-LGBTQ+ people. Despite the higher likelihood of

Despite the higher likelihood of being victims of crime, LGBTQ+ people are less likely to report such victimization to the police.

being victims of crime, LGBTQ+ people are less likely to report such victimization to the police. Moreover, they are more likely to have experienced police-initiated contact and have a greater likelihood of contending with offensive language and physical force by the police. These factors are associated with LGBTQ+ people's diminished trust in and reduced willingness to engage with police.

There are also significant differences within the LGBTQ+ community. In general, LGBTQ+ people of color (especially Black LGBTQ+ people), transgender people, nonbinary+ people, bisexual, and queer+ people experience more mistreatment by the police, perceive the police to be less fair and legitimate, and report a greater reluctance to engage with the police than white LGBTQ+ people, cisgender people, and gay and lesbian people, respectively.

Despite a higher likelihood of crime victimization among LGBTQ+ people, they exhibit a lower likelihood of reporting such incidents (74.3%) than non-LGBTQ+ people (80.8%), especially among those with intersecting marginalized identities.

- Lesbian and gay (81.0%) people are more likely to report their victimization to the police than bisexual (77.1%) and queer+ (61.6%) people.
- Within the LGBTQ+ community, transgender people (42.1%) and nonbinary+ people (52.4%)

are about half as likely as cisgender men (82.4%) and women (77.3%) to have reported their victimization to the police even though, as a group, their victimization rates are higher.

- As a whole, Black LGBTQ+ people report their victimization to the police at similar rates as white LGBTQ+ people. However, when further disaggregated by gender, Black cisgender men have some of the highest rates of reporting, whereas Black transgender people have some of the lowest rates of reporting.

Although LGBTQ+ people are less likely than non-LGBTQ+ people to have reported prior victimization to the police, they are more likely to have requested emergency or non-emergency police services.

- Approximately one-quarter of LGBTQ+ people (25.1%), compared to 19.3% of non-LGBTQ+ people, requested police aid in the prior twelve months. Over 50% of all LGBTQ+ people (53.5%) requested assistance at some point in their life, compared to 41.3% of non-LGBTQ+ people.
- Among sexual minorities, bisexual people (57.1%) are more likely to have requested police assistance at some point in their lives compared to lesbian and gay people (46.6%).

Compared to non-LGBTQ+ people (14.6%), LGBTQ+ people (21.0%) experience higher rates of police-initiated contact, including being stopped, searched, arrested, or held in custody.

- Lesbian and gay respondents (15.0%) experienced similar rates of police-initiated contact in the prior 12 months as their non-LGBTQ+ counterparts. However, one-quarter of all bisexual people (25.0%) had police-initiated contact.
- Transgender people (32.8%) are more likely to have had police-initiated contact in the past 12 months compared to cisgender LGBTQ+ men (17.1%) and women (22.4%).

- LGBTQ+ people of all racial groups, except LGBTQ+ people who are Asian, report higher rates of police-initiated contact over the course of their lives compared to their non-LGBTQ+ counterparts.

LGBTQ+ people contend with more adverse treatment by police than non-LGBTQ+ people. This is particularly pronounced among bisexual, transgender, and nonbinary+ people, who are more susceptible to experiencing insulting language and physical force from the police.

- Whereas lesbian and gay respondents (12.3%)—especially cisgender men and women—report experiencing insulting language only slightly more often than non-LGBTQ+ people (9.9%), more than one-fourth of all bisexual and queer+ respondents (25.4% and 26.8%, respectively) have experienced insulting language during a police interaction.
- Transgender and nonbinary+ respondents (44.9% and 33.1%) are significantly more likely than LGBTQ+ cisgender men (14.6%) to have experienced insulting language by the police.
- Black transgender people were the most likely to have experienced physical force by the police among all LGBTQ+ people by race.

LGBTQ+ people are less likely to perceive their most recent police interaction as procedurally just compared to their non-LGBTQ+ counterparts.

- Bisexual and queer+ people report lower perceptions of fairness in their recent interactions with police than gay and lesbian people. Additionally, transgender and nonbinary+ people report worse perceptions of fairness than cisgender LGBTQ+ people.
- Among LGBTQ+ people, Asian LGBTQ+ people report the highest perceptions of procedural

justice. Black LGBTQ+ people and LGBTQ+ people who are multiracial or of “another race”ⁱ report significantly lower perceptions of procedural justice than their Asian counterparts.

- When comparing LGBTQ+ and non-LGBTQ+ identity within racial groups, there are substantial differences among all racial groups, except Black respondents, in perceptions of procedural justice. Thus, being LGBTQ+ negatively impacts all racial groups except among Black people, suggesting that race is a more substantial factor than LGBTQ+ identity for Black people in relation to law enforcement interactions.

A higher prevalence rate of LGBTQ+ people’s negative encounters with the police is accompanied by less trust in police within the LGBTQ+ community.

- Lesbian and gay respondents report significantly better perceptions of the police than their bisexual and queer+ counterparts.
- Among LGBTQ+ people, cisgender men report the highest police legitimacy scores, and transgender and nonbinary+ people report significantly lower scores. Perceptions of police legitimacy are even lower among LGBTQ+ people who experience further oppression because of their race and socioeconomic status.
- Black and Hispanicⁱⁱ LGBTQ+ people report significantly lower perceptions of police legitimacy compared to white LGBTQ+ people. However, Asian LGBTQ+ people report the highest police legitimacy scores when comparing by race.

At the aggregate level, LGBTQ+ people are less willing to call the police for help in the future compared to non-LGBTQ+ people, and there are important differences based on sexual orientation and gender.

i People who are multiracial or of “another race” are respondents who identified as “Other, non-Hispanic” and “2+, non-Hispanic” in the AmeriSpeak intake surveys. See the Methods section for more details on how responses to race/ethnicity questions in the survey were coded and categorized.

ii ACLU typically uses the word “Latine” to refer to those known as Hispanic, Latino, or Latinx. However, given respondents selected the “Hispanic” options in the survey to describe themselves, we use the word “Hispanic” throughout this report. See the Methods section for more details on how race and ethnicity questions were asked.

LGBTQ+ people who are further marginalized by race/ethnicity and SES face disproportionate interactions with the police, including negative experiences.

- Lesbian and gay people (80.4%) are almost as likely to say they would call the police for help as non-LGBTQ+ people (86.9%). However, 68.5% of bisexual and 60.2% of queer+ people indicate that they would call the police for help in the future.
- Transgender respondents (61.3%) are far less likely than cisgender LGBTQ+ men to call the police for help in the future, and approximately one-quarter of nonbinary+ people (27.4%) are willing to call the police for help. Cisgender LGBTQ+ women (71.5%) are also less likely to call the police for help than cisgender LGBTQ+ men.
- Among LGBTQ+ people, there is no significant difference between willingness to call the police for help between Black (77.0%) and white (74.1%) people. However, Hispanic LGBTQ+ (57.8%) people are significantly less likely to call the police for help in the future than their white counterparts.
- LGBTQ+ people with high socioeconomic status (SES) (83.1%) are significantly more likely to call the police for help than are LGBTQ+ people with low SES (67.9%).

Conclusion & Key Recommendations

Although police departments throughout the United States have implemented numerous LGBTQ+ specific programs and policies, disparities persist in police interactions within the LGBTQ+ community, albeit in varying ways. While LGBTQ+ people generally differ from their non-LGBTQ+ counterparts in various aspects, the findings reveal that LGBTQ+ experiences with and perceptions of the police are not homogenous. Rather, the findings presented in this report point to significant variation based on gender and sexual orientation. Disparities among LGBTQ+ people who are bisexual, queer+, transgender, and nonbinary+ are profound; they report more adverse experiences, including experiencing insulting language and physical force, and hold more negative perceptions of the police compared to their gay and lesbian counterparts. LGBTQ+ people who are further marginalized by race/ethnicity and SES face disproportionate interactions with the police, including negative experiences associated with those interactions.

There are actions law enforcement, policymakers, and advocates can take to improve LGBTQ+ communities' interactions with the police and, by extension, law enforcement's relationship with LGBTQ+ communities in the U.S. Crucial steps should be taken to reduce the role of police as instruments of state control and as the default response to address public health and social problems. Broad recommendations for law enforcement, legislatures, and improved research and data collection are detailed below. Further details and more specific recommendations can be found in the full report.

Recommendations for Law Enforcement

There are immediate actions that police can take to address the well-documented unjust treatment of LGBTQ+ communities, and to limit harm to all community members, with particular care for the most marginalized people, including LGBTQ+ people, people of color, and people experiencing poverty. Specifically, law enforcement should:

- Discontinue policies and practices that require or incentivize officers to engage in aggressive tactics, such as quotas for citations or arrests, to reduce negative encounters between police and community members.
- Adopt and enforce specific policies and practices that ensure fair and equitable treatment of LGBTQ+ people, including nondiscrimination and anti-harassment policies. Implement strong oversight of police policy and practice with meaningful community involvement to ensure police are held accountable for violations and mistreatment of LGBTQ+ people. Implement internal audits and external reporting systems that review police encounters with LGBTQ+ people and that require corrective action when warranted.

Recommendations for Legislatures, District Attorneys, & the Courts

Legislatures and district attorneys should decriminalize and decline to prosecute minor offenses and nuisance crimes, as well as consensual sex work and drug possession. These offenses have a disparate impact on LGBTQ+ populations, particularly on those most marginalized. Despite the legal and social gains for LGBTQ+ rights, new bills seeking to criminalize LGBTQ+ people and expression, such as bans on drag shows, criminalization of transgender health care, and gender policing of public bathrooms, are now at an all-time high.⁴ It is critical to strenuously oppose these bills and repeal those already enacted. Specifically, policymakers and legal actors should:

- Decriminalize and reduce penalties for low-level offenses, such as drug possession and crimes that stem from substance use, mental illness, or homelessness. Fully decriminalize consensual sex work, including prostitution, among adults. While these offenses are still categorized as criminal offenses, district attorneys should decline to prosecute them.
- Repeal existing laws that explicitly criminalize LGBTQ+ people and expression, and oppose any proposed anti-LGBTQ+ laws, including those that would criminalize drag, criminalize health

care providers and families of trans children for providing necessary medical care, or legally require people to use public and school facilities that correspond to their sex assigned at birth.

- Ensure that decriminalization is accompanied by investments in non-carceral approaches such as prevention-and-treatment-focused initiatives that promote public safety by addressing poverty, addiction, mental health, and other root issues that drive criminal legal involvement. Establish and invest in alternatives to police response for people in crisis.

Recommendations for Research & Data Collection

Further research is necessary to better understand the nuanced experiences of LGBTQ+ people. Therefore, funding and public investments in such research is crucial, including examinations of interactions between LGBTQ+ people and police, the effects of specific laws and policies on LGBTQ+ people, and the root causes of increased LGBTQ+ contact with the criminal legal system. Fund research and evaluation of community-based programs and alternatives to policing that may increase the safety and wellbeing of LGBTQ+ people.

- Conduct research with large enough samples to systematically and effectively disaggregate the experiences and perspectives among various identity groups within the larger LGBTQ+ population, especially the differences among transgender women, transgender men, and nonbinary+ individuals compared to cisgender people.
- Develop systems for the routine collection of accurate data on a range of police practices. Identify and implement best practices for accurate collection of demographic data of individuals stopped, searched, detained, and/or arrested by law enforcement, such as sexual orientation, gender identity, and race/ethnicity.

Introduction

Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer+ (LGBTQ+) people have endured a long history of criminalization and over-policing. Over the course of the 20th century, raids on gay bars were common and often resulted in the mass arrest of LGBTQ+ patrons.⁵ The well-known raid on the Stonewall Inn in New York City on June 28, 1969, was a catalyst for what was then called “the gay liberation” movement and now generally referred to as the LGBTQ+ movement.

Even before Stonewall, LGBTQ+ and gender nonconforming people across the United States confronted law enforcement’s discriminatory practices, including, for example, demonstrations at the Black Cat Tavern in Los Angeles, in 1967, and Compton’s Cafeteria in San Francisco, in 1966, the latter of which was led by trans women.⁶ Moreover, during much of the 20th century, laws prohibited the gathering of LGBTQ+ people, the wearing of clothes of the “opposite sex,” and same-sex intimacy (this final prohibition was not lifted until the *Lawrence v. Texas* Supreme Court decision in 2003⁷). In other words, conflict with law enforcement has been at the center of the struggle for LGBTQ+ rights for more than a century.

At the same time, successful mobilization by LGBTQ+ communities and their allies during the late 20th and early 21st centuries has resulted in progressive social change, including courts striking down laws criminalizing LGBTQ+ people and the enactment of laws to recognize and protect the civil rights of LGBTQ+ people. Consistent with these changes, as well as significant shifts in public opinion about LGBTQ+ people generally moving in a positive direction over the last part of the 20th century and the first part of the 21st century, law enforcement agencies at every level of government across the

U.S. have made efforts to improve relations with LGBTQ+ communities by, for example, engaging in community policing of LGBTQ+ neighborhoods, instituting LGBTQ+ liaison officers⁸, and authorizing law enforcement personnel to wear insignia that communicates support for LGBTQ+ people.

Despite efforts by law enforcement to improve relations with and offer new protections to LGBTQ+ communities, LGBTQ+ people continue to be over-criminalized through other avenues, such as laws aimed at sex workers⁹ and people living with HIV¹⁰. Laws criminalizing poverty and the over-policing of less economically advantaged neighborhoods also disproportionately harm LGBTQ+ people — particularly LGBTQ+ youth and LGBTQ+ people of color — who are more likely to experience poverty and its collateral consequences.¹¹

In the U.S., new efforts to criminalize LGBTQ+ people abound, including bans on gender-affirming medical care, transgender people’s use of public bathrooms, drag performances, and books with LGBTQ+ content. According to the American Civil Liberties Union and the Human Rights Campaign, more than 500 anti-LGBTQ+ bills were introduced in 2023, many of which target transgender people specifically.¹² In the U.S. there is a marked increase in such legislation,

as over 300 anti-LGBTQ+ bills were introduced in the first three weeks of 2024 alone.¹³ Furthermore, LGBTQ+ people continue to be disproportionately impacted by various laws related to sex work,¹⁴ HIV status, and sex trafficking.¹⁵

LGBTQ+ people continue to have disproportionate contact with law enforcement,¹⁶ endure disproportionate harm from the criminal legal system,¹⁷ and are incarcerated at three times the rate of the general population.¹⁸ Studies conducted by academics, human rights groups, and advocacy organizations alike consistently find that LGBTQ+ people – and especially LGBTQ+ people of color – experience profiling and discriminatory treatment by law enforcement agents based on actual or perceived sexual orientation, gender, or gender identity/expression.¹⁹ A national survey found that 6% of LGBTQ+ people (compared to 1% of the general population) reported being stopped by the police in a public space.²⁰ The 2015 U.S. Transgender Survey – a national non-probability-based survey of trans and gender diverse people²¹ – found that 40.3% of respondents reported having interacted with the police in the past year, compared to only 21% of the general population who reported the same.²² Similarly, a recent survey of LGBTQ+ people by Lambda Legal and Black & Pink National found that Black and multiracial LGBTQ+ people were more likely to have had contact with police in the last five years (from the date they took the survey) and to have experienced police misconduct during those interactions than white LGBTQ+ people.²³

Related, studies also find that LGBTQ+ people, compared to non-LGBTQ+ people, are less satisfied with their interactions with police and more reluctant to engage with law enforcement.²⁴ As Colin P. Ashley, an organizer with the Reclaim Pride Coalition in New York City, told the *New York Times*, “For us, Stonewall is connected to a larger system of structural violence that includes mass incarceration ... These institutions [of law enforcement, jails, and prisons] haven’t really figured out how to deal with trans and queer+

people at all, or with people of color, and so they end up disproportionately harming them.”²⁵ In short, police are the gatekeepers of a larger criminal legal system that fails to treat LGBTQ+ populations, and particularly LGBTQ+ people of color, equitably.

In this context, this report utilizes data from a first-of-its-kind survey drawing on a national probability sample of LGBTQ+ adults and non-LGBTQ+ adults in U.S. households to understand their experiences with, attitudes toward, and perceptions of the police. This groundbreaking study produced high quality data that provides a national overview of LGBTQ+ and police relations in the U.S.

The ACLU has long been on the forefront of protecting the rights of LGBTQ+ people. In the courts, in the statehouses, and the court of public opinion, the ACLU has been fighting for the rights of LGBTQ+ people to be free from police harassment and discrimination in the criminal legal system.²⁶ From police profiling of trans women of color as sex workers to the violence LGBTQ+ people face in custody; reform of the criminal legal system is critically important for LGBTQ+ people and the social movements committed to advancing their social standing and welfare. Likewise, protecting LGBTQ+ rights is critically important for criminal legal reform movements. Knowing that LGBTQ+ rights are inextricably tied to racial and economic justice, this report applies an intersectional lens by examining 1) how LGBTQ+ people’s experiences differ from non-LGBTQ+ people’s experiences and 2) differences within the LGBTQ+ population by gender, sexual orientation, race/ethnicity, and economic status.

This new research builds upon the ACLU’s past work and supports continuing efforts to address inequities and advance justice by documenting LGBTQ+ communities’ experiences with police and the disparate treatment they face. These findings provide direction for future reforms to policies and practices. The report concludes with concrete recommendations for law enforcement and legislatures.

Methods

Data

The findings presented in this report derive from the Policing the Rainbow survey given to a nationally representative probability sample of both LGBTQ+ (N = 798) and non-LGBTQ+ individuals (N = 682), with a deliberate oversample of LGBTQ+ people. The survey was fielded in August of 2022 using NORC's AmeriSpeak Panel. The AmeriSpeak Panel is representative of approximately 97% of U.S. households and is sampled using area probability and address-based sampling based on age, race, Hispanic ethnicity, education, and gender. Black and Hispanic panelists were oversampled to ensure adequate representation. The survey was offered in English and Spanish and available for either an online or phone response. To encourage study participation, NORC sent email and SMS reminders to panelists throughout the fielding period and offered the equivalent of \$3 in redeemable points for participation in the survey. Respondents took, on average, 17 minutes to complete the survey. Out of the 5,886 invited panelists, a total of 1,598 respondents (27.1%) completed the survey.

Survey Instrument

The Policing the Rainbow survey was developed by report co-authors Stefan Vogler and Valerie Jenness, and administered by NORC, a nonpartisan research organization. The survey consists of approximately 50 questions that asked respondents about their experiences with and attitudes towards the police. Respondents were asked questions related to their experiences with and fear of crime victimization, most recent and most memorable police interactions,

willingness to engage with the police, and views on various types of police reform. Additionally, a number of contextual and demographic questions were asked, such as media and civic engagement and socialization. For external validity, several questions were derived from previously used measurements often found in other studies.

Measures

This report assesses differences in perceptions of and experiences with the police between LGBTQ+ people and non-LGBTQ+ people, as well as differences among LGBTQ+ people specifically, including by sexual orientation, gender, race, and socioeconomic status.

Sexual orientation was determined by responses to the question, "This next question is about sexual orientation. Which of the following best represents how you think of yourself?" Respondents could select from the categories of gay/lesbian, bisexual, straight, or identify a different term they use to describe their sexual orientation.²⁷ The most common written responses were pansexual and queer. A new variable, "queer+," was created to capture these and other remaining sexual orientations. Responses that were not easily categorized (i.e., "Just me") were recoded as missing.

To measure **gender**, the survey utilized the two-step method recommended by the National Academies of Science, Engineering, and Medicine.²⁸ Respondents were first asked whether their sex assigned at birth was male or female. Thereafter, they were asked whether they currently identify as male, female, transgender, or something else. If they selected "something else," respondents had the option to

write in another gender. The most common written response was nonbinary. In addition to male, female, and transgender, a “nonbinary+” category was created. Write-in responses were categorized as male, female, transgender, or nonbinary+. Responses that did not easily map onto one of these categories were marked as missing. If respondents stated that their current gender is male or female and this differed from their sex at birth, they were categorized as transgender. Because there is not enough information for all transgender people about how they specifically identify within this category, there are no distinctions made within this category between transgender men, transgender women, and transgender nonbinary+ people.²⁹

Race/Ethnicity was derived from the original AmeriSpeak intake surveys, which included eight racial categories: (1) white, non-Hispanic, (2) Black, non-Hispanic, (3) Other, non-Hispanic, (4) Hispanic, (5) 2+ non-Hispanic, (6) Asian, non-Hispanic, (7) American Indian/Alaskan Native, and (8) Hispanic/American Indian/Alaskan Native. Respondents who indicated Hispanic American Indian/Alaskan Natives and non-Hispanic American Indian/Alaskan Natives were combined into one “Indigenous” category and all respondents who identified as “Other, non-Hispanic” and “2+, non-Hispanic” into one “Another Race / Multi-Racial” category. The analyses that produced findings for this report assess race as six categories: White (non-Hispanic), Black (non-Hispanic), Hispanic, Asian (non-Hispanic), Indigenous, and Another Race / Multi-Racial. ACLU typically uses the word “Latine” to refer to those known as Hispanic, Latino, or Latinx. However, given respondents selected the “Hispanic” option to describe themselves, we use the word “Hispanic” throughout this report.

Although Indigenous people are included in the report, the sample size is too small to make meaningful assessments of their perceptions of and experiences with the police in conjunction with other demographics like specific gender and sexual orientation. While Indigenous LGBTQ+ people’s experiences at the aggregate level are included within the report, we have refrained from reporting any of

the findings related to specific sexual orientations and gender identities.

Socioeconomic status (SES) was determined through a composite scaled variable that consists of: 1) a measure of educational attainment (0, less than high school; 1, high school graduate and/or some college; 2, bachelor’s degree; 3, postgraduate or professional degree); 2) household income (0, less than \$30k; 1, \$30k-\$60k; 2, \$60k-\$100k; 3, \$100k+); 3) employment status (0, not working; 1, working); and 4) current housing (0, not owned; 1, owned). Scores from each variable were added together for a composite SES score ranging from 0-8 and this variable was split into three groups to represent low, medium, and high SES.

Procedural justice refers to individuals’ perceptions of the quality of treatment by police and the quality of police decision-making.³⁰ Respondents with prior police interactions were asked to rate the degree to which they perceived that the police during their most recent interaction (a) treated them with respect, (b) treated them fairly, (c) took the time to listen, (d) made decisions based on facts rather than opinions, and (e) explained their actions and decisions (see Appendix). A procedural justice scale was produced by averaging responses to these five questions. The scale ranges from 1 (low procedural justice) to 4 (high procedural justice).

Police legitimacy is described as “the belief that the police ought to be allowed to exercise their authority to maintain social order, manage conflicts and solve problems in their communities.”³¹ Survey respondents were asked to rate how much they agreed or disagreed with each of the following: (a) The police in this neighborhood are responsive to local issues, (b) The police are doing a good job in dealing with problems that really concern people in this neighborhood, (c) The police are not doing a good job in preventing crime in this neighborhood, (d) The police do a good job in responding to people in the neighborhood after they have been victims of a crime, and (e) The police are not able to maintain order on the streets and sidewalks in the neighborhood (see Appendix). A police legitimacy scale—ranging from 1 (low police legitimacy) to 5

(high police legitimacy)—was produced by averaging responses to these five questions.

Data Analysis

This report assesses differences among perceptions of and experiences with the police between LGBTQ+ people and non-LGBTQ+ people, as well as among LGBTQ+ people specifically, including by sexual orientation, gender, race, and socioeconomic status.

To assess these differences a series of analyses were run including tests of statistical significance in the form of chi-square tests and logistic and linear regression models (at the 95% significance level, $p < .05$). When examining group differences, statistically significant differences are reported. Findings that were substantially notable (at the 90% significance level, $p < 0.10$) are also included within the report. For some findings, point estimates are not provided due to small sample sizes that make such

estimates uncertain. Rather, confidence intervals (95% CI) are reported in endnotes for these findings.

Because the AmeriSpeak Panel uses a complex, multi-stage sampling design, individual survey responses were weighted to obtain accurate population estimates and confidence intervals. Individual-level estimates from the AmeriSpeak Panel data are representative of the population from which they were sampled.

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TABLE 1.
Weighted Sample Demographics

	Full Sample	LGBTQ+	Non-LGBTQ+
LGBTQ+ (N=1,480)			
No	91.9%	–	100.0%
Yes	8.1%	100.0%	–
Sexual Orientation (N=1,485)			
Straight/Heterosexual	92.3%	2.8%	100.0%
Lesbian/Gay	2.4%	30.4%	–
Bisexual	4.0%	50.2%	–
Queer+	1.3%	16.6%	–
Gender (N=1,525)			
Male	46.6%	32.4%	48.3%
Female	52.3%	52.1%	51.7%
Transgender	0.6%	8.0%	–
Nonbinary+	0.5%	7.4%	–
Race (N=1,598)			
White, non-Hispanic	64.1%	67.0%	65.0%
Black, non-Hispanic	10.4%	9.1%	10.4%
Hispanic	14.6%	16.5%	14.4%
Asian, non-Hispanic	5.5%	2.4%	5.7%
Indigenous	1.2%	0.9%	1.2%
Multiracial or “Another Race”	4.3%	4.2%	3.3%
Socioeconomic Status (N=1,598)			
Low SES	25.8%	29.4%	23.6%
Mid SES	49.2%	52.3%	50.2%
High SES	25.0%	18.4%	26.1%

Findings

The fact that LGBTQ+ people experience higher rates of crime victimization compared to straight/heterosexual and cisgender (non-LGBTQ+) people provides an essential backdrop for understanding the experiences and perceptions of LGBTQ+ people in relation to law enforcement. These experiences and attendant attitudes vary considerably by gender, sexual orientation, race, and socioeconomic status. Specifically, the findings reveal that the LGBTQ+ community is heterogeneous in regard to police interactions. Consideration of the intersections between sexual orientation and gender with race and socioeconomic status (SES) reveals that particularities along these lines often amplify disparities found at the aggregate level.

Despite a higher likelihood of crime victimization among LGBTQ+ people, several patterns emerge when examining their interactions with the police. For example, LGBTQ+ individuals report a lower likelihood of reporting such incidents, especially among those with intersecting marginalized identities. For example, Black and Hispanic transgender people, as well as transgender people with a low socioeconomic status, are less likely to report their victimization to the police. In contrast, lesbian and gay people, who experience the least amount of victimization among LGBTQ+ respondents, are the most likely to report their victimization to the police.

LGBTQ+ people are more likely than non-LGBTQ+ people to have requested emergency and non-emergency aid from the police. Surprisingly, Black and Indigenous LGBTQ+ people, and especially Black transgender people, were the most likely to call for police assistance. Although high socioeconomic status generally corresponds to a higher likelihood of requesting police assistance, high SES transgender people were the least likely to call for police aid.

Transgender and cisgender bisexual people are more likely to have been searched, arrested, and held in custody, compared to cisgender or gay/lesbian people, respectively.

Tellingly, LGBTQ+ people request police services at a higher rate than non-LGBTQ+ people, even in a context in which they are more likely to be stopped, searched, arrested, or held in custody. Cumulatively, the LGBTQ+ community is significantly more

likely than non-LGBTQ+ people to experience police-initiated interactions. Yet these higher rates of police interaction are not evenly distributed among LGBTQ+ people. For example, while lesbian and gay people experience police interactions at comparable rates to non-LGBTQ+ people, bisexual and transgender people are significantly more likely to experience police-initiated interactions.

These disparities are even more pronounced when the focus is on police-initiated contacts. Although transgender and bisexual people do not have a higher likelihood of being stopped by the police than their cisgender or lesbian and gay counterparts, they are significantly more likely to have been searched, arrested, and held in custody by the police. The convergence of race, gender, and sexual orientation gives rise to higher likelihoods of police interactions.

LGBTQ+ people also contend with more adverse treatment and perceive the police as less fair. This is particularly pronounced among bisexual, transgender, and nonbinary+ people, who report higher rates of experiencing insulting language or physical force from the police. Consequently, there is a significant reduction in perceptions of procedural justice among LGBTQ+ people, especially by bisexual, transgender, and nonbinary+ people.

With one exception, there are substantial differences in perceptions of police interactions between LGBTQ+ people across racial backgrounds and their non-LGBTQ+ counterparts. The exception is for Black respondents. The findings underscore the significant role race plays in relation to police interactions among Black people. Related, among Black LGBTQ+ people, cisgender women and transgender people report significantly lower perceptions of procedural justice compared to Black cisgender men. Moreover, people with higher SES generally report more favorable perceptions of the police within the LGBTQ+ community, including among transgender people.

The higher prevalence rate of LGBTQ+ people's negative encounters with the police are accompanied by less trust in law enforcement within the LGBTQ+ community. Specifically, individuals who experience marginalization based on both their sexual

orientation and their race express lower levels of trust in the police. For example, Black LGBTQ+ people, as well as Hispanic bisexual or queer+ people, are less likely to perceive the police as legitimate state actors. Among Black LGBTQ+ people, cisgender women are the least likely to perceive the police as legitimate, even in comparison to Black transgender people.

Collectively, these findings contribute to a reduced willingness among LGBTQ+ people, particularly those who are bisexual, queer+, transgender, and nonbinary+, to seek help from the police in the future. LGBTQ+ people from various racial backgrounds express less willingness to seek police assistance; the exception is Black LGBTQ+ people, who express a greater likelihood than their non-LGBTQ+ counterparts to seek police assistance. This heightened willingness within the Black LGBTQ+ community is influenced by Black LGBTQ+ cisgender men, who express the highest willingness to request police assistance. Conversely, cisgender women and transgender people (except Asian cisgender women and transgender people) are significantly less inclined to call the police for help in the future—a trend that aligns with their heightened exposure to involuntary police contact and perceptions of procedural injustice during police interactions.

LGBTQ+ People Are Less Likely to Report Their Victimization to the Police, Despite Higher Rates of Victimization

The survey findings confirm that LGBTQ+ people are significantly more likely to have ever been a victim of crime than non-LGBTQ+ people. In the past 12 months (from the date they completed the survey), nearly 25% of bisexual (23.1%) and queer+ (23.3%) people experienced victimization compared to 14.5% among non-LGBTQ+ people. Additionally, transgender people (30.8%) and cisgender sexual minority women (24.5%) report higher rates of victimization than non-LGBTQ+ cisgender men and women (16.4% and 12.3%, respectively).

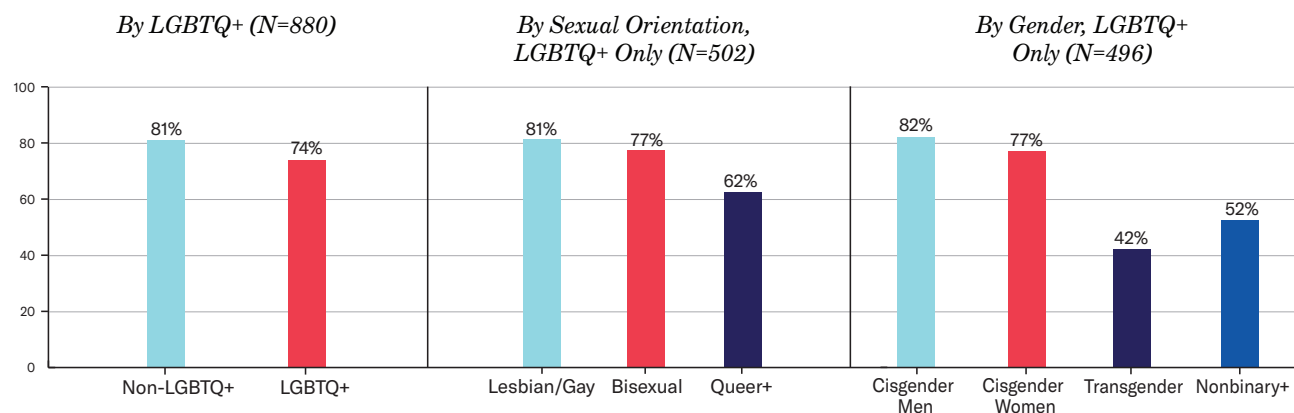
Despite higher rates of victimization, LGBTQ+ people (74.3%) are substantially less likely than non-LGBTQ+ people (80.8%) to have reported prior victimization to the police (see **Figure 1**). Within the LGBTQ+ community, transgender people (42.1%) and nonbinary+ people (52.4%) are about half as likely as cisgender men (82.4%) and women (77.3%) to have reported their victimization to the police even though, as a group, their victimization rates are higher. Among sexual minorities, although lesbian and gay people report lower victimization rates than bisexual and queer+ people, they are more likely to report their victimization to the police (81.0% compared to 77.1% and 61.6%, respectively).

Differences in Crime Victimization Reporting by Race/Ethnicity

- Among LGBTQ+ and non-LGBTQ+ people, Black (66.4%) and Asian (65.4%) people are substantially less likely to report victimization than other racial groups, including white (81.1%), Hispanic (88.4%), Indigenous (82.6%), and multiracial people or people of “another race” (89.4%) who all report their victimization at comparable rates.
- Among LGBTQ+ people, there are no significant differences in crime reporting by race. Black (76.0%) LGBTQ+ people report at similar rates as white (75.8%) LGBTQ+ people (see **Figure 2**).

FIGURE 1.

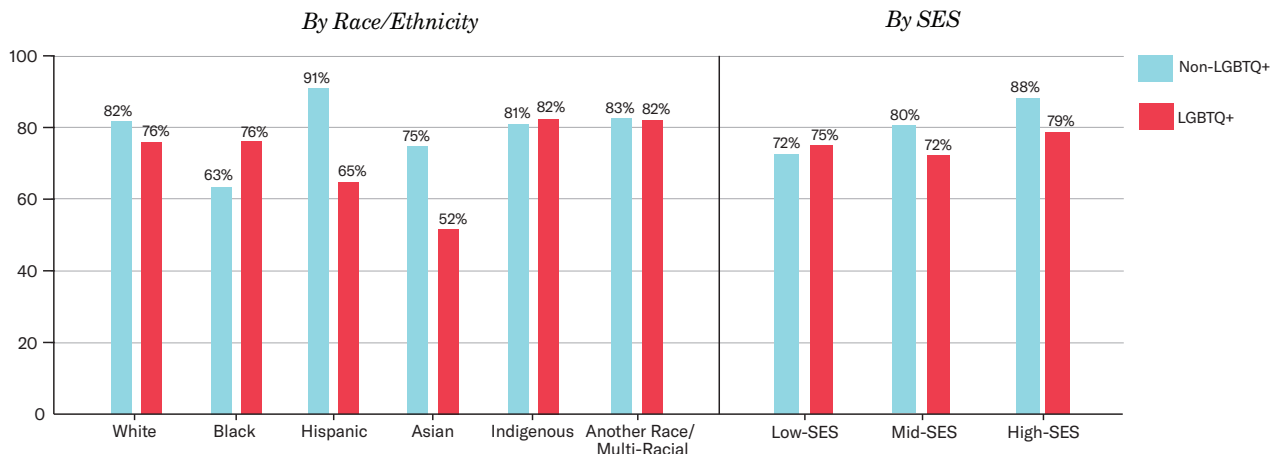
A Comparison of the Percentage of People Who Have Ever Reported Their Crime Victimization to the Police, by LGBTQ+, Sexual Orientation, and Gender



Note: When assessing sexuality, transgender respondents who identify as “Straight / Heterosexual” are excluded.

FIGURE 2.

A Comparison of the Percentage of People Who Have Ever Reported Their Crime Victimization to the Police, by Race and SES



Note: N=880

People who are Hispanic are the only racial group with significant differences in reporting between LGBTQ+ and non-LGBTQ+ people. Hispanic people who are LGBTQ+ (64.6%) are significantly less likely to report their victimization to the police compared to their non-LGBTQ+ Hispanic counterparts (90.8%).

- Black cisgender sexual minority men³² are the most likely to report their victimization to the police. People who are white and transgender or nonbinary+, as well as transgender people who

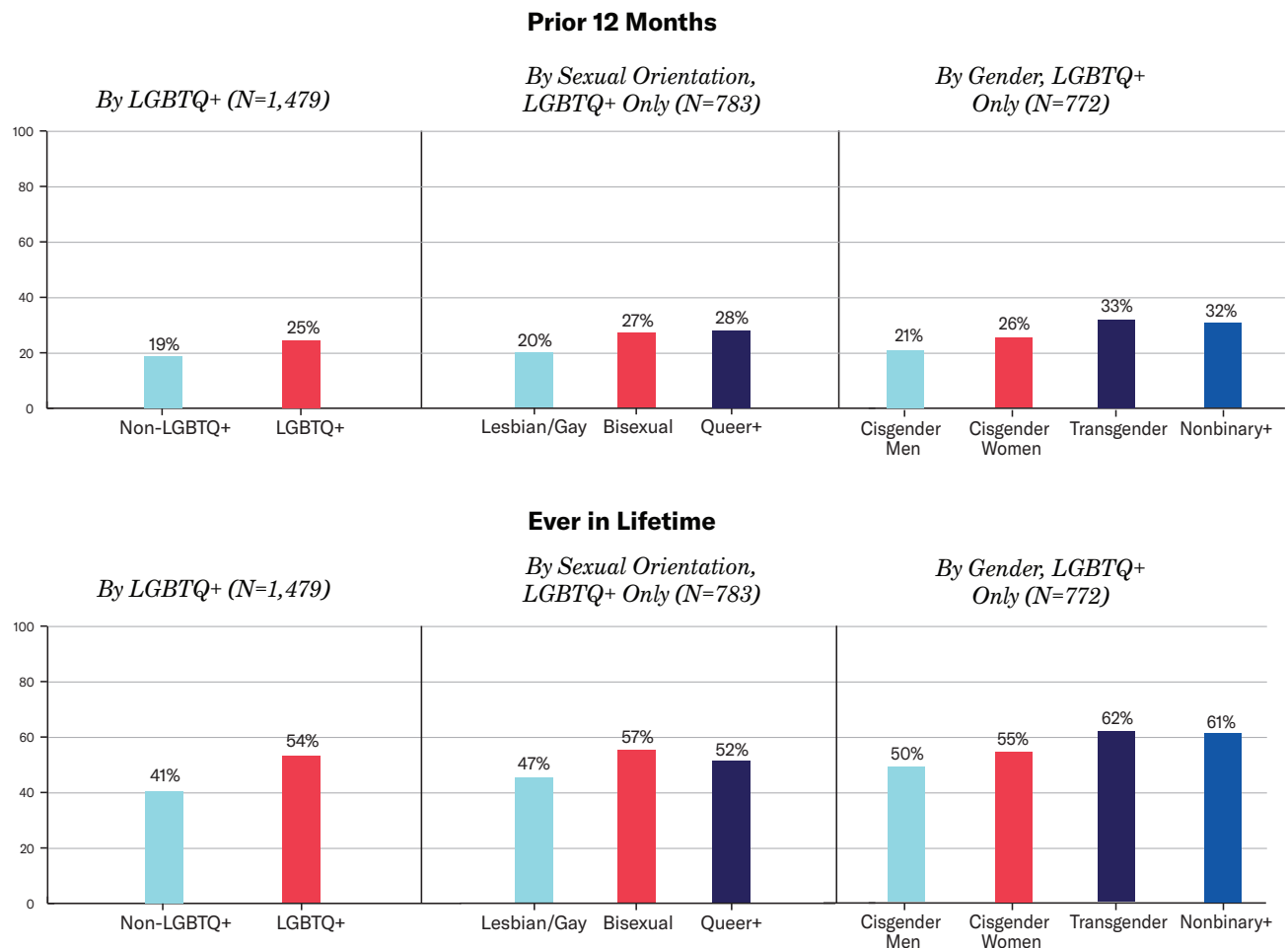
are Black, are less likely to have reported their victimization to the police compared to white cisgender sexual minority men³³.

Differences in Crime Victimization Reporting by SES

- SES significantly impacts crime victimization reporting among non-LGBTQ+ people, but not among LGBTQ+ people at the aggregate level (see *Figure 2*).

FIGURE 3.

A Comparison of the Percentage of People Who Have Requested Emergency or Non-Emergency Police Aid, by LGBTQ+, Sexual Orientation, and Gender



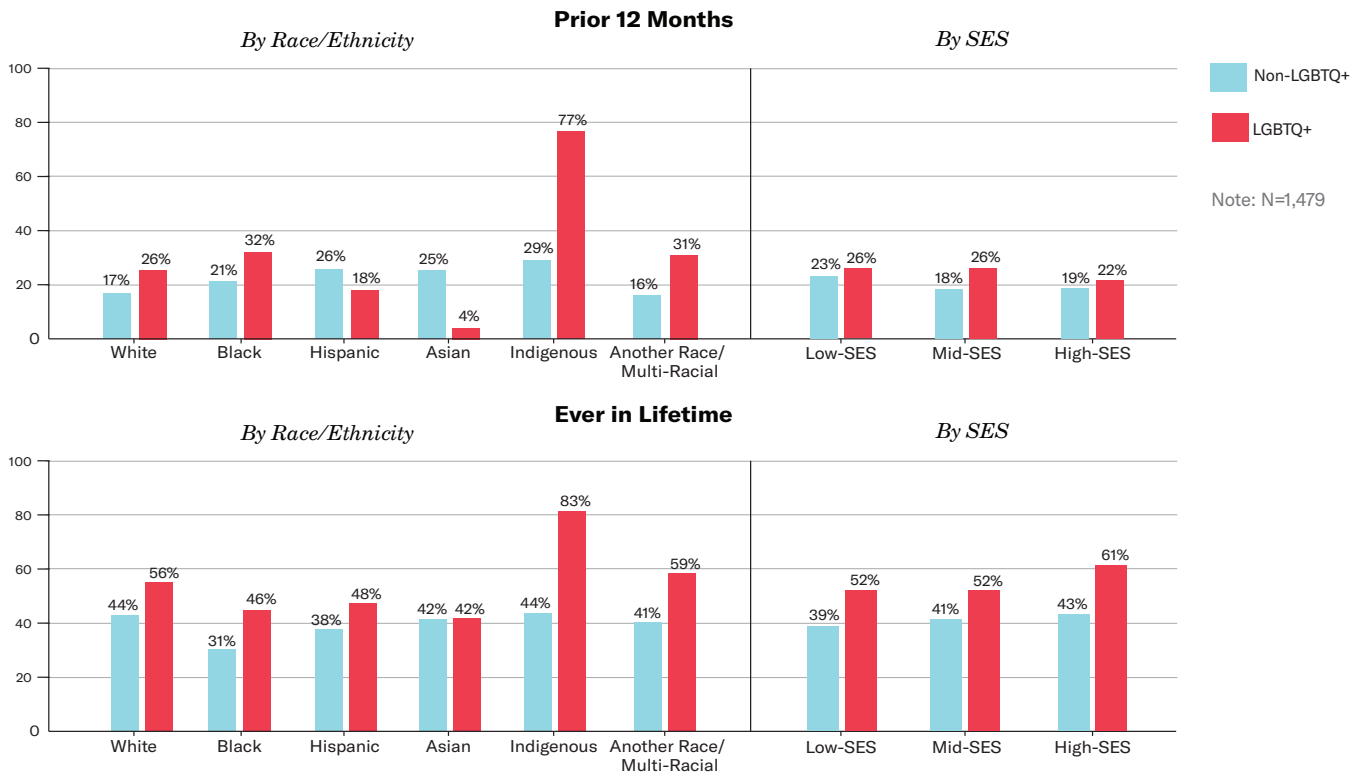
Note: When assessing sexuality, transgender respondents who identify as “Straight / Heterosexual” are excluded.

- Lesbian and gay people with high SES³⁴ are the most likely to have reported victimization to the police.
- By gender, cisgender men with mid-level SES³⁵ were the most likely to have reported their victimization to the police among all LGBTQ+ people. Comparatively, transgender and nonbinary+ people with mid-level SES were significantly less likely to report victimization to the police than mid-SES cisgender sexual minority men.³⁶

LGBTQ+ People Are More Likely to Have Requested Police Services

Although LGBTQ+ people are less likely than non-LGBTQ+ people to have reported prior victimization to the police, they are more likely to have requested emergency or non-emergency police services (see **Figure 3**). Approximately one-quarter of LGBTQ+ people (25.1%) requested police aid in the prior 12 months, and over half (53.5%) requested assistance at some point in their life. Among sexual minorities specifically, bisexual (57.1%) respondents are significantly more likely to have requested police assistance at some point in their lives compared to lesbian and gay respondents (46.6%). Importantly, there are no statistically significant differences

FIGURE 4.
A Comparison of the Percentage of People Who Have Requested Emergency or Non-Emergency Police Aid, Race and SES



among LGBTQ+ people by gender alone in their requests for police services.

Differences in Police Assistance Requests by Race/Ethnicity

- Among all non-LGBTQ+ and LGBTQ+ people, Black (30.7%) people are less likely to have requested police emergency or non-emergency services at some point in their lives compared to white (43.5%) and multiracial people or people of “another race” (56.8%). Hispanic (26.5%) people are significantly more likely than white (17.2%) respondents to have requested assistance at some point in the prior 12 months.
- LGBTQ+ people’s requests for police assistance in the prior 12 months (but not over the course of their lives) significantly vary by race (see *Figure 4*). Asian LGBTQ+ people (4.2%) were the least likely to have requested police assistance in the prior 12 months. Black LGBTQ+ respondents (32.4%) were nearly twice as likely to have requested police assistance as Hispanic LGBTQ+ people (18.0%). Additionally, Indigenous LGBTQ+ people were overwhelmingly more likely to request assistance than any other racial group (77.0%).
- Racial disparities within the LGBTQ+ community were also impacted by gender identity. Among LGBTQ+ people, white cisgender women and Black transgender people were more likely to have requested assistance in the prior 12 months compared to white cisgender men.³⁷ Over the course of their lives, Asian cisgender men are less likely and Asian cisgender women are more likely to have requested assistance than white cisgender men.³⁸

Differences in Police Assistance Requests by SES

- Among LGBTQ+ people, queer+ people with high-level SES³⁹ are the most likely to have ever requested police assistance, more than any other sexual minority group of any SES level.

Comparatively, queer+ people with low-level SES are significantly less likely to have requested any emergency or non-emergency police services.⁴⁰ Lesbian and gay people with low- or mid-level SES are also less likely to have requested police assistance.⁴¹

- By gender, transgender people with high-level SES⁴² are the least likely to have requested services in the prior 12 months.
- Over the course of their lives, cisgender men with mid-level SES⁴³ are the least likely to have requested assistance. Almost all nonbinary+ respondents with high-level SES⁴⁴ had requested emergency or non-emergency police services at some point in their lives.

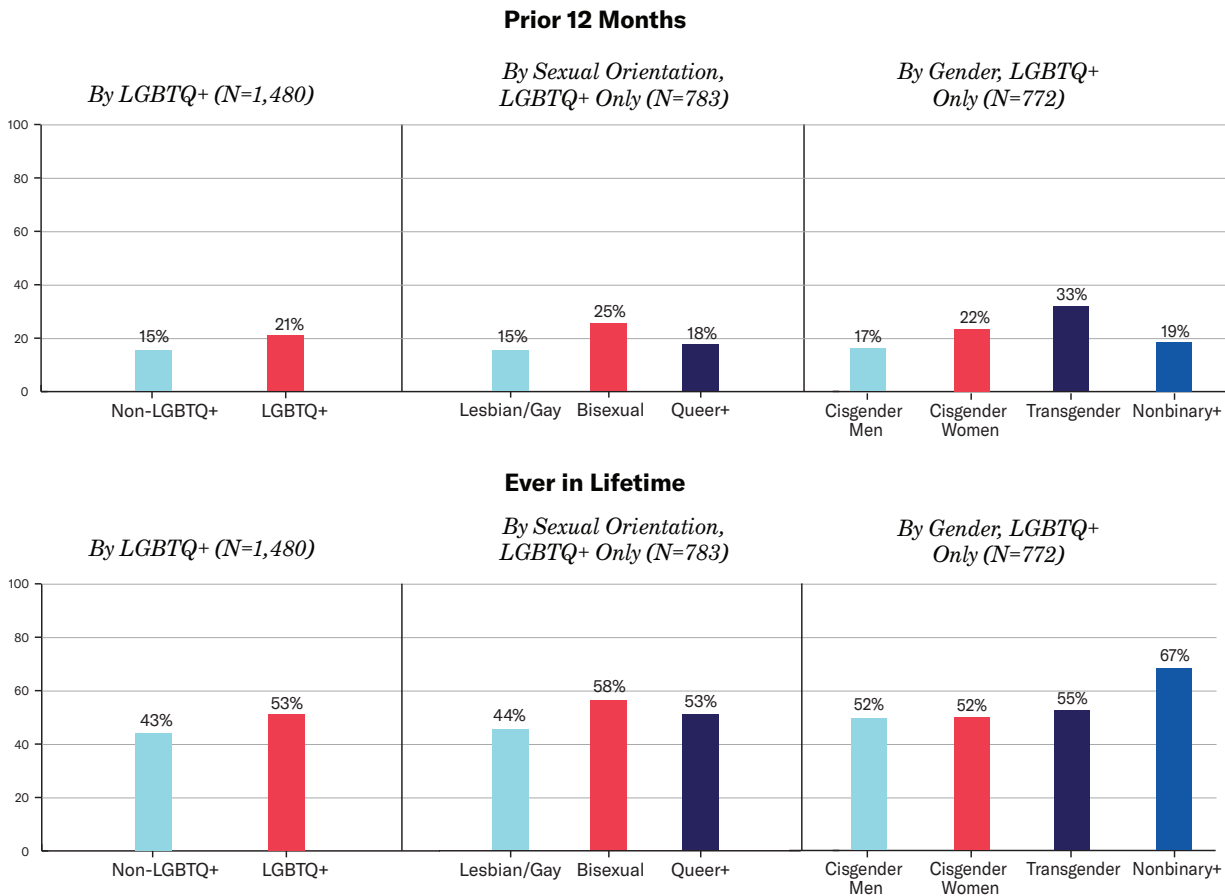
LGBTQ+ People Experience More Police-Initiated Contact

LGBTQ+ people are more likely to have experienced prior police-initiated contact, including being stopped, searched, arrested, or held in custody, than non-LGBTQ+ people (see *Figure 5*).⁴⁵ In the prior twelve months, 21.0% of LGBTQ+ people reported having experienced a police-initiated contact (compared to 14.6% of non-LGBTQ+ people). Lesbian and gay (15.0%) as well as queer+ (17.5%) people experienced similar rates of police contact in the prior 12 months as their non-LGBTQ+ counterparts (14.6%). One-quarter of all bisexual people (25.0%) had police-initiated contact. Additionally, transgender people (32.8%) are more likely to have experienced police-initiated contact in the past 12 months compared to cisgender LGBTQ+ cisgender men (17.1%) and women (22.4%).

Similar patterns arise when assessing police-initiated contact throughout respondents’ lifetimes. Bisexual and queer+ people (58.3% and 52.6%, respectively) experience significantly more contact than their lesbian and gay (43.5%) counterparts, who experience nearly the same amount of police-initiated contact as non-LGBTQ+ people (43.3%). Notably, throughout their lives, LGBTQ+ people’s experiences

FIGURE 5.

A Comparison of the Percentage of People Who Have Experienced Involuntary Police Contact, by LGBTQ+, Sexual Orientation, and Gender



Note: When assessing sexuality, transgender respondents who identify as “Straight / Heterosexual” are excluded.

of police-initiated contact do not significantly vary by gender. However, disparities in police-initiated contact among LGBTQ+ people are further impacted by race and SES (see *Figure 6*).

Differences in Police-Initiated Contact by Race/Ethnicity

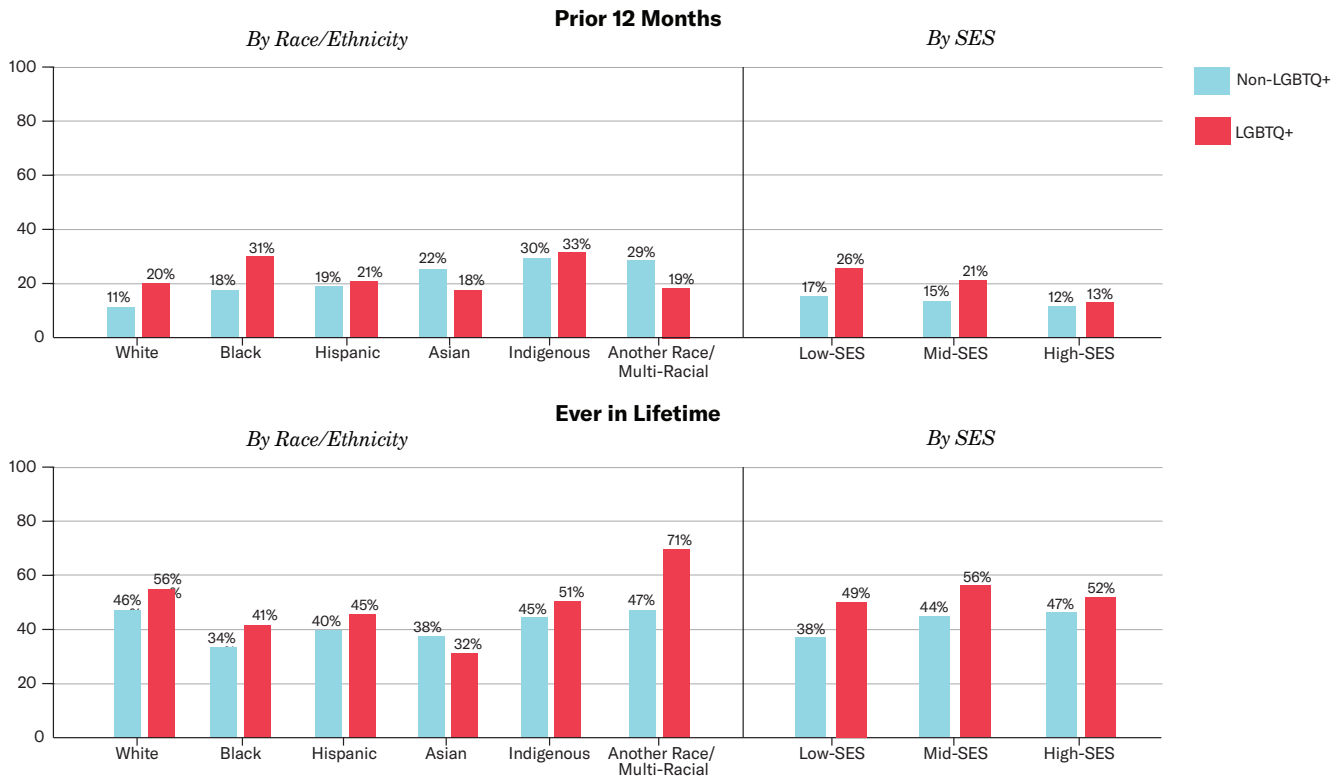
- Among LGBTQ+ and non-LGBTQ+ people combined, white (12.0%) people experienced the least amount of police-initiated contact in the last 12 months. Hispanic (20.4%) people experienced significantly more, and Black (19.3%) people experienced substantially more contact than their white counterparts. Over the course of their

lives, Asian (32.7%) people are the least likely to have experienced police-initiated contact.

- LGBTQ+ people of all racial groups, except LGBTQ+ people who are Asian, report higher rates of police-initiated contact over the course of their lives compared to their non-LGBTQ+ counterparts.
- White and Black bisexual people are about twice as likely to have had at least one police-initiated contact in the past 12 months compared to white lesbian and gay people.⁴⁶ Asian respondents who are lesbian or gay⁴⁷ reported the lowest rates of police-initiated contact over the course of their lives. Sexual minorities, especially bisexual and queer+ people, who are multiracial or of another

FIGURE 6.

A Comparison of the Percentage of People Who Have Experienced Involuntary Police Contact, by Race and SES



Note: N=1,480

race are the most likely to have experienced police-initiated contact at some point in their lives.

- Black cisgender LGBTQ+ women and transgender people are significantly more likely to have had one or more police-initiated contacts in the past 12 months than cisgender LGBTQ+ white men.⁴⁸

Differences in Police-Initiated Contact by SES

- Among both non-LGBTQ+ and LGBTQ+ people, SES does not significantly relate to the likelihood that respondents experienced one or more police-initiated contacts in the past 12 months. However, when analyzing police contact over the course of people’s lives, people with low-level SES (36.5%) are less likely to have experienced

police-initiated contact than people with mid-level SES people (45.6%).

- LGBTQ+ people with low-level SES (25.5%) are almost twice as likely as high-SES LGBTQ+ people (13.1%) to have experienced a police-initiated contact in the past 12 months. Over the course of their lives, LGBTQ+ people with mid-level SES (55.5%) are significantly more likely to have experienced a police-initiated contact than LGBTQ+ people with low-level SES (48.4%). LGBTQ+ people with high-level SES (51.8%) are also substantially more likely to have experienced a police-initiated contact over the course of their lives than low-level SES people (48.4%).
- Lesbian and gay people with high-level SES⁴⁹ were the least likely to have experienced a police-initiated contact in the past 12 months. Comparatively, bisexual people with low-level SES⁵⁰ are significantly more likely to have had at

least one police interaction in the past 12 months. Bisexual and queer+ people with mid-level SES are also more likely to have had one or more police-initiated interactions in the past 12 months compared to high-SES lesbian and gay people.⁵¹

- **LGBTQ+ cisgender men with high-level SES⁵²** report the lowest likelihood of having had one or more police-initiated contacts in the past 12 months. LGBTQ+ people with low-level SES are all more likely to have experienced a police-initiated contact in the past 12 months, regardless of gender. LGBTQ+ cisgender women and transgender people with mid-level SES are also significantly more likely to have experienced a police-initiated contact in the past 12 months compared to LGBTQ+ cisgender men with high-level SES.⁵³

LGBTQ+ People Are More Likely to Have Been Stopped, Searched, Arrested, and Held in Custody

LGBTQ+ people experience more police-initiated contact than non-LGBTQ+ people. These disparities persist among all types of police contact and are particularly driven by LGBTQ+ people with specific sexual orientations and gender identities (see *Figure 7*). Additionally, bisexual, transgender, and nonbinary+ people more often have experienced being stopped, searched, arrested, or held in custody, one or more times, than their gay and lesbian or cisgender counterparts.

- **Police Stops:** LGBTQ+ people (50.5%) are more likely to have been stopped by the police than non-LGBTQ+ people (41.6%). Among LGBTQ+ people, people who are bisexual (55.7%) are significantly more likely to have been stopped by the police than gay and lesbian respondents (41.6%).
- **Police Searches:** LGBTQ+ people (27.1%) are significantly more likely to be searched than non-LGBTQ+ people (16.3%). Just as they are more likely to have been stopped, bisexual respondents

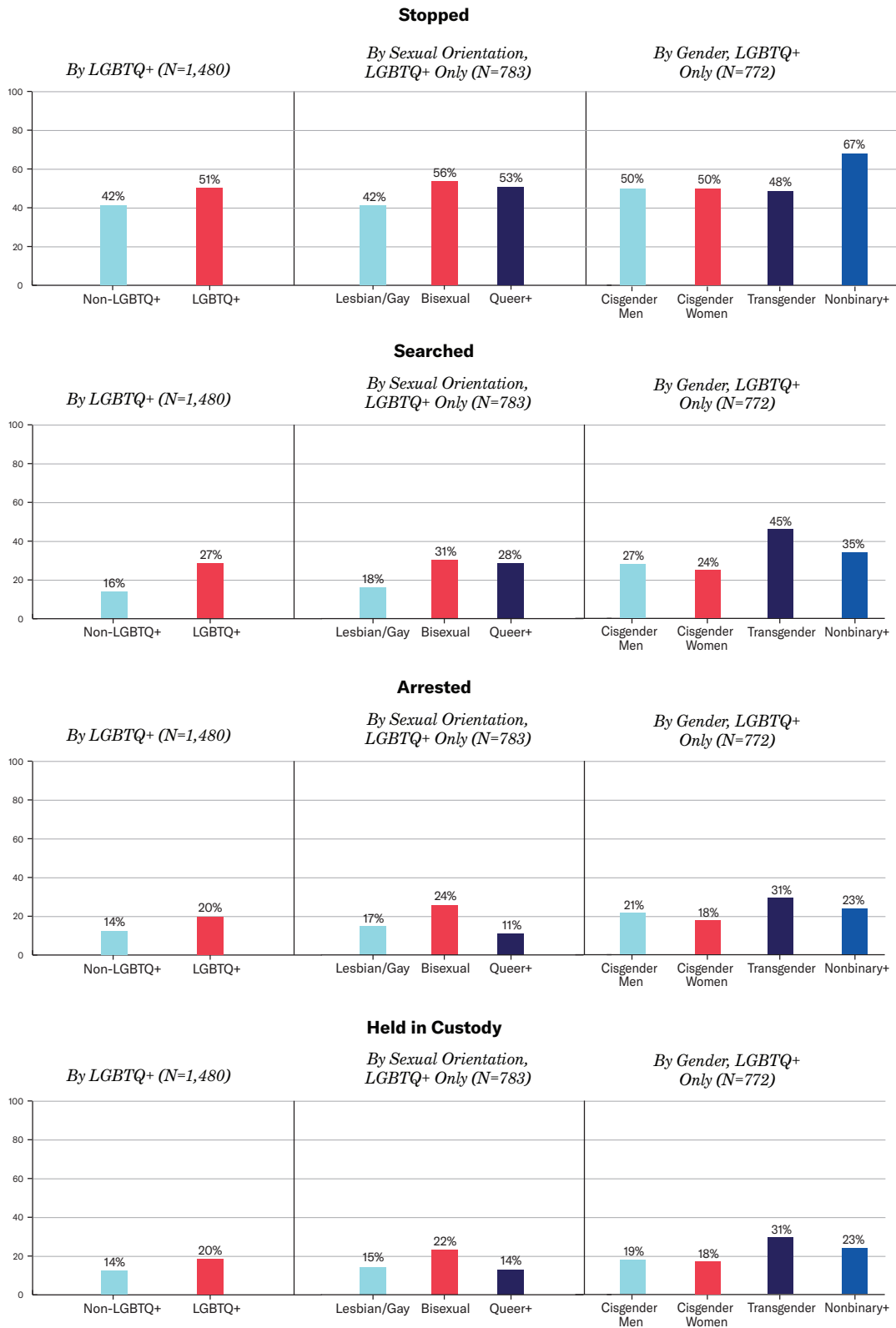
Transgender people (45.0%) are significantly more likely to have been searched by the police than LGBTQ+ cisgender men and women (27.2% and 24.2%, respectively).

(30.6%) are significantly more likely than lesbian and gay respondents (17.9%) to have been searched by the police. Queer+ people (28.4%) are substantially more likely to have been searched at least once in their lives, compared to lesbian and gay people (17.9%). Transgender people (45.0%) are significantly more likely to have been searched by the police than LGBTQ+ cisgender men and women (27.2% and 24.2%, respectively).

- **Arrested:** Almost 20% of LGBTQ+ people (19.7%) have been arrested by the police compared to 13.6% of non-LGBTQ+ people. Whereas queer+ respondents (11.4%) report higher rates of searches than non-LGBTQ+ people, they are substantially less likely to have been arrested (11.4%) than non-LGBTQ+ people (13.6%). However, bisexual respondents (23.8%) are significantly more likely to have been arrested compared to non-LGBTQ+ people (13.6%). By gender, cisgender LGBTQ+ women (18.2%) are the least likely to have been arrested, and transgender people (30.7%) are substantially more likely to have been arrested.
- **Held in Custody:** LGBTQ+ people (19.0%) are significantly more likely to have been held in custody than non-LGBTQ+ people (13.9%). Bisexual people (22.4%) are substantially more likely to be held in custody than their lesbian

FIGURE 7.

A Comparison of the Percentage of People Who Experienced Various Types of Involuntary Police Contact, by LGBTQ+ Identity, Sexual Orientation, and Gender



Note: When assessing sexuality, transgender respondents who identify as "Straight / Heterosexual" are excluded.

and gay (15.4%) counterparts. Additionally, transgender people (31.0%) are substantially more likely to be held in custody than LGBTQ+ cisgender women (17.5%).

Differences in Types of Involuntary Police Contact by Race/Ethnicity

- **Police Stops:** Among LGBTQ+ people, white respondents (54.2%) are significantly more likely to have been stopped by the police at least once compared to Hispanic people (39.9%). (See *Figure 8*.)
- **Police Searches:** Within the LGBTQ+ community, non-white respondents are no more likely to be searched than white LGBTQ+ people. Asian people (4.2%) are the least likely to have been searched by the police. Compared to Asian LGBTQ+ people, white LGBTQ+ people (27.8%) are about five times more likely, and Indigenous LGBTQ+ people (50.6%) are nearly ten times more likely, to have been searched by the police at least once in their lives. Bisexual people who are white or Indigenous are more likely to have been searched by the police than white lesbian and gay people.⁵⁴ Additionally, white and Black transgender people are significantly more likely to have been searched at least once over the course of their lives compared to white cisgender LGBTQ+ women.⁵⁵
- **Police Arrests:** Among LGBTQ+ people Asian respondents (4.2%) are the least likely to have ever been arrested. By gender, cisgender women who are Hispanic are the least likely to be arrested.⁵⁶ By sexual orientation, people who are lesbian or gay and multiracial or “another race” are the least likely to be arrested.⁵⁷
- **Held in Custody:** Asian LGBTQ+ people (4.2%) are the least likely to have ever been held in custody. Indigenous LGBTQ+ people (50.6%) are significantly more likely to have been held in custody at least once in their lifetime. Compared to Hispanic LGBTQ+ cisgender women,⁵⁸ who have the lowest rate of previously being held in custody, white LGBTQ+ people of all

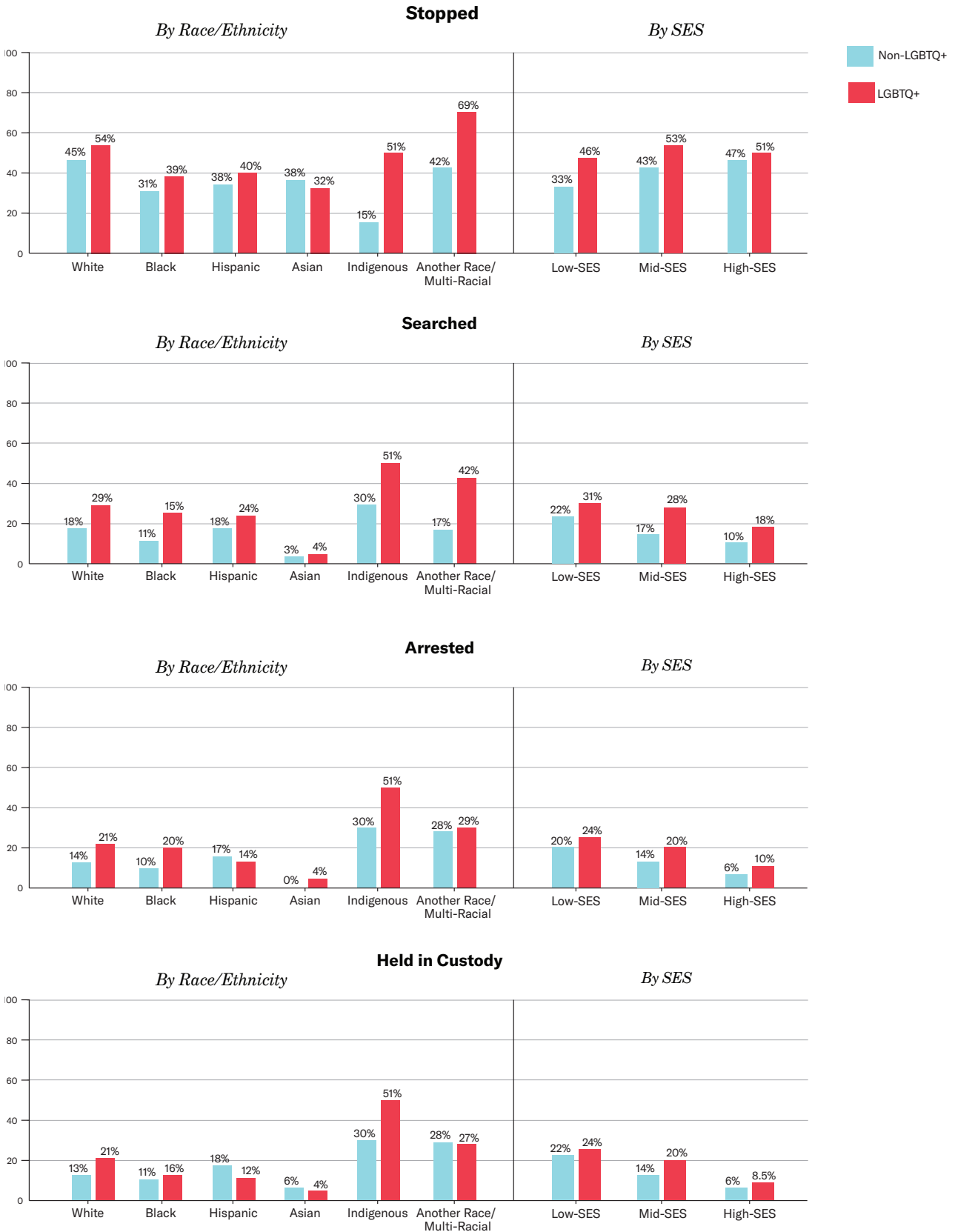
genders⁵⁹ are more likely to have been held in custody at least once in their lives. People who are multiracial or “another race” and lesbian or gay are the least likely to have ever been held in custody.⁶⁰ Conversely, Indigenous people who are bisexual are significantly more likely to have ever been held in custody.⁶¹

Differences in Types of Involuntary Police Contact by SES

- **Police Stops:** Among LGBTQ+ people and by sexual orientation, lesbian and gay people with low-level SES are the least likely to have been stopped by the police. Conversely, bisexual people with mid- or high-level SES are significantly more likely to have been stopped by the police.⁶²
- **Police Searches:** Like disparities among non-LGBTQ+ people, low-SES LGBTQ+ people (31.1%) are more likely to have been searched by the police at some point in their lives than high-SES LGBTQ+ people (18.4%). Within the LGBTQ+ community, low-SES transgender people⁶³ are most likely to have been searched by the police, especially compared to cisgender women with mid- and high-level SES and men with high-level SES.⁶⁴ Among LGBTQ+ people, lesbian and gay people with high-level SES⁶⁵ are the least likely to have been searched by the police.
- **Police Arrests:** Among LGBTQ+ people, those with low-level SES (24.3%) are more than twice as likely to have been arrested than those with high-level SES (10.4%). By gender, cisgender women who have high-level SES are the least likely to have been arrested. By gender, cisgender women who also have high-level SES are the least likely to have been arrested.⁶⁶ Transgender people with low- or mid-level SES are the most likely to have been arrested.⁶⁷ By sexual orientation, queer+ people with mid- and high-level SES are the least likely, and bisexual people with low- or mid-level SES are the most likely, to have been arrested.⁶⁸
- **Held in Custody:** The lower LGBTQ+ respondents’ SES, the more likely they are to

FIGURE 8.

A Comparison of the Percentage of People Who Experienced Various Types of Involuntary Police Contact, by Race and SES



Note: N=1,480

report previously being held in custody in a jail or other detention facility. Less than 10% of high-SES LGBTQ+ people (8.5%) report previously being held in custody, compared to 24.3% of low-SES LGBTQ+ people. Cisgender women with high-level SES⁶⁹ are the least likely to have been held in custody. Comparatively, cisgender women with low- and mid-level SES⁷⁰ are significantly more likely to have been held in custody. Transgender people who are low- or mid-level SES⁷¹ are also more likely to have been held in custody than high-SES cisgender women. Additionally, when disaggregated by sexual orientation, bisexual people with low-level SES⁷² are the most likely to have been held in custody.

LGBTQ+ People Experience More Insulting Language and Physical Force by the Police

LGBTQ+ people report more experiences of insulting language and physical force than their non-LGBTQ+ counterparts (see **Figure 9**). LGBTQ+ people (22.0%) are more than twice as likely to have experienced insulting language from the police during their most recent police interaction compared to non-LGBTQ+ people (9.9%). Importantly, whereas lesbian and gay respondents (12.3%)—especially cisgender men and women—report experiencing insulting language only slightly more often than non-LGBTQ+ people (9.9%), more than one-fourth of all bisexual and queer+ respondents (25.4% and 26.8%, respectively) have experienced insulting language at least once during a police interaction. Additionally, transgender and nonbinary+ respondents (44.9% and 33.1%) are significantly more likely than cisgender LGBTQ+ men (14.6%) to have experienced insulting language by the police. Transgender (44.9%), but not nonbinary+, people are also more likely to experience insulting language than cisgender LGBTQ+ women (22.3%).

LGBTQ+ people (17.0%) are substantially more likely to have experienced physical force than non-LGBTQ+ people (7.0%). By sexual orientation, people who are lesbian or gay (8.1%) are the least likely to

LGBTQ+ people (17%) are substantially more likely to have experienced physical force than non-LGBTQ+ people (7%).

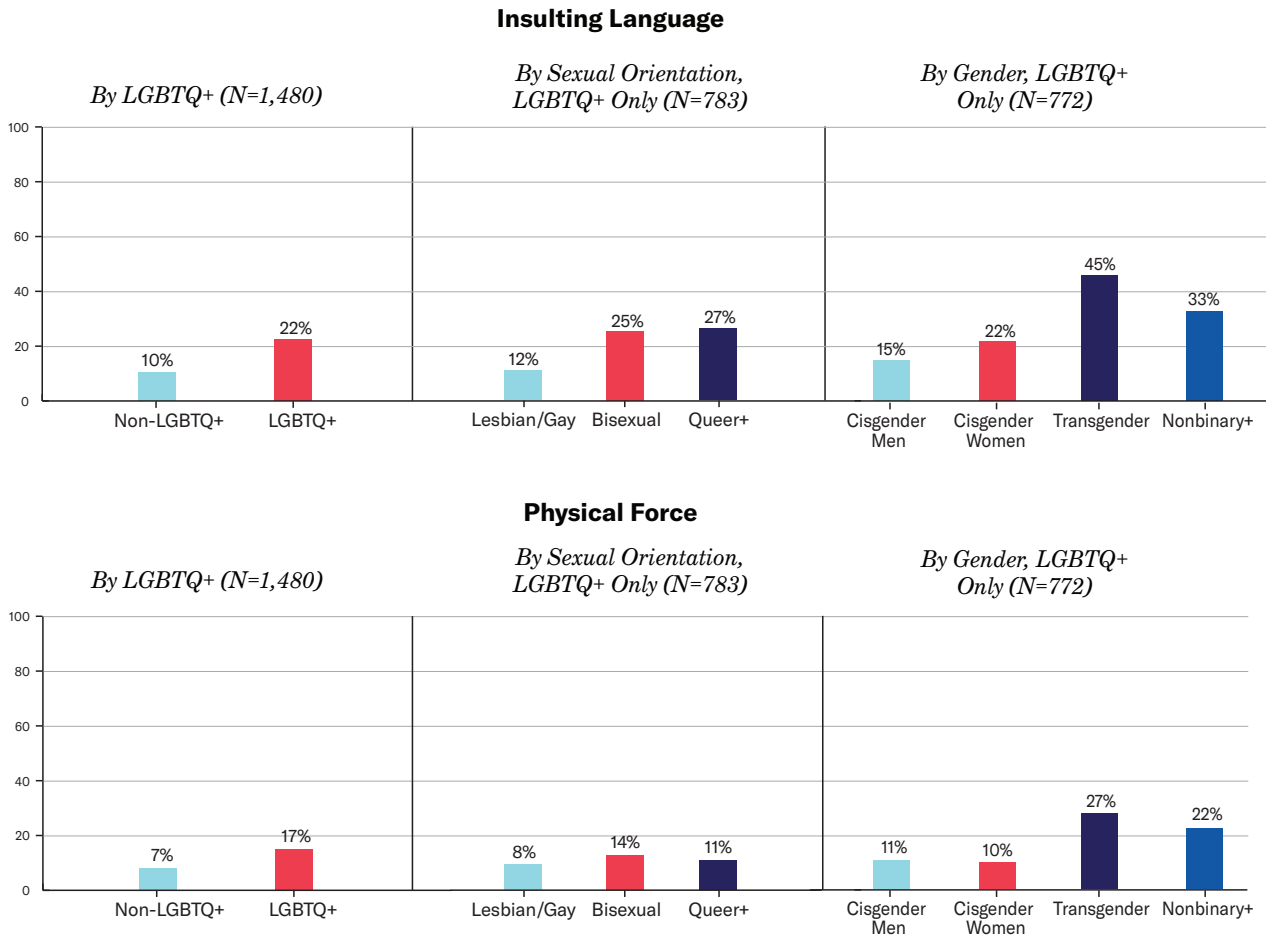
have experienced physical force by the police and do not significantly differ from non-LGBTQ+ people's experiences of physical force. By gender, transgender people (26.7%) are more than twice as likely to have experienced physical force than cisgender LGBTQ+ men and women (10.6% and 9.7%, respectively). Nonbinary+ people (21.9%) are also more likely to have experienced physical force than cisgender women, and substantially more likely than cisgender men.

Differences in Insulting Language by Race/Ethnicity

- Among LGBTQ+ and non-LGBTQ+ people combined, race is associated with who is likely to experience insulting language by the police (see **Figure 10**). Compared to white respondents (9.6%), Hispanic respondents (19.3%) are twice as likely to have experienced insulting language. Asian respondents (0.2%) report the lowest likelihood of experiencing insulting language.
- However, there are significant differences in how race relates to having experienced insulting language among LGBTQ+ people specifically. White, Black, and Hispanic LGBTQ+ people (21.0%, 20.0%, and 22.9%, respectively) all report similar rates of having experienced insulting language. However, LGBTQ+ people who are multiracial or of another race (44.6%) are approximately twice as likely to have experienced insulting language by the police.

FIGURE 9.

A Comparison of the Percentage of People Who Experienced Insulting Language or Physical Force by the Police, by LGBTQ+, Sexual Orientation, and Gender



Note: When assessing sexuality, transgender respondents who identify as “Straight / Heterosexual” are excluded..

- Hispanic bisexual people,⁷³ as well as bisexual and queer+ people who are multiracial or of “another race,”⁷⁴ report significantly higher rates of insulting language compared to white lesbian and gay respondents.⁷⁵ White bisexual and queer+ people⁷⁶ are also more likely to report having experienced insulting language compared to white lesbian and gay respondents. There are no notable differences in experiences with insulting language between white people who are lesbian and gay and LGBTQ+ people of any sexual orientation who are Black or Latino.
- Among LGBTQ+ people, Black LGBTQ+ cisgender men⁷⁷ report the lowest prevalence

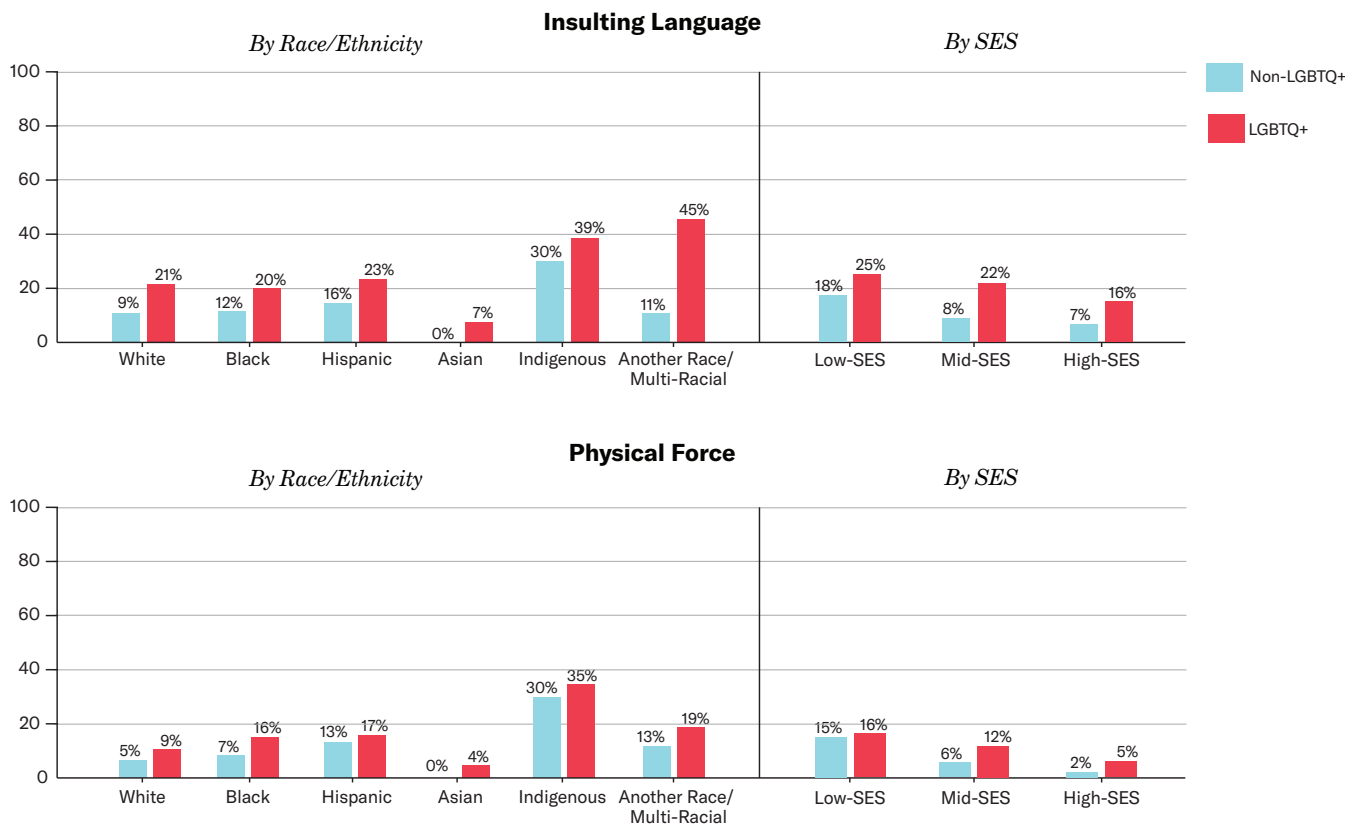
of insulting language by gender. Transgender people who are white or Black⁷⁸ are significantly more likely to have experienced insulting language than LGBTQ+ Black cisgender men. Additionally, white nonbinary+ people as well as LGBTQ+ cisgender women who are Black or multiracial or “another race”⁷⁹ are significantly more likely to experience insulting language compared to LGBTQ+ cisgender Black men.

Differences in Insulting Language by SES

- Bisexual people with low- and mid-level SES people are more than twice as likely to have experienced insulting language at least

FIGURE 10.

A Comparison of the Percentage of People Who Experienced Insulting Language or Physical Force by the Police, by Race and SES



Note: N=1,149

once compared to low-SES lesbian and gay respondents (27.3% and 26.2%, respectively, compared to 12.6%).

- Transgender people with low-level SES experience significantly more insulting language compared to LGBTQ+ cisgender men with low-level SES.⁸⁰ LGBTQ+ cisgender women with low-level SES also experience insulting language more often than LGBTQ+ cisgender men with low-level SES.

Differences in Physical Force by Race/Ethnicity

- Among LGBTQ+ and non-LGBTQ+ people combined, Hispanic (16.0%) and Indigenous (35.8%) people are significantly more likely to have experienced one or more instances of

physical force by the police than white people (5.8%). Asian people (0.1%), in general, are also significantly less likely to experience physical force.

- Among LGBTQ+ people specifically, Hispanic LGBTQ+ people (17.4%) are significantly more likely to have experienced physical force compared to white LGBTQ+ people (9.4%). LGBTQ+ people who are Indigenous (35.1%) or multiracial or of “another race” (18.9%) also experience substantially more police use of force than white LGBTQ+ people.
- White lesbian and gay respondents⁸¹ reported the lowest rates of experiencing one or more instances of physical force by the police. Comparatively, Hispanic people who are also bisexual⁸² are significantly more likely to have had at least one experience of physical force.

- Within the LGBTQ+ community, cisgender white women⁸³ reported the lowest rates of physical force. In contrast, Black transgender people⁸⁴ were the most likely to have experienced physical force by the police.

- High-SES cisgender LGBTQ+ women⁸⁷ were the least likely to have experienced physical force, especially compared to low-SES LGBTQ+ people of all genders.⁸⁸ Mid-SES transgender and nonbinary+ people⁸⁹ were also significantly more likely to have experienced physical force than LGBTQ+ cisgender men and women with high-level SES.⁹⁰

Differences in Physical Force by SES

- Among LGBTQ+ people, SES significantly relates to whether someone has experienced physical force. LGBTQ+ people with low-level SES (16.4%) were the most likely to have experienced physical force; in comparison, LGBTQ+ people with high-level SES were considerably less likely to experience physical force (4.8%). LGBTQ+ people with mid-level SES (11.6%) are also substantially less likely to experience physical force compared to LGBTQ+ people with low-level SES.
- Lesbian and gay respondents with low-level SES⁸⁵ were the most likely to have experienced physical force when disaggregating LGBTQ+ people by sexual orientation. Mid-level SES lesbian and gay people⁸⁶ report experiencing physical force significantly less frequently than low-level SES lesbian and gay people.

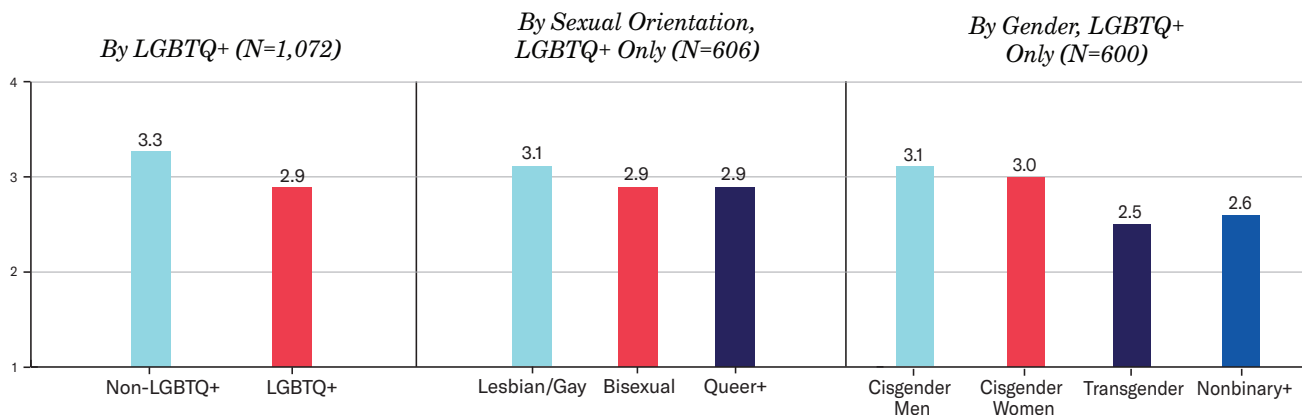
LGBTQ+ People Have More Negative Perceptions of Police Interactions

Overall, the perception of procedural justice was fairly high among both LGBTQ+ and non-LGBTQ+ people, with an average score of 3.3 on the four-point scale (with 1 low and 4 high). However, like other marginalized communities,⁹¹ LGBTQ+ people (2.9) are significantly less likely to perceive their most recent police interaction as procedurally just compared to their non-LGBTQ+ counterparts (3.3).

LGBTQ+ people report significant differences in perceptions of procedural justice when distinguishing between sexual orientation and gender (see **Figure 11**). Specifically, bisexual and queer+ (2.9 each) people report lower scores than gay

FIGURE 11.

A Comparison of Average Procedural Justice Score During the Most Recent Police Interaction, by LGBTQ, Sexual Orientation, and Gender (1-4 Point Scale, with 1 low and 4 high)



Note: When assessing sexuality, transgender respondents who identify as "Straight / Heterosexual" are excluded.

and lesbian people (3.1). Additionally, transgender and nonbinary+ (2.5 and 2.6, respectively) people report lower scores than cisgender LGBQ+ people (cisgender men, 3.1; cisgender women, 3.0). These differences indicate that particular identities are driving the disparities between LGBTQ+ and non-LGBTQ+ people. For example, bisexual, queer+, transgender, and nonbinary+ people are largely responsible for these differences insofar as their scores lower the aggregate average among LGBTQ+ people (compared to non-LGBTQ+ people). Perceptions of procedural justice further decline for those who are multiply marginalized by race and SES (see *Figure 12*).

Differences in Procedural Justice by Race/Ethnicity

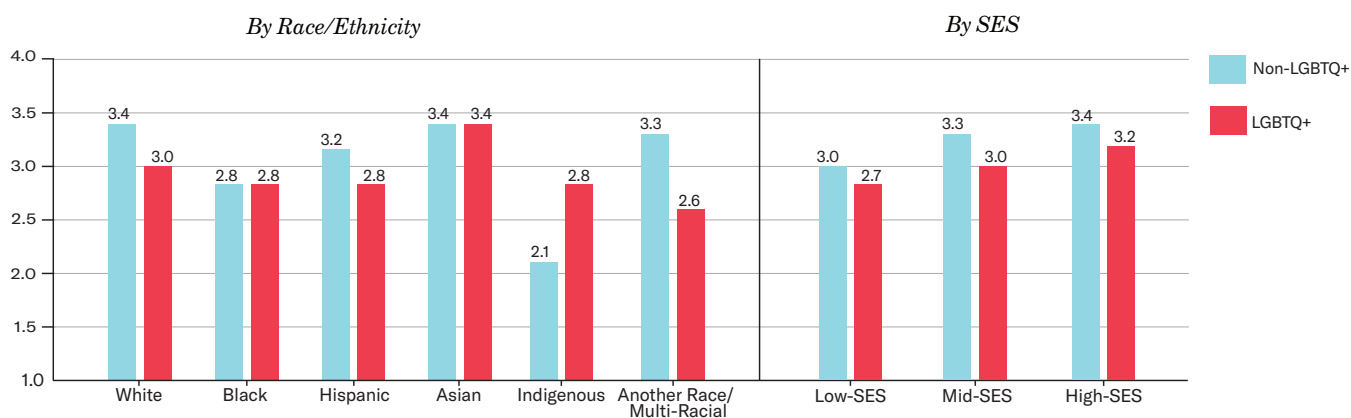
- Among both LGBTQ+ and non-LGBTQ+ people combined, people of color report significantly lower perceptions of procedural justice compared to their white counterparts. Black and Indigenous respondents (3.0 and 2.2, respectively) reported the lowest procedural justice scores for their most recent police interaction, especially compared to white respondents (3.3).
- Among LGBTQ+ people specifically, Asian people (3.4) report the highest procedural justice scores.

Black LGBTQ+ people (2.8) and LGBTQ+ people of “another race” or who are multiracial (2.6) report significantly lower procedural justice scores than their Asian counterparts. When comparing LGBTQ+ and non-LGBTQ+ identity within racial groups, there are substantial differences within all racial groups, except among Black people. Thus, being LGBTQ+ negatively impacts all racial groups except among Black people.

Differences in Procedural Justice By SES

- In general, the higher a person’s SES, the more positively they perceived their most recent police interaction. The average procedural justice score among all low-SES people—non-LGBTQ+ and LGBTQ+—is 3.0 compared to 3.3 among mid-SES people and 3.4 among high-SES people.
- This pattern of higher scores among respondents with high SES remains among LGBTQ+ people. LGBTQ+ people with high-level SES (3.2) report significantly higher perceptions of procedural justice in their most recent police interaction compared to LGBTQ+ people with low- or mid-level SES (2.7 and 3.0, respectively).

FIGURE 12. A Comparison of Average Procedural Justice Score During the Most Recent Police Interaction, by Race and SES (1-4 Point Scale, with 1 low and 4 high)



Note: N=1,149.

- Lesbians and gay people with high-level SES (3.1-3.5) report the most positive perceptions of the police during their most recent police interaction. Sexual minorities with low-level SES⁹² (2.7-3.0) report significantly lower procedural justice scores than high SES lesbian and gay people.
- Among LGBTQ+ people specifically, transgender people with low-level SES⁹³ report the lowest procedural justice scores. Cisgender men and women report significantly higher procedural justice scores, regardless of SES. Transgender people with mid-level SES have substantially higher procedural justice scores, and transgender people with high-level SES have significantly higher procedural justice scores than their transgender counterparts with low-level SES.⁹⁴

3.2 among LGBTQ+ people, suggesting that LGBTQ+ people are less likely to view the police as legitimate.

Among LGBTQ+ people specifically, perceptions of police legitimacy significantly vary by sexual orientation. Lesbian and gay respondents (3.3) report significantly better perceptions of the police than their bisexual (3.2) and queer+ (3.0) counterparts. Similarly, police legitimacy significantly varies by gender among LGBTQ+ people. Most notably, cisgender LGBTQ+ men report the highest police legitimacy scores (3.4), and transgender and nonbinary+ people report scores that are 0.6 points lower (2.8 among both transgender and nonbinary+ people). Cisgender LGBTQ+ women (3.2) also report significantly lower police legitimacy scores compared to cisgender LGBTQ+ men. Perceptions of police legitimacy are even lower among LGBTQ+ people who also experience marginalization because of their race and SES (see *Figure 14*).

LGBTQ+ People are Less Trusting of The Police

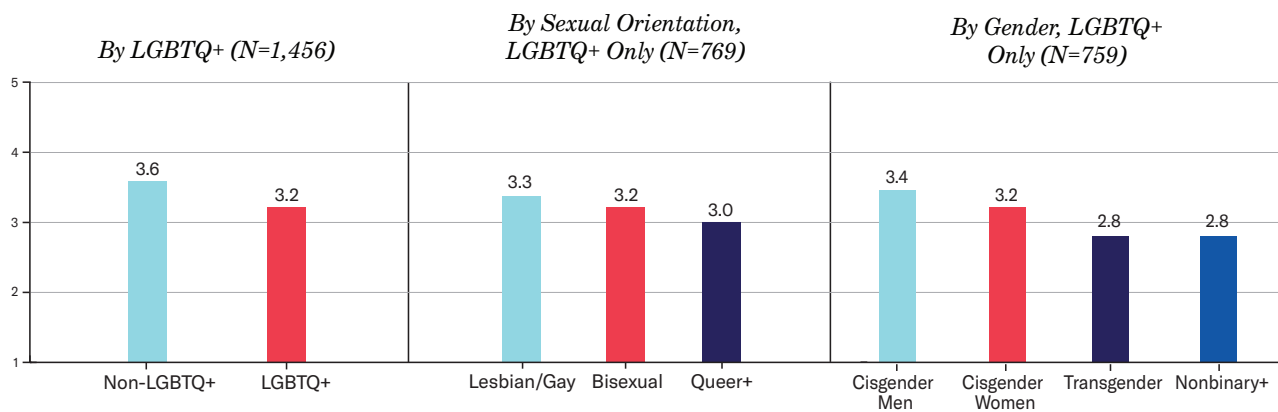
The average police legitimacy score among all participants was 3.5 on a five-point scale (with 1 being low and 5 being high). Perceptions of police legitimacy are lower among LGBTQ+ people compared to cisgender, straight people (see *Figure 13*), and they decrease from an average of 3.6 among non-LGBTQ+ people to

Differences in Police Legitimacy by Race/Ethnicity

- Black (3.3), Hispanic (3.2), and Indigenous (3.0) people—regardless of gender and sexual orientation—are less likely to view the police as legitimate, compared to white people (3.6). These

FIGURE 13.

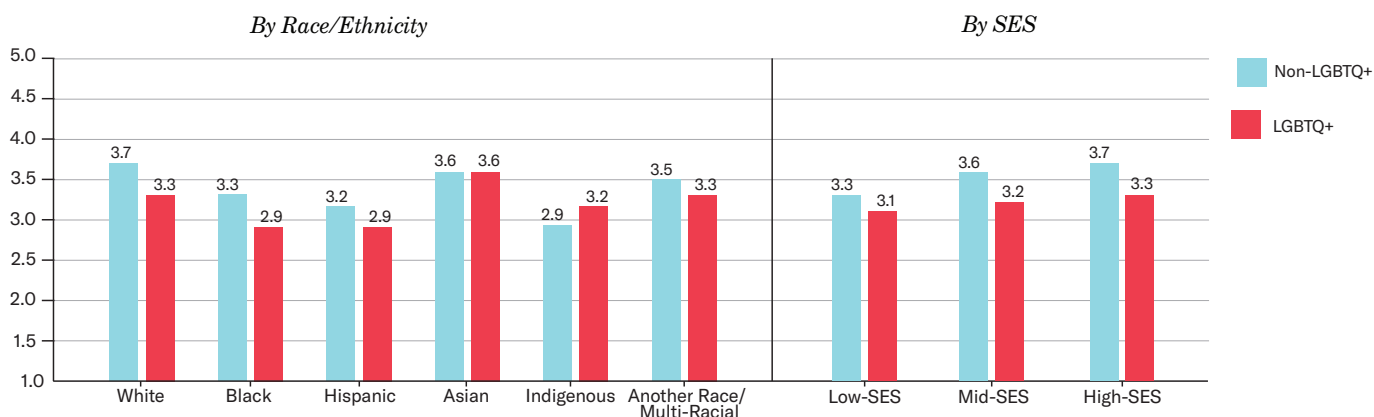
A Comparison of Average Police Legitimacy Score During the Most Recent Police Interaction, by LGBTQ, Sexual Orientation, and Gender (1-5 Point Scale, with 1 low and 5 high)



Note: When assessing sexuality, transgender respondents who identify as “Straight / Heterosexual” are excluded.

FIGURE 14.

A Comparison of Average Police Legitimacy Score During the Most Recent Police Interaction, by LGBTQ, Sexual Orientation, and Gender (1-5 Point Scale, with 1 low and 5 high)



Note: N=1,456

findings mostly hold up when assessing LGBTQ+ people specifically. Black (2.9) and Hispanic (2.9) LGBTQ+ people, but not Indigenous (3.2) LGBTQ+ people, report significantly lower perceptions of police legitimacy compared to white LGBTQ+ people (3.3). Among LGBTQ+ people, Asian people (3.6) report the highest police legitimacy scores.

- Compared to white lesbian and gay respondents,⁹⁵ Black sexual minorities⁹⁶ view the police as significantly less legitimate. Additionally, Hispanic bisexual and queer+ people,⁹⁷ but not Hispanic lesbian and gay people,⁹⁸ report significantly lower police legitimacy scores compared to white lesbian and gay people. Although Asian people generally report the highest average police legitimacy score among LGBTQ+ people, this average is elevated by bisexual Asian people⁹⁹ who have the most trust in the police of any racial group among the LGBTQ+ respondents.
- Among LGBTQ+ people, cisgender Black women¹⁰⁰ report having the least amount of trust in the police. Cisgender men and women of all other racial groups report significantly higher police legitimacy scores than cisgender Black women. Black cisgender men and transgender people¹⁰¹ also hold significantly more trust in the police than Black cisgender women.

Comparatively, cisgender men and women who are Asian¹⁰² hold the most amount of trust in the police.

Differences in Police Legitimacy by SES

- SES is significantly related to views of police legitimacy among LGBTQ+ people. LGBTQ+ people with high-level SES (3.3) have significantly better perceptions of the police compared to their counterparts with low-level SES (3.1).
- While LGBTQ+ people with high-level SES report more positive perceptions of police at the aggregate level, lesbian and gay people with mid-level SES¹⁰³ are the most likely to view the police as legitimate. Compared to lesbian and gay people with mid-level SES, bisexual and queer+ people with low-level¹⁰⁴ or mid-level SES¹⁰⁵ report lower police legitimacy scores.
- Although cisgender LGBTQ+ men with low-level SES are one of the most likely groups to experience insulting language, they are paradoxically the most likely to view the police as legitimate.¹⁰⁶ Cisgender women and transgender people with low-level SES¹⁰⁷ report significantly lower police legitimacy scores. Additionally, nonbinary+ people with mid- and high-level SES¹⁰⁸ as well as transgender people with

high-level SES¹⁰⁹ are significantly less trusting in the police than cisgender men with low-level SES.

LGBTQ+ People are Less Willing to Call the Police for Help in the Future

Considering the higher rates of police contact, lower perceptions of procedural justice, and lower perceptions of police legitimacy, it makes sense that LGBTQ+ people state they are less likely to agree that they “would call the police if I needed help” (see *Figure 15*).

At the aggregate level, LGBTQ+ people (71.0%) are less willing than non-LGBTQ+ people (86.9%) to call the police for help and to report victimization. However, there are several important differences by sexual orientation and gender. Among LGBTQ+ people, lesbian and gay people (80.4%) and cisgender men (81.8%) are almost as likely to call the police as non-LGBTQ+ people (86.9%). Conversely, bisexual (68.5%) and queer+ people (60.2%) are significantly less likely than lesbian and gay people (80.4%) to call the police. Similarly, transgender people (61.3%) are far less likely than cisgender men (81.8%) to call the police for help in the future, and only about one-quarter of nonbinary+

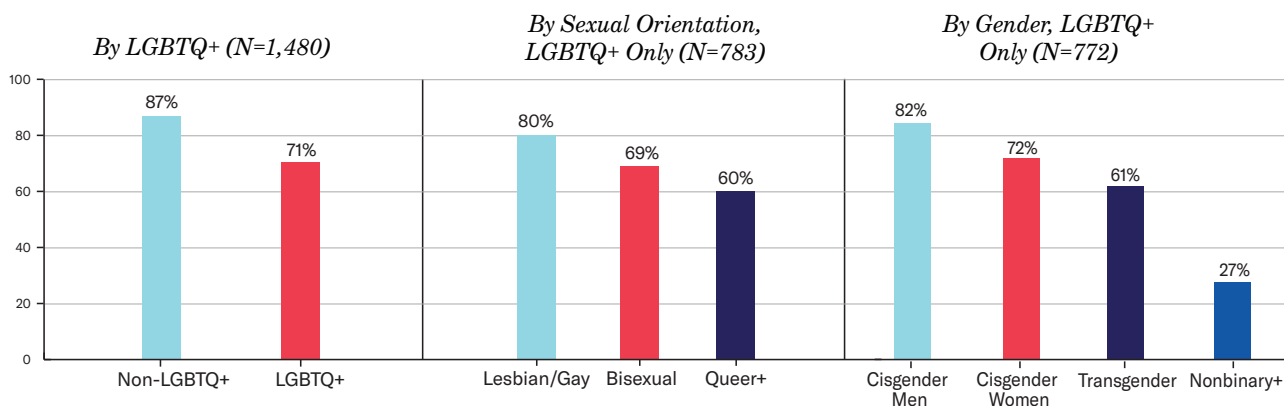
people (27.4%) are willing to call the police for help. Cisgender LGBTQ+ women (71.5%) are also less likely to call the police for help than cisgender men. Racial identity and socioeconomic status similarly impact willingness to call the police among LGBTQ+ people (see *Figure 16*).

Differences in Willingness to Call Police for Help in the Future by Race/Ethnicity

- Among LGBTQ+ people, there is no significant difference between willingness to call the police for help between Black (77.0%), white (74.1%), and Asian (74.0%) people. However, Hispanic LGBTQ+ (57.8%) people are significantly less likely to call the police for help in the future than their white counterparts.
- White lesbian and gay people as well as Asian people who are bisexual¹¹⁰ are the most likely to call the police for help in the future among all sexual minorities. Conversely, white bisexual and queer+ people¹¹¹ are significantly less likely to call the police for help. Additionally, Hispanic people who are lesbian, gay, or bisexual¹¹² are significantly less likely to call the police for help in the future compared to white lesbian and gay people. Black LGBTQ+ people of all sexual

FIGURE 15.

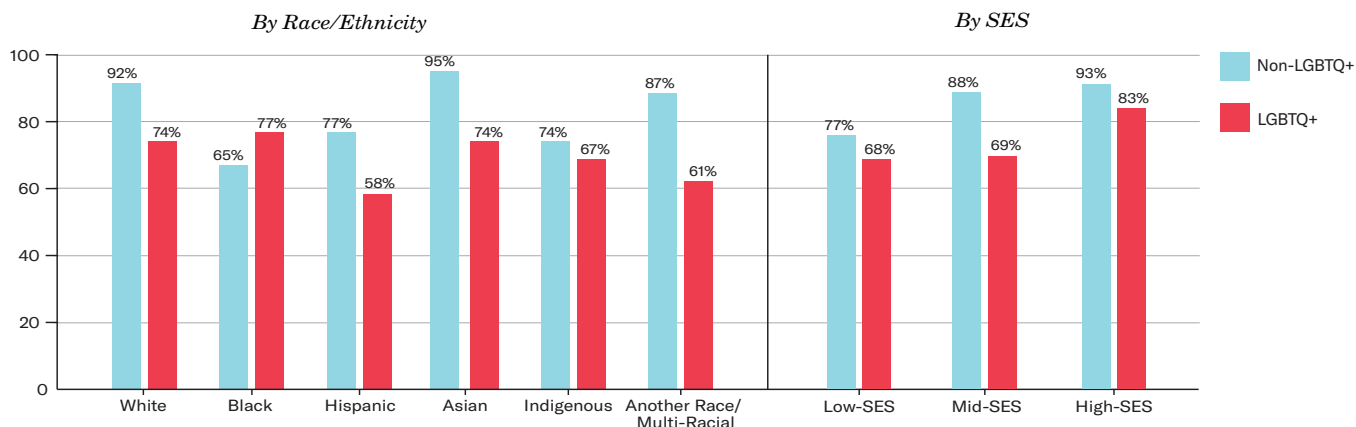
A Comparison of the Percentage of People Who Would Call the Police if They Needed Help in the Future, by LGBTQ+, Sexual Orientation, and Gender



Note: When assessing sexuality, transgender respondents who identify as “Straight / Heterosexual” are excluded.

FIGURE 16.

A Comparison of the Percentage of People Who Would Call the Police if They Needed Help in the Future, by Race and SES



Note: N=1,587

orientations¹¹³ are about as likely to call the police as their white lesbian and gay counterparts.

- Among LGBTQ+ people, Black cisgender men¹¹⁴ are the most willing to call the police for help in the future. White cisgender women, transgender and nonbinary+ people,¹¹⁵ and Black cisgender women¹¹⁶ are all significantly less likely to call the police for help in the future than Black cisgender sexual minority men. Additionally, Hispanic LGBTQ+ people of all genders¹¹⁷ are less willing to call the police for help.

Differences in Willingness to Call Police for Help in the Future by SES

- Among both LGBTQ+ and non-LGBTQ+ people, the higher a person’s SES, the more likely they are to call the police for help in the future. Nearly all high-level SES people (91.0%) are willing to call the police for help in the future,

which is significantly higher than all low-level SES people (76.4%). Among LGBTQ+ people specifically, people with high-level SES (83.1%) are significantly more likely to call the police for help than LGBTQ+ people with low-level SES (67.9%).

- Lesbian and gay people with high-level SES¹¹⁸ are the most likely to call the police for help than all other sexual minorities of any SES.
- Among LGBTQ+ people, cisgender men and women with high-level SES¹¹⁹ are the most likely to call the police for help in the future. Low-level and mid-level SES people, except cisgender men, are significantly less likely to call the police for help. Additionally, high-level SES nonbinary+ people¹²⁰ are significantly less likely to call the police for help in the future compared to all cisgender men and women, regardless of their SES.

Conclusion & Recommendations

Findings from this nationally representative sample of LGBTQ+ and non-LGBTQ+ people offer crucial insights into the encounters with police of both LGBTQ+ and non-LGBTQ+ people alike. Overall, LGBTQ+ people report more negative interactions with and perceptions of the police compared to their non-LGBTQ+ counterparts. Specifically, although LGBTQ+ people were more likely to have sought police assistance, they report less willingness to report crimes to the police when they are victimized in the future. These negative experiences with police may contribute to LGBTQ+ people being less trusting of the police and less likely to perceive the police as fair and just, leading to a reduced likelihood of calling the police for help in the future.

While LGBTQ+ people generally differ from their non-LGBTQ+ counterparts in various outcomes, the findings reveal that many of these differences are driven by transgender, nonbinary+, bisexual, and queer+ people. Systematic examinations of distinctions within the LGBTQ+ community reveal telling variation based on gender and sexual orientation. Most notably, bisexual and queer+ people report more adverse experiences, including experiencing insulting language and physical force, and hold more negative perceptions of the police compared to their gay and lesbian counterparts. Interestingly, in certain instances, the experiences and beliefs of cisgender gay and lesbian people are more closely aligned with or even surpass those of non-LGBTQ+ people. Conversely, bisexual people are more likely to have previously requested emergency or non-emergency aid from the police, but they are less likely to call for help in the future. Transgender and nonbinary+ people also experience significantly more involuntary interactions with the police, perceive these experiences as more negative, and are less willing to interact with the police than their cisgender LGBTQ+ counterparts.

Black transgender people are significantly more prone to police-initiated contact, especially compared to white cisgender LGBTQ+ people.

Racial and socioeconomic disparities in police interactions and beliefs are evident among LGBTQ+ and non-LGBTQ+ people alike. The intersection of minoritized sexual orientations and gender identities with minoritized racial identities or lower SES is associated with more severe and more frequent contact and mistreatment. For example, LGBTQ+ people from all racial minority groups (except

Asian LGBTQ+ people) are more likely to have experienced police-initiated contact. The impact is particularly pronounced when examining gender differences within the LGBTQ+ community, as Black transgender people are significantly more prone to police-initiated contact, especially compared to white cisgender LGBTQ+ people. Despite mid-level SES generally correlating with a greater likelihood

Analyzing LGBTQ+ communities as a monolith incorrectly assumes homogeneity between all LGBTQ+ people when it comes to experiences with and perceptions of the police.

of police-initiated contact among the general population, the findings reveal that LGBTQ+ people who additionally face minoritization through lower SES are nearly twice as likely to have experienced such contact compared to their high-level SES LGBTQ+ counterparts.

These disparities align with LGBTQ+ people's negative perceptions of the police and reduced willingness to seek police assistance in the future. Racial identity and SES further contribute to these disparities. For example, lesbian and gay people who are also white or high-level SES are among the most likely to call the police for help. Conversely, transgender people who are also low-level SES report some of the lowest procedural justice scores and are significantly less willing to call the police for help. Interestingly, some findings suggest that LGBTQ+

identity may enhance people's willingness to engage with the police when they also belong to minoritized racial identities. Among sexual minorities, Black cisgender men are the most willing to call the police for help in the future.

Our findings are consistent with prior research on LGBTQ+ people and policing,¹²¹ as well as research on racial disparities in police interactions.¹²² This report underscores that within a context of heightened criminalization and victimization, LGBTQ+ people—especially those who are furthest at the margins due to their sexual orientation, gender identity, race, or SES—continue to experience more interactions and disparate treatment by the police. The report contributes to the existing body of literature in two ways. First, this study leverages the first nationally representative study of LGBTQ+ people and their experiences with and perceptions of the police. Second, the national probability sample used in this work allows us to disaggregate the LGBTQ+ community by sexual orientation and gender. Through this analysis, we find an apparent “assimilationist effect” among lesbian and gay people, which aligns their experiences and perceptions more closely with those of non-LGBTQ+ people.¹²³ Conversely, bisexual, queer+, transgender, and nonbinary+ people continue to face disproportionate contact with the police. Together, these findings present a paradox in police-LGBTQ+ relations, suggesting that analyzing LGBTQ+ communities as a monolith incorrectly assumes homogeneity between all LGBTQ+ people when it comes to experiences with and perceptions of the police.

The findings presented in this report, as well as a larger literature to which it contributes, can—and should—be considered in light of important changes in policing in the U.S. Police departments nationwide have implemented numerous programs and policies geared toward LGBTQ+ communities, such as the recruitment of LGBTQ+ police officers,¹²⁴ an increase in LGBTQ+ police liaisons,¹²⁵ participation in pride marches,¹²⁶ apologies for prior police raids on LGBTQ+ bars,¹²⁷ and initiatives like Seattle's Safe Place Program, in which police departments collaborate with businesses to respond to and protect

LGBTQ+ people from hate crimes.¹²⁸ Despite these efforts and improvements to the “queer-friendly police image,”¹²⁹ disparities persist in police interactions within the LGBTQ+ community, albeit in varying ways. LGBTQ+ people further marginalized by race and SES continue to face disproportionate interactions with the police, and disproportionate negative experiences in those interactions. These facts evidence patterns of police discrimination that, no doubt, have deleterious effects on LGBTQ+ people and the communities they comprise.

Scholars have noted that the modern LGBTQ+ movement, initially aimed at “[removing] hostile government agencies from their lives,” has undergone a substantial shift.¹³⁰ The movement now primarily seeks inclusion through legal changes such as advocating for marriage equality and nondiscrimination legislation. This transformation has exacerbated a “hierarchy of respectability”¹³¹

wherein LGBTQ+ people who conform with heteronormative norms gain recognition and protection from government agencies, including law enforcement. As a result, lesbian and gay people, particularly white lesbian and gay people, have experienced a process of assimilation, which aligns their police interactions more closely with those of non-LGBTQ+ people. Meanwhile, those LGBTQ+ “further down the ladder of respectability,” who are most marginalized due to their sexual orientation and gender (i.e., bisexual, queer+, transgender, and nonbinary+) continue to experience more negative outcomes in their interactions with law enforcement. Additionally, those who experience additional marginalization due to other characteristics—such as race and SES—similarly face disparate outcomes in their police interactions.

It is in this context that this report concludes with recommendations.

Recommendations

There are actions police, policymakers, and advocates can take to improve LGBTQ+ communities’ interactions with law enforcement. Crucial steps should be taken to reduce the role of police as instruments of state control and as the default response to address public health and social problems. Legislatures and district attorneys should decriminalize and decline to prosecute minor offenses and nuisance crimes, including drug possession, sex work and “prostitution,” and loitering. In addition, laws that are unjust and have disparate impact on LGBTQ+ people, particularly LGBTQ+ people of color, such as HIV criminalization, should be repealed. Despite the legal and social gains for LGBTQ+ rights, new bills seeking to criminalize LGBTQ+ people and expression, such as bans on drag shows, criminalization of transgender health care, and gender policing of public bathrooms, are at an all-time high. It is critical to strenuously oppose these bills and fight to repeal those already enacted.

Reducing police interactions would decrease police violence and limit opportunities for civil rights violations. And yet, spending on police and the criminal legal system has dramatically outpaced expenditures on community-based services that help people build

stable communities and foster public health. Communities should invest in front-end, community-based efforts that enable communities to be safe and thrive.

There are also immediate actions that police themselves can take to counter unjust treatment of LGBTQ+ communities, ones that respect LGBTQ+ people's identities and can curb discrimination. Specific recommendations for law enforcement, legislatures, and improved research and data collection are detailed below.

Recommendations for Law Enforcement

Reduce negative encounters between police and community members, and reduce harm to community members, with particular care for the most marginalized people, including LGBTQ+ people, people of color, and people experiencing poverty.

- Cease policies and practices that require or incentivize officers to engage in aggressive tactics, such as quotas for citations or arrests.
- Cease enforcement of non-serious offenses, such as drug offenses, consensual sex work, or “survival crimes,” such as trespassing and petty theft. Instead, provide access to resources and voluntary support.
- Ban pretextual stops and consent searches, which often act as common mechanisms for police to engage in profiling and circumvent legal standards. Similarly, prohibit actual or perceived sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression from being used as a basis for stops, searches, and/or arrests for prostitution, solicitation, or any other offense.
- Adopt and enforce profiling policies that define profiling, prohibit law enforcement from engaging in it, and make clear it is unconstitutional under the Fourth Amendment.

Adopt specific policies and practices that ensure fair and equitable treatment of LGBTQ+ people.

- Enact, implement, and enforce nondiscrimination policies that include protections for actual or perceived gender, sexual orientation, gender expression, and race/ethnicity, among other characteristics. When such nondiscrimination policies are already in effect, ensure that protections apply not only between police personnel, but also to the police during their interactions with the public.
- Prohibit police harassment and the use of homophobic, biphobic, transphobic, and racist language against community members and department staff. Ensure policies

provide clear, effective procedures for both officers and civilians to file complaints, and transparent procedures for how those complaints are handled and addressed. Ensure policies identify specific consequences for officers who violate policies, and implement accountability measures including via oversight boards or other independent third parties.

- Prohibit frisks and searches aimed at determining someone's gender and imposing more invasive interactions on people who are, or perceived to be, transgender, nonbinary, or gender nonconforming.
- Educate police on the use of medical supplies and drugs, e.g., needles, and both prescribed and nonprescribed medication by some transgender and nonbinary+ people as gender-related health care.
- Prohibit the use or threat of sexual orientation or gender identity disclosure to parents, schools, or communities.
- Combat misgendering by requiring police to use the name and pronoun given by the community member. For forms and legal documents, include a "current" or "used" name field in addition to the legal name, as well as a pronoun field.
- Ensure that everyone, including transgender and nonbinary people, can access facilities appropriate for their gender, such as bathrooms and holding cells in police stations. Ensure that staff respect an individual's gender identity and expression in their use of these facilities.
- Carefully consider police presence in public LGBTQ+ spaces and events, such as pride parades and festivals. Given the history of police violence against LGBTQ+ people, police presence may be unwelcome and uncomfortable for some LGBTQ+ communities, even if the stated intention is to protect LGBTQ+ people and their allies.¹³² In instances where police presence is mandated or requested, police should consult directly with LGBTQ+ communities to determine best practices.

Implement strong oversight with meaningful community involvement to ensure police are held accountable for violations and mistreatment of LGBTQ+ people.

- Ensure police are held accountable for conduct that might indicate bias, such as misgendering people or targeting people because of sexual orientation or gender.
- Implement internal audits and external reporting systems that review police encounters with LGBTQ+ people and that require corrective action where improper encounters are documented.

- Enhance accountability structures in police audits to be attentive to LGBTQ+ issues.
- Ensure that civilian oversight committees, or equivalent bodies, have meaningful LGBTQ+ representation, explicitly including transgender and nonbinary representation, and representation of people with various racial/ethnic identities, particularly those who are most marginalized. Additionally, ensure that such committees have meaningful investigative and enforcement power.
- Civil rights protections should continue to be monitored and enforced, if needed through litigation.

Recommendations for Legislatures, District Attorneys, and the Courts

Decriminalize and reduce penalties for low-level offenses and raise the standards required for police to engage with individuals for investigative or enforcement purposes.

- Decriminalize behaviors that are not best addressed through the criminal-legal system, such as drug possession and crimes that stem from substance use, mental illness, or homelessness. While these offenses are still categorized as criminal offenses, district attorneys should decline to prosecute.
- Review all felonies and misdemeanors to determine if they can be decriminalized or reclassified downward.
- Fully decriminalize consensual sex work, including prostitution, among adults by eliminating all criminal penalties for sellers and buyers.
- Repeal existing “walking while trans laws,”¹³³ broad anti-loitering laws that can, and historically have, been used to criminalize LGBTQ+ people, particularly transgender women of color. Oppose any similar new bills.
- Remove criminal penalties for all people living with HIV, including laws that specifically increase penalties for HIV-positive persons convicted of prostitution or solicitation, and laws that criminalize HIV nondisclosure.

Repeal existing laws that explicitly criminalize LGBTQ+ people and expression and oppose new proposed laws.

- Repeal existing laws that criminalize drag and oppose new bills. In jurisdictions with existing laws criminalizing drag shows, district attorneys should decline to prosecute, and legislatures should repeal such laws.

- Repeal existing laws that criminalize health care providers and families of trans children for providing necessary and life-saving gender-affirming medical care; oppose any new bills.
- Repeal existing laws that criminalize bathroom use for transgender and nonbinary+ people by requiring people to use facilities that correspond to their sex assigned at birth or their “legal” sex; oppose any new bills.

Ensure that these reforms are accompanied by investments in non-carceral approaches, such as prevention and treatment-focused initiatives, that promote public safety by addressing poverty, addiction, mental health, and other root causes that drive criminal legal system involvement.

- Establish and invest in alternatives to police response for people in crisis. People who are experiencing behavioral health crises should not have to communicate with law enforcement as first responders. Instead, the response to such crises should be sufficiently staffed, culturally competent mental health services.
- Create integrated, community-based services to prevent and respond to crises related to mental health, substance use, and other factors, to reduce criminal legal system contact for people with disabilities, mental health conditions, or substance use disorders.
- Integrate civilian behavioral health professionals into emergency response systems; provide training for 911 dispatchers; and develop clear criteria about when 911 systems must divert certain types of calls to mental health responders.
- Create programs that divert people from the criminal legal system and instead provide free, need-based medical care, social services, education, employment, housing, and/or other programs. These programs should not be administered by the criminal legal system.
- Provide positive school-based student supports, including resources for counselors, training for staff, restorative practices, culturally responsive positive behavioral interventions and supports (PBIS), and mental health supports for students in crisis.
- Expand investments that build social capital and proactively keep communities safe, such as restorative justice, neighborhood mediation, peacekeeping programs, community-based gang intervention, and violence interruption programs.

Recommendations for Research & Data Collection

Fund research and evaluation of community-based programs and alternatives to policing that may increase the safety and wellbeing of LGBTQ+ people.

Fund research related to LGBTQ+ policing issues by increasing public investments in such research, including examinations of interactions between LGBTQ+ people and police; the effects of specific laws and policies on LGBTQ+ people; and the root causes of increased LGBTQ+ contact with the criminal legal system.

Conduct research with large enough samples to disaggregate the experiences and examine distinct experiences and perspectives among various identity groups among the LGBTQ+ population. Particular attention should be focused on examining differences among transgender women, transgender men, and nonbinary individuals.

- Research on LGBTQ+ people and policing should examine the particular experiences of LGBTQ+ people of color, and LGBTQ+ people experiencing poverty. Examining LGBTQ+ people as a monolith population may mask very real disparities and harms that the most marginalized members of the population experience.

Develop systems for the routine collection of accurate data on a range of police practices.

- Identify and implement best practices for accurate collection of demographic data of individuals stopped, searched, detained, and/or arrested by law enforcement, such as sexual orientation, gender identity, and race/ethnicity.

Appendix

TABLE A1.

A Comparison of the Percentage of People in Agreement and Disagreement with Statements Related to Police Procedural Justice During their Most Recent Police Interaction, by LGBTQ+ Status

		Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
The officer treated me with respect. (N=1,086)	Non-LGBTQ+	5.3%	11.0%	26.8%	56.9%
	LGBTQ+	8.9%	18.9%	30.8%	41.4%
The officer treated me fairly. (N=1,084)	Non-LGBTQ+	5.9%	9.7%	27.6%	56.8%
	LGBTQ+	10.5%	16.9%	29.1%	43.5%
The officer took time to listen to what I had to say. (N=1,081)	Non-LGBTQ+	9.2%	11.9%	26.5%	52.4%
	LGBTQ+	15.1%	19.6%	28.3%	37.0%
The officer made decisions on the basis of the facts of the situation, and not on their personal opinions. (N=1,083)	Non-LGBTQ+	7.8%	13.2%	26.0%	53.1%
	LGBTQ+	14.1%	17.1%	29.9%	39.0%
The officer explained their actions and decisions to me. (N=1,079)	Non-LGBTQ+	9.4%	9.9%	26.6%	54.1%
	LGBTQ+	18.4%	19.6%	25.0%	37.0%

Note. Proportions represented above only include scores for respondents who have ever had contact with the police.

TABLE A2.

A Comparison of the Percentage of People in Agreement and Disagreement with Statements Related to Police Legitimacy, by LGBTQ+ Status

		Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
The police in this neighborhood are responsive to local issues. (N=1,472)	Non-LGBTQ+	3.6%	6.4%	26.1%	48.1%	15.8%
	LGBTQ+	6.6%	14.6%	33.7%	34.8%	10.3%
The police are doing a good job in dealing with problems that really concern people in this neighborhood. (N=1,472)	Non-LGBTQ+	4.9%	8.9%	29.6%	42.7%	13.9%
	LGBTQ+	9.7%	18.4%	38.0%	24.4%	9.6%
The police are not doing a good job in preventing crime in this neighborhood.* (N=1,473)	Non-LGBTQ+	14.0%	38.5%	29.6%	13.7%	4.2%
	LGBTQ+	7.5%	26.2%	38.0%	20.6%	7.7%
The police do a good job in responding to people in the neighborhood after they have been victims of a crime. (N=1,466)	Non-LGBTQ+	4.1%	8.1%	33.5%	42.2%	12.1%
	LGBTQ+	6.3%	16.5%	41.4%	27.9%	8.0%
The police are not able to maintain order on the streets and sidewalks in the neighborhood.* (N=1,466)	Non-LGBTQ+	25.7%	34.1%	26.7%	10.3%	3.3%
	LGBTQ+	17.6%	27.1%	36.1%	13.9%	5.4%

* Both of these variables were inverted prior to being included in the police legitimacy scale. (see Methods Section for more details)

Endnotes

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- 24 Lisa M. Dario et al., “Assessing LGBT People’s Perceptions of Police Legitimacy,” *Journal of Homosexuality* 67, no. 7 (2020): 885–915, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00918369.2018.1560127>; Bianca Fileborn, “Policing Youth and Queerness: The Experiences and Perceptions of Young LGBTQ+ People from Regional Victoria,” *Current Issues in Criminal Justice* 31, no. 3 (2019): 433–51, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10345329.2019.1633727>; Toby Miles-Johnson, “Confidence and Trust in Police: How Sexual Identity Difference Shapes Perceptions of Police,” *Current Issues in Criminal Justice* 25, no. 2 (2013): 685–702, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10345329.2013.12035990>.
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		42	95% CI: 0-18.9%
		43	CI: 35.5-56.5%
		44	CI: 68.2-100%
		45	Importantly, police-initiated contact is a binary variable accounting for whether or not a respondent has had one or more involuntary police contacts (yes=1, no=0). The data and analyses represented here do not assess the extent of police-initiated contact.
		46	95% CI: 16.7-29.5% and 16.3-51.5%, respectively, compared to 9.0-19.9%
		47	95% CI: 0-30.1%
		48	95% CI: 16.3-51.0% and 61.4-100%, respectively, compared to 8.8-20.7%
27	Respondents could also state they prefer not to answer or that they do not know.	49	95% CI: 2.4-12.9%
28	National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, <i>Measuring Sex, Gender Identity, and Sexual Orientation</i> (Washington, DC: The National Academies Press, 2022), https://doi.org/10.17226/26424 .	50	95% CI: 22.0-41.3%
29	While many of the analyses presented show that transgender people significantly differ from cisgender people, data limitations prevented further disaggregation and thus cannot be used to account for differences between transgender men, transgender women, and transgender nonbinary+ people within the context of "transgender."	51	95% CI: 14.4-29.4% and 9.1-33.9%, respectively, compared to 2.4-12.9%
		52	95% CI: 2.2-12.7%
		53	95% CI: 45.6-62.8% and 24.1-78.0%, respectively, compared to 2.2-12.7%
30	J. M. Gau, "Procedural Justice and Police Legitimacy: A Test of Measurement and Structure," <i>American Journal of Criminal Justice</i> 39, no. 2 (2014): 187-205; T. R. Tyler, <i>Why People Cooperate: The Role of Social Motivations</i> (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2011).	54	95% CI: 24.5-38.5% and 31.0-100%, respectively, compared to 13.1-25.4%
		55	95% CI: 27.5-69.6%, 35.0-100%, respectively, compared to 17.9-30.4%
		56	95% CI: 0.3-16.8%
31	Daniela Gilbert, Stewart Wakeling, and Vaughn Crandall, "Procedural Justice and Police Legitimacy: Using Training as a Foundation for Strengthening Police-Community Relationships" (working paper, California Partnership for Safe Communities), https://bja.ojp.gov/sites/g/files/xyckuh186/files/bwc/pdfs/procedural-justice-and-police-legitimacy-paper-cpsc-feb-2015.pdf .	57	95% CI: 0-23.5%
		58	95% CI: 0-12.0%
		59	95% CI: Cisgender men, 12.5-26.5%; Cisgender women, 13.2-24.8%; Transgender, 19.6-62.4%; Nonbinary+, 8.8-42.4%
32	95% Confidence Interval (CI): 76.1-100%	60	95% CI: 0-23.5%
33	95% CI: 17.7-69.0%, 25.9-71.8%, and 0-78.0%, respectively compared to 76.9-92.2%	61	95% CI: 31.0-100%
34	95% CI: 75.5-96.0%	62	95% CI: 48.2-66.2% and 48.8-72.6%, respectively
35	95% CI: 76.2-95.0%	63	95% CI: 29.4-79.8%
36	95% CI: 0-28.2% and 14.4-64.1%, respectively, compared to 76.2-95.0%	64	95% CI: 16.2-30.6%, 4.9-24.4%, and 9.3-29.4%, respectively
37	95% CI: 23.0-35.6% and 61.4-100%, respectively, compared to 12.2-24.7%	65	95% CI: 4.1-17.8%
		66	95% CI: 2.1-12.3%
38	95% CI: 0-29.7% and 76.1-100%, respectively, compared to 43.1-60.2%	67	95% CI: 7.5-54.4% and 9.4-61.3%, respectively
39	95% CI: 69.0-100%	68	95% CI: 1.5-15.6% and 0-18.3% compared to 18.3-35.6% and 17.7-34.2%, respectively
40	95% CI: 11.4-61.6%		

- 69 95% CI: 0.9-10.1%
- 70 95% CI: 21.3-39.7% and 16.2-30.6%, respectively
- 71 95% CI: 7.5-54.4% and 5.5-56.7%
- 72 95% CI: 17.8-34.8%
- 73 95% CI: 15.0-44.6%
- 74 95% CI: 16.1-61.5% and 45.3-114.6%, respectively
- 75 95% CI: 7.5-17.0%
- 76 95% CI: 17.2-30.4% and 15.2-40.1%, respectively
- 77 95% CI: 0-14.4%
- 78 95% CI: 31.9-73.3% and 6.2-100%, respectively
- 79 95% CI: 15.6-55.1%, 12.8-44.9%, and 25.4-71.2%, respectively
- 80 95% CI: 32.8-82.5% compared to 2.9-21.3%, respectively
- 81 95% CI: 3.2-12.1%
- 82 95% CI: 12.7-41.9%
- 83 95% CI: 3.5-10.1%
- 84 95% CI: 6.2-100%
- 85 95% CI: 5.8-30.7%
- 86 95% CI: 1.7-9.4%
- 87 95% CI: 0.2-6.9%
- 88 95% CI: Cisgender men, 4.1-29.2%; cisgender women, 9.4-23.8%; Transgender people, 3.4-48.3%; Nonbinary+ people, 0-30.8%
- 89 95% CI: 10.1-62.1% and 5.9-46.0%, respectively
- 90 95% CI: 0.1-11.2% and 0.2-6.9%, respectively
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- 92 95% CI: Lesbian or gay, 2.6-3.2; bisexual, 2.5-3.0; queer+, 1.6-3.0
- 93 95% CI: 1.8-2.4
- 94 95% CI: 2.1-3.0 and 2.5-4.1, respectively, compared to 1.8-2.4
- 95 95% CI: 3.3-3.5
- 96 95% CI: Lesbian/gay, 2.5-3.3; Bisexual, 2.6-3.2; Queer+ 2.4-3.3
- 97 95% CI: 2.8-3.2 and 1.8-3.3, respectively
- 98 95% CI: 2.8-3.5
- 99 95% CI: 3.6-4.9
- 100 95% CI: 2.4-2.8
- 101 95% CI: 3.0-3.8 and 2.7-3.6, respectively
- 102 95% CI: 3.1-4.5 and 2.9-4.2, respectively
- 103 95% CI: 3.3-3.5
- 104 95% CI: 2.9-3.3 and 2.4-3.4, respectively
- 105 95% CI: 3.0-3.3 and 2.7-3.3, respectively
- 106 95% CI: 3.2-3.8
- 107 95% CI: 2.8-3.2 and 2.4-3.0, respectively
- 108 95% CI: 2.5-3.2 and 2.6-3.0, respectively
- 109 95% CI: 2.1-2.9
- 110 95% CI: 79.8-91.4% and 77.9-100.0%, respectively
- 111 95% CI: 65.3-78.7% and 44.0-73.2%, respectively
- 112 95% CI: Lesbian and gay, 45.0-84.8%; Bisexual, 33.8-65.6%
- 113 95% CI: Lesbian and gay, 56.0-96.0%; Bisexual, 66.3-93.9%; Queer+ 1.7-100.0%
- 114 95% CI: 91.1-100.0%
- 115 95% CI: Cisgender women, 71.1-83.3%; Transgender, 34.5-75.6%; Nonbinary+ 8.1-36.9%
- 116 95% CI: 39.5-76.4%
- 117 95% CI: Cisgender men, 25.9-72.0%; Cisgender women, 43.3-72.2%; Transgender, 36.2-100.0%; Nonbinary+, Omitted
- 118 95% CI: 77.0-94.0%
- 119 95% CI: 77.0-94.9% and 77.4-95.6%, respectively
- 120 95% CI: 0.0-45.6%
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