

New study suggests that nearly 60% of transgender people in the U.S. have reported mistreatment by police in the last year

By Muri Assunção
| New York Daily News |
May 07, 2019

Police treatment of the transgender population in the U.S. is in dire need of reform, according to new report.

Findings from a survey released by the [National Center for Transgender Equality \(NCTE\)](#) based on the U.S. Transgender Survey revealed some sobering statistics that are, unfortunately, an all-too-common reality for over half of trans individuals living in this country: 58% of transgender individuals have experienced harassment, abuse or other mistreatment by law enforcement agents last year.

“On the 50th anniversary of the Stonewall riots, transgender people of color remain targets of harassment, abuse, and violence. If we ever hope to end this crisis, police departments must evolve to meet the needs of the communities they have sworn to serve. The solutions we offer can lead these communities and our nation’s law enforcement to a more equitable future, but we must get there together,” NCTE’s executive director Mara Keisling said in a press release.

The report, which was published Monday, evaluated police department policies in the treatment of transgender people in the country’s 25 largest police departments, as measured by full-time staff employees. They were compared with a set of “ideal practices,” as defined in the [“Gender, Sexuality, and 21st Century Policing”](#) report, a project by [Community Oriented Policing Services \(COPS\)](#) aimed at protecting the LGBTQ community.

The report graded the 25 departments and verified if their policies: reflected, partially reflected, or did not reflect national best practices on 17 topics, including non-binary recognition, bathroom access, and respectful communication.

To most people from outside of these communities, the findings are a rude awakening to the harsh reality of living as a person whose gender doesn’t conform to the idea of the majority. The survey aims to shed light on the difficulties that transgender, non-binary and gender non-conforming people face, while their simple rights are denied.

The results found systemic neglect by police to prevent the mistreatment and of transgender people. The NCTE wants the findings to function as both a wakeup call, as well as a starting point in the improvement of the relationship between the police and transgender community.

No police department has strong policies to protect the community on all or almost all of the criteria, the survey found. Among the key findings:

- No department explicitly requires regular training on transgender interaction policies for all members across rank.
- Only nine of the 25 departments include gender identity and/or expression language in their non-discrimination policy which, according to the NCTE, is the best way to clarify that transgender people are protected. Fourteen departments include sexual orientation in their non-

discrimination policies. The better non-discrimination policies explicitly prohibit profiling, harassment and invasive questioning as types of discrimination.

- Only two departments explicitly prohibited sexual conduct between officers and those in their custody.
- Only one department (San Francisco) fully addresses how gender-specific policies applied to people with non-binary gender identities and/or gender markers, such as those regarding searches, placement in temporary holding cells, or use of pronouns, which leaves officers in the remaining 24 departments with no guidance on how to appropriately apply department policies to interactions with non-binary people.
- 15 out of 25 departments lack any policies regarding correct use of names and pronouns.
- Out of the 16 departments with holding facilities, only four adequately address access to hormone medications.
- 16 out of 25 departments failed to provide search procedures for transgender individuals and/or require members to perform searches based on sex.
- No department explicitly provides for transgender individuals to be transported along with individuals of the same gender identity.
- Only two department's policy explicitly allow for transgender people to retain all appearance related items (e.g. prosthetics, bras, clothes, undergarments, wigs, chest binders, or cosmetic items).
- 23 departments don't have policies prohibiting officer sexual misconduct towards members of the public.
- None of the departments explicitly prohibits the use of condoms as evidence in prostitution-related offenses.