

The LGBTQ Landscape in South Carolina in 2020



POPULATION

South Carolina is home to 137,000 LGBTQ adults, 30% of whom are raising children according to 2019 data.¹ South Carolina's LGBTQ population reflects the state's racial diversity: African-American, 25%; Hispanic/Latino: 10%; White: 52%; All Other Races: 13%.²

ECONOMIC DISPARITIES

LGBTQ adults in South Carolina experience disparities around essential issues such as food access, health insurance, unemployment – relative to non-LGBTQ adults, including. According to the Williams Institute:³

- 23% of LGBTQ adults in SC said they do not have health insurance, compared to 13% of non-LGBTQ adults.
- 36% of LGBTQ adults in SC said they do not have enough money for food, compared to 18% of non-LGBTQ adults.
- 11% of LGBTQ adults in SC are unemployed, compared to 5% of non-LGBTQ adults.

LEGAL LANDSCAPE

- South Carolina is one of 29 states where LGBTQ people are not fully protected from discrimination.
- Locally, eight communities across the state have passed measures protecting LGBTQ people from discrimination in housing, employment, and/or public accommodations, providing protections to a very small portion of the state's population.
- A 2018 PRRI poll found that 58% of South Carolinians support nondiscrimination laws related to housing, employment and public accommodations.⁴
- South Carolina is one of a handful of states that still have laws prohibiting the inclusion of LGBTQ content in health education curricula in public schools.

2020 LEGISLATIVE SESSION

Two bills targeting transgender youth have been introduced in the 2020 South Carolina legislative session. H4716 would ban doctors from providing medically necessary, gender affirming care to transgender youth; similar bills have recently been defeated in Florida and South Dakota. S1087 would ban transgender youth from participating in school sports; similar bills are under consideration in states including Mississippi, Ohio, and Kentucky.

A statewide LGBTQ coalition is working to defeat both bills and is also prioritizing the passage of an inclusive hate crimes law and inclusive non-discrimination legislation.

SOURCES

1 <https://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/wp-content/uploads/2020-LGBT-Vote-Oct-2019.pdf>

2 <https://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/visualization/lgbt-stats/?topic=LGBT&area=45#demo-graphic>

3 <https://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/wp-content/uploads/South-Carolina-ND-July-2019.pdf>

4 <https://www.prri.org/research/americans-support-protections-lgbt-people/>



Questions about LGBTQ organizing in South Carolina?

Get Involved:

www.southernequality.org/SouthCarolina



RECENT SC RESEARCH TELLS STORY OF URGENCY AND HOPE

2019 marked the release of groundbreaking community-based research that provides a new depth of insight into the LGBTQ community in South Carolina.

The Alliance for Full Acceptance (AFFA) surveyed 1,436 LGBTQ people in Berkeley, Charleston, and Dorchester Counties and found, within this tri-county region: ⁵

- 14% of respondents have been attacked on the street.
- 35% said they could not show affection in public in the last year.
- 52% said they have felt depressed or sad for a long time.
- 55% of respondents felt like they could not be themselves at work and more.

Across the state, LGBTQ South Carolinians experience pronounced health disparities. According to data from 404 LGBTQ South Carolinians who took the 2019 Southern LGBTQ Health Survey (led by the Campaign for Southern Equality and Western NC Community Health Services): ⁶

- 51.3% rated their mental health as *fair or poor*, including 69.5% of trans respondents who described their mental health as *fair or poor*.
- 2.3% of LGBTQ people in SC surveyed reported living with HIV (compared to less than 1% of the general population). 13.8% of respondents said they do not know their HIV status.
- 33% of South Carolina survey respondents said they have had suicidal thoughts, 71% said they have faced depression, and 63% said they face anxiety.
- 51.5% said they feel that being in the South makes it *always or often* harder to access quality medical care for LGBTQ individuals, including 72.7% of trans respondents who said it is *always or often* difficult to access quality care.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thank you to Alliance for Full Acceptance, GLAAD, Human Rights Campaign and The Williams Institute for support on this resource about LGBTQ experiences in South Carolina.



CAMPAIGN FOR
SOUTHERN
EQUALITY

Questions about LGBTQ
organizing in South Carolina?

REST IN POWER

As we work each day to build a South Carolina where LGBTQ people survive and thrive, we also honor those we have lost. In the past two years, our community has mourned the deaths of **Sasha Wall, Regina Denise Brown, Denali Berries Stuckey, and Pebbles LaDime Doe**, four transgender women of color who were murdered in South Carolina (approximately one half of the trans women of color who are murdered each year live in the South). The community also mourns the passing of LGBTQ South Carolinians, including youth, who have completed suicide.^{7,8}

GROWING MOMENTUM ACROSS THE STATE

South Carolina is home to a vibrant network of LGBTQ organizations spanning the Lowcountry to the Upstate. More than 20 organizations – many led by transgender people and people of color, and serving LGBTQ youth – have formed a new statewide coalition to defeat anti-transgender legislation and to build political power across the state. These locally-led organizations are frontline responders to both the needs and dreams of their community. Many provide food pantries and are a first call in times of crisis. They are also leading powerful events like a recent LGBTQ Youth Summit led by PrideLink that drew more than 200 people from across the Upstate, or the quickly-growing GSA Support Services that Charleston's We Are Family leads.

SOURCES

- 5 https://www.affa-sc.org/wp-content/uploads/AFFA_AssessmentReport_2019_Singles.pdf
- 6 <https://southernequality.org/survey>
- 7 <https://www.hrc.org/resources/violence-against-the-transgender-community-in-2018>
- 8 <https://www.hrc.org/resources/violence-against-the-transgender-community-in-2019>

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