

Breakout Report

LGBTQ Tennesseans:

A Report of the 2021 Southern LGBTQ Experiences Survey

January 2023



The Survey of Southern LGBTQ Experiences is a project of the Southern Equality Research & Policy Center and Campus Pride. The survey, conducted in 2021, highlights the experiences of more than 4,000 LGBTQ adults across 13 states in the US Southeast. To learn more about the survey, including our methodology, visit www.southernequality.org/comingofagesurvey

This special report focuses on Tennessee respondents to the 2021 Survey of Southern LGBTQ Experiences.

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Campaign for Southern Equality

works across the South to promote full LGBTQ equality – both legal and lived. Our work is rooted in commitments to empathy and to equity in race, class, and gender. www.southernequality.org

Campus Pride

Campus Pride is the leading national nonprofit organization dedicated to building future leaders and creating safer, more inclusive communities for LGBTQ people and allies at colleges and universities. www.campuspride.org

www.southernequality.org/ComingofAge#TN

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SOUTHERN
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CAMPAIGN FOR
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Campus
Pride

Coming of Age as an LGBTQ Southerner

About the 2021 Southern LGBTQ Experiences Survey

The 2021 Southern LGBTQ Experiences Survey is a project of the Southern Equality Research & Policy Center and Campus Pride. The overall survey highlights the experiences of 4,146 LGBTQ adults across 13 states. Population estimates suggest more than one-third of the LGBTQ community in the US resides in the South (Williams Institute 2019), where they are likely to have fewer legal protections and face more anti-LGBTQ policies than their peers in other parts of the country (Harless et al. 2019; Johnson et al. 2020; Movement Advancement Project 2022).

The goal of the survey was to better understand the lived experiences of LGBTQ people across social contexts. The self-administered survey, developed in 2021 by a team of sociologists, political scientists, and community organizers, was completed online between August 3 and December 20, 2021. The survey included demographic questions as well as questions related to home and family, faith and spirituality, school and education, and health and well-being. The survey was available in both English and Spanish. Recruitment took place online through targeted social media advertisements. Our team also hired community research ambassadors to promote the survey to LGBTQ people in their networks throughout the region.

Survey participants represent a variety of experiences and backgrounds. Each of the 13 Southern states had at least 100 participants. The average age for the sample is 28 years and over half of the sample (56.23%) is 24 years old or younger. Racially, the sample identifies as White (87.19%), Black (6.76%), multiracial (5.52%), Native American or Alaskan Native (1.77%), Middle Eastern or North African (0.56%), Asian or Pacific Islander (1.92%), or elected to self-describe (1.73%), and 10.15% of the sample is Hispanic. Just under 30% of the sample (29.32%) are transgender, and 26.07% of respondents are nonbinary. The most reported sexual orientations in the sample are bisexual (32.07%), queer (27.75%), lesbian (22.10%), and gay (20.30%).



Opening Letter

Forward from Chris Sanders, Executive Director of the Tennessee Equality Project

Striking in the history of social conflict is the targeting of young bodies and minds. In war, generations are decimated. In periods of domestic oppression, hearts and minds are brutalized with devastating results. Though it happens again and again, it remains hard to look into the faces of our young friends and admit, “We failed to stop this from happening to you.”

The Campaign for Southern Equality’s report on Tennessee documents the relentless legislative attacks on LGBTQ people in our state with particular attention to the ways that young lives are upended. This deadly obstacle course so callously laid out in a series of traps thwarts what should be a time of growth, support, and joy for far too many.

More frustrating is the realization that this catastrophe has always been avoidable because a state’s public policy is a choice. Most directly it is a choice by those in power such as our legislators. But it is also a choice by people who enable destructive policy, whether that be the small but vocal group cheerleading for discrimination or the many who tacitly go along with it.

This report is a sobering call for people of conscience in Tennessee to work in alliance with the LGBTQ community so that youth of all sexual orientations and gender identities can flourish. Please, read it carefully and take action.

In solidarity,

Chris Sanders
Executive Director
Tennessee Equality Project



**TENNESSEE
EQUALITY
PROJECT**

“This report is a sobering call for people of conscience in Tennessee to work in alliance with the LGBTQ community so that youth of all sexual orientations and gender identities can flourish.”

The Tennessee Sample

Of the 4,146 LGBTQ Southerners who responded to the LGBTQ Southern Experiences Survey, 381 are Tennesseans. This report centers their experiences. Tennessee is home to approximately 225,000 LGBTQ people,¹ including approximately 30,800 people who identify as a member of the transgender community.² No matter where you live in Tennessee, LGBTQ Tennesseans are your neighbors, your family, your coworkers, and your community members. LGBTQ Tennesseans deserve to be safe, respected, and celebrated within their communities.

Region

Due to the social-political climate in the South, LGBTQ people are often depicted as outsiders rather than neighbors, family members, and friends. Yet, the 381 LGBTQ Tennesseans who participated in this survey live in communities across the state, from small towns and rural hollows to medium and large cities. Of the LGBTQ Tennesseans who participated in this survey, 55.4% live outside of Tennessee's major urban centers of Nashville, Memphis, Chattanooga, and Knoxville (Figure 1). Of the LGBTQ Tennesseans who participated in this survey, 45% are residents of East Tennessee, 36% are residents of Middle Tennessee, and 15% are residents of West Tennessee.

Figure 1: County Level Distribution of Respondents from Tennessee

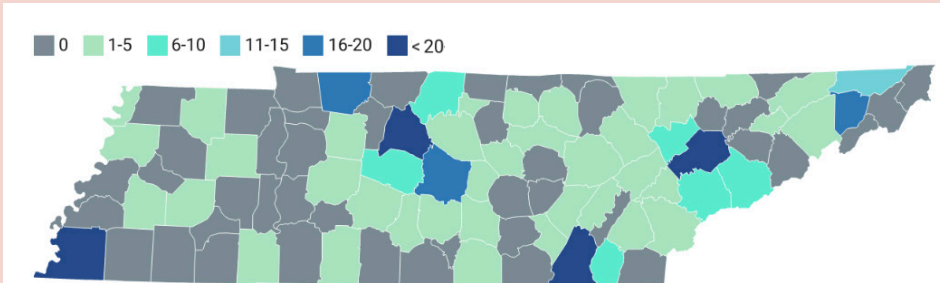
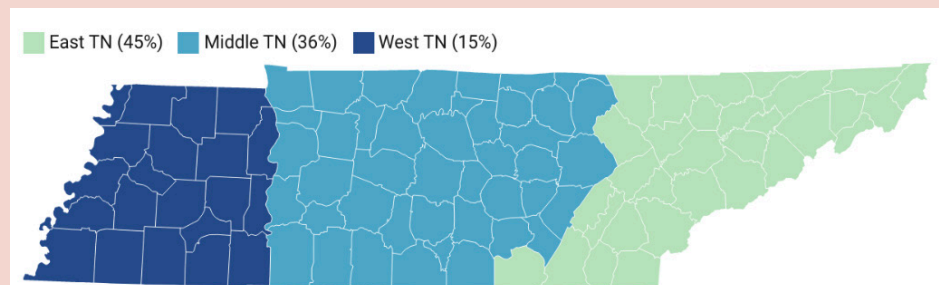


Figure 2: Regional Distribution of Respondents from Tennessee



1. Conron, K. J., & Goldberg, S. K. (2020, April). LGBTQ People in the United States Not Protected by State Non-discrimination Statutes". Williams Institute, UCLA School of Law. Retrieved November 30, 2022, from <https://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/wp-content/uploads/LGBT-ND-Protections-Update-Apr-2020.pdf>

2. Herman, J.L., Flores, A.R., O'Neill, K.K. (2022). How Many Adults Identify as Transgender in the United States?. Williams Institute, UCLA School of Law. Retrieved November 30, 2022 from <https://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/wp-content/uploads/Trans-Pop-Update-Jun-2022.pdf>

Income

Less than one percent of the LGBTQ Tennesseans who participated in this survey qualify as “upper-income.” More than half, however, qualify as “low-income,” earning less than \$20,000 per year. As a point of comparison, the U.S. Census Bureau indicates that only 13% of the general population in TN are living in poverty. Approximately 25% of respondents from Tennessee indicated that they were completely financially independent. Financial dependence was highest among those earning less than \$40,000 per year.

Figure 3: Income Distribution

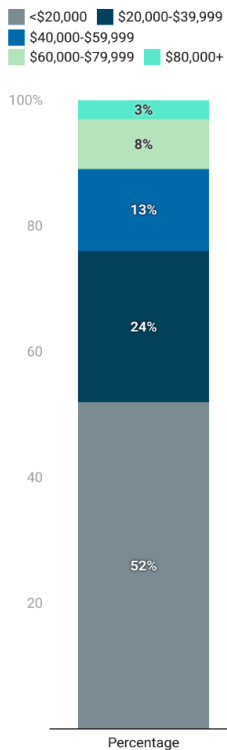


Figure 4: Economic Independence

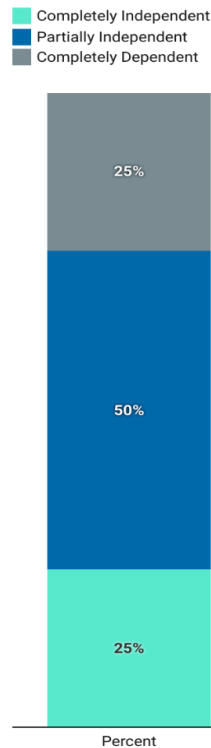
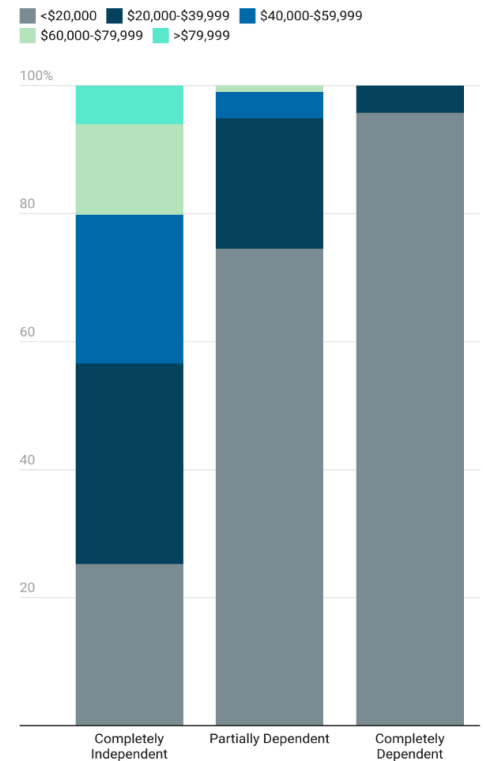


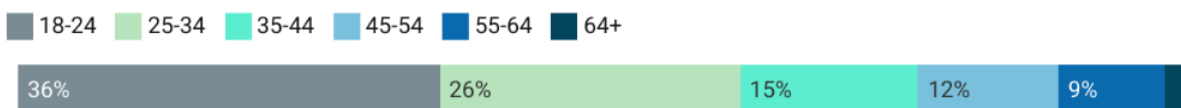
Figure 5: Income Distribution by level of Economic Independence.



Age

Most participants from Tennessee are young adults, under the age of 35 – 35.2% are between the ages of 18-24, and 26% are between the ages of 25 and 34. However, the LGBTQ population in Tennessee represents a wide range of age cohorts, with 37.7% of participants indicating that they are over the age of 35.

Figure 6: Age Distribution



Education

Approximately 75% of LGBTQ Tennesseans who participated in the survey reported at least some experience of college-level education with 25% holding a college degree and 15% holding a graduate or professional degree. Only 2% of respondents indicated that they have not yet earned a high school diploma or equivalent. As a point of comparison, the U.S. Census Bureau indicates that only nearly 30% of Tennesseans hold a four-year college degree.

Sexual Orientation

Respondents were given the opportunity to select all the sexual orientation labels that they use to describe themselves. The most common sexual orientation label used among respondents from Tennessee was Bisexual, used by 35% of respondents, followed by Queer (32%), Gay (22%), Pansexual (19%), Lesbian (16%), Demisexual (9%), Asexual (7%), and Straight (3%). Other sexual orientation labels used by fewer than 3 respondents each include Biromantic Asexual, Polyamorous, Omnisexual, Ambiamorous, Dyke, Sapiosexual, Grey Asexual, Dellosexual, Asexual Lesbian, and Panromantic.

Race

The majority of LGBTQ Tennesseans who responded to the survey identified their race as white (90%). Among the 10% of LGBTQ Tennesseans who did not identify their race as white, 6% identified as Black, 4% identified as multiracial, and 1% of respondents identified as Middle Eastern or North African, Asian or Pacific Islander, or preferred to self-identify as another racial group.

Figure 7: Level of Education

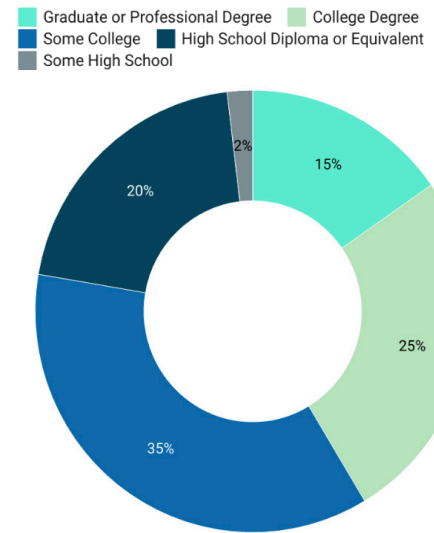


Figure 9: Sexual Orientation

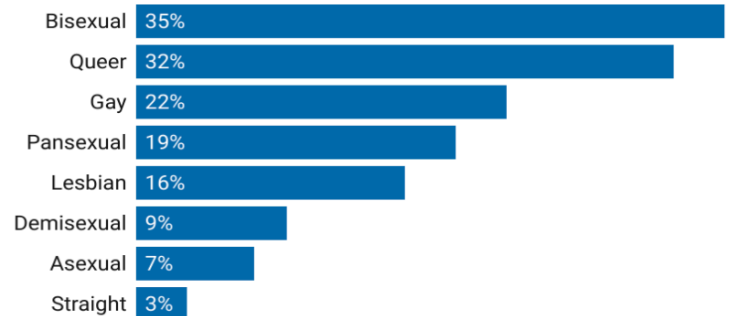
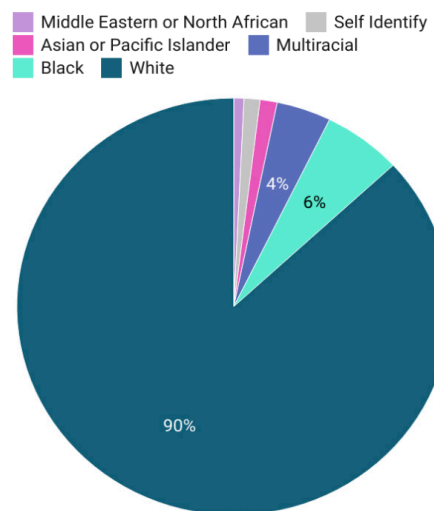


Figure 8: Racial Identification



Gender Identity

Participants from Tennessee were most likely to identify as women (42%) or as nonbinary (35%), with less than one-quarter identifying as men (23%). Of the women who participated in the survey, 7.9% identified as transgender, and 3.9% indicated that they are questioning their gender identity. Among the men who participated in the survey, 40.7% identified as transgender, and 1.2% indicated that they are questioning their gender identity. Interestingly, 11.7% of the participants who indicated their gender as nonbinary also indicated that they identify as cisgender; and 26.7% indicated that they are questioning their gender identity.

Figure 9a: Gender Experiences of TN Respondents

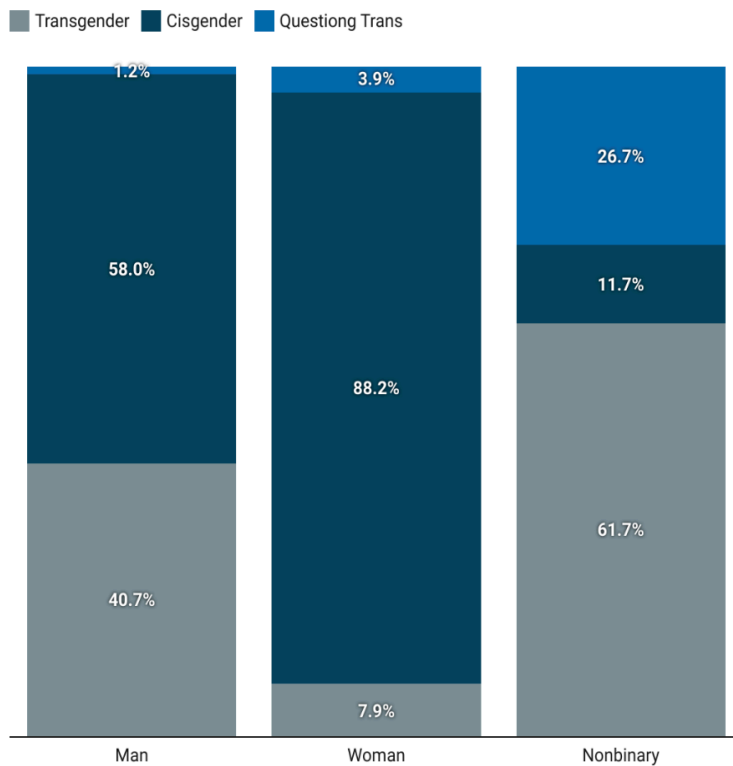


Figure 9b: Gender Identity of TN Respondents

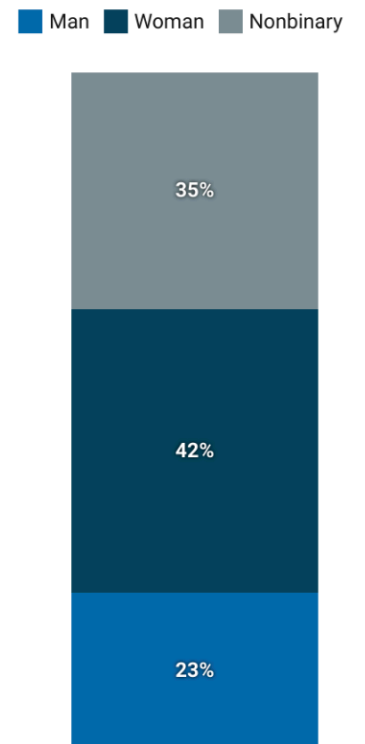



Figure 9c: Trans & Gender Questioning TN Respondents





TN's LGBTQ Legal Landscape

LGBTQ Tennesseans face an unsupportive legal system and a hostile political climate that results in disproportionate disadvantage across some of our most central social institutions, including work, family, education, and healthcare. In addition to an absence of laws that protect LGBTQ people, such as state and local non-discrimination policies, the state legislature in Tennessee has passed a host of negative laws that directly attack its LGBTQ residents. This section gives an overview of the legal landscape in Tennessee, focusing on the laws that target LGBTQ families, discrimination based on gender identity or sexuality, religious exemption for discriminatory practices, criminal justice policies that affect LGBTQ people, policies that restrict access to correct identity documentation for transgender people, healthcare policies impacting LGBTQ people, and policies impacting LGBTQ youth. The information presented here primarily relies on the Tennessee Equality Profile from Movement Advancement Project and on publicly available information from the Tennessee General Assembly.



Protection from Discrimination Based on Gender Identity and Sexuality

As a result of the 2020 Supreme Court ruling in *Bostock v. Clayton County*, employment discrimination based on gender identity or sexuality is illegal in all 50 states. However, there are no national prohibitions on LGBTQ discrimination in housing, public accommodations, or credit and lending. Unlike other states, Tennessee has not passed its own anti-discrimination laws and LGBTQ Tennesseans remain at risk. This risk is enhanced by the state's 2011 passage of a law preventing local governments from passing their own anti-discrimination laws.

Faith-Based Discrimination, or Religious Exemption Laws

The Tennessee State Legislature has passed several religious exemption laws, which make legal allowances for faith-based discrimination against LGBTQ people. In 2009 Tennessee passed a broad religious exemption law, which allows individuals, churches, non-profit organizations, and sometimes corporations to exempt themselves from laws that conflict with their religious beliefs. Under this law, a nonprofit homeless shelter could refuse to house a transgender homeless person if doing so conflicted with their religious beliefs. In 2016, Tennessee passed a law that extended religious exemption rights to mental health service providers, allowing them to refuse service to clients if the client's "goals, outcomes, or behaviors" conflict with the provider's religious beliefs. This law is especially harmful for individuals who are struggling to cope with community rejection based on their sexual orientation or gender identity and seek guidance and support from a mental health professional.

Hate Crimes Legislation, LGBTQ Panic Defense, & Jury Duty Discrimination

Hate crime laws create increased penalties for crimes committed with explicit bias toward protected characteristics. Tennessee's hate crime law is inclusive of gender and sexual orientation; and, the State Attorney General has affirmed that gender will be interpreted as gender identity for cases designated as hate crimes.³ For example, if a crime were committed against a transgender person, and the motive of the crime was found to be gender identity, this could be charged as a hate crime. Tennessee does not ban the "gay and trans panic defense" for criminal conduct.⁴ This legal loophole permits those who commit violent crimes against LGBTQ individuals to argue in court that fear and panic regarding a person's sexual orientation or gender identity was a valid reason for their crime. For example, a person who commits an act of violence, including an act of fatal violence, upon discovering that a person is trans could argue in court that their panic was a valid reason to excuse their actions. The state of Tennessee does not have laws prohibiting jury duty discrimination based on sexuality or gender identity. Therefore, an LGBTQ person could be prevented from serving on a jury due to their identity, inhibiting their ability to be a part of the judicial process, and limiting the rights of LGBTQ Tennesseans to be judged by a jury of their peers.

Marriage Rights & Family Law

Since the 2015 Supreme Court ruling in *Obergefell v. Hodges*, same-sex marriage is legal in all 50 states. These protections have been further codified into law through the passing of the Respect of Marriage Act in 2022. However, Tennessee sought to circumvent marriage equality in 2022 by creating a separate "common law" marriage process for people who oppose marriage for same-sex couples. While this common law marriage bill did not pass, its proposal showed a clear disregard for marriage equality among much of the state legislature.



Photo by The Gender Spectrum Collection

In Tennessee, LGBTQ parents have the right to adopt and foster children. However, Tennessee passed a law in 2020 that permits state-licensed child welfare agencies to refuse foster/adoption placement and the provision of services to LGBTQ people if doing so conflicts with their religious beliefs. This religious exemption law infringes on LGBTQ parents' rights to adopt and foster and could impact LGBTQ youth in the child welfare system. Additionally, Tennessee lacks important legal pathways to LGBTQ parentage such as second parent adoption, de facto parenting, and LGBTQ-inclusive Voluntary Acknowledgment of Parentage.

3. Hate Crime Laws. Movement Advancement Project. (n.d.). Retrieved November 30, 2022, from https://www.lgbtmap.org/equality-maps/hate_crime_laws

4. Panic Defense Bans. Movement Advancement Project. (n.d.) Retrieved November 30, 2022, from https://www.lgbtmap.org/equality-maps/panic_defense_bans

Name & Gender Marker Change on State-Issued Identity Documentation

Trans and nonbinary people in Tennessee can legally change their names by obtaining a court order. This is important, as many trans and nonbinary people use names not reflected on their original birth certificates and social security cards, or on their existing state IDs or Driver's Licenses. Tennessee does not, however, allow most trans and nonbinary people to change the gender marker on their state-issued identification documents. To change the gender marker on a state-issued ID, a person must have a letter from a doctor stating that they have received medical intervention resulting in a full medical transition to male or female. Many trans and nonbinary people are unable or uninterested in medical transition, and others do not identify with a male/female binary. An inclusive law would not require a medical transition and would include a nonbinary gender marker, in addition to "M" and "F". Currently, trans and nonbinary people born in Tennessee have no option to update the sex listed on their birth certificate, regardless of medical history.

LGBTQ Youth/Education Law

Unlike some other US states, Tennessee does not have laws protecting LGBTQ youth from discrimination in their lives and education. To the contrary, Tennessee has passed explicitly anti-LGBTQ education laws. While this report discusses laws that have been passed, it should be noted that even more anti-LGBTQ] education laws have been proposed, but have not passed. Some of Tennessee's anti-LGBTQ education laws restrict the use of curriculum materials mentioning LGBTQ identity.



Photo by The Gender Spectrum Collection

Other laws prohibit transgender students from participating in sports and using the bathrooms aligned with their gender identity. Finally, there is no law protecting LGBTQ youth from conversion therapy in Tennessee. Conversion therapy is the practice of attempting to change a person's sexual orientation or gender identity. Conversion therapy is currently being utilized in Tennessee, and is extremely harmful to LGBTQ people, especially youth.

Healthcare Law

Tennessee does not have laws protecting LGBTQ individuals from discrimination in healthcare. In addition, Tennessee has passed explicitly anti-LGBTQ healthcare laws in recent years. This includes laws allowing healthcare providers to refuse service to LGBTQ individuals, restrictions on gender affirming healthcare, and the criminalization of HIV.

In the following pages, we put the legal landscape of Tennessee in conversation with the experiences of LGBTQ Tennesseans, drawing on the findings of the 2021 Southern LGBTQ Experiences Survey from the Southern Equality Research and Policy Center at the Campaign for Southern Equality.

TN's Anti-LGBTQ Political Climate

Given the legal landscape described earlier, it is no surprise that 78% of respondents from Tennessee indicated that the state has a hostile political climate when it comes to LGBTQ issues, with 42.7% indicating that the political climate was somewhat hostile and 35.1% indicating that the political climate was extremely hostile. When asked how the attitudes of politicians toward the LGBTQ community makes them feel, the responses of LGBTQ Tennesseans were powerful. Some expressed that they do not feel respected or represented by their government.

In the words of one respondent from rural Middle Tennessee: ***"I feel as if we aren't supposed to matter, at least to them. We are the "other", we're less than them, so why would they care what we think, or about us in general? I just feel isolated, disappointed, and hurt, overall."***

Other respondents built upon this thought, stating that politicians support anti-LGBTQ laws to appease lobbyists with money, while ignoring the voices of constituents.

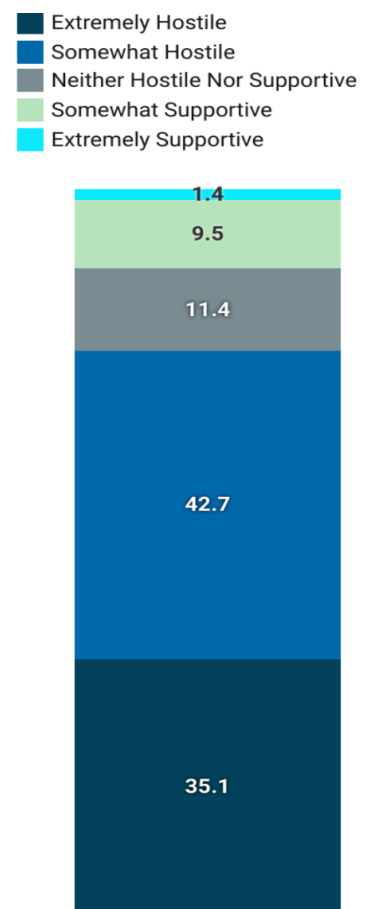
According to one respondent from rural West Tennessee: ***"Politicians prove time and time again that they do not care about, work for, or keep promises to their constituents, and the LGBT community is not excluded from this. Our voices are not heard over the lobbyists who have the money to get what they want."***

Still other respondents expressed that, upon hearing the openly anti-LGBTQ sentiments among Tennessee's politicians and seeing anti-LGBTQ laws being passed, they felt fearful and isolated in their communities.

One rural West Tennessee resident said: ***"Their attitudes make me feel scared and unsafe and at times. I stay at home rather than attend public outings due to this fear."***

These responses reflect the emotional impact that anti-LGBTQ policies have on Tennesseans. They also reflect the impact of anti-LGBTQ legislative harassment on Tennessean's opinions of their legislators.

Figure 11: LGBTQ Tennesseans' Perceptions of the State's Political Climate



"Our voices are not heard over the lobbyists who have the money to get what they want."

Health & Health Care Experiences

Tennessee does not have laws guaranteeing LGBTQ access to healthcare or protecting LGBTQ people from discrimination in healthcare. In Tennessee, the state Medicaid policy and the state employee health insurance policy explicitly exclude coverage for gender affirming care. The state has also made it legal for private health insurance companies to do the same. These exclusions prevent transgender Tennesseans from accessing care that is necessary for their health and well-being.

In 2021, Tennessee lawmakers passed HB1027/SB0126. This law, opposing guidance from the American Academy of Pediatrics and the American Psychological Association, prevents doctors from prescribing hormone blockers to transgender youth before they reach puberty. This law is medically inaccurate, as hormone blockers are only effective once puberty has already begun. The language of the law appears to be aimed at spreading misinformation about gender affirming care. Further, it sets a harmful precedent of lawmakers with little medical knowledge regulating decisions that should be between a doctor, patient, and parents/guardians.

Tennessee lawmakers went on to propose even more restrictive policies that interfere with the health needs of LGBTQ youth. In 2022, lawmakers proposed SB657/HB578, which would have outlawed the provision of hormone replacement therapy and/or hormone blockers for prepubescent minors and required all minors to receive authorization from two physicians and a child psychologist before undergoing hormone intervention of any kind. While this law is medically inaccurate (hormone blockers are never prescribed to prepubescent minors), it would have created an enormous bureaucratic barrier to necessary healthcare for



Photo by The Gender Spectrum Collection

transgender youth in Tennessee who are in the process of puberty and thus are eligible for this necessary medical care. The American Academy of Pediatrics has gone on record denouncing laws such as this one, as they go against medical best practices and disadvantage youth who do not have the resources to satisfy the unreasonable standard of approval from multiple medical specialists trained in gender affirming care.

Tennessee law criminalizes people living with HIV, while promoting negative and damaging stereotypes. This law promotes an incorrect understanding of HIV transmission and. They are based on an individual's "perceived exposure" to HIV, ignoring factors that affect actual transmissibility. This law disproportionately impacts men who have sex with men, transgender people, and people of color who are at a higher risk for HIV exposure. Tennessee's HIV criminalization law requires those convicted to "exposure" to register as a sex offender for life, further stigmatizing this population.

Health & Healthcare Experiences

Unlike many other states in the country, Tennessee does not have legislation protecting LGBTQ individuals from discrimination in healthcare or insurance coverage. And, in recent years, Tennessee lawmakers have passed explicitly anti-LGBTQ healthcare laws. These laws allow healthcare providers to refuse service to LGBTQ individuals; they place restrictions on gender affirming healthcare; and they shore up stigma by criminalizing people living with HIV.

The results of anti-LGBTQ healthcare laws in Tennessee are a healthcare system and health resources that may be difficult to access for LGBTQ people. These laws create a hostile environment wherein LGBTQ Tennesseans may feel intimidated and fearful when seeking care and may be hesitant to be honest about their identity and behaviors with their healthcare providers.

Among the LGBTQ Tennesseans who participated in this survey, fifty percent reported that their physical health was fair or poor, and 41% reported that they were living with a disability or chronic illness. While these rates are similar to the general population of the state, LGBTQ Tennesseans encounter numerous social and policy barriers to receiving needed care.

More than 50% of LGBTQ Tennesseans who responded to the 2021 survey reported that they were aware of recent legislation that could impact the ability of LGBTQ people to access medical treatment, and 7% of LGBTQ Tennesseans reported that they were denied access to healthcare due to their LGBTQ identity. An awareness of the potential for legal discrimination based on sexuality or gender identity, as well as personal experiences of mistreatment in healthcare, result in delays and avoidance when seeking medical care.

A respondent from rural Middle Tennessee reported: ***"I haven't been to the doctor since I came out for fear that I'll be refused medical treatment based on my identity."***

Figure 12: Self-Rated Physical Health of LGBTQ Tennesseans

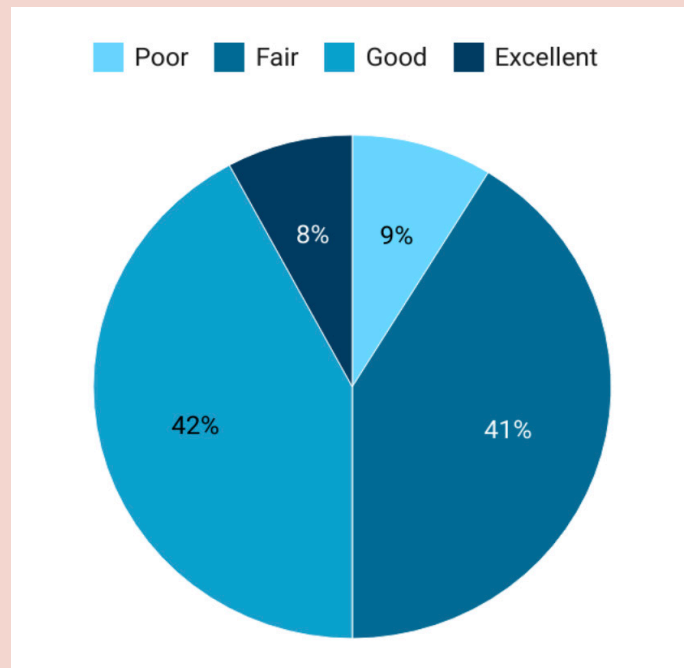
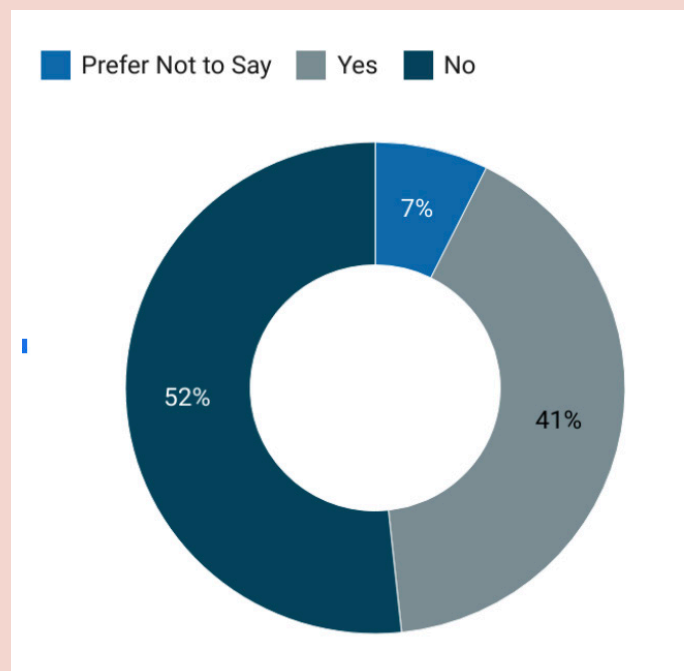


Figure 13: Percentage of LGBTQ Tennesseans Living with a Disability or Chronic Illness



Health & Healthcare Experiences

Another respondent made clear that for transgender Tennesseans, being denied treatment is not just a fear, it is a reality:

“I have been discriminated against and refused treatment for being trans. I don’t want it to go on.”

Approximately 35% of LGBTQ Tennesseans reported delaying or avoiding seeking medical care due to fear of being denied treatment by their healthcare provider; and 42% reported delaying or avoiding seeking medical care due to fear of discrimination or harassment.

According to one Nashville respondent:

“Bigotry in the medical industry makes queer people (in my experience) hesitant to go to the doctor.”

In addition to delaying or avoiding care, some LGBTQ Tennesseans reported being dishonest with their healthcare providers about their gender identity, sexual orientation, or sexual relationships due to fear of harassment or discrimination. When patients are afraid to be honest with their healthcare providers, they are at higher risk of conditions going undiagnosed, potentially leading to worse outcomes.

One respondent reported:

“It’s very stressful to me. I feel like I can’t be fully honest with my healthcare providers sometimes.”

Overall, only 30% of LGBTQ Tennesseans agreed that doctors in their community are prepared to treat LGBTQ patients. These findings should be situated among other research focused on LGBTQ people in Tennessee, and LGBTQ Southerners more broadly.

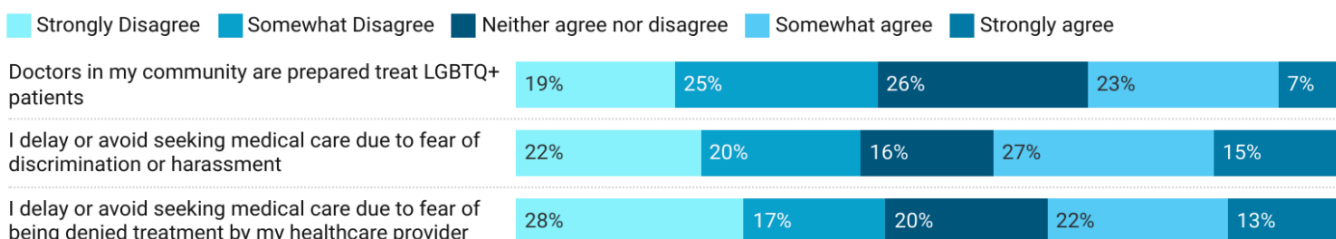
According to a 2021 study conducted in Nashville, LGBTQ Nashvillians were more likely to be uninsured, report unmet medical care needs because of cost, exhibit worse mental health outcomes, and were more at risk of contracting HIV compared with non-LGBTQ Nashvillians. These findings suggest that a lack of access to healthcare is directly tied to health disparities.

“I haven’t been to the doctor since I came out for fear that I’ll be refused medical treatment based on my identity.”

“I have been discriminated against and refused treatment for being trans. I don’t want it to go on.”

“Bigotry in the medical industry makes queer people (in my experience) hesitant to go to the doctor.”

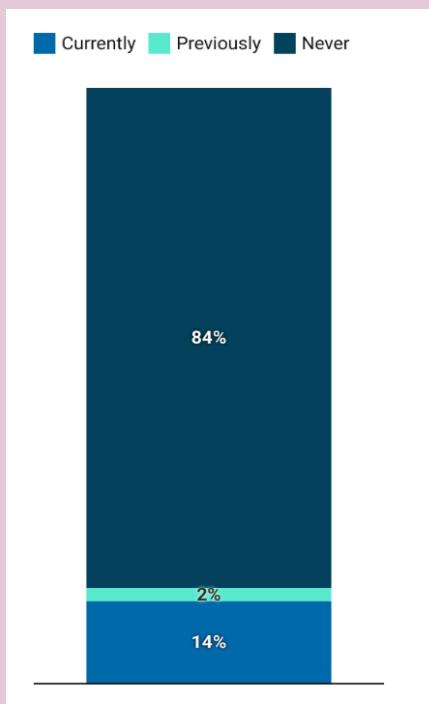
Figure 14: Trust in Providers and Treatment Seeking Behaviors Among LGBTQ Tennesseans



Gender-Affirming Healthcare

There are more transgender individuals in the South than in any other region in the United States. According to a 2022 report from the Williams Institute at UCLA School of Law, an estimated 30,800 Tennesseans identify as transgender.⁵ Transgender people in Tennessee experience more barriers than their peers in other states due to harmful legislation that restricts their access to necessary medical care. In addition to the state's restrictive policies related to insurance coverage, the Tennessee legislature recently passed legislation that regulates transgender

Fig. 15: HRT Use Among TN Transgender Respondents



healthcare in ways that are medically inaccurate. These policies were passed in opposition to the guidelines for best practices among multiple professional medical communities.⁶ This legislation is a strong example of the harmful overreach of lawmakers into private medical interactions between patients and their doctors.

What is Gender Affirming Care?

Gender affirming healthcare is an individualized experience for all trans and nonbinary people. There is no single surgery or standard path that all trans people access and each transgender person has their own unique needs related to gender affirming care. Some transgender people require top surgeries, the term trans and nonbinary people may use to refer to chest reconstruction or breast augmentation. Also, transgender people may require bottom surgeries, the term trans and nonbinary people may use to refer to genital reconstruction or the removal of reproductive organs. Other potential gender affirming surgical interventions can include, but not limited to, facial feminization body masculinization, or vocal cord surgeries. Gender affirming care may also include hormone replacement therapy (HRT) and/or hormone blockers (sometimes referred to as puberty blockers). Through HRT, exogenous hormones are administered. Through hormone blockers, endogenous hormones are blocked to stop or slow the progression of secondary sex characteristics, such as hair growth or breast development. Both HRT and blockers are safe and effective measures recommended by health professionals to address gender dysphoria for trans and nonbinary people.

5. Herman, J.L., Flores, A.R., O'Neill, K.K. (2022). How Many Adults Identify as Transgender in the United States?. Williams Institute, UCLA School of Law. Retrieved November 30, 2022 from <https://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/wp-content/uploads/Trans-Pop-Update-Jun-2022.pdf>

6. Ronan, W. (2021, May 19). Governor Lee Signs Anti-Trans Healthcare Bill Into Law. Human Rights Campaign.

Gender-Affirming Healthcare

Nearly one-third (32%) of the respondents from Tennessee identified as Transgender and another 11% reported that they were questioning their gender identity. Among the transgender Tennesseans who responded to the survey, approximately 14% indicated that they currently use hormone replacement therapy (HRT).

Approximately 84% of transgender respondents from Tennessee reported that, when they were under the age of 18, having access to gender-affirming care was important to their overall well-being. Yet, among respondents who reported currently using hormone replacement therapy (HRT), only 18% reported using HRT prior to the age of 18, and only 5% reported using hormone blockers prior to the age of 18. Of those survey respondents who used puberty blockers under the age of 18, approximately 33% used puberty blockers that were not prescribed by a licensed physician. As state lawmakers make it difficult to access this necessary medical care, some trans and nonbinary Tennesseans are sometimes forced to access HRT and/or hormone blockers through non-medical sources and administer treatment without the guidance of a licensed physician.

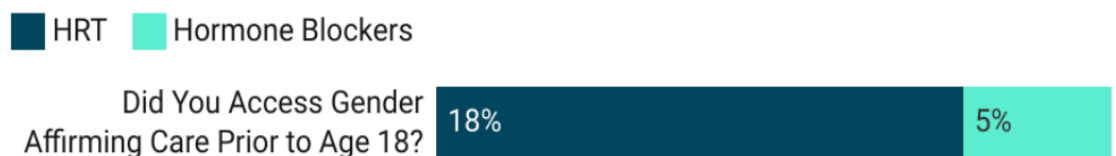
Restrictive laws and policies related to gender affirming care can lead to increased stigma for transgender people, resulting in delays or avoidance in seeking necessary medical care, ultimately resulting in worse health outcomes for this population. A recent study found a significant association between delaying or avoiding care and worse general and mental health outcomes among transgender adults.⁷

"I'm extremely anxious about going to the doctor, and the only place around here that offers any kind of trans healthcare is in Nashville, meaning I have to travel hours to be seen and get minimal respect. Anti-trans laws make that anxiety worse because I always wonder what will happen if I or my partner need emergency care locally."

There is evidence for this link in the survey results, as transgender Tennesseans gave specific examples of their avoiding and being denied healthcare because of their gender identity.⁷

In the words of a transgender respondent living in rural Middle Tennessee: ***"I'm extremely anxious about going to the doctor, and the only place around here that offers any kind of trans healthcare is in Nashville, meaning I have to travel hours to be seen and get minimal respect. Anti-trans laws make that anxiety worse because I always wonder what will happen if I or my partner need emergency care locally. I've also had a pharmacy refuse to refill an HRT prescription."***

Fig. 16: Gender Affirming Care Prior to Age 18 Among Respondents from TN



7. Seelman KL, Colón-Díaz MJP, LeCroix RH, Xavier-Brier M, Kattari L. Transgender Noninclusive Healthcare and Delaying Care Because of Fear: Connections to General Health and Mental Health Among Transgender Adults. *Transgender Health*. 2017 Feb 1;2(1):17-28. doi: 10.1089/trgh.2016.0024. PMID: 28861545; PMCID: PMC5436369.

Gender-Affirming Healthcare

When asked what they would say to legislators attempting to deny transgender, nonbinary, and gender diverse youth access to gender affirming care, respondents pointed to the connection between denying gender affirming care for youth and mental health issues and suicidality. Some respondents expressed pleas for lawmakers to stop passing laws that restrict lifesaving care for transgender youth.

As one respondent put it:
“Gender affirming care is suicide prevention.”

Using examples from their own lives, respondents made clear that laws restricting gender affirming care for youth have severe consequences in the lives of trans and nonbinary Tennesseans.

A respondent from rural East Tennessee said:

“I cannot express how much grief and suffering I (and my family by proxy) could’ve avoided if I’d been provided the kind of gender affirming care I deserved.”

When transgender Tennesseans reported being able to access gender affirming care in their youth, they explained the positive effect that healthcare had on their lives.

A participant from Knoxville wrote:

“Being able to start HRT in high school was the single best thing that could’ve happened to me. It made going to school in a transphobic area bearable.”

To protect the health and well-being of trans and nonbinary Tennesseans, especially youth, lawmakers should make gender-affirming healthcare easier to access, instead of more difficult. This would include adding coverage for gender-affirming care to all insurance plans, eliminating legislative action that promotes medically inaccurate information and interferes in private medical decisions, and ensuring that healthcare providers in the state are trained to serve transgender people and provide gender-affirming care.



Photo by The Gender Spectrum Collection

Mental Health

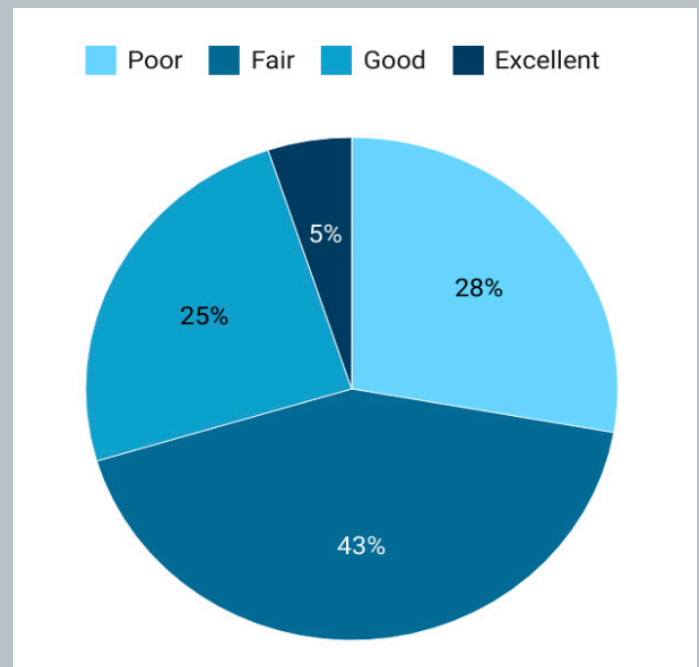
LGBTQ people, and especially queer and trans youth, experience mental health issues at a higher rate than the general population. This results from the social isolation and community rejection that many LGBTQ individuals experience because of their identity.⁸ Our survey responses reflected this trend and demonstrated a need for accessible mental health services for LGBTQ Tennesseans.

Most survey respondents (70%) rated their mental health as either “poor” or “fair”. Even more concerning, 58% of respondents reported experiencing suicidal thoughts within the past year, and 16% of respondents attempted suicide within the past year. This is far higher than the number of suicides attempted nationally; less than .01% of Americans attempt suicide each year.⁹

Other harmful behaviors indicative of mental health issues occurred at alarmingly high rates among respondents from Tennessee. 35% of respondents reported engaging in self harming behaviors, such as cutting, and 46% engaged in disordered eating.

People experiencing mental health issues require support from their communities, and often, from a mental health professional. Community support is often unavailable to LGBTQ Tennesseans who live in areas where those around them, including friends and family, are not accepting of their LGBTQ identity. Over half (63%) of survey respondents reported self-isolating from their community, rather than seeking help and support.

Fig. 17: Self-Reported Mental Health Among TN Respondents



8. LGBTQ+ communities and Mental Health. Mental Health America. (n.d.). Retrieved November 30, 2022, from <https://www.mhanational.org/issues/lgbtq-communities-and-mental-health>

9. American Foundation for Suicide Prevention. (2022, October 14). Suicide statistics. American Foundation for Suicide Prevention. Retrieved November 30, 2022, from <https://afsp.org/suicide-statistics/>

In addition to living in unsupportive communities, LGBTQ Tennesseans can legally be discriminated against and refused service by mental healthcare providers.

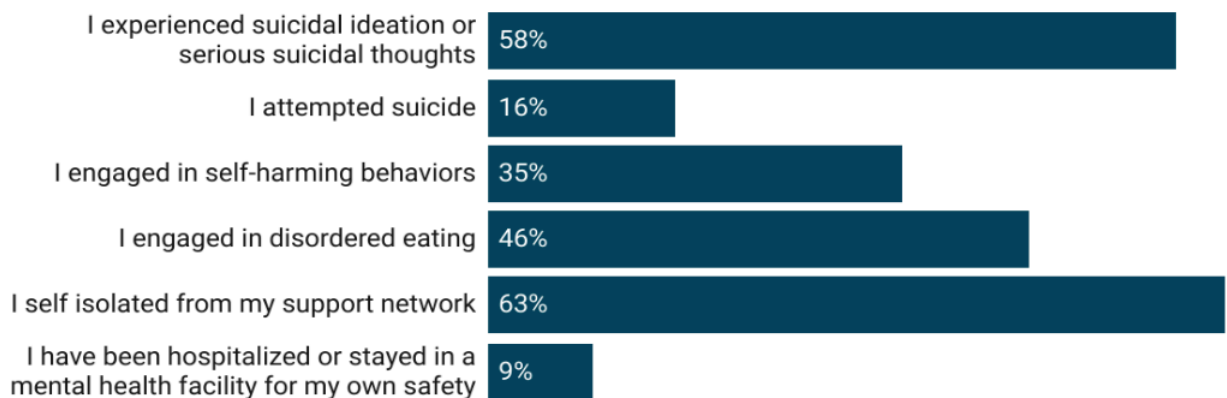
HB1840/SB1556, passed in 2016, allows counselors and therapists to refuse to serve any client whose goals, outcomes, or behaviors conflict with their “sincerely held principles or religious beliefs.”¹⁰ This law, also known as Tennessee’s Counseling Discrimination Law, has been widely criticized as further isolating already at-risk LGBTQ individuals from support and care. A 2020 study analyzing the impact of the Counseling Discrimination Law found widespread awareness of the law among LGBTQ Tennesseans and deep skepticism toward mental health care.¹¹ This sentiment was reflected in the survey responses.

“It is already very difficult to find mental and physical healthcare providers who are LGBTQ+ friendly or even neutral. Adding state sanctioned discrimination will make it ten times more difficult, especially for trans[gender] folks.”

According to a respondent from Murfreesboro: ***“It is already very difficult to find mental and physical healthcare providers who are LGBTQ+ friendly or even neutral. Most of the time I can ‘pass’ and I am cis[gender] so it’s easier for me with physical health as long as I don’t self-disclose, but mental health is very difficult and that is where my chronic illness lies. Adding state sanctioned discrimination will make it ten times more difficult, especially for trans[gender] folks.”***

To support LGBTQ Tennesseans who are experiencing alarming rates of psychological distress, Tennessee lawmakers should eliminate laws such as HB1840/SB1556 that permit discrimination. Instead of supporting legislation that is aimed at further marginalizing LGBTQ people, focus should be placed on educating healthcare providers about the needs of LGBTQ patients and ensuring that LGBTQ Tennesseans have access to the highest standard of mental health care.

Fig. 18: Mental Health Experiences Among TN Respondents



10. HB 1840, 2016, Reg. Sess. (Tenn. 2016). <https://wapp.capitol.tn.gov/apps/Billinfo/default.aspx?BillNumber=HB1840&ga=109>

11. Grzanka, P. R., Spengler, E. S., Miles, J. R., Frantell, K. A., & DeVore, E. N. (2020). Sincerely held principles” or prejudice? The Tennessee Counseling Discrimination Law. *The Counseling Psychologist*, 48(2), 223-248.

TN's Anti-LGBTQ Youth Laws

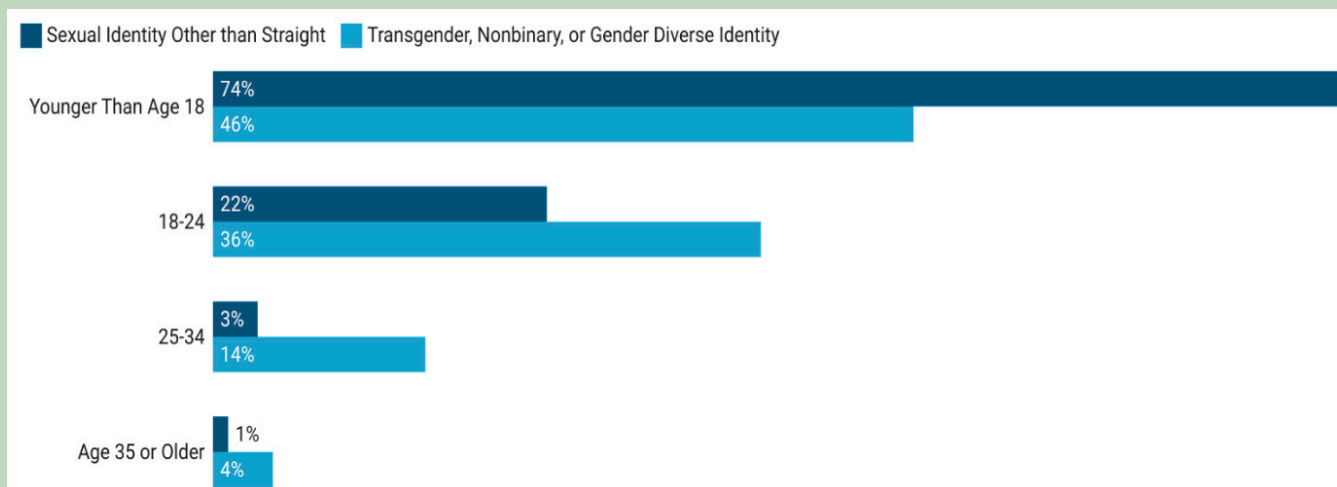
According to the Williams Institute at UCLA School of Law, there are an estimated 41,000 LGBTQ youth in Tennessee. It is important that Tennesseans create welcoming and affirming homes, communities, schools, and faith institutions for LGBTQ youth so that they may grow to be healthy and happy adults. Unfortunately, this is currently not the case in Tennessee. Unlike many other states, Tennessee does not have laws protecting LGBTQ youth from discrimination at school, in their extracurricular activities, or when seeking healthcare. Rather, Tennessee has passed multiple laws in recent years that explicitly enforce discrimination against LGBTQ youth in education, sports, recreation, and physical and mental healthcare; and many more have been introduced or are engrossed in litigation.

Tennessee's anti-LGBTQ education laws restrict the use of curricular materials mentioning LGBTQ identity. Other laws prohibit trans and nonbinary students from participating in sports or using the restrooms and locker rooms that align with their gender identity. LGBTQ youth

in Tennessee are not protected from conversion therapy, the harmful and debunked practice of attempting to change a person's sexual orientation or gender identity. Conversion therapy is currently being utilized in Tennessee and has been shown to result in negative mental health outcomes for LGBTQ people, especially LGBTQ youth.

Survey participants were asked a variety of questions about their experiences coming of age as LGBTQ Southerners. The responses reveal a pattern of rejection and alienation from families, communities, faith institutions, and schools. Many people are aware of their sexual orientation and gender identity at a young age and are experiencing this rejection and alienation at pivotal developmental moments in their lives. Nearly three-quarters (74%) of survey respondents reported that they first identified as a sexual identity other than straight or heterosexual when they were younger than 18. Nearly half (46%) reported that they first identified as transgender, nonbinary, or gender diverse when they were younger than 18.

Fig. 19: Age of First Identification with LGBTQ Identities



Experiences of LGBTQ Tennesseans in School

When asked about their experiences in school, the responses of LGBTQ Tennesseans were overwhelmingly negative. Nearly three-quarters of survey respondents (73%) reported that they were bullied at school or online because of their actual or perceived sexual orientation; and 40% of respondents reported being bullied due to their actual or perceived gender.

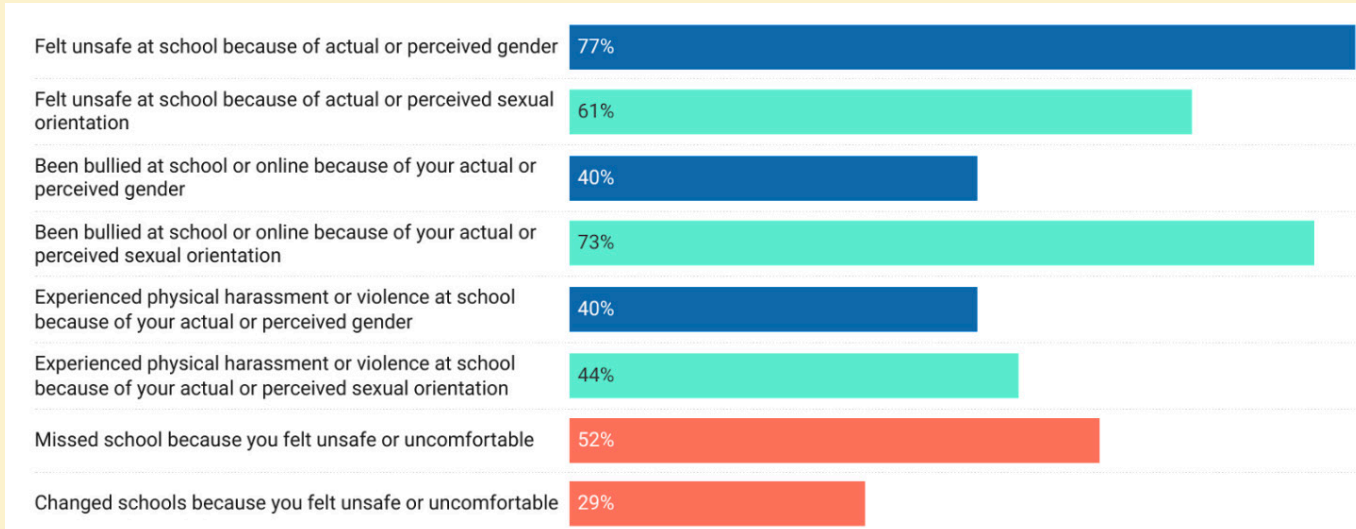
This bullying often took the form of physical harassment or violence. Approximately 44% of respondents reported experiencing bullying in the form of physical harassment or violence because of their sexual orientation, and 40% because of their gender identity.

Anti-LGBTQ bullying created a hostile environment, causing most respondents to feel unsafe at school as LGBTQ students. More than three-quarters of survey respondents reported feeling unsafe due to their sexual orientation (77%) and more than half reported

feeling unsafe due to their gender identity (61%). Anti-LGBTQ bullying resulted in these LGBTQ respondents missing days of school, with some leaving school altogether. 52% of survey respondents reported that they missed school because they felt unsafe or uncomfortable, and 29% reported changing schools.

The findings related to the impact of anti-LGBTQ school bullying is supported by other research. A 2015 study on the effect of homophobic bullying on Shelby County high school students linked such bullying to depression, poor grades, and low self-esteem.¹² Another, more recent study of LGBTQ students in Tennessee found that “bullying of LGBTQ+ students is an issue and that schools do not adequately address or try to prevent.”¹³ The study further suggested that supportive friends and student organizations where students feel accepted were helpful to LGBTQ students.

Fig. 20: Experiences in School Related to Sexual Orientation and/or Gender Identity



12. Chatman, S. W. (2015). The effects of bullying on the lives of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgendered students who attended high school in Shelby County, Tennessee. Arkansas State University.

13. Prairie, T. M. (2018). Collective Memories of LGBTQ+ Youth in Tennessee High Schools. Middle Tennessee State University.

Experiences of LGBTQ Tennesseans in School

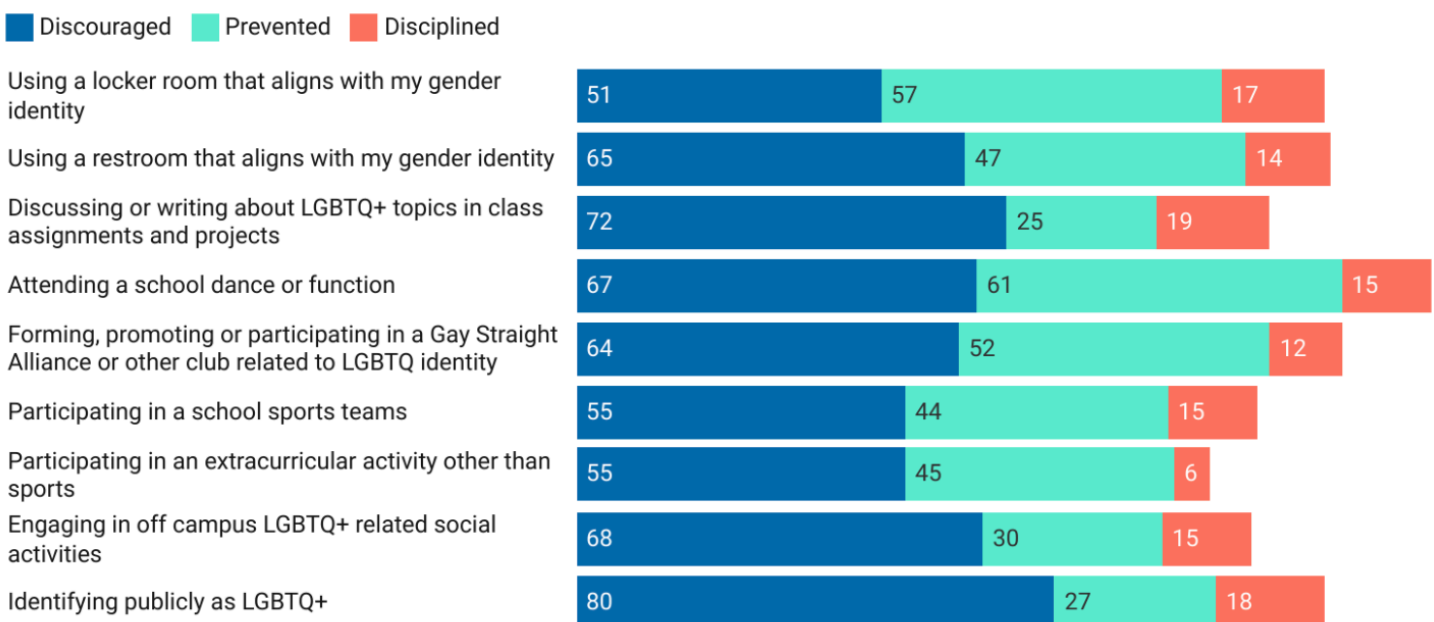
Additionally, LGBTQ Tennesseans reported being discouraged from, prevented from, and even disciplined for participating in activities like school clubs and sports.

Respondents reported high rates of being discouraged or prevented from attending school dances or functions (Discouraged 67%; Prevented 61%), participating in sports teams (Discouraged 55%; Prevented 45%), using a locker room that aligns with their gender identity (Discouraged 51%; Prevented 57%), and participating in extracurricular activities (Discouraged 55%; Prevented 45%). A sizable portion of respondents even reported being disciplined for engaging in these activities.

LGBTQ Tennesseans report being discouraged the most from activities that acknowledge or celebrate their LGBTQ identity. Among the LGBTQ Tennesseans who completed the survey, 80% reported being discouraged from publicly identifying as LGBTQ; 72% reported being discouraged from discussing or writing about LGBTQ topics in assignments and projects; and 68% reported being discouraged from engaging in off campus activities related to the LGBTQ community.

“Anti-LGBTQ bullying created a hostile environment, causing most respondents to feel unsafe at school as LGBTQ students. More than three-quarters of survey respondents reported feeling unsafe due to their sexual orientation (77%) and more than half reported feeling unsafe due to their gender identity (61%).”

Fig. 21: LGBTQ Tennesseans Discouraged, Prevented, or Disciplined at School



Experiences of LGBTQ Tennesseans in School



Photo by The Gender Spectrum Collection

Many LGBTQ students form or join school clubs centered on celebrating LGBTQ identity or supporting LGBTQ students, such as Gender and Sexuality Alliances (GSAs). These clubs create a safe space for LGBTQ students to connect with their peers. Among LGBTQ Tennesseans who participated in the survey, 64% were discouraged from forming, promoting, or participating in a Gender and Sexuality Alliance, 52% of respondents were prevented from doing so, and 12% were disciplined as a result.

It may be tempting to assume that LGBTQ students in Tennessee are experiencing bullying, harassment, and rejection from other students only. Yet, when asked to rate

their teachers, school administrators, and school staff related to their level of support for LGBTQ students (10=Not at All Supportive; 1=Incredibly Supportive), 67% of respondents rated their teachers, school administrators, and other school staff as “not at all supportive” to LGBTQ students. Only one survey respondent considered faculty and staff at their school to be “incredibly supportive” of LGBTQ students. This data suggests that in addition to being bullied by other students, rejected from school sports and extracurricular activities, LGBTQ students do not see the adults in their schools, including their teachers, as resources they could call on to help them with these difficult experiences.

Fig. 22: Support for LGBTQ Students from School Teachers, Administrators, and Staff



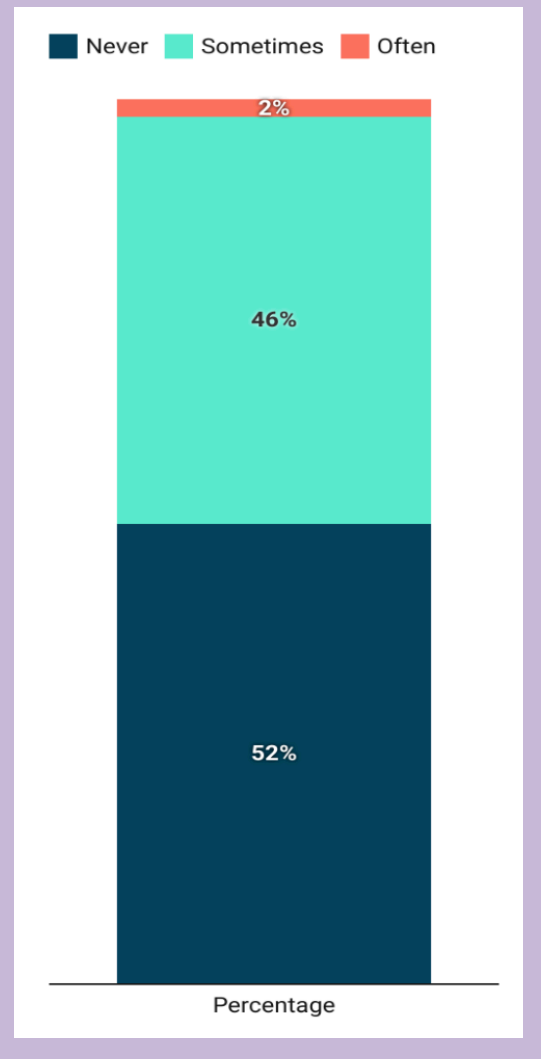
LGBTQ Representation in Education

In addition to being unsupported by their peers, teachers, and school administrators, LGBTQ students rarely see positive representation of LGBTQ experiences in their courses. Such positive representations might include a story about a child with same-sex parents, or a biography about a prominent historical figure from the LGBTQ community. In 2021, Tennessee Governor Bill Lee signed HB0529 / SB1229 into law, requiring school districts throughout the state to notify parents before including sexual orientation or gender identity in curriculum of any kind, including history, literature, and sex education.¹⁴

In addition to notifying parents prior to the introduction of any LGBTQ curricula, schools are also required to provide curricular materials and allow parents to restrict their children from learning the material. According to the law, parents should be able to remove their child from any lessons on these topics, and the school cannot penalize the student for missing class.¹⁵ Not only does this law prevent LGBTQ students with unaccepting parents from learning more about themselves, but it also prevents all students from learning about a group of people they may not know very much about. If students were educated about LGBTQ topics like sexual orientation and gender identity, they may better understand their LGBTQ peers and become more accepting.

More than half of the respondents from Tennessee (52%) reported that LGBTQ topics were never included in their school curriculum. Of the respondents who did learn about LGBTQ topics in school, less than half (37%) said that LGBTQ topics were portrayed positively. While most respondents did not see any representation of LGBTQ topics in their education, those who did learn about LGBTQ topics may have received negative impressions of LGBTQ identities, experiences, and communities.

Fig.23: Curricular Inclusion of LGBTQ Topics



14. Ronan, W. (2021, May 19). Governor Lee Signs Anti-Trans Healthcare Bill Into Law. Human Rights Campaign.

15. HB 0529, 2021, Reg. Sess. (Tenn. 2021). <https://wapp.capitol.tn.gov/apps/Billinfo/default.aspx?BillNumber=HB0529&ga=112>

LGBTQ Representation in Education

Nearly three-quarters of Tennessee respondents (72%) reported that during their time in school, they were discouraged from discussing or writing about LGBTQ topics in class assignments and projects. Some respondents even reported being prevented from or disciplined for discussing or writing about LGBTQ topics. Rather than being encouraged to explore and celebrate who they are, LGBTQ students in Tennessee schools are left with unanswered questions about their identities and community. Negative representations of LGBTQ identity may even cause LGBTQ students to feel ashamed of who they are. Recent legislation restricting free speech and increasing censorship in Tennessee classrooms is expected to worsen these experiences among LGBTQ students.

In the past two years, the Tennessee State Legislature has passed multiple laws restricting what educational materials teachers can use, including books and internet resources, and what topics can be discussed in the classroom. Given the already hostile environment for LGBTQ students and the restriction of LGBTQ topics in Tennessee schools, it is expected that these laws will be used to further censor discussion of LGBTQ topics.

SB2407/HB2154, known as the “Age-Appropriate Materials Act of 2022”, is one of the most restrictive of these laws. The law forces schools to develop a process for cataloging all the books in each classroom library and removing books that the state deems inappropriate.¹⁶ Some such topics could include discussion of LGBTQ identity, race, sexual health, and feminist issues. The law has created an enormous bureaucratic

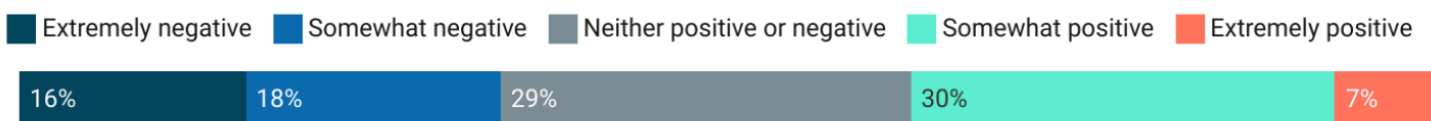
“In the past two years, the Tennessee State Legislature has passed multiple laws restricting what educational materials teachers can use, including books and internet resources, and what topics can be discussed in the classroom.”

barrier for Tennessee teachers, who now must spend valuable time cataloging hundreds of books.¹⁷

Beyond the bureaucracy, the law will likely lead to the few books discussing LGBTQ topics in Tennessee classrooms to be removed from the shelves. A similar bill requires schools to filter, block, or prevent certain internet searches e. The law states that parents, legal guardians, or students can report what they deem to be inappropriate internet searches to the school, which should then be reported to the state.¹⁸

While this law may protect students from inappropriate online content, it also has the potential to block content related to LGBTQ and other important issues. LGBTQ youth often turn to the internet for information when adequate sex education, including information about sexual orientation and gender identity, is not available to them. Without adequate education on these topics, LGBTQ youth are at higher risk for sexually transmitted infections, unplanned pregnancy, and mental health issues.

Fig. 24: Valence of LGBTQ Topics in Curriculum



16. HB 2154, 2022, 2022 Reg. Sess. (Tenn. 2022). <https://wapp.capitol.tn.gov/apps/BillInfo/default.aspx?BillNumber=HB2154&GA=112%20>

17. Aldrich, M. W. (2022, September 1). Tennessee School Library Law's expanded scope puts new burden on teachers. Chalkbeat Tennessee. Retrieved November 30, 2022, from <https://tn.chalkbeat.org/2022/9/1/23331530/school-library-law-stresses-teachers-classroom-books>

18. HB 2454, 2022, 2022 Reg. Sess. (Tenn 2022) <https://wapp.capitol.tn.gov/apps/Billinfo/default.aspx?BillNumber=HB2454&ga=112>

Access to Sports, Locker Rooms & Restrooms

While all LGBTQ students face discrimination at school, the state has implemented laws directly discriminating against transgender, nonbinary, and other gender diverse students. These laws force schools to limit their access to school sports, locker rooms, and bathrooms. This section details the laws that have been passed, as well as their effect on gender diverse students. It should also be noted that these laws may conflict with federal law, specifically Title IX and Executive Order 13672, which prohibit discrimination based on gender identity. As a result, laws discriminating against transgender students could ultimately lead to legal battles with the federal government.

SPORTS

Engaging in community and school sports can have significant and lasting physical, mental, and social benefits for students, such as higher self-esteem and better academic achievement. Of the LGBTQ Tennesseans who responded to the survey, nearly half (43%) reported playing school sports at some point during their education. And, when asked to rate the importance of playing school sports to them on a scale from not at all important to extremely important, more than half of the respondents (55%) said that participating in school sports was at least slightly important to them growing up. While these rates may seem to be low compared to the general population, this is unsurprising, as most respondents reported being discouraged from participating in sports due to their actual or perceived sexual orientation or gender identity.

Some respondents reported being prevented from or disciplined for participating in school sports. This discrimination led some respondents to avoid sports teams during their time in school, as they felt unsafe or uncomfortable participating.

Discrimination against gender diverse students in school sports is worsened by new state policies banning students from participating in school sports teams that do not align with the gender they were assigned at birth.

Fig. 25: Involvement in School Sports

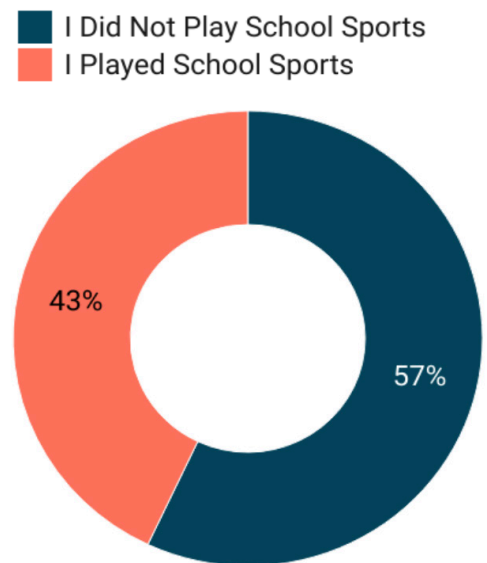
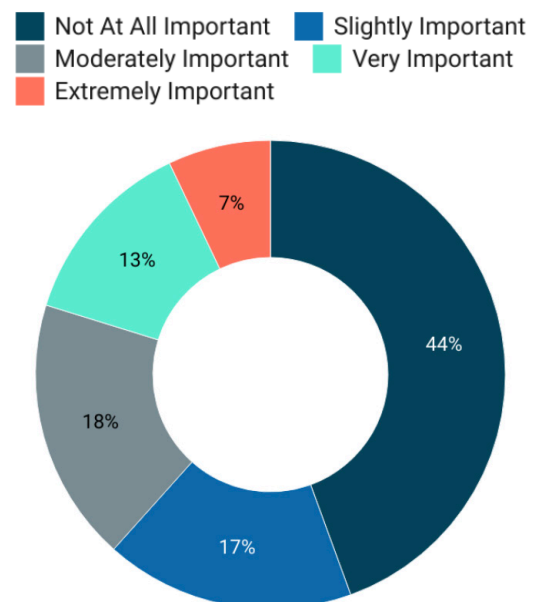


Fig. 26: Importance of School Sports



Access to Sports, Locker Rooms & Restrooms

This means that a transgender boy, for example, could not play on the boy's golf team, because when he was born, he was assigned "female" on his birth certificate. Tennessee has multiple laws enforcing this discriminatory practice in middle schools, high schools, colleges, and universities.¹⁹ Further, the state can legally withhold funding from any public school that allows a gender diverse student to join a sports team that does not align with the gender they were assigned at birth. For example, if a transgender boy was allowed to join the boy's golf team at his high school, the state could withhold funding from his school until he was forced to quit the team.

When asked what they would say to Tennessee legislators who deny gender diverse students the opportunity to participate in school sports, respondents showed overwhelming concern for the impact that these laws have on the lives of gender diverse students.

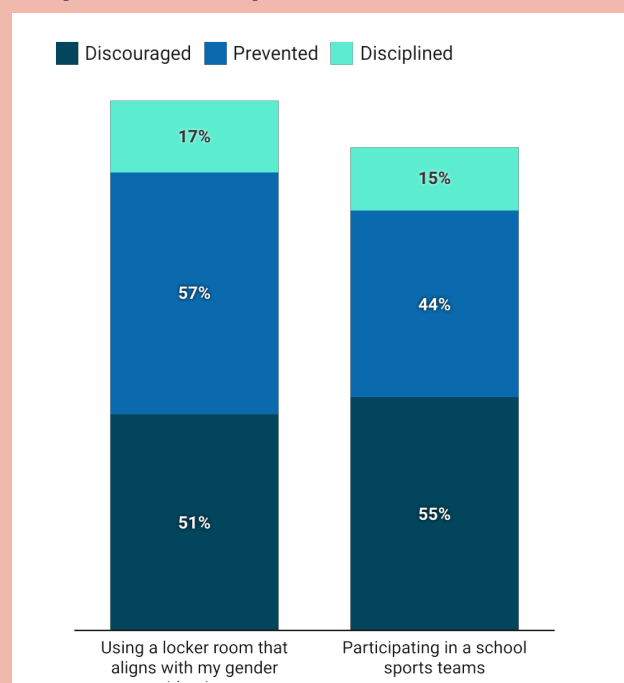
In the words of a respondent from Chattanooga: *"Sports are supposed to teach us the value of working hard and being part of a team where you collaborate to solve problems. Sports are important because they keep students fit and teach them valuable life skills. Denying any student this opportunity for growth and meaning because of who they are is wrong."*

Representing a common sentiment among respondents, a participant from Knoxville noted that they would encourage their legislators to *"focus on funding schools (as they have systematically failed to do) rather than worrying about the gender identity of students playing school sports."*

Other respondents addressed concerns among legislators and the public about the assumed advantages that transgender students, especially transgender girls assigned male at birth, have in sports. Participants corrected these false assumptions and encouraged legislators to become better educated on the topic. These assumed advantages

do not have basis in science. According to a recent interview with Dr. Eric Vilain, a pediatrician and geneticist who studies sex differences in athletes, "there are no good faith reasons to limit transgender women's participation in sports, especially at the high school level."²⁰ The discrimination against gender diverse student athletes is baseless and wrong, creating an even more isolated and difficult school experience for gender diverse youth who could otherwise benefit from sports.

Fig. 27: Discouraged, Prevented, Punished for School Locker Room Usage & Sports Participation



19. HB 2316, 2022, 2022 Reg. Sess. (Tenn. 2022). <https://wapp.capitol.tn.gov/apps/BillInfo/Default.aspx?BillNumber=HB2316&GA=112>
20. Ermyas, T., & Wakeam, K. (2021, March 18). Wave of bills to block trans athletes has no basis in science, researcher says. NPR. Retrieved November 30, 2022, from <https://www.npr.org/2021/03/18/978716732/wave-of-new-bills-say-trans-athletes-have-an-unfair-edge-what-does-the-science-s>

RESTROOMS & LOCKER ROOMS

In 2021, the Tennessee State Legislature passed a law allowing any student, parent, or employee to sue a public school if they feel uncomfortable using the same restroom or locker room as a transgender person. These laws intimidate schools into creating policies that prohibit gender diverse students from using the restrooms and locker rooms that align with their gender identity.

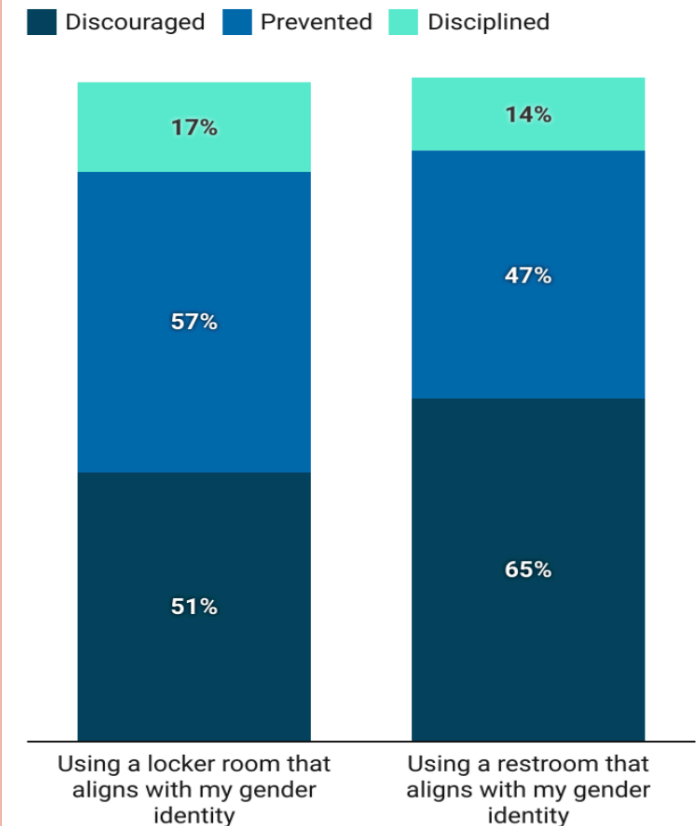
Of the LGBTQ Tennesseans who responded to this survey, the majority were discouraged from using restrooms (65%) and locker rooms (51%) that align with their gender identity during their time in school. Many students reported being prevented from using restrooms (47%) and locker rooms (57%), and some were even disciplined for using the restrooms (14%) or locker room (17%).

Unsurprisingly, high numbers of respondents also reported avoiding locker rooms and restrooms during their time in school because they felt unsafe or uncomfortable. More than half (61%) of respondents reported avoiding locker rooms, and nearly half (47%) reported avoiding restrooms.

Without access to restrooms and locker rooms, gender diverse students often develop physical conditions like urinary tract infections and digestive issues, as well as mental health issues like depression, anxiety, and suicidality.²¹

21 Compton, J. (2017, February 25). Without federal protections, trans students face potential health crisis. NBCNews.com. Retrieved November 30, 2022, from <https://www.nbcnews.com/feature/nbc-out/without-federal-protections-trans-students-face-potential-health-crisis-n725156>

Fig. 28: Regulation of Locker Room & Restroom Use



Access to Sports, Locker Rooms & Restrooms

Proponents of laws restricting gender diverse student's use of restrooms and locker rooms often argue that such laws will prevent harassment and sexual assault of cisgender students by transgender students in these spaces. This argument is based on false and stigmatizing stereotypes about transgender and gender diverse people. Data shows that states with policies that allow transgender people to use the restrooms that align with their gender identity do not see increases in the rate of sexual assault in restrooms.²²

Yet, transgender and gender diverse youth are at very high risk of sexual assault and harassment in restrooms and locker rooms, at the hands of their cisgender peers. In 2021, shortly after the passage of Tennessee's discriminatory bathroom bill, a transgender boy attending school in Rutherford County, Tennessee was bullied and called transphobic slurs by a group of boys while using the boys' restroom. The boys also attempted to break into the stall he was using. The transgender student used the multi-stall restroom, only because the single-stall faculty restroom he had special permission to use was occupied. The school's response to this incident of bullying was lenient, and the bullies were not immediately penalized. When school officials were questioned about their response to the incident, they cited the new law that allows a school to be sued if a student feels uncomfortable using the same restroom as a transgender student. Their response caused the transgender student's parents to feel that the new law was getting in the way of the school's responsibility to prohibit bullying.²³ This is a clear example of how Tennessee's laws restricting gender diverse students' use of restrooms and locker rooms ultimately harms gender diverse students.



Fig. 29: Avoidance of Locker Room & Restroom



22. Borrello, S. (2016, April 22). Sexual Assault and Domestic Violence Organizations Debunk 'Bathroom Predator Myth'. ABC News. Retrieved November 30, 2022, from <https://abcnews.go.com/US/sexual-assault-domestic-violence-organizations-debunk-bathroom-predator/story?id=38604019>

23. McDonald, H. (2021, August 26). Transgender student bullied in bathroom may be punished before boys who harassed him. News Channel 5 Nashville (WTVF). Retrieved November 30, 2022, from <https://www.newschannel5.com/news/transgender-student-bullied-in-bathroom-may-be-punished-before-boys-who-harassed-him>

Efforts to Change Gender & Sexual Orientation

The sexualities and gender identities of LGBTQ people are sometimes seen as deviant and abnormal; and, as such, are seen as experiences that need external intervention to suppress, correct, and control them. These conversion efforts take many forms including social pressures, psychological counseling, or pharmacological intervention, and may be carried out by friends and family members, healthcare providers, or spiritual and religious leaders.²⁴ Twenty states across the U.S. and Washington D.C. have passed laws protecting LGBTQ youth from formal conversion therapy as a psychotherapeutic practice. Additionally, all major medical associations have rejected the use of conversion therapy, citing the extensive harms of the practice for LGBTQ people.²⁵ Yet, conversion efforts, including formal conversion therapies, are still legal and ongoing in Tennessee. Furthermore, informal conversion efforts such as pressure, sanctioning, and bullying from friends, family members, and other authority figures are a common practice in the lives of LGBTQ people.

Those who engage in conversion efforts often claim they are doing so to help or support people who they view as having “unwanted same-sex attraction” or “gender-related confusion.” However, research has found that these practices are socially, psychologically, and spiritually harmful for LGBTQ people, especially LGBTQ young people, who experience heightened suicidal ideation and suicide attempt rates because of these conversion efforts.²⁶

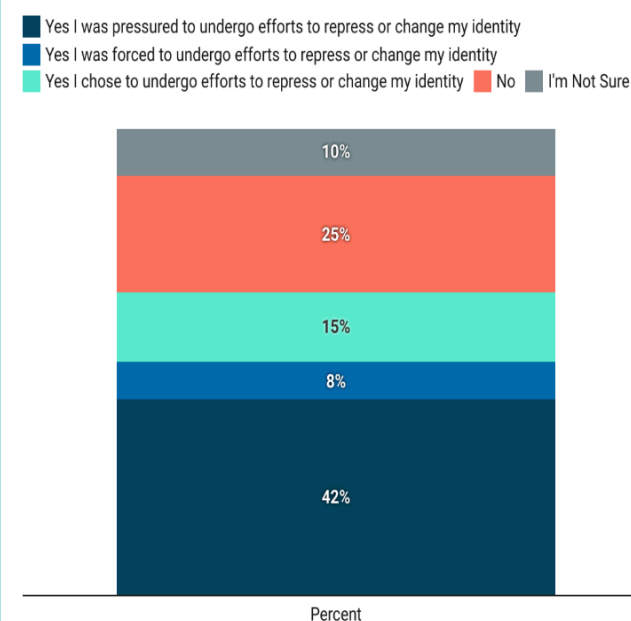
Participants in the Southern LGBTQ Experiences Survey were asked about their experiences with sexual orientation or gender identity conversion efforts. Among the respondents from Tennessee, 42% said that they were pressured to undergo efforts to repress or change their sexual orientation or gender identity.

24. HB 1233, 2021, 2021 Reg. Sess. (Tenn. 2021) <https://wapp.capitol.tn.gov/apps/BillInfo/default.aspx?BillNumber=HB1233&ga=112>

25. Conversion therapy. GLAAD. (2018, November 8). Retrieved November 30, 2022, from <https://www.glaad.org/conversiontherapy>, Policy and position statements on Conversion Therapy. Human Rights Campaign. (n.d.). Retrieved November 30, 2022, from <https://www.hrc.org/resources/policy-and-position-statements-on-conversion-therapy>

26. LGB people who have undergone conversion therapy almost twice as likely to attempt suicide. The UCLA School of Law Williams Institute. (2020, June 15). Retrieved November 30, 2022, from <https://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/press/lgb-suicide-ct-press-release/>

Fig. 30: Efforts to Repress or Change LGBTQ Identity



Efforts to Change Sexual Orientation or Gender Identity

Just over three-quarters (76%) of respondents reported that they first experienced efforts to repress or change their sexual orientation or gender identity when they were younger than the age of 18, and 18% reported that they first experienced these efforts between the ages of 18 and 24, demonstrating the disproportionate effect of conversion efforts for LGBTQ youth and young adults.

When asked to rate conversion efforts on a scale from extremely harmful to extremely helpful, almost all respondents (93%) reported that they believe efforts to change someone's sexual orientation or gender identity are harmful. Less than 1% of respondents said they thought these efforts might be somewhat helpful.

When asked their opinion on the legality of efforts to change someone's sexual orientation or gender identity, nearly all respondents (94%) reported that they believe conversion efforts should be illegal for people under the age of 18. For many respondents, their opinion on the legality of conversion efforts for minors is based on their direct experience with the negative mental health impacts of efforts to change their identity.

Fig. 31: Age of First Experienced Efforts to Change

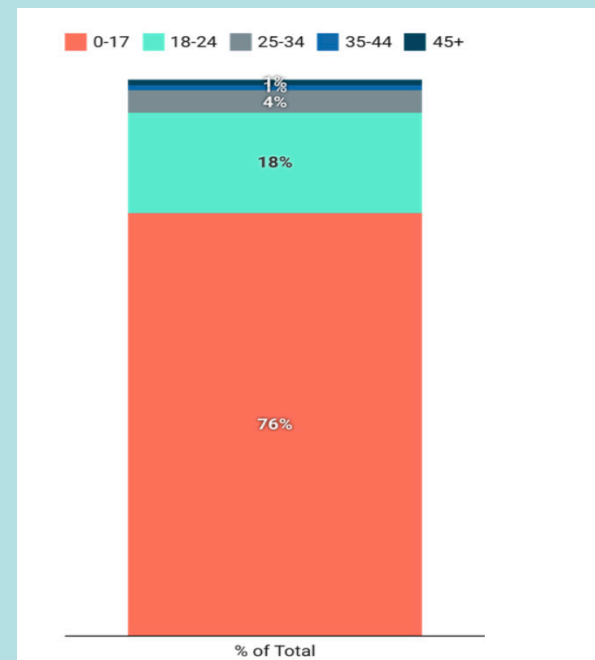


Fig. 32: Target of Change Efforts

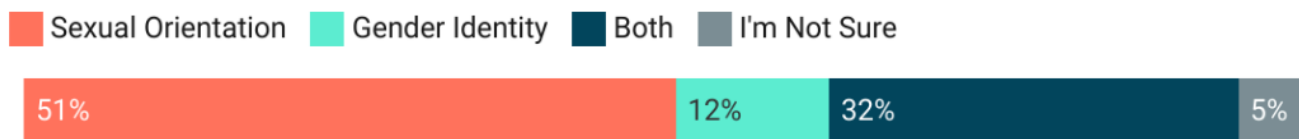


Fig. 33: Impact of Conversion Efforts



Fig. 34: Belief in the Legality of Change Efforts for Minors



Efforts to Change Sexual Orientation or Gender Identity

In the words of one respondent from Nashville: *“Any type of conversion therapy/pressure to change a person’s sexual/gender identity should be made illegal as it severely harms an individual’s mental health and often causes them to become suicidal. I am an example of that.”*

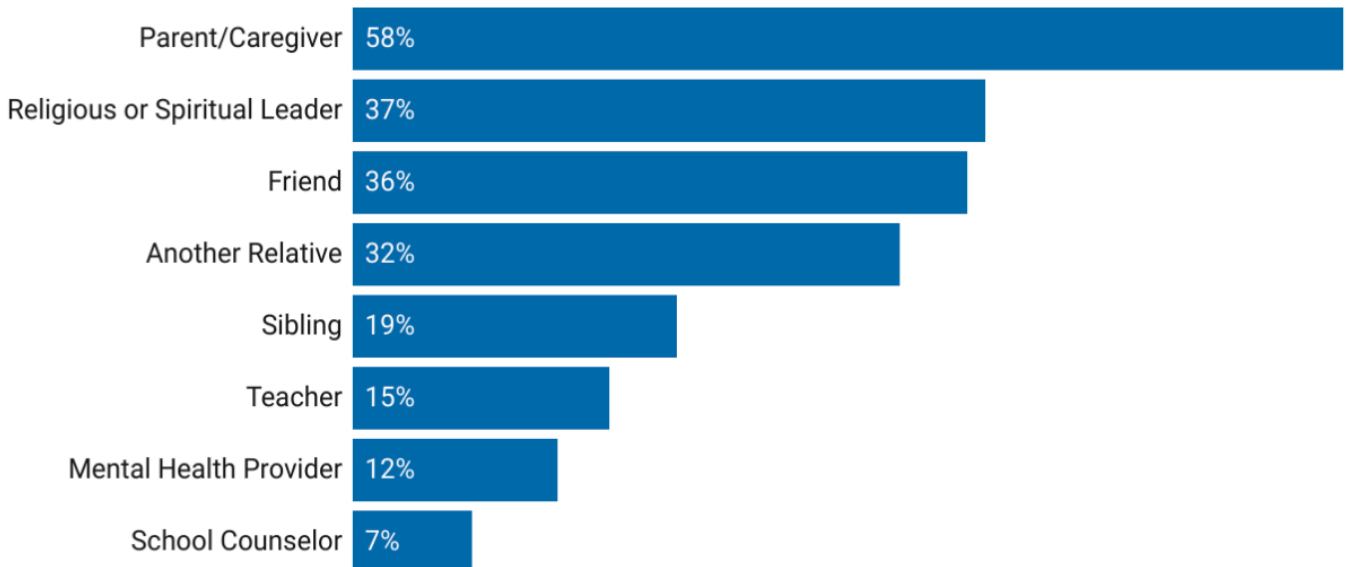
As these detailed responses indicate, conversion efforts are perpetuated by a wide range of individuals, including parents and other relatives, friends, and institutional authority figures. When asked from whom or in what contexts participants experienced conversion efforts, they reported a wide range of people in a variety of settings. The most common being from various family members and religious leaders.

A respondent from Knoxville went into detail about the abuse they endured by family attempting to repress their sexual orientation: *“I’m still dealing with self-loathing and long-term emotional issues brought on by the hatred of my family. My dad beat me when he found out. My mother did a lot of screaming*

and cursing and was incredibly mean about me being queer for about a decade. My entire family is still trying to “pray the gay away.” I’ve had friendships and relationships ruined by their behavior. I’m almost certain that played a role in my suicide attempt.”

Unfortunately, these negative experiences are common occurrences among LGBTQ people in Tennessee. The legality of conversion therapy and other efforts to change or repress a person’s sexual orientation or gender identity only reinforce this type of abuse at the hands of relatives and friends, by making it seem acceptable or even helpful to attempt to change someone’s sexual orientation or gender identity. These attempts are not only unhelpful and unacceptable, but detrimental to the health and well-being of LGBTQ people. Tennessee should protect LGBTQ youth, and all LGBTQ people, from the harms of conversion efforts by discouraging informal practices and making formal practices illegal.

Fig. 35: Origins of Conversion Efforts



Resources

LGBTQ Community & Advocacy in Tennessee

If you are an LGBTQ Tennessean, you are not alone!

LGBTQ Tennesseans are situated within a robust network of local and statewide LGBTQ community organizations and other organizations that are working on behalf of legal and lived equality throughout the state. Whether you are looking for social events, education, advocacy, or political activism, we have put together a list of resources to get you started, and are certain we missed some.

Pride Festivals

Tennessee Valley Pride	Chattanooga	chattanoogapride.com
Franklin Pride	Franklin	franklinpridetn.com
Jackson Pride	Jackson	jacksontnpride.com/
Tri-Pride	Johnson City	tripridetn.org/
Knox Pride	Knoxville	knoxpride.com/
Mid-South Pride	Memphis	midsouthpride.org/
Tri-State Black Pride	Memphis	tristateblackpride.com
Nashville Pride	Nashville	nashvillepride.org/
Nashville Black Pride	Nashville	nashvilleblackpride.org/

Youth Support

PFLAG	Statewide	pflag.org/find-a-chapter
GLSEN TN	Statewide	glsen.org/chapter/tennessee
True You TN	Statewide	trueyouthn.org/
Just Us at the Oasis Center	Nashville	oasiscenter.org/for-youth
Youth Pride Fest	Oak Ridge	youthpridefest.weebly.com/

Resources

LGBTQ Community & Advocacy in Tennessee

Community, Social, & Recreational

Nooga Diversity Center	Chattanooga	facebook.com/Noogadiversitycenter
Equality Jackson	Jackson	equalityjacksontn.org
Pride Community Center	Johnson City	pridetricities.com
Hard Knox Roller Girls	Knoxville	hardknoxrollergirls.com
Knox Boyz of East Tennessee	Knoxville	facebook.com/KnoxBoyz.of.East.Tennessee
Knox Girlz of East Tennessee	Knoxville	facebook.com/KnoxGirlz.of.East.Tennessee
Knoxville Gay Men's Chorus	Knoxville	knoxgmc.org
Knoxville Gay Men's Discussion Group	Knoxville	gaygroupknoxville.org/
K-Town Softball League	Knoxville	ktownsoftball.org
The Lesbian Social Group	Knoxville	Lesbiansocialgroup.com
Appalachian OUTreach	Maryville	appalachianoutreach.org/about-us
OUT Memphis	Memphis	outmemphis.org/
Inclusion Tennessee	Nashville	inclusiontn.org/
Nashville LGBT Chamber	Nashville	nashvillelgbtchamber.org/
The Tennessee Vals	Nashville	tvals.org
Lambda Car Club	Statewide	lccumberland.com

Healthcare Support

CHOICES	Memphis	yourchoices.org
Friends for Life	Memphis	fflmemphis.org
LGBTQ Health at Vanderbilt University	Nashville	vanderbilthealth.com/program/program-lgbtq-health
Music City PrEP Clinic	Nashville	musiccityprep.org
Nashville CARES Sexual Health Clinic	Nashville	nashvillecares.org/
Partnership to End AIDS Status	Memphis	partnershiptoendaidsstatus.com
Tennessee Suicide Prevention Network	Statewide	tspn.org
Planned Parenthood of Tennessee	Statewide	plannedparenthood.org

Resources

LGBTQ Community & Advocacy in Tennessee

Housing Support

Bryant's Bridge	Knoxville	bryantsbridge.org
Nashville Launch Pad	Nashville	nashvillelaunchpad.com/
My Sistah's House	Memphis	mshmemphis.org/

Political Organizations

Tennessee Justice Center	Nashville	tnjustice.org
ACLU of Tennessee	Statewide	aclu-tn.org
Tennessee Equality Project	Statewide	tnep.org/
TN Advocates for Planned Parenthood	Statewide	plannedparenthoodaction.org

Spiritual Resources

Rock Metropolitan Community Church	Chattanooga	facebook.com/TheRockMCC
Pagan Pride of East TN	East Tennessee	paganprideofeasttn.org
Gods Remnant Ministries	Knoxville	theremnantknoxville.org
Metropolitan Community Church	Knoxville	mccknoxville.org
St. Luke's Episcopal Church	Knoxville	facebook.com/stlukesknoxville
TN Valley Unitarian Universalist Church	Knoxville	tvuuc.org
Westside Unitarian Universalist Church	Knoxville	westsideuu.org
Oak Ridge Unitarian Universalist Church	Oak Ridge	orucc.org

2023 Tennessee Legislative Session

The 113th General Assembly convened on Tuesday, January 10, 2023.

ANTI-LGBTQ BILLS THAT HAVE ALREADY BEEN FILED FOR THE 2023 TN LEGISLATIVE SESSION

SENATE BILL 0001 / HOUSE BILL 0001 (SB1/HB1)

- **Description of SB1/HB1:** SB1/HB1 bans gender-affirming care in TN for minors under the age of 18. In this bill, gender-affirming care includes hormone replacement therapy, hormone blockers, and surgical intervention. The bill also targets healthcare providers who facilitate gender affirming care with legal action.
- **Prime Sponsors of SB1/HB1:** State Senator Jack Johnson (District 27), State Representative William Lamberth (District 44)

SENATE BILL 0003 / HOUSE BILL 0009 (SB3/HB9)

- **Description of SB3/HB9:** SB3/HB9 criminalizes public drag performances. The bill states that the first violation of this bill will be treated as a Class A misdemeanor, and a subsequent offense will be treated as a Class E Felony. The bill also explicitly prohibits local jurisdictions from passing protections against this bill.
- **Prime Sponsors of SB3/HB9:** State Senator Jack Johnson (District 27), State Representative Chris Todd (District 73)

SENATE BILL 0005 (SB5)

- **Description of SB5:** SB5 bans gender-affirming care for minors, adding religious exemptions to healthcare nondiscrimination laws and prohibiting government provided healthcare coverage from covering gender affirming care for adults.
- **Prime Sponsors of SB5:** State Senator Janice Bowling (District 16)



Tennesseans' Guide to Supporting LGBTQ People



Show up to Advancing Equality Day at the Capitol in Nashville on February 15, 2023.

Save the date and visit TNEP.org for more information.



Make sure you are a registered voter in Tennessee.

Register or check your registration status at proudvoter.org.



Call your Tennessee state lawmakers and urge them to protect LGBTQ Tennesseans by voting against legislative discrimination.

Find your local legislators and their contact information at www.capitol.tn.gov.



Write to your Tennessee state lawmakers, remind them that you are a voting member in their district, and voice your opposition to bills that limit LGBTQ rights.

Sign up to host a postcard party with people in your community by contacting Tennessee Equality Project at info@tnep.org.



Organize people in your community to speak out on behalf of LGBTQ rights.

Sign up to be a district captain through Tennessee Equality Project at info@tnep.org.



Get to know Tennessee's political landscape and stay up to date on all issues affecting LGBTQ Tennesseans.

Find Tennessee's Democracy MAP at the Movement Advancement Project at mapresearch.org/democracy_maps/state_profile/TN.



Stay up to date on anti-LGBTQ bills that are being filed in Tennessee.

Keep up to date with the Tennessee Equality Project.