

TRANSCENDING BARRIERS

ATLANTA, INC.

LIVING IN A STATE OF DESPAIR

A COMPREHENSIVE REPORT
PUBLICIZING THE CURRENT ISSUES IN
THE TRANSGENDER AND NON-BINARY
COMMUNITY IN METRO ATLANTA AND
THROUGHOUT THE STATE OF GEORGIA

Report By: TRANScending Barriers
Atlanta, Inc

TRANScending Barriers Atlanta, Inc

September 2018

www.transcendingbarriersatl.org



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/).

Cover Image: Fabian Washington, Iman Marc Live

TABLE OF

CONTENTS

3	EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
4	LOCAL LANDSCAPE
5	THE NUMBERS
6	KEY FINDINGS
8	RECOMMENDATIONS
12	CONCLUSION

Executive Summary:

This report is intended as a beginning to transcend the barriers that transgender and non-binary people face in the state of Georgia. It is based on the first comprehensive survey to include the experiences of the transgender and non-binary community from around Georgia. In this report, we use “non-binary” to include people who are gender non-conforming. This report lifts the voices of transgender and non-binary people across the state of Georgia so that we can empower, fight, and lead a movement for transgender rights.

These statistics represent one of the largest ever collections of information from transgender and non-binary people in Georgia. The information reported herein is collected from 250 transgender and non-binary people with 25 questions designed by, and from, the experiences of transgender and non-binary people living in Georgia. This report seeks to offer a platform for transgender and non-binary grassroots organizing and advocacy to strengthen efforts to remove the oppressive barriers, fight for transgender and non-binary rights, and empower a marginalized community.

We spent the summer of 2017 through March 2018 surveying participants. The participants in this survey come from many socio-economic and ethnic backgrounds. To get the most accurate assessment of our community, we conducted surveys in multiple locations. We recruited participants in the streets of Downtown and Midtown Atlanta where many transgender and non-binary people are homeless. We also conducted outreach through Backpage and Craigslist, where, at the time of our research, transgender and non-binary people would advertise sex work as a means of survival in the underground economy. In addition to this community outreach, we organized two focus groups where transgender and non-binary people provided information on all related topics from their own personal experience. Finally, we conducted surveys at Atlanta Pride and the Savannah LGBT Center.

The Local Landscape:

The data in this report does not exist in a vacuum. The challenges that transgender and non-binary people face in Georgia are a result of laws and policies that discriminate against our communities and/or fail to address our specific needs. For instance, the supportive housing community in Georgia has strict rules when housing people who are homeless - including requiring government-issued photo identification to receive services. The rules are even more strict when housing transgender people. Most homeless shelters and housing programs in Georgia house transgender people based on the sex listed on their government issued photo identification or deny transgender people services as a matter of practice.

There are currently no employment discrimination protection laws at the state level that protect transgender and non-binary people from employment discrimination like bias in: hiring; promotion; job assignment; or compensation or that prevent discriminatory termination, retaliation, or various types of harassment.

HIV in the transgender community in Georgia and The South is rampant. New HIV diagnoses in the transgender community is more than 3 times the national average, stated on the website for The Center for Disease Control and Prevention. In the Georgia State University study “Contextual, experiential, and behavioral risk factors associated with HIV status: a descriptive analysis of transgender women residing in Atlanta, Georgia,” more than 60% of transgender respondents reported being HIV positive.

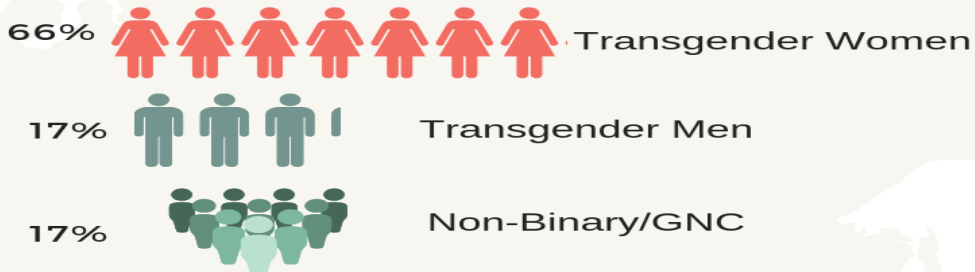
Living in the local landscape for a transgender and non-binary individual means to live in a state where the state’s laws allow for open discrimination; where there are little to no resources specific to our community; where employment discrimination is a constant legal practice; where our community has the highest rates of new HIV diagnoses. These are just a few out of the myriad of problems and atrocities that our community constantly endure in the state of Georgia.

The Numbers:



TRANSCENDING BARRIERS 2017 SURVEY REPORT

SURVEY PARTICIPANT DEMOGRAPHICS 250 PARTICIPANTS



AGE

15-70

AGE RANGE

26

MEDIAN AGE



LOCATIONS

70%

METRO ATLANTA

8%

SAVANNAH

6%

MACON

16%

COLUMBUS

TRANSCENDING BARRIERS ATLANTA, INC

Key Findings:

Homelessness & Housing

More than one third of the transgender and non-binary individuals we surveyed in Georgia were homeless at the time we surveyed them (and many remain homeless today). In addition, 68% of the transgender and non-binary respondents we surveyed reported having a history of homelessness. Yet, 65% of the transgender and non-binary people we surveyed reported not having knowledge of resources to assist them with housing needs.

Employment

48% of the transgender and non-binary people we surveyed were unemployed at the time we surveyed them (and many remain unemployed today). In addition, over 15% of the transgender and non-binary respondents reported not having a resume, and almost all transgender and non-binary respondents reported not having knowledge of places or organizations in Georgia that provide assistance with gaining employment and job readiness training.

HIV Prevention:

38% of the transgender and non-binary respondents we surveyed reported not being tested for HIV in the 6 months prior to taking the survey. In addition, 29% of the respondents reported not having knowledge of places in the state where they could get tested for HIV . When asked where they preferred to get tested, a majority of the respondents preferred a private office space for HIV testing.

Education:

14% of the transgender and non-binary respondents we surveyed reported not having a High School Diploma or General Equivalency Diploma. All respondents in our survey stated that they had no knowledge of places to get assistance with obtaining a diploma or enrolling in a GED program. Almost half of the participants reported that a high school diploma or its equivalent is their highest level of education. All the participants in our survey reported not having knowledge of places to assist them with enrolling in a higher education program.

Identification:

13% of the transgender and non-binary respondents surveyed reported not having any form of government-issued picture identification. In addition, 76% of our participants reported not having a legal name change. Of these, respondents reported not having knowledge of places to get assistance with a legal name change.

Incarceration:

59% of the transgender and non-binary respondents in our survey reported a history of incarceration. When asked if they received re-entry assistance after they were released, 95% of the respondents reported that they had not.

Violence & Discrimination:

95% of the respondents reported experiencing discrimination while being openly transgender and non-binary. 48% of the respondents reported a history of violence and harassment while being openly transgender and non-binary.

Recommendations:

As a trans led non-profit organization who consistently advocates for equality and equity in our community, we recommend the following based on our findings:

Addressing Homelessness:

Georgia Department of Community Affairs should work with TRANScending Barriers, Trans Housing Atlanta Program, and community leaders to address barriers to service and create solutions surrounding homeless in the transgender and non-binary community in Georgia. Furthermore, a creation of a community advisory board made up of transgender and non-binary people is recommended to address our findings.

City of Atlanta, Georgia Office of Human Services should work with TRANScending Barriers, Trans Housing Atlanta Program, and community leaders to address barriers to service and create solutions surrounding homelessness in the transgender and non-binary community. The City of Atlanta should increase and establish inclusion of transgender and non-binary individuals on all related boards. A model policy should be created on the treatment of transgender and non-binary people in all housing facilities in the City of Atlanta.

Partners for Home, Inc. should work with TRANScending Barriers, Trans Housing Atlanta Program, and community leaders to take action to lessen the issues surrounding homelessness in the transgender and non-binary community. Partners for Home, Inc. should increase and establish inclusion of transgender and non-binary individuals on all related boards. A model policy should be created on the treatment of transgender and non-binary people in all housing facilities partnered with Partners for Home, Inc.

The Atlanta Continuum of Care should work with TRANScending Barriers, Trans Housing Atlanta Program, and community leaders to address issues concerning transgender housing within their facilities and proactively eliminate discrimination against transgender and non-binary people within their facilities. The Atlanta Continuum of Care should increase and establish

inclusion of transgender and non-binary individuals on all related boards. A model policy should be created on the treatment of transgender and non-binary people in all housing facilities in the City of Atlanta.

Fulton County Homeless Continuum Of Care should work with TRANScending Barriers, Trans Housing Atlanta Program, and community leaders to address issues concerning transgender housing within their facilities and proactively eliminate discrimination against transgender and non-binary people within their facilities. Fulton County should increase and establish inclusion of transgender and non-binary individuals on all related boards. A model policy should be created on the treatment of transgender and non-binary people in all housing facilities in Fulton County.

DeKalb County Continuum of Care should work with TRANScending Barriers, Trans Housing Atlanta Program, and community leaders to address issues concerning transgender housing within their facilities and proactively eliminate discrimination against transgender and non-binary people within their facilities. Dekalb County Continuum of Care should increase and establish inclusion of transgender and non-binary individuals on all related boards. A model policy should be created on the treatment of transgender and non-binary people in all housing facilities in Dekalb County.

Marietta/Cobb Continuum of Care should work with TRANScending Barriers, Trans Housing Atlanta Program, and community leaders to address issues concerning transgender housing within their facilities and proactively eliminate discrimination against transgender and non-binary people within their facilities. Marietta/Cobb Continuum of Care should increase and establish inclusion of transgender and non-binary individuals on all related boards. A model policy should be created on the treatment of transgender and non-binary people in all housing facilities in Cobb County.

Addressing Unemployment:

Georgia Department of Labor should work with TRANScending Barriers and community leaders to address the systemic issue of unemployment in the transgender and non-binary community in Georgia and create programs for job readiness and placement specific to the needs of the transgender and non-binary community. The Georgia Department of Labor should include community programs that reach the transgender and non-binary community that people of our community are included in the decision making processes.

Georgia General Assembly should work with TRANScending Barriers to create, push, and pass legislation that protects transgender and non-binary people from discrimination in the workplace.

Addressing HIV Prevention:

Georgia Department of Public Health, Office of HIV/AIDS should work with TRANScending Barriers and community leaders to address the high rate of new HIV cases within the transgender community, specifically prevention measures and prevention outreach. Inclusion and establishment of transgender and non-binary people and people living with HIV should be reflected on all related boards and commissions.

Addressing Re-entry Issues:

The Georgia Department of Corrections should work with TRANScending Barriers to create and implement a re-entry program specific to the needs of transgender and non-binary incarcerated people to address the issues of recidivism and other related issues that our Georgia community faces. In addition, The Georgia Department of Corrections should receive sensitivity training and culture competency from TRANScending Barriers about their transgender and non-binary population. The Georgia Department of Corrections should include transgender and non-binary people on all program related boards and commissions. The Georgia Department of Corrections should create a model policy that addresses the unique needs specific to

transgender and non-binary people and ensure the implementation of said policy.

The Fulton County Sheriff Office, the DeKalb County Sheriff Office, the Cobb County Sheriff Office, the Gwinnett County Sheriff Office, the Clayton County Sheriff Office, the Chatham County Sheriff Office, the Bibb County Sheriff Office, and the Muscogee County Sheriff Office should work with TRANScending Barriers to create and develop a re-entry program specific to the needs of transgender and non-binary incarcerated people to address the issues of recidivism and other related issues that their local transgender and non-binary community faces. In addition, all of the listed Sheriff Offices should receive sensitivity training and culture competency from TRANScending Barriers about their transgender and non-binary population. All of the aforementioned Sheriff Offices should represent the inclusion of transgender and non-binary people on all program related boards and commissions. In addition, all of the listed entities should create a model policy that addresses the unique needs specific to transgender and non-binary people and ensure the implementation of said policy.

The Atlanta City Police Department should work with TRANScending Barriers to create and develop a re-entry program specific to the needs of transgender and non-binary incarcerated people to address the issues of recidivism and other related issues that the Atlanta transgender and non-binary community faces. The Atlanta City Police Department should receive sensitivity training and culture competency from TRANScending Barriers about their transgender and non-binary population. The Atlanta City Police Department should represent the inclusion of transgender and non-binary people on all program related boards and commissions. In addition, The Atlanta City Police Department should create a model policy that addresses the unique needs specific to transgender and non-binary people and ensure the implementation of said policy.

Conclusion:

While important, current focus on the legislature and media on the use of restrooms that coincides with one's gender identity is of little concern to transgender people in Georgia. There are more pressing and dire issues that need immediate action that impact our lives.

There are certain liberties that cisgender Georgians unknowingly enjoy that are essential to the socio-economic success of everyday life. Being able to seek meaningful employment, discrimination-free housing, re-entry, and culturally competent programs. However, our data shows that transgender and non-binary people are not receiving the services they need to successfully and safely navigate through society.

People under the transgender spectrum face extremely high rates of discrimination from housing authorities and homeless shelters. Housing transgender and non-binary people in facilities under their sex at birth is dangerous and ignores the legitimacy of their gender identity. In addition, based on our findings discrimination during the employment process and while employed is a large contributing factor to chronic homelessness for the transgender and non-binary communities.

Not being able to find work, keep work, or find a safe place to sleep lead many transgender people to a life in the underground economy; i.e. sex work. Because of these societal obstacles, transgender people are at an alarmingly high risk to contract HIV and/or become incarcerated, only to be released without re-entry support, back into the underground economy. This creates a cycle of recidivism, forcing many transgender people to spend years of their lives incarcerated for minor offenses, yet never receiving necessary support to end the cycle. People of the transgender experience are pushed and placed into the lowest strata of society without systems in places for success.

In addition, violence and harassment against the transgender community is high. Not having access to fair employment and safe housing, transgender people are put at high risk for violence and harassment. This is where teamwork between community leaders, TRANScending Barriers, and local and state entities come together to drive change for an underserved and marginalized community.

The various sheriff's offices in and around Georgia, the Georgia Department of Corrections, and The Atlanta Police Department could greatly benefit from training and programs in place to protect and understand the transgender and non-binary community. Various local and state departments should work with TRANScending Barriers, community leaders and other organizations to combat the issues of unemployment, pre-employment discrimination, housing and shelter discrimination, and HIV/AIDS prevention and in the community.

This, we believe, will create a state where transgender and non-binary people are not only surviving, but are thriving.

“It is revolutionary for any trans person to choose to be seen and visible in a world that tells us we should not exist” – Laverne Cox