

The Trans PULSE Canada project collected survey data from 2,873 trans and non-binary people in 2019. This report presents results from the first national all-ages data on health and well-being among racialized trans and non-binary people in Canada. Results highlighted elevated levels of discrimination, violence, and lack of trust in police among racialized respondents.

HEALTH AND WELL-BEING AMONG RACIALIZED TRANS AND NON-BINARY PEOPLE

Violence, discrimination, and mistrust in police



Highlights

Among racialized trans and non-binary respondents:

- 72% had experienced verbal harassment in the past 5 years
- 45% had ever been harassed at work or school
- 73% worried about being stopped or harassed by police or security because of who they are

Context

Transgender (trans) and non-binary people in Canada are a population that experiences discrimina-

tion^{1,2} and challenges in accessing health care.³ To date, there has been no all-ages data on the health and well-being of racialized trans and non-binary people in Canada. Both general population data in Canada, and trans-specific data from the United States has found that racialized populations were more likely to be living in low-income households,^{4,5} and to have experienced discrimination,^{4,6} among other inequalities. In 2009-2010, Ontario's Trans PULSE Project found that three quarters of racialized trans people had experienced racism or ethnicity-related discrimination, and one quarter had been harassed by police because of their race or ethnicity.⁷ This report expands on the Ontario data to pro-

vide a national snapshot of socio-demographics, health, access to health care, and experiences of discrimination among racialized trans and non-binary people.

Trans PULSE Canada

Over a 10-week period in 2019, the Trans PULSE Canada research team collected survey data from 2,873 trans and non-binary people age 14 years or older and living in Canada. Participants were able to complete the full survey, or a 10-minute short form containing key items, in English or French online, on paper, via telephone (with or without a language interpreter), or on a tablet with a Peer Research Associate in major cities. Data from respondents who completed the full survey has been weighted to more accurately represent those who completed the short-form. The Trans PULSE Canada survey included questions from the Ontario's Trans PULSE project, questions from Statistics Canada surveys to allow for comparisons to the general population, and questions developed by trans and non-binary people based on community priorities. This report especially highlights questions developed by the team's Racialized Priority Population Team.

How to Interpret

This report presents results comparing racialized and non-racialized survey respondents. The term "racialized" includes people and communities that experience racism, and racialization can be conceptualized as "the process by which societies construct races as real, different and unequal in ways that matter to economic, political and social life."⁸ Here, racialized respondents are those who indicated that they were "perceived or treated as a person of colour in Canada", or who identified as a person of colour. Those who answered no to both of these questions were considered non-racialized. 14% (n=403) of survey respondents were racialized.

Although Trans PULSE Canada used multiple approaches to make the survey accessible, it was not

possible to conduct a random sample of the trans and non-binary population. Therefore, results cannot be assumed to represent true population demographics. For instance, that 14% of participants were racialized, does not mean that exactly this proportion of all trans and non-binary people in Canada are racialized.

The final column of all comparative tables in this report contains a p-value. A p-value indicates whether there is a statistically significant difference between groups - here, the groups are racialized and non-racialized respondents. P-values that are less than 0.050 indicate that differences between groups are statistically significant, while p-values that are greater than or equal to 0.050 indicate that there is no statistically significant difference.

Socio-demographics

Table 1 shows that racialized respondents were generally distributed across Canada similarly to non-racialized respondents, with lower proportions of

Table 1: Distribution of racialized and non-racialized participants across provinces and territories

Current province/territory	Racialized	Non-racialized
	n=403 %	n=2,467 %
Alberta	17	19
British Columbia	17	19
Manitoba	3	3
New Brunswick	2	3
Newfoundland and Labrador	0	1
Nova Scotia	1	4
Ontario	48	33
Prince Edward Island	0	0.6
Quebec	8	14
Saskatchewan	3	3
Northwest Territories	0.2	0.1
Nunavut	0.2	0
Yukon	0.8	0.2

Table 2: Ethnoracial Group, Country of Origin, and First Language

Racialized	
n=403	
%	
Ethnoracial group ^a	
Black African	6
Black Canadian	5
Black Caribbean	7
East Asian	24
Indigenous	23
Indo-Caribbean	4
Jewish	3
Latin American	12
Middle Eastern	9
South Asian	12
South East Asian	10
White Canadian or White American	25
White European	21
Other	5
Country/region of origin ^b	
Canada	68
Latin America and the Caribbean	9
United States	4
Eastern Asia	4
Sub-Saharan Africa	3
South-eastern Asia	3
Western Asia	3
Southern Asia	2
Northern Europe	1
Western Europe	1
Northern Africa	0.8
Eastern Europe	0.5
Southern Europe	0.2
Oceania	0.2
Central Asia	0
First language	
English	66
Spanish	7
French	6
Cantonese	4
Mandarin	2
Arabic	2
Portuguese	1
Korean	1
Indigenous languages	1
Other	11

a Participants could select more than one option, so total will be more than 100%.

b Classifications based on the United Nations Geoscheme—Geographic Regions.⁹

racialized respondents living in the Atlantic provinces and Quebec, and a higher proportion living in Ontario. Table 2 describes self-identified ethnoracial group, as well as country or region of origin and first language among racialized trans and non-binary respondents. Respondents could select more than one ethnoracial group; approximately 1 in 4 racialized respondents selected East Asian, and 1 in 4 selected Indigenous, while about 1 in 10 selected Latin American, South Asian, South East Asian, and Middle Eastern, respectively. 15% of racialized respondents were Black, with most selecting Black Caribbean. 1 in 20 or fewer of racialized respondents selected Indo-Caribbean, Jewish, or another ethnoracial group, respectively. One quarter of racialized respondents also identified as white Canadian or white American. Most racialized respondents were born in Canada and spoke English as a first language, while 9% were born in Latin America or the Caribbean and 7% spoke Spanish as a first language.

Table 3 highlights an apparent under-representation of racialized trans women compared to non-racialized trans women (18% and 25%, respectively). Additionally, racialized respondents were more likely than non-racialized respondents to identify with an Indigenous or cultural gender. In terms of sexual orientation, a higher proportion of racialized respondents identified as queer and Two-Spirit. Racialized respondents were more likely to have immigrated to Canada than non-racialized respondents. A smaller proportion of racialized respondents lived in rural areas or small towns compared to non-racialized respondents (4% and 7%, respectively). 1 in 4 racialized respondents were disabled or living with a disability, and just over 1 in 4 were living with chronic pain. Both of these experiences were more common among racialized respondents. Despite high levels of education, half of both racialized and non-racialized respondents aged ≥25 had a personal

Table 3: Socio-demographics

	Non-racialized		P-value ^a
	n=403 %	n=2,467 %	
Age			0.276
14 - 19	15	12	
20 - 24	21	22	
25 - 34	38	37	
35 - 49	19	20	
50 - 64	6	8	
65 +	0.2	1	
Gender			<0.0001
Woman or girl	18	25	
Man or boy	23	26	
Indigenous or cultural gender	9	0.9	
Non-binary or similar	50	48	
Sexual orientation (check all that apply) ^b			
Asexual	16	13	0.112
Bisexual	24	29	0.039
Gay	13	13	0.627
Lesbian	11	16	0.016
Pansexual	27	32	0.076
Queer	61	50	<0.0001
Straight or heterosexual	9	7	0.237
Two-Spirit	14	2	<0.0001
Unsure or questioning	9	9	0.996
Relationship status ^c			0.038
In a relationship(s)	48	54	
Not in a relationship	52	46	
Indigenous in Canada			<0.0001
Indigenous in Canada	20	7	
Not Indigenous in Canada	80	93	
Immigration history			<0.0001
Newcomer (past 5 years)	8	3	
Immigrant (non-newcomer)	22	6	
Born in Canada	70	91	
Urban / rural ^d			0.047
Rural or small town	4	7	
Not rural or small	96	93	

Table 3: Socio-demographics, continued

	Non-racialized		P-value ^a
	n=403 %	n=2,467 %	
Disability identities (check all that apply) ^b			
Autistic	14	13	0.585
Blind	0.7	0.4	0.411
Crip	3	2	0.026
Deaf	1	0.9	0.581
Disabled or living with a disability	24	18	0.004
Chronic pain	26	20	0.010
Neurodivergent	31	30	0.825
Psychiatric survivor, mad, or person with mental illness	48	42	0.042
Other	8	6	0.238
Education (age ≥ 25) ^{c, e}			0.903
< High school	4	4	
High school diploma	7	8	
Some college or university	22	22	
College or university degree	47	48	
Grad/professional degree	20	18	
Employment situation (age ≥ 25) ^e			0.484
Permanent full-time	45	43	
Employed, not permanent full-time	32	35	
Not employed or on leave	18	16	
Not employed and student or retired	5	7	
Personal annual income (past year, age ≥ 25) ^e			0.070
None	3	1	
< \$15,000	24	24	
\$15,000 - \$29,000	26	24	
\$30,000 - \$49,000	19	22	
\$50,000 - \$79,000	21	17	
\$80,000 +	7	12	
Low-income household (past year, age ≥ 25) ^{c, e}			0.488
Low income household	42	40	
Non-low-income household	58	60	

- a Values <0.050 indicate that differences between groups are statistically significant.
- b Participants could select more than one option, so total will be more than 100%.
- c These variables were missing for 10% of respondents or more.
- d Rural and small town includes participants who reported a postal code or forward sortation area for a town or municipality with population <10,000.
- e Personal income, education, and employment are reported here for those age 25 and older; additional data on student status and other factors will be reported in our youth report.

income of less than \$30,000/year.

Health & Well-being

Table 4 shows that racialized and non-racialized respondents had similar access to health care, however, racialized respondents were more frequently unsure or not planning to seek gender-affirming medical care. In terms of health, racialized respondents rated their overall health more poorly than non-racialized respondents, while both groups reported fair or poor mental health at similar rates. Many trans people will avoid certain public spaces for fear of harassment or outing. While overall avoidance looked similar for racialized and non-racialized respondents, the racialized group was more likely to avoid religious institutions (38% among racialized respondents vs. 31% non-racialized).

Violence & Harassment

Table 4 reports on experiences of violence and harassment. Results showed that racialized trans and non-binary respondents experienced high levels of violence and harassment, even when compared to the already high levels among non-racialized respondents. In the past 5 years, 72% of racialized respondents had experienced verbal harassment, and 49% had experienced sexual harassment. In the same time frame, 41% of racialized respondents had been physically intimidated or threatened and 23% had experienced physical violence. 1 in 3 racialized

respondents had been sexually assaulted in the past 5 years. Physical violence, sexual harassment, and sexual assault were all significantly more common among racialized respondents when compared to non-racialized respondents.

Discrimination

Table 5 highlights experiences of discrimination. While some of the experiences may appear to overlap with those described in Table 4, respondents indicated that the following things happened because of who they are, or because they are trans or non-binary. On scales measuring anticipated, day-to-day (past-year), and major (lifetime) discrimination, racialized respondents had consistently higher scores. These scales asked about experiences of discrimination that happened “because of who you are”, and could be due to discrimination against many different parts of a respondent’s identity. These experiences include, for example, being unreasonably expelled or suspended from school, being harassed at work or school, or being physically assaulted. Unreasonable expulsion or suspension was twice as common among racialized respondents compared to non-racialized respondents (10% and 5%, respectively). 45% of racialized trans and non-binary respondents had ever been harassed at work or school. 39% had ever been physically assaulted because of who they were. When asked whether they had experienced physical or sexual assault because they were trans or non-binary, 24% of racialized respondents said yes, compared to 17% of non-racialized respondents.

Police, 911, & the Legal System

Table 6 demonstrates a profound mistrust in police and the legal system among racialized trans and non-binary people, as demonstrated by anticipated discrimination, avoidance, under-reporting of violence, and apparent under-recognition of transphobic hate crimes. 73% of racialized trans and non-binary re-

Table 4: Health & well-being

	Non-Racialized		P-value ^a
	n=403 %	n=2,467 %	
Has primary health care provider			0.166
Yes	78	81	
No	22	19	
Unmet health care need(s) (past year)^b			0.072
Unmet need(s)	49	44	
No unmet need	51	56	
Avoided emergency room (past year)^b			0.097
Yes	11	12	
No	63	68	
Never needed ER care	26	21	
Gender-affirming medical care status^b			0.001
Had all needed care	21	26	
In the process of completing	28	32	
Planning, but not begun	15	15	
Not planning	17	11	
Unsure if going to seek care	19	16	
Self-rated health			0.022
Excellent or very good	35	37	
Good	32	37	
Fair or poor	33	26	
Self-rated mental health^b			0.162
Excellent or very good	13	17	
Good	29	28	
Fair or poor	58	55	
Considered suicide (past year)^b			0.674
Yes	32	31	
No	68	69	
Attempted suicide (past year)^b			0.458
Yes	5	6	
No	95	94	
Experienced violence or harassment (past 5 years, check all that apply)^{b, c}			
Verbal harassment	72	68	0.148
Physical intimidation or	41	37	0.112
Physical violence	23	15	0.001
Sexual harassment	49	42	0.016
Sexual assault	32	25	0.005

Table 4: Health & well-being, continued

	Non-Racialized		P-value ^a
	n=403 %	n=2,467 %	
Avoided public spaces for fear of harassment or outing (past 5 years, check all that apply)^{b, d}			0.921
No avoidance	16	16	
1 or 2 types of spaces	20	20	
3 or more types of spaces	64	64	
Avoidance of specific spaces for fear of harassment or outing (past 5 years, check all that apply)^{b, d}			
Gyms or pools	60	63	0.377
Travelling internationally	40	39	0.656
Religious institutions	38	31	0.023
Travelling within Canada	15	12	0.275
Housing security^b			0.692
Secure	89	90	
Insecure ^e	11	10	
Household food security (past year)^b			0.501
Always had enough to eat	84	85	
Sometimes did not have enough	11	12	
Often did not have enough	5	3	

a Values <0.050 indicate that differences between groups are statistically significant.

b These variables were missing for 10% of respondents or more.

c Participants could select more than one option, so total will be more than 100%.

d Of 14 spaces given as options in survey (e.g., public washrooms, schools, being out on the land, public transit).

e Included living in shelters, motels or boarding houses, temporarily with partners/friends/family, on the street, in a car, or in an abandoned building.

Table 5: Discrimination

	Non-Racialized		
	n=403	n=2,467	
	Median, IQR ^a	Median, IQR ^a	P-value ^b
Anticipated discrimination^{c, d}			<0.0001
Median score, 0 to 4	2.78 (0.89)	2.44 (1.00)	
Day-to-day discrimination (past year)^{c, d}			0.010
Median score, 0 to 18	8.00 (8.00)	8.00 (8.00)	
Major discrimination (lifetime)^{c, d}			<0.0001
Median score, 0 to 25	5.00 (9.00)	4.00 (7.00)	
	%	%	
Unreasonably expelled or suspended from school (lifetime)^{c, d}			0.002
Yes	10	5	
No	90	95	
Harassment at work or school (lifetime)^{c, d}			0.020
Yes	45	37	
No	55	63	
Physical assault (lifetime)^{c, d}			0.004
Yes	39	30	
No	61	70	
Transphobic physical or sexual assault (past 5 years)^{d, e}			0.004
Yes	24	17	
No	76	83	

- a IQR indicates the interquartile range.
- b Values <0.050 indicate that differences between groups are statistically significant.
- c Experiences happened “because of who you are”, including how you describe yourself and how others might describe you. For example, skin colour, ancestry, nationality, religion, gender identity, sexuality, age, weight, disability or mental health issue, income, or source of income.
- d These variables were missing for 10% of respondents or more.
- e Experience happened “because you’re trans or non-binary”.

Table 6: Police, 911, & the legal system

	Non-Racialized		
	n=403	n=2,467	
	%	%	P-value ^a
Worries about being stopped or harassed by police or security^{b, c}			<0.0001
Agree	73	50	
Neutral	11	18	
Disagree	15	32	
Avoided calling 911 for police services (past 5 years)^c			<0.0001
Yes	33	21	
No	19	23	
Haven't needed police services	48	56	
Avoided calling 911 for emergency medical services (past 5 years)^c			0.006
Yes	24	16	
No	24	29	
Haven't needed emergency medical services	52	55	
Anticipated fair treatment from police & legal system if physically assaulted^c			<0.0001
Yes	19	34	
No	81	66	
Anticipated fair treatment from police & legal system if sexually assaulted^c			0.001
Yes	11	20	
No	89	80	
Reported transphobic physical or sexual assault to police (past 5 years)^{c, d}			0.679
All incidents	3	4	
Some incidents	13	11	
None	84	84	
Reported transphobic assault was treated as a hate crime (past 5 years)^{c, d}			1.000
Yes	6	5	
No	84	83	
Unsure	11	12	

a Values <0.050 indicate that differences between groups are statistically significant.

b Experience happened “because of who you are”, including how you describe yourself and how others might describe you. For example, skin colour, ancestry, nationality, religion, gender identity, sexuality, age, weight, disability or mental health issue, income, or source of income.

c These variables were missing for 10% of respondents or more.

d Among those who experienced transphobic physical or sexual assault in the past 5 years (per Table 5, 24% of racialized and 17% of non-racialized respondents).

Table 7: Belonging & thriving

	Non-Racialized n=403 %	Non-racialized n=2,467 %	P-value ^a
Sense of belonging in trans spaces			0.587
Very or somewhat strong	45	45	
Somewhat weak	23	24	
Very weak	16	13	
No access to trans spaces	12	12	
No interest in accessing trans spaces	5	7	
	Median, IQR^b	Median, IQR^b	
Identity siloing^c			<0.0001
Median score, 0 to 3	1.00 (0.80)	0.60 (0.50)	
Thriving^d			0.296
Median score, 1 to 5	2.50 (1.10)	2.60 (1.20)	

a Values <0.050 indicate that differences between groups are statistically significant.

b IQR indicates the interquartile range, the difference between the 25th and 75th percentiles.

c A scale where higher scores indicate having more freedom to be/share/express all aspects of oneself in day-to-day life (e.g. ethnicity, disability, sexual orientation).

d These variables were missing for 10% of respondents or more.

spondents worried about being stopped or harassed by police or security because of who they are, compared to 50% of non-racialized respondents. A striking 33% of racialized respondents had avoided calling 911 for police services in the past 5 years, while

24% had avoided calling 911 for emergency medical services. Each of these percentages were significantly higher when compared to non-racialized participants.

When asked whether they trusted that the police and courts would treat them fairly if they were physically assaulted, only 1 in 5 racialized respondents said yes. When asked the same question about sexual assault, only 1 in 10 racialized respondents trusted these systems. In both scenarios, trust was significantly lower among racialized respondents. Materially, the vast majority of incidents of physical or sexual assault that happened because the respondent was trans or non-binary went un-reported to police, among both racialized and non-racialized respondents. Of those few that were reported, 1 in 20 were treated as a hate crime. We note that transphobic assaults reported in this survey may or may not meet the definition of a hate crime,¹⁰ which can vary across police agencies. As well, survey questions on reporting captured crimes occurring in the past 5 years, which included the time period before gender identity and expression were recognized in the Criminal Code provisions.¹¹

As with racialized people in the general Canadian population,¹¹ racialized trans and non-binary people experienced profound levels of discrimination compared to their non-racialized peers. When asked about what changes they’d like to see as a result of this study, one participant (age 26, racialized) answered:

I am hoping this will shape change to uphold the full humanities of trans femmes, and trans women ... I see white, trans femmes experience life with so many more options for their survival than those of us who are racialized.

Belonging & Thriving

Table 7 shows a snapshot of how trans and non-binary respondents move through their communities and the world. 45% of racialized respondents indicated that they had a very or somewhat strong sense of belonging in trans spaces in-person, while 12% indi-

cated that they did not have access to these spaces. Our measure of identity siloing is a scale that captures whether respondents are able to live and express themselves authentically in all their identities and social positions. For example, questions in the scale included: “depending on where I am or who I’m with, I need to... change my language, dialect, or accent / hide or minimize my disability / make my clothing or gender expression more conventional.” Higher scores on the scale indicate more identity siloing, or being less free to express one’s whole self. Racialized respondents had significantly higher levels of identity siloing, as compared to non-racialized respondents. Finally, respondents answered a series of questions on “thriving”, including questions such as “what I do in life is valuable and worthwhile”, and “I feel a sense of belonging in my community”. Racialized and non-racialized respondents had similarly mid-to-high scores on this scale.

Conclusion

This report presents the first quantitative all-ages data on racialized trans and non-binary people in Canada. Results highlight that like non-racialized respondents, racialized respondents were highly educated but under-employed. Racialized respondents were more likely to rate their health as poor, and to report living with a disability and/or chronic pain. They had similar access to health care compared to non-racialized respondents, with the exception of gender-affirming medical care where racialized respondents were more likely to be unsure about or not planning to seek care. Self-rated mental health, suicide consideration and attempts, and scores on a scale about thriving did not differ significantly between racialized and non-racialized respondents. Overwhelmingly, racialized respondents reported high levels of discrimination, violence and assault, as well as anticipated and actual negative experiences with police and the legal system. It is critical for further research to investigate the causes and impacts of systemic racism, and its intersection with transphobia.

Acknowledgments

The Trans PULSE Canada team includes 109 people who have contributed in different ways to the project. We would like to acknowledge the valuable contributions of the following people, and 36 additional individuals: Aaron Devor, Adrian Edgar, Alisa Grigorovich, Alyx MacAdams, Ander Swift, Angel Glady, Anna Martha Vaitses Fontanari, Asha Jibril, Ayden Scheim, Bretton Fosbrook, Caiden Chih, Callie Lugosi, Carol Lopez, Charlie Davis, Connie Merasty, Dominic Beaulieu-Prévoist, Drew Burchell, Elie Darling, Emily Nunez, Eva Legare-Tremblay, Fae Johnstone, Fin Gareau, Françoise Susset, Frédéric S.E. Arps, Gioi Tran Minh, Greta Bauer, Hannah Kia, Jack Saddleback, Jacq Brasseur, Jaimie Veale, Jelena Vermilion, Jordan Zaitzow, Joseph Moore, Julie Temple-Newhook, j wallace skelton, Keegan Prempeh, Kelendria Nation, Kimberly Dhaliwal, Kohenet Talia Johnson, Kusha Dadui, Kylie Brooks, Leo Rutherford, Marcella Daye, Mayuri Mahendran, Meghan Smith, Moomtaz Khatoon, M. Roberts, Naja, Nathan Lachowsky, Nik Redman, Noah Adams, Peetanacoot (Winnie) Nenakawekapo, Parker L., Rainbow Hunt, Randy Jackson, Reann Legge, Rebecca Hammond, Reece Malone, Renée Masching, Renu Shonek, Robb Travers, Rosalyn Forrester, Roxane Nadeau, Sharp Dopler, Shaz Islam, Siobhan Churchill, Skylar Sookpaiboon, Sophia Ciavarella, T.F., Todd Coleman, Tony Kourie, William Flett, and Yasmeen Persad. Thank you!

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This project is funded by the Canadian Institutes of Health Research.

