



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.

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