February 3, 2026

Mr. Graeme Reid
Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
CH 1211 Geneva
Switzerland

Submitted via hrc-ie-sogi@un.org

Dear Mr. Reid:

We are grateful for the opportunity to provide input to inform the Independent Expert's forthcoming report on violence and discrimination experienced by lesbian, bisexual, and queer (LBQ) women.

The undersigned are scholars affiliated with the Williams Institute at UCLA School of Law—an interdisciplinary research center dedicated to conducting rigorous and independent research on sexual orientation and gender identity. Central to our research is analyzing the impact of laws, policies, and systemic violence and discrimination on the experiences and well-being of LBQ women, with particular attention to sub-populations experiencing greater challenges such as bisexual women, women of color, and transgender women.[1]

This comment draws on findings from various Williams Institute studies to address key questions identified in the call with respect to the experiences of LBQ women.

1. **Has your government, your organization, or you as an individual identified significant challenges, barriers or forms of violence and discrimination impacting LBQ women?**

Williams Institute scholars have used multiple data sources to comprehensively assess the experiences, health, and socioeconomic well-being of both cisgender and transgender LBQ women and girls in the United States. Data from the Generations and TransPop studies, which used nationally representative samples to examine a range of issue areas impacting various subgroups of LGBTQ people, showed that almost half (46%) of LBQ women reported being physically or sexually assaulted in adulthood.[2] Researchers also found that three out of four (75%) LBQ women experienced at least one discriminatory event in the year prior to data collection,[3] and two out of three (67%) LBQ cisgender women reported being bullied "often or

[1] In this brief, LBQ women is inclusive of transgender LBQ women, except when noted otherwise. Our data sources and sample sizes do not always permit us to disaggregate LBQ transgender women from heterosexual transgender women or from transgender people as a group. Throughout this brief, we use the acronym (e.g., LGBT, LGBTQ) that corresponds to the population studied in each cited source.
[2] Bianca D. M. Wilson, Allegra R. Gordon, Christy Mallory, Soon Kyu Choi, and M. V. Lee Badgett, *Health and Socioeconomic Well-Being of LBQ Women in the US* (Los Angeles, CA: The Williams Institute, UCLA School of Law, March 2021), 27, accessed January 10, 2026, https://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/wp-content/uploads/LBQ-Women-Mar-2021.pdf
[3] Ibid, 23.

sometimes" during childhood.[4] Among high school youth, according to data from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), almost one in four (24%) lesbian, bisexual, queer, and questioning (LBQQ) girls experienced sexual violence in the previous 12 months.[5]

Research indicates that LBQ cisgender women experience more discrimination and violence, and poorer health outcomes, than GBQ men and heterosexual cisgender women. For example, an analysis of Generations data also found that LBQ cisgender women experienced all forms of everyday discrimination more often than GBQ cisgender men, including being treated with less respect (48% vs. 34%), receiving poorer service (25% vs. 16%), being treated as "not smart" (48% vs. 30%), and being threatened or harassed (23% vs. 17%).[6] LBQ cisgender women reported more experience with adverse childhood events than GBQ cisgender men. This included emotional abuse (72% vs. 68%), physical abuse (42% vs. 37%), sexual abuse (43% vs. 29%), household intimate partner violence (37% vs. 31%), and household substance abuse (49% vs. 47%).[7] Additionally, 46% of LBQ women reported being hit, beaten, physically attacked or sexually assaulted since the age of 18, compared to 34% of GBQ cisgender men.[8] Thirty-two percent of LBQ cisgender women reported having symptoms consistent with serious mental illness, compared to 18% of GBQ cisgender men.[9]

The same analysis found that LBQ cisgender women experienced poorer mental and physical health outcomes than their heterosexual counterparts. Overall, 29% of LBQ women described their health as fair or poor, compared to 19% of heterosexual women. More LBQ women were uninsured compared to heterosexual women (14% vs. 10%), and LBQ women of color reported being uninsured more often than LBQ White women (20% vs. 11%).[10] Almost one-third (29%) of LBQ women were without a regular health care provider.[11] Negative health outcomes and inadequate care may be due in part to stigma and discrimination, as over half of LBQ women (54%) reported fear of being negatively judged by their health care provider.[12]

2. **What systemic factors (economic, social, cultural, political, and civil) contribute to these challenges? Have these challenges led to greater violence and/or discrimination against LBQ women?**

Williams Institute research has found that LBQ women face socio-economic challenges that may impact their ability to remain securely employed and housed. Generations and TransPop data showed that LBQ cisgender women (48%) and transgender people (48%) were more likely than GBQ cisgender men (32%) to be living in a low-income household, defined as a household with

[4] Ilan H. Meyer, Bianca D.M. Wilson, and Kathryn K. O'Neill, *LGBTQ People in the US: Select Findings from the Generations and TransPop Studies* (Los Angeles, CA: The Williams Institute, June 2021), 18, accessed January 10, 2026, https://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/wp-content/uploads/Generations-TransPop-Toplines-Jun-2021.pdf.
[5] Wilson et al., *Health and Socio-economic Well-being of LBQ Women in the US,* 26.
[6] Meyer, Wilson, and O'Neill, *LGBTQ People in the US*, 21.
[7] Ibid, 23.
[8] Ibid, 18.
[9] Ibid, 32.
[10] Wilson et al., *Health and Socio-economic Well-being of LBQ Women in the US,* 51.
[11] Ibid.
[12] Ibid, 27.

income lower than 200% of the U.S. poverty level.[13] Approximately one-third of LBQ women (33%) have experienced a major financial crisis, declared bankruptcy, or were more than once unable to pay their bills on time at some point in their lives.[14] Fewer straight women (24%), straight men (15%), and GBQ men (23%) reported these experiences. Additionally, over one-third (39%) of LBQ cisgender women had been fired or denied a job at some point in their careers.[15] One-fourth (25%) of LBQ cisgender women were denied a promotion or received a negative evaluation at work.[16] Furthermore, LBQ cisgender women were less likely to own a home than GBQ cisgender men (21% vs. 32%) and were more likely to be homeless, in a shelter, or staying with others temporarily than GBQ cisgender men (11% vs 8%).

A 2025 Williams Institute study used 2021 and 2023 data collected through the Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS), a nationally representative health-related survey administered by state health departments, to assess food insecurity among LGBT adults. Researchers found that LGBT adults were more likely than non-LGBT adults to have experienced food insecurity (18% vs. 14%) and to have relied on Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits (15% vs. 11%) in the past year.[17] Cisgender lesbian and bisexual women were almost twice as likely as cisgender gay and bisexual men to have received SNAP benefits (17% vs. 10%) and were also more likely to have experienced food insecurity (20% vs. 14%) in the past year. The same study reported that transgender adults experienced greater food insecurity than cisgender adults (21% vs. 14%).[18]

In combination with other Williams Institute studies that indicate economic precarity and higher reliance on public services such as SNAP among LBQ women, the higher use of federal student loans by LBQ women demonstrates another area of potential economic vulnerability. An analysis of data from the Williams Institute's 2021 Access to Higher Education Project survey, a nationally representative sample of LGBTQ adults ages 18-40, found that 36% of LBQ cisgender women and 51% of transgender adults had federal student loans, compared to 28% of GBQ cisgender men.[19]

3. **How does race, ethnicity, class, age, disability, immigration status, gender identity, religion, or other factors intersect with LBQ identities to shape experiences of violence and discrimination?**

Williams Institute research has found that race and ethnicity intersect with LBQ identities in ways that could meaningfully impact experiences with violence and discrimination. A 2023

[13] Ibid, 11.
[14] Ibid, 36.
[15] Meyer, Wilson, and O'Neill, *LGBTQ People in the US*, 19.
[16] Ibid.
[17] Brad Sears, Andrew R. Flores, and Jet Harbeck, Food Insecurity and Reliance on SNAP Among LGBT Adults (Los Angeles, CA: The Williams Institute, UCLA School of Law, July 2025), 9, accessed January 26, 2026, https://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/wp-content/uploads/SNAP-Reliance-Jul-2025.pdf.
[18] Ibid.
[19] Kerith J. Conron, Winston Luhur, Kathryn K. O'Neill, and Mathew Santiago, Federal Student Loan Debt Among LGBTQ People (Los Angeles, CA: The Williams Institute, UCLA School of Law and the Point Foundation, July 2021), accessed January 26, 2026, 3, https://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/wp-content/uploads/LGBTQ-Student-Debt-Jul-2021.pdf

publication by the Williams Institute used nationally representative data from the 2017-2019 National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS) to assess whether patterns of violence vary at the intersection of race/ethnicity and sexual and gender minority (SGM) statuses among adults.[20] The NCVS documents the prevalence and characteristics of violent and property crimes in the United States, regardless of whether such experiences were reported to the police. Researchers found that SGMs had higher victimization rates within each racial and ethnic group compared to non-SGMs. White straight women had violent victimization rates of 22 per 1,000 persons, while White LBQ women had rates of 137 per 1,000 persons.[21] For Hispanic women, victimization rates were 19 and 112 per 1,000 for straight and LBQ women, respectively. Straight Black women also experienced victimization rates of 19 per 1,000 persons, whereas Black LBQ women were 59 per 1,000. Among LB women, the overall differences in victimization rates were primarily driven by bisexual respondents. The rates of violent victimization for bisexual women were 133, 176, and 201 victimizations per 1,000 people for Black, Hispanic, and White bisexual women, respectively.[22] White and Hispanic bisexual females had higher rates of victimization than their lesbian counterparts, but there was no significant difference between Black lesbian and bisexual females.

In a series of reports on the intersection of LGBT well-being and race, Institute scholars analyzed data on several racial and SGM sub-populations using nationally representative data. For example, using Gallup data from 2012-2017, researchers found that 18% of all LBT Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) women in the United States, including 14% of LBT Asian American women and 29% of LBT Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander (NHPI) women, felt unsafe in their communities.[23] Among transgender AAPI adults, 71% reported experiencing everyday discrimination, 56% experienced physical assault, and 63% experienced verbal assault.[24] For American Indian and Alaska Native (AIAN) LBT women, 22% reported not feeling safe and secure sometimes, while 14% of non-LBT AIAN women reported the same.[25]

Research also indicates that LBTQ women of color may be more likely to experience intimate partner violence. For example, a study of data from the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health's 2023 Los Angeles County Health Survey found that over twice as many LBTQ

---

[20] Andrew R. Flores, Bianca D. M. Wilson, Lynn L. Langton, and Illan H. Meyer. "Violent victimization at the intersections of sexual orientation, gender identity, and race: National Crime Victimization Survey, 2017-2019." *PLOS One*, 18(2): (2023), https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0281641

[21] Ibid, 10.

[22] Ibid, 9.

[23] Soon Kyu Choi, Bianca D.M. Wilson, Lauren J.A. Bouton, and Christy Mallory, *AAPI LGBT Adults in the US* (Los Angeles, CA: The Williams Institute, May 2021), 36, https://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/wp-content/uploads/LGBT-AAPI-SES-May-2021.pdf. For similar analyses of LGBT well-being at the intersection of race, see Soon Kyu Choi, Bianca D.M. Wilson, Lauren J.A. Bouton, and Christy Mallory, *Black LGBT Adults in the US* (Los Angeles, CA: The Williams Institute, January 2021), https://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/wp-content/uploads/LGBT-Black-SES-Jan-2021.pdf and Bianca D.M. Wilson, Christy Mallory, Lauren Bouton, and Soon Kyu Choi, *Latinx LGBT Adults in the US*, (Los Angeles, CA: The Williams Institute, September 2021), https://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/wp-content/uploads/LGBT-Latinx-SES-Sep-2021.pdf.

[24] Ibid, 37.

[25] Bianca D.M. Wilson, Lauren J.A. Bouton, and Christy Mallory, *American Indian and Alaska Native LGBT Adults in the US: LGBT Well-Being at the Intersection of Race* (Los Angeles, CA: The Williams Institute, UCLA School of Law, October 2021), 28, accessed January 26, 2026, https://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/wp-content/uploads/LGBT-AIAN-SES-Oct-2021.pdf.

Latinas as adults overall in Los Angeles County (49% vs. 19%) reported any lifetime experience with intimate partner violence.[26] LBTQ Latinas (49%) were much more likely to report IPV than non-LBTQ Latinas (22%), GBTQ Latinos (27%), and non-GBTQ White men (17%).[27]

It is notable that there is some evidence, despite a lack of statistical significance, that gender identity may intersect with race to compound experiences of victimization. Williams Institute research suggests that transgender LBQ women experienced direct threats of violence at higher rates (71%) compared with cisgender LBQ women (52%) and GBQ men (53%).[28]

Research also suggests that sexual orientation may intersect with racial and ethnic identities to increase economic insecurity. Among AAPI women, 12% of LBT women were unemployed compared to 8% of non-LBT women. Among Asian American women, 9% of LBT women were unemployed versus 7% of non-LBT women. And among NHPI women, 20% of LBT women were unemployed versus 11% non-LBT.[29] Black LBT women had higher rates of unemployment and food insecurity (15% and 41%, respectively), compared to Black non-LBT women (11% and 29%) and Black GBT men (11% and 31%).[30]

4. **How do LBQ women experience interactions with police, courts, healthcare systems, schools, or other institutions?**

A 2021 Williams Institute study on policing found that LBQ women were more than six times as likely as the general population of women to be stopped by police in public (7% vs. 1%) and about half as likely to have sought help from police (11% vs. 23%) in a one-year period.[31] LBQ women were less likely than the general population of LGBQ people to report being treated respectfully by police (68% vs. 79%) and overall reported less satisfaction with police response (69% vs. 85%) during their most recent interaction with police.[32] One-third (33%) of LBQ women said they were less likely to call the police again after their most recent interaction with law enforcement compared to 6% of the general population of women.[33]

Another study from 2022 found the percentage of incarcerated women who are LBQ (33%) to be more than 10 times as high as the proportion of women who are LBQ in the general population

---

[26] Brad Sears, Neko Michelle Castleberry, Emily "Eve" Tuyết Nhi Huynh, Dolores Magdalena Loaeza Pech, Miguel Fuentes Carreño, Yan Cui, and Megha D. Shah, *Una Fuerza Más de Cien Mil: LBTQ Latinas in Los Angeles County* (Los Angeles, CA: The Williams Institute, October 2025), 91, https://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/wp-content/uploads/LACo-LBTQ-Latinas-Oct-2025.pdf.

[27] Ibid, 91.

[28] Wilson et al., *Health and Socio-economic Well-being of LBQ Women in the US*, 26.

[29] Choi et al., *AAPI LGBT Adults in the US,* 22.

[30] Bianca D.M. Wilson, Christy Mallory, and Debra I. Beeson, *LGBT Black Adults in the U.S.: Socioeconomic Status and Well-Being at the Intersection of Race and Sexual Orientation* (Los Angeles, CA: The Williams Institute, UCLA School of Law, January 2021), 16, accessed January 26, 2026, https://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/wp-content/uploads/LGBT-Black-SES-Jan-2021.pdf

[31] Winston Luhur, Ilan H. Meyer, and Bianca D.M. Wilson, *Policing LGBQ People* (Los Angeles, CA: The Williams Institute, UCLA School of Law, May 2021), 3, accessed January 26, 2026, https://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/wp-content/uploads/Policing-LGBQ-People-May-2021.pdf

[32] Ibid, 4.

[33] Luhur, Meyer, and Wilson, *Policing LGBQ People*, 4.

(3%).[34] Nearly two-thirds of LBQ women who are incarcerated (61%) are people of color, and almost one-quarter (24%) are Black LBQ women. Incarcerated transgender people are roughly 10 times more likely to report having been assaulted by staff or other inmates than incarcerated non-transgender people. Though not statistically significant, there is an apparent gap between LBTQ Latinas and LBTQ white women in Los Angeles County in experiences with verbal harassment from law enforcement (12% vs. 4%).[35]

Taken together, Williams Institute research indicates higher vulnerability among LBQ women than heterosexual women and, in some cases, than other LGBT sub-groups. Of particular importance are disparities in physical and sexual assault, economic security, and interactions with law enforcement.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input. If you have any questions, please contact Ari Shaw, PhD, Director of International Programs, at shaw@law.ucla.edu.

Respectfully submitted,

Alisson Rowland, PhD
Research Analyst
The Williams Institute

Ari Shaw, PhD
Senior Fellow and Director of International Programs
The Williams Institute

[34] Bianca D.M. Wilson and Lauren J.A. Bouton, *System Involvement Among LBQ Girls and Women* (Los Angeles, CA: The Williams Institute, UCLA School of Law, April 2022), 5, accessed January 26, 2026, https://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/wp-content/uploads/LBQ-System-Involvement-Apr-2022.pdf
[35] Sears et al., *Una Fuerza Más de Cien Mil*, 70.