

House Committee on Oversight and Reform
Hearing on Anti-LGBTQI+ Extremism and Violence in the United States
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Oral Testimony

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Chairwoman Maloney, Ranking Member Comer, and distinguished Members of the
Committee

I am a public health researcher, Senior Scholar of Public Policy at the Williams Institute at UCLA School of Law. My area of expertise is the study of the effects of social stress related to prejudice and discrimination on the health of LGBTQ populations.

LGBTQ rights have seen significant developments in the past few decades, but homophobia and transphobia are embedded in American history and culture, and they produce stress—I've referred to it as *minority stress*. This stress intersects with stigma and prejudice based on other statuses so that different LGBTQ subgroups, such as POC LGBTQ, experience this social stress differently. But every LGBTQ person has to learn to cope with stress related to stigma throughout their lives.

Studies have concluded that the minority stress experienced by LGBTQ people can result in an array of mental health problems, including depressive symptoms, substance use, and suicide ideation and attempts.

In recent years we have seen a resurgence of anti-LGBTQ rhetoric and violence, including the recent shooting in Club Q in Colorado. But violence against LGBTQ people is not new. In several recent studies analyzing data collected by the Department of Justice as part of the National Crime Victimization Survey my colleagues and I found that:

- The odds of experiencing a violent victimization, defined as rape or sexual assault, robbery, and aggravated or simple assault, were 4 times higher for LGBTQ than non-LGBTQ people. The rate of violent victimization for LGBTQ people was 71.1 victimizations per 1,000 people compared with 19.2 victimizations per 1,000 people for those who are not LGBTQ. More LGBTQ than non-LGBTQ people experienced violence both by offenders well-known to them and by strangers.
- Assessing victimization among transgender versus cisgender people, specifically, we found that transgender people had 4 times the rate of victimization. Transgender people experienced 86.2 victimizations per 1,000 persons compared with cisgender people's 21.7 per 1,000 persons.
- We also assessed the distribution of hate crimes, a subset of violent victimization, and found that LGBTQ people experienced 8 times as many hate crimes as non-LGBTQ people. LGBTQ people reported 6.6 violent hate crime victimizations per 1,000 persons compared with non-LGBTQ people's 0.6 per 1,000 persons.

LGBTQ people are socialized, like most people in society, to believe that being LGBTQ is wrong and to believe in stereotypical stigmatizing ideas such as that as an LGBTQ person you will never find happiness and a family who will love them. As children and youth, LGBTQ individuals often experience rejection and even violence by families of origin, many are bullied at school, and some sent to so-called conversion therapies that teach them the very stereotypes and self-hatred that mental health professionals say they should be taught to reverse.

Evidence also shows that LGBTQ people are more likely to experience socioeconomic stress, including higher rates of poverty, housing instability, and food insecurity. Specific subpopulations face even greater socioeconomic disparities, including transgender people, bisexuals, LGBTQ people of color, and older LGBTQ people.

Transgender people have seen fewer positive changes in the past few decades than did sexual minority people, and an increase in hostile public rhetoric in recent years.

Gender non-affirmation is a particular stressor that affects health outcomes of transgender individuals. Gender non-affirmation refers to the denial of recognition of a transgender person's gender and, more globally, their dignity and humanity.

Gender-affirming treatment is one form of gender affirmation. Research has shown that transgender individuals who had received hormone therapy or surgical care they needed had lower prevalence of one-year suicide attempts compared to those who had not received the care they needed (5.1% vs. 8.5%).

In summary, research shows that stigma, violence, and discrimination remain persistent and pervasive stressors for LGBTQ people. While same-sex marriages have

become more accepted in American society, LGBTQ people still lack many non-discrimination protections that would have been afforded them under the Equality Act. A lot more needs to be done to afford LGBTQ people equality and dignity and improve their health and well-being.