



Fuelling Hate

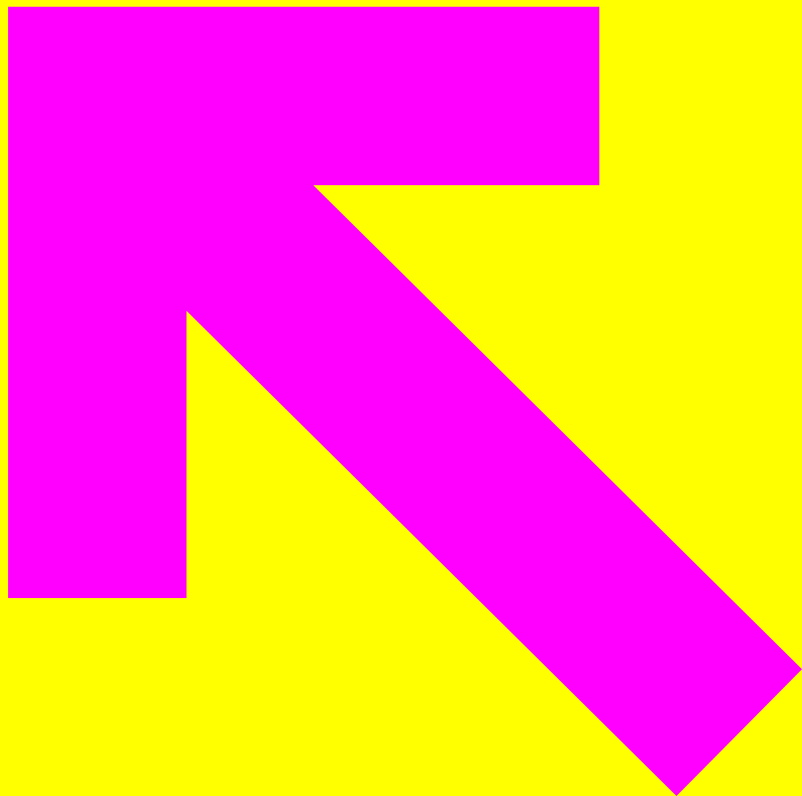
Abuse, Harassment, Vilification and
Violence Against Trans People In Australia

 **Trans
justice
project.**


Victorian Pride Lobby

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Acknowledgement of Country

The Trans Justice Project and Victorian Pride Lobby would like to recognise the enduring sovereignty of First Nation peoples across the continent. This report was written on the lands of the Kulin Nation to whose Elders the project team pays their sincere respect.

We also wish to pay respect to Sistergirl and Brotherboy communities across this continent. Always was, always will be, Aboriginal land.



Thanks from the Project Team

This report would not have been possible without the cooperation and goodwill of trans people, their families, friends and communities. The project team would like to thank all participants for their expertise, time and trust.



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About the Report

In April 2023, Trans Justice Project and the Victorian Pride Lobby engaged researchers and advisors to investigate the prevalence and possible escalation of transphobia in Australia. We investigated transphobia by asking about abuse, harassment, vilification and violence, which we summarise as anti-trans hate.

We divided the survey into questions about what people had seen and experienced online and in-person. The survey was open to anyone aged 18 and over from any state or territory. It ran for nine days from 17 to 25 April 2023. It was promoted on social media by project team members, community-controlled organisations, civil society groups and community members.

The survey took 3 minutes on average and had an average completion rate of 85%. The survey received 3099 responses, excluding 40 bad-faith responses which are omitted from the primary analysis. This makes it the largest ever project of its kind and one of the most extensive samples of trans Australians ever collected.

Support Services

The contents of this report may be confronting or distressing for trans people, their families and friends. If you or someone you know is in an emergency and needs assistance now, **call triple zero (000)**.

You can also find support through the following services:

Service	Focus	Contact	Operating hours
Emergency	Emergency assistance	000	24 hours, 7 days a week
Beyond Blue	Depression and anxiety support	1300 22 4636	24 hours, 7 days a week
Lifeline	Crisis and mental health support with suicide prevention services	13 11 14	24 hours, 7 days a week
QLife	Free LGBTQ peer support and referral	1800 184 527	3pm to midnight everyday
Switchboard Victoria and Tasmania	Free LGBTQ peer support and referral	1800 729 367	10am to 5pm everyday

Executive Summary

The Trans Justice Project and the Victorian Pride Lobby present *Fuelling Hate*, the largest-ever project investigating anti-trans hate in Australia and one of the largest samples of trans Australians ever collected. Regrettably, we found that anti-trans hate is rampant in Australia. In the 12 months preceding the survey:



9 in 10

of all participants
witnessed online
anti-trans hate



1 in 2

trans participants
experienced
anti-trans hate



1 in 10

trans participants
experienced
anti-trans violence



We also found that anti-trans hate is intensifying over time, with 8 in 10 participants reporting an increase in online anti-trans hate since 2020, corresponding with disinformation promoted by politicians and media outlets. Additionally, 7 in 10 participants reported an increase in the two months preceding the survey coinciding with the tour of anti-trans lobbyist Kellie-Jay Keen.

Trans people experience a range of online hate, such as deliberate misgendering, hate speech, bullying, doxing, stalking, threats of violence and sexual assault, death threats, incitement to commit suicide and incitement to genocide. They also experience a variety of in-person hate, including workplace bullying, street-based harassment, harassment relating to using bathrooms, stalking, physical and death threats.

Additionally, 1 in 10 trans people experienced anti-trans violence, including physical and sexual assault, which likely represents several thousand anti-trans hate crimes in the last 12 months. We hope these grave findings can help inform efforts to promote the safety and well-being of trans people across Australia.


Key Findings


1

Anti-trans hate is widespread, both online and in-person

We found that in the last 12 months:

 **94%** of all participants saw online anti-trans abuse, harassment or vilification

 **52%** of all participants saw anti-trans abuse, harassment or vilification in-person

 **49%** of trans participants experienced online anti-trans abuse, harassment or vilification

 **47%** of trans participants experienced in-person anti-trans abuse, harassment or vilification

2

Anti-trans hate is escalating, both online and in-person

We also found that compared to 2020:

 **85%** of all participants saw significantly more online anti-trans abuse, harassment or vilification

 **39%** of all participants saw more or significantly more in-person anti-trans abuse, harassment or vilification

 **40%** of trans participants experienced more or significantly more online anti-trans abuse, harassment or vilification

 **34%** of trans participants said they had experienced more or significantly more in-person anti-trans abuse, harassment or vilification

Key Findings

3 🔍

Hate toward trans people spiked during the period coinciding with the national tour of anti-trans lobbyist Kellie-Jay Keen

We further found that in the two months preceding the survey:

👁️ **68% of all participants** saw more or significantly more online anti-trans abuse, harassment or vilification

👁️ **30% of all participants** saw more or significantly more in-person anti-trans abuse, harassment or vilification

⚠️ **31% of trans participants** experienced more or significantly more online anti-trans abuse, harassment or vilification

⚠️ **23% of trans participants** experienced more or significantly more anti-trans in-person abuse, harassment or vilification

4 ⚠️

Anti-trans violence is prevalent

Finally, regarding violence we found that:

👁️ **15% of trans participants** experienced anti-trans violence in the last 12 months

👁️ **13% of trans participants** experienced more or significantly more anti-trans violence in the last 12 months

⚠️ **11% of trans participants** experienced more or significantly more anti-trans violence in the two months preceding the survey

Background

The current wave of anti-trans hate in Australia was preceded by several key events, such as the moral panic around Safe Schools, the marriage equality postal survey and targeted disinformation campaigns from media outlets and anti-trans lobbyists.

- ↙ **Safe Schools**
- ↙ **The Marriage Equality Postal Survey**
- ↙ **Anti-Trans Disinformation**
- ↙ **Anti-trans Lobbying and Politics**
- ↙ **The International Context**
- ↙ **Moral Panic, Social Licence and Disinformation**



Safe Schools

Safe Schools was a bi-partisan anti-bullying program that aimed to create supportive school environments for LGBTQ young people by providing training to teachers. In 2015, the Australian Christian Lobby (ACL),¹ launched a campaign accusing the program of ‘turning kids gay’ and ‘sexualising children’² resulting in targeted harassment of researchers.³

In 2016, Family First senator Bob Day referred to the scheme as a ‘gay lifestyle promotion program’ and called on the government to withdraw funding.⁴ At the same time, then Liberal senator Cori Bernardi launched a petition to cut the program’s funding. He erroneously linked Safe Schools to ‘bondage clubs and sex toys’⁵ and claimed it ‘indoctrinated kids’.⁶

Nationals MP George Christensen, another vocal critic, inflammatorily compared the program to ‘child grooming’.⁷ Bowing to pressure, Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull ordered an investigation into Safe Schools.⁸ The Loudon review suggested minor changes but supported the program’s content, calling it ‘suitable, robust, age-appropriate, [and] educationally sound’.⁹

The program was defunded in 2016 and replaced by other programs in some states. In 2017, several cis celebrities published a letter calling for a new version of Safe Schools without the ‘controversy’,¹⁰ widely criticised for pandering to conservatives and its lack of trans inclusion.¹¹

1 Global Project Against Hate and Extremism, ‘Australian Christian Lobby (ACL)’ <<https://globalextrémism.org/australia/#acl>>

2 See ‘Australian Christian Lobby slams Safe Schools anti-bullying program’, The Sydney Morning Herald, 2015 <<https://www.smh.com.au/national/nsw/australian-christian-lobby-slams-safe-schools-antibullying-program-20151104-gkq6gr.html>>. There is no evidence whatsoever for the proposition that inclusive education or anti-bullying programs ‘turn kids gay’, see ‘Safe Schools Coalition: what is the Christian Right afraid of?’, The Conversation, 2016 <<https://theconversation.com/safe-schools-coalition-what-is-the-christian-right-afraid-of-55296>>.

3 ‘Safe Schools LGBTI program researchers ‘receiving abusive emails’ after Christian lobby campaign’, The Guardian, 2016 <<https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2016/feb/24/safe-schools-lgbti-program-researchers-receiving-abusive-emails-after-christian-lobby-campaign>>

4 ‘Give the parents a say on sex program’: Senator Bob Day’, The Australian, 2016 <<https://www.theaustralian.com.au/nation/education/give-the-parents-a-say-on-sex-program-senator-bob-day/news-story/3772a70f5645fe7a702ea6530743fce2>>

5 ‘Cory Bernardi email reportedly links Safe Schools to ‘bondage clubs and adult sex toys’, The Guardian, 2016 <<https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2016/mar/22/cory-bernardi-email-reportedly-links-safe-schools-to-bondage-clubs-and-adult-sex-toys>>

6 ‘Turnbull orders review of Safe Schools LGBTI program after pressure from Cory Bernardi’, The Guardian, 2016 <<https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2016/feb/23/turnbull-orders-review-safe-schools-lgbti-program-after-pressure-from-cory-bernardi>>

7 ‘Safe Schools is like child grooming, says Nationals MP George Christensen’, The Guardian, 2016 <<https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2016/feb/25/safe-schools-is-like-child-grooming-says-nationals-mp-george-christensen>>

8 ‘Safe Schools: Malcolm Turnbull requests investigation into program helping LGBTI students’, ABC News, 2016 <<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2016-02-23/turnbull-requests-investigation-into-safe-schools-program/7192374>>

9 ‘The reality of Safe Schools’, The Guardian, 2016 <<https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2016/dec/14/safe-schools-roz-ward-life-saving-support-queer-theory-classroom>>

10 ‘Celebrities lobby Malcolm Turnbull for Safe Schools 2.0 - without the ideology’, The Sydney Morning Herald, 2017 <<https://www.smh.com.au/politics/federal/celebrities-lobby-malcolm-turnbull-for-safe-schools-20--without-the-ideology-20170501-gvw6nw.html>>

11 ‘Sorry Celebs, LGBTIQ Australians Deserve A Lot More Than “Tolerance”’, Junkee, 2017 <<https://junkee.com/lgbtiq-tolerance-safe-schools/104104>>



The Marriage Equality Postal Survey

The moral panic around Safe Schools coincided temporally and thematically with the 2017 marriage equality postal survey. The postal survey was a national, non-compulsory survey proposed by the sitting Coalition government as a compromise between different elements within the party.

The first 'No' campaign television advert featured a woman who had previously lobbied against Safe Schools. She claimed that her son's school told him that 'he could wear a dress' and that such measures would become 'widespread and compulsory'.¹² The school debunked the claim, saying 'it never happened'.¹³

Indeed, the 'No' campaign explicitly tied marriage equality to fears about 'radical gay sex education' [sic] in schools.¹⁴ One anonymous pamphlet claimed that marriage equality would lead to trans people raping women in bathrooms.¹⁵ Nazi groups actively campaigned,¹⁶ circulating posters that linked marriage equality to paedophilia¹⁷ and child abuse.¹⁸

Unsurprisingly, the public legitimisation of homophobic and transphobic views took a tremendous toll on LGBTQ people. Social media accounts were targeted with homophobic slurs¹⁹ amid a spate of homophobic vandalism and attacks.²⁰ Verbal and physical hate crimes doubled after the announcement of the survey.²¹

Out of fear of tying the 'Yes' campaign to the moral panic surrounding Safe School, many 'Yes' campaign organisations, made a strategic decision to avoid these topics altogether.²² While the strategy succeeded, many trans people criticised how this strategy prioritised the ability of cis people to marry over trans people and their rights.²³

12 'Anti same-sex marriage campaign airs: "School told my son he could wear a dress"', News.com, 2017 <<https://www.news.com.au/lifestyle/relationships/marriage/anti-same-sex-marriage-campaign-airs-school-told-my-son-he-could-wear-a-dress/news-story/535dcae290582136cb2445f3869ff820>>

13 "It never happened": Principal denies mum's TV claim that son could wear a dress', The Sydney Morning Herald, 2017 <<https://www.smh.com.au/politics/federal/it-never-happened-principal-denies-mums-tv-claim-that-son-could-wear-dress-20170830-gy6ygk.html>>

14 'Australia Same-Sex Marriage Vote Spawns Toxic Debate', NBC News, 2017 <<https://www.nbcnews.com/feature/nbc-out/australia-same-sex-marriage-vote-spawns-toxic-debate-n819666>>

15 'Homophobic anti-marriage equality material surfaces in postal survey campaign', The Guardian, 2017 <<https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2017/aug/21/homophobic-anti-marriage-equality-material-surfaces-in-postal-survey-campaign>>

16 'Labor calls on PM to condemn neo-Nazi hate campaign in same-sex marriage debate', SBS News, 2017 <<https://www.sbs.com.au/news/article/labor-calls-on-pm-to-condemn-neo-nazi-hate-campaign-in-same-sex-marriage-debate/lpdcqp88m>>

17 'Antipodean Resistance Neo-Nazi group trying to sway Australia's same-sex marriage postal vote', ABC News, 2017 <<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2017-09-05/neo-nazi-group-antipodean-resistance/8852682>>

18 'Neo-Nazis Are On The Frontline Of The Campaign Against Marriage Equality', Junkee, 2017 <<https://junkee.com/australian-neo-nazis-frontline-campaign-marriage-equality/119299>>

19 'Same-sex marriage survey: Facebook accounts targeted with homophobic slurs', The Guardian, 2017 <<https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2017/sep/16/same-sex-marriage-survey-facebook-accounts-targeted-with-homophobic-slurs>>

20 'Rocks thrown through windows amid spate of homophobic attacks', The Guardian, 2017 <<https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2017/sep/26/rocks-thrown-through-windows-amid-spate-of-homophobic-attacks>>

21 'Marriage equality survey marred by doubling in reported assaults', The Guardian, 2017 <<https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2017/dec/05/marriage-equality-survey-marred-by-doubling-in-reported-assaults>>

22 'Marriage equality: yes, it's about gender', Overland, 2017 <<https://overland.org.au/2017/09/marriage-equality-yes-its-about-gender/>>

23 'Is it really a win for queer rights if we exclude our most vulnerable to achieve it?', The Guardian, 2017 <<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2017/sep/06/is-it-really-a-win-for-queer-rights-if-we-exclude-our-most-vulnerable-to-achieve-it>>



Anti-Trans Disinformation

Later, in 2019, The Australian launched a column dedicated to 'gender issues'. Early articles baselessly accused trans people of 'corrupting' and even 'castrating children'. The Australian published 68 articles regarding transgender people between June and August 2019 of which 98% were negative.²⁴

The Australian repeatedly platformed the idea that trans people use their identity to gain access to women-only spaces to assault women, a transphobic myth for which there is no evidence. The outlet also argued that trans women have an unfair advantage in sports, which is also unsupported by evidence.²⁵

The paper further promoted the so-called 'social contagion theory', a fringe conspiracy theory that trans people manipulate or trick people into 'becoming trans'. Articles warned of a 'surge' of young people seeking treatment due to 'pro-trans social media', 'online trends' and 'being coached'.

In response, the Australian Psychological Association released a statement refuting social contagion theory and supporting gender-affirming healthcare.²⁶ Many of the above stories were subject to a Press Council complaint relating to 45 articles over ten months.²⁷ The Press Council ruled that The Australian's coverage was unfair and caused substantial distress.²⁸

In 2021, researchers analysed 1319 articles about trans people from the top 10 most widely read outlets and found similarly that media coverage was overwhelmingly negative.²⁹ They discovered that much of the same anti-trans rhetoric that first appeared in The Australian had found purchase in The Herald Sun, The Daily Telegraph, The Age and The Sydney Morning Herald.

24 'Here's Proof That Trans People Are The New Target Of 'The Australian's War On Queer People', Junkee, 2019 <<https://junkee.com/the-australian-trans-coverage/235282>>

25 'Elite sport is becoming a platform to target the trans community', The Conversation, 2019 <<https://theconversation.com/elite-sport-is-becoming-a-platform-to-target-the-trans-community-113347>>

26 'APS Refutes 'Social Contagion' Arguments', Australian Psychological Association, 2019 <<https://psychology.org.au/about-us/news-and-media/media-releases/2019/aps-refutes-social-contagion-arguments>>

27 "Substantial distress": Press watchdog rebukes The Australian for reporting on gender issues', The Sydney Morning Herald, 2020 <<https://www.smh.com.au/business/companies/substantial-distress-press-watchdog-rebukes-the-australian-for-reporting-on-gender-issues-20210903-p58oi7.html>>

28 Adjudication 1799, Australian Press Council, 2021 <<https://presscouncil.org.au/document/1799-complainant-8>>

29 'Transgender people in the Australian press: "Bombarded by outright harassment"', Sydney Corpus Lab, 2021 <<https://sydneycorpuslab.com/transgender-people-in-the-australian-press-bombarded-by-outright-harassment/>>



Anti-trans Lobbying and Politics

More recently, high-profile anti-trans lobbyist Kellie-Jay Keen (who also goes by Posie Parker) completed a national speaking tour, holding anti-trans rallies in several capital cities. Among other things, Keen claims that trans women are sexual predators and describes being trans as a 'fetish'.³⁰

Keen's tour was protested by hundreds of pro-trans community members in Adelaide, Brisbane, Canberra, Hobart, Perth and Sydney. The anti-trans rally in Melbourne coincided with a demonstration by Nazis who held up a banner calling trans people 'paedo freaks' and performed the Nazi salutes while Keen spoke to the crowd.³¹

Independent researchers reported that Keen's tour in New Zealand sparked a 'massive increase' in online anti-trans hate, with one researcher describing it as 'genocidal'.³² In Australia, there were anecdotal reports of an 'uptick' in anti-trans abuse around the time of Keen's tour, with journalists covering anti-trans issues facing an 'avalanche' of online abuse.³³

Her tour was supported and partially financed by the Conservative Political Action Conference (CPAC).³⁴ Additionally, it was promoted and attended by a number of prominent anti-trans figures such as Katherine Deves, who gained prominence through the 2022 Federal Election.³⁵

Shortly after her pre-selection as the candidate for Warringah, an online archive of her Twitter account was released to the media displaying several tweets degrading trans people and spreading anti-trans rhetoric.³⁶ She also claimed to have played a key role in developing trans-exclusionary legislation.³⁷

Although she did not gain the support of her electorate, anti-trans rhetoric became a cornerstone of the election media landscape with a number of articles dedicated to repeating and exploring anti-trans rhetoric.³⁸

30 'Kellie-Jay Keen's anti-trans rights campaign has become a headache for the Liberal Party. But the issue runs deeper than one MP', ABC News, 2023 <<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2023-03-26/kellie-jay-Keenanti-trans-rights-liberal-party-debate/102142130>>

31 'Nazi salutes performed on steps of Victorian parliament as protesters clash over trans rights', SBS News, 2023 <<https://www.sbs.com.au/news/article/nazi-salutes-performed-on-steps-of-victorian-parliament-as-protesters-clash-over-transgender-rights/yr7gzkevn>>

32 'Spike in online hate toward trans community after Posie Parker visit - researchers', RNZ, 2023 <<https://www.rnz.co.nz/news/national/487306/spike-in-online-hate-toward-trans-community-after-posie-parker-visit-researchers>>

33 'Newsrooms grapple with online safety as journalists face influx of anti-trans abuse', Crikey, 2023 <<https://www.crikey.com.au/2023/06/01/anti-trans-abuse-journalists-threats/>>

34 'Confusion over who paid for Kellie-Jay Keen's tour of Australia', OutinPerth, 2023 <<https://www.outinperth.com/confusion-over-who-paid-for-kellie-jay-keens-tour-of-australia/>>

35 'Trent Zimmerman joins Liberals calling for Scott Morrison to dump Katherine Deves over trans comments', The Guardian, 2022 <<https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2022/apr/18/trent-zimmerman-joins-liberals-calling-for-scott-morrison-to-dump-katherine-deves-over-trans-comments>>

36 'PM's 'captain's pick' for Warringah Katherine Deves wipes social media accounts after transgender comments', News.com, 2022 <<https://www.news.com.au/national/federal-election/pms-captains-pick-for-warringah-katherine-deves-wipes-social-media-accounts-after-transgender-comments/news-story/e1b41b73c646a5494e64928bba8f3>>

37 'Katherine Deves claims key role in controversial bill to ban trans women from women's sport', The Guardian, 2022 <<https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2022/apr/19/katherine-deves-claims-key-role-in-controversial-bill-to-ban-trans-women-from-womens-sport>>

38 See 'NSW Liberal candidate described campaign supporting LGBT youth as 'grooming tactic' used by 'gender extremists', The Guardian, 2022 <<https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2022/apr/14/nsw-liberal-candidate-described-campaign-supporting-lgbt-youth-as-grooming-tactic-used-by-gender-extremists>>



The International Context

The situation in Australia is emerging against a backdrop of escalating anti-trans and anti-LGBTQIA+ attacks globally. In the US, 566 anti-trans Bills have been introduced across 49 states aiming to restrict trans people's access to education, bathrooms, healthcare, legal protections and sports.³⁹

This has coincided with bills banning drag shows⁴⁰ and the introduction of 'Don't Say Gay' Bills⁴¹ restricting the freedom of LGBTQIA+ educators and students in many states. The US Supreme Court also recently repealed anti-discrimination protections for LGBTQIA+ people across the country.⁴²

In the UK, there has been a coordinated attack on key institutions and organisations that support the trans community such as the youth suicide prevention service Mermaids.⁴³ Worryingly, anti-trans hate crimes recorded by police rose by 81% in 2019 against this backdrop of anti-trans campaigns.⁴⁴

Furthermore, when Scotland moved to make it easier for trans people to change their legally recognised sex, the UK government vetoed the law using its veto powers over the Scottish government for the first time.⁴⁵ Regrettably, many elements of the above anti-trans moral panic is now spilling over into Australia.

In the months since Kellie-Jay Keen's tour there has been an escalation of attacks on LGBTQIA+ events, such as drag story time. In February, there was a bomb threat against a Sydney library holding a drag story time event⁴⁶ and by may at least 9 Victorian councils had called off similar events due to threats of violence⁴⁷ from the far right.⁴⁸

39 2023 anti-trans bills tracker, Trans Legislation Tracker, 2023 <<https://translegislation.com/>>

40 'Tennessee Passed the Nation's First Law Limiting Drag Shows. Here's the Status of Anti-Drag Bills Across the U.S.', Time Magazine, 2023 <<https://time.com/6260421/tennessee-limiting-drag-shows-status-of-anti-drag-bills-u-s/>>

41 'Not just Florida. More than a dozen states propose so-called 'Don't Say Gay' bills', NPR, 2022 <<https://www.npr.org/2022/04/10/1091543359/15-states-dont-say-gay-anti-transgender-bills>>

42 'US Supreme Court deals blow to LGBT rights in web designer case', Reuters, 2023 <<https://www.reuters.com/legal/us-supreme-court-rule-web-designer-with-anti-gay-marriage-stance-2023-06-30/>>

43 'Former Mermaids CEO Susie Green blasts UK media for transphobic rhetoric: 'They don't care'', PinkNews, 2023 <<https://www.thepinknews.com/2023/08/02/susie-green-mermaids-ipsos-complaint/>>

44 'Transgender hate crimes recorded by police go up 81%', BBC News, <<https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-48756370>>

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46 'Love is love': Drag queen storytime at Sydney library goes ahead amid bomb threat, protests', SBS News, <<https://www.sbs.com.au/news/article/crowds-chanting-love-is-love-meet-protesters-against-drag-storytime-amid-bomb-threat-at-sydney-library/fewo560lf>>

47 'Councils call off drag storytime and LGBTQ+ events in Victoria after far-right threats', The Guardian, 2023 <<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/may/13/councils-call-off-drag-storytime-and-lgbtq-events-in-victoria-after-far-right-threats>>

48 'Victorian councils to hold emergency meeting on far-right targeting of drag queen storytime events', The Guardian, 2023 <<https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2023/may/16/drag-queen-storytime-far-right-victoria-councils-emergency-meeting-lgbtq-events>>



Moral Panic, Social Licence and Disinformation

These events provide the necessary theoretical and practical background for this research project. The moral panic around the Safe Schools program introduced anti-trans and far-right talking points into political and media discourse, many of which were recycled during the marriage equality postal survey.

The decisions to pursue a trans-exclusive Safe Schools and to ignore anti-trans talking points effectively ceded space to anti-trans lobbyists. Though the postal survey was ultimately successful, the 'No' campaign successfully wedged the 'Yes' campaign, positioning trans people as acceptable targets for abuse, harassment, vilification and violence.

Media outlets capitalised on this development, concentrating these themes into a series of anti-trans narratives revolving around children's safety, women's safety, and fairness in sport which eventually became mainstream. In turn, Nazis and other anti-trans extremists exploited this hostile environment to recruit new members⁴⁹ and spread anti-trans hate⁵⁰.

With this timeline in mind, the project team hypothesised that it should be possible to observe an increase in transphobia over the last few years and an additional spike in the months leading up to the survey. Researchers designed a survey tool to test these hypotheses and collect more detail regarding the nature, scope and prevalence of anti-trans hate.

49 'What's behind the 'terrifying' backlash against Australia's queer community?', The Guardian, 2023 <<https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2023/mar/25/whats-behind-the-terrifying-backlash-against-australias-queer-community>>

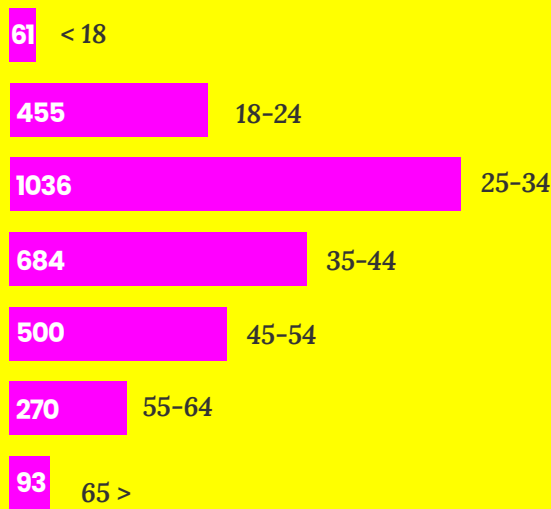
50 'Experts warn that anti-trans rhetoric is fuelling a major right-wing extremist threat', American Independent, 2021 <<https://americanindependent.com/transphobic-rhetoric-right-wing-extremism-threat-lgbtq-laws/>>

Survey Demographics

3099 total participants

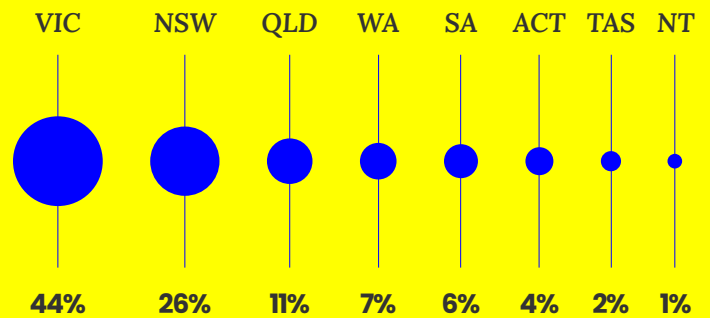
Age

Number of participants by Age



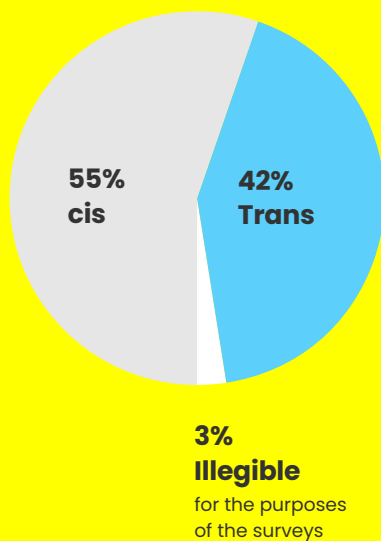
Location

Participants by State

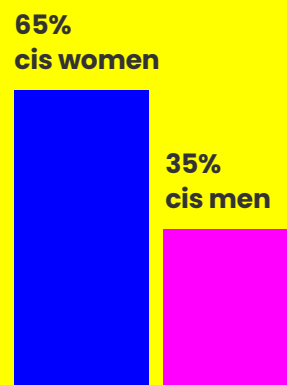


Gender

All participants



Cis participants



Trans participants

50% (657) Non-binary

29% (372) Trans women

15% (191) Trans men

3% (38) Genderqueer

1.5% (20) Genderfluid

1% (16) Agender

1% (9) Sistergirls

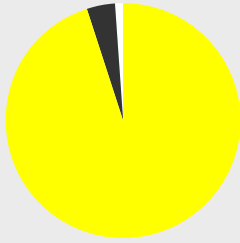
0.5% (6) Brotherboys

Anti-Trans Hate in Australia



Online Anti-Trans Hate

👁️ Seen in the last year:

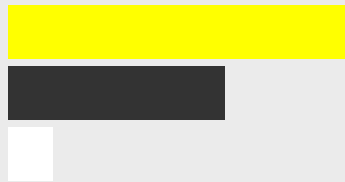


- 95% Yes
- 4% No
- 1% Unsure



In-Person Anti-Trans Hate

👁️ Seen in the last year:

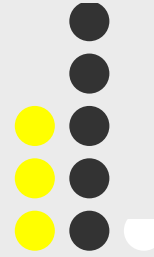


- 52% Seen
- 33% Not Seen
- 7% Unsure



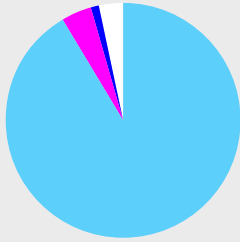
Anti-Trans Violence

👁️ Seen in the last year:



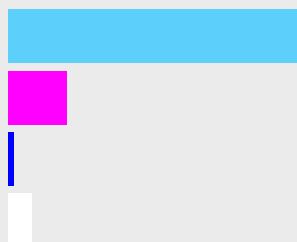
- 30% Yes
- 49% No
- 7% Unsure

👁️ Seen compared to 2020:



- 85% More or significantly more
- 4% About the same
- 1% Less or significantly less
- 3% Unsure

👁️ Seen compared to 2020:



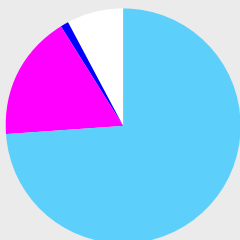
- 40% More or significantly more
- 8% About the same
- 1% Less
- 3% Unsure

👁️ Seen compared to 2020:



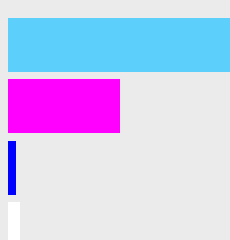
- 26% More or significantly more
- 2% About the same
- 1% Seen Less
- 1% Unsure

👁️ Seen in the two months prior to the survey:



- 68% More or significantly more
- 16% About the same
- 1% Less or significantly less
- 7% Unsure

👁️ Seen in the two months prior to the survey:



- 30% More or significantly more
- 15% About the same
- 1% Less
- 5% Unsure

👁️ Seen in the two months prior to the survey:



- 21% More or significantly more
- 9% About the same
- 1% Seen less
- 2% Unsure

Trans People's Experiences



Online Anti-Trans Hate Of 1309 trans participants

In the last 12 months

49.2%

644 trans people had experienced online anti-trans abuse, harassment or vilification

41%

537 trans people had not

8.2%

108 trans people were **unsure**

Compared to 2020

40%

524 trans people experienced **more** or **significantly more** online anti-trans hate

5.4%

71 trans people experienced around the **same** amount

0.8%

10 trans people reported experiencing **less**

1.6%

20 trans people were **unsure**

Two months preceding the survey compared to the start of the year

31.2%

408 trans people experienced **more** or **significantly more** online anti-trans hate

13.9%

182 trans people experienced around the **same** level

1.2%

15 trans people experienced **less**

1.6%

21 trans people were **unsure**

Open-text responses suggest that anti-trans hate is concentrated in online spaces such as social media platforms, comment sections (especially on news websites) and dating apps. Perpetrators were sometimes well-known anti-trans figures but were often anonymous.

Trans people described a wide variety of online anti-trans hate, such as:

Microaggressions (i.e. 'casual' transphobia)

Deliberate misgendering

Insults, ridicule, humiliation, intimidation and trolling

Defamation and hate speech (including slurs)

Pile-ons, doxing and stalking

Threats of violence and sexual assault

Death threats

Incitement to commit suicide

Incitement to commit genocide

Accounts, therefore, range from microaggressions to extreme violence. Threats tended to be graphic and severe, with some trans participants detailing threats of knife and gun violence.

The frequency of threats was also notable, with one trans woman explaining that she had 'given up counting death threats because what is the point?'

Trans People's Experiences



In-person Anti-Trans Hate

In the last 12 months

47.9%

627 trans people of trans participants reported **experiencing** anti-trans abuse, harassment or vilification in-person

36.3%

475 trans people said **none**

8.2%

107 trans people were **unsure**

Compared to 2020

34.2%

448 trans people said they had experienced **more** or **significantly more** anti-trans in-person hate

9%

119 trans people reported **around the same** level of anti-trans hate

1.37%

18 trans people reported **less** or **significantly less**

2.14%

28 trans people were **unsure**

Two months preceding the survey compared to the start of the year

23.6%

309 trans people reported **more** or **significantly more** anti-trans hate in-person

18.7%

245 trans people reported **around the same** level

1.8%

23 trans people reported experiencing **less**

2.9%

38 trans people were **unsure**

Trans people reported in-person anti-trans hate in various settings, including in the home, workplace, and street. Anti-trans hate in the home and workplace tended to be perpetrated by people known to the victim and involved more personalised abuse, such as deliberate deadnaming.

Street-based abuse and harassment tended to be perpetrated by individuals unknown to the victim. These involved one perpetrator or several, with many participants describing being harassed, chased or assaulted by groups of men, typically at night and when the victim was alone.

Trans people described a range of in-person hate, such as:

Microaggressions (e.g. 'dirty looks', stares, pointing)

Non-consensual picture taking

Deliberate misgendering and deadnaming

Workplace bullying

Harassment in public

Harassment in private venues (especially relating to bathrooms)

Stalking

Physical assault (e.g. spitting, grabbing, punching)

Sexual assault (e.g. rape)

Death threats

As with online anti-trans hate these range from microaggressions to extreme violence.

Workplace bullying involved social exclusion, inappropriate touching, and vexatious complaints, while public harassment involved verbal assault in the street or on public transport, typically involving slurs.

Trans People's Experiences



Anti-trans Violence

In the last 12 months

16%

209 trans people of trans participants **had experienced** anti-trans violence

66.5%

870 trans people had not

5.7%

74 trans people were **unsure**

Compared to 2020

13.3%

174 trans people reported experiencing **more** or **significantly more** anti-trans violence

1.6%

21 trans people said they had experienced around the **same amount**

0.2%

3 trans people reported **less** or **significantly less**

0.6%

8 trans people were **unsure**

Two months preceding the survey compared to the start of the year

11.4%

149 trans people reported **experiencing more** or **significantly more** anti-trans violence

3.3%

43 trans people reported around the **same amount**

0.4%

5 trans people experienced **less** or **significantly less**

0.7%

9 trans people were **unsure**

Trans people said many different kinds of anti-trans violence, including:

Spitting

Non-consensual touching

Grabbing, shoving, punching and kicking

Being chased or assaulted by groups of men

Assault with objects
(e.g. bottles, chairs, lit cigarettes)

Assault with weapons (e.g. knives)

Sexual assault (e.g. rape)

Trans participants described physical assaults often involving spitting, grabbing, and punching. Several of these may have amounted to grievous bodily harm. For example, one trans woman recounted an instance of an attacker beating her over the back of the head with a tree branch and breaking several ribs.

A few participants described situations that may have amounted to attempted murder. For instance, one trans woman recounted how an assailant repeatedly tried to run her down with their car. Additionally, many trans people explicitly discussed violence perpetrated by police at length.

Bad-faith Responses

Demographics

A small minority of responses used anti-trans rhetoric, slurs, hate speech or otherwise voiced hostility toward trans people. Researchers identified 40 such bad-faith responses and excluded these from the primary analysis. However, these responses illuminate the perspectives of those who engage in anti-trans abuse, harassment, vilification and violence.

Of these 40 responses, the demographics of four were illegible for the purposes of the survey. Fifteen per cent (6) were aged 18-24, 10% (4) were 25-34, 27.50% (11) were 35-44, 30% (12) were 45-54, 5% (2) were 55-64 and 2.50% (1) was 65 and over. Fifty per cent (20) were cis women and 40% (16) were cis men.

Regarding state or territory of residence, 42.50% (17) lived in Victoria, 10% (4) lived in New South Wales, 10% (4) lived in Queensland, 7.50% (3) lived in the Australian Capital Territory, 5% (2) lived in South Australia, 2.50% (1) lived in the Northern Territory, and 2.50% (1) lived in Western Australia.

Interestingly, bad-faith participants submitted 80% (32) of their responses on just three of the nine days the survey was open and often only a few minutes apart. This concentration of responses suggests that the study was circulated among anti-trans networks on social media, either publicly or privately.

Notably, these respondents tended to skip most questions on the survey, answering only the open-text questions with comments ranging from a few sentences to lengthy essays. Several included links to identical anti-trans resources, further indicating a calculated approach to taking the survey.

Anti-trans perspectives

The content of these responses varied significantly but typically involved some level of disinformation. Interestingly, many revolved around or noted the anti-trans rally that coincided with a Nazi demonstration on the steps of the Victorian Parliament on 18 March 2023, with a handful of respondents identifying themselves as attendees.

For instance, one man aged 18-24 identified himself as a National Socialist Network (NSN) member who attended the Nazi rally. In his comments, he claimed to have engaged in physical anti-trans violence and repeatedly denigrated trans people as paedophiles.

This was a common theme among the bad-faith responses, with several asserting that LGBTQ organisations and people are 'grooming' or 'sexualising' children or otherwise using them to 'push agendas'. These comments emulate homophobic and transphobic tropes promoted by politicians and the media about Safe Schools and during the marriage equality postal survey.

Several submissions were further preoccupied with the idea of children undergoing surgical transition. In this context, it is essential to note that gender-affirming surgeries are generally unavailable to people under the age of 18. Indeed, these responses displayed a poor understanding of the science and laws around trans healthcare in general.

Many of these respondents appeared to take pleasure in engaging in anti-trans hate. When asked about relevant experiences, one man aged 18-24 said, 'I cause the hate most of the time'. Another man from the same age bracket stated, 'I'm always trying to up my levels of anti-trans hatred and further spread anti-trans sentiment'.

These comments ranged from mild to severe, with one middle-aged man writing, 'I spit on and laugh at those wankers [sic] every day'. The self-identified Nazi further stated that he regularly incites trans people to commit suicide, explaining that doing so 'feels awesome'.

Bad-faith Responses

Anti-trans rhetoric and DARVO

Many of these responses engaged in

DARVO (deny, attack, and reverse victim and offender),

a common strategy used by abusers when someone exposes their abuse. These submissions tended to frame trans people as perpetrators and cis people, typically cis women, as victims of abuse and violence.

Many bad-faith respondents comprehensively denied the existence of transphobia in any form. For example, one middle-aged man claimed that all instances of anti-trans hate are 'made up'. Similarly, a middle-aged woman stated that there is '[no] vilification or hatred directed at trans people'.

Further, many of these participants took the survey as an opportunity to attack trans people. One middle-aged woman stated that 'trans ideology [sic] is an awful abusive cult' and compared gender-affirming healthcare to Nazi human experimentation. In another example, another man referred to trans people as a 'death cult'.

Reversing the victim and offender was a common tactic. One older cis man stated that hate 'mostly comes from trans people and their allies against women'. Another respondent skipped nearly every question to write, 'I have seen violence by trans activists' and nothing else. Indeed, several responses framed trans people as inherently 'anti-women'.

Among bad-faith respondents, this approach was popular with middle-aged to older cis women who often framed repercussions for engaging in anti-trans hate as 'attacks'. For example, respondents freely described deliberate misgendering and attending anti-trans rallies but understood these as 'merely stating an opinion'.

These respondents described 'receiving hate', being 'yelled at' and 'pushed and jostled' while attending anti-trans events. Several cis women described feeling 'afraid' or 'terrified' by the presence of pro-trans rallygoers protesting the 18 March Nazi rally, though none reported any anxieties regarding the Nazi attendees.

Results

We found compelling evidence that anti-trans abuse, harassment, vilification and violence are rampant in Australian society and intensifying over time. Nearly all respondents had seen anti-trans hate online and more than half had seen it in-person. Additionally, most reported a recent escalation of transphobia.

Virtually all participants saw anti-trans hate online in the last year, with a majority reporting an intensification since 2020 and in the prior two months.

Similarly, over half saw anti-trans hate in-person in the previous year, with around a third reporting a recent increase. Around a third of the sample witnessed anti-trans violence in the prior two months, with roughly a quarter reporting an increase in the last few months to years.

Summary of Results: All Respondents



Online hate

In the last year

9 in 10

saw anti-trans hate online

Since 2020

8 in 10

reported an increase in anti-trans hate online

In the prior two months

7 in 10

reported an increase in anti-trans hate online



In-person hate

In the last year

1 in 2

saw anti-trans hate in-person

Since 2020

1 in 3

reported an increase in anti-trans hate in-person

In the prior two months

1 in 3

reported an increase in anti-trans hate in-person



Violence

In the last year

1 in 3

saw anti-trans violence

Since 2020

1 in 4

reported an increase in anti-trans violence

In the prior two months

1 in 5

reported an increase in anti-trans violence



Results

Similarly, around half of trans respondents experienced online anti-trans hate in the last year, with around a third reporting an escalation since 2020 and over the prior two months.

Nearly half experienced anti-trans hate in-person, with a third reporting an increase since 2020 and a quarter reporting one in the previous two months. Unfortunately, 1 in 10 trans participants experienced anti-trans violence in the last year, with a similar amount reporting an escalation since 2020 and in the prior two months.

Summary of Results: Trans Respondents



Online hate

In the last year

! 1 in 2
experienced
anti-trans hate online

Since 2020

↗ 1 in 3
reported an increase in
anti-trans hate online

In the prior two months

↗ 1 in 3
reported an increase in
anti-trans hate online



In-person hate

In the last year

! 1 in 2
experienced anti-trans
hate in-person

Since 2020

↗ 1 in 3
reported an increase in
anti-trans hate in-person

In the prior two months

↗ 1 in 4
reported an increase in
anti-trans hate in-person



Violence

In the last year

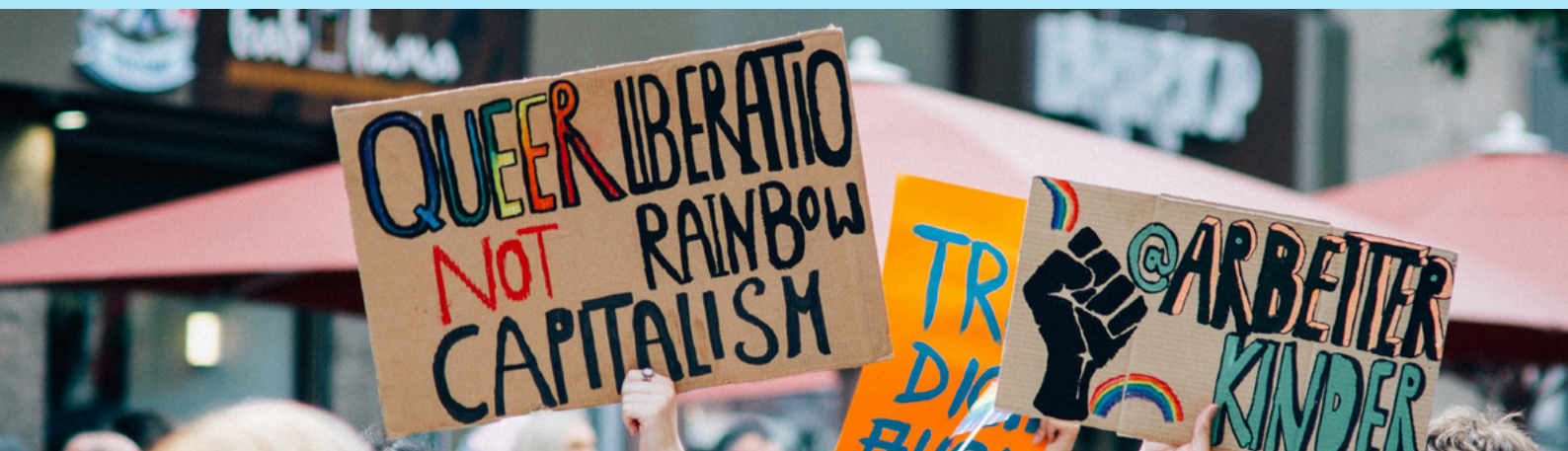
! 1 in 10
experienced
anti-trans violence

Since 2020

↗ 1 in 10
reported an increase
in anti-trans violence

In the prior two months

↗ 1 in 10
reported an increase
in anti-trans violence



Results

These findings paint a grim picture of the prevalence and escalation of anti-trans hate in Australia. It is clear that transphobia wields a broad social licence and that it remains a common experience for many trans people. The results further suggest that anti-trans hate has intensified over the last few years and even more so in 2023.

With 9 in 10 participants witnessing anti-trans hate online and 1 in 2 trans respondents experiencing it in the last year, it is evident that transphobia is routine in online spaces. This may be attributable to factors such as poor content moderation on social media platforms, anti-trans incitement in online media, and bad-faith actors spreading disinformation.

Of course, while anti-trans hate is most visible in online spaces, mainly social media and digital news media, a comparable number of trans people experienced abuse, harassment or vilification offline. This speaks to the relationship between online anti-trans hate and its real-world consequences.

Indeed, 1 in 2 of all respondents saw (and the same number of trans participants experienced) anti-trans hate in-person in the last 12 months before the survey. This demonstrates that anti-trans abuse, harassment and vilification are not confined to online spaces but are widespread in daily life. Contributing factors may include inadequate anti-vilification legislation, among much else.

Unfortunately, these real-world experiences of anti-trans hate often escalate to physical violence. Around 1 in 3 participants witnessed anti-trans violence in the last year while 1 in 10 trans people experienced it. Even an extremely conservative estimate suggests that this represents several thousand anti-trans hate crimes in the previous 12 months.

Importantly, findings also suggest that anti-trans hate is escalating over time. Overall, 1 in 3 participants reported an increase in anti-trans hate since 2020. A comparable number also reported an increase two months before the survey, coinciding with the speaking tour of anti-trans lobbyist Kellie-Jay Keen.

A relatively smaller number of trans participants reported a rise in anti-trans violence compared to other forms of anti-trans hate. This may indicate that the level of violence has remained relatively stable. Still, it may also suggest that violence is merely concentrated among trans people who present atypically or who are more often perceived to be trans.

Summary of Findings



Anti-trans abuse, harassment, vilification and violence are rampant in Australia with virtually all participants reporting online anti-trans hate in the previous 12 months.



Participants reported an increase in anti-trans hate in the two years preceding the survey



Respondents reported an increase in anti-trans hate in the two months preceding the survey which coincides with the Australian tour of anti-trans lobbyist Kellie-Jay Keen



Around half of all respondents saw anti-trans hate in-person in the previous 12 months and a significant minority of trans participants experienced anti-trans violence in the same period



Trans people experienced a variety of online anti-trans hate, including deliberate misgendering, insults, hate speech, doxing, stalking, threats of violence and sexual assault, death threats, incitement to commit suicide and incitement to genocide



Trans people also experienced a range of in-person anti-trans hate, including workplace bullying, street-based harassment, harassment relating to the use of bathrooms, stalking, physical and sexual assault and death threats



Trans people further experienced anti-trans violence, including spitting, grabbing, punching, assault by groups, assault with objects and weapons, and sexual assault

Recommendations

Based on the above findings, the Trans Justice Project and Victorian Pride Lobby recommend that State, Territory and Federal Governments work collaboratively to:



Introduce Federal and State anti-vilification laws to protect the entire LGBTQIA+ community from abuse, harassment, vilification and violence



Investigate community-led interventions to curb anti-LGBTQIA+ extremism and de-radicalisation approaches



Work together with social media companies to stop the spread of anti-trans disinformation and anti-LGBTQIA+ hate groups



Provide funding for research into the causes and impacts of anti-trans abuse, harassment, vilification and violence and strategies for addressing them



Strengthen media regulations to ensure greater accountability for news outlets that promote anti-trans disinformation



We hope that the grave findings in this report can help inform efforts to promote the safety and well-being of trans people across Australia

Thank You

The project team would like to extend our sincere thanks to every person who contributed to the production of this report including everyone who took part in the survey, those who shared their stories with us, and all of the organisations and community members who helped to share the survey through their networks and friends.

Additionally, we want to extend our thanks to all of the people behind the scenes who advised on various aspects of the final report including legal advice, media, and policy development.



PROTECT TRANS RIGHTS



Trans justice project.

Victorian Pride Lobby

