Trans and Gender Diverse People's Experiences of Escalating Stigma

Anti-Trans Media, Political Rhetoric, Policies, and Violence

Findings from the TRANSform Australian national trans health survey

Department of Medicine

THE UNIVERSITY OF MELBOURNE

TRANS HEALTH RESEARCH

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FG Trade, iStock

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Acknowledgement of Country

The Trans Health Research Group is based in Naarm (Melbourne), on the lands of Wurundjeri people of the Kulin Nation.

We Acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the Lands and Waterways on which we work and pay our respects to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elders, past and present.

Sovereignty was never ceded. This always was, and always will be, Aboriginal land.

Acknowledgements

This study was run as part of the TRANSform Project, a longitudinal trans-led and community co-designed research project.

We would like to send our sincerest thanks to the over 800 trans and gender diverse people who have so generously shared their experiences of anti-trans stigma.

Behind the scenes, there have been countless hours of discussion, data analysis, and reporting.

Thank you to the Trans Health Research Community Advisory Group who through their diverse expertise and lived experience, have provided such invaluable feedback to TRANSform, helping to improve the inclusivity and accessibility of the project.

Thank you to our wonderful volunteers who are integral members of our team, and the many TRANSform collaborators, including community organisations, advocacy groups, clinicians, fellow researchers, and scientists across the country.

This research has been approved by the Austin Health, ACON and Thorne Harbour Ethics Committees, and we are deeply appreciative of their ongoing support for this project. This research was only possible because of competitive grant funding, and we are so grateful for funding support from NHMRC and The University of Melbourne.

Recommended Citation

Zwickl, R., Chan, R., Murray, J., Skewis, F., Lane, S., Grace, J., Ward-Smith, E., Leemaqz, S.L., Bailey, S., Ruggles, T., Cheung, AS. Trans and gender diverse people's experiences of escalating stigma: Anti-trans media, political rhetoric, policies, and violence. Melbourne: Trans Health Research Group, Department of Medicine, University of Melbourne, 2026.

Additional details and data from this research have been published in *Frontiers of Public Health*.

Content Note

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people should be aware that page 21 of this document contains a photograph of people who may have since died.

This document contains screenshots of anti-trans content, including articles and photos. The purpose of including these real-world examples is to educate readers who have never been impacted by anti-trans rhetoric themselves, and to accurately capture the ongoing reality of anti-trans stigma both nationally and internationally.

This document also contains frequent mentions of anti-trans stigma and mental health, including suicidality. Support is always available. Find a collation of trans-affirming resources and support options here.

About Trans Health Research Group

The Trans Health Research team are based in the Department of Medicine, at The University of Melbourne, Australia.

We conduct research with one goal: **to provide robust evidence to improve the health and wellbeing of trans communities.** Every research question we ask, every project that we do, every collaboration that we start, is aligned with our goal, and must translate to better outcomes for our communities.

Our research covers **three priority areas – gender affirming hormone therapy (GAHT), mental health and wellbeing, and health care service delivery.** Our research findings have been translated into health and wellbeing programs, treatment guidelines, and health policy.

While research is our core focus, we are also advocates and passionate speakers and routinely provide **consultation and trans health educational training** to health care professionals, government, and community organisations nationwide.

Trans Health Research place a strong focus on community co-designed and trans-led research. Our team includes trans men, trans women, non-binary people, and cisgender allies.

Contact Information

Trans Health Research Group

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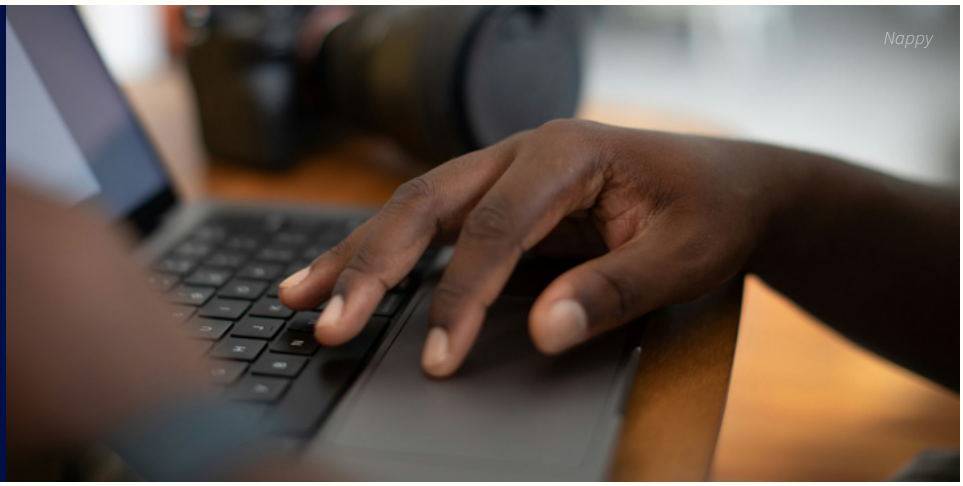
Terms Used In This Document

Trans and gender diverse (trans): People who have a gender different to the gender presumed and recorded for them at birth. It is a broad umbrella term inclusive of a large range of genders including trans man, trans woman, non-binary, genderqueer, genderfluid, agender, Sistergirl, Brotherboy, and more. More key community definitions can be found here.

Anti-trans stigma: The labelling, stereotyping, and ostracising of trans and gender diverse people by institutions and individuals, thereby restricting their access to social, economic, and political power. More information about anti-trans stigma can be found here and here.

Executive Summary



In May 2024, **807 trans and gender diverse (herein referred to as *trans*) people across Australia, aged 16+**, completed a national survey on their experiences of anti-trans stigma, conducted as part of the TRANSform Project, a trans-led and community co-designed longitudinal study based at The University of Melbourne.

In The Previous Month

58%
encountered anti-trans news media multiple times weekly

72%
encountered anti-trans remarks online multiple times weekly

8%
personally experienced anti-trans bullying, harassment, or threats online multiple times weekly

In the month before the survey, 58% of respondents had seen or heard anti-trans remarks in the news media multiple times weekly, and 72% online, with 41% seeing and hearing anti-trans remarks online every day. One in thirteen (8%) had personally experienced anti-trans bullying, harassment or threats online multiple times weekly, and 38% had thought about, seen or heard anti-trans rhetoric by Australian politicians and high-profile people.

In The Previous 12 Months

75%
stopped or reduced engagement with news media

69%
stopped or reduced engagement with social media

In the previous 12 months, a majority had stopped or reduced their engagement with news media (75%) and social media (69%) to avoid anti-trans content, cutting many off from community connection, information, and work opportunities.

This exposure is a health issue. Stigma is an established driver of the disproportionate rates of psychological distress experienced by trans people, and international evidence links anti-trans legislation and public debate with increased distress and suicidality, particularly among trans young people.

All seven forms of anti-trans stigma that were measured in this study were associated with a statistically higher risk of anxiety, depression, self-harm ideation, and suicidal ideation. Six stigma types were associated with increased risk of suicide planning, and five with increased risk of self-harm behaviours.

Anxiety

Depression

Self-harm ideation

Self-harm behaviours

Suicidal ideation

Suicide planning

Since the survey closed, anti-trans rhetoric, policies and violence have continued to escalate, including restrictions on gender-affirming healthcare in Queensland and the Northern Territory. Urgent action is needed to curb the influence of anti-trans mis/disinformation and protect trans people from harm.

Recommendations At A Glance

The **Australian Government** should name hate-based conduct targeting trans people as a foreseeable harm under the forthcoming Digital Duty of Care legislation, extend the 2026 federal hate crime reforms to cover gender identity, sexual orientation and sex characteristics, and introduce civil vilification protections into the Sex Discrimination Act 1984.

The **Australian Government** should fund independent monitoring of anti-trans mobilisation, including its funding sources and international coordination, and invest in community-led prevention, education, and research under the National Action Plan for the Health and Wellbeing of LGBTIQA+ People 2025-2035.

State and territory governments should legislate safeguards protecting access to evidence-based gender-affirming healthcare from political interference.

Social media platforms should enforce their hateful conduct policies and report transparently on the handling of anti-trans abuse.

Media regulators should make standards for reporting on trans people enforceable, and media organisations should adopt them as internal editorial policy.

Project Background And Methods

In recent years, there has been a marked escalation in anti-trans stigma; the labelling, stereotyping, and ostracising of trans people.

In what has been termed a "trifecta of violence", anti-trans media and political rhetoric, policies, and violence are strongly correlated over time.

Mis/disinformation dominates rhetoric about trans people and has spurred policies and legislation in the United States of America (USA), United Kingdom (UK), and Australia, that restrict trans people's access to essential healthcare, sports participation, single-sex spaces, and legal gender affirmation.

In this rapidly changing sociopolitical climate, there is a need for research focused on trans people's experiences of escalating anti-trans stigma.

To address this research gap, an online survey focused on anti-trans stigma was open for completion between 1 May 2024 and 31 May 2024 to anyone:

- With a gender that is different to what was presumed for them at birth (trans or gender diverse).
- Currently living in Australia.
- Aged 16 years or older.

More Information

For more detailed information about the study methods and/or additional data analysis, please refer to this peer-reviewed publication or contact the TRANSform research team: transform-research@unimelb.edu.au.

This survey was conducted as part of the larger TRANSform Project. TRANSform is an ongoing research project that aims to produce priority-based and community-led research to improve the health and wellbeing of trans communities. Design of this survey was led by researchers with lived experience and expertise as trans people, with input from ACON and community members, and cisgender clinicians with extensive experience in trans health.

Survey questions with fixed-option responses are included in the report where relevant. Anxiety and depressive symptoms (herein referred to as *anxiety* and *depression*) in the preceding 2 weeks were assessed using the Generalized Anxiety-7 (GAD-7) and Patient Health Questionnaire-9 (PHQ-9), respectively. Survey respondents were also asked about whether in the preceding 12 months they had thought about hurting themselves on purpose in some way (*self-harm ideation*), hurt themselves on purpose in some way (*self-harm behaviours*), seriously considered attempting suicide (*suicidal ideation*), made a plan about how they would attempt suicide (*suicide planning*), or attempted suicide (*suicide attempt*).

The researchers looked at whether people who frequently experience anti-trans stigma are more likely to have worse mental health. To do this, they used statistical models that estimate how much more likely (as a "risk ratio") someone with more than weekly stigma exposure is to have poor mental health, compared to someone with less than weekly exposure. When that model wasn't able to obtain a reliable result for a particular analysis, they switched to an alternative method that gives comparable results but is more computationally reliable. They controlled for age and gender (categorised as trans man, trans woman, or non-binary and gender diverse) in every model — meaning they mathematically accounted for these factors so that any differences in mental health outcomes could be attributed to stigma exposure rather than to differences in the age or gender makeup of the groups being compared. Given the small number of people with a culturally-specific gender identity (<1%), these people were included under the broader non-binary and gender diverse category for this analysis.

Respondent quotes that are used throughout the report were in response to a single free-text survey question *"Is there anything else you would like to share with us about your experiences of anti-trans news media, social media and recent events?"* Names featured in this report are pseudonyms, to protect the privacy of respondents.

The study received ethical and governance approval by the Austin Health Human Research Ethics Committee (Reference Number HREC/57155/Austin-2019), ACON Research Ethics Review Committee (Reference Number 2020/03) and the Thorne Harbour Health Community Research Endorsement Panel (Reference Number THH/CREP 20-006).

Gender Spectrum Collection

Survey Respondents

CREATISTA, iStock

"Feels like the walls are closing in on us, that violence and the removal of our basic human rights are ever increasingly a threat, and a reality."

–Luke, trans man.

Josu Ozkaritz, Adobe Stock

"I feel locked into it. I can't look away. Our whole world is burning, and no one cares."

–Jacinta, trans woman.

807
Respondents

286 (36%)
Trans women

242 (30%)
Trans men

271 (34%)
Non-binary or gender diverse

5 (<1%)
Culturally-specific gender identity

658 (82%)
Lived in metropolitan area

681 (84%)
Born in Australia

33 (4%)
Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander

415 (51%)
Diagnosed disability or chronic health condition

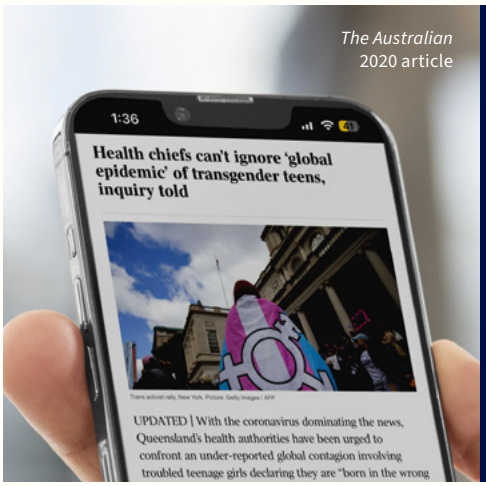
16–79 years old
Age range

33 years old
Median age

“Being trans is actually wonderful, it’s the ever-present push against our rights that makes it hard.”

–Zoe, trans woman.

Annie, Adobe Stock



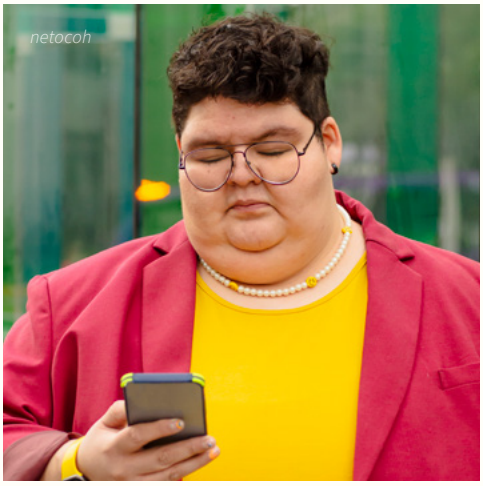
The Australian
2020 article

Anti-Trans Remarks In The News Media

Valeria Blanc, iStock

"The amount of platform anti-trans activists get in mainstream media is frightening as trans people do not get the same platform. We can't defend ourselves if we do not get the same platforms."

–Jenny, trans woman.



netocoh

"The proportion of anti-trans news media I see vastly outweighs any positive coverage."

–Rachel, trans woman.

Trans identities and experiences have long been medicalised and pathologised. In the last decade, media and political discourse about trans people and their healthcare has increasingly involved misinformation (inaccurate information) and disinformation (deceptive information).

In response to growing concern about reporting on trans people, in 2019 the Press Council of Australia released guidelines for the reporting on persons with diverse sexual orientation, gender identity, and innate variations of sex characteristics. However, these guidelines are industry-funded, non-binding, and lack enforceability.

In the absence of consequences and driven by commercial interests, Australian media outlets have continued to publish anti-trans mis/disinformation and use negative framing of trans people, with one media review showing that over 90% of articles framed trans people and issues negatively.

Recurring themes in the Australian media include poorly supported claims of the 'dangers' of social and medical gender affirmation for trans children and adolescents, and of trans people's access to single-sex spaces, including public bathrooms and sports.

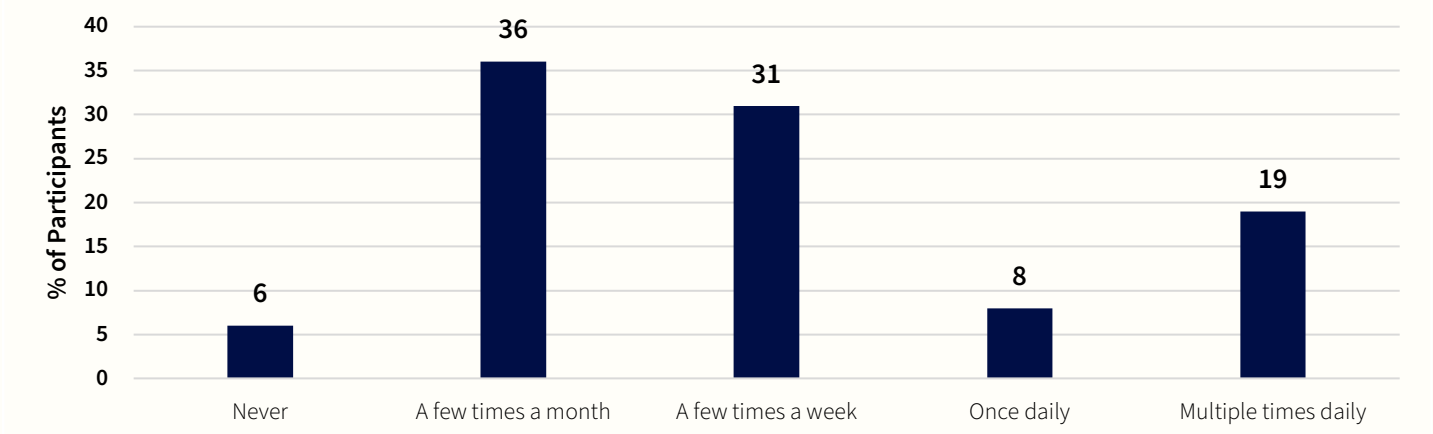
To assess how often trans people are exposed to anti-trans news media, survey respondents were asked *"In the last month, how often have you seen or heard anti-trans remarks in the news media?"*

In the previous month:

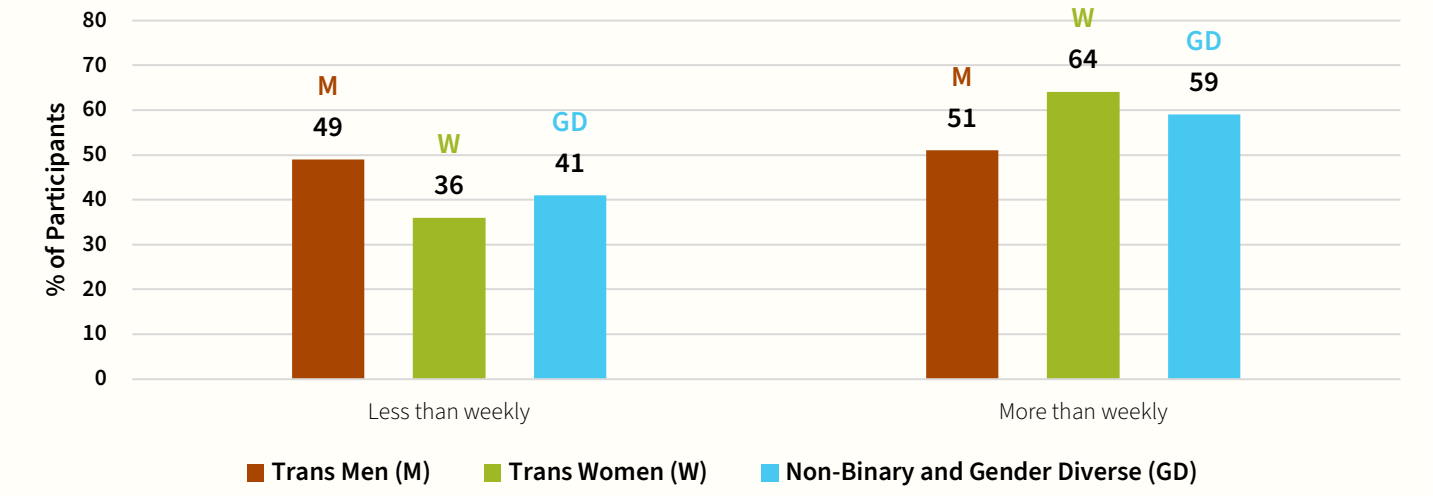
Over half (58%) had seen or heard anti-trans remarks in the news media multiple times weekly. This experience was more common amongst trans women (64%), compared to non-binary and gender diverse people (59%) and trans men (51%), and amongst those aged 41-55 years (61%), 26-40 years (59%), and 16-25 years (58%), compared to those 56+ years (50%).

"In the last month, how often have you seen or heard anti-trans remarks in the news media?"

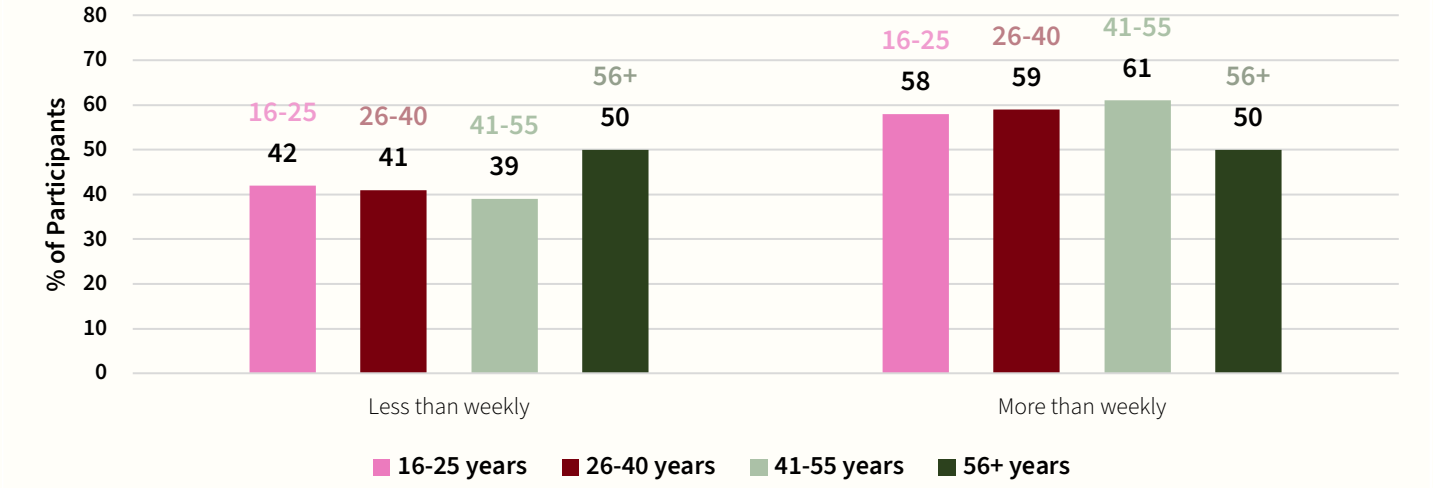
Total Sample



By Gender



By Age



People who saw or heard anti-trans remarks in the news media multiple times weekly (compared to people who saw or heard this less often), were:

37% more likely to report **anxiety**

25% more likely to report **depression**

23% more likely to report **self-harm ideation**

38% more likely to report **self-harm behaviours**

33% more likely to report **suicidal ideation**

43% more likely to report **suicide planning**

Ranta Images

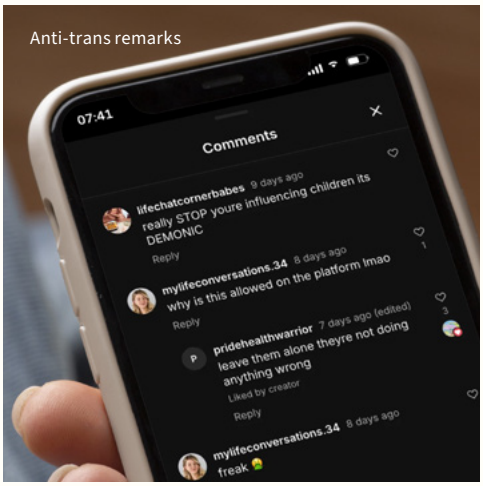
"Every time I see/hear an outrageous news story about trans people repeated completely uncritically (e.g., "they're putting litter trays in a school in the US for students who identify as cats") it really bothers me. Some narratives are so absurd that the only reason someone would accept one at face value is because it confirms what they already believe about trans people."

–Harrison, non-binary.

"Trans 'issues' are so thoroughly oversaturated in the media… It's deeply saddening, and really quite stressful. It's worsened in particular since about 2020 … I used to feel it was not only good but ethically necessary to stay up to date on trans issues in the news, but it would debilitate me, now."

–Wilson, trans man.

Anti-Trans Remarks Online



"The anti-trans rhetoric feels overwhelming and never ending. It's exhausting being hyper vigilant."

–Jackson, trans man.

"The current media climate against trans people is unduly affecting my mental health, however I feel like I need to know the current state of things to keep myself as safe as possible."

–Avery, non-binary.

Since the 1990s, the internet has played a vital role in the lives of many trans people, allowing spaces for positive trans representation, social support, and trans community connection with relative privacy and anonymity. However, many online spaces have changed over time, in terms of trans community utility of different platforms and platform responses to trans people.

There are several notable examples of social media platforms that have formerly been sites of trans community connection that have become increasingly hostile to trans people.

To assess how often trans people are exposed to anti-trans content online, survey respondents were asked *"In the last month, how often have you seen or heard anti-trans remarks online?"*

In the previous month:

A majority (72%) had seen or heard anti-trans remarks online multiple times weekly. This was experienced at similar rates amongst trans women (72%), trans men (72%) and non-binary and gender diverse people (72%), though was more common amongst those aged 26-40 years (77%), compared to those aged 16-25 years (73%), 41-55 years (68%) and 56+ years (53%).

People who saw or heard anti-trans remarks online multiple times weekly (compared to people who saw or heard this less often), were:

60% more likely to report **anxiety**

47% more likely to report **depression**

30% more likely to report **self-harm ideation**

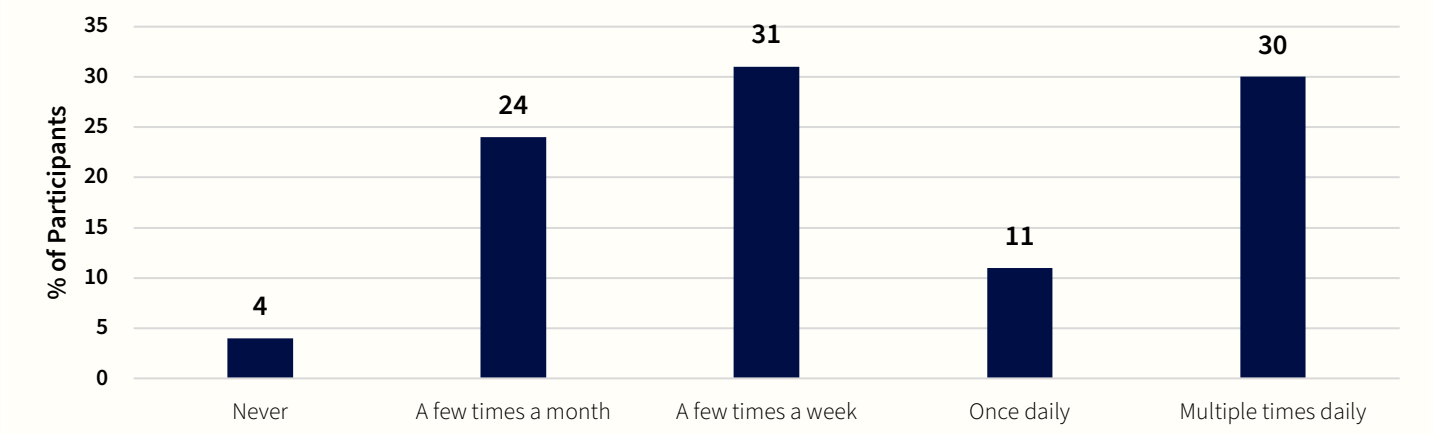
85% more likely to report **self-harm behaviours**

68% more likely to report **suicidal ideation**

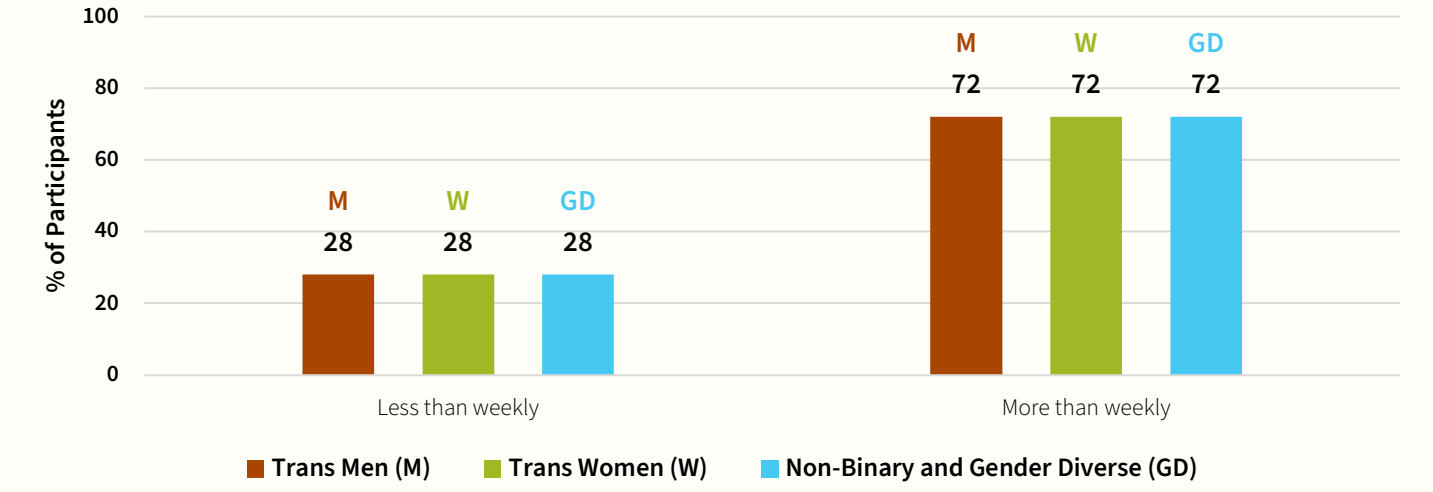
71% more likely to report **suicide planning**

"In the last month, how often have you seen or heard anti-trans remarks online?"

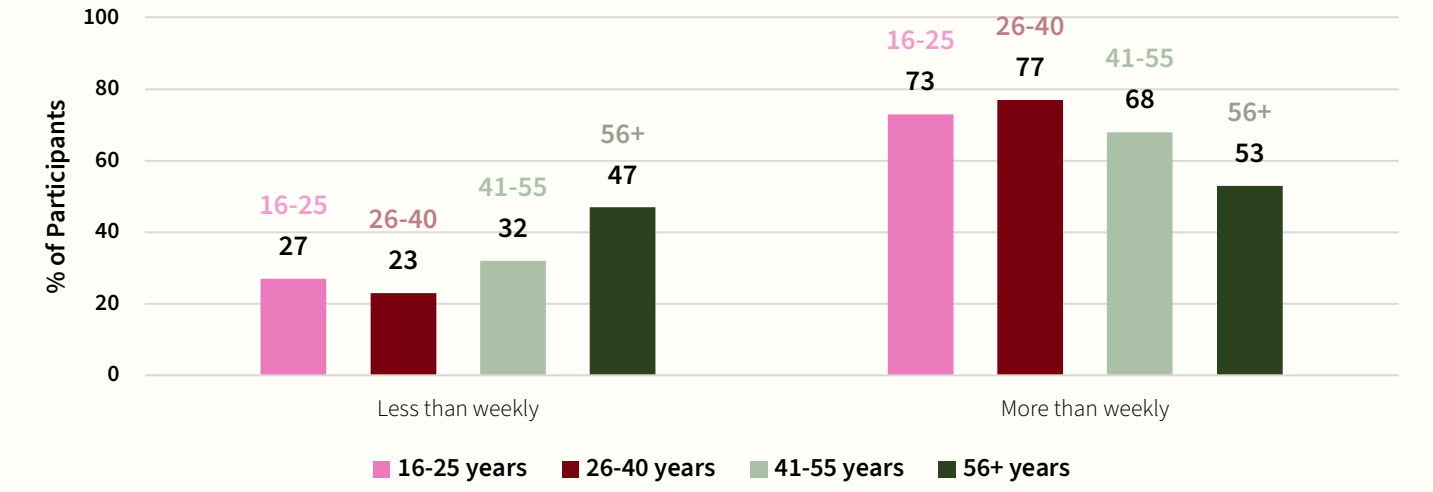
Total Sample

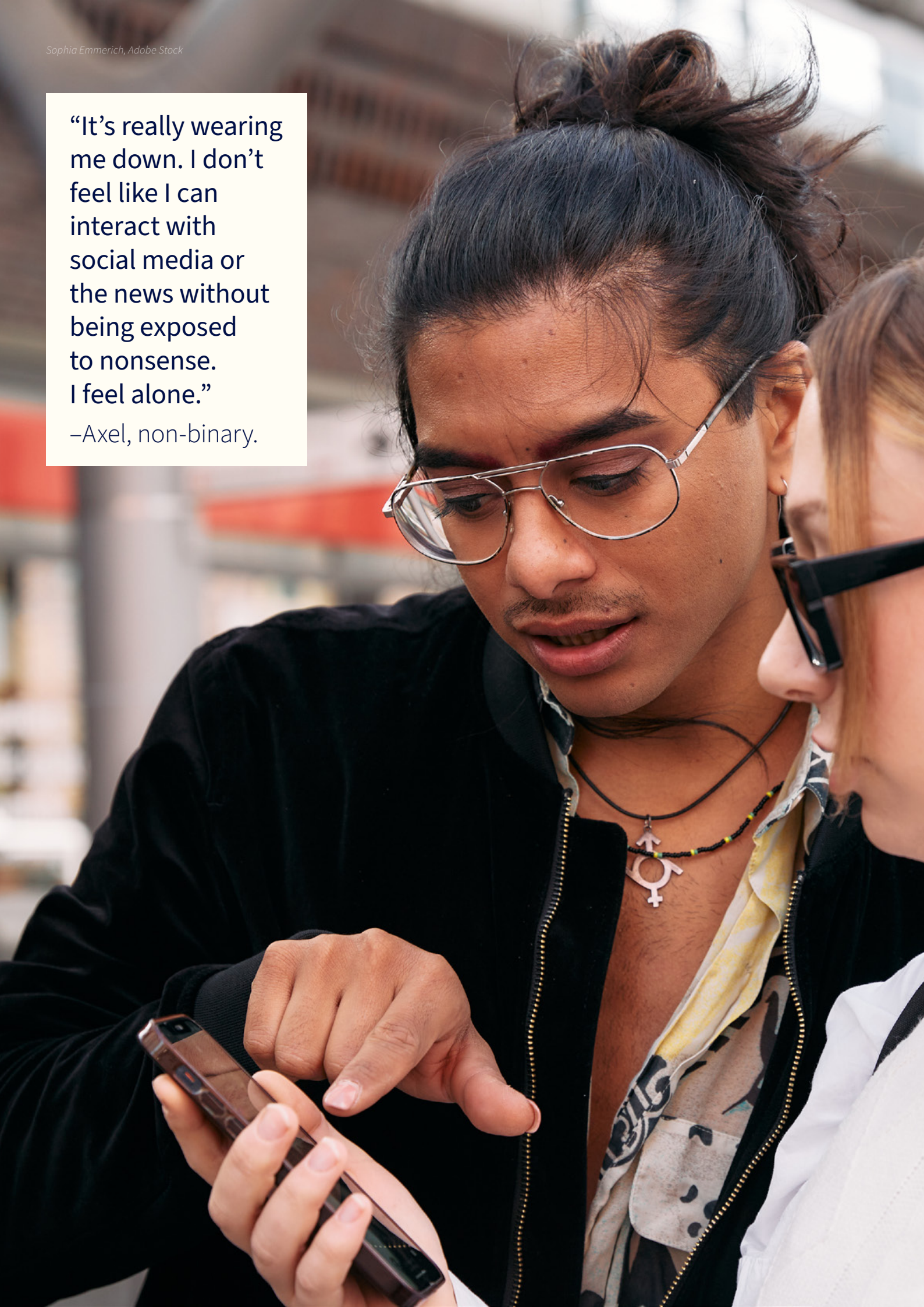


By Gender



By Age

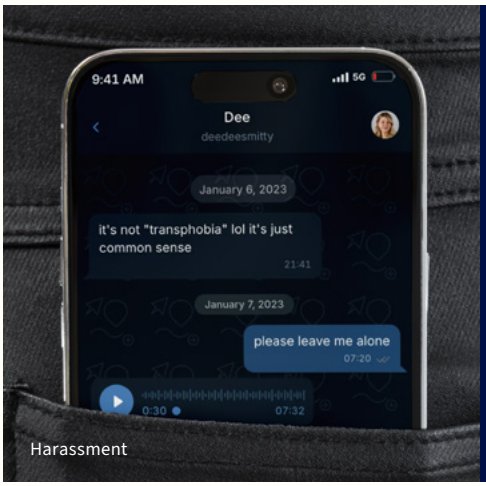




Sophia Emmerich, Adobe Stock

"It's really wearing me down. I don't feel like I can interact with social media or the news without being exposed to nonsense. I feel alone."

–Axel, non-binary.



Harassment

Bullying, Harassment, And Threats Online

Diamond Dogs, iStock

"I have received death threats and accusations of 'grooming' for my positive stance on gender-affirming care for kids."

–Penelope, trans woman.

Petra Ryan

"My football team, which has been a source of safety and community, has been targeted by anti-trans hate groups online. This has led to my name and the names of other trans people on my team being exposed."

–Jessica, trans woman.

In addition to seeing and hearing anti-trans remarks, trans people may be directly targeted by bullying, harassment and threats online.

To assess these experiences, survey respondents were asked, *"In the last month, how often have you personally experienced anti-trans bullying, harassment or threats online? For example, someone leaving a transphobic comment on something you posted on social media."*

In the previous month:

1 in 13 (8%) personally experienced anti-trans bullying, harassment or threats online multiple times weekly. This experience was most common amongst trans women (14%), compared to non-binary and gender diverse people (6%) and trans men (4%), and amongst those aged 41-55 years (14%), compared to those aged 26-40 years (8%), 16-25 years (6%), and 56+ years (6%).

People who personally experienced anti-trans bullying, harassment, or threats online multiple times weekly (compared to people who experienced this less often), were:

74% more likely to report **anxiety**

58% more likely to report **depression**

41% more likely to report **self-harm ideation**

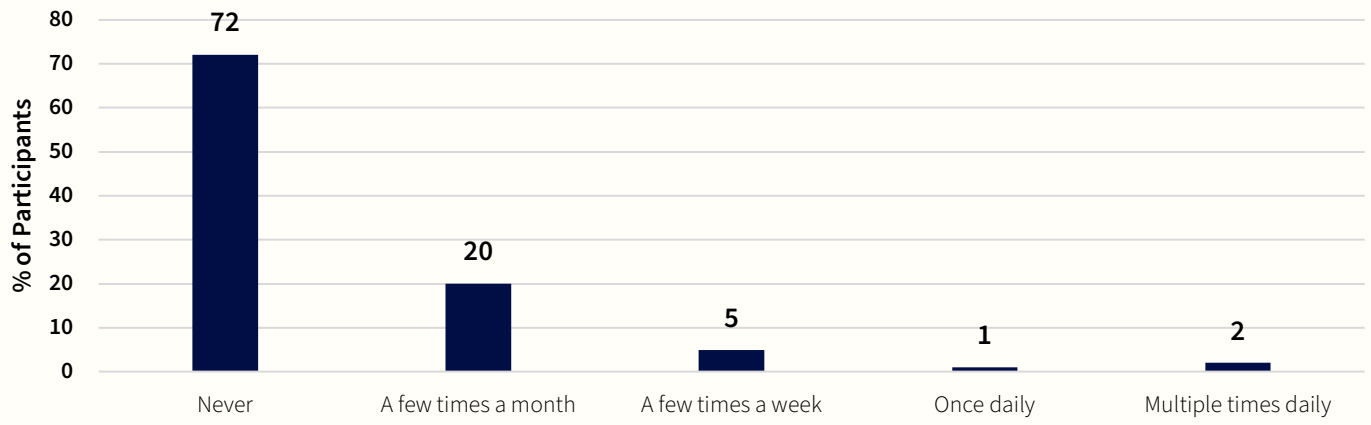
107% more likely to report **self-harm behaviours**

110% more likely to report **suicidal ideation**

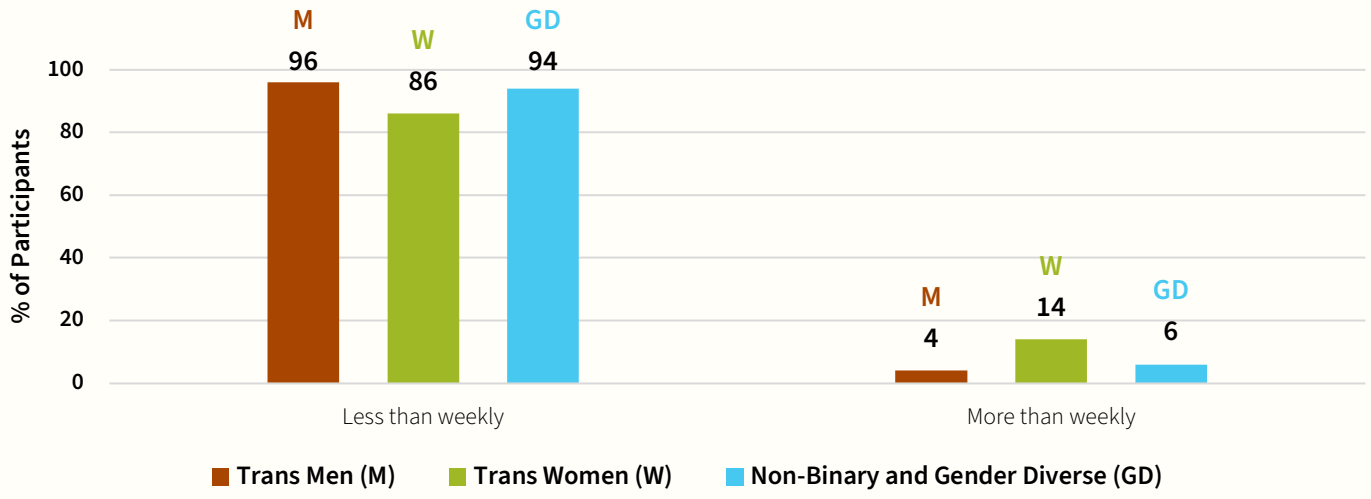
155% more likely to report **suicide planning**

"In the last month, how often have you personally experienced anti-trans bullying, harassment or threats online? For example, someone leaving a transphobic comment on something you posted on social media."

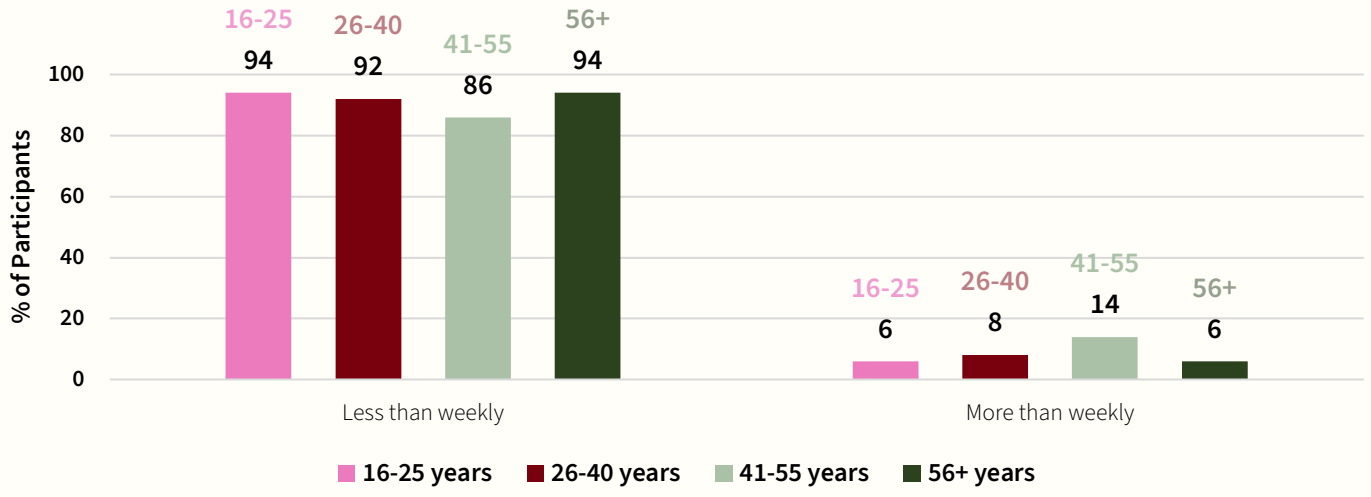
Total Sample



By Gender



By Age



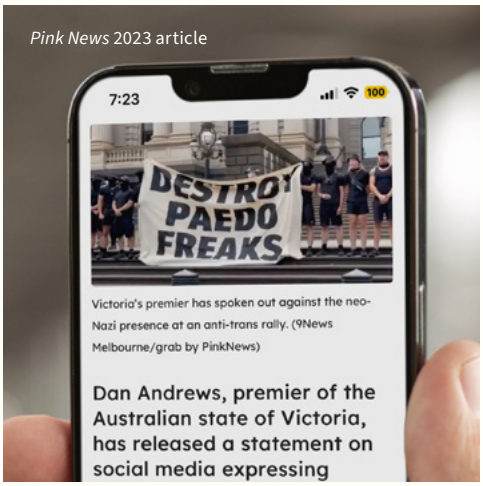
“Because I’m open about being transgender, I often receive hate messages online from strangers, and at least once or twice a month death threats or threats of violence.”

–Helena, trans woman.

Baliente Agency

Anti-Trans Rallies in Australia

ABC News 2023 footage



Pink News 2023 article

"There has been an increase in anti-trans media coverage and an increase in transphobic bullying on social media platforms over the last 5 years… When Posie Parker came to Australia, the situation on social media became so toxic that I deleted my Twitter account and made my Instagram as restricted as possible, in order to avoid people spamming my posts with transphobic hate speech."

–Eric, trans man.

In 2023, in the year prior to this survey, Australia experienced an unprecedented wave of rallies and coordinated campaigns against trans people. This included "Let Women Speak" events led by UK-based lobbyist Kellie-Jay Keen-Minshull (also known as Posie Parker) across multiple capital cities throughout March 2023, with the Melbourne event most notable for the presence of neo-Nazis and violence between protestors, counter protesters, and police. Also in March 2023, a group of LGBTIQA+ protesters had glass bottles and other projectiles thrown at them outside a political event in Sydney.

To assess how often trans people are exposed to anti-trans rallies in Australia – through direct personal experience, exposure via news or social media, or rumination – survey respondents were asked *"In the last month, how often have you thought about, seen or heard about anti-trans rallies in Australia?"*

In the previous month:

1 in 8 (12%) had thought about, seen or heard about anti-trans rallies in Australia multiple times weekly. This experience was more common amongst non-binary and gender diverse people (15%) and trans women (14%), compared to trans men (10%), though similar across those aged 16-25 years (12%), 26-40 years (14%), 41-55 years (11%), and 56+ years (12%).

People who thought about, or had seen or heard about anti-trans rallies in Australia multiple times weekly (compared to people who experienced this less often), were:

57% more likely to report **anxiety**

33% more likely to report **depression**

30% more likely to report **self-harm ideation**

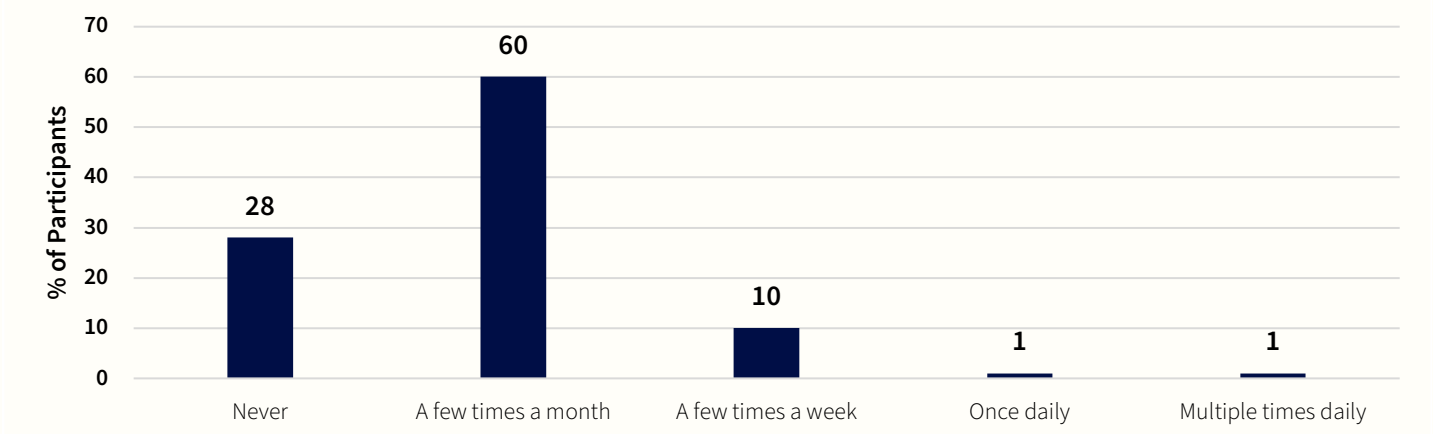
40% more likely to report **self-harm behaviours**

50% more likely to report **suicidal ideation**

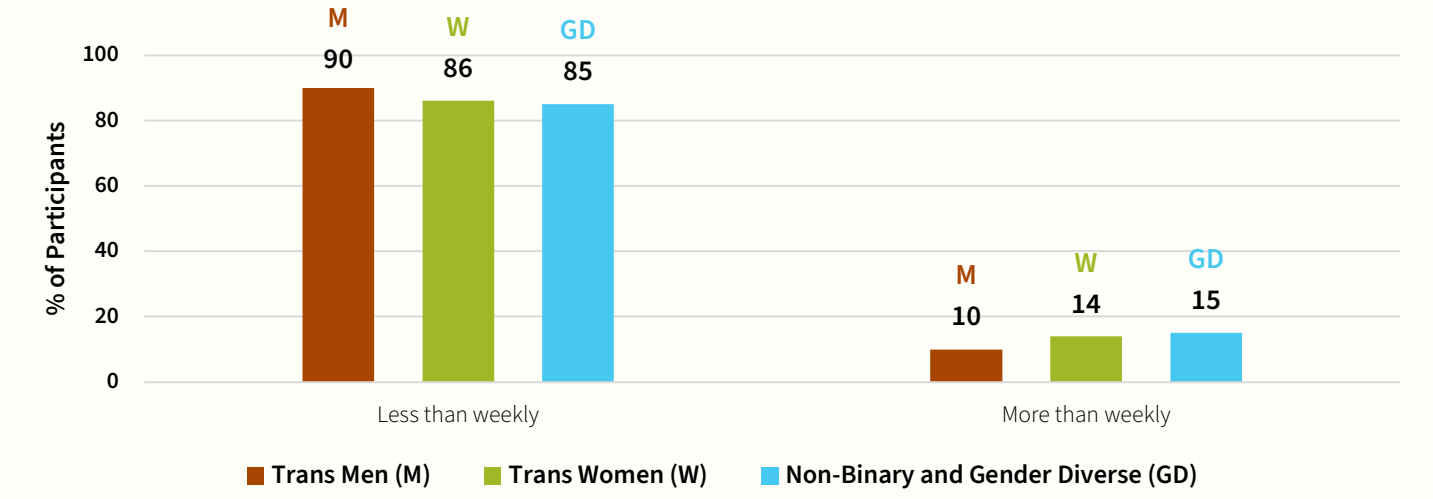
71% more likely to report **suicide planning**

"In the last month, how often have you thought about, seen, or heard about anti-trans rallies in Australia?"

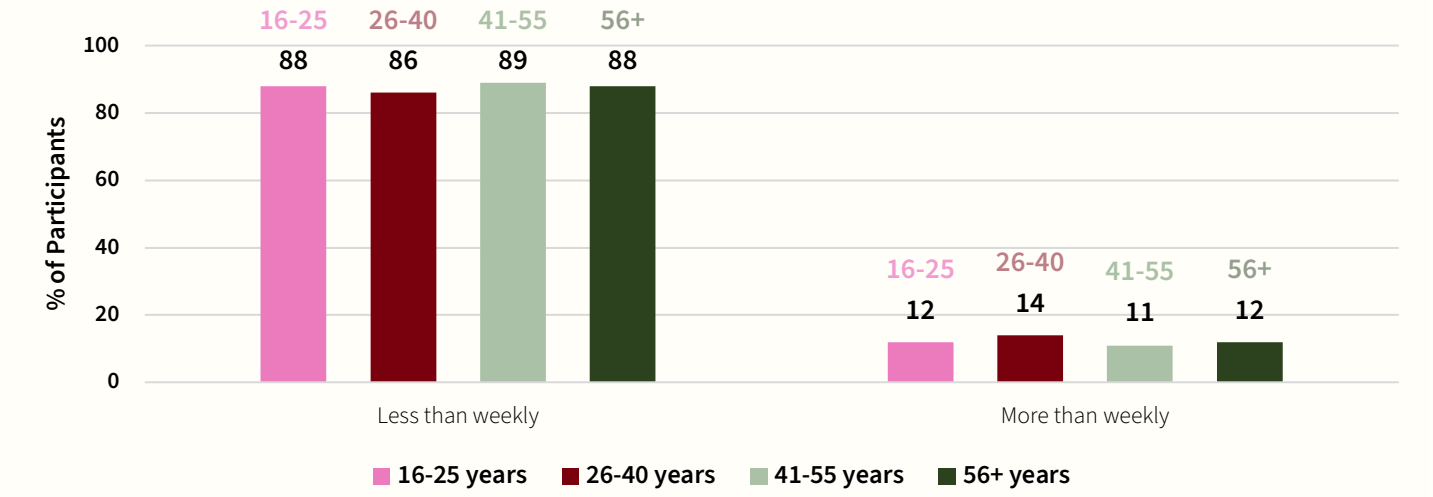
Total Sample

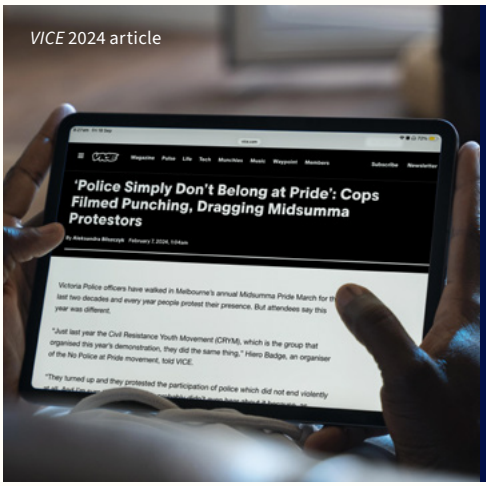


By Gender



By Age





VICE 2024 article

Police Violence Against Trans People In Australia

2020 Melbourne protest
Mitchell Luo

"I think the bit about cops and trans people is also heightened by my experience as a Blackfulla. Trans and gender diverse mob are at even higher rates of both violence and harassment from police, but also just have a higher likelihood of coming into contact with cops because we're such an overpoliced population. I can't really separate my fear around the police because of being Aboriginal from my fear around the police because of being transsexual - they're both intertwined and they intimately interact with each other."

–Jed, Brotherboy.

There are multiple incidents of police violence against trans people that have been widely reported in Australia. These include the outing of former AFL player and coach Dani Laidley as trans by a police officer who leaked photos of her in custody in 2020, accusations of biased and discriminatory policing of trans people and their allies at rallies in 2023, and use of physical force against protestors who were protesting police participation at the Midsumma Pride March in 2024.

To assess how often trans people are exposed to police violence against trans people in Australia – through direct personal experience, exposure via news or social media, or rumination – survey respondents were asked *"In the last month, how often have you thought about, seen or heard about police violence against trans people in Australia?"*

In the previous month:

1 in 8 (13%) had thought about, seen or heard about police violence against trans people in Australia multiple times weekly. This experience was most common amongst non-binary and gender diverse people (17%), compared to trans women (13%) and trans men (9%), and amongst those aged 26-40 years (16%), compared to those aged 16-25 years (14%), aged 41-55 (10%), and aged 56+ years (1%).

People who thought about, or had seen or heard about police violence against trans people in Australia multiple times weekly (compared to people who experienced this less often), were:

32% more likely to report **anxiety**

26% more likely to report **depression**

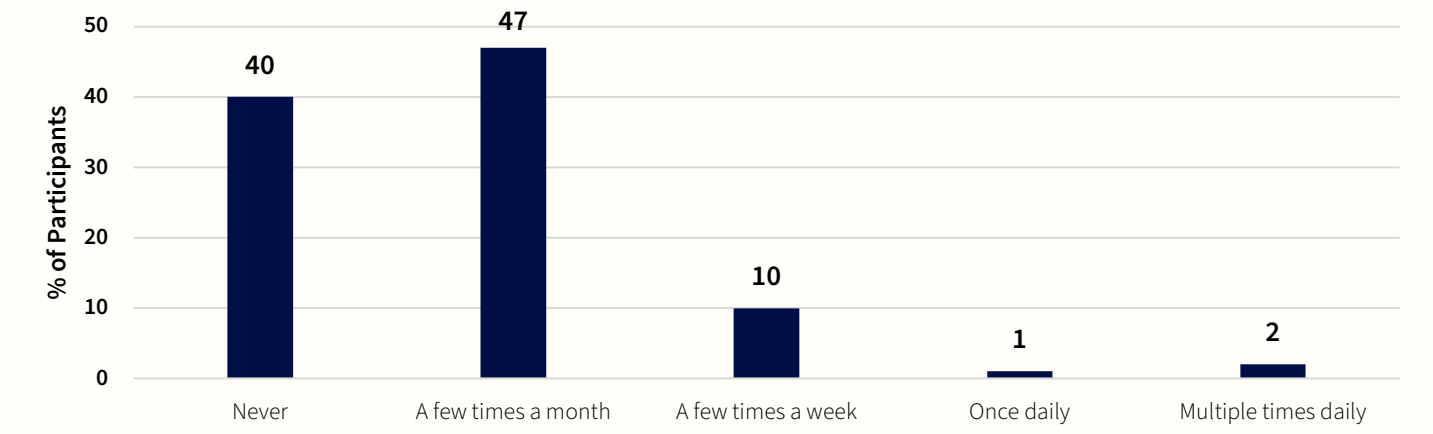
18% more likely to report **self-harm ideation**

42% more likely to report **suicidal ideation**

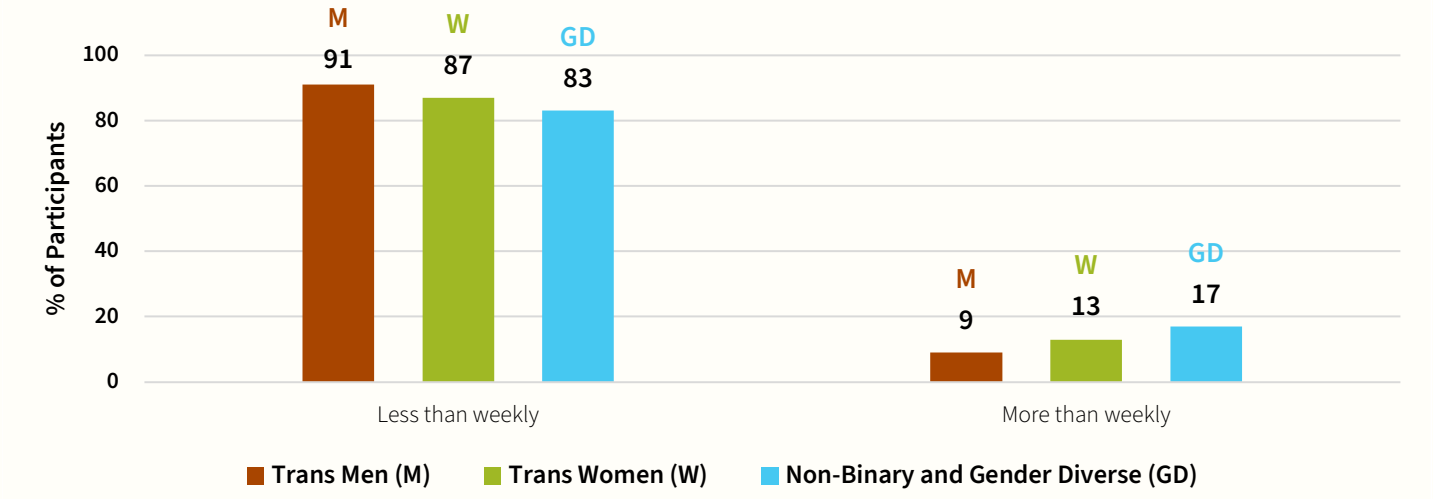
68% more likely to report **suicide planning**

"In the last month, how often have you thought about, seen, or heard about police violence against trans people in Australia?"

Total Sample



By Gender



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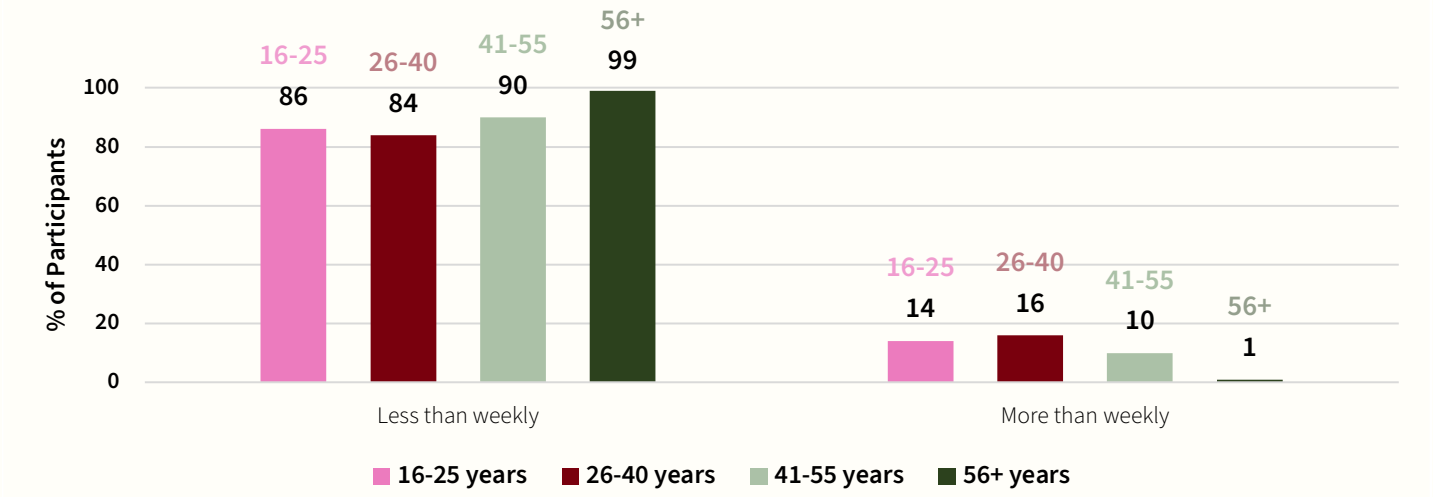
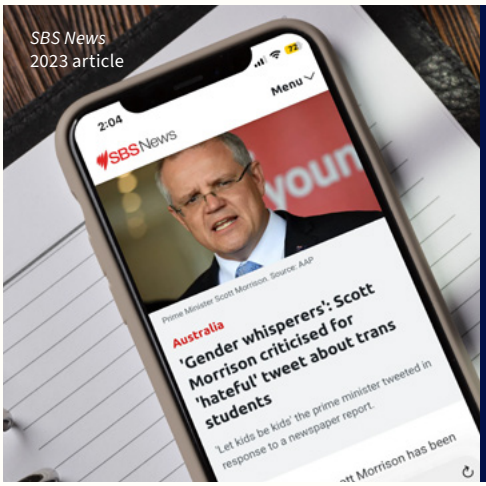




SBS News
2023 article

Anti-Trans Rhetoric By Australian Politicians And High-Profile People

Over the last decade, there has been an increase in the use of anti-trans rhetoric by Australian politicians and other high-profile individuals. For example, in 2018 then Prime Minister Scott Morrison declared "We do not need 'gender whisperers' in schools. Let kids be kids", in response to media allegations saying teachers were being taught to spot potentially trans students. Several bills have been proposed to the Australian Senate, including the Sex Discrimination and Other Legislation Amendment (Save Women's Sport) Bill 2022 which sought to exclude trans women from women's sport, and the Childhood Gender Transition Prohibition Bill 2023 which sought to outlaw access to medical gender affirmation for trans people under the age of 18.

To assess how often trans people are exposed to anti-trans rhetoric by Australian politicians and high-profile people – through direct personal experience, exposure via news or social media, or rumination – survey respondents were asked *"In the last month, how often have you thought about, seen or heard about anti-trans rhetoric by Australian politicians and high-profile people?"*

In the previous month:

1 in 3 (38%) had thought about, seen or heard about anti-trans rhetoric by Australian politicians and high-profile people multiple times weekly. This experience was more common amongst non-binary and gender diverse people (47%), compared to trans women (35%) and trans men (30%), and amongst those aged 26-40 years (41%), compared to those aged 16-25 years (35%), 41-55 years (35%), and 56+ years (32%).

People who thought about, or had seen or heard about anti-trans rhetoric by Australian politicians and high-profile people multiple times weekly (compared to people who experienced this less often), were:

28% more likely to report **anxiety**

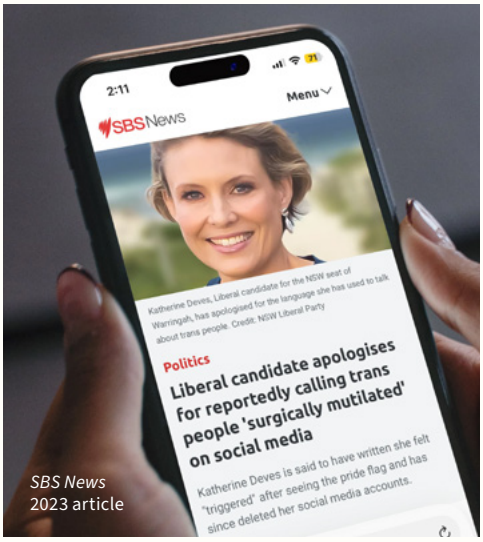
29% more likely to report **depression**

14% more likely to report **self-harm ideation**

32% more likely to report **self-harm behaviours**

46% more likely to report **suicidal ideation**

41% more likely to report **suicide planning**



SBS News
2023 article

"It's disheartening how many people are trying to leverage their profiles within the right-wing space by hating on trans people."

–Sara, trans woman.

"I'm so done with this scare campaign. It's people who don't know us and don't understand us trying to control us and make people scared of us."

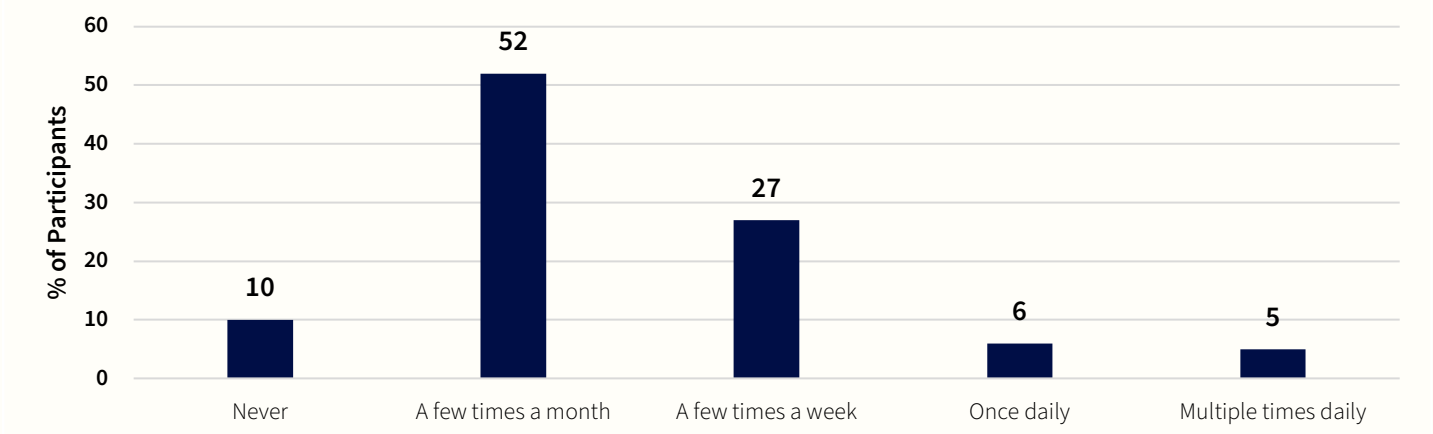
–Jamie, non-binary.

"I follow political news closely across Australia, the UK and USA and can see the anti-trans culture wars being imported here by conservative politicians and it terrifies me and reactivates previous trauma and fears about living with discrimination."

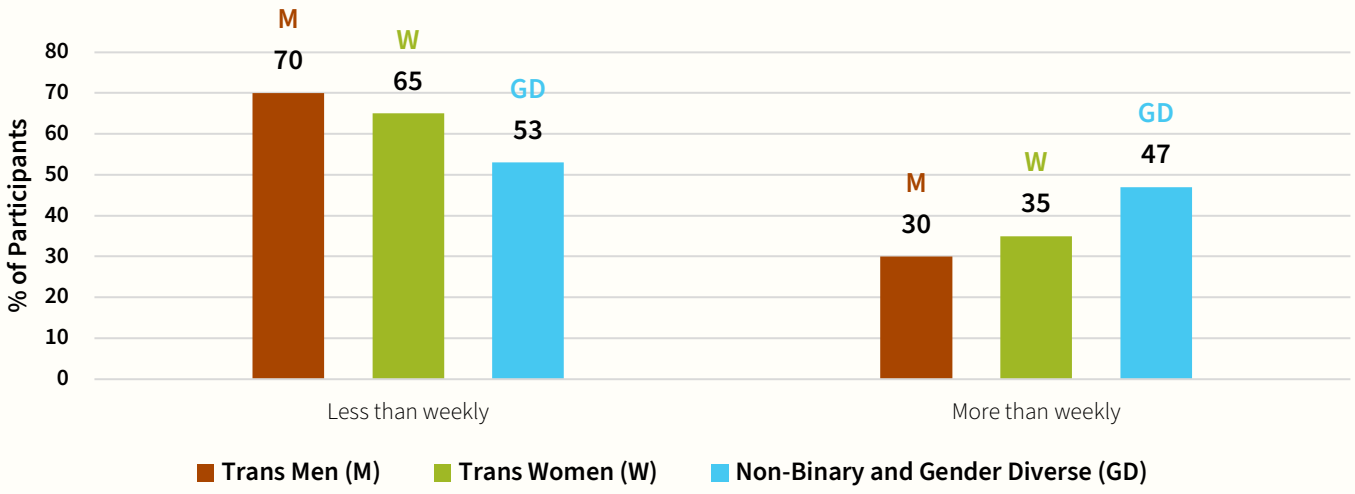
–Shaun, trans man.

"In the last month, how often have you thought about, seen, or heard about anti-trans rhetoric by Australian politicians and high-profile people?"

Total Sample



By Gender



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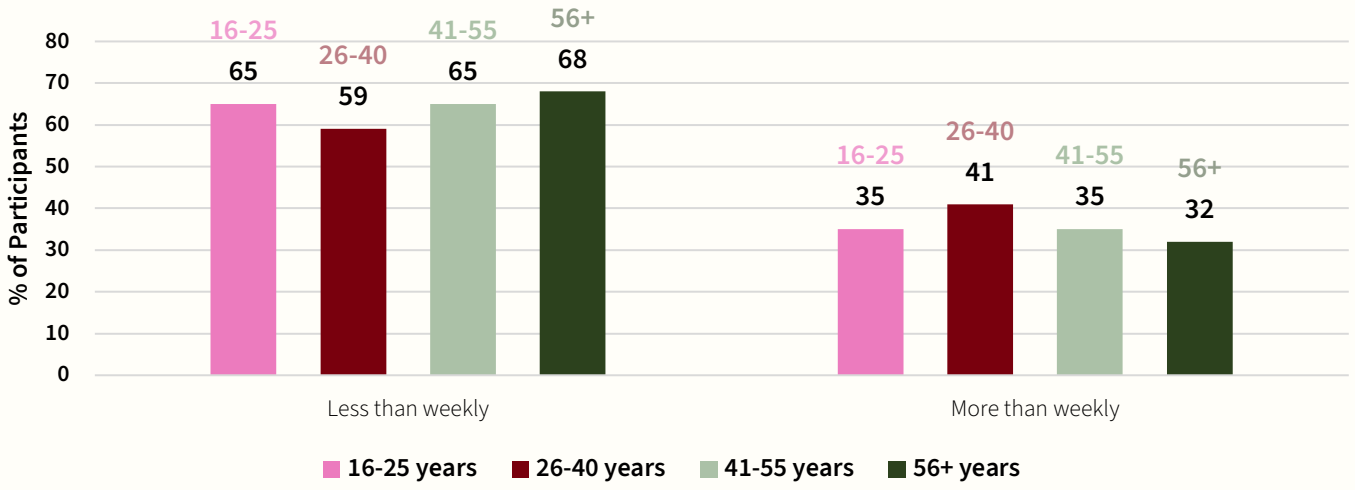
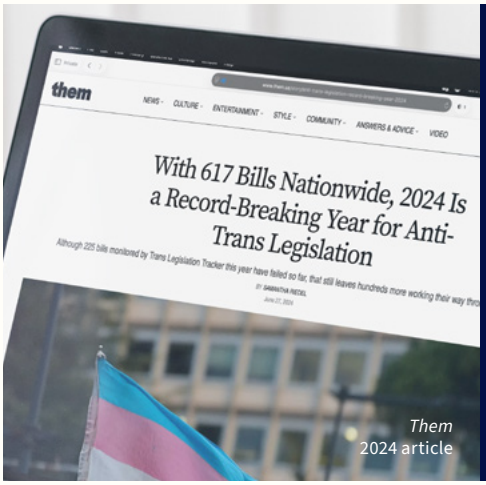


Drs Producoes, iStock

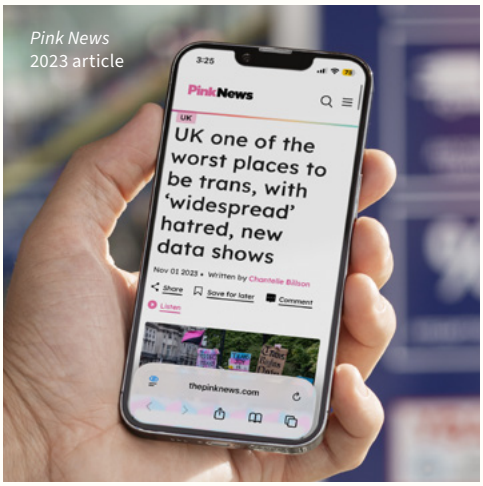
"It seems to be the latest thing, for news commentators, journalists, high profile people, to make derogatory and bullying comments and posts about trans people… They do not seem to realise that what they are saying is abusive and is bullying and very hurtful. It is as if they think we can just be a laughingstock for the community."

–Hadley, trans man.



Them
2024 article

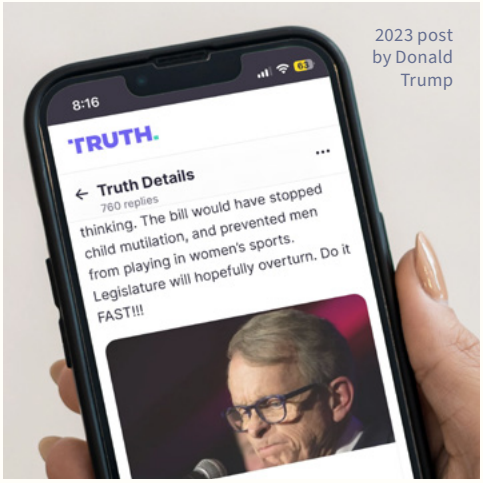
International Anti-Trans Policies And Violence



Pink News
2023 article

"Every time I read about countries in Europe or states/provinces in the Americas restricting access to hormones, it brings back PTSD to being forced to go through male puberty as a teenager which is extremely distressing and makes me suicidal."

–Aurora, trans woman.



2023 post
by Donald
Trump

"The anti-trans climate in the US and UK do not give me confidence for the future of Australia."

–Ruby, trans woman.

Globally, there has been an increase in anti-trans policies and violence against trans people over the past decade. In this era of globalised media, these international anti-trans developments and their media coverage frequently reach trans people in Australia. This is particularly the case for events in the USA and UK. For example, the sharp increase in legislative efforts in the USA targeting trans healthcare, education, and legal recognition have received broad coverage, as have acts of violence against trans individuals, such as the 2023 murder of 16-year-old trans girl Brianna Ghey in the UK.

To assess how often trans people are exposed to international anti-trans policies and violence – through personal experience, exposure via news or social media, or rumination – survey respondents were asked 'In the last month, how often have you thought about, seen or heard about international anti-trans legislation and violence?

In the previous month:

7 in 10 (69%) had thought about, seen or heard about international anti-trans legislation and violence multiple times weekly. This experience was most common amongst non-binary and gender diverse people (72%), compared to trans men (68%) and trans women (66%), and those aged 16-25 years (73%), compared to those aged 26-40 years (69%), 41-55 years (69%), and 56+ years (60%).

People who thought about, or had seen or heard about international anti-trans legislation and violence multiple times weekly (compared to people who experienced this less often), were:

46% more likely to report **anxiety**

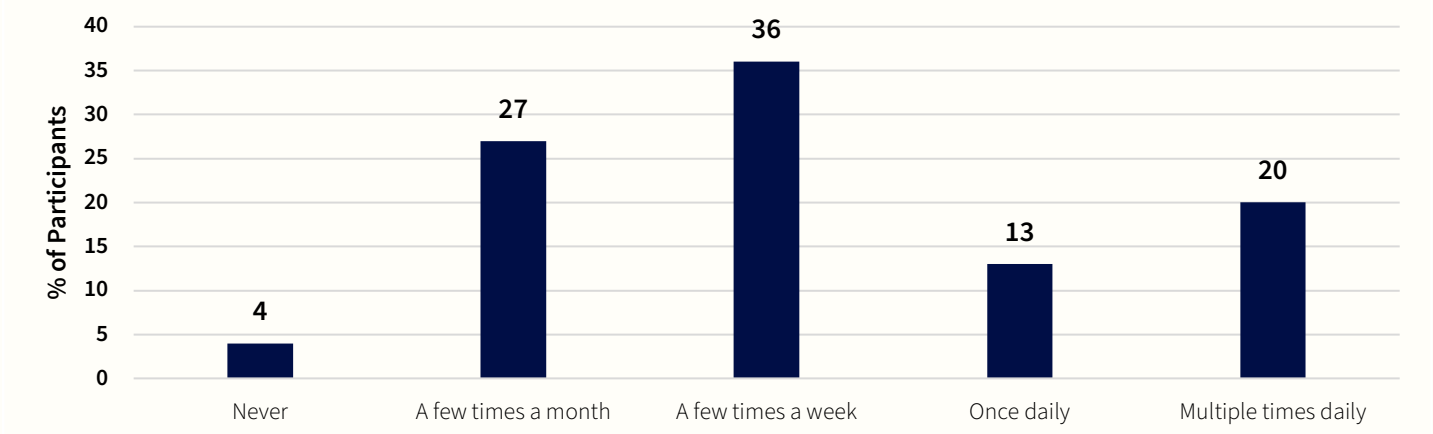
30% more likely to report **depression**

24% more likely to report **self-harm ideation**

37% more likely to report **suicidal ideation**

"In the last month, how often have you thought about, seen, or heard about international anti-trans legislation and violence?"

Total Sample



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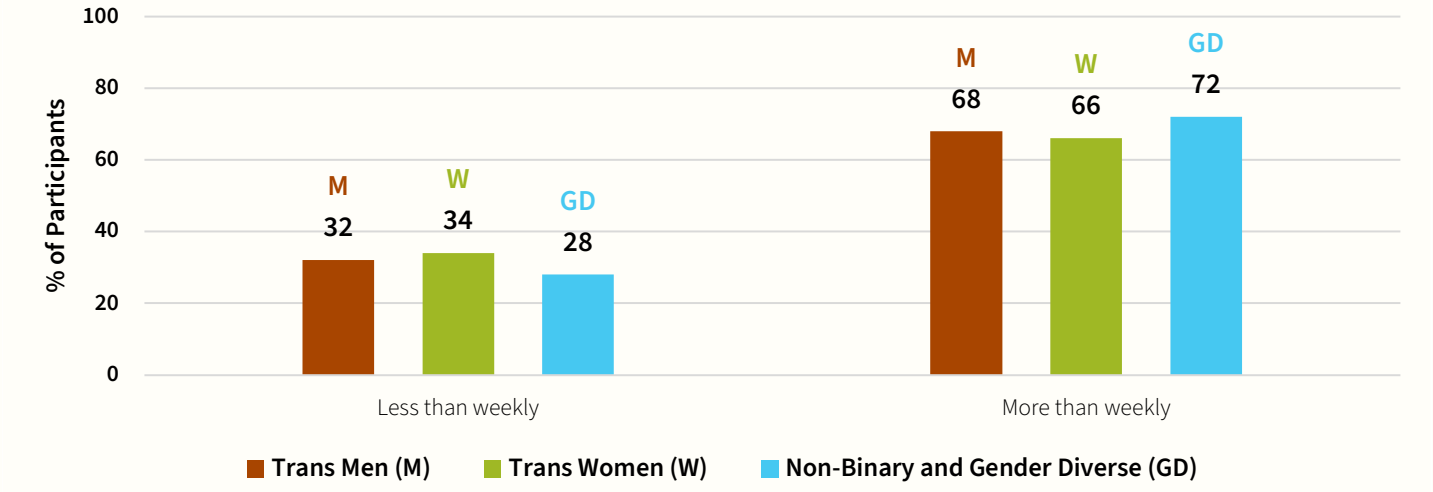

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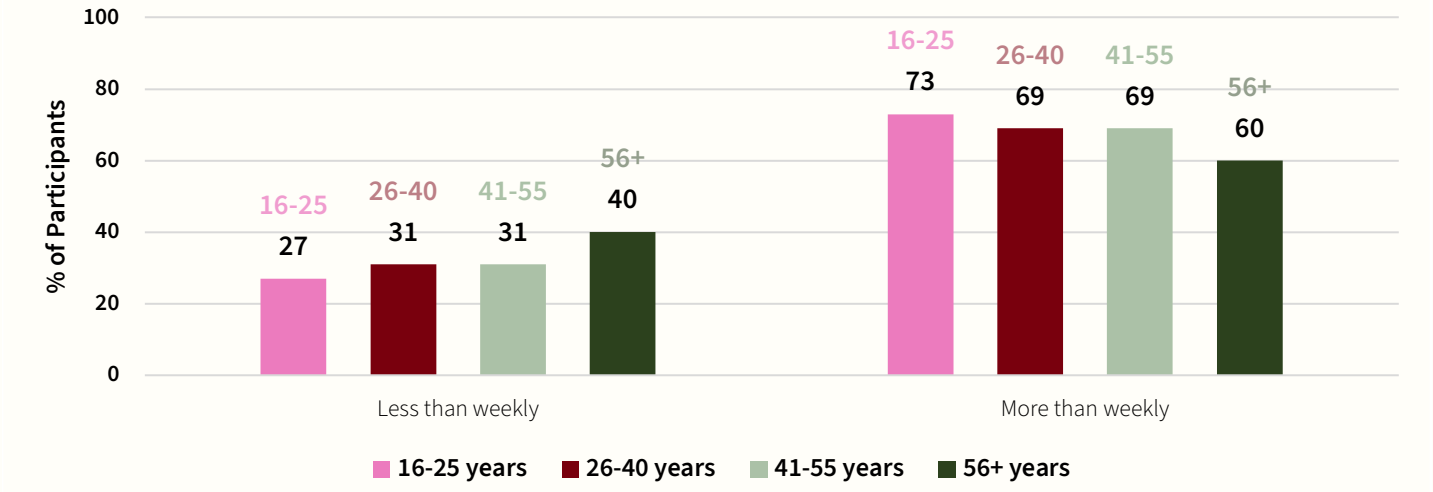


Brian Ramirez

Stopping And Reducing Engagement With News And Social Media

To assess changes in news and social media engagement as a response to increasing anti-trans rhetoric, policies, and violence, respondents were asked *"In the last 12 months, have you stopped or reduced your engagement with news media to avoid or reduce your exposure to anti-trans content?"* and *"In the last 12 months, have you stopped or reduced your engagement with social media to avoid or reduce your exposure to anti-trans content?"*

In the previous 12 months:

1 in 7 (14%) had *stopped* and 3 in 5 (61%) had *reduced* their engagement with news media to avoid or reduce their exposure to anti-trans content.

1 in 10 (10%) had *stopped* and 3 in 5 (59%) had *reduced* their engagement with social media to avoid or reduce their exposure to anti-trans content.

Disabled and Here

"I deleted multiple social media accounts as the anti-trans rhetoric online was causing my significant anxiety issues."

–Beth, trans woman.

"Previously I've received a lot of freelance work from cultivating a big Twitter audience, but now I'm not safe on the platform and have stopped using it."

–Brayden, trans man.

"I feel torn between a need to reduce exposure to these things and a need to be informed and aware."

–Sam, non-binary.

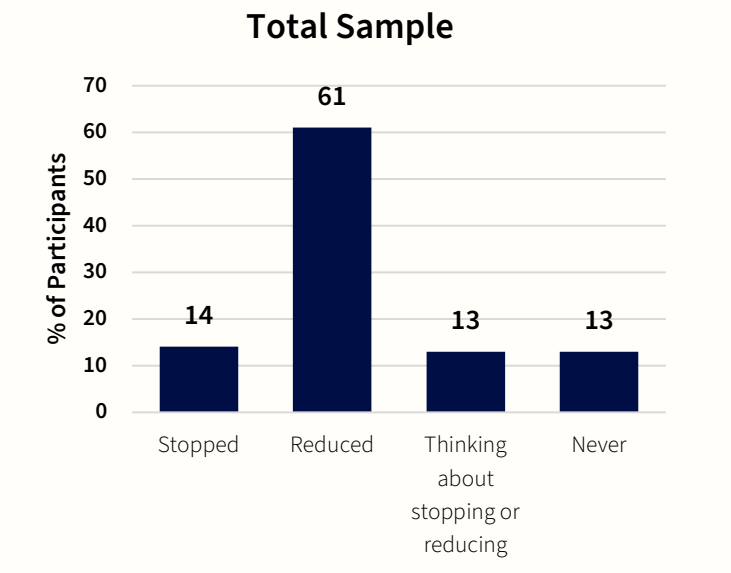
"It makes me so depressed/distressed that I block all my social media apps but that also means that I can't message actual friends on there. When I see this kind of thing it makes me feel so hopeless and down that some days I can't get out of bed."

–Morgan, non-binary.

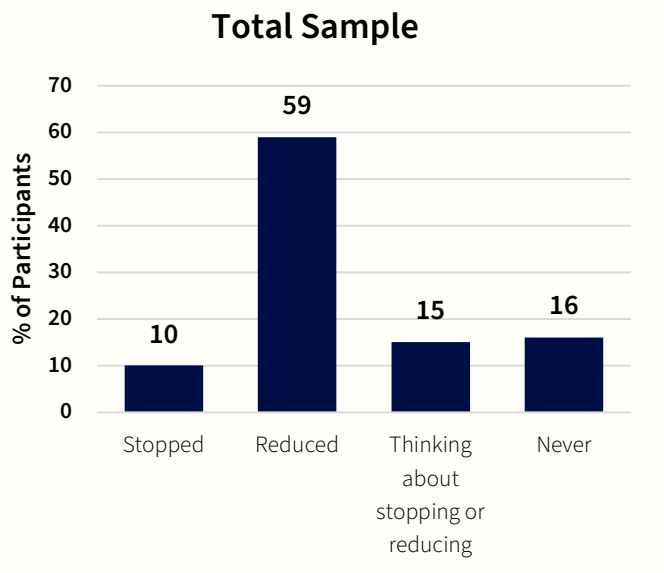
"I've stopped engaging with social media, stopped sharing on social media and have removed virtually all of my presence. The anti-trans media impacts my mental and physical health, so I no longer engage with it."

–Aiden, non-binary.

"In the last 12 months, have you stopped or reduced your engagement with news media to avoid or reduce your exposure to anti-trans content?"



"In the last 12 months, have you stopped or reduced your engagement with social media to avoid or reduce your exposure to anti-trans content?"



Wagner Okasaki, iStock

"Not only do I see truly disturbing and violent anti-trans rhetoric most days, but I've found that I can report references to violence and most social media platforms won't actually remove it or follow up in any way."

–Oliver, trans man.

"It is beyond description… how much hate some people have for those of us in the trans community. It's so damaging, it makes it hard to live on."

–Travis, trans man.

"I'm scared to live freely and out of the shadows for fear of being targeted by anti-trans groups."

–Jules, non-binary.

Recommendations

Exposure to anti-trans rhetoric is a health issue. Stigma is an established driver of the disproportionate rates of psychological distress experienced by trans people and findings from this research and international evidence link anti-trans legislation and public debate with increased distress and suicidality among trans people. Trans people in Australia experience significant barriers to their safety, dignity, and full participation in society. Protections for trans people against harassment, abuse, and violence must be a priority.

Global increase in anti-trans stigma is tied to funded and coordinated mobilisations, including in the USA, UK, Europe, and Australia. Targeted initiatives are needed to understand and disrupt anti-trans mobilisations in Australia and globally.

These findings highlight the urgent need for a multi-pronged response to the escalation in anti-trans stigma. The 15 recommendations below are grouped by the actor best placed to implement each one and are anchored, wherever possible, to policy processes already underway.

Australian Government

1. Name anti-trans hate as a foreseeable harm under the Digital Duty of Care. The Australian Government's response to the statutory review of the Online Safety Act 2021, released on 14 April 2026, commits to legislating a Digital Duty of Care requiring online platforms to proactively assess and mitigate risks of harm, with draft legislation expected in late 2026. The legislation and accompanying eSafety Commissioner risk assessment guidance should explicitly name hate-based conduct and vilification targeting trans people as a foreseeable harm that platforms are required to assess, mitigate, and report on.

2. Extend federal hate crime protections to trans people. The aggravated sentencing factor and incitement offences legislated in the Combatting Antisemitism, Hate and Extremism (Criminal and Migration Laws) Act 2026 are limited to conduct motivated by racial hatred, excluding LGBTIQA+ people. These provisions should be extended to conduct motivated by hatred of a person's gender identity, sexual orientation, or sex characteristics.

3. Introduce civil vilification protections into the Sex Discrimination Act 1984. Nationally consistent civil protections against vilification on the grounds of gender identity, sexual orientation and sex characteristics would provide trans people with clear pathways to protection and redress. Victoria's Justice Legislation Amendment (Anti-vilification and Social Cohesion) Act 2025, with civil provisions commencing 30 June 2026, provides a working model. Harmonisation across jurisdictions should be progressed through the Standing Council of Attorneys-General.

4. Fund independent monitoring of anti-trans mis/disinformation and coordinated mobilisation. Government-funded, independent monitoring with annual public reporting is needed to track anti-trans mis/disinformation, information interference and mobilisation, enabling early intervention and informed policy responses. Monitoring should include the funding sources and international coordination of anti-trans campaigns, and organisations undertaking advocacy in Australia on behalf of foreign principals should be assessed against their obligations under the Foreign Influence Transparency Scheme Act 2018.

5. Establish dedicated research funding under the National Action Plan for the Health and Wellbeing of LGBTIQA+ People 2025-2035. Under the National Action Plan for the Health and Wellbeing of LGBTIQA+ People 2025-2035, targeted MRFF and NHMRC funding calls are needed for research into the drivers and health impacts of anti-trans stigma, and the development and evaluation of interventions to reduce it, co-designed with trans communities. Anti-trans stigma reduction should also be embedded in implementation of the National Suicide Prevention Strategy, which identifies LGBTIQA+ people as a priority population.

6. Establish clear expectations for political accountability for anti-trans rhetoric. Anti-trans rhetoric by politicians and high-profile people was among the most common exposures reported in this research. Parliamentary standards processes and party leadership should treat vilification of trans people as a conduct issue, including in communications outside parliamentary proceedings, and all parties should commit to accurate, respectful public communication about trans people that is consistent with the evidence base.

State And Territory Governments

7. Legislate safeguards protecting access to gender-affirming healthcare. Restrictions implemented in Queensland and the Northern Territory demonstrate the need for legislative safeguards that prevent political interference in clinical decision-making and protect access to healthcare that is evidence-based and supported by professional medical bodies and clinical guidelines.

8. Harmonise anti-discrimination and anti-vilification protections. All jurisdictions should align their protections with the strongest available national model and ensure clear, accessible pathways for trans people seeking protection and redress.

9. Invest in evidence-based counter-messaging and positive representation. Accurate, evidence-based counter-messaging and positive trans representation improve attitudes towards trans people. Governments should build on the Victorian Government's "The Unsaid Says a Lot" landmark campaign (which was later expanded to Tasmania and the Australian Capital Territory) and better practice guidelines for including trans people in campaigns.

10. Strengthen independent oversight of policing of trans people and LGBTIQA+ events. One in eight respondents had thought about, seen or heard about police violence against trans people in the previous month. Police oversight bodies should independently review the policing of trans people and of LGBTIQA+ public events, address the concerns documented at the 2023 rallies and the 2024 Midsumma Pride March, and strengthen police media policies and LGBTIQA+ liaison programs in partnership with trans communities.

Media Regulators And Standards Bodies

11. Make standards for reporting on trans people enforceable. The Australian Communications and Media Authority should incorporate specific standards for reporting on trans people into broadcast codes of practice at their next review. The Press Council of Australia should elevate its Advisory Guideline on reporting on persons with diverse sexual orientation, gender identity, and innate variations of sex characteristics into a binding Standard of Practice, with published adjudications.

Media Organisations

12. Adopt enforceable editorial standards now. Media organisations should adopt the Press Council Advisory Guideline as internal editorial policy with named editorial accountability; apply the same sourcing standards to claims about gender-affirming healthcare as to other health reporting, grounded in peer-reviewed evidence and professional medical bodies; and include trans individuals as sources in reporting about trans people.

13. Provide right of reply, accessible complaints processes, and newsroom training. Trans people and community organisations should have a guaranteed right of reply and accessible complaints handling. Newsroom and journalism training should incorporate trans-inclusive human rights and ethical reporting modules, drawing on existing community-developed resources (see Resources).

Social Media Platforms

14. Enforce hateful conduct policies and report transparently. Social media platforms should enforce their existing policies on hateful conduct targeting trans people, with transparent public reporting on the volume and handling of anti-trans abuse reports, ahead of obligations under the forthcoming Digital Duty of Care.

15. Co-design safety features with trans communities. Trust and safety teams should consult trans people and community organisations in the design and evaluation of moderation systems, reporting tools, and safety features.

Resources

Below is a collation of resources related to trans human rights, anti-trans mobilisations, countering mis/disinformation, and Australian trans-affirming support and resources. This resource list is not exhaustive.

Trans Human Rights And Anti-Trans Mobilisations

Equal Identities Report. A comprehensive human rights review of trans experiences, rights and inclusion in Australia, by the Australian Human Rights Commission.

Tracking the 2023 Wave of Anti-trans and Anti-drag Mobilisation in Australia. A report analysing the relationship between online hate and offline events targeting trans communities in Australia, by Deakin University.

Project 2025 Goes Global: The American Export of Authoritarianism and Christian Nationalism Worldwide. A report that examines the ideological foundations, domestic implementation, and international expansion of Project 2025, a policy blueprint spearheaded by the Heritage Foundation and a coalition of conservative organisations, by Global Project Against Hate and Extremism.

Like a Snowball: The Growth and Impact of the Gender Critical Movement in the UK. A report on media coverage about trans people, political discourse and mapping of anti-trans mobilisation in the UK, by Amnesty International UK.

The Role of Media in European Anti-Gender Politics. A report focused on news media amplification of 'anti-gender' messaging in Europe, by RESIST Project.

Anti-gender Tactics in Europe. A transnational report focused on anti-gender politics, with case studies from Hungary, Poland, Switzerland, United Kingdom and European Parliament, by RESIST Project.

Trans Legislation Tracker. A website that tracks anti-trans bills introduced across the USA.

Countering Mis/Disinformation

Trans Justice Project Resources. A suite of resources that provide insights into how to identify anti-trans disinformation and strategies for formulating responses to common myths, by Trans Justice Project.

Living True, Living Better. An evidence-based resource pack countering harmful disinformation about gender-affirming healthcare for trans young people, created by Transcend Australia, in partnership with the Australian Professional Association for Trans Health, and supported by Equality Australia and LGBTIQ+ Health Australia.

Dispelling the Myths About Trans People. A plain-language resource that addresses some of the common myths about trans people, by Trans Health Research.

Trans Women in Sport: What Does the Science Say? A plain-language resource that addresses some of the common myths and disinformation about trans women in sport, by Trans Health Research.

Combating Anti-LGBTQ+ Pseudoscience. A report on the groups and actors using the language of science to attack the medical consensus supporting LGBTQ+ affirming health care and resources to counter anti-trans narratives and extremism, by Southern Poverty Law Center.

Countering Anti-Gender Politics in Europe. Policy recommendations to counter anti-trans rhetoric, policies, and violence, by RESIST Project.

Advisory Guideline: Reporting on persons with diverse sexual orientation, gender identity, and innate variations of sex characteristics. Standard of Practice for reporting on trans people and those of diverse sexual orientation and with innate variations of sex characteristics, by the Press Council of Australia.

Trans-Affirming Support And Resources

Community Resources. A collated list of Australian support services and resources for trans people, including for mental health, alcohol and drug use, eating disorders, and relationships.

"While the current moral panic onslaught against our community locally and internationally has been distressing at times, I feel as if we can push through. And I am not going anywhere."

–Odin, non-binary.