

The Layered Issue Of Violence Against Black Trans Women

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Introduction

The layered issue of Black Trans Women is intersectional crossing relations such as class, race, gender, sexuality. According to the Human Rights Campaign, they have tracked at least 44 transgender or gender non-conforming deaths where the majority were Black and Latinx transgender women in 2020 though 2021 could bet this record. The words “at least” are used because most often violence against transgender or non-conforming people go unreported or misreported [1]

Here, I will discuss some layers of the set up of society that has disproportionately led to violence against the Black Trans women community

- Governmental Blocks
- Police Brutality
- Citizen Hate Crimes

Governmental

Rights and protections are critical to any race, gender, class for greater quality of life, however there have been many movements made by the federal and state government that have reversed, ignored, or blatantly opposed to protect LGBTQ+ rights which in turn affects Black Trans Women the most.

- Trump’s administration in 2018 “reversed protections for transgender students in public schools”, which allowed students to use the bathroom based on their gender identity rather than assigned sex at birth [2].
 - This harbors transphobic ideologies that affects Black trans women showing that only *some* women should be protected and furthering the stigma around Black bodies especially perceived *male* bodies [2]
- Besides the outright bans and legal actions against the LGBTQ+ community, there is still a raging silence over protections that could be initiated with the Equality Act which has passed the Senate but awaits further action from the rest of the U.S government [9]
- On top of the reversal and outright refusal of protections for Trans people (affecting Black Trans women the most), there are legal excuses for those who harm Trans people
 - One is called “panic defense” which is a legal strategy that looks at the victim’s sexual orientation or gender identity as an excuse for the defendant's violent reaction [5]

Police

Police harassment towards trans people (most affected are Black and Latinx trans women) is so often that the phrase “walking while trans” has become a label when police officers ask these women if they are participating in sex work [2]

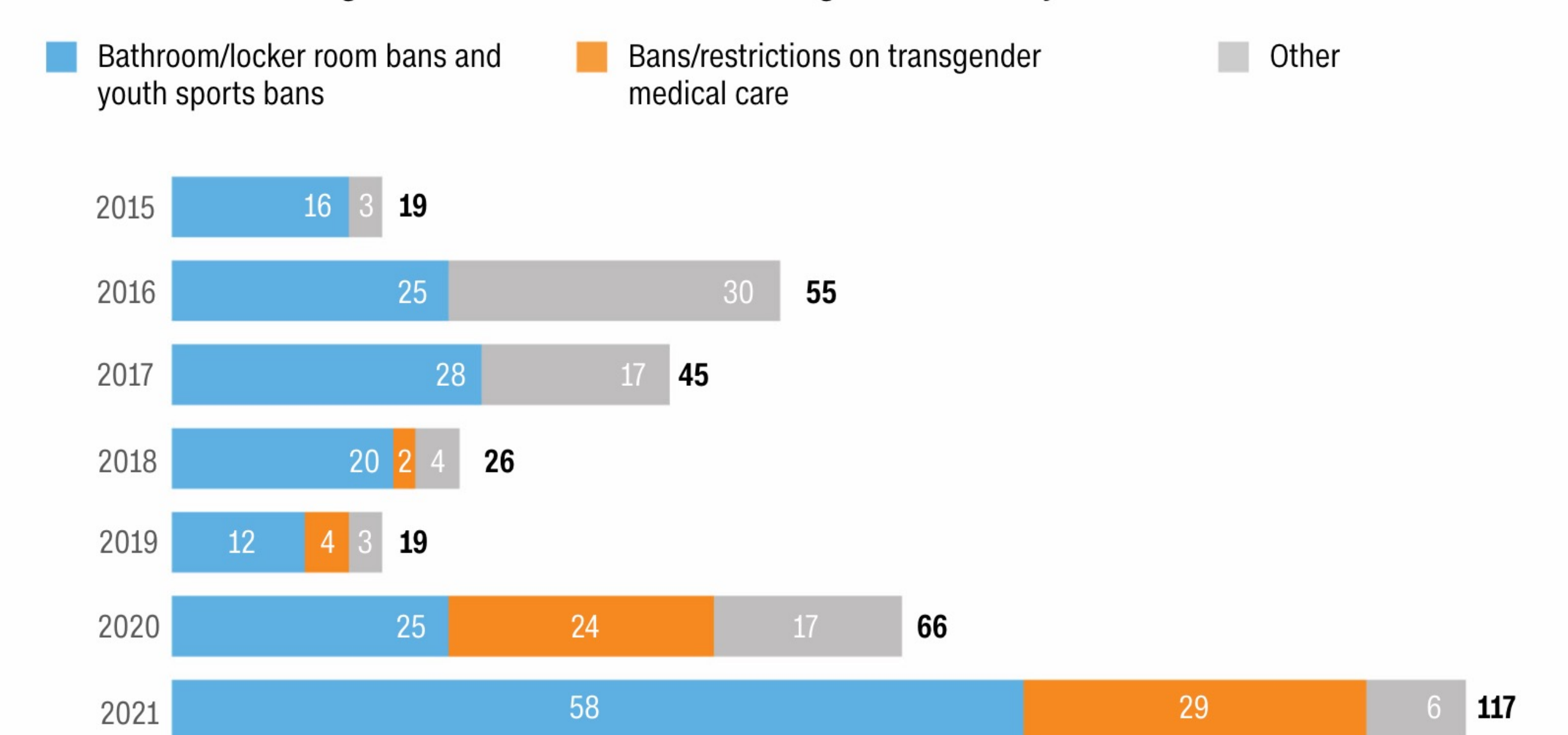
- Many Black Trans women do participate in sex work because it seems like their only option to survive, as poverty and unemployment are especially high within the community. This leads to higher rates of being arrested and potential violence in prisons [6]
- Black Trans Women are constantly misgendered and experience gendered specific forms of police brutality such as [7]
 - Bathroom policing
 - Broken window policing
 - Through calls of assistance
 - Through materials such as condoms

Citizen

“Hate crime statistics gathered by the US Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) are limited because reporting hate crimes is not mandated by federal law and most states do not include gender identity in their hate crime statutes” [2] This is another instance where Black Trans women bodies are not seen as important enough to document the violence inflicted on them.

- According to a report done by TranEquality.org in 2015, 49% of Black Trans women and have experienced sexual violence and 58% experienced domestic violence [3]
- With little to no government or police effort to save the lives of Black Trans women and protect them, this shows citizens that they don’t have to care about Black Trans women safety or protection either, making these women especially vulnerable to hate crimes, assault and other violence [4].

Number of anti-transgender bills introduced in state legislatures each year

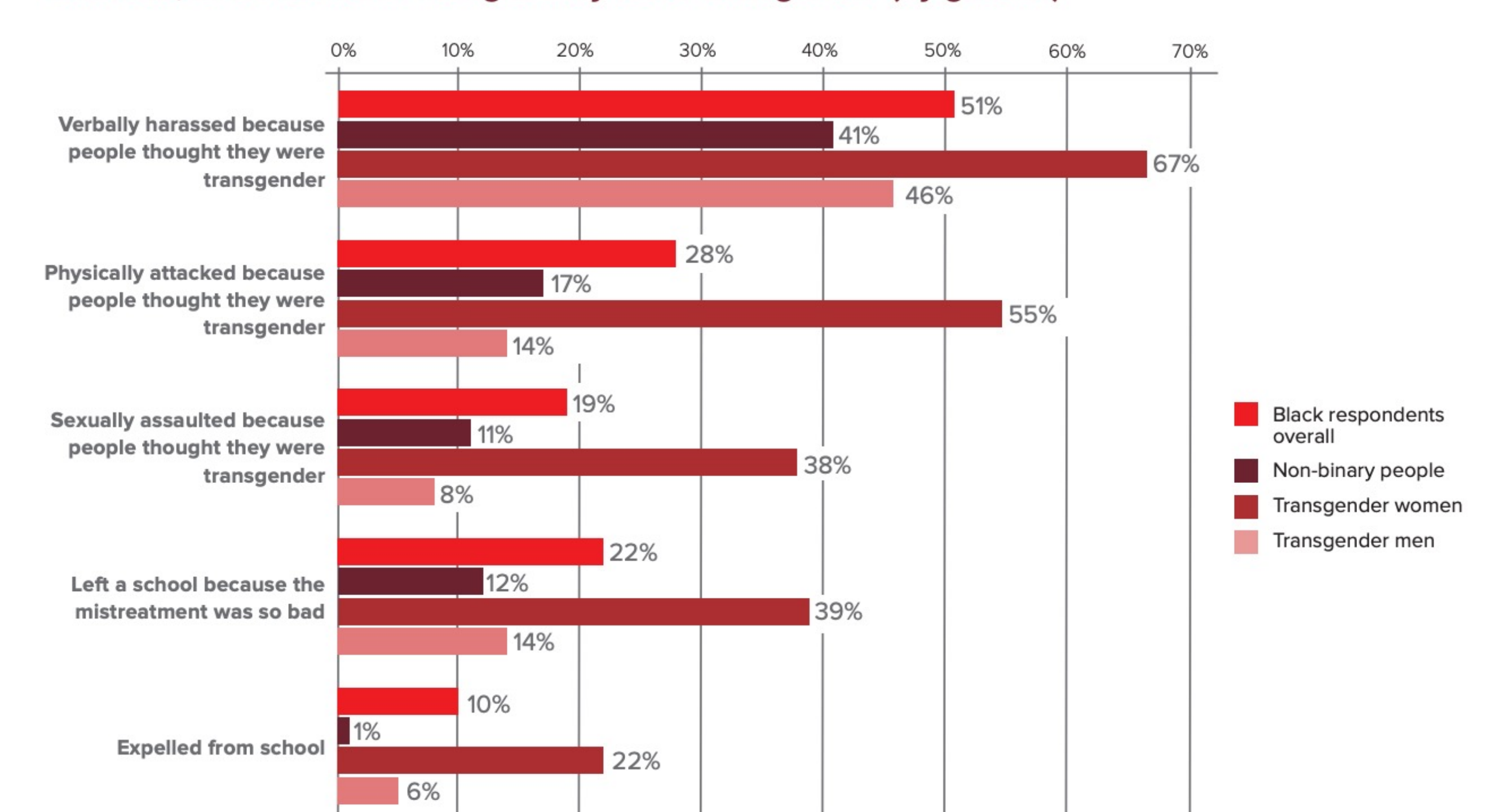


Note: Data is as of April 12

Source: Human Rights Campaign

As of April 2021 [10]

Figure 14: Experiences of people who were out as transgender in K–12 or believed classmates, teachers, or school staff thought they were transgender (by gender)



National Center for Transgender Equality 2015 [3]

Solutions

- Ban laws such as “panic defense” and begin issuing laws such as the Equality Law, which is in the process of becoming a law [4,9]
- Police trainings on LGBTQ+ populations. Ensure law enforcement agencies, departments identify, investigate and report hate crimes [8]
- More awareness and education on intersectional lives of others is critical for empathy and understanding.
- With more incident follow-up and law enforcement taking violence towards Black Trans women seriously, there could be less hate crimes.

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