



Survey on the experiences of young trans people in France First sample analysis 90 respondents at the beginning of April 2009

In order to increase the awareness and knowledge of the experiences of transgender youth aged 16 to 26 in France, the organisations Homosexualités & Socialisme (HES) and the Movement of Affirmation for young Gays, Lesbians, Bi and Trans (MAG-LGBT Youth) conducted a survey using an on-line questionnaire targeting this population.

The questionnaire can be found (in French) at : <http://www.questions-lgbt.fr.fm/spip.php?article357>

The questionnaire focused on their story (family background, geographical background, studies), how they became aware of their trans identity, their transition, their sexuality, their well-being, acts of transphobia they suffered in their family, at school and at work, their future plans and their relationship to health, especially HIV.

The questionnaire was on-line from December 2008 to April 2009 and about a hundred responses were collected. After validation, a sample of ninety respondents was chosen for statistical analysis. This figure is obviously not large enough to fully justify the figures obtained, but it enables us to draw some significant tendencies that we wish to publicize.

The first sample analysis highlights the fact that a greater proportion of FTM trans (Female To Male) than MTF trans (Male to Female) responded to the call of the study (2 / 3 FTM for 1 / 3 MTF). Young trans women who responded were mostly older (over 20 years).

We find in this result that young trans people feel a greater challenge to "come out of the closet", to make people accept their female identity when assigned male at birth. Young trans MTF consciously seize their trans identity younger, mostly before 15 years old (40%) whereas the majority of young trans FTM own their trans identity from between 16 and 20 years old (47%).

Sources of information cited to support this process of consciously owning their identity was the Internet for up to 91% and audio-visual documentaries for up to 56%.

To be young and trans today – Experiences and feelings

The rate of suicide attempts reported by the respondents is 34%. As such it has to be linked to similar proportions among the young gay and lesbian population.

	FTM and transgenders assigned female at birth	MTF and transgenders assigned male at birth	TOTAL
Thought about suicide (in relation to their trans identity)	67%	72%	69%
Made one or several suicide attempts	34%	32%	34%

These suicide attempts are most mentioned at ages between 12 and 17. Admitted addictions are mostly to drugs, alcohol (especially among FTMs) but also a large proportion suffered with bulimia and many report self-harm as well.

Whereas before 20 their trans identity presented suffering for 80% of respondents, there are only 46% after 20 who still have this feeling. At the same time, the feeling of finding a source of fulfillment in it grows from 11% to 24%.

For you, your trans identity represents...	Aged from 16 to 20	Aged from 20 to 26
A suffering	80%	46%
A disease/a handicap	20%	17%
A restraint to social life	51%	41%
A source of fulfillment	11%	24%
A fully owned identity	20%	26%
An enrichment	23%	35%

To be young and trans today – the medical transition

In total less than half of the respondents (48%) had started to meet doctors in relation to their medical transition. Most of them take from 1 to 10 years between awareness and the start of the transition. Among those who have become aware of their trans identity between 11 and 15 and are over 18 today, 40% have made no steps in this process, 55% are under hormonal therapy, 39% have undergone surgery and in total only 10% have their official name and civil status change in process or completed.

A vast majority of the medical transitions are being done outside the self-proclaimed "official" hospital teams. *(In France, trans people can be reimbursed for health care if they follow the so-called "official" route. This route is long; minimum 2 years before any treatment occurs and very conservative doctors are in charge of it. Moreover, the doctors have created "official teams" while no law or official document gives them this "official" status. Trans people can also go to see the doctors they choose and get hormonal treatments quicker as well as some operations. But then they*

will not get reimbursed. The situations are very different since there is no regulation. The following figures aim at demonstrating the absurdity and uselessness of this "official" route, the way it works today).

Of the 30% of respondents who started hormonal therapy, between 70% and 80% are not followed by these "official" teams and 6% are taking hormones from the "black market"(hormones purchased on the Internet).

	FTM and transgenders assigned female at birth	MTF and transgenders assigned male at birth	TOTAL
Black market	6%	8%	6%
Others	11%	8%	10%
Followed outside of the self-proclaimed official teams	78%	69%	74%
Followed by the self-proclaimed official teams	6%	15%	10%

As far as operations are concerned (either simple restorative plastic surgery or sex reassignment surgery), 90% of the respondents who underwent surgery did it outside of the official teams and at least half of them outside France.

For those who plan to have surgery, FTMs are twice as likely to have their surgery performed abroad rather than in France, and this statistic jumps to 4 times as many for MTFs. (This figure aims at denouncing the very bad quality of surgeries that are proposed to trans people in France and advocates reimbursement of the surgeries practiced outside France.)

The problems raised by the respondents for pursuing their medical transition beyond hormonal therapy are of various kinds, related to both their families and their studies. But the first reason is the financial cost. Many trans minors say they have to wait before they can consider it seriously.

	FTM and transgenders assigned female at birth	MTF and transgenders assigned male at birth	TOTAL
Don't wish to undergo surgery	2%	0%	1%
Have problems to find surgeons	11%	14%	12%
Have problems related to their family	21%	24%	22%
Have problems related to their studies	13%	19%	15%
Have financial problems	42%	33%	39%
Other (minors, problems in the future)	42%	24%	36%

To give the measure of transphobia experienced daily we reviewed the life situations of trans people.

To be young and trans today – in the family

We first addressed the issue of "coming out" (i.e. telling people about one's trans identity). Not surprisingly, it begins with close friends (85%), then the close family (65%) followed by the wider family circle. The reactions of the family are diverse, going through phases and mixed feelings.

We can see strong acceptance and support, but also a significant amount of rejection and shame.

It seems that families approve less of the FTM trans identity than the MTF trans identity of their child, but on the contrary they seem to protect, support but also fear more for a MTF transition with an additional sense of shame in relation to the opinion of society.

Reaction from the family	FTM and transgenders assigned female at birth	MTF and transgenders assigned male at birth	TOTAL
Acceptance	59%	71%	62%
Support	39%	47%	41%
Understanding	27%	41%	31%
Tolerance	49%	47%	48%
Rejection	32%	24%	29%
Shame	37%	41%	38%
None	7%	6%	7%
Other (fear, lack of understanding)	32%	18%	28%

When asked about situations of transphobia in the family and among friends, young trans people report both a strong protection from their families and their loved ones but also other facts of extremely violent transphobia such as denial and exclusion (20% of them) and denial in the form of insulting inquisitiveness and unsaid disapproval .

Situations of transphobia with family and friends	FTM and transgenders assigned female at birth	MTF and transgenders assigned male at birth	TOTAL
None	30%	48%	35%
Insulting inquisitiveness	41%	16%	34%
Unsaid disapproval	28%	20%	26%
Exclusion	20%	20%	20%
Insults	13%	24%	16%
Threats	9%	12%	10%
Mental harassment	8%	8%	8%
Physical aggressions	5%	4%	4%
Sexual aggressions	2%	0%	1%
Denial	20%	16%	19%
Others	8%	8%	8%

To be young and trans today – at school

It appears clear that trans people must attempt to fit in with the institution and the school environment in order to avoid situations of transphobia.

A minority declared their chosen gender identity to the institution (13% of the sample). In total, only half “came out” to their peers or administration.

Total sample from 16 to 26	
Registered under their chosen gender identity	13%
Registered under their assigned gender identity, came out to the administration	13%
Registered under their assigned gender identity, came out to the other students	36%

Reactions of support and tolerance coexist together with situations of rejection (again higher against MTF young trans).

Reactions at school	FTM and transgenders assigned female at birth	MTF and transgenders assigned male at birth	TOTAL
Acceptance	49%	36%	46%
Support	33%	18%	30%
Understanding	24%	18%	23%
Tolerance	36%	36%	36%
Rejection	7%	18%	9%
Shame	4%	0%	4%
None	33%	18%	30%
Others (lack of understanding, mockery, blocking)	18%	27%	20%

Situations of transphobia in schools are far from insignificant, as insults directed especially to young trans MTF and threats and assaults against young FTM trans can testify.

Situations of transphobia at school	FTM and transgenders assigned female at birth	MTF and transgenders assigned male at birth	TOTAL
None	38%	24%	34%
Insulting inquisitiveness	17%	20%	18%
Unsaid disapproval	14%	16%	15%
Moral harassment	6%	8%	7%
Exclusion	6%	4%	6%
Insults	16%	24%	18%
Threats	6%	0%	5%
Physical violence	6%	0%	5%
Sexual violence	0%	0%	0%
Others	6%	8%	7%

When we look at whether expressing one's trans identity at least to friends (and to the administration where appropriate) improves the situation, it is clear that unfortunately the stigma persists and sometimes gets worse. Insults were reported by 27% of those who came out, and only 14% of those who did not.

Situations of transphobia at school	Didn't came out	Came out	TOTAL
None	31%	46%	34%
Insulting inquisitiveness	17%	24%	18%
Unsaid disapproval	12%	22%	15%
Moral harassment	7%	8%	7%
Exclusion	5%	8%	6%
Insults	14%	27%	18%
Threats	5%	5%	4%
Physical violence	5%	5%	4%
Sexual violence	0%	0%	0%
Others	12%	3%	7%

To be young and trans today – entering professional life

58% of the respondents told us about their professional or internship experience. Their jobs, whether they are actually working or unemployed, include being a teacher, an engineer, a social worker, a soldier, a police officer, but also a video editor, an assistant director, an employee in retail, a barber, a hairdresser, ...

Just under half of the respondents presented themselves to their job in their chosen gender identity, and were at that time almost all over 20. Curiously few cases of transphobia are reported on the whole, although several cases of insults can be found and even a case of dismissal.

Since the sample was limited to less than 26, we believe that we do not cover the range of possible professional situations.

To be young and trans today – risks regarding HIV

Finally, to complete the picture from the point of view of health, we wanted to know how the young people concerned face the HIV epidemic. This area of results covers only 58 responses in total. It shows that HIV prevention must remain an extreme priority for a trans generation living in situations of risk, even though the sample includes only two people involved in sex work/prostitution and thus exercising a very exposed activity from this point of view.

	Under 20	Over 20
Already took an AIDS and STI test	21%	56%
Has received offers of unprotected sex	25%	47%
Has undergone a Post-Exposure Treatment (PEP)	0%	15%

To be young and trans – life projects

Finally we asked these young people (who have "their life in front of them") about their future plans. A very large majority express the desire to marry and have children. The obstacles are numerous before they can achieve those goals, starting with a process of civil status change that remains archaic, arbitrary and discriminatory (in France), and a society that remains reluctant to accept to family plans which are not based on biological plausibilities.

	FTM and transgenders assigned female at birth	MTF and transgenders assigned male at birth	TOTAL
Want to get married / sign a civil union	70%	84%	74%
Want to have children	44%	48%	45%
Maybe want to have children	34%	36%	35%

In conclusion, what emerges from this survey is very interesting. It is the first initiative that reveals truths about a social reality too often ignored in our country (France).

From there, HES and MAG issue a call to awareness, to the development of knowledge and understanding of our young trans citizens and to the end of attitudes of ignorance, stigma and rejection.

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