Trans+ at UCSB: Report on a 2020 Survey

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1. About the survey

This report presents results from a survey of trans+ people at UC Santa Barbara conducted in Winter of 2020, prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. The report uses the term *trans+* as an umbrella term that includes self-identified transgender, non-binary, and gender non-conforming people along with anyone else with a non-cisgender identity (see glossary in section 1.4). This section explains the motivation behind the survey, the collaborators who produced this report, the limitations of the survey, and a glossary of terms used in later sections.

1.1. Motivation

The presence of trans+ people in higher education has been a subject of increasing attention as the overall visibility of trans+ people – and, in turn, public expressions of transphobia – has grown. At the time of writing, trans+ people, and especially trans+ youth, are in a highly vulnerable position. Each year sees increases in violence against trans+ people,[1,2,3] which disproportionately impacts trans women and other transfeminine people of color. At the same time, the last several years have been record breaking with respect to the introduction of anti-trans legislation, which often targets youth and/or educational contexts.[4,5] These include efforts to outlaw gender-affirming medical care for trans minors, to ban discussions of trans identities in public school classrooms, to exclude trans people from using gender-segregated public facilities like bathrooms and locker rooms, to prohibit trans people from participating in competitive sports, and to establish interpretations of Title IX that exclude trans+ people from its protections.

Previous survey-based research suggests that transgender people tend to be positively oriented toward higher education. In a survey of 6,450 trans Americans conducted by the National Center for Transgender Equality and the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force,[6] respondents were more likely to have attended college or received an advanced degree than members of the general population. This is true despite the barriers many transgender people face in pursuing their education, including transphobia in the classroom,

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[1] Yurcaba, J. 2021. As anti-trans violence surges, advocates demand policy reform. NBC News. http://nbcnews.com/feature/nbc-out/anti-trans-violence-surges-advocates-demand-policy-reform-n1260485.

[2] Powell, L. 2021. 2021 Becomes deadliest year on record for transgender and non-binary people. Human Rights Campaign. https://www.hrc.org/press-releases/2021-becomes-deadliest-year-on-record-for-transgender-and-non-binary-people.

[3] Factora, J. 2022. At least five trans women have been killed in 2022 so far. *them*. https://www.them.us/story/at-least-five-trans-women-have-been-killed-in-2022-so-far.

[4] Krishnakumar, P. 2021, April 15. "This record-breaking year for anti-transgender legislation would affect minors the most." CNN. https://www.cnn.com/2021/04/15/politics/anti-transgender-legislation-2021/index.html.

[5] Jones, A. III & Navarro, A. 2022. This year on pace to see record anti-transgender bills passed by states, says Human Rights Campaign. https://www.cbsnews.com/news/2022-anti-transgender-legislation-record-human-rights-campaign/

[6] Grant, Jaime M., et al. 2012. *Injustice at Every Turn: A Report of the National Transgender Discrimination Survey.* Washington, DC: National Center for Transgender Equality and the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force. https://transequality.org/sites/default/files/docs/resources/NTDS_Report.pdf

harassment and sexual harassment and violence, lack of access to safe housing, employment discrimination, and disproportionately high rates of homelessness, poverty, violence, and trauma.

The survey presented in this document may be the first to delve deeply into the experiences of trans+ people at UCSB, including students, faculty, and staff. It also builds on findings from previous, general climate surveys, such as the one conducted in 2013 by Rankin & Associates Consulting.[7] Their survey of 8,193 students and employees at UCSB included 16 of whom described themselves as transgender (0.2% of responses) and 59 as genderqueer (0.7% of all responses). Although trans+ identities were not in focus, the report by Rankin & Associates – who are known for their work on LGBTQ+ campus climate issues – reveals several significant findings about trans and genderqueer[8] people:

1) Respondents who identified themselves as genderqueer and transgender were **more likely than the other gender groups to report discomfort with the climate on campus, within their departments, and in their classes**. The level of discomfort was also higher among those who identified themselves as genderqueer than those who identified as transgender.
2) Transgender and genderqueer respondents were the most likely group to report facing "exclusionary, offensive, hostile, or intimidating conduct," both in general and as a result of gender specifically (p. 73). Of all of the populations considered by the survey, which are defined by race/ethnicity, gender, disability, citizenship status, and sexual orientation, **genderqueer and transgender people were the most likely to report having witnessed such conduct targeting any of these marginalized groups**.
3) Transgender and genderqueer students are acutely aware of the **absence of faculty and staff who share their identities**.
4) Even non-trans people recognized the poor climate for trans people at UCSB: all respondents were asked to rate the climate for different minoritized groups on a scale of 1-5, and **the lowest ratings were given for the climate for transgender people**, who tied with people of low SES.

The present survey builds on these findings in several ways. First, it is an opportunity to consider how the experiences of trans+ community members may have changed during a decade of rapid shifts in public attitudes toward and awareness of trans+ people. It also asks questions that are particular to trans+ people's experiences, such as experiences with misgendering and accessing trans+ affirming healthcare. Additionally, it addresses how well trans+ community members feel their needs are served by UCSB's current efforts at trans+ inclusion and how they might be improved in the future. It discusses some of the forms of inequality that exist within trans+ populations as well, especially based on race and gender. Finally, it presents comments from transgender and genderqueer respondents, whose perspectives were at times excluded from analysis in the 2014 survey due to concerns about confidentiality.[9]

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[7] Rankin & Associates Consulting. 2014. *University of California Santa Barbara Campus Climate Project Final Report*. https://campusclimate.ucop.edu/_common/files/pdf-climate/ucsb-full-report.pdf.
[8] In 2013, the term *non-binary* was still relatively new, and many still used the older term, *genderqueer*, as an umbrella label for anyone outside of the female/male binary (see Zimman, L. & Hayworth, W. 2020. "How we got here: Short-scale change in identity labels for trans, cis, and non-binary people in the 2000s." *Proceedings of the Linguistic Society of America* 5(1):499–513).
[9] The present survey was also concerned with confidentiality. However, we employed an informed consent model (approved for exempt status by the UCSB Human Subjects Committee, protocol 5-19-

1.2. Contributors

This report is based on a survey carried out by a research group, led by Professor Lal Zimman, consisting of 10 mostly trans graduate and undergraduate students at UCSB. The survey was designed in Fall 2019 by participants in a course taught by Prof. Zimman, including graduate students Aris Keshav and Brooke English, and undergraduates Julia Leary, Forest Stuart, Levi Huntley, Jung Ho Hahm, and Alex Pigeon. Responses to the survey were collected during the Winter and Spring quarters in 2020. Surveys with substantive answers were submitted by 70 participants between January and March, 2020. Data collection efforts were impeded by the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, which led the team to end survey administration early. Data collection was overseen by Zimman, Keshav, Leary, Huntley, and Stuart. Analysis took place primarily during the 2020-21 academic year, with ongoing contributions from Zimman, English, Keshav, Leary, Stuart, as well as graduate students Alice Blank, Cedar Brown, and Jordan Tudisco.

1.3. Limitations

There are some limitations to the survey. First, the abrupt switch to remote instruction due to COVID-19 made it difficult to continue recruiting participants. Additionally, the situation in which students found themselves (e.g., no longer having access to on-campus spaces) would likely impact the responses participants provided. We decided to end the administration of surveys when UCSB switched to remote instruction. Although 70 responses provide significant insight, we likely could have recruited more participants in the survey if it were shorter rather than attempting to cover a great deal of ground.

Another shortcoming has to do with the demographics of survey participants. As the demographics section discusses, there is an overrepresentation of white participants and an underrepresentation of Latinx and Asian/Pacific Islander respondents relative to the overall demographics of the UCSB community. Similarly, far more responses came from individuals assigned female at birth than those assigned male. However, it is not entirely clear whether these skews accurately represent the trans+ population at UCSB, or whether it suggests sampling was not representative of that population. It is plausible that the most vulnerable members of the UCSB trans+ community were less likely to respond to the survey due to factors like lack of a private, reasonably fast computer and reliable internet access, insufficient time, and/or a lack of emotional energy to revisit traumatic experiences. Trans+ people who have left UCSB, though eligible to participate, may no longer be connected to UCSB networks and thus may not have heard about the survey, especially if their experiences at UCSB were negative. Finally, there is a dearth of responses from faculty (n=1), postdoctoral scholars (n=0) and staff (n=4), though again these low rates may simply reflect the relative proportion of trans+ people employed at UCSB at the time of the survey.

0894) that allowed participants to decide which questions to answer, and what information they were comfortable sharing, with the knowledge that being identified based on the experiences they shared was a potential risk of sharing them. In some cases, where we feel the risk of recognition is especially high, we have either refrained from offering direct quotes or omitted commenters' demographic information, which is otherwise provided.

1.4. Glossary

The following abbreviated glossary presents definitions for key terms as they are used in this report. Many of these terms have multiple definitions that circulate among trans+ and queer people, so the definitions used here may not perfectly align with the way survey participants use language to describe themselves.

asexual (adjective)
having no, or less than normative, sexual attraction and/or interest in engaging in sexual activity with others.

assigned sex (or **assigned gender**) (noun)
the sex/gender category an individual is placed in at birth.

Related terms: **AFAB** (Assigned Female At Birth) and **AMAB** (Assigned Male At Birth)

cisgender (adjective)
people whose gender identity is the same as their assigned sex.

(to) deadname
1. (noun) the first (and/or middle) name a trans+ person no longer uses; connected to **misgendering**;
2. (verb) to refer to a trans person by their deadname.

intersex (adjective)
individuals whose bodies are not normatively female or male as a result of genetic, anatomical, hormonal or other physiological difference (excluding consensually-chosen medical interventions like those sought by some trans people); intersex people can be either transgender or cisgender.

gender identity (noun)
the gender with which an individual self-identifies.

gender non-conforming (adjective)
individuals whose gender presentation is outside the norms for their gender identity and/or assigned sex; gender non-conforming people may or may not also identify as transgender.

gender presentation (noun)
how an individual expresses their gender outwardly, e.g., through clothing, dress, hair, language, etc.

to misgender (verb)
to refer to a person as belonging to a gender they do not identify with.

Related terms: **to deadname** (to misgender someone by name), **to mispronoun** (to misgender someone by pronouns)

non-binary (adjective)
individuals who do not identify exclusively with one binary gender (i.e., female or male) or the other.

Related terms (some types of non-binary identities): **agender** (having no gender), **bigender**/**polygender** (having more than one gender), **genderfluid** (having a gender identity or presentation that changes), **genderqueer** (having a non-normative gender identity or presentation; sometimes also used as an umbrella label meaning the same thing as **non-binary**)

pansexual (adjective)
attraction to all genders or without regard for gender.

sex designation (noun)
the legal or administrative category to which a person is classified, which may or may not be the same as their gender identity or gender assignment.

trans+ (adjective)
individuals who fall under our definitions of transgender, non-binary, and/or gender non-conforming.

transgender (adjective)
individuals whose gender identity is not the same as their assigned sex.

transfeminine (adjective)
trans+ individuals who were assigned male at birth but who identify on a feminine spectrum when it comes to gender identity and/or presentation.

transmasculine (adjective)
trans+ individuals who were assigned female at birth but who identify on a masculine spectrum when it comes to gender identity and/or presentation.

2. Summary of report

This section summarizes each part of the full report on a survey of 52 undergraduates, 13 graduate students, 1 faculty member, and 4 staff members. However, not all respondents answered all of the questions, and some chose not to provide any demographic information. Percentages are always relative to the total number of respondents who answered a given question.

2.1. Demographics

Over three quarters of survey respondents were non-binary (78%, n=39), with just 12% identifying as trans men and 6% as trans women. The remaining participants (n= were questioning their gender or identified as gender non-conforming, but not transgender or non-binary. The great majority of survey takers (78%) were assigned female at birth, while fewer than one quarter (22%) were assigned male; something reported not to put great value on assigned sex, but to contextualize inequalities between transfeminine and transmasculine people. No participants reported being intersex. When asked about the pronouns they identify with, the vast majority selected they/them (82%, n=41), though most also selected another set of pronouns as well: he/him (18%), she/her (16%) or both (20%). A minority use only he/him (14%), only she/her (4%), ze/hir (2%) or name rather than pronouns (2%).

Figure 1: Respondents' gender identities by category and assigned sex
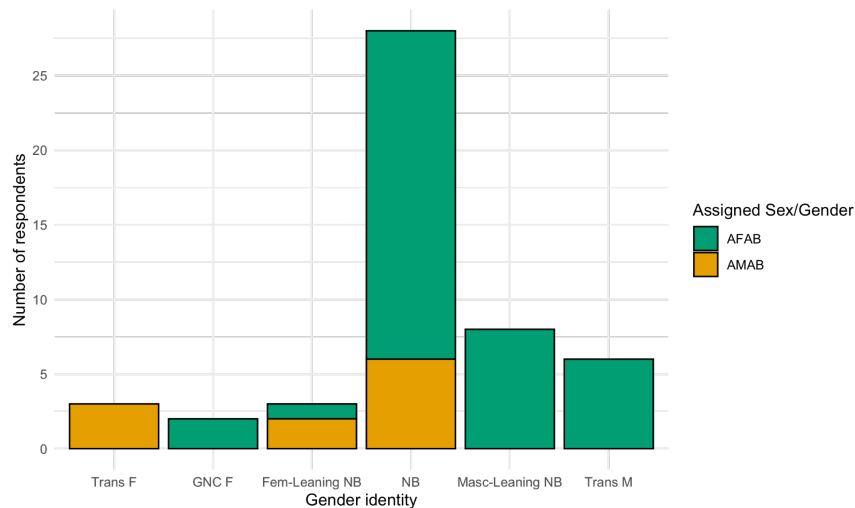
Figure 2: Respondents' pronouns
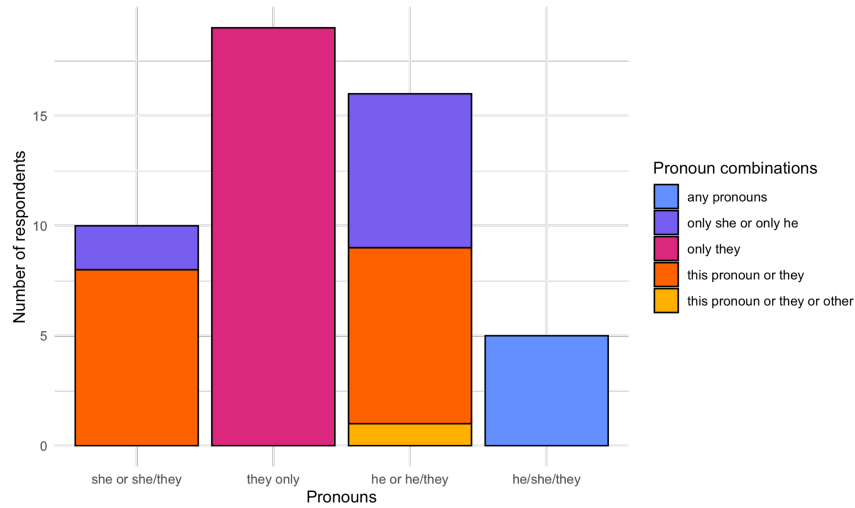
Just over half of survey takers identified as *queer* (54%, n=27), usually in combination with other labels, and the same proportion indicated attraction to more than one gender. Most who were not queer-identified indicated that they were gay and/or lesbian (28%). Around one quarter identified as being on the asexual identity spectrum (24%) usually in combination with other categories (22%). Smaller numbers were straight (8%) or questioning their sexuality (8%).

Figure 3: Respondents' sexualities by category
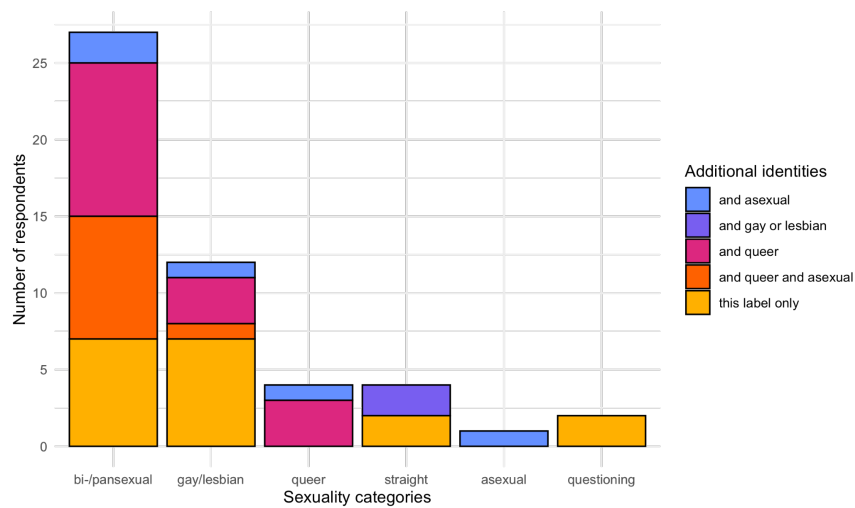
White respondents are overrepresented in the survey (52%, n=26) relative to UCSB's population, and just 22% were members of racial groups considered underrepresented in academia. The second most frequently selected racial group was Asian/Asian American (20%). Latinx participants (18%) were most underrepresented relative to the UCSB population, but the groups with the lowest numeric representation were Native American (4%) and Black (2%) trans people. One in five participants selected more than one

racial category, the most common combination of which was Asian/Asian American and white. The vast majority indicated they were US citizens (94%); just a few were documented immigrants (6%).

Figure 4: Respondents' racial/ethnic identification by category
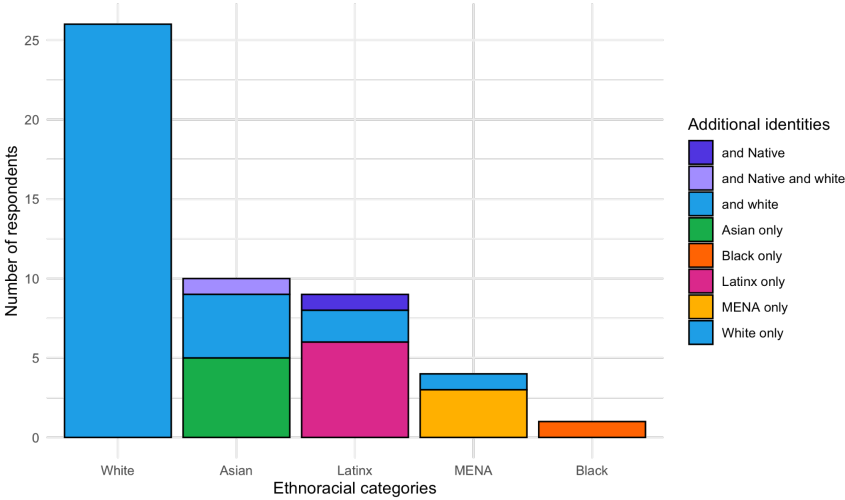
Figure 5: Respondents' URM (underrepresented minority) status by UCSB role
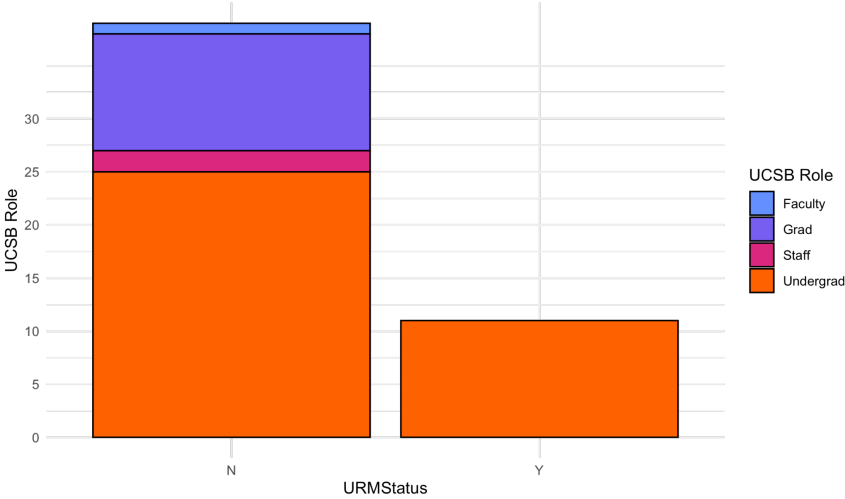
The majority of respondents reported coming from economically stable or privileged families, but 20% (n=10) indicated that they did not always have their basic needs met when they were growing up, and 10% said their families frequently struggled to afford necessities. The average age of survey takers was 22 for undergraduates, 29 for graduate students, and 33 for employees. Finally, more than half of the survey's participants have a disability (56%, n=28), most of whom (44%) require accommodations.

Figure 6: Participants' economic situation in childhood
(total responses = 49)
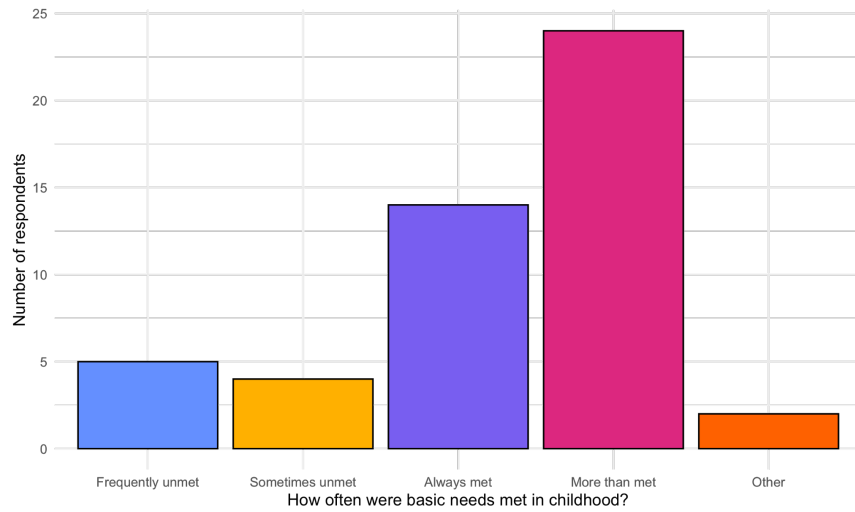
Figure 7: Participants' disability status and accommodations-related needs
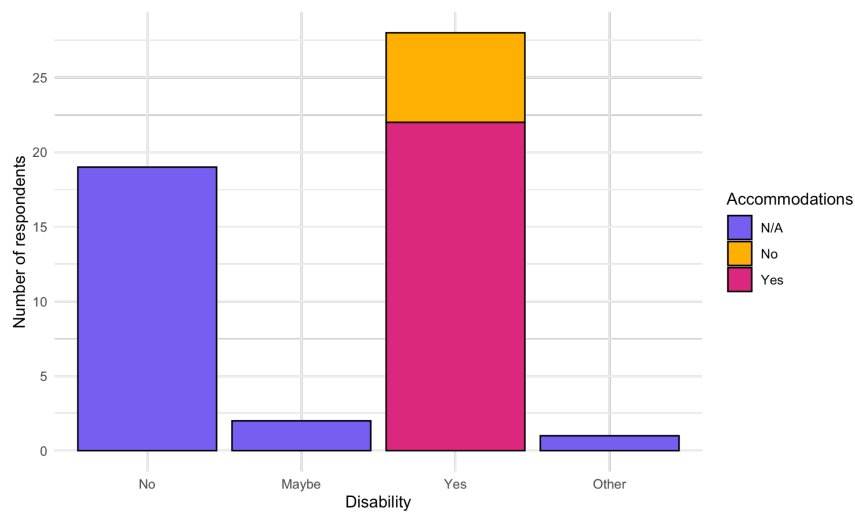
2.2. Climate

Responses to questions about campus climate and respondents' experiences with various forms of support and mistreatment indicate that almost all participants had experienced some form of mistreatment since coming out as trans+, ranging from transphobic microaggressions to harassment and violence. Frequently, these experiences occurred across multiple domains of respondents' lives, such as academics, housing, employment, and/or social relationships. Microaggressions and misgendering were the most widely shared experience reported by 86% (n=61) of survey respondents, but more overt forms of transphobia were also common, especially verbal harassment (46%), but also unfair treatment in school or work (27%), sexual harassment (25%), and sexual assault (17%). Most survey takers had received support from some corner of their lives (89%), but almost the same number had also experienced some form of mistreatment (87%).

Furthermore, just over one in ten (11%) describe being subjected only to mistreatment with a total absence of support.

Figure 8: Ratings of overall safety and support as a trans person at UCSB (total responses=39)
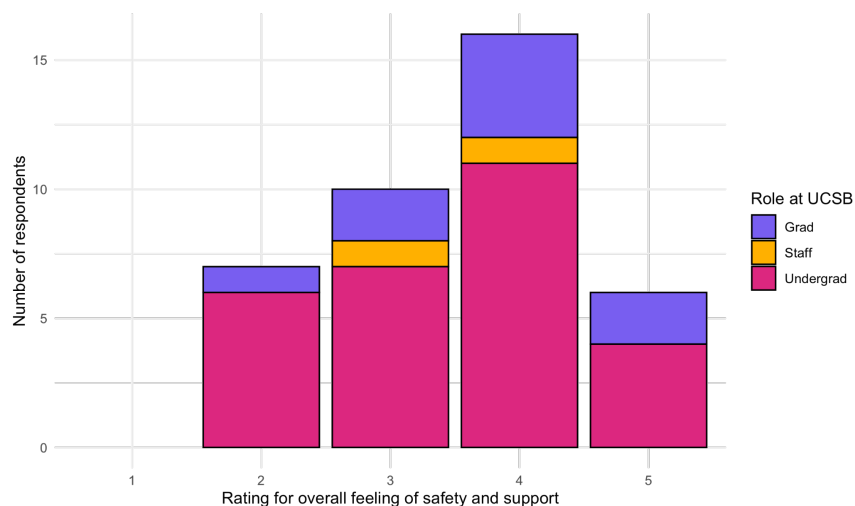
The forms of support respondents most desired tended to revolve around the use of appropriate and respectful language. This includes communicating with trans+ individuals to find out how they would like others to refer to them; consistently using that language; and correcting others and/or modeling correct usage for them when possible and appropriate. Other means of support included listening and providing emotional comfort in difficult times, taking initiative to educate oneself about trans+ issues, getting involved with trans+ communities, and finding opportunities to normalize trans+ identities.

Because students may be articulating or outwardly manifesting their trans+ identities for the first time at UCSB, many need to maintain control over the flow of information back to their families and communities of origin, who may not offer even the most basic forms of support. Unfortunately, coming out as trans+ to family members generated more negative than positive outcomes, and a number of survey takers lost familial relationships and/or financial resources as a result of their gender. Regarding financial support, 71% (n=35) of trans+ students were at least partially financially dependent on their families of origin. Those who had come out to unsupportive parents had the lowest level of financial support, and a number of students who had not come out to family expressed fear over potential loss of those resources should they do so. Those who had emotional support from their families were more than twice as likely to receive financial support than those without emotional support.

2.3.   Academics

The largest section of the survey contained questions about academic experiences, including overall academic performance and support; how students and teachers feel about requests for their pronouns in a classroom/academic setting and why; how transphobia is managed in the classroom; the study of languages with grammatical gender; and courses that cover trans-related content.

For an overall picture of trans+ people's academic experiences at UCSB, respondents were asked if they feel they are living up to their academic and/or professional potential (total responses = 60). The overall mean was 3.5 out of 5, with undergraduates having the lowest mean of 3.3, followed by graduate students at 3.7 and employees at 4.4. Participants were also asked whether they felt they had the support they needed to be successful, and in each case these ratings were lower: the overall mean was just 3 out of 5, and the lowest mean was again from undergraduates (3.1), followed by grad students (3.2), and employees (4).

Most trans+ students who completed this survey expressed support for the practice of asking about pronouns as part of self-introductions in the classroom (70% n=38). However, others had conflicting views (22%) and a minority disapproved of this practice (13%). Those with positive views of pronoun introductions mention that the practice helps prevent misgendering, validates trans+ identities, shows support for those who use non-normative pronouns, creates visibility for trans+ people, and makes students respond more positively to pronoun corrections. At the same time, those with negative or conflicting views express concern that asking about pronouns draws too much attention to them or trans+ people in general, is awkward, or is not handled well by instructors. Whatever their stance, a number of students identified factors that influence how they feel about pronoun checks in class. These include the class size and makeup, with large classes presenting particular difficulty; whether the question is asked of every student or just those judged to "look trans"; whether people are asked privately or in front of others; whether there is any explanation for why students are being asked to share their pronouns; whether the practice seems to be mandatory; and whether people actually use students' specified pronouns once they have been introduced. As these comments suggest, most who objected to pronoun sharing in classes were focused on *how* pronoun introductions are executed rather than objecting to the practice of talking about pronouns outright, although a small minority did feel that asking for pronouns in the classroom was unnecessary.

Whether or not pronouns are requested by teachers, being misgendered and deadnamed in the classroom is a common experience among trans+ students at UCSB, particularly those who use pronouns other than she/her or he/him. Just over three quarters of students who answered questions about their classes said they have encountered transphobia from instructors and/or TAs. Of these, the great majority (70%, n=19) felt unable to do anything about it, often out of fear of retaliation. Those who have tried to address transphobia met variable outcomes: some teachers at least attempted to change their behavior, while others refused. Even when a positive outcome was obtained, this process was often difficult and emotionally laborious for students; in one case a student said they no longer feel able to take classes from a specific teacher after attempting to speak with them about transphobia in their class.

When students are the ones engaging in transphobic behavior, respondents said faculty rarely address it, often because they are unaware that it occurred. Even when instructors are aware, one student said it was extremely rare for a faculty member to correct a student who has misgendered another student, and another said that when faculty do try to address the issue, they sometimes do more harm than good.

The degree to which language classes serve trans+ students at UCSB is an underexplored issue. Most students who participated in this survey had not taken such classes at UCSB (70%, n=37), but many of those who did had studied languages with binary grammatical gender distinguishing feminine and masculine nouns, such as Spanish (19%) and/or trinary grammatical gender with an additional neuter

category, which is typically inanimate, such as German (13%). These structures introduce additional opportunities for misgendering, and may create tension between instructors and students regarding what qualifies as "correct" language use. A few students (6%) reported that they have avoided language study, or the study of specific languages, out of concern about being misgendered, while 26% studied the language(s) of their choice despite the expectation that they would be misgendered. Among students who had studied languages with grammatical gender, nearly two-thirds (63%) said their instructors had never discussed the relationship between grammatical and social gender, nor how trans+ people would fit into the system. Almost as many (57%) said they were told by their instructors that there is no way to refer to someone in the language without assigning them to one binary gender or the other. Only a handful of students were supported in using non-binary forms, and none had studied under instructors who they perceived to be knowledgeable about the subject. Few students attempted to address misgendering-related issues with their instructors, and those who did were more likely to describe facing apathy, hostility, or dismissal than a positive outcome.

Another academic experience shared by many trans+ students pertains to the coverage of trans+ related topics in courses about gender and sexuality. Two thirds of respondents (n=42) had taken at least one course on gender or sexuality, across a variety of departments, and most had negative experiences to report. Some also had a mix of positive and negative experiences in different classes, but only two respondents (5%) had exclusively positive experiences.

Forty-four percent of students said they avoid gender and sexuality classes out of concern about the way trans+ content will be discussed by both instructors and other students. In some classes, respondents encountered more overt forms of transphobia, including not just individual cases of misgendering but also the rejection of the validity of trans+ identities entirely or the assumption that gender is a biological phenomenon in ways that exclude and misgender trans+ people. Survey respondents who take courses in these subjects tend to do so selectively, relying on both personal experiences and the reputation of specific faculty or departments. However, they also note that these views may not be apparent until well into the quarter, leaving trans+ students with fewer options. Another reason for the overall dissatisfaction students expressed include uniformed instructors and the relative absence of openly trans+ faculty. Students who have studied under trans+ instructors were more likely to be satisfied with their courses than those who mention having only cis teachers. More than one student also noted that trans+ content seems to be taught with the assumption that everyone in the room is cisgender. Others brought up trans+ content being an afterthought and the absence of material about trans women and transfeminine people, non-binary people, and trans+ people of color.

Despite these points of dissatisfaction among survey participants, 42% of students said they seek out gender and sexuality classes, and more say they wish they could take classes in the area. Avoidance of such courses was motivated by many other factors as well, such as the need to focus on degree requirements to graduate on time, stigma from students' major departments or advisors, or fears about being outed by virtue of having such a class on one's transcripts.

Finally, the experiences of trans+ teachers at UCSB revealed that transphobia also shapes the classroom experiences of those who occupy positions of structural power within the university. Most instructors, including graduate students and the lone faculty member, said their trans+ status impacts their work as

academics, both in terms of their research and teaching. Research-related impacts were largely negative and included dealing with transphobia on research teams and mental exhaustion resulting from ongoing transphobia and misgendering in professional contexts. Though the classroom brought some of the same issues students described, instructors were more likely to describe their trans+ identity positively in a teaching context because of the opportunities it provides to mentor, support, and make space for trans+ students and to offer trans+ affirming perspectives and pedagogical practices.

These results suggest that a significant number of instructors at UCSB wish to incorporate trans-related content in their courses, but that trans+ students do not always feel well-served by these attempts; in some cases, they even find them harmful. Instructors may benefit from more resources and support, including those that target problems identified by this survey. A smaller number of faculty and instructors appear to disregard the expressed needs of trans+ students and express overt antagonism toward trans+ identities. This reality heightens the need for the university to find ways to ensure that trans+ students are well-supported as they face transphobia, misrepresentation, and erasure in the classroom.

2.4. Administrative records

Many respondents had made administrative changes to their name, sex designation, and/or pronouns within UCSB's records. They generally learned how to navigate these processes through online resources, particularly the RCSGD's website. The name change process was characterized as relatively easy, but fewer students had or knew how to change their sex designation within UCSB's records. Most students also said they had entered their pronouns on GOLD and were happy to be able to do so, but there was also some lack of clarity regarding who has access to that information and how it can be shared or used.

Some students experienced difficulties with pronouns and name changes, including being outed inadvertently. Others found that having their pronouns and lived names in their records was not sufficient to ensure that faculty and staff who had access to that information would use it when referring to them. Other shortcomings in the current system were identified, including the inability to enter more than one pronoun set in GOLD and confusion regarding how many separate records systems hold information about students' names, sex designations, and/or pronouns, and whether separate processes are needed to change each system.

2.5. Bathrooms, resources, and policing

Bathroom access and safety have been recognized by the university as an important element for trans+ people's well-being at UCSB. Yet around half of survey respondents expressed that their needs are not currently well met by the facilities available on campus. Most expressed a preference for gender-neutral bathrooms, and some are uncomfortable using binary gender bathrooms under any circumstances, a situation that can result in negative health outcomes if restrooms are not easily accessible. Respondents share a sense that the campus needs more gender-neutral bathrooms, and that they can be improved in terms of cleanliness, signage to make it clear when bathrooms are gender-neutral and what facilities are present (e.g., urinals), and being more equitable regarding which bathrooms are made gender-neutral. Specifically, multiple responses pointed to problematic aspects of turning men's restrooms into gender-inclusive facilities while leaving adjacent women's rooms single-gender only (see section 8.1.2).

Figure 10: How well respondents' bathroom needs are met
(total responses=47)
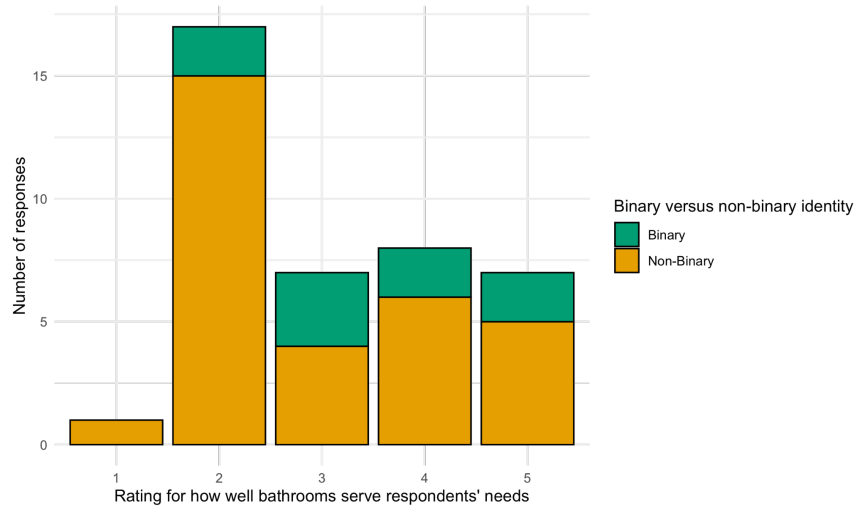
When asked about the most important resources for trans+ people at UCSB, participants mentioned institutional-level resources like the Resource Center for Sexual and Gender Diversity (RCSGD), the presence of at least some gender-neutral bathrooms on campus, and the ability to indicate pronouns and lived names in some records systems. The availability of mental health services provided by CAPS and trans-related medical care at Student Health were also mentioned, along with trans-affirming housing options and the availability of trans+ inclusion training for staff. However, some found that these resources did not meet their needs. Others named student-based resources, including trans+ clubs, events, and organizations, and the trans+ community at UCSB itself. Despite the availability of and (albeit mixed) praise for these resources, respondents detailed others that are needed or need improvement. These include more and higher quality training for faculty and staff, a smoother process for changing identity records and receiving appropriate housing assignments, more gender-neutral bathrooms, improvements to healthcare and mental health services, and more availability of gender-appropriate housing for trans+ students.

For the most part, respondents reported having no direct contact with either local or UC police (74% n=39). Among those who had (n=14), most described neither particularly positive nor particularly negative experiences (64%). However, only 14% (n=2) of those who had interacted with police felt that their gender had been respected during those interactions, and one student mentioned the exclusion of non-binary people from the UCSB Police Department's historical practice of offering binary gender-segregated self-defense classes. In response to an open-ended question about respondents' thoughts on policing, 87% (n=13) of those who provided answers expressed skepticism about the help police would provide them and over half (60% n=9) expressed fear and/or lack of trust in police. A few respondents referenced traumatic experiences that left them feeling distrustful, while others made reference to stories they had heard from others.

2.6. Healthcare

Medical care is an area of great importance for trans+ people, both for those who make use of trans-related medical care such as hormones and being able to access general healthcare needs as a trans person. As a measure of overall well-being, survey takers were asked to rate their general overall health and their mental health on a scale from 1 (poor) to 5 (excellent). For general health, 42 respondents gave an average rating of 2.95, with responses roughly balanced above and below the mean. Graduate students had a lower mean (2.2) than undergraduates (3.14), who had a lower mean than staff (3.67).

Figure 11: Respondents' ratings of their overall health
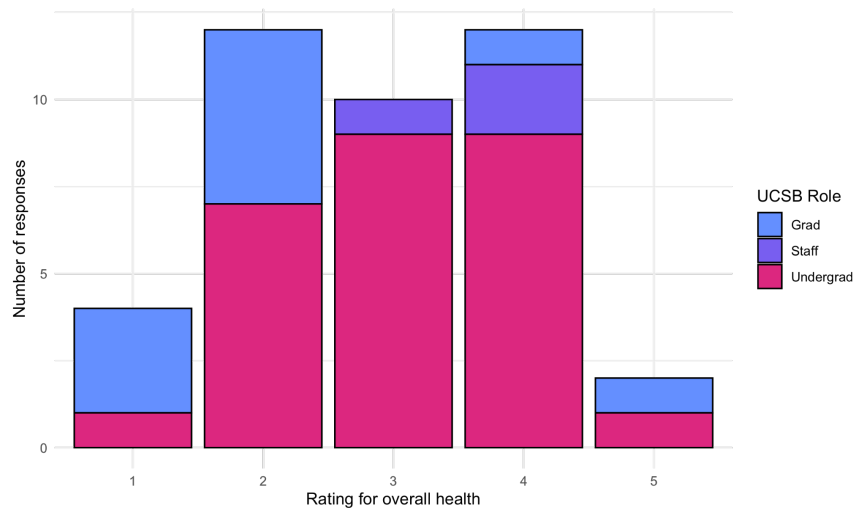

Figure 12 shows the same information for mental health ratings (n=48). The overall average is significantly lower for mental health (2.27) and over half selected a rating of 2 (56% n=28). Only 17% gave a rating above the midpoint, while 75% (n=36) gave a rating below the midpoint. On this measure, grads and undergrads had the same mean of 2.3, while staff gave a higher mean rating of 4.

Figure 12: Respondents ratings of their mental health
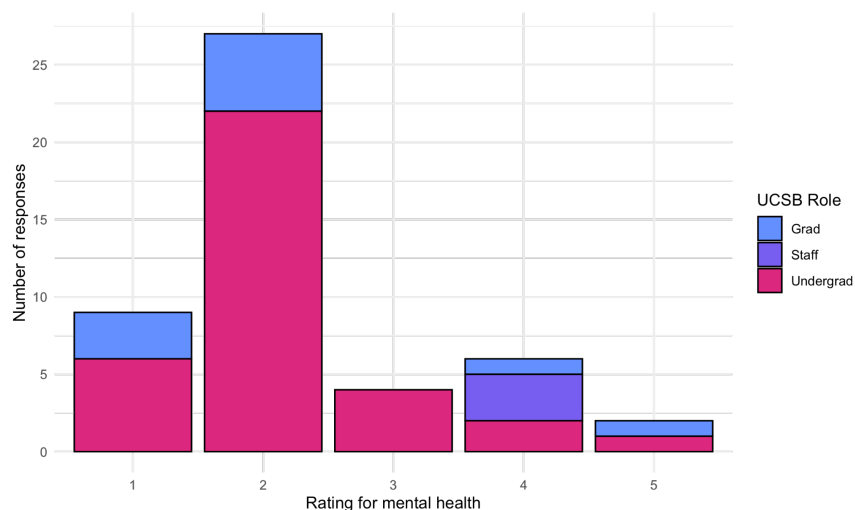
Most students receive their healthcare on campus (70% n=35), though a significant number also (or only) receive off-campus services (42% n=21), usually for mental health services. Students' choices about providers were most frequently driven by insurance restrictions and cost, the availability of needed care, and convenience. Students who receive mental health care off campus also expressed the wish that CAPS provided longer-term care.

Although there was clear demand for more services at CAPS, the overall assessment of both Student Health and CAPS was uneven and seems to depend primarily on the specific providers students saw. Even those who described specific positive experiences with treatment at Student Health or CAPS typically mentioned having been misgendered by some of the staff in those contexts.

The most common way students were misgendered at CAPS or Student Health was through use of their deadname, which were at times called out in front of crowded waiting rooms. Patients also experienced misgendering through linguistic norms in the medical field, such as referring to gynecological/pelvic health as "women's health." In some cases, respondents experienced misgendering at both CAPS and Student Health as apathetic or even intentionally hostile because of repeated instances or overt refusal.

When asked to rate the different types of providers and staff they had seen, the highest ratings were given to physicians at student Health (mean = 3.9), followed by nurses and staff at Student Health (3.6). CAPS was ranked lower, with a mean of 3.4 for providers and 3.0 for staff.

Faculty and staff were also asked about the level of difficulty they have experienced obtaining healthcare as a trans+ person in Santa Barbara on a scale of 1 (very easy) to 5 (very difficult). There were three responses, which were highly variable (1, 3, and 5). Mental health services were rated slightly higher (mean of 2.67, meaning lower difficulty).

2.7. Housing

The housing section of the survey asked students about their preferences and experiences with on- and off-campus housing and asked all participants about the difficulty they have had finding housing while at UCSB.

Among the 40 undergraduate students and 10 graduate students who responded to these questions, most (68%) had lived in housing situations they did not consider trans+ friendly. Most respondents also expressed skepticism about the trans+ friendliness of other housing options that they had not experienced. For undergrads, gender segregated dorms were the type of housing considered the least trans+ friendly, but even gender-neutral dorms were not ideal: fewer than half of respondents (42%) who had lived in them said they were trans+ friendly. Despite these issues, undergraduates generally prefer housing operated by UCSB, while grad students were more likely to prefer off-campus accommodations. The most popular housing options among trans+ undergrads were UCSB apartments (59% said trans+ friendly), Rainbow House dorm (50%), with roommates off campus (50%), and living alone or with a partner or family off-campus (75%), though the latter was not an option and/or not desirable for many students, especially undergraduates. See section 10.1 for more discussion.

When asked about how difficult it was to obtain gender-appropriate housing on a scale of 1 to 5 (1 = not at all difficult, 5 = extremely difficult), 23 undergraduate students gave an average rating of 2.65 and 5 graduate students gave a mean rating of 2.2. Employees reported more difficulty finding housing than students, with a mean rating of 3.5.

Students were also asked about whether they were able to be housed with a type of roommate they felt comfortable with. Most responded that they were housed with their preferred gender roommate (58% n=21) or at least with one they felt comfortable with (14%). Others were housed with someone they were not comfortable with when it comes to gender or trans+ status. Graduate students were more consistently housed with someone they were comfortable with or lived on their own. In general, students appreciated the opportunity to live with other trans+ people.

Regarding facilities, most undergraduates said they had access to a gender-neutral bathroom (58%, n=21) or a gender segregated bathroom they felt comfortable using (14%). However, 5 undergraduates said they did not have access to a bathroom they were comfortable with or had to go to another building to find such a bathroom.

A final issue that came up with regard to housing was parental comfort. While most respondents would like to have a trans+ roommate, a few mentioned that their parents would only allow them to live with a cisgender person or someone of the same assigned sex.

A final set of questions explored housing insecurity and homelessness. Ninety percent of the 50 respondents had never experienced these challenges. Small numbers of undergraduates had been housing-insecure (n=6) or homeless (n=4), but all were securely housed at the time of the survey. Graduate students were in a more precarious situation, with 60% (n=6) reporting housing insecurity, half of whom were insecurely housed at the time of the survey. Although not many respondents are currently housing insecure, those who are are

disproportionately AMAB (2 out of 3), non-citizens (2 out of 3), without another source of financial support (3 out of 3), and lacking parental support (2 out of 3).

2.8. Employment and finances

As a measure of current material well-being, participants were asked how consistently they are able to meet their basic needs currently, defined as "food, housing, medication, hygiene items, transportation, and other necessities." This question received 52 responses (48 students, 38 of them undergrads, and 4 employees).

Only half of all undergraduates (n=19) said they are always able to meet their basic needs, and just 18% (n=7) can afford non-necessities like new clothing and technology. The other half of respondents struggle sometimes (42% n=16) or consistently (8% n=3). Overall, graduate students fared better in that 80% (n=8) are able to consistently meet their basic needs and a larger percentage can afford extras (40% n=4), but 20% (n=2) do sometimes struggle to afford food, housing, and other things they need. Even one of staff respondents sometimes struggles to meet basic needs, and the two who never struggle receive some financial support from partners. This picture is in sharp contrast to the way participants described their childhood (see section 4.8), during which 80% said they never struggled to meet their basic needs.

Those least likely to struggle to meet their basic needs were those who are financially dependent on others, including family members and partners. Only seven respondents were both financially independent and never struggled to meet their basic needs, including the sole faculty member, five graduate students, and just one undergraduate. Support from someone else does not guarantee security, however, as many who receive help from family or partners still struggle to meet their basic needs (n=15).

Employment introduced its own challenges, including gender-based discrimination, microaggressions, and harassment. Almost all undergraduates had worked at jobs either on- or off-campus (85% n=33), whereas graduate students were mostly supported through their departments via fellowship, teaching or research positions. Nearly a quarter of all undergraduates (23% n=9) and one fifth of graduate students (n=2) said they had experienced discrimination related to their trans+ status either at work or when seeking work. Of those who had not experienced discrimination (n=23) most were either not out as trans+ at work (40%) or had jobs where their trans+ status was seen as beneficial (i.e., in LGBTQ+ service positions; 17%). Some students specifically mentioned the challenges of balancing their need for financial security against the need to be free from transphobic work environments.

3.   Recommended actions

The recommendations in this section are based on a synthesis of all comments from survey participants. The authors have attempted to develop recommendations that would serve the largest possible number of trans+ community members, but recognize that it may not be possible to meet the (sometimes conflicting) needs of every individual with equal efficacy.

3.1.   Recommended practices for asking about pronouns

The following recommendations are based on the results of questions answered by 53 trans+ students about their perspectives and experiences with being asked for their pronouns in an academic setting (see section 6.1). The suggested actions are written with instructors and teaching assistants in mind, but can also be implemented in other contexts with some adaptations. The recommendations are based on an assumption that readers are open to pronoun sharing and wish to implement the practice more effectively.

1) **Don't make assumptions** about gender identity, trans+ status, or degree of outness based on the pronouns a student shares in class or lists on GOLD.

   Naming pronouns is not the same as declaring a gender identity, and there are many reasons students select pronouns for their introductions or on GOLD. Students may be trying to avoid outing themselves, experimenting with a new pronoun, using different pronouns in different contexts, wanting to keep their trans+ status from family members, etc.

   Furthermore, knowing someone's pronouns does not indicate whether that person is transgender or cisgender, non-binary or binary-identified, genderfluid or not, questioning their gender or not, etc. It should be assumed that anyone, regardless of appearance or pronouns, might identify with those categories.

2) **Ask in a way that is context-specific**. For example, "What pronouns would you like to use in this space?"

   This approach makes it easier for students to choose a pronoun without implying that this pronoun should be used at all times or in all contexts. This helps students who are trying out or shifting to a new pronoun, who use different pronouns in different settings, or who are not yet widely out.

3) **Provide context about why you are asking about pronouns**. Students appreciate when there is a discussion of why pronouns are being asked about and how the information should be used. This discussion can be used to set the expectation that members of the class avoid misgendering others.

   This practice helps those who are uncertain about how pronoun sharing works and may increase the likelihood that class members take pronoun sharing seriously.

4) **Students should be encouraged, but not required, to share their pronouns.**

Trans+ and questioning students may not want to share their pronouns in class. At the same time, cisgender students who are comfortable naming their pronouns may simply forget to do so. When asking students to share their pronouns, it is useful to acknowledge that people may forget to mention pronouns, especially if they rarely experience misgendering. Drawing attention to this fact may encourage those who are comfortable sharing their pronouns to remember to do so.

5) **If students don't share pronouns, avoid gendering them**. Apply this policy equally to all students, and let students know about it before they have the opportunity to share their pronouns.

Letting students know that you won't make assumptions about their gender signals that you care about students' self-defined identities. It also establishes a model that other students may adopt when referring to those who haven't shared pronouns. If stated prior to pronoun sharing, this practice may encourage students who use she/her or he/him pronouns to remember to share them if they feel comfortable doing so. This practice provides a rare space where students who identify with gender-neutral language can feel more confident that they won't be misgendered.

6) **Reach out to students individually and/or invite them to reach out to you**, ideally in addition to inviting students to share pronouns during self-introductions.

Many students indicated discomfort with being asked about their pronouns in front of an entire class, but also did not want to feel singled out. Reaching out to all students about their pronouns and/or inviting all students to reach out individually provides reassurance that pronoun information is desired, but that discretion is also recognized as important. On the other hand, many trans+ students appreciate the opportunity to state their pronouns in front of the class and learn others' pronouns as well, so one-on-one discussions should not replace the invitation of pronouns during more public self-introductions.

7) **Talk to students about what they would like to happen if they are misgendered in class**. For example, do they want their instructors to correct other students when they are the source of misgendering? Would they rather it happen after the fact? Do they prefer to do the correction themself? Or would they rather not have any additional attention called to the misgendering event at all?

Regardless of how pronoun information is gathered, it is useful to invite students to let you know would like to have happen if they are misgendered, particularly if you anticipate that this is likely to happen for a student, e.g., by virtue of their use of pronouns other than she/her or he/him. This information is best asked for privately.

8) Use students' pronouns. Once you have asked for someone's pronouns, it is especially important to actually use them and model that usage for others.

Survey respondents mentioned appreciating it when the people around them don't just use their pronouns in private, but model which pronouns should be used in front of others. Instructors have unique authority and influence in this regard, and as such are especially powerful models.

3.2. Recommended practices for language instructors

The following recommendations are specifically for instructors of language with a grammatical gender system. They are based on the results of questions answered by 53 trans+ students about their choices regarding whether to take language classes and the experiences of 16 students who had studied one or more languages with grammatical gender, such as Spanish, French, German, Italian, and Russian.

The suggestions presented here may be seen as more radical than those above because of their departure from traditional approaches to language instruction, in which the notion of correct usage plays a central role. However, the survey results make clear that these approaches are in conflict with the needs of trans+ students. Furthermore, what is deemed "correct" is determined by those with current and historical social power and privilege, and we are committed to the goal of sociolinguistic justice in and beyond the classroom.[10,11,12]

1) **Learn how native and heritage speakers of the language who are trans+** (or members of other communities with non-normative gender expressions) **deal with grammatical gender.**

   Most student respondents report being told by language instructors that it is impossible to refer to someone in that language without placing them in one binary gender or the other, even for languages with well-documented examples of trans+ speakers using creative strategies to express their genders.

2) **Support trans+ students' use of the linguistic practices modeled by trans+ speakers of the language** and not just those that receive support from linguistic authorities.

   Of course, all students would still learn to use the binary forms, just as students are taught to use both feminine and masculine forms even if they only ever apply one set or the other to themselves.

3) **Teach all students about these additional options for grammatical gender**.

[10] Charity Hudley, A. H. & Mallinson, C. 2018. Introduction: Language and social justice in higher education. *Journal of English Linguistics* 46(3):175–85.

[11] Bucholtz, M., et al. 2016. Beyond empowerment: Accompaniment and sociolinguistic justice in a youth research program. In R. Lawson & D. Sayers (eds.), *Sociolinguistic Research: Application and Impact*, 25–44. London & New York: Routledge.

[12] Knisely, K. A. & Paiz, J. M. (2021). Bringing trans, non-binary, and queer understandings to bear in language education. *Critical Multilingualism Studies* 9:23–45.

Just as students are taught to recognize, understand, and produce masculine and feminine forms, all students should be taught to recognize and use non-binary forms so they can avoid misgendering those who identify with them. Even if no one in the class uses these forms, some students will have people in their lives who do and will want to learn how to refer to them.

If adding another gender seems too confusing, remember that languages can have many more than two or three genders (also known as "noun classes"). For example, Swahili, which serves as a lingua franca for around 200 million people, has ten noun classes.

4) **Talk about grammatical gender early on**, and **give students the opportunity to choose** the grammatical gender they wish to use.

Students may not have considered this choice before, so it is best to give them time to think about their answer rather than expecting an immediate response. The guidelines in section 2.2.1. regarding how to ask about students' pronouns can be applied here as well.

5) Recognize that **students may want to change the grammatical gender they use**, either because that is the best reflection of their identity or because they experience a change in how they identify during the course of the class. Rather than requiring consistency, require intentionality.

For example, a non-binary student who intends to use a mixture of feminine and masculine grammatical forms when speaking a language should not be penalized for doing so on assignments. If the goal is to test students' facility with grammatical gender, using fictional characters, public figures, or scripted interactions could be used rather than requiring students to refer to themselves.

6) Relatedly, **find ways to communicate with students regarding how they intend to use grammatical gender** before concluding they have made a "mistake" by using an unexpected grammatical   form.

One way to implement this strategy would be to offer students an opportunity to indicate what grammatical gender they will use for themselves for a given assessment. This could have the added benefit of reminding all students to pay attention to gender agreement.

3.3. Recommendations for gender-neutral restrooms

The recommendations below concern the need for more and better equipped gender-neutral restrooms across campus. They are based on responses to questions about how well trans+ people are currently served by UCSB's bathrooms and how the provision of gender-neutral restrooms could be improved (see section 8.1).

1) **More gender-neutral restrooms** (GNRs) should be available across campus, with a focus on buildings that currently have none.

   Most trans+ respondents prefer to use GNRs, including some who identify within the female/male binary. Furthermore, respondents mention that single-user GNRs are often occupied, which suggests that demand for this type of facility is greater than their current availability.

2) **More gender-neutral restrooms should be multi-use**.

   One way to address demand for GNRs is to make more of them available for simultaneous use. Currently, some GNRs are converted from multi-use women's or men's rooms into single-user GNRs despite retaining multiple stalls and/or urinals. Some may see this choice as sending the message that multi-stall GNRs are unsafe or inappropriate, and potentially even that it is the presence of trans+ people that renders them unfit for use by more than one person at a time.

3) **When a women's and men's restroom are next to each other**, alternatives should be found to the practice of turning only the men's room into a gender-neutral restroom.

   Several survey participants identified problems with the practice of converting a men's room into a GNR while leaving a single-gender women's room immediately adjacent. Respondents indicated that men frequently mistake GNRs for men's rooms under those circumstances, which can put trans+ users in a vulnerable position if they are seen as out of place, or out them as trans. This practice also implies that women's rooms are for women – possibly only cisgender women – while GNRs are for anyone who isn't a (cis) woman, an idea that is especially harmful to trans women (see section 8.1.2).

4) **Signage should clearly label GNRs as gender-neutral**, and should ideally provide **information about what types of facilities** (i.e., urinals and stalls or just stalls) are inside.

   Participants mentioned that GNRs without clear signage can lead to problems, especially when GNRs are situated next to women's rooms. Some expressed appreciation for GNRs like those in the Student Resource Building, which indicate whether urinals are present.

5) Facilities should direct specific attention to **ensuring that gender-neutral restrooms are clean and available for use**.

   Commenters mentioned that GNRs are often dirty or out of service. Because there are so few GNRs, and because multiple respondents described long trips across campus to find one, it is particularly important that existing GNRs be available and sanitary. They should also be monitored for transphobic graffiti.

4. Conclusion

The survey described in this report paints a picture of trans+ people at UCSB that is rich with complexity. The stories shared by members of our campus community represent the varied experiences trans+ people have with exclusion and erasure, harassment and fear, violence and trauma. Yet they also reflect the joy of self-discovery, the lifegiving process of building community and chosen family, and the strength that allows trans+ people to fulfill their academic goals despite the barriers they often encounter.

There are also many stories that have gone untold. The trans+ people who are most vulnerable may also be those least likely to take the time necessary to complete an in-depth survey, those who are unable or unwilling to revisit their traumas, and those who are so isolated that they did not learn of the survey at all. Perhaps more critical still, this survey does not represent the trans+ people who have left UCSB because they lacked the resources, support, ability to cope, or willingness to deal with the forms of transphobia they experienced, which may have been amplified in intersection with racism, classism, xenophobia, and ableism.

UCSB's attempts at improving resources for trans+ people have been directed at many of the issues identified by survey takers. However, there are clear gaps in which trans+ community members' needs are still not being served, including in the domains of healthcare, administrative record keeping, bathrooms, housing, and addressing transphobia on campus. Providing funding as well as more information regarding the available resources can help begin to close these gaps, but institutional policies only go so far. Although most survey takers rate the climate relatively positively, trans+ people at UCSB frequently experience microaggressions, harassment, and discrimination in public spaces, academic contexts, and when seeking employment and housing. Looking back on their communities of origin, some trans+ people may no longer see a place for themselves, and some have lost all familial support by coming out. In this context, it is all the more critical that UCSB commit to addressing the complex and varied needs of its trans+ community members, the first steps of which have been sketched out by this report.