



2019 CENSUS REPORT

ABOUT US

Mission: We're advancing the core human rights of self-determination and expression for all trans, nonbinary and gender nonconforming people in Louisiana.

We're more than just a transgender rights organization. We're a grassroots force of nature, deeply rooted in the communities we serve. Our leadership is cultivated from our social support groups, which are some trans people's only opportunity each month to be themselves. We believe that every single trans person in our state can contribute to the movement for trans liberation.

Since our founding in 2011, we've been a consistent resource for transgender and gender nonconforming Louisianans, whether they needed referrals for providers, support, or an advocate to help them with their school or employer. We've held over 350 monthly support meetings in cities throughout Louisiana, including Baton Rouge, New Orleans, Shreveport, Lafayette, Lake Charles, and Monroe. Between our monthly meetings and our online support space, over 1,500 Louisianans consider themselves members of Louisiana Trans Advocates, and we're growing every day.

ON MEMBERSHIP

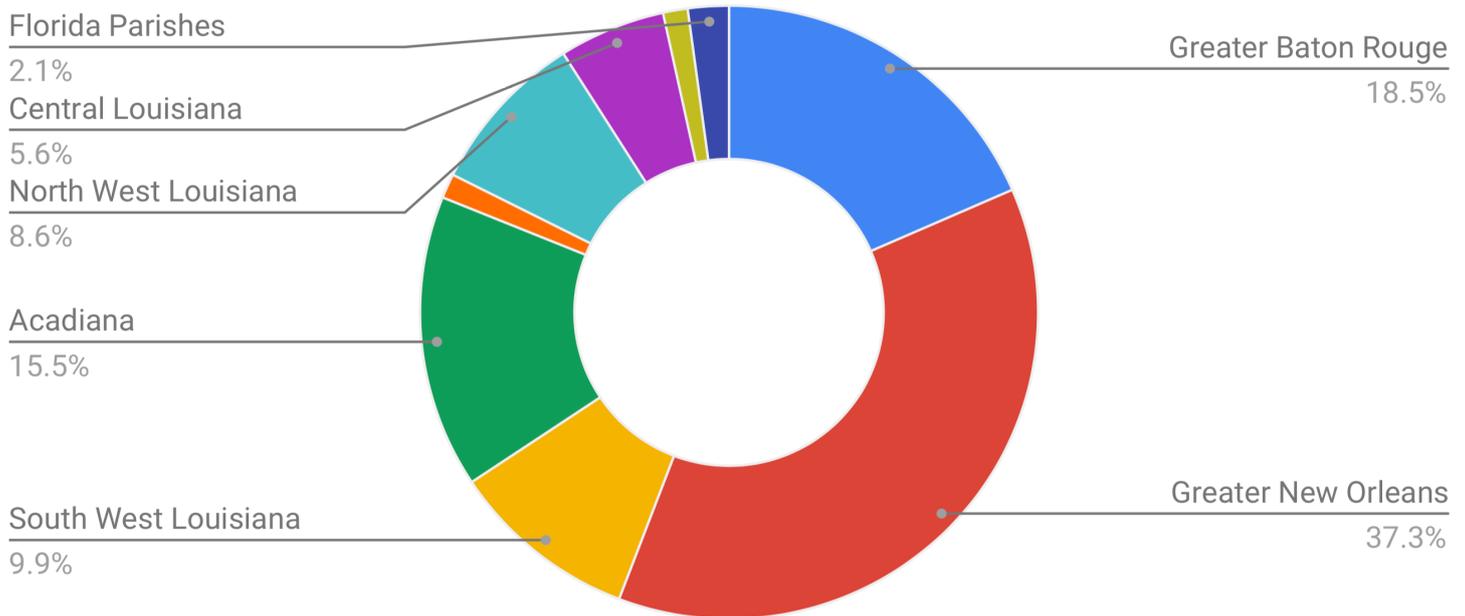
Louisiana Trans Advocates is a membership-based organization. There are no dues to become a member, and membership is self-determined and open to trans and nonbinary people throughout the state of Louisiana. Membership includes an opportunity to vote on the leadership of our organization semi-annually at our Statewide Convention. While our support spaces and some volunteer opportunities are open to cisgender allies who are partners, parents, or children of trans people, cis participants are not members for the purpose of voting in board elections and board membership is reserved for transgender people.

ON THE PURPOSE OF THIS REPORT:

Since our founding in 2011, we have never conducted a statewide survey of the community that we serve. We've experienced a full leadership turnover in the past few years, and an immediate priority of the new leadership has been to assess the effectiveness of our organization's social support programs, gather feedback from our members, and learn more about their experiences with discrimination, both within the trans community and outside of our organization, and other barriers to accessing positive long term outcomes in health, employment, safety, and housing. We also hoped to grow our understanding of where our members would like us to expand our work.

We received responses from 234 anonymous census participants during the survey period from June through October 2018, who make up approximately 13 percent of our organization's membership. Their responses are reflected in the results of the survey throughout this report.

Geographic Region by Percentage



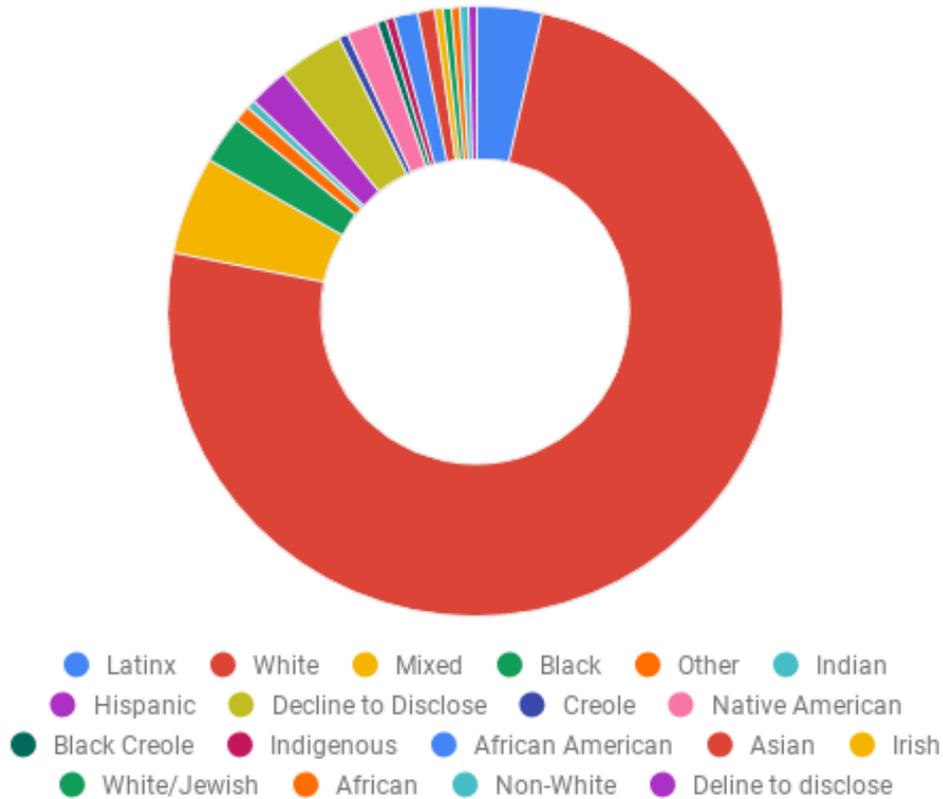
GEOGRAPHY

We included two questions to find out where our members live, both geographic region and city/town. We found that more than half of our total members live in either the Greater New Orleans region or the Greater Baton Rouge region. This is consistent with the levels of participation we see in our monthly support groups.

Members report living in more than 70 cities and towns,

including New Orleans, Baton Rouge, Metairie, Shreveport, Lafayette, Lake Charles, New Iberia, Harahan, Gretna, Donaldsonville, Slidell, St. Francisville, Jennings, Chalmette, Denham Springs, New Roads, Erath, Pineville, West Monroe, Watson, Natchitoches, Maurepas, Houma, Hammond, Sulphur, Bunkie, Bernice, Alexandria, Starks, Covington, Arabi, Avery Island, Tickfaw, and more.

Race of Members by Percentage



AGE & RACE

More than half of our members are under the age of 30, including nearly one-third of our members who are youth between the ages of 18 and 24. Elders are 6 percent of our membership.

Nearly three-quarters of our members identified as White.

5.2 percent of our members identified as mixed-race.

3.4 percent of members identified as Latinx, and an additional 2.1 percent identified as Hispanic.

3.9 percent of our members identified as Black or African-American.

2.1 percent of our members identified as Native American or Indigenous.

An additional 3.4 percent of our members declined to disclose their race.

A small percentage of respondents identified their race as: Creole, Black Creole, Indian, Asian, Irish (which we grouped with White for the total percentage), African, and Other.

SEXUAL ORIENTATION

- 44 percent of respondents identified as bi or pansexual
- 19 percent identified as straight.
- 10 percent identified as lesbian.
- 10 percent identified as queer.
- 5 percent identified as asexual.
- 4 percent identified as gay.

Additional responses included questioning, ambivalent, apathetic, and fluid.

15 percent of respondents identified as nonbinary.

Additional responses included transmasculine (3 percent), agender (1 response), and gender non-conforming (1 response).

N.B. 10 percent of our respondents identified as cisgender. Their responses were removed from our census for the purposes of analyzing the information we collected on employment, housing, health care, and experiences of discrimination.

GENDER IDENTITY

38 percent of respondents identified as trans women.

36 percent of respondents identified as trans men.

ACCESS TO EMPLOYMENT, HOUSING, AND HEALTH INSURANCE

At the time of our survey, 17.6 percent of respondents were unemployed. Over the two years prior to the survey, 66.5 of respondents experienced unemployment. Half of those experienced unemployment in the year prior to the survey.

21.9 percent of respondents have not experienced unemployment as adults.

HOUSING

82 percent of respondents have never experienced homelessness.

8.3 percent have experienced homelessness in the past two years.

An additional 8.2 percent of respondents have experienced homelessness at some point in their life greater than two years ago.

Among non-white respondents, experiences of homelessness were higher. Around 25 percent of these respondents have experienced homelessness at some point in their life.

HEALTH INSURANCE

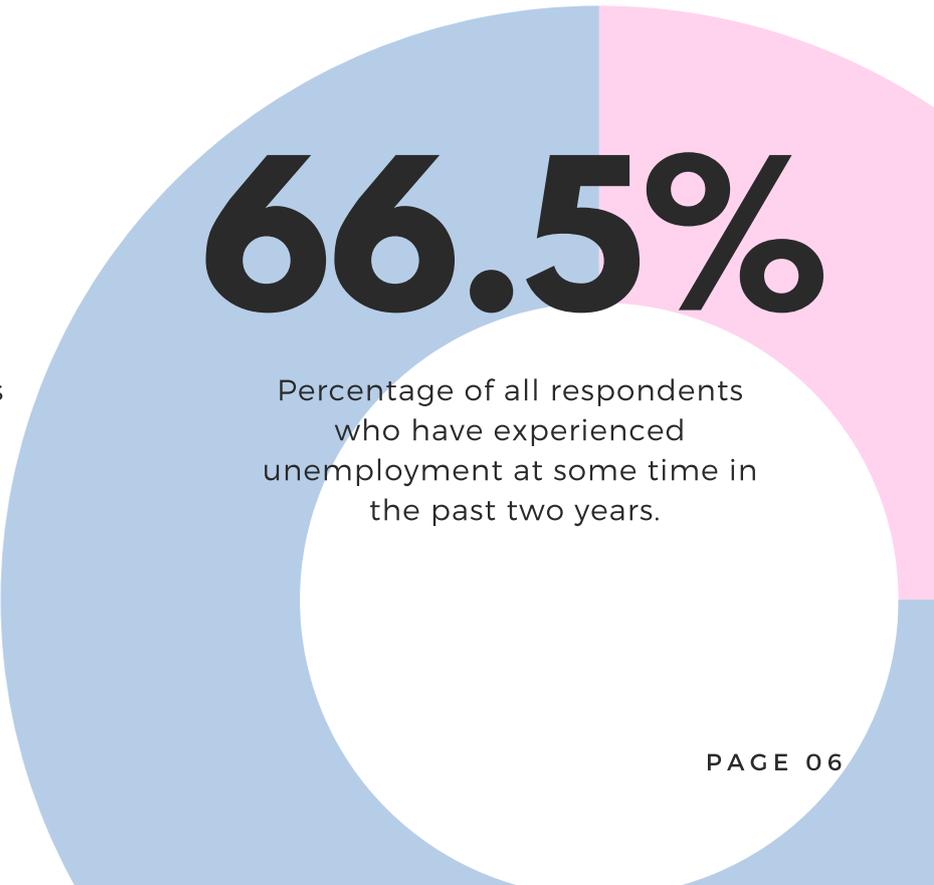
27.1 percent of respondents have Medicaid insurance, and one-sixth of those respondents access Medicaid via the Medicaid expansion program.

12 percent of respondents have no health insurance.

34.1 percent of respondents access health insurance through their employer.

26.7 percent of respondents chose "other health insurance."

N.B. We did not include Medicare as an option in the census. This was an oversight, and we expect that Medicare beneficiaries make up a significant portion of the "other insurance" respondents.



25%

Percentage of non-white census respondents who have experienced homelessness at some point in their lifetime.

66.5%

Percentage of all respondents who have experienced unemployment at some time in the past two years.

EXPERIENCES WITH DISCRIMINATION

39 percent of respondents disclosed experiencing discrimination in the six months prior to the survey. Of those that have experienced discrimination, 16.6 percent experienced workplace discrimination, 6.7 percent experienced discrimination at home, and 5.5 percent experienced discrimination in school.

Several respondents shared that they've experienced violence or discrimination when trying to access a public restroom.

A teenager in Northwest Louisiana reported that he was told that if he uses the boys' restroom at school, he would be suspended. The student has been singled out among his peers to use a faculty restroom, which has resulted in bullying and taunting from his peers. Another teenager in the Greater New Orleans Area reported the same experience, and in his case, the harassment escalated to the point that he was forced to leave the school.

These experiences don't end after high school graduation. College students also report experiencing discrimination:

My college is forcing me to live in the most expensive housing because it's the only one without communal bathrooms, and they won't let me live with people of my own gender unless I have a private bath (not the case for cis students). No one is allowed to live off campus.

—White trans woman, Houma / Thibodaux Area (attending college out of state)

My school regularly refuses to respond to the concerns of trans students, particularly regarding safety at our internships which are coordinated by the school and a requirement for our degrees. When I had to move to a new internship because of problems at the first one, I was essentially ordered to be stealth at the new internship.

—White trans man, Northwest Louisiana

My school refuses to change my sex in their computers, even though my passport and license say "female."

—White trans woman, Acadiana

Additionally, a number of respondents have said that they've lost a job due to their gender identity. Others report difficulties gaining employment because of their gender identity.

Employers have intentionally avoided me because of my gender identity, despite being more qualified than who they chose to hire.

—White trans woman, Acadiana

I was let go from work because of my transition, while being given the excuse that I did all my work and they had nothing left for me to do, when I know they did.

—Mixed race trans man, Florida Parishes

EXPERIENCES WITH DISCRIMINATION, CONT.

Trans people also report experiencing harassment and intimidation while doing everyday activities:

I've experienced people wondering if I'm in the right bathroom, calling me "it", have received multiple physical threats, plenty of transphobic speech and derogatory language used against me.

—Mixed-race nonbinary person,
Central Louisiana

Implicit exclusion from school activities at my college, intentional misgendering at college, housing discrimination by an apartment complex over my legal gender markers, and other similar experiences.

—White trans man, Greater Baton Rouge Area

I was recently followed by a store employee while getting crafting supplies with my family.

—Creole agender person,
Greater New Orleans Area

And dangerously, trans people have reported experiencing discrimination in moments of crisis:

I was misgendered by the local fire department paramedics when I required their services to provide me transportation to the hospital after my blood sugar spiked. I'm diabetic. I have legal paperwork declaring me female and offered it. Their leader refused to see it or acknowledge it.

—Indigenous trans woman, Northwest Louisiana

EXPERIENCES WITH LOUISIANA TRANS ADVOCATES

We asked respondents to rate how supported they felt by our organization on a scale of 1-10 and then to explain their rating. The mean of all of the responses is 7.8. Among non-white respondents, the mean rating is 7.3. And among nonbinary respondents, the mean rating is 7.5.

Those who felt unsupported (rating 1-3) were generous in sharing why they gave the rating they did. Some expressed that they just haven't taken advantage of the organization's programs, so it does not play a large role in their support system.

EXPERIENCES WITH LOUISIANA TRANS ADVOCATES, CONT.

Some trans people of color and nonbinary people responded that they feel they aren't represented among the organization's leadership or local chapter. And another common response was that the group is too liberal.

I and a number of others feel like it isn't the place of what's supposed to be a support group to come out against more traditional/conservative trans people like myself and a number of others. —White trans woman, Acadiana

Sometimes I feel very put off by comments on individual posts and silencing of nonbinary voices/policing of gender expression.

*—Mixed-race nonbinary person,
Greater New Orleans Area*

It doesn't really take into account or respect non-binary perspective.

*—White nonbinary person,
Greater Baton Rouge Area*

Some of the above perspectives were shared by respondents who rated how supported they felt in the middle range (4-6):

LTA always uses very binaried and gendered language (ladies and gentlemen, etc...) that is not inclusive of me and my gender expression. It could instead refer to us all as people, folks, loves, community members, family members, etc.

*—Black nonbinary person,
Greater New Orleans Area*

To me LTA feels more like a space for trans-feminine individuals and less like a place for trans-masculine. No one has done anything to purposefully exclude anyone, but a lot of the questions from trans-feminine individuals seem to get more attention and more answers than those posted by more masculine identifying individuals. Part of the problem is most definitely due to the tendency of trans-masculine individuals to go "stealth" and drop from communities, but if others feel even close to what I feel I can imagine it is also hard for them to post because they feel like it is not their space. I certainly do.
—White trans man, Northwest Louisiana

Among those who feel supported by the organization (7-10), many said that the Facebook group is a useful resource to find good information and expressed that it's been a positive place for them to seek social support from peers:

I know the group would support me if I talked about any concerns or problems I'm having. When I've needed resources everyone has been very helpful
—White trans man, Northwest Louisiana

EXPERIENCES WITH LOUISIANA TRANS ADVOCATES, CONT.

The new leadership seems extremely interested in outreach and inclusion. And clearly in the past months, several people have stepped up, empowered themselves, to help move LTA and support members. I have really been impressed with the new energy, empathy, and sincerity.

—White trans woman,
Greater New Orleans Area

There is such a variety of people involved and it is one of the most welcoming and all-encompassing groups I have ever seen for trans people!

—Latinx nonbinary person,
Greater New Orleans Area

IN-PERSON SUPPORT

72 percent of respondents said they know where their local in-person support group meets. The remaining 28 percent did not know whether there was one in their area and if there is, when and where those meetings occur.

49 percent of respondents have never attended an in-person support group and rely fully on our online space for social support.

Among those who have attended a support group, 30.3 percent said they attend every month, 23.5 percent estimate that they attend every few months, and 45 percent estimate that they attend every 6 months - year.

Among those who don't attend the support groups, frequent reasons given included anxiety, transportation, distance from their home, and money.

Among those who do attend the support groups, when asked to share any problems they've noticed, respondents cited lack of diversity among participants.

STRENGTHS OF LOUISIANA TRANS ADVOCATES

Respondents were asked to pinpoint what they think the organization does well. Common responses included responding to requests for information and resources and creating space for supporting each other. A few people also responded that we do a good job in policy advocacy and media presence.

Favorite part is that the facebook page is a good platform for those in need of assistance and I think care is taken to help all of us who need it.

—White trans man, Greater New Orleans Area

Providing information and support for local trans people about trans-related topics!

—Mixed-race trans woman,
Greater Baton Rouge Area

The organization has stayed alive despite challenges over the years - both in the personal lives of its board members and the many attacks on a political level. I admire this organization's resiliency and drive to stay true to its mission - representing and supporting transgender people in Louisiana. It has been a valuable resource to many, including myself.

—White trans man, Greater New Orleans Area

Provides a safe environment online for questions and venting.

—Black trans woman, Acadiana

I think this organization brings people together that would not have a community otherwise. We realize how strong we are in numbers. By putting together people who are similar, we have more momentum for growth.

—Latinx trans man, Greater Baton Rouge Area

WHAT WE'RE MISSING

When asked what respondents feel the organization lacks, responses reiterated points made throughout earlier survey responses.

We need to have a cultural responsiveness in the group. We need to do way more reaching out to Black, Latinx and Asian American communities.

—Latinx trans man, Greater New Orleans Area

More organized information on the facebook group. I feel like people are constantly asking the same questions about name changes on the facebook group every day.

—Mixed-race trans woman,
Greater Baton Rouge Area

I would like to see LTA do more intentionally support and outreach in communities of color, as well as recruit more leaders in those communities.

—White trans man,
Greater New Orleans Area

In addition, respondents noted that social activities outside of the support groups were lacking, as well as opportunities to get involved in advocacy and activism:

There doesn't seem to be any clear way to learn how to participate in activism or leadership. No mentoring for maybe confidence boosting. No social activities outside the support meeting.

—White trans woman, Greater New Orleans Area

The organization lacks a clearly communicated structure and there are not enough updates on advocating activities.

—White trans woman, Acadiana

OUR RESPONSE TO SURVEY RESULTS

Our monitoring of survey responses began as soon as the survey was released in the summer of 2018, and our response has been immediate and ongoing. Leadership has previously noted many of the same issues as were raised in survey responses. This honest feedback from our members has been instrumental in framing internal leadership conversations on how to move forward.

MAKING SOCIAL SUPPORT POSITIVE, SAFE, AND ACCESSIBLE TO TRANS PEOPLE OF COLOR

Since our leadership elections in May of 2018, we've taken several steps toward becoming a better resource for trans people of color in our state. We identified four goals to achieve via board partnership with the LTA Trans People of Color Empowerment Committee (launched August 2018):

- Work toward dismantling systems of oppression that disempower and disenfranchise people of color within the transgender community;
- Address racism within the trans community, as well as the broader LGBTQ community;
- Develop anti-racism education to shift culture inside of Louisiana Trans Advocates; and
- Commit long-term to ongoing, open dialogue on racism and strategies to address it within Louisiana Trans Advocates.

The launch of the LTA Trans People of Color Empowerment Committee was a huge first step toward making our organization a better resource for trans people of color, but this strategy will only work if our entire Board of Directors is fully committed to this work. To that end, we've taken two steps so far.

In February 2019, the Board of Directors amended the organization's bylaws to include a new clause under the Removal of Board Members section. It reads:

“Any Director may be removed by the affirmative vote of 2/3 of the Directors when that Director has failed to represent Louisiana Trans Advocates in a manner that is consistent with the written Statement of Principles or has otherwise demonstrated an unwillingness to act in a manner that is consistent with anti-racist, anti-oppression values.”

OUR RESPONSE TO SURVEY RESULTS, CONT.

Leadership has also committed to engaging with members intentionally and more frequently in the Facebook group on these issues, making anti-racism educational content more available and giving more space to content highlighting current and historical TPOC leadership in our movement and the violence and discrimination faced by TPOC at higher rates.

Finally, we understand that accessibility to our meeting space can be a barrier for trans people of color at higher rates than white members. Our New Orleans chapter has responded to this by moving the general monthly support group meeting to a more centralized location in the Mid-City neighborhood of New Orleans (near the corner of Canal and Carrollton). Previously the meeting was in Metairie and was only accessible via car.

We have much work left to do to ensure that our organization is the best resource it can be for trans people of color, and we invite internal and external accountability as we move through this period of growth and change.

MAKING SOCIAL SUPPORT POSITIVE, SAFE, AND ACCESSIBLE TO NONBINARY PEOPLE

A consistent problem we've faced has been members expressing views that trans identities beyond the man-woman binary are invalid, a view which is not only incorrect, but dangerous and stigmatizing to nonbinary people. It is worth saying here, as we did above, that nonbinary people make up a significant portion of our membership, an estimated 15 percent. Nonbinary people are also subject to discrimination and harassment at higher rates than trans people whose identities and gender expression is binary.

This past year, we formalized our "no gatekeeping" rule in the Facebook group and at social support meetings. In the past, this rule wasn't explicitly included in our written protocols, which sometimes resulted in lax or inconsistent moderation of content that can be read as gatekeeping. We take responsibility for climate issues that arose for nonbinary members as a result of this, and are fully committed to doing better.

We also recently started a nonbinary support group in New Orleans, where there were enough members who wanted to participate to make this group possible. While this is limited to New Orleans for now, we'd be enthusiastic about providing logistics support to anyone interested in starting a nonbinary group in a region where there is demand.

OUR RESPONSE TO SURVEY RESULTS, CONT.

Leadership has also committed to engaging with members intentionally and more frequently in the Facebook group on nonbinary identity, making gender spectrum educational content more available and giving more space to content highlighting current and historical nonbinary leadership in our movement.

TRANSPARENCY AND MEMBER ENGAGEMENT

A common theme among survey responses was that members don't always know what Leadership is working on or how to plug in. Louisiana Trans Advocates has long taken the position that every single trans person in our state can contribute to the movement for trans liberation. We believe that our support spaces (in-person and online) aren't just for support. They're also for cultivating our organization's future leaders and giving members an opportunity to use their power as trans Louisianans to build better communities for the trans people who will come after us. This means that ensuring an open line of communication between Leadership and members is critical to achieving our goals in advocacy and in organizational sustainability.

Our Leadership conversations are open to all trans people in our state who are interested in contributing to discussion and decisions around our long-term strategy, our legislative agenda, our fundraising, communications, community education/training, or anything else that fits within our mission of advancing the core human rights of self-determination and expression for all trans, nonbinary and gender nonconforming people in Louisiana. While some of our leadership decisions are limited to voting members of our Board of Directors (bylaw amendments, financial decisions, etc.), we welcome full participation in almost every leadership conversation from the full scope of our members. In this way, leadership isn't limited to our Board of Directors. It encompasses many non-board leaders who have been active participants in our work.

In order to cement that in our practices, we recently transitioned from monthly open board meetings at Metropolitan Community Church in Baton Rouge to hosting our board meetings online via video conferencing, which we livestream into the Facebook group, to allow greater participation in discussion from members across the state, who can hear more about what we're working on, ask questions, and bring ideas.

We also have a weekly video conference where we do much of the day-to-day management of projects, work areas, and more. While these meetings are not livestreamed, they are open to any member of LTA who wants to make a long-term commitment to participation in leadership of the organization.

OUR RESPONSE TO SURVEY RESULTS, CONT.

Finally, we made a huge structural change to our Board of Directors in May of 2018. As of this past year, our Board of Directors is membership-elected, instead of self-appointed. President, Vice-President, and At-Large Directors are now elected by a vote of all members at the annual statewide convention in even-numbered years. Chapter representatives to the Board are elected by a vote of chapter members the month prior to the annual statewide convention in even-numbered years. We hope that the democratization of our leadership will give members across the state a greater sense of ownership of the work we do together, and that it will give leadership a greater sense of accountability to our members.

CONCLUSION

We hope that our 1,500+ members feel empowered by this report to voice their concerns, ask their questions, and participate in shaping the future of Louisiana Trans Advocates. Our promise to you is not just to listen, but to act, and we hope you feel reassured by the initial steps we've taken to address the concerns that were included in survey results. Our work has started, but it is far from over. We want to reiterate the invitation to lead that has been included throughout the past few sections of this report. We value you and everything you bring to the conversation. There is room for you at our table.

To inquire about joining the TPOC Empowerment Committee, contact Elliot Wade at elliott@latransadvocates.org. To learn more about other leadership opportunities, contact Dylan Waguespack at dylan@latransadvocates.org.

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