

SECURING A **Gender Equitable Future**

COMMISSION ON GENDER EQUITY
2021 ANNUAL REPORT

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Letter from the Executive Director

Dear Mayor Adams and Speaker Adams,

The Commission on Gender Equity (CGE) works across city agencies to eliminate gender discrimination in New York City. Each year, CGE is required to submit a report detailing its activities of the previous year, making recommendations to advance gender equity in NYC, and sharing its plans for the upcoming year.

This report highlights activities from January 2021 through December 2021, the final year of the de Blasio Administration. As COVID-19 continued to wreak havoc in the lives of New Yorkers, CGE worked to increase awareness of much-needed services provided by city agencies. We also testified before the New York City Council on the numerous challenges facing girls, women, transgender, gender non-binary, and intersex New Yorkers as they navigated the pandemic, which proved disproportionately burdensome to them and their families. Additionally, CGE continued to think about how the city can build a gender equitable recovery, after COVID-19, as we rolled out the third and final phase of our longitudinal *Gender Equity and COVID-19 Recovery Survey*.

CGE's efforts over the past year and since 2015 would not have been possible without the partnership of our CGE Commissioners and our former Co-Chairs, First Lady Chirlane McCray and Silda Palerm. We thank them for their unwavering support and visionary leadership.

As we reimagine life after COVID-19, I am pleased to share this report with you and look forward to working together to augment New York City's legacy as a place where ALL New Yorkers, regardless of gender identity, gender expression, and background, can live economically secure lives, have access to quality and affordable health care, have full autonomy over their reproductive lives, and live safely in their homes, communities, and workplaces.

Regards,

Jacqueline M. Ebanks
Executive Director

Executive Summary

Local Law 45 of 2020 requires the New York City Commission on Gender Equity (CGE) to report to the Mayor and the Speaker of the Council about the agency's:

- Activities during the previous 12 months.
- Goals for the following year.
- Recommendations for the reduction of gender-based inequality.
- Recommendations for agencies, including, but not limited to, the Department of Education, for preventing and improving responses to sex- and gender-based discrimination and harassment.

During 2021, CGE continued to work across city agencies and in partnership with local and global entities to advance gender equity within its three areas of focus: Economic Mobility and Opportunity, Health and Reproductive Justice, and Safety, as laid out in its 2018-2021 Strategic Plan. Additionally, CGE continued to operate with an intersectional lens and within a human rights framework by leveraging four key actions to achieve its goals: legislation/policy/advocacy, interagency and cross-sector collaboration, research and publications, and public education and engagement.

The following annual report highlights CGE activities between January 2021 and December 2021. It also lays out a plan of action for 2022. Specifically, in 2021, CGE:

- **Conducted preliminary analysis of its *Gender Equity and COVID-19 Recovery Survey***
 - In June 2020, CGE launched its longitudinal *Gender Equity and COVID-19 Recovery Survey* to better understand the long-term effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and to inform a sustainable and equitable recovery in NYC. The third and final round of the survey was released in April 2021 to respondents of the previous two rounds who indicated an interest in continuing their participation in the survey.
- **Convened two new inter-agency workgroups**
 - Menstrual Equity Workgroup
 - Pay Equity Workgroup
- **Participated in global gender equity campaigns and presented at international events**
 - Denim Day
 - 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence campaign
 - United Nation's 65th Commission on the Status of Women convening
 - NYC Junior Ambassadors program

- **Testified before the City Council**

- Appendix A of this report contains copies of CGE's three public hearing testimonies.

In 2022, under the Adams Administration, CGE will build for sustainability. To do so, CGE will

- **Launch a strategic planning process to develop a five-year strategic plan.**

- **Increase its organizational capacity.**

- **Continue to lead interagency collaborations.**

- **Gender Equity Interagency Partnership**

- Created in 2019, the Gender Equity Interagency Partnership (GEIP) was designed to convene senior-level agency representatives from City agencies, to help develop an integrated and sustainable approach to achieving gender equity in NYC. CGE will re-launch the GEIP in 2022.

- **Menstrual Equity Workgroup**

- CGE will continue to convene the Menstrual Equity Workgroup, which was established in October 2021 to examine the need and feasibility of establishing a citywide menstrual equity policy.

- **Pay Equity Workgroup**

- In collaboration with the Department of Citywide Administrative Services (DCAS), CGE will continue to co-chair the Pay Equity Workgroup in efforts to close the gender and racial pay gap within the city's workforce.

- **Continue to lead cross-sector Task Forces and Advisory Boards**

- **Sexual Health Education Task Force**

- The work of the Sexual Health Education Task Force (SETF) sunset, by law, in May 2022. CGE will re-constitute the Task Force to focus on the implementation of its recommendations.

- **Street Harassment Prevention Advisory Board**

- Local Law 46 of 2021 requires that CGE and Mayor's Office to End Domestic and Gender-Based Violence (ENDGBV) co-chair the newly established Street Harassment Prevention Advisory Board "to advise the mayor and the council on the issue of street harassment and its prevention."

- **Continue participation in global campaigns**
 - Denim Day
 - CGE will continue to join ENDGBV and community advocates as they rally against rape and sexual assault.
 - 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence Campaign
 - CGE will continue to partner with ENDGBV to increase NYC's participation in this annual global campaign to combat gender-based violence.

2021 in Review

Key Accomplishments: Gender Equity and COVID-19 Recovery Survey

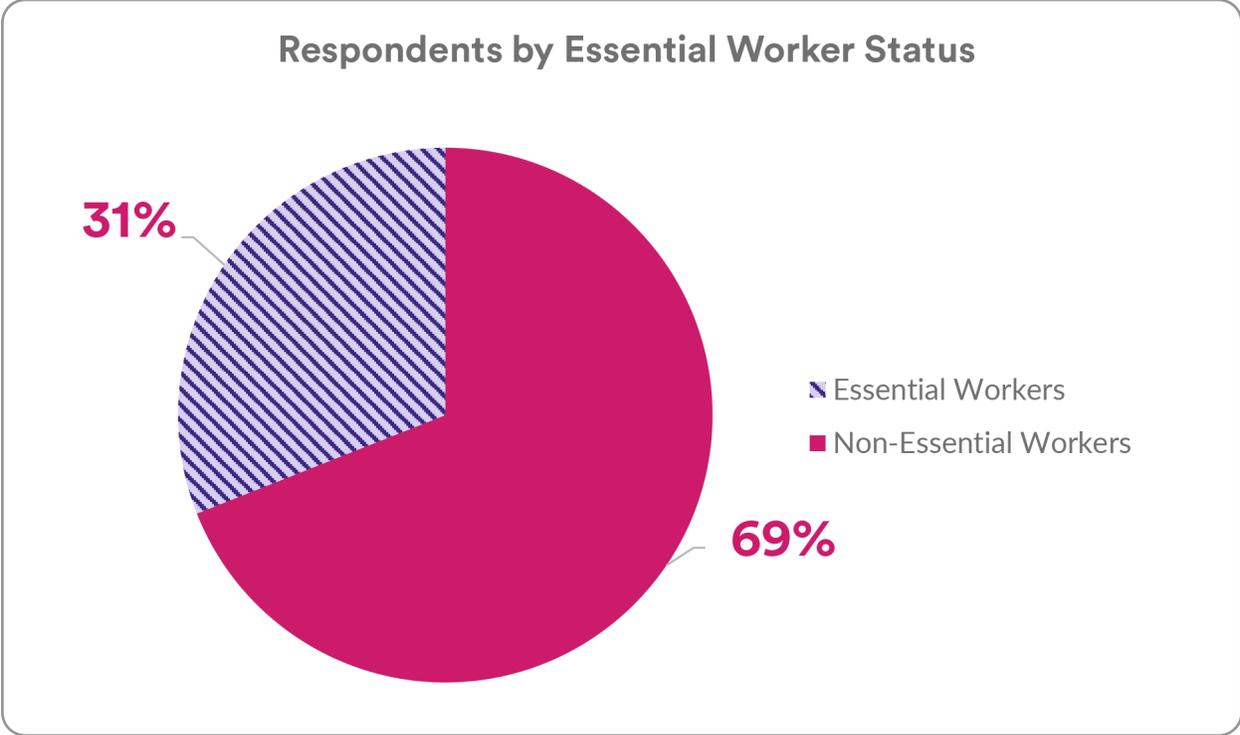
Overview

In June 2020, CGE launched its longitudinal *Gender Equity and COVID-19 Recovery Survey* to better understand the long-term effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and to inform a sustainable and equitable recovery in NYC. The third and final round of the survey was released in April 2021 to respondents who indicated an interest in continuing their participation in the survey.

Thirty-three respondents completed the final survey, providing responses to questions about their needs and experiences during the four-month period prior to the release of the third round of the survey. They represented a cross-section of NYC’s population.

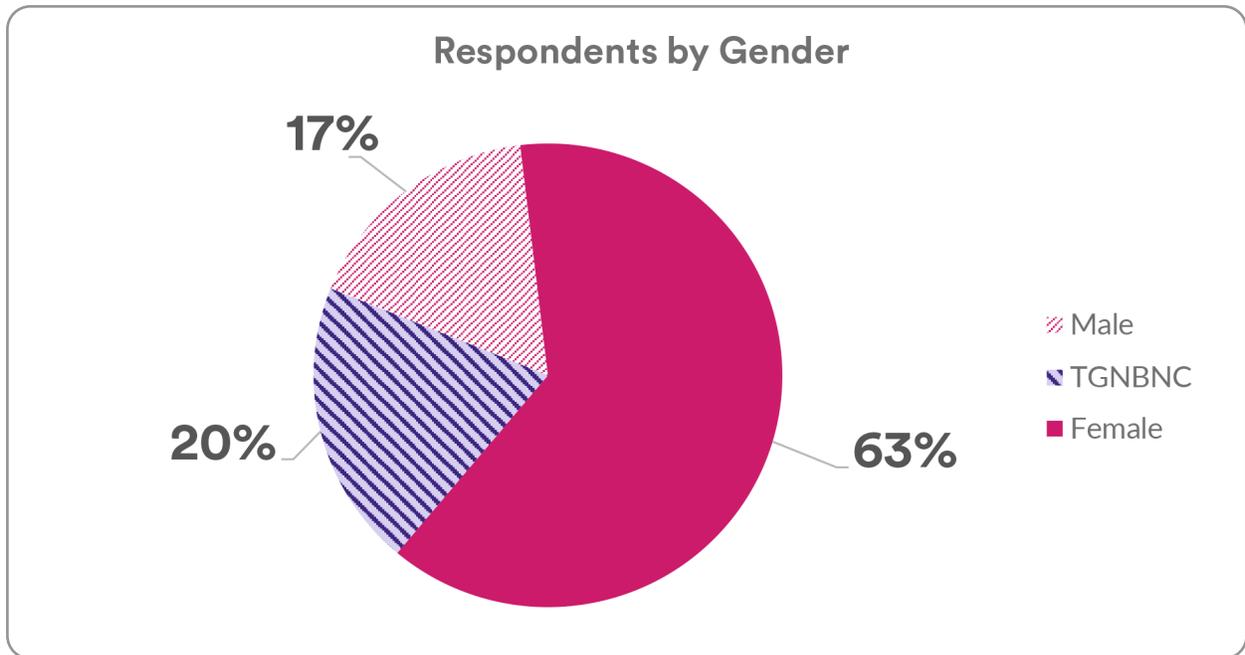
ESSENTIAL WORKERS

Thirty-one percent (31%) identified as essential workers.



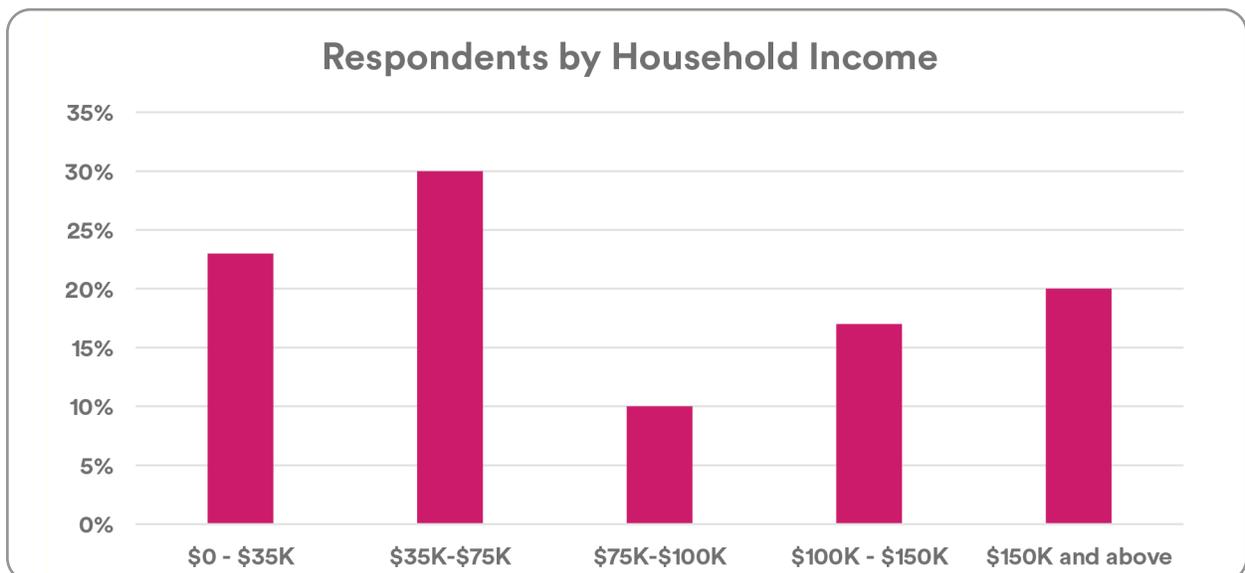
GENDER

Sixty-three percent (63%) identified as female; 20% identified as transgender, gender non-binary, and gender non-conforming (TGNBNC); and 17% identified as male.



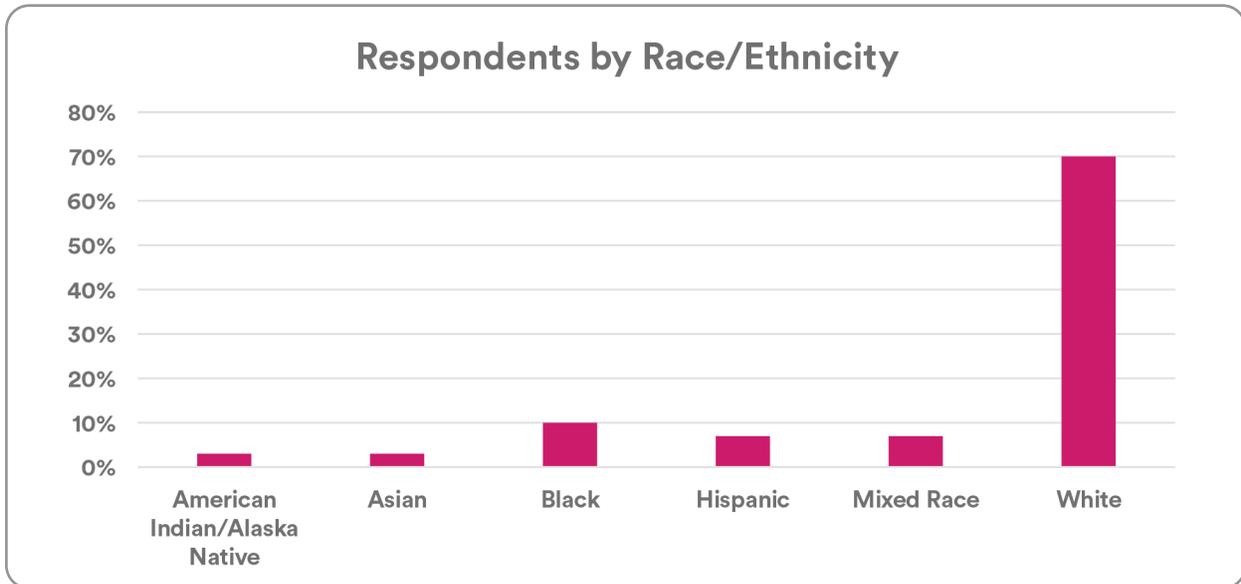
INCOME

Annual incomes of survey respondents ranged from below \$35,000 to over \$150,000, with the majority, 53%, reporting income between \$0 and \$75,000; 27% reporting income between \$75,000 and \$150,000, and 20% reporting income above \$150,000.



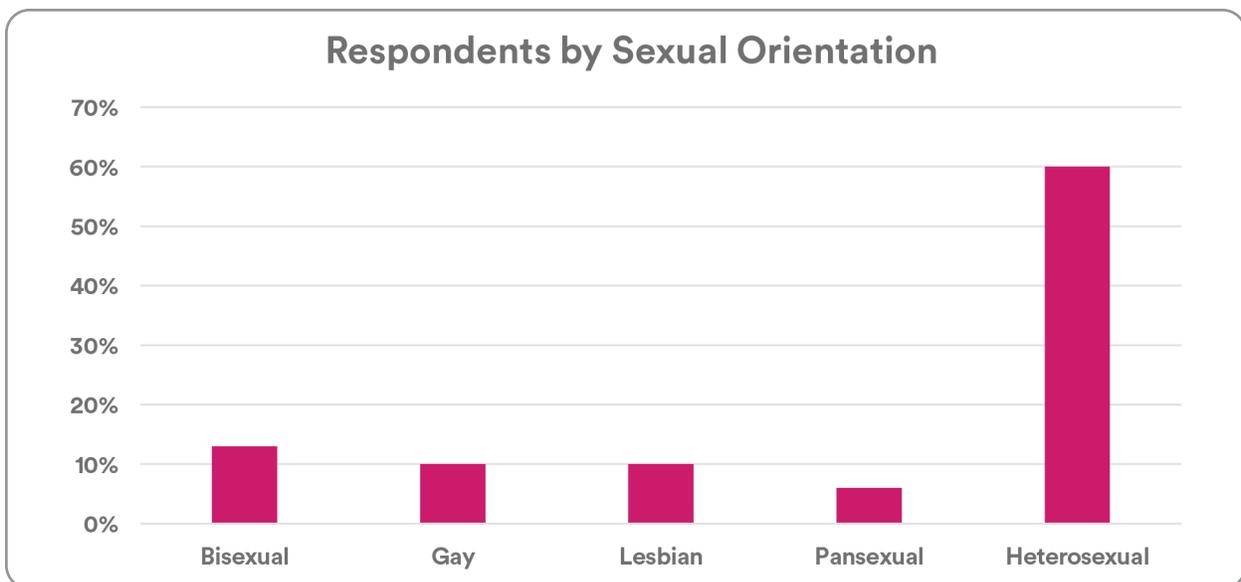
RACE/ETHNICITY

Sixty percent (60%) of respondents provided a racial identity. Of those, seventy percent (70%) identified as White; 10% as Black; 7% as Hispanic; 7% as mixed race; 3% as American Indian/Alaska Native, and 3% as Asian.



SEXUAL ORIENTATION

Sixty percent (60%) of respondents identified as heterosexual; 13% as bisexual; 10% as gay; 10% as lesbian, and 6% as pansexual.



RECOMMENDATIONS

Overall, there are three major findings from the third round of the survey:

- Respondents continued to suffer with mental health, specifically anxiety.
- Respondents who had been struggling to pay rent were facing eviction.
- Most respondents had favorable attitudes towards the vaccine and were excited to return to aspects of their pre-pandemic life but were hesitant about being indoors around persons they did not know, particularly at work and dining indoors at restaurants.

These findings, as well as others identified in the other two phases of the survey, shed light on how to create a gender equitable post-COVID recovery in NYC. An overview of the findings by CGE's three areas of focus: Economic Mobility and Opportunity, Health and Reproductive Justice, and Safety follows in the next section.

Findings: Economic Mobility and Opportunity

The Persistent Impacts of the COVID-19 Pandemic on New Yorker's Economic Mobility and Opportunity

Although government policies and the availability of COVID-19 vaccines contributed to improved economic conditions, New Yorkers continued to experience hardships during this phase of the recovery.

UNEMPLOYMENT

A quarter of the respondents reported being unemployed, which was substantially higher than the 11.1% unemployment rate in NYC around that time (April 2021).¹ Thirty-eight percent of respondents who reported being unemployed did not provide their gender or racial identity, but of those who did, 50% identified as female and 13% identified as male. By race/ethnicity, 25% identified as White, 13% as Black, 13% as Hispanic/Latinx, and 13% as Native.

REMOTE WORK

Telework became mainstream during the pandemic, and for many became a permanent mode of work, particularly among higher-income workers. Seventy-two percent (72%) of survey respondents reported that they were working remotely due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Of the survey respondents who reported that they were able to work remotely, 80% were White, 5% were Black, 5% were Asian, 5% were Hispanic/Latinx, and 5% did not disclose their racial or ethnic identity. In terms of gender identity, 62% identified as female, 29% as transgender or nonbinary, 5% as male, and 5% did not disclose. Thirty-one percent (31%) of respondents reported being an essential worker and called into work between December 2020 and March 2021, though 56% of the self-identified essential workers also reported being able to work remotely.²

1 <https://www.bls.gov/regions/new-york-new-jersey/data/xg-tables/ro2xglausnyc.htm>

2 <https://www.epi.org/publication/testimony-before-the-u-s-equal-employment-opportunity-commission-at-a-hearing-on-the-civil-rights-implications-of-the-covid-19-pandemic/>

HOUSING INSECURITY

A dire situation that New Yorkers continued to face in 2021 was housing insecurity, despite the temporary relief the rent moratorium provided some renters. Of the 22 survey respondents who said they rented their homes, two reported being unable to pay rent, and both had incomes below \$75,000.

This hints at larger trends seen throughout the city earlier in 2021. According to the Mayor's Office, 27% of households with incomes less than \$50,000 per year were behind on their housing payments during the period from January to March 2021.³

“I am being evicted now from my apartment due to not working for an entire year and being basically behind on rent.”

Respondent, Age 30-39, Female, Heterosexual, Black, Income \$50,000-75,000

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Reinstatement of eviction moratorium and increase public and affordable housing stock to increase housing options for the houseless.
- Develop more flexible work policies for a variety of workers, including telework and expanded sick and family leave.
- Increase job protections, including expanding project labor agreements, and strengthening labor law.

³ <https://medium.com/nyc-opportunity/as-covids-impact-lessens-nyc-s-housing-crisis-remains-50138bd2cb6c>

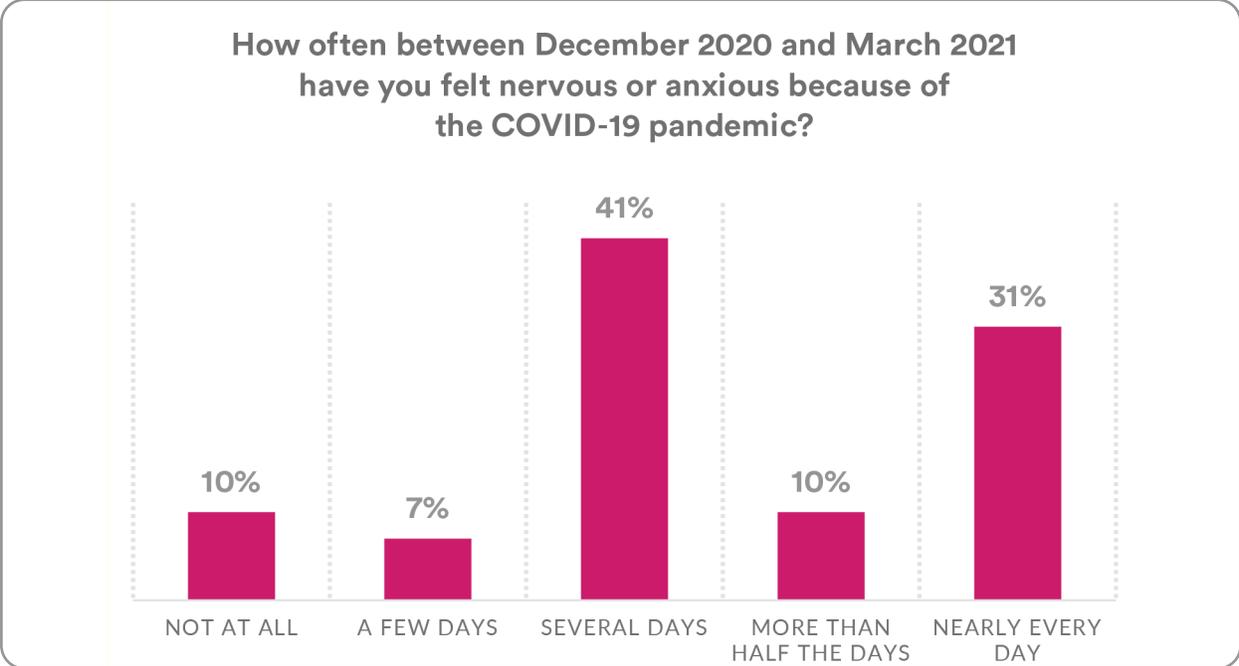
Findings: Health and Reproductive Justice

The Continued Impact of COVID-19 on Health and Reproductive Justice

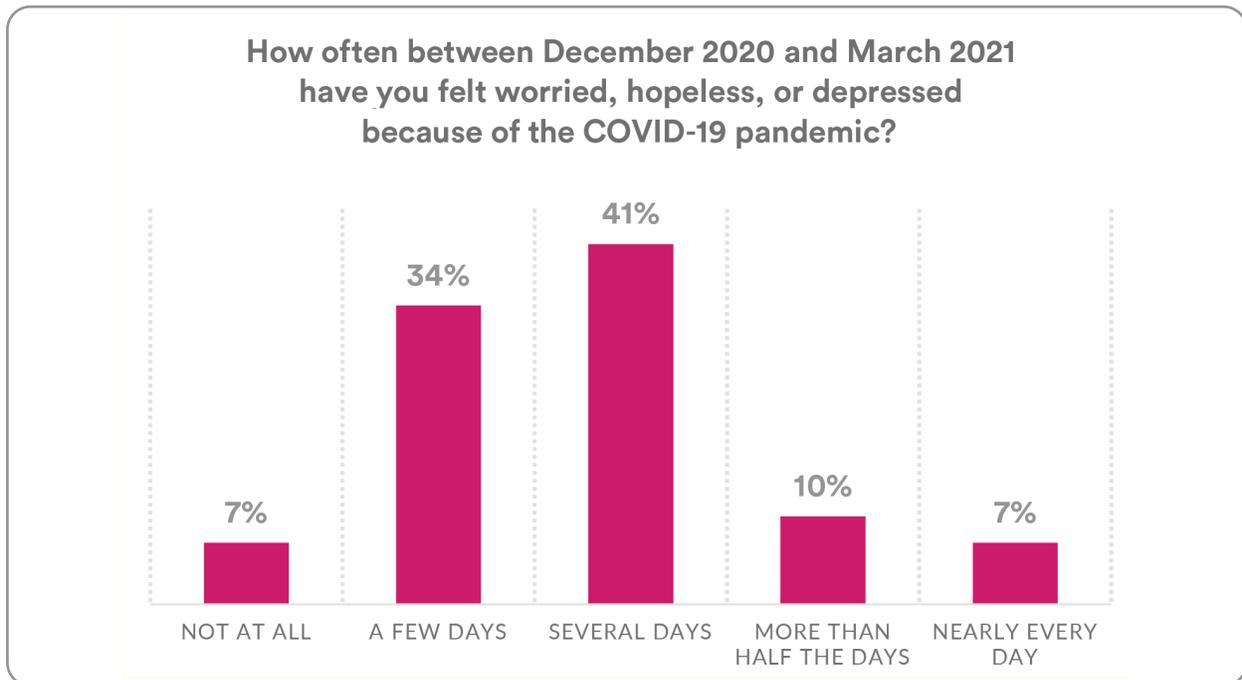
The second year of the COVID-19 pandemic continued to pose challenges for health and reproductive justice, despite the introduction and eventual widespread availability of the COVID-19 vaccines. The effects could be seen on a variety of issues from mental health, to delayed care and care provision, to racial disparities in vaccination rates.

MENTAL HEALTH

The negative impact on mental health, in particular anxiety and depression, continued to persist in 2021. The survey revealed that 82% of respondents had struggled with their mental health anywhere from several days to nearly every day over the course of the previous four months.



Fifty-eight percent (58%) of survey respondents said they felt worried, hopeless, or depressed because of the pandemic for several days to nearly every day during the previous four months.



“Most depressed I’ve ever been in my life, started on antidepressants for the first time. So much worse than the previous parts of the pandemic. I feel better now but I am seriously burnt out.”

Respondent, Age 21-29, Female and Gender Non-Binary, Lesbian, White, Income <\$25,000

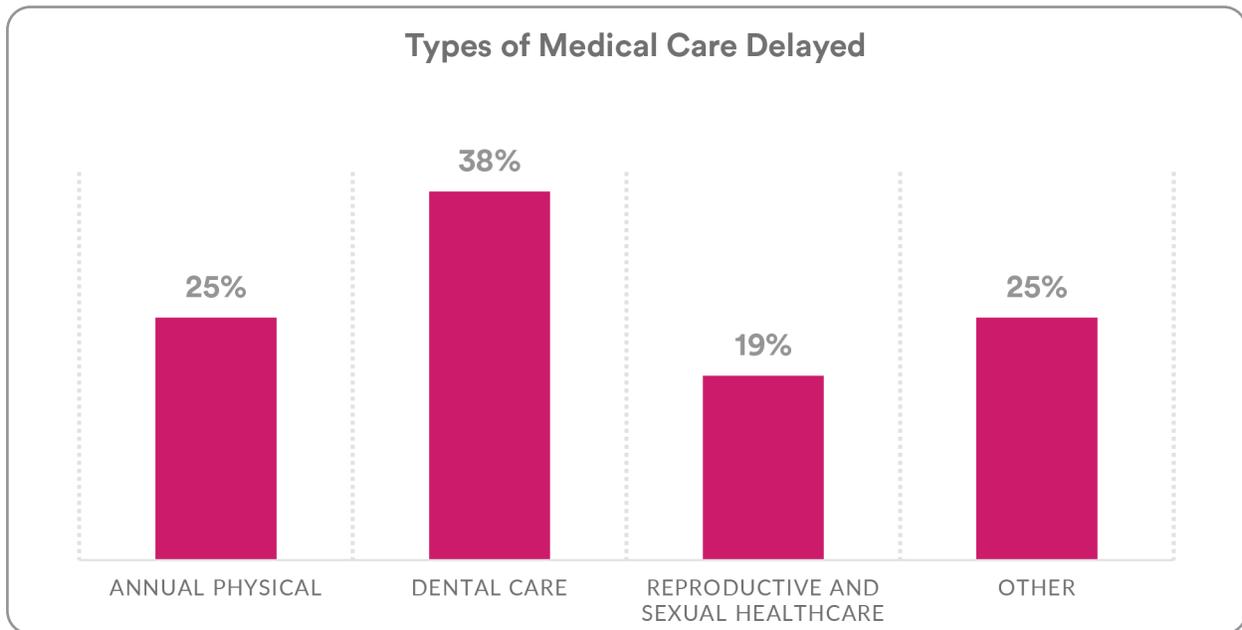
“[I have felt] stress and trauma on top of stress and trauma. For 14 months.”

Respondent, Age 30-39, Female, Pansexual, White, Income \$75,000-\$99,000

Fifty-five percent (55%) of respondents to the survey said they felt like they needed mental health services during the previous four months. When asked about whether they had received mental health services, 42% of respondents who answered said no, with some citing issues like cost, lack of insurance, or few available providers in their area as barriers to receiving care.

MEDICAL CARE

The pandemic also continued to impact routine medical care. Fifty-eight percent (58%) of respondents shared that they had delayed getting medical care because of COVID-19. The services that respondents said they delayed included annual physicals, gynecological exams, dental care, mammography screenings, and physical therapy. Despite delaying care, 76% of respondents said they did eventually receive services either in person or via tele-health.



COVID-19 VACCINES

As the COVID-19 vaccines became available in 2021, there were clear racial disparities in terms of access and adoption. By the time CGE conducted its survey in April 2021, 86% of respondents had received either one or two doses of the vaccine. Yet, some respondents shared their concerns or distrust of the vaccine, citing its hasty development and unknown long-term side effects.

“These vaccines were rushed to the market without any knowledge of what the long-term effects will be. I don’t trust it.”

Respondent, Age 60-69, Female, Lesbian, American Indian/Alaska Native, Income <\$25,000

“I do wonder about long term effects [of the vaccine], but I think the only way to get this pandemic under control is for everyone to get vaccinated and continue following the COVID protocols, wearing masks, social distancing and hand hygiene.”

Respondent, Age 50-59, Female, Heterosexual, White, Income \$100,000 - \$149,000

Eighty percent (80%) of those who indicated they had already received the vaccine identified as Caucasian/White.

Generally, survey participants felt the vaccines provided them with a sense of relief, security, and optimism. Seventy-four percent (74%) of respondents said that being fully vaccinated would affect how they felt about returning to public activities. Many said they were looking forward to returning to aspects of their pre-pandemic life, like socializing, traveling, and taking public transportation, and felt this would be possible with vaccination. Twenty-two percent (22%) of respondents shared they would continue to maintain COVID-19 protocols and would feel safer once their children could be vaccinated or if they could be assured that those around them were also vaccinated.

“I am excited to feel less afraid of strangers and more willing to invite trusted friends into my space and my circle again.”

Respondent, Age 21-29, Female/Gender Non-Binary, Bisexual, White, Income \$50,000 - \$74,999

“It won’t my change my behavior in the foreseeable future, while cases are still high. Will still be wearing masks, washing hands a lot, thinking carefully about congregating in crowded places.”

Respondent, Age 30-39, Female, Bisexual, White, Income \$50,000 - \$74,999

“I feel like I can go out more.”

Respondent, Age 30-39, Female, Heterosexual, Black or African American, Income \$75,000 - \$99,999

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Ensure vaccine equity.
- Expand access to mental health services.
- Expand use of telehealth.

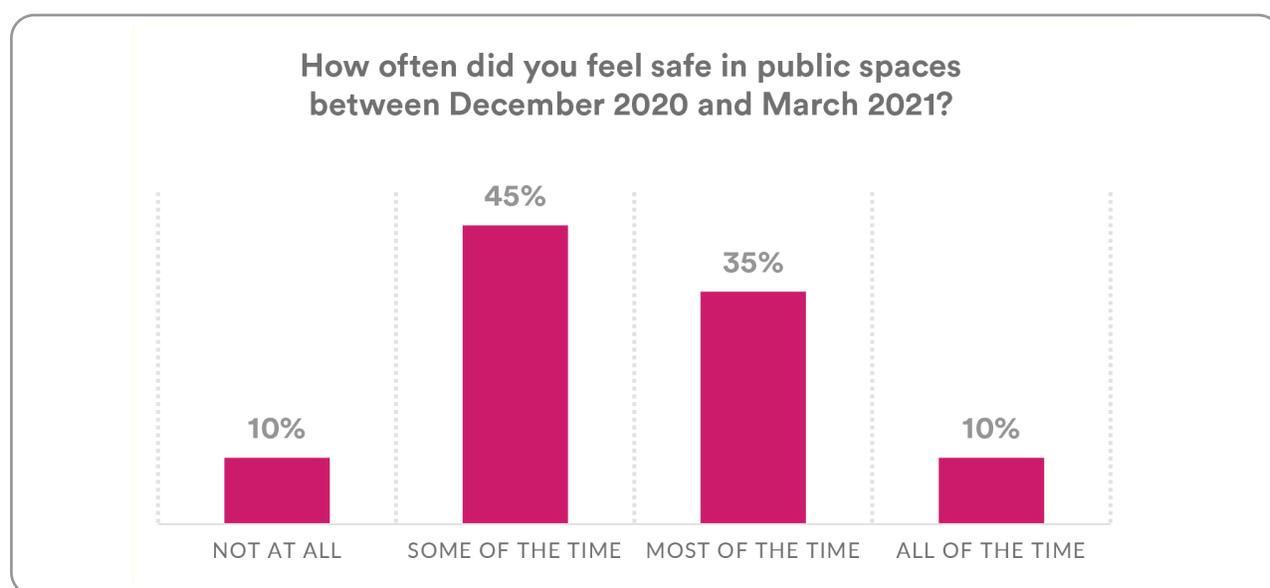
Findings: Safety

The Continued Impact of COVID-19 on Safety

As the COVID-19 pandemic entered its second year, New Yorker's overall sense of safety in public, at home, and at work continued to be affected.

PUBLIC SAFETY

When asked whether they felt safe in public spaces, 55% of survey respondents answered, "not at all" or "some of the time." Of the respondents who answered either "not at all" or "some of the time," 93% identified as female, transgender, gender non-conforming, or gender non-binary.



Public safety impacts were felt more acutely by certain communities, especially Asian-Americans, due to rising levels of discrimination and bias.

Other communities were also affected by an uptick in hate crimes, with 75% of the survey's Jewish respondents choosing either "some of the time" or "not at all" in response to how often they felt safe in public spaces.

This notion of feeling unsafe is evidenced by NYPD hate crimes data showing that there were 196 anti-semitic incidents recorded and 61 arrests in 2021, a significant increase from the 121 incidents recorded and 25 arrests in 2020.⁴

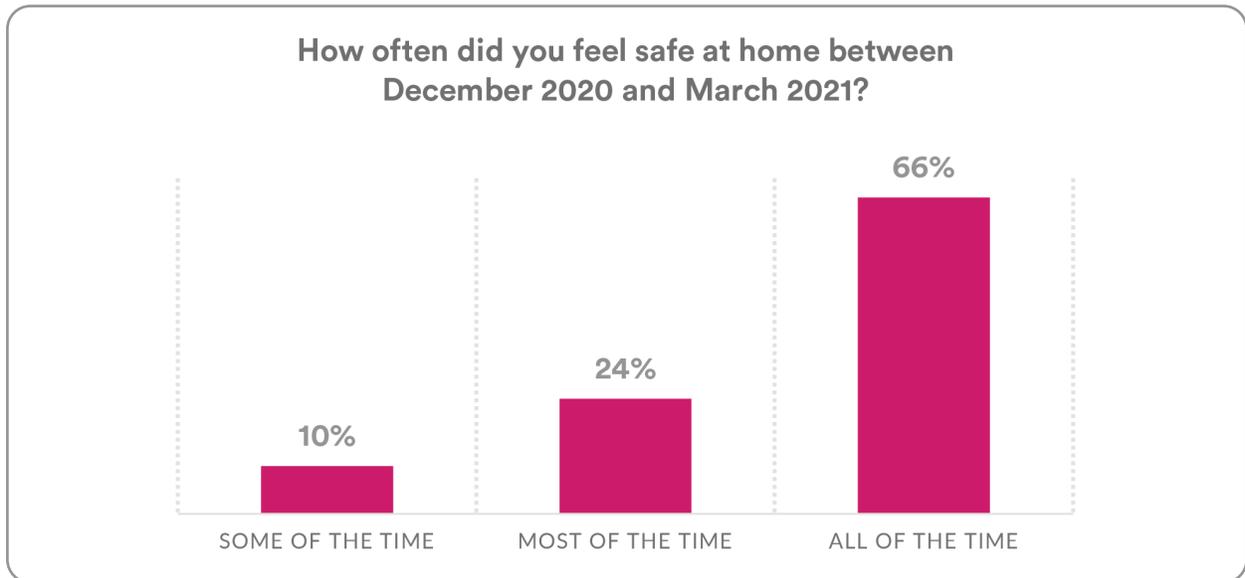
“Rise in anti-Asian hate due to the pandemic has made me more anxious about going out especially if not accompanied by my non-Asian husband.”

Respondent, Age 30 - 39, Female, Heterosexual, Asian, Income \$100,000- \$149,999

⁴ <https://app.powerbigov.us/view?r=eyJrIjoiYjg1NWl3YjgtYzkyOS00Nzc0LTkwMDAtNTgzM2I2M2JmYWY1IiwidCI6IjIOWY1N2ViLTc4ZDEtNDZmYi1iZTgzLWEyYWZkZDdjNjAOMyJ9>

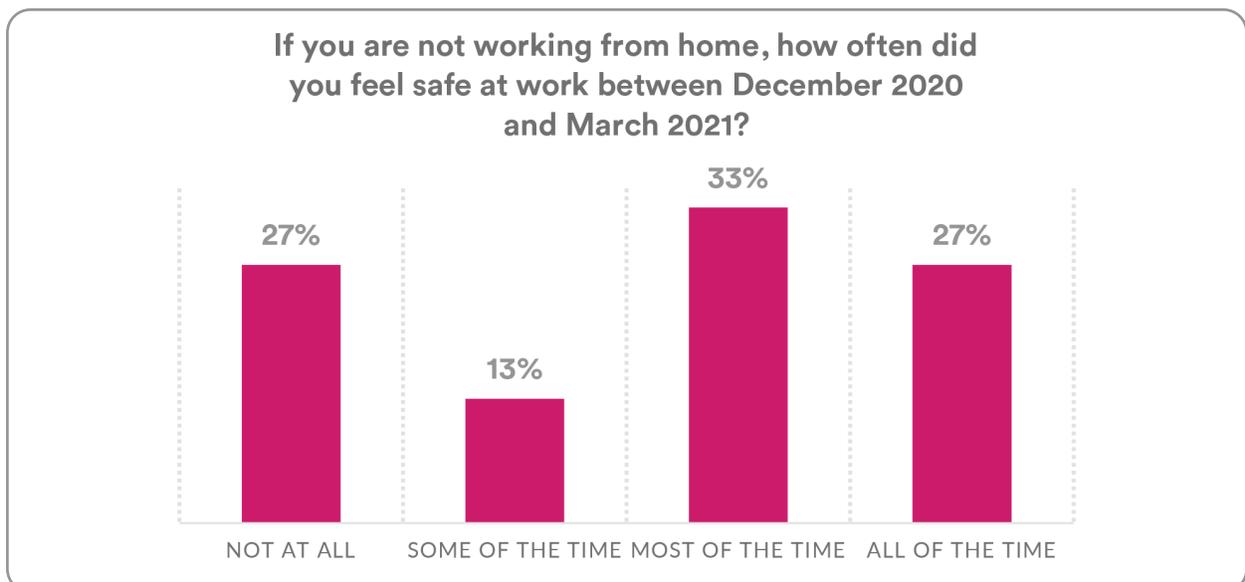
SAFETY AT HOME

Sixty-six percent (66%) of survey respondents reported feeling safe in their homes “all the time,” while 35% responded with “most of the time” or “some of the time.” Two-thirds of those reporting “some of the time” also recorded a decline in household wealth and when asked if they could pay for a \$400 unexpected expense stated they could not, which could indicate a link between economic stressors and safety at home.



SAFETY AT WORK

When asked how often they felt safe at work (when not working from home), 60% of respondents said, “all the time” or “most of the time.” However, 50% who reported not feeling safe at work identified as essential workers with an annual income between \$50,000 and \$75,000.



IMPACT OF COVID-19 VACCINE ON SAFETY

Another important factor in respondents' sense of overall safety was the availability of the COVID-19 vaccine with 60% of respondents indicating that being vaccinated would allow them to feel safer around others.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Expand workplace policies to allow for remote work and hybrid arrangements.
- Strengthen and expand access to and awareness of gender-based violence prevention and intervention programs, as well as trauma-informed mental health services for survivors.
- Invest in medium- and long-term prevention efforts to end gender-based violence, addressing gender norms, root causes, and risk factors including through educational curricula.

Key Accomplishments: Economic Mobility and Opportunity

Pay Equity Workgroup

In late October 2020, Mayor de Blasio instructed the Commission on Gender Equity and the Task Force on Racial Inclusion and Equity to establish a workgroup to examine pay inequity within the city's workforce and to make recommendations to eliminate this inequity, after City Council analysis of data from the Mayor's Office of Data Analysis reported gender and racial pay gaps among salaries for the city's workforce,

The Pay Equity Workgroup, co-chaired by then Executive Deputy Commissioner for the Department of Citywide Administrative Services Dawn Pinnock, and CGE Executive Director, Jacqueline Ebanks, convened its first meeting in November 2020, laying out its goal and process as follows:

Goal: Building a Sustainable Pay Equity Structure across NYC's Municipal Workforce



STEP I: COLLECT THE DATA

- Define the city's municipal workforce.
- Collect existing salary data.
- Identify existing resources and stakeholders.



STEP II: ANALYZE THE GENDER AND RACIAL PAY GAP

- Analyze the data using an intersectional lens of gender, race, tenure, etc.
- Identify where the pay gap exists and its magnitude.
- Estimate the cost and time required to close the gender and racial pay gap.
- Identify challenges to closing the gender and racial pay gap.



STEP III: CREATE A ROADMAP TO PAY EQUITY

- Determine requirements to achieve pay equity.
- Ideate new initiatives to complement existing ones.
- Develop clear recommendations and detailed action plan to close the gender and racial pay gap.

The Workgroup continued its work throughout the remainder of 2021 and prepared to report out by March 2022. Workgroup members included representatives from the following city agencies:

- Commission on Human Rights
- Commission on Gender Equity
- Department of Citywide Administrative Services
- Department of Law
- Equal Employment Practices Commission
- Office of Data Analytics
- Office of Economic Opportunity
- Office of Labor Relations
- Task Force on Racial Inclusion and Equity

ECONOMIC MOBILITY AND OPPORTUNITY: AGENCY SPOTLIGHT

New York City Economic Development Corporation

women.nyc Childcare Innovation Lab

An initiative of the New York City Economic Development Corporation (EDC), women.nyc aims to make New York City the best place in the world for women of all backgrounds, ages, abilities, and identities to thrive in their careers, run businesses, and launch startups. In 2021, women.nyc launched the Childcare Innovation Lab (the Lab), which aims to make New York City the center of care innovation by reframing and researching childcare as an economic development issue.⁵

In response to the urgent need to address the city’s childcare crisis during the pandemic, the Lab conducted research on the implications of the lack of reliable childcare on labor force participation, economic output, tax revenues, and how the pandemic exacerbated existing trends. In May 2021, the Lab published a report, “A Crisis for Working Women and Mothers: Making the Case for Childcare at the Core of Economic Recovery in NYC.”⁶ The report laid out the real economic consequences of the childcare crisis. For example, it found that lack of childcare access could cost New York City \$2.2 billion per year in tax revenues because of parents needing to step out of, or reduce participation in, the economy to provide care. Over five years, this trend could cost the city \$60 billion in economic output and \$18.5 billion in disposable personal income.⁷

The report also highlighted the disparate consequences faced by women during the pandemic. When New York City unemployment rates peaked in the second quarter of 2020, women faced a higher unemployment rate of 20.8%, compared to 17.6% for men. Further, many women at the time were either working part time or not looking for work at all due to their caregiving obligations. Toward the end of January 2021, about 519,000 people in the New York City metro area were not participating in the workforce because they needed to provide childcare instead. These issues were also highlighted in an op-ed titled, “To revive NYC, invest in childcare,” published by senior leadership of the EDC and women.nyc in the New York Daily News.⁸

The Lab is working with a variety of stakeholders to explore ways to leverage public-private partnerships to tackle the childcare crisis. The Lab led a virtual event, “It’s Not You, it’s an Economic Crisis: Forging NYC’s Path Toward Accessible Childcare” in May 2021 in collaboration with Maven, a telemedicine start-up focused on closing gaps in women’s health care.⁹ The event featured speakers from EDC, women.nyc, Maven, the New York Times, Times Up, and

5 <https://women.nyc/childcare-lab/>

6 https://women.nyc/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/2021-ChildcareInnovation-SOTE_report.pdf

7 <https://www.nydailynews.com/opinion/ny-oped-to-revive-nyc-invest-in-childcare-20210513-ukpcqbhdqrcvzcbwyqn2scbq6u-story.html>

8 <https://www.nydailynews.com/opinion/ny-oped-to-revive-nyc-invest-in-childcare-20210513-ukpcqbhdqrcvzcbwyqn2scbq6u-story.html>

9 <https://www.mavenclinic.com/post/its-not-you-its-an-economic-crisis-maven-x-women-nyc>

CUNY, who discussed the business case for providing childcare and how to catalyze public-private partnerships. Building on that conversation, the Lab examined how New York City employers make decisions regarding childcare benefits and identified actionable ways for employers to expand childcare access to their workers. These findings were presented at the 2021 Work Beyond Summit in October 2021 as part of a session on Childcare as Essential Infrastructure for Equitable Recovery.¹⁰

In addition to research, the Lab is committed to catalyzing innovation in the growing FamTech sector, which leverages technology to solve childcare challenges. The Childcare Innovation Lab will continue to work toward developing innovative solutions to improve childcare, which is a critical part of ensuring equity for women and parents in New York City's economic recovery.

10 <https://seramount.com/events-conferences/conferences/recap-workbeyond-summit-october-2021/#:~:text=The%202021%20WorkBeyond%20Summit%20examined,office%20plans%20will%20have%20on>

Economic Mobility and Opportunity: Select Executive, Legislative, Policy, and Programmatic Actions that Advance Gender Equity

I. Executive Orders

- PAY EQUITY

[Executive Order 84 for 2021](#) establishes the Mayor's Office Pay Equity Cabinet to close the gender and racial pay gap in the City's workforce. on.nyc.gov/3PXWXFI

- WORKERS' RIGHTS

[Executive Order 70 of 2021](#) creates the Mayor's Office of Youth Employment to assist City agencies in expanding, improving, and coordinating programs and services to prepare young New Yorkers for career success and economic security, and to coordinate disconnected youth services. on.nyc.gov/3AWobYP

II. Legislation

- RETIREMENT FOR ALL

[Local Law 51 of 2021](#) creates a mandatory auto-enrollment payroll deduction IRA program for employees of private sector employers which do not offer a retirement plan and employ five or more employees. on.nyc.gov/3cwuGIA

[Local Law 52 of 2021](#) establishes a retirement savings board to facilitate the implementation of the above retirement security program and to select the investment strategies and policies. on.nyc.gov/3AtT9pT

- TENANTS' RIGHTS

[Local Law 54 of 2021](#) provides access to legal services for tenants who are facing eviction proceedings in housing court. on.nyc.gov/3ATdJ4r

[Local Law 53 of 2021](#) requires the office of the civil justice coordinator to work with not-for-profit community organizations in educating tenants about their rights in housing court, and to report on its efforts. on.nyc.gov/3e5siZQ

[Local Law 73 of 2021](#) requires the Department for the Aging to report annually on senior centers within property owned by the New York City Housing Authority, including complaints received about that center’s facilities, and steps taken to address those complaints.

on.nyc.gov/3wAutLa

[Local Law 75 of 2021](#) creates a position within the Department for the Aging to coordinate with the New York City Housing Authority about matters impacting older adult public housing residents. on.nyc.gov/3wEr4Li

- **WORKERS' RIGHTS**

[Local Law 4 of 2021](#) extends employment protections prohibiting employers from discriminating based on applicant’s arrest or criminal record. on.nyc.gov/3PZjhjL

[Local Law 87 of 2021](#) requires City human services contractors and certain subcontractors to enter into labor peace agreements with labor organizations seeking to represent their employees rendering services under City human services contracts. on.nyc.gov/3cyxjJJ

[Local Law 173 of 2021](#) requires covered employers of a retail; food establishment; distribution center that is located on property within the city that has been improved or developed using city financial assistance to enter into a labor peace agreement.

on.nyc.gov/3R54oMG

[Local Law 88 of 2021](#) extends the employment protections of the New York City Human Rights Law to domestic workers. on.nyc.gov/3Ku64fW

[Local Law 104 of 2021](#) requires severance pay for hotel service employees in the event of certain closures or layoffs. on.nyc.gov/3Ky64vn

III. Policies

- **BUILDING GENERATIONAL WEALTH**

Effective June 17, 2021, the “NYC Juneteenth Economic Justice Plan: Building Generational Wealth” establishes a plan to build generational wealth and confront the persistently growing racial wealth gap in America. on.nyc.gov/3CMGZeF

- **EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION EXPANSION**

As of September 2021, 3-K for All was expanded to the remaining sixteen community school districts, bringing free, full-day, high-quality 3-K, up to 16,500 more three-year-old’s childcare slots across New York City, and serving a total of 40,000 children.

on.nyc.gov/3AzT3gi

- **TENANTS' RIGHTS**

Effective March 3, 2021, NYC established new restrictions for landlords with multiple violations for unsafe or hazardous conditions and allowed the Department of Buildings to deny new construction permit applications at properties where landlords may be using poor building maintenance as a tool to harass their tenants. on.nyc.gov/3RCWUQX

IV. Programs

- **SERVING LGBTQI YOUTH**

- **Creating Unity Works**

- Effective April 20, 2021, the Unity Works program was established, in partnership with the Ali Forney Center, to connect LGBTQI youth to a full suite of services including basic and higher educational opportunities, paid internships and training, work credentials, job placements, career coaching, and comprehensive LGBTQI affirming case management that incorporates full wraparound supports and mental health counseling. on.nyc.gov/3TtX1zE

Key Accomplishments: Health and Reproductive Justice

Sexual Health Education Task Force

The Sexual Health Education Task Force (SETF) was established by Local Law 90 of 2017 and is composed of students, teachers, parents, principals, sexual health experts, LGBTQ health experts, and representatives of agencies including CGE, the Department of Education (DOE) the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH), and the Mayor's Office to End Domestic and Gender-Based Violence (ENDGBV). In 2018, the SETF issued a report and recommendations designed to ensure comprehensive quality sexual health education in NYC schools. Initial efforts to develop action steps related to the recommendations were disrupted by the onset of the COVID19 pandemic in 2020, as DOE staff, educators, and students quickly had to transition to a remote learning model, which continued well into 2021.

In 2021, the SETF held two virtual meetings in February and June to continue development of the action plan. The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic raised questions about how to effectively support students and advance the goals of the SETF. Two key issues that emerged were the continued impact of remote learning on sexual health education and access to resources, and how to ensure the group's recommendations have community buy-in and ownership.

SETF members discussed different stakeholder groups, such as local nonprofit organizations and groups that provide youth services, that should be engaged and how best to bring them to the table. The SETF developed a stakeholder engagement plan and worked to identify target audiences for potential presentations on its work and recommendations. The SETF also began thinking about next steps for continuing this work under a new mayoral administration as it is scheduled, by law, to close in 2022.

CGE staffs the SETF and remains committed to supporting the members in working to advance comprehensive sexual health education in NYC and finding ways to build community support and partnerships.

Menstrual Equity Workgroup

Menstrual equity, or adequate access to menstrual products, tools, and education, is a critical component of achieving gender equity. In September 2021, the New York City Council's Committee on Women and Gender Equity held an oversight hearing on Menstrual Equity in New York City to examine city agencies' compliance with 2016 laws requiring the provision of menstrual products in schools, shelters, and correctional facilities. Executive Director Ebanks delivered testimony at the hearing and outlined the challenges around period poverty that many girls, women, and gender non-binary and trans people face. It is estimated that those who menstruate can spend over \$6,000 over their lifetime on menstrual products.¹¹

During her testimony, Executive Director Ebanks committed that CGE would convene an inter-agency Menstrual Equity Workgroup to develop and implement a citywide strategy for menstrual equity. In December 2021, CGE held the first meeting of the Workgroup, which includes City Legislative Affairs, the Department of Citywide Administrative Services, the Department of Correction, the Department of Education, the Department of Homeless Services, and the

Human Resources Administration. The Workgroup developed a Charter to guide its work and outlined steps to address gaps and increase menstrual equity in the city, which includes examining current practices to distribute products, identifying barriers to access, and understanding the needs of New Yorkers to ensure they are met. The Workgroup will continue to meet throughout 2022.



11 <https://swnsdigital.com/us/2019/11/new-research-reveals-how-much-the-average-woman-spends-per-month-on-menstrual-products/>

HEALTH AND REPRODUCTIVE JUSTICE: AGENCY SPOTLIGHT

Department of Health and Mental Hygiene

Maternal and Sexual Health Programs

The New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH) provides public health services for all New Yorkers and is one of the oldest and largest public health agencies in the country. DOHMH incorporates racial equity and inclusivity in its work. For example, by implementing implicit bias training for providers at maternity hospitals and developing the “New York City Standards for Respectful Care at Birth,” DOHMH works to shift culture and practices around labor and delivery and reduce racial disparities in health outcomes.

Community engagement and collaboration are also a crucial part of DOHMH’s approach to public health. The agency has a Women’s Advisory Board, made up of diverse and dedicated women leaders in New York City with expertise in serving and empowering women in their communities, particularly around HIV, and a Transgender, Gender Non-Conforming and Non-Binary (TGNCNB) Community Advisory Board, which advises DOHMH on its work related to TGNCNB health, services, training, research, and best practices.

In 2021, DOHMH continued to further maternal and sexual health initiatives that serve vulnerable and underrepresented communities through comprehensive, trauma-informed, and inclusive care.

Maternal Health

In response to inequities in birth outcomes, especially infant and maternal mortality and morbidity, DOHMH has expanded several maternal health initiatives to provide historically underserved communities with consistent, quality care. In 2021, the New Family Home Visiting Initiative was expanded to give access to home visiting programs and community resources to an estimated 22,000 additional new families. The initiative offers a range of evidence-based home-visiting services to first-time families within the Taskforce for Racial Inclusion and Equity (TRIE) neighborhoods or to families engaged with the child welfare system. Providers include trained health care workers and clinical providers such as social workers, nurses, and lactation consultants, and offer services from breastfeeding support, to mental health screenings, to health education, among others. The initiative encompasses the Newborn Home Visiting Program, the Nurse-Family Partnership Program, Power of Two (which supports family healing in BIPOC communities), and the Citywide Doula Initiative.

In 2021, DOHMH continued to implement the Healthy Women, Healthy Futures and By My Side programs, both of which provide no-cost doula support and other kinds of services to address inequities in birth outcomes. The Healthy Women, Healthy Futures program is available

citywide and trains community members to act as doulas, while the By My Side program serves eligible families in central and east Brooklyn.

Sexual Health

In 2021, DOHMH continued to design and deliver innovative interventions around HIV and sexual health. In March 2021, the agency released its “2020 New York City Ending the HIV Epidemic Plan,” the product of a nearly year-long community planning process to develop strategies and key activities for the next phase of the city’s efforts to end the epidemic. The plan identifies seven priority populations including Black cisgender and transgender women, Latina cisgender and transgender women, and all people of trans, gender nonbinary or gender queer experience, and will focus on the challenges facing these communities. In 2021, DOHMH’s Training and Technical Assistance Program (T-TAP) launched a new training, “The Value and Principles of a Trauma-Informed Approach to Improve HIV Care Outcomes Among Black and Latina Cisgender Women.” This training is available to all contracted providers who deliver HIV services and programming.

DOHMH has also been using a microfinancing model to support grassroots, community-based organizations to design and implement projects focused on resilience, promoting sexual health as essential to HIV prevention, and community leadership. One of the micro-contract awardees, the Audre Lorde Project, used the funding to support its 2021 POZitively Resilient virtual event, which was led by and designed for lesbian, gay, bisexual, two-spirit, transgender, and gender non-conforming people of color. The event featured performances promoting positive identity development to fight internalized stigma around HIV that can often prevent people from seeking health services or social support.

HEALTH AND REPRODUCTIVE JUSTICE: AGENCY SPOTLIGHT

Department of Education

Office of School Wellness Programs

Throughout 2021, with schools providing remote and blended instruction, the Department of Education (DOE) made the health and well-being of the city's students a top priority. Students, families, and school communities experienced trauma and loss in every borough—but many neighborhoods suffered disproportionately. Moreover, the impact of COVID-19 on adolescent health outcomes, including mental health and sexual risk behaviors, was and is not fully known. The DOE's Office of School Wellness Programs continued its mission to support quality Health Education, where students learn essential skills to keep themselves and others safe and healthy. Select 2021 programs and activities are as follows:

- **Digital Health Education Resources:** In response to changing school needs over the course of 2021, the DOE developed virtual teacher training and resources to ensure that during pandemic school closures, students still had access to quality sexual health information and services. Office of School Wellness programs developed and released include:
 - New [Health Education Return to School Guidelines](#).
 - A live virtual training series for educators on how to teach health education and sexual health education in a remote setting. During Spring 2021, DOE offered eight live virtual sessions with 178 attendees from 130 schools, many of whom attended more than one session.
 - A new, virtual [Condom Availability Program \(CAP\)](#) training series attended by 45 school staff from 28 schools in Spring 2021. When schools closed in March 2020, students lost access to their school-based Health Resource Rooms, where free condoms, information about reproductive and sexual health, and health referrals are available to students in grades 9-12 from trained staff. Staff were also not able to attend in-person CAP training. Now, approximately 16,800 additional high school students have access to quality sexual health services, accurate sexual health information, and free condoms in their school buildings and communities.
- **Middle School Health Resource Rooms:** The DOE has been developing and piloting a referral system that builds the skills and capacity of middle school staff to operate Health Resource Rooms, where students can access free health information, resources, and referrals from trusted and trained adults at their school. This work addresses a key need. Even though New York State laws support minors' rights to confidential reproductive and sexual health care, middle school students have limited access to

school-based sexual health services and referral opportunities. Using feedback provided by the 24 schools participating in the pilot in the 2021-2022 school year, the DOE will launch middle school Health Resource Rooms Citywide beginning in the 2022-2023 school year.

- **K-12 HIV Prevention Curriculum Update:** The New York State Education Department and the DOE require HIV/AIDS education for all students in grades K-12, as part of comprehensive health education. In 2020, the DOE in partnership with Advocates for Youth, Cairn Guidance, and the HIV Advisory Council (a group consisting of teachers, parents, faith leaders, DOHMH staff, and staff from related community-based organizations) began working on a new edition of the HIV prevention curriculum, last updated in 2012. The revised edition will be relevant and engaging for the diverse learners who attend DOE schools with lessons and content that are not only age-appropriate, medically accurate, and strength-based but also inclusive and reflective of historically marginalized communities by design. To engage end users in this work, the DOE convened student and teacher focus groups and administered an anonymous survey to students in middle and high schools that are piloting the new curriculum. The new curriculum will launch Citywide in the 2022-2023 school year.
- **OUT for Safe Schools®:** The OUT for Safe Schools campaign is a national initiative that supports school-based staff to visibly identify as trusted adults to LGBTQ students. School staff receive training in building affirming environments for LGBTQ students before receiving badges for the school community. For many LGBTQ students, intermittent school closures during 2021 meant decreased access to supportive and affirming adults. The DOE continued to provide the OUT for Safe Schools badges in both physical and digital versions, training more than 50 school staff through a combination of live virtual and asynchronous trainings, supporting schools to affirm students wherever they are.

Health and Reproductive Justice: Select Executive, Legislative, Policy, and Programmatic Actions that Advance Gender Equity

I. Legislation

- ACCESS TO HEALTHCARE

[Local Law 30 of 2021](#) requires the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH) to create an advisory board to study gender equity in healthcare and inequities related to gender at hospitals in NYC, and to analyze factors and social determinants leading to such inequities. on.nyc.gov/3R85FCI

[Local Law 107 of 2021](#) requires the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene or another agency designated by the Mayor to develop and manage a primary care services and patient navigation program (PCSPNP), which provides primary care services and applicable patient navigator services. on.nyc.gov/3KtsoGN

- BIRTH JUSTICE

[Local Law 76 of 2021](#) requires the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH) to post information about licensed midwives, including the services they offer and how to find them, on the DOHMH website. on.nyc.gov/3AvGrqM

[Local Law 95 of 2021](#) requires the Department of Correction (DOC) to retain an organization to provide doula services to incarcerated individuals twice a week, as well as during labor and delivery. It also creates a working group to discuss ways to improve communication, collaboration, and efficiency related to pregnant individuals in custody. on.nyc.gov/3B7rexH

- INTERSEX RIGHTS

[Local Law 60 of 2021](#) requires the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH) to conduct a public information and outreach campaign regarding the provision of medically unnecessary treatments and interventions performed on individuals born with intersex traits or variations in sex characteristics. on.nyc.gov/3PU8WE8

- MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

[Local Law 155 of 2021](#) establishes the Office of Community Mental Health (OCMH), charged with developing interagency policies and practices to promote mental health and decrease any barriers to mental health care that may prevent access among groups identified as being under-served. on.nyc.gov/3AZNtFK

Key Accomplishments: Safety

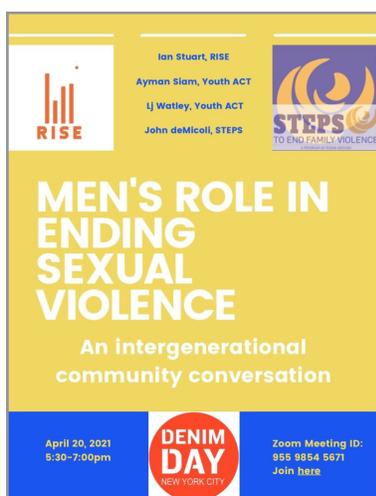
Stand Up Against Street Harassment Trainings



Every person has the right to feel safe in public regardless of their race, gender identity, religion, color, size, sexual orientation, faith, disability, or age. In 2021, CGE continued its partnership with the Mayor's Office to End Domestic and Gender-Based Violence (ENDGBV), Hollaback!, and L'Oreal Paris, to offer free, one-hour, Stand Up Against Street Harassment Trainings. These trainings, designed to combat gender-based violence in public spaces, provided participants with proven tools to actively stand against street harassment.

The trainings were held virtually and open to all New Yorkers. Throughout 2021, there were 153 trainings, including fourteen as part of the annual global 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence campaign. A total of 30,486 people were trained as part of these Stand Up Against Street Harassment trainings.

Denim Day



Denim Day is an annual global campaign that takes place on the last Wednesday in April as part of Sexual Assault Awareness Month. The campaign began after a rape conviction was overturned by the Italian Supreme Court, because the justices felt that the victim must have helped the person who raped her remove her jeans because of how tight they were. The following day, the women in the Italian Parliament came to work wearing jeans in solidarity with the victim. California-based nonprofit Peace Over Violence developed the Denim Day campaign in response to this case. What started as a local campaign to bring awareness to victim blaming and destructive myths around sexual violence has grown into a movement and the longest running sexual violence prevention and education campaign in history.

As part of Denim Day 2021, CGE hosted a panel on “Men’s Role in Ending Sexual Violence: An Intergenerational Community Conversation.” Moderated by CGE Policy and Programs Analyst

Matt Graham, the conversation convened masculinity experts from the Center for Court Innovation’s RISE Project, STEPS to End Family Violence, and A Call to Men’s Youth ACT program. The panel addressed how rigid masculinity norms show up in daily life, including the ways it negatively affects emotional health, quality of close relationships, and how it is used to victim blame.

16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence



The 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence is an annual campaign from November 25, International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, to December 10, Human Rights Day. Since its founding by the Center for Women’s

Global Leadership in 1991, the campaign has become an international movement to prevent and eliminate gender-based violence (GBV) and to raise awareness about its far-reaching consequences.

During the 2021 Campaign, CGE and ENDGBV brought together community members, nonprofit and for-profit organizations, faith-based institutions, and city agencies to raise awareness about gender-based violence across New York City’s diverse communities, and to inform their fellow New Yorkers on steps they could take—small or large—to stop it. Two key events held were:

“Stand Up Against Gender-Based Violence”: This virtual roundtable was hosted by Hollaback! and CGE, and featured expert voices on the importance of combatting GBV, the power of bystander intervention, and healing approaches audience members could bring to their communities. Speakers included Jacqueline M. Ebanks, CGE’s Executive Director, Jorge Arteaga, Deputy Director at Right To Be, Steve Pokornowski, Senior Trainer at Right To Be, and Alicia Patterson, Trainer at Right To Be.

“People of Faith Respond to the Hidden Pandemic: Violence Against Women”: This virtual roundtable was hosted by the Task Force on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault of the Episcopal Diocese of New York and moderated by the Executive Director of the Center for Women’s Global Leadership, Krishanti Dharmaraj. Participants discussed what people of faith can do to end the increased violence against women and girls during the COVID-19 pandemic.



Department of Education Title IX Reporting

Local Law 67 of 2016, which codified the Commission on Gender Equity, was amended in 2020 to:

1. Require the Department of Education (DOE) to annually report on resources, support, policies, and procedures related to preventing and addressing sex- and gender-based discrimination and harassment, as well as information related to the internal structure for central and borough employees whose work relates to sex- and gender-based discrimination and harassment.
2. Require CGE to post links to publicly reported data from city agencies, including the DOE, relating to sex- and gender-based discrimination and harassment.

In compliance with this requirement, DOE provided a copy of its 2021 to CGE, which can also be accessed at the following link: <https://infohub.nyced.org/reports/government-reports/local-law-45---title-ix-report>

The 2021 report includes:

1. Description of resources and support related to preventing and addressing sex- and gender-based discrimination and harassment provided to schools by the DOE.
2. Description of DOE policies and procedures for preventing and addressing sex- and gender-based discrimination and harassment and for investigating allegations of sex- and gender-based discrimination and harassment.
3. Description of DOE's organizational structure for central and borough employees whose work is related to preventing and addressing sex- and gender-based discrimination and harassment, in total and disaggregated by borough.

The 2021 report includes an overview of the updated Online Complaint Reporting System as a way for parents, students, and individuals who are not staff, to make online complaints of student-to-student discrimination, harassment, intimidation and/or bullying, including sexual harassment, and for parents who have NYC Schools Accounts to receive e-updates regarding investigations and outcomes.

The report also describes a full-day interactive virtual event built on the work of the Sexuality, Women and Gender (SWAG) conference that was held in prior years, focusing on digital accessibility, inclusion, and equity, with a strong focus on LGBTQ+ inclusion.

SAFETY: AGENCY SPOTLIGHT

Mayor's Office of Criminal Justice

Office of Crime Victim Supports

The Office of Crime Victim Supports (OCVS) is the first stand-alone municipal office of its kind in the country, dedicated to providing individuals, families, and communities impacted by crime the supports they need to promote recovery and resiliency. OCVS works to secure a gender equitable future by supporting marginalized populations, including people who identify as Black, Indigenous, people of color, LGBTQIA+, immigrant, limited English proficiency, people with disabilities, and other intersecting identities, to have meaningful access to the culturally responsive services and supports they need to heal from experiences of violence. The goal is a system in which the whole person is supported and not just the specific issue or form of victimization.

OCVS also builds toward a gender equitable future by expanding programming that addresses the root causes of crime, including domestic and gender-based violence. This programming recognizes that people who cause harm are often impacted by violence and trauma themselves and providing support for these individuals is vital to prevent future violence, disrupt cycles of abuse, and help survivors heal.

OCVS 2021 Program Highlights:

- The Abusive Partner Intervention Program (APIP) launched in Fall 2020. APIP is a new model for working with people who cause harm in intimate partner relationships. This work is directly responsive to the needs of survivors, many of whom ask for interventions that will make abuse stop within relationships. APIP is comprised of two curricula: Dignity and Respect for male-identifying clients and Turning Points for female-identifying clients. In Fall 2021, OCVS reviewed key program data and saw multiple positive outcomes including a positive trend in enrollments despite the COVID-19 pandemic and resulting court closures.
- The [Crime Victims Services Finder](#), created and maintained by OCVS, is a tool to help connect victims with local services that meet their specific needs. In 2021, the Finder was updated to include services for people experiencing hate crimes and additional filters so that users can search by services offered, languages spoken, and cultural competency. The Finder currently contains 78 service providers that represent 361 unique service locations across all five boroughs.

In 2022, OCVS will focus on three key areas of growth:

- Developing immediately accessible emergency housing options, particularly for survivors who do not have adequate options in the current system, including survivors of violent crime, families of homicide victims, survivors of trafficking and sexual violence, and domestic violence survivors.
- Expanding and upstreaming services for sexual violence and human trafficking by establishing new programs for survivors, while also addressing root causes through education and interventions that disrupt the systems of patriarchy that perpetuate sexual violence.
- Enhancing community-based supports for victims of crime with a focus on underserved populations including LGBTQ+ people, young people, seniors, people with disabilities, and people with limited English proficiency.

Safety: Select Executive, Legislative, Policy, and Programmatic Actions that Advance Gender Equity

I. Executive Orders

- SAFETY IN THE WORKPLACE

[Executive Order 85 of 2021](#) requires the Mayor's Office to End Domestic and Gender-Based Violence (ENDGBV) to create a written NYC Domestic and Gender-Based Violence Workplace Policy establishing a standardized, trauma-informed response to survivors of domestic and gender-based violence, that shall be incorporated into city agencies' existing Workplace Violence Prevention Programs. on.nyc.gov/3AykMht

[Executive Order 64 of 2021](#) requires all city agencies that contract with outside entities for the provision of human services to make their best efforts to amend existing contracts to require that they provide information about sexual harassment complaints, whether made by an employee, client, or other person. on.nyc.gov/3ctRicC

- POLICING

[Executive Order 81 of 2021](#) establishes the LGBTQIA+ Liaison within the New York Police Department (NYPD) to partner with the Office of Equity and Inclusion and Training Bureau on workforce outreach, institutionalizing trainings, providing support to all NYPD on LGBTQIA+ related issues, and advising the NYPD on issues that affect the city's LGBTQIA+ community. on.nyc.gov/3KtLfs2

II. Legislation

- CHILDREN'S SERVICES

[Local Law 131 of 2021](#) requires the Administration for Children's Services (ACS) to report on the total number of emergency removals of children each quarter, disaggregated by race, community district, and primary language of each child and parent or person legally responsible for the child. on.nyc.gov/3wBVxtu

[Local Law 132 of 2021](#) requires the Administration for Children's Services (ACS) to report on various demographic information including race, ethnicity, gender, community district, and primary language of parents and children in the child welfare system and to create a plan to address any disparities identified because of such reporting. on.nyc.gov/3PWP1UZ

[Local Law 133 of 2021](#) requires the Administration for Children’s Services (ACS) to report annually information on how long it takes for the families of children in ACS custody to visit their child after a placement or transfer, as well as the number of children that are given placements in boroughs other than those which they are from, disaggregated by borough. on.nyc.gov/3wEllol

[Local 135 of 2021](#) requires the Administration for Children’s Services (ACS) to provide a parent or caretaker written information about their right to request a fair hearing to challenge an indicated report made against a parent or caretaker. on.nyc.gov/3Kw0r0Q

- **ENDING FEMALE-GENITAL MUTILATION AND CUTTING**

[Local Law 109 of 2021](#) establishes an advisory committee on female genital mutilation and cutting (FGM/C) within the Mayor’s Office to End Domestic and Gender-Based Violence (ENDGBV), to engage communities and agencies in decreasing, with the goal of eventually eliminating, the practice of female genital mutilation and cutting in the city, and would identify supportive community-based and culturally-responsive resources for people who have undergone female genital mutilation and cutting. on.nyc.gov/3KulfWH

- **POLICING**

[Local Law 47 of 2021](#) clarifies that the Civilian Complaint Review Board has the power to investigate bias-based policing and racial profiling complaints made by the public. It would also provide that based on a final determination by the NYPD, the Board, the Commission on Human Rights, the Department of Investigation, or a court that a member of the NYPD engaged in an act of bias, the Board would be empowered to investigate past professional conduct by the member. on.nyc.gov/3AyaLRB

[Local 48 of 2021](#) establishes a local right of security against unreasonable search and seizure and against excessive force regardless of whether such force is used in connection with a search or seizure. Qualified immunity, or any substantially equivalent immunity, is not allowed as a defense. on.nyc.gov/3AxGW3w

- **SHELTER SERVICES**

[Local Law 102 of 2021](#) requires the Department of Social Services (DSS) to deliver a survivor-centered response to complaints of sexual assault or harassment, to post a survivor guide and other training resources on its website, and to review actions taken in response to such complaints. on.nyc.gov/3AZujzM

[Local Law 130 of 2021](#) requires the Department of Social Services (DSS) to review the services and resources it provides specific to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, questioning, intersex, gender non-conforming and non-binary (LGBTQI+) individuals who are entering domestic violence emergency shelters, including the department's outreach efforts, and any complaints. DSS is also required to consult with a community-based organization with culturally specific expertise in challenges faced by survivors of domestic violence self-identifying as LGBTQI+ to develop and provide trainings to staff. on.nyc.gov/3wGdVkR

III. Programs

- **SUPPORTING SURVIVORS**

Beginning on March 16, 2021, through new investments and resources, the city expanded and strengthened its support for survivors outside of the criminal justice system.

on.nyc.gov/3wGsKEc

- **COMBATING HATE CRIMES**

Effective May 27, 2021, the Office for the Prevention of Hate Crimes partnered with six anchor organizations to launch the Partners Against Hate FORWARD initiative, which provides \$3 million in funding and programmatic support for community-based approaches that reduce hate crimes, expand reporting on hate crimes, and increase services for victims.

on.nyc.gov/3e83bFG

International Partnerships

Advancing Gender Equity Through Legislation Webinar

On October 21, 2021, CGE and the Mayor’s Office for International Affairs hosted a panel of leaders dedicated to advancing gender equity through legislation. The event highlighted CGE’s publication *Advancing Gender Equity through Legislation*, which documents the legislative accomplishments from 2014 to 2020 to promote economic mobility and opportunity, health and reproductive justice, and safety for all New Yorkers regardless of their gender identity or gender expression.

Leaders from academia, international entities, and local government made opening remarks. The panel, comprised of city agency executive leaders, discussed the gender equity gains achieved through the passage of legislation in NYC. The publication explored the potential impact of these laws, and the future steps for the next administration to consider in achieving gender equity.

Following the panel discussion, select community leaders, from local and international non-profits and governments, responded to the city’s efforts from their vantage points and offered guidance on ways to advance gender equity further in the coming years.

These international and nonprofit representatives noted the importance of the publication in highlighting a compilation of laws that have made headway in achieving gender equity in NYC. The representatives also pointed out the need for increased public access and education on passed legislation, ensuring that all communities affected by these laws are aware of their rights. Additionally, there were calls for transparency and readily accessible data in a central location that could be accessed by the public, with a special focus on youth, as they have been catalysts for gender equity change around the world.



Many speakers cited the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), as the guiding foundational framework for creating legislation and effective implementation of laws in advancing the rights of women and girls through a human rights framework. The speakers encouraged building and sustaining partnerships between city agencies, academia, public and private sectors, and civil society. CGE appreciates this feedback and acknowledges that these recommendations are essential to advancing gender equity in New York City.

Junior Ambassador Program

Brooklyn Science and Engineering Academy in East Flatbush, Brooklyn provides students with learning experiences that prepare them to tackle the rigorous academic work of high school and beyond. Through small class sizes, advisory, and one-on-one academic coaching, they help their students to demonstrate excellence in all academic subject areas and through a unique foundation of learning experiences, including an in-depth study of Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM).

NYC Junior Ambassadors (NYCJA) students of BSEA met with CGE Executive Director Jacqueline Ebanks to learn more about how to systemically address gender inequality. Their school created a social media campaign at the onset of the pandemic to advocate for gender equity. The campaign was presented to the United Nations and used as a tool to engage young people in their own community. The NYC Junior Ambassadors program is operated by the Mayor's Office of International Affairs.

United Nations 65th Commission on the Status of Women (CSW65)

From March 15-19, 2021, the UN convened CSW65 to address women's full and effective participation and decision-making in public life, as well as the elimination of violence for achieving gender equity and the empowerment of all women and girls. Executive Director Jacqueline Ebanks was a panelist in two NGO parallel sessions during CSW65.

Panel I: Women Leadership During COVID-19: Access, Demands, and Challenges, *organized and hosted by NYC4CEDAW (New York City for the Convention to Eliminate All Forms of Violence Against Women)*

In this discussion, women leaders shared strategies that promote women's participation and leadership to ensure a post-COVID-19 recovery based on the human rights framework of CEDAW (Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women).

The panel focused on four key areas—the Economy, Healthcare, Gender-Based Violence, and Migration—where COVID-19 impacted women and where women's leadership will have a major impact post recovery. The goal was to formulate a gendered and intersectional approach to the post COVID-19 recovery.

The panel was moderated by **Jane Tillman Irving**, President, New York Press Club. In addition to CGE's Executive Director Jacqueline Ebanks, other panelists were:

- **Helen Rosenthal**, New York City Council Member
- **Heidi J. Meyers**, Immigration lawyer
- **Lorena Nascimento**, Environmental Justice Activist and Ph.D. Candidate in Urban Studies at Portland State University
- **Terry Ince**, Founder/Convener at CEDAW Committee of Trinidad and Tobago.

Panel II: Promoting Women’s Agency in Developing Public Safety and Equity Guidelines in a Post-COVID-19 World, *organized and hosted by Center for Women’s Global Leadership and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)*

In 2020, during the annual, global 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence campaign, the Center for Women’s Global Leadership coordinated conversations with community residents on addressing safety and equity for women and girls in public spaces. These conversations were held across nine countries: Bahamas, Fiji, India, Indonesia, Iraq, Kenya, Morocco, U.S.A., and Yemen. CGE and the Mayor’s Office to End Domestic and Gender-Based Violence hosted two Community Circles as part of this global conversation.

The Promoting Women’s Agency in Developing Public Safety panel discussion was designed to share select findings from these circles and focused on developing and implementing public safety indicators with communities led by feminists. The panel was moderated by Center for Women’s Global Leadership’s Executive Director **Krishanti Dharmaraj**. In addition to CGE’s Executive Director Jacqueline Ebanks, other panelists were:

- **Fatima Outaleb**, Founding member and Executive Board Member, Union for Women’s Action, and Steering Committee Member for Feminist Alliance for Rights, Rabat/Marrakesh, Morocco
- **Venna Odhiambo**: Project Coordinator and Director, WaleWale, Kibera, Kenya

Respondents to the panel discussion included representatives from Indonesia, Yemen, Ethiopia, Barbados, and Fiji.

The Year Ahead 2022: Building for Sustainability

2022 will be the first year of the Adams Mayoral Administration and CGE will begin, in earnest, its journey to sustainability. To ensure sustainability beyond the Adams Administration, CGE will:

Increase Organizational Capacity

- In 2022, CGE will institutionalize its organizational structure and will establish four key departments to function as follows:
 - **Communications and Public Engagement:** To develop and implement a multi-pronged communication strategy that increases the visibility and expands the reach of CGE in policy, advocacy, research, and community engagement.
 - **Executive Office:** To develop and implement overall agency strategy, processes, and accountability measures to advance gender equity and to ensure the agency's effective and efficient daily operations.
 - **Policy and Programs:** To develop and implement CGE's policy and legislative agenda and programmatic initiatives and conduct research and analysis on issues relevant to CGE's three areas of focus: Economic Mobility and Opportunity, Health and Reproductive Justice, and Safety.
 - **Strategic Learning and Capacity Building:** To strengthen the capacity of city agencies to develop and implement gender equitable policies and practices.

Create New Strategic Plan

- Upon the identification and appointment of Commission members, CGE will launch a strategic planning process to determine how it will continue to meet its mandate.

Convene Interagency and Cross-Sector Collaborations

- **Gender Equity Interagency Partnership**
 - Created in 2019, the Gender Equity Interagency Partnership (GEIP) was designed to convene senior-level agency representatives from city agencies, to help develop an integrated and sustainable approach to achieving gender equity in NYC. In 2022, with the establishment of its Strategic Learning and Capacity Building department, CGE will re-launch the GEIP and will focus on the implementation of the GEIP Action Plan initially created by the members of the partnership between 2019 and 2020. Implementation of the Action Plan was halted as resources were diverted to the COVID-19 pandemic response.
- **Menstrual Equity Workgroup**
 - CGE will continue to convene the Menstrual Equity Workgroup, which was established in October 2021 to examine the need and feasibility of establishing a citywide menstrual equity policy.
- **Pay Equity Workgroup**
 - In collaboration with the Department of Citywide Administrative Services, CGE will continue to co-chair the Pay Equity Workgroup in efforts to close the gender and racial pay gap within the city's workforce.
- **Sexual Health Education Task Force**
 - The work of the Sexual Health Education Task Force (SETF) sunsets, by law, in May 2022. CGE will continue to lead the SETF and determine next steps after its sunset date.
- **Street Harassment Prevention Advisory Board**
 - Local Law 46 of 2021 requires that CGE and ENDGBV co-chair the newly established Street Harassment Prevention Advisory Board “to advise the mayor and the council on the issue of street harassment and its prevention.” CGE looks forward to partnering with ENDGBV on this important effort.

Continue Participation in Global Campaigns for Gender Equity

- **Denim Day**
 - CGE will continue to join the Mayor's Office to End Domestic and Gender-Based violence and community advocates as they rally against rape and sexual assault.
- **16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence**
 - CGE will continue to partner with the Mayor's Office to End Domestic and Gender-Based Violence to increase NYC's participation in this annual global campaign to combat gender-based violence.

Commission Members (2021)

CO-CHAIRS

Chirlane McCray, First Lady of New York City

Silda Palerm, Partner, Vestry Laight LLC

COMMISSIONERS

Shahara Ahmad-Llewellyn, President, S. Ahmad-Llewellyn Family Foundation

Sasha Ahuja, Co-Campaign Manager, Yang for New York

Chanel Porchia-Albert, Founder and Executive Director, Ancient Song Doula Services

Chitra Aiyar, Independent Consultant

Ivelyse Andino, CEO, Radical Health

Diana Ayala, New York City Council Member

Radhika Balakrishnan, Faculty Director, Center for Women's Global Leadership and Professor of Women's and Gender Studies, Rutgers University

Taina Bien-Aimé, Executive Director, International Coalition Against Trafficking in Women

Jimmie Briggs, Principal, The Skoll Foundation

Beverly Cooper Neufeld, Founder & President, PowHer New York

Laurie Cumbo, New York City Council Member and Majority Leader

Cecilia Gaston, Former Executive Director, Violence Intervention Program

Andrea Hagelgans, Executive Vice President for Public Affairs, Edelman, New York Office

Sherry Hakimi, Executive Director, genEquality

Anne Hess, Co-Founder & Co-Chair, MADRE

Imara Jones, Creator, Translash Media

Nancy Kolben, Executive Director, Center for Children's Initiatives

Sherry Leiwant, Co-Founder & Co-President, A Better Balance

Danielle Moss, Executive Director, Oliver Scholars

Robina Niaz, Founder, Turning Point for Women and Families

COMMISSIONERS (CONTINUED)

Sonia Ossorio, President, National Organization for Women, New York City

Carlina Rivera, New York City Council Member

Helen Rosenthal, New York City Council Member

Celeste Smith, Former Vice President, J.P. Morgan Chase Private Bank

Kiara St. James, Founder and Executive Director of New York Transgender Advocacy Group

Beverly Tillery, Executive Director, New York City Anti-Violence Project

Ellyn Toscano, Senior Director for Programming, Partnerships and Community Engagement, NYU in Brooklyn

Shyama Venkateswar, Senior Director of Learning, Seramount

Ex-Officio Member

Carmelyn P. Malalis, Chair/Commissioner, New York City Commission on Human Rights (through October 2021)

CGE STAFF (2021)

Gael Black, Deputy Executive Director, External Affairs (through October 2021)

Helen Broad, Special Projects Coordinator (through August 2021)

Jacqueline M. Ebanks, Executive Director

Matt Graham, Policy and Programs Analyst, Economic Mobility and Opportunity

Maria Quinn, Policy and Programs Analyst, Health and Reproductive Justice

Appendix A

CGE Testimony before the New York City Council

- I **The Mental Health Impact of COVID-19 on Women as Caregivers** before the Committees on Women and Gender Equity and Mental Health, Disabilities and Addiction. Virtual Hearing. Friday, October 8, 2021

- II **Menstrual Equity in New York City** before the Committee on Women and Gender Equity. In-person Hearing. Tuesday, September 14, 2021

- III **Street Harassment Advisory Board** before the Committee on Women and Gender Equity. Written testimony submitted to Virtual Hearing, Monday, November 29, 2021



Testimony

of

**Jacqueline M. Ebanks
Executive Director, Commission on Gender Equity**

before the

**New York City Council
Committee on Women and Gender Equity
Committee on Mental Health, Disabilities and Addiction
Oversight Hearing**

on

The Mental Health Impact of COVID-19 on Women as Caregivers

**Friday, October 8, 2021
Virtual Hearing**

Introduction

Good morning, Chair Diaz, Chair Louis, and members of the Committees on Women and Gender Equity and on Mental Health, Disabilities and Addiction.

I am Jacqueline Ebanks, Executive Director of New York City's Commission on Gender Equity (CGE). In this role, I also serve as an advisor to the Mayor and First Lady on policies and issues affecting gender equity in New York City for all girls, women, transgender, and gender non-binary New Yorkers regardless of their ability, age, ethnicity/race, faith, gender expression, immigrant status, sexual orientation, and socioeconomic status.

My colleague, Dr. Chinazo Cunningham who is the Executive Deputy Commissioner for Mental Hygiene at Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, and I welcome this opportunity to discuss the Administration's efforts around the mental health impact of COVID-19 on women as caregivers.

The de Blasio Administration is steadfast in its commitment to promote equity, excellence and fairness for all New Yorkers and has converted its words into action to become a leader in protecting the rights of all New Yorkers regardless of gender identity, gender expression, or background.

It is within this context that CGE works to tear down equity barriers across New York City. CGE carries out its activities across three areas of focus within a human rights framework and using an intersectional lens. These areas of focus are:

- 1. Economic Mobility and Opportunity.** The goal is to create a City where people of all gender identities and gender expressions live economically secure lives and have access to opportunities to thrive.
- 2. Health and Reproductive Justice.** The goal is to foster a City free from gender- and race-based health disparities.
- 3. Safety.** The goal is to foster to a City free from gender- and race-based violence.

Gender Equity and the COVID-19 Recovery Survey Findings

By March 2020, the COVID-19 virus was spreading aggressively within New York City. As city agencies developed and implemented emergency and longer-term responses to the pandemic, the Commission on Gender Equity (CGE) focused on how best to inform and shape a gender equitable recovery, resulting in the release of CGE's **Gender Equity and COVID-19 Recovery Survey**.

This longitudinal survey was designed to better understand the COVID-19 recovery needs and experiences of New Yorkers and included both qualitative and quantitative questions that addressed CGE's three focus areas: Economic Mobility and Opportunity, Health and Reproductive Justice, and Safety. While we continue to prepare a full analysis of the data, I would like to share some insights we gained from the first survey distributed on June 10, 2020.

Respondents

Of the 1366 responses from the non-random sample, 64% were submitted by female identified individuals; 34% by male identified persons, and 2% by transgender and gender non-binary New Yorkers.

Economic Mobility and Opportunity

Financial hardships stemming from unemployment or fear of job loss, were prominent in survey responses. **Sixteen percent** of respondents indicated they were unemployed—**fifty one percent** of whom attributed that job loss to the pandemic. Responses showed a tension between the desire to find work and feeling unsafe in the workplace, forcing participants to make an uncomfortable choice between a loss of income and the risk of illness. Wealthier respondents generally were able to avoid this choice, as they were more likely to be able to work from home, and in some cases, temporarily leave the city.

The relevant predominant themes shared by participants included:

1. Stress around an inability to pay rent with fears of eviction
2. Concern that individuals will not be able to pay their bills once the extra \$600 unemployment benefits run out.

Caregiving

In their July 2019 report on Family Caregivers in New York City, the Center on Poverty and Social Policy noted that 16% of New Yorkers are family caregivers. For our non-random sample, 25% respondents indicated they were caregivers. These respondents indicated that between March and June of 2020, the childcare services that parents and caregivers previously relied on were suddenly either unavailable or perceived as unsafe in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic. This created additional stress, especially for those with limited social support and/or an inability to work from home.

Participants described many challenges with childcare ranging from feeling that remote education was a second job to feeling pressured to choose between continuing to work or care for their children in the home. In those early days of the pandemic, many participants expressed fear around returning to the office because of concern about contracting the virus and bringing it into the home, or leaving their children alone for remote education.

One respondent left the following comment:

“My spouse has not lost his job during the pandemic, but I was supposed to return from maternity leave, so while our household has been generally stable, I was not equipped or prepared to provide full time childcare and exacerbating this is that our old daycare is essentially providing us with minimal assistance and still charging us money. Not only that, no one has assured us or given us the impression that any expert knows how children fit into the pandemic puzzle and the result is that the government seems to be green lighting our childcare provider into stealing our money while giving us no reason to trust them to reopen safely. Additionally, I was on maternity leave at the start of the pandemic and now my job can't take me back but there is no other job out there for me-- at the moment. I would have to interview and find a job while I have 2 children to manage on my own and the result is that I'm not going to be able to look for a job and may get pushed out of my industry entirely. My male counterpart also is able to walk away at any moment for work and now my only job is maintaining house and children like I belong in the 1950s and signed up for this.”

Health and Reproductive Justice

In the Health and Reproductive Justice segment of our survey, many participants indicated that their overall health was “good” or better. However, the majority of respondents indicated they were struggling with significant mental health burdens in the first four months of the pandemic. Ninety-two percent (92%) of respondents indicated feeling anxious and eighty-four percent (84%) of respondents reported feeling depressed every day or nearly every day since the pandemic, with transgender and

non-binary people and women reporting comparatively higher rates than their male counterparts. Respondents gave myriad reasons for experiencing anxiety and depression. The most prevalent themes were:

- Loneliness and isolation
- For those who contracted COVID-19, many described not only the physical burden of the illness itself, but also expressed fear and anxiety around lingering symptoms, spreading the virus to someone else in the household, and lack of access to testing to confirm the infection.
- Additionally, many respondents who cared for either elderly family or immunocompromised members of their household also experienced greater anxiety, as the risk burden for going out to public to get groceries or other necessities left them wondering if they would bring the virus back into the home.
- Lastly, many respondents lost a family member or loved one to COVID-19 illness. Compounding the grief for the death itself, participants also shared the pain and sorrow for the inability to say goodbye in person.

Safety

Finally, in the Safety segment of the survey, New Yorkers reported being deeply fearful about their safety as the COVID-19 virus rapidly spread throughout New York City during the early months. Seven percent (7%) of respondents reported feeling unsafe at home, 53% reported feeling unsafe at work, and most predominantly, 70% reported feeling unsafe in public. Many respondents indicated that they felt much better working from home and hope teleworking options will continue in the future.

Recommendations

Through their quantitative and qualitative responses, survey respondents showed how COVID-19 affected and exacerbated hardships across all aspects of their lives; lives which were too often already impacted by histories of systemic oppressions and exploitation.

As we consider their responses, we gain insight into shaping an equitable COVID-19 recovery and post-COVID reality. We must advance new policies and programs that ensure that all women, and transgender and gender non-binary individuals, can live safe, healthy and economically secure lives. To that end, CGE made the following recommendations in its 2020 Annual Report: Advancing Gender Equity during Crisis.

To address issues of Economic Mobility and Opportunity, we recommend:

1. Institute universal healthcare and childcare
2. Raise the minimum wage and expand workers' bargaining rights
3. Eliminate gender and racial pay gaps

To address issues pertaining to Health and Reproductive Justice, we recommend:

1. Expand mental health services
2. With all health services, prioritize marginalized communities and those most vulnerable, including the aging

And finally, to address issues concerning Safety, we recommend:

1. Invest in restorative programs, in accordance with "Using Restorative Approaches to Address Intimate Partner Violence: A New York City Blueprint" released by the Center for Court Innovation in 2020. These programs should begin with a pilot and must have the following qualities:

- Be predicated on an individual survivor’s voluntary desire to engage in a restorative process.
- Be based in communities rather than referred through legal entities.
- Address structural oppression and incorporate community- and culturally-specific components.
- Have a dedicated funding structure that includes a mix of public and private funds.

Thank you for this opportunity to address this critical issue. I look forward to addressing any questions you may have. At this time, my colleague, Dr. Chinazo Cunningham, Executive Deputy Commissioner for Mental Hygiene at DOHMH, will now provide testimony.



Testimony

of

**Jacqueline M. Ebanks
Executive Director, Commission on Gender Equity**

before the

**New York City Council
Committee on Women and Gender Equity Oversight Hearing**

on

Menstrual Equity in New York City

**Tuesday, September 14, 2021
Committee Room, City Hall**

Introduction

Good morning, Chair Diaz, and members of the Committee on Women and Gender Equity.

I am Jacqueline Ebanks, Executive Director of New York City’s Commission on Gender Equity (CGE). In this role, I also serve as an advisor to the Mayor and First Lady on policies and issues affecting gender equity in New York City for all girls, women, transgender, and gender non-binary New Yorkers regardless of their ability, age, ethnicity/race, faith, gender expression, immigrant status, sexual orientation, and socioeconomic status.

The de Blasio Administration has been steadfast in its commitment to promote equity, excellence and fairness for all New Yorkers. From combatting workplace sexual harassment and discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity, to enshrining rights for pregnant and parenting New Yorkers, to ensuring access to inclusive services and paid safe leave for survivors of domestic and gender-based violence, the Administration has converted its words into action to become a leader in protecting the rights of all New Yorkers regardless of gender identity, gender expression, or background.

It is within this context that CGE works to create a deep and lasting institutional commitment to tearing down equity barriers across New York City. CGE carries out its activities across three areas of focus within a human rights framework using an intersectional lens. These areas of focus are:

- 1. Economic Mobility and Opportunity.** The goal is to create a City where people of all gender identities and gender expressions live economically secure lives and have access to opportunities to thrive.
- 2. Health and Reproductive Justice.** The goal is to foster a City free from gender- and race-based health disparities.
- 3. Safety.** The goal is to foster to a City free from gender- and race-based violence.

Menstrual Equity: Why It Matters

Menstruation is a natural monthly occurrence, experienced by over half the population for much of their lives, and yet stigma and lack of access to menstrual products is still pervasive within our society.

Menstrual equity is the equal, safe and affordable access to menstrual products as well as ensuring that girls, women, and transgender and gender non-binary persons have the support and education to make informed choices on how to take care of their menstrual health. Although CGE addresses menstrual equity primarily within its health and reproductive justice focus area, we acknowledge that matters of economic mobility and opportunity and safety are inextricably related to menstrual equity and deeply affect quality of life.

Menstrual inequity is a gender and reproductive justice issue that disproportionately affects marginalized girls, women and transgender and gender non-binary persons including students, persons living in poverty, many of whom may be homeless and/or experience housing insecurity, persons who are justice involved, and persons in our foster care system.

Nationally, nearly a quarter of students experience period poverty according to a 2021 national survey on *The State of The Period*, with lower income and students of color (particularly Latinx)

disproportionately bearing the impact of lack of access to menstrual products.¹ Students overwhelmingly agreed that too many of their peers miss school time because they do not have the period product they need. In addition to access to menstrual products, students also cited struggling with period stigma in their school environment and need for more informed and open sexual health education that includes in-depth menstrual health education.

People living in poverty are directly affected by lack of access to menstrual products. It is estimated that women, girls, non-binary persons, and people of trans-experience who menstruate will have to spend well over \$1,000 in their lifetime on menstrual products.² Even those who may have access to public assistance programs such as WIC or SNAP still face challenges as those public benefits are not permitted to cover the cost of menstrual products.³ This is particularly problematic because many people need access to menstrual products after birth solely because of post-partum bleeding and discharge.

People experiencing housing insecurity or homelessness also often struggle to access menstrual. Despite the paucity of research, nationally we know that some face barriers, such as limitations on access to soap or a shower, and facility availability. It is also well documented that transgender and non-binary people can face particular challenges in sex-separated spaces, sometimes reporting being turned away, harassed or assaulted when seeking a place to sleep. Many avoid shelters, sometimes based on the perception that the shelters are unsafe or unsanitary.⁴ Furthermore, compared to the general population, transgender and non-binary people are more than twice as likely to live in poverty and more than three times as likely to be unemployed.⁵ Even in the absence of financial hardship, transgender and non-binary people bear the constant risk of violence and harassment in shared bathrooms and other public spaces.

Faced with barriers of poverty, homelessness and housing insecurity, and gender discrimination, girls, women, transgender, and gender non-binary person are often more likely to re-use, prolong use, or misuse menstrual products or other items (such as diapers, toilet paper, etc.) to manage their period. All of which can lead to infection, infertility, or life-threatening diseases such as Toxic Shock Syndrome. No one should have to compromise their education, economic opportunity or physical or mental health because they cannot equitably access the period products they need.

Implementing Menstrual Equity Laws

CGE testified in strong support of the Council's Menstrual Equity bills in 2016 and supported the State's elimination of the tampon tax that quickly followed the Council's action. Since the laws were enacted in 2016, agencies have implemented procurement and distribution processes to get the products to New Yorkers, in accordance with the laws.

The administration was also able quickly to modify these processes for COVID-19 when, in March 2020, New York City became the epicenter of the pandemic resulting in sudden economic hardship for many New Yorkers, including increased incidences of period poverty. Students who previously relied on obtaining menstrual products in schools were left without this resource in the context of a sudden shift

¹ <https://period.org/uploads/State-of-the-Period-2021.pdf>

² <https://www.aclu.org/report/unequal-price-periods>

³ <https://www.aclu.org/report/unequal-price-periods>

⁴ <https://www.aclu.org/report/unequal-price-periods>

⁵ <https://www.nbcnews.com/feature/nbc-out/transgender-men-pain-menstruation-more-just-physical-n111396>

to remote learning. In households where one or more parent may have lost a job, the additional cost of menstrual products could add unprecedented financial stress on families.

Heeding the call of student advocates, elected officials and the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene collaborated to distribute sanitary napkins to New Yorkers through the local Food Bank. In addition, the Department of Education ensured that menstrual products were available at food distribution centers located at public schools.

Moving Forward

Ensuring the availability and fair access of menstrual products for all New Yorkers falls within CGE's health and reproductive justice focus area, through which CGE seeks to ensure all New Yorkers live healthy lives with full bodily autonomy. This work is now more important than ever.

We are proud that New York City is among the first in the nation to address the issues of menstrual equity and period poverty by passing Local Laws 82, 83, and 84 of 2016 ensuring free menstrual products in schools, correctional facilities and shelters. To support implementation of these laws, and to address any gaps that exist or may arise, CGE will continue to collaborate with our colleagues at the DOE, DOC, DHS and DCAS by convening a Working Group on Menstrual Equity within the Gender Equity Inter-Agency Partnership, an inter-agency collaborative which advances intersectional gender-equitable policies and practices across city agencies. We anticipate convening the working group in October 2021, and will begin with an examination of current practices, and their efficacy, in distributing menstrual products to New Yorkers. We will also explore additional ways to meet New Yorkers' menstrual equity needs citywide.

Whether the lack of access to menstrual hygiene products derives from scarce funds, insufficient sexual health education, or other barriers of access—no one should go without necessary menstrual products. Everyone should have the opportunity to make informed decisions with fair access to the products that best meet the needs of their bodies. Menstrual equity is a key issue in the realms of public health, human rights, and gender and reproductive justice and must be addressed to advance gender equity for New Yorkers.

Thank you for inviting me to speak today. I look forward to continued conversations on this issue.



Testimony

of

**Jacqueline M. Ebanks
Executive Director, Commission on Gender Equity**

before the

**New York City Council
Committee on Women and Gender Equity**

on

Street Harassment Advisory Board

**Monday, November 29, 2021
Written Testimony submitted to Virtual Hearing**

Good morning, Chair Diaz, and members of the Committee on Women and Gender Equity.

I am Jacqueline Ebanks, Executive Director of New York City’s Commission on Gender Equity (CGE). In this role, I also serve as an advisor to the Mayor and the First Lady on policies and issues affecting gender equity in New York City for all girls, women, transgender, and gender non-binary New Yorkers regardless of their ability, age, ethnicity/race, faith, gender expression, immigrant status, sexual orientation, and socioeconomic status.

The de Blasio Administration has worked relentlessly to promote equity, excellence, and fairness for all New Yorkers. It is within this context that CGE works to remove equity barriers across New York City. CGE carries out its activities across three areas of focus within a human rights framework and using an intersectional lens. These areas of focus are:

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- 3. Safety.** The goal is to foster to a City free from gender- and race-based violence.

Street Harassment

CGE applauds the Council’s effort to augment the Administration’s work to eliminate street harassment. The legislation, in its definition, rightly recognizes how intersecting forms of oppression manifest through this scourge, by explaining that the term “street harassment” means “unwanted or unwelcome disrespectful, offensive or threatening statements, gestures or other conduct directed at a natural person in public based on the person’s actual or perceived age, race, creed, color, national origin, gender, disability, sexual orientation or any other trait, status or condition.”

According to the Anti-Violence Project, an organization represented on our Commission, “this kind of harassment thrives in a culture and society where violence is common, accepted, and most often said to be the fault of the person experiencing it (victim-blaming). It limits people’s mobility, safety, access to public space and well-being and is a form of gender-based violence.”¹

Around the world, communities and organizations recognize the prevalence of street harassment and the ways it impacts and limits peoples’ lives. According to the United Nations, “available data suggest that the vast majority of women has experienced some form of unwanted sexual attention or sexual harassment in public spaces. Women and girls regularly experience sexual harassment and other forms of sexual violence in public spaces—on the streets, in and around public transport hubs, schools, workplaces, water distribution sites, public toilets and

¹ <https://www.antiviolenceproject.org/sexualized-harassment/>

parks. Moreover, many women street traders and vendors in open markets face violence and harassment on a daily basis.”²

Earlier this year, CGE partner L’Oréal Paris completed a 15-country survey about street harassment with a representative sample of around 1,000 women in each country. The results confirm once again that this is a pervasive and global problem. “Around 80 percent of women across the 15 countries said they’ve experienced street harassment.” Notably, this study included only women, ages 18 and up. The authors suggest, and other evidence shows, if teenagers and pre-teens were included and persons of all genders from the LGBTQ community and other targeted communities, these figures would be even higher. (Interestingly, 72 percent of women felt “harassers were emboldened to harass because of the increased anonymity a mask gave them.”)³

In 2018, the National Sexual Harassment and Assault Report, a nationally representative survey⁴ of approximately 1,000 women and 1,000 men, ages 18 and up found that women most frequently reported sexual harassment in a public space (66% of women), at their workplace (38% of women), and at their residence (35% of women). Men’s most frequently reported locations were a public space (19% of men), their school (14% of men), and for 13% of men their workplace, own residence, and by phone/text. Furthermore, a public space was the most frequently reported location for a person’s first experience of sexual harassment (37% of women and 29% of men) and the place where it occurred the most overall. These data show a disturbing and robust level of street harassment occurring throughout our nation.

While the difference in sexual harassment based on sexual orientation for women was not statistically significant, lesbian, and bisexual respondents reported experiencing each type slightly more than straight women. Notably, 42% of gay and bisexual men reported facing physically aggressive sexual harassment compared with 25% of straight men.

Persons with disabilities were significantly more likely to experience all forms of sexual harassment than people without disabilities. Urban women were significantly more likely than rural women to report experiencing sexual harassment in public settings (while the reverse held true for men).

The most frequently selected time for both women and men to first experience sexual abuse was when they were high school-age, 14 to 17 years old (27% women, 20% men). However, many people experienced it even earlier: 30% of women had experienced some form of sexual harassment and assault by age 13, as had 22% of men.⁵

Research and surveys focusing on smaller geographic areas and municipalities reflected similar trends. For example, when researchers examined 100 women’s and men’s experiences

²<https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/Headquarters/Attachments/Sections/Library/Publications/2019/Addressing-violence-and-harassment-against-women-in-the-world-of-work-en.pdf>

³ <https://stopstreetharassment.org/2021/04/loreal2021study/>

⁴ <http://www.stopstreetharassment.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/2018-National-Sexual-Harassment-and-Assault-Report.pdf>

⁵ <http://www.stopstreetharassment.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/2018-National-Sexual-Harassment-and-Assault-Report.pdf>

with offensive speech in the California San Francisco Bay Area in the early 2000s, they found that 100 percent of the 54 women asked had been the target of offensive or sexually-suggestive remarks at least occasionally: 19 percent said every day, 43 percent said often, and 28 percent said sometimes.⁶ Another survey by the Los Angeles transit authority found in 2015 that 19% of riders have been harassed in the past year.⁷

It is vital to address the impacts that street harassment has on LGBTQ+ communities. In the US, the Anti-Violence Project compiled interviews of 1,036 survivors of hate violence that reported to 12 national AVP member programs in 2016. LGBTQ+ people of color were 2 times more likely than white LGBTQ+ folks to experience physically violent anti-LGBTQ+ harassment. Undocumented LGBTQ+ folks were 4 times more likely than other LGBTQ+ folks to experience anti-LGBTQ+ harassment.

These general trends surfaced in CGE’s survey of New Yorkers about the COVID-19 pandemic. We asked our non-representative sample New York City residents if they felt safe in public. Overall, 72% responded “no” (women: 74%, TGNB: 75%, men: 66%). When asked to elaborate, New Yorkers cited both sex-based and race-based harassment, for example:

- “The few times I had to take public transportation were somewhat scary: fewer people on the trains meant more criminally-minded males leering and deliberately approaching lone women, in direct contradiction of the orders to keep six feet apart.”
- “I am afraid of taking public transportation because of the increases in hate crime against Asian Americans.”
- “I’ve experienced more sexual harassment since the pandemic began. It’s making my mental health worse.”

Administration’s Response

Eliminating street harassment is a priority for this Administration, which has taken novel, decisive action. To educate New Yorkers about the many relevant protections in the recently strengthened New York City Human Rights Law, our colleagues at the Human Rights Commission (CCHR), have produced a number of know-your-rights materials and campaigns against street harassment. In “Harassment on the Street and in Other Public Spaces,” CCHR explains: “Under the New York City Human Rights Law, one of the strongest and broadest anti-discrimination laws in the country, women who visit, live, or work in NYC have the right to be free from discrimination and harassment as they go about their daily lives... “The NYC Human Rights Law prohibits gender-based harassment on the street, in public spaces, and in all types of public accommodations, such as restaurants and gyms.”⁸

CCHR also specifically targets harassment based on sexual orientation or gender identity: “LGBTQ individuals must be treated equally in the workplace, in housing, and in public spaces. It is illegal to harass, name-call, insult, refuse to serve, or intimidate someone because they are

⁶ <http://stopstreetharassment.org/resources/statistics/statistics-academic-studies/>

⁷ <https://stopstreetharassment.org/2015/08/launwantedtouching/>

⁸ https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/cchr/downloads/pdf/publications/CCHR_Women_FactSheet.pdf

LGBTQ.”⁹ And CCHR’s “While Black in NYC” campaign details New Yorkers’ right to be free from anti-Black harassment.¹⁰

Since our inception, CGE has worked in partnership with our colleagues at the Mayor’s Office to End Domestic and Gender-Based Violence on many of these issues described above, including ending street harassment. For example, we are currently in the middle of the initiative “16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence”, where CGE’s main effort is to train New Yorkers on how to intervene in street harassment.

For the second year in a row, CGE and ENDGBV are partnering with Hollaback! and L’Oréal Paris during the “16 Days” campaign to present "Stand Up Against Street Harassment" training sessions. Signing up for a bystander intervention training session or hosting a training gives participants tools to intervene safely when witnessing street harassment. In addition, ENDGBV will host the December 8 event "Gender-Based Violence (GBV) in the Community: What Is It and What Can We Do?" to help increase familiarity with various forms of GBV, including street harassment, and other intersecting interpersonal violence issues, the impact that interpersonal violence has on individuals and the community, and to hear about best practices that can be implemented in daily life to respond to survivors.

In recognition of this campaign, and in solidarity with the global campaign, tomorrow evening, iconic buildings and landmarks around the City will be lit up in orange lighting. These include City Hall, the World Trade Center, the Bank of America Tower, 4 Times Square, Gracie Mansion, the David Dinkins Municipal Building, Queens Borough Hall, Brooklyn Borough Hall, Staten Island Borough Hall and others.

CGE’s and ENDGBV’s partnership with Hollaback! against street harassment extends beyond the “16 Days” to serve New Yorkers year-round. In addition to offering and promoting bystander trainings, we are surveying and interviewing New Yorkers about their experiences with and preferences for bystander intervention in various street harassment situations. This work will result in recommendations for tools and materials to facilitate the efficacy of bystander intervention.

CONCLUSION

The Commission on Gender Equity welcomes this opportunity to supplement its efforts to reduce street harassment in New York City by learning more from stakeholders who will be part of the newly established Street Harassment Advisory Board.

Thank you for this opportunity to present testimony. We look forward to working with the Council to create safer streets for all New Yorkers.

⁹ https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/cchr/downloads/pdf/publications/LGBTQ_Brochure.pdf

¹⁰ <https://www1.nyc.gov/site/cchr/media/while-black-nyc.page>

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