

Get close to transgender people to understand and help them

A survey report of Chinese transgender population is released on Nov. 20, 2017 in Beijing. [Provided to China.org.cn]

For a long time, Chinese people have known little about the transgender group which is often regarded as weird, mysterious or even abnormal in domestic society. However, the fact is we should get close to transgender people in order to know them, understand them and provide care for them.

In fact, transgender people are only different in regard to their gender identity and gender expression, and are not suffering from mental disorder. Additionally, they should not be confused with homosexuals to whom they are not necessarily related.

The term "transgender" refers to people whose gender identity or gender expression is different from the biological sex assigned to them at birth. It includes the transgender man, being identified as a "female-to-male" (FTM) person, and transgender woman, who refers to "male-to-female" (MTF) people.

Besides, some ambiguous people, who may feel their gender identity is both male and female, or neither male nor female, are also defined as trans people.

The transgender group in China has been facing great pressure and challenges, and their life is filled with worries. According to an online survey released on Monday by the Beijing LGBT Center and Peking University, 61.5 percent of 2,060 polled transgender people were experiencing depression, and 73.2 percent had some level of anxiety; 46.2 percent reported they had considered suicide, with 12.7 percent ultimately attempting to do so.

Reasons for their psychological disorders are the pressure and challenges they are encountering in the country. Their gender expression and appeal for sex reassignment are not accepted by the society.

Transgender people are facing discrimination or even violence at home, in schools and workplace. They also have difficulties in seeking medical treatment.

Nearly 90 percent of the natal families cannot fully accept their transgender children. Of the respondents who indicated they had a partner, spouse, or child, only four of them (3.8 percent) said they had not experienced violence. Among all respondents, 70.8 percent reported being subject to some form of violence at school.

The survey also indicates few transgender people seek mental health treatment, with the most common reason provided that therapists will not be able to understand their difficulties.

However, efforts have been made around the world to provide more care for the

transgender group and show respect to their gender identities and gender expressions.

Facebook provides 56 gender options for users who don't identify simply as "male" or "female". Some European countries and North America cover transgender-related surgery and hormone therapy in their public health care system.

Nowadays, China's policy and attitude towards transgender people is being improved. Its regulations on sex reassignment surgery have become friendlier for people who want to change their sex. Gender-neutral bathrooms have also been promoted.

However, we still have a long way to go to improve the living conditions of the trans population and realize real equality among those people who have different values of gender identity and expression.