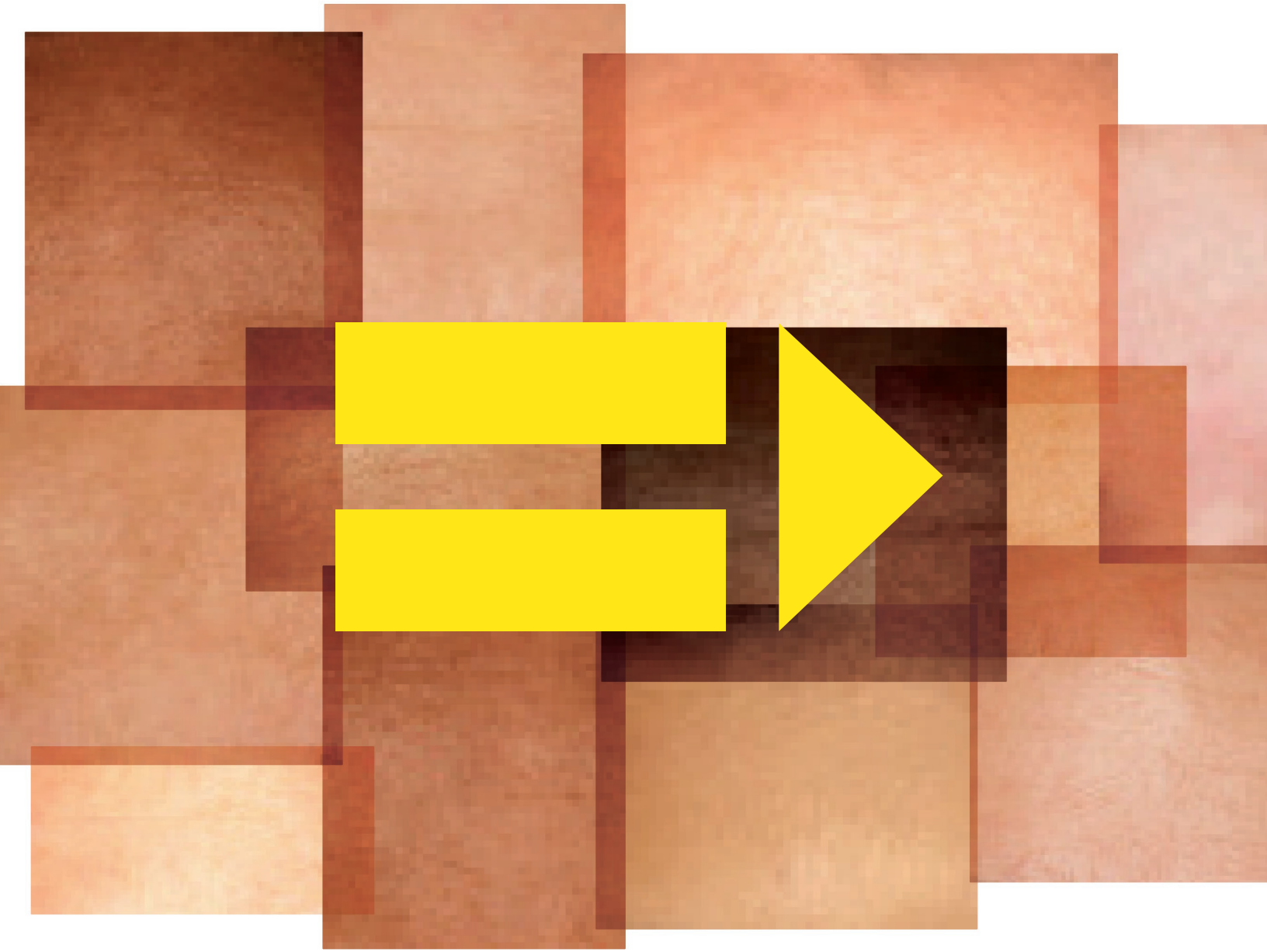
AT THE INTERSECTION
RACE, SEXUALITY AND GENDER

HUMAN RIGHTS CAMPAIGN FOUNDATION



EQUALITY FORWARD

A COMMITMENT OF THE HUMAN RIGHTS CAMPAIGN

DIFFERENT BACKGROUNDS. A SHARED FUTURE.

AT THE INTERSECTION:
RACE, SEXUALITY AND GENDER

HUMAN RIGHTS CAMPAIGN FOUNDATION

Research and analysis by Lake Research Partners
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The Human Rights Campaign Foundation believes that all Americans should have the opportunity to care for their families, earn a living, serve their country and live open, honest and safe lives at home, at work and in their community.

Through pioneering research, advocacy and education, the HRC Foundation pursues practices and policies that support and protect lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender individuals and their families in education, healthcare, corporate, public and private organizations across the country.

The HRC Foundation also provides accurate, timely research and information vital to the LGBT community, straight allies and policymakers on a wide range of issues, including: family law, senior health and housing, parenting, schools, workplace policies and law, religion, civil unions, marriage, adoption, financial planning and healthcare.

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PREFACE

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Researcher and activist W.E.B. Du Bois noted that "the cost of liberty is less than the price of repression." Arguably, a group that has experienced a myriad of oppressive circumstances is lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people of color. Freedom of expression is inextricably intertwined with liberty. This document is an effort to allow LBGT people of color to express themselves. The respondents of this study have heeded the warnings of Audre Lorde's "your silence will not protect you," and they have chosen to speak.

However, speaking is not nearly as important as being heard; and one cannot be heard if no one is listening. The November 2008 passage of Proposition 8 in California clearly showed what could happen when a group listens solely so it can repress others. Research has revealed that organizing efforts by religious and conservative forces were extensive, proactive and heavily funded. Such an observation is important because it also reveals that progressive – or in this case, LGBT-specific – organizing efforts were less effective at listening, canvassing, targeting and activating Californians in the same ways that conservative forces were. This ineffectiveness was a result of many significant forces, some of which included lack of access to populations historically left out of debates, basic information about these populations, and the resources – including cultural competency needed – to effectively reach the targeted populations.

The challenges of conducting research on LGBT people of color are similar to the challenges of canvassing and targeting a wide constituency to override a ballot initiative. But there are some significant differences. Research is often shrouded in a language of science that clings to methods that have historically turned a blind eye to diversity, especially when not utilizing a deviance framework or a framework that automatically uses White people or Whiteness as a gold standard for investigating attitudes and experiences.

Research endeavors like the one in this report are crucial to our knowledge of LGBT people of color. As a research project, "At the Intersection: Race, Sexuality and Gender" is the result of months of planning, months of fundraising, months of canvassing and months of analysis. In the end, the knowledge gathered by this project helps us all to better understand the complexities and similarities that exist within and across LGBT populations of color as well as within and across the wider LGBT population in this country.

As our own research has shown, overwhelmingly, one issue that has continued to receive much attention is visibility, or representation and information. In both formal (focus groups, in-depth interviews and surveys) as well as informal (private discussions) research settings, LGBT people of color report that more work must be done to promote racial diversity within larger LGBT communities, as well as sexual diversity within racialized communities. The inclination to rank, order or prioritize experiences of discrimination is understandable. Though it is important to continue to document the ways in which race and gender affect people, it is equally important to show that race and gender are not experienced singularly. That is, these identifiers function multiplicatively and are often used strategically and experienced contextually, often reflecting the social environment and audience targeted.

As a report, "At the Intersection" contributes to our expanding knowledge about LGBT people of color. And it does so within the context of organizing for rights. This advocacy component is key because though LGBT people of color know and celebrate their own histories, advocacy groups are often criticized for failing to consider this when trying to create or dismantle ballot initiatives. In the coming months and years, we look forward to more research and more advocacy that provides better insight into understanding individual agency and the social and cultural contexts surrounding the experiences of LGBT people of color.

Ultimately, investigations such as this must drop down out of the elite world of research and into the broader environment of the lived experiences of the population described herein. If that happens, the greatest possible impact of this document is its potential to serve as a springboard for ideas, strategies and programs that smart, committed and willing-to-listen legislators, funders, academics, activists and thought leaders can create to improve the quality of life for LGBT people of color.

LETTER

FROM THE CHIEF DIVERSITY OFFICER OF THE HUMAN RIGHTS CAMPAIGN

I am pleased to share "At the Intersection: Race, Sexuality and Gender." This study is part of *Equality Forward*, an initiative by the Human Rights Campaign to unite lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people and straight allies of all races and backgrounds to win equality for all.

More than two years ago, we began this project with one desire: To better understand what's important to LGBT people of color[1], a group of people that has not traditionally been asked. We envisioned a listening project and put aside our assumptions of what we thought we knew or didn't know. Most importantly, we wanted to empower LGBT communities of color with information.

This report is just the beginning. We know that one study of African Americans, Asian Pacific Islanders and Latinos/as cannot fully explore the experiences of people in each of these races and ethnicities. We hope this research will serve as a launching point for more study of the lives of LGBT people in each of these communities.

The Human Rights Campaign wants to do three things with *Equality Forward*: Deepen understanding among individuals, organizations and coalitions about the complexities we find when we bring race, sexual orientation and gender together; use dialogue and educational tools to broaden support for LGBT equality; and establish an ongoing forum for dialogue and collaboration on the issues important to us all. Through partnerships with 100 local and national groups in more than 25 cities, we have already heard from more than 5,000 people. By moving this discussion from boardrooms and leadership summits to church pews, living rooms, break rooms, pride festivals, happy hours, conferences and online social networks, we are hearing from LGBT people of color who deal with unique challenges large and small.

Two historic events have happened since this project began: The election of Barack H. Obama, the United States' first African-American president, and the passage of Proposition 8, which eliminated marriage rights and responsibilities for same-sex couples in California. In many ways, the 2008 elections remind us that the road to equality is a long one and must include bridges to people from every walk of life. Until we build these bridges, our differences – race and ethnicity, religiosity, sexuality, gender identity and age – can, and as we have learned, *will* be used to divide us into factions to be played against each other in the political arena. As Audre Lorde put it, "It's not our differences that divide us. It is our inability to recognize, accept and celebrate those differences."

This report comes at a critical time when our future depends on our ability to understand our differences and similarities. In this area, we have so much work to do – both within ourselves, as well as in our communities. But if we dare and care to learn, we can begin to speak of "we" and eliminate the false dichotomy of "us" and "them." Because in truth, "we" are all that we have.

Thank you,

Cuc Vu
Chief Diversity Officer
Human Rights Campaign

1 While not everyone in our study described themselves as people of color, the term is used here to collectively refer to African-American, Asian Pacific Islander, Latino/a and mixed-race individuals.

KEY FINDINGS

DIVERSITY IS A REALITY, BUT INCLUSION IS THE REAL CHALLENGE

Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people of color tell a complex story about being simultaneously present and excluded in the communities where we live – feeling both treated like everyone else and condemned. Diversity is a reality, but inclusion – valuing and leveraging differences – is the real challenge to build genuine partnerships with LGBT people of color. We want to foster a greater sense of connection and shared opportunity to work on the issues that affect us all. In organizations working to end racial discrimination as well in LGBT groups, the participation of LGBT people of color should be invited early and at every level of decision-making.

WE ALL HAVE MORE IN COMMON THAN WE REALIZE

Too often, human rights advocates stress our differences, but the clearest finding from the research is that we have more in common than we realize. We seek the same freedoms and opportunities and share concerns about affordable healthcare, jobs and the economy. LGBT movement organizations have to stand up for more than just LGBT concerns and recognize that issues such as access to healthcare and the economy affect LGBT people of color just as much (and in some cases more) as everyone. In joining others to achieve these common goals, LGBT groups can build effective partnerships.

RELIGIOUS ATTITUDES ARE A MAJOR SOURCE OF PREJUDICE

Religious attitudes are a major source of sexual prejudice. For LGBT people of color, many of whom are regular churchgoers, the conflict is acute. More than half of LGBT people of color interviewed feel treated like sinners by their ethnic and racial communities, and faith communities are among the places LGBT people of color feel least accepted. The need to reach out to faith and religious leaders is underscored by the rise of HIV/AIDS in black and Latino/a communities even as anti-LGBT sermons continue to be delivered in houses of worship. Human rights advocates should have dialogues with faith leaders who condemn LGBT people and find common purposes to gather around. LGBT people of color should be welcomed into inclusive and affirming communities of faith.

RACE STILL MATTERS

LGBT people of color view the world first from the point of view of race and gender. Most feel there is as much racism and sexism among LGBT people as there is among as non-LGBT people, and racially motivated violence and discrimination are more prevalent than violence or prejudice based on sexual orientation. Race matters, and partnerships among groups of LGBT people must respect that. Human rights groups have to ask for and listen to the concerns of LGBT people of color in large forums and in one-on-one conversations. LGBT groups should recognize that for some, the desire to achieve racial equality is more important than the desire for marriage equality. We should support efforts to combat racial profiling, ensure fair immigration laws, fight HIV/AIDS, stop discrimination in housing and end disparities in healthcare.

MORE INFORMATION AND MEDIA IMAGES OF LGBT PEOPLE OF COLOR ARE NEEDED

LGBT people of color are serious media consumers, but they do not find enough information or see accurate media representations of themselves. They watch LGBT television programming, read print and online publications, websites and blogs looking for LGBT information. Human rights organizations should provide more news and information about LGBT people of color as well as advocate for better media representation. We should embrace communications that allow for full reader and viewer participation, such as online social networks and blogs.

PROTECTIONS FROM VIOLENCE AND JOB DISCRIMINATION ARE BRIDGE-BUILDING ISSUES

Nearly all LGBT people of color say protections from violence and workplace discrimination are important; issues strong majorities of all Americans support in opinion polls. Violence and discrimination are also the most salient issues that connect three critical groups – non-LGBT people, communities of color and white LGBT communities. Human rights advocates should look for every opportunity to use these crosscutting issues to build open partnerships that not only foster confidence and trust among each other, but also lay the groundwork for winning coalitions.

ABOUT THE RESEARCH

This study began in summer 2007 with nine discussion groups of lesbian, gay and bisexual people. Groups, which were assembled by race and gender, informed the creation of a national online scientific survey of 727 LGBT people of color in summer 2008.

While this research offers insight into issues of race and sexual orientation faced by many LGBT people, a national study dedicated to the lives of transgender people of color is needed to begin to examine prejudice at the crossroads of race, sexuality, gender identity and gender expression. Absent from this research are discussion groups of transgender people of color, and while 3 percent of the survey's participants identified as transgender, the number is too few to do a methodical analysis of their individual concerns and experiences.

INTRODUCTION

This study began in January 2007 to identify the priorities and experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people of color. Millions of LGBT people from all walks of life live in the United States, but remarkably, they are largely regarded as a homogenous group with similar concerns and backgrounds. LGBT people share much with each other and all Americans, but are also as diverse as any other group.

Previous research has told us that HIV/AIDS, hate crime violence, marriage and domestic partnerships are among the top priorities of African-American and Asian Pacific Islander LGBT people. Census data finds that Latino/a same-sex couples are raising children at three times the rate of their Caucasian counterparts. Tens of thousands of same-sex couples of color in the United States report lower median household incomes than white same-sex partners.

But how can we use this information to build a truly inclusive human rights movement? How can we gather around shared goals? How can we stop allowing our differences to hold us back and instead leverage them to take a giant step forward in our journey to equality for all?

This report begins to answer these kinds of questions. It is the hope that the findings and recommendations here are meaningful and relevant to human rights organizations, donors, scholars, elected officials and activists alike.

ABOUT THE SURVEY

Lake Research Partners conducted an online survey of 727 LGBT people of color with Knowledge Networks Inc. in June and July 2008. The survey reached 228 African-Americans, 80 Asian Pacific Islanders, 261 Latinos/as, 90 people of mixed race and 68 belonging to another ethnic group.

Just about half of respondents are men (50 percent) and about half are women (47 percent). Three percent identify as transgender.

A quarter of respondents (27 percent) have children and another third intend to have children (31 percent).

Nearly half (44 percent) are single, almost a third (27 percent) are in a committed but not legally recognized relationship, and 6 percent are married, in a civil union or domestic partnership with someone of the same gender. Seventeen percent are married to someone of the other gender.

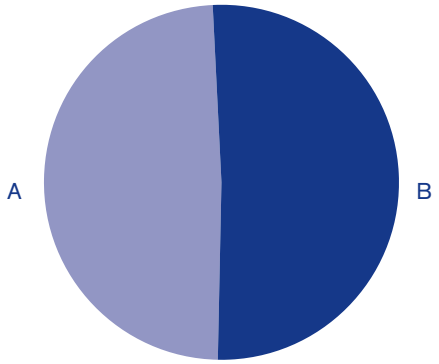
Fifteen percent immigrated to the United States, including 16 percent of Latinos/as, 4 percent of African-Americans, and 58 percent of Asian Pacific Islanders.

About half of the LGBT people of color in this survey identify as gay or lesbian (51 percent) and another 41 percent identify as bisexual[1]. The remaining 8 percent use a number of other terms to describe their sexual orientation, including queer, intersexual, asexual, human and prefer not to use labels.

A majority of men identify as gay (55 percent), while just over a third say they are bisexual (38 percent). Women split evenly between identifying as lesbian (43 percent) or bisexual (45 percent).

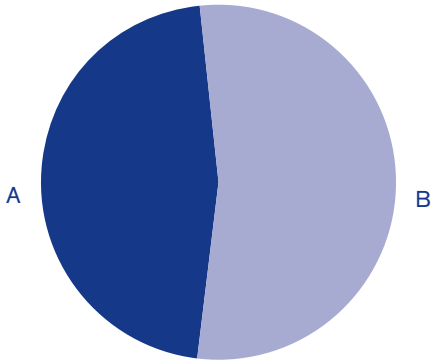
2 Studies including the National Survey of Family Growth find similar percentages of bisexual people compared to lesbians and gays.

PROFILE OF SURVEY PARTICIPANTS



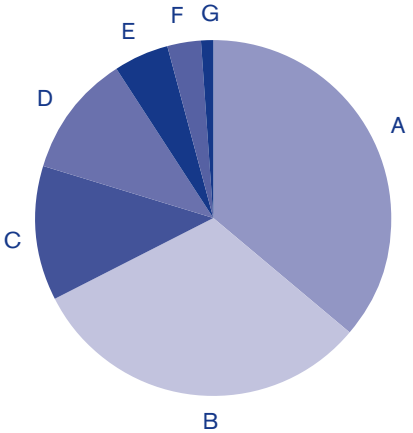
Age

A Under 35: 49%
B 35+: 51%



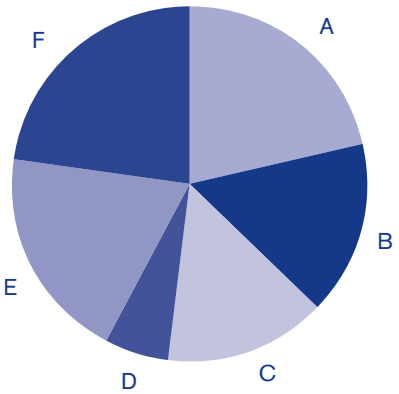
Income

A Under $40k: 46%
B $40k+: 53%



Race/Ethnicity

A Latino/a: 36%
B African-American: 31%
C Mixed race: 12%
D Asian Pacific Islander: 11%
E American Indian/Alaskan Native: 5%
F Declined to state: 3%
G Other: 1%



Religion

A Catholic: 22%
B Baptist: 16%
C Other Christian: 15%
D Protestant: 6%
E Other: 20%
F None: 23%

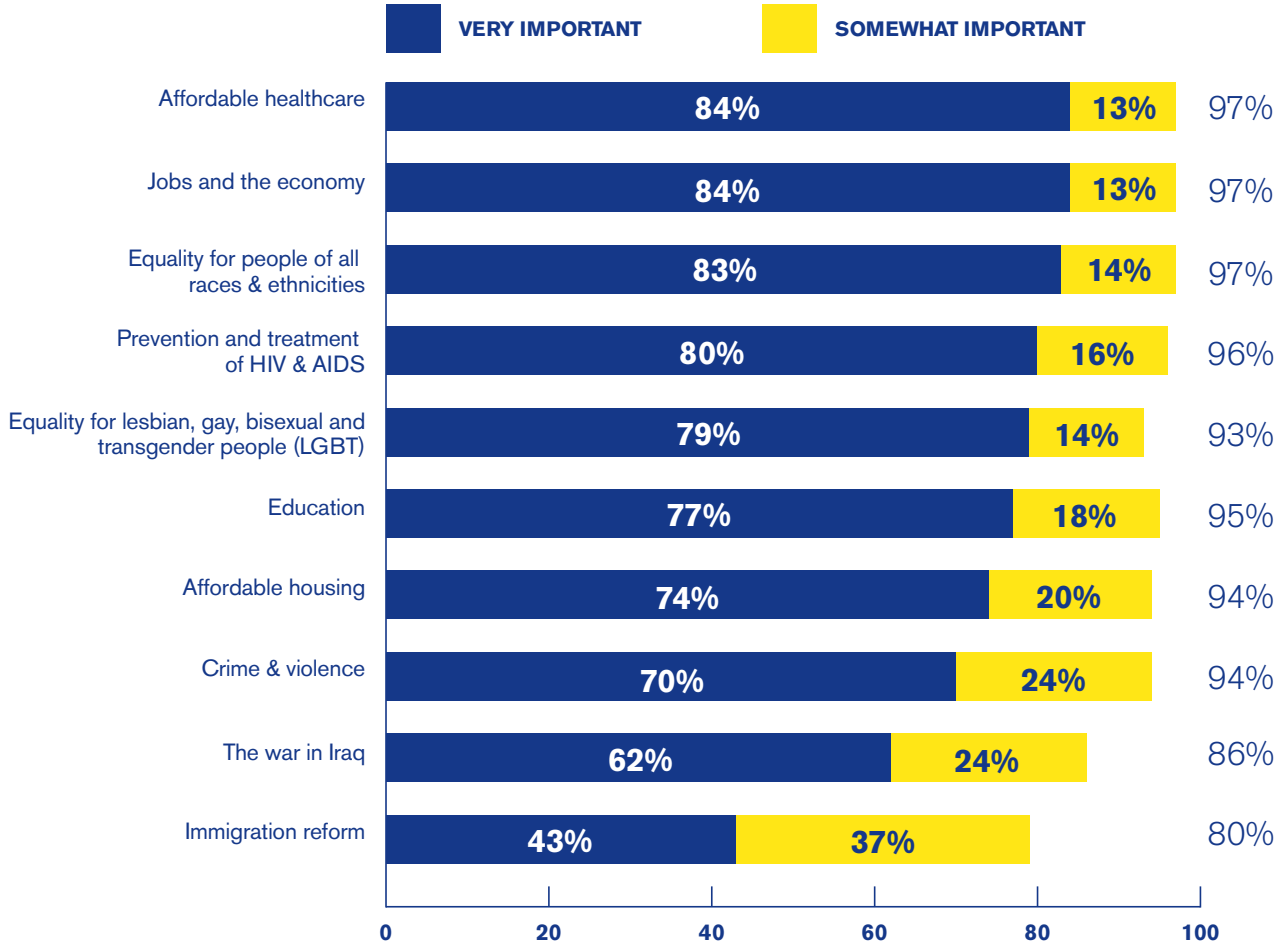
CONCERNS ALL PEOPLE SHARE: HEALTHCARE, JOBS AND THE ECONOMY

An overwhelming number (97 percent) of LGBT people of color say basic kitchen table issues such as affordable healthcare, jobs and the economy are important, but just as significant are racial and ethnic equality (97 percent) and prevention and treatment of HIV/AIDS (96 percent). Also important is education (95 percent), affordable housing (94 percent), crime and violence (94 percent) and equality for LGBT people (93 percent). Other priorities are the war in Iraq (86 percent) and immigration reform (80 percent). In group discussions, some of participants' most pressing issues centered around the daily challenge of making ends meet, frustrations over trying to get ahead, and concern for neighborhood safety.

Priorities are similar across groups with just slight differences. Latinos/as are more concerned about prevention and treatment of HIV/AIDS than African-Americans or Asian Pacific Islanders. While men's top issues are jobs and the economy, women prioritize healthcare and education. Non-college educated and LGBT people of color with lower incomes are more concerned with crime and violence than those with college degrees and higher incomes, who view the war in Iraq as more important.

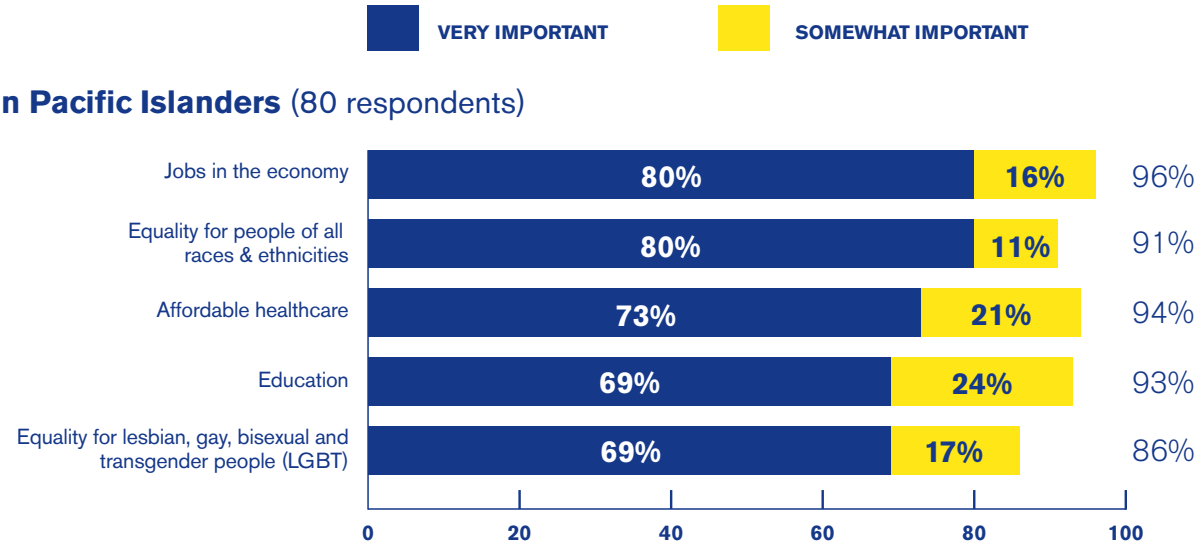
MOST IMPORTANT ISSUES FOR LGBT PEOPLE OF COLOR

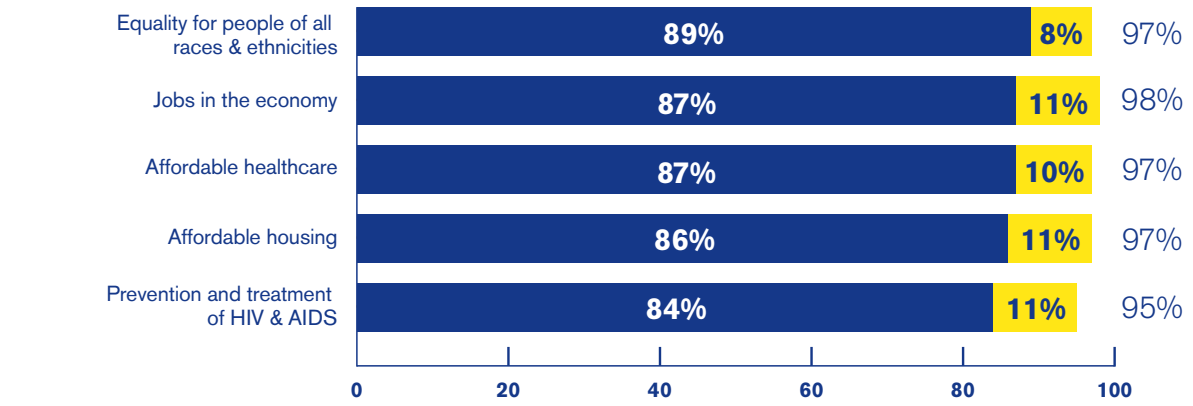
Let's look at issues some people have said are important to them personally.
For each one, please tell us how important that issue is to you:

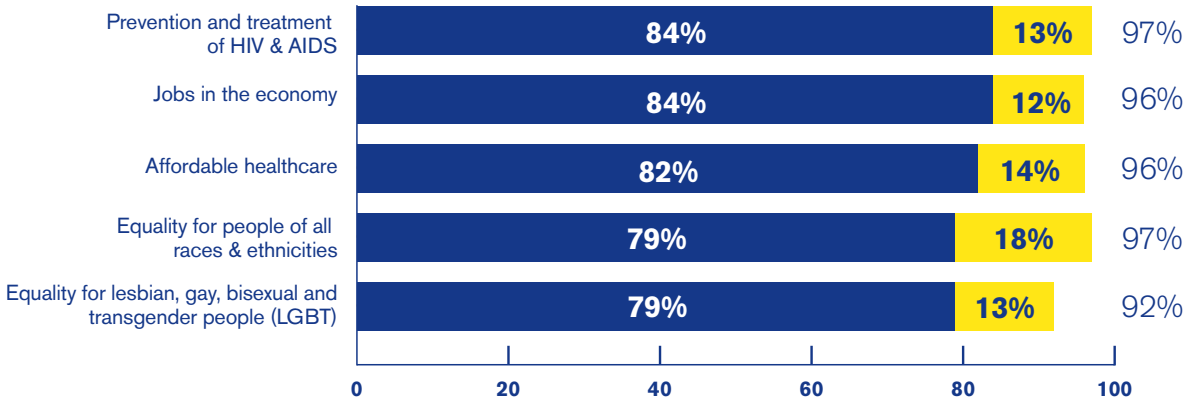


MOST IMPORTANT ISSUES FOR LGBT PEOPLE OF COLOR BY RACE AND ETHNICITY

Let's look at issues some people have said are important to them personally.
For each one, please tell us how important that issue is to you:







PROTECTIONS FROM VIOLENCE AND DISCRIMINATION

When asked about LGBT-specific proposals, nearly all LGBT people of color say protections from violence (95 percent) and workplace discrimination (94 percent) are important, issues strong majorities of all Americans support in opinion polls. Concern for families and relationship recognition is also high: Most LGBT people of color want to be able to adopt or be foster parents (89 percent), be allowed to form civil unions or domestic partnerships (88 percent) and be allowed to marry (85 percent). Also important is being able to openly serve in the military (87 percent) and advocating for the immigration rights of LGBT people with a same-sex U.S. spouse or partner (82 percent).

Latinos/as and African-Americans place much more importance on all these proposals than Asian Pacific Islanders, especially on protections from violence. Asian Pacific Islanders prioritize marriage over domestic partnerships, while African-Americans and Latinos/as focus more on domestic partnerships. Common across all three groups is the desire for LGBT people to be able to adopt or foster children and protection against employment discrimination for LGBT people. Women place more emphasis on all these issues than men, in particular marriage equality (67 percent of women say it is very important, compared to 54 percent of men). Relationship recognition is also more important to Latinas, mothers and those with a college degree.

"The violence on the streets – even the kids can't go to school in this state! There's so much violence everywhere. I have two teenagers at home, so it's scary just sending them to school."

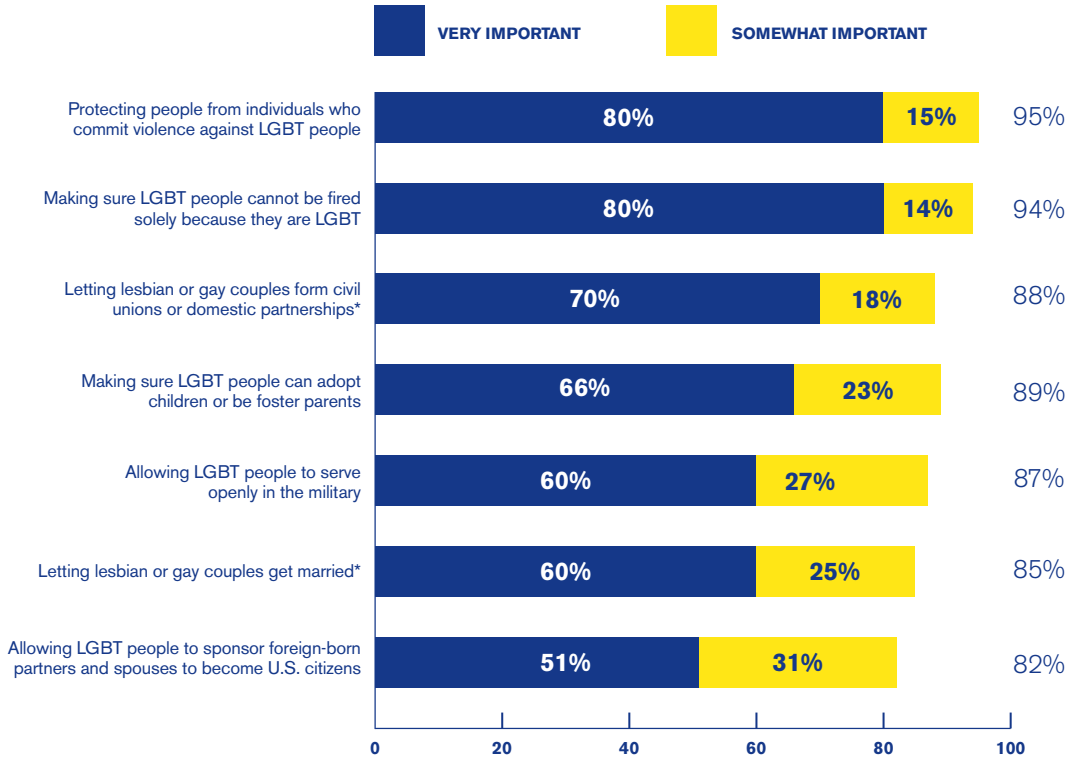
Puerto Rican-American bisexual mother
37 years old
Chicago

"It seems like achieving things in life is harder to achieve. Buying a home in this area and just even finding a job is ridiculous."

Guatemalan-American gay man
Recent college graduate
22 years old
Los Angeles

MOST IMPORTANT LGBT-SPECIFIC PROPOSALS FOR LGBT PEOPLE OF COLOR

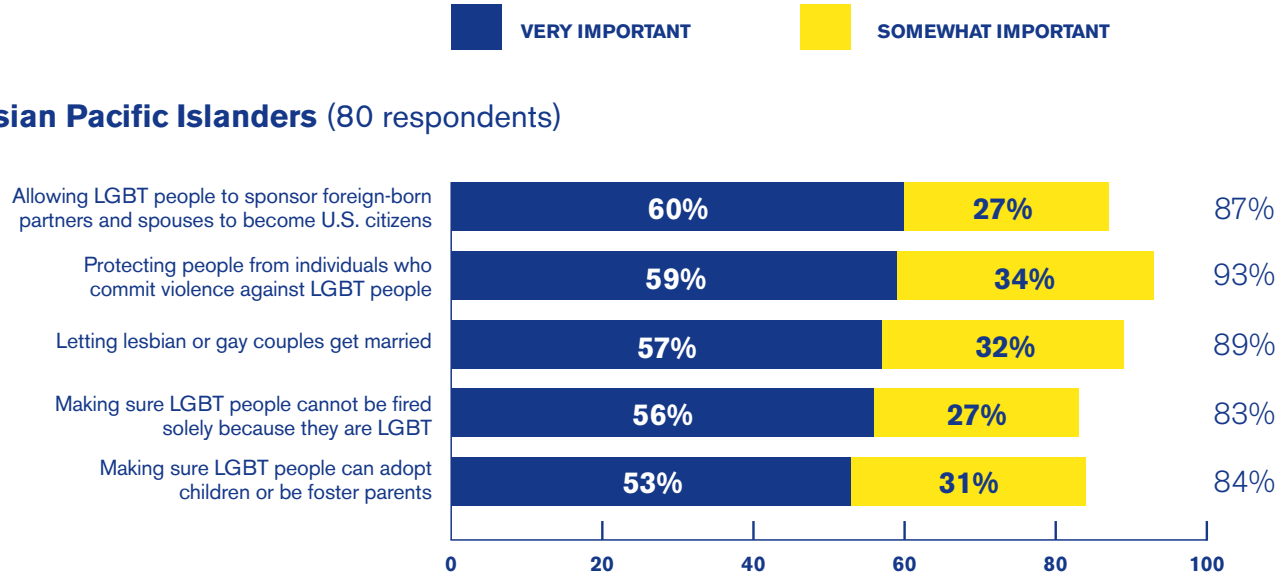
Now let's look at some proposals being discussed in the country. Tell us how important each one is to you:

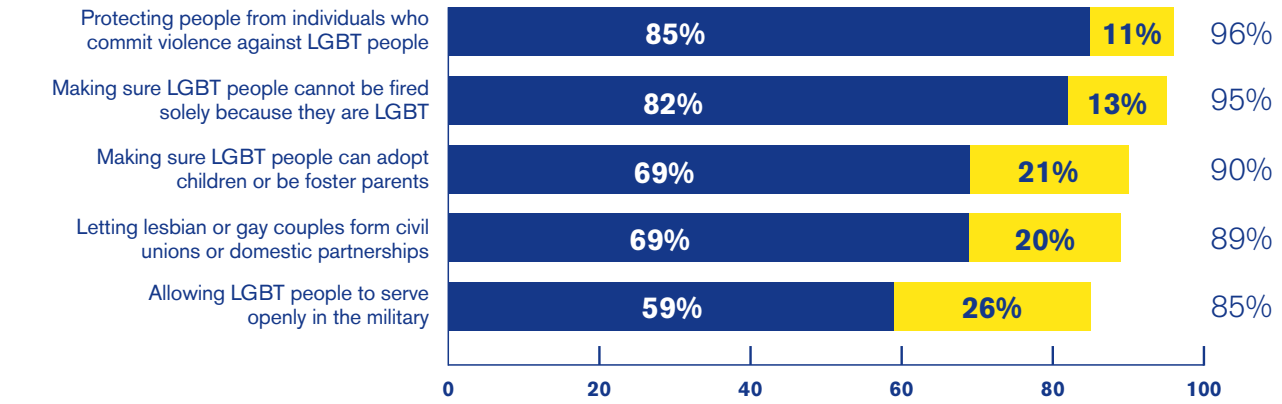


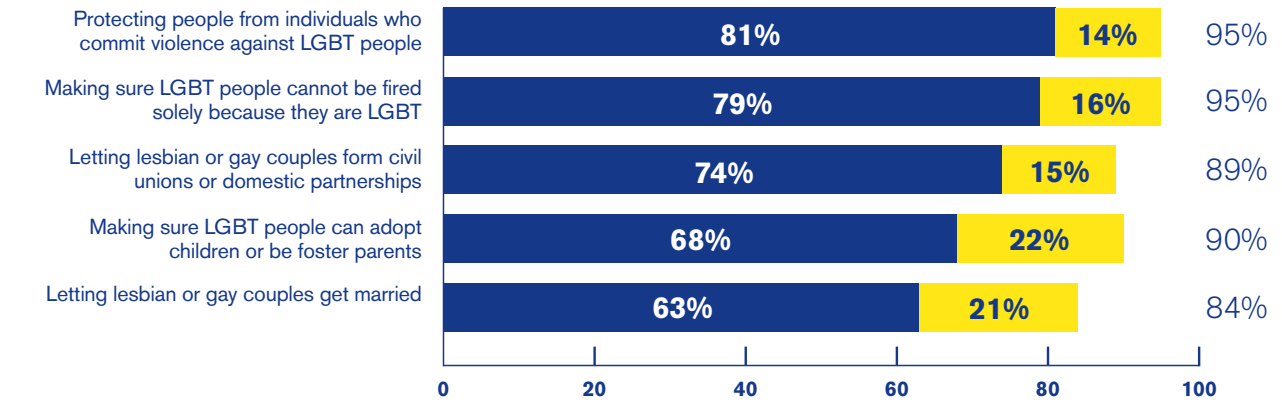
* Asked of half of survey participants

MOST IMPORTANT LGBT-SPECIFIC PROPOSALS FOR LGBT PEOPLE OF COLOR BY RACE AND ETHNICITY

Now let's look at some proposals being discussed in the country. Tell us how important each one is to you:







FIRST RACE, ETHNICITY, AND GENDER – THEN SEXUAL ORIENTATION

Like everyone, LGBT people of color view the world from lived experiences grounded in an intersection of identities. In discussion groups, when asking participants to rank some two-dozen personal characteristics, almost everyone first listed race, ethnicity or gender, then later sexual orientation. Often family status (I'm a mother, I'm a daughter, I'm a future parent), economic class or occupation (I'm working class, I'm a student) or spiritual or religious also came ahead of sexual orientation. This was true for men and women and across racial and ethnic groups, although some Latinos/as and Asian Pacific Islanders also placed immigrant or American ahead of sexual orientation. Racial and ethnic identities were dominant regardless of whether participants identified as lesbian, gay, bisexual, same-gender loving or queer. The few discussants who placed their orientation first closely attached it to their ethnicity – "I'm a lesbian Latina" or "I'm a gay black man."

Discussants said race and gender carry surface visibility: It's how the world first sees them. Many discussants said no one needed to know their sexual orientation, or they could pass as heterosexual if they wanted, but they could never be white or alter others' perceptions of race. "I was black before I was a lesbian," said an African-American in New York. "I grew up black since I was a little kid."

PREJUDICE IN RACIAL AND ETHNIC COMMUNITIES

"I think for me identifying as a lesbian is more of a private matter. There's the cultural implication of being Chinese, and my parents come from another country, so there's so many rules and structures on how you're supposed to live your life."

Chinese-American lesbian
Model
27 years old
Los Angeles

"I identify with race first because that's who we are, were and will always be."

African-American lesbian mother
22 years old
Brooklyn

"I think that there was finally a decision somewhere I made that if I was really going to be gay, if I was going to come out, that was sort of like my exit papers from the black community."

African-American gay man
Shipping and receiving clerk
41 years old
Chicago

"In my case, sexuality is basically all that I am. I mean, I label myself 100 percent, because when people walk down the street, the first thing they see about me is me being a butch lesbian."

Filipina-American lesbian
Database assistant
23 years old
Hollywood, Calif.

LGBT people of color tell a complex story about their experiences in their ethnic and racial communities. They are largely optimistic about the acceptance of LGBT people: The majority (80 percent) believes the United States is becoming more accepting, especially young people (89 percent). Their families are less likely to be supportive (68 percent), as are their ethnic and racial communities (67 percent).

When presented with a list of ways that their racial and ethnic communities might treat them, 60 percent say "like anyone else," but nearly as many also say "condemned as sinful" (58 percent). Half to nearly half also feel discriminated against (50 percent), doubted they're really LGBT (50 percent), excluded (45 percent) or teased or made fun of (45 percent).

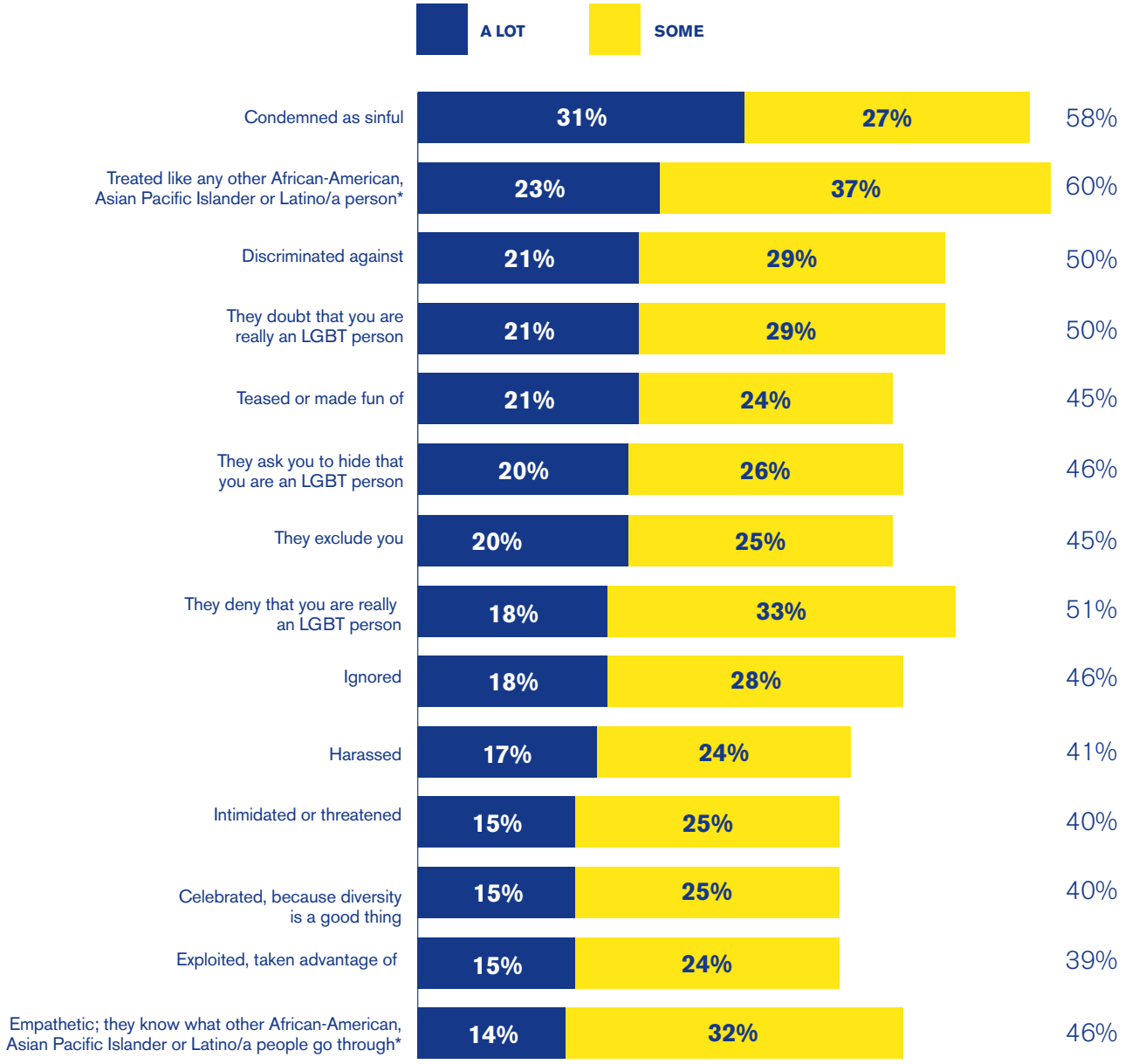
Forty-four percent of LGBT people of color have experienced three or more of these negative interactions, and more than a third (35 percent) had experienced eight or more. Those who come from more traditional backgrounds (recent immigrants or immigrant parents, frequent church-goers) are the most likely to feel negative reactions from their racial or ethnic communities, as are younger men (52 percent) and Latinos (47 percent). Men – especially Asian Pacific Islanders – are also more likely than women to feel teased or excluded, but women are more likely to say others doubt they're LGBT or be asked to hide their sexual orientation. Feeling condemned as sinful for being LGBT is particularly strong among African-Americans and Latinos/as.

The LGBT people of color who have had the fewest negative experiences in their racial and ethnic communities are older women (56 percent), bisexual women (50 percent), non-college-educated women (52 percent) and older African-Americans and African-American women (52 percent each). Those who have had the fewest negative experiences are also least likely to have told other people they are LGBT.

Most LGBT people of color (87 percent) have told their friends they are LGBT, and nearly two-thirds have told their mother (63 percent) or siblings (65 percent). Other family members are less likely to know. Less than half have told an aunt or uncle (49 percent), their father (46 percent), children (45 percent) or grandparents (34 percent). More than half have told their healthcare provider (59 percent). At work, LGBT people of color are more likely to tell a coworker (60 percent have done so) than a supervisor (39 percent) or customers (38 percent).

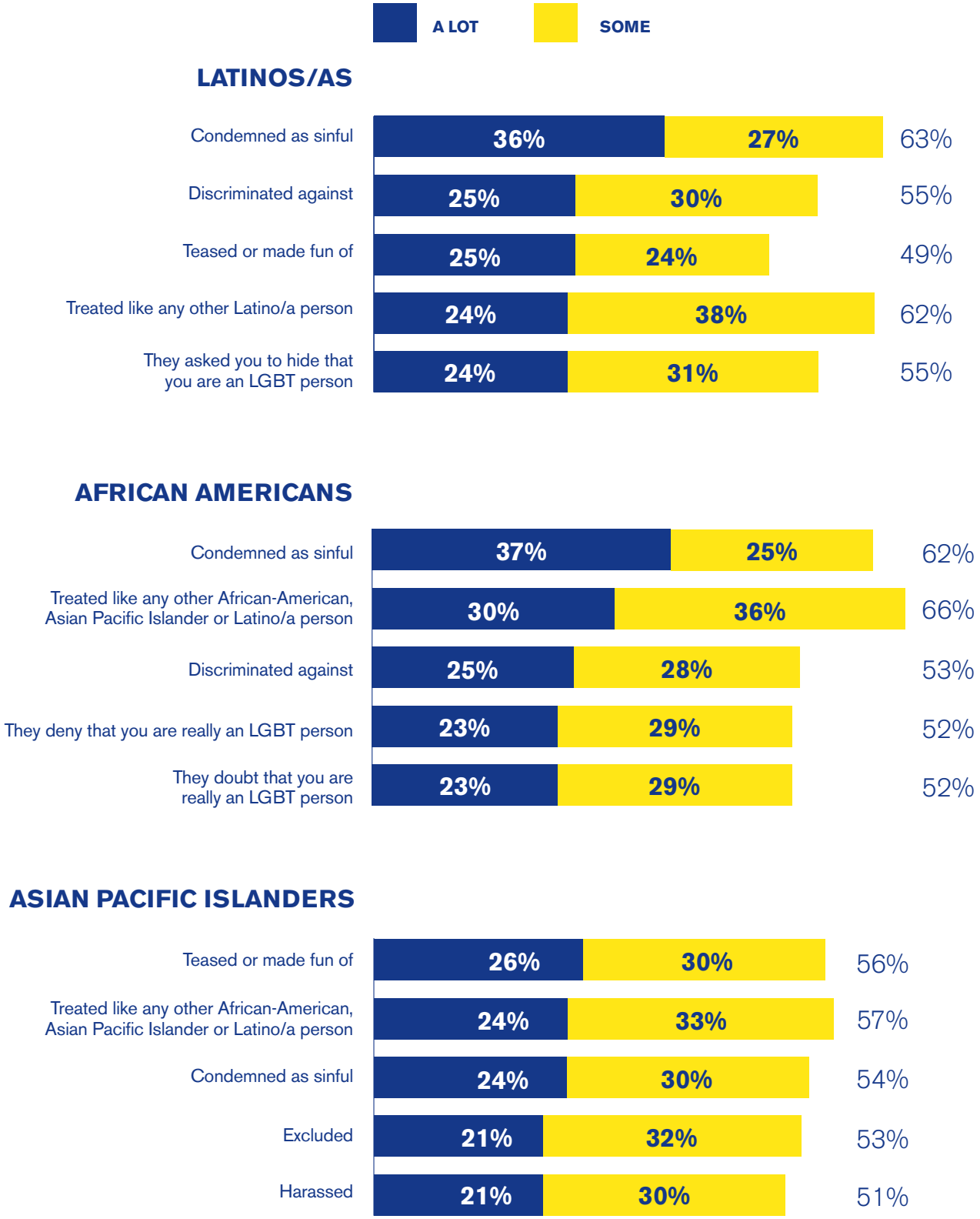
HOW LGBT PEOPLE OF COLOR SAY THEY ARE TREATED BY THEIR RACIAL AND ETHNIC COMMUNITY

Here is a list of ways some African-American, Asian Pacific Islander and Latino/a LGBT people said they have been treated within their own racial and ethnic community. For each one, please tell me if you have experienced this reaction a lot, some, a little or not at all in your racial and ethnic community:



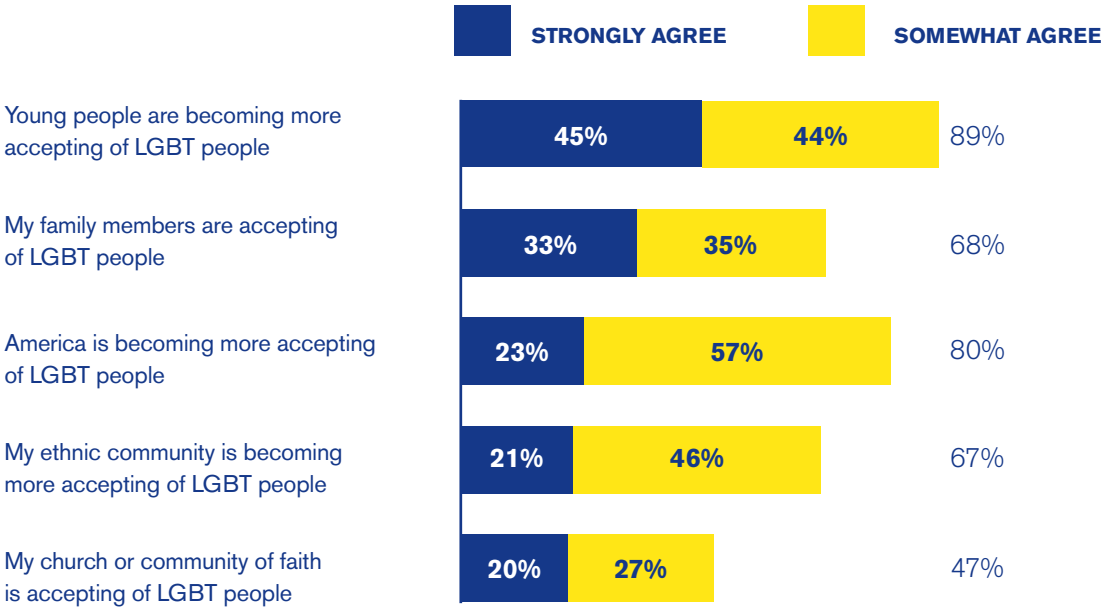
* Asked of half of survey participants

HOW LGBT PEOPLE OF COLOR SAY THEY ARE TREATED BY THEIR RACIAL AND ETHNIC COMMUNITY BY RACE AND ETHNICITY



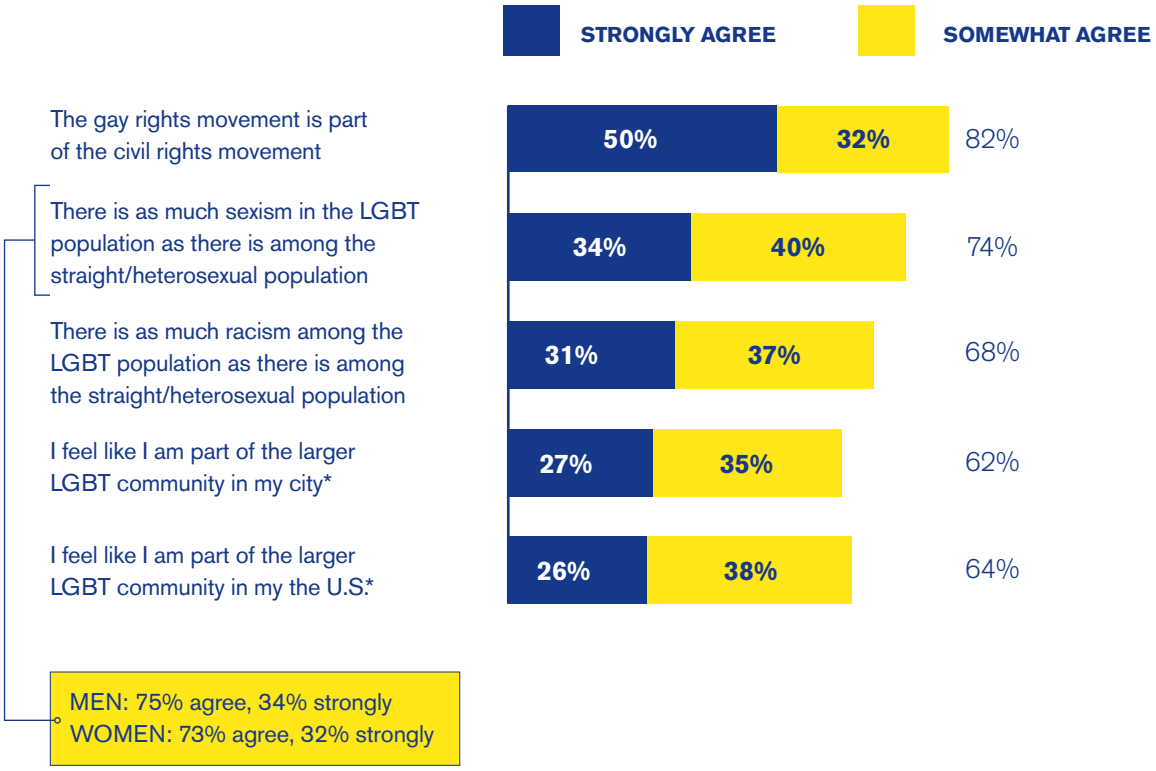
STATEMENTS ABOUT ACCEPTANCE OF LGBT PEOPLE

For each of these statements, tell us if you agree or disagree:



STATEMENTS ABOUT LGBT COMMUNITY AND MOVEMENT

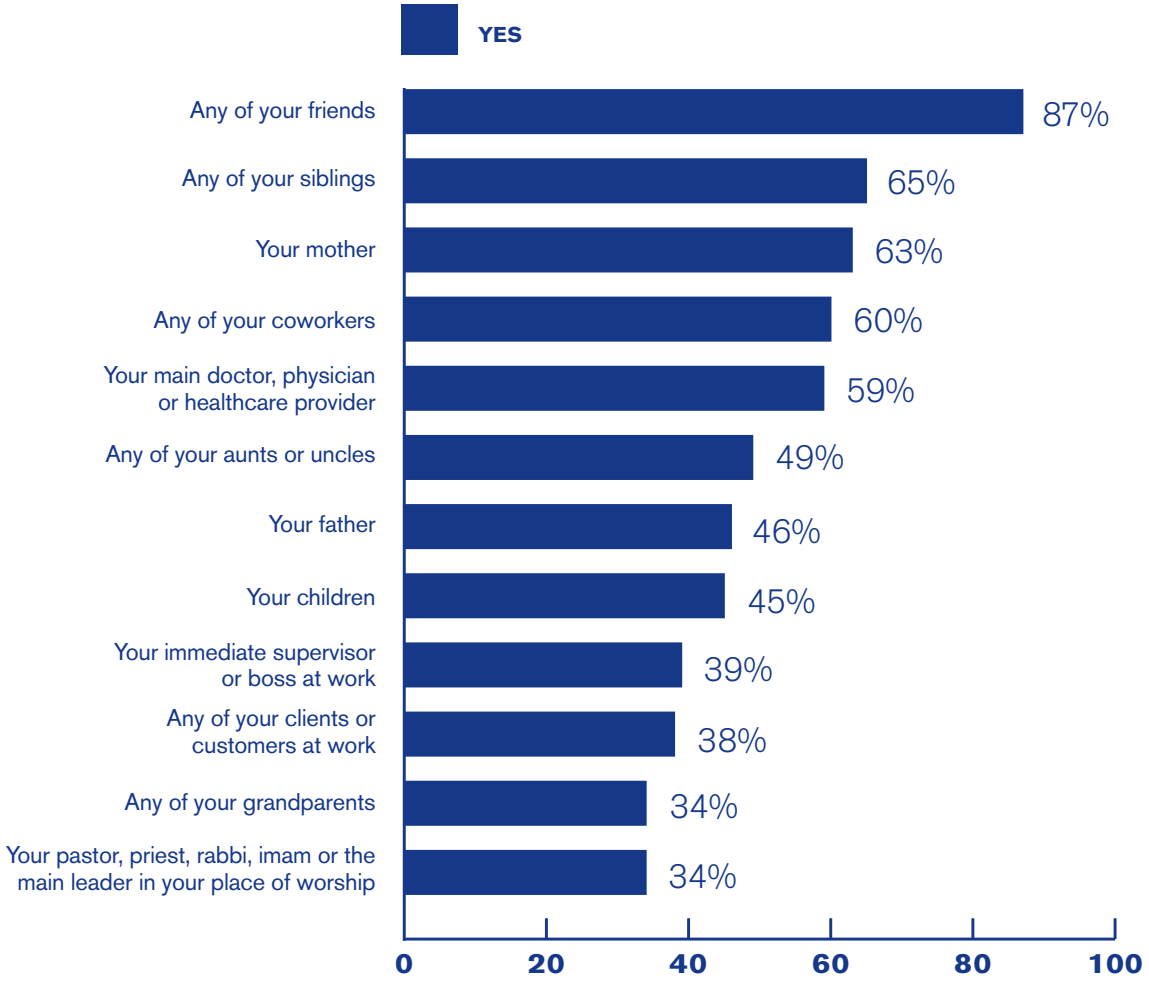
For each of these statements, tell us if you agree or disagree:



* asked of half of sample

WHO LGBT PEOPLE OF COLOR HAVE TOLD THEY ARE LGBT

Here are some people you might or might not have told that you are LGBT. For each one, please tell us if you have told that person or group of people:*



* Survey participants could select "Not applicable." Percentages are only of those who answered the question.

BEING PART OF THE FAMILY

Group discussion participants were keenly sensitive to how being lesbian, gay and bisexual affected their families, and many said it was an ongoing process to strike a balance between their sexual orientation and fully being accepted by the family – attending celebrations and keeping close relationships with parents and siblings as well as grandparents, aunts, uncles, nieces, nephews and cousins. For many participants, being lesbian, gay or bisexual ran counter to expectations of traditional gender roles children should fill. This was especially the case in Asian and Latino/a families, some of whom told their children that marrying someone of another gender and having children would "cure" them. One Malaysian-American man in New York said his family assumed a gay man would be unable to care for his aging parents. African-Americans also felt pressure from their surrounding neighborhood, church or larger African-American population. As one African-American man in Chicago recalled being told, "There are no sissies in the black community." Many African-American men were challenged to physical fights when they came out, and many African-American women were told that they had just not found the right man.

Some participants also described how being lesbian, gay or bisexual brought hardship or shame on their families. One Mexican-American woman in Chicago felt the need to shield her parents: "I can't actually even be on the Southside with my girlfriend because people that know my parents will say, 'Oh there's that girl' or 'There's so-and-so's daughter.' I don't really care at all what people say, but I do have my parents to think about. They're really old-fashioned, so I have to protect them."

"I was teased and made fun of when I was younger, but after I got to know me and love me, I celebrated. And that's what I do. I don't let things like that bother me. Sometimes, they do, but most of the time, I don't let things like that bother me."

African-American gay man
39 years old
Charlotte, N.C.

"When I was growing up and I came out when I was 14 or 15. You know with the whole gay thing, some guys automatically assume that you're being weak. I try to remain laid-back, but I had to fight a lot. Oh God – the people around the neighborhood, fighting people at school."

African-American gay man
Guest services manager
27 years old
Chicago

"I feel I can't really be open with family members other than my own parents because my aunts and uncles have a lot of judgment about everything. My family will say anything and everything about anything and everything."

Filipina-American lesbian
Office manager
28 years old
El Segundo, Calif.

RACISM WITHIN THE LGBT POPULATION

"I feel like women are ignored a lot. It's difficult for young women to meet each other; Pride becomes male-dominated – gay male-dominated."

Chilean-American lesbian
Art school student and server
24 years old
Chicago

"I try to get involved in various gay activities in this area, and they're always geared toward Caucasian people. I guess it's because that's the majority of the people who show up. So it's really odd to be a speck of chocolate in a sea of vanilla whenever you go out. So yes, I think we are treated differently."

African-American lesbian
41 years old
Morrisville, N.C.

"I'm always aware that even among gay individuals that there's the white male presence, and I'm the Latino. I'm alright with it, but I'm aware of it."

Mexican-American gay man
HIV/AIDS public policy specialist
52 years old
Los Angeles

LGBT people of color have mixed feelings about their treatment within the larger LGBT population. More than two-thirds of LGBT people of color say there is as much sexism (74 percent) and racism (68 percent) among the LGBT population as among non-LGBT people. Most also feel that in the gay community, power is held by those with money (68 percent) and by white LGBT people (64 percent). But when given a list of ways that white or Caucasian LGBT people might treat them, the top three answers are "like any other LGBT person" (67 percent), "empathized with" (52 percent) and "celebrated" (50 percent). Forty percent feel excluded, discriminated against or ignored. Less than half (44 percent) are made to feel empowered. While African-Americans and Latinos/as generally have more positive experiences, Asian Pacific Islanders are most likely to feel excluded (59 percent), ignored (57 percent) or harassed (48 percent).

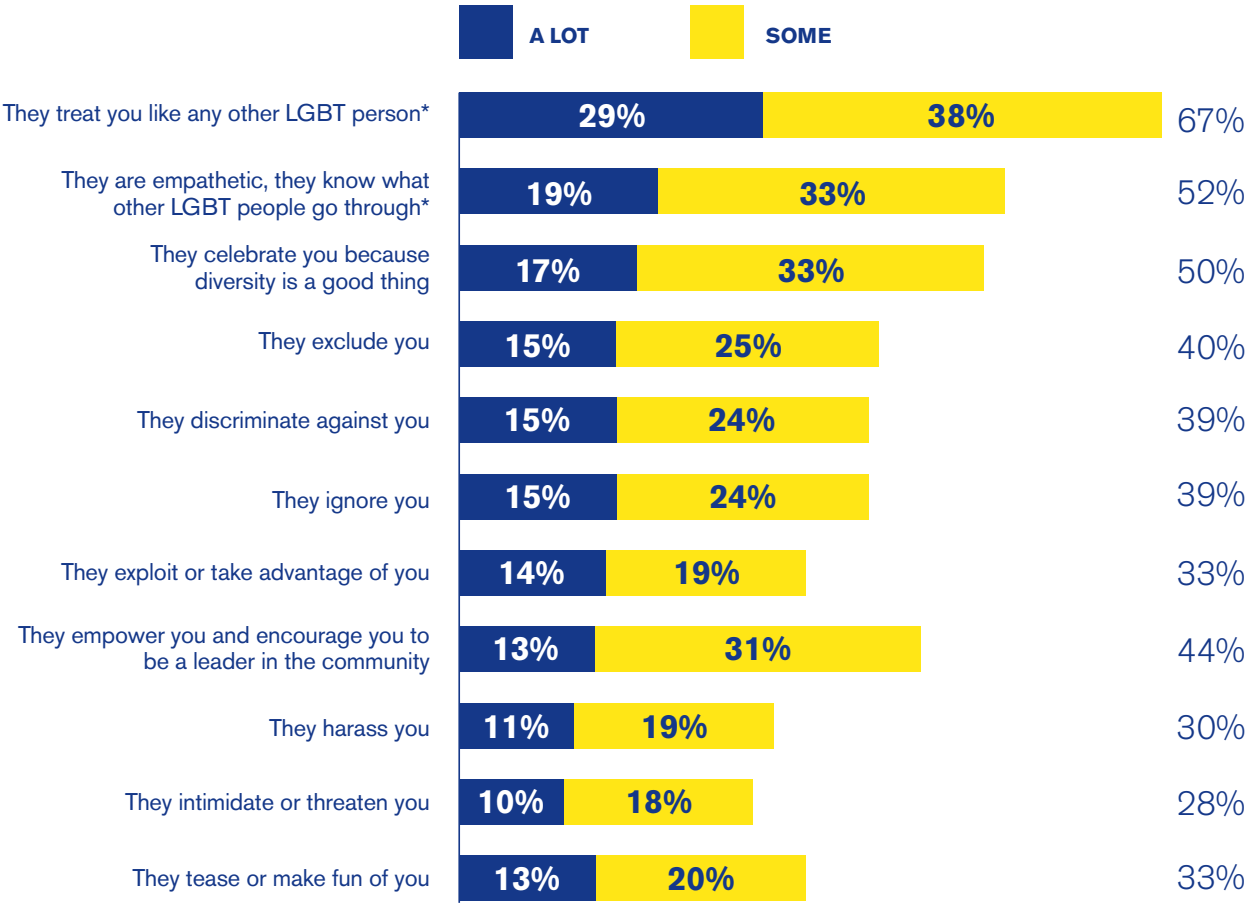
The majority (61 percent) of LGBT people of color have had just two or fewer negative experiences. Women have fewer negative experiences than men, especially bisexual women (74 percent), women who rarely attend religious services (72 percent), non-college educated women (71 percent) and older women (69 percent). Mixed-race LGBT people (73 percent) and those with annual incomes of less than $40,000 (67 percent) all also have had fewer negative experiences.

About a quarter (26 percent) of LGBT people of color have had five or more negative experiences. Those with the most negative experiences include young men (41 percent), those whose parents immigrated (37 percent), those who attend church regularly (36 percent), Asian Pacific Islanders and Latinos/as (36 percent each) and bisexual men (33 percent).

Most LGBT people of color see themselves as part of the larger LGBT community in their cities (62 percent) and in the United States (64 percent). Those most likely to feel part of an LGBT community include those in a same-sex relationship (75 percent), those who have experienced violence (74 percent) or discrimination (73 percent) for being LGBT and younger Latinos/as (72 percent) and younger African-Americans (71 percent). Those least likely to feel connected to an LGBT community are those who identify their sexual orientation as "other" (73 percent).

HOW LGBT PEOPLE OF COLOR SAY THEY ARE TREATED BY THE WHITE LGBT COMMUNITY

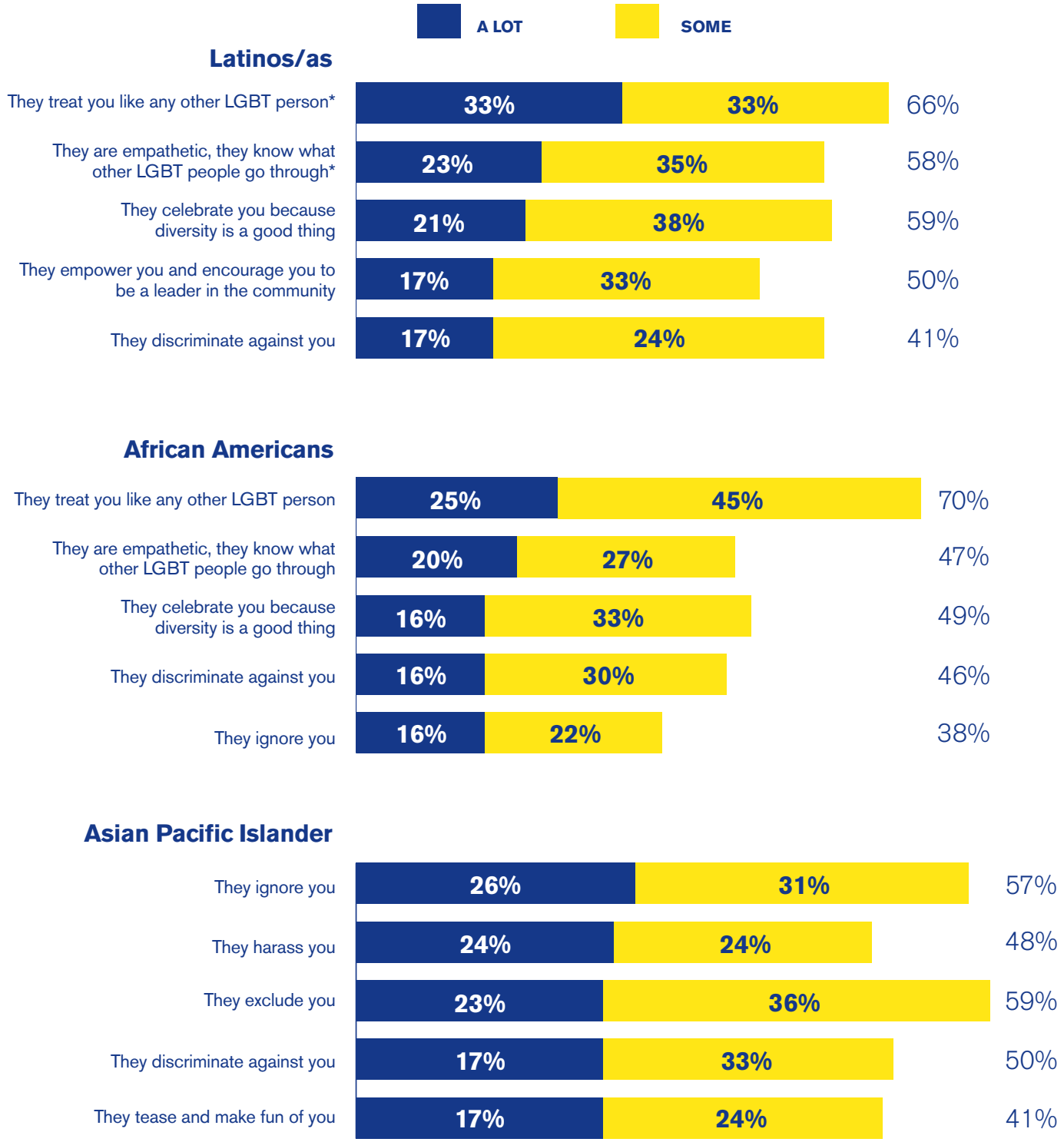
Here are some terms people have mentioned as the way white or Caucasian lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people treat African-Americans, Asian Pacific Islanders and Latinos/as who are LGBT. For each one, please tell me if you have experienced that reaction a lot, some, a little or not at all:



*Asked of half of sample.

HOW LGBT PEOPLE OF COLOR SAY THEY ARE TREATED BY THE WHITE LGBT COMMUNITY BY RACE AND ETHNICITY

Here are some terms people have mentioned as the way white or Caucasian gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people treat African-Americans, Asian Pacific Islanders and Latinos/as who are LGBT. For each one, please tell me if you have experienced that reaction a lot, some, a little or not at all:



*Asked of half of sample.

MEMBERSHIP IN THE "GAY COMMUNITY" VIA MONEY AND STATUS

Nearly two in five LGBT people of color do not feel part of the larger LGBT community in their city or in the United States. In discussion groups, when asked about the "gay community," conversation often seemed forced, and discussants pushed back when we asked if they felt part of it: "What gay community? The Asian gay community? The Chicago gay community?" There was little agreement over what the community is, and discussants were reluctant to feel part of it. Those who did recognize a gay community often described it as white, moneyed, male and elite.

Discussants also said there is as much racism among the LGBT population as there is among non-LGBT people. When raising the question discussion participants became incredulous: "Of course there is racism in the gay community!" Many discussants – especially men – felt dismissed as merely sexual partners. African-American men and Latinos felt like "trophy" catches, while Asian Pacific Islander men were frustrated over the perception they are subservient. One Japanese-American man in New York said: "I think it's having to deal with being fetishized a lot, like preconceptions of … do you want to cook sushi for me or be my geisha? Or like, you're a gay Indian man, do you know the Kama Sutra? And stuff like that."

"I think that money equals status in the gay community."

Mexican-American gay father
47 years old
Manager
Los Angeles

"There is a gay community: It's a gay, white, male community. So if you are a working-class black man, our ability to be in your community and be gay is not equal. You don't have the economic power and clout when you have entered the gay community."

African-American gay man
Graphic designer
21 years old
Chicago

RELIGION

"God does not make mistakes, so as far as I'm concerned, he knew what I was going to be before I got here. And it is left up to society to either accept or don't accept it."

African-American lesbian mother
42 years old
Oklahoma City, Okla.

"We're all spiritual beings. So first and foremost, I describe myself as spiritual."

Filipino-American gay man
Website producer
31 years old
Queens, N.Y.

"In the Bible Belt area of the country, it's really hard because it's really religious. They're always talking about how you're going to hell for being gay."

African-American gay man
21 years old
Little Rock, Ark.

"My religious mother kept praying for me. She kept trying to get the demons out of me and all that kind of crazy stuff, but you know, being from the old school, she really didn't understand. But I eventually got through to her. Now I'm open to everybody."

African-American bisexual woman
27 years old
Jacksonville, Fla.

Religious attitudes are a major source of sexual prejudice and conflict for LGBT people of color. While many group discussants felt themselves to be spiritual people, those who were raised in religious households often felt hurt and alienated by the church, which is as much a family and cultural institution as a religious one. This was especially intense among African-Americans, one of whom in Chicago described a church where everyone knew members of the congregation were gay, yet the pastor and congregation still condemned LGBT people.

LGBT people of color say churches and communities of faith are the least likely place to be accepting of LGBT people. Less than half (47 percent) say their church is accepting, and nearly one-third (32 percent) has heard their faith leader condemn LGBT people from the pulpit. Being condemned as sinful "a lot" was reported by nearly a third of LGBT people of color. Regular churchgoers feel this more intensely than anyone else (41 percent, compared to 34 percent of occasional churchgoers and 26 percent who rarely or never go to services). More than one-third (35 percent) of LGBT people of color attend church at least once a month, but less than half (43 percent) of regular churchgoers say it is a welcoming or inclusive place for LGBT people. Less than one-quarter (23 percent) of LGBT people of color have told their faith leader they are LGBT.

VIOLENCE AND DISCRIMINATION

Protection from violence and discrimination are paramount for LGBT people of color. In discussion groups, conversations around violence took many forms. Among women, the conversation was general and revolved around safety in their community and for children. For men, discussion led to shared stories of facing violence, sometimes from family members. In Los Angeles, one man said he could not return to Mexico because he feared his father would kill him for being gay.

However, racial discrimination and violence are more prevalent than discrimination or violence for being an LGBT person. Almost one-third (30 percent) have been victims of race-based violence, and nearly a quarter (24 percent) has suffered violence because they are LGBT. African-Americans are most likely to have experienced racially motivated violence, though nearly a third of Asian Pacific Islanders have experienced racial violence as well.

Nearly two-thirds (61 percent) of LGBT people of color have experienced discrimination because of their race or ethnicity, and half (50 percent) have experienced discrimination for being an LGBT person. Racial discrimination is more commonly experienced by African-American LGBT people (74 percent) than by either Latinos (54 percent) or Asian Pacific Islanders (60 percent), but all groups felt discrimination for being LGBT nearly equally.

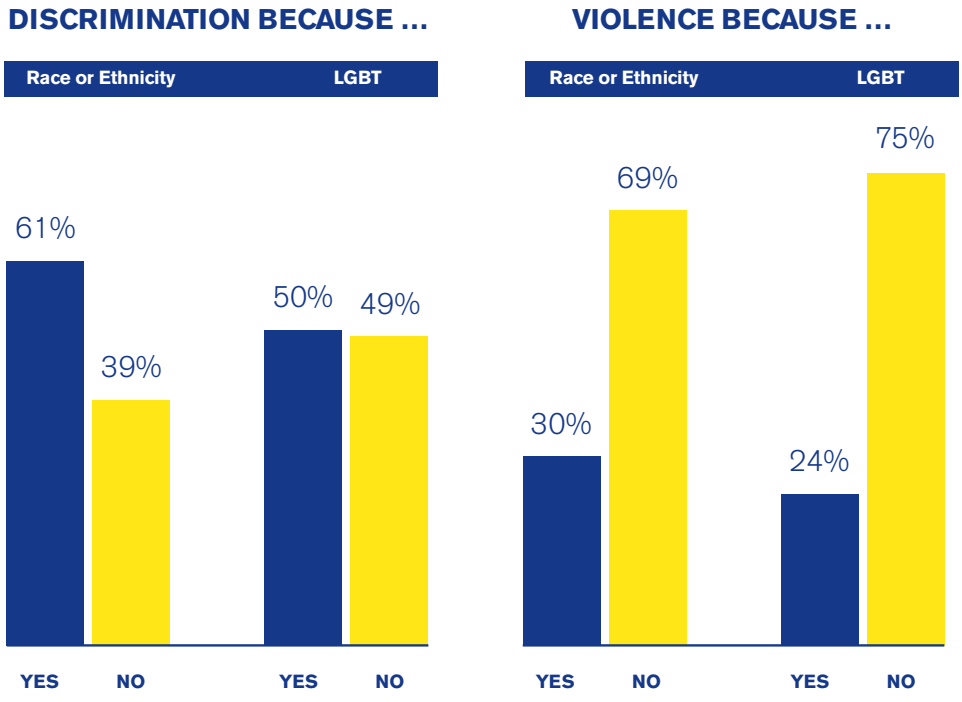
"My friend and I were attacked once, and my friend ended up in the hospital. When the D.A. started looking into our case, he immediately made the conclusion, 'How could they attack you? You're not drag queens or anything. You're not flamboyant.' Right away, he was not interested in the case, so we ended up just dropping it."

Filipino-American gay man
Cashier
42 years old
Bronx, New York

"I was at the batting cage, and I was called a name, and people said, 'What are you doing here?' and 'Why do you look like a man?' All these things started being thrown at me, and I grabbed my bags and left because I was scared of what was going to happen next."

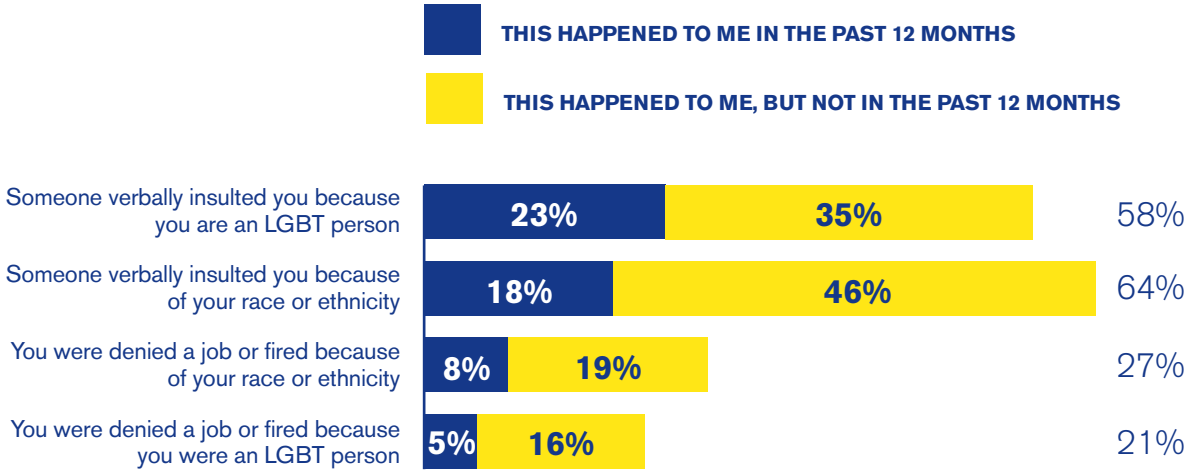
Mexican-American lesbian
Case manager
35 years old
Oak Park, Ill.

Experiences with violence and discrimination



Experiences with violence and discrimination

Please tell us whether any of the following have happened to you, and if so, when they took place:



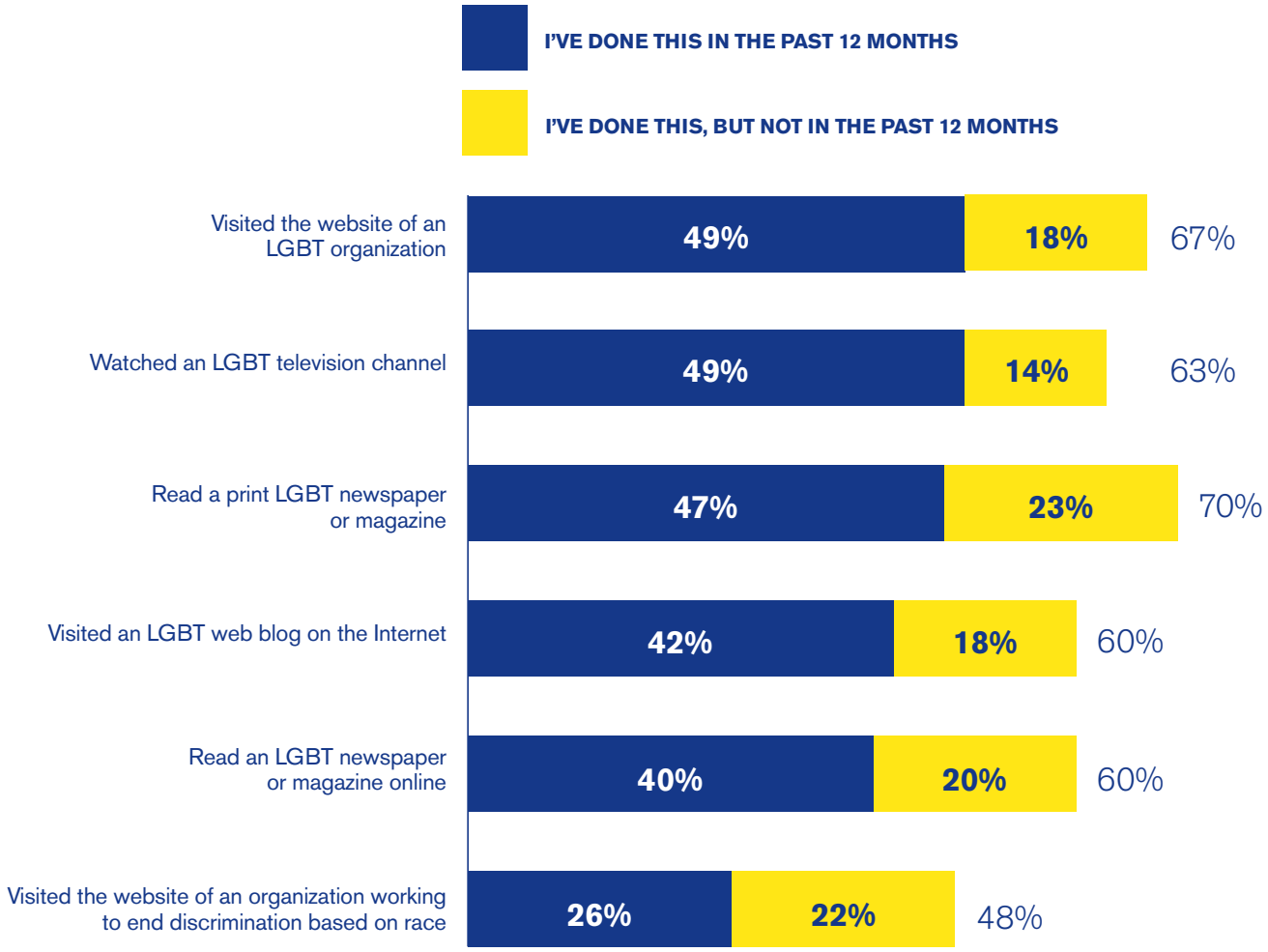
MEDIA CONSUMPTION AND PARTICIPATION IN HUMAN RIGHTS ORGANIZATIONS

LGBT people are serious consumers, but discussion group participants noted there was not enough information about LGBT people of color or accurate representations of themselves in the media. They wanted to see people who looked like them and shared their experiences. Most survey participants have read a print LGBT newspaper or magazine (70 percent) or read one online (60 percent). Most have also visited the website of an LGBT organization (67 percent), watched an LGBT television channel (63 percent) or visited an LGBT blog (60 percent). Younger LGBT people of color and Asian Pacific Islanders in particular are frequent Internet users.

While men read online and print publications more than women, women are more likely to attend a pride festival and volunteer. Activities such as going to an LGBT bar or nightclub or attending a pride parade are more popular than donating or volunteering. While majorities of LGBT people of color have gone to an LGBT club (74 percent) or attended a pride festival (59 percent), fewer have volunteered (38 percent) or donated to a local/state or national LGBT organization (39 percent each). Just over half (51 percent) have donated to an organization working to end racial discrimination, and one-third (33 percent) have volunteered for such an organization. Asian Pacific Islanders are less likely than other groups to participate in LGBT activities, but they are more likely to donate to LGBT groups and causes.

MEDIA CONSUMPTION

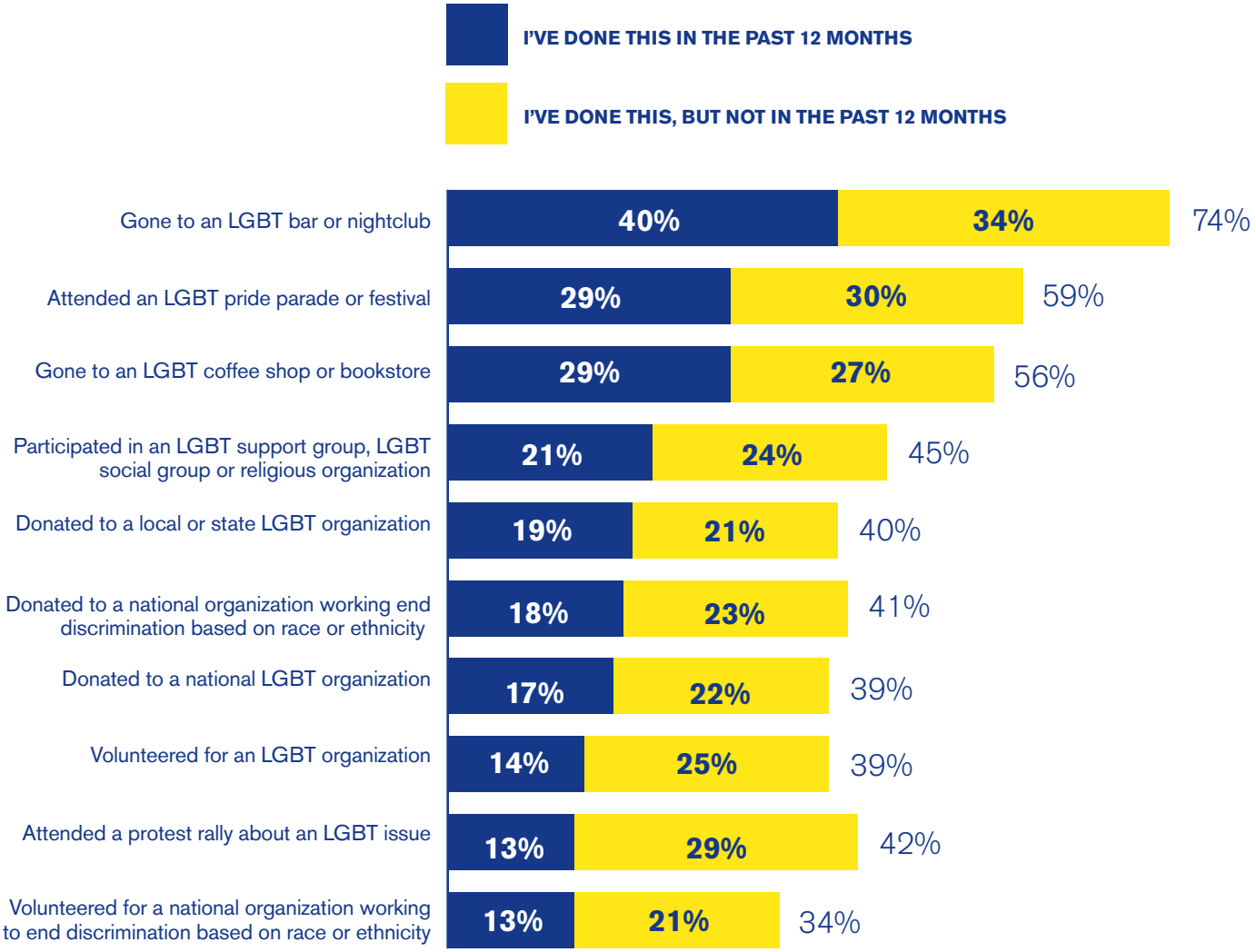
Please tell us if you've done each of the activities listed below.



* Asked of half of survey participants

PARTICIPATION IN THE HUMAN RIGHTS COMMUNITY

Please tell us whether you've done each of the activities below.



LEARNING THROUGH DIALOGUE

This report is successful if it sparks conversations about race, sexual orientation and gender – issues that often reveal the shortcomings of the human rights movement in dealing with its own diversity and inclusiveness. But in a culture defined by difference and individuality, our strength depends on our common humanity. We may come from different backgrounds, but we share a common future.

Continue this national dialogue with us at *www.hrc.org/equalityforward.*

APPENDIX A

A MESSAGE FOR P

As part of the *Equality Forward* initiative, the Human Rights Campaign Foundation fielded a shorter version of our scientific survey in the fall and winter of 2007 with partners in 100 local and national organizations in more than 25 cities. One question we asked was:

We're electing a new president in 2008. If you could tell him or her one thing about what it's like to be you, what would you say?

More than 5,000 LGBT people of color told us their answer. Here are some of their responses:

"We are normal humans, living normal lives. We are ALL created equal."

Mixed-race gay man
26 years old
Orlando, Fla.

"As a Christian, multi-racial lesbian with diabetes in America, it's a daily struggle!"

45 years old
Cleveland Heights, Ohio

"It's a struggle every day to be recognized as a second parent of a daughter who I've raised since she was 3 years old and who had to watch her two mommies get married in Canada instead of our home state of Pennsylvania."

African-American
27 years old
Philadelphia, Penn.

"Um … black, female, bisexual, lower middle class. Add that up."

20 years old
San Diego, Calif.

RESIDENT OBAMA

"I don't want to feel like a second-class citizen anymore. I want equality, and my sexuality is a part of me; it does not define me."

Latina lesbian
22 years old
Trenton, Mich.

"Although I pray for the day that I can sponsor my foreign-born domestic partner to come to the U.S., being me is no different from being him. Every day is new opportunity to be an excellent citizen of this country."

Latino gay man
28 years old
Dallas, Texas

"I'm gay, and I love and am loved. I want to be able to marry to acknowledge this to society."

Latina bisexual woman
20 years old
Dana Point, Calif.

"As a Latino gay man, I still live in a world where I seem to be asked to pick one community over another. It's time for America to realize that there is not one type of 'experience.' Everyone has their own history, culture and traditions."

39 years old
Portland, Ore.

"Struggling every day, I live with the battle/journey of being a lesbian Christian woman eager to be accepted in my community and family.

27 years old
Houston, Texas

"I've survived the racism and sexism in the military only to be subjected to the poor standard of services at the Veterans Administration and its medical services."

African-American gay man
49 years old
St. Louis, Mo.

"Every day is a dialogue of whether it is safe or not to come out as lesbian because of fear of discrimination, losing my job and not being treated equally. It hurts to know that because of who I love I cannot have the same rights and safety ensured."

Asian Pacific Islander lesbian
23 years old
Davie, Fla.

"I'm a 19-year-old bisexual Latino, and I deserve to be protected under the law and to have equal rights as any other American."

Los Angeles, Calif.

"I am HIV-positive and ready for a cure."

African-American gay man
42 years old
Brooklyn, N.Y.

"Give me the SAME rights, NOT similar, but the SAME legal rights that every straight American has in our country."

Asian Pacific Islander gay man
28 years old
Seattle, Wash.

"Native American people struggle with identity and cultural retention, and two-spirit people meet that challenge even more so. The right to have equality should be guaranteed and expected rather than to be an endless road filled with roadblocks."

American-Indian gay man
38 years old
San Francisco, Calif.

"I am a law-abiding citizen of the United States of America, and deserve the same rights and protections as any of my straight neighbors."

Asian Pacific Islander lesbian
24 years old
San Francisco, Calif.

"Gays are people, too."

Latina bisexual woman
21 years old
Terre Haute, Ind.

"My sexuality should not determine how I move about the world. However, despite the fact that I am mature and intelligent enough to know this, I live in a country that does not allow me to move on from the struggle over this small, insignificant fact."

Latina bisexual woman
21 years old
New Orleans, La.

"I pay taxes. I should have the same rights as everyone else."

Latino gay man
37 years old
Salt Lake City, Utah

"GLBT people are not second-class citizens and deserve equal rights."

Asian Pacific Islander transgender woman
27 years old
Jamaica Plain, Mass.

"Picture a bisexual, Irish, Mexican woman with a brain and attitude."

47 years old
Phoenix, Ariz

A MESSAGE TO PRESIDENT OBAMA

"Many do not have the luxury to choose one issue over another, as we are affected by many interlocking and interdependent forms of oppression."

African-American gay man
32 years old
Knoxville, Tenn.

"It's difficult to be open about who I am without worrying about getting fired."

Mixed-race lesbian
21 years old
Fairfax, Va.

"If you were one of the few heterosexuals in a homosexual world, wouldn't you ask for your equal rights?"

Asian Pacific Islander gay man
37 years old
Lakewood, Ohio

"It's rough living

"It's rough being a double

Asian Pacific Islander gay man
28 years old
Alexandria, Va.

"Nothing is worse than having to live a lie just to keep yourself safe from people that would hurt you because of who you are."

African-American bisexual woman
18 years old
Nashville, Tenn

"I live, love and pay taxes, and my civil rights and liberties are as important as anyone's."

American-Indian heterosexual transgender woman
65 years old
Jamestown, Ohio

"You have no idea how it is to be a minority among minorities."

American-Indian bisexual transgender woman
Camdenton, Mo.

"As a member of the human race and a creation of God, I stand as tall as any other member of society."

African-American gay man
63 years old
Decatur, Ga.

in a heterocentric world."

Latino gay man
60 years old
Culver City, Calif.

minority."

"How would you like it if you knew that you always had to hide a part of you because you knew that in one way or another someone was going to use it against you?"

Latina lesbian
23 years old
New Haven, CT

"Imagine living in a house with your family. When dinner is served, they only call you down after they have eaten everything, and you are forced to eat the scraps. This is my life as a black, gay American man.

32 years old
Smyrna, Ga.

ABOUT THE RESEARCH

Lake Research Partners conducted six in-person and three online focus groups of lesbian, gay and bisexual people of color from July to August 2007. A total of 79 people participated in the groups, which were assembled by race, ethnicity and gender.

IN-PERSON GROUPS:

African-American men – Chicago
African-American women – New York City
Asian Pacific Islander men – New York City
Asian Pacific Islander women – Los Angeles
Latinos – Los Angeles
Latinas – Chicago

ONLINE GROUPS:

African-American men – South
African-American women – South
Latinos – Southwest

Participants in Chicago, Los Angeles and New York City were recruited through local LGBT organizations, via flyers left in bars, cafés and shops frequented by LGBT patrons, and by using focus group facility databases. Online focus groups were conducted with YouGov/Polimetrix in the South and Southwest regions of the country. These groups, where online participants used microphones to talk around a virtual conference table, allowed us to hear from people outside major urban centers. They came from cities such as Tucson, Ariz., and Morrisville, N.C.

Group discussion informed the creation of a national online scientific survey of 727 LGBT people of color conducted by Lake Research with Knowledge Networks Inc. from June 24 to July 2, 2008. Knowledge Networks hosts the only probability-based online panel recruited through random-digit-dial telephone sampling of the full U.S. population. In addition, Knowledge Networks provides computers and Internet access to households without them. A total of 169 survey participants came from the Knowledge Networks panel; another 558 people were recruited through Survey Sampling International, which assembles its online panel via online advertising as well as from purchased membership and subscriber lists from companies and whose clientele indicate an interest in specific issues – in this case, LGBT issues. Those respondents were reached with a more traditional online research methodology, including opt-in respondents and respondents targeted based on other predictive measures such as magazine purchases.

The Knowledge Networks panel provided targets for age, gender, race and other demographics for the Survey Sampling International panel. The survey reached 228 African-Americans, 80 Asian Pacific Islanders, 261 Latinos/as, 90 people of mixed race and 68 belonging to another ethnic group. Differences between the Knowledge Networks and Survey Sampling International samples were minor. The Knowledge Networks sample was more female, included fewer bisexual or “other” sexual orientations, was slightly older, more educated, and included fewer parents. Conversely, Survey Sampling International sample included more men, more Latinos/as, more bisexual people, was younger, and included more parents. Both samples shared a similar income makeup.

While this research offers insight into issues of race and sexual orientation faced by many LGBT people, a national study dedicated to the lives of transgender people of color is needed to begin to examine prejudice at the crossroads of race, sexuality, gender identity and gender expression. Absent from this research are discussion groups of transgender people of color, and while 3 percent of the survey’s participants identified as transgender, the number is too few to do a methodical analysis of their individual concerns and experiences.

Special recognition is extended to the following local and national partners whose collaborative spirit makes it possible for the Equality Forward initiative to engage thousands of diverse members of the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender community.

We are so grateful.

THANK YOU

AidAtlanta/Evolution Project, Atlanta, Ga.
AIDS Foundation Houston, Houston, Texas
ALLGO, Austin, Texas
American Red Cross, National
Asian Pacific Islander Queer Sisters, Washington, D.C.
Asian Queers United for Action, Washington, D.C.
Austin Relay Pride, Austin, Texas
Bienestar, Los Angeles, Calif.
Bilerico.com, Washington, D.C.
Black National Pageantry System, Washington, D.C.
BlackGayChat.com, National
Brother2Brother Book Club, Houston, Texas
Center for LGBT Life at Duke University, Durham, N.C.
Chances Bar & Night Club, Houston, Texas
Chicago Gender Society, Chicago, Ill.
Cincinnati Men's Chorus, Cincinnati, Ohio
Congressional LGBT Caucus, Washington, D.C.
Crossport, Cincinnati, Cincinnati, Ohio
Denver American Indian Commission, Denver, Colo.
Denver Anti-Discrimination Office, Denver, Colo.
EQUAL (Harrah's Entertainment's LGBTA Affinity Group), Las Vegas, Nev.
Equality Cincinnati, Cincinnati, Ohio
Ernst & Young LLP, New York, N.Y.
East Carolina University "Prism" Student Group, Greenville, N.C.
GALLO, Houston, Texas
Gay and Lesbian Advocates and Defenders, Boston, Mass.
Gay and Lesbian Community Center, New York, N.Y.
Gay Asian Pacific Islander Men of New York, New York, N.Y.
Gender Identity Center, Denver, Colo.
Gill Foundation, Denver, Colo.
GLSEN Cincinnati, Cincinnati, Ohio
Hollywood Vietnamese Restaurant, Houston, Texas
Immigration Equality, New York, N.Y.
International Federation of Black Prides, Washington, D.C.
KhushDC, Washington, D.C.
Latino LGBT History Project, Washington, D.C.
Legacy of Success, Dallas, Texas
Macy's, National
Masala, Boston, Mass.
Men Uniting Men, Orlando, Fla.
Metropolitan Community Churches, National
Muse Cincinnati Women's Choir, Cincinnati, Ohio
National Asian Pacific American Women's Forum – D.C., Washington, D.C.
National Aeronautics and Space Administration, Washington, D.C.
National Black Justice Coalition, Washington, D.C.
North Carolina State University "AEGIS" Student Group, Raleigh, N.C.
North Carolina State University LGBT Advisory Committee, Raleigh, N.C.
Northwest Gender Alliance, Portland, Ore.
Nubian Phi Knights, Atlanta, Ga.
Phish Phest, Orlando, Fla.
Planet Out, Gay.com, National
Philadelphia Black Gay Pride, Philadelphia, Pa.
Portland Latino Pride, Portland, Ore.
Project Angel Food, Los Angeles, Calif.
Rainbow Cincinnati, Cincinnati, Ohio
Rainbow Pages – Houston, Houston, Texas
Resurrection Metropolitan Community Church, Houston, Texas
Stop AIDS, Cincinnati, Ohio
The Men's Gathering, Houston, Texas
Thomson Legal Employee Resource Group, Minnesota and New Jersey
TransCarolina, Albemarle, N.C.
Trans Central Station, Orlando, Fla.
Transsexual Support Group, Cincinnati, Ohio
Triad Gender Association, Greensboro, N.C.
Triangle Transgender Support Group, Raleigh, N.C.
Truth and Destiny Covenant Ministries, Cincinnati, Ohio
Two Spirit Society of Denver, Denver, Colo.
Unity Fellowship Church Movement, National
University of North Carolina QPAC, Chapel Hill, N.C.
Us Helping Us, Washington, D.C.
Valiente, Dallas, Texas
Washington, DC Black Pride, Washington, D.C.
Washington, D.C., Latino Pride, Washington, D.C.
Walk4mewednesdays.com, National
WhatsTEA.com, National
What's Yo Flava, St. Louis, Mo.
Whitman-Walker, Lesbian Services Program, Washington, D.C.
Windy City Black LGBT Pride, Chicago, Ill.
Winter Explosion, Washington, D.C.
Women in the Life, Washington, D.C.
Women Out Front, Cincinnati, Ohio
Women's Empowerment Network, Las Vegas, Nev.
Zuna Institute, Sacramento, Calif.

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