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**Growing up
LGBT in America**
HRC Youth Survey Report
Key Findings



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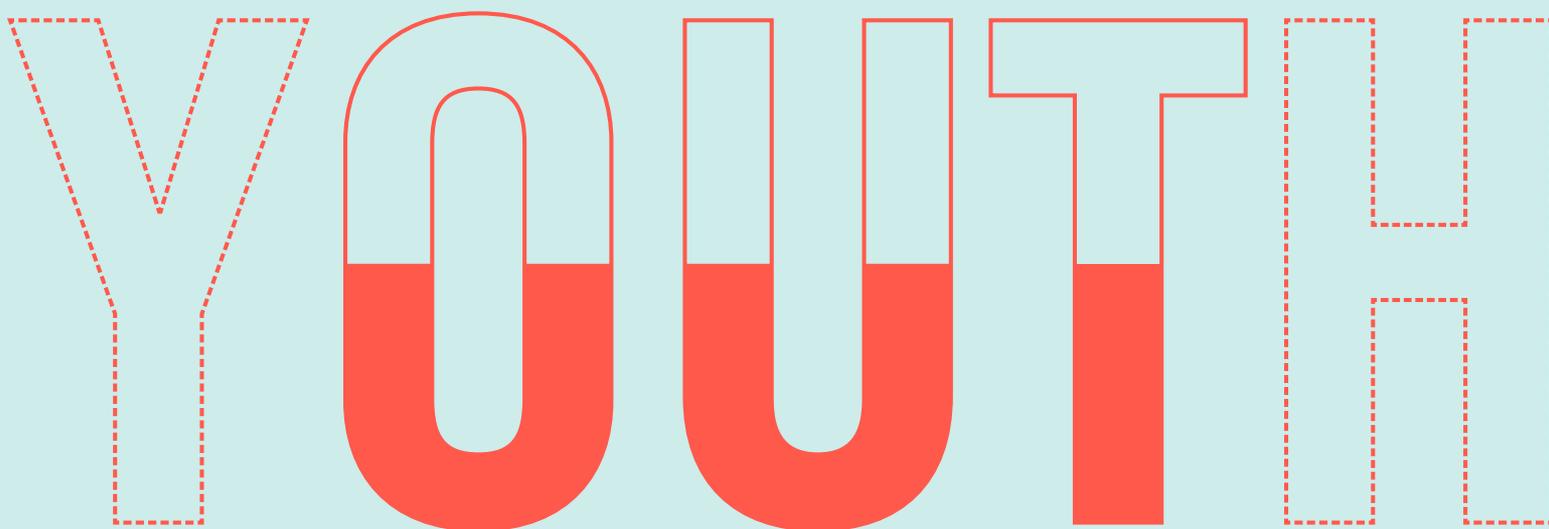
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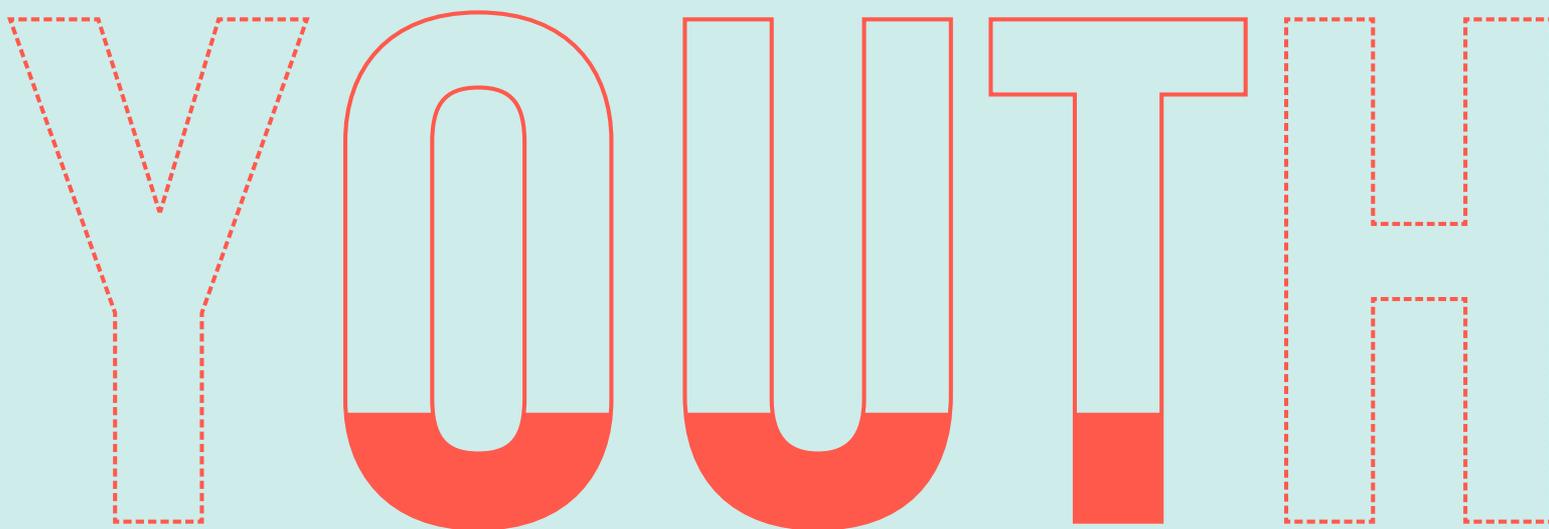
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More than half (**56%**) of LGBT youth say they are out to their immediate family; a quarter (**25%**) are out to their extended family.



Out to immediate family



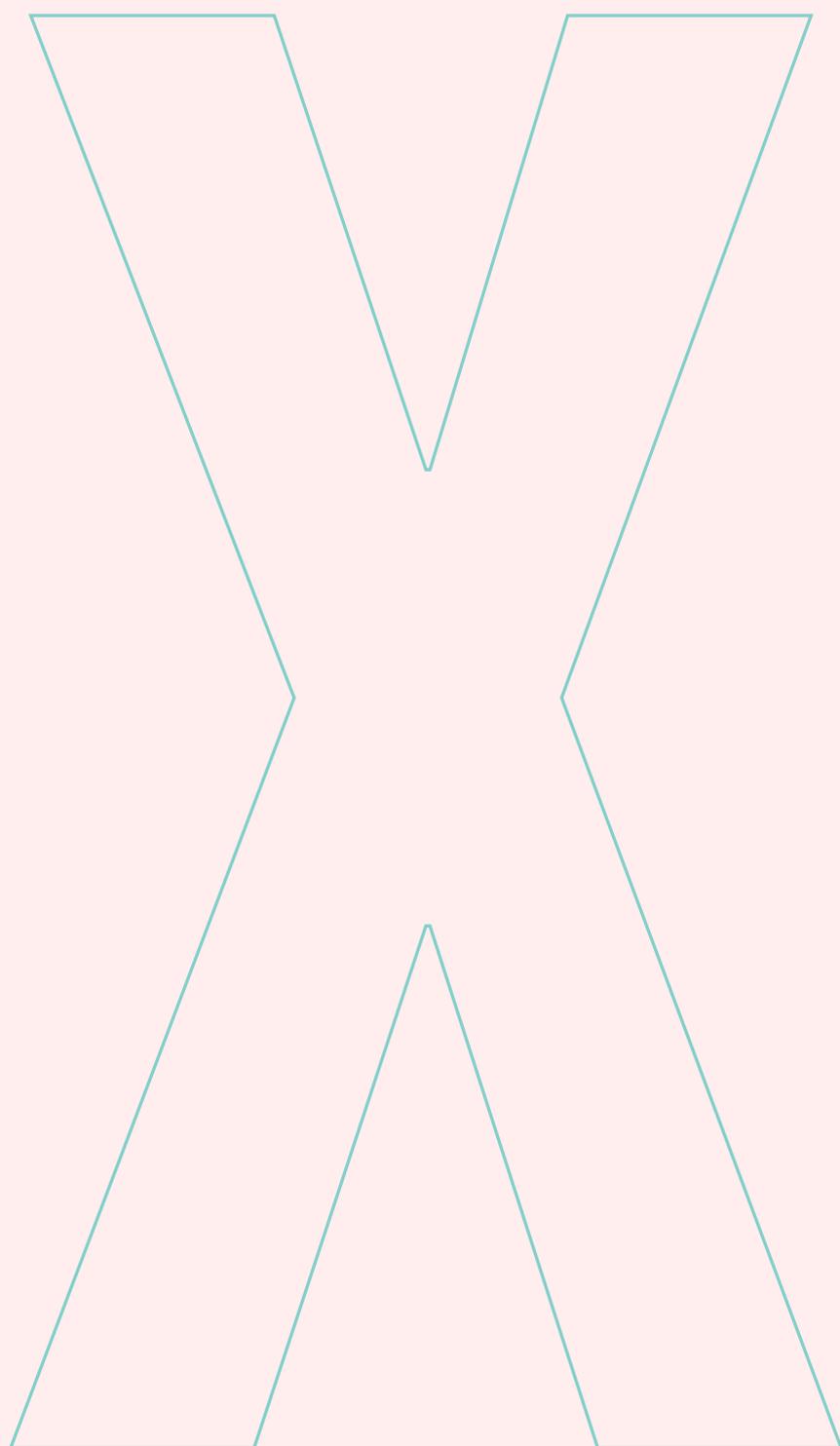
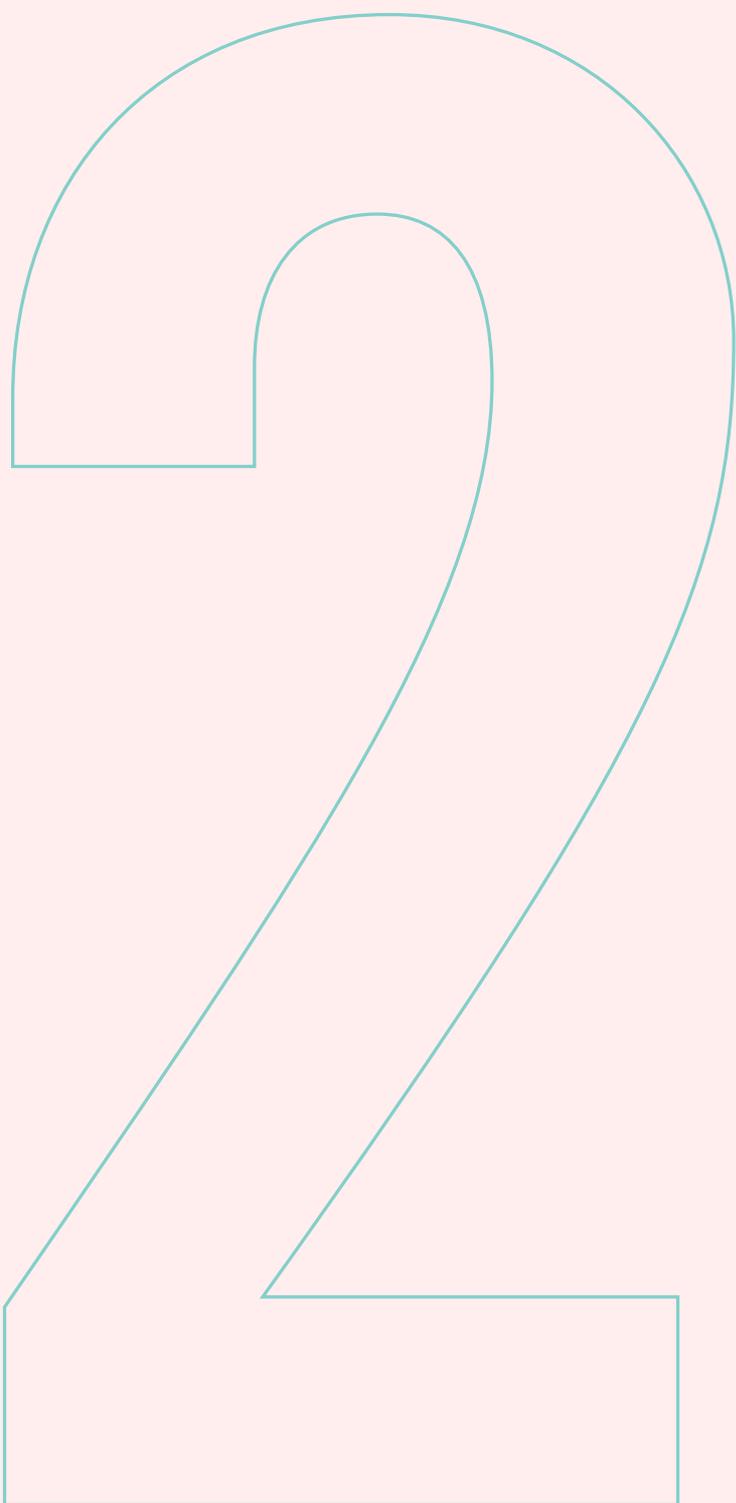
Out to extended family

AT

“It’s nice that my school is very open, I have a lot of friends who are okay and are helpful with my being bisexual.”

LOOKING FOR

LGBT youth are more than two times as likely as non-LGBT youth to say they have been verbally harassed and called names at school. Among LGBT youth, half (**51%**) have been verbally harassed at school, compared to **25%** among non-LGBT students.



IN
THE

COMMUNITY

“I live in such a narrow-minded community—it’s really hard on me. I deal with so much ignorance on a daily basis.”

INTRO DUCTION TION

THE DECK IS STACKED

The deck is stacked against young people growing up lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender in America. Official government discrimination or indifference along with social ostracism leaves many teens disaffected and disconnected in their own homes and neighborhoods. With an increase in public awareness about anti-LGBT bullying and harassment and the strikingly high number of LGBT youth who are homeless, in foster care, or living in high-risk situations, it is critical that we get a better understanding of the experiences, needs, and concerns of LGBT youth.

This groundbreaking research among more than 10,000 LGBT-identified youth ages 13-17 provides a stark picture of the difficulties they face. The impact on their well-being is profound, however these youth are quite resilient. They find safe havens among their peers, online and in their schools. They remain optimistic and believe things will get

better. Nevertheless, the findings of *Growing Up LGBT in America* are a call to action for all adults who want to ensure that young people can thrive.

The survey measured key factors that impact the daily lives of LGBT youth, including:

- A sense of being accepted by family, peers, and the larger community – in sports leagues, clubs, places of worship, school, work, online, and more
- Access to LGBT affirmative support and services
- Negative experiences such as verbal harassment, cyber-bullying, exclusion from activities
- Connection to a welcoming religious or spiritual community
- Level of optimism about the future and the ability to live a happy life as an “out” LGBT person

With more than 10,000 survey respondents, this is the largest known sample of LGBT youth from every region of the country, from urban, suburban and rural communities, and from a wide variety of social, cultural, ethnic, and racial backgrounds.

As the first in a series of reports analyzing the landscape for LGBT youth, the goal of this document is to summarize the major findings from a general analysis of all survey responses. Over the next several months, the Human Rights Campaign will be engaging in additional analysis that will provide a better understanding of the unique experiences of specific groups of youth, for example those living in conservative states, transgender youth, those of different races, religious traditions, and so on.

HRC is thankful to The Trevor Project for its partnership in promoting the survey, along with dozens of local and state LGBT youth-serving organizations.

SUMMARY

The responses to this survey reveal that many LGBT youth are profoundly disconnected from their communities, in sometimes stark ways. At the same time, LGBT youth often report resilience in facing today's challenges and a sense of optimism about tomorrow's possibilities.

Importantly, LGBT youth believe to a greater extent than their peers that they must leave their communities to make their hopes and dreams for the future come true.

When given an opportunity to describe their most important problem or the one thing in their lives they would like to change, LGBT youth and their peers have different experiences and priorities. LGBT youth describe the challenges they face as being directly related to their identity as LGBT.

For those asked to describe one thing in their lives they would like to change right now:

LGBT youth identified

1 Understanding/tolerance/hate (18%)

2 My parent/family situation (15%)

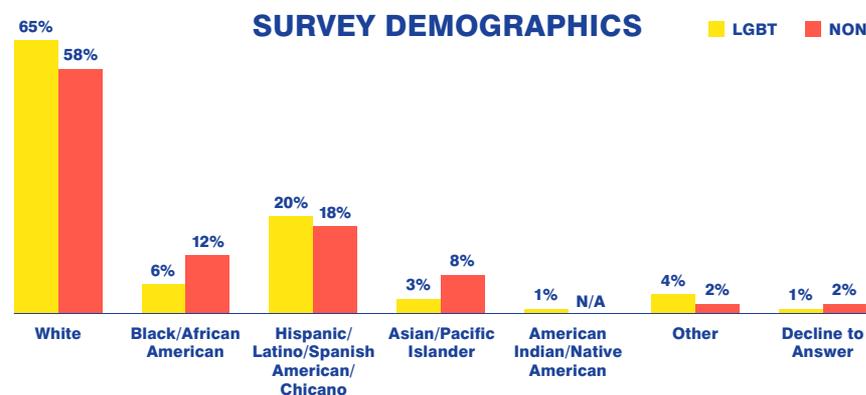
3 Where I live/who I live with (9%)

Non-LGBT youth identified

1 Money/debt/finances (20%)

2 Appearance/weight (9%)

3 Improving mental health (7%)



Among those asked to describe the most important problem facing their lives right now:

LGBT youth identified

1 Non-accepting families (26%)

2 School/bullying problems (21%)

3 Fear of being out or open (18%)

Non-LGBT youth identified

1 Classes/exams/grades (25%)

2 College/career (14%)

3 Financial pressures related to college or job (11%)

HRC believes LGBT youth will lead lives that are more safe, healthy, and fulfilling when institutional discrimination ends and the country fully embraces young people regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity.

HRC is dedicated to making their lives better, through federal and state-level policy work and institutional change in the workplace, healthcare settings, schools, and beyond. HRC also works to open hearts and minds to greater acceptance and appreciation of the LGBT community, and to infuse the broader culture with a sense of LGBT pride and dignity that can reach even the most isolated young people.

WHAT'S NEXT?

1

HRC intends to conduct further research with this expansive set of data and release future in-depth reports. Topics will likely include: “Youth of Color,” “Transgender Youth,” “Home & Family,” “Community & Culture,” “School & Peers,” and “Religion & Faith,” among others.

2

These key findings can help all youth-serving organizations better understand the concerns, fears, and barriers facing LGBT youth and help them establish inclusive policies and practices.

3

These data can inform the programmatic work of LGBT advocacy and direct service organizations, along with funders and supporters, enhancing our movement’s work on legislation and policy, administrative and regulatory changes at the local, state, and federal level.

4

Parents, family and friends can use these data to increase their own level of support and affirmation of the young LGBT people in their lives.

5

The experiences and hopes reported by LGBT youth in this poll inspire HRC to consider new ways to improve the lives of LGBT youth immediately and in the future. HRC will engage collaboratively with local and national organizations to raise the awareness of the concerns and problems identified here and to find solutions.

PERSONAL WELL-BEING

FINDINGS

Compared with their non-LGBT peers, LGBT youth in this survey report much lower levels of happiness, a higher incidence of alcohol and drug use, and less connection to adult support during personal problems. They also are much more likely than their non-LGBT peers to say they can be more honest about themselves online than in real life. When asked to describe their most important problem or one thing they would like to change, LGBT youth describe the challenges they face as being directly related to their identity as LGBT.



Non-LGBT youth are nearly twice as likely as LGBT youth to say they are happy.

Among non-LGBT youth, **67%** report being happy while only **37%** of LGBT youth say they are happy.



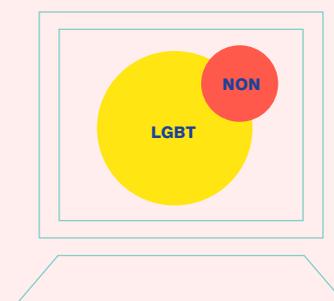
LGBT youth are more likely than non-LGBT youth to report that they do not have an adult they can talk to about personal problems.

Among LGBT youth, about a third (**29%**) disagreed with the statement “There is at least one adult I can talk to about my personal problems” while only **17%** of the non-LGBT youth disagreed with it.



LGBT youth are more than twice as likely as non-LGBT youth to experiment with alcohol and drugs.

Over half (**52%**) of LGBT youth say they have used alcohol and drugs while only **22%** of non-LGBT youth say they have.



Roughly three-quarters (**73%**) of LGBT youth say they are more honest about themselves online than in the real world, compared to **43%** among non-LGBT youth.

“This is me, this is how I was born and I’m happy with it.”



Three-quarters (**77%**) of LGBT youth say they know things will get better. Nearly a quarter (**23%**) of LGBT youth disagree with that statement compared with only **8%** of their peers.



Over one-half of LGBT youth (**54%**) say they have been verbally harassed and called names involving anti-gay slurs such as “gay” and “fag.”

BIGGEST PROBLEMS

What is the most difficult problem facing you in your life these days?

Among those asked to describe the most important problem facing their lives right now:

LGBT youth identified

1 Non-accepting families (26%)

2 School/bullying problems (21%)

3 Fear of being out or open (18%)

Non-LGBT youth identified

1 Classes/exams/grades (25%)

2 College/career (14%)

3 Financial pressures related to college or job (11%)

For those asked to describe one thing in their lives they would like to change right now:

LGBT youth identified

1 Understanding/tolerance/hate (18%)

2 My parent/family situation (15%)

3 Where I live/who I live with (9%)

Non-LGBT youth identified

1 Money/debt/finances (20%)

2 Appearance/weight (9%)

3 Improving mental health (7%)

LGBT Youth

- My parents/family not accepting 26%**
- Trouble at school/Bullying 21%**
- Afraid to be out/open 18%**
- Eating disorders/Self-harm/Depression/Suicide 14%**
- General being LGBT 12%**
- Trouble with classes 9%**
- Lonely 7%**
- Religion leading to lack of acceptance 6%**
- Problems in romantic relationship 6%**
- Concerns about college/money for college 6%**
- Confused about sexuality 5%**
- Finding a partner/Accepting partner 5%**
- Drama 3%**
- Nobody to date 2%**
- Other 4%**
- Don't know/Refused 1%**

Non-LGBT Youth

- Trouble with classes/Exams/Grades 22%**
- College and career decisions 17%**
- Financial problems/Paying for college/Getting a job 14%**
- Family stress/Pressure 10%**
- Life balance 8%**
- General stress 5%**
- Want a boyfriend/Girlfriend/Boy/Girl problems 5%**
- Family illness/death 3%**
- Problems with lack of friends/Social life 3%**
- Bipolar/Depression/Eating disorders/Anxiety 3%**
- Injuries 2%**
- I don't have any difficult problems 2%**
- Problems in romantic relationships 1%**
- Drugs/Drinking 1%**
- Other 15%**
- Don't know/Refused 1%**

“I HAVE BEEN GRACIOUSLY RECEIVED BY MY PEERS, BUT THE BIGGEST ISSUE I FACE IS MY

“I CAN’T COME OUT TO ANYONE I KNOW AT CHURCH BECAUSE THEY WILL IMMEDIATELY SEE ME AS A BAD PERSON.”

PARENTS

“IT’S VERY EASY TO LOOK AT ME AND TELL I’M GAY AND IT MAKES ME FEEL AFRAID TO WALK AROUND KNOWING THERE ARE PEOPLE HERE IN MY HOMETOWN THAT HATE ME, AND PEOPLE LIKE ME ENOUGH TO ATTACK ME.”

**“I LIVE IN SUCH A
NARROW-
MINDED
COMMUNITY
IT’S REALLY HARD ON ME. I DEAL WITH
SO MUCH IGNORANCE ON A DAILY BASIS.”**

ENTS,

**I HAVE BEEN CALLED SICK
AND PERVERTED BY THEM.”**

**“I WISH I COULD MEET
MORE GAY PEOPLE TO
TALK TO AND GET TO
KNOW.”**

COMMUNITY

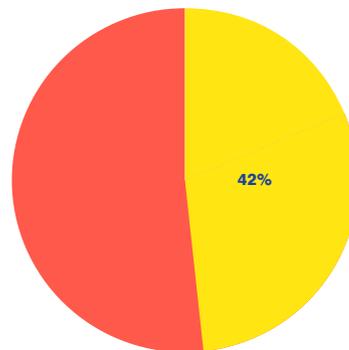
COMPARED WITH THEIR PEERS

Compared with their peers, LGBT youth in this survey report a greater sense of isolation or separation from their community in general, and among specific community activities. Fewer LGBT youth have an adult in their community to talk with if they feel worried or sad, compared with their peers. When thinking of their future, **LGBT youth believe to a greater extent than their peers that they must leave their community to make their hopes and dreams come true.**

Nearly half of LGBT youth (**47%**) say they do not “fit in” in their community

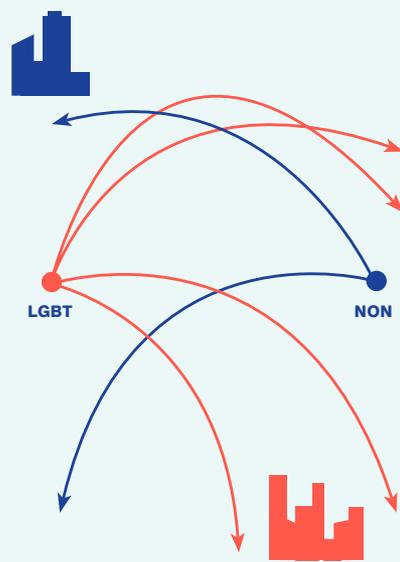


while only **16%** of non-LGBT youth feel that way.

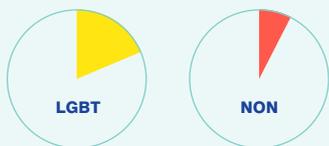


4 in 10 LGBT youth (42%) say the community in which they live is not accepting of LGBT people.

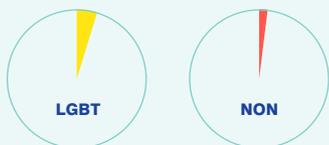
In a series of questions of whether their future would likely include happiness, a good job, a long-term partnership or marriage, children, and an active role in their communities, **LGBT youth often described a high degree of optimism, frequently at similar levels as their peers.** However, this optimism declined markedly compared to their peers when asked if they could achieve those dreams in the communities where they currently live. The most vivid example is that **83%** of LGBT youth believe they will be happy eventually, but only **49%** believe they can be happy if they stay in the same city or town. There is a drop among non-LGBT youth as well, but not nearly to the same scale.



LGBT youth are twice as likely as their peers to say they will need to move to another town or part of the country to feel accepted. Among LGBT youth, **63%** say they will need to move, while **31%** of their peers report the same.



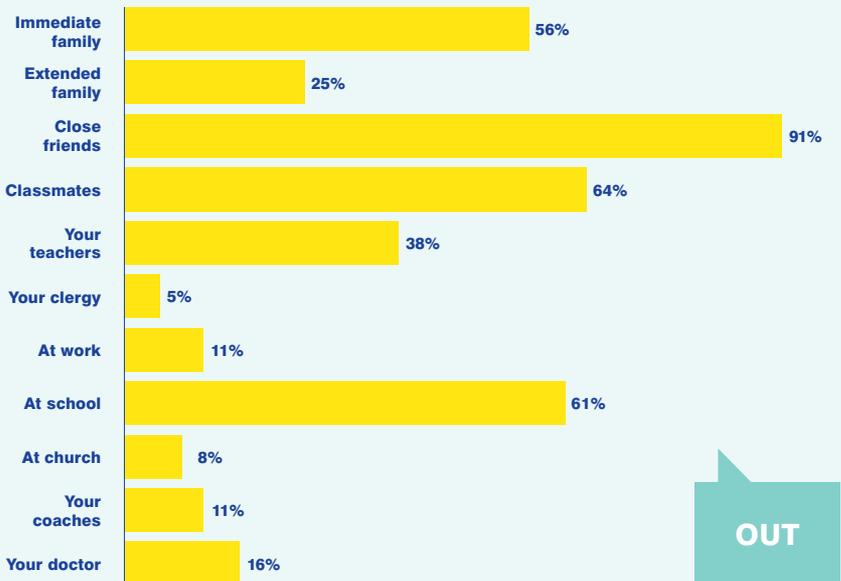
Verbal Harassment



Physical Assault

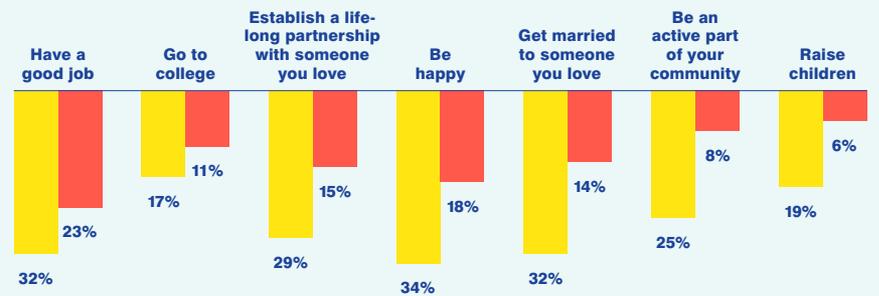
LGBT youth are about twice as likely as their peers to have been verbally harassed and called names outside of school (in the neighborhood or mall, etc.) as well as to have been physically assaulted outside of school.

Among LGBT youth, **18%** report verbal harassment while **10%** of non-LGBT youth report the same; **5%** of LGBT youth report physical assault compared with **3%** of their peers.



DECLINE IN OPTIMISM

(Percentage decline in likelihood of life achievements if youth stay in same city/town)



Likelihood of Life Achievements

	Overall		If Stay in Same City or Town	
	Non-LGBT	LGBT	Non-LGBT	LGBT
Total likely				
Have a good job	95	92	72	60
Go to college	93	91	82	74
Establish a life-long partnership with someone you love	86	84	71	55
Be happy	93	83	75	49
Get married to someone you love	89	77	75	45
Be an active part of your community	79	70	71	45
Raise children	84	68	78	49



Attend religious services



Participate in a religious youth group

LGBT youth are far less likely than non-LGBT youth to attend religious services in a house of worship.

Among LGBT youth, **28%** report attending church or religious services very often or sometimes while **58%** of non-LGBT youth say the same. LGBT youth are less than half as likely as their peers to participate in a church/religious youth group, with **22%** of LGBT youth saying they participate very often or sometimes while **47%** of their peers say the same.



GROUP ACTIVITY

Only **18%** of LGBT youth say they participate very often or sometimes in an LGBT group outside of school. However, **52%** of LGBT youth say they participate very often or sometimes in an online community that addresses issues facing LGBT youth.

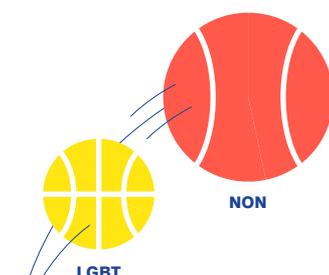


ONLINE GROUP ACTIVITY

“In school the people I am friends with are completely OK with my sexuality, at church I haven’t brought it up.”

Nearly six in ten LGBT youth (**57%**) say that churches or places of worship in their community are not accepting of LGBT people; a third (**35%**) say their own church or place of worship is not accepting.

More than 4 in 10 LGBT youth (**45%**) report that their state government is not accepting of LGBT people; about a third (**34%**) say their local government is not accepting. Not surprisingly, many youth say they are not sure.



Less than a third (**30%**) of LGBT youth say they play sports very often or sometimes for their school or community league/club, while about half (**49%**) of non-LGBT youth say they do.

Only **21%** of LGBT youth say there is a place in their community that helps LGBT people; the same (**21%**) say there is a non-official place in their community where LGBT youth can go and be accepted.

When asked in an open-ended question what it is like to be LGBT in their communities, 60% of the LGBT youth described negative experiences and 42% described positive aspects.

Top-four negative experiences

- 1 Intolerance in the community**
27%
- 2 Hard not to be closeted**
20%
- 3 Feeling out of place or lonely**
18%
- 4 Verbally harassed or abused**
15%

Most frequently cited positive aspects

- 1 Others are very accepting**
20%
- 2 It is good to be open / myself**
13%

“The people in my community and my family aren’t really accepting of the LGBT community and it’s hard for me to lie about who I am.”

“I can’t come out to anyone I know at church because they will immediately see me as a bad person.”



At the same time, nearly half (49%) of LGBT youth believe things are getting much better or somewhat better in their communities. Another 41% say things are about the same, while 9% of LGBT youth report that things are getting much or somewhat worse in their communities.

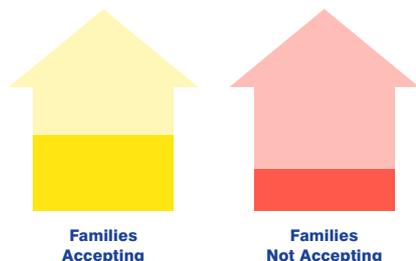
HOME & FAMILY

A STRONG BASE OF SUPPORT AT HOME IS CRITICALLY IMPORTANT

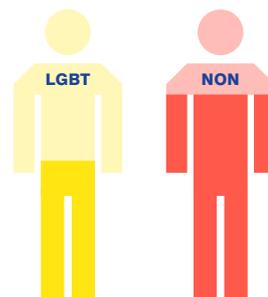
While a slight majority of survey respondents feel accepted by their family, far too many young people lack this critical support. We know that a strong base of support at home is essential for the long term positive outcomes for LGBT youth.



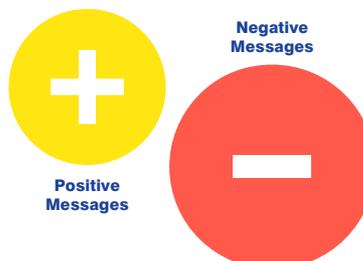
More than half (**56%**) of LGBT youth say they are out to their immediate family; a quarter (**25%**) are out to their extended family.



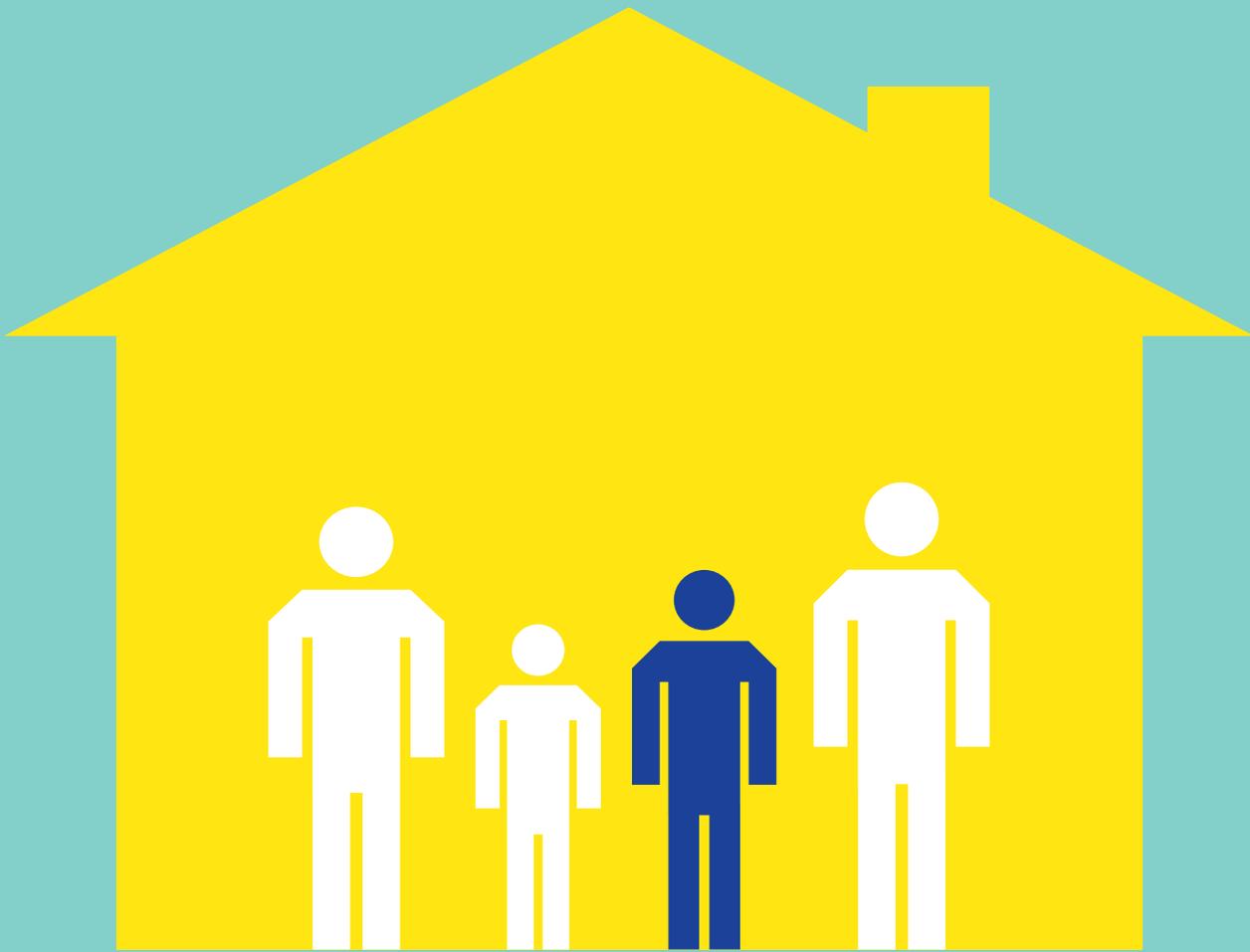
6 in 10 LGBT youth say their family is accepting of LGBT people, while a third (**33%**) say their family is not.



About half (**49%**) of LGBT youth say they have an adult in their family they could turn to for help if they felt worried or sad. Fully **79%** of non-LGBT youth have an adult in their family they could turn to for help.



Less than a third of LGBT youth (**32%**) chose their family among a list of places where they most often hear positive messages about being LGBT; nearly half (**46%**) chose their family among a list of places where they most often hear negative messages about being LGBT.



“My relationship with my parents has become much more tense ever since I came out.”

SCHOOL & PEERS

LGBT YOUTH ARE MUCH MORE LIKELY THAN THEIR PEERS TO EXPERIENCE VERBAL HARASSMENT, EXCLUSION, AND PHYSICAL ATTACK AT SCHOOL.

At the same time, most say most of their peers do not have a problem with their LGBT identity, nearly all are out to their close friends, and most are out to their classmates. LGBT youth rate schools as one of the most accepting parts of their community outside of peers and **47%** report having a Gay Straight Alliance (**54%** among LGBT high school students). They are as likely as their peers to participate in afterschool activities.

**Part of our survey outreach was conducted through GSAs and this number may be higher as a result.*

2X

LGBT youth are more than two times as likely as non-LGBT youth to say they have been verbally harassed and called names at school. Among LGBT youth, half (**51%**) have been verbally harassed at school, compared to **25%** among non-LGBT students.

2X

LGBT youth are twice as likely as their peers to say they have been physically assaulted, kicked or shoved at school. Among LGBT youth, **17%** report they have been physically attacked often while **10%** of their peers say the same.

2X

LGBT youth are about twice as likely as non-LGBT youth to say they have been excluded by their peers because they are different. Among LGBT youth, **48%** say they have been excluded often while **26%** of their peers say the same.

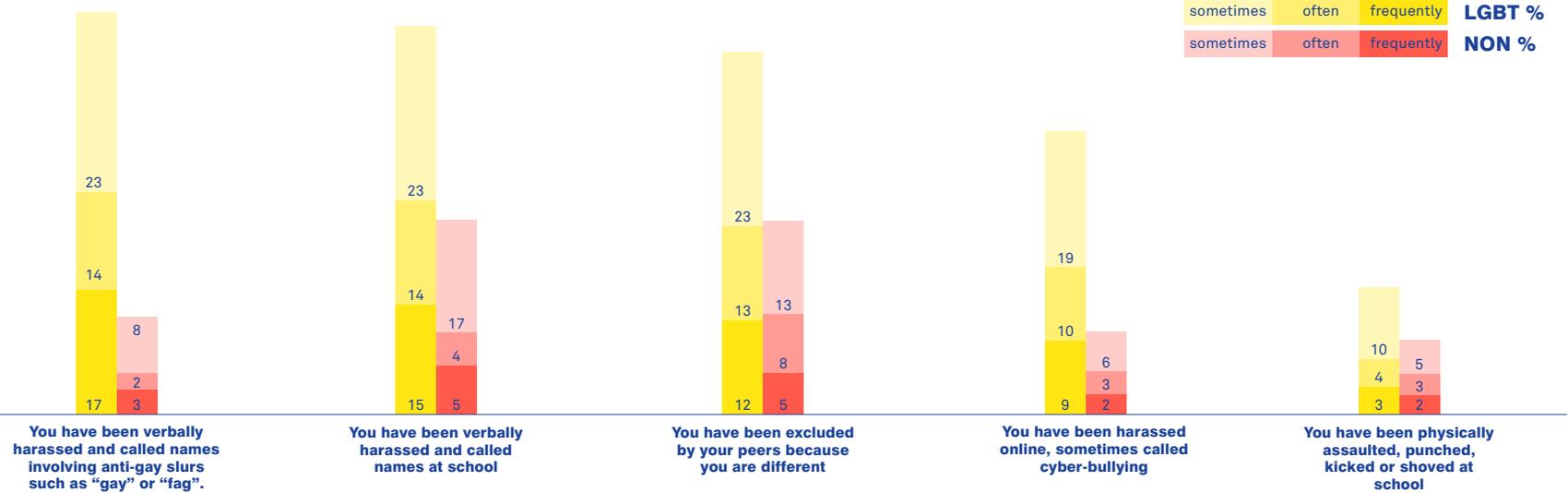
75%

Three-quarters of LGBT youth (**75%**) say that most of their peers do not have a problem with their identity as LGBT.

“I want to be able to go to school without being called a faggot or a dyke bitch. I don’t want to hide in the shadows about my sexuality because my safety is on the line.”



About a third (**36%**) of LGBT youth participate often in an LGBT club in school, such as a Gay Straight Alliance, while most (**64%**) do not.



YOUTH

Two-thirds out at school

9 in 10 LGBT youth (**91%**) say they are out to their close friends and two-thirds (**64%**) are out to their classmates. About a third (**38%**) are out to their teachers. In general, nearly two-thirds (**61%**) say they are out at school.



LGBT youth are as likely as their peers to participate in afterschool activities, such as drama, debate, band or academic clubs. Among LGBT youth, **63%** say they participate often while **63%** of their peers say the same.

“A lot of kids at my school think it’s sick and nasty and will give me looks when I hold hands with my friend, and call us fags and lesbos. I am proud of who I am and I don’t intend on changing, I just wish I wasn’t viewed differently.”

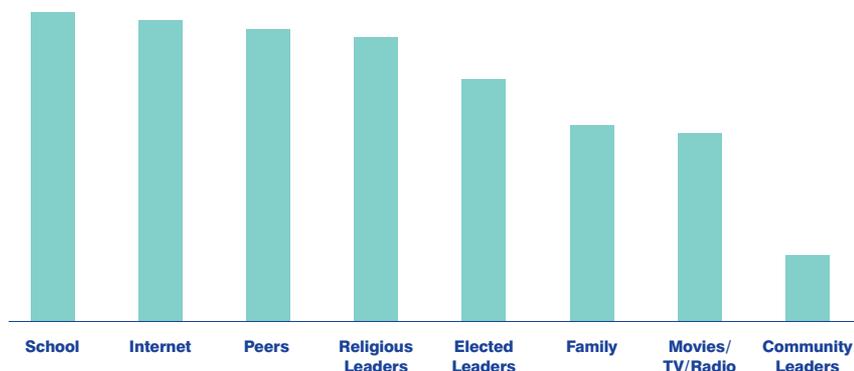
CULTURE



92%

9 in 10 LGBT youth (**92%**) say they hear negative messages about being LGBT.

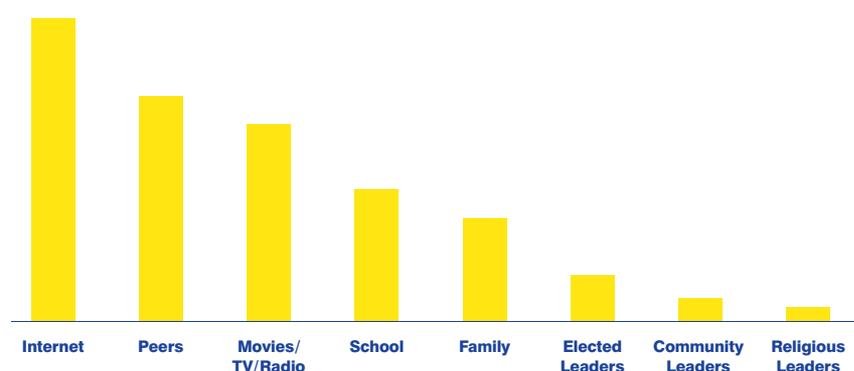
School, peers, and the Internet led the list of places where LGBT youth say they most often hear negative messages about being LGBT: **74%** chose school, **69%** chose their peers, and **70%** chose the Internet. Religious leaders (**68%**), elected leaders (**60%**), family (**46%**), movies/TV/radio (**42%**) and community leaders (**20%**) followed as places where LGBT youth often hear negative messages.



78%

Three-quarters (**78%**) of LGBT youth say they hear positive messages.

The Internet, their peers, and movies/TV/radio led the list of places where LGBT youth say they most often hear positive messages about being LGBT: **88%** chose the Internet, **69%** chose their peers, and **59%** chose movies/TV/radio. School (**41%**) and family (**32%**) followed with positive messages, and elected leaders (**16%**), community leaders (**8%**), and religious leaders (**4%**) trailed far behind.





LGBT YOUTH



ARE BOMBARDED WITH NEGATIVE MESSAGES ABOUT BEING LGBT.

AT THE SAME TIME,

MOST ARE ALSO LIKELY TO HEAR POSITIVE MESSAGES.

THE INTERNET AND THEIR PEERS ARE MAJOR SOURCES



OF BOTH GOOD AND BAD MESSAGES FOR LGBT YOUTH.



The Human Rights Campaign is America's largest civil rights organization working to achieve lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender equality. By inspiring and engaging all Americans, HRC strives to end discrimination against LGBT citizens and realize a nation that achieves fundamental fairness and equality for all. Its work has particular resonance for young people who continue to live in a world where societal prejudice continues to weigh on them and "that's so gay" is a common schoolyard epithet.

Through HRC's visibility and outreach, HRC is often a first point-of-contact for many youth. HRC's website offers blogs, videos, and other resources on federal & state advocacy, hate crimes, health, marriage, parenting, religion & faith, straight supporters, transgender issues, workplace, youth & campus. Online and by phone, HRC often refers young people to national, regional, and local resources that meet their individual needs. www.hrc.org

HRC'S CURRENT YOUTH-RELATED WORK

COMMUNITY

The HRC Foundation works to improve the LGBT cultural competence of community institutions, including youth-serving organizations and healthcare providers, and to engage all faith traditions in a dialogue on fairness.

HRC's All Children – All Families initiative is expanding its training curriculum in response to requests from youth-serving agencies that want to improve their competence in serving LGBT youth. This includes after-school programs, mental health agencies, and counseling centers, as well as foster care agencies that manage group homes for youth. HRC seeks to increase the number of safe, supportive, and affirming agencies for LGBT youth in communities across the country. It is working in collaboration with other organizations, including the Child Welfare League of America, to complement the work they are doing.

Whether through an emergency or a routine check-up, hospitals and healthcare providers serve all families and individuals. The HRC Healthcare Equality Index (HEI) engages health providers to implement non-discrimination policies and commit to be inclusive and affirming of LGBT patients of all ages. This is especially important for young LGBT people, who may not be out to their families but need to come out to their health providers to get proper care. The HEI targets children's hospitals to improve the landscape for all youth-serving medical providers. HRC works toward creating culturally-competent care as a common practice in the field.

To help combat LGBT youth homelessness and family rejection, HRC's Religion & Faith Program is launching a

new initiative to explore faith-focused approaches to family acceptance of LGBT youth with faith institutions that primarily serve Latinos, African Americans, and white evangelicals. Using focus groups and engagement with religious groups, along with groundbreaking research from the Family Acceptance Project, the initiative hopes to identify ways faith institutions can support families to raise happy, healthy youth.

HRC sponsored On the Road to Equality – a 12-week bus tour that visited 18 cities in 13 states and Washington, D.C. The bus tour brought an affirming message of LGBT dignity and equality to communities around the country, with a special emphasis on the Midwest and South where there are limited legal protections for LGBT people and living openly and honestly can be difficult. Exhibits featured information for LGBT people about families, health, civil rights, community, faith, and the workplace. HRC also offered workshops and educational seminars on religion and faith, schools and bullying, workplace and healthcare equality.

For a decade, HRC Foundation's Corporate Equality Index has sought to transform the workplace for LGBT employees by promoting policies of fairness and equality in the country's leading corporations. Identifying best practices for protection, recruitment, and retention of LGBT employees, the CEI has encouraged companies to improve and excel. In doing so, the CEI has raised the bar on how corporate America treats its LGBT employees, including LGBT youth, influencing an improvement in workplace climate even beyond the hundreds of companies that participate in the CEI.

Through its efforts to improve state laws and regulations, HRC is exploring

legislation that would ban bullying and discrimination of LGBT youth in public settings outside of schools. This would include community agencies such as parks and recreation facilities and clubs, public libraries, foster care agencies, and any other youth-serving public agency. There are currently few or no legal protections for youth using those community resources.

Each year, HRC blankets the country to support 150+ of LGBT pride and youth pride events, which frequently reach LGBT youth.

HOME & FAMILY

To address the disproportionate number of LGBT youth who are homeless, HRC advocates for federal action to prevent homelessness, improve funding for homeless youth programs, and expand existing programs to make them more inclusive of LGBT youth. HRC supports legislation, the Reconnecting Youth to Prevent Homelessness Act, which would require that the Secretary of Health and Human Services establish a demonstration project to develop programs that are focused on improving family relationships and reducing homelessness for LGBT youth.

HRC is also working with federal agencies, including the Department of Health and Human Services, to improve existing programs that serve youth in foster care, including those aging out of the system and becoming independent, to ensure they are inclusive of LGBT youth and that vulnerable LGBT youth do not get placed into hostile foster homes.

HRC is building awareness and support among federal legislators of the Every Child Deserves a Family Act, a bill that would prohibit discrimination in feder-

ally financed adoption and foster care, and would ensure that LGBT youth in care do not experience discrimination.

The HRC Foundation's All Children – All Families initiative works with public and private adoption and foster care agencies to improve their practices regarding LGBT prospective parents. This would expand the number of caring, qualified adults who are able to parent youth in foster care, including the disproportionate number of LGBT youth in care.

HRC also collaborates with and showcases the work of leaders in the field of family acceptance, including the Family Acceptance Project and Gender Spectrum, identifying new ways to encourage families to affirm and embrace LGBT youth and prevent some of the challenges identified here.

SCHOOL & PEERS

In Washington, D.C. and in state capitals, HRC fights for safe schools legislation that protects LGBT young people from discrimination and bullying. Many states have already adopted inclusive legislation, but there remains work to be done to implement those laws through training and increasing the cultural competence of education personnel.

On the federal level, HRC advocates for better protections for LGBT students, with a current focus on non-discrimination and anti-bullying/harassment policies. Additionally, HRC seeks to improve the way current laws are implemented for LGBT youth.

The Student Non-Discrimination Act would prohibit schools from discriminating against LGBT students and provide students and parents federal protection from harassment and discrimination.

The Safe Schools Improvement Act would promote school safety through a comprehensive focus on bullying or harassment with specific inclusion of sexual orientation and gender identity. School districts in states that receive specific federal funds would be required to adopt codes of conduct specifically prohibiting bullying and harassment, including on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity and religion.

HRC works with federal agencies, including the Justice Department and the Department of Education, to ensure that—wherever possible given current laws – federal regulations regarding safety and nondiscrimination are applied to protect vulnerable LGBT youth.

In state capitals across the country, HRC is advancing anti-bullying and non-discrimination legislation for K-12 schools. Some states have moved forward with improved laws and more states are considering efforts to limit the threat of cyber bullying. Further, some states that have other positive LGBT-related laws still do not address bullying and discrimination in the schools.

The Welcoming Schools project of the HRC Foundation is an LGBT-inclusive approach to addressing family diversity, gender stereotyping, bullying and name-calling in K-5 schools. With a focus on family diversity, it actively values families headed by LGBT parents. Its attention to gender stereotyping and name-calling can help create safer school cultures for all students and creates a more balanced and accurate understanding of LGBT people as students enter the challenging years of middle school. While the program was designed for K-5 elementary schools, some K-8 schools have used Welcoming Schools and have adapted the program for older grades.

CULTURE

The HRC team works to de-stigmatize LGBT issues and promote positive messages and images for LGBT people, including youth. HRC’s “Call It Out” project brings attention to and combats homophobia and transphobia wherever it occurs and promotes respect and civil discourse. Whether it is from a local school board member, a religious organization, national ‘advocacy groups’ or elected officials, anti-gay vitriol creates a toxic environment that can make LGBT people – particularly youth – think they are not worthy of the same legal rights and love that all Americans deserve. There remain additional opportunities to build greater acceptance particularly in the world of sports where HRC is partnering with groups like the Ben Cohen Stand-Up Foundation and Athlete Ally.

Marriage equality can improve the lives of LGBT young people in two key ways. It alters their perceptions of what is possible in the future, beyond current family life and school, and for those youth who have same-sex parents themselves, the ability for their family to receive full legal recognition can be an important milestone toward greater community connection. In addition to its extensive legislative and field work on marriage equality bills or ballot measures, HRC launched the online media campaign “Americans for Marriage Equality.” This video campaign features prominent Americans – including athletes, film and music celebrities, political and civil rights leaders, and business leaders – many of whom are admired and respected by youth.

For more than a decade, HRC has sponsored and promoted National Coming Out Day, generating media attention and public discussion on the

importance of LGBT openness. Coming out has a powerful impact beyond the individual. As the number of Americans who say they know someone who is LGBT has increased, so has public support for fairness and equality. Through National Coming Out Day, its blog, and other online resources, HRC promotes stories with affirming messages that are especially important for LGBT youth who may otherwise be isolated in their communities.

HRC has created a resource bank of materials to help individual LGBT people, including youth first coming to terms with their identity. Popularly-downloaded and requested materials include: [Resource Guide to Coming Out](#), [Resource Guide to Coming Out for African Americans](#), [Transgender Visibility: A Guide to Being You](#)

METHODOLOGY

Two methodologies were used to collect data for this sample.

PUBLIC URL

Working with the Human Rights Campaign and Harris Interactive Service Bureau, who hosted the Web survey, Greenberg Quinlan Rosner created a link that allowed participants to take this survey online. Participants invited to the study through this source were screened for (self-identified) LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or queer) status. This method was used to collect the overwhelming majority of LGBT interviews in this study and ultimately produced a sample of 10,030 participants ages 13-17 who self-identified as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or queer. Certain questions in the survey were directed only to self-ascribed LGBT respondents.

The Human Rights Campaign advertised this link through social media, as well as through direct communication with LGBT youth centers across the country. This method of collecting interviews is common in exploring hard to reach populations, but it does not represent a truly random opt-in sample. Traditional measures of margin of error do not apply and the results here may not be representative of this population as a whole.

ONLINE PANEL

In addition, this research includes 510 interviews among respondents ages 13-17 drawn from the Harris Poll OnlineSM (HPOL.) These interviews were not screened for LGBT status and comprise the “straight” population in this study. Note however that five percent of these interviews self-identified as LGBT and were asked questions directed at this population.

Harris Poll OnlineSM (HPOL) is a multimillion-member panel of cooperative online respondents. Panelists have joined the Harris Poll Online from over 100 different sources. Diverse methods are leveraged to gain panelists including: co-registration offers on partners’ websites, targeted emails sent by online partners to their audiences, graphical and text banner placement on partners’ websites (including social media, news, search, and community portals), trade show presentations, targeted postal mail invitations, TV advertisements, and telephone recruitment of targeted populations.

When respondents are recruited into this panel, it is made very clear to them that they are joining a market research panel and that they will be asked periodically to participate in online research. They are shown the terms and conditions of panel membership as well as our privacy policy. Panelists must agree to our Terms of Use which state that panelists are limited to a single membership and can be removed if they are found in violation of this rule.

All panelists recruited have completed a ‘confirmed’ or ‘double’ opt-in (COI/DOI) process. This process requires that each registrant confirm his or her desire to join our panel by clicking on a link within an email that is sent to the registrant’s email address upon registering. The content of the email specifies that by clicking on the link the registrant is expressly stating his or her desire to take part in the panel. Once they consent to join the panel, members are invited to participate in various surveys through email invitations which include a short description of the research and indicate the approximate survey length.

Our interviewing policies for U.S.-based research comply with the legal codes of conduct developed by the Council of American Survey Research Organizations (CASRO). According to CASRO guidelines, the minimum age to consent to participate in survey research in the U.S. is 13 years old.

A key issue in interviewing children both responsibly and legally is appropriate parental consent, which is required before conducting research with children under the age of 13. For 8-12 year olds, Harris Interactive obtains consent from their parents, who are HPOL panelists themselves, using well-defined parental permission policies. Panelists identified as age 18+ with an 8-12 year old child living in the household are sent email invitations with a link to the child survey. The invites specify that the survey is intended for their child and explain the content and approximate length of the survey. If the parent agrees to allow their child to participate in the survey, they are asked to provide the link to their child. This process is also used to supplement the 13-17 year old panel through targeted panelists age 18+ with a 13-17 year old in the household.

Data collected for this survey were collected by Harris Interactive Service Bureau (“HISB”) on behalf of the Human Rights Campaign. HISB was responsible for the data collected and Greenberg Quinlan Rosner Client was responsible for the survey design, data weighting, data analysis and reporting any/all methods that apply.

THE SURVEY

Q.1 (SAMPLE 1) Some of the questions we will be asking in this survey may seem quite personal. However, please be assured that your responses will remain strictly confidential. The responses from all participants will be combined and analysis will be conducted only on the information grouped together. If you have any questions about our confidentiality policies, please feel free to contact our Survey Help Desk. Your participation and input is crucial to the success of this study. If you feel uncomfortable answering a sensitive question, please select “Decline to answer” and then move on to the next question.

(SAMPLE 2) Some of the questions we will be asking in this survey may seem quite personal. However, please be assured that your responses will remain strictly confidential. This research is sponsored by the Human Rights Campaign (HRC), the nation’s leading civil rights groups for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people and is designed to allow HRC to better understand issues facing young lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender people. The responses from all participants will be combined and analysis will be conducted only on the information grouped together. If you have any questions about our confidentiality policies, please feel free to contact our Survey Help Desk. Your participation and input is crucial to the success of this study. If you feel uncomfortable answering a sensitive question, please select “Decline to answer” and then move on to the next question.

SAMPLE 1 Ages 13-17, generated from panel

SAMPLE 2 Ages 13-17, LGBTQ screened, generated by link

- 1) DIAL REGION 1
- 2) DIAL REGION 2
- 3) DIAL REGION 3
- 4) DIAL REGION 4
- 5) DIAL REGION 5
- 6) LOGOFF

Q.2 In what year were you born?

Please enter as a four-digit number, e.g., 1963. (For sample 1 and sample 2, accept only ages 13-17)

- 2) ENTER NUMBER

Q.3 In what state or territory do you currently reside? (DROP DOWN LIST OF STATES)

- 1) ENTER RESPONSE

Q.4 What is your zip code? Please enter only the first five digits.

- 4) ENTER ZIP

Q.5 (If ages 13-17) Do you currently attend?

- 2) MIDDLE SCHOOL OR JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL
- 3) HIGH SCHOOL
- 4) UNIVERSITY, COLLEGE OR COMMUNITY COLLEGE

- 5) NONE OF THE ABOVE, I AM OUT OF SCHOOL
- 6) HOME SCHOOLED
- 7) OTHER
- 8) (DECLINE TO ANSWER)

Q.6 Because we want everyone represented in this survey, the next few questions are for statistical purposes only. Do you identify your sexual orientation as:

- 1) HETEROSEXUAL/STRAIGHT
- 2) GAY
- 3) LESBIAN
- 4) BISEXUAL
- 6) QUEER
- 7) I PREFER TO IDENTIFY MYSELF AS: (SPECIFY)
- 8) (DECLINE TO ANSWER)

Q.7 Do you consider yourself male, female, transgender or other gender (e.g. genderqueer or androgynous)? (Punch 2-7 on LGBTQ OR punch 3-4 on gender are coded as “LGBTQ”; the rest are coded as non-LGBTQ) (TERMINATE NON-LGBTQ IN SAMPLE 1)

- 1) MALE
- 2) FEMALE
- 3) TRANSGENDER
- 4) I PREFER TO IDENTIFY MY GENDER AS: (SPECIFY)
- 5) (DECLINE TO ANSWER)

Q.8 Most people are born either male or female, but often feel or behave in a way that is different from what society believes is male or female behavior. On the scale below, please indicate either how male or female you feel.

- 1) 0-10

Q.9 (IF TRANSGENDER IN GENDER) Would you say that you transitioned...?

- 1) FROM MALE TO FEMALE
- 2) FROM FEMALE TO MALE
- 3) NEITHER
- 4) OTHER (SPECIFY)
- 5) (DECLINE TO ANSWER)

Q.10 Generally speaking, how would you say things are these days in your life - would you say you are very happy, pretty happy, pretty unhappy or very unhappy?

- 1) VERY HAPPY
- 2) PRETTY HAPPY
- 3) SOMEWHERE IN BETWEEN
- 4) PRETTY UNHAPPY
- 5) VERY UNHAPPY
- 6) (DECLINE TO ANSWER)

Q.11 (SPLIT A) What is the most difficult problem facing you in your life these days? Please be as specific as possible.

- 1) ??

Q.12 (SPLIT B) In your own words, if you could change one thing about your life right now what would it be, and why? Please be as specific as possible.

- 1) ??

Q.13 Thinking in terms of your community, the place where you live, do you feel that you?

- 1) DEFINITELY FIT IN
- 2) SOMEWHAT FIT IN
- 3) SOMEWHAT DO NOT FIT IN
- 4) DEFINITELY DO NOT FIT IN
- 5) (DECLINE TO ANSWER)

Q.14 How often you participate in the following activities?

- 1=VERY OFTEN
- 2=SOMETIMES
- 3=NOT VERY OFTEN
- 4=NEVER
- 5= (DECLINE TO ANSWER)

(RANDOMIZE)

___ **14** Attend church or religious services in a house of worship.

___ **15** Participate in a church or religious youth group.

___ **16** Play sports for your school or community league or club

___ **17** Participate in afterschool activities, such as drama, debate, band or academic clubs

___ **18** Participate in a service organizations, such as the Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, YMCA or Key Club

___ **19** Participate in lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender organizations in your school, such as the Gay Straight Alliance.

___ **20** Work at a paying job

___ **21** (LGBTQ) Participate in lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender organizations outside of your school, such as a gay youth center.

___ **22** (LGBTQ) Participate in an online community that addresses the issues facing lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender youth

Q.23 Would you say your community, that is, the place where you live, is generally accepting or unaccepting of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people?

- 1) VERY ACCEPTING
- 2) SOMEWHAT ACCEPTING
- 3) SOMEWHAT UNACCEPTING
- 4) VERY UNACCEPTING
- 5) DON'T KNOW
- 6) (DECLINE TO ANSWER)

Q.24 Do you believe things are getting better or worse in your community in terms of accepting lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people?

- 1) GETTING MUCH BETTER
- 2) GETTING SOMEWHAT BETTER
- 3) ABOUT THE SAME
- 4) GETTING SOMEWHAT WORSE
- 5) GETTING MUCH WORSE
- 6) (DECLINE TO ANSWER)

Q.25 When it comes to accepting lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people, how would you rate the following people or institutions in your community?

- 1=VERY ACCEPTING
- 2=SOMEWHAT ACCEPTING
- 3=NOT VERY ACCEPTING
- 4=NOT AT ALL ACCEPTING
- 5=DON'T KNOW/DOES NOT APPLY
- 6= (DECLINE TO ANSWER)

(RANDOMIZE)

___ **25** Churches and places of worship

___ **26** Your own church or place of worship

___ **27** Your school

___ **28** Your peers or people your age

___ **29** Your family

___ **30** Your local city/town government

___ **31** Your state government

___ **32** Your doctor

___ **33** Local businesses

Q.34 (IF LGBTQ) In your own words, please describe what it is like for you to be lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender in your community. Please be as specific as possible.

- 1) ??

Q.35 In the last year, how often does the following happen to you?

- 1=FREQUENTLY
- 2=OFTEN
- 3=SOMETIMES
- 4=RARELY
- 5=NEVER
- 6= (DECLINE TO ANSWER)

(RANDOMIZE)

___ **35** You are have been excluded by your peers because you are different.

___ **36** You have been verbally harassed and called names at school.

___ **37** You have been verbally harassed and called names outside of school, for example in your neighborhood, or at the mall.

___ **38** You have been physically assaulted, punched, kicked or shoved at school.

___ **39** You have been physically assaulted, punched, kicked or shoved outside of school, for example in your neighborhood, or at the mall.

___ **40** You have been harassed online, sometimes called cyber-bullying

___ **41** You have been verbally harassed and called names involving anti-gay slurs such as “gay” or “fag”

Q.42 (LGBTQ SAMPLE) (IF FREQUENTLY OR OFTEN FOR ANY ITEMS IN FREQ1) Do you believe these things happen to you because of your sexual orientation or gender identity?

- 1) YES
- 2) NO
- 4) (DECLINE TO ANSWER)

Q.43 If you felt worried or sad, is there an adult in your family you could turn to for help?

- 1) YES
- 2) NO
- 3) DON'T KNOW
- 4) (DECLINE TO ANSWER)

Q.44 If you felt worried or sad, is there an adult in your community or school, but outside of your family, you could turn to for help?

- 1) YES
- 2) NO
- 3) DON'T KNOW
- 4) (DECLINE TO ANSWER)

Q.45 Please answer the following questions to the best of your ability.

- 1=YES
- 2=NO
- 3=DON'T KNOW
- 4=(DECLINE TO ANSWER)

(RANDOMIZE)

____ **45** Is there a club at your school that supports lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender students, such as the Gay Straight Alliance?

____ **46** (LGBTQ) Is there a place in your community, such as a community center, that helps lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender young people?

____ **47** (LGBTQ) Is there a non-official place or hang-out in your community where young lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender students can go and be accepted?

____ **48** (SPLIT A) Are there laws in your state that protect lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender from discrimination in the work place?

____ **49** (SPLIT B) Are there laws in your city or town that protect lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender from discrimination in the work place?

____ **50** Is there a specific church or synagogue in your community that provides welcome environment for lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender people?

Q.51 If any of the items listed below are on your list of hopes and dreams for the future, how likely do you think it is that these will happen?

- 1=VERY LIKELY
- 2=SOMEWHAT LIKELY
- 3=SOMEWHAT UNLIKELY
- 4=VERY UNLIKELY
- 5=ALREADY HAPPENED
- 6=NOT ON MY LIST
- 7=(DECLINE TO ANSWER)

(RANDOMIZE)

____ **51** Get married to someone you love

____ **52** Establish a life-long partnership with someone you love

____ **53** Raise children

____ **54** Have a good job

____ **55** Be happy

____ **56** Go to college

____ **57** Be an active part of your community

Q.58 Thinking about these issues again, if you live in the same city or town where you live now for the rest of your life, how likely do you think it is that these will happen?

- 1=VERY LIKELY
- 2=SOMEWHAT LIKELY
- 3=SOMEWHAT UNLIKELY
- 4=VERY UNLIKELY
- 5=ALREADY HAPPENED
- 6=NOT ON MY LIST
- 7=(DECLINE TO ANSWER)

(RANDOMIZE)

____ **58** Get married to someone you love

____ **59** Establish a life-long partnership with someone you love

____ **60** Raise children

____ **61** Have a good job

____ **62** Be happy

____ **63** Go to college

____ **64** Be an active part of your community

Q.65 Please indicate whether you agree or disagree with the following statements. Remember, everything in this survey is kept completely confidential.

- 1=STRONGLY AGREE
- 2=SOMEWHAT AGREE
- 3=SOMEWHAT DISAGREE
- 4=STRONGLY DISAGREE
- 5=(DECLINE TO ANSWER)

____ **65** I know things will get better.

____ **66** I will need to move to another city/ town or another part of the country to really feel accepted

____ **67** I have experimented with alcohol and drugs.

____ **68** (LGBTQ) Most of my peers do not have a problem with my identity as a lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender person.

____ **69** I am more honest about who I am on-line than in the real world.

____ **70** There is at least one adult I can talk to about your personal problems.

Q.71 (SPLIT C) Do you ever hear any positive messages about being gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender?

- 1) YES
- 2) NO
- 3) (DECLINE TO ANSWER)

Q.72 (SPLIT C) (IF YES ON POSMSG). Where do you most often hear positive messages about being gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender? Please check all that apply? (ACCEPT UP TO SEVEN RESPONSES)

- 1) AT SCHOOL
- 2) IN MOVIES, TELEVISION SHOWS OR ON THE RADIO
- 3) ON THE INTERNET
- 4) FROM ELECTED LEADERS OR POLITICIANS
- 5) FROM YOUR FAMILY
- 6) FROM LEADERS IN YOUR COMMUNITY
- 7) FROM YOUR PEERS OR PEOPLE YOUR OWN AGE
- 8) FROM RELIGIOUS LEADERS
- 9) OTHER (SPECIFY)
- 10) (DECLINE TO ANSWER)

Q.73 (SPLIT D) Do you ever hear any negative messages about being gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender?

- 1) YES
- 2) NO
- 3) (DECLINE TO ANSWER)

Q.74 (SPLIT D) (IF YES ON NEGMSG). Where do you most often hear negative messages about being gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender? Please check all that apply? (ACCEPT UP TO SEVEN RESPONSES)

- 1) AT SCHOOL
- 2) IN MOVIES, TELEVISION SHOWS OR ON THE RADIO

3) ON THE INTERNET

4) FROM ELECTED LEADERS OR POLITICIANS

5) FROM YOUR FAMILY

6) FROM LEADERS IN YOUR COMMUNITY

7) FROM YOUR PEERS OR PEOPLE YOUR OWN AGE

8) FROM RELIGIOUS LEADERS

9) OTHER (SPECIFY)

10) (DECLINE TO ANSWER)

Q.75 (IF HOMESCHOOLED IN SCHOOL) Do you attend school at home because of your identity as a lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender person?

- 1) YES
- 2) NO
- 3) (DECLINE TO ANSWER)

Q.76 (IF LGBTQ) Have you come out to the following people or institutions?

- 1=YES
- 2=NO
- 3=(DOES NOT APPLY)

____ **76** Immediate family

____ **77** Extended family

____ **78** Close friends

____ **79** Classmates

____ **80** Your teachers

____ **81** To your clergy

____ **82** At work

____ **83** At school

____ **84** At church

____ **85** Your coaches

____ **86** Your doctor

Q.87 (SPLIT A) (IF NO ON FAMILY OR EXTENDED FAMILY IN OUT3) Please describe in your own words why are you are not out to your family or extended family:

- 1) ENTER RESPONSE

Q.88 (SPLIT B) (IF NO ON CLASSMATES, TEACHERS OR AT SCHOOL IN OUT3) Please describe in your own words why are you are not out to classmates, teachers or at school? :

- 1) ENTER RESPONSE

Q.89 (IF LGBTQ) Would you feel safe revealing your identify as a lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender person by wearing a t-shirt, button, or putting a rainbow sticker or equal sign sticker on your locker or bike?

- 1) YES
- 2) NO
- 3) (DECLINE TO ANSWER)

Q.90 To ensure that everyone is represented equally, what is your race/ethnicity?

- 1) WHITE
- 2) BLACK/AFRICAN AMERICAN
- 3) HISPANIC/LATINO/SPANISH AMERICAN/CHICANO
- 4) ASIAN/PACIFIC ISLANDER
- 5) AMERICAN INDIAN/NATIVE AMERICAN
- 6) OTHER
- 7) DECLINE TO ANSWER

Q.91 [SKIP IF HISPANIC IN RACE] Do you consider yourself an Hispanic, Latino or a Spanish-speaking American?

- 1) YES
- 2) NO
- 3) PREFER NOT TO SAY

Q.92 What is your religion?

- 1) PROTESTANT (SUCH AS BAPTIST, METHODIST, PRESBYTERIAN, LUTHERAN, EPISCOPAL)
- 2) ROMAN CATHOLIC
- 3) JEWISH
- 4) MUSLIM/ISLAM
- 5) MORMON
- 6) ORTHODOX CHURCH (GREEK, RUSSIAN, ETC.)
- 7) OTHER CHRISTIAN RELIGION
- 8) OTHER RELIGION (NOT CHRISTIAN)
- 9) NO PREFERENCE
- 10) ATHEIST/AGNOSTIC
- 11) DECLINE TO ANSWER

Q.93 (ASKED ONLY OF THOSE RESPONDENTS WHO HAVE A PROTESTANT OR OTHER CHRISTIAN RELIGIOUS PREFERENCE IN RELIG). When it comes to your religious identity, would you say you are a fundamentalist, evangelical, charismatic, Pentecostal, mainline, liberal Protestant, or do none of these describe you?

- 1) FUNDAMENTALIST
- 2) EVANGELICAL
- 3) CHARISMATIC
- 4) PENTECOSTAL
- 5) MAINLINE
- 6) LIBERAL
- 7) NONE
- 8) OTHER (SPECIFY)
- 9) DON'T KNOW
- 10) (DECLINE TO ANSWER)

Q.94 (IF RELIG=PROTESTANT/CATHOLIC/MORMON/ORTHODOX/OTHER CHRISTIAN/OTHER/DK) Would you consider yourself a born-again Christian?

- 1) YES
- 2) NO
- 3) (DECLINE TO ANSWER)

Q.95 How often do you attend religious services?

- 1) EVERY WEEK
- 2) ONCE OR TWICE A MONTH
- 3) SEVERAL TIMES A YEAR
- 4) HARDLY EVER
- 5) NEVER
- 6) PREFER NOT TO SAY

Q.96 And you would you describe the area in which you live?

- 1) RURAL
- 2) SUBURBAN
- 3) URBAN OR CITY
- 4) (DECLINE TO ANSWER)

Q.97 Do you currently live with?

- 1) PARENT OR PARENTS (NOT FOSTER)
- 2) EXTENDED FAMILY
- 3) FOSTER PARENT/PARENTS
- 4) NO FIXED ADDRESS
- 5) OTHER (SPECIFY)
- 6) (DECLINE TO ANSWER)

WWW.
HEROES!
FOY

