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HUMAN RIGHTS CAMPAIGN  
**POST-ELECTION  
SURVEY  
OF YOUTH**

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HUMAN  
RIGHTS  
CAMPAIGN  
FOUNDATION<sup>TM</sup>

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## KEY FINDINGS

- More than 50,000 young people ages 13-18 from across the United States participated in the largest-ever survey of its kind, representing a diversity in gender, sexual orientation, race, ethnicity, and religious background.
- Almost half of youth reported feeling nervous most or all of the time during the past 30 days, and fully one-third of youth reported feeling hopeless during most or all of that period. Twenty-six percent reported a pervasive sense of worthlessness.
- Seventy percent of respondents reported witnessing bullying, hate messages or harassment during or since the 2016 election. Of those, 79 percent said such behaviors have been occurring more frequently since the onset of the presidential campaign.
- Among young people who reported seeing bullying and harassment, 70 percent had witnessed incidents motivated by race or ethnicity, 63 percent had seen incidents motivated by sexual orientation, 59 percent had seen incidents motivated by immigration status, and 55 percent had witnessed incidents motivated by gender.
- More than a quarter of LGBTQ youth say they have been personally bullied or harassed since the presidential campaign began, compared to 14 percent of non-LGBTQ youth. Forty-six percent of LGBTQ youth reported muting their self-expression or re-thinking their plans for the future in light of the election – nearly double the percentage of non-LGBTQ youth who did so.
- Before Election Day 2016, more than half of survey respondents reported thinking about the election every day, and a third thought about it several times each week.
- Despite widespread post-election fear and anxiety, young people say they are more committed than ever to supporting others who are targeted for discrimination and harassment. Fifty-seven percent say that since Election Day, they more frequently feel motivated to help people in their community.



participants ages 13-18 from across the United States



More than **a quarter** of LGBTQ youth say they had been personally bullied or harassed since the presidential campaign began



**MORE THAN**  
**1/2**

thought about the election **every day**

**1/3**

thought about the election **several times each week**

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## METHODS

- Youth between 13 and 18 years old and living in the United States were eligible to take the survey. Responses were collected between December 19, 2016 and January 10, 2017. Of the 92,474 participants who began the survey, 51,394 completed it. Incomplete responses were eliminated, and 775 duplicate and mischievous responses were removed, for a final sample of 50,619.



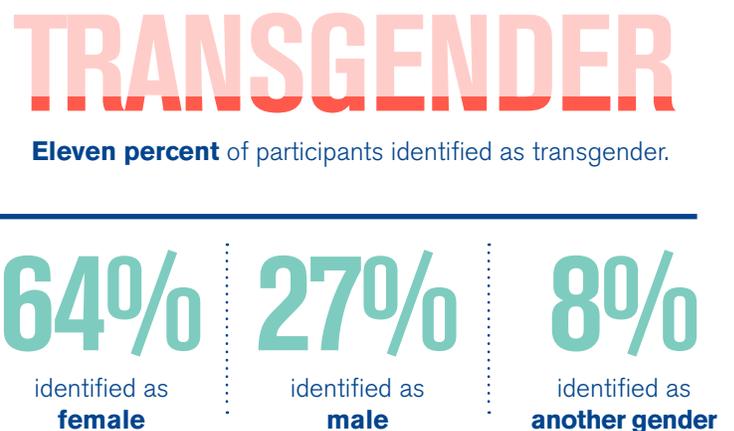
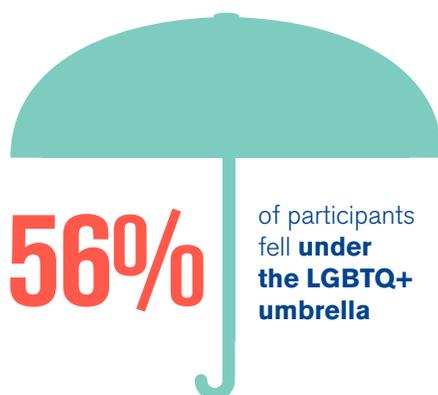
- Respondents were solicited through HRC's social media channels (including Facebook, Twitter, Snapchat and Instagram) and those of partner organizations, including the League of United Latin American Citizens, Mental Health America, the National Queer Asian Pacific Islander Alliance, the Planned Parenthood Federation of America, the Southern Poverty Law Center, True Colors Fund and The Trevor Project.
  - The survey was not designed to be statistically representative of all U.S. teens, but to reflect the lived experiences, fears, and convictions of a large number of young people across the United States.
- Similarly, although the sample's demographics do not reflect the full racial and ethnic diversity of the nation's youth, the large number of participants allows us to nonetheless learn first-hand about the experiences of youth of color, religious minorities, and other key groups.

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# RESULTS

## DEMOGRAPHICS

- The average survey-taker was just under 16 years old.
- Sixty-four percent of participants identified as female, 27 percent identified as male, and eight percent identified as another gender.
- Eleven percent of participants identified as transgender. Of those, 55 percent identified as a non-binary gender (not exclusively male or female), 39 percent identified as a transgender boy, and six percent identified as a transgender girl.
- Forty-five percent of respondents identified as heterosexual. Twenty-five percent identified as bisexual, 16 percent as gay or lesbian, 14 percent as pansexual, nine percent as queer, six percent as asexual, and five percent as something else. Participants were able to select as many sexual orientation options as applied to them; for instance, a participant could identify as both bisexual and queer.
- Fifty-six percent of participants fell under the LGBTQ+ umbrella.
- Seventy-two percent of participants identified as white and non-hispanic. Twenty-eight percent of participants identified as multiracial and/or youth of color: fourteen percent identified as Hispanic or Latino, seven percent as black or African American, seven percent as Asian American or of



Asian descent, and seven percent as American Indian or Alaskan Native. Two percent identified as of Middle Eastern or North African descent, and one percent of participants were Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islanders.

- Thirty-five percent of participants were raised in a Protestant household, 21 percent were raised Catholic, and 18 percent grew up in a secular family. Other religious backgrounds included Jewish (five percent), Mormon (three percent), Buddhist (two percent), Muslim (two percent), and Hindu (one percent), with some participants raised in more than one religion.

## IMPACT OF THE ELECTION

- Young people have been highly aware of the election. Before Election Day, more than half of survey participants thought about the election every day, and another third thought about it several times each week. Since Election Day, nearly a third have thought about it every day, with more than 90 percent thinking about it at least once or twice a week.
- Almost half of youth reported feeling nervous most or all of the time during the past 30 days, and fully one-third of youth reported feeling hopeless during most or all of that period. Twenty-six percent reported a pervasive sense of worthlessness.



- More than half of participants said they felt these feelings more often than usual during the past 30 days, and 10 percent felt them “a lot more often” than usual.

- We asked participants a series of eight questions designed to formally measure whether a child or teen could be experiencing trauma symptoms from an event. For example, participants were asked how often they try to remove the election from their memory, and how often they continue to have waves of

strong feelings about it. Were this a formal screening for post-event trauma, almost two-thirds of the survey participants would have reached the cutoff score for clinical concern.

- During the past 30 days, half of participants reported feeling less support from their community, with 21 percent saying they felt that support “a lot less often.” Overall, they felt somewhat less able than before to help other members of their community, although six percent said they felt able to help somewhat more often, and seven percent felt able to help a lot more often.

- Nonetheless, youth are more committed than ever to supporting others. Fifty-seven percent say they more often want to help people in their community since the campaigns and election, including 24 percent who feel that way a lot more often.

## BULLYING AND HARASSMENT

- A substantial majority of participants—70 percent—had witnessed bullying, hate messages or harassment during or since the election, with only 14 percent saying they definitely had not seen such activity.
- Of those who had observed bullying, hate messages and harassment, 79 percent said these behaviors were happening more often since the presidential campaigns began—including 32 percent who said they were happening “much more often.”
- We were especially interested in bullying and harassment that seemed to be motivated by a particular identity, including race, religion, gender, or LGBTQ identity. For participants who said they’d seen bullying and harassment, we asked whether they’d seen incidents motivated by...



- Twenty-four percent of participants who observed bullying and harassment said it had been directed at them personally. Of the rest, most said that at least some of the harassment was directed at a group they belong to, such as people of their race or gender.
- Participants saw clear links between harassment and the presidential election. Nearly two-thirds of those who saw harassment said at least one incident was definitely because of the election, including instances in which the perpetrator repeated a campaign slogan while making a threat or harassing comment. An additional 30 percent thought some of the events might have been linked to the election. Only six percent felt there was no connection.
- Thirty-six percent of participants said they’d changed something about the way they express themselves as a result of the election.

## INTERSECTING IDENTITIES

### Youth of Color

- More than 70 percent of participants who'd observed bullying or harassment said that at least one incident had been based on race, making it the most common motive reported.
- Hispanic and Latinx participants are 20 percent more likely than other youth to have been personally bullied. Much of the harassment that participants described targeted both immigrant and non-immigrant Hispanic and Latinx communities.
- For some youth, fear of harassment has affected every facet of life. One Hispanic 18-year-old from Illinois wrote, "My family and I go shopping and wash clothes at 2 am to avoid seeing and hearing people's comments."

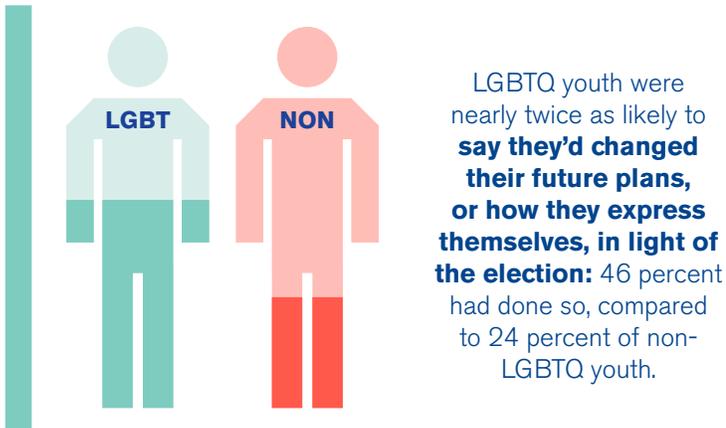
"I stopped speaking Spanish in places I could avoid [it]. I told my parents to stop speaking Spanish as well."

- 18-year-old from California

- Some youth of color have begun to downplay their race or ethnicity. An 18-year-old from California wrote, "I stopped speaking Spanish in places I could avoid [it]. I told my parents to stop speaking Spanish as well."
- Sometimes these changes are the result of explicit pressure. A 15-year-old African-American girl from Virginia said she'd stopped wearing her hair down after being told it was "distracting" other students because it was "too curly and big."
- Youth of color described feeling increasingly unwelcome in predominantly white spaces. A 16-year-old from Texas wrote, "I go to a majority white school and I take all AP classes [but] most of my African American friends/classmates take [different courses...]. When I say anything in class a lot of people gang up on me and it's overwhelming."
- In some cases, exclusion and fear are shaping major decisions. An 18-year-old from Georgia explained, "I went from planning a school and career close to home to searching for schools and careers near my family's Native American reservation, which is literally on the other side of the country, to avoid hate crimes...[I'm] wondering, if that happens, if I'll ever see my mom and my friends again."

## LGBTQ Youth

- Thirty-five percent of LGBTQ participants still think about the election every day, compared to only 26 percent of non-LGBTQ participants. LGBTQ youth were far more likely to have often felt nervous (59 versus 34 percent), hopeless (42 versus 22 percent), depressed (28 versus 12 percent) and worthless (34 versus 16 percent) in the past 30 days.



- More than a quarter of LGBTQ youth had been personally bullied or harassed, compared to 14 percent of non-LGBTQ youth. In turn, LGBTQ youth were nearly twice as likely to say they'd changed their future plans, or how they express themselves, in light of the election: 46 percent had done so, compared to 24 percent of non-LGBTQ youth.
- Transgender youth are struggling, even compared to other LGBTQ young people. Over the past 30 days, about half of transgender youth reported feeling hopeless and worthless most or all of the time, and

40 percent said they mostly or always felt depressed. 70 percent said that these and similar feelings have increased in the past 30 days. Thirty-six percent had been personally bullied or harassed, and 56 percent had changed their self-expression or future plans because of the election.

- Many youth described deciding not to come out as LGBTQ, or even hiding a sexual orientation or identity they were once open about. Both school and family life were areas of concern. A number of youth said their parents' election-related comments had convinced them that it wasn't safe to come out at home.
- More than two months after the election, LGBTQ teens continue to fear harassment. One 18-year-old from Florida wrote that she "thought about taking the equal rights bumper sticker off my car after my friend got her tires slashed and her sticker defaced... it's still there and I'm just waiting for the same thing to happen to me."

## Religion-Based Harassment

- Half of participants who'd seen harassment or bullying saw one or more incidents based on religion.
- Muslim, Jewish and Hindu youth all described concealing symbols of their faiths for fear of harassment. Jewish and Hindu teens said they hid or stopped wearing symbolic jewelry, while Muslim girls feared that covering their hair could put them at risk.

- Some Muslim youth in particular fear serious violence. A 15-year-old from California wrote, “I’ve always wanted to wear a headscarf...but since Trump got power I’m horrified. My mom told me I can’t wear one, otherwise I’m risking my life and that isn’t what God wants, and it’s sad that I agree.” An 18-year-old from Texas said, “My mom bought me a taser because a Muslim woman not far from where we live got raped recently.”
- Some teens feel forced to mislead others about their religion. One 16-year-old from Florida wrote, “[I] have since lied to others, telling them I am not Jewish.”

## LIVING AT THE INTERSECTIONS

- Teens’ responses made clear that these aggressions are thoroughly interconnected. The bullying they described often targeted more than one characteristic. For instance, a 16-year-old from Idaho told us: “A year ago I became open about being trans, and I knew that a few individuals that I go to school with weren’t too pleased about it. A couple of weeks ago one of the boys had said, to my Latinx friend: ‘Donald Trump is gonna deport wastes of space like you!’ then turned to me and said ‘And hopefully he does something about freaks like you too.’”

“After the election, I got more dirty looks in public, and more street harassment. When you are an obviously trans person of color getting spit on or called names is just part of an average day.”

- 17-year-old from Portland

- In many cases, the same teens are harassed for more than one reason, or because of a combination of traits. A 17-year-old from Portland remarked, “After the election, I got more dirty looks in public, and more street harassment. When you are an obviously trans person of color getting spit on or called names is just part of an average day.”

- Teens also described concealing more than one part of their identity at once. One 16-year-old from South Carolina wrote, “I decided on election night against transitioning to my natural hair anytime soon because the less I look like who I am, maybe the safer I’ll be...Also, I’m pretty sure I’m bisexual, but I am absolutely not under any circumstances ever coming out.”
- These experiences have led teens to develop a sense of solidarity across the identities they see targeted. In the words of an 18-year-old from New Mexico, “If you pick on one of us, you fight us all.”

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# IN THEIR OWN VOICES: EXAMPLES OF WRITE-IN RESPONSES

## DESCRIPTIONS OF BULLYING AND HARASSMENT

“Several men have sexually harassed my group of female friends, saying that they’re allowed to do that because the President-elect has. Also, several churches and public parks in my town have been spray painted with swastikas and messages to deport all immigrants.” – 18-year-old

“People on my school’s bus were talking badly about the LGBT community and black people, as well as a specific male identifying friend of mine who wore heels, calling him a ‘tranny’, a ‘faggot’, and ‘nigger’. They also related it the election stating that Trump is going to help so that ‘the faggots in the locker rooms can’t be there to be pedophiles and stare at us.’”

- 18-year-old from Illinois

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– 18-year-old from Illinois

“I’ve heard people call other queer and LGBT students homophobic names, and the Gay Straight Alliance at my school (which I am treasurer of) had received an anonymous threat, had our posters ripped down and destroyed, and even faced discrimination from the school board. We were stopped from holding some fundraisers that other clubs have held before in the past. I’ve also heard my peers call each other or other people racial slurs in the context of Trump’s presidency under the guise of a ‘joke.’” – 15-year-old from Pennsylvania

“At my high school, people were drawing in the stalls above water fountains and toilets: ‘white’ or ‘colored’...I am Hindu and one white boy at my school called me a terrorist and a Muslim, as if the two go hand in hand. It was insulting and humiliating.” – 16-year-old from California

“My dad is Muslim and has a long beard, and after the election, people started saying he looks like a terrorist and caused 9/11. They said Trump should deport him since he wasn’t born in America. I had just came out to a few of my friends that I was transgender, before the election. People started talking about me and how I should be put in conversion therapy. People started telling me that ‘my family should go back to Africa’ even though we aren’t even from Africa...” – 14-year-old from Ohio

## HOW YOUTH HAVE CHANGED SELF-EXPRESSION AND FUTURE PLANS

"I used to be very openly out about being with or wanting to be with people who aren't male, but now I'm a lot quieter about that. I'm dating a girl right now, actually, and we don't really show affection at lunch or in the halls anymore, because so many people would shout rude things at us." – 15-year-old from North Carolina

"Since our recent election, I've become more outspoken and determined to be involved politically. I want to see a change in this world, but I'm not just going to hope for it. I will be the change and influence others no matter how small or big the audience is."

- 16-year-old from Texas

"I took off my pride bracelet because I was afraid my classmates would harass me if they saw it." – 18-year-old from South Carolina

"I was going to come out publicly but I decided not to because I felt unsafe. I also do not wear my Hillary button or my feminist shirt to school because I am afraid that I will be confronted about my opinions negatively." – 15-year-old from Virginia

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## WHAT YOUTH WANT TO TELL TRUMP AND PENCE

"To respect what minorities in the country want, because their voices are the less-heard. Respect the rights that people now have and do not take these away, because they are rights for a reason. Lastly, please do your best to not create more fear and bigotry than there already is in this country." – 15-year-old from Maine

"I would say that I have lost a lot of my faith and hope in the future of our country under their administration as a result of (specifically) President-elect Trump's comments about women, people of color, and the LGBT community. I believe him to be completely and ridiculously unqualified for the position of president, and it terrifies me that so many people in our country see his blatant racism, misogyny, and bigotry as a flaw that can be overlooked instead of an absolute deal-breaker. Although I hold very strong negative convictions about Trump and his administration, I love my country, and I want to see improvement in the lives of the people around me. I desperately hope that he will prove me wrong, and not be the destructive force that I fear he will be." – 15-year-old from Colorado

"I would ask them if they realize the full weight and responsibilities of the office of President of the United States; if they understand that they are responsible for the safety and welfare of millions of people; I would demand that they recognize and denounce hate crimes done in their names and because of them. This country has always weathered bad presidents, but even those presidents understood their duties to the country. For all intents and purposes, Donald Trump does not."  
– 15-year old from North Carolina

## HOW YOUTH SAY ADULTS CAN HELP

"A lot of adults think the teenagers don't care about politics, are too self-involved to be engaged in the election. We're not. The results affect us just as much, and we can't affect them at all. Adults can help by being understanding and especially not being patronizing." – 17-year-old from Colorado

"Don't tolerate any kind of hateful speech. I see it happen so often where people are being ignorant and hateful and no one says anything to them. You can tell everyone is nervous because of the comments, but no one ever says anything. We cannot let hate become our norm." – 15-year-old from Wisconsin

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- 15-year-old from Wisconsin

"I think the most important thing figures of authority can do is believe people who say that they are victims, and support them in any way that they can. This includes defending the victim before the person who bullied/harassed them. By this I mean not apologizing on behalf of the bully, and protecting the victim first."  
– 15-year-old from Colorado

"The president for my university did send out an email shortly after the election just

reiterating that this is a school for all people and that everyone is welcome here, which I thought was nice. [O]ur campus has a lot of international students and students of color, so it's important that the school is proud of that and protects them." – 18-year-old from Oklahoma

"The best way for adults to reassure youth, especially minorities, is to get involved in the community and take action to make the world a better place, whether it is through volunteering at a homeless shelter, working on a campaign, or something else. Actions speak louder than words." – 15-year-old from North Carolina