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Human Rights Campaign Unveils Results of Largest LGBT Survey in Mississippi History

Earlier this year, the Human Rights Campaign (HRC) undertook the largest survey of its kind to date on the needs, experiences, and priorities of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people in Mississippi.

The results show that LGBT Mississippians are just like their friends and family members—living, working, volunteering, and going to church within their communities.

However, the assessment also finds that LGBT people face daunting amounts of harassment and discrimination and enjoy no legal protections at either the local or state level.

To address these disparities, HRC launched Project One America. With the goal of improving the lived experience of LGBT people, Project One America will work to change hearts and minds, advance enduring legal protections, and build more inclusive institutions for LGBT people from the church pew to the workplace.

What did the survey find?

The survey shows LGBT people are participating members of their respective communities and don't want to leave their homes.

- 57 percent of respondents have called Mississippi home for more than 20 years.
- 10 percent have served, or are serving, in the armed forces.
- More than half (53 percent) volunteer in their communities.
- 60 percent donate money to charitable groups and nonprofits.
- Faith is an important part of the lives of LGBT people. In fact, half are people of faith, including 63 percent of African American people. 48 percent of respondents have donated money to their respective houses of worship.
- Raising families is also a core component of the lives of LGBT people. 75 percent of those surveyed 18-25 intend to have children one day.

- Mississippi has the highest rates of same sex couples raising children according to a [2010 Census study by the Williams Institute](#).

Despite LGBT people embracing their respective communities, the survey also revealed they face some very harsh realities.

In the workplace:

- 24 percent of all respondents have experienced employment discrimination and 38 percent have experienced harassment at work.
- 41 percent of LGBT households earning less than \$45,000 have experienced harassment at work.
- Only one in three employed LGBT people have worked for an employer where they are protected from discrimination.
- A third of LGBT workers in Mississippi are not open with everyone in the workplace due to fear they will not be considered for advancement or development opportunities.
- More people faced workplace harassment in rural Mississippi (54 percent) than those in urban settings (37 percent).

Family, community, and faith:

- 41 percent have experienced harassment by members of their own family.
- 48 percent have experienced harassment in public establishments.
- 23 percent have experienced harassment from a public servant like a police officer or fire fighter.
- 22 percent have experienced harassment monthly or more at their respective houses of worship.

In healthcare:

- Almost half (47 percent) don't consider their doctor LGBT friendly.
- According to the [Kaiser Family Foundation](#), 84 percent of Mississippians are insured. But just 74 percent of LGBT respondents surveyed by HRC have health insurance and only 23 percent have access to partner benefits.

At school:

- 46 percent have experienced harassment at school.
- 42 percent of respondents say harassment is most common at the high school level.
- A third of LGBT students in rural areas have experienced harassment in school on a weekly basis.
- More LGBT students have been open to their peers (29 percent) rather than their teachers (25 percent) or counselors (21 percent).
- LGBT students from lower-income families (\$20,000 or less) have been harassed more frequently at school (45 percent).

Given these facts, the survey also questioned LGBT Mississippians on their priorities which they listed as follows:

- Preventing harassment and violence against LGBT people
- Reducing the stigma of HIV/AIDS and advancing awareness of treatment and prevention
- Increasing workplace protections
- Supporting LGBT youth in schools and their communities
- Ensuring LGBT families have the protections and dignity they deserve through marriage

Armed with this information, what will HRC do about it?

HRC Mississippi will work to create an environment where LGBT people can safely share their lives, hopes, struggles and dreams with their neighbors, relatives, members of their communities and policy makers. This work is important because LGBT Mississippians have no:

- Legal recognition for their relationships or families
- Rights to jointly adopt children
- Protections from discrimination in employment, housing, or public accommodations
- State protections from hate crimes
- Anti-bullying protections for LGBT students

How was the survey conducted?

HRC commissioned Anzalone Liszt Grove Research to conduct the online survey of its membership and the LGBT communities across Mississippi. 632 respondents participated in the online survey during the course of six weeks from February 6 to March 20, 2014. Survey participants, which represent various groups within the LGBT community, were recruited through email, social media, and online ads.

The Human Rights Campaign (HRC) is America's largest civil rights organization working to achieve lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) equality. HRC's Project One America--an unprecedented effort to dramatically expand LGBT equality in the South through permanent campaigns in Mississippi, Alabama, and Arkansas—is generously supported by the HRC Foundation.