

SUPPORTING AND CARING FOR OUR

# BISEXUAL YOUTH



HUMAN  
RIGHTS  
CAMPAIGN  
FOUNDATION



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HUMAN  
RIGHTS  
CAMPAIGN  
FOUNDATION

The Human Rights Campaign Foundation improves the lives of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people by working to increase understanding and encourage the adoption of LGBT-inclusive policies and practices. The HRC Foundation builds support for LGBT people among families and friends, co-workers and employers, pastors and parishioners, doctors and teachers, neighbors and the general public. Through an array of programs and projects, the HRC Foundation enhances the lived experiences of LGBT people and their families, as it changes hearts and minds across America and around the globe. The HRC Foundation is a non-profit, tax-exempt 501(c)(3) organization.



**BiNet USA**

As an umbrella organization and voice for bisexual people, BiNet USA facilitates the development of bisexual communities, promotes bisexual visibility, advocates for bisexual community interests and collects and distributes educational information regarding bisexuality. To accomplish these goals, BiNet USA helps facilitate the development and growth of bisexual organizations and individuals across the United States, and encourages participation and organizing on local, regional and national levels.



Bisexual Organizing Project's (BOP's) mission is to build, serve and advocate for an empowered bisexual, pansexual, fluid, queer, and unlabeled (bi+) community to promote social justice. BOP was founded in the late 1990's by Minnesota bisexual leaders who were active in local, regional and national bi+ organizing. BOP's initial focus was running the Bisexual Empowerment Conference: A Uniting, Supportive Experience (BECAUSE). The conference continues today as the largest, longest running conference by, for and about bi+ individuals and their allies. BOP's year round programming includes community events, research, outreach, advocacy and education. BOP is a Silver-level GuideStar Exchange participant.



Bisexual Resource Center

Founded in 1985, the **Bisexual Resource Center** is the oldest national bisexual organization in the U.S. that advocates for bisexual visibility and raises awareness about bisexuality throughout the LGBT and straight communities by creating and distributing print and online resources, and by community building with other organizations. The BRC envisions a world where love is celebrated, regardless of sexual orientation or gender expression.

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# INTRODUCTION

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**“I’m proud to be bisexual. And I’m proud to say that I’m proud to be bisexual because a lot of people can’t do that.”**

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The lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) community is making great strides toward legal and social equality across the United States. Thanks to the leadership of bisexual advocates, the bisexual community has become increasingly visible throughout this time of progress. For example, the first White House Bisexual Roundtable, held in 2013, brought together researchers and community leaders to share expertise with the Obama Administration. Bisexuality has also been a featured topic in recent major media publications including *The New York Times*<sup>1</sup> and *Cosmopolitan* magazine.<sup>2</sup>

Those who research gender and sexuality are also addressing the bisexual population. As a recent study from the Pew Research Center shows, bisexuals make up about 40 percent of the adult LGBT population, and about 50 percent of the LGB population.<sup>3</sup> Another recent study released by the Williams Institute reports that “nearly two-thirds of LGB parents are bisexual.”<sup>4</sup> And the Fenway Institute, the leading LGBT health research organization, has created a bisexual health think-tank to address the significant health disparities that bisexual adults face, including increased likelihood of mental health problems, lack of preventative care and general poor health.<sup>5</sup>

Given these disparities, it follows that bisexual youth would face a unique set of challenges that affect their ability to flourish in their families, schools and communities. Learning more about these youth will allow parents, caregivers, social workers, teachers and other youth-serving professionals to more effectively nurture and guide them toward successful and happy futures.

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In 2012, the Human Rights Campaign conducted a groundbreaking survey of more than 10,000 LGBT youth, ages 13 - 17, in the United States. The survey asked participants to talk about the levels of acceptance and support they felt from their families, peers and communities, as well as their participation in both school and extracurricular activities. This report focuses on the nearly 40 percent of survey participants who identified as bisexual. It is important to note that while this is one of the largest surveys of its kind, the findings are not representative of the entire U.S. LGBT youth population. The findings do align, however, with many lessons learned by those who work with LGBT youth.

The survey responses and lived experiences described by the participants make it clear that the people and institutions that serve these youth – including those that are more accepting of lesbian and gay youth – are failing to address the needs of bisexual youth. This report is designed to offer a more thorough understanding of the issues facing bisexual youth, and suggest ways that their peers and the adults in their lives can better support them and help them thrive. With these goals in mind, the report answers four main questions:

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- 1. Who are bisexual youth in terms of gender, race, school level and where they reside (e.g., cities and towns, rural or suburban)?**
  - 2. What are the issues facing bisexual youth, and how are those issues different from those facing their peers?**
  - 3. How does bisexual identity affect young people’s well-being, and their relationships with family, school, and community?**
  - 4. How can parents, educators, youth-serving agencies, and advocacy organizations better address the unique needs of bisexual youth?**

Above all, this report demonstrates the need for continued dialogue about bisexuality and the issues and concerns of bisexual youth.

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# WHO ARE BISEXUAL YOUTH?

In simplest terms, a bisexual person is someone who can be attracted to more than one gender; but adults and youth who identify as bisexual sometimes describe themselves differently. Many bisexual adults have embraced the definition proposed by longtime bisexual leader, national speaker and award-winning activist Robyn Ochs:

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**“I call myself bisexual because I acknowledge that I have in myself the potential to be attracted – romantically and/or sexually – to people of more than one sex and/or gender, not necessarily at the same time, not necessarily in the same way, and not necessarily to the same degree.”**

**–Robyn Ochs**

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This report analyzes survey responses from four groups of youth whose identities fall within this definition.

**3808**

youth who identified themselves explicitly as

**BISEXUAL**

in one of two ways:

- By selecting **“Bisexual”** from a list of sexual orientations provided to them
- By selecting the **“I prefer to identify myself as”** option and writing in a description of their sexual orientation that included the words **“bisexual”** or **“bi.”** For example, **“bisexual, mostly like guys,”** **“bi-romantic,”** or **“extremely bi.”**

**671**

youth who selected the **“I prefer to identify myself as”** option and wrote in a description of their sexual orientation that included

**PANSEXUAL.**

**We are including the voices of all of these youth who fall into this broader interpretation of bisexuality because, even with the variation in language, youth in all four of these categories share many of the same experiences, needs and concerns.**

For simplicity, we focus throughout the Findings section on the data from the 3808 youth who identified explicitly as bisexual. Where differences in the experiences of these four groups were found, they are explored.

#### SURVEY QUESTION ON SEXUAL ORIENTATION

**Do you identify your sexual orientation as:**

- Heterosexual/straight
- Gay
- Lesbian
- Bisexual
- Queer
- I prefer to identify myself as: (SPECIFY)
- Decline to answer

**354**

youth who selected

**QUEER**

from the list of sexual orientations.

**109**

youth who chose **“I prefer to identify myself as”** and described their sexual orientation with an array of other terms falling into Ochs’ definition (e.g., **“mostly lesbian,”** **“gay with straight tendencies,”** **“heteroflexible,”**

**“omnisexual,”** **“fluid,”** **“gender blind,”** **“open-minded,”** **“polysexual,”** **“homoflexible,”** and **“lesbian with exceptions”**). These youth are referred to as

**OTHER BISEXUAL**

throughout the report.

## TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

The terms and definitions below are a few of the most important for understanding this report and broader LGBT issues.

### BISEXUAL

A person who can be attracted to more than one sex, gender or gender identity. “Bi” is often used as an abbreviation.

### BIPHOBIA

Prejudice, fear, or hatred directed toward bisexual people.

### GENDER IDENTITY

One’s innermost concept of self as male, female, a blend of both or neither — how individuals perceive themselves and what they call themselves. One’s gender identity can be the same or different from their sex assigned at birth.

### SEXUAL ORIENTATION

Describes an individual’s enduring physical, emotional, romantic and/or spiritual attraction to another person. Gender identity and sexual orientation are not the same.

### LESBIAN

A woman who is emotionally, romantically, sexually and relationally attracted to women.

### GAY

A word describing a man or a woman who is emotionally, romantically, sexually and relationally attracted to members of the same sex.

### TRANSGENDER

An umbrella term for people whose gender identity and/or expression is different from cultural expectations based on the sex they were assigned at birth. Being transgender does not imply any specific sexual orientation. Therefore, transgender people may identify as straight, gay, lesbian, bisexual, pansexual, queer, etc.

### PANSEXUAL

A person who can be attracted to any sex, gender or gender identity.

### QUEER

A term people often use to express fluid identities and orientations.

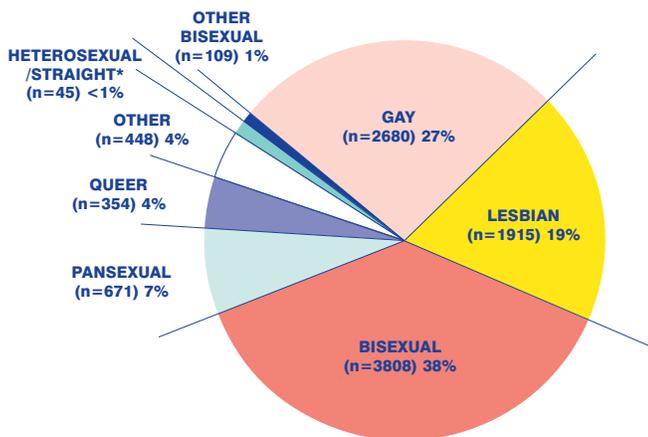
### GENDER-EXPANSIVE

Conveys a wider, more flexible range of gender identity and/or expression than typically associated with the binary gender system. For the purposes of this report, the term “gender-expansive” is used to identify the youth in the survey who identified their gender as transgender or selected the option “I prefer to identify my gender as: \_\_\_\_\_.”

# DEMO GRAPHICS

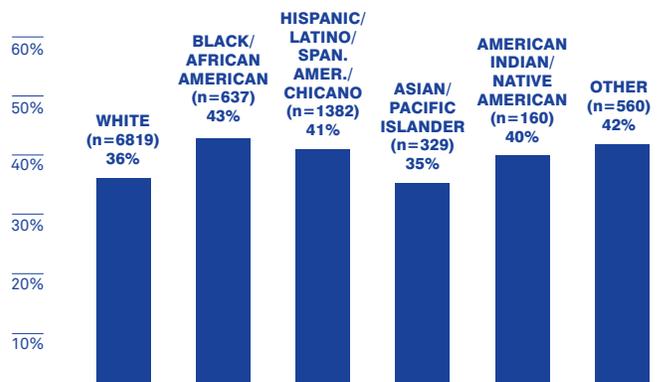
## A LOOK AT ALL 10,030 LGBT YOUTH SURVEY PARTICIPANTS

**SEXUAL ORIENTATION OF LGBT YOUTH PARTICIPANTS**



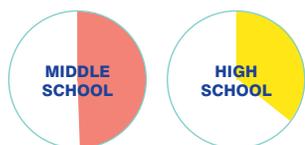
\*Gender-expansive youth who identify as heterosexual/straight.

**PERCENT OF LGBT YOUTH BY RACE WHO IDENTIFIED AS BISEXUAL**



# A LOOK AT THE BISEXUAL SURVEY PARTICIPANTS

The charts on the next page show gender, race, school level and living area breakdowns for each of the four groups of youth discussed in this report. When reviewing the demographics of the youth included in this report, it is important to remember that the findings do not represent LGBT youth nationally since the survey sample was not random. Nonetheless, here are a few highlights:



Half of the LGBT youth in middle school in this sample identify as bisexual compared to **36** percent of high school youth

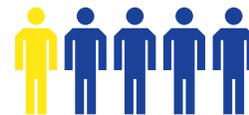
Overall, higher percentages of younger youth identify as bisexual in this sample while the percent of youth who identify as lesbian/gay is greater with older youth. The percentage of youth who identify as pansexual (between **6** and **8** percent) or queer (between **2** and **5** percent) are more similar across all age groups.

## FEMALE



**1 in 2** females in the sample identify as bisexual

## MALE



**1 in 5** males in the sample identify as bisexual

## TRANSGENDER



**1 in 4** transgender youth in the sample identify as bisexual

## OTHER GENDER-EXPANSIVE

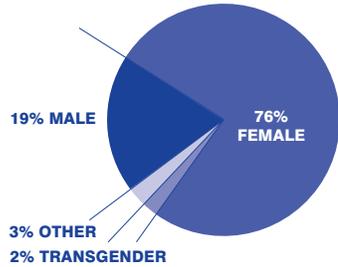


**1 in 5** other gender-expansive youth identify as bisexual

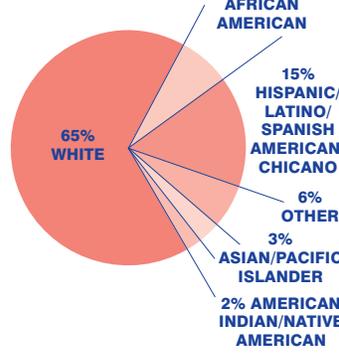
*See the appendix for more detailed breakdown of demographics.*

## 3808 "BISEXUAL" YOUTH

### GENDER

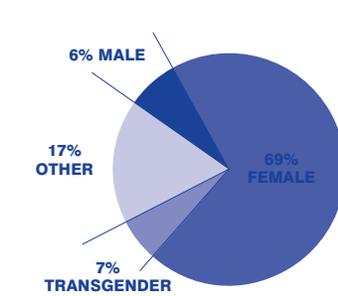


### RACE

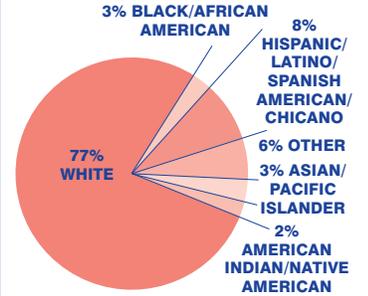


## 671 "PANSEXUAL" YOUTH

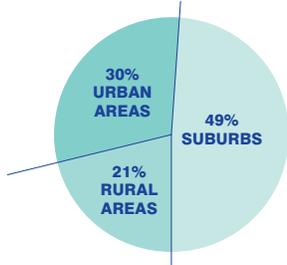
### GENDER



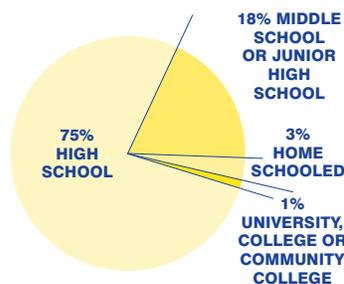
### RACE



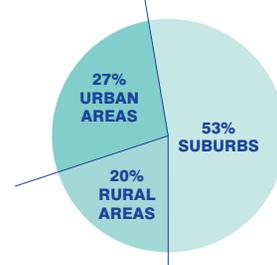
### LIVING AREA



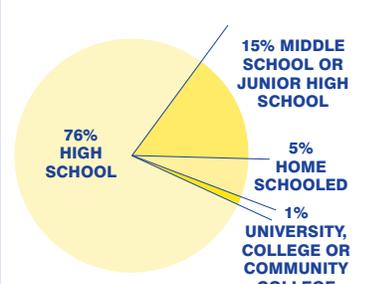
### SCHOOL LEVEL\*



### LIVING AREA

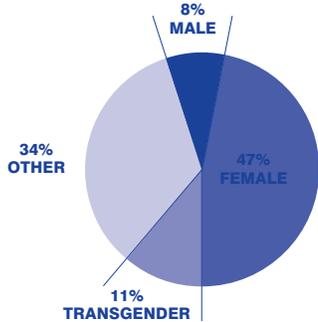


### SCHOOL LEVEL\*

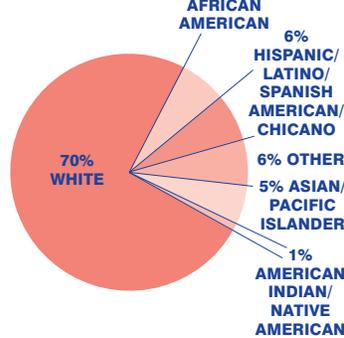


## 354 "QUEER" YOUTH

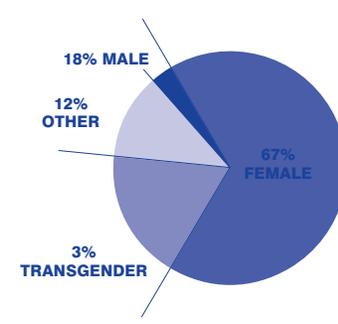
### GENDER



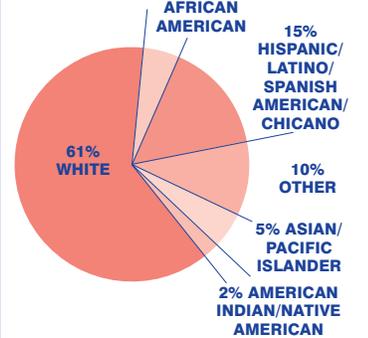
### RACE



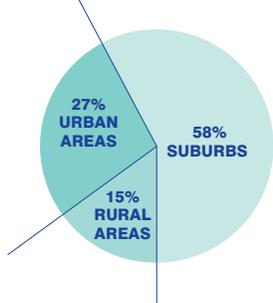
### GENDER



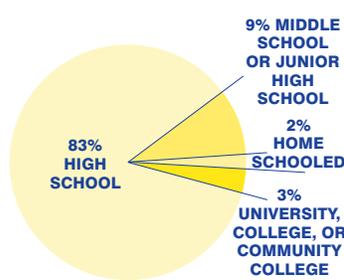
### RACE



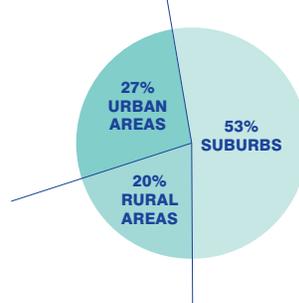
### LIVING AREA



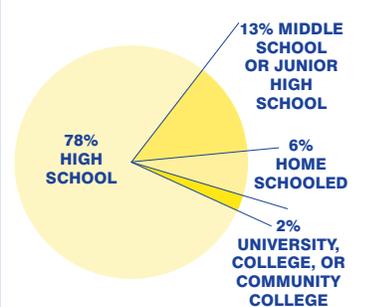
### SCHOOL LEVEL\*



### LIVING AREA



### SCHOOL LEVEL\*



\*Does not include youth who reported being out of school or checked "other" school level.

# FINDINGS

The survey findings demonstrate that bisexual youth struggle with many of the same issues faced by their lesbian and gay peers around coming out, bullying and harassment, and family and community acceptance, as well as additional challenges unique to their bisexual identities. Throughout this section we compare the experiences of bisexual youth with their straight\* and lesbian and gay peers.



Broadly speaking, bisexual youth reported lower levels than their gay and lesbian peers of family acceptance and knowledge of and access to social support systems. Another noteworthy way in which bisexual youth participants differ from their lesbian and gay peers is in their awareness of people and institutions that could help them through their journey to self-acceptance. Bisexual youth were much less likely to be aware of safe spaces for LGBT youth in their community, or to know a supportive adult in their family, school, or community whom they could turn to for support. Bisexual youth were also slightly less likely than gay and lesbian youth to know whether their state government, doctors, or local businesses were accepting of LGBT people. In short, bisexual youth often struggle with their sexual orientation and frequently feel like they have no one to turn to for help.

\* A note on the "straight" peers: This group consists of 472 youth who did not identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender. However, it is important not to conflate gender identity and sexual orientation. There may be youth in this group who have transgender experiences but are no longer identifying as transgender. And youth who identified as transgender and straight were not included in this straight group.

This lack of support is reflected in the ways that bisexual youth rated their happiness and their optimism about the future.



## OUT

Bisexual youth were much less likely to be out to their families, friends, peers, and communities.

They reported much lower levels of happiness, and were less optimistic about their potential for achieving their ambitions including establishing life-long romantic relationships, attending college and having successful careers.

While all youth who identify as LGBT have distinct issues and concerns, it is clear that bisexual youth have needs that are unique, due to myths, stereotypes, and stigma surrounding bisexuality. Interestingly, many of these findings mirror the challenges facing transgender and other gender-expansive youth, which are explored in an earlier report on the almost 1000 transgender and other gender-expansive youth in the survey ([www.hrc.org/youth-gender](http://www.hrc.org/youth-gender)).

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE **ANXIETY**  
**POVERTY** SUICIDE  
**BISEXUAL ADULTS**  
POOR GENERAL HEALTH **SEXUAL ASSAULT**  
**DEPRESSION**

These findings represent risk factors that put bisexual youth on a trajectory toward the issues that have been found to disproportionately affect bisexual adults.<sup>6</sup>

This report, then, is a call to action for us all to gain a better understanding of how to support and care for our bisexual youth and help them become happier, healthier and more successful adults.

# PERSONAL WELL-BEING

## HAPPINESS



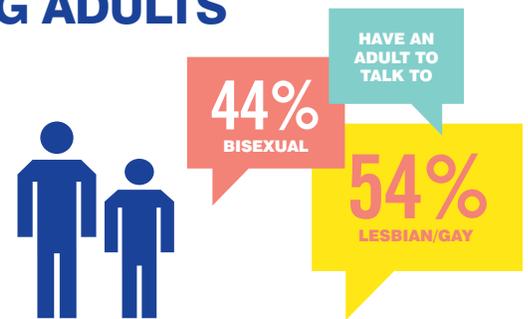
Across the board, LGBT youth report troublingly low levels of happiness. Only **5 percent** of bisexual youth reported being “very happy.” **Five percent** of the pansexual and the “other” bisexual youth also said they were “very happy” and only **4 percent** of queer-identified youth said the same. This is compared to **8 percent** of lesbian and gay youth surveyed who characterized themselves as “very happy.” More than four times as many straight youth than bisexual youth (**21 percent**) reported they were “very happy.”

## DRUGS AND ALCOHOL

**Fifty-six percent** of bisexual youth “strongly” or “somewhat” agreed that they have experimented with alcohol and drugs, a rate slightly higher than lesbian and gay youth (**50 percent**) and more than **twice as high as straight youth (22 percent)**.

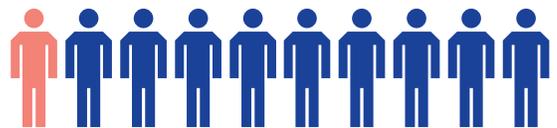
# 2X

## CARING ADULTS



Only **44 percent** of bisexual youth responded that there was an adult in their family they could turn to if they were sad compared to slightly more than half (**54 percent**) of lesbian and gay youth. Only **56 percent** of bisexual youth knew such a trusted adult outside of their families, much less than the **65 percent** of lesbian and gay youth who reported knowing a caring adult outside their families.

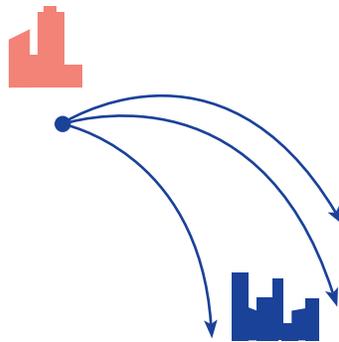
## SENSE OF BELONGING



Only **1 in 10** bisexual youth (**10 percent**) reported feeling like they “definitely fit in” in their community. For the pansexual youth this figure was just **4 percent**. Queer youth reported the highest percentage who believed that their community is getting “much” or “somewhat” better (**61 percent**), while only **44 percent** of bisexual youth and **53 percent** of lesbian/gay youth reported the same.

## LIKELIHOOD OF ACHIEVEMENTS

**58 percent** of the bisexual youth “strongly” or “somewhat” agreed that they would need to move to another city or town or another part of the country to really feel accepted. And when asked about the likelihood of achieving their ambitions, bisexual youth (like their lesbian and gay peers) believed they were less likely to do so if they remain in their current city.



However, in almost every case, bisexual youth are slightly more optimistic than their lesbian and gay peers when it comes to the prospect of achieving their dreams if they remain in their current city.

The exception to this trend is queer-identified youth, who showed the least optimism about their future ambitions compared to the other groups considered for this report. For example, queer youth expected to “be happy” in the future if they stayed in their current city at a rate half that of their lesbian, gay and bisexual peers (**12 percent** for queer youth vs. **24 percent** for LGB youth). Queer youth also expressed much less optimism than the other groups when asked about getting married and raising children.

*See the Appendix for more information on the youths’ perceptions of the likelihood of their future ambitions.*

“I can’t wait to move somewhere where there is a more accepting community.”

“I’m just hoping that I can get through the year and have better luck in college.”

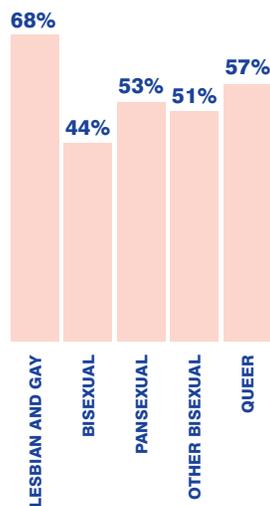
### BISEXUAL YOUTH REPORTING AMBITION AS “VERY LIKELY TO HAPPEN”

Future Ambition	Future Ambition If Stay In Same City
<b>GO TO COLLEGE</b>	
<b>70%</b>	<b>47%</b>
<b>HAVE A GOOD JOB</b>	
<b>55%</b>	<b>28%</b>
<b>ESTABLISH A LIFELONG PARTNERSHIP WITH SOMEONE YOU LOVE</b>	
<b>55%</b>	<b>30%</b>
<b>BE HAPPY</b>	
<b>51%</b>	<b>24%</b>
<b>GET MARRIED TO SOMEONE YOU LOVE</b>	
<b>53%</b>	<b>28%</b>
<b>BE AN ACTIVE PART OF YOUR COMMUNITY</b>	
<b>30%</b>	<b>19%</b>
<b>RAISE CHILDREN</b>	
<b>45%</b>	<b>31%</b>

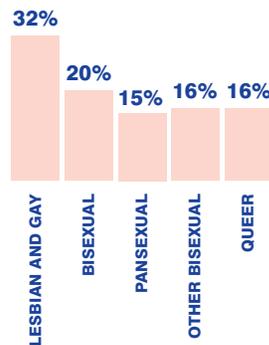
# COMING OUT

Across the board, a smaller percentage of bisexual youth reported being out than their lesbian and gay peers. This difference is most striking when it comes to being out to family, classmates, teachers and at school generally.

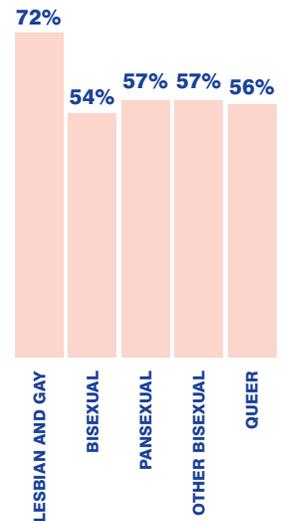
## 1 OUT TO IMMEDIATE FAMILY



## 2 OUT TO EXTENDED FAMILY



## 3 OUT AT SCHOOL



The survey revealed a great deal about the struggles bisexual youth face while coming out. Much of this information came from open-ended responses that gave the youth a chance to describe their experiences. Bisexual youth described many similar concerns as lesbian and gay youth, such as family acceptance and judgment from their peers. The nature of these concerns, however, showed ways in which bisexual youth face challenges unique to their bisexual identities due to the pervasiveness of biphobia and myths and stereotypes that trivialize or undermine the legitimacy of bisexual identity.

**They are told that:**

- **their sexuality doesn't exist or is not real**
- **being bisexual is "just a phase"**
- **they are confused, indecisive, or seeking attention**
- **they are highly sexually active or attracted to everyone**

In addition to these myths, some members of the bisexual community face other concerns that complicate their coming out process. Several of the respondents identified as both bisexual and transgender. This created a situation where they had multiple closets to come out of, and intertwined issues of sexual orientation and gender identity to address. The tendency among many to conflate these two aspects of identity makes the coming out process even more difficult.

One teen wrote:

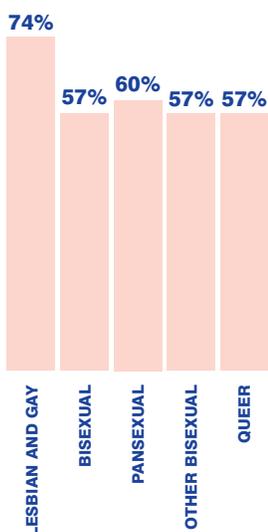
**"People have a hard time seeing the difference between gender identity and sexual orientation and don't see how I could be both trans and bisexual."**

Another teen explained:

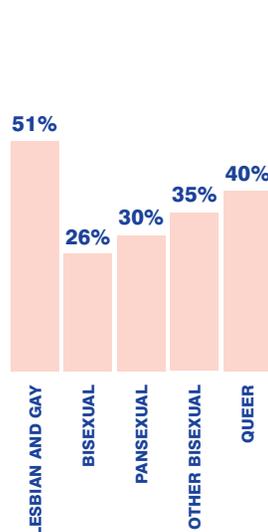
**"I don't think people would understand me if I said I'm a bisexual male trapped in a female body... people will wonder why I can't just be happy being a bisexual female because that means I like both anyways. But what they don't understand is that I FEEL MALE."**

**Unfortunately the pervasiveness of myths and stereotypes about bisexuality is not limited to people outside the LGBT community. Biphobia exists within the LGBT community and bisexual youth are aware of their marginalization.**

**4 OUT TO CLASSMATES**



**5 OUT TO TEACHERS**



**“I WISH THAT MORE PEOPLE INSIDE THE GAY COMMUNITY ITSELF WOULD SUPPORT MY DECISION TO CALL MYSELF BISEXUAL. I AM NOT BEING SELFISH. I AM NOT A LIAR. I AM NOT GAY. I AM NOT STRAIGHT. I AM BISEXUAL.”**

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**“I CAME OUT TO MY FAMILY AND THEY DIDN'T BELIEVE ME.”**

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**“I WOULD LIKE THE PRESSURE TO**

**‘PICK A**

---

**“THE ONE TIME I BROUGHT THE ISSUE UP WITH MY MOM, SHE SAID THAT I WOULD GROW OUT OF IT, AND THEN IGNORED IT.”**

**“BEING GAY IS UNDERSTOOD IN MY FAMILY, BUT BEING BISEXUAL IS NOT.”**

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**“I FEEL LIKE IF I WERE TO COME OUT AS BISEXUAL, PEOPLE WOULD JUST THINK I'M A SLUT.”**

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**“MY PARENTS AREN'T HOMOPHOBIC, BUT, WHEN IT COMES TO ME, THEY AREN'T ACCEPTING AT ALL. THEY SAY I CAN'T BE BI.**

**I HAVE TO BE GAY OR STRAIGHT.”**

**“WHEN I TELL MALES ABOUT MY SEXUALITY, I GET MANY REMARKS LIKE ‘THAT’S SO HOT’, WHICH I FEEL FETISHIZES MY SEXUAL ORIENTATION.”**

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**“I’M TIRED OF BEING TOLD IT’S A PHASE.”**

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**SIDE’**

**“I’VE HAD PEOPLE TELL ME THAT MY LIFE IS WORTHLESS BECAUSE I’M BISEXUAL, AND THAT I’M NOTHING.”**

**TO STOP. IT’S VERY FRUSTRATING.”**

---

**“I TRIED COMING OUT TO MY MOTHER, BUT SHE ADAMANTLY CLAIMED THAT YOU COULD ONLY BE GAY OR STRAIGHT AND THAT THERE WAS NO IN-BETWEEN.”**

---

**“AS A BISEXUAL, I FEEL SHUNNED BY THE GAY AND LESBIAN COMMUNITY.”**

**“MY MOTHER SAID: ‘YOU’RE SAYING YOU’RE BISEXUAL, WHAT IS THAT?! BISEXUALITY ISN’T REAL.’”**

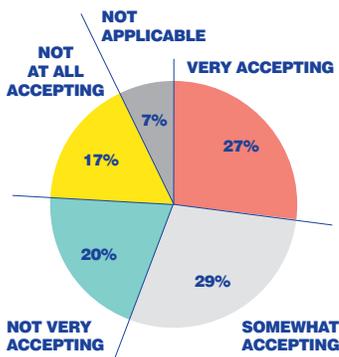
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**“THEY JUST THINK I’M CONFUSED.”**

# HOME & FAMILY ACCEPTANCE

“I’m afraid they will no longer love me the minute I tell them.”

## FAMILY ACCEPTANCE OF BISEXUAL YOUTH



Youth were asked to rate their level of acceptance within their community, family, peer group and schools. In several areas, bisexual youth reported slightly less acceptance than their lesbian and gay peers. The most pronounced difference was in the level of acceptance among their families.

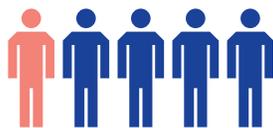
Slightly more than a quarter (**27 percent**) of bisexual youth reported that their families were “very accepting” compared to **33 percent** of lesbian and gay youth. Queer youth, however, had the highest rates of family acceptance with **36 percent** saying that their families were “very accepting.”

“Though my parents are accepting towards gays and lesbians, my mom told me she thought bisexual people should just make up their minds. That made me unsure of whether or not I could tell them.”

# SCHOOL AND PEERS

“When I make new friends, I let them know that I’m bisexual. If they accept me, then good. If they don’t, there’s the door.”

## ACCEPTANCE



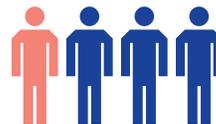
1 in 5 bisexual youth (**22%**) reported that their school was “very accepting” and **29%** said the same about their peers.

## AFTER SCHOOL ACTIVITIES



The activities with the highest participation rates for all survey respondents were the after-school activities such as drama, debate, band or academic clubs. The same is true for bisexual, pansexual, queer and the “other” bisexual-identified youth. More than one third of these youth reported participating in these activities “very often.”

## EXCLUSION AND HARASSMENT



Nearly 1 in 4 bisexual youth (**24 percent**) reported frequently or often being excluded by their peers because they are different. **Thirty-two percent** of the pansexual youth reported the same – in fact, pansexual youth reported slightly higher levels of exclusion and harassment in several areas including exclusion by peers and being called names involving anti-gay slurs.

**29%**  
VERBAL

**Twenty-nine percent** of bisexual youth reported being frequently or often verbally harassed and called names at school.

**Twenty-eight percent** reported frequent verbal harassment involving anti-gay slurs such as “fag.”

**7%**  
PHYSICAL

A much smaller percent of bisexual youth reported being physically assaulted frequently or often at school (**7 percent**) and outside of school (**5 percent**).

While the rates of harassment that bisexual youth reported both in school and outside of school were comparable to those reported by lesbian and gay youth, the open-ended responses revealed that **bisexual teen girls reported being subjected to sexual harassment** related to their bisexual identities.

“I have guys ask me if they can watch me with a girl. I get inappropriately touched.”

“People call me a whore because I’m bi.”

**76%** ♀

A Williams Institute study shows that most people who identify as bisexual are women;<sup>7</sup> similarly, 76 percent of the bisexual youth in this survey are female, and many of them are being sexually harassed.

“I’ve been pushed in the hall, called ‘dirty homo’ and ‘dyke,’ been told that I’m going to hell, that I should be ashamed of who I am.”

# LIFE ONLINE



**Twenty-two percent** of bisexual youth report participating in an online LGBT community “very often.” This is a rate slightly lower than

their lesbian and gay peers (**26 percent**). Queer youth report the highest percentage of participation in an online LGBT community (**36 percent**).

More than half (**51 percent**) of bisexual youth “strongly agreed” that they were more honest about who they are online than in the real world.

## ACCESS TO AND KNOWLEDGE OF RESOURCES



**Bisexual youth were less likely than their gay and lesbian peers to know whether there was a Gay-Straight Alliance at their school or an LGBT community center in their area.**

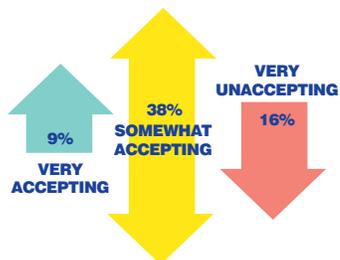
They were also less likely to know about community leaders and institutions that could serve as sources of support and affirmation and whether they were protected from discrimination by state or local laws or ordinances. Finally, they were slightly less likely to know whether their state or local government, their doctor, or local businesses were accepting of LGBT people.

**Compared to their LGBT peers, queer youth reported greater access to community resources.**

For example, more queer youth were aware of a place in their community that helps LGBT youth: (**41 percent**) versus bisexual youth (**18 percent**) or lesbian/gay youth (**22 percent**). A greater percentage of queer youth also reported having a club at their school that supports LGBT youth (**63 percent**) compared to bisexual youth (**45 percent**) or lesbian/gay youth (**48 percent**).

# IN THE COMMUNITY

## ACCEPTANCE



When asked about the level of acceptance of LGBT people within their community, only **9 percent** of bisexual youth rated their community “very accepting.” A larger percentage of bisexual youth (**38 percent**) felt that their communities were “somewhat accepting” of LGBT people. More queer youth report their community to be “very accepting” (**14 percent**).

**Sixteen percent** of bisexual youth said their community is “very unaccepting.”

## ACCEPTANCE OF YOUTH’S CHURCH/PLACE OF WORSHIP



Churches and places of worship received the lowest percentage of bisexual youth that reported them “very accepting” (**2 percent**). A slightly higher percentage of bisexual youth rated *their own* church/place of worship as “very accepting” (**7 percent**).

**Thirty-five percent** of bisexual youth rated churches and places of worship as “not at all accepting.” **Twenty-four percent** rated *their own* church/place of worship as “not at all accepting.”

A greater percentage of queer youth reported knowing a specific church or synagogue that provides a welcoming environment (**32 percent**) than bisexual youth (**15 percent**) or lesbian/gay youth (**19 percent**).

## PARTICIPATION

Youth were asked to rate their participation level in nine activities.

**Similar to lesbian and gay youth, more than half of the bisexual youth reported never participating in the majority of extra-curricular activities listed in the survey including community sports leagues, church youth groups, or service organizations.**

The only activities for which bisexual youth reported relatively high levels of participation were **afterschool activities** (e.g., band, debate, or academic clubs), **LGBT organizations at school**, and in **online communities** geared toward LGBT youth. If it weren't for these three types of activities, bisexual youth would largely miss out on key social activities for their development and growth. However, even these activities fail to engage a majority of bisexual youth. For example, afterschool activities had the largest number of bisexual youth reporting that they participated "very often." Yet a quarter of bisexual youth (**25 percent**) said they "never" participate in these activities.

Interestingly, **pansexual** and **queer** youth report the highest participation rates of all LGBT youth in afterschool activities, LGBT organizations at school and online communities.

## Bisexual Youth Participation Rates for 9 Activities



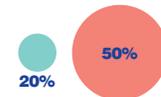
AFTER SCHOOL ACTIVITIES  
(E.G., DRAMA, DEBATE, BAND OR ACADEMIC CLUBS)



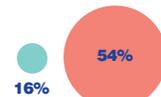
ONLINE LGBT COMMUNITY



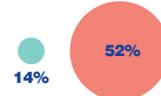
LGBT ORGS AT SCHOOL  
(E.G., GAY STRAIGHT ALLIANCES)



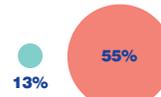
SPORTS FOR SCHOOL OR  
COMMUNITY LEAGUE/CLUB



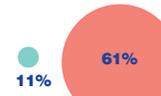
CHURCH OR RELIGIOUS SERVICES



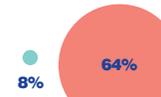
WORK AT A PAYING JOB



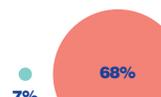
CHURCH OR RELIGIOUS  
YOUTH GROUP



SERVICE ORGS (E.G., BOY SCOUTS,  
GIRL SCOUTS, YMCA OR KEY CLUB)



LGBT ORGS OUTSIDE OF SCHOOL  
(E.G., LGBT YOUTH CENTER)



# BECOMING AN ALLY

## So how can we do a better job of reaching these youth, supporting their identities, and meeting their unique needs?

For anyone who interacts with youth, the first step is to acknowledge and talk about bisexuality, particularly when you're talking about topics like dating, relationships or sex. It's also important to use the language used by youth. Go beyond talking about gay and lesbian relationships and use terms like bisexual, queer, questioning, and pansexual. Let youth talk to you and tell you the terms they use. Also be inclusive of terms related to gender identity, such as transgender, genderfluid and genderqueer. By hearing this language used, bisexual and other youth can hear that their identities are legitimate and respected.

Another way that everyone can be an ally to bisexual youth is by calling attention to myths and stereotypes about bisexual youth and adults. Be mindful of the many pervasive myths and stereotypes addressed in this report and dispel them whenever you hear them. Correct your friends, family and coworkers when they perpetuate those stereotypes in conversation. Let people know that it is not okay to make generalizations about anyone's sexual orientation.

### EDUCATE YOURSELF

The first step for anyone wanting to be a better ally for bisexual youth is to educate yourself about bisexuality and the bisexual community. Learn about the kinds of issues listed in this report, and seek out the additional resources listed in this guide. Be aware of the prejudices that you might hold about bisexuality, and work toward changing your assumptions.

### FOR PARENTS AND CAREGIVERS

As your child comes to understand their sexual orientation, you may develop concerns about their safety, or whether they will be accepted by their

**“My family is very accepting. They love me for who I am and for what I am. They told me it didn't matter who I loved as long as I'm happy.”**

peers or extended families.

**Talk to your children about their sexual orientation and let them know that not only will you support them if they are gay or lesbian, but also if they are bisexual, queer, pansexual or questioning.**

Insist that the people surrounding your child are respectful. Don't allow others who are uncomfortable with your child's sexual orientation to put them down. Set clear expectations with others about how you want your child to be treated and referred to.

If your child comes out to you as bisexual, read all that you can about bisexuality, and talk to other parents of bisexual children. If needed, you can **seek advice from support groups, advocacy organizations, conferences, or online forums** where you can talk to people who might have had similar questions and experiences with their own children.

### FOR EDUCATORS

Since bisexual youth were much less likely than lesbian and gay youth to be out in school, and to their classmates and teachers, educators can play an important role in improving the well-being of bisexual youth. When teach-

ers and administrators talk to students about bullying and harassment, they should be sure to be as inclusive of bisexual youth as possible by modeling inclusive language.

### FOR LGBT ADVOCATES

Those who already work or volunteer in capacities that support LGBT youth or adults must strive to be as inclusive as possible by **using terms like “LGBT” when referring to the community, rather than talking about “gay” rights.**

When organizing events, be intentional about including and identifying openly bisexual participants and leaders, and include content specifically related to bisexuality to give the bisexual community a voice. It is especially important to show bisexual youth examples of successful people who identify like they do.

**Most importantly, we can hold ourselves and other members of the community accountable for biphobia, for addressing the disparate needs of the bisexual community and for making sure that bisexual youth and adults never feel marginalized, dismissed or stereotyped.**

**“I feel I am treated differently in my school because I'm female and bisexual... The teachers sometimes even preach hate against those that are not straight.”**

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# ADDITIONAL RESOURCES\*

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## NATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

### **BiNet USA**

<http://www.binetusa.org/>

### **Bisexual Organizing Project**

<http://www.bisexualorganizing-project.org/>

### **Bisexual Resource Center**

<http://www.biresource.net/>

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## LOCAL ORGANIZATIONS

### **AMBI Los Angeles**

<http://www.meetup.com/ambiLA/>

### **Bay Area Bisexual Network**

(San Francisco)

<http://www.bayareabisexualnetwork.org/>

### **BiNet Seattle**

<http://www.binetseattle.org/>

### **Bisexual Queer Alliance Chicago**

<https://www.facebook.com/BQACHicago>

### **Bisexuals in Metro Phoenix**

<http://bimetrophx.wix.com/bimetrophx>

### **Bisexuals United**

(Corpus Christi, TX)

<http://www.meetup.com/bisexuals-united>

### **BiUnity** (Philadelphia)

<http://www.biunity.org/>

### **Biversity Boston**

[http://biversity.org/Biversity\\_Boston/Biversity.html](http://biversity.org/Biversity_Boston/Biversity.html)

### **Los Angeles Bi Task Force**

<http://www.labicenter.org/>

### **New York Area Bisexual Network**

<http://www.nyabn.org/>

### **Richmond (VA) Bisexual Network**

[http://bisexuality.wikia.com/wiki/Richmond\\_Bisexual\\_Network\\_\(ROBIN\)](http://bisexuality.wikia.com/wiki/Richmond_Bisexual_Network_(ROBIN))

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\*This resource page was developed with assistance from the Bisexual Resource Center.

# APPENDIX

These tables provide a more in-depth look at the demographics of the 10,030 LGBT youth survey participants, in addition to a closer look at the responses around the likelihood of their future ambitions.

## GENDER OF LGBT YOUTH PARTICIPANTS BY SEXUAL ORIENTATION

Sexual Orientation	Female (n=5699)	Male (n=3406)	Transgender (n=319)	Other Gender Expansive (n=606)
<b>Bisexual</b>	51%	21%	25%	21%
<b>Pansexual</b>	8%	1%	14%	19%
<b>Queer</b>	3%	<1%	12%	20%
<b>Other Bisexual</b>	1%	<1%	1%	2%
<b>Lesbian/Gay</b>	32%	74%	25%	28%
<b>Heterosexual/straight**</b>	0%	0%	12%	1%
<b>Other</b>	5%	3%	10%	9%
<b>Total</b>	100%	100%	100%	100%

\*\* Heterosexual/straight youth identified are transgender or gender-expansive.

## SCHOOL LEVEL OF LGBT YOUTH PARTICIPANTS BY SEXUAL ORIENTATION

Sexual Orientation	Middle School or Junior Highschool (n=1399)	High School (n = 7988)	University, College or Com- munity College (n = 144)	Home Schooled (n = 298)
<b>Bisexual</b>	50%	36%	36%	37%
<b>Lesbian/Gay</b>	34%	48%	42%	39%
<b>Pansexual</b>	7%	6%	7%	11%
<b>Queer</b>	2%	4%	8%	3%
<b>Other Bisexual</b>	1%	1%	1%	2%
<b>Heterosexual/straight**</b>	<1%	<1%	1%	1%
<b>Other</b>	6%	4%	5%	7%
<b>Total*</b>	100%	100%	100%	100%

\* Percents may not total to 100% due to rounding error.

\*\* Heterosexual/straight youth identified are transgender or gender-expansive.

## AGE OF LGBT YOUTH PARTICIPANTS BY SEXUAL ORIENTATION

Sexual Orientation	13 Yrs (n=575)	14 Yrs (n = 1408)	15 Yrs (n = 2203)	16 Yrs (n = 2784)	17 Yrs (n = 3060)
<b>Bisexual</b>	51%	46%	41%	37%	31%
<b>Pansexual</b>	8%	8%	8%	6%	6%
<b>Queer</b>	2%	2%	3%	4%	5%
<b>Other Bisexual</b>	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%
<b>Lesbian/Gay</b>	31%	36%	42%	48%	54%
<b>Heterosexual/straight**</b>	0%	0%	0%	0%	1%
<b>Other</b>	6%	6%	5%	4%	3%
<b>Total*</b>	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

\* Percents may not total to 100% due to rounding error.

\*\* Heterosexual/straight youth identified are transgender or gender-expansive.

## SEXUAL ORIENTATION OF YOUTH PARTICIPANTS BY RELIGIOUS AFFILIATION

Religious Affiliation	Heterosexual /straight	Lesbian /Gay	Bisexual	Pansexual	Queer	Other Bisexual	Other	Total
<b>Religiously Affiliated*</b>	36%	39%	40%	26%	26%	34%	25%	38%
<b>No preference</b>	11%	10%	9%	9%	10%	10%	10%	10%
<b>Atheist/Agnostic</b>	36%	29%	29%	40%	41%	29%	41%	30%
<b>Decline to answer</b>	7%	4%	5%	3%	2%	4%	2%	4%
<b>Spiritual but not religious</b>	11%	17%	16%	23%	22%	23%	22%	17%
<b>Total</b>	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

\* Religious affiliation options: Protestant (such as Baptist, Methodist, Presbyterian, Lutheran, Episcopal), Roman Catholic, Jewish, Muslim/Islam, Mormon, Orthodox Church (Greek, Russian, etc.), Other Christian religion, Other religion (not Christian)

## RACE OF LGBT YOUTH PARTICIPANTS BY SEXUAL ORIENTATION

Sexual Orientation	White (n=6819)	Black/ African American (n=637)	Hispanic/ Latino/ Spanish American/ Chicano (n= 1382)	Asian/ Pacific Islander (n= 329)	American Indian/ Native American (n=160)	Other Race (n= 560)	Decline to Answer (n= 143)	Total
<b>Heterosexual/straight</b>	0%	0%	0%	1%	1%	0%	1%	0%
<b>Lesbian/Gay</b>	47%	43%	49%	46%	41%	38%	36%	46%
<b>Bisexual</b>	36%	43%	41%	35%	40%	42%	41%	38%
<b>Pansexual</b>	8%	3%	4%	6%	9%	7%	3%	7%
<b>Queer</b>	4%	4%	2%	5%	3%	4%	10%	4%
<b>Other</b>	4%	6%	3%	5%	6%	6%	6%	4%
<b>Other Bisexual</b>	1%	1%	1%	2%	1%	2%	2%	1%
<b>Grand Total</b>	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

**Two questions compared:**

- 1) Given your hopes and dreams for the future, how likely do you think it is that these will happen?
- 2) If you live in the same city or town for the rest of your life, how likely do you think it is that these will happen?

**PERCENT OF YOUTH REPORTING FUTURE AMBITION “VERY LIKELY TO HAPPEN” BY SEXUAL ORIENTATION**

<b>Future Ambitions Very Likely To Happen</b>	<b>Lesbian /Gay</b>	<b>Bisexual</b>	<b>Pan-sexual</b>	<b>Queer</b>	<b>Other Bisexual</b>	<b>Hetero-sexual/straight</b>	<b>Other</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Get married to someone you love</b>	53%	53%	43%	27%	37%	56%	39%	51%
<b>Get married to someone you love in same city</b>	20%	28%	21%	11%	17%	16%	19%	23%
<b>Percent Decrease</b>	<b>62%</b>	<b>47%</b>	<b>51%</b>	<b>59%</b>	<b>54%</b>	<b>71%</b>	<b>51%</b>	<b>55%</b>
<b>Establish a life-long partnership with someone you love</b>	61%	55%	49%	38%	48%	58%	42%	57%
<b>Establish a life-long partnership with someone you love in same city</b>	28%	30%	25%	17%	24%	20%	20%	28%
<b>Percent Decrease</b>	<b>54%</b>	<b>45%</b>	<b>49%</b>	<b>55%</b>	<b>50%</b>	<b>66%</b>	<b>52%</b>	<b>51%</b>
<b>Raise children</b>	38%	45%	34%	23%	37%	40%	35%	40%
<b>Raise children in same city</b>	19%	31%	22%	10%	23%	22%	24%	24%
<b>Percent Decrease</b>	<b>50%</b>	<b>31%</b>	<b>35%</b>	<b>57%</b>	<b>38%</b>	<b>45%</b>	<b>31%</b>	<b>40%</b>
<b>Be happy</b>	60%	51%	42%	35%	45%	44%	47%	54%
<b>Be happy in same city</b>	24%	24%	17%	12%	21%	20%	23%	23%
<b>Percent Decrease</b>	<b>60%</b>	<b>53%</b>	<b>60%</b>	<b>66%</b>	<b>53%</b>	<b>55%</b>	<b>51%</b>	<b>57%</b>
<b>Be an active part of your community</b>	42%	30%	31%	42%	35%	27%	29%	36%
<b>Be an active part of your community in same city</b>	22%	19%	20%	25%	23%	13%	19%	21%
<b>Percent Decrease</b>	<b>48%</b>	<b>37%</b>	<b>35%</b>	<b>40%</b>	<b>34%</b>	<b>52%</b>	<b>34%</b>	<b>42%</b>
<b>Have a good job</b>	66%	55%	46%	44%	49%	51%	51%	59%
<b>Have a good job in same city</b>	30%	28%	18%	17%	25%	16%	23%	28%
<b>Percent Decrease</b>	<b>55%</b>	<b>49%</b>	<b>61%</b>	<b>61%</b>	<b>49%</b>	<b>69%</b>	<b>55%</b>	<b>53%</b>
<b>Go to college</b>	78%	70%	69%	73%	63%	67%	74%	74%
<b>Go to college in same city</b>	54%	47%	44%	46%	49%	40%	54%	50%
<b>Percent Decrease</b>	<b>31%</b>	<b>33%</b>	<b>36%</b>	<b>37%</b>	<b>22%</b>	<b>40%</b>	<b>27%</b>	<b>32%</b>



# METHODOLOGY

## THE SURVEY QUESTION ASKED RESPONDENTS:

Do you identify your sexual orientation as:

- **Heterosexual/straight**
- **Gay**
- **Lesbian**
- **Bisexual**
- **Queer**
- **I prefer to identify myself as: (SPECIFY)**
- **Decline to answer**

Anne E. Nicoll, Ph.D., Nicoll Consulting is responsible for the data analysis and findings presented in this report. If not otherwise indicated, the quotes in this report come from youth respondents. Spelling and some punctuation in direct quotes from youth respondents have been corrected.

## 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. It 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.

During April and May of 2012, the Human Rights Campaign advertised this link through social media and 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. As a result, 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

This research also includes 510 interviews among respondents ages 13-17 drawn from the Harris Poll Online<sup>SM</sup> (HPOL). These interviews were not screened for LGBT status and comprise the “non-LGBT” population in this study. Note, however, that 5 percent of these interviews self-identified as LGBT and were asked questions directed at this population.

Harris Poll Online<sup>SM</sup> (HPOL) is a multimillion-member panel of cooperative online respondents. Panelists have joined the Harris Poll Online from more than 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 presen-

tations, targeted postal mail invitations, TV advertisements and telephone recruitment of targeted populations.

When respondents are recruited into this panel, it is made very clear 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 the privacy policy. Panelists must agree to the 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 the 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 that include a short description of the research and indicate the approximate survey length.

The research 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 United States is 13. Data 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 was responsible for the survey design, data weighting, data analysis, and reporting any/all methods that apply.

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 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-plus with a 13-17 year old in the household. To see the survey itself, visit [www.hrc.org/youth](http://www.hrc.org/youth).

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