

2018

# Latinx LGBTQ YOUTH REPORT



Table of Contents

<b>Supporting LGBTQ Latinx Youth</b> .....	<b>2</b>
<b>The Importance of Family</b> .....	<b>4</b>
<b>The Burden of Rejection</b> .....	<b>12</b>
<b>When Schools Fall Short</b> .....	<b>25</b>
<b>At the Intersection: Racism-related Stress</b> .....	<b>35</b>
<b>Transgender Youth Need Our Support</b> .....	<b>41</b>
<b>To Be or Not to Be Out</b> .....	<b>46</b>
<b>What You Can Do</b> .....	<b>52</b>
<b>Respondent Profile</b> .....	<b>53</b>
<b>Acknowledgements</b> .....	<b>55</b>
<b>References</b> .....	<b>56</b>

# Supporting LGBTQ Latinx Youth

In 2017, the **Human Rights Campaign Foundation** partnered with researchers at the University of Connecticut to conduct a groundbreaking survey of over 12,000 LGBTQ youth and capture their experiences in their families, schools, social circles and communities. More than 2,900 LGBTQ Latinx youth<sup>1</sup> responded to the survey. This resource presents data collected from these Latinx youth, shedding light on their challenges and triumphs encountered while navigating multiple, intersecting identities.

Too often, holding multiple minority identities magnifies discrimination faced by LGBTQ Latinx youth, which can have a dangerous impact on their mental health. Furthermore, blatantly discriminatory laws and policies, inflammatory rhetoric from the Trump-Pence administration, negative portrayals in media, and historical systems of anti-Latinx and anti-immigrant oppression complicate the ability of LGBTQ Latinx youth to fully express and explore their intersecting racial and LGBTQ identities.<sup>2</sup>

## For youth-serving professionals

This resource draws on a subset of data from the [2018 HRC LGBTQ Youth Report](#) to highlight the experiences of LGBTQ Latinx youth. We hope this information helps to encourage youth-serving professionals to apply an intersectional lens to their work.

Supportive parents, school administrators, teachers, counselors and other youth-serving professionals play an essential role in the lives of LGBTQ Latinx youth. Their support is especially important as LGBTQ Latinx youth can struggle in the absence of affirmation from their families and communities regarding their sexual orientation or gender identity.

However, LGBTQ Latinx youth continue to be their own powerful forces of change; their stories of empowerment, resilience, activism and advocacy are pronounced in these findings. Across the country, they are advocating for inclusivity and equality. They need us to do the same.

We *must* support LGBTQ Latinx youth in their pursuit of LGBTQ equality and racial justice. It's time that we acknowledge the intersectional nature of the LGBTQ Latinx experience and begin creating spaces that are safe, affirming and welcoming for all.

#### **A note on the use of Latinx**

Throughout this document, we use **Latinx** as a gender-inclusive term to refer to those who hold Latin American and/or Hispanic cultural or racial identities, including Latinos and Latinas, but also individuals with non-binary or gender-expansive identities.

# The Importance of Family

Parents and families play an essential role in promoting adolescent health and well-being.



“When I told my mom, she said: ‘Honey I want you to come home and bring the love of your life with you. I don’t see why you have to announce this. Just bring a girl over and I’ll treat her with all my love as well. What’s wrong with falling in love?’ So it’s normal. Not a praise or mistake, it’s normal.”

LGBTQ youth whose families are supportive and accepting are more likely to experience positive health outcomes across several dimensions including: greater self-esteem and resilience; a lowered risk of depression, distress and feelings of hopelessness; and a reduced risk of substance use.<sup>3</sup>

However, many LGBTQ youth report that sharing their sexual orientation or gender identity with their family is incredibly stressful. Latinx youth surveyed say that their real and perceived fears of rejection are compounded by negative comments they hear about the LGBTQ community from parents and family members.

As a youth-serving professional, you can provide life-changing support to LGBTQ Latinx youth who may not receive it from their parents or family members. Where possible, you may also be able to play a role in educating families in your community.

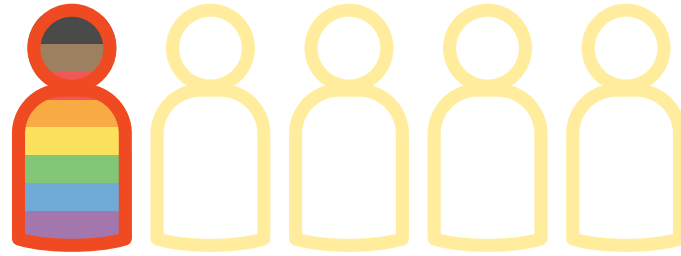
**Negative attitudes voiced by family members, peers and other community members can make LGBTQ youth reluctant to disclose or embrace their own identity.** Living authentically is a deeply personal process and one that can be even more complex for LGBTQ youth of color. Youth-serving professionals who wish to better understand the specific challenges LGBTQ Latinx youth face on their coming out journeys are encouraged to read HRC's resource [Coming Out: Living Authentically as LGBTQ Latinx Americans](#).





**72%**

of LGBTQ Latinx youth surveyed  
have heard family members say  
negative things about LGBTQ people

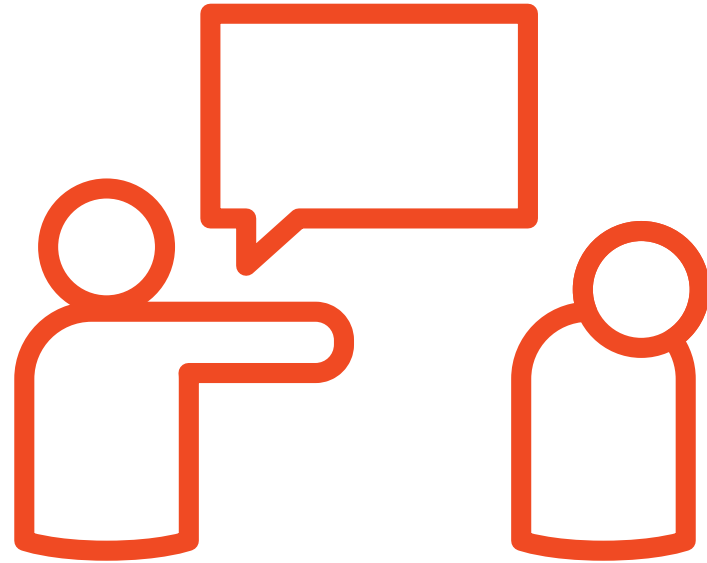


Only

**1 in 5**

have had family get  
involved in the larger  
LGBTQ community

**“I don’t like talking about myself in general, and I live in a small town, so it’s not always safe to be myself.”**



**45%**

of transgender youth

**28%**

of cisgender LGBTQ youth

have been taunted or  
mocked by family

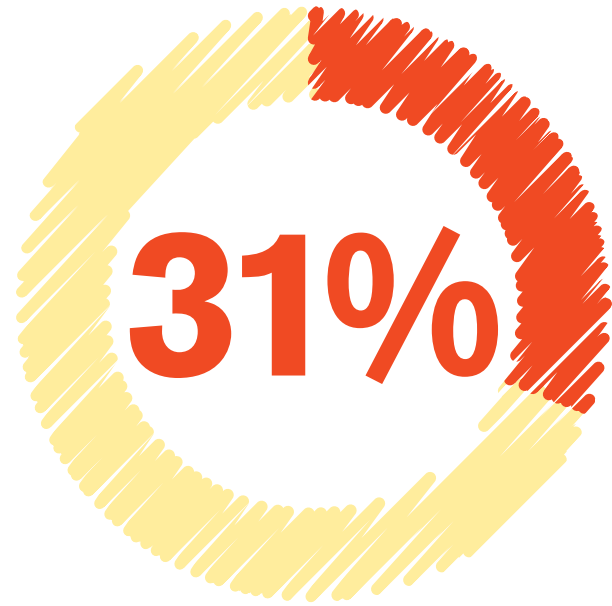
“I never actually came out to my parents, they just asked me. When I said yes, I do like girls, my mom said something I will never forget: ‘I just need you to know that what you’re doing is not right.’ It tore me.”



# The Burden of Rejection

In addition to the fear of familial rejection, LGBTQ Latinx youth face a variety of stressors – harassment, peer rejection, bullying and isolation – that have a major impact on their overall well-being.<sup>4</sup>





have received verbal threats  
because of their sexual  
orientation, gender identity  
or gender expression



**85%**

rate their average stress a five  
or higher on a 10 point scale

**93%** of genderqueer Latinx youth rate their  
stress a five or higher on a 10 point scale



“Although I have come out to a few of my friends, I am still not sure if I should open up to my counselor. If the counselor mentioned it, I would open up, though.”

“I came out to my counselor in hopes of her helping me, which she did. My teachers don’t know me by my preferred name, but she made a point that when I step in her office, that’s what she’ll call me.”

LGBTQ Latinx youth face significant challenges accessing affirming, supportive counseling services or mental health support. LGBTQ Latinx youth are also wary of opening up; only six percent of respondents said they would be very comfortable discussing a question about their LGBTQ identity with a counselor. This may be because their counselors do not seem open to discussing LGBTQ topics. However, several respondents wrote in that they would be more willing to talk about their identities if they knew their counselors were supportive.

Access to mental health service providers that are culturally competent and LGBTQ-affirming is essential to the well-being of these youth.

Many [learning opportunities](#), from web-based learning modules to large-scale conferences, are available to professional counselors and therapists who work with [LGBTQ youth](#) and wish to improve their skills, knowledge and competence in working with young people who have intersecting LGBTQ and Latinx identities.<sup>5</sup>



**95%**  
have had trouble  
getting to sleep



“usually”  
feel depressed  
or down

**73%**

“usually” feel  
worthless or  
hopeless

**82%**

“usually” feel  
worried, nervous  
or panicked



Only

**34%**

received counseling  
in the past year

“I don’t know where my counselor stands on LGBTQ rights. In her office, there are things that say ‘no whining,’ which I find makes it more difficult to discuss things without thinking that she just assumes I’m whining about everything.”

“I definitely would feel more comfortable talking to my counselor if he would be more open about the LGBTQ community in school. I know he has religion outside of school, but he takes his job seriously and never lets his religion get in the way of his opinion, which makes him such an incredible role model. Although, I do believe I would be more open if he would talk about things like the LGBTQ community and racism.”





**43%**

feel critical of their  
LGBTQ identities

“Being straight is ‘normal’ so I’m not confident that a counselor in my school would be much help because they would have no experience in the issues I may be facing due to my being gay. Also, I would trust an LGBTQ person more, especially one of color.”

# When Schools Fall Short

While some schools offer safe and affirming spaces that enable LGBTQ youth to thrive, many young people still experience negative, and even hostile, school environments.

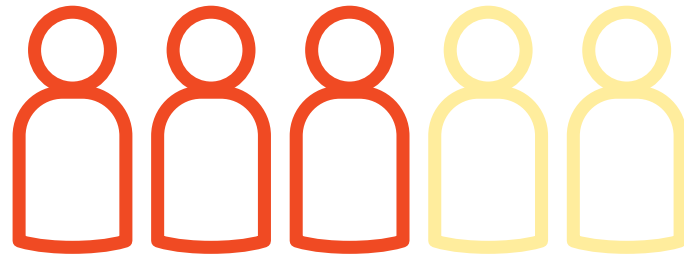
Without non-discrimination laws and state-wide policies to protect LGBTQ students or comprehensive cultural competency training, the majority of LGBTQ Latinx youth remain vulnerable to discrimination, harassment, and bullying from peers, teachers and administrators.<sup>6</sup> Youth-serving professionals must be attentive to how racial and ethnocultural oppression *uniquely* affect the experiences of LGBTQ Latinx youth.



always feel safe in  
the classroom

“If anyone ever mentioned any LGBT themes at school, it would either be met with homophobic jokes or our teacher would quickly move on from the subject.”

“LGBTQ topics are not talked about at all. People pretend like we don’t exist. There isn’t even a consistent sex ed program at my school; some people get sex ed and some people don’t. It depends on what health teacher you get and I got a teacher who didn’t teach it. But LGBTQ topics are just not brought up in school so as to not ‘offend’ or ‘inflamm’ anyone.”



Over

**3 in 5**

were teased at school  
about their race/ethnicity



\*#!@?!

73%

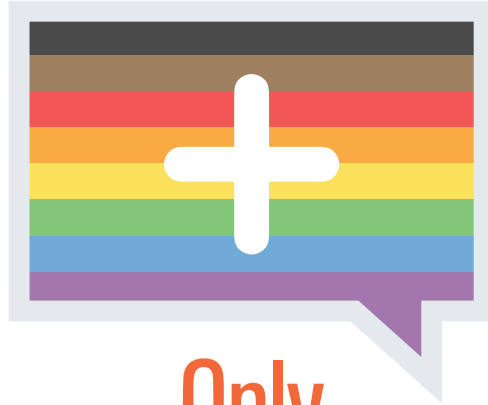
have been verbally insulted  
because of their LGBTQ identity

**40%** say this has happened **three or more times**



“Being in a Catholic, all-girls school, LGBTQ topics aren’t really discussed and are put on the back burner. The only message given to us is that if our sexuality is something other than heterosexuality, we should practice a life of chastity. We are taught that it is okay to be queer, so long as we do not act on it (through marriage, sexual intercourse, etc.).”

“Most LGBTQ things are discussed outside of health class. I found out most of my information from my school’s GSA club and the Internet. There are many ally teachers at my school who like to discuss LGBTQ topics, usually in casual settings.”



Only  
**15%**

have heard positive messages  
about being LGBTQ in school

Only **13%** have received information about  
safer sex that was relevant to them in school

“Same-sex relationships were briefly alluded to in our ‘relationships’ unit (we learned how to create and sustain healthy relationships) but only because the omission would have been glaring. You could tell that LGBTQ+ people and issues didn’t come across our teacher’s radar often, and it was met with a little laughter from the class. It felt like a topic that was being ignored or skirted around, and was not discussed in any way.”

# At the Intersection: Racism-related Stress

Negative experiences, whether in the classroom, in the halls, at lunch or during extracurricular activities, have a tremendous impact on LGBTQ Latinx youth's overall health and well-being.<sup>7</sup>

We also cannot discuss the experiences of LGBTQ Latinx youth without acknowledging the historical and contemporary realities of white supremacy and its impact on Latinx people in the United States.

The combination of discriminatory policies, systems, portrayals and biases complicate the ability of LGBTQ Latinx youth to fully express and explore their intersecting racial and LGBTQ identities.<sup>8</sup>



**4 in 5**

**have experienced  
racial discrimination**

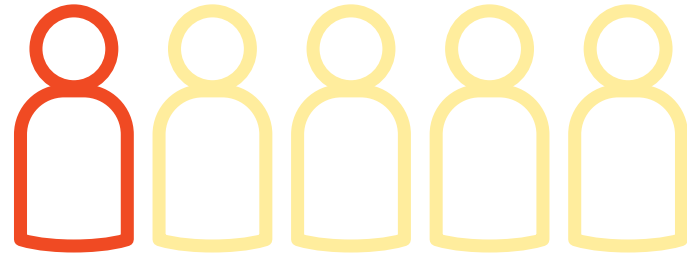


believe racism affects  
the lives of Latinx people

“Being in such a conservative state, talking about the LGBTQ+ community, while also being a minority, isn’t the easiest thing to do.”







**1 in 5**  
thinks about racism  
every day

# Transgender Youth Need Our Support

Transgender and gender-expansive youth of all backgrounds face particularly serious challenges in the school system.

Latinx transgender youth, like all transgender youth, report that they often feel unsafe and unprotected at school. Furthermore, transgender Latinx youth report being barred from using locker rooms and bathroom facilities that match their gender identity, being misgendered and being called the wrong name by adults and peers.

Combined, the effects of verbal and physical harassment along with overtly discriminatory practices and policies have damaging implications for transgender and gender-expansive Latinx youth.

they/them she/her  
**ze/hir/hirs**

Only

**19%**

were always called by  
the correct pronouns

# HELLO

my name is

Only  
**380%** are always  
called by their  
true name



are able to dress in a way  
that completely reflects  
their gender identity



**72%**

use restrooms that do not align with their gender identity at least some of the time

**64%** of transgender Latinx youth try to avoid using the restroom during the school day

# To Be or Not to Be Out

Every coming out story is unique. LGBTQ youth who identify as Latinx often face a more complex process than some of their peers as they reconcile multiple and intersecting identities.





“This school year, I am working together with a group of my friends to make a LGBTQ club that will provide a safe place for our classmates from all grade levels and allow them to freely express who they really are. There are a total of six of us, including our sponsor, and I am grateful to say that I am part of that community. I am one of the few who is out and proud in our school. I am so excited to be able to help and to see all those who identify as LGBTQ who are still hiding in the shadows finally come out and shine.”

“Being able to speak on diversity, inclusivity and equity at my school has led me to leadership opportunities and I’ve become a vocal activist on campus. I am very comfortable standing up for any identity I am a part of, including my multicultural background and bisexuality.”

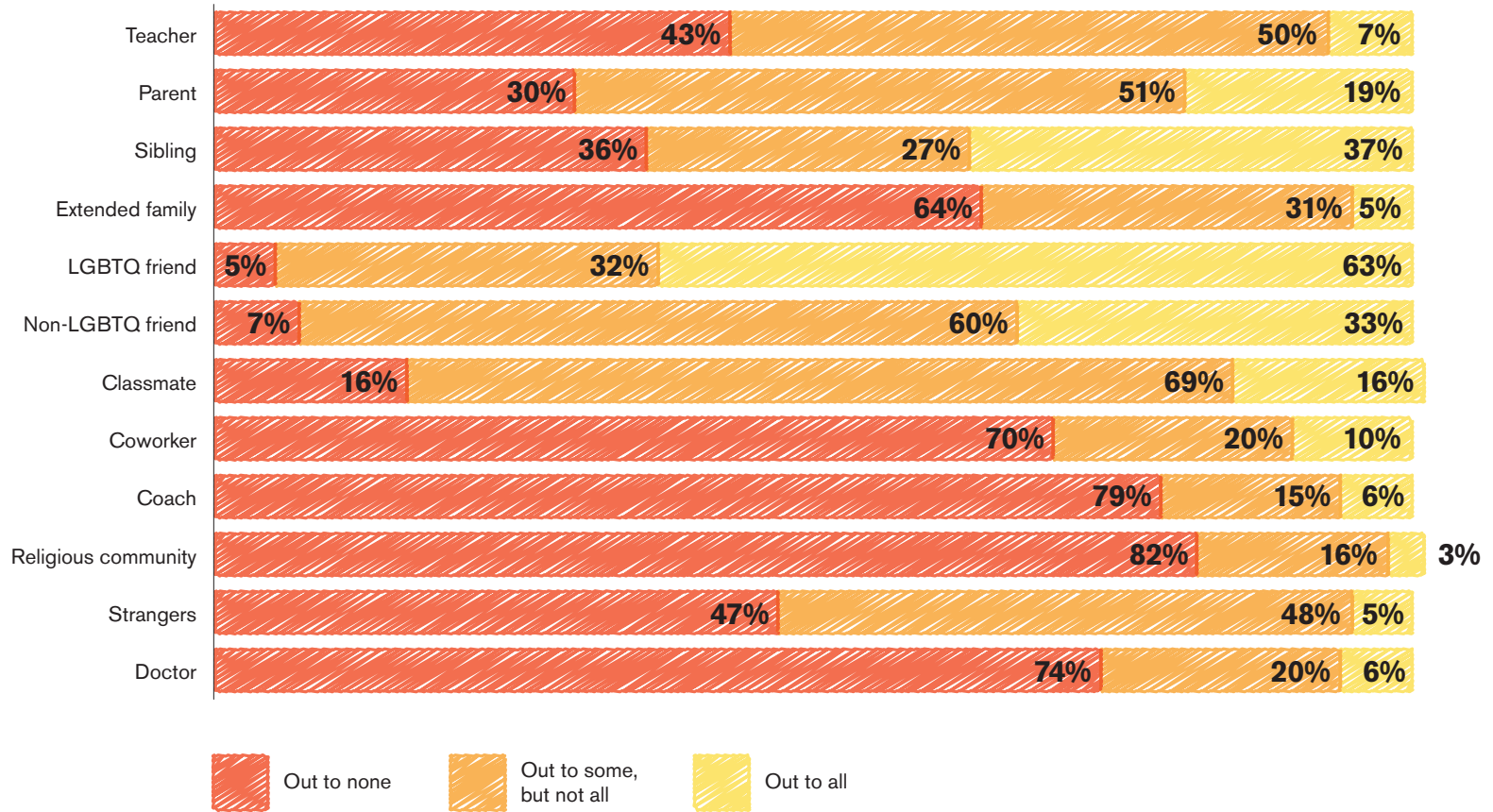
Potential language barriers, culture, nationality, religious identities and family dynamics can pull youth in different directions as they navigate the coming out process.

Yet, studies show that LGBTQ youth who live openly are more likely to experience positive outcomes such as better academic performance, higher self esteem and lower rates of anxiety and depression.<sup>9</sup>

To best support LGBTQ Latinx youth through the coming out process, youth-serving professionals must take into account how intersectional factors shapes each individual's experience. Resources like HRC's [Coming Out: Living Authentically as LGBTQ Latinx Americans](#) are a good place to start.

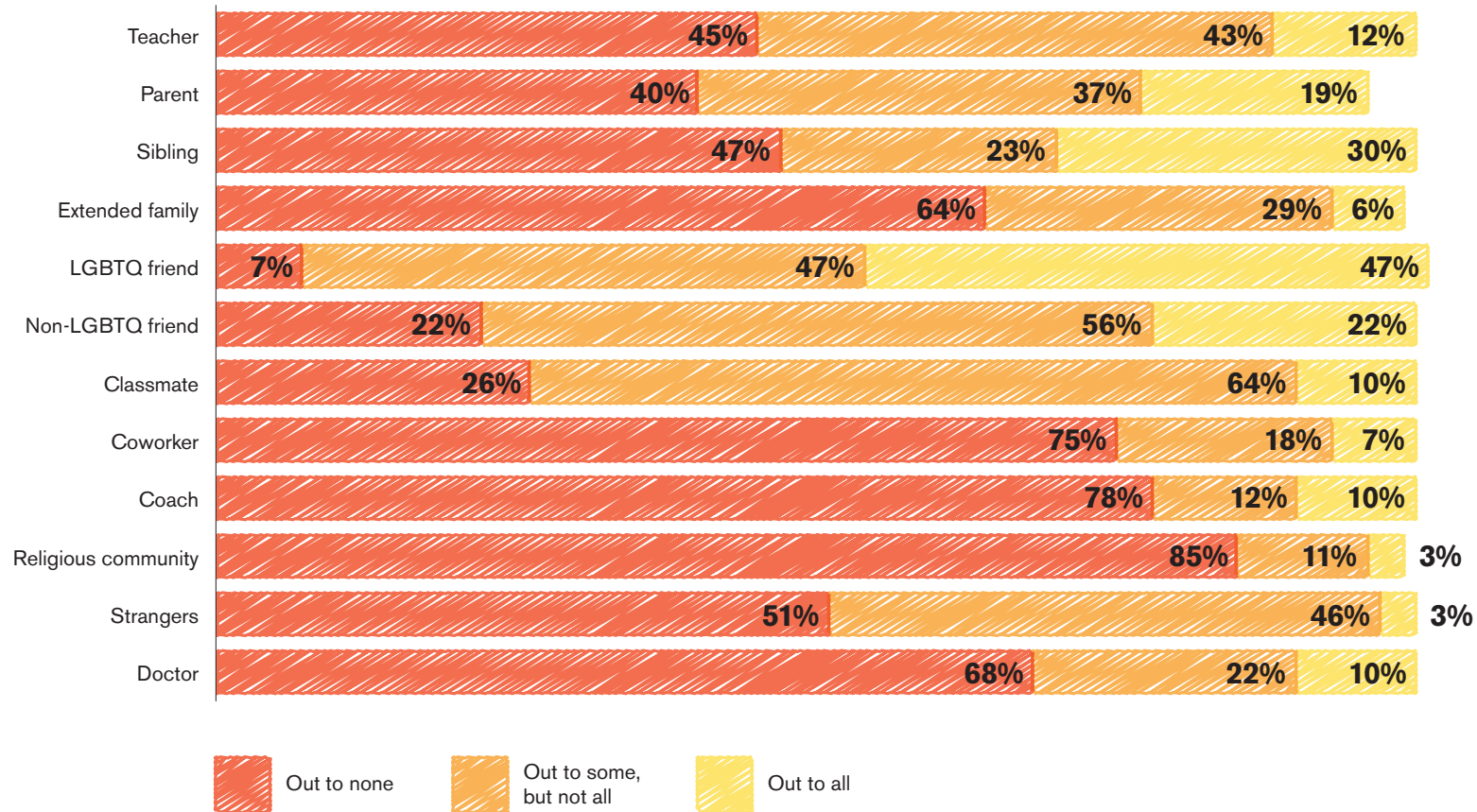


# Who are Latinx youth out as LGBTQ to?



Percentages may add up to over 100 due to rounding.

# Who are Latinx youth out as transgender, non-binary, or gender expansive to?



Percentages may add up to over 100 due to rounding.

# What You Can Do

Every adult can play a role in changing the landscape for LGBTQ Latinx youth. Often, small but impactful actions can reinforce inclusive, supportive and loving environments in homes, schools and communities.

We must also confront the very real and present discriminatory policies, institutional obstacles and anti-Latinx bias that hinder too many LGBTQ Latinx youth from fully thriving as who they are meant to be.

When supporting LGBTQ Latinx youth, it's imperative to address the anti-LGBTQ attitudes, racism and other systems of oppression that present undue challenges to their well-being. Youth-serving professionals, parents, school staff, policy-makers and community members can find general tips [here](#) that, as always, should be viewed through an intersectional lens.

# Respondent Profile

## Gender Identity

	N Values
Cisgender boy	938
Cisgender girl	1379
Transgender boy	355
Transgender girl	43
Non-binary	296
Genderqueer	247
Different Identity	121

Cisgender boy, cisgender girl, transgender boy and transgender girl numbers are a combination of self-identification and concordance with sex assigned at birth. N-values may add up to more than number of respondents as some participants self identify with more than one answer choice provided.

Includes write-ins such as: agender, androgynous, bigender, confused/don't know, demigender, genderfluid/flux, questioning, not listed and more.

## Ability

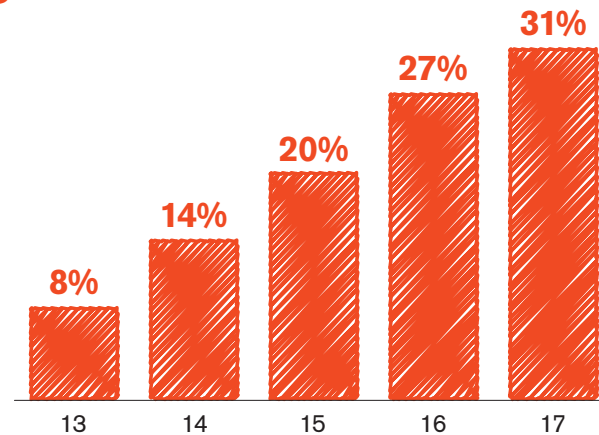


have a disability



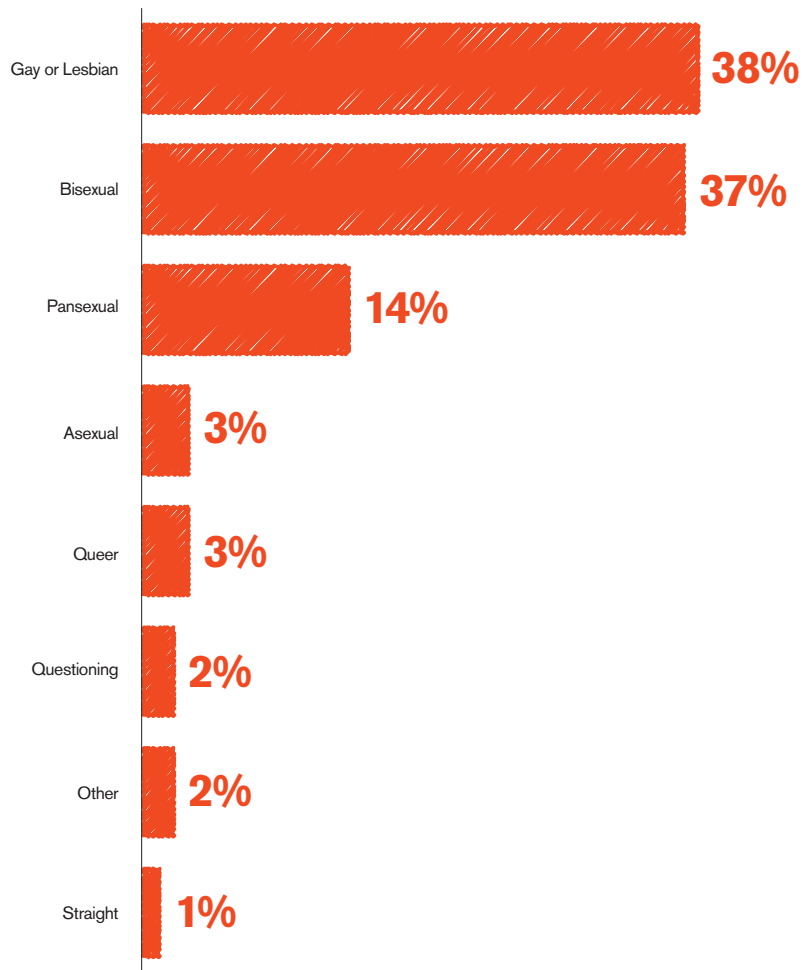
don't know

## Age

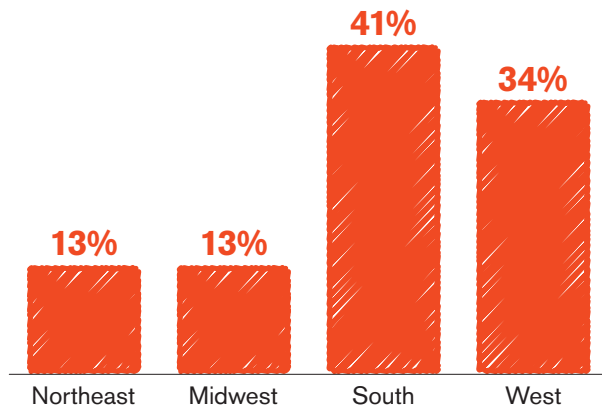


Percentages may add up to over 100 due to rounding.

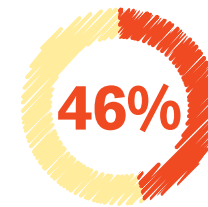
## Sexual Orientation



## Location



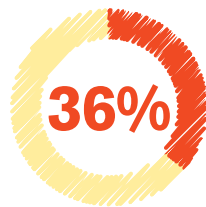
## Parental Country of Origin



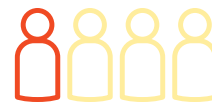
**46%** both parents born in USA

**23%** some parents born in USA

**31%** no parents born in USA



**36%** are multiracial



**1 in 4** speak English as a second language

Percentages may add up to over 100 due to rounding.



# Acknowledgements

## The HRC Foundation's Public Education & Research Program

The HRC Foundation's Public Education & Research Program spearheads a wide variety of LGBTQ advocacy and outreach campaigns, working to ensure that the HRC Foundation's resources and programs are timely, impactful and inclusive. In addition to publishing resource guides, informational materials and reports, the team conducts original quantitative and qualitative research exploring the lived experiences of LGBTQ people. The program also collaborates with academic researchers and provides guidance to other HRC initiatives in support of efforts to advance LGBTQ equality and well-being. Special thanks to Senior Research Manager **Liam Miranda** and Senior Content Manager **Mark Lee** for their leadership and work on this resource.

## Children, Youth & Families Program

Becoming a parent, sending your 5-year-old to kindergarten, watching your teenager graduate from high school – these are life's biggest moments. For LGBTQ parents and LGBTQ children, they can also be some of life's most challenging moments. That's where HRC's Children, Youth and Families Program comes in. Through innovative training and direct consultation with schools, child welfare agencies and other service providers, HRC's

Children, Youth and Families Program creates welcoming, affirming and supportive environments for LGBTQ prospective parents, LGBTQ-led families and LGBTQ youth. Special thanks to **Ellen Kahn** and **Jay Brown** for their leadership and guidance on this and similar resources related to the well-being of LGBTQ youth.

This survey and report would not be possible without Dr. Ryan Watson and Dr. Rebecca Puhl of the Department of Human Development and Family Studies at the University of Connecticut. Additional thank you to Dialectic for all their work on this resource.

Thank you to the many LGBTQ Latinx advocates and allies who shared their stories and expertise in this and similar resources. Additional thank you to many current and former HRC staff members that contributed to the creation and development of this resource.

We would also like to thank the Coca-Cola Foundation for their generous support that helped us create this important resource.

# References

## Page 2

<sup>1</sup> LGBTQ Latinx youth includes all youth who selected “Latinx, Hispanic, or Mexican-American” as one or more of their ethnoracial identities

<sup>2</sup> Wray-Lake, L., Wells, R., Alvis, L., Delgado, S., Syversten, A.K., Metzger. (2018) Being a Latinx Adolescent Under a Trump Presidency: Analysis of Latinx Youth's Reactions to Immigration Politics, *Children and Youth Services Review*, Vol. 87. 192-204. Eaton A. & Rios D. (2017), Social Challenges Faced by Queer Latino College Men: Navigating Negative Responses to Coming Out in a Double Minority Sample of Emerging Adults, *Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Minority Psychology*, Vol.23, No.4, 457-467. Cerezo, A. (2016). The Impact of Discrimination on Mental Health Symptomatology in Sexual Minority Immigrant Latinas, *Psychology of Sexual Orientation and Gender Diversity* 2015, Col. 3 No.3, 283-292.

## Page 6

<sup>3</sup> Ryan, C., Huebner, D., Diaz, R.M. & Sanchez, J. (2009). Family Rejection as a Predictor of Negative Health Outcomes in White and Latino Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Young Adults. *Pediatrics*, 123 (1), 346-352. Ryan, C., Russell, S., Huebner, D., Diaz, R., & Sanchez, J. (2010). Family Acceptance in Adolescence and the Health of LGBT Young Adults. *Journal of Child and Adolescent Psychiatric Nursing*, 23(4), 205-213.

## Page 12

<sup>4</sup> Birkett, M., Newcomb, M.E., & Mustanski, B. (2014). Does it Get Better? A Longitudinal Analysis of Psychological Distress and Victimization in Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Questioning Youth. *Journal of Adolescent Health*, 56 (3), 280-285.

## Page 17

<sup>5</sup> The marginalization of ethnically diverse LGBTQ communities has resulted in ineffective treatment and poor outcomes with mental health services. In their 2009 article, Wynn and West-Olatunji advocate for the use of Culture-Centered Counseling with ethnically diverse LGBTQ clients. They note that this approach “emphasizes social-cultural conditions by examining contextual factors that influence client empowerment and self-awareness. Additionally, this theoretical framework uses the clients’ own value-based conceptualization of psychological wellness to situate the therapeutic process. Thus, Culture-Centered Counseling offers a more effective approach for intervening with this population because it addresses the unique needs, experiences, and worldviews of ethnically diverse LGBT individuals. Wynn & West-Olatunji, (2009) Use of Culture-Centered Counseling Theory with Ethnically Diverse LGBT Clients, *Journal of LGBT Issues in Counseling*, 3:198-2014.

## Page 25

<sup>6</sup> According to data from a 2016 Pew Research Center report, Latinx youth drop out of high school at a higher rate than their peers. <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2016/07/28/5-facts-about-latinos-and-education/>

## Page 35

<sup>7</sup> Zewditu, D., Rasberry, C., Steiner, R., Brener, N., & McManus, T. (2018). Trends in Secondary Schools’s Practices to Support Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Questioning Students, 2008-2014). *American Journal of Public Health*, 108 (4), 557-564.

<sup>8</sup> Wray-Lake, L., Wells, R., Alvis, L., Delgado, S., Syversten, A.K., Metzger. (2018) Being a Latinx Adolescent Under a Trump Presidency: Analysis of Latinx Youth's Reactions to Immigration Politics, *Children and Youth Services Review*, Vol. 87. 192-204. Eaton A. & Rios D. (2017), Social Challenges Faced by Queer Latino College Men: Navigating Negative Responses to Coming Out in a Double Minority Sample of Emerging Adults, *Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Minority Psychology*, Vol.23, No.4, 457-467. Cerezo, A. (2016). The Impact of Discrimination on Mental Health Symptomatology in Sexual Minority Immigrant Latinas, *Psychology of Sexual Orientation and Gender Diversity* 2015, Col. 3 No.3, 283-292.

## Page 49

<sup>9</sup> Russell, S. & Fish, J.N., (2016) Mental Health in Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT) Youth. *Annual Review of Clinical Psychology*, 12, 465-487.



As the largest civil rights organization working to achieve equality for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer Americans, the Human Rights Campaign represents a force of more than 3 million members and supporters nationwide – all committed to making HRC's vision a reality.

**HRC envisions a world where lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer people are embraced as full members of society at home, at work and in every community.**

