SUPPORTING AND CARING FOR OUR LATINO LGBT YOUTH
The League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC) is the nation’s largest and oldest civil rights volunteer-based organization that empowers Hispanic Americans and builds strong Latino communities. Headquartered in Washington, D.C., with 900 councils around the United States and Puerto Rico, LULAC’s programs, services, and advocacy address the most important issues for Latinos, meeting critical needs of today and the future. LULAC founded its first LGBT council in 2006. See www.LULAC.org.

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

SUMMARY

We live in a time of unprecedented social and political progress toward equality for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) Americans. The president of the United States embraces marriage equality, and a dozen states now allow same-sex couples to wed. Sports figures, religious leaders, and celebrities are coming out or speaking up for fairness. Public opinion in support of LGBT inclusion and equality, including among Latino Americans, grows daily. The youth of today — Generation Equality — are the most open and accepting in our history.

LGBT youth can now envision marrying the person they love, having a successful career, serving in the military, and experiencing greater acceptance by their peers.

And yet, those same youth face significant challenges, as detailed in Growing Up LGBT in America — HRC’S groundbreaking research among more than 10,000 LGBT-identified youth ages 13 to 17. Responses to the 2012 survey reveal that many LGBT youth are profoundly disconnected from their communities, sometimes harshly so. Still, LGBT youth also demonstrate resilience in facing today’s challenges and express optimism about tomorrow’s possibilities.

This report explores the experiences of the 1,937 LGBT youth who identified as Latino. (See Methodology, p.30, for details.) To provide context, the report sometimes compares LGBT Latino responses to non-LGBT Latino youth from an online panel sample, as well as LGBT youth of other races and ethnicities.

The survey gave a voice to our youngest community members, most of whom live at home and remain dependent on their families. Respondents described their lives through sharing an average day at home, at school, and in their larger community. Of the 10,000 respondents, 19% identified as Latino/a/Hispanic. The report thus reflects the experiences of nearly 2,000 Latino teens living in all parts of the United States. Because the sample was not random, the report may not reflect the experience of all LGBT Latino youth. It does, however, provide a useful snapshot of the common themes and shared concerns of most LGBT Latino youth today.
Of the many details learned about LGBT Latino youth, the following were the most striking:

LGBT Latino youth are nearly as optimistic as their non-LGBT Latino peers about future life achievements. However, they feel much less hopeful than those peers about meeting those goals if they remain in their current communities.

The most difficult problems facing LGBT Latino youth are related to negative responses to their LGBT identity.

Concern about family acceptance is the top problem identified, and having their families accept and support them is a key change they wish for in their lives.

Slightly more than half of LGBT Latino youth are out to their immediate family, and nearly 6 in 10 say their family is accepting of LGBT people. Still, about one-third report a lack of family acceptance.

Slightly less than half of LGBT Latino youth have an adult in their family they can turn to, if worried or sad, while 8 in 10 of their non-LGBT Latino peers have such an adult.
Like other LGBT youth, **9 in 10** LGBT Latino youth are out to their close friends. However, Latino LGBT youth are more likely than others to be out to their classmates, at school, and to their teachers.

LGBT Latino youth are more likely to face harassment and violence in the community than their non-LGBT Latino peers and much less likely to participate in a variety of community activities.

Nearly three-quarters of LGBT Latino youth say their school is accepting of LGBT people, and more than **8 in 10** say their peers are accepting.

LGBT Latino youth are twice as likely as non-LGBT Latino youth to say they do not “fit in” in the communities where they live.

Two-thirds of LGBT Latino youth say they are more honest about who they are online, while about one-third of non-LGBT Latino youth say the same.
FAMILY MATTERS MOST

No matter how great the strides toward LGBT equality — from state-approved marriage to employee benefits and school policy — LGBT youth who do not feel loved and supported by their family will face greater challenges both now and in the future.

Family rejection weighs on the minds of all LGBT youth. Research supports what we know intuitively — family acceptance and adult support are essential to overall well-being. According to research by the Family Acceptance Project,

“family acceptance promotes well-being and helps protect LGBT young people against risk. And family rejection has a serious impact on a gay or transgender young person’s risk for health and mental health problems.”
Second only to African Americans, Latinos are the most religiously observant population in the country. According to a recent Pew Research Center study, over 70% of Latinos attend religious services regularly, and the number is significantly higher for those who are foreign born.

Faith is deeply embedded in Latino lives — in the communal practice of worship, the devotional life of individuals, and the values that inform family experience. For this reason, HRC’s Religion and Faith program has partnered with Fenton and Goodwin Simon Strategic Research to conduct in-depth focus group research designed to:

(1) understand underlying attitudes about lesbian and gay people that impact acceptance within the Latino Catholic community;

(2) assess the role of their church in forming such opinions;

(3) determine reactions to having a lesbian or gay child; and

(4) explore the effectiveness of messages that link acceptance of lesbian and gay children to Christian-based values.

This work is part of a larger, ongoing three-tiered research project to look at the relationship of faith informing attitudes about lesbian and gay youth among Latino Catholics, African-American Protestants, and evangelical white families.

This particular phase of the research was conducted in San Antonio, Texas, among Latino Catholics. Two groups were held among English speakers and two groups among those who primarily (or only) spoke Spanish. One group each of women and men were held in the English-language and Spanish-language categories.

Although we are still analyzing the research from the Latino focus groups and have not yet begun the work with other communities, we can make some preliminary recommendations from this work.

Recommendations for Engaging with Christian Families Struggling to Accept Their LGBT Youth:

• Emphasize the need for families to provide unconditional love — just as God does. God created each and every one of us and cares about all of us. When asked, Jesus told us the greatest commandment was to love.

• Emphasize that we are all God’s children and should accept our children no matter who they are or how they are. As one person described her children, “I love them all. They’re like the fingers on a hand; they’re so different but they’re still my children.”

• When Jesus commanded us to “Love thy Neighbors,” this included loving our families.

• We are not to judge; God will be the final judge. Lesbian and gay youth may make you uneasy, you may think they choose to be that way, you may think it is a sin but judge not. Only God is to judge.
HOW YOU CAN HELP...
BECOME AN ALLY

If LGBT youth don’t have support, they are at risk of depression, homelessness, academic failure, and lower personal achievement. Parents, family members, friends, teachers, coaches, school officials, religious leaders, and other caring adults can all help LGBT youth live happy and fulfilling lives.

When a young person comes out to you, they are demonstrating their deep trust in your understanding and acceptance. While common responses are confusion, sadness, or even anger, it is important to meet that trust with an open mind. If you don’t know what to say — listen. Keep the information confidential and help the young person think through whom to tell, how, and when. There is great relief in coming out, but it is a lifelong process and can come with risks as well, including school-based bullying.

To be a strong ally to an LGBT Latino youth, consider the following:

Educate yourself. Use the resources listed in this section to learn more about LGBT identity and issues.

Find someone to talk to. Talking with experienced parents, counselors, social workers, religious leaders, and others can help you explore your concerns without sending signals of rejection to the LGBT youth.

Keep the conversation alive with the LGBT youth. Be ready to listen and offer support, even if you feel uncomfortable. Encourage the youth to talk about what is going on for him or her at home, at school, at their congregation, and with friends.

Take broad action. Whether or not you know a young LGBT person, you can play an important role as an ally while modeling compassionate behavior within your community.

• If you see or hear anti-LGBT bullying or harassment, speak up. It means a lot to young people when adults have their back. Always make it clear that negative comments about LGBT people offend you. Some situations need to be dealt with in the moment, and some can be addressed after the situation has passed. In every case though, it’s critical that the person being targeted receive support and that the person who is acting inappropriately be informed of the consequences of continued unacceptable behavior and receive intervention from the school counselor.

• Do not use language that is offensive or hurtful to LGBT people. If you hear friends or colleagues using anti-LGBT language or making negative remarks, tell them you think it’s wrong. Explain your reasons clearly, and remind them that young people are listening. Negative remarks from family members are particularly hurtful to a young person, so it’s helpful to think how you might respond if present when these comments are made. For example, if another family member says, “If this were my child this gay stuff wouldn’t be allowed,” there are many youth-affirming ways to respond, including, “We ask that you respect our wishes by surrounding our child with support, respect, and unconditional love,” or “You seem uncomfortable, but we love our child just as she is.”

• If you work directly with youth as an educator, coach, mentor, religious leader, social worker, healthcare provider, police officer, etc., convey that you are open and supportive of LGBT youth. Say positive things about LGBT people whom you respect in the public arena, and give examples of same-sex couples participating in activities such as dating, going to prom, or attending a family event. Don’t assume all young people are heterosexual. If you are asking questions of a young person, use gender-neutral language such as, “Are you in a relationship with anyone?” instead of, “Do you have a boyfriend or girlfriend?”

• If you are confronted with a situation where you don’t know how to express your support for an LGBT youth, make sure your responses are genuine. You can always say something like, “I really don’t know much about LGBT people, but I’m willing to learn, and I want you to know that the bottom line is that I respect and support you.”

• Often negative attitudes are couched in religious language such as, “homosexuality is a sin.” Be careful when countering religious arguments against LGBT inclusion that you don’t discount faith or faith traditions. Religion is complicated, and there are many divergent interpretations of our sacred texts. Dismissing religious belief entirely will alienate those you wish to reach. In fact, recent campaigns for marriage equality have proven that respecting religious belief is key to changing hearts and minds. There are many resources available that can help you have a thoughtful conversation about faith, sexuality, and gender identity. HRC’s bilingual guide, A La Familia, www.hrc.org/familia, is a great place to start.

• Inform yourself about the needs, concerns, and experiences of LGBT youth. Learn what “lesbian,” “gay,” “bisexual,” “transgender,” “sexual orientation,” and “gender identity” mean, and use the terms correctly. Help others to do the same.
**FOR LGBT QUESTIONING YOUTH**

**Guía de Recursos para Salir del Closet**

**It Gets Better Project**
(www.itgetsbetter.org/) is an online effort to communicate to LGBT youth that life gets better, through user-created videos.

**The Trevor Project**
(www.thetrevorproject.org/) is the leading national organization providing crisis intervention and suicide prevention services to LGBT youth. The website also includes resources for parents and educators.

**Youth Pages**
(www.safeschoolscoalition.org/youth/index.html) of the Safe Schools Coalition includes resources and links for LGBT youth on a variety of health and well-being topics.

**FOR PARENTS & FAMILY MEMBERS**

**Familia es Familia**
(http://familiaesfamilia.org/) is a comprehensive public education campaign aimed at creating strong allies within Latino communities across the country. For the first time, this effort is being undertaken with national Latino organizations willing to engage as partners in advancing equality. Familia es Familia was founded by Latino LGBT, civil rights, business, labor, and community leaders. Fifteen of the leading national Latino organizations from across a broad constituency spectrum are founding partners. They’ve now been joined by many others.

**The Family Acceptance Project**
(familyproject.sfsu.edu/) is an initiative that works to decrease health and related risks for LGBT youth in the context of their families. In addition to research and videos, the Family Acceptance Project provides guides for how families can support their LGBT children. These are available in several languages at familyproject.sfsu.edu/publications.

**Parents, Families, and Friends of Lesbians and Gays/PFLAG**
(community.pflag.org/page.aspx?oid=194) is a national support, education, and advocacy organization that offers resources for parents and other caring adults. On its website, you will find local chapters where you can meet with other family members of LGBT people. You can also find answers to frequently asked questions about LGBT identity, and tips on how to be supportive.

**The Safe Schools Coalition**

**The Trevor Project**
(www.thetrevorproject.org/) is the leading national organization providing crisis intervention and suicide prevention services to LGBT youth. The website also includes resources for parents and educators.

**FOR FRIENDS**

**Advocates for Youth**
(www.advocatesforyouth.org/about-us) champions efforts that help young people make informed and responsible decisions about their reproductive and sexual health.

**It Gets Better Project**
(www.itgetsbetter.org/) is an online effort to communicate to LGBT youth, through user-created videos, that life gets better. Friends of LGBT youth can find videos for inspiration and information.

**FOR TEACHERS, SCHOOL OFFICIALS, COACHES**

HRC’s 2012 survey found that LGBT youth are twice as likely as their non-LGBT peers to report being bullied or harassed in school. The most effective prevention is to work proactively with your school to create a climate welcoming to LGBT youth. If bullying does occur, there are concrete steps to follow. They include: act immediately to stop the incident, separate the students involved, ensure that all students are safe, address the needs of the targeted student, and make sure that students who are bullying receive consequences for their action. Address the role of the bystanders by engaging them in conversations about options to stop the event, including getting an adult to intervene, diffusing the situation, or verbally defending the person who was targeted.

If you are a parent whose child is being bullied, request a meeting with a school administrator, counselor, or other appropriate representative.
HRC’S Welcoming Schools (www.welcomingschools.org/) offers tools, lessons, and resources for educators and school officials on embracing family diversity, avoiding gender stereotyping, and ending bullying and name-calling in elementary schools.

What Do You Know? Six to Twelve year-olds Talk About Gays and Lesbians (www.welcomingschools.org/whatsdoyouknow) is an award-winning professional development film by the HRC Foundation’s Welcoming Schools program for elementary school staff and parents. It features students discussing what they know about gays and lesbians, what they hear at school, and what they’d like teachers to do. Available with Spanish subtitles.

Call To Action educates, inspires, and activates Catholics to act for justice and build inclusive communities through a lens of anti-racism and anti-oppression principles. For more information, go to www.cta-usa.org.

Dignity USA works for respect and justice for people of all sexual orientations, genders, and gender identities — especially LGBT persons — in the Catholic Church and the world through education, advocacy, and support. For more information, go to www.dignityusa.org.

Fortunate Families serves as a resource and networking ministry with Catholic parents of LGBT children, to promote and facilitate personal, meaningful, and respectful conversation. For more information, go to www.fortunatenatfamilies.com.

Human Rights Campaign’s Living Openly in Your Place of Worship — This guide was created to provide people with suggestions and resources about coming out and living openly in places of worship. See www.hrc.org/resources/entry/living-openly-in-your-place-of-worship

Pacific School of Religion Latino/a Roundtable provides and promotes understanding, acceptance, and affirmation of Latino LGBTQ persons and their families by transforming Latino faith communities and the wider Latino community.

See www.clgs.org/latino-roundtable.

Reconciling Works advocates for the full inclusion of LGBT Lutherans in all aspects of the life of their church and congregations. For more information, see www.reconcilingworks.org.

UCC Council for Hispanic Ministries is an autonomous body working cooperatively with Council Regions and Associations, Conferences, and Ministries of the UCC to promote its work among Hispanics/Latinos/Latinas in the United States, Puerto Rico, Mexico, and other nations of the Caribbean, and Central and South America. For more information, go to www.ucc.org/about-us/council-for-hispanic.html.

Unitarian Universalist Association’s Multicultural Growth & Witness staff group is a welcoming, inclusive, and empowering resource for Unitarian Universalists who identify as bisexual, gay, lesbian, and/or transgender. It serves the economically oppressed, the Latino community, multiracial families, people of color, and people with disabilities. For more information, go to www.uua.org/directory/staff/multiculturalgrowth/index.php.

FOR RELIGIOUS LEADERS

A La Familia: A Conversation about Our Families, the Bible, Sexual Orientation, and Gender Identity (www.hrc.org/familia). This guide, co-created with the National Gay and Lesbian Taskforce and Unid@s, is designed to help Latinos integrate religion and family values into their understanding of sexuality and gender identities. Accompanying this guide is a full training program. Contact familia@hrc.org for more information.

Attend that meeting aware of your child’s rights under local, state, and federal laws (see resources below), document the meeting in writing, and ask for follow-up to ensure that the situation is resolved. Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network/GLSEN (www.glsen.org) is the leading national education organization focused on ensuring safe schools for all students, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity/expression. It offers research on school climate and resources for educators.

Cultivating Respect: Safe Schools for All (community.pflag.org/page.aspx?pid=1011) is a PFLAG initiative that provides support, education, and advocacy to students, parents, families, friends, and educators to help create positive learning environments for all students.

GSA Network (www.gsanetwork.org/) empowers youth activists to fight homophobia and transphobia in schools. It is a national youth leadership organization that connects school-based gay-straight alliances to each other and to community resources.

Safe Schools Coalition (www.safeschoolscoalition.org/) is an international public-private partnership in support of LGBT youth.

Human Rights Campaign’s Workshops for religious leaders...

For more information, go to www.hrc.org/whatdoyouknow.

For more information, go to www.fortunatenatfamilies.com.

For more information, go to www.hrc.org/resources/entry/living-openly-in-your-place-of-worship.

For more information, see www.clgs.org/latino-roundtable.

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GENERAL DEMOGRAPHICS OF THE LGBT LATINO YOUTH SAMPLE

GENDER: 53% of Hispanic LGBT youth in this survey identified their gender as female, 40% as male, 2% as transgender, and 6% identified their gender as “other” (gender-queer, gender fluid, both, neither, etc.).

SEXUAL ORIENTATION: 41% of the LGBT Latino youth identified their sexual orientation as “bisexual,” 29% as “gay,” 18% as “lesbian,” 2% as “queer,” and 10% as “other.”

RACE: Of the 555 who chose a race other than “Hispanic/Latino/Spanish American/Chicano” but also identify as a Hispanic, Latino/a, or Spanish-speaking American, 55% were “white,” 23% were “other,” 10% were “black/African American,” 4% were “Asian/Pacific Islander,” 4% were “American Indian/ Native American,” and 3% declined to identify their race.
**SCHOOL LEVEL:** 80% were in high school, 15% were in middle school, 2% were in college or university, 2% were home-schooled, 1% were out of school, and 1% were "other."

**LIVING AREA:** 44% live in suburban regions, 42% live in urban/city regions, and 14% live in rural regions.
PERSONAL WELL-BEING

FINDINGS

One of the most basic findings of Growing Up LGBT in America is that LGBT Latino youth are not as happy as their non-LGBT Latino peers. Their biggest challenges are related to discriminatory responses to their LGBT identity. And yet, these same youth are nearly as optimistic about their future as their peers. When asked to imagine the likelihood of major life achievements, LGBT Latino youth mirror the perspective of non-LGBT Latino youth in several areas, and more than 8 in 10 LGBT Latino youth believe that things will get better.

When asked to describe the “most difficult problem facing them in their life these days,” LGBT Latino youth most often cited three issues related to their LGBT identity:

1. lack of acceptance by parents and family;
2. fear about being out or open; and
3. trouble at school, including bullying.

Other “most difficult problems” identified by LGBT Latino youth included:

General problems being LGBT
Trouble with classes
Eating disorders/self-harm/depression/suicide
Romantic relationship problems
Religion and lack of acceptance
Loneliness
Concerns about college/money for college
Confusion about sexuality
Finding a partner/accepting partner
Nobody to date

WHAT YOUTH HAVE TO SAY:

“THE MOST DIFFICULT THING IS HAVING TO LIVE WITH MY PARENTS WHO DON’T KNOW, AND THEN GO EVERY DAY OF MY LIFE LIVING OPENLY GAY WITH A BOYFRIEND AND OPEN AT SCHOOL AND FOR MY PARENTS NOT TO BE A PART OF IT. GENERALLY, I HAVE BEEN VERY SUCCESSFUL IN HIGH SCHOOL DESPITE DIFFICULTIES, [BUT] NOT BEING ABLE TO TELL MY MOTHER HOW MUCH MORE I HAVE ON MY SHOULDERS IS HARD AS WELL.”
When asked, “If you could change one thing about your life right now, what would it be and why?” the three most commonly-cited changes sought by LGBT Latino youth again related to their LGBT identity and resulting discrimination or isolation. They hoped to see:

1. change in others’ understanding, tolerance, and/or hate of LGBT people;
2. change related to the parents or family situation; and
3. change related to their honesty and openness about their sexual orientation.

Other areas of change that LGBT Latino youth identified included:

**Body**
- Gender/sexual orientation
- Where they live/who they live with
- Relationships or dating life

**Personality**
- Friends/lack of friends
- Depression/self-harm (females only)
- How to deal with others (males only)
- Grades/school (males only)
- Marriage equality (male only)

**WHAT YOUTH HAVE TO SAY:**

“I WISH I COULD COME OUT TO THE PEOPLE I LOVE, SO I COULD BE FREE TO BE MYSELF.”

“I WOULD CHANGE MY GRANDMA BEING GONE; SHE WAS THE ONLY PERSON WHO UNDERSTANDS ME.”

“I WOULD WISH THAT PEOPLE IN THE WORLD WOULD BE MORE TOLERANT/EDUCATED ABOUT WHAT IT MEANS TO BE A GAY AND JUST FOR THERE TO BE A SAFE PLACE WHERE LGBT MEMBERS COULD HANG OUT IN PUBLIC.”
LGBT Latino youth are much less likely than their non-LGBT Latino peers to say they are happy. Thirty-seven percent of LGBT Latino youth say they are very or pretty happy, while 64% of non-LGBT Latino youth say the same. Sixteen percent of LGBT Latino youth say they are very or pretty unhappy, while just 6% of non-LGBT Latino youth say the same.

Likelihood of Life Achievements

At the same time, LGBT Latino youth are generally optimistic about their future, and their optimism nearly matches that of their non-LGBT Latino peers. When asked about the likelihood of common life achievements, more than 9 in 10 LGBT Latino youth say they are likely to go to college and get a good job; more than 8 in 10 say they will be happy and establish a life-long partnership with someone they love. These are similar to the views of non-LGBT Latino youth. However, LGBT Latino youth are less optimistic than their non-LGBT peers in several areas: 80% of LGBT Latino youth say they are likely to get married to someone they love, while 95% of non-LGBT Latino youth say the same, and 72% of LGBT Latino youth say they are likely to raise children, while 89% of non-LGBT Latino youth say the same.
LIKELIHOOD OF LIFE ACHIEVEMENTS, IF STAY IN SAME TOWN

This optimism declines drastically among LGBT Latino youth when asked to rate the likelihood of these same life events if they stay in the community where they currently live. Non-LGBT Latino youth also have less optimism about many life achievements if they continue to live in the same town. However, LGBT Latino youth have less optimism than non-LGBT youth in all areas, and the decline is much deeper than among non-LGBT youth. Compared to their non-LGBT Latino peers, LGBT Latino youth are much less likely to say they will marry someone they love, establish a lifelong partnership with someone they love, raise children, be happy, or be an active part of their community if they continue to live the city/town where they currently live.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>LGBT Latino</th>
<th>Non-LGBT Latino</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Have a good job</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>74%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Go to college</td>
<td>76%</td>
<td>86%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Be happy</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>82%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Establish a lifelong partnership w/ someone you love</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>78%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Get married to someone you love</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Raise children</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Be an active part of my community</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>76%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

8 in 10 (80%) of LGBT Latino youth say they believe things will get better; 93% of non-LGBT Latino youth say the same.

LGBT Latino youth are almost twice as likely as non-LGBT Latino youth to experiment with alcohol or drugs. More than half (58%) of LGBT Latino youth say they have experimented with alcohol or drugs, while 30% of non-LGBT Latino youth say the same.

A third (32%) of LGBT Latino youth say they do not have an adult they can talk to about personal problems, while just 13% of non-LGBT Latino youth say the same.
HOME & FAMILY

Many LGBT Latino youth have families who do not accept and support them. While 6 in 10 LGBT youth say their families are accepting of LGBT people, a third say they are not. Slightly less than half have an adult in their family they could turn to if worried or sad.

CONCERN ABOUT FAMILY ACCEPTANCE IS THE TOP PROBLEM IDENTIFIED BY THESE YOUTH, AND THE TOP CHANGES THEY WISH FOR IN THEIR LIVES.

OUT TO WHOM/WHERE?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Close Friends</td>
<td>93%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classmates</td>
<td>72%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At School</td>
<td>68%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immediate Family</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Your Teachers</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extended Family</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Your Doctor</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Your Coaches</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At Work</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At Church</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Your Clergy</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

COMING OUT

About half (53%) of LGBT Latino youth are out to their immediate family; more than a quarter (29%) are out to their extended family.

This number is higher than for some other LGBT youth. Among African American LGBT youth, 46% are out to their immediate family and 20% are out to extended family; among Asian/Pacific Islander LGBT youth, 40% are out to their immediate family and 19% are out to extended family; among non-Hispanic White LGBT youth, 58% are out to immediate family and 24% are out to extended family.

When asked to describe why they are not out to their immediate or extended family, LGBT Latino youth offered a variety of reasons: fear for their safety, belief that their family will disown them or kick them out, an expectation of negative responses due to conservative values or religious beliefs, or the belief they will be kept from their significant others or friends. As a result, some youth plan to come out to their family when they are older or out of the home. Others believe it is not the business of their family members, or that their family is not yet ready.
WHAT YOUTH HAVE TO SAY:

“I WANT TO WAIT UNTIL I’M A LEGAL ADULT AND OUT TO ALL OF MY CLOSE FRIENDS FIRST SO I HAVE A SAFETY NET FOR MYSELF IF IT BE NEEDED.”

“I AM NOT OUT TO MY FAMILY BECAUSE I KNOW THAT SOME OF THEM BELIEVE THAT BEING GAY, LESBIAN, BISEXUAL, OR TRANSGENDER IS A MENTAL DISORDER AND THAT THE CHURCH CAN ‘CURE’ THEM.”

“BECAUSE THEY WOULD HATE ME AND TRY TO CHANGE ME AND I’M TERRIFIED OF COMING OUT…. THEY’RE SO RELIGIOUS AND HATEFUL, THEY’RE EVEN RACIST AT TIMES. IT’S DISGUSTING.”

“MY FATHER IS HOMOPHOBIC, AND EVEN THOUGH MY MOM SAYS HE DOESN’T HAVE A PROBLEM WITH GAY PEOPLE, SHE HAS MADE IT VERY CLEAR TO ME THAT IT WOULD BREAK HER HEART FOR ME TO BE GAY.”
About a third (37%) of LGBT Latino youth say their family is not accepting of LGBT people, while 57% say their family is accepting.

Among non-Latino LGBT youth, 66% of White youth, 48% of African-American youth, and 46% of Asian/Pacific Islander youth say their families are accepting of LGBT people.

Less than half (47%) of LGBT Latino youth say they have an adult in their family they can turn to if worried or sad, while 8 in 10 (81%) of non-LGBT Latino youth say they have such a family member. Among non-Latino LGBT youth, 51% of White youth, 44% of African American youth, and 37% of Asian/Pacific Islander youth say they have such an adult in their family.

Twice as many LGBT Latino youth hear negative messages about being LGBT from their family compared to those who hear positive messages. When asked where they heard negative messages about being LGBT, about half (53%) of LGBT Latino youth cited family members. Just one in four (26%) said they heard positive messages from their family.
WHAT YOUTH HAVE TO SAY:

“EVERYONE ELSE KNOWS I HAVE A GIRLFRIEND AND THAT I AM GAY EXCEPT THE PEOPLE I LIVE WITH.”

“IT’S VERY FRUSTRATING BECAUSE I DON’T LIKE HIDING MYSELF FROM THE WORLD BECAUSE MY FAMILY IS ASHAMED.”

“TAKE AWAY THE HOMOPHOBIA. MY MOTHER HAS BEEN SAYING THAT I DESERVED EVERY BIT OF BULLYING THAT I GET BECAUSE OF MY GENDER EXPRESSION. ALSO, MY FRIEND CAME OUT AND NOW HIS MOTHER IS TREATING HIM LIKE A SECOND-CLASS CITIZEN, AND HIS SISTERS ARE SAYING GAYS DON’T DESERVE TO LIVE. SO THAT’S MY PROBLEM AND THE ONLY THING THAT I WANT IS FOR PEOPLE TO BE MORE UNDERSTANDING TOWARDS US.”
SCHOOL & PEERS

LGBT LATINO YOUTH RECEIVE THE MOST ACCEPTANCE AND SUPPORT IN THEIR SCHOOL COMMUNITIES.

Nearly three-quarters of LGBT Latino youth say their school is accepting of LGBT people. More than 8 in 10 say their peers are accepting, more than 9 in 10 are out to their close friends, and 7 in 10 are out to their classmates.

Still, LGBT Latino youth are almost twice as likely as non-LGBT Latino youth to be excluded by peers, verbally harassed, or physically assaulted at school.

Additionally, LGBT Latino youth are less likely than non-LGBT Latino youth and non-Hispanic LGBT youth to participate in afterschool activities.

The percentage of Latino LGBT youth who are out to close friends is similar as other racial groups. However, Latino LGBT youth are more likely than other LGBT youth to say they are out to classmates, at school, and to teachers.

More than 9 in 10 (93%) of Latino LGBT youth are out to close friends; 72% of Latino LGBT youth are out to classmates, as are 62% of non-Hispanic White LGBT youth, 65% of African American LGBT youth, and 58% of Asian/Pacific Islander LGBT youth.

The 25% of LGBT Latino youth who reported not being out to classmates, teachers, or at school described a different set of reasons than being closeted at home. Some fear they will be treated differently or judged, many do not think it’s the business of their teachers or classmates, and some want to focus their energy on grades and classes. Others fear bullying, are simply not ready, worry that their teachers will inform their parents, or say it is not easy to bring up the subject.

68% of Latino LGBT youth say they are out at school, as do 59% of White LGBT youth, 64% of African American LGBT youth, and 54% of Asian/Pacific Islander LGBT youth.

42% of Latino LGBT youth are out to teachers, as are 37% of White LGBT youth, 36% of African American LGBT youth, and 33% of Asian/Pacific Islander LGBT youth.

Among the 34 LGBT Latino youth who are homeschooled, about one-third (11) say they are home schooled because of their LGBT identity.
Nearly three-quarters (74%) of LGBT Latino youth say their school is accepting of LGBT people; more than 8 in 10 (84%) say their peers are accepting of LGBT people. These are higher than the levels reported by non-Latino White LGBT youth: 64% say their school is accepting and 76% say their peers are accepting. The numbers are similar, however, to those reported by non-Latino African American (75% and 85%, respectively) and Asian/Pacific Islander (79% and 85%, respectively) LGBT youth.

About 8 in 10 (79%) of LGBT Latino youth say their peers have no problem with their sexual orientation or gender identity.

LGBT Latino youth are almost twice as likely as non-LGBT Latino youth to be excluded by their peers: 40% of LGBT Latino youth say they are excluded by peers frequently, often, or sometimes, while 23% of non-LGBT Latino youth say the same. Among non-Hispanic LGBT youth, 52% of White youth, 34% of African American youth, and 36% of Asian/Pacific Islander youth say they are excluded by their peers.

What Youth Have to Say:

“I hear the stories of people committing suicide from bullying, so I am scared to being pushed into doing such a thing.”

“I am not out to them because I feel I will be even more left out than I already am.”

“Because I know I won’t be looked at the same and that I will be treated different or get nasty looks.”
PARTICIPATION

LGBT Latino youth are less likely than non-LGBT Latino peers to participate in after-school activities such as drama, debate, band, or academic clubs: 58% of LGBT Latino youth participate in such activities in contrast to 65% of non-LGBT Latino youth.

LGBT Latino youth are also less likely than other LGBT youth to participate in afterschool activities: 64% of non-Latino White LGBT youth participate, as do 65% of African-American LGBT youth, and 70% of Asian/Pacific Islander LGBT youth.

About half (49%) of LGBT Latino youth say they have a club in their school that supports LGBT students, such as a gay-straight alliance. Among those who have a club in their school, 6 in 10 (59%) of LGBT Latino youth say they participate often or sometimes. This is similar to the participation rates among non-Latino White, African-American, and Asian/Pacific Islander LGBT youth.

HARASSMENT

LGBT Latino youth are nearly twice as likely as non-LGBT Latino youth to be verbally harassed at school: 47% of LGBT Latino youth have been harassed frequently, often, or sometimes, while 26% of non-LGBT Latino youth report the same.

Among non-Latino LGBT youth, 54% of White youth, 39% of African American youth, and 35% of Asian/Pacific Islander youth have been verbally harassed at school.

LGBT Latino youth are nearly twice as likely as non-LGBT Latino youth to be physically assaulted at school: 14% of LGBT Latino youth say they have been attacked frequently, often, or sometimes while 8% of non-LGBT Latino youth say the same.

When asked to identify the most difficult problem they face, LGBT Latino youth identified trouble at school or bullying as the third most frequent problem.

8 in 10 (81%) LGBT Latino youth believe they have been the target of harassment and assaults because of their sexual orientation and/or gender identity.
“I’VE LOST FRIENDS DUE TO THEM LEARNING MY SEXUAL ORIENTATION.”

“OTHER GIRLS BULLYING AND/OR ALIENATING ME.”

“I’M HAVING TROUBLE FINDING MY PLACE IN SCHOOL, AND WITH HIGH SCHOOL STARTING NEXT YEAR, I FEEL A SORT OF PRESSURE TO FIT INTO A GAY STEREOTYPE BECAUSE THAT’S WHAT IS EXPECTED OF ME.”

“[I’M] BEING VERBALLY ABUSED BY OTHER CLASSMATES.”

“I’M BEING VERBALLY ABUSED BY OTHER CLASSMATES.”

“I’M BEING VERBALLY ABUSED BY OTHER CLASSMATES.”
CULTURE

LGBT YOUTH ARE BOMBARDED WITH MESSAGES — POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE — ABOUT BEING LGBT.

About three-quarters (77%) of LGBT Latino youth say they hear positive messages about being LGBT...

...while nearly 9 in 10 (87%) say they hear negative messages.

The Internet and the entertainment industry are key sources, along with peers and family. Through the Internet in particular, youth have access to support and community, but at the same time are vulnerable to online harassment.

SOURCES OF POSITIVE MESSAGES ON BEING LGBT

The Internet, peers, movies/TV/radio, and school were the top sources of positive LGBT messages among LGBT Latino youth. Religious leaders, community leaders, and elected leaders trailed in positive messages.

INTERNET | 86%
PEERS | 73%
MOVIES/TV/RADIO | 59%
SCHOOL | 50%
FAMILY | 26%
ELECTED LEADERS | 16%
OTHER | 15%
COMMUNITY LEADERS | 9%
RELIGIOUS LEADERS | 3%

SOURCES OF NEGATIVE MESSAGES ON BEING LGBT

School, the Internet, peers, and religious leaders were the top sources of negative LGBT messages among LGBT Latino youth.

INTERNET | 66%
PEERS | 66%
MOVIES/TV/RADIO | 39%
SCHOOL | 71%
FAMILY | 53%
ELECTED LEADERS | 52%
OTHER | 6%
COMMUNITY LEADERS | 16%
RELIGIOUS LEADERS | 66%
ABOUT THREE-QUARTERS (77%) OF LGBT LATINO YOUTH SAY THEY WOULD FEEL SAFE REVEALING THEIR LGBT IDENTITY BY WEARING A T-SHIRT, BUTTON, RAINBOW STICKER, OR EQUAL SIGN. THESE ARE SIMILAR TO THE LGBT WHITE, AFRICAN AMERICAN, AND ASIAN/PACIFIC ISLANDER REPORTS OF FEELING SAFE WEARING SOME OVERT IDENTIFICATION.

LIFE ONLINE

Nearly half (45%) of LGBT Latino youth participate in an online community that addresses LGBT youth issues. Among non-Hispanic LGBT youth, 54% of White youth, 45% of African American youth, and 46% of Asian/Pacific Islander youth participate in such community groups.

LGBT Latino youth are twice as likely as non-LGBT Latino youth to say they have been harassed online. About a third (32%) of LGBT Latino youth say they have been harassed online while 16% of non-LGBT Latino youth say the same. Among non-Hispanic LGBT youth, 41% of White youth, 22% of African American Youth, and 23% of Asian/Pacific Islander youth report online harassment.

LGBT Latino youth are almost twice as likely as non-LGBT Latino youth to say they are more honest about themselves online than in the real world: 68% of LGBT Latino youth say they are more honest online, while 36% of non-LGBT Latino youth say the same. Among non-Hispanic LGBT youth, 75% of White youth, 71% of African American Youth, and 77% of Asian/Pacific Islander youth say they are more honest online than in the real world.
LGBT Latino youth suffer more isolation in their communities than their non-LGBT Latino peers in several specific ways. They are more likely than non-LGBT Latino youth to face harassment and violence in the community, and much less likely to participate in a variety of community activities.

They are twice as likely as non-LGBT Latino youth to say they do not “fit in” where they live, with almost 6 in 10 LGBT Latino youth reporting they will need to move to be accepted.

These youth describe few places in their communities that are accepting of LGBT people. One in four say they do not have an adult in their community they could talk to if they felt worried or sad.

When asked to describe what it is like to be LGBT in their community, LGBT Latino youth offered responses that revealed both positive and negative characteristics. Among positive comments, some youth said it was good to be open and they felt proud in their communities, some said it was no different than being straight, some said their community is accepting of LGBT people, and others said they enjoyed being different than others. Among the negative responses, some said they were closeted in their communities, some said they have been verbally and physically abused, some said they feel lonely and that it is hard to meet other LGBT people, while others said it was scary or confusing being LGBT in their communities.
WHAT YOUTH HAVE TO SAY:

“TO BE GAY IN MY COMMUNITY IS REALLY SCARY. THERE ARE A LOT OF GANGS IN MY COMMUNITY THAT BULLY A LOT OF GAY PEOPLE.”

“ALTHOUGH I FEEL NO DANGER WITH BEING GAY, I ALSO DO NOT FEEL ENTIRELY COMFORTABLE BEING MYSELF IN MY COMMUNITY.”

“I HAVE NOT BEEN ACTIVE IN MY COMMUNITY AS OPENLY GAY. HOWEVER, FROM WHAT I’VE SEEN, GAY PEOPLE IN MY COMMUNITY ARE OSTRACIZED, MARGINALIZED, AND DEMEANED.”

OUT IN THE COMMUNITY

AMONG LGBT LATINO YOUTH, 17% ARE OUT TO THEIR DOCTORS, 14% ARE OUT TO COACHES, 12% ARE OUT AT WORK, 8% ARE OUT AT CHURCH, AND 6% ARE OUT TO THEIR CLERGY.

ACCEPTANCE

LGBT Latino youth are twice as likely as non-LGBT Latino youth to say they do not “fit in” in their communities where they live: 40% of LGBT Latino youth say they definitely or somewhat do not fit in, while 20% of non-LGBT Latino youth say the same.

LGBT Latino youth are twice as likely as non-LGBT Latino youth to say they will need to move to be accepted. More than half (58%) of LGBT Latino youth say they will need to move, while 28% of non-LGBT Latino youth say the same.

More than a third (35%) of LGBT Latino youth say the community in which they live is not accepting of LGBT people, though about half (48%) say their community is getting better.

Only 13% of LGBT Latino youth say that churches/places of worship in their community are accepting of LGBT people.

More than a third (39%) of LGBT Latino youth say their state government is not accepting of LGBT people, and about a quarter (27%) say their local government is not accepting.

Half (52%) of LGBT Latino youth said elected leaders were a source of negative messages about being LGBT, while just 16% said elected leaders were a source of positive messages.

More than half (58%) of LGBT Latino youth say they have an adult in their community or school they could turn to if they felt worried or sad, while three quarters (74%) of non-LGBT Latino youth say they have such an adult in their community or school. Among non-Hispanic LGBT youth, 61% of White youth, 59% of African American youth, and 65% of Asian/Pacific Islander youth say they have such an adult in their community.

Less than a quarter (22%) of LGBT Latino youth say they have a place in their community that supports LGBT youth, such as a community center or an unofficial hangout for LGBT youth, while half say they do not know.

Just 14% of LGBT Latino youth say there is a church or synagogue in their community that is welcoming to LGBT people, while more than half (53%) say they do not know.

Two in three (66%) LGBT Latino youth said religious leaders were a source of negative messages about being LGBT, while only 3% said religious leaders were a source of positive messages.
PARTICIPATION

About a third (34%) of LGBT Latino youth play sports for their community or school league, in contrast to nearly half (48%) of non-LGBT Latino youth. LGBT Latino youth are half as likely as non-LGBT Latino youth to participate in service organizations. Fewer than 1 in 5 (18%) of LGBT Latino youth say they participate very often or sometimes in service groups such as Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, or Key Club, in contrast to more than a third (36%) of non-LGBT Latino youth.

A fifth (21%) of LGBT Latino youth participate in LGBT groups outside of school, such as a gay youth center. Among non-Latino LGBT youth, 17% of White youth, 16% of African American youth, and 13% of Asian/Pacific Islander youth participate in such community groups.

LGBT Latino youth are much less likely than non-LGBT Latino youth to attend religious services every week: 17% of LGBT Latino youth say they attend services weekly, in contrast to half (50%) of non-LGBT Latino youth. Among those LGBT youth who attend services weekly, about a quarter (29%) say their own church is accepting of LGBT people; 10% are out to clergy; and 19% are out at church.

HARASSMENT

About a third (34%) of LGBT Latino youth say they have been verbally harassed outside of school, while a quarter (24%) of non-LGBT Latino youth say the same. About 1 in 10 (11%) of LGBT Latino youth say they have been physically assaulted outside of school, in contrast to 8% of non-LGBT Latino youth.

More than half (53%) of LGBT Latino youth have been the target of anti-gay slurs, in contrast to 16% of non-LGBT Latino youth. Among non-Hispanic LGBT youth, 55% of White youth, 45% of African American youth, and 37% of Asian/Pacific Islander youth report being the target of such slurs.

8 in 10 (81%) LGBT Latino youth believe they have been the target of such harassment and assaults because of their sexual orientation and/or gender identity.

Below illustrates the percentage decline in optimism — a dramatic illustration of LGBT Latino youth’s lack of hope in achieving their dreams in their current communities.

PERCENTAGE DECLINE IN OPTIMISM IF STAY IN SAME TOWN

Strikingly, LGBT Latino youth express a 24 percentage point drop in optimism about being an active part of their community if they have to stay in their same town, while non-LGBT Latino youth actually increase their optimism by one percentage point when asked the same question. A community connection that exists for non-LGBT Latino youth appears to be missing for many LGBT Latino youth.

1 Optimism declined for both LGBT and non-LGBT Latino youth in all areas except one: non-LGBT Latino youth said they were slightly more likely to be active members of their community if they remained in their same town; this is illustrated by the -1% decline, or increase.
This study includes a review of frequencies and cross-tabulations of raw data from research conducted by Greenberg Quinlan Rosner. That original data included 10,030 LGBT-identified youth and nearly 500 non-LGBT youth. Below is a full description of the original methodology. Most of the LGBT youth were recruited through the public URL described on this page; the 5% of respondents to the Harris Poll Online who identified as LGBT were also included in the sample of LGBT youth.

In two survey questions, these LGBT youth either 1) identified their race as Hispanic, Latino/a, Spanish American, Chicano (n=1,382) or 2) identified as another race, but also identified as a Hispanic, Latino/a, or Spanish-speaking American (n= 555).

For context and to better understand their experiences, their responses are sometimes compared to the responses of non-LGBT Latino youth (n=88) from an online panel sample, as well as LGBT youth of other races/ethnicities from among the 10,000 LGBT-identified youth. These include non-Hispanic White youth (n=6,513), non-Hispanic African-American youth (n=579), and non-Hispanic Asian/Pacific Islander youth (n = 306).

Robin Kane, RK Evaluation & Strategies, LLC, and Anne E. Nicoll, Ph.D., Nicoll Consulting, are responsible for the data analysis and findings presented in this report. 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 LGBT (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. 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® (HPOL). These interviews were not screened for LGBT status and comprise the “non-LGBT” population in this study. Note, however, that 5% of these interviews self-identified as LGBT and were asked questions directed at this population.

The Human Rights Campaign is thankful to The Trevor Project for its partnership in promoting the 2012 survey, along with dozens of local and statewide LGBT youth-serving organizations.
Harris Poll OnlineSM (HPOL) is a multimillion-member panel of cooperative online respondents. Panelists have joined the Harris Poll Online from over 100 different sources. Diverse methods are leveraged to gain panelists including: co-registration offers on partners’ websites, targeted emails sent by online partners to their audiences, graphical and text banner placement on partners’ websites (including social media, news, search, and community portals), trade show presentations, targeted postal mail invitations, TV advertisements, and telephone recruitment of targeted populations.

When respondents are recruited into this panel, it is made very clear 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 years old.

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 in its entirety, see www.hrc.org/latinoyouth and www.LULAC.org/lgbtyouth.
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THIS REPORT IS AVAILABLE IN SPANISH AT THE LINKS ABOVE.