Tulsa’s Sexual and Gender Minority Community Needs Report, 2019

Sponsored by Tulsa Reaches Out, a fund of Tulsa Community Foundation
TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. About the Report
2. Sample Characteristics
3. Sexual Identity
4. Summary of Findings
   a. Family & community
   b. Mental health and trauma
   c. Physical health and healthcare access
   d. SGM youth report challenges
   e. Workplace experiences
5. Priorities & Recommendations
ABOUT THE REPORT
The title of this report, *The Prism Project*, is meant to convey two things:

**First,** this report is the product of extensive input from members of the SGM community in the Tulsa region, and it is meant to shine a light on the issues and project a variety of solutions on the other side.

**Second,** we chose the word “project” because it implies the work is not done. Rather, this serves as one more step forward in contributing to an ongoing conversation.
About the Report

- The **first LGBT Needs Assessment** was commissioned in 2004 by Tulsa Reaches Out (TRO)

- The **purpose** was to promote access to needed social and health services and to inform the community of the gaps in inclusive policies and practices involving the LGBTQ population

- 585 completed the 2004 survey or participated in a focus group
About the Report

• TRO commissioned The Hope Research Center at the University of Oklahoma’s Tulsa Campus for this 2019 Report

• Our goals in providing this Report are three-fold:

  1. Outreach to community partners
  2. Inform advocacy groups
  3. Guide policymakers & policy implementers
“We hope readers will consider committing their resources, influence, and networks to come up with creative solutions to the persistent challenges faced by SGM individuals so that we can continue making progress together as one community.”
About the Report

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- **Ben Stewart**, George Kaiser Family Foundation
- **Al Triggs**
- **Jose Vega**, Oklahomans for Equality
- **Alex Wade**, Oklahomans for Equality
- **Justice Waidner**, ONEOK Inc
- **Mark Wilson**
Sample Characteristics

• Final sample consisted of **818 participants**

• Mean age was **38.2 years old**

• Majority (71.9%) identified as white-only as their race or ethnicity

The mean age of 818 participants was 38.2 years old.
Sample Characteristics

- 82.1% live within the **Tulsa Metropolitan Statistical Area (TMSA)**

- Mean number of **others living in the household** was 1.7

- Nearly all (97.9%) respondents reported **English being spoken** in the home, whether English alone or in addition to another language.
Sample Characteristics

Relationship status of respondents

- Single: 34.7%
- Married: 26.4%
- Partnered, living together: 15.8%
- Divorced or separated: 9.3%
- Partnered, not living together: 7.8%
- Non-monogamous relationship: 3.3%
- Widowed: 1.8%
- Other relationship status: 0.9%
Sample Characteristics

Annual household income for participants and TMSA appear proportionately similar with only minor differences between groups.
SEXUAL IDENTITY
Sexual Identity

• 92.1% of participants were categorized as sexual minorities

• 21.9% were categorized as gender minorities
  • 78.1% of respondents reported being cisgender
  • 10.6% reported being transgender
  • 9.8% reported being nonbinary
  • 1.5% gender minorities were left uncategorized
# Sexual Identity

## Table 4: Coded Sexual Identity Characteristics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender identity</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cisgender man</td>
<td>296</td>
<td>36.20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cisgender woman</td>
<td>343</td>
<td>41.90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transgender man</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>5.90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transgender woman</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>4.80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender nonbinary</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>4.90%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Genderqueer</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>1.60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Genderfluid</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>2.30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other gender minorities</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>2.40%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Sexual orientation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sexual orientation</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Straight or heterosexual</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>7.90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gay</td>
<td>266</td>
<td>32.50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lesbian</td>
<td>145</td>
<td>17.70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bisexual</td>
<td>170</td>
<td>20.80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asexual</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>3.20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Queer</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>2.40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pansexual</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>9.40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Androphilic(^2)</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1.20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gynophilic(^2)</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>2.30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other sexual minorities</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>2.40%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
SUMMARY OF FINDINGS
SUMMARY OF FINDINGS: Family & Community
Family & Community

• Adults are reporting high levels of hope (84.8%) and civic engagement (71.3%)

• Many are living with others and in relationships
  • Nearly 4 in 5 are living with at least one other person
  • Over half are in a relationship
Many are reporting *generally positive experiences with family*

- Over half of respondents reported none of the listed negative experiences with family
- 2/3 of respondents reported at least one of the listed positive experiences with family

86.6% reported being open with at least some family members,

Of those open with at least some family members, 1 in 8 reported that immediate family members were *unsupportive*
Family & Community

• Many respondents are accessing agencies, programs, and services in the community

• Many are reporting few instances of the listed negative experiences with law enforcement
  • 5 out of 6 participants who interacted with law enforcement in the past 3 years reported none of the listed negative experiences
Family & Community

• Those who have been involved in spiritual or religious communities in the past three years are **more open about their SGM identity** with their communities.

• And SGM individuals are more likely to remain involved in their spiritual and religious communities in the past three years if they have had a **more SGM-affirming experience**.
58% of those who have been involved within the past 3 years are open with members and leaders in their spiritual and religious communities.

Of adults who reported being open with at least some members, just 10% reported that members were unsupportive.

Those who report being white or identifying as Christian report a more SGM-affirming experience.
Family & Community

• A high percentage of respondents reported leaving their spiritual or religious communities, driven by fear of rejection or actual rejection by their communities.

• Half of respondents had been involved in such communities but not in the past 3 years.

3 in 5 participants who had ever been involved in a spiritual or religious community reported leaving out of fear of rejection or actual rejection.
Family & Community

• Several respondents have experienced homelessness, yet have not utilized shelters
  • 1 in 8 have experienced homelessness in their lifetimes
  • Of those who have stayed at a shelter, over 1/3 reported negative experiences as an SGM person

9 in 10 of those who have experienced homelessness did not utilize a homeless shelter, with nearly... 30% not doing so out of concerns of safety and fear of mistreatment
• Gender minorities and Black/African American respondents reported high rates of negative experiences with law enforcement.
SUMMARY OF FINDINGS:
Mental Health & Trauma
Study participants reported significantly higher exposure to childhood trauma than the national population.

**PERCENTAGE REPORTING 4 OR MORE ACES**

- **Sample**: 37.0%
- **US Average**: 15.8%

- Nearly 2/3 reported 2 or more Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)—much higher than the national rate of 38%
- 37% reported 4 or more ACEs, compared to 15.8% nationally
In comparison with the overall populations of both Oklahoma and the U.S., the study’s sample reports higher ACE scores, reflecting greater exposure to childhood trauma in the home.
Mental Health & Trauma

Rates of intimate partner violence and unwanted sexual contact are high, especially among SGM individuals assigned female at birth.

- 42.1% of individuals assigned female at birth reported at least one instance of IPV before their 18th birthday, compared with 25.8% nationally.
- Half reported ever experiencing unwanted sexual contact.
- Nearly 2/3 of SGM individuals assigned female at birth experienced unwanted sexual contact, 25 percentage points higher than the general female population.
Mental Health & Trauma

• Mental health diagnoses and serious psychological distress are prevalent among SGM respondents, especially among youth and gender minority individuals
  
  • The rate of those experiencing anxiety is 15% higher than in the 2005 study
  
  • 39.2% of gender minorities reported serious psychological distress
  
  • 24.5% of sexual minorities reported serious psychological distress

2/3

reported diagnoses related to Anxiety or Depression

1 in 4 participants reported serious psychological distress — much higher than national estimates of the general population ranging from 2.9 - 5.2%
SGM youth reported higher rates of serious psychological distress.
Despite such high rates of mental health diagnoses and psychological distress, just over 1 in 4 adult participants report currently seeing a mental health professional.

Of those who have ever discussed their SGM identity with a professional, nearly 20% reported that the professional attempted to change their sexual orientation or gender identity.
Mental Health & Trauma

• Suicidality is **strikingly high** among the study’s sample, especially among youth

Reports of *suicide attempts* are...

- **6x** the national rate for adults
- **3x** the national rate for youth
Mental Health & Trauma

Compared to national estimates, participants age 18 and older report strikingly higher rates of suicidality

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Sample</th>
<th>US Rates</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Suicidal Ideation</td>
<td>21.6%</td>
<td>4.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suicide Plan</td>
<td>14.8%</td>
<td>1.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suicide Attempt</td>
<td>3.8%</td>
<td>0.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Participants age 18 and younger also report high rates of suicidality compared to national estimates.
SUMMARY OF FINDINGS:
Physical Health & Health Care
Most reported at least a decent quality of health and have health insurance

- 94.1% reported being HIV negative
- Nearly 90% of all respondents who reported living with HIV also reported receiving health care related to HIV within the past 12 months

96.1% reported their health as fair or better
• The medically uninsured rate among respondents is **low** (8.6%) and comparable to the national rate (8.8%)

• The rate reported in this study is 10.4% **lower** than the rate reported in the 2005 study

The **medically uninsured rate** among respondents is **low**
Physical Health & Health Care

• There are concerns with respect to the physical health of SGM respondents and access to healthcare

• 1/3 reported having a serious health issue, including nearly 70% of respondents aged 70 and over

The uninsured rate remains high among Latinx and African American respondents
• 1 in 4 report not having a primary care provider, including 34.8% of Latinx and 30% of American Indian respondents

• Of those without a primary care provider, 27.8% report they do not seek healthcare because they can’t afford it

• Nearly 2/3 reported at least one of the listed negative experiences with their health care provider in the past 3 years
1 in 4 gender minority adults who requested gender affirming treatment and procedures reported being denied by their insurance providers.
SUMMARY OF FINDINGS:
SGM Youth Report
Challenges
SGM Youth Report Challenges

• Negative experiences are **common** for SGM youth

• Outside of any specific social group, 3 in 5 youth reported experiencing teasing, bullying or intimidation

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2 in 3 reported at least one of the listed negative experiences happening to them **in school**

15% **higher** than youth reports on bullying or harassment in 2009
SGM Youth Report Challenges

- There is **room for improvement** among school districts to adopt anti-discrimination policies and ensure that students are aware of them.

A **high percentage** of students responded ‘No’ or ‘Unsure’ about their schools having **anti-discrimination policies** regarding...

- 45.7% for Sexual Orientation
- 55.9% for Gender Identity
- 62.0% for Gender Expression

**3 in 4** students who reported policies for gender identity and/or expression said they were able to **present in accordance** with their **gender identity** in school.
Youth participants reported relatively **high rates of substance use**

- 30% reported using tobacco products
- 28% reported marijuana use without a prescription within the past month
- Nearly 1 in 4 reported having used illicit drugs in their lifetime
SGM Youth Report Challenges

• Youth reported significantly lower levels than adults on measures of wellbeing, including:
  • hope
  • flourishing
  • social support
  • civic engagement
SUMMARY OF FINDINGS:

Workplace Experiences
Workplace Experiences

• Many are employed and making contributions to the economy

• Nearly 4 in 5 participants 18 and older reported full-time employment, part-time employment, or being self-employed
Workplace Experiences

Since the 2005 study, there is greater awareness of anti-discrimination policies in the workplace.

- Over 2/3 reported awareness of their employers’ antidiscrimination policy regarding sexual orientation—an increase of 22.6%.

- Nearly half reported awareness of their employers’ anti-discrimination policy regarding gender identity—an increase of 23.1%.
Despite gains over the past 15 years, a high percentage reported that their employers do not have, or that they are unaware of, antidiscrimination policies.
Workplace Experiences

• High rates of SGM employees have taken actions in the past three years to avoid discrimination in the workplace
  • 13.7% quit their job
  • 42.6% had to stay in the closet

• These rates are higher among those who did not report that their workplaces had all three antidiscrimination policies
Workplace Experiences

• Of participants who said their employers had antidiscrimination policies in place, a **lower rate** reported that they have taken actions to avoid discrimination—such as:
  
  • feeling as though they had to **quit their job** (6.3% vs. 12.0%)
  • feeling as though they had to **stay in the closet** (26.1% vs. 44.7%)
Priorities & Recommendations
Regarding the most important services needed for SGM individuals:

- **Youth** indicated preferences for
  - mental health and counseling services
  - public awareness about LGBTQ+ issues
  - programs for LGBTQ+ youth
  - sexual health education

- **Adults** indicated preferences for
  - mental health and counseling services
  - advocacy at the state legislature
  - physical and medical health services
  - public awareness about LGBTQ+ issues
Recommendations
For Educators

• Implement **pre-service training** in regional colleges of education to build competencies among future educators in working with and supporting LGBTQ youth.

• Ensure that **emergency-certified educators receive training** in working and supporting LGBTQ youth early in their employment.

• Hold **staff training** on understanding the basics of working with and supporting LGBTQ youth.

• Implement **visible LGBTQ-affirming signs and messaging** in school buildings and identify staff in each building who are willing to be visible allies of LGBTQ students.

• Adopt and implement **LGBTQ-affirming**, evidence-based social-emotional learning, bullying prevention, and medically accurate sex education **programming** in schools.

• **Connect families to resources** that will help them support their children in “coming out” as an LGBTQ person, such as Oklahomans for Equality, Youth Services of Tulsa, and PFLAG.

• **Adopt anti-discrimination policies** covering sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression and regularly communicate those policies to all staff, teachers, and students.

• Embed **Hope-building practices** into all touch-points with youth and families.

• Provide students and families with a **general resource guide** listing LGBTQ youth-supporting agencies and services.
Recommendations
For Youth-serving Agencies

• **Adopt goals, accountability measures, and action plans** regarding program services provided to LGBTQ youth.
• Hold **staff training** on understanding the basics of working with and supporting LGBTQ youth and families.
• Implement visible LGBTQ-affirming signs and **messaging** in facilities.
• **Connect parents to resources** that will help them support their children in “coming out” as an LGBTQ person, such as Oklahomans for Equality, Youth Services of Tulsa, and PFLAG.
• **Adopt anti-discrimination policies** covering sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression and regularly communicate those policies to all staff and clients.
• Embed **Hope-building practices** into all touch-points with youth and families.
• Provide youth and families with a general **resource guide** listing LGBTQ-supporting agencies and services.
Recommendations
For Funders

• Require that grantees adopt anti-discrimination policies covering sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression.

• Request that grantees set goals, identify outcome measures, and collect data through application and reporting processes regarding program services provided to LGBTQ individuals.

• Fund the development and delivery of training for agencies and professionals working with and supporting LGBTQ youth and families.

• Fund community programs and initiatives that explicitly seek to improve the experiences and outcomes of LGBTQ individuals, as described in the Prism Project Report.
Recommendations
For Employers

• Hold training for all managerial positions on understanding the basics of building an LGBTQ-affirming workplace culture.

• Adopt anti-discrimination policies covering sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression and regularly communicate those policies to all employees.

• Implement visible LGBTQ-affirming signs and messaging in the workplace.

• Connect employees to resources that will help them support their children in “coming out” as an LGBTQ person, such as Oklahomans for Equality, Youth Services of Tulsa, and PFLAG.

• Provide employees with a general resource guide listing LGBTQ-supporting agencies and services (available through Oklahomans for Equality).
Recommendations
For Healthcare and Mental Health Professionals

• Participate in the ongoing efforts of Oklahomans for Equality to establish a directory of culturally responsive mental health and medical professionals.

• Implement pre-service training in regional schools of medicine, social work, counseling and other healthcare and mental health preparation programs to build competencies among future practitioners in working with and supporting LGBTQ youth and adults.

• Provide culturally competent and affirming care to LGBTQ youth and adults.

• Hold staff training on understanding the basics of working with LGBTQ youth and adults.

• Implement visible LGBTQ-affirming signs and messaging in hospitals and healthcare facilities.

• Connect parents to resources that will help them support their children in “coming out” as an LGBTQ person, such as Oklahomans for Equality, Youth Services of Tulsa, and PFLAG.

• Adopt anti-discrimination policies covering sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression and regularly communicate those policies to all staff and patients.

• Provide patients with a general resource guide listing LGBTQ-supporting agencies and services.
Recommendations
For Faith-based Institutions

• **Establish a definition and process** in line with accepted standards for determining the institution’s commitment as an open and affirming community.

• Assist Oklahomans for Equality in **maintaining a directory** of open and affirming faith-based institutions.

• Hold **training for staff** on understanding the basics of working with and supporting LGBTQ youth and families.

• Implement visible **LGBTQ-affirming signs and messaging** in facilities.

• **Connect parents to resources** that will help them support their children in “coming out” as an LGBTQ person, such as Oklahomans for Equality, Youth Services of Tulsa, and PFLAG.

• Adopt **anti-discrimination policies** covering sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression and regularly communicate those policies to all constituents.

• Provide constituents with a **general resource guide** listing LGBTQ-supporting agencies and services.
Recommendations
For Law Enforcement

• Implement **pre-service officer training** to build competencies among future practitioners in working with LGBTQ youth and adults.

• **Hold training for officers** on understanding the basics of working with LGBTQ individuals.

• Adopt **anti-discrimination policies** covering sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression and regularly communicate those policies to all constituents.
Recommendations
For Policymakers and Policy Implementers

• Require the creation of a plan to recruit more LGBTQ-friendly foster homes.
• Require the inclusion of an SGM identifying question on existing statewide survey instruments such as the State Department of Mental Health’s Oklahoma Prevention Needs Assessment.
• Adopt anti-discrimination policies covering sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression and regularly communicate those policies to all constituents.
• Adopt policies supporting the implementation of trauma-informed and Hope-building practices across all government agencies.
• Fund the development and delivery of training for agencies and professionals working with and supporting LGBTQ youth and families.
• Conduct and audit of current practices and needs across all state agencies that affirm or deter identifying as an LGBTQ person.
• State Licensing Boards should require culturally competent and affirming curricula in all professional training programs.
This Report and supporting documents are housed at the following link:

link.ou.edu/tulsa-lgbtq

If you have questions, comments or concerns about the Report or request additional data analysis or other support not available on the website, please contact Dennis Neill at 918.808.1010 or dneillok@mac.com

**Suggested Citation**