Policy priorities for the LGBT community: Pride Survey 2006

Marriage/partner recognition, discrimination, hate violence top three concerns

By Sean Cahill and Bryan Kim-Butler

Introduction

The National Gay and Lesbian Task Force surveyed 1,440 participants at seven LGBT pride celebrations in six United States cities in the spring and early summer of 2006. This survey is based on a convenience sample and is not representative of the LGBT community as a whole. Those surveyed were given a list of 10 "policy priorities for the LGBT community" and asked to circle three.[1] They were given the option to write in other priorities that were not in the list of 10. Respondents were also asked to provide demographic information.

Context: Other recent surveys

In the summer of 2000, the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force's Black Pride Survey sampled 2,645 black LGBT people at black gay pride celebrations around the United States. Respondents were asked to identify the top three issues facing black LGBT people. HIV/AIDS and hate crime violence were the top two issues, respectively. "Marriage/domestic partnership" was the third most important issue facing black LGBT people. Marriage and domestic partnership were of particular concern to female respondents, who placed it in the top three. Men and transgender respondents were less concerned with marriage and domestic partnership than were women.[2] A number of factors may explain why female respondents prioritized marriage more than did male and transgender respondents; these factors include lower income, a greater need for health insurance and other benefits associated with partner recognition, higher rates of parenting for female same-sex couples, and higher rates of HIV/AIDS among black gay and bisexual men and transgender people.

In June 2003, 1,471 LGBT pride attendees were surveyed in New York, Los Angeles and Washington, D.C. Some 32 percent of respondents said that partnership recognition was "the most important issue facing the GLBT community," either through "marriage/domestic partnership/civil unions" (20 percent), "Social Security survivor and spousal benefits" (9 percent) or "immigration rights" (3 percent). Nondiscrimination laws covering sexual orientation or gender identity were the second highest priority, chosen by 26 percent. Two issues tied for the

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[1] The provided list of policy priorities consisted of the following items: immigration; anti-LGBT discrimination/harassment; hate violence/harassment; marriage equality/partner recognition; media representations; HIV/AIDS; same-sex domestic violence; health issues; elder issues; youth and education issues.

[2] Battle, J., C.J. Cohen, D. Warren, G. Fergerson & S. Audam. (2001). *Say it loud I'm black and I'm proud: Black Pride Survey 2000*. New York: The Policy Institute of the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force. Available at <http://www.thetaskforce.org/downloads/blackpride.pdf>.

third most important issue: HIV/AIDS prevention and treatment and hate crime laws inclusive of sexual orientation and gender identity. Both were chosen by 9.5 percent of respondents.[3]

Survey limitations

This survey is based on a convenience sample and is not representative of the LGBT community as a whole. In fact, the sample is skewed in terms of age (with young people overrepresented and older people underrepresented) and gender (nearly two-thirds female). However, the sample is racially diverse (62 percent white, 38 percent people of color), and the cities chosen represent some degree of geographic diversity.

Collecting large-scale, random samples of specific populations, particularly those that are statistical minorities, is challenging and expensive. When the study population is a minority that also experiences significant social stigma and discrimination, as LGBT people do, such research is even more challenging. For these reasons, researchers collecting information on small and/or stigmatized groups often employ alternative sampling methods such as oversampling, stratified sampling or targeted sampling.[4] The 2006 Task Force pride survey made use of some of these techniques.

Methodology

The survey was conducted during seven LGBT pride parades and celebrations, in the late spring and early summer of 2006, in Washington, D.C. (at D.C. Black Pride and D.C. Capitol Pride); Long Beach, California; Kansas City, Missouri; Los Angeles; New York; and San Francisco.

First, respondents were asked to provide their "race/ethnicity," age and zip code. They were then asked to choose from a menu of options for "gender identity," "sexual identity," and "family structure."

The major goal of the survey was to gauge the top policy priorities of LGBT people who attended LGBT pride events. The next question on the survey listed 10 "policy priorities for the LGBT community" and also provided a space to write in one or more "other" policy priorities. The instructions directed the respondent to "circle three."

After the surveys were collected, the information was coded and entered into a custom SPSS database for analysis. Each survey was given a unique number for identification purposes and anonymity of the respondent was maintained by not requesting personally identifying information.

Responses to the survey had to meet certain criteria to be counted in our priority-assessing analysis of the surveys. Though some respondents chose more than three policy priorities, some even circling all of them, we limited analysis of the results to those who chose *three or fewer*

[3] National Gay and Lesbian Task Force. (2003, August 1). *Gay Pride Survey: 2004 Presidential Election.* Retrieved August 22, 2006, from http://www.thetaskforce.org/downloads/GayPrideSurvey.pdf

[4] Green, D., D. Strolovitch, J. Wong & R. Bailey. (2001). Measuring gay population density and the incidence of anti-gay hate crime. *Social Science Quarterly, 82*(2).

policy priorities, *including the "other" field*. Some respondents skipped this question entirely; their surveys were also excluded from our analysis.

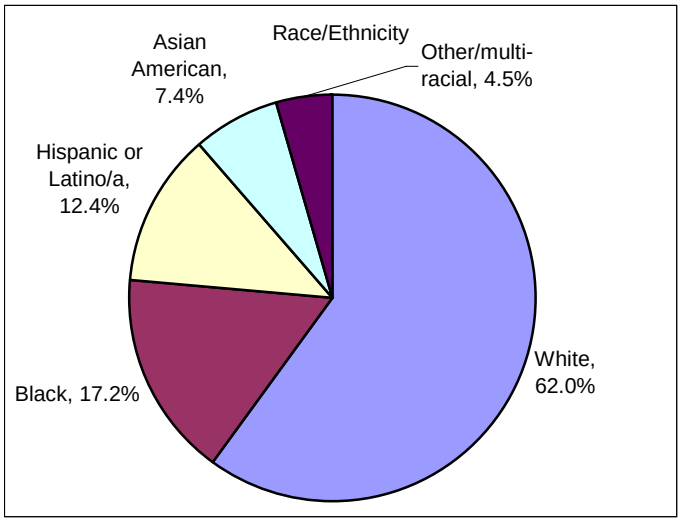
Results[5]

Demographics

Results reported in this section are based on the entire sample of 1,440 respondents. While nearly all respondents provided information about their sexual orientation (1,406 out of 1,440), gender identity (1,431) and family structure (1,387), smaller numbers offered information about their age (1,333) or race (1,169).

Race/Ethnicity

Of the 1,169 respondents who provided information about their racial/ethnic background, 62 percent were white, 17.2 percent black, 12.4 percent Hispanic or Latino/a, 7.4 percent Asian American, and 4.5 percent other or multiracial.



Age

This sample is skewed toward young adults: 4.6 percent of respondents who provided their age were under 18, 43.5 percent between ages 18 and 29, 24.7 percent in their thirties, and 27.2 percent 40 or older. Older respondents were significantly underrepresented. Only 9.2 percent of respondents were 50 or older, and a mere 1.1 percent 60 or older.

Gender identity

Just under one third of respondents who answered the gender identity question were male (32.3 percent), and 65.3 percent were female. Some 8.5 percent of respondents indicated that they were "transgender," "[a] cross-dresser," transsexual, FTM (female-to-male), MTF (male-to-female), or "genderqueer/androgynous." Many who described themselves as transgender or genderqueer also said they were male or female. One half of 1 percent (seven respondents out of 1,431) reported that they were "intersex."

Sexual orientation

Of the 1,406 respondents who provided information on their sexual orientation, 77 percent said they were "gay/lesbian/homosexual," 13.4 percent bisexual, 7.5 percent heterosexual, and 2.8 percent "other." An additional 1.1 percent wrote in "queer."

[5] Totals may exceed 100 percent due to rounding and/or because respondents were able to indicate multiple responses to demographic questions.

Family structure

Some 42.1 percent of respondents who answered the family structure question reported they were "single;" 16 percent were "dating," while 44.2 percent were "partnered."

Overall responses

Policy priorities: Marriage/partner recognition, discrimination and hate violence

Of the 1,440 respondents, only 1,162 circled or wrote in three policy priorities or fewer as directed. Only these surveys were analyzed to produce the results in this section.[6]

The three most frequently chosen "policy priorities for the LGBT community" were:

1. Marriage equality/partner recognition (chosen by 800 respondents)
2. Anti-LGBT discrimination (chosen by 526 respondents)
3. Hate violence/harassment (chosen by 434 respondents).

HIV/AIDS was the fourth most frequently chosen priority (379 respondents), followed by "youth and education issues" (332 respondents).[7]

Differences in policy priorities by race, age, gender identity and sexual orientation[8]

Racial differences

Of the 1,162 respondents who met our criteria for inclusion in our analysis of the policy priorities question, 197 declined to provide information about their race. Therefore, analysis in this subsection is based on 965 surveys.[9]

Table 2 lists the top four policy concerns by race. Although we only asked for three policy priorities, we provide the fourth most popular choice within each racial group for comparison purposes. Percentages listed indicate the prevalence, within each racial group, of individuals who

[6] Of these 1,162 respondents, 217 chose or wrote in only one or two responses. We did not analyze priorities from surveys in which four or more priorities were circled or written in.

[7] Twenty-three respondents wrote in issues not listed in the 10 choices. These included "foster parenting," "pregnant/family," housing, "inter-LGBT discrimination (esp. racism, sexism, and classism)," "leather/alternative inclusion," mental health, ending the military ban, veterans issues, "rural gay advocacy," race, and electing/reelecting moderate Republicans. All of these were suggested by one individual each, except race, which was suggested by two respondents.

[8] Tests for statistical significance were not conducted on these differences, and because sample sizes are small, any differences reported here should not be overstated. In order to be included in this analysis, respondents had to both answer the policy priorities question appropriately (i.e., not choose more than three responses) and provide the demographic data requested. As a result, sample sizes are smaller and are noted in each subsection.

[9] The racial breakdown of this sample of respondents is only slightly different than the racial breakdown of the survey respondents as a whole.

prioritized that policy issue. For example, 56.7 percent of black respondents said "marriage/partner recognition" is a major priority.

Table 2: Top policy priorities by race

	Black	White	Hispanic & Latino/a	Asian	Other/multi
1	Marriage* (56.7%)	Marriage (74.2%)	Marriage (70.5%)	Marriage (59.2%)	Marriage (73.7%)
2	Hate violence/ harassment (41.5%)	Anti-LGBT discrimination (50.6%)	Anti-LGBT discrimination (41.8%)	Youth and education (38.0%)	Anti-LGBT discrimination (47.4%)
3	HIV/AIDS (39%)	Hate violence/ harassment (34.7%)	Hate violence/ harassment (41.0%)	Anti-LGBT discrimination (36.6%)	Hate violence/ harassment (36.8%)
4	Anti-LGBT discrimination (37.8%)	HIV/AIDS (30.7%)	HIV/AIDS (39.3%)	Immigration (28.2%)	Youth/education (34.2%)

*** The actual language was "marriage equality/partner recognition." This was the fourth of ten options we listed on the survey. Respondents could also circle "other" and write in one or more issues not included in the list of ten. Percentages add up to more than 100 because respondents were asked to choose up to three policy priorities. For more details see methodology section.**

"Marriage equality/partner recognition" was the most frequently chosen policy priority for respondents in all five racial categories. "Partner recognition" refers to forms of same-sex partner recognition outside of marriage, such as domestic partnership and civil unions. This indicates that, at least in this racially diverse sample of 965 respondents, marriage or some form of partner recognition is a top priority for black, Hispanic and Latino/a, Asian, and white LGBT people, as well as for LGBT people from "other" or "multiracial" backgrounds.

Anti-LGBT discrimination was the second most important concern for white, Hispanic and Latino/a and multiracial respondents or respondents of other descent. It was the third most important concern for Asian Pacific Islander LGBT respondents and the fourth for black respondents.

Hate violence was the second most frequently chosen priority for black respondents; for whites, Hispanics/Latinos, and people of other or multiracial background, it was third highest priority. Asian-American LGBT people did not rank hate violence as a major concern when compared to other issues.

The fact that black respondents ranked hate violence as their second highest priority reflects findings on the 2000 Black Pride Survey, in which 2,645 respondents also rated "hate crime violence" as the second most important issue facing black LGBT people. There is some evidence in the national surveys of the National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs that black and Latino LGBT people are more likely to be victimized by anti-LGBT hate violence.[10]

HIV/AIDS was the third most frequent policy priority of black respondents. In the other racial groups, HIV/AIDS did not make it into the top three. In the United States, the gay and bisexual

[10] Patton, Clarence. 2006. *Anti-lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender violence in 2005.* New York: National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs. P. 38. <http://www.ncavp.org/common/document_files/Reports/2005%20National%20HV%20Report%20(Release%20Draft).pdf>. Accessed August 29, 2006.

male communities and African-American communities have long been at the epicenter of the HIV/AIDS pandemic.

Two groups, Asian Pacific Islanders and "other"/multiracial respondents, chose youth and education issues at higher rates than blacks, whites or Hispanics and Latino/as. For Asian-American respondents this was the second most frequently chosen policy priority; for respondents of other/multiracial descent, this was the fourth most frequently chosen priority. The fact that these two groups were younger, on average, than white or black respondents may explain part of this difference. Asian Pacific Islander respondents had a median age of 27.8 years, and other/multiracial respondents reported a median age of 29 years. By contrast, white respondents averaged 33.2 years and black respondents 32.9 years of age. However, though Hispanic and Latino/a respondents had the lowest median age of any racial/ethnic group — 27.2 years — they did not choose youth and education issues as a top priority.

Differences in policy priorities by gender identity

As illustrated in Table 3, both male and female respondents chose marriage/partner recognition most frequently as a policy priority for LGBT people. Transgender, transsexual, genderqueer/androgynous, cross-dressers, FTM, MTF and intersex people chose anti-LGBT discrimination as their top (most frequently chosen) priority and ranked marriage/partner recognition second and hate violence third. As in the Black Pride Survey six years ago, female respondents were more likely than males to prioritize marriage/partner recognition.

Table 3: Policy priorities by gender identity

	Male	Female	Transgender*
1	Marriage (55.2%)	Marriage (76.7%)	Anti-LGBT discrimination (50.0%)
2	HIV/AIDS (46.6%)	Anti-LGBT discrimination (48.2%)	Marriage (44.4%)
3	Anti-LGBT discrimination (39.1%)	Hate violence/ harassment (38.2%)	Hate violence/ harassment (43.1%)

Male N=373
Female N=760
Transgender N=72 (includes cross-dresser, transsexual, FTM, MTF, intersex, and genderqueer/androgynous)
* Some people said they were both male and transgender, or both female and MTF, etc.

Male respondents said that, after marriage and partner recognition, the most important priorities were HIV/AIDS and discrimination. Female respondents chose discrimination and hate violence as the second and third most frequent priority, respectively.

Interestingly, female respondents chose youth and education issues fourth most frequently. Males, on the other hand, ranked hate violence fourth. This gender difference may reflect higher parenting rates among females than males in the LGBT community. According to 2000 U.S. Census data on same-sex couple households, female same-sex couples parent at about twice the rate as male same-sex couples.

Policy priorities by sexual orientation

As illustrated in Table 4, differences in policy priorities based on sexual orientation were minimal. Both homosexuals (who may identify as gay, lesbian, homosexual, same-gender loving, or something else) and bisexuals chose marriage/partner recognition most frequently as their top policy priority, and both homosexuals and bisexuals ranked discrimination second. Heterosexual participants in LGBT pride celebrations also prioritized marriage, ranking hate violence second and HIV/AIDS third.

Table 4: Policy priorities by sexual orientation

	Gay/lesbian/ homosexual	Bisexual	Heterosexual	Other
1	Marriage (70.3%)	Marriage (70.0%)	Marriage (67.1%)	Anti-LGBT discrimination (57.6%)
2	Anti-LGBT discrimination (45.6%)	Anti-LGBT discrimination (52.0%)	Hate violence/ harassment (51.2%)	Youth/ education (48.5%)
3	Hate violence/ harassment (35.9%)	Youth/ education (37.3%)	HIV/AIDS (41.5%)	Marriage (42.4%)

Gay/Lesbian/Homosexual N=888
Bisexual N=150
Heterosexual N=82
Other (including queer) N=33

A small number of respondents chose "other" as their sexual orientation. For this group, discrimination and hate violence were tied for the top priority slot, as they were both chosen by these respondents more often than any other issue. The third most important issue for those who said they were something other than homo-, bi-, or heterosexual was marriage/partner recognition.

Conclusion

Among a convenience sample of more than 1,000 respondents at seven LGBT pride celebrations in six cities in 2006, more people chose "marriage equality/partner recognition" as a "policy priorit[y] for the LGBT community" than any other issue. Discrimination and hate violence were the second and third most frequently chosen issues. This sample was 38 percent people of color and nearly two-thirds female. Respondents in all racial groups prioritized marriage/partner recognition more than any other issue. Bisexuals as well as lesbians and gay men also prioritized this issue. For transgender respondents, marriage/partner recognition was the second most important policy priority, after discrimination.

This is the third survey of more than 1,000 respondents conducted by the Task Force since 2000 that asked about policy priorities facing the LGBT community. In each survey, respondents were given a list of 10 or more issues and allowed to write in an issue or issues not listed. In these surveys, respondents prioritized anti-LGBT discrimination, hate violence, marriage/partner recognition, and HIV/AIDS. Clearly, these issues are of concern to rank-and-file LGBT people across the country.

Debate over which policy issues to prioritize as a movement can be healthy and illuminating. It is critical that LGBT organizations focus on a number of concerns concurrently, as LGBT people care about many policy issues at the same time.

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