

October 2023



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Report on the Status of LGBTQ+ Individuals and Families in Massachusetts & Related Policy Implications: 2023

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A Note from the Commission

Here at the Massachusetts Commission on the Status of Women (MCSW), we know that our advocacy on behalf of all women and girls of the Commonwealth is only as good as the data and stories we hear from those closest to the issues impacting our lives. This is all the more true when we hope to hear from women and girls holding additional marginalized identities.

The MCSW was created to advance women and girls toward full equity in all areas of life and to promote rights and opportunities for all women and girls, and the Commission's mission is to provide a permanent, effective voice for women and girls across Massachusetts. In order to achieve this mission, the Commission recognizes that the forces that prevent that full equity, such as sexism and discrimination, go hand in hand with other forces of oppression, such as homophobia and transphobia.

In May 2021, the Boston Community was rocked by the loss of activist and organizer Jahaira DeAlto, a transgender woman who dedicated her life to the liberation of transgender people and all survivors of domestic and sexual violence. As the Commission mourned Ms. DeAlto and celebrated her life's work, the Commission again recommitted to its work to uplift the transgender and LGBTQ community. We released a statement of solidarity after this tragedy in which we committed to stepping up our partnership with, and outreach to, the trans community and trans-serving organizations and commit the Commission to better serving trans women and girls and to work in solidarity with the larger transgender community.

In the two years since Ms. DeAlto's tragic passing, the legal, social, and political climate for LGBTQ people, especially transgender people, has become highly charged. Legislation across the country aimed at preventing transgender people's access to healthcare, public accommodations, and sports has proliferated, along with "Don't Say Gay" laws and book bans targeting LGBTQ stories and expression. Under these increasingly alarming conditions, it is especially important for the MCSW to live up to its commitment to uplift the voices of women and girls within the LGBTQ Community to report on their status and to make policy recommendations to advance this status.

To that end, the Commission committed more than a year of diligent research and collaboration to conduct primary data collection in order to write the enclosed report: 2023 Report on the Status of LGBTQ+ Individuals and Families in Massachusetts & Related Policy Implications. Only by standing together and raising our voices can we identify the issues impacting the health and wellness of our most vulnerable communities and ensure that we have the information and tools necessary to make effective and long-lasting policy change.

MCSW state and regional commissioners and staff have worked alongside community organizations to host a series of listening sessions called Community Conversations, received responses on the concerns and experience survey from respondents across the Commonwealth, and worked alongside our report author, Kaitie Chakoian, PhD Candidate and Shalaya West, MCSW's Program & Research Director to compile this crucial report.

The data is stark.

LGBTQ+ individuals are currently experiencing alarming rates of both interpersonal and structural violence in the U.S. Over the past two years, hundreds of laws have been proposed, and dozens passed, limiting the rights of LGBTQ+ people in their access to health care, public accommodations, sports competition, self-expression, and reading and educational materials.

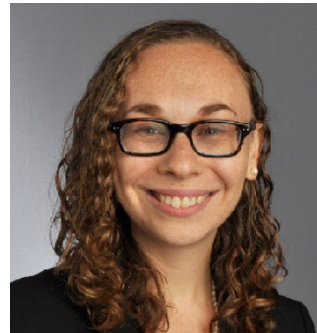
Under these increasingly alarming conditions, it is especially important for the MCSW to live up to its commitment to uplift the voices of women and girls within the LGBTQ Community to report on their status and to make policy recommendations to advance this status.

It is not enough to reduce an entire population to mere statistics – we must take what we’ve learned, and act. Together, we can chart a path forward, including through advocacy for needed legislative and policy reforms, to ensure that Massachusetts remains a safe haven for the LGBTQ community, and all of us, to live our lives as we see fit and to ensure basic human rights and the full enjoyment of life for all women and girls throughout their lives.

In solidarity,



Dr. Sarah Glenn Smith, MCSW Chairwoman



MCSW State Commissioner Rebecca Bact

Commissioners, Staff, and Interns



MCSW State Commissioners and Officers

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***Kaitie Chakoian**, Brockton – *Report Author & *MCSW Consultant*

MCSW Interns

The MCSW's internship program provides students with an opportunity to gain hands-on experience in public policy, research, communications, and community outreach related to women's issues. Interns work closely with the commission staff to support ongoing projects and initiatives, as well as to develop new projects and programs. We welcomed 8 paid interns this year from a variety of educational institutions.

Lauren Batiste, Boston University

Campbell Devlin, Tufts University

Nawal Khan, Tufts University

Yanli Lu, Boston College

Julia Steiner, Tufts University

Jada Alexander, Brandeis University

Madison Rodriguez, Western New England University

Jaden Wong, Boston University

Executive Summary

LGBTQ+ individuals are currently experiencing alarming rates of both interpersonal and structural violence in the U.S.ⁱ In June of 2023 the Supreme Court ruled in *303 Creative LLC et al. V. Elenis et al.*, denying equal protection and access guarantees for LGBTQ populations in commercial and service settings.ⁱⁱ

Further, over the past two years, hundreds of laws have been proposed, and dozens passed, limiting the rights of LGBTQ+ people in their access to health care, public accommodations, sports competition, self-expression, and reading and educational materials, so much so that Canada issued a travel warning for its LGBTQ+ residents traveling to the United States.ⁱⁱⁱ Beyond the erosion of legal protections and institution of legal discrimination, LGBTQ+ individuals experience violence at alarming rates. They are four times more likely to experience violent victimization than their non-LGBTQ+ peers.^{iv}

Recognizing the impact of the national political landscape on LGBTQ+ Massachusetts residents and the continued impact of violence here in the Commonwealth, in early 2023 the MCSW launched an investigation into the needs, concerns, and experiences of LGBTQ+ people in Massachusetts. This investigation was built on data collected from a statewide survey of Massachusetts' LGBTQ+ individuals and women, Community Conversations, and literature from existing research and other coalitions doing similar work in the Commonwealth and beyond. In all, approximately 70 Massachusetts residents contributed to the data presented here, not including the work of researchers, coalitions, and advocates interspersed throughout and the contributions of MCSW commissioners, staff, and consultants. This report presents the findings of that investigation.

KEY FINDINGS

4 CATEGORIES OF FINDINGS ACROSS ALL DATA SOURCES

- INTERPERSONAL AND STRUCTURAL VIOLENCE AGAINST LGBTQ+ INDIVIDUALS
- ECONOMIC STABILITY
- PARENTING AND CHILDREARING
- NAVIGATING INTERSECTIONAL IDENTITIES

Key Findings

- LGBTQ+ individuals in Massachusetts and across the country experience both interpersonal and structural violence. Policies and legal decisions in other parts of the country impact the daily lives of LGBTQ+ individuals here in the Commonwealth.
- Economic stability is of primary concern to LGBTQ+ individuals in Massachusetts. Threats to economic stability can take the form of workplace harassment, income gaps, and wealth gaps.
- Parenting issues – both related to the experience of being an LGBTQ+ parent and that of parenting an LGBTQ+ child – are the focus of many LGBTQ+ families in the Commonwealth. The legal processes around family-building are onerous, inconsistent, and emotionally burdensome. The issues facing LGBTQ+ youth in Massachusetts also weigh heavily on the parents of those youth.
- LGBTQ+ people in Massachusetts have to navigate their intersectional identities. The experiences of LGBTQ+ individuals in Massachusetts cannot be separated from the experiences of racial minorities, immigrants, people with disabilities, etc. LGBTQ+ people are also people of color, immigrants, and people with disabilities. Too often they do not feel able to bring all aspects of themselves to their communities and support systems.

Policy Recommendations

Interpersonal and Structural Violence Against LGBTQ+ Individuals

- Ban the use of the LGBTQ panic defense in Massachusetts
- Pass H.3094, "An Act to promote diversity on public boards and commissions"
- Pass S.1160, "An Act relative to nondiscrimination"
- Pass S.2207, "An Act relative to gender identity on Massachusetts identification"
- Pass S.621, "An Act relative to gender-affirming hair removal treatment"

Economic Stability

- Pass H.1849, "An Act relative to salary range transparency"
- Pass H.489/S.301, "An Act providing affordable and accessible high-quality early education and care to promote child development and well-being and support the economy in the Commonwealth"
- Pass H.1701/S.1002, "An Act supporting survivors of trafficking and abuse and encouraging increased access to opportunities through expungement and/or sealing of records"

Parenting and Childrearing

- Pass H.544/S.268, "An Act relative to healthy youth" and encourage the finalization of Governor Healey's comprehensive health and physical education curriculum framework
- Pass H.534/S.1381, "An Act to increase access to disposable menstrual products"
- Pass S.259/H.498, "An Act relative to LGBTQ+ inclusive curriculum"
- Lobby against H.458, "An Act relative to parental rights in education"
- Pass H.1713/S.947, "An Act to ensure legal parentage equality"
- Pass S.1415, "An Act relative to birthing justice in the Commonwealth"

Navigating Intersectional Identities

- Pass H.1239/S.744, "An Act establishing Medicare for all in Massachusetts"
- Pass H.2325/S.1493, "An Act related to rehabilitation, re-entry, and human rights for incarcerated persons"
- Pass H.1795/S.1979, "An Act establishing a jail and prison construction moratorium"
- Pass H.2288/S.1510, "An Act to protect the civil rights and safety of all Massachusetts residents"
- Pass H.3084/S.1990, "An Act relative to language access and inclusion"

Introduction

LGBTQ+ individuals are currently experiencing alarming rates of both interpersonal and structural violence in the U.S. In 2022 alone, there were 25 anti-LGBTQ bills enacted nationwide, and 70 in just the first five months of 2023.^v In June of 2023, the Supreme Court ruled in *303 Creative LLC et al. V. Elenis et al.*, holding that it is legal to deny same-sex couples services related to their wedding where the service provider disagreed with same-sex marriage, because mandating nondiscriminatory services would infringe on the provider's First Amendment right to free speech.^{vi} Beyond the erosion of legal protections and institution of legal discrimination, LGBTQ+ individuals experience violence at alarming rates. They are four times more likely to experience violent victimization than their non-LGBTQ+ peers.^{vii}

In 2021, Massachusetts lost a powerful activist and organizer, Jahaira DeAlto. Jahaira was a transgender woman and a fierce advocate for other transgender people and survivors of domestic and sexual violence. She was student, a friend, and a noted house mother in the Boston ballroom scene. She was murdered by a friend's partner after taking that friend and her children into her home to help keep them safe. Jahaira's murder catalyzed the Massachusetts Commission on the Status of Women (MCSW) to recommit to its work to recognize and advocate for the needs of the transgender and LGBTQ+ community in the Commonwealth.

Recognizing the impact of the national landscape on Massachusetts LGBTQ+ residents and the continued impact of violence here in the Commonwealth, and because the MCSW recognizes that achieving its mandate of full equity for women and girls includes that of LGBTQ+ individuals, in early 2023 the MCSW launched an investigation into the needs, concerns, and experiences of LGBTQ+ people in Massachusetts. This investigation was built on data collected from a statewide survey of Massachusetts' LGBTQ+ individuals and women, Community Conversations, and literature from existing research and other coalitions doing similar work in the Commonwealth and beyond. In all, approximately 70 Massachusetts residents contributed to the data presented here, not including the work of researchers, coalitions, and advocates interspersed throughout and the contributions of MCSW commissioners, staff, and consultants. This report lays out the findings of this investigation.

Four key themes emerged from the comments of participants: **interpersonal and structural violence**; **economic stability**; **issues related to parenting and childrearing**; and **existing at the intersections of multiple identities**. This report explores each finding in detail and concludes with implications for both policy and community practice. The aim of this report is to support the mission of the MCSW: to provide a permanent, effective voice for not just women and girls, but all LGBTQ+ individuals as well, across Massachusetts.



The (MCSW) was created to advance women and girls toward full equity in all areas of life and to promote rights and opportunities for all women and girls. The Commission's mission is to provide a permanent, effective voice for women and girls across Massachusetts.

The Commission stands for fundamental freedoms, basic human rights and the full enjoyment of life for all women and girls throughout their lives.

A Note on Language:

LGBTQ+ people use many words to describe their identities. In the Concerns & Experiences Survey (see more below), participants used the words “asexual”, “bisexual”, “cisgender”, “femme”, “gay”, “genderqueer”, “heterosexual”, “female”, “lesbian”, “male”, “non-binary”, “pansexual”, “polyamorous”, “transgender”, “queer”, and “straight” to describe different aspects of their sexual orientations and gender identities. (For an extensive glossary of terms, see the [2023 Massachusetts Commission on Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, and Questioning Youth appendix](#).) Beyond this, existing research on these populations uses an even more expansive variety of labels. Whenever possible in this report, if representing a quote or data from an individual, we use the words the participant themselves used. If reporting on previous research, we use the terms used in the particular study. Any variation in the order of terms (e.g., GLBT, LGB, etc.) is a variation in the source cited. In instances when we are describing trends or groups, we use the term “LGBTQ+” (lesbian,^{viii} gay,^{ix} bisexual,^x transgender,^{xi} queer,^{xii} and more) as an umbrella term to capture these and other ways that individuals describe their sexual orientation and gender identities.

Finally, this report explicitly delineates between interpersonal and structural violence, and notes the ways the two types of violence overlap in the experiences of LGBTQ+ individuals. Interpersonal violence includes acts of violence between individuals – family members, intimate partners, and strangers – where the violence is not specifically intended to further the aims of any specific group or cause.^{xiii} While the violence that LGBTQ folks experience, including violent victimization, verbal slurs, threats, sexual and non-sexual harassment, threats, domestic and sexual violence, etc., often falls into the interpersonal violence category, it also goes beyond the interpersonal interactions of individuals. Structural violence is harm that results from “exploitative and unjust social, political, and economic systems”.^{xiv} Structural violence refers to the ways that social inequalities and political economic systems make certain people and groups vulnerable.^{xv} This might include policies that diminish the rights of LGBTQ+ individuals or families or economic barriers to the accumulation of wealth and assets that disproportionately impact LGBTQ+ people. These two forms of violence are distinct but intertwined and mutually reinforcing.

Data Sources

This report pulls together data from three sources. First, the MSCW conducted a statewide survey of individuals in the Commonwealth who identify as women or LGBTQ+ between the ages of 25-65. Secondly, the MCSW conducted Community Conversations with groups of Massachusetts LGBTQ+ women and those who support them. Finally, the report draws from existing literature conducted by researchers and coalitions of practitioners and policymakers exploring the prevalence and causes of issues facing the LGBTQ+ community in Massachusetts and across the country.

Survey of Massachusetts LGBTQ+ Individuals & Women’s Concerns and Experiences

On April 1st, 2023, the MCSW launched an online survey of LGBTQ+ individuals and women in the Commonwealth. Over the next two months (the survey closed June 1st, 2023), 50 participants responded to the survey through SurveyMonkey®. Participants were recruited through social media (Facebook and Instagram), the MCSW email listserv, and through direct outreach from over 20 LGBTQ+ and social justice organizations across the Commonwealth. They had the option of remaining anonymous when completing the survey. Participants resided in 12 of the 14 counties in Massachusetts (there were no respondents from Dukes or Nantucket Counties), with 23% coming from Suffolk and another 17% from Middlesex. Most participants were between the ages of 25-44 (72%) with all participants falling between 18-64. Three-quarters (75%) of participants identified as white, 15% as Black/African American, 10% as Hispanic/Latinx, 4% each as Asian/Asian American and American Indian/Alaskan Native. The majority (84%) of respondents had completed college education. The highest level of school completed for 29% was an undergraduate degree, for 47% it was a graduate degree, and for 8% it was a doctoral degree. An additional 8% had earned a high school diploma and 2% earned an associate degree. Most respondents (88%) were employed full-time at the time they completed the survey and half (exactly 50%) belonged to households earning above the Massachusetts median income for a two-family household (\$96,358 in 2022).^{xvi} Of those respondents earning below the median family income, 6% earned less than \$20,000 annually, 13% earned less than \$50,000, and 23% earned less than \$75,000.

Despite the recruitment strategies employed, only 69% of survey respondents identified as LGBTQ+, with an additional 6% choosing not to respond to the question. (Additional details about limitations of the data can be found below). When asked what words they use to describe their gender, 86% of respondents reported “female”, 10% reported “non-binary”, one person wrote in “femme”, and another chose not to respond to the question. In describing their gender identity, 80% reported “cisgender” and 10% reported “transgender”. Other identities included “queer”, “genderqueer”, and “nonbinary woman”. In response to sexual orientation, 25% identified as “queer”, 22% as “lesbian”, 8% as “pansexual” and “bisexual” each, 6% as “asexual”, and 2% as “gay”. A quarter (25%) described themselves as “straight”. For the purposes of presenting data that represents the voices of LGBTQ+ individuals in the Commonwealth, throughout the report survey data is reported as either coming from all respondents or from all LGBTQ+ respondents. All respondents who did not identify as LGBTQ+ also identified as cisgender and “straight or heterosexual”.^{xvii}

KEY FINDINGS

CONCERNS AND EXPERIENCES SURVEY:

- 63% IDENTIFIED THE PROTECTION OF LGBTQ+ RIGHTS AS ONE OF THEIR TOP CONCERNS
- 42% IDENTIFIED ECONOMIC STABILITY, PAY, & WAGE EQUITY AS ONE OF THEIR TOP CONCERNS
- 39% IDENTIFIED RACIAL EQUITY AS A TOP CONCERN FOR THEIR COMMUNITY

96% OF RESPONDENTS HAVE BEEN DISCRIMINATED AGAINST BASED ON THEIR IDENTITY.

WHILE 96% OF RESPONDENTS FEEL PROUD OF THEIR IDENTITY, ONLY 50% STRONGLY AGREE OR AGREE THAT THE COMMUNITY WHERE THEY LIVE IS PROUD OF THEIR IDENTITY.

Community Conversations with Massachusetts LGBTQ+ Women and Families

In the spring of 2023, the MCSW hosted two Community Conversations with LGBTQ+ women, families, and those who support them. The first was held in February virtually on Zoom, in partnership with GLBTQ Legal Advocates and Defenders (GLAD), Boston^{xviii,xix} In total, 22 participants were in attendance including six members of the MCSW, four GLAD members, representatives of seven other organizations, and five community members. Holding the conversation on Zoom allowed for participation from across the state and participants resided in Essex, Hampshire, Middlesex, and Suffolk Counties. They were LGBTQ+ parents, adult children of LGBTQ+ parents, lawyers and advocates. The second Community Conversation was held in person in Hampshire County in early June. Community partners, the Hampshire County Regional Commission, and MCSW Staff handled recruitment for this conversation, specifically looking for participants who identified as both LGBTQ+ and women (although, not everyone who attended did identify as both or either). In total, eight community members participated plus a facilitator and a notetaker. Many of the participants also held leadership roles in the community. Participants resided in two of the most rural counties in the state: Hampshire County (4th most rural) and Franklin County (most rural).

The format of the Community Conversations is different from that of public hearings or other, more traditional research focus groups. The conversations were facilitated by Commissioners (from either the state commission or regional commissions). The facilitators set up the conversations by explaining what kinds of information they were seeking, how the data would be used (including in this report and to make recommendations to Commissioners and Massachusetts policymakers), and by answering any questions. Open-ended questions were asked to elicit stories and experiences of being an LGBTQ+ woman or family in the Commonwealth. Responses built off one another, with many participants responding to one another, not solely to questions posed by the facilitator. Facilitators and other Commissioners present also shared their own experiences and perspectives. As a result, the Community Conversations not only gleaned a wealth of data, but also acted as community-building and consciousness-raising tools. Upon completion of the second Community Conversation, participants reflected on the emotional experience of coming together in their own geographic regions with others who were navigating similar challenges and expressed gratitude for the opportunity.

Key Findings from Community Conversations

KEY FINDINGS

COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS:

- THE NEED FOR NOT JUST LGBTQ+ ACCEPTANCE, BUT ALSO INCLUSION AND BELONGING BASED ON RACE, SOCIOECONOMIC CLASS, AND OTHER IDENTITIES
- THE IMPACT OF WORKPLACE HARASSMENT BASED ON GENDER-IDENTITY
- NAVIGATING & SUPPORTING LGBTQ+ CHILDREN, ESPECIALLY IN SCHOOL SETTINGS
- THE CHALLENGES OF ENGAGING IN LEGAL PARENTAGE PROCESSES

Existing Literature and Coalitions Supporting the Concerns of LGBTQ+ Women

While this report seeks to hear directly from LGBTQ+ women in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, it would be a missed opportunity to exclude the myriad of research on the concerns and needs of LGBTQ+ communities throughout the country. Additionally, the MCSW is a state-established body charged with reviewing the status of women and offering policy recommendations to improve access to opportunities and equity – however this work cannot be done in isolation from other commissions and coalitions working to support various populations in the Commonwealth. This report draws on the work of other groups, especially that of the Massachusetts Commission on Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer and Questioning Youth, the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Aging Commission, the National Center for Transgender Equality, the Human Rights Campaign, the Family Equality Council, The Network/La Red, and the New York City Anti-Violence Project.

Strengths and Limitations of the Data

As previously noted, the goal of this report was to hear directly from LGBTQ+ women in the Commonwealth about the issues most affecting them to illuminate their concerns and provide recommendations to policymakers to improve equity across Massachusetts. The greatest strength of the data in this report is the extent to which it does amplify the voices of LGBTQ+ community-members. The implementation of grassroots data collection and recruitment methods enabled this report to capture the voices of anonymous survey respondents, the experiences of individuals living in some of the most rural counties in the Commonwealth, and the perspectives of those who would not have been able to attend events in person. These are critical steps in understanding the lived realities that LGBTQ+ people in Massachusetts experience.

The above notwithstanding, the data captured in this report does not reflect the perspectives of all LGBTQ+ people and families in the Commonwealth. In particular, the survey respondents are not demographically representative of the full Massachusetts LGBTQ+ community. The survey sample was skewed with more white, highly educated, and financially well-off respondents. There are myriad possible reasons for the skewed responses received. Importantly, it is necessary to consider that the survey (and Community Conversations) asked about the intimate experiences and concerns of people who have frequently experienced discrimination and are currently watching their protections and rights as full members of society be stripped away by state (and federal) actors. Fear and distrust of a government-related organization such as the MCSW is not only prevalent, but also often justified. This is further exacerbated for individuals with intersectional identities that are also experiencing similar discrimination and lack of protections based on those other identities (e.g., people of color, undocumented individuals, and people with disabilities). Reluctance of these groups to share their stories and experiences through the MCSW's data collection methods is likely even higher, for good reason. It is also reasonable to assume that the experiences of multiply marginalized individuals, such as BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Color)^{xx} LGBTQ+ people, are very different from those of non-BIPOC LGBTQ+ people.

In order to address this bias, the report highlights the stories from Community Conversations especially of participants who identified themselves as people of color, people who have struggled financially at some point in their lives, and people whose multiple identities intersect in ways that have historically, and currently, been targeted with increased barriers to accessing support and equity. Continued research is needed to further understand the experiences and concerns of all Massachusetts LGBTQ+ individuals and to keep up with the emerging and ever-changing concerns that impact this population.

Findings

Interpersonal and Structural Violence Against LGBTQ+ Individuals

LGBTQ+ individuals experience violence at alarming rates. In a national survey of over 4000 sexual and gender minorities, LGBT people (over the age of 16) were found to be nearly four times as likely to experience violent victimization than non-LGBT people. Women who identify as LBT were five times more likely than non-LBT women to experience violent victimization.^{xxi} Similarly, in a 2017 study of discrimination faced by LGBTQ Americans, 57% of respondents had experienced slurs related to their sexual orientation or gender identity.

Over half reported that they themselves or an LGBTQ friend or family member had been threatened or non-sexually harassed (57%), sexually harassed (51%), or experienced violence (51%) directly related to their sexuality or gender identity.^{xxii} LGBTQ+ spaces also experience violence with more than 60% of organizations and businesses that responded to a 2023 survey reporting having experienced harassment or violence and over a quarter (29%) experiencing two or more instances of violence.^{xxiii}

The Trevor Project reported in 2022 that 67% of LGBTQ youth in Massachusetts experienced discrimination and 32% experienced threat or harm based on their sexual orientation or gender identity.^{xxiv} Transgender people, specifically, face multiple types and incidents of violence starting early in life and lasting throughout their lives.^{xxv} In 2022, at least 34 transgender and gender non-conforming people were killed in the United States. As of August 2023, there have been at least 15 transgender and gender non-conforming people murdered so far this year.^{xxvi} The risk of fatal violence is heightened for Black transgender women, as they make up more than half (63%) of victims.^{xxvii}

Specifically, LGBTQ+ people are at higher risk for experiencing domestic/intimate partner and sexual violence. Data from the last 15 years has shown a higher lifetime prevalence of experiences of intimate partner violence against sexual minority women than heterosexual women, with bisexual women being roughly twice as likely to experience this type of violence. Similar rates exist for transgender people.^{xxviii} Bisexual people experience domestic violence at a rate that is eight times higher than straight people. Lesbians and gay people experience about twice as much domestic violence as straight people.^{xxix} A needs assessment conducted specifically in Massachusetts in 2020 found that 81% of LGBTQ respondents had experienced fear for their safety over the past five years.^{xxx} The violence that LGBTQ+ people experience in relationships has also been increasing in severity in the past decade. According to a 2017 report, rates of injury from intimate partner violence, the need to seek medical attention, and the use of weapons had all increased in the previous year.^{xxxi}

At the same time, LGBTQ+ people experience high rates of sexual violence. Close to half (46%) of all bisexual women have experienced rape, in comparison to 17% of straight women, and 47% of bisexual men (and 40% of gay men) have experienced sexual violence other than rape, compared to 21% of straight men, according to the Centers for Disease Control.^{xxxi} Nearly a quarter (23%) of college students identifying as genders other than “man” or “woman” reported experiencing non-consensual sexual contact while enrolled in school on a national campus climate survey.^{xxxiii}

LGBTQ+ youth, in particular, are at risk for engaging in commercial sexual exploitation^{xxxiv} due to high rates of homelessness they may experience. Up to 40% of homeless youth identify as LGBTQ+, and these youth are up to seven times more likely than their non-homeless peers to engage in sex to meet their basic needs (shelter, food, addictions, and toiletries).^{xxxv}

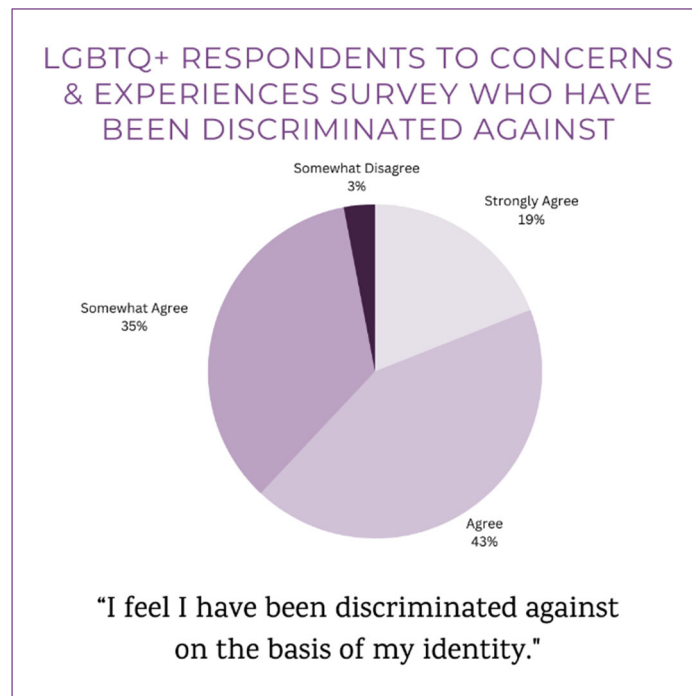
The MCSW found that these national trends are in line with what LGBTQ+ individuals in the Commonwealth are experiencing. In Community Conversations, participants shared their own experiences of sexual assault.

One person articulated the way that conversations around queer sexual assault are rarely held, and when they are, the nuances of the situations (e.g., the dynamics of small, insulated queer communities) are often overlooked. Another Community Conversation participant talked about the lack of skill and training for mainstream domestic and sexual violence providers in understanding and supporting survivors in relationships between two men or two women. Resources for providers around these issues do exist in Massachusetts^{xxxvi} but are underutilized and frequently underfunded.

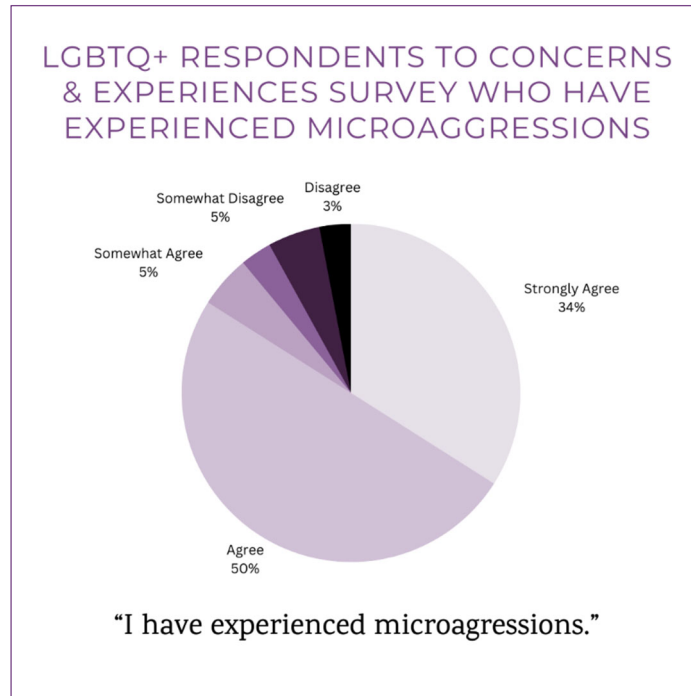
More broadly, the vast majority (97%) of LGBTQ+ respondents to the Concerns & Experiences Survey had experienced discrimination based on their identities and 89% had experienced microaggressions (a comment or action that subtly and often unconsciously or unintentionally expresses a prejudiced attitude toward a member of a marginalized group)^{xxxvii}. While the majority had experienced discrimination based on their sexual orientation (61%), they also experienced gender-identity discrimination (39%) age- (31%) and race-based discrimination (25%). Importantly, many respondents had experienced discrimination based on multiple intersections of their identities.



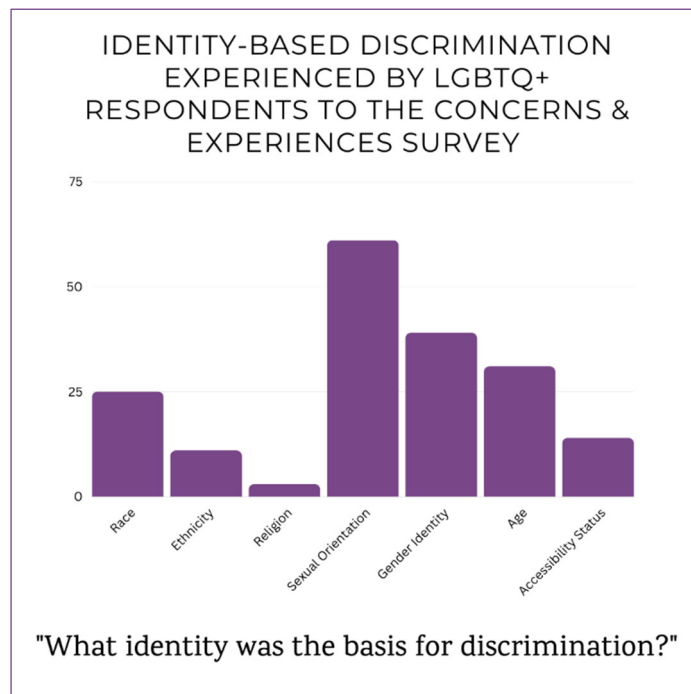
Graph 1: LGBTQ+ Respondents to Concerns & Experiences Survey Who Have Been Discriminated Against



Graph 2: LGBTQ+ Respondents to Concerns & Experiences Survey Who Have Experienced Microaggressions



Graph 3: Identity-Based Discrimination Experienced by LGBTQ+ Respondents to the Concerns & Experiences Survey



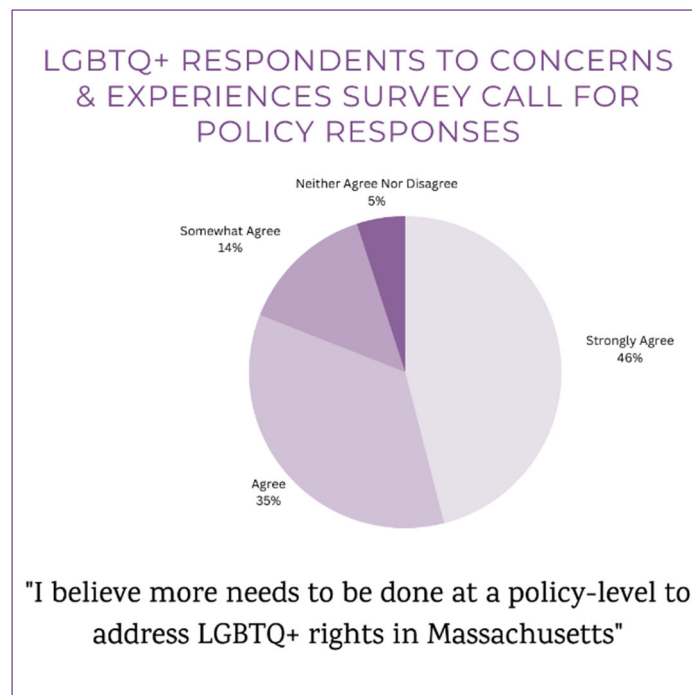
As defined above, interpersonal violence includes acts of violence between individuals – family members, intimate partners, and strangers – where the violence is not specifically intended to further the aims of any specific group or cause.^{xxxviii} Structural , in contrast, refers to the ways that social inequalities and political economic systems make certain people and groups vulnerable.^{xxxix} The two types of violence reinforce one another.

In Massachusetts, LGBTQ+ people experience both interpersonal and structural violence. While survey and Community Conversation respondents did name physical violence, and the threat of such violence, as a primary concern of theirs, they also named various types of structural violence. The stripping of rights, especially at the national level, and its impact on their daily lives; missed opportunities and constant stressors related to their LGBTQ+ identities; economic stability and prosperity; issues related to being an LGBTQ+ parent and parenting LGBTQ+ children; and the lived experiences of existing in the world with multiple intersecting identities are all examples of structural violence that were highlighted by participants.

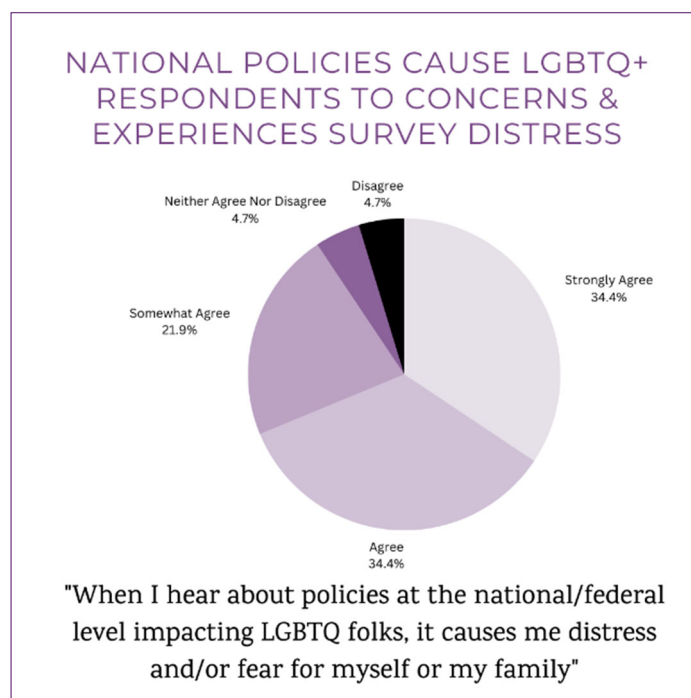


Respondents to the Concerns & Experiences Survey identified the protection of LGBTQ+ rights as a primary area of concern both for themselves and for their communities. Nearly all LGBTQ+ respondents (95%) believe that more needs to be done at a policy-level to address LGBTQ+ rights in Massachusetts, with one participant noting that “shifting state policies in trans and LGBTQ rights are cause for deep concern”. A similar rate of LGBTQ+ respondents (94%) indicated that when they hear about policies at the federal level impacting LGBTQ+ populations, it causes them distress and/or fear for themselves or their families.

Graph 4: LGBTQ+ Respondents to Concerns & Experiences Survey Call for Policy Responses



Graph 5: National Policies Cause LGBTQ+ Respondents to Concerns & Experiences Survey Distress



In 2022, there were 25 anti-LGBTQ bills enacted nationwide, with 70 passed in the first five months of 2023 through May^{xi} and nearly 500 (468) have been introduced specifically targeting LGBTQ+ youth's rights to visibility, gender-affirming care, school sports, and representative literature.^{xii} LGBTQ+ students, and especially transgender students, have faced ongoing regulations around what public restrooms they have access to^{xiii} and so-called "religious liberty" bills that enshrine discrimination into statute.^{xiiii} Finally, with the June 2023 Supreme Court decision in *303 Creative LLC et al. v. Elenis et al.*, which allows commercial or service providers to deny services and equal access to LGBTQ+ people in the name of providers' free speech right, LGBTQ+ individuals and communities across the U.S. were faced with tangible evidence that their rights would not be protected by the highest court in the country.^{xliv}

These instances of both interpersonal and structural violence impact the ability of LGBTQ+ people in the Commonwealth to access opportunities and equality. Policymakers and those close to the levers of power in this state have a responsibility to ensure the safety of all Massachusetts residents, including and especially those who identify as LGBTQ+, by banning the LGBTQ panic defense (further explanation below in Policy Implications) that protects violent offenders and passing a series of statewide bills that protect against both forms of violence: H.3095/S.2016 (to ensure representation of women, minorities, and LGBTQ+ individuals on state boards and commissions); S.1160 (to prevent discrimination in executive departments and agencies of the Commonwealth); H.3368/S2207 (to allow individuals to select gender "x" in lieu of "male" or "female" on legal documents); and S.621 (to ensure insurance coverage for gender-affirming hair removal treatment) ^{xxxviii} At the same time, communities can create opportunities for LGBTQ+ individuals to come together and process the impact that federal policies have on their everyday lives and well-being and to engage as advocates and supporters at the local, state, and federal level.

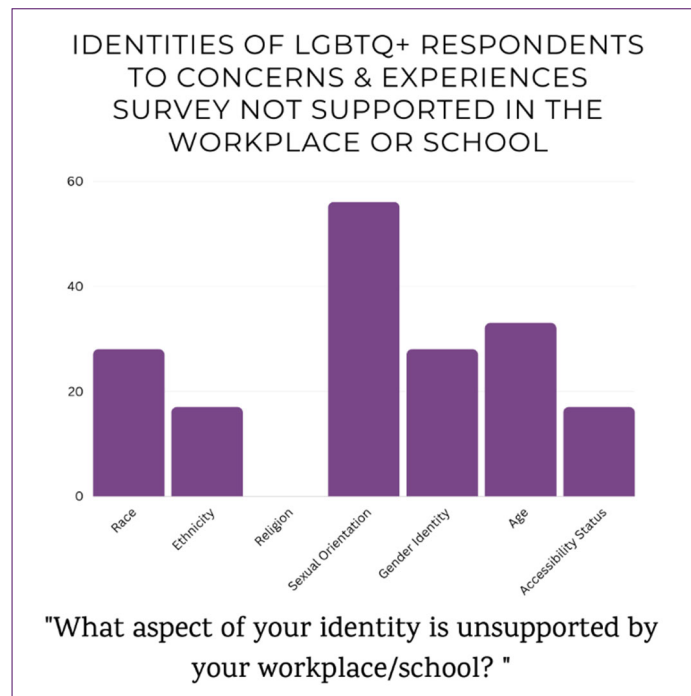
Economic Stability

One form of structural violence that participants identified as of critical concern is economic stability. There are many dimensions of economic stability, including pay equity and the impact of workplace harassment on the ability of LGBTQ+ people to maintain steady jobs, advance in their careers, and build and maintain wealth. In 2023, white LGBTQ+ workers earned 97 cents on the dollar of the average American worker while Latinx LGBTQ+ workers earned 90 cents and Black LGBTQ+ workers earned 80 cents. Similarly, LGBTQ+ men, regardless of race, earned 96 cents, LGBTQ+ women earned 87 cents, nonbinary, genderqueer, gender-fluid, and two spirit workers earned 70 cents, trans men earned 70 cents, and trans women earned 60 cents.^{xlv}

Wealth is a broader measure than income and is a summation of the total assets an individual or family has minus their debt.^{xlvi} Wealth serves as the financial buffer that helps families weather financial crises and unexpected expenses. Income is but one of the four main drivers of wealth. The others are education, home-ownership, and intergenerational wealth transfers.^{xlvii} Extensive research has shown that wealth gaps based on race^{xlviii} and gender^{xlix} are substantially wider than income gaps. A 2023 national survey found that LGBTQ+ respondents have far lower annual incomes than other adults and over half LGBTQ+ people have less than \$5,000 in savings. Some of the contributing factors include losing the ability to rely financially on their families after coming out, facing economic discrimination, and paying out-of-pocket expenses for family formation, legal name and gender-marker changes, and gender-affirming healthcare.^l

While 68% of respondents to the Concerns & Experiences Survey feel they belong in their workplace or school and 76% feel safe their workplace or school, many still feel that aspects of their identities are unsupported in these spaces. Just over half (56%) feel their sexual orientation is unsupported, 28% each feel their gender identity and race are unsupported, and 33% indicated that there lacks support for their age categorization.

Graph 6: Identities of LGBTQ+ Respondents to Concerns & Experiences Survey Not Supported in the Workplace or School



When asked for more details, respondents brought up being passed over for opportunities and leadership roles, having to “muscle” their way onto projects, experiencing sexual harassment at conferences and networking events, being tokenized, and being disappointed by supposedly “inclusive” jobs that made them feel unwelcomed because of their sexual identities. In one of the Community Conversations, a respondent talked about being a queer Latina woman and feeling that she had to keep her relationship “hush hush”, especially early in her career. She was very careful to talk about her “spouse”, rather than use gendered terms or pronouns. This is not an uncommon experience for LGBTQ+, and especially transgender, workers.

According to the 2015 U.S. Transgender Survey^[10] Another Community Conversation respondent shared a detailed description of their toxic workplace. They described very intentional disrespect of their pronouns, gaslighting^[11] by their boss and coworkers, and having to take unpaid medical leave.

THE COMMONWEALTH SPEAKS




"I am a gay woman working in a straight cis-male dominated field and it can be hard to move up."

CONCERNS & EXPERIENCES SURVEY
RESPONDENT SURVEY RESPONDENT

COMMUNITY STORIES

Alex (uses they/them pronouns) decided to be out as non-binary at their new job because the company had a reputation of being inclusive and accepting. Recently, someone came to meet with them. The visitor signed in at the front desk and asked "I'm meeting with Alex today, is Alex a them?" laughing. Alex's coworker sitting at the front desk laughed along with them. Not long after, this same coworker was asking employees their pronouns to put on an employee board. Whenever someone stated they used "he" or "she" the coworker would respond by saying "I love when it's easy!". Alex is the only person in their workplace that uses they/them pronouns and reflected on how hard it is to have the self-esteem to even try to fight these kinds of discrimination.



MASSACHUSETTS COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN

Workplace harassment and lack of belonging have negative consequences for economic stability. In comparison to 40% of the general population, 60% of lesbian, gay, and bisexual employees have been fired from or denied a job. At least one in five LGBTQ+ people in 2017 reported sexuality or gender identity discrimination when applying for jobs, being paid equally, or being considered for promotions.^{liv} Workers who identify as transgender, specifically, report very high rates of employment discrimination and their unemployment rate is three times higher than the general population.^{lv} A sense of belonging is critical, especially for underrepresented groups,^{lvi} such as LGBTQ+ workers. When workers lack a feeling of belonging, it negatively impacts their engagement and performance at work.^{lvii}

Importantly, most (74%) respondents to the Concerns & Experiences Survey do feel that there are people they can go to in their workplace and/or school to address discrimination. Among the 25% who do not, participants described that while they may know who to go to, that those people are more focused on ensuring that the workplace and school are not legally liable for discrimination than on disrupting or preventing it. One participant who works in a sexual violence prevention office at a university talked about how their work is compliance-based, providing further validation to earlier comments. Others brought up the challenges of remote work and the struggle to create trusting connections with those who are tasked with supporting them.

While Massachusetts does have nondiscrimination laws that protect workers from harassment and discrimination based on both sexual orientation and gender identity,^{lviii} more is needed to ensure that these policies are being fully implemented in ways that make workers feel safe to be their full selves.

Additional barriers to full participation in the workforce can be addressed by passing policies that ensure transparency and accountability around salary, benefits, and advancement in the workplace, provide accessible childcare, and create accessible pathways for those with criminal records to obtain and sustain employment.

Parenting and Childrearing

Another critical issue highlighted in responses to the Concerns & Experiences Survey and Community Conversations was LGBTQ+ parenting and childrearing – both challenges arising from parenting children who identify as LGBTQ+ and being a parent who does.

As noted above, a sense of belonging is critical to the experience of LGBTQ+ individuals in the workplace. It is equally important to the experience of LGBTQ+ youth at school. The extent to which students feel accepted and included in their school environment is associated with many positive outcomes in adolescents including lower rates of risky behaviors such as smoking and drinking^{lix} depression,^{lx} suicidal ideation and suicide attempts.^{lxi}

It has long been understood that supportive school environments can foster this sense of belonging, which in turn, leads to longer-term positive outcomes for youth.^{lxii} Parents who attended Community Conversations shared the ways that unsupportive school environments can do just the opposite.

COMMUNITY STORIES

Erin and Mike are the parents of a transgender son. Their son came home from his middle school one day and shared the story of a group of boys who were harassing him. They would pound on the stall door when he was in the bathroom. Later in the year, he found a single-stall restroom that he could use without their harassment, but it was in a different area of the school from where his classes took place. On his way back to class one day, a teacher stopped him and questioned why he was there. She asked for his name and when he provided his chosen name she scolded, "no, tell me the name your mama gave you". Erin recalled the pain of watching her child who had loved school become a student with sinking grades because of his teacher misgendering him and making him feel that he couldn't be himself in the classroom.



MASSACHUSETTS COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN

Even when school environments do not fully support LGBTQ+ youth, supportive parents can make all the difference. According to a 2017 study, across four main sources of support for youth (parents, teachers, classmates, and friends), supportive parents were most strongly associated with lower rates of depression and rates of higher self-esteem.^{lxiii} When youth perceive their parents as accepting of their LGBTQ identities they are more likely to include them in their lives.^{lxiv} They are also less likely to experience homelessness, attempt suicide, or experience psychological distress.^{lxv} Extensive exploration of issues facing LGBTQ+ youth in Massachusetts can be found in the annual recommendations of the Massachusetts Commission on LGBTQ youth,^{lxvi} but it is important to note the impact that these issues have on the parents of LGBTQ+ youth.

The other aspect of parenting that Massachusetts residents brought up in both the Concerns & Experiences Survey and Community Conversations is the experience of being a parent who identifies as LGBTQ+. In the U.S., 170,000 children are currently being raised by same-sex couples.^{lxvii} Looking at the generation currently of child-bearing age, LGBTQ+ Millennials are actively planning to grow their families at comparable rates to their non-LGBTQ+ peers, and they are doing so through foster care, adoption, and assistive reproductive technology.^{lxviii} In the Concerns & Experiences Survey, LGBTQ+ parents expressed fears over loss of access to family-building technologies such as in-vitro fertilization and not being able to travel throughout the country without the threat that their family may not be recognized in all states. Another survey respondent shared that she is now a single mom by choice but had previously been considering having children with her genderqueer partner and had concerns that they would not both be recognized as parents.

The imposition of the legal system in family-building and family-maintenance for LGBTQ+-headed families is of primary concern. While in Massachusetts same-sex couples can expect the presumption of both parents being “legal parents” (established by a 2016 state Supreme Court case), in order to be fully protected many LGBTQ+ parents seek second-parent adoptions.^{lxx} Community Conversation participants articulated that judges and clerks are undereducated on this issue and the experience of families can vary significantly based on what county they are in and which judge presides over their case. Having to go through a legal adoption process (which can sometimes be lengthy and expensive) is humiliating for families and only accessible to those families with the privilege and resources to be able to afford it. Individual community members shared the impacts that these processes have on children.

One described the way that older children in the family can experience fear and insecurity if the adoption of a younger sibling doesn't go through. Another recounted her own experience having been adopted by her second parent at age 11. She vividly remembered worrying that she might not be able to stay with her parents. These processes can be traumatizing to the whole family.

There is particular risk for non-legal parents after separation or divorce or in the case of domestic abuse. One mother and “de facto” parent (a parent with a non-legal or biological relationship to the child but who has participated as a member of the child’s family)^{lxx} spent four years in litigation after the birth mother of her daughter took the child out of state. Another shared an example where an abusive biological parent has the right to stay in their children’s lives and the de facto parent has no legal avenues to protect them. One point of particular risk is related to the intersectional identities of these families. A parent at one of the Community Conversations noted that LGBTQ+ parents of color are less likely to be able to afford to engage in these legal processes, and if they do, they are less likely to look like a couple the court “wants,” so they face many more barriers in gaining needed legal protections.

These gaps in parental rights cause LGBTQ+ parents’ distress and undermine the legal protections that families do have in the Commonwealth. Policymakers in Massachusetts can address these gaps by enacting policies that safeguard the parentage rights of LGBTQ+ families and protect the myriad of ways that these families grown, including through artificial insemination, in-vitro fertilization, access to midwives and doulas, and adoption. At the same time, there are also policy opportunities to better protect the LGBTQ+ youth being parented in the Commonwealth. Of highest priority is enacting legislation that creates an inclusive environment in school settings and promotes belonging by ensuring inclusive sex education and other curricula and making menstrual products discreetly available to students of all genders.

Navigating Intersectional Identities

Like all people, LGBTQ+ individuals exist at the intersections of many identities. According to a 2019 report, people of color were more likely than white people to identify as LGBT: 4% of white adults, 4.9% of Asian adults, 5% of Black adults, and 6.1% of Latinx adults also identified as members of the LGBTQ+ community.^{lxx} Many participants from Community Conversations and Concerns & Experiences Survey respondents brought up the critical importance of approaching issues related to their LGBTQ identities through an intersectional lens. An intersectional lens requires considering not only the multiple identities an individual holds, but also the ways that those identities overlap and intersect and the power (or lack thereof) that accompanies those intersections.^{lxxi}

THE COMMONWEALTH SPEAKS

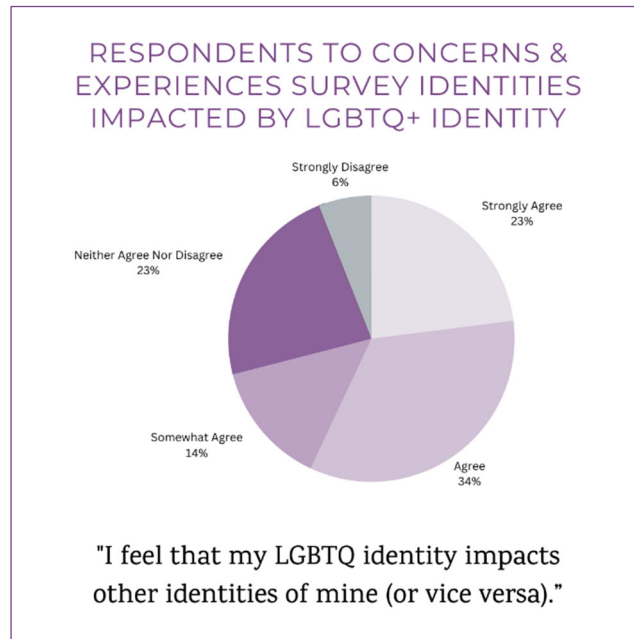


"Families deserve legal protections no matter what they look like or are composed of. We need to update the laws to protect children who are not heterosexually 'naturally' conceived."

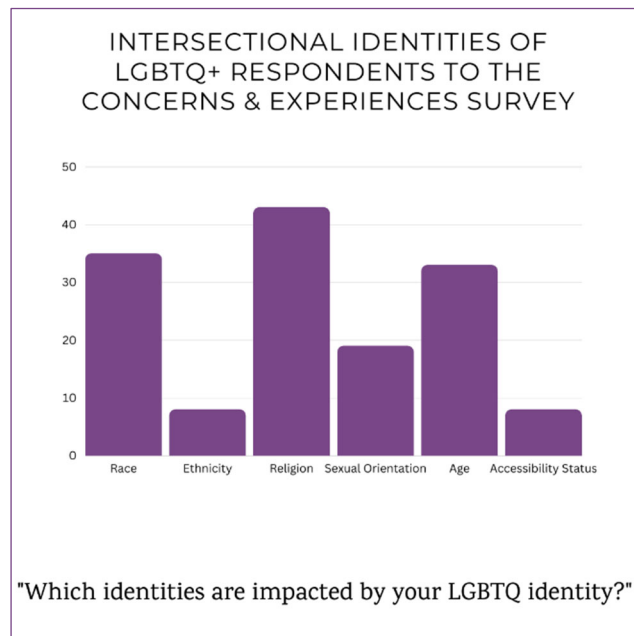
CONCERNS & EXPERIENCES SURVEY
RESPONDENT SURVEY RESPONDENT

Well over half (71%) of LGBTQ+ survey respondents specifically noted that their LGBTQ identity impacts their other identities. Specifically, 42% noted the intersection of their LGBTQ+ and religious identities, 35% noted the intersection with their racial identity, and 20% with their age. Two additional respondents indicated the intersection with their accessibility/disability status. The overlap between religion and LGBTQ+ identity came up repeatedly with respondents describing the ways their LGBTQ+ communities did not accept their Christian identity, and their faith community discriminated or otherwise made them feel badly about their sexual orientations and gender identities.

Graph 7: Respondents to Concerns & Experiences Survey Identities Impacted by LGBTQ+ Identity



Graph 8: Intersectional Identities of LGBTQ+ Respondents to the Concerns & Experiences Survey



Community Conversation participants highlighted the ways that they struggle to find spaces where they can bring their full selves to the table, particularly their racial, sexual orientation, and gender identities. One person highlighted the way that their community does welcome queer and trans people, but that their blackness is not fully embraced. They noted that this lack of acceptance makes them and their partner question whether to stay in their community, and even Massachusetts, in the long term.

Research shows that individuals whose identities exist at these intersections experience greater discrimination in both large and small ways. For example, in 2015, transgender respondents to the U.S. Transgender Survey were more than twice as likely as the general U.S. population to be living in poverty, but trans people of color were more than three times as likely.^{lxxii} According to the same survey, the unemployment rate among transgender people of color was over four times that of the general population.^{lxxiii}

A national survey in 2020 found that 24% of LGBTQ+ people of color experienced discriminatory treatment from a healthcare provider in the previous year, while only 17% of their white counterparts did; 44% of LGBTQ+ people of color experienced discrimination when trying to rent or purchase a home, compared to 32% of white LGBTQ+ individuals; and 36% of LGBTQ+ people of color reported staying away from public spaces to avoid discrimination, while only 32% of white LGBTQ+^{lxxiv} did the same.^{lxxv,lxxvi}

In recognition that ending violence against LGBTQ+ people cannot be done in isolation from work to end violence against all other marginalized groups, policymakers and coalitions must work together to dismantle the systems of oppression impacting all people. Small steps in this direction include enacting policies that protect the rights and safety of multiply marginalized groups. At the same time, creating and expanding existing coalitions across identity groups and showing up to support groups that experience similar forms of structural violence is a powerful tool to counteract the negative experiences reported above.



Implications, Recommendations, and Relevant Pending Policy Measures and Legislation

The MCSW is tasked with analyzing and reporting on the status of women in the Commonwealth and counseling executive and legislative bodies on the effect of proposed legislation on women. This report specifically solicited the voices and experiences of LGBTQ+ individuals in the Commonwealth.

Below are recommendations for both policy and community practice based on the findings detailed above, as well as pending bills and policy measures that address the issues identified in the report's findings above, and which are currently under review by the MCSW for endorsement and support. Many of these bills have been endorsed by the Massachusetts Commission on LGBTQ Youth, which commission the MCSW supports fully.

Implications for Policy

Interpersonal and Structural Violence Against LGBTQ+ Individuals

- *Ban the LGBTQ panic defense*: In most states, including Massachusetts, there is no explicit rule against the so-called “LGBTQ panic defense”. The panic defense is a legal strategy in which a criminal defendant can argue that finding out a victim’s sexual orientation or gender identity caused them to panic and enact a violent reaction. This can lead to a reduced charge or sentence. At least ten states have enacted explicit bans of this defense.^{lxxvii} Massachusetts should join Rhode Island, Connecticut, Maine, New Jersey, California, and others in ensuring this defense cannot be used to help perpetrators avoid accountability for violence committed against LGBTQ+ people.
- *Pass Massachusetts House Bill H.3095/S.2016, “An Act to promote diversity on public boards and commissions”, in the 193rd Session (2023-2024)*: One approach to addressing structural violence is to increase representation of LGBTQ+ individuals in spaces where recommendations and decisions are made. H.3095 would require state appointive boards and commissions to have (or explain why they do not have) at least 50% members who identify as female and at least 30% members who identify as an underrepresented minority or as LGBTQ+.^{lxxviii}
- *Pass Massachusetts Senate Bill S.1160, “An Act relative to nondiscrimination”, in the 193rd Session (2023-2024)*: In conjunction with H.3095/S.2016 above, this bill would tackle structural violence by ensuring safety from discrimination in executive departments and agencies of the Commonwealth.^{lxxix}
- *Pass Massachusetts Bills H.3368/S.2207, “An Act relative to gender identity on Massachusetts identification”, in the 193rd Session (2023-2024)*: Forcing individuals to select either “male” or “female” on identification forms and, subsequently, to be labeled as such anytime they present their state-issued identification is invalidating and causes structural harm to transgender, non-binary, and gender-non-conforming people. This bill would allow for a third option, gender “X”, in lieu of “male” or “female” on legal documents such as birth certificates.^{lxxx}
- *Pass Massachusetts Senate Bill S.621, “An Act relative to gender-affirming hair removal treatment”, in the 193rd Session (2023-2024)*: Ensuring that health insurance companies cover the cost of procedures related to gender-affirming hair removal is another way to validate the identities of especially transgender, non-binary, and gender-non-conforming people and undo the structural violence they face.^{lxxx1}

Economic Stability

- *Pass Massachusetts House Bill H.1849, “An Act relative to salary range transparency”, in the 193rd Session (2023-2024)*: In order to develop greater equity for all workers, including LGBTQ+ workers, this bill would require employers with 15 or more employees to post the salary range of a position in the job posting and provide the salary range to an employee upon promotion or request.^{lxxxii}
- *Pass Massachusetts Bills H.489/S.301, “An Act providing affordable and accessible high-quality early education and care to promote child development and well-being and support the economy in the Commonwealth”, in the 193rd Session (2023-2024)*: LGBTQ+ workers need affordable and accessible childcare in order to ensure that they are able to remain in the workforce. This bill would provide the structure for affordable childcare in Massachusetts while also ensuring significantly better pay and benefits for providers.^{lxxxiii}
- *Pass Massachusetts Bill H.1701/S.1002, “An Act supporting survivors of trafficking and abuse and encouraging increased access to opportunities through expungement and/or sealing of records”, in the 193rd Session (2023-2024)*: As noted above, a high proportion of LGBTQ+ and especially transgender people engage in criminalized behaviors in order to survive. Having a public criminal record makes access to jobs and housing much more difficult. This bill would increase opportunities for expungement or the sealing of criminal records for survivors of sexual assault, domestic violence, and/or human trafficking.^{lxxxiv}

Parenting and Childrearing

Policies that promote access to inclusive and accessible education for LGBTQ+ youth

- *Pass Massachusetts Bill H.544/S.268, “An Act relative to healthy youth”, in the 193rd Session (2023-2024):* School belonging begins with feeling represented and welcome in schools. H.544/S.268, the Healthy Youth Act, would require that all schools providing sex education in Massachusetts do so in medically accurate, age-appropriate, and inclusive ways. This includes addressing LGBTQ+ relationships, identities, and healthy sexual practices.^{lxxxv} In September, Governor Healey’s new curriculum framework was approved, mirroring these changes.^{lxxxvi} It will still take schools two-to-three years to implement the new standards. Passing the Healthy Youth Act would enshrine these changes into law.
- *Pass Massachusetts Bill H.498/S.259, “An Act relative to LGBTQ+ inclusive curriculum”, in the 193rd Session (2023-2024):* Along with including LGBTQ+ relationships, identities, and practices in sex education spaces (which H.544/S.268 would do), another important element to a sense of belonging among students is an inclusive curriculum in other subjects. This bill would require the inclusion of the histories, roles, and contributions of LGBTQ+ individuals in teaching about the history of this country and the Commonwealth.^{lxxxvii}
- *Pass Massachusetts Bill H.534/S.1381, “An Act to increase access to disposable menstrual products”, in the 193rd Session (2023-2024):* Accessing menstrual products can be a source of stigma and can negatively impact a student’s sense of belonging, particularly for transgender students. This bill would ensure cost-free access to disposable menstrual products for all menstruating individuals, regardless of gender-identity, in schools, prisons, and shelters.^{lxxxviii}
- *Lobby against Massachusetts House Bill H.458, “An Act relative to parental rights in education”, in the 193rd Session (2023-2024):* Not all parents are supportive and accepting of their LGBTQ+ children. Currently, schools do not have to inform parents when students use different names and/or pronouns in school, creating, for some students, an environment of social safety at school even when it may not exist at home. Bill H.458 would require that parents be notified when students access physical, mental, and emotional health services. It would also ban any content on sexual orientation or gender identity in K-3 classrooms.^{lxxxix}

Navigating Intersectional Identities

Pass a suite of policies that protect marginalized communities in the 193rd Session (2023-2024):

- H.1239/S.744, “An Act establishing Medicare for all in Massachusetts” to guarantee healthcare access to all residents without regard to citizenship status, incarceration, financial or employment status, ethnicity, race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, previous health problems, or geographic location.^{xc}
- H.2325/S.1493, “An Act related to rehabilitation, re-entry, and human rights for incarcerated persons” to establish universal baseline standards for every person incarcerated in Massachusetts state prisons, county jails, and the house of Corrections with a shift in correctional priorities to rehabilitation and re-entry.^{xcⁱ}
- H.1795/S.1979, “An Act establishing a jail and prison construction moratorium” to stop the construction of any new jails or prisons in the Commonwealth for five years and, instead, to shift spending priorities to invest in communities.^{xcⁱⁱ}
- H.2288/S.1510, “An Act to protect the civil rights and safety of all Massachusetts residents” to explicitly delineate between immigration enforcement and state and local law enforcement, making it safer for undocumented immigrants to seek support and services.^{xcⁱⁱⁱ}

Implications for Community Practice

Despite the various challenges identified by respondents to the Concerns & Experiences Survey and Community Conversation participants, the Massachusetts LGBTQ+ community exhibits substantial resilience. Many Concerns & Experiences Survey respondents identified the tight knit communities they have found and built that make them feel safe, supported, and valued. This support and belonging can act as a protective factor against the negative impacts of discrimination and both interpersonal and structural violence explored throughout this report.^{xciv} Fostering spaces and opportunities to continue to build these communities of belonging and resilience are the most substantial implications for community practices. Below are additional implications for each of the four areas of findings outlined throughout this report.



Interpersonal and Structural Violence Against LGBTQ+ Individuals

Create opportunities for individuals and communities to come together to talk about and process policy decisions at the federal level and their impacts. At the same time, create opportunities for affected people and communities to engage in advocacy and support work at all levels – local, state, and national. Engaging meaningfully with other members of the LGBTQ+ community in order to take action against oppressive policies has the potential to counteract the trauma of oppression,^{xcv} build feelings of belonging within the collective identity and LGBTQ+ community,^{xcvi} and lead to feelings of empowerment.^{xcvii}

Economic Stability

In addition to passing new state-level policies, there is considerable work to be done to improve the implementation of existing policies intended to address and eliminate workplace harassment. For example, Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 (prohibiting sex discrimination in educational settings) and Title VII of the Civil Rights of 1964 (prohibiting discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex, and national origin in the workplace) are two federal policies with the potential to protect LGBTQ people. Companies, organizations, and educational institutions can work with groups and individuals who have lived experience to develop effective implementation strategies for these policies. This might involve creating LGBTQ+ advisory boards and or anonymous reporting venues and support resources. Finally, in order to create opportunities for meaningful economic stability, it is necessary to look beyond income to understand the drivers of wealth disparities among LGBTQ+ people. Wealth enables individuals and families to weather financial storms. Investing in wealth-building strategies that specifically target the LGBTQ+ community is a critical approach.

Parenting and Childrearing

While LGBTQ+ families face many challenges as they work to grow their families and raise their children, Massachusetts is, in many ways, a leader in this area. One thing that communities can do is highlight what is already happening and available in this Commonwealth to these families. For instance, in 2021 Massachusetts issued its first three-parent birth certificate,^{xcviii} paving the way for more families to have birth certificates amended to more accurately represent the various parents in a child's life. These advancements are bright spots in what can feel like a daunting landscape of parentage protections. Another bright spot is the power and potential of youth to make meaningful change. Schools can create spaces such as identity-based affinity groups (e.g., Gay-Straight Alliances) that give LGBTQ+ students opportunities to gather and take on leadership roles in their schools and communities, thereby increasing their feelings of belonging.^{xcix}

Navigating Intersectional Identities

It is impossible to separate experiences of violence and discrimination that are based on gender-identity and sexual orientation from those based on race, socioeconomic class, disability status, immigration status, etc. Yet, many non-profit organizations, policies, and even anti-bias initiatives attempt to do just that. Work to end violence – both interpersonal and structural – must work to dismantle all systems of oppression simultaneously. This means creating coalitions across identity groups, advocating and lobbying for policies that disproportionately impact marginalized groups, and showing up to support groups that are experiencing similar forms of structural violence even when the identity that is being targeted is different. In the words of Audre Lorde, “I am not free while any woman is unfree, even when her shackles are very different from my own. And I am not free as long as one person of Color remains chained”.^c

Conclusion

The purpose of this report was to amplify the voices of LGBTQ+ individuals and families throughout Massachusetts to better understand their experiences, concerns, and most pressing needs. The findings from the Concerns & Experiences Survey and the Community Conversations point to four key areas of concern: violence, both interpersonal and structural; economic stability; issues related to being a parent who identifies as LGBTQ+ and parenting an LGBTQ+ child; and existing at the intersections of multiple identities.

Given the political attacks on LGBTQ+ people across the country, now is a critical moment to both understand issues facing these communities in the Commonwealth and take action to address those issues. This report recommends specific policies at the state level to address each key area of findings, as well as outlines implications for community practice to best support LGBTQ+ individuals and families in Massachusetts.

Appendix A –

Survey of Massachusetts LGBTQ+ Individuals & Women’s Concerns and Experiences: Results

All Responses

Q1. Please rate your top 3 areas of concern for YOURSELF.

Answer Choices	Response %	Responses
Childcare	18.00%	9
Discrimination in the workplace	16.00%	8
Economic stability/prosperity	46.00%	23
Education	12.00%	6
Gender-based violence	10.00%	5
Healthcare	28.00%	14
Housing	16.00%	8
Impact of COVID 19 on Women	0.00%	0
Increasing paths to citizenship	0.00%	0
Job Security	2.00%	1
Pay & Wage Equity	36.00%	18
Prison reform and decreased sentencing	0.00%	0
Protection of LGBTQ+ Rights	48.00%	24
Racial Equity	22.00%	11
Reproductive Justice	28.00%	14

Only Respondents Identifying as LGBTQ+

Q1. Please rate your top 3 areas of concern for YOURSELF.

Answer Choices	Response %	Responses
Childcare	10.53%	4
Discrimination in the workplace	15.79%	6
Economic stability/prosperity	42.11%	16
Education	18.42%	7
Gender-based violence	15.79%	6
Healthcare	31.58%	12
Housing	15.79%	6
Impact of COVID 19 on Women	0.00%	0
Increasing paths to citizenship	0.00%	0
Job Security	2.63%	1
Pay & Wage Equity	36.84%	14
Prison reform and decreased sentencing	0.00%	0
Protection of LGBTQ+ Rights	63.16%	24
Racial Equity	21.05%	8
Reproductive Justice	23.68%	9

Student Debt Relief	18.00%	9
Transportation	2.00%	1
Teen Pregnancy Prevention	0.00%	0
Workplace harassment (Including sexual harassment)	4.00%	2
Other (please specify)	8.00%	4
	Answered	50
	Skipped	0

Student Debt Relief	21.05%	8
Transportation	2.63%	1
Teen Pregnancy Prevention	0.00%	0
Workplace harassment (Including sexual harassment)	0.00%	0
Other (please specify)	7.89%	3
	Answered	38
	Skipped	0

Q2. Please check off your top 3 areas of concern YOUR community (church, school, workplace, religious institution etc.)

Answer Choices	Response %	Responses
Childcare	20.00%	10
Discrimination in the Workplace	12.00%	6
Economic Stability/Prosperity	28.00%	14
Education	22.00%	11
Gender-based Violence	10.00%	5
Healthcare	24.00%	12
Housing	36.00%	18
Impact of COVID 19 on women	0.00%	0
Job Security	14.00%	7
Pay & Wage Equity	24.00%	12
Prison Reform and decreased sentencing	4.00%	2
Protection of LGBTQ+ Rights	40.00%	20
Racial Equity	36.00%	18
Reproductive Justice	26.00%	13
Transportation	6.00%	3
Teen pregnancy prevention	0.00%	0
Workplace harassment (including sexual harassment)	2.00%	1
Other (please specify)	6.00%	3
	Answered	50
	Skipped	0

Q2. Please check off your top 3 areas of concern YOUR community (church, school, workplace, religious institution etc.)

Answer Choices	Response %	Responses
Childcare	13.16%	5
Discrimination in the Workplace	15.79%	6
Economic Stability/Prosperity	26.32%	10
Education	18.42%	7
Gender-based Violence	13.16%	5
Healthcare	18.42%	7
Housing	36.84%	14
Impact of COVID 19 on women	0.00%	0
Job Security	18.42%	7
Pay & Wage Equity	15.79%	6
Prison Reform and decreased sentencing	5.26%	2
Protection of LGBTQ+ Rights	52.63%	20
Racial Equity	39.47%	15
Reproductive Justice	26.32%	10
Transportation	7.89%	3
Teen pregnancy prevention	0.00%	0
Workplace harassment (including sexual harassment)	2.63%	1
Other (please specify)	5.26%	2
	Answered	38
	Skipped	0

Q3. I feel proud of my identity.

Answer Choices	Response %	Responses
Strongly agree	42.00%	21
Agree	54.00%	27
Somewhat agree	2.00%	1
Neither agree nor disagree	2.00%	1
Somewhat disagree	0.00%	0
Disagree	0.00%	0
Strongly disagree	0.00%	0
	Answered	50
	Skipped	0

Q3. I feel proud of my identity.

Answer Choices	Response %	Responses
Strongly agree	42.11%	16
Agree	55.26%	21
Somewhat agree	2.63%	1
Neither agree nor disagree	2.63%	1
Somewhat disagree	0.00%	0
Disagree	0.00%	0
Strongly disagree	0.00%	0
	Answered	38
	Skipped	0

Q4. If applicable, what aspect of your identity don't you feel proud of? (Check all that apply)

Answer Choices	Response %	Responses
Race	40.00%	8
Ethnicity	15.00%	3
Religion	10.00%	2
Sexual orientation	30.00%	6
Gender Identity	15.00%	3
Age	20.00%	4
Disability Status	30.00%	6
Other (please specify)	10.00%	2
	Answered	20
	Skipped	30

Q4. If applicable, what aspect of your identity don't you feel proud of? (Check all that apply)

Answer Choices	Response %	Responses
Race	35.29%	6
Ethnicity	17.65%	3
Religion	17.65%	3
Sexual orientation	29.41%	5
Gender Identity	5.88%	1
Age	17.65%	3
Disability Status	29.41%	5
Other (please specify)	5.88%	1
	Answered	17
	Skipped	21

Q6. I feel the community in which I live is proud of my identity.

Answer Choices	Response %	Responses
Strongly agree	10.00%	5
Agree	40.00%	20

Q6. I feel the community in which I live is proud of my identity.

Answer Choices	Response %	Responses
Strongly agree	10.53%	4
Agree	36.84%	14

Somewhat agree	20.00%	10
Neither agree nor disagree	20.00%	10
Somewhat disagree	8.00%	4
Disagree	0.00%	0
Strongly disagree	2.00%	1
	Answered	50
	Skipped	0

Somewhat agree	21.05%	8
Neither agree nor disagree	18.42%	7
Somewhat disagree	10.53%	4
Disagree	0.00%	0
Strongly disagree	2.63%	1
	Answered	38
	Skipped	0

Q7. If applicable, what aspect of your identity is unsupported by your community? (Check all that apply)

Answer Choices	Response %	Responses
Race	20.69%	6
Ethnicity	13.79%	4
Religion	3.45%	1
Sexual orientation	41.38%	12
Gender Identity	27.59%	8
Age	13.79%	4
Disability Status	17.24%	5
Other (please specify)	10.34%	3
	Answered	29
	Skipped	21

Q7. If applicable, what aspect of your identity is unsupported by your community? (Check all that apply)

Answer Choices	Response %	Responses
Race	18.18%	4
Ethnicity	13.64%	3
Religion	0.00%	0
Sexual orientation	54.55%	12
Gender Identity	27.27%	6
Age	13.64%	3
Disability Status	18.18%	4
Other (please specify)	0.00%	0
	Answered	22
	Skipped	16

Q9. My identity is supported by my family of origin.

Answer Choices	Response %	Responses
Strongly agree	32.00%	16
Agree	20.00%	10
Somewhat agree	22.00%	11
Neither agree nor disagree	8.00%	4
Somewhat disagree	14.00%	7
Disagree	4.00%	2
Strongly disagree	0.00%	0
	Answered	50
	Skipped	0

Q9. My identity is supported by my family of origin.

Answer Choices	Response %	Responses
Strongly agree	28.95%	11
Agree	10.53%	4
Somewhat agree	50.00%	19
Neither agree nor disagree	10.53%	4
Somewhat disagree	18.42%	7
Disagree	5.26%	2
Strongly disagree	0.00%	0
	Answered	38
	Skipped	0

Q10. If applicable, what aspect of your identity is unsupported? (Check all that apply)

Answer Choices	Response %	Responses
Race	4.55%	1
Ethnicity	13.64%	3
Religion	9.09%	2
Sexual orientation	72.73%	16
Gender Identity	36.36%	8
Age	0.00%	0
Disability Status	13.64%	3
Other (please specify)	0.00%	0
	Answered	22
	Skipped	28

Q10. If applicable, what aspect of your identity is unsupported? (Check all that apply)

Answer Choices	Response %	Responses
Race	4.76%	1
Ethnicity	14.29%	3
Religion	9.52%	2
Sexual orientation	76.19%	16
Gender Identity	33.33%	7
Age	0.00%	0
Disability Status	14.29%	3
Other (please specify)	0.00%	0
	Answered	21
	Skipped	17

Q12. My sexual orientation is supported by my family of origin.

Answer Choices	Response %	Responses
Strongly agree	32.00%	16
Agree	20.00%	10
Somewhat agree	20.00%	10
Neither agree nor disagree	10.00%	5
Somewhat disagree	10.00%	5
Disagree	8.00%	4
Strongly disagree	0.00%	0
	Answered	50
	Skipped	0

Q12. My sexual orientation is supported by my family of origin.

Answer Choices	Response %	Responses
Strongly agree	18.42%	7
Agree	21.05%	8
Somewhat agree	23.68%	9
Neither agree nor disagree	13.16%	5
Somewhat disagree	13.16%	5
Disagree	13.16%	5
Strongly disagree	0.00%	0
	Answered	38
	Skipped	0

Q13. If applicable, what aspect of your identity is unsupported? (Check all that apply)

Q13. If applicable, what aspect of your identity is unsupported? (Check all that apply)

Answer Choices	Response %	Responses
Race	5.56%	1
Ethnicity	0.00%	0
Religion	5.56%	1
Sexual orientation	88.89%	16
Gender Identity	22.22%	4
Age	0.00%	0
Disability Status	16.67%	3
Other (please specify)	0.00%	0
	Answered	18
	Skipped	32

Q15. I have trusted allies who support my identity.

Answer Choices	Response %	Responses
Strongly agree	65.31%	32
Agree	28.57%	14
Somewhat agree	4.08%	2
Neither agree nor disagree	2.04%	1
Somewhat disagree	0.00%	0
Disagree	0.00%	0
Strongly disagree	0.00%	0
	Answered	49
	Skipped	1

Q16. If applicable, what aspect of your identity is unsupported?

Answer Choices	Response %	Responses
Race	44.44%	4
Ethnicity	33.33%	3
Religion	33.33%	3
Sexual orientation	66.67%	6
Gender Identity	22.22%	2
Age	11.11%	1
Disability Status	33.33%	3
Other (please specify)	22.22%	2
	Answered	9
	Skipped	41

Q18. I feel that I have been discriminated against on the basis of my identity.

Answer Choices	Response %	Responses
Strongly agree	20.41%	10
Agree	46.94%	23
Somewhat agree	28.57%	14
Neither agree nor disagree	2.04%	1
Somewhat disagree	2.04%	1
Disagree	0.00%	0
Strongly disagree	0.00%	0
	Answered	49
	Skipped	1

Q19. If applicable, what identity was the basis for the discrimination? (Check all that apply)

Answer Choices	Response %	Responses
Race	21.28%	10
Ethnicity	10.64%	5
Religion	2.13%	1
Sexual Orientation	51.06%	24
Gender Identity	53.19%	25
Age	36.17%	17
Accessibility Status	12.77%	6
	Answered	47
	Skipped	3

Answer Choices	Response %	Responses
Race	5.88%	1
Ethnicity	0.00%	0
Religion	0.00%	0
Sexual orientation	94.12%	16
Gender Identity	23.53%	4
Age	0.00%	0
Disability Status	17.65%	3
Other (please specify)	0.00%	0
	Answered	17
	Skipped	21

Q15. I have trusted allies who support my identity.

Answer Choices	Response %	Responses
Strongly agree	65.79%	25
Agree	28.95%	11
Somewhat agree	2.63%	1
Neither agree nor disagree	2.63%	1
Somewhat disagree	0.00%	0
Disagree	0.00%	0
Strongly disagree	0.00%	0
	Answered	38
	Skipped	0

Q16. If applicable, what aspect of your identity is unsupported?

Answer Choices	Response %	Responses
Race	50.00%	4
Ethnicity	37.50%	3
Religion	37.50%	3
Sexual orientation	75.00%	6
Gender Identity	25.00%	2
Age	12.50%	1
Disability Status	37.50%	3
Other (please specify)	25.00%	2
	Answered	8
	Skipped	30

Q18. I feel that I have been discriminated against on the basis of my identity.

Answer Choices	Response %	Responses
Strongly agree	18.92%	7
Agree	43.24%	16
Somewhat agree	35.14%	13
Neither agree nor disagree	0.00%	0
Somewhat disagree	2.70%	1
Disagree	0.00%	0
Strongly disagree	0.00%	0
	Answered	37
	Skipped	1

Q19. If applicable, what identity was the basis for the discrimination? (Check all that apply)

Answer Choices	Response %	Responses
Race	25.00%	9
Ethnicity	11.11%	4
Religion	2.78%	1
Sexual Orientation	61.11%	22
Gender Identity	38.89%	14
Age	30.56%	11
Accessibility Status	13.89%	5
	Answered	36
	Skipped	2

Q21. I feel like I belong in my workplace/school.		
Answer Choices	Response %	Responses
Strongly agree	22.00%	11
Agree	46.00%	23
Somewhat agree	16.00%	8
Neither agree nor disagree	8.00%	4
Somewhat disagree	4.00%	2
Disagree	0.00%	0
Strongly disagree	4.00%	2
	Answered	50
	Skipped	0

Q22. If applicable, what aspect of your identity is unsupported by your workplace/school? (Check all that apply)		
Answer Choices	Response %	Responses
Race	25.00%	5
Ethnicity	15.00%	3
Religion	0.00%	0
Sexual Orientation	50.00%	10
Gender Identity	35.00%	7
Age	35.00%	7
Accessibility Status	15.00%	3
	Answered	20
	Skipped	30

Q24. I feel safe in my workplace/school.		
Answer Choices	Response %	Responses
Strongly agree	32.00%	16
Agree	44.00%	22
Somewhat agree	16.00%	8
Neither agree nor disagree	4.00%	2
Somewhat disagree	2.00%	1
Disagree	2.00%	1
Strongly disagree	0.00%	0
	Answered	50
	Skipped	0

Q25. If applicable, what aspect of your identity makes you feel unsafe in your workplace/school? (Check all that apply)		
Answer Choices	Response %	Responses
Race	23.53%	4
Ethnicity	17.65%	3
Religion	0.00%	0
Sexual Orientation	52.94%	9
Gender Identity	41.18%	7
Age	11.76%	2
Accessibility Status	11.76%	2
	Answered	17
	Skipped	33

Q27. I feel there are people I can go to in my workplace/school to address discrimination.		
Answer Choices	Response %	Responses
Strongly agree	24.00%	12
Agree	32.00%	16
Somewhat agree	18.00%	9
Neither agree nor disagree	12.00%	6
Somewhat disagree	6.00%	3
Disagree	6.00%	3
Strongly disagree	2.00%	1
	Answered	50

Q21. I feel like I belong in my workplace/school.		
Answer Choices	Response %	Responses
Strongly agree	21.62%	8
Agree	43.24%	16
Somewhat agree	21.62%	8
Neither agree nor disagree	8.11%	3
Somewhat disagree	5.41%	2
Disagree	0.00%	0
Strongly disagree	0.00%	0
	Answered	37
	Skipped	1

Q22. If applicable, what aspect of your identity is unsupported by your workplace/school? (Check all that apply)		
Answer Choices	Response %	Responses
Race	27.78%	5
Ethnicity	16.67%	3
Religion	0.00%	0
Sexual Orientation	55.56%	10
Gender Identity	27.78%	5
Age	33.33%	6
Accessibility Status	16.67%	3
	Answered	18
	Skipped	20

Q24. I feel safe in my workplace/school.		
Answer Choices	Response %	Responses
Strongly agree	31.58%	12
Agree	44.74%	17
Somewhat agree	15.79%	6
Neither agree nor disagree	2.63%	1
Somewhat disagree	2.63%	1
Disagree	2.63%	1
Strongly disagree	0.00%	0
	Answered	38
	Skipped	0

Q25. If applicable, what aspect of your identity makes you feel unsafe in your workplace/school? (Check all that apply)		
Answer Choices	Response %	Responses
Race	21.43%	3
Ethnicity	21.43%	3
Religion	0.00%	0
Sexual Orientation	64.29%	9
Gender Identity	28.57%	4
Age	14.29%	2
Accessibility Status	14.29%	2
	Answered	14
	Skipped	24

Q27. I feel there are people I can go to in my workplace/school to address discrimination.		
Answer Choices	Response %	Responses
Strongly agree	28.95%	11
Agree	31.58%	12
Somewhat agree	18.42%	7
Neither agree nor disagree	10.53%	4
Somewhat disagree	2.63%	1
Disagree	5.26%	2
Strongly disagree	2.63%	1
	Answered	38

Skipped	0
Q29. I have experienced microaggressions. (i.e. A comment or action that subtly and often unconsciously or unintentionally expresses a prejudiced attitude toward a member of a marginalized group)	
Answer Choices	Response % Responses
Strongly agree	36.00% 18
Agree	46.00% 23
Somewhat agree	8.00% 4
Neither agree nor disagree	2.00% 1
Somewhat disagree	4.00% 2
Disagree	4.00% 2
Strongly disagree	0.00% 0
Answered	50
Skipped	0

Q30. If applicable, what identity was the basis for the microaggressions? (Check all that apply)	
Answer Choices	Response % Responses
Race	34.09% 15
Ethnicity	25.00% 11
Religion	11.36% 5
Sexual Orientation	54.55% 24
Gender Identity	61.36% 27
Age	38.64% 17
Accessibility Status	15.91% 7
Answered	44
Skipped	6

Q32. I feel that I miss out on opportunities for growth because of my identity.	
Answer Choices	Response % Responses
Strongly agree	14.29% 7
Agree	20.41% 10
Somewhat agree	26.53% 13
Neither agree nor disagree	20.41% 10
Somewhat disagree	6.12% 3
Disagree	12.24% 6
Strongly disagree	0.00% 0
Answered	49
Skipped	1

Q33. What identity was the basis for the missing out on opportunity? (Check all that apply).	
Answer Choices	Response % Responses
Race	16.67% 5
Ethnicity	20.00% 6
Religion	3.33% 1
Sexual Orientation	26.67% 8
Gender Identity	46.67% 14
Age	33.33% 10
Accessibility Status	16.67% 5
Answered	30
Skipped	20

Q35. I feel that my LGBTQ identity impacts other identities of mine (or vice versa), such as race, socioeconomic status, religion.	
Answer Choices	Response % Responses
Strongly agree	19.51% 8
Agree	31.71% 13
Somewhat agree	12.20% 5
Neither agree nor disagree	31.71% 13
Somewhat disagree	0.00% 0
Disagree	0.00% 0

Skipped	0
Q29. I have experienced microaggressions. (i.e. A comment or action that subtly and often unconsciously or unintentionally expresses a prejudiced attitude toward a member of a marginalized group) ¹	
Answer Choices	Response % Responses
Strongly agree	34.21% 13
Agree	50.00% 19
Somewhat agree	5.26% 2
Neither agree nor disagree	2.63% 1
Somewhat disagree	5.26% 2
Disagree	2.63% 1
Strongly disagree	0.00% 0
Answered	38
Skipped	0

Q30. If applicable, what identity was the basis for the microaggressions? (Check all that apply)	
Answer Choices	Response % Responses
Race	27.27% 9
Ethnicity	15.15% 5
Religion	9.09% 3
Sexual Orientation	63.64% 21
Gender Identity	57.58% 19
Age	30.30% 10
Accessibility Status	15.15% 5
Answered	33
Skipped	5

Q32. I feel that I miss out on opportunities for growth because of my identity.	
Answer Choices	Response % Responses
Strongly agree	13.51% 5
Agree	21.62% 8
Somewhat agree	21.62% 8
Neither agree nor disagree	21.62% 8
Somewhat disagree	8.11% 3
Disagree	13.51% 5
Strongly disagree	0.00% 0
Answered	37
Skipped	1

Q33. What identity was the basis for the missing out on opportunity? (Check all that apply).	
Answer Choices	Response % Responses
Race	14.29% 3
Ethnicity	19.05% 4
Religion	4.76% 1
Sexual Orientation	33.33% 7
Gender Identity	28.57% 6
Age	28.57% 6
Accessibility Status	23.81% 5
Answered	21
Skipped	17

Q35. I feel that my LGBTQ identity impacts other identities of mine (or vice versa), such as race, socioeconomic status, religion.	
Answer Choices	Response % Responses
Strongly agree	22.86% 8
Agree	34.29% 12
Somewhat agree	14.29% 5
Neither agree nor disagree	22.86% 8
Somewhat disagree	0.00% 0
Disagree	0.00% 0

Strongly disagree	4.88%	2
Answered		41
Skipped		9

Q36. If applicable, which identities are impacted by your LGBTQ identity? (Check all that apply)

Answer Choices	Response %	Responses
Race	25.93%	7
Ethnicity	7.41%	2
Religion	37.04%	10
Sexual Orientation	44.44%	12
Gender Identity	37.04%	10
Age	18.52%	5
Accessibility Status	7.41%	2
Answered		27
Skipped		23

Q38. I experience frequent stressors related to my LGBTQ identity.

Answer Choices	Response %	Responses
Strongly agree	4.88%	2
Agree	26.83%	11
Somewhat agree	26.83%	11
Neither agree nor disagree	24.39%	10
Somewhat disagree	4.88%	2
Disagree	9.76%	4
Strongly disagree	2.44%	1
Answered		41
Skipped		9

Q39. If applicable, which identities bring on stress related to your LGBTQ identity? (Check all that apply)

Answer Choices	Response %	Responses
Race	5.26%	1
Ethnicity	10.53%	2
Religion	0.00%	0
Sexual Orientation	73.68%	14
Gender Identity	47.37%	9
Age	10.53%	2
Accessibility Status	5.26%	1
Answered		19
Skipped		31

Q41. I believe more needs to be done at a policy-level to address LGBTQ+ rights in Massachusetts.

Answer Choices	Response %	Responses
Strongly agree	45.65%	21
Agree	32.61%	15
Somewhat agree	10.87%	5
Neither agree nor disagree	8.70%	4
Somewhat disagree	2.17%	1
Disagree	0.00%	0
Strongly disagree	0.00%	0
Answered		46
Skipped		4

Q42. If applicable, which identities need more policy reform in Massachusetts? (Check all that apply)

Answer Choices	Response %	Responses
Race	64.86%	24
Ethnicity	45.95%	17
Religion	18.92%	7
Sexual Orientation	64.86%	24

Strongly disagree	5.71%	2
Answered		35
Skipped		3

Q36. If applicable, which identities are impacted by your LGBTQ identity? (Check all that apply)

Answer Choices	Response %	Responses
Race	34.62%	9
Ethnicity	7.69%	2
Religion	42.31%	11
Sexual Orientation	42.31%	11
Gender Identity	34.62%	9
Age	19.23%	5
Accessibility Status	7.69%	2
Answered		26
Skipped		12

Q38. I experience frequent stressors related to my LGBTQ identity.

Answer Choices	Response %	Responses
Strongly agree	5.71%	2
Agree	28.57%	10
Somewhat agree	31.43%	11
Neither agree nor disagree	17.14%	6
Somewhat disagree	5.71%	2
Disagree	8.57%	3
Strongly disagree	2.86%	1
Answered		35
Skipped		3

Q39. If applicable, which identities bring on stress related to your LGBTQ identity? (Check all that apply)

Answer Choices	Response %	Responses
Race	5.56%	1
Ethnicity	11.11%	2
Religion	0.00%	0
Sexual Orientation	72.22%	13
Gender Identity	44.44%	8
Age	11.11%	2
Accessibility Status	5.56%	1
Answered		18
Skipped		20

Q41. I believe more needs to be done at a policy-level to address LGBTQ+ rights in Massachusetts.

Answer Choices	Response %	Responses
Strongly agree	45.95%	17
Agree	35.14%	13
Somewhat agree	13.51%	5
Neither agree nor disagree	5.41%	2
Somewhat disagree	0.00%	0
Disagree	0.00%	0
Strongly disagree	0.00%	0
Answered		37
Skipped		1

Q42. If applicable, which identities need more policy reform in Massachusetts? (Check all that apply)

Answer Choices	Response %	Responses
Race	60.71%	17
Ethnicity	42.86%	12
Religion	17.86%	5
Sexual Orientation	71.43%	20

Gender Identity	70.27%	26
Age	35.14%	13
Accessibility Status	48.65%	18
	Answered	37
	Skipped	13

Gender Identity	71.43%	20
Age	28.57%	8
Accessibility Status	42.86%	12
	Answered	28
	Skipped	10

Q44. When I hear about policies at the national/federal level impacting LGBTQ folks, it causes me distress and/or fear for myself or my family.

Answer Choices	Response %	Responses
Strongly agree	50.00%	23
Agree	21.74%	10
Somewhat agree	19.57%	9
Neither agree nor disagree	6.52%	3
Somewhat disagree	0.00%	0
Disagree	2.17%	1
Strongly disagree	0.00%	0
	Answered	46
	Skipped	4

Q44. When I hear about policies at the national/federal level impacting LGBTQ folks, it causes me distress and/or fear for myself or my family.

Answer Choices	Response %	Responses
Strongly agree	58.33%	21
Agree	22.22%	8
Somewhat agree	13.89%	5
Neither agree nor disagree	2.78%	1
Somewhat disagree	0.00%	0
Disagree	2.78%	1
Strongly disagree	0.00%	0
	Answered	36
	Skipped	2

Q45. If applicable, which identities cause you distress/and or fear for yourself or your family in relation to your LGBTQ identity? (Check all that apply)

Answer Choices	Response %	Responses
Race	29.41%	10
Ethnicity	20.59%	7
Religion	17.65%	6
Sexual Orientation	85.29%	29
Gender Identity	67.65%	23
Age	11.76%	4
Accessibility Status	26.47%	9
	Answered	34
	Skipped	16

Q45. If applicable, which identities cause you distress/and or fear for yourself or your family in relation to your LGBTQ identity? (Check all that apply)

Answer Choices	Response %	Responses
Race	31.03%	9
Ethnicity	24.14%	7
Religion	13.79%	4
Sexual Orientation	89.66%	26
Gender Identity	68.97%	20
Age	13.79%	4
Accessibility Status	27.59%	8
	Answered	29
	Skipped	9

Q53. What county do you live in?

Answer Choices	Response %	Responses
Berkshire	2.22%	1
Barnstable	2.22%	1
Bristol	4.44%	2
Dukes	0.00%	0
Essex	2.22%	1
Franklin	6.67%	3
Hampden	11.11%	5
Hampshire	4.44%	2
Middlesex	17.78%	8
Nantucket	0.00%	0
Norfolk	6.67%	3
Plymouth	0.00%	0
Suffolk	22.22%	10
Worcester	17.78%	8
Other (please specify)	2.22%	1
	Answered	45
	Skipped	5

Q53. What county do you live in?

Answer Choices	Response %	Responses
Berkshire	3.03%	1
Barnstable	3.03%	1
Bristol	6.06%	2
Dukes	0.00%	0
Essex	3.03%	1
Franklin	6.06%	2
Hampden	12.12%	4
Hampshire	6.06%	2
Middlesex	18.18%	6
Nantucket	0.00%	0
Norfolk	6.06%	2
Plymouth	0.00%	0
Suffolk	27.27%	9
Worcester	9.09%	3
Other (please specify)		0
	Answered	33
	Skipped	5

Q55. What age group best describes you?

Answer Choices	Response %	Responses
Under 18	0.00%	0
18-24	2.13%	1
25-34	46.81%	22
35-44	25.53%	12
45-54	17.02%	8
55-64	8.51%	4
65+	0.00%	0
	Answered	47

Q55. What age group best describes you?

Answer Choices	Response %	Responses
Under 18	0.00%	0
18-24	2.86%	1
25-34	51.43%	18
35-44	25.71%	9
45-54	14.29%	5
55-64	5.71%	2
65+	0.00%	0
	Answered	35

Answer Choices	Response %	Responses
Black/African American	14.58%	7
Hispanic/Latinx	10.42%	5
Asian/Asian American/Pacific Islander	4.17%	2
American Indian/Alaskan Native	4.17%	2
Caucasian/White	75.00%	36
Mixed ethnicity (Two or more races)	6.25%	3
Prefer not to answer	4.17%	2
Other (please specify)	0.00%	0
	Answered	48
	Skipped	2

Answer Choices	Response %	Responses
Yes	69.39%	34
No	24.49%	12
Prefer not to answer	6.12%	3
	Answered	49
	Skipped	1

Answer Choices	Response %	Responses
Female	85.71%	42
Male	0.00%	0
Non-binary	8.16%	4
Agender	0.00%	0
Gender queer	0.00%	0
I prefer not to say	2.04%	1
Other (please specify)	4.08%	2
	Answered	49
	Skipped	1

Answer Choices	Response %	Responses
Cisgender	83.33%	40
Transgender	10.42%	5
I prefer not to say	2.08%	1
Other Gender Identity (please specify)	4.17%	2
	Answered	48
	Skipped	2

Answer Choices	Response %	Responses
Gay	2.04%	1
Lesbian	22.45%	11
Straight or heterosexual	24.49%	12
Bisexual	8.16%	4
Asexual	6.12%	3
Pansexual	8.16%	4
Queer	24.49%	12
I prefer not to say	4.08%	2
Other Sexual Orientation	0.00%	0
	Answered	49
	Skipped	1

Answer Choices	Response %	Responses
Black/African American	13.89%	5
Hispanic/Latinx	11.11%	4
Asian/Asian American/Pacific Islander	5.56%	2
American Indian/Alaskan Native	2.78%	1
Caucasian/White	77.78%	28
Mixed ethnicity (Two or more races)	5.56%	2
Prefer not to answer	2.78%	1
Other (please specify)	0.00%	0
	Answered	36
	Skipped	2

Answer Choices	Response %	Responses
Yes	89.47%	34
No	0.00%	0
Prefer not to answer	10.53%	4
	Answered	38
	Skipped	0

Answer Choices	Response %	Responses
Female	81.08%	30
Male	0.00%	0
Non-binary	10.81%	4
Agender	0.00%	0
Gender queer	0.00%	0
I prefer not to say	2.70%	1
Other (please specify)	5.41%	2
	Answered	37
	Skipped	1

Answer Choices	Response %	Responses
Cisgender	78.38%	29
Transgender	13.51%	5
I prefer not to say	2.70%	1
Other Gender Identity (please specify)	5.41%	2
	Answered	37
	Skipped	1

Answer Choices	Response %	Responses
Gay	5.41%	2
Lesbian	29.73%	11
Straight or heterosexual	0.00%	0
Bisexual	10.81%	4
Asexual	5.41%	2
Pansexual	10.81%	4
Queer	32.43%	12
I prefer not to say	5.41%	2
Other Sexual Orientation	0.00%	0
	Answered	37
	Skipped	1

Q61. What is your family structure?		
Answer Choices	Response %	Responses
Single	24.49%	12
Married	32.65%	16
Divorced	8.16%	4
Widowed	0.00%	0
Partnered, but unmarried	30.61%	15
Prefer not to answer	2.04%	1
Other (please specify)	6.12%	3
	Answered	49
	Skipped	1

Q62. What is the highest level of school you have completed?		
Answer Choices	Response %	Responses
Less than high school	0.00%	0
High school degree or equivalent (e.g. GED)	8.16%	4
Associate degree	2.04%	1
Bachelor degree	28.57%	14
Graduate degree	46.94%	23
Doctoral degree	8.16%	4
Some college but no degree	6.12%	3
	Answered	49
	Skipped	1

Q63. Which of the following categories described your employment status?		
Answer Choices	Response %	Responses
Employed full time (35 or more hours per week)	88.00%	44
Employed part time (fewer than 35 hours per week)	6.00%	3
Not employed, looking for work	6.00%	3
Not employed, NOT looking for work	0.00%	0
Part-time Student	0.00%	0
Full-time Student	2.00%	1
Full-time parent	0.00%	0
Disabled, not able to work	2.00%	1
Retired	0.00%	0
Other (please specify)	0.00%	0
	Answered	50
	Skipped	0

Q64. How much total combined income did all of your members of your household earn last year?		
Answer Choices	Response %	Responses
Less than \$20,000	6.25%	3
\$20,000 to \$34,999	0.00%	0
\$35,000 to \$49,999	12.50%	6
\$50,000 to \$74,999	22.92%	11
\$75,000 to \$99,999	8.33%	4
\$100,000 to \$149,999	20.83%	10
\$150,000 or More	29.17%	14
	Answered	48
	Skipped	2

Q61. What is your family structure?		
Answer Choices	Response %	Responses
Single	27.03%	10
Married	27.03%	10
Divorced	8.11%	3
Widowed	0.00%	0
Partnered, but unmarried	37.84%	14
Prefer not to answer	0.00%	0
Other (please specify)	5.41%	2
	Answered	37
	Skipped	1

Q62. What is the highest level of school you have completed?		
Answer Choices	Response %	Responses
Less than high school	0.00%	0
High school degree or equivalent (e.g. GED)	5.56%	2
Associate degree	2.78%	1
Bachelor degree	27.78%	10
Graduate degree	55.56%	20
Doctoral degree	2.78%	1
Some college but no degree	5.56%	2
	Answered	36
	Skipped	2

Q63. Which of the following categories described your employment status?		
Answer Choices	Response %	Responses
Employed full time (35 or more hours per week)	86.84%	33
Employed part time (fewer than 35 hours per week)	7.89%	3
Not employed, looking for work	5.26%	2
Not employed, NOT looking for work	0.00%	0
Part-time Student	0.00%	0
Full-time Student	2.63%	1
Full-time parent	0.00%	0
Disabled, not able to work	2.63%	1
Retired	0.00%	0
Other (please specify)	0.00%	0
	Answered	38
	Skipped	0

Q64. How much total combined income did all of your members of your household earn last year?		
Answer Choices	Response %	Responses
Less than \$20,000	8.33%	3
\$20,000 to \$34,999	0.00%	0
\$35,000 to \$49,999	13.89%	5
\$50,000 to \$74,999	30.56%	11
\$75,000 to \$99,999	8.33%	3
\$100,000 to \$149,999	16.67%	6
\$150,000 or More	22.22%	8
	Answered	36
	Skipped	2

Appendix B –

Community Conversations Guided Discussion Questions

MCSW Community Conversation Guided Discussion Questions

1. What brought you here today?
2. In what ways has being a part of the LGBTQ community changed your life? Positive effects? Negative effects?
3. What barriers have you faced in your life due to your gender identity or sexual orientation?
4. What are the biggest issues facing the LGBTQ community in Massachusetts? What are the biggest issues you personally are facing as a person in the LGBTQ community?
5. What do you wish policymakers knew about your experience as a member of the LGBTQ community in Massachusetts? What do you wish they would do?
6. You are here as a [member of XYZ Organization]. What needs do folks this group serves have? What more could be done for this group?
7. Have you experienced discrimination in the workplace, at school, within your community etc. as a result of your identity or orientation? What do you want to share about that discrimination?
8. Are there certain issues that are prominent for certain parts of the LGBTQ community (for example, LGBTQ people of color)? What are those issues and what parts of the community do you see being affected?
9. As a person who holds this identity, how do you see the role of allies? In an ideal world, what should an ally do? What do allies do in reality, and how does that work for you?
10. If there's one thing you could leave MCSW with as a result of today's conversation, what would you want it to be?

Appendix C –

Statement on Behalf of the Massachusetts Commission on the Status of Women Concerning Jahaira DeAlto and Violence Against Transwomen and Transwomen of Color

Statement on behalf of the Massachusetts Commission on the Status of Women
Concerning Jahaira DeAlto
And violence against Transwomen and Transwomen of Color
May 6, 2021

The Massachusetts Commission on the Status of Women stands in outrage with the transgender community as we mourn the loss of our trans sister Jahaira DeAlto. It is the mission of the Commission to advance women and girls toward full equality in all areas of life, promoting rights and opportunities for all. We want to add our voices to bring attention to our sister Jahaira and celebrate her life and legacy. Jahaira was an advocate of change, dedicating her life to the liberation of trans people and the safety of the survivors of domestic and sexual violence. She is not simply another statistic.

Jahaira DeAlto was born in Beirut, and came to the United States at the age of 3 months old; she lived most of her childhood in Chestnut Hill. Assigned male at birth, at the age of sixteen she made the decision to transition openly and live her life authentically as the woman she always knew she truly was. Jahaira earned her GED before attending Berkshire Community College, graduating in August 2019 with an Associates Degree in Human Services. At the time of her death, Jahaira was attending Simmons University, studying social work with an expected graduation in 2023.

Jahaira worked as a trans activist and organizer for decades. In 2017, she was one of the key organizers for Berkshire County's first-ever annual lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer festival and its first-ever Transgender Day of Remembrance event. From 2018 to 2019, Jahaira was a member of the counseling staff at the Elizabeth Freeman Center, advocating for survivors of domestic and sexual violence and their families in Berkshire County and at the shelter. She was honored for her work by the Massachusetts Office of Victims Assistance and named recipient of the 2019 Victims Rights Month Special Recognition Award.

Jahaira's name has been added to the growing list of trans people killed this year for just living their lives. According to the nonprofit [Human Rights Campaign](#), at least 21 trans or gender-non-conforming people have been killed already in 2021. Jahaira appears to be the first in Massachusetts, although we also recognize the death of GLBT community member Mikayla Miller in Hopkinton in April. Friends want people to know Jahaira was more than the circumstances of her death. While no motive has been determined for Jahaira's killing, the Commission recognizes that she lost her life as she lived it: in service to others. We also offer our deepest condolences to Jahira's family, friends, and colleagues.

As we remember Jahaira's legacy, we reiterate the Commission's strong commitment to improving the status of women and girls across the Commonwealth, including our trans sisters. Trans women form a beloved and essential part of the Commission's constituency, and we reaffirm our commitment to serving the trans community.

First, we must address the alarming pattern of murders of trans women, particularly of trans women of color. We must commit to holding ourselves, as members of the Commission, responsible for doing more than we have in the past, to rail against and speak out forcefully about these killings of a vulnerable population at the intersection of so many marginalized identities.

Second, we must acknowledge and commit to do more to include transwomen in the work the Commission does to serve these communities, including in the Commission's work combating domestic and sexual violence. The Commission commits to do more—much more—than we have in the past to take into account the experience of trans women as we tackle this complex issue.

Third, as a campaign of hateful anti-trans legislation sweeps the nation, we commit to speak out loudly to condemn these efforts. We must also more actively support the trans community in seeking access to affirming healthcare and access to competition in sports. Trans women and girls (and all trans people) deserve dignified healthcare and equal access to cherished activities.

Finally, the Massachusetts Commission on the Status of Women also commits to stepping up its partnership with and outreach to the trans community. We commit to reach out and connect with trans and trans-serving organizations and trans individuals to learn from them how the Commission can better serve trans women and girls. To that end, the Commission encourages feedback from members of the trans community as to how we can provide better and more robust support going forward, by contacting the Commission at our email address of mcsw@state.ma.us.

"It is still vitally important we leverage our privilege to provide educational opportunities for people to learn more," Jahaira said. "The more we humanize ourselves for those who don't think they've encountered a transgender person, the more we're able to remove the stigma and fear surrounding the perception of what trans people are. Education is our greatest weapon against ignorance. After having the experience of meeting Jahaira DeAlto, you can no longer say you've never met a trans person."

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