2016 Needs Assessment:
A Look into the Lives of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer Coloradans and their Families
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Introduction

The One Colorado Education Fund (OCEF) is the state’s leading advocacy organization dedicated to advancing equality and opportunity for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) Coloradans and their families. Founded in 2010, the organization focuses on issues like protecting advances for LGBTQ equality, ensuring every student feels safe and welcome in their school, ensuring LGBTQ Coloradans have equitable access to health care, advocating for transgender equality, and advancing opportunities for LGBTQ Coloradans. This needs assessment, conducted during the summer of 2016, serves as a comparison to the data collected and reported on in 2010.

Background

A needs assessment was conducted when OCEF was founded in 2010 to learn about the needs and experiences of LGBTQ Coloradans and shape the organization’s policy and program priority areas. The survey polled 4,619 Coloradans on issues important to LGBTQ people, asking respondents about the following themes:

- SELF: The opportunity to be a healthy, autonomous, and responsible adult.
- FAMILY: The opportunity to love and raise a family.
- CAREER: The opportunity to earn a living and support a family.
- SOCIETY: The opportunity to participate in the community and democracy.
- SPIRITUALITY: The opportunity to pursue one’s spiritual path.

Since the inaugural needs assessment, much has changed for LGBTQ Coloradans and their families on both the state and federal levels, including winning the freedom to marry, increased accessibility and affordability of health care, better non-discrimination protections based on sexual orientation and gender identity, and the increased visibility of transgender individuals. However, in response to these advances for LGBTQ equality, there has been a noticeable backlash in the form of religious exemption legislation across the country. Some of these measures have been broad in scope; allowing businesses and individuals to pick and choose which laws they want to follow. Other laws have been narrow, attempting to bar same-sex couples from adopting children, as seen in Alabama and Oklahoma. Religious exemption laws permit people, churches, non-profit organizations, and sometimes corporations to claim their religion allows them to exempt themselves from laws they don’t like. As of this report, there have been six religious exemption bills introduced in the Colorado General Assembly.

Across all the areas in which OCEF works, LGBTQ people of color and transgender Coloradans face even greater barriers than their white and non-transgender peers. This report highlights a number of those barriers, as well as the work needed to create a more fair and just state for all LGBTQ Coloradans and their families.
The state of Colorado passed House Bill 11-1254, a comprehensive anti-bullying bill that prohibited bullying on the basis of a student’s actual or perceived sexual orientation or gender identity, as well as provided funding to schools to implement their anti-bullying efforts.

After two previous attempts in 2011 and 2012, the Colorado General Assembly passed the Colorado Civil Union Act. It provided thousands of committed couples with critical legal protections and responsibilities, including the ability to take employment leave to care for a partner, make medical and end-of-life decisions for a partner, and adopt children.

Section 3 of the Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA), which restricted federal marriage benefits and allowed states to refuse to recognize same-sex marriages, was struck down by the United States Supreme Court in United States v. Windsor.

The Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act, often shortened to the Affordable Care Act (ACA), went into effect, expanding health insurance coverage to an estimated 23 million Americans — including LGBTQ Americans.

In Obergefell v. Hodges, the United States Supreme Court ruled that state-level bans on same-sex marriages were unconstitutional, legalizing same-sex marriage across the country.

The Obama administration officially allowed transgender Americans to serve openly in the military and covered costs of those who transition during their service.
Methodology for the 2016 Needs Assessment

OCEF commissioned Simon Analytics to conduct a 20-minute, 53-question survey available online and in paper form from June 17, 2016 through October 10, 2016 that 3,614 qualified respondents completed. To be qualified, respondents needed to be 18 years or older, a current Colorado resident, identify as LGBTQ, and complete the survey only once. The survey was disseminated through strategic and easily shareable email communication from OCEF board and staff, advertised on Facebook and Instagram reaching 78,942 people, some of which targeted Spanish-speakers and those with transgender interests, and the survey was repeatedly shared on OCEF’s social media platforms. Paper copies of the survey were also available during the 2016 Pride Season and shared with organizations that serve LGBTQ people experiencing homelessness.

The Williams Institute at the UCLA School of Law estimates that 3.9 percent of Coloradans identify as LGBT1, and the most recent census data at the time of the survey indicated that there were 5,456,574 individuals living in Colorado.2 Given this information, Simon Analytics estimates that 212,800 LGBT individuals live in the state. The survey’s margin of error is 1.6 percent at the 95 percent confidence interval.

This survey and survey data has limitations. The data was collected before the 2016 Presidential Election of Donald Trump. Most respondents were from the Denver Metropolitan area and the survey was only available in English and Spanish, which are not the only languages spoken in Colorado. The survey was predominantly disseminated online, limiting most respondents to people with regular access to internet use.

Who responded?

GEOGRAPHY

The highlighted counties show the quantity of responses per county. The darker the color, the more responses received. A greater percentage of survey respondents came from rural Colorado in the 2016 Needs Assessment compared to the 2010 survey. About 60% of respondents live in the Denver Metropolitan area (Denver, Adams, Arapahoe, Jefferson, Douglas, Broomfield, Elbert, Park, Clear Creek, and Douglas counties), but the survey had representation from other parts of the state, including 13% of respondents from Southern-Central Colorado, 17% from Northern Colorado, and 3% from Mesa County.

1 Same-sex Couple and LGBT Demographic Data Interactive. (May 2016). The Williams Institute, UCLA School of Law
GENDER IDENTITY

A greater percentage of survey respondents identify as transgender, queer, and non-binary Coloradans than in the 2010 survey. Relative to white respondents, Hispanic respondents were more likely to identify as male, and Native American respondents were more likely to identify as transgender.

*The 4 percent in striped boxes are included in the 52% of transgender respondents who self-identity as both transgender and male or female.
SEXUAL ORIENTATION

Compared to 2010, fewer lesbian and gay Coloradans took the survey and more bisexual and queer people took the survey. Of all respondents, 37 percent identified as gay, 21 percent as lesbian, 15 percent as bisexual, 10 percent as queer, and 12 percent identified as another orientation or chose not to identify.

Over a third of transgender respondents identified as queer, 7 times more than non-transgender respondents. Nearly a quarter of transgender respondents indicated a sexual orientation other than lesbian, gay, bisexual, queer, or heterosexual.

Respondents of color were more likely than white respondents to identify as bisexual. Native Americans respondents were more likely to identify as bisexual or a different identity. African Americans were more likely to identify as lesbian.

EDUCATION

7 in 10 respondents had a college degree or higher. Respondents of color and transgender respondents were less likely to have a college degree than their white and non-transgender peers.

EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT OF RESPONDENTS
INCOME LEVEL

LGBTQ people of color were more likely to make less than $50,000 a year and support three or more people with their income. For all respondents making $75,000 or less a year, transgender people made less, on average, than non-transgender people. Of all respondents, a third had an income of $75,000 a year or more, and nearly a third made less than $40,000 a year. Nearly a quarter of respondents support 3 or more people in their household.

INCOME LEVELS OF RESPONDENTS

RACE AND ETHNICITY

88 percent of respondents identify as white, 13 percent as Latino/Hispanic, 4 percent as Native American, 2 percent as African American/Black, 2 percent as Asian/Pacific Islander, and 3 percent as “other.”

Transgender Coloradans are more likely than non-transgender people to be white, Native American, and Asian/Pacific Islander.
What did it say
...about education and safe schools?

OCEF believes that schools must be safe and welcoming for young people and their families. Both real and perceived stigma as an LGBTQ parent, exacerbated more so for families of color, can be a barrier to the way in which an individual or family engages with the school community. Students who experience bullying and harassment are less likely to thrive in school settings, which has a significant impact later in life. According to the 2016 Needs Assessment, 64 percent of respondents believe that ensuring LGBTQ youth have safe schools is among the most important social service issues on which OCEF should work.

- 30%  
  3 in 10 LGBTQ people are not out to their children’s schools.

- 57%  
  Respondents of color were more likely than their white counterparts to have experienced homophobia, transphobia, and/or harassment in places like their children’s school, with 57 percent compared to 47 percent.

- 64%  
  Nearly two-thirds of transgender respondents reported that they had been harassed or bullied in school.
What did it say...about health?

The LGBTQ community in Colorado has seen many improvements in accessing health care. Before the passage of the Affordable Care Act (ACA), being transgender was considered a pre-existing condition, a transgender individual could be charged more for the same service as their non-transgender peer, and there were strict annual and lifetime limits on individuals who had chronic conditions (like HIV/AIDS), among many other barriers to care. The ACA extended health insurance coverage to more than 500,000 Coloradans through the public exchange and Medicaid expansion, eliminated pre-existing conditions and transgender-specific exclusions, established cost-parity, and removed limits on annual and lifetime spending for people with chronic conditions.

Thanks to the ACA, only 6 percent of Colorado’s LGBTQ community is currently uninsured, compared to 15 percent in the 2010 Needs Assessment. More LGBTQ Coloradans receive health care from government-based plans, such as Medicare, Medicaid, or the Veterans Administration, with 19 percent compared to just 7 percent in 2010. About 28 percent of transgender respondents have government-sponsored health care through Medicare, Medicaid, or from Veterans Administration, compared to 17 percent of non-transgender LGBTQ respondents. In addition, the Colorado Division of Insurance published Bulletin No. B-4.49, barring insurance companies from discriminating against or denying coverage to individuals based on sexual orientation and gender identity.

There is still a lot of work to do in order to improve the physical, mental, and behavioral health disparities between LGBTQ Coloradans and the general public. Although insured rates have increased for the LGBTQ community overall, people of color are less likely to have private insurance, more likely to have Medicaid, and twice as likely as white people to have no insurance at all.

52 percent believe access to LGBTQ-affirming sexual health services, such as family planning, reproductive health, STD screening, and HIV Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP) access, to be among the most important social service work in which OCEF needs to engage. LGBTQ people of color, especially Latinos, are more likely than white people to say access to LGBTQ-affirming sexual health services and services for people living with HIV/AIDS are important.

46 percent believe access to LGBTQ-welcoming mental health services to be among the most important social service work in which OCEF needs to engage. Transgender people are more likely than non-transgender people to say access to LGBTQ-welcoming mental health services, health care access, and substance abuse services are important.
Harassment and discrimination have increased for LGBTQ Coloradans in all aspects of their daily lives, including on the street, at public establishments, at work, in the home, and at places of worship than in 2010. Both people of color and transgender respondents experienced increased amounts of discrimination compared to their white and non-transgender peers.

- Nearly two-thirds report experiencing homophobia, transphobia, and/or harassment on the street.
- 7 in 10 have experienced verbal abuse due to their sexual orientation or gender identity.
- More than half report being harassed or bullied in middle or high school.
- 3 in 10 have experienced discrimination on the job.
- 2 in 10 have been victims of domestic violence or physical abuse due to their sexual orientation or gender identity.

**FREQUENCY OF TRANSGENDER RESPONDENTS EXPERIENCING HOMOPHOBIA, TRANSPHOBIA AND/OR HARASSMENT IN LAST 12 MONTHS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Non-transgender respondents</th>
<th>Transgender respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>On the street</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At a public establishment</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At work</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At school</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>61%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At home by family</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At your place of worship</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>By a government official</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>By a firefighter, police officer, or other EMS worker</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
What did it say
...about racial and economic justice?

Respondents indicated that income inequality, access to housing, and fighting racism are among the top social issues for which OCEF should advocate, as they directly impact the quality of life of the LGBTQ community in Colorado. Transgender respondents were more likely than average to indicate that OCEF should prioritize housing, income inequality, and criminal justice issues.

57 percent of respondents indicated that OCEF should work to fight racism and advance racial justice.

57 percent of respondents indicated that OCEF should work to address and eliminate homelessness among LGBTQ youth.

51 percent of respondents indicated that OCEF should work to ensure LGBTQ Coloradans have access to affordable housing.

48 percent of respondents indicated that OCEF should work to fight income inequality.

**TOP SOCIAL ISSUES FOR WHICH ONE COLORADO SHOULD ADVOCATE**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Racism and racial justice</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affordable housing/access to housing</td>
<td>51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income inequality</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Criminal justice–inequity or biases within the current system</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Criminal justice–treatment within the system or public profiling</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voting rights</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immigration</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None of the above</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
What did it say
...about civic engagement?

Often, the issues that matter to LGBTQ Coloradans and their families are debated on and decided by elected officials at every level of government, which is why civic engagement has been an integral part of OCEF’s work since its founding. More than three-fourths of survey respondents believe the organization needs to lead efforts to prevent anti-LGBTQ policies from passing—such as bills targeting transgender people and measures enshrining harmful religious exemptions into law. This is in addition to the many bills and ballot measures OCEF has worked on—and continues to work on—to protect and advance equality for LGBTQ Coloradans.

HOW OFTEN DO YOU VOTE?

Nearly all respondents want OCEF to continue its work on the state level, but believe the work needs to expand into other jurisdictions. Almost 70 percent of respondents want OCEF to work on school board elections and 58 percent want OCEF to work at the federal level. More than half of respondents say they always vote, and 3 in 10 say they vote most of the time. LGBTQ Coloradans, and transgender Coloradans in particular, face increased barriers when voting including not having identity documents who match who they are, lack of information on local races, and issues with redistricting. Respondents who were LGBTQ people of color and transgender were less likely to vote than their white and non-transgender peers because of the barriers noted above.

What did it say
...about trends in philanthropic giving?

The majority of respondents donated some amount of money or goods in the past year, although the amount of money donated decreased since the 2010 Needs Assessment. More people are giving between $0 and $100, whereas donors previously gave in amounts of at least $500. About 75 percent of respondents stated that some or all of their charitable dollars go to LGBTQ causes, while more respondents stated that they gave to political candidates than in 2010—possibly due to the fact 2016 was a presidential election year while 2010 was not. While the amount of money given by survey respondents decreased, more respondents indicated they had donated their time by volunteering than in the past. Fewer survey respondents donated money in 2016 than in 2010, but more people donated their time.
Conclusion

Since OCEF’s inception, policies and attitudes in Colorado and across the country have shifted in the direction of stronger protections and increased acceptance of LGBTQ Coloradans and their families. At the same time, LGBTQ Coloradans face many new challenges — as well as some of the same challenges — to living a full, healthy life.

OCEF HAS MADE PROGRESS.

OCEF’s priorities since 2010 have addressed many of the issues identified by LGBTQ Coloradans in the 2010 Needs Assessment. In addition to winning the freedom to marry for all committed couples, OCEF’s safe schools program has increased the number of school districts with inclusive anti-bullying policies and built the fourth largest Gay Straight Alliance (GSA) Network in the nation, coordinating 220 GSAs in schools across the state.

LGBTQ Coloradans have greater access to health care and coverage, thanks to the Affordable Care Act (ACA) and the work of OCEF and its partners. Currently, there are fewer barriers for LGBTQ people to get the care they need when they need it, especially regarding services for transgender Coloradans and those living with chronic conditions like HIV/AIDS.
OCEF has also increased acceptance of LGBTQ Coloradans and their families through proactive media coverage, hundreds of trainings across the state, community outreach activities, and public education campaigns. The organization has conducted extensive research over the years to make sure decisionmakers and the public have data on the experiences of LGBTQ people, to better understand public opinion, and to mobilize a community of LGBTQ people and allies in support of fairness and equality.

**OCEF IS ON THE RIGHT TRACK FOR THE FUTURE.**

OCEF still has a lot of work to do to ensure equality and opportunity for every LGBTQ Coloradan and their family—no matter their zip code. This means continuing to work until every school in Colorado is safe for all students, every LGBTQ person has access to quality, affordable, and affirming mental, sexual, and physical health care, and LGBTQ issues can be advanced and protected in the state legislature and at the ballot box.

Respondents indicated that OCEF should still work to combat homophobia, biphobia, and transphobia in the non-LGBTQ community, as well as ramp up work to improve the quality of life for transgender Coloradans in housing, employment opportunities, and the right to vote.

**MOST IMPORTANT SOCIAL SERVICE-RELATED ISSUES**

- Ensuring schools are safe for LGBTQ youth: 64%
- Addressing LGBTQ youth homelessness: 57%
- Access to LGBTQ-affirming sexual health services: 52%
- Access to LGBTQ-welcoming mental health services: 46%
- Addressing safety for LGBTQ youth in the state care system: 39%
- Ensuring parents have information on supporting LGBTQ youth: 38%
- Access to LGBTQ-welcoming health care/substance abuse services: 29%
- Safe spaces to congregate and build a support network: 29%
- Increased support and services for LGBTQ elders: 25%
- More research on needs, concerns, strengths of LGBTQ populations: 24%
- Substance abuse treatment & prevention for LGBTQ community: 23%
- Additional social/cultural/recreational activities or more community-wide events & celebrations: 21%
- Increasing services for people living with HIV/AIDS: 20%
- Housing for LGBT elders: 18%
- Increased support and services for elders: 18%
- More training on LGBTQ issues: 15%
- Improved legal protections: 14%
- Increased LGBTQ representation in leadership positions: 13%
- Other: 9%

Respondents agreed that OCEF is on the right track for the future. However, OCEF still has a lot of work to do to ensure equality and opportunity for every LGBTQ Coloradan and their family—no matter their zip code. This means continuing to work until every school in Colorado is safe for all students, every LGBTQ person has access to quality, affordable, and affirming mental, sexual, and physical health care, and LGBTQ issues can be advanced and protected in the state legislature and at the ballot box.

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What’s next for OCEF’s work?

While OCEF has made enormous strides since 2010, many LGBTQ Coloradans continue to face discrimination, violence, and barriers to living full, healthy lives. Respondents stated that fighting racism, housing, and income inequality are the top social justice issues for which OCEF should advocate. In particular, transgender people and LGBTQ people of color were more likely than average to say housing, income inequality, and criminal injustice issues were top issues for which OCEF should advocate, in addition to its current priorities.

The 2016 Needs Assessment illustrates that many transgender Coloradans and LGBTQ people of color are more likely to be educated, yet experience unemployment and underemployment at higher rates than other respondents. LGBTQ Coloradans still face harassment and violence in every sector of daily life, and many are still not out to their friends, family, doctors, teachers, or employers.

While the 2016 Needs Assessment offers a unique look into the experiences of LGBTQ Coloradans, it is crucial that state and federal government agencies, and other organizations, continue to collect and analyze data on LGBTQ people in order to have the most comprehensive picture of LGBTQ lives as possible. OCEF will continue to be the voice for LGBTQ Coloradans in all facets of their lives and continue to work at all levels of government, with community partners, schools, allies, and LGBTQ people across the state to improve the lives of all LGBTQ Coloradans and their families—no matter where they live.
One Colorado is the state’s leading advocacy organization dedicated to advancing equality and opportunity for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer Coloradans and their families.

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www.one-colorado.org