



# LGBTQ Mississippians' Local Neighborhoods & Communities

Findings from a statewide needs assessment study

## Methods and Data

Findings reported in this brief are taken from a statewide needs assessment study conducted in 2018 among self-identified sexual and gender minority Mississippians. Data were collected using a web-based survey that was designed by the research team using both extant survey items and using preliminary findings from a statewide collection of LGBTQ focus groups. The survey was distributed to a convenience sample of LGBTQ Mississippians - at present, no population level data are available for LGBTQ Mississippians and a probability sample is therefore not possible. The initial pool of participants was recruited through targeted social networking advertisement,

membership lists of participating LGBTQ groups in Mississippi, and through in-person recruitment at LGBTQ-targeted events occurring during the study period. Sponsored advertisements were posted to targeted audiences in Mississippi via Facebook in an effort to reach as wide a cross-section of Mississippi's LGBTQ population as possible. The final dataset includes responses from 500 LGBTQ Mississippians across 51 Mississippi counties. To the knowledge of the research team, this constitutes the largest dataset of LGBTQ Mississippians collected as of the date of publication.

## Community Inclusivity

Respondents were asked to characterize their neighborhoods with regard to LGBTQ inclusivity such as how often they see LGBTQ-serving organizations, businesses, same sex and transgender people, and LGBTQ events in their own community. Approximately one-third of all respondents reported seeing LGBTQ-supportive organizations and events in their own community; 33% of all respondents reported seeing LGBTQ advocacy and non-profit organizations "very often" or "somewhat often," 36% of all respondents reported seeing LGBTQ-

supportive businesses "very often" or "somewhat often," and 29% of all respondents reported seeing pride events or other LGBTQ community events "very often" or "somewhat often" in their own community. Of those who reported seeing pride events in their communities, about 22% reported attending all of (6%, n = 28) or most of (16%, n = 82) these events. Table 1 shows the breakdown of response frequencies by community inclusivity indicator.

Table 1: Response Frequencies for Community Inclusivity Indicators

	Very often		Somewhat Often		Rarely		Never	
	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N
Advocacy & nonprofit organizations	7%	33	26%	129	39%	193	27%	134
Same sex couples & families	12%	58	30%	149	42%	212	15%	74
Transgender individuals	3%	16	16%	79	47%	233	31%	153
Supportive businesses	7%	36	29%	145	41%	206	20%	101
Flags & symbols	3%	14	18%	91	49%	245	30%	149
Pride & other events	5%	25	23%	117	42%	214	28%	141

## Opportunities for Networking

Each respondent was asked to provide a measure of accessible networking opportunities in their own communities. The majority of all respondents generally reported limited opportunities for networking. Approximately 63% (n = 317) of our sample reported “few” opportunities for meeting other LGBTQ people in their communities, 58%

(n = 290) reported “few” opportunities for meeting potential romantic partners, and 59% (n = 295) reported “few” opportunities to spend time in LGBTQ inclusive spaces in their own communities. Table 2 shows the breakdown of response frequencies by type of social networking type.

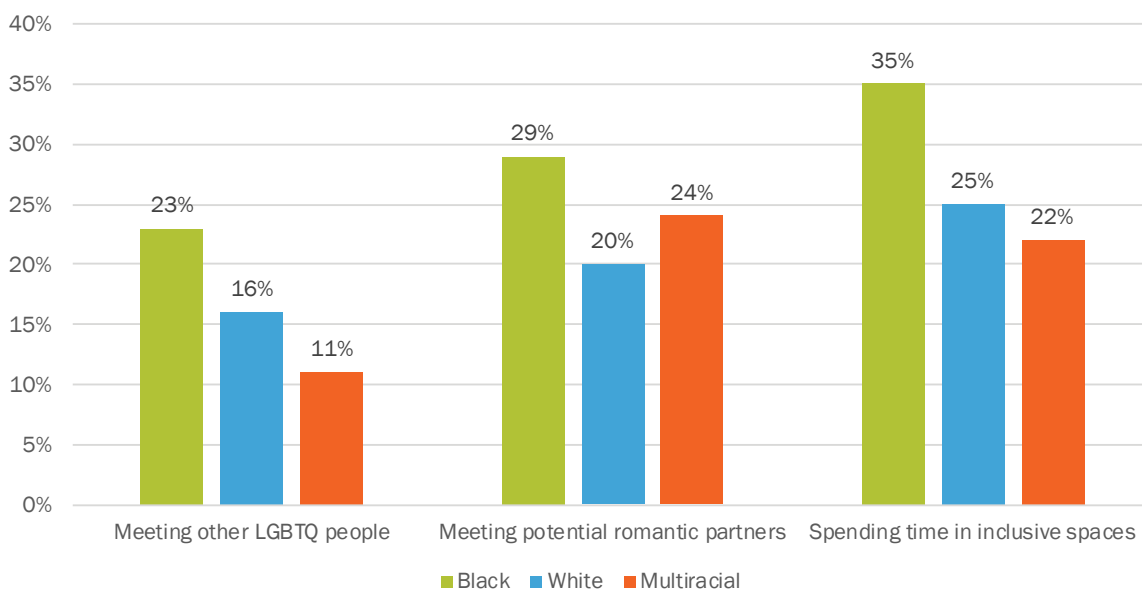
Table 2: Response Frequencies for Social Network Measures

	Many		Few		None		Unsure	
	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N
Meeting other LGBTQ people	13%	66	63%	317	15%	73	9%	43
Meeting potential romantic partners	9%	46	58%	290	18%	88	14%	69
Spend time in inclusive spaces	11%	53	59%	295	24%	118	7%	33

Race was associated with opportunities to spend time in LGBTQ inclusive spaces such that Black individuals reported fewer opportunities than other race categories. For example, 35% (n = 13) of black respondents reported having no opportunities to spend time in LGBTQ inclusive spaces in their own community, compared with only 25% (n = 94) of

white respondents, and 21% (n = 8) of multiracial respondents. This could suggest racial disparity in ability to access LGBTQ resources and networking opportunities in Mississippi communities. Figure 1 below illustrates the difference, by race, in respondents who reported having “no opportunity” for each type of social networking.

Figure 1: Percent reporting having “no opportunities” for each networking question, by race

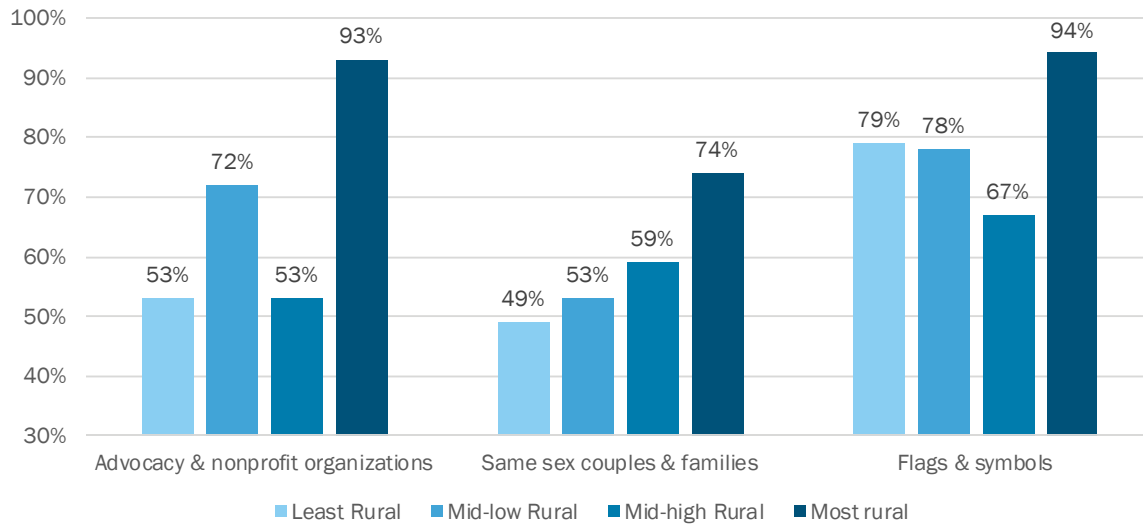


## LGBTQ Life in Rural Mississippi

Respondents living in more rural areas consistently reported seeing LGBTQ-supportive organizations and events less frequently than respondents living in less rural areas of the state. For example, respondents living in the most rural counties reported seeing LGBTQ advocacy and nonprofit organizations far less often; 93% (n = 101) of respondents from the most rural areas reported “never” or “rarely” seeing LGBTQ organizations, compared to 51% (n = 67) among respondents living in the least rural areas. This trend was also

noted with regard to frequency of a) seeing same sex couples and families, b) seeing LGBTQ-friendly businesses, c) seeing LGBTQ symbols and pride events, and d) attending these events. Figure 2 below illustrates the percent of respondents endorsing “never” or “rarely” by rurality for some community inclusivity measures. Note that the percentage of respondents reporting “rarely” or “never” seeing LGBTQ Flags and symbols is high across all rurality groups.

Figure 2: Percent reporting “never” or “rarely” on seeing community visibility features



For measures of social networking opportunities, rurality was substantially associated with each measure. Among participants in the most rural communities, 34% reported having ‘no opportunities to meet other LGBTQ people’ as compared to 11% or less in all other rurality categories. The most rural category of participants reported having having ‘no opportunities to meet potential romantic partners’ in 31% of cases, as compared to 18% in the high-mid rural quartile and 12% in the low-mid rural and least rural quartiles. Finally, 53% of participants in the most rural counties reported having ‘no opportunities to spend time in LGBTQ inclusive spaces,’ as compared to 14% in the high-mid rural quartile, 19% in the low-mid rural quartile, and 13% in the least rural quartiles. Overall, the more rural a community is, the less likely participants from that community were to report LGBTQ socialization opportunities.

In Mississippi’s most rural communities

# 53%

of participants reported having no opportunities to spend time in LGBTQ inclusive spaces.

## Attendance at Pride or other LGBTQ Events

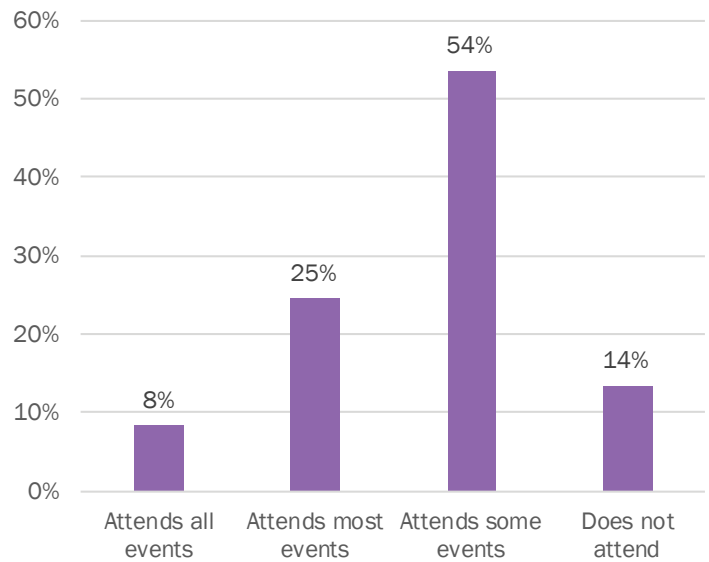
Among the total sample, 72% of respondents reported living in communities with pride events or other LGBTQ events, while 28% of respondents reported living in communities with no such events. Rurality was substantially associated with the presence of pride and other LGBTQ events; 58% of participants in the most rural communities reporting having no events, compared to only 19% of participants in the least rural communities.

Respondents living in communities with pride or other LGBTQ events were asked about their own frequency of attendance at these community events. Of those who reported seeing any pride or other LGBTQ events in their community, 33% (n = 110) of respondents reported attending “all of” or “most of” these events, 54% (n = 179) reported attending some of these events, and 14% (n = 45) do not attend these events.

Responses to this item varied meaningfully by gender identity whereby transgender respondents reported more frequent participation in these events than cisgender respondents; 52% of transgender respondents reported attending LGBTQ community events “all of the time” or “most of the time,” while 31% of cisgender respondents reported attending LGBTQ community events “all of the time” or “most of the time.” This may suggest that transgender identified community members who have access to LGBTQ-inclusive resources and networks use and rely on supportive resources more frequently than their cisgender counterparts.

Similarly, responses to this item varied meaningfully by race. Note that respondents of color and white respondents reported roughly equal rates of having any pride or LGBTQ events in their communities. Respondents of color, however, reported more frequent participation in these events than white respondents; 26% of respondents of color reported attending LGBTQ community events “all of the time” or “most of the time,” while 21% of white respondents reported attending LGBTQ community events “all of the time” or “most of the time.” Among white respondents, 10% reported never attending the pride or LGBTQ events in their communities compared to only 6% of respondents of color who reported never attending these events. Thus, among the survey participants overall, there was no racial disparity in access to pride events, but a notable disparity emerged in the frequency of attendance.

Figure 3: Frequency of Attendance at Pride/LGBTQ Events, among Participants in Communities with Such Events



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