

SAN LUIS OBISPO COUNTY  
COMMUNITY  
FOUNDATION

**The  
Growing  
Together  
Fund**

Supporting the needs of our  
lesbian, gay, bisexual, and  
transgender community



**Community  
Individual  
Survey  
Report**

**Executive  
Summary**

**November, 2001**

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The Growing Together Fund is a two-year initiative by the San Luis Obispo (SLO) County Community Foundation to address the needs of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) communities in SLO County. The Fund is supported through grants from the National Lesbian and Gay Community Funding Partnership and the California Endowment, as well as through local donations. The goals of the Fund are:

- 1) To assess the issues and service needs of the local LGBT community in order to determine how best to distribute grant monies.
- 2) To promote community education, and to encourage local groups to better address the needs of the LGBT community.
- 3) To strengthen the capacity of organizations that serve and support SLO County's LGBT communities.
- 4) To create a permanent endowed fund dedicated to supporting the needs of the LGBT communities.

In order to begin fulfillment of the first goal, the Growing Together Advisory Committee commissioned the development and administration of a Community Individual Survey. This community scan was intended primarily to identify issues important to and services needed by the LGBT community. It was also intended to gather information about the community's health and wellbeing, sources of LGBT information, and level of community involvement.

The survey was distributed throughout SLO County in three ways. Surveys were mailed to all those individuals on the mailing list of the Gay and Lesbian Alliance (GALA). Copies were handed out at community events such as Pride at the Plaza and SLO Farmers' Market and at libraries, community agencies, and local businesses. Finally, the survey was available on the Community Foundation website.

#### **SAMPLE**

Approximately 1,400 surveys were distributed. Five hundred six completed surveys were returned, for a response rate of 36%.

The sample of respondents was largely female (60%), older (mean age = 45.5 years), and white (87%). Those who completed surveys reported living in SLO County for an average of 14.6 years. They were well educated (72% reported attending some college), and were generally middle to lower-middle class socioeconomically (57% reported annual income of less than \$45,000).

The sample was well distributed throughout the four regions of SLO County, although it overrepresented respondents from the Coastal Region, and underrepresented respondents from North County. See Table 1 on the next page.

**Table 1**  
**Respondents' Residence by SLO County Region**

SLO County Region (% of County Population*)	Number	Percent
North County (31%)	101	20.2%
Coastal Region (18%)	124	24.7%
San Luis Obispo (28%)	157	31.3%
South County (23%)	119	23.8%

The sample was three-quarters (73%) LGBT, and one-quarter heterosexual (26%). LGBT respondents were distributed as follows: lesbian – 37%; gay – 28%; bisexual – 6%; and questioning – 2%. One percent of the respondents reported themselves as identifying their sexual orientation as *other*.

Only one LGBT respondent indicated being open with no one about his sexual orientation and/or gender identity. Two percent of all respondents indicated their sexual orientation as *questioning*. Thus, the LGBT sample in SLO County who responded to the Community Individual Survey was not representative of lesbians, gays, bisexuals, or transgender individuals who are “closeted” or not open. Nor was the sample representative of individuals who do not clearly identify themselves as LGBT. Rather, the individuals making up the survey’s sample of the LGBT community in SLO County were largely open, and clearly identified themselves as LGBT.

## RESULTS

The survey required respondents to respond to the following question on a five-point Likert scale:

In your opinion, how serious are the following **issues** or **service needs** facing the LGBT community in SLO County at the present time? (*Please circle the appropriate number for each item listed.*)

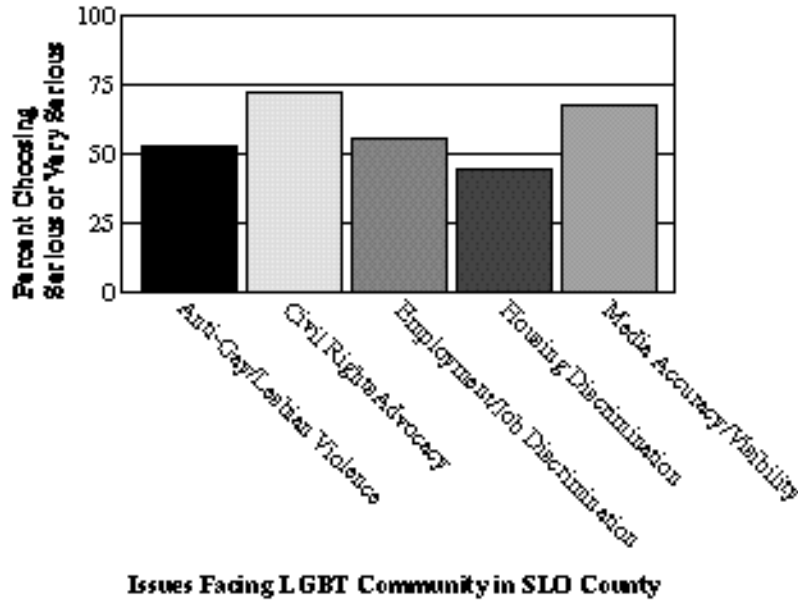
Not at all Serious 1	Not Very Serious 2	Neutral 3	Serious 4	Very Serious 5
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The results for issues and service needs presented as the percentage of respondents who chose either serious (4) or very serious (5). All results in this Executive Summary are for *all respondents* unless otherwise indicated.

## Issues

There were five issues facing the LGBT community in SLO County listed in the Community Individual Survey. The percentage of respondents who agreed that each was serious or very serious are presented in Figure 1 on the next page.

**Figure 1**  
**Percentage of Respondents Rating Issues Facing the**  
**LGBT Community in SLO County as Serious or Very Serious**



The rank order of these issues and their respective percentages are presented in Table 2.

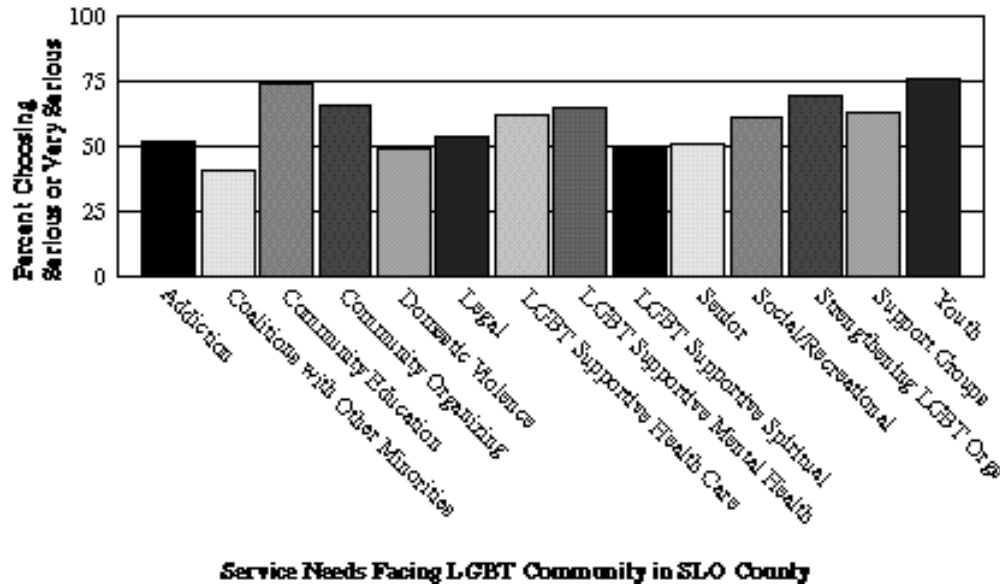
**Table 2**  
**Ranked Issues Facing LGBT Community in SLO County**  
**Rated as Serious or Very Serious**

Issues	Percent
1) Civil Rights/Advocacy	72%
2) Media Accuracy/Visibility	66%
3) Employment/Job Discrimination	55%
4) Anti-Gay/Lesbian Violence	52%
5) Housing Discrimination	44%

**Service Needs**

There were fourteen service needs of the LGBT community in SLO County listed in the Community Individual Survey. The percentage of respondents who agreed that each was serious or very serious are presented in Figure 2 on the next page. The rank order of these service needs and their respective percentages are presented in Table 3, also on the next page.

**Figure 2**  
**Percentage of Respondents Rating Service Needs of the LGBT Community as Serious or Very Serious**



**Table 3**  
**Ranked Service Needs of LGBT Community in SLO County**  
**Rated as Serious or Very Serious**

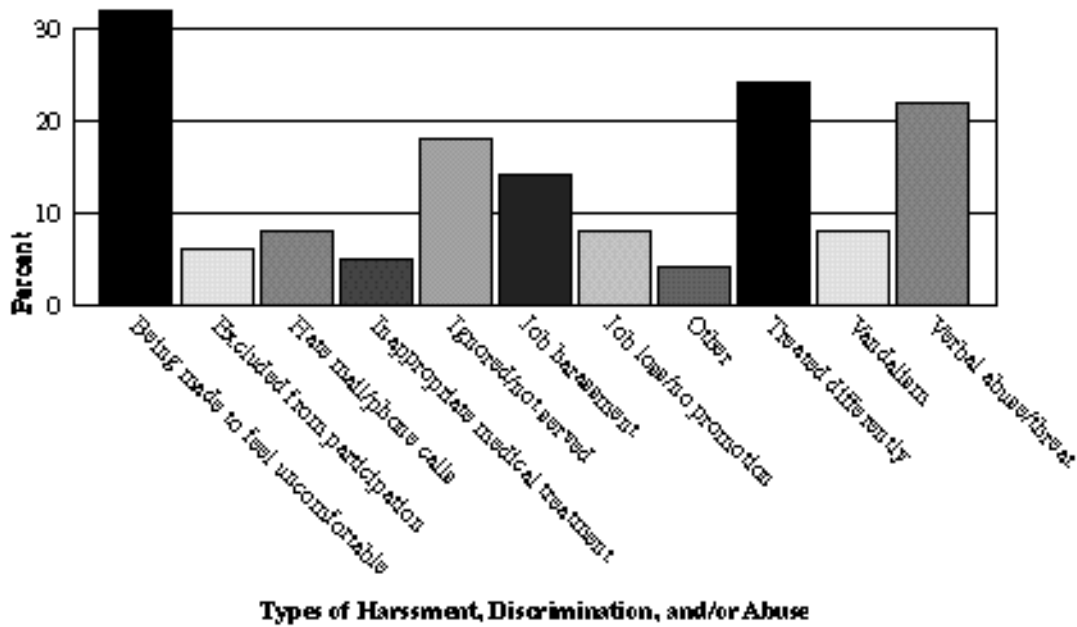
Service Needs	Percent
1) Youth Services	76%
2) Community Education	74%
3) Strengthening LGBT Orgs.	69%
4) Community Organizing	66%
5) LGBT Supportive Mental Health	65%
6) Support Groups	63%
7) LGBT Supportive Health Care	62%
8) Social/Recreational Activities	61%
9) Legal Services	55%
10) Addiction (e.g., alcohol, drugs, etc.)	52%
11) Senior Services	51%
12) Domestic Violence Services	49%
13) LGBT Supportive Spiritual Outlets	49%
14) Coalitions with Other Minorities	41%

**Discrimination, Harassment, and/or Abuse in SLO County**

When asked if they had ever experienced discrimination, harassment, and/or abuse in SLO County due their sexual orientation and/or gender identity, one-third (31%) of all respondents said they had. The percent of LGBT respondents reporting such discrimination, harassment, and/or abuse was somewhat higher at 41%. More than half (59%) of the LGBT respondents reported not having been exposed to such discrimination, harassment, and/or abuse in SLO County. One-thirds of LGBT respondents (32%) had reported such an incident, and two-thirds (68%) had not.

Respondents were asked about various types of discrimination, harassment, and/or abuse in SLO County due to sexual orientation and/or gender identity. Those types which were most commonly reported by the LGBT respondents are presented in Figure 3.

**Figure 3**  
**Percent of LGBT Respondents Reporting Discrimination, Harassment, and/or Abuse in SLO County Due to Sexual Orientation and/or Gender Identity**



**Health and Wellbeing**

The overwhelming majority (91%) of all respondents reported their physical health to generally be good to excellent. The same percentage (92%) reported their mental health to be good to excellent.

Respondents overwhelmingly (88%) reported having health insurance, seeing a physician at least once a year (85%) as their primary health care provider (83%). Those who did not have health insurance gave three primary reasons: (*can't afford* –67%, *other* – 15%, and *employer does not provide* (14%). Incidence of permanent physical or mental disability that substantially limits a major life activity was reported by one-sixth of the sample (17%).

Slightly over one-quarter (28%) of the lesbians respondents reported a reluctance to seeking health care. Their most common reasons for doing so were *fear of being embarrassed or judged* (38%), *discomfort with male physicians* (18%), and *fear of being outted* (17%).

**Identification with LGBT Community**

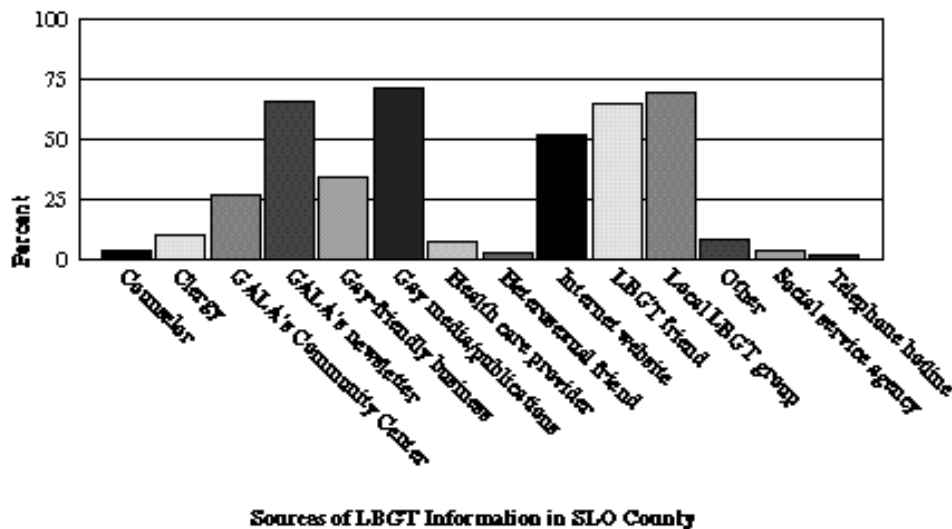
LGBT respondents were asked at what age they first became conscious of their sexual orientation. One-third (33%) reported becoming so between 11 and 17 years of age, and another third (31%) reported their first awareness between 18 and 25 years of age. One-fifth (19%) reported consciousness of their LGBT identity at ten years or earlier, and somewhat less than one-sixth (16%) reported the age at 26 years or over.

Almost all LGBT respondents (98.8%) reported being open about their sexual orientation and/or gender identity with their friends, and the vast majority reported such openness with family (83%) and health professionals (74%). Two-thirds (67%) reported being out with fellow employees, and slightly over half (56%) reported being open with neighbors. One-quarter (26%) reported openness with religious organizations, and four percent were open with schools. Only one person (<1%) reported being open with no one.

When asked if they had family members who were lesbian, bisexual, gay, or transgender, 42% of the sample said yes regarding extended family members. One-fifth (19%) reported an LGBT sibling, and slightly more than that (22%) reported some other LGBT family member. LGBT respondents reported having LGBT family members at a lower rate than all respondents (31% extended family, 15% sibling, and 16% other).

Respondents were asked where they go to get lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender information. Responses for LGBT respondents (who rated most sources higher than the sample as a whole) are presented in Figure 5.

**Figure 5**  
**Percentage of LGBT Respondents Who Reported Obtaining LGBT Information from Specific Sources**



When asked about the importance of an LGBT Community Center in SLO County, over half (58%) of all respondents said it was important or very important. Significantly more (88%) of the LGBT respondents felt that way. Three-quarters (74%) of the LGBT respondents reported they would use such a center during regular business hours, and 82% reported they would do so on evenings and weekends. Forty-two percent of the heterosexual respondents reported they would use an LGBT Community Center during regular business hours, and 26% reported they would do so on evenings and weekends.

### Community Involvement

When asked if they vote in public elections, almost all respondents (96%) said yes. Asked about their contributions of time and money to local organizations, slightly more than one-third (37%) of all respondents said they contributed time, and somewhat more than one-half (56%) reported contributing money. The percentages of respondents who reported giving time and/or money to multiple local organizations is presented in Table 4, below.

**Table 4**  
**Contributions of Time and Money to Local Organizations**

Number of Organizations	Time Percent	Money Percent
One Organization	37%	56%
Two Organizations	19%	38%
Three Organizations	12%	28%
Four Organizations	8%	17%
Five Organizations	4%	9%

### CONCLUSION

This Executive Summary outlines the results of the Community Individual Survey conducted by the Growing Together Fund. The information gathered by the survey will be used to prioritize the activities supported by Growing Together in confronting the issues and needs of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender communities in San Luis Obispo County. Those who wish to be a part of the Growing Together Fund, those who would like more information, or those who require the complete results of the Community Individual Survey are invited to visit the website at [www.slccf.org](http://www.slccf.org), or contact:

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