



## Campus Climate for LGBT Students

September 2000

### Purpose

This survey explored student awareness of the campus climate for gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender students, their self-reported level of comfort with and their attitude towards LGBT issues.

### Implications/Highlights

A third (32%) thought the campus climate was supportive of LGBT students. Two-thirds heard derogatory LGBT comments and jokes in the past month. Students categorized by Greek, athlete, ethnic and grade status differed little in their responses. There were differences for those who said they personally knew LGBT students or who had taken a PSU class which included a segment on human sexuality.

### Participation Rate

N = 871 (54%) agreed to participate

N = 735 (46%) did not agree to participate

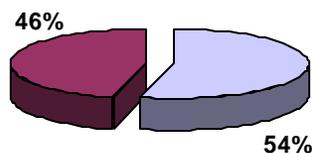


Figure 1. Participation rate

### Findings

Two-thirds of the respondents (66%) said they themselves were supportive while one-third (32%) thought the campus climate was supportive of LGBT students. A number of respondents (13%) said they 'didn't know' how supportive the campus climate was.

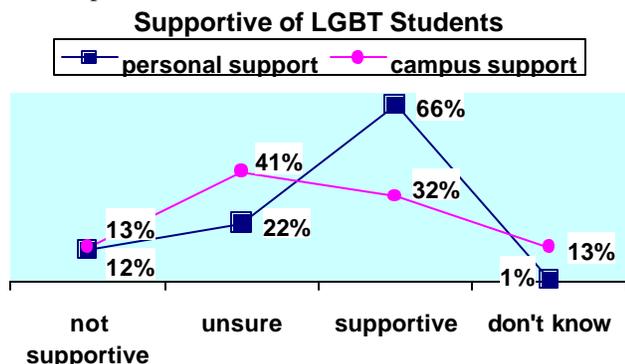


Figure 2. One-third of students thought the campus climate was supportive for LGBT students; two thirds thought they themselves were supportive of LGBT students

Statistically significant at the .05\* level

One-third (36%) thought they had become more accepting of LGBT persons since coming to Penn State.

### Level of Acceptance Since Coming to PSU

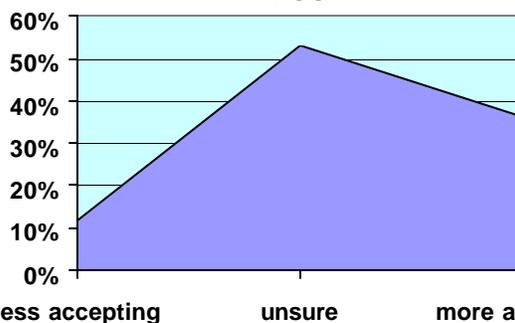


Figure 3. Level of acceptance of LGBT persons since coming to Penn State

A fourth (26%) of respondents thought they were knowledgeable about LGBT issues. Many said their knowledge was based on information from movie, television, magazine or print media.

### Source of Personal Knowledge about LGBT Issues

- 45% movie, television, magazine, print media
- 35% friends
- 15% parents/family
- 14% religious background
- 10% teachers

Half the respondents (53%) said they personally knew another student who was gay; a third (35%) knew a student who was lesbian.

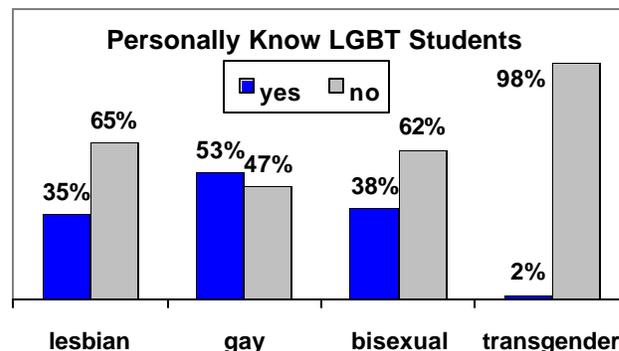


Figure 4. Half the respondents personally knew a gay student; one-third said they knew a lesbian student

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Student Affairs

Students were asked how often in the past month they had personally:

	<u>times/past month</u>	
	none	average
- heard derogatory comments about LGBT students	39%	5.05
- heard someone joke about LGBT issues	31%	6.00
- saw someone physically harass LGBT students	95%	.01
- heard someone verbally harass LGBT students	90%	.20
- had a class assignment that put down LGBT persons	96%	.00
- saw derogatory written comments on campus about LGBT issues	65%	1.36

Three-fourths of the respondents (78%) said they had never confronted others who made derogatory comments about LGBT students.

Students were asked how they would suggest a student confront a faculty instructor who made derogatory comments about LGBT students.

- 35% go up to instructor after class
- 19% go to instructor's office hours with a friend
- 12% speak to department head
- 10% other
- 9% send an email note
- 7% speak to someone in College Dean's office
- 4% speak up during class
- 3% speak to advisor
- 1% speak with someone from the LGBT resource center
- 1% add note on teacher evaluation
- 2% don't know

Over 80% of students said they would be comfortable having a club advisor or a faculty member who was lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender. Fewer were comfortable having a best friend (69%) or a roommate (50%) who was an LGBT student.

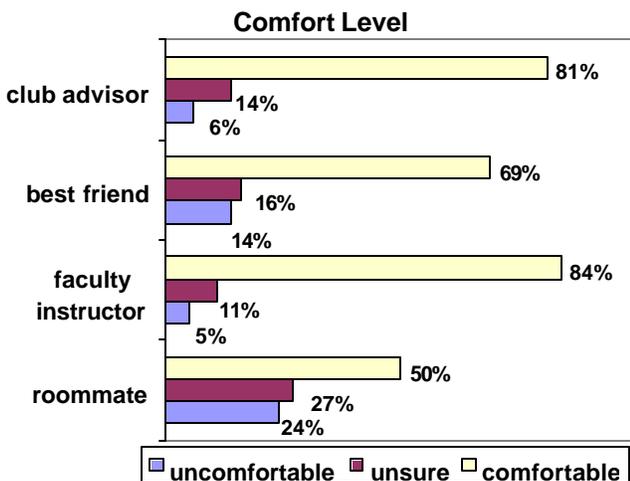


Figure 5. Personal comfort level knowing that specific others were lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender

Most students were comfortable:

- 80% being involved in discussions that focused on sexual orientation issues
- 76% seeing movies or TV shows that involve LGBT couples
- 74% knowing that LGBT students were at the same social functions they attended

Few respondents (1%) were likely to refer a student whose instructor had made a derogatory comment about LGBT students to the LGBT Resource room or to seek information for themselves from the LGBT Resource room (8%).

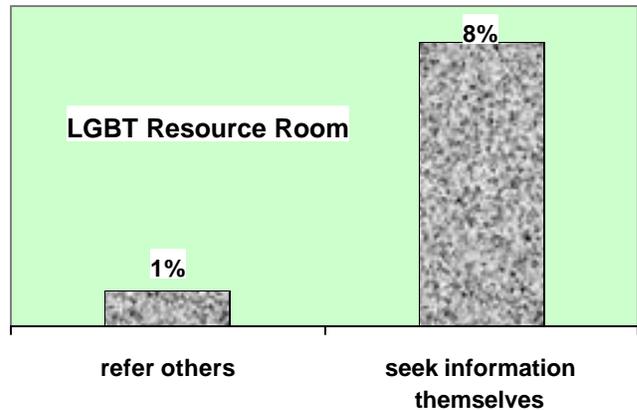


Figure 6. Few respondents use LGBT Resource room resources

Students were more likely to report feeling uncomfortable with "public displays of affection" between LGBT couples.

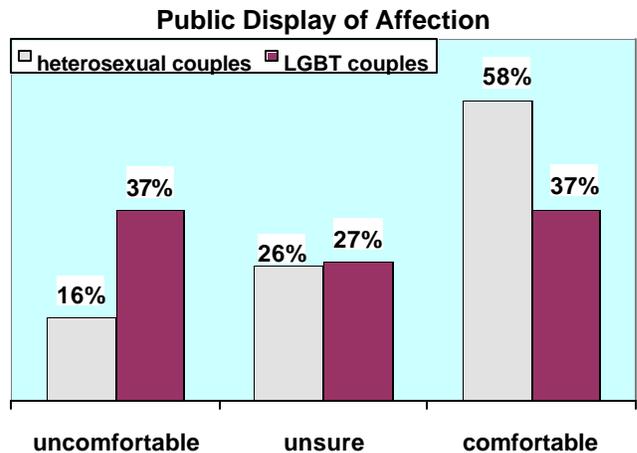


Figure 7. Many students were uncomfortable with public displays of affection by couples

Getting to know students who are gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender was cited by one-fourth of the respondents (26%) as having influenced their attitude towards LGBT issues since coming to Penn State.

**Influence on Attitude Towards LGBT Issues**

- 26% getting to know LGBT students
- 22% hearing discussions about LGBT issues
- 20% reading about LGBT issues
- 18% personal awareness of harassment of LGBT students
- 9% getting to know LGBT faculty or staff

Ten percent said they would be likely to attend programs on LGBT issues while 8% would be likely to seek out information from an LGBT resource center.

Many students (53%) thought it unlikely that they would attend social functions sponsored or led by LGBT persons.

### Would Attend LGBT Sponsored Socials

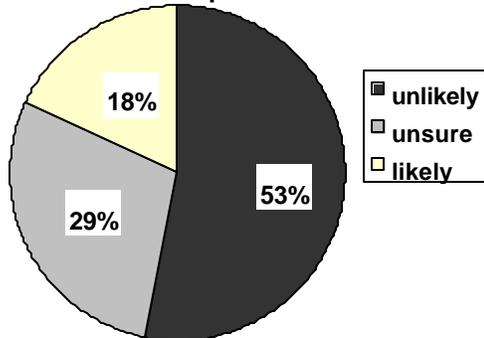


Figure 8. Most students would not attend a social activity sponsored by LGBT persons

Minority students were more likely than non-minority students to say their knowledge about LGBT issues is based on information from their family\* and that they would be more likely to attend programs on LGBT issues and to attend LGBT sponsored social events.

	minority	non-minority
knowledge influenced by family	26%	13%
would attend program on LGBT	14%	10%
would go to LGBT social event	26%	16%

In general, there were few differences between students who were members of Greek social fraternities or sororities and those who were not. The same was true looking at the differences between student athletes and non-athletes.

Men and women differed considerably in their responses on this survey. Men were more likely than women to have heard someone make derogatory comments\* and jokes\* about LGBT students.

Women were more likely than men:

- to have taken a course since coming to Penn State that included a segment on human sexuality\*
- to state they were supportive of LGBT students\*
- to say they would be likely to attend a program on LGBT issues\*
- to personally know someone who was lesbian or gay\*
- to be comfortable knowing their roommate or best friend was a LGBT person\*

Approximately a fifth of the respondents (n=182) took a course since coming to Penn State that included a segment on human sexuality. Those who took such a course were more likely to know a lesbian, gay, or bisexual student\* and to be comfortable with a roommate or best friend who was an LGBT person.\* Those who took such a course were also more likely to feel they had become more accepting since coming to Penn State,\* to feel supportive of LGBT students,\* and to be comfortable with LGBT discussions.

### Took Course Which Included Segment on Human Sexuality

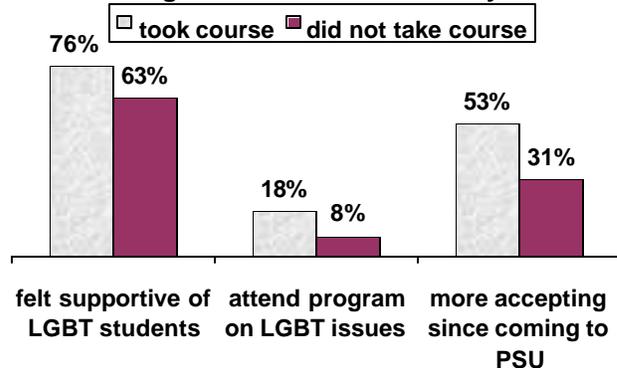


Figure 9. Those who took a course since coming to Penn State that included a segment on human sexuality were more supportive of LGBT issues

Two thirds of respondents (n=556) said they knew a student who was lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender.

Students who said they 'knew' were more likely than those who said they 'did not know' an LGBT student to be comfortable with an LGBT roommate\* or best friend\* and to:

- attend a program on LGBT issues\* (15% vs. 2%)
- attend an LGBT social event\* (22% vs. 8%)
- feel informed about LGBT issues\* (30% vs. 18%)

### Knew an LGBT Student

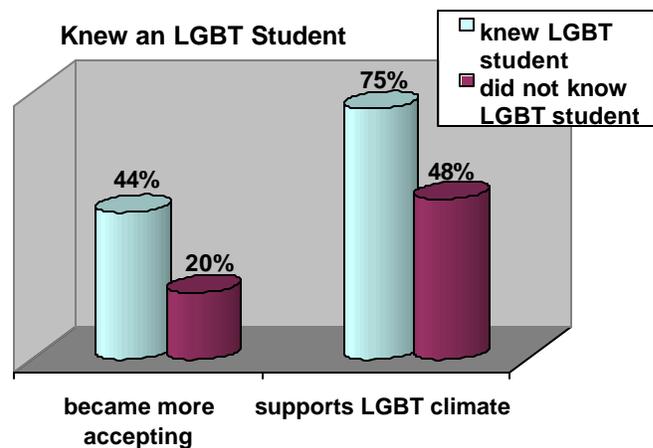


Figure 10. Those who said they knew an LGBT person became more accepting of LGBT issues since coming to Penn State and felt they were more supportive of the campus climate for LGBT students