

RESEARCH THAT MATTERS

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# HEAR US. SUPPORT US. JOIN US!

Civic Engagement  
of LGBTQ Adults  
in LA County and  
Recommendations for  
Local Elected Officials

June 2024

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Brad Sears  
Christy Mallory  
Kerith J. Conron

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



Approximately 665,000 LGBTQ adults live in Los Angeles County. Using data collected from a representative sample of over 500 LGBTQ adults surveyed in 2023 and 2024, this report focuses on LGBTQ Angelenos' assessment of local elected officials and services and, in their own words, their recommendations for local elected officials. It also discusses how LGBTQ people are not only actively engaged in LGBTQ issues in Los Angeles County but across a broad range of causes and issues.

Based on 368 specific recommendations from a diverse sample, LGBTQ Angelenos would like the following from local elected officials:

- **Visible allyship.** LGBTQ Angelenos would like elected officials to listen to their input, support them, and join them in better educating the public about LGBTQ communities and advocating for their needs.
- **Representation in government.** LGBTQ Angelenos want visible allyship and to be part of government at all levels, from government employment to serving on advisory boards and committees to being elected officials themselves.
- **Economic assistance.** LGBTQ Angelenos share broader concerns about the high cost of living in Los Angeles. They want support for programs to help people who are unhoused and have low incomes, as well as initiatives to make housing, health care, education, and transportation affordable in Los Angeles for everyone.
- **Community safety.** LGBTQ Angelenos would like more protection for their communities, greater enforcement of hate crime laws, and for law enforcement to be better trained to meet their needs.
- **Equal rights.** LGBTQ Angelenos not only want strong local LGBTQ legal protections in place but to see those protections consistently enforced, including protections from discrimination and harassment.
- **Support for vulnerable subpopulations.** Many LGBTQ Angelenos pointed out the need for elected officials to pay particular attention to the needs of transgender people and LGBTQ people of color, youth, and older people.

## KEY FINDINGS

### Responsiveness of Los Angeles County Elected Officials

- Just under half of LGBTQ people (46%) agreed with the statement that elected officials in Los Angeles County are responsive to the needs of the LGBTQ community, and 21% disagreed with this statement (the rest were neutral).
- Fewer LGBTQ people of color (40%) agreed with the statement that elected officials are responsive to the concerns of LGBTQ people than white LGBTQ people (59%). One in four (25%) LGBTQ people of color disagreed with the statement compared with 12% of white LGBTQ people.

### Assessment of Los Angeles County Programs and Services

- Three-fourths (75%) of LGBTQ people agreed with the statement that Los Angeles County programs and services are welcoming to LGBTQ people, while 10% disagreed with this statement. The rest were neutral.
  - Only one service area was rated as very welcoming by over half (56%) of LGBTQ people—the library system.
  - Five other service areas were viewed by over half of LGBTQ people as either somewhat or very welcoming: parks and recreation, voting and elections, health services, mental health services & support programs such as CalFresh and CalWORKs.
- The service areas rated as the least welcoming were all part of the criminal legal system, including the Los Angeles County jails, the Probation Department, the District Attorney's Office, the Public Defender's Office, the Alternate Public Defender's Office, and the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department.
- LGBTQ people of color are more likely to use and rely upon County programs and services, but overall, did not rate them to be as welcoming as white LGBTQ people.

### Civic Engagement of LGBTQ Community Members

- The majority of LGBTQ people (83%) actively engage with non-profits and government by volunteering, donating money, and expressing their views through petitions and protests to elected officials directly or online.
- LGBTQ people engage in a wide range of social and political issues, including women's issues, racial justice, immigration, environmental issues, disaster relief, hunger, homelessness, and others. In the past year, over half (54%) reported engaging on both LGBTQ issues and other issues, 27% reported engaging on just non-LGBTQ issues, and only 1% reported engaging on just LGBTQ issues.
- In the past year, approximately half of LGBTQ people have donated to a charitable cause or community organization (55%), signed a petition (48%), or posted online about social issues (47%). Over one in four reported volunteering with a community group (27%) or contacting a public official to express their feelings about a particular issue (24%).

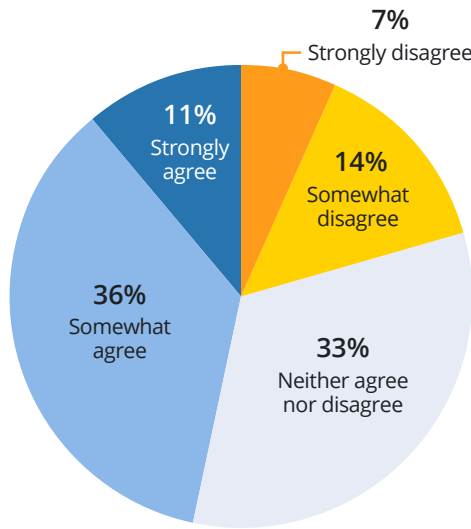
LGBTQ people are already engaged as volunteers, donors, and constituents, with most actively supporting both LGBTQ and non-LGBTQ issues. They seek to work together in partnership with elected officials as constituents, government employees, and increasingly as elected officials to improve Los Angeles County not only for LGBTQ communities but for everyone.

## FINDINGS

### RESPONSIVENESS OF LOS ANGELES COUNTY ELECTED OFFICIALS

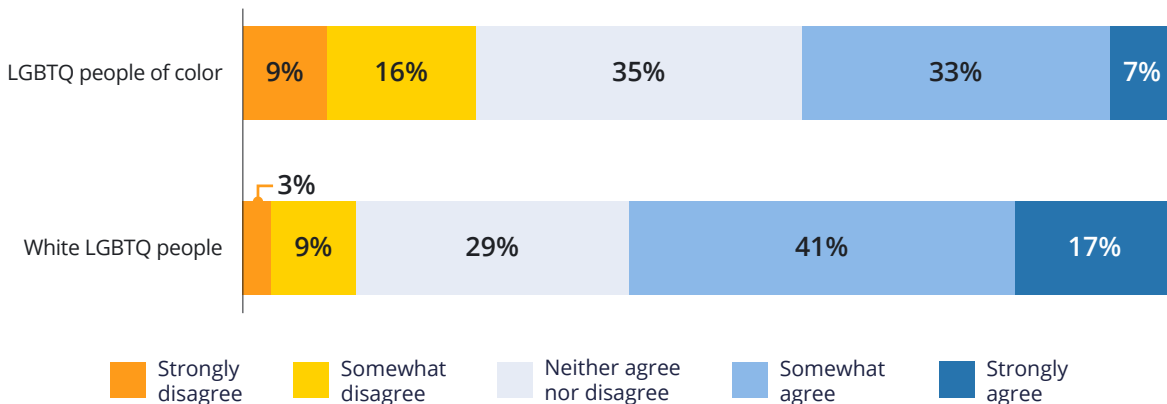
Just under half (46%) of LGBTQ people strongly or somewhat agreed with the statement that “elected officials (Board of Supervisors, Assessor, District Attorney, Sheriff) in Los Angeles County are responsive to the needs of the LGBTQ community,” while 21% strongly or somewhat disagreed with this statement.

Figure 1. Perceptions of whether Los Angeles County elected officials are responsive to the needs of LGBTQ people, among all respondents



LGBTQ people of color had less favorable views of Los Angeles County elected officials than white LGBTQ people. Only 40% of LGBTQ people of color somewhat or strongly agreed that elected officials are responsive to the concerns of LGBTQ people compared with 59% of white LGBTQ people. One in four (25%) LGBTQ people of color strongly or somewhat disagreed that elected officials are responsive to the concerns of LGBTQ people compared with 12% of white LGBTQ people.

Figure 2. Perceptions of whether Los Angeles County elected officials are responsive to the concerns of LGBTQ people, by race



In response to an open-ended question calling for recommendations for how Los Angeles County elected officials can improve the quality of life for LGBTQ people, one in twelve respondents (8%) gave elected officials in Los Angeles County positive feedback or framed their suggestions in terms of elected officials “continuing” the great work they have already been doing:

*It seems like they're doing a lot.*

— Cisgender Black lesbian in her 60s

*Another rainbow crossing? Overall, very happy!*

— Cisgender gay white man in his 30s

*They are doing great.*

— Cisgender gay Latino in his 20s

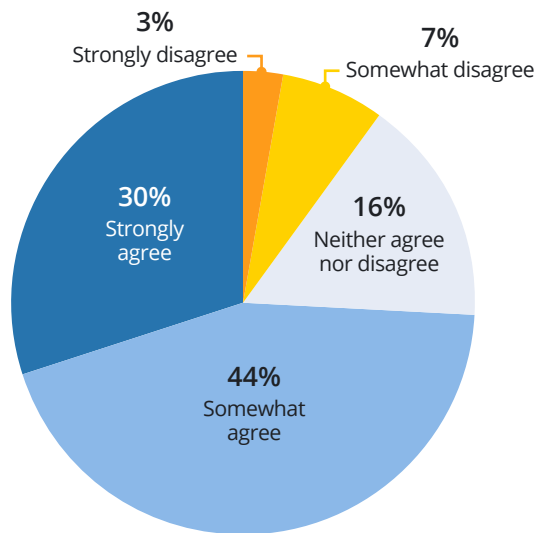
*In my opinion, Los Angeles County is an excellent place to live!*

— Cisgender white lesbian in her 40s

## ASSESSMENT OF LOS ANGELES COUNTY PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

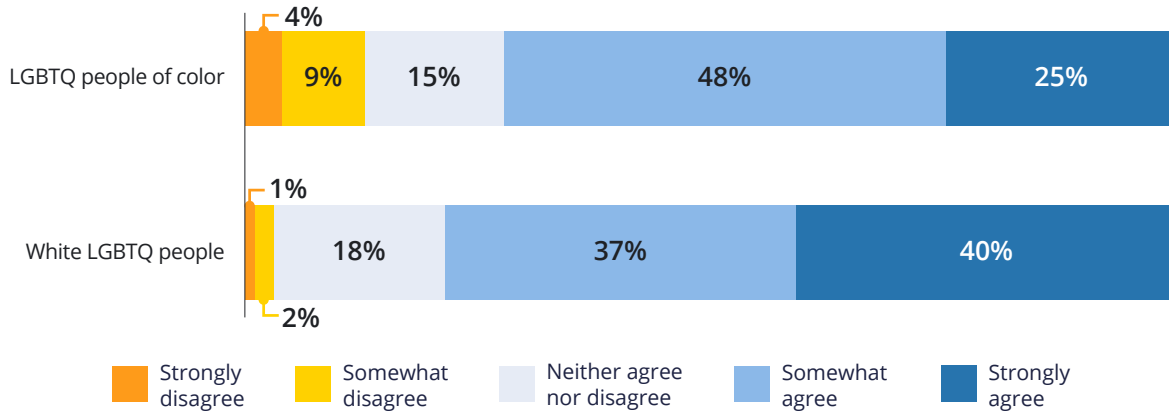
Three-fourths (75%) of respondents strongly or somewhat agreed with the statement that “the services and programs that Los Angeles County offers are welcoming to everyone, regardless of sexual orientation and gender identity,” while 9% strongly or somewhat disagreed with the statement.

Figure 3. Perceptions of whether Los Angeles County services and programs are welcoming to LGBTQ people, among all respondents



LGBTQ people of color had less favorable views of Los Angeles County services and programs than white LGBTQ people. Only 25% of LGBTQ people of color strongly agreed that County services and programs were welcoming to LGBTQ people compared with 40% of white LGBTQ people, and 12% of LGBTQ people of color strongly or somewhat disagreed that County services and programs were welcoming to LGBTQ people compared with 4% of white LGBTQ people.

**Figure 4. Perceptions of whether Los Angeles County services and programs are welcoming to LGBTQ people, by race**



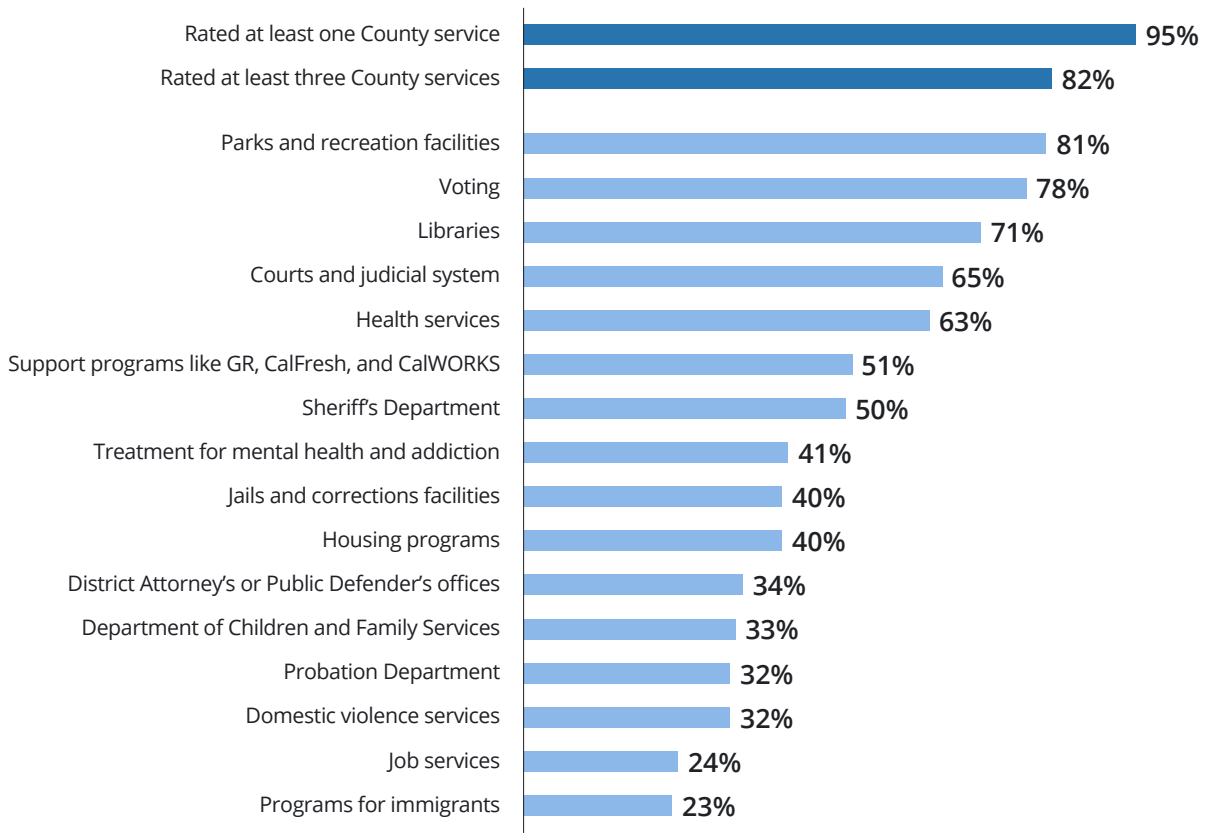
Respondents were asked to rate sixteen Los Angeles County service areas in terms of how welcoming they are to LGBTQ people, presented on the survey in these four groups:

- Los Angeles County Libraries
  - Voting (in elections)
  - Los Angeles County Parks & Recreation facilities
  - Los Angeles courts and judicial system
- 
- Support programs administered by Los Angeles County, including CalFresh, CalWORKs, and General Relief
  - Los Angeles County health services, including Medi-Cal, public health, mental health, and public hospitals and clinics
  - Department of Children & Family Services (DCFS)
  - Los Angeles County housing programs, including public housing, In-Home Supportive Services, Section 8, affordable housing, shelters, or other homeless services
- 
- Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department
  - Los Angeles County jails and correctional facilities
  - Los Angeles County Probation Department
  - Los Angeles District Attorney's Office or Public Defender or Alternate Public Defender
- 
- Programs for immigrants, including Refugee Cash Assistance and Cash Assistance Program for Immigrants (CAPI)
  - Job services such as START (Skills and Training to Achieve Readiness for Tomorrow) and GAIN (Greater Avenues for Independence)
  - Treatment for mental health and substance use
  - Domestic violence services



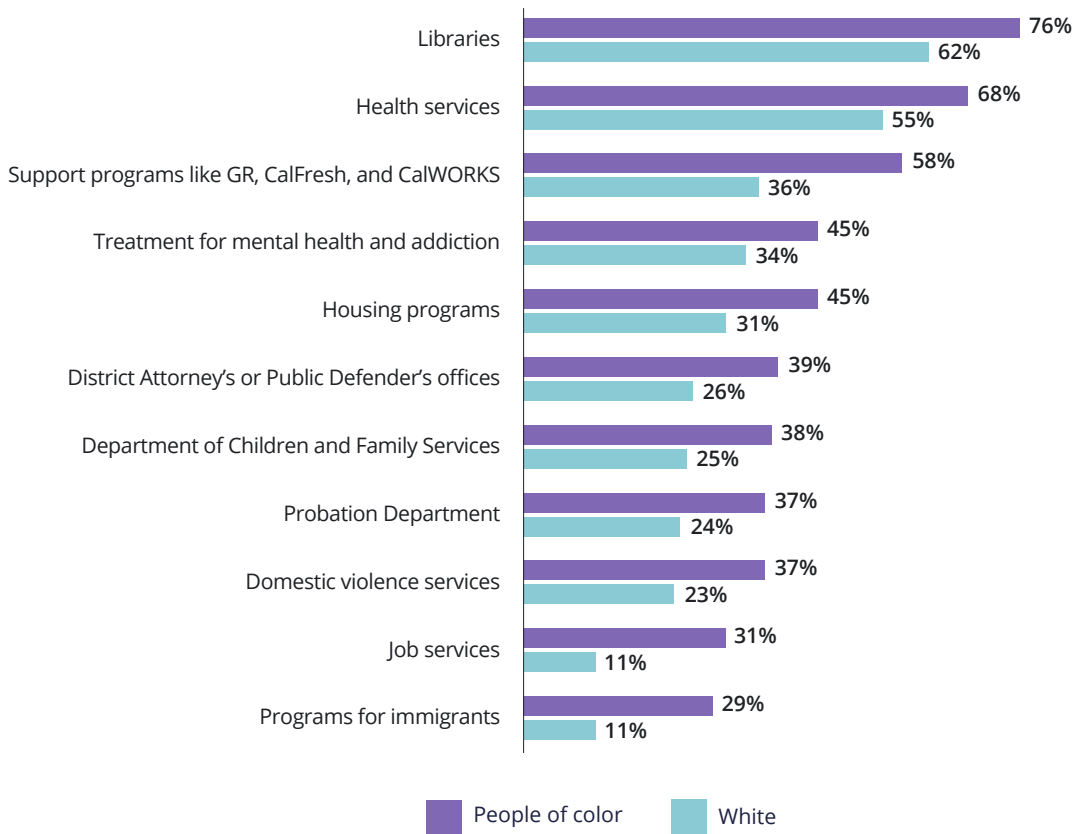
Over 95% of LGBTQ respondents were able to rate at least one Los Angeles County service area, and over 82% were able to rate at least three Los Angeles County Service areas. The percentage providing a rating suggests the degree to which LGBTQ Angelenos are using or coming into contact with various County services and programs. For example, over 80% of respondents were able to provide ratings for parks and recreation facilities (81%) and voting and election-related services (78%), while less than one in four were able to provide ratings for services focused on job services (24%) and those specifically for immigrants (23%).

**Figure 5. Ratings of various Los Angeles County services and programs in terms of being welcoming to LGBTQ people, among those who responded**



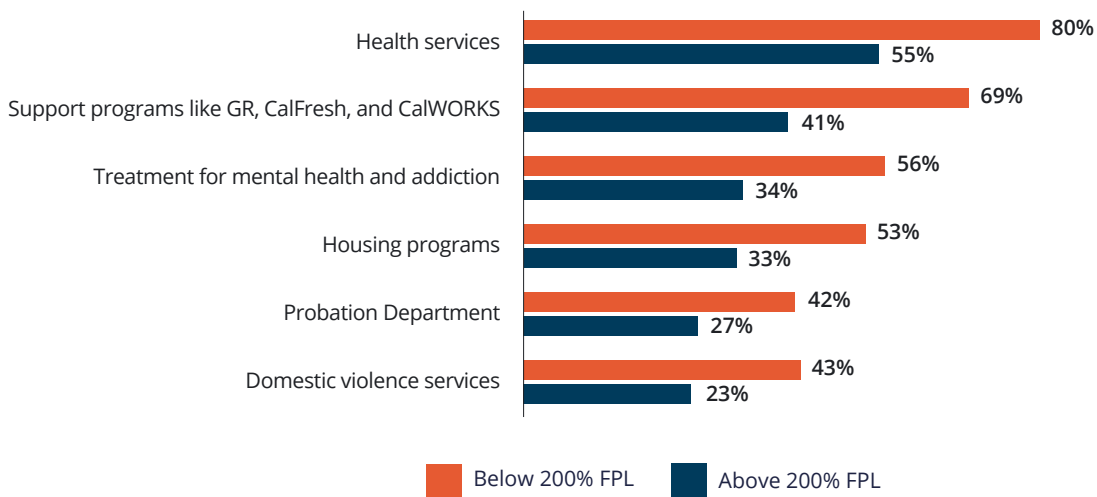
More LGBTQ people of color provided ratings for 11 of the 16 service areas than white LGBTQ people; for the remaining five areas, similar percentages of LGBTQ people of color and white LGBTQ people provided ratings—a reflection of service utilization. More LGBTQ people of color provided ratings for Los Angeles County libraries, programs and services related to health care, support programs for those with lower incomes, Department of Children and Family Services, as well as programs and services related to the criminal legal system, interpersonal violence, and for undocumented immigrants.

Figure 6. Ratings of various services in terms of being welcoming to LGBTQ people, by race



More LGBTQ people with household incomes below 200% of the federal poverty level provided ratings for six of the 16 service areas than LGBTQ people with incomes at or above 200% of the federal poverty level. These included health-related services, support programs for lower-income people, and programs and services related to the criminal legal system and interpersonal violence.

Figure 7. Ratings of various Los Angeles County services and programs in terms of being welcoming to LGBTQ people, by household income

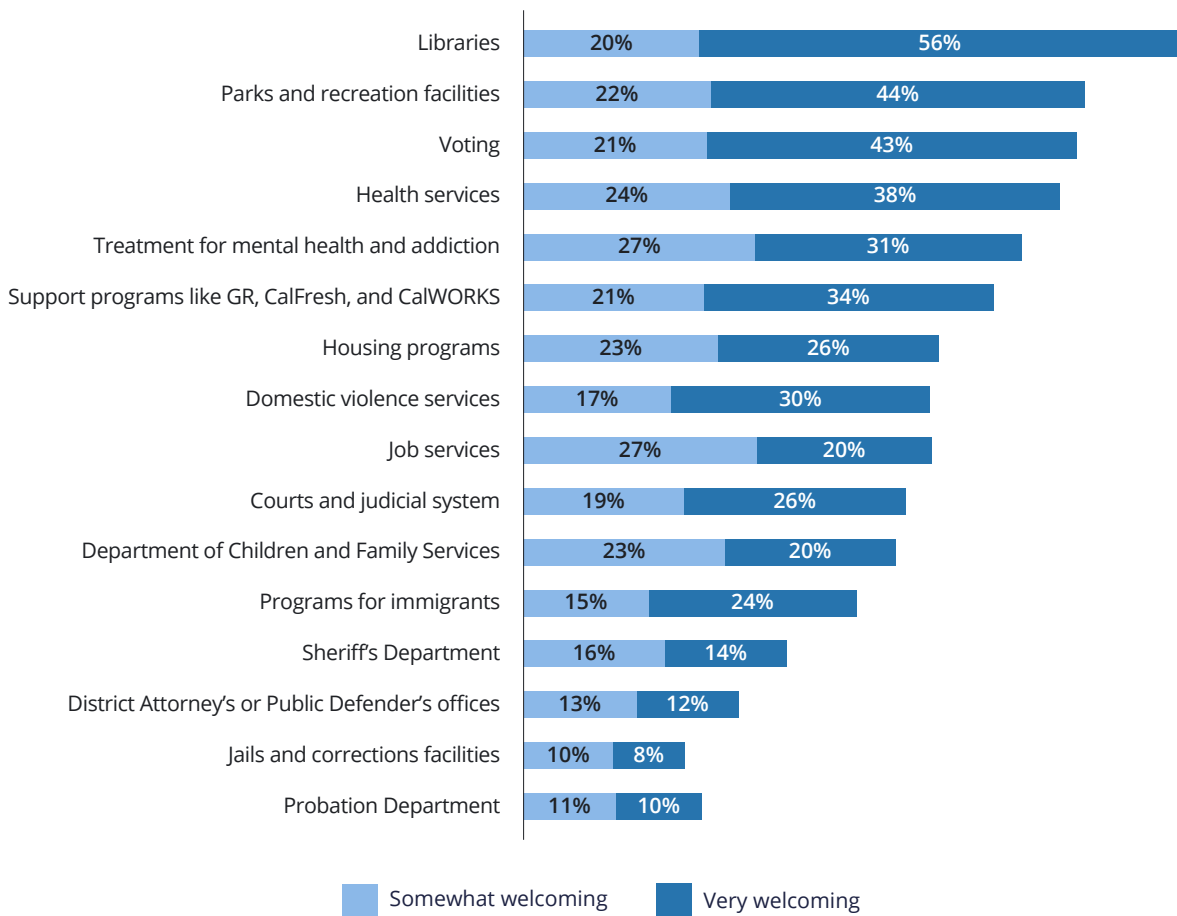


Of the 16 Los Angeles County service areas assessed, all but four were viewed by more LGBTQ people as welcoming as opposed to unwelcoming (See Figures 8 and 9). Those that more respondents rated as unwelcoming are all part of the criminal legal system: the Los Angeles County jails, the Probation Department, the District Attorney’s Office, the Public Defender’s Office, and the Alternate Public Defender’s Office, and the Los Angeles County Sheriff’s Department.

The Los Angeles County library system was the only Los Angeles County service area viewed by a majority of LGBTQ people as “very welcoming.”

Only six service areas were viewed by a majority—over half—of LGBTQ people as either somewhat or very welcoming: the library system; parks and recreation facilities; services related to voting and elections; health services; mental health services; and support programs such as CalFresh, CalWORKs, and General Relief.

**Figure 8. Ratings of Los Angeles County services and programs as somewhat or very welcoming, among all respondents<sup>1</sup>**



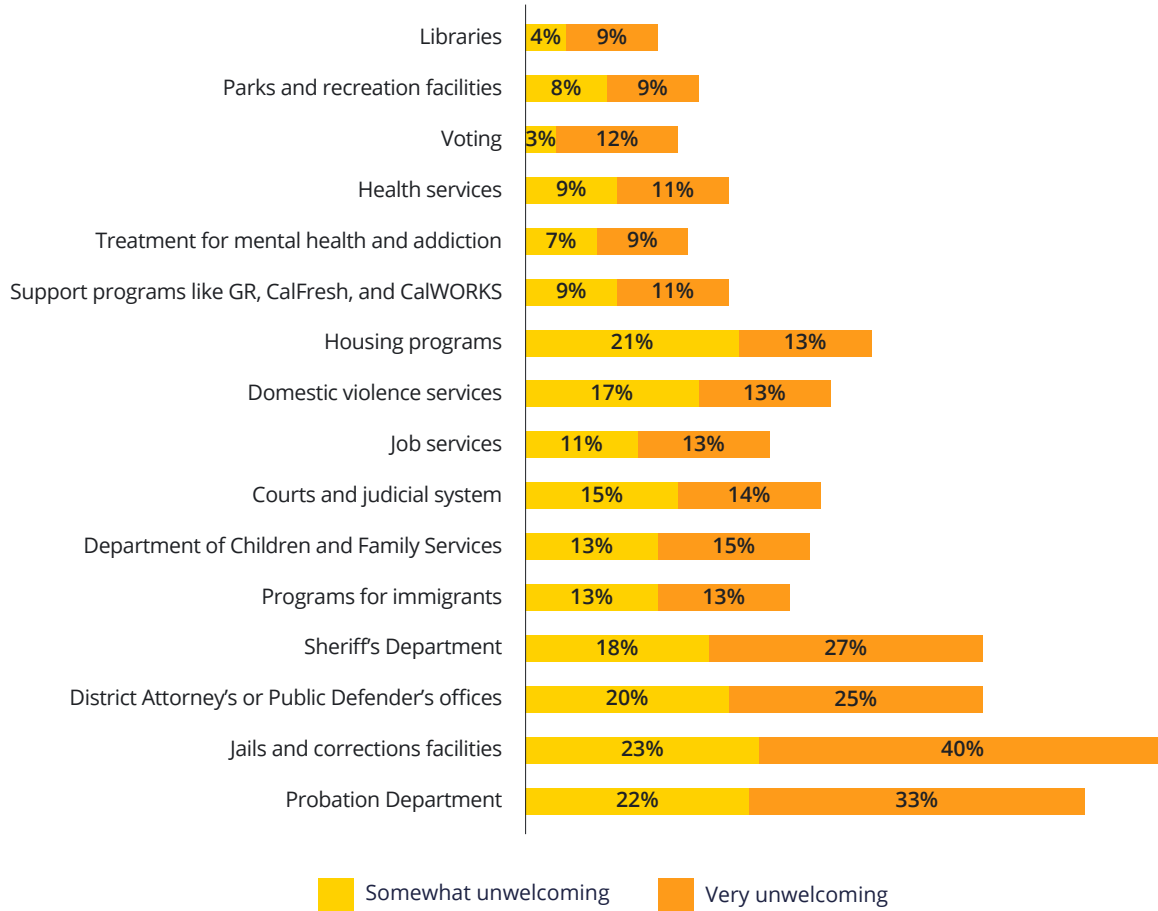
<sup>1</sup> Graphs 8 and 9 present all those who rated services as welcoming or unwelcoming. The remaining respondents selected a neutral rating, neither welcoming or unwelcoming.

Some of the services most widely used by LGBTQ people are also some of the services that they rated the most favorably:

- Four of the five Los Angeles County service areas that were most used by LGBTQ people (as indicated by their ability to rate those services) were also four of the five that were perceived as the most welcoming: the library system parks and recreation facilities, services related to voting and elections, and health services. Between 62% and 76% of respondents viewed these services as very or somewhat welcoming, and only 13% to 20% viewed them as unwelcoming.
- The County's courts and judicial system were also in the top five services that respondents were able to rate (65%). Still, only 45% of LGBTQ people viewed this area as somewhat or very welcoming to LGBTQ people, and 29% viewed it as somewhat or very unwelcoming.
- Two other programs were rated by over 50% of respondents: the Sheriff's Department and income support programs such as CalFresh, CalWORKs, and General Relief. While a majority of respondents felt favorably about the income support programs (55% rated them as somewhat or very welcoming), they did not rate the Sheriff's Department highly (30% somewhat or very welcoming).

The four programs viewed by the fewest LGBTQ people as welcoming and the most LGBTQ people as unwelcoming (See Figures 8 and 9) were all part of Los Angeles County's criminal legal system: Los Angeles County jails, the Probation Department, the District Attorney's Office, the Public Defender's Office, the Alternate Public Defender's Office, and the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department. The fifth program area viewed as the most unwelcoming was immigration-related programs and services, such as Refugee Cash Assistance and Cash Assistance Program for Immigrants (CAPI).

**Figure 9. Ratings of Los Angeles County programs and somewhat or very unwelcoming, among all respondents**



Falling in the middle of these ratings are a set of programs with relatively high percentages of respondents rating them as both welcoming and unwelcoming: Los Angeles County housing programs, domestic violence services, job services, and DCFS.

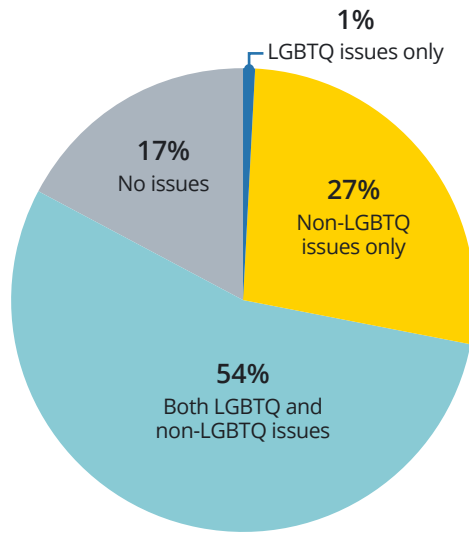
## CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

LGBTQ people reported high levels of civic engagement, with 83% reporting at least one form of civic engagement in the past year across seven areas: Charitable contributions, signing petitions, sharing opinions on social issues online, volunteering, participating in protests or marches, contacting an elected official, and working for a campaign.<sup>2</sup>

LGBTQ people were engaged across a wide range of issues and causes. In the past year, over half (54%) engaged on both LGBTQ issues and other issues, 27% engaged on only non-LGBTQ issues, and just 1% engaged on only LGBTQ issues. Examples of other issues included women’s issues or issues related to race, immigration, environment, disaster relief, hunger, homelessness, and others.

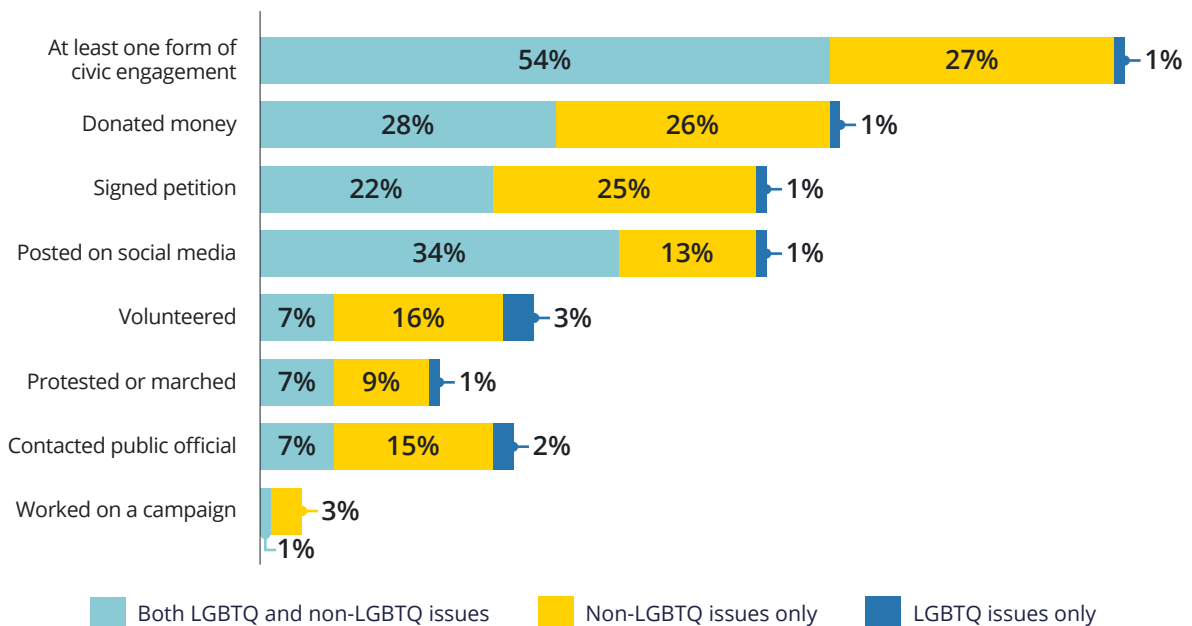
<sup>2</sup> Respondents were asked about their engagement in all forms of civic engagement during the past year, except for work on a political or electoral campaign. The time period for participation in a campaign was expanded to two years to include work leading up to the November 2022 election.

Figure 10. Types of social issues LGBTQ respondents engaged in, among all respondents



In terms of types of engagement, in the past year, approximately half of respondents reported donating money to community organizations or causes (55%), signing a petition (48%), or posting or responding to social media posts about social issues (48%). In the past year, approximately one in four reported volunteering with a community group or organization (27%) or contacting a public official to express their feelings about a particular issue (24%). Approximately one in six reported joining a march or demonstration (16%) in the past year, and 4% reported working for pay or volunteering on an electoral or political campaign in the past two years.

Figure 11. Participation in different types of civic engagement by issue type (LGBTQ v. non-LGBTQ), among all respondents



By comparison, the percentage of LGBTQ respondents volunteering with organizations was similar to that of residents in California overall in 2019 and pre-pandemic (27% v. 25%) (volunteering declined during the pandemic, the most recent years for which there are comparable data).<sup>3</sup> However, current levels of charitable giving among LGBTQ people are higher than that of California residents overall (55% v. 39%).<sup>4</sup> Compared to 2021 data for California residents overall, LGBTQ survey respondents were much more likely to engage on issues through social media posts (47% v. 23%).<sup>5</sup> Similarly, the rate of LGBTQ respondents contacting public officials about social issues was much higher than for California residents overall in 2021 (24% v. 8%).<sup>6</sup>

In response to an open-ended question asking respondents what LGBTQ people contributed to Los Angeles community culture, approximately one in five (22%) LGBTQ people discussed the community service that LGBTQ people provide not only to the LGBTQ community but to other marginalized communities and more broadly through volunteering, social justice activism, and participating in the political process.

Some respondents emphasized the ways in which the LGBTQ community “takes care of its own,” providing support for others in the LGBTQ community, including LGBTQ elderly and youth:

*LGBTQ culture in West Hollywood is a culture of helping others through providing services and events in the community.*

— Cisgender Latina lesbian in her 40s

*They do a lot of work. Distribution of meals, mental and physical help, medical help, housing. They help direct youth and elderly to organizations that can also offer aid. They offer free testing for HIV and STDs. Many LGBTQ organizations do fundraisers and help better their communities.*

— Cisgender gay white man in his 70s

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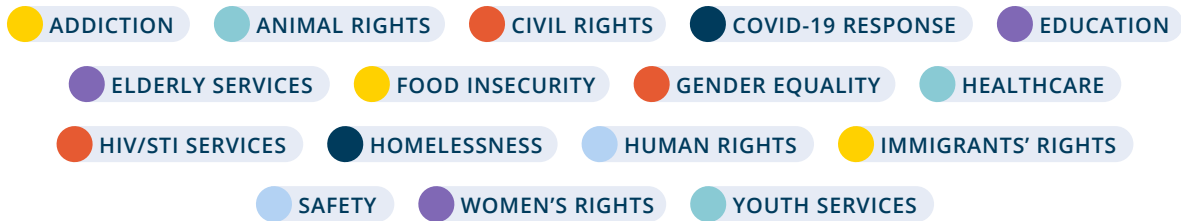
<sup>3</sup> Data on California residents overall are from the Current Population Survey Civil Engagement and Volunteering Supplement are from the Current Population Survey Civic Engagement and Volunteering and are available at AmeriCorps, 2017-2021 CEV Findings: State-Level Rates of All Measures Supplement, [https://data.americorps.gov/National-Service/2017-2021-CEV-Findings-State-Level-Rates-of-All-Me/4r6x-re58/data\\_preview](https://data.americorps.gov/National-Service/2017-2021-CEV-Findings-State-Level-Rates-of-All-Me/4r6x-re58/data_preview) (last visited Apr. 24, 2024).

<sup>4</sup> Id.

<sup>5</sup> Id.

<sup>6</sup> Id.

Other respondents emphasized LGBTQ people’s “allyship” for marginalized people more generally. Many offered specific examples of the ways that LGBTQ people are politically active, serve as elected officials, volunteer, support progressive causes, contribute to organizations and events financially, and are leaders in the fights for “social justice” and “equal rights.” Specific causes that LGBTQ people mentioned were the following:



Examples of these responses include:

*My wife and I provide compassionate, direct services to the LA County indigent population ... the queer experience has ... deepened our empathy and desire to help others.*

— Cisgender white lesbian in her 30s

*Without queer people, so many societal developments would still be stalled ... LGBTQ people in Los Angeles County have carved out a safe haven for those who need a home and community.*

— Cisgender bisexual Latina in her 30s

*Queer people, specifically queer Black and people of color ... organize and lead, not simply on queer issues but on multiple ongoing struggles against the state through an intersectional lens.*

— Nonbinary queer multiracial person in their 30s

*In working with various LGBTQ charitable organizations, I have found that when they develop programs to benefit their members, they ensure to share the benefits of those programs to the community at large and do not limit them simply to their LGBTQ members.*

— Pansexual Latine person in their 60s

*At protests and demonstrations, the people represented are largely LGBTQ ... Any push for further human rights protections is supported at a grassroots level by LGBTQ communities.*

— Cisgender bisexual Latina in her 20s



## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ELECTED OFFICIALS IN LOS ANGELES COUNTY

Survey respondents were given the opportunity to provide a brief response to the question, “What, if anything, should elected officials do to improve quality of life for LGBTQ people who live in Los Angeles County?” Out of 504 respondents, almost three-fourths of respondents (73%) wrote in a substantive response or provided a recommendation to local officials.<sup>7</sup>

Suggestions for elected officials to improve the quality of life for LGBTQ people in Los Angeles County focused on four main themes:

- **Elected officials engaging more effectively with LGBTQ communities** through acceptance and support of the community, listening and incorporating their input, and public and visible allyship.
- **Improving government and civil service**, including through increased representation and participation of LGBTQ people as elected officials and in civil service.
- **Advancing specific policies, programs, and services**, including advancing equality, promoting safety for the LGBTQ community, housing stability, access to health care, public education about LGBTQ people, and financial support to meet the high cost of living in Los Angeles; and
- **Supporting vulnerable subpopulations** within LGBTQ communities, including transgender people and LGBTQ people of color, youth, and older people.

### ENGAGING MORE EFFECTIVELY WITH LGBTQ COMMUNITIES

Over one-third of respondents (36%) focused on ways that elected officials could improve how they work with LGBTQ communities through fully accepting LGBTQ people, proactively creating opportunities to receive community input, and championing the LGBTQ community through visible allyship. These suggestions also included recommendations for improving government and civil service, including through trainings and increased representation of LGBTQ people as elected officials and government employees.

#### Acceptance and Support

Fifteen percent of respondents called on Los Angeles County elected officials to be more “accepting,” “understanding,” and “supportive” of their LGBTQ constituents. Respondents called on elected officials to treat LGBTQ people with “dignity and respect,” to approach them with an “open mind,” and to treat them “equally” and “fairly,” just like “they would treat everyone else.” Several respondents called on elected officials to stop approaching the LGBTQ community in harmful ways, including by being “judgmental,” “shaming,” and treating the LGBTQ community “like a problem to be solved.” Examples of these responses include:

<sup>7</sup> The following responses were excluded: twenty (20) survey respondents did not provide any response to the question; fifty-one (53) wrote in “IDK,” “I don’t know,” “unsure,” “not sure” or something similar; twenty-two (22) respondents wrote something that indicated they did not have an answer (“no,” “none,” “nothing,” etc.); twenty (20) respondents wrote in some version of “NA” or not applicable; fifteen (17) wrote in a response that was not responsive to the question (“be free,” “M,” “W my pew supportive,” etc.); and four (4) respondents wrote in “yes.”

*Mejor el apoyo.*<sup>8</sup>

— Cisgender gay Latino in his 30s

*Try to see beyond our genders.*

— Transgender pansexual Latina in her 20s

*Be more accepting and less judgmental.*

— Cisgender gay white man in his 50s

*Stop pandering to fear and indifference.*

— Cisgender gay Black man in his 60s

*We don't want preferential treatment, just acknowledgment.*

— Nonbinary queer Asian person in their 50s

*Approach us with curiosity and kindness.*

— Cisgender bisexual woman of color in her 30s

## Listening and Community Input

Twelve percent of respondents requested that elected officials listen more to LGBTQ community members, get to know the community better or educate themselves about LGBTQ-specific issues. Respondents suggested that elected officials directly ask LGBTQ people about their needs “on an ongoing basis,” “proactively do outreach” with the community, conduct “research” and “surveys such as this one,” and host “events,” “workshops, and discussions” where community members could “safely share” their needs in a “supportive environment.”

Once received, respondents asked that their input and stories be “believed,” “taken seriously,” and “responded to” when shaping priorities and policies. Some also requested that elected officials educate themselves more about LGBTQ communities, including about “mental health needs” and the “ongoing bigotry” that LGBTQ people face. Examples of these responses include:

*Immerse yourselves in our social circles to understand our communities.*

— Transgender multiracial woman in her 60s

*Ensure that our perspectives are heard and valued.*

— Cisgender gay white man in his 30s

*Listen when we say we're hurting.*

— Cisgender bisexual Black woman in her 20s

<sup>8</sup> More support.

*Ask more people in the LGBTQ community directly.*

— Nonbinary bisexual Asian person in their 20s

*Keep us top of mind. We are moving backward.*

— Cisgender white lesbian in her 60s

## Public and Visible Allyship

Six percent of respondents called on elected officials to become more “public” and “visible” in their support of LGBTQ people, policies, and issues. They called on elected officials to “speak up,” “visually advocate,” and “continue to fight” on behalf of LGBTQ people. Examples of these responses include:

*Be more vocal about your views on LGBTQ issues.*

— Cisgender gay Latino in his 30s

*Continue to visibly advocate (legislation, programs).*

— Cisgender gay Asian man in his 50s

*Amplify LGBTQ needs and instill those policies.*

— Cisgender bisexual white woman in her 30s

*Publicly support the LGBTQ community.*

— Cisgender bisexual woman of color in her 30s

## IMPROVING GOVERNMENT AND CIVIL SERVICE

Some respondents spoke more directly about improving local government and the civil service through more “inclusion of LGBTQ people in decision-making,” “more representation of LGBTQ people” among “elected officials” and on “advisory boards,” “councils, and “committees” and by elected officials holding themselves more accountable to “the promises that they make.”

*Do outreach to include LGBTQ people in every facet of decision-making.*

— Cisgender gay white man in his 60s

*Follow-up statements of support with actual action.*

— Cisgender gay Asian man in his 30s

*Llevar a cabo su promesa.<sup>9</sup>*

— Transgender Latina lesbian in her 50s

<sup>9</sup> Keep your promises.

*Put more LGBTQ persons of color in government.*

— Cisgender white gay man in his 50s

*Put more LGBTQIA+ people in political offices.*

— Cisgender Latina lesbian in her 30s

Others called for hiring more LGBTQ people and people who embrace diversity in government positions, with some focusing on hiring in law enforcement specifically. In addition, respondents called for more training about the LGBTQ community for current government employees.

*Be more proactive in your approach to hiring more LGBTQ people.*

— Cisgender white lesbian in her 30s

*Employ people who are open and welcoming to all.*

— Cisgender bisexual Asian woman in her 30s

*Provide proper training to government agencies and offices.*

— Cisgender Latina lesbian in her 20s

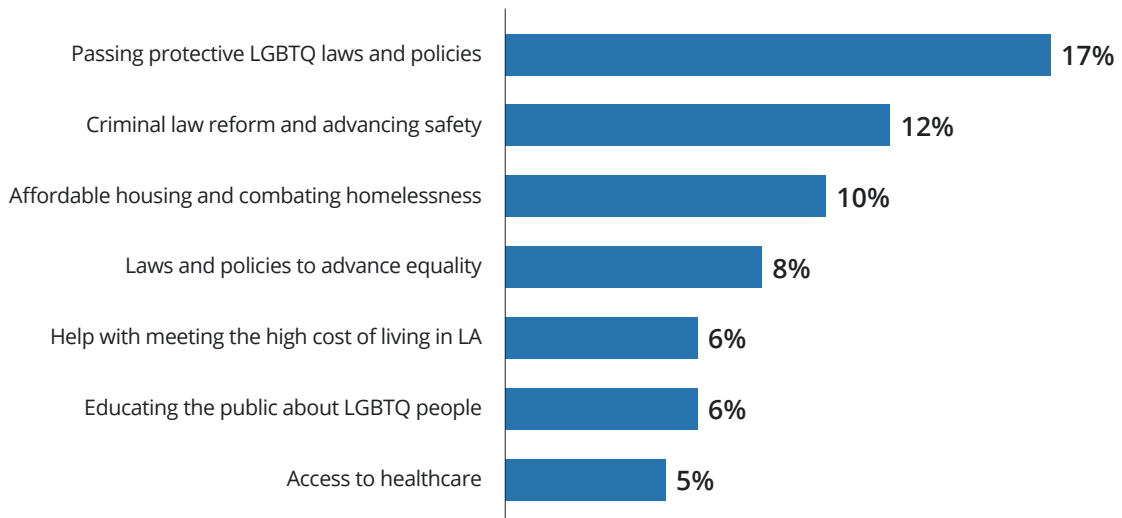
*Pay people with lived experience to envision the future.*

— Nonbinary queer person of color in their 30s

## Specific Policies, Programs, and Services

Sixty-one percent of respondents provided specific suggestions for improving programs, policies, or events. The substantive areas for the most common suggestions are summarized in Figure 12 and discussed more fully below.

Figure 12. Suggestions for substantive policies, programs, and services, by topic area



## Pass Laws and Policies to Protect LGBTQ People and Advance Equality

The most frequent suggestions (17%) were requests that Los Angeles County elected officials pass laws and policies to protect the LGBTQ community.

Twenty-eight respondents, or 8% of all respondents to this question, focused on legal protections to advance “equality,” “equity,” and “civil rights,” and to “fight discrimination.” Examples of these responses include:

*[We need] laws to ensure equality.*

— Cisgender Black lesbian in her 50s

*Pass stronger housing and employment protections.*

— Cisgender gay white man in his 60s

*Apollar en todo lo bueno para todos por igual.<sup>10</sup>*

— Cisgender gay Latino in his 50s

*Continue to lead the country in equal access for all.*

— Cisgender white gay man in his 60s

Twenty-two respondents called for more support and enforcement of “laws,” “rights,” “freedoms,” and “protections” for the LGBTQ community without further specifying the type of legal protections.

*Lower the amount of hate for LGBTQ people. More protections.*

— Cisgender bisexual multiracial man in his 20s

*Be vigilant of our rights.*

— Cisgender gay white man in his 70s

*Pass protections and rights laws.*

— Nonbinary Latinx bisexual person in their 30s

Fourteen respondents focused on more specific legal protections, including protections from discrimination, harassment, violence, and bullying (5), fighting back against laws targeting the LGBTQ community (3), protections for LGBTQ people of color (2), protections for transgender people (1), and supporting DEI efforts (1). Examples of these responses include:

*Stop anti-LGBTQ harassing of kids at school meetings.*

— Cisgender bisexual white woman in her 30s

<sup>10</sup> Support all that is good for everyone equally.

*Que pongan más atención cuando hay abuso verbal.<sup>11</sup>*

— Cisgender gay Latino in his 40s

*Make harsher punishments for discrimination.*

— Cisgender gay white man in his 30s

*Stop the laws that harm LGBTQ people.*

— Cisgender bisexual Black woman in her 20s

*Do not allow book bans in schools!*

— Cisgender gay Asian man in his 40s

## Criminal legal system and safety

Thirteen percent of respondents focused on the criminal legal system, or more broadly on promoting safety, in their suggestions for how Los Angeles County officials could improve the quality of life for LGBTQ people. Eight percent of respondents had recommendations focused on the criminal legal system. Some of these respondents called for more or continued law enforcement, with seven respondents focused on continuing or increasing the prosecution of hate crimes against LGBTQ people and five additional respondents calling for more police or resources to reduce crime.

*There should be more programs to protect the LGBTQ [community].*

— Cisgender bisexual Asian woman in her 30s

*Work on hate crimes.*

— Cisgender Black lesbian in her 60s

*Prosecute hate “incidents” as hate “crimes.”*

— Cisgender pansexual white man in his 60s

*We need more protection and security at LGBTQ public events.*

— Cisgender bisexual white man in his 30s

In contrast, other respondents called for “defunding” or “abolishing” the criminal justice system in full or part.

*Don’t go after sex workers—especially transgender escorts.*

— Transgender sexual minority Latina in her 20s

<sup>11</sup> Pay more attention when there is a verbal abuse.

*Abolish/completely reform the criminal justice system.*

— Cisgender white bisexual woman in her 20s

*Defund the LAPD. Fund other forms of LGBTQ support.*

— Cisgender pansexual Asian man in his 30s

In addition, some respondents called for “improving relations between police and LGBTQ people” through “training,” “monitoring,” and “hiring more LGBTQ people” in law enforcement.

*Improve services by the police.*

— Cisgender pansexual multiracial woman in her 50s

*Cops shouldn't be prejudiced and generalize right away.*

— Transgender straight Asian woman in her 40s

*Eradicate bigotry in the sheriff, police, and fire departments.*

— Cisgender gay white man in his 50s

*Get a new Sheriff, retrain police, and hire more LGBTQ people in law enforcement.*

— Cisgender bisexual white man in his 40s

Without specifically mentioning elements of the criminal legal system, an additional 18 respondents framed their suggestions to elected officials around “protecting” the LGBTQ community and improving or ensuring their “safety.” Seven of these responses focused on creating “safe spaces” or “LGBTQ zones.”

*Provide a safe community for us to live.*

— Cisgender Asian lesbian in her 30s

*Take violence against LGBTQ people more seriously.*

— Cisgender pansexual Latina in her 30s

*Ensure that we have safe spaces, events, and businesses.*

— Cisgender gay multiracial man in his 40

*Create more safe spaces in South LA and the Valley.*

— Cisgender gay Latino in his 20s

## Housing

Ten percent of respondents specifically focused on housing, with the majority calling for providing more affordable housing and lowering rents. Others focused on helping unhoused populations, including LGBTQ people, and providing services for them such as mental health care, HIV care and prevention, and addiction treatment. Others focused on improving the quality of housing, protection from discrimination, and the specific needs of transgender people, LGBTQ youth, and older people.

*Keep rent reasonable so LGBTQ people can continue to escape here.*

— Cisgender gay white man in his 50s

*Rent control and affordable housing.*

— Cisgender bisexual multiracial woman in her 30s

*Mas vivienda de bajos recursos.<sup>12</sup>*

— Transgender gay Latino in his 50s

*We need financial support. Help with home purchase.*

— Cisgender white lesbian in her 40s

*Affordable housing with gender-inclusive spaces/forms*

— Cisgender white bisexual woman in her 30s

*Provide mental health care for the LGBTQ homeless.*

— Cisgender gay Latino in his 30s

## Financial Insecurity

Six percent of respondents focused on supporting LGBTQ people in meeting the high cost of living in the County. Suggestions included creating more “job opportunities,” “higher wages,” “lowering taxes,” “lowering gas prices,” and increasing the support provided by “social safety net programs.” LGBTQ older people and transgender people were specially named as subgroups that need more financial support to live in Los Angeles County.

*[Do] things that would help everyone - lower cost & cleaner city.*

— Cisgender Asian lesbian in her 20s

*Improve the cost of living.*

— Cisgender bisexual Latino in his 30s

<sup>12</sup> More low-income housing.



*Incentivize businesses to have inclusive hiring.*

— Nonbinary white sexual minority person in their 20s

*Fight price gouging and keep life affordable.*

— Transgender bisexual multiracial man in his 30s

*Raise the minimum wage.*

— Cisgender bisexual white woman in her 30s

## Public Education

Six percent of respondents called for elected officials in Los Angeles County to support programs that educate students or the public about LGBTQ people. They called for programs that would spread “awareness” about the LGBTQ community to increase “acceptance” and “promote equality.” Some mentioned methods for public education, including “campaigns,” “events,” and “posters.”

*Educate through events, educational opportunities, discussions, etc.*

— Cisgender pansexual multiracial woman in her 20s

*Publicize gay life and people.*

— Nonbinary white person in their 80s

*Educar a la comunidad para que tengan aceptación.<sup>13</sup>*

— Cisgender bisexual Latino in his 50s

*Require more LGBTQ+ history in schools.*

— Cisgender gay white man in his 20s

## Health Care

Five percent of respondents offered suggestions focused on health care, including making health care more “accessible,” “affordable,” and “inclusive” for LGBTQ people. The majority of those who focused on health care specifically focused on improving access to mental health care. Several respondents focused on the needs of specific subpopulations, including LGBTQ older people, transgender people, those struggling with addiction, the unhoused, and people living with HIV. Examples of these responses include:

*Ensure viable, low-cost medical and educational services.*

— Nonbinary Black person in their 60s

<sup>13</sup> Educate the community to have more acceptance.

*Increased access to public health services.*

— Cisgender gay white man in his 30s

*Fund LGBTQ-inclusive health & housing initiatives.*

— Transgender white lesbian in her 30s

*More mental health awareness programs.*

— Cisgender gay Latino in his 40s

*More trauma-informed mental health care.*

— Cisgender Asian lesbian in her 30s

## Other Services and Programs

In addition to the specific policies and issues discussed above, a few (less than five percent) respondents also provided the following types of suggestions:

- **More LGBTQ programs, services, and events.** Sixteen respondents called for more “programs,” “social services,” and “community events” to support LGBTQ people, with most not specifying a substantive focus. These suggestions included providing more “information about” and “awareness” of existing programs and services.
- **Funding LGBTQ community resources.** Sixteen respondents specifically called for more “funding,” “resources,” and “donations” for LGBTQ “communities,” “organizations,” “networks,” “culture,” “events,” and “community centers.”
- **Public transportation.** Five respondents focused on transportation, calling for “improved public transportation,” “cleaner city streets,” and “more bike lanes.”
- **Support for family formation.** Three respondents focused their suggestions on support for LGBTQ people in forming families, including “resources for fertility,” “money for assisted reproduction programs,” and “encouraging LGBTQ people to adopt with DCFS.”

## VULNERABLE POPULATIONS

Finally, some respondents (6%) specifically focused on vulnerable sub-populations within the LGBTQ community, including transgender people, people of color, youth, and older people. Most of these responses were focused on the transgender community.

Those focused on the transgender community emphasized the greater needs of the community overall and called for more “support,” “services,” “affordable housing,” “ungendered bathrooms,” and “gender-inclusive spaces/forums.” Those focused on LGBTQ people of color advocated for more “opportunities,” “inclusion,” and “legal protections.” Those who focused on LGBTQ youth and older people specifically focused on housing-related needs.

*Advocate for transgender-identifying people.*

— Cisgender bisexual multiracial woman in her 20s

*Support for trans people would be the top priority.*

— Cisgender gay white man in his 60s

*Improve access to gender-affirming care.*

— Nonbinary multiracial person in their 20s

*Create opportunities for queer POC visibility.*

— Cisgender gay Latino in his 40s

*Have more funding for LGBTQIA homeless youth.*

— Cisgender Black lesbian in her 50s

*More senior home care.*

— Cisgender gay white man in his 60s

## CONCLUSION

Many LGBTQ people in Los Angeles believe that Los Angeles County elected officials are responsive to their needs and that county programs and services are generally welcoming of LGBTQ people. Almost half (46%) of LGBTQ people agree that elected officials are responsive to their needs, and three-fourths (75%) agree that county programs and services are welcoming of LGBTQ people.

However, fewer LGBTQ people of color perceive elected officials as responsive and programs as welcoming than white LGBTQ people. For example, only 40% of LGBTQ people of color agreed that elected officials are responsive to the concerns of LGBTQ people compared to 59% of white LGBTQ people. Similarly, LGBTQ people of color were more likely to rely on county programs and services but did not rate them to be as welcoming of LGBTQ people as white LGBTQ people did.

Many LGBTQ people in Los Angeles County are also actively engaged in civic life and their communities. The vast majority (83%) engage by volunteering, donating money, and expressing their views through petitions and protests to elected officials directly and online. LGBTQ people engage not only on LGBTQ issues but also on a wide range of issues, including women's issues, racial justice, immigration, environmental issues, disaster relief, hunger, homelessness, and others.

About three-quarters of survey respondents provided written recommendations for how elected officials could improve the quality of life for LGBTQ people in Los Angeles County. Their responses focused on strategies for meaningful and visible allyship, greater representation of LGBTQ people in elected positions and the civil service, providing economic support to meet the high cost of living in the County, promoting community safety, advancing equality, and supporting vulnerable subpopulations, including transgender people and LGBTQ people of color, youth, and older adults.

LGBTQ people are engaged across a broad range of LGBTQ and non-LGBTQ issues. They seek to work in partnership with elected officials to improve Los Angeles County not only for LGBTQ communities but for everyone.

## METHODS

This report is one of a series that uses data collected from a representative sample of over 500 LGBTQ adults on the Lived Experiences in Los Angeles County (LELAC) Survey. The LELAC survey was designed by the Williams Institute and conducted as a "call-back" survey of LGBTQ participants in the 2023 Los Angeles County Health Survey. Please refer to the *Communities of Resilience: The Lived Experiences of LGBTQ Adults in Los Angeles County* for details on the study.

In the survey, respondents were asked, "What, if anything, should elected officials do to improve quality of life for LGBTQ people who live in Los Angeles County?" Almost three-fourths of respondents (73%) provided a substantive response to this open-ended question. Text responses were coded in Excel by main emic themes using a content analysis approach.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Patton, M. Q., & Patton, M. Q. (2002). *Qualitative Research and Evaluation Methods* (3 ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Examples of quotes provided in the text were copyedited to correct spelling and grammatical errors. After the beginning of the excerpted text, deleted words are indicated by “...” and added words for clarity are indicated by “[].”

Terms used in the question, filler words (a, the, with, some), and words used less frequently were excluded from the word cloud.

## AUTHORS

**Brad Sears, J.D.**, is the Roberta A. Conroy Distinguished Scholar of Law and Policy and Founding Executive Director at the Williams Institute. In addition, he is the Associate Dean of Public Interest Law at UCLA Law.

**Christy Mallory, J.D.**, is the Renberg Scholar of Law and Legal Director at the Williams Institute.

**Kerith J. Conron, Sc.D., M.P.H.**, is the Blachford-Cooper Distinguished Scholar and Research Director at the Williams Institute.

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### ABOUT THE WILLIAMS INSTITUTE

The Williams Institute is dedicated to conducting rigorous, independent research on sexual orientation and gender identity law and public policy. A think tank at UCLA Law, the Williams Institute produces high-quality research with real-world relevance and disseminates it to judges, legislators, policymakers, media, and the public. These studies can be accessed at the Williams Institute website.

### FOR MORE INFORMATION

The Williams Institute, UCLA School of Law  
williamsinstitute@law.ucla.edu  
williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu

RESEARCH THAT MATTERS



## APPENDIX

Table A1. Perceptions of whether Los Angeles County Elected officials are responsive to the needs of LGBTQ people (all respondents by race)

	ALL				LGBTQ PEOPLE OF COLOR				WHITE LGBTQ PEOPLE				RAO-SCOTT CHI-SQUARE
	n	%	95% CL		n	%	95% CL		n	%	95% CL		P-VALUE
<b>Total</b>	<b>485</b>	<b>100.0</b>			<b>268</b>	<b>100.0</b>			<b>217</b>	<b>100.0</b>			<b>0.009</b>
Strongly disagree	23	7.1	4.0	12.1	18	9.3	5.0	16.7	5	2.8	0.9	8.2	
Somewhat disagree	56	13.5	9.6	18.8	39	15.7	10.6	22.8	17	9.4	4.6	18.1	
<b>Somewhat or strongly disagree</b>	<b>79</b>	<b>20.6</b>	<b>15.6</b>	<b>26.7</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>25.1</b>	<b>18.3</b>	<b>33.4</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>12.2</b>	<b>6.7</b>	<b>21.0</b>	
Neither agree nor disagree	157	32.8	27.2	38.8	97	34.8	27.5	42.9	60	28.9	21.3	38.0	
Somewhat agree	170	35.8	30.2	41.9	89	32.9	25.7	41.1	90	41.4	33.0	50.3	
Strongly agree	70	10.6	7.9	14.2	25	7.2	4.2	12.0	45	17.1	12.3	23.4	
<b>Somewhat or strongly agree</b>	<b>249</b>	<b>46.4</b>	<b>40.4</b>	<b>52.6</b>	<b>114</b>	<b>40.1</b>	<b>32.4</b>	<b>48.3</b>	<b>135</b>	<b>58.5</b>	<b>49.2</b>	<b>67.2</b>	

Table A2. Perceptions of whether Los Angeles County services and programs are welcoming to LGBTQ people, all respondents and by race

	ALL				LGBTQ PEOPLE OF COLOR				WHITE LGBTQ PEOPLE				RAO-SCOTT CHI-SQUARE
	n	%	95% CL		n	%	95% CL		n	%	95% CL		P-VALUE
<b>Total</b>	<b>485</b>	<b>100.0</b>			<b>268</b>	<b>100.0</b>			<b>217</b>	<b>100.0</b>			<b>0.008</b>
Strongly disagree	23	7.1	4.0	12.1	7	3.5	1.2	9.8	2	1.3	0.3	5.5	
Somewhat disagree	56	13.5	9.6	18.8	17	8.7	4.9	14.8	8	2.3	1.0	5.1	
<b>Somewhat or strongly disagree</b>	<b>79</b>	<b>20.6</b>	<b>15.6</b>	<b>26.7</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>12.2</b>	<b>7.5</b>	<b>19.3</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>3.5</b>	<b>1.7</b>	<b>7.4</b>	
Neither agree nor disagree	157	32.8	27.2	38.8	39	14.5	9.4	21.8	37	18.4	12.2	26.9	
Somewhat agree	179	35.8	30.2	41.9	120	48.0	39.8	56.2	81	37.4	29.1	46.5	
Strongly agree	70	10.6	7.9	14.2	85	25.2	19.1	32.6	89	40.2	31.9	49.1	
<b>Somewhat or strongly agree</b>	<b>249</b>	<b>46.4</b>	<b>40.4</b>	<b>52.6</b>	<b>205</b>	<b>73.2</b>	<b>64.9</b>	<b>80.2</b>	<b>170</b>	<b>77.6</b>	<b>69.2</b>	<b>84.3</b>	

Table A3. Respondents rating various services in terms of being welcoming to LGBTQ people (among those rating each service)

	ALL			LGBTQ PEOPLE OF COLOR				WHITE LGBTQ PEOPLE				RAO-SCOTT CHI-SQUARE	BELOW 200% FPL			ABOVE 200% FPL			RAO-SCOTT CHI-SQUARE			
	n	%	95% CL	n	%	95% CL		n	%	95% CL		P-VALUE	n	%	95% CL		n	%	95% CL		P-VALUE	
Rated at least one county service	463	95.3	91.9	97.3	254	95.3	91.5	97.4	209	95.3	86.5	98.5	1.000	134	96.3	90.8	98.6	329	94.8	90.0	97.4	0.557
Rated at least three county services	409	82.2	76.7	86.7	225	81.6	74.0	87.4	184	83.4	75.3	89.2	0.718	125	88.3	78.7	93.9	284	79.0	71.9	84.7	0.089
Parks and recreation facilities	394	80.5	75.0	85.1	217	80.5	73.0	86.4	177	80.5	72.4	86.7	0.999	113	83.5	73.8	90.1	281	79.0	71.9	84.7	0.406
Voting	389	77.6	71.6	82.6	201	72.4	64.2	79.4	188	87.4	79.7	92.4	0.004	107	73.8	62.1	82.9	282	79.7	72.7	85.3	0.326
Libraries	339	70.8	64.9	76.1	200	75.6	67.9	82.0	139	61.7	52.5	70.1	0.016	102	71.7	60.3	80.9	237	70.4	63.4	76.5	0.830
Courts and judicial system	309	65.2	59.2	70.8	173	65.3	57.2	72.6	136	65.0	56.4	72.7	0.952	98	69.3	58.2	78.6	211	63.0	55.8	69.7	0.330
Health services	291	63.3	57.4	68.9	171	67.9	60.3	74.7	120	54.5	45.6	63.2	0.023	107	79.7	69.9	86.9	184	54.5	47.2	61.7	0.000
Support programs (e.g., CalFresh, CalWorks, GR)	218	50.6	44.4	56.8	144	58.4	50.3	66.0	74	35.6	27.4	44.8	0.000	93	68.6	57.5	77.9	125	40.9	33.6	48.6	0.000
Sheriff's Department	263	49.5	43.3	55.7	144	47.6	39.5	55.8	119	53.2	44.3	61.9	0.362	78	52.0	40.7	63.1	185	48.2	41.0	55.5	0.588
Treatment for mental health and addiction	193	41.4	35.4	47.7	115	45.4	37.3	53.7	78	33.9	26.0	42.9	0.062	77	55.7	44.3	66.5	116	33.7	27.1	41.1	0.001
Jails and correctional facilities	189	40.5	34.5	46.8	115	43.3	35.3	51.7	74	35.1	26.9	44.2	0.181	61	45.6	34.6	57.0	128	37.7	30.8	45.3	0.251
Housing programs	190	40.2	34.2	46.4	127	45.1	37.1	53.4	63	30.8	22.9	39.9	0.020	73	53.4	42.1	64.4	117	33.1	26.6	40.3	0.003
District Attorney's or Public Defender's Offices	166	34.0	28.4	40.2	111	38.5	30.9	46.7	55	25.5	18.3	34.4	0.029	59	41.1	30.5	52.6	107	30.2	24.0	37.3	0.098
Department of Children and Family Services	159	33.4	27.8	39.6	105	37.6	30.1	45.9	54	25.4	18.2	34.3	0.038	58	39.6	29.1	51.1	101	30.1	23.8	37.3	0.147
Jails and correctional facilities	152	32.5	26.8	38.7	100	37.0	29.4	45.2	52	24.0	16.9	33.0	0.029	53	41.8	31.0	53.4	99	27.5	21.4	34.5	0.028
Domestic violence services	150	32.2	26.6	38.5	97	36.9	29.3	45.2	53	23.4	16.4	32.4	0.024	60	43.3	32.4	54.8	90	26.3	20.3	33.4	0.009
Job services	109	24.4	19.3	30.2	83	31.3	24.2	39.4	26	11.1	6.7	18.0	0.000	42	30.8	21.5	42.1	67	20.9	15.3	27.8	0.093
Programs for immigrants	103	23.0	18.1	28.7	79	29.2	22.4	37.2	24	11.0	6.6	18.0	0.000	38	26.6	18.1	37.2	65	21.0	15.4	28.1	0.337



Table A4. Respondents rating Los Angeles County services and programs as welcoming and unwelcoming (among those rating each service)

	VERY WELCOMING		SOMEWHAT WELCOMING		SOMEWHAT UNWELCOMING		VERY UNWELCOMING	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Libraries	201	55.9	62	20.4	6	4.20	28	9.1
Parks and recreation facilities	190	43.5	89	21.7	23	8.3	23	8.6
Voting	197	42.9	63	21.3	11	3.3	36	12.0
Health services	114	38.3	80	24.0	23	8.6	18	11.0
Treatment for mental health and addiction	65	30.9	51	26.9	20	7.2	14	8.7
Support programs (e.g., CalFresh, CalWorks, GR)	76	33.7	52	20.9	15	9.0	13	10.9
Housing programs	50	25.6	54	22.6	31	21.2	15	13.3
Domestic violence services	46	30.1	25	17.1	26	17.2	21	13.5
Job services	22	20.3	26	27.1	14	10.9	11	13.1
Courts and judicial system	73	25.8	66	18.6	48	14.6	28	14.0
Department of Children and Family Services	34	19.8	37	23.4	18	12.8	17	15.4
Programs for immigrants	21	24.2	18	14.5	17	13.0	13	13.4
Sheriff's Department	40	14.2	45	16.4	53	18.2	62	26.6
District Attorney's or Public Defender's Offices	18	11.9	24	13.1	31	19.8	37	24.8
Jails and correctional facilities	15	8.3	24	10.4	36	22.9	76	39.5
Probation department	14	10.0	17	10.7	28	21.6	49	33.0

Note: Authors' calculations based on this table appear in graphs in this report. Calculations are on file with authors.

Table A5. Participation in different types of civil engagement

	ANY ISSUE			IF YES, LGBTQ ISSUES ONLY				IF YES, OTHER ISSUES ONLY			IF YES, BOTH LGBTQ AND OTHER ISSUES			IF YES FOR TWO OR MORE TYPES OF ENGAGEMENT INDICATE BOTH LGBTQ AND OTHER ISSUES ACROSS MULTIPLE ENGAGEMENTS						
	N	%	95% CL	N	%	95% CL		N	%	95% CL	N	%	95% CL	N	%	95% CL				
<b>At least one form of civil engagement</b>	<b>418</b>	<b>82.6</b>	<b>76.9</b>	<b>87.1</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>1.4</b>	<b>0.6</b>	<b>3.4</b>	<b>117</b>	<b>32.7</b>	<b>26.6</b>	<b>39.5</b>	<b>114</b>	<b>26.6</b>	<b>21.1</b>	<b>32.9</b>	<b>181</b>	<b>39.3</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>45.9</b>
Donated money	306	55.1	48.7	61.3	8	1.8	0.8	3.9	140	39.6	39.6	54.9	158	43.4	43.4	58.6	*	*	*	*
Signed petition	244	47.9	41.7	54.1	5	1.4	0.5	3.9	112	51.8	42.9	60.6	127	46.7	38.0	55.7	*	*	*	*
Posted on social media	250	47.3	41.1	53.4	4	1.4	0.5	3.8	53	26.7	19.4	35.5	193	71.9	63.2	79.3	*	*	*	*
Volunteered	145	27.2	22.1	33.0	16	12.5	6.1	23.9	75	60.5	49.2	70.7	54	27.1	19.4	36.4	*	*	*	*
Participated in a protest or march	88	15.9	12.0	20.9	7	4.7	2.1	10.3	47	54.3	38.8	69.0	34	41.0	26.5	57.2	*	*	*	*
Contacted a public official	138	24.1	19.6	29.3	6	8.3	2.9	21.6	84	61.4	50.1	71.6	48	30.3	21.7	40.6	*	*	*	*
Worked on a campaign	21	4.2	2.2	8.0	0	0.0	0.0	0.0	11	66.1	35.8	87.3	10	33.9	12.7	64.2	*	*	*	*

Note: Authors' calculations based on this table appear in graphs in this report. Calculations are on file with authors.