

11/9/2021 Press Conference Talking Points
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I am honored to join the Network, the Commission, and the Department of Public Health to share the findings from the first statewide LGBTQ+ Needs Assessment.

Conducting a needs assessment is a vital component in addressing concerns about health equity and quality of life and to better understand the perceptions, lived experiences, and specific health and human service needs of LGBTQ+ individuals residing in Connecticut.

Ensuring that as many people as possible had the opportunity to have their voices heard was made more challenging by the pandemic. However, Network members worked tirelessly to broadly disseminate the survey resulting in more than 3,000 people completing it.

Survey Respondents closely mirrored the Connecticut population in many ways including geographically and with regard to their race and ethnicity.

The results from this survey provide novel information about gender identity and sexual orientation that was previously not available for our state.

The survey asked respondents about the types of services they have accessed in the past three years, their experiences receiving services, service access barriers, and current service needs. Some important findings include:

- More than half of respondents experienced some form of violence as a result of identity-based discrimination.
- Almost all of the respondents who reported accessing housing services had concerns that these services would not be LGBTQ+ friendly or affordable.
- Although most respondents had successfully accessed healthcare services in the past 3 years, many still reported unpleasant interactions and experiences with healthcare providers, creating a barrier to accessing needed healthcare.
- Mental health services were reported to be highly accessed by these LGBTQ+ respondents, however over half identified concerns or barriers related to accessing such services.

Generally, respondents feel that Connecticut is making visible efforts to meet the needs of the LGBTQ community and that Connecticut is a relatively safe place for members of the community to live.

However more than 400 respondents added comments to the survey that included their suggestions for enhancing their quality of life in Connecticut.

- Respondents indicated that it is *Very Important* for Connecticut to strengthen policies and modify forms to promote a more inclusive environment for the LGBTQ community.
- Discrimination against the community is still pervasive, particularly in the workplace and in medical settings. Discriminatory experiences with law enforcement and religious communities were also mentioned.
- More training for service providers, law enforcement, and other professionals is needed to work with LGBTQ individuals safely and effectively.
- More needs to be done to raise awareness and meet the needs of LGBTQ individuals who also experience racism, ableism, and/or classism.

It is important to note the appreciation felt by the individuals completing the survey, many of whom took the time to thank us for providing them with an opportunity to be heard. Here are just a few of their comments:

- *I was in the group of gay and lesbian people that stormed the Supreme Court in the 1980s during the AIDS years when people were afraid of gay people. I am glad you are doing this survey to support the younger people so they can express themselves as they are. Thank you*
- *I think Connecticut has come a long way in terms of making it comfortable for us to live our lives. Thank you for asking us these questions.*
- *Thank you for working on this survey and helping our community. It's nice to be heard.*