

**CITY OF TUCSON COMMISSION ON GAY, LESBIAN, BISEXUAL AND  
TRANSGENDER (GLBT) ISSUES**

**COMMUNITY SURVEY 2002**

**Final Report**

June 2003

Jenifer McGuire, MS, MPH, Consultant  
Jean Baker, Ph.D., Education Committee Co-Chairperson  
Stephen Baker, Outreach Committee Chairperson  
Nancy Robinett, J.D., Commission Co-Chairperson

**Acknowledgements**

Special thanks go to Tucson Pride, Inc. for facilitating volunteers for data collection and for allowing survey collection at a Pride sponsored event, to members of the City of Tucson Commission on GLBT Issues for feedback on the survey and administrative support, to volunteers who participated in survey collection for hours of tireless support, to community members who agreed to take pilot versions of the survey and provide feedback, and to Tucson's GLBT community who willingly and cheerfully completed surveys.

## COMMUNITY SURVEY 2002

### Executive Summary

A survey was administered to over 1600 individuals on October 12, 2002, at the annual OutoberFest event, a gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender festival in Reid Park in Tucson, Arizona. The purpose of the survey was to assess the social climate for gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender persons in the Tucson area.

#### **Summary of survey participants:**

- 37% gay, 31% lesbian, 10% bisexual, 13% straight
- 70% White, 18% Hispanic
- 52% female, 1.7% transgender, 45% male
- 8% 19 or younger, 40% age 26-40, 4% over age 60

#### **Perceptions of the General Climate in Tucson Toward GLBT Persons:**

Tucson was generally regarded as a fairly welcoming place for GLBT persons and most individuals reported that their own workplace was fairly non-discriminatory. Participants' responses toward the sensitivity of the Tucson Police Department were closer to neutral, but still positive.

#### **Experiences of Harassment and Violence:**

Participants were asked how many times the following events occurred based on their sexual orientation or gender identity in Tucson in the last two years

- Verbal harassment or threats were reported by close to half (43-48%) of the gay, lesbian and bisexual respondents
- Verbal or physical abuse by a family member was reported by 16-28% of the gay, lesbian and bisexual respondents
- Verbal harassment or threats were reported by 56% of transgender respondents
- Having objects being thrown at them was reported by 10-16% of the gay, lesbian and bisexual respondents
- Physical assault was reported by 11% of the transgender respondents and by 5-8% of the gay, lesbian and bisexual respondents

#### **GLBT Youth Experiences of Harassment and Violence:**

Of special concern are the much higher rates of victimization for youth, defined as 19 years of age and younger.

### Gay Male Youth:

- Verbal harassment or threats were reported by 74%.
- Physical assaults were reported by 20 %.
- Having objects thrown at them was reported by 34%.
- Verbal or physical abuse by a family member was reported by 20%.

### Lesbian Youth:

- Verbal harassment or threats were reported by 55%
- Physical assault was reported by 20%
- Having objects thrown at them was reported by 40%
- Verbal or physical abuse by a family member was reported by 35%

### Straight Youth:

- Verbal harassment or threats were reported by 34%
- Physical assault was reported by 9%
- Having objects thrown at them was reported by 14%
- Verbal or physical abuse by a family member was reported by 9%.

### **Location of Harassment and Violence towards GLBT Youth:**

- 40% of GLBT youth experienced verbal harassment or threats at school
- 23% of gay youth and 25% of lesbian youth reported that they had had objects thrown at them at school.
- 43% percent of gay youth also reported harassment and threats on the street or in public.

### **Reports to Tucson Police Department:**

- 20% of participants who indicated an experience of victimization had reported it to the police
- When asked how they were treated by the TPD, with low scores being insensitive and high scores being very sensitive, the average rating was slightly above neutral.

### **Reasons for not reporting**

- Didn't think the incident warranted being reported
- Thought that nothing would happen
- Fear of being "outed" or retaliated against
- Mistrust of the police

### **Areas of Concern**

- The safety and well being of GLBT youth at school, at home and in the community

- Verbal harassment, threats and occasionally physical assaults experienced by GLBT persons of all ages detract from a climate that is generally considered positive for this population
- There were mixed reactions about the sensitivity of the Tucson Police Department around GLBT issues that may be contributing to underreporting of reportable incidences

## COMMUNITY SURVEY 2002

### Final Report

#### **Background**

The City of Tucson Commission on Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender (GLBT) Issues requested that members of the GLBT community in Tucson be surveyed regarding personal experiences with discrimination or abuse based on GLBT status. The purpose of this survey was to broadly assess the recent social climate for GLBT persons in Tucson. In particular the survey asked about experiences of harassment and discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity occurring during the last two years. There were also more general questions about perceptions of the overall climate for GLBT persons in Tucson, especially in regard to the perceived sensitivity of the Tucson Police Department to GLBT issues.

#### **Methods**

The survey was developed with a consultant from outside the commission, and three members of the GLBT Commission. The commission reviewed a draft of the survey, and requested changes were made. The final instrument covered the front side of one page, consisted of twenty-one questions, and took about two minutes to complete. Four items assessed basic demographics (age, gender, ethnicity, and sexual orientation). Three items assessed the overall climate for GLBT persons in Tucson, and ten questions asked about specific incidences of abuse or harassment. Another three questions asked specifically about experiences with reporting incidences to the Tucson Police Department. A final space left room for participants to comment.

On October 12, 2002, the survey was administered at the entrance of OuttoberFest, a well-attended pride festival that occurs in Tucson each year during mid-October. Permission was granted from Tucson Pride, Inc. (the festival organizing body) to administer the survey. Approximately ten volunteers participated in the administration of the survey. Volunteers were stationed at a table just outside the front and back gates. Festival-goers were asked as they approached the gate to complete the survey. Participants were told that survey participation was voluntary. Volunteers were trained and monitored by the survey coordinator regarding survey procedures. Survey administration began at 10:00 am (when the festival opened) and continued until 6:30 pm, when few people were entering the festival.

#### **Findings**

A total of 1622 surveys were collected with an average of 200-250 per hour until the late afternoon when festival entrances slowed considerably. Most festival-goers were willing to complete the survey when asked and many expressed gratitude that it was being conducted. During the busy times of day, there were so many people entering the park

that volunteers were not able to approach every person, and thus a smaller percentage of persons entering completed the survey at those times. Persons stationed at each gate utilized mechanical counters to count the number of persons entering the park. A total of 5400 persons entered the park during the hours that the survey collection was conducted, yielding a response rate of 30.1%. Children and persons from outside of the Tucson metropolitan area were discouraged from taking the survey (a few took it anyway), even though they were included in the count of persons entering the park. A conservative estimate would put the number of eligible survey takers at around 4000, raising the response rate to around 40%. The survey was not offered in Spanish. Following is a table indicating number of surveys collected and time of day.

Table 1. Time survey completed.

Time of Day	Number of Surveys
10:00 am – 12:00 pm	420
12:00 – 1:00	236
1:00 – 2:00	270
2:00 – 3:00	200
3:00 – 4:00	241
4:00 – 5:00	188
After 5:00	67
Total	1623

Eight hundred twenty-six (51%) females, 724 (45%) males and 27 (1.7%) transgender persons completed the survey. Another 44 persons completed the survey but did not identify their gender. Among the transgender persons, thirteen identified as male to female, and another seven identified as female to male.

The age of individuals completing the survey ranged from four (completed by a parent) to 77, with an average age of 36. The following table lists the numbers and percents of persons in each age group. Fifteen people declined to indicate an age.

Table 2. Age groups of participants

Age Group	Number	Percentage
19 and under	137	8.4
20-25	251	15.5
26-40	643	39.6
41-59	509	31.4
60 and over	67	4.1

Participants were asked to list their ethnicity or race. Open-ended responses were coded into six primary ethnic groups: White, Hispanic, African-American, Native-American, Asian/ Pacific Islander, or mixed/ other. Eleven percent, (n=177) declined to list an ethnicity. The following table summarizes participants' responses.

Table 3. Ethnic groups of participants

Ethnic Group	Number	Percentage
White	1015	70.2
Hispanic	256	17.7
African American	47	3.3
Native American	34	2.4
Asian/ Pacific Islander	26	1.8
Mixed/ Other	68	4.7

One question assessed sexual orientation, with four response choices: Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual or Straight. Thirty seven percent (n=602) of the participants identified as Gay, 31% (n=498) identified as Lesbian, 10% (n=159) identified as Bisexual, and 13% (n=213) identified as Straight. Nine percent (n=150) declined to identify their sexual orientation. Bisexuals were 43 males and 102 females.

Three questions were asked that tapped the overall climate for GLBT persons in Tucson. The first question asked “Overall, is Tucson a welcoming place for GLBT persons?” A score of “1” indicated a non-welcoming perception, and a score of “7” indicated a welcoming perception. The average score for this item was 5.0, indicating that respondents viewed Tucson as overall a fairly welcoming place.

The second question asked “Overall, is your workplace non-discriminatory in GLBT issues?” A score of “1” indicated a discriminatory perception, and a score of “7” indicated a non-discriminatory perception. The average score for this item was 5.28, indicating that most individuals believed their own workplace was fairly non-discriminatory.

The third question asked “Overall, is the Tucson Police Department (TPD) sensitive to GLBT issues?” A score of “1” indicated a sensitive perception, and a score of “7” indicated an insensitive perception. The average score for this item was 3.79, indicating a primarily neutral but slightly positive perception about Tucson Police department sensitivity. This item was scored in the opposite direction from the two items before it, leaving a possibility that some people may have responded incorrectly. Each survey was assessed to determine if this question was answered in error and a total of 415 responses were removed. The effect of this transformation was almost nil, as most respondents (52% of those who properly answered the question) answered that their opinion of the TPD was neutral. An additional 300 people (18.5%) refrained from answering this question, often coupled with words such as “I don’t know,” or “not sure” written on the survey.

Persons of different sexual orientations were compared for differences in perceptions about the overall climate in Tucson. Following is a table with the mean of each item organized by sexual orientation. Across the groups, the only significant difference was that gay men perceived the city and their workplace to be more welcoming than lesbians

and bisexuals. In parentheses are the reverse coded scores for the TPD question, which allows a more direct comparison with the other questions, e.g. higher scores in the parentheses are better.

Table 4. Sexual orientation differences in perceptions

	Gay	Lesbian	Bisexual	Straight
How welcoming is Tucson?	5.12	4.94	4.79	4.97
How non-discriminatory is your workplace?	5.43	5.17	5.08	5.17
How sensitive is the Tucson Police Department?	3.78 (4.22)	3.81 (4.19)	3.93 (4.07)	3.74 (4.26)

The second portion of the survey asked participants to indicate whether they had experienced harassment or abuse, how many times they had experienced those events and where. Participants were asked to limit their responses to those events that were based on their sexual orientation or gender identity and occurred in Tucson during the last two years; however, it is possible that some may have reported on incidences not in Tucson or more than two years ago, or incidences that were not based on sexual orientation or gender identity. Finally, they were asked to indicate if they had reported any of those events to the police and how the sensitive police had been, or if they had not reported, why not. The following table summarizes the numbers of people and percents that experienced each of the events at least once.

Table 5. Experiences of harassment or abuse

Event	Number Experiencing	Percent
Verbal Harassment or threats	659	40.6
Physical Assault	107	6.6
Objects thrown at you	178	11.7
Vandalism	221	13.7
Verbal or physical abuse by a family member	306	18.9

*Experiences Based on Sexual Orientation*

The group was split by sexual orientation to see if different groups experienced different types of events. The following table presents the percent of each group who experienced each incident.

Table 6. Percent who had experiences of harassment or abuse by sexual orientation

Event	Gay	Lesbian	Bisexual	Straight
Verbal Harassment or threats	43 <sub>a</sub>	43 <sub>a</sub>	48 <sub>a</sub>	23 <sub>b</sub>
Physical Assault	7	5	8	7
Objects thrown at you	13 <sub>ac</sub>	10 <sub>ab</sub>	16 <sub>ac</sub>	7 <sub>b</sub>
Vandalism	15	13	14	11
Verbal or physical abuse by a family member	16 <sub>b</sub>	24 <sub>a</sub>	28 <sub>a</sub>	11 <sub>b</sub>

Straight people were significantly less likely to have reported verbal harassment or threats than any of the non-straight groups. There were no significant differences between the groups in physical assault or vandalism. Gays and bisexuals were more likely to have had objects thrown at them than straight persons. Lesbians were in the middle, and not significantly different from either gays or straight persons in having had objects thrown, but lesbians were less likely than bisexuals to have had objects thrown at them. In terms of verbal or physical abuse by a family member, lesbians and bisexuals were significantly more likely to have had those experiences than gay or straight persons.

Of note is the large proportion of persons who indicated having received verbal harassment or threats. Close to half of the gay, lesbian and bisexual persons reported that this event occurred. Further analyses were conducted to determine the location of verbal harassment and threats. For gays, lesbians and bisexuals, the vast majority of harassment and verbal threats occurred on the street or at a public gathering. An average of 20% of these people reported being harassed or threatened on the street and another 15% reported experiencing these things in public.

### *Youth*

Separate analyses were run on individuals who reported being age nineteen or under to examine specific experiences of this population. There were 137 people in this age category who completed a survey. Ninety percent of young people were between the ages of 15-19. Fifty-four percent were female (n=73), 45% (n=61) were male, three people did not list a gender, and none reported being transgendered. With regard to sexual orientation, 32% reported being straight, 22% reported being bisexual, 15% reported being lesbian, and 26% reported being gay. Among females, 29% were lesbian, 30% bisexual, and 41% straight. For males, 60% were gay, 16% bisexual and 24% straight.

In general, rates of victimization were higher in this population. For the entire group, 53% reported verbal harassment or threats, 15% had experienced physical assault, 25% had an object thrown at them, 15% had experienced vandalism and 20% experienced physical or verbal abuse from a family member. When the numbers are broken out by sexual orientation, the difference is even greater. Following is a table of sexual orientation by experience for young people only.

Table 6. Percent who had experiences of harassment or abuse by sexual orientation for people age 19 and under

Event	Gay	Lesbian	Bisexual	Straight
Verbal Harassment or threats	74	55	55	34
Physical Assault	20	20	10	9
Objects thrown at you	34	40	16	14
Vandalism	17	25	19	9
Verbal or physical abuse by a family member	20	35	32	9

The differences in experience based on sexual orientation mimic those found in the larger group. Gay, lesbian and bisexual persons were significantly more likely to report having experienced verbal harassment and threats than straight persons. Gay and lesbian persons were more likely to have had objects thrown at them than bisexual or straight persons. Finally, lesbian and bisexual persons were more likely to report verbal or physical abuse by a family member than straight persons. Gay persons were in the middle, but not significantly different than either of the other groups.

What is strikingly different in younger people than the overall sample is the rate at which these incidences have occurred to gay, lesbian and bisexual youth. Seventy four percent of gay youth reported experiencing verbal harassment or threats in the last two years, and 40 percent of young lesbians reported having objects thrown at them. Analyses were conducted to determine the location of these events. An average of forty percent of gay, lesbian and bisexual youth reported that they had received verbal harassment or threats at school during the last two years. Gay youth also reported a relatively high level (43%) of harassment and threats on the street or in public. For gay youth, 23% had had an object thrown at them at school during the last two years and 25% of lesbian youth had experienced this.

#### *Transgender Respondents*

Separate analyses were run on individuals who reported being transgender to examine specific incidences among this population. The transgender population was small (n = 27), not allowing for systematic comparison between transgender and non-transgender persons. However, a review of the frequency of incidence in this population is useful as a basic indicator of prevalence for this group. Transgender persons reported violations in the following frequency: verbal harassments or threats 56%, physical assault 11%, objects thrown at you 22%, vandalism 11%, verbal or physical abuse by a family member 33%. Transgender persons reported frequencies of all forms of violations that at a glance appear to be higher than gay, lesbian or bisexual persons. However these differences are difficult to interpret, and cannot be considered statistically significant due to the small sample of transgender persons.

#### *Reporting to the Tucson Police Department*

Finally, respondents indicated if they had reported any of these incidences to the Tucson Police Department. Of the total sample, 840 individuals reported at least one of the violations. Of those, 19.8% (175 people) reported it to the police at least once. When asked how they were treated by TPD in that instance, the average rating on this item was a 3.64 on a scale from 1-7 with 1 being “with insensitivity” and 7 being “with great sensitivity.” On the 1-7 scale, 29.6% rated their treatment by TPD as 1 or 2 (insensitive), another 50% rated their treatment as 3, 4, or 5 (neutral), and 20.4% rated a 6 or 7 (sensitive).

When asked why respondents did not report, most indicated that they did not think the incident warranted it, or they thought that nothing would happen. Several categories of

responses emerged. The most common response was to indicate that the incident was too minor to report. Respondents made comments such as “didn’t feel it was important enough,” or “I felt it was minor.” Along these lines, some respondents indicated that the incidents were not illegal with comments such as “figured it wasn’t a reportable thing,” or “it was just ignorant words.” A second common type of response communicated fear of what would happen if the incident were reported. For instance some respondents were afraid of negative consequences in their own lives with comments such as “because I was not out publicly,” or I didn’t want “my address known to any attackers” . . . from “filing a police report,” or “I didn’t want to make a big deal out of it.” Some respondents expressed a negative attitude towards the police with comments such as “don’t trust the police from other experiences,” “police wouldn’t be able to resolve,” “I didn’t feel the police would do anything, they don’t like me because of how I look,” or “I chose to not be a victim twice.” Another group of respondents simply indicated that they were afraid. Comments from this group were often simple such as “fear,” “scared and ashamed,” and “afraid, left the scene.” Finally, some respondents indicated that they didn’t report the incident because it was a family issue. For instance some comments were “because it was my dad,” “she is my mother and didn’t take me coming out very well,” and “sister’s verbal abuse- didn’t need police to handle family matters.”

At the end of the survey, respondents were given the opportunity to make general comments. By and large the comments were positive about the survey “I think that this survey is a great idea,” the event “I like pride gatherings,” or the community “In general, Tucson is gay friendly.” Specific comments related to the Tucson Police Department from either the general comment section or the reasons not to report are included in an appendix to give feedback to the Tucson Police Department.

### **Limitations**

There are limitations of the current study. The first is that the survey was not made available in Spanish. Liberal estimates of the impact of this indicate that 20-25 persons may not have taken the survey for this reason. Therefore, OutoberFest participants are likely not to be representative of the non-English speaking Hispanic community in Tucson. Thus, even using a survey written in Spanish would not furnish a representative sample of the non-English speaking Hispanic community. If a more thorough assessment of these populations is desired, it would be more appropriate to directly contact those populations rather than surveying such a large event.

Secondly, the survey was designed with the assumption that most people would be from Tucson. In administering the survey it became quickly apparent that many attendees of OutoberFest come from all over the Southwest for this event. Participants not from Tucson were asked not to take the survey, but some may have. Additionally, the demographic information on survey participants may not reflect OutoberFest as a whole, because of the bias of eliminating out-of-towners.

## **Issues Raised By the Data**

A very high percentage of GLBT youth are being verbally harassed and smaller percentages are being physically assaulted or having objects thrown at them. The location of the harassment for youth is often at school and in public or on the street. There is a relatively large percentage (20% for gay males to 35% for lesbians) of youth who are experiencing verbal or physical abuse by a family member.

Despite a general climate of non-discrimination in the Tucson area, a high percentage of GLBT persons are experiencing verbal harassment or threats and a smaller percentage have experienced physical assault and other forms of discrimination.

Despite many positive statements by respondents about police sensitivity, there are also many who expressed a feeling of distrust toward the police and feel that they have been treated without sensitivity. There are still GLBT individuals who would not report harassment or assault to the police because they are not publicly out or they are afraid and ashamed.

## **Recommendations:**

Based on the trends indicated by the data, several recommendations have been made as areas for development within the community of Tucson, and for ways to make best use of this collected data for community development.

This report should be disseminated within the Tucson GLBT community. As needed, members of the report committee or the GLBT Commission should be available to meet with local agencies to assist in interpretation of the findings, or to work to make further use of the data generated through this project.

Copies of this survey should be distributed to the following list, and appropriate contact and follow-up should be carried out: Mayor and Council of the City of Tucson, Tucson Police Department, school districts in the Tucson area; the State Superintendent of Public Instruction, the Tucson/Pima GLBT Youth Collaboration; the Gay, Lesbian, Straight Education Network (GLSEN), Tucson Chapter.