



**Maryland Commission
on LGBTQIA+ Affairs**

Analyzing Progress and Charting Future Directions: An In-Depth and Iterative Report for the Maryland Commission on LGBTQIA+ Affairs

This report offers a comprehensive analysis of five projects commissioned by the Maryland Commission on LGBTQIA+ Affairs, conducted in partnership with the University of Maryland, College of Information, iConsultancy Program. The report combines five critical sections: a meta-meta-analysis of the previous project's findings, an extensive compilation of relevant data, a post-election survey analysis, the creation of promotional infographics, and development ideas for a new, forward-looking survey. Together, these elements provide a thorough review of past efforts, insights into current issues, and actionable recommendations for future initiatives aimed at improving the well-being and visibility of Maryland's LGBTQIA+ Community.

In Partnership with the:



COLLEGE OF
INFORMATION

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Maryland Commission on LGBTQIA+ Affairs
100 Community Place
Crownsville, MD 21032

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Analyzing Progress and Charting Future Directions: An In-Depth and Iterative Report for the Maryland Commission on LGBTQIA+ Affairs

Introduction

This report presents an in-depth and iterative body of work developed in collaboration with the Maryland Commission on LGBTQIA+ Affairs and the University of Maryland's iConsultancy. It includes a meta-analysis of previous data and analyses to identify key trends and challenges within Maryland's LGBTQIA+ community, the creation of a centralized repository to support future research, and a qualitative review of post-election survey responses to assess the current administration's impact. Additionally, the report features the development of public-facing promotional and health and wellness infographics, and an evaluation of national LGBTQIA+ surveys to inform best practices for a statewide needs assessment in Maryland.

The five projects included in this report are:

1. Meta-Meta Analysis (p 7-30)

An analysis of the analyses conducted and data collected by the previous team to better understand trends and challenges facing the LGBTQIA+ Community in Maryland. Using tools like Python, Google Sheets, and Tableau, data was reviewed and visualized to identify key areas for policy focus and highlight where state initiatives have had a positive impact.

2. Data Repository (p. 32-34)

The creation of a repository that brings together key data from the previous team's work and newly sourced materials to support the Commission's goals. The well-organized

collection includes cleaned CSVs, supplemental resources, and documentation, creating a centralized foundation for future analysis and informed decision-making.

3. *Post-Election Survey Data Analysis* (p. 36-56)

A qualitative analysis of the post-2024 election survey results created and conducted by the Commission for LGBTQIA+ Affairs, exploring how the current administration is affecting Maryland's LGBTQIA+ community. Insights included ways to create more structured surveys in the future and to get feedback from the LGBTQIA+ community.

4. *Creation of Promotional Infographics* (p. 57-68)

A design-focused project centered on creating visualizations that highlight key information about the Commission, its members, and essential resources available to the LGBTQIA+ community. These infographics were crafted to be more digestible to the general public, making them suitable for distribution across social media, the department website, or as printed materials.

5. *New Maryland LGBTQIA+ Survey Development* (p. 69-76)

An analysis of state and national LGBTQIA+ surveys to identify key themes, methodologies, inclusion criteria, and privacy measures. Despite limited access to full questionnaires, shared challenges across states are highlighted. Drawing from these trends, best practice recommendations are offered to guide the Commission in designing a statewide needs assessment that will inform policy and resource decisions for Maryland's LGBTQIA+ community.

Scope of Work #1: Meta-Meta Analysis

Abstract

In collaboration with the Maryland Commission on LGBTQIA+ Affairs under the Governor's Office of Community Initiatives (GOCI) and the University of Maryland, a review and analysis of the data and findings discovered, collected, reviewed, and worked on by the previous projects group was conducted. This information analysis aims to provide the Maryland Commission on LGBTQIA+ Affairs with a deeper understanding of current trends and challenges for the LGBTQIA+ community in Maryland. By building on previous work, we hope to highlight specific areas and challenges that the Commission should prioritize in terms of resources and proposed policies, as well as areas in which Maryland initiatives have made positive impacts.

The analysis of the information gathered from last teams' group work was conducted through PDF and web scraping, analyses using Python, and was collected and documented on Google Sheets. Additionally, graphics used to convey the analysis of last group's analysis of information gathered were conducted and created using Tableau to allow the information to be displayed and shown in a digestible manner to the Maryland Commission on LGBTQIA+ Affairs under the Governor's Office of Community Initiatives (GOCI).

Introduction

In the previous work, the teams from the University of Maryland (UMD) completed a series of meta-analyses for the Maryland Commission on LGBTQIA+ Affairs through a partnership with the UMD iConsultancy Program. These meta-analyses covered six topics: Civil Rights, Equal Employment Opportunity, Hate Bias crime, public school bullying, and youth risk behavior data, as well as information gathering on LGBTQIA+ needs. From these analyses, we

identified several pieces of missing information and trends between topics, which we sought to address in our team's meta-analysis. Specifically, we researched gaps, spikes, and dips in Maryland's Civil Rights complaints data, income disparities, distribution of hate crimes, public school bullying in counties across Maryland, and youth mental health for the LGBTQIA+ community.

The following information discusses the process and methodology used to identify and expand upon gaps identified from the last team's meta-analyses, as well as findings from our team's meta-meta-analysis. Within our findings specifically, we discuss the explanations for gaps in Civil Rights complaints, income disparities for LGBTQIA+ adults, geographic distribution of Hate crimes and public school bullying in Maryland, youth mental health in the LGBTQIA+ nationally and within Maryland – as well as a general discussion regarding complaints, discrepancies, and disparities affecting the Maryland LGBTQIA+ community.

Process

To conduct this meta-meta-analysis for the Maryland Commission on LGBTQIA+ Affairs, the team used the work previously conducted as our foundation. We focused on identifying and addressing any gaps or areas that needed further exploration across six core topics, based on available data. These topics are: Civil Rights, Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO), Hate Bias crimes, LGBTQIA+ needs, public school bullying, and youth risk behavior.

Our process began with a review of the last team's analyses. These analyses were based on data from publicly available reports provided by various government agencies spanning from 2013 to 2023. Each team member was assigned a different meta-analysis from the previous team's work and was tasked with reading through their respective part of the report and identifying any unanswered gaps in the data or questions from the previous analyses. Once these

had been identified, team members conducted research to find explanations for unanswered questions and trends between the meta-analyses. Through this process, we were able to fill in some missing pieces from the previously completed work and come away with a more comprehensive view of the disparities and challenges facing the Maryland LGBTQIA+ community. While Google Sheets served as our primary tool for manually collecting, organizing, and documenting our data and research, each meta-analysis required a different methodology, laid out in the section below. Through this iterative process, we were able to fill in some missing pieces from the previously completed work and come away with a more comprehensive, data-driven view of the disparities and issues facing the Maryland LGBTQIA+ community.

Methodology

As mentioned in the previous section, this project utilized data from six meta-analyses that covered different issues facing Maryland's LGBTQIA+ community. Each meta-analysis was primarily based on government reports, yet expanding on these analyses required a variety of research techniques and tools.

To start, the Civil Rights meta-analysis relied on data from the Maryland Commission on Civil Rights (MCCR). Using last groups's analyses from the MCCR's annual reports from 2013 to 2023, several unexplained gaps, spikes, and dips in the data were identified. To uncover possible explanations, multiple reputable sources were canvassed to find certain historic events or trends that support the quantitative analyses from the previously done work. A mistake was also identified; the last teams civil rights report counted all complaints filed and split them up by SOGI, rather than reporting on complaints made based on sex discrimination. Given this, the Maryland Annual Reports from 2013 to 2023 were reexamined, and only complaints regarding sex discrimination were extracted. To enhance the level of detail of this analysis and contribute

to the data compilation project, more granular data was collected than in the previous projects. Rather than whole-state cumulative totals, the totals for each county, subcategory of complaint, and individual year were manually collected. For this analysis, the most recent year's information was visualized, and normalized it to per-capita rates to avoid skewing against higher-population counties.

For the Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) meta-analysis, we wanted to further investigate income disparities for LGBTQIA+ adults. To conduct our research, we primarily read through published studies and peer-reviewed online articles, and were able to identify a few main explanations for these income disparities.

The Hate Bias crime meta-analysis from the previous team left unanswered questions regarding the geographic distribution of Hate crimes across Maryland counties. To get a better understanding of the different levels of reporting by county, we synthesized a variety of government documents and reports, such as a report from the Office of the Attorney General and the Maryland State Police Hate Bias Report. Additionally, by combing through the FBI's crime reporting database, we were able to find per-county hate crime incidents for the past decade for specific gender identities and sexual orientations.

The Information Gathering On LGBTQIA+ Needs analysis expanded on the last team's recommendations and future directions by exploring different LGBTQIA+ surveys from other states to identify national trends. This research was primarily used to inform the fifth scope of work for our team (see Scope of Work #5).

The last two meta-analyses focused on LGBTQIA+ youth. First, the Public School Bullying analysis expanded upon the Maryland Commission on LGBTQIA+ Affairs Report from the last group by analyzing Maryland's State Department of Education (MSDE) guidelines on

creating inclusive spaces for LGBTQIA+ youth and data collected from the 2021 GLSEN National School Climate Survey. Annual reports related to bullying, harassment, and intimidation, sourced from the Maryland Department of Education, were examined. Data from these reports was obtained either through web scraping or was manually entered into Google Sheets. Tableau and Microsoft Excel were then used to create visual representations of the patterns found in these bullying reports, especially those related to sexual orientation and gender identity. Finally, the Youth Risk Behavior meta-analysis drew from the Youth Risk Behavior and Youth Tobacco Surveys, conducted between 2013 and 2023, however, we realized there was a lack of information regarding youth mental health. To collect data on this, national surveys related to the mental health of LGBTQIA+ youth were examined, such as the Trevor Project reports and a Pew Research Center survey.

Findings

Civil Rights

The project team's quantitative analysis revealed several gaps, spikes, and dips in the Civil Rights complaints data submitted to the Maryland Commission for Civil Rights (MCCR) between 2013 and 2023. These notable fluctuations, with sharp increases and periods of inactivity, reflect overarching societal, legal, and structural dynamics.

Key trends from 2013 to 2020 are the noticeable absence of complaints related to gender identity, almost no complaints tied to sexual orientation in housing and employment, limited complaints filed by women in those same areas before 2020, and a lack of public accommodation complaints filed by men before 2021 (State of Maryland, 2020; State of Maryland, 2021). While there is not enough evidence to identify a definite cause for these gaps, there are some possible explanations.

One possible explanation is that people may have avoided reporting gender identity-based discrimination due to fear of stigma, retaliation, or because they were unaware of the proper channels in which to file a complaint. The low number of sexual orientation complaints may reflect fear of job or housing loss, especially before broader societal acceptance of the LGBTQIA+ community grew around 2021. For women, it's possible that increased awareness brought on by the #MeToo movement encouraged more people to come forward in 2020, when the movement was starting to make tangible impacts. Lastly, the lack of data on male public accommodation complaints may be related to lower visibility and protection for transgendermen prior to recent legal and social changes.

The MCCR data from 2020 also reveals a sharp decline in reported complaints across multiple categories, with some data missing entirely (State of Maryland, 2020). This can likely be attributed to the widespread impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, which diverted attention and resources toward urgent health and economic concerns. The transition to remote work and reduced public engagement may have further contributed to a decline in the frequency and reporting of discriminatory incidents.

Contrary to 2020, a significant spike in employment-related complaints based on gender identity occurred in 2021 (State of Maryland, 2021). Employment complaints based on sexual orientation and gender identity (SOGI) reflect discriminatory practices within professional settings. These may include unequal access to hiring and advancement, workplace harassment, exclusion from benefits or accommodations, and the creation of hostile work environments. Such conditions impact employee morale, retention, and overall equity in the labor force.

In 2021, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled to include SOGI protections under Title VII in the *Bostock v. Clayton County* decision (*Bostock v. Clayton County*, 2020). This ruling, along with

increased media coverage and public discourse around LGBTQIA+ rights, likely empowered individuals nationwide to report injustices that may have previously gone unaddressed. However, in 2022 and 2023, the number of SOGI-related employment complaints in Maryland declined (State of Maryland, 2022; State of Maryland, 2023). This pattern indicates that legal decisions, corporate diversity programs, and wider cultural changes have likely created safer and more inclusive work environments in Maryland. That being said, this decline should not be assumed to mean the elimination of discrimination, as underreporting and unequal access to resources remain concerns for the LGBTQIA+ community.

Also in 2022, complaints regarding public accommodations based on gender identity emerged for the first time in the data, further reflecting increased awareness and a recognition of LGBTQIA+ rights in everyday spaces (State of Maryland, 2022). However, decreases in certain reporting categories or among specific demographics do not equate to the elimination of discrimination. Importantly, SOGI-related issues rarely exist in isolation. The intersection of SOGI with other demographic characteristics (race, gender, or socioeconomic status) often amplifies the impact of discrimination.

Decreasing and addressing Civil Rights complaints across intersectional identities will require the development of thoughtful, data-supported policies and a long-term commitment to equity and inclusion. Based on our research, we found various possible solutions. First, there should be more outreach to LGBTQIA+ communities about how to report discrimination and what legal protections exist. Offering confidential ways to file complaints may also make people feel safer. Lastly, partnering with LGBTQIA+ organizations could build more trust and support for those filing complaints.

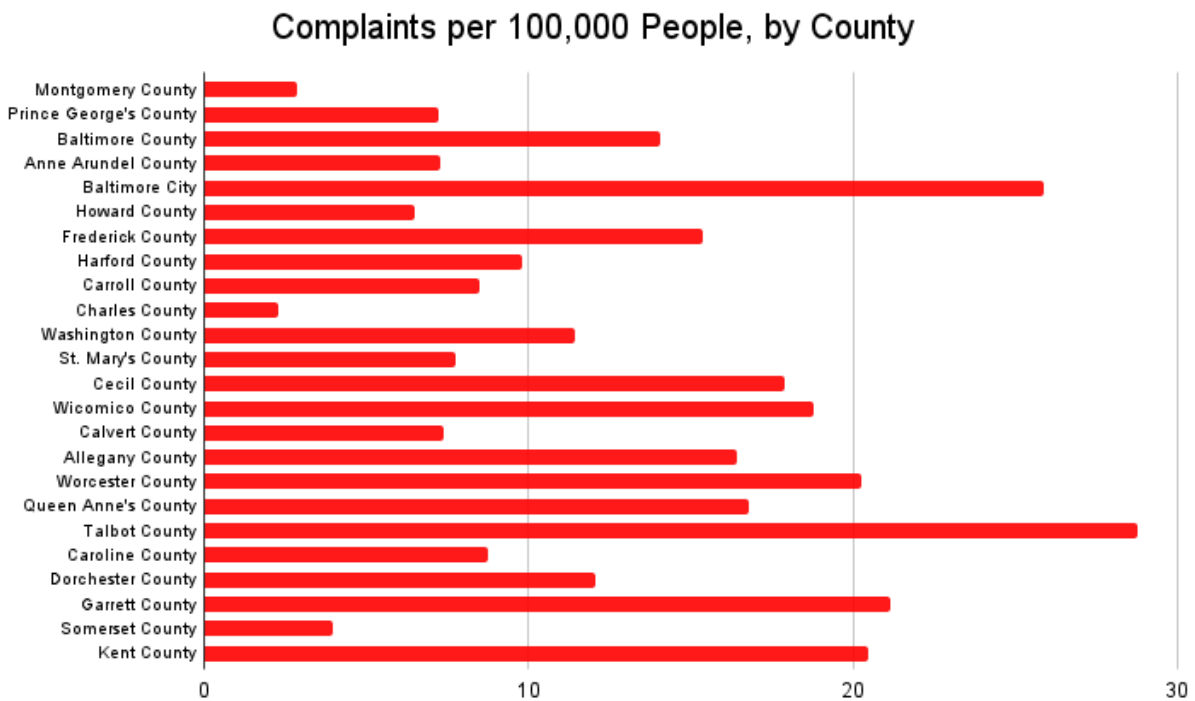
The last team's analysis of how Maryland's trends in Civil Rights complaints compared to other states was expanded upon. To do this, Maryland's overall trends in employment and housing complaints related to gender identity (GI) against California and Illinois were analyzed. During the research process, it was found that the last teams civil rights report counted all complaints filed and split them up by SOGI, rather than reporting on complaints made based on sex discrimination. To make the data from the report comparable to data from California and Illinois, the Maryland Annual Reports from 2013 to 2023 were analyzed, and only complaints regarding sex discrimination were extracted.

In the comparison, a few notable trends were observed. First, as discussed above, Maryland had almost no GI-related employment complaints until 2021, when it suddenly jumped from 0 to 43, but dropped down to 23 by 2023. Again, we hypothesize that this spike indicates increased empowerment of the LGBTQIA+ community with the expansion of Title VII. California saw a much steadier increase in GI employment complaints, from 55 in 2016 to 129 in 2023. Illinois, which groups GI and sexual orientation (SO) complaints together, also showed a steadier pattern, with complaints decreasing from 82 in 2016 to 60 in 2023. Housing and public accommodation complaints show a similar contrast. Maryland reported just one GI-related housing complaint in 2021 and none from 2013 to 2020. Contrarily, California had a clear upward trend from five complaints in 2017 to 27 in 2023, and Illinois stayed fairly steady with eight in 2018 and six in 2023. In terms of public accommodation complaints, SOGI complaints in Maryland have consistently stayed between zero and four each year over the past decade.

Illinois and California show higher and more consistent numbers, with Illinois ranging from 37 complaints in 2019 to 13 in 2023 and California reporting 27 in 2019 and 16 in 2023. Overall, Maryland's civil rights complaints data tends to have much more variability compared

to California and Illinois, both of which have smoother, more predictable trends. These trends suggest that Maryland may lack a consistent and robust system for tracking and addressing gender identity-related discrimination complaints.

To investigate these trends further, data were collected on the number of overall Civil Rights complaints for each county in Maryland from 2013 to 2024. By including a broader category of complaints with longer histories of reporting, insights can be gathered on how effective the reporting and filing systems are. This can be translated into methods and mechanisms that could benefit ways of reporting LGBTQIA+ Civil rights complaints. Figure 1 (see below) depicts the number of complaints for 2024. There is a lot of variability in the number of complaints, which supports the idea that Maryland lacks a robust system for reporting and addressing Civil Rights complaints.

Complaints per 100,000 People by County.

When the total number of complaints from 2024 is compared to prior years, Frederick, Alleghany, Washington, Saint Mary's, Calvert, Cecil, Queen Anne's, Talbot, Wicomico, Worcester, and Carroll counties all saw an increase in complaints. In fact, Frederick, Alleghany, Cecil, and Queen Anne's counties had a record high number of complaints. Additionally, across the 11 years of data, the same counties consistently had lower and higher levels of reporting. These trends and irregularity in reporting across counties and demographics support the notion that the commission should be concerned about gaps in protections for the LGBTQIA+ community, reporting accessibility, and trust in local governments and organizations.

Overall, the data from 2024 reflects an increased victimization of the LGBTQIA+ community, suggesting that working to understand the sources of this increase may need to be

prioritized. Addressing these gaps is essential to ensuring equitable protections and effective civil rights enforcement for all demographics across the state. Some ideas for addressing these gaps may include launching campaigns in collaboration with LGBTQIA+ organizations to increase education about methods of reporting or establishing SOGI-related trainings and guidelines for public businesses across the state.

Equal Employment Opportunity

In addition to investigating explanations for trends from MCCR data, the income disparities revealed in the previous project's quantitative analysis of Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) data were also investigated. Income disparities based on SOGI can be attributed to several factors, such as discrimination, the location of a workplace, and differences in household labor division. As discussed above, many LGBTQIA+ employees have reported discrimination based on SOGI in the workplace, but discrimination is also very prevalent in the hiring process (National Academies of Sciences, 2020).

The National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine conducted a study that found that “openly gay men” in many states were less likely to be invited to a first-round interview than otherwise identical straight men. This finding implies that a “gay man would have to apply to 14 jobs to get an interview while a heterosexual man would have to apply for only 9” (National Academies of Sciences, 2020). These statistics suggest that LGBTQIA+ applicants may not have the same opportunities or chances of securing higher-paying jobs compared to heterosexual applicants, thus potentially accounting for part of the income disparity observed from the previous project.

The location and industry of a job opening or workplace may also have an impact on the income disparities LGBTQIA+ employees face. For example, “in 2010, 43% of lesbian, gay, and

bisexual people in Utah said they had been discriminated against, compared to about 27% of lesbian and gay people in Colorado” (Mollenkamp, 2024). This statistic indicates that LGBTQIA+ employees in conservative states may suffer higher income disparities compared to those who live in more progressive states. Furthermore, different industries may have higher rates of discrimination and income disparities for LGBTQIA+ employees.

Daniel Mollenkamp, writer for Investopedia, found that “44% of [LGBTQIA+] people in national surveys from 2009 reported discrimination,” while only “19% of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender staff and faculty at universities and colleges across the country reported having suffered discrimination,” which may suggest that academic positions are less discriminatory (Mollenkamp, 2024.). Given these national geographic differences, it would be important to explore whether workplace discrimination and income disparities differ across counties in Maryland.

Differences in household labor division also affect how income is distributed between LGBTQIA+ couples. Instead of the cisgender norm of a “breadwinner” and “caretaker”, LGBTQIA+ relationships fall into a grey area where there has not been clear and established labor divisions. For example, lesbian couples are notorious for earning less, since the government sees two women as two caretakers (National Academies of Sciences, 2020). This leads to a compounded disparity between the couple and inadequate compensation. This is seen within a study done by the National Academy of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, which found that “married different-sex couples and male same-sex couples have the highest household incomes, while female same-sex couples and unmarried different-sex couples have the lowest” (National Academies of Sciences, 2020).

An additional study was done to see if age had an effect on this matter, and “among couples in which one or both partners were 65 or older” it was found that “female same-sex couples had significantly lower levels of income than either older male same-sex couples or older married different-sex couples” (National Academies of Sciences, 2020). No matter the age or race of the couple, this suggests that having men within a household is an essential component when trying to sustain a high income. This highlights the importance of including questions on future EEO surveys to assess if this finding persists in Maryland.

Hate Crime

Despite growing awareness of LGBTQIA+ rights and legal protections, disparities in the reporting of anti-LGBTQIA+ hate crimes persist across Maryland. This section explores how geography, socioeconomic conditions, and institutional barriers affect the frequency of these crimes and the likelihood of them being reported. It also considers the broader cultural and political context that may prevent victims from seeking justice.

The geographic and county-level variation in reports of hate crimes was analyzed. Rates of reported hate crimes against LGBTQIA+ individuals vary widely across Maryland’s counties. Urban counties such as Baltimore City, Montgomery County, and Prince George’s County generally report higher incidents (Maryland Department of State, 2023). This may reflect larger, more visible LGBTQIA+ populations, greater public awareness, and better-funded and resourced law enforcement agencies with the capacity to recognize and document hate crimes.

In contrast, rural counties—such as Garrett, Caroline, Kent, Allegany, and Somerset—often report few or no hate crimes, which isn’t necessarily because such crimes do not occur, but may reflect underreporting that is fueled by distrust, lack of access, or stigma. For example, a 2017 report by the Maryland Attorney General's Office found that 54% of hate crime

incidents were not reported to law enforcement between 2011 and 2015. The reasons included fear of retaliation, lack of clarity about what qualifies as a hate crime, and skepticism that authorities would take the complaint seriously (Civil Rights Division, 2020).

These findings reflect nationwide patterns in underreporting, but they remain relevant to Maryland, especially when disparities in resources and social attitudes persist between counties. Maryland launched an online hate crime reporting system in 2024 to address this. This digital platform allows individuals to submit reports anonymously and safely, particularly in areas where in-person reporting may feel intimidating or unsafe (Wood, 2024). This platform's effectiveness hinges on public awareness, digital access, and follow-through by local authorities.

Examining which counties report the highest and lowest rates raises important questions about economic development, educational attainment, and local crime rates. Counties with lower median incomes and limited public services may not have the training or administrative support to identify and investigate bias-motivated crimes. Areas with high overall crime rates may not prioritize or recognize hate crimes against LGBTQIA+ individuals due to strained resources. Additionally, deeply rooted social norms—shaped in part by religious or traditional values—may contribute to the stigmatization of LGBTQIA+ individuals in some communities. These cultural factors can create environments where bias-related incidents are less likely to be reported and where institutional trust remains low (Ratcliff & Schwandel, 2023).

Disparities in anti-LGBTQ hate crime reporting across Maryland reflect more than demographics – they highlight deep-rooted structural challenges related to trust, access, education, and political culture. Through this additional research into Civil Rights, EEO, and hate crime data, a few common patterns have been identified. The most common being higher discrimination against the LGBTQIA+ community in Maryland across all sectors. More

specifically, it was found that higher rates of discrimination occur in counties and industries that lean more conservative and may hold more harmful stigmas about the LGBTQIA+ community. Thus, while Maryland has made progress in raising awareness and changing policies, discrimination and an unequal landscape are still widespread.

The ability for LGBTQIA+ individuals to report, find protection, and achieve fairness depends heavily on where someone lives, works, and the resources available in their community. Therefore, a coordinated response that includes public education, better data collection, community engagement, and law enforcement accountability is essential. Only through a more inclusive and transparent system can Maryland fully address the scope of hate crimes and protect its LGBTQIA+ communities statewide.

When looking at an estimate of LGBTQ+ adults from the Williams Institute of UCLA, Maryland ranks around the middle of the country in population of LGBTQ+ adults, with slightly over 250,000 adults estimated to fall under an LGBTQ+ identity. When it comes to a proportion of the overall state population, Maryland falls slightly below the national average of 5.5%, with 5.4% of adults identifying as LGBTQ+. By using a 10-year sample of the FBI's Uniform Crime Report and filtering for LGBTQ+ hate crimes, we found that nearly 16,000 people experienced a hate crime across all federal and state jurisdictions.

The FBI identified six different types of victims' identities when reporting these crimes. Anti-Bi-Sexual, Anti-Gay (male identifying), Anti-Lesbian (female identifying), Anti-Gender Non-Conforming, Anti-Transgender, and a mixed group. Maryland saw the most amount of LGBTQ+ hate crimes towards gay males, which was over 48% of the sample of hate crimes.

Public School Bullying

The findings in this section focus on challenges faced by LGBTQIA+ youth. How public school bullying rates vary across Maryland and how that variation relates to trends in youth risk behavior(s) was explored.

The Maryland Commission on LGBTQIA+ Affairs Report from 2023 provides valuable insight into the widespread bullying, harassment, and discrimination experienced by LGBTQIA+ students in Maryland public schools. The report emphasizes that LGBTQIA+ students, particularly transgender and students of color, encounter bullying at much higher rates (Maryland Commission on LGBTQIA+ Affairs, 2023). Rural areas in Maryland, including much of the Eastern Shore, experience higher levels of bullying and are simultaneously showing lower rates of formal reporting. Key findings have indicated that misgendering by staff and peers, as well as the absence of gender-neutral facilities, has brought feelings of alienation and discrimination among LGBTQIA+ students (Maryland Commission on LGBTQIA+, 2023). These types of environments have a measurable impact on the mental health and academic success of LGBTQIA+ students. These environments have contributed to increased levels of depression, anxiety, and an overall lower well-being.

In an attempt to address these mental health impacts, the Maryland State Department of Education published the Safe and Supportive Schools for All Students guidelines. They set forth strategies and best practices to create schools where all feel welcome and included. These strategies involve training the staff on LGBTQIA+ concerns, incorporating inclusive content in the curriculum, and increasing mental health support and counseling services (Division of Student Support, 2024). The findings of the 2021 GLSEN National School Climate Survey demonstrate the positive results that these initiatives bring. LGBTQIA+ youth in supportive

schools feel safer, perform better academically, are less depressed, and feel a greater sense of belonging overall (Kosciw et al., 2022). However, the survey also reveals crucial gaps in such support, seeing as only 26.7% of Maryland LGBTQIA+ youth report that they see positive representations of LGBTQIA+ individuals in their school curriculum (Kosciw et al., 2022).

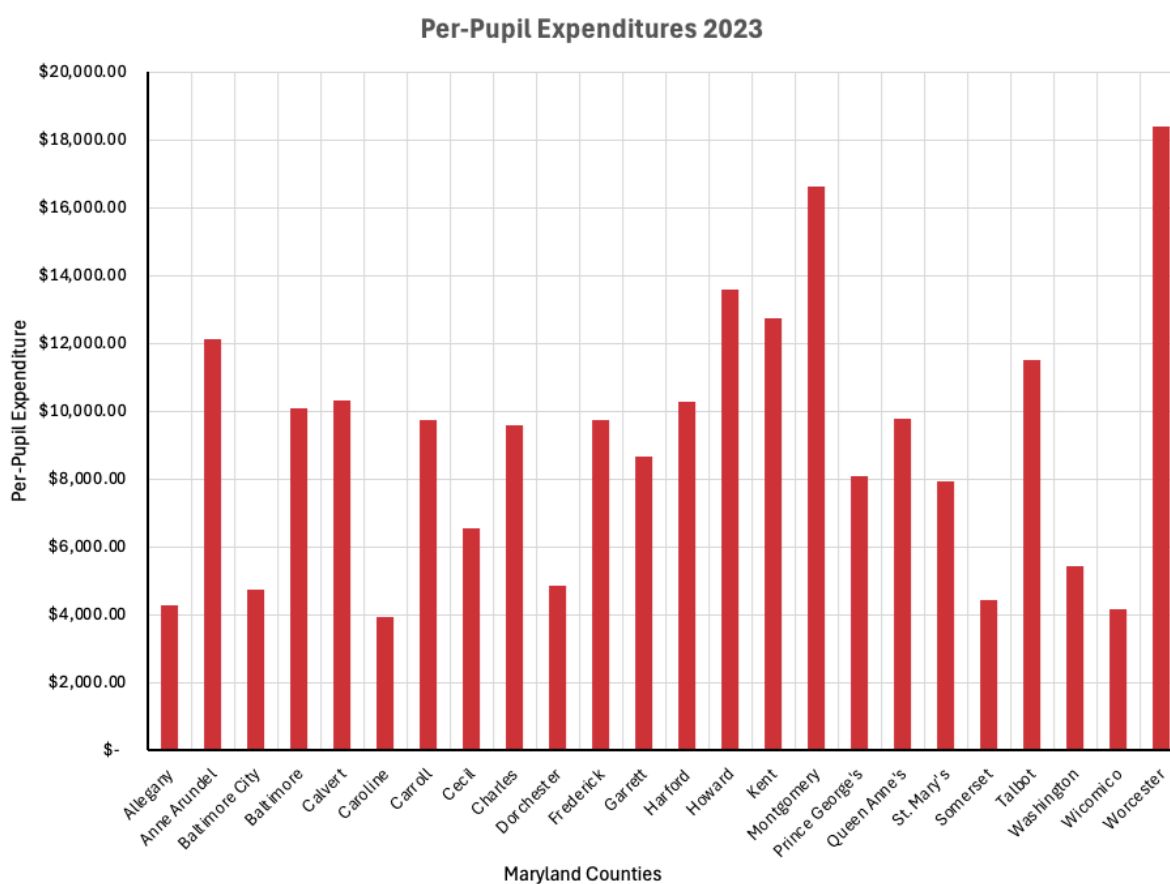
Although the Eastern Shore is home to only 7.4% of the population in Maryland, it has the highest school bullying rates. The history, cultural norms, and political conduct within this region of Maryland have allowed bullying to prosper against LGBTQIA+ students. Highly politicized groups such as the 1776 Project PAC and Moms for Liberty that exist in these counties suggest a larger movement to counter inclusive education policies (Henson Carey, 2023).

These movements have made an impact on school board elections that are responsible for the curriculum taught in schools and allow for a lack of diversity, gender, sexuality, and race in their education and school environment. In specific counties, such as Talbot and Wicomico, the LGBTQIA+ youth have very low rates of reporting bullying against them due to fear of retaliation or lack of intervention by their administrators. Youth in these counties do not believe reporting will result in any meaningful action (Maryland Commission of LGBTQIA+, 2023). This distrust in the administration was reinforced when students were punished for flying LGBTQIA+ pride flags on school grounds, whereas other students received zero punishment for displaying symbols of oppression in history, such as the Confederate flag (Division of Student Support, 2024).

Overall, these findings reveal a critical need for more effective and enforced support/resources for LGBTQIA+ students in Maryland public schools, particularly in rural areas with historically high rates of bullying and underreporting.

Whether or not school funding is correlated with higher reports of bullying was also investigated. Per-pupil funding for counties in Maryland in 2023 was analyzed, which reflects the financial resources allocated for each student and is a crucial measure of educational investment. In Maryland, this funding comprises contributions from state, local, and federal sources. Results of the analysis showed that, for the most part, counties on Maryland's Eastern Shore (Dorchester, Kent, Somerset, Talbot, Wicomico, Worcester, and Queen Anne's) had lower per-pupil expenditure for 2023, while also having the highest school bullying rates – with the exception of Queen Anne's (see Figure 2 below).

Per-Pupil Expenditures for 2023 by Maryland Counties.



This analysis reveals significant disparities in school funding among Maryland counties, which may be contributing to higher rates of school bullying and worsening student mental health, especially for those who identify with marginalized communities. Differences in funding may also impact the implementation and success of statewide guidelines and programs aimed at supporting LGBTQIA+ youth, as well as the extent of reporting resources available to students. Future research should continue to explore these correlations as well as ensure data is collected from every county in Maryland.

Youth Risk Behavior

Negative school environments have significant impacts on the mental health of LGBTQIA+ youth, which may increase their engagement in risky behaviors. In the last team's analysis of Maryland's Youth Risk Behavior Survey/Youth Tobacco Survey (YRBS/YTS) from 2013 to 2023, gay, lesbian, or bisexual individuals had a higher percentage of youth at risk for each survey interval (year) (Maryland Commission on LGBTQIA+, 2025). However, important limitations from this initial meta-analysis include the absence of the 'other/questioning' option for gender in the surveys before 2021 and mental health questions before the 2023 survey. Given these limitations and the disproportionate bullying of LGBTQIA+ youth in Maryland, this section further explores the state of their mental health.

Due to a lack of comprehensive research into the mental health of LGBTQIA+ youth in Maryland, the research focused on national trends through a review of national mental health surveys and articles that focused on LGBTQIA+ youth. Various trends across the different sources were identified.

It was found that LGBTQIA+ youth are at a higher risk for anxiety and depression compared to their heterosexual peers. For example, in a 2023 survey, the Trevor Project reported

that 67% of their respondents who identified as LGBTQIA+ have anxiety, and 54% have depression. These rates are highest in the Southern U.S. In 2024, the Trevor Project's survey results showed a slight decrease in these numbers, with 66% of respondents reporting anxiety and 53% of respondents reporting depression. There were significantly fewer respondents in 2024 (~10,000 fewer) (National Alliance on Mental Illness, n.d.).

Furthermore, sources revealed that LGBTQIA+ youth consistently report higher rates of suicide, both considered and attempted. In 2024, 39% of lesbian, gay, and bisexual participants reported that they had considered suicide, and 12% reported that they had attempted (The Trevor Project, 2024). These rates were even higher for transgender and non-binary youth. These findings reveal the severity of the mental health crisis within the LGBTQIA+ community, especially for youth.

Other sources cited similar risk factors that could be contributing to higher rates of anxiety, depression, and suicide in LGBTQIA+ youth. These factors include: coming out, peer + family rejection, trauma, substance use, homelessness, and inadequate mental health care (National Alliance on Mental Illness, n.d.). An article by the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) posits that youth who come out may face trauma and rejection due to unsupportive peer, school, or home environments.

In recent surveys, 86% of LGBTQIA+ youth reported being harassed or assaulted at school, and only 37% of LGBTQIA+ youth identified their home as an "LGBTQ-affirming" space (Kosciw et al., 2020; The Trevor Project, 2022). Coping with the rejection of one's identity has been correlated with increased susceptibility to the risk factors mentioned above, including increased trauma, illicit drug use, homelessness, and suicide ideation (Garey, 2024; National Alliance on Mental Illness, n.d.). Taken together, this research shows that LGBTQIA+ youth are

at a high risk for negative mental health outcomes, yet most don't have the support that they need or the space to voice their needs.

In Maryland specifically, many organizations and policies are working to support the mental health of LGBTQIA+ youth. The Maryland State Department of Education's Safe and Supportive Schools for All Students guidelines work to increase mental health support and counseling services in Maryland public schools and have already shown positive results in schools that support these initiatives (Division of Student Support, 2024).

Additionally, the state government established a consortium to fund a diverse range of mental health services (online and in-person therapy, training for parents and teachers, etc.) in every county of Maryland (Allen, 2025). Although these are positive actions in addressing the mental health crisis among adolescents, these services are under threat by budget cuts in an attempt to close the billion-dollar budget gap (Allen, 2025). Furthermore, research has shown that youth with intersectional identities, such as LGBTQIA+ youth, face unique mental health challenges that may not be acknowledged in these services' approaches (National Alliance on Mental Illness, n.d.).

The research and analysis suggest there remains a need for more robust mental health support that is sensitive to the unique challenges LGBTQIA+ youth face. This is supported by national trends that indicate a greater risk for negative mental health outcomes for LGBTQIA+ youth, as well as higher rates of bullying of LGBTQIA+ youth in Maryland public schools. To initiate the conversation about what these supports could look like, a statewide needs assessment that includes a section regarding mental health would be extremely helpful to get firsthand accounts from the LGBTQIA+ community in Maryland to help identify specific areas for improvement, realistic solutions/ supports that could be made available, etc.

Future Exploration

Significant gaps in data across all analyses highlight the need for more consistent, comprehensive, and inclusive data collection practices. Future efforts should prioritize implementing standardized frameworks for recording sexual orientation and gender identity information (SOGI) across Maryland agencies and institutions, ensuring mandatory reporting for all complaint categories, incidents, and survey responses. Special attention should be paid to gathering detailed demographic information that captures intersectionality across race, socioeconomic status, and other identities to better understand disparities.

To address missing or inconsistent data, future research could include conducting statewide needs assessments, climate surveys, and targeted interviews with LGBTQIA+ individuals to understand barriers to reporting and engagement. Engaging advocacy groups, students, and other stakeholders will be critical to shaping more effective data collection methods and program interventions. There is also a need to examine external factors, such as policy changes, cultural shifts, and legal rulings, that may influence complaint and incident trends over time. Expanding research into underrepresented communities and populations, especially areas with low reported incidents, will help uncover structural or community-specific barriers to reporting and resource access.

Standardized systems for collecting SOGI-related bullying and risk behavior data across public schools could be developed in the education sector, paired with new surveys and staff training initiatives. Further exploration into factors such as student-to-teacher ratios, political climate, and socioeconomic conditions could shed light on variations in bullying and mental health outcomes.

Lastly, the survey design itself could benefit from future examinations and updates. Future surveys must offer more inclusive identity options and maintain consistency over time. Analyzing response patterns—particularly why specific sensitive questions are skipped—will help refine survey methodologies to better capture the lived experiences of LGBTQIA+ individuals.

Conclusion

Overall, Maryland has made meaningful progress in protecting the rights of LGBTQIA+ individuals, particularly through policies that prohibit discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity (SOGI). As outlined above, the Maryland State Department of Education has issued comprehensive guidelines to support LGBTQIA+ students, affirming both their identities and safety. Additionally, the Attorney General’s LGBTQIA+ guidance Memorandum (2025) aims to educate the community on their rights under state and federal law, covering healthcare, education, employment, housing, identification, and hate crimes, while also offering guidance on how to report discrimination.

However, despite these advancements, critical gaps remain. Many policies lack consistent enforcement, adequate funding, or universal implementation. For example, inclusive practices in schools often differ by district, and there is no statewide mandate for cultural competency training among healthcare providers. Transgender-specific concerns also remain insufficiently addressed. Furthermore, until recently, many state-level surveys excluded SOGI-related questions, limiting the ability to collect meaningful data and fully understand the needs of the LGBTQIA+ population.

To better support this community, Maryland must prioritize the enforcement and expansion of existing protection, invest in culturally competent healthcare and mental health services, and conduct a comprehensive statewide LGBTQIA+ needs assessment. This would

help ensure current efforts are effective and responsive to emerging challenges. Ultimately, proactive and sustained action is essential to achieving equity and inclusion for all LGBTQIA+ Marylanders.

Scope of Work #2: Data Repository

Abstract

The creation of the Data Repository presents a compilation of data sources previously used in the last group's work and newly acquired data relevant to the objectives of the Commission. While not exhaustive, the compilation is robust and well-organized, including cleaned and formatted CSVs and accompanying documentation such as README/Use Case files. The work ensures a centralized location for all data and sets a foundation for future analysis and informed decision-making, which will be protected and maintained under the iConsultancy's data governance policies. These policies uphold principles of lawfulness, fairness, and transparency; ensure data accuracy and accessibility; and require that data is used and processed within its intended context. They also address data minimization, storage limitations, and accountability, ensuring that individuals with access handle the data with integrity and under strict confidentiality (iConsultancy, 2025). Additionally, in accordance with the non-disclosure agreement signed by all authorized data users at the project's onset, data with potentially sensitive information is stored separately and secured and maintained with additional protocols by TJ Rainsford, the head of the iConsultancy.

Introduction

The objective of this project is to build upon data collected in the previous projects by expanding the repository with new, relevant sources and organizing all materials in a structured, accessible format. This process supports the Commission's ongoing projects by ensuring that data has not only been collected but also cleaned, documented, and is ready for analysis. The scope includes data at the Maryland state, national, and census levels, consolidated into a single location for ease of access.

Process

The data compilation followed a structured and multi-stage approach. Firstly, the previous team's work was reviewed, existing sources were examined, and their utility was assessed. Secondly, additional data was collected to expand upon the previous groups meta-analysis, and Maryland, national, and census data was collected. Thirdly, a detailed README file was created for each source. Next, datasets were standardized into CSV format, with efforts made to merge relevant information and remove any redundant data. Lastly, all finalized data and materials were stored in a centralized Google Drive folder for easy access and future use.

Methodology

Each dataset, whether previously used or newly acquired, was critically analyzed for relevance and uniqueness. Repetitive or outdated sources were excluded from the compilation. The cleaning of data involved removing duplicates, handling missing values, and formatting data for consistency. Each data source was paired with a README/Use Case file, detailing: the source, topic, key findings, potential uses, and relevant data points. A Python script was created to scrape PDF files and streamline the extraction of relevant data into a CSV file. Finally, to handle census data, another Python script was developed and used to facilitate the consolidation of weekly data into categorized datasets.

Findings

A total of 21 relevant census data categories were selected for the years 2021 through 2024. Numerous Maryland and national-level datasets were identified and formatted. The README files that were created provide valuable insights and metadata, facilitating user

understanding and future analysis. Both raw and aggregate datasets were successfully organized into usable formats, such as CSVs, improving overall accessibility and utility.

Future Exploration

While what has been completed in this scope of work focuses on data collection, cleaning, organization, and documentation, potential areas for future exploration have been identified. These areas could significantly enhance the utility and analysis of the compiled data: data analysis on specific variables, juxtaposing census and additional CSV data to find correlations, and developing a database. Future census data analysis could be performed with the cleaned and categorized census data to provide further insights relevant to the Commission's objectives. Additional CSVs can be analysed beyond the census information, and the findings can further inform future decision-making and policy development. Finally, creating a centralized database with searching features would significantly enhance accessibility and usability. This would allow for more efficient searches, better data integrity, and simplified data integration for future projects.

Conclusion

The creation of the "Data Repository" folder marks a significant step in both organizing and expanding the data infrastructure for the Commission. By combining legacy data with newly curated sources and enhancing it with clear documentation and consistent formatting, the groundwork has been laid for more effective analysis and data-driven decision-making. Future teams will benefit from the structured Google Drive folder and thorough documentation practices established in this work.

Scope Of Work #3: Post-Election Survey Data Analysis

Abstract

In collaboration with the Maryland Commission on LGBTQIA+ Affairs, data was collected and analyzed through a survey to assess general satisfaction with election results and the emotional responses of Marylanders. The survey results, under an NDA, measured the prevalence and intensity of emotions such as nervousness, hopelessness, restlessness, depression, worthlessness, and the sense that “everything was an effort.” Responses were categorized by frequency, ranging from “None of the time” to “All of the time”, and analyzed through the lens of intersectionality. Variables such as ethnicity, gender identity, and other demographic factors.

The survey data was also used to generate visualizations that illustrate patterns in emotional responses and concerns across various groups. These graphs reflect participant sentiment regarding topics such as rights, safety, policies, healthcare, education, and hate. Additionally, the analysis explored whether respondents felt they had access to necessary resources and support systems post-election.

Introduction

The post-election survey data analysis scope of work used survey results on Marylanders' satisfaction levels, their general responses, and the gathered response distributions to create graphs that allow viewers to see areas of concern of the general public. These graphics show the emotional response distribution by race, emotional response distribution by primary race, the emotional response patterns by primary race identity, the emotional response patterns by primary gender identity, an age analysis, particular concerns responders have around policies, education, and other similar concerns, and general sentiments around the availability of resources available

to marginalized populations. From these graphics, we can find areas where the general public feels a lack of attention and care for their well-being. By bringing attention to these areas, we will be able to better understand the problems currently facing the average Marylander and will better allow our policymakers to argue and construct future laws, policies, and initiatives that will help marginalized Marylanders.

The following sections regarding analysis of the post-election survey data cover the process used to collect and analyze the survey results, the methodologies used to separate results and create graphs to allow a better understanding of the collection information, the overall findings and important data points to point out, and any future recommendations for future groups to take on how to expand and/or add to this scope of work.

Process

A qualitative analysis of the post-election survey was conducted across several survey questions. Each question was examined through a targeted review of responses with key themes identified to guide the analysis. Visualizations such as heat maps and bar graphs were created to represent the findings, highlight emerging trends, and illustrate points of intersectionality across demographic groups including race, gender, and age.

Methodology

To analyze emotional responses following the presidential election, we focused on six core survey questions that asked participants how frequently they experienced specific emotions: nervousness, hopelessness, restlessness or fidgetiness, depression, a sense that everything was an effort, and feelings of worthlessness. Each of these questions used a Likert-style response scale ranging from “None of the time” to “All of the time.” Our objective was to assess how these emotional responses varied across different demographic groups—specifically race, gender

identity, and age. To prepare the data for analysis, we removed incomplete or non-informative responses, including entries where participants selected “N/A or I do not wish to answer.” For participants who selected multiple race or gender categories, we extracted the first-listed identity to serve as a proxy for their primary identity. This allowed us to organize participants into distinct demographic groups while still capturing broad trends in emotional well-being.

For each group, we determined the most frequently selected emotional response and visualized these results through heatmaps and percentage-based bar charts. To represent emotional intensity, we mapped each response to a numerical scale, assigning values from 0 (“None of the time”) to 4 (“All of the time”), and applied color gradients to show variation in emotional burden across groups. Analyses were conducted separately for race, gender, and age to ensure clear comparisons. This methodological approach enabled us to generate targeted insights about which communities reported higher levels of emotional distress in the aftermath of the election, providing valuable information that can inform future policy, mental health support, and public engagement strategies.

Relating to particular concerns, the data was based on a keyword analysis conducted on three open-ended survey questions: “Would you like to elaborate or clarify any of your answers above about how you are feeling following the election?”, “What other ways do you anticipate these political shifts to negatively impact your day-to-day life, if any?”, and “What specific concerns do you have about the potential impacts of the recent presidential election on LGBTQIA2S+ rights and protections?” A predefined list containing concern-related keywords (e.g., healthcare, rights) was used to filter the free responses. Each response was tokenized and checked for any matching concern keyword. Any matching keywords were counted and responses were then categorized based on the concerns reflected by the matching keywords. The

density of each concern was calculated to help create a visualization of what respondents are most concerned about.

For the resources, a preliminary qualitative analysis was conducted on the responses in Column R: "What types of resources, information, or support would help you prepare for or respond to potential rollbacks in LGBTQIA2S+ protections?" Each response was reviewed and assigned up to three numerical codes, with each code representing a specific topic or sentiment expressed in the response.

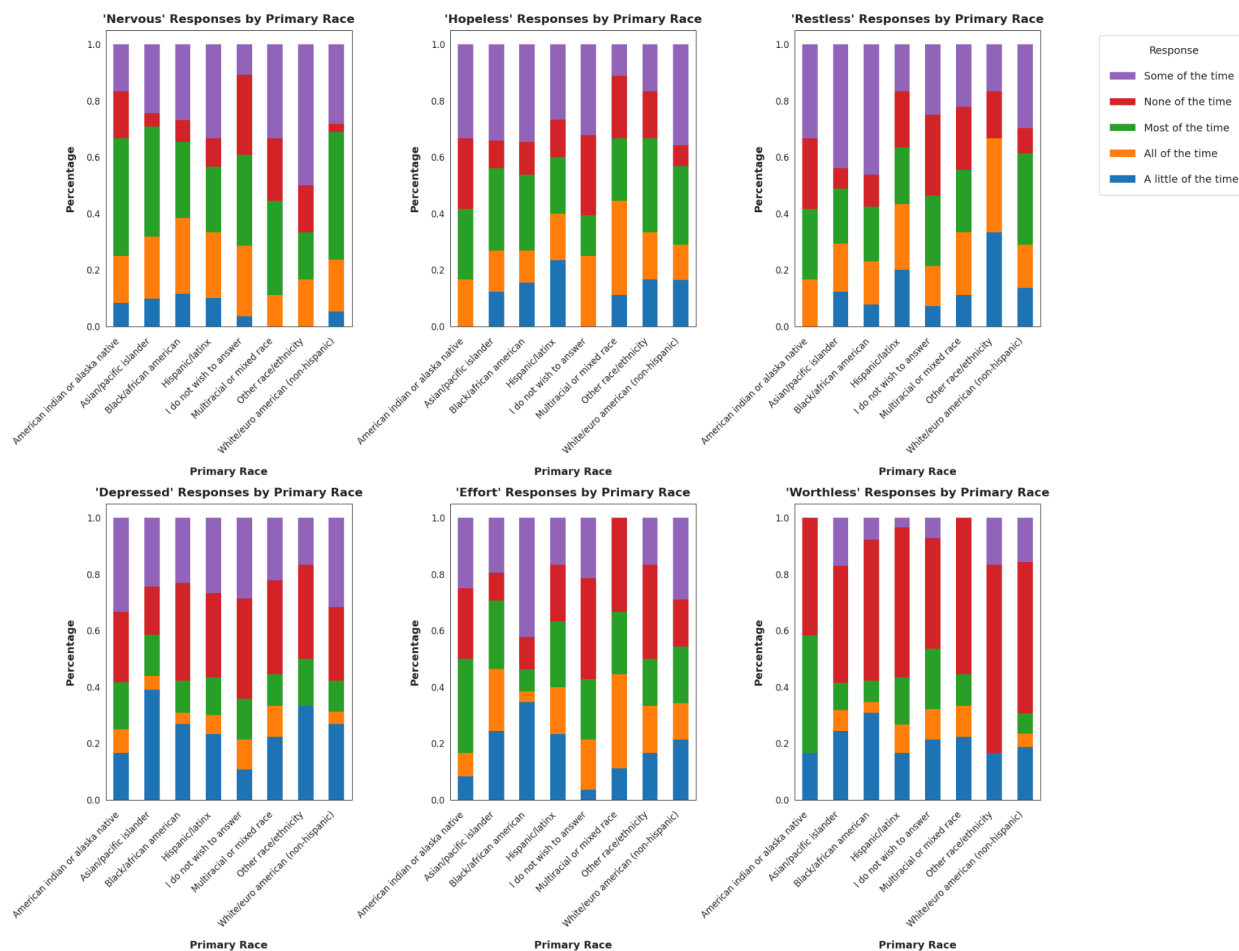
Findings

Demographic Representation

The participants in the survey are predominantly White/Euro-American (Non-Hispanic) and identify as women. This demographic skew should be considered when generalizing the findings to the broader population.

Emotional Responses

Emotional Response Distribution by Primary Race.



This analysis shows that multiracial or mixed-race respondents face the steepest emotional burden. We can see that 33.3% report feeling *hopeless* “All of the time.” Two-thirds say everything takes *effort*. Over half (55.6%) feel *worthless* “Most of the time.” Both have a combined top-two frequency (All + Most) above 50%. It should be noted that this group consistently leads in the highest-frequency categories for nearly every one of the negative emotions.

This analysis also shows that Black/African American respondents show especially high depression and low self-worth. 34.6% say that they “felt so *depressed* that nothing could cheer them up” most of the time. And 50% report feeling *worthless* “Most of the time.” These indicate a critical need for depression-focused support within this community.

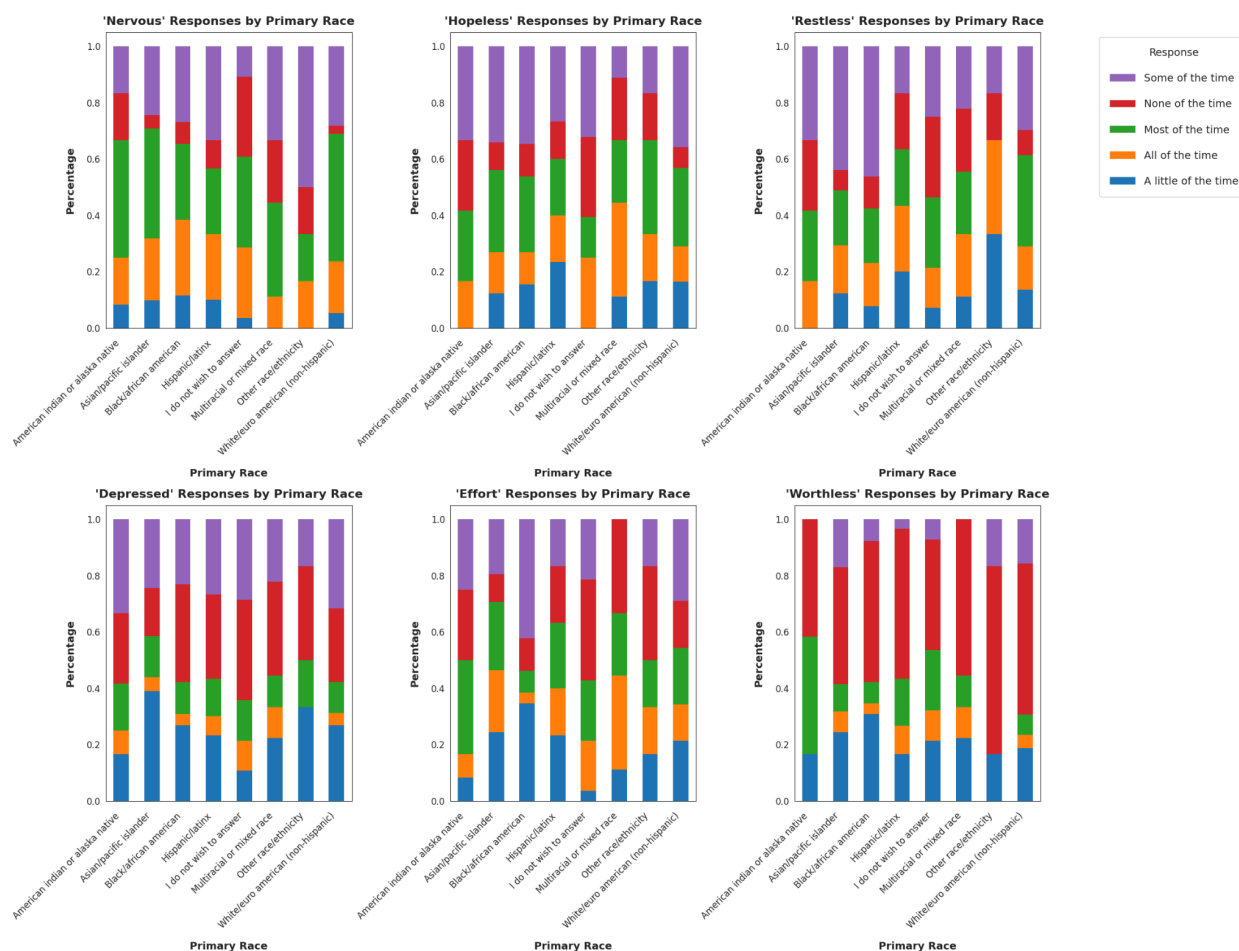
This analysis further shows that White/Euro American (Non-Hispanic) respondents: moderate anxiety but strong *self-worth* issues. 45.3% mark feeling nervous “Some of the time.” And 53.6% feel *worthless* “Most of the time,” indicating a strong sense of low self-esteem.

Other Race/Ethnicity respondents display a paradox in this analysis. 50% reported they experienced Anxiety “None of the time,” indicating low anxiety among this group. And 66.7% reported that they felt worthless “Most of the time,” the highest amount among all groups. They report a low amount of anxiety and a high amount of worthlessness.

American Indian or Alaska Native and Asian/Pacific Islander patterns show that American Indians or Alaska Natives surveyed had the highest “Some of the time” nervousness at 41.7%. Asian/Pacific Islanders reported that 39% felt depressed “Some of the time,” and fewer of them picked “Most” or “All of the time” compared to other groups.

This analysis shows that Hispanic/Latinx respondents report moderate distributions across emotions. No emotion was *most* often picked as “All of the time” or “Most of the time,” but many still reported moderate-to-high levels of hopelessness, depression, and effort.

Emotional Response Distribution by Primary Gender.



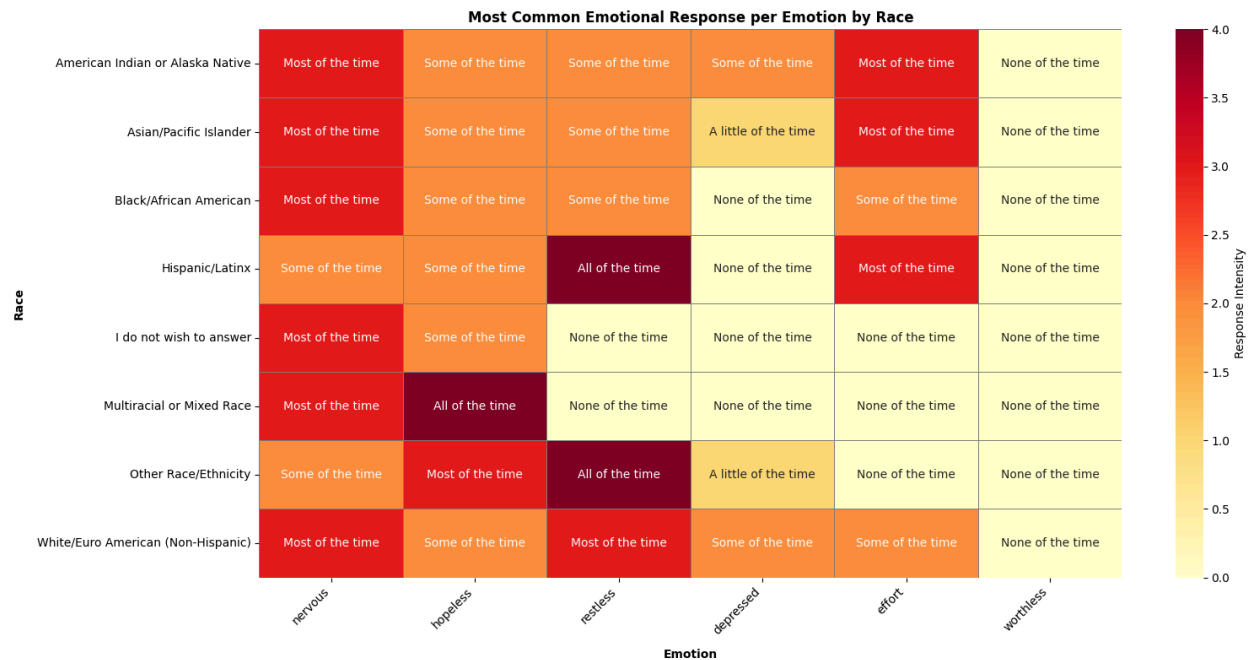
This analysis highlights disparities in emotional well-being across communities, revealing which groups may be experiencing greater emotional burdens and could benefit from targeted support. In this analysis, we are shown that nonbinary groups noted that 35.5% feel depressed “Some of the time,” the highest out of any group. Transgender groups reported that 30.9% feel depressed “A little of the time,” and only 19.4% say they never feel depressed which is lower than all other groups.

In the analysis, it notes that everyday tasks feel hardest to nonbinary people, with 33.9% saying that everything feels like an effort “All of the time,” more than three times the rate of cisgender (10%) or women (9.3%). Gender-diverse groups show a high response rate for anxiety.

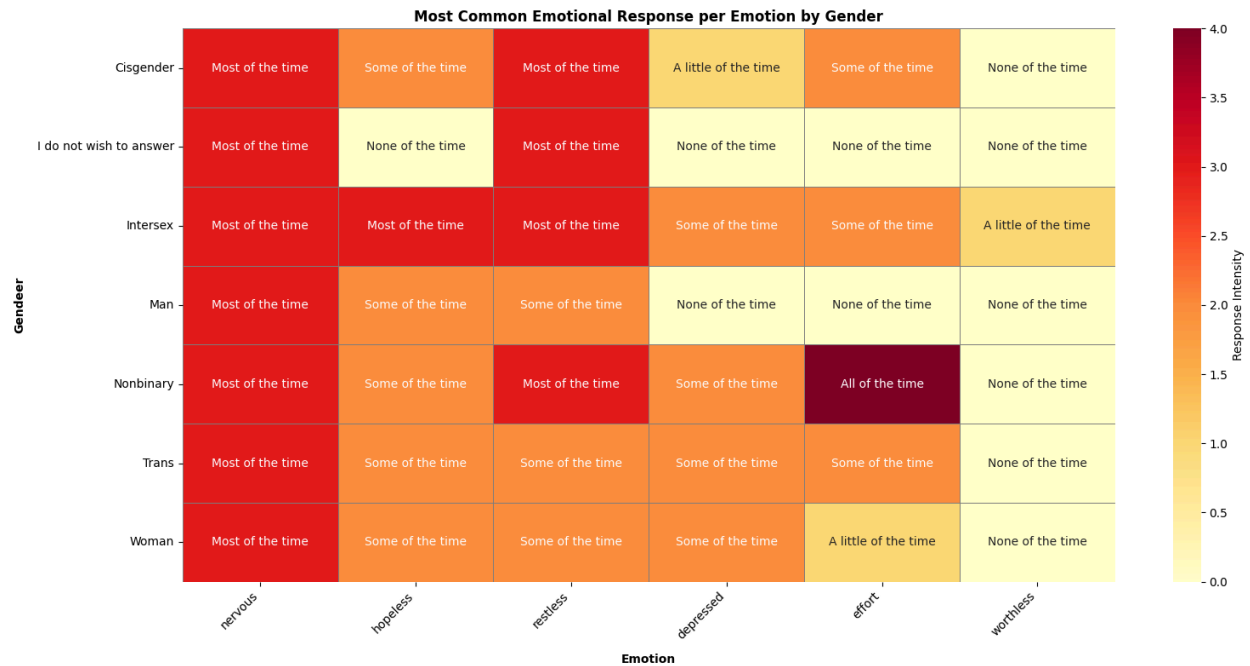
Nearly half of cisgender (48%), transgender (47.6%), nonbinary (40.3%), and women (39.3%) say they feel nervous “Most of the time.” Whereas we see that men report nervousness “Most of the time” at a much lower percentage of (29.1%).

The analysis shows that self-worth is most significant among men, cisgender people, and women. A majority in these groups say they never feel worthless (men: 64.1%, cisgender: 57.0%, women: 58.5%). In contrast, only 32.3% of nonbinary and 42.4% of transgender respondents report “None of the time” for worthlessness, pointing to lower self-esteem in gender-diverse groups.

Hopelessness is a major issue for cisgender people and women. 31.5% of cisgender and 30.1% of women say they feel hopeless “Most of the time,” higher than in nonbinary (24.2%) or transgender (24.6%) groups. Gender-diverse respondents, especially nonbinary and transgender individuals, experience the highest day-to-day burdens (anxiety, effort, depression), while men, cisgender people, and women show stronger self-worth and slightly lower overall distress.

Emotional Response Patterns by Primary Race Identity.

This analysis visualizes the most common emotional response for each racial group across six feelings, including nervousness, hopelessness, restlessness, depression, “Everything was an effort,” and worthlessness. Each cell in this heatmap displays the response category most frequently chosen by respondents in that group, with darker shades marking where “Most of the time” or “All of the time” dominate. This analysis shows “Most of the time” is the most frequent response for nervousness across nearly every group, indicating high rates of anxiety. For worthlessness, almost every racial group’s response is “None of the time,” suggesting that despite other burdens, respondents generally maintain a positive sense of self-worth. Multiracial or Mixed-Race participants most often report “All of the time” for hopelessness, hinting at a potentially unique emotional burden they have as they have to navigate multiple identities.

Emotional Response Patterns by Primary Gender Identity.

This analysis shows which response is most common for each gender identity across six feelings, including: depressed, “Everything was an effort”, hopelessness, nervousness, restlessness, and worthlessness. Darker shades mark where “Most of the time” or “All of the time” dominate.” This analysis shows that “Most of the time” is the top response for nervousness for almost every gender. For effort, only Nonbinary respondents selected “All of the time,” suggesting they experience the greatest day-to-day strain. Intersex and Nonbinary participants consistently mark “Most of the time” for several emotions, indicating elevated emotional burdens. Those identifying as Man or Cisgender most often choose “None of the time” or “Some of the time,” pointing to relatively fewer severe negative experiences. Self-worth remains strong: Like the race heatmap, almost every group reports “None of the time” for worthlessness, suggesting a generally positive self-image despite other stresses.

This analysis clearly shows that gender-diverse individuals and many of the racial groups report alarmingly high levels of negative emotions. However, because self-report categories like “None of the time,” “Some of the time,” and “Most of the time” were exclusively relied on, there is little insight into the actual intensity, context, or triggers of that anxiety.

Another key gap is the lack of data on coping strategies and social support. It is known how often people feel anxious, but not how they manage those feelings or whether they even have access to resources like counseling, peer support, or community groups. Finally, due to the decision to simplify gender identity by taking only the first-listed option, individuals who identify with multiple genders or races are less visible in our analysis. While this approach helps streamline the results, future studies should include and explore these fluid identities directly to capture any distinct emotional patterns they may experience.

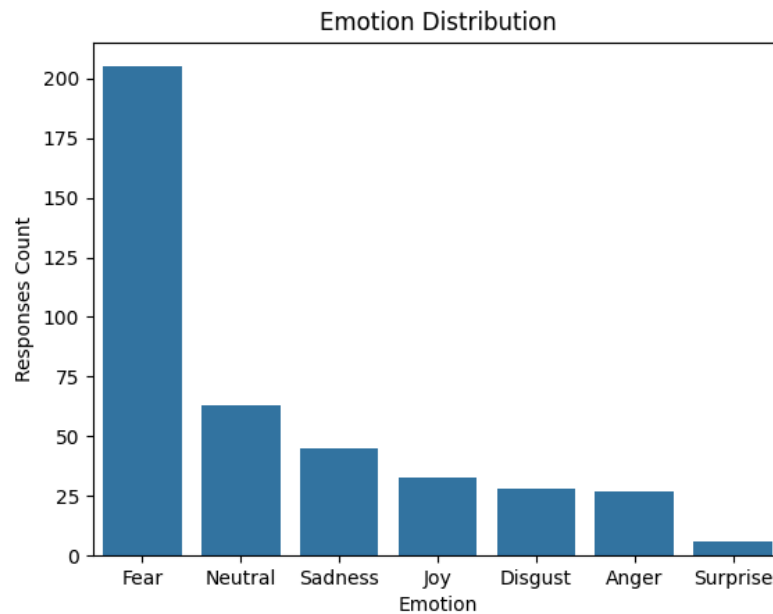
Overall Election Sentiment and Emotion Analysis

To better understand how respondents were feeling after the election’s outcome was declared, both a qualitative and quantitative analysis were performed on the survey from columns F and M of the survey, both of which asked: “*Would you like to elaborate or clarify any of your answers above about how you are feeling following the election?*” Since both columns posed the same question, their responses were merged into a single dataset.

Before analysis, responses were cleaned by removing punctuation, empty cells, and non-emotive words. A Hugging Face model (emotion-english-distilroberta-base) was used to identify the top three emotions in each response. A sentiment analysis model also labeled each response as positive or negative. To improve accuracy, mismatches were filtered out, such as responses marked as “joy” but paired with negative sentiment, or those with multiple conflicting emotional scores. The final, filtered results were visualized using Seaborn and Matplotlib to

Post-Election Emotion Word Cloud.

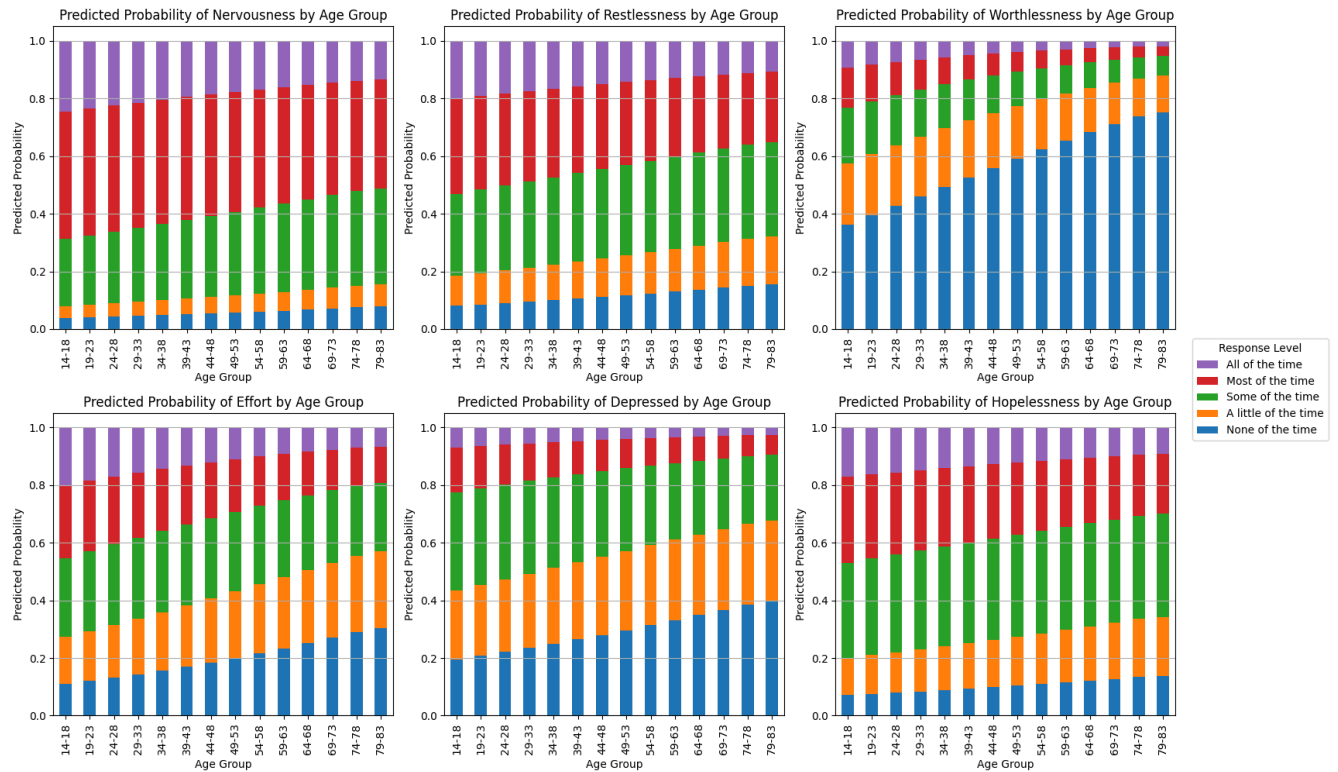


Post-Election Emotion Bar Chart.

The word cloud and bar chart reveal an overall negative emotional response to the election. Fear emerged as the dominant emotion, with the word cloud detailing that many felt “terrified”, “scared”, “worried”, and even “hopeless”. The respondents genuinely believe that they will face dire consequences as a result of the newly appointed leadership in the US. Other prevalent emotions included sadness and anger. The word cloud highlights the emotional language used, giving a visual sense of the recurring themes in the responses, where more frequently used expressions appear with larger fonts, emphasizing the emotional impact of the election.

Age Analysis

Predicted Probabilities of Emotions by Age Group.



This analysis covers how a subject's age affects their emotions following the recent election. It looks into six different feelings, including restlessness, depression, hopelessness, nervousness, worthlessness, and "Everything was an effort." Each age group spans five years, ranging from 14 through 18 up to 79 through 83.

In this analysis, there is a pattern with predicted probability levels of nervousness in relation to age. Older respondents were less likely to answer with "Most of the time" and "All of the time" in response to feeling nervous, and younger respondents were less likely to choose "None of the time" and "A little of the time," indicating that experiencing feelings of nervousness decreases with age. Despite this pattern however it is important to note that the

answer “Most of the time” for feeling nervous does remain the most frequently selected across all age groups. Across all age groups and all emotional responses, the feeling of “nervousness” was the most agreed upon. Overall, this analysis shows that younger respondents had a high rate of emotional distress following the election.

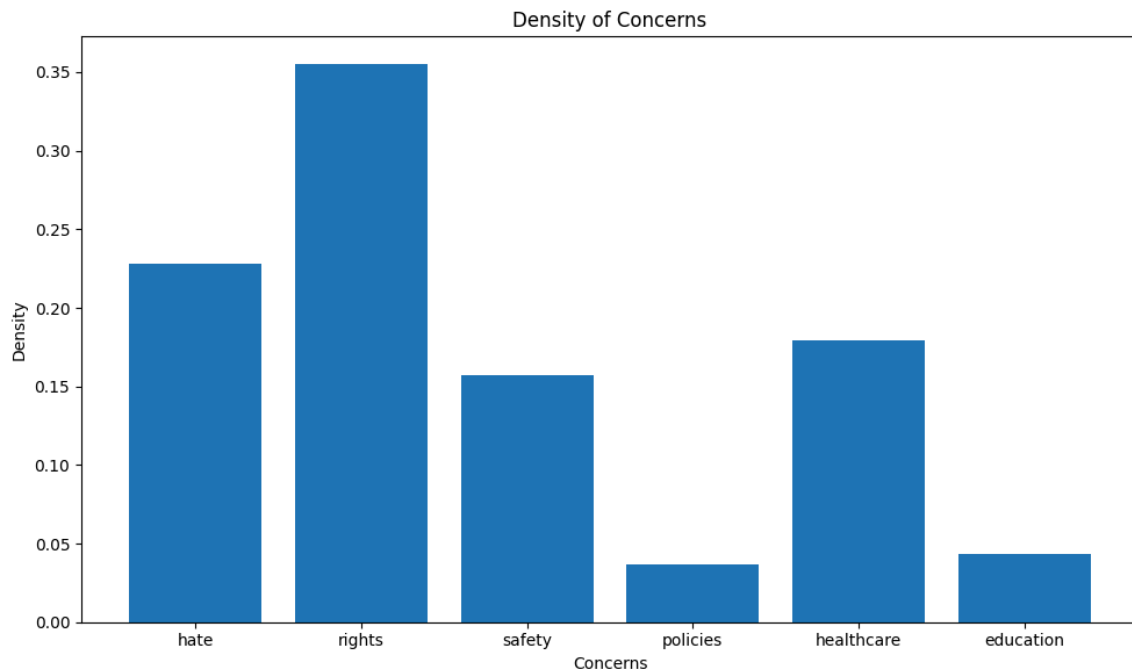
Feelings of worthlessness decrease with age. This graph shows that as respondents get older, they are more likely to choose that they feel worthless “None of the time.” Whereas younger respondents are more likely to choose “All of the time.” However, “None of the time ” is the most frequently chosen option across all age groups.

Reports of depression decrease with age. As respondents get older, “None of the time” and “A little of the time” are more frequently chosen, and responses “Most of the time” and “All of the time” decrease. This is an indicator that depression is most common in younger age groups.

Feelings of hopelessness show a clear age-related pattern. As age increases, more respondents select feeling hopeless “None of the time” or “A little of the time,” while reports of feeling hopeless “Most of the time” or “All of the time” decrease. The response “Some of the time” remains steady across all age groups and appears to be the most common overall. This pattern is also seen in responses relating to restlessness and the feeling that “Everything was an effort.”

Particular Concerns

Density of Concerns.

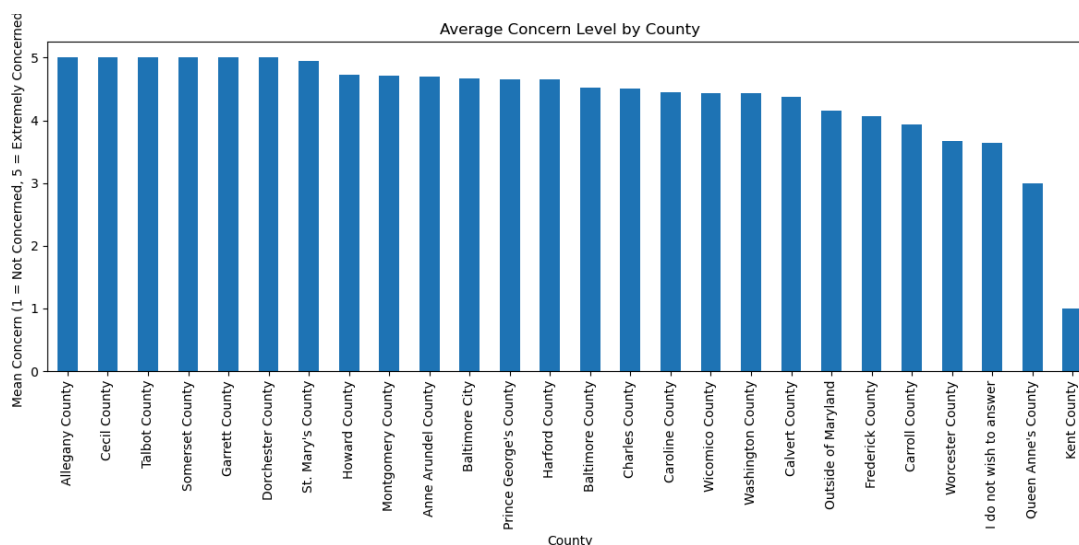


A keyword analysis of the free responses was conducted in response to the survey question: What are the aspects individuals are particularly concerned or fearful about? A predefined set of concern-related keywords was created to help filter and categorize the free responses. One recurring theme that was found was that “rights” are highly mentioned in the statements made by respondents.

The concern for “rights” mentioned was .35, or 35%, making it the highest concern out of the six keywords. The graph above shows the overall mentions of each keyword within the free responses of three survey questions regarding particular concerns. The category “rights” is representative of any response that uses this keyword, including more specific responses such as “trans-rights” and “LGBTQIA+ rights”. “Hate”, “safety”, and “healthcare” were also popular

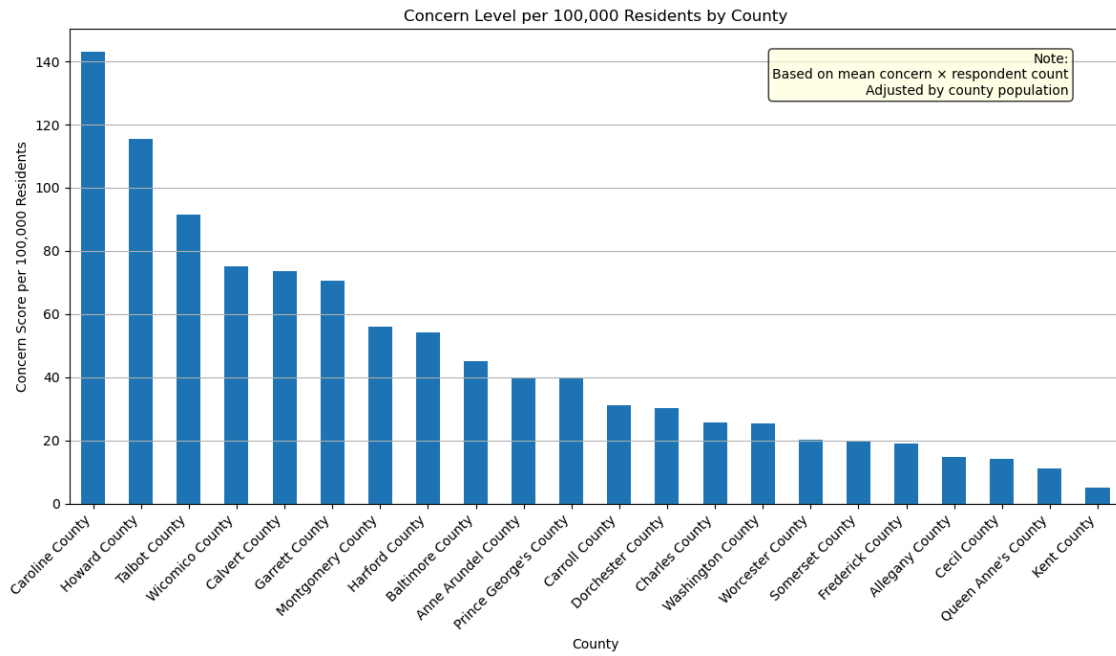
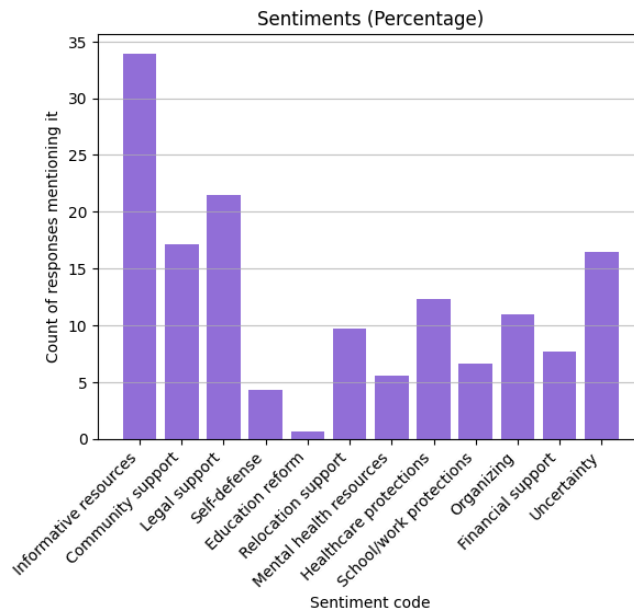
responses for particular concerns among members of the LGBTQIA+ community. All of the concerns shown in this analysis are related to the LGBTQIA+ rights, or the lack thereof, which may contribute to the high density of responses using the term “rights”.

Average Concern Level By County.



This analysis addresses the question: *Does concern about a rise in hate/bias incidents following the election differ by county in Maryland?* Results indicate that concern levels varied significantly across counties. In terms of raw averages, Montgomery County, Baltimore City, and Prince George's County displayed the highest levels of concern, with a large number of respondents selecting the highest level of agreement. These counties, which are among the most populous and diverse in the state, reflect a strong awareness of or sensitivity to the threat of post-election hate or bias incidents. Conversely, counties such as Carroll, Queen Anne's, and Kent showed lower overall concern, with more responses falling in the lower end of the scale. While some counties like Allegany and Dorchester reported unanimous concern, these results are based on very small samples and may not reflect broader sentiment.

To better account for population disparities, a second visualization analyzed concerns on a per capita basis, calculating a concern score per 100,000 residents. This adjustment significantly reshaped the interpretation. Caroline County ranked highest, followed by Howard, Talbot, and Calvert Counties—smaller or mid-sized areas where concern may be deeply felt, even if fewer responses were recorded overall. On the other hand, counties like Montgomery and Prince George’s, which had the highest raw concern totals, dropped to mid-level rankings per capita due to their large populations. At the low end of the spectrum, Queen Anne’s and Kent Counties showed the least concern per capita, suggesting lower relative levels of fear or potential underreporting. Overall, this dual analysis demonstrates that while populous urban counties exhibit strong absolute concern, smaller counties may show equal or greater intensity of concern relative to their size. Including both raw and population-adjusted perspectives is critical to forming an accurate, inclusive understanding of regional emotional responses following the election.

Concern Level per 1,000,000 Residents by County.**Resources***Sentiments.*

This bar graph depicts the responses to the question, “What types of resources, information, or support would help you prepare for or respond to potential rollbacks in LGBTQIA2S+ protections?” The top 3 sentiments include: Informative Resources: 33.95% (220 responses), Legal support: 21.45% (139 responses), Community support: 17.13% (111 responses). More specifically, examples of informative resources are: communications about legal proceedings and your rights in Maryland, along with other educational materials, newsletters, and infographics on how to prepare yourself or how to be an ally. Next, legal support and government solutions: pushing back against federal obstruction and rollbacks, legal counseling, protective legislation, and seeing that Maryland will fight for LGBTQ+ rights. Third, community resources: Support groups, safe spaces, and social services. From this analysis, responses revealed three key needs in preparing for potential rollbacks in LGBTQIA2S+ protections: access to clear information, legal support, and safe community spaces. The desire for newsletters and updates reflects a need for timely, reliable information. Legal counseling was frequently mentioned, pointing to concerns about navigating discrimination and defending rights. The call for public safe spaces highlights the importance of inclusive, affirming environments. Together, these sentiments show that effective support must combine communication, legal empowerment, and community care.

Future Exploration

Based on the findings related to intersectionality, future research should incorporate more inclusive and detailed measures to better understand the root causes of negative emotions among various gender and racial groups. Reliance on vague self-report categories such as “None of the time,” “A little of the time,” or “Some of the time” offers limited context and may obscure the complexity of the participants’ experiences. Future studies should aim to develop more refined

response options, thus leading to qualitative insights that can more accurately capture the emotions of these groups.

Conclusion

The findings, visualizations, and overall survey data provide meaningful insight into Marylanders' general satisfaction and their concerns regarding community issues. These insights present a valuable opportunity for the Maryland Commission on LGBTQIA+ Affairs to shape informed policies and allocate resources effectively. By identifying the areas of greatest concern, the Commission can prioritize initiatives that reflect the community's needs. As policies evolve and social dynamics shift, it will be essential to conduct more surveys to gather up-to-date information. Doing so will help ensure that resources and policy efforts remain aligned with the current attitudes and priorities of Maryland's diverse communities.

Scope of Work #4: Creation of Promotional Infographics

Abstract

In collaboration with the Maryland Commission on LGBTQIA+ Affairs and the University of Maryland, promotional graphics were created that allow newcomers and those unfamiliar with the LGBTQIA+ Commission and the Maryland Community Initiatives to gain a better understanding of what the governor's office provides for its citizens and how those in need of help can properly request it. The leading resource used to create these promotional graphics and materials was information from the Governor's Office of Community Initiatives website, which strives to serve LGBTQIA+ Marylanders by galvanizing community voices, researching and addressing challenges, and advocating for policies to advance equity and inclusion. These visualizations were developed using Canva to deliver critical information about the commission and the multiple ways that are available to get in contact with them.

The graphics cover general information about the Maryland Commission on LGBTQIA+ Affairs, including how to report a hate bias Incident, various mental health and crisis support hotlines and websites, LGBTQIA+ health and wellness resources, and contacting and volunteering with the Commission. These graphics allow the Commission to communicate its mission and overall purpose to the general public. Additionally, they can serve as a foundation for building a social media presence, helping the Commission reach and assist more people in need.

Introduction

The visualizations constructed for promotional graphics used by the Maryland Commission for LGBTQIA+ affairs for creating a social media presence will allow the commission to get in touch with its community, will offer an opportunity to provide information

to Marylanders about the commission, and through small form information, provide resources that will allow those in need to get the help they require. The commission has a lot of valuable information on its website to help and support LGBTQIA+ individuals and those who witness hate crimes related to these issues. These promotional graphics have been created to show that resources are available for those who need them and encourage individuals to find and discover the support, guidance, and reporting tools available through the commission's website.

This scope of work in this paper outlines the methodology used to create promotional materials that provide information on the Maryland Commission on LGBTQIA+ Affairs, how to contact the proper help hotlines and resources, and how people can volunteer and get involved with the commission.

Process

We began by reviewing the materials provided by the commission. Through this, we were able to center the most pressing concerns and highlight the most significant knowledge gaps Marylanders face regarding the commission and the services they can connect with. From there, we selected the key topics that aligned the most with the commission's goal to promote knowledge of the hotlines and resources they encourage. Upon finalizing the topic selection, we could move to the design phase.

We created the images in Canva, thanks to its ease of use and ability to store the templates for future needs. We sought to create accessible images, ensuring appropriate color contrast to aid in visibility, and by selecting an appropriately legible typeface. We then ensured that the messaging was clear. We can maximize their reach and utility by ensuring the images are easy to digest, visually and informationally. Feedback was taken in and utilized to ensure the

final product met everyone's wishes, and the images were then formatted for their optimal size depending on the use case.

Methodology

To ensure the materials were accurate and effective, the Maryland Commission on LGBTQIA+ Affairs' website was reviewed, paying particular attention to the resources it discussed. This initial research allowed us to identify which services, support lines, and commission initiatives were the most heavily featured and relevant to the Maryland community. We sought to focus specifically on services that may be underutilized, even if they are available, simply due to a lack of public knowledge.

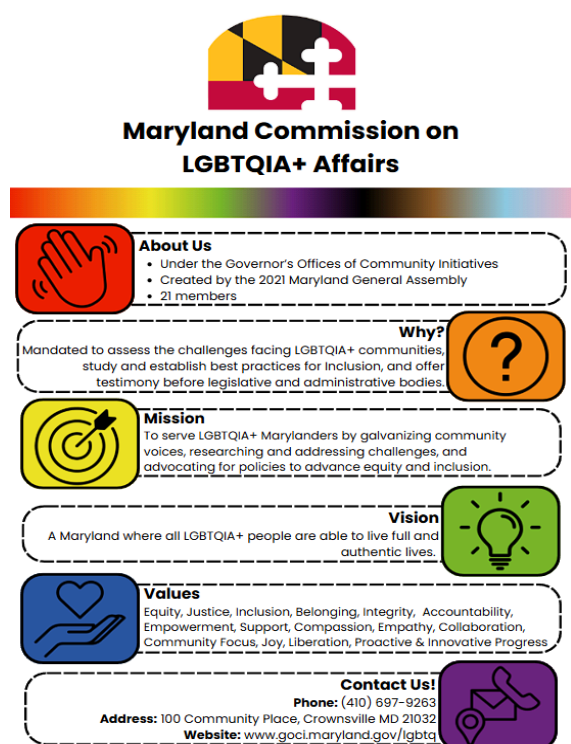
Throughout the project, we maintained regular communication with the head of the commission through weekly meetings led by the project management team. We could confirm which resources should be more prominently featured with his input. Through this dialogue, we could better grasp what all parties were looking for and how to achieve it. By combining the feedback from the commission and from within our team, we ensured that the final products not only performed visually but also effectively communicated the informational needs of the LGBTQIA+ community in Maryland.

Findings

Through weekly meetings with Jeremy Browning, the Director of the Maryland Commission on LGBTQIA+ Affairs, and an analysis of their website, we focused on five resource types that we found most important to deliver to the public. These include the following: general and recruitment information about the Maryland Commission on LGBTQIA+ Affairs; LGBTQIA+ mental health, and health and wellness resources; hate/bias incident reporting resources, and transgender resources

General Information about the Maryland Commission on LGBTQIA+ Affairs

These graphics were created to provide general information to those unfamiliar with the Commission. The goal is to provide newcomers with information about the Commission and its team, its purpose, vision, values, meetings, and contact information in a digestible medium. The formatting of this graphic provides a more accessible and consolidated version of the information that can be found on the LGBTQIA+ Affairs website.



Maryland Commission on LGBTQIA+ Affairs

About Us

- Under the Governor's Offices of Community Initiatives
- Created by the 2021 Maryland General Assembly
- 21 members

Why?

Mandated to assess the challenges facing LGBTQIA+ communities, study and establish best practices for inclusion, and offer testimony before legislative and administrative bodies.

Mission

To serve LGBTQIA+ Marylanders by galvanizing community voices, researching and addressing challenges, and advocating for policies to advance equity and inclusion.

Vision

A Maryland where all LGBTQIA+ people are able to live full and authentic lives.

Values

Equity, Justice, Inclusion, Belonging, Integrity, Accountability, Empowerment, Support, Compassion, Empathy, Collaboration, Community Focus, Joy, Liberation, Proactive & Innovative Progress

Contact Us!

Phone: (410) 697-9263
Address: 100 Community Place, Crownsville MD 21032
Website: www.goci.maryland.gov/lgbtq



DID YOU KNOW?

The Commission publishes an annual report that includes recommendations on policies for LGBTQIA+ adults & youth to end discriminatory practices in Maryland. These reports are accessible on the Commission's website.

<https://goci.maryland.gov/lgbtq/>

View past reports:

2022 2023

Maryland Commission on LGBTQIA+ Affairs

¹ Graphic created by Jocelyn Ginn

² Graphic created by Marta Fikru



Meet the Team

Commission

Lee Blinder
They/Them
Chair

M Valle Pease
They/Them
Vice Chair

Staff

Jeremy Browning
He/Him
Director

Taylor Harer
They/She
Special Assistant

The Maryland Commission on LGBTQIA+ Affairs currently holds **21** members

Learn more about the team here!

Maryland Commission on LGBTQIA+ Affairs

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LGBTQIA+ COMMISSION MEETING

Commission Meeting

QR code for Zoom registration

Bi-Monthly 6:00PM - 8:00PM

Meetings are held via **Zoom**.
Agendas will be posted at least 24 hours in advance, which include Zoom registration links.

Maryland Commission on LGBTQIA+ Affairs

³ Graphic created by Marta Fikru

⁴ Graphic created by Marta Fikru

Recruiting

These paired graphics were created to provide a resource for those interested in learning about volunteer opportunities with the Maryland Commission on LGBTQIA+ Affairs. A link and QR code provide easy access for viewers to get connected to the commission's website, where they can learn more about joining the team. The graphics were designed for use across social media, posters, and other promotional formats.



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⁵ Graphic created by Marta Fikru

⁶ Graphic created by Marta Fikru

LGBTQIA+ Mental Health / Health & Wellness Resources

The Mental Health & Crisis Support graphic was created to provide resources for those dealing with various mental illnesses, including information about the Trevor Project, Sage X HearMe, and the Trans Lifeline. The graphic includes a brief description of each resource along with a link to their website to learn more. The consolidation of this information into a single graphic facilitates the process of finding these resources during urgent circumstances.

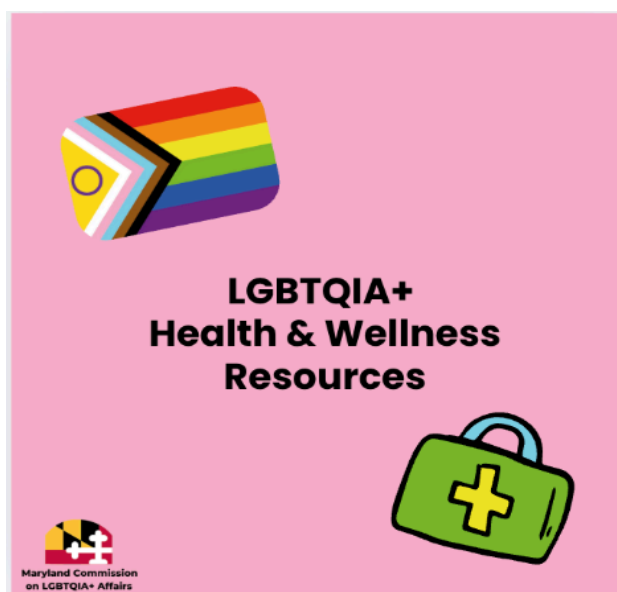
The four conjoined Health & Wellness graphics were created to provide the location and hours of various healthcare-related resources around the state of Maryland. The graphics provide information on multiple primary healthcare services, Whitman-Walker Health and Chase Brexton Health Care, which focus on LGBTQIA+ healthcare, as well as Planned Parenthood, which highlights women's reproductive health services.



FIND MORE RESOURCES:
[HTTPS://GOCI.MARYLAND.GOV/RESOURCES-3/](https://GOCI.MARYLAND.GOV/RESOURCES-3/)

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⁷ Graphic created by Marta Fikru



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Chase Brexton Health Care

Locations Near MD Health Care LGBTQIA

	Baltimore 1111 North Charles Street, Baltimore, MD 21201	8 AM - 7 PM
	Columbia 5500 Knoll N Dr, Columbia, MD 21045	8 AM - 7 PM
	Easton 500 Cadmus Lane, Suite 203, Easton MD 21601	8:30 AM - 5 PM

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Whitman-Walker Health

Locations Near MD Health Care LGBTQIA

	Whitman-Walker at 1525 1525 14th St. NW Washington, DC 20005	8 AM - 6 PM
	Whitman-Walker at LIZ 1377 R St. NW, Suite 200 Washington, DC 20009	8 AM - 5:30 PM
	Max Robinson Center 1201 Sycamore Dr. SE Washington, DC 20032	8 AM - 6 PM

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Planned Parenthood

Locations Near MD Health Care LGBTQIA

	Annapolis 929 West St. Suite 200 Annapolis, MD 21401	9 AM - 4:30 PM
	Frederick 170 Thomas Johnson Drive Suite 100 Frederick, MD 21702	9 AM - 4:30 PM
	Baltimore 330 N. Howard Street Baltimore, MD 21201	9 AM - 4:30 PM

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⁸ Graphic created by Marta Fikru

⁹ Graphic created by Marta Fikru

¹⁰ Graphic created by Marta Fikru

¹¹ Graphic created by Marta Fikru

Hate/Bias Incident Reporting

These graphics were created with the intention of providing information on how to report a hate bias incident. The graphic breaks down the process into three easy steps, which aim to facilitate the process for those who need to file a report or may need to in the future. In addition, a QR code is provided that will bring the viewer to the Hate Bias Incident online form.

Need to Report a Hate Bias Incident?

1 Initiate an inquiry using online form
<https://dolt.state.md.us/selectsurvey/TakeSurvey.aspx?PageNumber=1&SurveyID=7423578&Preview=true#>

2 Schedule interview
 Intake Unit will contact you to schedule an interview (either by phone or in-person) with a trained Intake Officers to complete the process.

3 Handle necessary docs
 Complete the interview, then sign and return any and all necessary documents (including the Charge of Discrimination)

Track your progress
 Completing the online form does not constitute the filing of a complaint of discrimination! Make sure to follow through with the rest of the process.

Maryland Commission on LGBTQIA+ Affairs

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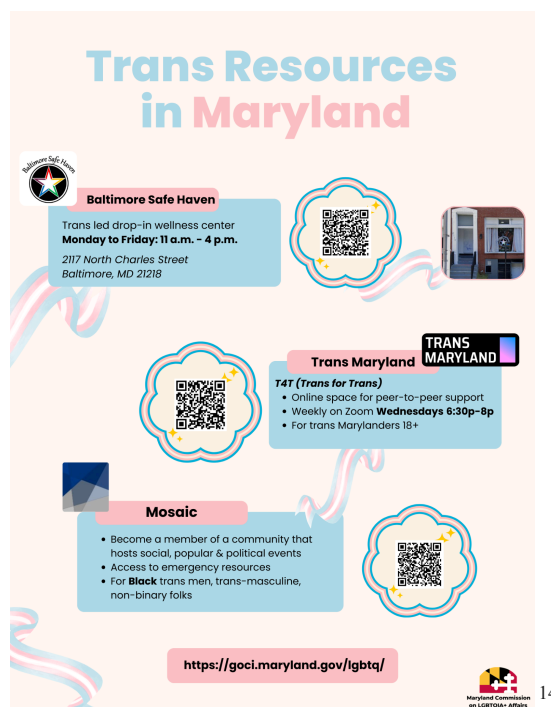
Maryland Commission on LGBTQIA+ Affairs

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Transgender Resources

¹² Graphic created by Marta Fikru

¹³ Graphic created by Marta Fikru



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This graphic highlights specific resources that are designed for those who identify as transgender. Baltimore Safe Haven provides a drop-in center, TransMaryland has weekly peer support meetings, and Mosaic focuses on the intersectionality of those who identify as transgender and Black. QR codes are attached to the respective resource to easily access, as well as an image of the drop-in center for reference. This resource focuses on the ongoing discrepancies transgender people face and ways for them to receive assistance in Maryland.

Future Exploration

Future projects in this area should consider expanding into forms of multimedia outreach beyond just static infographics. Incorporating short-form videos, content in multiple languages, and directions towards online interactive web tools would help to improve accessibility and engagement. By partnering with other local LGBTQIA+ organizations and youth centers, the reach of these materials could also be improved through expanding the channels of distribution.

¹⁴ Graphic created by Marta Fikru

Additionally, implementing the proper tools to measure and interpret the analytical data from the relevant social media platforms and websites could help improve the effectiveness of future graphics. By analyzing what does and does not work, future iterations of these graphics can be further refined to meet the needs of the community.

Conclusion

The promotional graphics created for this project provide a valuable opportunity to the Maryland Commission on LGBTQIA+ Affairs to get in touch with the Maryland community, to provide valuable information on the commission, and to offer resources to those in need. As the commission's social media presence grows, information and updates that it shares should allow citizens to get involved and provide examples and reasons for why certain issues need to be changed and addressed, allowing for feedback and the opportunity to grow, as more information is conveyed to the public.

In addition to promotional content, several graphics were specifically designed to provide the community with quick access to some pertinent and essential healthcare and wellness information, both physical and mental. These include contact information for support services, locations for receiving healthcare, guidance on reporting bias and hate incidents, and instructions on how to get involved with the commission's initiatives.

Scope Of Work #5: New Maryland LGBTQIA+ Survey Development

Abstract

This scope of work presents a thorough analysis of state surveys and survey reports from across the country that sampled members of their LGBTQIA+ community. These documents were analyzed to identify the primary focus of each survey, the methodology used for data collection and survey construction, participant inclusion criteria, trends from the data, specific questions asked, and measures taken to protect participants' privacy. Although not all states released their exact survey questions, the reports revealed similar challenges facing the LGBTQIA+ community. Based on these national trends and similarities across survey design, we hope to provide the Maryland Commission on LGBTQIA+ Affairs with recommendations on the best practices for designing and distributing a statewide needs assessment for Maryland's LGBTQIA+ population. This assessment is essential to understanding the current challenges facing Maryland's LGBTQIA+ population and helping to inform future policy development and resource allocation across Maryland.

Introduction

We aim to build on the survey recommendations from *A Decade of Data: Meta-Analysis of Data and Insights on the Experiences of LGBTQIA+ People in Maryland*, to support the Maryland Commission on LGBTQIA+ Affairs in developing and designing a comprehensive statewide survey. To address the current needs, challenges, and strengths of the LGBTQIA+ community across the state and the current gaps in existing data, we reviewed a range of LGBTQIA+ surveys from other states to identify common themes, best practices, and effective questions. Based on this research, we outline key recommendations for survey content, distribution, and participant privacy protection.

Process

Our work began by reviewing a list of state-level LGBTQIA+ surveys and recommendations developed by the previous project's team. Building on their insight, we aimed to identify specific questions and content areas that could be adapted for a comprehensive Maryland statewide survey. Through analyzing and reviewing multiple state reports and in-progress surveys, we identified recurring themes, which informed the development of our recommendations.

Methodology

This project relied on the analysis of existing state and national LGBTQIA+ survey reports. We analyzed over a dozen different sources, including *The Greater Cleveland LGBTQ+ Community Needs Assessment*, *Washington LGBTQ+ Survey Year 1 Report*, *Minnesota LGBTQIA2S+ Community Needs Survey*, and national surveys such as the Trevor Project's youth mental health report. Each report was reviewed in full to assess the scope, question content, structure, and distribution methodology.

We categorized the survey content into recurring focus areas such as health, safety, and youth-specific issues. We took particular note of surveys that explicitly gave full question sets, as well as questions we could infer from the final reports. This analysis informed our selection of questions and topic recommendations for the Commission.

Findings***Question Sections***

We recommend including a comprehensive demographic information section, as this was a consistent feature across all surveys reviewed. Understanding the diversity within the LGBTQIA+ community is crucial for identifying how intersecting identities impact individuals

and their communities. Some of the standard questions that were asked throughout the surveys included: sexual orientation, gender identity, age, race/ethnicity, income, relationship status, employment, occupation, military status, disabilities, and location. For the Maryland survey specifically, the location could be separated by county to assist in identifying positives and negatives in certain areas and prevent too much identifying data. Additionally, The Greater Cleveland LGBTQ+ Community Needs Assessment included the questions asking about the age of the respondent when they realized they are LGBTQIA+, the age they “came out”, and who they are “out” to (Kent State University, 2024). This additional information could benefit the Commission in identifying emerging trends over time about the acceptance and comfort for individuals in “coming out” about their identity.

The second main theme consists of questions about health, wellness, and community. We recommend narrowing this section to questions exploring the mental and physical health of the LGBTQIA+ community, along with their experiences seeking and receiving support. Research and reports from other surveys consistently show that LGBTQIA+ individuals face higher rates of depression, anxiety, and suicidal ideation compared to their heterosexual and cisgender peers. To better understand and address these disparities, we propose including questions that assess key health concerns such as diagnosed mental health conditions, chronic illnesses, sexual health, and substance use. Additionally, tracking self-reported rates of physical, mental, behavioral, and social health will help the Commission identify subgroups within the LGBTQIA+ community that are facing higher risk levels. We also know that social support is crucial for individuals to have a higher quality of life. Therefore, we recommend including questions that ask if the individual feels their LGBTQIA+ identity is supported and accepted by their city or town, biological family, and close or chosen family. In addition, access to affirming spaces is vital for

improving well-being. Questions asking about access and participation in events or community spaces will provide valuable insight into current levels of social inclusion and connectedness, as well as the presence of any community support programs.

In connection with health and support, we recommend a section on safety. It is necessary to acknowledge where the community does not feel physically or mentally safe or comfortable in different places or situations. The survey could include questions about how individuals feel at their school or work, interacting with police, on public transit, and accessing care. Additionally, identifying if individuals have experienced mistreatment due to their LGBTQIA+ identity, such as verbal or physical abuse. It would be beneficial to identify the impact other social identities have such as race or disability status intersect with individuals LGBTQIA+ identity and their feelings of safety. Finally, asking about whether individuals took action or why they did not would highlight the struggles of the community in finding safe spaces.

Another section we recommend be added to the state survey is one on the LGBTQIA+ community's access to services and facilities. We need to understand the areas that individuals in this community are struggling with. Asking questions about education, financial instability, food and housing insecurity, and healthcare access will shed light on the areas where the LGBTQIA+ community needs more assistance. Specifically, the Commission can assess medical distrust, access to LGBTQIA+ specialists, ability to obtain food, and satisfaction with living arrangements. Additionally, it is important to understand what barriers the community faces when attempting to access these services to identify where attention needs to be focused to better provide these services in the future.

In our meta-meta-analysis, we identified significant instances of bullying, discrimination, and mental health concerns for LGBTQIA+ youth. Therefore, we recommend a section of the

Maryland survey to focus on the experiences of the youth. While we acknowledge that it could be more difficult to have individuals under the age of eighteen take a state survey, one method we could incorporate is asking the adults taking the survey about experiences they had before they turned eighteen. With this method, the Commission would be able to still monitor some aspects of LGBTQIA+ youth, while also identifying possible improvements between the older and younger generations. Questions that we recommend including in the survey are: whether students had access to LGBTQIA+ student groups, whether there was support from family or teachers and staff in schools, feelings of discrimination in school settings, LGBTQIA+ education, having access to LGBTQIA+ related care, and social concerns, including food or housing insecurity. Additionally, there could be a question specifically asking LGBTQIA+ adults about experiences in their youth that shaped their relationship with their identity. LGBTQIA+ youth are in a vulnerable position due to increased stress factors, therefore, it is imperative that the Commission gathers information on this specific demographic.

Survey Distribution

Survey distribution is crucial for having a diverse response. The *Washington LGBTQ+ Survey* had a section in their report laying out their methods of administering the survey. We believe that following some of these methods would be beneficial for the Commission to reach a wider respondent population. Firstly, creating social media accounts specifically for the survey would help bring attention. Currently, the Governor's Office for Community Initiatives has its own Instagram, Twitter/X, and Facebook. These platforms broadly cover each aspect of the Office, therefore, it splits its attention across different issues. A dedicated account would allow the survey to target and engage with the intended audience more effectively. In addition to Instagram, Twitter/X, and Facebook, branching out into TikTok might garner the younger

population and a further reach. Secondly, engaging with LGBTQIA+ organizations and events. Communicating with LGBTQIA+ organizations will bring the possibility for those organizations to advertise the survey to their own communities and expand our own reach. By going to events such as drag shows and pride events to advertise the survey, the Commission will be able to gather participants and further spread the survey to others. As mentioned in the demographics section of these recommendations, having as diverse a dataset as possible would highlight the areas within the community that need the most support. Therefore, new distribution channels are critical for the Commission.

Privacy

We were tasked with giving recommendations on how the Commission could maintain survey respondents' privacy. Some methods that we gathered from surveys like the Trevor Project, Nevada state survey, and Minnesota state survey simply avoided collecting identifying information such as names and emails. Other surveys, like Washington and the *LGBTQ Poll Report*, had conversations with advisory boards and obtained confidentiality agreements to protect their respondents. Another method that the Commission could employ is encryption. Ensuring that all the respondent data is stored securely, with safeguards to prevent unauthorized access, such as strong passwords and multi-factor authentication, would ensure the protection of collected data. Additionally, we recommend that when sharing responses from the survey, especially short response answers, there should be someone to review to ensure that no identifiable information will be present in an official report. To ensure confidence in the protection of respondents' data, we advise the Commission to include a disclaimer about how the data will be stored and handled. This way, individuals understand where their information is going and how the Commission plans to protect it.

Future Exploration

As the Maryland Commission on LGBTQIA+ Affairs prepares to implement a comprehensive statewide survey, future exploration should focus on ongoing evaluation, privacy concerns, and creating survey content to reflect emerging trends. The survey should be regularly reviewed and updated to sustain the community's changing needs. It is also important to continue protecting the privacy of those who complete the survey, especially when collecting sensitive information. Many LGBTQIA+ individuals, especially youth, may fear being outed or discriminated against due to their survey responses if they are not completely ensured that they are kept fully confidential. To build trust within the LGBTQIA+ community, it may be helpful to store the data in a secure and encrypted system that removes any identifying details from public reports, whilst also explaining to the community exactly how their data is stored. Additionally, new trends should be paid close attention to, such as school experiences, access to resources, and mental health struggles. This will help keep the survey relevant and support improvement in future policies and programs. Finally, the Commission should obtain feedback from the respondents on questions, concerns, and possible areas that the survey is lacking in.

Conclusion

Overall, our recommendations for a comprehensive statewide survey stem from current research and best practices from successful LGBTQIA+ surveys conducted in other states. By including these areas of interest in the Maryland survey, the Commission will gain actionable, inclusive, and meaningful information to better serve Maryland's LGBTQIA+ community.

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