

# VOICES <sup>20</sup><sub>21</sub> OF HEALTH

Annual Report on LGBTQ+  
Health Access and Experiences  
in Minnesota

RAINBOW  
HEALTH





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# INTRODUCTION

For almost 40 years, Rainbow Health Minnesota has been advocating for and serving the LGBTQ+ community, people living with HIV, and all folks facing barriers to healthcare. Rainbow Health is dedicated to working for equitable health care access and outcomes for people who experience injustice at the intersection of health status and identity. We center individuals and communities at risk of and living with HIV or facing barriers to equitable health care access and outcomes because of their identity as gender, sexual, and/or racial minorities.

- We help people navigate healthcare systems by breaking down barriers, particularly LGBTQ+ people and those affected by HIV.
- We work to End HIV by building on our four-decade legacy of providing the most comprehensive array of Minnesota AIDS Project's wrap-around services for people with HIV. As a disease of injustice, the only way to end HIV is to end health disparities.
- We offer unique and specialized mental and chemical health services by and for the communities we serve. Our care is trauma-informed, harm-reduction based, sex-positive, and meets people where they are. We turn no one away for inability to pay.
- We work to empower people on the margins with relevant information, support, and connection to resources that allow them to lead healthier lives. Our legacy of four decades fighting HIV and LGBTQ+ health disparities has given us insight and experience that we can bring to the broader movement for health equity.

## INTRODUCTION

- We educate and train providers about how to deliver better care for the diversity of LGBTQ+ and HIV communities through a lens of intersectionality.

In order to do this important work, we need to know about the health access needs and experiences of LGBTQ+ people across the state. While there has been an increasing understanding that LGBTQ+ identities shape and impact health and wellness, many public health surveys and tools still don't look at sexual orientation and gender identity. Rainbow Health Minnesota's Voices of Health is an annual LGBTQ community health and wellness survey that seeks to uplift and share the health access and experiences of LGBTQ people while highlighting ongoing health disparities.

## METHODS

The 2021 survey instrument is very similar to the 2020 instrument in order to maintain consistency and track trends across years. The core questions on health access and experience have remained consistent since the survey was fielded in 2012.

The survey was conducted through Survey Monkey. Rainbow Health worked with partner organizations throughout the state to publicize the survey and send out links to their communities. The survey was also shared on social media and promoted at Pride events across the state.

In order to boost completion rates, participants were offered a \$10 online gift card as an incentive. When participants completed the survey, they were taken to a page on the Rainbow Health website and able to enter their email information for the gift card to be sent to their email. This ensured that participants' contact information was separate from their survey data.

The data from Survey Monkey was downloaded, cleaned, and checked for duplicates before being analyzed. The survey was collected through a convenience sampling technique, which is common in research with the LGBTQ community due to the difficulty of achieving a sufficiently large random sample. Through intentional sampling, and targeted boosted posts on Facebook and Instagram, Rainbow Health sought to collect surveys from LGBTQ people of diverse age, race, education, gender identity, and sexual orientation backgrounds.



## DEMOGRAPHICS

In 2021, **1,341 LGBTQ Minnesotans** completed the Voices of Health survey.

### Sexual Orientation

Respondents were asked to select what best described their sexual orientation from the options provided, or to write in something else. 33% of respondents identified as lesbian, 16% identified as bisexual, 34% identified as gay, 11% identified as queer, and 5% identified as pansexual. Less than 1% wrote in a response, and less than 1% identified as straight.<sup>1</sup>

### Gender

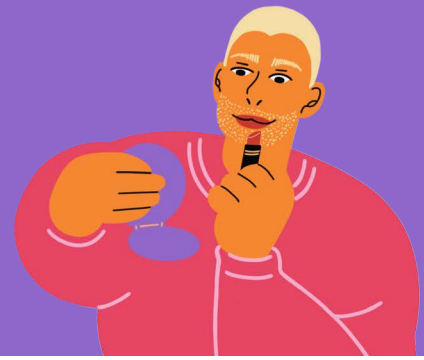
Respondents were asked about their current gender and their sex assigned at birth. 27% of LGBTQ respondents are transgender or non-binary and 73% are cisgender.

Overall, 37% of respondents are cisgender women and 5% are trans women. 35% of respondents are cisgender men, and 3% are trans men. 19% of respondents are non-binary, genderqueer, gender non-conforming, or genderfluid.

### Intersex

8% of respondents report they have been diagnosed with a medically-recognized intersex condition.

<sup>1</sup> While straight and cisgender respondents were removed before analysis, transgender respondents who are straight are included.



## DEMOGRAPHICS

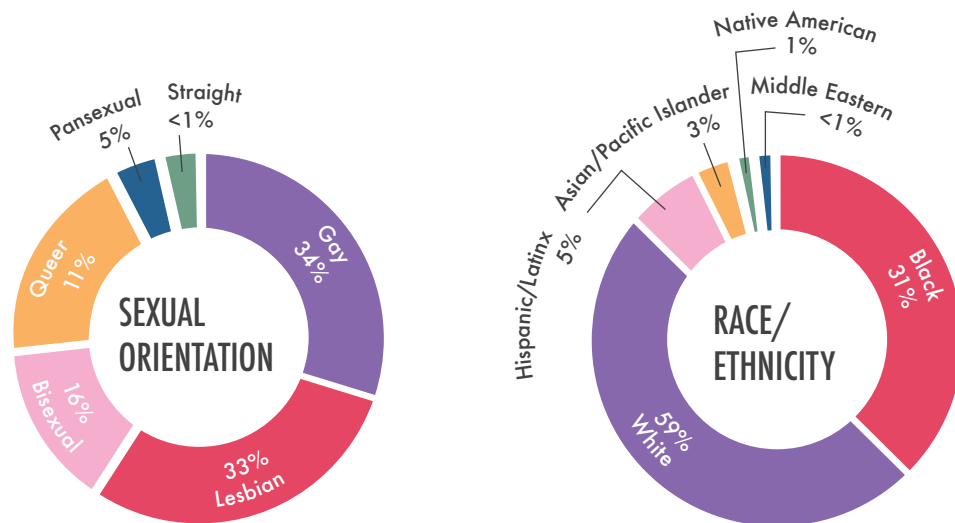
### Race and Ethnicity

40% of respondents are people of color, and 60% are white.

Overall, 31% of respondents are black, 5% are Latinx or Hispanic, 1% are Native American, 2% are Asian or Pacific Islander, and .5% are Arab or Middle Eastern. Respondents were encouraged to select all options that described them.

### Location

44% live in the Twin Cities itself, 18% live outside the Twin Cities but in the Twin Cities 7 county metro area.<sup>2</sup> The remaining 38% live in Greater Minnesota.



## Sexual Orientation, Race, & Ethnicity of Respondents in Minnesota

<sup>2</sup> The Twin Cities 7 County metropolitan area consists of the counties of Hennepin, Ramsey, Scott, Washington, Anoka, Dakota, and Carver.



## DEMOGRAPHICS

### Age

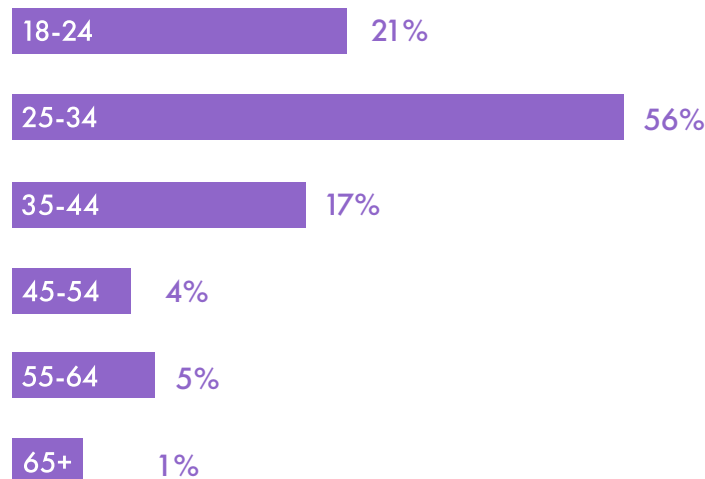
At the time of the survey, 21% of respondents were 18-24, 56% were 25-34, 17% were 35-44, 4% were 45-54, 5% were 55-64, and only 1% were 65+.

### Food Security

51% of LGBTQ respondents reported that at least once in the past 12 months they worried their food would run out before they had money to buy more. 44% did have their food run out before they had money to buy more.

BIPOC respondents reported worrying about their food running out (57%) and running out of food (53%) at higher rates than White respondents (47% and 38%).

### Ages of Respondents Living in Minnesota







# DEMOGRAPHICS

## Income

Respondents were asked their individual income and household income before taxes. This measure doesn't account for household size. The median household income in Minnesota is \$73,382.<sup>3</sup> 76% of LGBTQ respondents have household incomes of \$75,000 or less, indicating that LGBTQ households may have lower.

Respondents were asked if their income covered more than their basic living expenses, covered their basic living expenses, or did not cover their basic living expenses. 40% of respondents described their income as covering more than their basic living expenses. 50% described their income as just covering their basic living expenses, and 10% described their income as not being enough to cover their basic living expenses.

MN Income Category	MN Household Income <sup>1</sup>	Individual Income
\$0-\$10,000	6%	8%
\$10,001-\$20,000	3%	8%
\$20,001-\$25,000	7%	21%
\$25,001-\$35,000	13%	23%
\$35,001-\$50,000	24%	26%
\$50,001-\$75,000	23%	8%
\$75,001-\$100,000	17%	4%
\$100,001+	7%	2%

<sup>3</sup> 2020 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates. Retrieved from <https://data.census.gov/cedsci/profile?q=0400000US27>



## TOBACCO AND E-CIGARETTE USE

55% of LGBTQ respondents are “ever smokers” (have smoked 100 cigarettes or more in their lifetime), 37% are former smokers and 18% of all LGBTQ respondents are current smokers. 45% of LGBTQ respondents have never smoked.

Of current smokers, 8% plan to quit smoking in the next month, 25% plan to quit smoking in the next 6 months, and 8% plan to quit smoking sometime in the next year. 30% have no intention to quit smoking, and another 30% sometimes think about quitting but don’t have a plan.

26% of LGBTQ respondents reported having ever used an e-cigarette/vaping, and 20% of all LGBTQ respondents had used an e-cigarette/vaped in the past 30 days.

**55%** of LGBTQ respondents . . . have smoked 100 cigarettes or more in their lifetime.



## ALCOHOL USE

43% of respondents reported not drinking alcohol in the past month, and 9% reported drinking alcohol less than once a week. 28% reported drinking 1-3 days per week in the past month, and 17% reported drinking 3-4 days per week. 2% reported drinking 5 days per week and only 1% reported drinking 6-7 days per week.

If they had drank alcohol in the past 30 days, respondents were asked how many drinks they had on average on the days they did drink. On average, on days they used alcohol 14% of LGBTQ respondents who drank had one drink. 25% had two drinks and 22% had three drinks. 12% had four drinks, and 10% had 5 drinks on average when they drank. 8% consumed an average of 6 drinks and 10% of LGBTQ who drink consumed an average of 7 or more drinks on the days they drank alcohol.

In order to gauge binge drinking, respondents were also asked how many times in the past 30 days they had had 4 or more drinks on one occasion. 18% reported never drinking 4 or more drinks on one occasion in the past month. 31% reported binge drinking once in the past month. 22% reported binge drinking twice in the past month and 17% reported binge drinking three times in the past month. 3% reported binge drinking four times in the past month. 6% reported binge drinking 5-9 times and only 3% of LGBTQ people who drank binged 10 or more times in the past month.

## ANTI-LGBTQ BEHAVIOR


77% of respondents experienced some form of anti-LGBTQ behavior<sup>4</sup> in the past 12 months.

66% have experienced verbal abuse or harassment because they were LGBTQ at some point in their lifetime.

35% have been physically attacked or threatened because they were LGBTQ at some point in their lifetime.

## HOMELESSNESS

6% of respondents were homeless (including couch-surfing or living in a car) at the time they took the survey. 45% of LGBTQ respondents had experienced homelessness or housing instability at least once in their life.



**77%** of BIPOC LGBTQ respondents experienced anti-LGBTQ behavior in the past 12 months.

<sup>4</sup> Rejected by a friend or family member, made to feel unwelcome at a place of worship, received poor service or denied service at a place of business, received poor healthcare or denied healthcare, treated unfairly by a coworker or supervisor, treated unfairly by an employer, or other anti-LGBTQ behavior.



## UNWANTED SEXUAL ACTIVITY

49% of LGBTQ respondents have experienced some form of unwanted physical sexual activity in their lifetime, with 16% experienced unwanted physical sexual activity in the past 12 months.

19% of respondents who had experiences unwanted physical sexual activity said that they did not seek help, tell anyone, or report their most recent experience. 33% of respondents told someone about their experience. 9% called a sexual assault crisis line. 17% saw a medical doctor or nurse. 25% talked to a therapist about their experience. Only 5% reported their experience to police.

## PHYSICAL OR EMOTIONAL ABUSE

47% of LGBTQ respondents have experienced physical or emotional abuse in a relationship in their lifetime, with 9% of respondents experienced physical or emotional abuse in the past year.

14% of respondents who had experienced physical or emotional abuse in a relationship said that they did not tell anyone about their most recent experience. 28% told someone about the abuse. 14% called a domestic violence hotline. 29% saw a medical doctor or nurse. 32% talked a therapist about the abuse. Only 3% reported the abuse to police.



## HIV AND PrEP

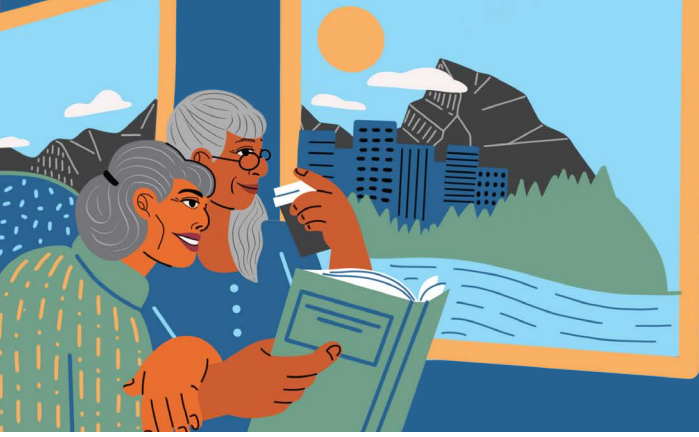
### HIV

65% of LGBTQ respondents have ever been tested for HIV. 3% of LGBTQ respondents who have been tested report having been diagnosed with HIV. Of respondents who have been told they are HIV positive, 90% had an HIV-related medical appointment, HIV medical prescription, or HIV labs in the past 12 months. When asked if they had ever used HIV support services such as a case manager, benefits counselor, or getting connected to medical or social service resources, 59% of people living with HIV said they'd used those services in the past year, 24% said they'd used them previously, and 14% said they had never used such services

### PrEP

8% of respondents were currently taking PrEP daily as prescribed, and 15% reported they were sometimes taking PrEP. 9% previously had taken PrEP but were not currently taking in. 50% had never taken PrEP and 18% didn't know what PrEP was.

Of the people that had ever used PrEP, 31% said they had used PrEP for 1 to 6 months. 45% had used it for 7 to 12 months and 24% had used it for 13 months or longer.



## COVID-19

At the time of the survey in late summer 2021, 15% of all LGBTQ respondents reported ever having had COVID-19.

White respondents (17%) reported having ever had COVID-19 at a slightly higher rate than BIPOC respondents (11%).

40% of LGBTQ respondents personally knew a family member or friend who died because of COVID-19.

At the time of the survey, only 50% of all LGBTQ respondents reported having been vaccinated against COVID-19. An additional 22% reported they intended to get vaccinated as soon as possible, and another 16% said they intended to get vaccinated but planned to wait to get a vaccine. 12% reported they did not plan on ever getting vaccinated for COVID-19.

Slightly more White respondents (52%) reported being vaccinated than BIPOC respondents (46%). BIPOC respondents (15%) were slightly more likely to report planning to not get vaccinated than White respondents (10%).



## GENERAL HEALTH ASSESSMENT

8% of respondents rated their general health as excellent, 40% rated their health as very good, and 31% rated their health as good. 16% rated their health as fair and 4% rated their health as poor.

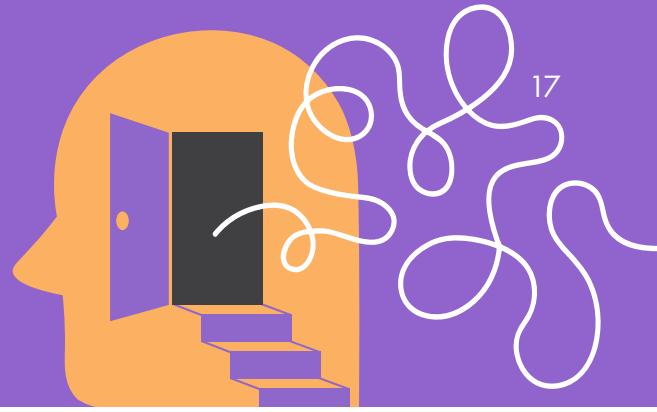
## MENTAL HEALTH

LGBTQ people continue to be experiencing high rates of mental distress. It's unclear if the increase in mental distress is due to COVID-19, increasing anti-LGBTQ sentiment and legislation, financial stress, or some other combination of factors. 4 out of 5 LGBTQ respondents were experiencing moderate to severe mental distress at the time of the survey.<sup>5</sup> 55% of all LGBTQ respondents were experiencing moderate mental distress and 25% were experiencing severe mental distress at the time of the survey. 20% were experiencing no mental distress or mild mental distress at the time of the survey.

Queer (98%), bisexual (89%), and pansexual (97%) were experiencing moderate to severe mental distress at much higher rates than lesbian (66%) and gay (80%) respondents.

While transgender (18%) and cisgender (22%) respondents experienced mild or no mental distress at similar rates, transgender respondents (33%) experienced severe mental distress at higher rates than cisgender respondents (22%).





## MENTAL HEALTH

White (80%) and BIPOC (79%) respondents reported experiencing similar rates of moderate to severe mental distress.

Income is highly correlated with experiencing severe mental distress, respondents reporting that their income does not cover their basic living expenses experience severe mental distress (44%) at rates much higher than respondents whose income covers their basic expenses (27%) and respondents whose income covers more than their basic expenses (16%).

### Mental Distress by Sexual Orientation

	Lesbian	Gay	Bisexual	Queer	Pansexual
No mild or mental distress	34%	20%	11%	2%	3%
Moderate mental distress	45%	55%	54%	76%	78%
Severe mental distress	21%	25%	35%	22%	19%

<sup>5</sup> Mental distress is measured by the Kessler 6 scale, developed with support from the National Center for Health Statistics. The scale was designed to help identify between cases and non-cases of serious mental illness.

Kessler, R.C., Barker, P.R., Colpe, L.J., Epstein, J.F., Gfroerer, J.C., Hiripi, E., Howes, M.J., Normand, S-L.T., Manderscheid, R.W., Walters, E.E., Zaslavsky, A.M. (2003). Screening for serious mental illness in the general population Archives of General Psychiatry. 60(2), 184-189.

## HEALTH INSURANCE

Only 64% of respondents reported having health insurance. 32% reported being uninsured and 3% didn't know if they had health insurance. The majority of respondents who reported being uninsured have incomes of \$25,000 or less, it's unclear if respondents who reported being uninsured are actually enrolled in medical assistance or MinnesotaCare and are unaware that it counts as being insured.

Of the respondents with health insurance 40% were insured through their employer and 22% were insured through someone else's employer (spouse, partner, parent). 10% were insured through Medicare and 16% were insured through Medicaid/MinnesotaCare. 11% had private health insurance. Less than 1% had insurance through the military or VA, and 1% had student health insurance through their college or university.



**32%** of respondents reported being uninsured . . . The majority of respondents who reported being uninsured have incomes of \$25,000 or less.

## HEALTH CARE ACCESS & EXPERIENCES

### Health Care Access Barriers

27% of respondents reported there was a time in the past year that they needed to see a health care provider but couldn't because of cost.

23% of LGBTQ respondents reported that there was a time in the past year they needed to see a doctor but did not because they thought they would be disrespected or mistreated as an LGBTQ person.

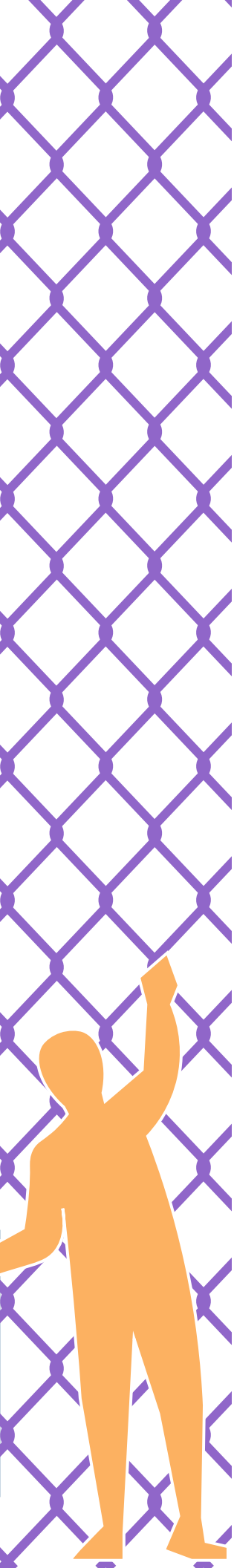
### Primary Care and Routine Check-Ups

33% of respondents report not having a primary care provider or one place they go for routine care (not including emergency care), and 4% didn't know if they had a primary care provider. Only 63% had a primary care provider or one place they go for routine care.

Of respondents who have a primary care provider, 60% see a medical doctor, 21% see a nurse practitioner, and 17% see a physician assistant. 2% don't know or don't remember.

79% of respondents had seen a doctor in the past year, whether for routine care like an annual check up or because they were sick.

When asked when their last routine check-up occurred, 59% reported they had had a routine check up in the past 12 months. 28% reported their last check up was 13 months to 2 years ago. 8% had had their last check up more than 2 years ago. 5% reported having never had an annual check up as an adult.



## HEALTH CARE ACCESS & EXPERIENCES

### Sexual Health

When asked when they had their last sexual health discussion with a health care provider of any kind 57% reported this occurred in the past 12 months. 34% said it was 13 months or more, and only 8% said they had never had a discussion about sexual health with a medical provider.

### Out to Doctor

When asked about whether or not they were out as LGBTQ to their primary health care provider, 73% said they were out, 13% said they were not out, and 6% said they were somewhat out. 3% didn't know or were unsure, and 4% said it wasn't applicable because they don't have a doctor. This is the highest percentage of respondents who have ever reported being out to their doctor in Voices of Health surveys, which may be an indication that more clinics and doctors are asking about sexual orientation and gender identity.

**23%** of respondents reported there was a time they needed to see a doctor, but didn't because they felt they would be disrespected or mistreated as an LGBTQ person.



# HEALTH CARE ACCESS & EXPERIENCES

## Experiences With Providers

1 in 4 LGBTQ respondents (24%) reported having to teach their provider about LGBTQ people so they could get appropriate care in the past 12 months, and an additional 33% have experienced this previously in their life but not in the past 12 months. In other words, 57% of respondents have ever had to teach their provider about LGBTQ people to get appropriate care.

18% reported that a provider refused to care for them because they were LGBTQ in the past year. An additional 30% have had a provider refuse to treat them previously in their life. 48% of respondents have ever had a provider refuse to treat them because they were LGBTQ.

19% have had a provider ask intrusive or unnecessary questions about their LGBTQ identity unrelated to the purpose of the appointment in the past year. 34% have had this happen previously. 53% of all respondents have ever had a provider ask intrusive or unnecessary questions about their LGBTQ identity.

19% have had a provider use harsh or abusive language when treating them in the past year and an additional 27% have experienced this a year ago or more. 45% of LGBTQ respondents have ever had a provider use harsh or abusive language when treating them

17% had a provider who was physically rough or abusive with them in the past year and an additional 26% have experienced this previously.

## HEALTH CARE ACCESS & EXPERIENCES

43% of respondents have ever had a provider be physically rough or abusive with them because of their sexual orientation or gender identity when they were trying to get health care.

19% were verbally harassed in a health care setting (such as a hospital, office, clinic) in the past year and 29% have been verbally harassed in a health care setting previously. 48% of all respondents have ever been verbally harassed in a health care setting. This includes being harassed by other patients/clients, security guards, nurses, front desk staff, etc., and not just experiences with doctors.

### Provider LGBTQ knowledge

Respondents were asked how important it was that their provider had LGBTQ-specific knowledge and support. Only 14% of LGBTQ people said it wasn't important that their health care provider had LGBTQ-specific knowledge. 23% said it was neither important nor unimportant. 34% said it was slightly important and 27% said it was very important. In other words, 61% of respondents said it was important that their provider had LGBTQ-specific knowledge.

**61%** of LGBTQ respondents said it was important that their provider had LGBTQ-specific knowledge.