

EVERY VOICE COUNTS

JEWISH
ROCHESTER'S
2019 REGIONAL
SURVEY

OUR COMMUNITY'S LGBTQ MEMBERS & THEIR FAMILIES

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Jewish Federation of Greater Rochester

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**“Every Voice Counts” was designed, fielded, and analyzed by
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in collaboration and partnership with
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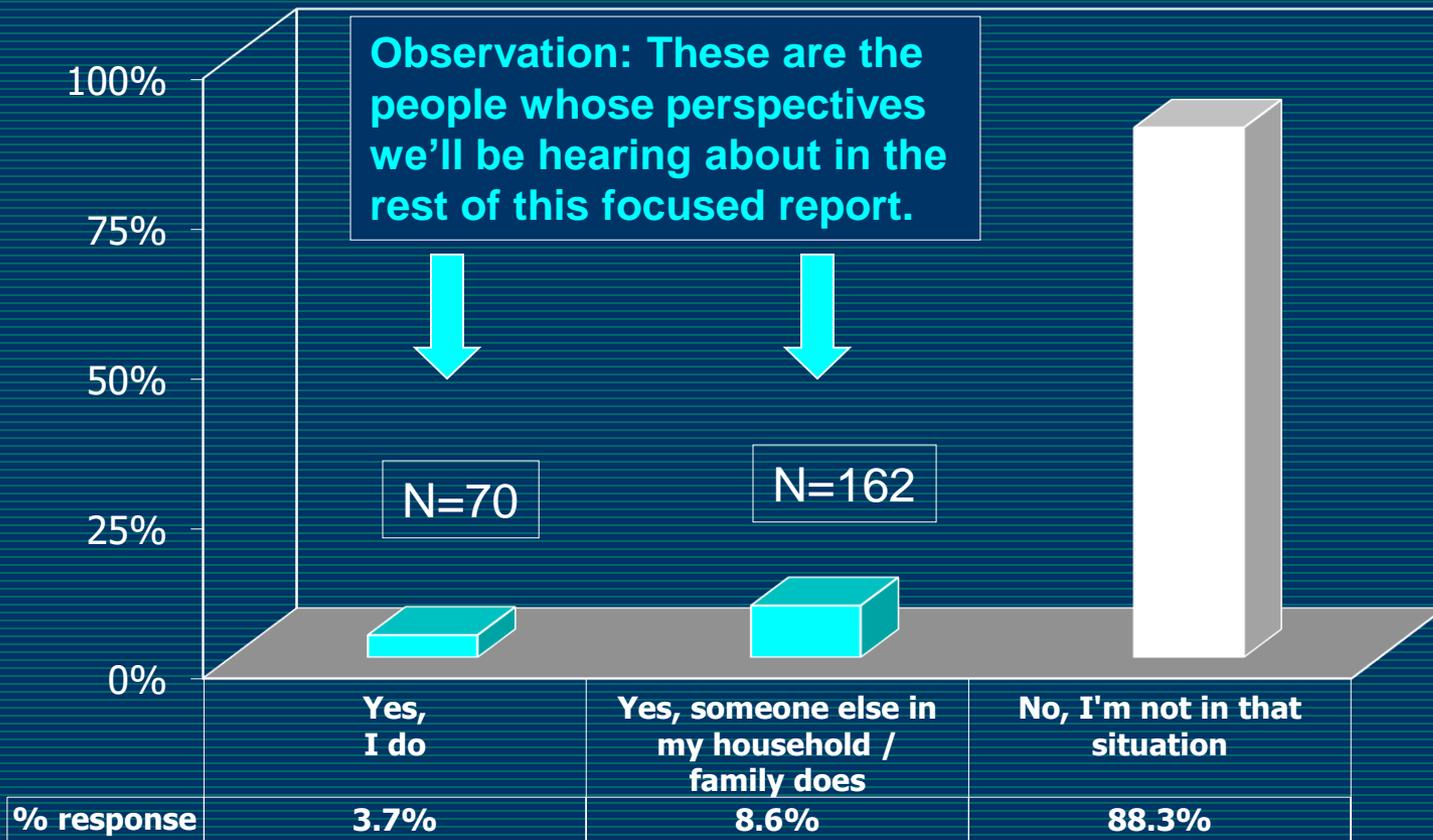
“This project was truly a labor of love from the three of us to the Jewish community we love. Although none of us were born or raised here, it is the community that became our home . . . where each of us have lived, raised our children, worked professionally, and volunteered for the past 40 years.” -- **Judy, Janet & Jocelyn**

Survey data tells us stories.

Within a sample comprised of 2,395
Jewish adult participants,

here's what we learned about the perspectives of
**our 70 respondents who said that they identify as
LGBTQ, and our 162 respondents who said that
someone else in their household or family identifies
as LGBTQ.**

Is yours a household or family in which someone identifies as LGBTQ?



How many members of our Jewish community identify as LGBTQ today?

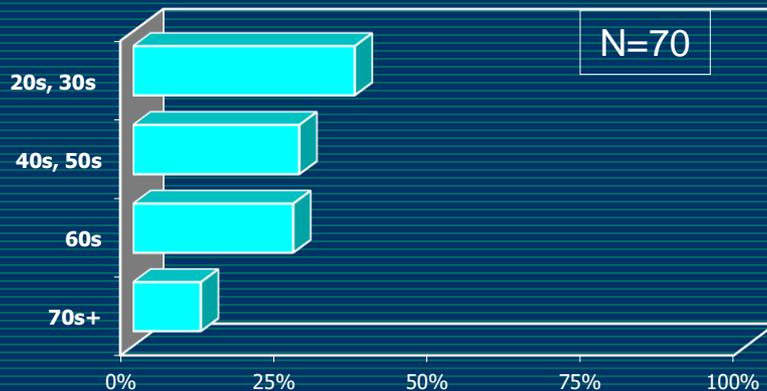
We project that an estimated 609 adults and teens living in Jewish households across the Rochester region today identify as LGBTQ.

[N= 1878 of our Jewish Adult Respondents answered this question, with 221 saying yes to one and 11 to both these situations.]

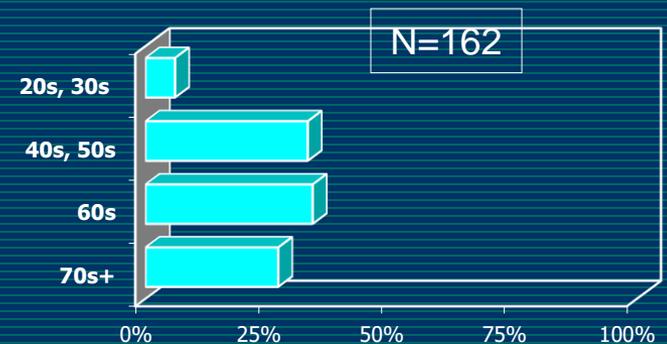
What do we know about the age profiles of those who identify as LGBTQ, and their household / family members?

Is yours a household or family in which someone identifies as LGBTQ?

1/3 of our LGBTQ participants are in their 20s and 30s, but the other 2/3 span all ages, including 2 currently in their 80s.



	70s+	60s	40s, 50s	20s, 30s
Yes, I do	11%	26%	27%	36%



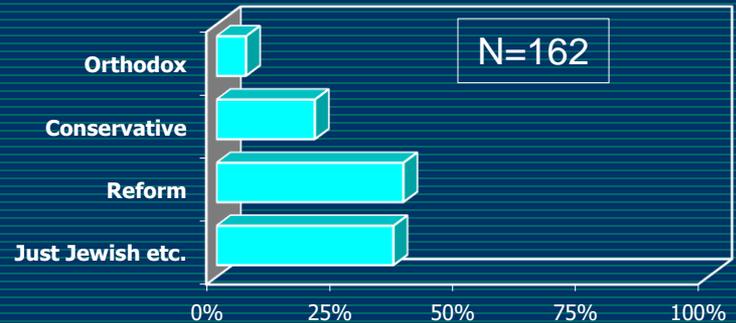
	70s+	60s	40s, 50s	20s, 30s
Yes, someone else in my household or family does	27%	34%	33%	6%

And those whose households / families include one or more members who identify as LGBTQ again span all ages.

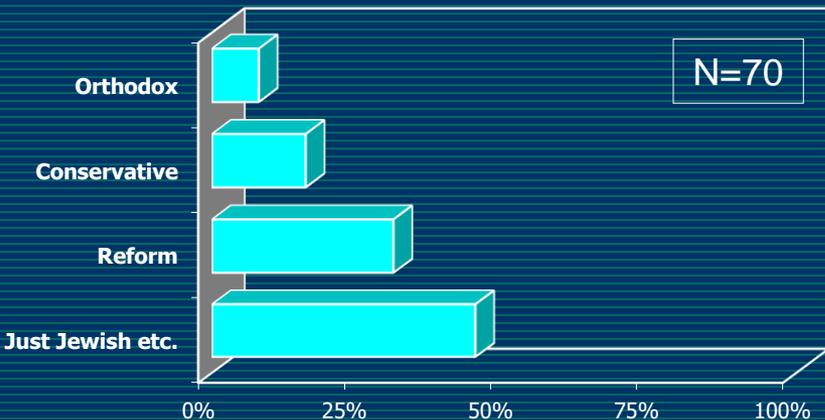
What do we know about the denominational profiles of those who identify as LGBTQ, and their household / family members?

Is yours a household or family in which someone identifies as LGBTQ?

When our LGBTQ respondents describe themselves denominationally, they increasingly choose the more liberal options. Yet 8 of our respondents consider themselves both LGBTQ and either Traditional Orthodox [2] or Modern Orthodox [6].



	Just Jewish etc.	Reform	Conservative	Orthodox
Yes, someone else in my household or family does	36%	38%	20%	6%

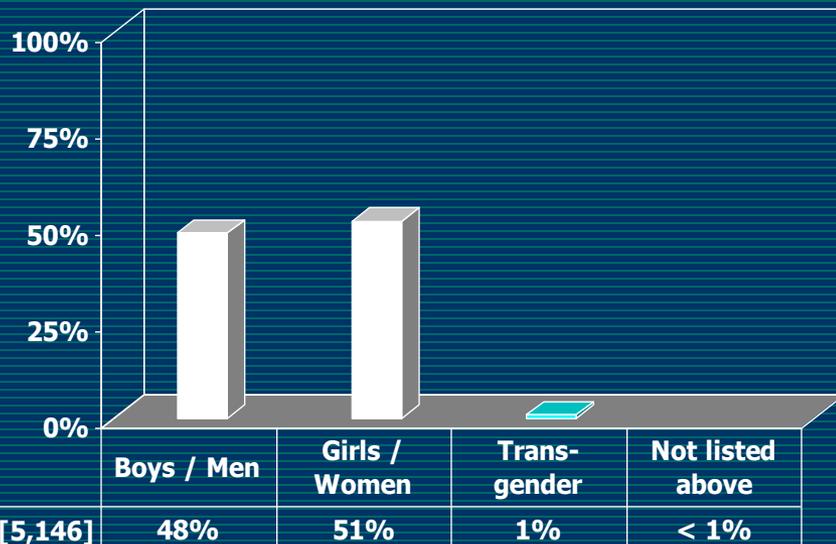


	Just Jewish etc.	Reform	Conservative	Orthodox
Yes, I do	45%	31%	16%	8%

And those whose households / families include one or more LGBTQ members span all denominations, but again tend towards the more liberal Reform or Just Jewish etc. denominational choices.

[N= 1878 of our Jewish Adult Respondents answered this question, with 221 saying yes to one and 11 to both these situations.]

As part of our counting question series, we asked: In terms of gender, how many people in your household are...?



This question was thoughtfully and carefully asked using wording recommended via consultation with the organization Keshet, which is dedicated to “LGBTQ equality in Jewish life.” A polarized set of comments were contributed by our survey participants -- some highly grateful, others highly critical.

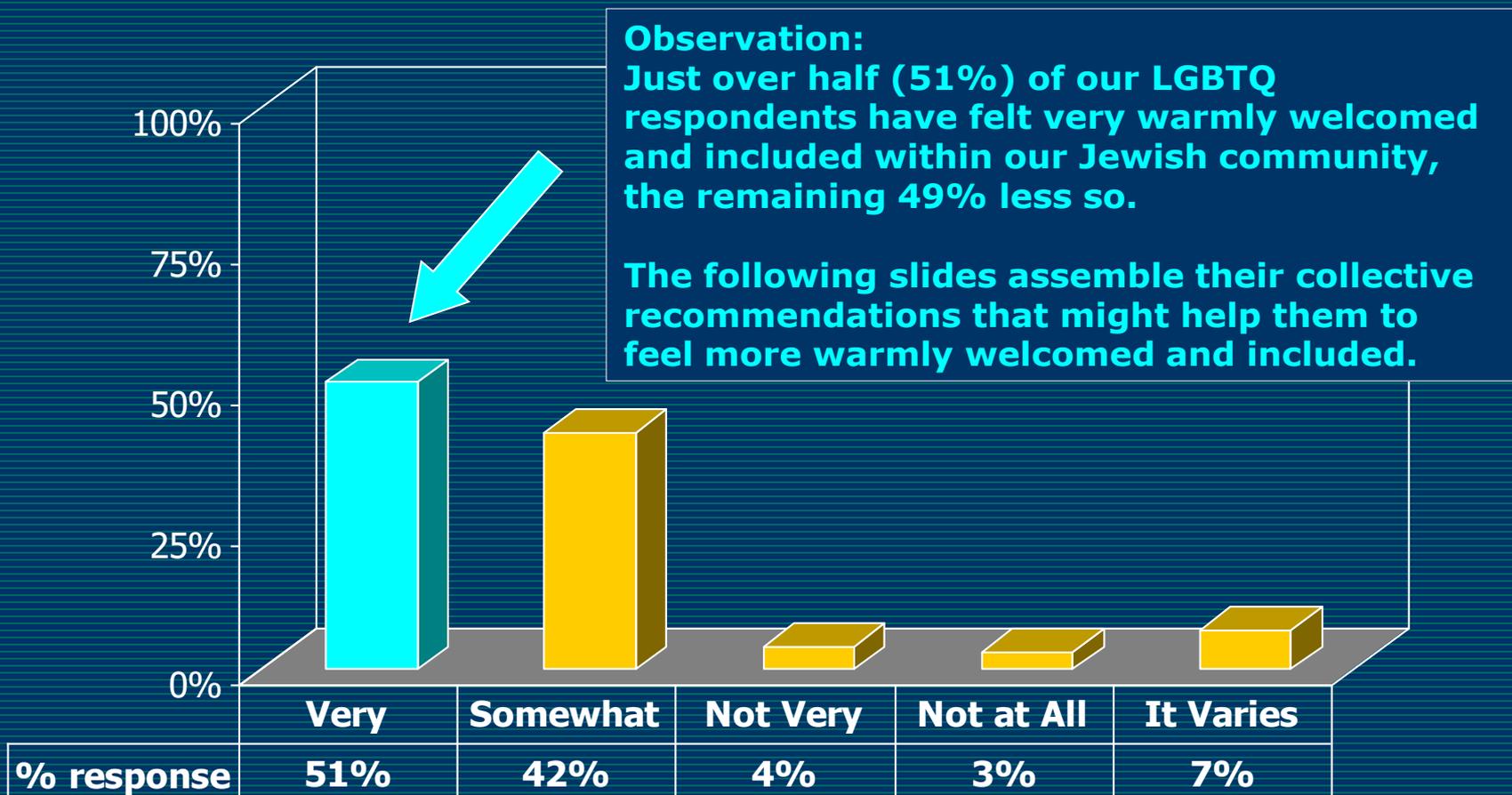
Clearly, gender is another issue about which we as Jews do not all agree.

Grateful Comments: *“I want to say how glad I am you have included this option. I think it is so important for our community to welcome and value all people!” “No additional genders in my household but THANK YOU SO MUCH for including this question!” “Thank you for including trans and non-binary as an option in your survey.”*

Critical Comments: *“What in the world?” “There are only two genders according to the Torah.” “How PC of you!” “Transgender isn’t a Jewish option.” “There is NO other gender than male or female.” “WHAT are you asking???. Just because the world has gone mad, doesn’t mean the Jewish people have to jump on that bandwagon too. There ONLY exist 2 genders in the world. Look under the microscope at anyone’s DNA and you’ll have your answer. Male or Female.” “Why is there even a question about additional genders. Really?” “PLEASE get rid of all this politically correct crap!!!”*

Asking the 70 respondents who told us that they identify as LGBTQ:

How warmly welcomed -- and included -- have you felt within our Jewish community?



[Asking the 70 respondents who told us that they identify as LGBTQ:]
What could and should our Jewish community be doing or providing to make you feel more warmly welcomed and included?

- **One emerging theme is certainly that many of our LGBTQ respondents already feel warmly welcomed and included, and they are grateful to the people and organizations that make them feel that way.**

"Nothing need be done - my Jewish friends are totally accepting of the diversity of sexual preferences."

"I'm assuming you mean as an LGBTQ person. I don't see any visibility in community leadership, education, synagogue environments -- but I am certainly included and welcomed as an individual in liberal parts of the community."

"I feel very welcomed in most synagogues and community centers."

"Temple Sinai warmly welcomes us as an interfaith GLBT family."

"I felt welcomed by Amy Sapowith, the former Rabbi at Temple Sinai. Temple Sinai is very welcoming and inclusive (and they participate in Pride)."

"I attend Chabad so it's not a problem."

"I know Temple Beth El is working to make our synagogue more inclusive and welcoming. I think it's really important to listen to members and ask us what would make us feel included instead of assuming."

"Satisfied with things as they are."

"Nothing new is needed."

"Nothing right now."

[Asking the 70 respondents who told us that they identify as LGBTQ:]
What could and should our Jewish community be doing or providing to make you feel more warmly welcomed and included?

- **Another emerging theme suggests that there may be a comfort differential between those who are officially and obviously “out”, versus those who are less openly so. Sensitivity is certainly required if welcome and inclusion are to be truly unconditional.**

“I am straight appearing right now so my orientation isn't outwardly visible to others. I can't speak to how to make the community more inclusive to people who are more visibly out.”

“I pass for straight, so I can't really speak to the experiences of people who are more obviously out.”

“Honestly, I am just scared to come out. No one can really fix that.”

- **Another request echoes one heard from our inter-faith participants, and that is the ability to be Jewishly wed. While clearly a departure from Jewish tradition, the inability to marry Jewishly deprives non-trivial portions of our Jewish community from feeling welcomed, included and accepted.**

“Performing same sex marriages.”

[Asking the 70 respondents who told us that they identify as LGBTQ:]
What could and should our Jewish community be doing or providing to make you feel more warmly welcomed and included?

□ **Another cluster of requests were attitudinal in nature, and perhaps therefore more challenging in terms of implementation:**

"Do more than claim to be inclusive. So long as people who support homophobic and transphobic policies are welcomed in our spaces, myself and most of my queer peers will not be able to feel fully safe in Jewish community spaces. The same goes for racism, classism, ableism, and Islamophobia. I have heard more than a few bigoted statements go uncontested while in shul. Inclusivity means actively deconstructing oppressive forces, not just putting a sign on the door. I know too many disenfranchised Jews who have been pushed out of the community due to bigotry and intolerance, often subtle enough to avoid notice from unaffected bystanders."

"Talk about LGBT Jews and how they are loved and welcome."

"In my Temple I am treated warmly but I feel that in more religious parts of community I would not be treated as warmly."

"It depends on the congregation. One can't change Orthodox practices."

"not be so judgmental"

"more accepting"

"better outreach"

[Asking the 70 respondents who told us that they identify as LGBTQ:]
What could and should our Jewish community be doing or providing to make you feel more warmly welcomed and included?

□ **A wide range of requests for well-publicized programming that intentionally addresses and includes LGBTQ-related issues comprise another emerging theme:**

"Continue to have well publicized activities that are geared towards this community. This occurred in the 1980's, but fizzled out."

"I honestly am not sure what the Rochester Jewish community currently offers to those who identify as LGBTQ today."

"Partnering with the GAGV (Out Alliance) on programs."

"[Programs providing] more knowledge of what it means to be LGBTQ+ and ways to support our LGBTQ+ siblings."

"More LGBTQ Temple activities such as socials and classes on gay Jewish history."

"Include more diverse images, artwork, and programming. Show up more places than at Pride."

"Federation [should be] part of Pride celebration."

"It was kind of disappointing not to see anything during pride month, even though the JCC went to Pride. It seemed like the goal was more marketing than showing support."

"Have LGBTQ friendly events more often."

"More social options for LGBT Jews and for single Jews older than 30."

"More programming, perhaps a group that meets regularly."

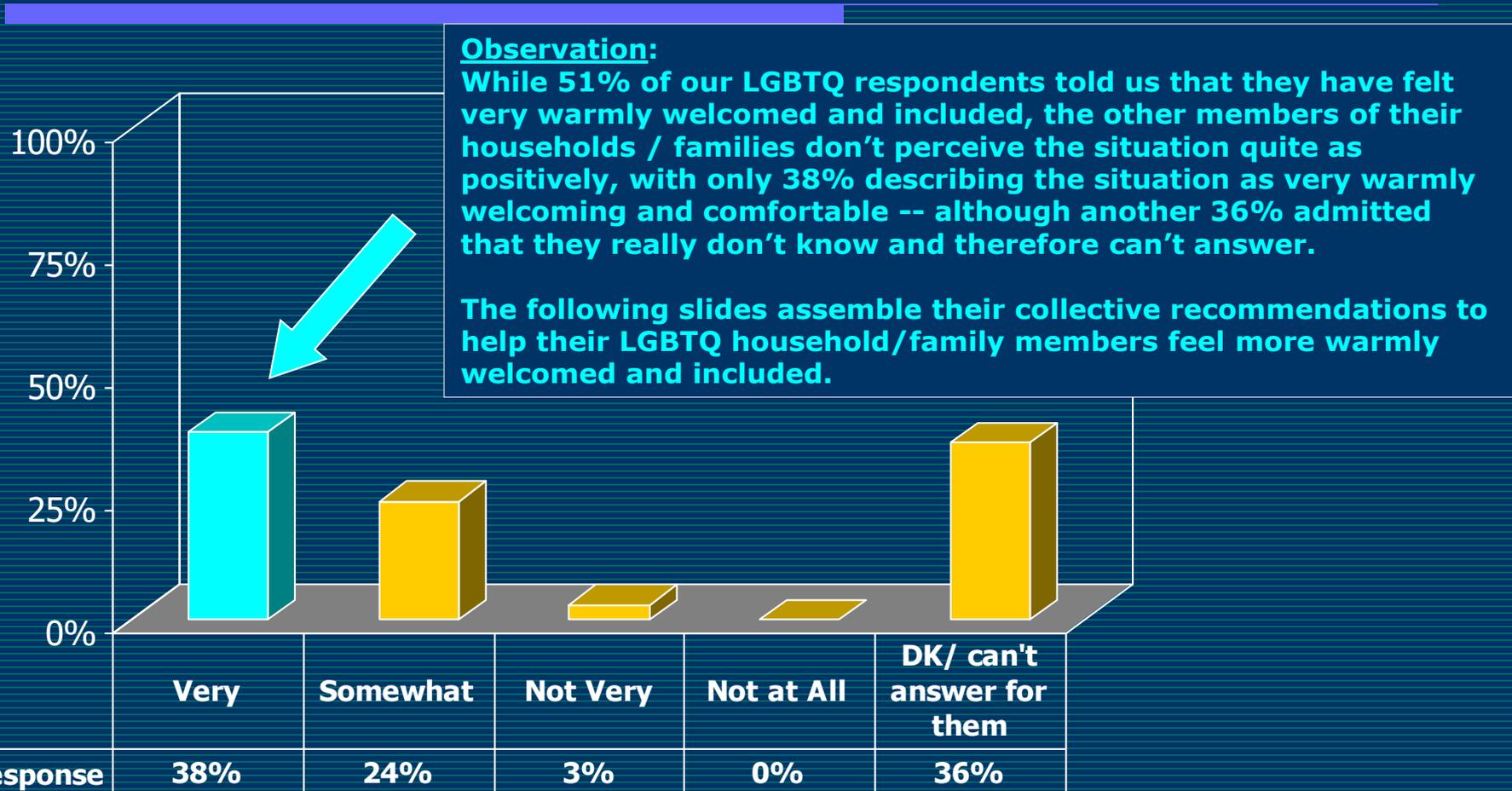
"More events with people attending that are diverse." "More social programs and community-based events." "Better communication as to events and occurrences."

And a very specific request for a support service that is not explicitly or exclusively LGBTQ, but might help our entire community to deal with a serious and sensitive issue:

"A sexual violence hotline for both female and male survivors of rape, sexual torture, forced prostitution, forced pornography, etc."

[Asking the 162 respondents who told us that someone else in their household or family identifies as LGBTQ:]

How warmly welcomed -- and included -- have they felt within our Jewish community? (If they don't live locally, think about how welcome and comfortable they've felt when visiting.)



[Asking the 162 respondents who told us that someone else in their household or family identifies as LGBTQ:]

What could and should our Jewish community be doing or providing to make them feel more warmly welcomed and included?

- **One emerging theme was the request to be – and feel -- Jewishly accepted and Jewishly engaged while being LGBTQ.**

"Have LGBTQ+ Jewish texts - something to identify with. Maybe even resources for them specific to Judaism and LGBTQ+"

"I would like to see all synagogues and all other buildings owned or rented by Jewish agencies have some sort of sign saying we welcome all Jewish people regardless of gender or sexuality preference. Also we should include all gender options and sexuality options to all agency's intake forms, including membership, financial, service oriented, etc."

"More temples, besides ours, should be fully welcoming to LBGQT members."

"Outreach to LGBTQA high school and college students. Social events. Counseling. Connections to LGBTQA rabbis and doctors. Assistance with adoption/surrogacy."

"Outreach and engagement. They did not get married at a Temple, nor involved with any Temple, because they did not feel they could get married there (and they were likely correct)."

"Welcome them to the Jewish community, regardless of gender or sexual orientation. Respect them, their identity and their lifestyle choices."

"While I believe she feels welcome, there is little organized young adult/ LGBT Jewish community here."

"If there were a well identified Jewish LGBTQ community, maybe they'd get involved."

"If there were a large community of Jewishly oriented LGBTQ, then more would feel comfortable. The question is, how to get the initial group started."

[Asking the 162 respondents who told us that someone else in their household or family identifies as LGBTQ:]

What could and should our Jewish community be doing or providing to make them feel more warmly welcomed and included?

□ **A wide range of potential activities and opportunities for Jewish LGBTQ presence and involvement were requested:**

"Perhaps there could be some Rochester-wide get-togethers for Jewish LGBTQ?"

"Have a [Jewish] presence at the Pride Parade."

"Host mixers for gay women."

"There should be more activities for them, especially when LGBTQ children are growing up."

"Observe Pride week, hire LGBT employees, have services that focus on diversity."

"Programming with broad and unique focuses on Jewish LGBTQ identity. Speakers, volunteer opportunities, etc."

"Continue promoting programs and policies inclusive of LGBT Jews."

"Have a viable PFLAG [Parents & Friends of Lesbians and Gays] for Jewish families."

"...maybe a Jewish lights group."

"Jewish LGBT group."

[Asking the 162 respondents who told us that someone else in their household or family identifies as LGBTQ:]

What could and should our Jewish community be doing or providing to make them feel more warmly welcomed and included?

- **Another emerging theme, echoing our LGBTQ participants, offers gratitude for the ways in which our community is already welcoming and inclusive.**

"I think you already are."

"The community is LGBTQ friendly and welcoming."

"Our community is welcoming and my Temple Sinai is extremely welcoming."

"We have Special Shabbats at Temple Sinai."

"We are very happy with the way Temple Sinai welcomes and includes LGBTQ individuals."

"I, my friends, and the Temple I belong to (Sinai) are all extremely welcoming."

"Temple Emanuel is doing this very well."

"Reform congregations are inclusive."

"She has enjoyed 'Pride Shabbat' and is proud that our temple marches in the pride parade."

"They are active & feel included already. Shyness is their limiting factor! (Yes, they can see me type this)."

"I think the local community does a fine job of welcoming LGBTQ people."

"For now they are feeling welcomed."

[Asking the 162 respondents who told us that someone else in their household or family identifies as LGBTQ:]

What could and should our Jewish community be doing or providing to make them feel more warmly welcomed and included?

- **Another emerging theme, again echoing our LGBTQ participants, seeks the attitudinal change needed to achieve open-minded acceptance – a potentially challenging undertaking in terms of implementation.**

"Continue educating society (and our community) that LGBT is not a choice."

"Deal with them warmly and not make a big deal about how they define themselves."

"Treat them as people, not just as LBGT."

"I think just having an attitude of acceptance."

"More accepting"

"Be welcoming"

"...honey vs. vinegar..."

"Address trans issues more."

"My daughter identifies as bi. I don't think she has ever felt that her identification is a barrier in the Rochester Jewish community. More that the community itself isn't that welcoming."

"I don't trust the community to be welcoming."

"Publicize the fact that all of such persuasion are welcome here."

"Be publically welcoming. 'Don't ask, don't tell' policies are hurtful."

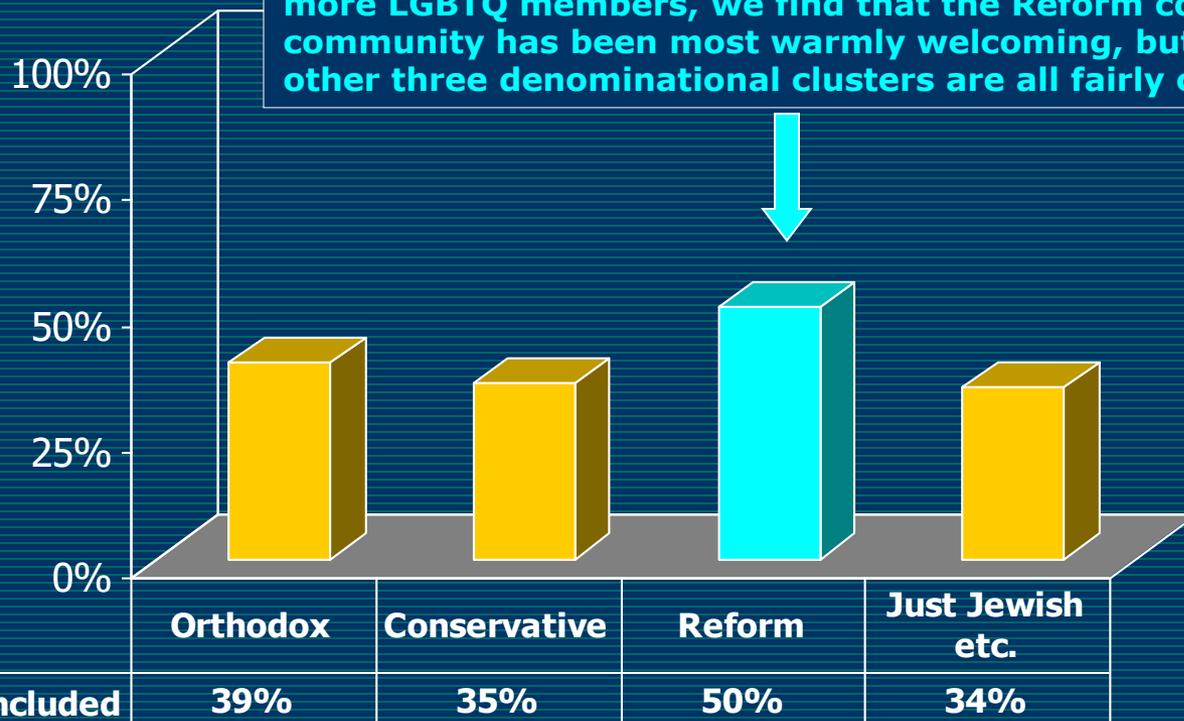
"Most of those who do not welcome others need to deal with this on an individual basis."

How – if at all -- does this perception differ denominationally?

How warmly welcomed -- and included -- have you and your LGBTQ household / family members felt within our Jewish community?

Observation:

Combining the responses of the 70 participants who identify as LGBTQ and the 162 whose household / family have one or more LGBTQ members, we find that the Reform corner of our community has been most warmly welcoming, but that the other three denominational clusters are all fairly comparable.



What additional comments were made, throughout our survey, by and about our LGBTQ community members' needs and issues?

"I am a member of JCC. I have friends who are Jewish. I have dated men who are Jewish. I have participated in Neherim, a Gay Jewish organization that sponsors a summer camp at Easton Mountain."

"I love the [JCC's Center Stage] Theatre productions and inclusivity of the LGBTQA community."

[A teen talking about something that inspired her Jewishly:] *"Yes, Abby Wambach. The hate towards her being gay never got her mad, but helped her be strong. Being Jewish helps me knowing that many have suffered in order for world peace efforts."*

Events & Activities They Would Like to See Offered:

"Have events that include everyone. Multi-cultural , LGBTQ, etc. Have people in the community become aware of their prejudices: lack of social/socio-economic skills, compassion towards others, and expose their children to new ideas & people outside the Jewish community..."

"Discussions on the importance of solidarity with struggles for freedom and justice including anti-racism, anti-Islamophobia, and LGBTQ+ rights."

"Jewish weekend for LGBT community"

"LGBTQ Jewish options"

"Events/activities specifically for LGBT Jews"

"Programming for LGBT"

"Young Jewish LGBT singles events (perhaps with another community as well)."

LGBTQ-related Comments Re: Synagogues They Would Consider Joining

"I wouldn't say I've felt unwelcome, but I don't feel that traditional temples are geared toward LGBT people."

"If there were more people of color and LGBTQ folks involved, and the prayers were still in Hebrew..."

"If there were an LGBT congregation (depending on cost)..."

"Women's participation, LGBTQ+ inclusiveness, more inclusiveness overall..."

Incidents of Anti-Semitism Also Involving anti-LGBTQ Issues:

"Linda Sarsour & Ilhan Omar, Jewish lesbians excluded from women's gay march in Chicago..."

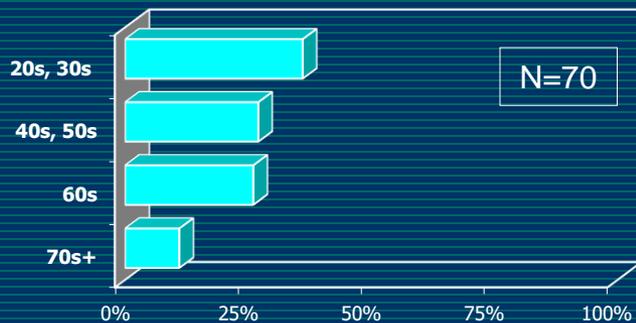
"At a school where I currently teach (a secular school), a sensitivity workshop for LGBTQ individuals was held. One of the presenters gave examples from the Bible to support her view that the Bible was outdated and not a sufficient argument for rejecting the gay lifestyle. Many of the examples she gave were things that I, as an Orthodox Jew, do observe. Her examples clearly come from a lack of understanding but could be construed as anti-Semitic. Even though I am open to those who want to follow alternative lifestyles, I was offended."

The LGBTQ Perspective: Concluding Summary

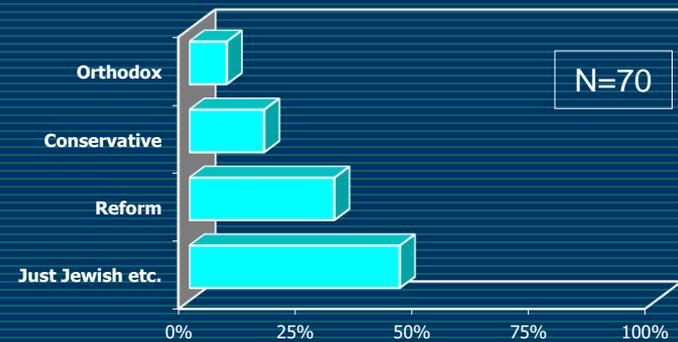
70 of our survey participants told us that they identify as LGBTQ, and 162 told us that someone else in their household or family does so. **Community-wide**, we project that an estimated **609 adults and teens** living in Jewish households across the Rochester region today identify as LGBTQ.

Our LGBTQ respondents **span all ages** – from 36% in their 20s and 30s, to 11% in their 70s. And they **span all denominations** – mostly Just Jewish etc. or Reform, but Conservative and Orthodox as well.

Is yours a household or family in which someone identifies as LGBTQ?



	70s+	60s	40s, 50s	20s, 30s
■ Yes, I do	11%	26%	27%	36%

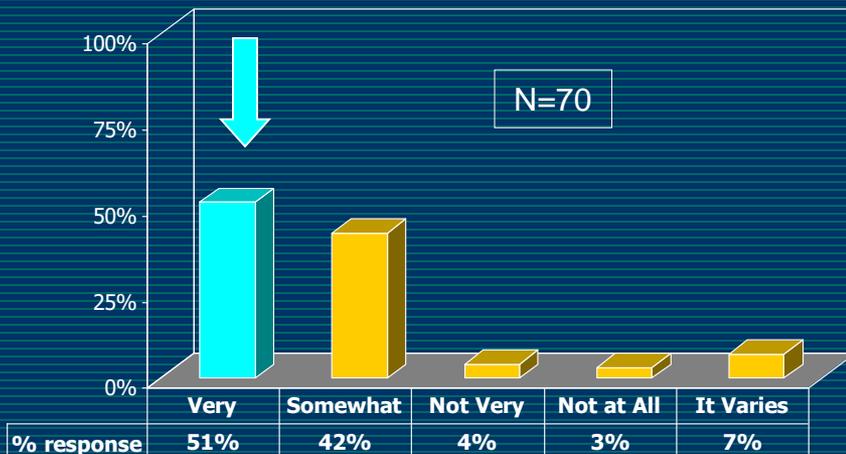


	Just Jewish etc.	Reform	Conservative	Orthodox
■ Yes, I do	45%	31%	16%	8%

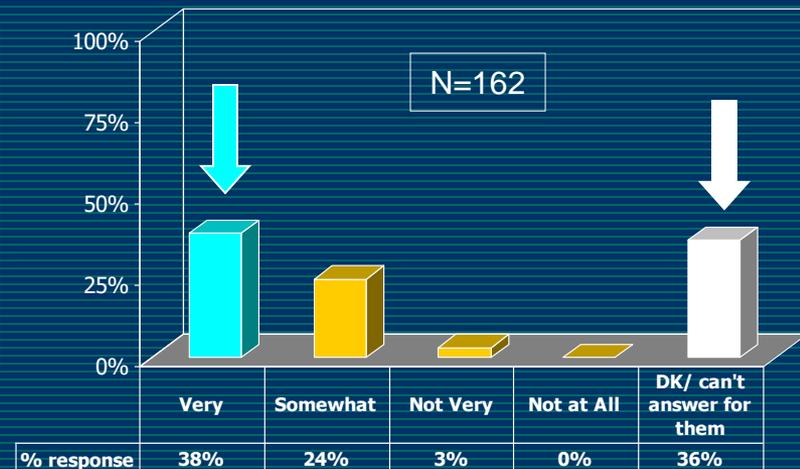
The LGBTQ Perspective: Concluding Summary (continued)

51% of our LGBTQ respondents describe themselves as feeling **very warmly welcomed and included** within our Jewish community. Only **38% of their household / family members** agree – although another 36% admit that they don't know.

How warmly welcomed -- and included -- have you felt within our Jewish community?

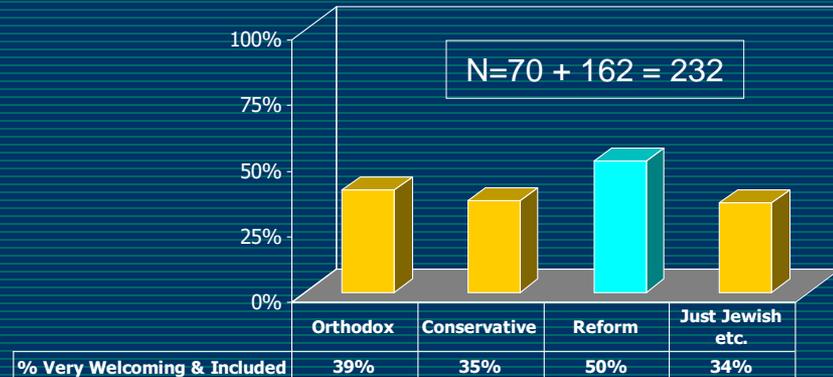


How warmly welcomed -- and included -- have they felt within our Jewish community?



The LGBTQ Perspective Concluding Summary (continued)

So far, the **Reform** corner of our Jewish community is portrayed as having been the **most consistently welcoming and inclusive** by those who identify as LGBTQ and their household and family members -- an observation confirmed both quantitatively and anecdotally.



When asked what our Jewish community could and should be doing to help those who identify as LGBTQ feel **more warmly welcomed and included**, several recurring themes emerged:

[1] **Gratitude** towards those within our Jewish community who have already been warmly welcoming and inclusive towards those who identify as LGBTQ and their households and families.

[2] Whether or not the individual is openly and visibly “out” or not, there is a shared **desire to comfortably engage Jewishly across the full spectrum of Jewish life** -- participating in events, activities and programs created **specifically for LGBTQ participants**, but also participating right **alongside the rest of the community** and partaking in the full range of community celebrations, holidays, traditions, worship experiences, volunteer experiences, etc.

The LGBTQ Perspective Concluding Summary (continued)

[3] Our LGBTQ respondents would like to be able to marry Jewishly, and seek a range of support such as *“Outreach to LGBTQA high school and college students, counseling, connections to LGBTQA rabbis and doctors, assistance with adoption/surrogacy, etc.”* **They would, in other words, like to be both LBGTQ and nonetheless Jewish.**

[4] While the Reform community has been especially receptive to Jews who identify as LGBTQ, our Jewish community’s LGBTQ activities and offerings today – if any -- seem to be **under the radar and missing widespread awareness and participation**. Hence comments like: *“I honestly am not sure what the Rochester Jewish community currently offers to those who identify as LGBTQ today.”* *“While I believe she feels welcome, there is little organized young adult LGBT Jewish community here.”* *“If there were a well identified Jewish LGBTQ community, maybe they’d get involved.”* *“If there were a large community of Jewishly oriented LGBTQ, then more would feel comfortable. The question is, how to get the initial group started.”* Jewish LGBTQ community offerings, in other words, need to be loudly and proudly promoted. Partnerships between our Jewish community and LGBTQ organizations like GAGV (Out Alliance), or PFLAG (Parents & Friends of Lesbians and Gays) might be helpful. But there is a clear calling for more.

[5] Planning programs and activities is one kind of challenge; **changing attitudes** is arguably more complicated. More than a few of our survey participants were upset by our gender question having been asked in a more nuanced way than the traditional Male/Female. From both our LGBTQ participants and their household and family members, we hear a calling for greater **acceptance, respect, and inclusion** in every aspect of our Jewish community -- **institutionally and individually**. To that end, our Jewish community will need both open minds and open hearts.

... questions or comments?

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