

**CAMPUS CLIMATE SURVEY ON
LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL AND TRANSGENDER
CONCERNS 1996**

Survey Results

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Introduction and Background

In the fall of 1989, then University of Oregon (UO) President Myles Brand appointed a campus task force on lesbian and gay concerns, and asked its members to address the problem of ensuring the rights of all individuals on this campus, regardless of sexual orientation. As part of this effort, the committee gathered data about the experiences of lesbian, gay and bisexual faculty, staff, and students on the UO campus. A survey was distributed in the spring of 1990. To assess the current climate, as well as document any change in the atmosphere for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered faculty, staff, and students, the Office of Student Life decided to repeat the survey in the spring of 1996. The Office of Student Life contracted with the Oregon Survey Research Laboratory (OSRL) to conduct this research. Planning for this survey began in April 1996 with Stephanie Carnahan and proceeded through June 1996. Working closely with representatives of the Office of Student Life, OSRL conducted a survey of 712 University of Oregon students, faculty and staff.

Survey Methodology

Survey Instrument

The overall goals of the survey were to obtain information from University of Oregon students, faculty and staff regarding the current climate of the UO campus for gays, lesbians, bisexuals, and transgendered persons (GLBTs). In designing the survey instrument, OSRL replicated several questions from the original 1990 Survey of Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual Students. OSRL staff expertise was used to improve the appearance, question order, question sequencing, and question phrasing.

Before entering the field, OSRL pretested the instrument using our standard three-pronged pretest procedure, which involves: (a) members of the survey population, (b) OSRL's Questionnaire Review Committee, comprised of survey experts from our staff and university-wide advisory committee, and (c) potential users of the data, including members of the Office of Student Life. Individual questions were pretested for clarity, accuracy, validity, and variability of response. The entire instrument was pretested for flow, length, comprehension, and other factors which affect respondents cooperation and attention.

The survey instrument comprised the following subject areas:

1. **Demographic characteristics**, including age, staff/faculty/student status, sex of respondent, and sexual orientation;
2. **General campus climate** including general impressions and changes in the campus environment;
3. **Personal safety** including verbal, physical and sexual harassment, and whether or not such incidents were reported;
4. **Pressure to conceal sexual orientation** including number of people who know the sexual orientation of GLBT individuals, and pressure to falsify sexual orientation;

5. **Course offerings** at UO including number of courses, workshops and lectures which emphasize GLBT concerns;
6. **Classroom environment** including remarks made by instructors about sexual orientation, effect of sexual orientation on evaluation of students;
7. **Experience with UO services** including treatment based on sexual orientation of respondent, influence of sexual orientation on health care and housing;
8. **Workplace environment** including affect of sexual orientation on opportunities for professional advancement.

A facsimile of the survey instrument is provided in Section 2 of this documentation. All questionnaires were self-administered, completely anonymous, and human subjects approval was obtained.

Sample and Data Collection

Because of the sensitive nature of the topics covered in this study the research was conducted by anonymous self-administered questionnaire. Naturally, many individuals chose not to fill out a questionnaire and, therefore, the portion of the target population which responded to this survey is called a “sample of convenience.” The survey does not represent the opinions and experiences of the campus in general, but it does capture the perceptions of a diverse cross-section of UO faculty, staff and students.

Approximately five thousand questionnaires were printed. A questionnaire was sent to every UO faculty, staff, and graduate student. Several questionnaires were also picked up by undergraduate students who had contact with the Office of Student Life or other cooperating campus organizations. 712 questionnaires were completed and returned via campus mail during the period May 15, 1996 to June 30, 1996.

Survey Results

This presentation of the survey results is organized around the eight survey subject areas identified on page 2. Readers of this report may refer to the banner tables in Section 5 for more detail. In the banner tables, all questions asked in the survey were cross-tabulated with 10 key variables (description of the campus environment, sexual orientation, number of people who know of respondent’s sexual orientation, whether the respondent is part of an organization which primarily provides services to GLBTs, whether respondent attended a course, lecture, or workshop on lesbian gay or bisexual concerns, age, sex, and student or employment status. The banner data include counts and percentages for each question overall and for each row and column of the cross-tabulation. Narrative responses to open-ended questions are provided in Section 6.

Demographic Characteristics

Because the focus of this study is gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender concerns, it is perhaps appropriate to begin by presenting the percentage of respondents in each category of sexual orientation: Of the 712 faculty, staff, and students who completed a questionnaire most identified as heterosexual (76%), while 9% identified as lesbian, 5% as gay, 7% as bisexual, and 2.4% as “other.”¹ Much of the analysis to follow will be organized around the respondent’s reported sexual identity, however, it should be noted that due to the non-random nature of the study sample (the “sample of convenience” generated by self-administered questionnaires distributed in the fashion described on page 2) the extent to which the experiences and opinions represented in this survey can be said to be representative of any group is uncertain.

Thirty-four percent of the respondents were male, 65% percent were female, and four respondents (.6%) answered “other.” Of the males who responded to the survey, 14.5% identified as gay, 6.2% identified as

¹ Only one respondent indicated “transgender” as a sexual orientation. For purposes of confidentiality the following analysis will not make use of the category of transgender.

bisexual, and 75.5% as heterosexual. Of the female respondents, 13% identified as lesbian, 7% identified as bisexual, and 76% as heterosexual.

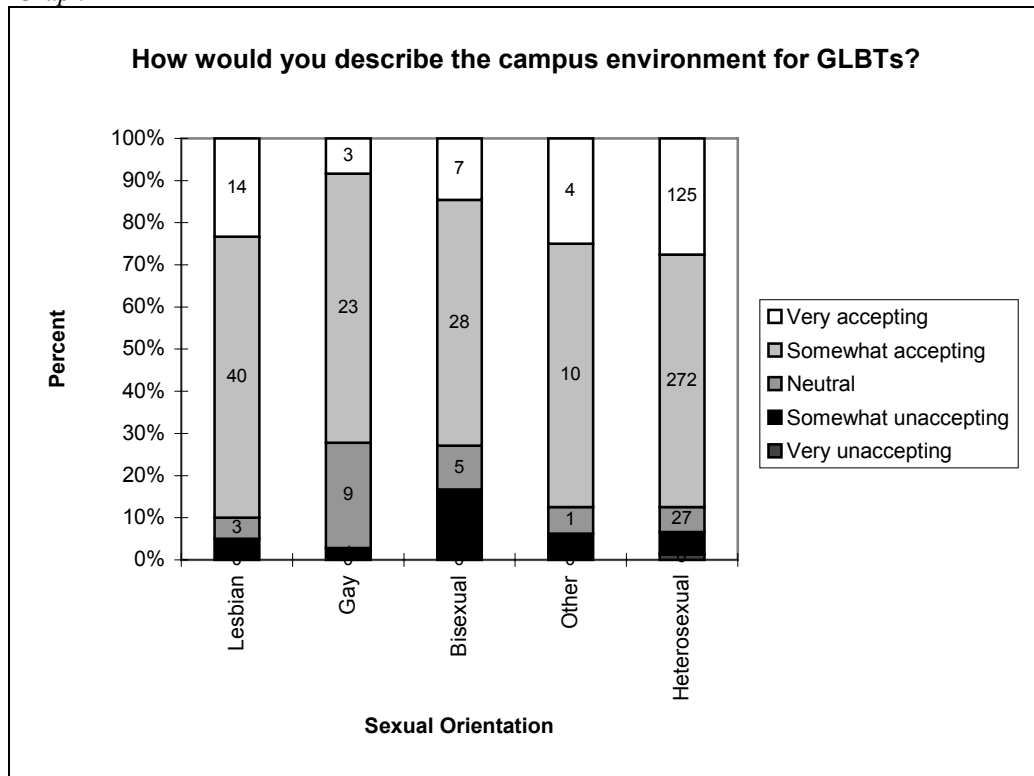
Over half (516) of the respondents are employees, 41% of whom are faculty, 36% classified staff, 10% are in management services and 8% administration. 195 of the respondents are students, of whom 61% are graduate students and 38% are undergraduate. Seventy-eight percent of students live in off-campus housing, 10% both in residence halls and university housing, and only 1% in fraternity or sorority houses. Only 7% indicated that they were international students. Sixty-five percent of the student respondents identified as heterosexual as opposed to 79% of those who are employees. Ten percent of respondents indicated that they were part of an organization that primarily provides services to GLBTs.

Respondents to the survey were broken down into five age categories: 25 % of the respondents stated that they were 29 years of age or less, 22% were 30 to 39, 31% were 40 to 49, 12% were 50 to 55 years of age, and 8% were “56 or more.”

General Campus Climate

Respondents were asked “Generally speaking, how would you describe the campus environment for GLBT people?” Responses revealed more acceptance than not: 22% marked the category “very accepting,” 53% marked “somewhat accepting,” 6% “neutral,” 6% “somewhat unaccepting,” and only 1% marked “very unaccepting”. Twelve percent chose to mark the “don’t know” category.

Graph 1



Answers varied somewhat depending on sexual orientation of respondent (Graph 1). Respondents identifying as lesbian answered “very accepting” 23% of the time and “somewhat accepting” 66%. Five percent of lesbians reported “neutral” and “somewhat unaccepting” while none reported “very unaccepting.” For gay respondents, only 8% reported “very accepting,” 62% “somewhat accepting,” 24% “neutral,” 3% “somewhat unaccepting,” and 0 reported “very unaccepting.” Bisexuals are more evenly dispersed as 14% reported “very accepting,” 57%

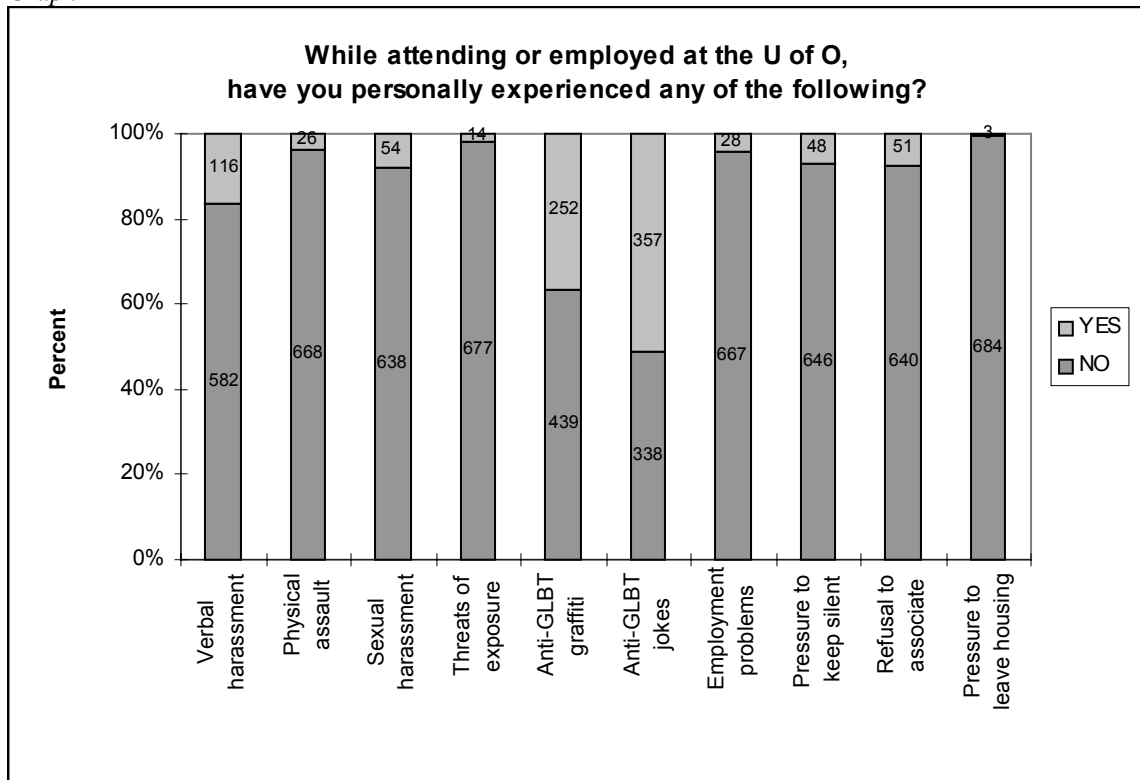
“somewhat accepting,” 10% “neutral,” 16% “somewhat unaccepting,” and no one reported “very unaccepting”. Heterosexual respondents feel very differently than other respondents. Twenty-three percent felt that the campus is “very accepting,” 51% reported “somewhat accepting,” and 5% for both “neutral” and “somewhat unaccepting.” Surprisingly, heterosexuals were the only group to report “very unaccepting” (1%).

Several other survey questions also address the general campus environment. The first asked respondents to describe changes in the campus environment since they first began studying or working at UO. Overall, responses were fairly evenly split between “more accepting” (25%), “somewhat more accepting” (24%), “no change” (27%), and “don’t know” (22%). Aside from 2 heterosexuals reporting “less accepting,” no others reported feeling that way. 57% of gay respondents felt that the campus was either “more accepting” or “somewhat more accepting” compared to 43% of the lesbian respondents, 39% of bisexual respondents and 50% of Heterosexual respondents.

30% of respondents, reported going to events sponsored by GLBT organizations but just 10% reported that they belong to one. Of those respondents who do belong to an organization, 28% are lesbian, 32% are gay, 18% bisexual, and 5% heterosexual.

Additionally, respondents were asked a series of questions regarding various harassment situations on campus (Graph 2). These questions included things such as verbal, physical or sexual harassment, threats of exposing the sexual identity of the respondent, anti-GLBT jokes or graffiti, employment problems, etc. Fifty percent of all respondents had heard anti-GLBT jokes and 35% of all respondents had viewed anti-GLBT graffiti. In both cases, the percentages were significantly higher for GLBTs than for heterosexuals.

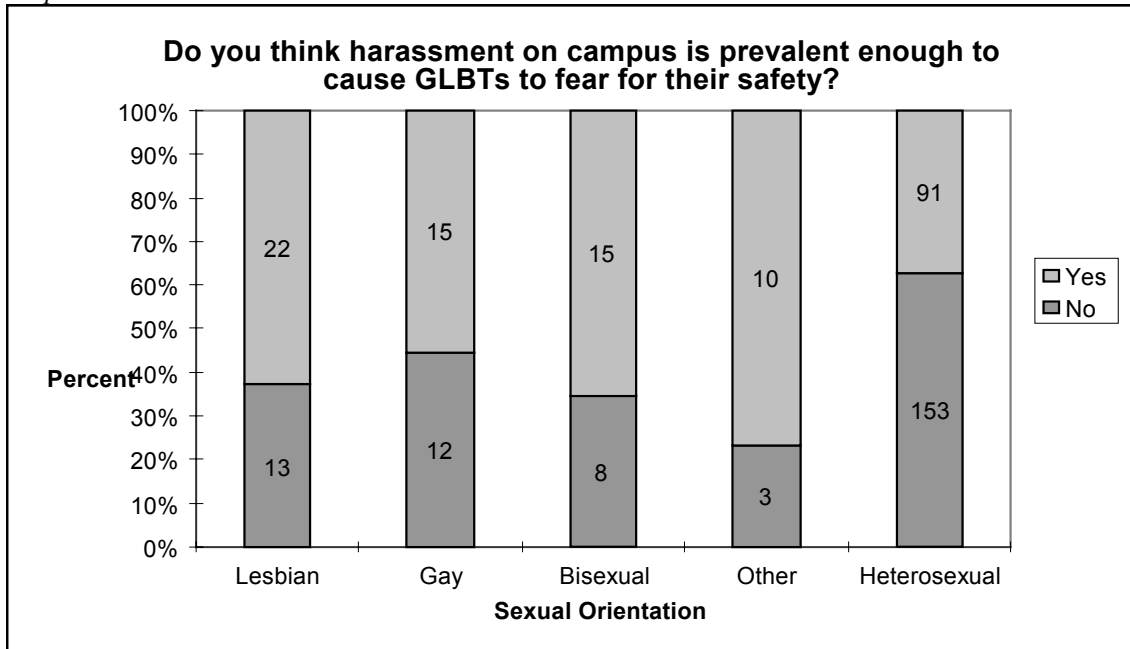
Graph 2



Of those who experienced the situations mentioned above, only one quarter or less were officially reported. Twenty-one percent of respondents who experienced verbal harassment reported it. Twenty-five percent of those

who experienced physical assaults reported them, 18% reported sexual harassment, 9% reported threats of exposure, 11% reported graffiti, 5% reported jokes, 20% reported employment problems, 8% reported that they were pressured into silence, 11% reported their friends' refusal to associate with them, and less than 1 percent officially reported being pressured into leaving housing.

Graph 3

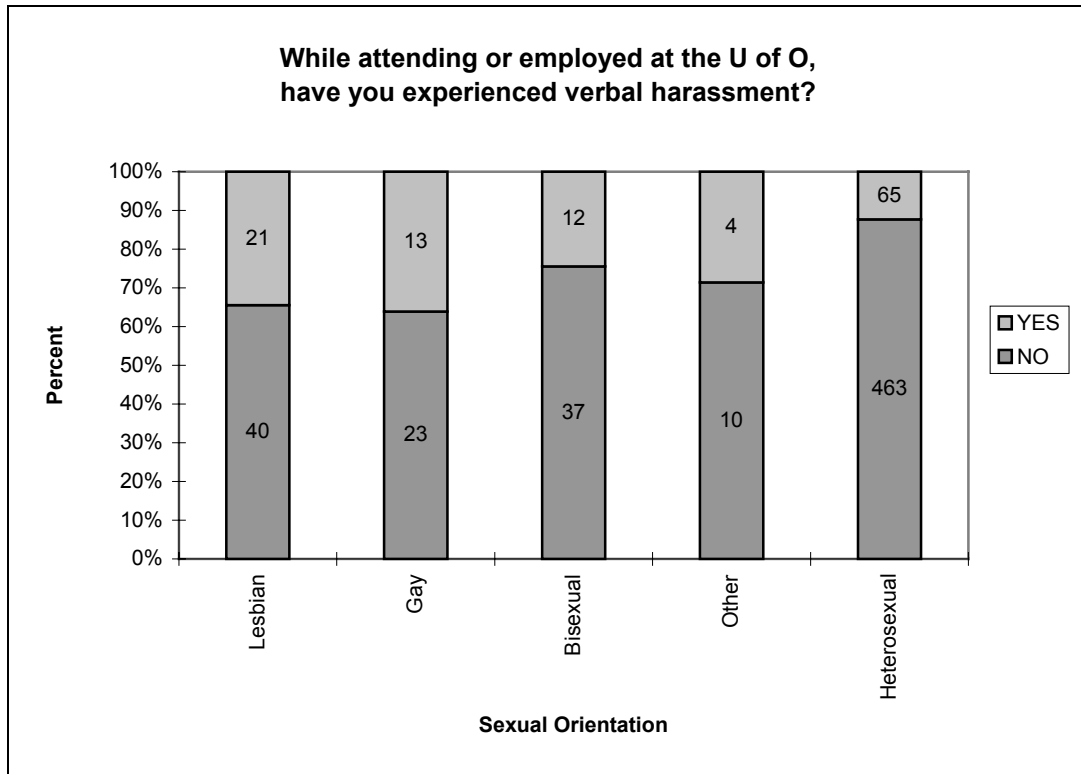


Personal Safety

Respondents were asked if harassment on campus is prevalent enough to cause GLBTs to fear for their safety. Overall, 22% responded “yes,” 27% said “no” and almost 49% marked the “don’t know” box. Looking across sexual orientation, we might expect more variability in the percentages but the data do not support it. 36% of the lesbian respondents stated that harassment is prevalent enough to cause fear by marking “yes,” 21% marked “no,” and 43% of lesbians marked “don’t know.” Forty-one percent of gays said “yes,” 32% “no,” and 27% reported “don’t know.” Of bisexual respondents, 31% said “yes,” 16% “no,” and 53% were unsure. Heterosexuals had the highest percentage of “don’t know” responses (55%), 17% said “yes,” and 28% replied “no.” Interestingly, ten of the seventeen respondents identifying their sexual orientation as “other” had the highest percentage of “yes” answers (60%), 18% “no,” and 24% were unsure (Graph 3).

When asked specifically about harassment issues, approximately one-third of all GLBTs indicated that they experienced verbal harassment because of their sexual orientation, including 34% of lesbians, 35% of gays, 25% of bisexuals (Graph 4). 12% of heterosexuals indicated such harassment. Fewer respondents indicated physical abuse because of their sexual orientation, although 11% of the gay respondents answered in the affirmative, followed by 3% of both the lesbian and heterosexual respondents. Sexual harassment because of sexual orientation was highest among lesbians (9.8%), followed by bisexuals (8.2%), heterosexuals (7.2%), and gays (5.4%).

Graph 4



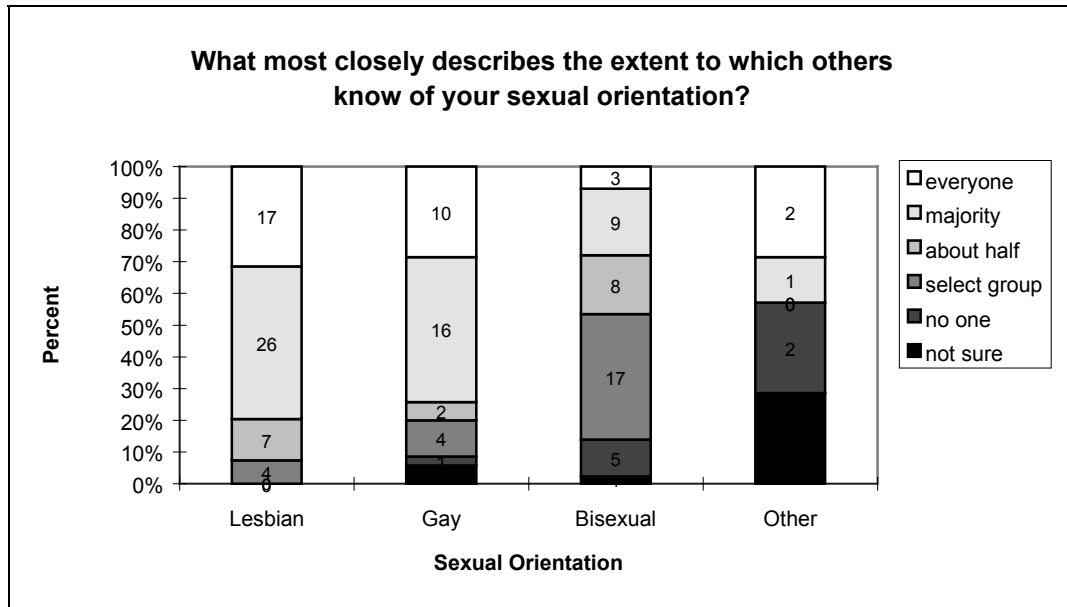
Pressure to Conceal Sexual Orientation

GLBTs were asked how many people knew of their sexual orientation. Of those who answered, 5% were not sure, 6% answered “I am ‘out’ to no one,” 18% answered “I am ‘out’ to only a select group,” 12% answered “I am ‘out’ to about half of the people I know,” 37% answered “I am ‘out’ to a majority of people,” and 23% answered “I am ‘out’ to everyone”. Of those who reported being out to everyone, 53% are lesbian, 31% are gay, 9% bisexual and 3% marked “other.” None of those who were “out to no one” are lesbian, 13% are gay, 63% bisexual, and 25% are “other”. Bisexual responses were quite different than lesbian and gay behavior. Two percent of bisexuals were “not sure”, 10% are out to no one, 35% are out only to a select group, 16% report they are out to about half, 18% are out to a majority, and only 6% of bisexuals are out to everyone (Graph 5).

Only 13% of all respondents reported that they had felt it necessary to indicate that they were not GLBT while at the University -- but this number includes heterosexual respondents. A full 31% of lesbian respondents answered that they had felt it necessary to indicate that they were not GLBT; 27% of gay respondents and 41% of bisexual respondents also reported having to lie about their sexual orientation. Even 8% of heterosexuals felt it was necessary to indicate that they were not GLBT. Of those who replied that they felt it necessary to indicate they were not GLBT, close to half (43%) were heterosexual.

Relatively few respondents (2%) reported that they had been threatened with “exposure” of their sexual orientation while at the UO. However, 10% of the bisexual respondents, and 5% of both lesbian and gay respondents indicated that they had experienced this sort of threat. When asked whether they had experienced pressure to silence their sexual orientation, 25% of the bisexual respondents replied “yes,” followed by 23% of the lesbian respondents and 16% of the gay respondents.

Graph 5

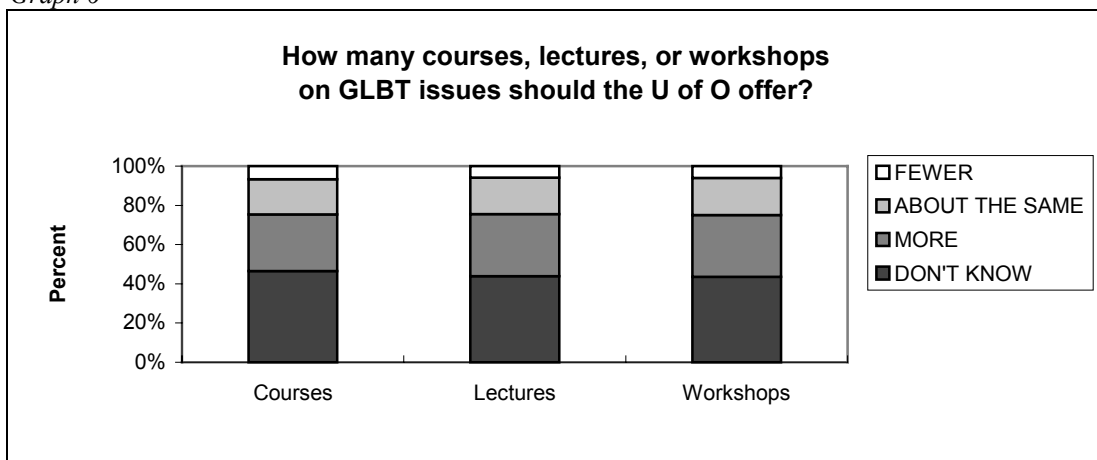


Satisfaction with GLBT Offerings at UO

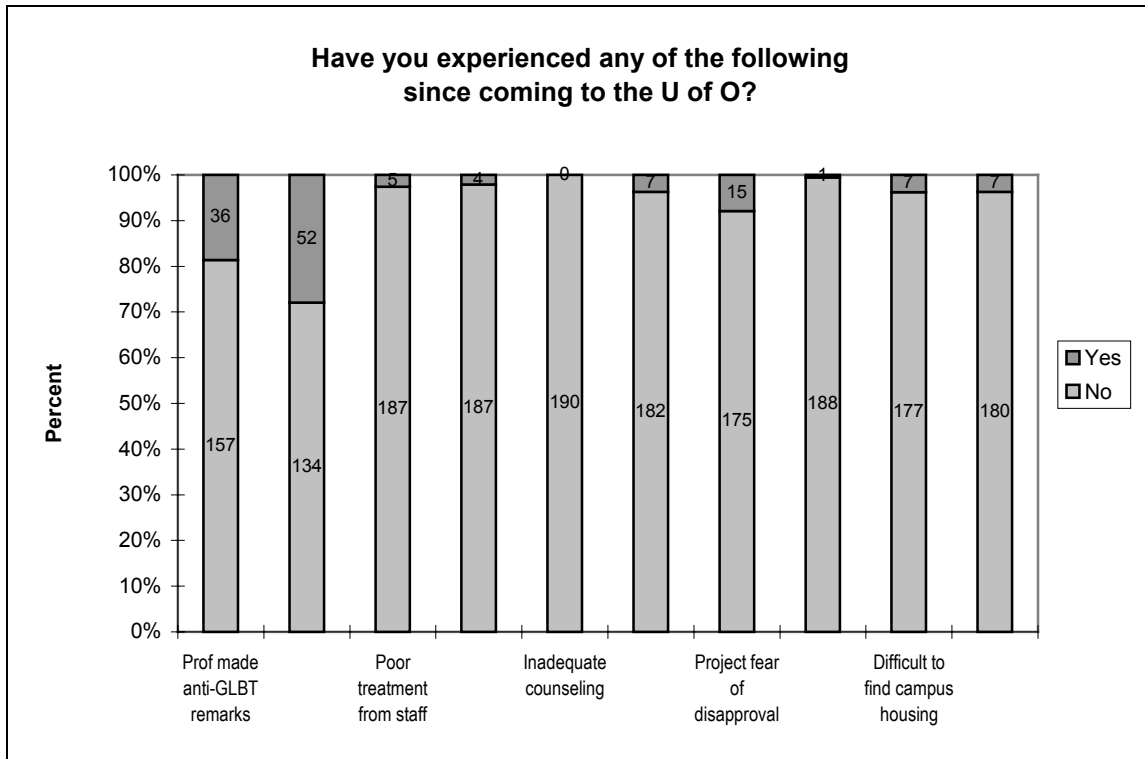
Survey responses suggest a relatively high level of involvement with GLBT events: 29% of the respondents indicated that they had attended an event sponsored by GLBT organizations in the past year, and 41% indicated that they had attended either a course, lecture, or workshop on lesbian, gay, or bisexual concerns. Of those who have attended, 9% took a course, 28% went to a lecture, 26% a workshop, and 30% of the respondents have attended more than 1 course, lecture or workshop.

When asked how many courses, workshops, or lectures on GLBT issues UO should offer compared to other campus' offerings, "don't know" received the highest response rate ranging from 35-38%, followed by "more" 29-32%, "about the same" 18-19%, and "fewer" 6-7% (Graph 6).

Graph 6



Graph 7



Classroom Environment

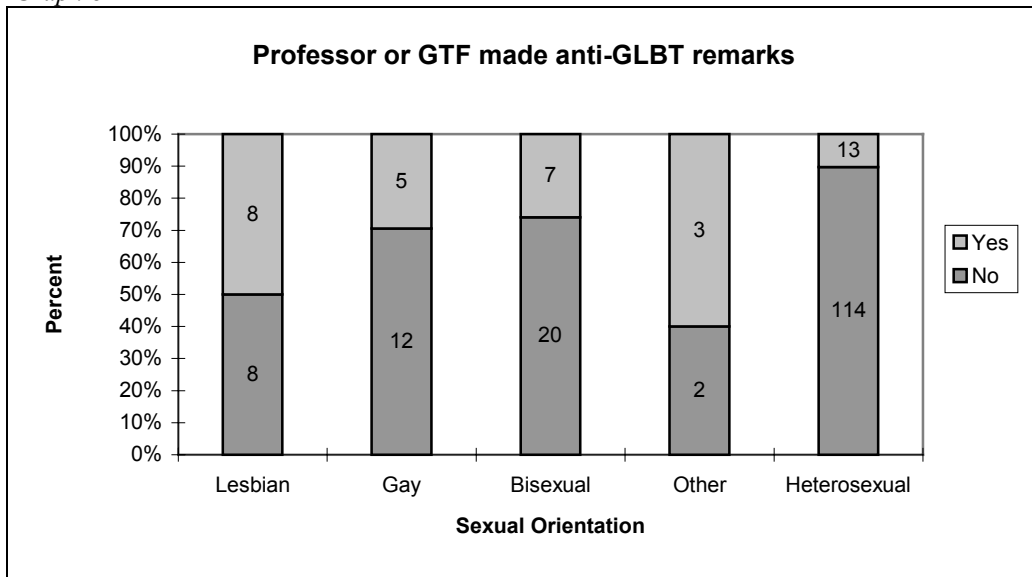
The questions which relate most directly to classroom environment were asked only of the 195 respondents who were students. Graph 7 details the overall responses to these questions asked of students. Nineteen percent of students have heard a professor or GTF make anti-GLBT remarks and 27% said that they have taken courses where the instructor did not discuss alternatives to heterosexuality even though such discussion would be appropriate. Eight percent of students reported changing an academic project for fear that faculty or GTF might disapprove. About 3% of students each reported poor treatment from staff, feeling penalized in class, having difficulties finding adequate health care and on-campus housing, and having to change an academic project because faculty or GTF discouraged it. No one had difficulties with counseling and less than 1% reported being refused off-campus housing because of sexual orientation.

Answers to these questions suggest that there is some hostility toward GLBT concerns in UO classrooms. Furthermore, response patterns to some questions suggest that students who are themselves gay, lesbian, or bisexual are often more susceptible than are their heterosexual counterparts. For example, in response to a question which asked whether or not the respondent had experienced a professor or GTF making anti-lesbian, gay or bisexual remarks since coming to UO, only 10% of the heterosexual respondents answered “yes” (Graph 8). Far higher percentages of GLBT respondents -- 47% of lesbian respondents, 29% of gay respondents, and 26% of bisexual respondents -- answered “yes” to the same questions.

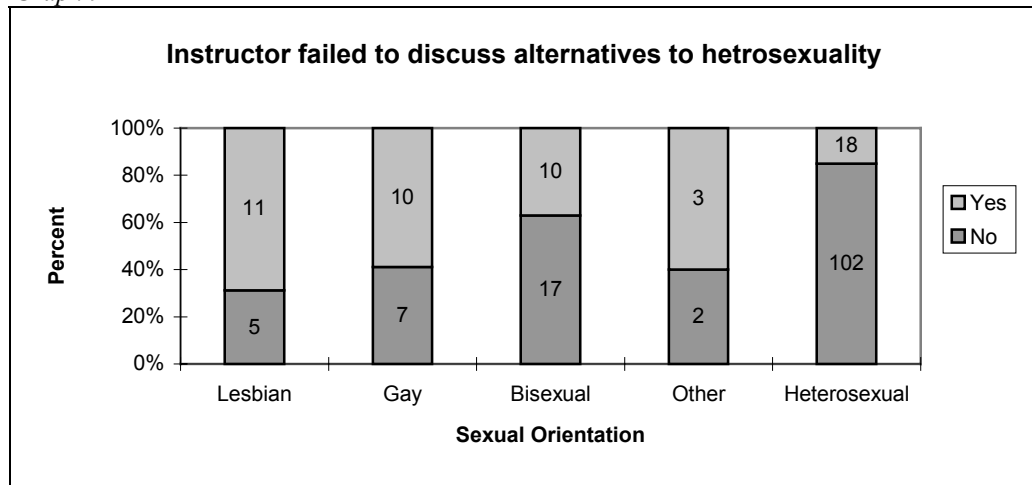
This pattern shows up again in response to a question which asked whether respondents had taken courses where the instructor did not discuss alternatives to heterosexuality, even though such discussion would have been appropriate to the topic being studied. Here only 14% of the heterosexual respondents answered “yes,” compared to 65% of the lesbian respondents, 59% of the gay respondents, and 37% of the bisexual respondents. Somewhat smaller, but still notable, disparities existed on questions that dealt with experiences such as changing academic projects which were based on sexual orientation because of either being discouraged by the instructor or fearing the instructor’s disapproval (3.6% and 7.7% of all respondents to these questions answered that they

had). Only 7 students, three of whom were heterosexual, reported that they had been penalized in class because of their sexual orientation.

Graph 8



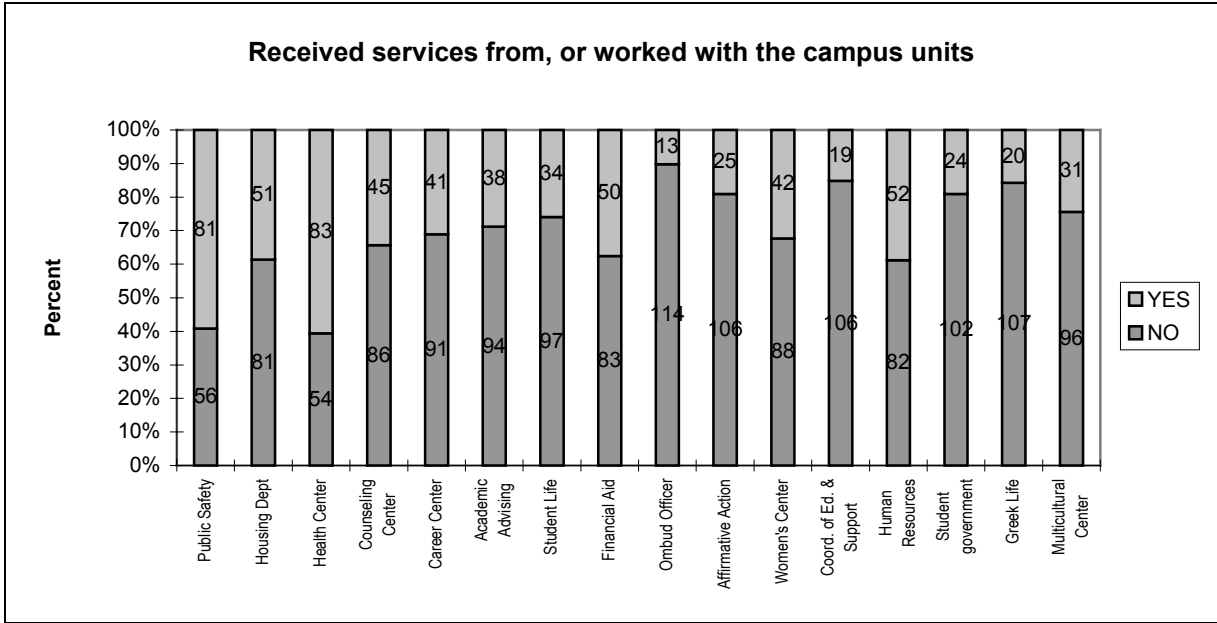
Graph 9



Experience with U of O Services

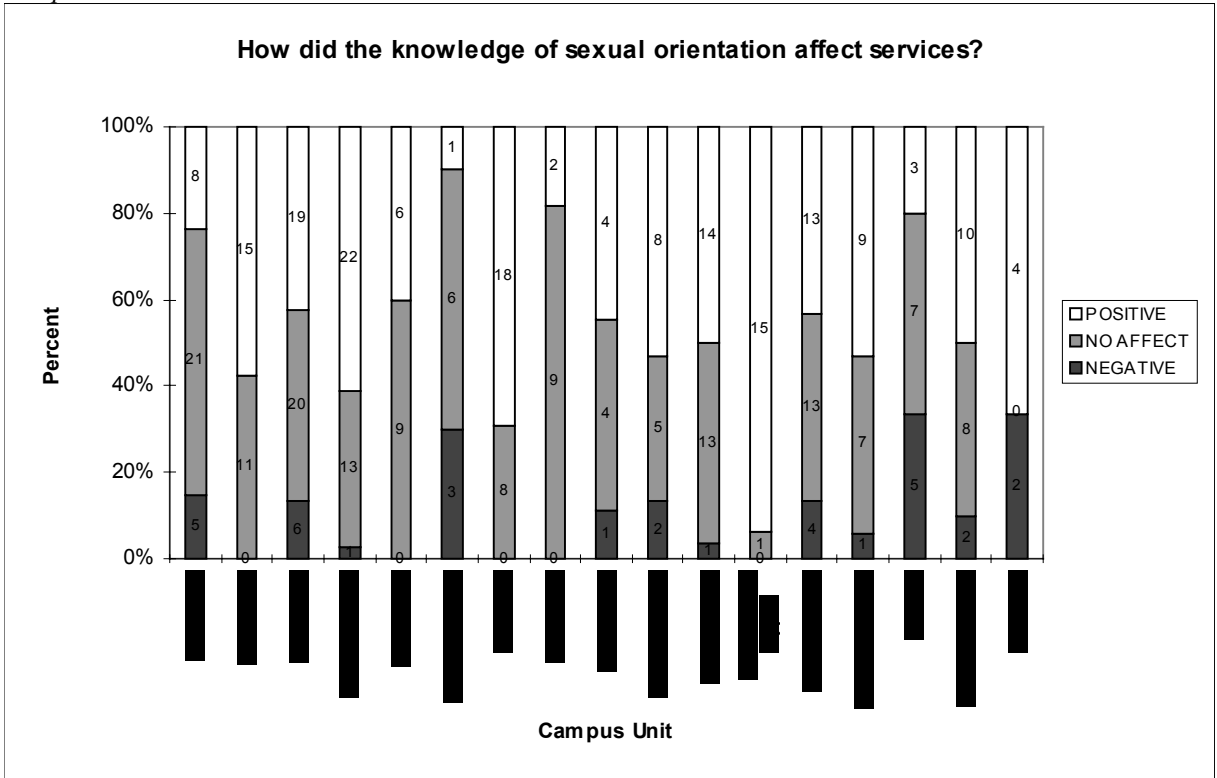
A series of 16 questions on the survey asked GLBT respondents about available services and various offices at the U of O, ranging from the Office of Public Safety and the Housing Department to the Financial Aid Office and the Multicultural Center. Respondents were asked three questions about each service or office: (1) Whether they had received services from or worked with the specific unit in question (Graph 10); if so, (2) whether the unit was aware of the respondent’s sexual orientation; and if so, (3) whether the awareness of sexual orientation had affected the service that was received by the respondent.

Graph 10



Limited numbers of GLBT respondents had contact with each of the specified units, making it hard to detect any patterns of discrimination. However, in most cases respondents indicated that the services that they received were not affected by their sexual orientation. Units such as the Housing Department., the Career Center, the Office of Student Life, the Financial Aid Office, and the Coordinator of Education and Support Services received no reports of services being negatively affected by knowledge of sexual orientation. However, some

Graph 11



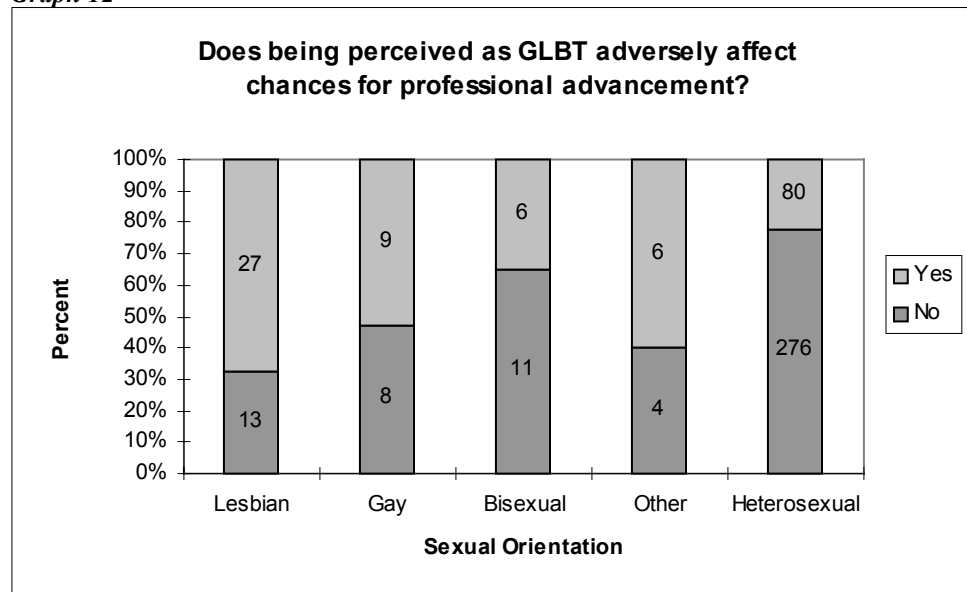
campus units apparently are negatively affected by the service deliverer’s awareness of the service receiver’s sexual orientation. The units with the highest percentages of “negative” affect included Greek Life (33%), Academic Advising (30%), the Office of Public Safety (15%), Human Resources and the Student Health Center (both 13%). It is important to note however, that not all GLBT respondents had contact with the campus units and not all units knew of the respondents’ sexual orientation. Therefore, with the limited number of cases, the data must be examined with caution for this group of questions.

Workplace Environment

Faculty and staff were asked a short series of questions concerning the interaction of sexual orientation and professional life at UO. Approximately one quarter of the respondents (27%) indicated that being openly lesbian, gay or bisexual would adversely affect a person’s chances for professional advancement at UO. Only 23% of heterosexual respondents indicated the belief that being openly lesbian, gay or bisexual adversely affect chances for advancement compared to 57% percent of lesbian respondents, 40% of gay respondents and 36% of bisexual respondents.

Overall results of being perceived as GLBT are comparable to those results of being GLBT. Twenty-five percent of all respondents feel that it does adversely affect a person’s chances for professional advancement. Similarly, only 20% of heterosexual respondents indicated this belief, as opposed to 61% of lesbian respondents, 45% of gay respondents and 27% of bisexual respondents (Graph 12). Finally, relatively few respondents indicated that they had ever been accused of being lesbian, gay or bisexual in a manner which threatened their ability to perform as an employee. Overall only 2% of respondents felt this way, including 14% of lesbian respondents, 5% of gay respondents, 1% of heterosexual respondents and none of the bisexual respondents.

Graph 12



Conclusions

The purpose of this survey was to develop an instrument which would measure changes in the social climate on UO campus for GLBTs and set a baseline for comparison for use in the future. The result of this survey is a descriptive picture of current attitudes, behaviors, and views of faculty, staff, and some of the students on campus. It is apparent there are differences between GLBTs and heterosexuals on campus and this survey data will be used to bridge those differences, create understandings, and improve the climate at UO for all people.