

High rates of harassment of LGBT Asians

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LGBT Asian and Pacific Islanders (API) report high incidences of harassment and discrimination based on their sexual orientation and their race/ethnicity, according to a study released May 10 by the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force Policy Institute.

Seventy-five percent of respondents reported experiencing anti-gay harassment and discrimination, while 85 percent reported victimization based on their race or ethnicity, according to "Living in the Margins: A National Survey of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Asian and Pacific Islander Americans." Equally as concerning, 78 percent of respondents agreed that LGBT API people experience racism in the mainstream LGBT community, which is predominantly white.

With 863 respondents, "Living in the Margins," is the largest-ever national survey of members of the LGBT API community. The online survey, conducted from June through September 2006 in English, Chinese, Korean and Vietnamese, attracted participants from 38 states and the District of Columbia. More than a dozen ethnicities were represented, among them Chinese, Filipino, Japanese, Asian Indian and Vietnamese. Study co-author Alain Dang, a policy analyst at the Task Force Policy Institute, said the survey resulted from several years of conversations within LGBT API organizations across the country. "One of the things that kept coming up was this need for real, quantifiable data to back up a lot of the information and a lot of the anecdotal evidence that people had been talking about over the past few years," he said, among them immigrants' rights, language access issues and media representation. "These are all things that community members had been talking about."

Dang said he'd like to see the groundbreaking study used to give the API LGBT community a voice in the current congressional debates around hate crimes legislation, immigration rights for the partners of same-sex couples and comprehensive immigration reform. "We usually have a very visible stake in these issues," said Dang. The survey results, said Dang, can also aid "the current advocacy that is going on around these issues from mainstream LGBT organizations and mainstream API organizations to broaden their perspective and create an even more dynamic and more forceful presentation around these particular issues."