

# GLBTQA CULTURE

## Just how many GLBT people are there?

We don't really know since no one has ever specifically asked and the fear of discrimination will always keep some people from revealing their sexual orientation. Different kinds of research have been done with different numbers being reported:

- The most common figure identified is that 10% of the population is gay, lesbian or bisexual.
- A 2006 study estimated the total U.S. gay, lesbian and bisexual population at 8.8 million.

## Wow - that's a mouthful! What do all those letters stand for?

**Gay** – Typically used to describe anyone attracted to members of the same gender. Some may use it only when referring to males attracted to other males (and use the term “lesbian” to refer to females attracted to other females).

**Lesbian** – A female who is sexually and romantically attracted to other females.

**Bisexual** – A person (male or female) who is attracted to both men and women.

**Transgender** – A person whose birth gender does not match their gender identity. Transgender persons may or may not live the lifestyle of the gender they identify with and they may or may not have had surgery to physically change their gender characteristics

**Queer** – A slang term for a gay, lesbian or bisexual person. Some people feel this is a derogatory term. Some GLBT persons, however, embrace the term and use it proudly to refer to themselves and others. This term will generally be considered offensive if used by someone who is not GLBT.

**Questioning** – Some people believe the “Q” stands for “questioning”. This refers to a person who may be exploring their sexual orientation and questioning whether they may be gay, lesbian or bisexual.

**Ally** – A heterosexual person who supports equal rights (and serves as an ally) for GLBT people.



## So . . . are there words or terms that I should avoid?

Of course, not everyone feels the same way about all terms and there is not a single mindset among all GLBT people. Your use of terminology, however, serves as an indication of your openness and some terms may cause GLBT people to be guarded around you. Some terms to think about . . .

**Sexual Preference** – Most GLBT people bristle at the assumption that their sexual orientation is a “preference”. It isn't a choice, anymore than being straight is a choice. The more accepted term is “sexual orientation”, which indicates it is a “way of being” rather than a “choice”.

**Queer** – A term sometimes embraced by people who are GLBT; especially younger people. Other people (even GLBT people) may find this term offensive.

**Gay** – Although this term may be used appropriately to describe same gender relationships or culture, it is often used in a derogatory way, especially by young people.

An example is “That's so gay” to describe a negative item or behavior.

**Fag** – A negative slur used to describe a gay or effeminate man. Like many other negative terms, however, this word may be used and embraced by some people who are gay.

**Dyke** – A negative term used to describe a lesbian or masculine woman. Like many other negative terms, however, this term may be used and embraced by some lesbians who use the term positively to describe strength or assertiveness.

**Husband/wife; girlfriend/boyfriend; mom/dad** – Automatically using these terms is a form of heterosexism. Assuming that all partnerships consist of one female and one male or that all people have one male and one female parent diminishes the existence and worth of same-sex couples. It is more encompassing and descriptive to instead use words such as “partner” or “parent”.

# What You Can Do

Get to know your students (and student employees).

When talking with students, ask the kinds of open-ended questions that invite honest dialogue about family situations.

Get to know colleagues and ask openly about their families.

Make your classroom (and/or office) an inviting space. If you have pictures or displays, make sure that they reflect different kinds of families.

Watch the language you use. Be careful that your language does not assume all people are straight.

Do an “audit” of any forms, handbooks, letters, notices or newsletters that you produce or send. Make sure you use inclusive terms here. (e.g. Don’t have a form that asks for father name and mother name. Instead, ask for names of all family members and let them specify the relationships.)

Recognize that not all gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgender students and staff may be “out”. That’s a very personal decision that can have ramifications in many areas of life. Respect their decisions.

If you’re not sure about a family issue and you think it’s important, ask!

Be mindful of how you structure social events in your office. Are same-sex partners invited in the same way that straight partners and spouses are?

Be honest – if a colleague displayed a picture of their same gender partner in their workspace, would it raise an eyebrow?

Examine your own attitudes towards divorce, blended families, foster families, unmarried partners living together, gay/lesbian families, etc. Be honest with yourself and deal with your feelings. Know how you will reconcile those feelings with your students in mind.

Educate yourself about gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender issues.

Don’t allow heterosexist jokes to be told without challenging them (in the office or in the classroom).

If you teach, is there a way to include GLBT issues in your curriculum?



# Educate Yourself

## National Organizations

### Gay, Lesbian & Straight Education Network (GLSEN)

<http://www.glsen.org>

The **Gay, Lesbian & Straight Education Network** strives to assure that each member of every school community is valued and respected regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity/expression.

### American Civil Liberties Union's LGBT Project

<http://www.aclu.org/lgbt/>

The LGBT Project fights discrimination and moves public opinion on LGBT rights through the courts, legislatures and public education across five issue areas.

### National Center for Transgender Equality

<http://www.nctequality.org/>

The **National Center for Transgender Equality** is a social justice organization dedicated to advancing the equality of transgender people through advocacy, collaboration and empowerment.

### To make complaints regarding discrimination or behavior:

Eric Barber  
Office of Human Resources & Diversity  
(262) 472-1072  
[barbere@uww.edu](mailto:barbere@uww.edu)

Mary Beth Mackin  
Assistant Dean of Student Life  
University Center 245  
(262) 472-1533  
[mackinm@uww.edu](mailto:mackinm@uww.edu)

### Pride Resource Center

Warhawk Involvement Center  
UC 144  
(262) 472-5237  
<http://www.uww.edu/involve/centers/pride.php>

### University Police

Goodhue Hall  
(262) 472-4660  
**IN CASE OF EMERGENCY - 911**  
<http://www.uww.edu/adminaffairs/police/>

### University Health & Counseling Services

Ambrose Health Center  
(262) 472-1305  
<http://www.uww.edu/uhs/>

### Rainbow Special Interest Group of NAFSA: Association of International Educators

<http://www.indiana.edu/~overseas/lesbigay/index.html>

The **Rainbow SIG** is comprised of diverse members of **NAFSA** whose goals are to counsel international students and study abroad students who identify as LGBT; to support gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered professionals in international education; to combat homophobia, heterosexism and transphobia within NAFSA.

### Human Rights Campaign

<http://www.hrc.org>

The **Human Rights Campaign** represents a grassroots force of more than 700,000 members and supporters nationwide. As the largest national gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender civil rights organization, HRC envisions an America where LGBT people are ensured of their basic equal rights, and can be open, honest and safe at home, at work and in the community. Founded in 1980, HRC advocates on behalf of GLBT Americans, mobilizes grassroots actions in diverse communities, invests strategically to elect fair-minded individuals to office and educates the public about LGBT issues.

### National Gay & Lesbian Task Force

<http://www.thetaskforce.org>

The **National Gay and Lesbian Task Force**, founded in 1973 and incorporated in 1974, works to build the grassroots political power of the LGBT community to win complete equality. We do this through direct and grassroots lobbying to defeat anti-LGBT ballot initiatives and legislation and pass pro-LGBT legislation and other measures. We also analyze and report on the positions of candidates for public office on issues of importance to the LGBT community.

## Campus Resources

### LGBT Task Force

[http://www.uww.edu/adminaffairs/hr/aaeo/lgbt\\_taskforce.html](http://www.uww.edu/adminaffairs/hr/aaeo/lgbt_taskforce.html)  
**BLOG** - <http://blogs.uww.edu/lgbtforce/>

The **Chancellor's Task Force on LGBT Issues** is a campus committee whose members are representative of campus constituencies. Its function is to offer advice and assistance to the Chancellor, Provost and Equal Opportunity Officer ensuring that the voices of LGBT employees and students are heard and that equal opportunities for LGBT employees and students continue to be carried out as fundamental responsibilities of the institution and are carried out appropriately in all aspects of employment and student life.

### IMPACT

[impact@uww.edu](mailto:impact@uww.edu)  
(262) 472-5738

Long-standing student organization for LGBT students & allies

# Rights of the LGBT Community at UW-Whitewater

## Harassment, Assault and Threatening

If you have been **harassed, threatened or assaulted** on campus, and the perpetrator is a UW-Whitewater student, you have the right to make a complaint under the campus judicial processes:

If the incident occurred in a residence hall and the perpetrator lives in a residence hall, report the incident to the **Hall Director**.

If the perpetrator is a student who does not live in the residence halls, or if the incident did not occur in a residence hall, report the incident to the **Office of Student Life** (262) 472-1533.

### Harassment is defined as:

Striking, shoving, kicking or otherwise subjecting another person to physical contact or attempting or threatening to do the same with the intent to harass or intimidate that person

### OR

Engaging in a course of conduct or repeatedly committing acts which harass or intimidate another person, which serve no legitimate purpose, and which are intended to harass or intimidate another person.

If you have been **harassed, threatened, or assaulted** on campus, or if you feel another person is engaging in **disorderly conduct**, you may **ALSO** choose to call the **University Police** by dialing (262) 472-4660, or in a case of an emergency, 911.

## Discrimination

Any employee or student who has reason to believe that they have been **discriminated against** in a University education program or activity or in their employment, may contact the Office of Human Resources 1024. Discussion or complaint can be verbal and informal. Confidentiality can be preserved unless the complaint becomes written and formal. Informal solutions may be agreed to as an appropriate means to resolving an issue. If resolution cannot be obtained informally, a formal procedure may be utilized.

## University Non-Discrimination Statement

The University of Wisconsin-Whitewater is committed to equal opportunity in its education programs, activities and employment policies for all persons regardless of race, color, gender, creed, religion, age, ancestry, national origin, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity expression, political affiliation, marital status, veteran status, parental status, and pregnancy.