

Share Your Voice Survey Results

June 14, 2017



Partners:



**Lambton
Public Health**



Rainbow Health Ontario
Santé arc-en-ciel Ontario



North Lambton
Community Health Centre



LGBTQ2IA Experiences with Health Care in Lambton County

Share Your Voice Survey Report

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Background

Lambton Public Health received funding from [Rainbow Health Ontario](#) to carry out a one-year "Breakthrough Project" in 2016/17. These projects aim to achieve significant steps in creating greater health, well-being and equity for LGBTQ2IA communities.

Lambton Public Health has chosen to use the acronym "LGBTQ2IA" which stands for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, two-spirit, intersex and asexual; however, we mean to include any group who experiences discrimination and/or lacks access to appropriate services due to sexual orientation and/or gender identity/expression.

Our local project seeks to identify and address gaps in health care services for LGBTQ2IA individuals in Lambton County. Lambton Public Health is collaborating with the following partners on this project:

- Sarnia-Lambton Rebound
- St. Clair Child and Youth Services
- North Lambton Community Health Centre
- Lambton Mental Wellness Centre

There are four main objectives of the project, including:

1. Identify gaps in health care services for LGBTQ2IA individuals
2. Create a positive space at Lambton Public Health by enhancing inclusiveness guidelines
3. Develop LGBTQ2IA-specific resources for health care providers and the public
4. Facilitate education and networking between project partners and community stakeholders

To address the first objective, we conducted a survey to gather feedback from LGBTQ2IA individuals. The results of the Share your Voice Survey are presented in this report.

Purpose

The purpose of the Share your Voice Survey was to learn more about LGBTQ2IA experiences with health care providers in Lambton County. The feedback gained through the survey will help

stakeholders develop a local strategy to address any gaps identified in local health care services for LGBTQ2IA residents.

Methods

The Share your Voice survey was developed using online survey software (Survey Gizmo). Data collection occurred between October and December 2016. Those who met the following criteria were eligible to participate:

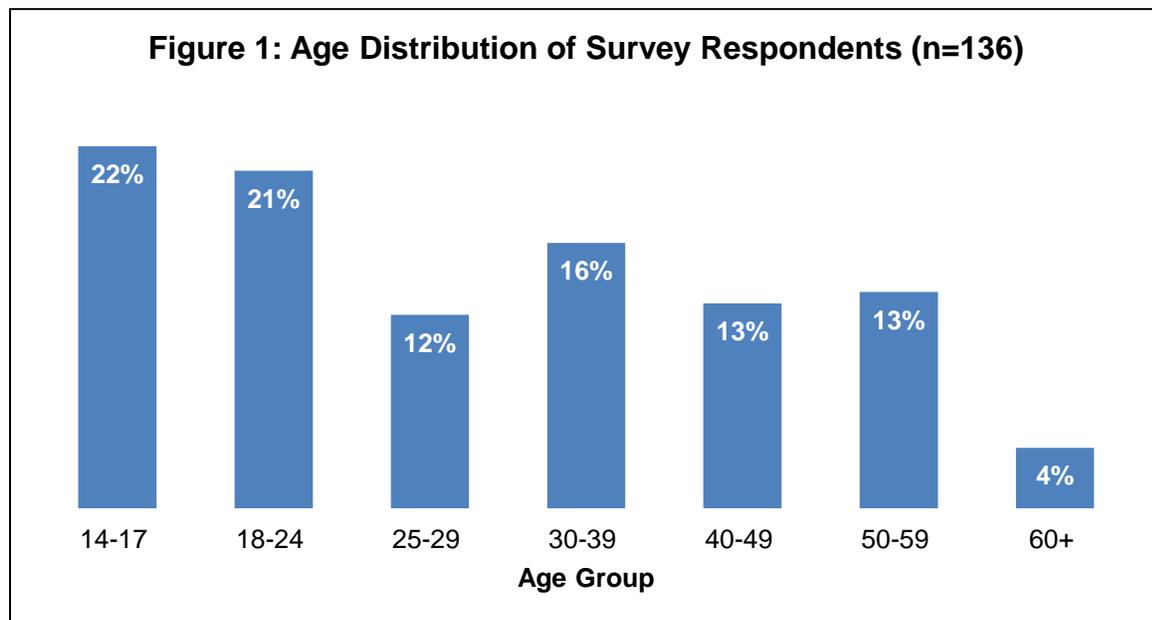
- 1) Fourteen years of age or older
- 2) Identify as LGBTQ2IA
- 3) Received health care in Lambton County

The survey link was shared through community partners and promoted using social media.

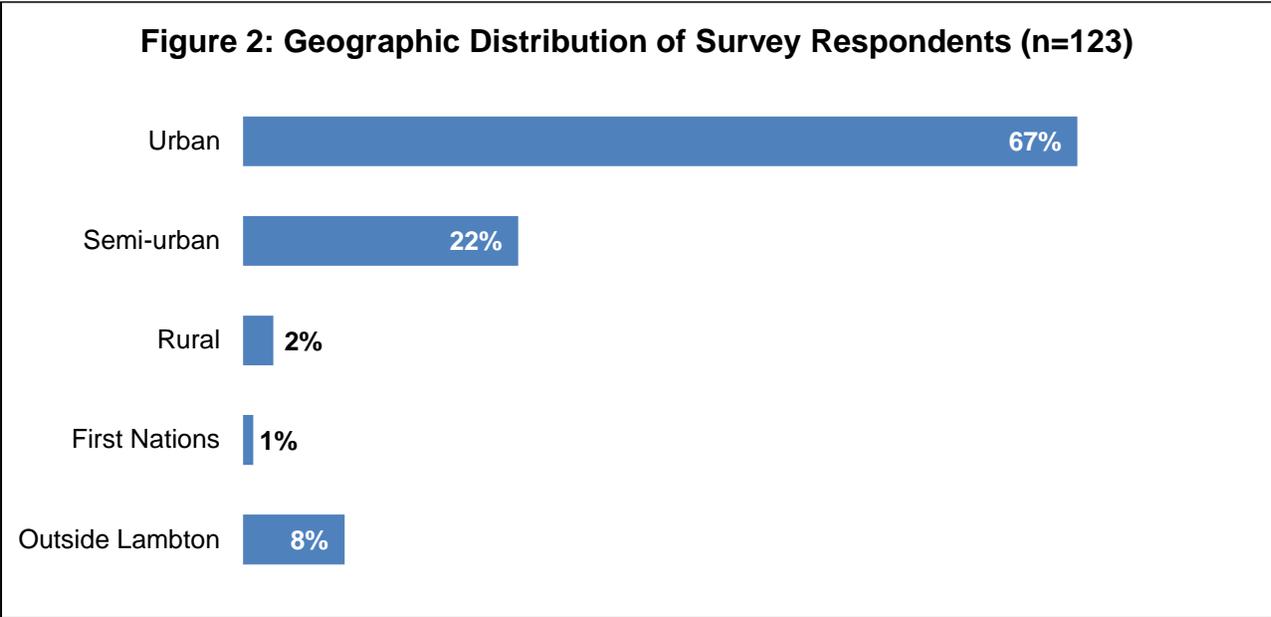
Results

Respondent Characteristics

There were **138** valid responses to the survey. This is considered an excellent response, given the eligibility requirement for participation. All age groups were represented, with over 40% of respondents between 14-24 years old (Figure 1).



As expected, the majority of the responses were residents of Sarnia/Point Edward (67%), but there was representation from all areas of Lambton County (Figure 2).



*Urban: Sarnia, Point Edward; Semi-Urban: St. Clair Township, Petrolia, Lambton Shores or Plympton Wyoming; Rural: Enniskillen, Oil Springs, Warwick, Brooke-Alvinston or Dawn Euphemia; First Nations: Aamjiwnaang, Kettle and Stony Point or Walpole Island First Nation

Respondents were asked about their sex assigned at birth and their current gender identity. About 57% of respondents were assigned female sex at birth, 42% male and 2% intersex. Sex assigned at birth and current gender identity differed for approximately 24% of respondents. Among this subset of respondents, those assigned male sex at birth were most likely to identify as female or trans, while those assigned female sex at birth identified with a range of gender identities (agender, gender fluid, male or trans, non-conforming and queer).

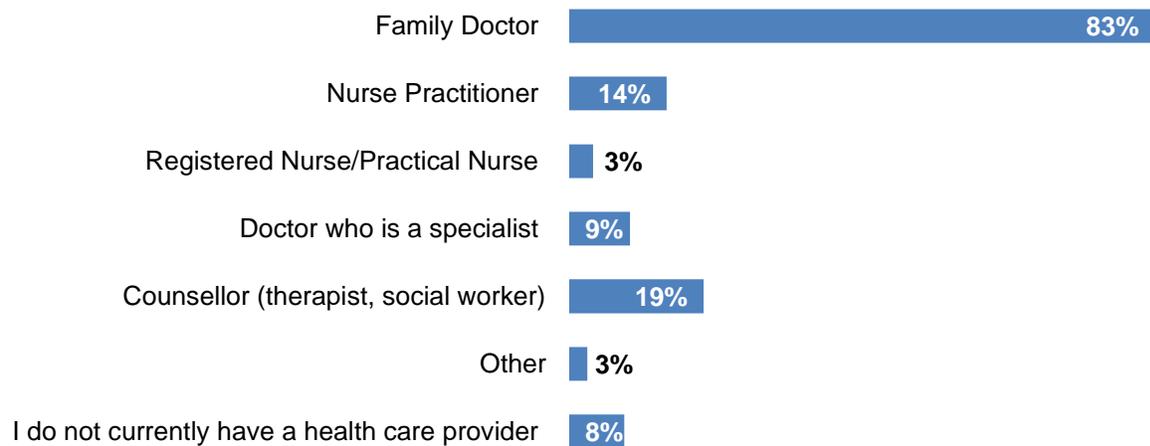
While the majority of respondents identified as lesbian (22%), gay (20%) or bisexual (12%), the remaining respondents reported a wide diversity of sexual orientations: pansexual, heterosexual, asexual, queer, panromantic (asexual or heterosexual), homoflexible, pansexual (asexual, demiromantic or queer) and questioning.

Health Care Experiences

Current health care providers

The majority of survey respondents reported having a family doctor or nurse practitioner in Lambton County (Figure 3). About 8% reported that they did not have a health care provider at the time of the survey. About 76% of respondents had visited a health care provider within the past year, 17% within the past 2-3 years and 7% four or more years ago.

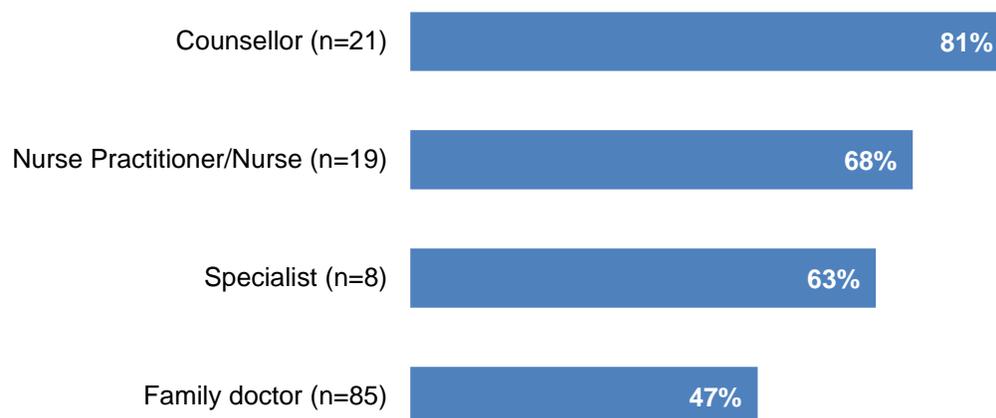
Figure 3: Respondents with health care providers by type of provider (n=116)



Disclosure of gender identity and/or sexual orientation

Approximately 40% of respondents had not disclosed their gender identity/sexual orientation to any of their health care providers. While the largest number of respondents disclosed to their family doctor (40), this represented only 47% of those who currently had a family doctor. Respondents were more likely to disclose their gender identity/sexual orientation to counsellors, nurse practitioners or nurses, and specialists (Figure 4).

Figure 4: Percentage of respondents who disclosed their gender identity and/or sexual orientation to their provider



*n=total number of respondents reporting they currently have each type of health care provider

Influence of disclosure on care

Of those who had disclosed their gender identity and/or sexual orientation to their health care provider(s), the perceived impact on care varied.

No impact

For several respondents they did not think that disclosing their gender identity or sexual orientation had any impact on their health care.

Positive impacts

Those who felt disclosure did impact their care positively said that their health care providers started using proper pronouns and assisted them with fertility issues. They felt their health care provider was able to ask better questions and help with specific health concerns.

Negative impacts

Those who felt disclosure had a negative impact on their care said that their provider's demeanor changed and they were not as receptive. Others felt that medical issues were now blamed on the fact they were queer or that they were asked invasive questions. A primary concern for some lesbian respondents was that they were told that a Pap test was not needed if they were not having sex with men.¹

Reasons for non-disclosure

Respondents expressed a variety of reasons for not disclosing their gender identity and/or sexual orientation to any or all health care providers.

Not relevant

Many felt that disclosing their gender identity/sexual orientation was not relevant to their health care provider. For example, one respondent noted that an optometrist would not need to know sexual orientation.

Fear

Fear was overwhelmingly the main reason for not disclosing their gender identity/sexual orientation, but there were a variety of reasons for this fear. Respondents were afraid of being unsafe, discriminated against or treated poorly. They feared being asked awkward or inappropriate questions. Some have had their doctor for a long time or their doctor was older and they weren't sure how they would react. Some felt that they might lose their doctor and they could not afford to as they are hard to find.

Lack of trust/confidentiality

A lack of trust in both health care provider staff and hospital staff to maintain confidentiality was a significant concern for many. These individuals thought that staff at the physician's office or Bluewater Health would share this information with others.

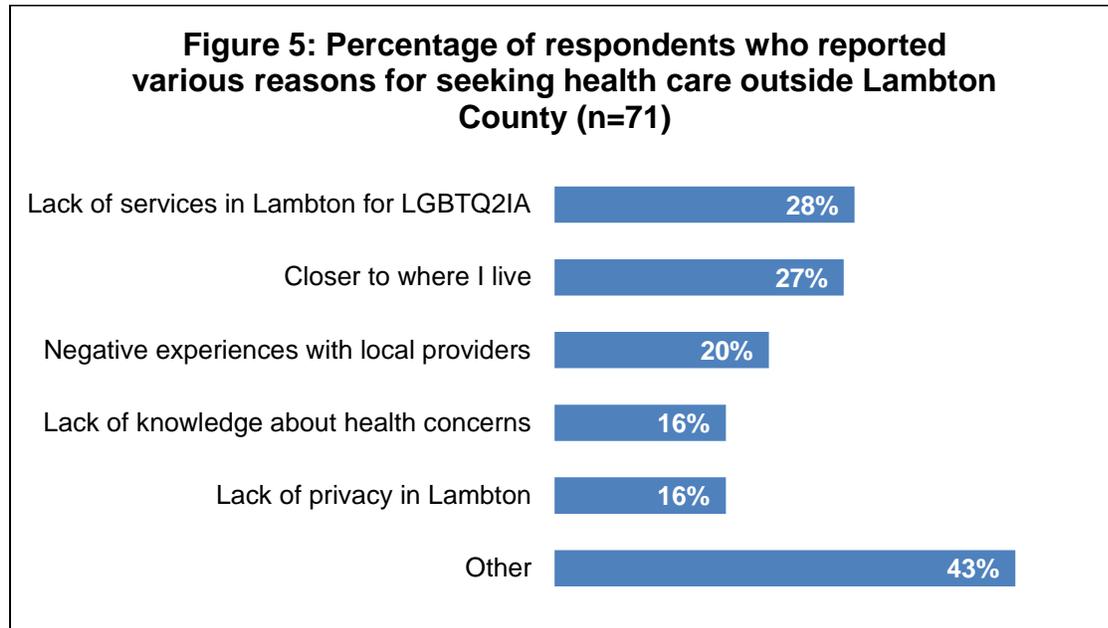
Health Care Service Use Outside Lambton County

Over 60% of respondents had ever used health care services outside Lambton County. Several respondents reported that they accessed health care outside Lambton simply because it is

¹ The [Ontario Cervical Screening Guidelines](#) state that screening should begin at age 21 if women are or have ever been sexually active (including any sexual activity involving the genital area with a partner of either sex). Women who have sex with women and transgender men who have retained their cervix should be screened according to the guidelines.

closer to where they live. Others had resided elsewhere before moving to Lambton or temporarily as a student.

Nearly 30% of respondents sought health care services outside Lambton due to a lack of services for LGBTQ2IA individuals (Figure 5). Several provided comments specifically about accessing specialists outside Lambton, particularly endocrinologists and fertility specialists. Previous negative experiences and lack of privacy were also concerns for some respondents.



Respondent Suggestions for Improved Services

Better support for LGBTQ2IA individuals

Inclusive language

Respondents felt that health care providers should use inclusive language both on forms and when talking to clients. Respondents felt that it was very important that health care providers not make assumptions about gender identity and sexual orientation. They suggested that providers ask questions to allow people to feel comfortable and to clarify which pronoun their patients/clients would prefer.

LGBTQ2IA-specific education

Respondents felt that health care providers need more education on issues that impact LGBTQ2IA individuals. Priorities for education included: hormone replacement therapy, transgender issues and safe sex practices for same sex couples.

Equality

Respondents would like health care providers to be non-judgemental and open-minded. It was expressed that everyone should be treated equally and that there is nothing "wrong" with them; they are normal people too. Particularly at the hospital, it was suggested that same sex couples be treated the same as heterosexual couples (e.g. equal visiting rights and access to information).

Resources in health care offices

About 13% of respondents reported that their health care provider's office had displayed any resources to indicate that they are LGBTQ2IA informed and supportive. These included rainbow stickers, signs and pamphlets.

While some respondents felt that rainbow stickers are always nice to see, others felt that they were not necessary.

Respondents would like the opportunity to request resources and information, specifically mentioning the following:

- Rainbow Health Ontario
- Parenting resources for LGTBQ2IA parents
- Support groups/ transgender support groups
- Activities for LGBTQ2IA community
- LGBTQ2IA healthcare organizations
- Canadian Mental Health Association programs
- Parenting queer/trans children
- Sexual and mental health promotion and awareness
- Dental dams, including using condoms as dental dams
- Trans lifeline crisis phone number

Respondents also thought that it would be helpful to have or display educational resources for the general public in providers' offices, so they can be more inclusive of the LGBTQ2IA community.

Overall perceptions of health care in Lambton County

Respondents had mixed opinions about their overall experiences with health care providers in Lambton County. While some people feel very accepted in Lambton County, others do not feel accepted at all. Those who felt accepted often spoke about good experiences with their care provider. Those who felt unaccepted felt that health care providers and all Lambton residents need to be more respectful and inclusive. Some felt that a larger city might be more accepting.

Overall, respondents want to feel safe and be taken seriously. Health care provider education about hormone replacement therapy and inclusivity was again stressed as a priority. The comments about inclusivity were not limited to family doctors, but also included EMS and emergency room staff.

While most respondents reported having a primary care provider, some expressed concerns about finding a family doctor and about the lack of walk-in clinics in the area.

Finally, several respondents expressed their gratitude for an opportunity to give their input and opinions through this survey.

Conclusions and Next Steps

There was an excellent response to the Share your Voice survey. The experiences and suggestions provided by the LGBTQ2IA community in Lambton County will help to shape future initiatives at Lambton Public Health and our partner agencies.

Key experiences and suggestions:

- While several respondents have had very good experiences with their health care provider(s), many also suggest that health care providers need to be more inclusive, respectful and educated about issues that impact LGBTQ2IA individuals
- There is a lack of specialist services in Lambton County, particularly related to hormone replacement therapy and fertility issues
- There is a need to increase the availability of LGBTQ2IA resources, particularly related to sexual health, mental health, parenting and support groups.

These findings will contribute to the remaining objectives of the Rainbow Health Ontario project, specifically enhancing inclusiveness or "positive space" guidelines at Lambton Public Health, supporting other health care providers to develop positive space policies and developing educational resources and sessions for local health care providers.

Acknowledgements

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Internal Committee Members

Kevin Churchill, Rhonda Galler, Jen Gibbs, Karolyn LaCroix, Lindsay MacKenzie, Shauna Nelles, Victoria Morris, Laura Spinnato, and Matt Joesse.

External Working Group Partners

Sarnia-Lambton Rebound, North Lambton Community Health Centre, St. Clair Child & Youth Services, and Lambton Mental Wellness Centre.

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