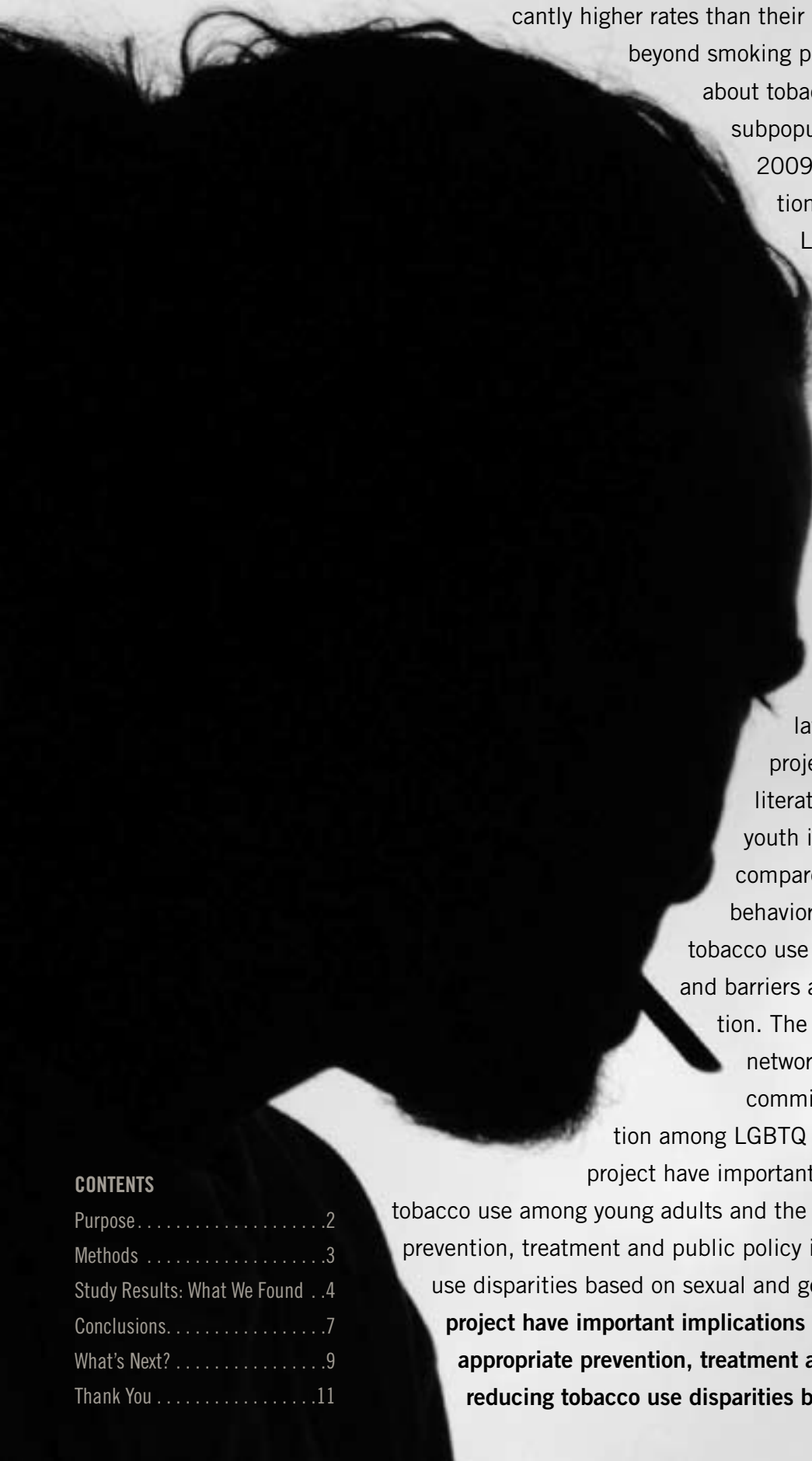


A close-up photograph of a person's midsection and hands. The person is wearing a grey zip-up hoodie, a pink ribbed belt, and black denim jeans. Their right hand is holding a lit cigarette, and their left hand is in their pocket. The background is a colorful, textured surface, possibly a rug or carpet.

Coming Out about Smoking

A Report from the National
LGBTQ Young Adult Tobacco Project

Purpose



Reduction of tobacco use among youth and young adults in the United States is an important public health issue. Emerging data from national probability samples suggests that young adults are smoking at significantly higher rates than their heterosexual counterparts. However,

beyond smoking prevalence rates, little else is known about tobacco use among this under-served subpopulation of youth. In the summer of 2009, the National Youth Advocacy Coalition (NYAC) was funded by the American

Legacy Foundation's Small Innovative Grants program to conduct a nation-wide research project focusing on tobacco use in the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, questioning, and intersex community of young adults, ages 18–24.

As a national organization dedicated to serving LGBTQ youth and youth service providers, NYAC was uniquely positioned to take the lead in conducting one of the first national studies of tobacco use in this population.

The overall objectives of the project were to address gaps in the extant literature about tobacco use among LGBTQ youth including characteristics of smokers compared to non-smokers, smoking related behaviors of current smokers, attitudes about tobacco use among smokers and non-smokers and barriers and facilitators to smoking cessation.

The project was also aimed at building a network of community-based organizations committed to tobacco control and prevention among LGBTQ young adults.

The results of the project have important implications for future research on

tobacco use among young adults and the development of culturally appropriate prevention, treatment and public policy initiatives aimed at reducing tobacco use disparities based on sexual and gender identities. **The results of the project have important implications for the development of culturally appropriate prevention, treatment and public policy initiatives aimed at reducing tobacco use disparities based on sexual and gender identities.**

CONTENTS

Purpose	2
Methods	3
Study Results: What We Found	4
Conclusions	7
What's Next?	9
Thank You	11

Method

Survey Methods

The Survey was distributed between November 2009 and February 2010 with the assistance of community-based partner organizations (see page 11 for a listing of participating partner organizations). Three separate surveys were developed to measure the smoking attitudes and behaviors of LGBTQ young adults: a smoker survey, a former smoker survey and a non-smoker survey. The surveys were pretested with LGBTQ young adults and revised based on their input. The surveys were then distributed in both self-administered paper and pencil and online web-based versions. The survey took approximately 10 minutes to complete and measured a range of attitudes, knowledge and behaviors associated with tobacco use and cessation. In addition, the survey collected information on respondents' age, gender identity, sexual orientation, social habits and home life.

Prior to distribution, NYAC conducted outreach to increase awareness and

interest in the project. Several recruitment strategies were used including Internet outreach tools such as Facebook advertisements and web buttons. In addition, partner organizations played an essential role in recruitment of project participants. Each partner organization was encouraged to use outreach and recruitment methods that were known to be effective in the communities that they serve. A total of $N = 989$ questionnaires were received. Of those, 796 were completed online through a Survey Monkey web application with predetermined skip patterns. Additionally, 193 paper surveys were collected and entered by NYAC staff. Eighty-eight of the online surveys were committed due to missing or insufficient data. Please refer to page 4 for a survey of key survey findings.

Focus Group Methods

In addition to survey data collection, focus groups were conducted in January 2010 at LGBTQ youth service agencies in 5 states: Illinois, Oregon, Florida, Utah and New York. A moderator's guide and set of protocols were developed to standardize the conduct of the focus groups across different data collection locations. A total of five focus groups were conducted at community-based organizations. On average, 7–15 young adults were in attendance in each session for a total of approximately 50 focus group participants. Focus group participants were diverse in terms of socio-demographic characteristics such as age, race, and sexual orientation and attitudes and experiences with tobacco. Following completion of the focus groups, all notes and audiotapes of the sessions were sent to NYAC to be transcribed and analyzed by a trained focus group consultant.



Study Results: What We Found

From the Focus Groups

Of the 5 community based organizations that conducted focus groups, a diverse swath of geographical locations were represented, including dense urban and more rural areas, one was affiliated with a University, and one was conducted by a LGBTQ youth tobacco cessation program. Although the young adults represented a diverse array of smoking statuses (smoker vs. non-smoker vs. former smoker) as well as ages, racial ethnicities, and education levels, there were a number of strong themes that surfaced in their responses to the focus group questions.

Nearly 83% said they would be more likely to smoke when drinking, while nearly 87% smoke when stressed. Nearly 83% smoke at a club. Most are light smokers, with 77% report smoking less than 10 cigarettes per day.

Most young adults preferred to date non-smokers!

The most common theme was the idea that smoking is a social activity that is embedded into the fabric of the LGBTQ young adult community. One young person reported, “It’s a thing gay people get together and do – It’s a social event!” This speaks to the larger issue that the focus group participants felt that smoking with a group of other LGBTQ identified people not only gave them a social space to make friends, but it was a vehicle for bonding over the stresses of being discriminated against for being LGBTQ at school and with their families and friends. Many echoed that smoking was merely another facet to their community to be accepted, as “all queer young people smoke, its just part of the package.”

The focus group participants also strongly echoed one another when it came to addressing the issue of tobacco use for LGBTQ young adults. They stressed 3 main points: (1) tobacco cessation programs must address the major stressors that LGBTQ young adults face (like discrimination, lack of family support, school, etc) to be able to affect tobacco use, (2) if young people knew the health risks associated with smoking, they would be more likely to quit, and (3) tobacco prevention programs and campaigns created by youth for youth would be the best way to get their attention. Much of this dialogue has been utilized to address the “What’s Next” section on page 10.



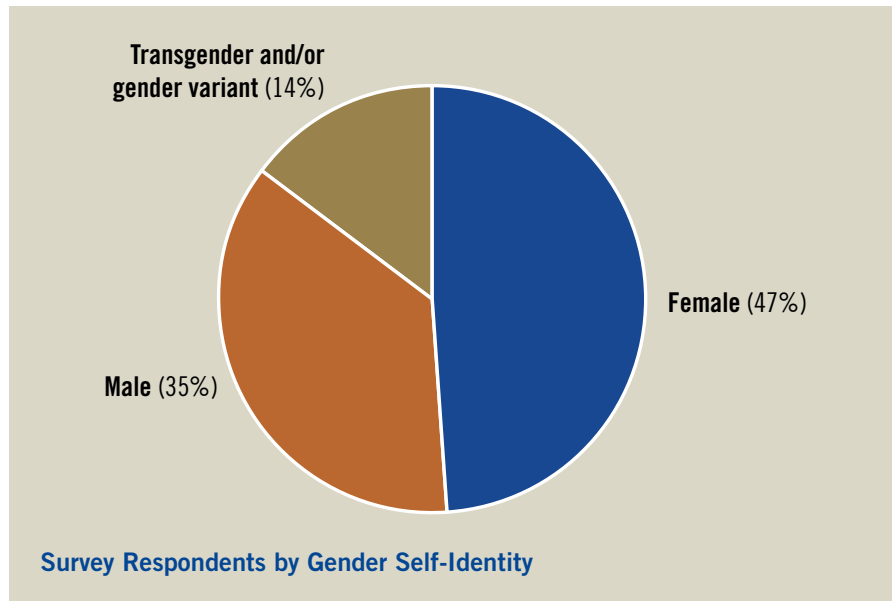
From the Survey

Who took the survey?

- **Number of respondents:** N = 989
- **Age:** Mean age was 20 years old
- **Gender Self-Identity:** 47% female, 35% male, 14% transgender or gender variant categories
- **Race/Ethnicity:** 70% White, 13% Hispanic/Latino, 13% Multiracial, 9% African American, 3% Asian, 1% Other
- **Education:** 20% College or above, 3% Technical or associate's degree, 12% High School or GED, 11% less than High School
- **Locations:** Respondents came from 44 states, including DC and Puerto Rico
 - The highest percentage of respondents came from New York (12%)

What knowledge and attitudes do LGBTQ have about smoking?

- Almost all of the respondents thought that LGBT people were either more (50%) or equally (47%) likely to smoke as straight, non-transgender people
- Over half of the non- and former smokers reported that they chose not to smoke because "I don't think it is healthy."
- Most respondents (54%), regardless of smoking status, preferred to date non-smokers.

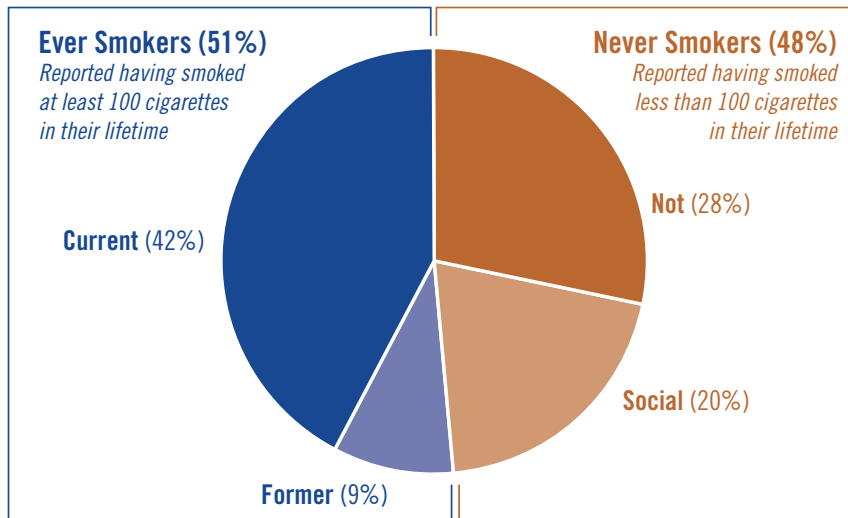


What about smoking rates?

- A total of 51% of the sample reported **EVER** smoking.
- Current smoking status:
 - 48% were non-smokers
 - 42% were current smokers
 - 9% were former smokers
- **20% of non-smokers considered themselves to be social smokers!**
- Only 28% of respondents reported never smoking.

What are the characteristics of current smokers?

- Current smokers were 40% Gay or Lesbian, 30% Other*, 23% Bisexual, 7% straight.
- Mean age: 21 years old
- Of all current smokers, 50% Female, 33% Male, 17% Other**



- Mean age first started smoking: 15 years old

**"Other" refers to queer, pansexual/omnisexual, questioning, unsure, and other.
 ***"Other" here refers to Trans MTF, Trans FTM, Trans not F or M, Genderqueer, Prefer no Gender, and Other

Smoking Rates



Study Limitations

While the study had a relatively large sample size for a pilot survey of this type, sample size may have still been a limiting factor in detecting statistically significant differences between the strata in various comparisons. Further, the study relied on cross-sectional, self-report data, collected through two different survey formats. The variations in the survey formats (online, with predetermined skip logic, versus a paper version where participants could choose which questions to skip) may have also affected the results.

Despite the limitations, the data itself, combined with what was learned about methodological issues specific to the young LGBTQ population of interest, provides a strong basis from which to launch future data collection and analysis efforts. Additional inquiry, for which necessary sample size can be calculated using mean and/or proportion esti-

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mates from this exploratory analysis, can be better focused on describing those factors which showed association with smoking and smoking cessation. Further, a larger, sufficiently powered analysis may also allow for more accurate estimation of risk (both for smoking and cessation) associated with key predictors.

What's Next?

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Now that we see a glimpse of tobacco use among LGBTQ young adults, further research on prevention and treatment is needed.



After a thorough analysis of the survey and focus group findings, NYAC and the Working group prepared a list of important issues to be considered in the future and proposed actions that folks can take to address tobacco use in the LGBTQ young adult community.

1. More research must be done.

The United States must start and continue to lobby that the government include LGBTQ identities and youth specific questions when performing data collection. There are many instances, including adding LGBTQ and/or youth questions to national data collection that would provide more data on how to properly address our community. Now that we see a glimpse of how tobacco disproportionately affects LGBTQ young adults, a nationwide, representative research project is more than necessary!

Next steps:

- The LGBTQ and tobacco prevention community can conduct regional data collection—utilize NYAC’s survey tools and resources to collect research in your community. Visit tobacco.nyacyouth.org to find out more!
- This survey project was not able to secure ample evidence on the wide array of identity categories within the LGBTQ community. When collecting data, better and more effective outreach is necessary to collect more representative information for intersex, transgender, and people of color communities.
- Rally for LGBTQ inclusivity in government data collection like the US Census and Youth Risk Behavior Survey.

2. More funding is necessary to sustain this movement.

In the span of one year (2009–2010), the working group and NYAC staff were not able to mobilize as many partner organizations as was hoped across the country as an economic downturn rendered a lack of resources funneled to LGBTQ youth and tobacco programming. Many organizations lost tobacco funding for running their youth and LGBT centered cessation programs, losing their ability to be included in the research and continue their important work. It is necessary that we all advocate.

Next steps:

- Get involved with organizations that advocate for tobacco control like the National LGBTQ Tobacco Control Network, the American Legacy Foundation, and the American Lung Association.
- Advocate for policy change with your congress representatives or organizations in your community by writing letters, signing petitions, and holding officials accountable.

- Get involved with local organizations working on tobacco prevention and cessation in your area. Refer to NYAC's list of partner organizations or visit the Trevor Project's database of local resources for LGBTQ youth at thetrevorproject.org.
- Get involved with local organizations working on tobacco prevention and cessation in your area. Refer to NYAC's list of partner organizations or visit the Trevor Project's database of local resources for LGBTQ youth at thetrevorproject.org.
- Use the findings and conclusions in *Coming Out About Smoking* to write a proposal for funding for your youth center to start a tobacco prevention and cessation program! Also refer to the American Lung Association's *Smoking Out a Deadly Threat* for more detail on tobacco use in the LGBTQ community.

3. Providing LGBTQ young people with opportunities for discussion and leadership is a positive first step.

Many organizations reported that the simple act of distributing the surveys and/or conducting focus groups was a great motivator to engage young adults about issues around tobacco. Some organizations' experiences show that the discussions helped change young adults' attitudes on tobacco's place in the community and many were activated around the protecting their community from a perceived targeting from the tobacco industry.

Next steps:

- Recommend discussion and cessation groups at your youth center and start from a perspective of hope. If many LGBTQ young adults believe they can quit, how can you help them get there? Work with young adults to design these sessions?
- Run awareness campaigns and events to educate young adults about the risks of tobacco. If young adults are beginning to smoke around age 15, start talking about it before they reach 18. Address the issue of social smoking specifically to talk about risk reduction.
- Gain momentum on attitudes that keep young people from smoking, like "I don't think [smoking] is healthy," and encourage other healthy behaviors.
- Get young adults invested and engaged in creating their own programs—many young adults reported that they un-

aware of tobacco prevention efforts in their communities and that they were interested in seeking out resources for tobacco prevention and cessation.

4. Build your own tobacco prevention program or activist campaign!

There are plenty of ways to affect tobacco control in your community—local government, LGBTQ centers, schools, etc. Use NYAC tools and resources to think about creating a program at the LGBTQ center, survey the young adults in your area with NYAC's survey tools to create statistics around tobacco use in your community, use those statistics and interviews to design a program and write a grant for tobacco control funding, be part of creating a generation of LGBTQ people who care about changing the way tobacco affects our community!

Next steps:

- Visit tobacco.nyacyouth.org for NYAC resources on this issue. Also refer to the National LGBT Tobacco Network's resources at lgbttobacco.org.
- Seek out possible funding sources to create your own program and empower young adults to design it with creativity and innovation—think about videos, popular role models, and Internet outreach!
- Smoking is a social experience for many LGBTQ young adults—think about providing alternative activities and events in which young adults can bond with a no-tobacco policy.
- Start a group of tobacco control activists in your community—young adults felt strongly about addressing discrimination by being "targeted" by tobacco campaigns and marketing.

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Thank You

Thank you to all the organizations that helped to make this project a success.

National LGBTQ Young Adult Tobacco

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Diversity of Rockford, Rockford, IL
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The Gay and Lesbian Community Center of Anchorage, AK
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Identity Youth Center at Southern Tier AIDS Program, Johnson City, NY
In Our Own Voices, Albany, NY
Ithaca College LGBT Center, Ithaca, NY
Jacksonville Area Sexual Minority Youth Network (JASMYN), Jacksonville, FL
LGBT Center of SE Wisconsin, Racine, WI
The LGBT Resource Center, University of Colorado at Boulder
LGBTQA Resource Center at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln
The Los Angeles Gay & Lesbian Center, Los Angeles, CA
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Mazzoni Center, Philadelphia, PA
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Utah Pride Center, Salt Lake City, UT
The Waltham House, Waltham, MA
Wingspan: Southern Arizona's LGBT Community Center, Tucson, AZ
Youth Pride Center, Chicago, IL

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nyac

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The National Youth Advocacy Coalition is a social justice organization that advocates for and with young people who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or questioning (LGBTQ) in an effort to end discrimination against these youth and to ensure their physical and emotional well-being.

