

Executive Summary

Demographic Survey of Same-Sex Couples in Belize provides a comprehensive understanding of the experiences and challenges encountered by same-sex couples in Belize. The survey is a “snapshot” of the state of rainbow families, offering crucial insight and data to help inform national leaders, local communities, and philanthropic actors. Most critically, the survey is an opportunity to increase dialogue between the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) community and broader Belizean society, minimizing the family divide and supporting the health and sustainability of all families in Belize. Our Circle conducted its Demographic Survey of Same-Sex Couples in Belize from December 10th, 2018 to March 10th, 2019 with over 120 local LGBT respondents. The survey’s response rate makes it the largest and most comprehensive survey on LGBT families in Belize.

2019

DEMOGRAPHIC SURVEY OF SAME-SEX COUPLES IN BELIZE

TOP RAINBOW FAMILY FINDINGS

- * Rainbow Families do exist in Belize
- * Members of Rainbow Families are contributing to the economic stability of Belize
- * Rainbow Families are often excluded from national systems protecting families in Belize

Top Finding	Lesbians	Gays	Bisexuals	Transgender	Other
Are in relationships	23%	21%	10%	4%	6%
Are raising children	17%	6%	4%	2%	1%
Are fully employed	8%	4%	3%	5%	2%
Are paying Social Security	13%	22%	8%	4%	2%

OVERVIEW: THE IMPACT OF DISCRIMINATORY POLICIES

Today’s Belizean families are increasingly diverse. Yet archaic and discriminatory laws ignore modern realities, with devastating consequences. These laws deny children the protection of having a legal connection to a parent who cares for them. They undermine families’ economic strength by denying access to safety net programs, and health insurance and care. Antiquated laws leave children destitute if a parent dies or becomes disabled. They wrest children away from loving parents when relationships dissolve.

Rainbow families—like all families—simply want equal opportunities to provide stable, loving homes to their children, to ensure economic stability, and to raise healthy children who become integral parts of their communities.

The figure below shows how discriminatory laws and stigma make this more difficult for LGBT families (families where lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender parents are raising children).

ARCHAIC LAWS DENY FAMILIES THEIR BASIC NEEDS

Stable loving homes:

- * waiting children denied forever homes
- * children denied legal ties to parents
- * children lack protection when parents split up or a parent dies
- * children live in fear of parents deportation



Economic security:

- * inequitable treatment under government safety net programs
- * children denied legal ties to parents
- * children denied financial protections when a parent dies or becomes disabled

Health and well being:

- * children denied health insurance and competent care
- * family members restricted in taking care of each other
- * hostilities in schools, communities etc



KEY FACTS ABOUT RAINBOW FAMILIES

RAINBOW FAMILIES DO EXIST IN BELIZE

A growing population

- * an estimation of over 100 children are being raised by rainbow families in Belize, and that number is expected to grow in the coming years;
- * more than 1/3 of the lesbians without a child want to have children; and 2/3 of the bisexual women without children want to have children;
- * of gay men who have not had children 14% of them want to have children as to 52% of bisexual men

Geographically diverse

Rainbow families were identified in all six districts of Belize.

Corozal— 6%	Cayo— 24%
Orange Walk—14%	Stann Creek— 5%
Belize— 46%	Toledo— 6%

Racially and ethnically diverse

- * 39% of rainbow families with children identified as Mestizo
- * 40% of the lesbian women with children identified as Mestizo and another 40% identified as Creole
- * 40% of the gay men raising children identified as Creole

MEMBERS OF RAINBOW FAMILIES ARE CONTRIBUTING TO THE ECONOMIC STABILITY OF BELIZE

Visibility in the work field

- * 62% of the gay men with children are employed full time; with 10% working in government agencies
- * 71% of the lesbian women with children are employed full time; with 29% working in government agencies
- * 33% of the transgender persons with children are full time employed and employed in the private sector

National Contributions

- * 14% of the participants with children are retired and are collecting government pension
- * 2% of the participants with children are business owners
- * 46% of the participants with children are currently paying Social Security contributions

RAINBOW FAMILIES ARE OFTEN EXCLUDED FROM NATIONAL SYSTEMS PROTECTING FAMILIES IN BELIZE

Social Security and Survivors and Disability Benefits Denied

- * Denies children benefits if a non-recognized parent dies, even if the children were financially dependent on the parent. This denies benefits for children of parents who are not biological or adoptive and children of non-adoptive stepparents.

Inheritance

- * Since laws governing estates and inheritance prioritize the surviving spouse for distribution of assets, and since same-sex partners are not recognized as spouses in Belize, same-sex partners cannot inherit via these laws. Children of non-legally recognized parents generally cannot inherit via these laws either.

Health Disparities

- * Disparities between LGBT adults and the general population can be seen in access to care, the incidence of HIV/AIDS, and chronic physical conditions such as diabetes, obesity, and arthritis. Contributing factors include high rates of stress due to systemic harassment and discrimination.

Limited Access to Health Insurance

- * Because most employee benefits are regulated under local laws, which does not recognize same-sex couples, most employers are not required to offer health benefits to the partners or non-recognized children of LGBT workers.

Unwelcoming Healthcare Environments

- * Health care environments are often inhospitable to rainbow families, with providers who may be hostile, discriminatory, or unaware of rainbow families' unique health needs.
- * Many rainbow families still face discrimination and delay when staff are uncertain or opposed to policies that explicitly address rainbow families.

POLICY SOLUTIONS

The list of legal, policy and cultural solutions detailed below, if taken together, could virtually eliminate the legal disparities that pose harm to the two million children being raised by rainbow families. Many of these recommendations would also help other children, including those with unmarried parents and those awaiting adoption.

Legally Recognize LGBT Families

- * Pass comprehensive parental recognition laws to fully protect children in rainbow families.
- * Legalize and recognize relationships for LGBT couples.
- * Provide pathways to immigration and citizenship for binational rainbow families.

Provide Equal Access to Government-Based Economic Protections

- * Recognize rainbow families and children across government safety net programs.
- * Provide equitable economic protections when a parent dies or is disabled.

- * Advance equal access to health insurance and care.
- * Enable rainbow family members to provide care to one another.
- * Pass anti-bullying laws and laws barring discrimination in employment, adoption, custody and visitation, health services, housing and credit.
- * Educate and provide cultural competency training to a wide array of professionals.
- * Create stronger support services for rainbow families, particularly low-income families and transgender parents.

Expand Research on LGBT Families

- * Expand research and education on rainbow families and parenting, with emphasis on filling gaps in data on low-income families and transgender parents.

ABOUT THIS BRIEF

This brief is based on content from *Demographic Survey of Same-Sex Couples in Belize*, a survey which provides one of the most comprehensive portraits to date of the wide range of obstacles facing Rainbow Families in Belize. It also offers detailed recommendations for eliminating or reducing inequities and improving the lives of children with LGBT parents. To view the complete report visit www.ourcirclebze.weebly.com.



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