

White paper on Data Collection in Sexual and Gender Minority Communities.

Sexual and Gender Minorities (SGM) are a diverse and relatively invisible community that transects all other communities (e.g., race, gender, class). Social stigma and invisibility work together to make this community particularly problematic when working to collect representative data. This paper will explore a strategy employed by Out, Proud And Healthy (OPAH) project using purposeful sampling to collect sizeable survey samples from the SGM community in Missouri.

Why is SGM data important?

Data are validating what many thought was likely, that the SGM individuals have significant health disparities. Historically, very little has been done to identify and address these disparities (aside from HIV/AIDS research and homosexuality as a mental illness—most of this research conducted prior to the 1974 change in DSM classification of homosexuality as a mental illness), but effective data collecting and reporting can and is changing that. Data provide the evidence necessary to persuade funders that a problem exists and needs to be addressed.



OPAH Accomplishment

In the summer of 2012 OPAH developed a three page, 28-item survey aimed at gaining insight on health, behaviors, attitudes and habits in the SGM community in Missouri. Outstandingly, our staff managed to collect 5,253 surveys during Pride Festival season with representative samples from SGM African-Americans (14.4%), Hispanics (5.9%), bisexuals (14.1%), and transgender/transsexuals individuals (3%). You may wonder, how did they do it?

OPAH's Strategy for collecting large sample sizes on surveys at Pride Festivals



We knew that Pride festivals offered a small window of opportunity for access to this otherwise hard-to-reach community, so we focused on utilizing this opportunity to the fullest. Before each pride event we secured volunteers and “paid volunteers” to help, especially during what we foresaw as, high volume times. We also made sure to have ample surveys on hand, at our largest pride festival in St. Louis we took 70 clip-boards with us. Each of these boards were preloaded with about 10 to 20 surveys. We reserved enough booth space so that pride attendees could sit (preferably in shade) while filling out their surveys.

During the pride festival we made a point of asking everyone who walked by if they would fill out a survey to help the LGBTQ community. It was our goal to try and get as many people filling out surveys simultaneously as possible, and by rotating up to 80 clip-boards we could keep a constant crowd of participants actively filling out our surveys. We developed a system, where one or two staff/volunteers would load clip-boards with fresh surveys, and file the completed surveys; while 5-9 volunteers and 2-3 staff (at large festivals or very busy times); 2-4 volunteers and 2-3 staff (at medium size festivals); and 2-3 staff (at small-size festivals) would distribute surveys to festival goers passing by. We also offered cold water, soap bubble smiley face necklaces, and OPAH stickers to festival goers.

Data Collection Tips.

- Always make your ask in a friendly upbeat manor.
- Have a diversity (race, age, gender, SGM) of workers/volunteer.
- Provide shade and a place to sit while filling out surveys, if possible.
- Thank everyone who fills out a survey and let them know their opinion is important.
- Set up shop in a high volume area of the festival whenever possible.
- Collaborate with other organizations, everyone benefits when you promote each other.
- Keep a good supply of pens, they disappear frequently; ideally have pens as give aways.
- Volunteers wearing half aprons with lots of pens and stickers allows for fluid data collection.
- Ask everyone who walks by, especially minority populations (i.e. trans, Latino, African-American, etc)
- Give-aways provide a small token of appreciation.
- Pay volunteers (we paid \$50) for obtaining 60 surveys which can take about 4 hours of work; If the volunteer makes his/her numbers, they are done.
- Stickers or necklace bubbles worn by Pride attendees signal they have completed a survey and need not be approached again.
- Each paid volunteer carries 5-10 clipboards with a stack of empty surveys; it is often the case when approaching a group, one person will be willing to fill out the survey; others will then do so since they are just standing around waiting for the willing participant to complete the survey. Therefore having several clipboards to hand out at one time allows for multiple surveys to be completed simultaneously. Completed survey goes to bottom of the stack with a fresh one on top.
- If a parade is part of the festival, going to the line-up of parade members is an excellent opportunity to collect data since the parade participants are typically standing around and waiting for the parade to begin. However, it is best to stop collecting as soon as the parade starts.
- If a parade is part of the festival, similarly, asking those who have set up to watch the parade can also be a source of individuals to complete the survey; the same rule applies—stop collecting when the parade begins.
- At the beginning of the Pride festival, when it is often quiet, approaching the other vendors/booth participants to fill out the survey can add to number of completed surveys;



- For those who have booths close by, it is helpful to 1) give them a small token of thanks such as a water bottle and 2) encourage those who have completed the survey to visit the nearby booths (“You should check out the... booth; they have.....”); this helps ease a potential discord if your booth has lots of people standing around and blocking easy access to surrounding booths.
- Obtain IRB approval for the data collection and ideally for obtaining data from youths (anonymous survey with low risk and unlikely that parents would attend are arguments to allow for youth data collection).

Conclusion

Data is helpful in justifying needs within the SGM Community. Anyone can collect data with some planning, a willingness to ask festival goers for help, and a desire to learn about the SGM Community. Contact Out, Proud, And Health for more information about health disparities or additional information on data collection in SGM Communities at: www.outproudandhealthy.org