

# 2021 LGBTQ SOUTHERN STATES ROUNDTABLE

HOSTED BY MILLIKEN



# Presenters

**Deena Fidas**



Managing Director & Chief  
Program and Partnerships Officer  
**Out & Equal**

Pronouns: She/Her

**Ricaye Harris**



Director of Diversity & Inclusion  
**Milliken**

Pronouns: She/Her

**Madelyn Gelpi**



Sr. Manager of Stakeholder  
Engagement  
**Out & Equal**

Pronouns: Anything Respectful



# Evolution of Progress: What We've Learned So Far



# Who We Are

Out & Equal is the global convener, thought leader and catalyst actively working to achieve workplaces of equality and belonging – supporting LGBTQ+ employees and leaders who thrive in their careers and lives and achieve greater impact on the world.



## Southern States Initiative

Our Southern States programming helps employers build cultures of belonging in this region, taking into account the broader cultural context of the South and the daily realities LGBTQ workers and their families face.

- **Launched in 2019**
- **Annual forums**
- **Region-specific programming & resources**

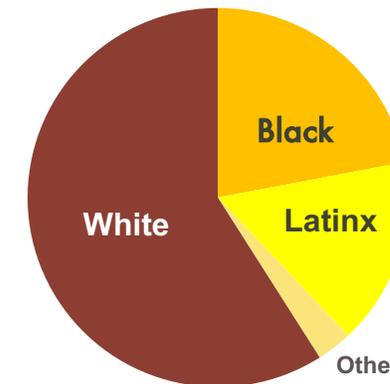
# The Southern LGBTQ Landscape

More LGBT adults live in the South than any other US region.

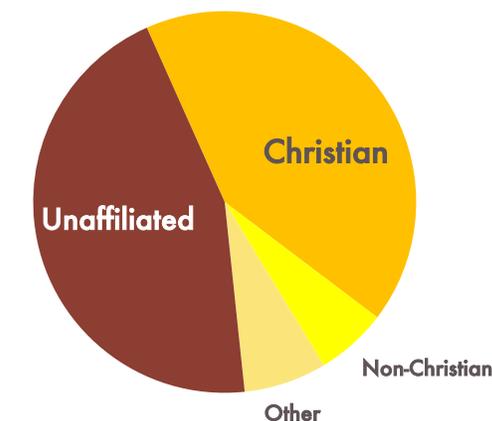
- 1 in 3 LGBT adults
- 2 in 5 transgender adults



**4 in 10 are people of color.**



**55% are religiously-affiliated.**



**More likely to be raising children.**

- 20% of same-gender couples in the South.
- 25.7 % of same-gender couples in Mississippi.
  - Highest rate in the nation.

# Driving Inclusion in The South

## Challenges

- Law & Policy
- Religion
- Culture

## Opportunities

- Collaboration – Southern employers working together to achieve greater environments of inclusion across the region.
- Empathy & authenticity as powerful tools for change in the face of cultural challenges.
- Developing a new intersectional framework for inclusion which leverages Southern values as strengths in building cultures of belonging for all.

&

# Law & Policy

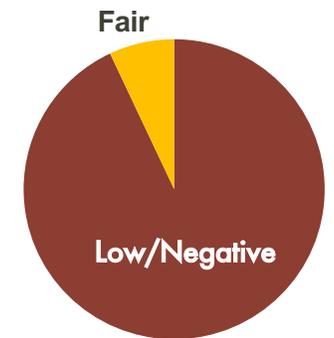
- Most at-risk, least protected
  - Fewest state-level legal protections for LGBTQ people against discrimination
  - Highest # of religious exemptions laws

- Virginia is the only Southern state that explicitly prohibits discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity in key areas:
  - Public Accommodations
  - Employment (public and private)
  - Housing
  - Credit
- Florida and Texas interpret existing law to include some protections against LGBTQ discrimination
- 5 out of the 7 US states with anti-LGBTQ laws are in the South:
  - Alabama
  - Louisiana
  - Mississippi
  - South Carolina
  - Tennessee

# Law & Policy

- Two-thirds of LGBTQ Southerners live in rural counties with fewer services available if facing discrimination
- The Equality Act & the ongoing importance of state protections
- Anti-LGBTQ legislation causes economic & reputational harm
  - Businesses continue to take a stand

**93% of LGBTQ Southerners live in states with a low or negative equality rating.**



An aerial photograph of a city at sunset, with a large stadium in the foreground. The sky is a deep orange and red, and the city lights are visible in the background. The stadium has a large scoreboard and advertisements, including one for Nissan. The text "Religion" is overlaid in white on a dark orange rectangular background.

# Religion

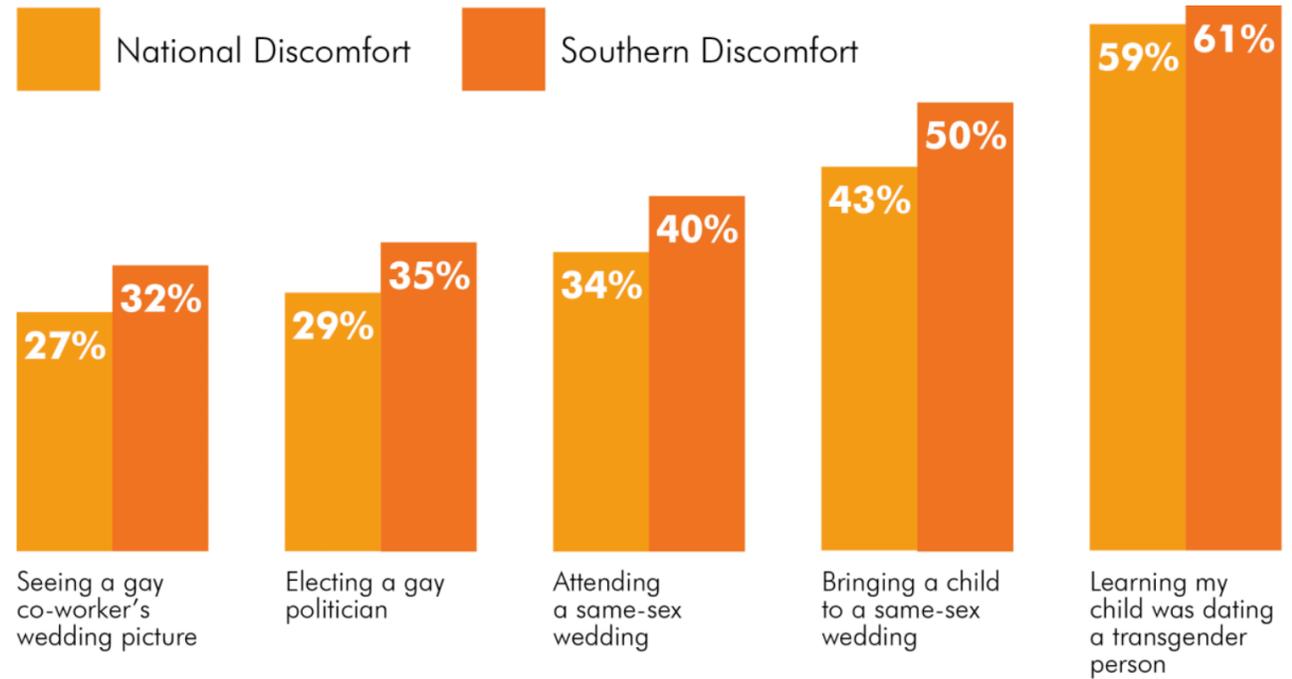
**A cornerstone of life in the South**

- **More likely to be highly religious & broadly conservative in beliefs**
  - 73% of Southerners identify as Christian
- **Faith-based rejection can translate into rejection in the political arena**
- **Both a challenge & force for good**
  - Preference for “status quo” & “traditional values”
  - Opportunities for community, resources, and social fulfillment



# Culture

- Across the board, people in the South showed more discomfort with LGBTQ people than those in the U.S. overall.
- 71% of LGBTQ Southerners have experienced harassment related to their sexual orientation or gender identity.
- Challenges in gaining visible allies
  - Norms of respect = not discussing "it"



GLAAD. 2016. Accelerating Acceptance Report.



# Opportunities

- **Collaboration** – Southern employers working together to achieve greater environments of inclusion across the region.
- **Empathy & authenticity** as powerful tools for change in the face of cultural challenges.
- **Developing a new intersectional framework** for inclusion which leverages Southern values as strengths in building cultures of belonging for all.



2020 **SOUTHERN STATES FORUM**

"Sometimes we have to make hard decisions, but more often we have to make 'heart' decisions. This work is really about the heart decisions and how we make people feel. At the end of the day, I believe that it's about how we create spaces of learning, listening, leading, and lifting."



**Sandra  
Evers-Manly**

(Pronouns: she/her)  
Northrop Grumman

# GOALS

- Surface broad challenges & needs.
- Engage in peer-to-peer learning.
- Build solutions and opportunities for collaboration.
- Identify goals & next steps for the year.



# DISCUSSION

We encourage you to unmute yourselves and turn on your camera.



# IDENTIFYING COMMON ISSUES & NEEDS

What problems are you facing? What would you like to address here?



# GOING DEEPER

What are the barriers? Why hasn't this happened yet?



# GOING DEEPER

What have you done or tried? What have you seen your company or others do to advance the issue?



# **BUILDING SOLUTIONS TOGETHER**

What can be done? What's possible with the attendees here and with Out & Equal?



# COMMITMENTS

What will you do on Monday?



# NEXT STEPS

## What can you do across the year?

- Continue the conversation at Southern Forum.
- Attend the Out & Equal Workplace Summit 2021.
- Work with O&E as a partner on building out your strategies to address these goals and engage in ongoing conversations in The Global Hub.



**THANK YOU FOR  
PARTICIPATING!**

