

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Damien Center and Community Partners Release *Deep Divides*, a Report on COVID-19's Impact on Central Indiana's LGBTQ+ Community**

*New report highlights how challenges caused by the pandemic are disproportionately affecting the LGBTQ+ community*

**INDIANAPOLIS (March 9, 2021)** – Today, [Damien Center](#) and its community partners released *Deep Divides*, a report that highlights the results of a COVID-19 impact survey of Central Indiana's LGBTQ+ community. The community-wide assessment was conducted between October and December 2020 among LGBTQ+ community members living in and around Marion County. The report highlights how the multi-layered challenges caused by the pandemic are disproportionately affecting the LGBTQ+ communities.

When asked how the COVID-19 pandemic had changed their lives, four key areas of concern emerged: Mental Health, Physical Health, Economic Stability, and Social Connections. "The findings show a significantly greater decline in wellbeing when compared to responses from cisgender heterosexual individuals in these same areas," explained Alan Witchey, president and CEO of Damien Center. "The LGBTQ+ population has historically faced significant health disparities, making these negative effects on the mental health and wellbeing even more devastating."

The report was developed by a dynamic coalition of more than a dozen LGBTQ+ focused organizations including [Damien Center](#), [BU Wellness Network](#), [Gender Nexus](#), [The Glow Up Projects](#), [Indiana Pride of Color](#), [Indiana University's Office of the Vice President for Diversity, Equity, and Multicultural Affairs](#), [Indiana Youth Group \(IYG\)](#), [Indy Pride](#), [Indy Rainbow Chamber](#), the [IUPUI LGBTQ+ Center](#), [Never Alone Project](#), [OutCare Health](#), and [Step-Up](#). Each organization distributed a COVID-19 Impact Survey throughout their respective networks, resulting in 336 responses from individuals in and around Marion County.

Highlights of the survey's findings include:

**Mental Health:**

- Since the onset of the pandemic, 64% of LGBTQ+ individuals said their mental health has gotten worse versus 52% of cisgender heterosexual individuals. This demonstrates that the LGBTQ+ population is 23% more likely to have had a decline in their mental health due to COVID-19.

**Physical Health:**

- LGBTQ+ individuals are 65% more likely to have had a decline in their physical health due to COVID-19 as compared to their cisgender heterosexual counterparts. 38% of LGBTQ+ individuals surveyed report that their physical health has gotten worse versus 23% of their cisgender heterosexual counterparts.

**Economic Stability:**

- 17% of LGBTQ+ individuals surveyed reported being unemployed and looking for work versus 7% of cisgender heterosexuals.
- 16% of LGBTQ+ individuals reported a decrease in overall working hours.

**Social Connectedness:**

- LGBTQ+ individuals are 21% more likely to have experienced a decline in feelings of social connectedness due to COVID-19.

Another important finding is that the divide is even greater for LGBTQ+ youth, for whom regular, positive social interactions are particularly important for managing stress, reducing depression, and lowering the risks of suicide. Nearly 9 in 10 LGBTQ+ youth and young adults under 25 reported their mental health has gotten worse due to the pandemic. 47% report their physical health has gotten worse, a figure more than twice the 23% of their cisgender heterosexual peers. 84% of LGBTQ+ youth report they have experienced a decline in social connections during the pandemic.

Damien Center and its partner organizations hope the results of the survey lead to COVID-19 response measures that include a specific focus on programs and services that are culturally competent and accessible for the LGBTQ+ population, with particular attention on meeting critical needs, creating safe social spaces, and serving intersecting identities.

A full copy of the *Deep Divides* report can be downloaded here: <https://damien.org/survey>.

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***About Damien Center:***

Damien Center is Indiana's oldest and largest AIDS service organization and leads the effort to prevent the spread of HIV. The Center opened in 1987 and offers a one-stop-shop model of care that includes preventive, supportive, and medical services that empowers people in Central Indiana affected by HIV/AIDS to move forward each day with dignity so they may live abundant and productive lives. Damien Center believes passionately in the dignity and worth of every person who seeks their services and strives to be a safe and welcoming place so that no barriers separate people from the services they need to prolong and enhance their lives. For more information visit: <http://www.damien.org> or follow them on Twitter at [@DamienCenter](https://twitter.com/DamienCenter) or like them on Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/thedamiencenter/>.