

# **LOCAL MEDIA ACCOUNTABILITY INDEX**

**-U.S. SOUTH**



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# LETTER FROM GLAAD PRESIDENT & CEO

Fair, accurate, and inclusive news media coverage is vital to expanding public awareness and understanding of LGBTQ people. While recent decades have shown remarkable advancements in accurate reporting on issues affecting our lives and increasingly nuanced portrayals of the incredible diversity within LGBTQ communities, the fact remains many reporters, editors, and producers continue to face challenges covering LGBTQ issues in a complex, sometimes rhetorically charged climate.

GLAAD's first Accelerating Acceptance report in 2015 revealed that levels of discomfort towards the LGBTQ community are as high as 43% in America—and spiked to 61% in the U.S. South. GLAAD's 2021 State of HIV Stigma Study showed significant stigma remains against people with HIV along with gaps in knowledge about testing, treatment and transmission. This lack of information fuels fear, shame and stigma, driving new infections, particularly in the South, which has the highest rates of diagnosis and people living with HIV in the country.

It was clear that in pursuit of accelerating LGBTQ acceptance in the U.S. South and nationwide, and to defeat stigma around HIV, GLAAD, as part of a three-year, \$9 million, multi-state program with Gilead Sciences, should examine the coverage of LGBTQ and HIV-related issues in media outlets across the South. This research creates a baseline count of stories and beginning evaluation of LGBTQ news coverage. In this report, we also provide recommendations for local media outlets in the South to increase the quantity, quality and diversity of news stories about LGBTQ people and about HIV.

The importance of accurate reporting of LGBTQ communities wherever they live cannot be overstated.

Over the past few years, the increase in reported violence against transgender people, as well as proposed and passed legislation unfairly and inaccurately targeting transgender youth, has become one of the greatest barriers to LGBTQ people's safety, as well as full equality, acceptance, and participation in American society.

Most Americans erroneously believe that LGBTQ people have federal protections in areas of life in which they do not, and do not know that statewide protections are missing across the South, where a majority of LGBTQ people live. The reality is that the Equality Act is stalled in the U.S. Senate and, as of September 2021, there are no consistent and explicit federal anti-discrimination protections for LGBTQ people in housing, education, public accommodations, and many other areas of life (The U.S. Supreme Court's June 2020 ruling in *Bostock v. Clayton County, Georgia* protects gay and transgender people in matters of employment, but not in other respects). None of the nine states examined in this project have broad statewide anti-discrimination protections. Two states, Arkansas and Tennessee, passed dangerous bills into law in 2021 limiting or restricting private healthcare for transgender youth. Four Southern states studied (Alabama, Florida, Mississippi and Tennessee), passed unjust and unnecessary laws to ban trans youth from school sports in 2021, bringing the total nationwide to nine states. Local media outlets can be a force for facts about these and other anti-LGBTQ laws. Local journalists must reach out to local LGBTQ advocates and citizens to educate their audiences about their LGBTQ neighbors who are harmed by these measures.

If an outlet's journalistic principles include a commitment to speak truth to power and authentically reflect and serve its community, then by necessity, that outlet must include a commitment to recognize its LGBTQ audiences and accurately report on those using their power to target LGBTQ people. Pursuing those principles with integrity and veracity includes an awareness of the specific concerns of LGBTQ audiences, a commitment to using language that is accurate and respectful, a pledge to report on and feature the diversity of the LGBTQ experience, and a promise to hire and foster LGBTQ talent in newsrooms, among freelancers, and in all the parts of the newsgathering process. The news media is an indispensable component of democracy, and its stewards have a responsibility to disseminate reliable information and to reflect the community it serves— for LGBTQ users, and for everyone.

The GLAAD LOCAL MEDIA ACCOUNTABILITY INDEX - U.S. SOUTH is new research that follows in the successful tradition of our reports by looking at coverage in a set timeframe (both prior to and during the COVID-19 pandemic) and examining the depth of coverage of local and national LGBTQ and HIV stories, the accuracy and sensitivity with which the reporting is conducted, and the service that local media outlets provide to their communities.

The Index marks the start of a dedicated GLAAD program to be an ongoing resource to local newsrooms across the U.S. South, to urge them to implement the recommendations in the Index and to be a source of stories of LGBTQ and HIV advocates in their areas. The Gilead COMPASS Initiative® is working to address the HIV/AIDS epidemic in the Southern U.S. by collaborating with local community organizations to meet the needs of people living with and impacted by HIV/AIDS. Their stories and work deserve more attention from local media. GLAAD will serve as their megaphone.

Local media is key to reaching non-LGBTQ people living in the region with stories that educate and grow acceptance. For these local newsrooms, GLAAD can be a resource. For their readers and viewers, this Index offers accountability, and a challenge for the outlets to do better. This guide will serve as a tool for the media as they work to effectively share the stories of LGBTQ people, and as we work to build a world in which we can all live the lives we love.



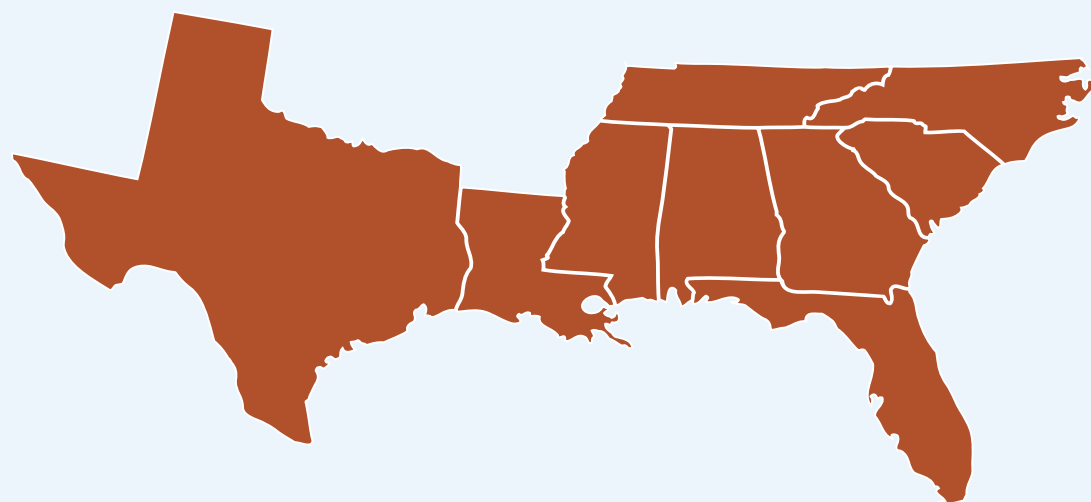
A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sarah Kate Ellis".

**SARAH KATE ELLIS**  
President & CEO, GLAAD



# LOCAL MEDIA ACCOUNTABILITY INDEX

-U.S. SOUTH



**9 STATES STUDIED**

**0 HAVE STATEWIDE  
LAWS PROTECTING  
LGBTQ PEOPLE**

## WHY THE U.S. SOUTH?

According to the Williams Institute [35% of LGBT people live in the Southern states](#), and in the South the LGBT (the acronym used in that report) population is more likely than the non-LGBT population [to be African-American](#). Additionally, Southern LGBT people have the lowest health insurance rates in the country, and more new HIV infections among men who have sex with men (MSM) come from the South than from other regions. Levels of discomfort towards the LGBTQ community are 61% in the U.S. South, compared with 43% nationally, according to GLAAD and The Harris Poll's 2015 Accelerating Acceptance report, meaning that more than half of Southerners reported being uncomfortable around LGBTQ people in various day-to-day situations. And none of the nine states examined in this Index have broad statewide anti-discrimination protections for LGBTQ people. This analysis identifies these and other problem areas and offers recommendations—both specific and general.

LGBTQ Southerners need support and acceptance now more than ever. Our overarching recommendation is that all decision makers at news media organizations, including management, editors, and reporters, must continue to use best reporting practices, challenge newsrooms to be more inclusive, and use accurate and respectful language.

## METHODOLOGY

In preparing this report, GLAAD reviewed the web sites of 181 newspapers and television outlets in Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, and Texas. Both independent and syndicated outlets were researched. Google searches and manual searches on outlets' sites were conducted for the following terms: *LGBT, LGBTQ, gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, trans, nonbinary, non-binary, queer, genderqueer, asexual, agender, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, gender non-conforming, HIV, AIDS, HIV/AIDS, intersex, and drag*. Searches were limited to an 18-month period (June 1, 2019–December 31, 2020), roughly half of which pre-dates COVID-19 working conditions. Outlets were assessed on a variety of metrics, including fair, accurate, and inclusive reporting, use of accurate terminology, respect in naming story subjects and their families and relationships, refraining from defamatory or offensive terms, refraining from incendiary rhetoric and sensationalistic distortions of LGBTQ people's lives, coverage of the diversity of the LGBTQ community with an emphasis on local stories, and responsible use of images and video, among other factors. Individual local media outlets were given an assessment of *excellent, good, fair, or poor*. This report begins with a selection of broad recommendations, relevant to both newspaper and television news, to improve areas of competency. Our general recommendations are followed by a selection of subject-specific recommendations to advise against systemic lapses in fair and accurate reporting.



# CONCERNS

The Index found the following trends and areas for improvement, common across states and local news outlets including:

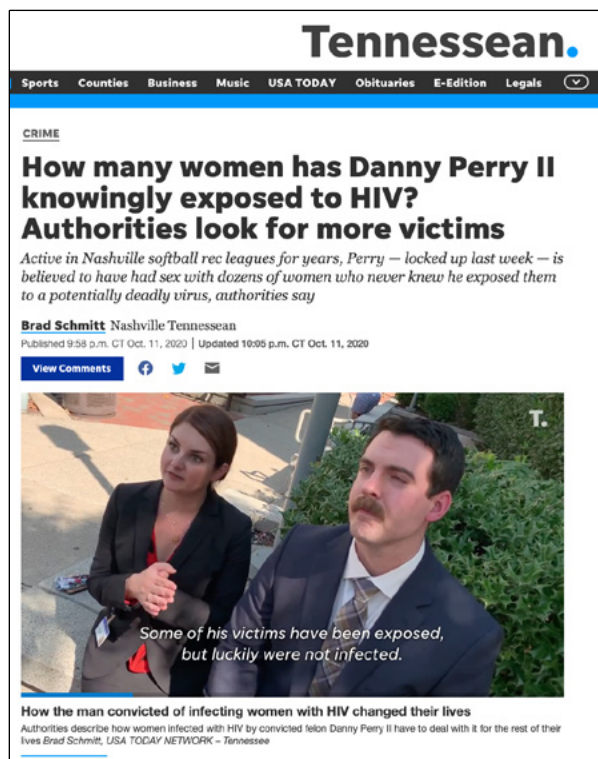
- **Limited or complete lack of LGBTQ or HIV-related content.**
- **Lack of LGBTQ voices and local LGBTQ voices, particularly transgender people, in LGBTQ and trans-specific stories:**

• **Example:** This article from *Alabama Today* clearly indicates an anti-transgender bias in the headline, describes gender-affirming surgeries as “radical surgeries” and fails to include any LGBTQ perspectives, only including the anti-LGBTQ group *Eagle Forum* and the bill’s legislative sponsor: [“Alabama lawmaker files bill to protect children from gender reassignment treatments”](#) (2/23/20).



- **“Deadnaming” or misgendering of transgender people**
- **Example:** *The Fayetteville Observer* deadnamed and misgendered a transgender murder victim, despite acknowledging her name in quotation marks (“Murder of 23-year-old in Lumberton draws national attention,” June 13, 2019).
- **Limited reporting of HIV treatments and latest science about “undetectable = untransmittable.”** Outlets also hyperfocus on HIV-related crime without context about how statutes criminalizing HIV exposure are considered out of date with latest science and understanding of treatment and transmission.

• **Example:** HIV coverage must expand beyond stories of sensationalist crimes about exposure, like this article from *The Tennessean* (Nashville). [“How many women has Danny Perry II knowingly exposed to HIV? Authorities look for more victims”](#) (11/11/20)



- **Misunderstanding the motivation and practical effect of latest anti-transgender legislation, including banning transgender girls from girls’ sports.**

• **Example:** This report from WAPT (Jackson, MS), [“Mississippi bill would restrict transgender athletes from some sports teams”](#) (March 2, 2020) uncritically repeats unproven claims and language from the proposed legislation, conflates adult athletes with student athletes and erroneously cites unfairness to girls: “The bill states that ‘inherent differences between men and women’ ... [that] give male athletes an unfair advantage over female athlete.”

- **Engaging in a “false balance” dichotomy.** Stories giving wordcount and video to responsible representation do not need equivalent media time or wordcount to anti-LGBTQ voices.
- **Understanding terminology regarding LGBTQ relationships, families, marriages, and individuals in those relationships.**
- **Repeating myths that pit LGBTQ people against people of faith traditions.**

Stories about so-called “conversion therapy” should use quotation marks as it not a recognized therapy and is condemned by every major psychiatric and psychological organization. This video in two parts, [“McKrae Game starting “new chapter” as gay man”](#) (11/11/19) by Fox Carolina (Greenville, NC) is well-intentioned for the subject’s disavowal of “conversion therapy,” but falls short by including a statement from his former organization while failing to include the voices of those who have survived it, and the trauma, depression, even suicidal thoughts or actions that can be the result of this debunked practice.





## FINDINGS

The research indicates a variety of approaches to LGBTQ– and HIV-related reporting. Some states fared significantly better than other states in the amount and consistency of high-quality reporting, but even within a state, newspaper and television station reporting quality can vary significantly.

Many outlets relied heavily on national wire stories or affiliations with national outlets, rather than report within the local or regional LGBTQ community. A few outlets relegated LGBTQ coverage to the opinion pages rather than devote reporting resources to LGBTQ issues.

**Most striking of all,** 39 outlets produced zero or negligible LGBTQ content for the entire time period studied. In each of the 9 states studied, there was at least one outlet that failed to report a single LGBTQ story. As noted earlier, approximately 3.6 million LGBT adults, including more than 525,000 transgender adults, live in the U.S. South— more than any other region. One in 3 LGBT Americans live in the Southern states.

For HIV reporting in particular, this research set found that of the 79 stories that included HIV, 27 stories were substantive, giving context in reporting about vulnerable populations, stigma, or prevention, but 34 stories only mentioned HIV in a service post about testing, in reporting on research or grants, in a list of Covid-19 comorbidities, or similar. Only 43 stories included key public health information including the fact that people living with HIV today, when on effective treatment, live long and healthy lives and can suppress the virus to be undetectable and therefore untransmittable. Eighteen stories were reporting on crimes about exposure, without context that the CDC considers such laws outdated and out of step with current science about how HIV is preventable and can be untransmittable, and how criminalization of HIV fuels infections. Even publications that rated “good” on balance have included such sensationalized reporting about criminalized HIV exposure which fuel HIV stigma and ignore advances in HIV prevention and treatment today, (including *The Tennessean*, “[How many women has Danny Perry II knowingly exposed to HIV? Authorities look for more victims.](#)” October 11, 2020).

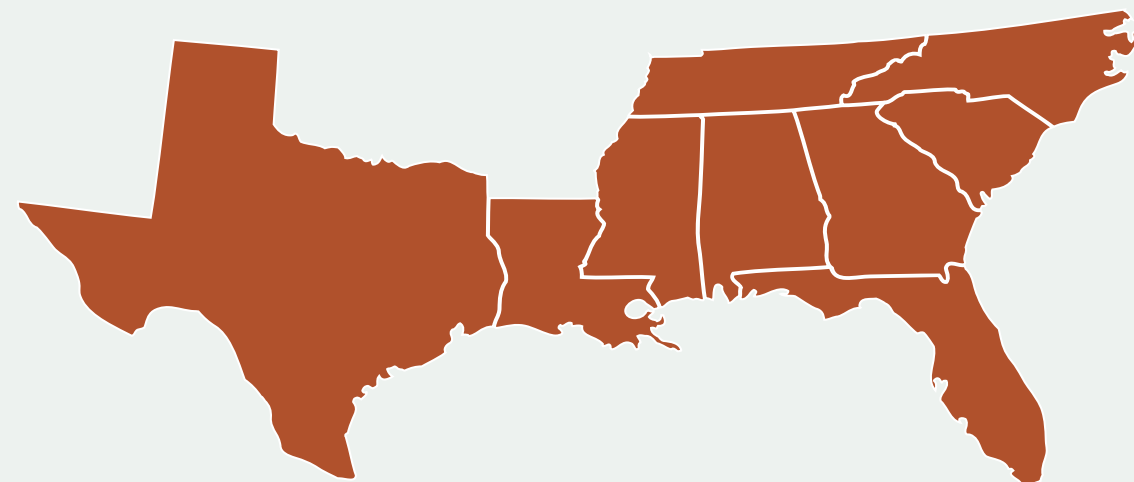
**U.S. States Studied: 9**

**Number of Outlets: 181**

**Number of stories: more than 1,300**

**HIV-related stories: 79**

**Number of outlets that produced no or negligible original content: 39**



Outlets receiving a “poor” rating frequently included minimal or no mentions of the search terms, or no original, local LGBTQ reporting or local LGBTQ voices, including *The Inquisitor* (Shreveport, LA), *KPLC-TV* (Lake Charles, LA), *Focus Daily News* (Dallas, TX), *The Times Daily* (Florence, AL), *The Decatur Daily* (Decatur, AL), *The Dispatch* (Columbus, MS), *Enterprise-Journal* (McComb, MS), *The Prentiss Headlight* (Jefferson Davis County, MS), *WTOK-TV* (Meridian, MS), *WCBI-TV* (Columbus, MS), *The Sun News* (Myrtle Beach, SC), and *The Times and Democrat* (Orangeburg, SC), *WIS-10* (Columbia, SC), *WAFB-TV* (Baton Rouge, LA), *WTVM* (Columbus, GA), *WCBI-TV* (Columbus, MS), *WTOK-TV* (Meridian, MS), and others. A lack of original reporting represents a failure to adequately serve all populations in those outlet’s coverage areas.

Relatively few poor-rated outlets were rated as such based on overtly biased content, but some publications indicated problems specifically with regard to reporting on transgender people. In a few examples, *Alabama Today* gave a platform to anti-transgender bias, misgendering, and false medial information (“[Danna Hall McCain: Transgender activism puts vulnerable children in cross-hairs of progressive agenda.](#)” November 8, 2019); *WAPT-TV* (Jackson, MS) used the problematic term “biological sex” and quoted from the anti-trans bill, but did not interview or quote transgender people or experts (“[Mississippi bill would restrict transgender athletes from some sports teams.](#)” March 2, 2020); *The Fayetteville Observer* deadnamed (using the birth name of a transgender person who no longer uses the name) and misgendered a transgender murder victim, despite acknowledging her authentic name, though unnecessarily in quotation marks (“[Murder of 23-year-old in Lumberton draws national attention.](#)” June 13, 2019). Deadnaming was a problem across many outlets in multiple states.

*The Sumter Item* (Sumter, SC) published this anti-marriage equality opinion piece mis-labeled as “letter”: “[Letter: How can Black Christians support Democratic ideas?](#),” October 7, 2020); and *WTVM* (Columbus, GA) aired this editorial from the station’s general manager describing Billy Porter as “cross-dressing gay entertainer,” and insisting a gender-inclusive policy in programming for children should come with parental warnings (“[WTVM Editorial 2-13-20: Kids, gender, and Sesame Street.](#)” February 13, 2020).

*The Times-Picayune / The New Orleans Advocate* received an “excellent” rating for responsible reporting about trans youth in sports (“[This Louisiana bill would keep trans students from playing on teams matching their gender identity.](#)” March 5, 2020), reporting with context on communities disproportionately affected by HIV (“[Three New Orleans groups awarded grants to fight HIV in 2020. Here’s how they plan to use them.](#)” December 17, 2019), and good feature reporting on diverse local people who people the colorful figures that make up the LGBTQ community (“[Choke Hole looks for romance in Valentine’s Day queer wrestling show.](#)” Feb 10, 2020).

*The Naples Daily News* (Naples, FL) received an “excellent” rating for solid reporting on the legal and social inequities and how they affect local residents (“[‘A clear message’: Local LGBT community calls for increased protections in employment, public accommodations.](#)” November 29, 2019), and for feature coverage that included a memoir about lesbians who were not allowed to marry (“[‘Life is precious’: Southwest Florida LGBTQ advocate releases memoir.](#)” November 26, 2020), and an interview with rockstar and home-grown trans icon (“[Laura Jane Grace: Punk-rock star talks new album, Naples and being a transgender icon.](#)” October 27, 2020).

Other outlets that received excellent ratings include *KATC-TV* (Lafayette, LA), *WTTA/WFLA* (St Petersburg/Tampa), *Knoxville News Sentinel* (Knoxville, TBN), *WBIR-TV* (Knoxville, TN), *Dallas Morning News* (Dallas, TX), *Fort Worth Star-Telegram* (Fort Worth, TX), *KSAT* (San Antonio, TX), *WBRC* (Birmingham, AL), *Montgomery Advertiser* (Montgomery, AL), *Northeast Mississippi Daily Journal* (Northeast MS), *The Daily Mississippian* (student newspaper of the University of Mississippi), and *Student Printz* (student newspaper of the University of Southern Mississippi).

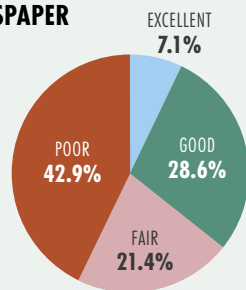


# STATE-SPECIFIC HIGHLIGHTS

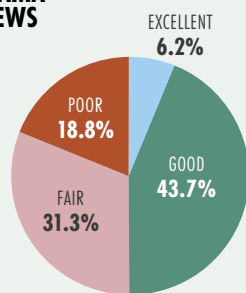
## ALABAMA

“[Dinner and a show: The Starlite bringing drag back to Montgomery](#)” (June 3, 2019) from *the Montgomery Advertiser* is a fair and accurate local culture piece that notes the lack of LGBTQ gathering spaces and plans for a new restaurant and club with entertainment.

### ALABAMA NEWSPAPER

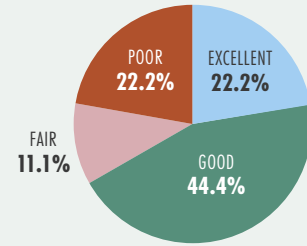


### ALABAMA TV NEWS

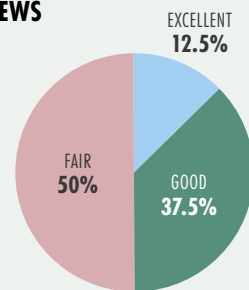


## FLORIDA

### FLORIDA NEWSPAPER



### FLORIDA TV NEWS

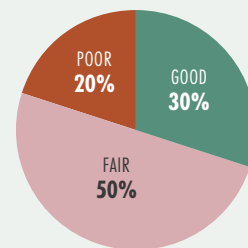


Solid reporting from *the Orlando Sun-Sentinel*, “[Anti-LGBT Florida schools getting school vouchers](#)” (January 23, 2020) about the 156 private Christian schools with anti-LGBTQ views that educated more than 20,800 students with tuition paid for by state-funded scholarships.

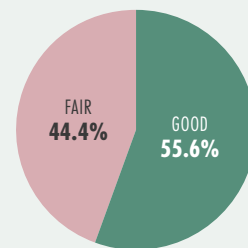
## GEORGIA

The reporting is solid and in-depth in this video report and accompanying text article about the citizenship struggle facing the child of gay parents in Georgia, from *WXIA* (Atlanta), “[‘Born out of wedlock’ policy used to deny 1-year-old citizenship, because her parents are gay](#)” (August 14, 2019).

### GEORGIA NEWSPAPER

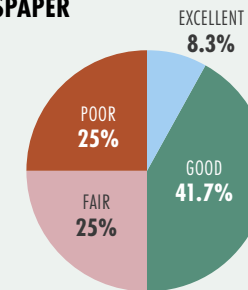


### GEORGIA TV NEWS

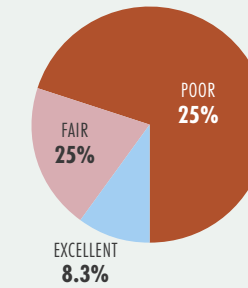


## LOUISIANA

### LOUISIANA NEWSPAPER



### LOUISIANA TV NEWS

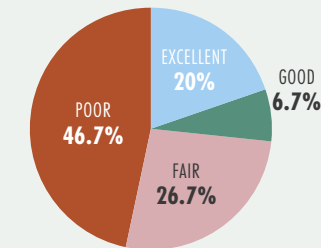


“[Nyx Mardi Gras krewe members claim club rule discriminated against transgender people: Captain says no](#)” (June 24, 2020) from *The Times-Picayune* (New Orleans) focuses on the effect of anti-transgender discrimination in a cultural issue specific to the region, a Mardi Gras krewe.

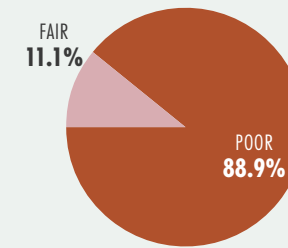
## MISSISSIPPI

This report from *WAPT* (Jackson, MS), “[Mississippi bill would restrict transgender athletes from some sports teams](#)” (March 2, 2020), is indicative of the lack of coverage throughout Mississippi. While 12 outlets had little or no coverage, this report uses “biological sex” in the headline, quotes the bill’s harmful language, but quotes no transgender people or experts.

### MISSISSIPPI NEWSPAPER

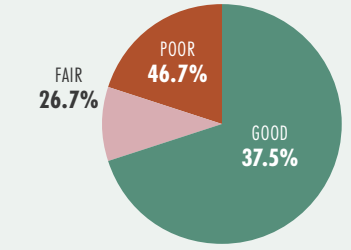


### MISSISSIPPI TV NEWS

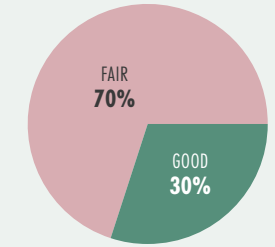


## NORTH CAROLINA

### NORTH CAROLINA NEWSPAPER



### NORTH CAROLINA TV NEWS



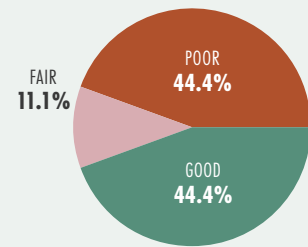
*The News and Observer* (Raleigh) does a fair and accurate job of including LGBTQ issues in its coverage, including this original reporting about the health risks faced by parts of the community, “[Lesbians, gays, bisexuals face risk of dementia due to depression](#),” (November 19, 2020).



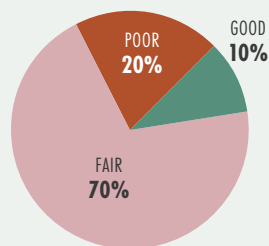
## SOUTH CAROLINA

This local reporting from *Greenville News* (Greenville) includes quotes from council members as well as community members who spoke out both in favor and against rescinding the measure: "[County Council measure to rescind anti-gay resolution fails by 1 vote](#)" (March 3, 2020).

### SOUTH CAROLINA NEWSPAPER



### SOUTH CAROLINA TV NEWS

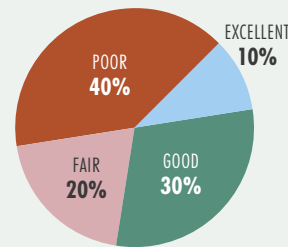


## TENNESSEE

### TENNESSEE NEWSPAPER



### TENNESSEE TV NEWS



WBIR (Knoxville) featured a lot of accurate and original reporting including this video report, "[University of Tennessee ranks as second most LGBTQ-unfriendly university in the U.S.](#)" (August 26, 2020).

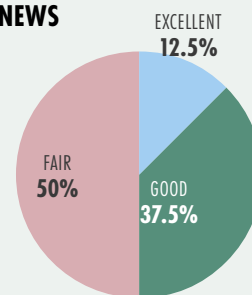
## TEXAS

*The Dallas Morning News* includes in-depth and consistent reporting on LGBTQ issues including this piece, "[Texas leads the nation in transgender murders. After the latest attack, the Dallas trans community asks why](#)" (September 30, 2019).

### TEXAS NEWSPAPER



### TEXAS TV NEWS



## RECOMMENDATIONS

GLAAD encourages all media outlets to implement these key recommendations.

### INCLUDE LGBTQ VOICES AND SEEK OUT LOCAL LGBTQ PEOPLE

The perspectives and voices of LGBTQ people should be centered in stories about their lives, and incorporated into general news coverage as well, including stories about jobs, healthcare, housing and education.

Be sure to interview transgender people when reporting on matters that affect transgender people. A *Media Matters* study found only 21% of stories about anti-trans legislation in Tennessee quoted a trans person. This profile in the *Miami Herald*, "[I am not in the wrong body, but in the perfect one': Hispanic trans woman leads LGBTQ board](#)" (7/1/20) is an example of good reporting that centers the subject, and notes compounded marginalization of those who are both transgender and Black or Latinx.



Alyana Gonzalez chairs the Miami-Dade County Advisory Board for LGBTQ Affairs. "Every day I face a world without a mask, without a lie, and I do it as a realized person." JOSE A. IGLESIAS JIGLESIAS@ELNUEVOHERALD.COM



Use a transgender person's authentic name and pronouns. Do not use the birth names (when subjects do not go by those names), a practice known as "deadnaming." While this post by WRAL (Raleigh, NC) on the killing of a Black transgender woman notes her name toward the end, the article deadnames the victim in the first mention. Oftentimes police reports do not use accurate names and gender for trans victims of violence so it is on the local media outlet to fact check, confirm with other sources who personally knew them (social media contacts can help with this), and accurately report on who the victim was. "[Victim left to die in Lumberton field was shot 8 times, autopsy says](#)" (6/27/19)



## AVOID FALSE “BALANCE”

While two or more viewpoints could be expressed in many reported topics, the dignity and equality of any person is not a two-sided issue. The humanity and safety of LGBTQ people does not necessitate an anti-LGBTQ perspective for “balance.”

**Don’t include interviews with anti-LGBTQ organizations or individuals for “balance.”** Provide context and facts about an organization or person with a history of advocating against LGBTQ people.

**Avoid using shorthand such as calling an organization or person ‘pro-family’ or ‘conservative.’** Do include information about their records of speaking or acting out against equality for LGBTQ people and families. [The GLAAD Accountability Project](#) includes more than 200 profiles of well-known people who have used their platforms to spread misinformation and advocate against LGBTQ people.

**Avoid a “both sides” narrative, especially where it’s harmful to the subjects of news reporting.** The negative effects of anti-LGBTQ legislation and rhetoric are real and can be deadly: When LGBTQ people are demeaned, audiences may believe lies perpetrated against LGBTQ people and may perpetrate violence against them. LGBTQ people may be driven to isolation, self-harm, or suicidal ideation.

Look for ways to highlight the intersectionality of LGBTQ lives—they are among every race, religion and ethnicity - as in this article in *The Charlotte Observer* (Charlotte, NC), “[Black lives matter, LGBTQ groups find common ground in fight against police brutality](#)” (7/2/20)

### Black lives matter, LGBTQ groups find common ground in fight against police brutality

BY MARTHA QUILLIN  
JULY 02, 2020 11:00 AM, UPDATED JULY 02, 2020 11:51 PM



### Seek perspectives of bisexual people.

Bisexual individuals make up [more than half](#) (54.6%) of the LGBTQ community yet are under-represented in news stories and in scripted entertainment (GLAAD WVAITV). This article in the Atlanta Journal-Constitution, “[Popular Black politician comes out](#)” (9/14/20), distinguishes between “gay” and “bisexual” in Gillum’s own words.

## The Atlanta Journal-Constitution

### Andrew Gillum comes out as bisexual



The former Florida gubernatorial candidate also explains what happened in the Miami hotel in March

## FACT CHECK SOURCES

**Media must research entities expressing anti-LGBTQ views, who often have a long and well-documented history of repeating lies about LGBTQ people, their lives and experiences.**

[The GLAAD Accountability Project](#), [The Southern Poverty Law Center](#), [Right Wing Watch](#), and [Media Matters for America](#) are all references that catalog the source of such falsehoods and factual refutation of lies about LGBTQ people.

**Request data if presented with statistics about LGBTQ people.** Do not report on any data that cannot be fact-checked, and examine the source of data for partiality in the organization offering it. Some polling entities and think tanks have very clear anti-LGBTQ biases, are funded by discriminatory groups, or have an interest in presenting data that they view as damaging to LGBTQ equality. Seek out nonpartisan, objective sources for data, and call out lies presented to you as fact, or so as not to enable the spread of misinformation or propaganda.



### Cawthorn on LGBTQ issues

Madison Cawthorn on how he will handle LGBTQ issues as a congressman.  
Angela Wilhelm Angela Wilhelm, awilhelm@citizentimes.com  
Published 12:10 p.m. ET Nov. 4, 2020

**Beware platforming anti-LGBTQ voices; include facts to counter untrue claims.** [In this video interview](#) by newspaper Citizen Times (Asheville, NC) then-candidate for Congress Madison Cawthorn is asked a broad question about LGBTQ issues, but the producer fails to challenge his lies about indoctrination or “life-altering surgeries at a very young age to change their gender,” a claim with no evidence and in conflict with recommendations from every major medical organization [supporting gender-affirming care](#) for transgender youth. The piece fails to include accompanying text to fact-check and refute the lies and false claims.

## ENCOURAGE DIVERSITY IN HIRING AND SUPPORT OF LGBTQ PEOPLE AT ALL LEVELS OF NEWS ORGANIZATIONS

Newsgathering organizations should encourage people of all sexual orientations and gender identities and expressions to apply for positions at every level from entry to management. A commitment to this representation will help capture and engage all the communities that a news organization covers, and help accurately report on the life experiences of LGBTQ subjects and audiences. Make a public commitment to diversity (like the [Shreveport Times](#) and [Gannett](#) outlets have done.)

**Don’t question the objectivity of LGBTQ journalists.** Editors should not single out LGBTQ journalists or question their objectivity when reporting on topics with which they may be particularly familiar. All journalists have cultural perspectives, but devaluing the expertise of LGBTQ journalists can result in a defaulting to a majoritarian perspective, as opposed to a diversity of perspectives, and can contribute to a hostile work environment for LGBTQ reporters and contributors.

**Encourage feedback from LGBTQ audiences.** Encourage your readership or viewership to improve your coverage by noting when your organization falls short and accept and consider such critiques in an effort to improve your journalism. Similarly, encourage your audiences to submit guest columns and letters to the editor. All opinion pieces should be assessed with the same standards of accuracy as news reporting, even those from prominent people.

**Encourage your advertisers and ad agencies to eliminate key words that ads cannot run against.** Advertisers are vital to the viability of newsrooms, but some refuse to advertise opposite stories that include key words like “LGBTQ.” Such prohibitions can serve as disincentives to cover issues of importance to the community. Consider asking ad agencies to remove “LGBTQ” and similar terms from lists of terms against which ads cannot run.

## KEEP UP WITH EVOLVING TERMINOLOGY

As more LGBTQ people feel comfortable coming out and presenting as their authentic selves in society, our language must evolve to encompass those identities in a respectful manner, and to more accurately describe individuals, communities, and experiences. Journalists should ask for interview subjects’ pronouns as standard procedure, and maintain fluency with the growing diversity of gender identity, expression and terms to describe them. This evolution is respectful to their reporting subjects, and will yield more precise journalism.



## INCLUDE LATEST SCIENCE IN HIV STORIES

**Local news media must report more stories about people living with HIV and help end the stigma fueling infections by including accurate information:** HIV is preventable with medication. HIV is treatable to the point the virus is undetectable and therefore untransmittable (U=U). People living with HIV, when treated properly, live long, full and healthy lives. 2021 marks 40 years since the first HIV cases were diagnosed. [GLAAD research](#) finds significant stigma and lack of current understanding of HIV as a preventable, treatable and survivable condition.

### Why access to easy HIV prevention is difficult for many young people | Opinion

College students and other youth can access easy HIV/AIDS prevention with a pill. But barriers exist like vast areas where the pill is unavailable.

Cameron Noel Guest columnist  
Published 6:00 p.m. CT Mar. 11, 2020



Access to HIV prevention is not universally equal, and can be made much more difficult for queer people, people of color, and poor people. This opinion piece with accompanying video in the Tennessean (Nashville), "[Why access to easy HIV prevention is difficult for many young people](#)" (3/11/20), highlights the important issue of access disparities, yet is reported and filed as opinion, rather than in the main news sections. It also includes important current facts such as medications like PrEP (a daily pill to prevent HIV) are 99% effective at preventing HIV when taken as prescribed for people who do not have HIV.

**Coverage of HIV is critical in rural areas.** This TV news report by station WDHN (Dothan, AL), "[High rates of HIV cases reported in rural Alabama](#)," underscores that HIV is an ongoing epidemic of infections and stigma, and access to education, prevention, and treatment can be prohibitive in rural areas.



## DIRECTORY OF COMMUNITY RESOURCES

[www.glaad.org/reference/communityresources](http://www.glaad.org/reference/communityresources)



**For best practices on covering** transgender people, bisexual people, same-sex marriage, LGBTQ families, faith and religion, anti-LGBTQ hate crimes, HIV, so-called "conversion therapy," and LGBTQ people in sports, please see the GLAAD Media Reference Guide at <https://www.glaad.org/reference>.

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