

Community Survey Result Analysis

This is an analysis of the results from the first community-wide brand survey conducted April 2024. This survey was followed by a Board and Stakeholder Survey in May 2024 (See separate analysis.)

We had a good mix of respondents in the first survey, with 60 total participants who self-described as:

- Gay = 28, Lesbian = 8, Other = 24
- 65+ = 21 and under 65 = 39
- Gay, white, and 65+ = 19
- Most important aspect of org = Social = 33, Civic = 16, Scholarship = 10, no response = 1

It was very interesting to look at how different self-reported groups viewed us. For example, we had big gaps in perceptions with:

- Youthful:
 - If you were 65+ = 44% thought we were youthful
 - If under 65 = only 8% thought so (-36% lower)
- Well known:
 - If you were 65+ = 89% thought well known
 - If under 65 = 54% (-35% lower)
- Outdated:
 - If you were "gay" then only 14% thought it was outdated
 - If not "gay" then 35% thought it outdated (21% worse)
- Progressive:
 - If you were "gay" then 86% thought yes we were progressive
 - If not "gay" then 67% (-19% lower)
- Fully representative of the community:
 - If you were "gay" = 3.286/5 average score for representation
 - Otherwise, 2.689/5 (-18% lower)
- The majority of respondents don't say the plus in the name.
 - *It's not in our URL, our emails, etc.*
 - Pronunciations were similarly mixed, agreeing there is confusion.
- Like the name OPALGA+
 - If you were "gay" then 3.714/5
 - If not "gay" then 2.87/5 (-23% lower)
- Feel represented by "Lesbian and Gay Association Plus"
 - If "gay" then 4.393/5
 - If not "gay" then 3.13/5 (-29% lower)
 - If you were "never" a member = 2.69/5 (-38% lower)

There were, of course, many positive comments about OPALGA+. However, see below for verbatim responses:

- *Anything that lumps in countless groups of people as "L and G plus" feels very outdated to me. Bisexuals and trans folks make up a huge part of the community and we deserve to be clearly represented, especially when too many gay and lesbian organizations have doubled down on transphobia across the globe.*
- *I do not identify as either Gay or Lesbian and feel the plus is a consolation move for the BTQIA+ community members rather than holding them on equal footing with the L & G*
- *It difficult to pronounce. Not easy for branding.*
- *It's outdated and exclusive. It prioritizes gay and lesbian folks and adds "everything else" as an afterthought to avoid changing structurally and/or for tradition or ease of saying "OPALGA." It's literally the exact same process you see in any institution, structure, or organization. It's convenient to add a + and not think about it anymore. Those who don't identify as lesbian or gay (and cis) may not engage due to the name not being explicitly inclusive and inviting. The group population echoes that message.
An example of this exclusive process is voting rights. They were established for White men originally and others were excluded. Those rights were added as an afterthought only after those groups fought so hard to acquire those rights.
Think of it this way. If you are a White, cisgender, gay man and see a group called OPAQTPOC+ (OP Area Queer and Trans People of Color Plus other identities), would you attend? Obviously the dynamics are very different due to some of these identities needing a more dedicated safe space, but you get the idea.*
- *It doesn't include trans people*
- *When I first joined OPALGA+, I showed up to several events and no one came up to me to even introduce themselves. I felt like I was not welcome at all and it turned me off from the organization for a while. Now that I am a more active member of OPALGA+, I hear this time and time again from members of the community. While I think that some members of OPALGA+ have been actively trying to change that reputation, the outreach has not been happening and many people have no idea that the reputation has changed.*
- *I went to a couple Potlucks in the fall and I felt welcomed, but I was younger than everyone else by at least 15 years. It was hard to relate to everyone when we had such different experiences*
- *The members are very welcoming but it can more inclusive of age and genders.*
- *There should be more events partnered with PFLAG Oak Park since it is a smaller group with the same goals and interests.*
- *I think perhaps it could be more inclusive of allies as well (if that is indeed part of who the organization intends to attract).*
- *is confusing*
- *I've heard the name pronounced in several variations and as such, have found myself shying away from saying it out of fear of mispronouncing it.*
- *it's a mouthful*
- *I am BI with a Tran son. Neither are in the name, but I also see the issue with alphabet-soupifying the name. I like the term queer as a catch all, but may still see it as a pejorative. Oak Park Queers also sounds off. I am fine with the name and would be fine with a low-drama name change to something more inclusive.*

- *I don't know if it was just the day, but the group seemed very homogenous. On the surface—and I'm aware that asking may have changed my perspective—it appeared to be mainly just another space for White, queer, cis men with a couple of outliers (myself included as an outlier). It tells me that perhaps the organization can do more to be more explicitly inclusive, as many queer communities become dominated by the same group even if coded as broader than one particular identity. Sometimes this can be compensated for by outreach, explicit inclusivity, representation, rebranding (more than just adding a "+" to the name), events (such as social events, learning, volunteering) that are more specific to identities other than "LGB" with an emphasis on the "G." I don't mean to come across as bashing the group at all. I greatly appreciate this resource. I'm calling on the group to put in the work that we all have to do to access marginalized and/or more actively marginalized parts of the group. One other specific area of growth is racial and/or ethnic identity. I don't think I saw a single non-European White person (again, based on visual appraisal alone), and am wondering how the group may become more accessible and safe for those of intersecting identities different from the majority of the group.*
- *I think the people who attend the potlucks are pretty friendly, and the food is good (though I can't eat a lot of it for medical reasons). When I first started to attend the potlucks, I was dismayed by how few women seemed to be involved.*
- *I don't know a ton about the organization or what they're involved in*
- *Hard to know; however, prior to COVID suggested folks attend and participate however they did not feel welcome - clickish.*
- *I went to one event, felt like an outcast. I think the idea is great - but breaking into the group isn't easy.*
- *I wish there was more effort made in outreach to increase diversity among membership (age, race, identity, etc.)*
- *I want to get involved but from photos the organization seems to steer much older and I'd love to see more members in 30s-40s. My perception may be wrong but that is the sense I get from photos*
- *More all ages events focused around queer families. The play dates are great, but don't really establish relationships between the parents/guardians.*
- *I think a name change is important to make the organization feel more inclusive. This could open up the door for new opportunities to be involved with groups of people not traditionally attending OPALGA+ events.*
- *I have very little involvement with OPALGA now, not because i don't value it, but because my time is taken with other activities that have greater priority for me. It seems from an outside perspective that the org has reactivated in a GREAT way, with involvement in activities both social and political.*
- *More women, trans, non-binary, younger adults, and poc. More advocacy. Include school-aged families for some events.*

Respondents were also asked to provide adjectives they felt describe the organization. The results are below, with words that present challenges to longevity and growth highlighted in red. The top 3 most common responses were Friendly, Fun, and Welcoming, which does demonstrate a generally positive response. However, it should be noted that often positive words like "Fun" were partnered with words like "outdated" by the same respondent.

Adjectives to describe OPLAGA+

Active	3
active	
active	
Advocacy	
Aging	2
Aging	
Inspiring	
Caring	
Charitable	
Cisgender gay men	
Community	4
Community focused	
Community oriented	
Community-minded	
Connections	
Connectivity	
Diverse	2
diverse	
Earnest	
Engaged	2
engaged	
Engaging	
Enlightened	
Foundational	
Friendly	6
friendly	
friendly	
friendly	
friendly	
friendly	
Fun	6
fun	
fun	
fun	
fun	

fun	
Giving	
Helpful	
History	
Inclusive	
Inclusive	
Insular	
Interesting	
Introverted	
Involved	2
involved	
Joyful	
Lively	
Local	
Male-dominated	
Men	
Motivated	
Multifaceted	
Musical	
Old	
Older	
Open	
Organized	
Outdated	
Positivity	
Pride	
Progressive	
Purposeful	
Queer	
Social	4
social	
social	
social	
Supportive	
Welcoming	6

welcoming	
welcoming	
welcoming	
welcoming	
welcoming	
White	3
white	
white	