

# 'They Were Our Brothers & Sisters'

## Global LGBTQ Responses to the Shooting at Pulse Nightclub in Orlando, Florida

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### INTRODUCTION

- On June 12, 2016 a gunman opened fire in the early morning hours at Pulse Nightclub in Orlando, Florida - During Pride Month
- 49 people were killed**
- The majority of the **victims were Latinx queer people** who had gathered at the club for a Latin dance night
- It was the deadliest mass shooting in US history carried out by a single gunman against a civilian population
- In the aftermath of the shooting, media coverage focused considerably on potential links to terrorism, gun control issues, and mental illness
- Eventually the sexuality of the victims was more widely acknowledged
- LGBTQ people around the world held vigils and dedicated pride parades



Prime Minister of Canada, Justin Trudeau, Participates in moment of silence for Orlando Victims during Toronto Pride Parade

### CURRENT STUDY

- As part of an ongoing study of LGBTQ experiences, we asked participants about their reactions to the Pulse Shooting in Orlando
  - How were you impacted by the shooting?
  - Has the shooting influenced your views on any of the related topics?
  - How did your family and friends react to the shooting, and how did their reactions impact you?
- Participants also completed measures of trauma and provided information about their plans to attend Pride.
- From 1 week following the shooting until 4 weeks past the shooting, 338 participants completed the survey
  - 15 were classified as "trolls"
    - "God Hates Fags"
    - "I was glad man, fuck those faggots"
    - "It drove up the price of 5.56 ammo."
    - "Homos should carry weapons around Muslims."
    - "I felt sad because I lost fellow faggot-kin. Kill all fucking Muslims. Muslims are not people."

### SAMPLE

Sample: N = 323

- Age: 18-74, Mean: 29.9, SD = 12
- 23% Cisgender Men; 5.9% Trans Men
- 46.1% Cisgender Women; 5.9% Trans Women
- 18.9% Gender Queer / Self-Described
- Currently Living In:
  - USA - 56.3%; Canada - 28%; UK - 5.5%; Australia - 4.2%
  - 13 Other Countries - 6%
- Sexual Identity
  - 4.7% Heterosexual / 5.3% Straight
  - LGBTQ, Two Spirit, Asexual: 94.7%

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### MAJOR THEMES & QUOTES

#### Threat to Safety, Safe Spaces & Burst Bubbles

*I haven't felt safe being visibly queer since.*  
*It hit me really hard that there are people who think the world would be a better place without me and my friends, so strongly that they would kill us if given the chance.*  
*I never feared for my life as a LGBT individual until the morning after Pulse.*  
*It is open season on me and my body.*  
*It's extremely difficult to imagine ever feeling 100% safe.*  
*We're not making this shit up. The violence. The discrimination. It's all real. Orlando has legitimized our collective fear.*  
*Before I was living in a nice bubble where I didn't think this could happen to me.*  
*Bricks and Mortar spaces are sanctuaries for us and a shooting in a bar is the same as a shooting in a church.*  
*Somehow, I thought humanity was more evolved.*  
*We can't live in a bubble where we pretend that discrimination is a thing of the past.*  
*It has reminded me that the fight for equality by our elders is definitely not over.*

#### Identification / Community / "Chosen Family"

*People like me.*  
*I kept thinking about how it could have been here, and I couldn't imagine losing even one person in my community, let alone 49.*  
*This could have happened to any of us (LGBTQ). That could have been my boyfriend bleeding out on that floor. This could have been me or my close people.*  
*I feel connected with queer community, even when the geographic distance is significant.*  
*This was an attack on my brothers and sisters in what was supposed to be a safe space.*  
*I felt like I had lost 49 family members.*  
*Although I didn't know anyone personally, I felt as though I had lost family.*

#### LGBTQ Resilience & Mobilization

*We will not hide. Pride is vital this year.*  
*Support, solidarity, kindness, love. I have been gladdened by what I've seen as a result of this horror.*  
*I felt the need to attend pride and to be surrounded by the LGBT community.*  
*First it upset me, then it angered me. Now it's mobilized me.*  
*I used to think "what's the point of a Pride Parade?" but now I understand.*

#### Responses from Outside of the USA

*Confirmation that I cannot see the USA as a first world country with such things going on.*  
*Thank God we're Canadian.*  
*I feel like it could have happened to me, even though it's impossible because Australia has very strict gun laws and nothing like this could ever happen here.*  
*Never has a world tragedy affected me so deeply. I attended the vigil in London (UK), which is something I wouldn't normally do, but I just felt like I had to do SOMETHING.*  
*I am no longer apathetic about visiting America. I will never, ever, go to America.*

#### In & Out of The Closet

*I took the pride buttons off my backpack for fear of a rise in homophobic violence.*  
*I wish that I wasn't gay. I wish conversion therapy actually worked.*  
*I was just beginning the process of coming out, but since Pulse I've kinda put a halt on it. I'm scared.*  
*I wouldn't hold my partner's hand in public for a few days, I almost didn't go to the vigil I organized, and I considered leaving my position on my city's pride board.*  
*After attending a requiem and vigil I found the courage to come out.*  
*It made me publicly out myself on Facebook to be counted with all the other gay men and women who fight for the right to equality.*  
*I now fly a huge rainbow flag in my window.*  
*I'm a lot more unapologetic about being gay. Now I really don't care who knows.*

#### Impact of Family & Friend Responses

*I wanted to be with my queer friends.*  
*Most of my friends are cis/straight. I felt horribly alone in my feelings.*  
*Hetero people have dropped the ball in a big way. Not a single person has said anything. My university stayed silent.*  
*Queer friends reached out to me during this time, but hetero friends didn't.*  
*What further affected me was the silence of my straight friends / co-workers.*  
*Some have minimized the hate crime aspect, saying it could have been anyone, anywhere. That infuriates me.*  
*I found myself wanting to be around and get support from my LGBTQ friends rather than my straight ones.*  
*Straight people in my life have already moved on from it, and yet I'm still struggling and feeling really messed up over it.*

*Some family members have expressed extreme reactions of "they deserved it" and "maybe this will teach these people [LGBTQIA+] a lesson."*  
*My cis/het partner's family joked about the shooting and he joked back. It wasn't a joke to me at all. He never takes my sexuality seriously. I tried to explain that these were MY people, that this could have been ME.*

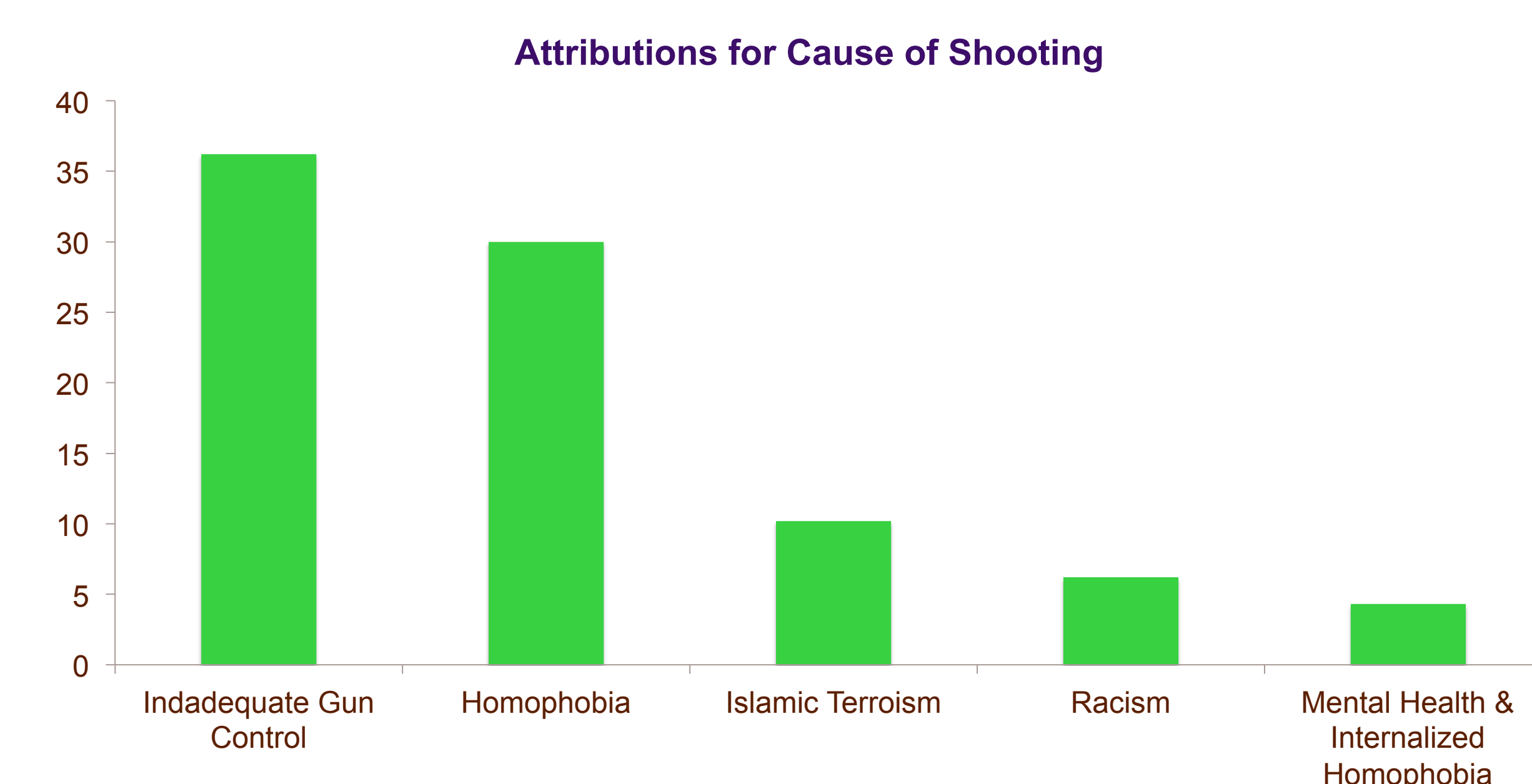
#### Grief & Guilt

*I don't really know how to describe my feelings or get over them.*  
*I was grieving for days.*  
*When I think about how the shooting affects me, I sometimes feel guilty. It makes me feel like I'm making the tragedy about me.*  
*It upset me greatly and affected my ability to concentrate and do my day job. I became uncharacteristically absent-minded. I wasn't able to recover from things in my day to day life that I normally would have no problem with (e.g., rude people).*  
*I cry every time I read that "49". I am mourning people I've never met. I'm mourning the violation that took place. I'm mourning the society where someone is driven to this and pulls it off.*  
*It hurts to think about the fact that they were all together in the happiest time of the year for a lot of lgbtq+ people. The time where you can be free and be yourself. Straight people don't understand because all spaces are made for them, but there is something great about being in a space that is outwardly and openly inclusive of you when you don't experience that every day. It makes me sick to think about people dying there, in that atmosphere.*

#### To Arm or Unarm

*I've decided that I will absolutely purchase a handgun when I turn 21.*  
*I've enrolled in conceal carry classes.*  
**NO MORE GUNS!**

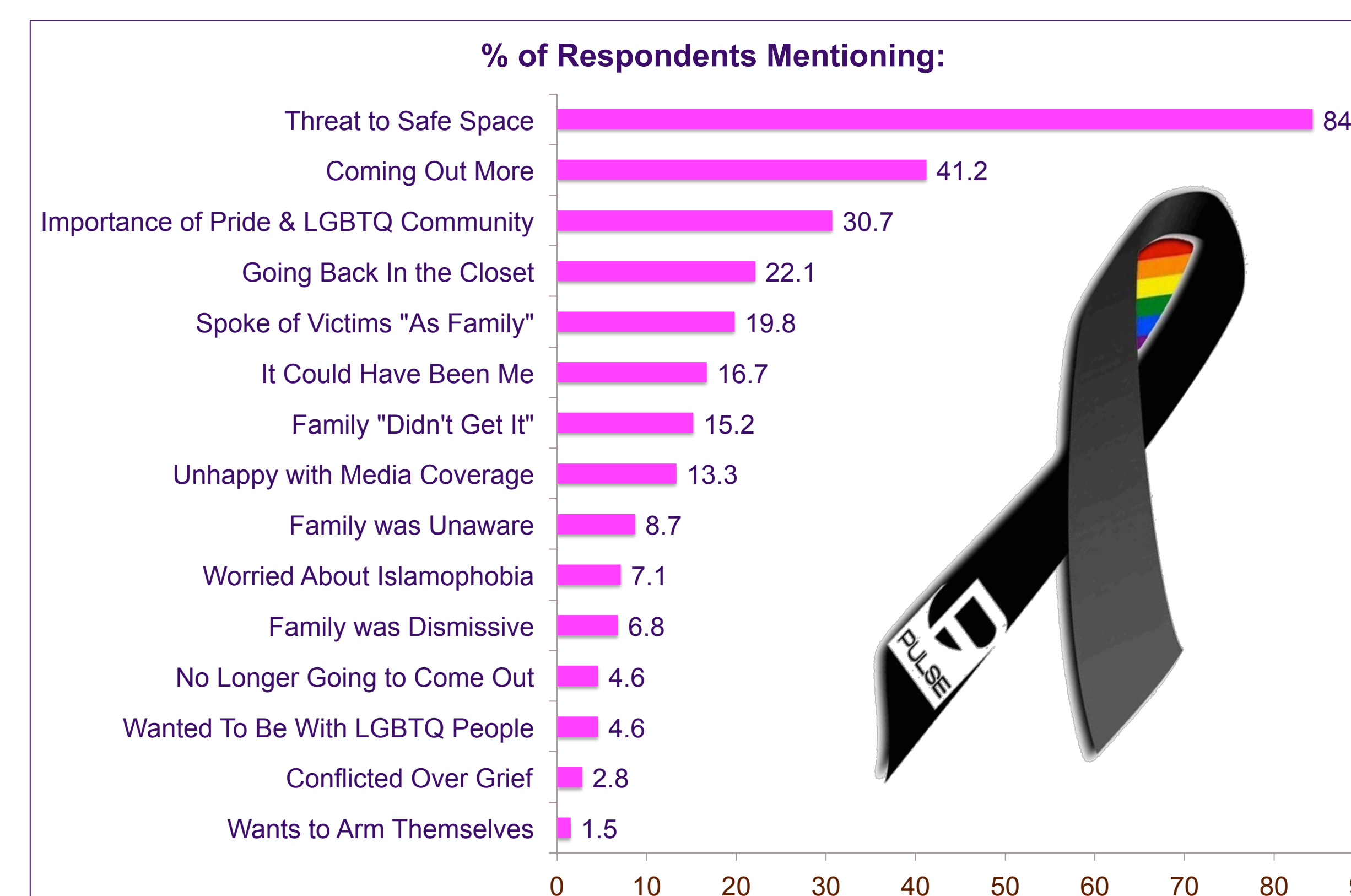
### ATTRIBUTION FOR SHOOTING



### QUALITATIVE RESPONSES BY THE NUMBERS

#### Emotional Content of Responses

- 83.1% = Only negative emotions, 15.6% = Both positive and negative emotions, 1.3% Only positive emotions



### QUANTITATIVE RESPONSES



### WE REMEMBER

In honor of the 49 victims of the Orlando LGBTQ nightclub shooting



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