

Municipal Equality Index

A NATIONWIDE EVALUATION OF MUNICIPAL LAW

2020



Frequently Asked Questions

WHERE CAN I GET MORE INFORMATION ABOUT THE CITIES RATED?

This booklet contains only a summary of the scorecards for each of the 506 cities rated on the 2020 MEI. The full scorecards are available online at www.hrc.org/mei.

HOW WERE THESE CITIES CHOSEN?

This year, the cities rated are: the 50 state capitals, the 200 largest cities in the United States, the five largest cities or municipalities in each state, the cities home to the state's two largest public universities (including undergraduate and graduate enrollment), 75 cities & municipalities that have high proportions of same-sex couples (see page 19 for more information) and 98 cities selected by HRC and Equality Federation state groups members and supporters.

WHY ISN'T WASHINGTON, D.C. RATED?

For an explanation as to why Washington, D.C. is not included in the MEI, please see page 19.

DID YOU KNOW THAT ISN'T A CITY?

Yes. A few of the places rated in the MEI are "census-designated places" which are not incorporated as cities. In that case, we rated the local incorporated government that actually serves that census-designated place, which is usually the county. This is explained further on page 19.

HOW ARE THE SCORES CALCULATED?

Cities are rated on a scale of 0-100, based on the city's laws, policies, benefits, and services. There are 100 standard points and 22 flex points (flex points are awarded for items which apply to some but not all cities). For more information on the scoring system, see pages 22-23, 28, and 30-31.

WHERE DID THE INFORMATION FOR THESE SCORES COME FROM?

The MEI team conducted the research, compiled it into a draft scorecard, and sent the draft scorecard to the city for review.

Cities had an opportunity to review the draft scorecard and offer any feedback prior to publication.

CAN ONLY CITIES IN STATES WITH GOOD LAWS GET GOOD SCORES?

Definitely not. The MEI was specifically designed to measure the laws and policies of the municipality, not the state. While state law might add to a city's score, positive state law is not necessary for a city to score 100 points.

IS THIS A RANKING OF THE BEST CITIES FOR LGBTQ PEOPLE TO LIVE IN?

No. This is not a ranking of a city's atmosphere or quality of life. It is an evaluation of the city's law and policies, and an examination of how inclusive city services are of LGBTQ people. Some high-scoring cities may not feel truly welcoming for all LGBTQ people, and some low-scoring cities may feel more welcoming than their policies might reflect.

Research Process

The information reflected in this publication was gathered by the MEI team and compiled into draft scorecards using publicly available information. Cities were then offered an opportunity to review the scorecards, ask any questions, and submit any additional information they wished the MEI

team to consider. Our team sent out a letter in March to mayors and city managers notifying them that their cities were being rated by email and certified mail, followed by a draft scorecard sent to the mayors and city managers in June also via email and certified mail. The feedback window lasted six

weeks. Finally, cities were sent their final scorecards and information about the 2020 MEI in the same way. Equality Federation state groups also were able to review the scorecards and provide feedback to the MEI team prior to publication.

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Dear Friends



This has truly been an unprecedented year — a year with multiple crises that underscored the gap between the best promises of equal justice in our nation and the lived experience of millions facing fundamental injustices in our daily lives. While we witnessed historic victories for our community, we also saw how far ahead the north star of full equality remains. But as we grappled with the twin pandemics of COVID-19 and racial violence, our communities found resilience and solidarity in one another. And leaders in cities and municipalities in every corner of this nation met the moment with urgent action as they continued their work to advance equality and inclusion for all.

This year's Municipal Equality Index (MEI) makes clear how, in the absence of federal leadership, municipalities continue to lead the way for progress by advancing protections for LGBTQ residents and visitors. The national average for cities increased for the fourth year in a row. Ninety-four cities earned a 100 point score this year — the most in the MEI's history. Coast to coast, and in every corner of our nation, local leaders

are advancing LGBTQ equality not only for their constituents but for their own employees. For the first time, 179 of the cities we scored now offer transgender-inclusive health benefits to city employees.

As we celebrate the progress made, we also must make real and explicit commitments to continue the urgent work to address the fundamental injustices of our society. This past year has been a stark and stinging reminder that racism, and its strategic objective, white supremacy, is as defining a characteristic of the American experience as those ideals upon which we claim to hold our democracy. It is incumbent on all of us — including our municipal leaders — to address the ways in which our systems uphold white supremacy as we transform these systems to truly serve all of us. This report lays out recommendations for municipalities in how they can take concrete steps to do precisely that.

We must also acknowledge how the systems of oppression — including racial injustice — have made vulnerable communities even more vulnerable during the COVID-19 crisis. As our research makes clear, the pandemic has disproportionately impacted LGBTQ people, people of color, and has been especially harsh for those living at the intersection of multiple marginalized identities. As municipalities look to negotiate these challenging times, and rebuild in the times ahead, they must ensure that those most impacted receive the most support.

This year, as we grappled with tremendous challenges, our community also realized unprecedented progress. In the

Bostock vs. Clayton County decision this summer, the Supreme Court made clear that discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity is prohibited under the federal employment non-discrimination law. While the *Bostock* decision is monumental in the effect it will have on federal employment non-discrimination law and beyond, it cannot be a replacement for continuing to ensure that cities and states treat LGBTQ people's right to be free from discrimination in the same way as they treat discrimination on the basis of other protected characteristics. Thus, we continue to call for the express inclusion of sexual orientation and gender identity in state and municipal non-discrimination protections.

In spite of all the challenges municipalities have faced this year, our top-scoring cities have remained key drivers of necessary progress and greater inclusion. We are grateful for their commitment, as well as for the undaunted advocacy and leadership of our partners at the Equality Federation Institute and statewide LGBTQ organizations. Together, we remain united in our shared mission to serve our communities and to fulfill our nation's promise of full equality under the law.

Sincerely,

ALPHONSO DAVID
President

Human Rights Campaign Foundation

Dear Readers



It is difficult to capture all that has happened in 2020. A global pandemic changed the way we exist in the world. Protests moved across the country against racial injustice. Transgender and gender non-conforming people fought back against increased violence, especially against Black trans women. The strength of our democracy was put to the test during an exhausting election session. Yet, during a year unlike any other, I am heartened by the progress the LGBTQ state-based movement made to keep driving progress forward.

As the movement builder and strategic partner to state-based organizations advancing equality for LGBTQ people in the communities we call home, Equality Federation is committed to our partnership with HRC on the Municipal Equality Index. The scoring helps cities and advocates on the ground take stock of their progress, marking important steps forward to achieve equality for LGBTQ people and our families.

For example, thanks to the leadership of Equality Virginia and local advocates, Virginia became the first state in the South to secure statewide non-discrimination protections early this year. This achievement created higher city scores throughout the state as the number of LGBTQ people protected from discrimination skyrocketed.

Every local win puts us one step closer to full and lasting equality. From Florida to Kentucky to Michigan, state groups helped secure local non-discrimination ordinances, bringing the number of municipalities with fully comprehensive non-discrimination protections for LGBTQ people to over 300 nationwide. Georgia Equality celebrated a win in Savannah, making it the first city outside of the Atlanta metro area to protect LGBTQ residents from discrimination.

Equality Ohio and local partners helped the city of Gambier pass a non-discrimination ordinance, making it the 30th municipality in the state with fully inclusive protections. At the ballot, voters in Golf Manor voted overwhelmingly to keep the LGBTQ-inclusive non-discrimination ordinance that their city council passed in January of last year.

Even in states with legislatures hostile to our issues, cities and towns of every size are doing what they can to positively impact the lives of their LGBTQ residents, especially LGBTQ youth. Anchorage became the first city in Alaska to ban the harmful practice of conversion therapy, covering nearly 40% of the state's population. In Iowa, Kansas, and Kentucky, advocates were able to pass local ordinances banning conversion therapy for the first time. OutFront Minnesota added four more cities to its list of those banning conversion therapy, covering nearly 16% of the state's population.

As we celebrate our successes and plan for the future, we thank our members and their local partners for their dedication to securing LGBTQ equality. We're proud to be in this movement with you.

REBECCA ISAACS
Executive Director
Equality Federation Institute

Inclusivity Drives Economic Growth

Ensuring that all city residents, workers, and visitors are protected from discrimination is not just the right thing to do.

Full inclusivity drives economic growth.

Cities are in constant competition for residents, visitors, employees, and businesses. A demonstrated commitment to equality through laws and policies that protect everyone, including LGBTQ people, sends a clear message that all residents, visitors, workers, and businesses are welcome and valued. Inclusive non-discrimination laws give cities a competitive edge.

A growing body of research shows that openness to diversity and inclusiveness is not a byproduct of communities that achieve economic prosperity, but rather a key element in the formula that leads to economic growth.¹

The Fortune 500 has long utilized inclusive workplace policies as proven recruitment and retention tools. Diversity and inclusion enhance an employer's reputation, increase job satisfaction, and boost employee morale. Municipalities and their employees similarly benefit from LGBTQ-inclusive workplace policies and practices.

What's more, businesses actively take into account local laws and policies when making decisions about cities in which to headquarter, relocate, or expand. In fact, the nation's top businesses are becoming increasingly vocal in their support for laws and policies that protect all of their employees and their families at home, in the workplace, and in their communities.

Until full nationwide equality is realized, cities must continue to lead the way on vital protections for LGBTQ residents, visitors, and workers. In doing so, city leaders will help ensure the health, safety, and well-being of all residents while encouraging real economic growth that benefits everyone.



¹ Florida, Richard, *The Geography of Tolerance*, available at <https://www.citylab.com/equity/2012/07/geography-tolerance/2241/> (last accessed Oct. 9, 2019).

Until **full nationwide equality** is realized, cities must continue to lead the way on **vital protections** for LGBTQ residents, visitors, and workers.

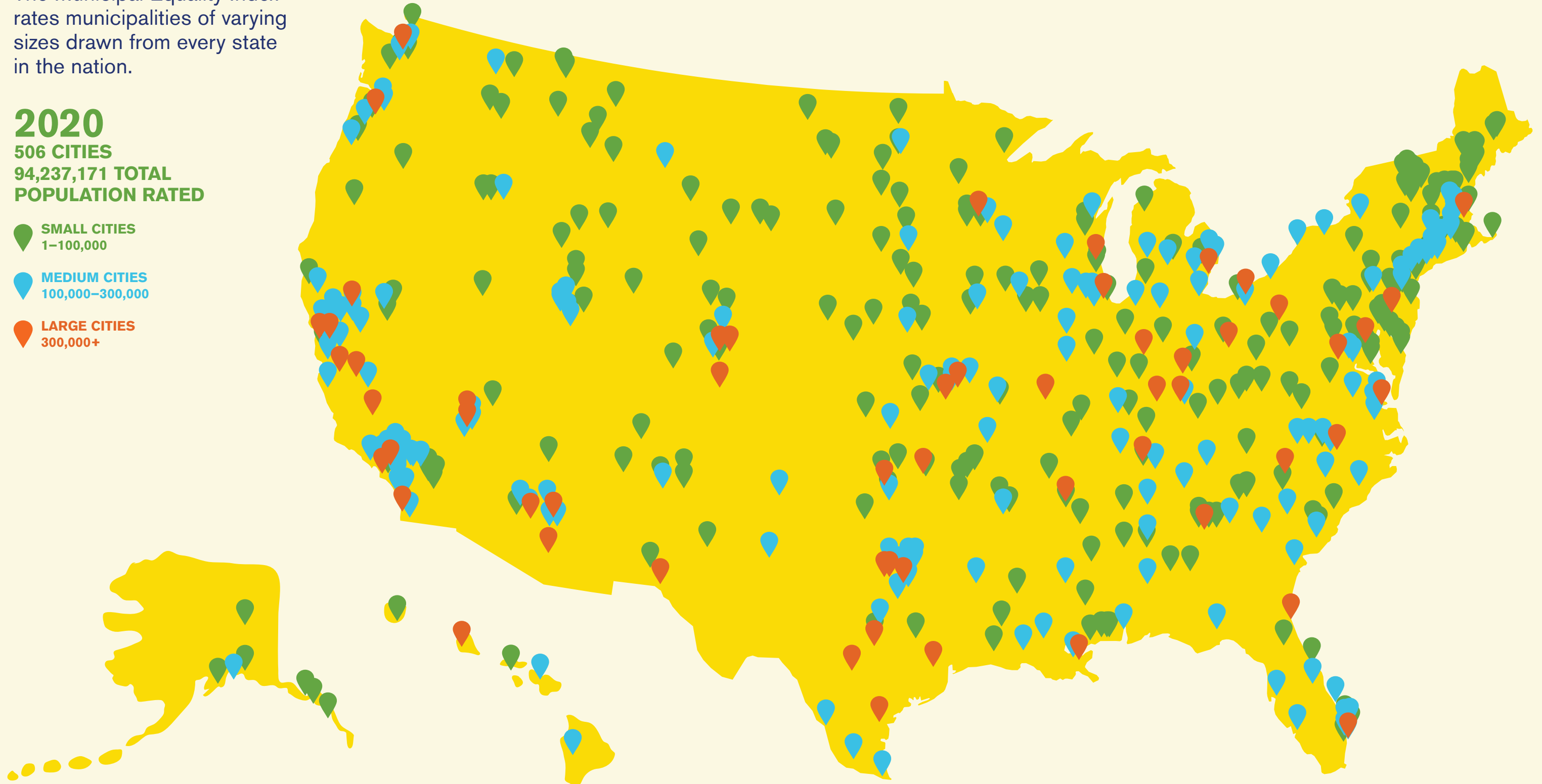


CITIES RATED BY THE MEI

The Municipal Equality Index rates municipalities of varying sizes drawn from every state in the nation.

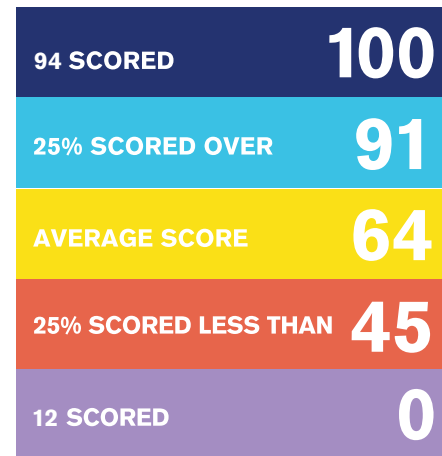
2020
506 CITIES
94,237,171 TOTAL
POPULATION RATED

-  **SMALL CITIES**
1-100,000
-  **MEDIUM CITIES**
100,000-300,000
-  **LARGE CITIES**
300,000+



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Cities Boldly Leading the Way to Equality



The 2020 MEI reflects the largest number of top-scoring municipalities in the MEI's nine year history. 94 cities earned the maximum score of 100 points this year, up from 88 cities last year and just 11 in 2012. What's more, the national city score average jumped to a record high of 64 points (up from 60 last year), marking the fourth consecutive year of national average increases as well as the highest year-over-year national average growth ever.

PROGRESS IN A YEAR OF COLOSSAL CHALLENGES

2020 has been a year of unthinkable challenges. The twin pandemics of COVID-19 and racial violence continue to affect every community in the country. Despite having to tackle these colossal challenges with limited time and resources—and often with little or no help from state and federal officials—many local legislators across the nation never lost sight of the vital importance of protecting their LGBTQ communities. They understand that these twin pandemics drastically amplify existing disparities, hitting vulnerable populations like LGBTQ people of color the hardest. Moreover, they understand that robust anti-discrimination measures form the foundation on which true equity can be built (for more on equity, see page 32).

A LANDMARK SUPREME COURT DECISION

A ray of hope came in June of this year when the Supreme Court of the United States ruled in *Bostock v. Clayton County, Georgia* that sexual orientation and gender identity discrimination are prohibited under the sex non-discrimination employment provisions of Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Still, many local legislators—including those in Reynoldsburg, Ohio; Savannah, Georgia; and Holland, Michigan—listened to the calls of community advocates urging them to continue advancing comprehensive non-discrimination laws. These advocates understood that *Bostock* did not end the struggle for full, comprehensive legal equality (for more on *Bostock* and the continued importance of local non-discrimination laws, see page 24).

KEY FINDINGS

As noted above, many municipalities—including MEI-rated Decatur and Savannah, Georgia—enacted LGBTQ-inclusive non-discrimination protections covering employment, housing, and public accommodations over the past year. Alexandria and Arlington County, Virginia took steps to strengthen protections on the basis of gender identity.

The number of cities that have local protections against so-called “conversion therapy”—dangerous, discredited practices that attempt to change a person’s sexual orientation or gender identity—significantly increased over the past year.

38 MEI-rated localities in states with no state-level protections now have anti-conversion therapy ordinances, up from 28 last year. Moreover, public accommodations in 103 MEI-rated municipalities are required to make single-user restrooms available to people of all genders pursuant to city, county, and/or state law.

Municipalities also utilized their administrative authority to expand inclusivity for city and city contractors’ employees.

- 429 cities currently have equal employment opportunity policies that expressly include sexual orientation and/or gender identity, up by 21 over the past year.
- 188 municipalities require their contractors to have employment non-discrimination policies that include sexual orientation and/or gender identity.
- 179 cities now offer transgender-inclusive health care benefits for city employees, up from 164 last year.
- 127 cities offer equal benefits to the same- or different-sex domestic partners of city employees and their legal dependents.

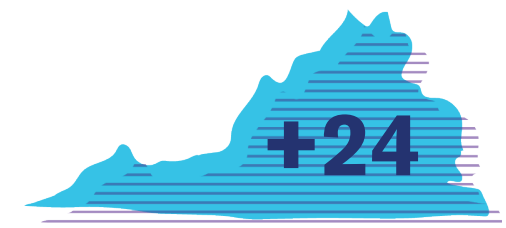
STATE AND REGIONAL TRENDS

38 state averages increased since the 2019 MEI. North Dakota, Nebraska, Virginia, and Kansas had the top four highest state average increases.

STATE AVERAGE INCREASES SINCE 2019



CITIES IN NORTH DAKOTA



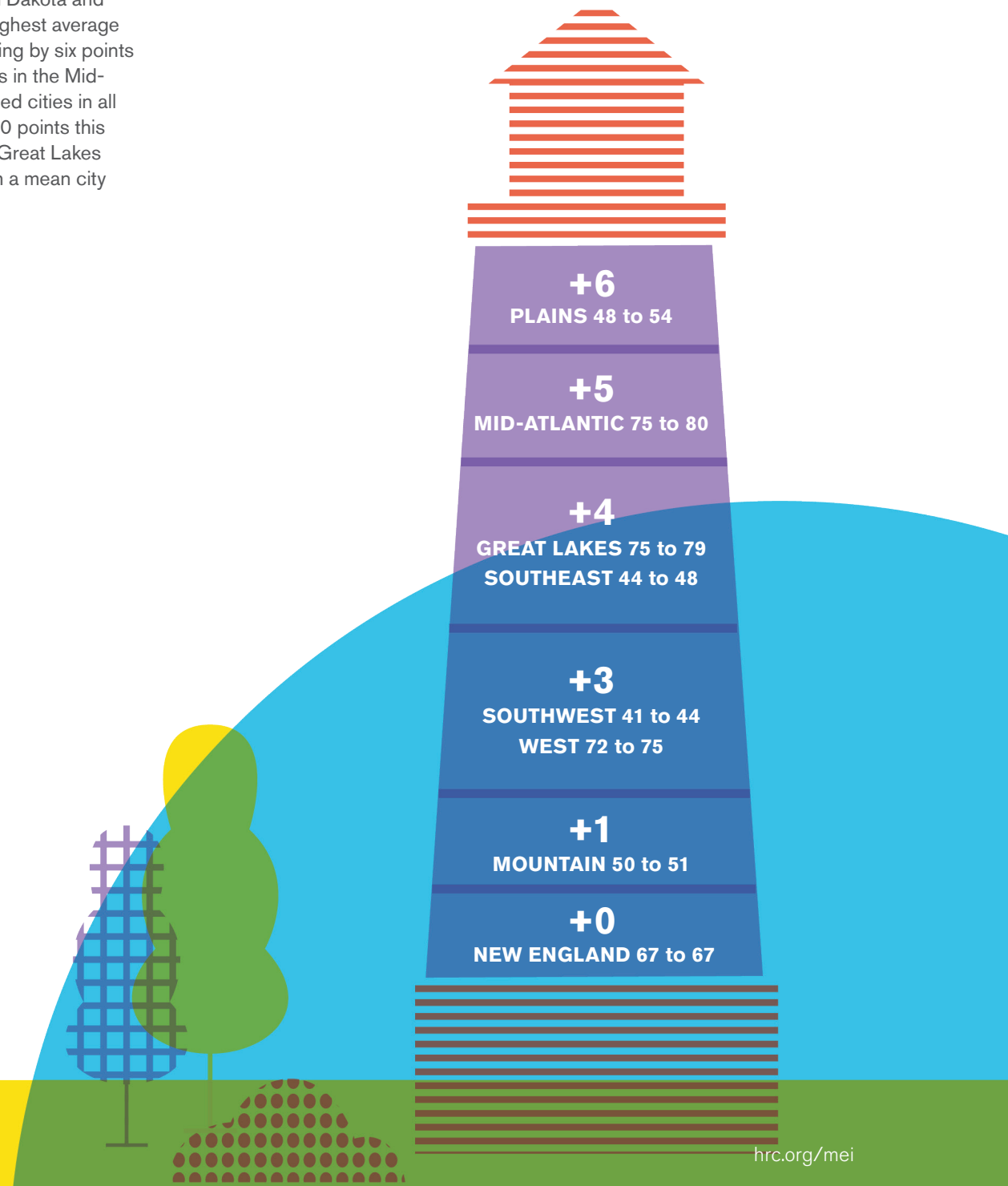
CITIES IN NEBRASKA AND VIRGINIA



CITIES IN KANSAS

Every region of the country saw a mean city score increase this year, with the exception of the New England region which maintained its 2019 average. The Plains region—which includes Kansas, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota and South Dakota—saw the highest average city score growth, increasing by six points since the last report. Cities in the Mid-Atlantic region outperformed cities in all other regions, averaging 80 points this year. Municipalities in the Great Lakes ranked just below this with a mean city score of 79.

REGIONAL AVERAGE CHANGES OVER THE PAST YEAR



NEW RECORDS

MEI-rated cities topped last year's records on nearly every front: the most 100-point scores, the most cities offering transgender-inclusive health care benefits, the highest number of "All-Star" Cities, and the most LGBTQ liaisons ever appointed, to name a few. These new milestones are even more notable given the unprecedented aforementioned challenges localities faced this year.

This year's MEI revealed:

- 94 100-point cities, up from 88 last year.
- 179 cities offer transgender-inclusive health care benefits to city employees, an increase of 15 since 2019.
- 61 "All-Star" Cities—cities that scored above 85 points despite being in states with no state-level explicit statutory non-discrimination protections for LGBTQ people—compared to 59 last year.
- 195 LGBTQ liaisons in city executive offices—up by 13 since 2019.

OF THE 94 CITIES THAT EARNED THE TOP SCORE...



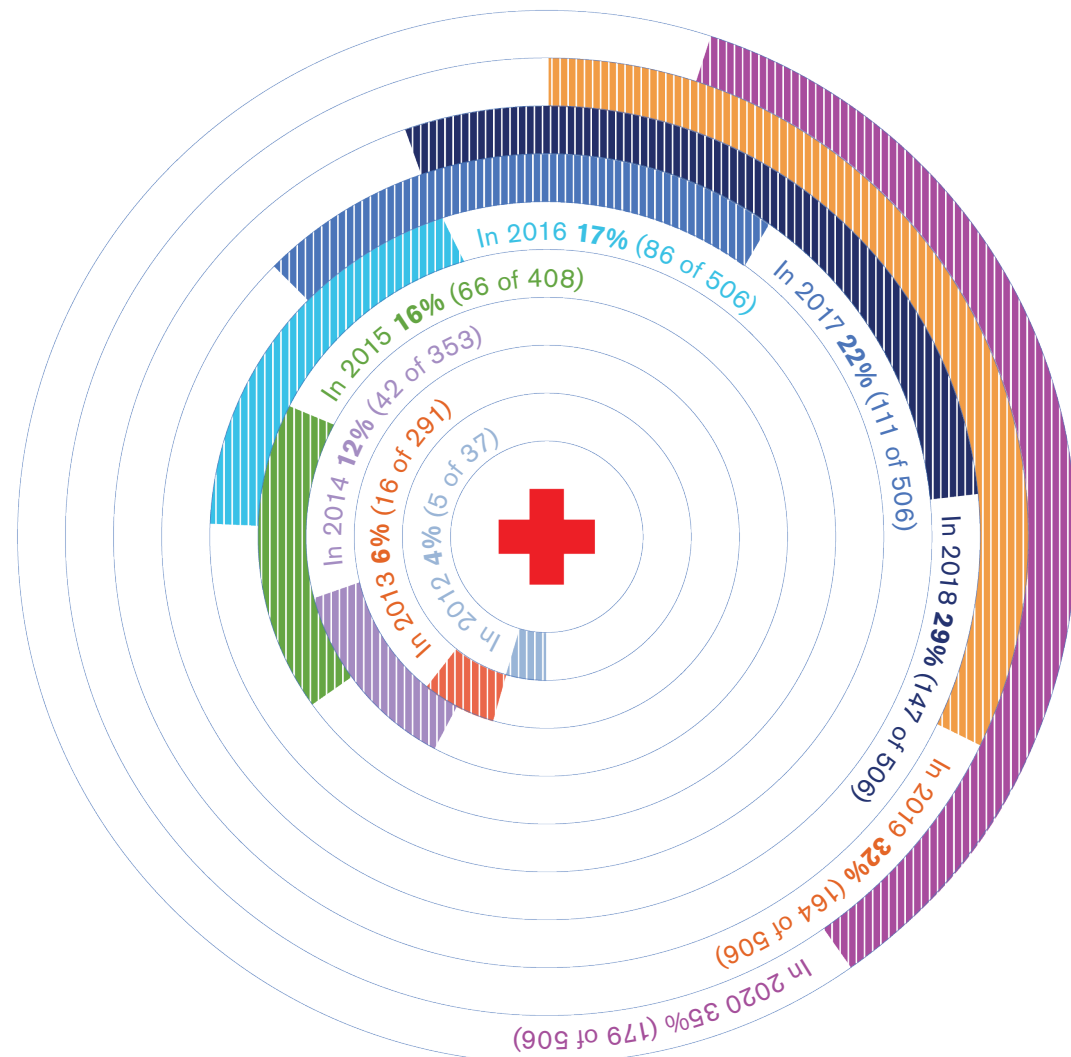
CONCLUSION

The 2020 MEI makes it clear: In the absence of federal and state leadership, local officials continue to work tirelessly to ensure that everyone in their communities can secure housing, make a living, and participate in community life without

being discriminated against because of who they are or who they love. These local officials know that extending legal protections to everyone, regardless of sexual orientation and gender identity, is both the right thing to do and the smart way to govern. A city's commitment to diversity, equity, and

inclusion is a key driver of economic success, serving to attract residents, visitors, and businesses who place a high value on inclusivity. Furthermore, these local leaders know that in times of national crisis, the work of achieving genuine equity must continue to protect the most vulnerable among us.

NUMBER OF RATED CITIES OFFERING TRANS-INCLUSIVE HEALTH BENEFITS



SUCCESS STORY: GEORGIA EQUALITY

For the past seven legislative sessions, Georgia Equality has partnered with HRC and a number of national and local organizations to successfully prevent any anti-LGBTQ legislation from becoming law in Georgia.



While we are proud of this effort, simply fighting off bad legislation is not enough. That is why we launched the Georgia Unites Against Discrimination campaign in 2015. It is an effort to educate the public on the need to protect all Georgians, including those of us in the LGBTQ community, from discrimination.

Central to this effort has been the goal of building bi-partisan support for statewide non-discrimination legislation by passing local ordinances. While Atlanta passed an ordinance nearly 20 years ago, it has only been within the past two years that we have been able to build the momentum to enact comprehensive ordinances that address discrimination in employment, housing, and public accommodations elsewhere. The effort started in late 2017, when Doraville City Councilwoman Stephe Koontz, the only openly transgender office holder in Georgia, worked with her colleagues to become the first city other than Atlanta to pass such an ordinance.

In less than two years, nearly a dozen cities now have ordinances with a

half dozen additional cities around the state currently considering them. These range from small municipalities such as Clarkston, considered one of the most diverse cities in America due to its large per capita immigrant population, to larger and more conservative cities such as Dunwoody, which passed their ordinance with a unanimous vote, and rural communities such as Statesboro, located in southeast Georgia.

In 2020, we have worked closely with the new Mayor and city leadership of Savannah to not only adopt a comprehensive non-discrimination ordinance, but to use the MEI as a roadmap of reforms that will ensure that LGBTQ folks who live, work or visit there will be treated with fairness and equality. By nearly doubling their MEI score in less than a year, they are poised to be the best example of how local advocates can work in partnership with elected officials to ensure the promise of equality in the communities we call home.

JEFF GRAHAM
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
GEORGIA EQUALITY

Central to this effort has been the goal of building **bi-partisan support for statewide non-discrimination legislation** by passing local ordinances.

SUCCESS STORY: DECATUR, GEORGIA

The City of Decatur, Georgia is 4.5 square miles in size with a population of 23,000 located 6 miles east of Atlanta. We are an urban city that values and is committed to equity, inclusion and diversity.



We have worked closely with the Human Rights Campaign to understand and apply the standards associated with the Municipality Equality Index because we believe that LGBTQ-inclusion is critical to our commitment of being a Welcoming City. We have a high population of LGBTQ residents and business owners and they are an important part of the fabric of our community.

I am proud to announce that Decatur passed a non-discrimination ordinance in November 2019. The ordinance prohibits local businesses from discriminating based on sexual orientation or gender identity, as well as race, religion, color, sex, disability, national origin, ancestry, age or military status. Discrimination is prohibited in the areas of employment, housing, and public accommodation. No federal or Georgia state law expressly prohibits discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity.

We followed in the footsteps of the City of Atlanta and four other DeKalb County cities becoming the 6th city in Georgia to adopt a non-discrimination ordinance. Decatur is committed to the values of equity, inclusion and

diversity and the adoption of this ordinance was a tangible way to demonstrate that commitment.

In addition, we passed a resolution urging the State of Georgia to adopt a broad and comprehensive hate crimes act through prompt legislative action stating that “the Mayor and Commission believe that such hate crimes act should protect the widest range of vulnerable persons.”

We appreciate the HRC and the MEI team working in partnership with us to modify some of the language in standards geared to large cities in order to reach and include smaller municipalities who strive to ensure LGBTQ inclusion in all areas of community work, life and play. Working with HRC and the MEI team, the City of Decatur was able to identify areas to codify existing practices, pass ordinances and document our commitment and in doing so, and raise our MEI score from 51 points in 2017 to 86 points in 2020. We are proud of the accomplishment!

**PATTI GARRETT
MAYOR**

We have a high population of **LGBTQ residents and business owners** and they are an important part of the fabric of our community.



CITY SELECTION

How Cities Were Selected For Rating

The 2020 Municipal Equality Index rates 506 municipalities of varying sizes drawn from every state in the nation.

These include: the 50 state capitals, the 200 largest cities in the United States, the five largest cities or municipalities in each state, the cities home to the state’s two largest public universities (including undergraduate and graduate enrollment), 75 cities and municipalities that have high proportions of same-sex couples and 98 cities selected by HRC and Equality Federation state groups members and supporters.

These 75 cities with highest proportions of same-sex couples are drawn from an analysis of the 2010 Census results by the Williams Institute at the UCLA School of Law

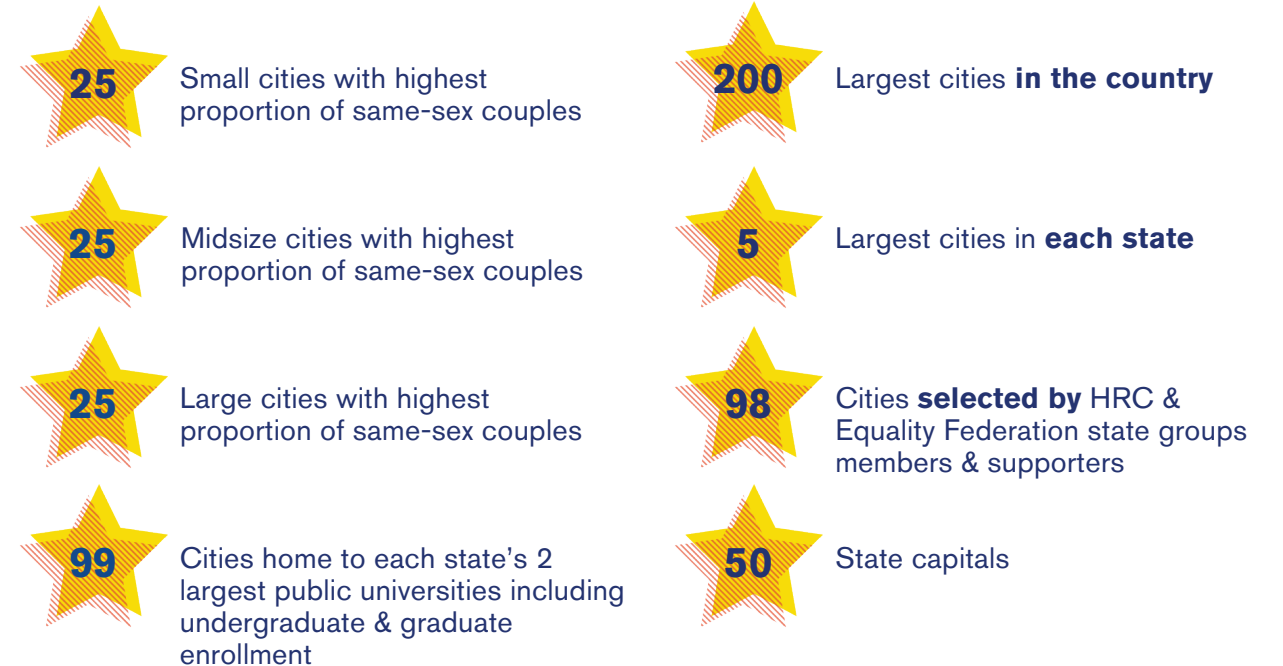
which ranked the 25 large cities (population exceeding 250,000), 25 mid-size cities (population between 100,000 and 250,000), and 25 small cities (population below 100,000) with the highest proportion of same-sex couples. To be consistent, we rated all twenty-five of these small cities, even though some of these small “cities” are in fact unincorporated census-designated places. In that case, we rated the laws and policies of the applicable incorporated local government (the entity actually rated, often the county, will be clearly indicated).

Significant overlap between these categories of cities brings the total number of cities rated in the 2020 MEI to 506. In 2012, the MEI rated 137 cities; in 2013, 291; in 2014, 353; and in 2015 we rated 408 cities.

WHY ISN'T WASHINGTON, D.C. RATED?

Washington, D.C. is not rated by the MEI, even though it has a high proportion of same-sex couples and fits into several of the city selection criteria. Unlike the cities rated in the MEI, however, Washington D.C. is a federal district. This means that it has powers and limitations so significantly different from the municipalities the MEI rates that the comparison would be unfair—for example, no city rated by the MEI has the legal capacity to pass marriage equality, as Washington, D.C. did in 2009. While the District of Columbia is not a state, either, it is more properly compared to a state than it is to a city. For that reason, Washington, D.C. is included in HRC’s annual State Equality Index. More information on Washington, D.C.’s laws and policies can be viewed on the maps of state laws located at hrc.org/sei.

506 TOTAL MUNICIPALITIES



2020 MEI SCORECARD



CITY, STATE 1/2 2020 MUNICIPAL EQUALITY INDEX SCORECARD

I. Non-Discrimination Laws**

This category evaluates whether discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity is prohibited by the city, county, or state in areas of employment, housing, and public accommodations.

	STATE	COUNTY	MUNICIPAL	AVAILABLE
Employment	0/0	0/0	0/0	5/5
Housing	0/0	0/0	0/0	5/5
Public Accommodations	0/0	0/0	0/0	5/5
SCORE	0 out of 30			
FLEX Single-Occupancy All-Gender Facilities	+0	+0	+0	+2
FLEX Protects Youth from Conversion Therapy	+0	+0	+0	+2

II. Municipality as Employer

By offering equivalent benefits and protections to LGBTQ employees, awarding contracts to fair-minded businesses, and taking steps to ensure an inclusive workplace, municipalities commit themselves to treating LGBTQ employees equally.

	COUNTY	MUNICIPAL	AVAILABLE
Non-Discrimination in City Employment	0/0	0/0	7/7
Transgender-Inclusive Healthcare Benefits	0/0	0/0	6/6
City Contractor Non-Discrimination Ordinance	0/0	0/0	3/3
Inclusive Workplace	0/0	0/0	2/2
SCORE	0 out of 28		
FLEX City Employee Domestic Partner Benefits	+0	+0	+1

III. Municipal Services

This section assesses the efforts of the city to ensure LGBTQ constituents are included in city services and programs.

	COUNTY	CITY	AVAILABLE
Human Rights Commission	0/0	0/0	5/5
NDO Enforcement by Human Rights Commission	0/0	0/0	2/2
LGBTQ Liaison in City Executive's Office	0/0	0/0	5/5
SCORE	0 out of 12		
FLEX Youth Bullying Prevention Policy for City Services	+0	+0	+1
FLEX City Provides Services to LGBTQ Youth	+0	+0	+2
FLEX City Provides Services to LGBTQ People Experiencing Homelessness	+0	+0	+2
FLEX City Provides Services to LGBTQ Older Adults	+0	+0	+2
FLEX City Provides Services to People Living with HIV or AIDS	+0	+0	+2
FLEX City Provides Services to the Transgender Community	+0	+0	+2



CITY, STATE 2/2 2020 MUNICIPAL EQUALITY INDEX SCORECARD

IV. Law Enforcement

Fair enforcement of the law includes responsible reporting of hate crimes and engaging with the LGBTQ community in a thoughtful and respectful way.

	COUNTY	MUNICIPAL	AVAILABLE
LGBTQ Liaison/Task Force in Police Department	0/0	0/0	10/10
Reported 2018 Hate Crimes Statistics to the FBI	0/0	0/0	12/12
SCORE	0 out of 22		

V. Leadership on LGBTQ Equality

This category measures the city leadership's commitment to fully include the LGBTQ community and to advocate for full equality.

	COUNTY	MUNICIPAL	AVAILABLE
Leadership's Public Position on LGBTQ Equality	0/0	0/0	5/5
Leadership's Pro-Equality Legislative or Policy Efforts	0/0	0/0	3/3
SCORE	0 out of 8		
FLEX Openly LGBTQ Elected or Appointed Leaders	+0	+0	+2
FLEX City Tests Limits of Restrictive State Law	+0	+0	+3

TOTAL SCORE 0 + TOTAL FLEX 0 = Final Score 0
CANNOT EXCEED 100

** On June 15, 2020, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in *Bostock v. Clayton County, Georgia* that sexual orientation and gender identity discrimination are prohibited under federal sex-based employment protections. Nevertheless, it is imperative that localities continue enacting explicitly LGBTQ-inclusive comprehensive non-discrimination laws since it will likely take additional litigation for *Bostock* to be fully applied to all sex-based protections under existing federal civil rights law. Moreover, federal law currently lacks sex-based protections in numerous key areas of life, including public spaces and services. Lastly, there are many invaluable benefits to localizing inclusive protections even when they exist on higher levels of government (see pg. 24 of the full report). For these reasons, the MEI will continue to only award credit in *Part I* for state, county, or municipal non-discrimination laws that expressly include sexual orientation and gender identity. Credit may be awarded on the state level if a state has definitively applied *Bostock's* reasoning to include LGBTQ people under state sex non-discrimination protections.

PTS FOR SEXUAL ORIENTATION — PTS FOR GENDER IDENTITY + FLEX PTS for criteria not accessible to all cities at this time.

FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT CITY SELECTION, CRITERIA OR THE MEI SCORING SYSTEM, PLEASE VISIT HRC.ORG/MEI. All cities rated were provided their scorecard in advance of publication and given the opportunity to submit revisions. For feedback regarding a particular city's scorecard, please email mei@hrc.org.

hrc.org/mei

SCORING CRITERIA

I. Non-Discrimination Laws

It should not be legal to deny someone the opportunity to work, rent a home, or be served in a place of public accommodation because of their sexual orientation or gender identity.

This category evaluates whether discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity is prohibited within the city in areas of employment, housing, and public accommodations. In each category, cities receive five points for prohibiting discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and five points for prohibiting discrimination on the basis of gender identity. There will be a three point deduction for non-discrimination protections in public accommodations that contain carve-outs prohibiting individuals from using facilities consistent with their gender identity. Additionally, up to six points will be deducted for religious exemptions that single out sexual orientation and/or gender identity. All non-discrimination laws ought to be fully inclusive of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer people. Sexual orientation-only protections are not sufficient to protect the LGBTQ community from discrimination.

PART I POINTS CAN COME FROM STATE LAW, COUNTY LAW, OR CITY LAW.

If the state or county has a comprehensive and inclusive non-discrimination law that applies within

the city limits, a city may conclude it is an inefficient use of resources to pass a local non-discrimination ordinance. For that reason, so long as the protections of a state or county law apply throughout city limits, the city effectively has such protections, and the state or county law will earn the city points in Part I. If there is no state or county law, but the city has passed an ordinance of its own volition, the city will receive credit for those non-discrimination protections. However, where laws exist at both the city and the state (or county) level, the city will not receive double (or triple) points—the maximum points in this section are capped at 30.

ALL-GENDER SINGLE-OCCUPANCY FACILITIES

Transgender individuals face disproportionately high levels of prejudice and discrimination in everyday life. These members of our community deserve the same dignity and respect as everyone else, in every area of life. This includes being afforded the dignity of equal access to public facilities in accordance with the gender they live every day.

Making single-user facilities open to everyone regardless of gender makes sense on every level. Not only does it provide a safe space for transgender residents, it benefits everyone by reducing line wait times. Cities that require all single-user sex-segregated facilities within the city like bathrooms and changing rooms to be all-gender

will receive two flex points. Cities that designate all single-occupancy facilities within its own buildings as all-gender will receive half credit (one flex point).

PROTECTING YOUTH FROM CONVERSION THERAPY

So-called “conversion therapy,” sometimes called “sexual orientation change efforts” or “reparative therapy,” encompasses a range of dangerous and discredited practices that falsely claim to change a person’s sexual orientation or gender identity. These practices are based on the false premise that being LGBTQ is a mental illness that needs to be cured—a theory that has been rejected by every major medical and mental health organization.

There is no credible evidence that conversion therapy can change a person’s sexual orientation or gender identity. To the contrary, research has clearly shown that these practices pose devastating health risks for LGBTQ young people such as depression, decreased self-esteem, substance abuse, homelessness, and even suicidal behavior. The harmful practice is condemned by every major medical and mental health organization, including the American Psychiatric Association, American Psychological Association, and American Medical Association.

Cities that enact laws to protect youth from conversion therapy will garner two flex points.

II. Municipality as Employer

Almost every municipality has immediate control over its employment policies. Respect for LGBTQ employees is clearly demonstrated by the inclusiveness of these employment policies.

CITY PROHIBITS DISCRIMINATION IN CITY EMPLOYMENT

Cities can adopt internal hiring policies that prohibit employment discrimination (including hiring, promotions, termination, and compensation) on the basis of sexual orientation (7 points) and gender identity or expression (7 points). It is a fundamental principle of fairness that an employee should be judged on their ability to perform the responsibilities of a position, and not by who they are or whom they love. A state-level non-discrimination law or a local non-discrimination ordinance alone is not sufficient to earn these points—personnel policies must enumerate sexual orientation and gender identity in order for the city to receive credit.

TRANSGENDER-INCLUSIVE HEALTHCARE BENEFITS

Cities, like other employers, provide health benefits to their employees, but some employees routinely have critical and medically necessary treatment excluded from the health care options they are offered. Transgender

employees are routinely denied health care coverage for gender-affirming care such as hormone therapy, gender-affirming surgery, and other medically necessary care.

Starting in 2021, cities will be rated according to the following standards. Municipalities must offer at least one municipal employee health insurance plan that expressly covers transgender healthcare needs, including gender-affirming surgical procedures, hormone therapy, mental health care, and all related medical visits and laboratory services. The lack of express exclusions for these services is not sufficient for credit because this care is routinely not covered. The plan should also ensure coverage of routine, chronic, or urgent non-transition services and eliminate other barriers to coverage including, but not limited to, separate dollar maximums and exclusions for covered dependents. Moreover, all out-of-network gender-affirming care for which in-network care is unavailable should be covered on the same terms as out-of-network coverage for other types of necessary care.

CITY REQUIRES ITS CONTRACTORS TO HAVE INCLUSIVE NON-DISCRIMINATION POLICIES

Cities who take fair workplaces seriously also require city contractors to have inclusive non-discrimination policies. An equal opportunity

ordinance, as these are sometimes known, requires city contractors to adopt non-discrimination policies that prohibit adverse employment actions on the basis of sexual orientation (3 points) and gender identity or expression (3 points).

Partial credit is awarded to cities that do not have an official policy or ordinance to this effect, but maintains a practice of including a qualifying city contractor non-discrimination clause in all city contracts.

MUNICIPALITY IS AN INCLUSIVE WORKPLACE

This section measures whether the city is a welcoming workplace for LGBTQ employees as measured by the following: the city actively recruits LGBTQ employees, or conducts LGBTQ-inclusive diversity training, or it has an LGBTQ employee affinity group (a total of 2 points are awarded if any of these exist).

Cities will receive credit for offering equal benefits to both same- and different-sex domestic partners of city employees and their legal dependents. Even after nationwide marriage equality, it is important to respect the diverse family forms that exist by expanding domestic partner benefits to include all families.

DESPITE LANDMARK SUPREME COURT RULING IN *BOSTOCK*, MUNICIPALITIES MUST CONTINUE TO ADVANCE EXPLICITLY LGBTQ-INCLUSIVE NON-DISCRIMINATION LAWS AND POLICIES

In June of this year, the Supreme Court of the United States issued a landmark ruling in *Bostock v. Clayton County, Georgia* confirming that sexual orientation and gender identity discrimination are prohibited under the sex-based employment protections of Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. This represents a major step forward for LGBTQ equality and has implications that ought to reach federal civil rights laws forbidding discrimination in all federal laws prohibiting sex discrimination, including education, health care, and housing. Despite this significant progress on the federal level, it is imperative that local governments continue enacting comprehensive non-discrimination protections that are expressly inclusive of both sexual orientation and gender identity.

Implementation of *Bostock* Beyond Employment

Opponents of LGBTQ equality have already begun executing legal strategies to attempt to stymie the full and proper implementation of *Bostock* beyond the federal employment context. Current federal civil rights laws contain sex-based protections in numerous areas, including education, housing, health care, credit, and jury service. Pursuant to the reasoning of

Bostock, LGBTQ people ought to be protected under these federal laws as well. However, due to the resistance of anti-equality officials and organizations, the full implementation of *Bostock* will likely require protracted litigation that could take years. While advocates continue the fight for *Bostock* to be correctly applied throughout all relevant federal civil rights law,

local governments have the ability to immediately protect residents from discrimination in many areas beyond employment. Localities should exercise the fullest extent of their legal authority to clearly and holistically protect the LGBTQ community without delay.

Limitations of Existing Federal Non-Discrimination Law

Importantly, *Bostock* only impacts areas of federal law where sex discrimination is already explicitly prohibited. Existing federal statutes do not outlaw discrimination on the basis of sex in public spaces and services as well as

all federally-funded programs. While advocates across the country continue to push for the passage of the federal Equality Act, which would remedy these deficiencies and fully codify *Bostock*, municipalities can and should extend

vital protections to LGBTQ people including in public accommodations, municipal services, and taxpayer-funded programs.

Local Non-Discrimination Laws Are Always Beneficial

Even when LGBTQ-inclusive protections exist at higher levels of government, local laws can provide many additional, invaluable benefits. This is why states and localities across the nation have enacted laws codifying and expanding protections that exist on the federal and state levels, respectively, for decades.

SCOPE

Even if federal and state protections already exist, local non-discrimination laws and policies can provide more expansive protections for workers, visitors, and residents. For example, federal employment non-discrimination law only covers employers that employ fifteen or more people. This excludes many workers of smaller employers all across the country.

ENFORCEMENT

Municipalities can and should create better, more accessible enforcement options for those who have been discriminated against. For instance, localities can create human rights commissions with the authority to enforce non-discrimination protections. These bodies provide additional avenues of redress that can resolve disputes more quickly and with significantly less expense than the judicial system. Moreover, local human rights commissions provide remedies for those who have been harmed by discriminatory practices but lack the resources to hire an attorney.

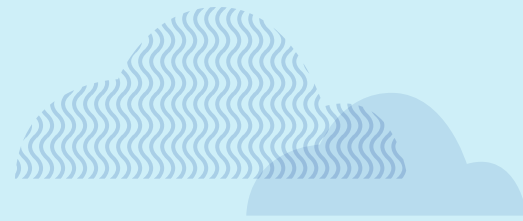
EDUCATION AND AWARENESS

The legislative process and implementation of local non-discrimination laws create significant opportunities for preventive anti-discrimination education and awareness. Additionally, local human rights commissions created by non-discrimination ordinances play an important role in regularly educating communities on the harms of prejudice and discrimination and the importance of diversity, equity, and inclusion.

ECONOMIC STRENGTH

As noted throughout this report, the enactment of strong, comprehensive, and fully-inclusive local non-discrimination laws is one of the strongest statements of a community's values. People in search of new places to live, visitors in search of leisure getaways, and businesses looking to begin or expand operations take heed. Localities that care enough to localize inclusive protections position themselves to attract new residents, visitors, and businesses who value diversity, equity, and inclusion.





Conclusion

Although *Bostock* represents a watershed victory in the fight for LGBTQ-inclusive non-discrimination protections, it does not signal the end of the struggle for full, comprehensive legal equality. The decision itself directly applies to federal sex non-discrimination protections in employment and does not automatically apply to sex non-discrimination protections under state and local law. While the only

correct implementation of *Bostock* requires immediate application to all other federal sex non-discrimination protections, anti-equality opponents are doing everything they can to prevent this from happening. Even when fully implemented, *Bostock* only applies to areas of existing federal law that expressly cover sex non-discrimination, which excludes important areas of life like access to public accommodations. Local officials are uniquely positioned

to engage the relatively quick-moving gears of municipal government to fill many of these gaps and offer LGBTQ people immediate comprehensive protections. Moreover, localizing protections that exist on higher levels of government provide opportunities for broader protections, more efficient and accessible enforcement mechanisms, preventative community education, and continued economic growth.



Localizing protections that exist on higher levels of government provide opportunities for **broader protections**, more efficient and accessible **enforcement mechanisms**, preventative **community education**, and continued **economic growth**.

SUCCESS STORY: OVERLAND PARK, KANSAS

Inclusion has been part of Overland Park's identity since the City was incorporated on May 20, 1960, when it absorbed unincorporated neighborhoods shunned by adjacent cities because of the religious faith of residents living in those neighborhoods.



Since then Overland Park has rapidly grown into the second most populous city in Kansas and the Kansas City metropolitan area. The City consistently achieves high national rankings because of its great schools, affordable living, diverse population, major corporations, abundance of retail, and many attractive amenities.

Recently nearly 1,000 residents and community leaders convened as part of the "ForwardOP" visioning process to outline Overland Park's path for the next 20 years and beyond. Participants identified eight major initiatives, including becoming a more inclusive community.

In response, in the spring of 2019 the City Council adopted a resolution directing staff to take actions to increase LGBTQ equality in Overland Park. Staff conducted LGBTQ-diversity training for law enforcement and other City personnel; adopted a policy prohibiting bullying based sexual orientation or gender identity on City facilities; modified several City Hall restrooms to be gender neutral; and advocated for state legislation prohibiting LGBTQ discrimination. In the fall of 2019, the City Council passed a nondiscrimination

ordinance prohibiting discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity. Thanks to these efforts, in 2019 Overland Park became the largest city in Kansas to enact a nondiscrimination ordinance, achieved the highest MEI score in Kansas, and had the largest increase in MEI score of any city in the nation.

In 2020, Overland Park continued its efforts to advance LGBTQ equality. In July, the City requested that the Kansas Human Rights Commission (KHRC) interpret existing state laws prohibiting sex discrimination so those laws also prohibited discrimination based on a person's sexual orientation or gender identity. In August, the KHRC announced that they would adopt this interpretation prohibiting LGBTQ discrimination across the entire state of Kansas.

Overland Park has been a welcoming community since its very beginning, and we are thankful to the Human Rights Campaign for providing guidance on how to expand our culture of inclusivity to our LGBTQ community.

**CARL GERLACH
MAYOR**

Thanks to these efforts, in 2019 Overland Park became the largest city in Kansas to enact a nondiscrimination ordinance, achieved the **highest MEI score in Kansas**, and had the **largest increase in MEI score** of any city in the nation.

III. Services and Programs

Census data shows that LGBTQ people live in virtually every city in the country, but not every city recognizes that their LGBTQ constituents can have different needs. This section assesses the efforts of the city to include LGBTQ constituents in city services and programs.

Human Rights Commissions do important work to identify and eliminate discrimination; even in jurisdictions where LGBTQ equality isn't explicitly a part of the commission's charter, these commissions investigate complaints, educate the city, and sometimes enforce non-discrimination laws. Human Rights Commissions serve as important bridges between constituents and their city.

A Human Rights Commission will be worth five standard points if its purpose is largely or entirely educational. These commissions may hold community discussions, screen movies, present panels, take public comment, advise the city on matters of diversity and inclusion, develop policies and

strategies for making the city more inclusive, and undertake other similar types of endeavors. Where, in addition to the functions listed above, a Human Rights Commission has the authority to conciliate, issue a right to sue letter, or otherwise enforce non-discrimination protections, that commission will earn two flex points in addition to the five standard points awarded above.

Similarly, an LGBTQ liaison to the Mayor or City Manager's office (5 points) is responsible for looking at city policies and services through an LGBTQ lens and speaking up when a policy or service might exclude LGBTQ people. This position is also known to be a friendly ear to constituents who want to bring LGBTQ-related issues to the city government but are fearful they might be dismissed or misunderstood.

Cities that expressly prohibit bullying based on sexual orientation and gender identity in all youth-facing city programs, activities, services, facilities, and funding will earn up to two flex points (1 flex point for sexual orientation/1 flex point for gender

identity). These policies should cover, for example, the city's parks and recreation department, library programs, and any other department or service that incorporate young people.

The MEI also evaluates city services that address segments of the LGBTQ population who are particularly vulnerable and may have specific and acute needs. While all people age, battle illness, struggle to fit in, and work hard to improve their lot in life, these struggles can be different and particularly difficult for LGBTQ people. Cities can address these challenges by offering services—or supporting a third party provider of these services—to LGBTQ youth, LGBTQ elders, LGBTQ homeless people, people who are HIV-positive or living with AIDS and the transgender community (2 flex points for each service the city provides).

While all people age, battle illness, struggle to fit in, and work hard to improve their lot in life, **these struggles can be different** and particularly difficult for LGBTQ people.

SUCCESS STORY: TALLAHASSEE, FLORIDA

As Mayor of Florida's capital city, I could not be prouder that Tallahassee has received a score of 100 on the Municipal Equality Index (MEI). I want members of the LGBTQ+ community to know that Tallahassee is a safe, welcoming, and inclusive city to live, work, and play.



The Tallahassee City Commission has been a leader in our community on LGBTQ+ equality since 2009, despite state limitations, when the City expanded our anti-discrimination policies to include sexual orientation and gender identity and enacted domestic partner benefits. For years, the MEI has been a critical benchmark for our continued commitment to advancing LGBTQ+ equality, and this year's perfect score represents the work of countless individuals over many years.

We have made great progress, but we know there is still more work to do. With the recent completion of our City's first comprehensive five-year strategic plan, we developed a new list of core values, including promoting equity and celebrating diversity. We got to work right away to implement these core values in tangible ways. In 2020, the City Commission unanimously passed the state's most inclusive conversion therapy ban with the assistance of many members of the public. We also capitalized on renovations underway in City Hall to build gender-neutral restrooms to ensure our facilities are more accessible to all.

As Mayor, I also took explicit steps to build a more fair, equitable, and inclusive city. Early in 2020, I created an LGBTQ+ Advisory Council, one of the first of its kind in the state, to evaluate City policies and services, identify deficiencies and gaps in service delivery, and provide feedback to my office on better serving the LGBTQ+ community. This Advisory Council of volunteer citizens has and will continue to use the MEI scorecard to identify opportunities for improvement.

It is one thing to say we are an inclusive city; it's another thing to actually implement policies and services that help every member of our community feel seen, heard, and valued. The MEI is an important tool in helping us be such a city, and we are thankful for the tireless work of the Human Rights Campaign to provide municipalities with a framework and tools that help us achieve these goals.

Keep an eye on Tallahassee. We scored 100 this year, but we're not done yet.

**JOHN E. DAILEY
MAYOR**

Tallahassee is an inclusive community that welcomes visitors with open arms and southern charm. Residents enjoy a high quality of life, which includes awe-inspiring natural beauty; creative, engaging public spaces; and a full-service city **government that redefines the standard of public service.**

IV. Law Enforcement

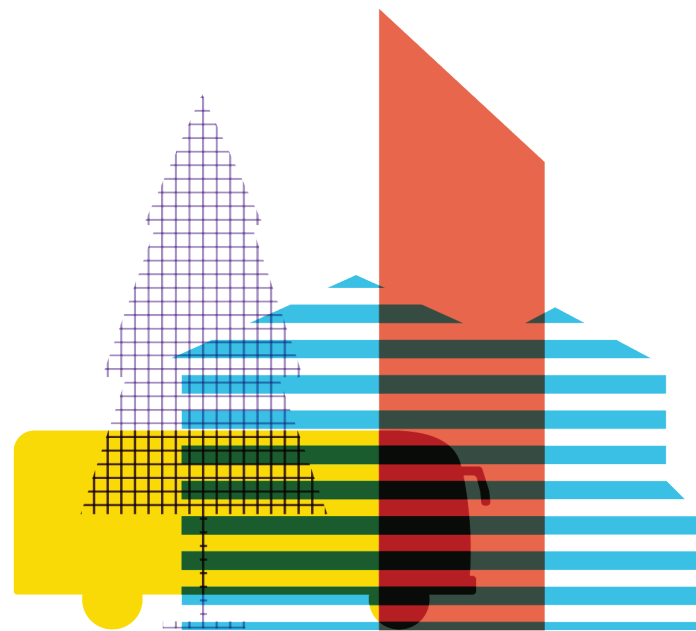
The relationship between law enforcement and the LGBTQ community, particularly LGBTQ people of color, is often rightly fraught with suspicion, misunderstanding, and fear.

LGBTQ people are vulnerable to violence arising from bigotry and ignorance. Law enforcement can help ensure safety for all by treating LGBTQ people with understanding and respect, remaining mindful of the LGBTQ community's unique law enforcement concerns and engaging the community in a positive way.

An LGBTQ police liaison (10 points) can serve as an important bridge between the community and law enforcement. The liaison is an advocate for fair and respectful enforcement of the law as well as an officer that the community can rely upon to appropriately respond to sensitive issues. In instances of violence against

LGBTQ people, LGBTQ police liaisons can help ensure that bias-motivated crimes are properly investigated and reported, victims are not misgendered, and the community is kept abreast of the investigation's progress.

Respectful and fair enforcement includes responsible reporting of hate crimes, including for hate crimes based on sexual orientation and gender identity, to the FBI (12 points). Such reporting demonstrates law enforcement's attention to these crimes and ensures that the larger law enforcement community is able to accurately gauge the scope and responses to them.



V. Leadership on LGBTQ Equality

Leadership is an aspect of policy that is not fully captured by executive orders or the passage of legislation into law. When a city leader marches in a Pride parade, a city joins a pro-equality amicus brief, a city council dedicates a park to an LGBTQ civil rights leader, or a city paints its crosswalks in rainbow colors, it sends a message to LGBTQ people that they are a valued part of the community.

At first glance, these actions may seem to be more symbol than substance; however, as HRC reported in its groundbreaking youth report in 2012, four in ten LGBTQ youth surveyed said the community in which they live is not accepting of LGBTQ people, and 60% of the youth surveyed said they heard negative messages about being LGBTQ from elected leaders.

Further, LGBTQ youth are twice as likely as their peers to say they will need to move from their hometown in order to feel accepted. When elected leaders speak out on matters of equality, their constituents do hear—and it informs their constituents' perception of safety, inclusion, and belonging.

This category, therefore, measures the commitment of the city to include the LGBTQ community and to advocate for full equality.

The first category rates city leadership (on a scale of zero to five points) on its public statements on matters of equality, particularly where the city leadership pushes for equality in the face of substantial adversity.

For example, a city would be awarded points if the city council passed a resolution in support of a state level non-discrimination bill—while this is not something the city can legislate, it is a powerful statement of the city's principles nonetheless.

The level of support for pro-equality legislation is also reflected in this section. The second category rates the persistence of the city leadership in pursuing legislation or policies that further equality (on a scale of zero to three points).

Note that even small or unsuccessful efforts are recognized in this category, and that these efforts may be heavily weighted if the city's political environment is not conducive to passing pro-equality legislation.

Finally, this section also includes two opportunities to earn flex points: first, for openly LGBTQ people holding elected or appointed office in the municipality (two flex points); and second, for cities who do all they can in the face of state law that restricts their ability to pass LGBTQ-inclusive laws or policies (three flex points).

When elected leaders speak out on matters of equality, their constituents do hear—and it informs their constituents' perception of **safety, inclusion, and belonging.**

ADDRESSING SYSTEMIC RACISM THROUGH MUNICIPAL ACTION



In every locality across the United States, race is a defining social construct that has major impacts on the life of every resident, including those who make up the incredibly diverse LGBTQ community. The precise form this impact takes is defined by one's actual or perceived race along with other intersecting identities. The actual or perceived race and intersectional identity of some opens the door to opportunity and advantage, while that of others engender discrimination, disadvantage, and disparities in virtually every area of life. This has been true since the founding of this country and unfortunately remains true today.

Historical Foundations of Systemic Racism in the United States

Systemic racism, also known as structural racism, refers to an overarching system of racial bias across institutions, culture, and society.¹ Systemic racism does not necessarily mean that institutions are overtly racist or have patently racist policies. It also refers to systems, institutions, and policies that create or allow disparate negative impacts for individuals who are Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (**BIPOC**). The origins of modern systemic racism in this country is embedded in its very founding, and the rampant **racial disparities**—used herein to refer to the stark overrepresentation of BIPOC communities in negative outcomes based on their proportional representation in the general population—that persist today are grim manifestations of the enduring, destructive effects of systemic racism.

As early as 1526, enslaved Africans were brought to Spanish Florida.² After 1619, when a Dutch ship brought approximately twenty enslaved Africans to the first British colony of Jamestown,

Virginia, slavery spread rapidly through the American colonies.³ During this first part of the 1600s, enslaved Africans were just one source of labor alongside European indentured servants and enslaved Indigenous People.⁴ Moreover, enslavement was not always a permanent lifelong status nor did this status automatically pass down to the children of enslaved peoples.⁵

As the demand for forced labor increased in the late 1600s, white settlers turned to enslaved Africans as their primary labor source over less profitable indentured servants.⁶ In 1662, Virginia enacted a law that automatically applied the legal status of “slave” to the children of enslaved persons.⁷ In 1667, another Virginia law removed the religious conditions that sometimes limited a person’s servitude by making it legal to keep enslaved people even if they converted to Christianity.⁸ This marked a turning point in which the justification of the enslavement of African peoples shifted from a religious one to justifications based on race.⁹ By the mid-1700s, new laws and societal

norms linked Africans to perpetual labor and the colonies began making formal distinctions among people based on race. The colonies also began legally restricting the interactions between whites and Blacks, creating a legal racial hierarchy positioning Black people at the bottom and white people at the top.¹⁰

The end of chattel slavery in America did not bring about the end of systemic racism.¹¹ Instead, racial bias across institutions, culture, and society merely adapted and evolved with every major advancement toward racial equality. After the Civil War, the 13th Amendment was passed formally abolishing slavery, but it enshrined in our Constitution a glaring loophole that still contributes to the overrepresentation and exploitation of BIPOC communities in the criminal justice system. It allowed slavery and involuntary servitude “as a punishment for crime whereof the party shall have been duly convicted.”¹² This led to a new type of slavery, known as convict leasing, in which Black people were

arrest and convicted under racist Black Codes¹³ then forced to work for local planters and industrialists.¹⁴ Countless other efforts to preserve the social

order of white supremacy emerged over the ensuing decades, including Jim Crow segregation laws, efforts to prevent Black people from voting

including poll taxes and literacy tests,¹⁵ and the so-called “war on drugs” that targets BIPOC communities.¹⁶

Systemic Racism in Policing

Modern American policing provides one of the most prominent examples of enduring systemic racism, an issue thrown into the national spotlight this year by widespread protests against police killings of Black people. While this issue received unprecedented national attention this year, the problem of police killings disproportionately affecting Black people has been present throughout our history. In fact, one early form of policing that first emerged in the Carolina colonies in 1704 was known as “slave patrols,” which consisted of groups of men tasked with catching and punishing runaway enslaved people as well as preventing revolts by enslaved people.¹⁷ After the Civil War and during Reconstruction, many southern sheriffs carried on the agenda of maintaining white supremacy by enforcing segregation and preventing freed enslaved people from voting.¹⁸

Enduring system racism in policing is evinced by data clearly showing that police kill Black people at

disproportionate rates. In the United States, Black people are three times more likely to be killed by police.¹⁹ One study found that Black Chicagoans are over 650% more likely to be killed by police than white Chicagoans.²⁰ Even when unarmed, Black people are still more likely to be killed by police.²¹

What’s more, racial disparities exist throughout police interactions. A recent study found that Black people are 20% more likely to be pulled over, twice as likely to be searched, and less likely to be carrying illegal contraband compared to their white peers.²² Stark racial disparities do not end with police interactions, but hold true throughout the broader criminal justice system.²³

Fortunately, municipalities can take decisive action to begin addressing systemic racism in policing. Cities, towns, and counties should expeditiously implement the following reforms in their law enforcement agencies.

DEMILITARIZE THE POLICE

Public confidence in law enforcement declines with the presence of militarized units.²⁴ The transfer of military weapons to police departments increases officer-induced fatalities among civilians.²⁵ While there is a troubling lack of public data on police militarization, a review of police militarization in Maryland shows that SWAT teams are more likely to be deployed to Black neighborhoods regardless of crime levels, consistent with anecdotal evidence across the country.²⁶ While much of the process of militarization occurs as a result of transactions between the federal government and state law enforcement departments, local governments should take a firm stance against militarization by explicitly prohibiting the purchase of military equipment by their local law enforcement agencies through law, policy, or budgetary decisions.

REDIRECT FUNDS

Research shows that investing directly in communities, including vital social services, reduces crime.²⁷ Local

In every locality across the United States, **race is a defining social construct that has major impacts on the life of every resident**, including those who make up the incredibly diverse LGBTQ community.



Employment, Housing, Education, and Beyond

governments can reduce incidents of crime by redirecting funds to critical assistance programs as well as housing programs, mental health services, substance abuse treatment, and early intervention programs. (See discussion on intersectionality and equity below for important frameworks that should guide funding decisions.)

CREATE STANDARDS FOR ACCEPTABLE USE OF FORCE

Municipalities should create acceptable use of force standards for police departments. At a minimum, it should permit use of force only when necessary and as a last resort when all reasonable options have been exhausted. It should also expressly prohibit maneuvers and restraints that restrict the flow of blood or oxygen to the brain, including neck holds and chokeholds. Moreover, this policy should ban the use of force as a punitive or retaliatory measure and require law enforcement to use de-escalation tactics instead. Police officers must also act when they observe misconduct by fellow officers. When witnessing a colleague using excessive force or engaging in wrongdoing, police officers should have a duty to intervene and accurately report the incident to supervisors, making it clear to the community and to other officers that law enforcement's primary responsibility is to protect and serve the public.

TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Police departments must aim to become more transparent by making trainings and departmental procedures accessible to the public. Departments must collect robust data on types of police stops, instances of use of force, and the treatment of vulnerable populations, including immigrant, LGBTQ, and Black and Brown communities. Local police departments should also be transparent with records regarding officers charged with or disciplined for misconduct. Additionally, body cameras have the potential to increase transparency and provide an additional perspective to police-community encounters. Coupled with a consistent standard of use, body cameras can be used to promote both civilian and officer safety. An appropriate standard should emphasize public availability and regular footage review.

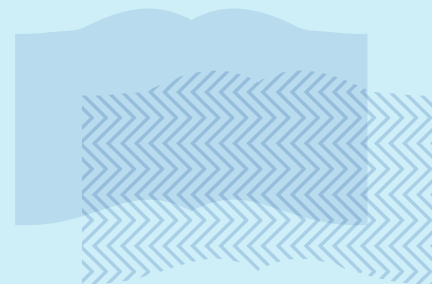
END RACIAL PROFILING

Profiling and discrimination in policing must be strictly and explicitly prohibited. These policies must prohibit law enforcement from targeting a person based on actual or perceived race, ethnicity, national origin, religion, disability, gender, gender identity, or sexual orientation. Anti-racial profiling policies should also require law enforcement to take affirmative measures to eliminate profiling,

including implementing data collection and analysis to accurately assess the extent of the problem, regular mandatory training on issues of profiling, and clear procedures for receiving, investigating, and responding to complaints of alleged profiling.

PROHIBIT NO-KNOCK WARRANTS

No-knock warrants authorize police to enter a premises without announcing their presence or their purpose. Intended to prevent the destruction of evidence or ensure police safety, no-knock warrants have instead led to the killing and injury of innocent people. An analysis of no-knock warrant raids conducted by the New York Police Department found that 10 percent were wrong-door raids.²⁸ Local governments must prohibit the use of no-knock warrants to ensure the safety of the people.



While the **pervasiveness of systemic racism** and the severity of the racial disparities it creates may seem daunting, **municipal officials have many tools at their disposal** to begin addressing these issues in their communities.

While policing presents a highly visible illustration of the presence and effects of systematic racism, systemic racism affects the municipal institutions with which residents interact in virtually every area of life.

Racial disparities run deep in employment. The U.S. economy was built on the exploitation and occupational segregation of BIPOC.²⁹ By some estimates, slaveholders extracted more than \$14 trillion in labor costs (in today's dollars) from enslaved people.³⁰ The legacies of slavery, Black Codes, Jim Crow, racist aspects of the New Deal, and limited funding and reach of government anti-discrimination bodies helped keep BIPOC individuals concentrated in undervalued occupations and promoted employment discrimination as well as wage and benefits disparities based on race.³¹ A recent study by the Harvard Business Review found that since 1990, white applicants received 36% more callbacks on average than Black applicants and 24% more callbacks than Latinx applicants with identical resumes.³² As of August 2020, the Black unemployment rate is twice as high as the white unemployment rate.³³ Moreover, as we've seen in many areas, the COVID-19 pandemic amplifies existing disparities. A recent Human Rights Campaign report found that BIPOC LGBTQ people are 70% more likely than the general population to have lost their jobs since states initiated reopening policies due to COVID-19.³⁴

Federal New Deal housing policies played a central role in the creation and persistence of segregated Black neighborhoods during a significant part of the 1900s.³⁵ The federal Home Owners' Loan Corporation, created to refinance home mortgages in default to prevent foreclosure, institutionalized

“redlining,” or the practice of denying mortgages based on the racial and ethnic makeup of neighborhoods.³⁶ Communities with large BIPOC populations were assigned the lowest investment rating and deemed too risky for government-backed mortgages.³⁷ The Public Works Administration, which built the first civilian public housing in the U.S., primarily benefited white middle- and lower-middle class families and built explicitly segregated housing for Black families.³⁸ What's more, the Federal Housing Administration subsidized the building of entire suburbs with explicit requirements of restrictive covenants—provisions in deeds prohibiting resale to Black Americans—while subsidizing white families to move out of urban areas into all-white suburbs.³⁹ Housing discrimination and inequality persists today. A 2012 study by the Department of Housing and Urban Development and the Urban Institute found that real estate agents and rental housing providers recommend and show fewer available homes and apartments to racial minorities than equally qualified whites.⁴⁰ Additionally, the Census Bureau reported that Black households had the lowest homeownership rate at 44%, nearly 30 percentage points behind white households.⁴¹

Systemic racism also begins disadvantaging Black students from the moment they enter the educational system. For example, a 2014 Department of Education study found that although Black students make up only 18% of all preschoolers, they represent 50% of all preschool suspensions.⁴² White children, on the other hand, make up 40% of all preschool enrollment but represent 26% of those receiving suspensions.⁴³ Black students in K-12 are suspended at three times the rate

of white students who commit similar infractions.⁴⁴ 2015-16 data from the Department of Education found that while Black students make up 15% of the total student population in public schools, 31% of students who were arrested or referred to law enforcement were Black.⁴⁵ Furthermore, research shows that majority-Black schools are chronically underfunded.⁴⁶

The economic disparities engendered by enduring systemic racism in all of these areas of life are striking. The income gap between Black and white people in the U.S. has persistently grown over time. The difference in median household incomes between white and Black Americans has grown from about \$23,800 in 1970 to roughly \$33,000 in 2018.⁴⁷ Poverty is particularly high for those who live at the intersection of racial minority and LGBTQ status. BIPOC LGBTQ people have statistically significant higher poverty rates than their same-race non-LGBTQ counterparts.⁴⁸ For example, 30.8% of Black LGBTQ people live in poverty, whereas 25.3% of Black non-LGBTQ people live in poverty.⁴⁹

The scourge of systemic racism extends to many other areas of life, including health care and public services. This reality combined with transphobia and sexism contributes to the tragic, escalating [epidemic of fatal violence against Black and Brown transgender women](#).

While the pervasiveness of systemic racism and the severity of the racial disparities it creates may seem daunting, municipal officials have many tools at their disposal to begin addressing these issues in their communities.

Crafting Solutions

Understanding and operationalizing the core concepts of intersectionality and equity are central to developing and implementing effective local laws, policies, and services to begin addressing the disparities engendered by systemic racism.

INTERSECTIONALITY

Intersectionality refers to the complex, cumulative way in which the effects of multiple forms of discrimination (such as racism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia, ableism, and classism) combine, overlap, or intersect, especially in the experiences of marginalized individuals or groups.⁵⁰ A person who identifies as Black, transgender, and female, and who is living with a disability, lives at the intersection of all of these

marginalized identities. Their life and daily experiences are unfortunately shaped by a complex, compounded mix of prejudices and discrimination on account of their actual or perceived identities as Black, transgender, female, and a person living with a disability. This term was born out of Black feminism, coined by lawyer, scholar, and professor Kimberlé Crenshaw in a 1989 paper published in the University of Chicago Legal Forum entitled “Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex.”⁵¹

EQUITY

Equity is an important concept that is distinct from the concept of equality. Equity means providing tools and resources according to need such that historically disadvantaged communities truly have the same

access to opportunities intended to be equally available to everyone. This takes into account the unequal footing traditionally marginalized groups, including LGBTQ people and Black and Brown communities, start off on because of the effects of historical and extant systemic marginalization and discrimination. Equality, on the other hand, refers to treating everyone the same and offering everyone the same opportunities. In essence, equality is the foundation that makes the ultimate goal of equity possible. Equity is important because even if opportunities are equally available to everyone, those who are oppressed by systemic barriers (like systemic racism) face unique difficulties in accessing those equal opportunities, often resulting in continued inequality.

Understanding and operationalizing the core concepts of **intersectionality** and **equity** are **central to developing and implementing effective local laws, policies, and services** to begin addressing the disparities engendered by systemic racism.



CHECKLIST

□ BUILD A STRONG FOUNDATION OF NON-DISCRIMINATION

As noted above, true equity cannot be achieved without the baseline of robust enforceable non-discrimination laws and policies. Municipal officials must ensure that every city department has an enumerated non-discrimination policy that expressly prohibits discrimination against BIPOC individuals, including BIPOC LGBTQ people. These policies should cover municipal employment (Part II of the MEI Scorecard) as well as city services, programs, and facilities. Local legislators should enact robust citywide non-discrimination protections that explicitly includes race and ethnicity as well as sexual orientation and gender identity (among other protected characteristics) in all areas of life including employment, housing, and public spaces (Part I of the MEI Scorecard).

□ CREATE AND EMPOWER LOCAL HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSIONS

As local bodies specifically designed to take on the issues of prejudice and discrimination, human rights commissions (Part III of the MEI Scorecard) are well-situated to begin addressing system racism in local communities with a focus on intersectionality and equity. They can be created by executive action or ordinances and should be adequately funded and empowered to enforce citywide non-discrimination laws. These entities should also be given the authority to review municipal laws and policies for unintended racial

disparities and propose revisions or other potential solutions. Local commissions should be composed of diverse community members—including BIPOC residents, LGBTQ residents, and those with intersecting marginalized identities—who possess thorough understandings of systemic racism, intersectionality, and equity. Human rights commissioners should regularly consult with local advocates representing BIPOC communities and those with multiple marginalized identities. Moreover, local human rights commissions should make it part of their mission to end the epidemic of violence against transgender and gender non-conforming individuals, which disproportionately affects Black and Brown transgender women.

□ RESTRUCTURE BUDGET PRIORITIES

Municipalities should make addressing systemic racism a budgetary priority by (as discussed earlier) divesting from police budgets and investing directly in BIPOC and other marginalized communities. Local officials must increase funding for social services, direct assistance programs, health care (including mental health care), housing and food security programs, education, and employment programs while making sure that services are equitably accessible to the multiply marginalized. City budgets should also adequately fund anti-discrimination bodies like local human rights commissions.

□ INNOVATE

Addressing issues as pervasive and complex as systemic racism, the racial disparities it creates, and the compounding effects of multiple intersecting identities requires thorough study and innovative thinking. One innovative approach cities can take is creating an Equity Task Force that brings together members of the local human rights commission, city council, the mayor’s office, the city manager’s office, and municipal agencies to study and identify racial disparities, review municipal policies and services for effectiveness in reducing disparities, identify unmet community needs, and formulate services and policies that further equity and wellbeing for BIPOC residents, including BIPOC LGBTQ residents.

□ ADVOCATE FOR REFORM BEYOND CITY LIMITS

The voices of local officials, the closest representatives of the people, carry significant clout. Mayors, city council members, police chiefs, human rights commissioners, and other local officials should voice their support for policy reforms to address systemic racism not only within their own spheres of authority, but also in local school boards, state government, and the federal government. Local officials can make their voices heard in many ways including through official statements, social media channels, proclamations, and resolutions.

Conclusion

Systemic racism is a grave and pervasive problem deeply rooted in our nation's history. The legacies of slavery, Black Codes, Jim Crow, the New Deal, and many other racially biased governmental laws and policies still affect the institutions and systems that shape every aspect of American life. Together, these create the conditions where racialized police violence endures with impunity and where Black

Americans continue to suffer the worst racial disparities in virtually every area of life. These racial disparities are often drastically compounded for BIPOC individuals who live at the intersection of multiple marginalized identities, like BIPOC transgender and gender non-conforming people. Though the issue of systemic racism may seem dauntingly colossal, local officials have many tools at their disposal to begin addressing

this issue head on, including reshaping city budgets and creating local task forces to promote genuine equity for BIPOC communities. As leaders entrusted with the most important task of ensuring the health, safety, and well-being of all residents, municipal officials must immediately begin to address the blight of systemic racism in their communities and beyond.



Join HRC's pledge for local elected leaders to end violence against Black and Brown transgender women.

Endnotes

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ACKNOWLEDGING CONTEXT

Not All Cities Are Created Equal

Some cities have the autonomy and wherewithal to pass inclusive laws and offer cutting-edge city services; other cities are hampered by severe state-imposed limitations on their ability to pass inclusive laws, or they have found that the small scope of their local government limits their capabilities.

The MEI is designed to understand the unique situation of each city and is structured to reward the specific achievements of a local government.

The efforts and achievements of each city can only be fairly judged within that city's context; while imposing a score may seem to strip a city of its context, the MEI honors the different situations from which the selected cities come in three major ways:

FLEX POINTS

First, in addition to the 100 standard points for city laws and services, the MEI includes 22 flex points.

Flex points are awarded for essential programs, protections, or benefits that are not attainable or very difficult to attain for some cities; therefore, cities with the item are rewarded, but cities without it are not penalized.

Flex points can also provide some leeway for cities that face challenges in accomplishing the specific achievements the MEI measures, and ensure that every city has the ability to improve its score for next year.

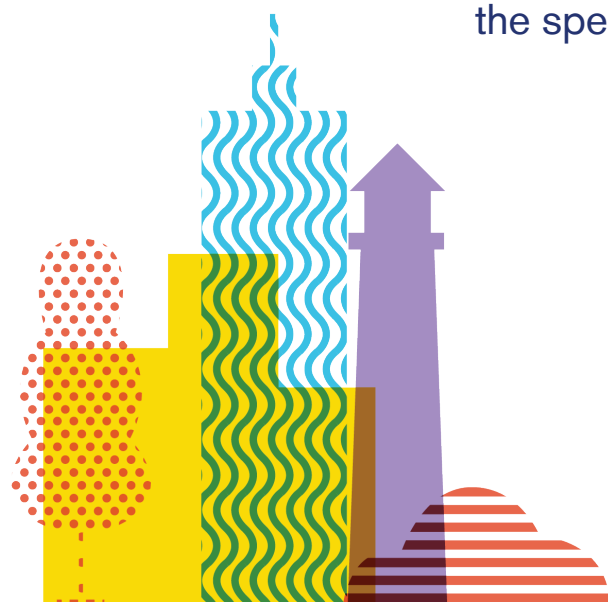
CONSIDERATION OF STATE LAW

Second, the MEI weights state and municipal law such that the effect of excellent or restrictive state law does not determine the city's ability to score well.

LEGISLATIVE LEADERSHIP

Third, it also rates the city leadership's public position on LGBTQ equality and gives credit for legislative efforts (even unsuccessful efforts), so if a city has outspoken advocates for equality who are unfortunately still in the minority, the city will still receive credit for the efforts it has made.

The MEI is designed to **understand the unique situation** of each city and is structured to reward the specific achievements of a local government.



Fair Assessment Respects Legal Differences

The Municipal Equality Index is carefully designed to rate cities in detail while respecting that a number of factors may boost or inhibit a city's ability or incentives to adopt the laws and policies this project rates.

Given the range of authority and incentives that cities have, and acknowledging that our effort to rate small cities as well as large cities exacerbates these challenges, the MEI had to wrestle with three major questions in its initial design.

QUESTION 1

How could the MEI fairly take state law into account, particularly as the disparity between states with pro-equality laws and states without pro-equality laws continues to grow?

ANSWER

The answer is balance; the rating system would not be fair if cities were not able to score a 100 on the MEI without living in a state that had favorable state law. Allocating the points carefully to respect the dynamic relationship between state and local government was a must, and we concentrated on what the state law meant for the city being rated.

QUESTION 2

How could the MEI assess a list of cities as diverse as those selected while acknowledging that the smaller places rated may understandably have less capacity to engage on LGBTQ issues?

ANSWER

We addressed concerns about a small city's capacity to affect change by building flexibility into the scorecard through the use of flex points and by providing multiple avenues toward earning points.

QUESTION 3

What do MEI scores say about the atmosphere for LGBTQ people living and working in a particular place?

ANSWER

This last point is to recognize that even the most thoughtful survey of laws and policies cannot objectively assess the efficacy of enforcement and it certainly cannot encapsulate the lived experience of discrimination that many LGBTQ people—even those living in 100-point cities—face every day.

This question can only be answered by precisely defining what the MEI is designed to do: the MEI is an evaluation of municipal laws and policies.

It is not a rating of the best places for LGBTQ people to live, nor is it an evaluation of the adequacy or effectiveness of enforcement.

It is not an encapsulation of what it feels like to be an LGBTQ person walking down the street. While some LGBTQ people may prefer to live in cities that respect and include them, there are undoubtedly many other factors that make a community a welcoming, inclusive place to live.

To be clear, the MEI specifically rates cities on their laws and policies while respecting the legal and political context the city operates within. It is not a measure of an LGBTQ person's lived experience in that city.

Even the most thoughtful survey of laws and policies **cannot encapsulate the lived experience of discrimination** that many LGBTQ people—even those living in 100-point cities—face every day.

Accounting for City Size

The MEI rates municipalities as small as Rehoboth Beach, Delaware (2010 population according to the US Census: 1,327) and as large as New York City (2010 population according to the US Census: 8,175,136). Such a range in city size creates concerns about ensuring that the efforts of small cities are not diminished in comparison to the capabilities of large cities.

Fairness dictates that the MEI not measure small cities against a standard only the metropolitan giants of the country can meet.

The MEI is designed to ensure that small cities have the same ability to score well on the MEI as large cities do.

First, while some of the criteria might be more challenging for a small city to accomplish, none of the non-flex criteria are prohibitive for small cities. Further, flexibility was built into the scoring system to acknowledge that a small city may accomplish the criteria in a slightly different manner: for example, an LGBTQ liaison may have many other duties, and a Human Rights Commission might be all-volunteer.

Second, the MEI uses flex points to ensure cities are not being held accountable for services that they simply are unable to provide. Points

pertaining to a city's administrative structure and capabilities are generally flex points and there often are multiple paths to earning the same set of points.

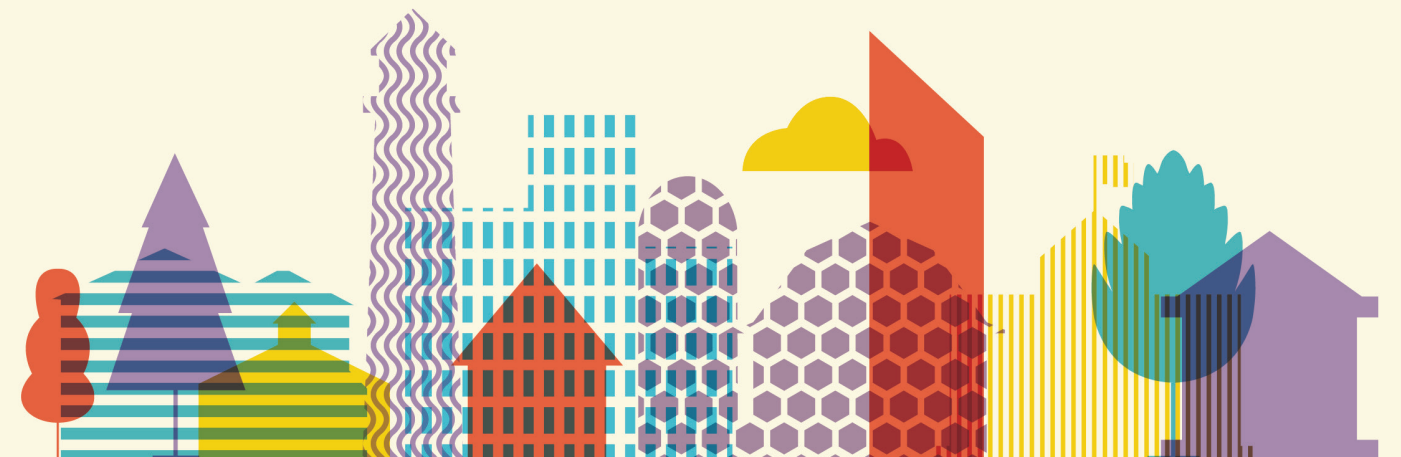
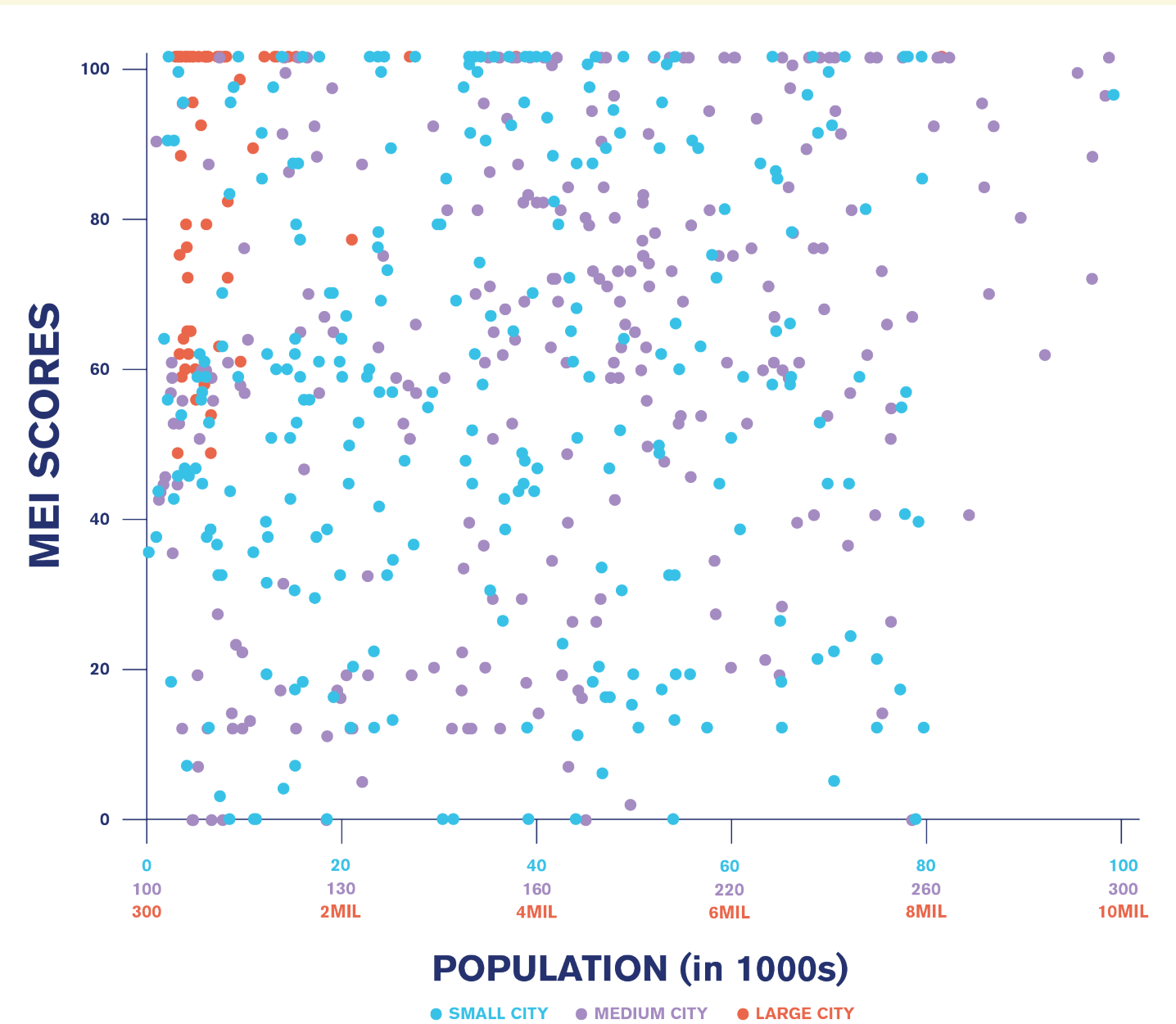
Having alternative paths to the same points and classifying some points as flex points accommodates the varying needs and capabilities of different sized cities.

An analysis of the MEI's results over the past several editions shows these efforts to accommodate small cities worked: small cities were able to score comparably with the large cities.

More than half of the cities rated qualify as "small", and these continue to be represented more or less proportionally across the range of scores, including top scores. In every edition the data has clearly shown that a city's score is not well predicted by its size.

Having **alternative paths** to the same points and classifying some points as flex points accommodates the varying needs and capabilities of different sized cities.

CITY SIZE NOT PREDICTIVE OF MEI SCORE



Balancing State and Local Laws

Cities are creations of the state. Cities are granted the power to govern by their states, and some states have multiple classes of cities that are invested with varying degrees of autonomy. Some cities are granted so much power that they have nearly complete independence, but other cities—particularly smaller cities—are more limited in the scope of their city government.

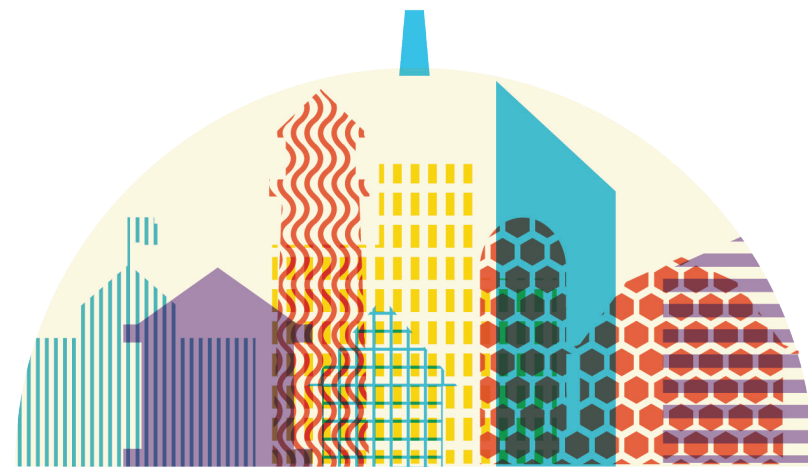
To be a worthwhile survey of cities across states, the MEI must be respectful of how different cities are from one another.

This is especially true when LGBTQ law is the subject being surveyed. Some cities are hampered from passing pro-equality laws by state law that limits their ability to do so; others come from states with strong pro-equality laws that ensure a high level of legal protections for all.

The MEI balances the influence of LGBTQ-inclusive state law by weighing state and local laws equally, and by not awarding double points to a city fortunate enough to have protections at both the state and local levels.

If a state has a comprehensive and inclusive non-discrimination law, a city may not be incentivized to pass an ordinance extending duplicative protections, but it should still have those protections reflected in its score.

Conversely, the city should be able to achieve a top score on the basis of municipal law alone—otherwise the MEI would not be a true evaluation of cities. The success of this balanced approach is demonstrated by a number of cities who were able to achieve top scores despite being in states that do not have pro-equality laws.

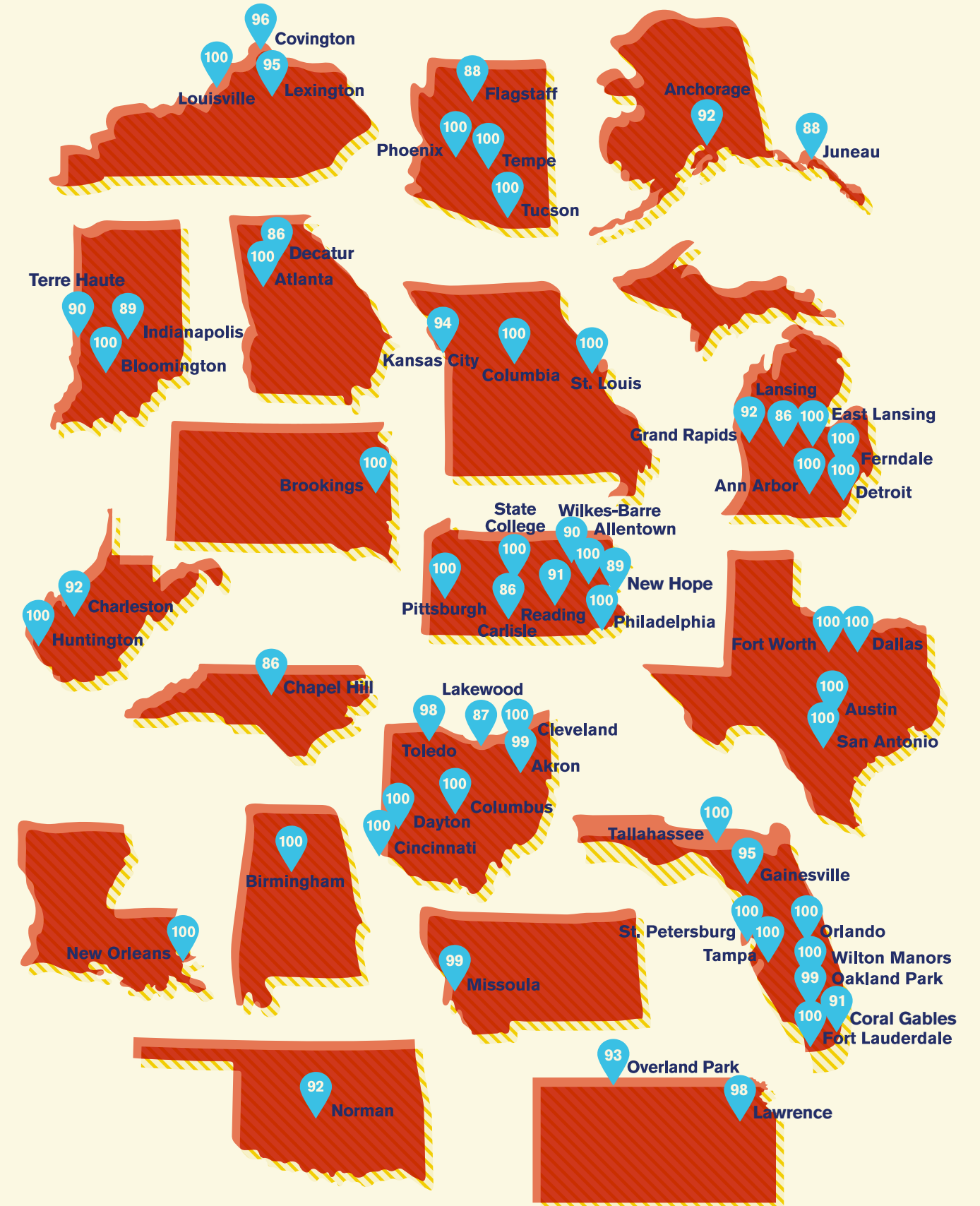


25
million people

live in localities that **explicitly cover trans folks** at the local level alone

MEI ALL-STARS

High Scores in States Without Non-Discrimination Laws that Expressly Include LGBTQ People



Understanding Restrictive State Law

Some states restrict their cities from passing inclusive laws either by passing specific legislation that prohibits cities from doing so or through application of the Dillon’s Rule (which prevents cities from providing broader non-discrimination protections than those offered under state law) to LGBTQ-inclusive legislation.

An example of restrictive legislation is a Tennessee law that prohibits municipalities from passing non-discrimination ordinances that affect private employees. Because of these types of restrictions, not every city has the power to enact the types of legislation that the MEI measures.

Cities with a dedication to equality that are in Tennessee and North Carolina, for example, will never be able to score as well as cities with comparable dedication to equality that exist in states without the restrictive laws.

However, the MEI provides avenues for cities who are dedicated to equality—as some cities in North Carolina and Tennessee are—to have that commitment reflected in their score despite restrictive state law.

Flex points are offered for testing the limits of these state restrictions, while standard points reflect city leadership advocating against the state restrictions.

The MEI provides avenues for cities that are dedicated to equality to have that dedication reflected in their score despite restrictive state law.

These flex points help to level the playing field for restricted cities; however, the small number of cities suffering such restrictions will find it extremely challenging—and, in some cases, perhaps impossible—to score a 100 on the MEI.

While this may initially appear to be at odds with the MEI’s purpose of evaluating what cities do, the bottom line is that these vital protections don’t exist for the folks who live and work in these cities. That these cities will face an uphill battle in earning points for certain criteria on the MEI is a reflection of the actual difficulties they face as a result of restrictive state law.

Ameliorating the effect of a restrictive state law on the MEI score would be a dishonest representation of the protections that the city truly does offer.

Effect of Enforcement and Lived Experience

The MEI is an encapsulation of the best practices of inclusion followed by cities nationwide. It is a blueprint for positive change and an opportunity for cities to become aware of best practices in municipal equality. It is not a ranking of the friendliest cities to live. It neither attempts to quantify how respectfully cities enforce their laws, nor does it try to gauge the experience of an LGBTQ person interacting with the police or city hall.

Fair and respectful implementation of the best practices described by the MEI is crucial if the policies are to have any meaning. Realistically, the MEI simply has no objective way of measuring the quality of enforcement. Even the most thoughtful survey of laws and policies cannot objectively assess the efficacy of enforcement and it certainly cannot encapsulate the lived experience of discrimination that many LGBTQ people—even those living in 100 point cities—face every day.

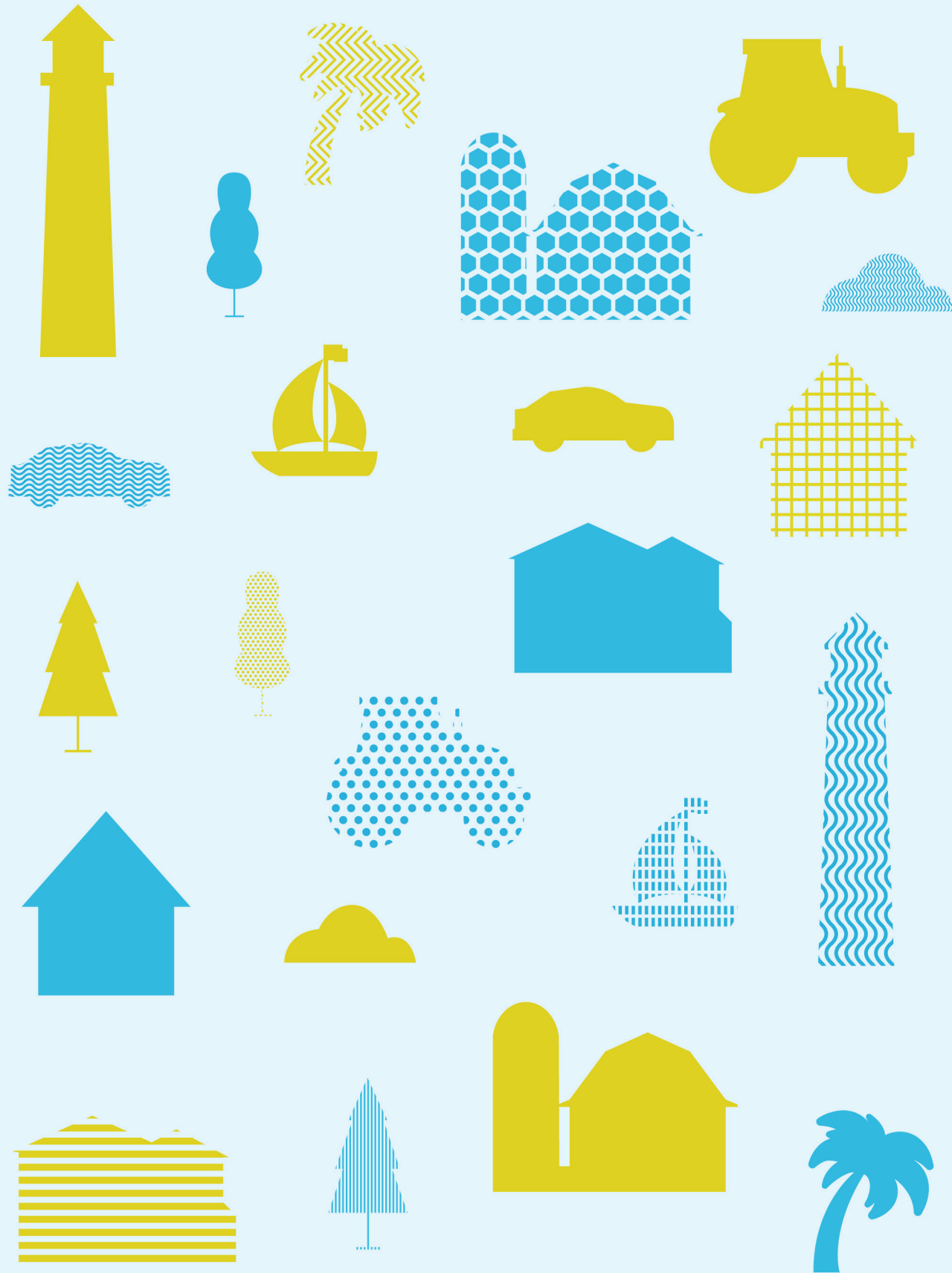
The MEI can make some limited, blunt judgments about the existence of enforcement, if not its quality. For example, one of the harder questions the MEI faces is evaluating how seriously police departments take anti-LGBTQ related violence. While the MEI awards points to cities that report hate crimes statistics to the FBI, it does not evaluate whether the report made by the police department to the FBI is an accurate reflection of hate crimes, whether detectives competently collected evidence related to proving a hate-related motivation for the violence or whether the police department created a safe space for victims to come forward. It doesn’t measure how respectful police are when making a stop, nor how the police decide whom to stop.

Collecting and assessing such data in an objective, thorough way would be impossible. However, a city will not receive credit for reporting hate crimes if the city hasn’t reported any hate crimes of any kind this year or for five previous years. The MEI deems this effectively non-reporting because the probability is very low that a city truly experienced zero hate crimes of any kind in five years. While this is a judgment call, it is the best measure the MEI has to determine if hate crimes are being taken seriously at the local level.

A 100-point city, then, may have terrific policies—a well-trained police force, a police liaison, and consistent hate crimes reporting—but nevertheless be an atmosphere in which LGBTQ people have intense fear of tangling with the police department. This fear may be magnified for LGBTQ people of color or undocumented LGBTQ immigrants, and the MEI reflects discrimination against those populations in only a general way. On the other hand, a police department in a 40-point city could have none of these policies but have a reputation for fair and respectful enforcement. The MEI specifically rates cities on their laws and policies; it is not a measure of an LGBTQ person’s lived experience in that city.

The MEI specifically rates cities on their laws and policies; it is not a measure of an LGBTQ person’s lived experience in that city.

WHAT WE FOUND



SUMMARY OF RESULTS

The 2020 MEI rates the same 506 cities for the fifth year in a row based on the same criteria as the prior two years. Because the cities rated and criteria herein are identical to the previous report, key measures from this year's report directly demonstrate a sustained, record-setting pro-equality trend. This is all the more noteworthy in the context of the twin pandemics of COVID-19 and racial violence that localities across the country continue to grapple with.

This edition of the MEI revealed the largest number of top-scoring cities in the report's nine year history. Since the MEI's 2012 inaugural issue, the number of 100-point cities has steadily increased each year. 94 cities now claim the maximum score of 100 points, up from 88 municipalities last year and just 11 in 2012. What's more, the national city score average jumped to an all-time high of 64 points (up from 60 last year), marking the fourth consecutive year of national average increases as well as the highest year-over-year national average growth ever.

PROGRESS IN A YEAR OF COLOSSAL CHALLENGES

2020 has been a year of unthinkable challenges. The twin pandemics of COVID-19 and racial violence continue to affect every community in the country. Despite having to tackle these colossal challenges with limited time and resources—and often with little or no help from state and

federal officials—many local legislators across the nation never lost sight of the vital importance of protecting their LGBTQ communities. They understand that these twin pandemics drastically amplify existing disparities, hitting vulnerable populations like LGBTQ people of color the hardest. Moreover, they understand that robust anti-discrimination measures form the foundation on which true equity can be built (for more on equity and addressing systemic racism, see page 32).

A LANDMARK SUPREME COURT DECISION

A ray of hope came in June of this year when the Supreme Court of the United States ruled in *Bostock v. Clayton County, Georgia* that sexual orientation and gender identity discrimination are prohibited under the sex non-discrimination employment protections of Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Still, many local legislators—including those in Reynoldsburg, Ohio; Savannah, Georgia; and Holland, Michigan—listened to the calls of community advocates urging them to continue advancing comprehensive non-discrimination laws. These advocates understood that *Bostock* did not end the struggle for full, comprehensive legal equality (for more on *Bostock* and the continued importance of local non-discrimination laws, see page 24).

KEY FINDINGS Citywide Protections

Despite another year of some state legislatures and the federal government working to roll back hard-won protections—even in the midst of a devastating pandemic and widespread racial injustices—cities across the nation of all sizes and compositions took decisive steps to protect the most vulnerable members of their communities.

MEI-rated Decatur and Savannah, Georgia enacted LGBTQ-inclusive non-discrimination protections covering citywide employment, housing, and public accommodations. Additionally, MEI-rated Alexandria and Arlington County, Virginia took steps to strengthen local protections on the basis of gender identity.

The number of municipalities that enacted ordinances to protect against so-called “conversion therapy”—harmful, discredited practices that attempt to change a person's sexual orientation or gender identity—significantly increased over the past year. As of this report, 35 MEI-rated cities have local anti-conversion therapy protections in states with no state-level protections (up from 28 last year).

Furthermore, public accommodations in 103 MEI-rated municipalities are required to make single-user restrooms available to people of all genders pursuant to city, county, and/or state law.

Municipal Employment, Contracting, and Programs

Cities recognize that inclusive workplace policies help attract and retain the best and brightest employees. 429 cities (nearly 85% of all rated cities) now have equal employment opportunity policies that expressly include sexual orientation and/or gender identity, up by 21 over the past year. Additionally, 188 municipalities now require their contractors to have employment non-discrimination policies that include sexual orientation and/or gender identity.

A growing number of cities are also enacting enumerated laws or policies that prohibit bullying in all youth-serving city services, programs, and facilities. 35 cities now have these vital LGBTQ-inclusive bullying prevention policies, up from 25 last year.

Transgender-Inclusive Healthcare Benefits

Because transgender people are often denied coverage for medically necessary care, it is important for cities to explicitly affirm coverage for transition-related health care (including gender-affirming surgical procedures, hormone therapy, mental health care, and all related medical visits and laboratory services) in employee healthcare plans. The MEI has tracked the existence of transgender-inclusive city employee health care plans since its first edition. Of the 137 cities rated in the inaugural 2012 MEI, only 5 offered these vital benefits. Eight years later, that number has taken an impressive leap to 179 of 506 rated cities.

Equality Across America

This year's data confirms the fact that localities all over the country—small and large, red and blue—care deeply about creating inclusive communities through pro-equality laws, policies, and services.

The six most improved cities since the last MEI are:

- Newport News, Virginia, which increased its score by 46 points since last year;
- Bismarck, North Dakota, which jumped 44 points since 2019;
- West Lafayette, Wisconsin, which improved its score by 43 points over the past year;
- Hampton, Virginia, which gained 42 points; and
- Savannah, Georgia, and Ketchikan, Alaska, which both increased by 38 points since last year.

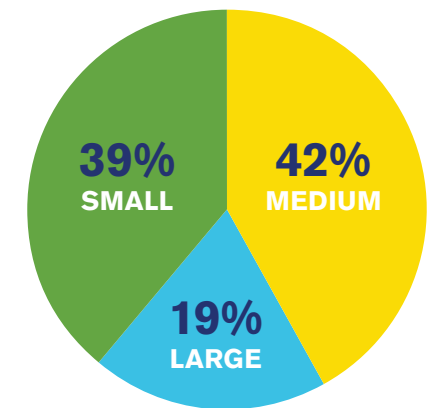
Compared to 2019, 38 state averages increased and eight stayed the same.

- Cities in North Dakota increased by an average of 31 points.
- Cities in Nebraska and Virginia increased by an average of 24 points.
- Cities in Kansas increased by an average of 22 points.

Every region of the country saw a mean city score increase this year, with the exception of the New England region which maintained its 2019 average. Although small cities (populations below 100,000) averaged eight points

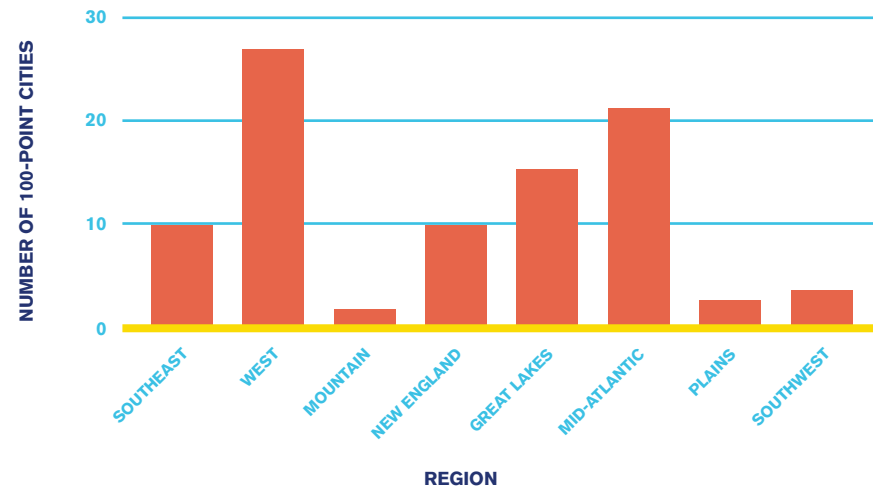
below the national average, medium-sized cities (populations between 100,000 and 300,000) averaged four points above the national average. Large cities (populations above 300,000) ranked by the MEI had a mean score of 86 points. Notably, the vast majority (81%) of cities that scored above the national average were small and medium sized cities.

Cities that Scored Above the National Average

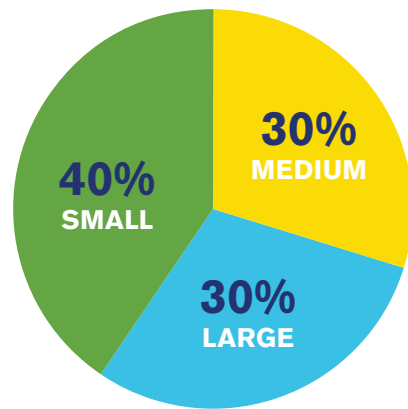


The 2020 MEI boasts a record-setting 61 “All-Star” Cities — cities that scored above eighty-five points despite being in a state with no explicit state-level statutory non-discrimination protections for sexual orientation and gender identity.* Small cities make up the largest proportion of 2020 All-Star Cities.

100-Point Scores by Region



All-Star Cities by Size



See **MEI All Star Map** on Pg. 45

94 municipalities achieved a 100-point score this year. This represents a nearly ninefold increase in 100-point cities since the first edition of the MEI.

100-point localities come from every region of the country and span the wide spectrum of city size, demographics, and political leanings. This group comprises cities from 30 states, including municipalities in Alabama, Arizona, Florida, Georgia, Indiana, Kentucky, Louisiana, Michigan, Ohio, Pennsylvania, South Dakota, Texas, and West Virginia. The majority of these cities (27) are situated in the West. However, the highest proportion of 100s to cities rated is the Great Lakes region, with 34% of cities rated in this region attaining the MEI’s highest score. What’s more, small and medium-sized cities together comprise the majority (62%) of 100-point cities.

CONCLUSION

The 2020 MEI makes it clear: In the absence of federal and state leadership, local officials continue to work tirelessly to ensure that everyone in their communities can secure housing, make a living, and participate in community life without being discriminated against because of who they are or who they love. These local officials know that extending legal protections to everyone, regardless of sexual orientation and gender identity, is both the right thing to do and the smart way to govern. A city’s commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion is a key driver of economic success, serving to attract residents, visitors, and businesses who place a high value on inclusivity. Furthermore, these local leaders know that in times of national crisis, the work of achieving genuine equity must continue to protect the most vulnerable among us.

* Cities in states that are receiving first-time state-level credit in *Part I - Non-Discrimination Laws* because their state human rights commission or Attorney General adopted the U.S. Supreme Court’s reasoning in *Bostock v. Clayton County, Georgia* to protect sexual orientation and gender identity under state sex non-discrimination laws were still considered for All-Star status. If and when these human rights commission or Attorney General decisions become permanent—as would be the case if there is a state supreme court decision to that effect—these cities will no longer be considered for All-Star status. For more information on the *Bostock* ruling and what it means for local non-discrimination laws, see page 24.

SELF-SUBMIT

Cities Not Rated by the MEI Submit Themselves

Currently, the MEI rates 506 cities from all across the country. In 2012, this project began with just 137 municipalities. Though the MEI’s reach is far and wide, our general selection criteria may not capture some cities that wish to be rated.

This is why we created a self-submit process to allow cities that do not fall under our selection criteria to receive a rating. City leadership who wish to have their city’s laws and policies assessed according to MEI standards can send an email to the MEI team at mei@hrc.org with all of the relevant documentation needed to justify credit for each criterion.

In 2020, we had 6 cities successfully self-submit: Doraville, Georgia; Dublin, California; Laguna Beach, California; Miami Beach, Florida; New Rochelle, New York; and West Palm Beach, Florida. By self-submitting,

these cities have demonstrated their commitment to equality and are sending a message to their LGBTQ residents that they are a welcome and important part of the community.

We might not be able to include scores from cities that self-submit in the publication, but we will always provide cities with their own scorecard and support them in working toward LGBTQ equality.




Full scorecards for self-submit cities can be found on hrc.org/MEI.


By self-submitting, cities demonstrate their commitment to equality and send a message to their LGBTQ residents that they are a welcome and important part of the community.

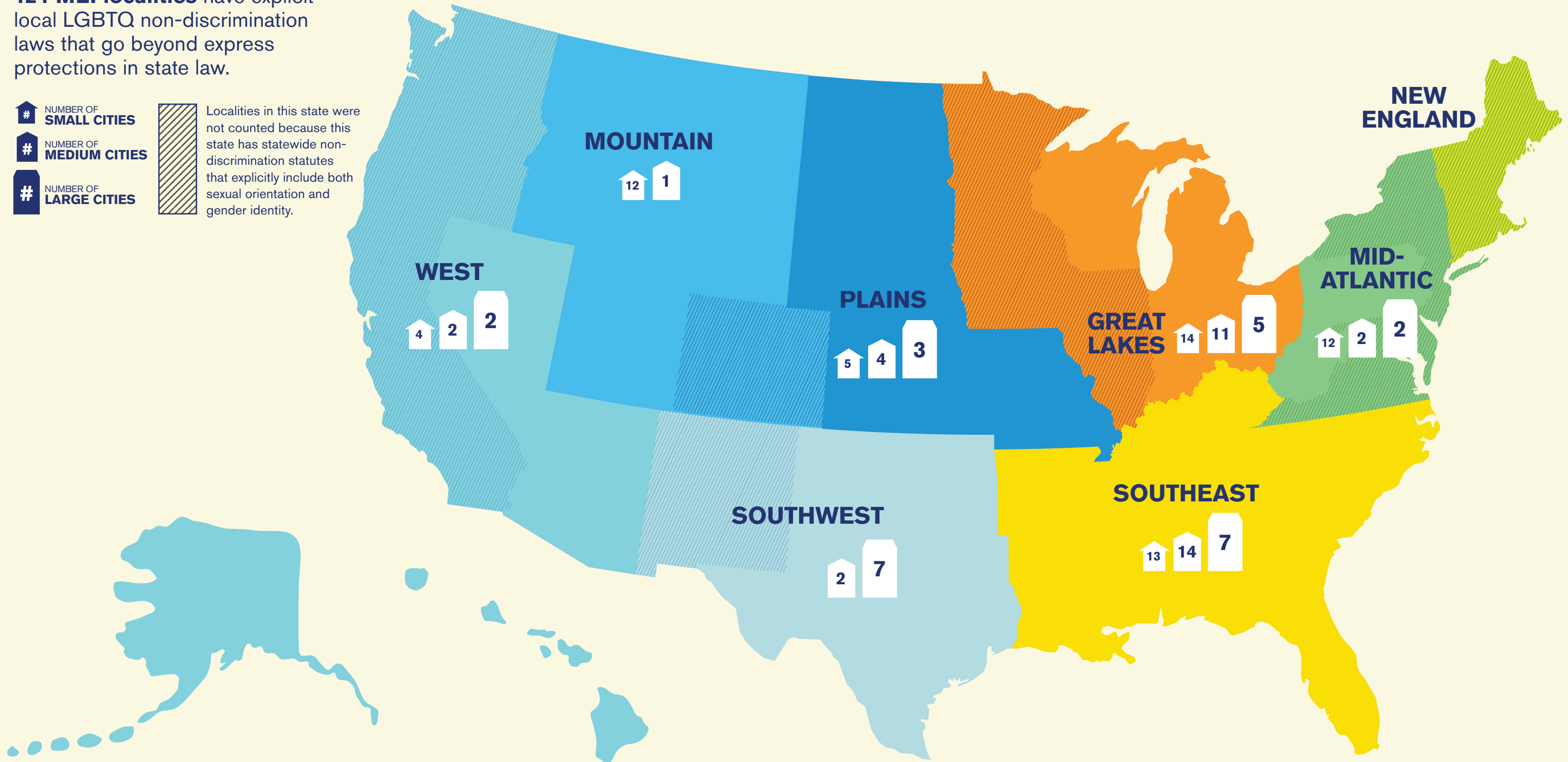
STATE	CITY	I. Non-Discrimination Laws	II. Municipality as Employer	III. Municipal Services	IV. Law Enforcement	V. Leadership on LGBTQ Equality	STANDARD POINTS	FLEX POINTS	FINAL SCORE
CALIFORNIA	Dublin	●	◐	◐	◐	◐	78	6	84
CALIFORNIA	Laguna Beach	●	◐	◐	●	◐	83	10	93
FLORIDA	Miami Beach	●	◐	●	●	●	98	12	100
FLORIDA	West Palm Beach	●	●	●	●	●	100	6	100
GEORGIA	Doraville	●	◐	◐	◐	●	70	8	78
NEW YORK	New Rochelle	●	◐	●	●	◐	95	8	100

EQUALITY ACROSS AMERICA

124 MEI localities have explicit local LGBTQ non-discrimination laws that go beyond express protections in state law.

-  NUMBER OF SMALL CITIES
-  NUMBER OF MEDIUM CITIES
-  NUMBER OF LARGE CITIES

 Localities in this state were not counted because this state has statewide non-discrimination statutes that explicitly include both sexual orientation and gender identity.



SCORES

Full scorecards for each city at hrc.org/mei

STATE	CITY	I. Non-Discrimination Laws	II. Municipality as Employer	III. Municipal Services	IV. Law Enforcement	V. Leadership on LGBTQ Equality	STANDARD POINTS	FLEX POINTS	FINAL SCORE
ALABAMA	Auburn	○	◐	◐	○	○	21	2	23
	Birmingham	●	◐	●	●	●	94	8	100
	Florence	○	○	○	○	○	0	0	0
	Hoover	○	○	○	◐	○	12	0	12
	Huntsville	○	◐	◐	○	◐	20	0	20
	Mobile	◐	○	◐	○	○	17	2	19
	Montgomery	○	◐	◐	◐	◐	36	4	40
	Tuscaloosa	○	◐	○	○	◐	22	2	24
ALASKA	Anchorage	●	◐	●	◐	●	88	4	92
	Fairbanks	○	◐	◐	◐	◐	32	2	34
	Homer	○	○	○	○	◐	5	2	7
	Juneau	●	◐	◐	●	●	84	4	88
	Ketchikan	●	○	○	○	●	38	0	38
	Sitka	●	○	○	○	◐	36	0	36
	Wasilla	○	○	○	◐	○	12	0	12
ARIZONA	Avondale	◐	○	◐	●	○	37	1	38
	Chandler	◐	◐	●	●	◐	66	0	66
	Flagstaff	◐	◐	◐	●	◐	81	7	88
	Gilbert	◐	◐	●	●	◐	68	7	75
	Glendale	◐	◐	◐	●	◐	70	2	72
	Mesa	◐	◐	◐	●	◐	64	0	64
	Peoria	◐	◐	◐	●	○	46	9	55
	Phoenix	◐	●	●	●	●	98	11	100
	Scottsdale	◐	◐	◐	●	◐	69	11	80
	Tempe	●	●	●	●	●	100	9	100
Tucson	●	◐	◐	●	●	93	11	100	
ARKANSAS	Conway	○	◐	○	○	◐	16	0	16
	Eureka Springs	●	◐	◐	○	●	60	3	63
	Fayetteville	○	◐	◐	◐	●	39	5	44
	Fort Smith	○	◐	○	◐	○	19	2	21
	Jonesboro	○	○	○	○	○	0	0	0
	Little Rock	○	◐	◐	●	●	61	5	66
	North Little Rock	○	◐	○	◐	◐	15	0	15
	Springdale	○	◐	○	◐	○	19	0	19

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SCORES

Full scorecards for each city at hrc.org/mei

STATE	CITY	I. Non-Discrimination Laws	II. Municipality as Employer	III. Municipal Services	IV. Law Enforcement	V. Leadership on LGBTQ Equality	STANDARD POINTS	FLEX POINTS	FINAL SCORE
CALIFORNIA	Anaheim	●	◐	◐	◐	◐	78	9	87
	Bakersfield	●	◐	◐	◐	○	54	4	58
	Berkeley	●	◐	◐	●	●	93	13	100
	Brisbane	●	◐	○	◐	○	49	4	53
	Cathedral City	●	●	◐	◐	●	81	19	100
	Chula Vista	●	◐	◐	●	◐	89	11	100
	Concord	●	◐	◐	◐	◐	69	12	81
	Corona	●	◐	○	◐	○	55	4	59
	Elk Grove	●	◐	◐	◐	◐	78	4	82
	Escondido	●	◐	○	◐	○	55	5	60
	Fontana	●	◐	○	◐	○	55	4	59
	Fremont	●	◐	●	◐	◐	81	9	90
	Fresno	●	◐	○	◐	○	50	5	55
	Fullerton	●	◐	◐	◐	○	73	6	79
	Garden Grove	●	○	◐	◐	◐	49	4	53
	Glendale	●	◐	◐	◐	◐	65	5	70
	Guerneville (Sonoma County)	●	●	◐	◐	◐	81	13	94
	Hayward	●	◐	◐	◐	◐	75	4	79
	Huntington Beach	●	◐	◐	◐	○	54	4	59
	Irvine	●	◐	●	●	◐	84	9	93
	Lancaster	●	◐	◐	●	◐	73	4	77
	Long Beach	●	●	●	●	●	100	11	100
	Los Angeles	●	◐	◐	●	●	93	15	100
	Modesto	●	◐	◐	◐	◐	55	5	60
	Moreno Valley	●	◐	○	◐	○	56	4	60
	Oakland	●	◐	◐	●	●	94	15	100
	Oceanside	●	◐	◐	●	◐	90	14	100
Ontario	●	◐	○	◐	○	48	4	52	
Orange	●	◐	◐	◐	○	67	4	71	
Oxnard	●	◐	◐	◐	○	54	4	58	
Palm Desert	●	◐	◐	●	◐	83	11	94	
Palm Springs	●	●	◐	●	●	98	19	100	
Palmdale	●	◐	◐	◐	○	71	5	76	
Pasadena	●	●	◐	◐	◐	84	9	93	
Pomona	●	◐	○	◐	○	68	4	72	
Rancho Cucamonga	●	◐	○	◐	○	62	6	68	
Rancho Mirage	●	◐	◐	●	◐	87	16	100	

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SCORES

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CALIFORNIA	Richmond	●	◐	●	●	◐	90	4	94
	Riverside	●	●	◐	●	◐	94	7	100
	Sacramento	●	●	◐	●	◐	91	17	100
	Salinas	●	◐	○	◐	○	60	4	64
	San Bernardino	●	○	◐	◐	○	49	4	53
	San Diego	●	●	●	●	●	100	11	100
	San Francisco	●	●	●	●	●	100	17	100
	San Jose	●	◐	◐	●	●	93	4	97
	Santa Ana	●	◐	◐	◐	◐	57	4	61
	Santa Clarita	●	◐	◐	●	○	70	4	74
	Santa Monica	●	●	◐	●	●	98	7	100
	Santa Rosa	●	◐	◐	◐	◐	71	7	78
	Signal Hill	●	◐	◐	◐	◐	80	16	96
	Stockton	●	◐	○	●	◐	67	4	71
	Sunnyvale	●	◐	●	◐	◐	80	9	89
	Thousand Oaks	●	◐	○	◐	◐	63	5	68
	Torrance	●	◐	◐	◐	◐	54	4	58
Vallejo	●	◐	◐	◐	◐	77	4	81	
Visalia	●	◐	○	◐	◐	58	4	62	
West Hollywood	●	●	◐	●	●	98	17	100	
COLORADO	Aspen	●	◐	○	◐	○	57	4	61
	Aurora	●	◐	◐	◐	◐	69	5	74
	Boulder	●	◐	●	●	◐	96	14	100
	Colorado Springs	●	◐	◐	◐	○	58	3	61
	Denver	●	◐	●	●	●	98	9	100
	Fort Collins	●	◐	◐	●	◐	88	7	95
	Lakewood	●	◐	○	◐	○	56	2	58
	Littleton	●	◐	○	◐	○	49	2	51
	CONNECTICUT	Bridgeport	◐	○	○	◐	◐	40	2
Fairfield		◐	◐	○	◐	◐	44	2	46
Hartford		◐	◐	◐	●	◐	89	10	99
New Britain		◐	◐	◐	◐	●	65	6	71
New Haven		◐	◐	◐	●	◐	79	4	83
Norwalk		◐	◐	●	●	◐	92	14	100
Stamford		◐	●	●	●	●	94	6	100
Storrs (Mansfield)		◐	◐	◐	◐	○	55	6	61

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CONNECTICUT	Waterbury	◐	◐	◐	◐	○	63	4	67
DELAWARE	Bethany Beach	◐	◐	○	○	○	35	2	37
	Dover	◐	◐	◐	◐	○	52	2	54
	Middletown	◐	○	○	○	○	28	2	30
	Milford	◐	◐	○	◐	◐	67	2	69
	Newark	◐	◐	○	◐	○	54	2	56
	Rehoboth Beach	◐	◐	○	◐	○	54	4	58
	Smyrna	◐	○	○	◐	○	40	3	43
	Wilmington	◐	◐	◐	●	◐	83	5	88
FLORIDA	Cape Coral	◐	◐	○	◐	◐	48	1	49
	Coral Gables	◐	◐	●	●	◐	90	1	91
	Daytona Beach	●	○	○	○	○	30	0	30
	Fort Lauderdale	●	●	●	●	●	100	10	100
	Gainesville	●	◐	◐	●	●	88	7	95
	Hialeah	◐	◐	◐	○	○	40	0	40
	Hollywood	◐	◐	◐	●	◐	80	3	83
	Jacksonville	◐	◐	◐	●	◐	81	0	81
	Miami	◐	◐	●	●	○	70	5	75
	Miami Shores	◐	◐	●	◐	◐	81	1	82
	Oakland Park	◐	◐	●	●	●	90	9	99
	Orlando	●	◐	●	●	●	98	17	100
	Pembroke Pines	◐	◐	◐	◐	◐	70	3	73
	Port Saint Lucie	◐	◐	◐	◐	◐	53	0	53
St. Petersburg	◐	●	●	●	●	97	14	100	
Tallahassee	●	◐	◐	●	●	92	14	100	
Tampa	●	◐	●	●	●	98	16	100	
Wilton Manors	◐	●	●	●	●	96	18	100	
GEORGIA	Athens-Clarke County	○	◐	◐	○	◐	24	5	29
	Atlanta	●	●	●	●	●	100	9	100
	Augusta-Richmond County	○	◐	○	◐	◐	28	0	28
	Avondale Estates	○	◐	○	○	◐	18	0	18
	Columbus	○	◐	◐	●	◐	61	2	63
	Decatur	●	●	◐	◐	●	86	0	86
	North Druid Hills (DeKalb County)	○	◐	○	○	○	7	0	7
	Roswell	◐	○	○	○	○	5	0	5

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SCORES

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GEORGIA	Sandy Springs	🟡	🟡	🟡	🟡	🟢	21	0	21
	Savannah	🟢	🟡	🟡	🟡	🟢	75	3	78
HAWAII	Hawaii County	🟢	🟢	🟡	🟡	🟡	50	2	52
	Honolulu County	🟢	🟡	🟡	🟡	🟡	58	2	60
	Kalawao County	🟢	🟡	🟡	🟡	🟡	33	2	35
	Kauai County	🟢	🟡	🟡	🟡	🟡	30	2	32
	Maui County	🟢	🟡	🟡	🟡	🟡	66	4	70
IDAHO	Boise	🟢	🟡	🟡	🟢	🟡	75	0	75
	Coeur d'Alene	🟢	🟡	🟡	🟡	🟡	66	0	66
	Idaho Falls	🟢	🟡	🟡	🟡	🟢	58	0	58
	Meridian	🟢	🟡	🟡	🟡	🟡	50	0	50
	Moscow	🟢	🟡	🟡	🟡	🟡	68	1	69
	Nampa	🟡	🟡	🟡	🟡	🟡	18	0	18
	Pocatello	🟢	🟡	🟡	🟢	🟡	71	0	71
ILLINOIS	Aurora	🟢	🟡	🟡	🟢	🟡	77	6	83
	Carbondale	🟢	🟡	🟡	🟡	🟡	45	4	49
	Champaign	🟢	🟡	🟢	🟡	🟡	75	9	84
	Chicago	🟢	🟢	🟡	🟢	🟢	93	11	100
	Joliet	🟢	🟡	🟡	🟡	🟡	61	4	65
	Naperville	🟢	🟡	🟡	🟡	🟡	66	4	70
	Peoria	🟢	🟡	🟡	🟡	🟡	68	6	74
	Rockford	🟢	🟡	🟡	🟡	🟢	77	4	81
	Springfield	🟢	🟡	🟡	🟡	🟡	63	5	68
INDIANA	Bloomington	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟢	100	6	100
	Evansville	🟢	🟡	🟢	🟡	🟢	80	2	82
	Fort Wayne	🟡	🟡	🟡	🟡	🟡	40	0	40
	Hammond	🟢	🟡	🟡	🟡	🟢	71	0	71
	Indianapolis	🟢	🟡	🟡	🟢	🟡	86	3	89
	Muncie	🟢	🟡	🟡	🟡	🟢	69	0	69
	South Bend	🟢	🟡	🟢	🟡	🟡	75	0	75
	Terre Haute	🟢	🟡	🟡	🟢	🟡	90	0	90
	West Lafayette	🟢	🟡	🟢	🟡	🟡	85	0	85

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IOWA	Ames	🟢	🟡	🟢	🟢	🟢	82	6	88
	Cedar Rapids	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟢	100	2	100
	Davenport	🟢	🟡	🟢	🟡	🟢	80	4	84
	Des Moines	🟢	🟢	🟡	🟢	🟢	88	0	88
	Dubuque	🟢	🟡	🟢	🟢	🟢	95	5	100
	Iowa City	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟢	100	12	100
	Sioux City	🟢	🟡	🟡	🟡	🟡	55	2	57
	Waterloo	🟢	🟡	🟡	🟡	🟡	59	0	59
	West Des Moines	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟢	94	5	99
KANSAS	Emporia	🟢	🟡	🟡	🟡	🟡	63	0	63
	Hutchinson	🟢	🟡	🟡	🟡	🟡	61	0	61
	Kansas City	🟢	🟡	🟡	🟡	🟡	64	4	68
	Lawrence	🟢	🟡	🟢	🟢	🟢	92	6	98
	Manhattan	🟢	🟡	🟡	🟢	🟢	81	0	81
	Olathe	🟢	🟡	🟡	🟡	🟡	68	3	71
	Overland Park	🟢	🟡	🟡	🟢	🟢	88	5	93
	Topeka	🟢	🟡	🟡	🟢	🟢	77	3	80
	Wichita	🟢	🟡	🟡	🟢	🟡	59	0	59
	KENTUCKY	Berea	🟡	🟡	🟡	🟡	🟡	35	0
Bowling Green		🟡	🟡	🟡	🟡	🟡	20	0	20
Covington		🟢	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟢	89	7	96
Frankfort		🟢	🟡	🟡	🟡	🟡	66	0	66
Lexington		🟢	🟡	🟢	🟢	🟢	86	9	95
Louisville		🟢	🟡	🟢	🟢	🟢	96	7	100
Morehead		🟢	🟡	🟡	🟡	🟡	55	0	55
Owensboro		🟡	🟡	🟡	🟡	🟡	18	0	18
LOUISIANA		Alexandria	🟡	🟡	🟢	🟡	🟡	39	4
	Baton Rouge	🟡	🟡	🟡	🟢	🟡	44	6	50
	Lafayette	🟡	🟡	🟡	🟡	🟡	14	0	14
	Lake Charles	🟡	🟡	🟡	🟡	🟡	12	0	12
	Metairie (Jefferson Parish)	🟡	🟡	🟡	🟡	🟡	26	0	26
	Monroe	🟡	🟡	🟡	🟡	🟡	12	0	12
	New Orleans	🟢	🟡	🟢	🟢	🟢	98	8	100
	Shreveport	🟢	🟡	🟡	🟡	🟢	77	0	77

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MAINE	Auburn	●	○	○	○	○	34	4	38
	Augusta	●	○	○	○	○	46	6	52
	Bangor	●	○	○	○	○	40	7	47
	Brunswick	●	○	○	○	○	33	6	39
	Lewiston	●	○	○	○	○	52	4	56
	Orono	●	○	○	○	○	26	6	32
	Portland	●	●	○	○	○	89	5	94
	Scarborough	●	○	○	○	○	54	7	61
	South Portland	●	○	○	○	○	54	4	58
MARYLAND	Annapolis	●	○	○	○	○	80	4	84
	Baltimore	●	○	○	○	○	94	6	100
	Bowie	●	○	○	○	○	56	4	60
	College Park	●	○	○	○	○	92	9	100
	Columbia (Howard County)	●	○	○	○	○	90	12	100
	Frederick	●	○	○	○	○	96	4	100
	Gaithersburg	●	○	○	○	○	87	6	93
	Hagerstown	●	○	○	○	○	66	2	68
	Rockville	●	○	○	○	○	100	10	100
	Towson (Baltimore County)	●	○	○	○	○	82	4	86
	MASSACHUSETTS	Amherst	●	○	○	○	○	71	7
Arlington		●	○	○	○	○	92	8	100
Boston		●	○	○	○	○	100	8	100
Cambridge		●	○	○	○	○	100	14	100
Lowell		●	○	○	○	○	48	2	50
Northampton		●	○	○	○	○	94	10	100
Provincetown		●	○	○	○	○	94	8	100
Salem		●	○	○	○	○	100	2	100
Springfield		●	○	○	○	○	68	6	74
Worcester		●	○	○	○	○	99	4	100
MICHIGAN	Ann Arbor	●	○	○	○	○	100	5	100
	Detroit	●	○	○	○	○	95	11	100
	East Lansing	●	○	○	○	○	98	6	100
	Ferndale	●	○	○	○	○	93	12	100
	Grand Rapids	●	○	○	○	○	90	2	92
	Kalamazoo	●	○	○	○	○	78	2	80

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MICHIGAN	Lansing	●	○	○	○	○	84	2	86
	Pleasant Ridge	●	○	○	○	○	55	0	55
	Sterling Heights	○	○	○	○	○	39	0	39
	Traverse City	●	○	○	○	○	82	2	84
	Warren	○	○	○	○	○	16	0	16
	MINNESOTA	Bloomington	○	○	○	○	○	77	0
Duluth		○	○	○	○	○	82	8	90
Eden Prairie		○	○	○	○	○	51	0	51
Minneapolis		●	○	○	○	○	98	4	100
Minnetonka		○	○	○	○	○	43	0	43
Rochester		○	○	○	○	○	60	4	64
Saint Cloud		○	○	○	○	○	48	0	48
Saint Paul		○	○	○	○	○	99	5	100
MISSISSIPPI		Bay St. Louis	○	○	○	○	○	3	0
	Biloxi	○	○	○	○	○	30	0	30
	Gulfport	○	○	○	○	○	13	0	13
	Hattiesburg	○	○	○	○	○	35	3	38
	Jackson	○	○	○	○	○	80	0	80
	Ocean Springs	○	○	○	○	○	4	0	4
	Oxford	○	○	○	○	○	17	0	17
	Southaven	○	○	○	○	○	0	0	0
	Starkville	○	○	○	○	○	16	0	16
	MISSOURI	Cape Girardeau	○	○	○	○	○	0	0
Columbia		○	○	○	○	○	99	9	100
Independence		○	○	○	○	○	18	0	18
Jefferson City		○	○	○	○	○	57	0	57
Kansas City		○	○	○	○	○	85	9	94
Springfield		○	○	○	○	○	45	2	47
St. Charles		○	○	○	○	○	49	0	49
St. Louis		○	○	○	○	○	98	10	100
MONTANA		Billings	○	○	○	○	○	20	0
	Bozeman	○	○	○	○	○	75	3	78
	Butte-Silver Bow	○	○	○	○	○	36	0	36
	Great Falls	○	○	○	○	○	6	0	6

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MONTANA	Helena	●	●	○	●	●	58	0	58
	Kalispell	○	●	○	●	○	18	0	18
	Missoula	●	●	●	●	●	93	6	99
	Whitefish	●	●	○	●	●	57	1	58
NEBRASKA	Bellevue	●	●	○	●	○	46	0	46
	Fremont	●	○	○	○	○	20	0	20
	Grand Island	●	●	○	●	●	47	0	47
	Kearney	●	○	○	●	○	32	0	32
	Lincoln	●	●	●	●	●	77	6	83
	North Platte	●	○	○	●	○	32	0	32
	Omaha	●	●	●	●	●	71	0	71
NEVADA	Carson City	●	●	○	○	○	48	2	50
	Elko	●	●	○	○	○	48	2	50
	Enterprise (Clark County)	●	●	●	●	●	91	10	100
	Henderson	●	●	●	●	●	85	9	94
	Las Vegas	●	●	●	●	●	87	15	100
	Mesquite	●	○	○	○	○	29	2	31
	North Las Vegas	●	●	○	●	○	54	2	56
	Paradise (Clark County)	●	●	●	●	●	91	10	100
	Reno	●	●	●	●	●	96	16	100
Sparks	●	●	○	○	○	42	2	44	
NEW HAMPSHIRE	Concord	●	●	●	●	○	71	2	73
	Derry	●	●	○	●	○	56	4	60
	Dover	●	●	●	●	○	66	2	68
	Durham	●	●	●	●	●	86	4	90
	Keene	●	●	●	●	○	65	4	69
	Manchester	●	●	○	●	○	59	2	61
	Nashua	●	●	○	○	○	50	2	52
	Plymouth	●	○	○	○	○	42	2	44
	Portsmouth	●	●	○	○	○	51	4	55
Rochester	●	○	○	○	○	37	4	41	
NEW JERSEY	Asbury Park	●	●	●	●	○	92	4	96
	Elizabeth	●	●	●	○	○	69	2	71

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NEW JERSEY	Hoboken	●	●	○	●	●	91	12	100
	Jersey City	●	●	●	●	●	98	5	100
	Lambertville	●	●	○	●	●	91	7	98
	Montclair	●	○	○	●	○	71	7	78
	New Brunswick	●	○	○	○	○	65	2	67
	Newark	●	○	○	○	○	59	2	61
	Ocean Grove	●	○	●	●	○	82	7	89
	Paterson	●	○	○	○	○	60	2	62
NEW MEXICO	Princeton	●	●	●	●	●	96	9	100
	Trenton	●	●	●	○	○	87	8	95
	Albuquerque	●	●	●	○	○	78	13	91
	Eldorado at Santa Fe	●	○	○	○	○	42	4	46
	Farmington	●	○	○	○	○	38	4	42
	Gallup	●	○	○	○	○	33	4	37
	Las Cruces	●	○	○	○	○	47	9	56
	Rio Rancho	●	○	○	○	○	40	4	44
NEW YORK	Roswell	●	○	○	○	○	40	4	44
	Santa Fe	●	●	○	○	○	56	9	65
	Albany	●	●	●	●	●	98	13	100
	Brookhaven	●	○	○	○	○	57	2	59
	Buffalo	●	●	○	○	○	85	6	91
	Ithaca	●	●	○	●	●	93	5	98
	New York	●	●	○	●	●	95	17	100
	Northwest Harbor	●	○	○	○	○	40	2	42
NORTH CAROLINA	Rochester	●	●	○	○	○	93	9	100
	Syracuse	●	○	○	○	○	65	7	72
	White Plains	●	○	○	○	○	92	4	96
	Yonkers	●	○	○	○	○	97	4	100
	Carrboro	○	○	○	○	○	64	12	76
	Cary	○	○	○	○	○	0	0	0
NEW JERSEY	Chapel Hill	○	○	○	○	○	68	18	86
	Charlotte	○	○	○	○	○	57	5	62
	Durham	○	○	○	○	○	55	10	65
	Fayetteville	○	○	○	○	○	37	2	39
	Greensboro	○	○	○	○	○	64	15	79

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NORTH CAROLINA	Raleigh	○	●	●	●	●	51	13	64
	Wilmington	○	●	○	●	●	29	0	29
	Winston-Salem	○	●	●	●	●	45	9	54
NORTH DAKOTA	Bismarck	●	●	●	●	○	63	0	63
	Fargo	●	○	●	●	●	72	13	85
	Grand Forks	●	●	●	●	●	78	0	78
	Jamestown	●	○	○	○	○	37	0	37
	Mandan	●	○	○	●	○	42	0	42
	Minot	●	○	●	●	○	47	0	47
	West Fargo	●	○	○	●	○	44	0	44
OHIO	Akron	●	●	●	●	●	92	7	99
	Cincinnati	●	●	●	●	●	96	14	100
	Cleveland	●	●	●	●	●	94	9	100
	Columbus	●	●	●	●	●	98	9	100
	Dayton	●	●	●	●	●	97	4	100
	Dublin	○	●	●	●	○	44	0	44
	Lakewood	●	●	●	●	●	83	4	87
	Toledo	●	●	●	●	●	89	9	98
OKLAHOMA	Broken Arrow	○	○	○	○	○	0	0	0
	Edmond	○	●	○	●	○	26	0	26
	Lawton	○	○	●	●	○	17	0	17
	Moore	○	○	○	○	○	0	0	0
	Norman	●	●	●	●	●	92	0	92
	Oklahoma City	○	●	●	●	●	54	3	57
	Stillwater	○	●	○	●	○	26	0	26
	Tulsa	○	●	●	●	●	68	10	78
OREGON	Ashland	●	○	○	●	○	49	6	55
	Bend	●	●	○	●	○	56	2	58
	Corvallis	●	●	●	●	○	62	2	64
	Eugene	●	●	●	●	●	98	5	100
	Gresham	●	●	○	●	○	66	4	70
	Hillsboro	●	●	○	●	○	54	4	58
	Portland	●	●	●	●	●	98	10	100
	Salem	●	●	●	●	●	88	2	90

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PENNSYLVANIA	Allentown	●	●	●	●	●	98	8	100
	Carlisle	●	○	●	●	●	86	0	86
	Erie	●	●	●	○	●	78	2	80
	Harrisburg	●	●	○	○	○	66	3	69
	New Hope	●	○	●	●	●	86	3	89
	Philadelphia	●	●	●	●	●	98	14	100
	Pittsburgh	●	●	●	●	●	100	11	100
	Reading	●	●	●	●	○	89	2	91
	State College	●	●	●	●	●	94	8	100
	Wilkes-Barre	●	○	●	●	●	86	4	90
RHODE ISLAND	Cranston	○	○	○	○	○	55	2	57
	East Providence	○	○	○	○	○	62	2	64
	Kingston (South Kingstown)	○	○	○	○	○	54	2	56
	Narragansett	○	○	○	○	○	48	2	50
	Newport	○	○	○	○	○	55	5	60
	Pawtucket	○	○	○	○	○	60	2	62
	Providence	●	●	●	●	●	100	6	100
	Warwick	○	○	○	○	○	61	4	65
SOUTH CAROLINA	Charleston	○	○	○	○	○	73	8	81
	Clemson	○	○	○	○	○	0	0	0
	Columbia	○	○	○	○	○	60	0	60
	Greenville	○	○	○	○	○	33	0	33
	Mount Pleasant	○	○	○	○	○	32	0	32
	Myrtle Beach	○	○	○	○	○	50	2	52
	North Charleston	○	○	○	○	○	38	2	40
	Rock Hill	○	○	○	○	○	17	0	17
SOUTH DAKOTA	Aberdeen	○	○	○	○	○	12	0	12
	Brookings	●	●	●	●	●	98	4	100
	Mitchell	○	○	○	○	○	0	0	0
	Pierre	○	○	○	○	○	0	0	0
	Rapid City	○	○	○	○	○	19	0	19
	Sioux Falls	○	○	○	○	○	60	2	62
	Spearfish	○	○	○	○	○	19	0	19
	Vermillion	○	○	○	○	○	41	2	43
	Watertown	○	○	○	○	○	29	0	29

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TENNESSEE	Chattanooga	○	●	●	●	●	45	0	45
	Clarksville	○	○	●	●	○	17	0	17
	Franklin	○	●	○	●	○	19	0	19
	Johnson City	○	○	○	●	○	12	0	12
	Knoxville	○	●	●	●	●	53	7	60
	Memphis	○	●	●	●	●	45	3	48
	Murfreesboro	○	○	○	●	○	12	0	12
	Nashville	○	●	●	●	●	64	14	78
TEXAS	Amarillo	○	●	●	○	○	19	2	21
	Arlington	○	●	●	●	●	55	8	63
	Austin	●	●	●	●	●	100	15	100
	Brownsville	○	●	●	●	●	34	0	34
	College Station	○	○	○	●	○	12	0	12
	Corpus Christi	○	●	●	●	●	46	2	48
	Dallas	●	●	●	●	●	89	12	100
	Denton	○	●	●	●	●	59	4	63
	El Paso	○	●	●	●	●	48	5	53
	Fort Worth	●	●	●	●	●	91	9	100
	Garland	○	○	○	●	○	12	2	14
	Grand Prairie	○	●	○	●	○	27	0	27
	Houston	○	●	●	●	●	63	13	76
	Irving	○	●	●	●	●	36	0	36
	Killeen	○	●	○	●	○	19	0	19
	Laredo	○	○	○	○	○	0	0	0
	Lubbock	○	●	○	●	○	26	0	26
	McAllen	○	●	○	○	○	7	0	7
	McKinney	○	●	○	●	○	26	0	26
	Mesquite	○	●	○	●	●	29	0	29
Pasadena	○	○	○	○	○	0	2	2	
Plano	●	●	○	●	●	68	1	69	
Round Rock	○	○	○	●	○	12	0	12	
San Antonio	●	●	●	●	●	83	18	100	
Waco	○	●	●	●	●	32	2	34	
UTAH	Logan	●	●	○	●	○	46	2	48
	Ogden City	●	●	●	●	●	54	4	58
	Orem	●	○	○	○	○	20	2	22

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SCORES

Full scorecards for each city at hrc.org/mei

STATE	CITY	I. Non-Discrimination Laws	II. Municipality as Employer	III. Municipal Services	IV. Law Enforcement	V. Leadership on LGBTQ Equality	STANDARD POINTS	FLEX POINTS	FINAL SCORE
UTAH	Park City	●	●	○	○	○	35	2	37
	Provo	●	●	○	●	●	50	2	52
	Salt Lake City	●	●	●	●	●	70	5	75
	West Jordan	●	○	○	●	●	34	2	36
	West Valley City	●	●	○	●	○	46	2	48
VERMONT	Barre	●	○	○	○	○	28	4	32
	Brattleboro	●	●	○	●	○	54	4	58
	Burlington	●	●	●	●	●	91	7	98
	Castleton	●	●	○	○	○	42	4	46
	Essex	●	●	○	●	○	54	4	58
	Montpelier	●	●	○	○	●	46	6	52
	Rutland	●	●	○	●	●	55	4	59
	South Burlington	●	●	○	●	●	55	4	59
Winooski	●	●	○	●	○	56	4	60	
VIRGINIA	Alexandria	●	●	●	●	●	100	8	100
	Arlington County	●	●	●	●	●	94	16	100
	Charlottesville	●	●	●	●	●	84	5	89
	Chesapeake	●	●	○	●	○	59	2	61
	Fairfax County	●	●	●	●	●	77	11	88
	Hampton	●	●	●	●	●	72	6	77
	Newport News	●	●	●	●	●	72	2	74
	Norfolk	●	●	●	●	●	85	6	91
	Richmond	●	●	●	●	●	100	5	100
	Roanoke	●	●	○	●	●	50	4	54
Virginia Beach	●	●	●	●	●	100	13	100	
WASHINGTON	Bellevue	●	●	●	●	●	97	7	100
	Bellingham	●	●	○	●	●	61	3	64
	Kent	●	●	○	○	○	75	5	80
	Olympia	●	●	●	●	●	96	9	100
	Pullman	●	●	○	○	○	54	2	56
	Seattle	●	●	●	●	●	98	13	100
	Spokane	●	●	○	○	○	64	3	67
	Tacoma	●	●	●	●	●	83	13	96
	Vancouver	●	●	○	○	○	63	9	72
	Vashon (King County)	●	●	○	○	○	81	13	94

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SCORES

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STATE	CITY						STANDARD POINTS	FLEX POINTS	FINAL SCORE
		I. Non-Discrimination Laws	II. Municipality as Employer	III. Municipal Services	IV. Law Enforcement	V. Leadership on LGBTQ Equality			
WEST VIRGINIA	Charles Town	●	◐	○	○	●	45	0	45
	Charleston	●	◐	●	●	●	88	4	92
	Huntington	●	◐	●	●	●	98	6	100
	Lewisburg	●	○	◐	○	●	43	2	45
	Morgantown	●	◐	◐	◐	●	71	6	77
	Parkersburg	○	○	○	◐	◐	13	0	13
	Wheeling	●	○	◐	◐	●	57	2	59
WISCONSIN	Appleton	●	◐	◐	◐	◐	70	4	74
	Green Bay	◐	◐	◐	●	◐	60	0	60
	Kenosha	◐	◐	○	○	●	37	2	39
	Madison	●	●	●	●	●	100	18	100
	Milwaukee	●	◐	●	●	●	98	5	100
	Oshkosh	◐	◐	◐	◐	◐	61	0	61
	Racine	●	◐	●	◐	●	80	6	86
WYOMING	Casper	○	◐	○	○	◐	11	0	11
	Cheyenne	○	◐	○	○	◐	16	0	16
	Gillette	○	◐	○	◐	◐	22	0	22
	Jackson	●	◐	○	◐	●	62	0	62
	Laramie	●	◐	◐	◐	●	69	3	72
	Rock Springs	○	○	○	○	○	0	0	0
	Sheridan	○	○	○	◐	○	12	0	12

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

XAVIER PERSAD serves as Senior Legislative Counsel at the Human Rights Campaign and provides his legal research and analysis skills and policy experience to ensure that the Municipal Equality Index is incisive, accurate, and resourceful. He focuses on state and local law and policy, including protections against conversion therapy and anti-discrimination safeguards in employment, housing, and public spaces. Xavier obtained his Master of Laws degree from the London School of Economics and Political Science and his law degree from Florida A&M University College of Law. He is a member of the Florida Bar.

ABOUT THE MEI TEAM

This project would not exist without the dedication, persistence, and ingenuity of the MEI team and those who have supported us. To reach the MEI team with questions, comments, suggestions, or requests for MEI hard copies or other resources, please email mei@hrc.org.

COLIN KUTNEY is one of HRC's two-person core MEI team in the role of Senior Manager for State and Municipal Programs at the Human Rights Campaign. He expertly manages both the Municipal Equality Index and the State Equality Index each year. Colin conducts research, manages all project logistics, analyzes MEI data, and works one-on-one with cities across the country to advance LGBTQ equality. He carries the weight of this extensive project with incredible strength and a contagious optimism. Colin is a graduate of the University at Albany in Albany, NY.

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EQUALITY FEDERATION INSTITUTE

And as always, this work happens because of our dedicated partners at the Equality Federation Institute. The achievements we celebrate in this publication are often theirs. The state groups on the following page deserve a special mention for their engagement and support this year.

For questions or additional information, please contact mei@hrc.org or visit hrc.org/mei.

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The Municipal Equality Index would not have been possible without the valuable contributions made by state and local advocates. A particular thanks therefore goes out to the following:



CONNECTING COMMUNITIES

A NATIONAL LGBTQ LIAISON SUMMIT

Join us in 2021 for the second annual national summit for LGBTQ municipal liaisons and allied local officials!



Alphonso David
President, HRC



Keisha Lance Bottoms
Mayor, City of Atlanta

This one-of-a-kind annual gathering is designed to provide a space for pro-equality municipal officials to learn more about the most critical issues facing the LGBTQ community and what they can do to address them.

Invitations will be sent in the first half of 2021. If you are a local official and would like to be added to the invitation list, please email liaisons@hrc.org.

WE LOOK FORWARD TO SEEING YOU NEXT YEAR!

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