



The Ultimate Business Case For LGBTQ+ Marketing

A REPORT BY THE NATIONAL LGBT MEDIA ASSOCIATION



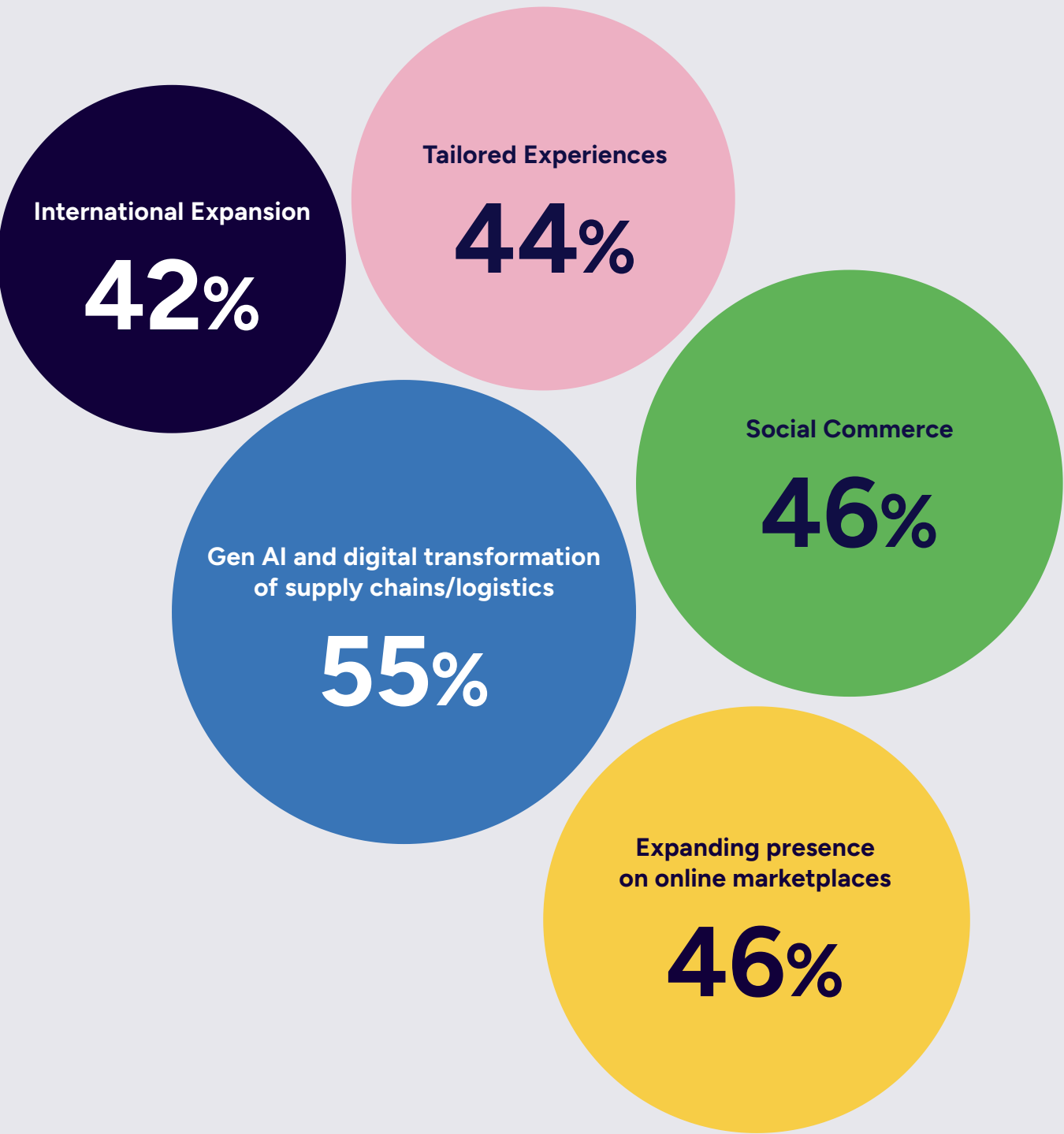
The LGBTQ+ market is bigger than most brands realize.

With \$1.4 trillion in U.S. spending power, a population approaching 10% of American adults, and brand loyalty rates that exceed the general market, LGBTQ+ consumers represent one of the most significant target markets in modern marketing.

Yet too many organizations remain on the sidelines, uncertain how to engage authentically or unconvinced they should engage at all. This report uncovers why organizations can no longer afford to wait.



Fig 1: Top five growth drivers for ecommerce in 2025



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What Our Data Reveals

Our recent survey of more than 100 marketing professionals uncovers a compelling reality:

LGBTQ+ campaigns deliver results.

- 46% of marketers report their LGBTQ+-targeted campaigns outperform general market campaigns in ROI

Investment is growing—but unevenly.

- 51% of marketers increased their LGBTQ+ marketing investment since 2022
- 42% plan to increase budgets further in 2026
- Yet 36% still allocate less than 5% of their marketing budget to LGBTQ+ initiatives

Barriers remain.

- Potential backlash ranks as the #1 challenge in creating LGBTQ+ content
- Budget scrutiny and leadership buy-in follow close behind

The Cost of Inaction

While some brands hesitate, others are capturing this loyal consumer base. The risk is more than just a missed opportunity; it could mean getting outpaced by your competitors. 78% of LGBTQ+ adults and their friends and family would switch to brands known to be LGBTQ-friendly.

As younger generations enter the workforce and marketplace, the expectation of inclusive marketing will only intensify. Brands that fail to build authentic relationships now may find the door closed later.

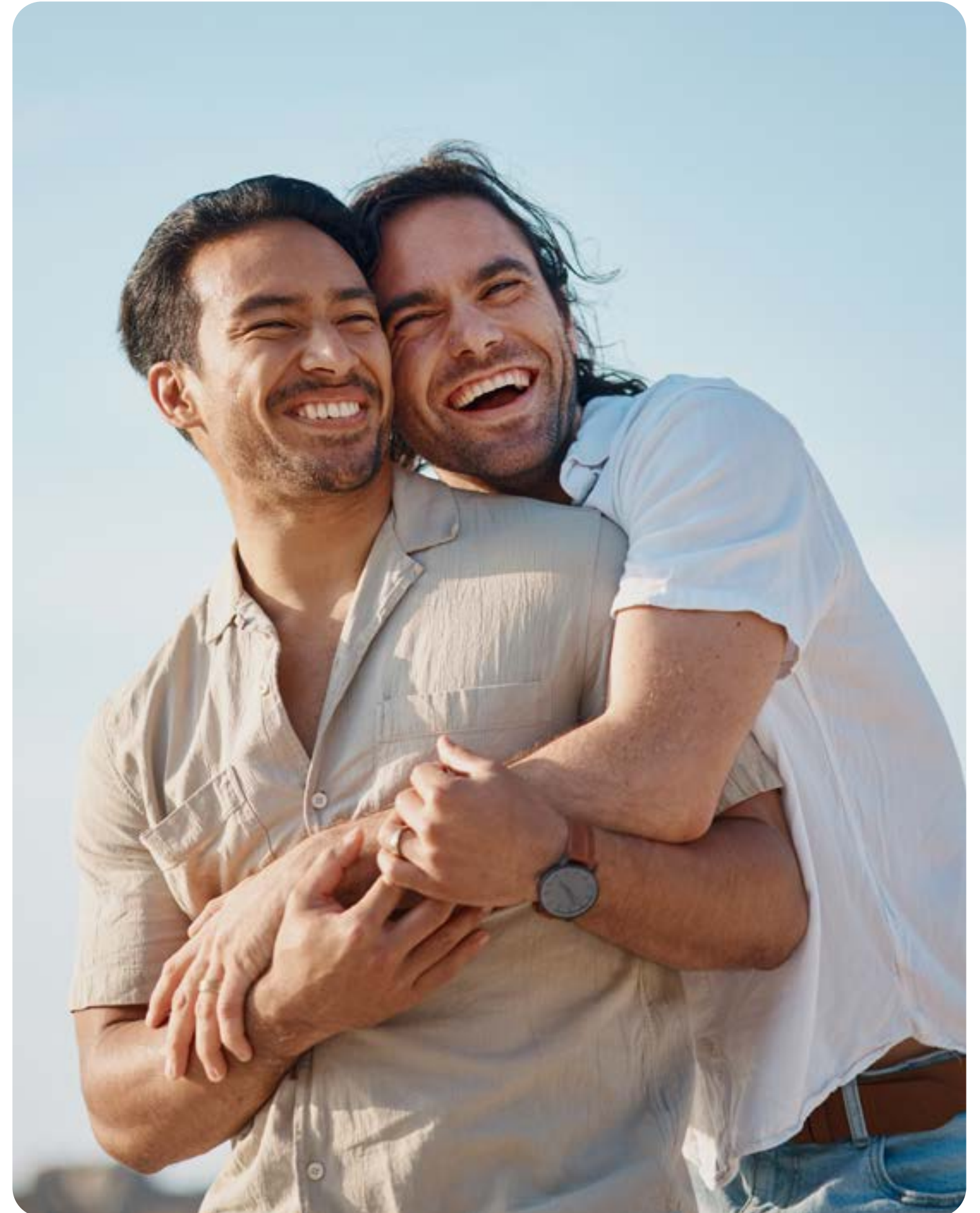


What's Inside This Report

In the pages that follow, you'll find:

1. The Foundation of LGBTQ+ Marketing: The principles that separate authentic engagement from performative gestures
2. LGBTQ+ Economic Power: Updated data on spending power, demographic shifts, and generational trends
3. Marketing Professional Survey Findings: What marketing professionals are actually experiencing in the field
4. The Business Risk of Inaction: What happens when brands stay silent
5. Case Studies: Real examples of organizations that have successfully marketed to the LGBTQ+ audience
6. Implementation Roadmap: A practical framework for getting started

**The opportunity is clear. The data is compelling.
What will your organization do about it?**



CHAPTER 1

The Foundation of LGBTQ+ Marketing

Successful LGBTQ+ marketing isn't about adding a rainbow to your logo in June. It's built on four pillars that distinguish authentic engagement from performative allyship: authenticity, inclusivity, equality, and visibility.



1

Authenticity

The LGBTQ+ community has a finely tuned radar for brands that speak out of both sides of the mouth. A rainbow flag during Pride Month means nothing if your company actively works against the community the other eleven months of the year — donating to anti-LGBTQ+ causes, supporting legislation that harms LGBTQ+ people, or treating the community as a revenue opportunity while undermining their rights.

That's the line. And it's an important one to draw clearly.

What authenticity does not require is a perfect DEI scorecard. You don't need an employee resource group, a formal inclusion policy, or years of community investment before you're welcome in this market. Most brands start somewhere — and starting is exactly what you should do. Showing up to sell your product or service honestly is a legitimate entry point, and the LGBTQ+ community has always rewarded brands that simply show up consistently and communicate clearly.

The best practice in this market, as in most minority markets, is straightforward: be honest about what you're offering, don't work against the community, and keep showing up. Authenticity and ROI build on each other over time.



2

Inclusivity

Inclusivity extends far beyond representation in advertising. It encompasses internal policies, employee resource groups, supplier diversity, community partnerships, and leadership composition.

Brands that practice inclusivity internally earn the credibility to communicate it externally.

Fig 2: Our survey reveals that organizations are taking this seriously

45%

have established employee resource groups

43%

have implemented inclusive workplace policies

34%

have established employee resource groups



29%

have established employee resource groups

26%

have implemented inclusive workplace policies

3

Equality

Supporting LGBTQ+ equality isn't just ethically sound, it's economically smart. According to the Human Rights Campaign, 80% of LGBTQ+ adults would boycott a company that rolled back DEI initiatives. And 75.7% say they would have a less favorable opinion of any company that retreated from its equality commitments.

Equality must be woven into corporate DNA, not treated as a marketing tactic. This means advocating for LGBTQ+ rights even when it's uncomfortable, standing firm in the face of backlash, and ensuring your support isn't contingent on political convenience.

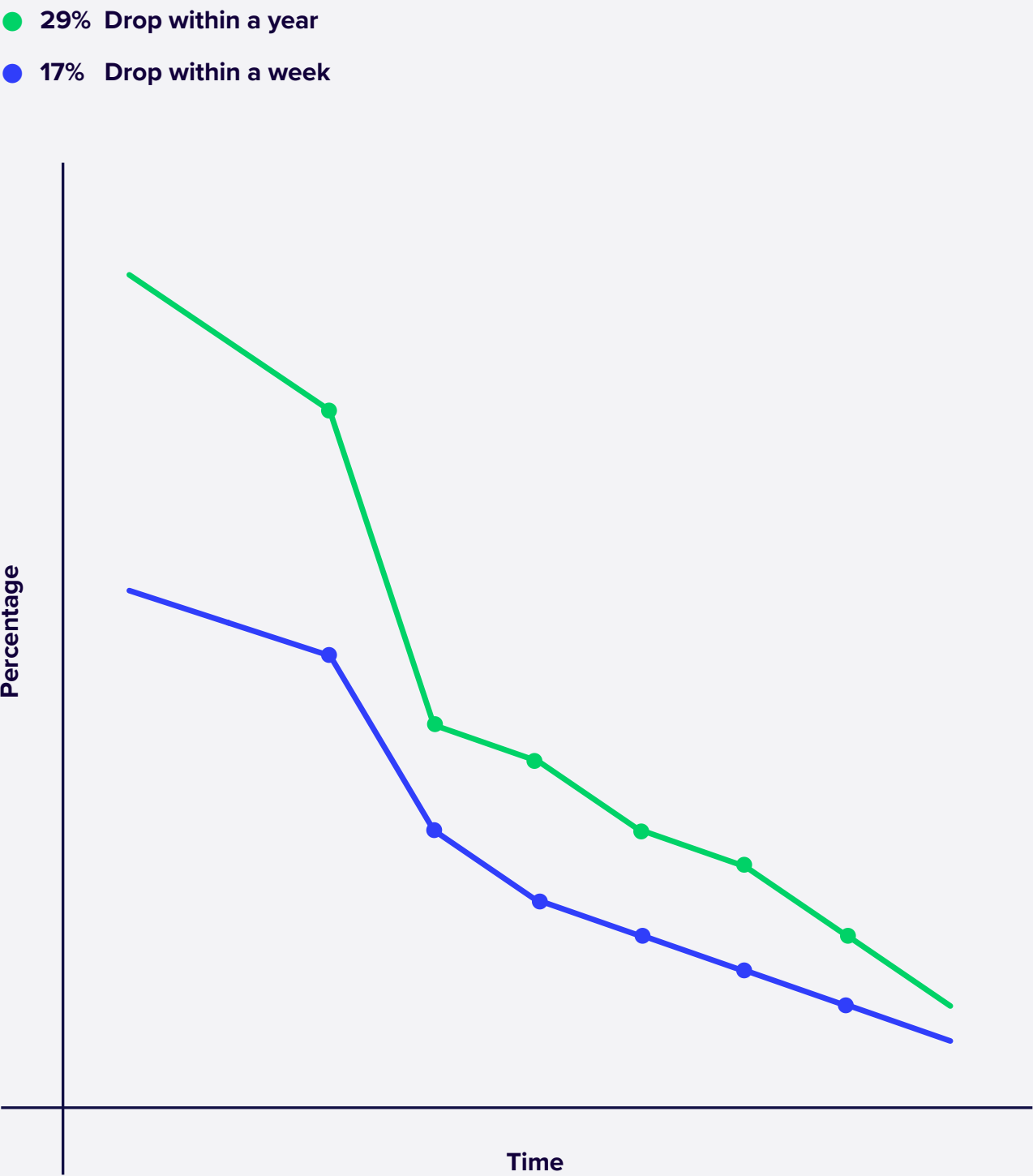
Brands that got it right:

- Costco publicly refused to roll back its DEI programs despite shareholder pressure in early 2025, reinforcing its commitment to inclusive practices.

Brands that stumbled:

- When Bud Light faced backlash over a partnership with a transgender influencer in 2023, the company's vague, non-committal response alienated both conservative critics and LGBTQ+ supporters. Sales dropped 17% within weeks, and by mid-June, sales volume was down 29% from the prior year. The brand lost its two-decade reign as America's best-selling beer, not because of the partnership itself, but because the company's tepid response satisfied no one.

Fig 3: LGBTQ+ supporters impact on Bud Lights sales



4

Visibility

For decades, the LGBTQ+ community was rendered invisible in mainstream media and advertising. When representation did appear, it was often stereotypical, tokenizing, or relegated to the margins.

Today's consumers expect more. They want to see LGBTQ+ people living ordinary lives. Not just celebrating Pride, but buying groceries, raising families, going to work, and doing all the unremarkable things that signal genuine belonging. Visibility doesn't just serve the community; it expands your potential market by increasing comfort among allies.

The Work Starts Now

These four pillars aren't just feel-good principles. They're the foundation of campaigns that actually work. The absence of any one can undermine your



entire effort (as several high-profile brand crises have demonstrated).

In the sections that follow, we'll explore the economic case for investment, what, what marketers are experiencing in the field, and how to put these principles into practice.

According to GLAAD's Accelerating Acceptance research, when non-LGBTQ+ adults see the community represented in media, familiarity grows by up to 34% and comfort with LGBTQ+ interactions increases by up to 23%. Younger generations continue to enter adulthood and the workforce, the LGBTQ+ share of the consumer market will only expand.

CHAPTER 2

LGBTQ+ Economic Power and The 2026 Market Reality

The LGBTQ+ market isn't a niche. It's an economic force that rivals entire nations, and it's growing faster than almost any other demographic segment in America.



Buying Power By The Numbers

According to the National LGBT Chamber of Commerce, there are an estimated 1.4 million LGBTQ+ business owners in the United States. These businesses contribute \$1.7 trillion to the U.S. economy annually, while the LGBTQ+ community as a whole spends more than \$917 billion every year on goods and services.

To put that in perspective: if the U.S. LGBTQ+ community were its own country, it would be the 4th largest economy in the world.



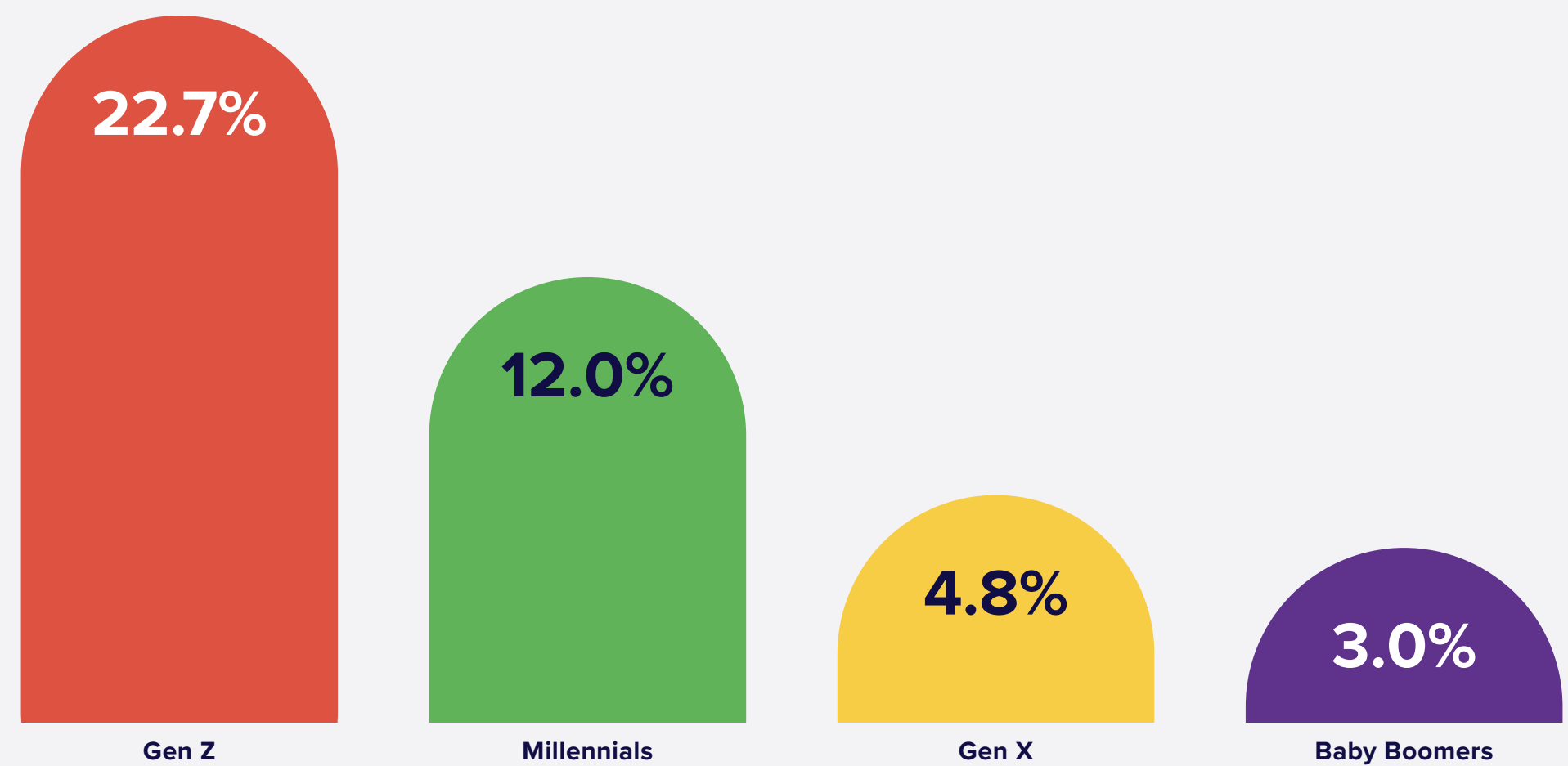
And this spending isn't spread thin. LGBTQ+ consumers over-index in key categories, including travel, fashion, electronics, financial services, and automotive. These are high-margin categories where brand preference drives significant revenue.



Fig 4: Generational growth shifts

Percentage that Identify as LGBTQ+

- Gen Z (ages 18-27)
- Millennials (ages 28-43)
- Gen X (ages 44-59)
- Baby Boomers (ages 60-78)



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A Population on the Rise

The LGBTQ+ community is growing rapidly.

Gallup’s 2025 data found that **9.3% of U.S. adults now identify as LGBTQ+**, up from 7.6% in 2023 and 3.5% when Gallup first measured it in 2012. In just over a decade, the population has nearly tripled.

The trajectory is clear

As younger generations continue to enter adulthood and the workforce, the LGBTQ+ share of the consumer market will only expand.

The Loyalty Factor

The Loyalty Factor

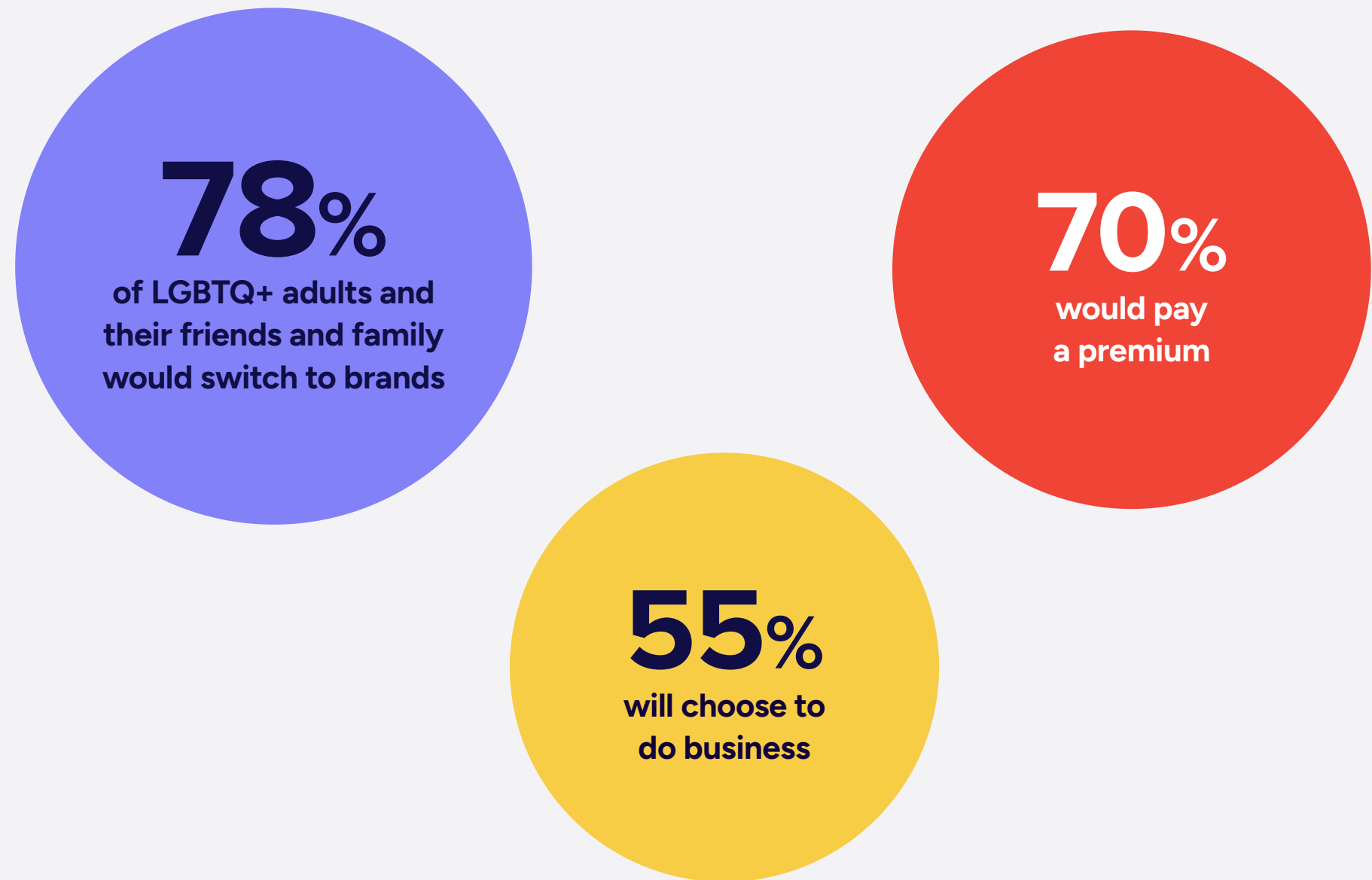
Perhaps no consumer segment rewards authentic engagement more than the LGBTQ+ community.

According to Community Marketing Inc. and Harris Interactive:

- **78% of LGBTQ+ adults and their friends and family would switch to brands** known to be LGBTQ-friendly
- **70% would pay a premium** for products from companies that support the community
- **55% will choose to do business** with companies committed to diversity and equal treatment

This loyalty extends beyond the LGBTQ+ individual. Friends, family members, and allies—who now number in the hundreds of millions—also factor a brand's LGBTQ+ stance into their purchasing decisions. The ripple effect multiplies your potential audience far beyond the community itself.

Fig 5: According to Community Marketing Inc. and Harris Interactive:



And according to Nielsen, **72% will stop purchasing** from brands that devalue their community.

The Local Advantage

Here's what many national brands miss: LGBTQ+ consumers demonstrate particularly strong loyalty to brands that show up in their local communities.

This isn't just about visibility; it's about trust. When a brand advertises in regional LGBTQ+ publications, sponsors local Pride events, or partners with community organizations, it signals a level of commitment that national media campaigns alone cannot achieve.

LGBTQ+ consumers notice which brands support their local newspapers, their community centers, and their events. And they reward those brands with fierce loyalty and word-of-mouth advocacy that money can't buy.



The Future Is Already Here

With nearly one in four young adults identifying as LGBTQ+, the brands that build authentic relationships today will have a significant competitive advantage tomorrow. Those that wait risk being seen as latecomers—or worse, as opportunists trying to catch up.

The economic case is clear, but is your organization positioned to capture the opportunity?

CHAPTER 3

Marketing Professional Survey Findings (A Reality Check)

To understand the current state of LGBTQ+ marketing, we surveyed more than 100 marketing professionals across industries about their budgets, challenges, channel performance, and strategies. The results reveal both promising momentum and persistent obstacles.



Current Investment Levels

Fig 6: How much are organizations actually investing in LGBTQ+ marketing?

How does LGBTQ+ campaign ROI compare to general market efforts?



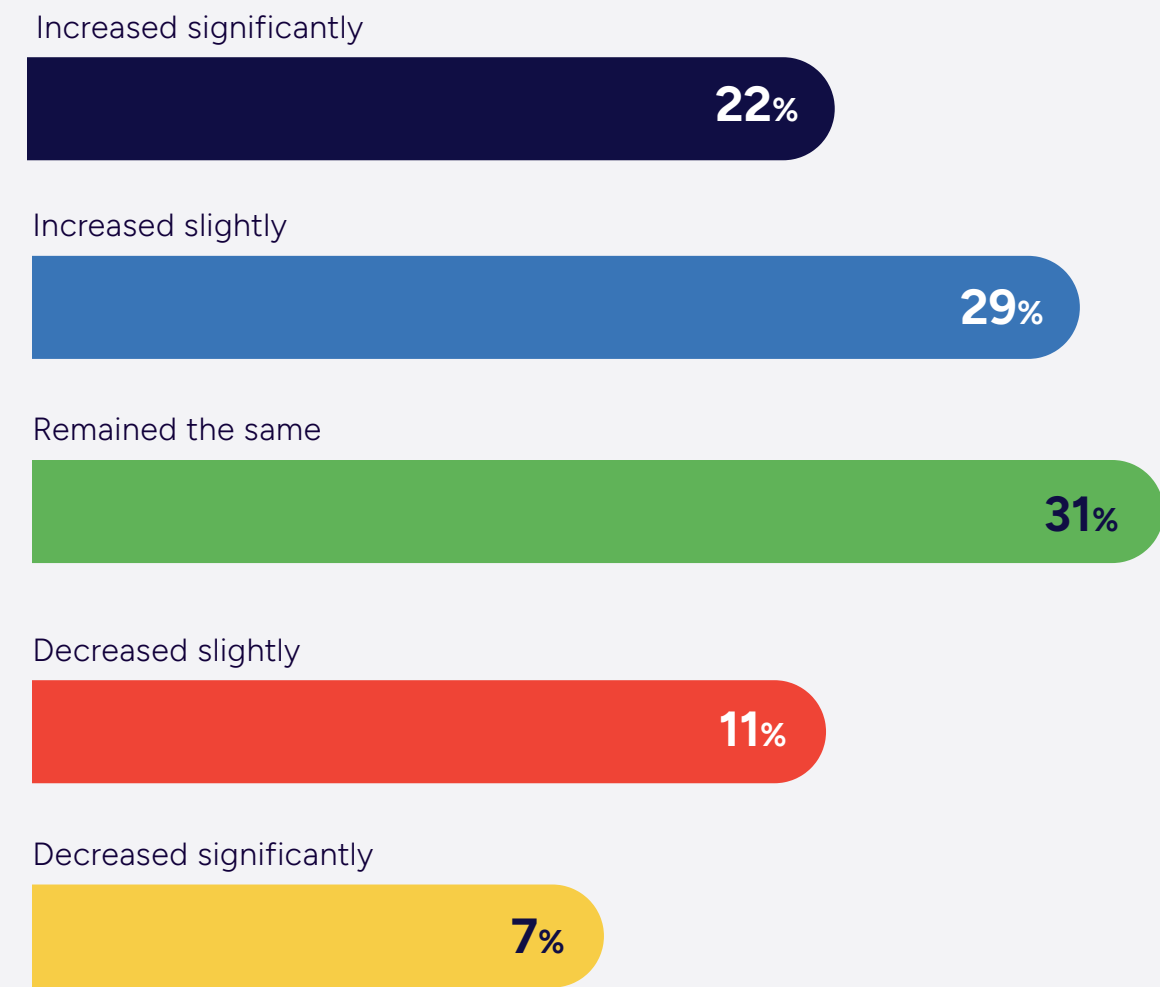
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While these percentages may seem small, they represent meaningful investment—and the trend is moving in the right direction.



Budget Trajectory: Then, Now, and Next

Fig 7: How has LGBTQ+ marketing investment changed since 2022?

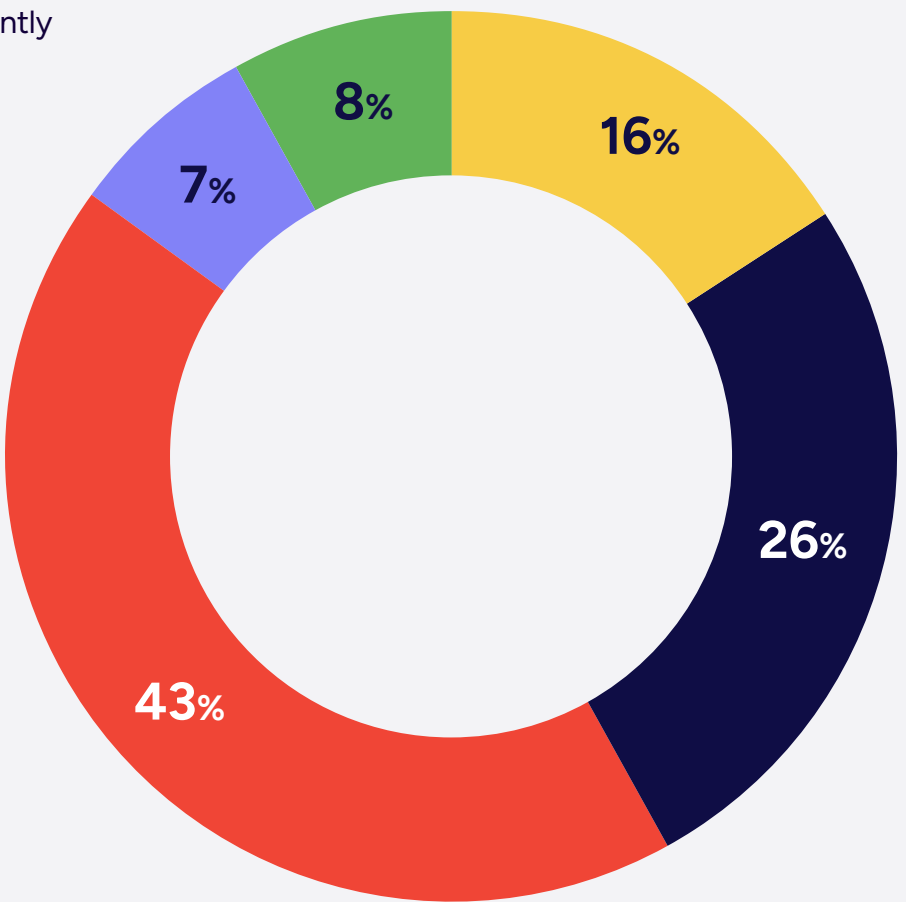


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More than half of marketers (51%) have increased their LGBTQ+ marketing investment over the past three years, while 18% have pulled back.

Fig 8: What is your planned budget allocation for LGBTQ+ marketing in 2026 compared to 2025?

- Plan to remain the same
- Plan to increase slightly
- Plan to increase significantly
- Plan to decrease significantly
- Plan to decrease slightly

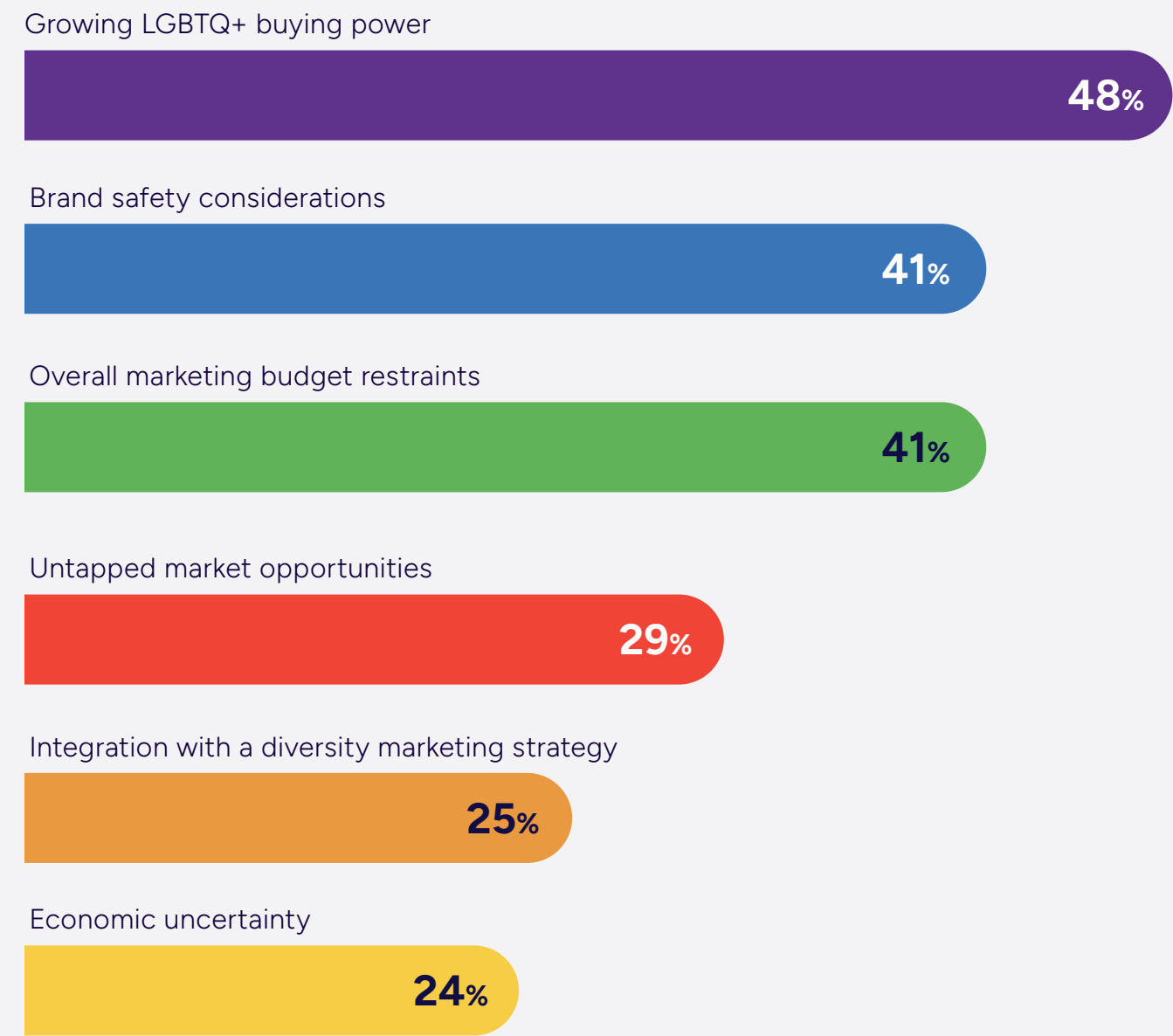


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42% of marketers plan to grow their LGBTQ+ budgets in 2026, while only 15% anticipate cuts. The plurality (43%) will hold steady—representing an opportunity for competitors willing to invest more aggressively.

What's Driving Budget Decisions?

Fig 9: When asked what factors influence their 2026 LGBTQ+ marketing budgets, marketers cited:



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The top driver—growing LGBTQ+ buying power—signals that marketers recognize the economic opportunity. However, brand safety concerns and budget constraints remain significant factors, suggesting that internal advocacy is still needed to unlock greater investment.

Making the Internal Case: Tips for Securing Buy-In

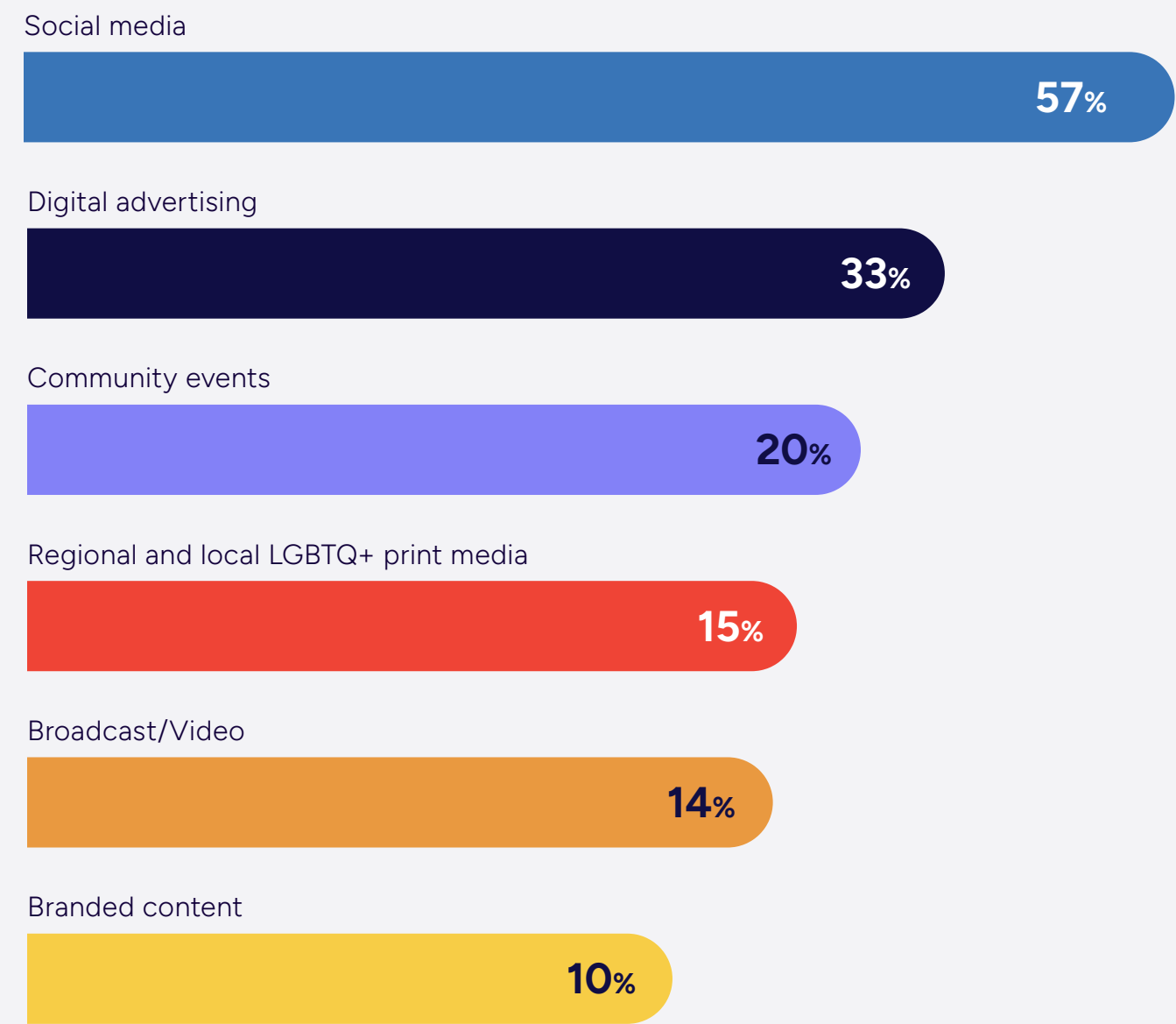
If you're facing resistance from leadership or budget gatekeepers, consider these approaches:

- 1. Lead with ROI data.** 45% of LGBTQ+ campaigns outperform general-market efforts. Hard numbers cut through hesitation.
- 2. Quantify the market.** Frame the opportunity in terms that leadership understands: \$1.4 trillion in spending power, nearly 10% of the adult population, and growth projections that show this audience expanding every year.
- 3. Highlight competitor activity.** Research what competitors are doing in the LGBTQ+ space. Fear of being left behind can be a powerful motivator.
- 4. Address backlash concerns head-on.** Acknowledge the risk, but reframe it: the Bud Light case shows that how you respond matters more than whether backlash occurs. Brands that stand firm have never had a lasting issue; brands that waffle often don't.
- 5. Connect to existing values.** If your organization already has DEI commitments, ERGs, or inclusive policies, position LGBTQ+ marketing as an authentic extension—not a new risk.
- 6. Bring in external expertise.** Partner with LGBTQ+-owned agencies or consultants who can speak credibly to both opportunity and best practices.

Channel Performance: What's Working

Fig 10: Which channels deliver the highest perceived ROI for LGBTQ+ marketing?

Marketers identified their top-performing channels:



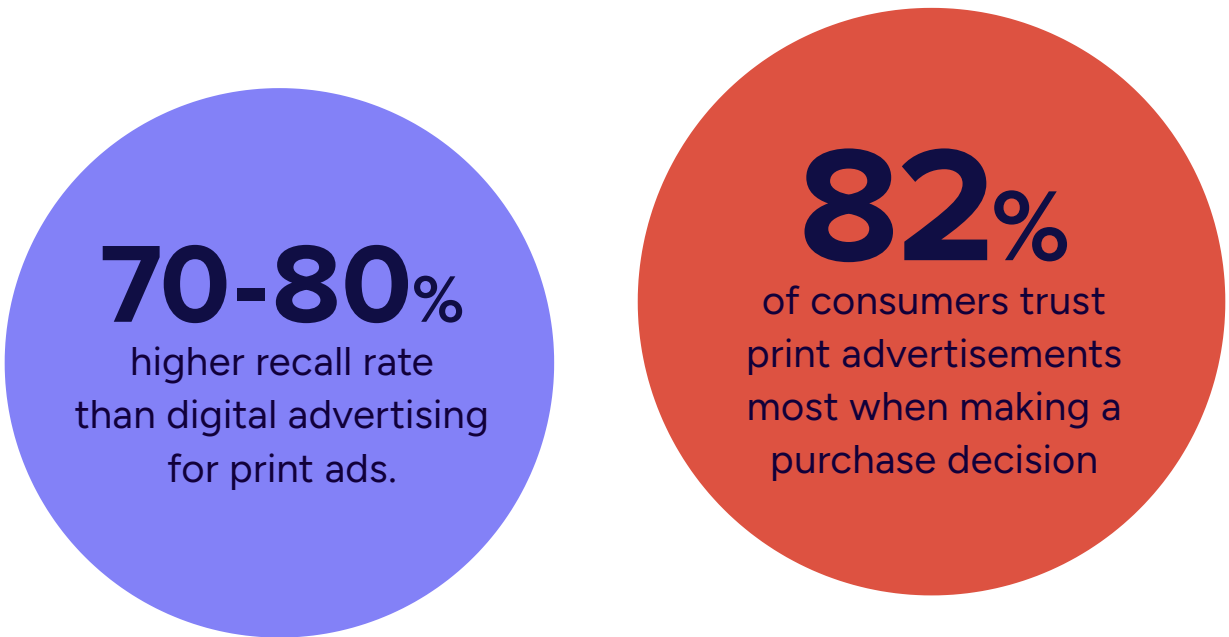
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Social media and digital lead the pack, but regional and local LGBTQ+ print media hold its own, delivering ROI for 15% of respondents. This underscores the vwcations.

Why local representation matters

In an era of declining media trust, **local publications stand apart**. According to Pew Research Center, **70% of Americans** trust information from local news organizations, compared to just 56% for national news. And a Knight Foundation/ Gallup study found that **45% of Americans** trust local news “a great deal” or “quite a lot”—14 points higher than national news (31%).

This trust gap is critical for advertisers. According to recent print marketing research...



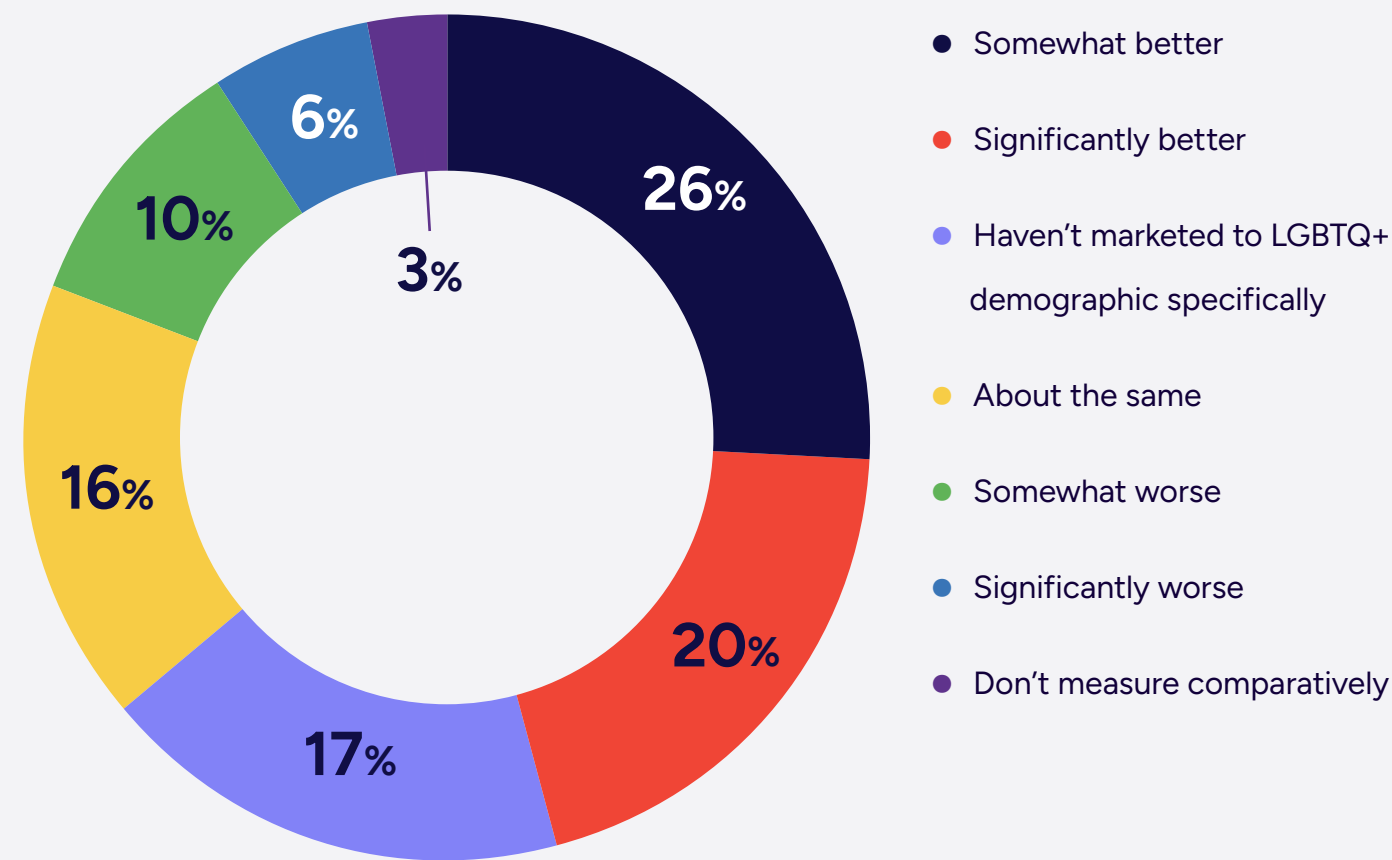
For LGBTQ+ audiences specifically, local community publications carry an additional layer of credibility. These aren’t just news sources. They’re institutions that have served and advocated for their communities for decades, often when no one else would. That history creates a bond for the brands that advertise within them.

The takeaway: an integrated approach that combines digital reach with the trust and credibility of established local LGBTQ+ publications delivers more than either channel alone.

Perceived ROI Compared to General Market Campaigns

Fig 11: Here's where it gets interesting.

How does LGBTQ+ campaign ROI compare to general market efforts?



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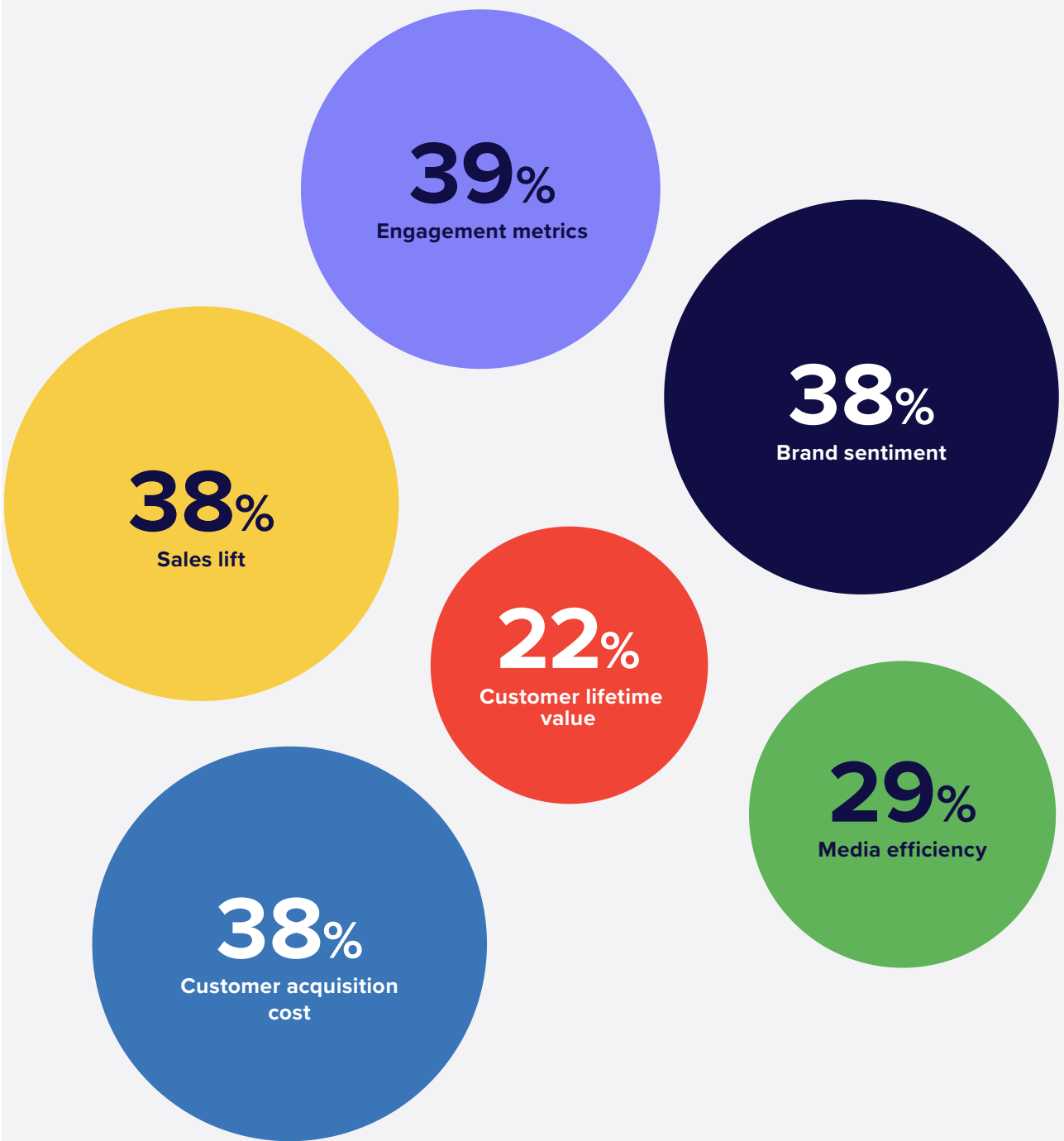


This is a critical finding: LGBTQ+ marketing isn't just a values play; it's a performance play. For nearly half of the marketers surveyed, these campaigns deliver superior returns.

Social media and digital lead the pack, but regional and local LGBTQ+ print media hold its own, delivering ROI for 15% of respondents. This underscores the value of an integrated approach that combines digital reach with the trust and credibility of established community publications.

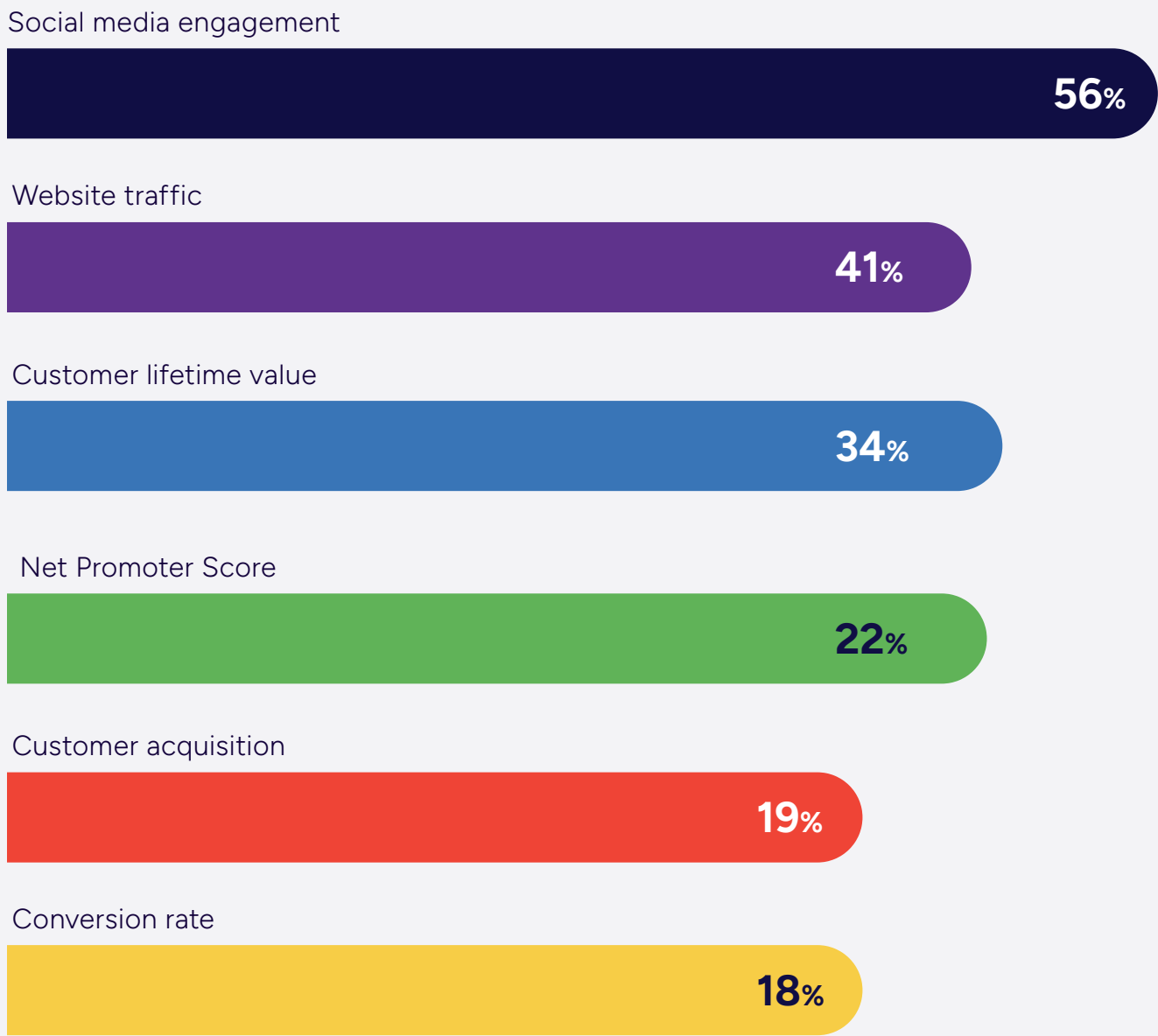
Measurement: How Marketers Track Success

Fig 12: What metrics are organizations using to measure LGBTQ+ marketing success?



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Fig 13: Which metrics show the strongest performance?



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Social media engagement leads as both a commonly used metric and a top performer—validating the channel investments marketers are making.

The Measurement Challenge

Despite these results, measurement remains a significant hurdle:



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These challenges point to an opportunity: organizations that invest in better measurement infrastructure will be better positioned to demonstrate ROI and secure future budget increases.



Strategic Barriers and Hesitations

What are the biggest challenges when creating LGBTQ+ marketing content?

Marketers ranked their top obstacles:

1. Potential backlash/boycotts



5. Economic uncertainty



2. Budget scrutiny



6. Regulatory concerns



3. Leadership buy-in



7. Internal stakeholder alignment



4. Authenticity concerns

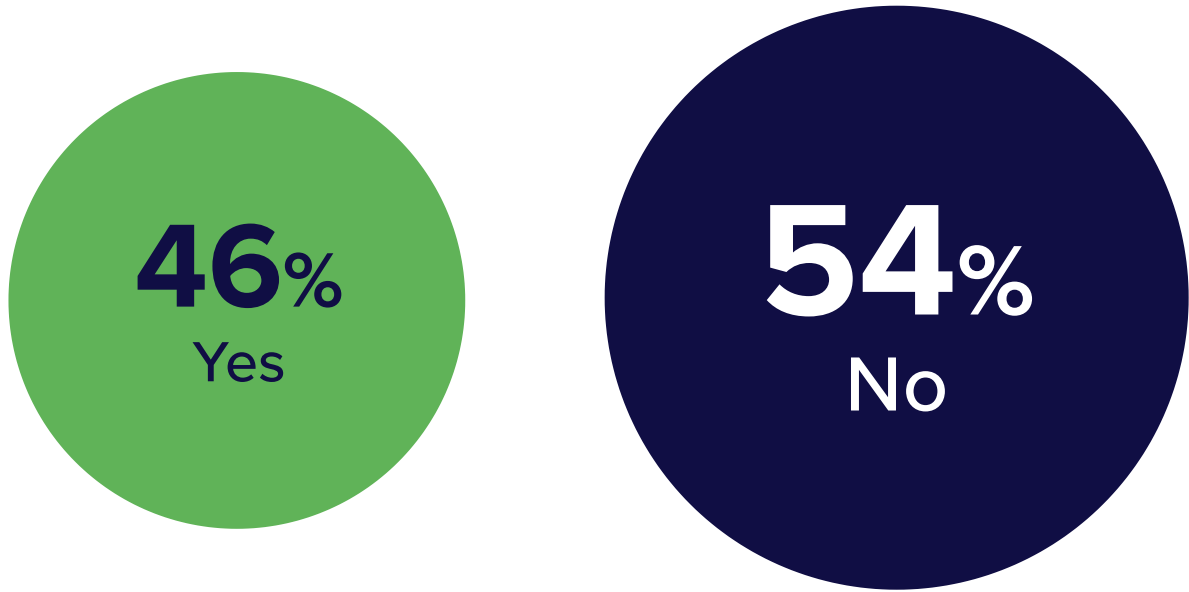


8. Backlash from the administration

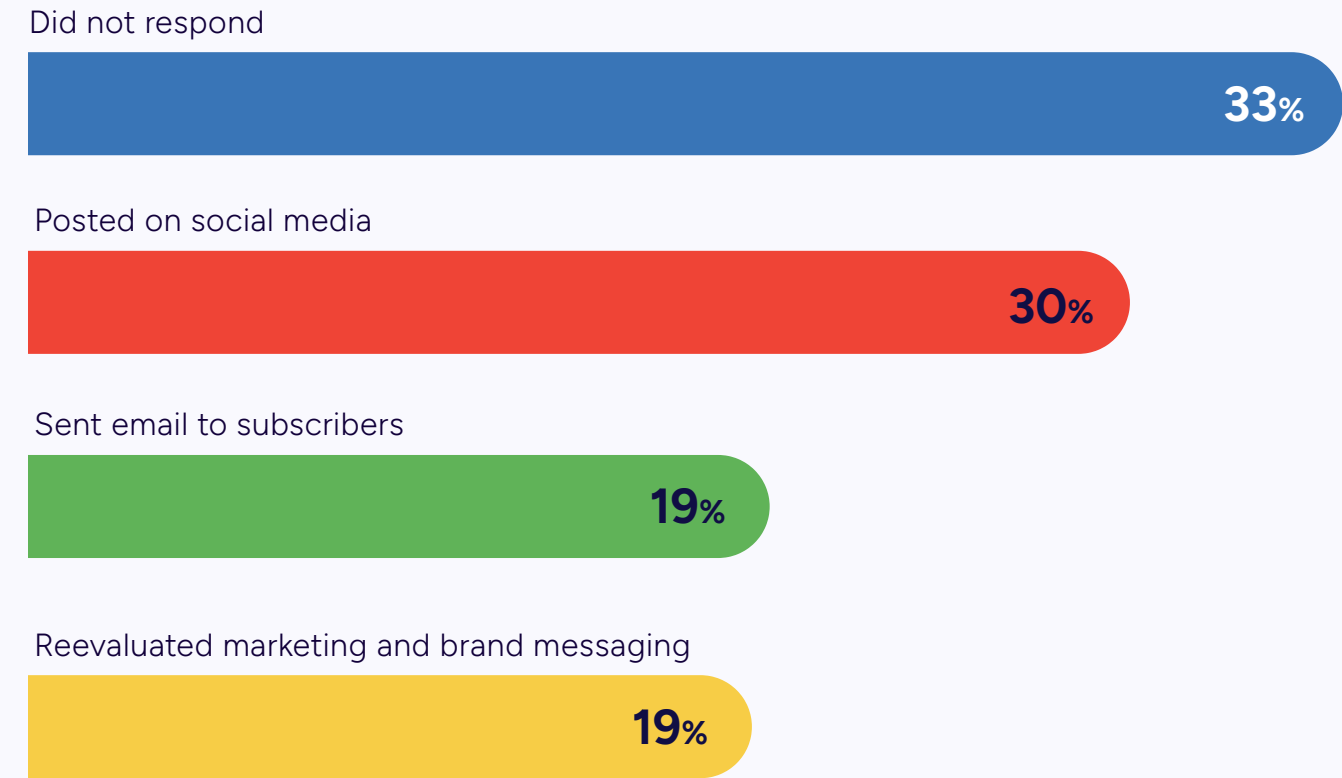


Navigating Negative Feedback

Has your organization received negative feedback on LGBTQ+ initiatives?



Nearly half of organizations have faced pushback. But here’s how they responded:



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The split responses reveal an industry still finding its footing. Those who stood firm and communicated their values often emerged stronger; those who went silent or retreated often faced criticism from both sides.

4 Ways to Navigate Negative Feedback (And Prevent It in the First Place)

1

Don't go silent.

The worst response is no response. When Bud Light went dark on social media for two weeks after backlash, it created a vacuum that critics filled. Have a response plan ready before you launch, and commit to standing behind your campaigns.

2

Respond with clarity, not ambiguity.

Vague statements that try to please everyone typically please no one. If your campaign reflects your values, say so clearly. Audiences respect conviction more than equivocation.

3

Prepare your internal stakeholders.

Many backlash situations spiral because internal teams are caught off guard. Brief leadership, customer service, and social media teams before launch. Align on messaging and escalation protocols so everyone responds consistently.

4

Build authenticity before you need it.

Brands with established, year-round LGBTQ+ engagement have more credibility to weather criticism. If your first visible LGBTQ+ effort is a splashy Pride campaign, you're more vulnerable than a brand with a track record of community partnership, inclusive policies, and consistent support. The best defense against backlash is a foundation of authenticity that speaks for itself.

What's Working: Effective LGBTQ+ Marketing Strategies

Which campaign strategies have been most effective?

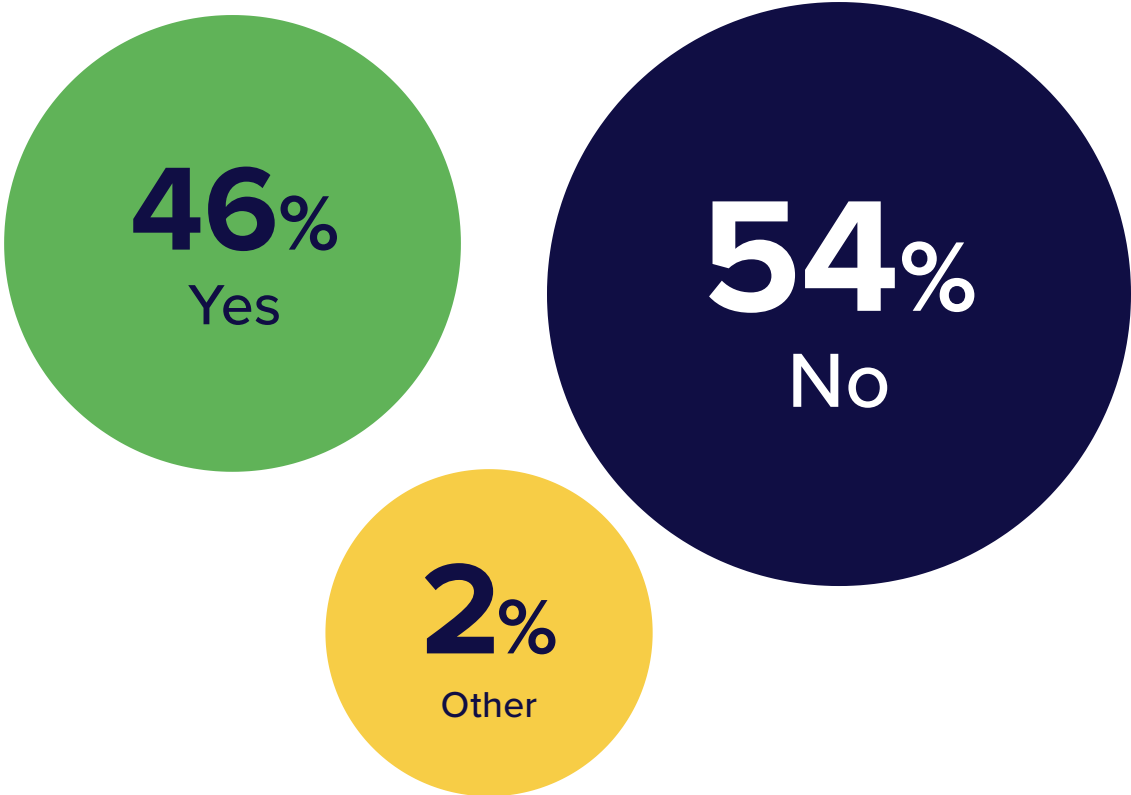
Marketers ranked their top-performing approaches:



The top two strategies reflect a both/and approach: weaving LGBTQ+ representation into mainstream campaigns and developing targeted initiatives for the community.

Agency and Vendor Partnerships

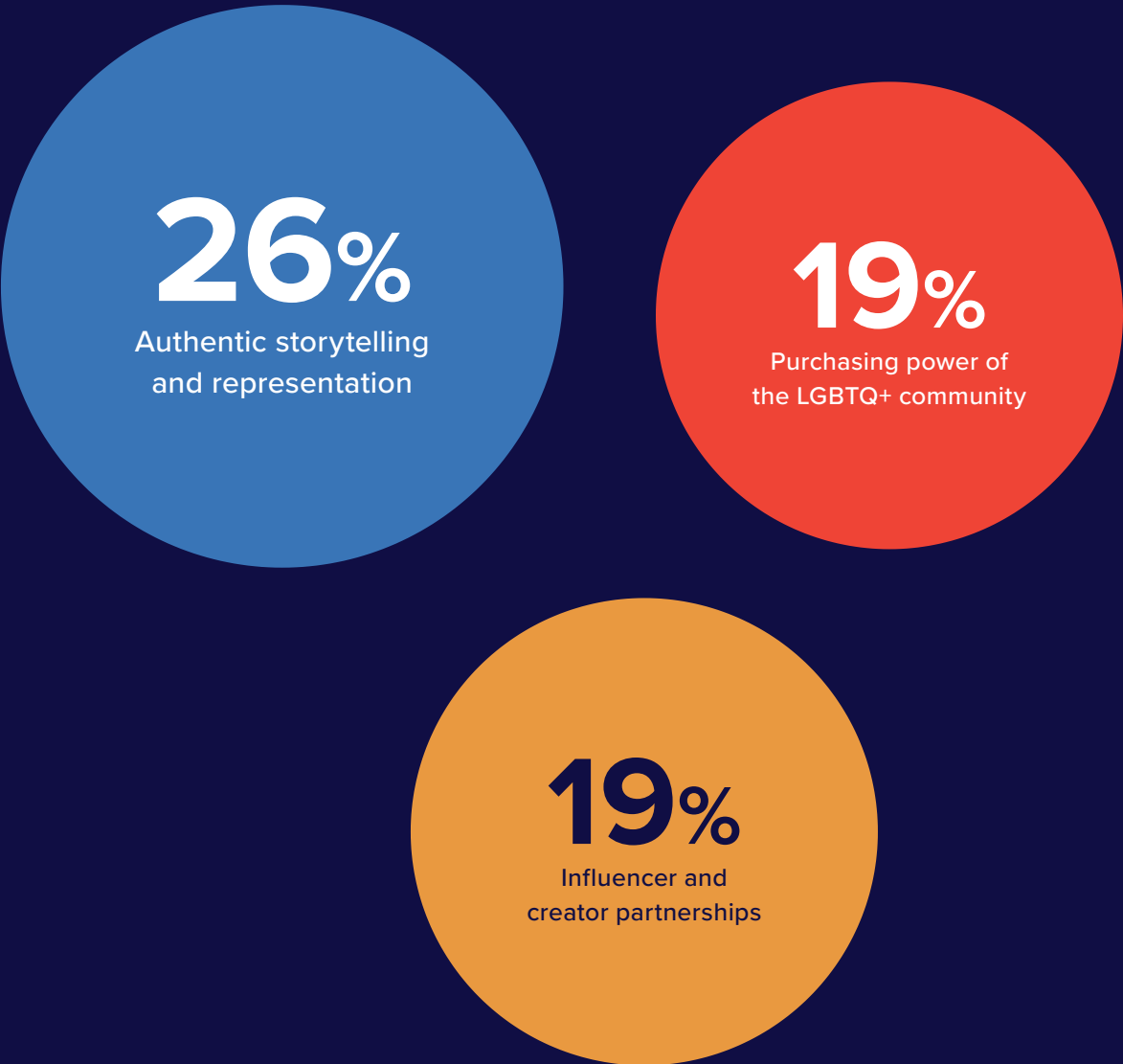
Has your organization received negative feedback on LGBTQ+ initiatives?



The majority of marketers are partnering with LGBTQ+-owned or specialized vendors—a positive sign for authenticity and expertise. For the 42% who aren’t, this represents an opportunity to strengthen campaign credibility and community connections.

The Biggest Opportunities Ahead

Top 3 opportunities for organizations wanting to dive into LGBTQ+ marketing in 2026:



Authentic storytelling leads the way, reinforcing that the fundamentals matter most. Marketers recognize that getting the message right is more important than any single tactic.

CHAPTER 4

The Business Risk Of Inaction

Some brands are still asking whether they should invest in LGBTQ+ marketing. The smarter question: **what happens if they don't?**



Market Share Erosion

While you wait, competitors are building relationships with a fiercely loyal consumer base. Once those relationships are established, they're hard to break. Remember: 78% of LGBTQ+ adults and allies will switch to brands known to be LGBTQ-friendly—and they'll stay there.

The Acquisition vs. Retention Math

Acquiring new customers costs 5-7x more than retaining existing ones. LGBTQ+ consumers who feel seen and valued become long-term customers with higher lifetime value. Brands that ignore this audience aren't just missing sales today—they're paying more to acquire customers tomorrow.

Reputation Risk

In the age of social media, silence is a statement. Younger consumers especially notice which brands show up and which stay quiet. A reputation for exclusion—or even indifference—can follow a brand for years.

Talent Disadvantage

It's not just customers. LGBTQ+ employees and allies increasingly choose employers based on values alignment. According to the Edelman Trust Barometer, 60% of people say an inclusive work culture is critical to attracting and retaining them. Brands that don't market inclusively often struggle to hire inclusively.

What's The Cost of Inaction?

The cost of turning a blind eye isn't zero—it's compound interest working against you. Every year you wait, competitors build stronger community ties, capture more loyal customers, and establish themselves as the default choice.

The question isn't whether you can afford to invest in LGBTQ+ marketing. It's whether you can afford not to.

Case Study: LGBTQ+ Marketing Takes Center Stage

The Democratic National Convention 2024

The Challenge: Mobilize LGBTQ+ voters in a high-stakes presidential election with a limited budget and intense competition for attention.

The Approach: The DNC deployed an integrated media strategy targeting LGBTQ+ voters through regional LGBTQ+ print publications with digital extensions. The campaign prioritized print-first placement across the country, supported by digital amplification. The print-first campaign was a strategic approach that met voters in trusted, community-centered spaces.

The Results: The LGBTQ+ market segment was the only voter segment that came in under budget and overperformed its targets.

The impact on voter behavior was striking. In 2020, 71% of LGBTQ+ voters supported Joe Biden without a dedicated LGBTQ+ outreach effort. In 2024, after the targeted print and digital campaign, 86% of LGBTQ+ voters supported Kamala Harris. That’s a 15-point increase, in an election decided by narrow margins, demonstrates the power of intentional, authentic outreach.

The campaign also generated significant mainstream press coverage, extending its reach far beyond paid placements.

The Takeaway: An integrated approach—print first, with digital extensions—delivered efficient, measurable results. By showing up in trusted local LGBTQ+ publications, the campaign built credibility that national advertising alone couldn’t achieve.



“The LGBTQ+ segment outperformed every other demographic target we had—and did it under budget. That’s the power of meeting this community where they are, in the publications they trust.”
— [Placeholder: Campaign Strategist]

CHAPTER 6

4 Step Implementation Roadmap

Ready to move forward? Here's a practical framework for launching or strengthening your LGBTQ+ marketing efforts.



4 Step Implementation Roadmap

1

Assess

Before you spend a dollar, understand where you stand.

- ☐ Audit your current efforts. What LGBTQ+ marketing have you done? What worked? What didn't?
- ☐ Evaluate internal alignment. Do your policies, ERGs, and company culture support external messaging?
- ☐ Identify gaps. Where are competitors showing up that you're not?
- ☐ Know your audience. Which segments of the LGBTQ+ community align with your product or service?

4

Review and Improve

Measure, learn, and iterate.

- ☐ Track the metrics that matter. Engagement, sentiment, acquisition cost, and lifetime value all tell part of the story.
- ☐ Gather feedback. Listen to LGBTQ+ consumers and employees. What's landing? What's missing? How can you improve?
- ☐ Report results internally. Document ROI to build the case for continued or expanded investment.
- ☐ Refine and repeat. The best LGBTQ+ marketing programs evolve over time based on real-world learning.

2

Strategize

Build a plan rooted in authenticity, not opportunism.

- ☐ Set clear objectives. Define success upfront, whether it's brand awareness, customer acquisition, or loyalty.
- ☐ Choose your channels. An integrated mix of local print, digital, social, and community events typically outperforms any single channel.
- ☐ Develop authentic creative. Partner with LGBTQ+ creators, agencies, or consultants to ensure your messaging resonates.
- ☐ Plan for year-round engagement. Pride Month is a moment, not a strategy. Integrate LGBTQ+ advertising and storytelling into your marketing plan year-round.

3

Execute

Launch initiatives with intention and consistency.

- ☐ Brief internal stakeholders. Ensure leadership, customer service, and social teams are aligned before you go live.
- ☐ Start where trust exists. Regional LGBTQ+ publications offer built-in credibility that national buys can't replicate.
- ☐ Amplify with digital. Extend print campaigns through social, email, and targeted digital ads.
- ☐ Show up in the community. Sponsorships, partnerships, and events build relationships that advertising alone cannot.

Your Next Step

The data is clear. The opportunity is real.

The time to act is now.

LGBTQ+ consumers represent a \$1.4 trillion market that rewards authenticity with fierce loyalty. Nearly half of marketers say their LGBTQ+ campaigns outperform general market efforts. And with almost one in four young adults identifying as LGBTQ+, this audience will only grow more influential in the years ahead.



We're Here to Help

ADiving into the world of LGBTQ+ marketing can feel daunting, and that's understandable. The landscape changes quickly, and it's not always easy to figure out the best way to frame messages that resonate with today's consumers.

The great news? You're in the right place.

The National LGBT Media Association has been helping clients develop marketing campaigns that resonate, inspire, and build brand loyalty for decades. When you put your voice in front of our dedicated readership across our 12 NGMA publications, you can feel confident you're reaching an engaged, attentive audience that trusts the media they're reading.

Our integrated approach—combining print, digital, directory, mobile, email, and social—ensures maximum coverage across the touchpoints where this community lives, works, and engages. And our local presence in markets across the country means your message lands with the credibility that only trusted community publications can deliver.

Reach out today to get started.

