

Reader's Survey Results

IF YOU ASK FOR CRITICISM, IT WILL COME

OK, there was praise, too, but readers spoke firmly their desire for change

by Renée LaChance



Two of the driving reasons for us to conduct a reader's survey were to assess how we are doing editorially in the eyes of our readers and to do some outreach to those who don't often read the paper, to see what we could change to make them regular readers. To accomplish this, we asked you tell us where you would like to see *Just Out* improve and what would make you be a regular reader if you weren't already. The comments were thoughtful

and thought-provoking.

A majority of comments focused on the adult services ads we have in the back of the paper. Many felt it would improve *Just Out* if those ads were removed. This subject is routinely considered in our office, and we will be opening the debate to the entire community in coming months to review our current policy of accepting those ads.

Many men felt that *Just Out* was too heavily biased toward lesbians and said they would read *Just Out* more often if that changed. The survey certainly has brought this issue into the daily consciousness of the editorial department. In fact, we've gone a little overboard—the last five issues have had male-oriented covers and feature stories. It has always been our goal to balance the

coverage of issues specifically of interest men and those specifically of interest to women. In attempting to do this, a misconception developed that the survey brought clearly to light. Articles that may be of interest to men are often also of interest to women. It was always thought the reverse was true, too, but articles that may be of interest to women are apparently not necessarily of interest to men. The responses regarding the columns *The Amazon Trail* and *It's a Queer Thing* illustrate this best. While a majority of men always read *It's a Queer Thing*, they don't read *The Amazon Trail*, yet a majority of the women who responded read both. This information will definitely have an impact on editorial decisions.

A number of comments focused on "political correctness": many respondents wished that *Just*

Out would be less so. That term has become so charged in this era of the Christian right that it is impossible to guess how political correctness is defined by these commentators. To the editorial staff of *Just Out*, political correctness is treating all groups with respect and using language that is nonoffensive to the majority of people within each group. That is one of our founding policies, and it is not going to change. We will, however, do a feature in a future issue that will explore this topic with people of varying opinions to facilitate dialogue within our community.

Readers who responded to the survey want more personal ads. To help facilitate this, we will be offering free Just Friends ads in our Oct. 20 and Nov. 3 issues. (See the ad in the classified section of this issue for more information.)

A GLIMPSE AT WHO RESPONDED

GENDER

Respondents to the *Just Out* Reader's Survey were 42 percent men, 54 percent women and 4 percent people who did not identify a gender.

SEXUAL ORIENTATION

More people identified as lesbian—46 percent. Forty-one percent identified as gay, 9 percent as bisexual, 3 percent as heterosexual, and 1 percent as transgender.

AGE

When broken down by gender, the only significant difference was that there were more men than women who are under 20 and over 60. The majority of respondents were between the ages of 30 and 50.

REGULAR JO READERS?

Sixty-seven percent of respondents said they read every issue of *Just Out*. More women read every issue—72 percent—while 68 percent of the men do. Forty percent of men and women share their paper with two or more friends.

More demographic details of who responded will be included in Part 2 of the Just Out Reader's Survey results, which will appear in our next issue, Oct. 6.



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