

Shropshire, Telford and Wrekin Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual Research Project; July 2012 - January 2013

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Shropshire, Telford and Wrekin Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual Research Project; July 2012 - January 2013: Executive Summary

1. This project was a response to Shropshire Equalities Forum’s concerns in 2010 about a lack of reliable information on Shropshire’s Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual (LGB) people’s experience of living, working and using services in the county. It set out to develop analysis and recommendations to enable service providers to ensure the quality and relevance of their services to the LGB communities. The project was subsequently extended to include Telford and Wrekin.
2. A framework was provided by an earlier Birmingham City Council research project to support the development of their Single Equality Scheme, and to provide information about the health needs of the city’s Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) communities. The original Shropshire project partners were Shropshire LGB Network, Shropshire Primary Care Trust, Shropshire Council, Shropshire Fire & Rescue Service and Shropshire Primary Care Trust.

This group was later expanded to include representation from Shropshire Housing Group, Citizen’s Advice Shropshire, Telford and Wrekin Council, West Mercia Police, Victim Support, the Rainbow Film Festival, Shropshire Disability Network, UAF Shrewsbury, and Rights and Fairness Telford (RAFT), all of whom committed funding to the project, as did the Shropshire General and Telford branches of Unison. The research was planned and carried out by RAFT.

3. Research was by means of a web-based questionnaire survey, hosted on project partners’ websites and advertised via LGB networks and publications. It ran for the eighteen months up to January 2013, and sought views from both lesbian, gay and bisexual (LGB) and heterosexual (straight) people on a range of subjects and issues. These included:
 - Participants’ personal characteristics
 - Their understanding of local support available to LGB people
 - Their views and experience of public attitudes and discrimination
 - Their views and experience of service delivery, with the opportunity to make responses about named services
 - Their views and experience of workplace discrimination and disadvantage
 - Their views and experience of homophobic crime and hate incidents, and reasons for not reporting these to the authorities.

4. Key issues from the research

There was a total of 201 research participants, which is not sufficient to enable reliable statistical conclusions to be drawn. However, it is sufficient to allow for some broad themes to be identified, and to suggest issues that may need action or further investigation.

Issues raised or highlighted from the research fall into two broad categories; firstly information about wider public and community attitudes and behaviour relating to LGB people and issues, and secondly information about the attitudes, policies and practice of different service agencies across the area.

Total survey responses	
Lesbian	28
Gay	49
Bisexual	21
Heterosexual (Straight)	87
Undecided	6
Prefer not to say	6
Other	4
Total	201

This report deals only with the first. The information about wider public and community attitudes and behaviour provides a context for analysing general policy and service development for LGB communities, and information about agencies' attitudes, policies and practice will be fed back to those agencies to enable them to review their own policies and practice.

5. **Participants' personal information**

Analysis of the responses on personal information showed some interesting areas of difference between heterosexual and LGB responses. The most striking was in the housing status of LGB respondents, where a much greater proportion of LGB respondents live with their parents. Although there are similar distributions for those aged 18 – 24, those who are students and those on low incomes, the data do not enable analysis of a direct relationship between these factors, and it is in any case difficult to rely on extrapolated conclusions due to the small sample.

Nevertheless the response may suggest difficulties in finding suitable accommodation. If so, this might be linked to the far greater proportion of LGB respondents who are on gross annual incomes of less £10,000 (which might be age-related), or possibly with prejudice among housing providers

6. **Support and attitudes**

Respondents were asked to name any local groups or organisations that work specifically with and for the LGB communities. Relatively few were named by either respondent group, and many of those were not specifically LGB organisations. This reflects the lack of an LGB 'scene' in the area, and the sparsity of support available to LGB people.

Asked about changes in people's attitude towards LGB people in the last five years, replies were broadly consistent across both respondent groups, with a large majority identifying either an improvement or no change. Participants were given an opportunity to comment on their responses:

Heterosexual responses

- *I cannot accept why a big issue is made of the sexuality or gender of anyone!*
- *On the whole people in these communities can be quite narrow-minded*
- *I find the attitude to be open and positive, there should be no difference. People are people are people; what is normal?*

LGB responses

- *... (myself and partner) in Shrewsbury for 7 years, ... pleasantly surprised by the mostly warm way we've been treated*
- *...lots of school bullying, when children are in school they aren't taught about families that come in different shapes, sizes,*
- *I sense a reduction in society's support and tolerance for LGBT. I think that relates on a wider level to the current economic downturn*
- *more positive, though progress feels very fragile*

7. The survey also sought respondents' views about how comfortable the wider public feels about five more detailed issues (people being open about sexuality in their workplace, showing affection in public, Gay Pride and similar events, LGB couples accessing public services and LGB couples fostering and adopting children).

Heterosexual responses on all five issues reflect a perception of much greater comfort than do the LGB responses. Comments reflect different attitudes and perceptions within both groups.

8. **Experience of prejudice or discrimination**

Respondents identifying as LGB were asked whether they fear or have experienced prejudice or discrimination in a selection of places and situations. Space was given for respondents to add their comments. Of particular concern is the high response to questions about fear of prejudice or discrimination and - especially - experience of it.

The reasons for participants' fear of discrimination or prejudice, and the experiences that have influenced their answers include:

- *....at work, (where) homophobic jokes have been made which have intimidated me... (though ... not directed at me).*
- *... verbally abused in a local pub and the bar staff refused to do anything about it.*
- *...when away from our local haunts we are wary of new places and behave strictly straight, initially at least.*
- *I was verbally attacked in ASDA because I hugged my partner*
- *One area [of threat] is ... e.g. making your way to a place, or meeting a friend, or on public transport*
- *Past experience - even from a long time ago - can keep impacting*
- *Buying a car - the seller wanted us to wait until our husbands had seen it. Accessing utilities providers - they like to talk to your husband!*
- *Bullying at school, before I even knew I was gay*
- *I generally find any activity that involves alcohol and/or groups of people to be worrying, ... We have been subject to several instances of homophobia whilst in (this) setting ...*

9. **General service delivery issues**

The survey offered participants the opportunity to comment on their experience of using a range of public services in Shropshire, Telford and Wrekin, and for LGB respondents to record examples they have experienced of service providers' prejudice and discrimination. This involved some participants answering multiple questions, leading to the number of responses being higher than the total number of respondents. What follows are some general observations from the responses.

- a) Out of a total of 570 heterosexual and 593 LGB responses, 31 heterosexual and 79 LGB responses stated that LGB people face prejudice and discrimination in accessing named public services. Although the total perception of prejudice and discrimination is low, the difference between the two groups is marked.
- b) LGB participants were asked whether they or their families face prejudice or discrimination due to their sexual orientation when accessing services from named providers. 46 responses indicated such experiences, while 347 did not.
- c) General levels of LGB satisfaction with named services are high.
- d) LGB respondents were generally supportive of a need for seven new services around community support, rights campaigning, service users, health and wellbeing, social and community venues and events, and issue groups. Fifteen comments were broadly divided between a majority who felt that specific LGB services were needed and a minority who felt that all services should be LGB-friendly and appropriate, and that separate services are therefore counter-productive.

- e) All participants were asked whether they think any existing services need to be improved to meet the needs of LGB communities, and for their reasons. There was a total of 146 responses, not differentiated between LGB and heterosexual, with 'yes' responses (34%) significantly higher than 'no' (20%).

10. Workplace discrimination and disadvantage

All participants were asked whether they think people from the LGB communities suffer disadvantage in their workplace due to their sexual orientation. 81 heterosexual and 84 LGB participants responded, with a clear difference between the two groups: 37% of heterosexual respondents agreed, compared with 49% of LGB respondents. Comment themes included:

Heterosexual

- Two comments highlighted a view that employers fear being accused of discrimination (*"if anything they are positively fawned over by employers"*) and that being LGB is seen as a positive attribute - representing a minority.
- A difference between younger LGB people (who face less discrimination) and older (who have always feared coming out at work)
- The level of disadvantage depends on who is the employer

LGB

- Response from people working in the public sector that although at a policy level there is tolerance and respect, day-to-day working experience depends on individual attitudes and relationships. Discrimination may be relatively minor, but is still upsetting (*"You can draft any amount of policies and file them away to tick the box but what actually counts is training the staff ..., making them aware of the consequences and ... nipping the small stuff in the bud before a culture of intolerance develops"*)
- Depends on the workplace and the employer's commitment to eliminate discrimination and homophobia in the workplace.
- High potential for discrimination, but will depend on how many people feel able to come out at work. In general there will be disadvantage if people know. (*"...there is likely to be some sort of 'disadvantage' - even if that is a wariness and slight anxiety. It can be very subtle or very overt but, often stops us being true to ourselves"*)

11. Hate crime and incidents

All participants were asked whether they think that people from LGB communities are at greater risk of crime due to their sexual orientation. 87 heterosexual and 84 LGB people responded. A majority of both groups think there is a greater risk of crime for LGB people, but there was a very marked difference between the two groups in the proportion expressing this view: 51% of heterosexual compared with 74% of LGB respondents. Comments include:

Heterosexual

- *"Anyone who is different runs the risk of harm ..."*
- *"I feel they are more open, and people take advantage..."*
- *"... if you make a huge issue of your preference you will always leave yourself open to some kind of unwanted attention..."*
- *"...They are an easy target"*
"People ... look at LGB people as another breed.."

LGB

- *"... (homophobic) bullying is still going strong for many young people...."*
- *"Being a victim of hate crime I do fear (verbal) or physical abuse"*
- *"...I feel the small number of (the) LGB community who get attacked are possibly .. part of the general public who get bashed by the drunken yobs"*

- “... I have had my windows broken and been called names in the street” “I know of several men who live 'straight' lives .. due ... for fear of violence / bullying”
- “... I have been the victim of verbal abuse on many occasions while out with my partner... because of my perceived sexual orientation.

LGB participants were asked whether they had been victims of specified crimes or incidents during the last two years because of their sexual orientation, and whether these incidents had been reported. The results are disturbing, with some 22% saying they experienced discrimination at work, 32% experiencing bullying or harassment, and 45% experiencing verbal abuse. Of equal concern is the very low level of reporting for homophobic crime and incidents, with some 63% of bullying or harassment, 77% of verbal abuse, and 82% of discrimination at work cases not reported.

The most common reason for not reporting is a high level of mistrust of enforcement and criminal justice agencies - which has worrying implications for Hate Crime campaigns - followed by fear of consequences of reporting and protecting personal feelings.

Recommendations

12. Housing issues

A high proportion of LGB people live with their parents. There may be a number of possible reasons for this, among which might be that LGB people are experiencing particular difficulties in obtaining independent housing. Possible causes may include low income status or discrimination (direct or indirect).

It is recommended that further research is undertaken to explore this issue.

13. LGB Support

The survey revealed a low level of awareness about LGB support organisations in the area. This reflects the lack of an LGB 'scene', and the sparsity of support available to LGB communities. It ties in with the majority of LGB respondents' support for setting up a range of support and social groups.

It is recommended that statutory and other service providers collectively explore with LGB people and groups the possibility of setting up some or all of these facilities, with robust feasibility studies as a starting point.

14. Prejudice and discrimination

- There was a high response to questions about LGB participants' fear and experience of prejudice or discrimination.
- Additionally, despite generally high levels of LGB satisfaction with named services, some 13% identified prejudice and discrimination in accessing them.
- Asked whether they think people from LGB communities suffer disadvantage in their workplace due to their sexual orientation, 49% of LGB respondents agreed.

This suggests there is still a need to improve non-homophobic service delivery, staff training in anti-homophobic values and practice, and to develop organisations' commitment to challenge homophobia in public arenas.

15. Hate crime and incidents

A majority of both respondent groups think that LGB people face a greater risk of crime. In the case of LGB respondents, the figure is 74%.

Some 22% of LGB respondents say they have experienced discrimination at work because of their sexual orientation in the past two years, with 32% experiencing bullying or harassment, and 45% experiencing verbal abuse. There is a very low level of reporting homophobic crime and incidents: some 63% of bullying and harassment, 77% of verbal abuse, and 82% of discrimination at work incidents are not reported. The most common reason given for not reporting is a high level of mistrust of enforcement and criminal justice agencies, which has worrying implications for the Hate Crime campaigns across the area. Other reasons are fear of personal consequences of reporting, and protecting personal feelings.

Recommendations are consistent with several proposals under discussion in Shropshire's Hate Crime Working Group:

- **Research into the level and reasons of under-reporting of hate crimes and incidents to establish a base-line for interpreting Hate Crime statistics**
- **Better publicity for the Hate Crime campaigns, including an emphasis on the optional nature of pursuing action**
- **Improved training – frequency and quality – of Hate Crime Centre staff and CSOs.**

Introduction

16. The idea for this project emerged from discussions in Shropshire Equalities Forum about the lack of reliable information about Shropshire LGB people's experience of living, working and using services in Shropshire. It was also prompted by a significant research project in Birmingham between December 2009 and January 2010, which sought to provide information for Birmingham City Council's Equalities and Diversity Department to support the development of their Single Equality Scheme, and to provide information about the health needs of the city's LGBT communities.
17. The original project partners were Shropshire LGB Network, Shropshire Primary Care Trust, Shropshire Council, Shropshire Fire & Rescue Service and Shropshire Primary Care Trust, and the development of the project was endorsed by Shropshire Equalities Forum. This group was later expanded to include representation from Shropshire Housing Group, Citizen's Advice Shropshire, Telford and Wrekin Council, West Mercia Police, Victim Support, the Rainbow Film Festival, Shropshire Disability Network, UAF Shrewsbury, and Rights and Fairness Telford (RAFT), all of whom committed funding to the project, as did the Shropshire General and Telford branches of Unison.

Research administration and methodology

18. RAFT undertook the research design and administration. The primary research method was a web-based survey placed on participating agency websites. Survey Monkey was used to conduct the survey, enabling the responses to be analysed consistently.
19. The survey was carried out over an eighteen month period ending on 31st January 2013.
20. The number of responses is too low to support statistically reliable general conclusions. However, the data provides a sufficient basis to support some broad themes; especially where there are significant differences in response between heterosexual and LGB participants. The research also provides a range of very interesting comments from participants, many of which have a powerful impact and underline the ongoing discrimination experienced by some LGB people in Shropshire, Telford and Wrekin.

Key themes

21. A total of 201 people responded to the survey, 98 of whom defined themselves as lesbian, gay or bisexual (LGB), 87 as heterosexual (straight), and 16 as 'undecided', 'other' or preferred not to say. All participants were firstly asked to define their sexual orientation, and then - depending on their response - they were directed to different sections of the survey to enable valid analysis of any differences in response from LGB and heterosexual respondents. As far as we know this is the first time such a research comparison has been made.
22. **Personal information**
 - 22.1. Heterosexual respondents were split roughly evenly between male and female. A slightly higher proportion of LGB men than women responded (53:47%). Some 7% of all respondents defined themselves as intersex or 'other'.

22.2. 11.5% of both heterosexual and LGB respondents defined themselves as disabled. The overwhelming majority of all respondents defined themselves as white, reflecting the ethnic origins of the wider population in both areas.

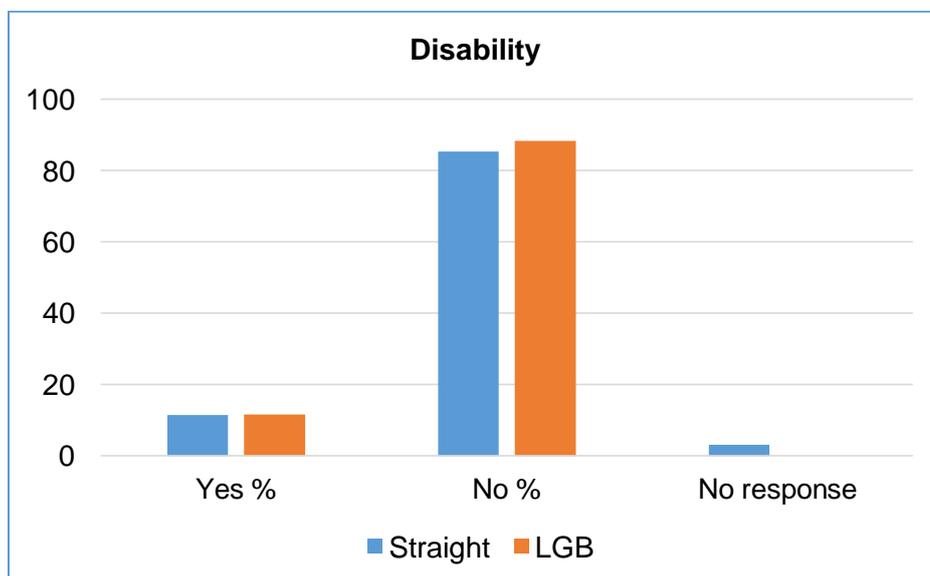
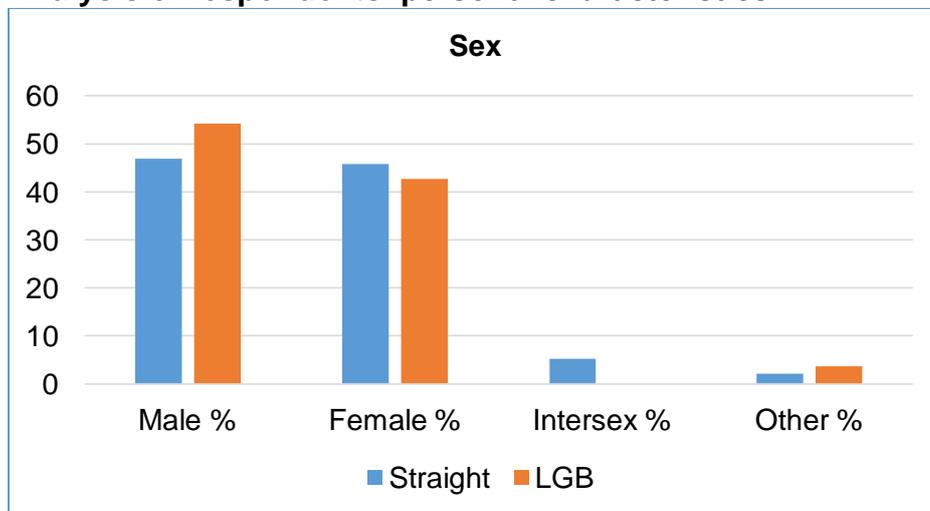
22.3. The main differences in the age distribution between both sets of respondents were in the following age groups:

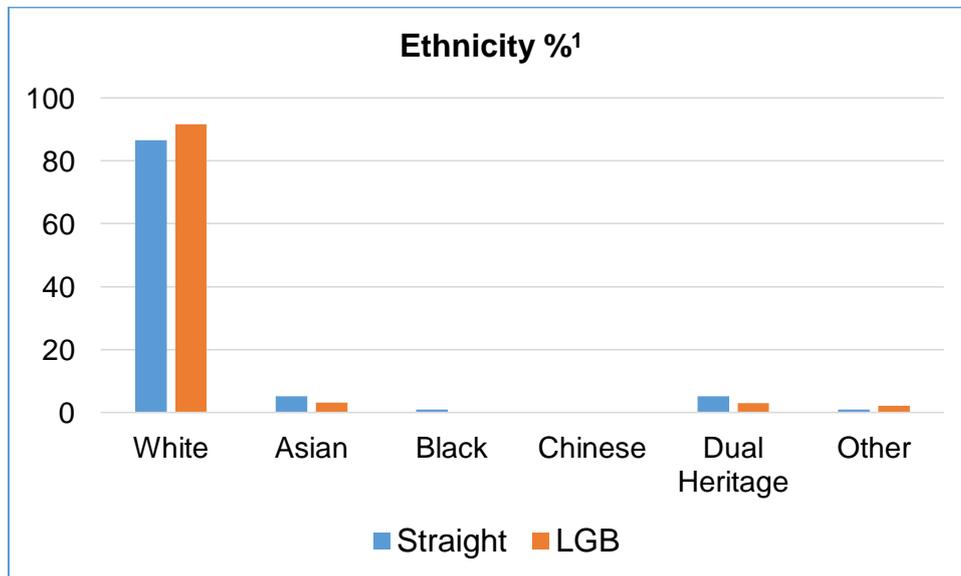
Age	Heterosexual		LGB	
	No.	%	No.	%
18-24	7	7.3%	12	12.5%
25-34	16	16.7%	24	25.0%
35-44	23	24.0%	13	13.5%

22.4. Among the self-definition of religion, a significantly lower proportion of LGB than heterosexual respondents identified with a formal religion. 43% of heterosexual respondents described themselves as either atheist or agnostic, compared with 56% for LGB respondents.

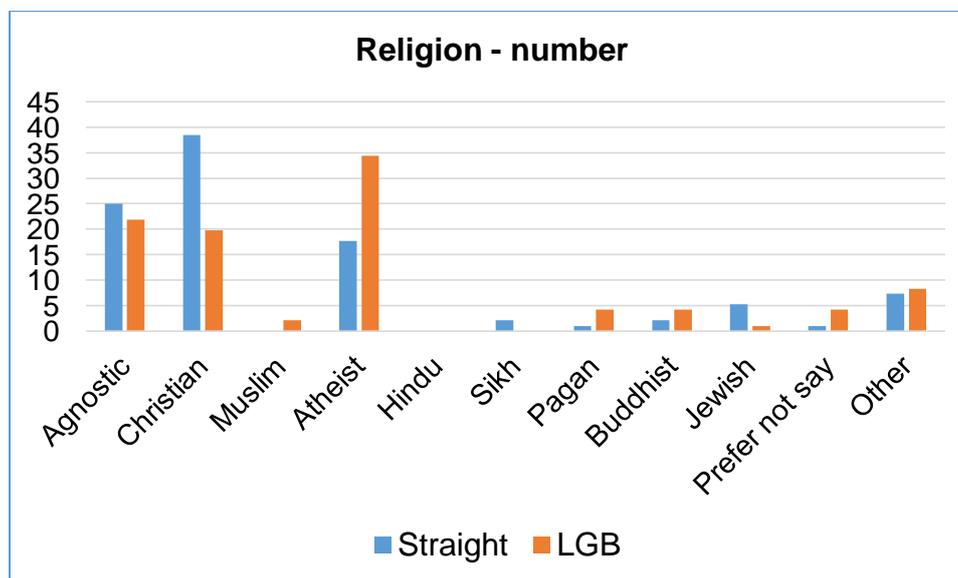
Although we have no evidence from the survey, it is reasonable to speculate that a number of recent controversial religious debates about sexual orientation in the UK and elsewhere may have had some impact on these responses.

22.5. **Analysis of respondents' personal characteristics**





Ethnicity %¹	White		Asian		Black		Chinese		Dual Heritage		Other	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Straight	83	86.5	5	5.1	1	1.0	0	0.0	6	5.1	1	1.0
LGB	88	91.7	3	3.1	0	0.0	0	0.0	3	3.0	2	2.1



23. **Occupation and income**
 23.1. **Employment status**

The survey highlighted some interesting differences in the employment status of LGB and heterosexual respondents. More than 87% of heterosexual respondents are in paid employment (full time, part time or self-employed). The equivalent for LGB respondents is 70%.

¹ These headings have been compressed for this report. The original survey contained sub-definitions, e.g. under 'White': 'White Irish', etc, and under 'Asian': 'Pakistani', etc.

The percentage of students among LGB respondents is almost double that among heterosexual respondents. There are similar distributions for those aged 18 – 24, those who live with parents, and those on low incomes, all of which are commonly associated with age.

For respondents who are not in paid employment there are again some significant differences between the two groups:

Occupation/ activity	Heterosexual		LGB	
	No.	%	No.	%
Retired	8	40.0%	9	31.0%
Long-term sick leave	1	5.0%	4	13.8%
Waiting to start a job	3	15.0%	7	24.1%
Studying / Training	6	30.0%	6	20.7%

23.2. Type of employer, occupational roles annual income

a) Type of employer

Of those in employment, private sector employment of LGB respondents is almost three times higher than for heterosexual respondents. Conversely, less than 40% of LGB respondents work in the public sector, compared with nearly 70% of heterosexual respondents

Sector	Heterosexual		LGB	
	No.	%	No.	%
Private Sector	6	6.5%	18	19.1%
Public Sector	62	67.4%	36	38.3%
Voluntary/Community Sector	14	15.2%	12	12.8%
Own Business	7	7.6%	9	9.6%

There were 97 heterosexual and 197 LGB responses to this question, indicating that any extrapolation needs to be treated with caution, However, given the public sector statutory equality duty this outcome may indicate a need to question how effectively equal opportunity and positive action is working in the statutory sector for LGB communities.

b) Occupational roles

The main differences in occupational roles between the two respondent groups are:

- Senior management (3.7% of heterosexual respondents and 18.5% of LGB respondents)
- Management (22.2% of heterosexual respondents and 15.4% of LGB respondents)
- Officer (39.5% of heterosexual respondents and 21.5% of LGB respondents)

c) Annual income

The only major differences in income levels between the two respondent groups are at the lower end of income distribution, where a significantly higher proportion of LGB respondents have gross annual incomes of less than £10,000.

23.3. Qualifications

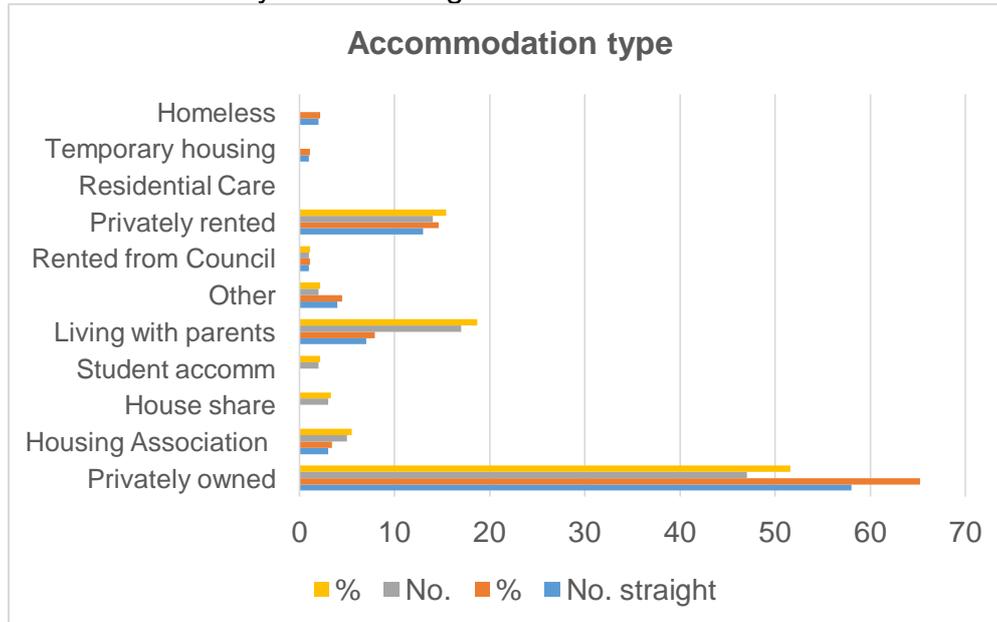
Respondents were asked to specify whether they possess postgraduate degrees, degrees or equivalent, higher education qualifications, GCEs, A-levels or equivalent, GCSE grades A*-C or equivalent, no qualifications, don't know, or other qualifications.

The only major qualification differences between the two respondent groups are among those with degrees or equivalent and those with higher educational qualifications. In both cases LGB respondents are better represented:

Qualification	Heterosexual		LGB	
	No.	%	No.	%
Degree or equivalent	23	25.6%	30	33.7%
Higher education	29	32.2%	36	40.4%

24. Housing

24.1. There were 89 heterosexual responses and 190 LGB responses to this question. There are differences between the two groups among those who are owner-occupiers, those living with parents, and those who share houses, live in student accommodation or are homeless; although in the latter three cases the numbers are too low for any statistical significance:



24.2. The accommodation response that stands out is the difference between heterosexual and LGB respondents for those living with parents. There are similar distributions for those aged 18 – 24, those who are students and those on low incomes (see chart below).

Category	Heterosexual		LGB	
	No.	%	No.	%
Age 18-24	7	7.3%	12	12.5%
Student	5	5.3%	10	10.5%
Income < £10,000	11	12.2%	21	22.6%
Living with parents	7	7.9%	17	18.7%

Although there are similar distributions for those aged 18 – 24, those who are students and those on low incomes, the data do not enable analysis of a direct relationship between these factors, and it is in any case difficult to rely on extrapolated conclusions due to the small sample.

Nevertheless the response may suggest difficulties for some LGB participants in finding suitable accommodation. If so, this might be linked to the far greater proportion of LGB respondents who are on gross annual incomes of less £10,000 (which might be age-related), or another possibility might be prejudice among housing providers

Support, attitudes and discrimination

25. The survey contained a number of questions about respondents' knowledge and attitudes about local LGB support groups and networks, and local people's attitudes towards LGB people and cultures. This section also contains valuable attitudinal feedback through the inclusion of a commentary section, selected responses from which are quoted below.
26. Respondents were asked to name any Shropshire, Telford or Wrekin groups or organisations of which they are aware that work specifically with and for LGB communities.

The responses from both groups include examples of organisations that do not work "specifically with and for the LGB community", including the Terence Higgins Trust, RAFT, Gender Matters, Women's Aid and Unison.

Although LGB respondents identified almost double the number of organisations named by heterosexual respondents (12/23), there are relatively few named in total. This almost certainly reflects the lack of an LGB 'scene' in the area, and the sparsity of infrastructure support available to LGB people.

27. Asked whether the attitude of Shropshire, Telford and Wrekin people towards LGB people has become more positive, stayed the same or become more negative in the last five years, replies were broadly similar across both respondent groups:

Perception that attitudes have:	Heterosexual response		LGB response	
	No.	%	No.	%
Become more positive	27	32.9%	34	39.1%
Stayed the same	27	32.9%	34	39.1%
Become more negative	2	2.4%	4	4.6%
Don't know	26	31.7%	15	17.2%

28. Respondents were given an opportunity to add comments. There were ten heterosexual and seventeen LGB responses, with a range of attitudes within both groups. The most evident of these attitudes are analysed opposite:

Response	Straight	LGB
Positive	3	3
Discriminatory/uninformed	2	0
Negative	2	3
Neutral	2	6

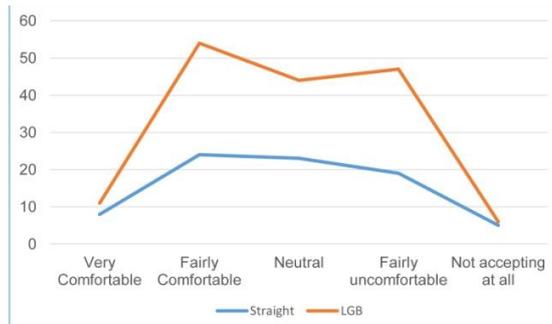
Example responses include:

Heterosexual responses	LGB responses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I cannot accept (sic) why a big issue is made of the sexuality or gender of anyone!! if you are gay, so what! does this make you special? Why all the fuss about it? I am straight but I don't have to bang on about it or have a march. Leaflets make it appear positive; attitudes remain biased towards heterosexual; G more than L as L can be hidden I continue to hear negative comments, and when I challenge people, they seem very reluctant to change their views. On the whole people in these communities can be quite narrow-minded I find the attitude to be open and positive, there should be no difference. People are people; what is normal? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ...seems to be more going on ... in Shrewsbury for 7 years, myself and partner ... pleasantly surprised by the mostly warm way we've been treated experience in Shrewsbury is mostly positive - quite probably less so in less liberal and reasonably tolerant middle class(ish) communities. ...lots of school bullying, when children are in school they aren't taught about families that come in different shapes, sizes, and that not everyone has a mum and a dad, this isn't just about same sex parents but children living with grandparents for example.... I sense a reduction in societies (sic) support and tolerance for LGBT. I think that relates on a wider level to the current economic downturn ... and the effect this has on attitudes...more positive, though progress feels very fragile /tentative, and much more can be done to achieve equality, understanding, and positive regard for people....

29. The survey also sought respondents' views about public attitudes on five more detailed issues (see table below). There were 79 heterosexual (straight) and 83 LGB respondents. Key findings include:

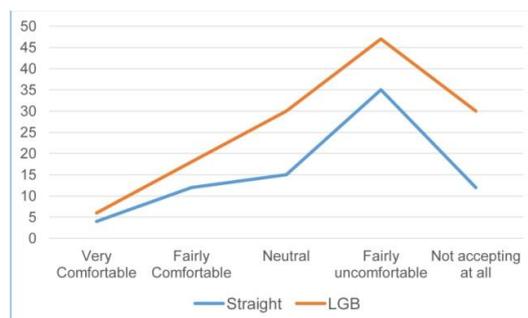
29.1. People being open about their sexual orientation in their workplace

Responses to this question revealed a marked divergence of views at the attitudinal 'extremes'. There were eight heterosexual 'very comfortable' responses against only three LGB, compared with five heterosexual 'not accepting at all' responses against only one LGB. Responses in the attitudinal mid-range were less divided.



29.2. LGB people holding hands and showing affection in public places

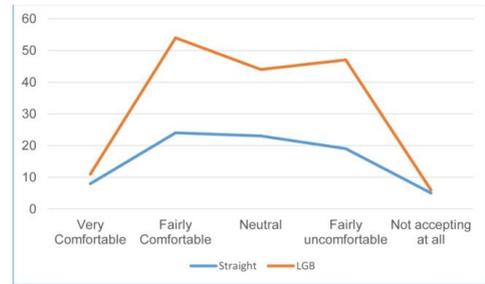
Responses to this question shows four heterosexual 'very comfortable' responses against two LGB, compared with twelve heterosexual 'not accepting at all' responses against eighteen LGB. Overall, however, there is perceived to be a strong bias towards the 'uncomfortable/not acceptable' end of the spectrum in general public attitudes.



29.3. **Holding Gay Pride events or other LGB oriented social events**

Nine heterosexual respondents think there is a high level of public comfort with Gay Pride and other LGB public events, compared with four LGB respondents.

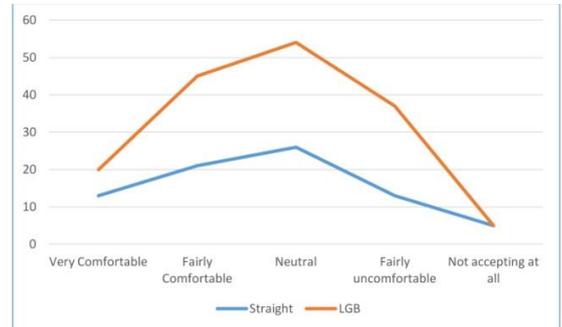
These numbers are almost exactly replicated for responses to 'not accepting at all'. Overall, LGB respondents show a more marked distribution towards the 'neutral' view than do heterosexual respondents



29.4 **LGB couples accessing public services such as their doctor's surgery together**

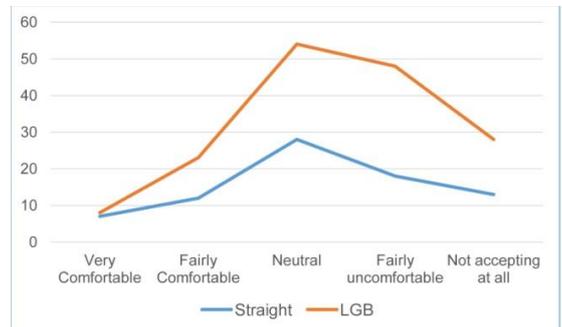
There is a marked difference in response to the view that people are very comfortable with this, with thirteen heterosexual people agreeing while only seven LGB respondents do so.

Conversely, while five heterosexual respondents think that LGB couples accessing public services is not accepted at all, no LGB respondents share this view.



29.5. **LGB couples fostering and adopting children**

Seven heterosexual respondents think that people are very comfortable with LGB couples fostering and adopting children, in contrast with only one LGB respondent. At the 'uncomfortable' end of the spectrum the picture is less clear, although overall there is a strong view that this issue does not have wide public acceptance.



30. Again, these reflect a range of attitudes, some of which are reflected across both groups of respondents:

Heterosexual Responses

- Why am I filling this in? Surely there are more important things to worry about. Do lesbians and gays want special treatment? if you love someone then who cares what people think! if a couple give children love, safety and education then all power to them I would like to think my answers reflect the people of Shropshire - if I was answering for myself I would have said very comfortable to all.
- Based on personal experience, my partner and I feel comfortable with holding hands in public, however we are aware that public displays of affection for heterosexual couples is easier /more accepted by others....
- G fare worse than L

LGB Responses

- ... these are really difficult questions to address as it's bound to vary from person to person and community to community... I've no idea how the majority of the population think/feel....
- Some workplaces will be more comfortable. At it was deemed to be more acceptable to be gay if you were studying Art or Drama than engineering!!!
- Events - lots who came to the Rainbow Film Festival came because they were interested/ comfortable. One man came to a film not realising it was part of the festival and slammed his leaflet back at me, clearly very uncomfortable, angry and filled with hate!

Heterosexual Responses

- I sometimes feel that LGB community members are treated preferentially by employers for fear of action against them
- I am comparing the attitudes I have encountered here with those I have encountered in other parts of the UK (e.g. London and Manchester) and although some people are very accepting, others are openly hostile here....
- Same sex fostering has to been seen from the perspective of the children and not what we believe is socially acceptable at this point in time. It is not acceptable to have gay pride events, as there are no heterosexual pride events, it highlights we are different, whereas it should be we are all different, none of us are the same, it is more political hype, there is no need for differentiation, just acceptance for the right reasons and not because we feel we should, but because we are all humans.

LGB Responses

- I would like to approach my GP regarding IUI treatment, however information is limited for couples, even simple questions like whose GP do we use hers or mine seem uncomfortable to ask, as you get such a strange look.
- public expression of tolerance, yes you can have rights, yes you can access public services but there is the more personal reality in respect of physical expressions of affection or family definitions. I may regard Shropshire society as generally accepting of LGBT rights but ... I still have to choose when and where I hold my partner's hand or give them a kiss....
-'workplace is a vague term. It is so different if your workplace is e.g. a local authority social services department or a building firm or farm...
- I don't believe people should be allowed to foster or adopt children unless they are in a [long standing] heterosexual relationship.... children should be raised in a normal environment and I don't believe gay relationships are lasting enough to include children.....Some GP surgeries are deeply homophobic, most are not. .. My partner and I often hold hands/link arms - in Shrews Town Centre mainly.... Some areas in Shrews would be more risky and some rural towns. e.g. Oswestry

31. Experience of prejudice or discrimination

Respondents identifying as LGB were asked whether they fear or have experienced prejudice or discrimination in a selection of places and situations. Space was given to add their comments to these responses, an opportunity taken up by eleven out of the eighty people completing this question.

Of particular concern in the table on the right is the high responses in red:

I fear prejudice or discrimination, and I have experienced prejudice or discrimination

Location	I fear prejudice or discrimination		I do not fear prejudice or discrimination		I have experienced prejudice or discrimination		Not applicable		Response count
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
School or College	12	15%	11	13.8%	30	37.5%	31	38.8%	80
Workplace	14	17.5%	33	41.3%	25	31.3%	13	16.3%	80
Accessing Public Services (e.g.GP Surgeries)	12	16.7%	50	64.9%	8	10.4%	8	10.4%	77

Location	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No
Accessing Private Services (i.e. restaurants)	19	23.8%	42	52.5%	18	22.5%	4	5.0%	80
Socialising	28	35.4%	27	34.2%	26	32.9%	2	2.5%	79
Other public activity (e.g. shopping)	20	25.6%	38	48.7%	22	28.2%	3	3.8%	78

32. **Reasons participants fear discrimination or prejudice, and experiences that have influenced their answers**

- Fear is almost too strong as sometimes it more about unease - not quite knowing response when checking in to our room with a double bed - when people say, "Oh did you mean a twin room?" I also think it's different the older you get, as people don't see middle-aged women as necessarily having any sexuality - they must be sisters, friends, companions etc.....such varied experiences - we don't even know all this about each other and I'm pretty sure the straight world don't know about us.....
- Social exclusion at college on the grounds of sexuality, as well as occasional verbal abuse (mostly by 'straight' women). Similarly at work, where homophobic jokes have been made which have intimidated me (though I should point out not directed at me). My partner and I have been verbally abused in a local pub and the bar staff refused to do anything about it.
- My partner could be described as "butch" and definitely is treated differently if she goes to "girlie" clothes shops etc.
- My partner and I choose to socialise in places we feel comfortable and non-threatening. However when away from our local haunts we are wary of new places and behave strictly straight, initially at least.
- I was verbally attacked in ASDA because I hugged my partner
- I have kept the fact that I am gay to myself; I have heard how others talk about gay people, and that makes me feel I need to keep this to myself. The only people I have spoken to about being gay are others that I know are gay.
- ...again it is difficult to answer, because it depends where you are in Shropshire or Telford. One area [of threat] is in the public arena, e.g. making your way to a place or meeting a friend, or on public transport
- School/college - in the past I was bullied at school. At college (Teacher Training, London) I went to college psychiatrist to talk about depression and he focused upon my sexuality recommending Aversion Therapy!
I have experienced discrimination when trying to book a B&B, before the law changed. I think we still get a twin room as 'doubles are not available'. I am aware that I may get a homophobic response from other customers in some pubs.
- Past experience - even from a long time ago - can keep impacting I was among 40 lesbians attacked in Bristol in 1989 - it has a legacy about socialising, treatment by police and health service, taxi drivers, journalists etc. We have had lots of lovely affirming shopping experiences in Shrewsbury - e.g. for a bed in Feather & Black - sadly this feels like a surprise and a story to tell! Thinking about a civil partnership, we would only consider ... venues that would treat us with respect, but where are they? How can we know - it is always a risk? Buying a car - the seller wanted us to wait until our husbands had seen it. Accessing utilities providers - they like to talk to your husband!
- Bullying at school, before I even knew I was gay.
- I generally find any activity that involves alcohol and/or groups of people to be worrying, and modify my behaviour with my g/f according to how high I view the risk. We have been subject to several instances of homophobia whilst in a setting as above. Generally from males who have had too much to drink and are with friends.

33. Service Delivery

The survey offered participants the opportunity to comment on their experience of using a range of public services in Shropshire, Telford and Wrekin, and for LGB respondents to record examples they have experienced of service providers' prejudice and discrimination. All responses in this section are being fed back directly to the organisations concerned. However, it is possible to draw some general observations from the responses.

In the following sections about public services, statistics are derived from the number of responses to questions about different service providers. Many respondents have answered questions about more than one service provider within a question, which means that the number of **responses** is much higher than the number of **participating respondents**.

33.1. To a question asking whether respondents think that LGB people face prejudice and discrimination in accessing services from eight public service providers, the number of responses varied (depending on the service) between 74 to 76 heterosexual responses and 83 to 85 LGB responses per service. Overall, there were 31 heterosexual and 79 LGB responses that LGB people face prejudice and discrimination in accessing the services.

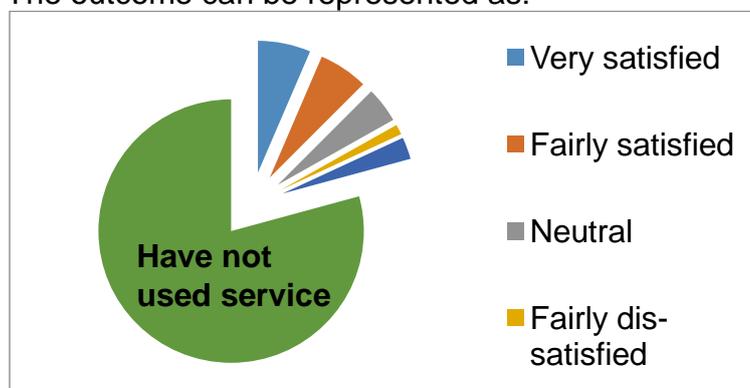
This contrasts with 374 heterosexual and 357 LGB responses that LGB people do not face such prejudice and discrimination, while there were 196 heterosexual and 236 LGB 'don't know' responses.

33.2. This was followed by a question for LGB respondents only, asking whether they or their families face prejudice or discrimination due to their sexual orientation when accessing services from the named providers.

Across the eight service providers, there are 46 responses indicating experience of such discrimination, while 347 had no such experience and a mean of 34 respondents per service had not accessed particular services.

33.3. A second question in this section for LGB respondents only asked about their satisfaction with services (Have you used and how satisfied were you with the service you received from the following providers?)

The outcome can be represented as:



33.4. LGB respondents were asked whether they see a need for the following new services:

New service	No.	%
Community Support Group	64	58.7%
Rights Campaigning Group	43	39.4%
Service Users Forum	45	41.3%
Health and Wellbeing Centre	54	49.5%
Community Venue	56	51.4%
Social Events	79	72.5%
LGBT History Month Group	42	38.5%

33.5. Respondents were invited to comment on the need for these services. The fifteen contributions were broadly divided between a majority who felt that specific LGB services were needed and a minority who felt that all services should be LGB-friendly and appropriate, and that separate services are therefore potentially divisive and counter-productive.

Broad themes included:

- The need for a sense of common values and community in the diverse LGB community, and for an LGB network to include exploration of consulting, gaining information and providing support.
- The need to combat bullying in schools, and spread the message that LGB people are normal and everyday
- The need for better provision of LGBT-friendly or (better still) exclusively LGBT venues and socialising spaces in Shropshire, Telford and Wrekin. At present people have to travel to Birmingham and Manchester in order to socialise with fellow LGBT people.
- A need for an inclusive community centre providing all kinds of support
- Better funding for LGB provision (social and services) is needed
- Society changes and accepts when inclusion becomes the norm ... having LGB-only events even with a caveat of 'others welcome', is not about acceptance at all.

33.6. All participants were asked whether they think any existing services in Shropshire, Telford and Wrekin need to be improved to meet the needs of LGB communities, and for their reasons. There was a total of 146 responses, not differentiated between LGB and heterosexual:

Response	No.	%
Yes	49	33.6%
No	29	19.9%
Don't know	68	46.6%

'Yes' responses are significantly higher than 'no'. The number of 'don't know' responses is unusually high, but it is not possible to determine the reasons for this.

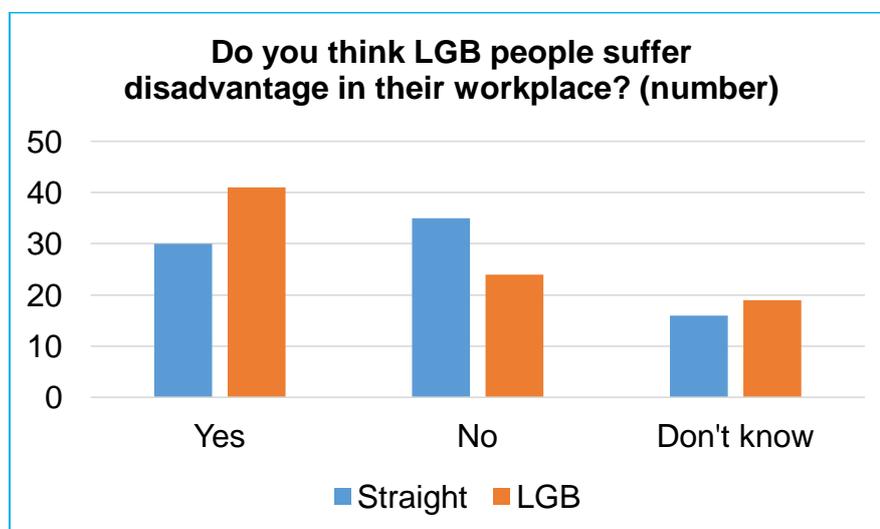
Again, responses contain a range of views and prejudices. Examples include:

- "And just what are the needs of the LGB community? and how and why is it different from anyone else's needs? Everyone wants to be accepted so why make a big issue of setting yourself apart? I prefer brunette women to blondes! do I need a special service available to me?"

- “Staff need to be better trained, so there are no raised eyebrows when you introduce yourself...”
- “...the question ... rather implies that there are services out there. The fact I have no idea about them speaks volumes.....”
- “Too much reliance ... (on) the few "out" LGBT people in the county to do what the agencies should be doing themselves.... agencies (often) say they don't know what to do, then call on those people ("to show us") and then back off, leaving them to shoulder the work..... There is too much tolerance of bigoted people; homophobia is simply wrong and agencies need to take a firm stand”
- “There should be more services for 18 - 25 year olds, (the transition time), and more services for adults”
- “.... the LGBT people in this county are 5th -class citizens .. needs better provision across the board - social, transport, education , community awareness..., better links between LGBT people who are isolated, lonely..”
- “...need more equality and diversity training in ALL work places”
- “.... services in Shropshire, Telford and Wrekin need to take into account the needs of the gay community. Something needs to be done to help people be comfortable about being open about their sexuality (most young people) move away because of the intolerance...”
- “....Schools have limited time and resources to deal with sexual orientation adequately in their sex education classes”
- “....myself and my partner have thought long and hard about what services there are available to the LGB community and we are struggling to think of any...”
- “...it should be about inclusive services for all, not because you think everyone should be treated differently”

34. **Workplace discrimination and disadvantage**

34.1. All participants were asked whether they think people from the LGB communities suffer disadvantage in their workplace due to their sexual orientation. 81 heterosexual and 84 LGB participants responded, with a clear difference between the two group’s responses:



34.2. Participants were invited to comment on their answers. Emerging themes include:

Straight Respondents (9 responses)

- Two comments highlighting a view that the reverse is true – because of employers’ fear of being accused of discrimination (*“if anything they are positively fawned over by employers”*) and being LGB seen as a positive attribute - representing a minority.
- Difference between younger LGB people (who face less discrimination) and older (who have always feared coming out at work)
- The level of disadvantage depends on who is the employer

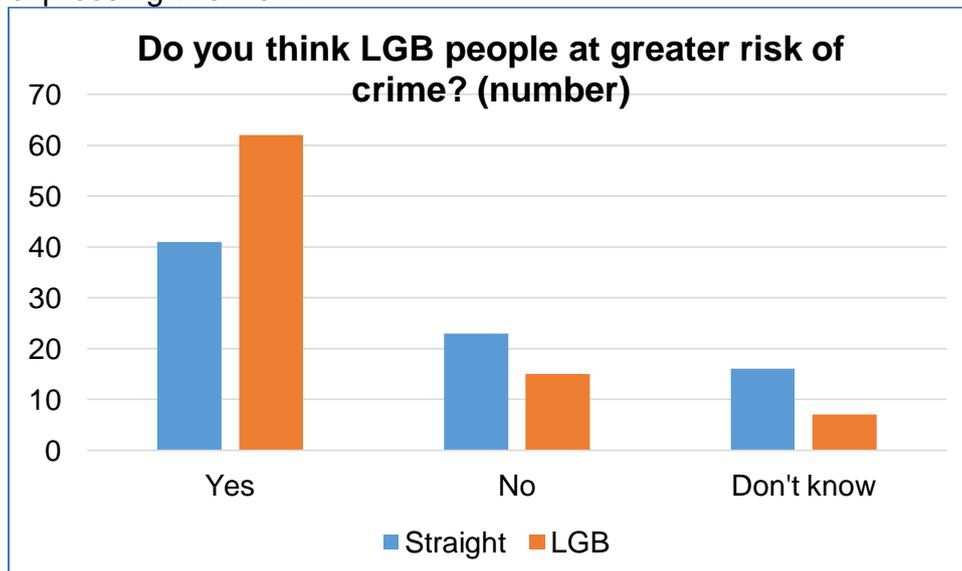
LGB Respondents (22 responses)

- Response from people working in the public sector that although at a policy level there is tolerance and respect, day-to-day working experience depends on individual attitudes and relationships. Discrimination may be relatively minor, but is still upsetting (*“You can draft any amount of policies and file them away to tick the box but what actually counts is training the staff ..., making them aware of the consequences and ... nipping the small stuff in the bud before a culture of intolerance develops”*)
- Depends on the workplace and the employer’s commitment to eliminate discrimination and homophobia in the workplace.
- High potential for discrimination, but will depend on how many people feel able to come out at work. In general there will be disadvantage if people know. (*“...there is likely to be some sort of 'disadvantage' - even if that is a wariness and slight anxiety. It can be very subtle or very overt but, often stops us being true to ourselves”*)

35. **Crime and hate incidents**

35.1. All participants were asked whether they think that people from LGB communities are at greater risk of crime due to their sexual orientation. 87 heterosexual and 84 LGB people responded,.

A majority of both groups think there is a greater risk of crime for LGB people, but there was a very marked difference between the two groups in the proportion expressing this view.



Again, participants were invited to comment on their responses. Seven heterosexual and fourteen LGB respondents did so. Among these were:

Straight

- “Anyone who is different runs the risk of harm ...”
- “I feel they are more open, and people take advantage...”
- “... if you make a huge issue of your preference you will always leave yourself open to some kind of unwanted attention...”
- “...They are an easy target”
- “People ... look at LGB people as another breed..”

LGB

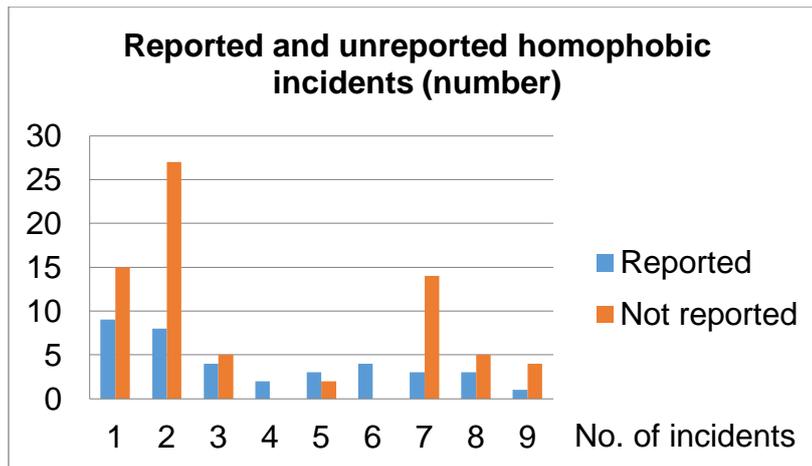
- “... (homophobic) bullying is still going strong for many young people...”
- “..may be a target if sexuality is known”
- “ ... gay men in particular are an easy target” “... There is also a lot of low level anti-social behaviour directed at LGBT people on a daily basis (personally experienced)”
- “Being a victim of hate crime I do fear (verbal) or physical abuse when with my male partner when passing pubs or groups of men....”
- “...I feel the small number of LGB community who get attacked are possibly .. part of the general public who get bashed by the drunken yobs at pub kicking out time....”
- “... I have had my windows broken and been called names in the street” “..
- I wouldn't advertise my sexuality if walking home by myself...” “I know of several men who live 'straight' lives .. due ... to a fear of violence / bullying”
- “... I have been the victim of verbal abuse on many occasions while out with my partner... because of perceived sexuality

35.2. LGB participants only were asked whether they had been victims of specified crimes or incidents during the last two years because of their sexual orientation.

Even with an expectation of a high level of homophobic incidents from wider Hate Crime statistics the results are disturbing:

	Type of incident	Responses	'No'	'Yes' – reported	'Yes' - not reported	Total 'Yes'
1.	Bullying or Harassment	76	52	9	15	24
2.	Verbal Abuse	77	42	8	27	35
3.	Physical Abuse or Assault	77	68	4	5	9
4.	Burglary or theft	77	75	2	0	2
5.	Criminal damage	77	72	3	2	5
6.	Neighbour dispute	77	73	4	0	4
7.	Discrimination at work	77	60	3	14	17
8.	Discrimination in accessing services	77	69	3	5	8
9.	Discrimination in accessing venues (i.e. refused entry)	77	72	1	4	5

35.3. Equally disturbing, although again not surprising, is the very high level of under-reporting of such incidents, graphically represented in the diagram below:



Respondents who had not reported incidents were asked to give reasons. for not doing so. Thirty people gave responses. Among the reasons were:

Mistrust of enforcement and criminal justice agencies

- Nothing would get done about it
- It wouldn't be dealt with appropriately or be taken seriously
- I did not think there was any point; no-one would do anything
- It would be considered petty by the police
- I do not feel that anything will actually be done about it
- LGB crimes get swept under the carpet frequently
- It would be unlikely to result in any conviction
- Didn't trust others to deal with it
- I have reported homophobic incidents in the past and feel those investigating have a tough task identifying them as homophobic
- What's the point? If you complain you get branded as a trouble maker...

Fear of consequences

- There might be personal repercussions
- Partner's care might have been at risk if I'd reported it
- Worried any intervention would escalate rather than improve anything..

Personal feelings

- Not wanting to make a fuss and draw attention
- ... embarrassed to report it
- Did not want to dwell on incidents
- It happens too often
- We can handle the comments

Self-help

- I got mean back and put him in his place

Lack of information

- Who would you report to?
- Didn't know who they were or at which school

The most common reason was a lack of trust or belief in the enforcement agencies and the criminal justice system, which has worrying implications for the Hate Crime campaigns in both local authority areas.

Recommendations

37. Housing issues

A high proportion of LGB people live with their parents. There may be a number of possible reasons for this, among which might be that LGB people are experiencing particular difficulties in obtaining independent housing. Possible causes may include low income status or discrimination (direct or indirect).

It is recommended that further research is undertaken to explore this issue.

38. LGB Support

The survey revealed a low level of awareness about LGB support organisations in the area. This reflects the lack of an LGB 'scene', and the sparsity of support available to LGB communities. It ties in with the majority of LGB respondents' support for setting up a range of support and social groups.

It is recommended that statutory and other service providers collectively explore with LGB people and groups the possibility of setting up some or all of these facilities, with robust feasibility studies as a starting point.

39. Prejudice and discrimination

- There was a high response to questions about fear of prejudice or discrimination and LGB participants' experience of it.
- Additionally, despite generally high levels of LGB satisfaction with named services, some 13% identified prejudice and discrimination in accessing them.
- Asked whether they think people from LGB communities suffer disadvantage in their workplace due to their sexual orientation. 49% of LGB respondents agreed.

This suggests there is still a need to improve non-homophobic service delivery, improve staff training in anti-homophobic values and practice, and develop a commitment to challenge homophobia in public arenas.

40. Hate crime and incidents

A majority of both respondent groups think that LGB people face a greater risk of crime. In the case of LGB respondents, the figure is 74%.

Some 22% of LGB respondents say they have experienced discrimination at work because of their sexual orientation in the past two years, with 32% experiencing bullying or harassment, and 45% experiencing verbal abuse. There is a very low level of reporting homophobic crime and incidents. Some 63% of bullying and harassment, 77% of verbal abuse, and 82% of discrimination at work incidents are not reported.

The most common reason for not reporting is a high level of mistrust of enforcement and criminal justice agencies, which has worrying implications for the Hate Crime campaigns across the area. Other reasons are fear of consequences of reporting and protecting personal feelings.

Recommendations are consistent with several proposals under discussion in Shropshire's Hate Crime Working Group:

- **Research into the level and reasons of under-reporting of hate crimes and incidents to establish a base-line for interpreting Hate Crime statistics**
- **Better publicity for the Hate Crime campaigns, including an emphasis on the optional nature of pursuing action**
- **Improved training – frequency and quality – of Hate Crime Centre staff and CSOs.**

Jonathan Hyams
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Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service
July 2013