

**Stonewall**

# ABOUT THIS RESOURCE

**This resource is produced by Stonewall, a UK-based charity that stands for the freedom, equity and potential of all lesbian, gay, bi, trans, queer, questioning and ace (LGBTQ+) people.**

At Stonewall, we imagine a world where LGBTQ+ people everywhere can live our lives to the full.

Founded in London in 1989, we now work in each nation of the UK and have established partnerships across the globe. Over the last three decades, we have created transformative change in the lives of LGBTQ+ people in the UK, helping win equal rights around marriage, having children and inclusive education.

Our campaigns drive positive change for our communities, and our sustained change and empowerment programmes ensure that LGBTQ+ people can thrive throughout our lives. We make sure that the world hears and learns from our communities, and our work is grounded in evidence and expertise.

To find out more about our work, visit us at [www.stonewall.org.uk](http://www.stonewall.org.uk)

**Registered Charity No 1101255 (England and Wales) and SC039681 (Scotland)**

Stonewall is proud to provide information, support and guidance on LGBTQ+ inclusion; working towards a world where we're all free to be. This does not constitute legal advice, and is not intended to be a substitute for legal counsel on any subject matter.



# LGBT IN BRITAIN

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## BI REPORT



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## BI REPORT

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# INTRODUCTION

The Stonewall Bi Report is the last in a series of reports drawing on our **LGBT in Britain** survey data. We asked more than 5,000 lesbian, gay, bi and trans (LGBT) people across England, Scotland and Wales about their experiences in order to understand everyday life for British LGBT people. A third of respondents identified as bi, and this report pulls together key findings relating to life for bi people specifically.

Stonewall uses the term ‘bi’ to refer to people who have a romantic and/or sexual attraction towards more than one gender. People under the bi umbrella may describe themselves using one or more of a wide variety of terms, including, but not limited to, bisexual, pan, and queer.

People with an attraction to more than one gender challenge the sometimes binary categories we use to organise the world. To take one example, a bi person’s orientation often cannot be determined by their current partner(s). However, the fact that bi identities defy assumptions many people have about attraction and relationships can also mean that bi people are particularly stigmatised. While biphobia shares common elements with homophobia and transphobia, it has several distinctive elements. Crucially, biphobia can come from two directions – it is expressed both by straight people, and by gay/lesbian people, creating exclusion and prejudice from within and outside the LGBT community. This exacerbates the challenges already faced by bi communities and compounds the shame and prejudice that many bi people experience.

This report directly examines the experiences of bi people. It demonstrates how specifically biphobic prejudices – such as disregarding bi people’s understanding of their own orientation, or assuming that all bi people are promiscuous – lead to significantly higher levels of reported discrimination and shame, across all surveyed areas, for bi people themselves. Many of these statistics are deeply shocking – they paint a stark image of a community which experiences higher levels of prejudice compared to lesbian and gay people. At the same time, bi people’s experiences of discrimination are often undermined or ignored altogether.

The research shows that bi people experience numerous, distinct types of discrimination. They are significantly less likely to be out to friends or family because they fear prejudice. However, when they look for support from other members of the LGBT community, they often experience rejection there, too. Bi people also reported fear around being open about their orientation when seeking medical help. When they did come out to their healthcare provider, 22 per cent of respondents experienced inappropriate questioning about their sexuality. To improve outcomes for bi people, it is vital that we acknowledge that this combination of erasure and harmful stereotypes creates unique problems, and that we need unique solutions to solve them.

However, our existing data doesn’t tell the whole story. The results of our survey show a clear need for more research into the experiences of bi people, particularly those who face multiple types of discrimination, such as people of colour, people of faith, disabled people, working class people, and trans people. Ultimately, this report should open up a conversation about the ongoing and emerging needs of bi communities, as well as marking our commitment to investing in work which will create meaningful change for all bi people, including those overlooked in our existing data.



# WHAT DO YOU NEED TO KNOW?

## WHAT DO WE MEAN BY 'BI'?

Bi is an umbrella term used to describe romantic and/or sexual attraction towards more than one gender. Bi people may describe themselves using one or more of a wide variety of terms, including, but not limited to: bisexual, pan, queer.

## HOW MANY BI PEOPLE ARE THERE?

There is currently no nationally representative survey of the LGBT population in Britain but, according to the Office for National Statistics, in 2017 an estimated 2 per cent of the population aged 16 or over in the UK (1.1 million people) identified as LGB. Of these, 0.7 per cent (385,000 people) identified as bi. Based on the methodology for this estimate, we believe it underestimates the bi population significantly.

## WHAT IS BIPHOBIA?

Biphobia is a fear or dislike of someone because of prejudice towards, or negative attitudes about, bi people. Biphobia can be targeted at people who are, or who are perceived to be, bi.

# HOW TO BE A GOOD ALLY

Everyone can do more to be bi inclusive, including those within the LGBT community. Here are some simple tips on how to be a good ally from bi people themselves.

## 1. Believe us.

Bi people exist, and all bi identities are valid. It is all too common for bi people to be challenged and scrutinised on their identity. One bi person might generally date one gender, another might have been in a monogamous relationship with somebody for many years – and they can both still be bi. Believing bi people about our own identity is the bare minimum of allyship!

## 2. Make no assumptions.

Don't assume someone's identity based on their current or previous partner(s). The gender of someone's sexual or romantic partners doesn't define them. Take their lead on the language they use to describe their relationships and identity, whether they identify as bi, pan, queer, any of the other labels under the bi umbrella, or no label at all. Some bi people might also use the terms lesbian or gay to describe themselves in some contexts.

## 3. Recognise and challenge biphobia.

Whether it's street harassment or a harmful generalisation about bi people, make sure to challenge biphobia when you see or hear it. Don't leave it to bi people to do all the work, and support other allies when they challenge prejudice.

## 4. Uplift and support marginalised bi people.

This goes for everyone in the bi community, as well as our allies. BAME/PoC bi people are doubly underrepresented, erased and discriminated against. Bi men face stigma within and outside of the LGBT community. Ace bi people are told they 'can't' be bi. Bi people of faith are often invisible in narratives about LGBT inclusion in faith spaces. And sometimes trans bi people are invalidated when people question how their bi identity intersects with their gender identity. Check out and support [Bi's of Colour](#) and [#BisexualMenExist](#) as a first step.

## 5. Use inclusive language.

Think carefully about who you're talking about. You can erase and exclude bi people when using words like 'gay' as catch-all terms, especially if you don't know whether everyone you're referring to identifies in that way. But remember that outing someone or asking intrusive questions to pin down their identity is harmful – there are plenty of resources online about bi-inclusive language. Read up!

## 6. Make your LGBT spaces and events inclusive.

43 per cent of bi respondents to our survey reported that they had never attended LGBT spaces. Having a safe space to find community and belonging can be life-changing, and every LGBT person deserves to feel accepted and respected in our communities.

Make it explicit that bi people and their partners of any gender are welcome at your event or venue, and that biphobia will not be tolerated. If you're hosting speakers or performers, plan ahead to ensure you have bi representation and that everyone has been briefed about your bi-inclusive stance.

## 7. Support bi organisations and campaigns.

There are some amazing groups that have been amplifying bi voices, tackling biphobia and building communities for years. Many of them are run by volunteers, but you can support them by donating, sharing their work or lending your time: **BiPhoria**, **Bi Pride UK**, **Bi's of Colour**, **Bi Survivors Network**, **Biscuit**, **The Bisexual Index**

## 8. Make sure your workplace, university or school is inclusive.

As a first step, make sure all of your institutional policies are explicitly bi inclusive. These policies should protect all employees, regardless of their gender or the gender of their partner. Try to ensure that any wording used avoids labelling someone's relationship (e.g. 'straight', 'gay', 'wife', 'husband') in a way that they might reject. Make sure that biphobic bullying is explicitly addressed in policy and practice.

## 9. Support bi people to live full and complex lives, like everyone else!

Watch out for the bi double bind. Biphobia can double down hard on bi people if they are seen to 'fit' a stereotype. For example, if a bi person has multiple romantic and/or sexual partners, it's seen as 'proof' of the greedy and promiscuous stereotype, and yet a bi person in a monogamous relationship might be accused of 'making up' their bi identity. Affirm your bi friends' lives and relationships, and remember how much harm negative stereotypes can cause bi people.

## 10. Celebrate us!

Amplify and celebrate bi people and their stories. Days like Bi Visibility Day are a great reason to celebrate us, but ensure that you're also giving our identities and experiences a platform throughout the year. As a start, look up bi creators on social media, follow them and share their content.



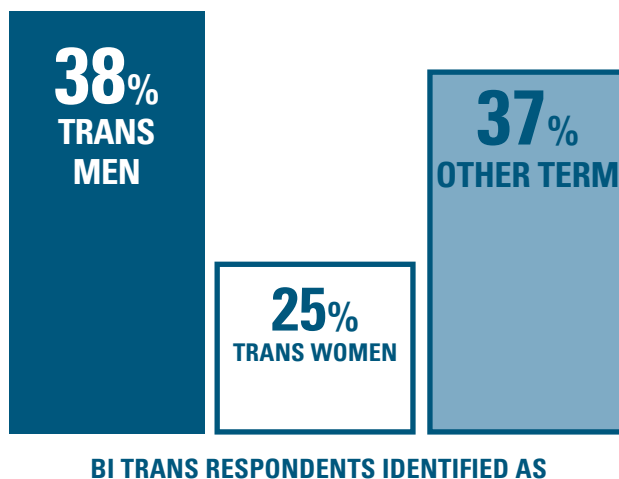
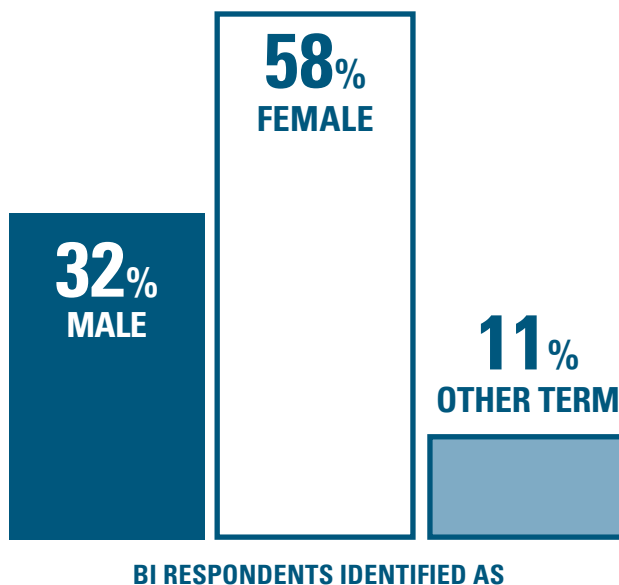
# THE STUDY

In 2017, Stonewall commissioned YouGov to carry out a survey asking more than 5,000 LGBT people across England, Scotland and Wales about their daily life.

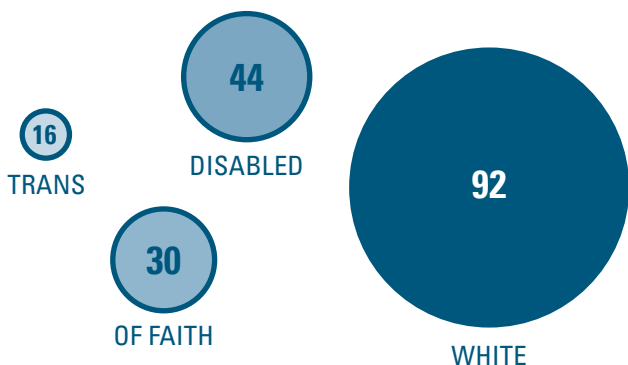
This report, part of a series based on the research, investigates the specific experiences of bi people. It highlights the unique and persistent challenges that they face at home, in education, at work, when accessing healthcare, and within LGBT communities.

## 31 per cent (1668) of respondents identified as bi. Of these:

- 32 per cent were male, 58 per cent were female, 10 per cent identified in another way or preferred not to say. Different terms that respondents used to describe their gender identity include 'non-binary', 'genderfluid', and 'genderqueer'. People who used a different term to describe their gender identity are referred to as 'non-binary people' throughout this report.
- 16 per cent of bi respondents identified as trans. Of these respondents: 38 per cent identified as trans men, 25 per cent as trans women, and 37 per cent as trans and identified in another way
- 30 per cent identified as being a person of faith
- 44 per cent identified as disabled
- 92 per cent of bi respondents identified as white



BI RESPONDENTS IDENTIFIED AS (%)



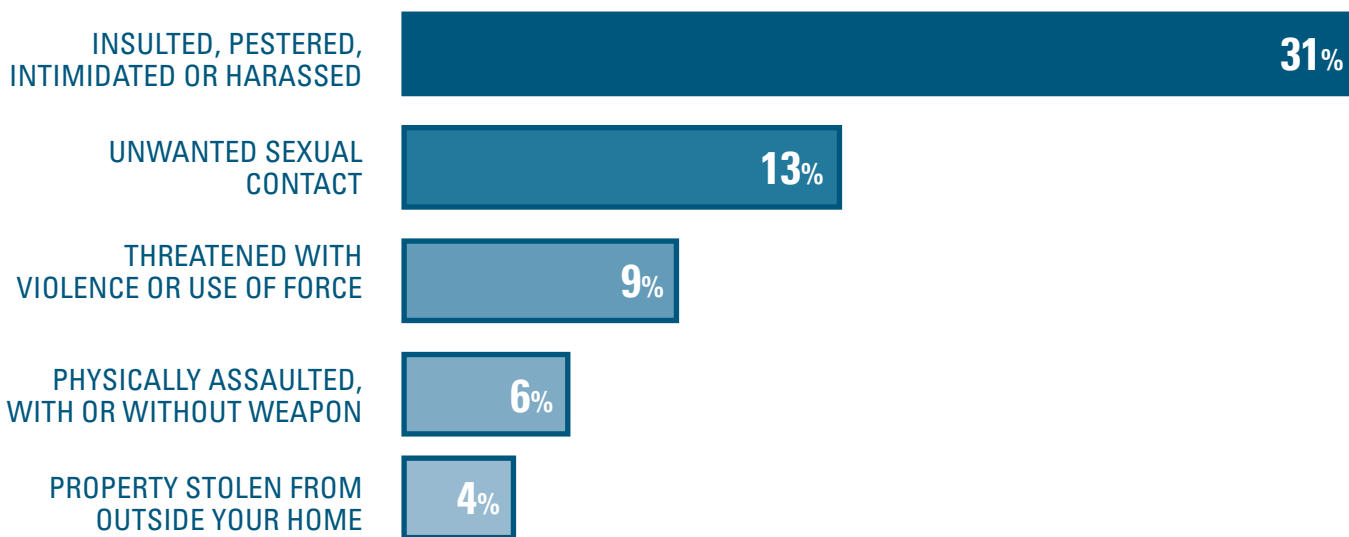
# THE FINDINGS

# HATE CRIME AND DISCRIMINATION

Over the past 25 years, Britain has taken huge strides on the journey towards equality for LGBT people. Changes in the law mean that more schools, employers, and public services are tackling anti-LGBT discrimination and bullying. Access to marriage is a reality for many, and Section 28 has been consigned to history. But for many LGBT people, legal changes have not yet translated into true equality.

## HATE CRIME AND DISCRIMINATION

Hate crimes can range from physical violence and unwanted sexual contact to theft and property damage. Our survey data showed that, in the year prior to being surveyed, bi respondents were affected by the following hate incidents because of their actual or perceived orientation:<sup>1</sup>



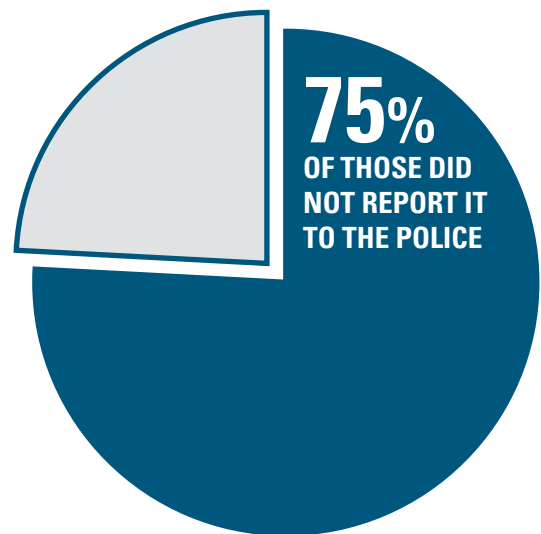
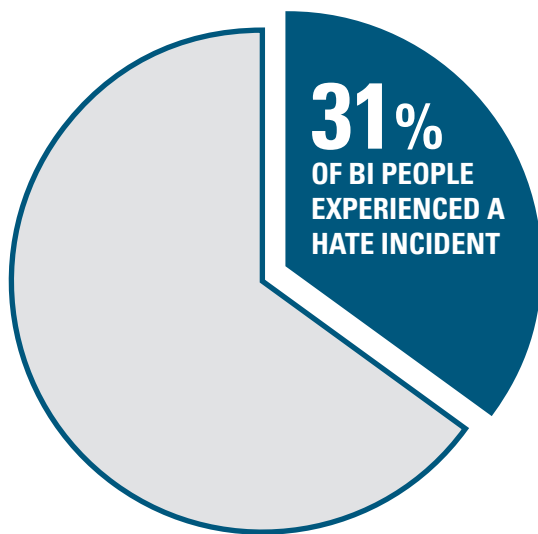
<sup>1</sup> Respondents were asked: 'Which, if any, of the following types of incidents have you been affected by in the last year?'

## HATE CRIMES AND INCIDENTS

The findings are stark. They show that bi people face abhorrent levels of abuse, harassment, and discrimination on a daily basis.

**31 per cent** of bi respondents had been **insulted, pestered, intimidated, or harassed** in the year prior to being surveyed.

Of these, **75 per cent** of these had **not reported it to the police**, many because they feared it would not be taken seriously.



**16%** and **14%**  
**of bi men**      **of bi women**

**experienced a hate crime or incident in the year prior to being surveyed because of which they believed was motivated by their sexual orientation.**

\*Data is shown for 'men' and 'women' only because there was an insufficient sample size of non-binary respondents.

# SEXUAL AND INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE

## INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE

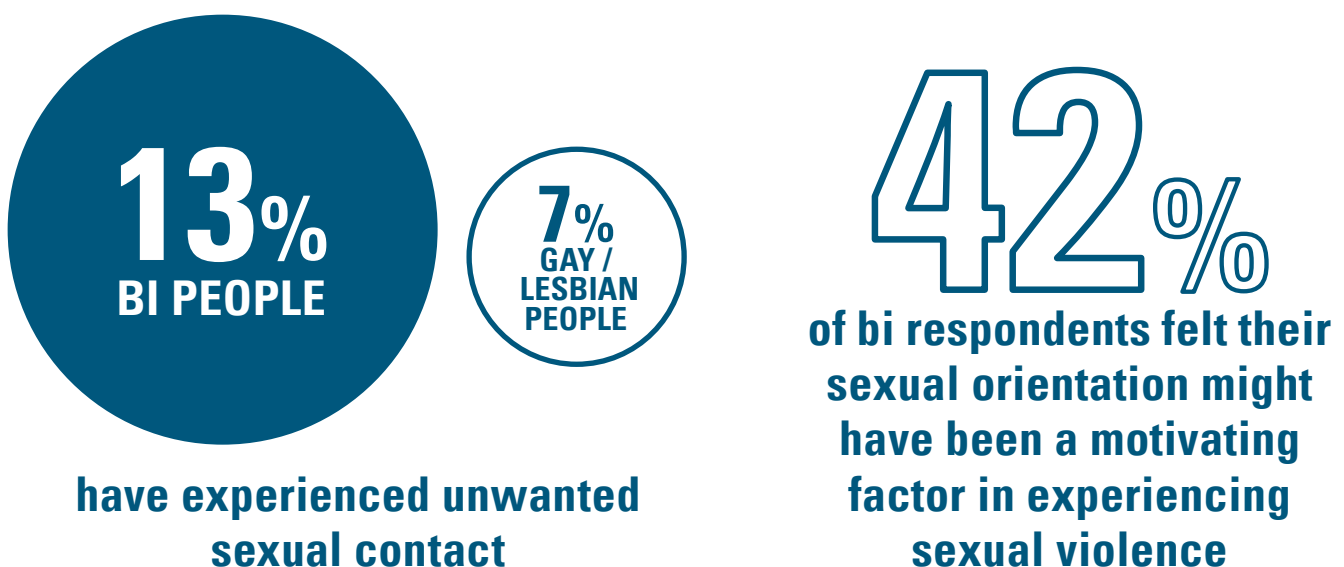
Overall, LGBT people are significantly more likely to experience sexual and intimate partner violence than non-LGBT people. However, biphobia and harmful stereotypes about bi people put them at even greater risk of experiencing violence – and leave them with fewer sources of support.

**More than one in ten LGBT people** (11 per cent) have faced intimate partner abuse in the year prior to being surveyed. This includes **13 per cent of bi women**, **12 per cent of bi men**, and **17 per cent of bi non-binary people**.<sup>2</sup>

In contrast, ONS statistics show that an estimated **7.9 per cent** of women and **4.2 per cent** of men in the general population experienced domestic abuse from a partner in the last year.

## SEXUAL VIOLENCE

**42 per cent** of bi respondents felt their **sexual orientation might have been a motivating factor** in them experiencing unwanted sexual contact.<sup>3</sup>



<sup>2</sup> Respondents were asked: 'Thinking about any relationships you have had in the last year, has any partner ever done any of the following to you?'

<sup>3</sup> Respondents were asked: 'Was there anything about the incident that made you think it might have been motivated by any of these factors?'

# BEING OUT AS BI

Coming out is one of the most important experiences in LGBT people's lives, and deciding whether or not it is safe to be open about your identity in a particular situation can cause significant stress.

Bi people are less likely to be out in every aspect of everyday life, whether that's at home, in education, at work, or as part of a faith community. This inability, or unwillingness, to be out can be linked to a number of factors, including a fear of discrimination or harassment. Another key challenge for bi people is that their identities are often erased or ignored. Biphobic assumptions around what LGBT people look like, and assumptions of their orientation based on the gender of a person's current partner, can both play a role in erasing bi people's identities.

## FRIENDS AND FAMILY

Many LGBT people can be open about their sexual orientation and/or gender identity, and are supported by their family and friends. However, bi people are significantly less likely to be out with friends and family about their orientation, and many lack support from those closest to them.

**'Immediate family [who I live with] have always made comments about bi people being greedy or indecisive. So I cannot come out.'**

**'Having lived as a straight man all my life, it is virtually inconceivable that I would admit to my family that I am bisexual.'** – Nash, 61 (South East)

**'Being bisexual means finding yourself excluded by gay people and straight people in social settings. I only tell my friends about my sexuality, meaning it is hidden from my family and my work colleagues. Bisexuality is a hidden sexuality through people's lack of acceptance.'** – Kendra, 32 (Scotland)





## EDUCATION

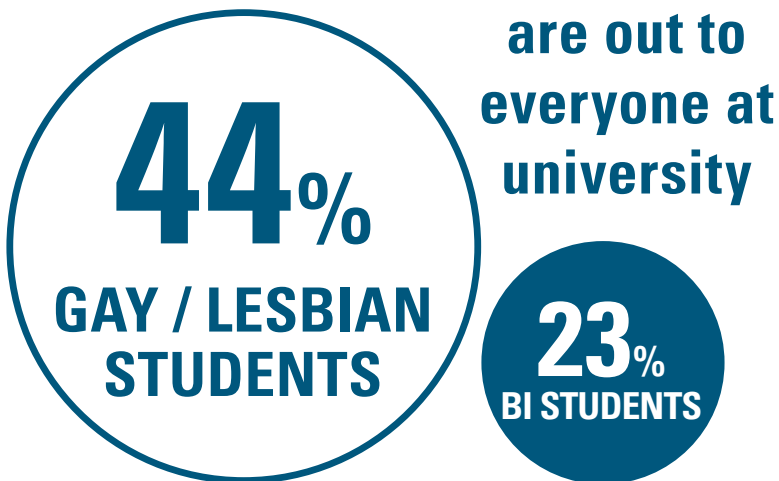
Education should be a time for young people to learn, grow, and enjoy independence. However, for many bi students the experience can be marred by discrimination, exclusion, and abuse because of their orientation.

33 per cent of bi student respondents said they would not feel comfortable reporting biphobic bullying and harassment to their educational institution.

**47%**  
of bi students had received  
negative comments from other  
students because they were bi

**7%**  
had been  
physically attacked

It is therefore unsurprising that bi students are much less likely to be open about their sexual orientation at their education institution.



## FAITH COMMUNITIES

When asked about their experiences, bi people of faith reported that some faith communities provide a welcoming space to worship.

However, discrimination and hostility are still widespread. When asked to discuss their experiences, many respondents described feeling that bi people would be unwelcome in their faith community, and therefore they felt unable to be out to anyone in these contexts. There were also calls for more explicitly LGBT-inclusive services and faith groups.

**'When discussing my marriage at church, our vicar was very personal with us and asked a lot of questions about our lives. I could tell there was only a certain lifestyle he approved of so I kept quiet about my bisexuality because I was scared he wouldn't marry us if I was honest. It was a horrible, uncomfortable feeling that made me feel ashamed of who I am.'**

**'I think that there is a pressure amongst the Islamic community which I am a part of to pursue heterosexual partnerships. Many Muslims who I know seem to stress that it's not a sin to be gay, but to have sexual intercourse with a woman (as a woman) would not be permissible in my religion.'**

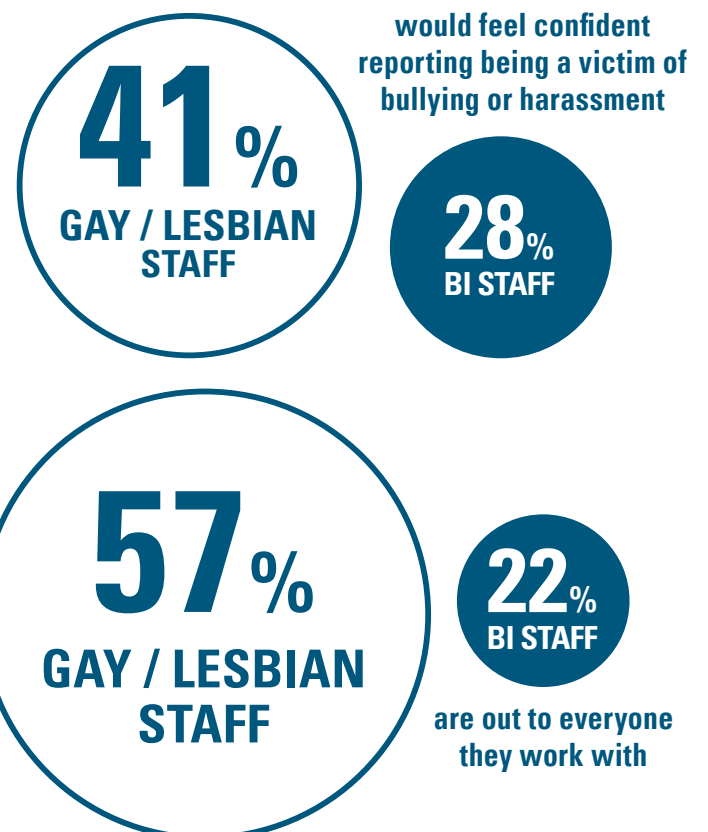
**'Rather than respect, there is frequently a stream of hate and criticism (from within the LGBT community) for not rejecting the idea of spirituality completely. That is very difficult for me to accept from an otherwise welcoming community. Similarly, I have faced hate and criticism from the church and pals from other faiths for accepting my sexuality. It often feels like I am between a rock and a hard place.'**

## AT WORK

Increasingly, employers are waking up to the fact that, in order to succeed, they need their staff to feel confident to be themselves at work. From global corporations to local businesses, organisations have demonstrated real commitment to their LGBT staff, consumers, and service users. But not every LGBT person feels supported by their employer.

Our findings reveal that many bi staff don't feel safe disclosing their identity at work, and often those who do **experience discrimination and abuse**, with incidents ranging from **offensive language from customers to being outed at work without their consent**.<sup>6</sup>

Only 28 per cent of bi respondents strongly agreed that they would feel confident reporting to their employer if they were a victim of biphobic bullying or harassment (compared to 41 per cent of lesbian or gay respondents).



<sup>6</sup> Respondents were asked about the types of workplace experiences they had had in the past year, such as receiving negative comments from colleagues and customers, being encouraged to hide their sexuality, and losing a job or not being promoted because they are LGBT.

# BI HEALTH

Despite the strides we've made towards LGBT equality in recent years, many LGBT people still face significant barriers in leading healthy, happy, and fulfilling lives in Britain today.

Hostility, discrimination, and unfair treatment are still commonplace in healthcare services. Many LGBT people are 'outed' without their consent, treated with inappropriate curiosity, and subjected to unequal treatment because of who they are. Discrimination – both experienced and expected – can deter LGBT people from accessing health services when needed, and LGBT people's health can be negatively impacted as a result.

Our data reveals that bi people face particular, and distinct, challenges when accessing physical and mental health care.

## HEALTHCARE DISCRIMINATION

Healthcare services have a legal duty under the Equality Act 2010 to treat LGBT people fairly and without discrimination.

However, Stonewall's *Unhealthy Attitudes* research revealed that LGBT people face discrimination and a lack of understanding around their specific health needs when accessing healthcare services.

Bi people are no exception. They often have their specific health needs overlooked, which in turn undermines trust in their healthcare provider.

**21 per cent of bi respondents** to our survey said healthcare professionals **didn't understand their specific health needs**.<sup>9</sup>

Some bi people aren't open about their sexual orientation and/or gender identity when seeking medical help because of fear of unfair treatment and invasive questioning.<sup>10</sup>

**22 per cent of bi respondents** indicated that they had experienced **inappropriate curiosity from healthcare professionals** when trying to access care.



**aren't out to anyone when seeking medical care**

\*Data is shown for 'men' and 'women' only because there was an insufficient sample size of non-binary respondents.

<sup>9</sup> Respondents were asked: 'Have you ever experienced any of the following situations because you are LGBT, when using or trying to access healthcare services in Britain?'

<sup>10</sup> Respondents were asked: 'To how many people are you open about your sexual orientation, when seeking medical care?'

*'Going for STI screenings and feeling that the provider **asked a lot of intrusive questions about who I had slept with.** For reference, I had been to the same clinic and nurse when I had only slept with the opposite sex, and the same amount of questioning wasn't done.'*

*'My girlfriend was heavily advised to get a HIV test because I'm bisexual, even though (and the doctor knew this) I had already been tested the year before and hadn't slept with anyone since. **The assumption was that I was promiscuous,** with the doctor speaking to my girlfriend as if she couldn't trust me, and **treating me notably differently once she knew my sexuality.**'*

## MENTAL HEALTH

LGBT people overall are at significantly higher risk of experiencing common mental health problems than the general population.

However, our data shows clearly that bi respondents' self-reported mental health outcomes were worse than their gay or lesbian counterparts'. Biphobic discrimination and harassment in day-to-day life, rejection from family and friends, and experience of hate crimes and incidents were contributing factors to experiences of poor mental health.



11

<sup>11</sup> Respondents were asked: 'In the last year have you experienced any of these mental health conditions?'; 'In the last year, have you felt that life was not worth living?'; 'In the last year, have you deliberately harmed yourself in any way, but not with the intention of taking your own life?'.

# EXPERIENCES IN LGBT COMMUNITIES

Local LGBT communities are important social networks where LGBT people can feel welcome, supported, and able to be themselves.

Respondents were asked about their experiences in a range of spaces, such as LGBT bars, LGBT community groups and Pride events. However, many bi people don't find their local LGBT-specific spaces welcoming, and some have experienced discrimination from other LGBT people because of their identity.

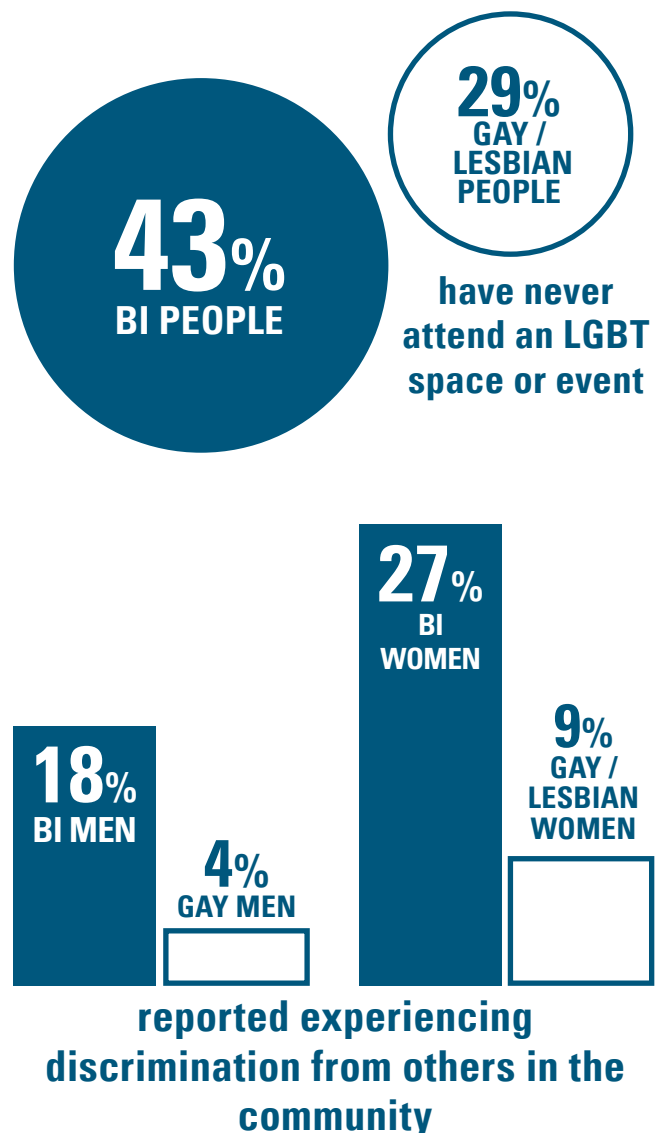
Bi respondents indicated that not feeling included or welcomed in LGBT spaces because they were bi was a common occurrence for them, and that it contributed to a sense of isolation and loneliness.

*'I may not be out to everyone, but through social groups I have found friends who identify as LGBT whom I'm open with. Without these friends I may not be as confident and comfortable about being bi as I am today.'*  
Zola, 28 (East of England)

*'[I was] treated as a pariah for being bisexual, including being told that I 'wasn't really a minority' as I could 'pass for being straight' whenever I supposedly liked.'*

*'Remember that it's **not just white cis abled people who are LGBT+**. I am an Arab, ex-Muslim, autistic, mentally ill, poor brown girl who is also bi. **No LGBT+ people support me or accommodate me, I am invisible to you.***

*(Asha, 21, North West)*



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# METHODOLOGY



# METHODOLOGY

Between February and April 2017, 5,375 lesbian, gay, bi and bi (LGBT) people across England, Scotland and Wales completed an online questionnaire about their life in Britain today, which was administered by YouGov on behalf of Stonewall.

Participants were recruited through the YouGov panel, as well as an open recruitment that circulated through a wide range of organisations, community groups and individuals.

## Of the unweighted sample

- 53 per cent of respondents are from England, 24 per cent are from Wales, and 23 per cent are from Scotland.
- 50 per cent are male, 41 per cent are female, and 8 per cent describe their gender in a different way. Different terms that respondents used to describe their gender identity include 'non-binary', 'genderfluid', and 'genderqueer'. People who used a different term to describe their gender identity are referred to as 'non-binary people' throughout this report.
- 58 per cent are gay or lesbian, 30 per cent are bi, 9 per cent use a different term to describe their sexual orientation, and 2 per cent are straight. Different terms that respondents used to describe their sexual orientation include 'pansexual' and 'queer'.
- 14 per cent said they identify as trans and another 4 per cent said they are unsure whether they're trans or are questioning their gender identity.
- 35 per cent are disabled.
- 28 per cent hold a religious belief or identify as a person of faith.
- 6 per cent are Black, Asian, or Minority Ethnic.

These figures have been weighted by region and age. All differences reported in the survey are statistically significant. All names in quotes have been changed for anonymity and ages have been assigned from within these bands.

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*'Having lived as a straight man all my life, it is virtually inconceivable that I would admit to my family that I am bisexual.'*  
(Nash, 61, South East)

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