

Serves You Right

Lesbian, gay and bisexual Scots' expectations
of discrimination

A recent survey conducted by Stonewall with the polling organisation YouGov makes it clear that many Scottish LGB people have learnt the hard way to expect discrimination. While attitudes in Scotland are improving in general, poor experiences of public services, schooling and commercial organisations persist. We know that in order to get the best out of their staff, customers, or service users, companies and public bodies must make a real effort to achieve equality for all. But to overcome the expectations learnt from years of mistreatment, they've got to do more than that. They need to make it clear to LGB Scots

that they are welcome. After all, the figures show that LGB people in Scotland will reward companies that make the effort. The results are clear – gay people in Scotland still expect that being open about their sexual orientation will hold them back. There is not yet a duty on public bodies requiring them to promote equality of service for gay people in the way that already exists for gender, ethnicity and disability. The urgency of introducing such a 'positive duty' on public bodies is amply illustrated by the compelling new evidence outlined here.

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Stonewall

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Politics

In 2008 there are no 'out' members of the Scottish Cabinet. Only four MSPs are 'out' as lesbian, gay or bisexual.

Most lesbian and gay Scots expect to experience discrimination from the major political parties if they run for parliament or stand as a local councillor.

- Seven in ten lesbian, gay and bisexual people think they would face barriers from the Scottish National Party (SNP) if they wanted to be selected to run for parliament. Sixty five per cent expect to face barriers from the Labour Party, 88 per cent

with the Conservative Party, half with the Liberal Democrats.

- Seventy four per cent of lesbian, gay and bisexual people think they would face barriers from the Scottish National Party (SNP) if they wanted to be selected to run as local councillors. Sixty nine per cent expect to face barriers from the Labour Party, 87 per cent with the Conservative Party and just over half (52 per cent) with the Liberal Democrats.

Policing

23 per cent of lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender (LGBT) Scots have been subjected to physical assault and 68 per cent to verbal assault because they are LGBT. *Beyond Barriers, Stonewall Scotland 2003*

Many police forces in Scotland have worked hard to engage with the LGBT community – Lothian and Borders Police was Scotland's most gay-friendly employer in 2008 (Stonewall Workplace Equality Index 2008).

But it's clear from the results that there is still work to be done. Many gay people in Scotland still distrust the police, and would expect to be treated worse than straight people when they report a crime.

- 42 per cent of lesbian, gay and bisexual Scots would expect to be treated worse than a heterosexual by a police officer if suspected of committing an offence, compared to over a third in GB overall.
- 26 per cent would expect to be treated worse if reporting a crime compared to more than one in five GB wide.
- 32 per cent would expect to be treated worse than a straight person if reporting a homophobic hate crime, compared to 27 per cent in GB as a whole.

School

68 per cent of lesbian, gay, and bisexual Scottish school pupils have been bullied because of attitudes towards their sexual orientation. Only one school in five tells its pupils homophobic bullying is wrong. *School Report, Stonewall 2007*

Homophobic bullying is getting worse in British schools. Young people are more likely to have experienced homophobic bullying than those who are older. Lesbian, gay and bisexual people would not generally have felt able to come out at school and are anxious about how they would be treated if they tried to enrol their children in school.

- 54 per cent of LGB Scots experienced physical and verbal abuse at school because they were gay or thought to be gay.
- 85 per cent would not have felt able to come out to anyone at school.
- Three in ten expect to be treated worse if they enrolled their child into primary or secondary school.

Work

In 2007 Jonah Ditton, a sales manager from Paisley, was awarded £120,000 by an employment tribunal after colleagues called him a 'wee poof' and told him he looked like a 'cream puff' before he was sacked and told he was not 'psychologically balanced'.

One in six of all working lesbian, gay and bisexual Scots have been bullied at work because of their sexual orientation.

- 17 per cent of LGB Scots have received verbal bullying at work because of their sexual orientation.
- Three in ten LGB Scots think that gay people are more productive in the workplace if they can be open about their sexual orientation.

Media

'I obviously lit the pink touch paper last week with my reference to those with unnatural sexual predilections. Yes, I'm getting fed up with using the word 'gay' out of politeness'. *Bob Shields, comment piece, Daily Record 20th March 2007*

Most Scottish LGB people don't think they are portrayed fairly on TV – and a significant minority don't expect complaints about homophobia to be taken seriously.

- 53 per cent of LGB Scots think the portrayal of gay people on TV is unrealistic.
- 24 per cent of LGB Scots feel that the Press Complaints Commission will consider complaints about homophobia less seriously than other complaints.
- 36 per cent would expect ITV to take complaints about homophobia less seriously than other complaints. 32 per cent think Channel 5 would take complaints less seriously, 20 per cent think the BBC will take complaints less seriously and just 14 per cent with Channel 4.

Society

65 per cent of Scots think the country should do everything it can to tackle all kinds of prejudice. 30 per cent of Scots think same sex relationships are always or mostly wrong. 21 per cent think people of the same sex should not have the right to marry. *Scottish Social Attitudes Survey 2006*

Although attitudes towards lesbian, gay and bisexual people are improving in Scotland, there is still prejudice. Many gay Scots do not expect to be treated fairly in everyday life. But when a company goes out of its way to send a message that it welcomes LGB people as customers or members of staff, LGB Scots will support it.

- 94 per cent of LGB Scots felt they would face barriers if they were openly LGB whilst applying to be a foster carer, compared to nine in ten in GB overall.
- 47 per cent of LGB Scots would expect to be treated worse than straight people in a divorce or custody court.
- 58 per cent would be more likely to use the products or services of a company which makes a positive commitment to recruiting LGB people.

- 49 per cent are more likely to buy the products or services of a company that uses images of LGB people in its advertising. No one reported being less likely to do so.

Methodology: In December 2007 Stonewall commissioned YouGov to conduct the first ever survey exclusively with gay people. YouGov canvassed the opinion of 139 lesbian, gay, and bisexual Scots and asked them about their experiences and expectations of all aspects of living in a modern Scotland. This was part of a wider GB survey of 1,658 LGB people, and the results are broadly consistent across GB. The fieldwork was undertaken 6-10 December 2007. The survey was conducted using an on-line interview administered to members of the YouGov GB panel of over 115,000 individuals who have agreed to take part in surveys. The resulting data was analysed and presented by Stonewall. Respondents who answered "do not know" were excluded from analysis unless statistically significant. Some figures are presented in summary form rather than percentages.

The full report *Serves You Right* can be found at www.stonewall.org.uk

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