



Counted Out

The findings from the 2002-2003
Stonewall Cymru survey of lesbian,
gay and bisexual people in Wales

Executive Summary October 2003

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Context of report

Historically, discrimination against lesbian, gay and bisexual people has been ignored, sometimes even encouraged. As a result Governments have put few resources into researching the extent of discrimination experienced by LGB people. Information that is specific to Wales is virtually non-existent. This lack of information has given many policy makers and employers an excuse to ignore LGB equality issues.

Fortunately this situation is changing. Since devolution, there has been an increase in political and financial support in Wales for initiatives that seek to promote equality for lesbian, gay and bisexual people. In addition, from December 2003 there will be legislation outlawing discrimination at work on the grounds of sexual orientation for the first time. Both factors have helped push LGB discrimination issues further up the equality agenda in Wales.

With funding from the Welsh Assembly Government, Stonewall Cymru initiated this first ever Wales-wide survey of lesbian, gay and bisexual people in Wales. The aim of the survey is to better understand the needs of LGB people in Wales - to ensure our work is rooted in the concerns of LGB people and that policy making in Wales is based on evidence, not just anecdote.

The policy recommendations of this report span beyond the borders of Wales. The majority of the issues highlighted by this survey are endemic to a wider problem evident not only in the UK but much further afield.

Findings in brief

The following are highlights of the main findings outlined in the report:

- ★ More than 1 in 3 respondents reported being the victim of physical violence or bullying. Over half of those aged under 18 to 25 had been physically assaulted or bullied. Men were far more likely than women to have been physically victimised.
- ★ Men were also far more likely than women to experience being dismissed from a job, being denied access to their children, not being selected for a job, being evicted, being harassed by the police, not receiving the same education or training and being economically exploited because of their sexuality.
- ★ 25% of respondents reported having been dismissed from a job because of their sexuality. A large proportion reported being victim to harassment in the workplace. Almost 20% of respondents reported concealing their sexual identity in the workplace.
- ★ Those LGB people with disabilities were far more likely to be discriminated against in all areas of life.
- ★ Older respondents experience less discrimination compared to other age groups. They were also less likely to disclose their sexual identity and were less likely to be involved in community activities. Combined these factors may lead to the social exclusion of older LGB people.
- ★ Speaking Welsh as a first language, or living in a particular area of Wales (south, mid-west, or north) did not significantly impact the likelihood of being physically victimised or experiencing other forms of discrimination.
- ★ Over half of the respondents feel under protected by the law and a quarter reported being harassed or discriminated against by the police. In general opinions and experiences of the police were mixed, possibly reflecting the proactive work police services have been carrying out in relation to homophobic hate-related crime.
- ★ The prevalence of physical victimisation of younger LGB people in the survey may be indicative of school bullying. Elevated levels of bullying in educational settings have serious negative consequences for the health and social well-being of young LGB people.
- ★ The majority of respondents perceived that obstacles and solutions to gay equality were located at the societal level, placing less emphasis on themselves or the LGB community as sites of obstacles and solutions. Perceptions of solutions towards gay equality increase with age but drop after age 60.

Main Findings

This was the first major survey of its kind to identify the unique problems and needs of LGB people across Wales. This survey was exploratory in nature, focusing on many areas of experience and perception ranging from attitudes to obstacles and solutions to equality to levels of physical victimisation. As a result the survey was not designed to examine any particular phenomena in relation to the Welsh LGB population. Instead a snap-shot of Welsh LGB life was obtained where themes and relationships could be identified across social experiences. Some of the more pertinent findings included the following:

Relationships

In terms of relationship length there were no significant differences between men and women. The average length of relationship was between 2 and 5 years. Similar proportions of men and women are living with their partners, and very similar proportions have made legal arrangements. About 1 in 5 respondents reported caring for a child. More than 60% of respondents reported that they may wish to bring up a child together with their partner sometime in the future.



Visibility of Sexual Orientation

It was identified that larger proportions of respondents were 'out' to people in their families compared to other people such as neighbours or work colleagues. Respondents were least likely to be out to their work colleagues, the benefits agency and the bank. More than half of the respondents were out to their local GP. On the visibility scale statistically significant differences were found in scores by respondents' age. Of all the age categories, those who were 18-25 years old had the highest scores on the visibility scale compared to those aged over 60 who had the lowest.

Community Events

Compared to women, men are significantly more likely to be involved in community events (such as neighbourhood watch, youth offender teams, rainbow centre etc.), LGB activities (BLAG, FFLAG, GYL project etc.)¹, and local politics. Respondents from north Wales were more likely to be involved in local politics compared to respondents living in south Wales or mid-west Wales.

¹ BLAG – Bisexual, Lesbian and Gay - South Wales Police Liaison group.
FFLAG – Families and Friends of Lesbian and Gay people.
GYL – Gay Youth Line.

Experiences of Discrimination

More than 1 in 3 respondents reported being the victim of physical violence or bullying. A consistent relationship was found between sex and discrimination due to sexual orientation. Women appear to be less likely to experience physical violence, being denied access to their children, not being selected for a job, being dismissed from a job, being evicted, being harassed by the police, not receiving the same education or training and being economically exploited.

Those with disabilities were more likely to be discriminated against 'across the board.' Older respondents experience less discrimination compared to other age groups.

Obstacles and Solutions: Achieving Gay Equality

In relation to perceived obstacles to gay equality both men and women had similar agreement levels. A pattern was identified that showed respondents were more likely to think that obstacles to gay equality arise from societal issues rather than LGB community issues or personal issues. A similar pattern was identified for solutions. Respondents' perceptions of solutions weighed more heavily on society in general rather than at the personal or LGB level. It was also found that perceptions of solutions tended to increase steadily with age, but fall off once respondents reach the age of 60.

Age

It was highlighted that older people tend to be less visible as LGB, are less involved in community activities and are excluded from the LGB social scene. As a result older LGB people are at risk of social exclusion which has further consequences for health and social well-being. A major contributor to this social exclusion is the fear younger LGB people harbour of becoming old. This anxiety results in the exclusion of older LGB people. In order to prevent future social exclusion this cyclical process has to be broken.

School Bullying

Those less than 25 years old reported a relatively high level of physical violence and bullying in comparison to other national and local surveys. It is probable that a substantial proportion of this victimisation takes place within school settings, as 44% of those less than 25 reported currently being a student. However, additional research is necessary to investigate when and where most young people have been physically victimised or bullied. The high levels of physical victimisation in the Welsh sample are worrying given the evidence that suggests homophobic bullying has very serious consequences in terms of absenteeism from school, exam performance, mental health and suicide ideation. While positive steps have been made by the DfEE and the Welsh Assembly Government to address homophobic bullying in school little could be achieved until Section 28 of the Local Government Act was repealed.



Employment

The Welsh sample reported numerous employment issues in relation to their sexual identity. Most notably 25% of respondents reported having been dismissed because of their sexuality. This is over twice the national average for LGB people. Because of such negative attitudes towards LGB people some respondents reported being victims of harassment in the workplace. The survey found that similar amounts of LGB people were reluctant to disclose their sexuality identity as were identified in other research conducted by Stonewall. Currently there is no domestic law that prohibits the unfair treatment of LGB people in the workplace. While European legislation is being introduced it is questionable whether it will fully protect the rights of LGB people in all working environments.

Victimisation and Criminal Justice

General levels of physical violence and bullying were slightly higher than figures reported in other Stonewall surveys. As is common in research of this nature some of the qualitative illustrations of victimisation were salaciously graphic and horrific. In some circumstances respondents reported that their children were also falling victim to the perpetrators of homophobic hate crime. Over half of the respondents reported feeling unprotected by the law, and a quarter report being discriminated against or harassed by the police. More generally the qualitative elements of the survey highlighted mixed experiences of the police. It is likely that proactive policing strategies regarding homophobic hate crimes and a reduction in the over policing of gross indecency offences has had the beneficial effect of smoothing out the once contentious relations between the police and the LGB community.

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Recommendations

The policy recommendations of this report span beyond the borders of Wales.

The majority of the issues highlighted by this survey are endemic to a wider problem evident not only in the UK but much further afield. However, given the practicalities that must be adhered to the recommendations outlined below relate to various local organisations including the National Assembly of Wales, local education authorities, local county councils, charity organisations, social and health care services and local police services.

General

- ★ LGB equality should no longer be relegated to a second tier equality issue in Wales. The National Assembly of Wales, WLGA and other public bodies should mainstream LGB equality issues in the wider equality agenda.
- ★ All public bodies should be statutorily obliged to mainstream equalities work.
- ★ In light of the differences in discrimination between Wales and other parts of the UK any new Single Equalities Body must recognise devolution so that these unique differences can be fully addressed at the local level.

Relationships

- ★ Civil same-sex partnerships should be recognised in law.
- ★ Increased access to information regarding rights to adoption.
- ★ The National Assembly of Wales should issue guidance to the NHS in Wales regarding the constitution of next of kin.



Education and Youth

- ★ Increased support of groups to counsel those who are 'coming out,' especially in more rural areas. This applies equally to young and old LGB people.
- ★ Following the repeal of Section 28 of the Local Government Act, increased support provision to enable teachers to counsel and deal with sexual identity and bullying issues openly and freely without fear of reprisal.²
- ★ The recognition and inclusion of LGB issues within the teaching of the Personal and Social Education key stage framework in the National Curriculum.
- ★ Further support for the introduction of anti-homophobic bullying policy.
- ★ Support for LBG staff.
- ★ Increased equal opportunities and diversity training for all teachers on a regular basis.
- ★ Punitive reprisals for teachers found guilty of homophobic bullying/abuse of other staff or students.

² Stonewall Cymru has developed training and resources for teachers on LGB issues.

Community Development and Age

- ★ Increase the willing participation of LGB women and older people in community and LGB events.
- ★ Reduce the social exclusion of older LGB people from the major LGB social scene in Wales by creating support groups and promoting positive images of ageing.
- ★ Provide social and health care service employees with equality and diversity training on a regular basis highlighting the unique problems faced by younger and older LGB people.
- ★ Increased capacity building on a regional basis. Regional networks should be further supported to provide increased access and the promotion of services to LGB people of all ages within local communities.

Employment

- ★ Current concessions made to religious organisations, and those claiming to be run on religious principles, in the EU framework directive for equal treatment in employment must be addressed by the Government. At the local level the National Assembly for Wales must take a position against these concessions and should commission an audit to identify the potential impact they may have in Wales.

Experiences of Discrimination

- ★ An introduction of 'Hate Crimes' legislation in relation to homophobic hate related violence and property damage.
- ★ An introduction of 'Hate Crimes' legislation which recognises multiple discrimination, including the discrimination experienced by women, ethnic minorities and disabled LGB people.
- ★ The introduction of legislation equivalent to the Race Relations and Sex Discrimination Act.
- ★ The continued support for equal opportunities and diversity training for all police services.
- ★ The further promotion of police and LGB community liaison groups and meetings.
- ★ The introduction of domestic workplace anti-discrimination law which recognises sexual orientation.
- ★ The National Assembly of Wales to introduce of a Code of Practice in relation to workplace equal opportunities and diversity in relation to sexual orientation, sex, race and disability.

LGB equality should no longer be relegated to a second tier equality issue in Wales – public bodies should mainstream LGB equality issues in the wider equality agenda.

Methodology

Selection of the Sample

The sample to be analysed in this report includes 354 lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered (LGB) people.³

A purposive sampling strategy was adopted for this research. Areas and events where LGB people were likely to be present were targeted for dissemination. Primary sites included: the St David's Eisteddfod, Cardiff Mardi Gras, Stonewall Cymru's first annual conference in Cardiff and several night clubs and local groups across Wales. Several membership databases were also utilised for the dissemination of the survey, including Stonewall Cymru, TUC Wales Lesbian and Gay committee and the North Wales Lesbian Line. Finally, Internet sites (such as Gay Wales) were also used to disseminate the questionnaire.

It is likely that Mardi Gras and Stonewall Cymru's annual conference generated the majority of responses. The prevalence of lesbian respondents in the survey is likely to be a result of the dissemination through the lesbian magazine Womanzone.

The lack of community groups or a proper community infrastructure across much of rural Wales made it more difficult to access LGB people in these areas. Stonewall Cymru is currently looking at ways of increasing capacity and community infrastructure on a regional basis.

This study is exploratory. In no way should the methodology be presumed to have enabled data collection from a sample that is representative of the entire LGB population living in Wales. Results from this study should be treated as a first attempt to ascertain the perceptions and experiences of those LGB people living in Wales who were able to respond to this survey.

This was the first major survey of its kind to identify the unique problems and needs of LGB people across Wales.

³ One respondent described their sexual identity as Transgendered (male to female) and another reported being Transgendered (female to male). The survey did not make it explicit whether these respondents would describe their sexual identity as homosexual, bisexual, or heterosexual. Because they were responding to a "Survey of Wales' Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual Community," we must assume they are gay. However, in the future the survey will be amended to make this clear. Reflecting the sexual identity of the majority of respondents, and for ease of presentation, we use the acronym LGB throughout this report.