

INTERSECTIONS

DIVING INTO THE
FRA LGBTI II
SURVEY DATA

BISEXUAL
BRIEFING

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Intersectional analysis from findings of the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) 2nd LGBTI survey on LGBTI people in the EU and North Macedonia and Serbia (2019)

Introduction

A significant number of EU citizens continue to experience discrimination, inequalities and violence based on their sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression or sex characteristics (SOGIESC). These problems undermine fundamental EU values and show how some Member States have failed to effectively protect the rights of all citizens. In 2019, the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) conducted the second round of the LGBTI Survey which shows how LGBTI people experience their human and fundamental rights in daily life across Europe. [1] This briefing summarises the findings of data analysis disaggregating the responses of bisexual people from the responses provided by all LGBTI respondents to the 2019 FRA LGBTI Survey II, in order to show the differences in their lived experiences compared to the overall community. FRA's ways of sampling through LGBTI channels (convenience sampling) has led to a selective sample of bisexual people: those who have connections to LGBTI communities. Many studies show that bisexual people are far less connected to LGBTI communities compared to, for example, gay and lesbian people, therefore the data in this report are not as representative of bisexual people as with, for example, the data about lesbian and gay people.

There is a significant data gap about the knowledge of the experiences of LGBTI people and in particular bi+ and bisexual people, especially when analysing these groups in an intersectional and multidimensional way. This briefing and the other briefings in the Intersections series, [2] seek to elaborate on existing data and analysis of the FRA LGBTI Survey II (2019) and provide a more complex and complete picture of LGBTI people in the region. In order to make sure that the point of view of the bisexual community was represented, this document is the result of a collaboration between ILGA-Europe and Bi+ Nederland (the national bi+ organisation in the Netherlands), both contributing in the data analysis and drafting of the briefing.

The FRA report defined “bisexual people” as “those emotionally and/or sexually attracted to persons of more than one gender”. The survey asked respondents to choose the answer that best matched their sexual orientation, based on the following list: Lesbian; Gay; Bisexual; Heterosexual/Straight; Other - please specify; Don't know. We acknowledge that the broader term “bi+”, which includes all people with a sexual orientation towards more than one gender, regardless of identity or label, was not an answer option. It is unknown how non-bisexual people who fall under the bi+ umbrella answered this question about sexual orientation, such as queer, pansexual, straight, and sexually fluid people. Therefore, in this briefing we use the terminology of the FRA LGBTI II Survey, [3] and we use the terms “bisexuality” and “bisexual people”.

The FRA LGBTI II Survey separated respondents onto different survey tracks early in the survey, meaning that intersex people responded to one set of questions, endosex [4] trans people a second set, and cisgender and endosex lesbian, gay, and bisexual people a third set. This meant in practice that the definition of “bisexual people” in the FRA LGBTI Survey II Report, “A Long Way to Go For LGBTI Equality”, only refers to cisgender, endosex bisexual people.

In this report, a new sample group was created which included everyone who selected “Bisexual” as their sexual orientation, regardless of their sex characteristics or gender identity. As such, the word “bisexual” throughout this report is used to refer to every respondent who self-identified as bisexual. [5]

The methodology and background information on the survey are available in Annex 1.

Recommendations

Based on this analysis, ILGA-Europe and Bi+ Nederland recommend that States and institutions:

- Ensure that research on LGBTI communities enables the specific experiences of bisexual people to be disaggregated from the broader LGBTI group, or at least from gay and lesbian people, since bisexual experiences can vary significantly.
- Conduct specific research on the experiences of bisexual people in the areas where they face human rights violations, such as discrimination, inequality and violence, and develop policies to respond to this. Based on this report we recommend attention to, at minimum, biphobia among heterosexual as well as gay and lesbian people and LGBTI communities, lack of openness about being bisexual (including towards a relationship partner), sexual and physical violence, discrimination at school.
- It is vital to accompany convenience sampling with other types of data collection in order to increase effective outreach and therefore representativeness of bisexual people, who are often not in touch with LGBTI communities or may still not be out about their sexual orientation (in particular bisexual men).
- Consulting bisexual organisations and organisations working with non-monosexual identities when developing surveys and terminology of the LGBTI community.

4. Endosex means not intersex, or being born with sex characteristics that fit the societal definitions of a male or female body.

5. As a consequence of this new sample group, outcomes about 'bisexual people' cannot be compared to the FRA report

Results and Discussion

Respondents to the FRA LGBTI Survey II were asked questions about their identities and demographic information, socioeconomic status, parenthood, experiences with discrimination, violence, and harassment, and life satisfaction. In this briefing, we highlight key findings from the cross tabulation regarding the lived experiences of bisexual people.

Per theme, two kinds of outcomes are provided. First, the outcomes are split by sexual orientation, comparing people who identified as bisexual, lesbian or gay. Second, the outcomes about bisexual people are presented, split by subgroups in order to see which bisexual people report even more problems. Disaggregation between bisexual subgroups was possible on the responses to questions about their disabilities status, ethnic minority or migration status, age, gender identity, and sex characteristics.

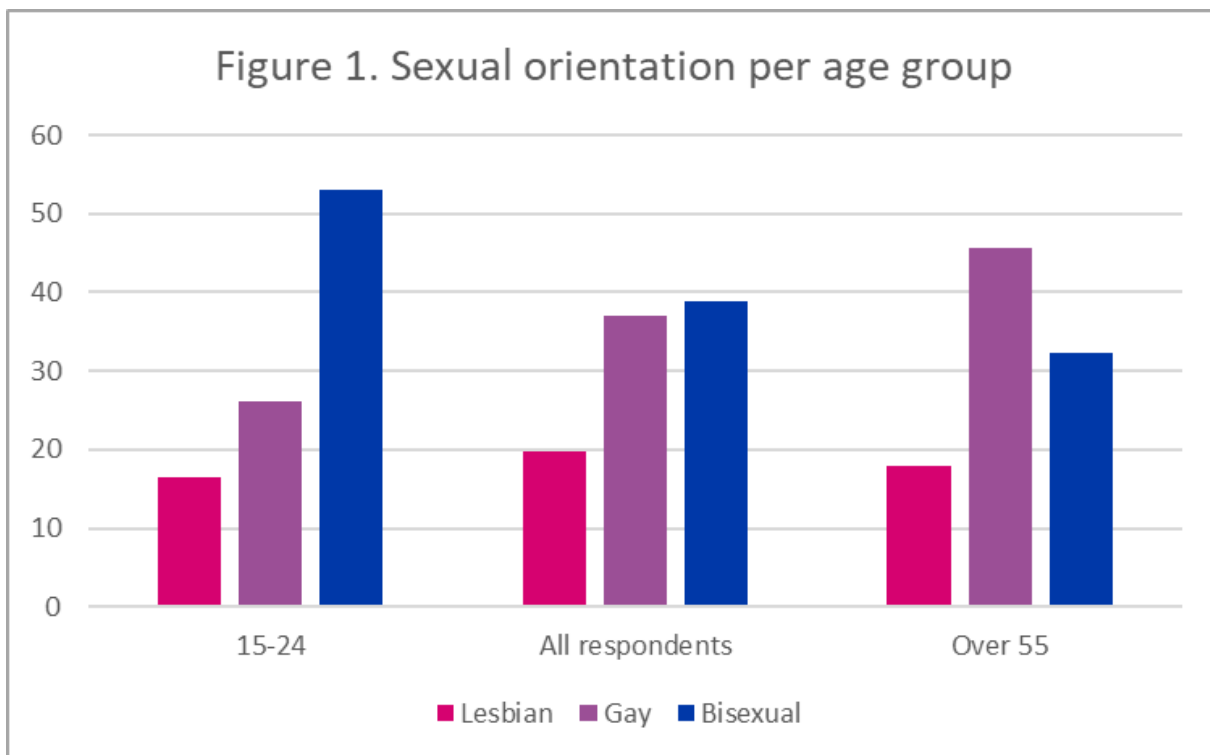
The full disaggregated data analysis is [available in table form at this link](#). For this report, data were drawn both from the disaggregation file and from the [FRA LGBTI Survey II data explorer](#). [6]

Identities and demographic information

In comparing how many respondents answered that they self-identify as bisexual, gay or lesbian, we can see clear differences among age groups. Respondents of a lower age group were more likely to self-identify as bisexual than other age groups, with over half (52.92%) of young respondents identifying as bisexual, as compared to 32.38% of older respondents identifying as bisexual.

While the percentage of respondents identifying as lesbian did not vary that much between age groups, there is significant variation when it comes to those identifying as gay, with almost half of respondents over 55 identifying as gay (45.66%) as compared to just over a quarter of young respondents (26.12%).

This data could be interpreted to show an increase of openness among bisexual men in younger cohorts, as younger people within the LGBTI communities may be less monosexual normative and less gender binary normative compared to older people in the LGBTI community. These normativities result in it being more difficult for people to recognise, acknowledge and positively identify as bi+ (including bisexual).



When asked about their gender identity, 50.52% of bisexuals identified as women, compared to 37.81% of all respondents, 39.99% of bisexuals identified as men as compared to 51.36% of all respondents, and 5.14% identified as non-binary as compared to 6.22% of all respondents.

Table 1. Self-identified gender identity

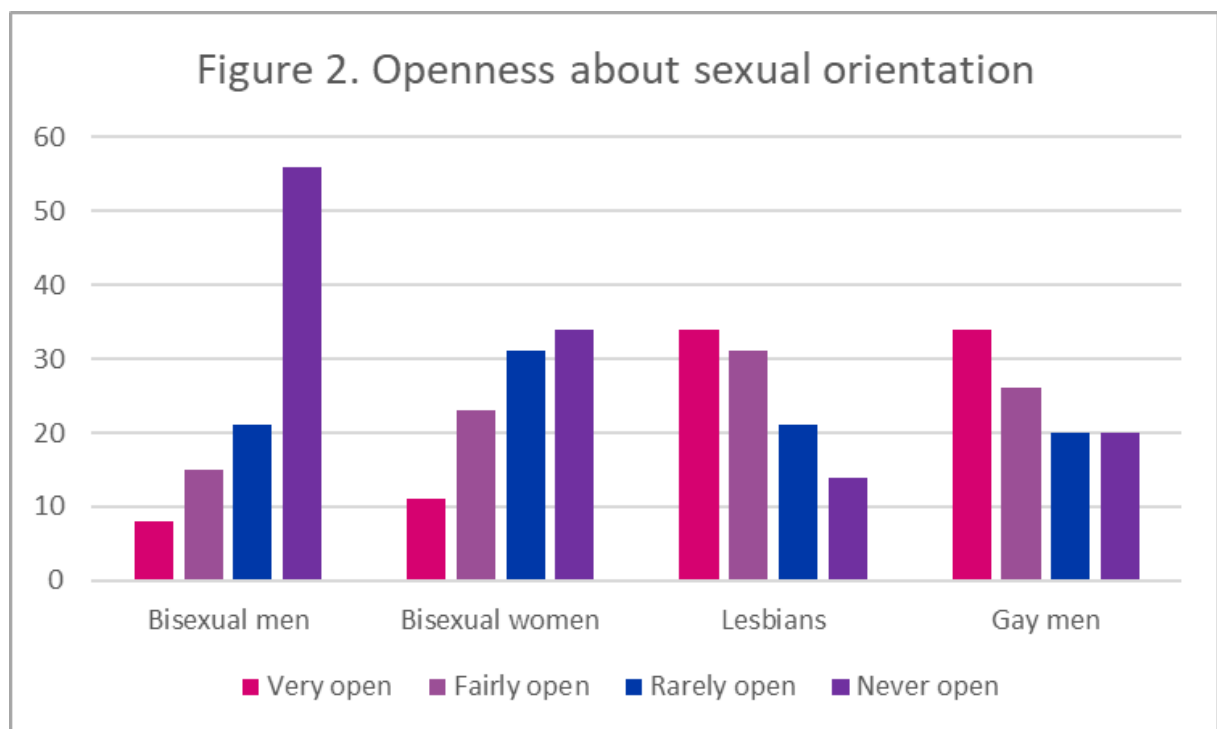
	All respondents	Bisexual respondents
Woman	37.81%	50.52%
Man	51.36%	39.99%
Non-binary	6.22%	5.14%

Among bisexual respondents 16.92% identified as trans, as compared to 14.51% of all respondents, and 1.94% of bisexual respondents would describe themselves as intersex, in comparison with 2.45% of all respondents.

When asked “In the country where you live, do you consider yourself to be part of any of the following, other than LGBTI?” (question H15), 7.92% of bisexual respondents identified as being an ethnic minority (including of migrant background) and 6.97% identified as having disabilities. These figures are higher than the general respondent group, at 7.71% and 5.18%, respectively.

Openness about sexual orientation

Respondents were asked to which extent they are open about being LGBTI [7] to different people, such as family members, friends, colleagues, etcetera. FRA calculated four levels of 'openness': very open, fairly open, rarely open, and never open. From this data we can see clear differences between bisexual men and bisexual women, as per figure 2.[8] Similar gender differences have been found in other studies, such as in the Netherlands (Baams et al. 2021)[9] and Portugal (2013).[10] Explanations for bisexual men being less open point towards non-disclosure as stigma management due to anticipated societal rejection, which appears to be stronger for men than women due to stricter gender norms (Schrimshaw et al. 2018;[11] Bisexual Resource Centre 2019;[12] Baams et al. 2021).



Outcomes in levels of openness are also interesting to compare with gay and lesbian respondents. Figure 2 shows that lesbian and gay respondents were on average more likely to be open about their sexual orientation than bisexual people. Many studies have found the same differences, and this could be explained by biphobia and double stigma: bisexual people do not conform to the norm of heterosexuality as well as the norm of monosexuality (having a sexual orientation focused on one gender).

7. The 2019 FRA LGBTI II Survey asked groups of respondents about their openness based on a single part of their identities (being lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, or intersex). LGB trans and intersex people were asked specifically about being trans or intersex and were not asked about being LGB, so this section focuses on comparisons based on sexual orientations for more reliable analysis.

8. Data for Figure 2 were taken from the FRA LGBTI Survey II data explorer, available [at this link](#).

9. Not in one box: Experiences and well-being of bi+ persons in the Netherlands (2021). Available [at this link](#).

10. Internalized Homonegativity, Disclosure, and Acceptance of Sexual Orientation in a Sample of Portuguese Gay and Bisexual Men, and Lesbian and Bisexual Women (2013). Available [at this link](#).

11. Reasons for Non-Disclosure of Sexual Orientation Among Behaviorally Bisexual Men: Non-Disclosure as Stigma Management (2018). Available [at this link](#).

12. Coming Out as a Bisexual Man: The 5 Reasons Why We Don't – Bisexual Resource Center: biresource.org

In many societies, it is still expected to be heterosexual and otherwise lesbian or gay. Gay men and lesbian women may have this expectation too. This results in bisexuality - and other bi+ orientations - being regarded as an invalid sexual orientation, for example by perceiving it not seriously or as a phase. In addition, besides facing gay and lesbian stereotypes and prejudice, bisexual people also face the risk of bisexual stereotypes and prejudice from both straight as well as lesbian and gay people. As a result, many bisexual people fear being open in lesbian and gay communities, as well as among heterosexual peers.

Relationship Partner

Across the board, more bisexual respondents were in a relationship with a woman than with a man, with the exception of bisexual people of an ethnic minority (including of migrant background) and bisexual people with a disability.

Bisexual intersex people, bisexual trans people and bisexual people with a disability were more likely to be in a relationship with a non-binary person than the average bisexual respondent group, with the highest likelihood being among bisexual non-binary people.

Table 2. Gender of current partner [13]

	All bisexual respondents	Bisexual people of an ethnic minority (incl. of migrant backgrnd)	Bisexual people with a disability	Bisexual intersex people	Bisexual non-binary people	Bisexual Men [14]	Bisexual Women [15]	Bisexual Trans Men	Bisexual trans women
A woman	50.79%	41.41%	33.44%	49.54%	45.43%	55.30%	48.45%	57.17%	60.18%
A man	44.66%	51.56%	54.04%	36.91%	38.20%	41.60%	47.28%	31.40%	24.73%
Non-binary	4.55%	12.34%	12.34%	13.55%	16.38%	3.10%	4.29%	11.43%	15.09%

It is interesting to note that there is almost a 50-50 split regarding the gender of the partners of bisexual women respondents (48.45% were in a relationship with another woman, 47.28% were in a relationship with a man).

However, for bisexual men, bisexual trans men, bisexual trans women and bisexual non-binary people, the balance is skewed much more in favour of women. 55.30% of bisexual men were in a relationship with a woman, and 41.60% in a relationship with a man. The biggest gap regarding this can be found among bisexual trans women: 60.18% of whom responded that they were in a relationship with a woman, in comparison with only 24.73% responding they were in a relationship with a man.

13. The survey presumed that respondents only had one current partner.

14. This category includes both cisgender and trans men.

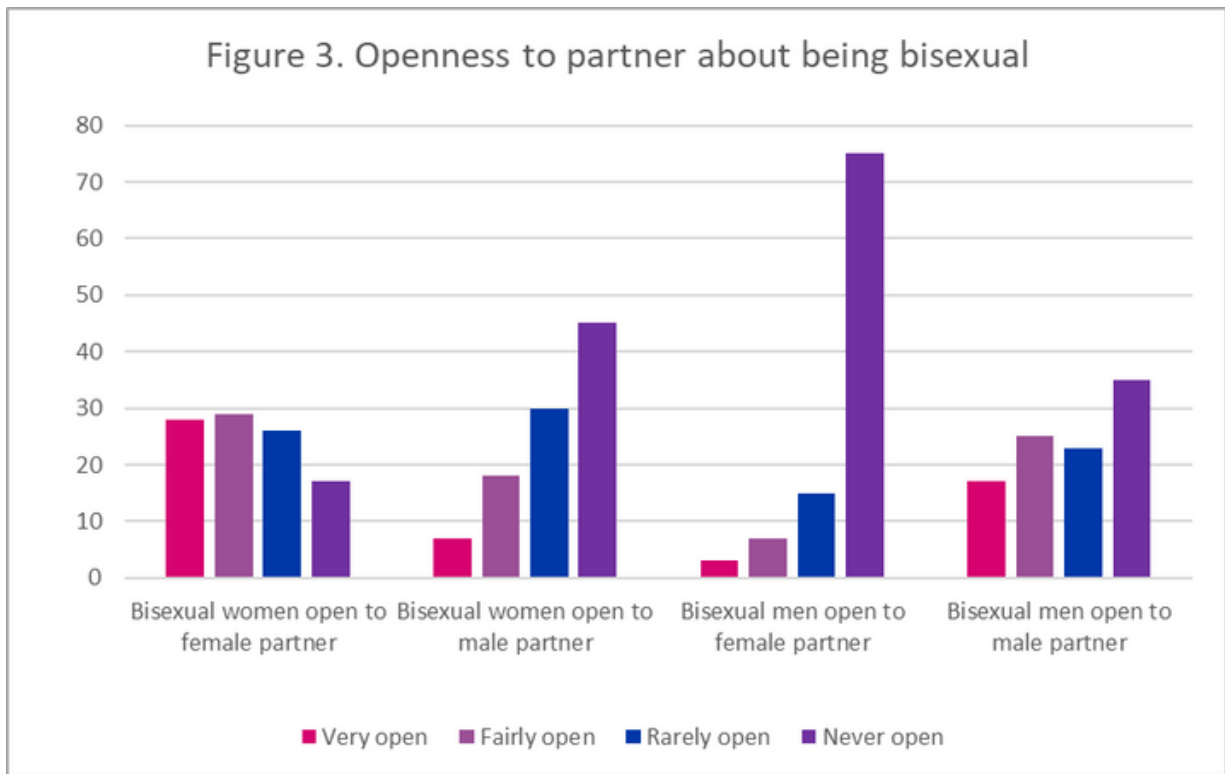
15. This category includes both cisgender and trans women.

The figures are not dissimilar for bisexual trans men either, who responded 57.17% in comparison with 31.40%. Certainly more research is needed to look into the reasons for this, but one of the potential reasons may be that bisexual trans respondents may feel safer in relationships with women, since violence against trans people is most often perpetrated by men (see the intersections briefing on trans and non-binary people, [16] as well as the data tables). [17]

The survey asked a question specific to bisexual respondents about whether they are open to their current partner about being bisexual. Respondents could select whether their partner was a woman, a man or non-binary/other. Due to very limited responses regarding the “non-binary/other”, we have not included this response option in the analysis as there was not enough data. What is striking from the available data is the proportion of bisexual men and women who have never been open about being bisexual to their current partner (see Figure 3). [18] This is the case for three quarters (75%) of the bisexual men in a relationship with a woman. For bisexual women in a relationship with a man, this was almost half, at 45%. These findings certainly can point to the prevalence of heteronormativity in opposite-sex relationships, which, as we mentioned earlier in this briefing, can deter bisexual people from coming out.

Interestingly, the levels of never being open for bisexual men in a relationship with another man was also very high, at 35%, whereas bisexual women in a relationship with another woman were much more likely to be open about being bisexual than to hide it (28% very open, compared with 17% never open). We could interpret these outcomes as showing that stigma about being bisexual is significantly higher among gay men than lesbian women. In opposite-sex relationships, we can see that a small minority of bisexual respondents were very open to their partners (only 3% of bisexual men and 7% of bisexual women). The picture is much more mixed for same-sex couples, with bisexual women being more open than bisexual men. Yet, also in these relationships, only a minority of bisexual women (28%) and bisexual men (17%) were very open to their same-sex partner.

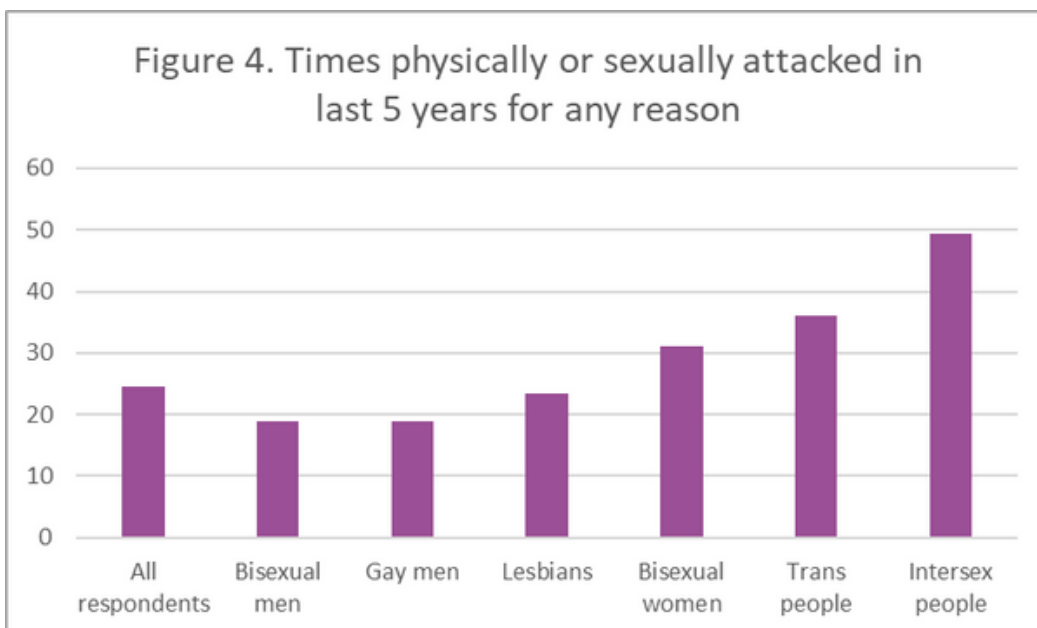
Figure 3. Openness to partner about being bisexual



Experiences of violence

Respondents were asked a series of questions about their exposure to violence in the recent past (section E of the FRA survey). Of all LGBTI respondents, intersex (49.40%) and trans respondents (35.96%) reported the highest rates of experiencing violence in the previous 5 years. Of all sexual orientation groups, bisexual women (31%) had the most experiences of violence, followed by lesbian respondents (23.38%), gay men and bisexual men (both at 19%). [19] The fact that bisexual men are relatively closed about their sexual orientation may explain the lower rates of experiences of violence.

Figure 4. Times physically or sexually attacked in last 5 years for any reason

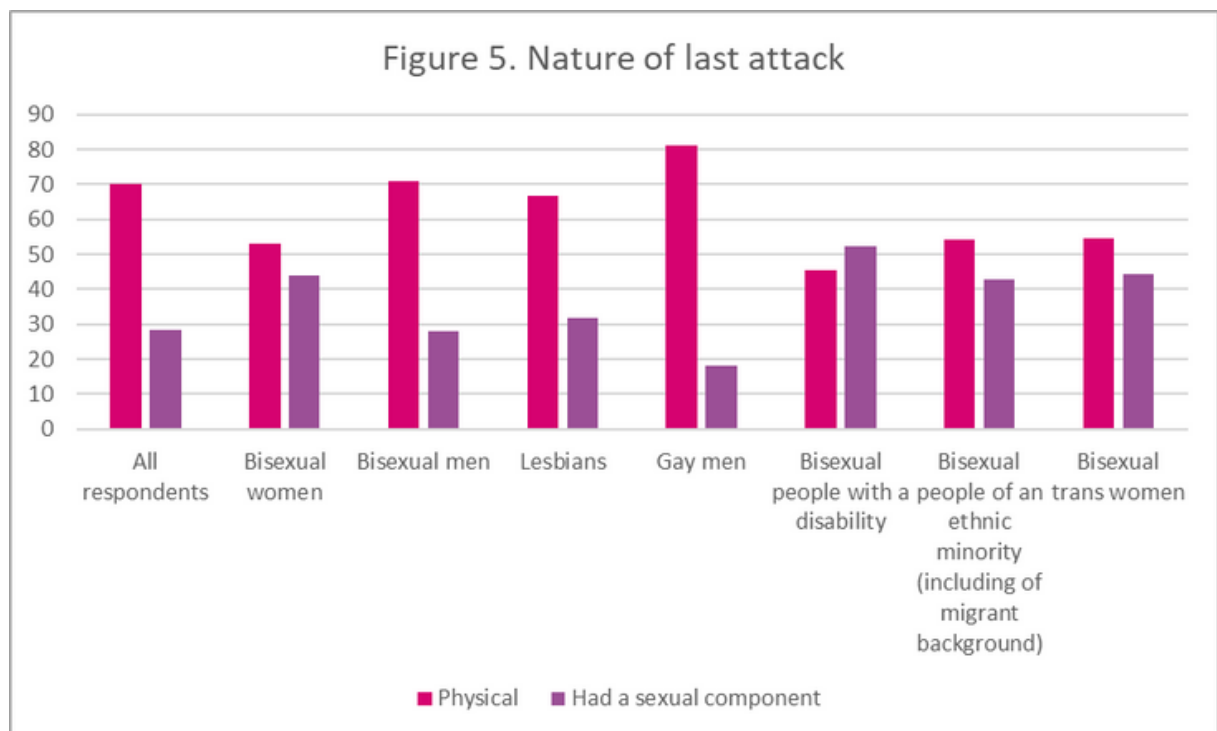


Since the types of violence faced by these different groups vary significantly, it is not easy to draw clear comparisons between them. Therefore, this section’s analysis of the disaggregated data will focus on bisexual people, with some comparisons with other sexual orientation groups.

When we look at subcategories of bisexual people, the rates of experiences of violence were highest among intersex bisexual people (57.10%), trans bisexual people (37.84%), non-binary bisexual people (37.23%), and bisexual people with a disability (41.70%).

When it comes to the nature of the last attack experienced by respondents, respondents were asked whether the nature was physical or included a sexual component. Bisexual women were by far the most likely to experience a sexual attack, and least likely to experience a purely physical attack. Almost half of bisexual women experienced an attack with a sexual component (44%), compared to 31.72% of lesbians.

Although many studies find shockingly high percentages of bisexual women who experience sexual violence during the course of their life, there is little knowledge as to why bisexual women are more often victims of sexual violence. More research is needed in this area. Among bisexual men the picture is reversed compared to bisexual women. In the last attack, bisexual men experienced more physical violence (71%) compared to sexual violence (28%).



It was more likely that the most recent attack experienced by bisexual people with a disability had a sexual component (52.36%, compared to 28.42% of all LGBTI respondents, and 36.55% of all bisexual respondents). Almost 20% of bisexual people of an ethnic minority (including of migrant background), bisexual people with a disability, and bisexual trans women reported that the most recent attack they experienced included both sexual and physical violence, in comparison with an average of 11.33% of all bisexual respondents.

Similar to the overall LGBTI respondent group, bisexual respondents were more likely to report the latest incident of violence to the police (11.51%) than to any other organisation surveyed, such as local authorities or an LGBTI community organisation. Among these bisexual respondents, 13% of bisexual men reported to the police in comparison to 8% of bisexual women. This could maybe be explained by the nature of this last incident of violence, which has more often a sexual component for bisexual women. When comparing with gay men and lesbian women, we can see that gay men and lesbian women appear to trust the police slightly more (19% and 12.07% respectively reported to the police). When it comes to reporting to an LGBTI organisation, 2.70% of bisexual people reported to an LGBTI organisation, as compared with 3% of gay men and 2.78% of lesbian women. Overall, as with other respondents, the vast majority of bisexual respondents did not report at all, at 82.36% (81.31% of lesbians did not report, and 75% of gay men did not report either). Interestingly, bisexual and lesbian people with a disability, bisexual and lesbian intersex people and bisexual and lesbian trans women reported more to the police than the general bisexual and lesbian respondent groups.

Experiences of discrimination

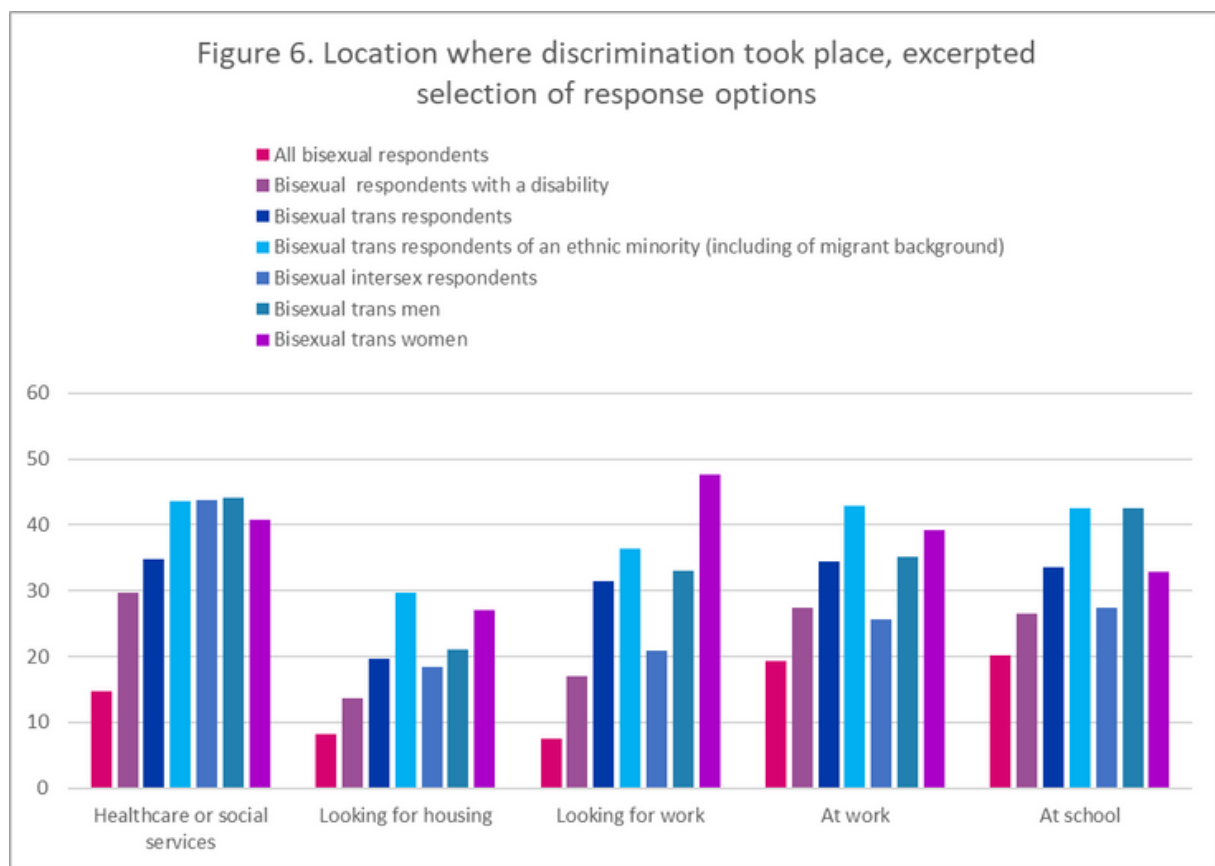
The survey asked a series of questions about experiences related to discrimination across a variety of life contexts. Bisexual respondents were overall slightly less likely than the general respondent population to experience discrimination in all settings surveyed apart from at school, where they were slightly more likely to experience discrimination (20.26% as compared to 19.51%). Table 4 [20] also shows that trans, intersex, lesbian and gay respondents experienced more discrimination in almost all settings, except for school. A likely explanation for the lower rates of discrimination in the context of housing and work may be the invisibility of their bisexual orientation due to lower levels of openness and a misinterpreted sexual orientation (i.e. assumed heterosexuality) for some bisexual people. In the context of school, bisexual women (21%) and lesbian women (20.80%) experienced slightly more discrimination than bisexual men (18%) and gay men (14%). More research is needed to explain these differences.

Table 3. Location of discrimination, excerpted selection of response options

	All respondents	Bisexual women	Bisexual men	Gay men	Lesbians	Trans people	Intersex people
Looking for housing	10.95%	7%	9%	9%	14.53%	20.83%	22.04%
Looking for work	10.17%	4%	6%	8%	11.32%	31.79%	27.98%
At work	20.83%	18%	17%	19%	21.80%	34.42%	31.01%
At school	19.51%	21%	18%	14%	20.80%	33.47%	36.13%

When we look at the subgroups of bisexual respondents (Figure 6), we can see that they experienced discrimination more often than the average bisexual group in all settings. For example, when accessing healthcare or social services 29.77% of bisexual people with a disability, 34.86% of bisexual trans people, 43.56% of bisexual trans people of an ethnic minority (including of migrant background) and 43.72% of bisexual intersex people experienced discrimination at over twice the rate of the general bisexual respondent population, with the most discrimination experienced by bisexual trans men (44.13%).

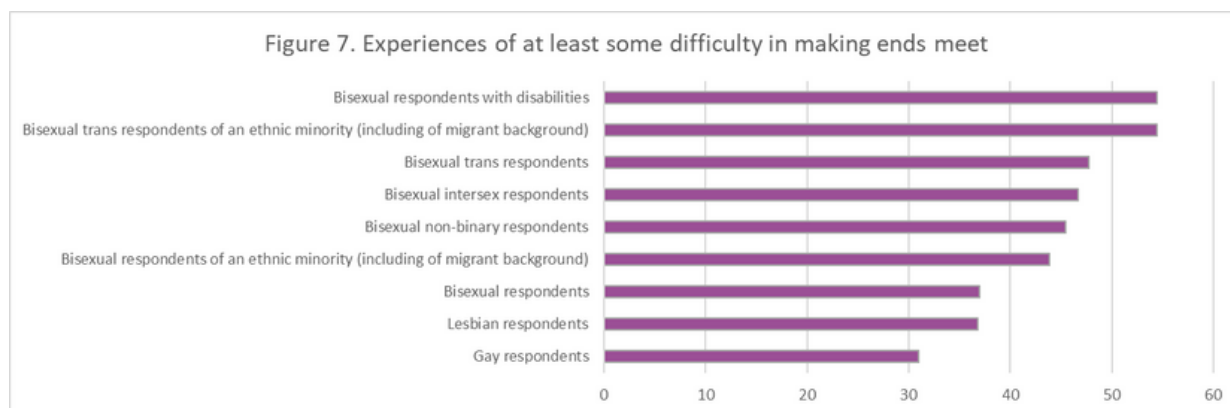
When looking for work, all bisexual trans and intersex subgroups experienced discrimination at over twice the rate of the general bisexual respondent group, which corresponds with the rate of discrimination experienced by trans and intersex respondents overall in comparison with all respondents. Particularly striking is that almost half of bisexual trans women experienced discrimination when looking for work (47.65%). The rate is also extremely high for bisexual trans people of an ethnic minority (including of migrant background), at 36.37%. When it comes to school, over 40% of bisexual trans respondents of an ethnic minority (including of migrant background) and bisexual trans men experienced discrimination.



Socioeconomic status

The survey asked respondents several questions pertaining to their socioeconomic status. Firstly, respondents were asked about their type of employment; in this regard, bisexual people were slightly less likely to be in paid work than the total respondent population (39.55% and 49.06%, respectively). As we have seen earlier, a high proportion of the bisexual respondents to this survey were aged 15-24, which is reflected in the fact that 38.77% of bisexual respondents were students, in comparison with 27.92% of all respondents. However, when further disaggregated, we can see that bisexual trans people and bisexual trans people of an ethnic minority (including of migrant background) are almost twice as likely to be unemployed as the average of bisexual respondents (8.38%, 8.17% and 4.81% respectively), whilst they constitute less than the bisexual average to be students (32.51% of bisexual trans respondents and 32.88% of bisexual trans people of an ethnic minority (including of migrant background) were students). We can also see that 6.67% of bisexual trans people, 6.72% of bisexual non-binary people and 8.80% of bisexual intersex people are unable to work due to a long-term health problem, which is over twice as many as the average of bisexual respondents (the average being 2.55%). For bisexual people with disabilities, they are almost seven times more likely, at 17.66%. [21]

Bisexual respondents had slightly more difficulty in making ends meet (39.41%) than all respondents (36.79%), lesbian respondents (36.96%) and gay respondents (31%). [22] And almost half of bisexual respondents who are trans, intersex, non-binary, or of an ethnic minority (including of migrant background) experienced at least some difficulty in making ends meet. These figures reflect the overall findings for trans, intersex and non-binary respondents in comparison with all LGBTI respondents. For bisexual respondents with disabilities, and for bisexual respondents who are both trans and of an ethnic minority (including of migrant background), over half have experienced at least some difficulty in making ends meet (see Figure 7).



Annex 1: Methodology and survey background information

Background: FRA LGBTI II Survey 2019

The statistics used to write this brief come from the 2019 EU LGBTI II Survey conducted by the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights. The survey was open to individuals who were 15 years of age or older who self-identified as lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and/or intersex. The survey was conducted online in 27 EU Member States, the UK, Serbia and North Macedonia between May and July of 2019. The respondents were asked a series of questions about their lived experiences, including information about their experiences of discrimination, harassment, violence, openness about their sexual orientation, gender identity, and sex characteristics, experiences in education and at work, their relationships and parenting, health, housing difficulties, living conditions and socio-economic status.

Representativeness of the results used in the report

The survey was available to LGBTI people who had access to the internet. As such, the survey did not provide a random sampling of LGBTI people, which would have made it representative of the LGBTI community in Europe. In addition, the digital divide between generations is significant and it increases with age. The 2019 Fundamental Rights Survey [23] showed that one in five people (20%) aged 75 years and older in the survey uses the internet at least occasionally, in comparison with 98% of 16-29 year olds. However, we applied weights developed by FRA for the 2019 LGBTI survey [24] so the results presented in the LGBTI survey report are as representative of the population as possible.

Sample

This briefing provides information on bisexual people, which was a subset from the entire sample of respondents resulting in a sample size of 44,788 (32.04% of the total respondent population of 139,799 respondents). The subsetting process followed a procedure of removing the answers of respondents who did not select “Bisexual” as their sexual orientation (question A4).

Statistical methods

The report is based on descriptive statistics extracted from the survey. The primary method used is cross tabulations, which is used to quantitatively analyse the relationship between multiple variables.