

# The impact of homophobic and transphobic bullying on education and employment



A European survey 2013  
Eleanor Formby

Many thanks to the research participants who gave up their time to respond to the survey, and to those individuals and organisations who supported the project by disseminating information and assisting with the research process.

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Centre for Education and Inclusion Research  
Howard Street  
Sheffield  
S1 1WB

Email: [e.formby@shu.ac.uk](mailto:e.formby@shu.ac.uk)  
Website: [www.shu.ac.uk/research/ceir](http://www.shu.ac.uk/research/ceir)

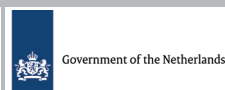
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## Foreword

Since our foundation in 1984, IGLYO has developed a long history of working in the education sector, a key part of the lives of LGBTQ young people. It is based on this tradition that the 2012 General Assembly in Mykolaiv, Ukraine, decided that 2013 would be dedicated to tackling all forms of bullying in formal education settings.

Throughout 2013, IGLYO has joined the global efforts to combat bullying. Building on our previous work, we held a conference titled Stop H8: Tackling Homophobic and Transphobic Bullying in Europe in Oslo, Norway. As a result of that conference, our Education Working Group has formulated a set of minimum standards to combat bullying in Europe. Additionally, IGLYO gathered perspectives from young people across the world in our publication, IGLYO On Bullying, available in print and on our website, [www.iglyo.com](http://www.iglyo.com).

This research report highlights the destructive phenomenon of bullying and the longer term consequences for many individuals. In 2012, the IGLYO Board and Secretariat decided to explore the relationship between bullying and access to the labour market. In the current time of economic recession, much attention is paid to factors affecting employment, and it seemed apparent that bullying would impact individuals' job prospects. Yet very little research had focussed on this connection.

Therefore, in late 2012 IGLYO issued a public research call on the topic, inviting researchers to define their own scope and methodology. We received a large number of applications, and, after a difficult review process, we selected Eleanor Formby from the Centre for Education and Inclusion Research at Sheffield Hallam University (UK) to conduct research titled *The Impact of Homophobic and Transphobic Bullying on Education and Employment: A European Survey*. Eleanor worked closely with IGLYO to design a piece of investigative research on the impact of bullying and access to the labour market.

Without revealing the results that follow in the report, it is clear that a connection exists between bullying and employment, particularly in the current economic recession. It is also apparent that there is a need for more research in this area in order to better understand the impact of bullying. For us, this exploratory research is only a beginning, and IGLYO hopes to help facilitate more investigation into the topic at the European, national, and local levels.

IGLYO sincerely thanks Eleanor Formby for conducting this research on our behalf, and of course extend our extreme gratitude to all of the respondents who took the time to share their experiences.

**IGLYO Board & Secretariat**  
November 2013

# Glossary

For a fuller glossary see ILGA-Europe (2013): [www.ilga-europe.org/home/publications/glossary](http://www.ilga-europe.org/home/publications/glossary)

**Biphobia**

Fear of, discrimination against, or hatred of bisexual people.

**Homophobia**

Fear of, discrimination against, or hatred of lesbian and gay people (also sometimes used to include bisexual people).

**LGB**

Lesbian, gay and bisexual.

**LGBT**

Lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans.

**LGBTQ**

Lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and queer<sup>1</sup>.

**Pansexual**

Person or people who are attracted to people of all genders. Sometimes used as alternative term to bisexual or polysexual.

**Polysexual**

person or people who are attracted to multiple genders. Sometimes used as alternative term to bisexual or pansexual.

**Queer**

Alternative term sometimes used for LGB or LGBT by those seeking to 'reclaim' it from previous/current derogatory usage. Also used to refer to those wishing to challenge gender or sexual binaries, as well as other identity categories.

**SRE**

Sex and relationships education.

**Trans**

Umbrella term used to refer to people who may not identify as either 'male' or 'female' and/or who may identify as intersex, transgender, transsexual or transvestite.

**Transphobia**

Fear of, discrimination against, or hatred of trans people.

# Executive summary

In February 2013, the International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer Youth and Student Organisation (IGLYO) commissioned Eleanor Formby from Sheffield Hallam University (in the UK) to carry out research on the impact of homophobic and transphobic bullying on education and employment in Europe.



An online survey was used, specifically targeted at a range of countries: Croatia, Denmark, Ireland, Italy, and Poland. The research extends existing literature that often focuses on impacts on mental health and emotional wellbeing. This summary outlines the study's key findings, drawing on 187 survey responses. Though this number is relatively small (meaning that results cannot be generalised or disaggregated by region), the data does point to issues to be considered in future service planning and/or further research.

## About the participants

- 36% of respondents were from Ireland, 12% from Italy, 10% from Denmark, 3% from Croatia, 3% from Poland, and 18% were from countries not targeted within the research (19%<sup>2</sup> did not disclose their country of residence)
- Respondents' age ranged from 15 to 38, with a (mean) average age of 25
- 40% identified as gay (whether male or female), 18% as lesbian, 11% as bisexual, 7% as queer, 3% unsure/questioning, 1% heterosexual, and 2% said that none of these categories were appropriate for them
- 44% identified as male, 29% as female, 5% as genderqueer, 1% gender variant, 1% trans, and 1% said that none of these categories were appropriate
- 72% had never identified as trans; 6% had at some point in their life
- Respondents were asked about their education and/or employment activities<sup>3</sup>: 44% were involved in full time education; 23% in part time employment; 17% in part time education; 16% in full time employment; 5% on another course or apprenticeship; 4% were not involved in any education, employment or training
- 37% of participants had high school qualifications, 27% university degrees, and 25% graduate or doctoral degrees

2. Figures may exceed 100% due to rounding.

3. Responses were not mutually exclusive.

## Experiences at school

Respondents were asked if they had ever experienced any of the following at school because of their actual/perceived sexual or gender identity:

- over half (57%) were 'outed' as lesbian, gay or bisexual (LGB)
- 78% experienced rumours and/or gossip about them and just under three quarters (73%) experienced name calling
- just under half (47%) experienced threats or intimidation
- over a quarter (28%) had experienced physical assault.

46 individuals provided further detail about their experiences, for example related to verbal incidents, being isolated, and incidents involving teachers:

*"The most damaging stuff was homophobia from teachers in the school".*

As a result of these experiences:

- over two thirds (65%) said they had felt less confident
- over half (53%) reported that they had felt depressed
- a significant minority (40%) felt they had fewer friends than other people
- 33% said they had thought about suicide.

48 participants described (other) impacts in more detail, including impacts related to mental health/emotional wellbeing, delaying coming out and/or uncertainty about their sexuality, and influences on relationships with (potential) friends:

*"I isolated myself during school and for a long time after school".*

Participants were asked to think about the influence on their school work:

- the majority had felt left out or isolated at some point (72%)
- 50% said they struggled to concentrate and/or did not feel motivated (47%)

- 49% sometimes chose not to participate in class questions or discussions
- 40% felt they did not acquire skills at school as well as they should have done
- 37% thought they achieved lower marks for their work
- a significant minority (36%) reported missing classes as a result
- 13% had changed school.

32 respondents provided further detail about impacts on their school work, for example about lack of motivation, changing or not attending school, and not enjoying school. Interestingly, some felt that experiences of bullying made them study harder:

*"I actually think it helped to improve my grades for the most part as I wanted to get out of school and into college as fast as possible".*

## Aspirations and plans for the future

Respondents were asked if their aspirations/plans for the future had been affected by any experiences/fear of bullying/discrimination connected to their identity: the majority (46%) thought that they had; slightly fewer (41%) thought that they had not. Participants were then asked if bullying/discrimination had any impact in a number of specific ways:

- the majority did not think that their educational aspirations (88%) or career aspirations (74%) had been restricted
- 88% did not think their ability to do well at university had been affected
- 87% did not believe their ability to do well at work had been affected
- 67% did not think their ability to get a job had been affected
- however, 37% thought that their experiences had influenced their choice of job/career (e.g. what job, which location) and/or their choice of studies (e.g. what course, what institution) (29%).



45 respondents provided further detail about impacts on their aspirations/plans for the future, including related to migration issues, and choice of career/area of interest:

*"I think it affected me in a positive way because I chose to study to become a teacher/educator, because I want to have the opportunity to talk about homophobia and bullying to boys and girls".*

Some participants suggested that their experiences had heightened their motivation:

*"Caused me to retaliate with an 'I'll show them' attitude causing me to aim higher".*

Some also emphasised that it was not individual bullying but broader societal discrimination that impacted upon them most.

When asked if there were difficulties or barriers to accessing further/higher education or training, 24 responded that there were not:

*"I think higher education is much, much more accessible and a better place for LGBTQ students. For me as a gay man I found it very open and encouraging and friendly".*

However, 23 responded that there were difficulties or barriers to accessing further/higher education or training, concerning migration issues, restricted subject choices, isolation/segregation, and broader fears:

*"I worry if it will be a safe space for me. I worry about repeat experiences similar to school. I worry about being able to participate as fully as I want to".*

Participants were also asked if there were difficulties or barriers to gaining employment. This question had the largest volume of open responses: 17 were not sure or thought that there were not, but 45 felt that there were, for instance regarding fear, poor experiences of/lack of faith in fair recruitment practices, limited choice of career, relationships at work, pressure to remain closeted, and migration:

*"Trying to navigate how much to disclose at interview is a constant reminder that you're 'other'".*

Specific points were raised by people wishing to work in schools (primarily in Ireland) and believing their opportunities were limited by institutions led by religious organisations:

*"Education in Ireland [is] still mostly under Catholic church control so as a gay man it is close to impossible to find a teaching position unless I hide my sexuality. This discrimination is allowed under Irish law".*

### Experiences of studies since leaving school

Respondents were asked if their time at university or in higher education had been affected by any bullying/discrimination (or fear of) connected to their identity: for the majority (63%) it had not, but for 29% it had. Those who had been to university or continued in their studies reflected on impacts on their studies since leaving school:

- the clear majority (91%) had felt left out or isolated at some point
- 69% struggled to concentrate, and 67% did not always feel motivated
- 62% chose not to participate in class questions or discussions at some point
- 57% thought they had achieved lower marks for their work
- 55% did not feel they acquired skills as well as they should have done
- just under half (49%) had missed classes more than once.

## Seeking employment

Respondents were asked if they thought their ability to gain employment had been affected by any prior experiences of bullying/discrimination connected to their identity: the majority thought that it had not (62%), but 19% felt that it had. Participants were then asked about specific impacts:

- 27% thought their confidence in their abilities had been adversely affected
- 20% thought their ability to perform well at job interviews had been affected
- 17% felt that their CV was not as good as other people's
- 13% said that having fewer or lower qualifications had affected the range or level of jobs they could apply for.

Other issues highlighted included lack of confidence impacting upon interview and/or job performance, and pressure to remain closeted:

*"I tend to be quieter than the other employees at work, and don't always allow for my employer to see my full potential".*

## Experiences of employment since leaving school

Participants were asked if their time at work had been affected by any bullying/discrimination (or fear of) connected to their identity: for just over half (54%) it had not, but for nearly a third (30%) it had. Those who had experienced a job were asked about the impact of bullying/discrimination in their work:

- the clear majority had felt left out or isolated more than once (83%)
- 70% struggled to concentrate at times, and 63% did not always feel motivated
- 61% felt their career progression was restricted
- 44% had changed jobs, and 41% had quit their job
- 43% called in sick or missed days at work as a result of their experiences
- 42% did not feel they had acquired skills at work as well as they should have.

Other issues emphasised by respondents included feeling isolated or stereotyped, and remaining closeted.

## Guidance and support

Respondents were asked if they had ever received any advice/support as an LGBTQ person connected to their education or employment opportunities:

- places of work were least likely to offer advice/support (90% had not), followed by youth workers (88%) and schools (85%)
- 55% had received helpful advice from friends
- 35% had received advice/support from family, though not always helpful
- 24% had received advice/support from another professional, but it was not always helpful
- 22% had received advice/support at university, the majority of it helpful.

Other advice/support received included from LGBTQ groups or organisations, online, and specifically mental health related, though a number of respondents criticised their experiences of counselling/psychological support, echoing evidence documented elsewhere (Bidell, 2012; Formby, 2013a).

Support that was thought to be helpful was often related to the ability to share issues and feelings; confidence; work, and emotional support:

*"A lot of it was people telling me to just accept who I am. With the knowledge that people close to me felt no different about me, I began to build my confidence again after it was shocked a bit by my coming out".*

Participants were also asked for suggestions for future advice/support for LGBTQ people: most answers related to inclusive education and school- or university-based support services; work related information, and opportunities for peer support:

*"I would like to see more education in post-primary schools about being LGBTQ... I just want kids to have an awareness that they're not alone".*

## Conclusions

The study data supports the following key conclusions:

1. Experience or fear of bullying and/or discrimination can have specific impacts on young LGBTQ people's education and employment opportunities
2. These impacts include loss of confidence, isolation, attendance and/or participation issues, and lack of motivation and/or concentration, resulting in potential academic attainment and/or achievement disadvantage
3. Not all experiences of prejudice or harassment were from peers; teachers and/or family members were also sometimes responsible. Broader societal discrimination/pressures were also experienced negatively by participants. These issues are often not understood or acknowledged within a focus on 'bullying'
4. Identifying as LGBTQ can impact upon a person's plans or aspirations for the future, regarding choice of studies and/or career, as well as migration concerns
5. Migration issues were apparent in people's desires to avoid certain areas for education and/or employment, and in people's desire to move to locations with more progressive legislative frameworks in which to live their lives
6. Ongoing issues about fear, apprehension and/or a belief in the need to stay 'closeted' were apparent, including pervasive fears about securing and retaining employment as an 'out' LGBTQ person. Fear of prejudice can be as significant and influential as actual experiences of discrimination, for some people
7. LGBTQ identities are still experienced as, or assumed to be, stigmatised; even advocates and campaigners in this field were wary of acknowledging their (often voluntary) work on CVs and/or in job interviews
8. Caution is needed to not portray LGBTQ people as 'victims'; not all experiences of being young and identifying as LGBTQ are negative, so a 'one size fits all' approach from professionals working with young people may not be helpful.

## Recommendations

Recommendations for LGBTQ organisations and individuals working with young people to consider in future service planning include:

- adopting inclusive education practices (see IGLYO, 2007)
- provision of information or support that does not assume or suggest that all LGBTQ young people will have negative experiences of education or employment, and/or will necessarily require support
- work related support, e.g. advice about LGBTQ friendly organisations and/or policies, and on ways to have confidence in 'negotiating' or 'managing' LGBTQ identities in the workplace
- school- and university-based LGBTQ support services; not necessarily individually focussed, but could entail group orientated activities and support
- ways to facilitate mutual or peer support among LGBTQ young people
- provision of accessible online information for LGBTQ young people about a range of education, social, and employment related issues
- ways to inform and improve general awareness about LGBTQ lives and identities
- supporting LGBTQ young people with their family relationships, if appropriate
- offering (non-stigmatising) sex education appropriate for LGBTQ young people
- promoting the need for LGBTQ awareness and inclusive practice among all professionals working with young people
- further research, e.g. examining the experiences and needs of trans young people specifically.

## Introduction

**In February 2013, the International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer Youth and Student Organisation (IGLYO) commissioned Eleanor Formby from Sheffield Hallam University (in the United Kingdom) to carry out a small piece of research on the impact of homophobic and transphobic bullying on education and employment in Europe.**

The chosen research method was an online survey, targeted at five different countries selected to give a 'spread' across Europe (Croatia, Denmark, Ireland, Italy and Poland). This area of study is important because much previous research has tended to focus on the impact of bullying experiences in terms of mental health and emotional wellbeing.

The last fifteen years or so have seen growing acknowledgement of the prevalence of homophobic bullying and broader discomfort with, and/or invisibility of, same-sex relationships and identities in education contexts (Douglas et al, 1999; Ellis and High, 2004; Formby, 2011a; Greenland and Nunney, 2008), though most evidence has emanated from North America and/or the United Kingdom, and far less exists about the experiences of trans young people. Recent large-scale research in the UK suggested that 55% of lesbian, gay and bisexual (LGB) young people experience homophobic bullying in secondary schools and colleges, and that three in five pupils who experience homophobic bullying say that teachers who witness it do not intervene (Guasp, 2012). Research has also identified discriminatory attitudes among some staff, and poor or inadequate responses to homophobic bullying from some schools (McNamee et al, 2008; Warwick et al, 2001).

Studies have suggested that LGB young people are rarely included in the (formal) school curriculum, with some school staff fearful about including LGB issues within their teaching, particularly regarding sex and relationships education (SRE) (Buston and Hart, 2001; Formby, 2011a, b). It has been suggested that homosexuality is viewed as a 'taboo' subject, at risk of exclusion due to concerns about tackling it incorrectly by unconfident staff (DePalma and Atkinson, 2006; Ellis, 2007; Formby, 2011a).

There has also been increasing acknowledgment and interest in the use of the word gay as a pejorative term, and the effect this might have on young people's developing identities and wider emotional wellbeing (Guasp, 2009; Hunt and Jenson, 2007; Thurlow, 2001). By contrast, UK and USA research indicates that where schools are more supportive environments, they can lessen the potential for negative outcomes for lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans (LGBT) pupils (Espelage et al, 2008; Rivers and Cowie, 2006; Russell, 2005; Tippet et al, 2010).

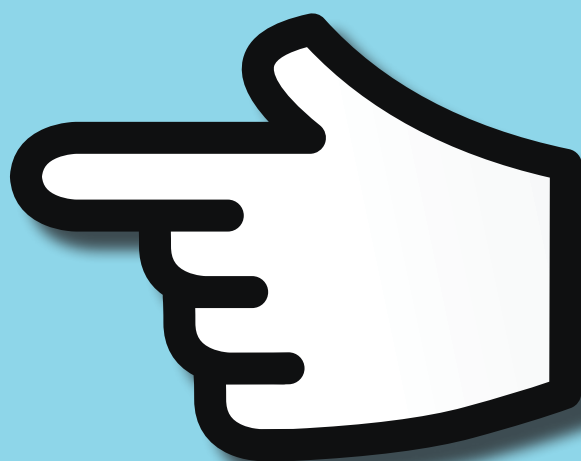
Research from the UK and the USA has demonstrated the potential impact that homophobic bullying can have on young LGBT people's mental health and wellbeing, including higher incidences of self-harm, depression and/or attempted suicide compared with their heterosexual counterparts (Almeida et al, 2008; McNamee et al, 2008; Robinson and Espelage, 2011). LGBT youth are similarly said to be more likely to suffer poorer physical health arising from higher incidences of alcohol, drug and/or tobacco use, related to their experiences of broader society (Espelage et al, 2008; Rivers and Noret, 2008), though there is also evidence to the contrary (Russell et al, 2011).

Evidence suggests that negative experiences in adolescence can impact upon educational attainment, as well as on mental health and/or emotional wellbeing (Takacs, 2006). Existing research, for example, suggests that experiences of bullying influence (lack of) confidence, self-esteem and school/educational attendance (Jones and Clarke, 2008; Rivers, 2000; UNESCO, 2012). This has also been acknowledged in previous European research (Takacs, 2006).

These factors, together with a lack of role models and/or appropriate support (Crowley et al, 2001; Formby and Willis, 2011), and the potential for conflict with family and/or friends (Formby, 2012; Valentine et al, 2003), can influence educational achievement (in the form of skills acquisition and/or attainment levels), and therefore opportunities for labour market entry (Robinson and Espelage, 2011; Warwick et al, 2004).

Research also suggests that experiences may not be markedly more positive at university for some young people (Ellis, 2009; Valentine et al, 2009). Caution is needed, however, to not over-state these risks, or portray LGBTQ people as inherent 'victims' (Cover, 2012; Formby, 2013a; Russell, 2005).

Set within this broader context, this report presents the findings of the research (chapter three), together with a summary of how the study was conducted (chapter two), and suggested conclusions and recommendations (chapter four). For more detailed recommendations, please see the accompanying Recommendations based on the research document.



## Research methods and participants

The online survey was hosted on a secure website for a period of approximately two months. The survey was designed and piloted in negotiation with IGLYO, and distributed via networks connected to IGLYO, targeted in particular at Croatia, Denmark, Ireland, Italy and Poland.



Budgetary limitations prevented more in-depth methods, such as face to face interviewing or peer research. The project received research ethics approval from Sheffield Hallam University's research ethics committee. There were 33 questions in total, with a balance of 'closed', i.e. tick box (17 questions), and 'open' questions allowing fuller responses (16 questions). As with any online survey, there are advantages to this approach in being able to reach a wide range of people relatively easily, yet there are also disadvantages in being restricted to those with access to the internet, which may have limited who was able to take part.

Unfortunately, the survey was only available in English, which will have reduced who was able to respond. There were 187 responses to the survey in total. Due to this relatively small number, the results cannot be generalised or disaggregated by region, but as a whole they do point to issues to be considered in future service planning and/or further research. Where evidence is supported by larger-scale data, this will be highlighted to demonstrate validity of the findings. For the most part, comparisons will be made with the recent European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (known as FRA) report, because of its sample size (over 93,000 respondents, of who over 68,000 were aged 18-39, which is broadly similar to the age span reported here).

Results throughout are presented in percentages, unless otherwise stated, though figures may not always add up to 100% due to rounding.

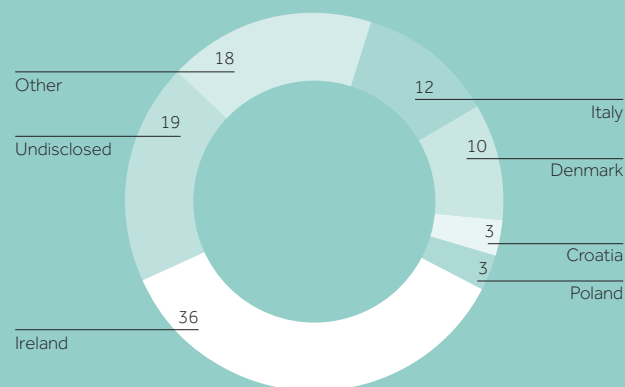
Participants were ensured confidentiality; where details provided may have proved identifiable, these have been removed from quote extracts.

## Participants

The survey collected some demographic information about respondents, presented below.

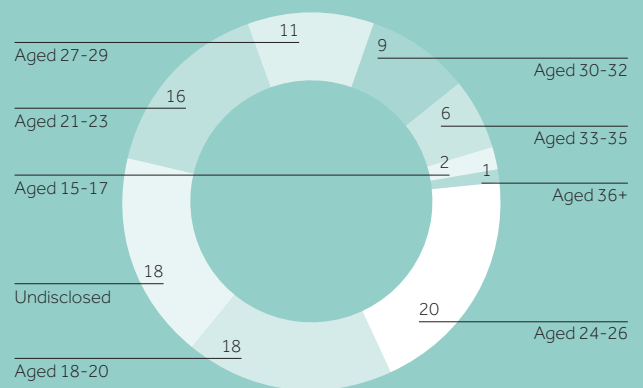
Respondents were asked where they currently lived. The clear majority of participants (36%) were from Ireland. The next two largest groups either did not disclose their country of residence (19%), or were from countries not specifically targeted within the research (see above) (18% in total). This 'other' category comprises small numbers from Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Finland, France, Germany, Iceland, Lithuania, Malta, the Netherlands, Norway, Spain, Turkey, the United Kingdom, and the United States. Remaining respondents were from Italy (12%), Denmark (10%), Croatia (3%), and Poland (3%).

### Participants' country of residence (Figure 2.1)



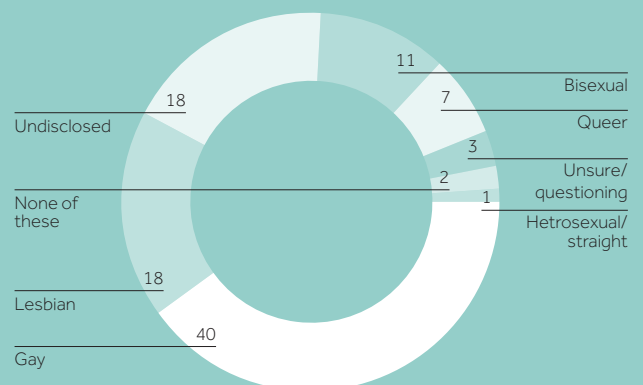
There was a wide range of respondents in terms of age, ranging from 15 to 38, with many participants able to reflect back on experiences of schooling, further/higher education, and seeking employment. The most common age group was 24-26 (20%), followed by those aged 18-20 (18%). A further 18% did not supply this information. The (mean) average age was 25.

### Age of participants (Figure 2.2)



Respondents identified their sexuality in a number of different ways, the most common being gay (whether male or female) (40%), followed by lesbian (18%) and bisexual (11%). Smaller numbers identified as queer (7%), unsure/questioning (3%) and heterosexual (1%). 2% said that none of these categories were appropriate and instead provided their own responses: "asexual and queer", "I like women", and "pansexual".

### Participants' sexual identity (Figure 2.3)

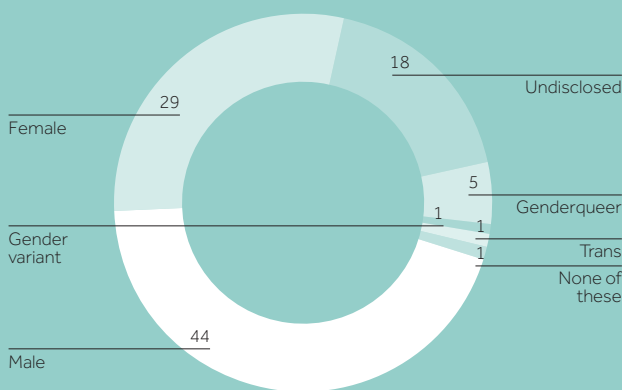


Similarly, respondents described their gender identity in a number of different ways, the most common being male (44%), followed by female (29%) and genderqueer (5%). Smaller numbers identified as gender variant (1%) and trans (1%). 1% said that none of these categories were appropriate and instead provided their own responses:

*"Female also genderqueer. Society can't really cope with the inbetweeners, so I approach it as female. Makes the paperwork easier! In an ideal world I might take a different approach"*

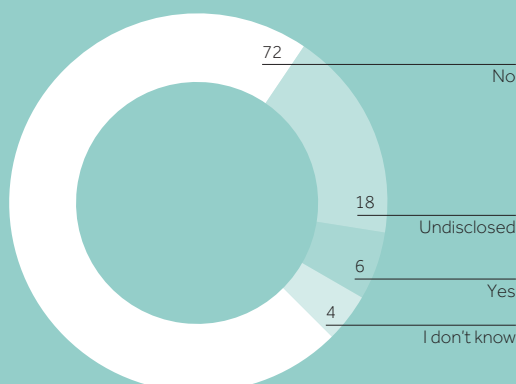
*"Female or trans-female if it is medically relevant".*

### Participants' gender identity (Figure 2.4)



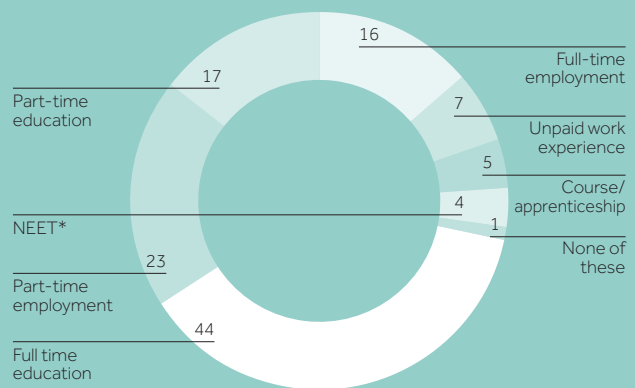
Respondents were also asked if they had ever identified as trans: the clear majority had not (72%), with just 6% saying they had. This demonstrates a limitation in the sample, but does mirror previous research in this area which tends to include more LGB than trans respondents.

### Trans identities (Figure 2.5)



Respondents were asked to identify what education and/or employment activities they were currently involved in, though responses were not mutually exclusive.

### Participants' economic activity status (Figure 2.6)



\*NEET stands for not in education, employment or training

The majority of participants were involved in full time education at the time of the survey (44%), with a large proportion also involved in paid employment, either part time (23%) or full time (16%). A further 22% were involved in part time education (17%) or another course/apprenticeship (5%). A number provided further details as to their current activities, such as these:

*"Unemployed but starting college in September"*

*"I was on full time education until this month"*

*"PhD student"*

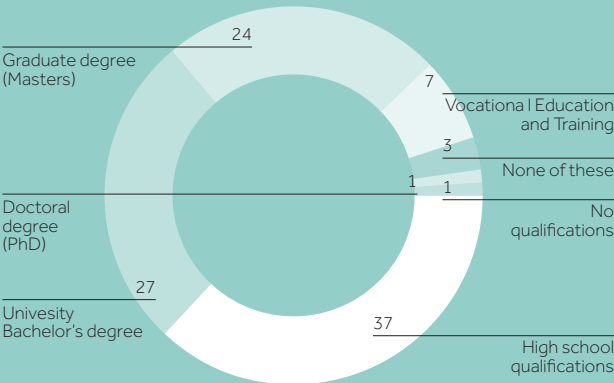
*"Looking for work"*

*"Travelling"*



Participants were also asked about their highest educational qualification so far. The largest proportion had high school qualifications (37%), followed by those with university degrees (27%) and those with graduate or doctoral degrees (25% in total). This means that over half the sample had education levels to at least degree level, which could be assumed to impact upon potential employment opportunities.

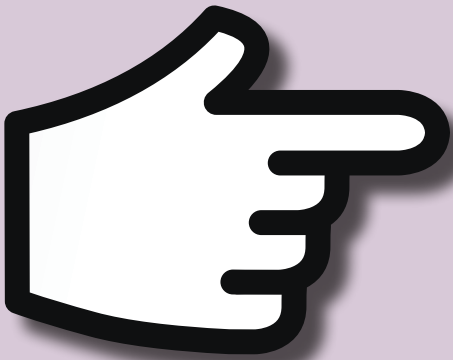
**Highest educational qualification of participants**  
(Figure 2.7)



# Research findings

This chapter reports the findings from the online survey, presenting both quantitative and qualitative evidence.

The results presented, unless otherwise stated, refer to the 'valid percent', which means the figures after the number of non-responses to any particular question have been removed.



The data is presented in sections relating to:

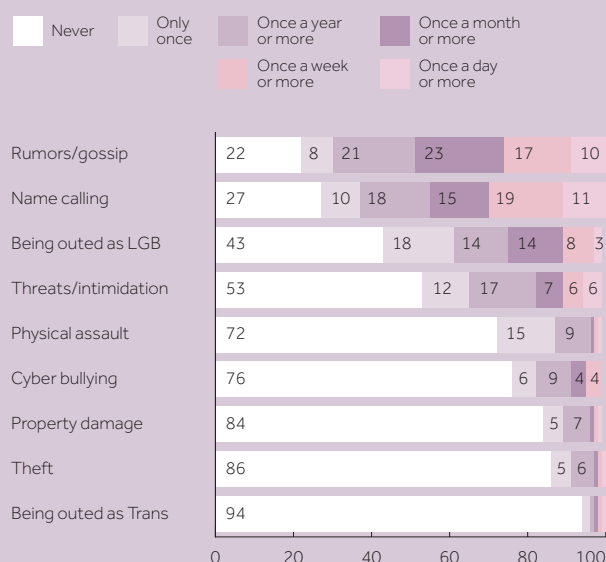
- experiences at school;
- aspirations and plans for the future;
- experiences of studies since leaving school;
- seeking employment;
- experiences of employment since leaving school;
- guidance and support.

## Experiences at school

This section deals with people's recollections of their time at school and what they experienced there, together with its immediate impacts. For some participants this was about current or very recent memories, whilst for the oldest respondents it was around twenty years ago.

Respondents were asked if they had ever experienced any of the following at school because of their actual or perceived sexual orientation or gender identity. The results show that over half (57%) were 'outed' as LGB (with frequency between once only and once a day or more). By comparison, 6% were 'outed' as trans. Just under three quarters of all respondents (73%) experienced name calling (between only once and once a day or more). Similarly, 78% experienced rumours and/or gossip about them, and a large minority experienced threats or intimidation (47%). Just over a quarter (28%) had experienced physical assault at some point. The majority had not experienced cyber bullying (76%), damage to property (84%), or theft (86%).

### Experiences of bullying or discrimination at school (Figure 3.1.1)



The above results are broadly in line with recent large-scale evidence from Europe that identified over 80% of participants in every European Union (EU) member state, plus Croatia, who recalled negative comments or bullying from their time at school, with 68% overall saying this happened often or always (FRA, 2013). Previous research in France, Ireland, the Netherlands and Scotland has also identified negative experiences of schooling among LGB pupils (Lough Dennell and Logan, 2012; UNESCO, 2012).

Participants were also asked what else they may have experienced. A total of 46 provided further responses, which have been grouped and categorised below.

### Other experiences of bullying or discrimination at school (Figure 3.1.2)

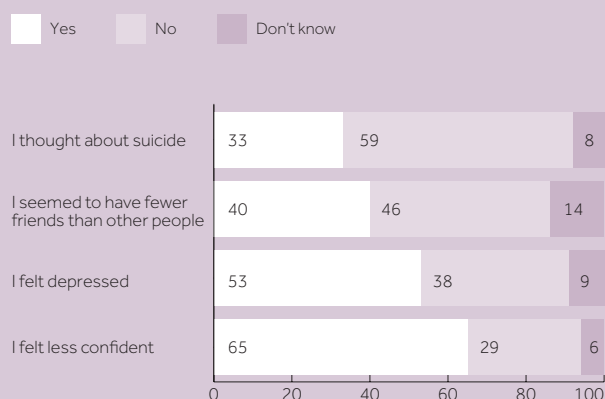
Impacts	Replies	Example responses
Verbal incidents	14	"I experienced a LOT of sexual remarks" "I was constantly called 'gay' and 'faggot' and other such terms (especially by fellow male students). They seemed certain that I was gay before even I was certain!"
Not applicable	13	"I'm not out at my school yet" "I've had very limited bad experiences since starting my transition (MtF)"
Being isolated	8	"People avoiding me, exclusion from groups" "Isolation, exclusion, loneliness"
Teachers	4	"Bullying from teachers... I reported multiple incidents of teachers making derogatory comments" "The most damaging stuff was homophobia from teachers in the school"
Visual incidents	4	"Leaving my number in a men's WC for cruising boys" "Had male genitalia exposed to me by my male peers on regular occasions to intimidate me and to record my response"
Bullying of friends	1	"Bullying of my friends and accusations regarding their sexuality as a consequence of mine"
Positive experiences	1	"Acceptance, respect and support"
Threatening behaviour	1	"Threatened to be burnt"

The above comments about teachers highlight that homophobia or bullying from teachers can be a problem as much as homophobia or bullying from classmates for some young people (see also Formby, 2013a).

Respondents were asked what impact these experiences had. Over two thirds (65%) said they had felt less confident as a result, and over half (53%) reported that they had felt depressed. A significant minority (40%) felt they had fewer friends than other people, and 33% said they had thought about suicide.

### Impacts of bullying or discrimination at school

(Figure 3.1.3)



Participants were also asked what other impacts their experiences had. A total of 48 provided further responses, which are grouped and categorised below.

### Other impacts from bullying or discrimination at school

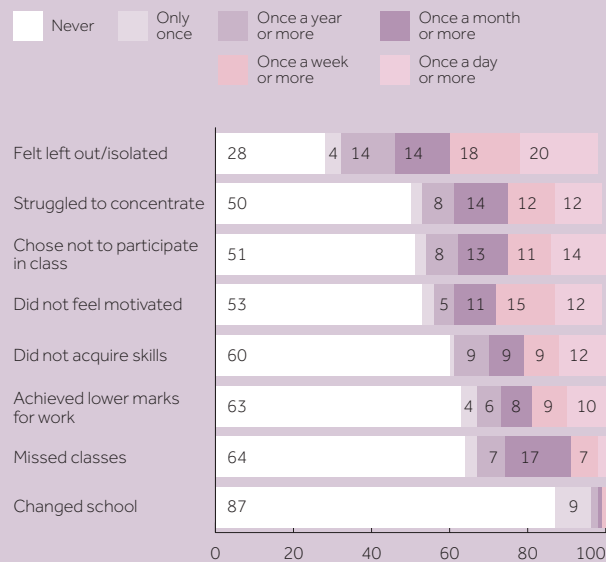
(Figure 3.1.4)

Impacts	Replies	Example responses
Mental health/emotional wellbeing	13	<p>"The effect of my experiences on my confidence has endured to the present day"</p> <p>"I developed long term agoraphobia/social panic attacks"</p>
Delayed coming out and/or uncertainty about sexuality	12	<p>"I waited until my twenties to explore my sexuality, rather than doing so in my teens"</p> <p>"My confusion about my own sexual orientation was influenced by people telling me that I was misinformed, attention seeking or simply a slut"</p> <p>"I hid my sexuality in the beginning because I was ashamed"</p>
Influence on relationships with friends or potential friends	11	<p>"I isolated myself during school and for a long time after school"</p> <p>"The bullies were male so I found it difficult to make friends with other guys"</p> <p>"I thought everyone talked about my orientation behind my back and that made me a bit more 'awkward'"</p>
None	3	
Physical health impacts	3	<p>"I ended up becoming a recreational drug user and struggled to get out of this habit"</p> <p>"I started suffering from insomnia and it lasted for three-four years"</p> <p>"It induced me to develop anorexia nervosa which I have suffered with now for seven years... and I drink heavily"</p>
Informed choice of study and/or career	1	
Led to bullying behaviour	1	"Made me behave sometimes as a bully to others weaker than me to make me feel stronger"
School avoidance	1	
Unspecified	1	"Took a good few years to put the bullying behind me"
Valued friendships	1	"My friends were loyal, so I valued them more"

The above responses indicate the potential impact of school experiences on identity, relationships, and mental and physical health.

Participants were asked to think about the potential influence on their school work. The majority had felt left out or isolated at some point (72%), whether regularly or infrequently. A significant minority (36%) reported missing classes as a result (see also IGLYO, 2013; Lough Dennell and Logan, 2012). Just under half (49%) said they (sometimes) chose not to participate in class questions or discussions, and 50% said they struggled to concentrate at school at some point. At times, 47% did not feel motivated to do their school work, and 37% thought they achieved lower marks for their work. 40% reported that they did not feel they acquired skills at school as well as they should have done, whilst a small proportion (13%) had changed school as a result of their experiences.

### Bullying or discrimination impacts on school work (Figure 3.1.5)



Respondents were also asked what other impacts their experiences had on their school work: 32 respondents provided further detail, with comments grouped and categorised below, though not all relate to school work specifically.

### Other bullying or discrimination impacts on school work (Figure 3.1.6)

Impacts	Replies	Example responses
None/not applicable	8	
Increased studying	6	<p>"I actually think it helped to improve my grades for the most part as I wanted to get out of school and into college as fast as possible... I would also participate more in class discussions to try get some of the others to change their views"</p> <p>"I actually think that my sexual orientation motivated me to higher school performance in order to prove that I can do more than my 'normal' peers"</p>
Lost motivation	4	<p>"I loved very much to study, but I lost my will to go to school"</p> <p>"I felt that I was quite good at English but because I associated the subject with school, I completely abandoned the idea of continuing it"</p>
Changed schools or stopped attending	4	<p>"I stopped attending regularly in the final two years of high school"</p>
Mental health issues leading to missing classes/school completion	3	<p>"In the end I didn't finish school because my depression and anxiety of facing people"</p> <p>"For many years I was so depressed and uncertain about my life, my education and studying suffered. They suffered to the detriment of my examination results"</p>
Felt unhappy in school/didn't enjoy it	2	<p>"I did not want to be there"</p>
Negative comments/lack of support influenced relationships with teachers	2	
Felt didn't fit in	1	
Slower to accept sexuality	1	
Felt uncomfortable talking about LGBT issues within school	1	

Sometimes, participants suggested that bullying did not impact upon their school work, though it was still affected by issues about their gender or sexual identity more broadly, such as in this example:

*"My work suffered through my own preoccupations with my gender rather than from bullying".*

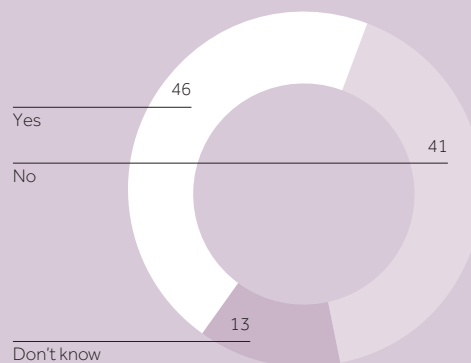
The potentially productive impacts are often not acknowledged, but are demonstrated above, which is not to say that bullying is a positive experience overall. It does suggest, however, that young people respond differently, and therefore a 'one size fits all' approach from professionals may not be helpful (Formby, 2013b).

## Aspirations and plans for the future

This section deals with people's thoughts about their future, however far on they were with their studies and/or whatever life stage they were at.

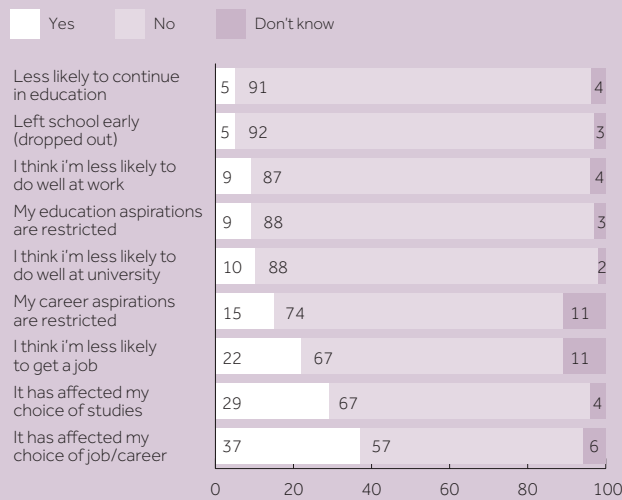
Respondents were asked if they thought their aspirations or plans for the future had been affected by any experiences, or fear, of bullying or discrimination connected to their sexual orientation and/or gender identity. The majority (46%) thought that they had, but only slightly fewer thought that they had not (41%).

### Does bullying or discrimination impact upon aspirations or plans for the future? (Figure 3.2.1)



Participants were asked if bullying or discrimination had any impact in a number of specific ways. The majority did not think that their career aspirations (74%) or educational aspirations (88%) had been restricted. 87% did not believe their ability to do well at work had been affected; 67% did not think their ability to get a job had been affected, and 88% did not think their ability to do well at university had been affected. 91% did not think they were less likely to continue in education, and 92% had not 'dropped out' of school. However, sizable minorities thought that their experiences had influenced their choice of job or career, e.g. what job or which location (37%), and their choice of studies, e.g. what course or what institution (29%).

### Impact of bullying or discrimination on aspirations or plans for the future (Figure 3.2.2)



Participants were also asked if bullying or discrimination had impacted upon their aspirations or plans for the future in any other ways: 45 respondents provided further examples, which have been grouped and categorised below.

### Other bullying or discrimination impacts on aspirations or plans for the future (Figure 3.2.3)

Impacts	Replies	Example responses
None/not applicable	14	
Informed choice of career/area of interest	12	<p>"I think it affected me in a positive way because I chose to study to become a teacher/educator; because I want to have the opportunity to talk about homophobia and bullying to boys and girls"</p> <p>"I have become very active in LGBT organisations and social justice organisations and campaigns"</p> <p>"I currently volunteer (and plan to continue volunteering) for a charity involved with the issue of youth suicide"</p>
Restricted choice of career/life choices	7	<p>"I feared working in caring roles because I feared what people would say if they found out I was gay and working with vulnerable people"</p> <p>"I chose a creative career as it was expected of me"</p>
Migration related	5	<p>"I intend to have a family and will move to where I feel we will have the most rights and my children won't be persecuted"</p> <p>"It gives you an inclination to flee, so that you don't want to stay where you studied"</p> <p>"I am afraid to go to certain countries because of LGBT criminalisation and discrimination"</p>
Heightened drive to succeed	3	<p>"Caused me to retaliate with an 'I'll show them' attitude causing me to aim higher"</p> <p>"It made me more determined to succeed"</p>
Slowed progress	2	<p>"It has definitely halted where I would have been today if I were not bullied"</p> <p>"I left school with no formal education, I worked through my teens and returned to university as a mature student"</p>
Remain closeted	1	
Negatively impacted upon social skills	1	

Sometimes, participants stressed that it was not individual bullying that impacted upon them most, but rather was broader discrimination or pressures from within society, as in these examples:

*"Not bullying; more the pressures of a society only geared to cope with two genders"*

*"I would not say bullying or discrimination, I would rather call it 'perception of reality'. I have understood that many dreams I had for my future could not become reality, because it is probably too early for this society".*

It should be noted that the relatively high numbers active within LGBT organisations and/or campaigns may be influenced by the sample drawn from networks connected to IGLYO, rather than being representative of all young LGBTQ people.

When asked if there were any other difficulties or barriers to accessing further or higher education and/or training for them as an LGBTQ person, 24 responded that there were not, with some of the following explanations:

*"Higher education is, in my experience, one of the most encouraging environments for transgendered people"*

*"I think higher education is much, much more accessible and a better place for LGBTQ students. For me as a gay man I found it very open and encouraging and friendly".*

However, 23 responded that there were other difficulties or barriers to accessing further or higher education and/or training for them as an LGBTQ person, with issues grouped and categorised below.

### Other difficulties or barriers to accessing further or higher education (Figure 3.2.4)

Issue raised	Replies	Example responses
Fears	5	<p><i>"I worry if it will be a safe space for me. I worry about repeat experiences similar to school. I worry about being able to participate as fully as I want to"</i></p> <p><i>"As a trans person without legal recognition I feel unsafe in unknown environments with lots of new people who perceive me differently. That makes it hard to go to new courses etc"</i></p>
Migration related	5	<p><i>"I have to go to the bigger city, I'm from a small town, and I don't imagine staying here and getting education, because people are bigots"</i></p> <p><i>"Lots of locations are not suitable for young gay people to attend further or higher education - I have limited myself to one or two locations based on this"</i></p>
Isolation/ segregation	4	<p><i>"Being socially separated at traditional activities such as end-of-year dances, where you usually have an opposite-gender partner"</i></p> <p><i>"As a non-binary person, I worry about what will happen if I need to partake in gender-segregated activities (such as getting a dorm room)"</i></p>
Subject choices restricted	3	<p><i>"There are areas in which you 'can't' be LGBT, mostly masculine ones... in those schools it may be difficult to get diploma"</i></p> <p><i>"I believe there are some courses where homophobia is accepted/expected"</i></p>
Access barred	2	<p><i>"I wanted to work with a youth club and was declined because I'm gay"</i></p> <p><i>"My first choice was a Catholic run teacher training college and despite good results from exams I did not get accepted"</i></p>
Expectations	1	<p><i>"Given that university/further education is a completely different environment the challenge is convincing people that things are different. Many people think that it will be more of the same... [but] the truth is there are entire communities within college and most are accepting of LGBT people"</i></p>



Issue raised	Replies	Example responses
Confidence	1	<i>"If you're struggling with identity at the time you're applying you may not be confident enough to do well in the application process and might withdraw"</i>
Mental health related	1	<i>"As an LGBTQ person I've experienced more depression and less friendship and I spent huge amounts of time sorting out myself and my emotions than I would have done otherwise. This made it harder for me to choose the right course and may make me drop out of university"</i>
Support related	1	<i>"I think the success one achieves might alter with the amount of support one's family has to offer, which can be affected by one being an LGBTIQ person"</i>

It is interesting to note that one participant acknowledged the potential in moving away to pursue further or higher education, which has also been explored in research elsewhere (Scourfield et al, 2008; Willis, 2012):

*"Universities are located in bigger cities, which allows LGBTQ students from small villages and towns to move and live their sexuality more openly".*

Participants were also asked if there were any other difficulties or barriers to gaining employment for them as an LGBTQ person. This question had the largest volume of responses to any of the open questions: 17 were not sure or thought that there were not, for example:

*"I do not see there being any for me as my career is a very open minded industry".*

However, 45 responded that there were other difficulties or barriers to gaining employment: issues raised have been grouped and categorised or commented on below.

### Other difficulties or barriers to gaining employment (Figure 3.2.5)

Issue raised	Replies	Example responses
Fears	10	<i>"I'm always afraid I'm going to be stuck with intolerant people who won't accept me"</i> <i>"I'm a little bit worried about my future because I don't know if I will find a good working environment, where I could be myself"</i> <i>"There are things I am too afraid to put on my CV, such as... my activities with my university's LGBT society"</i>
Poor experiences of, and/or lack of faith in, fair recruitment practices	10	<i>"I have felt that my sexuality has negatively affected my chance of getting certain jobs"</i> <i>"Some institutions still discourage LGBTQ hiring where children are involved"</i> <i>"Trying to navigate how much to disclose at interview is a constant reminder that you're 'other'"</i>
Choice of career limited or affected	5	<i>"If I wanted to have a career in sport such as football, I would definitely not go in that direction"</i> <i>"In some multinational firms regardless of country, being gay is seen as a hindrance to the company's reputation"</i> <i>"Identifying as LGBT has an impact on me pursuing a career in education as legislation allows for teachers identifying as LGBT to be removed from this career"</i>
Religion	5	<i>See page 24</i>
Relationships at work	4	<i>"Many employers in Poland are homophobic and dismiss their LGBTQ employees"</i> <i>"I have noticed certain clients 'disappeared' upon gaining knowledge of my sexuality"</i>
Pressure to remain closeted	4	<i>"If your boss is a homophobe you have to keep quiet, and run the risk one slip of the tongue could make life hell"</i>
Migration related	3	<i>"I think that it might be more difficult to get employed at international level"</i> <i>"Less job opportunities around the world due to sexuality, limits where we can go"</i>
Misconceptions about LGBTQ people	2	
Confidence	1	
Social isolation	1	

Points raised about religion (above) all refer to people wishing to work in schools and believing their opportunities for this are limited by institutions led by religious organisations. Legislation supporting this in Ireland was specifically mentioned by a number of respondents, such as this comment:

*“Education in Ireland [is] still mostly under Catholic church control so as a gay man it is close to impossible to find a teaching position unless I hide my sexuality. This discrimination is allowed under Irish law”.*

Another participant suggested that it is not conforming to (visible) ‘norms’ and gendered expectations that can be the issue, rather than people’s actual sexual or gender identities:

*“I don’t think the difficulties of employment has anything to do with being LGBTQ. It has more to do with your gender identity. An example; being male, not acting or looking masculine enough would be more of an obstacle, than being a handsome masculine guy that happens to like men”.*

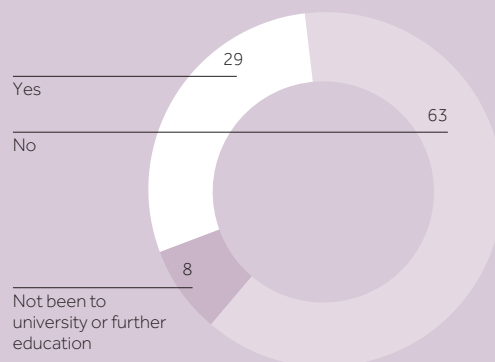
Taken together, the responses to this question highlight the continuing importance of issues about identity and their impact upon LGBTQ people’s fears, decision-making, and general working lives.

## Experiences of studies since leaving school

This section focuses on experiences of studying at university or in higher education, following school completion.

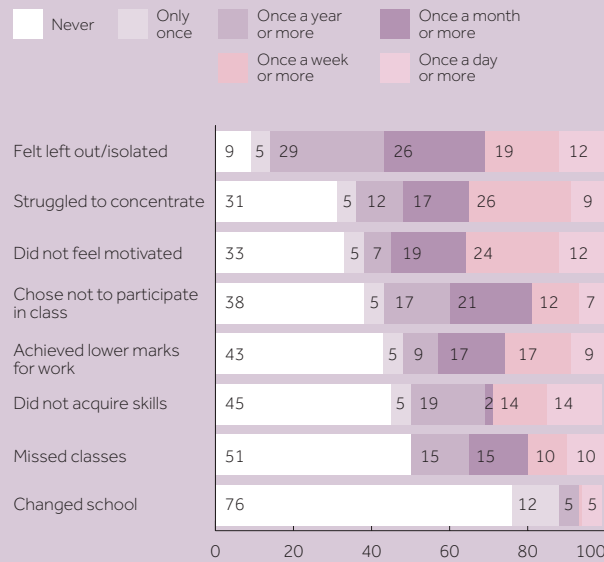
Respondents were asked if their time at university or in higher education had been affected by any bullying or discrimination (or fear of) connected to their sexual orientation and/or gender identity. For the majority (63%) it had not, but for 29% it had been.

### Bullying, discrimination or fear at university or in higher education (Figure 3.3.1)



Those who had been to university or continued in their studies beyond school were then asked to think about the potential impact of bullying or discrimination on their studies since leaving school. The clear majority (91%) had felt left out or isolated at some point, whether once only, or once a day or more. Just under half (49%) had missed classes more than once, and 62% had chosen not to participate in class questions or discussions at some point. 69% sometimes struggled to concentrate, and 67% did not always feel motivated. 57% felt that they had achieved lower marks for their work, and 55% did not feel they acquired skills at university or in higher education as well as they should have done. 24% had changed university or institution at some point.

### Impact of bullying or discrimination on studies since leaving school (Figure 3.3.2)



Participants were also asked if bullying or discrimination had impacted upon their studies after leaving school in any other ways: 12 respondents provided further examples (see below).

### Other bullying or discrimination impacts on studies after leaving school (Figure 3.3.3)

Impact	Replies	Example responses
Isolation	7	<p>"In social clubs or societies I was isolated and ridiculed for being gay"</p> <p>"Similar to school, isolation, whispering, being left out"</p> <p>"I got kicked out of my amateur dramatics society when I started transitioning. I lost about 30 friends in one fell swoop"</p>
LGBT involvement related	3	<p>"I generally saw and heard derogatory remarks and situations that others were in. This motivated me to restart the LGBT society in my university and try my best to show that different sexualities and gender norms were OK"</p> <p>"I was aware that I was seen as an LGBT advocate and that concerned me at times"</p>
Confidence	1	<p>"I have little or no confidence in myself despite my academic achievements. I believe this is a consequence of learned emotional behaviour from past experiences"</p>

In addition, another comment highlighted that their experiences were not (only) related to their identity, and that their impact on attainment were temporary:

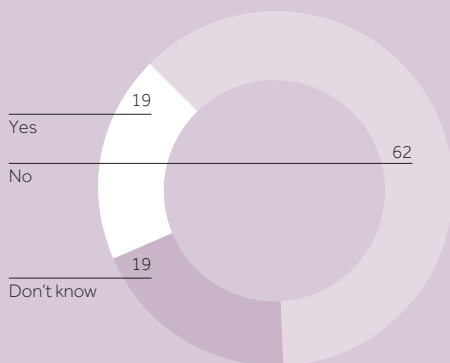
*"My marks improved after changing gender... I was not part of the clique in my studies, which was a de-motivation, but not linked to my gender issues".*

## Seeking employment

This section deals with experiences of trying to gain employment as an LGBTQ person.

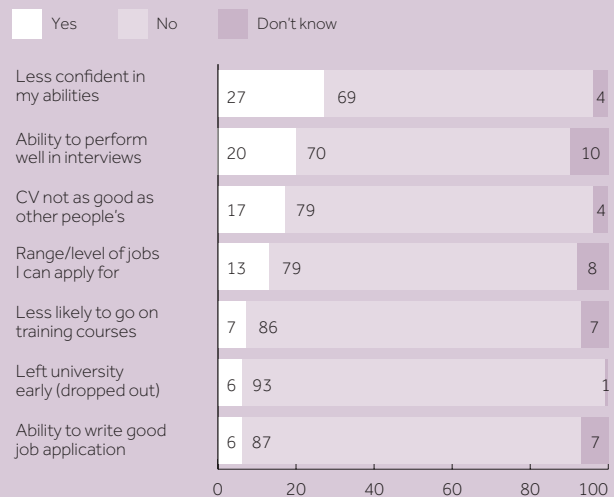
Respondents were asked if they thought their ability to gain employment had been affected by any prior experiences of bullying or discrimination connected to their sexual orientation and/or gender identity. The majority thought that it had not (62%), but 19% felt that it had.

### Impact of bullying or discrimination on ability to gain employment (Figure 3.4.1)



Respondents were then asked if they thought bullying or discrimination had had an impact in a number of specific ways. For the most part it had not, but 6% had 'dropped out' of university as a result, 6% thought their ability to write good job applications had been affected, and 7% felt they were less likely to go on training courses because of their experiences. Larger proportions, though still in the minority, thought that their experiences had influenced their confidence in their abilities (27%) and their ability to perform well at job interviews (20%). 17% felt that their CV was not as good as other people's, and 13% said that having fewer or lower qualifications had affected the range or level of jobs they could apply for.

### Impacts of bullying or discrimination on employment opportunities (Figure 3.4.2)



Participants were also asked if bullying or discrimination had impacted upon their employment opportunities in any other ways: 27 respondents provided further examples, which have been grouped and categorised below.

**Other bullying or discrimination impacts on employment opportunities** (Figure 3.4.3)

Impact	Replies	Example responses
None	10	
Confidence impacting upon interview and/or job performance	5	<p><i>"Bullying and discrimination in the past may be responsible for some of my confidence issues, which in turn affect my interview skills"</i></p> <p><i>"I tend to be quieter than the other employees at work, and don't always allow for my employer to see my full potential"</i></p>
Pressure to remain closeted	3	<p><i>"I've learned to just act straight, whenever that's required of me... including getting a job. In that sense discrimination has impacted upon my ability to be myself"</i></p>
Activism related	2	<p><i>"I am active in LGBT rights advocacy groups. However, I hesitate to put this down on my CV because I think employers would infer that I am LGBT and then discriminate against me"</i></p> <p><i>"As my CV involves many aspects of LGBT policy development I do feel that employers look at this and think about whether they should hire a person who was so involved in the LGBT community... that isn't necessarily as a result of bullying in college but rather pre-existing prejudice on the part of the employer"</i></p>
Choice narrowed	2	<p><i>"I try to avoid places I 'suspect' that I can be treated worse because of my sexual orientation - so in this case I have less places to apply to"</i></p>
Social impact	1	<p><i>"It affects the way I socialise within my employment"</i></p>
CV related	1	<p><i>"Never played on a team because of the bravado that existed within sports in school, and the targeting of perceived gay people within that. This is a drawback on my CV"</i></p>
Motivation	1	<p><i>"It has motivated me to perform better"</i></p>
Positive experience	1	<p><i>"My employers have been extremely supportive and my HR manager made extra efforts to receive training to help benefit his knowledge of issues relating to members of the LGBT community"</i></p>
Unspecified	1	<p><i>"It had terrible effect on my life"</i></p>

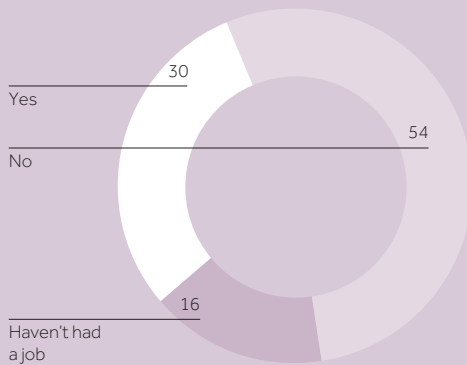
The above comments demonstrate that there are still fears about the potential 'stigma' attached to identifying, or being identified, as LGBTQ, hence even advocates or campaigners in this area had some concerns about their CV publically demonstrating their work. Similarly, others described more generally the constant negotiation and/or denial of their identity in different situations.

## Experiences of employment since leaving school

This section now turns to experiences whilst in employment.

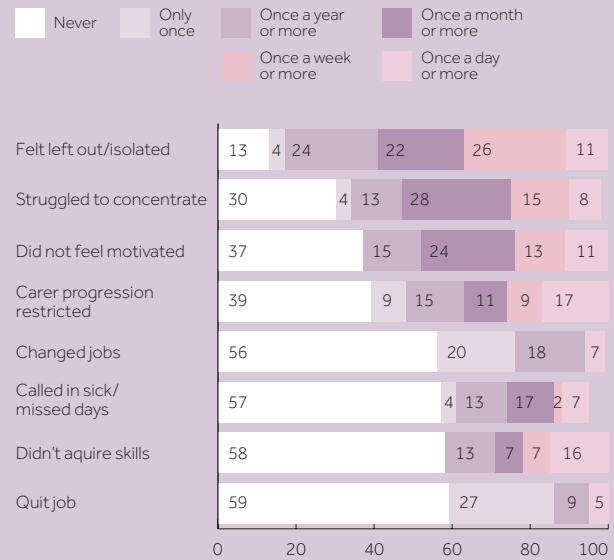
Participants were asked if their time at work had been affected by any bullying or discrimination (or fear of) connected to their sexual orientation and/or gender identity. For just over half it had not (54%), but for nearly a third (30%) it had.

### The existence or fear of bullying or discrimination whilst in employment (Figure 3.5.1)



Those who had experienced a job were asked about the impact of bullying or discrimination in their work. The clear majority had felt left out or isolated more than once (83%), with a further 4% feeling this way just once. However, 57% had never called in sick or missed days at work as result, though 43% had done so at some point. 70% struggled to concentrate at work at times, and 63% did not always feel motivated to work. 42% did not feel that they had acquired skills at work as well as they should have done, and similar proportions had changed jobs (44%) or quit their job as a result (41%). Overall, 61% felt that their experiences of bullying or discrimination meant that their career progression was restricted.

### The impacts of bullying or discrimination whilst in employment (Figure 3.5.2)



Participants were also asked if bullying or discrimination had impacted upon their experiences of work in any other ways: 14 respondents provided further examples, which have been grouped and categorised below.

### Other bullying or discrimination impacts on employment experiences (Figure 3.5.3)

Impact	Replies	Example responses
Isolated or stereotyped	6	<i>"It makes me less confident to be open about myself as a person to my colleagues... and therefore I lack a sense of connection to my colleagues"</i> <i>"Being isolated at work left me very vulnerable to homophobic bullying and as a result of these experiences I no longer wanted to succeed there"</i> <i>"Always being introduced as the gay one"</i>
Remaining closeted	3	<i>"I'm totally closeted at work because I'm so afraid of my colleagues' reactions if I came out"</i>
Harassment/ bullying from manager(s) or colleague(s)	2	<i>"I have been directly bullied by managers and occasionally colleagues for being involved in LGBT advocacy"</i>
Left job	1	<i>"I have quit one job because I felt that I didn't belong in that environment and that I would have to hide too much"</i>
Silenced	1	<i>"Asked by a school principal to hide my sexuality as might make her and other teachers uncomfortable"</i>
Fear	1	<i>"It was more the fear of discrimination"</i>

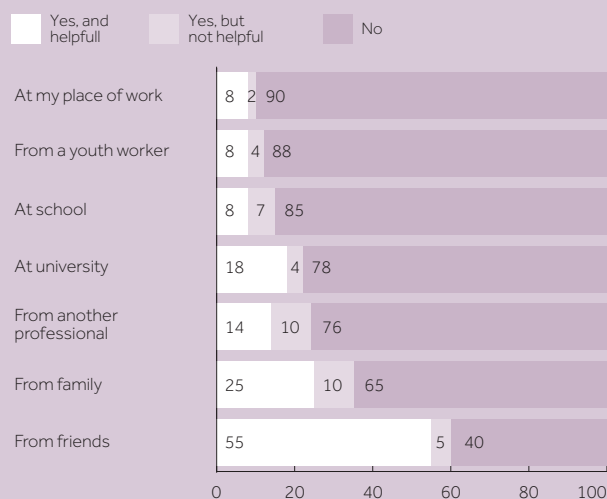
The above extracts emphasise that fear of prejudice can be as significant and influential as actual experiences for some people, for instance explaining why they remain closeted, which mirrors research in the field of LGBT health inequalities where fear of poor responses from professionals often reduces service access (Formby, 2011b).

### Guidance and support

This final section of the report relates to the guidance, advice and support (some) participants had received, or would like to receive in the future.

In the final section of the survey, respondents were asked if they had ever received any advice or support as an LGBTQ person connected to their education or employment opportunities. The majority had not, with the exception of those who had from friends, from whom 55% had received helpful advice. Places of work were the least likely to offer advice or support (90% had not), followed by youth workers (88%) and schools (85%). 22% had received advice or support at university, the majority of it helpful. 35% had also received advice or support from family members, though 10% did not find this helpful. 24% had also received advice or support from another professional, but again 10% had not found this helpful.

### Sources of advice or support (Figure 3.6.1)



Other advice or support received (32 responses) also included the below:

### Other advice or support received (Figure 3.6.2)

Comments	Replies	Example responses
LGBTQ related	6	<i>"College LGBTA society is a great support network"</i>
Mental health related	5	<i>"Psychotherapy and medication"</i> <i>"Psychological support at school two years in a row"</i> <i>"I have gone to counselling for over a year"</i>
None	5	
Unspecified	5	
From family and friends	4	<i>"A lot of personal support from friends and family"</i>
Online	4	
Acceptance	1	<i>"The fact that most people don't care and are very accepting in my profession"</i>
From trade union	1	
From partner	1	

The data above indicates the importance of LGBTQ-specific services, supportive family and friends, and online sources of information. At the same time it also suggests a continuing trend for the potential medicalisation of LGBTQ experiences through the provision of individual (mental health) support. Whilst these services may be helpful to the individuals concerned (though they are not always, as evidenced below), they do risk failing to address the broader social issues relating to homophobia and transphobia, and can therefore be interpreted as forms of 'victim blaming' (Formby, 2013a).

Helpful support was described in the following ways (45 responses):

### Forms of helpful support received (Figure 3.6.3)

Comments	Replies	Example responses
Ability to share issues and feelings	11	<i>"I just sometimes need to tell my friend, who also is gay, how I am angry on all homophobia of the world"</i> <i>"Great to talk to other people in the same situation, and share ideas and experiences as future school teachers"</i>
Confidence related	11	<i>"I discovered there were a lot of other gay people like me, and I started to feel more confident with myself"</i> <i>"A lot of it was people telling me to just accept who I am. With the knowledge that people close to me felt no different about me, I began to build my confidence again after it was shocked a bit by my coming out"</i>
Work related	10	<i>"My friends were always giving me good advice on what to say or what not to say at interviews or work"</i> <i>"Suggestions and advice from gay friends about how to conduct myself and communicate with employers and interviewers"</i> <i>"LGBTQ members who were more advanced in their careers made themselves known to me and advised me on experiences they've had and how best to deal with them if I encounter the same"</i>
Emotional support	5	<i>"I always knew I was loved and I always knew people would be there for me"</i> <i>"Family and friends supporting me by telling me they love me and accept me for the person I am"</i> <i>"It made me feel like I was loved, supported and appreciated"</i>
None	4	
Hope	1	
Security	1	<i>"It helped me creating a 'security network' that made me feel more comfortable and motivated at university and at work"</i>
Understanding	1	
Unspecified	1	



When the support received had not been helpful, participants were asked to describe what they thought would be helpful (29 responses). Comments have been grouped and categorised below.

#### Forms of helpful support desired (Figure 3.6.4)

Comments	Replies	Example responses
None/not applicable	11	
Work related	5	<p>"Professionals who know LGBTQ friendly companies and universities"</p> <p>"Lists of employers, advice on how to deal with people asking you about your identity"</p> <p>"Being informed what employers value diversity in the workplace"</p>
Unspecified	3	
Family support	2	"Support from the family is the big missing thing. That would have been really important for me but never came"
Professionals working with young people	2	"Support from teachers or professionals in high school would mean a lot for every young LGBT person"
Awareness raising	1	"I demand getting people educated about tolerance and making them realise that people in the workplace ARE NOT only heterosexual or cisgender"
Legislation	1	"What is needed is clear legislation to make sexuality irrelevant i.e. all people are equal"
Understanding	1	

In addition to the above, a number of respondents took the opportunity to criticise their experiences of counselling/psychological support:

*"The first psychological support I received was not helpful... discussing the 'phenomenon of homosexuality'... and if it was right or wrong"*

*"University counsellors just seemed to be trained to nod unhelpfully. No specialist training in gender or sexuality. It was a ridiculous waste of time"*

*"Counsellors discriminate based on sexuality".*

This issue has also been documented previously in the UK and USA (Bidell, 2012; Formby, 2013b).

Participants were asked for suggestions for future advice or support for LGBTQ people (40 responses). The answers have been grouped and categorised below.

#### Suggestions for future advice or support (Figure 3.6.5)

Comments	Replies	Example responses
Inclusive education and school - or university-based support services	15	<p>"I would like to see more education in post-primary schools about being LGBTQ... I just want kids to have an awareness that they're not alone"</p> <p>"Education, advice and support of LGBTQ people should begin in school (secondary)"</p> <p>"Educational systems must be more open and inclusive"</p>
Work related	8	<p>"Having a supportive employer, who accepts my trans*ness and all the name pronoun stuff that comes with it"</p> <p>"I would like to have a clear anti discrimination statement from companies I apply to, before I apply there or when we meet the first time"</p> <p>"How to deal with bullying/ harassment in the workplace"</p>
Peer support	5	<p>"It would be great if there was more groups for younger LGBTQ people"</p> <p>"To have been talked to at a younger age by people who had come out and what they faced"</p> <p>"I'd like to feel more supported by the community, be able to chat with more people in my situation"</p>
Online	3	<p>"I think there should be more information on the internet clearly setting out what is discrimination and how to identify it and make complaints"</p> <p>"Information on internet should be made available and clear, as it is the first place where a youngster may try to find it"</p>
Greater awareness	2	"There really isn't enough information in Ireland certainly about the concept of double discrimination - I'm a person with a disability (I have Multiple Sclerosis) and that presents challenges and when coupled with being LGBT it creates extra barriers as many services for LGBT persons are not fully accessible or relevant to persons with disabilities"

Continued over

Continued from previous

Comments	Replies	Example responses
None	2	
LGBTQ-inclusive sex education	2	<p>"I 100% think sex education for LGBTQ teens should be happening in schools. I don't understand why it doesn't"</p> <p>"I feel that LGBT issues should have been discussed in certain classes (sex education) instead of shied away from"</p>
Legal protection	1	
Safe spaces	1	"More safe spaces, in work and socially, where you can just go and be without worrying"
Unspecified	1	

Much of the comments above support previous evidence about the self-identified needs or desires of LGBT people, for instance on:

- school-based support (see e.g. Denyer et al, 2009; Formby and Willis, 2011);
- appropriate sex education (see e.g. Formby, 2011a; Hillier and Mitchell, 2008);
- safe spaces (see e.g. Formby, 2012; Valentine, 1993, 1995),
- and community-level support (see e.g. Formby, 2012; Hines, 2007; Weeks et al, 2001).

There is also corroborating evidence available about the experiences of disabled LGBTQ people (Casey, 2007; Formby, 2012).

A final question allowed people to expand on any previous areas of the survey or their experiences: 24 participants took the opportunity to do so. For the most part these contributions echoed themes raised throughout the rest of the survey. Responses are grouped and categorised below.

## Further comments

Comments	Replies	Example responses
Education related	7	<p>"If it's OK in society for teachers to be openly gay then it would be easier for students to feel that they can be who they are without prejudice"</p> <p>"Increased education is needed for primary and secondary school children to reduce the stigma associated with LGBTQ individuals"</p> <p>"I think there is a serious lack of services available for LGBT youths in secondary schools in Ireland"</p>
Work related	3	<p>"I think that all employment opportunities in Ireland should come with equal access and equal employment opportunity codes and should be obliged by law to adhere to this practice"</p> <p>"LGBT staff networks can help people in the employee sector and need to be encouraged"</p>
Closet related	2	"For many reasons I don't feel comfortable being 'out' in public. In terms of employment and college I think being 'out' would negatively affect how I am treated, and I do not reveal my sexuality to protect myself from further discrimination"
Positive experiences; more fortunate	3	<p>"At work, I was surprised how accepting my employers and co-workers were and still are of my sexuality"</p> <p>"I've been lucky to be out at work for about 13 years and have never experienced any homophobic bullying nor negative feedback nor gossip related to my sexual orientation"</p> <p>"I was rarely bullied. I was more fortunate than some"</p>
Signposting to resources	2	
Campaigns	1	"A campaign against homophobia/discrimination in the workplace/school is badly needed"
Fear	1	"The fear is always there. I came out myself in another work place and I got a few negative comments. You just never know and that's the scary part"

Comments	Replies	Example responses
Biphobia	1	<i>"I have felt that the place I am most discriminated against for my sexuality is within the gay community... I am constantly told that I am not bi[sexual] but simply seeking attention"</i>
Migration related	1	<i>"I have moved to the UK from Italy... my sexual orientation and the way I experienced it during my teen and post-adolescent years definitely had an impact [on my decision]"</i>
Universities	1	<i>"Schools are rapidly improving, universities however still contain large numbers of people who are out to harm LGBTQ people"</i>
Personal experiences	1	
Victimisation	1	

The above comments support evidence elsewhere that biphobia and other forms of discrimination also exist within LGBTQ communities (Barker et al, 2012; Formby, 2012; Willis, 2012), but also offer a reminder that not all experiences of being young and identifying as LGBTQ are negative.

## Conclusions and recommendations

**This research is important in highlighting the potential impact of young LGBTQ people's experiences, or fear, of bullying and/or discrimination on education and employment opportunities specifically. The report has therefore drawn out details rarely focussed on elsewhere, where the impact is often discussed in terms of the impact on mental health and/or emotional wellbeing.**

It should be made clear that not all experiences of bullying or harassment were from peers, as is sometimes assumed, but also involved teachers and/or family members (see also Formby, 2013a; FRA, 2013). Broader societal discrimination and/or pressures were also experienced negatively by participants; these issues are often not understood or acknowledged within discussions limited to 'bullying'.

Despite the modest response numbers, the research has demonstrated the prevalence of issues about (loss of) confidence, isolation, attendance and/or participation, and motivation and/or concentration, resulting in potential academic attainment and/or achievement disadvantage. Though negative experiences of schooling were more widespread, there were differences of opinion about the potential for bullying or discrimination at further or higher education levels. On the whole, it was clear that identifying as LGBTQ could impact upon a person's plans or aspirations for the future, regarding choice of studies and/or career, as well as migration concerns. Migration issues were apparent in people's desires to avoid certain areas for education and/or employment, and in people's desire to move to locations with more progressive legislative frameworks in which to live their lives.

Ongoing issues about fear, apprehension and/or a belief in the need to stay 'closeted' were also apparent, including pervasive fears about securing and retaining employment as an 'out' LGBTQ person; fear of prejudice can be as significant and influential as actual experiences of discrimination, for some people. Participants also identified broader disquiet about LGBTQ invisibility within education, and for example about appropriate and inclusive sex education. LGBTQ identities are still experienced as, or assumed to be, stigmatised by advocates and campaigners in the field who are wary of acknowledging their (often voluntary) work on CVs and/or in job interviews.

This research has shown the strong links between emotional wellbeing and mental health issues, and education or employment related impacts, for example relating to (lack of) confidence and/or isolation.

Whilst not focussing on mental health or emotional wellbeing, the survey still identified evidence of suicidal behaviours, echoing research reported elsewhere. Much of this data supports evidence available elsewhere, but what is perhaps striking is the implicit subtext that those who identify as LGBTQ need, or are 'lucky', to be 'accepted'. This could imply that LGBTQ identities are somehow lesser than other identities, which many LGBTQ activists would challenge. The implication is therefore suggestive of a fundamental insecurity among some LGBTQ young people within Europe about their identities. Needless to say this might be something that IGLYO will want to consider in their future work.

There are a number of potential recommendations emanating from this study. Overall, the research suggests the need for individual support, but also wider inclusive education practices (see IGLYO, 2007). Within this, there needs to be caution to not assume or suggest that all LGBTQ young people will have negative experiences of education or employment, and to not portray LGBTQ people as 'victims' (see Formby, 2013a). A 'one size fits all' approach from professionals working with (LGBTQ) young people may not be helpful.

More specific suggestions for LGBTQ organisations and individuals working with young people to consider in future service planning include:

- the provision of work related support, such as advice about LGBTQ friendly organisations and/or policies, as well as ways to have confidence in 'negotiating' or 'managing' LGBTQ identities in professional contexts
- ways to support or provide school- and university-based LGBTQ support services; these need not be individually focussed but could also entail group orientated activities and support
- thinking about ways to facilitate mutual or peer support among LGBTQ young people, as the ability to share issues and feelings was highlighted as beneficial within the research, with the need for (improved) confidence and emotional support specifically identified (for example in the form of empathy and understanding)
- the provision of accessible online information for LGBTQ young people about a range of education, social, and employment related issues
- ways to inform and improve general awareness about LGBTQ lives and identities
- methods of supporting LGBTQ young people with their family relationships, as appropriate, when these may have been affected by disclosure of an LGBTQ identity
- ways to support schools and other education providers to offer (non-stigmatising) sex education appropriate for LGBTQ young people
- promoting the need for LGBTQ awareness and inclusive practice among all professionals working with young people.



Further, more wide-scale, research could also explore the issues raised here in greater depth, and attempt to generate a more diverse sample (e.g. regarding education level, gender identity, geographical location, and sexual identity).

Research tools available in a wider variety of languages could facilitate more extensive recruitment. Future work could also consider focusing the research away from the language of 'bullying'; given that some participants were keen to stress their experiences were of broader discrimination or prejudice, use of the word bullying may have deterred some potential participants in this study.

Additional useful information and guidance is available in the below (though there are also many others sources):

- Formby and Willis, 2011: this report, though UK focussed, provides an extensive list of resources and available evidence on addressing homophobic and transphobic bullying in schools and youth work settings (see [www.shu.ac.uk/\\_assets/pdf/ceir-homophobia-full-report-Formby2011.pdf](http://www.shu.ac.uk/_assets/pdf/ceir-homophobia-full-report-Formby2011.pdf))
- IGLYO, 2007: these LGBTQ-inclusive education guidelines provide a thorough review of what can be done to tackle discrimination in schools, and are available in a number of European languages (see [www.iglyo.com/resources](http://www.iglyo.com/resources))
- IGLYO, 2013: this publication provides a range of articles on the topic of bullying (see [www.iglyo.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/04/IGLYO-on-Bullying.pdf](http://www.iglyo.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/04/IGLYO-on-Bullying.pdf))
- Shannon, 2013: this report could be used as a policy lever to evidence homophobic and transphobic bullying as a child protection issue (see [www.dcy.gov.ie/documents/Publications/SixthRapporrteurReport.pdf?utm\\_source=Newsletter+List&utm\\_campaign=264072396b-specialrappprt\\_07\\_10\\_2013&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_term=0\\_096b9fe041-264072396b-244028621](http://www.dcy.gov.ie/documents/Publications/SixthRapporrteurReport.pdf?utm_source=Newsletter+List&utm_campaign=264072396b-specialrappprt_07_10_2013&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_096b9fe041-264072396b-244028621))
- UNESCO, 2012: this report provides an international review of homophobic bullying in educational institutions (see <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0021/002157/215708e.pdf>).



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## About the author

**Eleanor Formby is a Senior Research Fellow at Sheffield Hallam University, UK.**

**Her research interests centre on lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans (LGBT) wellbeing and health inequalities, and on young people's learning about sex and sexualities.**

She has published a range of journal articles and research reports in these fields. Prior to conducting this work for IGLYO, she led an Arts and Humanities Research Council project on understandings and experiences of LGBT 'communities' in the UK.

She has also undertaken research on responses to homophobic and transphobic bullying in schools and youth work settings, and is currently conducting work regionally with trans young people.

[www.shu.ac.uk/ceir/sp-eleanor-formby](http://www.shu.ac.uk/ceir/sp-eleanor-formby)





## About IGLYO

**IGLYO is the International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer Youth and Student Organisation.**

**IGLYO is a network gathering LGBTQ youth and student organisations in Europe and beyond.**

### **Vision**

IGLYO's vision is a world where we, young people in all our diversity, are able to express and define our own sexual orientations, gender identities and gender expressions without discrimination, violence or hatred. We work for a world where we can participate without limitation in our lives and communities, so we can rise to our full potential, enjoying respect, celebration and positive recognition.

### **Mission**

Run by young people, for young people, IGLYO is an international membership-based umbrella organisation that aims to empower and enable its Members to ensure representation of LGBTQ youth and student issues. IGLYO's approach promotes cooperation and joint strategies, and often advocates on behalf of Members to international bodies, institutions and other organisations.

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