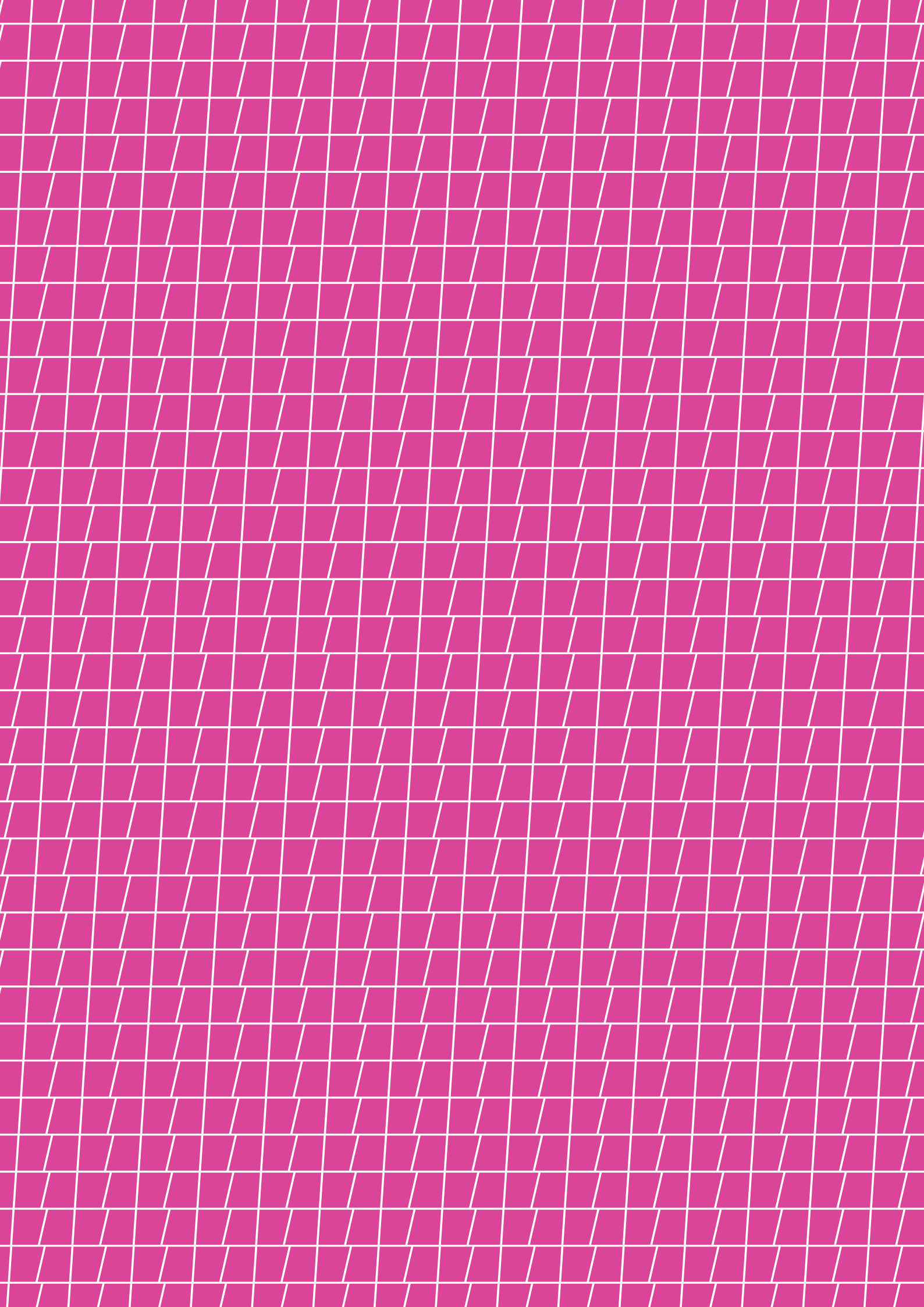


Pride and Prejudice in Education

An exploration of experiences and perceptions of
sexual orientation and gender identity among
post school education learners and staff





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The Forum thanks the following team members who worked on completing this project:

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Catina Barrett, Head of Inclusion, Learning and Work Institute

Clare Pavitt, Senior Policy Adviser, ECU

Sally Thomas, Policy Officer (Liberation), NUS

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* The report may sometimes refer to NIACE as NIACE was the organisation originally involved in this research project. In January 2016 NIACE merged with the Centre for Economic and Social Inclusion to become the Learning and Work Institute

Forewords

This research presents a significant step in NUS' understanding of LGBT+ student experiences within further education. We are particularly encouraged to see that many LGBT+ students are involved in student activism and course representation, and that many feel comfortable being open about their sexual orientation or gender identity to friends in their learning environment. However, we remain concerned that LGBT+ bullying and harassment appears widespread, risking some LGBT+ learners dropping out. An important next step for the NUS LGBT+ campaign will be to work with further education unions to tackle LGBT+ discrimination, including supporting students' unions to implement the recommendations in this report to ensure we are creating a learning environment that is inclusive and welcoming for all LGBT+ students.

Fran Cowling, LGBT+ Officer (Women's Place), NUS
Robbiie Young, LGBT+ Officer (Open Place), NUS

ECU welcomes this research which, together with the 2014 NUS research into lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans (LGBT) students' experience in higher education, provides an up-to-date insight into the perceptions and experiences of staff and learners around sexual orientation and gender identity in higher and further education. While it is encouraging to see that staff and learners have a positive view of the steps learning providers have taken to create inclusive environments, there remains work to be done. Education institutions need to tackle harassment, bullying and inappropriate behaviour and address the concerns that LGBT+ staff and learners have about being visible and valued in their places of work and learning. We hope that the recommendations in this report will prove useful to learning providers in planning future work on sexual orientation and gender identity equality.

Clare Pavitt, Senior Policy Adviser, ECU

It is with the greatest of pleasure that I can recommend this excellent report to you for further reading and interrogation. The report is well written and most informative, and on the whole I am optimistic about its findings. In the report you can perceive a general societal shift towards a more accepting and liberal society,

especially among the young and our students. There is still work to be undertaken in training our college and university staff in successfully dealing with trans-/homo-/bi-phobia and making our places of education and work somewhere that everyone can be free to express themselves and live in whatever role they self-describe. I am particularly heartened by the growing number of young people who can be open about their identity to their peers; this will pave the way for more inclusive future workplaces and a better society.

Steve Boyce, Chair, UCU LGBT Members Standing Committee

Learning and Work Institute is pleased to contribute to this work, which builds on previous research and the many recent examples of LGBTQ+ development work carried out by FACES (Further, Adult, Community, Education, Skills) providers, such as the last four years of SFA-funded equality and diversity projects. Unfortunately, despite previous research evidence and some positive progress, we are failing as a sector to keep up with the pace of social change and new understandings of equalities, social mobility and workforce wellbeing. The findings of this study suggest that every day somewhere in the sector we are failing LGBTQ+ learners and staff. Failing to enable learners and staff of all sexual orientations and gender identities to be present as themselves in our places of learning and work. Failing to enable them to perform at their best and fulfil their potential. Individually and collectively we need to recognise our responsibilities and take action to end LGBTQ+ bullying and discrimination in our organisations. The findings of this report make it clear that staff and learners need help to do so. Above all, this is the responsibility of leadership and governance. Leaders and governors have to ensure they deliver a modern, forward-thinking approach for LGBTQ+ people and across equalities and social mobility. Our sector membership and other national bodies must similarly provide the necessary data and support so that our leadership and governance does not lag behind best practice but drives it forward.

Catina Barrett, Head of Inclusion, Learning and Work Institute

Preface

The Forum for Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Equality in Post-School Education (the Forum) is a community of practice consisting of national level strategic and member organisations (more details on our website www.sgforum.org.uk). Members have met since 2007 to discuss, share ideas and work together on initiatives to further sexual orientation and gender identity equality in the further and higher education sectors. We are concerned with all staff and learners in the sector, including organisational environment, leadership, teaching and learning, and employment practices.

The Forum first came together when UCU invited several sector partner organisations to discuss how to respond to the 2006 national research into the experiences of LGB staff and learners in further education.ⁱ At that time, the report was ground-breaking. Together, Forum members have since developed a significant body of work across post-school education referenced in this report, including the ECU's Advancing LGB Equality report (2010) and the SFA's 2011 research into sexual orientation and gender identity equality in adult learning.

The survey tool used for this report emerged from a group of practitioners in the Midlands, facilitated by UCU, which met several times to discuss how to capture perceptions of sexual orientation and gender identity across post-school education. By 2014 there was shared concern about the time that had elapsed since previous pieces of research in this area within the sector. NUS had embarked on a survey of higher education learners, which we felt would be complemented well by a survey that could engage with staff in both further education and higher education and learners in further education. Both the SFA and ECU were keen to build on the previous research they had conducted. NIACE offered to provide specialist research support.

The aim of this research is to explore how staff and learners perceive and experience sexual orientation and gender identity in post-school education today. In doing so, we also chart the distance travelled and add to our growing understanding of sexual orientation and gender identity in post-school education. We provide 12 key recommendations to help staff and learners of different sexual orientations and gender identities experience inclusion, respect and value.

Seth Atkin

Chair, the Forum for Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Equality in Post-School Education

Executive Summary

Executive Summary

This report presents the findings from research carried out by Forum for Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Equality in Post-School Education (the Forum) from December 2014 to January 2015. Learners in further educationⁱⁱ and staff in further and higher education in the UK were asked to complete an online survey exploring their perceptions and experiences of sexual orientation and gender identity in their place of learning or work.ⁱⁱⁱ Overall, 1,505 people involved in post-school education took part. The majority of respondents were learners (62 per cent, n = 930); 38 per cent (n = 575) were members of staff.

The aim of the research was to explore the experiences of learners and staff with different sexual orientations and gender identities. The research updates the body of knowledge on staff experience in further and higher education who have not been surveyed on this topic for five and seven years respectively. It also explores learners' experiences in a range of educational environments that have not been reached before by this kind of research, including adult and community learning students, work-based learners and those studying at specialist colleges. Similarly, the report includes views expressed by staff from a broad range of post school education providers, including adult and community learning providers, land-based colleges, sixth forms, independent training providers or the third sector. The report further captures the experiences of non-binary gendered staff in further and higher education, who had not previously been asked about their experiences at a national level.

The report focuses on the quantitative findings of the survey to get a broad picture of the experiences and perceptions of LGBTQ+ learners in further education and LGBTQ+ staff in further and higher education. Further work is needed to analyse the qualitative data captured and to fully break down the findings from the quantitative data (please see recommendations for further research).

Terminology/abbreviations used in this report

- **Binary gendered:** individuals who self-identify as either male or female, including trans men and women
- **Cis-gendered:** individuals who identify with the gender they were assigned at birth
- **Heterosexual:** individuals who identify as heterosexual or straight
- **Learner/student:** both terms are used interchangeably in this report, but 'learner' is generally used to describe people in further education and 'student' to describe those in higher education
- **LGB:** lesbian, gay and/or bisexual
- **LGBT:** lesbian, gay, bisexual and/or trans – used when referring to previous studies where the focus has been people who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual and/or trans; also used as an umbrella term for organised groups
- **LGB+:** individuals who define their sexuality as lesbian, gay, bisexual, undecided or 'other'
- **LGBTQ+:** an umbrella term to include all those who identify as non-heterosexual and/or non-binary gendered; this reflects the survey questions and acronyms in use at the time of this survey
- **Non-binary gendered:** individuals who define their gender identity as not male or female, including those who describe themselves as 'genderqueer', 'X' or 'other.'
- **Out/coming out/being out:** having disclosed, disclosing or being open about one's gender identity and/or sexual orientation
- **OSO:** other sexual orientation – in our statistical analysis, this category combines 'undecided' and 'other' respondents
- **Trans:** individuals who describe their identify differently to that assigned at birth
- **X:** survey respondents who identified as 'X' did so based on the following definition: 'We use "X" as an option to describe gender identity to enable anyone who wishes to do so to choose a gender identity that is different to the traditional female and male. We recognise that this option is usually used by intersex and some trans-identifying people who regard their identity as a third sex'.

Language, definitions and concepts

Researching people of different sexual orientations and gender identities in education has been a relatively recent enterprise: throughout, the language and categories used to describe and attract research participants has evolved. This evolution reflects the ongoing development of a more nuanced understanding of how people define their sexual orientation and gender identities.

While the terms 'lesbian', 'gay' and 'bisexual' have remained relatively stable and in common use, researchers began to use other categories in recent studies. These include 'undecided' and 'other', and it is now standard practice to provide research participants with the option to describe their sexual orientation in their own words.

In the past 15 years, awareness about the diversity of gender identity has gone beyond the binary of 'male' and 'female', and the terminology used to describe gender-variant people has seen considerable change and development. While this is celebrated, it can make comparisons between surveys difficult. UK law only protects a very narrow group of people from discrimination and harassment on the basis of their gender identity: those undergoing or who have undergone gender reassignment. In contrast, research studies have increasingly sought to capture the experiences of a range of trans people, rather than just those protected by the law. As a result, different surveys reflect the experiences of slightly different groups. These considerations must be taken into account when making any comparisons between, and/or drawing conclusions across, research studies.

Key findings: Learners

- The majority of LGB+ students reported being out to friends, but one in 10 was still not out to anybody in their life. One in four reported being out to tutors, trainers, teachers or assessors.
- The reported existence and visibility of LGBT groups in educational institutions is fairly low; fewer than one

in four learners were aware of an officially recognised group in their place of learning.

- Almost half (47 per cent) of learners who describe their gender as neither male nor female (non-binary) have seriously considered dropping out of their learning, compared with 35 per cent of respondents on average.
- One in four trans learners reported that they had been well supported by their place of learning.
- Lesbian/gay and bisexual learner respondents were more likely than average to be involved in activism and course representation; non-binary learners participating in this study were also more likely than average to be course representatives.
- Negative behaviour towards learners based on their sexual orientation or gender identity appears to be commonplace: 60 per cent of respondents had witnessed a learner acting negatively towards people because of their sexual orientation at least once; one in 10 respondents saw or heard this behaviour every day; and more than half of lesbian/gay (51 per cent) and non-binary students (59 per cent) had experienced homophobic or transphobic name-calling.
- Non-binary learners were more likely than any other group to have experienced name-calling, harassment, threats or intimidation, physical assault or any other kind of bullying.
- Gay/lesbian (13 per cent) and non-binary (16 per cent) learner respondents were more than twice as likely than average (6 per cent) to say that they had considered leaving their education because of the way they were treated, eg they felt they had been bullied, harassed or discriminated against.
- Findings suggest that the learning environment for LGBTQ+ learners in further education may be more hostile – in terms of transphobic, biphobic and homophobic name-calling, harassment, threats and assault – than in higher education, although across both environments LGBTQ+ students in general felt less safe than other students.

- Heterosexual respondents were less likely to have witnessed or experienced negative behaviour based on sexual orientation or gender identity than other groups.
- In the majority of cases where a further education provider has collected personal information for equality monitoring purposes, learners were not asked to declare their sexual orientation or gender identity.
- Heterosexual students felt more confident than other respondents about declaring their sexual orientation for equality monitoring processes, particularly compared with bisexual students. LGB+ learners were almost 10 times more likely (37 per cent) to say that something would stop them declaring their sexual orientation than heterosexual respondents (4 per cent). Non-binary learners felt less confident about doing this than those who described themselves as male or female.
- Most staff respondents were aware of workplace policies to protect people from discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation (80 per cent) and/or gender identity (74 per cent), but just over half agreed that these policies were well-publicised, with LGB+ respondents significantly less likely to agree.
- Less than half of staff respondents (42 per cent) agreed that workplace policies to protect people from discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation and/or gender identity were effective in preventing discrimination.
- More than half of staff respondents had witnessed learners acting negatively towards people because of their sexual orientation (55 per cent). LGB+ staff respondents were significantly more likely to have witnessed negative behaviour motivated by sexual orientation or trans identity than heterosexual respondents.

Key findings: Staff

- The majority of staff (78 per cent) said they believe their organisation tries to create an environment where all staff feel equally valued, works to eliminate discrimination against staff and learners on the grounds of sexual orientation (82 per cent) and gender identity (79 per cent), and encourages good relations between different groups. Heterosexual staff had a more positive view of their organisations in all these areas compared with LGB+ respondents.
- Just over half of the sample (52 per cent) said that no sexual orientation or gender identity equality training was provided for staff or learners where they worked.
- More respondents reported that they felt confident in challenging homophobia at work (87 per cent), compared with transphobia (79 per cent) and biphobia (78 per cent).
- Overall, 17 per cent of respondents reported having experienced biphobic, homophobic or transphobic name-calling at work. Thirteen per cent had been harassed, one in 10 had experienced being threatened or intimidated and 3 per cent had been physically assaulted. Eleven per cent reported that they had experienced another kind of biphobic, homophobic or transphobic bullying at their place of work.
- In the case of transphobic behaviour between staff, non-binary respondents were more likely to have witnessed staff acting negatively than binary respondents (57 per cent compared with 26 per cent).
- Approximately half of those who had experienced harassment or threats/intimidation in their workplace had reported the incident (51 per cent and 52 per cent, respectively), whereas only 41 per cent reported name-calling. In these instances, staff were most likely to report incidents to a representative of the staff union.

- More than three-quarters (78 per cent) of respondents said they did know who to go to in their place of work if they experienced bullying; one in 10 said they did not know who to approach about this.
- In all situations where staff could be given the opportunity to declare their sexual orientation and/or gender identity, such as in staff surveys, more than one quarter of respondents reported that they had not been asked. More than half of all staff respondents said they would be willing to declare their gender identity or sexual orientation for the purposes of equality monitoring.

Key recommendations

The authors of this report strongly believe that all organisational and learning environments should be inclusive and foster equality and diversity. These recommendations aim to ensure that all learners and staff in post-school education can express their identities and be respected and valued in their studies or workplace, free from discrimination on the basis of their sexual orientation or gender identity.

The Forum's 12 steps document^{iv} provides complementary guidance on how to develop work on sexual orientation and gender identity equality.

Learners

Further education providers and students' unions should:

- Focus efforts on protecting and preventing learners from experiencing homophobic, biphobic and transphobic bullying, harassment and assaults by staff or other learners. Establish a clear first point of contact for learners to report incidents and have appropriate reporting and disciplinary mechanisms in place to address complaints.
- Increase understanding among staff that many LGBTQ+ learners are not out about their sexual orientation and/or gender identity. Education providers and students' unions should assume that LGBTQ+ learners exist in all learning environments, which need to be inclusive and welcoming for everyone.
- Ensure that derogatory language and discriminatory behaviour is challenged as a matter of course to foster a supportive and inclusive environment. For example, by widely publicising equality policy or developing a zero tolerance approach to LGBTQ+ bullying and harassment.
- Harness the suggested higher levels of LGBTQ+ participation in course representation and activism to promote information about LGBTQ+ students' experiences, to develop inclusive curriculum content and promote equality policies.
- Pay specific attention to the higher risk of non-binary learners dropping out of education, as suggested by this data. Further education providers should ensure that staff are appropriately trained to support non-binary learners and can signpost to support services including, where appropriate, third-party LGBTQ+ organisations. Particular attention should also be paid to developing more LGBTQ+ societies as an important means of support for LGBTQ+ learners. The research findings showed fewer than one in four learners reported that their place of learning had such a group.
- When information is collected on learners' sexual orientation and gender identity for equality monitoring purposes, ensure that efforts are made to encourage reporting by reassuring and explaining the reasons for such data collection and how the data will be stored. The language and terminology used to collect information should be up-to-date with best practice and ideally agreed with LGBTQ+ learners. Reporting on learners' sexual orientation and gender identity should remain completely voluntary.

Staff

Providers of further and higher education should:

- Focus on equipping staff with the understanding and skills to identify and challenge inappropriate behaviour and encourage good relations between people of different sexual orientations and gender identities.
 - Address harassment, bullying and unacceptable behaviour in the learning environment by building discussion of sexual orientation and gender identity into curriculum content and delivery.
 - Take steps to enable all staff to:
 - i. understand their rights and responsibilities in relation to sexual orientation and gender identity
 - ii. work in an environment that is free from discrimination, harassment and bullying
 - iii. deal with instances of unacceptable behaviour among learners and staff
 - iv. provide support for colleagues who are the targets of bullying and harassment.
 - Ensure that the voices of all staff – including those who do not define as heterosexual and/or male or female – are heard throughout the organisation. Having union representation on organisational equality committees will help achieve this, along with addressing sexual orientation and gender identity issues through equality for a and reaching out to all sexual orientation and gender identity groups in consultations and surveys.
 - Develop effective policies and procedures that address sexual orientation and gender identity equality and ensure that they are easy to find and well-publicised.
- Wherever equality monitoring is carried out:
 - i. include questions around sexual orientation and gender identity
 - ii. explain the purpose of the exercise
 - iii. pay attention to the needs and concerns of staff and learners who are LGBTQ+ (including asking appropriate questions about sexual orientation) and be sensitive to concerns about disclosure, noting that environments can be made welcoming and enabling.
 - iv. do not restrict staff and/or learners to male/female gender identities.
 - v. ensure confidentiality.

Introduction

Introduction

Introduction

A once sparse field has relatively quickly become populated with a number of pieces of evidence that have helped the post-school education sector to understand and respond to the concerns of LGBT staff and students. Some knowledge gaps still exist, while progress in other areas has been relatively rapid, meaning that older pieces of research have become outdated. This report, based on research conducted by the Forum for Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Equality in Post-School Education (the Forum), seeks to fill some of these gaps. The research outlined in this report:

- captures the experiences of non-binary gendered staff in further education, who to date have not been surveyed about their experiences at a national level
- provides an update on the body of knowledge on staff in further and higher education, who have not been surveyed for five and seven years, respectively
- allows for comparisons between heterosexual, LGB+, non-binary and binary-gendered respondents, where the majority of previous reports have only presented the experiences of LGBT learners and staff
- updates the evidence base on learners in further education, with data that can be more easily compared to findings from NUS' 2014 research about higher education students (though such comparisons require caution – for further details, see the note on limitations in Meeting the objectives of this research)
- is UK-wide, giving voice to further education learners in all four nations of the UK for the first time.

Method

A written survey was promoted to learners online through NUS' further education membership, Facebook, Twitter and via the NUS Extra database. The survey was also promoted to learners who were involved in equalities activities in post-school education providers. A British Sign Language (BSL) video was also produced to target deaf learners in specialist colleges. The survey was promoted to staff

through existing networks by email, mailings and newsletters.

We made efforts to ensure the survey was accessible to a range of learners, including those who use assisted technology such as screen readers and by producing a trailer in BSL to encourage deaf learners who use sign language to complete the survey.

Both learners and staff were asked about their experiences of negative behaviour, bullying and harassment, and equalities monitoring. Learners were also asked about coming out, activism and representation around sexual orientation and gender identity, and teaching and learning. Staff were also asked about organisational ethos, dealing with discrimination at work, and awareness and effectiveness of anti-discrimination policies.

Most survey questions were closed rather than open. There were some questions that allowed respondents to describe their experiences in more detail (such as, 'What resources would you like your college or learning provider to offer you?'). Only the quantitative data from survey responses has been analysed and used in this report.

Analysis was carried out using the statistical package SPSS. For the majority of the report, only statistically significant results are presented when making comparisons between groups' responses.^v Where patterns and trends in the data are presented that are not statistically significant, this is clearly stated. Where relevant, the learner survey results have also been compared with results from the NUS survey of higher education LGBT students published in 2014.^{vi} Percentages have been rounded up to the nearest whole number, so on occasion results presented may add up to slightly more or less than 100 per cent.

Profile of respondents

Overall, 1,505 people in post-school education took part in this survey. Some 62 per cent (n= 930) of respondents were learners and 38 per cent were members of staff (n = 575).

Respondents were asked a number of questions relating to their learning or employment status and personal demographic characteristics.

Almost three-quarters of respondents in the staff sample were based in higher education, and the majority of respondents were in full-time teaching roles. Respondents were mainly white, heterosexual and aged 30–59 (though no learner respondents were older than 54).

The majority of respondents in the learner sample were young, unmarried, female, heterosexual, white, studying in a general further education college and living in England. Most had no religion or belief and did not consider themselves to be deaf and/or disabled.

Of particular note is the staff profile: 29 per cent of respondents worked for a general further education college. Four per cent were employed in adult and community learning, with a further five per cent employed in land-based colleges, sixth forms, independent training providers or the third sector. This provides valuable insights as previous studies, and national annual sector workforce diversity reports, include very few findings about LGBTQ+ staff outside higher education and general further education colleges.

Profile of learners

Learning environment: the majority of respondents (59 per cent) were learners at general further education colleges, while just over one in 10 (11 per cent) were adult and community learning students. Five per cent were learners at specialist colleges, 4 per cent were enrolled in work-based learning, 4 per cent were apprentices and another 4 per cent were trainees. Twelve per cent of the learners' sample selected 'other' when asked about the status of their participation in further education and 8 per cent preferred not to answer this question.

Sexual orientation: more than half the participants (62 per cent) said they were straight or heterosexual. Fifteen per cent said they were bisexual, 11 per cent

identified as gay or lesbian and 7 per cent were undecided. Four per cent selected 'other' and 1 per cent preferred not to answer this question.

Gender identity: two-thirds of learners (67 per cent) were female (including male-to-female trans women) and 26 per cent were male (including female-to-male trans men). Six per cent said that their gender identity was different to the sex they were assumed to be at birth. Three per cent described themselves as 'genderqueer', 2 per cent described themselves as 'X' and 2 per cent preferred not to answer the question; 1 per cent selected 'other'. As this was the first time 'X' and 'other' were included in a survey at this level within post-school education, definitions of these options were provided to survey respondents.

Age: the majority of the sample was aged 14–19 (81 per cent), 9 per cent were aged 20–24, with the remaining 10 per cent aged 25–54. No respondents in this sample were over 54.

Nationality: the majority of learners reported that they were British (57 per cent). Twenty-five per cent defined as English, 10 per cent as Scottish and 3 per cent as Welsh.

Ethnicity: 86 per cent of respondents self-identified as White, 7 per cent as Asian/Asian British (Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Chinese and other Asian background), 4 per cent as mixed or multiple ethnic groups, and 2 per cent as Black/Black British (African, Caribbean). One per cent belonged to an ethnic group not listed, and another 1 per cent preferred not to answer the question.

Religion, belief or non-belief: respondents were able to select multiple responses to this question. The majority of responses were clustered in non-organised faiths or belief systems. Forty per cent of learner respondents reported having no religion and 30 per cent said they had no beliefs. Nineteen per cent also said they had a non-religious philosophy/belief-based lifestyle and 12 per cent defined as Atheist. Out of the faith groups, almost a quarter of learner respondents (24 per cent) said they were Christian, 3 per cent said they were Muslim and 1 per cent defined as Jewish,

Buddhist, Hindu or Sikh. Five per cent of learners chose not to declare their religion or belief.

Disability: 5 per cent of the learners sample considered themselves to be Deaf or disabled.

Pregnancy: 1 per cent of the sample reported that they were currently pregnant or had been pregnant in the last year.

Area of residence: most respondents were based in England (81 per cent), with 13 per cent in Scotland, 4 per cent in Wales and 1 per cent in Northern Ireland.

Profile of staff

Employer:^{vii} 575 staff responded to the survey. Seventy-two per cent worked for a higher education institution and 29 per cent worked for a general further education college. Four per cent were employed in adult and community learning, with a further 5 per cent employed in land-based colleges, sixth forms, independent training providers or the third sector.

Job role: 54 per cent of staff respondents were in educational roles: as teachers, tutors, trainers, lecturers or assessors. Support workers/staff and administrators each made up 12 per cent of respondents in this sample, and 11 per cent were managers or co-ordinators. Six per cent of the sample were heads of department and 1 per cent CEOs, directors, principals or heads of service. One per cent of the sample were trainee teachers and a further 1 per cent preferred not to declare this information. Eight per cent of staff respondents selected 'other' when asked about their role. Respondents were able to select more than one response.

Working pattern/arrangement: the majority of the respondents were full-time staff (80 per cent) and 19 per cent said they worked part-time. Over half of respondents (55 per cent) stated that they were on annual hour contracts while one in five had no flexible working arrangements. Nine per cent worked flexi-time and the same amount had term-time hours. Smaller numbers of respondents said they worked at

home, had flexible shifts, compressed hours, staggered hours, job shares or other working arrangements. This question was included to identify the reach of the survey but there was no aim to provide a comparative analysis of answers within the staff group based on working patterns.

Location of workplace: 68 per cent of the sample worked in organisations based in England, 21 per cent in Scotland, 7 per cent in Northern Ireland, and 4 per cent in Wales. Respondents working in England were asked which region their organisation was based in. There were respondents from all regions, with the highest proportion (20 per cent) in the West Midlands and the smallest proportion (3 per cent) in the North East.

Subject/curriculum area: among respondents who stated that they worked in specific subject or curriculum areas, one in four worked in the social sciences and almost one in five in the humanities (18 per cent). Sixteen per cent were based in health, public services and care and the same proportion in education and training. Twelve per cent worked in science/mathematics, and the same figure worked in languages, literature and culture. People working in information and communication technology made up 7 per cent of the sample, 5 per cent were in engineering and manufacturing technologies, and a further 5 per cent were in numeracy.

Sexual orientation: just over half the respondents self-identified as heterosexual or straight (52 per cent), while approximately one third (34 per cent) identified as gay or lesbian. Eight per cent described themselves as bisexual, three per cent selected 'other', 1 per cent responded as 'undecided' and another 1 per cent opted not to answer this question.

Gender identity: 57 per cent of respondents self-defined as female (including male-to-female trans women) and 38 per cent self-defined as male (including female-to-male trans men). Two per cent described themselves as genderqueer, 1 per cent selected the option 'X' (see Terminology used in this report), 1 per cent selected 'other' and 1 per cent

preferred not to answer this question. Some 9 per cent of staff respondents said that their gender identity was different to the sex they were assumed to be at birth.

Age: there was wide age range of staff respondents, with the majority clustered between the ages of 30 and 59. Ten per cent of the sample was aged under 30 and 10 per cent over 59. The biggest group (16 per cent) was aged 45–49.

Nationality: 59 per cent of the sample described themselves as British while one in 10 identified as English. Thirteen per cent said they were Scottish, 3 per cent said they were Northern Irish and 2 per cent identified as Welsh. Ten per cent indicated that they had a non-UK nationality.

Ethnicity: the vast majority of the staff sample (91 per cent) described themselves as White (including, in order of sample size, English, Scottish, Other White background, Northern Irish, Irish and Welsh). One per cent of the sample selected the option 'any other mixed background' and 1 per cent self-identified as Asian/Asian British: Indian. A very small number of respondents placed themselves in one of the following categories: Asian/Asian British; Chinese: Asian/Asian British; Pakistani; White and Black African; Other Asian Background; Arab; Black British: African; Black British: Caribbean; White and Black Caribbean and Other Ethnic Group. Three per cent of the sample chose not to declare their ethnicity.

Religion, belief or non-belief: as above, respondents were able to select multiple responses. The majority of responses were clustered in non-organised faiths or belief systems: 37 per cent said they had no religion, 19 per cent said they had no beliefs, 13 per cent had a non-religious philosophy and 10 per cent described themselves as Atheist. The second largest category was Christian, which accounted for 28 per cent of respondents. Two per cent said they were Buddhist, 1 per cent Jewish, 1 per cent Muslim and 4 per cent 'another religion'. Five per cent of respondents chose not to declare their religion or belief.

Disability: 12 per cent of the sample identified as Deaf or disabled.

Pregnancy: 1 per cent of the sample said they were currently pregnant or had been pregnant in the last year. Results were not broken down by pregnancy as this was not central to our aim in this particular research.

Meeting the objectives of this research

We acknowledge the following limitations:

The sample: as described below, the profile of respondents is relatively narrow, both in terms of general demographics and in terms of participants' learning and work environment. The networks that were used to circulate the survey mean that the experiences reflected are mainly those of learners in general further education colleges rather than those in a range of work-based, distance or offender learning environments. However, the fact that these were reached at all is a big step forwards. In general, higher education staff were better represented than staff in further education, and there is also a lack of ethnic diversity in the staff sample.

The research instrument: our aim to compare our findings with results from the 2014 NUS higher education survey^{viii} presented challenges in incorporating and adapting questions to fit the diversity and access needs of the broadest range of learners in further education. This means that the survey was less likely to have been accessible to (or perhaps completed by) learners with low literacy levels, learning disabilities or little or no Internet access.

The analysis: while this survey reached across the devolved nations and regions we do not comment on differences between nations and regions as that was not a primary aim of the research (see Recommendations for further research, below). The research captures the experiences of staff and students who identify as binary and non-binary in terms of gender. This is an innovative approach to address gaps in previous research but it does not

comprehensively breakdown the experience of those who identify as a gender other than the one they were assigned at birth.

Recommendations for further research

While we gathered information from respondents working and studying in a wider range of further education settings than previous studies and from those who identified as non-binary gender, a significant amount of data gathered from this survey falls outside the scope of this report. As noted above, this report only presents the findings of the quantitative survey results, not qualitative responses. Further comparative analysis could be done within groups of learners and staff – in particular:

- the differences and similarities among members of groups who have been analysed as a whole in this report (eg differences between the experiences among bisexual and lesbians)
- the qualitative data provided by non-binary and LGB+ learners and staff to give further insight into many issues raised in this report
- experiences and perceptions among those who identify their gender as different to the one assigned at birth, perhaps using cis- and non cis-gendered as groupings – our focus was to analyse findings by gender identification (grouped in this report as binary and non-binary gender)
- comparisons between further education and higher education staff in order to understand whether there are differences in experiences within these two environments, as our findings only present the results of staff perceptions and experiences as a whole
- exploring relationships between variables, eg examining any links between experiences of harassment and educational retention/learner satisfaction and links between experiences among LGBTQ+ respondents and those with other protected characteristics
- further research targeting learners and staff in a real diversity of further education learning environments – including offender, distance and work-based settings – to provide much-needed information about the extent to which perceptions and experiences of people with different sexual orientations and gender identities may be informed by diverse educational contexts
- developing detailed practical recommendations for how to address some of the issues raised in this report, including summaries of the findings that are accessible for the full diversity of learners in further education.

Literature review

Literature review

Legislative context

The UK legislative and social landscape for sexual orientation and gender identity equality has changed dramatically in the last 15 years. Since the age of consent was equalised in 2001, legislation has been enacted to protect people from discrimination and to promote equality. Most recently, same-sex couples in England, Scotland and Wales have celebrated the new right to marry.

Legislative drivers have been significant in encouraging further and higher education institutions and sector organisations to gather information about the experiences of students and staff who identify as non-heterosexual and/or non-binary gendered in order to promote equality and fulfil their legal obligations. For example, the Employment Equality Regulations, which came into force in 2003, required colleges and universities to ensure for the first time that they were protecting employees from discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation in the workplace. This was followed in 2007 by the ban on discrimination in the provision of goods and services on the grounds of sexual orientation, which prompted education providers to consider the accessibility of the services that they provided in relation to LGB people.

In 2004, the Gender Recognition Act provided some trans people with the option to legally change their gender, encouraging institutions to adopt policies and procedures to support students who had undergone, or were undergoing, transition. This legislation also amended the Sex Discrimination Act (1975), ensuring employment protection on the grounds of gender reassignment. Two years later, the Equality Act (2006) brought in the Gender Equality Duty, placing responsibility on providers to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination against 'transsexual' people in the fields of employment and vocational training (including further and higher education).

Most recently, in 2010, the Equality Act streamlined more than 30 pieces of anti-discrimination legislation in England, Wales and Scotland, extending protection on the grounds of sexual orientation and gender identity in

line with other equality areas such as race. The Act made direct and indirect discrimination, harassment and victimisation on the grounds of sexual orientation and gender reassignment illegal. It also brought in the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED), which required universities and colleges to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between different groups and introduced the legally protected characteristics of sexual orientation and gender reassignment.^{ix}

Research context

The further and higher education sectors have responded to the changing legislative landscape with a number of research projects aimed at understanding the experiences of LGB and/or T staff and students. These research reports have sought to identify if and where barriers, discrimination and/or good practice exist, and have in turn led to written guidance and equality initiatives for staff and student leaders.

While some small-scale, union member surveys and regionally-based research had begun to emerge prior to 2006 it was at this point that the Centre for Excellence in Leadership (CEL) carried out the first national piece of research exploring the experiences of LGB further education staff and learners.^x

The study primarily focused on the readiness of the sector to comply with new sexual orientation equality legislation protecting staff and students from discrimination. The research consisted of an online survey of 161 college principals, 203 college staff and 26 student governors/representatives, as well as focus groups, interviews and observation of sexual orientation equality awareness raising and training. The final report identified an overwhelming experience of homophobic discrimination, bullying and harassment among LGB staff and learners. It also found low levels of reporting of such incidents, a dearth of staff and learner training or support, and a lack of clarity about the existence and content of college equality policies. A key issue highlighted by this research was anxiety and a lack of clarity around the interaction between sexual orientation

equality and equality on the grounds of religion and belief; this was to be unpacked further in later pieces of work.

The researchers found a sector unprepared and unconfident to engage with and promote sexual orientation equality, despite its willingness to do so. Pockets of good practice were also identified by the researchers. They strongly recommended that the further education sector should begin comprehensive equality monitoring of the sexual orientation of staff and students in order to identify the needs of different groups of learners and staff and measure the impact of policies and practices on these groups.

In 2007 NUS began to probe the experiences of higher education LGBT students, examining the effects of student finance procedures on those estranged from their families – a scenario that was anecdotally understood to affect LGBT students disproportionately.^{xii} NUS concluded that the procedures for applying for maintenance funding in the face of relationship breakdown were unnecessarily cumbersome and inaccessible, and had the potential to indirectly discriminate against LGBT students.

This research was followed in 2008 by a UK-wide study conducted by Sonja Ellis at Sheffield Hallam University, which explored the campus climate for LGBT university students, drawing on survey data from 291 LGBT students at 42 universities.^{xiii} This survey uncovered evidence of homophobic harassment and discrimination and associated fears of such behaviour. It also explored the extent to which students felt able to be out about their sexual orientation/gender identity on campus and how inclusive universities felt for LGBT students. Ellis concluded that homophobia on campus was 'significant' but not 'overwhelming', and that where it existed it was generally perpetrated by – and between – students rather than staff.

This study was in turn followed by a comprehensive report commissioned by the ECU considering the experiences of both LGB and trans staff and students in higher education, drawing on an evidence base of 4,205 online survey responses as well as focus groups and

interviews.^{xiii} The 2009 report describes a sector that provided a positive space for many LGBT staff and students but where fear and experiences of discrimination remained a reality for some. For the first time, the concerns of LGBT staff in higher education were documented. These included: wariness about being out because of employment security and discrimination; fear of student homophobia; systematic institutional discrimination in relation to promotions; evidence of negative treatment, particularly experienced by trans staff; and evidence of covert discrimination through exclusion from social networks.

The ECU study found that university provided an important space for young LGBT students in which to be openly gay or present in their preferred gender: the majority were out to their friends. The research explored concerns suggested by NUS' earlier work on student financial support and found that a minority (4.9 per cent of LGB and 7.1 per cent of trans students) had been cut off financially by their parents. The findings also suggested that LGB students experienced significant levels of negative treatment because of their sexual orientation, with trans students facing even more negative treatment. The data suggested links between LGBT students taking more time out from education (compared with the national average) and negative treatment. Respondents were divided about the value of monitoring sexual orientation and gender identity, with LGB staff and students more willing to declare their sexual orientation than trans respondents were to declare their trans status.

Research in both further and higher education has consistently identified common themes, including perceived and emerging tensions between LGBT and faith groups. Responding to this concern in 2010, on behalf and as part of the Forum, Lifelong Learning UK (LLUK) commissioned research to explore the management of sexual orientation equality and equality on the grounds of religion and belief in further and higher education in England.^{xiv} This research found a high degree of anticipated difficulty and conflict between the two protected characteristics, which contrasted with few actual experiences of such conflict.

The report was accompanied by guidance that sought to support the sector to ensure that equality on grounds of sexual orientation and religion and belief were promoted on equal terms without undue tensions arising.

Further education came into focus again in 2011 when the SFA commissioned research into sexual orientation and gender identity equality in adult learning,^{xv} this time including trans learners but excluding staff.^{xvi} The research sought to fill a gap in the evidence – identified during development of the agency's Single Equality Scheme – about how well the sector was meeting the needs of LGBT learners. This comprehensive research drew on the views of nearly 450 LGBT learners in a wide-ranging look at their experiences, including openness about sexual orientation and gender identity, perceptions of – and barriers to – adult learning, bullying and harassment, policies and systems, and their curriculum.

The researchers found that while a significant minority of LGBT learners had experienced bullying or harassment in adult learning, the majority found their experience to have been a welcoming one. The researchers urged caution in relation to treating LGBT learners as a homogenous group, finding significant differences between the experiences of different groups of respondents. Specifically, as with the ECU study, trans learners were found to experience more bullying and harassment, bisexual learners were found to be less open in the learning environment, and gay males seemed happier with the support systems offered by education providers. The SFA researchers found no consensus among respondents on whether equality monitoring should be extended to gender identity and sexual orientation, echoing the findings of the ECU research.

In 2014, NUS took a fresh look at LGBT students in higher education with a report based on a national survey, focus groups and case studies across the UK.^{xvii} This research was distinctive in surveying 4,240 students of all sexual orientations and gender identities (rather than either LGB or T participants). Published results compared differences between LGB, trans and heterosexual groups. The study looked at safety and well-being, coming out as a trans student, campus culture, teaching and learning,

and LGBT activism and representation. It found that LGBT students were more likely to be involved in their students' union than their heterosexual counterparts, but were also more likely to seriously consider dropping out of their course. As with the ECU study, the NUS research uncovered harassment and bullying of LGBT students (with higher rates for trans respondents than LGB respondents), and made a connection between these experiences and retention rates. Most recently, Sheffield Hallam University produced the report *From Freshers' Week to Finals*,^{xviii} which analyses the available research literature in the field, together with youth and student perspectives on this, to influence what universities could – and should – be thinking about in relation to student experience.

During this time period NUS also carried out three focused pieces of research delving deeper into specific issues raised in earlier work. In 2011, it published a Home Office-funded study looking at incidents of LGBT hate crime experienced by further education and higher education students in the UK.^{xix} In 2012, against the backdrop of the London Olympics, NUS investigated the participation of LGBT students in college and university sports.^{xx} And the following year, NUS published an analysis of data relating to LGB students' financial well-being in further and higher education.^{xxi}

Other recurring themes that have emerged through the research to date include:

- significant experiences of bullying, harassment and negative treatment
- anxieties amongst LGBTQ+ students around the collection of monitoring data
- the extent to which people feel able to come out at work or in their place of study
- staff promotion and inclusion
- inclusive curriculum and teaching practices
- support for LGBT staff and student groups
- equality policy development and awareness
- staff and student representation.

Research findings^{xxii}

Research findings: Learners

Negative behaviour, bullying and harassment

In this section of the survey, learners were asked about personal experiences of biphobic, homophobic or transphobic behaviour, bullying and harassment. This was most commonly reported to have taken place between learners, rather than between staff and learners. This finding is consistent with results from staff respondents as well as NUS' survey in higher education.^{xxiii}

Sixty per cent of learner respondents reported having witnessed a learner acting negatively towards people because of their sexual orientation at least once, with 39 per cent having witnessed negative behaviour towards trans people. The target of this behaviour was also predominantly learners, regardless of who was carrying it out. In comparison, just over one in 10 learners reported having witnessed staff acting negatively towards people because of their sexual orientation (14 per cent) and 11 per cent of all respondents had witnessed staff acting negatively towards people because of their trans identity.

In all scenarios, heterosexual respondents were less likely to have seen or heard this behaviour than any other group, and in all but one category non-binary students were more likely to have heard or seen this behaviour than other learner groups.^{xxiv} For example, 61 per cent of non-binary learners reported having seen learners act negatively towards people because of their trans identity, compared with only 13 per cent of heterosexual respondents.

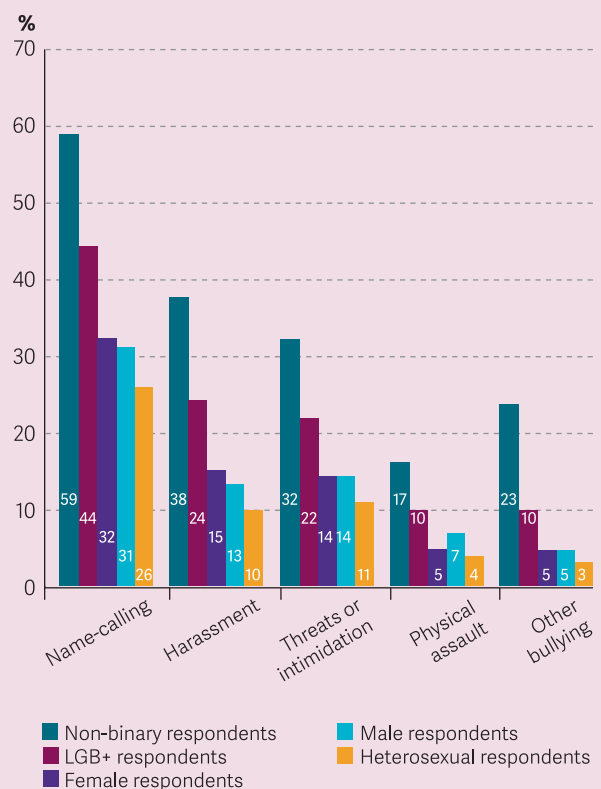
Heterosexual respondents were less likely to have experienced biphobic, homophobic or transphobic name-calling, harassment, threats/intimidation, physical assault or any other kind of bullying in their educational setting than other learners (see Figure 1).^{xxv} Fifty-nine per cent of non-binary respondents had experienced name-calling, 38 per cent had been harassed, 32 per cent had been threatened or intimidated and 17 per cent had been physically assaulted. Non-binary students were more likely to have experienced each of these behaviours than respondents who identified as male or female.

In breaking down the LGB+ group it was found that half of lesbian/gay learners (51 per cent) had experienced name-calling, nearly a third (29 per cent) had experienced harassment and 27 per cent had been threatened or intimidated at their place of learning. More than one in 10 bisexual learners reported having been the victim of assault in their educational setting.

Overall, almost three-quarters of learners (73 per cent) said they would know who to go to in their place of learning if they experienced bullying.

Figure 1: Have you ever experienced any of the following kinds of biphobic, homophobic or transphobic bullying at your place of learning?

Name-calling (N = 1,470)
Harassment (N = 1,453)
Threats or intimidation (N = 1,450)
Physical assault (N = 1,446)
Other bullying (N = 1,323)



These results suggest that the further education sector is a more hostile environment for LGBTQ+ students than higher education. For example, 18 per cent of LGB+ respondents in higher education have experienced name-calling at least once, compared with more than twice as many who reported the same in further education (44 per cent). A higher proportion of LGB+ learners in further education also said they had direct experience of harassment, threats and physical assault than their equivalents in higher education.

Coming out

Gender identity

Coming out as trans: 6 per cent of learner respondents reported that their gender identity was different to the sex they were assumed to be at birth. Of these, the majority (71 per cent) had not transitioned or were not transitioning.

Over half of the respondents whose gender identity was different to the sex they were assigned at birth

(54 per cent) had not – to date – come out as trans (see Figure 2).

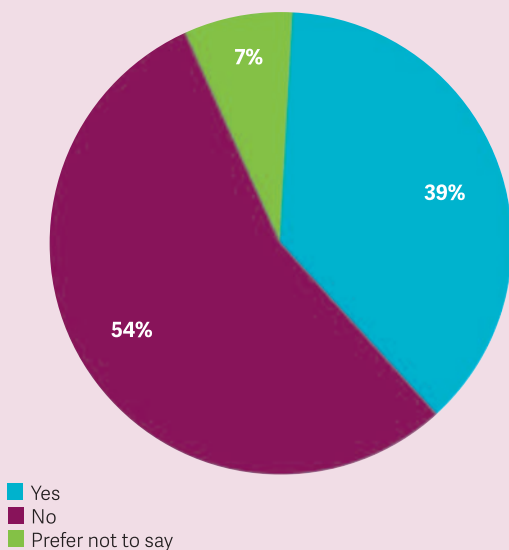
Issues for respondents whose gender identity is different to the sex assigned at birth

Fear of coming/being out, being inappropriately titled, named or gendered and a lack of gender-neutral facilities were issues commonly reported by learners whose gender identity was different to the sex they were assigned at birth (cited by 54 per cent, 44 per cent and 42 per cent of this sample, respectively).

Of the 39 per cent of learners who had come out as trans (see Figure 2), half were out to educational staff, but respondents were more commonly out to friends, the LGBT community and family members. The most frequently reported reasons for not being out in their place of learning were that respondents were not out in most areas of their life, had concerns about how their family would react, or said that their gender identity was of no concern to other learners or staff. Only one in four of those who identified as trans said they had been well supported by their place of learning.

Among learner respondents who had transitioned or who were transitioning during the research period, half (50 per cent) felt that their place of learning offered the necessary resources to support them when coming out or transitioning, while just under half (43 per cent) disagreed with this statement. A small number ($n = 6$) had needed to take time out of learning because of coming out or transitioning.

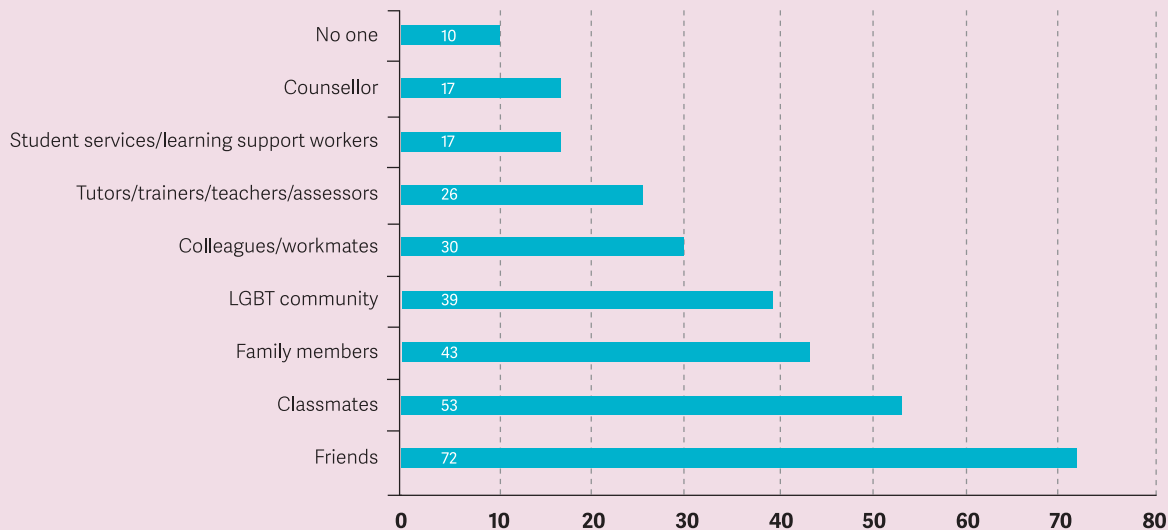
Figure 2: Have you come out, or are you currently coming out, as trans? ($N = 56$)



Sexual orientation

Coming out as LGB: almost three-quarters of lesbian, gay and bisexual (LGB) learners (72 per cent) said they were out to friends, while over half (53 per cent) were out to classmates, and approximately one quarter (26 per cent) were out to educational staff (see Figure 3). One in 10 LGB learners said they were not out to anyone. Among this group, the most common reason

Figure 3: If you self-define as an LGB learner, who are you out to? (N = 358) (this question allowed multiple responses; there were 1,150 responses in total)



given for not being out was that it was a choice not to be (47 per cent), while more than a third had concerns about the way their friends (38 per cent) or other learners (35 per cent) would react.

Activism and representation

Learners were asked about their involvement in activism and representation on campus. Overall, one in five respondents said they were involved in some kind of activism or representation in their place of learning.

Course representation: 8 per cent of respondents said they were a course or learner representative. Lesbian/gay (15 per cent) and bisexual (12 per cent) respondents were more likely than average to be a course or learner representative. Heterosexual (6 per cent) or 'other sexual orientation' (OSO) respondents (7 per cent) were less likely than average to have reported the same. Non-binary (14 per cent) and male (12 per cent) learners were more likely than women (6 per cent) to hold this position.

Figure 4: How confident do you feel to speak in class/in the workplace? (N = 919)



Activism: overall, 5 per cent of respondents considered themselves to be an activist. Lesbian/gay, bisexual and non-binary learners were more likely to consider themselves activists (11 per cent and 7 per cent, respectively).

LGBT groups: fewer than one in four learners reported that their place of learning has an officially recognised LGBT group (22 per cent), and approximately half did not know whether one existed (48 per cent).

Teaching and learning

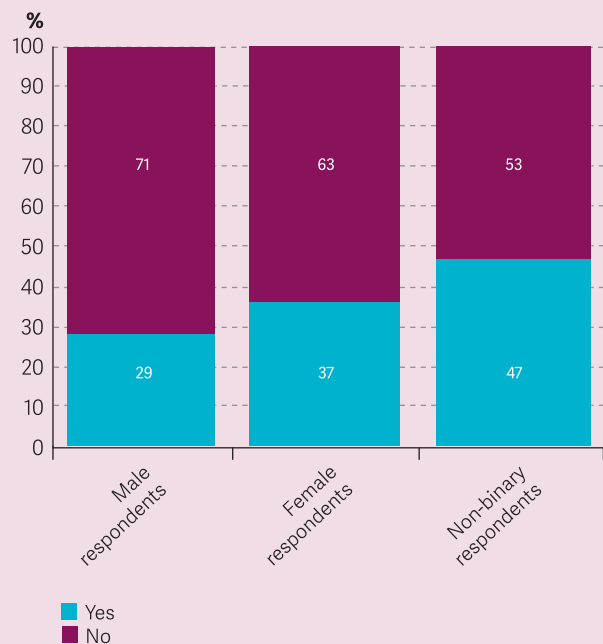
Learners were asked a series of questions about how they felt about their experiences of teaching and learning.

Confidence: Bisexual and gay/lesbian learners were less likely than average to report feeling confident about speaking in class (69 per cent and 72 per cent, respectively), compared with 77 per cent of heterosexual/straight learners (see Figure 4). Male respondents were most likely to feel quite or very confident about this (85 per cent), compared with female respondents (72 per cent) and non-binary learners (62 per cent). Overall, three-quarters of learners said they felt quite, or very, confident about speaking in class (74 per cent).

Group learning: 87 per cent of all respondents said they always or quite often felt included in group learning activities. Bisexual and OSO learners were less likely than average to feel included. Male students were more likely to feel included (93 per cent) than women or non-binary learners.

Safety: learners were asked to rate how safe they felt in their place of learning on a scale of one to 10, where 10 means 'very safe'. Respondents' average score was 8.58. Overall, bisexual (8.47), gay/lesbian (8.06), women (8.56) and non-binary (7.39) learners reported feeling less safe than average, and heterosexual/straight (8.79) and male (8.8) respondents reported feeling more safe than average. The findings echo those reported by students in higher education, where a relatively high level of overall safety was reported among all groups but there were statistically significant differences

Figure 5: Have you ever seriously considered leaving your course or dropping out of your learning? (N = 930)



between students with different sexual orientations and gender identities.^{xxvi}

Retention: learners were asked whether they had ever seriously considered leaving their course or dropping out of learning (see Figure 5). Approximately one in three said that they had (35 per cent). Non-binary respondents were most likely to have considered this (47 per cent). Male respondents were less likely than average to have considered dropping out (29 per cent).

Respondents who reported having seriously considered leaving their course or dropping out were asked for the reasons behind this. Gay/lesbian (13 per cent) and non-binary (16 per cent) respondents were more than twice as likely than average (6 per cent) to say that they had considered leaving because of the way they were treated (eg they felt they had been bullied, harassed or discriminated against). Personal circumstances was the least common reason for heterosexual students to consider dropping out.

Figure 6: Would anything stop you from declaring your sexual orientation for equality monitoring purposes at your place of learning? (N = 1,505)

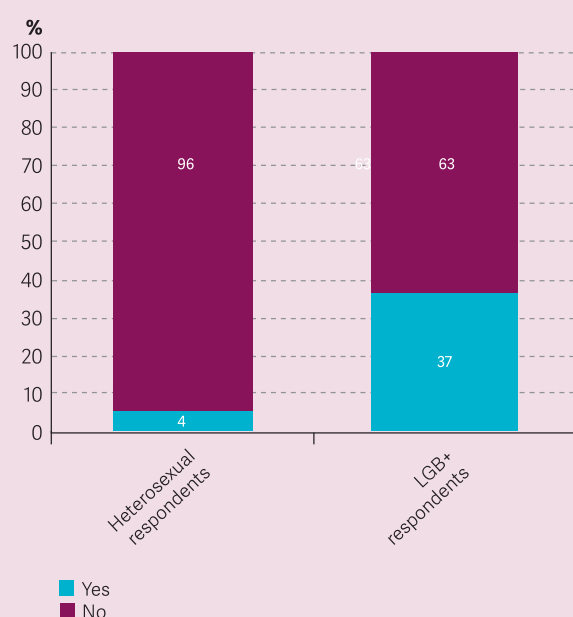
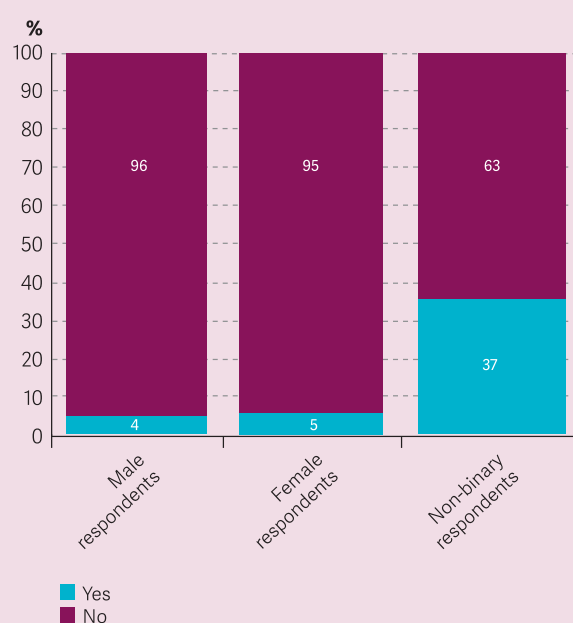


Figure 7: Would anything stop you from declaring your gender identity for equality monitoring purposes at your place of learning? (N = 1,505)



Equality policies

More than half of all respondents did not know whether their place of learning has a policy that protects people from discrimination based on their gender identity (59 per cent) or sexual orientation (54 per cent). Of all groups, gay/lesbian respondents were most likely to be aware of a policy (41 per cent). The majority of respondents thought that where policies existed they were well-publicised (59 per cent for gender identity policies and 61 per cent for sexual orientation policies). Respondents were split as to whether they effectively protected people from discrimination (49 per cent thought gender identity policies were effective compared to 46 per cent for sexual orientation policies).

Equality monitoring

Responses to questions about equality monitoring around sexual orientation and gender identity suggest that it is still fairly uncommon for learners to be asked to disclose this data in further education environments. Where learners did report being asked a question about their sexual orientation, it most commonly happened when applying for their course (29 per cent of learners). Thirty-nine per cent of learners were asked about their gender identity during their course application.

Declaring sexual orientation: LGB+ learners reported being significantly more concerned than heterosexual learners about declaring their sexual orientation for equality monitoring purposes in their place of learning (37 per cent and 4 per cent, respectively, see Figure 6). Bisexual learners were 10 times more likely to say that something would stop them declaring their sexual orientation compared with heterosexual respondents (42 per cent versus 4 per cent).

Declaring gender identity: More than one in three non-binary students (37 per cent) reported that something would stop them from declaring their gender identity in their place of learning (see Figure 7). This dropped to approximately one in 20 for female students (5 per cent) and male students (4 per cent).

Research findings: Staff

Negative behaviour, bullying and harassment

In this section of the survey staff were asked about personal experiences of biphobic, homophobic or transphobic behaviour, bullying or harassment and behaviour that they had witnessed in their place of work.

Witnessing negative behaviour: Staff were asked whether, and how often, they had seen or heard staff or learners acting negatively towards people because of their sexual orientation or trans identity.

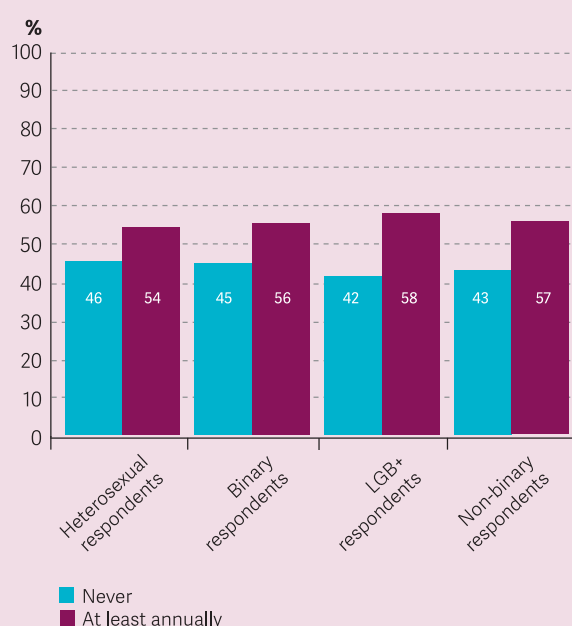
More than 40 per cent of both LGB+ (41 per cent) and non-binary gendered (43 per cent) respondents had witnessed staff acting negatively towards other people because of their sexual orientation at least once a year (see Figure 8). This contrasted with just under a third of binary gendered respondents (32 per cent) and a quarter of heterosexual respondents (25 per cent).

**Figure 8: Approximately how often do you hear or see staff acting negatively towards people because of their sexual orientation? (N = 575)*



** Denotes that there is no statistically significant difference between the perception and/or experience of heterosexual, lgb+ or binary gender – non-binary gendered respondents.*

**Figure 9: Approximately how often do you hear or see learners acting negatively towards people because of their sexual orientation? (N = 575)*

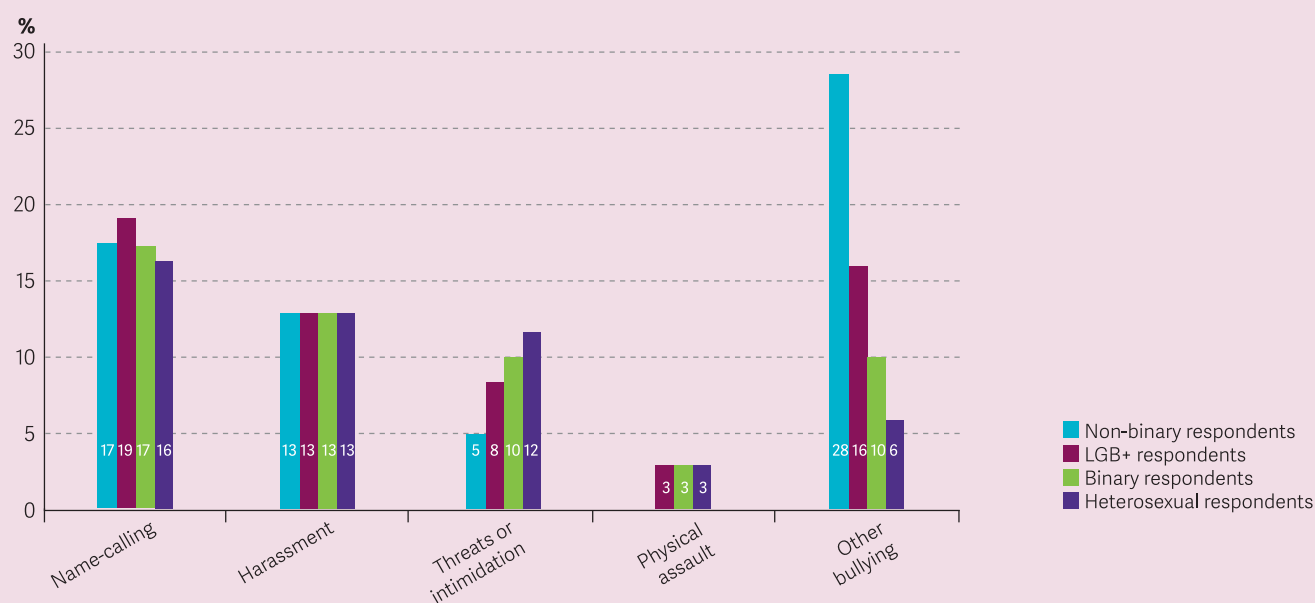


Overall, one in three staff respondents (33 per cent) reported that they had witnessed staff acting negatively towards people because of their sexual orientation at least once a year. Sixty per cent of these respondents had seen this behaviour being directed towards other staff, while just under half of them (45 per cent) had had witnessed it being directed towards learners.

A higher proportion of respondents had witnessed learners acting negatively towards people because of their sexual orientation, with more than 50 per cent of staff respondents from each sexual orientation and gender identity group reporting this negative behaviour at least annually (54 per cent of heterosexual respondents and 58 per cent of LGB+ respondents, see Figure 9).

In these scenarios, the majority of incidents witnessed were directed towards other learners (67 per cent), while 29 per cent were aimed at staff.

***Figure 10: Have you ever experienced any of the following kinds of biphobic, homophobic or transphobic behaviour at your place of work? Name-calling (N = 567), Harassment (N = 566), Threats or intimidation (N = 562), Physical assault (N = 558), Other bullying (N= 500)**



Trans identity

A little more than a quarter of staff respondents (27 per cent) had witnessed other staff acting negatively towards people because of their trans identity at least once. Half of these respondents had witnessed this behaviour being directed at learners, and 42 per cent had witnessed it being directed towards staff.

As with sexual orientation, more staff had witnessed learners acting negatively towards other people because of their trans identity (41 per cent). Again, the majority of these respondents had witnessed negative behaviour directed towards other learners (61 per cent), compared with a quarter witnessing incidents directed at staff.

The results in this section show a general pattern where LGB+ staff respondents were significantly more likely to have witnessed negative behaviour than heterosexual respondents, whether motivated

by sexual orientation or trans identity. Similarly, in the case of transphobic behaviour, non-binary staff were more likely to have witnessed staff acting negatively than binary respondents (57 per cent, compared with 26 per cent).

Experiences of bullying and harassment

Overall, 17 per cent of staff respondents reported having experienced biphobic, homophobic or transphobic name-calling at work, 13 per cent reported experiencing harassment, one in 10 reported experiencing threatening or intimidating behaviour and 3 per cent reported experiencing physical assault at work. Eleven per cent of the overall sample reported that they had experienced another kind of biphobic, homophobic or transphobic bullying at their place of work.

Our findings indicated a high level of unreported incidents across all categories of bullying and harassment on the grounds of sexual orientation and gender identity. Staff respondents who had been physically assaulted at work were most likely to have reported the incident to somebody (81 per cent), and those who had experienced an unspecified kind of bullying were least likely to have reported it (28 per cent). Approximately half of those who had experienced harassment or threats/intimidation in their workplace had reported the incident (51 per cent and 52 per cent, respectively) whereas only 41 per cent reported name-calling.

Staff respondents who had experienced name-calling, harassment or physical assault at work relating to sexual orientation or gender identity were most likely to report this to staff union representatives than other contacts (21 per cent, 50 per cent and 42 per cent, respectively). Where other bullying was reported in most cases it was to the respondent's line manager (64 per cent). No data was available about who staff reported workplace threats or intimidation to.

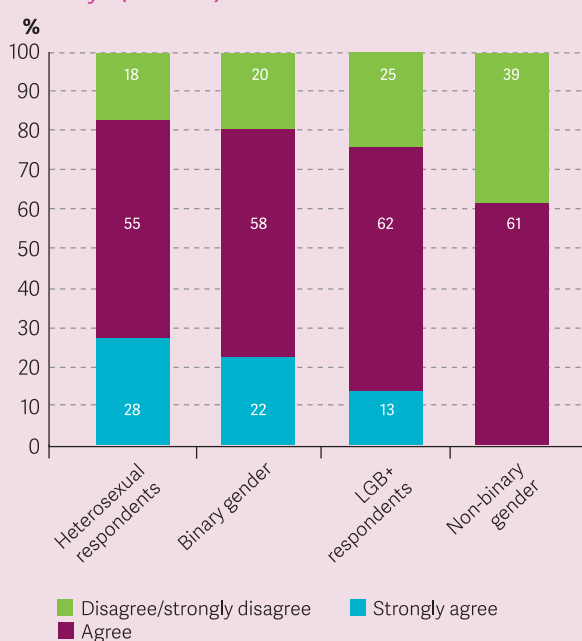
Staff perspectives on organisational ethos

Staff were asked a series of questions about the environment in which they work. Overall, the majority of respondents agreed that their organisation tried to create an environment for all learners and staff, which made them feel equally valued, and that their organisation made efforts to eliminate discrimination and encourage good relations between people of different sexual orientations and gender identities. In general, heterosexual respondents had a more positive view of their organisation's efforts, compared with LGB+ respondents.

Environment

Eighty-nine per cent of staff respondents agreed that their organisation tried to create an environment where all learners feel equally valued. Fewer, though still the

Figure 11: To what extent do you agree that your organisation works to eliminate discrimination against learners and staff based on their gender identity? (N = 568)



majority (78 per cent), thought that the same was true in relation to creating such an environment for staff. More than one in five of all staff respondents (22 per cent) disagreed that the organisation tried to create an environment where all staff feel equally valued.

Eliminating discrimination

When staff respondents were asked about their organisation's work to end gender identity discrimination, 79 per cent agreed or strongly agreed that their organisation worked to eliminate such discrimination. Some 83 per cent of heterosexual respondents felt this was the case, compared with only 75 per cent of LGB+ respondents (see Figure 11).

The same pattern emerged when staff respondents were asked about their organisations' work to eliminate discrimination against learners and staff based on their sexual orientation. Eighty-two per cent

strongly agreed/agreed that their organisation worked to eliminate this type of discrimination. Heterosexual respondents were more positive than average, with 85 per cent agreeing/strongly agreeing with this statement, compared with only 78 per cent of LGB+ staff.

Encouraging good relations

Overall, 85 per cent of staff respondents reported that their organisation worked to encourage good relations between people of all sexual orientations, and 80 per cent agreed that their organisation encouraged good relations between people of all gender identities. Heterosexual respondents had a more positive view of their institution's efforts to encourage good relations between people of diverse gender identities than LGB+ respondents (85 per cent compared with 78 per cent). One third of non-binary respondents (35 per cent) had a negative view of their organisation

in this context (although this is not a statistically significant result, it is perhaps worth noting in the context of the other results).

Discrimination at work

Staff respondents were asked how confident they felt challenging various forms of discrimination related to sexual orientation and gender identity in their workplace (see Figure 12). They were also asked about equality training opportunities, and whether they knew who to go to if they experienced workplace bullying. Staff respondents were asked how confident they felt challenging various forms of discrimination in their workplace.

Overall, respondents expressed more confidence in challenging homophobia in their workplace than biphobia and transphobia. Eighty-seven per cent of staff said they felt very or quite confident in challenging homophobia, compared with 79 per cent for

***Figure 12: How confident do you feel to challenge homophobia, biphobia and transphobia in your place of work? Homophobia (N = 570)**

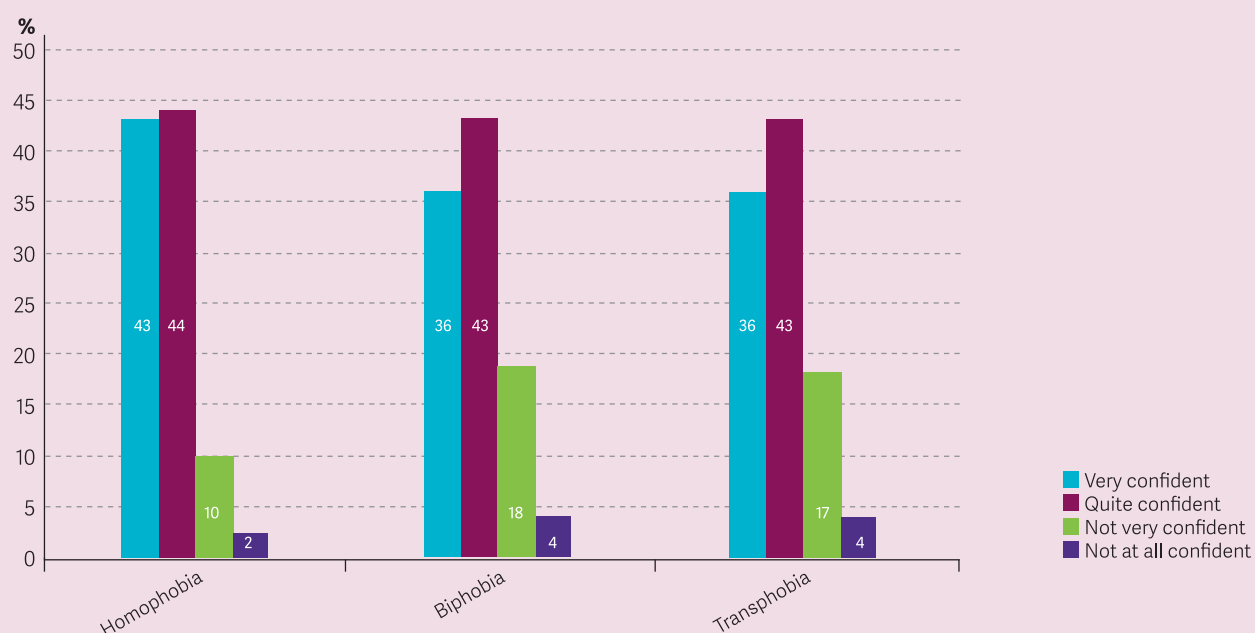


Figure 13: Is the policy on sexual orientation well-publicised to staff, learners and others? (N = 454)



Figure 14: Is the policy that protects people from discrimination based on their gender identity well-publicised to staff, learners and others? (N = 420)



transphobia and 78 per cent for biphobia. Twice as many respondents said they did not feel at all confident about challenging transphobia or biphobia at work than those who did not feel confident challenging homophobia. This pattern repeated for staff from all sexual orientation and gender identity groups.

Staff training and support

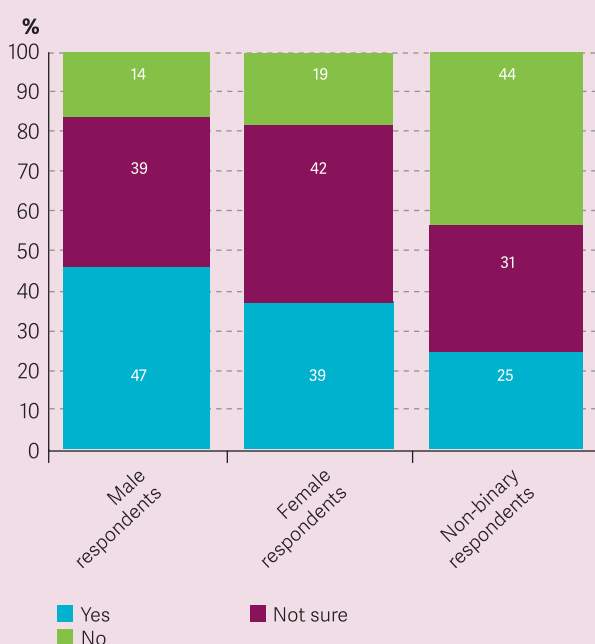
Staff respondents reported a high level of confidence in challenging homophobia, biphobia and transphobia at their place of work. This staff confidence was in contrast to sexual orientation and/or gender identity equality training staff respondents said they had received. Slightly more than one third of respondents (39 per cent and 34 per cent, respectively) said they had received training in sexual orientation and/or gender identity equality. Even fewer instances of learner training on sexual orientation and/or gender were reported (approximately one in 10 respondents said that their organisation provided this). Just over half of the overall sample (52 per cent) said that no training of either kind was provided for staff or learners at their educational provider. More than three-quarters (78 per cent) of staff respondents said they knew who to go to in their place of work if they experienced bullying, one in 10 said they would not.

Awareness and effectiveness of anti-discrimination policies

The majority of staff respondents reported that their place of work had policies that protect people from discrimination based on their sexual orientation (80 per cent) or gender identity (74 per cent). However, only just over half agreed that these policies were well-publicised, with LGB+ and non-binary gendered respondents significantly less likely to agree that such policies were well-publicised.

Less than 50 per cent of both LGB+ and non-binary gendered staff respondents considered that their workplace's policies on either sexual orientation or

*Figure 15: Does the policy effectively protect people from discrimination on the grounds of their gender identity? (N = 420)



gender identity were well-publicised. Heterosexual respondents were more positive about this, but even among that group more than one in three (37 per cent in both cases) did not think these policies were well-publicised.

Overall, less than 50 per cent of each respondent group (male, female and non-binary) agreed that their workplace's policies were effective in protecting people from discrimination based on either sexual orientation or gender identity. Significantly, male staff respondents were most likely to think that their workplace's policies to protect people on the grounds of gender identity discrimination were effective (47 per cent, see Figure 15) while only a quarter of non-binary respondents agreed with this.

Equality monitoring

Self-declaration

Just over half of staff respondents reported having been asked to declare their sexual orientation and/or gender identity when they applied for their job role (53 per cent and 51 per cent, respectively). This was the most common time for staff to have been asked for this information. Approximately one third of respondents did not have the opportunity to disclose this information when applying for their job.

The second most common time for staff respondents to have been asked about their sexual orientation and/or gender identity was in staff surveys (48 per cent). Staff were least likely to be asked for this information when registering for services such as counselling, or health services.

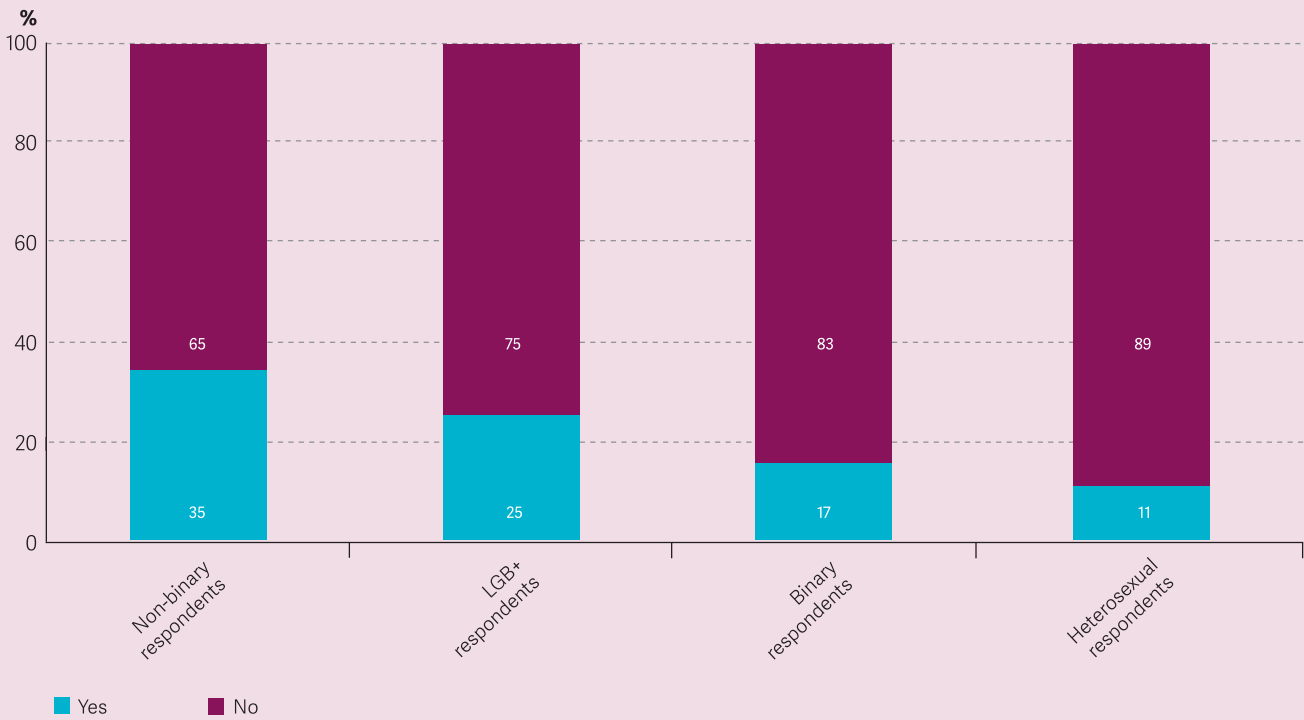
In all situations where staff could be given the opportunity to disclose their sexual orientation and/or gender identity, more one quarter of respondents reported that they had not been asked.

Declaring sexual orientation

More LGB+ than heterosexual staff respondents reported that something would stop them from declaring their sexual orientation at work (25 per cent and 11 per cent, respectively – see Figure 16).

Overall, the majority of staff respondents (82 per cent) said that nothing would stop them from declaring their sexual orientation for equality monitoring purposes at their place of work. Eighteen per cent of respondents said that something could stop them from doing this.

**Figure 16: Would anything stop you from declaring your sexual orientation for equality monitoring purposes at your place of work? (N = 575)*

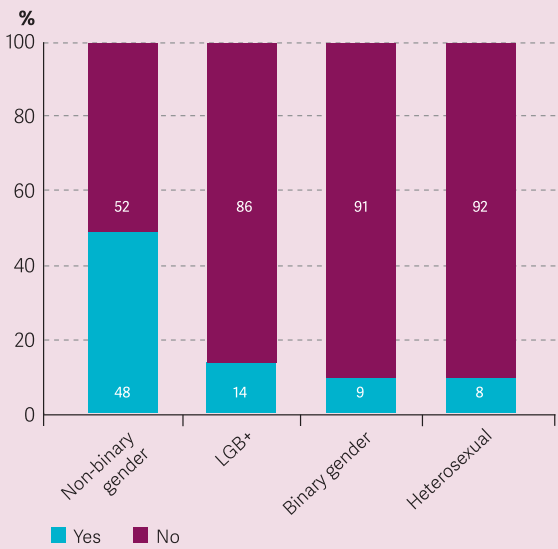


Declaring gender identity

Non-binary staff were more than four times more likely than average to state that something would stop them from declaring their gender identity at work (48 per cent). This compares to 9 per cent of binary gendered respondents (see Figure 17).

Overall, 89 per cent of respondents said that nothing would stop them from declaring their gender identity for equality monitoring purposes at work – with 11 per cent expressing some reservation about this. Bisexual and OSO staff were more likely than average to say that something would stop them (15 per cent and 35 per cent, respectively). Female staff members were slightly less likely than average to express doubt about whether they would declare their gender identity (9 per cent).

Figure 17: Would anything stop you from declaring your gender identity for equality monitoring purposes at your place of work? (N = 575)



Conclusion

Conclusion

This report has highlighted that a significant proportion of LGBTQ+ learners in further education have experienced bullying and harassment linked to sexual orientation and/or gender identity in their place of learning. More than half of learner respondents reported having witnessed peers acting negatively towards people because of their sexual orientation at least once, and one in 10 saw or heard this behaviour every day. More than half of lesbian/gay learners also reported having experienced homophobic or transphobic name-calling in their educational setting. Non-binary learners were particularly vulnerable as they were more likely than any other group to have experienced name-calling, bullying and/or harassment on this basis. Our findings suggest that the learning environment in further education may be more hostile towards LGBT learners than the learning environment in higher education.^{xxvii}

Our research provided evidence to suggest that negative behaviour towards learners because of their sexual orientation or gender identity had an impact on their learning and retention levels. For example, gay/lesbian and non-binary respondents were more than twice as likely as the average to say that they had considered leaving their course because of the way they were treated. Our finding that few learners were aware of existing and visible LGBT groups in further education is likely to exacerbate feelings of isolation and exclusion as well as underpin negative feelings around how supportive their institution has been.

Among staff respondents, a smaller percentage reported experiencing biphobic, homophobic or transphobic name-calling, bullying or harassment at work. However, a high proportion of staff had witnessed learners acting negatively towards other people because of their sexual orientation or gender identity. More than half of staff respondents had witnessed learners acting negatively towards others because of their sexual orientation and 41 per cent had witnessed learners acting negatively towards people because of their trans identity. Learners were much more likely to have been seen acting negatively towards other learners rather than towards staff.

We found some evidence that staff are responsible for biphobic, homophobic or transphobic behaviour towards colleagues and learners. For instance, one in three staff respondents reported having witnessed staff acting negatively towards people because of their sexual orientation at least once a year and more than half (60 per cent) said this negative behaviour was directed towards staff. The majority of staff reported that they were aware of who to go to if they experienced discrimination and what workplace policies protected people from discrimination on the basis of their sexual orientation and/or gender identity. Nevertheless, the findings show that there was a high level of unreported incidents by staff who had faced bullying and harassment at work.

"A significant proportion of LGBTQ+ learners in further education have experienced bullying and harassment linked to sexual orientation and/or gender identity in their place of learning."

Despite significant levels of biphobic, homophobic or transphobic behaviour occurring among learners and staff in post-school education settings, training around sexual orientation or gender identity for both groups was relatively low. Just over half of the overall sample (52 per cent) said that no training of either kind was provided for staff or learners.

Moreover, while most respondents had a positive opinion around their organisation's efforts to eliminate discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation and gender identity, policies to tackle this were largely viewed as ineffective. This suggests that further work needs to be done to develop policies and improve training to ensure staff have the understanding and skills to identify, challenge and report inappropriate behaviour – towards learners, colleagues or themselves.

The research also identified a number of positive behaviours and areas to build upon. Our finding that the majority of LGB+ learners were out to friends and a quarter were out to tutors, trainers, teachers or assessors suggests that those LGB+ found the further education environment a safe one. Overall, respondents described their learning environment as safe – a finding that is also reflected in NUS' research into LGBT students' experience in higher education. We also found that lesbian/gay and bisexual learner respondents were more likely than average to be involved in student activism and course representation. Further education providers and students' unions could harness this behaviour to raise awareness about LGBT+ learners' experiences and help them feel supported.

The fact that the vast majority of staff reported being aware of workplace policies to protect people from discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation and/or gender identity and felt able to challenge homophobia, biphobia and transphobia is also a positive finding. Education providers could use this awareness and confidence amongst staff to build effective pathways to tackle incidents of harassment and bullying when they occur.

Finally, the research highlighted a number of areas requiring further analysis in order to gain a greater understanding of the range of perceptions and experiences of LGBTQ+ learners and staff in different learning environments. Expanding on this initial data will help education providers, students' unions and other key stakeholders to develop more targeted support to learners and staff with different sexual orientations and gender identities, while also providing more evidence for practical measures to create inclusive learning environments.

"The findings show that there was a high level of unreported incidents by staff who had faced bullying and harassment at work."

Endnotes

Endnotes

- ⁱ Centre of Excellence in Leadership. (2006) *Equality and Sexual Orientation: The Leadership Challenge for Further Education*. London, Centre for Excellence in Leadership
- ⁱⁱ 'Post-school education' denotes the whole further education landscape. This includes any teaching and learning provided by further education colleges, prisons, specialist colleges and within adult community education, work-based learning programmes and apprentices.
- ⁱⁱⁱ Students in higher education were not surveyed because they had been recently surveyed by NUS using a similar framework and research questions. See National Union of Students. (2014) *Education beyond the straight and narrow: LGBT students' experience in higher education*. London, NUS
- ^{iv} For more information please visit:
<https://sgforum.org.uk/resources/12-steps-guidance/>
- ^v Where comparison statistics are presented between different sexual orientations and gender identities, we omitted respondents who chose 'prefer not to say' as a gender identity or sexual orientation option, since we believe it is unethical to read anything into their responses as a result of choosing this option.
- ^{vi} National Union of Students. (2014) *Education beyond the straight and narrow: LGBT students' experience in higher education*. London, NUS. This reported on results from an online national survey of more than 4,000 students from 80 higher education institutions in the UK. In many cases, identical questions were used in both surveys.
- ^{vii} Respondents were able to select more than one type of education/training provider as their employer since staff can work for more than one provider (and commonly do so if on part-time or short-term contracts), hence these figures add up to more than 100.
- ^{viii} National Union of Students. (2014) *Education beyond the straight and narrow: LGBT students' experience in higher education*. London, NUS
- ^{ix} In addition to the general duties under the PSED, further and higher education bodies have to comply with the specific duties. These are different in England, Wales and Scotland, but in all three countries public bodies are required to publish equality information to demonstrate compliance with the general equality duty and how their policies and practices impact on different protected groups, including people of different sexual orientations and gender identities.
- ^x Centre of Excellence in Leadership. (2006) *Equality and Sexual Orientation: The Leadership Challenge for Further Education*. London, Centre for Excellence in Leadership
- ^{xi} National Union of Students. (2007) *Evaluating estrangement: a report into the estrangement application process in higher education student finance*. London, NUS
- ^{xii} Ellis, S.J. (2008) *Diversity and Inclusivity at University: a Survey of the Experiences of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Trans Students in the UK*. Sheffield, Sheffield Hallam University Research Archive
- ^{xiii} Equality Challenge Unit. (2009) *The Experience of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Trans Staff and Students in Higher Education*. London, Equality Challenge Unit
- ^{xiv} The Forum for sexual orientation and gender identity equality in post-school education/Lifelong Learning UK. (2010) *Managing the Interface: Sexual Orientation and Faith*. London, Lifelong Learning UK
- ^{xv} Adult learning was defined in that survey as including further education, work-based learning, and adult and community education.
- ^{xvi} Skills Funding Agency. (2011) *Research into Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Equality in Adult Learning*. London, Skills Funding Agency
- ^{xvii} National Union of Students. (2014) *Education beyond the straight and narrow: LGBT students' experience in higher education*. London, NUS

- ^{xviii} Formby, E. (2015) *From Freshers' Week To Finals*. Sheffield, Sheffield Hallam University. Available at: http://www.shu.ac.uk/_assets/pdf/freshers-to-finals-end-report.pdf
- ^{xix} National Union of Students. (2011) *No place for hate: Hate crimes and incidents in further and higher education: Sexual orientation and gender identity*. London, NUS
- ^{xx} National Union of Students. (2012) *Out in sport: LGBT students' experiences of sport*. London, NUS
- ^{xxi} National Union of Students. (2013) *The pound in your pocket: Lesbian, gay and bisexual students*. London, NUS
- ^{xxii} To find the full list of questions asked in the survey, please visit: <https://sgforum.org.uk/research/survey/>. All research findings presented in the learners' section of this report are statistically significant. Some data presented in the staff findings are not statically significant. Wherever this is the case, it is clearly highlighted.
- ^{xxiii} National Union of Students. (2014) *Education beyond the straight and narrow: LGBT students' experience in higher education*. London, NUS
- ^{xxiv} There was no statistical difference in non-binary responses related to learners acting negatively towards people because of their sexual orientation.
- ^{xxv} This is perhaps unsurprising but worth noting since the targets of bi-/homo-/trans-phobic bullying and harassment are not always LGBTQ+ themselves. For example, a heterosexual student could be subject to this kind of bullying because they are perceived to be LGB+.
- ^{xxvi} The equivalent figures reported in the NUS higher education survey were 8.7 for heterosexual students and 7.5 for trans students.
- ^{xxvii} National Union of Students. (2014) *Education beyond the straight and narrow: LGBT students' experience in higher education*. London, NUS

Contact details

The Equality Challenge Unit (ECU)

Equality Challenge Unit (ECU) works to further and support equality and diversity for staff and students in higher education institutions across the UK and in colleges in Scotland. We are a registered charity funded by the Scottish Funding Council, the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales and Universities UK, and through direct subscription from higher education institutions in England and Northern Ireland.

Our approach is evidence-based, using research to identify and develop initiatives that change practices that unfairly exclude, marginalise or disadvantage those with certain protected characteristics. This evidence supports institutions to remove barriers to progression and success for all staff and students.

ECU believes that the benefits of equality and diversity and inclusive practice are key to the wellbeing and success of individuals, the institution's community, the competitiveness and excellence of institutions, and the growth of further and higher education in a global economy.

www.ecu.ac.uk

National Union of Students (NUS)

The National Union of Students (NUS) is a voluntary membership organisation which makes a real difference to the lives of students and its member students' unions.

We are a confederation of 600 students' unions, amounting to more than 95 percent of all higher and further education unions in the UK. Through our member students' unions, we represent the interests of more than seven million students.

NUS champions students to shape the future of education – and create a better world. We promote, defend and extend student rights. We fight discrimination, isolation and injustice. Through practical information and national action, we make sure students can thrive. We support and strengthen students and their unions. We are informed – developing research that influences national policy.

We are active – taking on all the issues that affect students' lives now and in future. We know students. We are students. We are 7 million student voices.

www.nus.org.uk / www.nusconnect.org.uk

University and College Union (UCU)

The University and College Union (UCU) represents over 110,000 academics, lecturers, trainers, instructors, researchers, managers, administrators, computer staff, librarians and postgraduates in universities, colleges, prisons, adult education and training organisations across the UK.

www.ucu.org.uk

The Forum for Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Equality in Post School Education (the Forum)

First meeting in 2007 the Forum brings together partner organisations to co-ordinate work that advances sexual orientation and gender identity equality in post-school education.

We aim to support the work of all learning providers by providing high quality information, advice and guidance.

www.sgforum.org.uk

Learning and Work Institute

Established in 2016, Learning and Work Institute, is a new independent policy and research organisation dedicated to lifelong learning, full employment and inclusion. We bring together over 90 years of combined history and heritage from the 'National Institute of Adult Continuing Education' and the 'Centre for Economic and Social Inclusion'.

We want everyone to have an opportunity to realise their ambitions and potential in learning, work and throughout life.

We believe a better skilled diverse workforce, in better paid jobs, is good for business, good for the economy, and good for society.

Examples of good practice, discussion and policy in par-equalities for the whole FACES (Further, Adult, Community, Education Skills) sector can be found on our equalitiestoolkit website at www.equalitiestoolkit.com and @equalitytoolkit

www.learningandwork.org.uk

