



THE FIRST INTERNATIONAL STUDY  
ON HOMOPHOBIA IN SPORT



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## OUR VISION

**A WORLD WHERE EVERYONE FEELS WELCOME TO PLAY  
AND ENJOY SPORTS WITHOUT FEAR OF DISCRIMINATION.**

**In memory and honour of Marc Naimark, a long-time  
champion of LGBTI athletes who supported this study  
within the Federation of Gay Games. He sadly passed  
away just weeks before it was complete.**

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

In 2014, the Sydney Convicts Rugby Club, Australia's first gay rugby union club, hosted the Bingham Cup, the world cup of gay rugby. The Out on the Fields study was part of a series of initiatives to tackle homophobia in sport undertaken by Bingham Cup Sydney 2014, led by **Andrew Purchas**. The Out on the Fields study was conceptualised and managed by **Erik Denison**, a member of the **Sydney Convicts Rugby Club** and the Bingham Cup Sydney 2014 organising committee. Many others played key roles in the early stages of the study, including Sydney Convicts' President **David Whittaker** and head coach **Charlie Winn**. Important support also came from **Brian Kitts** and **Patrick Burke** at **You Can Play** and **Les Johnson** and **Marc Naimark** at the **International Federation of Gay Games**.

## Data Collection

The most significant support for the study came from the global sports market research firm **Repucom**. They contributed significant hours and resources conducting the research and tabulating the data results. Particular acknowledgment needs to go to Australian Managing Director **Guy Port**, Head of Research **Jo-Ann Foo**, Research Team Members **Levi McCusker**, **Anzie Huynh** and Media Manager **Kate Pembroke**.

## Expert Panel

The world's leading experts on homophobia in sport generously donated their time and considerable expertise to review the study. This ensured the research was conducted to the highest possible standard.

## Financial support

Out on the Fields would not have been possible without a huge amount of support from a variety of individuals and organisations around the world. Almost every service and resource needed to complete the study was donated by those who saw the critical need for this research. Limited funding was provided by Bingham Cup Sydney 2014 and The Australian Sports Commission, through the assistance of Merrilee Barnes, to fund recruitment of female participants.

## Study Management/Coordination

The following people personally donated thousands of hours to make this study possible:

**Erik Denison (Sydney Convicts)**: Study Manager, Lead author, Media and Publicity Manager. **Dou Ribu (Brisbane Hustlers)**: Video Editing, Graphic Design, Recruitment. **Katee Donnelly (Bingham Cup Intern)**: Media Relations, Recruitment. **Alistair Kitchen (Sydney Convicts)**: Co-author of the final report and media material. **Luke Moseley**: Designer of the Final Report. **Joel Spencer**: Designer of Infographics and Media Material. **Andrew Johnston (Brisbane Hustlers)**: Developer of Legacy Website. **Brennan Bastyvanszky (Sydney Convicts)**: Data Analysis. **James Saunders (Sydney Convicts)**: Data Analysis. **John Pye (Anahata Design)**: Recruitment Website. **Kevin Perry (Sydney Convicts)**: Editing. **Ewan Samway (Sydney Convicts)**: Editing.

## Recruitment

Videos and endorsements were provided by a range of high-profile, professional athletes including **Sarah Walsh** (Football/Soccer), **Alex Blackwell** (Cricket), **Darren Lehmann** (Cricket), **Thomas Burgess** (Rugby League), **Sam Burgess** (Rugby League/ Rugby Union), **David Pocock** (Rugby Union), **Adam Ashley-Cooper** (Rugby Union), **Gareth Thomas** (Rugby Union/League), **Michael Sam** (American Football), and **Brock McLean** (Australian rules). Numerous sporting organisations also provided extensive support including **The Qantas Wallabies**, **South Sydney Rabbitohs**, **Australian Rugby Union**, **Cricket Australia**, **Football Federation Australia**, **National Rugby League**, **Australian Football League** and **Netball Australia**.

Finally a number of media organisations and journalists helped recruitment through publicity. These include **Cyd Zeigler** (Outsports), **Reg Domingo / Cec Busby / Shane Haydock** (Gay News Network/Evo Media), **Benedict Brook / Elias Jahshan** (Star Observer), **Matt Akersten** (Same Same), **Jill Stark / Andrew Webster / Georgina Robinson / Peter FitzSimons / David Sygall / Tessa van der Riet** (Fairfax Media), **Tom Lutz** (The Guardian), **Andrew Withers** (ESPN), **Scott De Buitléir** (EILE Magazine Ireland), **Jacqui Stanford** (Gay NZ), **Andrew Potts** (GayStar News), **Robin Perelle** (Daily Xtra Canada) and the editorial team at **Pink News UK**.



# ABOUT THE EXPERT PANEL

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Internationally respected experts on homophobia from six universities played the critical role of ensuring this study was conducted to the highest possible standards of research. While Out on the Fields is not an academic study, the panel of experts reviewed the scope of research, study design, data collection methods, recruitment methods and the contents of the final report and media material to ensure they met strict standards of data collection and analysis. The experts also provided expert media commentary. We are very grateful for their generous contributions of time and expertise.

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**Professor Pat Griffin,**  
*University of Massachusetts, United States*

Pat Griffin is Professor Emerita in Social Justice Education at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst where her research and writing interests were LGBT issues in education and athletics. She has been an advocate for LGBT equality in sport for over 30 years and is often referred to as the Grandmother of the LGBT sports advocacy movement in the United States. She is founding director for Changing the Game: The Gay Lesbian Straight Education Network (GLSEN) Sports Project. She is the former director of the Women's Sports Foundation's It Takes A Team project, an LGBT education project. She regularly consults with the NCAA and college and high school athletic departments on LGBT issues in sports. She is the author of *Strong Women, Deep Closets: Lesbians and Homophobia in Sports*, co-editor of *Teaching For Diversity and Social Justice*, and co-author of *On The Team: Equal Opportunities for Transgender Student-Athletes*, the NCAA Guide for the Inclusion of Transgender Athletes and coauthor of *Champions of Respect: the NCAA resource for the inclusion of LGBTQ student-athletes*. Dr. Griffin played basketball, field hockey and swam at the University of Maryland College Park. She coached high school basketball, field hockey and softball in Montgomery County, MD and coached swimming and diving at the University of Massachusetts Amherst. She won a bronze medal in the 1994 Gay Games Triathlon and a gold medal in the 1998 Gay Games Hammer Throw.

**Dr. Sue Rankin,**  
*Pennsylvania State University (retired), United States*

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**Professor Ian Rivers,**  
*Brunel University London, United Kingdom*

Prof. Ian Rivers is Professor of Human Development and Head of the School of Sport and Education at Brunel University. He conducted the very first studies of homophobic bullying in the UK. He is a leading authority on the harms of homophobic and transphobic bullying on gender and sexuality diverse young people, and as a developmental psychologist has researched extensively the role and effects of bullying. Professor Rivers helped author the first ever literature review of sexual orientation in sport. Among other things it identified a strong need for large scale and international research. This finding was a key motivation for the Out on the Fields study. Prof. Rivers has published numerous articles in the areas of homosexuality and homophobia including 'Coming out', *Context and Reason: First disclosure of sexual orientation and its consequences*, and books such as *Bullying: Experiences and discourses of sexuality and gender*.



# ABOUT THE EXPERT PANEL

**Professor Caroline Symons,  
Victoria University, Australia**

Assoc. Professor Caroline Symons is the Director of Learning and Teaching in the College of Sport and Exercise Science, Victoria University (Australia), research associate of the Institute of Sport, Exercise and Active Living (VU) and lecture's in sport and recreation studies. She is the pioneering researcher of homophobia in sport in Australia, having written extensively on the history and progress of LGBTIQ sportspeople, and most recently was the lead researcher on the first comprehensive study of the sporting experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people in Australia, entitled *Come Out To Play*. This groundbreaking study won a peak Australian health promotion award for knowledge and translation in 2010 and has proved a catalyst for policy change within sport and government. Professor Symons was also lead researcher on a more recent study concerning the impact of homophobic bullying in Australian school sport and Physical Education on same-sex attracted and gender diverse young people's mental health and well-being (*Equal Play*, 2014). Caroline authored the award-winning book: *The Gay Games: A History* (Routledge, 2010), which documented the social, political and organisational development of this major LGBTQ sporting event.

**Professor Guylaine Demers,  
Laval University, Canada**

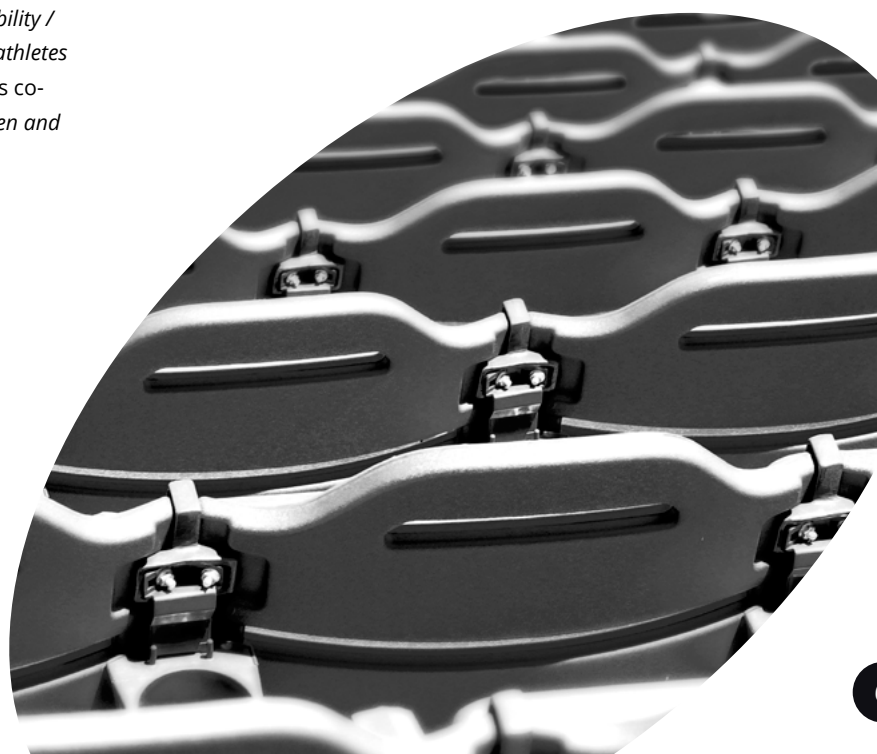
Prof. Guylaine Demers is pioneer of homophobia in sport research in Canada and an expert on women and sexuality diverse people generally. Since being selected by the Canadian Association for the Advancement of Women in Sport and Physical Activity (CAAWS) to be part of a program designed to fight homophobia, Dr. Demers' interests have been primarily focussed on the issue of homophobia in sport. Her publications on the issue include *Homophobia in Sport - Fact of Life, Taboo Subject*, and she has worked alongside Dr. Sandra Kirby on articles such as *Vulnerability / Prevention: Considering the needs of disabled and LGBT athletes in the context of sexual harassment and abuse*, as well as co-authored the book *Playing it Forward: 50 years of Women and Sport in Canada*.

**Dr. Sandra Kirby,  
University of Winnipeg, Canada**

Dr. Sandra Kirby is Professor Emerita at the University of Winnipeg, and a leading academic in child safety and inclusion in sport. After representing Canada at the 1976 Olympic Games, Dr. Kirby turned to an academic career which has been dedicated to the eradication of harassment and homophobia in sport. Her work has included substantial research on child protection from harassment in sport, and has extended to partnerships with UNICEF and the International Olympic Committee. Dr. Kirby is the author or co-author of eleven books and more than thirty book chapters, reports and refereed articles. Recently, Dr. Kirby co-authored *Playing it Forward: 50 years of Women and Sport in Canada*, a look at the women's sporting movement in Canada between 1960 and 2010.

**Dr. Grant O'Sullivan,  
Victoria University, Australia**

Dr Grant O'Sullivan was a research officer in the College of Sport and Exercise Science at Victoria University for most of the study. His work focuses on the inclusiveness of sporting environments, including physical education classes, for same-sex-attracted and gender diverse young people and adults. Recently he was involved in the *Equal Play* research project, which assessed the mental health impacts of homophobic bullying on same-sex attracted and gender diverse youth. He is a health psychologist and has extensive expertise in working with same-sex attracted and gender diverse communities. In his youth, he participated in both competitive gymnastics and track and field.



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# FOREWORDS



The Out on the Fields study has cast some very bright light on the prevalence of homophobia in sport in the UK and around the world. One of the findings that stood out the most for me was that gay,

lesbian and bisexual people participate in absolutely every team sport you can think of. This means it's very likely that just about every team or club has at least one gay player. Unfortunately, these players feel they have to keep a major part of their life invisible and keep their sexuality secret. I am not surprised to hear this, especially since homophobic and discriminatory language is still very widely used and heard on sporting fields around the world. One of the most damaging is jokes and humour. We all like to have a good laugh when playing or watching sport. However, when this

comes at the expense of gay people, it pushes athletes trying to hide their sexuality, deeper in the closet or they simply stop playing team sports. I am one of those who hid his sexuality for years because this kind of language created an environment where it seemed impossible to be accepted as a gay man. The good news is I don't believe most people making these jokes and using these slurs are being intentionally homophobic. After I came out of the closet, many of my greatest supporters were teammates who in the past, had made the most jokes about gay people. They didn't realise they were unintentionally causing great pain to one of their closest friends. This awareness is important however, change also needs to begin with individual choices. Whether you're a coach or an athlete enjoying a sport, I encourage you to do your part to make sports welcoming and safe for gay athletes like me.

- GARETH THOMAS,  
WELSH RUGBY UNION AND RUGBY LEAGUE, RETIRED



The Out on the Fields study is a great step towards ending homophobia in sport as it identifies the many challenges and very real fears of discrimination that LGB athletes face. The study found that many

LGB athletes develop the courage to come out about their sexuality to their teammates when they are part of a sport that already has openly gay participants. This was true for me and I'm very grateful to the openly gay women who bravely came out before me, making my own process of accepting my sexuality easier. In turn, I hope that by being

open about my sexuality I can show others that there is nothing wrong with being gay and this may help them in some way feel more confident in coming out of the closet. As more of us become visible, being an gay athlete will become common-place and attitudes about gay athletes will change more quickly. The alternative is remaining silent about our sexuality, which I believe only supports the idea that there is something inherently wrong with us and that we need to hide such an important part of our life. This is why I'm proud of who I am and I'm proud to be given the opportunity to represent Australia playing cricket. I'm just a sport loving woman who just happens to also be gay.

- ALEX BLACKWELL,  
AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL CRICKET TEAM, VICE-CAPTAIN



I'm not surprised soccer is one of the most popular sports among gay, lesbian and bisexual athletes. My game sets the standard for participation around the world. However, while many gay people are playing this amazing

game, most also still feel the need to keep their sexuality secret. I believe one of the biggest reasons people remain in the closet is the homophobic language they hear. This extends to the slurs and chants heard from spectators. Not only is this homophobic behaviour causing gay players to feel unwelcome, the Out on the Fields study found it's also affecting fans. The study found the overwhelming majority of participants, including the many straight people who

took part, thought an openly gay, lesbian or bisexual person would not be very safe as a spectator. This is not acceptable, everyone should be able to enjoy sports. It's time that all sports enforce a zero tolerance of hateful language on and off the fields. I strongly support immediate venue bans for anyone using homophobic, racist or any other form of discriminatory language. Players also need to receive stiff penalties for using this language. It is also important that international governing bodies, including FIFA, make committed and determined efforts to ensure LGBTI people feel welcome. Sport is about having fun and soccer can be the most enjoyable game to play. Let's ensure everyone is having fun while participating or watching the sports they love.

- ROBBIE ROGERS  
SOCCER PLAYER, LA GALAXY





# INTRODUCTION

The inclusion and acceptance of lesbian, gay and bisexual (LGB) people across the English-speaking world has improved dramatically in recent years. It was not long ago that in each of these countries it was illegal to sleep with a person of the same sex, let alone marry them. Without doubt, there is much to celebrate. However, such progress does not mean that lesbian, gay and bisexual people feel included in all parts of society.

For many, sporting culture, in particular team sporting culture, has not seen the same progress observed in broader society. In the recent past, smaller scale research projects have shown homophobia and discrimination to be commonly experienced by athletes and fans alike. Unfortunately, this research has been dismissed by some groups, including national sporting organisations, for being too limited in scope. To date, there have been few large-scale and no international studies conducted on the topic. This study changes that. It is the first international and the largest study conducted into the experiences of LGB people in team sporting environments.

The study's findings come at a time of increased awareness and heightened interest in the issue of homophobia in sports. Michael Sam made international headlines last year when he became the first American Football player to be drafted into the NFL after very publicly 'coming out of the closet'. His story captivated many and continues to do so simply because he is so rare as an openly gay male professional athlete. For example, at the 2014 Men's FIFA World Cup, held within months of Michael Sam's announcement, none of the 736 competitors were openly gay. This would indicate that there are no gay men in international men's soccer, and yet this study found soccer is one of the most popular sports among gay and bisexual men. More likely is that none of the players were comfortable revealing their sexuality, something not unique to soccer. Out on the Fields discovered that many athletes of all sexualities, playing all sports, choose to remain silent. Very few, particularly in youth sport, feel safe to come out of the closet in the same way as Michael Sam. Many fear homophobia — including some 30% of gay male

participants who said they did not come out because they feared discrimination from coaches and officials.

The Out on the Fields study provides insight into the experiences of LGB athletes, such as how many remain in the closet, but it also looks at the experiences of LGB people, generally, around sport such as their experiences as spectators. The study takes a particular focus on issues of sexuality, rather than gender, which is why we use LGB rather than the now standard LGBTI. However, the study goes beyond capturing the experiences and views of LGB people. It also includes the experiences and perspectives of nearly 2500 heterosexual/straight participants who make up more than 25% of the participants. By including people with a wide range of sexualities, the study provides the opportunity to conduct a range of comparisons between these sexualities. The international nature of the study also provides the opportunity for insightful comparisons between the English-speaking countries. This kind of international comparison provides the opportunity to identify areas where individual countries are doing a better job at addressing homophobia, so their approach can be studied and potentially replicated.

Unfortunately, the study found few positive signs in any country that LGB people are welcome and safe playing team sports. Instead, even in the most promising countries, such as Canada, discrimination and homophobia were still widely experienced by both LGB and straight participants. The majority of participants, for example, overwhelmingly shared the view that youth sport is not a safe place for LGB people. Another issue on which participants were largely unanimous was the topic of spectator stands - an alarming 78% of the nearly 9500 participants believed visibly gay, lesbian or bisexual people (such as if they showed affection to a partner) are 'not very safe' as spectators at sporting events. This concerning finding raises many questions about what sporting organisations and venues are doing to ensure the safety of spectators. Moreover, this finding may also be of great interest to companies that sponsor these sporting events, given such a large segment of the population feels unsafe attending.



# INTRODUCTION

We hope the findings from Out on the Fields answer the question of whether homophobia exists in sports. We also hope that this allows us to collectively move forward to focusing on how to ensure LGB people feel welcome and safe in all sporting environments. Without a doubt, more research will be needed to answer this question. However, Out on the Fields also provides some indication of where we can start. We asked study participants of all sexualities for their perspective on how best to address homophobia in sport. They overwhelmingly said that change needs to start at the grassroots levels, starting with changing behaviour in youth sport. Participants also said change needs to come from leadership at the top, through action from government and sporting organisations responsible for overseeing and managing sporting culture. Change can begin now with each of us, collectively, deciding that homophobia is no longer acceptable in sporting

environments. Players, coaches and fans can call out homophobia when it is seen or heard and officials can decide to use existing regulations, which ban homophobic behaviour, and take a zero tolerance approach to homophobic slurs and language. Change is not going to happen overnight, but hopefully the results of this study will shine a spotlight on behaviour that has historically been accepted and even defended as 'part of the game.' We need to ensure that this 'game' no longer makes LGB people feel unsafe and unwelcome.





## HOW THE STUDY CAME ABOUT

Out on the Fields was initiated by the volunteers on the organising committee for Bingham Cup Sydney 2014, the biennial world cup of gay rugby. The study was part of a wider series of initiatives undertaken to shine a light on and erase homophobia in sport. This included obtaining a commitment by the five major professional Australian sports (Australian Rules, rugby league, rugby union, football and cricket) to address homophobia and implement policies and programs contained in the Australian Anti-Homophobia and Inclusion Framework for Australian Sport. The Bingham Committee also initiated an ambassador program with elite athletes from Australia's major professional sports and launched a series of You Can Play video campaign messages, all with the goal of reducing homophobia in sport. The Bingham Cup Sydney 2014 Committee took the lead in coordinating this research, however, the study would not have been possible without the support of a wide variety of other passionate and caring individuals and organisations who donated their time, resources and expertise. This included the Federation of Gay Games, You Can Play, the Australian Sports Commission, Sydney Convicts Rugby Club and International Gay Rugby. The most critical support came from sports market research company Repucom, which conducted the research pro bono.

## DOES THE STUDY LOOK AT SPORTING ISSUES FOR THE GENDER DIVERSE COMMUNITY?

You will note the study uses LGB rather than the now standard LGBTQ or LGBTI acronym. This is because the study is focused on understanding the experience of sexual minorities and the prevalence of discrimination due to sexuality in sport. Researchers of gender and sexuality diversity in sport have found that while there are many similarities between transphobia and homophobia, these two forms of discrimination also vary considerably (eg. transgender athletes can be excluded from sport teams that align with their gender identity). For this reason, we decided to focus the study on issues of sexuality. Having said this, the Out on the Fields questionnaire and data collection process was not gender specific, nor was it exclusive of transgender participants. Those who identified as 'gay, lesbian, bi-sexual, straight or other' were welcome to participate regardless of their gender identity. Our hope is this study will help highlight issues around inclusivity in sport which will in turn motivate further research into the experiences of all minorities. Readers will also note the study includes the experiences of bisexual men and women. Like gays and lesbians, bisexuals are subject to discrimination on the sporting field, though they experience biphobia instead of homophobia. For the greater part of this report, the word 'homophobia' is used as a cover-all term to describe the discrimination felt by sexuality diverse peoples, but this should not imply that the experiences of discrimination are uniform across the sexualities.

## ABOUT THE STUDY PARTICIPANTS

Participants had a range of educational, age, employment and social backgrounds, however nearly 50% of participants were under the age of 30 and nearly 70% were under the age of 40.

Participants by sexuality	TOTAL 9494	GAY 4672	LESBIAN 1386	BISEXUAL 709	STRAIGHT 2494	OTHER 181	
Participants by country	USA 2064	UK 1796	AUSTRALIA 3006	CANADA 1123	IRELAND 501	NZ 631	OTHER 373
Participants by age group	15-17 3%	18-21 15%	22-29 29%	30-39 24%	40-49 16%	50-59 9%	60+ 4%

# KEY FINDINGS



## FACTS ABOUT THE STUDY

The first international study and largest ever conducted on homophobia in sport

There were 9494 participants including 2494 heterosexuals

Data collection, analysis and the final report were reviewed by a panel of 7 academic advisors from 4 countries and 6 universities

Data was collected through a 10-15 minute anonymous online survey promoted by governments, corporations, professional athletes and mainstream/LGBTI media and sporting organisations

The study focused primarily on issues of sexuality affecting lesbian, gay and bisexual (LGB) people living in the 6 predominantly English-speaking countries

## YOUTH SPORT (UNDER 22)

There was considerable agreement across all sexualities and genders around homophobia in youth team sport. 73% of participants believe youth sport is not safe and welcoming for LGB people

Most gay men felt unwelcome in sport with 54% saying they are 'not at all accepted' or only 'accepted a little' versus 36% of lesbians who felt this way

More than 1 in 4 (27%) gay men said they did not participate in youth team sports

Of those who did not participate in youth team sports, 44% of gay men said negative experiences in school PE class turned them off and 31% said they feared rejection because of their sexuality

## ACCEPTANCE AND INCLUSION

ONLY  
1%

of all participants believe LGB people were 'completely accepted' in sporting culture while nearly half (46%) believed LGB people are 'not at all accepted' or only 'accepted a little'

78%

said an openly gay, lesbian or bisexual person would not be very safe as a spectator at a sporting event

62%

of all respondents and 73% of gay men believed homophobia is more common in team sports than in other parts of society

Participants believed the most likely sporting environment for homophobia to occur is spectator stands (41%) and school PE classes (21%)

84%

of participants said homophobic jokes and humour occur 'all the time,' 'often' or 'sometimes' around sports while only 1% thought they 'never occur'

# KEY FINDINGS

## PREVALENCE OF HOMOPHOBIA AND DISCRIMINATION

**80%** of all participants and 82% of LGB participants said they have witnessed or experienced homophobia in sport

More than half of gay (54%) and bisexual men (60%) and nearly half of all lesbians (48%) and 29% of bisexual women said they had personally experienced homophobia

**28%** of straight male participants said they had also been personally targeted

Young LGB participants (under 22) were much more likely to report personally experience homophobia. For example, 62% of gay male youth said they had been personally targeted compared to 53% of gay male adults

## FORMS OF HOMOPHOBIA EXPERIENCED

Homophobic language, in particular slurs such as 'faggot' or 'dyke,' was the most common form witnessed or personally experienced by all participants, regardless of sexuality.

Of those reporting personal experiences:

**84%** of gay men and 82% of lesbians had received verbal slurs such as faggot or dyke

**38%** of gay men and 18% of lesbians had been bullied

**27%** of gay men and 16% of lesbians had received verbal threats

**19%** of gay men and 9% of lesbians had been physically assaulted

## COMING OUT

**81%** of gay men and 74% of lesbians who were under 22 at the time of the study reported being completely or partially in the closet to teammates while playing youth sport

Half of gay men (48%) and nearly 1 in 3 lesbians (32%) said they hid their sexuality in youth sport because they were worried about being rejected by teammates while 31% of gay men and 15% of lesbians were worried about discrimination from coaches and officials

LGB people were more likely to come out while playing adult team sport, however, 49% of gay men, 39% of lesbians, 80% of bisexual men and 61% of bisexual women reported remaining in the closet to some or all of their team

Even as adults, 44% of gay men and 29% of lesbians were worried they would be rejected by teammates and 20% of gay men and 12% of lesbians were worried about discrimination from coaches and officials

Athletes who did 'come out' said the most helpful things were having an ally or supporter on their team and playing for a team that has a culture which is supportive of diversity. For men, playing on a 'gay team' was important to being able to come out but it was less so for women



# KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

## PARTICIPANTS' RECOMMENDATIONS

Participants were provided with a range of possible solutions and asked to pick three, ranking them in order of effectiveness in addressing homophobia in sports. They could also submit their own. The top three solutions for homophobia in sport chosen by participants were:

- 1 Start early with schools; coaches and parents need to take homophobia and bullying seriously in sporting environments
- 2 National sporting organisations need to adopt and promote clear anti-homophobia and LGB inclusion policies for professional and amateur players
- 3 LGB professional sporting stars need to come out of the closet to set an example

## RESEARCHERS' RECOMMENDATIONS

- In many parts of the world PE teachers receive no training about homophobia or supporting LGB athletes. Coaches, PE teachers and sport officials should be required to undertake mandatory training on how best to support LGB athletes and create positive environments that promote success in youth sport
- Sporting organisations, schools and teams should adopt a zero tolerance for players and fans who engage in homophobic behaviour
- LGB athletes struggling with their sexuality need some form of specifically tailored support, ideally from peers
- Straight athletes at all levels of sport should be encouraged to be an ally and supporter of anyone struggling with their sexuality
- More research needs to be conducted on the most effective ways to change behaviour within sport and ways to ensure LGB feel welcome to participate in team sports





# TEAM SPORT PARTICIPATION

One of the core objectives of Out on the Fields was to determine whether LGB people participate in organised team sports, particularly in their youth. We also wanted to determine which sports LGB people played. If participants said they did not play any team sports, we aimed to determine the reasons. Combined, this information can help us to better understand whether there are any barriers to team sport participation, and if so, how they might be overcome.

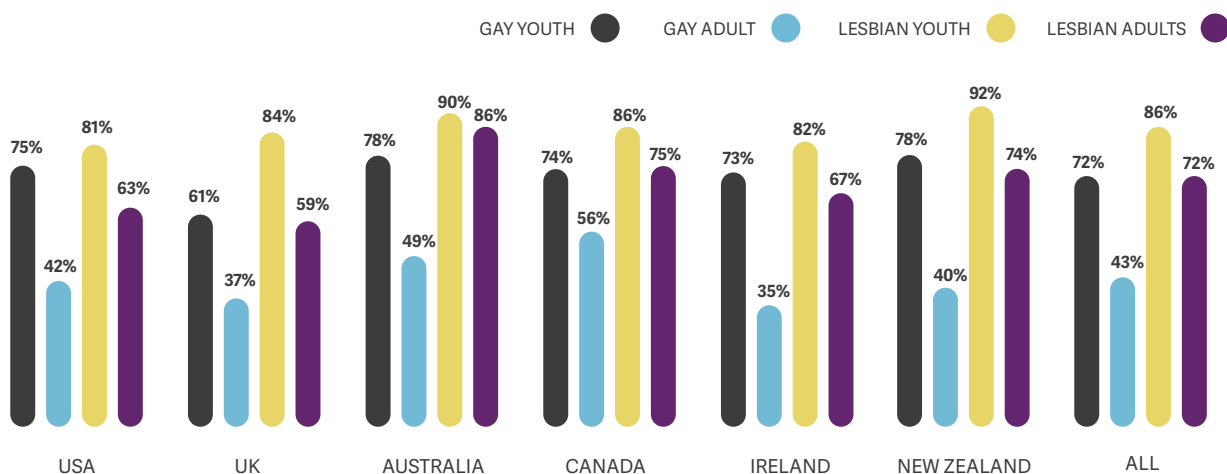
The rates of LGB sport participation, particularly among gay male participants, were higher than expected given previous, smaller-scale studies have found much lower rates of participation. This difference could suggest the Out on the Fields study may have attracted participants who are particularly sports oriented. Alternatively, the results could reflect a more accurate portrayal of sport participation due to this study's size and scope. Either way, while it is a positive sign that so many gay men say they played

HOWEVER, ONE IN FOUR GAY MEN DID NOT PARTICIPATE IN YOUTH TEAM SPORTS, VERSES ONE IN SEVEN LESBIANS.

One of the most positive findings from the study was that the overwhelming majority of LGB participants had participated in organised team sports, particularly in their youth (under 22). In fact, 73% of gay men and 88% of lesbians said they played or are currently playing youth team sports (18% of participants were under 22 at the time of the study). However, the study also found that this rate of team sport participation declined significantly as people grew older.

youth sport, the rates of sport participation also highlight a potential cause for concern. In the general population, men are more likely to play team sports than women. However, the study found the opposite among LGB participants. Lesbians were much more likely to play team sports than gay men. The participation by lesbians is a positive sign that they feel welcome to play sports. However, one in four gay men did not participate in youth team sports, versus one in seven lesbians.

ORGANISED TEAM SPORTS PARTICIPATION\*  
PERCENTAGE OF PARTICIPATION IN TEAM SPORTS



\*Male and female bisexual participation was too low in some countries for accurate country comparisons



## REASONS LGB PEOPLE DECIDE NOT TO PLAY TEAM SPORTS

Those who did not participate in team sports were asked for their reasons. They were provided with a long list of possible answers or they could supply their own. They could choose multiple answers.

While many participants said they simply had no interest in team sports, a large number also said they were turned off team sports by their experiences in school physical education class and/or they didn't play team sports because they feared discrimination.



**HOMOPHOBIC SLURS AND JOKES WERE QUITE COMMON DESPITE A "SCHOOL POLICY" AGAINST SUCH ACTIONS.**

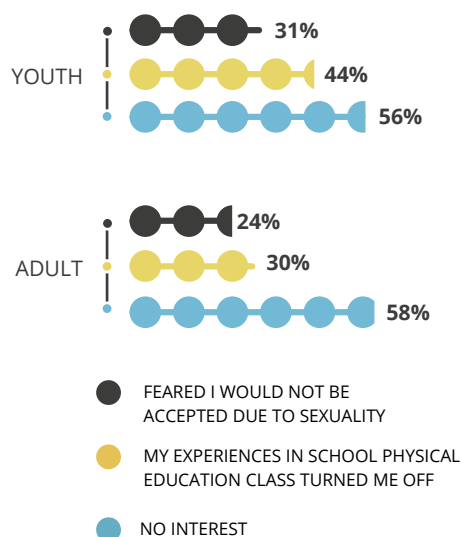
-DEREK, USA



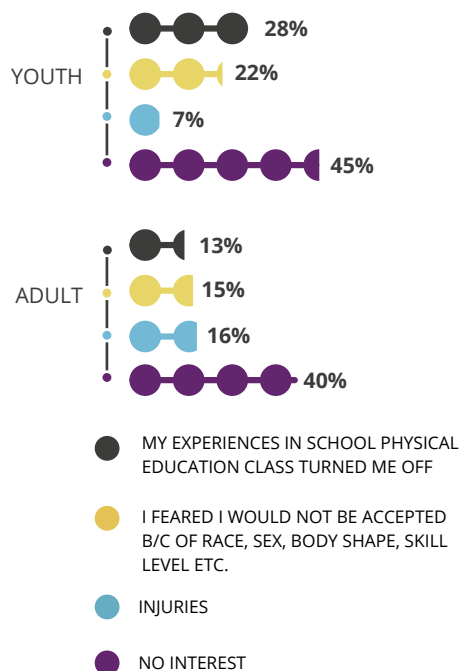
Lesbians were more likely to fear they would be discriminated against due to skill or ability, while men were more worried about discrimination due to their sexuality. This fear of homophobia is particularly evident among gay men in the UK, Ireland and New Zealand, which were the countries with the biggest declines in gay male sport participation between youth and adult.

Engaging in team sports, particular when young, has a very long list of well-established and clearly documented health, social, developmental and psychological benefits. This includes improved self-esteem, ability to work with others, problem solving abilities and communication. This is why it is both encouraging that so many lesbian women are participating in team sports and also concerning that one in four gay men are not participating. Far more concerning is that many cite fears of discrimination or negative experiences in school physical education class as the reason. Although participants weren't asked to explain specifically why PE class turned them off team sports, other studies, such as Australia's Victoria University's "Equal Play Study," found school PE class to be the most hostile of all school

### TOP REASONS FOR NOT PLAYING TEAM SPORTS AS YOUTH OR ADULTS: GAY MEN



### TOP REASONS FOR NOT PLAYING TEAM SPORTS AS YOUTH OR ADULTS: LESBIANS



environments for LGB students. The study, and others like it, found that experiences in PE class led to serious mental health problems such as depression, anxiety and even suicide. This may shed light on why so many gay participants in Out on the Fields said their experiences in PE class turned them off of team sports.

Finally, it is important to note that the study did not specifically ask participants who said they had 'no interest' in team sports if they instead played individualised sports. However, participants were given the opportunity to provide their own reasons and indeed many did indicate they engaged in sports such as tennis and swimming.

TOP REASONS FOR NOT PARTICIPATING IN ADULT TEAM SPORT  
COUNTRIES WITH THE LARGEST DECLINE BETWEEN YOUTH AND ADULT SPORT • GAY MEN



## WHICH TEAM SPORTS DO LGB PEOPLE PLAY?

Out on the Fields found LGB participants engaged, at least to some degree, in every single team sport listed as a possible option. Of particular interest, in all countries, a significant portion of participants said they played their nation's most popular team sports, such as American Football and Ice Hockey in the United States and Canada, Soccer in the UK and Ireland and Rugby Union in Australia and New Zealand.

This finding, that LGB participants firstly engage in such a wide variety of sports, and secondly that they participate in the most mainstream sports, should be of particular interest to sport governing bodies. While they may not be open about their sexuality, without exception LGB athletes can be found playing every team sport, and therefore need support from all sports.

Additionally, the findings challenge some prevailing stereotypes about gay men and women. Specifically stereotypes that gay men do not play team sport and in particular, do not play contact or sports considered

to be more 'masculine'. The study found this stereotype to be without merit. In fact, Rugby Union was the most popular sport amongst adult gay male participants.\*

### IN ALL COUNTRIES, LGB ATHLETES PLAY THEIR NATION'S MOST POPULAR TEAM SPORTS

Equally, there are prevailing stereotypes that lesbians gravitate toward these contact or 'masculine' sports. This was also shown to be without foundation. The most popular sports amongst female participants of all ages were soccer, softball and basketball.

Finally, the study found gay male participants moved away from playing basketball and baseball, which they played in their youth, and as adults they were more likely to play rugby union and volleyball. It is worth further investigation into whether rugby and volleyball are seen by gay men as more welcoming and accepting than other sports such as basketball and baseball.

Most popular sports played by		sexuality	
<b>GAY YOUTH</b>	<b>BISEXUAL MALE YOUTH</b>	<b>LESBIAN YOUTH</b>	<b>BISEXUAL FEMALE YOUTH</b>
SOCCER 40%	SOCCER 47%	SOCCER 46%	SOCCER 34%
BASKETBALL 26%	BASKETBALL 34%	BASKETBALL 40%	BASKETBALL 33%
BASEBALL 20%	BASEBALL 27%	SOFTBALL 30%	NETBALL 32%
<b>GAY ADULTS</b>	<b>BISEXUAL MALE ADULTS</b>	<b>LESBIAN ADULTS</b>	<b>BISEXUAL FEMALE ADULTS</b>
RUGBY UNION* 20%	SOCCER 22%	SOCCER 34%	SOCCER 21%
VOLLEYBALL 19%	SOFTBALL 21%	SOFTBALL 24%	BASKETBALL 16%
SOCCER 17%	RUGBY 19%	BASKETBALL 16%	NETBALL 15%

\* Although the Bingham Cup, the world cup of gay rugby, is the lead partner of this study it's unlikely this had much, if any, impact on the study results, in particular the findings around the popularity of certain sports. This is supported by the fact many more gay men play rugby union in the United States than any other country, however, rugby does not appear in

the top 4 most popular sports played by American male participants. Furthermore, sporting organisations of all kinds helped promote the study, including the Federation of Gay Games at the Gay Games 9 and numerous national sporting organisations such as Football Federation Australia as well as athletes, such as Australia's national cricket vice captain.



# LGB ATHLETES AND COMING OUT



## CASE STUDY

# RUGBY UNION

“

I WAS COMFORTABLE ABOUT TELLING PEOPLE I WAS GAY AND **NO ONE MADE A JUDGEMENT.** WITH THIS NEW CONFIDENCE I DECIDED TO START TO PLAY RUGBY AGAIN AT THE AGE OF 28...

– ANTON, AUSTRALIA

“

“Growing up in rural Wales I always knew I was different. Back then there were no role models to look up to and although I loved rugby I hated sport because I felt different. Not playing sport really affected my health and my choices in life and I became quite overweight. I decided to start a new life where people didn't know me and move to a completely different country. I finally became comfortable with being who I am in a city where no one knew my business. Living in Manchester, I was comfortable about telling people I was gay and no one made a judgement. With this new confidence I decided to start to play rugby again at the age of 28 and I joined a gay and inclusive team .... I finally got to be a part of the game I loved with others who've been through similar situations.... I've now moved to Melbourne, Australia and I am the President of my rugby club. I am so happy to lead an organisation that is able to provide access to play a game that might not have been available to people.”

– ANTON, AUSTRALIA



A powerful measure of the prevalence of homophobia in sporting environments is whether LGB athletes feel comfortable being open about their sexuality to their teammates or officials. Participants of all ages were asked whether they were out of the closet while playing both youth sports (under 22) and adult sports.

Overall, the majority of LGB people said they kept or continue to keep their sexuality secret while playing youth and adult team sport. However, there are encouraging signs that things may be starting to change and more people are starting to come out of the closet. We separated the answers of those who were over and under the age of 22 at the time of the study. Participants who were under 22 were more likely to be out of the closet while playing in their youth than previous generations were. For example, only 5% of gay men and 14% of lesbians who are now over the age of 22 said they were 'out to everyone' while playing sport in their youth. This compares to 19% of gay men and 27% of lesbians who were under the age of 22.

While there are encouraging signs that more people are coming out to teammates in their youth, at least partially, it's important to note that 81% of gay and 76% of lesbian participants who were under 22 at the time of the study still felt the need to keep their sexuality secret from at least some or all of their teammates. Furthermore, those under 22 represent just under 20% of the participants of the study, while nearly half were under 30 years old. This suggests that many of the participants would have relatively recent experience with youth sport, and sport in general, and so the overall findings from the study would be a fairly relevant reflection of the acceptance of LGB people in sporting culture.

*Notes about the data tables: Due to the relatively small number of bisexual men and women, we have not provided country comparisons.*



## CASE STUDY

# MICHAEL SAM

Michael Sam, 25, came out to the world through a high profile story in Sports Illustrated in February 2014. However, despite making headlines around the world, it was old news to his teammates on the University of Missouri American Football team. In August 2013, Sam took the opportunity of a team “introduce yourself” at the start of the season to inform his Missouri teammates that he was gay. In a recent interview, Sam told Oprah Winfrey his team was supportive, “They didn’t look at me as gay, the gay person...they looked at me like their friend.” Sam played a key role in the University of Missouri winning the college championships, The Cotton Bowl Classic.

Sam’s performance during the season made him the consensus All-American and the Southeastern Conference (SEC) Defensive Player of the Year. Most football commentators expected him to be an early, third or fourth round draft pick into the NFL, but in the end the St. Louis Rams drafted Sam in the seventh round. He was the 249th of 256 players, one of the last selected by a team. While many commentators at the time suggested Sam’s choice to come out of the closet contributed to him not being chosen earlier, Sam did make history as the first openly gay person to be drafted into the NFL. Unfortunately he was later dropped by both the St. Louis Rams and the Dallas Cowboys, but he remains a trailblazer and his story remains an inspiration to many young gay athletes. Sam’s experience shows that it is possible to come out of the closet and be accepted by teammates - even in the most ‘masculine’ of sports.

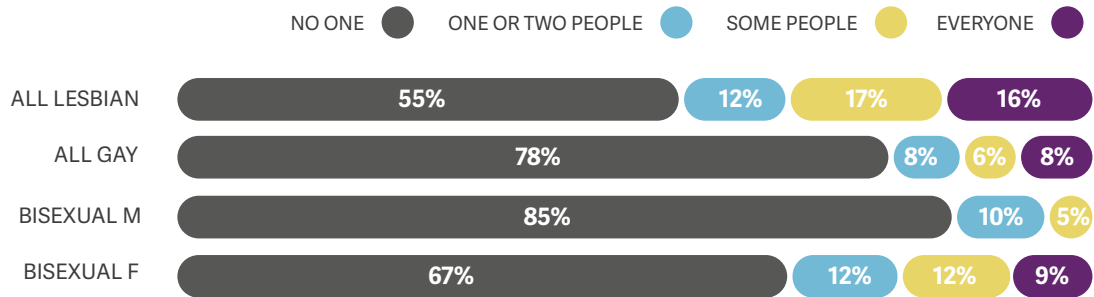
“

THEY DIDN’T LOOK AT ME AS GAY,  
**THE GAY PERSON...**THEY LOOKED  
 AT ME LIKE THEIR FRIEND.

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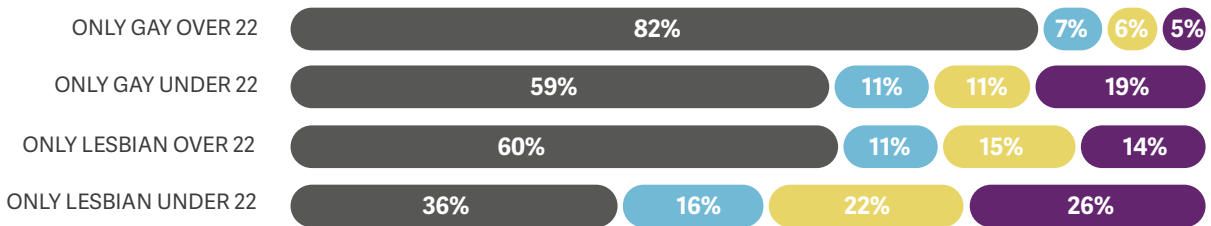
'OUT OF THE CLOSET' TO TEAM MATES WHEN UNDER THE AGE OF 22

ALL PARTICIPANTS • COMPARISON BY SEXUALITY



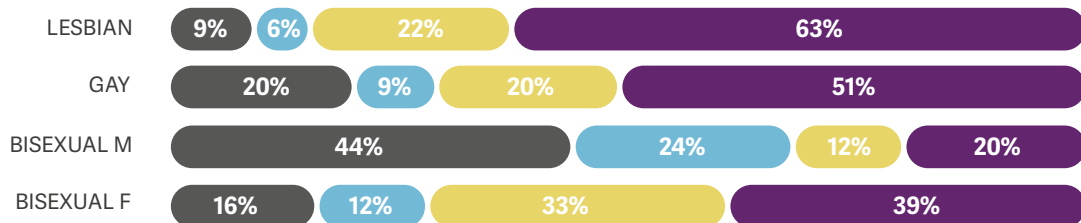
'OUT OF THE CLOSET' TO TEAM MATES WHEN UNDER THE AGE OF 22

COMPARISON OF RESPONSES PARTICIPANTS <22 WITH >22 AT THE TIME OF THE STUDY



'OUT OF THE CLOSET' TO TEAM MATES WHEN OVER THE AGE OF 22

ALL PARTICIPANTS • COMPARISON BY SEXUALITY





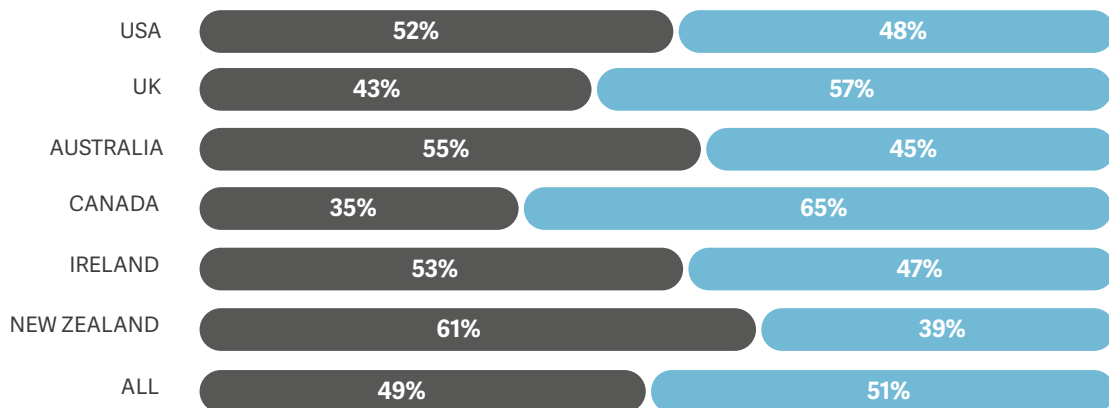
## OUT OF THE CLOSET TO TEAM MATES WHEN UNDER THE AGE OF 22

GAY MALES UNDER 22 AT THE TIME • COMPARISON BY COUNTRY



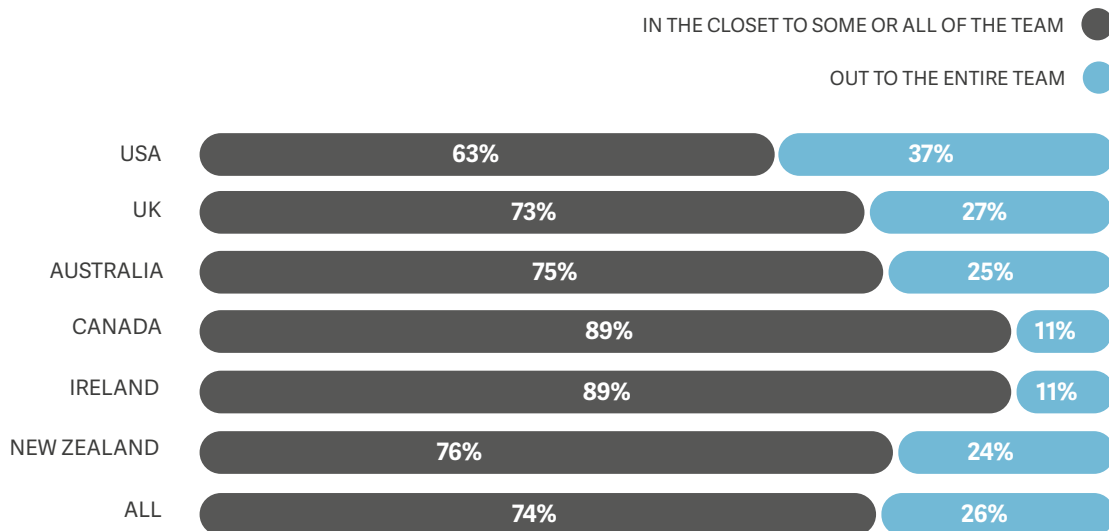
## OUT OF THE CLOSET TO TEAM MATES WHEN OVER THE AGE OF 22

GAY MALES • COMPARISON BY COUNTRY



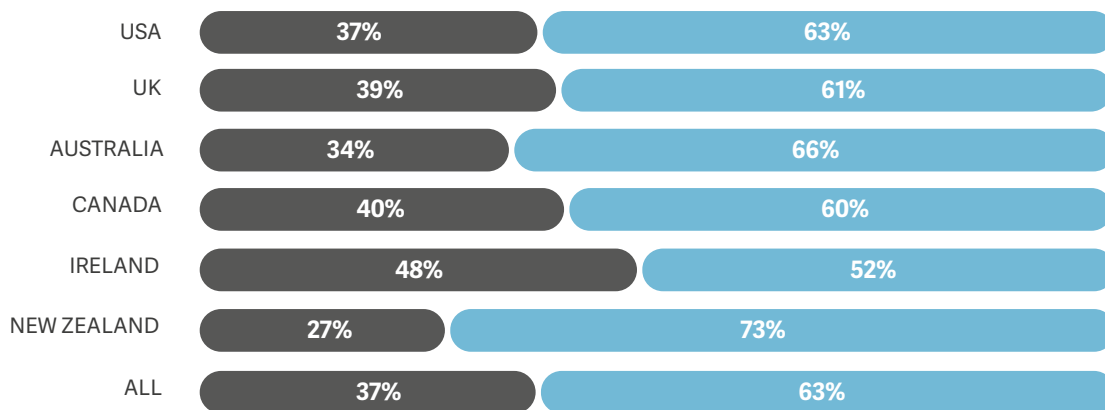
## OUT OF THE CLOSET TO TEAM MATES WHEN UNDER THE AGE OF 22

UNDER 22 AT TIME OF STUDY • LESBIANS • COMPARISON BY COUNTRY



## OUT OF THE CLOSET TO TEAM MATES WHEN OVER THE AGE OF 22

LESBIANS • COMPARISON BY COUNTRY



Top 3 countries where LGB athletes are most likely to stay in the closet

UNDER THE AGE OF 22

GAY

- 1. New Zealand **88%**
- 2. Australia **87%**
- 3. Canada **86%**

LESBIAN

- 1. Ireland **89%**
- 2. Canada **89%**
- 3. New Zealand **76%**

OVER THE AGE OF 22

GAY

- 1. New Zealand **61%**
- 2. Australia **55%**
- 3. USA **52%**

LESBIAN

- 1. Ireland **48%**
- 2. New Zealand **40%**
- 3. UK **39%**

## REASONS LGB ATHLETES STAY IN THE CLOSET

With so many LGB participants deciding to remain in the closet, particularly while playing youth sport, those participants who hid their sexuality from at least some people on their team were asked for their reasons. Study participants were given the opportunity to select as many answers as they desired from a long list of possible answers. Many respondents selected three or more responses from the list of possible options. This suggests that there

These findings suggest that many LGB athletes playing team sports fear discrimination if they come out of the closet. Of particular concern is the high number of LGB athletes who fear discrimination from coaches and officials. These officials are responsible for creating and enforcing a team culture that supports diversity, especially in formative youth sport years.



ALTHOUGH I AM OUT TO MY FAMILY IT HAS TAKEN ME MORE THAN TWO YEARS TO COME OUT TO MY SPORTING CLUB AND SPORTS FRIENDS BECAUSE I FEAR THE RIDICULE AND ISOLATION. I HAVE ONLY VERY RECENTLY COME OUT TO A FEW PEOPLE ON MY LOCAL SPORTS TEAM.

-BRIANNA, AUSTRALIA



are multiple reasons and factors involved in the decision to keep one's sexuality secret while playing team sports. The study found many participants remained in the closet because they feared various forms of discrimination. This was particularly true while playing youth sport with many saying they hid their sexuality because:

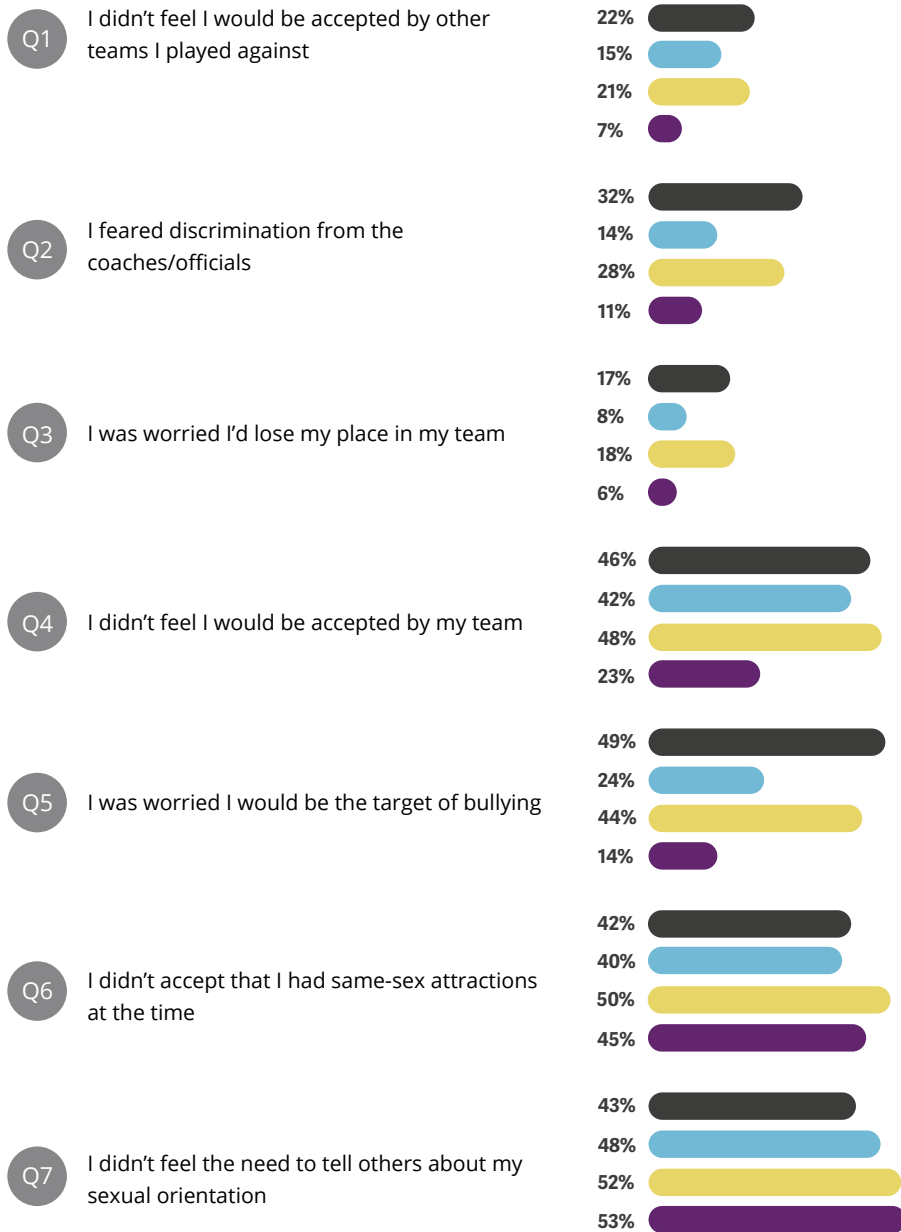
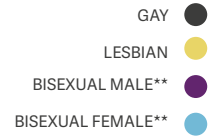
- Nearly half (49%) of gay men and one in four (24%) of lesbians said they feared they would be bullied
- Nearly half of gay men (46%) and 42% of lesbians said they were worried they would not be accepted by their team
- Almost one in three gay men (33%) and more than one in seven (14%) lesbians feared discrimination from coaches and officials

While fears of discrimination were a key consideration for many who decided to remain in the closet, many also said they did not come out because they did not accept the fact they were attracted to the same-sex at the time.

Interestingly many athletes of both sexes, particularly those who played adult sport, said they did not come out of the closet because "they didn't feel a need to do so." In some cases this might have been because these participants were part of 'gay teams' and so there was no need to come out to others. However previous research has found some LGB people 'compartmentalise' their life to avoid being open with their sexuality when inconvenient or dangerous. This of course means they would likely have to lie about their personal lives to teammates. Indeed a number of participants who submitted their personal stories as part of the study, such as one named Jason from the USA, said they regret this decision to keep their sexuality secret. Jason, who played on a university team, says "*I was cautiously out to several members. But at that time, I never felt the need to be out (to everyone), and that saddens me now because I had created a barrier between myself and many good teammates.*"

# REASONS FOR NOT COMING OUT TO TEAMMATES WHILE PLAYING YOUTH SPORT\*

ALL SEXUALITIES • UNDER THE AGE OF 22

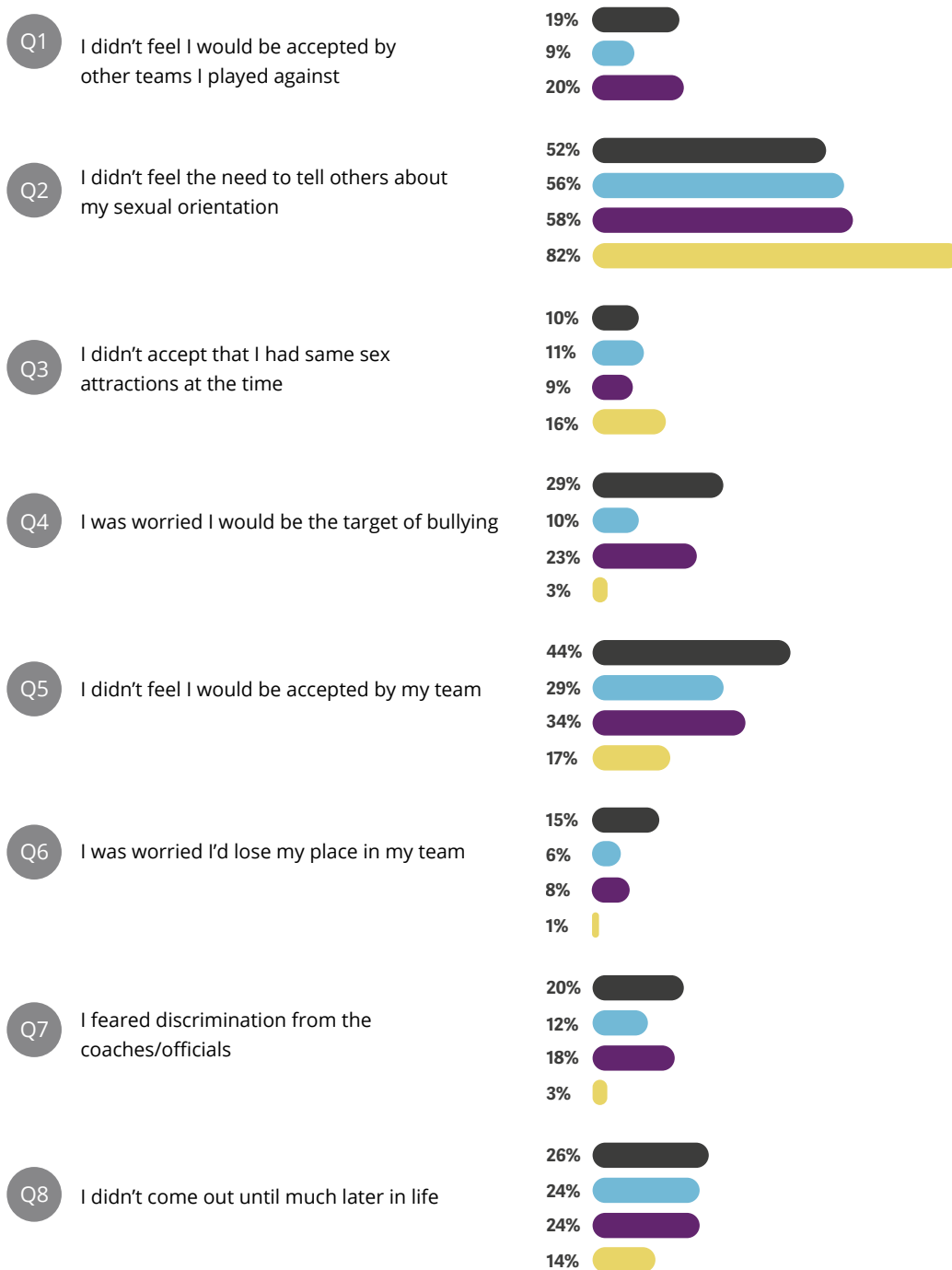


\*Multiple answers allowed

\*\*Due to a limited number of bisexual participants under 22, findings are based on the responses of all bisexual participants, not all ages.

# REASONS FOR NOT COMING OUT TO TEAMMATES WHILE PLAYING ADULT SPORT\*

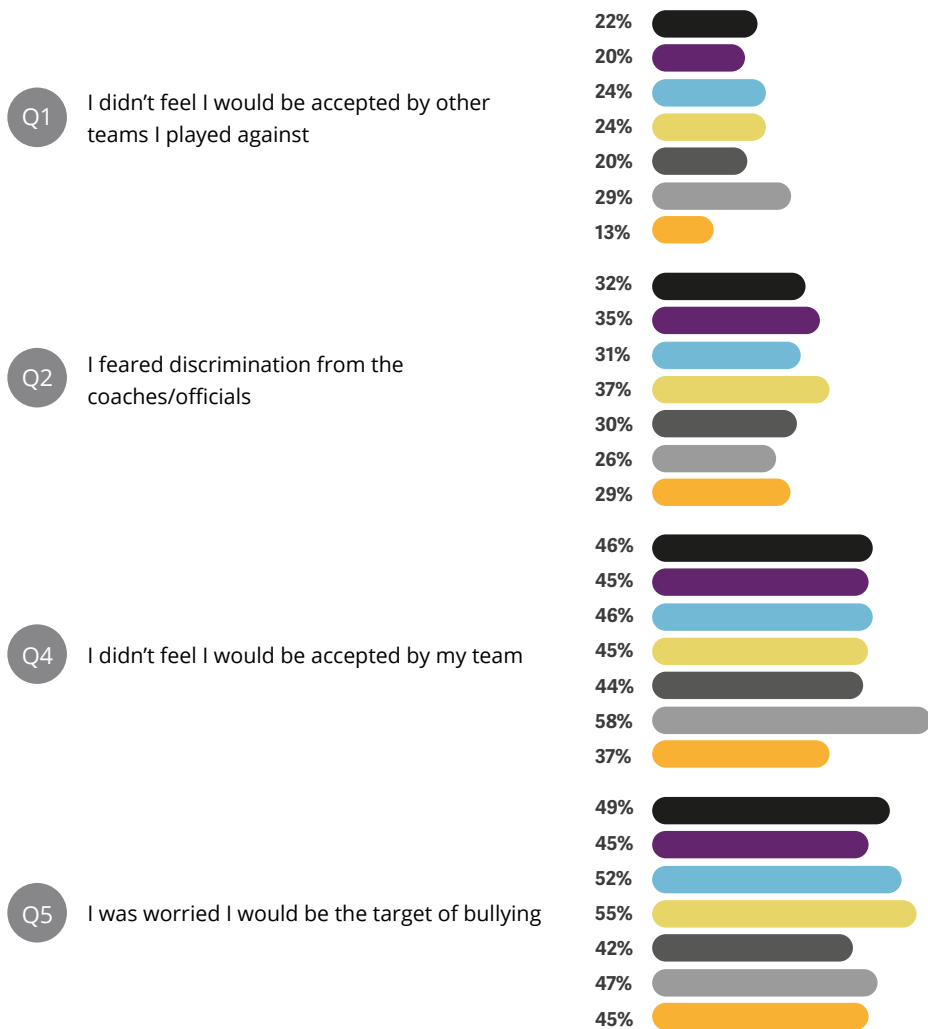
ALL SEXUALITIES • ALL PARTICIPANTS OVER 22



\*Multiple answers allowed

# REASONS FOR NOT COMING OUT TO TEAMMATES WHILE PLAYING YOUTH SPORT\*

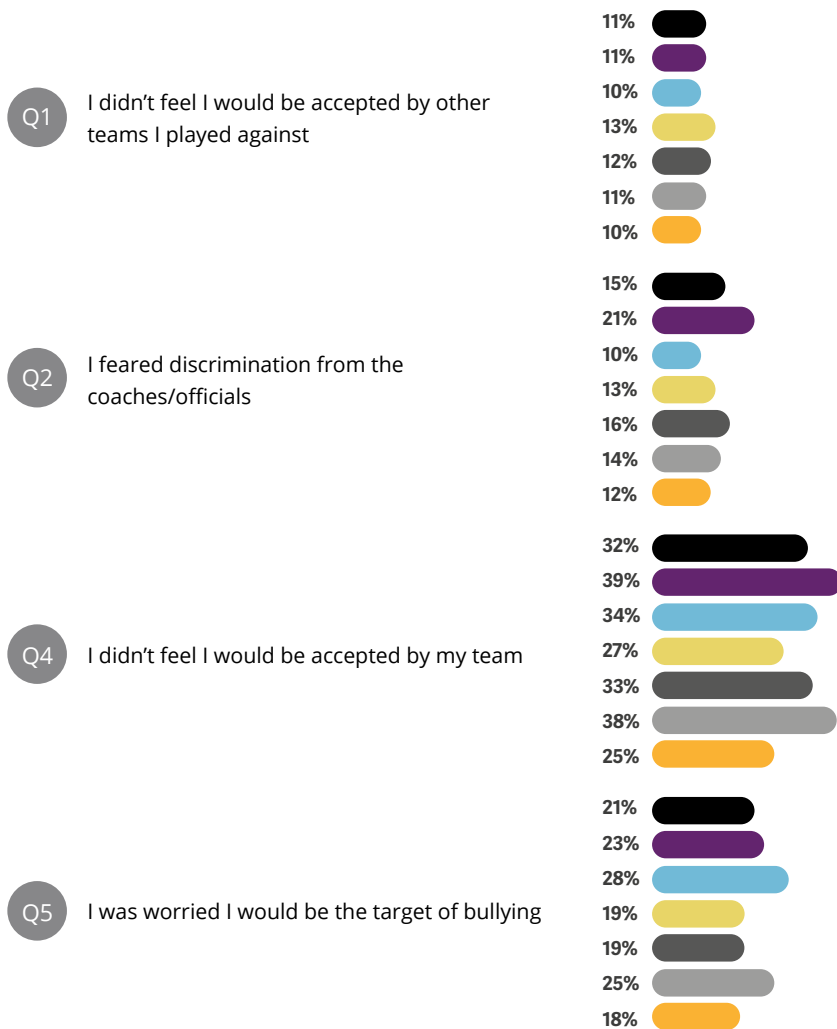
GAY MEN • COMPARISON BY COUNTRY • UNDER 22



\*Multiple answers allowed

# REASONS FOR NOT COMING OUT TO TEAMMATES WHILE PLAYING YOUTH SPORT\*

LESBIANS • COMPARISON BY COUNTRY • UNDER 22



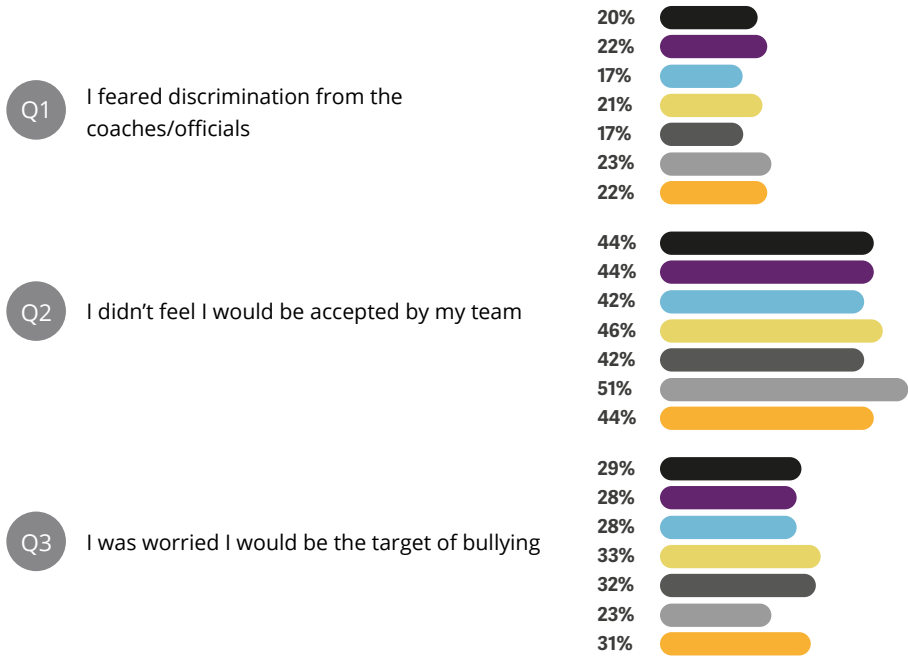
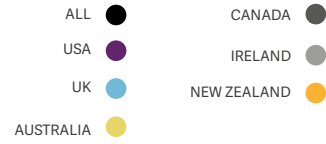
\*Multiple answers allowed

Note: Lesbians were much more likely than gay men to come out. This left a very small comparison sample for lesbian youth. To correct this the lesbian findings are based on answers from all participants.



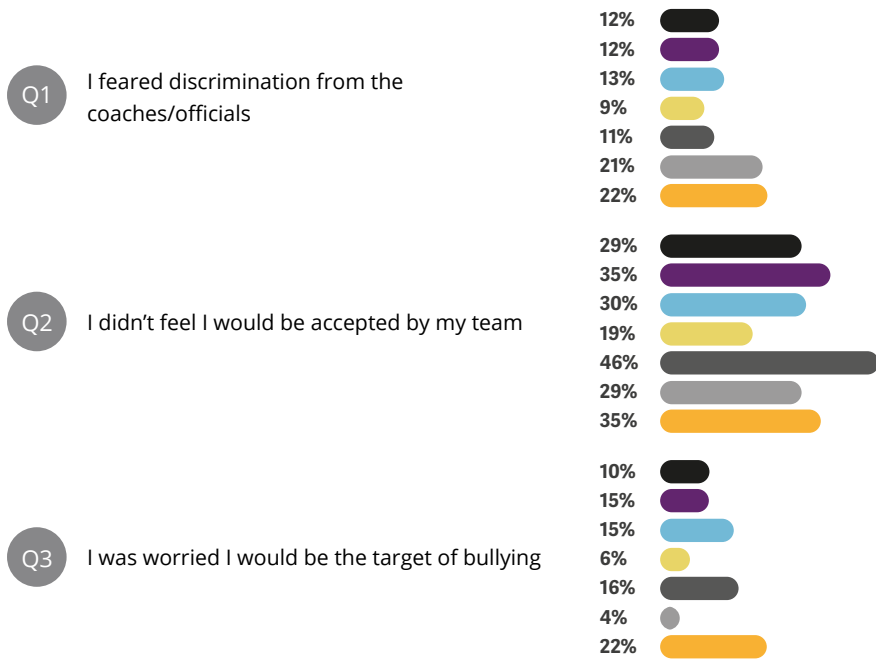
## REASONS FOR NOT COMING OUT TO TEAMMATES WHILE PLAYING ADULT SPORT\*

GAY MEN • COMPARISON BY COUNTRY



## REASONS FOR NOT COMING OUT TO TEAMMATES WHILE PLAYING ADULT SPORT\*

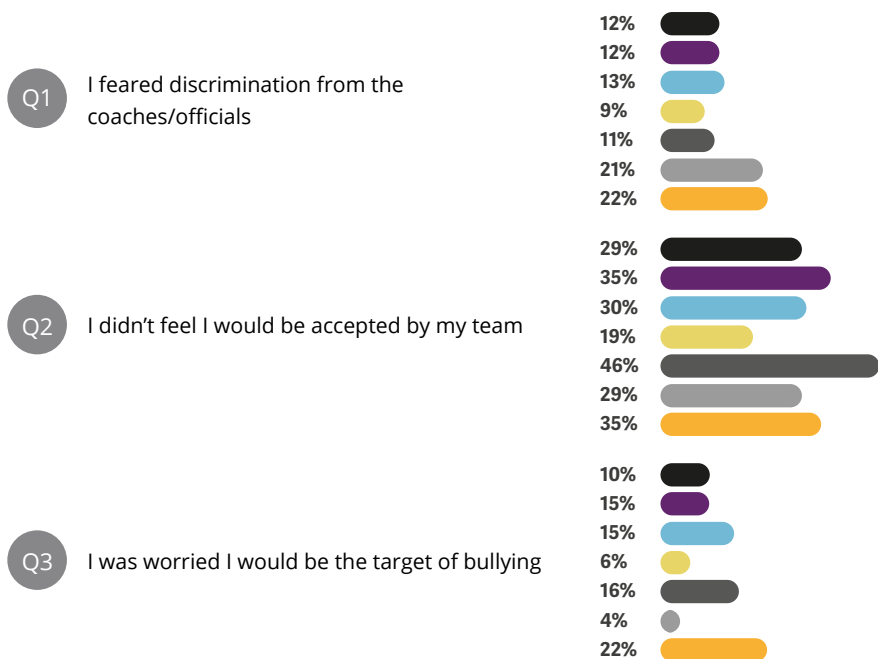
LESBIANS • COMPARISON BY COUNTRY



\*Multiple answers allowed

# REASONS FOR NOT COMING OUT TO TEAMMATES WHILE PLAYING ADULT SPORT\*

LESBIANS • COMPARISON BY COUNTRY



## REASONS ATHLETES DECIDE TO COME OUT OF THE CLOSET

While it's essential to understand why LGB athletes keep their sexuality secret, it's equally important to understand why some athletes do feel safe being open with teammates about their sexuality. Their answers can help sporting administrators and others identify ways to create sporting environments where LGB people feel safe to be open about their sexuality with others.

### CASE STUDY

## ALEX BLACKWELL



Alex Blackwell, 30, is a professional Australian cricket player. She is one of the most successful openly gay athletes in the world. She is the vice-captain of the national team and she has captained her state team to 10 consecutive national championships. Alex has played in seven world cups representing her country, and won five. Blackwell remained in the closet for much of her earlier career but told the Australian Broadcasting Corporation that she decided to come out of the closet in 2012 after she was "made, at a cricket event, [to feel] that perhaps the sport would be better off without someone like me, that perhaps it's getting better with fewer lesbians in the team." Blackwell continues, "That moment was very crushing, and it was a very isolated case in the 12 years I've been a part of the cricket team." From that moment, Blackwell decided to be more open to the public about her sexuality. She wants to help younger generations of athletes who may be struggling in sports because of their sexuality and not feeling welcome or safe in sports. She hopes to show young athletes that they can be openly gay and even represent their country while playing the sport they love.

## TOP REASONS CITED BY GAY YOUTH FOR BEING ABLE TO COME OUT

- 64% Having friends on the team who already knew they were gay
- 28% Having a team culture that is accepting of all forms of diversity
- 26% Rarely hearing homophobic language

## TOP REASONS CITED BY LESBIAN YOUTH FOR BEING ABLE TO COME OUT

- 41% My sport already had 'Out' people participating
- 46% Having friends on the team who already knew they were lesbian
- 44% Being on a team that is accepting of all types of diversity

## TOP REASONS CITED BY BISEXUAL MEN FOR BEING ABLE TO COME OUT IN YOUTH SPORT

- 36% Having friends on the team who already knew they were bisexual
- 27% Playing on a 'gay' identified team
- 27% Being on a team that is accepting of all types of diversity

## TOP REASONS CITED BY BISEXUAL WOMEN FOR BEING ABLE TO COME OUT IN YOUTH SPORT

- 48% Being on a team that is accepting of all types of diversity
- 45% My sport already had 'Out' people participating
- 41% Having friends on the team who already knew they were bisexual

## TOP REASONS CITED BY GAY ADULTS FOR BEING ABLE TO COME OUT

- 50% Playing on a gay identified team
- 49% Having friends on the team who already knew they were gay
- 37% Being on a team that is accepting of all types of diversity

## TOP REASONS CITED BY LESBIAN ADULTS BEING ABLE TO COME OUT


- 55% Being on a team that is accepting of all types of diversity
- 55% Having friends on the team who already knew they were lesbian
- 52% My sport already had 'Out' people participating

## TOP REASONS CITED BY BISEXUAL MEN FOR BEING ABLE TO COME OUT IN ADULT SPORT

- 47% Playing on a gay identified team
- 44% Being on a team that is accepting of all types of diversity
- 38% My sport already had 'Out' people participating

## TOP REASONS CITED BY BISEXUAL WOMEN FOR BEING ABLE TO COME OUT IN ADULT SPORT

- 66% Being on a team that is accepting of all types of diversity
- 63% My sport already had 'Out' people participating
- 38% Having friends on the team who already knew they were bisexual



“

PARTICIPANTS WERE FAR MORE LIKELY TO COME OUT OF THE CLOSET IF THEY HAD AN ALLY ON THEIR TEAM WHO ALREADY KNEW ABOUT THEIR SEXUALITY

“

A clear theme emerged out of the reasons chosen by participants to explain why they decided to come out of the closet while playing sport. Participants were far more likely to come out of the closet if they had an ally on their team who already knew about their sexuality. Also important to participants, was having a team culture that is welcoming of all forms of diversity. These two reasons were chosen far more than any other reason by all LGB participants when explaining why they felt safe coming out while playing team sport.

However, there was one reason chosen by gay and bisexual men much more often than by lesbian and bisexual women. Men were much more likely to choose belonging to a 'gay identified' team. Nearly half (48%) of gay and bisexual men said this helped them as adults, while it was one of the least chosen reasons by women (22% of lesbians). Instead of playing on a 'gay team' women said it was much more important to play on a team that had a culture that was accepting of all types of diversity (55% of lesbians chose this).

In many ways, however, men and women are providing the same answer in different ways, both need to be part of a team that intentionally embraces diversity in order to feel safe coming out of the closet. However, their answers also highlight a potential difference between male and female sport teams. This finding suggests that it may be easier for women to find mainstream female sports teams that are supportive of diversity while men need to join gay identified teams in order to find this kind of supportive team culture.



# ACCEPTANCE OF LGB PEOPLE IN SPORTING CULTURE

Participants were asked a range of questions about sporting culture in their country in order to better understand the perceptions of both straight and LGB participants about the acceptance and inclusion of LGB people in sport. Their answers also provide an opportunity to compare responses and perceptions by country, sexuality, gender and age. Unlike the previous sections, the findings in the following sections are based on responses from all participants, including the 2300 heterosexual participants.

While these questions ask participants about sporting culture in general, it is important to remember that the study, overall, does take a particular focus on team sport. Furthermore, you will see country comparisons of gay and lesbian participants but none for bisexual. The number of male and female bisexual people in some countries is too low for comparisons to be accurate.

## ARE LGB PEOPLE ACCEPTED IN SPORTING CULTURE?

One of the most illuminating questions we asked participants was about the acceptance of LGB people in sporting culture in their country. We were surprised by how many participants held the view that LGB are barely accepted. Participants were provided with a range of possible answers and asked, "Thinking about the sporting culture, generally (eg. school sports and professional sports) in your country, in your opinion, which of the following phrases best describe the acceptance of same-sex attracted people (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual) in sporting culture?"

The study found only 1% of all participants, including heterosexuals, felt LGB people were 'completely accepted'. Instead, nearly half of all participants (46%), of all sexualities, chose the lowest forms of acceptance and believed LGB people are 'not accepted at all' or at most, only 'a little bit accepted' in sporting culture in their country.

Gay men were far more negative, in fact, gay men were twice as likely as lesbians to believe that LGB people are 'not accepted at all' or 'accepted a little.' Over half (54%) of gay men, from each of the major

English speaking countries believed they are 'not accepted at all' or 'only accepted a little'. Only 30% of gay men were more positive and thought that they were 'moderately accepted.' When broken down by country, the USA and Australia stood out as the countries in which gay men felt the least welcome in sport, with nearly 60% believing they are 'not accepted at all' or 'accepted a little'. On the other hand, Canada stood out as the country where gay men felt the most accepted. In fact, Canada had nearly the reverse findings to the United States and Australia. Of Canadian gay males, 60% thought they were 'moderately' or 'mostly accepted' while just 36% thought they were 'not accepted at all' or 'accepted a little.'

## CASE STUDY

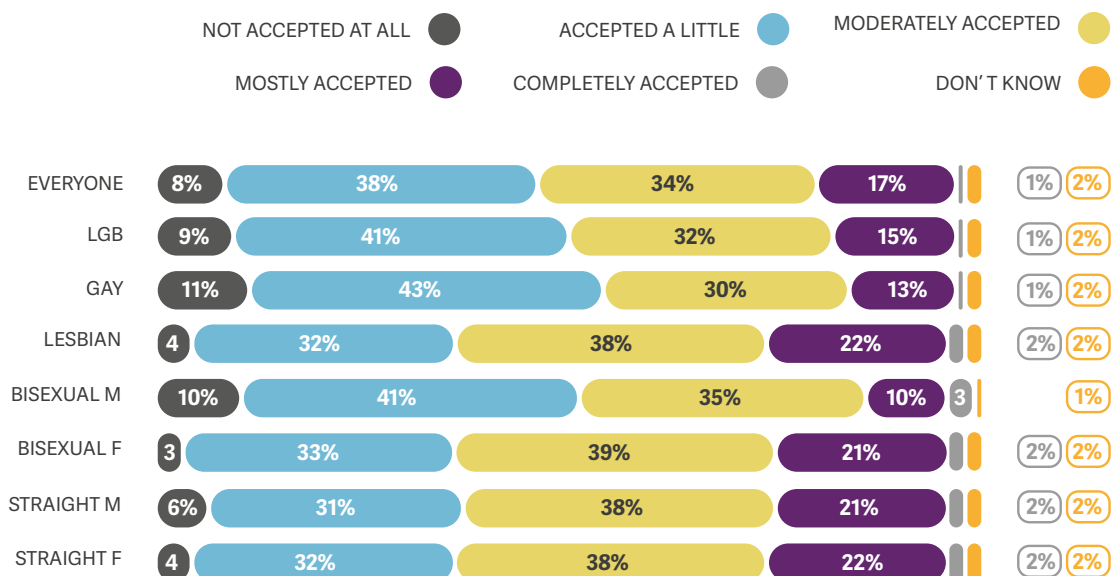
## CANADA

My father was my high school PE teacher and my football coach. He routinely made gay jokes in front of his students and players. I tried everything in my power to prove I wasn't gay. I couldn't be gay. It just wasn't possible. I didn't know how to reconcile the image of who I was supposed to be with the feelings I had. It wasn't until I was 27 that I admitted to myself that I was gay. It was in sport that I found inspiration and solace. I bonded with gay friends on the volleyball court and I accepted my own sexuality. If they could play sports and be gay, so could I.... At first being gay was impossible with sport, now it is my strength and I couldn't be happier.

– BRIAN, CANADA

## VIEWS ON ACCEPTANCE OF LGBTQ PEOPLE IN SPORT

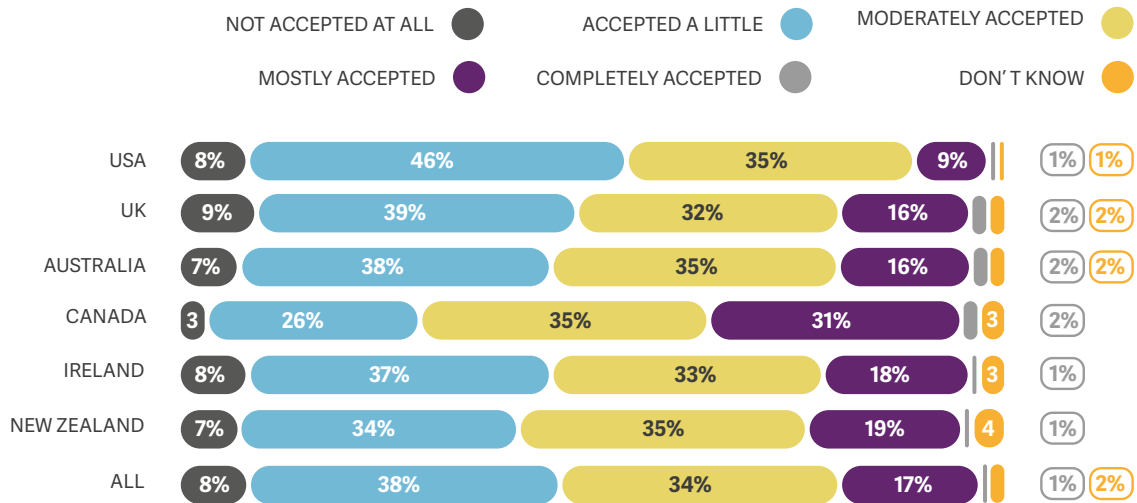
ALL SEXUALITIES • COMPARISON BY SEXUALITY





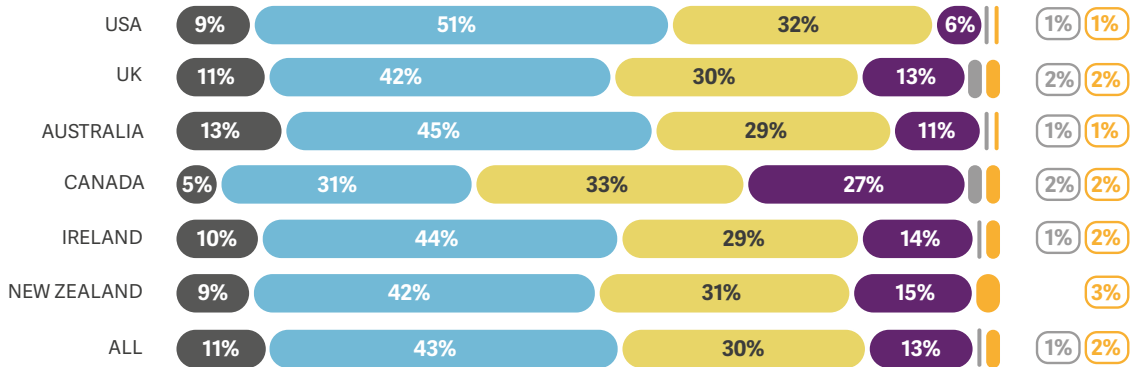
## VIEWS ON ACCEPTANCE OF LGBT PEOPLE IN SPORT

ALL SEXUALITIES • COMPARISON BY COUNTRY



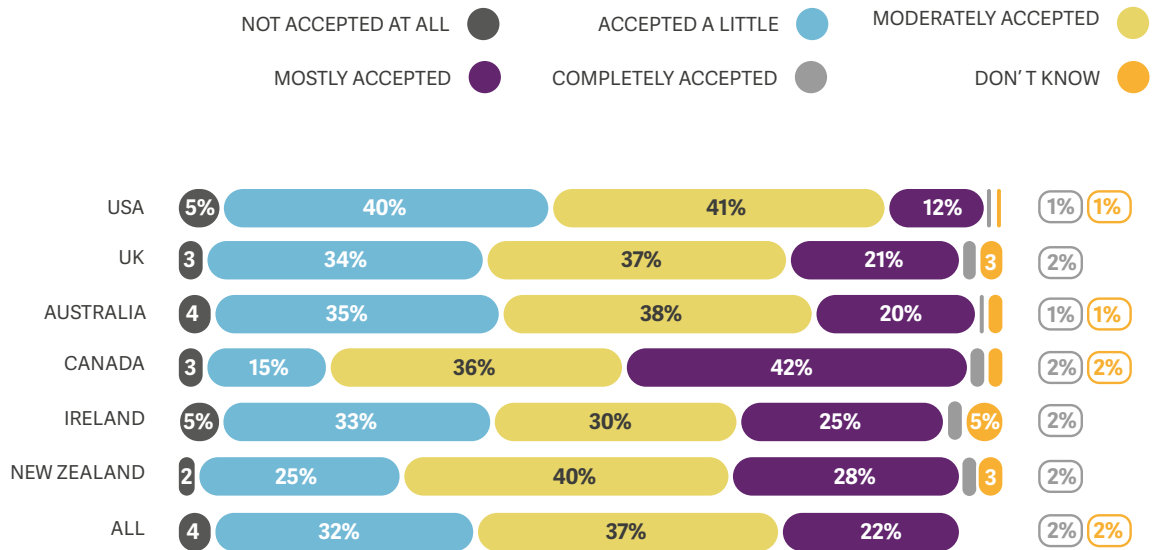
## VIEWS ON ACCEPTANCE OF LGBT PEOPLE IN SPORT

GAY MEN • COMPARISON BY COUNTRY



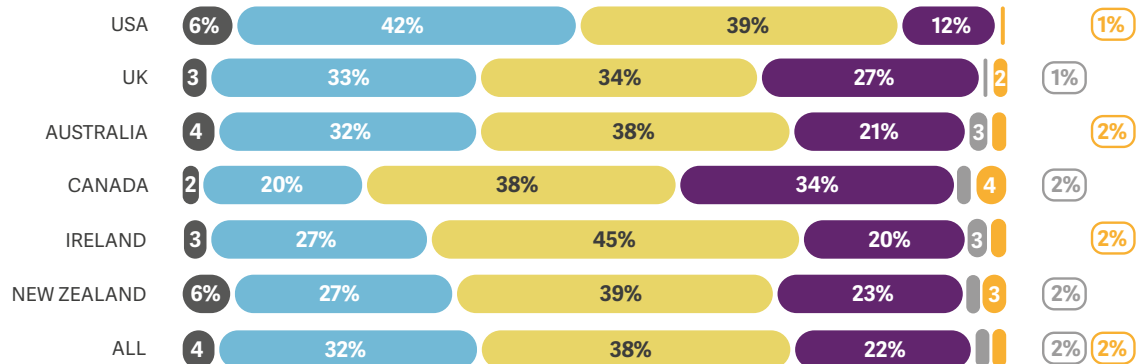
## VIEWS ON ACCEPTANCE OF LGBT PEOPLE IN SPORT

LESBIAN • COMPARISON BY COUNTRY



## VIEWS ON ACCEPTANCE OF LGBT PEOPLE IN SPORT

STRAIGHT PARTICIPANTS • COMPARISON BY COUNTRY



## IS HOMOPHOBIA MORE COMMON IN SPORTS THAN IN OTHER PARTS OF SOCIETY?

While the findings in the previous section show that the majority of participants do not believe LGBT people are welcome in their country's sporting culture, the question remains whether this lack of acceptance is specific to sporting culture or if there is general lack of acceptance of LGBT people in their country. In order to gain insight into this question, specifically around team sports, participants were asked if they thought homophobia is more common in team sports than in the rest of the society.

Overall participants felt that homophobia was more common in the sporting culture of their country than the rest of society. This is true in most countries and, in fact, across the English-speaking world. Interestingly gay and bisexual men were far more likely to believe this than anyone else, with 73% of gay men and 69% of bisexual men strongly agreeing or agreeing with this statement. Over half of straight male participants also believed this to be true. Meanwhile women of all sexualities were the least likely to believe that sporting culture in their country is less accepting than broader society.

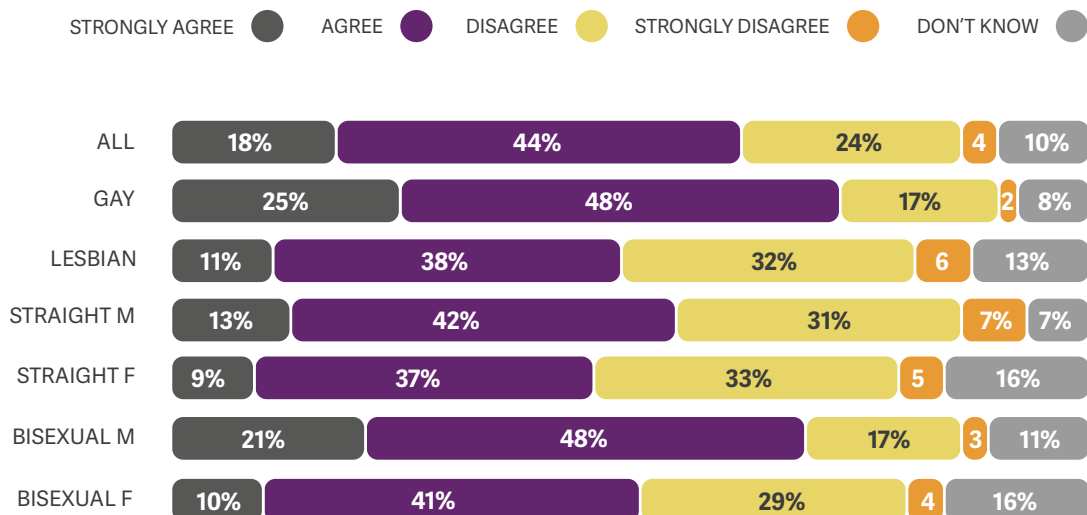
While it seems that most participants feel sports teams are more homophobic than the rest of society, the findings could also suggest something else. They

may suggest participants believe that in general, society is not accepting of LGBT people and sporting culture is not better or worse. However, when the findings to this question are read with responses to other questions, particularly the previous question looking at whether participants believe LGBT are accepted in sport, and combined with the stories many participants submitted, it's clear that most participants believe that sporting environments are, in fact, more likely to be homophobic than general society.

It is also worth examining why there is such a striking and unusual differences in perspectives between men and women on this question and in particular, straight men and straight women. The answers men provided are likely a reflection of their personal experiences in men's sports, whereas women would not have had these experiences. This is potentially why women are more positive. This could indicate that male sporting culture is more homophobic than female sporting culture, which is consistent with answers participants provided in previous sections where men hold a more negative view of sporting culture than women.

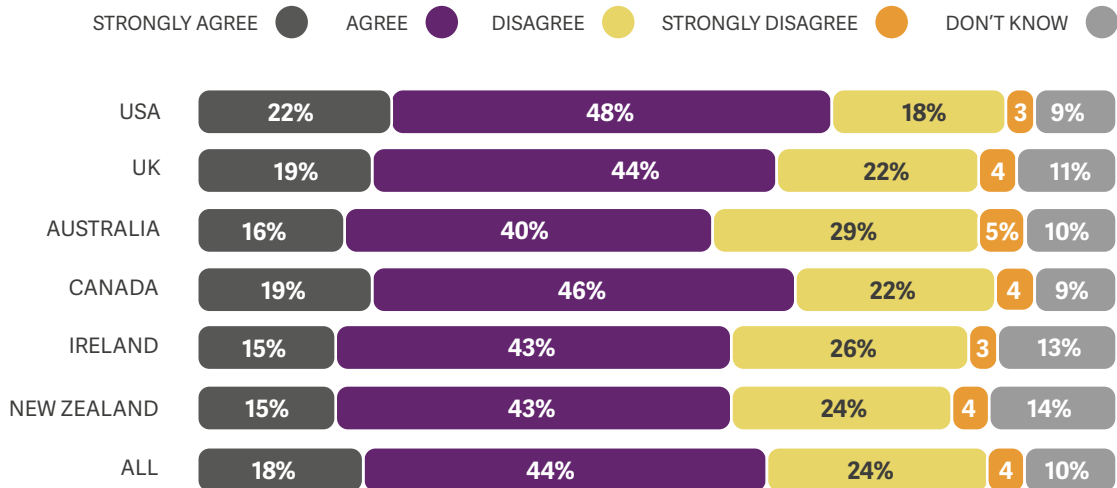
### VIEWS ON WHETHER HOMOPHOBIA IS MORE COMMON IN TEAM SPORTING ENVIRONMENTS THAN IN GENERAL SOCIETY

ALL PARTICIPANTS • COMPARISON BY SEXUALITY



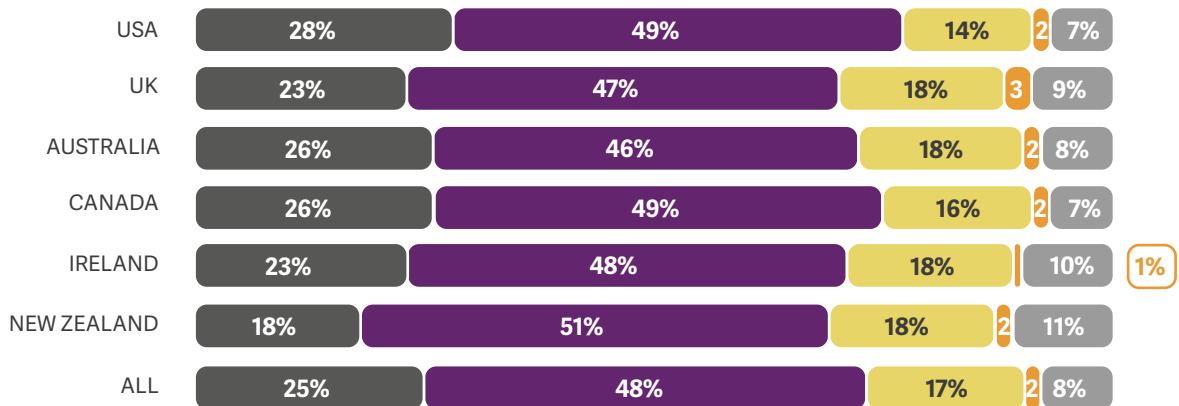
## VIEWS ON WHETHER HOMOPHOBIA IS MORE COMMON IN TEAM SPORTING ENVIRONMENTS THAN IN GENERAL SOCIETY

ALL PARTICIPANTS • COMPARISON BY COUNTRY



## VIEWS ON WHETHER HOMOPHOBIA IS MORE COMMON IN TEAM SPORTING ENVIRONMENTS THAN IN GENERAL SOCIETY

GAY MALE PARTICIPANTS • COMPARISON BY COUNTRY



## HOW OFTEN ARE HOMOPHOBIC JOKES USED IN SPORTS?

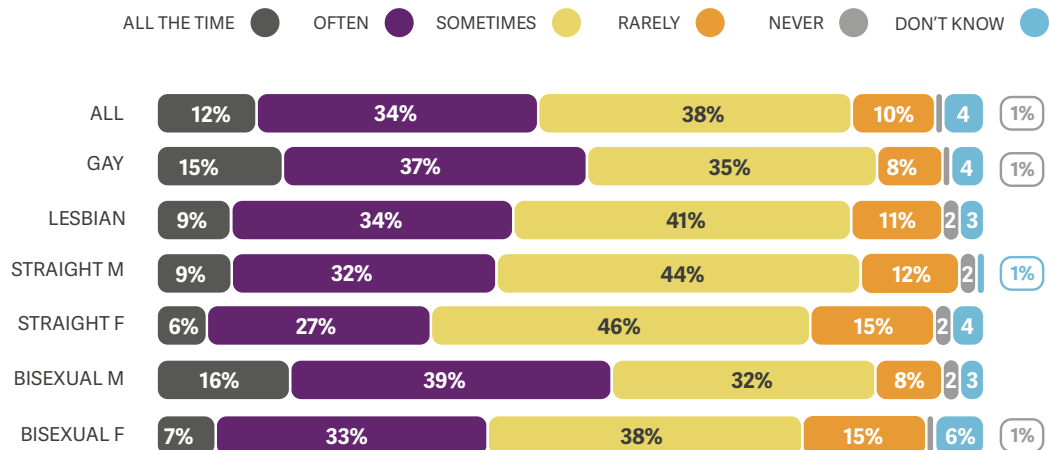
Although jokes and humour are not often intended to be damaging or hurtful, jokes about LGBT people often create an unwelcoming environment. To understand if this kind of humour is common, we asked participants about the prevalence in sport. Overall, gay and bisexual men were more likely than anyone else to believe that this kind of humour occurs all the time or often. Still, 41% of straight men thought this kind of humour occurred either 'all the time' or 'often' around sport. While very few participants of any sexuality considered this kind of humour to be rare, heterosexual women were much less likely to think homophobic humour is common than anyone else.

It could be they have less contact with sporting culture or alternatively they were only thinking about female sport when answering this question.

The United States stood out with more participants believing this kind of humour to be prevalent than any other country. Indeed, 54% of participants thought that homophobic jokes and humour occurred either 'all the time' or 'often' in sporting environments. Interestingly, Canada once again showed nearly the reverse findings to the United States, with 56% believing jokes and humour "only occur rarely" or "sometimes."

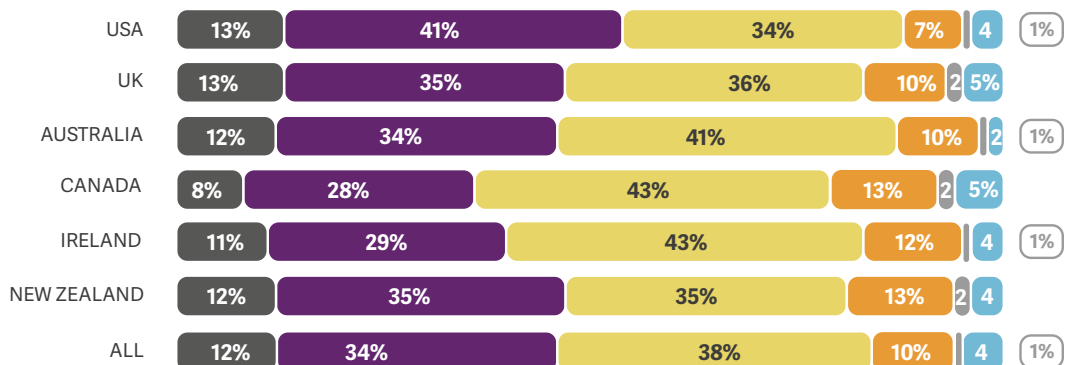
### HOW OFTEN DO YOU PERCEIVE HOMOPHOBIC JOKES AND HUMOUR OCCUR AROUND SPORT IN YOUR COUNTRY?

ALL PARTICIPANTS • COMPARISON BY SEXUALITY



### HOW OFTEN DO YOU PERCEIVE HOMOPHOBIC JOKES AND HUMOUR OCCUR AROUND SPORT IN YOUR COUNTRY?

ALL PARTICIPANTS • COMPARISON BY COUNTRY



## ACCEPTANCE OF LGB PEOPLE IN YOUTH SPORTS

One of the core objectives of the Out on the Fields study was to understand the experiences of young LGB people. This is due to the fact that people are more likely to engage in team sports when they are young than at any other time. Furthermore, studies have shown that those who actively participate in a sport in their youth are more likely to be active later in life, which has many lasting social and personal benefits.

Participants were asked about their perceptions of youth sport and whether youth sporting environments (under 22) are supportive and welcoming to LGB people who are open about their sexuality.

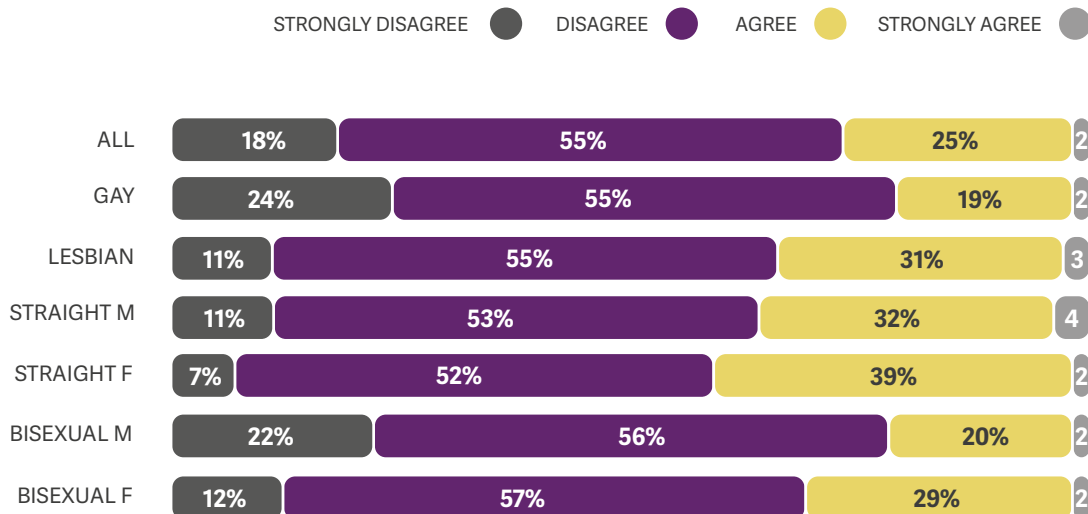
The overwhelming majority of participants (73%), including straight participants, did not believe that youth sport was welcoming and safe. If we look particularly at the responses from straight men and women, more than 60% felt this way while only 3% of straight participants “strongly agreed” that youth sport is a welcoming place of LGB people. Once again the United States stood out from other countries, with nearly 80% of all participants strongly disagreeing or

disagreeing. In fact, American participants were more likely than any other country to ‘strongly disagree’ (23%) that youth sport is welcoming to LGB people.

*There is a general view by the majority of participants across all sexualities that youth sport is a hostile environment for LGB people.* This finding provides context to the previously discussed finding that most LGB participants remain in the closet while participating in youth team sports. Most cited a fear of discrimination and it would seem that participants of all sexualities, including straight participants, believe it is quite likely they would, in fact, face discrimination if they were open about their sexuality. Unfortunately, this is not good news for those who advocate for more people to come out of the closet in order to raise the visibility of LGB athletes in sport. It would seem that most agree that if LGB people are more open about their sexuality they would be made to feel unwelcome in youth sporting environments.

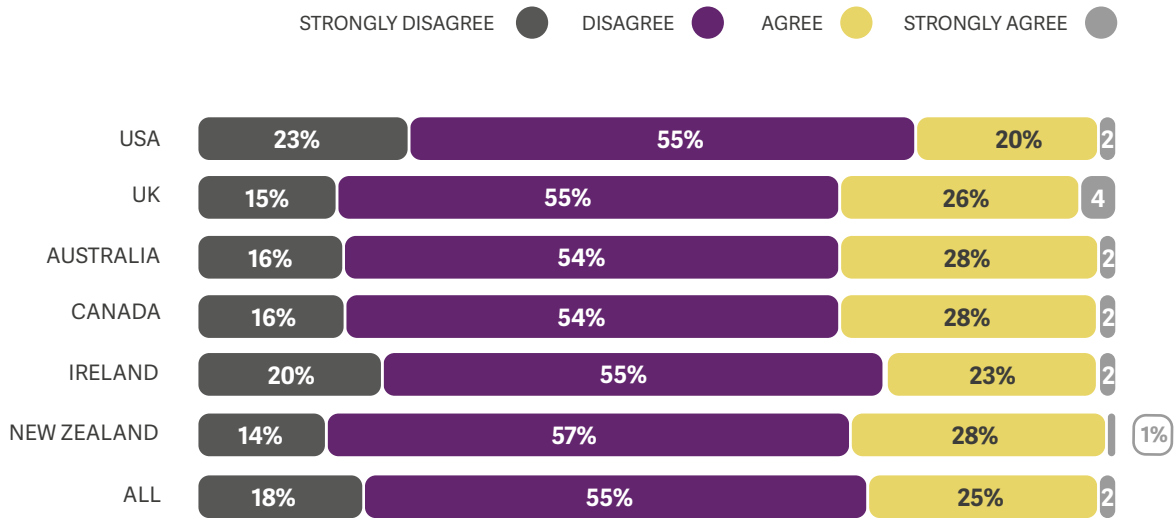
### SPORTING TEAMS FOR PEOPLE UNDER 22 ARE GENERALLY A SUPPORTIVE AND SAFE ENVIRONMENT FOR OPENLY SAME-SEX ATTRACTED PEOPLE

ALL PARTICIPANTS • COMPARISON BY SEXUALITY



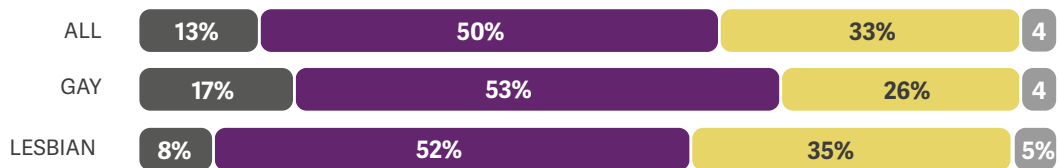
## SPORTING TEAMS FOR PEOPLE UNDER 22 ARE GENERALLY A SUPPORTIVE AND SAFE ENVIRONMENT FOR OPENLY SAME-SEX ATTRACTED PEOPLE

ALL PARTICIPANTS • COMPARISON BY COUNTRY



## SPORTING TEAMS FOR PEOPLE UNDER 22 ARE GENERALLY A SUPPORTIVE AND SAFE ENVIRONMENT FOR OPENLY SAME-SEX ATTRACTED PEOPLE

ONLY PARTICIPANTS UNDER 22



## ACCEPTANCE OF LGB PEOPLE IN ADULT SPORTS

Participants were also asked about whether they felt LGB people who are open about their sexuality are safe and welcome while playing adult team sports. Participants were more likely to believe adult sport is more welcoming than youth sport. Still 57% of participants strongly disagreed or disagreed that adult sport was a safe place for LGB people who are out of the closet.

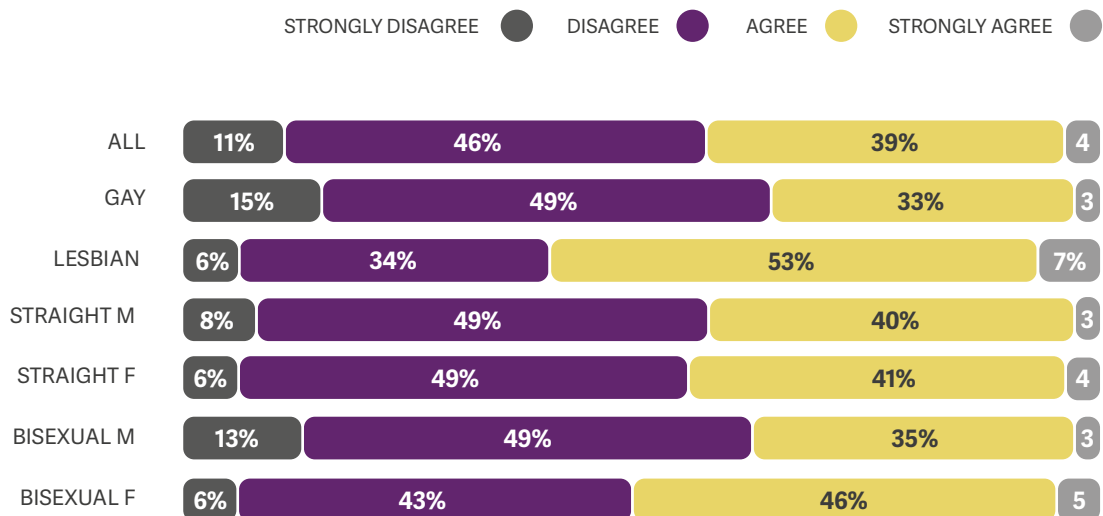
Unlike in the previous question on youth sport, participants of various sexualities were less likely to have provided similar responses to this question. In fact, lesbian participants were far more positive than any other sexuality. Indeed, straight men and women were much more closely aligned with the views of gay and bisexual men in their perceptions on adult sport than they were to lesbians and bisexual women.

As with the findings of the last question, the responses to this question suggest there is good reason for LGB athletes to fear discrimination if they come out of the closet while playing adult team sport. However, the results also highlight clear differences in perceptions between participants about adult

sport. Lesbians and bisexual women were more positive than any other group, this could be explained through the earlier findings that lesbians are much more likely than gay and bisexual men to be out of the closet. Perhaps the responses from lesbian and bisexual women are based on personal experience in adult sport. It could be that these women believe adult sport is welcoming because they have actually come out to teammates and had a positive reception. By extension, the straight women and straight, gay and bisexual male participants may not have been specifically thinking about female sport when answering this question and may have been largely considering male sport, which gets far more attention than women's sport. This could explain why their views are more closely aligned with the views of gay and bisexual men.

### SPORTING TEAMS ARE GENERALLY A SUPPORTIVE AND SAFE ENVIRONMENT FOR OPENLY SAME-SEX ATTRACTED PEOPLE OVER 22 YEARS

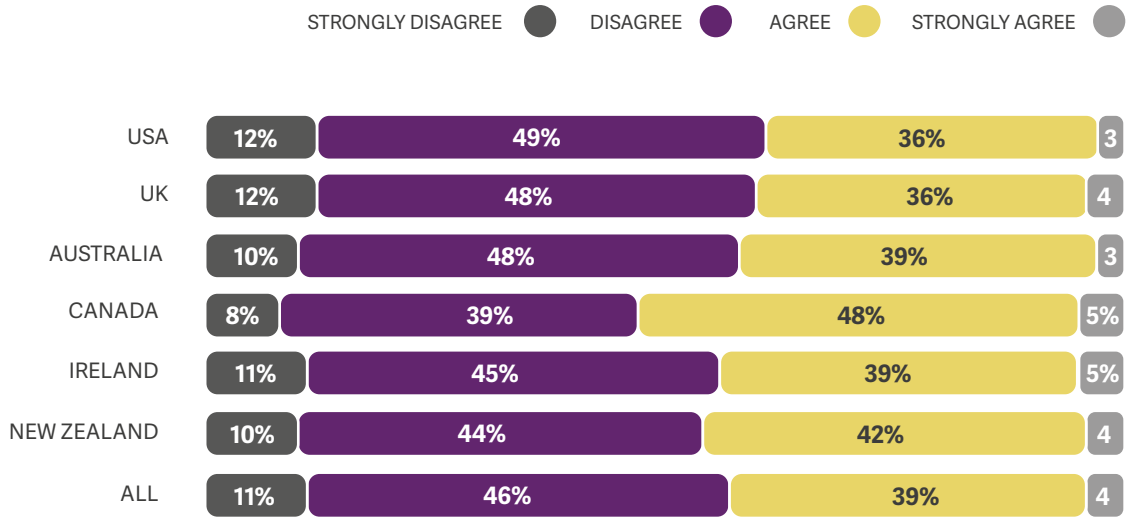
ALL PARTICIPANTS • COMPARISON BY SEXUALITY





## SPORTING TEAMS ARE GENERALLY A SUPPORTIVE AND SAFE ENVIRONMENT FOR OPENLY SAME-SEX ATTRACTED PEOPLE OVER 22 YEARS

ALL PARTICIPANTS • COMPARISON BY COUNTRY



## HOMOPHOBIA IN SPECTATOR STANDS

There have been a series of recent high profile international incidents of fans shouting or holding signs with homophobic slurs and insults. For example, in 2014, fans at a rugby union match in the UK shouted slurs at internationally respected referee Nigel Owens. The incident made headlines around the world however, it was unclear whether this incident was isolated and if this kind of behaviour has any impact on the safety of LGB people who may be spectators. Out on the Field participants were asked two separate questions about spectator stands and their answers show they overwhelmingly feel that homophobia is both very common among those watching sports and this behaviour is affecting the the safety of LGB people. Participants were first asked to identify the most likely sporting environment for homophobia to occur. Overall, 41% of participants identified spectator stands, which was nearly double the number who chose school physical education classes (21%), the next most commonly selected location. Interestingly, given the Nigel Owens incident, nearly half (49%) of the participants from the UK (more than any other country) chose spectator stands as the most homophobic sporting environment. Participants were also asked about the safety of LGB people who are watching sport if those around them knew their sexuality (such as if they showed affection to a partner). An overwhelming majority of participants, 78%, felt these LGB spectators would

not be safe, with gay men the most likely (85%) to believe this. Once again the findings from the United Kingdom stood out, with 85% of respondents saying LGB are not safe as spectators. Canada also stood out again, with Canadian participants far less likely than those in any other country to believe LGB people are at risk as spectators. This does not mean Canadians have reason to celebrate, however, with 66% still believing LGB would be at risk if others knew their sexuality at a sporting event.

It would appear that a large portion of the English-speaking world feels spectator stands are hostile environments for LGB people. The fears of LGB people are broadly supported by the majority of straight participants (60%), who agreed that spectator stands are not safe places. Straight participants (44%) were also more likely than LGB participants to describe spectator stands as the most homophobic sporting environment. With such a large portion of the population feeling unwelcome and unsafe at sporting events, it raises many questions about what sporting organisations, sporting venues and corporate sponsors are doing to keep LGB fans safe.



## SCHOOL PHYSICAL EDUCATION CLASS

While Out on the Fields has highlighted some serious issues of homophobia among spectators, it is important to highlight that a large portion - more than one in five participants (21%) - did not choose spectator stands as the most likely homophobic sporting environment and instead choose school physical education classes. Their selection of PE classes adds further context to the findings discussed earlier around sport participation. Many gay men said their experiences in PE class turned them off playing team sports. It would seem that these classes are particularly homophobic compared to other sporting environments.

To ensure the perspectives of participants on PE class were current and relevant, we compared responses from those over and under 22. They were identical, indicating PE classes continue to be seen by young people as hostile environments. This finding on PE classes also reflects the findings from a range of other recent research specifically looking at PE classes and the impact on LGB students. Aside from the Australian 'Come out to Play' study mentioned earlier, another 2013 study, by the American Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network, found more than half of LGB students were bullied or harassed in PE class. That study also found nearly 75% felt uncomfortable talking to their coaches or PE teachers about LGB issues. There is now mounting evidence that LGB students are not getting the same benefits

from PE classes as other students and in fact their attendance may even cause lasting psychological damage. Out on the Fields adds to this evidence and shows this problem is not limited to any one country. The study's findings also add weight to calls for PE teachers to be provided with more training on supporting and protecting LGB young people.

However, given PE classes were identified as the second most likely place for homophobia to occur, it's also important to recognise participants are mostly out of grade school so their perspective is based on an historical perception. Still this finding supports other recent research that found PE classes are particularly hostile environments for LGB people. It would seem that many, including straight participants, believe homophobia is a major issues in these classes. These findings show there is a great deal of work to be done on behalf of stadiums, sports leagues, teams and fans alike to address homophobic behaviour occurring at both sporting events and during PE classes. While this does not suggest these are the only two sporting environments of concern, we hope that identifying these apparent hotbeds of homophobia could assist those working to address discrimination in sport with focusing their efforts on environments where homophobia is most likely to occur.





## CASE STUDY

# NIGEL OWENS

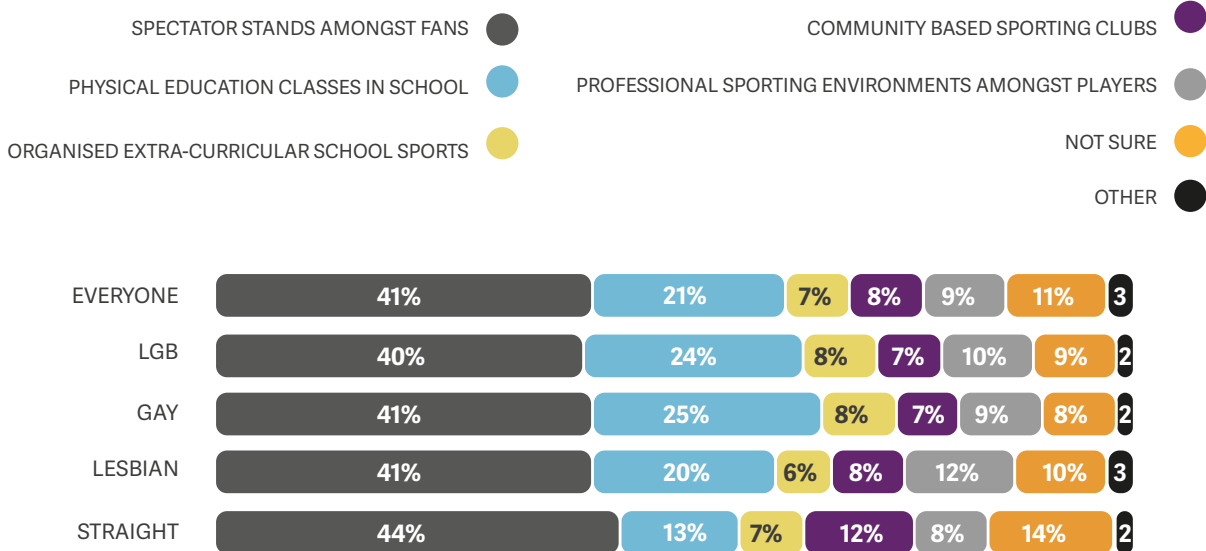
Nigel Owens is considered one of the top international rugby union referees in the world. At a game between England and New Zealand in November, 2014, a few fans yelled homophobic slurs towards the openly gay, Welsh-born official. The slurs only came to light after a fan, who was at the game, wrote a letter to the British based newspaper, The Guardian. Keith Wilson from South Yorkshire, wrote: "As a lifelong rugby fan, a straight man in his 60s, I could not believe that a bunch of men half my age watching a rugby match in the 21st century could be capable of hurling such nasty, foul-mouthed, racist, homophobic abuse at an openly gay match official... hearing this vitriol, was a little boy; I felt ashamed." The fans were given a two year stadium ban after an investigation. Owens later told the BBC, "It's not me they're hurting, it's the young kid sitting in the row in front who's maybe dealing with their own sexuality. The most difficult thing I ever had to do in my life was accepting I was gay. It's someone sitting two seats away, going through what I went through, dealing with who they are, who are the people they're putting in danger... I know they can tip you over the edge."

“

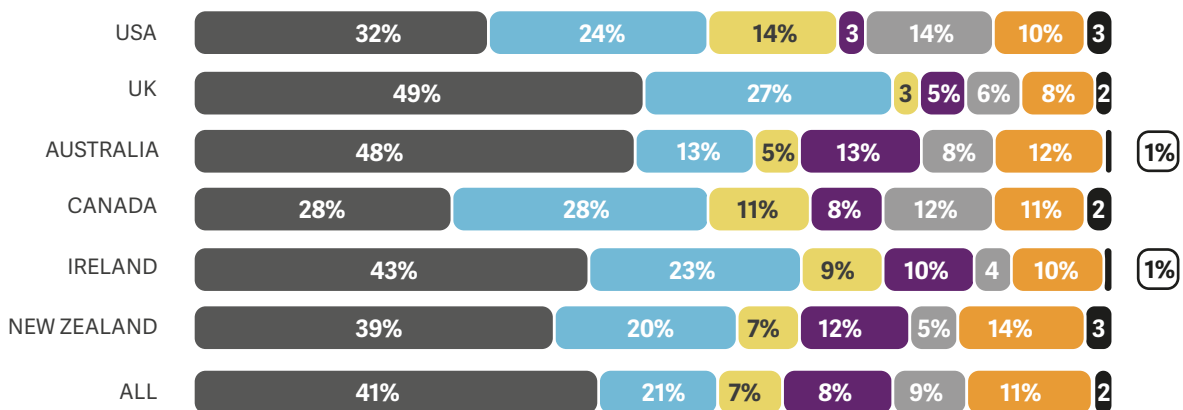
IT'S NOT ME THEY'RE HURTING,  
IT'S THE YOUNG **KID SITTING  
IN THE ROW IN FRONT** WHO'S  
MAYBE DEALING WITH THEIR OWN  
SEXUALITY...

“

## THINKING OF ALL SPORTING ENVIRONMENTS WHERE HOMOPHOBIA COULD OCCUR, WHERE DO YOU THINK IT OCCURS MOST OFTEN?

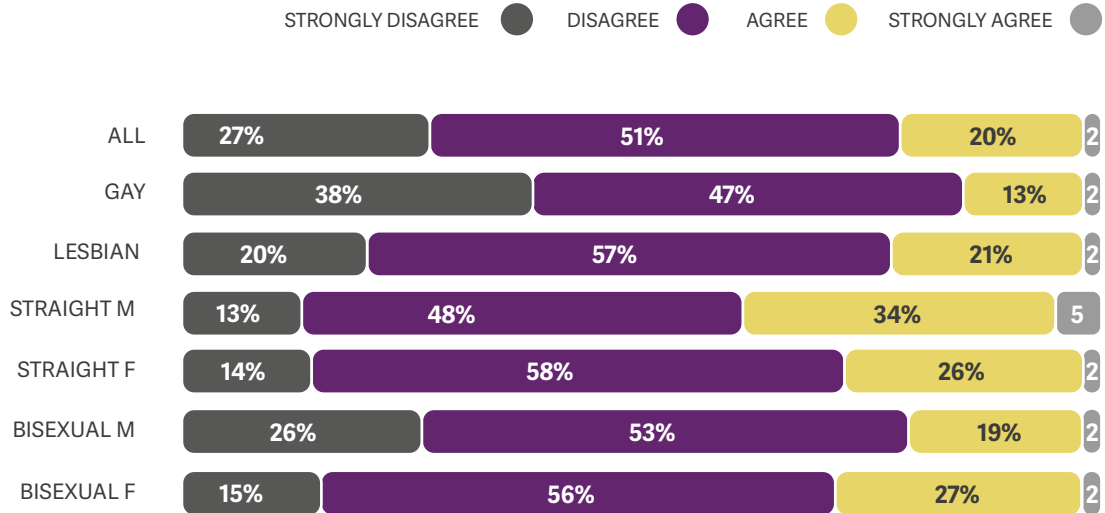


## THINKING OF ALL SPORTING ENVIRONMENTS WHERE HOMOPHOBIA COULD OCCUR, WHERE DO YOU THINK IT OCCURS MOST OFTEN?



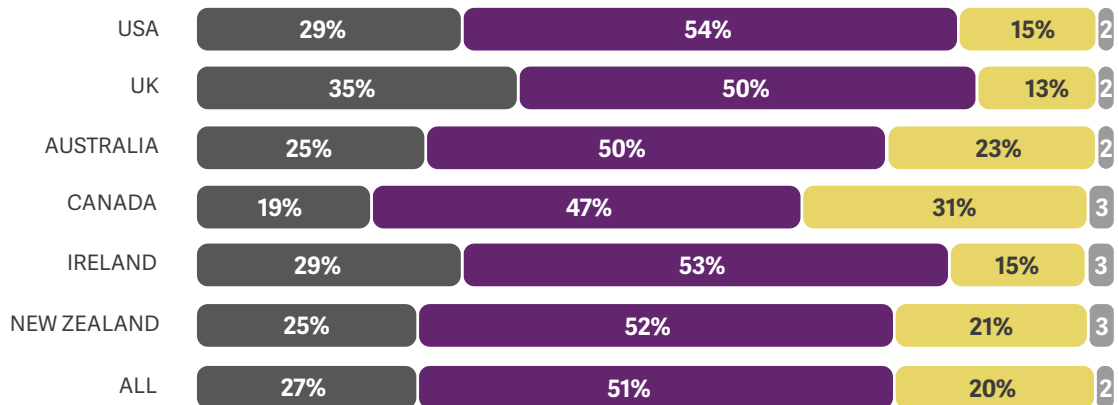
## SAME-SEX ATTRACTED PEOPLE, WHO ARE VISIBLY 'OUT' (SUCH AS SHOWING AFFECTION TO A PARTNER IN A STADIUM) ARE VERY SAFE AS SPECTATORS?

PERCEPTIONS OF PARTICIPANTS • COMPARISON BY SEXUALITY



## SAME-SEX ATTRACTED PEOPLE, WHO ARE VISIBLY 'OUT' (SUCH AS SHOWING AFFECTION TO A PARTNER IN A STADIUM) ARE VERY SAFE AS SPECTATORS?

PERCEPTIONS OF PARTICIPANTS • COMPARISON BY COUNTRY





# FREQUENCY AND FORMS OF HOMOPHOBIA IN SPORT

Another core objective of Out on the Fields was to gain a clearer picture of the frequency and forms of homophobia that occur in and around sporting environments. For many years there has been an ongoing discussion, particularly in the English speaking world, around whether homophobia is common and whether there is any need for concern. Some commentators have recently suggested that homophobia and discrimination against LGB people, in general, is not the problem it once was.

The extent of discrimination and homophobia reported by participants is very concerning and also much higher than we expected. This is why we decided to test the findings. Young people are more likely to participate in sports and so we assumed that their experiences would be a more accurate indication of contemporary sporting culture. With this in mind, we compared the responses from those under and over the age of 22 at the time of the study. We found there is no difference in the rates of



**I DIDN'T NECESSARILY EXPERIENCE HOMOPHOBIA WITHIN MY TEAM, IT TENDED TO BE FROM CLASSMATES AND FRIENDS WHO WOULD SAY SLURS LIKE 'DYKE' AND 'BUTCH' BECAUSE I PLAYED ON A SPORTS TEAM. AT THE TIME I WAS NOT OUT AND THESE TAUNTS WERE PERSISTENT AND TURNED TO BULLYING.**

- LAURA, UK



This is why it is important to gain a better understanding around whether this is true and, if beyond a few high-profile homophobic incidents, whether homophobic behaviour in sport is rare and fairly contained.

In order to better understand the experiences of Out on the Fields participants, we first asked them if they have witnessed or experienced homophobia or discrimination in sporting environments. We then asked them if it was directed at them, someone else or both. Finally we gave them a long list of possible forms of homophobia this could have taken and asked them to identify the forms they have personally experienced and/or witnessed. Participants could also provide their own form of homophobia or discrimination, though most chose from the options provided.

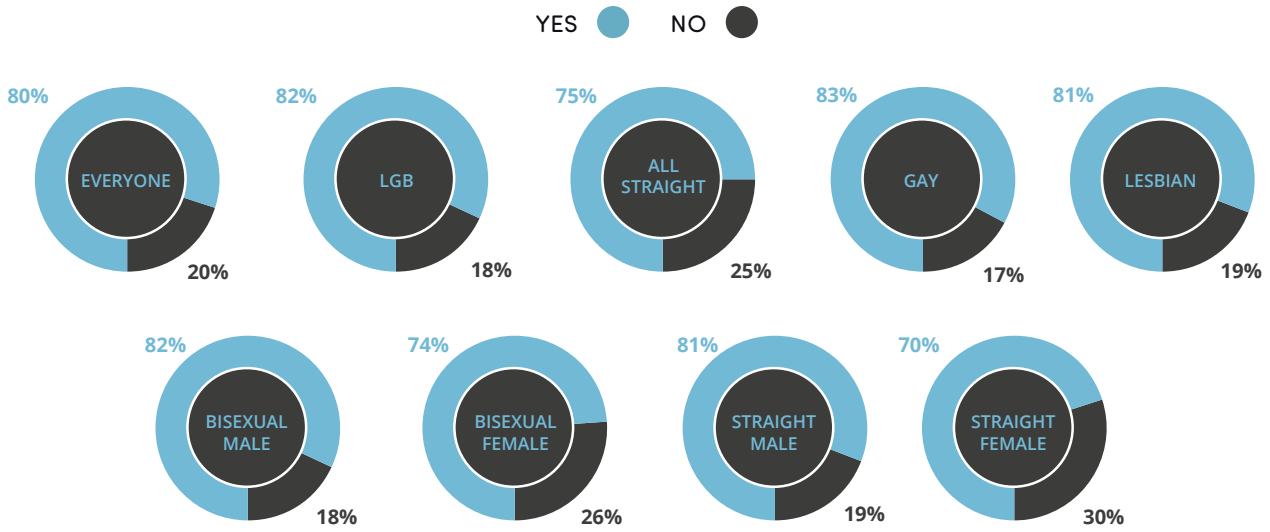
Participants of all sexualities overwhelmingly reported experiences of homophobia and discrimination in sporting environments, with abusive language being the most commonly experienced such as slurs like 'faggot' or 'dyke', being the most commonly experienced.

homophobia and discrimination witnessed. However, we found those under 22 were actually more likely to report being personally targeted than those over 22. This highly unexpected finding was true for both gays and lesbians. Does this suggest homophobia is actually on the increase? Future research would need to be undertaken, perhaps using this study as a benchmark, to answer this question. However, we believe this is unlikely. Instead, as discussed earlier, participants under 22 were more likely to be out of the closet while playing youth sport than older participants. Perhaps, by being more open about their sexuality, this is also making it more likely they will personally experience discrimination. More research will be needed. However, what is clear from our findings is that homophobia is widely experienced around sport across the English-speaking world by people of all ages, genders and sexualities.



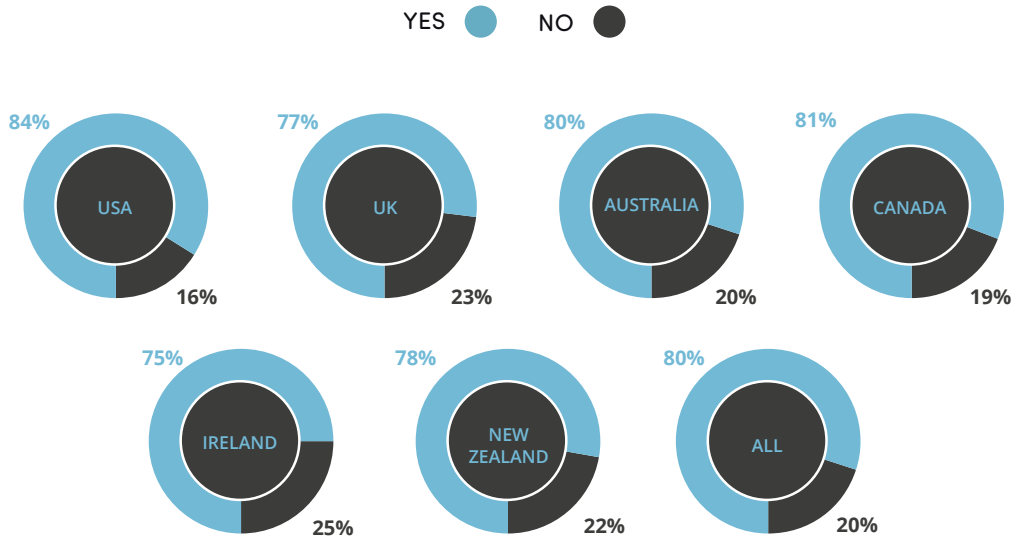
## WITNESSED OR EXPERIENCED HOMOPHOBIA IN A SPORTING ENVIRONMENT

ALL PARTICIPANTS • COMPARISON BY SEXUALITY



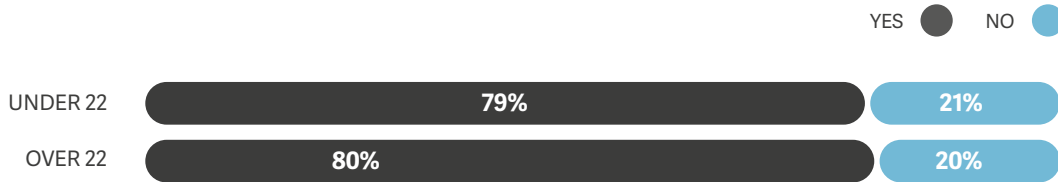
## WITNESSED OR EXPERIENCED HOMOPHOBIA IN A SPORTING ENVIRONMENT

ALL PARTICIPANTS • COMPARISON BY COUNTRY



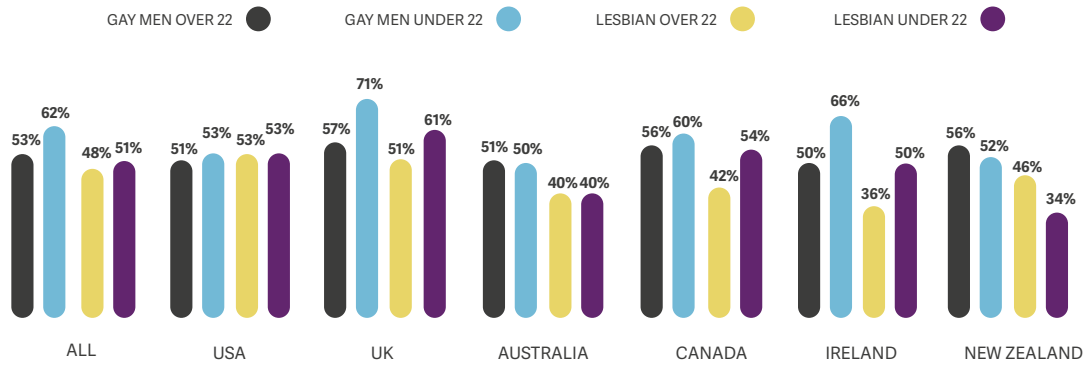
## WITNESSED OR EXPERIENCED HOMOPHOBIA IN A SPORTING ENVIRONMENT AS A PLAYER OR SPECTATOR

COMPARISON OF PARTICIPANTS OVER AND UNDER 22



## PERSONALLY TARGETTED BY HOMOPHOBIA

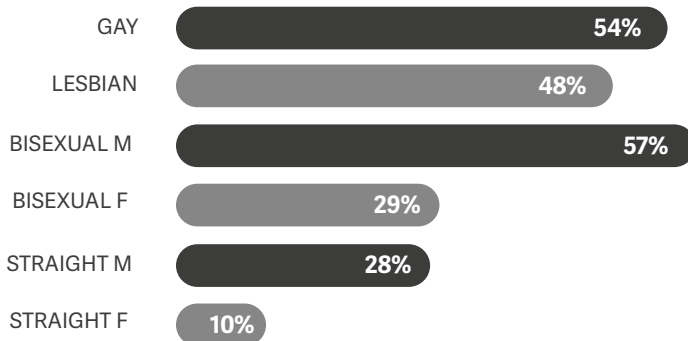
COMPARISON OF PARTICIPANTS OVER AND UNDER 22



Please note: when comparing countries it is important to note the number of lesbians under 22 in Ireland and New Zealand was much lower than the number of gay men. For a full participant breakdown please see the appendix.

## PARTICIPANTS WHO EXPERIENCED HOMOPHOBIA

ALL PARTICIPANTS • COMPARISON BY SEXUALITY



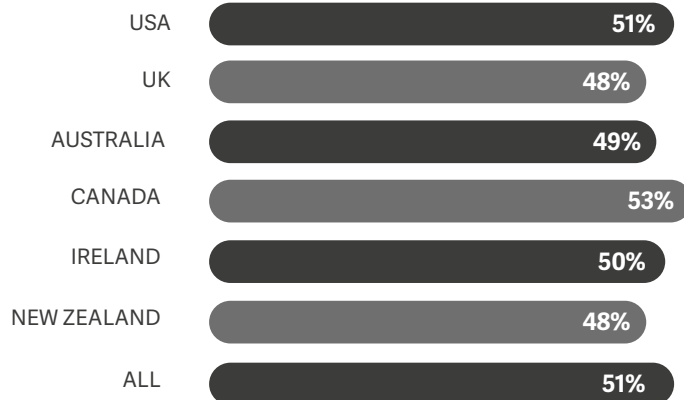
## PARTICIPANTS WHO WITNESSED HOMOPHOBIA

ALL PARTICIPANTS • COMPARISON BY COUNTRY



## PARTICIPANTS WHO EXPERIENCED HOMOPHOBIA

LGB PARTICIPANTS • COMPARISON BY COUNTRY



# MOST COMMON FORMS OF HOMOPHOBIA AND DISCRIMINATION PERSONALLY EXPERIENCED

## KEY FINDINGS

**Language** was the most common form of homophobia reported

Verbal slurs such as 'faggot' or 'dyke' were more commonly experienced than more casual forms of language such as jokes and humour

Violent forms of homophobia including **physical assaults and verbal threats** were also widely reported

Half of gay men had personally experienced homophobia and of those, more than **1 in 4 (27%)** had received verbal threats

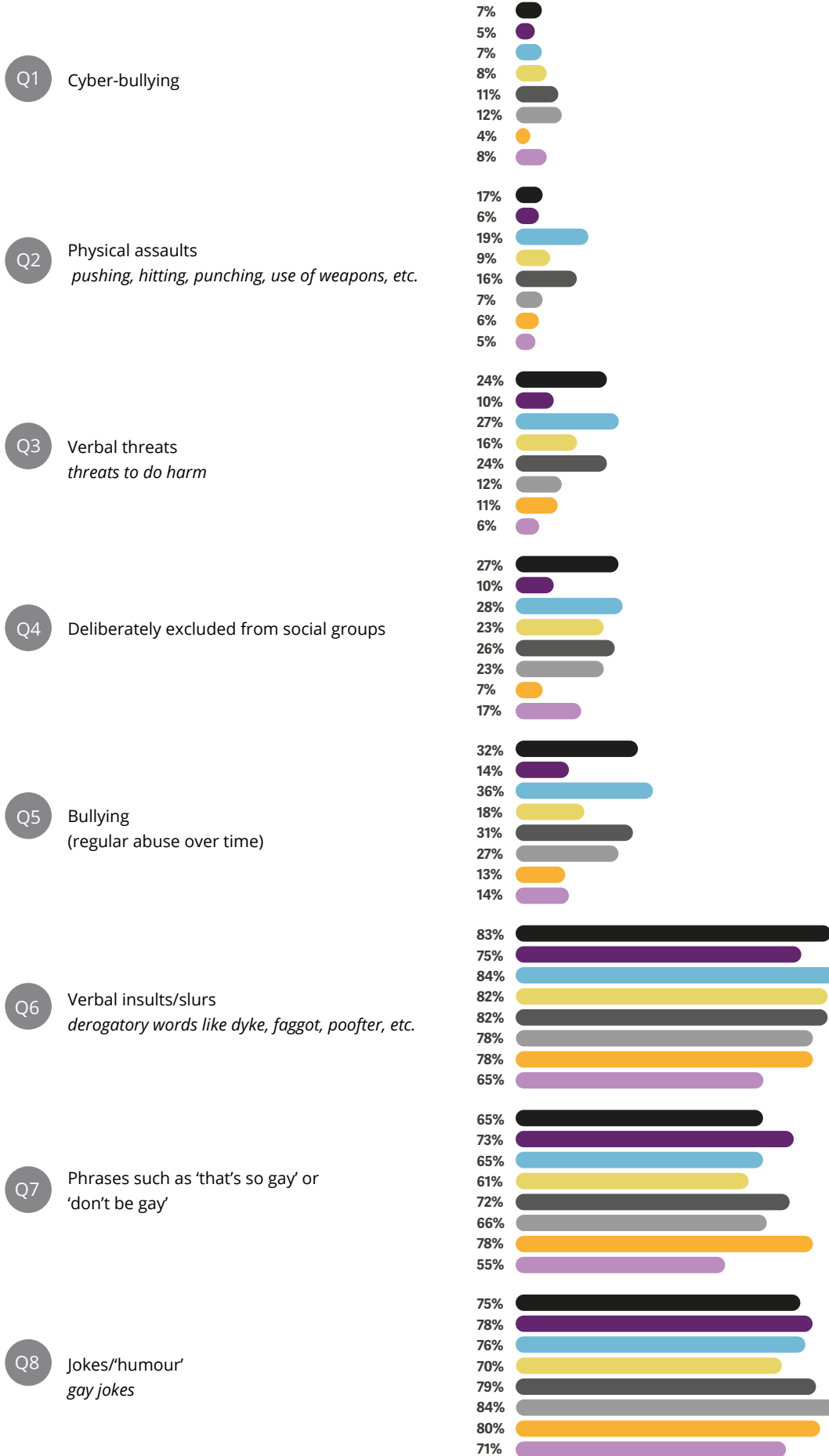
**Participants under 22** were more likely to report personal experiences with homophobia than older participants, potentially because they are more likely to be at least partially out of the closet

With the exception of bisexual women, nearly half or more of LGB participants have been personally targeted by homophobia or discrimination

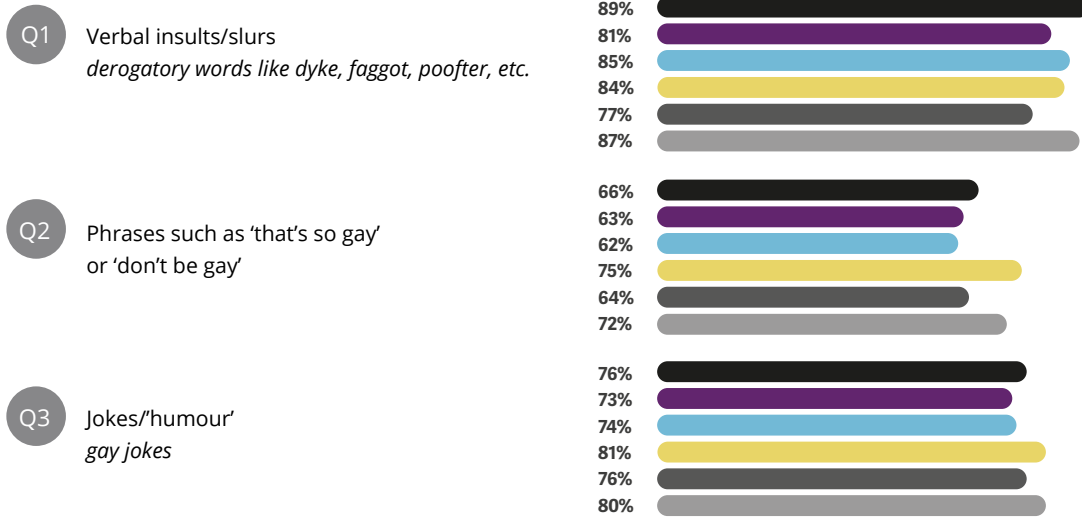
**28%** (nearly 1 in 3) heterosexual men also say they have been personally targeted

# FORMS OF HOMOPHOBIA AND/OR DISCRIMINATION WHEN PERSONALLY EXPERIENCED\*

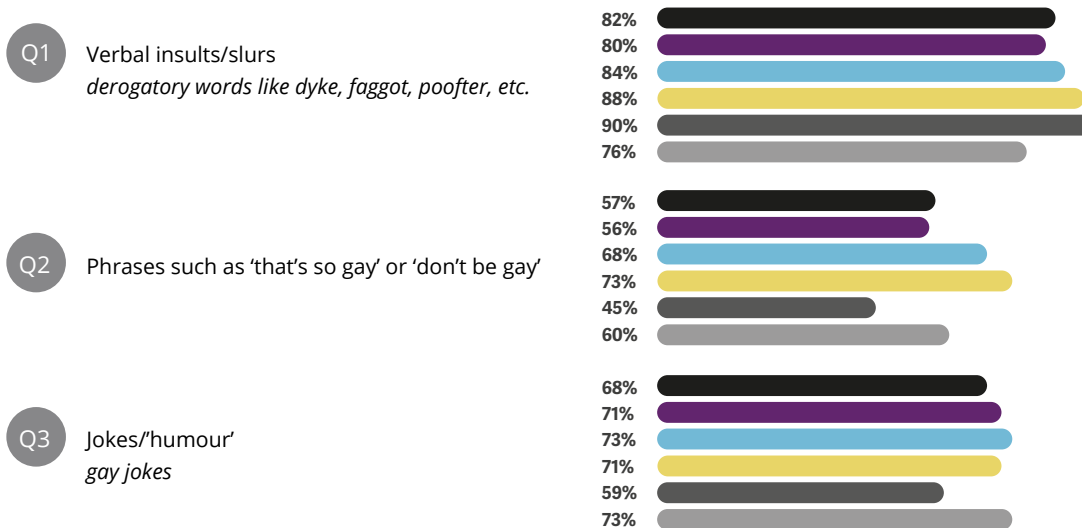
ALL PARTICIPANTS • COMPARISON BY SEXUALITY



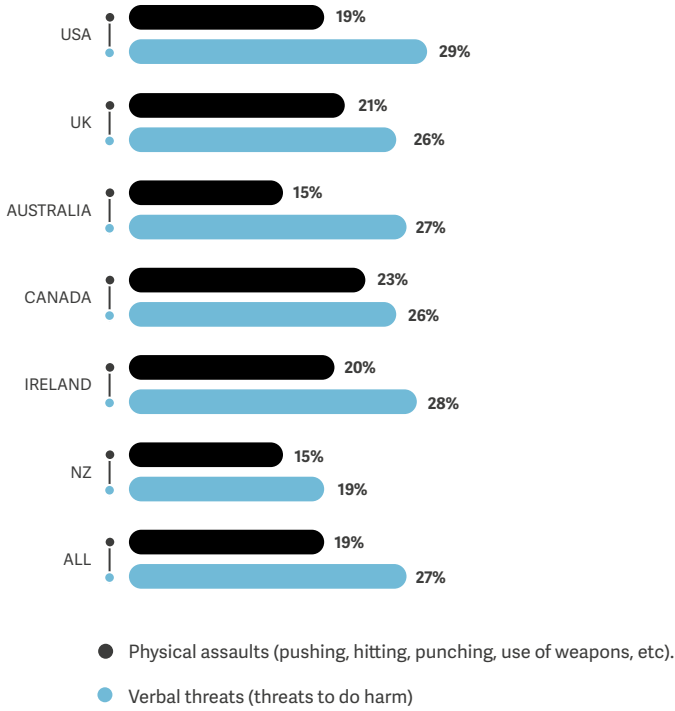
## VERBAL FORMS OF HOMOPHOBIA WHEN PERSONALLY EXPERIENCED BY GAY MEN



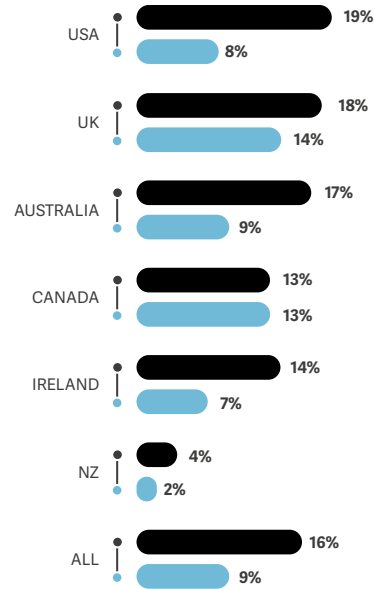
## VERBAL FORMS OF HOMOPHOBIA WHEN PERSONALLY EXPERIENCED BY LESBIANS



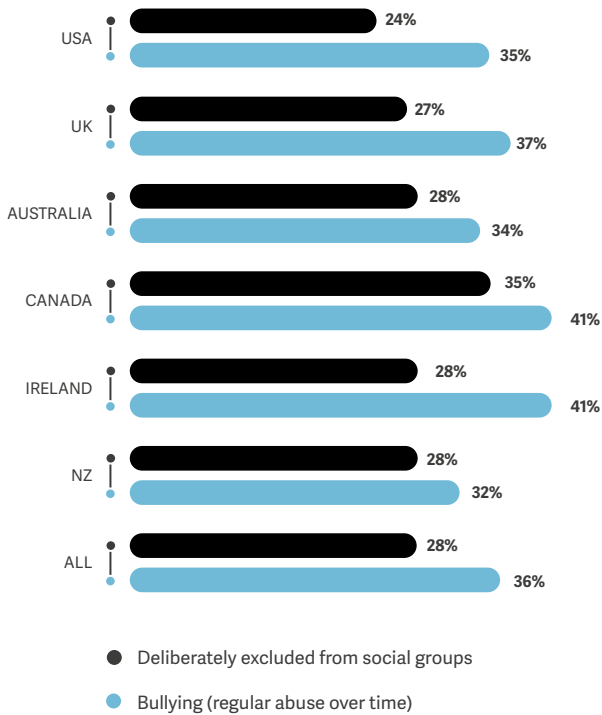
### VIOLENT FORMS OF HOMOPHOBIA: WHEN PERSONALLY EXPERIENCED BY GAY MEN



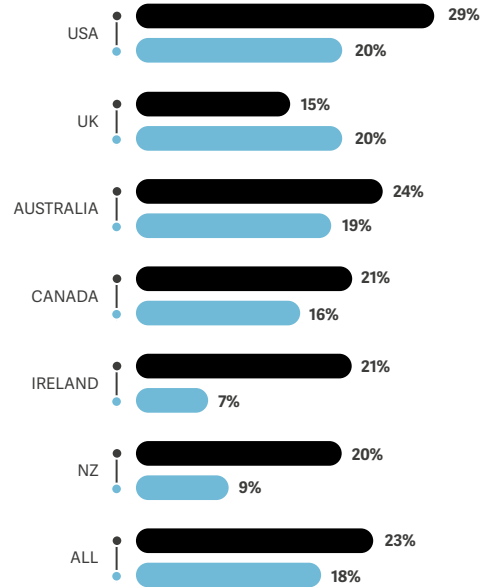
### VIOLENT FORMS OF HOMOPHOBIA: WHEN PERSONALLY EXPERIENCED BY LESBIANS



### BULLYING AND SOCIAL EXCLUSION: WHEN PERSONALLY EXPERIENCED BY GAY MEN



### BULLYING AND SOCIAL EXCLUSION: WHEN PERSONALLY EXPERIENCED BY LESBIANS



## MOST COMMON FORMS AND TYPES OF HOMOPHOBIA AND DISCRIMINATION PARTICIPANTS HAVE WITNESSED IN SPORTING ENVIRONMENTS

### KEY FINDINGS

While it is important to understand which kinds of homophobia and discrimination people personally experienced, participants, particularly straight people, were more likely to have witnessed others being targeted.

Language was the most common form witnessed by all participants, 80% of straight people who have witnessed homophobia have witnessed slurs such as 'faggot' and 'dyke'

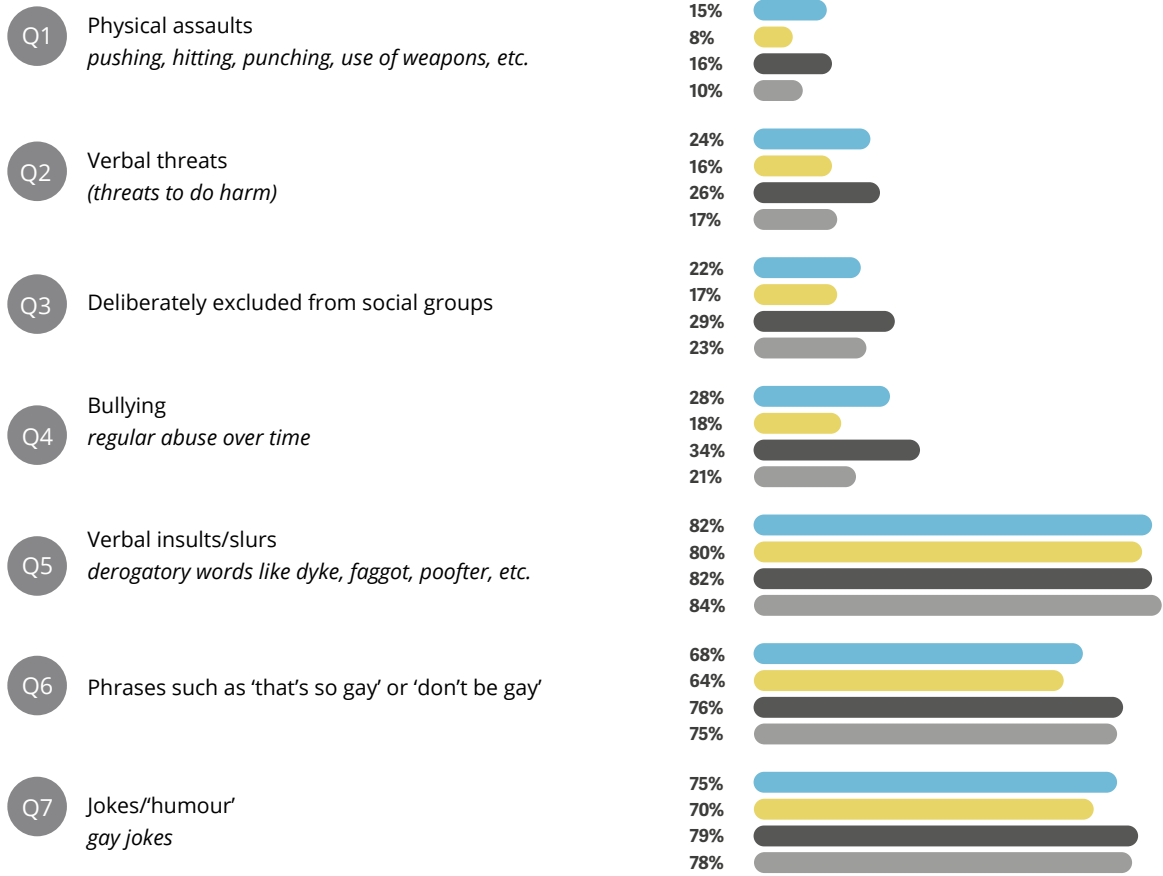
One in four (26%) LGB people have witnessed others being bullied over a period of time

Gay and bisexual men were more likely to be physically assaulted themselves than witness others being attacked, however, nearly 15% said they saw others being assaulted due to their sexuality



# FORMS OF HOMOPHOBIA WHEN WITNESSED IN SPORTING ENVIRONMENTS

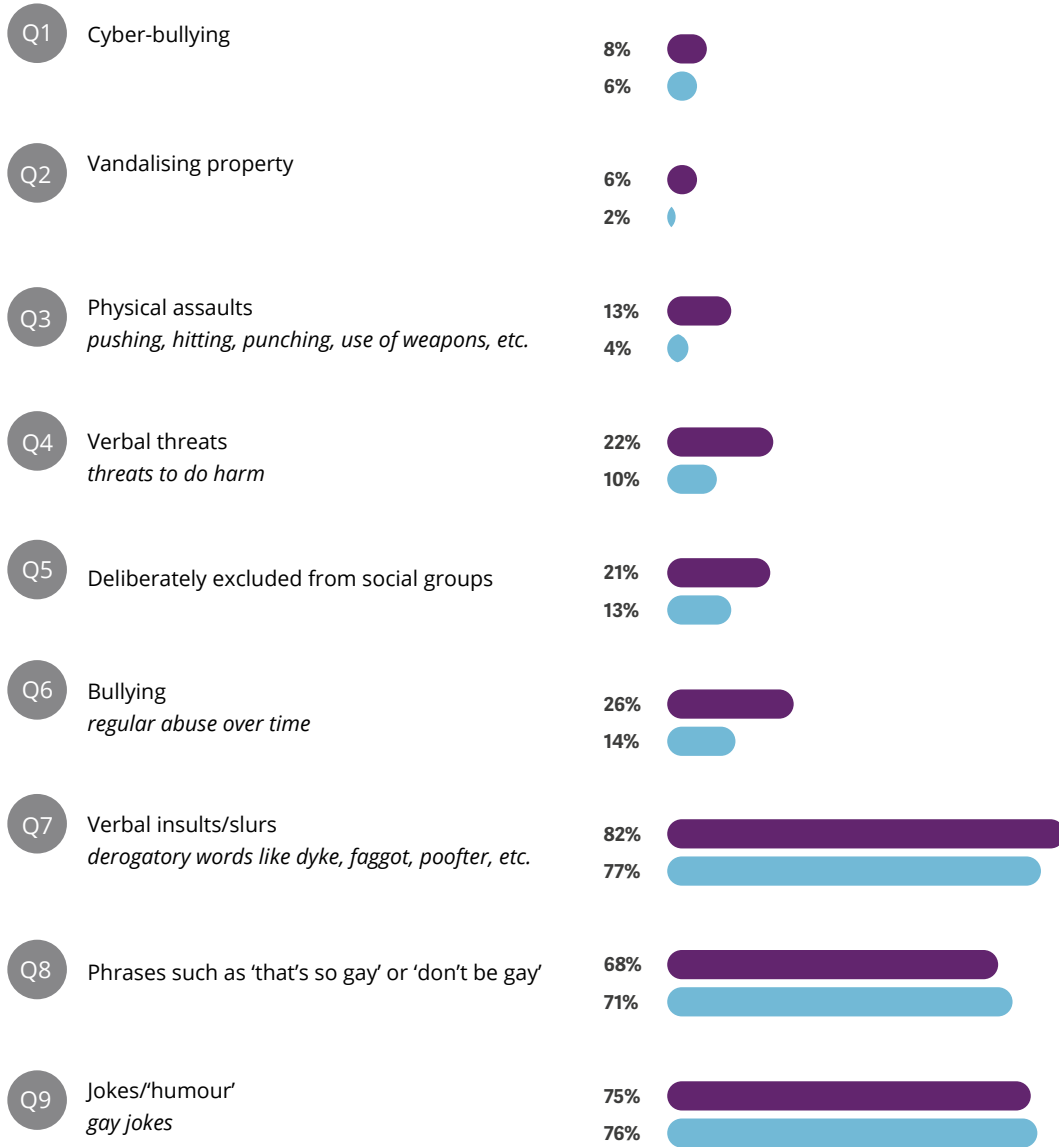
LGB PARTICIPATION



# FORMS OF HOMOPHOBIA WHEN WITNESSED IN SPORTING ENVIRONMENTS

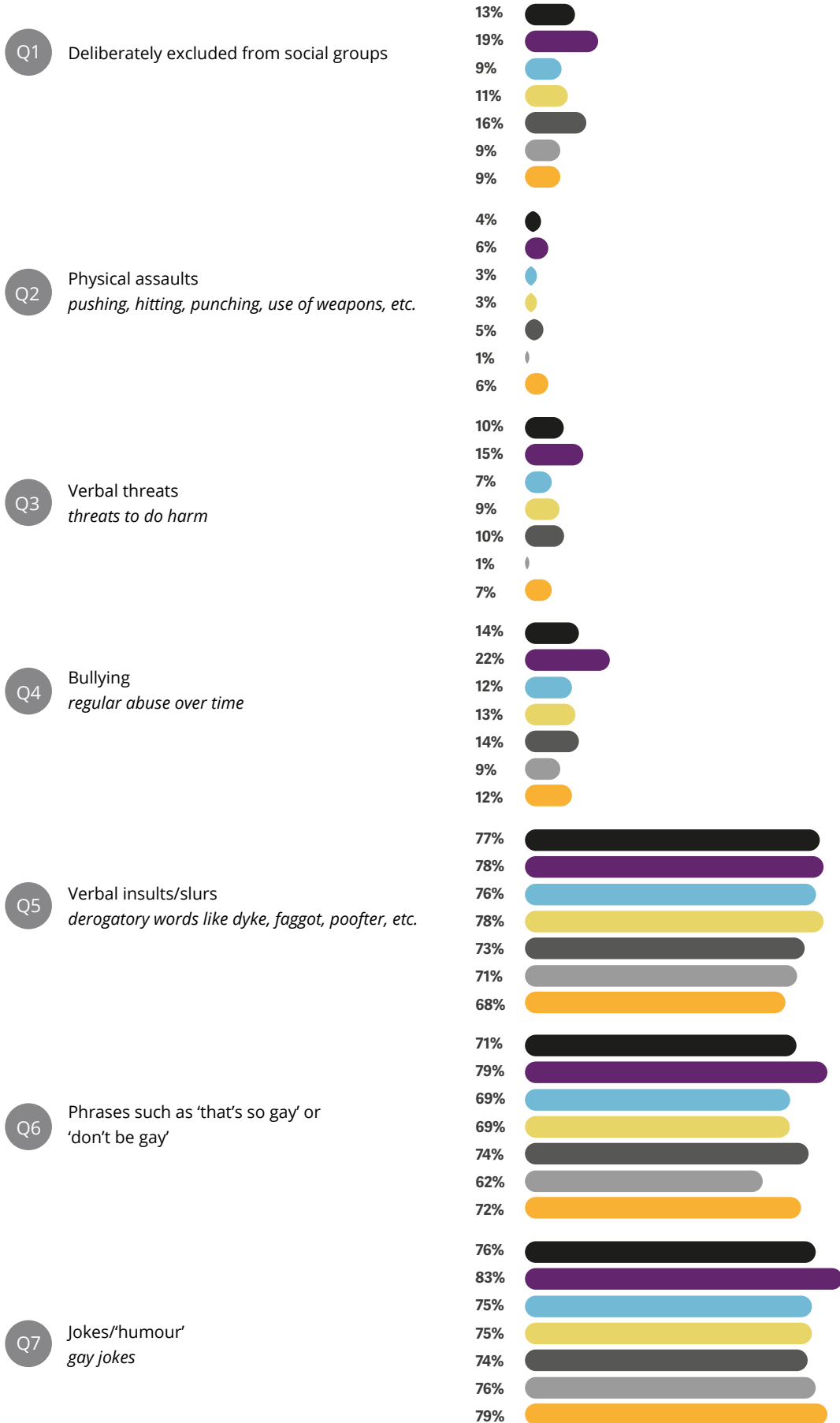
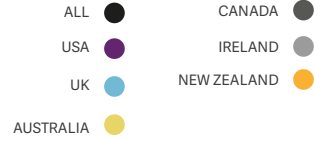
LGB VS. STRAIGHT

LGB ●  
STRAIGHT ●



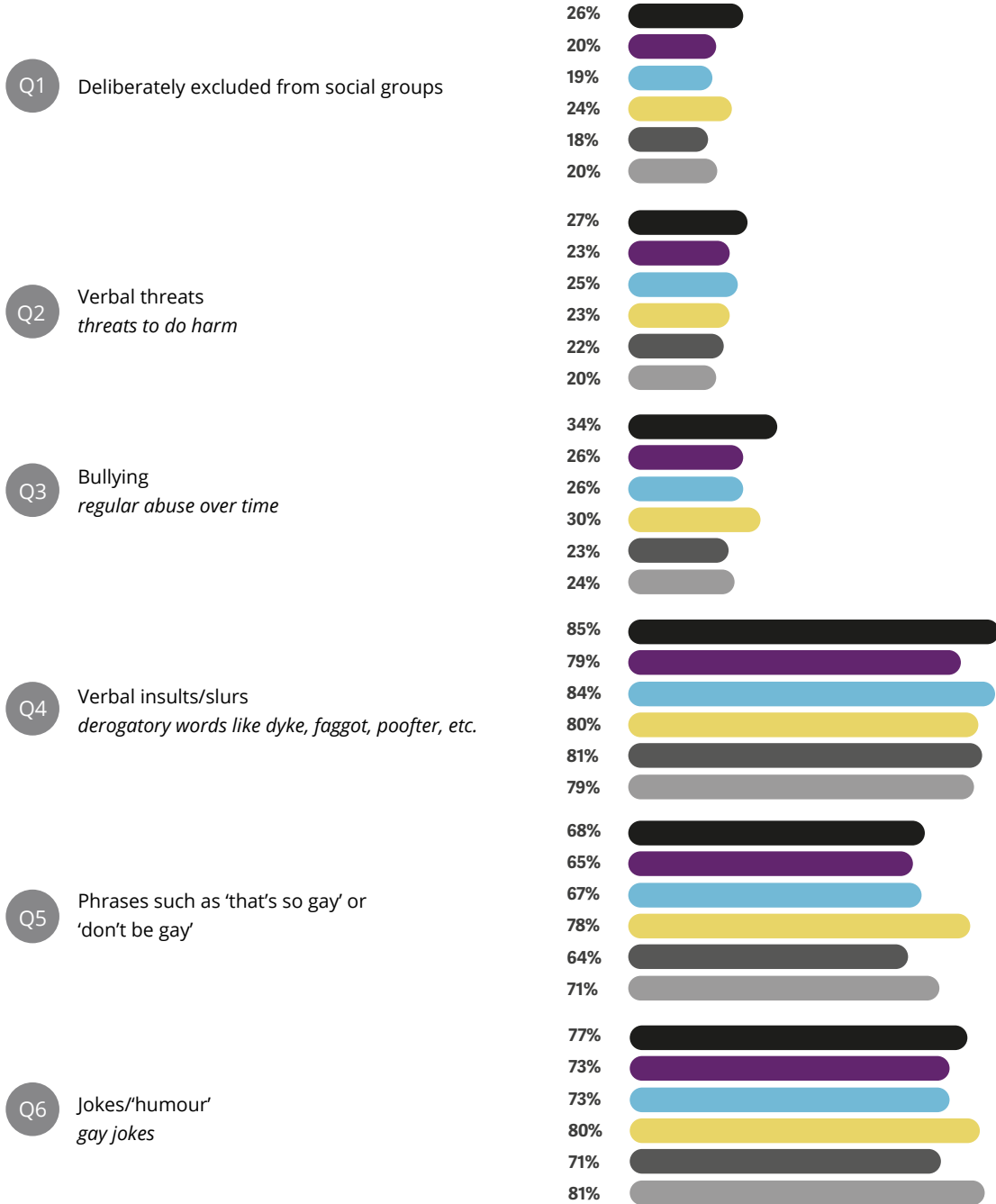
# FORMS HOMOPHOBIA WHEN WITNESSED IN SPORTING ENVIRONMENTS

STRAIGHT • COMPARISON BY COUNTRY



# FORMS OF HOMOPHOBIA WHEN WITNESSED IN SPORTING ENVIRONMENTS

GAY MEN • COMPARISON BY COUNTRY





# CHANGING SPORTING CULTURE

## PARTICIPANTS VIEWS ON CHANGING SPORTING CULTURE

While most studies, including this one, include a series of recommendations written by the authors or other academic experts, we decided to take the unique approach of asking the participants, themselves, for recommendations. All participants were asked for their suggestions for addressing homophobia and discrimination with the goal of ranking sports welcoming and safe for all.

Participants were given six options and asked to pick the best three and then rank those three selections by the most likely to help, participants could also submit their own recommendation, though most chose to use the ones provided. The options included:

- National sporting organisations need to adopt and promote clear anti-homophobia and LGB inclusion policies for professional and amateur players
- You need to start early with schools, coaches and parents taking homophobia and bullying seriously in sporting environments
- More LGB professional sporting stars need to come out of the closet to set an example
- Police, stadium and sporting officials need to adopt a zero-tolerance policy for homophobic humour, chants and slurs
- Major public education campaigns featuring sporting stars need to be developed and shown in places such as stadiums and in the media
- More straight sports allies need to visibly speak out challenging homophobia in sport

Top three solutions chosen by all participants were:

1. You need to start early with schools, coaches and parents taking homophobia and bullying seriously in sporting environments
2. National sporting organisations need to adopt and promote clear anti-homophobia and LGB inclusion policies for professional and amateur players
3. More LGB professional sporting stars need to come out of the closet to set an example

Of those participants who submitted other suggestions, some of the most common were:

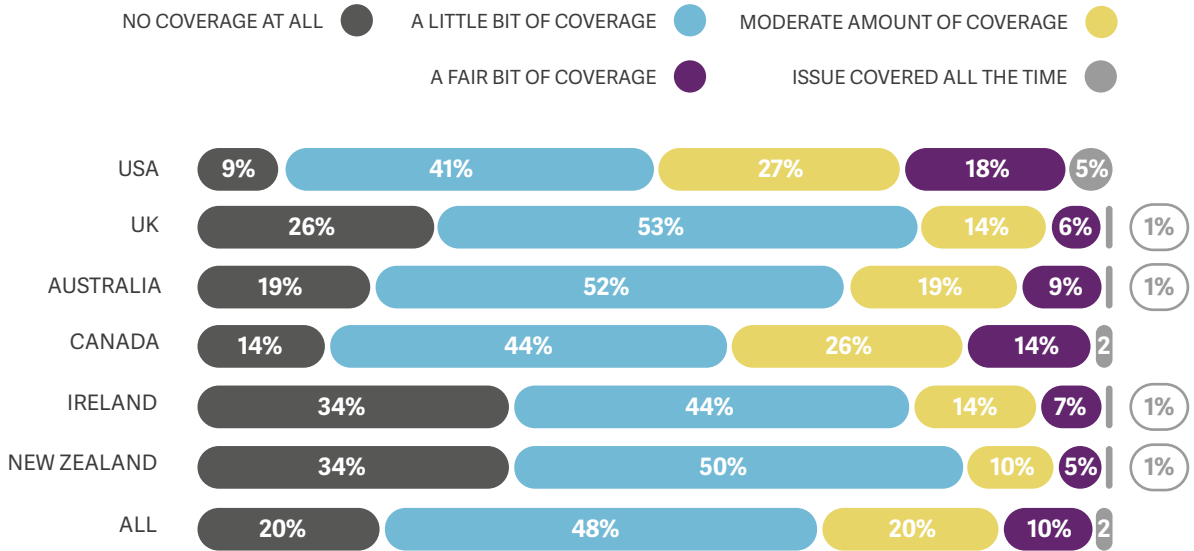
- Educating the public through the media
- Changing wider society to improve acceptance of LGB people
- Ensure parents, coaches and teachers are positive role models of acceptance
- Ongoing support and advocacy for LGB people from professional and high profile athletes



68%

OF PARTICIPANTS FEEL THERE HAS BEEN NOE OR ONLY 'A LITTLE' MAINSTREAM MEDIA COVERAGE OF HOMOPHOBIA IN SPORT

THINKING ABOUT THE MAINSTREAM MEDIA COVERAGE OF HOMOPHOBIA IN TEAM SPORTS, HOW WELL DO YOU THINK IT IS COVERED COMPARED TO OTHER ISSUES, SUCH AS RACISM?



# CONCLUSION

The findings from Out on the Fields unfortunately paint a picture of consistent homophobic discrimination in sporting culture across the English-speaking world. The study also found team sporting environments are fraught with barriers to participation for lesbian, gay and bisexual athletes.

While there were subtle differences between countries, with some countries doing better than others on certain measures, even this was no cause for celebration. For example, Canadians were much more positive than any other predominantly English-speaking country around their perceptions of the inclusion of LGB people in sport.

However, when it came down to actual participant reports of experiences of homophobia and discrimination in sport, Canada was no different than any other country. In fact, Canada had the highest number of gay male participants and second highest number of lesbians reporting physical assaults. The country was also tied with Ireland for the highest number of gay men reporting bullying over an extended period of time. This highlights difference between the perceptions around sporting culture and the reality of experiences of LGB. Interestingly, such disconnects were not isolated to Canada.

Disconnects were also seen between the more positive views held by heterosexuals compared to LGB athletes, in all countries, around the inclusion of LGB people in sport. In many cases the positive perceptions of straight participants did not match the many negative experiences reported by LGB athletes. However, disconnects between perception and reality can go both ways.

Most gay and bisexual men remained at least partially in the closet while participating in team sport due to fears of homophobia and discrimination. There is no doubt that these fears have some foundation given the prevalence of homophobic discrimination that has been reported. Equally, though, over one thousand participants submitted their personal stories as part of the study. Many LGB participants said the deep fears they had of rejection proved to be completely unfounded after they came out to teammates and were embraced and supported. In fact, many said they were able to deepen their bonds with teammates and enjoy their sport even more after revealing their sexuality.

The good news is that participants who were under 22 at the time of the study were more likely to come out of the closet, at least to some people on their team, than previous generations. This increased visibility of LGB



# CONCLUSION

athletes may, in fact, be the most powerful method of changing sporting culture.

One only needs to look at the differences between the experiences of LGB men and women as proof.

Women were much less likely to experience homophobic discrimination and held a much more positive view of acceptance in sport than gay men. They were also much more likely to come out of the closet and many lesbian and bisexual women said they gained the courage to do this because there were already lesbians and bisexual women playing their sport who were open about their sexuality.

It would seem that the brave athletes who come out of the closet in sport help others to do the same and in turn, this increased visibility seems to lead to reductions in homophobic behaviour. However, it shouldn't require bravery to 'come out.' Parents, coaches, teachers and sporting organisations have a responsibility to make 'coming out' a non-event by ensuring LGB athletes who decide to come out of the closet are supported and protected. Spectators also need to be willing to accept the reality that many of their sporting heroes, particularly in male sport, might be gay.

One area that should be of great concern to anyone involved in or supporting sport is the finding that 78% of participants believed an openly gay, lesbian or bisexual person would not be very safe as a spectator at a sporting event. Participants also believe spectator stands are the most likely sporting environment for homophobia to occur.

Again, we can look to the stories that participants submitted for deeper insight into this finding. Many participants said they were at sporting events where homophobic slurs were being yelled or chanted by fans and officials did not take action. Clearly many participants believe this homophobic language creates an unsafe environment for lesbian, gay and bisexual people. It's also worth noting that racist chants and slurs were once commonplace and seen by some as 'part of the game' and 'just a bit of fun.'

For the most part, racist language is now rare and punished quite severely by officials. Our hope is that homophobic language and behaviour is treated in the same way; that it no longer continues to be 'part of the game' that many feel they aren't welcome to play.

# APPENDIX

## METHODOLOGY

Data was collected by Repucom through a 10-15 minute online survey focused primarily on collecting quantitative data. However, participants were also given the opportunity to provide qualitative information. The survey was open to anyone, though heterosexual participants were given fewer questions than lesbian, gay and bisexual participants. For example, heterosexual participants were not asked about whether they played team sports and about their experiences in coming out of the closet. Furthermore, LGB participant questions about sport involvement focused on team sports rather than individualised sports while the rest of the survey asked a mix of questions about team sports and sport generally. With this in mind, the results should be read with the understanding that the general, overall focus of the study was on team sports.

The survey comprised of six sections, with sections 2 and 3 only open to LGB participants.

1. Demographics – closed questions about gender, sexual identity, age, country of residence, education, and employment status.
2. Sport involvement – closed questions about youth (under 22) and adult (22 and over), team sport participation including deterrents to sport participation.
3. Openness around sexuality - Participants were asked if they were out in their sport and provided with a range of multiple choice responses around their reasons for coming out/staying closeted.
4. Perceptions of sporting culture – multiple choice questions to gauge participants' perceptions of sporting culture in their country and the acceptance around LGB athletes or spectators.
5. Discrimination in sport – closed questions about experiences around homophobic discrimination including the forms.
6. Policies to address homophobia – open and closed questions around sporting culture and the best approaches, if any, to address homophobia and/or ensure LGB people feel welcome.



# APPENDIX

## PARTICIPANT RECRUITMENT

Although the study was open to people living anywhere in the world, the researchers were particularly focused on comparing the experiences of people living in the major English-speaking countries. There were many reasons for this, including practical such as a lack of resources to translate and promote the study in multiple languages.

However, another key consideration was the fact these countries generally have similar cultures. This means, that when comparing results from the different countries, there is less of a need to account for differences in religion, legal status of LGB people etc. Given this focus on the English speaking countries, recruitment efforts were focused on the UK, Canada, Australia, USA, New Zealand and Ireland. The primary recruitment messages used in all communication tactics was typically "Share Your Story" with the tagline of "The First International Study on Homophobia in Sports." It is unclear if this messaging would have had any impact on the kind of participants who decided to take part in the study.

While some may have chosen to participate to share negative experiences, many with positive or even neutral experiences were also attracted to the study. This is illustrated through the differences in participant perspectives, for example lesbians were much more positive overall than gay men but still chose to participate. Without a doubt, though, the study did seem to attract a more sport oriented participant group, as shown by higher overall LGB sport participation rates found by this study compared to some others in the past. Finally, we used a variety of tactics and techniques to promote the study to encourage participation. This included media coverage, endorsements by high-profile athletes from a variety of sports, promotion by corporate supporters and government as well as social media content and advertising. We have provided some examples of the social media ads or headlines from news articles.



**Kiwi Women Urgently needed for Historic Study**

Female Kiwi participants are urgently needed by researchers conducting the first international study on homophobia in sport.

The study, called Out on the Fields, is now the largest ever done on the subject. It is open to everyone, regardless of sexuality or whether they play sports.

Nearly 9000 people have participated through a short online survey, but participation by women from New Zealand has been much lower than other countries. The study, which will shine a light on discrimination in sports, is set to close on Monday.



**World Cup Star Alex Blackwell on Homophobia**

The world cup Cricket star, long-time Australian captain/vice-captain and proud lesbian asks you to help end homophobia in sport Spend 10 min. and take a sur...

160 people reached

Boost Post



**Gay NFL player Michael Sam urges more to take part in survey on homophobia**

THE first-ever openly-gay professional gridiron player to have been drafted into an NFL team has thrown his support behind a research survey looking at...



**Burgess Brothers on Homophobia and Sports**

Rugby league stars and brothers Sam and Thomas Burgess encourages you to help end homophobia in sport Spend 10 min. and take a survey that's part of the worl...

88 people reached

Boost Post



# APPENDIX

## PARTICIPANT BREAKDOWN

Australia	Gay	35%	1048
	Lesbian	13%	385
	Straight/heterosexual	44%	1316
	Bisexual + Other (please specify) + Choose not to disclose	7%	220
Canada	Gay	49%	547
	Lesbian	13%	147
	Straight/heterosexual	23%	225
	Bisexual + Other (please specify) + Choose not to disclose	13%	149
New Zealand	Gay	38%	238
	Lesbian	20%	142
	Straight/heterosexual	25%	155
	Bisexual + Other (please specify) + Choose not to disclose	14%	88
United Kingdom	Gay	68%	1214
	Lesbian	13%	234
	Straight/heterosexual	12%	216
	Bisexual + Other (please specify) + Choose not to disclose	7%	116
United States of America	Gay	55%	1123
	Lesbian	15%	315
	Straight/heterosexual	18%	363
	Bisexual + Other (please specify) + Choose not to disclose	119%	224
Ireland	Gay	52%	260
	Lesbian	19%	94
	Straight/heterosexual	23%	115
	Bisexual + Other (please specify) + Choose not to disclose	6%	27





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