

Centre for Citizenship, Identities and Governance  
and Faculty of Health and Social Care

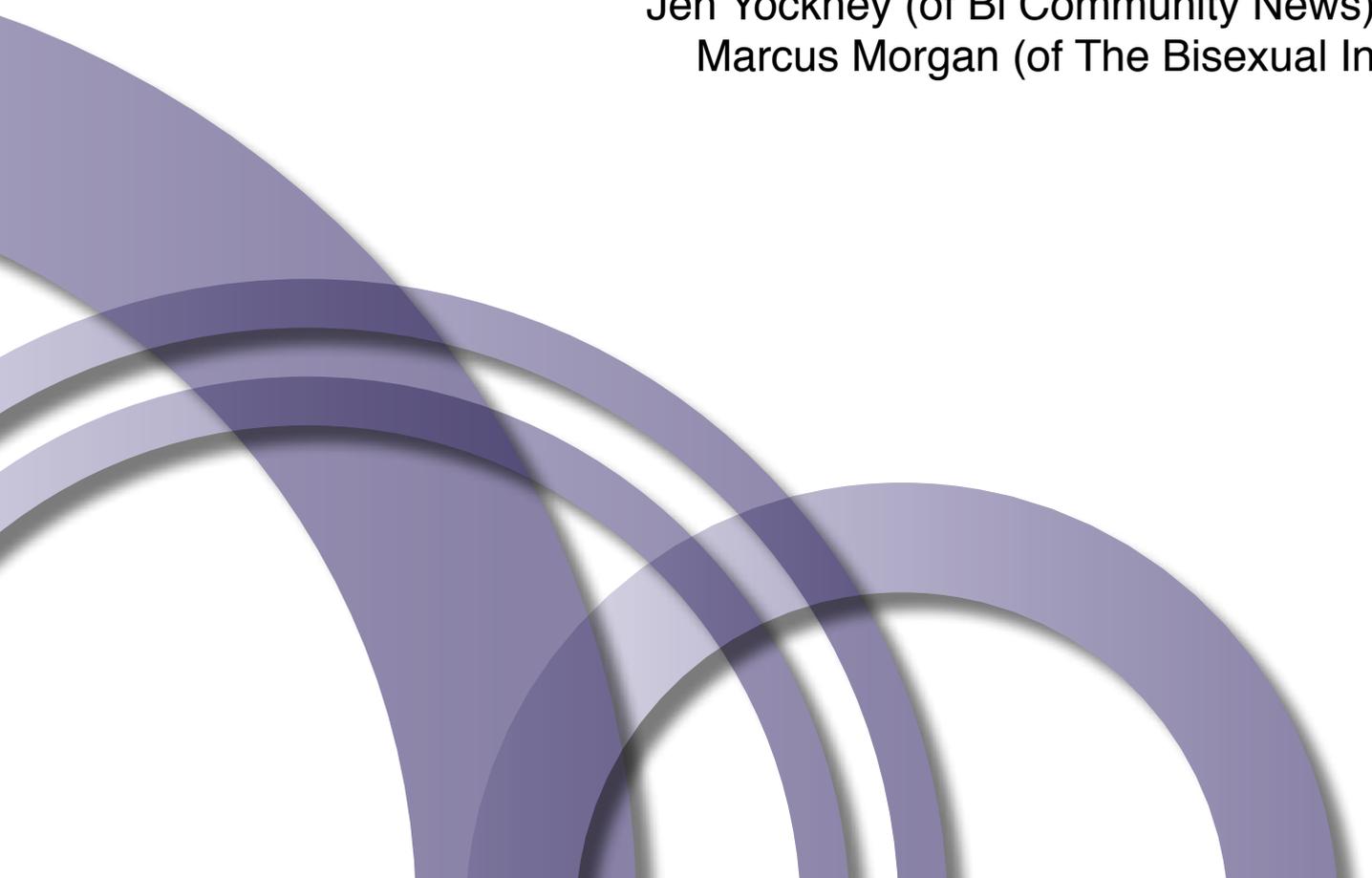
# The Bisexuality Report:

Bisexual inclusion in LGBT equality and diversity

Meg Barker, Christina Richards, Rebecca Jones,  
Helen Bowes-Catton & Tracey Plowman (of BiUK)

with

Jen Yockney (of Bi Community News) and  
Marcus Morgan (of The Bisexual Index)



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# THE BISEXUALITY REPORT: Executive Summary

Please see full report for detail and footnotes

This report aims to improve UK policy and practice in relation to bisexual people as part of the wider lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) equalities agenda. It is directed particularly at national and local government, at practitioners and policy-makers, and at LGB and LGBT groups and organisations.

Policy and practice in this area generally considers LGB and/or LGBT issues together. While there are many shared experiences and needs across the LGBT spectrum, there are also significant differences. As detailed in the full report, there are strong grounds for singling out bisexual people as a specific group:

- Bisexual people's experiences differ in important ways from those of heterosexual people, and from those of lesbian and gay people.
- Biphobia is distinct from homophobia.
- Bisexual people often face discrimination and prejudice from within heterosexual, and lesbian and gay, communities. This can be obscured by LGBT amalgamation.
- Bisexual populations have significantly higher levels of distress and mental health difficulties than equivalent heterosexual or lesbian/gay populations.

## Definitions and extent

Bisexuality generally refers to having attraction to more than one gender. It is a broad term which may include the following groups and more:

- People who see themselves as attracted to 'both men and women'.
- People who are mostly attracted to one gender but recognise this is not exclusive.
- People who experience their sexual identities as fluid and changeable over time.
- People who see their attraction as 'regardless of gender' (other aspects are more important in determining who they are attracted to).
- People who dispute the idea that there are only two genders and that people are attracted to one, the other, or both.

Not everybody who is attracted to more than one gender describes themselves as bisexual. There are many reasons for this including: common prejudices against bisexuality, different cultural understandings of sexuality, and a desire to fit in with lesbian, gay or heterosexual communities.

It is extremely difficult to determine the number of bisexual people due to both a lack of research and different definitions of bisexuality. If the term is defined narrowly, for example as the number of people who self-identify as 'bisexual' on a national UK survey, then the proportions tend to be small. If the term is defined as broadly as all people who have ever had an attraction to more than one gender then it may include a significant minority, or even a majority, of the population. However, how many bisexual people there are has no bearing on the necessity of ensuring that bisexual people enjoy equality and freedom from discrimination, as these rights apply to all regardless of sexual identity or attraction.

## Specifics of bisexual experience

Bisexuality has been acknowledged to be an 'invisible', 'excluded' or 'silent' sexuality within several domains including: mainstream media, lesbian and gay communities, sex research, psychology and psychotherapy, policy and legislation. It has been argued that bisexual invisibility is the main problem confronting bisexual people accessing services.

## Biphobia

Biphobia refers to negative attitudes, behaviours and structures specifically directed towards bisexual people or anyone who is attracted to more than one gender. Attitudes to bisexual people are often found to be even more negative than those towards other minority groups. Common forms of biphobia include:

- **Bisexual denial** for example, questioning the existence of genuinely bisexual men, or seeing bisexual people as 'confused' about their sexuality.
- **Bisexual invisibility** for example, assuming that people are either heterosexual or lesbian/gay, or assuming people's sexuality on the basis of their current partner.

- **Bisexual exclusion** for example, claiming to speak for LGB or LGBT people but then neglecting bisexual-specific issues, or including bisexual people in research but amalgamating their responses with those of lesbians and gay men.
- **Bisexual marginalisation** for example, failing to engage with bisexual people/groups in policy and practice, or prioritising lesbian and gay issues over bisexual ones.
- **Negative stereotypes** for example, assuming that bisexual people are promiscuous, spreaders of disease, incapable of monogamy, a threat to relationships/families or sexually available to anyone.

## Bisexual health

Of all the larger sexual identity groups, bisexual people have the worst mental health problems, including high rates of depression, anxiety, self harm and suicidality. This has been found both internationally and in the UK specifically, and has been strongly linked to experiences of biphobia and bisexual invisibility. While there has been little research into bisexual people's physical health, links between mental and physical health suggest that bisexual people should also be considered more at risk of physical health problems.

## Intersections

It is vital, when researching, working with, or targeting initiatives towards bisexual people, to remember that other aspects intersect with sexual identity in important ways. This means that some people experience multiple discriminations, and that the experience of bisexuality is not universal. Other aspects of identity include such things as race, culture, gender, relationship styles, sexual practices, age, ability, religion, class and geography.

## Positive experiences

This report focuses largely on problems faced by bisexual people in order to demonstrate that these need to be addressed. It is predominantly the attitudes and behaviours of others, and wider structures, which cause problems for bisexual people (as with lesbian and gay people). International research has found many positive aspects to bisexual people's experience, including the ability to develop identities and relationships which feel right, without restrictions, linked to a sense of independence, self-awareness and authenticity. Bisexual people also speak of their acceptance and appreciation of other's differences, and feel well-placed to notice and challenge social biases and assumptions beyond sexuality.

# Key Recommendations

## General Recommendations

- Inform yourself about bisexuality and avoid stereotypes about bisexual people.
- Liaise with bisexual communities on issues of equality and diversity in the same way that you liaise with lesbian, gay and trans communities. There are many bisexual groups and organisations who are willing to engage in this manner (see resources at the end of this report).
- Ensure that bisexual people are included amongst the speakers on panels and forums relating to LGBT communities.
- Include bisexual representation in all relevant working groups and initiatives.
- Include bisexuality within all policy and explicitly within the diversity implications section of every document and policy.
- Don't assume one unified bisexual experience. Many different types of relationships and sexual practices are found among bisexual people. The experiences and needs of bisexual people are also affected by their race, culture, gender, relationship status, age, disability, religion, social class, geographical location, etc.
- Separate biphobia out from homophobia, recognising that there are specific issues facing bisexual people such as lack of acknowledgement of their existence, stereotypes of greediness or promiscuity, and pressure to be either gay or straight.
- Recognise the role that biphobia and bisexual invisibility play in creating negative outcomes for bisexual people.
- Recognise that bisexual people are also subject to homophobia, heterosexism and heteronormativity (see glossary).
- Be clear, when talking about bisexual people, whether you are defining bisexuality by attraction, behaviour and/or identity.
- Support and commission research addressing the specific needs and experiences of bisexual people in the UK.
- Support events and spaces for bisexual people financially, through access to venues and resources, and with publicity.

## Sector-specific Recommendations

### LG, LGB & LGBT Organisations & Equality & Diversity Groups Within Organisations

- Ensure that groups who speak for bisexual people as well as lesbian and gay people include the 'B' in their name (if it includes LG) and mission statement.
- Separate out bisexual issues from those affecting gay men and lesbians.
- Address biphobia as well as homophobia and transphobia.
- Include bisexual issues in all training.
- Where possible, openly acknowledge the history and impact of bisexual people's marginalisation within lesbian and gay spaces and groups.
- Include positive aspects of bisexual experience, with a focus on what bisexual people have to offer, rather than problematising them as a group.

### Criminal Justice

- Tackle biphobic hate crime by separating out the experiences of bisexual people in national surveys, examining bisexual-specific experiences, and particularly addressing sexual assault.
- Address bisexual-specific experiences of domestic violence given evidence that bisexual people in 'same-gender' relationships are more at risk than other groups.
- Conduct research into how bisexual people fare in legal cases where they may face bisexual discrimination, and identify precedents in terms of protection.
- Ensure that bisexual people are treated fairly in relation to asylum seeking.
- Ensure that the CPS prosecute as Hate Crime when the crime is perceived as such.

## Education

- Tackle biphobia in schools through further research focusing on bisexual youth specifically.
- Ensure that teacher training and anti-bullying campaigns include bisexual-specific issues.
- Ensure that Personal, Social, Health and Economic Education includes bisexuality.

## Workplace

- Tackle biphobia in the workplace by adhering to the recommendations of the Stonewall report on bisexual people in the workplace, these include:
  - Separate out bisexual experience.
  - Consult and support bisexual staff.
  - Ensure safe access to support for bisexual workers.
  - Ensure effective bisexual-inclusive policies, training, procedures and networks.
  - Monitor overall personnel career development in relation to sexuality.

## Sport

- Tackle biphobia in sport explicitly as well as inclusion within homophobia campaigns.

## Media

- Be aware of how bisexuality is represented and how this can feed into biphobia.
- Consider developing guidelines for bisexual inclusion along the lines of recent BBC guidelines on LGB representation and those of Trans Media Watch for trans people.
- Endeavour to represent the diversity of bisexual people, especially people for whom their bisexuality is incidental to the story, as with heterosexual people.

## Health

- Address the mental health experiences of bisexual people in research, policy and practice. Increase awareness among practitioners of specific issues faced by bisexual people, put initiatives in place to address bisexual mental health, offer separate services if desired by the person.
- Conduct further research into the specific physical health needs of bisexual people, particularly in relation to substance use and cancer screenings. Put initiatives in place where relevant.
- Make sexual health promotion literature more inclusive of a range of sexual practices.
- Specifically target bisexual youth in sexual health campaigns, rather than subsuming them in lesbian and gay categories. Any restrictions relating to sexual health, such as the donation of blood, should be around safety of sexual practices engaged in rather than the genders or sexual identities of those involved.

## Introduction to the report

This report aims to inform UK policy and practice on lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) equality in relation to the inclusion of bisexuality and issues specific to bisexual people. Therefore it is aimed particularly at national and local government, at practitioners and policy-makers, and at LGB and LGBT groups and organisations.

Policy and practice in this area generally considers LGB and/or LGBT issues together<sup>1</sup>. While there are undoubtedly shared experiences and needs across the LGBT spectrum, there are also significant differences. Thinking about bisexuality only within the umbrella group 'LGBT' fails to acknowledge that there may be issues specific to bisexuality and to being bisexual that require separating out from issues affecting lesbian and gay people. There are similar issues regarding trans which are currently being addressed through government engagement with UK trans communities and experts<sup>2</sup>, leading towards the first ever Government transgender equality action plan. No such initiatives are in place in relation to bisexual equality.

Research on local authority sexualities and trans equalities initiatives has found very little specific reference to bisexual people in documentation or in the talk of key stakeholders<sup>3</sup>. Similarly, the recent government report on LGBT equality<sup>4</sup> does not, at any point, consider bisexual needs specifically. LGB and LGBT groups' and organisations' reports and initiatives also often neglect to address biphobia and bisexual experience separately to homophobia and broader LGBT experience<sup>5</sup>.

There are strong grounds for singling out bisexual people as a specific group in policy and practice for the following reasons:

- There is a wealth of evidence that bisexual people's experiences differ in important ways from those of heterosexual people, and those of lesbian and gay people.
- Biphobia is distinct from homophobia.
- Bisexual people often face discrimination and prejudice from within lesbian and gay communities. These processes of discrimination are erased by simply amalgamating bisexuality into LGBT.
- Research has found significantly higher levels of distress and mental health difficulties amongst bisexual groups than amongst equivalent heterosexual or lesbian/gay populations.

## A note on the evidence base

Due to the lack of UK-specific research in certain areas, particularly in terms of large-scale quantitative studies, this report draws on international data about bisexuality as well as that which is UK-specific. The very invisibility and exclusion of bisexuality which we outline here means that much research to date combines data from bisexual people with data from lesbian and gay people, or excludes bisexual people entirely from studies. However, in recent years there has been more specific research on bisexuality (much of which is listed in the BiUK website reference lists<sup>6</sup>), and we have recently published good practice guidelines for researchers which will hopefully aid future research<sup>7</sup>.

Where possible, UK-specific research is drawn upon to supplement the international research cited, and to clarify whether international trends are also true for the UK.

## Acknowledgements

We are grateful to everyone who made this report possible, particularly to the UK bisexual communities for constantly informing, and taking part in, our work, and to those on the academic\_bi email list for international discussions on these issues. We are deeply appreciative too of the work of the San Francisco Human Rights Commission in publishing their 'bisexual invisibility' report, which was the inspiration for this document, and to Katrina Roen for the report to ILGA-Europe on bisexuality. We are very grateful to Surya Monro and to Ian Watters for their support and expertise during the production of this report.

Our thanks also go to the Open University for their continued support for our work in this area and for publishing this report, and to all of the groups and bodies who endorsed the report.

# Definitions and Extent of Bisexuality

## Definitions

Bisexuality generally refers to having attraction to more than one gender<sup>8,9</sup>. It is a broad umbrella term which may include the following groups and more:

- People who see themselves as attracted to ‘both men and women’.
- People who are mostly attracted to one gender but recognise that this is not exclusive.
- People who experience their sexual identities as fluid and changeable over time.
- People who see their attraction as ‘regardless of gender’ (other aspects of people are more important in determining who they are attracted to).
- People who dispute the idea that there are only two genders and that people are attracted to one, the other, or both<sup>10</sup>.

“ **Bisexual Experience:** “When I was slowly realizing that I was bi, the first thing was ‘I fancy women’ then it was ‘I don’t think actually gender is that relevant’...my tagline is that gender is like eye colour, and I notice it sometimes, and sometimes it can be a bit of a feature it’s like ‘oo, that’s nice’ and I have some sorts of gender types, but it’s about as important as something like eye colour.”<sup>11</sup>

## Other terminology

Some in the latter three groups may prefer words like pansexual, omnisexual or queer (see glossary) to bisexual, sometimes because these words don’t have ‘bi’ in them. This is because the ‘bi’ in bisexual can be seen as implying that there are two genders. Others understand the ‘bi’ in bisexual as referring to both ‘same-gender’ and ‘other-gender’ attraction, meaning that it is open to an understanding of there being multiple genders. There can also be a criticism that bisexuality maintains gendered attraction as the defining aspect of a person’s sexuality<sup>12</sup>.

Some in asexual (ace) communities prefer the term ‘biromantic’ as it does not imply having sexual attraction/contact. Some who experience their sexual identities as changeable over time often prefer not to use labels, whilst some use bisexual, some use queer, or fluid, or other such words, and others see themselves as heterosexual, lesbian or gay.

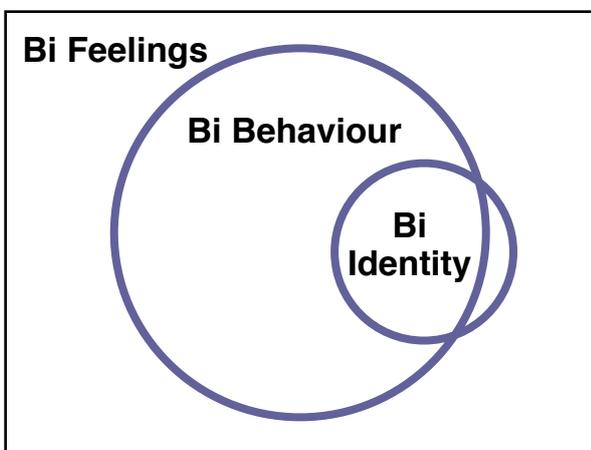
Many people use more than one of these terms to describe themselves (e.g. bisexual and queer). For example, around half of the attendees at a national UK event (BiCon) reported that they used more than one of the terms: bisexual, queer, heterosexual/straight, lesbian/gay/homosexual<sup>13</sup>. This

is similar to the way in which, for example, a woman who is attracted to women might describe herself as a gay woman, a lesbian, a dyke, queer, or some combination of these labels.

### Bisexual identity, bisexual behaviour or bisexual feelings

A further issue with the term 'bisexual' is that not everybody who is attracted to more than one gender uses this identity label themselves. This may be for the reasons given above; because of the prejudices around bisexuality which we cover in this report; because there is no word and/or concept for bisexuality in their particular cultural group; in order to fit in with lesbian, gay or heterosexual communities (which may reject bisexual people); or for a number of other reasons. Some research uses the terms MSMW (men who have sex with men and women) and WSWM (women who have sex with women and men) rather than 'bisexual' (see glossary for a fuller explanation of these acronyms), but such terms do not include people who identify as bisexual but only have sex with one gender, and they are based on sexual activity and a two-gender model of sexuality. Also, the terms MSM and WSW often include MSMW and WSWM.

Many more people have bisexual feelings than act bisexually and many more people act bisexuality than identify as bisexual, as the following diagram depicts:



Bisexual feelings, behaviours and identities<sup>14</sup>

Despite these issues, 'bisexuality' is the term most used in equalities policies, by LGBT groups themselves, by researchers, and by those campaigning on behalf of people who are attracted to more than one gender. Whilst recognising that it is problematic, it is therefore the term that we will use throughout this document, except where other terminology is specifically appropriate.

**Bisexual Experience:** “If someone points out a pretty girl and I turn round, they all crow at me not to look ‘cos I’m supposed to be gay. I’m fed up. It’s all gay this and queer that at school. I don’t know how they know, I never told no-one. There isn’t a word for people like me, so I guess I’m on my own. I’d say I was bisexual, but you have to be 50-50, right?”<sup>15</sup>

### Bisexual allies

Finally, there are some people who feel affiliated with bisexuality and bisexual communities but who do not identify as bisexual themselves. For example, they may have partners or family who are bisexual, or just find bisexual spaces to be comfortable places to be. This group are often known as 'bisexual allies' and may face some of the same issues as bisexual-identified people themselves due to their relationships with, and affiliation to, bisexuality. Members of this group may be attracted to more than one gender but prefer not to use the identity label 'bisexual', or may not be bisexual at all.

## Extent of bisexuality

Due to the different definitions of bisexuality, it is extremely difficult to determine the number of bisexual people. If we define the term narrowly, for example the number of people who self-identify using the label 'bisexual' on a national UK survey or census<sup>16</sup>, then the proportions tend to be small. Of course, this may well reflect issues of biphobia and bisexual invisibility (which we address later) which prevent people from checking the 'bisexual' box on such surveys, despite self-identifying in this way<sup>17,18</sup>. Recent US surveys have tended to find self-identified bisexual people to be the largest population within the broader group of LGB people, with statistics of 3-5% of the population identifying as bisexual (compared to 1-3% as gay/lesbian)<sup>19</sup>.

If we define the term 'bisexual' broadly as all people who have ever had an attraction to more than one gender, then this may be a significant minority, or even majority, of the population. Certainly Kinsey's classic

research, which measured sexuality in terms of behaviour rather than identity, found that many people fell somewhere between being exclusively heterosexual or exclusively homosexual<sup>20</sup>. More recently, one US study found that 13% of women and 6% of men report attraction to more than one gender (whilst only 2.8% of women and 1.8% of men actually identified as bisexual)<sup>21</sup>. Though not an academic study, The Observer newspaper conducted a UK survey in 2008 which found that only 6% of respondents defined as LGB. However, more than twice that number (13%) had had some form of sexual contact with someone of the 'same-sex'. 16% of women had had sexual contact with another woman and 10% of men with another man. 23% of respondents aged 16-24 had had 'same-sex' sexual contact<sup>22</sup>.

Estimates of the bisexual population, of course, have no relation to the necessity of ensuring that bisexual people enjoy equality and freedom from discrimination: these rights apply to all regardless of sexual identity or attraction<sup>23</sup>.

# Specifics of bisexual experience and community

## Bisexual invisibility and exclusion

Bisexuality has been acknowledged to be an ‘invisible’, ‘excluded’ or ‘silent’ sexuality within several domains<sup>24</sup> including: mainstream media, lesbian and gay communities, sex research, psychology and psychotherapy, and policy and legislation<sup>25</sup>. Indicatively, Firestone’s seminal US collection on bisexuality was subtitled: ‘the psychology and politics of an invisible minority’<sup>26</sup>, there is a Wikipedia entry for ‘bisexual erasure’<sup>27</sup>, and the recent San Francisco Human Rights Commission report on bisexuality was titled Bisexual Invisibility<sup>28</sup>. In the UK, it has been argued that the exclusion of ‘the b-word’ is the main problem confronting bisexual people trying to access services<sup>29</sup>.

Bisexual invisibility is a type of biphobia (see below) which generally takes the form of a conventional view in many western cultures: that people’s sexual identity is defined by the gender that they are attracted to, and that people are only attracted to the ‘other gender’ (in which case they are heterosexual) or to the ‘same gender’ (in which case they are lesbian or gay). Such binary understandings entirely erase bisexuality as a possible sexual identity, despite the large proportion of people who report attraction to more than one gender (see above).

“ **Bisexual Experience:** Being bi has never really been an issue for me or those close to me, but other people’s assumptions really annoy me. People tend to think I’m gay unless they know I’m with an opposite-sex partner, and then they assume I’m straight, which makes me feel invisible. But then, when I say I’m bi, they assume I’m into threesomes and have open relationships. When they realize that’s not the case, they sometimes seem to think my sexuality’s irrelevant since I’m not ‘doing anything about it’, and that I should stop ‘going on about it’.<sup>30</sup> ”

Common ways in which this bisexual invisibility manifests include the following:

- Doubt being raised over the very existence of bisexuality, for example in research studies<sup>31</sup>, in popular texts<sup>32</sup>, in student textbooks<sup>33</sup>, and in journalism<sup>34</sup>. This is despite the clear existence of bisexual communities, and statistics on the extent of bisexuality. Such research informs literature, discourse, and the remit and understanding of service providers and policy-makers.

- Bisexuality being seen as ‘just a phase’ on the way to a heterosexual, or lesbian/gay identity. Of course some people do identify as bisexual, or have relationships with more than one gender, before coming to identify as lesbian, gay or heterosexual. However, longitudinal research suggests that bisexuality is more often a stable identity than one which is relinquished for a different one over time<sup>35,36</sup>.
- Behaviourally bisexual figures in history being interpreted as lesbian or gay, and their other-gender relationships or sexual encounters being ignored, leaving bisexual people with a lack of available role models<sup>37</sup>. Also, historical LGBT activism being reinterpreted as LG struggles<sup>38</sup>.
- LGB organisations and initiatives ‘dropping the B’ so that bisexuality is included in the title and/or mission statement, but the rest of their materials default to ‘lesbian and gay’ or even just ‘gay’ and refer to ‘homophobia’ rather than ‘homophobia and biphobia’<sup>39</sup>

## Representations of bisexuality in the media

The BiMedia website keeps a regular track of media representations of bisexual people in the UK (both in UK produced media and in media from other countries which is aired in the UK)<sup>40</sup>. Stonewall UK have also conducted two surveys on LGB media representations in recent years: one on the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC)<sup>41</sup>, and one on television aimed at young people<sup>42</sup>. We can conclude from these sources that representations of bisexual people in the UK media have remained relatively consistent over the past decade.

Generally speaking, bisexual invisibility is standard in the media<sup>43</sup>. The Stonewall BBC study found no specifically bisexual representations at all, and focus group participants could recollect very few portrayals

of bisexual people. In their report on television for young people, LGB people altogether accounted for only 4.5% of all programming, and bisexual portrayals accounted for around 1% of the programming relating to LGB people.

Fictional characters on films and television, and people reported in the news media, are generally not presented as bisexual even if they demonstrate attraction to more than one gender, thus reinforcing bisexual invisibility (see above). Instead, characters are depicted as moving from straight to gay, or from gay to straight. Attraction to more than one gender is portrayed as ‘just a phase’. Examples of this have occurred in most of the long-running UK soap operas, including the characters of Todd Grimshaw in *Coronation Street* and Syed Masood in the soap opera *Eastenders*.

On other occasions, where attraction to more than one gender continues over time, same sex attraction tends to be emphasised. For example, the film *Brokeback Mountain* was frequently described as a ‘gay western’<sup>44</sup>, despite the two main male characters having long-term female partners. Newspaper reports overwhelmingly describe married male politicians who have sexual relationships with other men as ‘gay’<sup>45</sup>.

When bisexuality is depicted in the media it is generally portrayed in a negative light. The Stonewall report on youth TV found that, when they were represented, bisexual people were depicted overwhelmingly negatively, for example as greedy. Bryant’s earlier review of bisexual people in films found that they tended to be portrayed as promiscuous, wicked people with insatiable desires, and that their bisexual behaviour was often linked to tragedy. He concluded that ‘If Hollywood is any guide, it is not safe to be bisexual or to be in the company of people who are’<sup>46,47</sup>. Recent examples of evil/tragic bisexuality would be the manipulative Tony from the first series of the UK programme *Skins*, and the character Thirteen on the popular US series *House*, who has Huntington’s disease. The character of Captain Jack Harkness on the

BBC's Dr. Who and Torchwood is a notable bisexual main character who is generally portrayed positively (although the stereotype of amorality & promiscuity still holds in his case).

Finally, depictions of bisexuality in the media are gendered. In the UK bisexual women are generally more likely to be portrayed as promiscuous<sup>48</sup>; as an object of concern with regards their capacity to break up relationships<sup>49</sup>; and as behaving bisexually just to titillate heterosexual men. Bisexual men, on the other hand, are more likely to be regarded as not existing at all<sup>50</sup> or to be portrayed as being feminine in some way.

The BBC conducted its own audience consultation on the portrayal of LGB people in 2010<sup>51</sup>. Respondents noted their dissatisfaction with the invisibility of bisexual people across the BBC's output, and their concerns that 'bisexual identity was too often portrayed as a behaviour and not a valid sexual orientation'<sup>52</sup>. The BBC have subsequently committed to a more accurate and authentic portrayal of lesbian, gay and bisexual people. It is yet to be seen how these recommendations will be taken up in programming.

### Coming out

As with lesbian and gay people, issues of coming out and self-disclosure are likely to be of relevance to bisexual people, with people coming to different decisions about who to tell about their bisexuality and when and how to do this. Clearly, for bisexual people, this process will be greatly impacted by bisexual invisibility, stereotypical media depictions, and biphobia, and therefore bisexual people may have specific concerns about how they will be viewed by others if or when they do come out. They may also feel pressure to come out as gay or lesbian rather than bisexual due to the popular binary perception of sexuality, and the greater visibility of lesbian and gay communities.

Coming out regarding one's sexuality is often seen as an essential part of coming

to a healthy, mature sexual identity for LGB people. However, more recently this has been questioned, for example by those who have pointed out that the concept of sexual identity may not be relevant across all cultures and that disclosure can open people up to discrimination, exclusion and violence, particularly within some cultural, geographical and community contexts<sup>53</sup>. There are stresses attached both to being out (exposure and potential discrimination), and to remaining hidden (secrets and fearing disclosure). The recent UK guide Getting bi in a gay/straight world<sup>54</sup> emphasises the different levels of outness that people choose and the fact that people may not disclose immediately or to everyone. Policy-makers should recognise that there is therefore a need to acknowledge and devise policy for bisexual people irrespective of the number of bisexual people known to be within their remit.

**Bisexual Experience:**  
 “I first came out to my best friend, then I started coming out to other friends. People were generally quite accepting, and before long it was common knowledge within my social circles. My sister's social circles overlapped with mine, so she found out when most other people did. But I never came out to my parents - there was no need to because my sister did it for me when she was drunk once. The result? The last I heard, my dad thinks I'm a lesbian and my mum thinks I'm going through a 'phase' and I'm straight really. Coming out hasn't all been easy, and unless I tattoo BISEXUAL across my forehead, I doubt I'll ever be out completely.”<sup>55</sup>

## Bisexual communities

It is important to refer to LGBT communities (plural), rather than community (singular), because even within each category (lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans) there are inevitably multiple overlapping communities and groups, rather than one explicit community.

UK bisexual communities are not found in commercial scenes in the way that lesbian/gay communities often are (with specific bars, clubs and shops). Rather, bisexual communities exist through a network of grass-

roots groups and events (such as the national BiCon<sup>56</sup> and local BiFests<sup>57</sup>), meet ups (such as The Bisexual Underground<sup>58</sup> BiPhoria<sup>59</sup>, and Bi Coffee London<sup>60</sup>), networks of activists working to educate people on bisexual issues (such as The Bisexual Index<sup>61</sup> and BiUK<sup>62</sup>), online bisexual spaces (such as bi.org<sup>63</sup>), and the national magazine Bi Community News<sup>64</sup>. However, it should be remembered that many people define as bisexual, and many more people act bisexually, who are not connected to these communities.

# Biphobia

## Homophobia, heterosexism and heteronormativity

When tackling biphobia it is important to remember that, like lesbians, gay men, and anybody else who identifies as outside of heterosexuality, bisexual people are also subject to homophobia, heterosexism and heteronormativity. Heterosexual people can also be subject to homophobia and biphobia in cases where their sexuality is misread.

Homophobia consists of negative attitudes towards those with 'same-gender' attractions and relationships, expressed as anger, disgust, fear, or other negative emotions. It includes hate crimes, workplace discrimination, the use of the word 'gay' as an insult, and the perpetuation of negative stereotypes of LGB people. Institutionalised homophobia is where whole structures, organisations or societies are homophobic.

Heterosexism refers to the fact that, even when explicit homophobia is not present, society is set up in a way that marginalises people who are not heterosexual. For example, being 'tolerant' or 'accepting' of LGB people is heterosexist because it assumes that they are somehow inferior and require tolerance/acceptance. Heterosexism can also be found in common attitudes such as the perception that 'same-gender' couples shouldn't express affection publicly, or have the same rights, as 'other-gender' couples.

Heteronormativity is the wider societal assumption that heterosexuality is the 'normal' way of being. We can see heteronormativity in everyday occurrences, such as the assumption that a person's partner will be of the 'other-gender' (so that they either have to correct this, or let the wrong assumption go unchallenged). Heteronormativity can also be seen in the way that men's and women's magazines assume desire for a heterosexual relationship, or the fact that anniversary cards are almost exclusively designed for 'other-gender' couples. Heteronormativity is additionally present in the assumption that 'sex' means penile-vaginal penetration or that 'family' means a male-female couple with children (images which most commercials and billboard advertisements perpetuate).

Bisexual people may also be more likely than heterosexual people to be subject to transphobia and cisgenderism (attacking or discriminating against those who transgress the perceived gender binaries, or making assumptions about how men and women should appear or behave). This is because bisexuality, in itself, is seen by some as a gender transgression, in that it is not conforming to conventions of femininity (for women) and masculinity (for men) which involve being attracted to 'the other gender'. In addition (and more so than lesbian and gay sexuality) attraction to more than one gender can be seen as challenging the gender binary for those bisexual people who do not distinguish people on the basis of gender.

## Biphobia

Biphobia refers to negative attitudes, behaviours and structures specifically directed towards anyone who is attracted to more than one gender. Biphobia is perpetuated in common representations of bisexual people (see above) and attitudes towards bisexual people are often found to be even more negative than those towards other minority groups<sup>65</sup>. A related idea is 'monosexual

privilege'<sup>66</sup> which refers to the privilege experienced by all those whose (stated) attraction is to only one gender.

We have touched upon many of the most common forms of biphobia already in our considerations of bisexual invisibility and bisexual representations above. The list below summarises some of the most common forms of biphobia:

### Common forms of biphobia

#### Bisexual denial

- Questioning the existence of bisexuality or of certain groups (e.g. bisexual men, bisexual people of colour).
- Believing that bisexual people should 'make their mind up' or 'stop sitting on the fence'.
- Seeing bisexual people as 'confused' about their sexuality.

#### Bisexual invisibility

- Assuming that people will either be heterosexual or lesbian/gay.
- Referring to 'homophobia' rather than 'homophobia and biphobia' when speaking of negative attitudes, behaviours and structures in relation to LGB people.
- Referring to 'same gender' relationships as 'lesbian relationships' or 'gay relationships' and 'other gender relationships' as 'heterosexual relationships', as this misses the fact that such relationships may include one or more bisexual people. This applies to words like 'couples' and 'parents' as well as 'relationships'.
- Assuming people's sexuality on the basis of their current partnership (straight if they are with someone of an 'other gender' and lesbian/gay if with someone of the 'same gender').
- Assuming that attraction to more than one gender, or identifying as bisexual, is a phase on the way to a heterosexual or lesbian/gay identity.
- Questioning a person's bisexuality unless they have had sex with more than one gender (heterosexuality is rarely similarly questioned before somebody has had sex with someone of an 'other gender').
- Pressuring bisexual people to become lesbian/gay and/or only recognising their 'same gender' partners.

#### Bisexual exclusion

- Providing no bisexual-specific services but expecting bisexual people to use a combination of heterosexual and lesbian/gay services.
- Claiming to speak for LGB, or LGBT people, and then failing to include 'B' in the name or mission statement of a group, neglecting bisexual-specific issues, and/or dropping the 'B' within materials.

## Bisexual marginalisation

- Allowing biphobic comments to go unchallenged when homophobic comments would be challenged.
- Assuming that bisexuality is an acceptable topic for humour in a way that lesbian/gay sexualities are not.
- Prioritising lesbian and/or gay issues over bisexual issues.
- Failing to engage with bisexual individuals or groups in relation to policy and practice.
- Asking lots of questions about a person's bisexuality in ways which would be deemed offensive in relation to heterosexual, lesbian or gay sexuality.

## Negative stereotypes

- Viewing bisexual people as greedy, or wanting to 'have their cake and eat it'.
- Seeing bisexual people as spreaders of diseases.
- Assuming that bisexual people are promiscuous or incapable of monogamy.
- Assuming that bisexual people are a threat to relationships/families.
- Believing bisexual people to be manipulative, evil or tragic.
- Thinking that bisexual people will always leave their 'same' or 'other' gender partners.
- Assuming that bisexual people can pass as heterosexual and are therefore privileged or taking the 'easy option'.
- Denigrating the attractiveness of bisexual people.
- Viewing bisexual people only in terms of their sexual practices, for example as objects to fulfil sexual fantasies (such as threesomes).
- Assuming that bisexual people will be sexually interested in 'anything that moves'.

“ **Bisexual experience:** “Some people say bisexuality is just a phase. Well, when I was a teenager I didn't find girls attractive at all. I was gay. I joined gay groups, had a long-term boyfriend and came out to my family. I was absolutely certain. But in my early twenties I started fancying women. It wasn't that I'd been attracted to them all along and been in denial - my sexuality changed. For me the 'phase' was being gay. And maybe my sexuality will change again - but I've been bisexual now for twenty years.”<sup>67</sup>

## Double discrimination

Another issue specific to biphobia is double discrimination<sup>68</sup>: the fact that bisexual people can be discriminated against both by heterosexuals and by lesbian and gay people. Both groups can be suspicious of bisexual partners (fearing that they will be left for someone of the ‘other gender’) and assume that bisexual people will be a threat to their relationships. Some lesbian and gay people may also feel threatened if they have any ‘other gender’ attraction themselves and are faced with the tough prospect of a second ‘coming out’ if they were to identify as bisexual. Also, some people can feel that the existence of bisexuality ‘muddies the water’ in a way which calls into question the basis on which they have fought for their rights.

It can be particularly difficult for bisexual people when they are excluded from, or rejected by, lesbian and gay individuals or groups where they had expected to find safety and community. Common historical examples of such exclusions include having to fight to be allowed to take part in pride marches, being relegated to the back of such marches, and having no bisexual people on the stage alongside the lesbian, gay and trans people there. Some gay clubs and services have also had gay-only door policies meaning that bisexual people have been forced to lie if they want to participate. Recent goods and services legislation makes such policies illegal (see ‘Biphobia in the workplace’), but the legacy remains among bisexual people accessing services today<sup>69</sup>, and there is still fear among UK bisexual people that they will be rejected if they attempt to engage with LGBT groups<sup>70</sup>.

**Bisexual experience:**  
“At the gay club we’ve got locally, I kept getting stick for being bi. Other women told me I was letting the side down, said they were ‘gold star’ for not sleeping with men. There’s a support group that meets but I don’t want to go to that - some of them do and so it’s not LGBT, it’s LG. That’s why I called Samaritans instead.”<sup>71</sup>

## Crime and violence

Section 146 of the Criminal Justice Act means that most police forces in the UK now record hate crimes relating to ‘sexual orientation’<sup>72</sup>. However, Stonewall report that the criminal justice system still has no reliable picture of the extent of ‘homophobic hate crime’<sup>73</sup>. In their own national survey in 2008 they found that one in five LGB people had experienced a homophobic crime or incident in the past three years, often in their local area or in the workplace (where one in five had experienced bullying).

Whilst previous studies of this kind<sup>74</sup> have not reported the experiences of bisexual people specifically, this report did consider bisexual participants separately and found that one in twenty of them had experienced a homophobic hate incident in the last year, and less than one in twelve in the last three years, which is lower than the rates for LGB people overall. This may be reflective of not being identified as lesbian or gay (as participants suggested), and/or of the lower visibility of bisexual people.

Indeed, many police forces recognise that reported crime increases as communities become confident to approach police to report it. Thus, for minority communities, low reported crime can actually mean high crime rates because crime is not reported and so is not prevented or investigated. These findings may also be related to the fact that the police use the terminology of ‘homophobic’ rather than ‘homophobic and biphobic’ hate crime, so biphobic incidents may be under-reported due to being less recognised. Due to low numbers of bisexual people reporting crime, the Stonewall report could not include a detailed consideration of experiences of those who were victims of such incidents. It is important that future research and criminal justice statistics separate out biphobic hate crime and continue to consider incidents involving bisexual people to determine the specifics of such incidents, levels of reporting, and ways of addressing this. It may also be useful to pull out the experiences of those who are visibly bisexual (or non-heterosexual).



#### **Bisexual experience:**

“I don’t think we’d do it again. They threw stones at us. Lots of shouting, very graphic. What we need, what would fix us, what they think we do to kids. Sick. Horrible. Then the police said as we were a man and a woman it wasn’t homophobic. I kept saying “we’re bisexuals” but I don’t think he had a box for that. When I say I don’t think we’d do it again, I mean reporting it. What’s the point?”<sup>75</sup>



Similarly, there are statistics that approximately 1 in 4 people in ‘same-gender’ relationships in the UK experience domestic

violence<sup>76</sup>, which is similar to the number of heterosexual women. There are LGB specific issues including fear of reports not being taken seriously due to homophobia and assumptions that domestic violence is all carried out by men against women, and concerns over disclosing in small LGBT communities where it is likely that individuals will have to continue to confront their abuser. Little research has separated out bisexual experience specifically. That which has, has found that bisexual people were more prone than lesbian or gay people to experience both physically and emotionally abusive behaviour from ‘same gender’ partners<sup>77</sup>, suggesting that there is a need to address the issues faced by bisexual people in abusive relationships specifically.

Asylum seekers who identify as bisexual may experience even greater difficulty than others in proving their sexual identity to adjudicators (something which is frequently demanded<sup>78</sup>). In particular, individuals who have been in relationships that may outwardly appear heterosexual might struggle to gain recognition for the threat they face<sup>79</sup>. Additionally, there is no UK rule to grant asylum based specifically on sexuality, instead it is granted on the basis that the person is a member of a persecuted social group<sup>80</sup>. There is a call for the UK Border Agency to provide distinct guidelines for cases of bisexuality, to avoid it being categorised as between straight and gay rather than as its own social group or part of a broader ‘persecuted social group’ such as LGBT<sup>81</sup>. Obviously it is vital that those whose lives are in danger due to bisexual identities and ‘same-and-other gender’ attractions are offered the same help as those who are threatened due to lesbian and gay identities or ‘same-gender’ attractions.

#### **Biphobia in schools**

Much is now known about the general situation for young LGB people in UK schools and rates of homophobic bullying (which

also affects bisexual students). A large 2006 survey found that 65% of young LGB people had experienced direct bullying in UK schools (75% in religious schools), and 98% had heard LGB-specific insults (notably ‘that’s so gay’ used pejoratively). Rates of harassment were: verbal abuse (92%), physical abuse (41%), cyberbullying (41%), death threats (17%) and sexual assault (12%). 58% of people never reported the bullying. For those who did, 65% reported that nothing was done about it<sup>82</sup>. There is a general lack of visibility of LGB issues in schools<sup>83</sup>, including curricula which assumes heterosexuality and fails to include LGB experiences<sup>84</sup>, and 2 in 5 teachers who feel uncomfortable discussing LGB issues<sup>85</sup>. This exclusion and discrimination negatively impacts on young people’s self-esteem; their ability to be ‘out’ or to ‘be themselves’; their progress in studies<sup>86</sup>; and their general well-being (see the ‘Health’ section of this report). In a recent white paper, the Department for Education reported that prejudice-based bullying in general was on the rise and called for it to be addressed<sup>87</sup>.

The UK reports on LGB experiences in schools do not address bisexual experiences specifically, and internationally bisexuality in schools has been a neglected topic due to bisexual invisibility<sup>88</sup>. International studies which have addressed the experience of young bisexual people specifically tend to find that, in response to the stigma they face, they have higher levels of identity confusion and lower levels of self-disclosure and community connection compared to lesbian and gay peers<sup>89</sup>. Participants in one qualitative Australian study which did explore the experiences of young bisexual people specifically, found mention of many of the forms of biphobia listed above, including the assumption that bisexual girls would be sexually attracted to everybody and would want to engage in threesomes; pressure to identify as gay or lesbian and ‘prove gayness’ so as not to be further ostracised; as well as physical and sexual attack<sup>90</sup>.

**Bisexual experience:**  
“I got thrown down stairs, punched, and threatened with rape by boys for coming out as bi. They said raping me would take away the lesbian parts. I’d tried several times to complain to the principal. I reported what these guys were doing, but all he said was that since I’d done this foolish thing and come out, he could guarantee no protection, I’d brought it on myself. So when these losers saw my complaining wasn’t getting me anywhere and they weren’t getting in trouble, they got worse and worse.”<sup>91</sup>

Recently in the UK, a school student spoke out publicly about his experience of biphobic bullying in school after he came out as bisexual at the age of 14<sup>92</sup>. He was bombarded with abuse on his social networking site and started self-harming. Through the Manchester Lesbian and Gay Foundation he is now part of a campaign challenging such bullying through presenting to assemblies in local schools. It is also important to remember that these issues may be faced in schools by children of bisexual parents, as well as those who are bisexual themselves<sup>93</sup>. Suggestions for tackling bisexual issues in schools can be found in some recent US research<sup>94,95</sup>, but have yet to be translated into a UK context.

There are also issues of homophobia, biphobia and heteronormativity at university level<sup>96</sup> with over a third of students feeling that anti-LGBT attitudes existed on UK campuses, and a quarter being victims of homophobic harassment at some point<sup>97</sup>. Whilst no research has studied bisexual experiences to date it is particularly notable that bisexuality is absent from university curricula<sup>98</sup>.

## Biphobia in the workplace

One area where bisexuality is covered in both UK policy and UK research is in relation to employment and the workplace. In UK legislation regarding equal treatment in relation to 'sexual orientation', there is prohibition of discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation, which is taken to mean: 'a person's sexual orientation towards: Persons of the same sex; persons of the opposite sex; or persons of either sex'<sup>99</sup>. However, despite this, bisexual people often report higher levels of discrimination in the workplace than lesbian, gay or trans people<sup>100</sup>.

In 2009, Stonewall published the first report capturing the experience of UK bisexual employees<sup>101</sup>. They found that bisexual experiences were often distinct from those of lesbian and gay colleagues, and that bisexual people often failed to access initiatives put in place to support them due to being confronted with biphobic assumptions and double discrimination where they were discriminated against because people thought they must be either gay or straight. Participants in the research that this report was based on highlighted high levels of ignorance about bisexuality and all of the forms of biphobia summarised above. Specifically mentioned were: constant questions about their sexuality in a work setting, fears around coming out or being recategorised as lesbian, gay or heterosexual despite coming out as bisexual, and disapproval from religious colleagues. Bisexual staff reported no bisexual networks within their organisations, and little support from their employers. There was frequently

no mention of bisexuality in equality and diversity training, and there were no out bisexual people in management. People did not feel comfortable disclosing their sexuality on monitoring forms due to fear of losing their jobs. A larger Canadian study found that bisexual people were less likely than lesbians and gay men to be out about their sexuality in the workplace<sup>102</sup>.

We endorse the recommendations from the Stonewall report which include: separating out bisexual experience, consulting and supporting bisexual staff, ensuring safe access to support, effective bisexual-inclusive policies, training, and procedures, inclusive networks, and monitoring career development.

**Bisexual experience:**  
“Ever since I told my boss I was going to a bi event she seems to treat me as a flake. She makes little comments all the time about how I can't stick at things, how I'm not a team player. One time she told me not to apply for a promotion because they wanted 'someone loyal, who could commit'. I think I'd have got that one too. I wish I'd never mentioned it now.”<sup>103</sup>

## Biphobia in Sport

Outside of specific LGB teams and groups, sports in the UK are generally perceived to be homophobic and difficult places to be LGB- identified. Professional sportspeople may even be advised to hide their LGB identities and to attempt to appear heterosexual<sup>104</sup>. Stonewall reports that 70% of football fans had heard or witnessed homophobic abuse at a match<sup>105</sup>, and that half of LGB young people do not like

team sports<sup>106</sup>. They emphasise the need for more research on the impact of homophobia in sports on LGB people, particularly in the run up to the Paralympic and Olympic games in 2012 in the UK. There is now a government charter against homophobia and transphobia in sport<sup>107</sup>. This refers to LGBT people, but notably does not include biphobia in its title, although we endorse its overall aims.

Certainly, there are few bisexual sportspeople who are 'out' about their sexuality. One notable exception is the American professional wrestler, Orlando Jordan<sup>108</sup>. There is also some evidence of bisexual people being excluded from specifically LG, LGB, or LGBT sports teams<sup>109</sup>. Significantly, The Justin Campaign, established in response to the suicide of out gay footballer Justin Fashanu, has launched an initiative on

'football v. biphobia' (alongside one on 'football v. transphobia')<sup>110</sup>. The results of their survey on bisexual people in football were not complete at the time of publication of this report.

Some research in the US has suggested that attitudes amongst sportspeople may be changing to accept bisexuality more. One study looking at attitudes of university soccer players found that they were likely to show understanding of 'same and other gender' attraction, though this was frequently expressed as variations on 'a little bit gay' rather than using the term bisexuality<sup>111</sup>.

# Bisexuality and health

## Mental health

Of all the common sexual identity groups, bisexual people most frequently have mental health problems, including depression, anxiety, self harm and suicidality. This has been found both internationally<sup>112</sup> and in the UK specifically<sup>113</sup>, and has been linked to experiences of biphobia and bisexual invisibility<sup>114</sup>. A major Canadian study found bisexual men to be 6.3 times more likely, and bisexual women 5.9 times more likely, to report having been suicidal than heterosexual people (in both groups this was also higher than rates for gay men and lesbians)<sup>115</sup>. A large Australian study found rates of mental health problems amongst bisexual people to be higher than those amongst lesbians, gay men or heterosexual people<sup>116</sup>. This study cautioned against the inclusion of bisexual people within samples of lesbians or gay men, because this may result in overstatement of the risks faced by LG people, and ignorance of the risks faced by bisexual people.

The key UK Mind report on the mental health and wellbeing of LGB people in England and Wales<sup>117</sup> found that bisexual men and women were less at ease about their sexuality than lesbian and gay people. The report found that bisexual people were also less likely than their lesbian and gay counterparts to be out to their family, friends, colleagues, general practitioners and mental health professionals, which has clear implications for developing services that are inclusive. Further, bisexual women were found to be less likely than lesbians to have received positive responses to their sexual identity from siblings. Bisexual men, in particular, were found to experience more psychological distress than gay men. They were also more likely to cite their sexuality as the reason for harming themselves.

A smaller survey which focused specifically on bisexual people attending the annual UK bisexual conference found that 36% of attendees had either single (24%) or multiple (12%) mental or physical health impairments that interfered with their day-to-day life. 25% of people had had a diagnosis of mental health issues from a professional, with the highest proportions reporting depression (16%), anxiety (8%), and self-harm (8%)<sup>118</sup>. Thus mental health service providers should be aware of the necessity of sensitivity when providing services for this population, as well as assuring that funding streams are available.

A report on mental health issues in the Brighton and Hove area of the UK confirmed that those who identified as bisexual, queer or 'other' in terms of sexualities were more likely than lesbian and gay identified people to have mental health difficulties and were more likely to have attempted suicide<sup>119</sup>. This study highlighted the vicious cycles of those experiencing mental health difficulties: they were more likely to experience homelessness, abuse and violence, which, in turn, increase the risk of mental health problems.

Research has also found bisexual people to have negative experiences with health professionals, both in the wider context of LGBT experience<sup>120</sup>, and in particular. For example, one US study found that over a quarter of therapists seen by bisexual clients erroneously assumed that sexual identity was relevant to the goal of therapy when the client didn't agree, and around a sixth saw bisexuality as being part of an illness. 7% attempted conversion to heterosexuality and 4% to being lesbian or gay<sup>121</sup>. Many therapists were openly uncomfortable about bisexuality. The UK Mind study cited above suggests that the situation may well be similar in the UK. It found that a third of bisexual men reported that health professionals had made a link between their sexuality and a mental health problem<sup>122</sup>.

**Bisexual Experience:**  
“A psychiatric nurse asked me what I'd done at the weekend and I mentioned I'd been at a bisexual event, and as a result came out as bisexual. He seemed fine at the time but when I came to see my counsellor, I found out that my referral letter said that I had unresolved issues with my sexuality. I hadn't said anything like that! I felt so betrayed, knowing that he'd secretly been judging me like that.”<sup>123</sup>

## Physical health

The strong links between mental and physical health suggest that bisexual people should also be considered more at risk of some physical health problems given that they are more at risk of mental health difficulties<sup>124</sup>. US researchers report that bisexual people experience greater health problems than the general population and experience biphobia

and bisexual invisibility from health providers, including those who are affirmative in terms of lesbian and gay issues<sup>125</sup>. This, in turn, leads to bisexual people accessing health services less, with attendant health implications which commissioners should address as a matter of urgency in terms of access to services. However, they acknowledge that there is relatively little research evidence on the specific physical health needs of bisexual people.

In terms of substance use, bisexual men have been found to be more likely than gay and heterosexual men to use recreational drugs<sup>126</sup>. Whilst not separating out findings for lesbian and bisexual women, another study found that this group combined had higher rates of smoking, drinking alcohol and recreational drug use than the general population<sup>127</sup>. This study also found evidence that lesbian and bisexual women were less likely to attend cervical smears, and were more likely to be diagnosed with breast cancer, which suggests that cancer screening may be a key issue for bisexual women. Half of participants reported negative experiences with health professionals, including inappropriate comments relating to their sexuality.

## Sexual health

Bisexual people have often been blamed for transmission of HIV and other STIs into heterosexual and lesbian communities. When AIDS appeared, the then governments of the USA and UK appeared indifferent, at best, about the prospect of large numbers of gay men dying. UK activists used the idea that bisexual men would spread HIV from the gay community into the wider population to (successfully) gain government action<sup>128</sup>. However, the legacy of this is a continued stereotype that bisexual men are a significant source of HIV infection, particularly for their female partners.

It is extremely difficult to establish rates of HIV and other STIs among bisexual people in the UK. This is for a number of reasons, including the crucial distinction between bisexual

identity and bisexual behaviour. People who identify as bisexual may have different sexual behaviours from people who identify as gay or straight but are sexual with people of more than one gender. In addition, many studies of men who have sex with men (MSM) do not distinguish between men who have sex with men only (MSMo) and men who have sex with men and women (MSMW). In particular, the Health Protection Agency, which keeps the UK's official records of HIV infection, does not distinguish MSMo from MSMW.

Sigma Research has carried out a long-running series of 'Gay Men's Sex Surveys' which, despite the title, do include and distinguish between MSMo and MSMW (both defined as 'in the last 12 months'). These surveys consistently show lower rates of HIV infection for behaviourally bisexual men than MSMo (4.3% vs. 14.3%)<sup>129</sup>. They also show lower rates of HIV testing (45.3% MSMW never been tested vs 24.8% MSMo) and higher rates of condom failure (20.3% vs. 12.3%, experienced in the last year). Earlier Sigma surveys showed higher rates of unprotected anal intercourse among MSMW when having sex with men<sup>130</sup> and one international study found that young MSMW report especially high levels of HIV risk behaviour<sup>131</sup>. However, more recent Sigma surveys suggest little difference between MSMW and MSMo. It is not known whether the lower rates of HIV infection observed among MSMW in the Sigma data are genuinely the result of lower prevalence or are simply the result of the lower rates of HIV testing. Sigma's latest report recommends health promotion initiatives on how to reduce condom failure aimed at bisexually behaving men.

However, men who take part in Sigma's surveys are unlikely to be typical of men who behave bisexually but identify as heterosexual. The vast bulk of health promotion work aimed at men who have sex with men is done via the commercial gay scene using language and imagery that behaviourally bisexual men will either never see (because they have much less contact with the scene) or not see as relevant to them (because they do not identify

as 'gay')<sup>132</sup>. Consequently, public health policy makers should consider specifically bisexual targeted campaigns, both towards the bisexual community and also towards MSM.

Women's sexual health issues are much less researched. Those studies that do exist also often fail to distinguish between women who only have sex with women (WSWo) and those who have sex with women and men (WSWM). Those that do distinguish are seldom UK-based. An Australian study found that rates of bacterial vaginosis and Hepatitis B were higher among WSWo than WSWM but that rates of HIV infection were low among both groups despite high numbers of partners<sup>133</sup>. A study from San Francisco found low rates of HIV transmission to female partners from MSMW, probably the result of high rates of barrier protection and extremely low rates of risky behaviour<sup>134</sup>. A larger US study found that only 1% of all new HIV infections were women who had contracted it from MSMW<sup>135</sup>.

Since sexual identities often differ from sexual practices, sexual health promotion materials should aim to better reflect this complexity. For example, leaflets aimed at heterosexuals could also mention sexual health issues relevant to same-sex activity.

**Bisexual Experience:**  
“I went to a sexual health clinic for a routine STD screening. I'm female but when it emerged I was sleeping with a bisexual, I was told I had to go to the gay and bisexual men's clinic to receive my testing. It was only when I mentioned that my bisexual partners were female that they agreed to treat me in the female clinic. I would not have felt comfortable going to the men's clinic and felt quite uncomfortable about being tested at all after that.”<sup>136</sup>

# Intersections with bisexuality

It is vital, when researching, working with, or targeting initiatives towards bisexual people, to remember that other aspects of identity intersect with sexual identity in important ways, meaning that some people may experience multiple discriminations, and that one experience of bisexuality is not universal.

For example, BME and trans bisexual people (see glossary) are particularly at risk of mental health difficulties due to the multiple marginalisations that they face<sup>137, 138</sup>. Similarly, as stated above, young bisexually active men may be particularly at risk of contracting STIs. Older bisexual people may be invisible due to generational and age differences in understandings of sexuality. Further, 'bisexuality' itself is a term which is only used in some cultural contexts (see 'Bisexual identity, bisexual behaviour or bisexual feelings' above).

In this section we deal briefly with several key intersections with bisexuality. With all of these it is important not to assume either that all bisexual people will also fit into another group, or that they will not. For example, there is a common perception that bisexual people are also non-monogamous, but statistics suggest that around 50% are monogamous<sup>139</sup>. Similarly, it may be assumed that bisexual people are all white, which excludes and marginalises bisexual people from BME groups.

## Race and culture

Understandings of people with 'same-and-other' gender attractions vary across cultures. Among white people in the UK such behaviour is often presented in a sensationalist manner and regarded as a reason to mistrust people who are viewed as 'really gay' but lying about it<sup>140</sup>. Some black British people may reject potential LGBT identities due to a perception that these are part of white culture<sup>141</sup>. Some authors have suggested that there is greater allowance of sexual fluidity (outside binaries of heterosexual/homosexual) in South and East Asian community contexts<sup>142</sup>. Of course it should be remembered that such cultural categories are extremely broad and that there are likely to be multiple meanings attached to 'same-and-other' gender attractions within each group, related to class, religion, generation, geographical location, personal experience and many other aspects.

Bisexuality may exacerbate certain specific prejudices and discriminations which BME people already experience. For example, stereotypical notions of black women as hypersexual<sup>143</sup> might be compounded by the idea that bisexual people are sexually insatiable. The double discrimination of racism and biphobia/homophobia impacts hugely on those in ethnic minorities who have 'same-and-other' gender attraction.

## Gender

People who are both trans and bisexual are often either doubly invisible, or doubly discriminated against for threatening assumptions about the gender binary<sup>144</sup>. However, there is some mutual support across trans and bisexual communities, perhaps due to the shared marginalisation of these groups within the LGBT movement more broadly, and

overlaps between the communities. For example, 19% of attendees at the national bisexual conference identify as transgender or genderqueer<sup>145</sup>, and a third of trans participants in one UK study identified their sexuality as bisexual<sup>146</sup>.

In relation to gendered perceptions of bisexuality, as previously mentioned, bisexual women are often viewed as 'bi-curious' or merely behaving in a bisexual way for the titillation of heterosexual men, whilst bisexual men are often assumed to 'really' be gay<sup>147</sup>. See 'Representations of bisexuals in the media' for more on this.

## Relationship styles

Openly non-monogamous styles of relating are more common amongst self-identified bisexual people than amongst lesbians or heterosexual people (they are similarly common amongst gay men)<sup>148</sup>. Due to the lack of legal recognition of such relationships, there can be problems such as partners not being recognised as 'family' in medical contexts, additional parents in polyamorous families struggling to gain custody following a break-up, and problems over property rights when somebody dies. There are also multiple marginalisations for openly non-monogamous bisexual people who are even more likely to be stigmatised for supposed promiscuity or to be seen as sexual predators. Despite evidence that children of openly non-monogamous parents fare as well as any other children<sup>149</sup>, there are still stigmas which mean that such families have to decide whether to experience the stress of hiding their relationships, or to expose themselves to potential prejudice if they are out in their local community<sup>150</sup>.

Bisexual people who are in monogamous relationships are more likely to be 'invisible' (due to sexual identity being assumed on the basis of their current partner). They may also find that other people assume that they are not monogamous, because they identify as bisexual.

“ **Bisexual Experience:** “I shouldn't have told my wife I fancied men. Now she thinks I'm gay and I'm going to leave her for a man. I don't know what to do - all the stuff I see is all about how to be “gay and proud”. I still love her, still fancy women. I'm scared the marriage counsellor will tell us to separate. I'm not gay, am I?”<sup>151</sup> ”

## Sexual practices

There is also some overlap between UK bisexual communities and BDSM/kink communities, with greater proportions of people in bisexual spaces being open about their BDSM/kink identities or practices than in many heterosexual spaces. BDSM is still heavily stigmatised, frequently ridiculed in popular media, pathologised by the main psychiatric taxonomies, and criminalised in some contexts<sup>152</sup>. This is despite consistent evidence that those who practice BDSM are no more prone to psychological problems, violence or abuse than the general population, and that clear codes of consensual conduct are commonplace<sup>153</sup>.

Bisexual people who do not identify with, or practice, BDSM/kink may still find that they are stereotyped as doing so, due to assumptions about bisexuality and 'spicy' sex. Those who do practice or identify with BDSM/kink may experience double discrimination and suspicion in relation to their sexual identities or practices and, like openly non-monogamous people, they will face difficult decisions about how open they are able to be and in what contexts.

## Age

As mentioned above (see 'Biphobia in Schools'), young people are vulnerable due to the biphobic, homophobic and heteronormative context of most educational settings and have been found to be particularly at risk amongst LGBT youth<sup>154</sup>. Research has found that the bisexual-specific mental, physical and sexual health concerns raised in this report are especially pertinent when it comes to bisexual youth<sup>155</sup>. This means that there is a need for bisexual-specific youth research and health promotion resources, in addition to more inclusive policies and practices, to address the bisexual invisibility and biphobia that are present for these groups<sup>156</sup>. Research in the US suggests that improved bisexual access to LGBT groups in schools would be an ideal way to support bisexual young people<sup>157</sup>.

For older bisexual people there may be increased invisibility due to assumptions that older people are no longer sexual, as well as the multiple discriminations of biphobia and ageism. The commercial gay scene, which some bisexual people access, is highly youth centric and may be hostile to older people, even those as young as their thirties<sup>158</sup>. The age profile of those attending bisexual events is somewhat older than that of the commercial lesbian and gay scene but is still fairly young (17-61, but with the largest group in their 30s)<sup>159</sup>. While there is a growing body of research into the impact of ageing on LGBT people in general<sup>160</sup>, there is hardly any research on bisexual ageing specifically<sup>161</sup>, and a great need for more information and understanding about the needs of older bisexual people.

## Ability

There is also a societal lack of visibility around the sexuality of disabled people in the UK and elsewhere<sup>162</sup>, particularly amongst people with more severe impairments such as paraplegia, quadriplegia and severe learning difficulties. There is often an absence of discussion of sexuality amongst groups of people with disabilities and amongst professionals working with these groups<sup>163</sup> although there are notable UK exceptions such as the group Shada<sup>164</sup>. Again, bisexual people with disabilities face double marginalisation. It is particularly important that bisexuality is seen as a viable option for people who may be bisexual, but have trouble expressing this identity.

## Religion

Faith-based bias against same-sex identities and expression is still found in the UK<sup>165</sup>. As already mentioned, The Equality Act (2010)<sup>166</sup> prohibits discrimination in the provision of goods and services on the grounds of sexual orientation. However, the act contains some limited exemptions on religious grounds.

Prejudice within some religious communities contributes profoundly to the isolation and marginalisation of bisexual people within these communities<sup>167</sup>. There are community organisations for LGBT Muslims, Christians and Jewish people. However, there are few bisexual-specific groups<sup>168</sup> and there may be low levels of bisexual awareness amongst such LGBT groups.

Various forms of paganism and atheism seem to be more common within bisexual communities than in the general population. In some cases bisexual people who belong to these communities may experience multiple marginalisation and discrimination in mainstream society<sup>169</sup>.

## Education, employment and social class

Nearly 80% of attendees at the national bisexual event, BiCon, have education to the level of a college/university degree<sup>170</sup>. Given that only one in six adults of working age in the United Kingdom hold a degree or equivalent qualification<sup>171</sup> this is an unusually high level of education, even allowing for the younger age range of people attending the event than the general population. However, this may well be due – in part – to the fact that BiCon takes place in a university setting, meaning that people who are comfortable in such a setting are more likely to attend. Further research on those attending other UK bisexual events (such as BiFest, which often takes place in a pub or community setting) would be valuable.

In terms of employment, one local UK study on LGBT experience found that, whilst bisexual people didn't differ much in terms

of whether they were employed, or in type of employment, on average they earned less than lesbian and gay people<sup>172</sup>. More research is needed into the ways in which social class relates to bisexual feelings, identity and behaviour, however employers should strive to ensure equity in pay for bisexual employees.

## Geography

Like most people in the United Kingdom, most bisexual community members live in urban areas (77%, compared to 80% nationally)<sup>173,174</sup>. Specifically, in the case of BiCon attendees, they tend to come from large towns or cities with a population over 100,000, and towns with local bisexual groups. Therefore there is important research and outreach to be done regarding bisexual people in smaller towns and rural areas.

# Positive bisexual experiences

This report has focused largely on the problems and difficulties faced by bisexual people, in order to support the claim that bisexual issues do need to be addressed, and that bisexual experiences should be separated out from those of lesbian and gay people. We have seen that ‘invisibility’ is a specific issue for bisexual people, that biphobia is different to homophobia (although many bisexual people may experience both), and that these aspects of bisexual life translate into specific problems in terms of crime, school experience, the workplace, and health.

However, an overwhelming focus on negative experience can do a disservice to the rich lives of bisexual people in the UK. It can also risk positioning bisexual people themselves as somehow problematic or pathological. It is vital to remember that it is the attitudes and behaviours of others, and wider structures, that cause problems for bisexual people (as with lesbian and gay people) and that a societal shift towards recognising and accepting the full range of sexual identities is needed to ameliorate this.

For these reasons, we end this report by considering specific positive aspects of bisexuality. One in-depth international study has researched this issue<sup>175</sup>, including participants from across Canada, Britain, America, New Zealand, Norway, Finland and Tunisia. Bisexual people reported that they felt freedom from the social binaries of gay/straight and male/female. This meant that they thought that they were more able than others to develop identities which felt right for them, and to form relationships without restrictions around who they could be attracted to. Many linked this to a sense of independence, self-awareness and authenticity.

Bisexual people also spoke a great deal about their acceptance and appreciation of other people’s differences, of diversity generally, and of their understanding of privilege and oppression more broadly. They felt that they were well-placed to see social biases and assumptions and to challenge these on issues beyond sexuality.

“ **Bisexual Experience:** “The last thing we need is to become sexuality-centric in how we approach others. Avoiding such attitudes takes effort, but the trials of bisexuality have equipped me well in this respect. So to conclude with the most positive aspects of bisexuality, I would say that what I value most highly is holding on to my compassion, tolerance and broadmindedness towards others.”<sup>176</sup>

Some people spoke of the resilience that they had developed and also of how their experiences had spurred them into community work, awareness-raising, and political activism against prejudice and discrimination more widely. Indeed, bisexual communities in the UK are notably active in volunteering (event organising, mentoring and support, offering education and training) compared to more commercial scenes. This would seem to fit well with current political moves towards community-based action and volunteering, as well as towards equality and diversity. Perhaps bisexual people could be seen as particularly well placed here in terms of what they can offer.

**“ Bisexual Experience:**  
“I’ve discovered an amazing subculture of people who also identify as bi and now feel part of a community for the first time in my life. I get a buzz out of supporting other people who are just making the first tentative steps towards a bi-identity. I’ve become very involved in organising bi-related events.”<sup>177</sup>”

See BiUK website ([www.biuk.org](http://www.biuk.org)) for more complete reference lists, including most of the major publications relating to bisexuality in the areas covered in this report.

## Key Reports on Bisexuality

- Chamberlain, B. (2009). *Bisexual people in the workplace: Practical advice for employers*. London: Stonewall.
- Miller, M., André, A., Ebin, J., & Bessonova, L. (2007). *Bisexual health: An introduction and model practices for HIV/STI prevention programming*. National Gay and Lesbian Task Force Policy Institute, the Fenway Institute at Fenway Community Health, and BiNet USA.
- Roen, K. (2002). *Bisexuality report for ILGA-Europe*. International Lesbian and Gay Association.
- San Francisco Human Rights Commission. (2010). *Bisexual invisibility: Impacts and recommendations*. San Francisco: San Francisco Human Rights Commission LGBT Advisory Committee.

## Key Books on Bisexuality (for more complete list see [www.biuk.org](http://www.biuk.org))

- Diamond, L. (2009). *Sexual fluidity*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Firestein, B. A. (Ed). (1996). *Bisexuality: The psychology and politics of an invisible minority*. London: Sage.
- Fox, R. (Ed). (2004). *Current research on bisexuality*. Binghamton, NY: Haworth Press.
- Garber, M. (1995). *Vice versa: Bisexuality and the eroticism of everyday life*. London: Penguin.
- George, S. (1993). *Women and bisexuality*. London: Scarlet Press.
- Hutchins, L., & Kaahumanu, L. (Eds). (1991). *Bi any other name: Bisexual people speak out*. New York, NY: Alyson Books.
- Klein, F. (1993). *The bisexual option*. New York: Harrington Park Press.
- Kristal, N., & Szymanski, M. (2006). *The bisexual's guide to the universe: Quips, tips, and lists for those who go both ways*. New York, NY: Alyson Books.
- Ochs, R. (Ed). (2009). *Getting bi: Voices of bisexuals around the world*. Boston, MA: Bisexual Resource Centre.
- Richardson, R., & Monroe, S. (forthcoming, 2012). *Sexuality, equality and diversity*. Houndmills, Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan.
- Rose S., Stevens, C., & The Off-Pink Collective. (Eds). (1996). *Bisexual horizons: Politics, histories, lives*. London: Lawrence and Wishart.
- Weinberg, M. S., Williams, C. J., & Pryor, D. W. (1998). *Dual attraction: Understanding bisexuality*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

## Online resources

### UK

The Bisexual Index: [www.bisexualindex.org.uk](http://www.bisexualindex.org.uk)

Bi Community News: [www.bicommunitynews.co.uk](http://www.bicommunitynews.co.uk)

BiMedia: [bimedia.org](http://bimedia.org)

Bi.org: [www.bi.org](http://www.bi.org)

BiUK: [www.biuk.org](http://www.biuk.org)

BiCon event: [www.bicon.org.uk](http://www.bicon.org.uk)

BiFest event: [www.bifest.org](http://www.bifest.org)

### US and International

Bi resource: [www.biresource.net](http://www.biresource.net)

Bisexual.com: [www.bisexual.com](http://www.bisexual.com)

Shybi.com: [www.shybi.com](http://www.shybi.com) (women), [www.shybi-guys.com](http://www.shybi-guys.com) (men)

American Institute of Bisexuality: [www.bisexual.org](http://www.bisexual.org)

Journal of Bisexuality: [www.tandfonline.com/toc/wjbi20/current](http://www.tandfonline.com/toc/wjbi20/current)

Academic-bi: [http://groups.yahoo.com/group/academic\\_bi](http://groups.yahoo.com/group/academic_bi)

# Glossary of terms

Asexual	Or 'ace', refers to people who do not experience sexual attraction or who do not wish to act upon it <sup>178</sup> .
Bisexual allies	People who don't identify as bisexual themselves but are affiliated with bisexual communities, often through partners, friends or family and/or because they find bisexual spaces and communities to be accepting and comfortable spaces to be. Some may be behaviourally bisexual.
Bi-curious	Term that can be used by people who think they might be bisexual but are not sure. It is also often used in a pejorative sense to describe such people, therefore a safer term is 'questioning'.
Biphobia	Negative attitudes, emotions, behaviours and structures relating to bisexual people and others who are attracted to more than one gender.
Biromantic	People who are romantically attracted to more than one gender. When coupled with asexual (biromantic asexual) the term refers to people who seek romantic relationships for various reasons, including companionship, affection, and intimacy, but are not sexually attracted to their romantic partners.
Bisexual (bi, the 'b' word)	Being attracted to more than one gender. Avoid hyphenating this (bi-sexual): The 'b' words have been around long enough not to count as neologisms and so there is no need for a hyphen to impart meaning.
BDSM / kink	BDSM stands for bondage and discipline, dominance and submission, and sadomasochism. Others use the umbrella term 'kink' to refer to sexual practices and identities which involve the exchange of power, restriction of movement, or intense sensation. Particularly common practices include spanking and being tied up during sex.
Cisgenderism	Assuming that there are two, and only two, genders, that people remain in the gender that they were assigned at birth, and that those who don't are somehow inferior or abnormal.
Coming out	The process of becoming open about your sexuality with yourself, other close people and/or publicly. 'Outing' is revealing somebody else's sexuality without their consent. Being 'closeted' refers to not being open about your sexuality.
Double discrimination	The discrimination that bisexual people often face from both heterosexual and lesbian/gay people and communities.

Gay	Being attracted exclusively to the 'same gender'. Mostly used with reference to men who are attracted to other men. Avoid using the term 'homosexual' as this was used as a psychiatric diagnosis in the past and still carries this historical baggage.
Heteronormativity	The assumption that heterosexuality is normal and that anything other than heterosexuality is abnormal. Often used to refer to the omnipresence of heterosexual images and representations and the assumption that people will desire the 'other gender' (e.g. in advertising, women's and men's magazines, movies, etc.)
Heterosexual	Being attracted exclusively to 'other gender' people.
Heterosexism	Discriminating against non heterosexual people. For example regarding them as inferior, assuming that they are heterosexual unless told otherwise, or expressing 'tolerance' towards them.
Homophobia	Negative attitudes, emotions, behaviours and structures relating to people on the basis of their attraction to the 'same gender' and/or identifying as gay or lesbian.
Intersections	This word refers to the fact that people's sexuality does not impact on their experience alone, but rather it intersects with other aspects of identity such as gender, race, religion, culture, class, age, ability and geography.
Lesbian	Refers to women being attracted exclusively to other women. Avoid using the term 'homosexual' as this was used as a psychiatric diagnosis in the past and still carries this historical baggage.
LGBT	Lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans (sometimes just LG or LGB, sometimes LGBTQ to include queer. Other additional initials can include a second Q for questioning, I for intersex, and A for asexual).
MSM	MSM stands for men who have sex with men and is a health research term for this group (who may or may not identify as gay).
MSMW	MSMW stands for men who have sex with men and women and is a health research term for men who are sexual with both men and women (who may or may not identify as bisexual). Some health research, particularly in the UK, uses simply MSM for all men who have sex with men, with ExHAM ('exclusively homosexuallly active men') for those who only have sex with men and BBM ('bisexually behaving men') for those who have sex with men and women (although see note on 'homosexuality' under 'gay' above).

Monogamy	A relationship style where people have one sexual and/or romantic relationship at a time.
Monosexual	Being attracted to only one gender (includes heterosexual, lesbian and gay identified people).
Non-monogamy	A term for all relationship styles where people have more than one sexual and/or romantic relationship at a time. This includes secret non-monogamy (often called ‘cheating’ or ‘infidelity’) as well as open forms of non-monogamy such as sexually open relationships and polyamory.
Omnisexual	Being attracted towards people of all genders (see also pansexual).
‘Other gender’	Refers in this document to relationships with, or attraction to, people of a different gender to the one you have yourself. Avoid the terms ‘opposite gender’ and ‘opposite sex’ because these suggest there are only two genders, where many cultures and groups of people see more than two.
Pansexual	Being attracted towards people of all genders (see also omnisexual).
Passing	A negative term (in relation to bisexuality) for allowing people to assume that you are heterosexual. Also used as a problematic term for trans people to suggest that a person ‘passes’ as a cisgendered person of their stated gender.
Polyamory	A relationship style where people have multiple sexual and/or romantic relationships at the same time.
Queer	A reclaimed term of abuse used by some (e.g. queer activists and queer theorists) to refer to LGBT people in general, or more specifically to those who challenge the binaries of sexuality (that people are either gay or straight) and gender (that people are either men or women).
Queer people of colour (QPOC)	An accepted term for LGBTQ people who are not white. Some may prefer the term BME LGBTQ people (where BME stands for black and minority ethnic).
‘Same gender’	Refers in this document to relationships with, or attraction to, people of the same gender as the one you have yourself. Terms like ‘same gender’ attraction and ‘same gender’ relationships are inclusive of lesbian, gay and bisexual people in such relationships.
Sexual fluidity (ambisexual)	Seeing sexual identity and desire as something that fluctuates over a lifetime, thus people might be more or less attracted to different genders at different times, or prioritise other aspects of sexuality such as how much sexual desire they have, or the sexual activities and roles they enjoy taking.

Sexual identity	This refers to identity terms which some people use to label their sexuality (most commonly in the UK: lesbian, heterosexual, bisexual and gay). It is important to remember that not all people who are attracted to, or form sexual relationships with, particular genders actually identify in these ways. For example (in another field) while one may have played a computer game one does not necessarily identify as a 'Gamer'. Also, there are sexual identities which are not about gender of attraction such as asexual, or BDSM/kink. We avoid the term 'sexual orientation' because it tends to imply 'orientation' to a particular gender (or genders) as the defining feature of a person's sexuality, which it isn't necessarily (e.g. it may be more about roles taken, practices engaged in, or specific fantasies or desires).
Trans	An umbrella term including people who define as transsexual, transvestite or genderqueer. Changing in some way from the gender that was assigned at birth.
Transphobia	Negative attitudes, emotions, behaviours and structures relating to people on the basis of their being trans in some way or otherwise not conforming to conventional gender roles.
Transvestite	This is a medical term, partially reclaimed for some people who wear clothing not normally worn by people of their birth-assigned sex, whether for reasons of sexuality, comfort, or for some other reason.
WSW	WSW stands for women who have sex with women and is a health research term for this group (who may or may not identify as lesbian).
WSWM	WSWM stands for women who have sex with women and men and is a health research term for women who are sexual with both men and women (who may or may not identify as bisexual). Some health research, particularly in the UK, uses simply WSW for all women who have sex with women, with ExHAW ('exclusively homosexually active women') for those who only have sex with women and BBW ('bisexually behaving women') for those who have sex with women and men (although see note on 'homosexuality' above under 'gay').

# About BiUK

Over the past decade, BiUK ([www.biuk.org](http://www.biuk.org)) has been at the forefront of researching UK bisexual experience; providing education and training on bisexuality to practitioners and policy makers; creating networks and events for dialogue about bisexual inclusion; and for the dissemination of research findings. This culminated in the world's first international bisexual research conference (BiReCon) in London in 2010<sup>179</sup>.



# Endnotes

- 1 On a national scale currently this is: HM Government (2011). Working for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender equality: Moving forward. Accessed from <http://www.equalities.gov.uk/pdf/action%20plan.pdf> on 27/6/11.
- 2 Government Equalities Office (2011). *Transgender equality*. Accessed from [http://www.equalities.gov.uk/what\\_we\\_do/lesbian,\\_gay,\\_bisexual\\_and\\_tra/transgender\\_equality.aspx](http://www.equalities.gov.uk/what_we_do/lesbian,_gay,_bisexual_and_tra/transgender_equality.aspx) on 27/6/11.
- 3 McNulty, A., Richardson, D. & Monro, S. (2010). *Lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans (LGBT) equalities and local governance*. Available from <http://research.ncl.ac.uk/selg/documents/selgreportmarch2010.pdf>. Accessed on 27/6/11.
- 4 HM Government (2011). Working for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender equality: Moving forward. Accessed from <http://www.equalities.gov.uk/pdf/action%20plan.pdf> on 27/6/11.
- 5 For example, the Stonewall 'Education for all' initiative refers to homophobic, but not biphobic, bullying ([http://www.stonewall.org.uk/at\\_school/education\\_for\\_all](http://www.stonewall.org.uk/at_school/education_for_all)), and their recent parenting guides are titled as guides 'for lesbians on how to get pregnant' and 'for gay dads' ([http://www.stonewall.org.uk/at\\_home/parenting](http://www.stonewall.org.uk/at_home/parenting)). A notable recent exception to this is the Stonewall report on bisexual people in the workplace: Chamberlain, B. (2009). *Bisexual people in the workplace: Practical advice for employers*. London: Stonewall.
- 6 See <http://bisexualresearch.wordpress.com/references/by-topic-reference-lists/bisexual-experience>.
- 7 Barker, M., Yockney, J., Richards, C., Jones, R., Bowes-Catton, H., & Plowman, T. (forthcoming 2012). Guidelines for Researching and Writing about Bisexuality. *Journal of Bisexuality*. Also available from <http://bisexualresearch.wordpress.com/reports-guidance/guidance/research-guidelines>.
- 8 Bisexual Index definition accessed from [www.bisexualindex.org.uk](http://www.bisexualindex.org.uk) on 6/7/11.
- 9 Petford, B. (2003). Power in the darkness: some thoughts on the marginalization of bisexuality in psychological literature. *Lesbian and Gay Psychology Review*, 4 (2), 5-13.
- 10 Bowes-Catton, H. (2007). Resisting the binary: Discourses of identity and diversity in bisexual politics 1988-1996. *Lesbian & Gay Psychology Review*, 8 (1), 58-70.
- 11 Barker, M., Bowes-Catton, H., Iantaffi, A., Cassidy, A., & Brewer, L. (2008). British bisexuality: A snapshot of bisexual identities in the UK. *Journal of Bisexuality*, 8 (1&2), 141-162. p.155.
- 12 Barker, M., Richards, C., & Bowes-Catton, H. (2009). "All the world is queer save thee and me...": Defining queer and bi at a Critical Sexology seminar. *Journal of Bisexuality*, 9 (3&4), 363-379.
- 13 Barker, M., Bowes-Catton, H., Iantaffi, A., Cassidy, A., & Brewer, L. (2008). British bisexuality: A snapshot of bisexual identities in the UK. *Journal of Bisexuality*, 8 (1&2), 141-162. p.155.
- 14 Jones, R. L. (2010). Troubles with bisexuality in health and social care. In R.L. Jones, & R. Ward (Eds.) *LGBT issues: Looking beyond categories* (pp.42-55). Edinburgh: Dunedin Academic Press, p. 46.
- 15 Our thanks to The Bisexual Index for this quote.
- 16 0.5% of people identified as bisexual on the 2010 Office for National Statistics integrated household survey. However 0.5% identified as 'other' and 3% did not know or did not answer, making these statistics difficult to interpret. See ONS (2011). *New ONS integrated household survey: Experimental statistics*. London: Office for National Statistics. Accessed from <http://www.statistics.gov.uk/pdfdir/ihs0910.pdf> on 27/6/11.
- 17 For more on the issues of measuring sexuality on the Office for National Statistics survey, see: Joloza, T., Evans, J., O'Brien, R., & Potter-Collins, A. (2010). *Measuring sexual identity: An evaluation report*. London: Office for National Statistics. Accessed from <http://www.statistics.gov.uk/articles/nojournal/measuring-sexual-identity-report.pdf> on 27/6/11.

- 18 See 'Sexual orientation and the census' for further details on the difficulties in measuring sexual orientation in this way. Available from: [http://www.statistics.gov.uk/about/consultations/downloads/2011Census\\_sexual\\_orientation\\_background.pdf](http://www.statistics.gov.uk/about/consultations/downloads/2011Census_sexual_orientation_background.pdf). Accessed on 27/6/11.
- 19 Herbenick, D., Reece, M., Schick, V., Sanders, S. A., Dodge, B., & Fortenberry, J. D. (2010). Sexual behaviour in the United States: results from a national probability sample of men and women aged 14-94. *Journal of Sexual Medicine*, 7 (suppl 5): 255-265.
- 20 For example, he found that 37% of men and 13% of women had had at least one same-sex experience to orgasm. Kinsey's heterosexual-homosexual rating scale (2011). Accessed from <http://www.iub.edu/~kinsey/research/ak-hhscale.html> on 22/4/11.
- 21 Mosher, W. D., Chandra, A., & Jones, J. (2005). Sexual behaviour and selected health measures: Men and women 15-44 years of age, United States, 2002. *Advance data from vital and health statistics*, no. 362. Hyattsville, MD: National Center for Health Statistics.
- 22 Accessed from <http://www.guardian.co.uk/lifeandstyle/2008/oct/26/relationships> on 6/7/11.
- 23 See Ford, Z. (2011). *Just how many gay people are there and does it matter?* Accessed from <http://thinkprogress.org/lgbt/2011/05/31/231402/just-how-many-gay-people-are-there-and-does-it-matter> on 27/6/11.
- 24 Hutchins, L. (2005). Sexual Prejudice: The erasure of bisexuals in academia and the media. *American Sexuality Magazine*, 3, (4). Available from <http://ai.eecs.umich.edu/people/conway/TS/Bailey/Bisexuality/American%20Sexuality/American%20Sexuality%20Magazine.pdf>.
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- 26 Firestein, B. A. (Ed.) (1996). *Bisexuality: The psychology and politics of an invisible minority*. London: Sage.
- 27 Wikipedia (2007). *Bisexual erasure*. Accessed from [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bisexual\\_erasure](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bisexual_erasure) on 12/1/07.
- 28 San Francisco Human Rights Commission (2010). *Bisexual invisibility: Impacts and recommendations*. San Francisco: San Francisco Human Rights Commission LGBT Advisory Committee.
- 29 Barker, M., & Yockney, J. (2004). Including the B-word: Reflections on the place of bisexuality within lesbian and gay activism and psychology. *Lesbian & Gay Psychology Review*, 5 (3), 118-122.
- 30 From BCN (2010). *Both directions: Finding the bi scene in the UK*. Manchester: Bi Community News.
- 31 E.g. Rieger, G., Chivers, M. L., & Bailey, J. M. (2005). Sexual arousal patterns of bisexual men. *Psychological Science*, 16 (8), 579-584.
- 32 E.g. Wilson, G., & Rahman, Q. (2005). *Born gay: The psychology of sexual arousal*. London: Peter Owen.
- 33 See Barker, M. (2007). Heteronormativity and the exclusion of bisexuality in psychology. In V. Clarke & E. Peel (Eds.), *Out in psychology: Lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, and queer perspectives* (pp.86-118). Chichester, UK: Wiley.
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