



The Law
Society



Pride in the Law: Results of the 2021 LGBT+ solicitors' survey

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Pride in the Law

The Law Society is committed to creating a modern, diverse and inclusive profession. Together with our LGBT+ Lawyers Division we launched a survey in 2021 to update our insights on LGBT+ equality in the legal profession and capture the experiences of LGBT+ lawyers.

The survey was open throughout LGBT+ History Month to LGBT+ legal professionals and non-LGBT+ colleagues who consider themselves allies (separate questions were asked of them). 617 legal professionals responded to the survey, with 62% identifying as LGBT+.

In the 2019 PC holders survey, one in twenty (5%) of solicitors defined themselves as being either lesbian, gay or bisexual, a higher proportion

than the 3% reported in the general population of England and Wales. According to the SRA's Diversity data tool, 2% of solicitors¹ had a gender identity different from their sex registered at birth.

No robust data on the UK trans population exists, the Government Equalities Offices estimated there were approximately 200,000 to 500,000 trans people in the UK in 2018².

Executive Summary

Workplace experiences

The full value of diversity comes from enabling people to be themselves, share ideas and contribute diverse perspectives. The majority of LGBT+ respondents (97%) felt able to be themselves in their workplaces – either sometimes (44%) or always (53%).

Gay men were the most likely to report 'always' being able to be themselves at work (56%), a slightly higher proportion than for lesbian/gay women (52%). A smaller proportion of bisexual respondents reported being able to be themselves (44%).

A higher proportion of respondents reported positive than negative experiences in the workplace as a result of their LGBT+ identity. For gay men and lesbian/gay women, negative experiences tended to be in relation to a lack of visible LGBT+ role models. For bisexual respondents, a relatively higher proportion reported negative experiences in relation to the availability of formal and informal networks.

A higher proportion of respondents reported positive (37%) than negative (11%) impacts on their wellbeing. Positive experiences were reflected in the open comments, with respondents saying they were able to be their authentic selves, working in organisations with inclusive cultures, and with support from colleagues and senior staff.

Negative experiences, conversely, were about the strain of not being able to be their authentic selves, negative language being used in the workplace and the need to 'repeatedly come out'.

Progress on trans, non-binary, and gender fluid issues was described as 'embryonic', with support sometimes viewed as being more theoretical than genuine.

Experience of COVID-19

LGBT+ lawyers reported experiencing the same sort of issues as others during the COVID-19 lockdowns, but the sense of isolation and disconnect from the wider LGBT+ community was hard felt by some.

¹ 1% of all lawyers (this would include solicitors, partners, barristers, Chartered Legal Executive / CILEx Practitioner, Licensed Conveyancer, Patent or Trademark Attorney, Costs Lawyer and Notarys).

² https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/721642/GEO-LGBT-factsheet.pdf

Being out at work

A higher proportion of respondents were out to colleagues at work (82%), compared to those out to clients (38%). Open comments suggested a more nuanced approach to asking about being out is required, to reflect that LGBT+ individuals may be out to some colleagues and clients, but not to others.

Not all respondents saw coming out at work as being necessary, with a small number making comments such as 'I don't think it is any of their business' or 'people are not interested in my private life'.

The majority of LGBT+ respondents in senior roles were out at work to colleagues. Open responses suggested that the experience of being out was easier at a more senior level, several senior respondents reflected on their feelings of responsibility as someone in a senior role, to be a positive force for change.

For some LGBT+ respondents coming out would be easier if they knew how colleagues would react and whether they would be treated respectfully or fairly. The language and behaviours experienced within the office, around sexuality and gender identity, influenced how open respondents were. Respondents wanted employers to be more committed to inclusion, to have more and better-informed conversations and policies. Some respondents commented on their experiences at different stages of their legal career and how they perceive the sector to have changed over time. LGBT+ respondents who said they had allies among non-LGBT+ colleagues were more likely to say they were out than those who did not.

Pressing issues in the workplace

Around half (52%) of LGBT+ respondents reported a lack of visible LGBT+ role models at work as a pressing issue. Visible role models can help create that sense of belonging, as well as inspiring and motivating us to reach our goals, showing us what's possible, enabling us to share and learn from their challenges and successes. The lack of LGBT+ role models was a common theme across all types of organisations, with a similar proportion of those working in private practice (17%), in-house (20%) and for national or local government (19%) identifying it as an issue.

Coming out to clients was a pressing issue for around two-fifths of respondents (42%), and microaggressions (indirect, subtle or unintended slights or insults) were reported by around one-third (34%). A higher proportion of bisexual respondents (53%) reported microaggressions as a pressing issue, compared to 35% of lesbian/gay women and 26% of gay men.

Around two-fifths (42%) of respondents indicated they 'do not think there is anything affecting me' in relation to their sexual orientation at work. A higher proportion of bisexual respondents (47%) gave this response, followed by 42% of gay men and 38% of lesbian/gay women. This was reflected in some open comments, with some lawyers either stating their sexual orientation is not their 'identity' or that they did not experience the workplace in a different way as a result of their sexual orientation.

Creating a supportive working environment

Workplace culture is shaped by a range of factors including senior leadership, organisational values, policies and procedures and connections or networks of peers. When asked whether senior managers demonstrate a visible commitment to LGBT+ equality, a higher proportion of respondents reported a visible commitment to LGB equality than to supporting trans staff – 73% compared to 43%.

Experience of homophobia, biphobia or transphobia

Overall, more than one third (37%) of LGBT+ respondents had experienced homophobia, biphobia or transphobia in their workplace. A similar proportion of lesbian/gay women (37%), gay men (36%) and bisexual (32%) lawyers had experienced these negative behaviours. Three out of the five trans respondents who answered this question had experienced transphobia in their workplace. Individual respondents gave examples of how such treatment, which included verbal abuse and physical behaviour had a longer-term impact including on their career progression and mental health.

Eighteen percent of those experiencing homophobia, biphobia or transphobia had reported it to their employing organisation, a further eight percent indicated the incident had been reported by someone else. Where

experiences had been reported this tended to be to the HR department or to a partner with HR responsibilities. Open comments included examples of where organisations had dealt swiftly with poor behaviours, taking a zero-tolerance approach, but also examples of where organisations had not believed the complaint, diminished it or dealt with it poorly.

Homophobia, biphobia and transphobia often went unreported. Some said this was because they did not feel the behaviours were serious enough to report (40%), whilst others said they lacked confidence that the issue would be resolved effectively (26%).

Around three-quarters of respondents (78%) indicated there were opportunities within their employing organisation to raise concerns anonymously or seek confidential support about homophobic, biphobic or transphobic behaviour in their workplace. However, not all those with the opportunity to raise concerns anonymously or seek confidential support felt comfortable about accessing these opportunities; 57% reported feeling confident, whilst 21% of respondents said they were not. A smaller proportion of lesbian/gay women (52%) and bisexual (51%) lawyers reported feeling confident accessing such opportunities compared to 62% of gay men. All of the six trans lawyers answering the question had access to opportunities to raise concerns or to seek confidential support, and four felt comfortable in accessing it if required.

Allies

The majority of LGBT+ respondents (91%) reported having supportive colleagues or allies for LGBT+ equality in the workplace. 47% said they had a lot of allies in their workplace, while 44% said they had a few. Around one in ten said they did not have supportive and active allies at work.

Challenging homophobic, biphobic and transphobic behaviour, educating themselves on LGBT+ issues and visibly demonstrating support for LGBT+ equality were the most commonly cited things that LGBT+ respondents thought allies could do in the workplace.

Non-LGBT+ legal professionals were also invited to complete the survey. As allies they also saw their role as being to challenge homophobic, biphobic and transphobic behaviour (29%) and to educate themselves on LGBT+ issues (25%). They also saw their role as actively listening to and amplifying the voices of LGBT+ staff (23%), engaging others and encouraging them to be LGBT+ allies too (12%) and working for better representation of LGBT+ staff or issues (11%).

Networks

Two-thirds of LGBT+ respondents were a member of at least one LGBT+ workplace or professional network. Of those not a member of a network, a similar proportion were gay, lesbian, and bisexual. A lack of awareness of available networks was the most commonly cited reason for not being a member of one (32%), followed by those who did not see their sexual orientation as defining their identity or did not see the networks as being relevant or needed (30%).

Gay men	Lesbian/gay women	Bisexual
56% can 'always' be themselves at work, 42% 'sometimes'.	52% can 'always' be themselves at work, 46% 'sometimes'.	44% can 'always be themselves at work, 47% 'sometimes'
93% are out at work to colleagues and 49% out to clients	84% out to colleagues and 31% out to clients.	60% out to colleagues and 16% out to clients
Most pressing issue is a lack of role models	Most pressing issue is a lack of role models.	Most pressing issue is a lack of role models
36% experienced homophobia, biphobia or transphobia	37% had experienced homophobia, biphobia or transphobia	32% had experienced homophobia, biphobia or transphobia
62% felt confident in accessing opportunities to raise concerns anonymously or to seek confidential support in their workplace	52% felt confident in accessing opportunities to raise concerns anonymously or to seek confidential support in their workplace	51% felt confident in accessing opportunities to raise concerns anonymously or to seek confidential support in their workplace
77% reported senior managers demonstrated support on lesbian, gay and bi-equality	67% reported senior managers demonstrated support on lesbian, gay and bi-equality	65% reported senior managers demonstrated support on lesbian, gay and bi-equality
49% had a lot of allies, 44% had a few	36% had a lot of allies, 51% had a few	52% had a lot of allies, 33% had a few

Trans

The low number of trans individuals responding (10 overall and lower numbers to individual questions) means that we can't report findings as percentages. Here are some key takeaways though.

- Of the five trans respondents answering the question about being themselves at work, three always felt they could be themselves, one felt comfortable being themselves sometimes and one did not.
- Six out of the eight trans individuals responding to the question about being out at work said they were out to colleagues, four said they were out to clients.

- In response to the question about experiences at work, trans respondents reported a lack of trans inclusion, issues around lack of promotions, job loss, lack of opportunities for career enhancing work, offensive banter and coming out to colleagues as being pressing issues. Respondents in open comments explained that experiences of the workplace may differ depending on the stage of transition.
- Of the six respondents answering the question, four reported that some or all senior managers in their workplace demonstrate a visible commitment to lesbian, gay and bi-equality and three out of six respondents reported senior management support for trans equality.

- Three trans respondents had experienced transphobia in their workplace, only one had reported the experience.
- All of the six trans lawyers answering the question said they had access to opportunities to anonymously raise concerns, or to seek confidential support, four felt comfortable in using such opportunities if required.
- All six trans lawyers answering the question reported there were either 'a lot' or 'a few' supportive and active allies for LGBT+ equality in their workplace.

Other

The low number (33) of individuals responding as 'pansexual' or 'other' (which included pansexual, poly and queer) in relation to sexual orientation means we cannot report percentages, although here are a few key takeaways.

- Of the 18 respondents answering the question, six always felt able to be themselves and twelve were able to be themselves 'sometimes'.
- Of the 29 respondents answering the question, 19 were out to work colleagues, 10 were out to clients.
- For the 29 respondents identifying as 'other', the most commonly cited issues were a lack of LGBT+ role models at work, coming out to colleagues and microaggressions.
- Of the 24 respondents answering the question, 19 reported that some or all senior managers in their workplace demonstrate a visible commitment to lesbian, gay and bi-equality and 14 out of 23 respondents reported senior management support for trans equality.
- Nine respondents had experienced homophobia, biphobia or transphobia with the incidents reported by only six of these.
- 21 out of 23 respondents reported having access to opportunities to raise concerns anonymously or seek confidential support about negative behaviours in the workplace, of these, four indicated they would not feel confident in accessing these opportunities.
- 22 out of the 23 respondents answering the question reported having either 'a lot' or 'a few' supportive and active allies in their workplace.

Approach

Throughout February 2021, LGBT+ History Month, the Law Society's LGBT+ Lawyers Division surveyed its members and the profession about their experiences of being LGBT+ at work. It was also open to and had specific questions for non-LGBT+ lawyers who viewed themselves as allies. The online survey was distributed via the Law Society's network and through social media. 617 legal professionals took part in the survey, with 62% identifying as LGBT+ and 38% responding to questions about being an ally.

A profile of respondents, including the questions asked on sex and gender, can be found in Appendix 1. Not everyone answered every question, figures and charts in this report relate to the percentage who answered the question. Respondents were self-selecting and findings should be considered indicative of the wider experiences of LGBT+ lawyers, rather than representative. The experiences of trans respondents are included within the 'all LGBT+' figures in charts and tables, but due to the low number of trans respondents, are reported in the text only, and again, should be considered indicative rather than representative of the experience of being trans in the legal workplace.

Workplace experiences

The business case for a diverse workforce has been articulated, for organisations inside³ and outside of the legal sector^{4,5}. Research has found that organisations with greater diversity are more innovative⁶. An OECD review of evidence on the impact of diversity found a strong social justice obligation as well as a business case to prevent discrimination and non-inclusive workplaces⁷. Workforce diversity is not just about the representation of different protected characteristics in an organisation or team, the full benefit of diversity comes from enabling people to be themselves and to contribute different ideas and perspectives gained and shaped by their wider life experiences, multiple identities and career journeys⁸. Workplace cultures that do not support employees to be themselves at work and do not provide psychological safety, can be harmful to the business and to the individual. The ability to ‘bring your whole self to work’ is linked to better mental health⁹.

‘I feel far better and more productive being able to be my authentic self. I was not out at my last firm and it was exhausting and limited my ability to build good relationships with colleagues’.

Lesbian, private practice, Senior partner, 81+, 36-45

‘It’s exhausting being LGBT in what remains a very conservative profession’.

Lesbian, private practice, 5-10, equity partner, 46-55

‘It can sometimes be daunting to discuss personal relationships past or present when not everyone knows you are out. As a bisexual woman who is currently in a relationship with a man, many colleagues would assume I am straight which could make reference to my sexuality or previous relationships with women uncomfortable. It is also sometimes easy to feel the effects of bi-erasure in the work place as many role models are either gay or lesbian and there seems to be less general focus or concern for the bisexual and other communities’.

Bisexual woman, private practice, 16-24

The majority of LGBT+ legal professionals responding to this survey (97%) felt able to be themselves in their workplaces – either sometimes (44%) or always (53%). Only three percent of respondents felt they could not be themselves, a lower proportion than the 14% reported in Stonewall’s 2018 ‘LGBT in Britain’

3 SRA, The business case for diversity, February 2018 [online], Available at <https://www.sra.org.uk/risk/risk-resources/risk-business-case-diversity/>, [Last checked 21.07.2021]

4 Dixon-Fyle S, Dolan K, Hunt V, Prince S, McKinsey & Company, May 2020, [online], Available at <https://www.mckinsey.com/featured-insights/diversity-and-inclusion/diversity-wins-how-inclusion-matters#> [last checked 21.07.2021]

5 OECD, September 2020, [online] Available at <https://www.oecd.org/els/diversity-at-work-policy-brief-2020.pdf> [last checked 21.07.2021]

6 Lorenzo, R, Voight N, Tsusaka M, Krentz M, Abouzahr K. Boston Consulting Group, January 2018, [online] Available at <https://www.bcg.com/en-us/publications/2018/how-diverse-leadership-teams-boost-innovation> [last checked 21.07.2021]

7 OECD Library, The impact of diversity: A review of the evidence, [online] Available at <https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/sites/5f8c1531-en/index.html?itemId=/content/component/5f8c1531-en> [last checked 21.07.2021]

8 Ely RJ, Thomas DA, Getting serious about diversity: Enough already with the business case’, November-December 2020, [online] Available at <https://hbr.org/2020/11/getting-serious-about-diversity-enough-already-with-the-business-case> [last checked 21.07.2021]

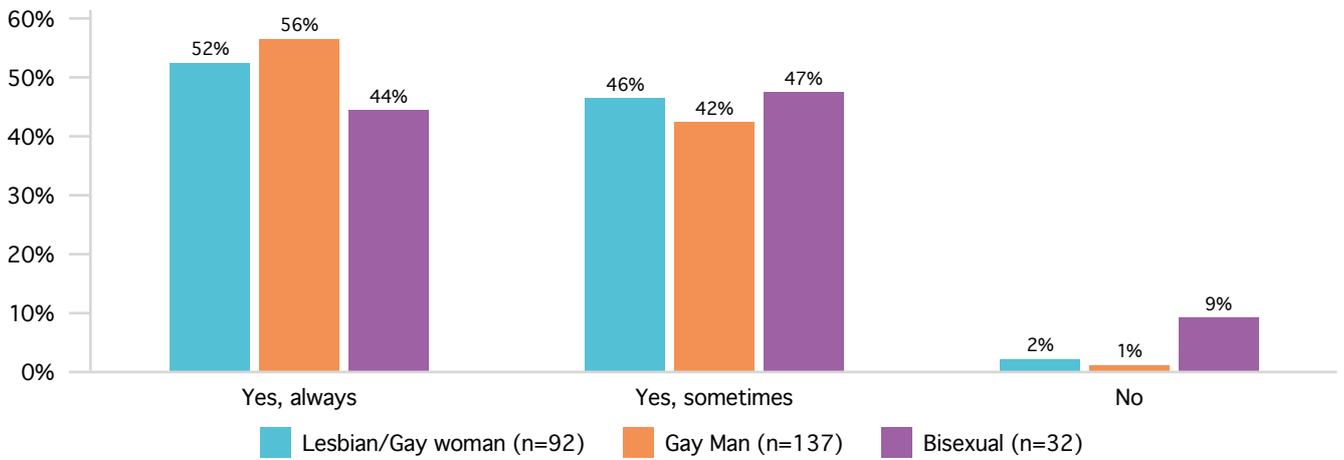
9 MHFA England, Join the campaign for workplace culture change [online] Available at <https://mhfaengland.org/my-whole-self/> [last checked 21.07.2021]

report¹⁰. Gay men were the most likely to report 'always' being able to be themselves (56%), a slightly higher proportion than for lesbian/gay women (52%). A smaller proportion of bisexual respondents reported being able to be themselves in their workplace (44%). Of the 10 respondents identifying as 'other', four always felt able to be themselves and six 'sometimes'.

Of the five trans respondents answering this question, three always felt they could be themselves, one felt comfortable sometimes and one did not.

Of the 18 respondents identifying their sexual orientation as 'other', six always felt able to be themselves and twelve were able to be themselves 'sometimes'.

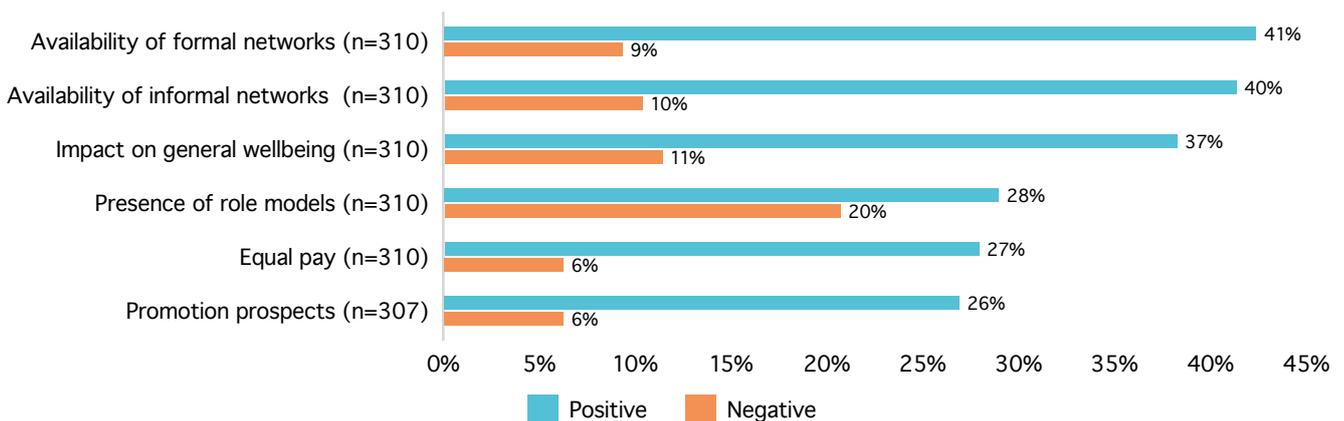
Do you feel, as a LGBT+ lawyer, you can be yourself in your workplace?



A higher proportion of LGBT+ legal professionals working in national or local government (64%) reported always being able to be themselves at work, compared to 54% of those working in other in-house roles and 55% of those working in private practice.

Overall respondents were more likely to report positive experiences in their workplaces as a result of their LGBT+ identity than negative experiences. For gay men and lesbian/gay women, negative experiences tended to be in relation to a lack of visible role models. For bisexual respondents, a relatively higher proportion reported negative experiences in relation to the lack of availability of formal and informal networks.

Do you have positive or negative experiences of the following in your place of work as a result of your LGBT+ identity?



10 Bachmann CL, Gooch B, Stonewall, LGBT in Britain, 2018 [online] Available at [lgbt_in_britain_work_report.pdf \(stonewall.org.uk\)](https://www.stonewall.org.uk/research/lgbt-in-britain-work-report) page 13 [last checked 21.07.2021]

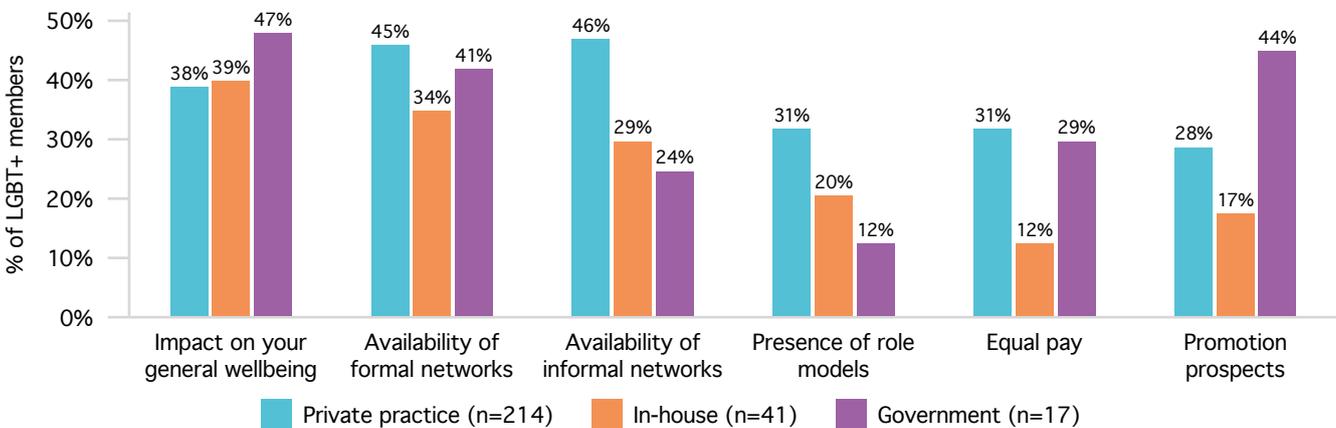
Positive or negative experiences at work as a result of a LGBT+ identity, by sexual orientation

	Lesbian / Gay woman (n=106)		Gay man (n=152)		Bisexual (n=51)		All LGBT+ (n=326)	
	Positive	Negative	Positive	Negative	Positive	Negative	Positive	Negative
Impact on your general wellbeing	31%	10%	41%	11%	33%	6%	37%	11%
Availability of formal networks	35%	7%	43%	8%	49%	10%	41%	9%
Availability of informal networks	31%	13%	43%	8%	48%	14%	40%	10%
Presence of role models	23%	28%	45%	29%	16%	7%	28%	20%
Equal pay	15%	9%	31%	5%	32%	6%	27%	6%
Promotion prospects	21%	8%	28%	5%	33%	8%	26%	6%

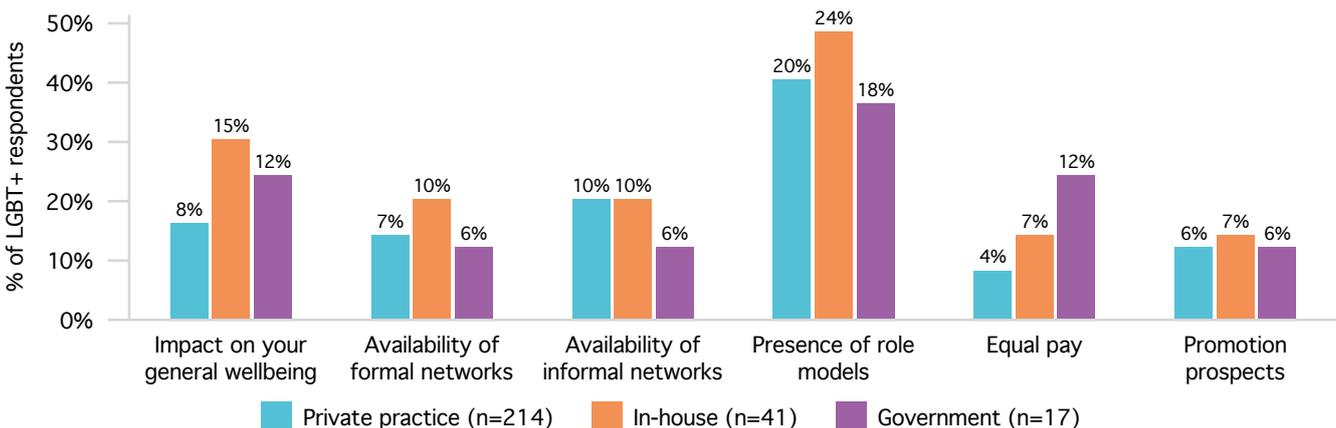
The experiences reported varied by sector of employment. A higher proportion of in-house legal professionals had positive experiences as a result of their LGBT+ status in relation to their own wellbeing and promotion prospects. Whereas those working in private practice were relatively more likely to report positive experiences in

relation to the availability of informal networks and the presence of role models. The absence of role models was a concern across the board, with a higher proportion of respondents reporting negative experiences in relation to this, compared to other issues.

Positive experiences, by sector



Negative experiences, by sector



Impact on well being

More than three times as many respondents reported positive (37%) than negative (11%) experiences in relation to the impact of their LGBT+ status on their wellbeing at work. Positive experiences were reflected in the open comments, by respondents being able to be their authentic selves, working in organisations with inclusive cultures, or with support from colleagues and senior staff. A number touched on positive developments within the sector or firms in recent years to actively make it more inclusive for LGBT+ employees.

'I am in a much healthier and happier place once I accepted myself and addressed my dysphoria. I tried to transition originally in the early '90s but it was impossible to make a start as a young trans lawyer back then. The world moved on but I didn't notice until 3 years ago'.

Trans woman, In-house, 46-55

'We have one of the best LGBTQ+ networks in a law firm and do an incredible amount of work internally and externally to ensure that lawyers and staff at the firm are happy and able to be themselves, with suitable mentoring and sponsorship opportunities. For me, it has been a big part of the reason I stay at my current firm'.

Bisexual woman, private practice, 25-35

'The support of colleagues over the years has made an enormous difference. It has been a long journey but the firm is now demonstrably committed to diversity and inclusion, from the Senior Partner down'.

Gay man, private practice, consultant, 56-65

'This is my second time around with my firm. My first was a decade ago as a trainee. In that time the firm has moved a long way forwards on ED&I generally and in supporting LGBT+ staff and causes. We now have an LGBT+ group and at the last Pride we were able to go to we sponsored the local Law Society and marched in the Parade. We have other plans but they are stymied (like everything else) by lockdown'.

Gay man, private practice, 25-35

Negative experiences, conversely, were about the strain of not being able to be their authentic selves, of negative language being used in the workplace and the need to 'repeatedly come out'. They also highlighted that progress has not been consistent for all individuals or across all organisations.

'My first firm was nothing short of terrifying. I had to spend so much energy on worrying about being gay, it was every other thought. It greatly reduced my effectiveness at work and ultimately resulted in a nervous breakdown. The only coping mechanism I had was to get up and walk out of the room whenever one of them would start a conversation that might get onto LGBT+ people. I didn't come out for a long time, I genuinely believed that I would lose my job if they knew. When I did come out, it wasn't great but it wasn't nearly as bad as I thought it would be. I don't think senior management even realised the effect of their comments, it was just their humour'.

Lesbian, private practice, 25-35

'Anti-LGBT+ sentiment is still to some degree expected/allowed/ignored - I have been told by a senior colleague that I am going to hell for my "lifestyle choice" - she still works here'.

Gay man, private practice, 46-55

'In previous private practice, discrimination in interviews, bullying. In legal representative groups, comments such as "we don't want them (LGBT+) in our organisation.". This has led to crippling lack of confidence, constant anxiety, career limitation, and feeling suicidal'.

Gay man, in-house, senior legal advisor, 46-55

'I was in the closet, or only came out to a very select group, for many years. It is still wearing having to come out multiple times. It takes confidence and experience to bring your whole, true self to the workplace; to get over the feeling that you need to present as someone else in order to succeed. My wellbeing has improved since I came out and became fully visible. As a partner, I think it is very important to be a positive and visible role model. It is also important not to over-emphasise the negative aspects of being gay and to forget other diversity issues that impact on others. As a white, middle class male, I am in a privileged position in many respects'.

Gay man, private practice, equity partner, 46-55

'In my location there is a greater cultural reluctance for staff and even partners to come out at work. There are few role models and not much active, visible partner support. Whilst there are no negative comments or obvious microaggressions, the prevailing attitude seems to be that private lives should stay private, and there is little benefit for staff and partners to "bring their whole selves to work"'.

Gay woman, private practice, 36-45

Progress on trans, non-binary, and gender fluid issues was described as 'embryonic', with support sometimes viewed as being more theoretical than genuine.

'Generally, things are fine, but I will say the discussion around trans/non-binary/gender fluid etc people is still pretty embryonic - senior leadership are mutedly supportive'.

Gay man, private practice, 46-55

'For me, trans identity issues have affected me all my life and it can make me depressed, but I am lucky as my family are aware. My wife is supportive, and I was upfront at the start. I try to educate my children that it is ok to be who you are. They are the future and they will help make gender identity/LGBT+ issues seem to be normal to the point that we do not have to talk about it. That is where we need to get to. If I was younger and single, I would definitely come out at work and transition from male to female'.

Bisexual, gender fluid, private practice, 46-55

‘At my previous firm I assumed all were LGBTQ and specifically trans allies but then saw that a very senior member of the leadership team was liking and re-tweeting a lot of anti-trans stuff.... I was devastated to realise that the firm was not the safe space for trans clients or staff I had naively assumed it to be’.

Lesbian, private practice, 56-65

Being out at work

The Law Society’s 2006 qualitative research¹¹, found significant factors in the decision on whether or not to be out at work included, the age of the solicitor, geographical location, self-confidence, level of career progression, issues of conformity at a new workplace and, the desire or ability to maintain a double life. Interviewees were found to be increasingly open about their sexual orientation as their career progressed.

A higher proportion of respondents were out to colleagues at work (82%), compared to those out to clients (38%). This is an increase on 2009

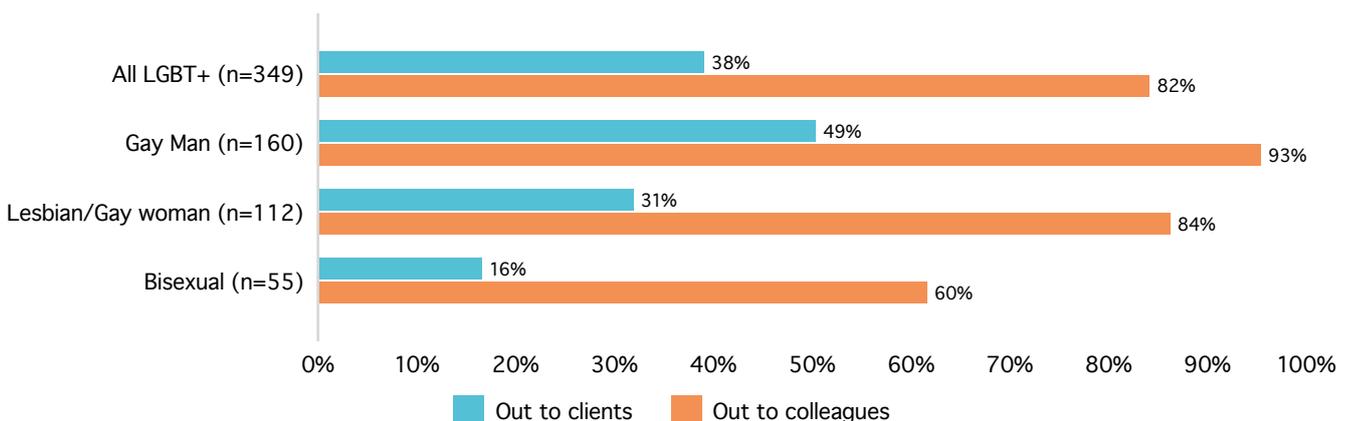
survey figures, when 63% of respondents were out to colleagues and 24% were out to both colleagues and clients¹². Some open comments suggested a more nuanced approach to asking about being out is required, to reflect that LGBT+ individuals may be out to some colleagues and clients, but not to others.

As a comparison, Stonewall’s 2018 ‘LGBT in Britain, Work Report’¹³, reports that 18% of lesbian, gay or bi people are not open with anyone at work about their sexual orientation. The National LGBT Survey¹⁴ from the Government Equalities Office in 2018 found that those that had been in a paid job for at least 12 months were more likely to have been open with colleagues at the same or more junior level. Respondents were less open with senior colleagues and customers.

Gay men were relatively more likely to be out to colleagues and to clients, compared to lesbian/gay women or bisexual individuals. Of the 29 respondents describing their sexual orientation as ‘other’, 19 were out to work colleagues, 10 were out to clients.

Six out of the eight trans individuals responding to this question were out to colleagues, four out of the six trans individuals responding were out to clients¹⁵.

Being out to colleagues and clients, by sexual orientation



11 Chittenden T, Law Society, 2006, Career experiences of gay and lesbian solicitors, Law Society, Research Study 53. [PDF available on request]

12 Law Society, Web Survey with Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual solicitors, June 2009, Law Society [Unpublished]

13 Bachmann CL, Gooch B, Stonewall, LGBT in Britain, 2018 [online] Available at [lgbt_in_britain_work_report.pdf \(stonewall.org.uk\)](https://www.stonewall.org.uk) page 12 [last checked 21.07.2021]

14 Government Equalities Office, 2018 [online] Available at [National LGBT Survey: Research report - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk), p137 [last checked 21.07.2021]

15 The Law Management Section provides advice to organisations in supporting an employee’s transition. Transition and change to gender expression template, Law Society 2020, [online] Available at <https://www.lawsociety.org.uk/en/topics/lgbt-lawyers/transition-and-change-to-gender-expression-template> [last checked 21.07.2021]

Not all respondents thought being out at work was an issue or necessary for them.

'I don't think it matters to come out at work. People are not interested in my private life'.

Bisexual woman, in-house, 46-55

'I personally choose to keep work and private life separate. Not much could be done to make it easier, [my organisation] has a very diverse and open workplace'.

Gay man, government, 25-35

'I'm married to a person of the opposite sex, so it never is relevant'.

Bisexual woman, in-house senior legal advisor, 36-45

'It's not about ease of coming out, it's more that I don't feel it is any of their business. I am out to some of my colleagues and not others, depending on whether we are close / work friends, or just colleagues'.

Bisexual woman, private practice, 25-35

The majority of respondents in senior positions were out at work to colleagues. Within private practice, 88% of those at partner level were out to colleagues. Of in-house lawyers, 100% of Director of Legal/General Counsel or Heads of Legal and 87% of senior legal advisors were out to colleagues. Open responses suggested that

the experience of being out was easier at a more senior level. Several senior respondents reflected on their feelings of responsibility as someone in a senior role, to be a positive force for change, which is welcome given the wider survey findings about a need for visible role models

'As the current founder and senior partner of the firm, it is my role to make the workplace LGBT+ inclusive'.

Gay man, private practice, equity partner, 46-55

'It's easier to be out the more senior you become as less people are likely to say anything negative to your face. You are also in a position of power and authority so can positively influence change'.

Bisexual woman, In-house, Director of Legal/GC, 36-45

'I found this harder when I was junior and went back into the closet when joining a large city firm and then when joining a large FTSE 100 business. Things have changed over the last 10 years and I have become one of the senior role models in our organisation.... I'm much more open with clients in recent years given considerable D&I work in the organisation. This however remains a challenge when travelling internationally on business and I do have to hide my sexuality on occasion on business trips'.

Gay man, in-house, Head of Legal, 36-45

'As a senior lawyer/partner who came out midway through a very long career with the same firm, overall, I have a very positive experience and a lot of support from fellow partners and colleagues'.

Gay man, private practice, equity partner, 56-65

For some, coming out would be easier if there was less uncertainty and they felt more confident about a supportive reaction from the organisation, other colleagues or managers.

'I'd like to avoid awkward situations with my line manager. If I do not feel comfortable but his reaction does not amount to discrimination, I will need to leave the firm'.

Gay man, private practice, 36-45

'Less fear of losing my job or being treated poorly as a result of coming out'.

Bisexual women, private practice 25-35

'It takes a lot of thought and energy to talk about what I do outside of work in gender neutral terms to people I am not out to; but it's also always nerve-wracking to come out. You never know how it's going to be received. It doesn't particularly cause me stress daily, but it's something that does come up occasionally'.

Bisexual woman, private practice, 25-35

The language and behaviours experienced within the office, around sexual orientation and gender identity influenced how open respondents were. Some had positive experiences whereas others wanted employers to be more committed to inclusion or to have better-informed conversations and policies.

'I am out in terms of sexuality (bisexual, pansexual, queer) but I am not out to most people at work as a trans man (most people think I am a cis man). More knowledge and training around LGBTQ+ issues and how to respect trans colleagues would increase my confidence in coming out more generally at work as trans. We also do not have a trans/transition policy which does not instill confidence in my 'coming out' being handled appropriately by my team, HR, management and the wider firm. If there was a trans/transition policy and everyone was educated on that I would feel much more confident coming out. There are also no visible trans/non-binary role models in the firm globally (1000+ lawyers). If there were, I would also feel like there was more support available'.

Trans-man, In-house, legal advisor, 25-35

'Firms also need to appreciate that there is more than one way to do this and not everyone is comfortable to be out and proud and that needs to be taken into account with any Pride organisations that exist within firms. Firms must also realise that gay people worked in a company before they founded a Pride branch. Sometimes it feels as though firms operate a Pride section because it looks good to clients - being gay is not a marketing tool.'

Gay man, private practice, 36-45

'At my firm we have no LGBT+ networks. I have discussed this with HR, but I have had no luck so far setting one up. Although HR have said that this is on the agenda, it has been 4 months with no development, and I am finding the slow pace frustrating'.

Trans woman, private practice, 25-35

'Having to decide whether or not to come out to clients, means I am wasting time and energy on this issue every time I encounter a new client rather than putting that time and thought into doing and enjoying my job'.

Gay woman, private practice 25-35

'My experience in the workplace has been very much a positive for me over the course of the last year. My colleagues have fully embraced my new identity and, when I was thinking that the most I could expect would be mere tolerance, I have been delighted to find that I'm not just welcomed but shown true affection by everybody. I know that not every trans woman is so lucky, but I can honestly say that I have had no problems at all with my identity and in fact coming out has opened some doors that previously were closed to me. I haven't had to worry about the use of female spaces - my female colleagues don't even seem to see me as trans anymore, just another woman working alongside them.'

Trans-woman, In-house, 46-55

'I don't think my sexuality is relevant but sometimes I have come out where appropriate - I don't hide it but also it's usually not relevant. Sometimes it helps a gay client to know you are also gay'.

Lesbian/gay woman, private practice, salaried partner 36-45

Being out to clients

Around two-fifths (38%) of LGBT+ respondents indicated they were out to clients. A higher proportion of gay men (49%) than lesbian/gay women (31%) or bisexual lawyers (16%), were out to clients. Again, open comments suggested that respondents made the decision on coming out based on their relationship with individual clients, rather than being out to all clients.

'It is difficult to gauge if, and when, to come out to clients, although it has got easier as I have become more senior. Sometimes there are (perceived) cultural issues, e.g. with clients from countries where LGBT rights are not established / it is illegal to be gay. Sometimes there are (perceived) issues relating to age or gender. Sometimes it is just not relevant. There is always the fear that you will jeopardise a client relationship by coming out to someone homophobic - although in practice, this has never happened (to my knowledge) and coming out has in fact strengthened many relationships because clients often welcome honesty and openness. I do think it is important to be visibly out as a more senior lawyer - so that my more junior colleagues feel able to do the same'.

Gay man, private practice, equity partner, 46-55

'Very difficult, and not always. I always 'read the room' and sometimes find myself adjusting in ways intended to "fit in".'

Gay man, private practice 25-35

'They are very open and positive about it and are often interested in my experiences, especially as a lesbian mother'.

Lesbian, Government, senior legal advisor, 36-45)

Examples were given by respondents of clients being positive and supportive. Again, some respondents commented on their experiences at different stages of their legal career and about how they perceive the sector to have changed over time.

'As a more junior lawyer this was challenging - I was concerned of a negative reaction by clients impacting business and career'.

Gay man, private practice, equity partner, 36-45)

'Very much more positive than I had dared to expect. I originally tried to transition in the early 90s and things were very different then. If anything, I would say that my relationships with most clients is stronger than before'.

Transwoman, in-house, 46-55

'I am now out to most clients where we have a close working relationship. This is relatively recent - in the last 5 years - and it has been easier to be out with private sector clients than my public sector clients. Since being out, the relationships have become stronger e.g. with clients regularly asking after my partner.'

Gay man, consultant, 56-65

Pressing issues in the workplace

Respondents were asked about any pressing issues for them as a LGBT+ lawyer in their workplace. Around two-fifths (42%) of respondents indicated they 'do not think there is anything affecting me'. A higher proportion of bisexual respondents (47%) gave this response, followed by 42% of gay men and 38% of lesbian/gay women. This was also reflected in responses to open questions, with lawyers either not seeing their sexual orientation as their 'identity' or believing they experienced the workplace in a different way from others.

My colleagues are all supportive of me as a person and not specifically my sexuality, it is a non-issue in my workplace. I am out at work but don't make a fuss/issue of being gay, it comes out naturally in discussions if I'm speaking about my home life or similar (i.e. using my partner's name or the male pronoun) It's not something that I am defined by it's just a small part of me. The survey appears to start from the assumption that sexuality is a bigger part of a person's life than my own personal experience has been. I acknowledge I have been fortunate in this regard and that there is still homophobia in the workplace which is why surveys and research like this are so important'.

Gay man, government, legal advisor, 25-35

'Being pan isn't my identity, nor is it who I'm attracted to. Other LGBTQ+ may be proud to identify as that, but for me, it's just a small part.'

Pansexual woman, private practice, 25-35

'I don't think there have been any LGBT specific challenges - my firm has been supportive and being LGBT has not resulted in me being treated any differently'.

Gay man, private practice, 23-35

A lack of LGBT+ role models at work was the most commonly cited 'pressing issue' for survey respondents. Positive role models at work can inspire and motivate us to reach our goals, show us what's possible, enable us to share and learn from their challenges and successes¹⁶. A similar proportion of those working in private practice (17%), in-house (20%) and for national or local government (19%) reported a lack of visible role models.

'I am a strong believer in the power of testimony and role models. For years I suffered in silence because I was too afraid - I thought if anybody knew, I would be an outcast. But I can see that it's no longer like that. It took a personal mental and physical health crisis to make me see that. I think if there were more stories and more publicity, others like me would see that they can be open and honest about themselves.'

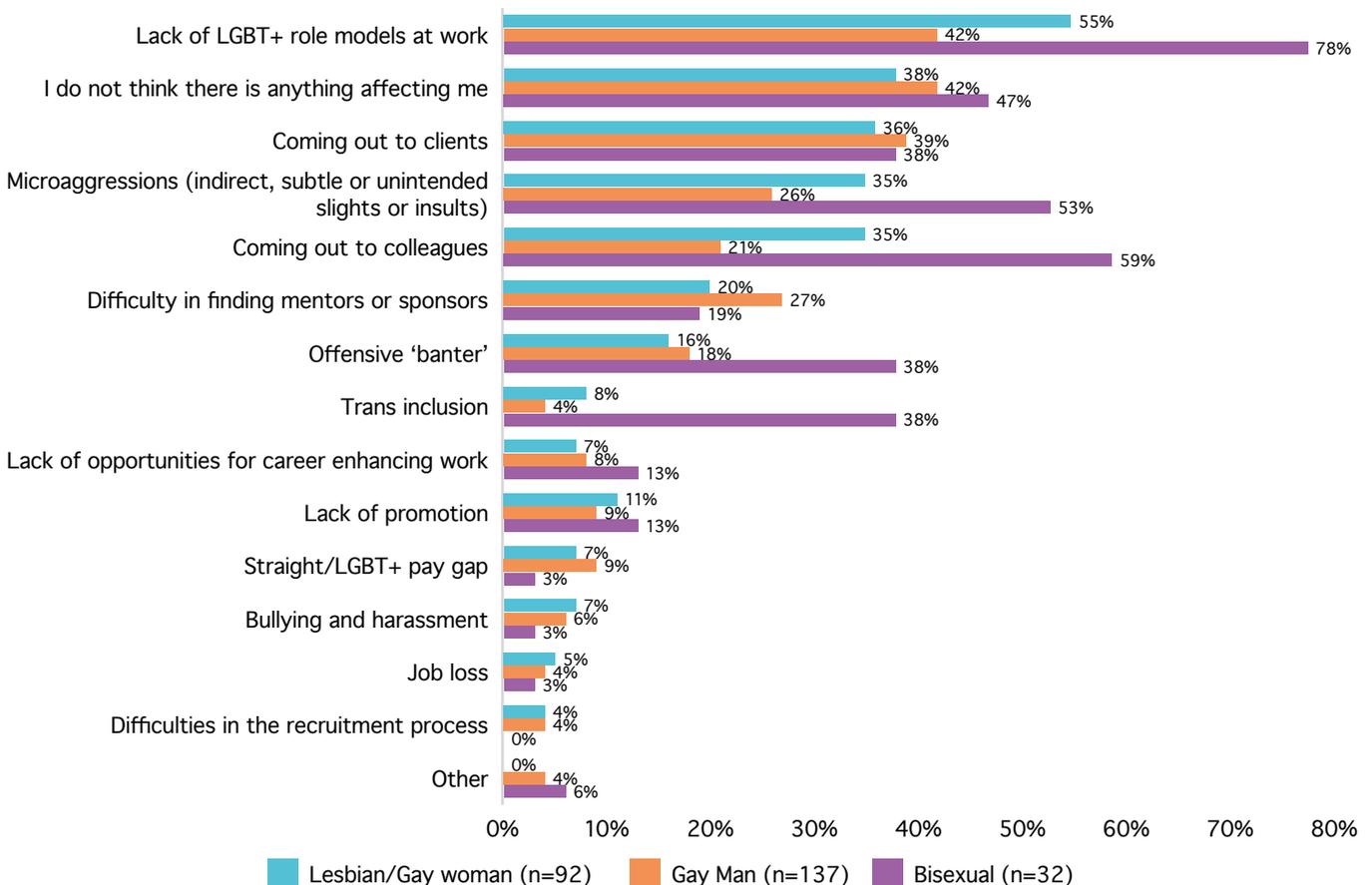
Trans-woman, In-house, 46-55

¹⁶ Members of the Ethnic Minority Lawyers Division spoke about the importance of role models. Ethnic Minority Lawyers Division, Law Society, 2019 [online podcast] Available at <https://www.lawsociety.org.uk/topics/ethnic-minority-lawyers/benefits-role-modelling> [last checked 21.07.2021]

What are the most pressing issues affecting you as a LGBT+ lawyer in your organisation?

	Lesbian / Gay woman (n=92)	Gay man (n=137)	Bisexual (n=32)	All LGBT+ (n=276)
Lack of LGBT+ role models at work	55%	42%	78%	52%
I do not think there is anything affecting me	38%	42%	47%	42%
Coming out to clients	36%	39%	38%	38%
Microaggressions (indirect, subtle or unintended slights or insults)	35%	26%	53%	34%
Coming out to colleagues	35%	21%	59%	33%
Difficulty in finding mentors or sponsors	20%	27%	19%	25%
Offensive 'banter'	16%	18%	38%	20%
Trans inclusion	8%	4%	38%	12%
Lack of promotion	11%	9%	13%	10%
Lack of opportunities for career enhancing work	7%	8%	13%	10%
Straight/LGBT+ pay gap	7%	9%	3%	7%
Bullying and harassment	7%	6%	3%	6%
Job loss	5%	4%	3%	5%
Difficulties in the recruitment process	4%	4%	0%	4%
Other	0%	4%	6%	4%

What are the most pressing issues affecting you as a LGBT+ lawyer in your organisation?



Top three pressing issues by sector

Private practice (n=501)	In-house (n=98)	National/Local Government (n=37)
Lack of LGBT+ role models at work (17%)	Lack of LGBT+ role models at work (20%)	Lack of LGBT+ role models at work (19%)
Coming out to clients (16%)	Coming out to colleagues (12%)	Microaggressions (14%)
Microaggressions (15%)	Microaggressions (9%)	Coming out to colleagues (8%)

Top three pressing issues by size of firm (private practice)

Small firms (1-4 partners) (n=36)	Medium firms (5-25 partners) (n=48)	Large firms (26+ partners) (n=130)	All private practice
Lack of LGBT+ role models at work (20%)	Lack of LGBT+ role models at work (19%)	Lack of LGBT+ role models at work (15%)	Lack of LGBT+ role models at work (17%)
Coming out to clients (11%)	Coming out to clients (17%)	Coming out to clients (16%)	Coming out to clients (16%)
Offensive ‘banter’ (10%)	Coming out to colleagues (14%)	Microaggressions (13%)	Microaggressions (15%)

Around one-third (34%) of respondents reported microaggressions as being a pressing concern for them at work. A higher proportion of bisexual respondents (53%) reported microaggressions as a pressing issue, compared to 35% of lesbian/gay women and 26% of gay men.

Amongst the 29 respondents identifying as ‘other’ (which included pansexual, poly and queer), the most commonly cited issues were a lack of LGBT+ role models at work, coming out to colleagues and microaggressions.

Some trans respondents reported having nothing affecting them, others reported issues around lack of promotions, job loss, lack of opportunities for career enhancing work, offensive banter and coming out to colleagues. Experiences of the workplace could differ with the stage of someone’s transition.

‘I am currently in the early stages of my transition and although I have begun the medical transition, I am not ready to socially transition at work yet as I do not feel secure in my position’.

Trans woman, private practice, 25-35

Microaggressions

Microaggressions can be indirect, subtle, often unintended slights or insults to and about marginalised groups.

Through a review of academic research from 2010-2015 Nadal et al identified variations of universally experienced LGBTQ+ microaggressions, including: offensive, heterosexual verbiage, support of only heteronormal behaviour, assumption of a singular LGBTQ+ experience, exoticization, disapproval of LGBTQ+ experiences, denial of

societal heterosexism, speculation of sexual pathology/abnormality¹⁷.

What can we do about it?

Recognise our own biases, apologise, and be open to feedback if we accidentally hurt someone.

Microaggressions are often unintentional, so 'calling people in' – rather than calling them out – may be an option. This means not shaming but showing openness and willingness to engage in conversation to address concerns.

Reinforce a culture of openness and willingness to discuss bias and learn from mistakes.

The LGBT+ experience of COVID-19

During the 2020/21 COVID-19 lockdowns, LGBT+ legal professionals reported experiencing the same sorts of issues as others, but the sense of isolation and disconnect from others in the wider LGBT+ community was hard felt by some. Just over a quarter of respondents (27%) mentioned the isolation and lack of community.

'I feel overlooked / invisible. Reference is consistently made to staying at home 'with family', 'with the kids', 'we need to support colleagues with children at home' etc, and while I appreciate that there is nothing to stop LGBT+ colleagues living with family or having kids (and that such set-ups come with their own difficulties), for the majority of us the experience has been living in solitary confinement. This to me seems pronounced in the LGBT+ community, with the vast majority of my LGBT+ contacts living alone'.

Gay man, private practice, 25-35

'Isolation from other LGBTQ people/lawyers socially, especially - clicking 'leave meeting' after speaking at or attending an event on video then ping. No social element to follow. All work and no play. This was especially the case for me in Pride season 2020 and I am dreading it again in history month. The content can be challenging/triggering then there is no 'de-brief' with the other speakers or attendees'.

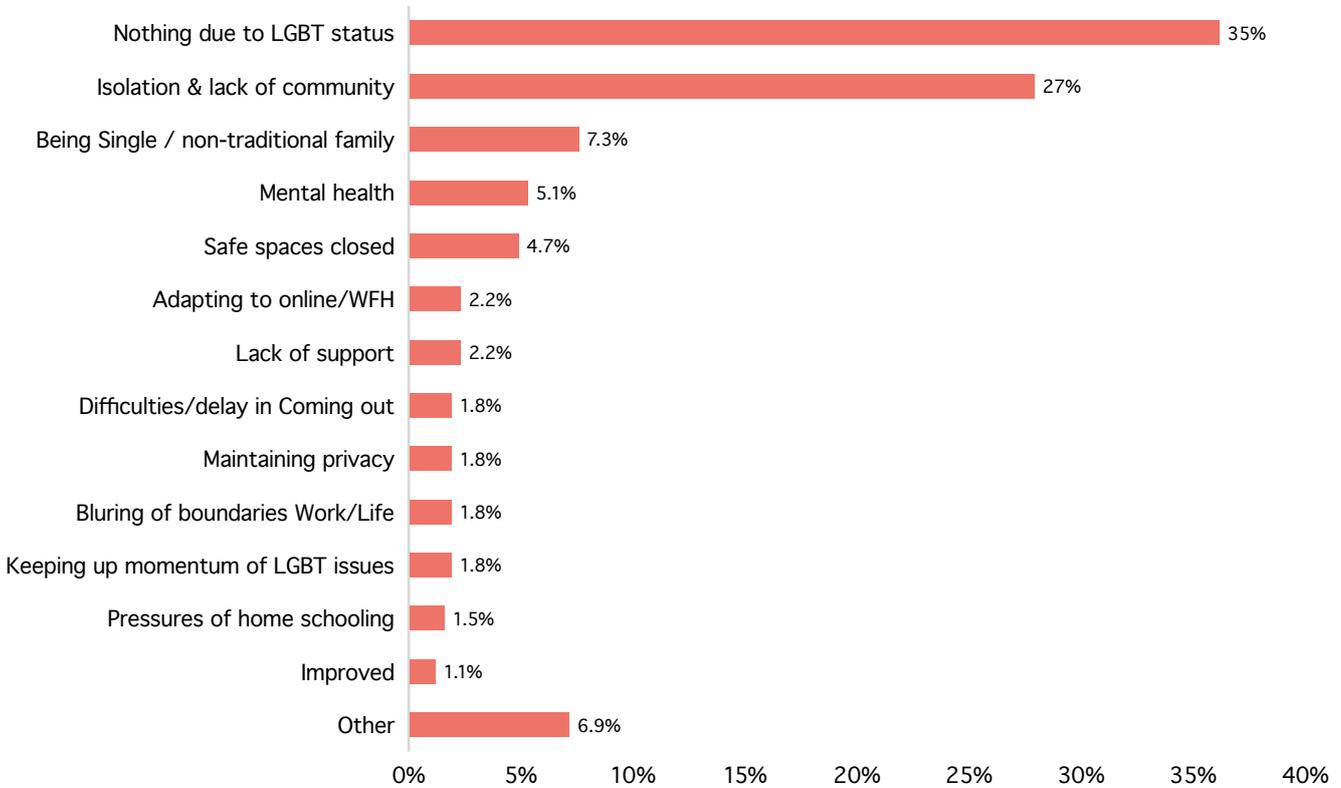
Lesbian, private practice, 56-65

'Loss of contact with other LGBT people day to day. Before Covid I had been attending an outdoor hiking gay group which was beneficial to my social interaction and support from other gays. At work almost everyone is straight. So, miss using that important side of my personality. Depression and loneliness at times'.

Gay man, private practice, 36-45

17 Nadal KL, Whitman CN, Davis LS, Erazo T, Davidoff KC. Microaggressions Toward Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, and Genderqueer People: A Review of the Literature. J Sex Res. 2016 May-Jun; <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/00224499.2016.1142495?journalCode=hjsr20>

As a LGBT+ lawyer, what have been the main challenges for you through the Covid-19 lockdowns?



‘Other’ included zoom fatigue in relation to presenting pronouns, experiences of ill-health, including due to long COVID, difficulties in accessing treatments (gender dysphoria and hormone treatments), the monotony and lack of motivation.

Factors creating a supportive environment

The challenges faced by LGBT+ employees are likely to vary with a range of personal and workplace related factors. Personal factors may relate to life stage, (being out, having a partner, having children) and career stage (being a junior member of staff, seeking promotion or a job move) and to external factors (sector, size of firm, location, the workplace culture). Respondents indicated that a one-size-fits-all solution does not exist, what would work for a large city firm is unlikely to help those working in small rural practices.

‘I am the only LGBT+ employee at our firm. Everyone is fine with me, people aren’t necessarily ‘active or visible’ but then they don’t need to be in my example. Articles about being out at large law firms with over 1000+ employees, or even over 100 employees aren’t hugely helpful to me nor would they assist anyone in my firm in thinking about how to develop and progress things’.

Gay man, private practice, 26-34

'At my last employer before my current role I had been invited to an office social event within weeks of starting, at this event a more senior (and inebriated) lawyer questioned my gender identity.... This experience had quite a large amount of psychological harm on reconciling my identity with my career. This firm had no LGBTQ+ support network and I had been warned before starting (whilst on work experience) that the office had some quite small-minded people and a 'banter culture'. I avoided this lawyer wherever possible but it created a hostile work environment for me. I would note that homophobic, biphobic and transphobic behaviours are more endemic outside of the larger cities. It also makes it evident that each office within larger national firms may have individual cultures that do not necessarily fit with the central head office's view of EDI. The mission should consider LGBTQIA+ lawyers in small cities, smaller firms, smaller companies'.

Queer, non-binary, in-house, 25-35

'I work in a small firm with a small partnership that is almost entirely straight, white and male. I have not been on the receiving end of any active discrimination whatsoever. My boyfriend has been welcomed at partner social events as warmly as anyone else. However, I do feel like there is a lack of appreciation within the partnership for the experiences of diverse people. We have a D&I group in the firm, but it is clearly regarded by the managing partners as more of an irritation and an annoyance than something that is important to the future of the business. I don't think there is any active animus behind this, just conservative attitudes and the idea that the firm shouldn't get involved with 'political' issues. But it does make me feel like an outsider at times and I feel like I either go along with it or I get a reputation as an annoying activist. As a junior partner, I don't have a lot of political capital to waste so there is a conflict between speaking up on D&I issues and not rocking the boat'.

Gay man, private practice, salaried partner, 36-45

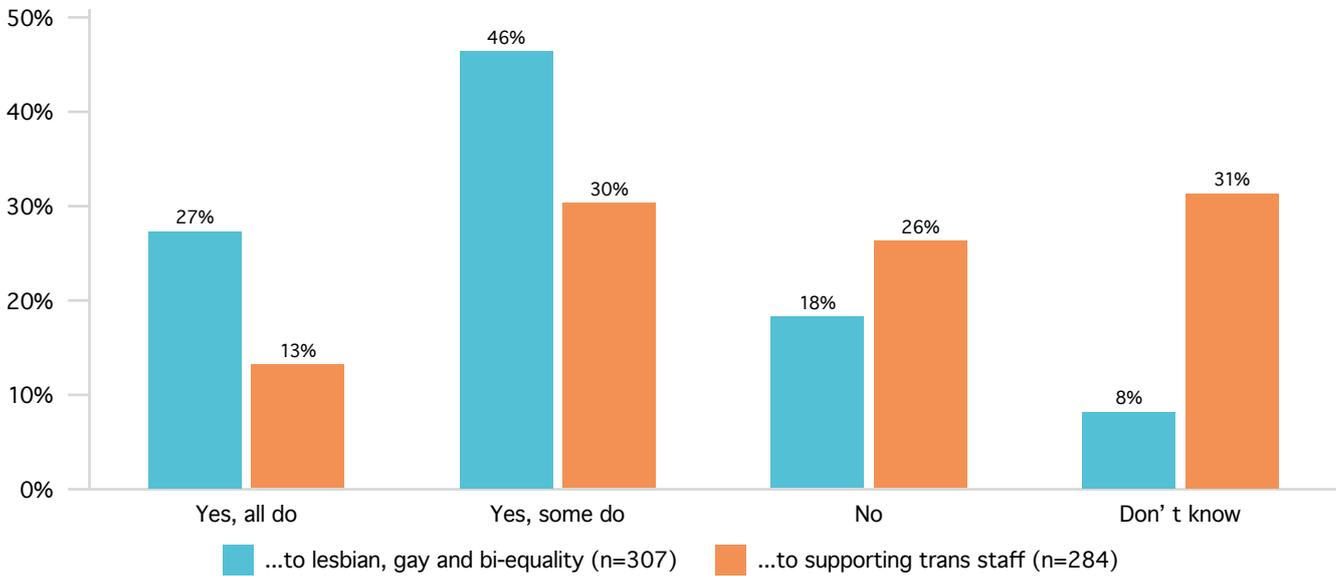
Our experiences of the workplace are influenced and shaped by our relationship with colleagues, line managers and senior staff. Workplace culture can be driven by grassroots activity (networking, events, community), through organisational values, policies and procedures, and by senior leadership.

When asked whether senior managers demonstrate a visible commitment to the LGBT+ community, a higher proportion of respondents reported a visible commitment to lesbian, gay and bi-equality than for trans-equality; 73% compared to 43%. These results suggest overall a higher level of

commitment in the legal sector than found in Stonewall's 2018 report¹⁸, 44% of respondents indicated that senior managers in their workplace demonstrate visible commitment to lesbian, gay and bi equality, compared to 28% showing a commitment to trans equality.

There were other differences in response to the current survey too, with a higher proportion of gay men (77%) reporting senior managers were supportive of lesbian, gay and bi-equality compared to 67% of gay/lesbian women and 65% of bisexual respondents.

Do senior managers demonstrate a visible commitment to...



For some, organisational support, while apparently visible, is viewed as non-existent or non-authentic or the commitment is seen to be quite superficial especially when employees helping with diversity and inclusion initiatives are not given billable credits for their work.

‘It is frustrating that whilst the firm outwardly encourages participation in inclusion initiatives, the reality is that there is very little appreciation of or credit given to people who engage in time consuming inclusion initiatives. There is no incentive for people to get involved which leads a lot of lawyers who are assessed largely by their chargeable hours, completely ambivalent to D&I activities and a feeling that it is all a waste of their time. There is a misguided sense that this still affects only a very small number of people and is therefore not important (particularly in relation to trans issues)’.

Woman, private practice, 36-45

‘It’s an additional tiresome strain and often asked to do extra CSR on top of full-time work and expected to just manage everything. Feels token and even LGB lawyers continue to ignore or forget pronouns despite a number of attempts to highlight this’.

Gay, non-binary, government, 25-35

‘When I announced my transition the firm on the surface outwardly were accepting but behind-the-scenes many of the partners refused to give me any work, made derogatory comments about me, effectively blocked any promotion or pay rises for me, refused to allow me to do any marketing,... But on the surface they were trying to make it look like they were yes, LGBT inclusive et cetera. It was pretty awful. Eventually I left’.

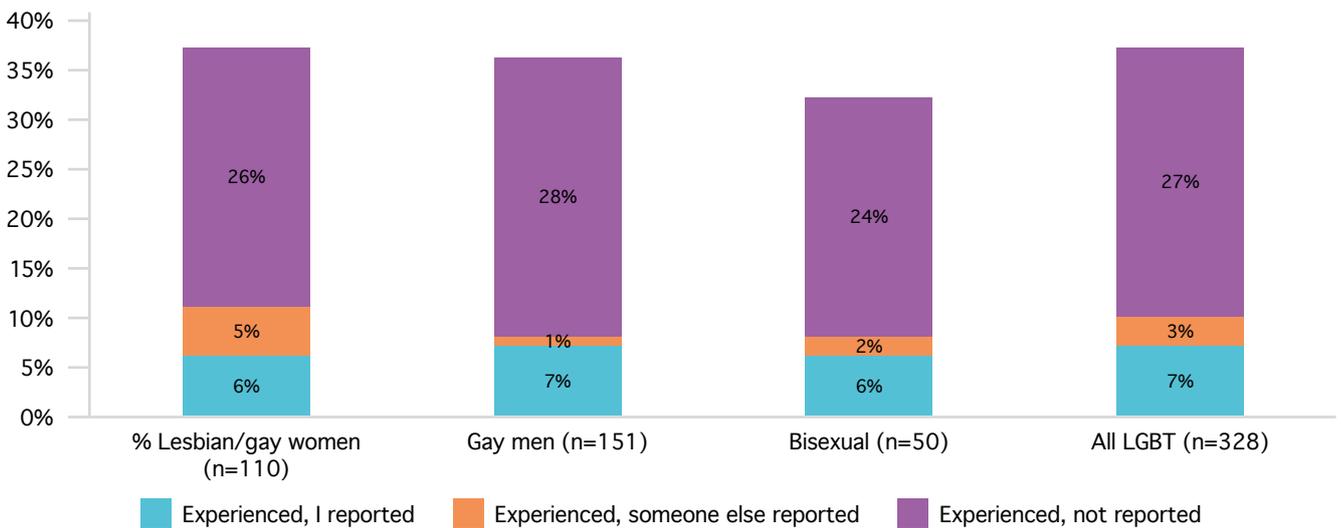
Trans-woman, private practice, 56-65

Experience of homophobia, biphobia or transphobia

Over a third (37%) of LGBT+ respondents said they had experienced homophobia, biphobia or transphobia in their workplace. A similar proportion of lesbian/gay women (37%), gay men (36%) and bisexual (32%) lawyers said they had experienced these negative behaviours. Three out of the five trans respondents answering this question had experienced transphobia in the workplace. Nine respondents identifying as 'other sexual orientation' had experienced homophobia, biphobia or transphobia, six said the incident been reported.

A lower proportion of LGBT+ respondents working in national or local government said they had experienced homophobia, biphobia or transphobia, 24%, compared to 35% of those working in private practice and 37% working in non-government in-house. Within private practice, a higher proportion of those working in small firms (1-4 partners) said they had experienced negative behaviours but were less likely to report it.

If you have experienced homophobia, biphobia or transphobia in your workplace, has this been reported?



Reporting negative behaviours

Generally, incidents of homophobia, biphobia or transphobia were more likely to be unreported than reported. Under one-fifth (18%) of those experiencing homophobia, biphobia or transphobia in their workplace had reported these experiences themselves, a further 8% indicated that someone else had reported the incident.

The most common reason given for not reporting these behaviours was feeling the behaviours were not serious enough to formally report (40%). This was followed by a lack of confidence that it would be resolved effectively (26%) and being too afraid to formally report it (14%). Open comments show that some may end up leaving an organisation as a result of incidents (even if unreported), whereas for others there is a feeling that they can perhaps brush it off or deal with it.

‘Sometimes it is difficult to report as it is difficult to identify a specific incident, or even a series of microaggressions; sometimes you just get a sense of not quite fitting in. At the large firm being a gay woman seemed to me to be part of not fitting the stereotype of what a predominantly straight, white, male partnership expected a woman to be. I think this resulted in a continual gentle erosion of confidence and wellbeing rather than there being an incident or thing to be able to report.

Gay woman, private practice 36-40

'I feel too nervous to report anything or to take it up with the relevant person as it would be clear who had reported it. I am also not clear on how the process would be resolved'.

Lesbian, private practice, 25-35

'While I have experienced homophobic language / banter in the workplace, I've never thought it malicious or intentional. It's often by people I like and get on with professionally, and who I know likewise respect me and wouldn't intentionally say or do anything if they knew it might cause offence. Reporting would only create barriers, damage relationships, and ultimately I would feel like the excluded party.'

Gay man, private practice, 25-35

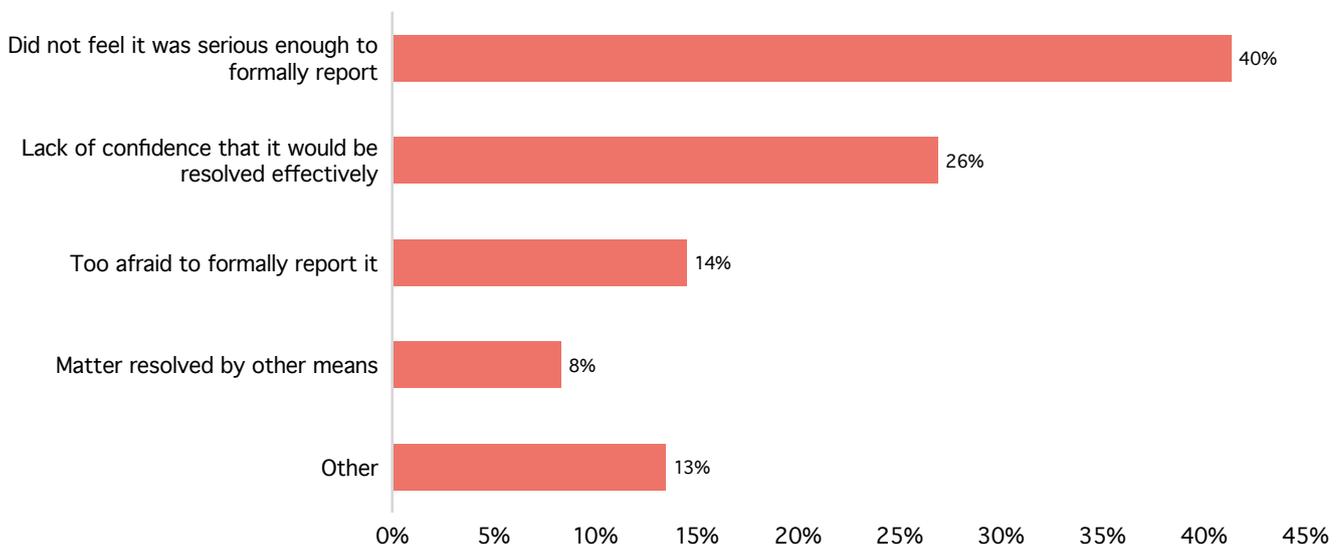
'My experience was at a previous firm. I didn't report it because the individual was a partner and the behaviour was subtle enough to be deniable. I didn't think I would be believed. I didn't find the individual threatening at all, but I think he was attempting to tease me by behaving in a manner that was subtly sexually suggestive. It fed into an impression of that firm that ultimately led to me leaving. Certainly not the only, or main, factor, but nonetheless an event that made me feel that I didn't belong at that firm'.

Gay man, private practice, 36-45

'Unless I thought that something was actually said or done maliciously / or was particularly serious, I would be more likely to pull the person up direct with the intention of gaining an apology from the person and recognition that the offending behaviour was wrong (before shaking hands and moving on as friends)'.

Gay man, private practice 25-35

If not formally reported, why is that? (n=101)



'Other' included – 'Don't want to talk about sexuality at work', those practising objectionable behaviour were in a position of seniority'.

The above is reflective of findings from the National LGBT+ survey, in which 77% of individuals said the most serious incident they had experienced had not been reported, with the main reason given being people not thinking it would be worth reporting, or that nothing would happen on or change¹⁹.

Where experiences were reported, this tended to be to HR or to a partner with HR responsibilities (62%), rather than to line managers (31%).

Views were mixed on the role and efficacy of involving HR.

'I would view going to HR/ taking any formal action to be the nuclear option from which there is likely no return - there would inevitably be an investigation, formal procedures followed, reputations damaged. There must be a question of "was the [behaviour] so serious as to justify this?"'

Gay man private practice, 25-35

'HR protects the company and does not support the person'.

Gay man, in-house, 36-45

'I would raise with HR, who I know are very sensitive to such issues and would be very supportive.'

Gay man, private practice, 25-35

Other open comments included examples of where organisations had swiftly dealt with poor behaviours, taking a zero-tolerance approach, and where organisations had not believed the complaint, diminished the complaint or dealt with it poorly.

ACAS advice

What an employer can do to prevent discrimination: Discrimination and the law - Acas [last checked 21.07.2021]

You can help prevent discrimination in the workplace by steps including:

- having an up-to-date equality policy
- providing regular anti-discrimination training to staff
- making it clear how staff can complain if discrimination happens
- regular one-to-one catch-ups between employees and their line managers, to help build positive working relationships

This can help:

- make sure your workplace treats employees fairly
- make it less likely you'll be held responsible for discrimination carried out by an employee

Opportunities to raise concerns

Some organisations have introduced different channels for raising concerns or seeking confidential support with issues like bullying or harassment. This recognises the barriers and anxiety many feel about going straight to HR, a partner or a manager and triggering formal investigations or procedures.

Around three-quarters of respondents (78%) indicated there were opportunities to raise concerns anonymously or seek confidential support if they experienced homophobic, biphobic or transphobic behaviours in their workplace. The majority of respondents indicated they would

¹⁹ Government Equalities Office, 2018, [online] Available at National LGBT Survey: Research report - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk), p155-158 [last checked 21.07.2021]

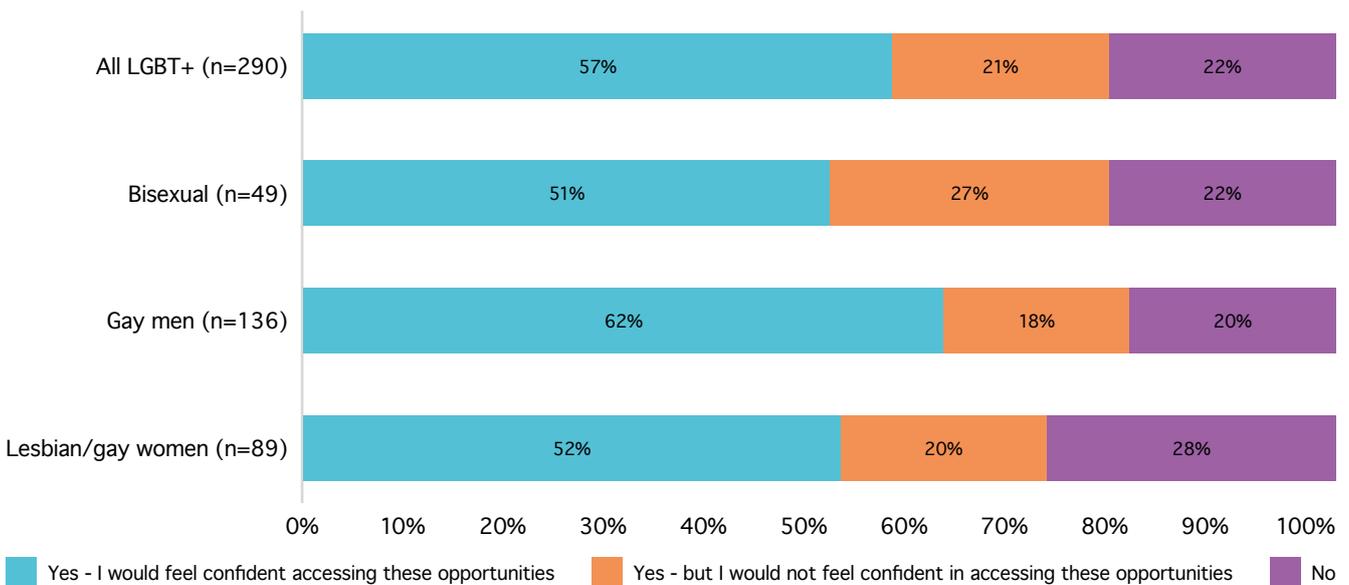
feel confident using such opportunities, however, some still lack confidence in these mechanisms for raising concerns or seeking help.

Overall, around one-fifth (21%) of respondents reported they would not feel confident in accessing these opportunities. A smaller proportion of lesbian/gay women (52%) and bisexual (51%) lawyers reported feeling confident accessing them compared to 62% of gay men. All of the six trans people answering the question had access to opportunities to raise concerns anonymously, or to seek confidential support, and four felt comfortable in accessing them if required. The majority (21 out of 23) of respondents with ‘other’ sexual orientation, reported having access

to opportunities to raise concerns anonymously and only four indicated they would not feel confident in accessing them.

A higher proportion of those out at work with colleagues said they felt confident in raising concerns anonymously (60%) compared to those who were not out (43%). Worryingly, younger respondents who are likely to be less senior in the workplace and may therefore find it harder to speak up to senior staff, were less likely to report having opportunities to raise concerns anonymously or to seek confidential support, or were less likely to feel confident in making use of them compared to older cohorts.

Are there opportunities to raise concerns anonymously or seek confidential support about homophobic, biphobic or transphobic behaviour in your workplace? By sexual orientation (n=290)



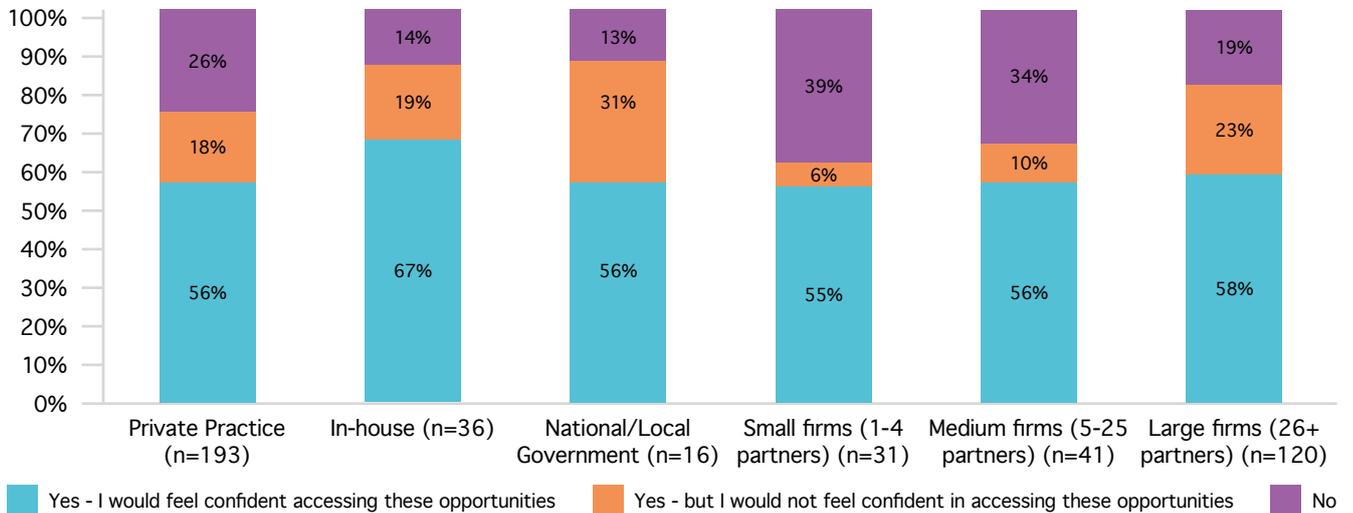
There were also differences between sector, and within private practice, by size of firm. A higher proportion of those working in-house reported feeling confident in accessing such opportunities, 67% compared to 56% of those working in private practice and 56% of government respondents. Around a quarter (26%) of those working in private practice reported there being no opportunities to raise concerns anonymously or seek confidential support. Even where opportunities did exist, respondents did not always feel confident in making use of them. Just under one-third of government respondents reported having opportunities, but not feeling confident to use them (31%), compared to about one-fifth of

respondents in private practice (18%) or working in-house (19%). Within private practice almost a quarter (23%) of respondents working in the larger firms were not confident in making use of opportunities to raise concerns.

‘We have a confidential Speak Up hotline in our organisation and pastoral care from the LGBT+ network’.

Gay man, In-house, Head of Legal

Are there opportunities to raise concerns anonymously or seek confidential support about homophobic, biphobic or transphobic behaviour in your workplace? By sector and size of firm



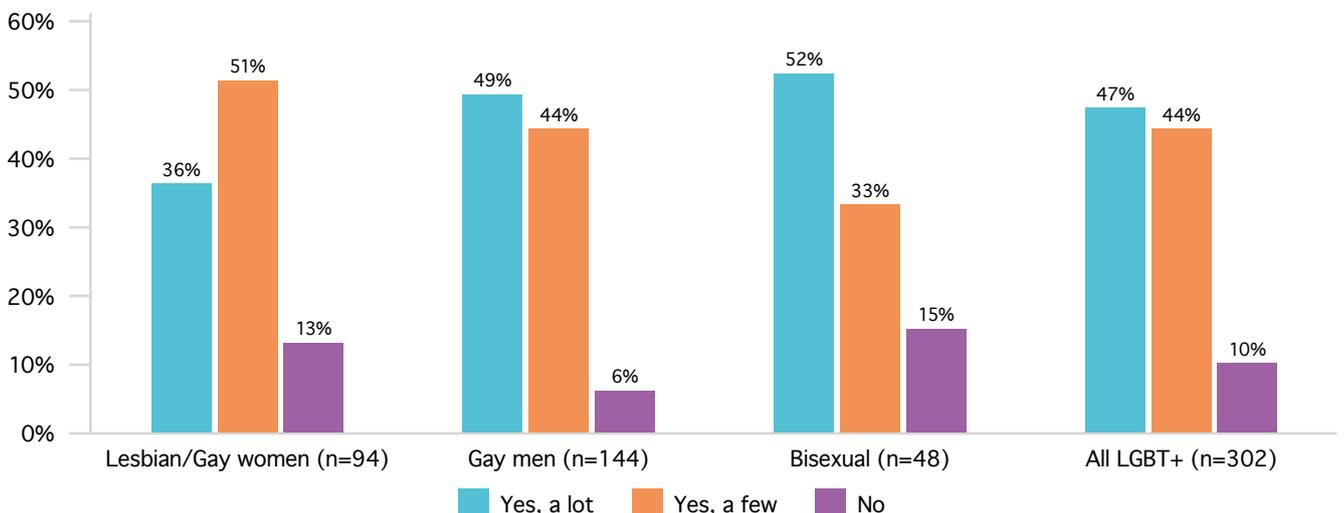
Allies

The majority (91%) of LGBT+ respondents reported having colleagues who are not LGBT+ themselves, but who are supportive and active allies for LGBT+ equality in the workplace: 47% said they had a lot of allies, 44% a few. All of the trans respondents and 22 out of the 23 lawyers selecting ‘other’ as their sexual orientation reported having either ‘a lot’ or ‘a few’ allies.

One in ten LGBT+ lawyers said they did not have supportive and active allies at work. This was similar across sectors; 10% of LGBT+ lawyers in private practice, 8% in-house, and 6% in government.

A higher proportion of LGBT+ lawyers who were out at work said they had allies (93%) compared to those who were not out to colleagues (70%).

Do you have colleagues who are not LGBT+ themselves but are supportive and active allies for LGBT+ equality in your workplace? By sexual orientation



Asked what the most important thing that their LGBT+ allies could do in the workplace, the top three were: challenge homophobic, biphobic and transphobic behaviour (28%), educate themselves on LGBT+ issues (19%), and visibly demonstrate support for LGBT+ equality (17%). Open comments included:

‘Show respect for everyone and treat everyone equally – it’s as simple as that’.

Gay Man, private practice, 36-45

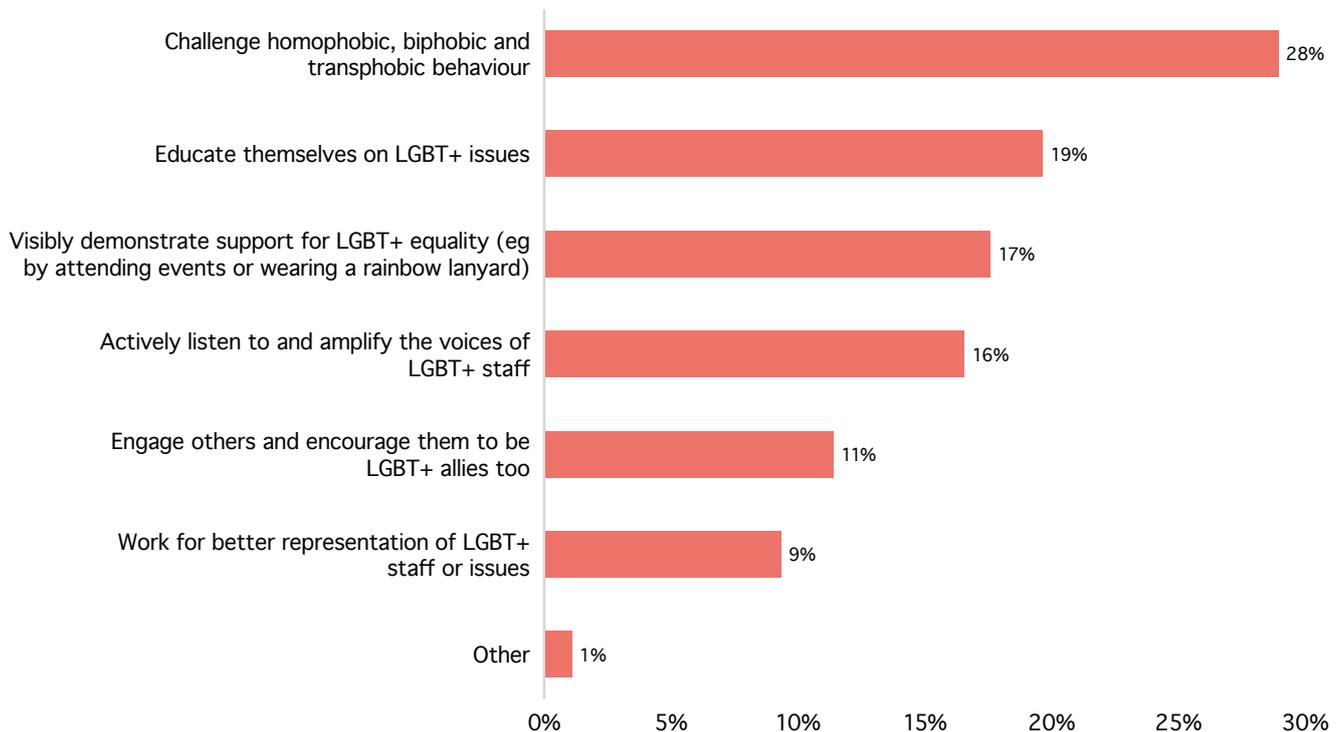
‘Not making my sexuality the centrefold of a conversation, i.e. asking how my boyfriend is just as they would with heterosexual colleagues’.

Gay Man, private practice, 16-24

‘Normalise it – don’t respond like a stunned mullet when I say ‘she/her’ when I speak of my partner’.

Lesbian, private practice, 25-35

What are the three most important things that LGBT+ allies can do in the workplace? (n=857 responses)



Respondents who viewed themselves as LGBT+ allies also saw their role as being to challenge homophobic, biphobic and transphobic behaviour (29%) and to educate themselves on LGBT+ issues (25%). However, they also prioritised the importance of actively listening to and amplifying the voices of LGBT+ staff (23%). Other ways of being an ally mentioned included:

‘Raising awareness of key events, inviting speakers to increase knowledge about LGBT+ issues’.

Heterosexual woman, private practice, 25-35

‘Assisting in initiatives and events internally to project LGBT+ voices and issues, widening the understanding’.

Heterosexual woman, private practice, trainee solicitor 25-35)

‘Good level of interaction to hear personal stories to better understand some of the challenges faced by our LGBTQ+ colleagues and contacts’.

Heterosexual woman, private practice, 46-55

‘Being supportive and doing all you can to promote a fair workplace where people are treated fairly and with respect and feel able to be themselves’.

Heterosexual man, private practice, equity partner, 46-55

‘I am impressed with our company’s approach to LGBT+ staff members and the inclusive and respectful approach adopted. There is a lively and active LGBT+ staff support group and their events are open to all regardless of orientation. Articles in the staff newspaper also contribute to our understanding of issues that can be encountered for example, highlighting the difficulties faced by a transgender staff member being mistaken on the phone for a man not a woman as they are transitioning’.

Heterosexual women, in-house, 56-65

Around a quarter (24%) of allies said they had witnessed homophobia, biphobia or transphobia in the workplace. Just over one-fifth of those witnessing incidents said the incident had been reported, typically to HR.

‘I think reporting instances of discrimination and outspoken prejudice is extremely important, however this is contingent on firms having a functioning grievance (or other) system that allows for this, including assurance that these issues will be taken seriously.’

Heterosexual woman, private practice, paralegal, 25-35)

‘I have only had positive experiences. My LGBT colleagues are a joy to be around and a positive asset in the workplace.’

Heterosexual women, private practice, equity partner, 46-55

When asked to comment on their experiences of being an LGBT+ ally in the workplace, the majority of comments were overwhelmingly positive. Respondents who considered themselves allies of LGBT+ staff commented on their experiences of inclusive workplaces and being actively involved in networks and events.

‘New friendship. A better understanding of LGBT issues. A better understanding of LGBT history & the varying rights for LGBT community across the EU’.

Heterosexual woman, private practice 25-35

Negative responses from those who considered themselves allies included cynicism from other employees and complaints not being adequately dealt with.

‘Negative experiences - there are some who think our efforts are ‘virtue signaling’ and that we positively discriminate unfairly’.

Heterosexual woman, private practice, 36-45

‘Generally, the firm is very positive regarding LGBTQ+ matters and we have a specific committee for LGBTQ+ and allies. However, I worry that when issues of discrimination or bullying come up at the firm it is not dealt with correctly. We had one instance where a partner was found to have been discriminatory to an LGBTQ+ member of staff and my view was that (A) the firm did not address staff directly on the point as a whole and (b) the partner continued to work at the firm.’

Heterosexual woman, private practice, 25-35

Networks

Two-thirds of respondents were members of at least one LGBT+ workplace or professional network. Networks can provide a welcoming, safe and supportive space for those who have been marginalised or who are in a minority. They provide an opportunity to discuss issues, share views and concerns. They can also help create a more inclusive culture, by raising the profile of LGBT+ staff and equality and inclusion within organisations.

Around one-third of respondents said they were not connected to a network, with a similar proportion of gay men and lesbian/gay women not being members of a network.

Respondents were asked whether there were any particular reasons for not being a member of these groups. Lack of awareness was the most commonly cited response. Others had made a choice not to join the groups, commenting that their sexual orientation was not their identity, or relevant, or the support not needed.

A few groups were critiqued, being seen as too London centric, being focused on the magic/silver circle, being too militant, or having a focus socialising rather than ‘advocating change, having talks or discussing policy issues’.

Some respondents mentioned the need to get better at acknowledging intersecting identities within network groups.

‘There is insufficient support for women within the LGBT+ spaces and little understanding of how sexism, racism and disablism affects LGBT people.’

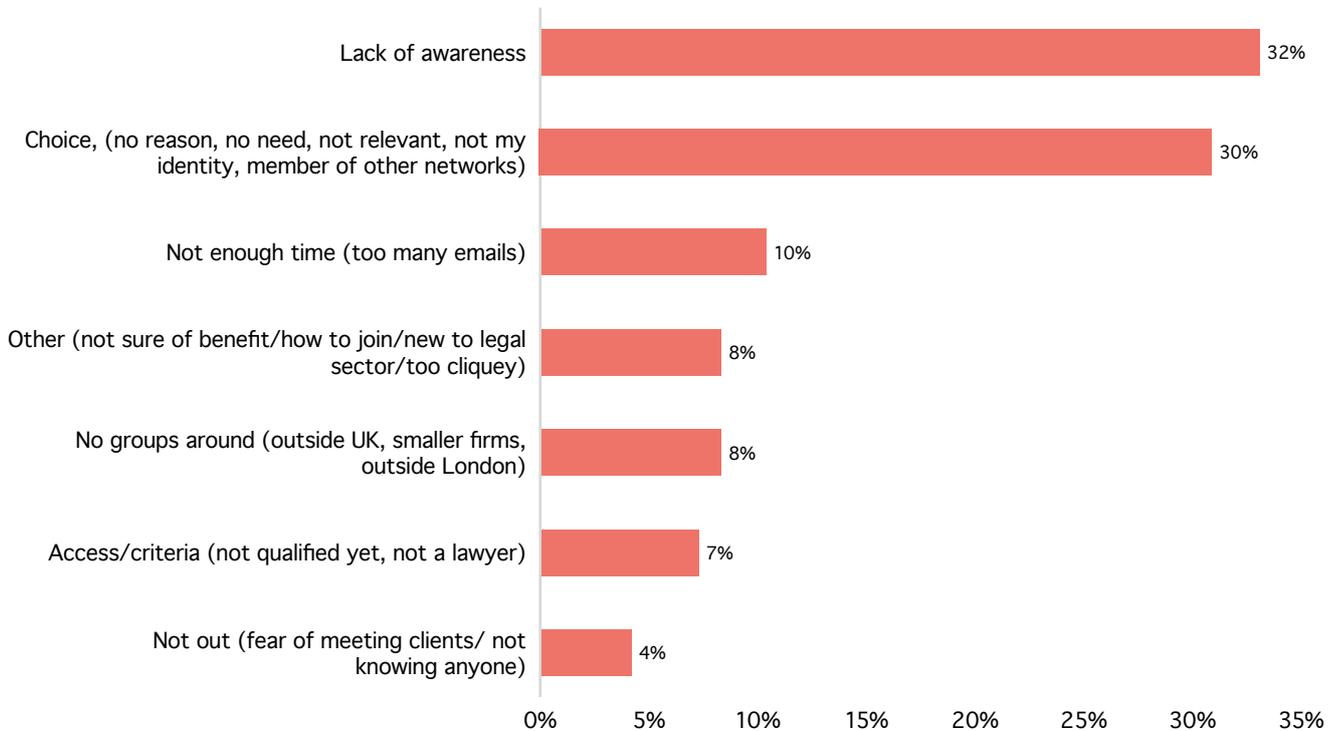
Heterosexual, private practice, 25-35

However, there was also recognition of the need to not simply merge all minority groups together.

‘We have an ‘Inclusion Forum’, but it is essentially a group of everyone who is non-white and/or non-straight lumped together to meet once every couple of months... It reduced being BAME or LGBTQ+ to ‘different therefore the same’.

Heterosexual, woman, charity sector, 36-45

Are there any particular reasons why you are not a member of any of these groups? (% of number of comments, n=192)



Purpose and benefits of networks²⁰

The University of York's report, 'Understanding LGBT+ employee networks and how to support them', based on a three-year study of staff LGBT+ networks in the NHS, makes some recommendations for networks and organisations.

Networks

1. Be clear on your purpose
2. Make space for sharing personal stories
3. Get to know your members
4. Seek support when you need it
5. Work with other staff networks and external partners.

Organisations

1. Help raise the network profile
2. Support and consult networks
3. Formalise time allocation and time release to support the growth and sustainability of networks

²⁰ Einarsdóttir A, Mumford K, Lockyer B, Sayli M, Birks Y, NHS Confederation, 2020, [Online] Available at [Understanding LGBT+ employee networks and how to support them | NHS Confederation](#) [Last checked 21.07.2021]

Conclusion

The survey findings present a relatively positive picture of LGBT+ equality in the legal community. The majority of LGBT+ respondents said they were able to be themselves at work, and positive experiences tended to outnumber the negative.

Signals that workplace and professional culture has been evolving came through in some of the open comments, from older respondents reflecting on how their experiences had been shaped by the preceding generation.

'I identify as straight, but grew up in a religious household where anything other than heterosexual behaviour within the confines of marriage was not mentioned, let alone discussed. If it was, it was branded sinful and disgusting. I therefore looked to school to educate me, but due to s28, I had the same blinkered education. My generation are now paying that price - moving from an area where non-heterosexuals were 'wrong', as reinforced in home, school and the workplace, set against a backdrop of stigma and AIDS from the early 80s (however misrepresented), to now, where our understanding of gender and sexuality is evolving all the time. It's important that the legal industry is an ally as much as individuals from within that industry and beyond, in part to right the wrongs of previous legislature'.

Heterosexual woman, private practice, 36-45)

'It was different reporting issues back in the 1980s and 1990s than it is today. Today I wouldn't have any concerns in reporting inappropriate behaviours'.

Gay man, private practice, equity partner, 55-65

Some respondents went as far as to query the tone of the survey, suggesting questions were framed in a negative way. Talking to the positive, was viewed as potentially being more helpful in progressing conversations and shaping workplaces which people will want to work in.

'I don't want to make life harder for anyone experiencing this awful problem, by suggesting it doesn't exist anymore; but, having said that, I DO believe that life would be much-improved for many LGBT people less fortunate or confident than me, if we gave more press to how positive and safe today's environment in this sector in the UK, is for them, and less to inviting discussion of the times when it isn't'.

Gay man, private practice, 45-55)

Despite some overall positive findings, the survey also highlighted ongoing negative experiences and disparities within the LGBT+ legal community. For example, over a third reported experiencing microaggressions or homophobic, biphobic or transphobic behaviour in the workplace. Bisexual respondents and lesbian/gay women were more likely to not feel comfortable being their authentic selves at work or being out in the workplace. There was less reported visible senior level support for trans equality (43%) compared to lesbian, gay and bi equality (73%). A higher proportion of those working in small firms than large firms in private practice were more likely to experience negative behaviour and be less confident in reporting it. The survey also highlighted ongoing differences in the proportion who are out to clients (38%) compared to colleagues (82%), although the numbers out to both has increased since a similar survey in 2009. Finally, Covid-19 has presented new challenges with over a quarter (27%) of LGBT+ legal professionals reporting a sense of isolation and lack of community during the pandemic.

Examples were given that highlight how as more LGBT+ lawyers are out and open at work they are contributing to change and a reminder that those organisations where people are most isolated or anxious about raising concerns are likely to be those where LGBT+ lawyers are still struggling to be themselves.

'I have commented on interview questions [for recruitment] - we have a 'putting at ease' question, which is often something like what are your hobbies. My hobby outs me, so I said that this is not a putting at ease question. It means the first thing I have to do in an interview is decide if I feel safe to come out to these people who can determine my future or if I should stay quiet and miss a chance to answer a question openly. That question is no longer used in interviews my manager conducts'.

Lesbian, National/Local Government, 56-65

'The existence of a workplace where someone feels confident in reporting an issue has already gone a long way to solve the problem. That's not in any way to lessen the importance of those incidents being dealt with, but the individuals likely to be suffering the most are those at firms where that does not yet feel possible'.

Gay woman, private practice, equity partner, 46-55

Finally, it was striking that the lack of visible role models was mentioned as a top issue across the board, mentioned by around half of respondents (52%). This shows that despite the positive steps that have been made in terms of LGBT+ equality and inclusion in the legal sector, there is still more that can be done to recognise diversity and create a sense of belonging.

Further reading

CIPD, Research report, February 2021, Inclusion at work, Perspectives on LGBT+ working lives [online] Available at [Inclusion at work: perspectives on LGBT+ working lives | CIPD](#) [last checked 21.07.2021]

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OECD Library, Over the Rainbow? The Road to LGBTI Inclusion [Online – paywall] Available at https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/social-issues-migration-health/over-the-rainbow-the-road-to-lgbti-inclusion_8d2fd1a8-en [last checked 21.07.2021]

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Appendix 1: Profile of respondents

- 2087 views
 - 678 total responses
 - 484 'completed'
- 382 identified as LGBT+

Sector

	LGBT+ (n=350)	Heterosexual allies (n=212)	All (n=632)
Private practice	72%	76%	72%
In-house	14%	11%	12.7%
National/local government	6%	3%	5.1%
Not currently working	3%	3%	4.3%
Other	5%	7%	6.2%

Other included, Universities, charities, law centres, Housing associations, judiciary, legal support services, NGO

Sector

	LGBT+ (n=256)	Heterosexual allies (n=167)	All (n=456)
Sole Practitioner	1%	1%	1%
Equity Partner	16%	14%	16%
Salaried Partner	6%	8%	7%
Senior Partner	1%	2%	1%
Solicitor	44%	45%	44%
Trainee solicitor	12%	6%	9%
Paralegal	5%	3%	5%
CILEX	3%	1%	2%
Apprentice	0%	0%	0%
Student	0%	0%	0%
Other	12%	20%	15%

Other included, support staff, support staff supervisor, Business teams director, research analyst, consultant, practice manager, future trainee, costs draftsman, legal secretary, IT professional, HR professional, Barrister, PR manager, D&I leader, Head of knowledge management

Size of firm (partner count)

	LGBT+ (n=257)	Heterosexual allies (n=168)	All (n=449)
1	5%	4%	4%
2-4	10%	5%	8%
5-10	9%	13%	11%
11-25	13%	10%	12%
26-80	19%	29%	23%
81+	40%	39%	39%
N/A	3%	1%	2%

In-house position

	LGBT+ (n=91)	Heterosexual allies (n=44)	All (n=148)
Trainee	7%	2%	5%
Legal Advisor	24%	16%	21%
Senior Legal Advisor	29%	27%	28%
Head of Legal	7%	5%	6%
Director of Legal / General Counsel	9%	11%	9%
Prefer not to say	1%	7%	5%
Paralegal	2%	0%	1%
Apprentice	0%	0%	0%
CILEX	0%	0%	0%
Student	2%	0%	2%
Other (Please specify)	20%	32%	23%

Other included, tutor, programme director, data analyst, HR officer, Senior Crown Prosecutor, Barrister's Clerk, Compliance Officer, Business owner, Consultant, intern, secretary, recruitment, customer services consultant, CEO. Legal innovation officer

Size of legal team

	LGBT+ (n=91)	Heterosexual allies (n=44)	All (n=142)
1	4%	7%	5%
2-4	12%	11%	12%
5-10	14%	11%	13%
11-25	8%	14%	10%
26-80	16%	11%	15%
81+	37%	36%	35%
N/A	8%	9%	10%

Location

	LGBT+ (n=350)	Heterosexual allies (n=210)	All (n=585)
City of London	34%	36%	34%
Rest of London	17%	12%	15%
South East	10%	12%	11%
South West	8%	8%	8%
West Midlands	7%	7%	7%
East Midlands	3%	1%	2%
Yorkshire and Humberside	5%	4%	4%
North West	8%	7%	8%
North East	2%	2%	2%
Wales	2%	6%	4%
Outside England and Wales	5%	5%	5%

Current working arrangement

	LGBT+ (n=342)	Heterosexual allies (n=204)	All (n=568)
Working remotely	75%	78.92%	76%
Working in the office	7%	4%	6%
A combination of home and office working	16%	16%	16%
I'm furloughed at the moment	1%	0%	1%
Other	2%	1%	2%

Other included, studying, retired, unemployed, no longer working, department working from home, but everyone else is in the office

Age

	LGBT+ (n=352)	Heterosexual allies (n=212)	All (n=586)
16-24	5%	1%	3%
25-35	44%	29%	37%
36-45	22%	31%	25%
46-55	20%	25%	22%
56-65	8%	12%	11%
65+	1%	2%	1%
Prefer not to say	1%	0%	1%

Gender

	LGBT+ (n=352)	Allies (n=211)	All (n=585)
Woman	42%	79%	56%
Man	51%	15%	37%
Trans-woman	2%	0%	1%
Trans-man	1%	0%	1%
Non-binary	2%	0%	1%
Gender fluid	1%	0%	1%
Prefer not to say	0%	1%	2%
Other	1%	5%	2%

Ethnicity

	LGBT+ (n=353)	Allies (n=214)	All (n=585)
Black, African / Caribbean / Black British	2%	3%	2%
Asian or Asian British	3%	8%	5%
Mixed / Multiple Ethnic Groups	4%	5%	5%
White	89%	79%	84%
Other ethnic group	1%	3%	2%
Prefer not to say	1%	1%	2%

Have a disability

	LGBT+ (n=353)	Allies (n=214)	All (n=578)
Yes	10%	11%	10%
No	88%	86%	86%
Prefer not to say	2%	2%	4%

Are your day-to-day activities limited by this disability?

	LGBT+ (n=36)	Allies (n=25)	All (n=62)
Yes - limited a lot	6%	8%	6%
Yes - limited a little	58%	68%	61%
No	33%	24%	29%
Prefer not to say	3%	0%	3%

Sexuality (multicode)

	LGBT+ (n=386)	Allies (n=216)	All (n=610)
Lesbian	20%	0%	12%
Gay woman	11%	0%	7%
Gay man	44%	0%	28%
Bisexual	16%	1%	10%
Heterosexual/straight	1%	98%	35%
Pansexual	4%	0%	2%
Prefer not to say	0%	0%	3%
Other	5%	0%	3%

Other included, queer, polysexual, not sure, asexual. Figures differ slightly from the tables above, which includes 'prefer not to say' in the LGBT+ group, which reflected the structure of the survey

Appendix 2:

Timeline of LGBTQ community

Timeline of LGBTQ communities in the UK (Source: [British Library/ LGBTQ+ pride month — Chelsea and Westminster Hospital NHS Foundation Trust \(chelwest.nhs.uk\)](#))

1533: Buggery Act

This **Act of Parliament**, passed during the reign of King Henry VIII, moved the issue of sodomy from the ecclesiastical courts to the state. The Act was renewed three times in 1536, 1539 and 1548. Over the next 20 years various monarchs would change the impact of the legislation, but all kept it in place.

The Act did not explicitly target homosexual acts between men as it also applied to sodomy between men and women and a person with an animal. However, it was male homosexual convictions that were by far the most common and publicised. Convictions under the Buggery Act were punishable by death.

1835: Last two men executed for homosexual acts in the UK

The last two men to be executed for homosexual acts were James Pratt and John Smith on 27 November 1835.

1921: Attempt to make sexual acts between women illegal

In 1921 three MPs attempted to add a clause to a new Criminal Law Amendment Bill (designed to protect children under the age of 16 from indecent assault): 'Any act of gross indecency between female persons shall be a misdemeanour and punishable in the same manner as any such act committed by male persons under section 11 of the Criminal Law Amendment Act 1885'.

In the debate that followed, despite agreement from speakers that lesbianism was distasteful and an attack on the 'fundamental institutions of society', both Houses rejected the clause, and ultimately the entire bill. There was concern that legislation would only draw attention to the offence and encourage women to explore their sexuality.

1946: Autobiography of the first transgender man

In 1946 Michael Dillon published *Self: A Study in Endocrinology*. The book, which in contemporary terms could be described as an autobiography of the first transgender man to undergo phalloplasty surgery, recounted Dillon's journey from Laura to Michael, and the surgeries undertaken by pioneering surgeon Sir Harold Gillies.

1957: The Wolfenden Report

The Wolfenden Committee released its report, recommending the decriminalisation of gay sex between consenting adults over 21, except in the armed forces. It stated: 'homosexual behaviour between consenting adults in private should no longer be a criminal offence.'

Despite support from the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Government rejected the report and it wasn't until 10 years later that the Sexual Offences Act 1967 decriminalised homosexual acts in private between two men, both over the age of 21.

1967: Sexual Offences Act

The Sexual Offences Act decriminalised homosexual acts between two men, both over the age of 21, in private. The age of consent was set at 21 (compared to 16 for heterosexuals and lesbians). Homosexual acts taking place in the presence of more than two people however, were deemed not 'in private' to prevent premises being used for communal activities. The Act only applied to England and Wales.

1972: First gay newspaper and first UK Gay Pride march

Gay News, Britain's first gay newspaper was a fortnightly publication founded by four members of the Gay Liberation Front and members of the Campaign for Homosexual Equality. It reported on discrimination and political and social advances but also campaigned for law reform. It ceased publication on 15 April 1983.

The London Gay Liberation Front organised the first UK Gay Pride march in London. The march ran from Trafalgar Square to Hyde Park with around 1,000 people marching through the capital.

1981: First UK case of AIDS

The first UK case of AIDS was recorded when a 49-year-old man was admitted to Brompton Hospital, London suffering from Pneumocystis Carinii Pneumonia. He died 10 days later.

1988: Section 28 of the Local Government Act

When a copy of *Jenny Lives with Eric and Martin* by Susanne Bosche was found in a local authority library in 1983, it caused an outcry. The Daily Mail lambasted local councils for promoting homosexuality to children at the tax payer's expense.

The argument escalated to the highest levels of government and resulted in the now-infamous Section 28 of the Local Government Act. Expressly denying local authorities the ability to support its LGBT constituents, funding was withdrawn from arts projects, while educational and resource materials which 'promoted an alternative gay family' were censored.

Section 28 remained enforceable until 2003. In 2009 British Prime Minister David Cameron issued a public apology for it.

1989: Stonewall UK

In response to Section 28 legislation, actor Sir Ian McKellen came out on BBC Radio 3 during a debate on the issues raised by the Bill. In 1989 he co-founded Stonewall, a group renowned for its campaigning and lobbying for LGBTQ rights.

1998: The Bolton Seven

This was a group of seven gay and bisexual men who were convicted of gross indecency under the Sexual Offences Act 1956 and age of consent offences under the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994.

Despite the Sexual Offences Act 1967 decriminalising gay sex, they were convicted under section 13 of the 1956 Act because more than two men had sex together, which remained illegal.

None of the men received custodial sentences. A high-profile campaign led by gay human rights group OutRage! presented over 400 letters to the court in support of the men, including those from MPs, Bishops and human rights groups. They urged the judge not to impose a custodial sentence, with Amnesty International pledging to declare the men prisoners of conscience should they be imprisoned.

2002: Equal rights for adoption to same-sex couples

The Adoption and Children Act 2002 allowed gay and lesbian single people, as well as same-sex couples, to adopt a child in the UK. Before this, neither same-sex couples nor unmarried heterosexual couples could adopt or foster children.

2005: Civil Partnership Act and Gender Recognition Act

The Civil Partnership Act was introduced by the Labour Government and gave same-sex couples the same rights and responsibilities as married heterosexual couples in England, Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales. It officially came into effect on 5 December 2005.

The Gender Recognition Act came into effect on 4 April 2005, giving trans people full legal recognition in their appropriate gender. It allowed trans people to acquire a new birth certificate, although gender options were still limited to 'male' or 'female'.

2010: Equality Act

The Equality Act 2010 legislates for equal treatment in access to employment as well as private and public services, regardless of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.

The Act also has several restrictions that cause concern, however. It allows religious and faith institutions in England, Scotland and Wales permission to refuse a same-sex marriage ceremony if it contravenes their beliefs.

With limited exceptions, the Equality Act 2010 does not apply in Northern Ireland.

2013: Marriage (Same-Sex Couples) Act

Although same-sex couples could enter into Civil Partnerships, they were not permitted to marry. This Act gave same-sex couples the opportunity to get married just like any other couple. Same-sex couples already in a Civil Partnership could also now convert this to a marriage.

It came into effect in 2014. The first same-sex marriages took place in England and Wales on 29 March 2014.

2018 : Government consultation on the reform of the Gender Recognition Act 2005

In 2018 the UK Government consulted on the reform of the Gender Recognition Act 2005 which focused on the process for achieving legal gender recognition. The report of the consultation responses can be found here https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/919890/Analysis_of_responses_Gender_Recognition_Act.pdf, the Government's response here. <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-responds-to-gender-recognition-act-consultation>. The Minister for Women and Equalities, Elizabeth Truss, acknowledged the need to improve the process and experience that transgender people have when applying for a GRC. The Government does not intend to change the criteria for the GRA, the Minister stated 'it is the Government's view that the balance struck in [the GRA] is correct, in that there are proper checks and balances in the system and also support for people who want to change their legal sex.

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