

Stonewall

ABOUT THIS RESOURCE

This resource is produced by Stonewall, a UK-based charity that stands for the freedom, equity and potential of all lesbian, gay, bi, trans, queer, questioning and ace (LGBTQ+) people.

At Stonewall, we imagine a world where LGBTQ+ people everywhere can live our lives to the full.

Founded in London in 1989, we now work in each nation of the UK and have established partnerships across the globe. Over the last three decades, we have created transformative change in the lives of LGBTQ+ people in the UK, helping win equal rights around marriage, having children and inclusive education.

Our campaigns drive positive change for our communities, and our sustained change and empowerment programmes ensure that LGBTQ+ people can thrive throughout our lives. We make sure that the world hears and learns from our communities, and our work is grounded in evidence and expertise.

To find out more about our work, visit us at www.stonewall.org.uk

Registered Charity No 1101255 (England and Wales) and SC039681 (Scotland)

Stonewall is proud to provide information, support and guidance on LGBTQ+ inclusion; working towards a world where we're all free to be. This does not constitute legal advice, and is not intended to be a substitute for legal counsel on any subject matter.



TAKE PRIDE REPORT

**Public sentiment towards
lesbian, gay, bi and trans
people in the UK - June 2022**

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Evidence briefing

Introduction

This year marks the 50th anniversary of the first pride march in the UK. It is a time for celebrating the progress we've made towards a world where LGBTQ+ can be ourselves and live our lives to the full. It is also a time to take a hard look at the gap between the world we imagine for our communities and the world we're in, where parts of our community are being left behind.

Over the last 50 years, every battle for the rights of LGBTQ+ communities has been fought in the court of public opinion as well as in the corridors of power. From the fight to decriminalise men who have sex with men, to the fight for trans people's rights to be protected and respected, our ability to survive and thrive has always been constrained by the views of people who aren't part of our communities.

So what does the general public think about LGBT people in the UK today? Perhaps more importantly, what do they feel?

In December 2021, Stonewall worked with Opinium to ask more than 2000 adults from across the UK how they feel about lesbian, gay, bi and trans people.

Our findings paint a picture of growing acceptance: a society beginning to truly take pride in LGBTQ+ people as neighbours, colleagues, friends and family. But the findings also show a small minority of people who are still holding on tight to the feelings of disgust and fear that drive homophobia, biphobia and transphobia. Feelings that were all too common when we first marched for our rights though London fifty years ago.

Methodology

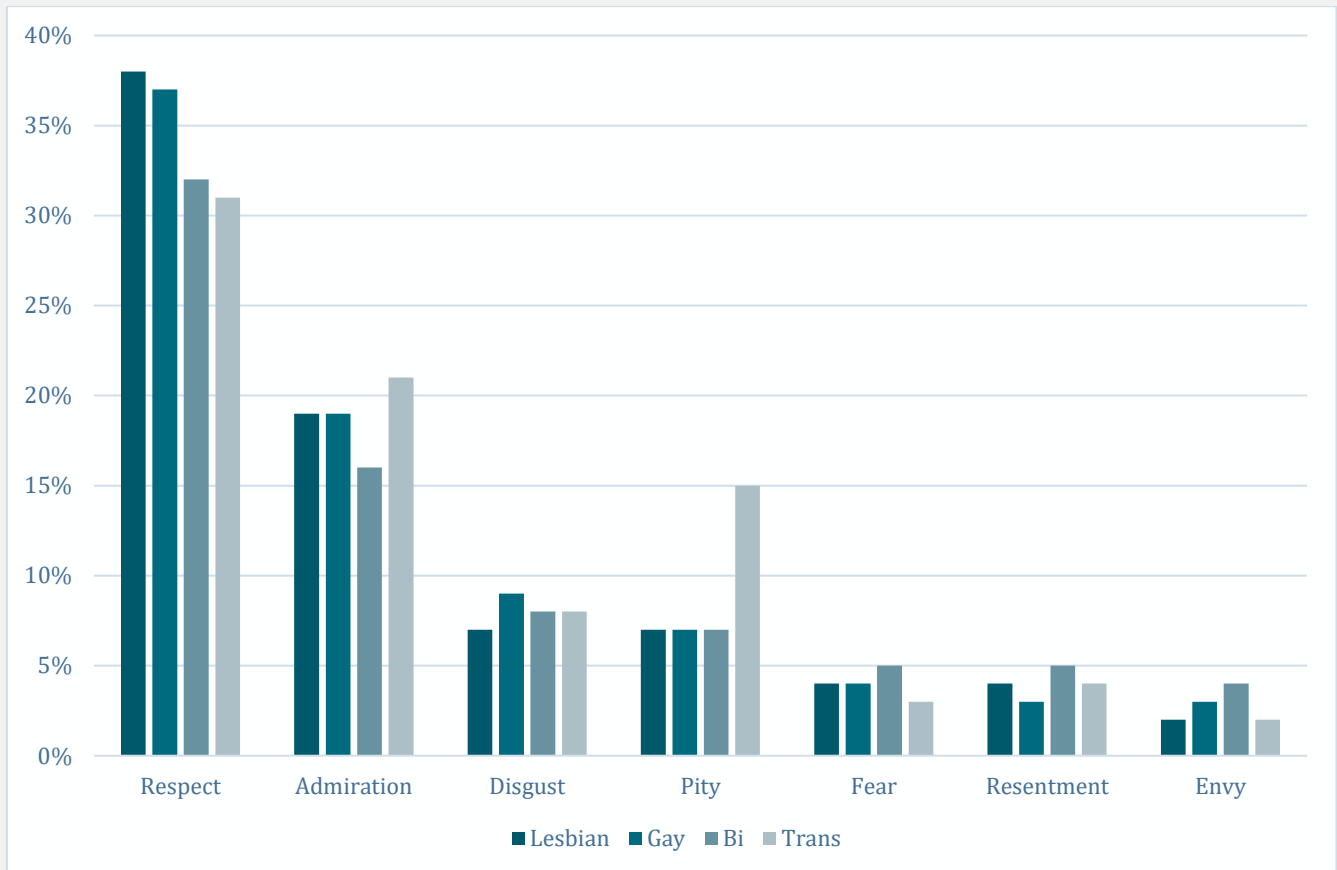
In December 2021, Stonewall asked just over 2000 adults living across the UK how they feel about lesbian, gay, bi and trans people. We asked separately about each of our communities and offered respondents the opportunity to tick as many options as they wanted to. The options we gave them were: respect, admiration, pity, disgust, resentment, fear and envy, as well as 'can't choose' and 'prefer not to say'.

These questions are based on a question about public sentiment towards trans people that was tested and used in the British Social Attitudes Survey of 2019, as part of a piece of work commissioned by the Equalities and Human Rights Commission. Questions asked are set out in full in Appendix 1, and data tables in Appendix 2.

Overall findings

The public is much more likely to have positive feelings towards LGBT people than they are to have negative feelings. Women and younger people are more likely to have positive feelings towards LGBT people than men and older people, a pattern that is common across a wide range of social attitudes.

Perhaps most interestingly, given the high level of focus on trans people in the UK press, and the very negative tone of much of that coverage, the way the public feels is consistent across lesbian, gay, bi and trans people.



Feelings of respect

	Lesbian	Gay	Bi	Trans
Respect	38%	37%	32%	31%

The most common feeling the public have towards LGBT people is one of respect, with more than a third of respondents choosing this option. People were more likely to say they felt respect for lesbian and gay people (38% and 37%) than for bi and trans people (32% and 31%).

Feelings of admiration

	Lesbian	Gay	Bi	Trans
Admiration	19%	19%	16%	21%

A significant proportion of the public also feel admiration for our communities. Like respect, admiration is an actively positive feeling, so it is striking how common this answer is. The pattern here is different, with the public significantly less likely to say they admire bi people than lesbian, gay or trans people. It's worth considering whether this might relate to biphobia in society given that biphobic stereotypes include the idea that bi people are untrustworthy or unreliable. Feelings of admiration are highest for trans people, perhaps reflecting public acknowledgement of the challenges faced by trans people living in the UK today.

Feelings of pity

	Lesbian	Gay	Bi	Trans
Pity	7%	7%	7%	15%

Overall, the public is far less likely to pity members of our community than it is to respect or admire them. However, there is a clear and distinct pattern in responses, with the public twice as likely to say they feel pity when they think about trans people as compared to lesbian, gay or bi people.

It's worth noting that pity is ambiguous. We might pity someone because of our beliefs about their identity, or we might pity them because of our beliefs about what it is like to go through life as a person with that identity. Put simply, the comparatively high levels of pity for trans people might be driven by transphobia and/or by concern about the impact of transphobia on trans people.

Feelings of disgust

	Lesbian	Gay	Bi	Trans
Disgust	7%	9%	8%	8%

Thankfully, feelings of disgust are not commonplace among members of the public. However, 50 years after the first pride march on the streets of London, a small but significant cohort of the public feel actively disgusted by LGBT people. These feelings of disgust are core to homophobia, biphobia and transphobia, and people who feel this way risk causing harm to LGBT people in their lives.

It is also striking how consistent the picture is across communities. It is thankfully far rarer than it once was to hear disgust expressed about lesbian, gay or bi people in our public conversation and our press. But it is commonplace to hear stories about trans people, and in particular trans people's bodies, that

are steeped in disgust. This is often reflected in media discourse about trans people and their rights. This data suggests that our media is amplifying a minority and harmful view, rather than reflecting more widely held sentiment.

Feelings of resentment and envy

	Lesbian	Gay	Bi	Trans
Resentment	4%	3%	4%	4%

	Lesbian	Gay	Bi	Trans
Envy	2%	3%	3%	2%

Feelings of resentment, and feelings of envy are even less common, and consistent across all of our communities.

Feelings of fear

	Lesbian	Gay	Bi	Trans
	4%	4%	3%	4%

Finally, as with other negative emotions, only a small percentage of the public are fearful of members of the LGBT community, and this percentage is consistent across all identity groups.

As with feelings of disgust, it is striking that the public is no more likely to fear trans people than it is lesbian, gay or bi people. Much of the current media coverage of trans people focuses on the idea that trans women pose a threat to cis women, and that cis women are fearful of them as a consequence. This data suggests that, as with feelings of disgust, our media is amplifying a minority view, rather than reflecting a commonplace sentiment.

Can't choose / don't want to say

Members of the public responding to the survey were also given the option of saying they 'can't choose' an option, or they 'prefer not to say'. These responses are very different from each other and are worth reflecting on briefly.

Can't choose

	Lesbian	Gay	Bi	Trans
Can't choose	32%	31%	37%	29%

Approximately a third of the public couldn't choose a response, suggesting that none of the feelings presented to them reflected their own thoughts and feelings. This should not be read as a negative response – it is likely to reflect a range of positions, including those members of the public who feel more neutrally about lesbian, gay, bi and trans people, and relate to members of our community on an individual basis.

Prefer not to say

	Trans	Gay	Lesbian	Bi
Prefer not to say	11%	10%	11%	11%

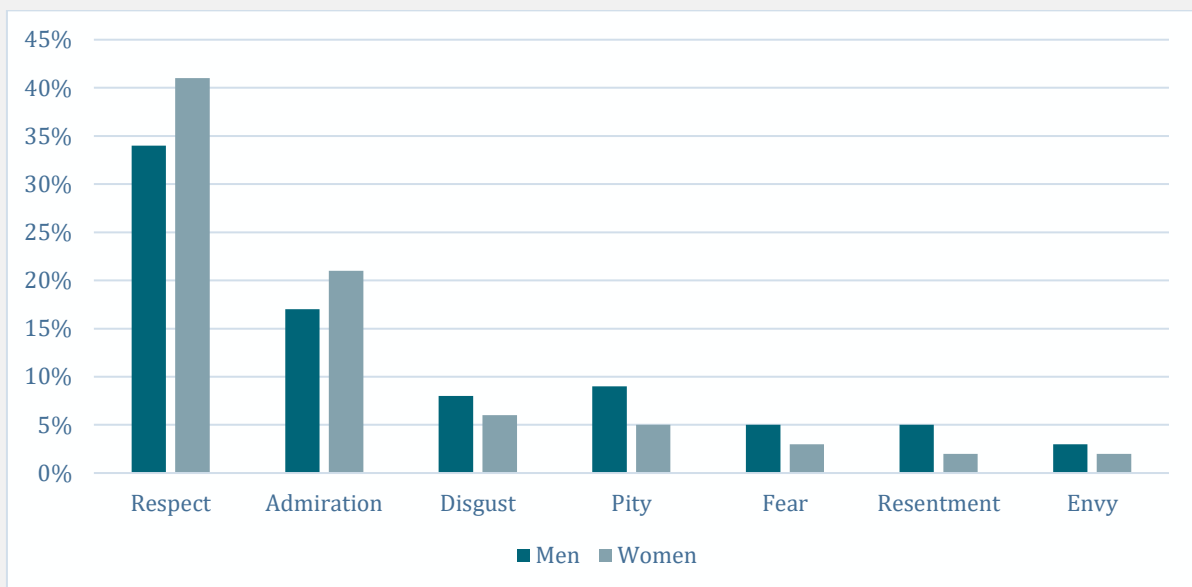
A smaller percentage of the public selected 'prefer not to say'. Although this response will also have a mix of drivers, it is reasonable to assume at least some of these people feel negatively towards lesbian, gay, bi and trans people, but are uncomfortable saying so because they are aware these responses might be seen as homophobic, biphobic or transphobic (this is known as 'social desirability bias'). What is striking here is that the percentage of people choosing 'prefer not to say' is relatively low. There is no 'silent majority' that feels negatively about lesbian, gay, bi or trans people.

How gender influences feelings towards LGBT people

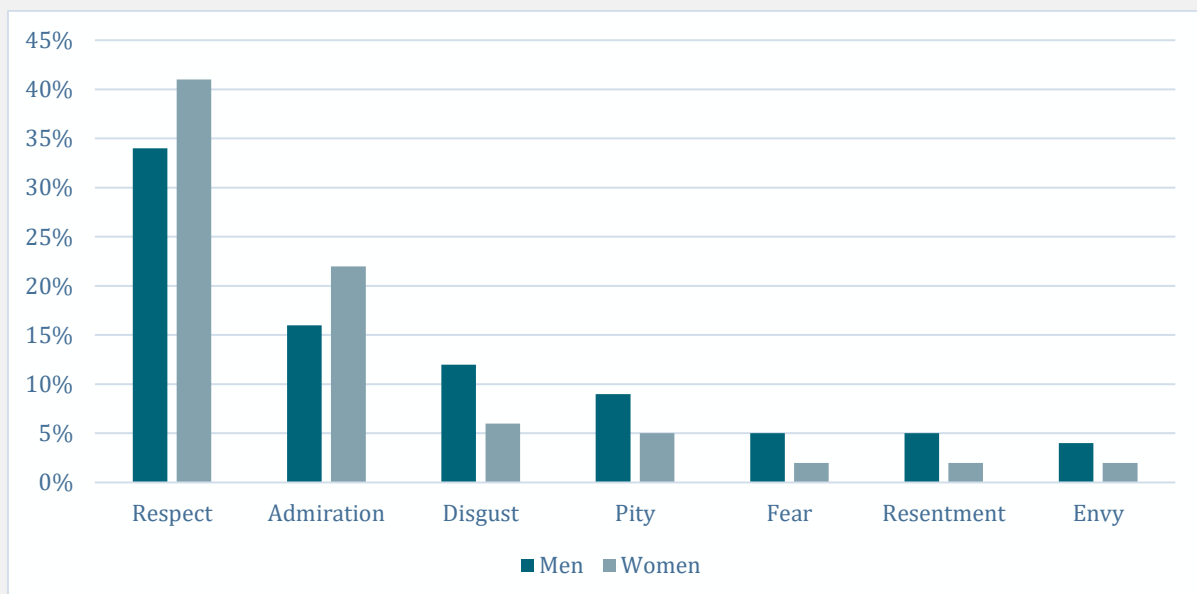
Across all the questions asked we see a consistent pattern of difference between women and men, where women are more likely to feel positively about LGBT people and less likely to feel negatively than men.

The percentages of women and men selecting 'can't choose' and 'prefer not to say' options are similar, so there is no evidence here that this gender difference is caused by women hiding their feelings. This pattern is keeping with gender differences in other attitudinal data, where women are typically more inclined than men to take a socially liberal approach.

Feelings towards lesbians by gender

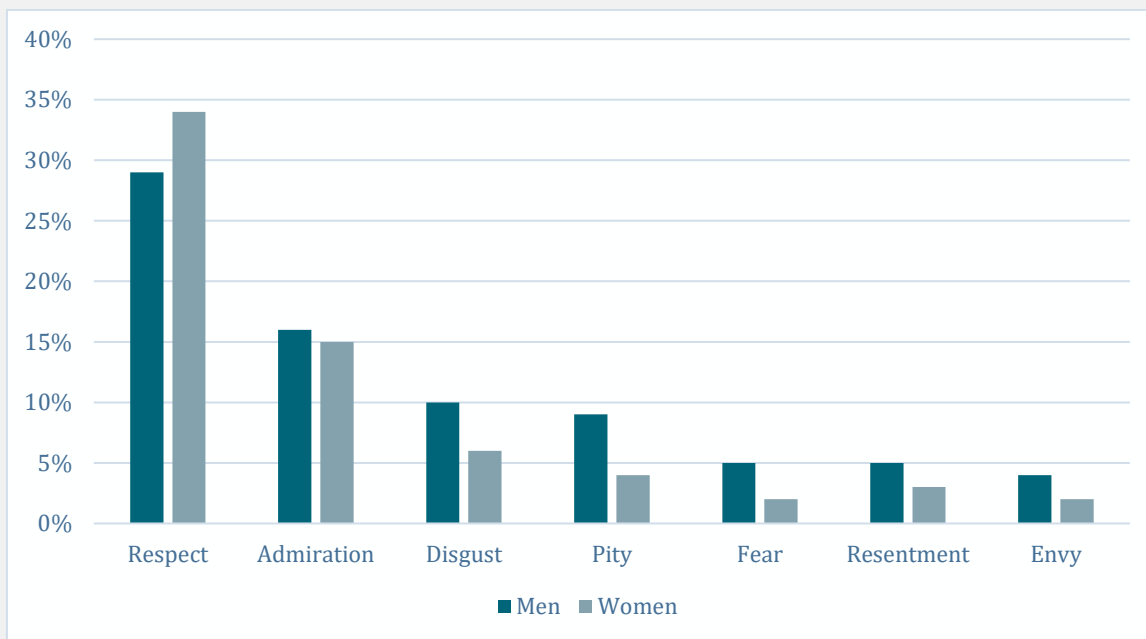


Feelings towards gay men by gender



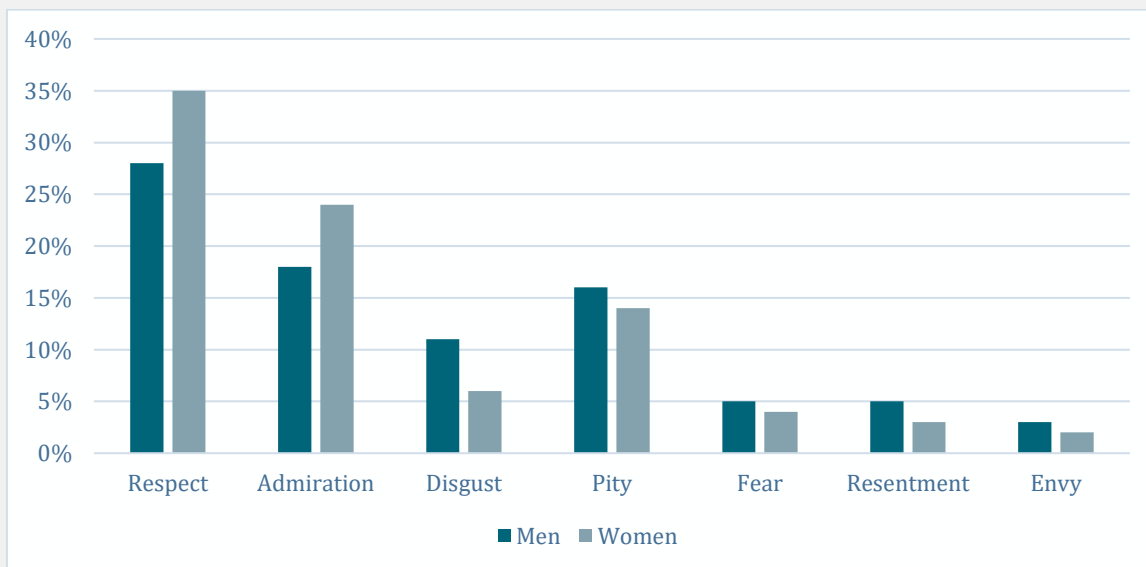
Overall, the way in which the men and woman feel about both lesbians and gay men is similar. However, women are significantly more likely to respect or admire lesbians and gay men, are and less likely to have negative feelings. Beyond this, we can see a slightly distinctive profile when it comes to feelings of disgust, where men are considerably less likely to feel disgust towards lesbians than towards gay men, bi people and trans people. This is unsurprising given the nature of homophobia, biphobia and transphobia and the relationship between these and toxic masculinity.

Feelings towards bi people by gender



As with other communities, women are more likely to feel positively and less likely to feel negatively towards bi people. There is one key point of distinction worth noting here. When it comes to feelings of admiration, men are as likely to admire bi people as women are (16% and 15% respectively).

Feelings towards trans people by gender



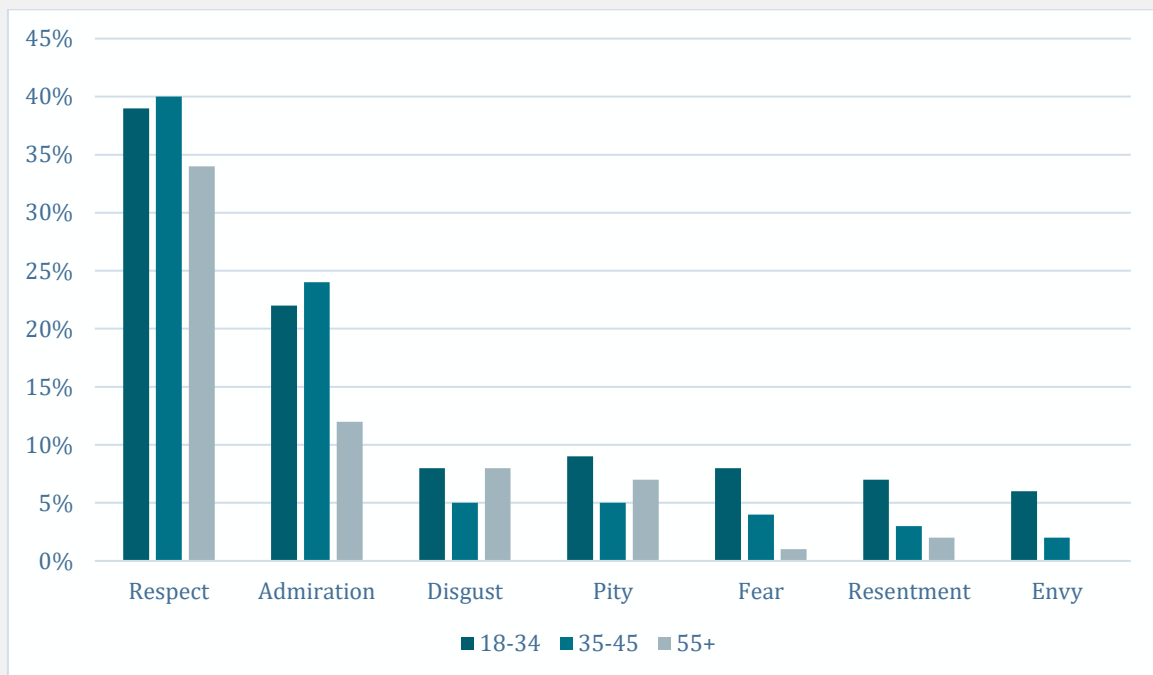
The way in which gender affects the public's feelings towards trans people is consistent with the way it affects their feelings to lesbian, gay and bi people. Women are more likely to respect and admire trans people, and less likely to pity them, or to have feelings of disgust, fear, resentment or envy about them. This is in line with all available good quality data on the UK public's attitudes to trans people, and to trans people's human rights.

These findings should therefore be uncontroversial, but they are worth remarking on precisely because the UK has become famous around the world for having a public conversation and a national media that relentlessly and negatively focuses on trans people. Core to this has been the idea that trans women in particular pose a threat to cis women's safety and empowerment. Yet despite years of prominent discourse in traditional and social media, women remain less likely to feel negatively about trans people than men. This striking finding is testament to a fundamentally liberal and inclusive outlook.

How age influences feelings about LGBT people

Unlike gender, where we see a very clear and consistent pattern, when we consider the impact of age on feelings about LGBT people we see a more mixed picture. People over 55+ are consistently more likely to have negative feelings and less likely to have positive feelings about lesbian, gay, bi and trans people than all other respondents. However, there is not a consistent age gradient when we look at all three age groups, and in some cases it is the middle-aged cohort that has the warmest feelings, a pattern that is particularly apparent in feelings towards lesbians.

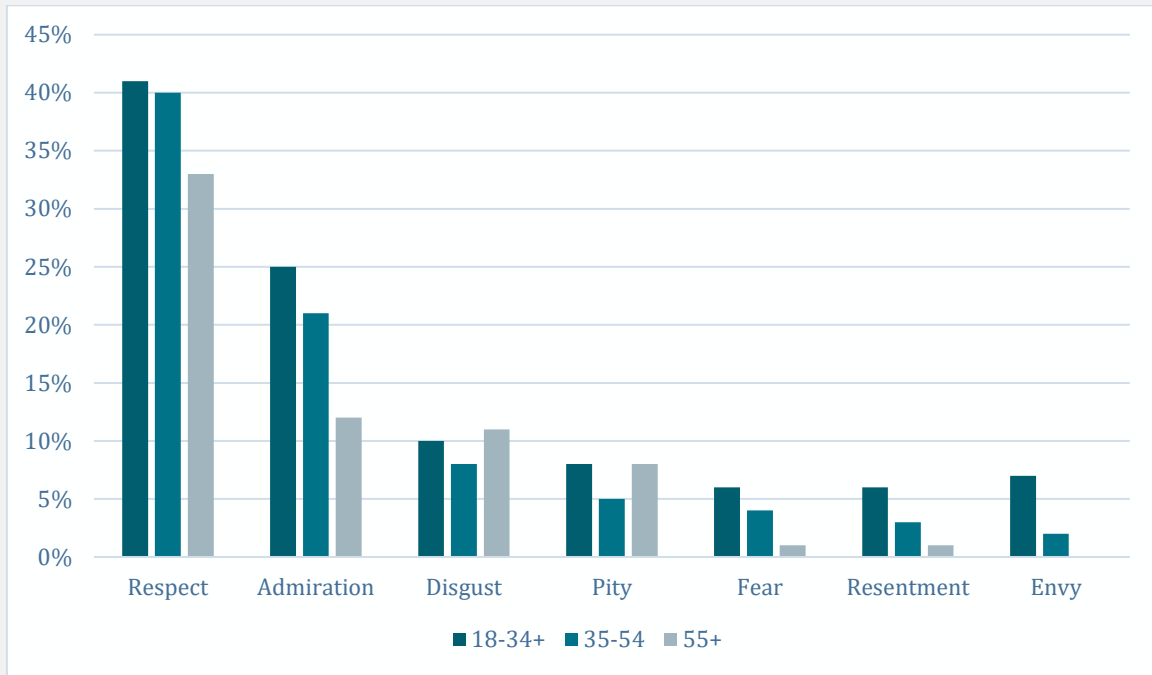
Feelings about lesbians by age



Age has a direct and consistent relationship with the likelihood of feeling fear, resentment and envy towards lesbians. The older you are the less likely you are to hold any of those feelings, while the youngest group is most likely to feel these feelings.

Interestingly other feelings, show a 'U' shaped distribution. This suggests that it is 35–54-year-olds who feel most positively towards lesbians.

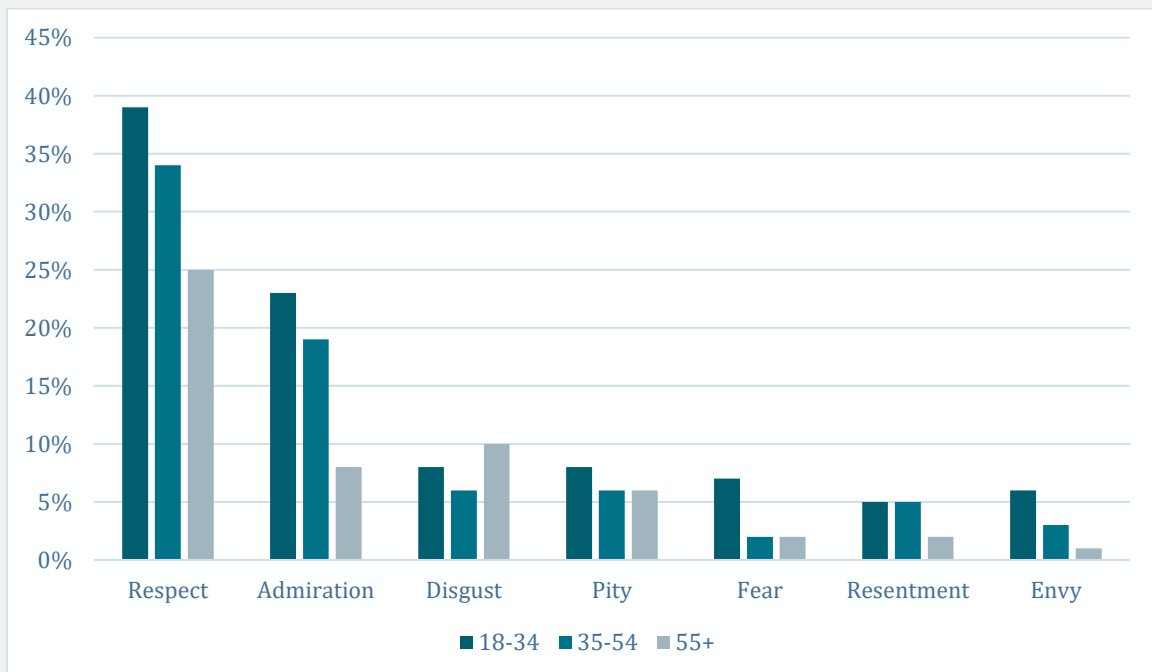
Feelings towards gay men by age



When we look at feelings about gay men, we can see that age has a direct and consistent relationship with feelings of respect, admiration, fear, resentment and envy. The older you are the less likely you are to feel any of these feelings, and the youngest group is most likely to feel all of these feelings.

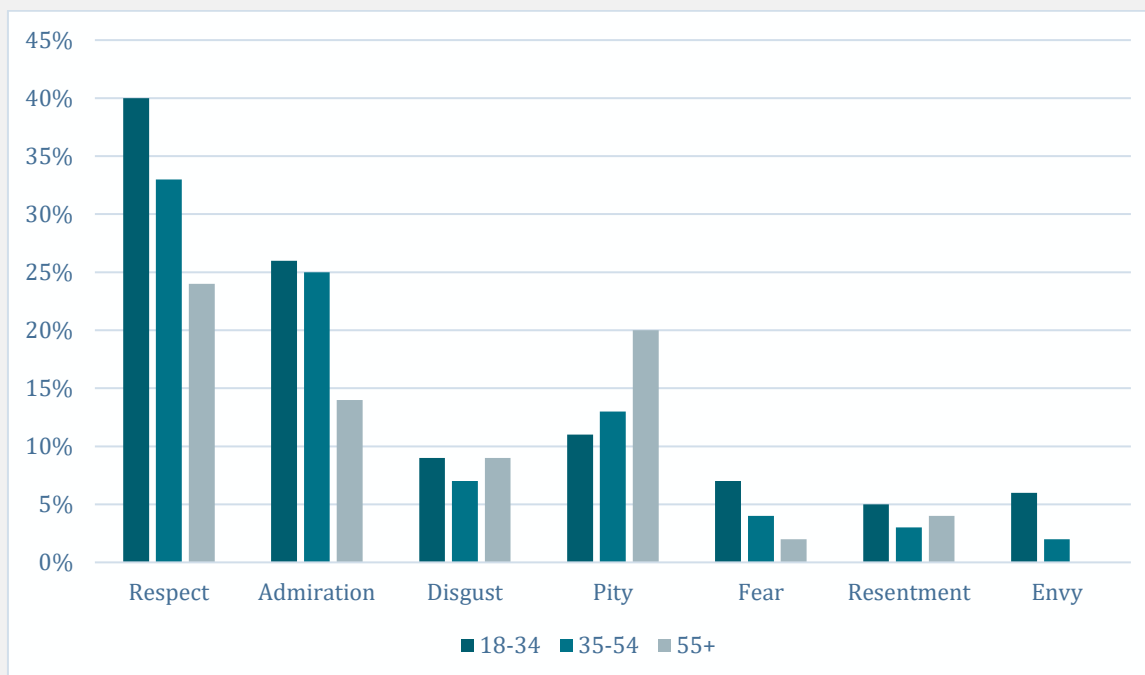
For disgust and pity we see a 'U' shaped distribution, where 35-54 year-olds are least likely to have these feelings. As with lesbians, this suggests attitudes to gay men may be slightly more polarized in the youngest group.

Feelings towards bi people by age



When we consider feelings towards bi people by age, we see a pattern that is similar to the data for gay men. Age has a straightforward and consistent relationship with feelings of respect and admiration – the older you are the less likely you are to have these feelings towards bi people. As with other communities, it is the 35-54 year-olds who are least likely to feel disgusted by bi people.

Feelings towards trans people by age



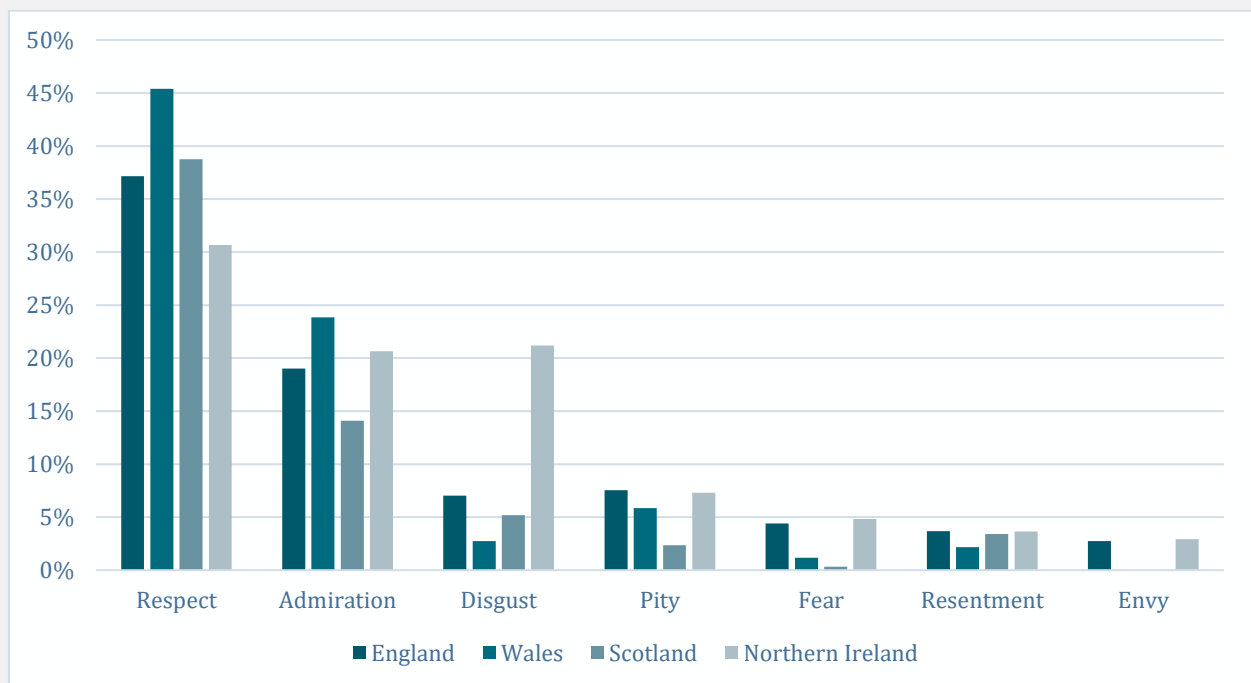
As for gay men and bi people, there is a straightforward and consistent association between age and feelings of respect and admiration for trans people. Older people are less likely to feel this way about trans people, young people more likely to feel this. As with all our communities, it is the middle cohort who is least likely to report feelings of disgust. However, feelings of pity towards trans people show a distinctive pattern: the older you are the more likely you are to feel this pity for trans people. This is perhaps unsurprising given the lack of visibility of trans people for much of that cohort’s lifetime, and the dominant stories told about trans people over that period.

How where we live influences our feelings towards LGBT people

Although care is needed with this data, as the base sizes in some geographies are small, we can see differences in feelings towards our communities that appear to be associated with where people live.

When we look at England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland, we can see positive feelings towards lesbian, gay, bi and trans people are most common in Wales, feelings are very similar between England and Scotland, while people in Northern Ireland have the least positive outlook and appear to be significantly more likely to have feelings of disgust and pity towards our communities. While the differences are quite large, the sample for Northern Ireland is low, which may be a distorting factor. It is also important to note that higher levels of 'disgust' are seen in the London sample. The data on both Northern Ireland and London is consistent with the idea that in areas where religious beliefs are more commonly held, the public is more likely to hold less positive views towards LGBT people.

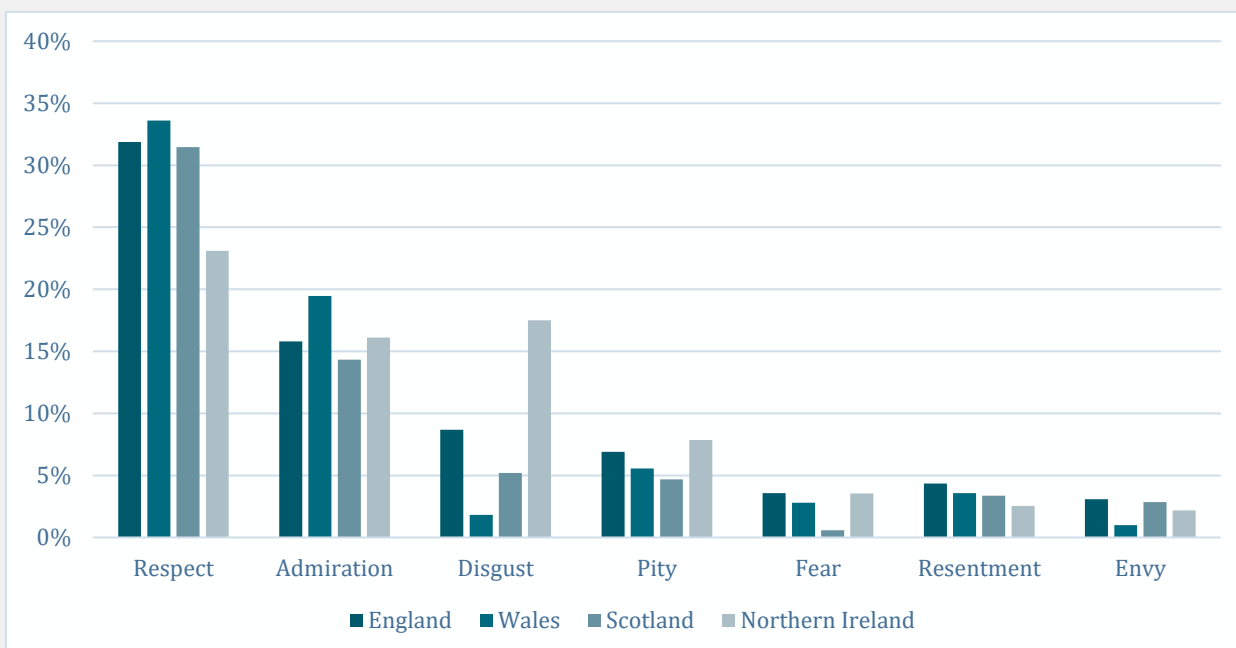
Feelings about lesbians in England, Wales, Scotland, Northern Ireland



Feelings about gay men in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland



Feelings about bi people in England, Wales, Scotland, Northern Ireland



Feelings about trans people in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland



How prejudice and support for our communities overlap

The findings have so far shown the size of the population who hold actively negative views towards lesbians, gay men, bi and trans people to be small and broadly consistent across communities.

We also analysed responses to understand the degree to which these feelings are correlated. Below we set out two examples of this:

How closely correlated are positive feelings across our communities?

When we look at the 37% of the population who respect gay men, 86% also respect lesbians, 72% respect bi people and 72% respect trans people. Respect for gay men is therefore highly predictive of respect for lesbians, bi and trans people.

Of the 19% of the population who say they admire gay men, some 70% also admire lesbians, 58% admire bi people and 65% admire trans people. Admiration for gay men is a very strong predictor of support for lesbians and bi people, and a strong predictor of support for trans people.

When looking at the 31% of the population who respect trans people, 82% respect lesbians, 81% respect gay men and 73% respect bi people. Respect for trans people is therefore highly predictive of respect for lesbians, gay men and bi people.

Of the 21% of the population who say they admire trans people, some 57% of them also admire gay men and 48% admire lesbians and 57% admire bi people. Admiration for trans people is also a very strong predictor of admiration for lesbian, gay and bi people.

How closely correlated are negative feelings across our communities?

When looking at the 9% of the population who admit to feeling 'disgust' about gay people, some 59% of them also feel disgust about lesbians, 61% about bi people, and 55% about trans people. That suggests that homophobia is a strong predictor of lesbophobia, biphobia and transphobia.

When looking at the 8% of the population who admit to feeling 'disgust' about trans people, some 52% of them also feel disgust about lesbians, 62% about gay men, and 56% about bi people. That suggests that transphobia is a strong predictor of lesbophobia, biphobia and transphobia.

In fact, of the 8% of the population who feel disgust about trans people, four in ten (40%) feel this way about all LGBT people. This finding is striking given the way in which public conversation and media coverage of trans people's rights and lives often assumes not only that the public feels more negatively about trans people than cis lesbian, gay or bi people, but also that feelings of transphobia are wholly distinct from feelings of homophobia or biphobia. Neither of these things appears to be true.

Conclusions

These findings paint a picture of a United Kingdom that is, on the whole, supportive and respectful of lesbian, gay, bi and trans people. We take pride in our diverse communities.

It is important to remember that a significant percentage of the population didn't identify with any of the feelings presented to them, so for those of us who want to build strong cultures of respect and support for LGBT communities, there is work to do to move this segment of the public from a more neutral position to active support.

While the population who feel respect for LGBT people is around four times larger than the population who feel disgusted by us, it is important to recognise that even a small minority of the public who hold such strong negative views can have a significant negative impact on the safety and wellbeing of LGBT people. We are a small population- just 3.1% of the public identify as lesbian, gay or bi, and estimates suggest only 0.6% of the population are trans. We are outnumbered by the people who look at us with disgust, pity and fear.

This data also tells us that work to counter negative feelings towards our communities should have a particular focus on building respect among men, among older people, and in particular geographies, where these views are more common.

Finally, it is clear that homophobia, biphobia and transphobia are closely interconnected. Fifty years after we first marched together through the streets of London, we are still standing proudly together in the face of a loud, intolerant minority.

Appendix 1: Methods

Opinium surveyed 2001 UK Adults between 14 and 17 December 2021. Results have been weighted to be nationally representative of the adult population.

Questions:

The next question is about lesbians, where this means women who form sexual and romantic relationships with other women. When you think about people who are Lesbian, which of the words below describe your feelings?

The next question is about gay men, where this means men who form sexual and romantic relationships with other men. When you think about gay men, which of the words below describe your feelings? Please tick all of those that apply.

The next question is about bisexual people, where this means people who form sexual and romantic relationships with people of more than one gender. When you think about people who are bisexual, which of the words below describe your feelings? Please tick all of those that apply.

The next question is about people who are transgender. People who are transgender have gone through all or part of a process (including thoughts or actions) to change the sex they were described as at birth to the gender they identify with, or intend to. This might include by changing their name, wearing different clothes, taking hormones or having gender reassignment surgery. When you think about people who are transgender, which of the words below describe your feelings? Please tick all of those that apply.

Appendix 2: TABLES

Feelings by gender

Feelings towards lesbians by gender

	Total	Gender	
		Male	Female
BASE: all respondents	2001	979	1022
Respect	38 % 751	34 % 330	41 % 421
Admiration	19 % 378	17 % 168	21 % 210
Disgust	7 % 142	8 % 75	6 % 66
Pity	7 % 140	9 % 89	5 % 52
Fear	4 % 79	5 % 46	3 % 33
Resentment	4 % 71	5 % 52	2 % 19
Envy	2 % 48	3 % 31	2 % 16
Can't choose	32 % 632	33 % 320	30 % 312
Prefer not to say	11 % 218	11 % 109	11 % 110

Feelings towards gay men by gender

	Total	Gender	
		Male	Female
BASE: all respondents	2001	979	1022
Respect	37 % 750	34 % 335	41 % 415
Admiration	19 % 375	16 % 155	22 % 220
Disgust	9 % 187	12 % 122	6 % 66
Pity	7 % 140	9 % 86	5 % 54
Fear	4 % 71	5 % 49	2 % 22
Resentment	3 % 65	5 % 46	2 % 19
Envy	3 % 62	4 % 40	2 % 22
Can't choose	31 % 614	30 % 296	31 % 318
Prefer not to say	10 % 208	11 % 109	10 % 99

Feelings towards bi people by gender

	Gender		
	Total	Male	Female
BASE: all respondents	2001	979	1022
Respect	32 % 633	29 % 281	34 % 352
Admiration	16 % 318	16 % 160	15 % 158
Disgust	8 % 167	10 % 101	6 % 66
Pity	7 % 133	9 % 87	4 % 46
Resentment	4 % 84	5 % 49	3 % 35
Fear	3 % 67	5 % 48	2 % 19
Envy	3 % 58	4 % 42	2 % 16
Can't choose	37 % 734	35 % 343	38 % 391
Prefer not to say	11 % 217	11 % 110	11 % 107

Feelings towards trans people by gender

	Gender		
	Total	Male	Female
BASE: all respondents	2001	979	1022
Respect	31 % 630	28 % 274	35 % 356
Admiration	21 % 425	18 % 178	24 % 248
Pity	15 % 306	16 % 159	14 % 146
Disgust	8 % 168	11 % 106	6 % 62
Resentment	4 % 81	5 % 50	3 % 31
Fear	4 % 81	5 % 45	4 % 36
Envy	2 % 50	3 % 32	2 % 18
Can't choose	29 % 574	31 % 300	27 % 274
Prefer not to say	11 % 226	12 % 119	10 % 107

Feelings by age

Feelings towards lesbians by age

	Age		
	18-34	35-54	55+
BASE: all respondents	552	659	790
Respect	39 % 218	40 % 262	34 % 271
Admiration	22 % 122	24 % 160	12 % 96
Disgust	8 % 43	5 % 34	8 % 65
Pity	9 % 50	5 % 35	7 % 55
Fear	8 % 43	4 % 26	1 % 10
Resentment	7 % 37	3 % 20	2 % 14
Envy	6 % 33	2 % 12	0 % 2
Can't choose	20 % 112	31 % 207	40 % 313
Prefer not to say	14 % 80	11 % 70	9 % 69

Feelings towards gay men by age

	Age		
	18-34	35-54	55+
BASE: all respondents	552	659	790
Respect	41 %	40 %	33 %
	227	264	259
Admiration	25 %	21 %	12 %
	137	140	98
Disgust	10 %	8 %	11 %
	53	51	83
Pity	8 %	5 %	8 %
	44	30	66
Fear	6 %	4 %	1 %
	35	28	8
Resentment	6 %	3 %	1 %
	34	20	11
Envy	7 %	2 %	1 %
	40	16	6
Can't choose	18 %	33 %	38 %
	101	215	297
Prefer not to say	15 %	10 %	8 %
	81	66	61

Feelings towards bi people by age

	Age		
	18-34	35-54	55+
BASE: all respondents	552	659	790
Respect	39 % 215	34 % 224	25 % 194
Admiration	23 % 129	19 % 126	8 % 63
Disgust	8 % 44	6 % 42	10 % 81
Pity	8 % 44	6 % 39	6 % 50
Resentment	5 % 30	5 % 35	2 % 19
Fear	7 % 37	2 % 13	2 % 17
Envy	6 % 33	3 % 17	1 % 8
Can't choose	21 % 116	36 % 240	48 % 378
Prefer not to say	15 % 80	11 % 71	8 % 65

Feelings towards trans people by age

	Age		
	18-34	35-54	55+
BASE: all respondents	552	659	790
Respect	40 % 221	33 % 220	24 % 189
Admiration	26 % 145	25 % 166	14 % 114
Pity	11 % 63	13 % 84	20 % 159
Disgust	9 % 52	7 % 44	9 % 72
Resentment	5 % 30	3 % 19	4 % 32
Fear	7 % 39	4 % 27	2 % 15
Envy	6 % 35	2 % 13	0 % 2
Can't choose	19 % 105	30 % 198	34 % 270
Prefer not to say	15 % 81	11 % 71	9 % 73

Geography

Feelings about lesbians, England, Wales, Scotland, Northern Ireland

	England	Wales	Scotland	Northern Ireland
BASE: all respondents	1682	96	168	55
Respect	31 %	45 %	39 %	31 %
	527	44	65	17
Admiration	21 %	24 %	14 %	21 %
	352	23	24	11
Disgust	15 %	3 %	5 %	21 %
	253	3	9	12
Pity	8 %	6 %	2 %	7 %
	142	6	4	4
Fear	4 %	1 %	0 %	5 %
	71	1	1	3
Resentment	4 %	2 %	3 %	4 %
	69	2	6	2
Envy	3 %	0 %	0 %	3 %
	46	0	0	2

Feelings about gay men, England, Wales, Scotland, Northern Ireland

	England	Wales	Scotland	Northern Ireland
BASE: all respondents	1682	96	168	55
Respect	37 %	41 %	39 %	31 %
	628	40	65	17
Admiration	19 %	23 %	17 %	23 %
	313	23	29	13
Disgust	9 %	6 %	7 %	25 %
	156	6	12	13
Pity	7 %	5 %	4 %	8 %
	124	5	7	4
Fear	4 %	0 %	2 %	2 %
	67	0	3	1
Resentment	3 %	3 %	3 %	4 %
	56	3	4	2
Envy	3 %	2 %	1 %	1 %
	58	2	1	0

Feelings about bi people in England, Wales, Scotland, Northern Ireland

	England	Wales	Scotland	Northern Ireland
BASE: all respondents	1682	96	168	55
Respect	37 %	34 %	31 %	23 %
	625	32	53	13
Admiration	19 %	19 %	14 %	16 %
	320	19	24	9
Disgust	7 %	2 %	5 %	18 %
	118	2	9	10
Pity	8 %	6 %	5 %	8 %
	127	5	8	4
Resentment	4 %	4 %	3 %	3 %
	74	3	6	1
Fear	4 %	3 %	1 %	4 %
	62	3	1	2
Envy	3 %	1 %	3 %	2 %
	46	1	5	1

Feelings about trans people in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland

	England	Wales	Scotland	Northern Ireland
BASE: all respondents	1682	96	168	55
Respect	32 %	37 %	32 %	24 %
	536	36	54	13
Admiration	16 %	28 %	21 %	20 %
	266	27	35	11
Pity	9 %	20 %	13 %	24 %
	146	19	22	13
Disgust	7 %	5 %	7 %	18 %
	116	5	12	10
Resentment	4 %	1 %	5 %	0 %
	73	1	8	0
Fear	4 %	3 %	2 %	8 %
	60	3	4	4
Envy	3 %	1 %	1 %	2 %
	52	1	2	1