

**RAINBOW**



**GYMRU**

**ATTRACTION, IDENTITY  
AND CONNECTION IN  
WALES IN 2023**

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**Stonewall**

# INTRODUCTION

For decades now, we have seen a significant increase in social acceptance of lesbian, gay and bisexual relationships and a slow, but steady increase in the percentage of the population who identify as lesbian, gay or bi (measuring the trans population and attitudes to trans people through social surveys is a newer phenomenon, so we don't have the same longitudinal data).

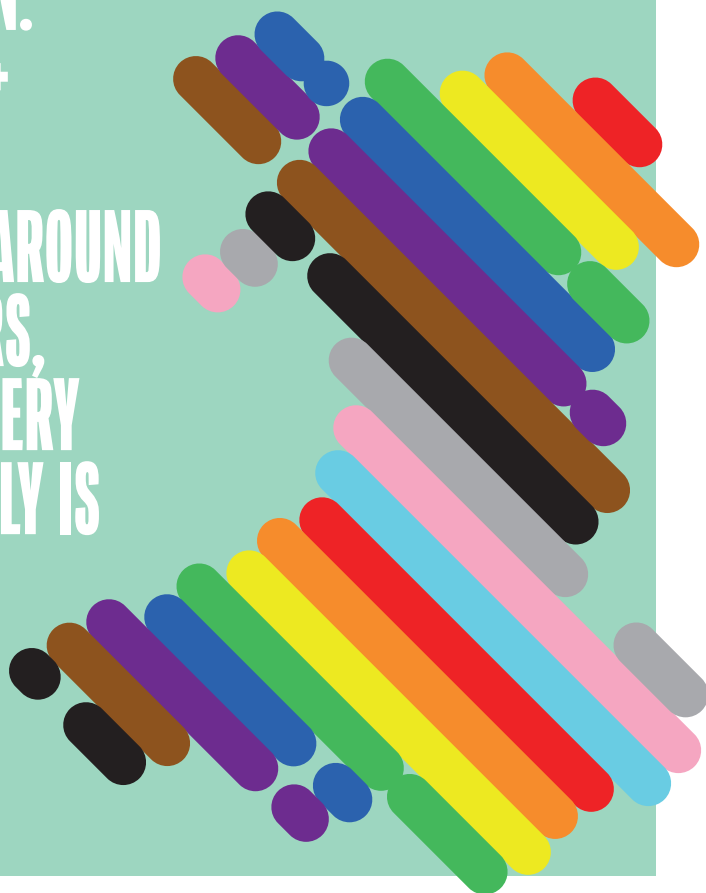
LGBTQ+ people, our lives and experiences are now more visible than they have ever been in every community and in all aspects of life in Wales.

This groundbreaking report using data from the 2021 Census for England and Wales, Ipsos Mori and Opinionium, paints a picture of a Wales that is becoming a more diverse and inclusive country.

The Census data shows that with each generation, more people identify as lesbian, gay, bi or trans. And as we look beyond the labels and into who we know and what we feel, we see that Wales is a country where more and more of us feel at ease acknowledging our own same-sex attraction, as we become better connected to LGBTQ+ people across our lives.

As Stonewall Cymru marks 20 years of campaigning and partnership to progress LGBTQ+ equality in Wales, and as the Welsh Government launches a groundbreaking LGBTQ+ Action Plan, we look at the LGBTQ+ community in Wales and our position in society.

**THIS IS OUR RAINBOW NATION:  
A COUNTRY IN WHICH LGBTQ+  
PEOPLE ARE COMING OUT TO  
OURSELVES AND THE WORLD AROUND  
US IN EVER GREATER NUMBERS,  
AND A COUNTRY IN WHICH EVERY  
COMMUNITY AND EVERY FAMILY IS  
BUILDING BONDS  
OF LOVE AND FRIENDSHIP  
WITH LGBTQ+ PEOPLE.**



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# METHOD

This report uses data from three datasets to paint a picture of LGBTQ+ life in Cymru.

- The 2021 England and Wales Census (March 2021)
- An Opinium poll of adults across the UK (December 2021)
- A series of three Ipsos UK polls of adults across Great Britain (June – August 2022)

## 2021 ENGLAND AND WALES CENSUS

In March 2021, the England and Wales Census asked voluntary questions about both sexual orientation and gender identity.

## OPINIUM METHODOLOGY

In December 2021, Stonewall asked just over 2000 adults living across the UK how they feel about lesbian, gay, bi and trans people. This included a sample of 168 adults in Scotland. This included a sample of 96 adults in Wales.

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

## IPSOS METHODOLOGY

This data is taken from three surveys using Ipsos UK’s online Omnibus. Ipsos UK interviewed a representative quota sample of 2,150 Britons aged 16-75 10th-14th June (including 105 in Wales). A second poll was conducted with a representative quota sample of 2,176 Britons aged 16-75 10th-13th June (including 107 in Wales). A third poll was conducted with a representative quota sample of 2,187 Britons aged 16-75 5th-8th August 2022 (including 109 in Wales).

Data are weighted to match the profile of the offline population. All polls are subject to a wide range of potential sources of error.

Due to differences in methodology and question wording, figures on sexual orientation and identity and gender identity should not be seen as comparable with Census figures.

# CHAPTER 1

# WHO ARE WE?

## SEXUAL ORIENTATION

The typical way we all talk about sexual orientation in everyday life and in social research is to use categories and ask people which category best fits them.

The 2021 Census for England and Wales asked the entire 16+ population voluntary questions about their sexual orientation

### THE CENSUS ASKED:

### WHICH, IF ANY OF THE FOLLOWING WOULD YOU IDENTIFY AS?

- Heterosexual / straight
- Bisexual
- Gay
- Asexual
- Pansexual
- Lesbian
- Omnisexual
- Other (specify)
- Don't know
- Prefer not to say

In total 77,000 people in Wales responded that they were gay, lesbian, bisexual or another minority sexual orientation. Of them:

38,000 people responded that they were gay or lesbian

32,000 people responded that they were bi

7,000 people responded that they were another sexual orientation, with significant responses from people writing in pansexual (4,500), asexual (1,500) and queer (500).

Looking across Wales, the local authority areas with the highest proportion of lesbian, gay and bi people were Cardiff, Ceredigion and Newport.

# SEXUAL ORIENTATION, AGE AND SEX

AGE	% IDENTIFYING AS LESBIAN, GAY, BI OR OTHER (LGB+)
16 - 24	7.9%
25 - 34	6.1%
35 - 44	3.6%
45 - 54	2.2%
55 - 64	1.4%
65 - 74	0.7%
75 AND OVER	0.2%

The figures for Wales paint a clear picture of younger generations being significantly more likely to identify as LGB+, with a particularly clear distinction between under 35s and those aged 35 and over. Those aged under 35 will have seen less impact from Section 28, the legislation that prohibited schools and local authorities from ‘promoting homosexuality’, which was repealed in 2003.

When looking at proportions of men and women in Wales who identify as LGB+ we can see that 3.4% of women identify as LGB+ and 2.7% of men.

The difference between men and women being LGB+ in Wales is greatest among 16 – 24 year olds, where 11.1% of women identify as LGB+ and 5% of men identify as LGB+, whereas men aged 65 – 74 and 75+ are around twice as likely to identify as LGB+ as women.

# LOOKING BEYOND THE LABEL

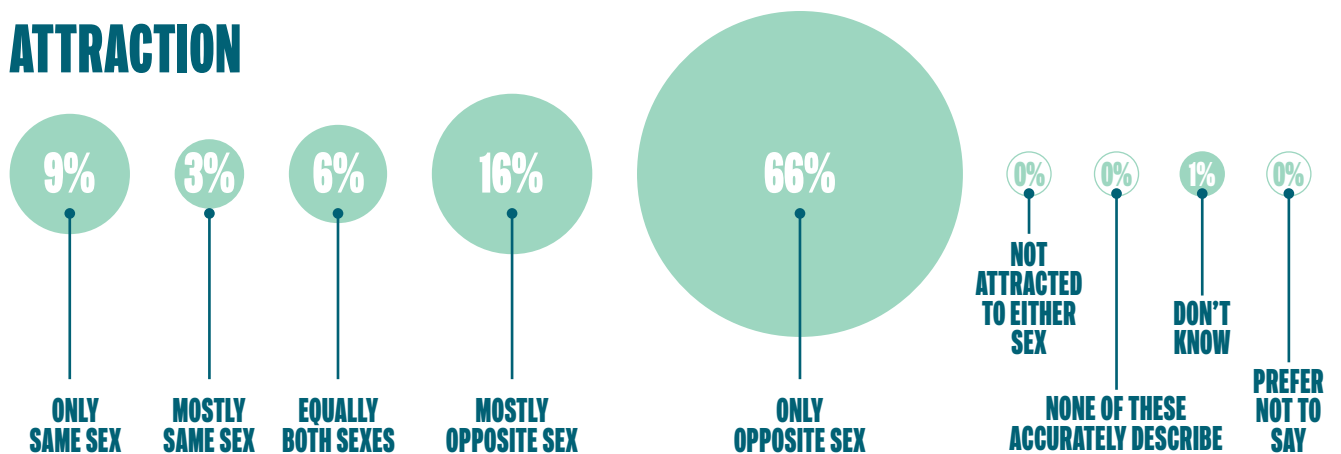
What happens when we look beyond the label, and instead of asking people which sexual orientation they identify with, ask them who they find sexually attractive?

The picture alters dramatically. Our survey with Ipsos UK in Summer 2022 asked:

## WHICH, IF ANY, OF THE FOLLOWING, BEST DESCRIBES HOW YOU THINK OF YOUR SEXUAL ORIENTATION?

- Only attracted to the same sex
- Mostly attracted to the same sex
- Equally attracted to both sexes
- Mostly attracted to the opposite sex
- Only attracted to the opposite sex
- I am not attracted to either sex
- None of these accurately describe my sexual orientation
- Don't know
- Prefer not to say

## ATTRACTION



Only 66% of people in Wales say they are exclusively attracted to people of the opposite sex.

Accounting for the small percentage of people who either don't know (1%) or prefer not to say (0%) who they are attracted to; this means that 34% of the population is at least a little bit queer.

The percentage of people who say they are only attracted to people of the same sex is significantly higher than the percentage who use the identity labels lesbian or gay. And the percentage of people who describe attractions that align with bi or pan sexual orientations is significantly higher than the percentage that use those labels in the Census.

What does this mean? Firstly, it means that when we talk about LGBTQ+ lives and relationships, we are talking about a wider group than those who explicitly identify themselves as part of the community. This shouldn't be news: the sexual health field has for years targeted 'men who have sex with men' as an audience, in order to deliver health promotion and health services to everyone who needs it. Secondly it gives us a sense of the true pattern of sexual attraction in the population – a sense of how many people might one day come out in a world where discrimination against LGBTQ+ people didn't exist, and we were all free to live our lives.

# GENDER IDENTITY

The 2021 Census for England and Wales asked the entire 16+ population voluntary questions about their gender identity.

## WE ASKED:

### WHICH, IF ANY, OF THE FOLLOWING WOULD YOU PERSONALLY USE TO DESCRIBE YOUR GENDER?

- Woman
- Man
- Trans woman
- Trans man
- Non-binary
- Genderqueer/gender fluid
- Agender
- Another gender identity (please specify)
- Prefer to self-describe (please specify)
- Don't know
- Prefer not to say

In total 10,500 people in Wales responded that their gender identity was different from their sex registered at birth. Of them around:

1,900 were trans men

2,200 were trans women

1,600 were non-binary

900 gave another gender identity and 4,000 said their gender identity was different from their sex registered at birth but did not give a specific identity.

## GENDER IDENTITY AND AGE

AGE	% IDENTIFYING AS TRANS
16 - 24	1%
25 - 34	0.7%
35 - 44	0.4%
45 - 54	0.3%
55 - 64	0.2%
65 - 74	0.1%
75 AND OVER	0.1%

The figures for Wales paint a clear picture of younger generations being more likely to identify as trans, but with a more gradual change between the generations than when looking at sexual orientation.



# CHAPTER 2

# WHO DO WE KNOW (AND WHAT DO WE KNOW ABOUT?)

The day-to-day experience of LGBTQ+ people and the place we have in society is not only about how large our community is, it is also about how visible and interconnected we are in wider society.

Our Rainbow Nation is made up of LGBTQ+ people and all the people who know and care about us.

We asked a series of three questions designed to understand how well the public knows LGBTQ+ people. We asked separately about bi people, because evidence suggests that bi people are much less likely to be out than lesbian and gay people<sup>1</sup>, and consequently we might expect the general public to be less likely to know or be connected to bi people. We also asked separately about trans people because the trans population is very small, and only recently more visible to the public at large.

## WE ASKED:

**THINKING ABOUT LESBIAN AND GAY PEOPLE, WHICH IF ANY OF THE FOLLOWING APPLY TO YOU?**

**THINKING ABOUT BI PEOPLE, WHICH IF ANY OF THE FOLLOWING APPLY TO YOU?**

**THINKING ABOUT TRANSGENDER PEOPLE, WHICH IF ANY OF THE FOLLOWING APPLY TO YOU?**

- I have met or encountered people like this
- As far as I know, I've never met or encountered someone like this
- I know of celebrities or people in the media like this
- I have acquaintances like this
- I have personal friends/family like this
- I myself am like this
- Don't know

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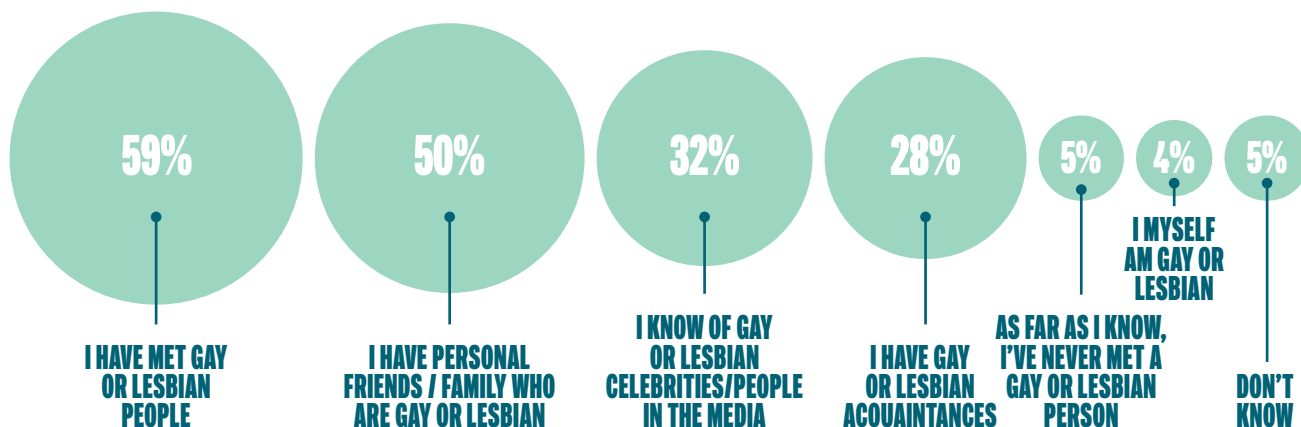
1. LGBT in Britain: Work Report (2018) Stonewall. Data shows that 38% of bi people were not out to anyone in their workplace

# CONNECTIONS WITH LESBIAN AND GAY PEOPLE

Half the population (50%) have a personal friend or a family member who is lesbian or gay. Well over half of the population (59%) have met a lesbian or gay person, just under a third (28%) have lesbian or gay acquaintances and 32% can think of lesbian or gay celebrities.

Just 9% of the population have never to their knowledge met a lesbian or gay person.

## CONNECTION



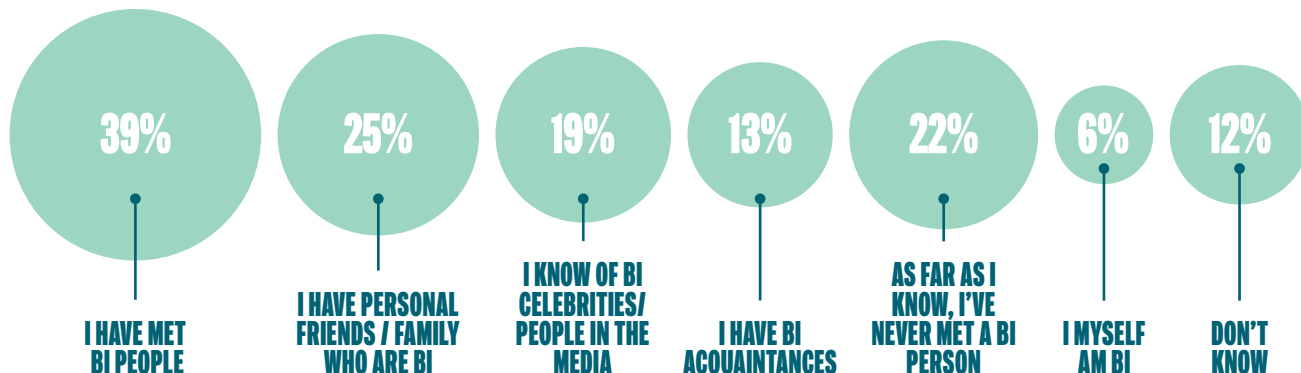
# CONNECTIONS WITH BI PEOPLE

Despite being a larger and faster growing community than lesbian and gay people, bi people are less visible and less connected within wider communities.

Just 25% of the public have a friend or family member who is bi, compared to 50% of people who said they have a lesbian or gay friend or family member. More than a third of the public (39%) say they have met bi people, compared to almost six in ten who say they have met a lesbian or gay person. Bi people are even less visible in the media: just under a fifth (19%) of people know of a bi celebrity.

One potential explanation for these differences is that bi people are less likely to be out in key spaces like workplaces, so fewer people might know that their friends and acquaintances are bi. Another is that a key aspect of biphobia is not acknowledging bi people's identities and viewing bi people as straight. This means that even when bi people are out in their public or private life, it isn't always recognised or respected.

## CONNECTION



# CONNECTION WITH TRANS PEOPLE

Unsurprisingly, given the size of the trans community, and the relatively short period of time in which trans people have been able to live as themselves and be visible in wider society, the percentage of the public who have a family member or close friend who is trans is relatively small: just 16% of us have a trans friend or family member.

When we include acquaintances, 14% of the population know a trans person in real life, and almost a third (32%) have met a trans person.

It's also worth recognising that a significant proportion (12%) of the population tell us they 'don't know' if they've met a trans person.

## CONNECTION



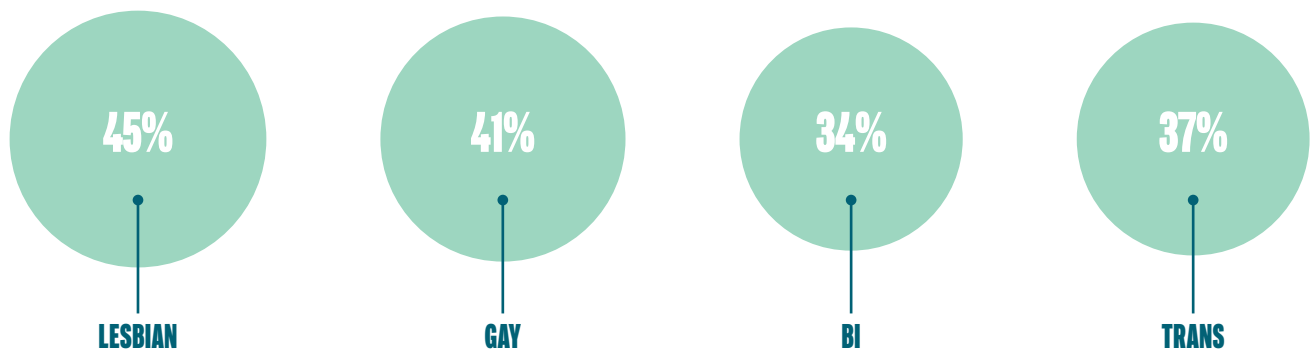
# CHAPTER 3

## HOW WE FEEL

The public is much more likely to have positive feelings towards LGBTQ+ people than they are to have negative feelings. Across our UK-wide sample, we can see that women and younger people are more likely to have positive feelings towards LGBTQ+ people than men and older people, a pattern that is common across a wide range of social attitudes.

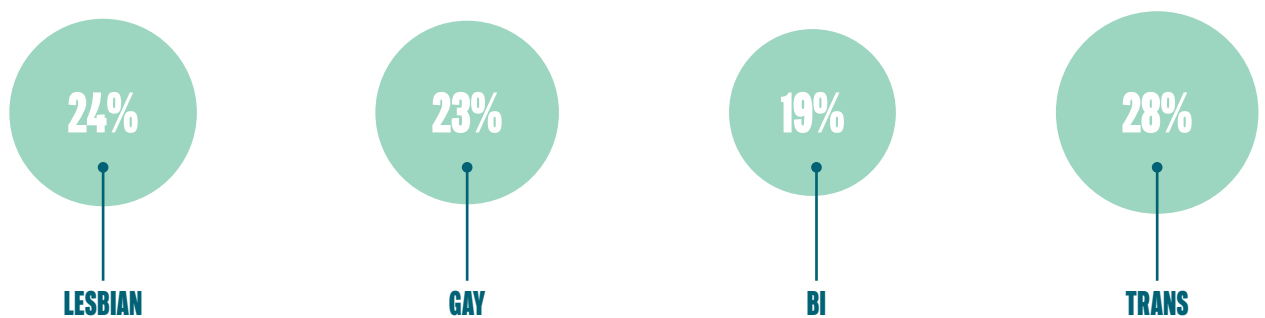
Perhaps most interestingly, given the high level of focus on trans people in the UK press, and the very negative tone of much of that coverage, the way the public feels is consistent across lesbian, gay, bi and trans people.

### FEELINGS OF RESPECT



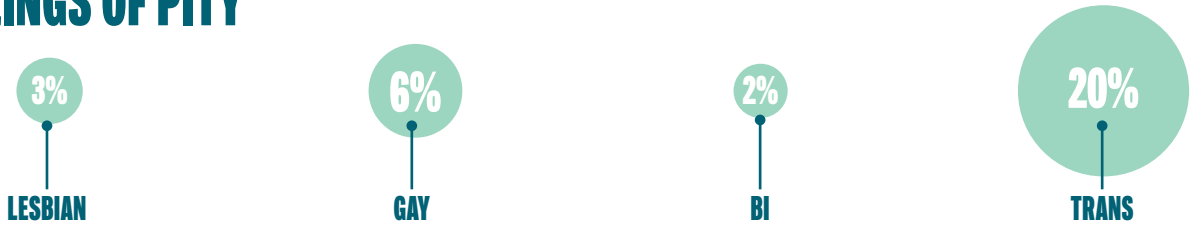
The most common feeling the public have towards LGBTQ+ people is one of respect, with more than a third of respondents choosing this option. People were more likely to say they felt respect for lesbian and gay people (38% and 37%) than for bi and trans people (32% and 31%).

### FEELINGS OF ADMIRATION



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



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



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 LGBTQ+ people. These feelings of disgust are core to homophobia, biphobia and transphobia, and people who feel this way risk causing harm to LGBTQ+ 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's rights. This data suggests that our media is amplifying a minority and harmful view, rather than reflecting more widely held sentiment.

## FEELINGS OF RESENTMENT

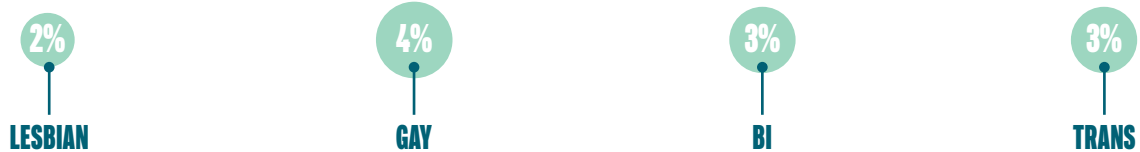


## FEELINGS OF ENVY



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

## FEELINGS OF FEAR



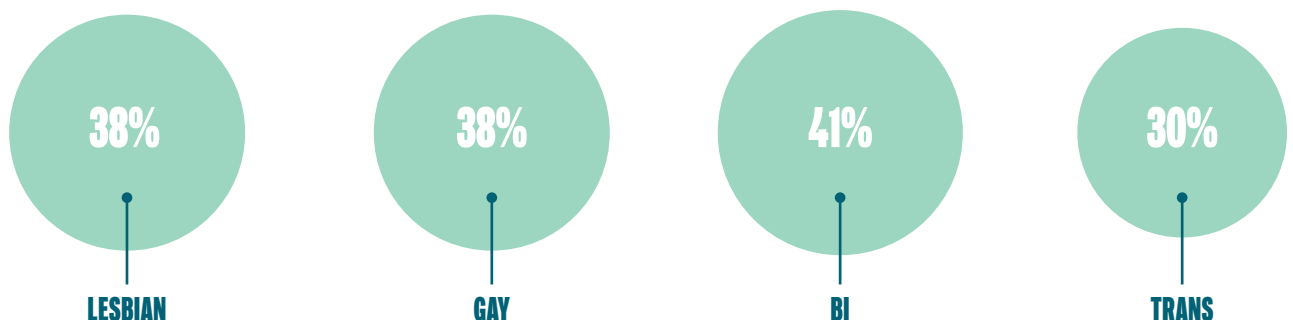
Finally, as with other negative emotions, only a small percentage of the public are fearful of members of the LGBTQ+ community, and this percentage is consistent across all identity groups.

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 that 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



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



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.

# CHAPTER 4

# WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR WALES?

## STEPS IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION

The data available clearly shows that we are living in a Wales that is more openly diverse than ever, with just over a third of the population falling somewhere under the queer umbrella - though they may not specifically identify as any one part of the LGBTQ+ community.

Younger generations in particular are more likely to identify as LGBTQ+ people. While this reflects a need to make spaces more inclusive of our older community members, we can also see the impact that abolishing Section 28 has had in Wales: people across the nation have far better access to information and support, empowering them to live and express themselves freely, welcomed as valued members of our wider Welsh community.

Public sentiment toward LGBTQ+ people is broadly positive, with feelings of respect far outweighing feelings of disgust, fear, resentment and envy. While our findings certainly show a need for further work increasing community links and cohesion, they also exhibit that many media narratives implying a negative sentiment toward the LGBTQ+ community actually only reflect a minority view.

## BUILDING COMMUNITIES

In fact, many across Wales either know or are close with a member of our community, as well as aware of LGBTQ+ public and media figures. Overall, LGBTQ+ people are gaining increased recognition in their communities for who they are, as well as more welcomed, loved and supported.

Many people in Wales feel that they have fewer close friends/family who are bi or trans than they do gay or lesbian people, perhaps indicative of the particular struggles bi and trans people can face around coming out, being believed, or being discriminated against.

Our mission is to make it so that these barriers are removed, empowering everyone who is LGBTQ+ to thrive as their entire selves among their friends, family, co-workers and acquaintances.

# WHAT NEXT?

We know that Welsh values hold no room for discrimination. The recently published LGBTQ+ Action Plan for Wales, as well as the Anti-Racist Wales Action Plan and HIV Action Plan for Wales all reflect the collective movement of a population that understands the worth of wellbeing, self-determination and the power to express yourself freely. These plans cannot work in silo; they must continue to utilise a holistic approach to ensure that these needs are met for everyone across Wales, removing barriers to supporting people with a number of intersecting identities.

Working collaboratively to reform access to healthcare, freedom from discrimination at work and in school, and empowering people with the information they need to look after themselves and others is a key part of the Welsh Government's aspiration to become the most LGBTQ+ friendly nation in Europe.

More than that, the success of Welsh LGBTQ+ creatives, businesses, social enterprises and mutual aid systems show us as a hub of activity and a burgeoning spot on the UK map when it comes to celebrating the different identities and cultures which make us as who we are.

**THE BRILLIANT DEVELOPMENTS IN WALES MAKE US PROUD TO BE A PART OF THIS PORTION OF OUR RAINBOW BRITAIN.**

**RAINBOW BRITAIN IS THE PRESENT AND THE FUTURE.**

**WE ARE HERE.  
WE ARE PROUD.**

