



Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual (LGB)  
People in Sport: Understanding  
LGB sports participation in  
Wales

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## Foreword – Stonewall Cymru



Whether it's mountain biking in Coed y Brenin, sailing in Bala, running the Llanelli Half, or rugby at the Millennium Stadium – from local clubs to national teams, sport is a massively influential part of our culture here in Wales. Unfortunately, for many of Wales' 184,000 lesbian, gay and bisexual people, their experience of sport is not always a positive one.

This ground-breaking research gives us an insight in to how lesbian, gay and bisexual people take part in sport, or indeed why they sometimes choose not to. It reveals that whilst many are interested in sport, they have also been put off by negative experiences or the perception that it is an unpleasant and unsafe environment for gay people.

If these issues are not addressed, we risk *excluding* and *not inspiring*, a generation of people from the many benefits offered by taking part in sports. The message is clear: those involved in the running of sport must do more to show their commitment to tackling homophobia and encouraging gay people to take part in sport.

This research sets out a clear challenge to governing bodies, clubs and schools across Wales. We're very proud to have developed our partnership with Sport Wales and look forward to working with other sporting organisations throughout Wales in the coming years to help create a sporting culture where people can be themselves and reach their full potential.

*Andrew White, Director, Stonewall Cymru*

## Foreword – Sport Wales

At Sport Wales, we have a genuine commitment to making sport something that all people in our nation can enjoy. I believe that people's lives are richer for their involvement in sport and the benefits it brings, both socially and for their long-term health. Unfortunately we are also aware that sport can sometimes be an unwelcoming place for some people and this research, conducted in partnership with Stonewall Cymru, highlights some of the difficult issues that we need to tackle head-on.



Let's be clear: homophobia in sport is completely unacceptable. But it is not just such overtly negative attitudes; it is the more gentle 'banter' and old fashioned or uniform approaches to extending the appeal of sport that are revealed here. From schools to community sport, the sector has to do more to send out a clear message that we will promote sport for all people, tackle homophobia and proactively encourage a more open environment with positive gay role models within sport. We can no longer simply turn a blind eye to the experiences outlined in the following pages; we have a duty to act on them.

The relationship that we have developed with Stonewall Cymru has been based on a shared belief that sport can be and is a positive activity in the lives of lesbian, gay and bisexual people. This report will mark the beginning of a renewed effort to make sport welcoming for all people in Wales, ensuring that we are all sharing in the benefits that come from diverse sporting communities.

*Professor Laura McAllister, Chair, Sport Wales*

## Executive Summary

This research provides a glimpse into how lesbian, gay and bisexual (LGB) people living in Wales experience and view sport. The findings examine several key areas of the sport experience: current participation levels; what it is like to take part in club sports or team sports; school sport; stereotypes in sport; types of discrimination experienced by LGB individuals in sport; and LGB visibility in sport.

Lesbian, gay and bisexual people make up around 6% of the UK population<sup>i</sup>. Sexual orientation is defined as a protected characteristic in the Equality Act (2010), to protect individuals or groups of people from being discriminated against due to their sexual orientation.

A person's sexual orientation should not be a barrier to them participating in sport, watching sport, or excelling at sport; but prior research indicates that it is a barrier. Anti-gay or homophobic discrimination has been documented in a variety of sport settings, including schools (e.g. the Stonewall School Report, 2012) and clubs (e.g. Plummer, 2006). A report for the Equality Network (Smith et al., 2012)<sup>ii</sup> indicates that "while sport bodies are content to take positive action around equality in general there appears to be hesitancy on taking action related to sexual orientation".

This research was the result of a successful and enthusiastic partnership between Sport Wales and Stonewall Cymru, and is evidence of the benefits of sharing different expertise and knowledge.

We invited lesbian, gay and bisexual individuals living in Wales to share their views about sport by taking part in focus groups, semi-structured interviews or completing an online survey. The findings identify distinct areas of the sport sector where inequalities need to be addressed, but also identify the need for shared responsibility in tackling homophobia in sport.

### Current sports participation

The majority of lesbian, gay and bisexual respondents (94%) reported they have taken part in sport in the last 12 months; and over 80% said they think it is fun to take part in sport and important to take part in sport regularly. LGB individuals also expressed interest in participating and volunteering in sport more. There were some significant differences between lesbian and gay male respondents with regard to the ways that they currently take part in sport. For example, lesbians (42%) were significantly more likely than gay men (25%) to report that they are a member of a sports club, while gay men (59%) were significantly more likely than lesbians (40%) to be a member of a gym or leisure centre.

These findings demonstrate that there is a clear interest in sport within the LGB community. Differences in the membership profiles of club, gym and leisure centre settings however suggest that more work should be done to understand diversity within the LGB community. For example to understand whether the differences in the representation of lesbians and gay men in sports clubs are because of differences in taste, a lack of opportunity for gay men, or because lesbians tend to have more positive experiences in this setting?

## Sports clubs

Some LGB people reported positive experiences in team sports and club sports. The likelihood of having this positive experience, however, depended on factors such as the gender of the participant, the culture within the sport and the person's prior socialisation into sport. Many gay male participants suggested that they are doubly excluded from team sports: firstly because of their sexual orientation; and secondly because they feel that they lack the basic skills that their straight peers have. Some lesbian participants, on the other hand, perceived some women's team sports to be quite 'gay-friendly'. These sports were typically the same sports that gay men felt excluded from. Half of LGB respondents (51%) said they would be more likely to participate in club sport if other members were LGB; and 72% of LGB respondents said they would be more likely to participate in club sport if the club was marketed as inclusive of LGB people (or 'LGB-friendly').

Make all clubs LGBT friendly - many people assume if they don't state it, they aren't. Bisexual female, survey

Some gay men in this study revealed that they would be more likely to participate in a club primarily for LGB people because the expectations of their ability would be lower. The research suggests that where there is a demand for such clubs it would be appropriate to provide this. The sports sector should be clear, however, about how LGB sports clubs fit in with traditional sports clubs, and what support can be provided to them. There is also a broader issue around how mainstream clubs can become more inclusive and accessible, in order to attract a more diverse participant base in the first place.

## School sport experience

School sport is a major factor in why many gay men are turned off team sports. Those participants who had a negative experience of school sport were more likely to say that this influenced their future views of sport, than those who had a relatively positive experience. The latter would say something like, "I just always loved sport [...] from a very young age", rather than saying this was due to school. LGB individuals said they were often the target of abuse and exclusion in school, particularly in school sport. One of the main reasons cited for abuse or exclusion was that LGB people were considered 'different', because they didn't act like typical boys or typical girls. Both males and females said that gender normative behaviour was encouraged in school sport through the way that teachers behaved and having different sports for boys and girls.

I got verbal threats from people saying [...] "If you go in the changing room you're going to get beaten up." Gay male, focus group

Schools have a big role to play in improving sport experiences for young LGB people, and preventing them from being turned off sport. As the Stonewall School Report (2012) recommends, schools should acknowledge and identify the problem; address staff training needs; and promote a positive social environment in the context of PE and extracurricular sport.

## Stereotypes

Many sport stereotypes are based on traditional notions of gender and sexual orientation. People internalise these stereotypes, which adversely affects the diversity of people who take part in particular sports. Boys are expected to play rugby, because it is a 'macho' sport, and through playing it they can demonstrate their masculinity. Girls, on the other hand, are mocked for playing rugby or other 'male sports', because it betrays ideas of appropriate femininity. Participants told us that they feel sport reinforces rigid ideas of both gender and sexual orientation. For example, many participants made a direct association between men who play football or rugby, and men who are very 'masculine' and straight.

[...] People's image of a lesbian is that they're butch and sport's reinforcing that really. Gay male, interview

Participants told us that stereotypes are deep-rooted in sport. Many gay men said they have a narrow view of what sports are available to them because of stereotypes. The overall findings suggest that there is a link between stereotypes and a lack of diversity in sport. Stereotypes can be self-fulfilling prophecies. A more diverse experience of sport at a young age could challenge existing stereotypes and encourage a broader range of people to play sport.

## Discrimination in sport

This research found that 75% of LGB respondents have heard homophobic 'banter' while either watching or playing sport. Participants who were socialised into sport were relatively acclimatised to this banter. However, those 'outside sport' said that the 'banter' excludes gay people. Many LGB respondents described negative personal experiences in sport, which they felt occurred because of their sexual orientation. Gay men were more likely than other respondents to say that they have had negative experiences, and more likely to say that sport is not a safe environment for LGB individuals.

I'm too scared to test the theory so don't take part. Lesbian, survey respondent

The sport sector should consider what behaviours are excluding LGB people and what constitutes acceptable behaviour in sport. There is a real danger that if exclusive behaviours in sport persist, many LGB people will continue to view sport as the preserve of straight people, and continue to be turned off sport.

## LGB visibility in sport

LGB visibility in sport is important to lesbian, gay and bisexual people. Their participation could be increased if there were a stronger presence of LGB role models in grassroots and high-profile sports. Those 'outside sport' perceived their sexual orientation to be a barrier or risk to them taking part, particularly in team sports. Some gay men, who had tried to conceal their sexual orientation while taking part in team sports, said that they couldn't be themselves and their performance was hampered as a result.

The sports sector should send a strong message that LGB individuals have a place in sport; and one way this could be demonstrated is by supporting the development and promotion of LGB role models at all levels of sport.

Make it clear that sport isn't a preserve for straight men. More openly gay premiership football players would turn a corner.

Gay male, survey

## Conclusions and recommendations

An aspiration of the Vision for Sport in Wales is to see *every child hooked on sport for life*. We know from our research that LGB people are interested in sport, and furthermore there is demand from LGB people to participate and volunteer more in sport. We have found that many LGB individuals are being turned off sport, however, because they have experienced it to be and perceive it to be an unpleasant and unsafe environment for gay people.

There were differences in the experiences of males and females in our study. Many gay men, for example, faced discrimination in accessing 'masculine' sports because of a perception that they were not masculine enough. Lesbians, on the other hand, were sometimes welcomed into particular team sports, but were discriminated against from those outside sports who felt that participating in those sports was not 'feminine'. Both present real barriers to participation for LGB individuals, as well as anyone else who does not behave in ways considered by others to be gender-appropriate.

This research has identified many challenges for the sport sector. One of the most significant issues to tackle is behaviour change – in schools, in community sport and in professional sport. The sport sector alone cannot change the opinions and beliefs of every person involved in sport in Wales – but we can make a commitment to change our own behaviour, and to challenge the behaviour of others where it falls short of our expectations.

Our recommendations target where the most significant changes can be made, so that sport becomes – and is seen to become – a space where all people feel confident, safe and able to be themselves.

### National Governing Bodies should:

- Visibly demonstrate a commitment to tackling homophobia in sport and encourage LGB people to take part in sport
- Work with the media to improve the coverage of LGB issues in sport
- Train officials and stewards to identify and challenge homophobic language and abuse
- Support the creation of LGB sports clubs where there is appropriate demand

### Clubs should:

- Educate fans about the impact of anti-gay abuse and discrimination and clearly explain 'the rules of the game'

- Provide an accessible reporting mechanism for those who witness or experience homophobia at sporting venues
- Encourage all players to act as role models and visibly support the inclusion of LGB people in sport
- Promote volunteering opportunities to a diverse range of communities, including LGB communities

#### **National Governing Bodies and Clubs should:**

- Engage with the LGB community at events such as Pride and Mardi Gras and seek feedback from LGB spectators and players to improve their experiences in sport
- Engage with schools on the issue of homophobia in sport
- Support a Wales-wide LGB Sport Network, which will provide support to LGB people involved in sport, champion the issue of sexual orientation in sport, and challenge abuse or discrimination in sport
- Demonstrate their commitment to equality for lesbian, gay and bisexual employees; and develop good practice in LGB workplace equality through joining a programme such as Stonewall Cymru Diversity Champions

#### **Schools should:**

- Recognise the specific types of homophobia in Physical Education and equip PE teachers to identify and challenge homophobic bullying in a sport setting
- Provide pupils with a diverse range of sports to minimise stereotypes based on gender and sexual orientation
- Demonstrate their commitment to equality for their lesbian, gay and bisexual pupils and staff, and develop good practice through joining a programme such as Stonewall Cymru's Schools Champions programme

#### **Welsh Government should:**

- Develop a 'Sport Charter for Wales' and encourage sport organisations to display their commitment to furthering equality



## Introduction

# Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual (LGB) People in Sport: Understanding LGB sports participation in Wales

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*There are millions of sportsmen and women out there who could excel in certain sports and you're stopping it, you're preventing it, you're making it like a little [...] club where only boys like you or girls like you are allowed to play. Gay male, interview*

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## Introduction

The Vision for Sport in Wales is to unite a proud sporting nation, where every child is hooked on sport for life and Wales is a nation of champions. Equality objectives underpin this vision, and are clearly outlined in the Sport Wales Strategic Equality Plan. According to Brackenridge et al. (2008)<sup>iii</sup>, those working in the sport sector know considerably less about sexual orientation than other equality strands. A report from the Equality Network (2012) also indicates that “while sport bodies are content to take positive action around equality in general there appears to be hesitancy on taking action related to sexual orientation” (Smith et al., 2012)<sup>iv</sup>. The Equality Network, an organisation that advocates for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender rights in Scotland, has urged those in the sport sector to recognise that “there is no place for discrimination in sport and that increasing LGBT [lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender] participation is good for individuals [...and] good for sport” (Ibid.).

Several organisations have launched campaigns to tackle discrimination in sport on the grounds of sexual orientation, for example the Out in Sport campaign from the National Union of Students (NUS); the Justin Campaign, in honour of the late footballer Justin Fashanu; and Homophobia Let's Tackle It, from Show Racism the Red Card.

In March 2011, Sport Wales signed the Government Equalities Office Charter for Action. This called for action at every level to tackle homophobia and transphobia in sport. The Statements of Intent within the Charter for Action are:

- everyone should be able to participate in and enjoy sport
- sport is about fairness and equality, respect and dignity
- we will work together to rid sport of homophobia and transphobia
- we will make sport a welcome place for everyone

There is a catalogue of research documenting the experiences of LGB participants, spectators, coaches and volunteers; across a variety of sport settings such as schools, clubs and stadiums. Overall, the literature suggests

that homophobia and more subtle forms of exclusion occur in sport spaces, but are sometimes experienced differently by males and females, because of a gendered dimension to homophobic discrimination.

Two reports from Stonewall have shown evidence of homophobia and discrimination in schools, including Physical Education (PE) and extracurricular sport environments. The *School Report* (2012)<sup>v</sup> revealed that two thirds of young lesbian and gay people don't like playing team sports, and bullied pupils are 27 per cent more likely to say this. The *Teachers' Report* (2009)<sup>vi</sup> found that "boys who are academic, girls who play sports, young people with gay parents, friends or family members, and young people merely perceived to be gay are all victims of homophobic bullying".

"Boys who are academic, girls who play sports, young people with gay parents, friends or family members, and young people merely perceived to be gay are all victims of homophobic bullying" (Teachers' Report, 2009).

Homophobia has been found to be particularly prevalent in team sport environments (Plummer, 2006)<sup>vii</sup>. As found in the *Teachers' Report*, homophobia does not always target homosexuality. Plummer argued that homophobia is consistently used to "police the boundaries between 'successful manhood' and those who, according to their peers, fail to 'measure up'".

Similarly, Cashmore and Cleland (2011) found that homophobic abuse and banter in team sport cultures, such as football, is used as a 'legitimate' tool to enforce acceptable displays of masculinity<sup>viii</sup>. This was despite 93% of participants in that study saying that they opposed the idea of homophobia.

Researchers have observed that homophobic discrimination is typically gendered, for example "homophobic bullying is targeted at boys who are poor at or uninterested in sport and at girls who are good at and like sport" (Brackenridge et al., 2008).

"Homophobic bullying is targeted at boys who are poor at or uninterested in sport and at girls who are good at and like sport" (Brackenridge et al., 2008).

Norman (2011) identified that a lack of diversity within some sport professions, such as coaching, results in resistance against people who are 'different'<sup>ix</sup>, which could also be applied to participant and spectator cultures. In this study, lesbian coaches described feeling that their homosexuality had to be kept to themselves and be a "private sexuality", which they felt caused further marginalisation within their profession.

According to the UK Sports Network<sup>x</sup>, there are approximately 46 lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) sports groups in the UK, spanning a range of sports such as football, volleyball and boxing. Elling et al. (2003)<sup>xi</sup> studied the motivations for participation in categorical clubs (e.g. LGBT) versus mainstream sports clubs. The researchers found that "decisions to join a categorical gay sport club are not solely motivated by negative experiences", as might be presumed. There are 'pull factors' towards gay sports clubs and 'push factors' away from traditional sports clubs. Participants said that in their experience, mainstream sports environments were

“not so much a negative, homophobic and discriminatory, culture, but more an explicit heterosexual atmosphere in which they did not always feel comfortable”.

Overall, the literature described above suggests that homophobia and other forms of discrimination, such as exclusion, are present in sport spaces. A consequence of this is that LGB individuals already engaged with sport may feel marginalised, and those that are ‘outside sport’ may feel that they do not belong in these cultures.

The above research findings pose questions for the sport sector in Wales:

- What does LGB sport participation look like in Wales?
- What are the motivations and barriers for and against participation?
- What are LGB people’s experiences and views of mainstream and LGB sport clubs?
- What can we learn from LGB people’s experiences of school sport?
- What would LGB people like sport to look like?

These question areas have been used to guide the Sport Wales and Stonewall Cymru research.

## Methodology

This research adopted a mixed-methods approach, using semi-structured interviews, focus groups and an online survey to capture the views of LGB individuals. The fieldwork was carried out between June and August 2012, and the analysis conducted between August and September 2012. Two Sport Wales researchers analysed the data; after which the emerging findings were taken to a meeting of Sport Wales and Stonewall Cymru staff to discuss.

### Survey

The survey was open to anyone living in Wales, but participation was particularly encouraged for LGB individuals. In total, 242 people responded, of which 44% were female and 55% male. Some respondents (1%) described their gender using a different term, for example gender neutral or gender queer. In addition, two percent of respondents said their gender identity was not the same as the gender they were assigned at birth.

The majority of survey respondents identified as LGB: 24% lesbians/gay women<sup>1</sup>, 42% gay men and 10% bisexual. In addition, 18% of respondents identified as heterosexual/straight, 5% as ‘other term’ and 3% as ‘prefer not to say’. Other sexual orientations identified in the survey included pansexual and asexual.

The age of survey respondents ranged from a lower end of 16-19 years to an upper end of 70-74 years. The median age group for bisexual respondents was 20-24 years, compared with 30-34 years for gay men; 40-44 years for heterosexual/straight respondents; 30-34 years for lesbians; 45-49 years for those who would ‘prefer not to say’; and 30-34 years for those with ‘other sexual orientation’.

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<sup>1</sup> This term will be shortened to ‘lesbians’ for the remainder of the report, for readability.

There were more responses overall from gay men, compared with lesbians. However, there were more responses from females who identified as bisexual or heterosexual, which narrowed the gender gap to some extent. Overall, 25 more males than females responded to the survey.

The survey was an important tool for lesbian, gay and bisexual individuals to be able to share their views and experiences in an anonymous way; and particularly effective for capturing the experiences of LGB people who were not open about their sexual orientation.

### **Qualitative methods**

Five semi-structured interviews and three focus groups were carried out, with people of different ages, backgrounds and views about sport. The interviews and focus groups were recorded, with the informed consent of participants, and transcribed by an independent company.

The focus groups were with pre-existing groups of individuals: one sport specific group and two school 'equality' groups. It was important to the researchers that the participants were familiar with each other, and felt able to talk in a supportive environment. There was also a natural pull for the individuals towards these groups, in that they felt they had something in common with other members. Conducting interviews alongside the focus groups, allowed for a more in-depth discussion with individuals about sport at various life stages.

Similar numbers of male (18) and female (14) participants took part. The majority of participants identified as lesbian, gay or bisexual, though sexual orientation was not disclosed in each instance. The age of participants ranged between 13 and 50 years old.

### **Use of the data**

In the following report, survey data is not directly compared with national sport participation data, due to sampling differences. The survey data is primarily used to examine the similarities and differences within the LGB population. The report places a great deal of emphasis on the lived experiences and views of LGB participants, as the researchers feel that this is where we can gain the most insight. It is also important to note that the survey did not just ask questions about frequency and type of sport participation, but also asked about barriers to participation and personal experiences of sport. This data complements the qualitative interview and focus group data, and vice versa.



## Findings and Discussion

# Current sport participation

## What did we find?

- The majority of LGB respondents (94%) have taken part in some kind of sport or recreation in the last 12 months.
- The most popular activities are independent activities, such as running and jogging, swimming and attending the gym.
- Over 80% said that it is both fun to take part in sport, and important to take part in sport regularly.
- Three quarters of LGB respondents said that they would like to do more sport.
- 36% of LGB people said they would be interested in volunteering to help run a sport activity.

Just 6% of LGB survey respondents reported that they have not taken part in any sport or recreation in the last 12 months. Overall, the most popular activities for LGB respondents were walking (69%), running and jogging (60%), indoor fitness activities e.g. classes, weights, gym (55%) and swimming (53%). These activities are similar to the most popular activities within the general population, as identified by the Active Adults Survey (2008/09)<sup>2</sup>: walking, exercise and fitness, swimming, cycling, football and jogging. Lesbians (30%) were more likely than gay men (18%) to have taken part in formal team sports; and lesbians (44%) were significantly more likely than gay men (21%) to have taken part in informal team sports.

The survey identified participation differences between lesbian, gay and bisexual respondents, in several sport settings. Lesbians (42%) were significantly more likely than gay men (25%) to report that they are a member of a sports club that specialises in one or more sports. While gay men (59%) were more likely to be a member of a gym or leisure centre than bisexual respondents (43%); and significantly more likely than lesbians (40%). These differences are illustrated in *Chart 1*.



Chart 1: Membership

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.sportwales.org.uk/research--policy/surveys-and-statistics/statistics.aspx>

The majority of LGB survey respondents agreed with the statements that *it's fun to take part in sport* (80%) and *it's important to take part in sport regularly* (82%). The most popular reason LGB participants (89%) cited for taking part in sport or physical activity was to *keep fit*. While, 58% of LGB respondents said that they take part in sport because they want to *socialise or be with friends*. Gay men (29%) were significantly less likely than lesbians (47%) to say that they take part in sport because they *enjoy the competition*.

When respondents were asked whether they would do more sport if they had the necessary minimum skill base / competency: 26% of gay men and 17% of bisexual respondents agreed, compared with 2% of lesbians. Gay men (25%) and bisexual respondents (22%) were also the most likely to say that one motivation for playing sport is to acquire new skills, compared with lesbians (16%). *Chart 2* below demonstrates these differences. Overall, these findings suggest that 'a lack of competency in sport' and 'a desire to develop competency in sport' are more significant factors for gay men, and to some extent bisexual respondents, compared with lesbians. The most striking differences, however, are between gay male respondents and lesbians. This is examined further in later sections on *Sports Clubs* and *School Sport Experience*.

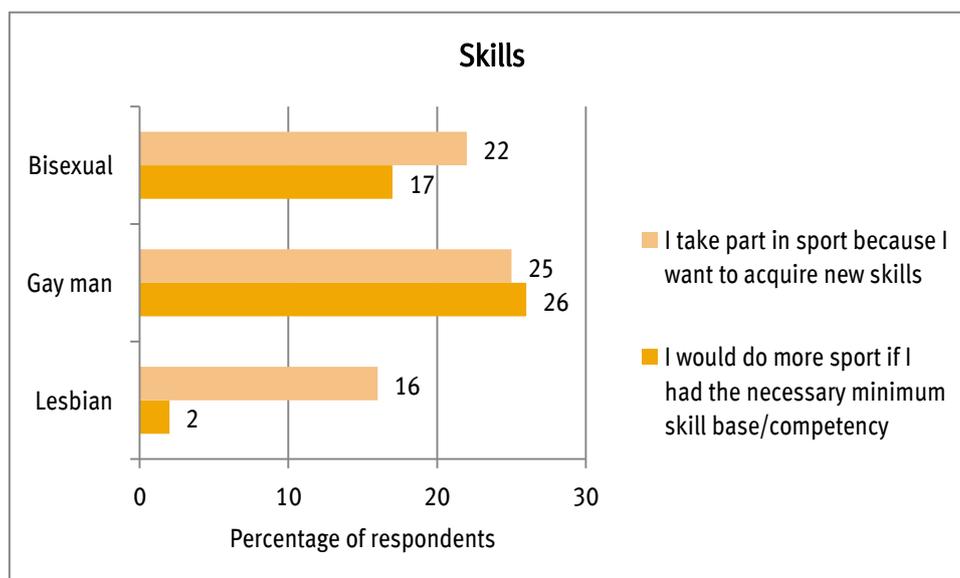


Chart 2: Skills to play sport

The majority of LGB respondents (73%) reported wanting to take part in more sport. LGB respondents said that *friendlier clubs* (25%) and *having more confidence* (33%) would increase the likelihood of them doing more sport. Gay men (40%) were significantly more likely than lesbians (22%) to cite increased confidence as a factor that would facilitate participation. Similarly, gay men (33%) were significantly more likely than lesbians (10%) to say that friendlier clubs would facilitate participation in sport.

Nearly a quarter of LGB respondents (23%) said that they have helped to run sporting activities on an unpaid basis in the past 12 months; and over one third of LGB respondents (36%) said they would be interested in spending more time helping groups, clubs or organisations associated with sport.

## What does this mean?

Overall, the findings in this section demonstrate that lesbian, gay and bisexual respondents have an interest in participating and volunteering in sport. There is also evidence of latent demand which means that under the right circumstances, LGB individuals may participate more and volunteer more than they currently do in sport.

The findings also illustrate some differences within the LGB population, adding depth to our understanding of sexual orientation and sport. Although there are no significant differences in the overall participation levels of lesbian, gay and bisexual respondents, there is evidence to suggest that particular groups

I'm glad there's [...] an effort being made to see what [...] opinions are [...and] an effort being made to improve [LGB participation].

Lesbian, interview

may be under-represented in some settings. There are also early indications that gay men feel some barriers to sport more acutely than other orientation groups. This will be followed up in subsequent chapters.

# Sports clubs

## What did we find?

- Being LGB and participating in sport at a club can be a positive experience; however this may depend on the culture within that particular sport.
- Many gay male participants say they feel subject to double exclusion from team sports due to their sexual orientation and lack of sport ability compared with straight peers.
- 72% of LGB respondents said they would be more likely to participate in a club if it was marketed as *LGB-friendly*.
- 51% of LGB respondents would be more likely to participate if the club was *primarily for LGB individuals*.

## Participation in sports clubs

Only a few focus group and interview participants said that they regularly participate or have participated in mainstream sports clubs: one bisexual male, one gay male and two lesbian participants. These participants tended to be people who had been socialised into sport from a young age, and showed a certain level of ability in that sport. They also tended to regard sport as a “massive part of [...their] social life”.

The experiences described by participants were quite different, and suggested that gender was a strong factor in the type of experience they had. So too was the type of sport they chose, the culture within that sport and the way that they behaved in their teams.

For example, two lesbian sports club participants said that in their experience, sexual orientation was not an issue in women’s rugby and football “because about half the women in the team were gay or bisexual”. Both participants said that when they played with their club, team-mates knew their sexual orientation but “nobody even batted an eyelid”. However, neither of these participants spoke specifically about *coming out* to their team-mates, they just implied that their sexual orientation was *known*.

The gay and bisexual male participants, on the other hand, either said that they were *not out* at the time of playing and tried to *blend* in with their straight team-mates, or *were out* to their team-mates but experienced banter about their sexual orientation.

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*I got away with refereeing [...] for 20 years. Not one person would think that I was gay.*  
*Gay male, focus group*

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Many gay male participants felt that their sexual orientation would exclude them from participation in sport at mainstream clubs. This was partly because they felt gay men weren’t exposed to team sports in the same ways as their peers in school, and also because they felt that straight men wouldn’t accept a gay man on their team.

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*I don't think many of the gay people would [...] have the confidence to walk up to their local rugby team and go, "I'd like to have a game please. Gay male, interview*

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### **Sports clubs primarily for LGB people**

Members of an 'LGBT-friendly' sport club took part in one of the focus groups. They explained that core members of the sports club were gay men, though some heterosexual/straight men, and women of different orientations also played with the team. One participant in the focus group identified as a straight female, and the remainder identified as gay males.

Participants identified various motivations for setting up the club including providing something for the gay community; an alternative space to gay bars and clubs; a social outlet; and a space where people could enjoy the sport without their sexual orientation being a barrier. The offer of this LGB club was tailored towards the needs of the participants, rather than the needs of the club.

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*[...] You can get out of it what you want to get out of it; if you are here for the social element and you want to meet new people [...] you get that. But if you want to play football and [...] be competitive with your football, it offers that as well. Gay male, focus group*

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The focus group said it was important to them that their club was more inclusive than mainstream sports clubs. Several participants said they felt that they were excluded from school sport because of their sexual orientation, and the effect of this was that they didn't get the opportunity to gain basic sports skills. These gay men perceive mainstream clubs to comprise of people who have a minimum competency, which deters people like themselves who feel they lack basic skills. This highlights an *ability barrier* for gay men. A Sport Wales paper on Thriving Clubs, found that "those young people identified as 'good' at sport by others are more likely to join clubs, and remain within clubs"<sup>xii</sup>. This complements the evidence in this LGB research, that there is a link for many people between perceived ability and sports club participation.

The focus group described their LGB team as quite distinct from mainstream teams; and the individuals within the team as quite different to many people in the gay community.

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*I know a lot of people [...] gay men especially who want to be involved in sport and who are into football and all that. [They are...] not necessarily the people who [...] go to the gay bars and socialise in that way. So [...] they don't meet [...] like-minded people in those places. Whereas if they join a club like ours then there is an opportunity to do so. And I've certainly met a lot of people [I] probably wouldn't have met [...] in [...] normal gay channels [...]. Gay male, focus group*

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*We are a community within ourselves. Gay male, focus group*

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The group suggested that the existence of a gay sport club challenged stereotypes about gay men and also helped to persuade gay men that they have a place in sport too, despite early socialisation or perceptions to the contrary.

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*It is [about] involving as many people as we can and making the organisation [...] something for the gay community. Gay male, focus group*

*So [gay people] can see [...] that they have a place in [sport]. And I think you know that is why we are important, isn't it? Gay male, focus group*

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One participant recounted what it was like when his gay sports team came into contact with a mainstream sports team. At first, the players from this other team were shocked that gay men played team sport. Then, as the quote below demonstrates, the gay team gained some acceptance by behaving in an archetypal masculine fashion, thus being less of a threat to the masculinity of the mainstream sport space than originally presumed.

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*I think because we drank harder and faster than them, and we were louder and more raucous during the game and we put more money behind the bar than they'd ever had behind the bar, I think they were like, "Oh, you're not too bad actually." Gay male, interview*

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Participants indicated that it is important to have defined 'gay spaces', for instance they identified the gay bar and the gay sports club. Participants suggested that the types of people who attend a gay bar and the types of people who attend a gay sports club are quite different; and so too are their motivations for attending. Club members in the focus group saw themselves as slightly on the periphery of gay culture, but also on the periphery of traditional sport cultures. The latter provokes some uncertainty about where gay sports teams fit in with traditional sport structures, and what support they can access/or are aware that they can access.

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*But it's difficult [...] because you need pitch facilities, changing facilities, all that kind of stuff. And you [...] almost need to forge a link with a local team to agree to share their training facilities. And that's a tricky one. Gay male, interview*

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The above illustrates that although gay sports teams may be utilising some of the same physical spaces as mainstream sports teams, for example a rugby or football pitch, they operate within different structures. The participants explained that there are separate 'gay leagues' for men in both football and rugby, which provide an opportunity for players to explore the competitive elements of the sport, as well as the chance to socialise and visit different parts of the country. This reflects the motivations of many people who take part in sport in mainstream clubs, but in the parallel structure of a 'gay space'.

In gay spaces, sexual orientation is typically the main organising factor. Participants indicated that they sought *similar* people in the gay sports club, alluding to meeting people with shared experiences, such as coming out. However, participants also said that playing for the LGB-friendly team removed the issue of sexual orientation altogether. These reflections were somewhat contradictory, but suggested that being gay is a *pull* towards an LGB team and a *push* away from mainstream teams.

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*It is just a social outlet [...] that is away from gay bars and gay clubs really. And it is one of [...] the only other social outlets [...] than gay bars in Cardiff. Gay male, focus group*

*[...] there is a need to connect with others like you. Gay male, interview*

*I think it is unusual actually – they both contrast each other. [...]One is about [...] drinking and doing things that you really shouldn't be doing you know? And [...] the other is about promoting [...] a healthy lifestyle and socialising. So it is quite strange how they are both on different ends of the scale. Gay male, focus group*

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The majority of members said they had very little experience of team sport before joining the LGB club, aside from school sport.

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*[...] It does knock your confidence if [...] people are angry with you for not making the right pass etc. [...] I think it starts in school really. Gay male, focus group*

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The online survey found that gay men were more likely than other respondents to say that they dislike competition, as highlighted in the section on *Current Sports Participation*. However, members of the LGB sports club offered a more in-depth understanding of this. They suggested that it is only certain types of competition that put gay men off. Participants perceived competition in traditional team sport environments to be non-supportive and quite negative, and said they developed this view from their school sport experiences. They perceived competition in the LGB club, on the other hand, to be healthy and supportive.

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*[...] Where I was playing before it was a bit too competitive; but competitive in the wrong kind of sense. [The gay team is] competitive but we realise [that...] nobody is going to be a premiership football star; so we can just get on with enjoying it. Gay male, focus group*

*I think competitiveness has its place. But I think that people who are not going to be premiership footballers, or in the first team in football in school should feel appreciated; and feel that there is value in them playing sports as well. And that it is not just about being good. Gay male, focus group*

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*I don't think anybody minds competition. I think gays are as competitive as the rest of them. In different ways. And I think competition's healthy and it's good and people need to understand sometimes you lose. Because that's life. But invariably, if you're gay, you end up doing drama. Gay male, interview*

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The focus group had very inclusive attitudes about the desired make-up of their club, though described some obstacles in trying to translate this into inclusive behaviour. For example, some of the gay leagues had traditionally been men-only, which meant that women could practice with their LGB team but not play in matches. The members said that although some leagues now accepted mixed teams, many gay teams were still men-only. This means that in practice, levels of inclusion differ from club-to-club and while a club may be advertised as LGB friendly, it may not truly cater for women:

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*[...] There are issues with women playing in male leagues [...]. Gay male, focus group*

*[...] On some of the tournaments we have gone along to, we are the only team that have women involved. Gay male, focus group*

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The online survey found that lesbians were significantly more likely than gay men to be a member of a sports club, as highlighted in the section on *Current Sports Participation*. However, the survey also revealed that gay male and bisexual respondents (48%) were more likely than lesbians (35%) to be a member of a non-sport group or club. This could suggest that there are specific characteristics about sports clubs that are more likely to exclude gay men than lesbians; or could indicate that there is something about the 'offer' of a sports club that appeals more to lesbians than to gay men.

### **Inclusive sports clubs**

Survey respondents were presented with two hypothetical sports clubs, and asked if they would be likely to participate in sport at these clubs. The first was labelled the *LGB-friendly* sports club; which was a mainstream sports club that was inclusive of LGB people, and marketed in this way. The second referred to a club where the membership was primarily (but not exclusively) LGB individuals.

Overall, 72% of LGB respondents said that they would be more likely to participate if the club was marketed as LGB-friendly and 51% said they would be more likely if the sport club was primarily for LGB individuals. These figures are broken down by sexual orientation in *Chart 3* and *Chart 4*.

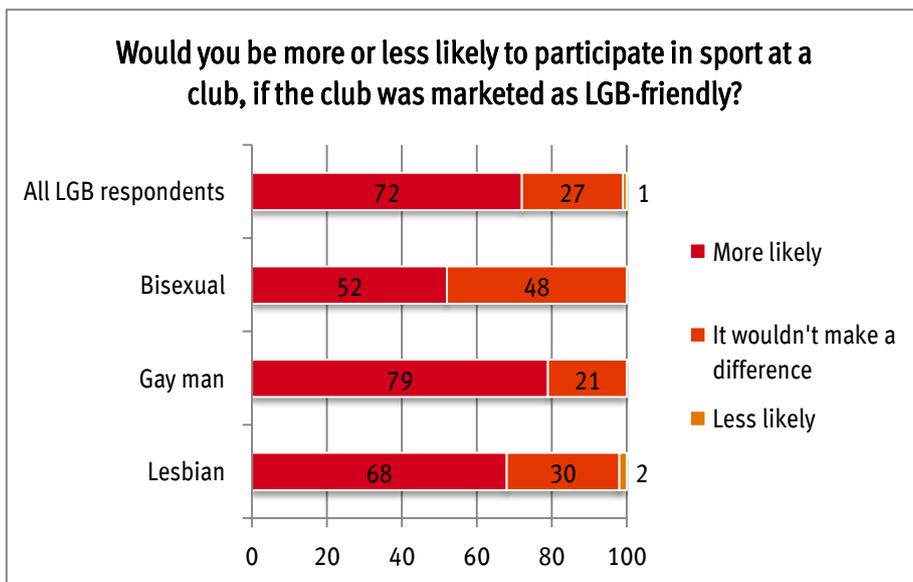


Chart 3: LGB-friendly sports clubs

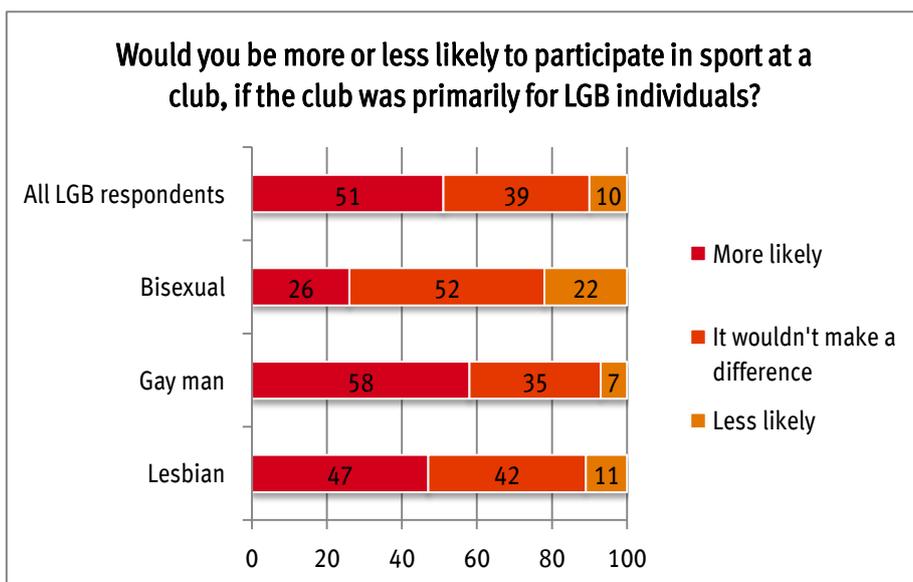


Chart 4: Sports clubs primarily for LGB individuals

A large majority of LGB respondents reported that they would like to see sports clubs being marketed as *inclusive of LGB people* (or LGB-friendly), which would suggest that many LGB people currently see mainstream sports clubs as un-friendly towards LGB people.

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*Make all clubs LGBT friendly - many people assume if they don't state it, they aren't.*  
 Bisexual female, survey

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## What does this mean?

Many of the gay male participants in the focus groups and interviews perceived their sexual orientation to be a barrier to mainstream club participation. They also identified that a lack of ability or basic skills prevented them from pursuing mainstream club sports. Much of this stemmed from exclusion in school sport; which resulted in a lack of opportunity and confidence to develop their skills. LGB sports club participants said they chose to play with other LGB people over a mainstream club because they felt the expectations of their ability would be lower and they wouldn't be judged.

Where there is a demand for LGB sports clubs, it would be appropriate to provide this. However, we would need a better understanding of how LGB clubs and leagues could be supported by National Governing Bodies (NGBs) and the wider sport sector.

The majority of respondents said that they would favour a club which markets itself as *LGB-friendly*, over a club that is specifically for LGB people. A broader issue, therefore, would be to consider how mainstream clubs can be more accessible, inclusive and diverse. Creating clubs that are genuinely LGB-friendly would challenge perceptions of team sports in the gay community and expand the potential customer base. In order to achieve this, clubs would need practical support and guidance on how to deal with homophobic discrimination and how to support someone that would like to come out or has come out within their team.

# School sport experience

## What did we find?

- Many LGB people have negative perceptions of team sports in physical education (PE), which they say has influenced their long-term views of sport.
- School sport is a major factor in why many gay men have been *turned off sport*.
- LGB participants said they often felt let down by their PE teachers, who they felt tolerated bullying, harassment and exclusion more in PE, than other school lessons.
- LGB participants feel that advocating different sports for boys and girls in PE reinforces gender stereotypes. This causes the exclusion of young people who don't conform.
- The word 'gay' is synonymous with 'rubbish' and 'weak' in schools. This has particular currency in PE and is used by some pupils to identify those that aren't as good as them at sports.

Participants reflected on their experiences of school sport in the focus groups and interviews. This part of their childhood and teenage years had more significance in the discussions than other experiences during this period (e.g. with friends, family etc). Those participants who had a negative experience of school sport were more likely to say that this influenced their future views of sport, than those who had a relatively positive experience. The latter would say something like, "I just always loved sport [...] from a very young age", rather than saying this was due to school. This mirrors a finding from the *Sport Wales Attitudes to School Sport* paper<sup>xiii</sup> that those who disengage from sport tend to cite their experiences of PE as a major influence.

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*I suspect most gay people who have negative feelings about competitive sport remember [...] school [and...] sadistic sports teachers. Gay male, survey*

*A lot of people seem to be traumatised by their experiences of PE at school so I think it would be a good idea to address that. Lesbian, survey*

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## Secondary school PE

Many of the interviews and focus groups featured discussions about the transition from mixed sex PE classes in primary school to single sex classes in secondary school. For participants, the transition symbolised the separation of boys and girls; and gendered PE activities (e.g. rugby and football for boys, netball and hockey for girls). On the whole, participants felt that the gendering of sport in secondary school had an adverse effect on their experience of PE, and made PE stand-alone from other lessons in school. Participants said that different activities for boys and girls limited their options in finding a sport that they liked, and also marked them out as *different* if they were interested in a sport deemed appropriate for the opposite sex.

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*[...] We do gymnastics, we do netball. [But...] I don't like gymnastics and netball [...] I like football and the girls don't do football. Lesbian, focus group*

*You need to stop the gender split, stop insisting that certain sports are for boys and certain sports are for – for girls. Gay male, interview*

---

The majority of participants said that it would benefit young people if everyone had the opportunity to do the same sports, and sometimes had the opportunity to take part in non-competitive, mixed PE classes. Overall, participants felt that more diverse experiences of sport in school would make sport more enjoyable and accessible for pupils, regardless of their gender and sexual orientation.

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*I used to play football and as soon as I went to high school there wasn't that option anymore because they just split it into boys do this, girls do that. It's very clearly divided so it targets people. Female, focus group*

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## **Vulnerability**

Participants talked about some of their more distressing experiences of PE, including bullying, harassment and exclusion. There were two particular environments within PE where these types of behaviours were prevalent – the changing rooms, and the playing fields. Participants said that teachers had little or no presence in changing rooms, which meant that changing rooms were a space where teasing and intimidation could easily occur.

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*I got verbal threats from people saying [...] “If you go in the changing room you're going to get beaten up.” Gay male, focus group*

*You're in a room full of other girls changing and [...] I remember one time when I finished getting changed and I was just sat there waiting for the teacher to come back in and [...]some of the popular girls [...] accuse[d] [me] of being a lesbian because [...I was] sat there. Female, focus group*

*That was horrendous. Having showers with everybody. [...] everybody's pointing and staring, and it makes you very self-conscious [...]. So I just hated anything to do with PE. Gay male, interview*

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On the playing fields, participants (particularly male participants) said that PE often got too physical and they were vulnerable to “covert bullying”.

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*[...] some of the bigger first team would just take the ball and plough through the smaller people. And then when they [...hit] the floor, everyone just [laughed]. Male, focus group*

*It's just an excuse to be physical, because it's contact and you can [...] hurt someone without getting in trouble. Male, focus group*

*Boys started to use rugby as a way to [...] get at you. [...] It was the only way [...] they could physically harm you without getting punished. Gay male, focus group*

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This is a useful insight into the spaces within the PE environment where pupils – especially LGB pupils – can feel vulnerable.

### **Gender norms**

Participants reported that pupils are often excluded by their peers if they don't behave in a gender appropriate way, i.e. like a typical boy or a typical girl. According to participants, the gendered nature of PE lessons makes nonconforming behaviour even more noticeable. Discussions with participants who are currently in school indicated that boys are expected to like sport, be good at sport and participate in masculine sports such as football and rugby.

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*[...] they automatically assume "Well he's gay then if he does dancing and stuff." So he got [...] self-conscious and [...] he didn't want people to know and judge him. Female, focus group*

*The ones that are crap at sport tend to have a shit time in school because they're not the full man. Gay male, interview*

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Girls, on the other hand, can show an interest in sport, but only the right types of sport; and not be so aggressive in their pursuit of sport that it undermines their femininity.

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*But they don't realise how [...] calling them a man affects them. [...] Just because [girls...] play rugby it shouldn't mean that they're any different. Female, focus group*

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One set of participants from a school focus group discussed girls playing hockey. There was a palpable sense that the participants were uncomfortable with the aggressive/violent/scary and unfeminine image associated with girls playing hockey. The same conversation probably wouldn't have happened about boys playing a physical sport, because aggression and violence are considered to be *masculine* traits.

*Conversation:*

*Girl 1: Yeah, we're quite aggressive in hockey [...]*

*Boy 1: Girls playing hockey is scary.*

*Boy 2: Yeah, they'll go for the shins, won't they?*

*Girl 1: It's violent.*

*Boy 3: Athletic girls [...] can get really aggressive.*

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Gay male participants said that there were high expectations of boys in sport to be masculine and good at sport. Several gay male participants said that they disengaged from sport because both their sexual orientation and relative lack of ability marked them out as unmasculine and unsuitable for sport.

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*You feel that you can't participate, and that you shouldn't participate, and that [...] you should be doing art or [...] making daisy chains on the cricket pitch, instead of paying attention. Gay male, interview*

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Gay men said that their experiences of feeling excluded or cut off from sport occurred throughout secondary school. Therefore their experiences could not be explained by one poor teacher or one poor PE class.

These participants remembered that they had tried some individual sports in school that they enjoyed, but were either not given the support to continue with them, or were excluded from them by others.

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*I was [...] doing gym lessons in the evening because I really liked gymnastics. [...] And when it came to the summer and we started going indoors, I thought, I'll show them [...]. I was thinking right, I'm going to do a head spring, I'm going to show 'em, and I went to run and I got pushed from behind and went flat on my face. And so I thought, sod it, so I walked up to the spring board, half jumped over it, clambered over the horse and went, there you go. There you go, you're right, I can't do it, sod you, why should I even try when you've got me like this – and it was – it was one disappointment after another. Gay male, interview*

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One participant said that she “used to horseride [...and] never had any problems with that [...whereas in school] it's easier [...for other pupils] to pick up on certain things that are different about you”. Another participant in the same focus group said that she attends an exercise class in the community, and often confides in the instructor about problems at school. Both of these participants indicated that they have disengaged from school sport, but

have pursued sport in the community. While it is positive that they haven't lost interest in sport altogether, it is disappointing that they could not feel supported to take part in school sport, which should be open to all.

### Self-exclusion

Several LGB participants said that they excluded themselves from PE because they thought they didn't have the skills to take part. Survey respondents were asked whether they agreed or disagreed with the statement *sport is only for people who are good at it*. A significant minority of gay men (19%) and bisexual respondents (17%) said that sport is only for people who are good at it, compared with a smaller minority of lesbians (5%).

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*[...] Generally in sport, if you're not in the A team, the teachers couldn't give a toss. Because it's all about getting [...] trophies for the school, not about actually getting you interested in exercise and activity and participating in sports. Gay male, interview*

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Some gay male participants in the interviews and focus groups said they felt nervous about playing sport in school because they thought it would make them stand out even more. They felt anxious that they would be spotted as *different*, as gay.

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*[...] I didn't try because I didn't want to get noticed. [...Joining in] almost felt like you were actually signposting yourself to the bully. Gay male, focus group*

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### Teachers

Research participants felt that PE teachers paid more attention to pupils who were good at sport, and overlooked others. This experience was true regardless of the pupil's sexual orientation.

Several participants felt that PE teachers' attitudes regulated the behaviour of pupils. For example, one teacher said that it was an "odd choice" for a boy to choose to do a musical over a sport.

Participants described some of their male teachers as very masculine: "*jocks*", "*manly*", and "*the kings of high school*". They equated this masculine behaviour with *overt* heterosexuality. Participants were reluctant to say that their teachers were homophobic, but many of their descriptions suggested that male PE teachers' behaviours were 'not quite right'.

Research participants also said they had little confidence in the way that their teachers dealt with homophobia in school. One participant told his teacher that he had been threatened in PE because he was gay. The teacher removed him from lessons and not the pupils who threatened him. He said that the teacher didn't even ask the names of the other pupils.

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*I don't do PE because when I came out I got verbal threats from people saying [...] "If you go in the changing room you're going to get beaten up". So I told my teacher[s]*

*[...and] they [...came] up with a compromise that [...] I would go over to a different room, change and go back. [...] This year I've been [...] helping out in [the Learning Development Centre...instead of doing] PE.” Gay male, focus group*

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### **‘Gay’ used as a slang word**

Participants who were in school at the time of this research reported that the word ‘gay’ is commonly used as a negative adjective in school PE, supporting the findings of the *Stonewall Cymru School Report* (2012). For example, pupils who are not very good at doing something in PE might be called ‘gay’. Other meanings of gay in this context are ‘rubbish’ and ‘weak’. Boys and girls are also called ‘gay’ if they do something associated with the opposite sex, for example, a girl playing a *male* sport such as rugby might be called ‘gay’.

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*If [girls...] like all the sports that the boys do they will say “Ah are you gay?” And then [...] if [the boys are...] good at gymnastics and stuff [...] the boys will call them gay because they like girly sports. Lesbian, focus group*

*[...] If you weren't very good at a certain sport that everyone else was good at and [it would] be - “Oh you're so gay, you're not good at football.” Gay male, focus group*

*[...] They say it's got two meanings, happy and then homosexual. But it's probably got three, because they're not actually saying “Ah, so and so is gay” [...] they're sort of saying it as a negative adjective. Male, focus group*

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The gendered nature of PE and the natural focus of ability and competition mean that slang use of the word ‘gay’ has a lot of currency in school sport. Participants felt that widespread use of this word in a negative way made it seem like being gay was a bad thing. Therefore, even though pupils may not be saying ‘gay’ with the intention of deriding gay people – that is the outcome.

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*It's just become [...] part of their everyday language without them actually thinking or analysing what it is they're saying and like the implication that being gay is bad or wrong or there's something wrong with it. Lesbian, interview*

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Several pupils said they would be comfortable challenging slang use of the word ‘gay’, and have done in the past, however there was little confidence in how teachers would deal with it. In one school there was a rule banning inappropriate use of the word ‘gay’, but participants explained that teachers applied the rule inconsistently.

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*The teachers [...] just roll their eyes [...]. Female, focus group*

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*[...]Some of the teachers will [...] pick up on people using it negatively but some won't. [...]If someone said "Ah that like the pen won't work, oh that's so gay, this pen won't work." [...] The teacher will just go "Oh just have another pen." And they won't like they'll just laugh and whatever. Or they'll just...just... They won't pick up on the fact that they're using it negatively or anything. Lesbian, focus group*

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Other participants reflected that it was wrong for pupils to use the word 'gay' in negative ways, though admitted to having previously used it themselves. The participants felt that it was most inappropriate when someone gay could be present. This showed some awareness of the homophobic connotations of the slang word, but also suggested that they didn't recognise that something could be offensive even if it was not about a particular person or directed at a particular person.

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*[...] People don't mean it as 'they're homosexual', they mean it as "You did something wrong and we thought that wasn't good". [...] But yes a gay person would find it quite offensive. Male, focus group*

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Pupils said that teachers' tolerance for the word 'gay' in this negative context, was sending the message to pupils that being gay is a bad thing and that homophobia in schools is ok. Current pupils felt that homophobia was taken less seriously in schools than other issues such as racism.

### **What does this mean?**

There is evidence of homophobia and discrimination in schools, particularly in school sport environments. LGB people said that they feel or have felt vulnerable to discrimination in PE because of the simplistic views perpetuated about gender and sexual orientation in sport. Participants feel that all pupils would benefit from a more diverse secondary school sport experience.

The Stonewall School Report made several recommendations for tackling homophobia in schools. Several of these could make a real difference to the experience of young LGB people in PE and extracurricular school sport activities and prevent them from disengaging from sport before adulthood.

- Acknowledge and identify the problem. "Schools should acknowledge that homophobic bullying occurs in schools and take steps to prevent it, and respond to it."
- Promote a positive social environment. "Even if a gay pupil has not been bullied, a culture of homophobia has an impact on their sense of belonging at a school. [...] Staff should feel able to contribute towards a social environment where gay people, and gay issues, are respected."
- Address staff training needs. "School staff need training to help them respond to, and prevent, homophobic bullying and support lesbian, gay and bisexual pupils."

# Stereotypes

## What did we find?

- Many sport stereotypes are based on traditional ideas of gender and sexual orientation.
- Stereotypes are perpetuated in sport by a lack of diversity, and are internalised by members of the LGB community and the wider community.
- Many people in the LGB community say they have a narrow view of what sports are available to them because of stereotypes.

Participants said that gender and sexual orientation stereotypes in sport influence their perceptions of sport and the way that they choose to participate (or not). Participants also said they feel that stereotypes are used in sport to exclude or marginalise lesbian, gay and bisexual people.

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*There might be a certain degree of naturalness [...] to sexual stereotypes 'cause they must've come from somewhere. But [there are...] so many people who don't conform [...that] it seems very unhelpful [...] to have [stereotypes...] so ingrained in people's brains. Lesbian, interview*

*[...] The stereotypes that have been imposed upon us [...] are not applicable [...] to everyone. Gay male, focus group*

*[...] There are variations within every minority. [...] There are little subcultures in every single minority. Gay male, focus group*

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A range of stereotypes taken from participants' transcripts are described below.

Many gay male participants said that there is a widespread stereotype that gay men can't play physical team sports, because they are not masculine/macho enough. The *effeminate or camp stereotype* of a gay man is at odds with the stereotype of a sportsman.

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*[...] They see the macho thing around the football team. And the competitive nature of the rugby team, or [...] the aggressive nature; and they start to define themselves in opposition to that. Gay male, focus group*

*Make it clear that sport isn't a preserve for straight men. More openly gay premiership football players would turn a corner. Gay male, survey*

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Another stereotype is that gay men aren't interested in team sports; they are more naturally drawn towards independent activities such as the gym. Gay men who took part in this study, however, said they are not innately averse to team sports, but they have *learned* that team sports are not appropriate activities for gay men. This stereotype has been internalised by many people in gay and sporting communities; and is being perpetuated by a lack of gay visibility in team sports. This stereotype has important implications for sport: firstly, gay men are excluding themselves from team sport because they feel it is not a gay activity, not because they don't have a desire to try the sport; and secondly, clubs are overlooking an untapped customer base. In the survey, gay men (29%) were significantly more likely than lesbians (10%) to say that they would do more sport if they were asked to take part. Gay men telling us that they feel they need to be asked to take part in sport, indicates that stereotypes are quite deep-rooted in sport and are real barriers to taking part.

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*My rejection of sport was absolute. To a degree it still is. If someone says, "Are you going to watch the tennis?" I say, "No, I'm a gay man; I have no interest in sport". Gay male, interview*

*[We get...] Drag Queens [...] commenting about the gay football teams. And I think okay I know it is taken in jest. But [...] it is kind of reinforcing the stereotype that a gay person shouldn't be in the sport. [...] It comes from within your own community. Gay male, focus group*

*[...] They basically thought it would be funny to watch a gay boy playing football. [...] They invited me along because they thought it would be funny. [...] I am not the manliest of men ever [...] I do have my very camp moments. [But...] I am not like that on the football pitch. Gay male, focus group*

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One participant, who takes part in sport at a mainstream sports club, said he has experienced 'banter' about his sexual orientation. He said that his team-mates joke because he *does not conform* to the stereotype that gay men are 'camp' and can't play sport. Though the participant perceived this as good-natured 'banter', the nature of it is clearly exclusionary. Frequent banter about his sexual orientation reminds the team that he is different, reminds them of his 'otherness', and also *gently* regulates what is deemed to be acceptable behaviour in the team: i.e. *a camp gay person* would not be an appropriate member of their team.

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*[...] Whenever it's been directed at me it's always been meant in jest. And the joke was always more laughing at the stereotype rather than laughing at the person. Bisexual male, interview*

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Many stereotypes in sport revert to ideas of gender-appropriate behaviours and activities. For example, some sports are considered to be male pursuits (e.g. football), and others are considered to be female pursuits (e.g. gymnastics). One might assume that this is largely the result of particular sports historically being dominated by

one sex. However, many sports have been described by participants as being inherently feminine or masculine, which means that further judgements are being made about the qualities needed to play the sport. This is influencing types of people who access these sports.

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*[They see...] this girl as a lot more manly because she plays rugby. Female, focus group*

*But that's what sport was, wasn't it? If you were [...] male, sport [was] rugby and football. I didn't realise that things like tennis and swimming and cycling were sport. Gay male, interview*

*I go dancing and a couple of boys from my school [...] go and [...] people instantly think that they're gay but then they're not. So it's like really stereotypical. Female, focus group*

*I know two [...girls who] went over to do rugby and they got loads of abuse [and it was...] said that they were a lesbian 'cause they chose to do like a masculine sport. Female, focus group*

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One participant suggested that 'male activities' are more valued in society – giving the example that there is a push for females to do 'male sports', but it rarely happens the other way around.

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*[...] A lot goes back to sexism basically [...] in that anything that's considered female or feminine is considered weak and not as good as the male. Gay male, interview*

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Female participants, however, reported that women and girls are mocked for being involved with some sports, and will be called a lesbian or a man so that people can draw attention to their transgression. This shows a lack of tolerance for people who step outside the boundaries of gender-normative behaviour in sport. Some women and girls continue to play sport despite being mocked, but many others are being *turned off*.

Further to this, some participants suggested that there are straight sports and gay sports. For example they said that men's football is "a straight sport", while "women's football is the opposite [...so] if a girl likes football everyone automatically assumes that they're gay". Similarly, gymnastics was perceived to be a female sport, but when males played it, it was a gay sport. This indicates that people's perceptions of gay and straight sports are very much based on traditional understandings of gender and gendered behaviour.

Participants said that in school, that boys are expected to be interested in sport, and girls are not – so boys and girls that break this stereotype are marked out as 'different'. This may be felt more acutely for males and females who are already marked out as different because they are lesbian, gay or bisexual.

*I think homophobia in sport for boys is definitely stronger than girls', because [...] all boys are sort of expected to do sport [...]. A friend of mine in primary school [...] didn't play football [...and] people were just weirded out by it. Male, focus group*

*[...] I think boys get a lot more encouragement or the expectations are much greater for them to be active and take part in sport. It's sort of assumed that they're going to be interested in at least football and rugby. [...] To be sporty is sort of expected of them. And the opposite is true of women [...]. Lesbian, interview*

*I've never heard [...homophobic banter] in any of the clubs that I've played for but then there's [...] a fairly large percentage of gay players in both women's rugby and football. Lesbian, interview*

*[Make...] people see that there is sport for all abilities and women's rugby is not just for lesbians. Lesbian, survey*

*[Boys are...] supposed to have inside psychic knowledge of how sport works. Gay male, interview*

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Research participants perceived lesbians to be more visible in sport than gay men, and expected lesbians to be more interested in sport than straight women. The underlying stereotypes are: lesbians are more masculine than straight women; and sport is a masculine pursuit. This presents a very narrow picture of what lesbians, and women more generally, can be interested in and talented at.

*[...] Women's tennis, 'full of lesbians'. Gay male, interview*

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The evidence about stereotypes so far, indicates that a person's potential and interest in sport is often judged on factors such as their sexual orientation, sex and gender behaviour. More than that, the findings suggest that people believe it is predetermined by those factors. This contradicts any assumptions that sport is always a meritocracy, as many LGB people are being turned off sport before they get the chance to find out if they are any good.

*[...] People's image of a lesbian is that they're butch and sport's reinforcing that really. Gay male, interview*

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## What does this mean?

Focus group and interview participants told us that they feel stereotypes are quite deep-rooted in sport, and have affected both their expectations of sport and their participation in sport. The evidence collected suggests that there is a link between stereotypes in sport and a lack of diversity in sport – one element perpetuates the other. This can be imagined as a negative feedback cycle, illustrated in *Diagram 1* below. This cycle would need to be disrupted in order to a) challenge dominant stereotypes; and b) increase diversity in sport. Information from the previous section on *School Sport Experience* suggests that a more diverse experience of sport for people from a young age could help them to change their way of thinking about sport, gender and sexual orientation, and stop the perpetuation of unhelpful stereotypes.

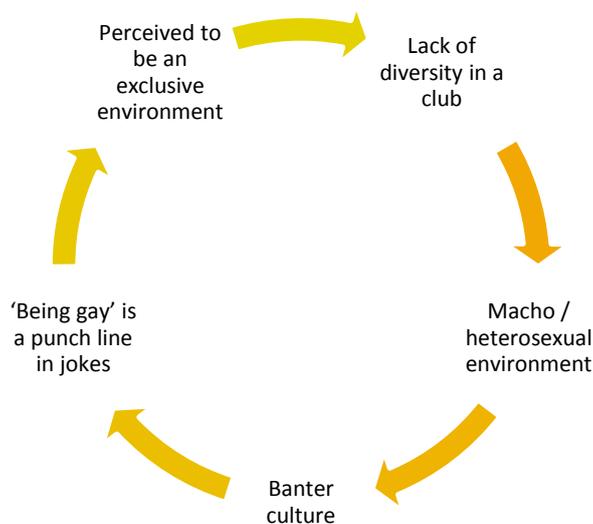


Diagram 1: Stereotypes in sport

# Discrimination in sport

## What did we find?

- 75% of LGB survey respondents have heard homophobic banter in sport.
- LGB people *inside sport* say that banter can be a mechanism for team bonding, whereas those *outside sport* feel that banter excludes them.
- Homophobic abuse in sport is often dismissed as banter.
- A quarter of all LGB respondents have experienced exclusion and isolation while playing or watching sport, because of their sexual orientation.
- One in ten LGB respondents have experienced intimidation or threats in a sport environment, because of their sexual orientation.
- Many LGB people exclude themselves from sport because they have had negative experiences in the past; or perceive sport to be unsafe or 'not for them'.
- Gay men were more likely than other respondents to say that sport is not a safe environment for LGB individuals.

## Banter

75% of all lesbian, gay and bisexual survey respondents reported having heard homophobic jokes or 'banter' while playing or watching sport. Bisexual (74%) and gay male participants (78%) were the most likely to report that they have heard banter in a sport environment, as shown in *Chart 5* below.

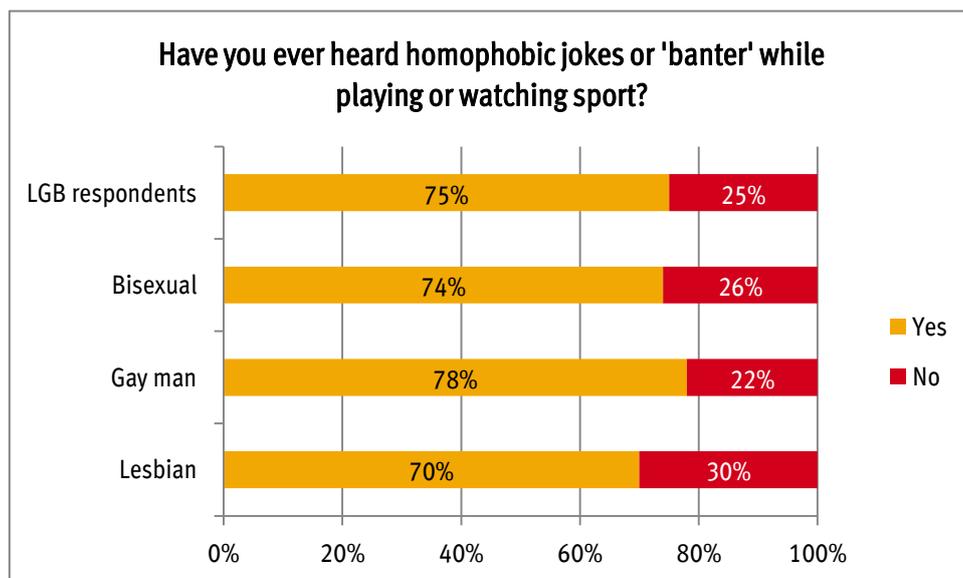


Chart 5: Homophobic abuse or 'banter'

The definition of ‘banter’ suggests a mutual exchange of jokes; but anecdotes from focus group and interview participants suggest that banter in sport is often one-sided.

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*[...] There might be the odd songs that some people think are witty. [...] Brighton fans get it a lot [...] because obviously Brighton [has...] quite a big gay community there. But [it...] happens [...] for any number of things [such as...] what they look like and [...] if they’re a little bit chubby [...]. Lesbian, interview*

*[I would like to have a] choice of changing rooms where I don’t have to be on guard when changing or put up with homophobic remarks by [...] straight guys [...] about others using the sports facilities". Gay male, survey*

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The survey asked respondents specifically about homophobic abuse or ‘banter’, while the interviews and focus groups allowed for a more nuanced discussion. A few participants said that ‘banter’ is a mechanism for team bonding, and that giving and receiving ‘banter’ is an important way of fitting in with a team. Those socialised into mainstream team sports were more comfortable with banter in teams, but participants *outside sport* perceived banter to be a barrier to participation.

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*I mostly just kind of roll my eyes [...] I think that’s their issue not mine. Lesbian, interview*

*[...] I have got a very different experience from others where I haven’t found any discrimination – initially yes you get a lot of discrimination from people what – who perceive you to be; but I kind of believe in if you want to do something you step up; it doesn’t matter who you are. Because of my experience it doesn’t matter who you are; you will get accepted. And there – there is always a bit of banter. But you know that doesn’t bother me; it is not – it is never done in a nasty way or anything. Gay male, focus group*

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The findings suggest that those who are already socialised into sport expect others to be ok with the language, behaviour and culture of team sports, including ‘banter’. Each of the occasions of banter discussed by participants occurred in team sport environments, or communal environments such as changing rooms.

One recurring type of ‘banter’ observed in participation and spectator environments, was sexualised homophobic ‘banter’.

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*[...]When we went into the bar [after the rugby]. It was, “Oh, you’ve been in the showers?” Gay male, interview*

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The quote above was described by the participant as being the default *ridicule* position of some men in team sports who aren't sure what to make of a gay man being in their space. The discussions suggest that homophobic or homosexually-themed abuse in sport is often conflated with 'banter'. The term 'banter' legitimises behaviour that might otherwise be deemed offensive and inappropriate.

'Banter' in team sports fits with the more general perception of participants that team sports are negative environments. For example, one participant who was talking about a high profile team sport, said that if a player makes a mistake "the fans just rain all hell down on them". Participants also perceived team sports to be opportunities for public embarrassment or shame. For example, they feel that sexual orientation is used as a "stick to beat people with" in team sports. In sport environments, being gay is perceived as a weakness, and joking that someone on an opposite team is gay is a way to upset them and undermine their confidence. LGB people in this study who play in team sports recognised that negative/'banter' culture described, but were acclimatised to it.

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*I'm old enough and long enough in the tooth to have the banter with the best of them.*  
Gay male, interview

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### **Negative experiences due to sexual orientation**

In the survey, respondents were asked whether they had personally experienced verbal abuse, physical abuse, exclusion or intimidation in a sport environment. One respondent commented:

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*I'm too scared to test the theory so don't take part.* Lesbian, survey respondent

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The above quote indicates a very *strong negative perception of sport*. Whilst it is only one respondent, it illustrates that negative perceptions can hold people back from participating in sport, as much as negative experiences. Therefore, any efforts to change the *experience* of sport would have to be matched with efforts to *communicate* those changes to the relevant groups of people.

Overall, 49% of LGB individuals said they had experienced verbal abuse; 12% physical abuse; 33% exclusion/isolation/being ignored; and 16% intimidation/threats. These negative experiences of sport were not explicitly linked to sexual orientation. However, there were differences when the data was analysed by sexual orientation. Bisexual respondents (43%) and gay men (40%) were significantly more likely than lesbians (16%) to report that they had experienced exclusion and isolation in a sport environment. While, lesbians (56%) were significantly more likely than bisexual respondents (22%) and gay men (35%) to say that they've never had any of the above negative experiences when watching or taking part in sport.

Survey respondents were asked a follow-up question about whether they felt that the abuse they had experienced was because of their sexual orientation, or their perceived sexual orientation. LGB individuals responded with the following:

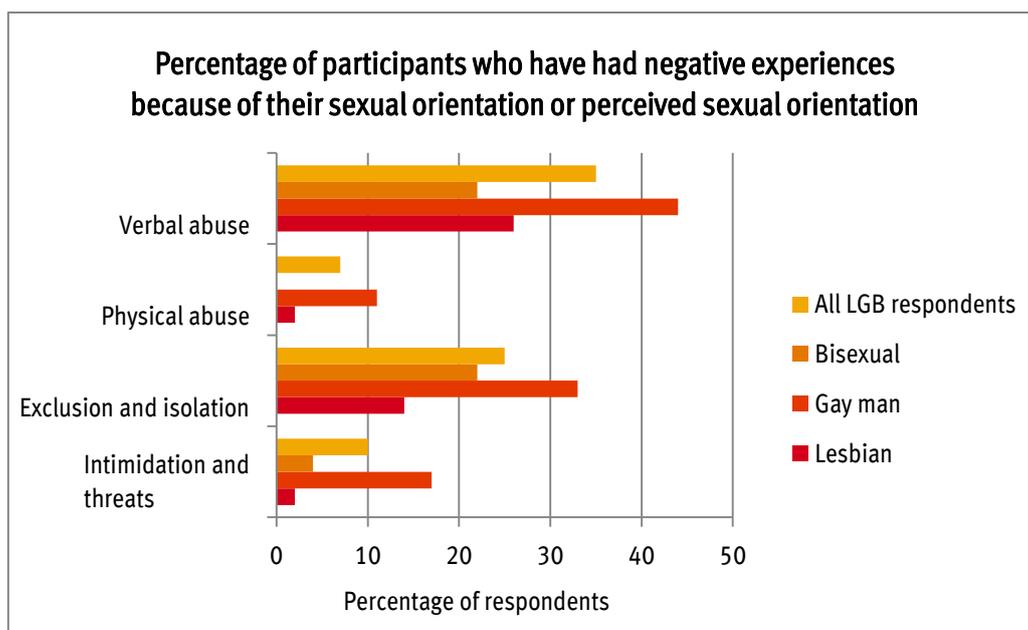


Chart 6: Negative experiences in sport

Chart 6 shows that gay men were more likely than other respondents to report experiencing verbal abuse, physical abuse, exclusion/isolation and intimidation/threats in sport, because of their sexual orientation. Gay men (46%) were also more likely than bisexual respondents (30%) and lesbians (28%) to disagree with the statement that *sport is a safe environment for people who are lesbian, gay or bisexual*. These findings suggest that gay men feel more of a target in sport, because of their sexual orientation. However, while reports of negative experiences are significantly more common for gay men, it is still an important issue for lesbians and bisexual individuals.

### Exclusion and self-exclusion

Participants reported that in some instances they had withdrawn themselves from sport spaces because they either feared the environment or perceived that they didn't belong.

Focus group and interview participants were more likely to have retreated from sport if they had experienced verbal abuse, physical abuse etc., and associated this abuse with their sexual orientation. This not only affected their participation in sport, but overall involvement such as watching live professional sport.

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*I would never, ever go to a football match, in fact I would never, ever even walk near a football stadium before or after a football match was on. [...] I find them the most threatening environment, ever. That lager fuelled testosterone aggression isn't safe to be around. Gay male, interview*

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One participant observed that women, as well as LGB individuals, are excluded as spectators in some sports. The anecdote below refers to a high profile male team sport and ties in with findings from previous chapters on *Sports Clubs* and *Stereotypes*.

*[...] They don't take [women...] as seriously or they assume that you're just there with a boyfriend or that you should only be there with a boyfriend [...]. Because there's [...] an equal number of toilets [...] you often get [...] men piling into the women's toilets [...] and generally the men don't act appropriately [...] they think it's alright to like pee in the sinks and stuff. Lesbian, interview*

Many participants felt that homophobic discrimination should be treated more seriously than it currently is, particularly in high profile settings that have the potential to influence a broad range of people.

*[There have] been a lot of more [...] lawsuits against people who've made racist remarks. It should be the same [...for] people who are homophobic as well. Female, focus group*

### What does this mean?

Though some LGB people are having very positive experiences of sport, many we spoke to are not. There seems to be a perception that both subtle and overt forms of homophobia are tolerated in sport, particularly in team sport environments. For example, the findings show that sometimes abuse in sport is disregarded as ‘banter’. It is important to understand that behaviours such as those described above, can be exclusionary. This is demonstrated in *Diagram 2*. There should also be an open dialogue in sport about what constitutes appropriate behaviour in schools, clubs and stadiums. The *School Sport Experience* section in this report revealed that some LGB people determine (through negative experiences) that sport is ‘not for them’. If lesbian, gay and bisexual individuals continue to have negative experiences of sport, or perceive it to be an unsafe or exclusive environment, they may disengage from sport altogether.

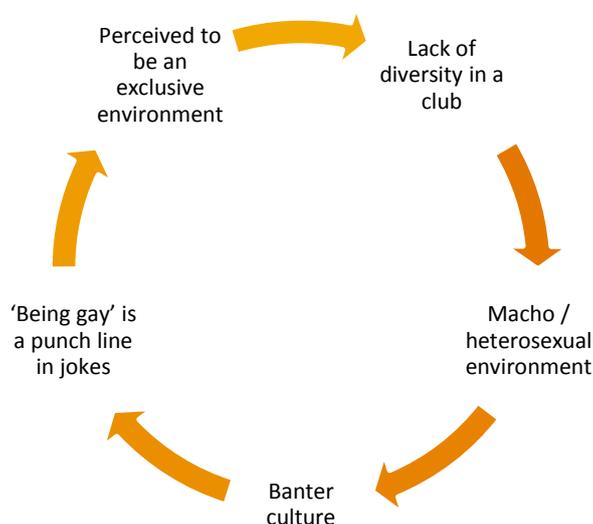


Diagram 2: LGB exclusion from sports clubs

# LGB visibility in sport

## What did we find?

- LGB participants say that when they aren't open about their sexual orientation in sport, they are inhibited and can't perform at their best. Coming out in sport can increase a person's confidence.
- Nearly all participants, however, say they would feel apprehensive about coming out in sport, because they view it as an uncommon thing to do.
- LGB people say they would be more likely to participate in sport if there were a stronger presence of LGB role models in grassroots sport and high profile sports.
- Participants would like to see more high profile LGB athletes being supported by the sport sector to come out.

## Coming out

The topic of *coming out* had a lot of resonance with lesbian, gay and bisexual participants. They discussed their own experiences of coming out in a community sport setting, and their feelings about seeing few athletes coming out in a professional or elite sport setting. Coming out is often discussed as if it is a one-off event, but participants said that when you make the discussion to come out in sport you often need to do it over and over again, as in other spheres of life.

Overall, participants *inside sport* felt more comfortable about coming out in sport than those *outside sport*. Gay female participants who took part in this study said that they knew other women on sports teams who were gay, and therefore didn't think their sexual orientation would be an issue. Gay and bisexual male participants, who were socialised into sport, said that they would ultimately be judged on their ability rather than their sexual orientation. Though this was said with some confidence that they did have the ability to play.

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*It's never been an issue to be honest. [...] I've had gay teammates the whole time so it was never an issue and really nobody even batted an eyelid when I joined [...] my current football team. Lesbian, interview*

*[...] People were quite open about it because about half the women in the team were gay or bisexual, so you know we felt we could be quite open about it. They knew that Josie<sup>3</sup> and I were partners. Lesbian, interview*

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Those participants *inside sport* said that whilst they felt they could come out in sport, they were still apprehensive about what the reaction would be.

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<sup>3</sup> Name changed

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*[...] This is my third or fourth team now. [...] It's always a bit daunting the first time, it's obviously a new set of people but yes I'd be quite open about it I think. Bisexual male, interview*

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Those who were *outside sport* (i.e. not socialised into sports) were more likely to describe their sexual orientation as an 'obstacle', 'risk' or 'barrier' to them participating.

Several participants expressed a fear that the way they acted on the pitch could give away their sexual orientation, and there was a risk they could be 'outed' rather than have the choice of whether to come out or not. These participants opted not to participate in mainstream team sports.

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*[...There's] that potential problem anyway of [...] joining a club which you know is going to be [...] quite laddish in their attitudes and [...] in their socialising. And you can come out within that environment and take that risk, but most people would [...] feel intimidated by that. Gay male, focus group*

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Male participants said they perceived sports teams to be very *straight* environments, and thought it would be unusual if a gay person was on a team. Participants who were gay and played in sports teams said that even if your own team was ok with your sexual orientation, it was hard to know how other teams would react when you played against them, or socialised with them after a game. This demonstrates of the continuous process of *coming out* that LGB people face in sport.

Male and female participants spoke about professional athletes coming out, and concluded that a gay man coming out would have more impact in sport than a gay woman. This was most likely said because male sports tend to have a higher public profile.

When participants considered what a *positive coming out scenario* would look like, the professional athletes were either exceptionally talented or had a high media profile (but often both).

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*It helps if they're a popular person in sport 'cause then they back them no matter what. Female, focus group*

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Although most participants felt that *fans* would be supportive of an LGB sports person, there was a perception that high profile players had to earn the support of the public and "be something for their fans" first.

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*[...] This is a lot of 'ifs' here [...] but if England get to the final of the Euros, and just before the match there was a press conference and [a high profile footballer...] said "I am gay," went and scored a hat trick and won us the Euros everyone would be like*

*[participant cheers and shouts]“Gay [footballer...] wins the Euro.” Gay male, focus group*

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The participant above sets quite a few hurdles for the gay athlete to jump over in order to be accepted: 1) high profile sports person; 2) scores not only once but three times; 3) team wins a big competition as a result. There is an element here of a gay person having to prove their ability even more, to justify being gay *and* a sports person.

There was also a broader issue about the acceptance of a gay player in a high profile sport was the stereotypes associated with their profession. For example, it would take some time to move away from the narrative “that [the...] footballer must have a WAG [wife and girlfriend]”.

All participants felt that it would be a very positive thing if more athletes came out. However, there was some apprehension about this, particularly in a high profile sport like football.

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*The funny thing is I am a firm believer of come out come out wherever you are, but I am not surprised that there are no gay footballers around. Not surprised at all. And it will take a really brave one to do it. Gay male, interview*

*[...] I would like to think that they would [get support] from inside the club; I mean from the fans I think undoubtedly they would get 100% backing. Lesbian, interview*

*I would force top level, high publicity sports and sports clubs to be more open and accepting of ALL people, regardless of gender, ethnic origin, disabilities or sexual orientation. One high profile case could change sport for the better. Lesbian, survey*

*I think a lot of sport teams are realising that they may have fellow player who could be gay. Or in the future there might be a gay player [...and] they realise they may need to [...] get over it and I think the fans are slowly realising that too. Gay male, focus group*

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One participant, who supported a high profile sports team, said that gay players might be afraid to come out because of the spotlight it would put on the club. She felt that a gay player would attract negative attention and perhaps weaken the club against the opposition.

Participants said that sexual orientation shouldn't be an issue in sport, but while it is an issue, it would help if people could talk about it openly. They said that sexual orientation is often dismissed as a private matter, but heterosexual people disclose their sexual orientation all the time without even noticing they're doing it.

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*It shouldn't be important [what an athlete's sexual orientation is], but whilst homophobia is a problem [...] and continues to be, it would be nice to have people who were openly gay or bisexual or lesbian [...]. The ideal is that people can just be*

*themselves [...] and be able to talk openly about themselves [...] not just in sports but in all areas of society. Lesbian, interview*

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Participants explained the significance of being open about your sexual orientation in sport, and how it can hold you back if you don't/can't disclose it.

*I really didn't like football in school. And I think that was probably a confidence thing [...]. If you're not out in sport [...] you are not going to be confident as a person. I think you need a little bit of confidence to be able to play. And you know as you play [...] sport your confidence builds, and your game gets better. Gay male, focus group*

*Before I joined the [...LGB club] I was playing five aside [...] and I – I felt sort of stymied and you know sort of – I had to hold back. [...] I felt I couldn't shout; I couldn't tell other players [...] "Pass the ball to me". Gay male, focus group*

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## **Role models**

Over half of survey respondents (52%) said that they have role models in sport. This figure was roughly the same across orientations. Of those who said they had role models, a very high proportion (89%) would describe them as professional or ex-professional athletes.

Respondents were asked whether more LGB role models would motivate them personally to take part in sport. The findings are shown in *Chart 7*. Overall, LGB respondents were most likely to say that more LGB people playing sport and more LGB professional/ex-professional athletes would motivate them to take part in sport. Gay men (57%) were significantly more likely than lesbians (37%) to say that having more LGB people playing sport would make a difference to their participation. They were also significantly more likely to say that more LGB athletes would make a difference to their participation (58% and 32% respectively). The findings suggest that gay men, more so than people of other orientations, perceive a lack of LGB visibility to hamper their own participation in sport.

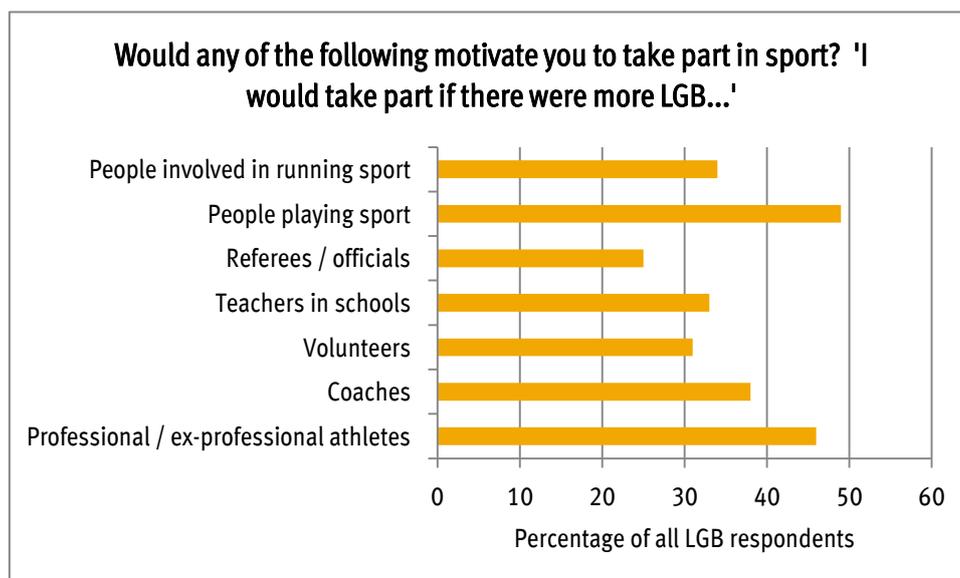


Chart 7: LGB visibility in different sport settings

The survey data suggests that having more high profile role models, as well as increased LGB visibility in grassroots sport could make a difference to LGB sport participation. Furthermore, a high profile LGB sports person could change perceptions about the type of people who can participate in sport and broaden the range of sports perceived to be available to LGB people, as touched upon in the section on *Stereotypes*.

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*I think there's [...] apprehension and a preconceived "Oh I'm going to get bullied or I'm going to get kind of teased for it" sort of thing that will stop people. I think it's kind of a vicious circle; so because they're not kind of joining; the clubs aren't used to LGBT players. [...] Whereas if more LGBT players joined it would be more normal [...].*  
 Bisexual male, interview

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LGB representation in sport should be encouraged in schools, as well as community sport and professional environments. The *School Sport Experience* section illustrated that many LGB people feel their experience of school sport is crucial to whether/how they continue to play sport.

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*If famous [...] successful professional sportsmen were speaking about it, [...] it wouldn't have got to my ears [...]. I just wanted the other kids to be nice to me [...] and the teachers to [...] be nice to me as well and to stop the other kids from being mean to me.*  
 Gay male, interview

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Overall, participants indicated that high profile LGB sport role models would have the most significant impact on the participation of young people who are still coming to terms with who they are and who are *outside sport*, rather than people who are already socialised into sport. For example, one gay female participant who was very

sporty said that it didn't matter to her whether her sport role models were gay or not, though it probably would have helped her when she was younger and coming out for the first time.

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*[To] see someone who's persevered through all the stuff [...and to] see them be openly gay and be at the top of that sport [...] be quite an inspiration. Gay male, focus group*

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### **What does this mean?**

Participants feel that it is important to see more lesbian, gay and bisexual people represented across all levels of sport. LGB role models should be promoted to show the benefits of diversity in sport, and to encourage LGB participation. The sport sector needs to send a strong message that LGB individuals have a place in sport. The sport sector also needs to be clear and confident about how its LGB participants and workforce can be supported to be involved in sport.

## Conclusion

An aspiration of the Vision for Sport in Wales is to see *every child hooked on sport for life*. This does not come with caveats: all young people regardless of background have the right to access sport. We know from our research that LGB people are interested in sport, and furthermore that there is demand from LGB people to participate more and volunteer more in sport. We have found that many LGB individuals are being turned off sport, however, because they have experienced it to be and perceive it to be an unpleasant and unsafe environment for gay people. A lack of LGB visibility in high-profile professional sports, and exclusionary behaviours such as ‘banter’ in team sports, reinforce the perception amongst LGB people, that they are not welcome in sport.

Exclusionary behaviours identified in this report are likely to affect a range of people – not just LGB individuals. For example, we know from listening to people’s experiences of school sport that non-LGB individuals are also the targets of homophobic discrimination. Very rigid notions of gender and sexual orientation in many schools, draw attention to young people who stray from what is considered ‘normal’ behaviour.

This helps to account for differences in the way lesbians and gay men experience discrimination: while gay men may face discrimination in accessing ‘masculine’ sports because of a perception that they are not masculine enough; lesbians could be welcomed into the same sports by fellow female participants yet fall prey to discrimination from those outside sports who feel that participating in those sports is not ‘feminine’. Both present real barriers to participation amongst LGB individuals, as well as anyone else who does not behave in ways considered by others to be gender-appropriate.

This research has identified many challenges for the sport sector. One of the most significant issues to tackle is behaviour change – in schools, in community sport and in professional sport. The sport sector alone cannot change the opinions and beliefs of every person involved in sport in Wales – but we can make a commitment to change our own behaviour, and to challenge the behaviour of others where it falls short of our expectations.

What do we need to change? We need more young people to be exposed to positive and diverse experiences of sport. We need the entire sport sector to stand up and say ‘no to homophobia in sport’. We need sport to change and communicate this change, not just rely on lesbian, gay and bisexual people to try sport and hope that they will have a positive experience.

Our recommendations target where the most significant changes can be made, so that sport becomes – and is seen to become – a space where all people feel confident, safe and able to be themselves.



Recommendations

### **National Governing Bodies should:**

- Visibly demonstrate a commitment to tackling homophobia in sport and encourage LGB people to take part in sport
- Work with the media to improve the coverage of LGB issues in sport
- Train officials and stewards to identify and challenge homophobic language and abuse
- Support the creation of LGB sports clubs where there is appropriate demand

### **Clubs should:**

- Educate fans about the impact of anti-gay abuse and discrimination and clearly explain 'the rules of the game'
- Provide an accessible reporting mechanism for those who witness or experience homophobia at sporting venues
- Encourage all players to act as role models and visibly support the inclusion of LGB people in sport
- Promote volunteering opportunities to a diverse range of communities, including LGB communities

### **National Governing Bodies and Clubs should:**

- Engage with the LGB community at events such as Pride and Mardi Gras and seek feedback from LGB spectators and players to improve their experiences in sport
- Engage with schools on the issue of homophobia in sport
- Support a Wales-wide LGB Sport Network, which will provide support to LGB people involved in sport, champion the issue of sexual orientation in sport, and challenge abuse or discrimination in sport
- Demonstrate their commitment to equality for lesbian, gay and bisexual employees; and develop good practice in LGB workplace equality through joining a programme such as Stonewall Cymru Diversity Champions

### **Schools should:**

- Recognise the specific types of homophobia in Physical Education and equip PE teachers to identify and challenge homophobic bullying in a sport setting
- Provide pupils with a diverse range of sports to minimise stereotypes based on gender and sexual orientation
- Demonstrate their commitment to equality for their lesbian, gay and bisexual pupils and staff, and develop good practice through joining a programme such as Stonewall Cymru's Schools Champions programme

**Welsh Government should:**

- Develop a 'Sport Charter for Wales' and encourage sport organisations to display their commitment to furthering equality



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