

**Report of the  
findings of the  
“Listening to Lesbian,  
Gay, Bisexual and  
Transgender People”  
Survey in Cumbria**

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# Report of the findings of the “Listening to Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender People” Survey in Cumbria

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## Introduction

National research has been carried out to gain an understanding of the issues lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGB&T) people face when accessing services and it has identified that people face discrimination when accessing services. In order to actively meet the needs of LGB&T people, service providers need to take specific steps to ensure that LGB&T people are not discriminated against and that they receive an equal service (This was taken from Putting people first: Equality and Diversity matters 1 – Providing appropriate services for lesbian, gay & bisexual and transgender people).

Adult and Local Services wanted to gain a local understanding of LGB&T issues in Cumbria. So a survey was launched “Listening to Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender People” to find out views on accessing services and to find out what makes this a good experience. We wanted to understand more about lives and concerns from people who are LGB&T so we can use this research to help us:-

- Improve our services
- Understand needs and priorities
- Effectively respond to these

A survey questionnaire was designed by Adult and Local Services using similar questions from surveys that have been carried out in other parts of England and Scotland so we could see if the concerns/issues were similar in different areas or if they were specific to Cumbria.

Adult and Local Services also worked with OutReach Cumbria who provided feedback on the questions.

The survey was launched online on Cumbria County Council’s Have Your Say consultation and community engagement database. A paper based survey was also available, upon request. Information about the launch of the survey was distributed to the following organisations to include in newsletters:-

- Lesbian & Gay Foundation North West
- AWAZ
- Cumbria Disability Network
- OutReach Cumbria
- Age UK
- Community Voluntary Service
- Cumbria County Council’s in house newsletters
- Cumbria Constabulary
- District Councils
- Cumbria Multi-Cultural Service
- NHS Cumbria
- Cumbria Partnership NHS Foundation Trust
- Carers Network
- North Cumbria University Hospitals NHS Trust
- Mental Health Provider Forum

Adult and Local Services would like to thank all of the above organisations for taking time to promote this survey within their organisations/networks which has helped us to gain an understanding of issues/concerns in Cumbria.

The key findings in this report are divided into the five main sections, following the flow of the questionnaire.

- Profile of Respondents
- Getting Older
- The Community You Live In
- Information and Services
- Issues facing LGB&T people

28% of responses were received from people who declared themselves as heterosexual and their response is included in the analysis.

The survey was self-completion so some respondents did not answer every question; this is highlighted within the report.

**Special thanks go to everyone who took the time to take part in this research and share their personal stories/ experiences.**

## Key Findings

### Response

- There were 83 responses to the survey.
- The District with the highest response was Carlisle (39%)
- The age of the respondents varied from people who are 16 and under to 65 years old, with the most responses from age groups 36-45 (27%) and 46-55 (30%).
- The sexual orientation of the respondents were lesbian and gay (53%), heterosexual (28%), bisexual (13%) and some respondents preferred not to say (6%).

### About You

- LGB&T respondents to our survey were more likely to be out/open about their sexual orientation to close friends (78%), this was followed by family (69%). It also showed that people felt comfortable being out/open to their GP/Healthcare professional (61%). Those who stated they were not out to their employer felt it could make relationships at work difficult as some people understand and some don't.
- The majority of respondents (84%) were fairly confident in disclosing their sexual orientation to a professional such as a GP or social worker. Those who stated they were not confident was linked to perceived negative attitudes within the work place.

### Getting Older

- The main concern that the respondents have about getting older is harder to find friendship/partner as they get older.
- There were also some concerns about lack of LGB&T friendly care or services.

### The Community We Live In

- Nearly three quarters of the respondents (71%) felt to some extent they are part of the wider community where they live.
- 38% of the respondents felt there is an LGB&T community where they live and 30% feel part of the LGB&T community where they live. From the responses given Carlisle appears to have the largest amount of people who felt part of the LGB&T community where they live.
- Friendship and support and a diverse collection of like minded people are the two main responses that the respondents felt that an LGB&T community meant to them

- 17% of the respondents had experience of discrimination or harassment within the LGB&T community. The respondents that answered "yes" was mainly around homophobic comments.

### Information and Services

- The area that the respondents identified as having the most difficulties in accessing information was around youth e.g. youth groups, coming out advice, homophobic bullying and community e.g. details of LGB&T groups, services and events.
- The area that the respondents identified as having the most difficulties in accessing services was around community information e.g. details of LGB&T groups, services and events.
- It was also highlighted that there are few groups at all for adults and limited provision for young people and never seeing anything advertised around LGB&T groups or general help and advice.
- The services that the respondents were most satisfied with were council tax issues and education and training.
- Some of the negative experiences that the respondents had encountered were being unable to find information on Cumbria County Council's website, no clear signposting, bullying at school and assumptions that you are "straight".
- It was highlighted that there should be more support from statutory service as there is nothing for people aged 25+.
- Positive experiences were support received from GPs when changing gender and the local genito-urinary medicine clinic (GUM) in Carlisle being very good and staff were non discriminatory.
- The area that the respondents felt would discourage them from accessing services was the poor range of services available (65%) and that lack of LGB&T publications (57%). Some comments that were made were around being treated differently when older and have to depend on others.

### Issues Facing LGB&T People

- The main issues that the respondents felt that they are faced with today is homophobia (63%) and safety e.g. abuse, bullying harassment (and fear of) (54%).
- It was also highlighted that there is difficulty in evidencing homophobic discrimination and there being a lack of understanding in wider society.

## Analysis and Reporting

1.1 Percentages are rounded up or down to the nearest whole number; for some questions this means that percentages may not sum to 100%. It should also be noted that respondents may not have answered all parts of the survey and the “base” for each question varies as a result of non-response.

### About You

2.1 A detailed profile of survey respondents is provided at Table 1 below.

**Table 1: Profile of survey respondents**

District	Number	%
Allerdale	15	18%
Carlisle	32	39%
Copeland	13	16%
Eden	3	4%
Furness	5	6%
South Lakeland	13	16%
Outside Cumbria	2	2%
Base	83	100%

Gender	Number	%
Male	41	49%
Female	39	47%
Transgender	3	4%
Base	83	100%

Age	Number	%
16 or under	3	4%
17-25	9	11%
26-35	9	11%
36-45	22	27%
46-55	25	30%
56-65	15	18%
66-75	0	0%
75+	0	0%
Base	83	100%

Sexual Orientation	Number	%
Bisexual	11	13%
Heterosexual	23	28%
Lesbian or Gay	44	53%
Prefer not to say	5	6%
Base	83	100%

Disability	Number	%
Yes	6	7%
No	76	92%
Not answered	1	1%
Base	83	100%

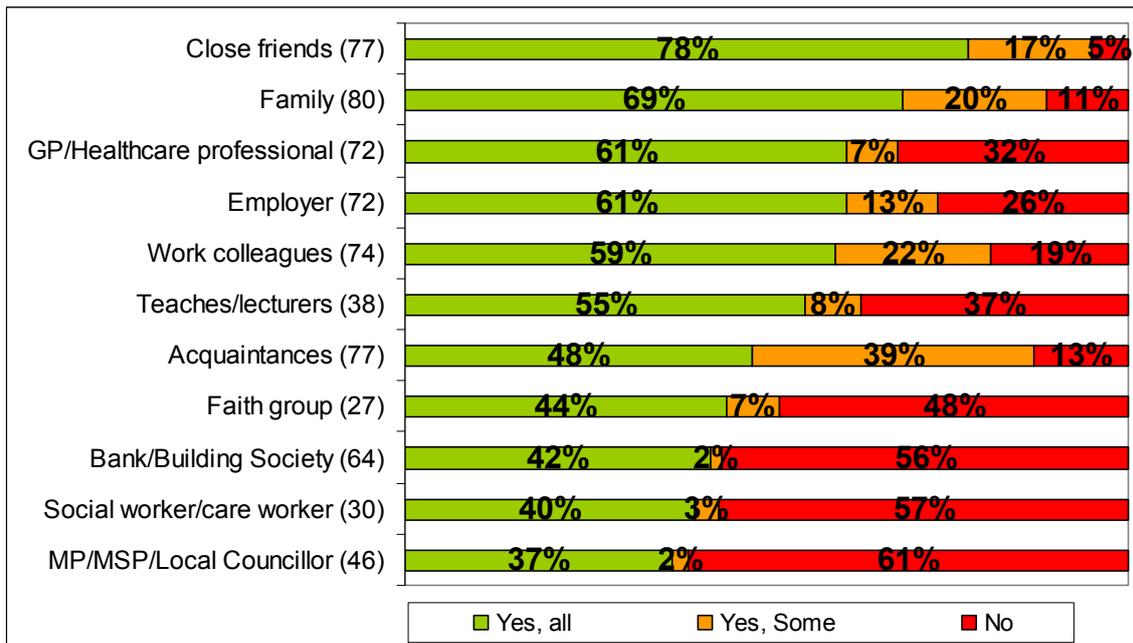
Religion/Belief	Number	%
No religion	42	51%
Buddhist	1	1%
Christian	34	41%
Muslim	1	1%
Other	5	6%
Base	83	100%

Ethnicity	Number	%
White British	75	90%
White Irish	1	1%
White and Black African	2	2%
Any other White background	5	6%
Base	83	100%

2.2 The survey asked if the respondent was out/open to various different people so we could gain an understanding of how comfortable people felt being open about their sexual orientation.

2.3 As figure 1 indicates, out of all the people that responded including those who declared as heterosexual, just over three quarters of the respondents are out/open to their close friends (78%) and just over two thirds are out/open to family (69%). This slightly reduces to GP/Healthcare professional and employer being 61%. Those aged 36-65 tended to be more open to family and close friends compared to other age groups.

**Figure 1: Out/open about your sexual orientation (inc heterosexual)**



2.4 Upon analysing this question there was no variation dependant on whether respondents were lesbian, gay or bisexual.

2.5 The respondents who stated “no” were mainly due to privacy/not relevant followed by fear of discrimination. There were also a few people who felt that it would affect their position at work/their job and that there is a lack of understanding. Some comments are below:-

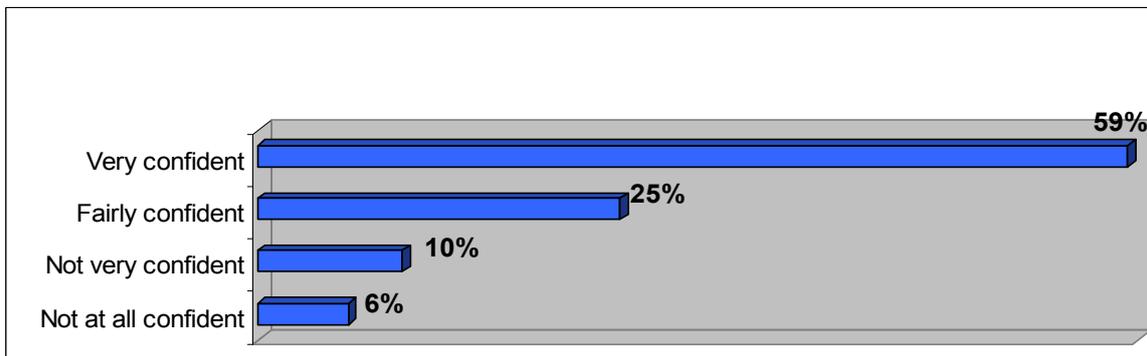
*“Due to previous experience, coming out to an employer and colleagues can make relationships at work difficult. Everyone’s reaction is different, some accept it, some don’t.”*

*“Concerned it may affect my job”*

2.6 Adult and Local Services are now asking service users about their sexual orientation so we can see how accessible our services are. We asked the respondents if they would feel confident or not disclosing their sexual orientation to a profession such as a GP or social worker.

2.7 As figure 2 indicates, over three quarters of the respondents stated they would feel very/fairly confident (84%) in disclosing their sexual orientation.

**Figure 2: Confident in disclosing sexual orientation to a professional. A total of 81 respondents answered this question**



2.8 The respondents that stated they were not confident in disclosing their sexual orientation felt it could lead to discrimination and receiving less of a service and respect. Some comments are below:-

*“There is no encouraging sign or literature available at the GP surgery. At the time of registration with G.P. Registration form does not provide option to disclose my sexual orientation. This shows I am not welcomed to disclose my sexual Orientation”*

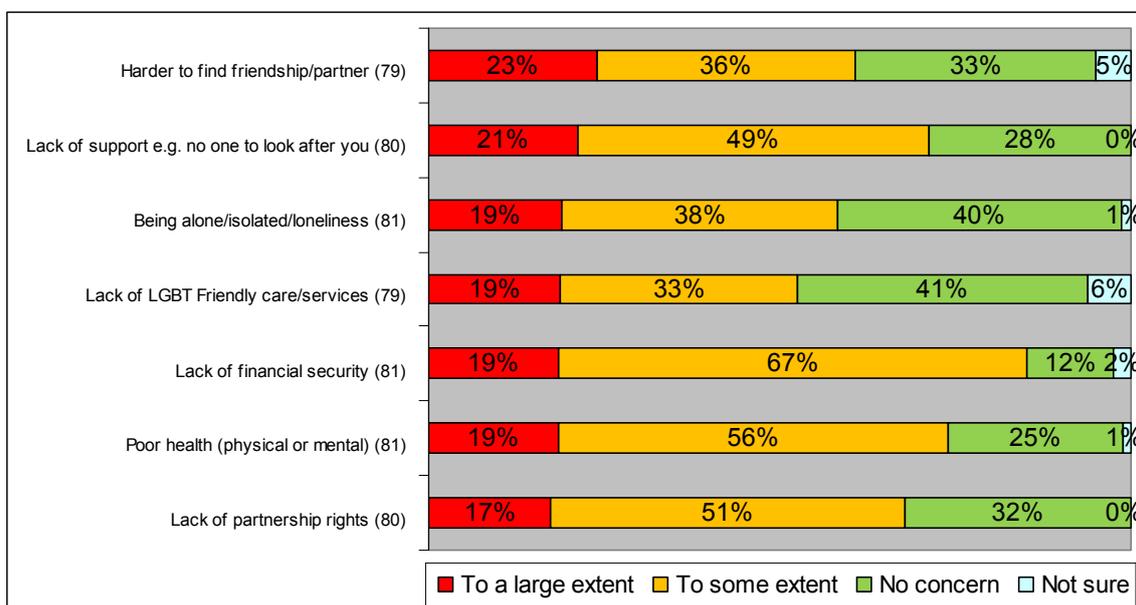
*“Not sure of GP or other professional personal prejudices and concern that these prejudices may affect the service or the quality of the service they provide. For example, during GP appointment the doctor ASSUMES that the partner is of opposite gender and projects these assumptions making it uncomfortable to contravene.”*

### 3. Getting Older

3.1 The survey asked the respondents if they had any concerns about getting older.

3.2 As figure 3 indicates, just under a quarter of respondents feel to a large extent they have concerns it will be harder to find friendship/partner as they get older (23%).

**Figure 3: Concerns about getting older**



- 3.3 Over half of the respondents to some extent have concerns about lack of financial security (67%), poor health (physical or mental) (56%) and lack of partnership rights (51%). Those aged 36 – 55 tended to feel this is more of a concern.
- 3.4 Some of the other issues that concern people are not being treated equally and general lack of concern for care and concern for older people in society. There were also a lot of comments highlighting the need for LGB&T friendly care or services.

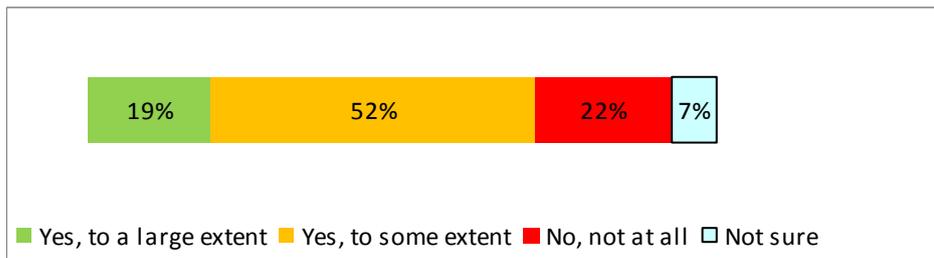
*“being put into care and being treated poorly because of my sexuality”*

*“I won’t be accepted in society”*

## 4. The Community You Live In

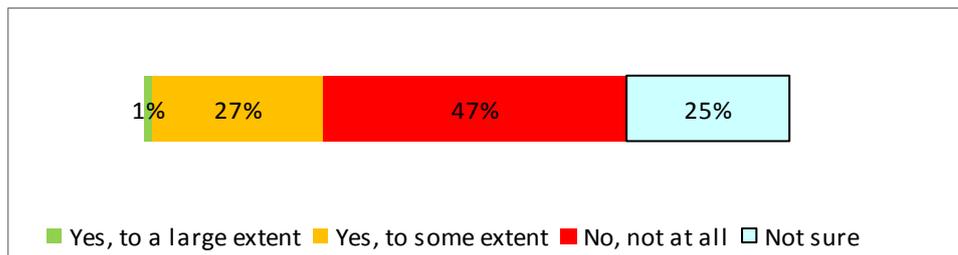
- 4.1 The survey asked respondents if they felt they were part of the wider community and if there is an LGB&T community where they lived.
- 4.2 As figure 4 indicates, almost a quarter of respondents feel they don’t feel part of the wider community. There are nearly three quarters of the respondents who feel at least to some extent they are part of the wider community where they lived.

**Figure 4: Feeling part of the wider community where you live. A total of 83 respondents answered this question**



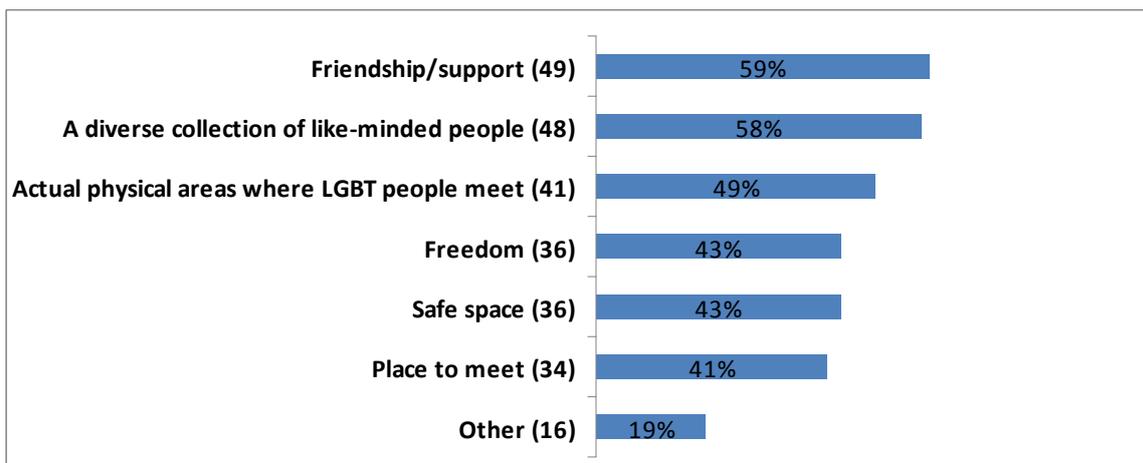
- 4.3 As figure 5 indicates, nearly half of the respondents felt there is no LGB&T community where they live, with just over a quarter whom feel there is to some extent.

**Figure 5: Do you feel there is an LGB&T community where you live. A total of 83 respondents answered this question**



- 4.4 As figure 6 indicates, the top three areas that an LGB&T community means to the respondents is friendship/support (59%), diverse collection of like-minded people (58%) and actual physical areas where LGB&T people meet with freedom (49%), safe space and a place to meet (43%) also being important.

Figure 6: What does an LGBT&T community mean to you



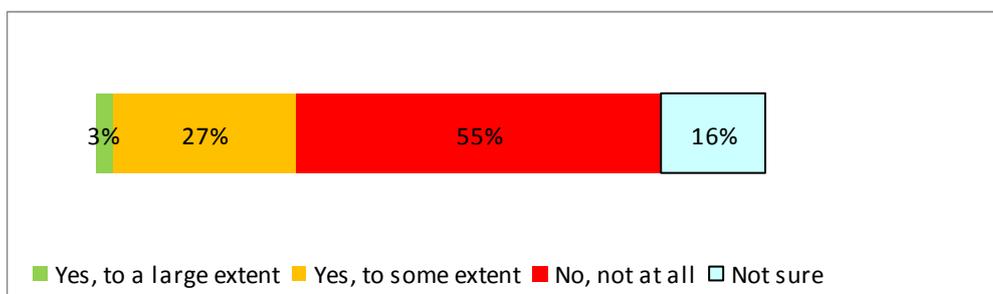
4.5 Some of the other comments made were the respondents felt that an LGBT&T community to them means acceptance where people will not judge and to be treated equally.

*“not exclusively gay place to meet and socialise but gay friendly where one can feel comfortable but not labelled “*

*“chance to spend time with people without the need to explain yourself or deal with assumptions about who you are”*

4.6 As figure 7 indicates, less than one third of the respondents feel they are part of a LGBT community where they live, where over half of the respondents state they are not.

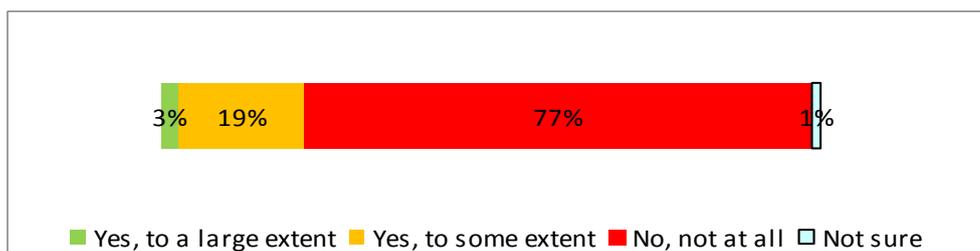
Figure 7: Do you feel part of this LGBT&T community where you live. A total of 77 respondents answered this question



4.7 The respondents aged 36 – 65 were less likely to feel part of an LGBT&T community where they lived.

4.8 As figure 8 indicates, just over three quarters of the respondents are not involved in any LGBT&T groups where they live.

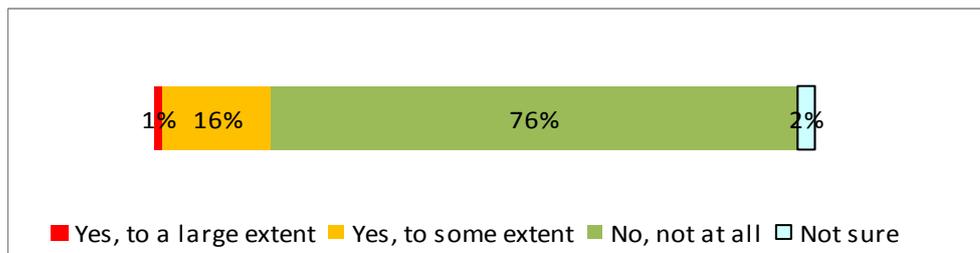
Figure 8: Are you involved in any LGBT&T groups where you live. A total of 79 respondents answered this question



4.9 Respondents from the Carlisle District tended to be more likely to feel part of the LGB&T community and involved in LGB&T groups where they live.

4.10 As figure 9 indicates, there was only a small percentage (17%) of respondents that have experienced discrimination or harassment within the LGB&T community.

**Figure 9: Experience of discrimination or harassment within the LGBT community. A total of 79 respondents answered this question**



4.11 The respondents that answered “yes” to experiencing discrimination or harassment commented this was mainly that they had been beaten up and receiving homophobic comments. It was also highlighted that homophobic comments was an issue within the workplace amongst colleagues. There were also some respondents who felt that being older makes it more difficult.

*“verbal assaults in either bars or on the streets”*

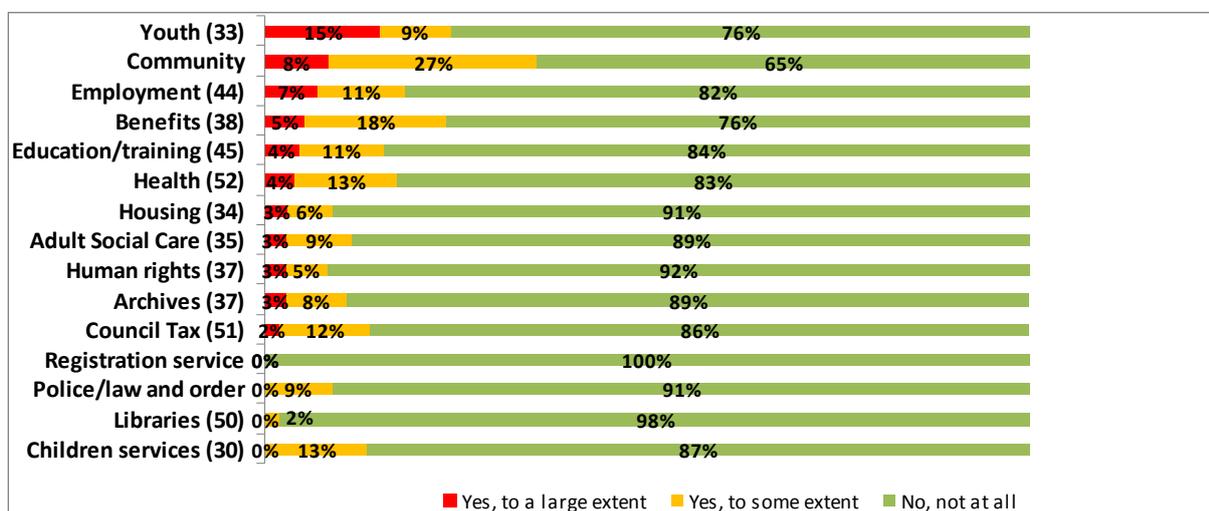
*“Being over 50 often attracts negative comments from younger gay people on the scene”*

## 5. Information and Services

5.1 The survey asked respondents if they have had any difficulties accessing information or services and to gain an understanding if it was because they felt they were LGB&T.

5.2 As figure 10 indicates, the main areas the respondents felt they had difficulties accessing information was about Youth e.g. youth groups, coming out advice and homophobic bullying and Community e.g. details of LGB&T groups, services and events.

**Figure 10: Have you had any difficulties accessing information about any of the following services**



- 5.3 The comments received from the respondents that have had difficulties accessing information about services was mainly not knowing where to go and that there is very little available. The comments emphasised the lack of coming out advice and support for homophobic bullying.
- 5.4 There is evidence that professional groups such as GPs and Police do not always understand and know how to work with same sex couples.
- 5.5 It was also commented that there needs to be more work carried out in schools around Equality and Diversity as homophobic bullying was identified in the survey.

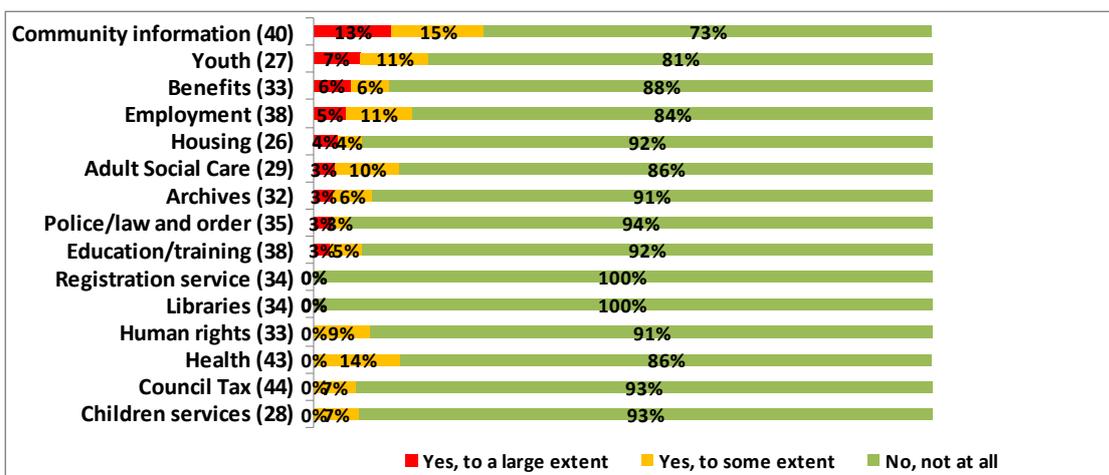
*“I have never seen or heard about any youth groups for the LGB&T community”*

*“Not knowing where to go, how to find out”*

*“Trying to find out about local LGB&T groups can be difficult”*

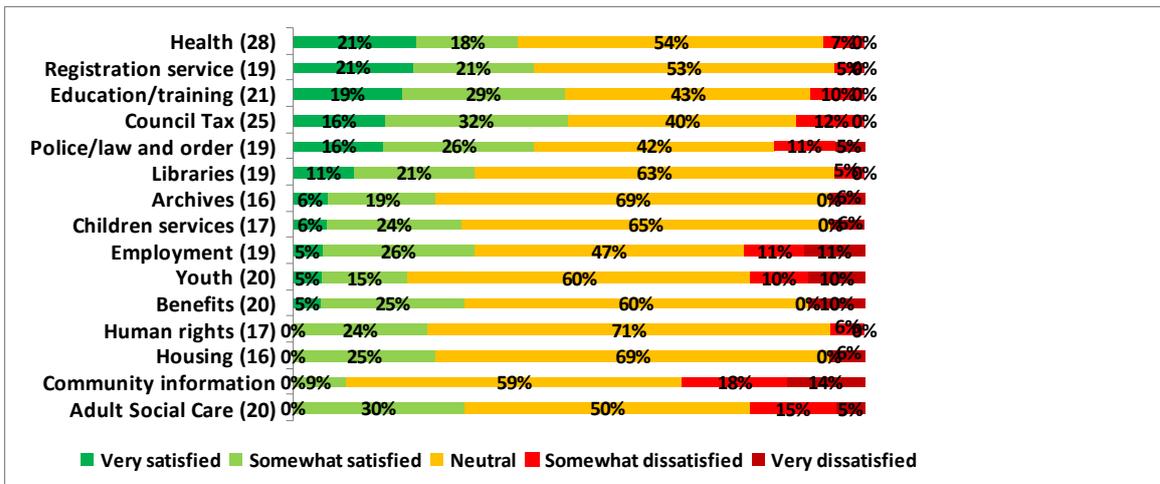
- 5.6 As figure 11 indicates, the main areas the respondents felt they had difficulties accessing services was about Youth e.g. youth groups, coming out advice and homophobic bullying and Community e.g. details of LGB&T groups, services and events, which is the same result as accessing information question.

**Figure 11: Difficulties accessing services from any of the following**



- 5.7 The comments received from the respondents that have had difficulties accessing services was mainly around there being few groups at all for adults, and limited provision for young people and never seeing anything advertised around LGB&T groups or general help and advice.
- 5.8 As figure 12 indicates, the respondents were mainly satisfied with council tax (48%) and education and training (48%) of the services that they had received.
- 5.9 As illustrated above, community information is the area where the respondents are most likely to be dissatisfied.

Figure 12: How satisfied were you with the services you received

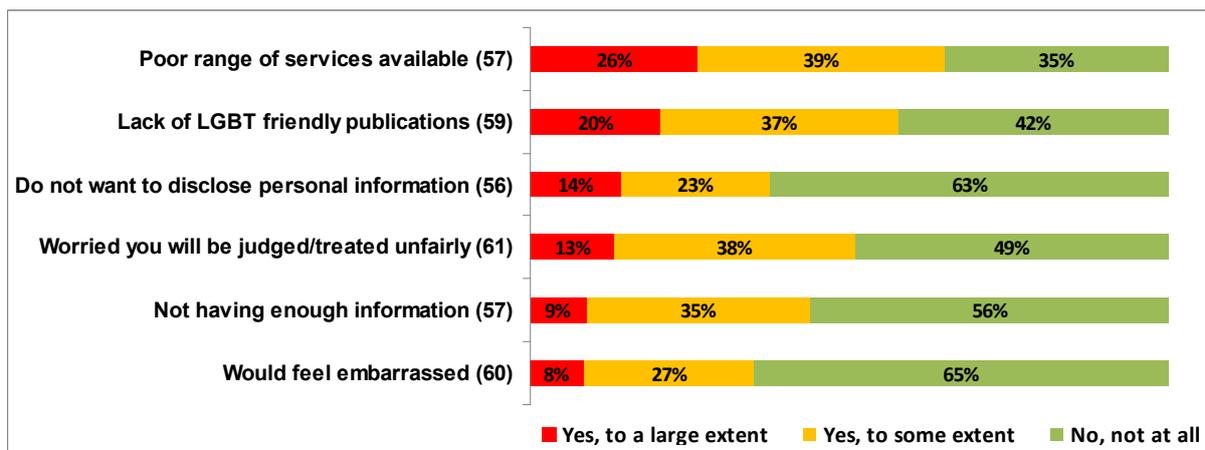


5.10 The survey asked respondents if they have any experiences accessing services that stand out either as a positive or negative. The areas that the respondents felt they had received a negative experience was around unable to find information on Cumbria County Council’s website, no clear signposting, bullying at school, assumptions that you are straight, should be more support from statutory service as there is nothing for people aged 25+ and attending GP appointments.

5.11 Some of the positives that respondents had made were the support they received from their GP when changing gender, excellent service received from the Registrar Service and the Local Genitourinary Medicine Clinic (GUM) clinic in Carlisle being very good and staff were in no way discriminatory.

5.12 As figure 13 indicates the main areas that would discourage people who are LGB&T from accessing help/support are the poor range of services available and the lack of LGB&T friendly publications. Only a small percentage of people saying it would be because they would feel embarrassed because they are LGB&T.

Figure 13: Would any of the following discourage you from accessing help/support?



5.13 Other comments that were made that would discourage people from accessing help/support are the attitudes of people and scared that people will find out that they are LGB&T. There was also concern about being treated differently when older and have to depend on others.

5.14 Suggestions for making services more accessible for people who are LGB&T are to invest in LGB&T friendly initiatives and support groups, educating children from an early age, being treated equally and to not make assumptions that everyone is straight.

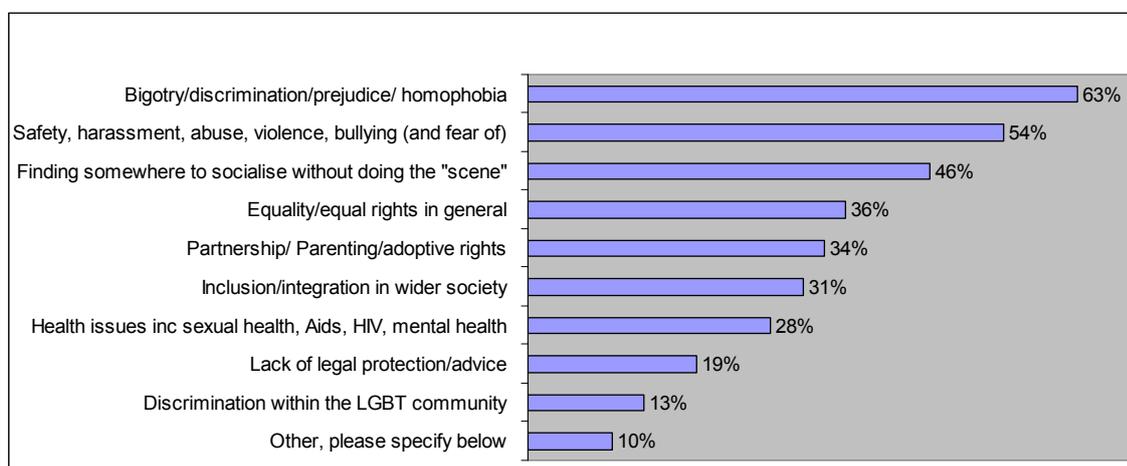
## 6 Issues Facing LGB&T People

6.1 The survey asked respondents what they thought the main issues are facing LGB&T people today.

6.2 Figure 12 indicates, the two main issues were bigotry/discrimination/prejudice/homophobia (63%) and three quarters of the respondents felt safety, harassment, abuse, violence, bullying (and fear of) (54%) was also identified as a main issues facing LGB&T people today.

Other issues are finding somewhere to socialise without doing the “scene” (46%).

**Figure 14: In your view, what are the main issues facing LGB&T people today? A total of 83 respondents answered this question**



6.3 Some of the other issues that the respondents felt face LGB&T people today are discrimination within the workplace and it being difficult to evidence as homophobic and there being a lack of understanding in wider society.

## 7 Further comments about any of the issues raised in this survey?

When respondents were asked to make any further comments about the issues raised in this survey, the comments centred around the following issues:-

Personal safety – a general feeling that people who are LGB&T are not fully accepted in society, for example there are issues around person safety, a comment that was made:-

*“My biggest concern would be about my safety if I openly displayed my sexuality. I would be nervous of verbal comments for, example if I was holding hands with partner openly showing affection”*

There was a general feeling that there should be support groups set up for people questioning their sexual orientation or gender. Also there is a view that there is a lack of LGB&T groups for people to meet and their options available are very limited.

There was a comment around “anti feeling from the church” and that maybe this could be the route of all the prejudice.

It was highlighted about Age UK South Lakeland had sourced a leaflet on issues for older lesbian and gay men and placed it in a church hall which was found to be very welcomed.

We were also thanked for conducting the survey as “it is nice to be listened” to and that we need to understand that issues facing people who are bisexual are not always the same as those facing people who are lesbian or gay.

If you require this document in another format (eg CD, audio cassette, Braille or large type) or in another language, please telephone 01228 606060.

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