

count me in too community summary

Bisexual lives

The Count Me In Too Bi People report explores the experiences and opinions of respondents who identify as bisexual. For the purposes of this research, 'bisexual' is treated as an identity with which respondents align themselves. 6% of respondents identified as bisexual. Further details are provided in chapter 2.

'Bisexual' and 'bi' can be used for self-identification, but they are complicated terms. Bisexual respondents in this research frequently described their identities in terms of their relationships, their appearance and their practices. Chapter 3 of the findings report explains the report's approach to bi identities.

'Open to people of varying sexualities. Queer, dyke-y, comfortable with relating to/socializing with both men and women'

Bisexual people identified 'greedy' and 'untrustworthy' as common negative stereotypes about bisexuals. However, almost four fifths of bisexual and queer respondents said they usually have monogamous relationships.

'There tends to be a bias in the lesbian community against Bisexuals as they are considered "untrustworthy" and unable to "choose what they want"'

Most respondents who identified as other than gay or lesbian said they used LGBT commercial venues and events. 59% said they enjoyed doing so

compared with 79% of gay men and 68% of lesbians. It is not only that the venues themselves are unwelcoming to bisexual people in relationships with opposite-sex partners, but also patrons of the venues can make them feel uncomfortable and regulate their behaviour

'I've got a boyfriend, we are both as gay as each other, you know, we've been out as queer, gay, whatever you want to call it, for years and years... we've got a queer history as everybody else in the pub. ... Sometimes we're like getting filthy looks from people like.. "what's that straight couple doing in here?" I have to regulate my behaviour to gay pub'

Being bisexual can result in multiple issues of marginalisation which includes discrimination, prejudice and isolation from straight and LGBT people, networks and spaces.

'Gay people fit in the gay scene and services, straight people fit in the mainstream world. I often feel like I'm bouncing between the two and don't feel like I can settle as long as I am true to myself. In rare events such as bi specific events, I finally feel like I am at home and can be truly "me" and not have to hide any aspect of my identity or background'

Almost a third of bisexual respondents had experienced bullying, abuse, discrimination or exclusion from LGBT people. Chapter 4 explores this issue in more detail. Bisexual and queer people were also more likely than lesbians and gay men to have experienced harassment, negative comments, teasing or bullying. Issues of safety are covered in chapter 8.

‘It’s made me feel uneasy about disclosing my sexual orientation, as a gay man who was the manager of a big LGBT nightclub in Brighton asked me to leave the club after he overheard that I was bisexual’

‘there are two issues for me really – the homophobia I experience from straight people and the biphobia I experience from both straight and LG people’

Bisexual and queer respondents are more likely than lesbians or gay men to have thought about and attempted suicide in the past five years.

Half of all bisexual respondents said that experiences of discrimination and exclusion keep them isolated.

Bisexual respondents, queer respondents, and those of other sexual identities than lesbian or gay, were more likely to have had mental health difficulties than lesbians or gay men. Focus groups revealed that there was a perception that support for LGBT people with mental health difficulties may not accommodate bisexual people. See chapter 6 for more on mental health, suicide and suicidal distress.

39% of bisexual respondents didn’t think that Brighton & Hove had sexual health information relevant to their sexuality. In chapter 5, you can read more about sexual and physical health.

‘I have sex with bi women, bi men, lesbian women, straight men. I would like safer sex info appropriate to all these groups in one place so I don’t have to hunt it all down in different places!’

A third of bisexual people said that they had experienced homelessness. See chapter 7 for more.

23% of bisexual people have experienced sexual / gender identity-based discrimination when trying to access goods, services or facilities. Chapter 9 includes a full discussion of the problems bisexual people can face when trying to access services.

The analysis group recommended that:

- ‘biphobia’ is always included and considered when discussing issues of discrimination, prejudice and abuse against LGBT people.
- awareness of the need for bi-inclusivity is developed among LGBT businesses and their staff.
- statutory services conduct gap analyses of their services with regard to their accessibility for bi people.
- bi-focused social space be funded and established.

More details about the results of the research and recommendations can be found in the full report which you can download for free from:

www.countmeintoo.co.uk