

# count me in too community summary

## Community safety & LGBT lives

The Count Me In Too Community Safety report explores the experiences and opinions of LGBT people with regard to safety and hate crime. Respondents were asked about incidences of violence, abuse and discrimination because of their sexual/gender identity. Hate crime for this report is experiences of verbal abuse, physical violence, criminal damage, harassment, sexual assault, negative comments, teasing and bullying. Safety, however, is seen as more than an absence of abuse, harassment and violence; it also incorporates the ability to live without the fear of these. Chapter 1 of the findings report explains the report's approach to hate crime and safety.

**Hate crime continues to be extensively perpetrated against LGBT people and some LGBT people are more likely to experience it than others.** 73% of respondents said that they had experienced abuse related to their sexual identity and/or gender identity in the past five years. Trans, bi and queer people, those who identified their sexual identity as 'other', young people and isolated people were more likely to have experienced hate crime.

Of the 596 people who had experienced some form of hate crime, just 40 had *only* experienced verbal abuse/negative comments from strangers in the street. Chapter 3 includes a full discussion of the range of hate crimes, and similarities and differences in the experiences of different identity groups within the LGBT collective.

**Fear of crime impacts on the ability of LGBT people to be themselves and live lives that are free not only from violence and abuse, but also from the fear of violence and abuse.** Trans people, people who are

isolated, people with mental health difficulties and people from certain neighbourhoods both *fear* and *experience* more hate crime than other LGBT people. Chapter 2 recognises that hate crimes are often ignored, tolerated and remain unnamed, but have emotional impacts. Hate crimes can both impact on, and result from, vulnerabilities around mental health and isolation.

Some LGBT people said that they had learned to accept prejudice and discrimination as normal.

'It is so common and expected that you learn to live with it... The unchallenged use of the term 'gay' to mean anything crap, rubbish, pathetic, etc. within schools and amongst kids doesn't help'.

There are clear indications that avoidance strategies are used by LGBT people in relation to these fears and experiences. 73% of LGBT people avoided public displays of affection at times. More than half said that safety concerns led them to avoid going out at night at some point during the past 5 years, and more than three quarters of respondents said that there are places in Brighton where they do not feel safe. Chapter 5 explores issues of fear and avoidance in more detail.

'Although I go out there and I'm myself and I'm buggered really if the world's going to not allow me to be who I am, but there is a cost isn't there, there's an emotional [cost] I think'.

Only a quarter of those who had experienced abuse, reported an incident. When asked why the incident was not reported, the most common response was that it was not serious enough. Over half of those who reported a hate crime did so to the police. See chapter 4 for more on the reporting of hate crimes.

‘One or two comments from people in the street in passing is not going to be taken as serious homophobic abuse and there is no chance of the perpetrators being ‘caught’. I normally just say something to challenge the taunt and leave it at that. This happens to LGBT people every day, the number of homophobic abuse incidents reported really IS just the tip of the iceberg.’

LGBT people had both positive and negative experiences and perceptions of police and safety services. See chapter 8 for more.

‘We know there’s massive homophobia still within the police force but we know that they’re trying to do something about it.’

The report argues for a broad definition of safety that is not only about not experiencing hate crime, but also takes into account the emotional and mental cost of hate crime. This includes raising awareness of acceptable behaviours, equalities initiatives, and broader community engagements.

‘Safety’ to me doesn’t just mean being safe from verbal/physical harassment. I want to feel comfortable that I’m not going to be subject to a range of annoying behaviour from ‘jokes’ and unwanted sexual advances to ‘funny’ looks and whispers. This may seem unrealistic and would require massive shifts in social attitudes.’

The analysis group recommended that:

- local agencies and fora agree a shared definition of safety, and move beyond reducing hate crime. This definition should be widely publicised to raise awareness of acceptable and unacceptable behaviours that LGBT people experience.
- a common hate crime reporting framework is created and used across a range of services and groups.
- dedicated specialist LGBT safety case workers are appointed to work across agencies to provide an accessible reporting point and to develop expertise in case resolution.
- hate crime hotspots are identified and monitored, and that targeted work be carried out there to improve safety in these areas.

To find out more details about the results of the research and recommendations (including housing and community safety, chapter 6; and monitoring and consulting with LGBT people, chapter 7), the full report can be downloaded for free from:

[www.countmeintoo.co.uk](http://www.countmeintoo.co.uk)