

'Is Britain Fairer?': Key facts and findings on sexual orientation

'Is Britain Fairer?' (2015) is the Equality and Human Rights Commission's five-yearly review of equality and human rights in Britain. This factsheet captures some of our key findings on sexual orientation.

Sexual orientation is a protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010. The Act prohibits unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation; protects individuals from unfair treatment; and promotes a fair and more equal society. It protects people from discrimination in a variety of fields, including employment, education, the exercise of public functions and the provision of services. Figures from a survey conducted by the Office of National Statistics indicate that, in 2013, **92.7%** of British respondents identified themselves as heterosexual/straight, while **1.9%** identified themselves as gay/lesbian/bisexual/other (**5.4%** did not indicate their sexual orientation).

Bullying is a major issue in schools

More than half of lesbian, gay and bisexual pupils in Britain experience bullying in school (verbal bullying is the most common). More than half of secondary school teachers said that they did not challenge the use of homophobic language every time they heard it.

The British Government provided more than £4 million to anti-bullying charities over the course of the 2010-15 Coalition Government to help schools develop strategies to tackle bullying. Financial support is also available to charitable organisations to work in schools to prevent and tackle homophobic, biphobic and transphobic bullying in the form of a £2 million fund administered by the Government Equalities Office.

The percentage of teachers across Britain that say pupils are often or very often the victim of homophobic bullying has fallen from **25%** in 2009 to **13%** in 2014.



As part of the National Approach to Anti-Bullying for Scotland's Children and Young People and the anti-bullying service, *respectme*, the Scottish Government seeks to support local authorities to ensure that prejudice-based bullying in schools is adequately covered in local policies.

A study of students across UK schools and colleges in 2015 found that **39%** of heterosexuals reported being bullied, compared with **61%** of gay students, **75%** of bisexual students and **76%** of lesbians.



The Estyn review in 2014 found that many Welsh schools' strategic equality plans did not pay enough attention to the full range of protected characteristics.

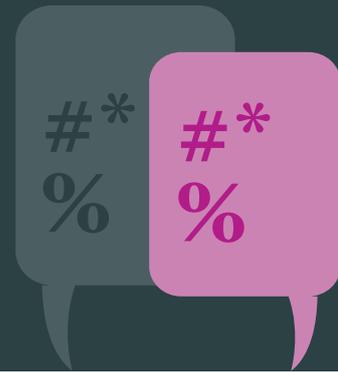
The review found that not all schools reviewed across Wales identified reducing bullying on the grounds of protected characteristics as one of their equality objectives. Those that did generally did not make specific reference to plans to tackle bullying on the grounds of sexual orientation.



Bullying in the workplace is also common

A 2011-12 survey of Britain found that lesbian, gay and bisexual employees were more than twice as likely to be bullied and discriminated against as heterosexual employees in the workplace.

19% of bisexual people and 17% of lesbians reported that they had been bullied over the past six months, a third of which was regular bullying. Negative actions and behaviours were also linked to negative health outcomes.



In Britain, 68.6% of heterosexual/straight people aged 16-64 were in employment in 2009/10, compared with 74.5% of gay/lesbian and 62.6% of bisexual people.

Sample sizes were small and have to be interpreted with caution. This analysis has not recently been updated.



Gay men earn more than people of any other sexual orientation



A study of Britain in 2011 found that gay men received a higher average hourly wage than heterosexual men or women, lesbians or bisexual men or women. Bisexual men earned 31% less per hour than heterosexual men when demographic, job and workplace characteristics were controlled for.



Bisexual men earned less than heterosexual men even if the employer had an equal opportunities policy which explicitly mentioned sexual orientation. Lesbians were paid nearly 30% less than heterosexual women on average. However, this changed if they were employed in a workplace with an equal opportunities policy which explicitly referred to sexual orientation, in which case there was no wage gap between these two groups.

Hate crime, discrimination and a lack of confidence in the authorities are still an issue



The Gay British Crime Survey 2013 found that one in six (17%) lesbian, gay and bisexual people reported experiencing a homophobic hate crime or incident between 2010 and 2013, and almost one in ten (9%) had been victimised in the last year. Two-thirds of those who experienced a hate crime or incident did not report it to anyone and more than three-quarters did not report it to the police. The reasons given for not reporting include anticipation that it will not be taken seriously, a fear of negative response and a belief that there is little that the police can do.



In England, a higher percentage of gay/lesbian/bisexual/other people reported being a victim of a hate crime in the last 12 months (**2.1%** in 2012/13) compared with heterosexual/straight respondents (**0.4%**).

No data were available for Scotland or Wales.

The number of sexual orientation hate crimes recorded by police in 2013/14 was 4,622 in England and Wales and 890 in Scotland.

In England and Wales, there were **913** convictions for crimes motivated by sexual orientation or transgender identity in 2013/14, an increase of **98** compared with 2008/09.

In Scotland, there were **389** offences with a hate crime aggravator motivated by sexual orientation in 2012/13, an increase of **297** compared with 2010/11.



In England, gay/lesbian/bisexual people have poorer health outcomes than heterosexual people

In England, **22.9%** of gay/lesbian/bisexual people reported that they suffered from bad health, compared with **14.8%** of heterosexual/straight people.

In addition, a higher percentage of sexual minority respondents to the Health Survey for England were at risk of poor mental health (**22.9%**), compared with respondents who classified themselves as heterosexual/straight (**14.8%**), in 2012. No data were available for Scotland and Wales.



However, **50%** of gay/lesbian/bisexual people were reported to be overweight or obese, compared with **62%** of heterosexual/straight people.

There has been some progress in electing openly gay, lesbian and bisexual MPs

There are now 32 openly lesbian, gay or bisexual MPs in the UK Parliament elected in 2015, the highest number ever.

In Wales, **2%** of elected councillors identified as lesbian, gay or bisexual compared with **5%** of unelected candidates, in 2012.

In England, people who self-identified as lesbian, gay or bisexual or other were considerably more likely than their heterosexual counterparts to feel they could influence things that affect their locality: **51.2%** compared with **34%** in 2013/14.

