

In Spring/ Summer 2020, LGBT Youth Scotland consulted with over 100 LGBT young women and girls in Scotland aged 13-25 to find out about the issues that matter to them. We found that LGBT young women and girls face several challenges in their daily lives, both as young women and as LGBT people.

Some of the key issues identified included:

- **Sexualisation of LGBT women and girls**
- **Experiences of harassment, abuse and violence**
- **Limited access to relevant advice or support**

In June 2020, we conducted a further consultation with over 100 LGBT young women and girls to better understand their experiences of these specific issues.

Sexualisation of LGBT Young Women and Girls

We asked young people about their experiences of being sexualised as LGBT young women and girls. Responses identified a high prevalence of sexualised behaviour targeted at or perpetrated around them:

- 85% have had people use sexual stereotypes about LGBT women around them
- 79% have had people make assumptions and comments about their sexual preferences and practices
- 62% have had people sexualise their body, such as making comments about looks, body shape/ type etc
- 59% have received inappropriate questions from people about sexual preferences and practices
- 35% have had people make sexually aggressive comments specifically due to their LGBT identity
- 34% have had people demand they 'prove' their LGBT identity, such as by kissing a girl etc
- 15.85% experienced 'other' forms of sexualisation.

Participants responses also raised concern about the sexualisation of LGBT women and girls in the media, particularly how the misrepresentation of LGBT identities and use of stereotypes in the media impacts on perceptions of LGBT women and girls. Many respondents were particularly concerned by the impact of pornography on how LGBT women and girls are represented in the media and feel that LGBT women are presented in a sexualised way to appeal to heterosexual men.

Experiences of Violence, Abuse and Harassment

We asked LGBT young women about their experiences of violence, abuse and harassment related to their gender identity; LGBT identity; domestic abuse, stalking and harassment; sexual violence and sharing of Intimate Images

Experiences related to Gender Identity

- 80% have had verbal abuse directed at them because they are a woman or girl
- 17% experienced physical violence because they are a woman or girl
- 31% had online abuse directed at them because they are a woman or girl

Experiences related to LGBT identity

- 55% had verbal abuse directed at them because of their LGBT identity
- 13% had physical violence (pushing, hitting, grabbing etc) directed at them because of their LGBT identity
- 41% have had online abuse directed at them because of their LGBT identity

Domestic Abuse, Stalking and Harassment

- 13% have experienced domestic abuse from a partner or ex-partner including physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse or controlling behaviour
- 12% have experienced specifically violent or controlling behaviour from a partner or ex-partner
- 15% have been stalked or harassed by someone they know, such as an ex-partner
- 20% have been stalked or harassed by a stranger
- 44% have been followed by someone and felt worried or frightened by it
- 29% have experienced violence or controlling behaviour from a family member
- None of the respondents had experienced forced marriage

Sexual Violence

- 65% have had someone make inappropriate sexual comments to them in person or online
- 31% have experienced sexual violence, including unwanted touching, sexual assault, and rape

Sharing of Intimate Images

- 43% have had inappropriate sexual images or 'nudes' sent to them without their consent
- 33% have had someone demand they send sexual images when they did not want to
- 8% have had someone share intimate images or video of them without consent

Access to Support and Information

Our consultations identified that LGBT young women and girls find it difficult to access appropriate information for issues around sexual health; relationships; domestic abuse and sexual violence and 73% of those who experienced incidents of violence, abuse or harassment did not report it to Police. Common reasons not to report included:

- Feeling like instances of violence, abuse or harassment were not serious enough to report.
- Concern about being outed
- Fear of not being taken seriously
- Lack of trust in police and criminal justice

Experiences of Seeking and Accessing Support

LGBT young women and girls who experienced violence, abuse or harassment sought support from the following:

- 73% sought support from friends
- 30% sought support from parents/ carers
- 23% sought support from a teacher/ tutor
- 21% sought support from social media groups and forums
- 11% accessed Helplines for support
- 9% sought support from a youth worker
- 9% sought support from an LGBT service
- 5% accessed specific support services, such as Women's Aid, Rape Crisis or similar
- 4% accessed support through health services

These figures demonstrate that LGBT young women and girls do not currently access specialist support when they experience violence, abuse or harassment whether relating to their gender or their LGBT identity.

In 2020/21, LGBT Youth Scotland will engage further with LGBT young people and relevant organisations to raise awareness of these issues and identify key recommendations for positive change.

For more information about this work please contact Janice.Stevenson@lgbtyouth.org.uk