

Speak Out:
**A Survey of Online Anti-LGBT+
Hate Speech and Hate Crime**

By Luke Hubbard

The organisations involved in this project were:

- Bilitis, Bulgaria (<https://bilitis.org/>)
- Cavaría, Belgium (<https://www.cavaría.be/>)
- Federation of Lesbians, Gays, Transsexuals and Bisexuals, Spain (<http://www.felgtb.org/>)
- Galop, UK (<http://www.galop.org.uk/>)
- Háttér Society, Hungary (<http://en.hatter.hu/>)
- Human Rights Centre, Estonia (<https://humanrights.ee>)
- International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association Portugal, Portugal, (<https://ilga-portugal.pt/ilga/index.php>)
- LGL, Lithuania (<https://www.lgl.lt/>)
- Mozaika, Latvia (<http://mozaika.lv/>)

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CONTENTS

Content Warning (*Page 1*)

Introduction (*Page 2*)

Methodology (*Page 3*)

Findings (*Page 6*)

1. Scale and Nature (*Page 6*)

- Prevalence (*Page 6*)
- Types of Incidents Experienced (*Page 7*)
- Type of Abuse Received (*Page 11*)
- Where Did the Abuse Occur? (*Page 12*)
- Who Was the Abuse Targeted at? (*Page 13*)
- Profile of Offender(s) (*Page 15*)
- Relation to Offline Incidents (*Page 18*)

2. Impact and Consequences (*Page 20*)

3. Support (*Page 26*)

- Reporting Behaviour (*Page 26*)
- Response of Agencies (*Page 28*)
- Knowledge of Support Services/Resources (*Page 35*)
- Response of Bystanders (*Page 36*)

Conclusion (*Page 38*)

Recommendations (*Page 39*)

Country Fact Sheets (*Page 40*)

- Belgium (*Page 40*)
- Bulgaria (*Page 41*)
- Estonia (*Page 42*)
- Hungary (*Page 43*)
- Latvia (*Page 44*)
- Lithuania (*Page 45*)
- Portugal (*Page 46*)
- Spain (*Page 47*)
- United Kingdom (*Page 48*)

Appendix (*Page 49*)

CONTENT WARNING

Some of the language used within this research may upset or offend readers.

This work contains examples of abuse, threatening and offensive messages and conduct that members of the LGBT+ community have received on the internet. These are replicated not to shock or sensationalise, but to acknowledge the nature of this abuse and to make clear the experiences of the individuals who have received this abuse.

INTRODUCTION

The internet has grown in scope and function ever since the invention of the World Wide Web in 1990, and is now ever present across society with 4.39 billion users across the world¹. While the internet has brought with it many benefits that have made the navigation of our everyday lives much easier, it has simultaneously provided a new arena for crime to occur. For LGBT+ individuals specifically, the growth of online spaces has brought a plethora of benefits, providing access to information, opportunities for self-exploration, and ways to connect with other LGBT+ people and communities. On the other hand, it has also become a breeding space for anti-LGBT+ abuse and hate. While there has been increasing attention given to abuse directed towards the LGBT+ community, this has primarily been concerned with abuse that occurs offline, meaning we know very little about the experiences of LGBT+ victims targeted by hate crime and hate speech online. This research therefore intends to address this issue by studying the experiences of LGBT+ victims of online hate crime and online hate speech across 9 European countries.

For the purposes of this research online hate speech is defined as any online communication or expression which advocates, promotes, or encourages hatred, discrimination or violence, against any individual or group because of their sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression or sex characteristics. Online hate crime is defined as any crime that is targeted at a person because of hostility or prejudice based on a person's real or perceived sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression or sex characteristics that takes place online (Galop, 2019²).

¹ According to research by We Are Social and Hootsuite there are 4,388 billion internet users, of which 3,484 are active social media users: <https://wearesocial.com/blog/2019/01/digital-2019-global-internet-use-accelerates>

² Galop (2019) What is online anti-LGBT hate speech and hate crime, <https://www.galop.org.uk/what-is-online-anti-lgbt-hate-speech-and-hate-crime/>, (accessed 23rd September 2019).

METHODOLOGY

To conduct this research an online survey was developed and administered to explore the nature, extent, impact and reporting of online anti-LGBT+ hate crime across 9 European countries (Belgium, Bulgaria, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Portugal, Spain, and the United Kingdom) using an online tool. The online survey, which ran for 3 months, was translated into 10 languages (Bulgarian, Dutch, English, Estonian, Hungarian, Latvian, Lithuanian, Portuguese, Russian, and Spanish) and was promoted by each individual country using their various social media platforms and publicising amongst their clients and service users.

Frequencies were carried out to analyse the quantitative data alongside a thematic analysis of the qualitative responses³.

The survey was completed by a total of 2538 participants across the participating countries. A breakdown of sample sizes by country can be found below:

Figure 1: Sample size broken down by country

<u>Country</u>	<u>No. of Respondents</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
Portugal	90	4%
Estonia	69	3%
Hungary	446	18%
Spain	540	20%
Belgium	90	4%
Lithuania	206	8%
Latvia	147	6%
Bulgaria	250	10%
UK	700	27%
TOTAL	2538	100%

Given the variation between countries in terms of the number of people to have completed the There was a wide variation in the number of respondents in each country. For example, nearly half of all the respondents came from either the UK or Spain. This means that when discussing the overall findings, the results are skewed towards these countries and do not necessarily represent the thoughts and opinions of all of the countries surveyed. Further, the number of respondents received by some countries (such as Estonia and Belgium) was very small and so, when discussing the results in these countries, they cannot be generalised to the opinion of the whole country.

Respondents were asked a series of questions about themselves to see if variables such as age and gender would affect their answers. The demographics of the sample were as follows:

³ For the analysis, the non-English responses were translated using Google Translate.

Figure 2: Breakdown of Respondents by Age

<u>What Is Your Age?</u>	<u>Frequency</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
Under 18	392	15%
18-24	860	33%
25-29	327	14%
30-39	444	17%
40-49	306	12%
50-59	143	6%
60-69	45	2%
70+	21	1%

Figure 3: Breakdown of Respondents by Gender

<u>How Would You Describe Your Gender?</u>	<u>Frequency</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
Male	1048	41%
Female	1100	43%
Non-Binary	165	7%
Genderqueer/Fluid	84	3%
Unsure/Questioning	76	3%
Other	65	3%

Figure 4: Number of Transgender Respondents

<u>Are You Transgender?</u>	<u>Frequency</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
Yes	352	14%
No	2039	80%
Unsure	147	6%

Figure 5: Number of Intersex Respondents

<u>Are You Intersex?</u>	<u>Frequency</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
Yes	44	2%
No	2400	95%
Unsure	94	3%

Figure 6: Breakdown of Respondents by Sexual Orientation

<u>How Would You Describe Your Sexual Orientation?</u>	<u>Frequency</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
Lesbian	431	17%
Gay	749	30%
Bisexual	558	22%
Queer	110	4%
Pansexual	217	9%
Asexual	109	4%
Heterosexual	278	11%
Other	86	3%

Figure 7: Percentage of Respondents with a Disability

<u>Do You Have Any Disabilities or Long Term Health Conditions?</u>	<u>Frequency</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
Blind or Visual Impairment	94	4%
Deaf or Hearing Impairment	67	3%
Learning Difficulty	171	7%
Mental Health Conditions	621	24%
Mobility Issues	141	6%
Other	217	9%
None	1612	64%

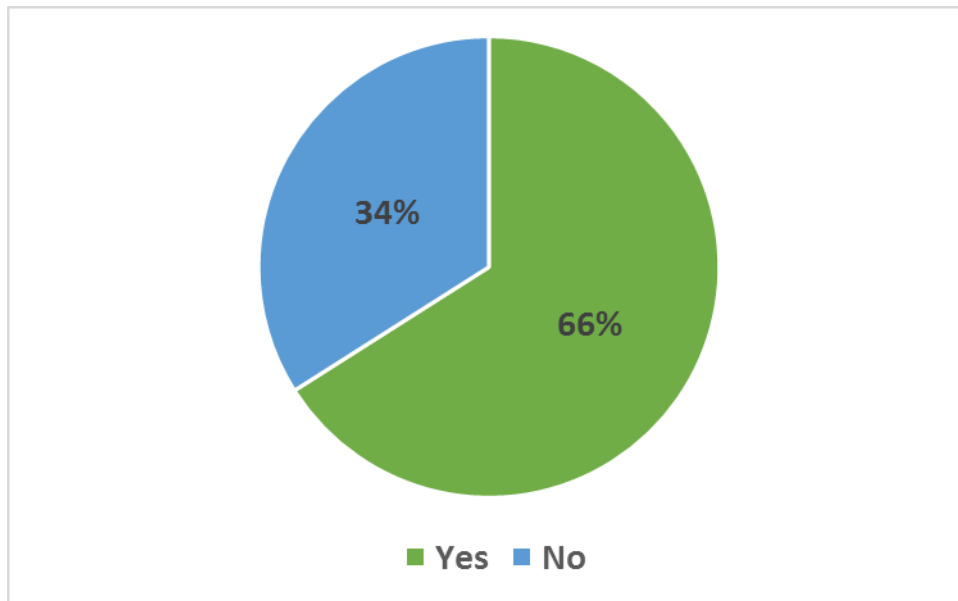
FINDINGS

1. Scale and Nature

Prevalence

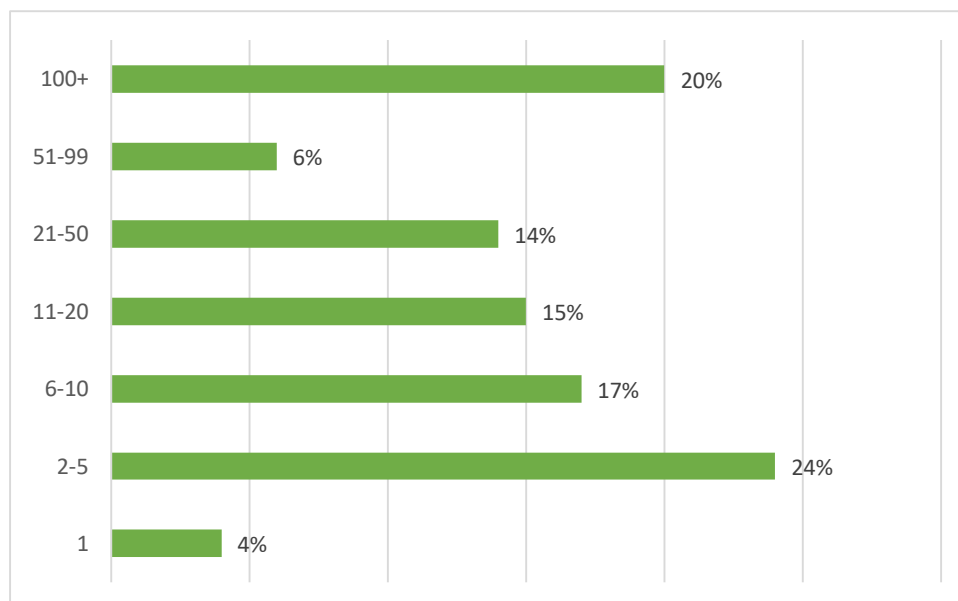
Participants were first asked whether they had experienced anti-LGBT hate crime/speech in the last 5 years. The graph below illustrates that 66% of respondents had experienced an anti-LGBT hate crime and/or hate speech, while 34% had not.

Figure 8: Have you experienced anti-LGBT+ online hate crime/speech in the last 5 years?



Respondents were also asked how many incidents of online abuse they had experienced online in the past 5 years. Their responses can be found below:

Figure 9: Number of instances of hate speech/crime experienced over the last 5 years



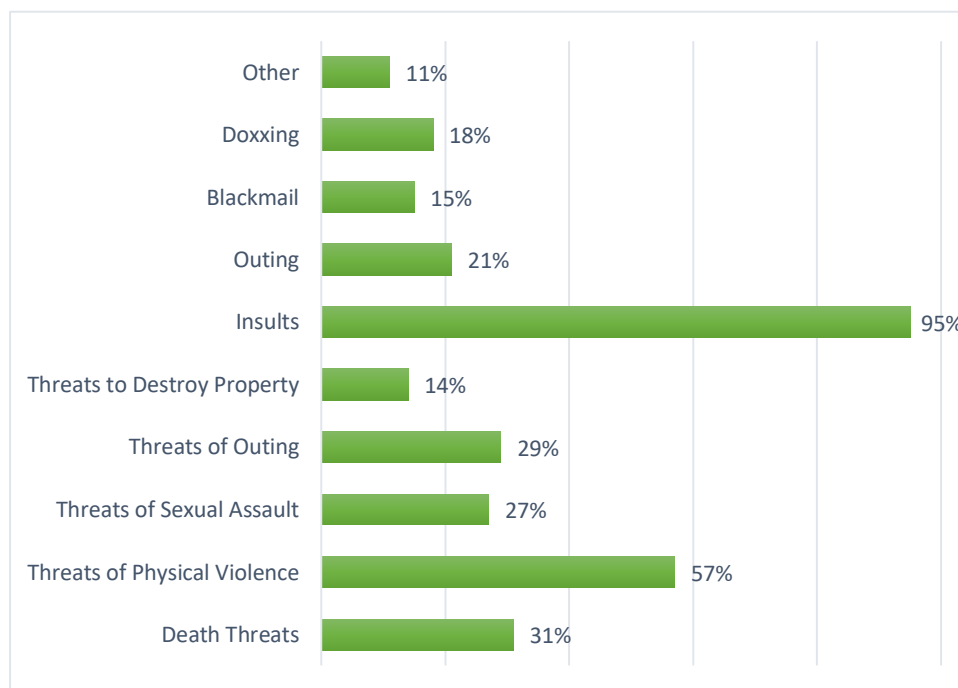
96% of participants had experienced more than one occurrence of online abuse, with 1 in 5 (20%) experiencing more than 100 incidents over the last 5 years, and 4 in 10 experiencing 21 or more. This highlights that online anti-LGBT hate crime is a common occurrence for many LGBT+ individuals.

In particular, online abuse is much more frequent for trans victims, who tend to experience a greater number of incidents than cisgender respondents. For example, 27% of those who identified as cisgender experienced between 2 and 5 incidents compared to just 15% of trans respondents. Similarly, only 17% of cisgender respondents had experienced 100+ incidents compared to 30% of trans respondents (see appendix 1).

Types of Incidents Experienced

Participants were also asked what type of incidents they had experienced over the last 5 years:

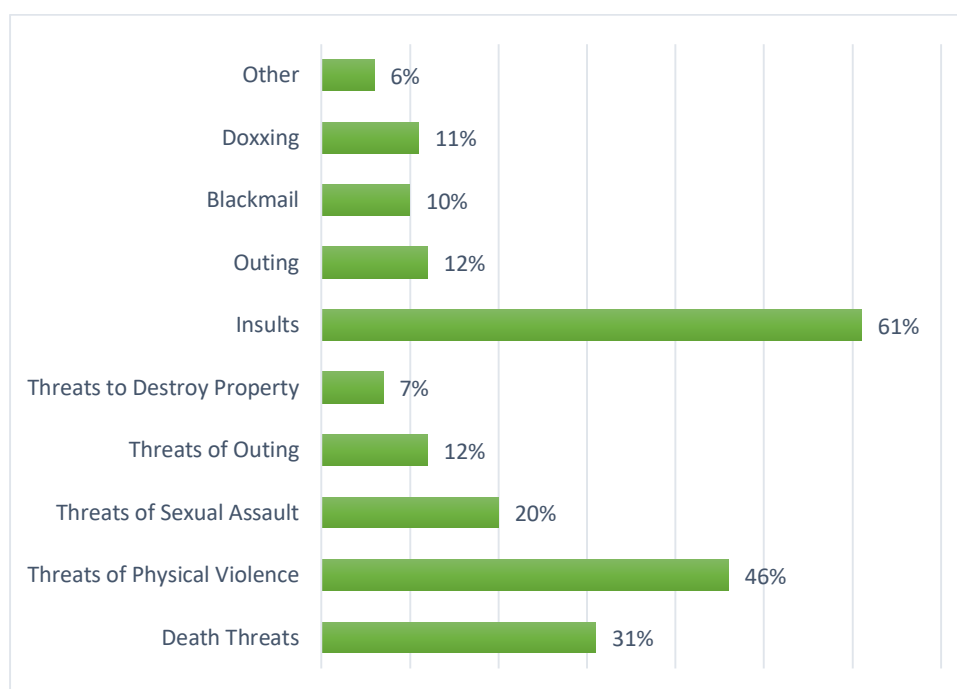
Figure 10: Type of incidents experienced over the last 5 years



This graph demonstrates that the most common incident experienced by members of the LGBT community online is insults (95%), followed by threats of physical violence (57%), death threats (31%), threats of outing (29%), and threats of sexual assault (27%). This chart also demonstrates that many LGBT+ victims of online abuse experience numerous incidents of varying seriousness, supporting the findings from Figures 9 and 10 that such abuse is rarely experienced in isolation.

Similarly, respondents were asked about their most serious incident of online anti-LGBT hate crime:

Figure 11: Most serious incident of anti-LGBT+ hate crime online



For the majority of respondents insults were the most serious incident they had experienced online (61%). Following this was threats of physical violence (46%), death threats (31%), and threats of sexual assault (20%). Similar proportions of participants experienced LGBT-specific incidents such as outing/threats of outing (both 12%) and doxing (11%) as well 10% being blackmailed, whilst 7% were threatened with having their property destroyed.

Participants were also able to provide details about their experiences, enabling us to explore the nature of their online hate crime victimisation in much more detail. Participants' experiences of victimisation were extremely diverse, and included:

- Bullying
- Harassment
- Defamation
- Dead naming
- Trolling
- Suicide baiting
- Being sent offensive memes and GIFs
- Receiving homophobic or transphobic comments
- Non-acceptance of one's identity
- Having one's gender constantly questioned
- Incitement to hatred
- Threats to reveal someone's HIV status
- Threats to reveal or revealing a person's sexual orientation
- Sexual harassment
- Cyberstalking
- Revenge porn

- Threats towards family and friends
- Threats of correctional rape
- The releasing of or threatening the release of private information
- Threatened with being beaten up, raped, and murdered.

While some of these incidents may appear relatively trivial, such as being called abusive names, being sent offensive memes and gifs, and non-acceptance of one's identity; for many of these victims this is something they experience on a regular basis, as these comments below outline:

"It's something continuous, these violent people chase us in networks."

"The attacks were very frequent."

"There is no one "incident." Every day we hear insults of all kinds."

"Over the past five years I have been subjected to numerous incidents of harassment, threats and abuse."

"Sadly I have got abuse like this for decades."

"I couldn't go on any social media without receiving some kind of hate message."

"I can't separate out the consequences of individual 'incidents' this shit is literally every day, multiple times a day."

Online abuse is therefore a routine feature of their everyday lives, which can have a profound impact upon them (this will be discussed in more detail in section 2). For many this abuse can also become 'normalised' and just something that they have to put up with it. As one participant illustrated with the following quote:

"It's everyday [online abuse]. For us, this is "normal."

Outing (the disclosing of a person's gender history, sexual orientation or HIV status without their consent) and doxing (the publishing of private or identifying information about a particular individual without their consent) are particular issues faced by the LGBT+ online. Outing and doxing can often overlap with each other, as those who are doxed are often simultaneously outed as the information relates to their identity, as well as other crimes such as blackmail. It can also have a massive effect on an individual leading to the breakdown of family relationships and friendships as well as problems at work or school:

"My employer fired me after I was outed by a colleague"

"After I was outed I couldn't face going back to school and so I didn't"

"It caused me to leave school"

"I lost a few close friends after it was revealed that I had HIV"

"I was outed to my mother who now doesn't talk to me"

“I was bullied at work after a colleague revealed I was gay”

“I know people who have been doxed and lost their jobs as a result”

“My employer was contacted and attempt was made to lose me my employment”

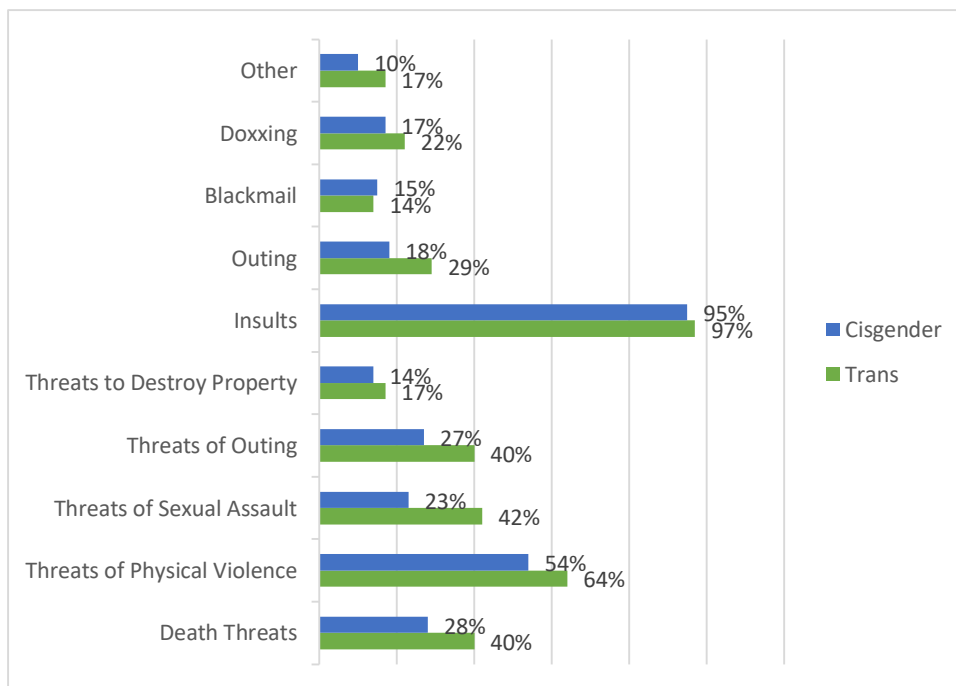
“My parents disowned me”

“My family disowned me and kicked me out”

In this sample outing was experienced by 3 in 10 respondents (29%), and was the most serious online incident for 1 in 10 respondents (12%). Doxing was experienced by 2 in 10 respondents (18%) and was the most serious incident for 1 in 10 (11%).

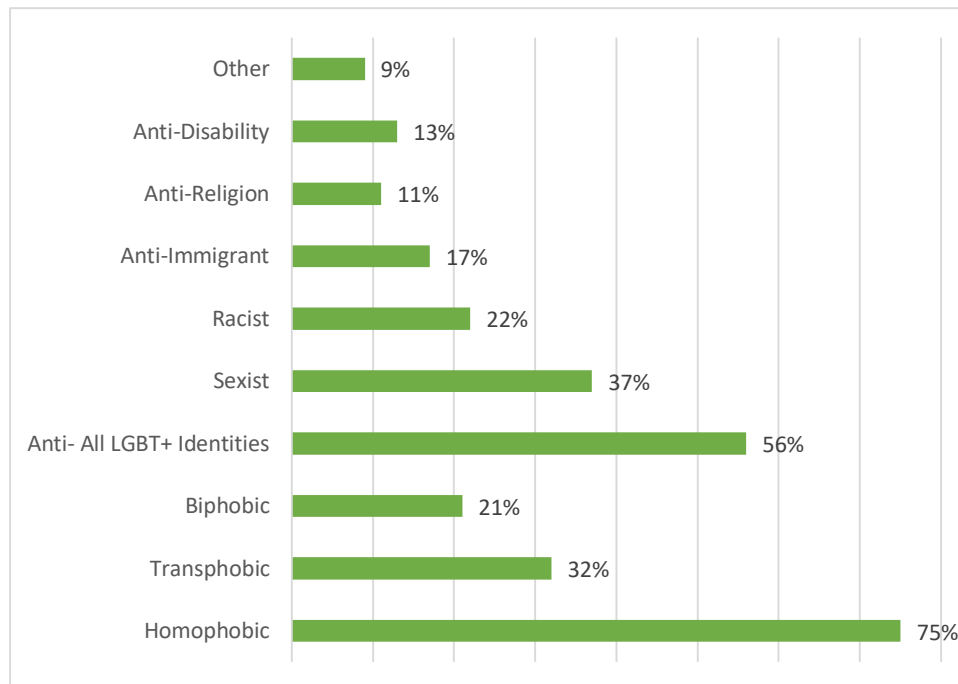
Within the research sample there were also some notable differences in terms of the type and frequencies of hate crime experienced by respondents. For example, lesbians were much more likely to receive threats of sexual assault (30%) than other groups of victims such as gay men (13%), who were more likely to receive threats of physical violence than their female counterparts (28% vs 19%). Similarly, trans victims were much more likely to experience online abuse compared to cisgender victims as the graph below demonstrates (Figure 12). For example, 40% of trans respondents had experienced a death threat, compared with only 20% of cisgender respondents; 40% of trans respondents were threatened with being outed compared to 27% of cisgender respondents, and 42% of trans respondents were threatened with sexual violence, compared with 23% of cisgender respondents.

Figure 12: Types of incident experienced over the last 5 years (Trans compared to Cisgender)



Type of Abuse Received

Figure 13: Was the abuse received?



The survey enabled respondents to specify the aspects of their identity which they felt had motivated the offender(s) to target them. Of the total sample, 73% ticked more than one reason (see appendix 2). While many respondents felt that the abuse they received was related to their sexual orientation or gender identity, this was often intertwined with other prejudices such as racism, sexism, and xenophobia. Similarly, many individuals received abuse that was both homophobic⁴ and transphobic⁵, or homophobic and biphobic⁶.

It is important to understand how different aspects of identity discrimination can overlap as this creates distinct experiences of online hate crime/speech, mediate perception and experiences of the criminal justice system, and affect the resources available to victims. For example, Meyer⁷ found that LGBT people with a white middle class background would frequently view the violence experienced as severe, whereas those from a black working class background did not. Meyer found that this affected whether such violence was reported by the victim and whether they sought support, with the latter often not reporting their experiences, which was often minimised by their friends and families who believed that it could have been worse. On the other hand, those from the former, were often encouraged to report because violence was an exceptional event amongst their family and friends, whereas for the latter the opposite was true.

⁴ Homophobia is a dislike of or prejudice against homosexual people.

⁵ Transphobia is a dislike of or prejudice against trans men and women.

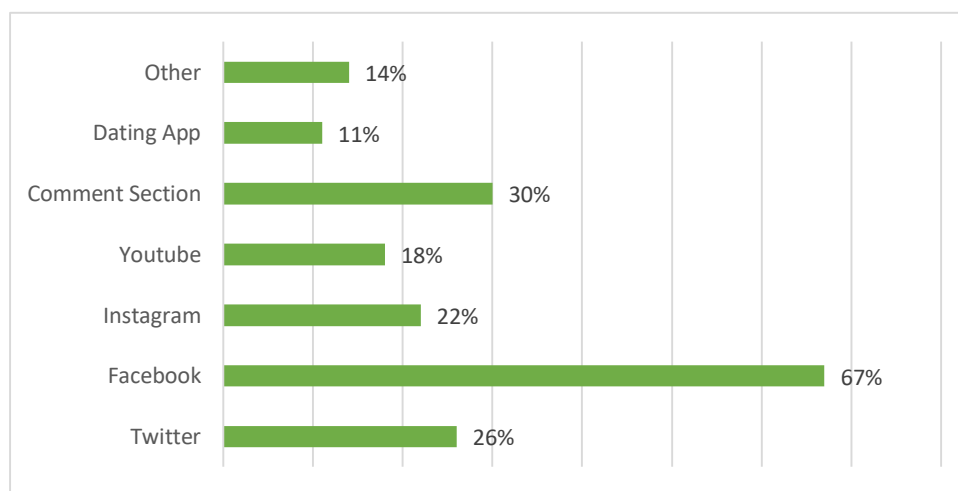
⁶ Biphobia is a dislike of or prejudice against bisexual people.

⁷ Meyer, D. (2010) 'Evaluating the Severity of Hate-Motivated Violence: Intersectional Differences among LGBT Hate Crime Victims', *Sociology*, **44**(5): 980-995.

Furthermore, it is also worth noting that a large number of lesbian respondents ticked the other box and stated that the abuse they received was lesbophobic, as opposed to homophobic. “Lesbophobia comprises various forms of negativity towards lesbians as individuals, as couples, or as a social group. Based on the categories of sex, sexual orientation, lesbian identity, and gender expression, this negativity encompasses prejudice, discrimination, and abuse, in addition to attitudes and feelings ranging from disdain to hostility. As such, lesbophobia is sexism against women that intersects with homophobia and vice versa”⁸. Similarly, a large number of Spanish respondents also stated that their abuse was motivated by the fact they were a same-sex parent(s) who had a child through surrogacy.

Where Did the Abuse Occur?

Figure 14: Where did the abuse take place?



Facebook appears to be the most common social media site that LGBT+ victims experience online hate speech/crime (67%), which is not surprising given that Facebook is by far the most popular social media platform⁹. Nevertheless, around 1 in 4 had also experienced abuse on other platforms such as the comments section of a media outlet (30%) and twitter (26%), and around 1 in 5 on Instagram (22%) and YouTube (18%).

It is also important to note that there were some differences in the types of offences that occurred on the various different platforms. For example, outing, blackmail, and doxing were much more likely to occur on dating apps (22%, 18%, and 23%) and Instagram (22%, 18%, and 16% respectively) than other social media platforms such as Facebook (13%, 11%, and 12% respectively) and comments on a media outlet (12%, 12%, and 13% respectively) (see appendix 3).

Additional platforms identified by respondents were:

- Tumblr
- Reddit

⁸ <https://medium.com/@notCursedE/the-lesbophobia-of-transactivism-8af7948df165>

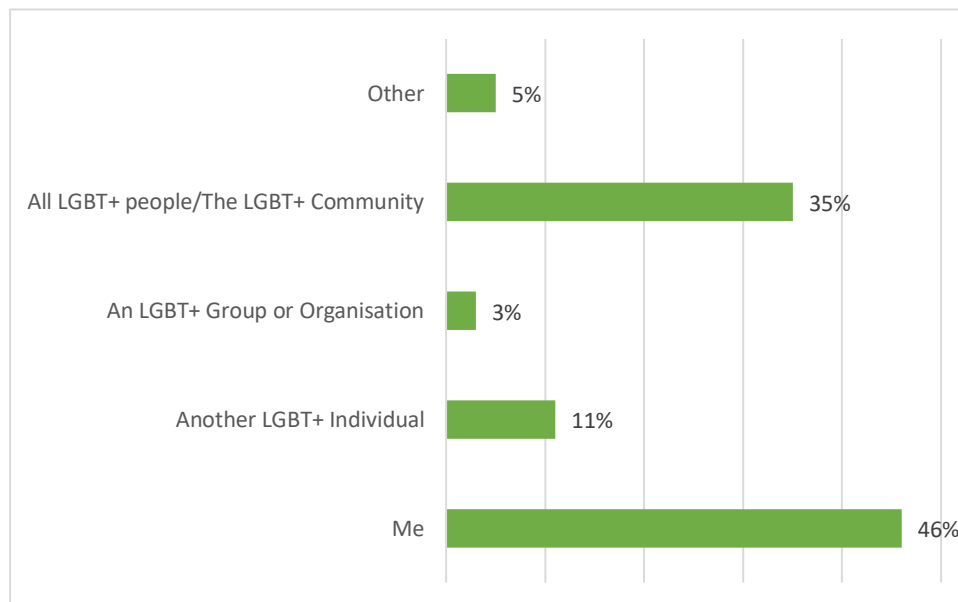
⁹ According to Global Stats Counter 80.33% of social media users use Facebook, 8.31% use Pinterest, 5.44% use twitter, 2.45 use Instagram, 1.81% use YouTube and 0.72 use Tumblr (<https://gs.statcounter.com/social-media-stats/all/europe>)

- Snapchat
- 4chan
- Email/E-messenger
- Chatrooms
- Discussion forums
- Online gaming
- WhatsApp
- Blogs
- Pinterest
- Published media articles.

The vast array of various social media platforms highlights that online LGBT+ abuse takes place across all sites, meaning there are few safe spaces for LGBT+ people online.

Who Was the Abuse Targeted at?

Figure 15: Who was the abuse targeted at?



Just under half of respondents (46%) were targeted directly by the online abuse, while a similar percentage (49%) were not directly targeted but had witnessed the online abuse towards another LGBT+ person (11%), an LGBT+ organisation (3%) or towards LGBT+ people as a whole (35%).

Hate crimes are often described as ‘message crimes’, in that they are designed to not only intimidate the direct victim but the broader community which that victim is perceived to belong to. Online anti-LGBT abuse is a particularly effective way of sending this message of intimidation to the wider community given that such abuse does not necessarily target an individual but can instead be seen by members of the LGBT+ community. For example, in the form of tweets, comments on Facebook/Instagram posts, news articles, and YouTube, and where other LGBT+ individuals and/or organisations are targeted, as the above graph

illustrates. LGBT+ people can therefore be targeted both directly and indirectly by online abuse. This is further supported by respondents in some of the qualitative comments below:

“Even when it’s not directed at me personally it’s there against ALL trans people on videos or posts.”

“I’ve not been targeted directly but I see lots of comments that are homophobic”

“There is a climate of transphobia on Facebook”

“This is a regular issue in the comments of domestic news sites. Constantly telling us we should be beaten and killed”

“I’m sure many other people would have seen it and felt equally as impacted”

“There’s been no single incident, however, seeing these comments regularly on LGBTQ topics has had a serious effect on me”

“I see lots and lots of really negative comments towards the LGBT community”

“I have stopped reading comments on the websites of online newspapers and I have also stopped looking on forums.”

“Every day we hear insults of all kinds on social media”

“The sheer number of death threats and hurtful comments I’ve seen people like me get or that are just out in the open on Facebook/Twitter has made me hate my sexuality”

“It gets you down after a while; scrolling through comments sections on social media sites or news sites and seeing all that venomous hatred.”

“It was just enough to read comments on LGBT+ posts and articles”

Some respondents explained that they regularly received online abuse after speaking out about LGBT+ issues or posting LGBT+ content:

“I posted a picture of me and my partner and we received a load of negative and hurtful comments”

“Because I am in favour of equal rights and talk about in on my Facebook, the comments I receive in response are very aggressive”

“After I posted an LGBT+ supportive comment below an article, I received personal messages that said they were going to find me and hurt me”

“I often receive replies to my tweets about LGBT rights which threaten me with violence”

“I am an activist and I receive a lot of negative comments underneath my asexuality activism, things like I should be fucked straight, beaten up and am mentally ill”

“I run an online trans rights campaign and this is regularly targeted by transphobes who wish to say transphobic things or deny trans peoples identities. I also receive similar communications to my personal accounts as well”

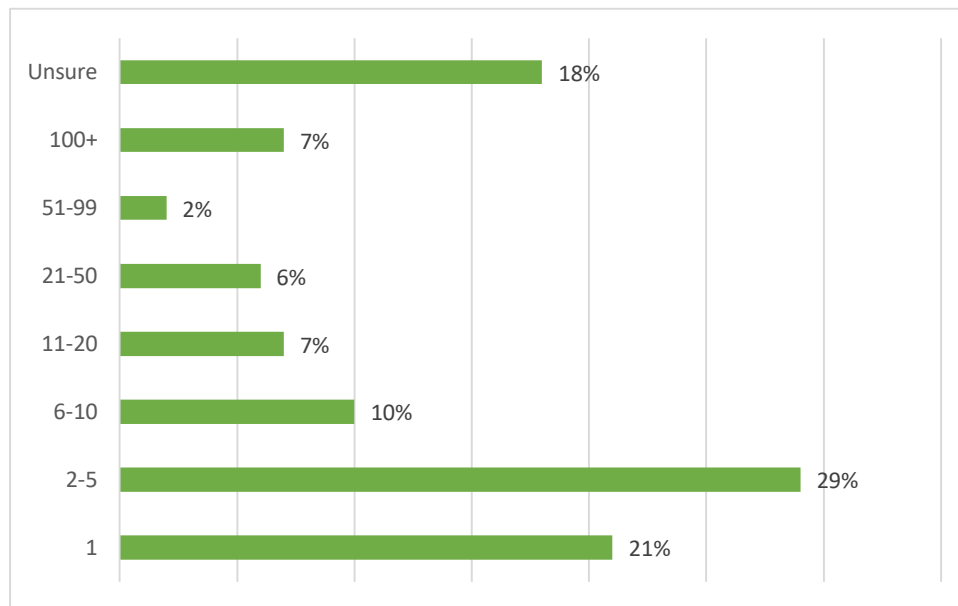
“I have received a lot of hate for standing up for LGBT people”

“I was trying to teach people about pansexuality and they kept on throwing insults at me, threatening to find me and beat me”

“The moment you speak in favour of LGBT rights in networks, the attack is automatic and inescapable”

Profile of Offender(s)

Figure 16: How many offenders were there?



Only 21% of online LGBT+ abuse involved a lone perpetrator. Much more common was for participants to be targeted by multiple offenders (61%); with participants most commonly targeted by between 2 and 5 offenders (29%).

Given that much online abuse respondents received commonly involved a number of perpetrators suggests that there are a number of instances where LGBT+ people are cybermobbed (where a group of individuals come together to attack a single target¹⁰) or are on the receiving end of dogpiling (a situation in which criticism or abuse is directed at a person or group from multiple sources¹¹). Attacks of this kind can be particularly damaging because of the persistence and quantity of the abuse. These scenarios were reflected by some participants in their qualitative responses.

“This kind of abuse often has a domino effect, where people see negative comments and join in and before you know it everyone is”

¹⁰ FemTechNet (2018) Key Terms/Definitions, FemTechNet. Available at: <http://femtechnet.org/csov/csov-key-termsdefinitions/>

¹¹ Oxford Dictionaries (2019) ‘Dogpile’, Oxford Dictionaries. Oxford: Oxford University Press. Available at: <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/dogpile>.

“This group would constantly target all my social media with insults and threats”

“People were jumping on a thread saying they were going to be beat, kill, and rape me”

“These people regularly appear in comments on my Facebook and twitter, and it is impossible to highlight just one case. The most common is constant hurtful, degrading comments, but there are also often threats of being beaten.”

“I received a cascade of misogynistic and homophobic insults on a post I uploaded”

“I was swarmed by anti-trans ‘feminists’ for a blog I wrote”

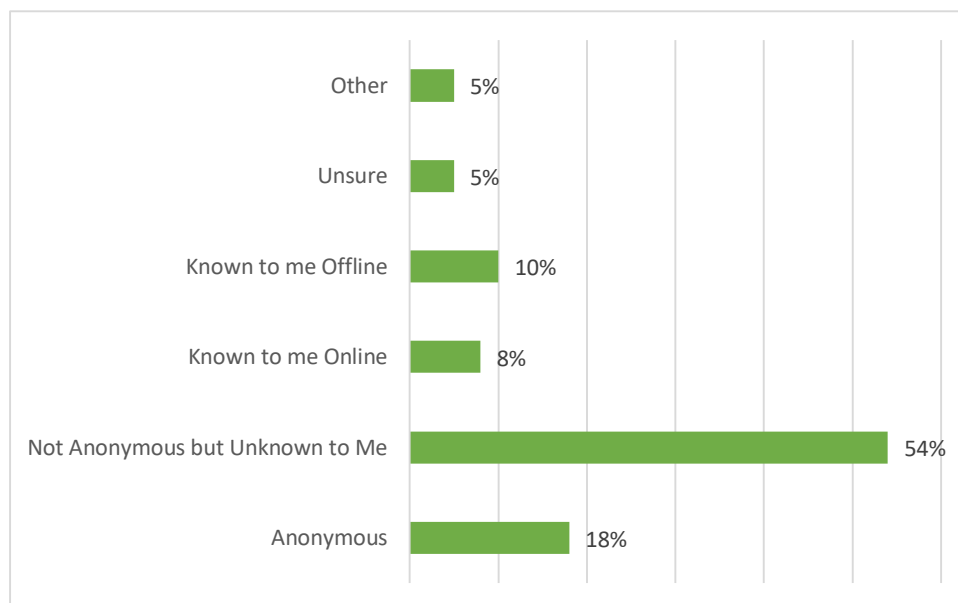
“A number of individuals spammed all my social media that they could find, demanding to know what genitalia I had, threatening to find me and hurt me if I didn’t tell them”

“After I posted about attending my local Pride parade, a lot of people started commenting in a very homophobic way such as insults, death threats, and physical violence”

“Many people commented incredibly inflammatory and hurting things on any post I make”

“A group of individuals have targeted me with comments claiming to know where I live, and graphic details of what they will do when they get there”

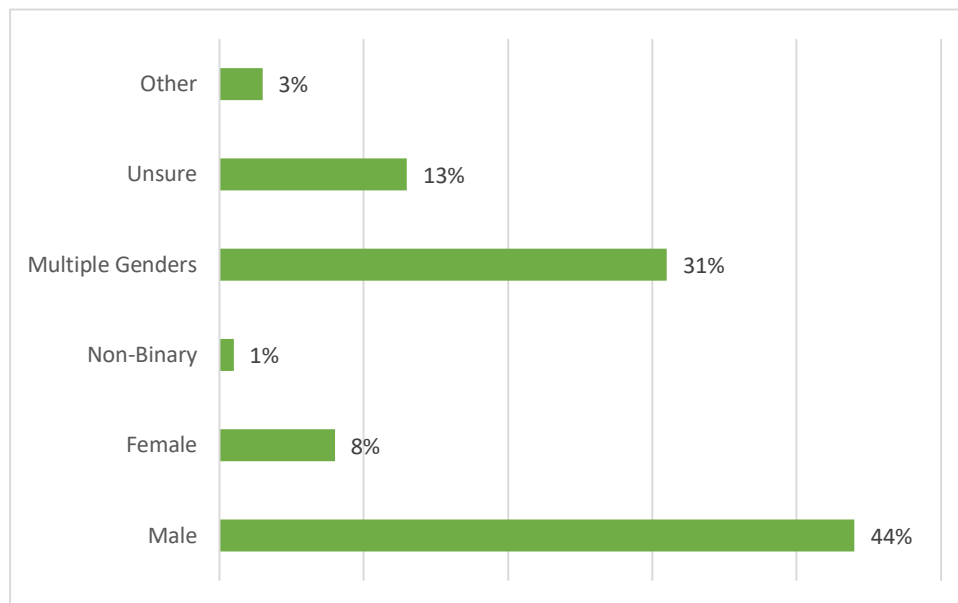
Figure 17: Were the offenders:



Online hate crime/speech has often been imagined as being primarily carried out by strangers given the anonymity that the internet provides offenders. Conversely, the above graph illustrates that the nature of the relationship between victim and offender is much more complicated, with only 18% of perpetrators anonymous to the offender. Much more frequent is that offenders are not anonymous to the victim but unknown (54%), and in some cases the victim knows the offender either online (8%) or offline (10%). Nonetheless, this does not mean that the victim and perpetrator know each other well, as the perpetrator remains

unknown to the victim in the majority of cases, thus suggesting a very limited form of recognition, such as following one another on social media, or having previously chatted briefly through a dating app, therefore challenging this notion of online hate crime as being primarily carried out by anonymous users of social media sites.

Figure 18: What gender were the offenders?



The questionnaire asked participants about the gender of their offenders. Primarily offenders were male (44%) as opposed to female (8%) and non-binary (1%). However, a significant proportion (31%) of offenders were multiple in number and of different genders. This further reinforces the idea that LGBT+ victims of online abuse are frequently targeted by a number of offenders as evidence in Figure 16.

Marginalised groups from within the LGBT+ grouping (bisexual, trans, queer, asexual, and pansexual respondents) indicated in qualitative comments that they often received abuse from gay men and lesbians:

“In an LGBT+ group they did not like asexual people very much and I was systematically insulted because of my orientation”

““Don’t consider myself part of the LGBT community anymore (even though I am bisexual) because there is a lot of hate and toxicity towards us”

“I exposed my pansexuality and I was verbally attacked and denied my right to self-determination from people of the LGTBIQ + group itself”

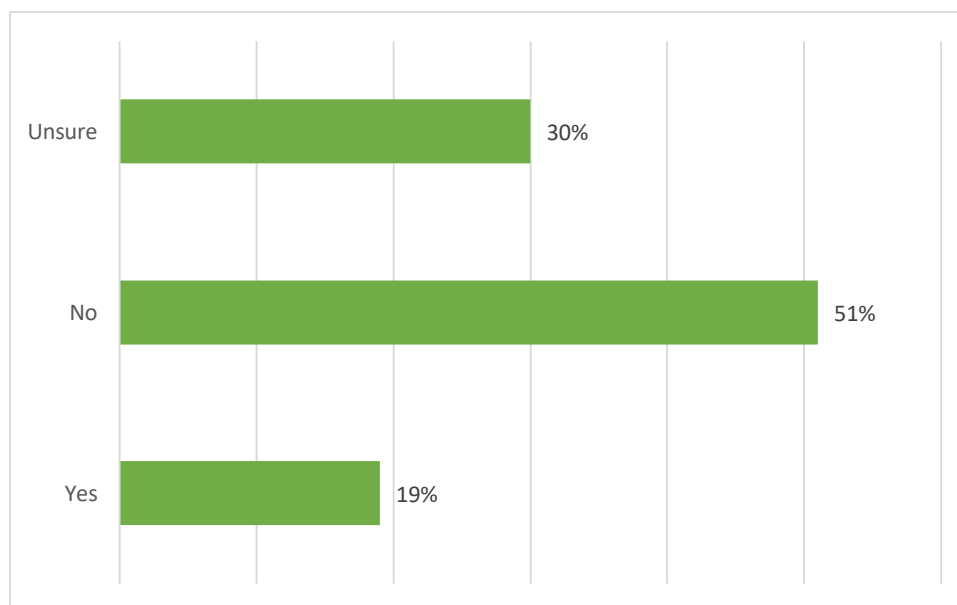
Additionally, for trans victims, a large proportion of abuse was often perpetrated by transphobic activists who oppose transgender rights, exclude trans women from women only spaces, and reject the assertion that trans women are women:

“My status as a woman (I am a trans woman) is constantly denied and denigrated by TERFS”

“As a trans woman online, radical feminists have called me (and often all trans women) rapists and paedophiles hundreds of times. The worst incidents involved threats to report me to the police on fabricated charges as “a man and a rapist”.”

Relation to Offline Incidents

Figure 19: Was the incident linked with offline incidents?



Just over half of respondents (51%) did not believe their online victimisation was linked with offline incidents, and around 1 in 5 (19%) believed they were linked. This illustrates that, for these victims at least, their online abuse is not distinct from their everyday lives but part of a wider experience of LGBT+ prejudice that cuts across both online and offline worlds. Interview participants reported receiving abuse simultaneously both online and offline, experiencing online abuse that was triggered by offline incidents and experiencing abuse that started online but moved offline. For example:

“After online threats, the perpetrator also caused offline material damage (destroying the mailbox and porch)”

“I constantly receive verbal abuse both on and off the internet”

“My bullying started online but soon happened in real life as well”

“The online threats became in person threats. On several occasions I had stones thrown at me and was threatened regularly. I was assaulted by having snooker balls thrown at me and was pinned to a wall by my torso and hair and held in a wrist lock. I was told that if I showed my face again it wouldn’t be a sprained wrist but a broken one.”

“Incidents are a repeated issue both on and offline”

“Abuse never stops, online and offline.”

“I was outed at school and then received a load of abuse online about my sexuality”

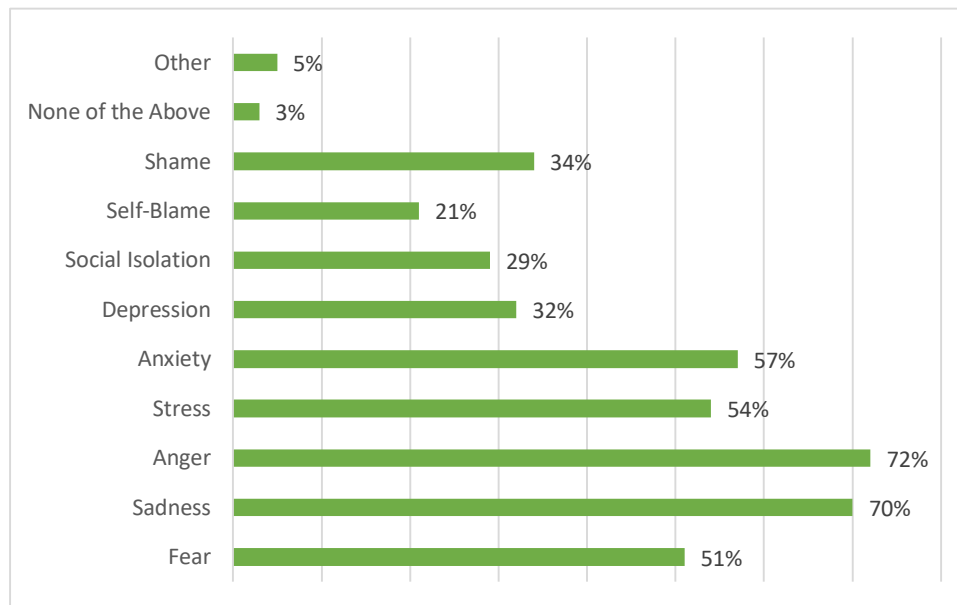
“The offenders posted a list of LGBTQ+ people and said they were all going to die. A few days later one of the girls on the list was stabbed to death near her home.”

It is also important to note that while the online abuse experienced by the majority of respondents was not believed to be linked with their offline experiences, this does not mean that they did not experience any offline incidents, just that they were not connected. The same can also be said for those that were unsure whether their experiences of abuse online and offline were connected. For example, one respondent described how he had been the recipient of a number of online violent threats, whilst also being assaulted in real life. While he believed there was a chance that these incidents may have been perpetrated by the same person/people, the victim was unsure and unable to prove that this was the case.

2. Impact and Consequences

As well as wanting to understand the scale and nature of online abuse that LGBT+ people experience, the survey was also interested in understanding how such incidents had impacted victims and what consequences of such abuse were.

Figure 20: As a result of the most serious incident, did you experience any of the following:



LGBT+ people reported suffering from a range of emotional responses as a result of their victimisation, with only 3% of participants experiencing no negative consequences. The most common response of victims was feelings of anger (72%), followed closely by sadness (70%). Over half of respondents experienced anxiety (57%), stress (54%), and fear (51%), whilst 1 in 3 suffered from depression (34%) or felt a sense of shame (32%), and 1 in 5 blamed themselves for what happened (21%). These consequences were rarely experienced in isolation, with 87% of victims experiencing 2 or more harms as a result of their online victimisation (see appendix 4).

Survey respondents were also able to provide further details on how the incident impacted upon them. Large numbers of respondents explained how they felt helplessness following their online victimisation, in that they felt there was little they could do to change the situation in which they found themselves. Suicidal thoughts and self-harm were also heavily cited by respondents as a consequence of the abuse they received. A small number of LGBT+ victims also described how online incidents had acted as triggers to past trauma resulting from anti-LGBT physical abuse and violence.

“I have been diagnosed with PTSD”

“It led to suicidal thoughts that I am only just getting over”

“The incident added to my PTSD”

“I self-harmed due to disgust and self-blame”

“I self-harmed and thought of attempting suicide”

“Following the incident I became suicidal and attempted to take my own life”

“I feel hopeless as this happens all the time and there doesn’t seem to be anything I can do”

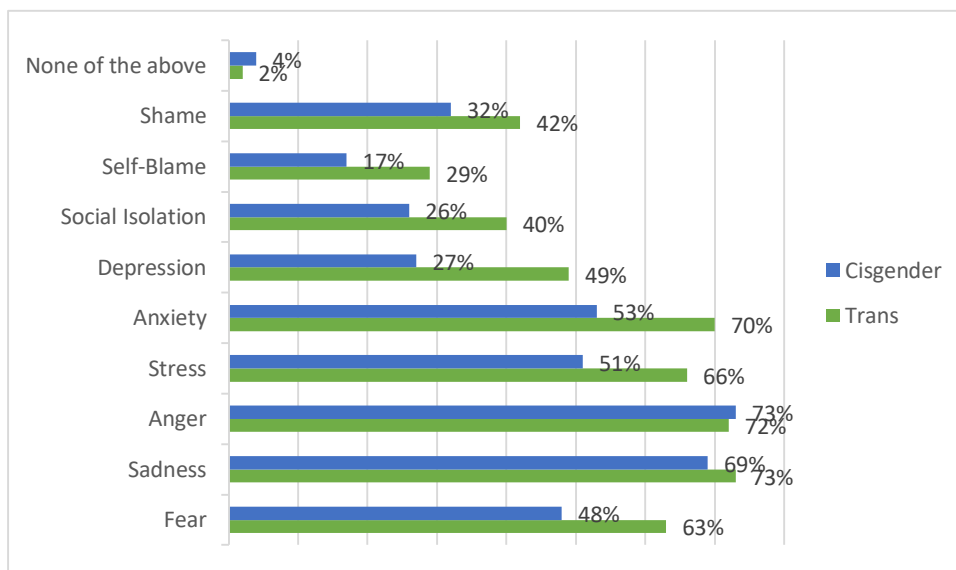
“It creates a feeling of helplessness”

“It’s constant [the abuse]. You can’t get away with it. It’s everywhere and is just something that you have to deal with.”

“I could barely go on twitter without getting hate messages, and I was just riddled with anxiety and depression over it”

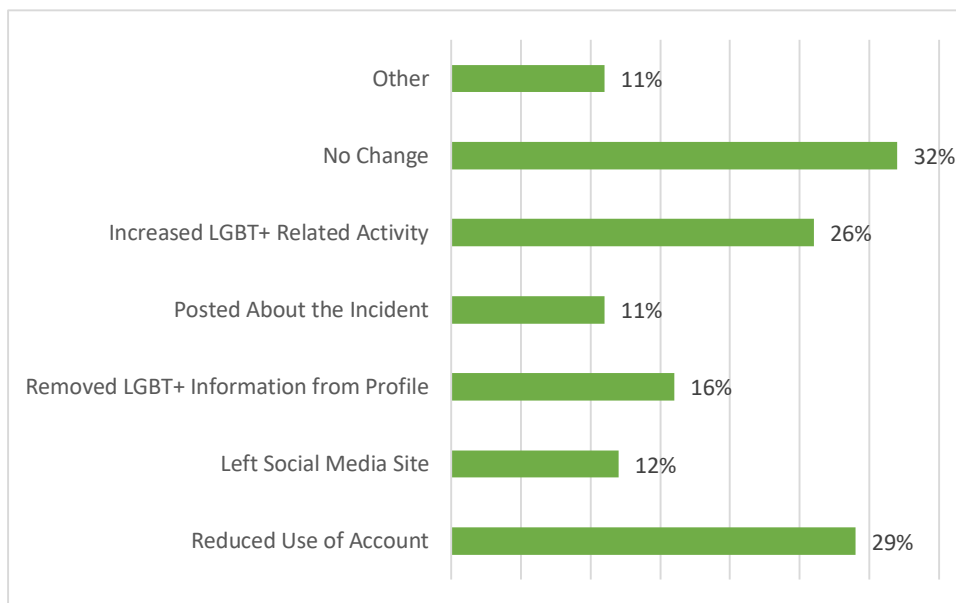
Trans respondents were also more likely to suffer emotionally as a result of their online victimisation, compared to cisgender respondents, as shown by Figure 21 below:

Figure 21: As a result of the most serious incident, did you experience any of the following (Trans victims compared to cisgender victims):



Participants were also asked whether they changed their behaviour after their most serious incident. 29% responded to their online victimisation by using their social media account less, 16% removed information relating to their sexual orientation, and 12% left social media altogether, as indicated below in Figure 22. This would suggest that if anti-LGBT+ abuse online is a means of silencing LGBT+ individuals then it is to some extent effective.

Figure 22: Did you change your behaviour after the incident and how?



Other common responses from participants involved blocking people who were directly targeting them (although this only stopped people abusing them directly), to stop posting or speaking about LGBT+ issues, and to report the instances to the relevant authorities (which will be discussed in section 3). Despite these negative changes to victim's behaviour, it is encouraging that 32% of victims did not change their behaviour, while 26% increased their LGBT+ activity online:

"It motivated me to better protect my own interests and those of other members of the LGBT community. I began to brave the hatred and continue to speak out when I see posts which are wrong or offensive"

"It has made me more of an activist and I post much more now about LGBT+ issues"

"It made me want to raise more awareness of the hate LGBT+ people receive on a daily basis"

"I have become much more outspoken about homophobia following all my experiences"

"I was appalled but I think that me being more open about being non-binary can help to normalize it and help other people to be honest about their gender/sexual identities as well"

"I haven't let it stop me posting and sharing about LGBT+ issues"

"I'm much more of an online LGBT+ activist because of the abuse I received"

"All these acts made me continue with more desire in my activism"

"I've slowly started becoming an activist and have set up social media accounts to raise awareness"

"I've become much louder in pushing for LGBT+ rights"

These quotes illustrate that some LGBT+ people refuse to be silenced by their abuse, choosing to carry on speaking out, or increasing their involvement in activism as a means of fighting back against this abuse and help other LGBT+ victims of online abuse. Responding in this way was not without its consequences however, and often lead to an increase in such abuse (see section 3).

Additionally, given that much online abuse towards LGBT+ people concerns virtual threats to their personal safety many victims were fearful for their physical safety, concerned that such threats might be carried out in reality:

“I was constantly afraid that they might look for me in some way”

“I became scared all the time. I kept looking at men thinking they were following me”

“I struggle to walk around on my own and am constantly thinking that one of these people might want to hurt me”

“I fear for my life”

“Makes me even more aware of the chances of me experiencing hate and abuse not just online but in the real world”

As a consequence, many of these victims took steps to reduce their victimisation offline. This involved restrictions on when and where they would go out and altering their appearance:

“I avoided leaving the house and if I did I avoided appearing with friends who were also non-heterosexual”

“I censored myself so that I didn’t stand out as much”

“I stopped wearing make-up and changed my clothes”

“I stopped going out because I was scared”

“These incidents made me hide in the ‘closet’ and try to suppress my identity”

“I feared doing anything LGBT so stopped”

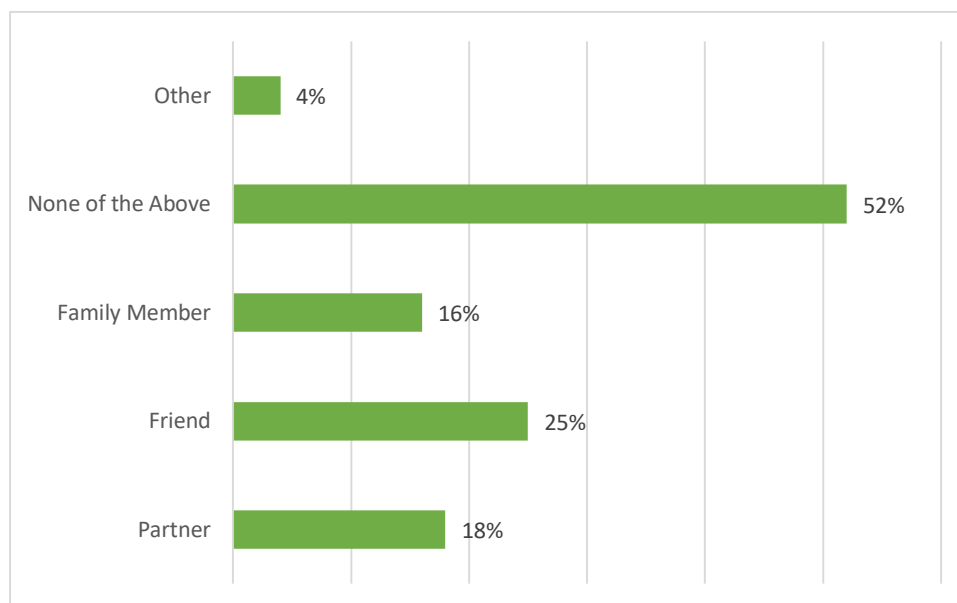
“I tried to be less out in public so that I wouldn’t be a target”

“I no longer go to any mainstream LGBT clubs, bars, groups or organisations as I don’t want to get abused”

“I stopped being so open about who I was, hid my sexuality and acted straight”

“I stopped going to Pride events because I was worried about what might happen”

Figure 23: Did it affect anyone else in your life?



In addition to negatively impacting upon the direct victim, online victimisation towards LGBT+ individuals also affected a quarter of victim's friends (25%) and just under a fifth of their partners (18%) and family members (16%). This impact upon friends, partners, and family members was primarily felt in two different ways; they were either directly targeted by the perpetrator in addition to the victim or were indirectly affected by the respondent's victimisation.

"They were angry and upset when I told them about it."

"The material threats were not just at me but my partner too"

"As a result me and my partner broke up because I was so depressive."

"We both received messages with threats and insults"

"Comments and threats were also directed at my boyfriend"

"My wife and our family live in fear"

"My partner suffers my fears, my contained anger, my sadness... He supports me a lot, but we have argued sometimes because it makes me irritable and that makes me show my less pleasant side."

"The constant abuse I received had an effect on my whole family, my wife and my son. He no longer wanted to go out and play with his step mum because of the homophobic abuse we were getting and him getting bullied too."

"I told my partner about the comment which I saw had a negative impact on him as well."

"They tried to target my partner at the time too"

“My father is very angry that I have been made to feel unsafe because of the threats I get”

“My partner is a woman and had experienced the same or similar levels of abuse and harassment. Friends and family have been affected due to their concern and worry about our safety.”

“They had to deal with me having constant breakdowns that they just couldn’t handle at the time but I had no one else I could turn to which strained many of my relationships and ended up with me losing some.”

These quotes provide further evidence that online LGBT+ hate crime is a message crime in that its effects are often felt beyond the immediate victim to the wider LGBT+ community to create a fear and apprehension amongst people who share similar identity characteristics to the victim, which often includes LGBT+ friends and partners. It also effects the victim’s family, who may not be LGBT themselves, such as parents or siblings, but who fear for their loved ones or where the online victimisation has placed a strain on their relationship.

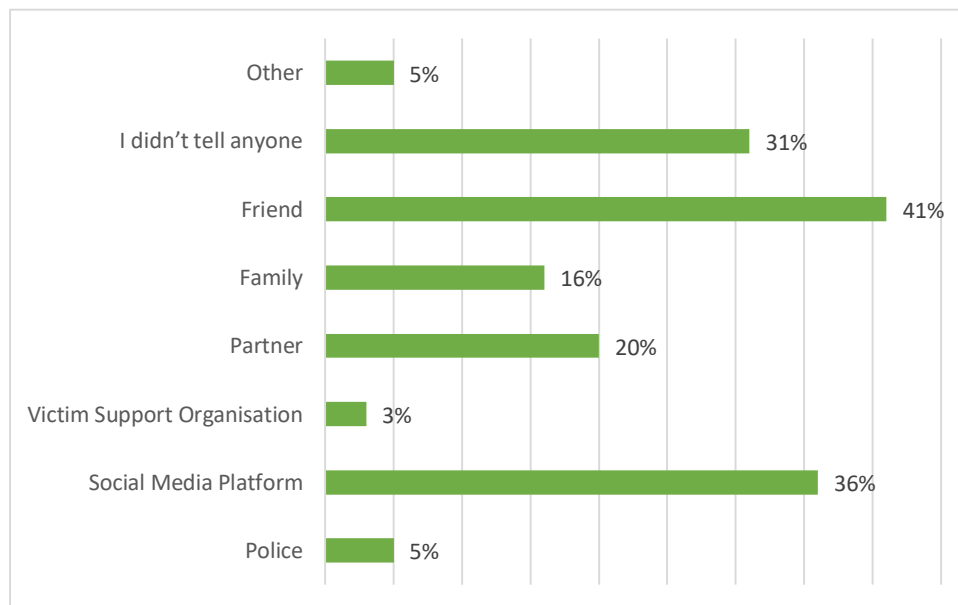
3. Support

One of the key aims of this survey was to explore victims' reporting habits and their experiences of reporting online anti-LGBT hate crime. Therefore, within the survey participants were asked if they had reported their experiences of online hate, and if so, to who. 36% of respondents stated that they had reported their victimisation to the social media platform on which the incident occurred, whilst only 5% reported to the police and only 3% to victim support services. 1 in 3 respondents (33%) did not report to anyone.

Only 5% of respondents stated that they had reported their victimisation to the police, only 36% had reported to the social media platform on which the incident occurred and only 3% reported to victim support services, while around one third of respondents did not report to anyone (33%).

Reporting Behaviour

Figure 24: I reported or mentioned the incident to:



Of the 31% who did not report or mention the incident to anyone the following reasons for doing so were given:

Figure 25: Reasons for not reporting the incident.

<u>Why did you not report/mention the incident to anyone?</u>	<u>Frequency</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
Just wanted to forget about it and move on		44%
Not sure if it was a hate crime		21%
Happens too often to tell anyone about it		48%
Afraid that responding would make it worse		29%
Did not want to disclose my sexual orientation or gender identity		30%
Did not want to be judged for the context it took place in (e.g. a dating site)		11%
Other		10%

The most common reason given for not reporting their experiences of online hate is that it happens too often to tell anyone (48%), followed closely by wanting to forget about the incident and move on (44%). 30% of participants did not want to disclose their sexual orientation or gender identity, 29% of respondents were afraid that reporting might make things worse and 21% were unsure that their experiences were a hate crime. These reasons were reflected by participants below:

“It’s just what happens to trans people. I get online hate all the time and was bullied in real life too. You just have to deal with it.”

“I didn’t even think about it [reporting], it’s just something that happens in life.”

“I didn’t want to go any further with it. I just wanted it over.”

“I was worried about reprisals.”

Participants who cited other for not reporting gave the following reasons:

“The incident wasn’t serious enough to report”

“It wasn’t serious, just insults and name calling.”

“I knew nothing would happen if I did”

These quotes suggest that many LGBT+ victims of online abuse did not believe that their victimisation was serious enough to warrant being reported and that even if they did nothing would be done. It is also worth noting that some victims had previously reported their victimisation to the police or the social media platform but were not taken seriously or saw that nothing was done. As a result, they do not see any point in reporting further incidents:

“Why report it? They never do anything when you do”

“I’ve reported similar incidents to the police before and have felt stupid for doing so. I was made to feel like I was wasting their time and nothing was done.”

“Nothing ever gets done about it. I’ve reported countless other things which are homophobic and Facebook has simply said it doesn’t go against their terms”

Finally, many respondents were not the direct victim of the online abuse, but had witnessed it, did not think it was their responsibility to report it, that someone else would have already reported it, and that a solitary complaint would make no difference:

“It didn’t happen to me so I didn’t tell anyone.”

“I wasn’t the victim”

“I thought an individual complaint was of no use”

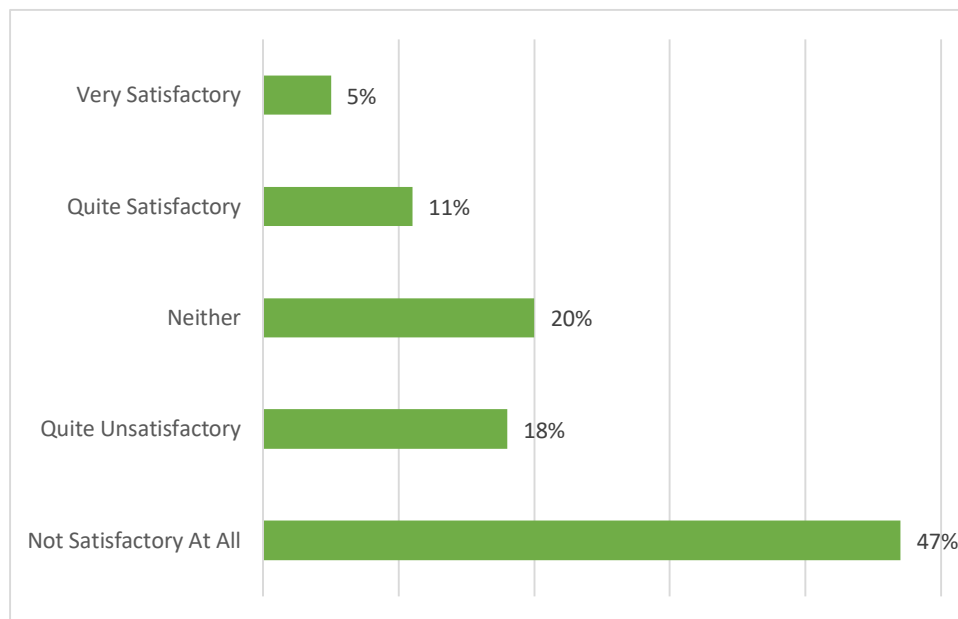
“I thought someone else would have reported it”

Participants in this research appeared reluctant to report their victimisation, with many never having done so. This reluctance to disclose their experiences seemed to be underpinned by a number of factors; a belief that it is not worthwhile, are apprehensive about reporting for fears of how they might be treated due to the sexuality/victimisation and retaliatory attacks, and previous bad experiences of reporting to the police or other relevant authorities. While some victims may have been able to take some comfort in friends, family, and partners, these individuals have no recourse to take action against the individual responsible or to remove any harmful content. Additionally, relying on friends, family, and partners can also place a strain on these relations (see Figure 23). It is also important to note that many bystanders to online abuse, for a number of reasons, did not believe that it was their responsibility to report, as they were not directly targeted, and did not do so as a result. What is clear is that underreporting is an issue in relation to anti-LGBT online abuse, meaning that many victims suffer in silence.

Respondents who did report their victimisation to a relevant authority (police, social media platform, and victim support services), were asked how satisfied they were with the response they received.

Response of Agencies (Police, Social Media, and Victim Support)

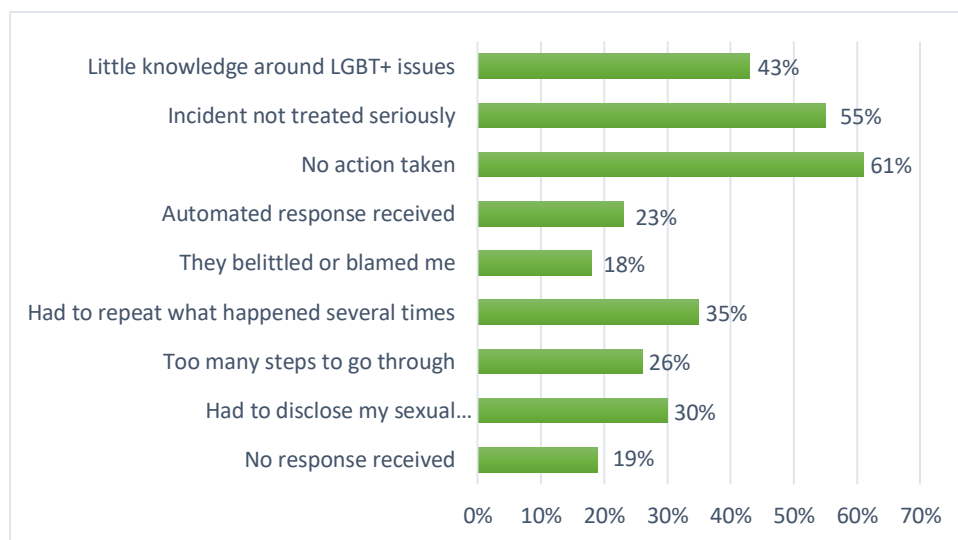
Figure 26: How satisfied were you with the response of the police?



The above chart highlights that nearly two thirds of respondents (63%) who reported to the police were dissatisfied with the response they received, while only 17% were satisfied.

Those that stated they were dissatisfied, gave the following reasons:

Figure 27: What were you dissatisfied with about the police response?

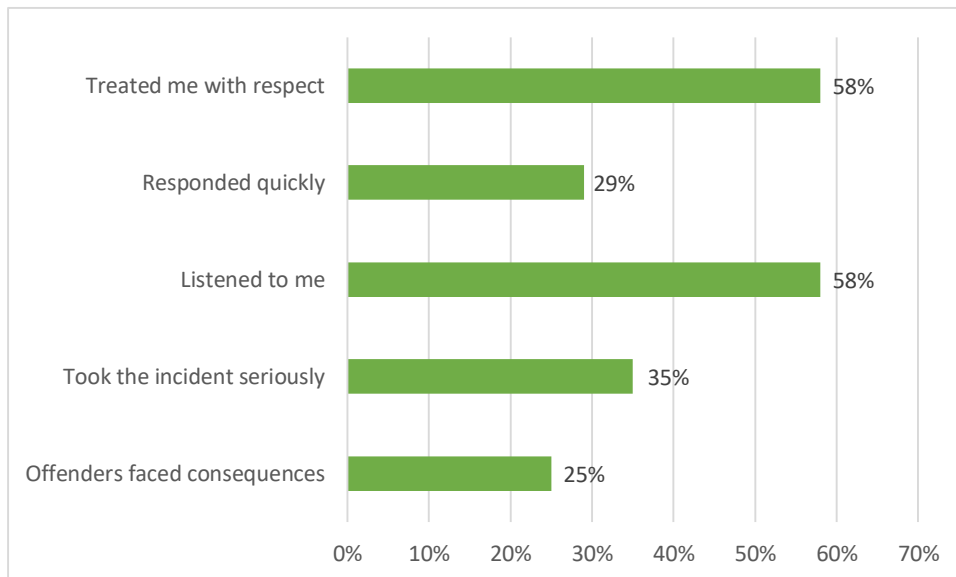


61% of respondents stated that they were dissatisfied because no action was taken, 55% felt that the police did not take the incident seriously, and 43% felt that the police had little knowledge/understanding around LGBT+ issues, which negatively affected the response they received. Around a third of victims were not happy that they had to continually repeat what happened to them or were required to disclose their sexual orientation to several people (35% and 33% respectively). Other reasons given for being dissatisfied with the police response was that there were too many steps (26%), that they only received an automatic

response (23%), they received no response (19%), and the victim felt belittled or blamed (18%).

On the other hand, those that were satisfied with the response, gave the following reasons:

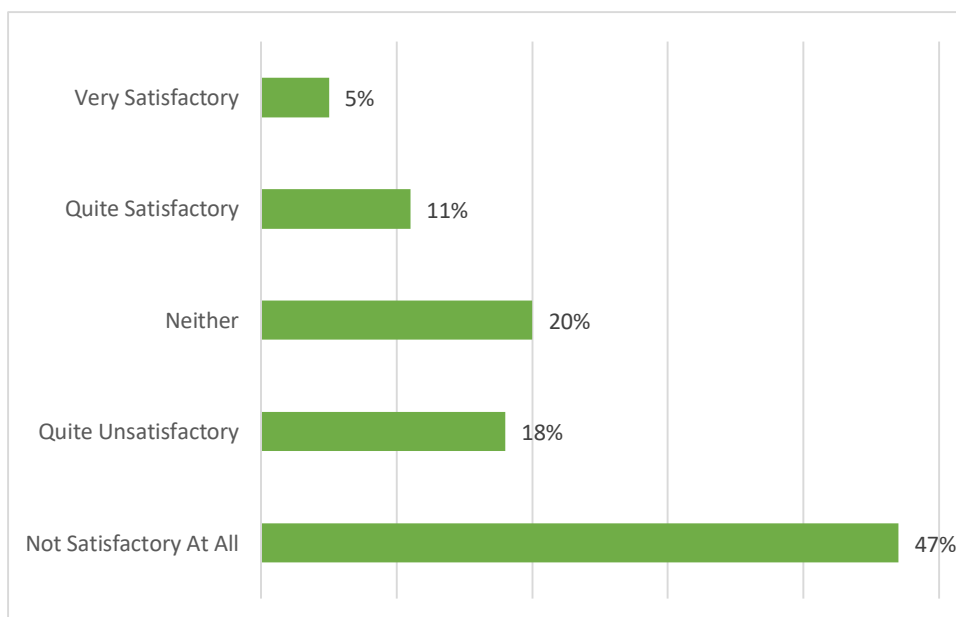
Figure 28: What were you satisfied with about the police response?



58% of participants felt that the police both listened to them and treated them with respect. Around a third believed that the police took the incident seriously (35%) and responded quickly (29%), whilst a quarter were satisfied because the offender faced consequences (25%).

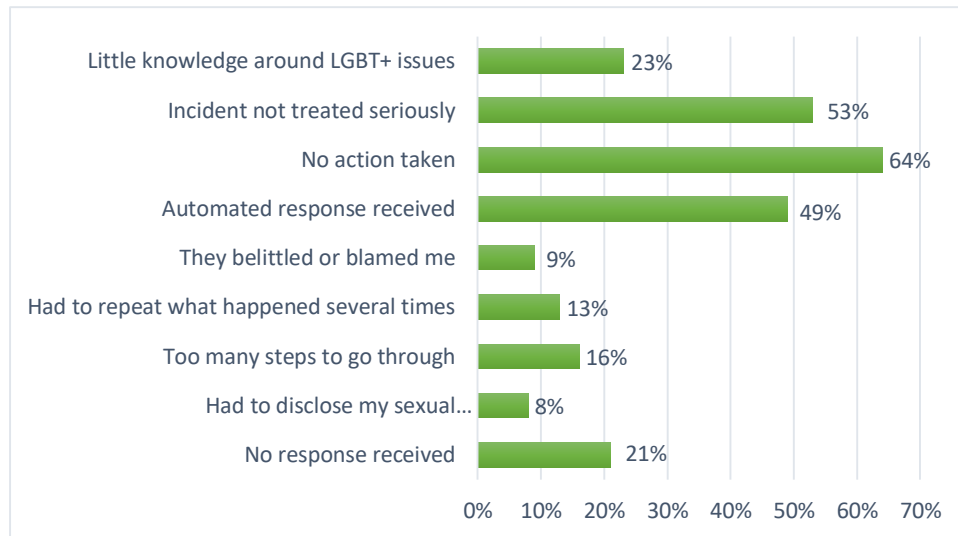
The majority of respondents who reported to the social media platform were similarly unhappy with the response they had received, as the below chart highlights:

Figure 29: How satisfactory was the response of social media?



Of those who reported their victimisation to the online platform on which their victimisation occurred, 65% were dissatisfied with the response they received, while only 16% were satisfied.

Figure 30: What were you dissatisfied with about the social media response?



The main reason for dissatisfaction was that no action was taken (64%) that the incident was not taken seriously (53%), or they only received an automatic response (49%). Around a quarter felt that the social media platform did not have any knowledge or understanding of LGBT+ issues (24%), and around a fifth were unhappy because they did not receive a response (21%). Less than a fifth of respondents were frustrated because there were too many steps to go through (16%), or they had to repeat what had happened to them several times (13%). Just under 1 in 10 felt that they were belittled or blamed (9%), whilst a similar percentage did not appreciate having to disclose their sexual orientation and/or gender identity to several people (8%).

Participants also expressed a particular issue with social media sites when it came to reporting harmful or abusive comment they had experience and/or witnessed. Some respondents did not know how to report/flag such content. Even when this sort of material was reported, it was found not to breach platform guidelines and was therefore not removed.

“The webmasters do nothing to minimise the negativity and violence towards LGBT+ people”

“Facebook and twitter’s rules leave much to be desired as much harmful content is left up”

“I have reported so many posts but nothing is ever taken down”

“Facebook need to do much more to combat these types of comments, which are often left”

“You can report hate speech all you like but they do nothing, even we you request a re-review”

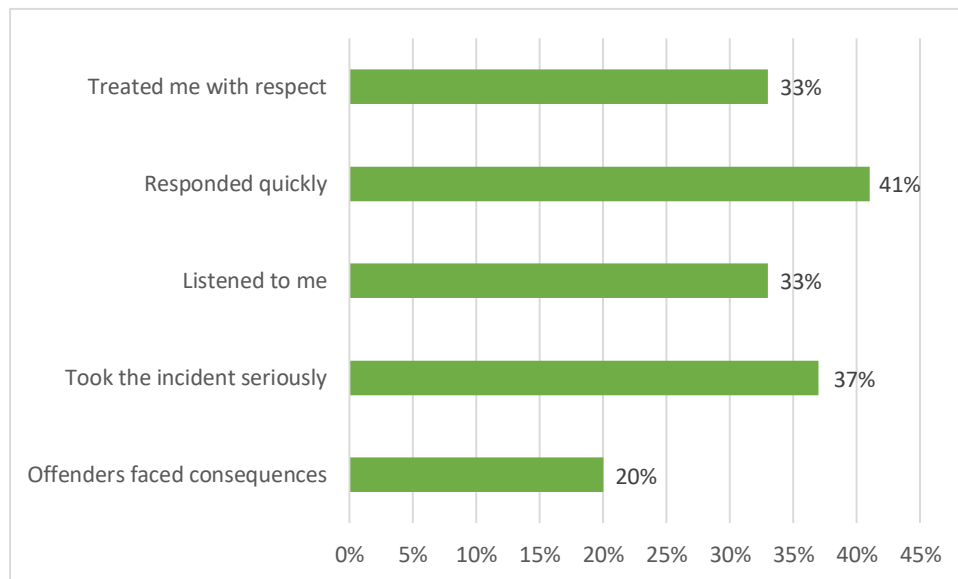
“Facebook and twitter do not think it is important protecting LGBT+ people is important”

“I reported it to Facebook and the response was that it didn’t violate community standards. This has been the case on multiple occasions with incidents relating to trans people, with everything from mockery and derision to suggested violence/eradication”

“They never think it breaks their T&Cs, so nothing was done”

“The extraordinary thing is that social media sites believed this was acceptable, and left it there”

Figure 31: What were you satisfied with about the social media response?



Reasons for being satisfied with the response of social media following a report on anti-LGBT+ online abuse were that the platform responded quickly (41%) and took the incident seriously. A third of respondents who had reported to social media also felt that they were listened to and treated with respect (both 33%). Only 20% were satisfied because the offender faced consequences of some kind.

These findings demonstrate that many LGBT+ victims are left wanting when they report their victimisation to the police or social media sites, which would appear to support some victims’ assertions that reporting their abuse would be futile (see above). These problems are particularly concerning given that victims are likely to have already suffered as a result of their online hate (section 2), and can result in victims feeling further victimised¹². While there are some instances of good practice, these appear few and far between.

Taken as a whole this suggests that victims satisfaction with agency responses are dependent upon how fair or ‘procedurally just’ they perceive their treatment to be. It has been argued that procedural justice can be characterised by the following 4 elements; (1) neutrality, (2) respect, (3) trustworthiness, and (4) voice¹³. Neutrality involves making decisions based upon

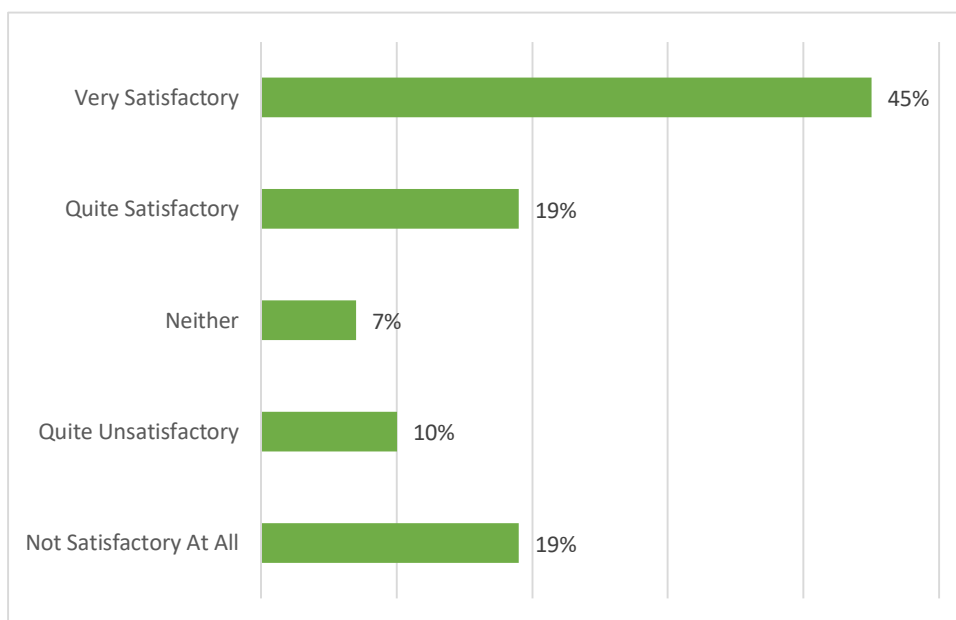
¹² College of Policing (2014) *Hate Crime Operational Guidance*, <https://www.college.police.uk/What-we-do/Support/Equality/Documents/Hate-Crime-Operational-Guidance.pdf>, (accessed 11th October 2019).

¹³ Tyler and Murphy (2011) cited in Murphy, K. and Barkworth, J. (2014) ‘Victim Willingness to Report Crime to Police: Does Procedural Justice or Outcome Matter Most?’, *Victims and Offenders*, 9(2): 178-204.

consistently applied legal rules and principles and the facts of a case rather than personal opinions and bias, as well as transparency and openness about how decisions are made. Respect relates to how victims view their treatment, with a preference for dignity and politeness, as opposed to being dismissed or demeaned. Trustworthiness relates to whether the interaction is perceived as benevolent and caring. Lastly, voice is where victims perceive that they are being listened to and given an opportunity to explain their experiences before any decisions are made. Victims who were dissatisfied with the response of the police and social media sites indicate that their encounters following reporting were not procedurally just as the incident was not taken seriously (lack of neutrality), were belittled or blamed (lack of respect), they had to continually disclose their sexual orientation/gender identity or repeat their victimisation experience (lack of trustworthiness), and often no action was taken (lack of voice). On the other hand, those that were satisfied often cited that they were treated with respect, the incident was taken seriously (neutrality), and the victim was listened to (voice). It is also worth noting that while research has found that people’s satisfaction was greater if the police solved their problems, the primary factor shaping their satisfaction was perceived fairness of the way the police treated them¹⁴. This would also appear to be supported by these survey findings as only 25% of respondents who were satisfied with the police response, and only 20% of victims satisfied with the social media response were so because the offender(s) faced consequences.

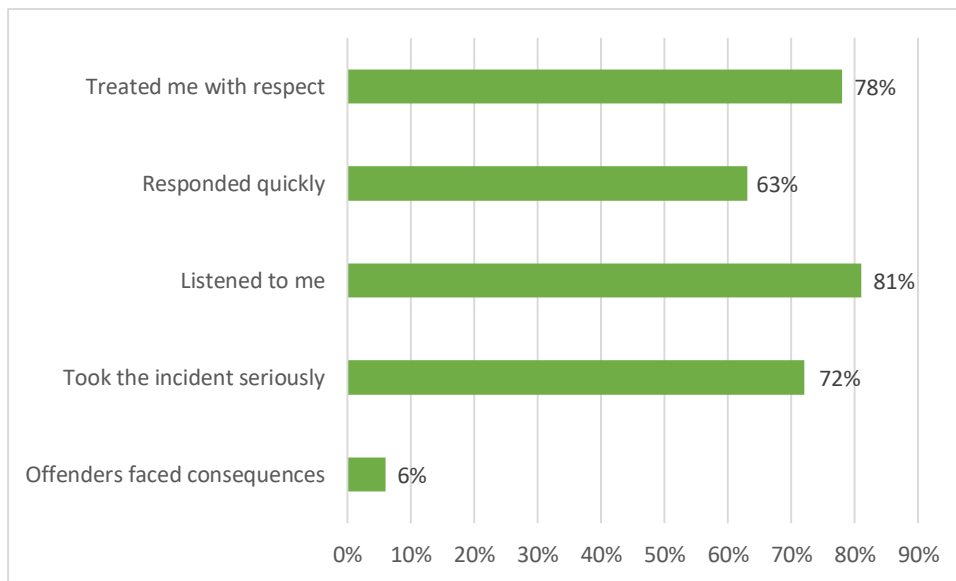
The importance of procedural justice can also be demonstrated in how satisfied respondents were with victim support services.

Figure 32: How satisfied were you with response of victim support services?



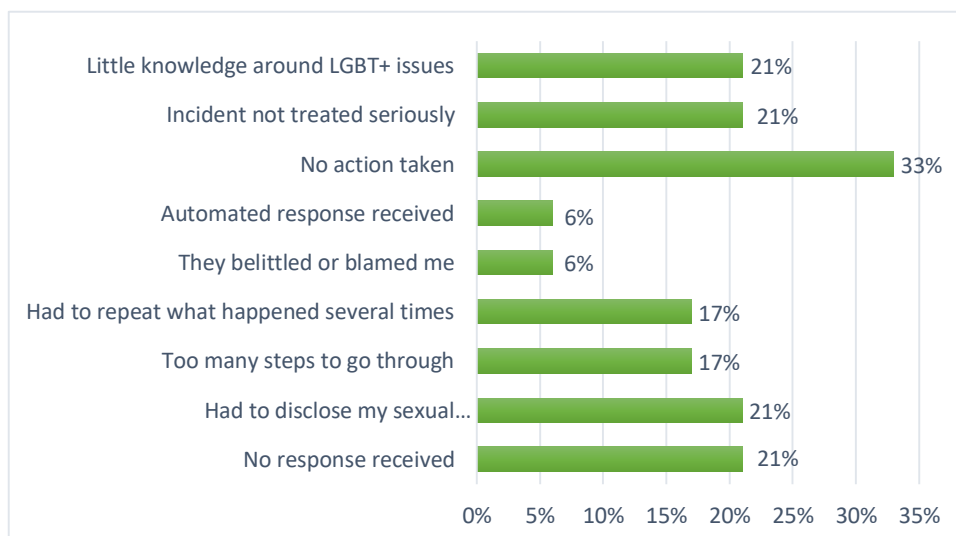
¹⁴ Tyler and Huo (2002) *Trust in the Law: Encouraging Public Cooperation with the Police and the Courts*, New York: Russell Sage.

Figure 33: Why were you satisfied with the response of victim support services?



64% of respondents who reported to victim support were satisfied with the response they received, whilst only 29% were dissatisfied. As outlined above, satisfied victims felt that they were listened to (81%), treated with respect (78%), felt the incident was taken seriously (72%) and were responded to quickly (63%) (see Figure 33 above). Conversely, victims were dissatisfied because no action was taken (33%), the incident was not treated seriously, they had little knowledge of LGBT+ issues, they received no response or had to repeatedly disclose their sexual orientation or gender identity (all 21%) (see Figure 34 below). Such findings further underline the importance of relevant agencies responding to victims of anti-LGBT+ abuse online in a fair and just manner.

Figure 34: Why were you dissatisfied with the response of victim support services?

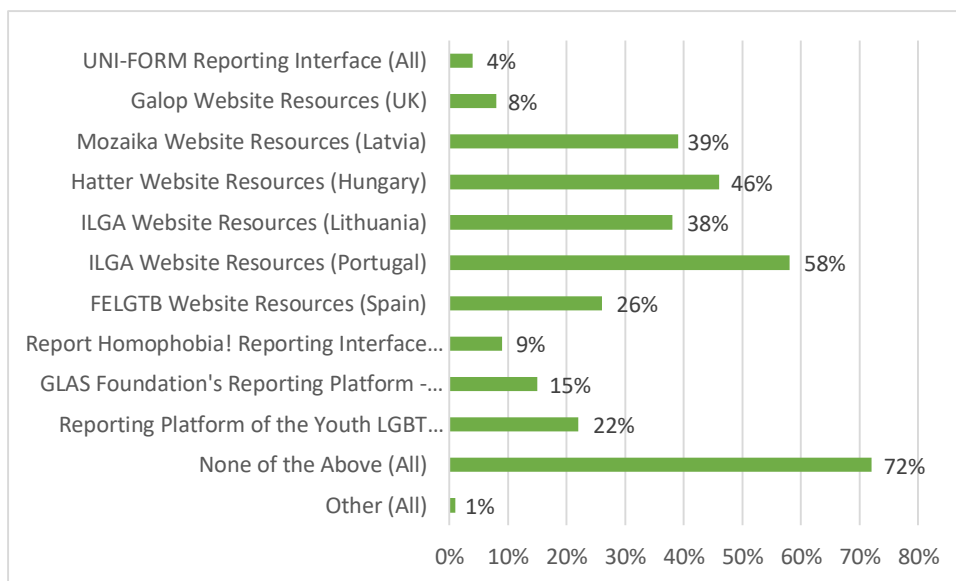


While the majority of victims were satisfied with the response they received from victim support, only 3% of respondents to the survey had disclosed to this organisation (see Figure 24), meaning that many victims do not seek any support following their victimisation, which is particularly worrying given the many harms that can result from receiving anti-LGBT+ abuse online (see section 2).

Knowledge of Support Services/Resources

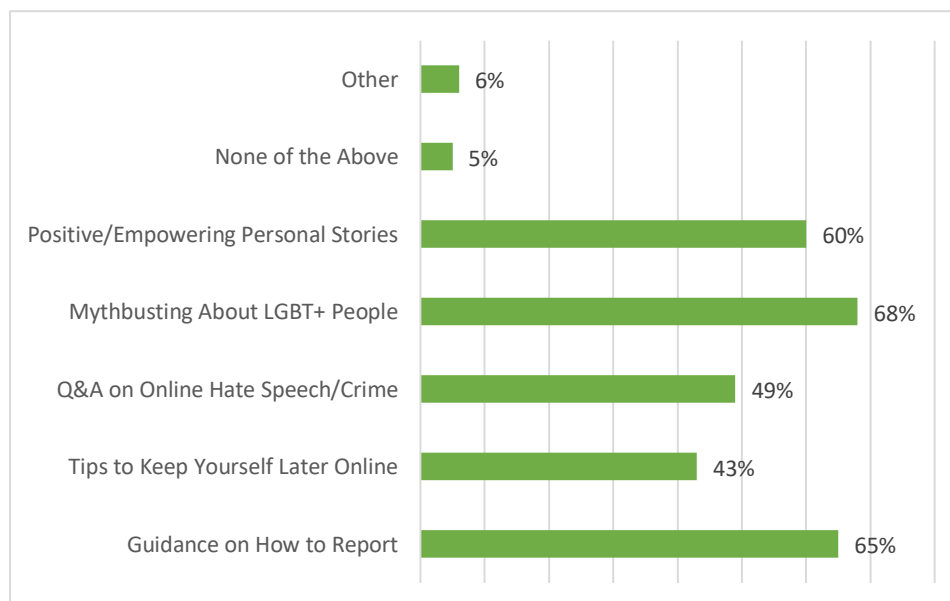
Additionally, only 28% of respondents had heard of some websites or resources designed to support victims of anti-LGBT hate crime and hate speech online, while 72% had not:

Figure 35: Have you heard of any of the following resources:



Given the apparent lack of support utilised by or available to LGBT+ victims of online abuse, participants were asked what type of information would be useful for people facing online hate crime. Their responses can be found below:

Figure 36: What information would be useful for people facing online hate crime?

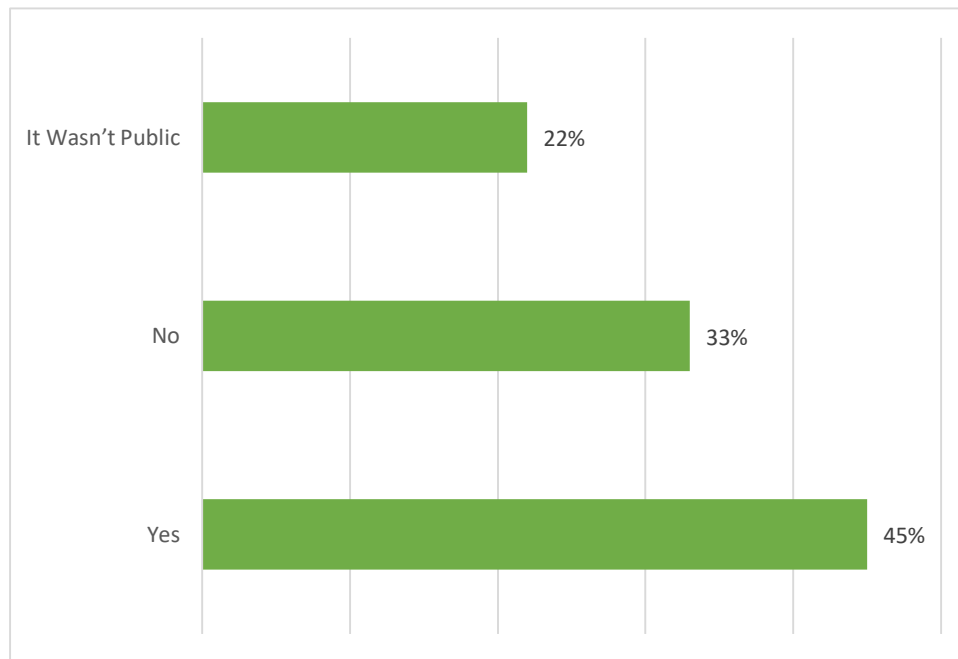


Mythbusting misinformation about LGBT+ people was the most common (68%) followed by guidance on how to report (65%) and positive/empowering personal stories (60%). Just under half wanted a Q&A on online hate speech/crime (49%) and tips to keep yourself safer online (43%).

Response of Bystanders

Finally, an additional source of support for some victims were bystanders who witnessed the online abuse, as the below chart illustrates:

Figure 37: If the abuse was viewable by others, did you receive positive or supportive messages or comments from anyone when the abuse happened?



45% of respondents received support from fellow social media users after receiving online abuse, whilst 33% did not. A further 22% were unable to receive public support because the abuse they received was private. Those that did receive support gave the following examples:

“There were some people who showed their support for the LGBT+ collective with some comments and there were some people who liked my comment showing their support”

“Plenty of people have messaged me offering support and comfort”

“Some people commented defending me”

“I had people commenting back supporting me”

“I received some supportive private messages from friends and strangers”

“Many of the group sent me messages of support and understanding. It helped a lot”

“Many people on twitter reached out to make sure I was OK”

As well as receiving support from bystanders, who were often, but not always, friends and family, a number of individuals also took it upon themselves to confront the perpetrator or correct hurtful and upsetting misinformation regarding LGBT+ people:

“A couple of people challenged the perpetrator”

“Someone attempted to explain to the offender why they were wrong”

“One person jumped in to defend me from the abuse”

“A guy started arguing with the attacker in my defence”

The intervention of some bystanders was effective in reducing, and in some circumstances even stopping the abuse. However, some bystanders who confronted perpetrators reported that their actions had in some instances aggravated the situation and lead to themselves becoming the target of anti-LGBT+ online hate crime, and therefore did little to reduce the abuse:

“I made a heartfelt plea to a woman who was encouraging a pile-on against an arts organisation for being trans inclusive and was met with a barrage of abusive”

““I denounced some transphobic comments on a friends feed and received many threats, insults and more for having done so”

“I received homophobic abuse for sticking up for a friend in a same-sex couple who had a child through surrogacy”

“A few people commented with similar sentiments to mine but they got targeted as well”

“The aggressor insulted my friends who stood up for me”

“The perpetrator hurled abuse at people supporting me”

Interventions from bystanders of online anti-LGBT+ hate takes two forms; supporting the victim and/or confronting the perpetrator. Intervening to support the victim appeared to help alleviate some of the negative impacts that occur as a result of their victimisation. Intervening to confront the perpetrator is much more complicated. While in some cases this type of action had a positive effect and reduced the online abuse, whilst also sending a message that this kind of behaviour is unacceptable; it also had the opposite effect of increasing the online abuse, and on some occasions resulted in the bystander becoming the victim of such abuse. Whilst bystander interventions can help to mitigate some of the online abuse that LGBT+ people experience online, particularly the effects of victimisation, it is important that people do so safely and do not risk inflaming the situation and/or put themselves at risk of online victimisation.

CONCLUSION

This research has identified that many LGBT+ individuals regularly experience a significant amount of online abuse across a wide range of sites and apps, meaning there are few online spaces where LGBT+ people are safe. Furthermore, online abuse is often experienced alongside offline abuse.

This type of behaviour has a severe impact upon LGBT+ victims, who experience a combination of negative emotional consequences ranging from anger and shame to anxiety, depression and thoughts suicide. To reduce their risk of victimisation, many restrict their use of online platforms. Conversely, some people refuse to be silenced and increase their use of the internet, although this is not without its risks as many continue to be the recipient of online abuse. Furthermore, whilst this abuse is carried out online, it also affects victims' offline, who are fearful that online threats might be carried out offline, who take steps to reduce their victimisation in the real world, by changing their appearance or restricting their movements. Online abuse also has an impact beyond the direct victim to the wider LGBT+ community, who are similarly affected by this type of behaviour, when they witness it on social media sites.

Despite the significant harm that occurs as a consequence of online hate, many victims do not report their experiences to the relevant authorities, and those who do report are often dissatisfied with the response they receive as their victimisation is not taken seriously. Take up of victim support services was also low amongst victims, who rarely reported to such services, and many were unaware of any online resources that may have helped them to report or provide support.

There are therefore a number of steps that need to be taken to ensure that the online abuse of LGBT+ individuals is dealt with properly and that victims are provided the care and support they need.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Launch an online campaign to encourage the reporting of online hate crime and online hate speech targeting both direct and indirect victims from both police and social media companies.
2. Improved public awareness of what is legal/illegal in terms of expressing views, what constitutes online hate crime and the impact and seriousness of such incidents.
3. Social media rules and policies need to be made clearer about what is and is not acceptable on its platform.
4. A faster and more informed response by the police to investigate online anti-LGBT+ hate crime:
 - Treating victims with respect
 - Taking online hate victimisation seriously
 - Listening to victims of online hate
5. Improved response from social media platforms to combat online anti-LGBT+ hate crime and speech more effectively:
 - Easy to use and visible flagging/reporting systems
 - Personalised responses to reports of online hate
 - To remove hate content quickly and efficiently
6. Ensure staff have sufficient knowledge of LGBT+ issues
7. Increased visibility and promotion of existing support services for LGBT+ victims of hate crime
8. Increased specialist advocacy and support services for LGBT+ people experiencing online hate crime, including provision for marginalised LGBT+ groups and indirect victims of online hate.
9. Improved online information for LGBT+ people experiencing online hate crime:
 - Guidance on how to report
 - Mythbusting about LGBT+ people
 - Positive/empowering personal stories
10. Launch a campaign to encourage social media users to support victims of online hate
11. Improved regulation of social media companies to make them accountable for tackling online hate crime and hate speech
12. Review of existing laws and their effectiveness in combatting online hate crime

Belgium

46% of respondents in Belgium had experienced hate crime and/or hate speech in the last 5 years, whilst 54% had not.

Respondents had experienced a range of online abuse:

- 95% had experienced insults
- 56% had received threats of physical violence
- 29% had received death threats
- 22% had experienced doxing
- 20% had received threats of sexual assaults
- 17% had received threats to destroy property
- 15% had received threats of outing
- 15% had been outed
- 10% had been blackmailed

In terms of reporting:

- 29% did not report at all
- 22% reported to social media companies
- 17% reported to the police

The main reasons for not reporting were:

- 50% just wanted to forget about it and move on
- 50% said it happens too often to tell anyone about it
- 25% were afraid that responding in anyway would make it worse

Respondents who did report were often dissatisfied with the responses they received:

- 43% were dissatisfied with the police response
- 22% were dissatisfied with the social media response

The main reasons for dissatisfaction with the police were:

- Had to repeat what happened several times (43%)
- Little knowledge around LGBT+ issues (29%)
- No action taken (29%)
- Had to disclose my sexual orientation/gender identity to several people (29%)

The main reasons for dissatisfaction with the social media companies were:

- No action taken (44%)
- Automated response received (44%)
- Incident not treated seriously (33%)

Bulgaria

73 of respondents in Bulgaria had experienced hate crime and/or hate speech in the last 5 years, whilst 27% had not.

Respondents had experienced a range of online abuse:

- 92% had experienced insults
- 58% had received threats of physical violence
- 31% had received threats of outing
- 31% had been outed
- 30% had received threats of sexual assaults
- 27% had received death threats
- 15% had experienced doxing
- 14% had been blackmailed
- 13% had received threats to destroy property

In terms of reporting:

- 34% did not report at all
- 24% reported to social media companies
- 3% reported to the police¹⁵

The main reasons for not reporting were:

- 47% did not want to disclose their sexual orientation/gender identity
- 44% just wanted to forget about it and move on
- 40% said it happens too often to tell anyone about it

Respondents who did report were often dissatisfied with the responses they received¹⁶:

- 67% were dissatisfied with the police response
- 45% were dissatisfied with the social media response

¹⁵ The sample size of respondents who reported to the police is extremely small and caution is therefore urged when generalising these findings.

¹⁶ Unfortunately, there was an issue with the Bulgarian survey, which meant that some responses did not show, whilst others were duplicated. As a result, we cannot provide details on why respondents were dissatisfied with their responses.

Estonia

58% of respondents in Estonia had experienced hate crime and/or hate speech in the last 5 years, whilst 42% had not.

Respondents had experienced a range of online abuse:

- 88% had experienced insults
- 53% had received threats of physical violence
- 33% had received death threats
- 28% had received threats of outing
- 23% had received threats of sexual assaults
- 20% had been outed
- 20% had experienced doxing
- 10% had been blackmailed
- 8% had received threats to destroy property

In terms of reporting¹⁷:

- 25% reported to social media companies
- 23% did not report at all
- 10% reported to the police

The main reasons for not reporting were:

- 10% did not want to disclose their sexual orientation/gender identity
- 8% said it happens too often to tell anyone about it
- 5% just wanted to forget about it and move on, were afraid reporting would make it worse, and did not want to be judged for the context it took place in

Respondents who did report were often dissatisfied with the responses they received:

- 60% were dissatisfied with the social media response
- 50% were dissatisfied with the police response

The main reasons for dissatisfaction with the police were:

- Little knowledge around LGBT+ issues, incident not treated seriously, and had to repeat what happened several times (50%)

The main reasons for dissatisfaction with the social media companies were:

- No action taken (66%)
- Automated response received and incident not treated seriously (50%)

¹⁷ The sample size for the reporting and response questions for Estonia is extremely low and caution is therefore urged when generalising these findings to the wider Estonian LGBT+ population.

Hungary

76% of respondents in Hungary had experienced hate crime and/or hate speech in the last 5 years, whilst 24% had not.

Respondents had experienced a range of online abuse:

- 98% had experienced insults
- 66% had received threats of physical violence
- 31% had received death threats
- 21% had received threats of outing
- 21% had experienced doxing
- 21% had received threats to destroy property
- 17% had received threats of sexual assaults
- 14% had been blackmailed
- 12% had been outed

In terms of reporting:

- 42% did not report at all
- 25% reported to social media companies
- 1% reported to the police¹⁸

The main reasons for not reporting were:

- 47% said it happens too often to tell anyone about it
- 28% did not want to disclose their sexual orientation/gender identity
- 24% just wanted to forget about it and move on

Respondents who did report were often dissatisfied with the responses they received:

- 59% were dissatisfied with the social media response
- 100% were dissatisfied with the police response

The main reasons for dissatisfaction with the police were:

- No response received and no action taken (100%)
- Incident not treated seriously (50%)

The main reasons for dissatisfaction with the social media companies were:

- No action taken and incident not treated seriously (42%)
- Automated response received (37%)

¹⁸ The number of respondents who reported to the police is extremely small so caution is urged when generalising these findings.

Latvia

72% of respondents in Latvia had experienced hate crime and/or hate speech in the last 5 years, whilst 28% had not.

Respondents had experienced a range of online abuse:

- 96% had experienced insults
- 69% had received threats of physical violence
- 35% had received death threats
- 35% had received threats of outing
- 28% had received threats of sexual assaults
- 20% had been outed
- 19% had experienced doxing
- 19% had been blackmailed
- 19% had received threats to destroy property

In terms of reporting:

- 44% did not report at all
- 19% reported to social media companies
- 2% reported to the police

The main reasons for not reporting were:

- 55% said it happens too often to tell anyone about it
- 36% did not want to disclose their sexual orientation/gender identity or just wanted to forget about it and move on
- 30% were afraid reporting would make it worse

Respondents who did report were often dissatisfied with the responses they received:

- 100% were dissatisfied with the police response¹⁹
- 40% were dissatisfied with the social media response

The main reasons for dissatisfaction with the police were:

- Incident not treated seriously (100%)
- No action taken and no response received (50%)

The main reasons for dissatisfaction with the social media companies were:

- No action taken (40%)
- Incident not treated seriously (30%)
- Automated response received (25%)

¹⁹ The sample size of respondents who reported to the police is extremely small and caution is therefore urged when generalising these findings.

Lithuania

53% of respondents in Lithuania had experienced hate crime and/or hate speech in the last 5 years, whilst 47% had not.

Respondents had experienced a range of online abuse:

- 95% had experienced insults
- 42% had received threats of outing
- 41% had received threats of physical violence
- 35% had been blackmailed
- 28% had received death threats
- 28% had been outed
- 27% had experienced doxing
- 22% had received threats of sexual assaults
- 12% had received threats to destroy property

In terms of reporting:

- 35% did not report at all
- 20% reported to social media companies
- 4% reported to the police²⁰

The main reasons for not reporting were:

- 58% did not want to disclose their sexual orientation/gender identity
- 55% just wanted to forget about it and move on
- 53% said it happens too often to tell anyone about it

Respondents who did report were often dissatisfied with the responses they received:

- 59% were dissatisfied with the social media response
- 50% were dissatisfied with the police response

The main reasons for dissatisfaction with the police were:

- Incident not treated seriously (50%)
- Little knowledge around LGBT+ issues, no action taken, too many steps to go through, no response received, and had to disclose their sexual orientation/gender identity several times (10%)

The main reasons for dissatisfaction with the social media companies were:

- No action taken (64%)
- Incident not treated seriously (55%)
- Automated response received (45%)

²⁰ The number of respondents who reported to the police is extremely small so caution is urged when generalising these findings.

Portugal

58% of respondents in Portugal had experienced hate crime and/or hate speech in the last 5 years, whilst 42% had not.

Respondents had experienced a range of online abuse:

- 87% had experienced insults
- 46% had received threats of physical violence
- 38% had received threats of outing
- 29% had experienced doxing
- 27% had received death threats
- 25% had been outed
- 21% had received threats of sexual assaults
- 15% had been blackmailed
- 8% had received threats to destroy property

In terms of reporting:

- 35% reported to social media companies
- 31% did not report at all
- 6% reported to the police

The main reasons for not reporting were:

- 69% wanted to forget about it and move on
- 38% were afraid that reporting would make matters worse
- 31% said it happened too often to tell anyone about it

Respondents who did report were often dissatisfied with the responses they received:

- 100% were dissatisfied with the police response
- 95% were dissatisfied with the social media response

The main reasons for dissatisfaction with the police were:

- Incident not treated seriously, no action taken, they belittled or blamed the victim, and the victim had to repeat what happened several times (67%)

The main reasons for dissatisfaction with the social media companies were:

- Incident not treated seriously (56%)
- No action taken (56%)
- Automated response received (44%)

Spain

48% of respondents in Spain had experienced hate crime and/or hate speech in the last 5 years, whilst 52% had not.

Respondents had experienced a range of online abuse:

- 92% had experienced insults
- 33% had received threats of physical violence
- 24% had received threats of outing
- 24% had been outed
- 17% had received death threats
- 13% had experienced doxing
- 12% had received threats of sexual assaults
- 12% had been blackmailed
- 4% had received threats to destroy property

In terms of reporting:

- 59% reported to social media companies
- 17% did not report at all
- 10% reported to the police

The main reasons for not reporting were:

- 58% wanted to forget about it and move on
- 27% were afraid that reporting would make matters worse
- 31% said it happened too often to tell anyone about it

Respondents who did report were often dissatisfied with the responses they received:

- 59% were dissatisfied with the social media response
- 50% were dissatisfied with the police response

The main reasons for dissatisfaction with the police were:

- No action taken (58%)
- Little knowledge around LGBT+ issues (46%)
- Incident not treated seriously (31%)

The main reasons for dissatisfaction with the social media companies were:

- No action taken (53%)
- Automated response received (42%)
- Incident not treated seriously (38%)

United Kingdom

78% of respondents in the United Kingdom had experienced hate crime and/or hate speech in the last 5 years, whilst 22% had not.

Respondents had experienced a range of online abuse:

- 97% had experienced insults
- 63% had received threats of physical violence
- 41% had received threats of sexual assaults
- 39% had received death threats
- 34% had received threats of outing
- 21% had been outed
- 17% had experienced doxing
- 16% had received threats to destroy property
- 14% had been blackmailed

In terms of reporting:

- 44% reported to social media companies
- 28% did not report at all
- 7% reported to the police

The main reasons for not reporting were:

- 56% said it happens too often to tell anyone about it
- 55% just wanted to forget about it and move on
- 36% were afraid that responding in any way might make it worse

Respondents who did report were often dissatisfied with the responses they received:

- 75% were dissatisfied with the social media response
- 71% were dissatisfied with the police response

The main reasons for dissatisfaction with the police were:

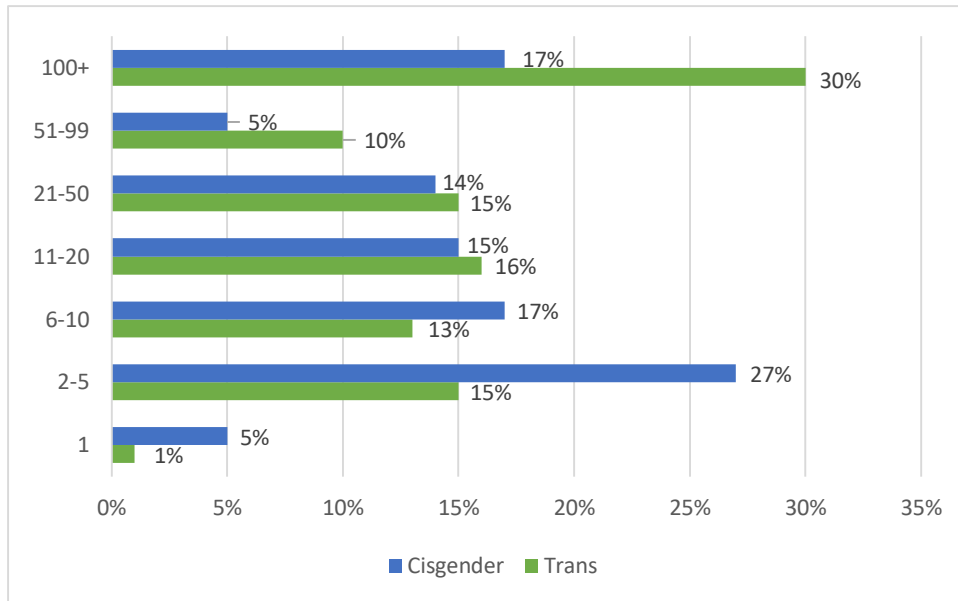
- No action taken (68%)
- Incident not treated seriously (63%)
- Little knowledge around LGBT+ issues (42%)

The main reasons for dissatisfaction with the social media companies were:

- No action taken (73%)
- Incident not treated seriously (58%)
- Automated response received (54%)

APPENDIX

Appendix 1: Number of instances of hate speech/crime experienced over the last 5 years



Appendix 2: Was the Abuse Received? Number of Responses Selected

<u>Number of boxes ticked</u>	<u>Number of Respondents</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
1	458	27%
2	426	25%
3	300	18%
4	200	12%
5	95	6%
6	75	4%
7	46	3%
8	29	2%
9	42	3%
10	3	0%

Appendix 3: Breakdown of Incident by Social Media Platform

Twitter:

<u>Type of Incidents</u>	<u>Frequency</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
Death Threats	134	30%
Threats of Physical Violence	179	41%
Threats of Sexual Assault	103	23%
Threats of Outing	55	12%
Threats to Destroy Property	39	9%
Insults	274	62%
Outing	59	13%
Blackmail	53	12%
Doxxing	69	16%

Facebook:

<u>Type of Incidents</u>	<u>Frequency</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
Death Threats	364	33%
Threats of Physical Violence	550	49%
Threats of Sexual Assault	219	20%
Threats of Outing	142	13%
Threats to Destroy Property	99	9%
Insults	700	63%
Outing	141	13%
Blackmail	123	11%
Doxxing	133	12%

Dating Apps:

<u>Type of Incidents</u>	<u>Frequency</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
Death Threats	57	32%
Threats of Physical Violence	84	48%
Threats of Sexual Assault	58	33%
Threats of Outing	42	24%
Threats to Destroy Property	19	11%
Insults	94	53%
Outing	39	22%
Blackmail	32	18%
Doxxing	40	23%

Instagram:

<u>Type of Incidents</u>	<u>Frequency</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
Death Threats	137	32%
Threats of Physical Violence	189	51%
Threats of Sexual Assault	94	25%
Threats of Outing	72	19%
Threats to Destroy Property	51	14%
Insults	217	59%
Outing	82	22%
Blackmail	67	18%
Doxxing	59	16%

YouTube:

<u>Type of Incidents</u>	<u>Frequency</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
Death Threats	124	41%
Threats of Physical Violence	163	54%
Threats of Sexual Assault	77	25%
Threats of Outing	37	12%
Threats to Destroy Property	49	16%
Insults	206	68%
Outing	49	16%
Blackmail	47	16%
Doxxing	40	13%

Comments:

<u>Type of Incidents</u>	<u>Frequency</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
Death Threats	191	38%
Threats of Physical Violence	278	55%
Threats of Sexual Assault	117	23%
Threats of Outing	60	12%
Threats to Destroy Property	56	11%
Insults	325	64%
Outing	63	12%
Blackmail	60	12%
Doxxing	67	13%

Appendix 4: Number of Consequences Suffered Following Victimization

Number of boxes ticked	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Number of respondents	12	205	230	262	254	225	179	124	93	90
Percentage	1%	12%	14%	16%	15%	13%	11%	7%	6%	5%