



Australian  
Human Rights  
Commission

## Face the facts:

LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL,  
TRANS AND INTERSEX  
PEOPLE • 2014



**11 in 100**

Australians are of  
diverse sexual  
orientation, sex or  
gender identity

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#### **Contact details**

For further information about the Australian Human Rights Commission, please visit

[www.humanrights.gov.au](http://www.humanrights.gov.au) or email [communications@humanrights.gov.au](mailto:communications@humanrights.gov.au).

You can also write to:

Communications Team  
Australian Human Rights Commission  
GPO Box 5218  
Sydney NSW 2001

# Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex People



**11 in 100**  
Australians are of diverse sexual orientation, sex or gender identity

In 2011, there were **6,300** children living in same-sex couple families. 9 in 10 are in female same-sex couple families



1996

2011

THE REPORTED NUMBER OF SAME-SEX COUPLES HAS MORE THAN TRIPLED BETWEEN 1996 - 2011



of children born in Australia are estimated to be intersex



**80%** of homophobic bullying occurs at school



PERCENTAGE OF LGBTI PEOPLE WHO HIDE THEIR SEXUALITY OR GENDER IDENTITY AT CERTAIN EVENTS

ACCESSING SERVICES

**34%**

SOCIAL AND COMMUNITY EVENTS

**42%**

WORK

**39%**

**6 in 10** Experience verbal homophobic abuse

**2 in 10** Experience physical homophobic abuse

**1 in 10** Experience other types of homophobia

TRANSGENDER MEN AND WOMEN EXPERIENCE SIGNIFICANTLY HIGHER RATES OF NON-PHYSICAL AND PHYSICAL ABUSE COMPARED WITH GAY MEN AND WOMEN

Percentage of gay and transgender people who experienced verbal abuse in 2012



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# Lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and intersex people

Equality and freedom from discrimination are fundamental human rights that belong to all people, regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity or because they are intersex.

On 1 August 2013, the [Sex Discrimination Act 1984](#) was amended to make discrimination on the basis of a person's sexual orientation, gender identity and intersex status against the law.

Despite this important step forward, lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and intersex (LGBTI) people in Australia still experience discrimination, harassment and hostility in many parts of everyday life; in public, at work and study, accessing health and other services and securing proper recognition of their sex in official documents.

## About

- Australians of diverse sexual orientation, sex or gender identity may account for up to 11 per cent of the Australian population.<sup>1</sup>
- Same-sex couples make up about one per cent of all couples in Australia. In 2011, there were around 33,700 same-sex couples in Australia, including 17,600 male same-sex couples and 16,100 female same-sex couples.<sup>2</sup> The number of same-sex couples more than tripled between 1996 and 2011.<sup>3</sup>
- In 2011, there were 6,300 children living in same-sex couple families, up from 3,400 in 2001. Most of these children (89 per cent) are in female same-sex couple families.<sup>4</sup>
- There are no firm figures for Australia's intersex population. Estimates range from one in 2,000 births to four per cent of the population.<sup>5</sup>

## Key issues for LGBTI people

- A large number of LGBTI people hide their sexuality or gender identity when accessing services (34 per cent), at social and community events (42 per cent) and at work (39 per cent).<sup>6</sup> Young people aged 16 to 24 years are most likely to hide their sexuality or gender identity.<sup>7</sup>
- LGBTI young people report experiencing verbal homophobic abuse (61 per cent), physical homophobic abuse (18 per cent) and other types of homophobia (nine per cent), including cyberbullying, graffiti, social exclusion and humiliation.<sup>8</sup>
- Eighty per cent of homophobic bullying involving LGBTI young people occurs at school and has a profound impact on their well-being and education.<sup>9</sup>
- Transgender males and females experience significantly higher rates of non-physical and physical abuse compared with lesbians and gay men.<sup>10</sup>
- Gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people are three times more likely to experience depression compared to the broader population.<sup>11</sup>
- Around 60 per cent of same-sex attracted and gender-questioning young people said they experienced verbal abuse because of their sexuality, while 18 per cent reported experiencing physical abuse. Young men (70 per cent) and gender-questioning young people (66 per cent) were more likely than young women (53 per cent) to experience verbal abuse.<sup>12</sup>

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## Positive developments

- LGBTI young people at schools where protective policies are in place are more likely to feel safe compared with those in schools without similar policies (75 per cent compared with 45 per cent). They are almost half less likely to be physically abused at school, less likely to suffer other forms of homophobic abuse, less likely to self-harm and less likely to attempt suicide.<sup>13</sup>
- People in same-sex couples tend to be more highly educated,<sup>14</sup> more likely to work in highly skilled occupations (53 per cent compared with 43 per cent)<sup>15</sup> and more likely to have higher incomes.<sup>16</sup>
- On measures of general health and family cohesion, children aged 5 to 17 years with same-sex attracted parents had significantly better scores when compared to Australian children from all other backgrounds and family contexts. For all other health measures, there were no statistically significant differences.<sup>17</sup>

## Did you know?

- **Almost half** of all gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people **hide their sexual orientation or gender identity** in public for fear of violence or discrimination.<sup>18</sup>

## Find out more

- Australian Human Rights Commission, [Addressing sexual orientation and sex and/or gender identity discrimination: Consultation Report](#) (2011)
- Australian Human Rights Commission, [Sex Files: the legal recognition of sex in documents and government records](#) (2009)
- Australian Human Rights Commission, [Same-Sex: Same Entitlements, Report of the National Inquiry into discrimination against people in same-sex relationships in the area of financial and work related entitlements](#) (2007)
- Australian Research Centre in Sex, Health and Society, La Trobe University, [Private Lives 2: The second national survey of the health and wellbeing of GLBT Australians](#) (2012)
- Beyond Blue, [In my shoes: Experiences of discrimination, depression and anxiety among gay, lesbian, bisexual, trans and intersex people](#) (2012)

## Our role

The Commission can investigate complaints of discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, gender identity and intersex status under the [Sex Discrimination Act](#), which was amended in August 2013.

The amended Act also protects same-sex couples from discrimination under the definition of “marital or relationship status”.

We have conducted a number of major projects in recent years to identify and build community awareness around the human rights issues faced by LGBTI people.

Find out more about [our work](#) in this area.

- 1 Department of Health, Australian Government, *National Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex (LGBTI) Ageing and Aged Care Strategy* (2012).
- 2 Australian Bureau of Statistics, *4102.0 – Australian Social Trends, July 2013, Same-Sex Couples* (July 2013).
- 3 Australian Bureau of Statistics, above.
- 4 Australian Bureau of Statistics, note 2.
- 5 See the website of the [Organisation Intersex International Australia \(OI\)](#). OII recommends a mid-range figure of 1.7 per cent of all births.
- 6 Australian Research Centre in Sex, Health and Society, La Trobe University, *Private Lives 2: The second national survey of the health and wellbeing of GLBT Australians* (2012).
- 7 Australian Research Centre in Sex, Health and Society, La Trobe University, above.
- 8 Australian Research Centre in Sex, Health and Society, La Trobe University, *Writing Themselves in 3: The third national study on the sexual health and wellbeing of same sex attracted and gender questioning young people* (2010).
- 9 Australian Research Centre in Sex, Health and Society, La Trobe University, above.
- 10 For example, while 26 per cent of males and 23 per cent of females reported verbal abuse in the past 12 months, the percentages jump to 47 per cent and 37 per cent for trans males and trans females respectively. See Australian Research Centre in Sex, Health and Society, La Trobe University, note 6.
- 11 Beyond Blue, *In my shoes: Experiences of discrimination, depression and anxiety among gay, lesbian, bisexual, trans and intersex people* (2012).
- 12 Australian Research Centre in Sex, Health and Society, La Trobe University, note 8.
- 13 T Jones and Western Australian Equal Opportunity Commission, *A report about discrimination and bullying on the grounds of sexual orientation and gender identity in Western Australian education* (2012).
- 14 Australian Bureau of Statistics, note 2.
- 15 Australian Bureau of Statistics, note 2.
- 16 Australian Bureau of Statistics, note 2.
- 17 University of Melbourne, *Australian Study of Child Health In Same-Sex Families (ACHESS): Interim report* (2013).
- 18 Australian Research Centre in Sex, Health and Society, La Trobe University, note 6.

## Further Information

### **Australian Human Rights Commission**

Level 3, 175 Pitt Street  
SYDNEY NSW 2000

GPO Box 5218  
SYDNEY NSW 2001  
Telephone: (02) 9284 9600

General enquiries and publications: 1300 369 711  
TTY: 1800 620 241  
Fax: (02) 9284 9611  
Website: [www.humanrights.gov.au](http://www.humanrights.gov.au)

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