

**BISEXUAL**

**AWARENESS**

**WEEK 2024**

**A COMMUNITY REPORT**

# INTRODUCTION

During Bisexual Awareness Week 2024, The Diversity Trust developed a survey to capture the voices of bisexual people. The purpose behind recording these experiences is to bring bisexuality to the front of conversations and highlight the barriers, challenges, and discrimination still faced by bisexual people in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. It's vital, also, to reveal the positive experiences: the joy; connection; and freedom found in bisexuality, to show the authentic reality of being bisexual.

This report presents the findings of our survey, which will present a richer perspective on bisexuality and bisexual experiences. We hope that it will aid the community, and organisations, in providing more inclusive services for people who identify as bisexual, and that the information will encourage positive social change across our communities. Our aim for this work is that it will inform and inspire, and promote inclusive engagement around bisexuality in organisations and services.

## ABOUT THE DIVERSITY TRUST

The Diversity Trust's mission is to influence social change and create a fairer and safer society for all. We work across sectors to provide lived experience-led training and consultation, and work in collaboration with key services, organisations, and partners, including local authorities, the NHS, Avon and Somerset Police, Stand Against Racism and Inequality (SARI), and corporate groups, to deliver equalities-focused projects.

In March 2024, the Trust announced a new grant award from the National Lottery Community Fund which is enabling us to provide voice and representation, and volunteering opportunities, to LGBTQ+

communities across Gloucestershire, South Gloucestershire, North Somerset, Bath and North East Somerset, and Somerset.

It's our goal to amplify the voices of LGBTQ+ people across these five regions, providing the community ways to explore the issues that matter the most to them and a platform from which to voice their experiences to the people and services who need to hear them. At the same time, we seek to develop strong, collaborative networks across the five localities and support organisations in improving services, experiences and outcomes for the LGBTQ+ community.

# WHAT IS BISEXUALITY?

**“BISEXUALITY  
MEANS BEING  
ABLE TO HAVE A  
RELATIONSHIP  
WITH A PERSON I  
HAVE A  
CONNECTION TO  
REGARDLESS OF  
THEIR GENDER.”**

Bisexual or “bi” refers to people who have a romantic and/or sexual attraction towards more than one gender. This can sometimes be described in other ways such as pansexual, pan, and queer. The important thing is that the attraction is not exclusive to one gender identity.

Bisexuality is often misunderstood as it falls outside of the binary patterns and categories that we use to understand the world. Examples of binary thinking include heterosexual/gay, rich/poor, or tall/short. A wealth of variation occurs between each, but we often don't consider the possibilities of what exists because we're used to thinking in binary ways.

Some misconceptions of bisexuality include:



A bisexual person is confused; they're either gay or heterosexual



Bisexuality is a phase



A bisexual person has to be in an exclusive relationship with someone of the same sex



Bisexual people are indecisive about their sexual orientation

There's no “one size fits all” approach to bisexuality. People can have attractions and relationships in ways that don't adhere to heteronormative models, including polyamorous, platonic, and aromantic relationships.

A bi person's orientation cannot be determined by their current partner(s). The fact that bi identities defy assumptions many people have about attraction and relationships can mean that bi people are more likely to experience stigma, harassment, abuse, and exclusion.

**55-64, SOMERSET**

# THE SURVEY

In this survey, we focused on three key areas that serve to present a richer picture of bisexuality:

## 1. CELEBRATING BISEXUALITY

## 2. THE CHALLENGES OF BEING BISEXUAL

## 3. BREAKING THE STIGMA AROUND BISEXUALITY

The results gathered from this research are not a complete exploration of the experiences of bisexual people. They represent the voices of participants living mainly in the areas of Avon & Somerset, and Gloucestershire, falling within the localities included in our LGBTQ+ Voice and Influence Project that is supported by the National Lottery Community Fund. The survey was available to people living outside of these areas, but most responses originate from within our funded areas.

Our findings highlight the need for more research to be conducted about bisexuality and around the representation of bisexual people. We acknowledge that this report represents a snapshot of the people and experiences who deserve to be visible and supported. Our hope is that this report will serve as a catalyst and encourage deeper conversations around the emerging and ongoing needs and experiences of bi communities.

## WHAT WE ALREADY KNOW

The 2021 UK Census reports that 1.3% of the population would describe themselves as bisexual.

In 2021, the Office of National Statistics (ONS) shows that 44.9% of people who identify as LGBTQ+ said they were bisexual.

In age groups up to 44 years, women were more likely to identify as bisexual than as gay or lesbian. <sup>1</sup>

Bisexual people are more likely to hide their sexual orientation compared to someone who identifies as lesbian or gay. <sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Office of National Statistics, [Sexual orientation: age and sex, England and Wales: Census 2021](#)

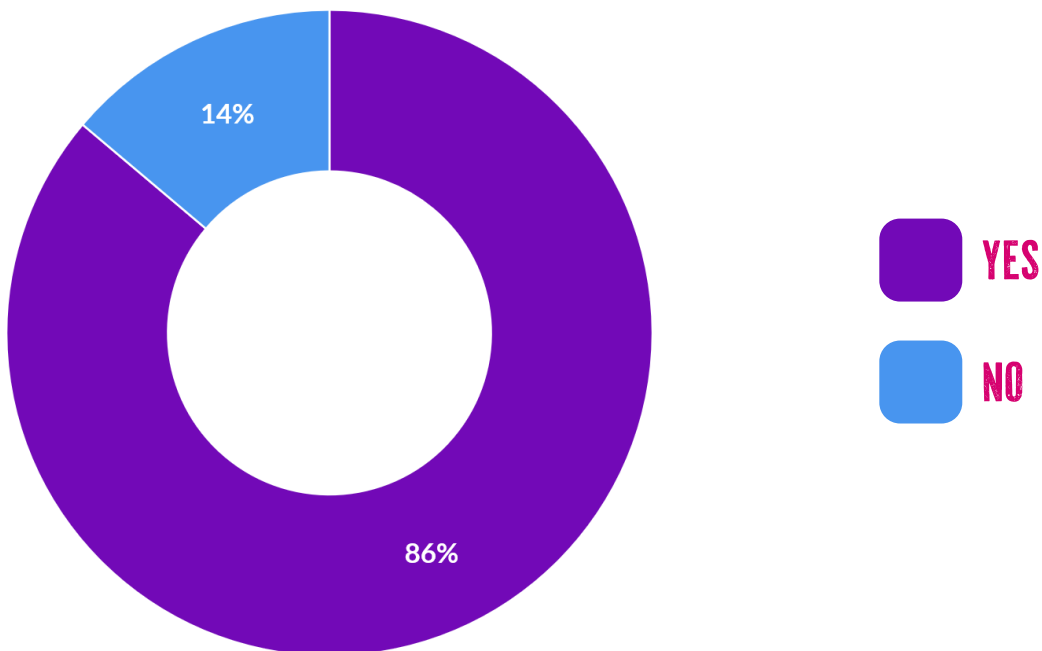
<sup>2</sup> Stonewall, [New research: bi people less likely to be 'out'](#)

# OUR FINDINGS

Our survey ran for the duration of Bisexual Awareness Week (16<sup>th</sup> – 23<sup>rd</sup> September 2024), during which we received 65 responses from Avon & Somerset, Gloucestershire, and further afield. 21.5% responded from outside of Avon & Somerset, and Gloucestershire.

Of those who responded to the survey, 56.9% were in the age range of 22-34 years old, and 87.7% said their ethnicity was White British. Most people who responded to the survey said that they were openly out as bisexual to friends and family but 13.8% said they still didn't feel comfortable enough to be openly out as bisexual.

## ARE YOU OPEN AS BI?

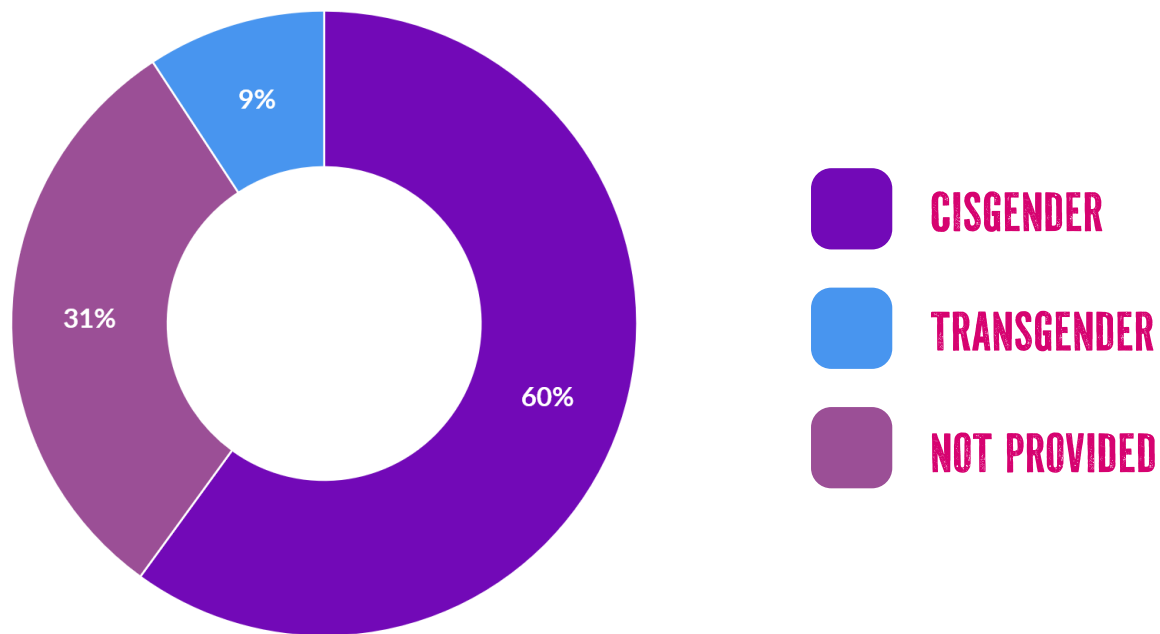


38.4% of respondents identified either as female or a cis woman, whereas 27.5% said they were a mix of genderfluid, queer or non-binary.

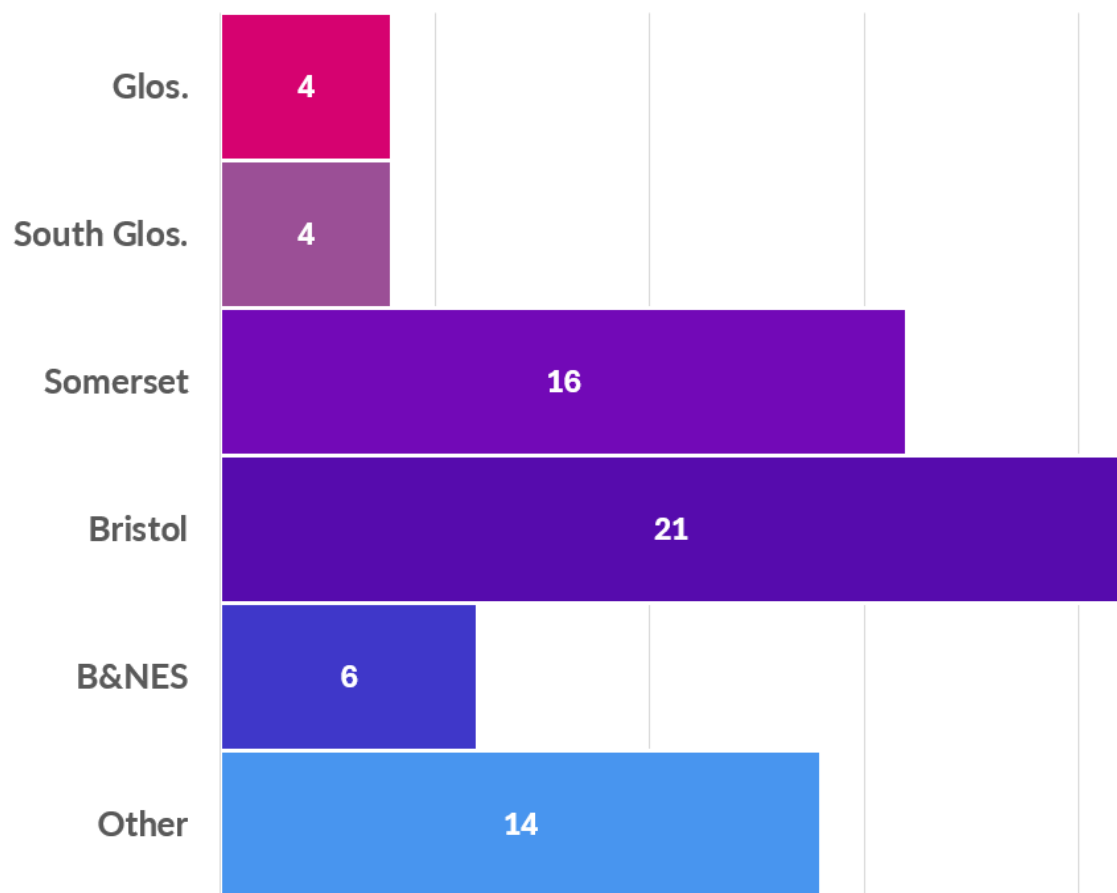
Geographically, most of the participants lived in Bristol with 32.3% saying they lived in or around the city, with 24.6% saying they lived in the Somerset region.



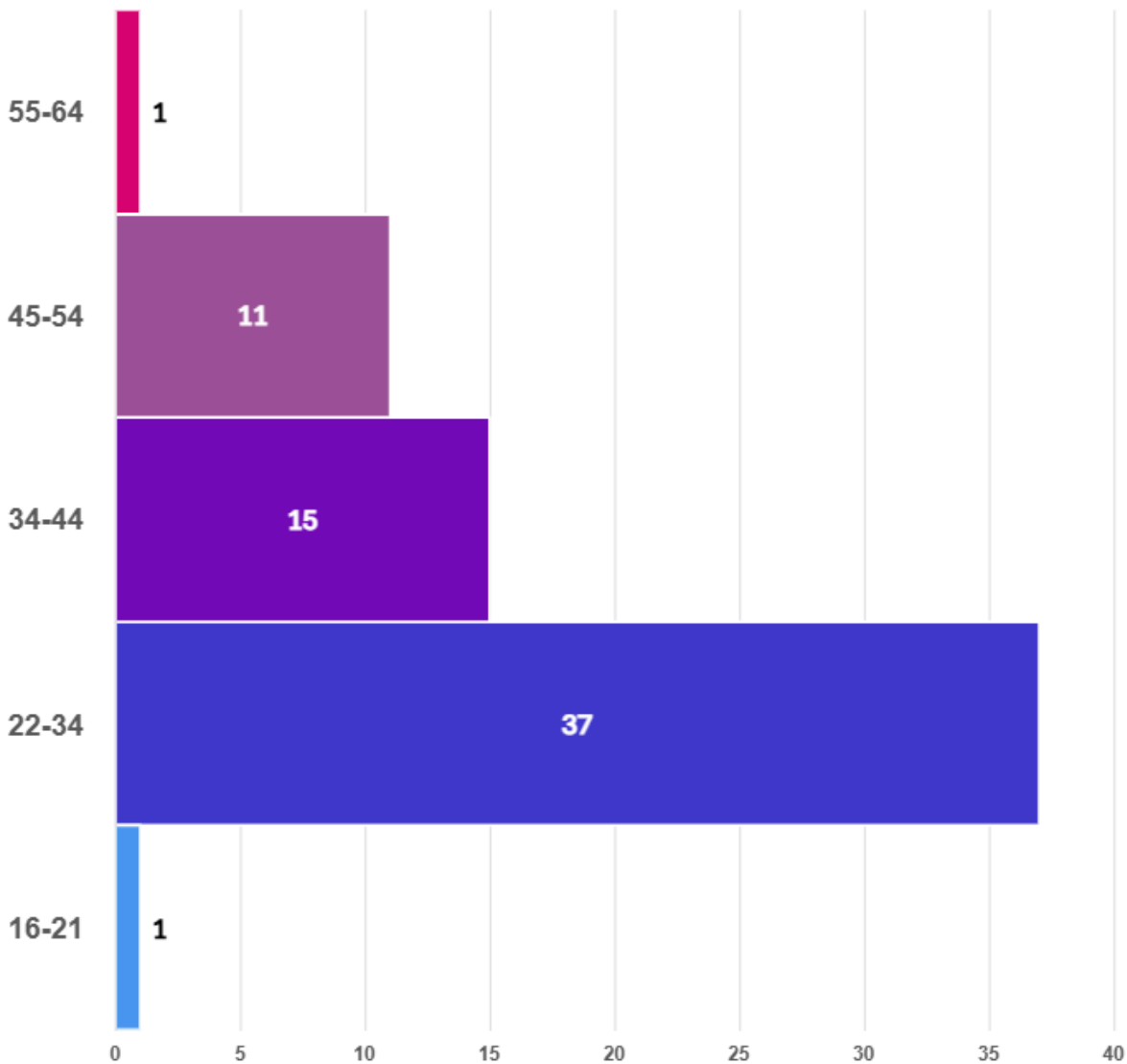
# GENDER IDENTITY



# REGION



# AGE



# ETHNICITY

BANGLADESHI	1.54%
BLACK AFRICAN	1.54%
GYPSY / ROMA / TRAVELER	1.54%
IRISH	1.54%
OTHER WHITE BACKGROUND	6.15%
WHITE BRITISH	87.69%

# CELEBRATING BISEXUALITY

Bisexual Awareness Week, and Bisexual Visibility Day, are crucial events for bi communities, providing opportunities to:

- ➡ Raise awareness of bisexuality
- ➡ Combat biphobia
- ➡ Share knowledge about the community, its needs and experiences
- ➡ Learn about bisexual erasure
- ➡ Celebrate bisexuality

Reporting around LGBTQ+ experiences often focuses on the problems and gaps the community faces, rarely capturing the positivity, connection, and joy that exists between people and within the community. This presents an unbalanced narrative, giving the impression that nothing can be done to improve outcomes, and that negative experiences such as being subjected to hate crimes, being erased, experiencing addiction, or living with domestic abuse, are 'normal' and part of being LGBTQ+.

When designing our survey, we set out to capture the good along with the bad, recognising that without both, we can't work towards a society where bisexual people can live openly, freely, and safely as the valuable members of our communities that they are. By documenting the good, we can see what we're aiming for and develop authentic, person-centred strategies for improving outcomes and dismantling biphobia.

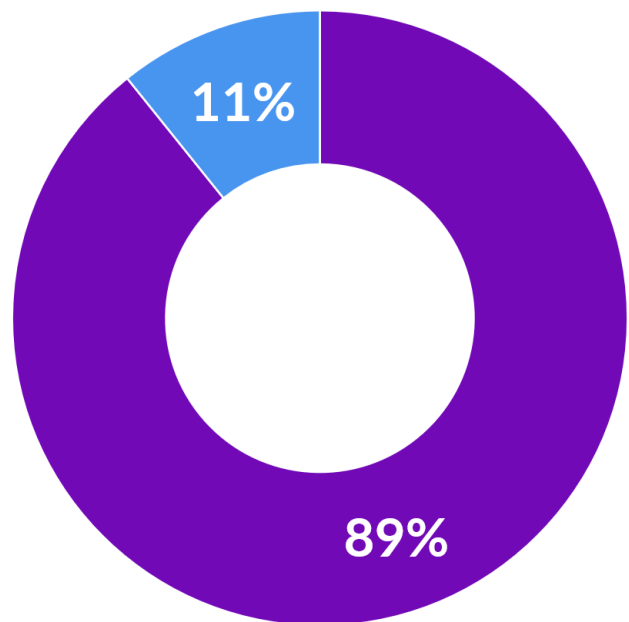
In recognition of the diversity of experiences in the bisexual community, we asked participants to share what being bisexual meant to them. The responses, anonymised and provided below, reveal a prevalent viewpoint:

## WHAT DOES BEING BISEXUAL MEAN TO YOU?

"Being able to love the people I love freely without any consideration for gender."

"Having attraction not be defined by someone's genitals."

## DO YOU THINK THERE'S GOOD REPRESENTATION OF BISEXUALITY IN SOCIETY?



 YES

 NO



# **“[BI JOY IS] SEEING BI FLAGS OUT IN PUBLIC, SEEING BI REPRESENTATION IN THE MEDIA, HAVING OPEN AND NORMAL CONVERSATIONS ABOUT FLUID SEXUALITY.”**

**23-34, SOUTH GLOUCESTERSHIRE**

“It means that I can love anyone I want, and that gender doesn’t restrict me.”

“Freedom to love and engage in romantic relationships with any gender. Visibility feels important, especially when in 'straight' looking relationships.”

“I’m attracted to men and women, although I’m attracted to all genders really, however I’m over 30 and pansexual wasn’t a common label when I was a teenager and realised this. I prefer bisexual to pansexual though as I find this an easier way for people outside the community to understand my sexuality quickly.”

“Having the freedom to love without borders.”

“Bisexuality, to me, means the freedom to love and connect with people regardless of their

gender. It’s about being open to love, attraction, and meaningful relationships with anyone—whether they’re male or female. It allows me to embrace my feelings without limits or expectations, to sleep with or form deep connections with the people I genuinely care about. It’s a beautiful part of who I am, giving me the space to explore love in all its forms.”

“To me it means I am not limited in who I love, being bisexual feels like warmth and love and acceptance. It feels like a very core facet of my being.”

The responses demonstrate one of the overarching themes for people: that through their bisexual identity they feel they have more freedom to openly love someone and connect to a person, regardless of gender. There is a sense that romantic and emotional connections to another person can happen without any of societies pre-determined borders and boundaries, allowing love to be fluid and unrestrictive.

With this unrestrictive nature to being bisexual, it opens more avenues to how people can have relationships, from romantic love to platonic attraction and affection. This freedom and fluidity is an important experience within bisexuality and something that should be recognised, supported, and celebrated.

## **BISEXUALITY AND JOY**

We asked participants what brings them “bi-joy”, that is, what about their bisexual identity brings them the most joy and what they celebrated the most about being bisexual. Asking this question gave respondents the chance to share the positive aspects of their experiences, providing insight into the experiences that make a difference:

## **WHAT BRINGS YOU**

### **“BI-JOY?”**

“I experience joy when my own position is validated by others. For example, being chatted up by all genders, being able to approach all genders and not be dismissed, being intimate with all genders. I also experience enjoyment from seeing other bi/pan people experiencing that too.”

“Seeing bi flags out in public, seeing bi representation in the media, having open and normal conversations about fluid sexuality.”

"Seeing people just freely expressing attraction to one another and not being judged for that. I'm quite engrained in the community, so I love it when someone subverts expectations about their sexuality and shows their attraction to someone who others wouldn't assume (say assumed gay)."

"Feeling seen and understood by other queer people in the community, being open with my partner about our bisexuality."

"Talking to my queer partner about people we both find attractive."

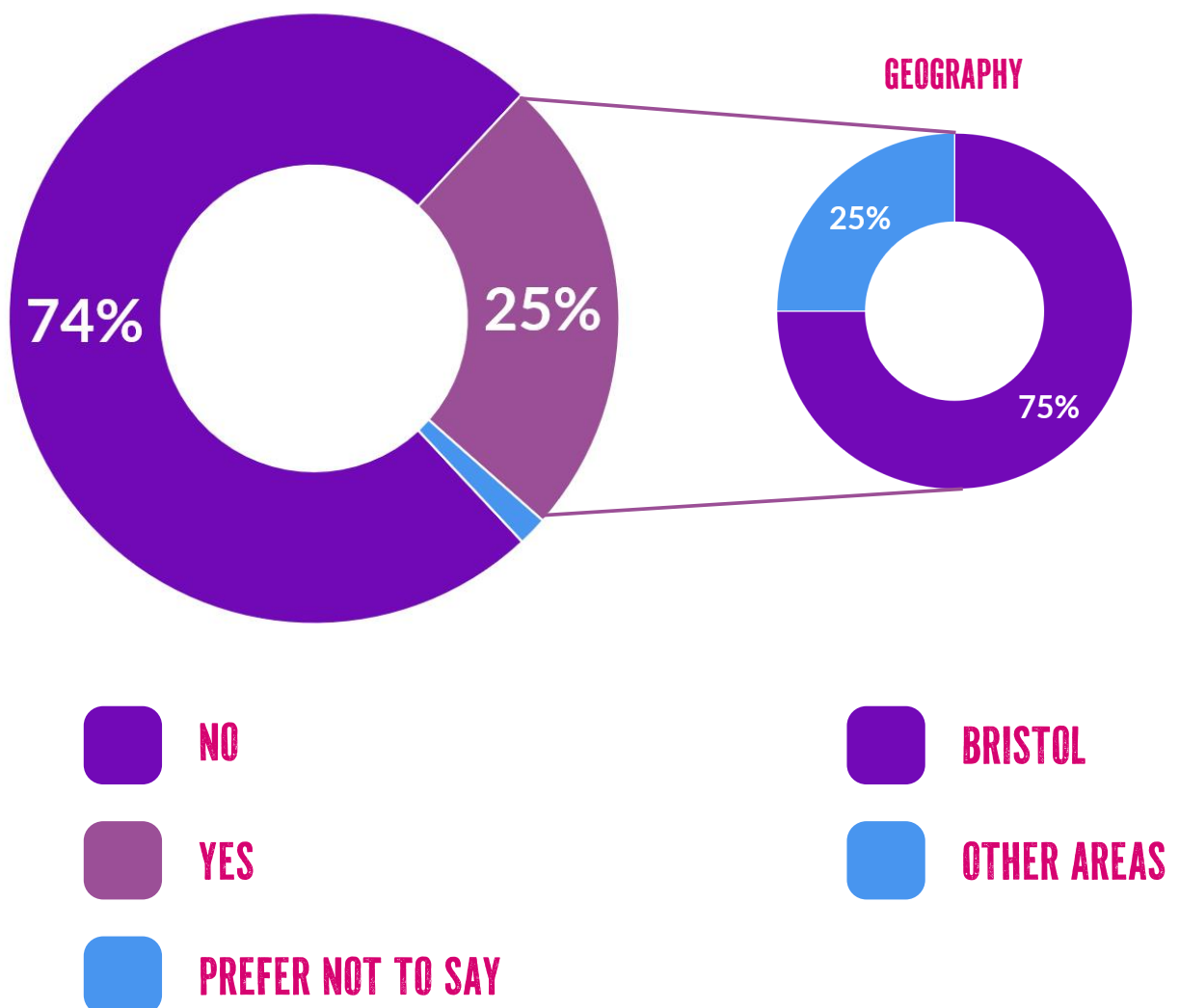
"When friends tell me that they had the confidence to come out because of me and that I've helped them to feel safe and comfortable to

identify that they are bi. Also seeing representations of other bi experiences. I did my master's dissertation on bisexuality and bisexual experiences of navigating a heteronormative society and it brought me so much joy interviewing other bi people and feeling validated in my own experiences and feeling part of a community."

"Seeing young children / teens at pride showing wearing the Bi flag. Men and women correcting people who think they are lesbian/ gay and saying aloud they are Bi."

"Seeing memes I can relate to online, being welcomed into queer spaces, and validated that I belong there just as much as other people."

## DO YOU FEEL BISEXUALITY IS CELEBRATED IN YOUR REGION?





# 89% OF RESPONDENTS DON'T BELIEVE THERE'S GOOD REPRESENTATION OF BISEXUAL PEOPLE IN SOCIETY

## VISIBILITY AND REPRESENTATION

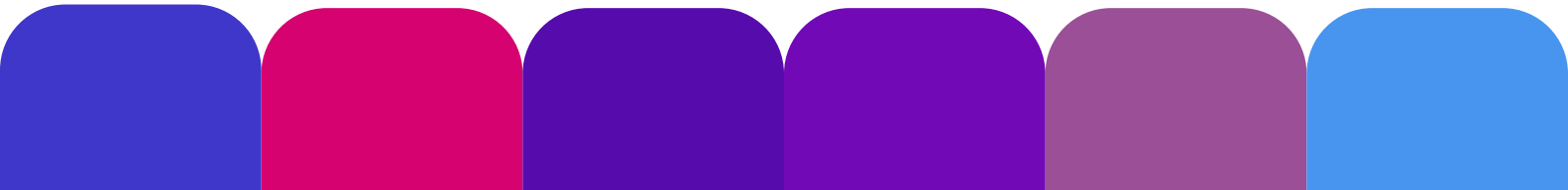
Despite a multitude of things which bring bisexual people joy about their identity, one of the areas many of the respondents said is that they didn't feel their bisexuality was celebrated in the region where they lived, or that they felt a good sense of belonging in within the LGBTQ+ community itself.

Of the responses The Diversity Trust received, 73.8% of people said that they felt like bisexuality was not celebrated in the region where they lived. When asked "Do you feel a sense of belonging in your LGBTQ+ community?" 43.1% said "maybe", revealing a sense of uncertainty as to whether people who are categorised under the "B" in LGBTQ+, genuinely felt part of that community.

It's clear that, although people who are openly bisexual experience a lot of joy and freedom in being bi, there's a lot of work to be done in our society around visibility, representation, and tackling the misconceptions around bisexuality.

One of the largest impressions to be taken from the survey highlights the lack of visibility for the community. 89.2% of respondents said that they didn't believe that there is good representation of bisexual people in society.

The lack of positive representation could be a contributing factor as to why bisexual people continue to experience challenges with their identity and being open about their sexual orientation, particulars around family, friends, and in the workplace. Improvements in broader LGBTQ+ representation in media has had a positive impact on the community, particularly for younger LGBTQ+ people, as they start to see authentic representation of their community and experiences. The move towards inclusion is a work in progress, and based on the responses in the survey, there is a need for better representation of bisexuality to create positive impacts and better outcomes for all people who identify as bisexual.



# THE CHALLENGES OF BEING BISEXUAL

The survey revealed some of the key issues faced by bisexual people, ranging from everyday barriers to experiences with health and wellbeing. Respondents provided clear insights into the regular challenges they faced, many of which highlighted the stigma and 'invisibility' encountered in their lives.

## STONEWALL'S 2023 LGBT IN BRITAIN: BI REPORT

The most recent publication by Stonewall, drawn from the research performed in 2017, includes exploration of the mental health experiences of bisexual people. The report found that 59% of bisexual respondents experienced depression, compared to 46% of gay/lesbian people.

Incidents of reported self-harm were reported by 26% of bisexual people completing the survey, whilst 50% of respondents who identified as bi reported that life wasn't worth living.

Source: Stonewall [LGBT in Britain: Bi Report](#)

## MENTAL HEALTH

The recurring theme found throughout the survey is the presence of misconceptions and stigma which continue to cloud the experience of being bisexual. The ongoing impact of this has significant consequences for the community, not least of all on the health and wellbeing of bisexual people.

Research published by Stonewall in 2023 [LINK] found that experiences of biphobic discrimination and rejection from family and friends significantly increase the risk of poor mental health for bi people. This connection was highlighted in our survey, with 52.3% of respondents saying that their bisexuality directly impacted their mental health. When asked to elaborate, some stated that the impact stemmed from either the stress of coming out or struggling with understanding their own identity.

We received comments such as "It's a confusing headspace when growing up! You don't know if you're kidding yourself. It screws with your head," and "[having] a real feeling that I had to pick one or the other."

Based on the qualitative feedback on this issue, the impact for people appears to stem from experiences in their youth, with feelings of confusion, a lack of support, no representation, and "having to pick a side" being some of the key experiences faced. Bullying, a pressure to conform, and having to appear "straight" also play a factor in what affects people's mental health, with anxiety and depression being cited as common mental health experiences.

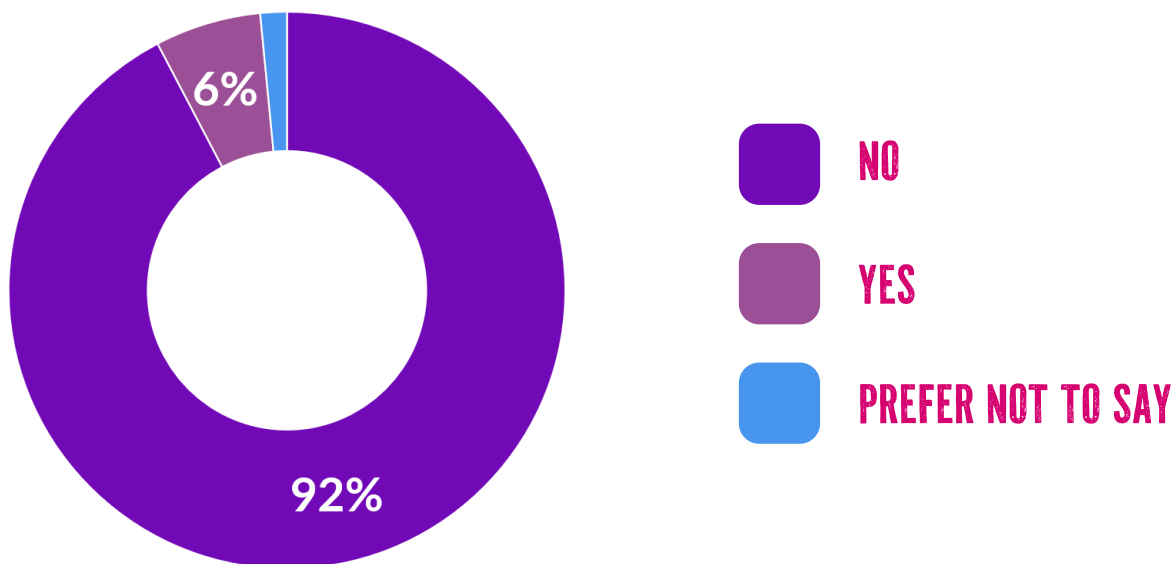
# BISEXUAL ERASURE

Bisexual erasure (or bi erasure), also called bisexual invisibility, is the tendency to ignore, remove, falsify, or re-explain evidence of bisexuality in history, academia, the news, media, and other primary sources.

Bisexual erasure remains one of the greatest challenges faced by the community, making it challenging to talk about bisexuality without it being dismissed. The lack of visibility for bisexuality led to the creation of the Bisexual Pride flag by Michael Page, based on the colour palette created by Liz Nania, in 1998.

Despite the move to bring bisexuality into view, the silencing of bisexual experiences in public, the media, and even within the LGBTQ+ community, is a profound and isolating experience. An overwhelming 92.3% of bisexual people who responded to our survey said they had felt a sense of bisexual erasure in their lives.

## HAVE YOU EVER FELT A SENSE OF BISEXUAL ERASURE?



# BIPHOBIA

Biphobia is a fear or dislike of someone because of prejudice towards, or negative attitudes about, bisexuality and bi people. Biphobia can be targeted at people who are, or who are perceived to be, bi.

When the Diversity Trust asked if people had ever been a victim of Biphobia, 89.2% responded "yes." We invited them to share their experiences with us and tell The Trust how being a victim of this type of hate made them feel:

"Like I wasn't queer enough, and that my sexuality wasn't real. So, I spent a lot of time trying to force myself to "choose" to be straight or gay. It took a long time to undo that." 22-34, Somerset

"Invalidated." 22-34, Other Region

"I have experienced biphobia from other members of the LGBTQ+ community in comments they have made to me about my sexuality, which didn't feel good, but this has been rare. I've also experienced invalidating comments from past relationships with straight men who try to fetishise my sexuality. The biphobia in my family, home, and school, has been much worse in my life and had much more of an impact [for] me, especially as a teenager [...] I was subject to a lot of bullying for being openly out and dating other girls." 22-34, Gloucestershire

"I've been hyper-sexualised which feels very demoralising." 22-34, *Other Region*

"It's frustrating to feel like you don't really belong anywhere because you aren't gay enough or straight enough." 22-34, *Bath & North East Somerset*

"In my youth, I was told to "chose a side", discriminated against by gays and lesbians and straight people, which made me feel I wasn't part of any community. Isolated and harder to find a mate. I experienced domestic abuse from straight men who didn't accept I was Bi." 45-54, *Other Region*

"Hurt, ashamed..." 34-44, *Somerset*

"Rejected, humiliated and disrespected, and misunderstood." 22-34, *Bath & North East Somerset*

These statements demonstrate why it's vital that we celebrate bisexual awareness, challenge biphobia, and amplify and champion the stories of bisexual people. We must address the inequities they face, not just in wider society but within their own communities.

The experience or fear of biphobia within the LGBTQ+ community itself has led to 29.2% of people saying that they have had issues accessing queer / safe LGBTQ+ spaces because of their sexual orientation. One person explained: "Whilst I do engage in queer spaces, I would rarely share that I'm bi and I use queer to describe my sexuality. My experience is that you can be stuck between cultures if you have one foot in each camp. Quietly excluded from both straight and queer communities without anything particularly overt being said."

Others have said that the actual names of some of the groups don't sound inclusive or welcoming because they have the words "gay" or "lesbian" in the title, meaning people avoid access the spaces.

Appearances or assumed appearance is reported as a factor that has led to negative interactions in LGBTQ+ spaces. Many of the responses referred to the fact that they looked femme or femme-presenting and had male partners so therefore were assumed to be "straight" or "not gay enough."

**"IT'S FRUSTRATING TO  
FEEL LIKE YOU DON'T  
REALLY BELONG  
ANYWHERE BECAUSE  
YOU AREN'T GAY ENOUGH  
OR STRAIGHT ENOUGH."**

**22-34, BATH & NORTH  
EAST SOMERSET**



# BREAKING THE STIGMA AROUND BISEXUALITY

The findings of the survey show the need for greater positive representation of bisexuality for people to feel more included in social spaces, and to live without fear of discrimination. Peer support spaces may also provide an opportunity for bisexual people to talk openly about their experiences, which would have the positive impact of creating and sustaining community presence and cohesion and help reduce the impacts of exclusion and isolation on people's mental health.

Before we can dismantle any stigma, we need to understand how it manifests and the impact it has on people. During our survey, we asked people what assumptions are made about bisexual people to show the common misrepresentations of bisexuality and highlight any patterns.

Understanding these assumptions and stereotypes provides a clearer picture of how biases play out in our society, opening the way for better ways to eliminate the biases and improve the experiences of bisexual people. By asking this question, we place the voices of bisexual people at the centre of our research, providing us with rich information whilst elevating the community and increasing visibility.

The most common responses to the question were that bisexual people are perceived as "greedy" or "more likely to cheat". In addition, openly bisexual people are seen as sexually promiscuous or simply haven't "chosen as side yet." The reality for many people is that their sexuality, and the romantic relationships they enter, more fluid than the binary model of relationships which are defined through heteronormative beliefs e.g. people are primarily "straight" but some are gay and identities beyond this aren't "normal."

These negative assumptions towards people have also had an impact on how trustworthy they're perceived to be because of the assumptions around cheating, being "hidden" or "closeted", being indecisive, and "doing it for attention." This can level of stigma can extend beyond their sexual

## COMMON ASSUMPTIONS ABOUT BISEXUAL PEOPLE

-  Bisexual people are "greedy"
-  They're more likely to cheat
-  They're doing it for attention
-  Bi people are sexually promiscuous
-  They haven't chosen a side yet
-  They're just "in the closet"

identity, leading to mistrust in other aspects of their day-to-day life.

To counter the poor representations of bisexual people, we created space for respondents to express what they thought would give a better understanding of what it means to be bisexual.

The recurring answer in this part of the survey is that being bisexual isn't a one size fits all experience. Everyone who identifies as bisexual has a different experience of it and a different interpretation of what it means to them. This diversity is one of the things that makes the bisexual community so vibrant and a place where a range of experience is welcome. Here are some of the other responses to this question:

“People may go through stages of exploring their bisexuality and varying levels of emotional/romantic interests towards genders.” 22-34, *Bristol*

“I think bi covers a range of preferences. I actually suspect that in a free, non-judgemental society without preconceptions most people would be bi.” 22-34, *Bristol*

“We're just regular people that can have regular relationships.” 22-34, *Gloucestershire*

“It is an identity in its own right - it's not sitting on the fence; your sexuality is not defined by the partner you're with; some people are monogamous, others are polyamorous, and that choice is separate from being bisexual as the same applies to other sexualities, and can also change at different points in your life, that it doesn't mean you want sex all the time or that you fancy everyone.” 34-44, *Other Region*

The final question in our survey, “What does bi visibility look like to you?”, was designed to lend voice to the needs of bisexual people and give a positive, active response to the barriers frequently encountered. The answers give us, as organisations and services, the knowledge to work

towards positive representation and dismantling biphobia.

Better representation of bisexual people in the media was the most significant topic raised in the responses, with people wanting to seeing portrayals of bisexual characters that are more authentic, and that bisexuality isn't the core of a character's personality or storyline.

Respondents expressed the need for more platforms on which to discuss and share their experiences, such as podcasts and YouTube channels. This need extends into the desire of more community spaces and groups where bi people can meet and share their experiences. It was also recommended that existing queer spaces uplift bisexual people and create better parity within broader community groups for bisexual visibility.

Feedback also centred around practical needs, including medical and healthcare professionals having a better understanding of bisexuality and better training to support this. Visibility in healthcare encompasses inequalities being explored and addressed and increasing inclusion.

**“IT IS AN IDENTITY IN ITS OWN  
RIGHT YOUR SEXUALITY IS NOT  
DEFINED BY THE PARTNER  
YOU'RE WITH...”**

**33-44, OTHER REGION**



# CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

The results of this research demonstrate an ongoing culture of misunderstanding around bisexuality and bisexual people's experiences. Despite the appearance of the increase in LGBTQ+ visibility and equality in our society, biphobia and bi-erasure continues to be a prevalent experience. Bisexual people are calling for more positive representation of their sexual identity within the media, and for our society to portray a positive message of what it's like to be bisexual. Visibility needs to be increased, and negative stereotypes must be challenged.

From a grassroots perspective, this positive reinforcement of bisexual identities starts with the continuation of Bisexual Awareness Week, and through other members of the LGBTQ+ community showing positive affirmations towards bi people. Allyship is a critical element and it's vital that those who identify as heterosexual are supported in understanding bisexual experiences and how to stand as effective allies for the community.

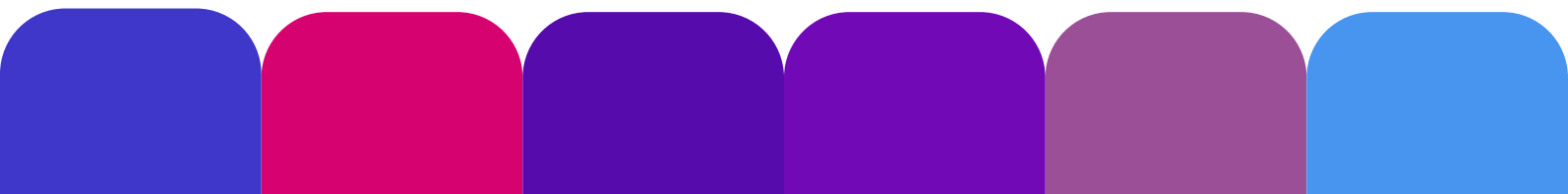
From our research The Diversity Trust recommends the following steps be taken to create a better understanding of bisexual people:

-  More education / training for community groups and organisations around bisexuality
-  Dedicated support / social groups for bisexual people
-  Existing LGBTQ+ spaces
-  Organisations / community groups giving more positive representation of bisexual people
-  Increasing visibility for bisexual people and championing inclusion in social spaces and services

## NEXT STEPS

This report will be published on The Diversity Trust website as well as circulated within our LGBTQ+ Equalities networks across Avon & Somerset and Gloucestershire. It will then also be sent to all the equalities leads at the local authorities within the region we are working to showcase what changes they could potentially implement.

We will also make sure this resource is available to anyone who wants to share it in a bid to work proactively towards making bisexual experiences a more positive existence.





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<https://www.diversitytrust.org.uk/subscribe>

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