



Evidence base for Manchester's lesbian, gay and bisexual population

Introduction

This dataset contains findings from The Lesbian & Gay Foundation's "I Exist" survey for lesbian, gay and bisexual (LGB) people living in Manchester. The total sample size is 364, although sample sizes differ per question, and this is stated where applicable.

It is estimated that between 5-7% of the UK population identifies as LGB. This would suggest Manchester has an LGB population of 24,950 – 34,930.¹ There are limitations to the sample in that it is biased towards younger people and gay men. The data should therefore be treated as indicative

Demographics

Gender by sexual orientation

The table shows the breakdown of respondents by sexual orientation and gender.

Sexual orientation by gender	Count	% of total	% of women	% of men
Female gay	11	3.0	7.6	
Female lesbian	95	26.1	65.5	
Female bisexual	39	10.7	26.9	
Total female LGB	145	39.8	100	
Male lesbian	1	0.3		0.5

¹ Based on a mid-2010 population estimate of 499,000 for Manchester MCD (ONS)

Male gay	209	57.4		95.4
Male bisexual	9	2.5		4.1
Total male LGB	219	60.2		100
Total	364	100	100	100

Of the respondents, three per cent identified as transgender. It is not known exactly how many transgender people there are in the UK, but the Gender Identity Research and Education Society (GIRES) estimates that around 1% of the UK population experiences some degree of gender variance.²

Age

The table below show the respondents grouped by age categories. The three most popular categories were 26-30, 31-35 and 36-40. The majority of respondents were aged 26- 45, accounting for 67% of the total.

Age group	Count	Percentage
Under 16	1	0.3
16-21	28	7.7
22-25	34	9.3
26-30	72	19.8
31-35	77	21.2
36-40	55	15.1
41-45	41	11.3
46-49	24	6.6
50-55	15	4.1
56-60	13	3.6
61-65	4	1.1
Total	364	100

Employment status

In terms of the employment status of the respondents aged 16-65, 72% were employed and 14% unemployed (the remainder were students or retired). This is similar to the general population, where the employment rate for those aged from 16 to 64 is 70%.³

² <http://www.gires.org.uk/Prevalence2011.pdf>

³ Office for National Statistics, *Statistical bulletin: Labour Market Statistics, May 2012* (London: ONS, 2012)

Children

7% of respondents said they had children, and 45% said they want, or have wanted to have, children.

Carers

1 in 10 respondents identified themselves as carers, providing unpaid care to someone, whether a relative, friend or neighbour, who couldn't manage without help because they are ill, elderly, disabled or have an addiction. This is the same as in the general population, where 1 in 10 are estimated to be carers.⁴ Around three quarters of those respondents who identified themselves as being a carer, provided between 1-19 hours of unpaid care per week, the remaining quarter provided 20+ hours of unpaid care per week.

Emotional wellbeing

The table below shows respondents who had experienced a range of emotional wellbeing issues, chosen from a list of options (respondents could choose more than one answer). 7% of respondents said they had never experienced a mental health problem, compared to an estimated 1 in 4 people in the general population who will experience a mental health problem in any given year.⁵ The table also shows a high prevalence of issues at the more serious end of the spectrum, such as suicidal thoughts, as well as more generally common issues like depression.

Emotional wellbeing issue	Count	Percentage
Low self-confidence or self-esteem	267	73.4
Depression	218	59.9
Anxiety (incl. panic attacks)	201	55.2
Feelings of isolation	204	56.0
Eating disorders	69	19.0
Self-harm	67	18.4
Suicidal thoughts	154	42.3
Attempted suicide	60	16.5
None of the above	25	6.9

⁴ Buckner, Lisa and Sue Yeandle, *Valuing Carers 2011 Calculating the value of carers' support* (Leeds: University of Leeds and Carers UK, 2011)

⁵ Mind, "How common are mental health problems?" 2011.

http://www.mind.org.uk/help/research_and_policy/statistics_1_how_common_is_mental_distress

Choosing from a list of options, respondents were asked to describe any negative effects on their ability to participate in life as a result of the above (respondents could choose more than one answer). The table below shows these responses.

Participation in life	Count	Percentage
Socialising	219	60.2
Making friends and keeping friendship groups	174	47.8
Forming relationships with a partner or partners	155	42.6
My behaviour towards my partner(s)/family	125	34.3
Working in a job	124	34.1
Getting involved in my local community	103	28.3
Getting a job	82	22.5
Accessing public services (e.g. GP or Council)	60	16.5
I do not feel there were any negative effects	31	8.5

Respondents who had experienced an emotional wellbeing issue were also asked if they had ever accessed support as a result, choosing from a list of options. While around 20% of respondents didn't access any support, a similar percentage sought support from their friends and/or family. Around two fifths of respondents accessed support from their GP which is towards the lower end of the figures for the general population (between 39-77% of those experiencing mental health problems in the general population will access their GP for support).⁶

Those who answered the above question were then asked whether they would have preferred to have accessed a support service that was LGB specific, almost half would have preferred to access support this way.

Physical health

Health conditions

The table below shows the number and percentage of respondents who said that they suffer from the following conditions. Respondents chose from a list of options and could choose more than one answer.

Condition type	Count	Percentage
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⁶ Mind, "How common are mental health problems?" 2011. http://www.mind.org.uk/help/research_and_policy/statistics_1_how_common_is_mental_distress

Other respiratory condition	11	3.0
Asthma	48	13.2
Eczema	48	13.2
Chronic sickness	24	6.6
Other cardiovascular condition	11	3.0
Diabetes	7	1.9
Stroke	2	0.5
Heart disease	3	0.8
Irritable Bowel Syndrome	42	11.5
Arthritis and rheumatism	33	9.1

Cancer risk factors

The table below shows the responses given when the sample were asked whether they smoke tobacco.

Do you smoke tobacco?	Women		Men	
	Count	Percentage	Count	Percentage
Yes	26	19.8	64	32.7
No, but used to smoke	48	36.6	51	26.0
No, have never smoked	57	43.5	81	41.3
Total	131	100	196	100

LGB people in Manchester are just as, or more, likely to smoke than the general population. 33% of gay and bisexual men are current smokers compared to 22% of men generally. Consistent with figure for women generally, 20% of lesbian and bisexual women are current smokers. LGB people in Manchester are less likely to have never smoked (41% GB men and 44% LGB women have never smoked compared to 49% of men generally and 57% of women generally who have never or occasionally smoked); and gay and bisexual men are less likely to have given up smoking than men generally (26% of GB men are ex-smokers compared to 29% men of men generally and 37% of LGB women are ex-smokers compared to 23% of women generally). Consistent with national trends, smoking is steady across all age groups until 50+ where it drops off.⁷

The table below shows responses to the question, “do you take steps to reduce your risk of cancer?” (respondents could choose more than one answer). 35% of respondents said they take steps to reduce their risk of cancer by reducing their alcohol and/or drug use. A quarter said they don’t take any steps to reduce their risk of cancer.

⁷ Office for National Statistics, *General Lifestyle Survey, 2009* (The Health and Social Care Information Centre, 2011)

Risk reduction method	Count	Percentage
Yes, by improving my diet	199	54.7
Yes, by taking exercise	173	47.5
Yes, by reducing my alcohol/drug use	126	34.6
No	89	24.5

Work missed due to stress and substance use

Respondents were asked whether they had missed any work due to stress, illness, drinking alcohol or using drugs in the last 12 months (respondents could choose more than one answer). The responses are shown in the table below.

Just under 30% of respondents had missed work in the last 12 months due to stress and 8% had missed a month or more. Nearly one fifth of respondents had missed work in the last 12 months due to their alcohol use, and 7% had missed work in the last 12 months due to their drug use.

Time	Due to stress		Due to illness		Due to alcohol use		Due to drug use	
	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
No time off work	222	72.5	111	35.5	246	83.1	273	93.2
Less than 1 day	13	4.2	20	6.4	18	6.1	3	1.90
1 to 3 days	26	8.5	86	27.5	21	7.1	11	3.8
4 to 6 days	7	2.3	32	10.2	4	1.4	4	1.4
At least 1 week but less than 2 weeks	8	2.6	17	5.4	4	1.4	1	0.3
At least 2 weeks but less than 1 month	5	1.6	20	6.4	2	0.7	1	0.3
At least 1 month but less than 3 months	12	3.9	9	2.9	0	0.0	0	0.0
More than 3 months	13	4.2	18	5.8	1	0.3	0	0.0
Total	306	100	313	100	296	100	293	100

Sexual health – gay and bisexual men

The table below shows when gay and bisexual male respondents had last had an HIV test. 40% had had an HIV test in the last year, but around one fifth had never

had an HIV test. Estimates for HIV testing in the last year vary from 7% among the general population to 36% among men who have sex with men.⁸

Last HIV test	Count	Percentage
In the last 1-3 months	62	16.8
In the last 3-6 months	31	8.4
In the last 6 months – 1 year	58	15.7
In the last 1-5 years	107	28.9
I can't remember	31	8.4
I've never had an HIV test	81	21.9
Total	370	100

Respondents who had never had an HIV test were asked to explain why, choosing from a list of options. Just under half said, “I do not think I need one because I have never had unprotected sex”. Another 30% were evenly split between those who were “afraid to go for one” and those who had “thought about it, but have never arranged one”.

82% of gay and bisexual male respondents said that they used the LGF’s gay and bisexual men’s safer sex packs, distributed across Greater Manchester. When asked if they were more likely to use condoms for anal sex because the LGF provide condoms and lube, 73% said they were.

Sexual health – lesbian and bisexual women

The table below shows when lesbian, gay or bisexual female respondents had last had a sexual health screening. The majority had never had a sexual health screening, accounting for around 40% of respondents. A quarter had had a screening in the last 1-5 years.

Last sexual health screening	Count	Percentage
In the last 1-3 months	13	10.2
In the last 3-6 months	6	4.7
In the last 6 months – 1 year	19	14.8

⁸ Health Protection Agency, *HIV in the United Kingdom: 2011 report* (London: HPA, 2011) and Weatherburn, P., et al, *Vital Statistics* (London: Sigma Research, 2010).

In the last 1-5 years	33	25.8
I can't remember	10	7.8
I've never had a sexual health screening	47	36.7
Total	128	100

Respondents who had never had a sexual health screening were asked to explain why, choosing from a list of options. The two most common reasons given were “I do not think I need one because I have never had unprotected sex” and “I have thought about it, but have never arranged one” accounting for a 17% and 35% of respondents respectively.

Nearly 3 in 10 respondents (69%) said they use the LGF's lesbian and bisexual women's safer sex info packs.

Conclusion

While the “I Exist” data should be treated as indicative, it indicates that LGB people in Manchester are disproportionately affected by poor mental health, cancer risk factors such as smoking, time off work due to problematic drug and alcohol use, and sexually transmitted infections. The data is broadly similar to that from the larger Greater Manchester sample. Further supporting evidence on these and other issues is available via The Lesbian & Gay Foundation's free information resource, the *Evidence Exchange*.

Further information

For information on the data contained within this report, please contact Heather Williams, Policy & Research Co-ordinator at The Lesbian & Gay Foundation:

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To access LGB&T statistics on a range of topics, visit The Lesbian & Gay Foundation's *Evidence Exchange*:

<http://www.lgf.org.uk/evidence-exchange>

For advice and information on including LGB people's needs in Joint Strategic Needs Assessments and other strategies, please contact Heather on the email address above, or visit:

<http://www.lgf.org.uk/policy-research/JSNA>