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# LGBTQ health and human rights in Australia: issues and required responses

Professor Adam Bourne

Deputy Director and Head of LGBTQ Health Research  
Australian Research Centre in Sex, Health & Society

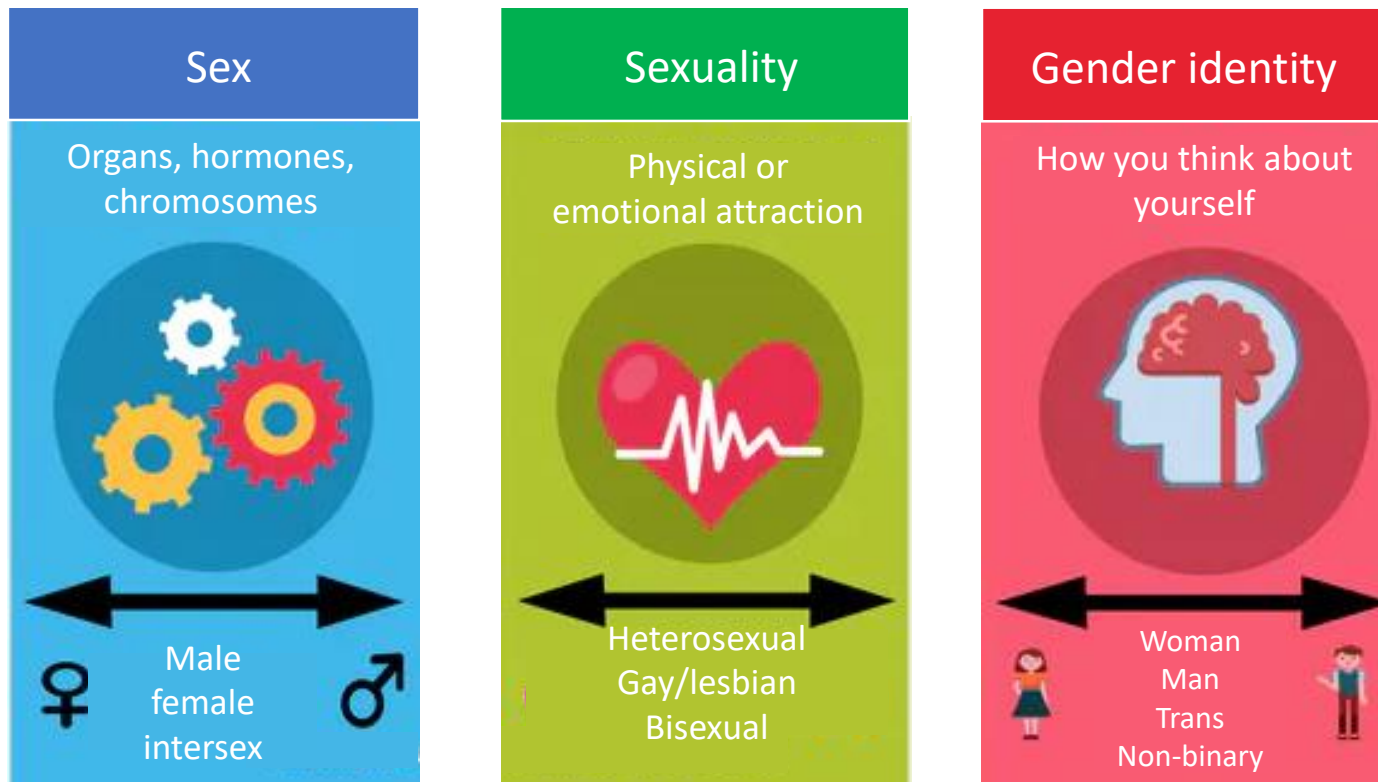
# Overview

- Terminology used in Australia about sexuality and gender (LGBTQ)
- Legal and social situation for LGBTQ people in Australia
- Health disparities experienced by LGBTQ people in Australia
  - Mental health and suicide attempt
  - Alcohol and other drug use
  - Domestic violence / intimate partner violence
  - Homelessness
- Drivers of health disparities – harassment, abuse and service safety
- Required structural, community and individual-level interventions

A close-up photograph of a string of Christmas lights. The lights are out of focus, creating a bokeh effect with various colored circles (red, green, blue, yellow) against a dark background. A red rectangular box is superimposed over the center of the image, containing the word 'Terminology' in white, bold, sans-serif font.

# Terminology

## LGBTQ: Lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans/gender diverse, queer



**Queer:** An umbrella term that includes non-normative gender identities and sexual orientations. Can also denote the community in general

**Cisgender:** Someone who identifies as the same gender they were assigned at birth



# Legal and social Situation for LGBTQ



# Timeline of LGBTQ legal rights

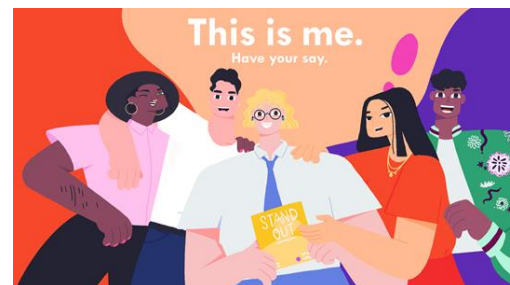
- 1980 Legalisation of homosexuality in Australia
- 2000 Gender identity added as a protected attribute under the Equal Opportunity Act
- 2002 Sexual orientation added as a protected attribute under the Equal Opportunity Act
- 2016 LGBTQ people can adopt children
- 2017 Marriage equality legalised under Commonwealth law, following Australian Marriage Law Postal Survey
- 2019 Sexual reassignment surgery is no longer needed to change a birth certificate
- 2021 Law passed to ban harmful LGBTQ+ change or suppression (conversion) practices

A photograph of a shower stall with a rainbow neon light sign on the wall. The sign is made of multiple curved neon tubes in the colors of the rainbow, arranged to form a semi-circular arc. The background is a dark, tiled wall. A shower head and part of a shower curtain are visible in the upper right corner.

# LGBTQ health disparities

# Data sources about LGBTQ health

Private  
Lives



- LGBTQ Adults aged 18 +
- Data collection from 24th July to 1st October 2019
- Online national survey
- Promoted via social media, paid Facebook advertising, LGBTIQ community organisations and networks

• N = 6,748

- LGBTQ young people aged 14–21
- Data collection conducted from September 2nd to October 28th 2019
- Online national survey
- Promoted via social media, paid advertising, LGBTIQ community organisations and networks

• N = 6,418



## Private Lives 3

### Adults 18 +, LGBTQ+

- Relationships and children
- Housing and homelessness
- Discrimination, harassment and feelings of acceptance
- General health and wellbeing
- Mental health
- Health service engagement
- Alcohol, tobacco and other drug use
- Intimate partner and family violence
- Community connections
  - Intersections of these experiences with housing, gender, sexuality, state, rurality, ethnicity, Aboriginality, disability, religion, school type etc.

## Writing Themselves In 4

### 14-21 years, LGBTQ+

- Trans and gender diverse specific experiences
- Community engagement
- Education settings: supportive structures and practices
- Education: discriminatory experiences
- Mental health and suicidality
- Alcohol and drug use
- Experiences of abuse and harassment
- Disclosure and affirmation of sexuality and gender

# Mental health and suicidal ity

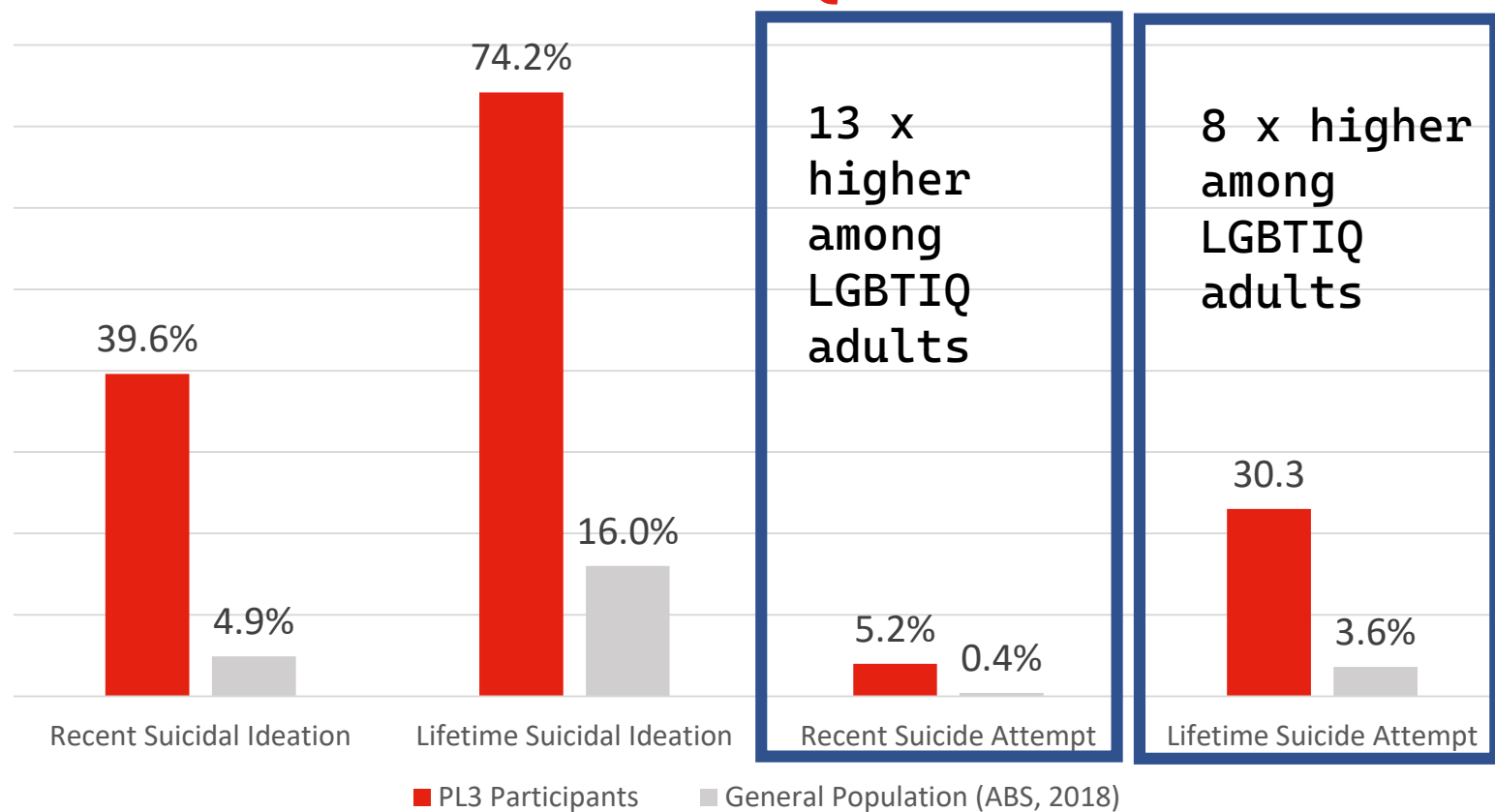


# Experience of psychological distress – LGBTQ adults

LEVEL OF PSYCHOLOGICAL DISTRESS	LGBT ADULTS IN AUSTRALIA	ADULT GENERAL POPULATION
Low	20.4	60.8
Moderate	22.4	21.9
High	27.8	8.9
Very High	29.4	4.0

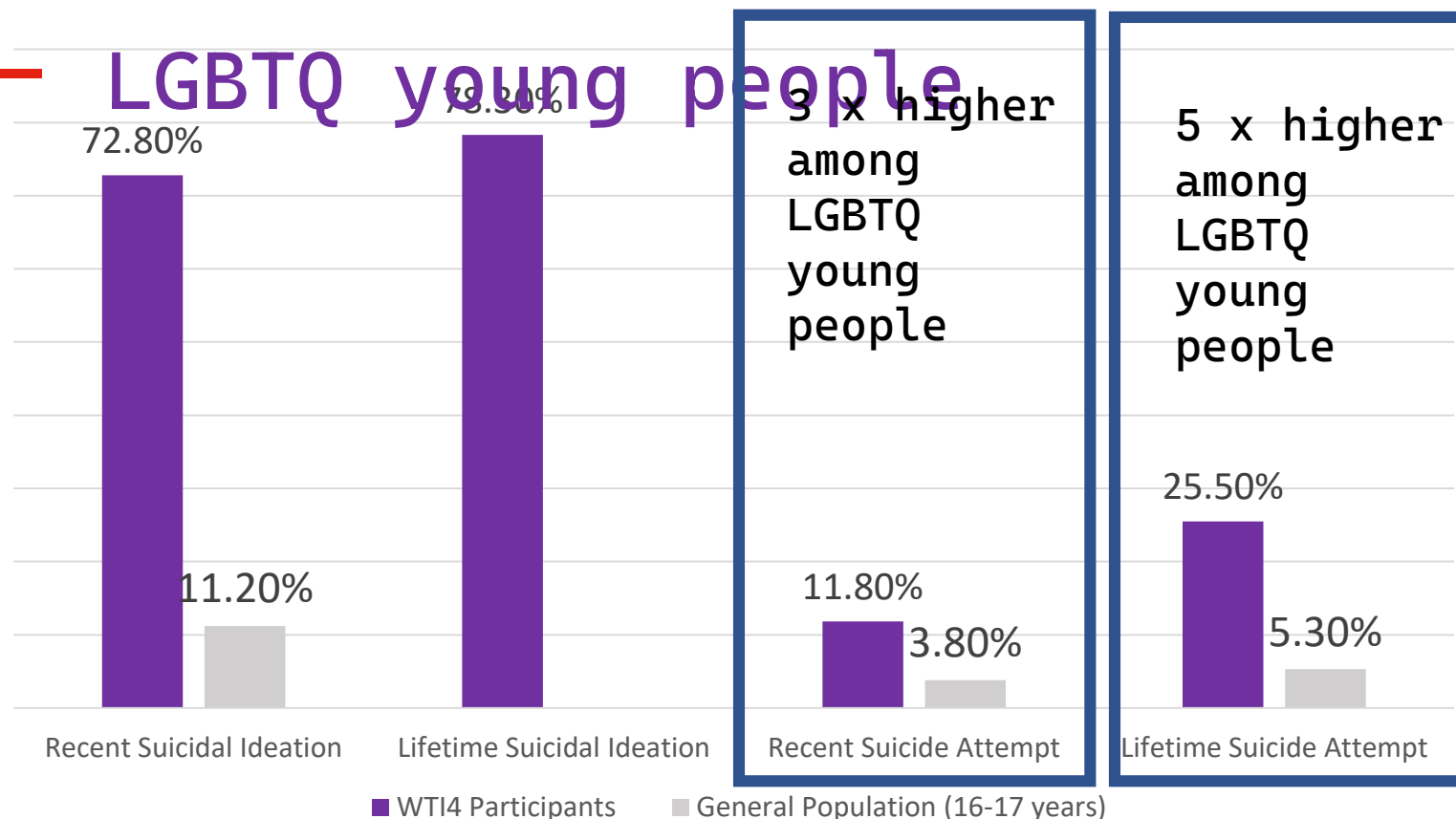
LGBT: 'high' or 'very high' levels of distress 4 times higher than general population

# Suicidal ideation/attempted suicide – LGBTQ adults



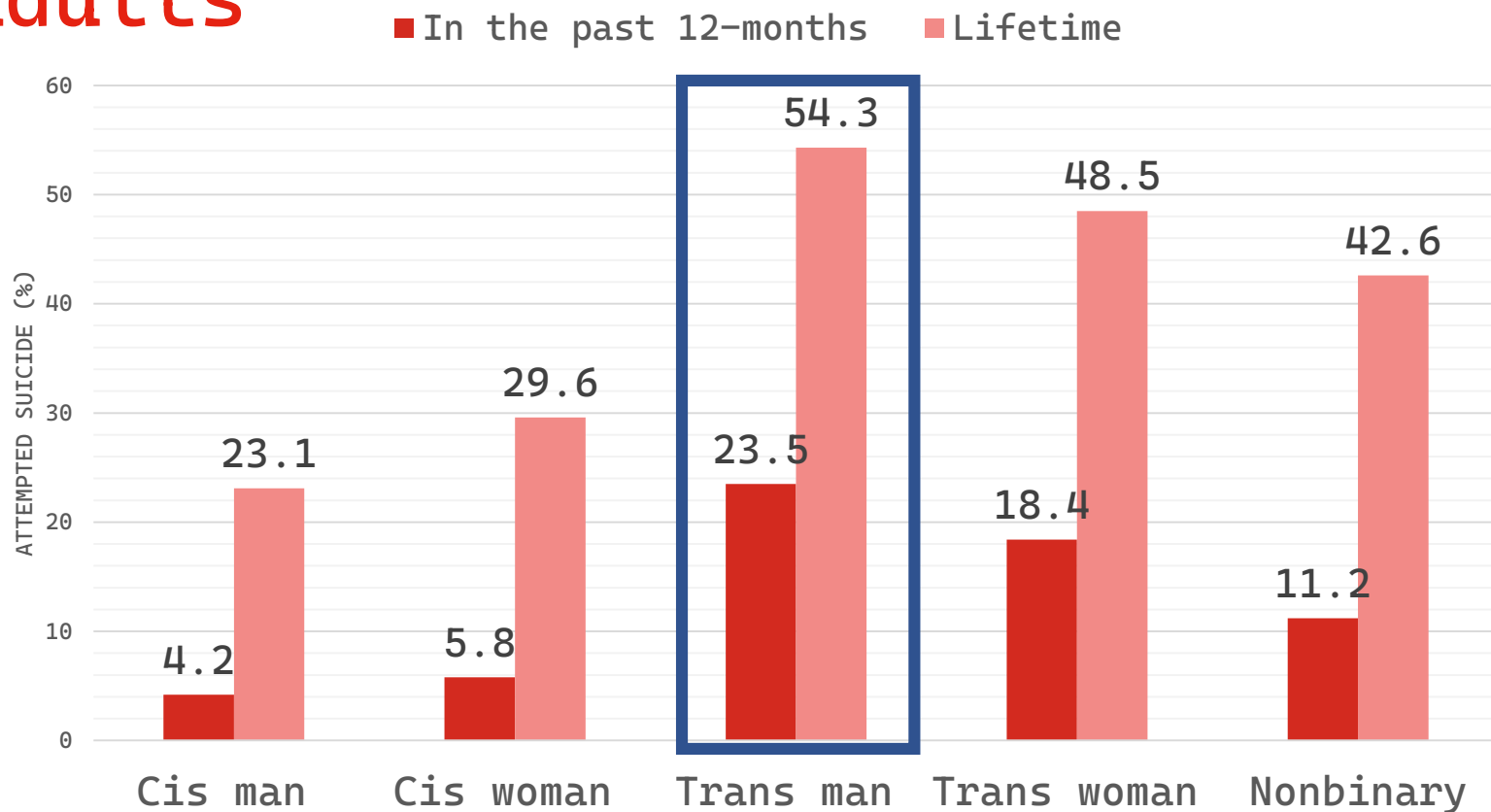
# Suicidal ideation/attempted suicide

## — LGBTQ young people





# Variation in suicide attempt by gender – LGBTQ adults



# Drug, alcohol & tobacco use



# Drug use – LGBTQ adults

Drug use in past 6 months	Number	%
Cannabis	1,904	30.4
Ecstasy/MDMA	872	13.9
Cocaine	601	9.6
Benzodiazepines (e.g., Valium, Serepax, Xanax)	549	8.8
Pharmaceutical opioids	327	5.2
LSD/synthetic hallucinogens/Psilocybin/PCP	285	4.5
Ketamine (Special K)	277	4.4
Meth/amphetamine	277	4.4
Pharmaceutical stimulants (e.g., Ritalin)	262	4.2
Antidepressants	236	3.8
Nitrous oxide	232	3.7
Naturally occurring hallucinogens	228	3.6
GHB/GBL/1,4-BD (Liquid e)	99	1.6
Antipsychotics	67	1.1
Steroids	34	0.5
Heroin (including homebake)	18	0.3
Synthetic cannabis	20	0.3
Mephedrone	7	0.1
Other drug	75	1.2
<b>Any drug use other than alcohol<sup>4</sup></b>	<b>2,781</b>	<b>44.4</b>

Adults in the  
general  
population  
(last 12 months)

10.4% (3 x  
higher)

2.5% (4 x  
higher)

1.4% (3 x  
higher)

14.0% reported that they  
struggled to manage  
their drug use or that  
it negatively impacted  
their daily life (higher  
among trans

Note: multiple responses were available thus percentages do not add up to 100.

# Alcohol and tobacco

use

(lesbian women)



- Drinking to problematic levels (more than 5 drinks on one occasion) 4 x higher among lesbian and bisexual women compared to heterosexual women



- Current smoking 3 x higher among lesbian and bisexual women compared to heterosexual women
- Similar rate (2.5 x higher) in the UK

# Experiences of homelessness



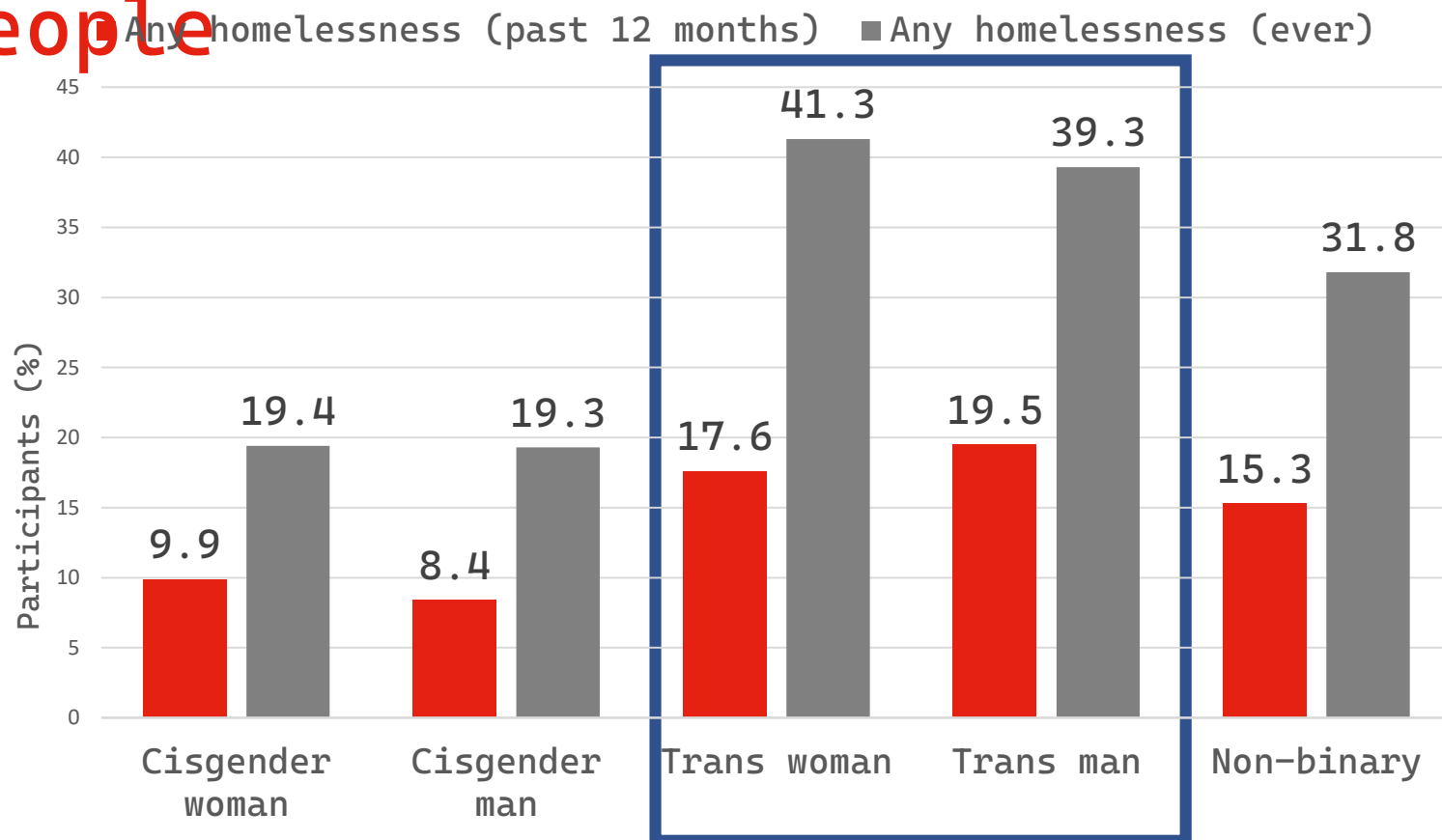


# Homelessness and housing insecurity –

## LGBTQ young people

Ethnicity	Number	Percentage %
Run away from home or the place you live	1,105	17.4
Left home or the place you live because you were asked/made to leave	667	10.5
Couch surfed because you had no other place to stay	423	6.7
Been homeless	260	4.1
One or more of the above	1,501	23.6

# Experiences of homelessness – LGBTQ young people



# Experiences of domestic violence



# Experiences of domestic violence

LGBTQ adults

- Q1. Have you ever been in an intimate relationship where you felt you were abused in some way by your partner/s?
- Q2. Have you ever felt you were abused in some way by a family member/s?

Domestic violence	N	%
No	3,788	55.5
Yes, once	1,864	27.3
Yes, more than 1 relationship	982	14.4
Don't know/not sure	186	2.7

More than four in ten  
(41.7%; n = 2,846) reported  
domestic violence

Family member	N	%
No	3,86	56.
Yes, by one family member	0	6
Yes, more than 1 family member	1,45	21.
Don't know/not sure	4	3
	1,17	17.
	5	2
	326	4.8

Almost four in ten  
(38.5%; n = 2,629) reported  
violence from a family  
member

# Experience of domestic violence



5.1%

of **heterosexual adults** had experienced domestic violence in the past 2 years



13.4%

of **LGBT adults** had experienced domestic violence in the past 2 years

Compared with the proportion in heterosexual, non-LGBTIQ+ adults, a significantly **higher** proportion of LGBTIQ+ adults had experienced:

- financial/economic abuse
- emotional/psychological abuse
- spiritual abuse
- physical abuse
- sexual abuse, or
- some other type of abuse.

Victorian Population Health Survey (2020)





Drivers of health  
disparities

## Transgender woman punched in the face in 'humiliating' Belfast attack

UTV | POLICE | Monday 19 October 2020, 8:22pm



2020

BBC Sign in Home News Sport Reel Worklife Travel

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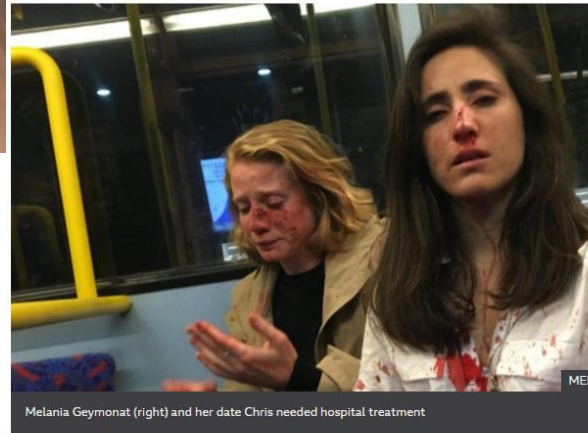
England | Regions | London

## London bus attack: Arrests after gay couple who refused to kiss beaten

7 June 2019



London violence



Melania Geymonat (right) and her date Chris needed hospital treatment

Two women say they were subjected to a homophobic attack and left covered in blood after refusing to kiss on a bus.

2019

# Experiences of physical

The New York Times

## Life Without Parole for Detroit Man Who Killed 2 Gay Men and a Transgender Woman

The victims were part of what the Human Rights Campaign has called an "epidemic of violence" against L.G.B.T.Q. people in the United States.



By Michael Levenson

July 1, 2020

A Detroit man who was convicted of killing two gay men and a transgender woman at a party last year was sentenced on Tuesday to three terms of life in prison without parole.

2020

# Fear of

# Experiences of bullying and



## 'Transphobic bullies nearly cost me my life'

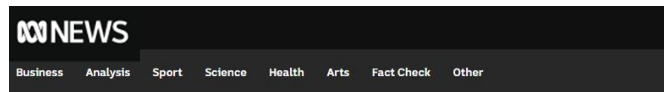
By Paul Murphy-Kasp  
Journalist, BBC London

27 October 2020



At the age of 15, Tyler tried to take his own life after he was teased and abused for being transgender.

2020



**LIVE BLOG** Follow our live coverage for the latest news on the coronavirus pandemic

## Tyrone Unsworth: Gay Brisbane schoolboy shared bullying torment with friend suicide

730 / By Michael Atkin

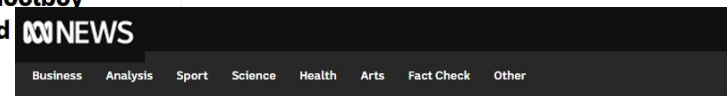
Posted Mon 5 Dec 2016 at 8:33pm, updated Tue 6 Dec 2016 at 1:39am



Bullies told gay teen to kill himself, friend says

Share   

2020



**LIVE BLOG** Follow our live coverage for the latest news on the coronavirus pandemic

## For some transgender students, the school bathroom is a battleground

By Jill Stark

Posted Sat 1 Apr 2017 at 9:13am, updated Tue 9 May 2017 at 11:57am



'I just remember them jeering at me,' transgender teen Georgie Stone recalls. (ABC News: Jackie Cohen)

Share   

2019

Fear of harassment or

# Experiences of violence based on LGBTQ identity- LGBTQ adults

Type of violence or harassment experienced in <u>last 12 months</u>	Number	%
Socially excluded	2,405	39.5
Verbal abuse	2,100	34.6
Harassment such as being spat at and offensive gestures	1,415	23.6
Received written threats of abuse via emails, social media	1,310	22.1
Threats of physical violence, physical attack or assault without a weapon	874	14.6
Sexual assault	698	11.8
Received written threats of abuse in other ways	661	11.4
Refusal of service	597	10.0
Refused employment/promotion	554	9.9
Physical attack or assault with a weapon	231	3.9
Other	166	2.9



# Experiences of violence based on LGBTQ identity- LGBTQ adults

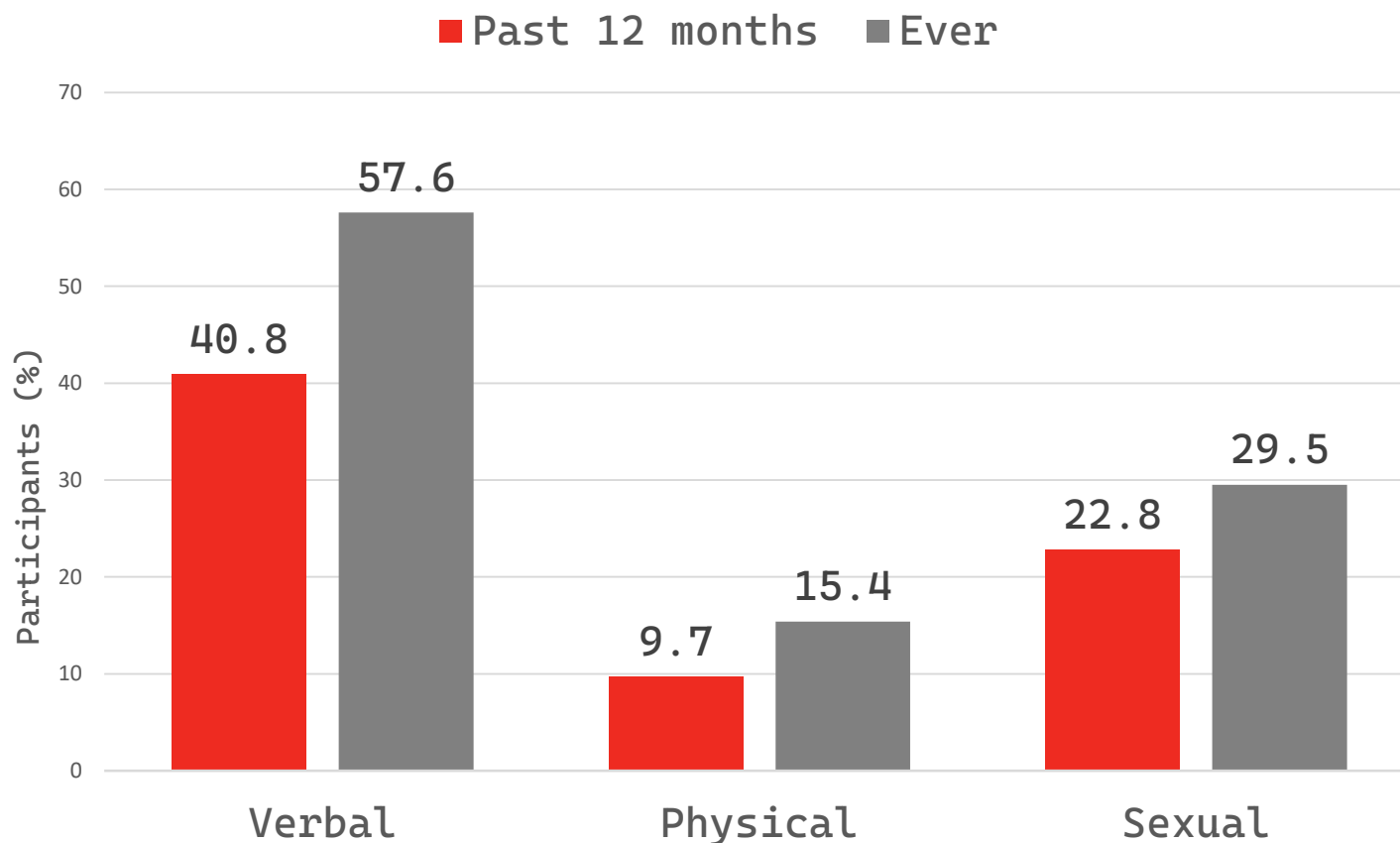
Type of violence or harassment experienced in last 12 months	Number	%
Socially excluded	166	39.5
Verbal abuse	148	34.6
Harassment	103	23.6
Received written threats of abuse in other ways	661	22.1
Threats of violence without a weapon	898	14.6
Sexual assault	898	11.8
Received written threats of abuse in other ways	661	11.4
Refusal of service	597	10.0
Refused employment/promotion	554	9.9
Physical attack or assault with a weapon	231	3.9
Other	166	21.9

People who had experienced abuse or harassment were:

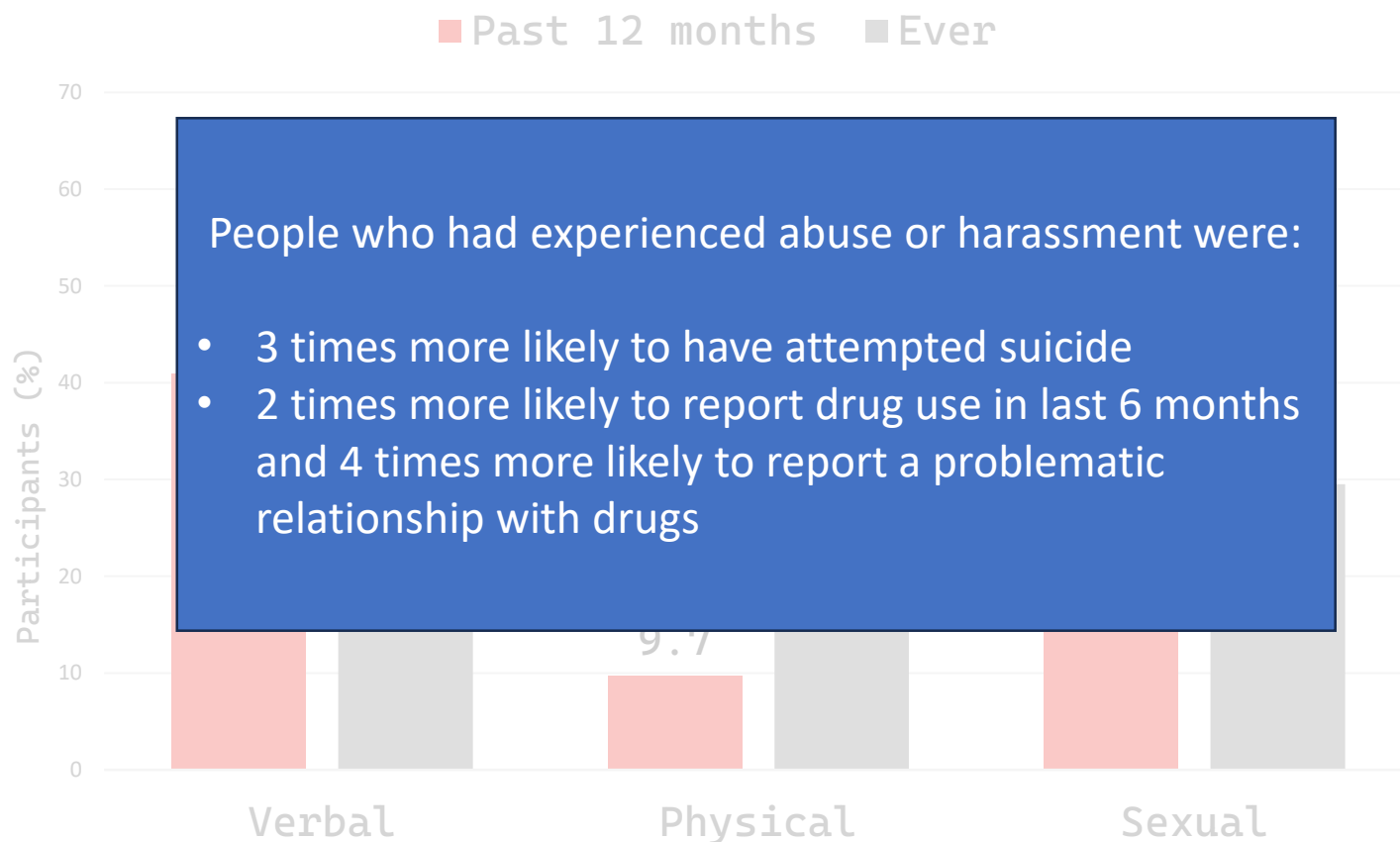
- 2 times more likely to have attempted suicide
- 3 times more likely to report a problematic relationship with alcohol or other drugs



# Experiences of Harassment based on LGBTQ identity – LGBTQ young people



# Experiences of Harassment based on LGBTQ identity – LGBTQ young people



# What helps ensure better health outcomes for LGBTQ people?

- LGBTQ young people who feel safe and supported at school to be LGBTQ are significantly less likely to report high psychological distress or attempt suicide
- LGBTQ young people who feel a part of the LGBTQ community and have LGBTQ friends/social networks are less likely to report attempting suicide
- LGBTQ young people who feel supported in their identity by family are less likely to experience homeless and less likely to have problem with using drugs
- LGBTQ adults who are connected to LGBTQ have better mental health outcomes
- LGBTQ adults who have disclosed their LGBTQ identity to their family, doctor (and felt supported when they did) are more likely to be engaged with appropriate healthcare services for mental health

Amos et al. (2023), Hill et al. (2022a), Hill et al. (2022b), Lyons et al. (2021)



How do we effectively  
promote positive change?

# How do we effect change?

## 1) Structural level

Policies and legislation

Media and the social environment

## 2) Organisational level

Creating culturally safe services

## 3) Individual level

How individuals and communities embrace diversity



# Recommendations

- Tackling upstream determinants of poor health
  - Realignment of health sector
  - Ensuring inclusivity in health and social care setting
  - Fostering support through families, allies & communities
  - Shaping educational settings
- Addressing stigma and violence directed towards LGBTQA+ communities and celebrating diversity
- Early intervention programs, provision of culturally safe services, resourcing of specialist and LGBTQA+ community controlled organisations
- Multi-sectoral partnerships to alleviate homelessness, access to culturally safe drug and alcohol services, enhanced provision of trans affirming care
- Enhancing opportunities for community connection, providing creative spaces for LGBTQA+ young people to affirm their identities; investing in family support
- Ensuring existence and promotion of LGBTQA+ anti-bullying policies, supporting safety at school, ensuring inclusivity



# References

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Hill AO, Lyons A, Jones J, McGowan I, Carman M, Parsons M, Power J, Bourne A (2021) Writing Themselves In 4: The health and wellbeing of LGBTQA+ young people in Australia. National Report, ARCSHS monograph series number 127. Melbourne: Australian Research Centre in Sex, Health and Society, La Trobe University.



Hill AO, Bourne A, McNair R, Carman M, Lyons A (2020) Private Lives 3: The health and wellbeing

# Further resources

Organisation	Role	Website
Australian Research Centre in Sex, Health and Society	LGBTQ health data – evidence for programs	<a href="http://www.latrobe.edu.au/arcsbs">www.latrobe.edu.au/arcsbs</a>
Rainbow Health Australia	Training and policy development for LGBTQ communities	<a href="http://www.rainbowhealthaustralia.com">www.rainbowhealthaustralia.com</a>
LGBTIQ+ Health Australia	Government policy, capacity building	<a href="http://www.lgbtiqhealth.com.au">www.lgbtiqhealth.com.au</a>
Thorne Harbour Health	Provides health services to LGBTQ communities	<a href="http://www.thorneharbour.org">www.thorneharbour.org</a>



Thank you

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