



LGBT+ Sport Volunteering: Insights from recent research

www.pridesports.org.uk

THE LARGEST AND FIRST INTERNATIONAL STUDY OF NEARLY 9500 GAY & STRAIGHT PEOPLE REVIEWED BY 7 INTERNATIONAL ACADEMICS

HOMOPHOBIA IN UK SPORT

www.outonthefields.com

77% OF PARTICIPANTS HAVE WITNESSED OR EXPERIENCED HOMOPHOBIA IN SPORT

85% BELIEVE AN OPENLY GAY PERSON WOULD NOT BE VERY SAFE AS A SPECTATOR AT A SPORTING EVENT

BELIEVE GAY PEOPLE ARE "NOT AT ALL ACCEPTED" OR "ACCEPTED A LITTLE" OR "MODERATELY ACCEPTED" IN SPORTING CULTURE

80%

Most believe sport is more homophobic than the rest of society

THE MOST LIKELY LOCATION OF HOMOPHOBIA IS SPECTATOR STANDS FOLLOWED BY SCHOOL PE CLASS

YOUTH SPORT (UNDER 22): MOST GAY PEOPLE PLAY TEAM SPORTS BUT...

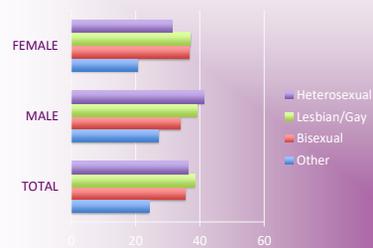
70%

BELIEVE YOUTH TEAM SPORT IS NOT SAFE FOR GAY PEOPLE

70% OF GAY MEN AND 73% OF LESBIANS

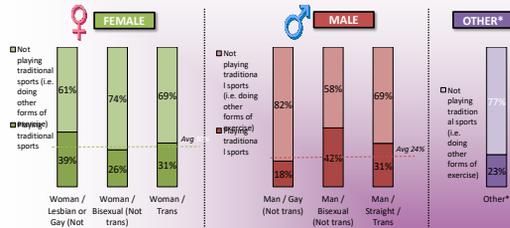
are completely or partially in the closet while playing youth sport. Many fear discrimination from players and officials

Active People Survey (2013 -2015)



Participation in 'traditional' competitive sports is low among LGBT+ groups, with a preference for other physical activities instead

What type(s) of sports have you done in the last 12 months?



Traditional sports includes: Badminton, basketball, bowls, cricket, football, golf, gymnastics, hockey, netball, rugby union, softball, squash, table tennis, tennis and athletics
Other sporting activities includes: Walking, boxing/boverice, climbing, cycling, fitness classes, gym sessions, running and swimming

LGBT+ Participation in Sport & Physical Activity



- LGBT+ more likely to feel intimidation and wrestle with guilt
- Lesbians, Bisexuals & Other feel the greatest level of intimidation and personally negative thoughts when thinking about health, exercise & fitness activities.
- Fewer LGBT+ groups are participating in Team Sports vs other sport types and definitely favour more solitary activities which do not have as many negative associations – particularly in the areas of intimidation, competitiveness & homo/bi/transphobia
- All LGBT+ groups describe secondary school sporting experiences very negatively – particularly Gay Males & Other. These same negative experiences in school can have a hugely destabilising impact on participation later in life

Other Factors



- **Mental health and wellbeing** is critical to an LGBT+ audience, 21% identified as having a mental health issue compared with Nat Rep 5%
- **Ultimate goal is greater inclusivity across all sports**
 - Raising awareness of what inclusivity is, building provider empathy and educating on the ingredients of a 'safe space' can help to build inclusivity across multiple sports.
 - Given the impact that early experiences have on shaping adult attitudes towards sport, it is worth considering a broader initiative to help facilitate greater inclusivity within schools
 - And yet for more **vulnerable audiences** there is still a real benefit to having a dedicated LGBT+ offer to maximise comfort and reassurance on safe space for sport – this can provide an effective bridge as they build confidence in their identity and sporting ability

"The reason I did that [volunteered] was purely that, and this is quite selfish, if you learn something knowing you've got to teach it to other people, then you learn it better"

"I came here, there was no gay [sports] club and I thought, "let's change that" and then one thing led to another. So, was I doing it for the community? Yes, I was doing it for the community, but I was also doing it for me"

"Before I began volunteering, it was mainly the practical reason of raising awareness. But as I began to run the events, I loved the space it gave for different communities to come together and engage in or talk about an activity that they loved. Sport, at its core, is amazing for doing that"

"What motivated me was the fact that I could see a massive gap for trans people and people had said they'd like to swim, including myself. Now it's that I can see how much it means to people – people who keep coming back and who look forward to it and people who come for the first time and say how amazing it is to be in the water again after years"

LGBT+ Motivations for volunteering

"I volunteer with a sports club I guess mostly for selfish reasons. It makes me feel much more part of the group/club/community than if I simply attend something. It allows me to have a say in how my environment is shaped and I can put my own stamp on something and shape the way the club is run. Needless to say, volunteering my time for others makes me happy - happy for the knowledge that my actions matter to others and make a difference to them. Volunteering my time makes me feel like I belong, it is great to work on a project with other volunteers and share the success or struggles"

Disincentives to volunteering for LGBT+ people

“The number of times I’d get asked “what did you do for your first wedding anniversary?”, “What did you get for Father’s Day?” it was just automatically assumed...[you were heterosexual]

“It took a long time to be accepted as a coach....I don’t think [the club] was homophobic to me, but I think that if I’d been a bloke, if I’d been English and had I been straight, it would have been easier”

“When I volunteered there was a culture of accepting negative attitudes because they are desperate for volunteers...While not always homophobic, I suppose the sort of language and tone of a 1990s PE teacher. So I have seen one laugh at someone for performing badly to the other extreme of making comments about a 15-year-old girl who had her hair cut short. It’s just a very old fashioned attitude that doesn’t attract new people or make anyone feel welcome”

Understanding LGBT+ Attitudes to volunteering in sport (Agile Consulting)

- Although the survey suggested people are more likely to be open about their sexuality or gender identity (80.41%), only half of respondents were ‘very comfortable’ with this.
- 43.6% of respondents had heard a coach or staff member ignoring homophobic language
- Negative experiences at school, college or university were seen to have a big impact, with 50.94% saying having better support for young people at school would have the biggest impact in driving more LGBT+ to volunteer.

Understanding LGBT+ Attitudes to volunteering in sport (Agile Consulting)

- Visibility of LGBT+ volunteers
- Visibility of LGBT+ policies/programmes
- Increased participation
- Openly supportive LGBT+ staff
- Increase LGBT+ content online

Good Practice Example

London 2012 Olympic & Paralympic Games

- LOCOG set a measure for success for LGBT inclusion at 5%-6% of the volunteer population and measured this
- Partner with 100 LGBT organisations and agreed action plans in relation to the promotion of volunteering opportunities at the Games.
- Internally, LGBT participation was valued; hosting guest speakers, establishing an LGBT staff network, providing training in unconscious bias for recruitment staff.

RESOURCES

lou@pridesports.org.uk
www.pridesports.org.uk
www.prideinsport.info
[@PrideSportsUK](https://twitter.com/PrideSportsUK)

<https://www.sportengland.org/media/11116/pride-sport-sport-physical-activity-and-lgbt-report-2016.pdf>

<http://www.outonthefields.com/media/>

<https://www.equality-network.org/our-work/policyandcampaign/out-for-sport/>

https://www.nus.org.uk/Global/Final%20Out%20in%20Sport_NEW_web.pdf

Pride Sports

LGBT Sports and equity

www.pridesports.org.uk