



COME OUT TO PLAY

The Sports experiences of Lesbian,
Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT)
people in Victoria

Caroline Symons

Melissa Sbaraglia

Lynne Hillier

Anne Mitchell





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Funded by Victoria University, VicHealth and Asia Pacific Outgames Legacy Fund.

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MAY 2010

ISBN **9781921377860**

Institute of Sport, Exercise and Active Living (ISEAL) and the School of Sport and Exercise at Victoria University.



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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Come Out To Play was funded by VicHealth, Victoria University and the Asia Pacific Outgames Legacy Fund. The study was conducted by Dr. Caroline Symons and Ms Melissa Sbaraglia from the School of Sport and Exercise and the Institute of Sport, Exercise and Active Living at Victoria University, and Associate Professor Anne Mitchell and Dr. Lynne Hillier from Gay and Lesbian Health Victoria and the Australian Research Centre in Sex, Health and Society, La Trobe University.

The community organisation Challenging Homophobia in Sport Initiative (CHISI), which is a sub-committee of Queer Sport Alliance Melbourne (QSAM), and is composed of representatives from Victoria University, Gay and Lesbian Health Victoria, Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission, the RJMTrust, Transgender Victoria and the ALSO Foundation played a central role in this research project. CHISI was involved in the original research design, funding submissions and consulted on survey design, key questions, language used and piloting of the survey. Many of those who helped with the development of the survey also assisted with recruiting participants through their networks.

Special mention should go to Dennis Hemphill, Jason Rostant, Kenton Miller, Daniel Witthaus, Sally Goldner, Jim Buckell, Malcolm Campbell, Chloe McCarthy, Rob Mitchell, and to Shelley Maher from VicHealth, for their most valuable input into a number of vital facets of this research project. Special thanks also go to Tim Spratling who built the survey for us in Demographix, and to Sunil Patel, who designed the survey recruitment cards and cover of this report.

We are especially indebted to the survey participants who shared their sporting experiences so generously with the project.

Published by the Institute of Sport, Exercise and Active Living and the School of Sport and Exercise Science at Victoria University

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GLOSSARY

Bisexual – people attracted to both sexes in varying degrees.

Gay – refers to men who have a primary sexual and romantic attraction to men, but it is also used by women as the way they identify their erotic and romantic attraction for the same-sex.

Lesbian – main term used by women who have primary sexual and romantic attraction to women.

Gender identity – the self-perception one has of their core identity being male, female, in between or fluid.

Heterosexism – the pervasive view within society that heterosexuality is the ‘normal’, even superior, sexual orientation and positions all other sexualities as a deviation from this ‘norm’.

Homophobia – prejudice, discrimination, harassment or violence based on a fear, distrust, dislike or hatred of someone who is lesbian, gay or bisexual. Homophobia can be verbal, physical or emotional harassment, insulting or degrading comments, name calling, gestures, taunts, insults or jokes, offensive graffiti, humiliating, excluding, tormenting, ridiculing or threatening, refusing to work or cooperate with others because of their sexual orientation or identity.

Mainstream sport – sports clubs, organisations and competitions that operate within the broader community. The membership of mainstream sport is from the broader community. The majority of the mainstream community clubs/organisations in the *Come Out To Play* research are affiliated with peak state, national and international sports bodies.

Physical activity – activities that require some physical exertions and or coordination, often resulting in fitness benefits.

Queer (identified) sport/clubs – sports clubs, organisations and competitions that have been founded by and organised for the LGBT community and whose membership base is predominantly LGBT.

Same-sex Attracted Youth (SSAY) – denotes young people (14 – 20 yrs) who have emotional and erotic attraction to their same-sex.

Sex – the duality of genetic male or female, however, even sex is more complex than common understandings. Sex involves a person’s genetic make-up, genital sex, gonadal and hormonal sex – all of which are also on continuums (not opposites).

Sexism – the belief or attitude that one gender or sex is inferior to, less competent, or less valuable than the other.

Sexual orientation – refers to the direction of a person’s erotic or sexual desire, often expressed on a continuum from exclusively heterosexual to exclusively homosexual.

Sport – ‘a range of activities that generally involves rules, physical exertion / coordination and competition between participants or environmental challenge’ (Lynch and Veal, 2006, p.22)

Transgender – people who live a gender identity which is ‘other’ or opposite to their birth (genetic, genital) sexed embodiment and correspondingly assigned gender identity. Transgender people may or may not seek surgery and hormonal treatment to bring their sex in line with their core gender identity.

Trans people – includes transgendered people and transsexuals.

Transsexual – a medical term for people who have undergone sex-realignment surgery (bringing their sexed embodiment – genitals, hormones, gonads, secondary sexual characteristics) in line with their core gender identity. Sex-realignment surgery is sometimes also referred to as gender affirmation surgery.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION

Despite extensive changes in social attitudes to lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) Australians over the last decade, research shows they still experience significant levels of discrimination and abuse. There is very little direct empirical research on the sport experience of LGBT Australians. Whilst other disadvantaged groups in the Australian sport context have been recognised in the research and policy agenda, the existence, experiences and needs of LGBT peoples within sport have largely been ignored. Both *implicit* discrimination that results from 'heteronormative' attitudes and *explicit* discrimination that causes LGBT sports-people to remain in the closet, become isolated and essentially silenced, have shaped a circle of silence on this topic. Sport plays a significant role in Australian society; however, it is a place where LGBT Australians are largely silent and invisible. *Come Out To Play* is the first comprehensive survey of the LGBT sport experience in Australia and provides rich insight through closed and open ended responses into the sporting lives, passions, rewards and challenges of these sports participants, supporters, volunteers and workers.

ABOUT THE PARTICIPANTS

Data were collected through an online survey open to Victorians over 18 who identified as LGBT. In all 307 responses were analysed. Approximately half the participants were male and 45% female with a small number (14) of transgender participants. The average age was 36 years with a range of 18 to 71 years. The sample had higher levels of education than the general community and the majority were in full-time employment.

SPORT AND PHYSICAL EDUCATION AT SCHOOL

Participants were asked to explain their experiences of sport and physical education at school in order to explore the issue of homophobia and sexism impacting on sports participation from an early age. There was a marked gender difference in the quality of these experiences with many more men than women reporting negative experiences of sport when at school. Although sexism in sport is commonly seen to be most damaging to women, the women participating in this study had more success in sport than the men, and this was a critical factor in shaping attitudes.

SPORT PARTICIPATION

Participants had been involved in a large variety of sports and physical activities in their lifetime with swimming, tennis, cycling and athletics being among the most popular. Only small numbers had no involvement in sport. Most participants could name a main sport in which they had been active participants. Involvement in team sports was more likely for women (63.3%) than men (44.7%). Most (84.0%) participants were involved in a mainstream club and were not generally out in that club- 46.0% were not out, 33.5% were out to some and 20.5% were out to all.

Sixteen percent of survey participants indicated that they were mainly involved in queer-identified sports clubs and organisations. Being involved in queer-identified sport clubs was seen to require a certain amount of confidence and self assurance, as members are not only coming into the gay sporting community, but also coming out as gay in the wider sport world. There were no negative responses found concerning queer-identified sports clubs in participant responses.

GENDER IN SPORT

Gender and sexuality are very strong organising features in society and their organising power is promulgated through language and behaviour. Being male or female brings with it expectations about how one should feel and act and there is little room for gender questioning. Similarly, sexuality is mostly coded as heterosexuality and there is little positive room for alternate sexualities. Generally, transgression from these norms around gender and sexuality is punished in sport, and particularly in team sport. Women were discouraged from playing sport by being called lesbians, insulted, sexually assaulted and told they could not play. Additionally women's teams found that they had to play a poor second to the men's teams in terms of resources and support.

Men had their gender and heterosexuality called into question when they played badly or to spur them on to a better performance. By definition, men who play badly cannot be heterosexual men – they must be sissies, girls, or they must be gay. The impact of being positioned in this way produced in the men feelings such as shame and hurt, and many left the sport because of it.

SEXUALITY IN SPORT

Within their own sporting teams, especially in traditional feminine teams or sports that were regarded as acceptable for women to play, some women suspected of being lesbian were singled out, shamed and excluded by other players. This had the effect of removing the lesbians and maintaining a heterosexual team. Where women played traditionally masculine team sports, whole teams of players were regarded as lesbian and were subjected to abuse regardless of individual participants' sexuality.

Men were significantly less likely to play team sport than women (45.0% versus 62.0%) because the abuse of men who were suspected of non- heterosexuality could be serious. Women who played traditionally masculine team sports were almost expected to be lesbian however, the idea that there might be a gay man on the men's team was unconscionable for other men. Team sports offer opportunities for intimacy and emotional expression that rarely exist outside the game. However this can only safely occur if all the men are believed to be heterosexual. It leaves gay men having two options, to pass as heterosexual or leave the game. Gay men who witnessed homophobic slurs and abuse became galvanised in their intentions to keep their same- sex attractions hidden. One finding of the research was that men in team sports were less likely to be out than those in individual team sports (55.0% versus 43.0%), clearly for protective reasons.

SPORTING CULTURES

There were other strong themes to emerge from the responses to the open-ended question encouraging participants to discuss the benefits, challenges, issues and experiences of being out or not out in their sport. Participants who were not out in their sport often described this environment as being unsafe, unpredictable, isolating and intimidating. More hostile environments were described by male participants than females, keeping them in the closet especially with team sports and some individual sports. The area of coaching sport was seen as particularly fraught with risk, as was sporting involvement in small rural towns.

The main themes to emerge from the responses of those who were out to all in their sport were also instructive, as they provide evidence of the main individual and social facilitators of open and inclusive sports environment for LGBT members. These facilitators were similar for male and female participants and include: confidence in, and positive self esteem concerning ones sexual and sporting identity, having a number of LGBT people out in the sports club to provide affirmation and support for other LGBT people, and a friendly and supportive club environment for all members.

DISCRIMINATION IN SPORT

Forty two percent of participants experienced verbal homophobia at some time during their involvement in sport. Approximately 87.0% of participants reported that their experience of verbal homophobia affected them in some way. Female participants reported more of this abuse than male and transgender participants (54.6%, 29.2% and 25.0% respectively). Eight (3.0%) participants (5 males and 3 females) reported an experience of physical homophobic assault at some time during their involvement in sport.

The majority of participants did nothing about homophobic abuse in order to prevent it escalating which meant homophobia went unchallenged. Of those who did nothing, the main emotions attached to the experience of abuse were embarrassment, shame and self-loathing focussing inward. The 16.0% of participants who confronted the abuse felt offended and angry, but importantly, focussed the feelings on the abuser.

Sexism was experienced by 42.7% of participants, more commonly female participants, and particularly by the transgender participants. Half of the participants reported that they did nothing, and only 16.7% of participants reported the sexist behaviour.

TRANSGENDER EXPERIENCES IN SPORT

Twelve participants identified as transgender. A further two participants, although identifying as male and female, were also transgender. *Come Out To Play* is the first study to examine the sporting experiences of transgender people in Australia. While this number may appear low, the transgender population is both small and difficult to access. Acknowledging the sample size, the results do provide an important initial insight into the sporting experiences and challenges of transgender Victorians. A number of participants indicated their difficulty with the two sexed/gendered sports model in many of their responses. They also highlighted general ignorance and prejudice concerning transgender issues within many of the sporting communities they had been involved in, experiences of discrimination based on this ignorance and prejudice, a lack of policies to enable their participation in sport, concerns with using change rooms, and being accepted and fitting in.

BENEFITS OF SPORT

Thirty five percent of participants identified health and fitness as the main reason for participation in sport and physical activity. This was followed by social interaction/friendship (24.1%) and enjoyment (14.1%). Similarly, the Australian population reports health and fitness as the main reason for engaging in physical activity. However enjoyment was ranked second, followed by wellbeing, and then social or family reasons. These data suggests that LGBT people value social interaction from sport and physical activity more than the general Australian population.

Participants were invited to describe one of the very best experiences they have had in sport. It was clear from their responses that participants gained a lot from their involvement in sport. Main themes included personal accomplishment; being part of a team; winning; participating in queer sporting teams; competing in the Gay Games and Outgames; being accepted for who they are; and making a positive contribution to sport and the LGBT community.

EXCLUSIONS FROM SPORT

Participants were asked if there are any sports they would like to play but don't because of their sexuality. The results show that 26.0% of male participants and 9.9% of female participants reported there were sports they would like to play but did not because of their sexuality. 58.3% of the transgender participants reported that there are sports they would like to play but don't, and this was due to gender identity rather than sexual identity. The most common sport male participants would like to play is Australian football (45.0%), followed by rugby (17.5%), soccer (10.0%), swimming (7.5%), lawn bowls (5.0%) and netball (5.0%). The most common sport female participants would like to play is also Australian football (42.9%), followed by synchronised swimming (14.3%) and dancing (14.3%). Women were excluded on two fronts – according to their gender and sexuality. Transgender participants identified a number of ways in which they were excluded associated with their gender identity, and the more rigid and traditional interpretations and organisation of gender in sport.

SAFE, WELCOMING AND INCLUSIVE SPORT POLICIES

In Australia, Federal and State equal opportunity, anti-harassment and discrimination laws apply to sport. Under the Victorian Equal Opportunity Act (1995) it is unlawful to discriminate against someone in sport, or vilify or harass them because of sex, gender identity and sexual orientation. The law applies to sports participants, administrators, managers, officials, coaches, trainers and volunteers. The majority of participants (87.0%) from queer sporting clubs reported that their clubs had policies that promote the safety and inclusion of LGBT people. However only 12.1% of participants from mainstream clubs reported that their clubs had such policies, and many more were unsure. Queer clubs were also far more likely to make members aware of such policies than were mainstream clubs.

A similar picture emerged in relation to anti-discrimination policies which were more common in queer sporting clubs, and more widely promoted. However both mainstream and queer clubs were seen to be similarly welcoming to all genders, all ethnicities, people with disabilities, and heterosexual people. The majority of queer clubs were seen to be more welcoming in the area of gender (male /female) and ethnicity, as well as for heterosexual members, than mainstream clubs were of non-heterosexuals and transgender participants.

Creating welcoming and inclusive sports club environments involves the implementation of member protection policies and more importantly, supportive and friendly leadership and membership that values diversity and respect for all. This goes well beyond legal compliance and underlines the essential spirit of the Victorian Code of Conduct for Community Sport.

CONCLUSION

Sports participation is valued by governments, human rights and health promotion agencies, and community members for a number of important reasons. These include; the engagement of people of all ages in mental and physical health-promoting sporting activity; the provision and support of opportunities for people to gain enjoyment, express themselves and their talents, and achieve to the best of their ability in their sporting pursuits and passions; the building of a strong and healthy national identity through high-performance sports successes; and the promotion of equality, social cohesion and inclusion in Australian society through engagement in sport. The report concludes with a series of recommendations to improve access to participation for all Victorians.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS

- The main benefits LGBT respondents identified from their sports involvement were: health and fitness (35.0%), social interaction and friendships (24.0%) and enjoyment (14.1%).
- The main themes to emerge from respondents' best sports experiences were: personal accomplishments including achieving personal and sports based goals, improving existing skills and learning new skills, as well as the sense of belonging, sharing of success, and the camaraderie of being part of a team.
- Nearly half (46.0%) of respondents involved in mainstream sport were NOT OUT as LGBT to anyone.
- 33.0% of respondents were OUT to some and 21.0% were OUT to all
- The main reasons for not being out included: Being unsure of sexuality (age), fear of being judged, harassed, discriminated against, abused, physically assaulted, not feeling safe.
- The relationship between male participation in mainstream competitive sport and being out was examined. The relationship between these variables was significant ($p < .01$). Males involved in team sport are less likely to be out than those involved in individual sport.
- The relationship between gender and type of sport played was found to be significant ($p = .01$). Females are more likely to be involved in team sport and males are more likely to be involved in individual sport.
- 41.5 % of respondents reported experiencing verbal homophobia at sometime during their sports involvement.
- Of those experiencing verbal homophobia 57.6% reported experiencing this often and 2.4% reported to always experiencing this homophobia in their sporting context.
- More females (54.6%) than male (29.2%) or transgender (25.0%) respondents reported verbal homophobia.
- 86.8% of respondents said that this experience of discrimination affected them in some way.
- 42.7% of respondents had experienced sexism at some time during their sports involvement, and of these 72.9% reported experiencing this kind of discrimination often and a further 8.5% always.
- Transgender sports participants reported experiencing the most sexism, followed by females and then males.
- 26.0% of males and 9.9% of females reported there were sports that they would like to play but did not because of their sexuality, and 58.3% of transgender respondents reported there were sports that they did not play because of their gender identity.
- The most common sports males would like to play but did not / could not – was Australian Rules Football (45.0%), rugby (17.5%) and soccer (10.0%). Females wanted to play AFL (42.9%), synchronised swimming (14.3%) and dancing (14.3%).
- 97.3% of participants from queer clubs reported their club to be welcoming to very welcoming of non-heterosexual people and 78.3% reported that their club was either very welcoming or welcoming to heterosexual people. 50.0% of participants from mainstream clubs reported their club to be welcoming to very welcoming of non-heterosexual people.
- 29.4% of participants from mainstream clubs reported that their club was either unwelcoming or very unwelcoming to transgender people. 4.7 % of participants from queer-identified clubs indicating that their club was either unwelcoming or very unwelcoming of transgender people.

INTRODUCTION

It is generally understood that approximately 8-11% of young people in Australia are not unequivocally heterosexual (Hillier et al., 1998; Lindsay, Smith and Rosenthal, 1997). In a recent survey of Australian men and women aged 16 to 59, 3% of people identified as gay, lesbian or bisexual (Smith, Agius, Dyson, Mitchell and Pitts, 2003). In the same study, a total of 15% of the respondents had had sex with someone of the same sex, or felt sexually attracted to someone of the same sex.

Over the past two decades, Australian society has experienced a period of great social change that promises to revolutionise the lives of people who are same-sex attracted by reducing homophobia and ameliorating the negative health impacts that homophobic abuse has traditionally had on their lives. For example, laws that criminalised sexual activity between men have been repealed and more recently discriminatory laws which disadvantaged same sex couples have been removed in federal and state law. Moreover, we have witnessed an upsurge in positive gay and lesbian visibility in the media and there are many high profile Australians who are 'out and proud.' Ex High court judge Michael Kirby and leader of the Greens Party Bob Brown are two examples. More recently and of particular relevance to this report is the public 'coming out' of former Olympic swimming champion Daniel Kowalski. From 2008 same-sex couples and their children have most of the same rights as opposite-sex de facto couples in Australia and lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) peoples are protected by anti-discrimination and equal opportunity legislation within each Australian state and Territory. However, laws in themselves do not eliminate discrimination or prejudicial attitudes.

There is a great deal of research indicating that LGBT Australians experience significant levels of discrimination and abuse. In one of the most extensive studies investigating the health and wellbeing of LGBT Australian's aged 16 to 92 years old, Pitts, Smith, Mitchell and Patel (2006) found significant levels of discrimination and abuse. Recent research of same-sex attracted young people (14-22 years old) living in Australia indicated regular abuse and discrimination (46% had been verbally abused and 13% physically abused) which had considerable negative impact on their health and wellbeing (Hillier, Turner and Mitchell, 2005).

There is very little direct empirical research on the sport experience of LGBT people in Australia. Whilst other disadvantaged groups in the Australian sport context (i.e. girls and women, people with disabilities, Indigenous Australians and ethnic minorities) have been recognised in the sport research and policy agenda, the existence, experiences and needs of LGBT peoples within sport has largely been ignored. Both *implicit* discrimination that results from 'heteronormative' attitudes¹ and *explicit* discrimination that causes LGBT sports-people to remain in the closet, become isolated and essentially silenced, have shaped a circle of silence on this topic. Research from the UK, Europe and North America identifies discrimination against LGBT peoples in sport, affecting their sports participation, enjoyment, performances, social inclusion and general wellbeing. Same-sex attracted young people (SSAY) are particularly affected. Sport is recognised as a vital social institution, bringing people together, promoting health and providing important opportunities for the demonstration and celebration of sporting talent and achievement. Sport plays a significant role in Australian society, however, it is a place where LGBT Australians are largely silent and invisible.

¹ Attitudes that view heterosexuality as the 'normal' sexual orientation and positions all other sexualities as a deviation from this 'norm'.

Come Out To Play is the first comprehensive survey of the LGBT sport experience in Australia and provides rich insight through closed and open ended responses into the sporting lives, passions, rewards and challenges of these sports participants, supporters, volunteers and workers.

LITERATURE REVIEW

HEALTH, WELLBEING AND DISCRIMINATION

Young people from the ages of 15 to 24 are the main participants of organised sport in Victoria, with 66.7% of young men and 59.5% of young women being members of sporting clubs and organisations (Australian Sports Commission, 2009). These years constitute the important formative and most active years of a person's sporting life. Research on SSAY in Australia indicates that while many feel good about their sexuality, large percentages experience regular abuse and discrimination that has an adverse impact on their health and well-being. In a survey involving 750 males and females, aged 14-21 from across Australia, Hillier et al. (1998) found that nearly 33% believed they were unfairly treated or discriminated against because of their sexuality; 44% had been verbally abused and 16% physically abused, with school and sport events identified as the prime sites of this abuse. Respondents indicated that abuse had a profound effect on health and well-being. While 33% of respondents did not suffer abuse because they kept their sexual identity hidden, most monitored their behaviour closely out of fear of being outed and subjected to abuse.

In a follow-up study Hillier et al. (2005) found that while an increasing number of respondents (74%) felt good about their sexuality, nearly 38% felt unfairly treated or discriminated against because of sexuality (compared to 33% in 1998); 46% had been verbally abused (compared to 44% in 1998); 13% physically abused (compared to 16% in 1998). 74% reported school as the prime site of abuse, and sport was once again identified as the next most unsafe environment for these young people. Those abused fared worse on every indicator of health and well-being, and were more inclined to self-harming behaviours.

A survey to assess hostilities toward gay men and lesbians undertaken by the Attorney General's Department of New South Wales (2003), involved 600 men and women, aged 20-40 years, including gay men and lesbians from Indigenous, Asian, Middle Eastern and western suburbs (Sydney) backgrounds. Results showed that 85% of respondents had experienced harassment or violence at some time; 75% reported changing behaviour to avoid homophobic harassment; and 50% reported negative impacts ranging from stress and anxiety to isolation and depression.

Private Lives (Pitts et al., 2006) was one of the most extensive studies done on the health and wellbeing of LGBT individuals living in Australia. In a survey of over 5000 people, aged 16-92, Pitts et al. (2006) showed that young people fared worse than their older counterparts on several measures of health and well-being. Sixty-seven percent of participants indicated that fear of prejudice and discrimination caused them to modify their behaviour in particular environments to avoid disclosing their sexual identity, a situation found to be more common for younger participants and in rural areas. Verbal abuse was more prevalent in urban areas, while threats of violence or physical attack were more apparent in rural areas. The self-reported health status of participants was worse for younger people compared to the general Australian population, and the prevalence of depression related conditions (49% of men; 44% of women), including suicidal thoughts, was higher among younger than older participants in the study.

This literature presents a troubling picture of the lives and health of LGBT people in Australian society. It is also concerning that schools are identified as a prime site for homophobic discrimination. Sport was identified as a common site of discrimination, suggesting that Australian sport is not the 'great equalizer' that it is often made out to be.

GENDER, SEXUALITY AND SPORT

Sports, especially those involving the demonstration of strength, power, speed and combat are still considered the central shapers of dominant masculinity in present-day western society. Formal sporting activities were developed in the nineteenth century as training grounds and celebratory public arenas for dominant forms of heterosexual masculinity. Sport is predominantly a sex-segregated social institution based on conventional gender divisions and heterosexuality as a central organising principle (Kolnes, 1995). Other cultural spheres such as music, theatre and literature do not have these rigid divisions and allow more freedom for LGBT peoples to express themselves and work in these fields.

According to Rowe and McKay (1998), the sports that are all-pervasive in contemporary society and especially the media “can be viewed as one of the most significant social institutions for defining preferred and disparaged forms of masculinity and femininity, instructing boys and men in the “art” of making certain kinds of men” (p. 118). Sport provides us with the most public displays of physical prowess, and has become a strong and lasting symbol of an all-pervasive and dominant masculinity because it “literally embodies the seemingly natural superiority of men over women” (Rowe and McKay, 1998, p. 118). Homophobia runs deep in the social worlds of the most valorised masculine team sports, where homosocial² affection and solidarity is central and it is very difficult to be different.

In over 30 in-depth interviews with gay sportsmen involved in the international Gay Games, Symons (2002) found that over half indicated they had significantly alienating experiences of sport during childhood and adolescence that put them off participating until the advent of gay sport organisations and events. Woog (1998) found that 28 gay sportsmen from the United States he interviewed for his book *Jocks* experienced significant homophobia in their mainstream sports careers, and were challenged by their efforts to combine a gay identity with an athletic identity. More recently, Andersen (2005) documents the significant challenges faced by elite and professional gay sportsmen within the US in his influential book *In The Game*. He asserts that men’s team sports in particular are “steadfast in their production of conservative gender orthodoxy” and institutionalised homophobia (p. 65). English Football Association Chief Executive Ben Summerskill states in his introduction to the report on the nature and extent of homophobia within soccer:

This pioneering research...including a YouGov survey of 2,000 fans and interviews with football insiders, shows clearly that ant-gay abuse is all too common on both the terraces and pitches and that this abuse almost always goes unchallenged. Fans believe that it is this abuse from fans, players and teammates that deters gay people from playing football, and creates a culture of fear where gay players feel it is unsafe to come out (Dick, 2009, p. 3).

Accounts from professional gay-male football players who have come out in retirement reveal the main pressures that have kept them in the closet, and maintained a culture of silence on homosexual players in their sport. Retired National football League (NFL) player Esera Tuaolo revealed these pressures as potential violence, de-selection, questions about team cohesion and hyper-masculine image-making of individual players:

² Homosocial is the nonsexual bonding of men with men and women with women. Homosociality manifests itself in everything from sports through to the military. “*Although homosocial relationships are not sexual, there often is an element of homoeroticism in them, even when it is expressed in heterosexual activities*” (from <http://www.LGBTq.com/glossary.php?id=13>)

The one thing I could never do was talk about it. Never. No one in the NFL wanted to hear it, and if anyone did hear it, that would be the end of it for me. I'd wind up cut or injured. I was sure that if the manager didn't get rid of me for the sake of the team, another player would intentionally hurt me, to keep up the image (cited in Freeman, 2003, p.53.).

The first publically gay professional soccer player in the Netherlands – one of the most inclusive countries in the world for gays and lesbians – who waited until his retirement to 'come out' described the very 'macho' and heterosexual context of his sport experience:

The soccer world is a heterosexual world. Macho behaviour and women predominate. Whenever soccer players are together they get vulgar, they talk about women and having sex. As a young boy I felt uncertain in this context. That's why I didn't want my fellow players to know it. Eight hours a day I passed. I couldn't do anything else (cited in Ellings, 1998, p. 6).

This experience is telling in an Australian context where there are no Australian Rules Football players or cricketers who have publicly revealed their homosexuality and evidence of footballers' heterosexuality is everywhere. It is difficult to imagine in the current environment that an 'out' gay footballer could win the Brownlow and lovingly acknowledge his male partner in his acceptance speech.

One of the very few gay male professional team sportsmen to 'come out' during his career was Australian Rugby League player Ian Roberts. He found the closet far too destructive and publicly announced his homosexuality in 1995. This was during the last three years of his illustrious twelve-year sports career. His biography documents the widespread homophobic abuse and misogyny of the rugby culture (Freeman, 1997). No gay players have followed in his footsteps within Australia. Tom Waddell, the founder of the international Gay Games, used his elite sporting career in tough manly sports such as American football and the decathlon as his personal closet up until he came out in San Francisco during the 1970s. Playing football and passing as straight was how Waddell did heterosexuality (Waddell and Schaap, 1996). Gay men have found a safe and welcoming environment to engage in sport through the emergence of gay sports organisations and the Gay Games (Symons, 2007).

The individual and more aesthetic sports such as diving have been more inclusive of gay sportsmen. Australia was only one of two nations to have an 'out' gay male athlete on its' Beijing Olympic team. Matthew Mitcham performed the highest scoring dive at any Olympics, won gold and went on to receive the Australian Athlete of the Year Award. His positive Olympic sport experience as a gay man, whilst a singular story so far, is a promising one for gay and lesbian sportspeople in Australia. In April 2010, Olympic champion Daniel Kowalski 'came out' – seven years after his retirement from swimming.

Sportswomen contest the gender order of sport through political activism and leadership in sports organisations, passionate participation, masculinisation and sheer athleticism (Hargreaves, 1994, 2000; Lenskyj, 2003). Outstanding sportswomen Martina Navratilova, Amelie Mauresmo and Dawn Fraser can be revered principally for their sporting achievements – although these world champions have had to battle issues around 'appropriate femininity' and sexuality. Sportswomen often receive the greatest accolades and commercial endorsements when they affirm their heterosexiness along with their sporting prowess (Griffin, 1998; Lenskyj, Hemphill and Symons, 2002; Choi, 2000). By being involved in the masculine territory of sports that emphasise strength, power and masculinity, women administrators, coaches and athletes, of all sexual orientations must continually prove their femininity to avoid being labelled as butch or lesbian (Griffin, 1998). Sportswomen are also involved in an ongoing struggle to gain a measure of parity in recognition, funding, facility provision,

leadership, management and coaching positions, sponsorship and media coverage in the world of sport (Hargreaves, 1994, 2000; Messner, 2002; Crawford Report, 2009).

Demers (2006) conducted interviews with lesbian coaches and athletes in Canada, and found that the team environment was relatively open for lesbians. Team mates were tolerant and accepting as long as the visibility of lesbian team members was not made public. Such visibility was controlled because of the perception that lesbians could tarnish the team's image and reputation (Demers, 2006). However, heterosexualising female teams and players through feminine dress codes and behaviour, and the production of heterosexy calendars, reinforce traditional images of gender and sexuality in women's sport.

Leading Canadian and US organisations (Canadian Association for the Advancement of Women and Sport and Physical Activity (CAAWS) and the Women's Sport Foundation) working for the advancement of women and girls in sport appreciate the contributions lesbian sportswomen have made to sport and advocate that it is homophobia and not lesbianism that is the problem in women's sport. They recognise the damaging effects of homophobia and how this acts to drive down participation of all girls and women in sport:

Homophobia – or the fear and hatred of homosexuals – is often an obstacle to participation in sport among all groups: women and men, young and old, homosexual and heterosexual. In particular, many girls and women shy away from sport out of fear they will be perceived as lesbians. CAAWS feels that addressing the issue of homophobia in sport is very timely given Canada's inclusive stance on minority rights as well as the Canadian sport system's overall strategy of making the sport environment, and the sport experience, safe and welcoming (CAAWS, 2006).

The politics of homophobia in mainstream sport is damaging to all involved, particularly for young people during their formative years of sport involvement. In an extensive review of qualitative research within the UK, North America and Europe, Brackenridge, Rivers, Gough and Llewellyn (2006) concluded that homophobic bullying:

....is used as a weapon to enforce conformity to a hypermasculine sporting ideal and to vilify those (boys) who deviate from it. For girls, homophobic bullying is used as a weapon to discourage sporting engagement and achievement. In both cases, the government's aim to 'drive up' participation is thwarted (p. 138).

Homophobic abuse is recognised as different from other types of bullying and discrimination. According to Hillier and Mitchell (2005), "the impacts are likely to be greater and the interventions more difficult to put in place". The four main reasons elucidated by Hillier and Mitchell (2005) can also be applied in the sport setting:

1. *'There has been broad historical, institutional backing for homophobic beliefs'*. Whilst psychiatry, psychology and the law have officially changed their positions and no longer deem homosexuality as criminal behaviour or as a mental illness, homophobia is still enshrined in more fundamentalist Christian belief systems.
2. *'It is harder to challenge homophobic abuse than other bullying such as that based on gender or race'*. There appears to still be a double standard in regard to teachers (or coaches, sport managers officials) ignoring homophobia whilst clamping down on sexist and racist comments and behaviour. Teachers need to be backed up by school (and sport) policies and support that effectively challenge homophobic abuse or they can risk being stigmatised. This can also be

applied to the sports context. Courageous leadership, anti-discrimination policy and support are required.

3. *'It is more difficult for young people to access help'*: Parents, family members and friends may not be a source of support as the disclosure of the young persons sexual orientation may result in rejection, leaving the young person alone and isolated.

4. *'The alienation from homophobic bullying is likely to be more absolute'*: Whilst other minority group members can share their difficulties and gain solidarity and support, same-sex attracted and gender-questioning youth (SSAGQY) often live in fear of rejection from their family and find it difficult to access such support. Rural SSAGQY are even more isolated and in need of support. Hillier and Mitchell conclude with the observation that 'naming homophobic bullying' specifically, rather than subsuming this form of abuse with other forms of harassment and bullying (generic) is an important first step in dealing with the problem.

HOMOPHOBIA AND THE ELITE ATHLETE

LGB³ athletes face many challenges as a result of their sexual orientation. Some of these challenges include:

- confronting homophobia;
- the process of staying in the 'closet' and/or 'coming out' and;
- the effect these issues have on their sporting performance (Martens and Mobley, 2005).

Athletic performance has been described by Martens and Mobley (2005) as involving deep personal significance to the athlete encompassing factors such as worth, identity and acceptance. Issues surrounding sexual orientation in Australian elite sport have implications for the health and performance of the LGB athlete, and the performance of their team, coaches and the sporting organisation as a whole.

LGB athletes at all levels experience homophobia in several ways. It can be verbal, physical or emotional harassment, insulting or degrading comments, name calling, gestures, taunts, insults or jokes, offensive graffiti, humiliation, exclusion, torments, ridicule, threats, or refusing to work or cooperate with others because of their sexual orientation or identity. LGB athletes respond to homophobia in different ways. In a review of sexual orientation in sport conducted for SportScotland, three strategies used by athletes to deal with homophobia were identified; resistance, accommodation and appropriation (Brackenridge, Alldred, Jarvis, Maddocks and Rivers, 2008). *Resistance* is defined by taking appropriate measures to stop the homophobic behaviour. However, in elite sport, LGB athletes are not likely to take action against homophobia for fear of punishment, de-selection and if they receive significant sponsorship and or financial reward (pay, endorsements etc), the fear of losing potential and real earnings (Brackenridge et al., 2008). When an LGB athlete chooses not to deal with homophobia and remain in the closet, it is called accommodation. Accommodation creates many problems for the LGB athlete (Brackenridge et al., 2008).

LGB athletes may go to extreme lengths to conceal their sexuality. Some athletes attempt to separate their personal life from their sporting life and avoid conversation about their families, partners and social activities. This strategy eventually leads to dishonesty and compromises the relationship between the LGB athlete, their teammates and coaches. The effort of the LGB athlete to

³ This section concentrates on LGB athletes and issues around sexual orientation. The challenges faced by transgender sportspeople in discussed in the 'Transgender Experiences in Sport' on pp. 55-58 of the report.

conceal his or her sexual orientation also diverts their attention away from their training and the sport, ultimately leading to a decrease in performance (Martens and Mobley, 2005; Brackenridge et al., 2008). In very recent articles that appeared in *The Age* newspaper, Olympic swimming champion Daniel Kowalski discussed the significant challenges he experienced due to his sexuality during his illustrious sporting career, including his suppression of being gay, the negative feelings he held about himself and his sexuality, significant anxiety about being exposed and on retirement 'coming out', the isolation and loneliness of living in the 'closet', and the impact these stresses had on his confidence and competitive edge (Bradley, 2010; Kowalski, 2010).

The emotional consequences of continually hiding one's homosexuality are significant and one must question the effect this has on the mental health of the athlete. LGB people experience higher rates of depression, more depressive symptoms, and poorer mental health compared to heterosexual people (Corboz et al., 2008). In extreme cases, LGB athletes have even committed suicide. Justin Fashanu an English soccer player committed suicide in 1998 after coming out eight years previously (Brackenridge et al., 2008).

Very few Australian LGB elite athletes are open about their sexuality. These LGB athletes use accommodation as a strategy to deal with their sexuality, despite the negative effects this has on their health and athletic performance. LGB athletes will remain in the closet at all costs because they perceive the environment around them to be unsafe. According to Brackenridge et al. (2008) an LGB athlete is less likely to be open about their sexuality when;

- there is a history of gender exclusion or, previous bad/inequitable experiences,
- there is an organisational culture that is hostile to LGBT issues (see Hostile climate below),
- they have temporary athletic status (especially for those at elite level),
- there are no visible LGB senior athletes,
- there is a lack of respect for privacy,
- fundamentalist anti-gay religious attitudes are openly expressed by peers,
- they have fears about selection and/or
- their performance success and credibility are not well established.

Further research is necessary to identify which of the above factors are present within Australian sport, particularly at the elite and professional levels. This will break the silence of homophobia in sport and allow for recommendations that create a safer environment for LGB athletes.

SOCIAL CLIMATES FOR THE SPORTING CONTEXT

Griffin (1998) developed a continuum of social climates (i.e. hostile, conditionally tolerant, and open and inclusive) for LGBT sports participants and workers in sports organisations. The continuum describes a variety of sports contexts; individual, team, club and league. These climates are not formalised, rather they develop out of day-to-day social practices. They are not set in concrete – all the elements of a particular climate may not be present, and elements of one climate may exist alongside the main elements of another climate within the same sporting organisation.

While these climates have been developed from research of the lesbian sport experience in the US they can be adapted for the Australian sports context (Symons and Hemphill, 2005, pp. 20-21). Symons has added a fourth climate taking into account the positive and affirming environment created by LGBT sports organisations and events (termed queer-identified sports clubs/events in this report). The climates provide a useful guide to the experiences and challenges facing LGBT sports participants and workers (i.e. volunteers, officials, coaches and managers). The key characteristics of each climate are summarised below:

Hostile Sporting Climate for LGBT people

- An organisation's non-discrimination / harassment / inclusion / member protection policies do not include sexual orientation and/or gender identity.
- Talk about homosexuality / LGBT issues is non-existent or negative.
- It may not be safe to 'come out' as LGBT due to possible abuse, threats, exclusion, ostracism, even violence.
- No one in the sport has publicly affirmed that they are LGB. Please note numerous transgender people wish to be identified as the gender they live rather than as transgender people. Being 'out' as transgender is different from being 'out' as a LGB person.
- Advocates for the inclusion LGBT people are often assumed to be gay or teased about being gay, and consequently have their perspective dismissed or silenced.
- Discrimination against LGBT sports workers exists in selection and career development processes of the sport.
- LGB sports participants or workers would never bring a same-sex date or partner to team/club social events.
- LGBT sports participants or those thought to be are avoided, isolated or harassed by teammates or coaches.
- Officials assure parents of athletes that no LGBT athletes or coaches are tolerated in the sport.
- Anti-gay sledging is commonly used by players as well as spectators to denigrate sporting performance and / or a sports person's character and gender.
- Everyone within the club / team is assumed to be heterosexual.
- A common belief is that all male coaches and athletes are heterosexual (especially in the traditionally 'masculine' sports), and that all female coaches and athletes are lesbian (especially in the traditionally 'masculine' sports).

Conditionally Tolerant Sporting Climate for LGBT people

- An organisation's non-discrimination / harassment / inclusion / member protection policies include sexual orientation and gender identity but few are aware of them and there is no direct connection between policies and programming or practice.
- Administrators allow individual coaches or teams to address LGBT issues, but prefer that it be done privately.
- People believe that LGBT issues are only relevant to LGBT people.
- LGBT sports participants and workers are expected to keep their visibility to a minimum in their sport. They are tolerated and can be included and supported within the team / sport environment as long as their visibility is kept as low as possible.
- Female athletes are encouraged to dress and comport themselves 'appropriately' (i.e., heterosexy dress, makeup, calendars – especially the case with elite female athletes and teams where the 'correct' media image is cultivated).

Open and Inclusive Sporting Climate for LGBT people

- An organisation's non-discrimination / harassment / inclusion / member protection policies include sexual orientation and gender identity, are known and affect the climate of the organisation in positive inclusive ways.
- LGBT sports participants and workers are as publicly 'out' as they choose to be.
- LGBT sports participants and workers are welcome to bring same-sex partners to social events.
- Staff development programs redress homophobia and address the needs of LGBT sports participants.
- Coaches and sports administrators make sports environments safe and inclusive of LGBT sports participants as part of their professional responsibilities.

- Anti-gay actions by participants or workers are disciplined through properly utilised grievance procedures.
- Parental complaints or concerns about the presence of LGBT sports participants or workers are received cordially. Administrators value diversity and support LGBT personnel and team club members.
- Sexual orientation or gender identity are not factors in determining anyone's eligibility for teams or coaching.

Affirming Sporting Climates for LGBT people

- LGBT sports participants and workers positively identify as LGBT within the sports club and as a queer-identified team / organisation within the wider society and sports world.
- LGBT people can be assured of being fully welcome, included, safe, supported, not in the minority, as well as being affirmed in their sexual orientation and gender identity within a queer-identified club / organisation.

The continuum can be used as a checklist to audit the 'social health' of sports teams, clubs, leagues and peak sports organisations. The characteristics of the third climate, 'open and inclusive' are the benchmark of best practice to guide the development of more LGBT- friendly sports policy, practices and behaviours. The affirming fourth climate also has its place. It could be argued that sports organisations are affirming places in general for heterosexual people: where heterosexuality is largely assumed as the norm; is highly visible and celebrated at sporting social occasions; image-making in sports marketing; media coverage; and special or major sports events. This contrasts with the relative invisibility of LGBT people within the world of sport. The continuum can also be considered when reviewing *Come Out To Play* results.

METHOD

PARTICIPATION

The survey was open to anyone who identified as lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender (LGBT). Participants were required to be at least 18 years of age and live in the state of Victoria.

A reference group was created to inform the design of the survey and to pilot it. The survey was hosted online by Demographix at www.comeout2play.net. The survey opened on March 15, 2009 and closed on September 24, 2009 as responses fell to less than one per day. The questionnaire consisted of 258 items, including both closed and open ended questions.

Both quantitative and qualitative information was collected in the *Come Out To Play* survey. To complement the 'what, where and when' of LGBT sport participation, open questions were used to capture the real thoughts, feelings and unique experiences of LGBT people in sport. The result is a greater understanding of the benefits and challenges of sport participation as an LGBT athlete, from grass roots to elite-level sport.

MATERIALS

The survey comprised eight main sections:

1. Demographics – closed questions about gender, sexual identity, age, country of birth, cultural ancestry, living arrangements, education, and employment status.
2. Sport involvement – closed and open questions about lifetime, current and main sport participation; how participants are/were involved in sport; the nature of the sport; and the context the sport is/was played in. Participants were asked if they were out in their sport and invited to tell us about the benefits, challenges, issues and experiences of being out/not out in sport.
3. Benefits of sport – open questions about what participants get out of their involvement in sport and to provide a story about one of their very best experiences.
4. Discrimination in sport – open and closed questions about experiences of sexism, verbal homophobia, physical homophobic assault and other forms of discrimination in sport.
5. Challenges of sport – open questions about sports that participants would like to play but don't because of their sexuality or gender identity, if they have ever felt unsafe in a sporting environment and experiences of sport and physical education at school.
6. Safe, welcoming and inclusive sport policies – closed questions about the safety and inclusion of LGBT people in sporting clubs and anti-discrimination policies. Participants were asked to identify how welcoming their club is in relation to all genders, all ethnicities, people with disabilities, heterosexual people, non-heterosexual people, and transgender people.
7. Dropping out of sport – open questions about whether participants had ever dropped out of sport and, if yes, to explain why.
8. General health and physical activity – closed questions about weekly sport / physical activity participation, height, weight, and self ratings of health.

ETHICS APPROVAL

The Victoria University Human Research Ethics Committee approved this research method and registered the study.

PARTICIPANT RECRUITMENT

Three aims of the promotional strategy for *Come Out To Play* were to: reach as many Victorian LGBT adults as possible, recruit an equal number of male and female participants, and include people involved in sport, as well as those not involved in sport.

Following is a brief description of the activities that occurred during March 15 to September 24, 2009 when the survey was open for responses:

- Business cards with www.comeout2play.net were designed and distributed via the personal networks of those working on the project. They were also left in health clinics and other businesses targeting the LGBT community, including clubs, bars, bookshops, cafes, and restaurants.
- An electronic information brochure was designed and distributed via personal email contact lists of those working on the project, including Gay and Lesbian Health Victoria's databases. The information was distributed to mainstream sport clubs by VicHealth and Sport and Recreation Victoria. The information reached queer sporting clubs through Queer Sports Alliance Melbourne (QSAM). Several university queer departments agreed to email the brochure to all their members on their database; notices and links to the survey were also included in university announcements for staff and students.
- An animated banner was designed and featured on the following websites: {also} Foundation, GLHV, Country Awareness Network, and QSAM. Links to the survey were also posted on relevant Facebook groups reaching queer sporting groups and the wider LGBT community.
- Paid advertisements were published in Southern Star and Melbourne Community Voice (MCV). Several articles and community listings about the survey also appeared in these magazines.
- Paid animated banner advertisements appeared on the Gay Destination and Pink Sofa websites.
- Caroline Symons and Daniel Witthaus participated in a number of radio interviews on JOYFM and 3CR in Melbourne. Rainbow Waves, in country Victoria, also agreed to promote the survey.

We are unable to establish how many LGBT Victorians were exposed to the advertisements. Additionally, we cannot determine the effectiveness of each strategy because participants were not asked to identify how they heard about the survey. However, the response rate was closely monitored after each activity; proving some useful information about its impact.

Come Out To Play did not receive a large amount of funding. Consequently, survey advertising and promotion options were limited. Additionally, accessing participants through gay press had limitations as not all LGBT people engage with this form of media. Recruiting participants in mainstream sport was also difficult because it was dependent on the willingness of mainstream sport associations and clubs to promote the survey to their members.

ABOUT THE PARTICIPANTS

361 people participated in the study by completing the online questionnaire. 54 questionnaires were excluded from data analysis because participants did not meet the inclusion criteria; 42 respondents did not live in Victoria, eight respondents identified as heterosexual or straight, three respondents were under 18 years of age and one response was repeated. The total number of questionnaires used for data analysis was 307. Since the survey was not advertised outside of Victoria this is a large number of interstate responses. This may suggest there is interest for the *Come Out To Play* study to be conducted at a national level.

GENDER

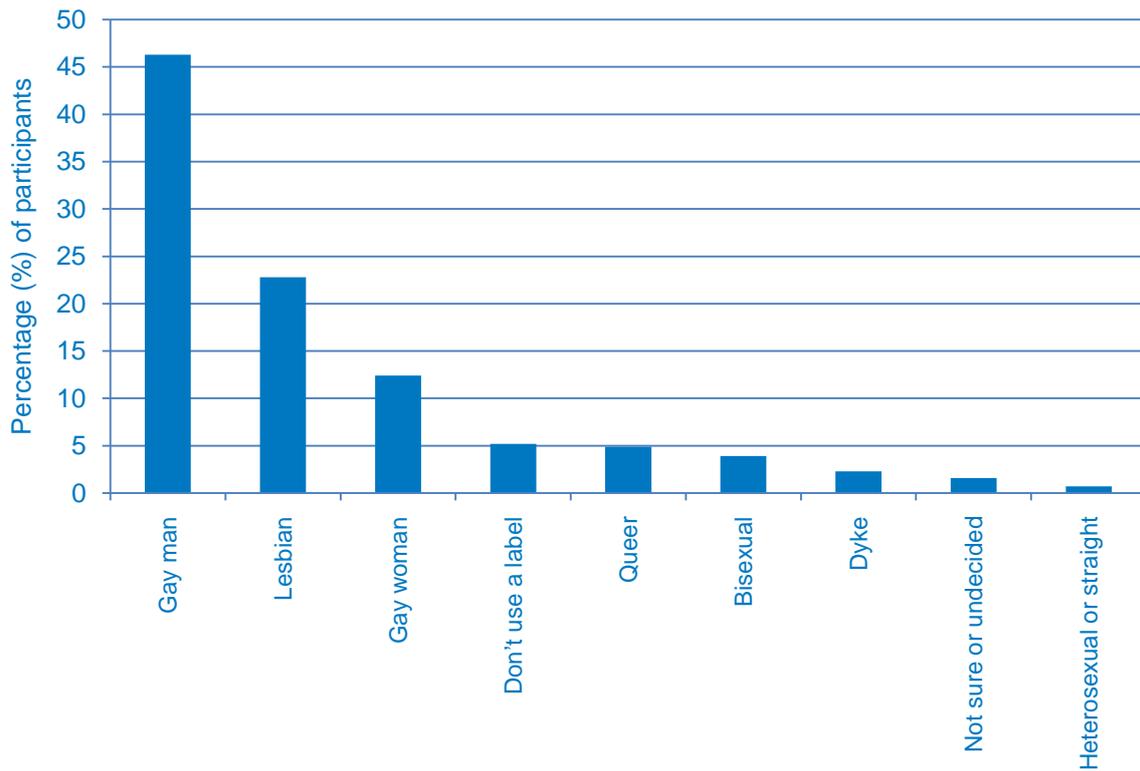
There were 307 participants; 50.2% ($n=154$) male, 45.9% ($n=141$) female and 3.9% ($n=12$) transgender. Although the recruitment strategy was designed to encourage a similar number of responses from females and males, there were a higher number of male participants. This may be a result of the larger proportion of media targeting gay men in Victoria compared with lesbians.

Of the transgender participants, 50.0% ($n=6$) identified as male, 41.7% ($n=5$) as female and 8.3% ($n=1$) identified as neither male nor female. Recruiting transgender participants is difficult because there are only a small number of transgender people living in the community and they often remain hidden. *Come Out To Play* is the first study in Australia to examine transgender participation in sport. The information collected in this study provides a valuable insight into the experiences, facilitators and barriers to transgender participation, which has previously been unknown.

SEXUALITY

The sexual identity of participants is shown in Figure 1. These results show that the most common sexual identity was 'gay man'. This is due to the higher number of males in the sample and because males used fewer labels than females to identify their sexual orientation.

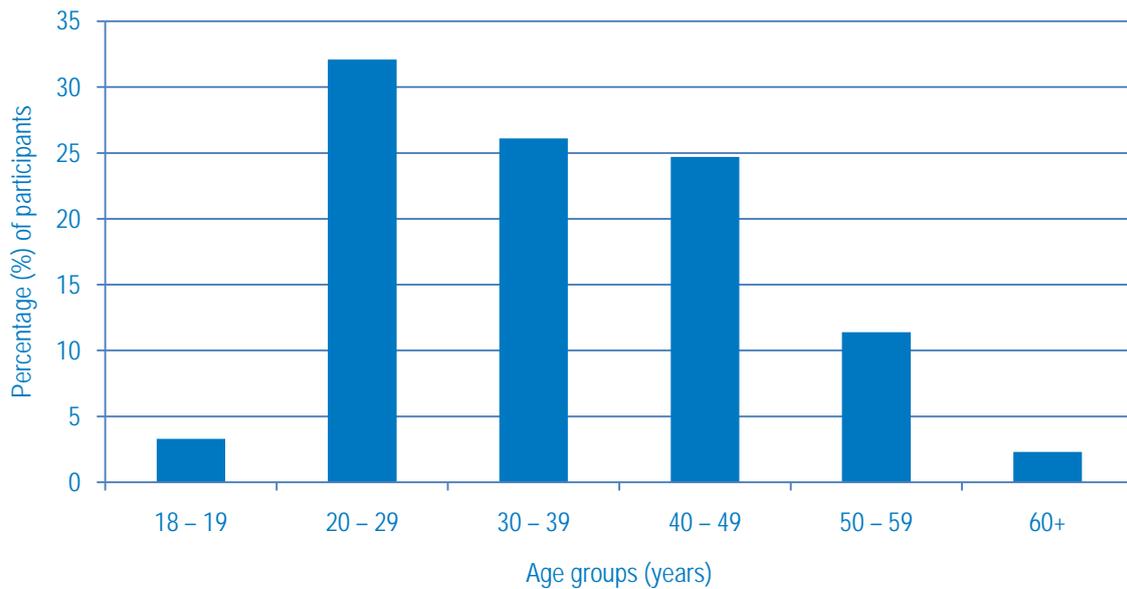
FIGURE 1 SEXUAL IDENTITY OF PARTICIPANTS



AGE

The average age of respondents was 36 years with a range of 18 to 71 years. The age group distribution of participants is shown in Figure 2. These results show that the majority of respondents were aged between 20 and 49 years.

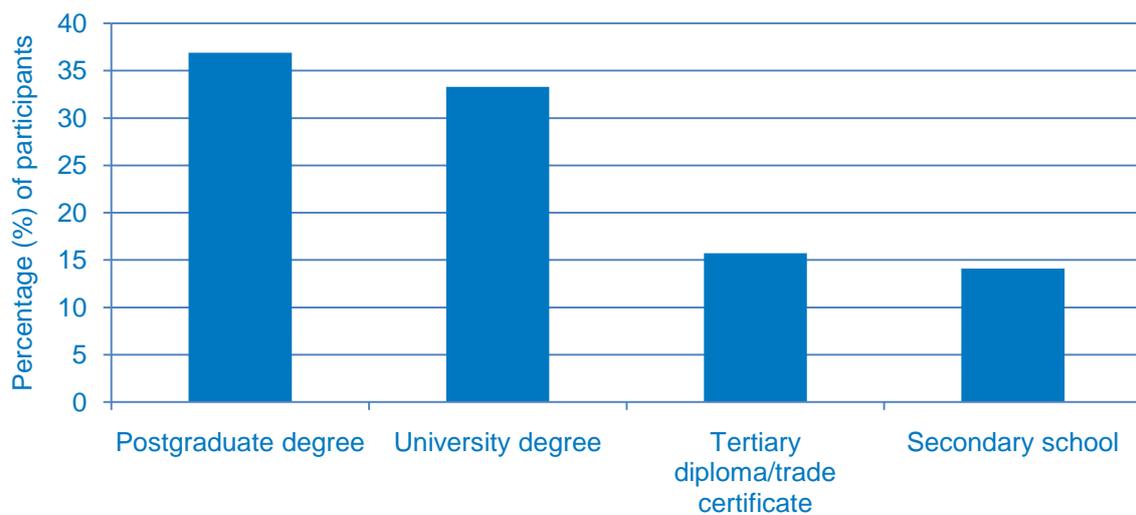
FIGURE 2 AGE GROUP DISTRIBUTIONS OF PARTICIPANTS



EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT

The highest education achieved by participants is shown in Figure 3. These results show that 36.9% have completed a postgraduate degree and 33.3% have completed a university degree. The number of participants with a university degree is comparable to other studies (Pitts et al., 2006; ABS, 2006), however, the number of participants with a postgraduate degree is much higher. The Private Lives survey reported 31.3% respondents with a university degree and 19.4% with a postgraduate degree (Pitts et al., 2006). Similarly, 30.6% of Victorian's hold a Bachelor's degree and 10.2% hold a postgraduate degree (ABS, 2006). The majority of participants work full-time and this is expected with a highly educated sample.

FIGURE 3 HIGHEST EDUCATION ATTAINED BY PARTICIPANTS

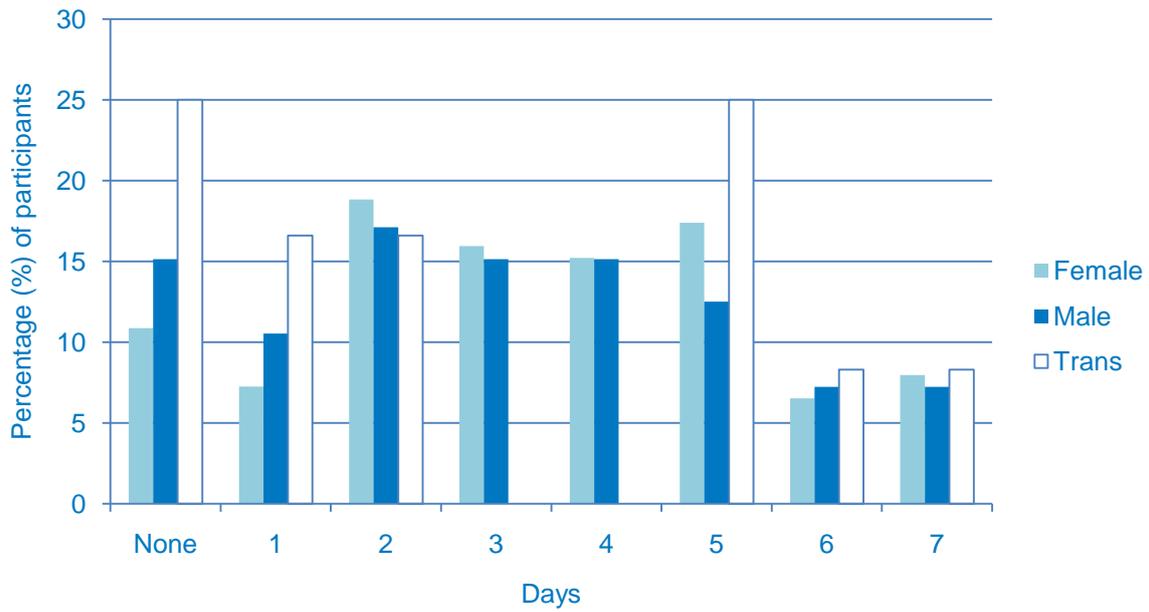


GENERAL HEALTH AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

Participants were asked to report how many of the past seven days they had participated in sport or physical activity for 30 minutes or more. The responses are provided in Figure 4. These results show that 89.1% of female, 84.9% of male and 33.3% of transgender participants were active in the past seven days of completing the survey. The majority of male and female participants were active between two and five of the past seven days.

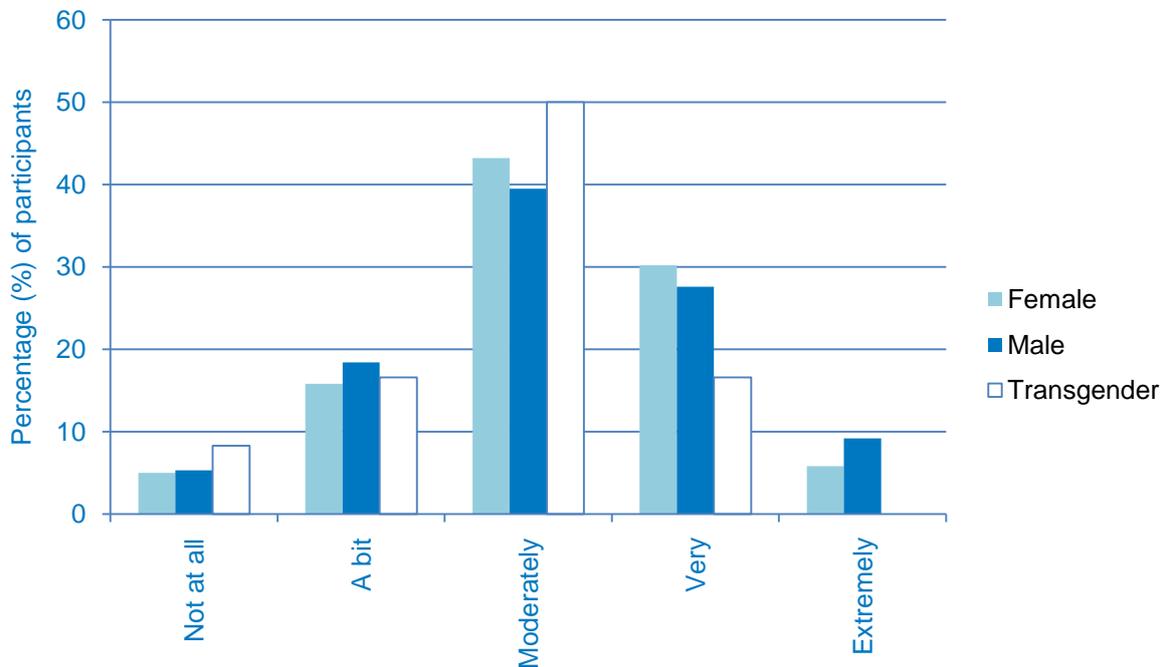
The National Physical Activity Guidelines for Australian adults outline the minimum levels of physical activity required to gain a health benefit (Department of Health and Ageing, 2009). These are to accumulate at least 30 minutes of moderate intensity physical activity on most, preferably all days. The results suggest that 44.4% of participants reached the minimum weekly recommended levels of physical activity in the week they completed the survey. 13.6% of participants reported that they are not active at all; comparable to 15.0% of the Australian population (Armstrong, Bauman and Davies, 2000).

FIGURE 4 PARTICIPANT ACTIVITY LEVELS SEVEN DAYS PRIOR TO COMPLETING THE SURVEY



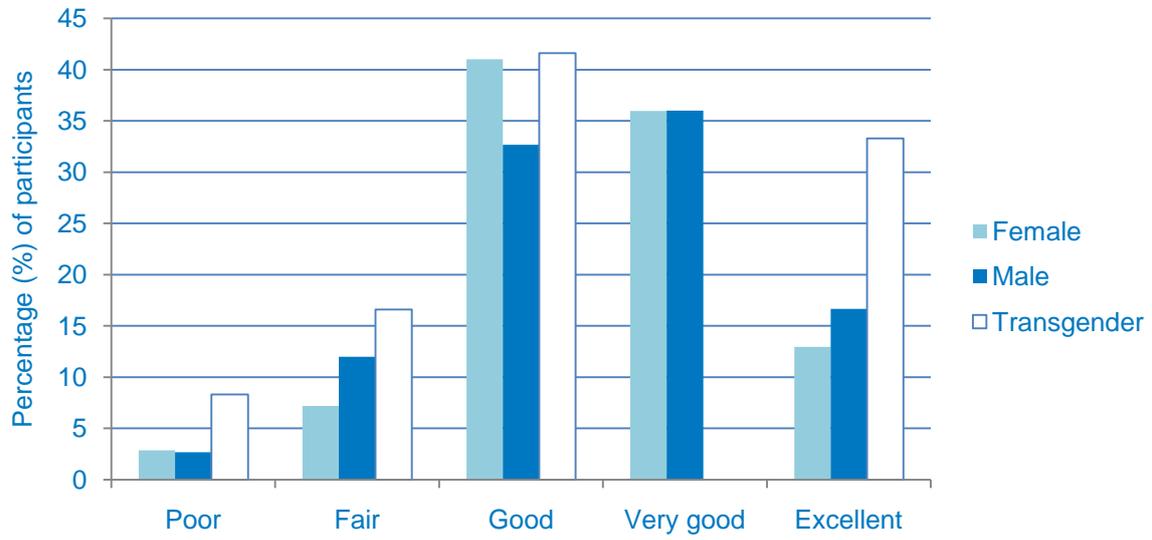
Participants were asked to report how physically active they are, generally. The responses are provided in Figure 5. These results show that the majority of female, male and transgender participants are moderately active (43.2%, 39.5% and 54.5% respectively).

FIGURE 5 PARTICIPANT PHYSICAL ACTIVITY LEVELS



Participants were asked to rate their own health on a five item scale from poor to excellent. The results are provided in Figure 6.

FIGURE 6 PARTICIPANT SELF- RATINGS OF HEALTH



SPORT AND PHYSICAL EDUCATION AT SCHOOL

Experiences of physical education and sport in the formative years are likely to have an impact on the willingness and confidence adults have to engage in sport. School sport has been demonstrated to be a key site of homophobic bullying (Brackenridge, 2006; Hillier, 2005) and sexism (Wellard, 2002; Penney, 2002). Participants in this study were asked to explain their experiences of sport and physical education at school in order to explore the issue of homophobia and sexism on sports participation from an early age. There was a marked gender difference in the quality of these experiences, with many more men than women reporting negative attitudes to sport when at school. Although sexism in sport is commonly seen to be most damaging to women, the women participating in this study had more success in sport than the men, and this was a critical factor in shaping their attitudes.

In the majority of the responses to this question it was clear that positive experiences of sport and physical education classes at school depended on participants being confident and successful in their sporting skill. Perceived ability at sport was a strong indicator of whether or not this area of study was remembered as a positive or a negative experience. A number of participants specifically stated that their sexuality had no impact on their attitude to school sport, possibly because they were not “out” at school, or had not yet experienced or acknowledged same-sex attraction.

Nevertheless there were some interesting findings about the impact of homophobia and sexism on many of the participants at that time and in later life.

There were some who did not find enjoyment of school sport incompatible with being gay. These ranged from the inevitable crush on the teacher through to genuine support from peers.

Great. The Phys Ed teacher is always the first crush. (Heather, 47 years).

Positive experience, had a crush on my PE teacher. (Nathaniel, 46 years).

Loved every minute I was a geek jock, go figure. (Gregory, 28 years).

Some girls were essentially “weirded out” by my open homosexuality but those girls I could mostly just ignore and because I was popular that was fairly easy. (Gabriela, 21 years).

...very positive experiences...positive attitude towards my sexuality. (Mark, 18 years).

Some of the boys and teachers said I was a bit of a sissy when I played but that changed when I started beating them. (Isaac, 50 years).

For others homophobia was an integral part of the sporting scene and was experienced as a negative warning at best and, at worst, a source of pain and damage.

Any minor weakness was attributed to purported sexuality which contributed to the overall negativity attached to queerness in the school community. (Vanessa, 22 years).

I was bullied on the field and targeted for being gay. (Connor, 31 years).

It was bad to be gay and bad to look gay. (Steven, 24 years).

I do remember one female basketball player at my school who seemed quite obviously lesbian, and I think she attracted some hostile attention. (Madeline, 24 years).

This gave young people a clear message about acceptable behaviour in sport. It created a situation in which some participants experienced great difficulty in achieving excellence in, or enjoyment of sport without fear of homophobic or sexist ridicule. Accounts of stress and modification of sports performances to avoid these outcomes were common.

Sometimes I held back from performing in sport, because I didn't want to appear aggressive or masculine. The girls didn't like to see that and it wasn't attractive to boys ... Some of the girls would say that about other girls – you can't compete against her cause she's a man. I heard them saying that about others and I didn't want them to say that about me too. (Tania, 22 years).

I was always trying to be among the best just for not being seen as a fag, and I was running in an awkward way on the field because I was always fearing my bum was shaking too much or my hips moving too much like a girl and I didn't want my classmates to tease me about it. I just could not give myself 100% in the game even if I wanted to. (Brady, 20 years).

For some there was a conflict between just being gay and enjoying sport in ways which made the situation impossible and led to sporting involvement diminishing.

Despite being very sporty, very negative (experience) due to gay, sissy taunts. (Julian, 41 years).

Found it difficult as an adolescent as I was dealing with my sexuality whilst trying to participate. (Adrian, 31 years).

I loved sport and was fairly good at it. However, I soon realised that my sexuality was incompatible with my interest in sport. (Elijah, 31 years).

Not good. Although tall and athletic no one wanted a fag on their team. (Joseph, 39 years).

In my mind I couldn't separate the lack of skill with being gay. I just assumed that people would know I was gay because I had poor skills. (Samuel, 39 years).

Your choice of sport marked you in the playground as being a man or "a girl". (Michael, 47 years).

...the poofs were always the last to be picked for teams. (Troy, 41 years).

Change rooms and toilets, which are private spaces in school and less likely to be supervised by teachers, have been noted as sites of homophobic bullying (Hillier). Participants in this study, particularly the men, also found managing school change rooms a common source of distress.

The thing I (and some of my friends) did not like was the compulsory open showers and "medical" check ups. Yes they used to happen. It made us not want to do sport. (Stephen, 41 years).

The having to get changed in communal change rooms and worse the shared showers. The fear of being picked on or taunted. (Derek, 56 years).

...the boys change room had open showers while the girls had cubicles. 18 years later my friends and I still discuss the impact this had on our adolescent lives. (Victor, 36 years).

Loved playing sport, didn't like the showers though. (Elizabeth, 47 years).

Nevertheless there were several who acknowledged some benefits from communal change rooms:

Compulsory sport at schools, that was fun- especially in the showers afterwards!!! (Ivan, 49 years).

Others carefully selected the sports that put them at least risk which generally meant choosing individual sports over team sports:

Not in a team and no physical contact with opponents.... I felt I'd be hurt, probably deliberately. (Shane, 46 years).

Sports like cross country running, table tennis, tennis and even hockey were less overtly homophobic and scary than football, but there was always a current of unease verging on unsafety. (Michael, 47 years).

...traumatised about team sports for life ...(Tessa, 41 years).

I feared I would get hurt ... I did a lot of dancing/callisthenics. (Gabriella, 35 years).

I enjoyed rowing and athletics but not other sports. (Lucas, 39 years).

Non-contact (sports) (like 10 pin bowling) or racquet sports like tennis or squash, these didn't involve the change room where I was likely to be harassed. (Jeremiah, 37 years).

I was lucky I was good at swimming which meant I did not have to worry about football, cricket etc. (Gabriel, 48 years).

This very explicit rejection of team sports clearly led to limited options for many and is not the ideal outcome of a school program which aims to introduce young people to a broad range of physical activities.

Finally, and not surprisingly given the strong division of sport according to gender, transgender young people reported universally negative experiences of school sport:

School is where everyone learns all that shit about sex segregated sport, even before puberty. It gave me very limited opportunities in what I could play. For a while it was pretty much either netball or tennis, despite the fact that I kicked arse in hockey. (Danny, transgender male, 38 years).

I avoided the sports I liked (Aussie rules) because of the macho attitudes, and tendency to glorify violence. (Angie, transgender female, 51 years).

Participants in this study had mixed experiences of school sport and many were put off sport for long periods of time, or for life because of rigid gender rules, sexism and homophobia. Several participants who had subsequently become teachers themselves lamented the inadequacy of support for those who were struggling to find a niche.

It was not just those who did poorly in sport or who avoided altogether who missed out. As one participant pointed out, successful or unsuccessful at sport, the lesson could still be the same:

A certain perverse pleasure in being highly successful in two sports at school, being elected as captain of one – whilst the same people who elected me as captain were the ones making many gay jokes and homophobic remarks. But ultimately I was the one who lost out as it reinforced for me that gay people were not welcome in sport and that I should hide who I really was if I was to be successful in life. (Sebastian, 45 years).

While those who were seen to be good at sport could generally make physical education and school sport work for them, sometimes even using their ability to silence sexism and homophobia, there is clear evidence that many could not. Nobody in the study gave examples of teachers supporting students to participate in a spirit of equity, or of teachers championing the safety and rights of those who were teased and threatened. Given that participants in this study generally show a high level of interest in and engagement with sport, their former schools have lost opportunities to take full advantage of this interest.

Worse, many LGBT people have been driven away from an activity that can provide healthy community connections and many physical health benefits in their formative years and throughout life.

SPORT PARTICIPATION

Participants were asked about three different aspects of sporting activity - lifetime, main and current.

LIFETIME

Participants were asked to identify all the sports they had been involved in during their life. The results show involvement in a large variety of sports and physical activities.

The most popular sports reported by participants included swimming (54.6%), tennis (48.7%), athletics (44.4%), cycling (37.2%) and Australian Rules football (36.8%). The most popular physical activities reported by participants included walking (55.6%), weights and circuit training (51.6%), jogging/running (49.7%) and stationary exercises (37.5%). All respondents have been involved in these sports/physical activities as active participants. They have also been involved as supporters (27.6%), volunteers (22.7%), officials (20.4%), coaches (20.1%), administrators (13.5%), and parents of children who play sport (3.9%).

These sports and physical activities are similar to those reported in other studies of LGBT people and the Australian population. Private Lives reported walking, swimming, aerobics, gym, cycling, golf, tennis, running, bushwalking and soccer as the most popular activities (Pitts et al., 2006). The Exercise, Recreation and Sport Survey conducted in 2008 by the Australian Sports Commission reported the top ten physical activities to be walking, aerobics/fitness, swimming, cycling, running, golf, tennis, bushwalking, outdoor football and netball (Australian Sports Commission, 2010).

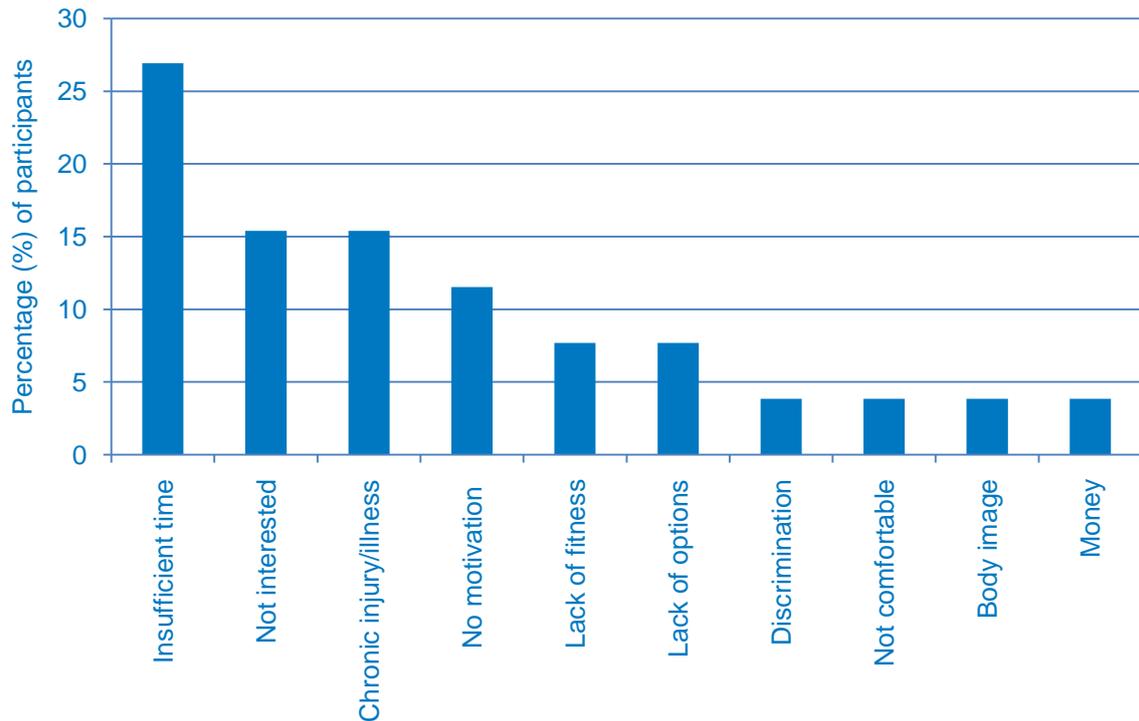
Only 1% of participants ($n=3$) reported having no involvement in any sport or physical activity in their life. Reasons for this included disliking sport or not having any opportunities to participate.

CURRENT

Participants were asked to identify the sports they were involved in at the time of completing the survey. Again, the results show that LGBT people have remained involved in a variety of sports and physical activities. The most popular sports included swimming (29.0%), cycling (24.4%), Australian Rules football (14.3%), tennis (12.9%) and soccer (9.3%). The most popular physical activities included walking (40.1%), weights and circuit training (34.8%), jogging and running (26.5%) and stationary exercises (21.9%). Respondents were involved in these sports and physical activities as active participants (94.3%), supporters (13.5%) and volunteers (9.6%).

Only 8.2% ($n=25$) of participants reported that they were not currently involved in any sport or physical activity. The reasons for not participating are provided in Figure 7. The most common reasons were 'not interested' (25%) and insufficient time (25%). Similarly, the two most common constraints to participation in exercise as reported by the Australian population was insufficient time due to work or study (23%), followed by 'not interested' (19%) (ABS, 2002). Other reasons reported by participants included discrimination, not feeling comfortable and lacking fitness.

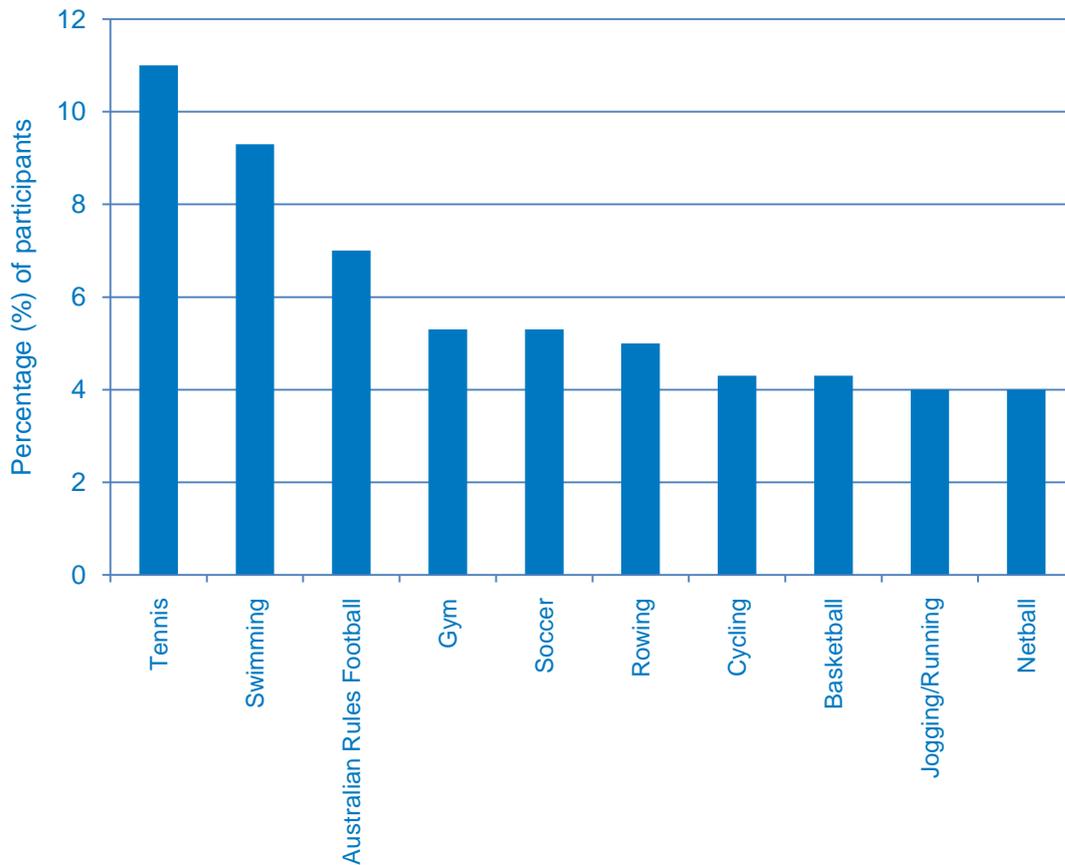
FIGURE 7 REASONS FOR NOT CURRENTLY PARTICIPATING IN SPORT OR PHYSICAL ACTIVITY



MAIN

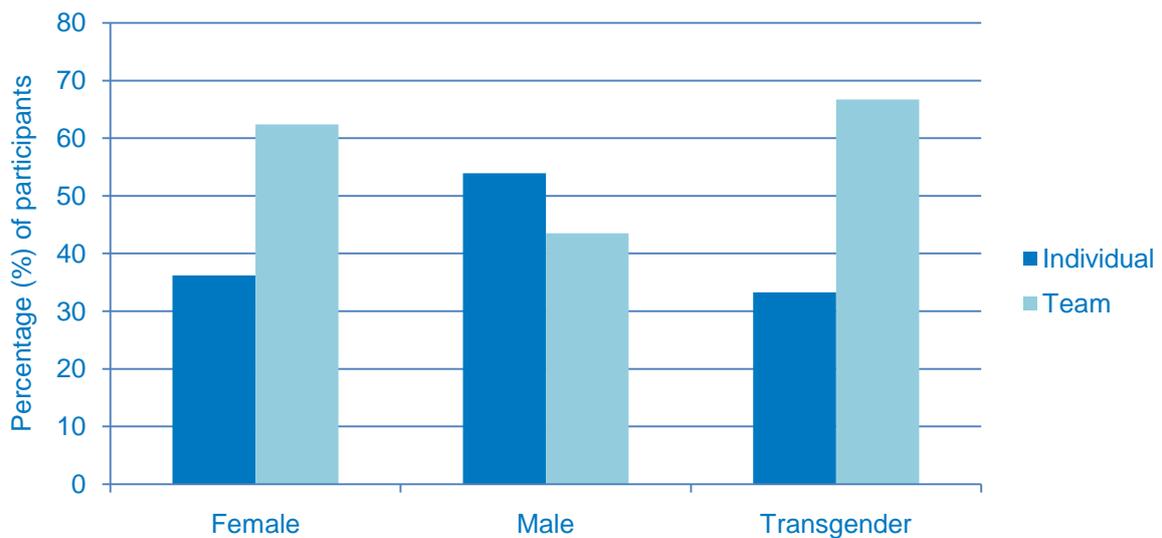
Participants were asked to identify the main sport they have been involved in. The ten most popular sports provided in Figure 8. They are tennis (11.0%), swimming (9.3%), Australian Rules football (7.0%), soccer (5.3%) and rowing (5.0%). The top five main physical activities are gym (including resistance training, stationary exercises, group fitness classes and boot camp for general fitness) (5.3%), jogging/running (4.0%) and walking (3.3%). The majority of respondents have been active participants in their main sport.

FIGURE 8 TOP TEN SPORTS



The participation in individual and team sport by gender is shown in Figure 9. These results show that 63.3% of female respondents are involved in team sport compared with only 44.7% of the male respondents.

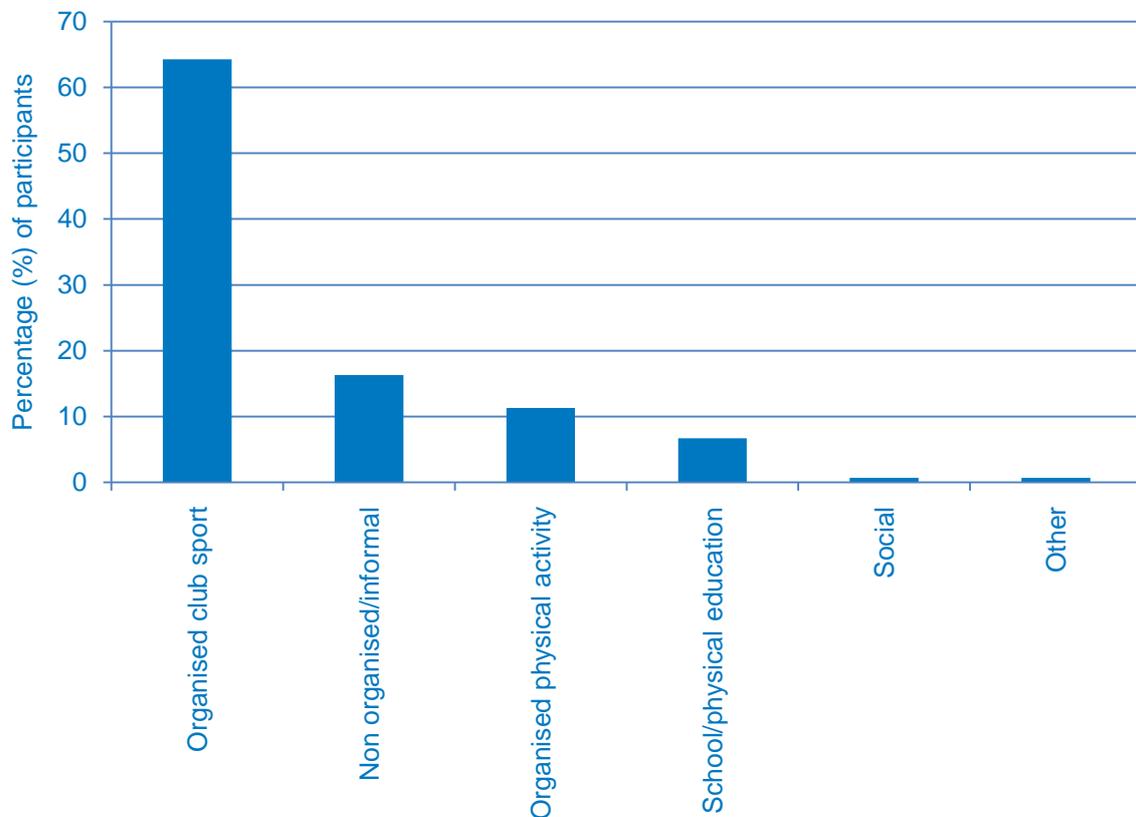
FIGURE 9 PARTICIPATION IN INDIVIDUAL AND TEAM SPORT BY GENDER



Participants were asked to identify the context their main sport was played. The results are provided in Figure 10. These results show that the majority (64.3%) of respondents play in organised club sport and this suggests a very sporty sample. According to the Participation in Exercise, Recreation and Sport Annual Report only 42.1% of Australian's aged over 15 years of age are involved in organised sport (Australian Sports Commission, 2009). The 15 to 24 year old age group is most engaged in organised sport (63.2%) (Australian Sports Commission, 2009) and this figure is comparable to the *Come Out To Play* sample which has an average age of 36 years. While the promotional strategy for the survey was to recruit participants involved and not involved in sport, people with an interest in sport are more likely to persist with the survey to completion.

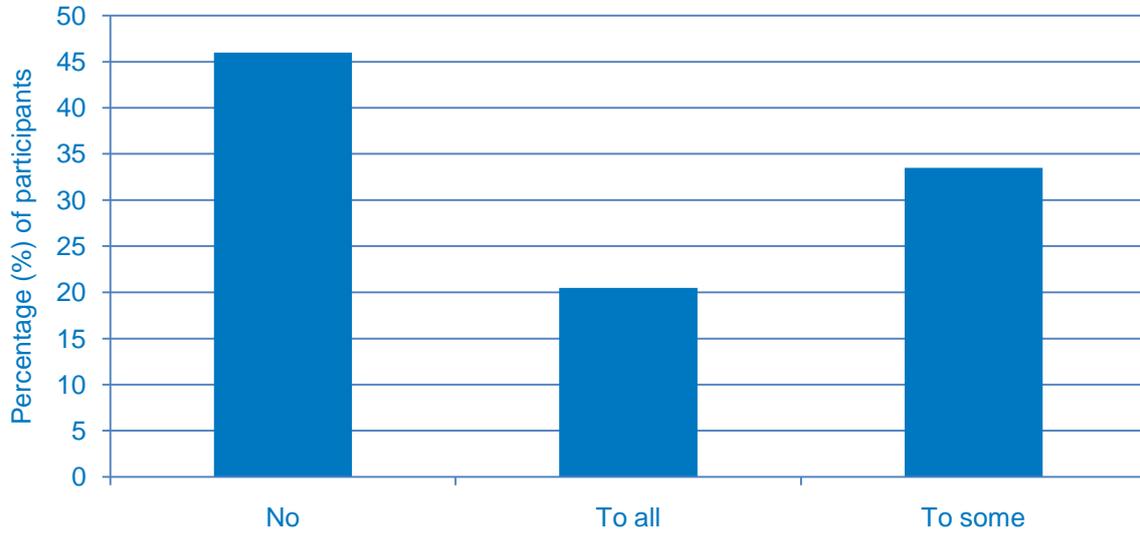
60.2% of participants involved in organised club sport indicated that their participation was of a competitive nature.

FIGURE 10 PARTICIPATION IN ORGANISED AND NON-ORGANISED SPORT



Participants who reported involvement in organised sport were asked to identify if their club was mainstream or queer-identified. The results show that 84.0% of participants are involved in a mainstream club. Of participants involved in mainstream clubs and organisations, 46% were not out, 33.5% were out to some and 20.5% were out to all (see Figure 11).

FIGURE 11 PERCENTAGES OF 'OUT' PARTICIPANTS VERSUS 'NOT OUT' PARTICIPANTS IN MAINSTREAM CLUBS



QUEER-IDENTIFIED SPORTS

In the gay swim team – sense of identity, camaraderie, shared love of the same sport and striving to do well. (Tori, 48 years).

Sixteen percent of survey participants indicated that they were mainly involved in queer-identified sports clubs and organisations. Melbourne boasts over 15 queer-identified sports organisations including the Argonauts rowing club; Bent Kranks mountain bike riders; Glamourhead Sharks swim team; Bent Boards surf club; Melbourne Spikers volleyball club; Melbourne Frontrunners running group; Melbourne Rovers soccer club; and Melbourne Surge water polo club to name a few (QSAM, 2010). Whilst some of these organisations are more social and recreational, many field teams in mainstream sport leagues and competitions, host mainstream events, and participate in predominantly LGBT local, regional and international sports events.

Survey participants were invited to tell us about one of the very best experiences they have had in sport and to explain why it was so good. The responses below encapsulate one of the main themes to come from this section of the survey – the positive experiences often derived from their queer sport involvement. The positive benefits derived from ‘being yourself’, feeling safe, being supported and affirmed as lesbian / gay and sporty, belonging to a larger community and gaining visibility, meaning and empowerment from this identity-making, solidarity and shared sporting and cultural endeavour, are expressed in these quotes:

Felt very relaxing and supportive in a queer sports club. Interesting to see straight teams reactions to us, some were negative, some neutral, some thought we’d be a walkover and then discovered we were very competitive. (Brian, 33 years).

When playing in the Queer Volleyball league when I worked in New York, I paraded in the New York Gay Pride Parade. (Jack, 37 years).

Playing volleyball in the 2002 Gay Games was awesome because it was uplifting to see so many people who felt comfortable with their physical selves and mentally as well without the aggressive competitiveness one-upmanship and anti-social behaviour of straight sport. (Luke, 41 years).

Playing in the Sydney Gay Games. It was such a positive involvement in the gay community. (Justin, 32 years).

Being “Out the back” with a group of surfers from the club bent boards on a beautiful day with good waves, the group had gone down the coast for the weekend and it was a lovely social time as well as learning from each other new skills and improving our surfing, trying new beaches and feeling safe and supported wherever we went, not having to worry about people thinking we were dykes because there was a big group of us. (Allison, 31 years).

I enjoyed performing with a queer swing dance group at a (mainstream) swing ball – the thrill of performance and the company of the group made it such a good experience. (Stephanie, 30 years).

Being part of a team that travelled to Montreal to compete in the Outgames. Such a great atmosphere on and off the court. Our team put in a lot of time and hard work which was

rewarded with a silver medal. The whole city was very supportive of the Games. (Brian, 33 years).

I was accepted into a social Gay Games netball team and allowed to play as a female. They were down on a player and the other team didn't object. I was great out there as a female. (Annie, Transgender female, 55 years).

A few participants valued the experience of developing their LGBT sports club / team and the positive impact these sports experiences had on LGBT sportspeople:

Taking a group of beginner rowers with no skills in 2001 to the World Outgames in Montreal and winning is the icing on a very big cake of building a rowing club up from nothing and watching the positive impact that rowing and the club has brought to so many people's lives within the club and in the sport more generally. (Sebastian, 45 years).

Refereeing and participating in the Gay Games and Outgames gives a great sense of global queer sporting community. Having established and run a queer women's sporting team, seeing people who would not normally participate in sport remembering how fulfilling it can be. (Jade, 28 years).

The most inclusive sports environments for non-heterosexuals and trans people are those created by and for LGBT communities. Hargreaves (2000) makes this observation in her research on the growth and development of gay and lesbian sport over the past twenty-five years:

The gay sports phenomena is a symbol of the growing demand for homosexual cultural activities, the need to experience greater visibility and solidarity and the quest for an 'imagined community'. Gay sport create spaces to be an 'insider' (rather than an 'outsider' in mainstream sport), to enjoy sport in a friendly and inclusive atmosphere and escape from the heterosexism and homophobia of mainstream sport (p. 153).

Being involved in queer-identified sport clubs requires a certain amount of confidence and self assurance, as members are not only coming into the gay sporting community, but also coming out as gay in the wider sport world, albeit with the encouragement and support of this larger LGBT community. Ellings et al. (2003) found that in probably the most tolerant and accepting country in the world for gays and lesbians – the Netherlands – the pull factors of belonging, self esteem and affirmation that characterised the experience of lesbian and gay people in queer identified clubs were stronger than the push factors of homophobic discrimination. Queer-identified clubs and organisations formed within the context of gay identity and rights politics and greater acceptance of gay people within society generally.

The development of gay sport has also been influenced and shaped by the growth of the international LGBT sport movement over the past quarter century. The international Gay Games were founded in San Francisco in 1982 against a backdrop of significant homophobia in society and sport, to foster gay pride and self esteem through healthy participation in sport and cultural activities (Symons, 2010). The international LGBT sports movement has grown significantly since these first Gay Games, with sports clubs, leagues and competitions occurring in all western nations and many developing countries throughout the world. In most metropolitan cities in Australia, LGBT sports clubs provide opportunities for training, socialising and competition (Symons, 2010).

Two of the most significant regional and international LGBT sport and cultural events were held in Australia in the past decade. The Gay Games were held in Sydney in 2002, involving 32 sports, a

large cultural festival and human rights program and attracting 13,000 participants from 74 countries, with an economic impact of \$100 million. The 1st Asia Pacific Outgames was held in Melbourne in 2008, involving 12 sports and a human rights conference and attracted 1,500 participants. The central philosophy underpinning these Games has been the inclusion of all genders, sexualities, races/ethnicities, abilities and ages (over 18) (Symons, 2010). These events have received little government funding (certainly in comparison to similar mass participatory sports and cultural events with a major economic and social/health impact). They have been organised largely by volunteers from LGBT communities. Most of the sports competitions were managed by the local queer sports organisations in partnership, or with support and assistance from the mainstream State and /or National mainstream sports body. Queer sports organisations participate and interact with mainstream sports organisations in a number of settings and are certainly not separate or isolated from the broader sports world.

Stuart Borrie (2002) Director of Sport for Sydney 2002 documented a number of positive examples of the way that these Gay Games brought mainstream sport officials into the heart of gay sport, working directly with LGBT organisers and sports participants in friendly, cooperative and productive ways during the sports competitions. Many of these officials had not officiated or been involved in the organisation of a gay sports event before and had limited direct contact (if any) with LGBT people before this major event. Borrie (2002) cites direct examples of positive bridge-building between mainstream (i.e. predominantly heterosexual) sports organisations and officials and queer sports, and the debunking of negative gay and lesbian stereotypes through these Gay Games.

Whilst significant, Gay Games occur every four years in different cities around the world and cannot sustain ongoing and direct positive impact to a city's sporting climate for LGBT people. However, queer-identified sports clubs can provide a supportive environment for their members whilst also facilitating integration within the mainstream sport setting. The Argonauts provide an excellent example of this process. When they first fielded rowing teams in mainstream competition some incidences of homophobic abuse from opposing teams occurred. In response to complaints about this abuse from the club, Rowing Victoria followed their member protection policies and procedures, supporting the Argonauts and reprimanding the perpetrators. The Argonauts now report a predominantly welcoming and inclusive sports environment in rowing. They were the winners of the Victorian Sports Club of the year in 2008. An Argonauts member reported this in the survey:

I feel completely comfortable as our club (The Argonauts) is a queer club. That is the reason I joined the club. I was initially nervous about how we would be accepted within the "old school" rowing fraternity, but it has all been an extremely positive experience. (Gabiella, 35 years).

There were no negative responses found concerning queer identified sports clubs in participant responses. Survey responses were overwhelmingly positive for LGBT people, with queer-identified sports clubs providing an important supportive and affirming environment for LGBT people to engage in sport. However, these clubs are limited to metropolitan cities. There were more mixed responses on policies and practices in queer-identified sport that promoted welcoming environments *within* the queer community (see pp. 74-77) For instance, 13.5% of participants in queer clubs reported their club is very unwelcoming to all genders, and a similar number were unwelcoming or very unwelcoming of all ethnicities. There are some discriminatory issues that need further exploration.

GENDER AND SEXUALITY IN SPORT

The majority of sports involvement by LGBT peoples occurs in mainstream sports clubs, leagues, competitions and facilities. Same-sex attracted young people engage in their formative sporting experiences at school, in holiday programs, leisure facilities and sports clubs and events. Same-sex parents take their children to 'Kick a Goal' and 'Aus Kick' programs, swimming lessons and clubs, netball competitions etc. LGBT peoples work and/or volunteer as sport trainers, coaches, administrators and officials. *Come Out To Play* is the first study to document the number of LGBT people who are 'out' in Australian mainstream sport. Approximately half of the participants stated that they are not out to anybody in mainstream sport and 21% reported that they are only out to some. Participants were invited to tell us more about being out or not being out in their sport. This was an open question and the strongest theme to emerge was the shaping field of gender and sexuality.

Gender and sexuality are very strong organising features in our lives and their organising power is promulgated through language and behaviour. Being male or female brings with it expectations about how we should feel and act and there is little room for gender questioning. Similarly, sexuality is mostly coded as heterosexuality and there is little positive room for alternate sexualities. Generally, transgression from norms about the ways we do our gender and sexuality is punished and nowhere more so than in sporting arenas. According to Griffin (1998) sport, and especially team sport:

'is where men learn their masculinity skills [where they learn to be] competitive and tough...to deny feelings of compassion ... to value physical strength and size, aggressiveness and the will to dominate' (p. 20).

Sport is often a place where those who are not male and/or heterosexual are unwelcome and this is expressed in a plethora of discourses which act to dissuade sporting participation of women, transgender, and gay and lesbian subjects. It also has other impacts. In this section we explore the ways that gender and sexuality discourses are played out in sport and how this affects non heterosexuals and non males who play sport. Gender and sexuality are complex and interwoven concepts, however, for the purpose of this analysis we will attempt to deal with them separately.

GENDER – WOMEN

Writers such as Cahn (1998), Dworkin (2001), Griffin (1992) and Theberge (1993) have all documented the ways in which women are discouraged from playing sport. Traditionally all sport was deemed unfeminine, however over the years the line between what is acceptable and unacceptable for women and sport has moved. In an article on women's football Hillier (2006) wrote that

Sport has been a traditionally male-only space and over the years women have been dissuaded from playing through a range of discourses, including that sport would: compromise women's health and reproductive capabilities; reduce their femininity; unleash rampant (hetero)sexuality; and later, that sport would encourage lesbianism (p. 4).

Many of these beliefs remain pervasive in our culture today. There are also strong expectations about the entitlements of men, and to a lesser extent women, in sport, and about their sporting abilities. In general men are expected to be better at sport than women and some sports are thought suitable only for men, others suitable only for women.

In this research one very prominent way that women who transgressed the norm by playing traditionally masculine sports such as cricket or football were punished, was to accuse them of being lesbians. According to Griffin (1992),

The purpose of calling a woman a lesbian is to limit her sport experience and make her feel defensive about her athleticism (p. 20).

Because the subject 'lesbian' is coded in many negative ways, being positioned as a lesbian brings with it a question mark over that subject's attractiveness, her femininity and her good character, and as a result many women fear this label. For these women, perhaps the majority of women, being labelled lesbian will have a powerful impact, especially on the ways that they participate in sport. In team sports that are traditional bastions of masculinity such as football, the lesbian label is pervasive and many women will not play those sports because they are likely to be called a lesbian. Women gave a number of examples of this.

Male football players questioning the sexuality of members of the women's team in a derogatory way. (Anne, 23 years).

They just say that all female cricketers are dykes. (Tara, 18 years).

For one young female football player, there was also the realisation that the women's team was of interest to the male players only as potential source of sexual partners and not for their skills and interests as fellow players. Being thought of as a lesbian team meant they weren't sexually accessible to men and were therefore excluded by them.

I heard the footy boys said something like "don't bother trying to hook in with the footy girls... most of them are dykes." It was true that half of our team were gay. But it was the way it was said, in a derogatory way. It was disrespectful to all of our team members, like we were all there not for football, but for the footy boys to try and get sex from us. (Tania, 22 years).

Beyond being called lesbians, more direct strategies were used to dissuade women from playing male-dominated sport. Women were sexually assaulted, insulted and generally told they would not or could not play.

I was living as a girl at the time, and I was told very firmly by the person running the after-school care that girls did not play football (AFL) I thought it was stupid, but I started noticing that girls apparently didn't play AFL, and so I felt uncomfortable playing, and eventually stopped. (Miguel, transgender male, 27 years).

I was body surfing and copping heaps of flack because only boys were bodysurfers. Someone was bodysurfing behind me and grabbed my crotch - bordering on sexual assault. (Kate, 36 years).

Whilst I was always playing football with my male peers during recess and lunch times, when we had a staff versus student match in grade six our PE teachers didn't let me play. Instead they got me to umpire. ...I didn't know the first thing about umpiring, but I knew how to play. It made me look incompetent because I didn't know what I was doing – I felt removed/different from my friends – all of my friends were the boys playing and I just wanted to play with them. It reminded me that I was different from them and that my opportunities were limited because I was female.

The boys wouldn't let my friend & I play football with them. They said we weren't good enough and we would ruin the game. We got singled out. I felt left out, I got rejected from something that I enjoyed. (Megan, 33 years).

While respect and admiration may be the appropriate response to the talent and skills of sportspeople, women who are good at sport often find themselves being treated in negative ways. One player from a talented women's team recounted the abuse her team experienced because they excelled at a masculine dominated sport:

We played in a male competition as the female competition wasn't strong enough, some of the male opponents make homophobic remarks about some of the players (most of whom weren't gay!). They didn't like being beaten by females in a male dominated sport!! (Hanna, 45 years).

According to Griffin (1992), female excellence in sport challenges essentialist notions of traditional masculinity. If traditional masculinity is coded as 'strength and endurance' what are we to think when women also display these attributes? How then can masculinity be separated out and regarded as different and perhaps superior? In order to maintain the difference, women and girls' abilities are derided and belittled as one women's football team discovered:

The footy boys' didn't respect that us women were also there to play football in the women's division. They didn't take us seriously. They would mock us during the game, and a guy even streaked naked out on the field while we were playing. As if we would want to see that!! It made me annoyed at the footy boys, but it didn't stop me from wanting to play football. (Tania, 22 years).

Finally if women insisted on playing male dominated sports and none of the deterrents described above succeeded, they found that they had to play a poor second to the men's teams in terms of resources and support. One woman called it 'structural sexism':

Structural sexism in that the men have reserved time slots eg Saturday while women are supposed to play during the week. It discriminates against women but particularly against working women meant I played less often than I wanted to and could not play in some events as they were only played during the week days reserved for women, rather than on weekends. (Brianna, 55 years).

In the section on sexism in sport below we explore this notion further. In all of the cases described above, many of the social advantages of being part of a sporting team for women were eroded away because of exclusion and punishment and many left their sport. However, despite the many hurdles and punishments to women playing traditional masculine sports, in Victoria there is a thriving women's football league. Griffin (1992) and others (Hillier, 2006) have pointed out the ironies in this. Once women decide that they will play football and become part of a team, regardless of the opposition they face outside, within the team they find a relatively safe space to explore their gender and sexuality. For these women the derision is outweighed by the benefits of the sport, which include female bonding and pleasure in bodily strength and ability. Heterosexual women who play football are already transgressing gender boundaries and those who decide to stay generally do not support negative beliefs about lesbians. Women in this research generally had positive experiences from inside the team of women's football or cricket. As one player said 'women's football is generally very gay-friendly.'

GENDER – MEN

In the same way that women's gender can be called into question if they play sport well, men had their gender and heterosexuality called into question when they played badly or as a way to spur them on to a better performance. By definition, men who play badly cannot be heterosexual men – they must be sissies, girls, or they must be gay.

Mostly guys just mouthing off about sissy faggots. I think they are usually just showing off. (Robert, 44 years).

The coach referred to all as a bunch of fags for not winning the game. I was not yet out to anyone and it reinforced the message that who I was is something to be ashamed of. (Alan, 23 years).

Performance on the field that was anything less than strong, competitive and winning had to be relegated to something other than masculine and heterosexual, it had to be that they were bunches of girls, sissies, pansies and poofers. The impact of being positioned in this way produced in the men feelings such as shame and hurt, and many left the sport because of it. Regardless of the intention of this abuse, it ensured that the players' behaviour was shaped into being more traditionally masculine or they left.

SEXUALITY – WOMEN

Within their own sporting teams, especially traditional feminine teams or sports that were regarded as acceptable for women to play, some women suspected of being lesbian were singled out, shamed and excluded by other players. This compromised the benefits of playing sport, particularly the social benefits, and left little motivation for remaining with the team. The following examples give a sense of this exclusion across a range of sports.

High school volleyball game - snide comments from other players about 'stay away from the dyke' pretty hurtful; at that stage just questioning my sexuality, so it made me a bit upset. (Isabelle, 25 years).

In the car on the way to a soccer game. The car was packed, girls sitting on each others knees in order to fit in. Other team member deliberately avoided sitting near me - I was the only out lesbian on the team. I felt rejected. (Kate, 36 years).

Driving home from the match, she asked me if I had a boyfriend. I said, "no - I have a girlfriend". My team mate was silent for the rest of the car ride and didn't talk to me for the rest of the season. It silenced me. (Sarah, 37 years).

I was a member of an all female dragon boat team in Melbourne. I think I was the only lesbian in the team and when they found that out, I was pretty much ignored during training sessions. (Anna, 50 years).

I got bitch-slapped (excuse the colloquialism) by a member of my own team and called a dyke for befriending a girl from the opposing team. I was fairly sure I was attracted to girls by this stage, and when I failed to deny that I might be a dyke I became alienated from a number of friends and team-mates. Lost interest in netball, lost a number of friends, effectively the event outed-me to all, including my own family. (Vanessa, 22 years).

The examples above are about other team members punishing women they thought were lesbians, however, this was not restricted to team members. Even spectators became involved in homophobic abuse.

A spectator kept yelling "get the dyke" to the people on the other team. (Danielle, 35 years).

The impact of the abuse of suspected lesbians within a team was to 'cleanse' the team of anyone who was not heterosexual so as to maintain the legitimate heterosexual nature of the team. Where women played traditionally masculine team sports, whole teams of players were regarded as lesbian and were subjected to abuse. This was especially the case with traditionally masculine sports such as football and cricket, but also when a team had a number of 'out' women on it. Rather than one team member being labelled and ostracised, the whole team could suffer this label.

We were a team of mainly lesbians of mixed ages. At a fairly parochial prominent Melbourne club, we were harassed by the other team and their supporters- called 'transsexuals' had our equipment stolen and things thrown at our cars. Made me angry and as a team, we never played at that ground again - just forfeited games. (Danielle, 35 years).

SEXUALITY – MEN

'A gay male athlete violates both the image of athletes as strong, virile and heterosexual and the image of gay men as swishy and homosexual' (Griffin, 1992, p. 25).

One finding of this study was that men were significantly less likely to play team sport than women (45.0% versus 62.0%, $p < .01$). The stories that men told about their experiences in team sport illustrate very clearly why this difference exists. Though women were often excluded for being lesbian by their team mates, the potential for the abuse of men who were suspected of non-heterosexuality was more serious. Women who played traditionally masculine team sports were almost expected to be lesbian, however, the idea that there might be a gay man on the men's team was unconscionable for other men who, because of the male-to-male intimacy and bonding, needed to believe that all were heterosexual and that they were not the object of a male sexual gaze. As Griffin wrote:

'Maintaining the myths that all male athletes are heterosexual and that sexual attraction among male athletes does not occur allows men to enjoy the physical and emotional intimacy of the ... team experience. They do not need to worry that team mates might think they are gay [or that someone else on the team is gay] (p. 26).

In men's team sports such as football, there are opportunities for intimacy and emotional expression that rarely exist outside the game. However this can only safely occur if all the men are believed to be heterosexual. It leaves gay men having two options. Pass as heterosexual or leave the game. Often abuse was directed at getting men believed or known to be gay off the team.

School - just name calling, and straight guys not wanting to let you be involved because you are gay. It made me not want to participate in sport, or try to participate. (Alexander, 27 years).

In terms of sexual transgression, men who played team sports and who were suspected of being gay knew that they were likely to be unsafe in change rooms and toilets. These are the places where homophobic abuse will occur and so they need to be avoided. In many cases, the punishment or fear of it led to withdrawal from the sport.

Ever tried to shower after a game if you are gay in the country? I do not shower until I get home. (Ethan, 32 years).

Toilets. Got bashed/robbed/humiliated. [I became] depressed, scared and angry. I withdrew and reported it to police. (Aden, 40 years).

Other gay men who witnessed the homophobic slurs and abuse became galvanised in their intentions to keep their same- sex attractions hidden. One finding of the research was that men in team sports were less likely to be out than those in individual team sports (55% vs 43%, $p < .00$). Clearly there is a protective aspect to this behaviour which was echoed in what the men had to say:

You'd hear gay jokes and things every now and then. I think that's why I didn't come out. (Matthew, 26 years).

A guy was mouthing off about another player saying that he's glad he did have to play him cause he is gay. It certainly made me question how I should react. If I say anything...what would be his reaction? Is it better to just ignore it? (Gavin, 41 years).

Members of my team identified an opponent as being gay and proceed to degrade the player on and off the court. I decided not to share the fact that I was gay. (Colin, 39 years).

Sexuality and experiences of homophobia also impacted on participant's choice of sport. For example, 45.0% of the men would have loved to play Australian Rules Football and in fewer cases, other football codes, but did not because of the risks of abuse. The following responses were to the questions about sports that men would have loved to play but did not because of their sexuality:

Would have loved to play football at school but that would have NEVER happened. (Joseph, 39 years).

I'd like to start playing rugby but have been a little bit worried about what my team-mates would think/do if they found out I was attracted to men. (Keith, 21 years).

Started playing football when I was younger and would have liked to play again after having a break for a couple seasons when I was in my teens but some of the guys I used to play with were big on derogatory comments of gays and referred it to a lot of guys who weren't necessarily gay. Just was an easier option not to play again. Now I have 2 friends who play football locally but wont even contemplate being "out" because of the backlash. If the other guys knew they were, then I'm sure there would be ramifications of it. (Bryan, 27 years).

AFL. Also I would like to participate with other guys from work in their sporting activities, however because they know I am gay I am not asked. (Alexander, 27 years).

Few men in traditional masculine team sports have openly declared their homosexuality. In Australian Rules Football no player has ever announced that he is gay though rumours abound. Clearly, the range of subtle and not so subtle pressures on gay football players to pass or leave are incredibly successful, and at this stage the heterosexual veneer remains in tact.

In summary, one can see from the forgoing narratives from gay men and lesbians in this research that strong sanctions are actively used against sportspeople who violate gender and sexual norms. These sanctions take many forms including verbal slurs and insults, threats, physical assaults and

general exclusionary practices, and they have a negative impact on the players they are directed against, as well as other players within their teams.

SPORTING CLIMATES

The social climates (i.e. hostile, conditionally tolerant, and open and inclusive) present within a particular sporting environment often influence the type of experience an LGBT person will have in sport. The participants in this study were invited to tell us about the benefits, challenges, issues and experiences of being out or not out in their sport. Participants' responses highlighted the characteristics of the three social climates which most often determined whether they concealed or were open about their sexuality and whether this experience was a positive or a negative one. Most responses were indicative of a hostile or an open and inclusive social climate.

Many male and female participants involved in mainstream sport were confronted by a hostile sporting environment which forced them to keep their sexuality hidden. They perceived their sporting environment was not safe to come out as LGBT due to possible abuse, threats, exclusion and even violence, especially for males.

There is a strong heteronormative culture, always ongoing indications that any other forms of masculinity (apart from hegemonic type) are met with disapproval and, at times, hostility. (Trent, 33 years).

Homophobic male only school. One reason I chose running was that it was relatively less aggressively homophobic than team sports like football. I could run my own race. (Michael, 47 years).

I was young and unsure of my sexuality. When I realised I was in fact gay, the culture of sport and people involved intimidated me into not coming out. (Samuel, 39 years).

It's dangerous to be out in mainstream sport. (Ethan, 32 years).

I would like to be out, but a local footy league hardly seems the place for it. Who knows, maybe it wouldn't be so bad. I'm just not sure if I should take the risk. (Matthew, 26 years).

Too scary to be out in the gym. (Trent, 33 years).

I was once afraid of being judged. I was also confused about my sexuality until age 27! (Nicole, 31 years).

To avoid possible harassment, I told no one. (Alison, 20 years).

I did not feel safe to come out. (Madison, 62 years).

I'm not out because I don't want people to judge and speculate about who I am because I fell in love with someone whom they don't approve. I also don't feel the need to bare all about myself to any random person. (Valentina, 19 years).

In addition to the fear of possible abuse, threats, exclusion and even violence, a hostile sporting climate is also characteristic when no one in the sport has publicly affirmed that they are LGBT, reinforcing the perception that it is not safe to come out.

As the gyms were definitely heterosexual (in the outer suburbs) I would be very uncomfortable revealing myself as gay as it might generate negative reactions from others. In any case nothing is really gained by outing myself when there are no signs of other gays. I came out only three years ago and am well used to acting straight. (Brock, 60 years).

I wasn't out at the time, I was scared of what people would think of me and that I might be targeted, plus I didn't know anyone that was out so I didn't have any support. (Mary, 24 years).

Some sports workers discussed how a hostile climate can include discrimination against LGBT sports workers exists in selection and career development processes of the sport.

When coaching – was in the process of coming out, but closeted around the team I was coaching as it would have been a huge issue. The young people I coached were predominantly of a religion that is very anti-gay. I was very concerned that I could be accused of something because of the lack of understanding. (Paige, 29 years).

I was not out to myself at this stage. I remember being told that I was a lesbian at about 10 (years old) by co-participants. Didn't know what it meant. I would have possibly felt uncomfortable, or felt that others were, due to everyone being dressed in leotards. May have felt that if I was out, parents may not have trusted me with their children...there is a lot of physical contact when coaching, and people may have misinterpreted this if I was out... (Amy, 26 years).

Many female participants, who were out in their sport, highlight individual and social facilitators of open and inclusive sports environments. These include confidence, positive self esteem concerning ones sexual and sporting identity, having a number of LGBT people out in the sports club to provide affirmation and support for other LGBT people and a friendly and supportive sports club environment for all members.

There are a number of team members who identify as lesbian/gay so everyone is easy to get on with and the other members who are not gay are 'gay friendly' (Anna, 50 years).

I was hesitant at first to be out, but it became easy one I knew I wasn't the only gay person playing. (Amelia, 23 years).

It was fine to be out, there were a number of lesbian girls within the club, and no-one had an issue with it. (Zoe, 38 years).

Ultimate Frisbee is a very friendly sport so most people are tolerant of difference. (Julia, 27 years).

Although Ultimate Frisbee in Australia does not have a large number of queer/gay players who are 'out' and the predominant culture is heterosexual, I have felt comfortable playing and socialising within the community with my female partner. I am also comfortable with the wider Frisbee community knowing that I have a girlfriend. This may be due to the fact that many players are also friends who know us very well on and off the field. Ultimate Frisbee also prides itself on its status as an 'alternative' sport. (Gabrielle, 28 years).

Being 'out' didn't present any challenges for me. I was amongst friends who were aware of my sexuality and very accepting. I don't think my sexuality played any significant part in my participation with the sport. (Kelsey, 21 years).

There were few male participants in mainstream sport who were out and discussed an open and inclusive climate, but those who did had similar experiences of an open and inclusive climate to the female participants.

I found it very positive, most of the guys on the team I played were curious about what it meant to be gay. This actually made me wonder more about their sexuality. (Joe, 36 years).

I came out to my team members and they were fine about it. It was much easier then as I could talk about my partner and other aspects of my life with ease. (Isaac, 50 years).

Dancing – it was more than ok to be gay. When I was doing weights I was not publically out but would not deny if asked. (Jordan, 50 years).

I could write a book about my experiences being a gay man sailing but in a nutshell, it has never been a problem, almost all ocean sailors of all ages are a bit bent in their own way and I have always felt welcomed throughout our club...whether that is in spite of or because of my sexuality I have never really worked out, probably a bit of both. (Adam, 54 years).

DISCRIMINATION IN SPORT

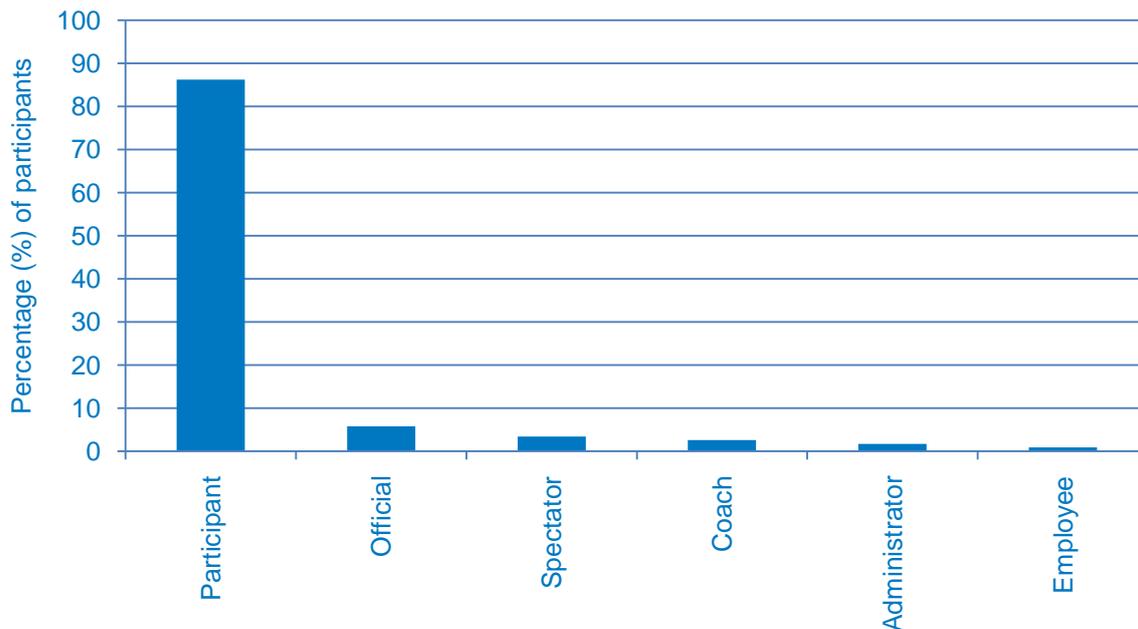
Participants were invited to answer a number of closed questions about their experiences of homophobia and sexism in sport. The following sections examine these responses.

VERBAL HOMOPHOBIA

41.5% of participants experienced verbal homophobia at some time during their involvement in sport. In terms of frequency, 40.0% reported 'once', 57.6% 'often' and 2.4% 'always'. Approximately 87.0% of participants reported that their experience of verbal homophobia affected them in some way. Female participants reported more of this abuse than male and transgender participants (54.6%, 29.2% and 25.0% respectively).

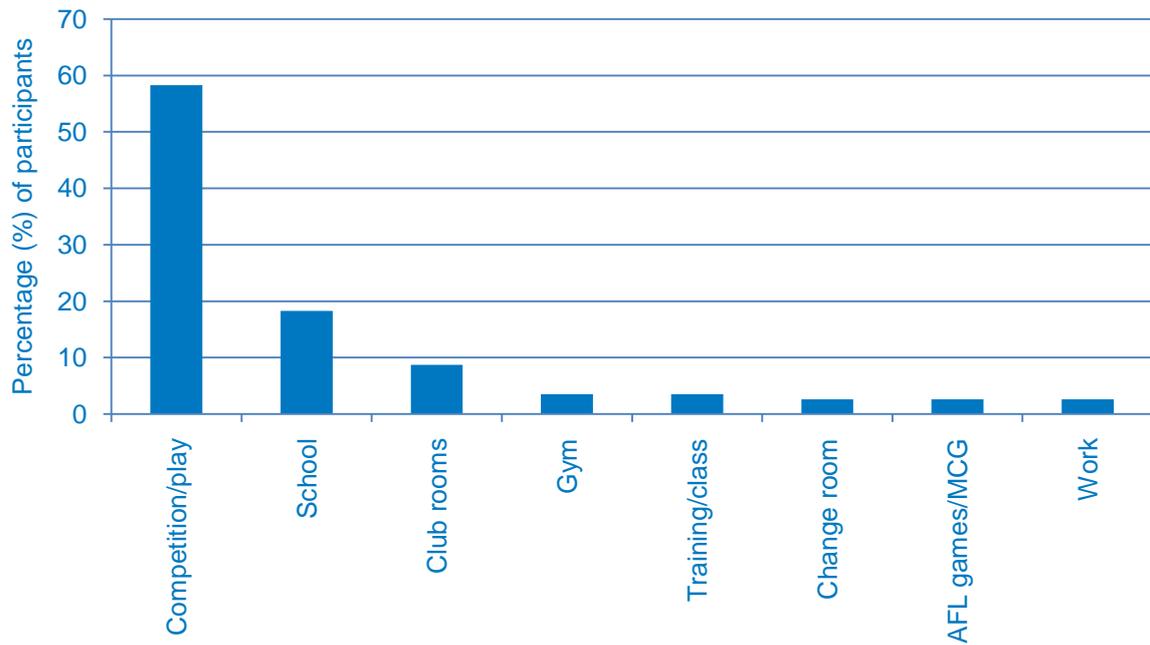
Participants were asked to recall a time when they experienced verbal homophobia and to answer a series of questions relating to the event. They were also asked how they were involved in sport when the verbal homophobia occurred. The results are provided in Figure 12. These results show that 86.2% of those who had experienced verbal homophobia experienced it as an active participant/player, 5.8% an official and 3.4% a spectator.

FIGURE 12 TYPE OF SPORT INVOLVEMENT WHEN THE VERBAL HOMOPHOBIA OCCURRED



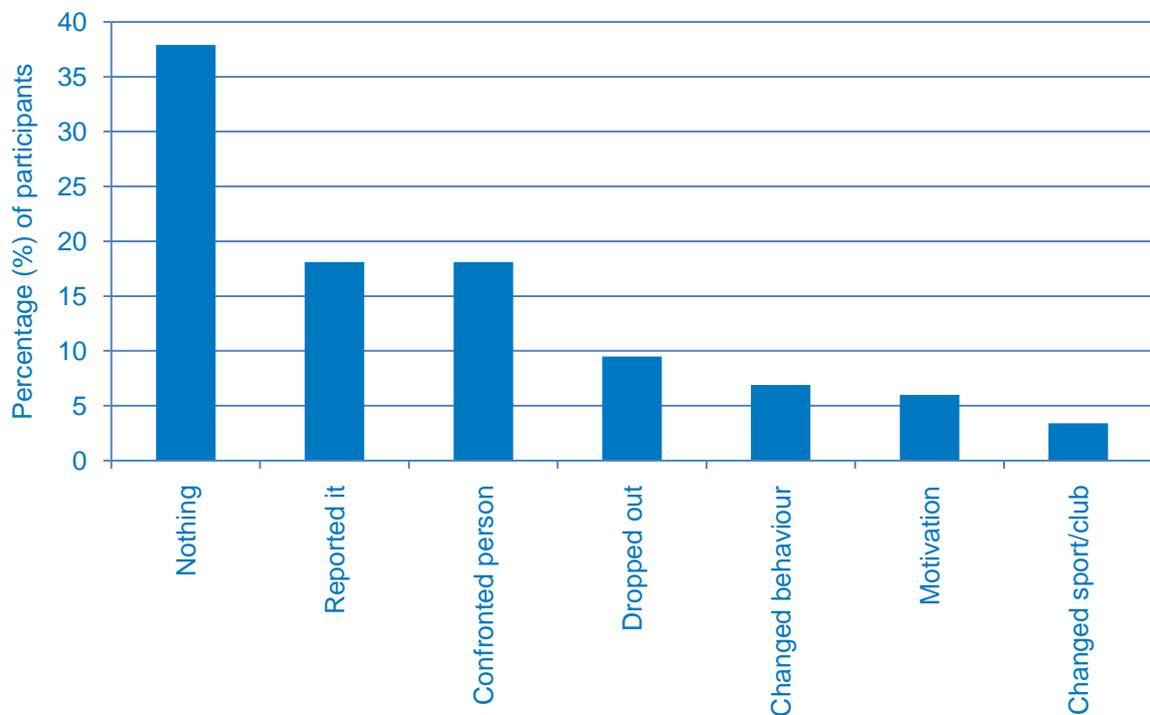
Participants were asked to identify where the verbal homophobia occurred. The results are provided in Figure 13. The most frequent sites of verbal homophobia in sport were experienced during competition or play (58.3%), at school (18.3%) and in the club rooms (8.7%).

FIGURE 13 SITES OF VERBAL HOMOPHOBIA



Participants were also asked what they did about their experience of verbal homophobia. The results are provided in Figure 14. These results show that the majority of participants did nothing.

FIGURE 14 PARTICIPANT REACTIONS TO OCCURRENCES OF VERBAL HOMOPHOBIA



The most common response (35.0%) to the homophobic abuse directed at them was to do nothing. Doing nothing is one strategy to deescalate conflict but is likely to have no impact on the problem of homophobia.

I was called a 'butch dyke' by an opposing player in a team golf competition. I was upset and embarrassed at the time... mostly due to my age. (Kirsten, 33 years).

Some male soccer players shouted abuse like 'fucking dykes' etc and crossed the road. I felt angry and upset. (Julia, 27 years).

Teasing, name-calling, jokes, low-level physical assault (eg dacking, towel flicking, name-calling etc). Looking back now, a lot was just adolescent horse-play, but for a boy like me convinced I was a sinner, sick and a criminal, it piled up shame and self-loathing. (Michael, 47 years).

Just accusations -- poof, faggot, etc... of course, I hated myself. (Elijah, 31 years).

Of those who did nothing, the main emotions attached to the experience of abuse were embarrassment, shame and self loathing. In contrast, 16.0% of those who were abused confronted the abuser and their emotional reactions to abuse were feeling offended and angry. The distinctions between these two clusters of emotions are important. In those who did nothing, the reactions were directed inward and were negative. In other words, the abuse was taken on and translated into negative feelings about the self. In those who confronted the emotions were directed outward in negative feelings towards the abusers.

Team members who didn't know I was gay were making disgusting comments about other gays in other teams at an end of the year presentation night - I let them have it!! I was deeply offended that they had these views. (Hannah, 45 years).

Lawn bowls green. Homophobic comment not directed at me. I said I am offended. No apology but instead homophobic comment directed at me and my partner. (Jayden, 40 years).

My opponent who knew I was gay accused me of a cheating and kept calling me poofter. I was furious and told him I was not a cheat and to stop calling me poofter. (Isaac, 50 years).

PHYSICAL ASSAULT

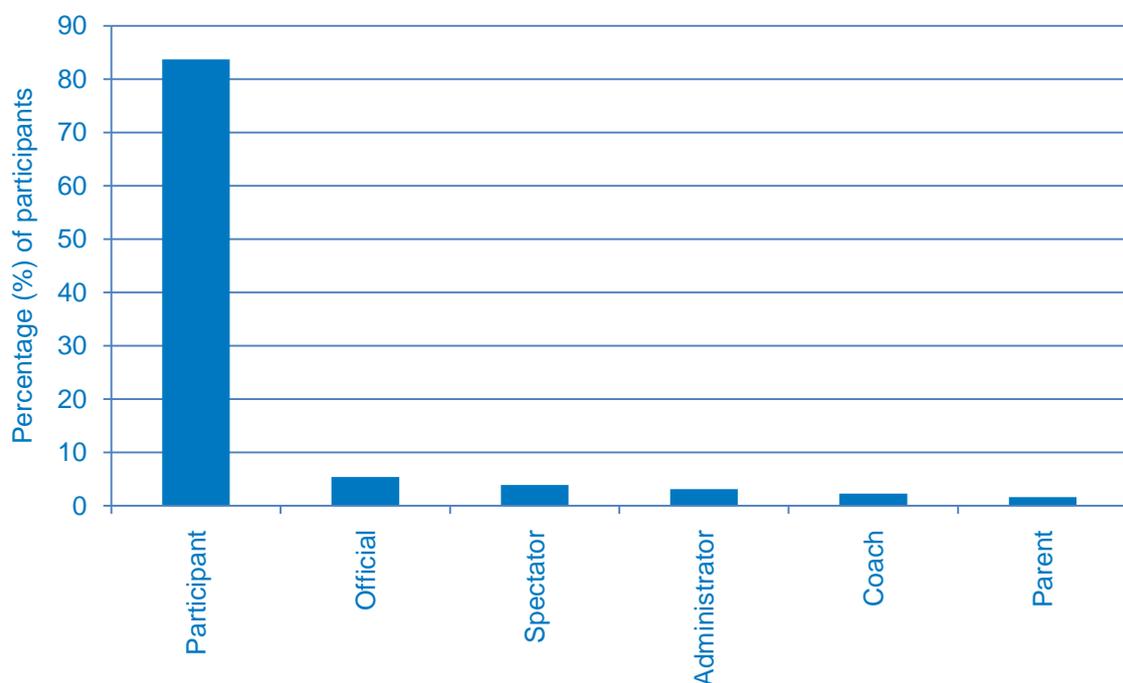
Eight (3.0%) participants (5 males and 3 females) reported an experience of physical homophobic assault at some time during their involvement in sport. In terms of frequency, five participants reported 'once', two participants reported 'often' and one participant reported 'always'. Seven were playing sport and one was coaching when the assault took place. Physical assault was not reported by any transgender participants. When asked to identify the site of the physical assault, responses included during play, in the change rooms, at school and in the gym.

SEXISM

42.7% of participants reported experiencing sexism during their involvement in sport. Of these participants, 18.6% reported 'once', 72.9% reported 'often' and 8.5% reported 'always'. 86.2% of participants reported that their experience of sexism had an impact on them. Transgender participants reported the most sexism, followed by female participants and male participants (66.7%, 54.6% and 28.6% respectively). Participants were asked to recall an experience of sexism and to answer questions relating to that particular event.

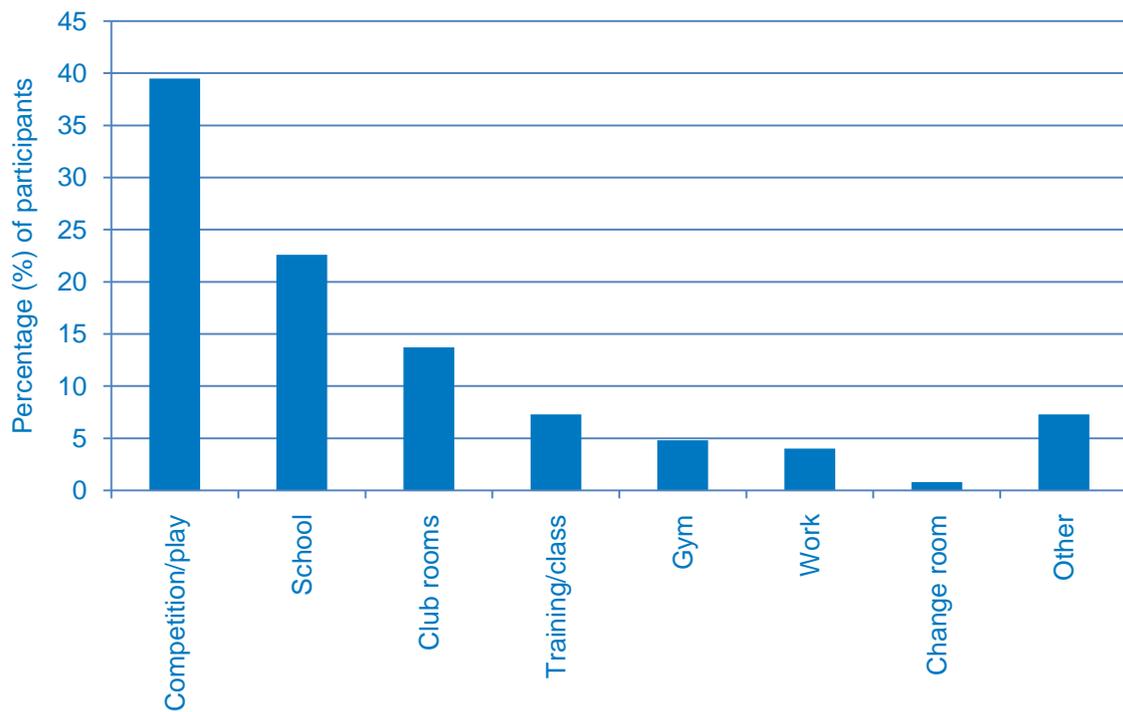
Participants were asked how they were involved in sport when the sexism occurred. The results are provided in Figure 15. They show that 83.7% of respondents experienced sexism as a participant, 5.4% as an official and 3.9% as a spectator.

FIGURE 15 TYPE OF SPORT INVOLVEMENT WHEN THE SEXISM OCCURRED



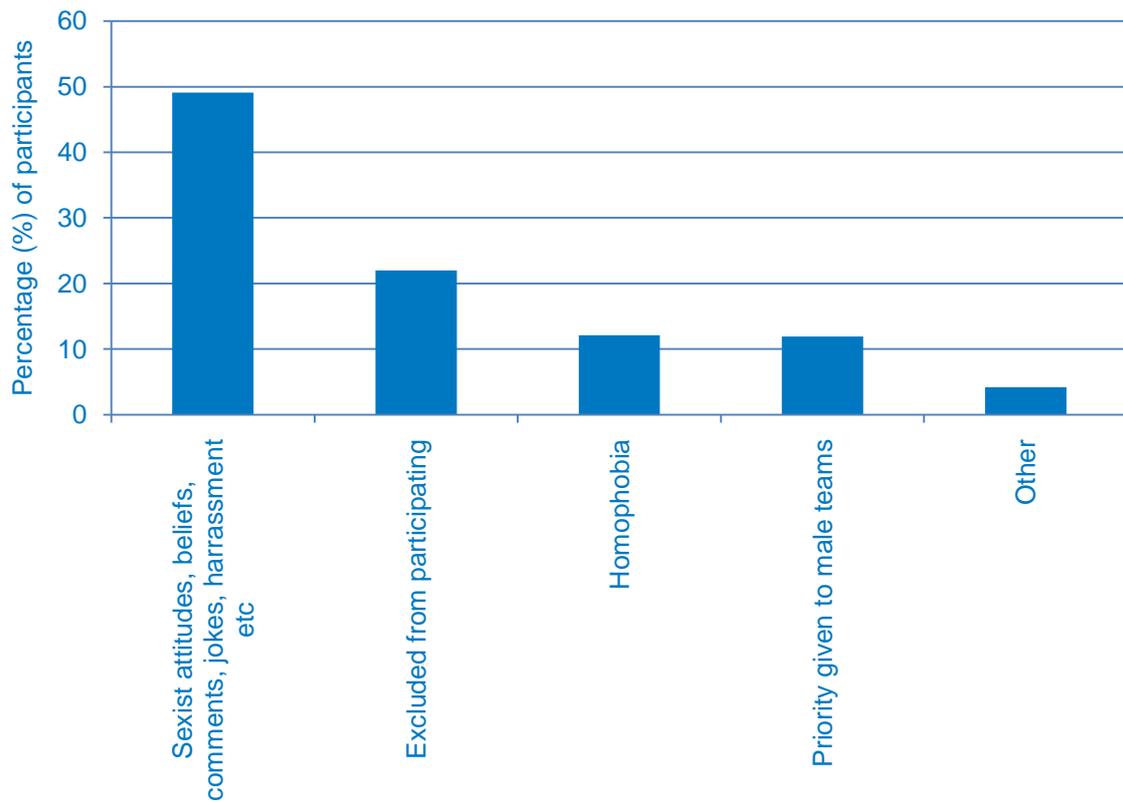
Participants were asked to identify the site at which the sexism occurred. The results are provided in Figure 16. These results show that 39.5% of participants experienced sexism during competition or play. The second most frequent site of sexism was at school (22.6%), followed by in the club rooms (13.7%). These sites of sexism are similar to the reported sites of verbal homophobia.

FIGURE 16 SITES OF SEXISM



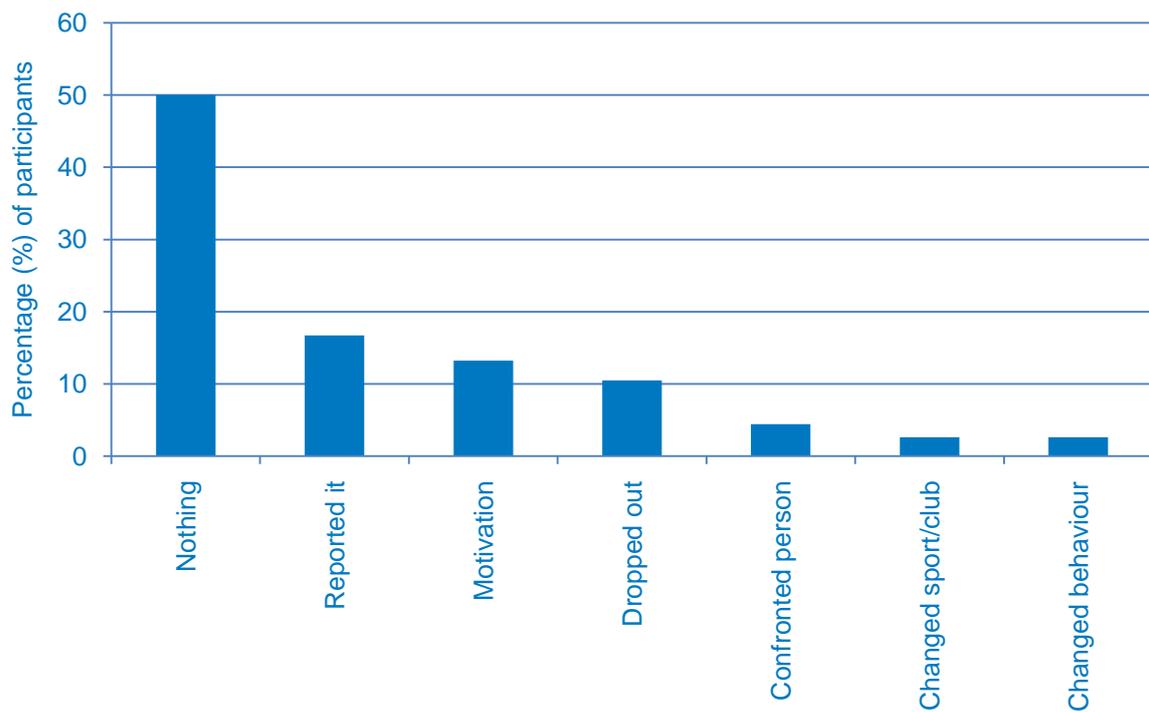
Participants were asked to explain what happened and what impact it had on them. All responses were analysed for common themes and they are shown in Figure 17. Sexist attitudes, beliefs, comments, jokes and harassment were the most frequent experiences reported (49.1%), followed by being excluded from participating (22.0%). 12.1% of participants identified occurrences of sexism that were also homophobic.

FIGURE 17 WHAT HAPPENED WHEN THE SEXISM OCCURRED



Participants were asked what they did about their experience of sexism (see Figure 18). Half of the participants reported that they did nothing and only 16.7% of participants reported the behaviour.

FIGURE 18 PARTICIPANT REACTIONS TO OCCURRENCES OF SEXISM



TRANSGENDER EXPERIENCES IN SPORT

Twelve participants identified as transgender. A further two participants, although identifying as male and female, were also transgender. *Come Out To Play* is the first study to examine the sporting experiences of transgender people in Australia. While this number may appear low, the transgender population is both small and difficult to access. Acknowledging the sample size, the results do provide an important initial insight into the sporting experiences and challenges of transgender Victorian's. It also highlights the need for further and more comprehensive research in this area.

The general health and wellbeing and the extent of discrimination experienced by transgender people in Australia provides an important broader context into which the sport experiences of transgender Victorian's can be situated. Couch et al. (2007) documented the general health and wellbeing of transgendered people in Australia and New Zealand in a first ever comprehensive study involving 253 participants. Participants rated their health using a five point scale from 'poor' to 'excellent'. 35.2 per cent rated their health as 'good' and a further 28.9 per cent as 'very good'. Whilst a majority considered themselves in good health these ratings were still comparably lower to those reported in the Australian National Health Survey (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2006). The picture of mental health for participants was concerning showing "a rate of depression much higher than levels of depression in the general Australian population" (pp. 7 & 26-28). Suicidal ideation was also high.

Couch et al. (2007) noted that there were many reasons for this high depression some of which is, or is not related to gender identity. Eighty-seven per cent of participants also reported experiencing 'at least one form of stigma or discrimination on the basis of gender, including: verbal abuse; social exclusion; threats of violence (a third of participants); having rumours spread about them and; being refused employment or promotion. The report makes a direct link with this discrimination and depression (p. 9). Reducing such discrimination through education and direct social action, as well as promoting the social inclusion of this marginalised section of Australian society is timely.

The survey also asked participants to identify what they did to sustain their health and wellbeing:

The main things that most participants mentioned as ways in which they took care of themselves were eating well and exercising regularly (p. 28).

Walking was the most popular regular exercise cited by participants. Other activities included cycling, running, swimming, yoga, Pilates, tai chi, kung fu, belly dancing, salsa, rock climbing, golf, going to the gym, and playing basketball.

Couch et al. (2007) did not go into the physical activity and sport participation rates, barriers and facilitators for transgender people. Considering the benefits of sport and physical activity to physical and mental health as well as to social inclusion and cohesion, it is a research and policy gap worth filling.

A brief overview of the rigid sex/gender binaries that provide the framework for the competitive, organisational and social aspects of sport is required to fully appreciate the challenges faced by many transgender people in their sports participation at recreational and elite levels. Most sports are divided into male and female teams and / or competition categories. Training and socialising, especially in team sports, are also separated by gender. There are separate change rooms in which sports participants display their bodies to others when showering and changing into and out of sports uniforms. Bodies can also be on display in revealing sports attire (bathers, lycra running suits, cycling gear etc) and during the process of drug testing (i.e. urine samples). Drug testing also

assumes 'normal' parameters for male and female hormone levels. Sexed anatomies are presumed to be distinctly male (i.e. penis, testes, no breasts, XY chromosomes) and female (i.e. labia, vagina, breasts, XX chromosomes). Males are assumed to have deep voices and be larger, more muscular, tougher, more aggressive and better at sport than women. However, not all people fit into this 'oppositional' two sexes and two genders model of humanity.

The organisation of sport into two distinct and oppositional categories based on a simplistic view of sex and gender makes sports participation particularly difficult for transgender and intersex peoples. The concluding paper by the Australian Human Rights Commission (AHRC), titled *2009 Sex Files: the legal recognition of sex in documents and government records* opens its discussion on how sex and gender is defined in multiple ways:

There are various legal, social, medical and scientific opinions and theories about what constitutes sex and what constitutes gender. There is no consensus about the definition of sex or gender.

Furthermore, transgender and intersex people do not define/identify themselves and their lived experience through simple categories of sex and gender (Australian Human Rights Commission, 2009; Couch et al., 2007). The Australian Human Rights Commission (AHRC) paper describes the variability in sex and gender (better defined as sex and gender diversity) and that a person's sex and/or gender is a central part of a person's personal identity.⁴ The AHRC advocates that 'every person has the right for their sex and/or gender identity to be recognised and respected'. Recommendations 2 and 3 of *Sex Files*⁵ support the Commission's findings that sex and gender identity should be defined according to the lived social identity of the person, rather than being over-determined by medical procedures and evidence.⁵ This recommendation presents some major challenges for sport at all levels. A number of *Come Out To Play* participants indicated their difficulty with the two sexed/gendered sports model in many of their responses. They also highlighted general ignorance and prejudice concerning transgender issues within many of the sporting communities they had been involved in, experiences of discrimination based on this ignorance and prejudice, a lack of policies to enable their participation in sport, and concerns with using change rooms, being accepted and fitting in:

I play on a mixed team in 5-a-side indoor football comp. Rules state there must be two women on field for each team at all times. As a transwoman I am out to my team but not to others in the competition. I am always worried that my trans status will jeopardise my ability to participate in the sport should someone decide that I'm "really a man". (Isaac, transgender male, 50 years).

As a TGirl unless you're very, very passable - you're not accepted. (Alice, transgender female, 49 years).

I never had an issue when I identified as a dyke, but since I have come out again as transgendered (FTM), I have found that it is quite hard for people to understand how they can

⁴ This variability will not be described here. Please go to the AHRC report pp. 7-8 for this information. Also see Symons, C. and Hemphill, D. (2006) 'Transgendering sex and sport in the Gay Games' in Caudwell, J (ed) *sport, sexualities and queer/theory*, Routledge: London, pp. 109-128.

⁵ Recommendation 2: The definition of sex affirmation treatment should be broadened so that surgery is not the only criteria for a change in legal sex.

Recommendation 3: The evidentiary requirements for the legal recognition of sex should be relaxed by reducing the quantity of medical evidence required and making greater allowance for people to self-identify their sex.

best respect my gender. Especially in archery (my secondary sport), I effectively cannot compete as I am classed as a female competitor. (Danny, transgender male, 38 years).

Since completing transition I am going to start playing next year. I am out, as I come from a country area and there is little to no way of getting around this issue of people knowing me. I am really "onto" the fact that policy and procedure is behind the eight ball in regards to protecting me when I play and I want to get that changed ASAP! (Bradley, transgender male, 25 years).

Swimming - I am too conscious of my body and the dangers associated with being trans in a change room. (Miguel, transgender male, 27 years).

Angie (transgender female, 51 years) gave a very detailed account of the challenges she experienced in queer and mainstream sport – sailing - which included lack of acceptance, discrimination, change room and inclusive policy issues, lack of education to address transgender discrimination, medical and drug testing issues.

I was out to all in my life and associated with the event when I competed in the Gay Games in Sydney in 2002 in sailing, but found that some others (in a gay sailing club - NOT all, by any means, but one of the main problem people was a senior official) were not very accepting of me as a female (because of their biases [discrimination] against trans people, and that played a large part in me choosing to give up competitive sailing after the Gay Games. Being trans also caused problems in one mainstream regatta that I competed in, where other women left a change room because my voice is deep and sounds male (I am, incidentally, post-operative). That experience also caused me to have reservations about joining any other sailing club.

I have seen some trans-friendly policies in yachting organisations recently, but I do not know how well those policies are supported with education (have asked, but received no satisfactory replies), so have decided not to join any clubs.

There are medical issues around me competing as well: one of the medical drugs I take (and will for the rest of my life) is Aldactone, and that is on the [prohibited list, so I have to stuff around getting permission etc in case of any drug tests. (On that, I also do not know whether or not I would be required to be tested by a male or female drug official: again, no-one has answered my queries on that.)

In the meantime, when I can get to a suitable financial state, I plan on building a boat and sailing on my own.

Right now, I do not trust many people in the world of sailing, and so chose to avoid that environment. That is saddening, but I have had enough discrimination and ignorance for several lifetimes, and don't want to have to go through all the crap questions - IF I find somewhere where the policies are genuinely held to.

Not all survey participants experienced these challenges in their sports participation.

One participant commented that there were a number of transgender peoples in her sport and she was very accepted:

I present as a female and participate dressed as a female. The sports I participate in are very accepting as there are a number of transgender people. (Annie, transgender female, 55 years).

Another discussed being accepted but at the same time experiencing difficulty fitting in because she/he was more gender queer than male or female:

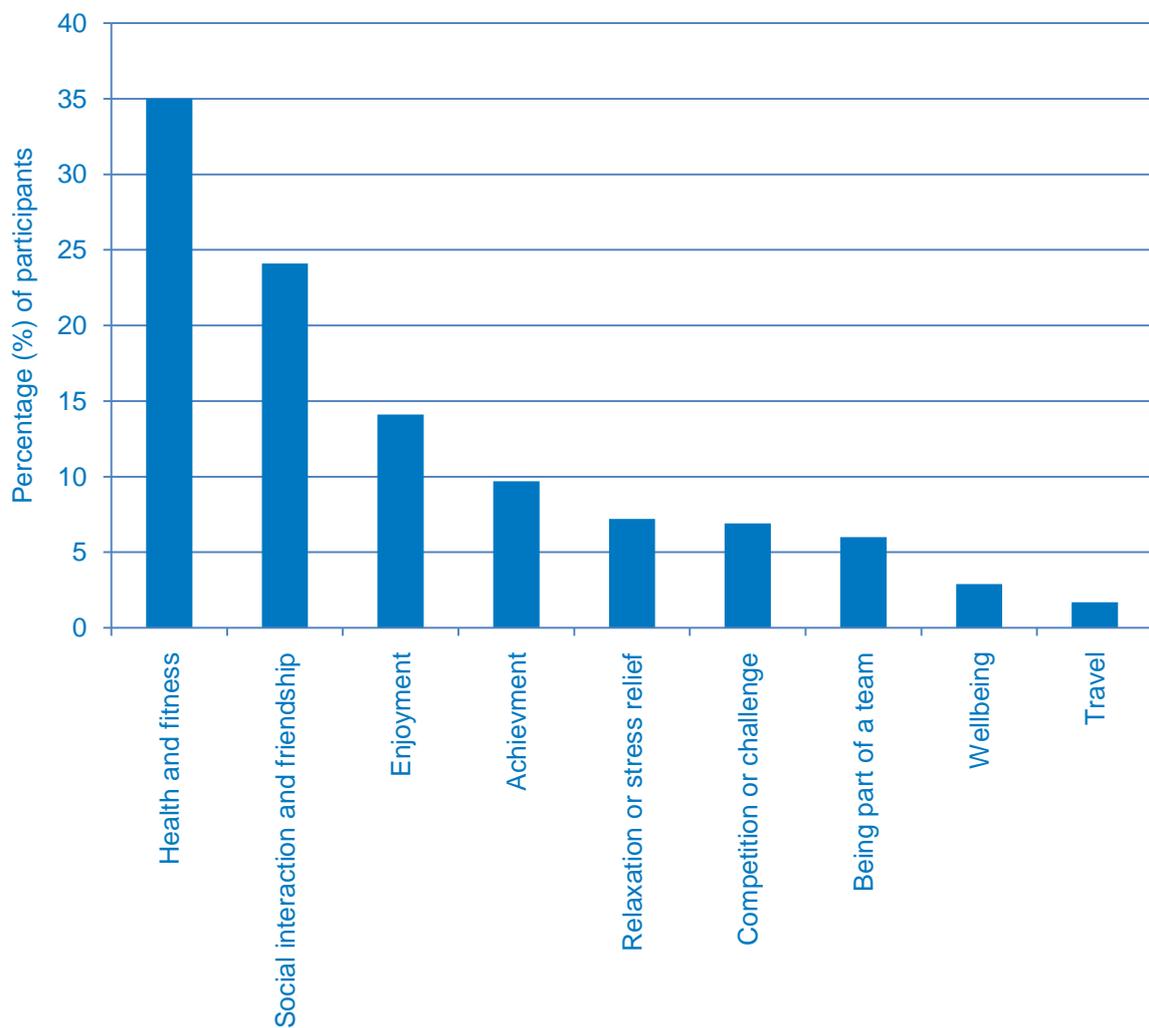
In women's groups/pelotons I felt a bit of an oddity though there was no homophobia really. The guys just treated me like one of the guys - but it was a little harder to keep up as there were more professional/experienced riders in male dominated groups due to woeful promotion of women in cycling . I wanted to compete but was aware of being seen as a woman - which is not really me either. Essentially I am pretty much gender queer and am very aware of male and female divides. I'd like to see more mixed events / competitions based on times/ levels etc. rather than gender. (Casey, transgender – does not identify as male or female, 35 years).

In summary, these responses provide an important initial insight into the sporting lives of transgender Victorians. There needs to be more substantial research of these experiences, as well as a better understanding of the policy context and challenges the rigid two-sexed and gendered sports model presents to transgender people.

BENEFITS OF SPORT

Participants were asked to identify the benefits of their sport participation. This was an open ended question and the results are provided in Figure 19. These data show that 35.0% of participants identified health and fitness as the main reason for participation in sport and physical activity. This was followed by social interaction/friendship (24.1%) and enjoyment (14.1%). Similarly, the Australian population reported health and fitness as the main reason for engaging in physical activity (ABS, 2002). However, enjoyment was ranked second, followed by wellbeing and then social or family reasons (ABS, 2002). This data suggests that LGBT people value social interaction from sport and physical activity more than the general Australian population.

FIGURE 19 REPORTED BENEFITS OF SPORT PARTICIPATION



BEST SPORTING EXPERIENCE

There are so many, but one that comes to mind ... I had sailed my boat for the first time ever from Melbourne to Sydney for the Olympics and we were approaching the heads after having had a pretty rough trip and I thought of my father, who had taught me how to sail and who had died a year earlier, and how proud he would have been of me, and at that moment the sky just filled with images of him. As we did the procession down Sydney Harbour towards the bridge, I felt like the happiest guy alive. (Adam, 54 years).

Winning. Winning against people who attacked me based on my sexuality and/or gender. The single best experience however was watching my younger sister (also gay) play for my former basketball side - out and proud. She won, wearing rainbow shoelaces and on court with her girlfriend... playing for a team I had been forced to leave a few years earlier because I couldn't stand the discrimination from other teams and players. Progress! (Vanessa, 22 years).

Participants were invited to tell us about one of the very best experiences they have had in sport. It was clear from their responses that participants gained a lot from their involvement in sport. This question was open ended and the responses were analysed to identify the main themes, which included: personal accomplishment; being part of a team; winning; participating in queer sporting teams; competing in the Gay Games and Outgames; being accepted for who they are; and making a positive contribution to sport and the LGBT community. Participant responses for each category are provided below.

Most participants reported personal accomplishments as their best experience of sport. This included achieving personal and sport-based goals, improving existing skills and learning new skills.

A personal best during around the bay 210kms. Everything just fit into place during the ride. I did it alone. (Casey, transgender – does not identify as male or female, 35 years).

In rock climbing having a wall that you keep coming back to until you hit the top is a good thing. It may take a long time to finally hit the top (months) but when you do it gives you that sense of "if I can succeed here, I can succeed in life in general". (Andrew, 25 years).

Competing in my very first Triathlon last year and beating the odds and completing and not stopping and giving it up. Best feeling. (Ashley, 36 years).

Many participants reported being part of a team as their best experience. This included feeling a sense of belonging, sharing victories together, the friendships formed and the social interaction associated with team sport.

A VFL grand final win. The team played through torrential rain, and came from behind to take out a convincing win. Back in the rooms after the presentations, they gathered the staff in their circle to sing the club song. It was one true moment when we were all inclusive, they may play the game, but they know it is us (the staff) who get them there. It is that memory that keeps me going back. Male, 41 years. (Stephen, 41 years).

We won a gold medal for women's footy at the Australian university games. It was great because we had been working hard as a team all year, focusing on our skills, and bonding with each other. We won gold not because we had the best skills, but because we worked the best as

a team, supporting each other. So we were ecstatic when we won, because we knew we deserved it. (Tanya, 22 years).

Some participants reported winning as the best experience. This included winning single races and games, to championships and grand finals. Rewards such as medals and recognition from others featured prominently in this category.

Participating in the rowing in the 2006 Outgames in Montreal and winning five events, against gay rowers from around the world. This then led to me winning Oarsman of the year from my club, which has been one of my proudest achievements. (Dylan, 40 years).

Scoring my 1st goal this year, everyone cheering and calls after the match congratulating me. Winning Most Improved Player in my first ever season of Basketball. I was surprised to have won the award, and it was a great sense of accomplishment as it was my first ever season in any competitive sport. (Christina, 18 years).

Several participants reported participation in queer sporting teams, the Gay Games and the Outgames as their best sporting experience.

Playing volleyball in the 2002 gay games was awesome because it was uplifting to see so many people who felt comfortable with their physical selves and mentally as well without the aggressive competitiveness one-upmanship and anti-social behaviour of straight sport. (Luke, 41 years).

Playing in the Sydney Gay Games. It was such a positive involvement in the gay community. (Justin, 32 years).

Being accepted for who they are by their team mates was the best experience. This included acceptance in mainstream clubs as well as queer-identified clubs.

The club I play with is primarily for gay men however they welcome all comers as long as they respect all parties. As a transgendered person I have been welcomed to as both a male or female person which was fantastic as some days I feel more female than male. (Daniel, 37 years).

I did competitive power lifting and decided to not announce my sexuality when I took up the sport. My partner came to watch and support me - announcing to all he was the Mrs. Everyone loved him, and later I was told that the other (straight) guys respected me more for not making an issue of my sexuality. They appreciated I liked to sleep with blokes and they liked to sleep with women, and this never got in the way of us being good mates in the club. (Brenden, 40 years).

Several participants reported making a contribution to sport, or making a difference was their best experience.

The first six months of helping to found a new gay soccer club in June-December 2008, as its inaugural Secretary/Public Officer, was terrific. It gave me an interest, I was able to apply my ample knowledge, skills and experience for the benefit of the club and its younger members, and I felt that I was also helping to bridge the gap between older and younger generations in the gay community. I got real pleasure from being in a happy club where everyone respected and got on with the others - for the first six months. I enjoyed seeing our young, enthusiastic, inexperienced

President start to grow into the role. I gained personal satisfaction from my achievements in setting up the club structure and linking to the local municipality. (David, 63 years).

My whole involvement with my football club has been one big highlight. I was on our Executive for eight years, and during that time we were able to build it up to be Australia's biggest club, which included three senior and two junior (u18) teams. It is a place where, as long as you are contributing in a positive manner, you are accepted regardless of your age, ability, background, religion, race, or sexuality. For many young women who are isolated from their families, either physically, socially or emotionally, it has become their family. Whilst we've enjoyed great on field success, the growth and development of our players is our biggest achievement. (Megan, 33 years).

Getting Policy change with the VCFL, to make sure that out transgender players have a place on male teams and that there are things in place to protect them, as well as the offer of education. Transgender (identify as male). (Bradley, 25 years).

Whilst survey participants were fulsome in their discussion of the benefits and best experiences of their sporting lives, they also elaborated on many of the challenges they faced in sport due to their sexuality and / or gender-identity. The next section explores these challenges and exclusionary experiences in sport.

EXCLUSIONS FROM SPORT

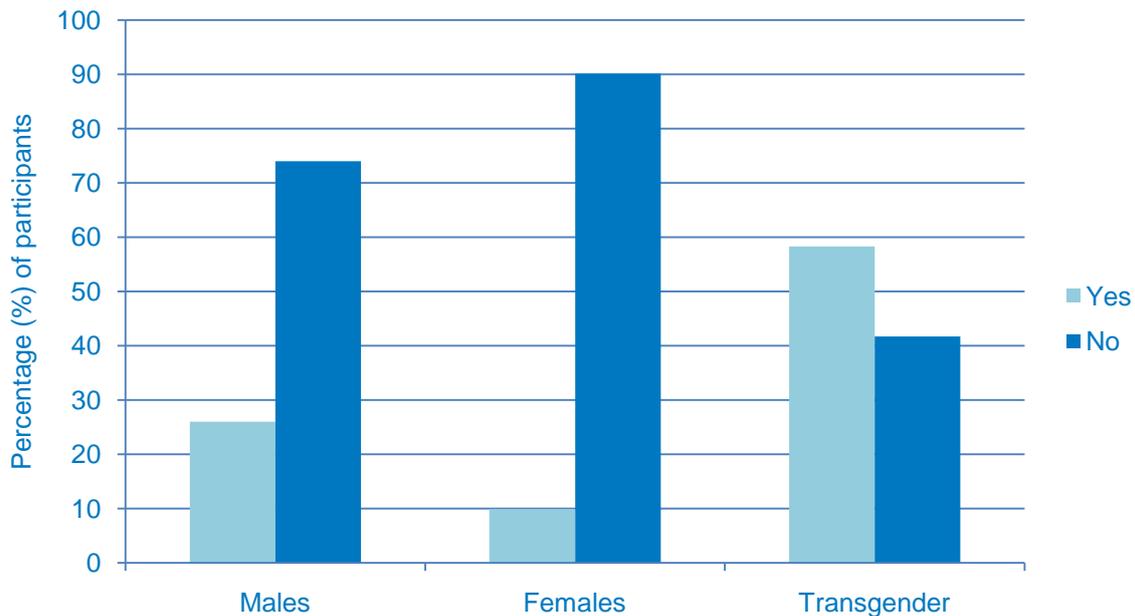
I've always felt sports as a heterosexual activity. Even if I played soccer or hand ball in my physical education class - I never felt my place to be on the field. It seemed to me that it was only straight business going on. (Brady, 20 years).

Soccer and Baseball, both involve a degree of physical contact, which would risk the participants questioning my motivation for playing. (Andy, 25 years).

Often, once outed, homophobia manifests itself in the game and you experience much rougher treatment and physical attack on the field. Any sporting environment with groups of men intimidates me immensely... because of both my sexuality and my gender. (Vanessa, 22 years).

Participants were asked to tell us if there are any sports they would like to play but don't because of their sexuality. The results are shown in Figure 20. These results show that 26.0% of male participants and 9.9% of female participants reported that there were sports they would like to play but did not because of their sexuality. 58.3% of the transgender participants reported that there are sports they would like to play but don't, however, this was due to gender identity rather than sexual identity.

FIGURE 20 ARE THERE ANY SPORTS YOU WOULD LIKE TO PLAY BUT DON'T BECAUSE OF YOUR SEXUALITY?



The most common sport male participants would like to play is Australian Rules Football (45.0%), followed by rugby (17.5%), soccer (10.0%), swimming (7.5%), lawn bowls (5.0%) and netball (5.0%). Some responses from male participants are provided below.

Australian Rules Football in particular, was identified as really challenging sport environment for gay men:

I can't even enjoy watching football, etc, because the whole ethos excludes me and my type - including TV shows on sport -they are frequently homophobic as well as generally excluding 'non-tuff' sensitive male stereotypes. (Christopher, 43 years).

Would have loved to play footy at school but that would have NEVER happened. (Joseph, 39 years).

AFL. Also I would like to participate with other guys from work in their sporting activities, however because they know I am gay I am not asked. (Alexander, 27 years).

Started playing football when I was younger and would have liked to play again after having a break for a couple seasons when I was in my teens but some of the guys I used to play with were big on derogatory comments of gays and refereed it to a lot of guys who weren't necessarily gay. Just was an easier option not to play again. Now I have 2 friends who play football locally but wont even contemplate being "out" because of the backlash. If the other guys knew they were, then I'm sure there would be ramifications of it. (Bryan, 27 years).

AFL too macho in my own mind. (Gregory, 28 years).

Other sports – team and individual - presented challenges for the gay men who were surveyed:

I would love to go back to boxing and try many other activities but I'm afraid I won't click with a sporty straight male crowd. (Liam, 29 years).

Many Uni based games - I find it hard to do things like go scuba diving with people in my scuba club that don't know or have just found out coz they think I'm gonna be looking them up while they change etc. (Alan, 23 years).

No but I have avoided team sports to avoid the name calling and apparent lack of sporting skill. (Derek, 56 years).

I'd like to start playing rugby but have been a little bit worried about what my team-mates would think/do if they found out I was attracted to men. (Keith, 21 years).

Soccer and Baseball, both involve a degree of physical contact, which would risk the participants questioning my motivation for playing. (Andy, 25 years).

One participant enjoyed being a spectator at the football, but found the 'homophobic' environment off putting:

Not so much playing sports, but I would have participated as spectator more when I lived in the country, maybe in Melbourne too, but deliberately chose to avoid a homophobic environment. (Jarred, 56 years).

A significant number of participants were very determined to pursue their sporting passions and did not see or would not allow their sexuality prevent them from doing so:

Cricket for a long time as I played tennis growing up and saw the cricket club like a football club but I loved cricket. But after coming to terms with myself I thought fuck it and just went down and started training and have for the last 3 seasons.

My sexuality would not stop me playing any sport. (Ivan, 49 years).

None. I'm very comfortable now - I wouldn't let anything stop me. (Elijah, 31 years).

These days if I want to do it I'll do it and screw anyone who has a problem with it. (Sebastian, 45 years).

Most of my sport activity is as an individual, not in a team, so it is less of an issue. Even so it would not cross my mind to not to participate, as my sexuality is my business. (Brock, 60 years).

The most common sport female participants would like to play is also Australian football (42.9%). This was followed by synchronised swimming (14.3%) and dancing (14.3%). Women were excluded on two fronts – according to their gender and sexuality. Some responses from female participants are provided below.

I've stopped playing cricket because I'm sick of the stereotypical views and don't want to be seen as a butch lesbian. (Tara, 18 years).

None now but when I was younger I didn't get involved in any sport because I was afraid of being stigmatised re: sexuality. (Kate, 36 years).

I wanted to do dancing when I was young, but mum said I was too much of a tom boy... in so many words. I got the idea that it was a 'girly' sport to do, and I was not girly. (Tania, 22 years).

I don't think sexuality is such a big issue for women in sports. It's only normative heterosexuality that is threatened by queers in team sports. (Jenna, 27 years).

That's a hard question. For me it's going along and checking out whether I perceive others will perhaps be uncomfortable about my sexual orientation. (Sophia, 55 years).

I have always felt like there are sports that wouldn't be supportive of my sexuality (i.e.: netball and basketball). I haven't had a massive interest in playing netball, but basketball is something that I might have pursued. (Megan, 33 years).

There were also a significant number of female participants who were very determined to pursue their sporting passions and did not see or would not allow their sexuality prevent them from doing so:

At the moment I am too heavily involved with Ultimate Frisbee to play other sports seriously, but think I wouldn't feel limited in choice because of my sexuality. (Gabrielle, 28 years).

My sexuality has no bearing on my involvement in sport. (Patricia, 22 years).

It is sexuality, not a disability. (Katie, 24 years).

Transgender participants identified a number of ways in which they were excluded or not supported in their sporting endeavours. These barriers were associated with their gender identity and the more rigid and traditional interpretations and organisation of gender in sport:

Netball, as a transgendered person I would love to play traditional female roles but lack a supportive environment to do so. (Daniel, 27 years).

Actually it is my sex identity that has been the biggest hurdle, I would love of played football or soccer, but separation of the sexes in sport means this didn't happen, now I'm too old and unfit to learn new skills like that and participate in such sports, because of delayed access to hormone medications and affirmation of sex identity i am of small stature- and this impedes participation in many competitive sports- where body image is the tall body beautiful. (Billy, 42 years).

My gender is more of an issue, the fact that I am transgender. I have still gotten policy changed, but I am scared about the reaction of other players in regards to myself. (Bradley, transgender male, 25 years).

I guess my gender identity would become an issue if I compete any further. (Casey, transgender – does not identify as male or female, 35 years).

UNSAFE SPORTING ENVIRONMENTS

37.0% of male participants reported that they have felt unsafe in a sporting environment. Interestingly, four participants that answered no reported that this was because they avoided sporting events because they perceive them as unsafe:

No because I avoid them. (Jordan, 50 years).

No, because I avoided sporting events. (Jarred, 56 years).

Don't put myself in unsafe environments. Maybe sub consciously avoiding difficult people & cultures. (Carlos, 63 years).

Never in a physical sense as I have always avoided situations that might put me at that risk. (Derek, 56 years).

Two participants reported that they feel 'uncomfortable' rather than unsafe and another participant reported that he remains 'very alert' in sporting environments:

Not unsafe but uncomfortable yes. (Alex, 20 years).

More uncomfortable than unsafe. (Brian, 33 years).

Not really unsafe but very alert and alarmed. (Julian, 41 years).

One participant wrote about his sexuality and how to avoid unsafe situations:

No - because no one (apart from a small close circle) knows I am gay. I also aim to be hyper masculine therefore shutting out any inference that I could be gay by "stereotyping" mannerisms. (Brayden, 39 years).

Of the 37.0% of male participants that reported that they have felt unsafe in a sporting environment, three participants reported that they 'often' feel unsafe and one participant reported that they 'always' feel unsafe in a sporting environment. Eight participants reported that they had felt unsafe when they were younger and/or at school. A further eight participants reported that they felt unsafe due to the nature of the sport. Five participants expressed that they felt unsafe specifically due to homophobia.

Many times as an adolescent until I removed myself from the environment - no direct threat, but threat of being discovered for who I really was and what that would lead to. (Sebastian, 45 years).

Not from physical attack....but certainly from (homophobic) verbal abuse. (Gavin, 41 years).

Yes, but it could be my own bias against the male dominated sporting environment, which provides a legitimate outlet for them to express their masculinity, unfortunately homophobia could be one of the expressions. (Jeremy, 35 years).

Yes during a conversation where gays and women were being slandered. (Stephen, 41 years).

Some participants identified that male dominated sporting environments become unsafe when alcohol is involved.

Yes junior football club days older guys getting drunk and becoming violent. (Gregory, 28 years).

Yes ... all male sports social environments where drinking is involved. (Colin, 39 years).

Yes, especially as a spectator when fans are getting drunk and angry. (Kyle, 57 years).

Yes where the main groups of spectators are males, in groups and who are affected by alcohol. (Christian, 37 years).

Some respondents identified specific sporting environments as unsafe – the football environment in particular:

AFL crowds seem intimidating to me; I am rarely in that environment. (Cameron, 40 years).

I find large aggressive football crowds somewhat unsettling, but that's all. (Adam, 54 years).

Some times around footy fans leaving stadiums. (Aidan, 21 years).

Yes the footy environment. (Adrian, 31 years).

I don't enjoy going to AFL or rugby matches as it feels intimidating and homophobic in certain seating areas. (Victor, 36 years).

My decision to be a spectator is impacted by my expectation of not feeling safe/comfortable. Wouldn't go to the footy for example. (Jeremiah, 37 years).

Yes. Many - as an observer. Eg AFL. When I go to watch my teenager nephew play his matches I feel I have to hide, just in case. (Nicolas, 47 years).

20.6% of female participants reported that they have felt unsafe in a sporting environment. Three participants reported feeling unsafe when officiating/umpiring sport.

Like the responses from male participants, several female participants reported when alcohol and men predominate, sporting environments can be unsafe.

Yes. During a big rugby game. Men who are drunk are scary. (Catherine, 24 years).

I feel unsafe in clubs with 'bloke y' males gathering. (Kayla, 23 years).

Only when people (especially males) are rowdy. (Ruby, 18 years).

When I travel to country tennis tournaments I elect to stay closeted due to the level of alcohol consumed by men in the country and the mob mentality that prevails. (Sarah, 37 years).

at the footy, can be a very rowdy/drunken crowd at times, I am not generally comfortable as a spectator when crowd is bad and wouldn't be entirely comfortable showing any affection for a partner I might have with me. (Nina, 33 years).

Several female participants identified that sporting environments may be unsafe due to homophobia.

Yes at footy matches and in club rooms. Knowing I am Gay and looking like the stereotype Dyke. (Sophia, 55 years).

I have not felt like I could be openly gay at sporting events throughout my younger years. I still would not be comfortable with being open at a football match or similar gathering. (Diana, 49 years).

Often, once outed, homophobia manifests itself in the game and you experience much rougher treatment and physical attack on the field. Any sporting environment with groups of men intimidates me immensely... because of both my sexuality and my gender. (Vanessa, 22 years).

When I was in high school I always felt unsafe in PE, even though I excelled in it. There was so much underlying homophobia right throughout the whole school. A lot of it came from the PE teachers, who created a really heterocentric environment. (Megan, 33 years).

One participant discussed the overall effect this homophobia had on women's sports such as cricket and football – it placed pressure on the sports to deny or hide the existence of lesbians. Lesbians became the problem for the sport rather than homophobia itself:

I guess now though I am lucky that I am interested in sports where there are a lot of other lesbians. Having said that however, the homophobia is directed at women in sport in Australia is always apparent, even in sports where there are a lot of lesbians. The result is that those sports that are the main targets (i.e.: cricket, football) feel the pressure of having to 'straighten up' to gain credibility and in turn, support and funding. (Megan, 33 years).

Of the 10 transgender participants who answered this question, four stated that they had never felt unsafe in a sporting environment. One participant reported that they have never felt unsafe because they don't go to sporting events and six stated that they had felt unsafe. Some participant responses are below.

Yes AFL matches: spectators yelling out "x team plays like a poofter team." 2nd spectator: "don't you just mean paedophile team?" (Emily, transgender female, 43 years).

Yes, I have been ganged up on when I am read. (Annie, transgender female, 55 years).

The next section of this report examines the legal and policy context of sport within Victoria and Australia. One of the foundations of this context is the right of all people to be able to participate in a safe and inclusive environment, free from discrimination and abuse. Whilst the majority of survey participants did not see or would not allow their sexuality to prevent them from participating in sport, a significant proportion (1 in 4 males, 1 in 10 females and 2 in 5 transgender participants) did report being excluded because of their sexuality and / or gender identity. Furthermore, 2 in 5 males, 1 in 5 females and 1 in 2 transgender participants reported feeling unsafe in their sporting environment. Sport appears to have a way to go before it is safe and inclusive for all LGBT people.

SAFE, WELCOMING AND INCLUSIVE SPORT POLICIES

POLICY CONTEXT

In Australia, Federal and State equal opportunity, anti-harassment and discrimination laws apply to sport. Under the Victorian Equal Opportunity Act (1995) it is unlawful to discriminate against someone in sport, or vilify or harass them because of sex, gender identity and sexual orientation. The law applies to sports participants, administrators, managers, officials, coaches, trainers and volunteers.

Over the past decade, many resources and educational programs to enable sports to develop and implement policies and procedures have been available to sports organisations at the national, state and local level. These resources assist organisations to bring them in line with the laws and more positively, promote safe, welcoming and inclusive cultures. In 1996, the Victorian Equal Opportunity Commission and Sport and Recreation Victoria worked with a sport reference group and launched *Playing Fair - Guidelines for Tackling Discrimination in Sport*. A training program based on these guidelines was also offered to sports organisations within Victoria.

In 2000, the Australian Sports Commission produced a number of booklets outlining anti – discrimination and harassment laws that were applicable to Australian sport. It also included policy examples, complaint procedures and educational information. One of these resources was dedicated entirely to sexuality discrimination and homophobia in sport (Australian Sports Commission, 2000). The online learning program for all sports organisations in Australia, *Play By The Rules*, was developed in the early 2000s and contains comprehensive information on ‘how to prevent and deal with discrimination, harassment and child abuse’ and ‘developing inclusive and welcoming environments for participation’ (Play by the Rules, 2010).

The latest initiative to strongly encourage all sports organisation within Victoria to develop and implement safe, welcoming and inclusive policies and practices is the Victorian Code of Conduct for Community Sport released by the Department of Planning and Community Development (DPCD) in March of 2010. The Code is part of the Victorian Government’s Respect Agenda, in which ‘the Government is committed to enabling every person, in any capacity, to have the opportunity to participate in community sport without fear of abuse, intimidation and harassment’ (DPCD, 2010). The Code stipulates that:

Every person: spectator, player, club member, official, participant, administrator, coach, parent or member of the community involved with sport, should work to ensure:

- Inclusion of every person regardless of their age, gender, or sexual orientation
- Inclusion of every person regardless of their race, culture or religion
- Opportunities for people of all abilities to participate in the sport and develop to their full potential
- Respect is shown towards others, the club and the broader community
- A safe and inclusive environment for all
- Elimination of violent and abusive behaviour
- Protection from sexual harassment and intimidation

All State Sporting Associations and their affiliated clubs are expected to sign the Code and pledge their support by ensuring that their policies and procedures are in line with the Code. If they do not adhere to and enforce the Code they ‘will not be eligible for funding through any SRV grant programs’.

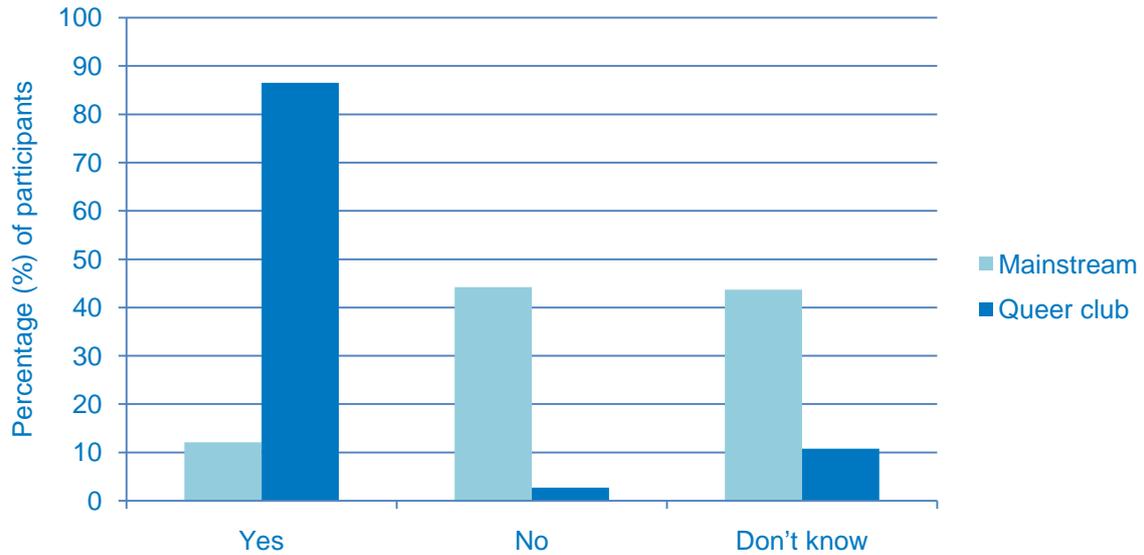
Come Out To Play was completed at least six months before the Code was released. However, it provides the most up to date policy and practice framework for community sport, based on well established equal opportunity and anti-discrimination legislation and a number of broad educational initiatives to enable sport to be as inclusive as possible. *Come Out To Play* survey responses have demonstrated that there is work to be done to ensure mainstream sport is safe, welcoming and inclusive of LGBT Victorians. The last section of the survey asked participants about their knowledge, perceptions and experiences of such policies and practices in mainstream and queer sport. Participants were invited to think specifically about a sporting club or organisation they have most been involved in their responses.

SAFETY AND INCLUSION

Participants were asked if their sports club has policies that promote the safety and inclusion of LGBT people. The results are shown in Figure 21. These results show that 86.6% of participants from queer-identified clubs reported that their club does have these policies, while only 12.1% of participants from mainstream clubs answered 'yes'. 44.2 % of participants involved in mainstream clubs reported that there were no policies that promoted the safety and inclusion of LGBT peoples, whilst a further 43.7 % did not know if such policies existed in their mainstream sports clubs. Only 10.8 % of those involved in queer sports clubs did not know about these policies in their club.

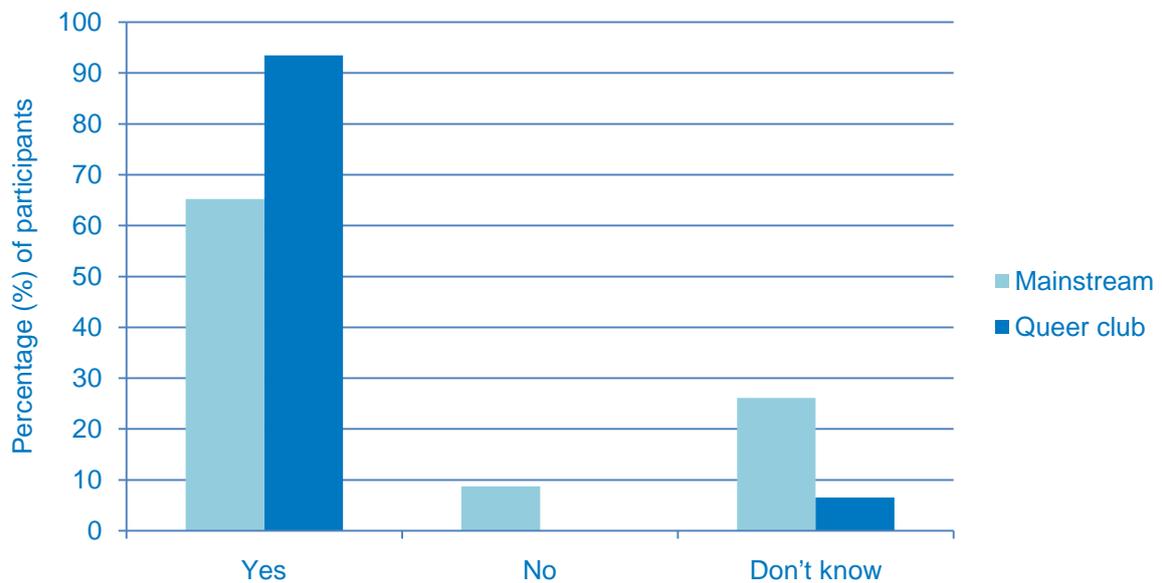
The relatively open aspect of this question, in which clubs could be assumed to be promoting inclusive and safe environments for LGBT people, aligns well with queer- identified clubs whose main purpose is to provide positive and affirming environments for their predominantly LGBT members to engage in sport. It also aligns well with the 'open and inclusive' sporting climate discussed on page 19 of this report, which was set as the benchmark for mainstream sports organisations to be inclusive of LGBT peoples. It is not enough for anti-discrimination and safety and inclusion policies that include sexual orientation and gender identity to merely exist within a sport organisation. Members also have to be aware of these policies and they need to be encompassed within the lived inclusive culture of the organisation. It could be inferred from these results that mainstream sports clubs represented in this survey are not proactive in providing safe and inclusive environments for their LGBT sports participants, and they do not meet a number of the key characteristics of open and inclusive sports environments for LGBT peoples.

FIGURE 21 DOES YOUR CLUB HAVE POLICIES THAT PROMOTE THE SAFETY AND INCLUSION OF LGBT PEOPLE?



Participants who answered 'yes' were then asked if club members are generally made aware of these policies. The results are shown in Figure 22. The results show that 93.5% of participants from queer-identified clubs reported 'yes' and 65.2% of participants from mainstream clubs reported that they are made aware. A further 26.1% of participants involved in mainstream sport clubs did not know if members were made aware of these policies.

FIGURE 22 ARE CLUB MEMBERS GENERALLY MADE AWARE OF SAFETY AND INCLUSION POLICIES?

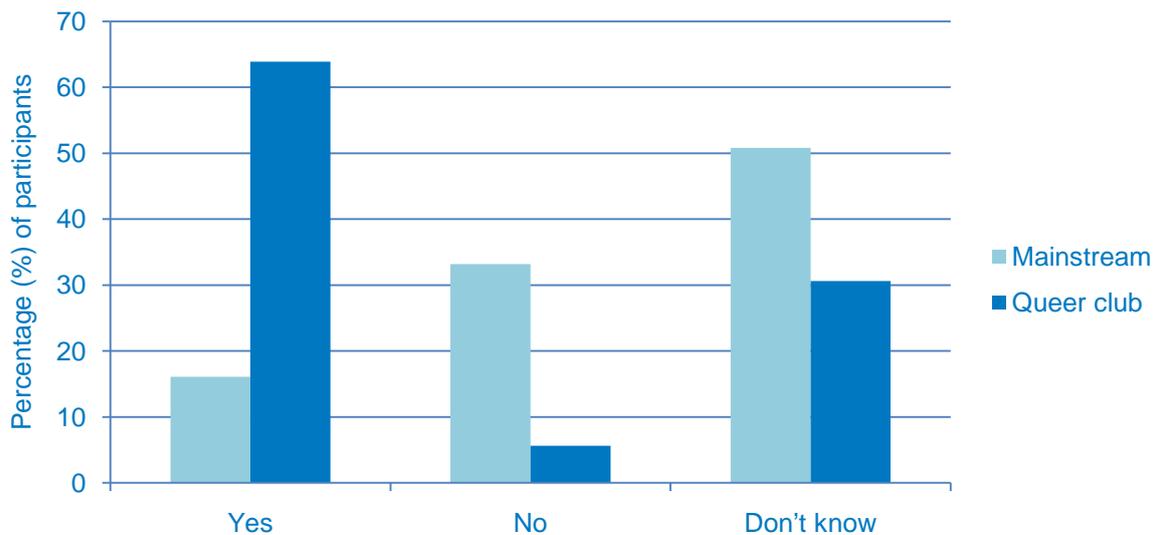


ANTI-DISCRIMINATION POLICIES

Participants were asked if their club has anti-discrimination policies that include sexual orientation and gender identity. The results are shown in Figure 23. These results show that 63.9% of participants from queer-identified clubs and only 16.1% of participants from mainstream clubs reported that their respective clubs have these anti-discrimination policies. A further 33.2 % (or a third) of participants in mainstream sport clubs reported that their clubs’ anti-discrimination policies did not acknowledge them in cases of discrimination.

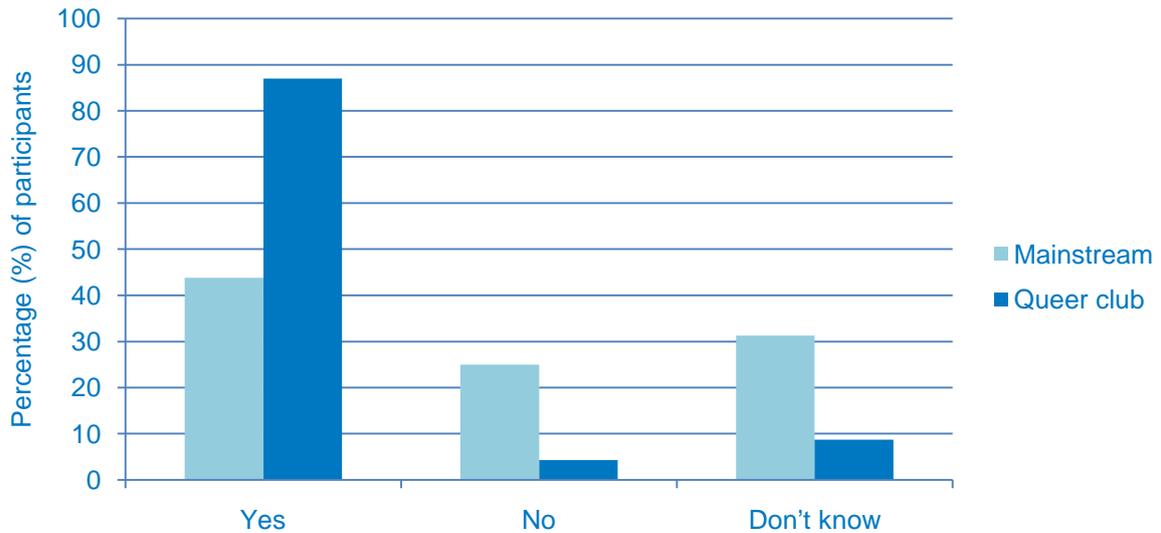
There were high percentages of participants who did not know if their club had such policies; over half in mainstream and 30.0% in queer- identified clubs. Perhaps the specific reference to the inclusion of sexual orientation and gender identity in these anti-discrimination policies resulted in a greater number of ‘don’t know’ responses. As expected, queer- identified club members appear to have a greater knowledge and awareness of anti-discrimination policies. It appears from these results that mainstream sport clubs have work to do in ensuring that their anti-discrimination policies or codes of conduct include sexual orientation and gender identity. All club members must be informed about these policies before they can be effective in preventing discrimination and in providing fair procedural frameworks in which incidents of discrimination and harassment can be sensitively and effectively managed.

FIGURE 23 DOES YOUR CLUB HAVE ANTI-DISCRIMINATION POLICIES THAT INCLUDE SEXUAL ORIENTATION AND GENDER IDENTITY?



Participants who answered ‘yes’ were then asked if club members are generally made aware of these policies. The results are provided in Figure 24. These results show that 87.0% of participants from queer-identified clubs and 43.8% of participants from mainstream clubs reported that club members were generally made aware of these anti-discrimination policies. Once again, queer-identified clubs were more effective in raising this awareness.

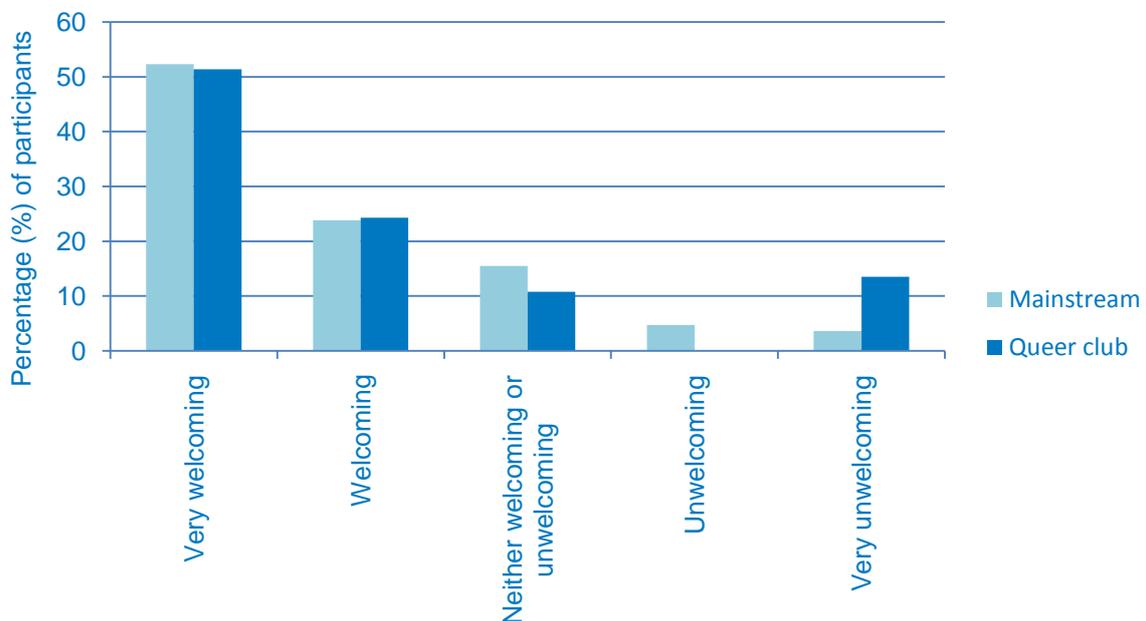
FIGURE 24 ARE CLUB MEMBERS GENERALLY MADE AWARE OF ANTI-DISCRIMINATION POLICIES?



HOW WELCOMING IS YOUR CLUB?

Participants were asked to identify how welcoming their club is in relation to all genders, all ethnicities, people with disabilities, non heterosexual people, heterosexual people, and transgender people. The results are shown in Figures 25 to 30.

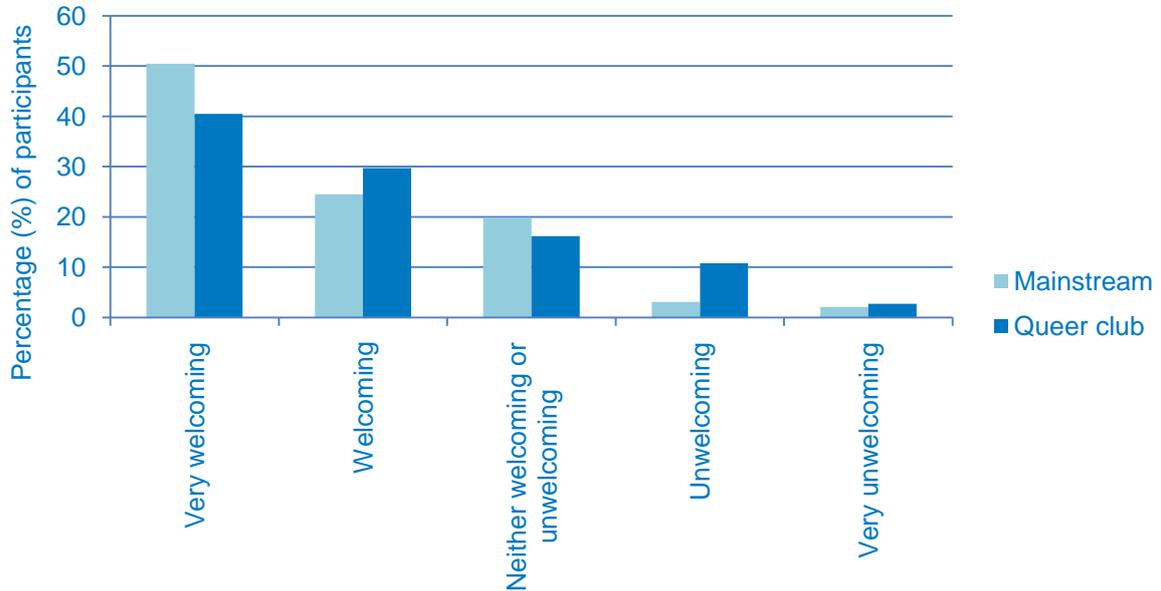
FIGURE 25 HOW WELCOMING IS YOUR CLUB TO ALL GENDERS?



These results show that both mainstream and queer clubs were perceived to be welcoming to all genders. 52.3% of participants in mainstream and 51.4% of participants in queer clubs reported that their clubs are very welcoming to all genders. A further 23.8 % of mainstream club members and 24.3% of queer- identified club members were welcoming to all genders. 13.5% of participants in queer clubs reported that their club is very unwelcoming, while 8.3% of participants in mainstream clubs reported their club to be unwelcoming and very unwelcoming. These results suggest that

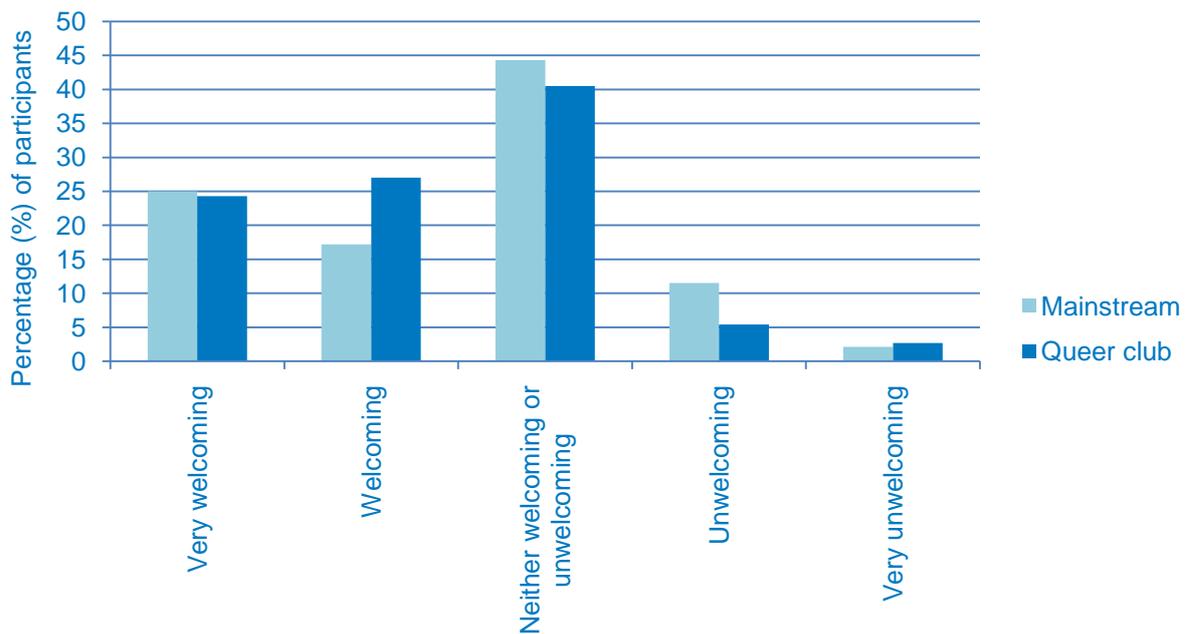
queer- identified clubs can be discriminatory and segregating of the genders, and this needs further investigation.

FIGURE 26 HOW WELCOMING IS YOUR CLUB TO ALL ETHNICITIES?



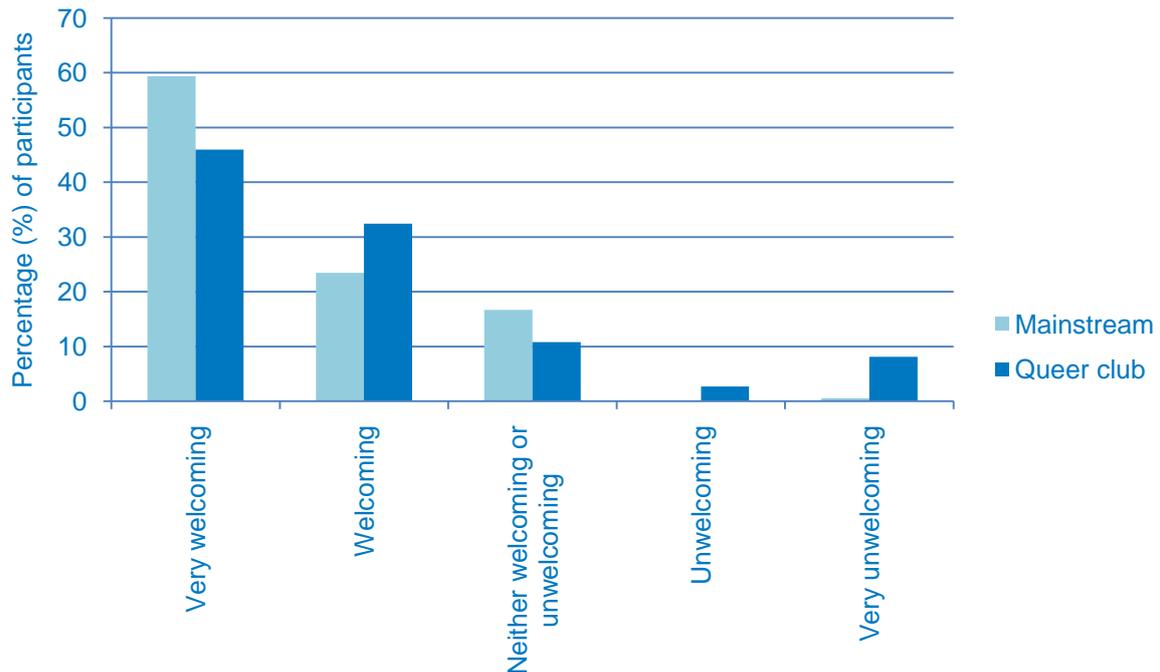
These results show that 75.0% of participants from mainstream clubs reported that their club was welcoming or very welcoming to all ethnicities, compared to 70.2% of participants from queer clubs. 13.5% of participants from queer- identified clubs reported that their club is unwelcoming and very unwelcoming, compared to only 5.2% of participants from mainstream clubs. These figures are very similar to the results for how welcoming clubs are to all genders. Queer-identified clubs were as welcoming as mainstream clubs to members based on their ethnicity, but they were also significantly more unwelcoming, which is troubling and requires further investigation.

FIGURE 27 HOW WELCOMING IS YOUR CLUB TO PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES?



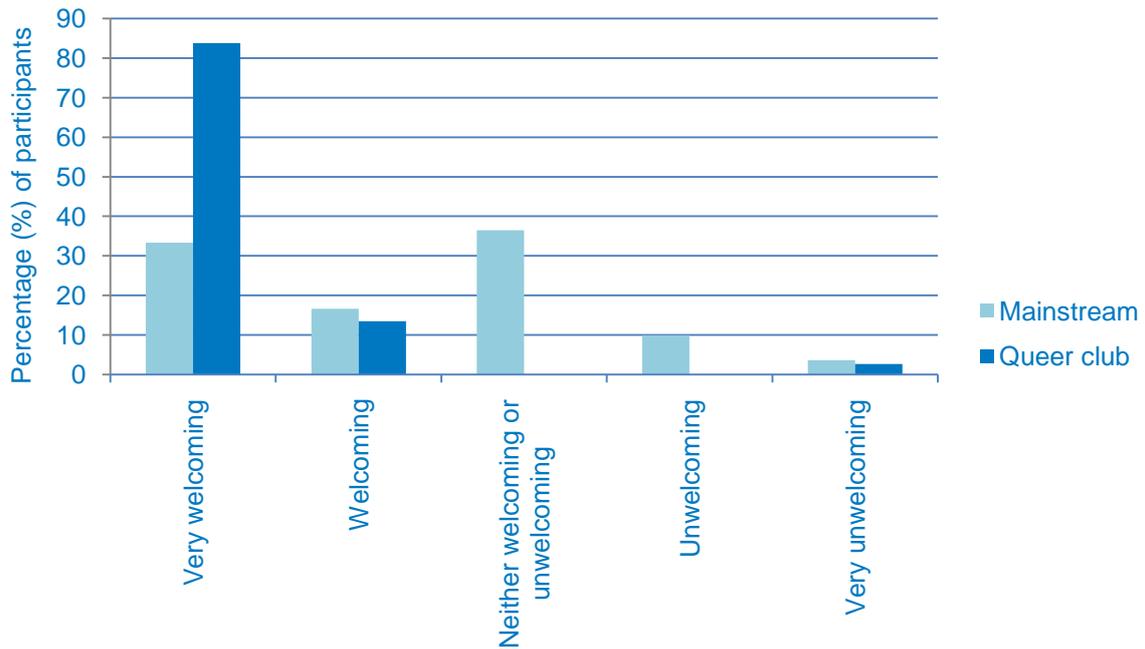
These results show that the majority of participants reported that their sports club was welcoming to very welcoming of people with a disability; 42.2% of mainstream clubs and 51.3% of queer-identified clubs. A further 44.3% of participants of mainstream clubs and 40.5% of participants from queer clubs reported that their club is neither welcoming nor unwelcoming to people with disabilities. A greater percentage of participants from mainstream clubs reported that their clubs were unwelcoming to very unwelcoming to disabled sports people (13.7%) than did participants from queer-identified clubs (8.1%). This suggests that both mainstream and queer-identified clubs may need to be more proactive in their inclusion of people with a disability in their organisation.

FIGURE 28 HOW WELCOMING IS YOUR CLUB TO HETEROSEXUAL PEOPLE?



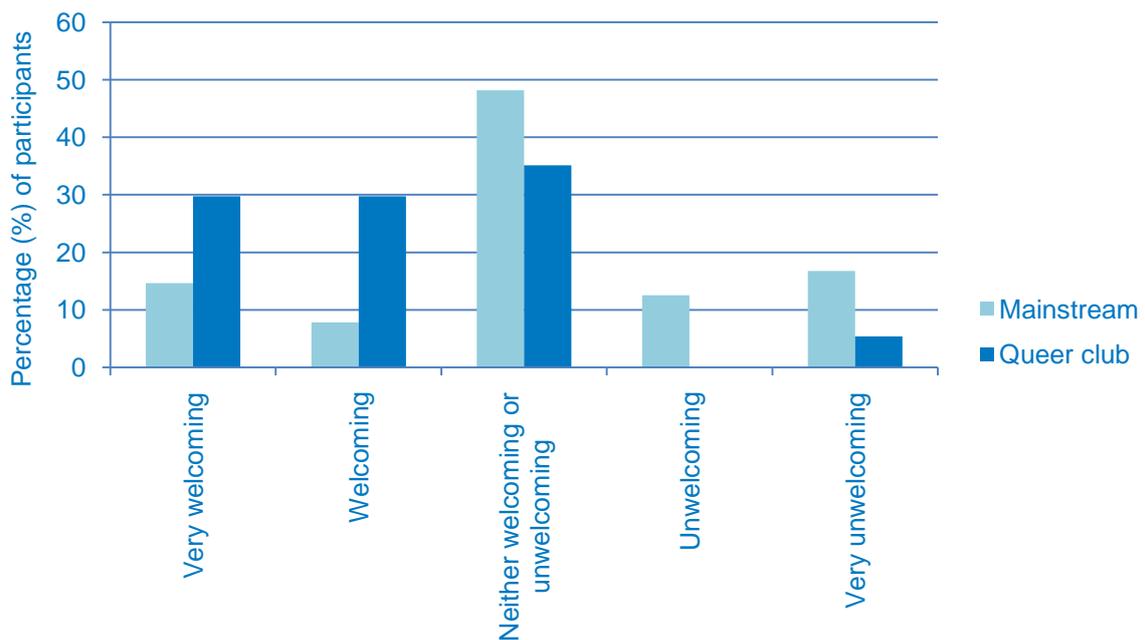
These results show that 82.8% of participants from mainstream clubs and 78.3% of participants from queer-identified clubs reported that their club was either very welcoming or welcoming to heterosexual people. A welcoming and positive environment appears to be perceived by the LGBT survey participants as the norm for four out of five heterosexual people in their mainstream and queer-identified sports club. 10.8% of queer club participants reported that their club was either unwelcoming or very unwelcoming of heterosexual people.

FIGURE 29 HOW WELCOMING IS YOUR CLUB TO NON-HETEROSEXUAL PEOPLE?



As expected, 83.8 % of participants from queer identified clubs reported that their club was very welcoming to non-heterosexual people, compared to 33.3% of participants from mainstream clubs. The majority of participants from mainstream clubs reported that their club was neither welcoming nor unwelcoming (36.5%). 13.6% of participants from mainstream clubs reported that their club was unwelcoming to very unwelcoming to them as non-heterosexuals. This is a significant figure considering that the ‘hostile environment’ is directed at them. According to these results a welcoming and positive mainstream sports environment was the norm for around a half of the LGBT survey participants.

FIGURE 30 HOW WELCOMING IS YOUR CLUB TO TRANSGENDER PEOPLE?



These results show that the majority of participants from mainstream clubs (48.2%) reported that their club was neither welcoming nor unwelcoming to transgender people. A troubling 29.4% of these participants reported that their club was either unwelcoming or very unwelcoming to transgender people. There was a much more positive sports environment reported for transgender people in queer identified sports clubs, with 59.4% of participants from queer-identified clubs indicating that their club was either welcoming or very welcoming of transgender people.

Creating welcoming and inclusive sports club environments involves the implementation of member protection policies and more importantly, supportive and friendly leadership and membership that values diversity and respect for all. This goes well beyond legal compliance and underlines the essential spirit of the Victorian Code of Conduct for Community Sport. From participant responses, mainstream and queer identified sports clubs appear to be achieving this in the areas of inclusion based on gender (male /female) and ethnicity as well as for heterosexual members. This appears to be less the case for non-heterosexuals and transgender participants within their mainstream sports club.

CONCLUSION

Sports participation is valued by governments, human rights and health promotion agencies and community members for a number of important reasons. These include; the engagement of people of all ages in mental and physical health promoting sporting activity; the provision and support of opportunities for people to gain enjoyment, express themselves and their talents, as well as achieve to the best of their ability, in their sporting pursuits and passions; the building of a strong and healthy national identity through high performance sports successes; and the promotion of equality, social cohesion and inclusion in Australian society through engagement in sport. The sport and recreation industry is also an important sector of the economy, providing employment, professional career paths and development, volunteer opportunities, products, services and events and contributes to the social and economic health of the nation. All Australians supposedly benefit from their sports involvement. Most *Come Out To Play* participants were sports devotees who valued these health, social and achievement benefits of sport. A significant proportion also persisted with their sport involvement even in the face of sexuality and gender based discrimination and abuse.

Other studies have demonstrated that school sport is a key site of homophobic bullying (Brackenridge, 2006; Hillier, 2005) and sexism (Wellard, 2002, Penney, 2002). Survey participants who had positive experiences of sport and physical education at school indicated that they were confident and successful in their sporting skill and ‘perceived ability at sport was a strong indicator of whether or not this area of study was remembered as positive or negative’ (p. 27). However, a significant proportion (over 45.0%) experienced homophobia as a common part of their sporting education, and this was more pronounced for men than women in the study. It was also troubling that nobody in the study gave examples of teachers supporting SSAY in their sports endeavours, or intervening when homophobic language and bullying did take place.

Brackenridge et al. (2006) conclusion that the overall effects of homophobic bullying on sports for boys who are non-athletic and or perceived as gay, as well as girls in general – that it drives down sports participation, or Hillier et al. (1998, 2005) finding that sport was one of the main environments that same-sex attracted young people within Australia felt least safe, could not be assessed by this study because of the sporty nature of the LGBT sample as well as the age range surveyed (over 18 years). Specific research needs to be conducted on sports participation including the benefits, barriers, facilitators and issues for SSAY in Australia. Furthermore, the overall participation rates of LGBT Australians in sport and physical activity have not been researched. Participation surveys such as the Sweeny reports and Australian Bureau of Statistics data do not even ask respondents to identify their sexual orientation. These research gaps need to be addressed. However, there is sufficient research evidence demonstrating that the school and sports environment present significant challenges for SSAY and that targeted programs that address homophobia in sport and promote sports participation and the inclusion of SSAY are timely. This would need to occur in the educational environment, ensuring that physical education and health teachers in particular, are professionally prepared and sensitive to this issue.

The shaping fields within society and sport for these discriminatory experience centre on traditional discourses of gender and sexuality. The qualitative responses from the *Come Out To Play* research indicated that ‘strong sanctions’ were imposed on those who violated these ‘gender and sexuality norms’ during their sports experiences. Homophobic and / or sexist verbal insults and threats, physical assaults and general exclusionary practices had a negative impact on the LGBT sports people who were the targets of these sanctions. Participant’s responses to the closed questions of the survey also portrayed a challenging mainstream sporting environment for many LGBT people. Forty-one percent of survey participants had experienced verbal homophobia at some time during their sport involvement and for the majority this experience was common place. A similar

percentage had experienced sexism during their involvement in sport and over 80.0% of this cohort reported that such sexism was a common occurrence. Whilst 33.0% of survey participants identified their sports club as very welcoming of non-heterosexual people, a further 36.0% reported their mainstream club to be neither welcoming nor unwelcoming and 13.6% reported their club to be unwelcoming to very unwelcoming to them as non-heterosexuals. Only 12.1% of survey participants indicated that their mainstream sports club had policies that promoted the safety and inclusion of LGBT people, whilst a further 44.2% reported that no such policies existed.

It is not surprising in this challenging context that nearly half of the survey participants were not 'out' in their mainstream sport, whilst a further 33.0% were 'out' to some. The main reasons given for not being 'out' were unsure of sexuality, safety and wellbeing concerns such as the fear of being judged, harassed, discriminated against, abused and even physically assaulted. Feelings of isolation also resulted when few if any LGBT club members were 'out'. Gay men were the least likely to be 'out' in a team sport, compared to an individual sport and were also significantly less likely to play team sports than women. Although the women in this survey reported experiencing greater levels of homophobia and sexism, the potential of the abuse for not being heterosexual was more serious for gay men. The dynamics of gender, sexuality and sport played out in the stories and responses of these survey participants was rich and instructive. Whilst there were some positive sport stories from this survey that provide good practice examples of open and inclusive sports environments for LGBT people, many exemplified conditionally tolerant environments at best and hostile ones at worst.

The sample size of transgender survey participants was small, limiting the generalisation that can be made from their responses. The results do provide an important initial insight into the sporting experiences and challenges of transgender Victorian's. It also highlights the need for further and more comprehensive research in this area. A number of *Come Out To Play* participants indicated their difficulty with the two sexed/gendered sports model in many of their responses. They also highlighted general ignorance and prejudice concerning transgender issues within many of the sporting communities they had been involved in, experiences of discrimination based on this ignorance and prejudice, a lack of policies to enable their participation in sport and concerns with using change rooms, being accepted and fitting in. More than twice as many survey participants indicated that their mainstream sport was either unwelcoming or very unwelcoming of transgender people (29.4%).

Queer-identified sports clubs provided the most inclusive and affirming sports environment for LGBT participants of this survey. The positive benefits identified from the responses included: 'being yourself', feeling safe, supported and affirmed as lesbian / gay and sporty, belonging to a larger community and gaining visibility, meaning and empowerment from this identity making, solidarity and shared sporting and cultural endeavour. There were also some welcoming and inclusive mainstream sports examples cited in participant responses that could be considered examples of good practice. For instance these participants reflected on being 'out' to all in their mainstream sport club:

The overall experience has been an entirely comfortable one. This was slightly different than what I may have expected due to high testosterone involved with about 25 blokes! Overall I have been welcomed with open arms and have felt comfortable. (Tyler, 27 years).

Playing in a soccer team as a fill in. I play in a queer team but there was another team who wanted a fill, there where a few queer guys in the team, but all heterosexual women, I actually filled in often. The best experience was when I was out there playing on this team because although it was mostly heterosexual women, they didn't care that I or the other guys were queer. It never came up in conversation they players were lovely and we played really well together. I was just another member of the team and wasn't treated differently because of my sexuality. (Kayla, 23 years).

Creating an environment that is welcoming for LGBT athletes has many significant benefits. In an extensive literature review on sport and sexual orientation Brackenridge et al. (2008) outline the personal impacts such an environment creates for the LGB athlete. They include:

- happiness and inclusion,
- freedom and willingness to speak,
- greater confidence and sense of inclusion,
- feeling of support,
- greater productivity and performance success and
- enhanced enjoyment and pride in and loyalty to the organisation (2).

Creating an environment free from homophobia also positively influences the people around LGB athletes (teammates, coaches, support staff, etc) by:

- creating increased team cohesion,
- lower turnover of personnel,
- enhanced reputation for the sport,
- better compliance with national standards,
- lower absenteeism and
- an increased likelihood to hit collective performance goals (Brackenridge et al, 2008, p.)(2).

The result is a robust sporting organisation leading the way in the health, welfare, diversity and equality of its athletes and sports workers and, of course, continued sporting enjoyment and success.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The findings of this research provide support for the initiative of the Australian Sports Commission Sports Integrity Program which is promoting inclusive practice and challenging homophobia and sexism through a few national sporting codes. This work should be supported and expanded.
2. It is clear that homophobia and sexism pervade many sporting environments which are either hostile or conditionally tolerant to LGBT people. This limiting of options for participation of a significant number of Victorians is unacceptable, and requires more proactive measures to be undertaken at the club level to create more inclusive environments that are sustainable in both rural and urban communities.
3. The importance of early experiences of physical education and school sport in shaping participants' future enjoyment of sport is strongly suggested in this study. In addition, coaches and other volunteer and professional sporting mentors have the opportunity to foster a love of sport at any time. The need for proactive inclusive practices wherever sport is played should be an essential element of both the pre-service and in-service training of physical education and sports teachers and other human movement professionals. This training should also be included in courses for coaches and other volunteers in sporting clubs.
4. This research focussed on participants over 18 years of age whose early experiences of physical education and sport at school were not current and commonly occurred at some time in the past. It is important we know more about same- sex attracted and gender-questioning young people in terms of their current experiences both of school sport and sports participation in their communities. Additional research should be carried out to explore this often vulnerable group and their access to community connectedness through sport.
5. There is little collected in official data sets to provide accurate statistics about LGBT participation in sport and physical activity in Australia. It is recommended that wherever data is collected on participation in sport and physical activity (for example, the Sweeney report or in ABS data sets) that data on sexual orientation and gender identity (beyond male\female) be part of that data collection.
6. This research was carried out in Victoria with relatively few resources. The study lends itself to informing a larger Australia-wide research project which extends the survey data with interviews of participants and stakeholders including members and leaders of sporting associations. Such a project should be funded by the main research funding bodies of health, sport, physical activity and social inclusion within Victoria and Australia, as a matter of priority.

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