

# Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer (LGBTQ) Peoples' Experiences in Oxford County

## Oxford County Rainbow Coalition Survey

Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer (LGBTQ) people experience disparities in terms of health and health service access, which may stem from negative experiences such as stigma and discrimination. In order to understand if these experiences described at the provincial and national level also resonate with the experiences of the local LGBTQ community in Oxford County, the Oxford County Rainbow Coalition commissioned a study. A survey was conducted from February 25, 2016 to July 4, 2016 and included people 16 years and older that self-identified as LGBTQ and lived, worked or went to school in Oxford County. There were 137 participants who completed all or some of the survey. This summary report presents the key findings. Please refer to the full report for more detailed results.

### Who is the Rainbow Coalition?

The Rainbow Coalition is a working group of representatives from the Canadian Mental Health Association, Ingamo Homes, Oxford County Community Health Centre, Oxford County Public Health, Woodstock General Hospital, Woodstock Public Library and volunteers from the community. Their mission is to create a safer and more supportive Oxford County for all people to live, work and play.

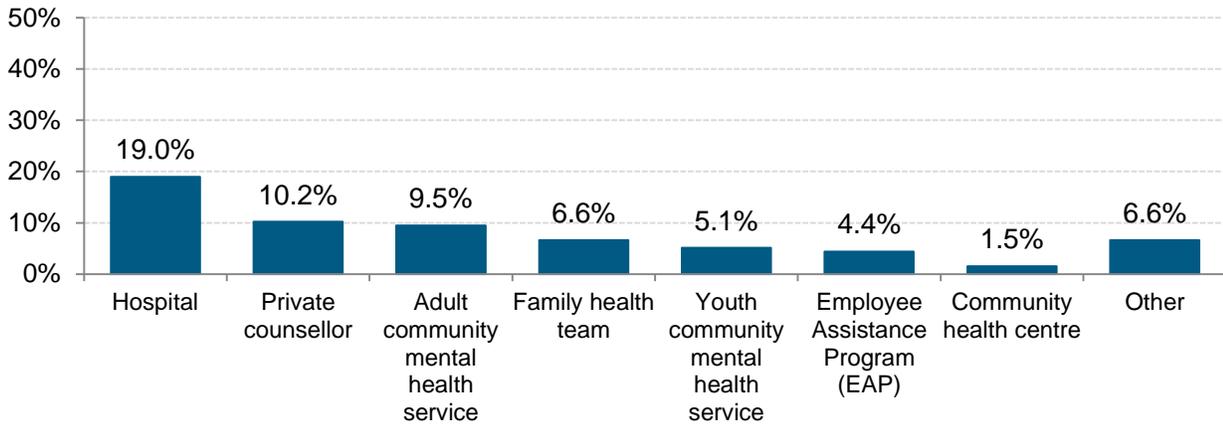
### Health and health services

- **85%** of LGBTQ participants had a regular primary health care provider such as a family doctor or nurse practitioner, or had access to a walk-in clinic or an interdisciplinary health centre.
  - **75%** felt comfortable sharing their sexual orientation with their provider but only **56%** had actually disclosed their sexual orientation to them.
  - **28%** talked to their provider about health issues specific to their sexual orientation.
- **74%** of LGBTQ participants have accessed health services at a hospital in Oxford County.

Per cent who reported that a regular provider...	Per cent who reported that hospital staff...
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>45%</b> assumed they were heterosexual</li> <li>• <b>10%</b> made assumptions about their health based on their sexual orientation</li> <li>• <b>8%</b> assumed they had a lot of sex partners based on their sexual orientation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>47%</b> assumed they were heterosexual</li> <li>• <b>10%</b> made assumptions about their health based on their sexual orientation</li> <li>• <b>7%</b> made negative comments or gestures about LGBTQ people</li> </ul>

- **51%** of LGBTQ participants did not access any mental health services in the last two years. Of those that did access mental health services, the most common setting was through a hospital (Figure 1). Participants reported negative interactions with mental health care services similar to those with regular providers and hospital staff.

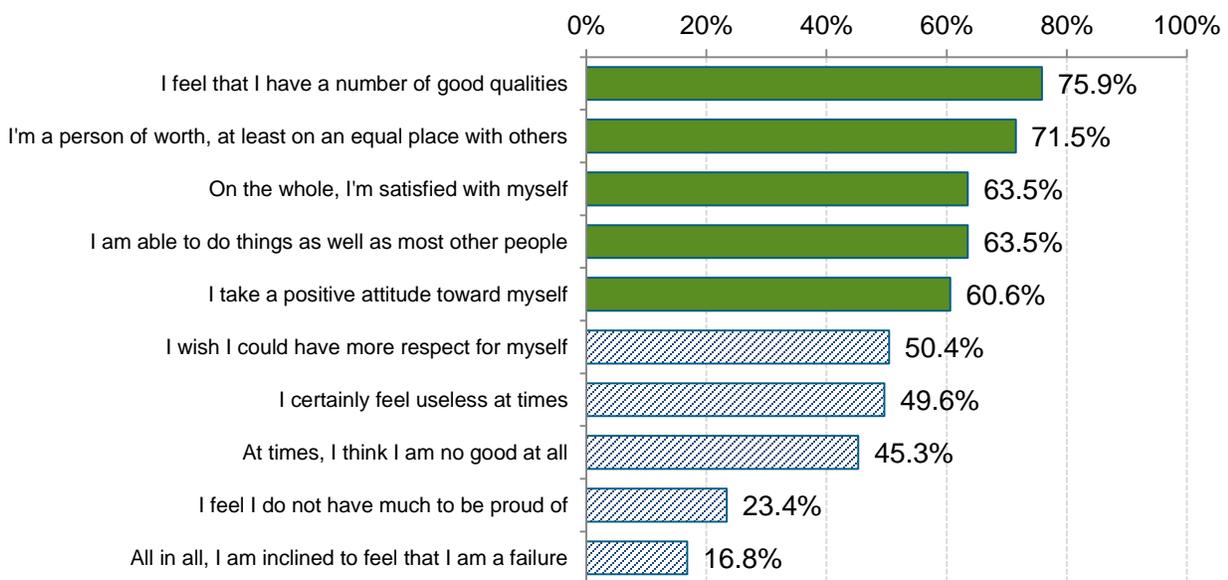
**Figure 1. Mental health service settings accessed in Oxford County in the last two years**



## Self-esteem

- Most participants had positive self-esteem (47% mid-range self-esteem, 16% high self-esteem), although 19% had low self-esteem. Some participants (18%) did not answer questions about self-esteem (Figure 2).

**Figure 2. Agreed/strongly agreed with the following statements\***

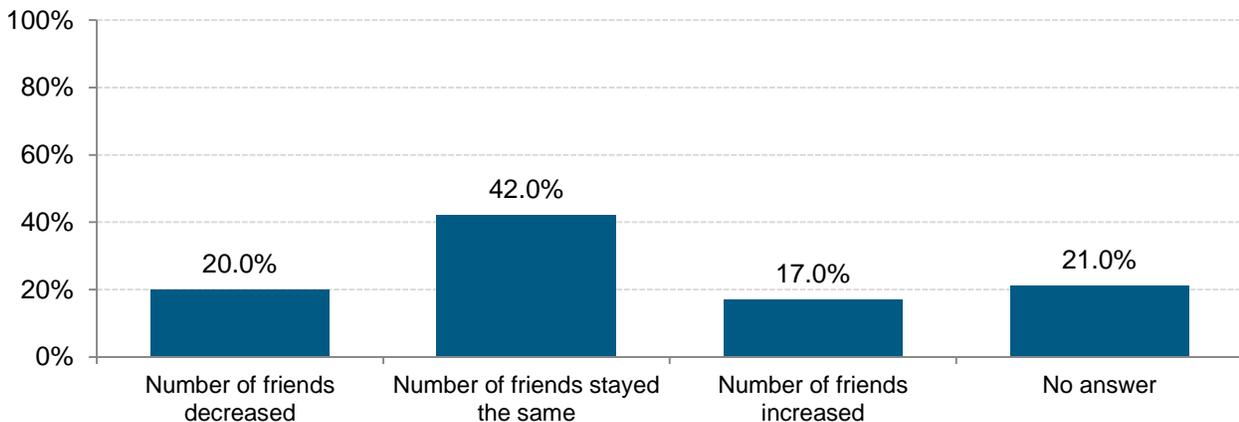


\*Solid bars indicate positive statements and patterned bars indicate negative statements.

## Coming out

Coming out is when an individual tells someone (or people) about their sexuality or gender identity. The majority of participants have told many groups of people in their life, with the most disclosing to LGBTQ friends (97%) and the least disclosing to religious institutions (65%). Since coming out, 42% of participants noted that the number of people they would call close friends stayed about the same, whereas 20% noted a decrease and 17% noted an increase (Figure 3).

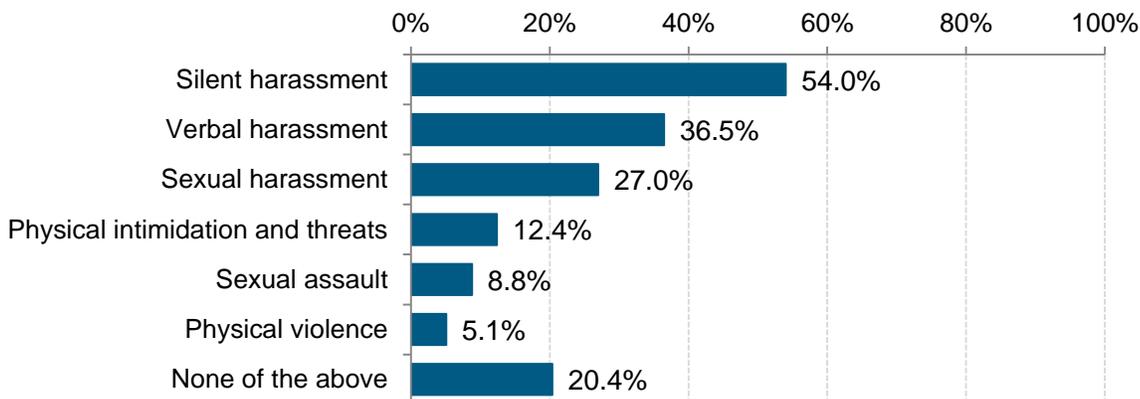
**Figure 3. Number of close friends before and after coming out**



## Life experiences

Over half of participants (54%) experienced silent harassment such as being stared at or whispered about (Figure 4). Of the 64 participants who experienced harassment or intimidation in Oxford County because of their sexual orientation, five (8%) reported these incidents to someone. Of the 15 participants who experienced physical violence and/or sexual assault because of their sexual orientation, four (27%) reported any of the incidents to the police in Oxford County.

**Figure 4. Harassment and/or violence based on sexual orientation\***



\*Respondents could check all that apply so totals may not equal 100%.

- **23%** reported avoiding religious institutions, **20%** reported avoiding clubs or social groups and **18%** reported avoiding restaurants or bars because of fear of being harassed, read as non-heterosexual, or being outed.

## Social support

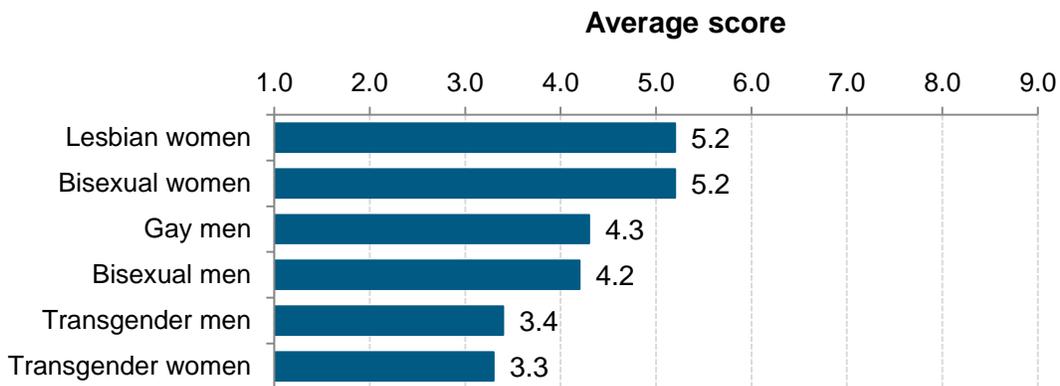
Over 90% of participants felt that people in their lives, such as friends, partner(s), teachers and classmates were somewhat or very supportive of their sexual orientation. However, only 31% of participants reported that religious groups were somewhat or very supportive.

Half of LGBTQ participants had 5 or more close friends or relatives that they feel at ease with and can talk about what is on their mind, although this ranged from 0 to 100 people.

## Community

Oxford County was perceived to be the most accepting of lesbian women and bisexual women, but only slightly accepting (Figure 5). All other LGBTQ identities were perceived to be less accepted.

**Figure 5. Average score for perceived level of acceptance of LGBTQ people in Oxford County\***



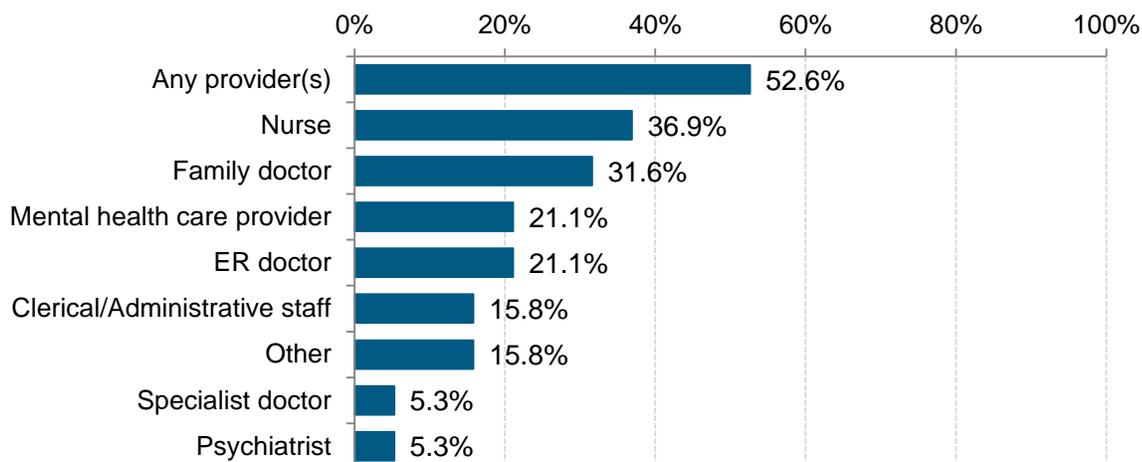
\*An average score of five was neutral, less than five was not accepting and more than five was accepting.

- **25%** felt that their sense of belonging was somewhat or very strong. This can be compared to 55% of residents in Oxford County who felt that their sense of belonging was strong based on the Oxford County Community Well-being Survey.<sup>1</sup>
- **47%** felt like it is somewhat or very important for them to be a member of an LGBTQ-specific organization. Many would be likely or very likely to attend or access Pride events, a LGBTQ safe community centre and a LGBTQ support group.
- **67%** felt like there is a need for LGBTQ friendly spaces to socialize in Oxford County.

## Trans-specific experiences

- **32%** reported that a primary provider told them that they did not know enough about trans-related care to provide it and over half of trans participants have had to educate health care providers about their needs (Figure 6).

**Figure 6. Health care providers ever educated by a trans participant about trans needs**



The most common services accessed by trans participants in Oxford County were mental health (37%), trans-related hormone therapy (11%) and support groups (11%).

**These findings highlight that opportunities exist to improve communication, acceptance and comfort within Oxford County related to a diversity of sexual orientations and gender identities.**

## References

1. Hilbrecht M, Smale B. A profile of the wellbeing of Oxford County Residents. A preliminary report for the Community Oxford Committee. Waterloo, ON: Canadian Index of Wellbeing and the University of Waterloo; 2016. Available from: [http://www.oxfordcounty.ca/Portals/15/Documents/SpeakUpOxford/2016/CIW%20Survey/CIW\\_WellbeingProfile\\_Pub20160714.pdf](http://www.oxfordcounty.ca/Portals/15/Documents/SpeakUpOxford/2016/CIW%20Survey/CIW_WellbeingProfile_Pub20160714.pdf)

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