

# LGBTQI+ PEOPLE OF FAITH: PREJUDICE & COMMUNITY COHESION IN BRIGHTON & HOVE

SWITCHBOARD HEALTH & INCLUSION PROJECT (HIP) ENGAGEMENT REPORT

JANUARY 2019

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# Introduction

## Why faith, LGBTQI+ and prejudice?

The intersection of faith and LGBTQI+ identity has not been a subject of much investigation in recent years, with the last major piece of work around this in the UK being conducted by Stonewall more than a decade ago, in 2008. However, LGBTQI+, while faith- and race-related Hate crime<sup>1</sup> statistics have climbed in the last five years, issues with under-reporting still prevail. According to Stonewall's 2017 report on LGBT hate crime, one in five LGBT people had experience a hate crime incident on the basis of their sexual orientation or gender in the last 12 months, and two in five trans people had experienced hate crime due to their trans status. Despite these high statistics, the report also found that under-reporting was a significant issue, with around four in five anti-LGBT hate crimes going un-reported, with people particularly reluctant to go to the police (Stonewall 2017).

According to figures from the British Transport Police (2018), the number of hate crimes reported to police across the country's transport network has doubled over the past five years. In particular, religious hate crimes increased almost five-fold since 2013. Homophobic and biphobic incidents trebled from 139 to 416, while race hate crimes increased from 1,453 to 2,566 from 2013-2018. It is clear that these varying forms of prejudice are inter-linked, with spikes in attacks coinciding with the aftermath of major events such as the murder of Lee Rigby in 2013, the Brexit vote in 2016 and 2017's Manchester Arena and London Bridge attacks.



*"I think people sometimes thinly veil their [anti-LGBTQ+] bigotry with religion and I think that then tars the brush of all straight people that are part of a faith group that they have the same negative opinions about LGBT+ people, and that's not always the case" – Focus Group Participant*

However, research suggests that while common perceptions of faith communities as a leading cause of prejudice against the LGBTQI+ community are widely held, they may not be accurate. As the Stonewall (2008) 'Love Thy Neighbour' report states: "Living Together, a YouGov survey of more than 2000 people commissioned by Stonewall in 2006, found that more than half of British adults felt that religious attitudes were a prevalent cause of public prejudice against gay people. However, that polling also revealed that people of faith in modern Britain are no more likely to be prejudiced against gay people than anyone else." (Stonewall 2008, p2).

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<sup>1</sup> The .gov.uk website defines hate crime as "Crimes committed against someone because of their disability, transgender-identity, race, religion or belief, or sexual orientation" and can include: threatening behavior, assault, robbery, damage to property, inciting others to commit hate crimes and harassment

*“Personally my faith is as an integral part of me as my gender identity. Sometimes I have felt as though I must choose between the two which result in [...] poor mental health. It is a constant struggle to align the two and remain sane” – Survey Respondent*

Indeed, while the challenges around community cohesion for the LGBTQI+ and faith communities is well known, the nuanced lived experiences of LGBTQI+ people of faith, and examples of positive LGBTQI+ affirmation and inclusion in faith settings are not so well documented. The prevailing

narrative that LGBTQI+ identity and faith ‘do not mix’ and are mutually antagonist is rooted in long-standing discrimination against LGBTQI+ people in some faith communities, at extremes including so-called ‘conversion therapies’.

However, the engagement found that this had led to an incorrect over-generalisation of faith as inherently anti-LGBTQI+, missing out an understanding of LGBTQI+ affirmative and inclusive faith practices and in some cases leading to varying degrees of prejudice and exclusion of LGBTQI+ people of faith within the LGBTQI+ community, adding to existing marginalisation, stigma and social isolation.

Positive and more nuanced experiences of faith identity as an LGBTQI+ person came through strongly throughout the engagement, as well as shining a light on the nature and extent of the prejudice and even hate crime that does still exist in some faith settings.

The engagement found that these issues of cohesion affect individuals’ attitudes and willingness to engage with support and reporting services, including council services, the police, local LGBTQI+ and faith organisations and third party reporting organisations. In some cases, individuals were not comfortable reaching out to anyone whatsoever for support due to the nature of the stigma on their identity as an LGBTQI+ person of faith.

The intention of this engagement then was to target these areas requiring attention, with a focus on how existing support pathways might be built upon and new solutions for improving cohesion might be explored.

The decision was taken in this engagement to focus on faith communities specifically, due to a recognition of the specific challenges facing the intersection of the faith and LGBTQI+ communities – in a national as well as local context<sup>2</sup>. For this reason, emphasis was not placed on philosophical beliefs or atheism as a subset of the characteristic of ‘faith and belief’, due to the already secular-dominant nature of mainstream LGBTQI+ communities.

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<sup>2</sup> One survey respondent objected to the wording of ‘faith’ and that this should be extended to ‘faith and belief’ to encompass non-spiritual and non-religious philosophical orientations. While a specific decision was taken to focus specifically on faith (for reasons outlined in the introduction) it would be helpful in future engagement to clearly explain any reasons for exceptions or specific focuses taken.

## Engagement Methods

The engagement was carried out over a period of three months in Autumn/Winter 2018 and included online survey and focus group methods. Paper and offline surveys were also made available.

This engagement could not have been successful without the support of local community organisations, whose input, resource support and outreach support created a greater depth and breadth of engagement into diverse faith communities in Brighton & Hove. These included:

- The Brighton & Hove City Council Community Safety Team
- Interfaith Connect
- The Racial Harassment Forum
- Trust for Developing Communities
- Brighton and Hove Faith in Action
- MindOut

# Executive Summary

This engagement project explored experiences of prejudice, community cohesion and access to support at the intersection of LGBTQI+ identity and faith in Brighton and Hove. Using survey and focus group methods, we consulted with a total of 73 individuals from this intersectional population about the key challenges and opportunities they faced, both as LGBTQI+ people in their faith communities and as people of faith in their LGBTQI+ communities.

**One thing is clear from the findings of the survey and focus group: the relationship between LGBTQI+ and faith identities, communities and experiences are far more complex and nuanced than the prevailing ‘either/or’ view that LGBTQI+ and faith identity ‘don’t mix’.**

*“Sometimes people in the LGBT community think your faith is 100% your choice. We choose to follow a particular faith trajectory, but there’s something within us that makes us do so. There’s actually quite a deep parallel between faith and sexuality and gender identity.”* – Focus Group Participant

**Rates and severity of LGBTQI+ prejudice and hate crime in faith communities were reported to be higher and greater than those of faith prejudice in the LGBTQI+ community.** Although this finding may not come as a surprise, it was clear that the faith prejudice experienced in LGBTQI+ communities was by no means insignificant, and that this was an important issue for people, with many participants in the survey and focus group greatly emphasizing the need to

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*“There’s a sense of it being a dichotomy – you’re one thing or the other, and they don’t mix, and they’re polarized politically.”* – Focus Group Participant

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address faith-inclusion in the LGBTQI+ community, and to highlight the positive examples of LGBTQI+ inclusion that do exist in faith settings. This was something many felt was largely overlooked or avoided due to a multitude of complex factors, some of which are addressed in this report.

While cohesion issues around mutual exclusion, prejudice and even hate crime were a clear challenge throughout, positive examples of integration and inclusion also emerged strongly, as did ideas for building community and developing new spaces and pathways of LGBTQI+ and faith support, as well as improving inclusion in existing services.

# Executive Summary

## LGBTQI+ and Faith Prejudice and Community Cohesion

### *LGBTQI+ Prejudice in Faith Communities*

- **80%**<sup>3</sup> said they had experienced LGBTQI+ prejudice in a faith setting (46% of which was from their own faith community)
- **36%** felt LGBTQI+ prejudice in their faith communities constituted a hate crime

### *Faith Prejudice in LGBTQI+ Communities*

- **44%** of survey respondents had experienced faith-based prejudice in the LGBTQI+ community
- **12%** said they considered the faith prejudice they had experienced in their LGBTQI+ community to be a hate crime

**A sense of division was a major theme throughout the engagement.** Some felt more comfortable being out as LGBTQI+ in their faith community than they did as faith in their LGBTQI+ community, while others felt the reverse. Others were not able to be 'out' in either community, and some felt they were fighting for the rights of LGBTQI+ people in their faith community, but then being marginalized in their LGBTQI+ community.

- **43%** of respondents said that LGBTQI+ prejudice kept them from participating in their faith community either 'a great deal' or 'a lot'
- **12%** said faith prejudice had kept them from participating in their LGBTQI+ community either 'a great deal' or 'a lot'.

"There's a question of acceptance on both sides – in terms of how a faith community accepts you as a person from the LGBTQI+ community and also how that community accepts you as a person of faith. You tend to live in this hinterland of being regarded with suspicion by the LGBTQI+ community [...] So you live in this weird world where you're battling one side for the rights of a group that really can't stick you anywhere because quite rightly they feel hurt and excluded from that so how dare you be part of it as well" –

*Focus Group Participant*

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*"To my Muslim family I hide my LGBTQ lifestyle and to my LGBTQ friends and to other social circles, I downplay my Muslim identity. To the non-LGBTQ Muslims in Brighton, I completely hide my true nature."*

*– Focus Group Participant*

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<sup>3</sup> Percentages, where given, refer to statistics from the online survey

### *‘Conversion’ or ‘reparative’ ‘therapies’*

At the more extreme end of LGBTQI+ prejudice in faith communities, and adding significantly to cohesion issues, are so-called ‘conversion’ or ‘reparative therapies’ – any intervention designed to attempt to change or ‘cure’ a person’s LGBTQI+ identity.

- **Nearly 1 in 5 (16%)** survey respondents had been offered some form of so-called ‘conversion’ or ‘reparative’ therapy and **1 in 10 (9%)** have undergone this.
- **Half** of these were faith-related, while the remainder came from health and psychological professionals.

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*“I have been prayed over for healing. It was devastating and led to suicidal thoughts”*

- Survey  
Respondent

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This finding echoes, but at more than double the rate, national statistics released in the 2018 National LGBT Survey, which reported that 5% of the LGBTQ population had been offered conversion therapy in the UK, and further 2% had undergone it.

### *Invisibility, visibility and representation*

While there were some examples of positive inclusion and integration, many people felt they could not safely be ‘out’ as a person of faith in their LGBTQI+ community, or as LGBTQI+ in their faith community, leading to a sense of invisibility and isolation.

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“There was a big [transphobic] sticker in the toilets. I ripped it off and looked to see if it was in any of the other cubicles, and it wasn’t but there were swastikas drawn on things. It was a bit of a double-whammy of that moment of being by myself and wondering – you know, because I don’t look [...] like a Hissidic Jew [...] and people don’t assume I’m LGBT when they meet me [...] am I only safe because I’m invisible?” – *Focus Group Participant*

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### *Migrants Refugees and Asylum Seekers*

LGBTQI+ migrants, refugees and asylum seekers of faith face additional challenges and barriers.

Faith communities can be a vital connection to community and yet also pose a risk to personal safety and relationships from anti-LGBTQI+ family members and communities from the person's country of origin.

### *LGBTQI+ People of Faith Wellbeing*

"To be vocal about our sexuality to our faith leaders puts us at a lot of risk. In this day and age online news travel fast. We may get freedom in UK but risk losing freedom when visiting our home country, and risk losing contact with our family and loved ones back home." – *Focus Group Participant*

As people from both LGBTQI+ and faith communities, some within this intersectional population are impacted by their multiple minority status – often with additional factors such as age, disability and ethnicity – increasing minority stress, social isolation and poor mental health, the engagement found.

### *Isolation*

While it is already widely known that the LGBTQI+ population experiences high levels of social isolation, the statistics from the survey and the findings of the focus group echo this, adding that the often double-stigma of being both LGBTQI+ and of faith increases their sense of isolation

Around **1 in 10** survey respondents said they would not feel comfortable turning to any individual or organisation whatsoever – including friends and family – for support after an incident of LGBTQI+ prejudice (7%) or faith-based prejudice (10%).

"Recently, I have come to terms with my spirituality and how this impact on my sexuality. I started going to the mosque, although I cannot disclose to the Imam and the other people of who I really am. There is fear that I would be negatively judged, and perhaps ostracized from the local Muslim community." -

*Focus Group Participant*

## *Mental Health*

As many respondents to the survey and focus group stressed, the detrimental impact of prejudice and exclusion within faith, LGBTQI+ and mainstream communities at large on the mental health and wellbeing of LGBTQI+ people of faith cannot be underestimated.

**39%** of LGBTQI+ people of faith who responded to the online survey and **three quarters** of focus group participants (6 in 8) reported that they live with a mental health condition, such as anxiety or depression, among others.

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*“Personally my faith is as an integral part of me as my gender identity. Sometimes I have felt as though I must choose between the two which result in cognitive dissonance and poor mental health. It is a constant struggle to align the two and remain sane.”* Survey Respondent

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“One thing that has really moved me and made me feel more able to be a whole person is the strength of conviction within [my faith community] that LGBT will have a place within that community without question. That has enabled me to relax and explore myself and the interaction between religion, spirituality, faith and identity.” – Focus Group Participant

However, when a faith community is explicitly LGBTQI+ inclusive, the positive benefits for the person can be profound.

## Support Needs

### *Peer Support*

Both the survey and focus group discussion agreed that a multi-faith LGBTQ space would be valued to share experiences, socialize and share informal support. It was felt that this would also help address the issues of isolation and a lack of representation of LGBTQI+ people of faith, and help to develop shared identity and a sense of community where currently this only exists in specific pockets of individual (and often exceptional) faith groups.

- **More than a third (36%)** said they would value either one-off peer support or an ongoing peer support group of with those of a similar identity/ shared experience if they experienced faith-based prejudice
- **Half (49%)** said they would value an ongoing peer support drop-in related to LGBTQI+ prejudice in their faith community.

### *Advocacy*

- Advocacy support with reporting was the preferred option for the **majority, 51%**, when it came to support after an incident of LGBTQI+ prejudice in their faith community.
- **More than a third (36%)** favoured advocacy support for reporting prejudice or hate crime in cases of faith-based prejudice in their LGBTQI+ community.

“Everyone seemed in warm agreement that a regular group meeting would be beneficial [...] There’s literally nothing of this sort in Brighton for LGBTQI+ people of faith.” – Focus Group Participant

“Sharing spaces within LGBTQI+ spaces for people of faith to share what their faith/belief means to them.” – Suggestion from survey respondent

“A peer support group would be a great idea and a specific LGBTQI advocate or support worker who could help people report faith based hate crimes etc.” - survey respondent

## *Meditation*

- **The majority, 64%** said that their preferred form of resolution for faith-prejudice in the LGBTQI+ community would be a carefully mediated session with the person or group who caused the harm, in an attempt to build awareness of the impact of prejudice and build dialogue.
- This was in contrast with preferences for LGBTQI+ prejudice in the faith community, where a mediated session was **the least favoured option, at 43%.**

## *Community Development*

The desire and need for a sense of shared LGBTI+ and faith identity and community came through strongly in the comments in the survey and focus group discussion

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“Let LGBTQI+ people know of safe groups to meet with in the town of different faiths; and of where to get support if experiencing prejudice; get inclusivity awareness onto the agendas of faith communities, where possible.”

“More interfaith/lgbtqi get togethers and worshipping. Fun events that make us laugh and love together. Talks of positive experience (because the negatives we know too well). To be race/culturally aware and what that means outside white communities and how that affects being of faith and lgbtqi.”

“Greater signposting to affirming faith groups [would help]”

– *Survey respondents*

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## Reporting and Accessing Support

Intersecting barriers associated with both faith and LGBTQI+ identity mean that conventional avenues of support or reporting – such as the Community Safety Team, the police, or trusted leaders or other organisations in one’s faith or LGBTQI+ community – are not as readily available for some LGBTQI+ people of faith. This leaves some without anywhere to turn, and others with only very limited options.

## Reporting LGBTQI+ and Faith Prejudice and Hate Crime

The engagement found that there is currently a lack of clarity about what constitutes a hate crime and that there are particular issues regarding under-reporting for this population.

- **Around a third** of respondents reporting that they were not sure whether prejudice (LGBTQI+ - 33%; Faith – 35%) they had experience counted as a hate crime or not.
- **Between a quarter and a third** (24%, LGBTQI+ hate crime and 31% for faith-based hate crime) said that uncertainty about what constitutes a hate crime would keep them from reporting.
- **The great majority of respondents (88%)** had never reported an LGBTQI+ hate crime incident perpetrated by a person or group of faith to the police, although **36%** felt they had experienced a hate crime of this nature, and a further **33%** were unsure.
- **Around half**, 42% and 52% respectively, said they would feel actively uncomfortable reporting faith or LGBTQI+ based prejudice to the police, while **only 4% and 6%** respectively said they would feel actively comfortable doing so.

“When it comes to [faith] prejudice towards me personally I don’t think I would go to anyone, and that means maybe one or two very close personal friends and that’s basically it.” - *Focus Group participant*

It was also found that community cohesion issues also have a detrimental impact on people’s comfort reporting or reaching out for support.

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*“[I wouldn’t report because] I would not want to add to any stereotypes that LGBT+ people hate people of faith.” – Survey Respondent*

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- **A third** of survey respondents (34%) said they would be reluctant to report faith-based hate crime in their LGBTQI+ community for fear of alienating them
- **17%** said they were worried reporting LGBTQI+ prejudice or hate crime would alienate their faith community and this kept them from taking action

### Perceptions of Council and Accessing Support

Willingness to reach out to the Brighton & Hove City Council Community Safety Team (CST) was low, both in terms of LGBTQI+ and faith-based prejudice, due to a number of factors, including:

- A lack of awareness of the services offered
- A perception of the council as associated with the police or as policing
- Negative experiences of other council services and departments (e.g. housing and disability benefits)
- Lack of trust in the LGBTQI+ and faith inclusivity of the council. Some said they would be more comfortable reaching out for LGBTQI+ support than faith support or an intersectional issue.

**Less than 1 in 10 (9%)** would currently choose reach out to the CST this option for support or reporting following a faith or LGBTQI+ hate crime.

“I would find [reaching out to a council service for support] really difficult, because you wouldn’t know if they were both on board with both of those sides of things [LGBTQ+ identity and faith]” – *Focus Group Participant*

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“I don’t feel like [the CST] have a very strong outward presence – I don’t see posters for them anywhere. [...] I don’t think they’re very good at getting it out there that they’re a non-policing organisation that can support you.” – *Focus Group Participant*

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**16%** said they would actively avoid reaching out to the CST for faith-based prejudice, and **21%** said the same for LGBTQI+ prejudice.

### LGBTQI+ Voluntary Sector

The engagement suggested that relationships with the LGBTQI+ community sector were tricky for LGBTQI+ people of faith. Many felt unsure that they would be fully accepted or supported. This is reflected in the statistics, which show a fairly low level of comfort accessing LGBTQI+ organisations for support that would ‘out’ them as people of faith.

- **33%** said they would feel comfortable seeking out support from local LGBTQI+ organisation for LGBTQI+ prejudice from their faith community, and only **7%** said they would actively *not* feel comfortable doing so
- However, only **18%** said they would consider going to a local LGBTQI+ organisation if the incident was related to their faith and happened in the LGBTQI+ community and nearly **1 in 5 (19%)** said they would feel actively uncomfortable doing so

# Recommendations Summary

This is a shortened version of the recommendations. You can find the full recommendations at the end of this report.

## Brighton & Hove City Council

### **1. Actively support faith and LGBTQI+ community cohesion**

Take actions to help challenge the narrative of faith/LGBTQI+ dichotomy, and promote positive examples of faith and LGBTQI+ integration and inclusion. Support LGBTQI+ inclusive faith organisations to link up, fostering inclusive community for LGBTQI+ people of faith.

### **2. Further investigation and concrete actions on so-called 'conversion therapies'**

The engagement found that the practice of 'Conversion therapy' is still a significant problem in the community. Outreach should be made into faith communities known to carry out these practices and interventions developed to prevent these and safeguard individuals at risk.

### **3. Increase the public profile of Community Safety Team (CST) and Brighton & Hove City Council's broader roles in relation to prejudice/ hate crime support and resolution options**

Engagement found that, at present awareness of the CST is low, and there is little confidence that there will be an understanding of the intersectional issues LGBTQI+ people of faith face. The CST should develop and promote an awareness raising campaign, highlighting the services offered and their non-policing approach.

### **4. Council to include LGBTQI+ and faith representation in Community Safety Team communications and outreach materials**

The need for trust and confidence in support services was paramount, with visible representation and demonstration of LGBTQI+ and faith inclusion being key factors in making LGBTQI+ people of faith feel more comfortable reaching out for support.

### **5. The Community Safety Team to access training on LGBTQI+ and faith**

In order to increase capacity to support LGBTQI+ people of faith, and increase community confidence, relevant workers within the CST should access specific LGBTQI+ and faith training to understand the intersectional needs and experiences of this community.

## LGBTQI+ Community Sector

### **1. LGBTQI+ and Faith Peer Support**

Peer-support group for LGBTQI+ people of faith should be provided within the LGBTQI+ community sector, highlighting wellbeing, community and dialogue across difference, to be led by a person from an LGBTQI+ and faith community.

### **2. Model positive LGBTQI+ and Faith inclusion and integration**

Organisations in the LGBTQI+ voluntary and community sector to take actions to improve internal attitudes and public-facing communications to be actively LGBTQI+ and faith affirming. Awareness raising training for staff and volunteers, addressing any current blind spots around LGBTQI+ and faith. (Switchboard's HIP project has attended LGBTQ and Faith training provided by the Faith and Belief Forum)

### **3. Work in partnership with inclusive faith organisations**

Where appropriate LGBTQI+ organisations should take opportunities to partner and build relationships with local LGBTQI+ inclusive and affirming faith organisations with a view to improving community cohesion, integration and signposting between services.

# Focus Group

## Introduction

The LGBTQI+ and Faith focus group was a two hour event held at a neutral and accessible central Brighton location on a weekday evening. In order to help build trust and support a safe and inclusive discussion, the group was led by a HIP worker and a paid facilitator with other experience of contracted work with Switchboard, both of whom are LGBTQ and of faith.

The focus group was introduced with an explanation of the engagement topic, the purpose of the focus group, and by establishing a shared group agreement for carrying out the discussion respectfully and confidentially. The group began with a name and pronoun round, with each person sharing a little about themselves before beginning with the focus group questions.

The focus group itself grew into a lively and respectful discussion, with everyone involved contributing and most actively engaging with one another.

## Promotion of the event

The focus group was promoted via a number of channels for four weeks prior to the group. This included social media (Facebook and Twitter), email campaign to the Switchboard newsletter list, via the Community Works list, and also through contacts made with a number of local faith-specific and interfaith community organisations, who were kind enough to share the call-out for participants (alongside the survey) with their contacts. This included organisations targeting BAME communities, such as the Trust for Developing Communities and the Racial Harassment forum. The community safety team at Brighton and Hove City Council also helped share the call-out for the group with their own networks. MindOut kindly provided a venue for the focus group and also helped promotion of the event through their networks.

In order to make the focus group more accessible, Switchboard offered to cover local travel expenses to attend the event, and £10 was also given to all participants by way of thanks for participating.

## Safety and Anonymity

Due to the sensitivity of the nature of the group and the issues discussed, the anonymity and confidentiality of participants was a high priority and was central to the planning of the event.

By way of protecting the safety of the group and the anonymity and confidentiality of the participants, the location was only shared with those who were offered confirmed places in the group. This also prevented people from mistakenly thinking the group was a drop-in open to all and arriving without prior discussion.

The event was held as a venue of no exclusive faith or LGBTQI+ affiliation, so that participants would not be 'outed' as affiliated with these groups when entering or leaving the venue.

Prior to being considered for the group, interested individuals were invited to share a little about their personal interest in the LGBTQI+ and faith group via email or telephone, so as to ensure only genuine participants were considered and to protect the safety of those involved.

In the interest of protecting the anonymity of participants, individuals are not identified in the focus groups, and profiles of individuals based on their characteristics are not shared in whole.

Participants were informed well in advance of audio recording of the session and consent was obtained for recording and for anonymised quoting in the report.

### Challenges

A key challenge in the group was ensuring diversity, which was supported by the screening process described above, to ensure that as representative as possible a mix of people were able to participate. Unfortunately, no-one from the Islamic faith was able to attend on the day; two muslim-identified LGBTQI+ people who had confirmed to attend were then unable to, meaning that these valuable voices were unfortunately missed from the focus group discussion. However, individuals were followed up and given an opportunity to contribute to the report in another way, and one chose to provide a written statement, provided part of the focus group findings below.

Ensuring confidentiality and anonymity was also a challenge within such a small community of LGBTQI+ people of faith. Therefore, participants were clearly advised of the ways in which anonymity would be ensured and given the opportunity to redact any statements on the recording, or after, via email. Care has also been taken in the report to avoid sharing information about participants that could build a profile of their identity, and therefore no more than one or two characteristics about each individual have been shared, with some information changed where necessary.

### Participants and Demographics

All participants completed an anonymous equalities monitoring form at the close of the session. 18 individuals expressed interest in participating in the group. 10 were ultimately offered, and 8 attended on the evening.

Places were not guaranteed or offered first come first-served, but rather all applications were considered on the basis of creating as diverse as possible a group in terms of representing the multitude of faith groups, LGBTQI+ identities and other intersectional characteristics of communities across Brighton & Hove.

### Faith

The group was made up of representatives from a range of faith traditions, including several different Christian traditions, including Church of England and the Coptic Church (5), Hinduism (1) and Judaism (2) and as Spiritual (1), - with some participants identifying with more than one faith. Two Muslim-identified individuals expressed interest in the focus group but were ultimately unable to attend. However, one of these individuals provided a written statement following the group, provided below.

### Sexual orientation

Participants identified across the LGBQ spectrum, as bisexual (1), lesbian or gay woman (3), gay (3) and queer (2) - again with some identifying with more than one of these. One participant chose 'prefer not to say'.

## Gender and Trans Status

There was a mix of gender representation - again with some identifying as more than one of the following: women (3), men (4) and non-binary (1). One participant self-identified as trans (1) and the remainder as cisgender (7).

## Race and Ethnicity

Two participants were people of colour and six were white. Of these, participants gave the following information: White British (3), White European (1), other white background (2), Indian (1) and one participant chose 'prefer not to say'.

## Disability

Seven in eight participants had some form of disability, long-term illness or physical impairment. Of these were: Mental health difficulty (6), Long-term illness (4), physical impairment or mobility issue (1). Only one had no known health condition.

## Focus Group Questions

The focus group was loosely structured around four key questions. The discussion evolved organically to incorporate each of the key questions.

1. What are the main issues facing LGBTQI+ people of faith in Brighton & Hove?
2. How do other aspects of your identity interact with these issues? For example ethnicity, disability, gender, age, and others?
3. How does your LGBTQI+ and faith identity affect who you would feel comfortable turning to for support?
4. What do services/ organisations/ groups need to do to show that they are a trustworthy source of support for LGBTQI+ people of faith?

## Focus Group Findings

Several key themes emerged from the focus group discussion. These centred around

- Perceptions of faith inclusion of the LGBTQI+ community, including the voluntary sector
- Perceptions of LGBTQI+ inclusion in faith communities
- Experiences of intersectionality
- Perceptions of Brighton & Hove City Council
- Feelings about reporting prejudice and accessing support

## Perceptions of LGBTQI+ Community

### *Silence and shame around faith in LGBTQI+ community*

Most participants said they were uncomfortable being open about their faith in the LGBTQ community at large. The barriers discussed to openness were a feeling of shame or embarrassment connected to defying the atheist 'norm' of the secular LGBTQI+ 'scene'; faith being perceived as inherently anti-LGBTQI+ and LGBTQI+ people of faith therefore being judged as naïve or traitorous; and, in some cases, a fear of being excluded from social circles.

One participant said they felt more accepted as an LGBT person in their faith community than a Christian in their LGBT community:

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*“Doing the [LGBTQI+ and faith] survey shocked me because I realized I belong to a church that’s been working really hard on becoming inclusive [...] and I don’t feel compartmentalized any more, but I do amongst my LGBT friends. [In my faith community] I can be LGBT and of faith and there’s no issue there, but with my LGBT friends I’m quiet about my faith because I have encountered some quite aggressive and nasty responses. And I feel sympathetic to that, because if someone I don’t know says they’re a Christian the first thing I think is ‘are you homophobic?’. So I relate to that but at the same time I don’t think they realise the impact they’re having.”*

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This sentiment was echoed by many in the group. One participant said:

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*“I feel I’m caught inside this space that doesn’t quite exist anywhere. It’s been really difficult. I feel I’m in the closet more as a person of faith than I am as an LGBT person. I carry much more shame about my faith identity than I do about my LGBT identity.”*

*“There’s a sense of it being a dichotomy – you’re one thing or the other, and they don’t mix, and they’re polarized politically. I feel like I can’t talk about being a person of faith in the LGBT community at all because I just don’t think it would go down very well. I’ve had people who are LGBT who I didn’t expect to be quite anti-religion – or maybe in a theoretical way but not at me – and then be quite overt about their resistance. And then I kind of never talked about it again.”*

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Several other participants echoed this sentiment: *“a space that doesn’t exist anywhere is how I feel as well.”*

One participant remarked that many of his gay male Christian and Muslim friends choose to be silent about their faith in an LGBT (and specifically gay-male-oriented) context, even though this is an important part of their life and identity. Speaking strongly on the subject of silence on faith in the Brighton & Hove gay-male community specifically, he said:

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*“They have to keep their mouth shut because if they open their mouth they will be deemed to be a heretic and they will no longer be welcomed on the scene, and the door will be shut in their face. And they will be kicked out by the very community they have worked so hard to become a part of in the first place.” The lack of welcome in this scene was linked by the participant to a perception of the Brighton gay-male community as alcohol and drug-centric, as well as holding an ethos of “aggressive atheism”.*

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It was noted that LGBTQ+ charitable organisations that were perceived as being particularly associated with the 'gay-male scene' were therefore perceived as not inclusive to people of faith.

However, other participants of other identities reported different experiences:

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*"The description of LGBTQI culture by some of the other participants as being hyper concerned with image, leaving no place for religion and spirituality is not relevant for all sections of the community. It affects the visible cis male gay sections of the community. It didn't resonate for me at all as a queer cis gay woman in queer culture."*

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In general, participants recognised that the relationship between faith and LGBTQI+ was complex, and that there was understandable resistance from the LGBTQI+ community due to the reality of harm perpetrated against LGBTQI+ communities by some faith groups, but that ultimately faith-based prejudice in the LGBTQI+ community does need to be challenged:

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*"There is a conversation to be had, because a lot of LGBTQ people have been very hurt by Christianity and different faiths, however, there's a culture of discrimination within the LGBT community that isn't being challenged. And how can there be trust in that situation?"*

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However, when asked, no participants shared positive experiences of faith inclusion within the secular LGBTQI+ community at large.

#### *The politicization of faith in LGBTQ communities*

Several participants shared that they felt politicised LGBTQI+ communities were particularly hostile to their faith, and that their faith affiliations were sometimes politicised in unhelpful and inaccurate ways:

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*"Being Jewish being seen as such a political topic. I consider myself to be on the left politically, but the left is also full of anger and misinformation that Judaism is the same as Zionism and Zionism is the same as pro-occupation of Palestine, or the issues around the conflict between Israel and Palestine. I feel I'm caught inside this space that doesn't quite exist anywhere. It's been really difficult. I feel I'm in the closet more as a person of faith than I am as an LGBT person"*

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Another participant echoed this sentiment, expressing a feeling that they would not want to seek support outside of their (LGBTQ inclusive) faith community because of the "animosity" they experience in political LGBTQ circles.

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*“The negative attitudes I’ve experienced toward religion and spirituality have been most prevalent in political contexts where spirituality/religion is seen as a way to avoid action and keep the status quo in place. The queer culture I’m part of exists in the overlap between LGBTQI and the political left and I think its mainly the political aspect that drives the animosity. The anger is primarily directed toward power structures, which includes the Christian church. Its also directed toward individuals who are putting time and energy into something that is perceived as a distraction from dismantling social inequality.”*

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In a similar vein, several participants reflected that oftentimes the secular LGBTQI+ community perceived faith and spirituality as a ‘choice’, and that some participants felt this in fact reflected the same discriminatory rhetoric used by anti-LGBTQI+ faith groups, who denounce LGBTQI+ identities as a matter of choice:

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*“Sometimes people in the LGBT community think your faith is 100% your choice. We choose to follow a particular faith trajectory, but there’s something within us that makes us do so. There’s actually quite a deep parallel between faith and sexuality and gender identity that seems to not exist – it’s as if there’s a brick wall: ‘Why are you that? Why have you made this abhorrent decision to be a person of faith?’ from someone coming from a sort of ‘Christian Vs. LGBT’ sort of background.”*

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Another participant echoed these views, sharing how they were sometimes dismissed by people both in and outside the LGBTQ community for “ticking a few too many boxes”, noting that these were boxes they never “consciously chose to tick”.

#### *Hierarchy of ‘acceptable’ faiths in LGBTQI+ community*

Several participants spoke about their experience of finding that certain faiths seemed to be more accepted in the LGBTQI+ community than others. In particular, traditions of Eastern origin such as Islam, Buddhism and Hinduism were perceived as more accepted, while Christianity and Judaism – particularly the former – were less accepted.

One participant shared from their experience as a Hindu, revealing both how a patronising unconscious bias regarding ethnicity in the white-British-centric LGBTQI+ community in Brighton & Hove can come into play, as well as the perceived ‘hierarchy’ of acceptable faiths in the community:

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*“When I tell my LGBT friends that I’m Hindu they’re fine [...] They seem to think Hinduism is a very frothy very funky sort of Shiva-like trendy thing that you do while you’re taking the hippie trail on a gap year or something. [But when I talk about being a follower of Christ] it’s like a sheet of ice comes down slowly on the room and I can actually see their body language change towards me.”*

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Two further participants shared that they experienced the LGBTQ community as “forcefully rejecting” of Christianity, and that other faiths – particularly traditions of an Eastern origin, such as Buddhism, Hinduism, and to some extent, Islam – were more accepted by the LGBTQ community. They noted that although Judaism was generally seen as more acceptable than Christianity, they still experienced anti-Semitic comments from their LGBTQ peers.

Echoing this, another commented that although there is greater tolerance of Muslims than Christians in certain corners of the LGBTQI+ community, there was perceived to be a lack of genuine respect and understanding for these groups:

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“The underdog is always favoured on the left so in response to high levels of islamophobia, Muslims are more tolerated than people practicing the other Abrahamic religions, but there's a lacking of true acceptance I think. A lot of my queer (cis, trans and non binary friends) have spiritual practices or affiliations, mainly Pagan and Buddhist.”

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#### Perceptions of Faith Communities

##### *Positive impact of inclusive faith spaces and ethos*

In general, participants shared much more positive feedback about LGBTQ inclusion in faith settings than vice versa. Several participants shared experiences of particularly positive examples of inclusion in faith settings, and the powerful effect of this on their wellbeing:

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“One thing that has really moved me and made me feel more able to be a whole person is the strength of conviction within [my faith community] that LGBT will have a place within that community without question. That has enabled me to relax and explore myself and the interaction between religion, spirituality, faith and identity [...] But that is quite unique, and I’m very aware of that.”

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One participant also noted how faith leadership was very important for creating an inclusive environment, where there is an assumption and a norm that members of the community will be supportive and inclusive of LGBTQI+ people.

Speaking of a local Christian venue being opened to organisations for events:

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“They hold so many LGBT related events all the time and it’s seen as quite a neutral place to be even though it is a church. I think just opening the church out to be used by the community has maybe helped some people break down a real deep pain that they had about being rejected by Christianity.”

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### *Negative LGBTQI+ experiences in Faith spaces*

However, participants did have negative experiences to share about their inclusion as LGBTQI+ people in a faith setting.

For example, one participant shared how their Christian church had at times dismissed the oppressive power of anti-LGBTQ views in faith spaces by framing these as simple differences of opinion.

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*“We have this idea of ‘disagreeing well’ and that’s how you can get a room full of people of faith with different views together and not falling out is the theory of it. And I’m fine about disagreeing well on all sorts of theological stuff, but it really sticks in my throat about someone’s gender identity, their sexuality. I could be sat next to somebody who thinks I’m inherently ‘sinful’, I suppose is a word they would use – not a word I would use – and somehow that disagreeing well thing makes that okay and I’m not sure it should be.”*

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Another participant spoke of the heteronormativity and hyper-sexualisation of LGBTQI+ communities by their Christian faith leadership. “Everything’s on the back foot” as an LGBTQ person, because of the idea of “inherent ‘sinfulness’”, they said. A local faith leader themselves, they went on to describe a scenario in which they had been urgently called by a church authority while away on holiday abroad, as they had posted about their trip with other gay men on social media:

*“There is that sense that you’re on the back foot for being in a certain place with a certain group of people [...] skating on thin ice, where I’m sure plenty of sexual immorality can happen in a Wetherspoons, but that isn’t mentioned, because it’s imagined as a heteronormative space.”*

However, it was noted that it was important to recognise anti-LGBTQI+ views in secular society, and that anti-LGBTQI+ views weren’t necessarily born out of religious beliefs, even when held by people of faith:

*“I think people sometimes thinly veil their [anti-LGBTQ+] bigotry with religion and I think that then tars the brush of all straight people that are part of a faith group that they have the same negative opinions about LGBT+ people, and that’s not the case, always”*

Furthermore, one trans participant noted that the strong gender roles and expectations of some faith traditions provided a challenge to a sense of belonging within some parts of their community:

*“It can be difficult to approach traditions that have very gendered experiences and then the way life is meant to be mapped out for you, and I don’t fit into that.”*

### Intersectional experiences of prejudice

#### *Multiple minority status of LGBTQI+ people of faith*

While some participants felt accepted and embraced as an LGBTQI+ person within their faith communities, those who did not spoke off a feeling of not belonging fully in either community, causing hurt and isolation, in addition to the existing stress of their multiple-minority status:

*“There’s a question of acceptance on both sides – in terms of how a faith community accepts you as a person from the LGBTQI+ community and also how that community accepts you as a person of faith. You*

*tend to live in this hinterland of being regarded with suspicion by the LGBTQI+ community but you don't quite fit in – from my perspective. Other faiths are more accepting. There's a perception the Church of England is very tolerant and open and of course it's not. So you live in this weird world where you're battling one side for the rights of a group that really can't stick you anywhere because quite rightly they feel hurt and excluded from that so how dare you be part of it as well"*

Echoing this view, another participant spoke of the lack of representation of this intersection– in LGBTQ+, faith, or mainstream communities or avenues, including the local council:

*"There's such a lack of positive representation – or any representation at all – about what it means to be an LGBT person that comes from a faith group. There are so many myths and stereotypes that exist, and it's really difficult to bust those myths without a platform from which to express those things."*

In the same vein, other participants said there was a sense of being 'either/or', and no space currently existing for LGBTQI+ people of faith to establish a shared identity:

*"There's a sense of it being a dichotomy – you're one thing or the other, and they don't mix, and they're polarized politically."*

*"I feel I'm caught inside this space that doesn't quite exist anywhere."*

#### *The risks of visibility*

One participant spoke of their ambivalence towards being more visible – as an LGBTQI+ person and as a person of faith – one the one hand wanting their identity to be recognised on their own terms, and on the other fearing for their safety when they are visibly LGBTQI+ or of faith.

Sharing an experience of finding both anti-trans and anti-Semitic graffiti in public toilets on the seafront, they said:

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*"There was a big [transphobic] sticker in the toilets. I ripped it off and looked to see if it was in any of the other cubicles, and it wasn't but there were swastikas drawn on things. It was a bit of a double-whammy of that moment of being by myself and wondering – you know, because I don't look [...] like a Hissidic Jew [...] and people don't assume I'm LGBT when they meet me [...] am I only safe because I'm invisible?"*

*"There's two sides to the invisibility coin – on one half I'm safe because I can choose when to speak and I'm safer when I do speak because I'm more palatable as a queer person or as a person of faith, but then there's also the invisibility of that people don't know that I exist, and that I'm impacted by things that they say or do."*

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This leads to a vigilance about the safety and views of others:

*"The writing's on the wall in a way – I wonder, is this what's happening in people's subconscious, and people feel able to wallpaper paste it or draw it on the wall but they wouldn't say it to my face? How do I respond? It's really difficult sometimes, and I didn't know what to do."*

Regarding anti-faith and anti-lgbt graffiti, they said that they would value a way of instantly reporting, such as an app, to send photos and locations information to the council to have it removed.

### Age

A trans young person participant spoke of the difficulties associated with their experience of the intersection of faith, trans status and age. Sharing an example from a medical encounter in which the healthcare staff made patronising comments regarding their religion and gender, they spoke of being perceived as a “snowflake millennial” – being branded as individualistic and “attention seeking” due to being judged as “ticking too many boxes”.

### Race and Ethnicity

A participant of colour said they would feel most comfortable approaching their 12 step group for support around the racial prejudice they experience, due to the existing trusting relationships there.

One participant noted that there was often a perception of Brighton as “tolerant, liberal” and safe for LGBTQ+ people, but that in fact there does exist a significant amount of prejudice – particularly when it comes to ethnicity.

Two white British participants shared experiences of being on the receiving end of racial prejudice due to being mistakenly perceived as of a minority ethnicity.

One participant shared that they and their partner had been targeted by racist abuse on their home due to being perceived as Asian. Another white British participant spoke of being told to ‘go back to his country’ because he was wearing a form of dress associated with his faith that was mistaken as being of a different country.

### Perceptions of Brighton & Hove Council

#### Perceptions of Council as LGBTQI+ safe but anti-faith

Several participants said they had had negative perceptions or experiences or of the council in the past that had led them to feel uncomfortable approaching them for support around faith-based prejudice.

One said that, several years, ago, their church LGBT group had been declined funding to participate in Pride due to their religious affiliation, and that they had felt discriminated against on this basis:

*“It’s really hard to get a grant out of the council for Pride if you’re part of a religious group. They just say we don’t give to faith groups – or they did [a few years ago]. So I said we’re an LGBT group and we want to march in pride, and they said they wouldn’t give us any money, because we were a faith group.”*

The same participant said the council had declined to let their church group access free online safeguarding training due to their faith affiliation.

The perception of a ‘hierarchy’ of acceptable faiths was also identified in the council, as well as in the LGBTQ community and society at large, with an expectation that the council will not treat reports of prejudice against Christians or Jews as seriously as those against those from faiths with a majority BAME membership:

*“As a Hindu [...] I would have no problem approaching the council or law enforcement or any of the other statutory services, but my partner is a Roman Catholic, and he would never, ever go to the council. He would never go to law enforcement, because he’s a Christian, and because he’s a Christian, he ranks*

*along with the Jews, and there is still this element of: if you're a Christian or if you're Jewish then somehow you're a perpetrator – you're to blame for something, you've caused something. But if you're a Hindu or a Muslim or a Buddhist you're an acceptable victim and they will be there to help you."*

Another participant said that they would feel comfortable approaching the hate crime support team at the council for concerns around LGBTQ prejudice but not if the incident was related to anti-Semitism or if it was an intersectional issue to do with both their faith and their LGBTQ identity:

*"When it comes to [faith] prejudice towards me personally I don't think I would go to anyone, and that means maybe one or two very close personal friends and that's basically it. But when it comes to LGBTQ related prejudice I feel comfortable to go to the council or the police without any problem at all [...] "For me, it comes from a place of being seen as if I'm kicking up a fuss about nothing."*

This view was echoed around the group, with several in agreement, and another participant commenting, adding that a public forum for exploring attitudes to faith would be a valuable way of addressing the current difficulty reaching out about faith-related issues:

*"I would happily go to the council about an LGBT related thing, but it wouldn't even occur to me to go to them for a faith-related thing. Maybe there's something about needing some forums to bring that conversation alive, so people can question their own mindsets, understand and learn. "*

#### *Need for assurance that council is LGBTQ and faith affirmative*

Several participants said that they found the council to be fairly neutral, and that they valued aspects of that neutrality – like being able to expect a certain degree of impartiality – but that not seeing reflections of the council being actively faith and LGBTQI+ inclusive led to feelings of uncertainty and doubt about their trustworthiness. Another highlighted that trust was key to who they would seek support from, and that for them this would be the people close to them they trusted, and that "the council would not be anywhere in my imagination" to go to.

The themes of trust and explicit assurance of LGBTQI+ and faith inclusion came up repeatedly as key pre-requisites for finding a place of support. One participant noted that their 12-step group, which was explicitly inter-faith in its approach and actively LGBTQ-inclusive, was a strong point of support in their life. They expressed that they valued this space because it was a safe and welcoming place to discuss all aspects of identity – including ethnicity and immigration status – as well as faith and LGBTQ identity. Another said that because their Jewish faith community was particularly supportive of LGBTQ people, they would feel comfortable sharing any issues of prejudice there, and this would be their first port of call. Another said that they were comfortable reporting an incident of prejudice to their psychologist, because they felt safe there, and that the assurance of confidentiality was helpful for this. However, while several people said they would feel comfortable going to the council for support around LGBTQI+ prejudice, they would not feel comfortable doing so regarding faith.

Several participants said:

*"I would find [reaching out to a council service for support] really difficult, because you wouldn't know if they were both on board with both of those sides of things [LGBTQ+ identity and faith]"*

*“I think definitely [it would help] the council making it feel like a safe space. I wasn’t even aware that there was someone you could report crime to in the LGBT community and that’s linked to religion as well. There’s so many people in Brighton that don’t know about that, but why don’t they know about it?”*

*“I don’t feel like they have a very strong outward presence – I don’t see posters for them anywhere. I feel like if I didn’t have the job that I do, I wouldn’t know that they exist. I see the people that work in that team in a lot of different community spaces, but that’s as a professional, not as an individual person. I don’t think they’re very good at getting it out there that they’re a non-policing organisation that can support you.”*

Adverse experiences of other branches of the council also came up as a barrier for some to seeking support. For example, one participant said that negative experiences with accessing housing benefit affected their willingness to approach the council for support around hate crime and prejudice.

Additionally, another participant added that, though this was an issue, they valued the council’s availability to support with prejudice, because it was perceived as “more neutral”, and potentially more confidential, than third sector organisations – which would leave him unsure as to whether to go to an LGBTQ or a faith-based organization, and have concerns that either one might not be welcoming and embracing of the ‘other’ aspect of their identity:

*“I like the neutrality of a statutory service, but I can understand how a lot of people are put off by it. I think the council is seen as one big blanket organization. If you’re a person that receives housing benefits, or you’ve had your disability benefits cut, you’ve experienced lots of issues that seems to stem from the council, perhaps people would be affected by those issues and would not want to go back to the council about something else that’s sensitive to do with their identity.”*

Several participants highlighted that public-facing representations of faith and LGBTQI+ inclusion in the council would be a valuable way of showing support and building trust with these communities:

*“Have little rainbow symbols, have leaflets for LGBT organisations, because if you’re a young person looking for someone to come out to, you’re scanning for safe spaces and you’ll pick up on those really simple things. It could be something as simple as if the hate crime team at council did a statement for Channukah – doing something nice for the different important dates for difference groups – doing something for the anniversary of the Stonewall riots, for Channukah, for Christmas, for Diwali – I think that would be a really cool way of putting it out there that these different groups exist in Brighton.”*

### LGBTQI+ and Faith Community Cohesion

The group discussion acknowledged the complexity of the issues of community cohesion between the various LGBTQI+, faith and secular communities in Brighton & Hove, involving complex and long-standing dynamics. However, it was noted that there were some ways in which it would be helpful to take steps towards building bridges between these different and sometimes conflicting spheres, as well as drawing attention to the places in which successful and positive overlap and integration is already occurring. Of these, ideas were:

#### *An LGBTQI+ multi-faith space*

Several participants expressed appreciation at the opportunity to come together as a multi-faith LGBTQI+ group, and wished for another group to exist outside. They said they would value a multi-faith

LGBTQ space to share experiences, socialize and share informal support. It was felt that this would also help address the issues of isolation and a lack of representation of LGBTQI+ people of faith, and help to develop shared identity and a sense of community where currently this only exists in specific pockets of individual (and often exceptional) faith groups.

*"I genuinely think [the focus group] helped all of us participants as much as it may have helped the council. [...] I wondered if we might be able to do something sooner concerning a group; everyone seemed in warm agreement that a regular group meeting would be beneficial [...] There's literally nothing of this sort in Brighton for LGBTQI+ people of faith."*

#### *A reflective public forum for secular and faith LGBTQI+ individuals and groups*

Several participants also said that they thought it would be helpful for there to be a forum for LGBTQI+ people of any faith and none to explore and reflect on their personal relationship to faith and religion in their own lives – positive and negative -- to help break down the “polarization” of for or against faith that they experienced as currently existing, and build dialogue and understanding across the current divide that is still often experienced outside of the limited safe LGBTQI+ faith spaces that currently exist.

*"There is a conversation to be had, because a lot of LGBTQ people have been very hurt by Christianity and different faiths, however, there's a culture of discrimination within the LGBT community that isn't being challenged. And how can there be trust in that situation?"*

#### **Additional Statement**

A registered focus group participant, a member of the LGBTQ and Muslim communities, who was not able to attend on the day contributed a written statement:

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*I am a registered professional, a proud and out LGBTQ member but I am also a Muslim. I socialise with other LGBTQ Muslims as well as of other faiths, in Brighton. Throughout my life, I have always had to hide one facet of life. To my Muslim family I hide my LGBTQ lifestyle and to my LGBTQ friends and to other social circles I downplay my Muslim identity. To the non-LGBTQ Muslims in Brighton, I completely hide my true nature. And so do all my LGBTQ friends of Muslim faith. In recent years, I also found similar stories with my LGBTQ friends of other faiths: Catholics, Hindu, Buddhist etc. We are in UK where it is legal and yet our faiths prevent us from being who we truly are.*

*My friends come from all over the UK and the world especially South East Asia. We visit the attractions, enjoy the lively LGBTQ scene. We never visit the mosques together though.*

*Recently, I have come to terms with my spirituality and how this impacts on my sexuality. I started going to the mosque, although I cannot disclose to the Imam and the other people of who I really am. There is fear that I would be negatively judged, and perhaps ostracised from the local Muslim community. There are LGBTQ groups of faith in London, but to some of us, their adaptation of the religion does not fit in with*

*our beliefs. To be vocal about our sexuality to our faith leaders puts us at a lot of risk. In this day and age online news travel fast. We may get freedom in UK but risk losing freedom when visiting our home country, and risk losing contact with our family and loved ones back home.*

*So that's how I live. That's how we LGBTQ Muslims in the UK live. Out to some, but not to others. At least, by living in Brighton, we can be ourselves at times. That's better than being in the closet totally. On the scale of things, where my peers in my home country have to undergo conversion therapy, I can live in Brighton and enjoying a free life, to be myself.*

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### Focus Group Conclusions

The generally negative attitude towards the LGBTQI+ community as being faith-exclusive was notable, as was the positive (though more mixed in opinion) focus on the LGBTQI+ inclusivity of participants' faith contexts. It was clear from the focus group that participants valued a forum to discuss 'the other side of the coin' of LGBTQI+ and faith inclusion, balancing the often one-sided mainstream discourse that highlights anti-LGBTQI+ faith practices and beliefs, at the expense of positive experiences and an examination of the LGBTQI+ communities' attitudes to people of faith.

A general perception of the council as too quiet on the subjects of LGBTQI+ and Faith, combined with some negative experiences related to the council – some involving faith directly, others associated with housing and benefits services – meant that turning to the council as a source of support with reporting or challenging prejudice was low on most participants' list of priorities. Most participants felt they would be more likely to reach out around an LGBTQI+ hate crime or incident of prejudice than one to do with their faith, and that they would struggle to know where to turn if the incident involved both – as in the example of the participant who found both transphobic and anti-Semitic graffiti in a public place. It was felt that increasingly outreach, visibility and representation of LGBTQI+ and faith communities in Council communications would help improve this, and aid in building trust.

A general sense of isolation and exclusion as an LGBTQI+ person of faith was prevalent in the group, and even those with highly LGBTQI+ inclusive faith-communities expressed feelings of exclusion in many places in LGBTQI+ and secular society outside of these niche pockets. It was expressed that a multi-faith LGBTQI+ group would be a welcome way of developing community for this currently under-represented intersection, and that a public forum for building cohesion between the faith and secular spheres of the LGBTQI+ community could help go some way in mending the rift that continues to exist in many parts of the community.

# Online Survey

## Introduction

The survey ran for a period of five weeks across November-December 2018, and was available in both online and paper formats. There were a total of 64 eligible respondents for the survey, which was a combination of multiple choice questions and free text fields for more in-depth responses.

In order to look at questions around community cohesion, the survey was split into focusing on LGBTQI+ prejudice in faith communities, and faith prejudice in faith communities<sup>4</sup>. Questions also explored the possible options for positive steps in the aftermath of prejudice, and steps that could be taken to help prevent prejudice and improve community cohesion and improve confidence in statutory and third sector support services.

## Survey Demographics

The following questions focus on survey respondent demographics across key protected and other relevant characteristics of sexual orientation, gender, trans status, intersex status, disability, age, and faith and belief.

### Q1: Screening question

The screening question was a compulsory question to ensure all survey participants identified with the key criteria for the engagement as follows:

**This survey is for people who:**

- **Identify as LGBTQI+ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans\*, queer, intersex, and/or any other other gender or sexual minority),**
- **Identify with any religion, faith or spirituality**

**AND**

- **Live, work, study or socialise in Brighton & Hove.**

**Does this describe you?**

73 respondents answered this question, with 64 being eligible to continue with the survey, and 9 who were ineligible and directed to an exit screen.

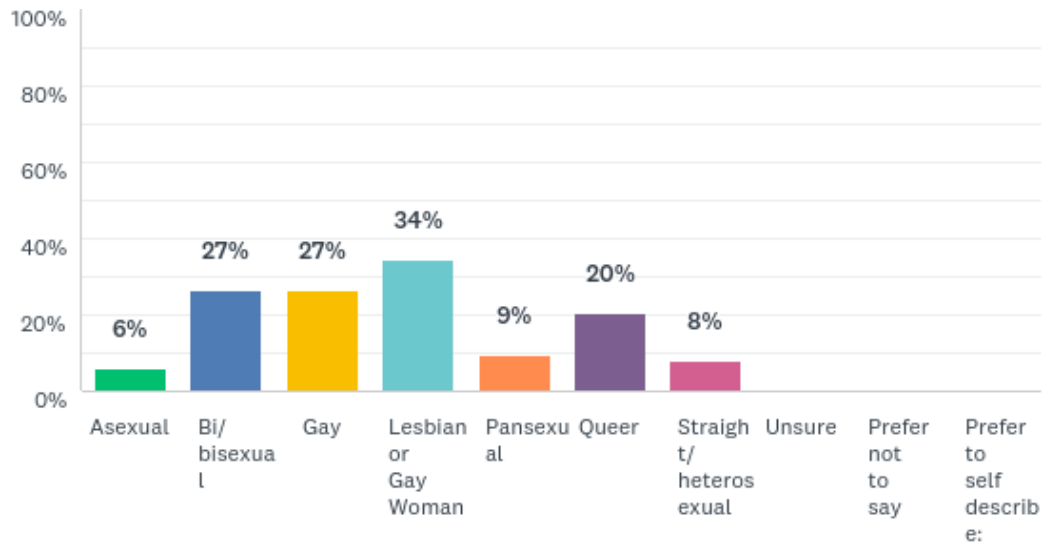
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<sup>4</sup> It was clear from some of the responses to and feedback on the survey that the structure had been unclear for some. As the survey asked similar questions about prejudice in both faith and LGBTQ+ contexts separately, some respondents thought the survey had been repeated, with the distinction of the different context not being clear. Fortunately, these responses were in a small minority and it was straightforward to remove these responses from the statistics. However, this is helpful feedback for future engagement, to ensure further steps are taken to ensure the questions and context are clear.

## Q2: Sexual Orientation

*How do you describe your sexual orientation? Please select all that apply.*

Answered: 64



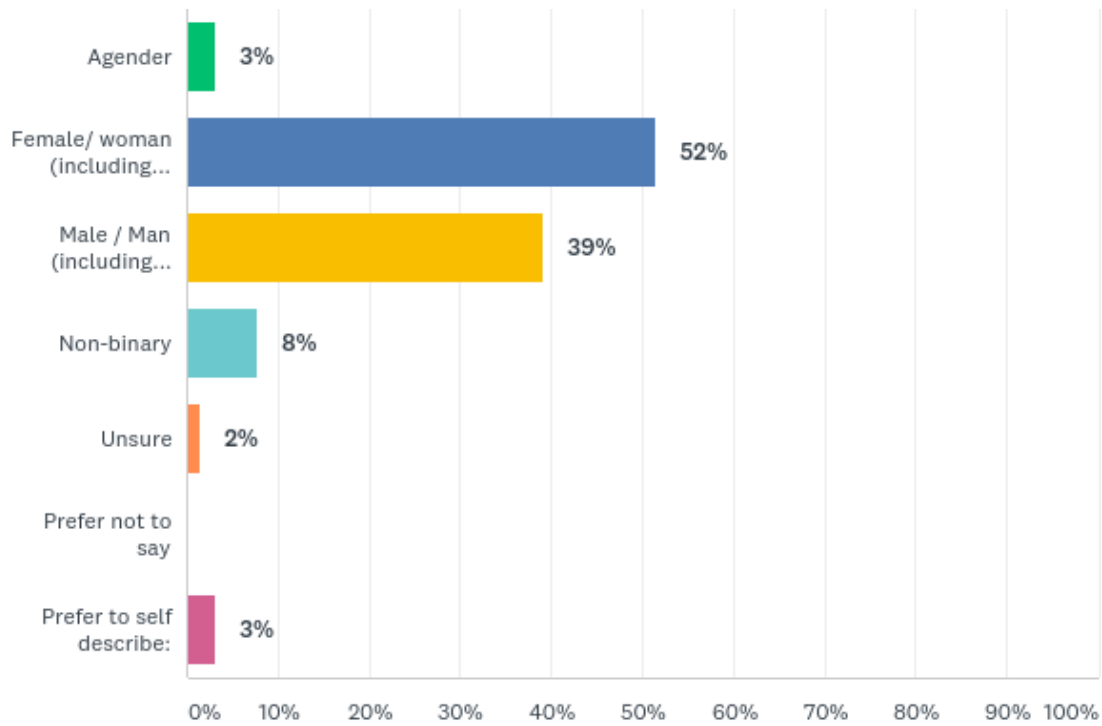
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Asexual	6%	4
Bi/ bisexual	27%	17
Gay	27%	17
Lesbian or Gay Woman	34%	22
Pansexual	9%	6
Queer	20%	13
Straight/ heterosexual	8%	5
Unsure	0%	0
Prefer not to say	0%	0
Prefer to self describe:	0%	0
Total Respondents: 64		

## Q3: Gender

*How do you describe your gender? Please select all that apply.*

Answered: 64

3% (2) chose to self-describe and said 'genderqueer' and 'genderfluid / genderqueer'.

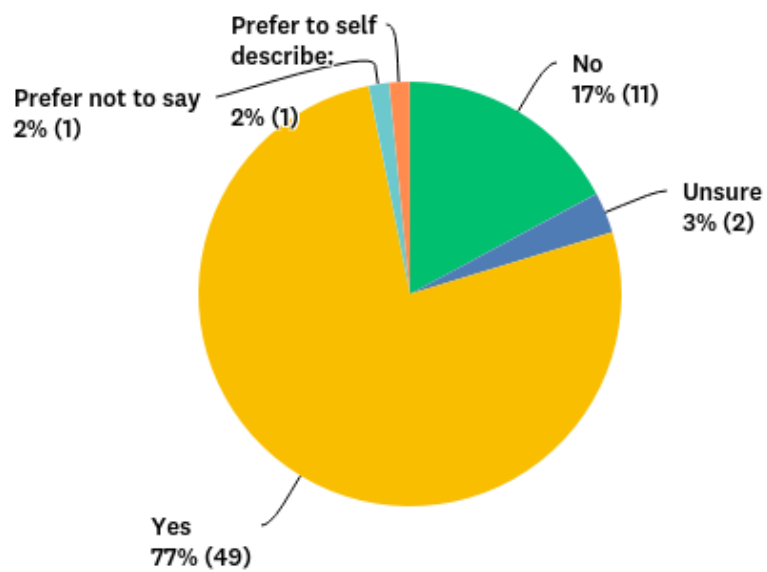


#### Q4 Trans Status

*Is your gender the same as the gender you were assigned at birth?*

Answered: 64

2% (1) preferred to self-describe and said 'yes and no'.

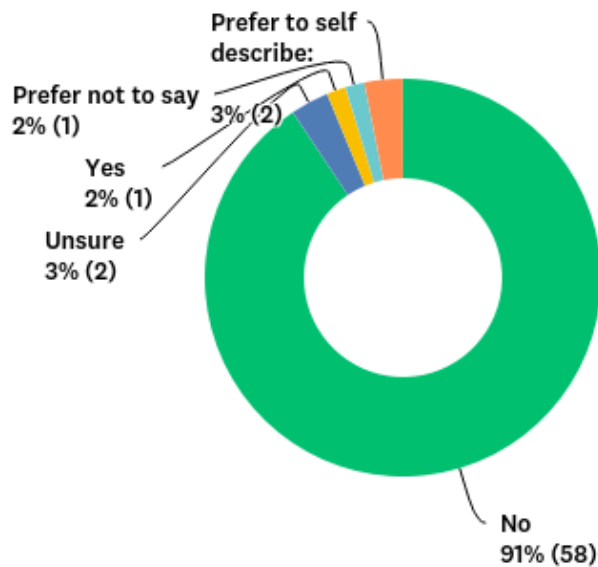


### Q5 Intersex Status

*Do you have an intersex variation? Intersex is a term for people born with atypical physical sex characteristics. There are many different intersex traits or variations.*

Answered: 64

3% (2) chose to self-describe and said “I have physical female attributes” and one said not as far as they were aware, but pointed out that people can have intersex variations without being aware of this.



### Q6 Religion, Faith and Spirituality

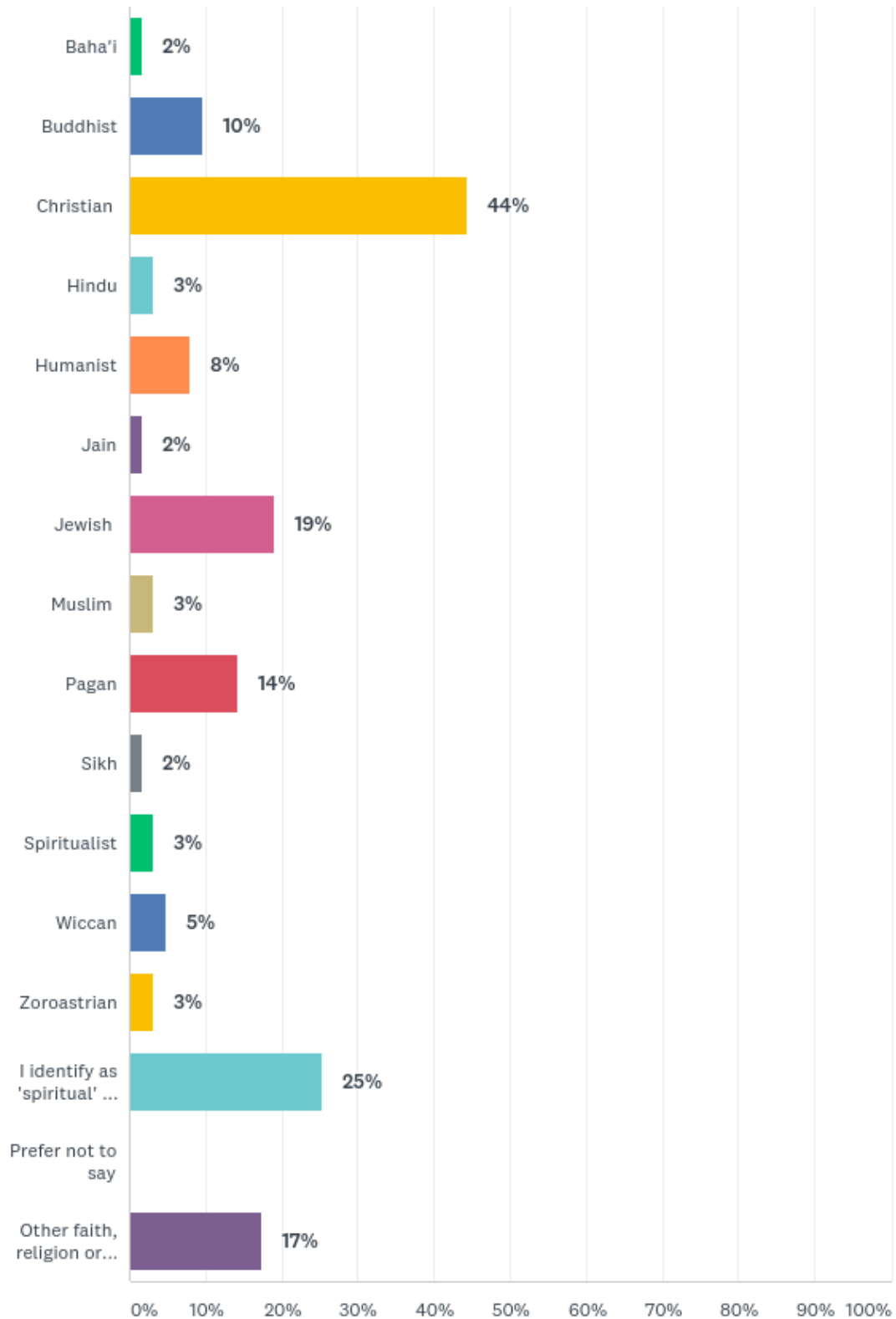
*How would you describe your religion, faith, or spirituality? Please select all that apply*

Answered: 63

17% (11) chose to self-describe, and said:

- Atheist
- Shamanism
- Witch
- Spiritual with a Christian Focus
- Christ-based spirituality
- Intuitive approach based on Discordianism
- Unitarian liberal Christian
- Quaker/ Atheist/ Open-minded
- Plaedian
- One said: “I did identify as a Christian prior to coming out in my early 30's. Since coming out I no-longer use Christian to describe myself as for me it can be problematic. I normally tick 'prefer not to say' but this

too doesn't really capture who I am. It is interesting that for me in terms of identity, this is the box that causes me the most anxiety - 10 years ago it would have been sexuality!"



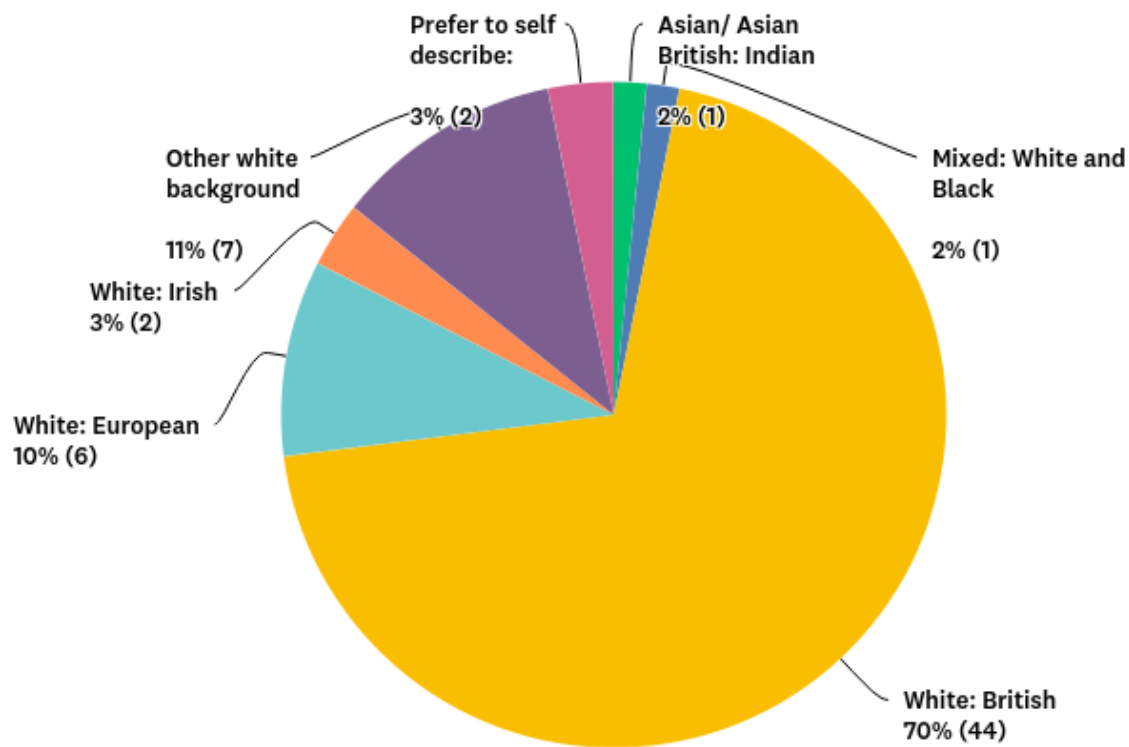
### Q7 Ethnicity

*How do you describe your ethnic origin?*

Answered: 63

3% (2) preferred to self-describe and said:

- *Mixed white background (Irish/British/European - via Southern Africa)*
- *Ashkenazi Jewish*



### Q8 Disability

*Do you live with a health condition, impairment, learning difference, or Neuro-divergence that shapes your day to day activities? Please select all that apply.*

Answered: 62

8% (5) chose to self-describe and said:

- *Hypermobility/Connective tissue syndrome*

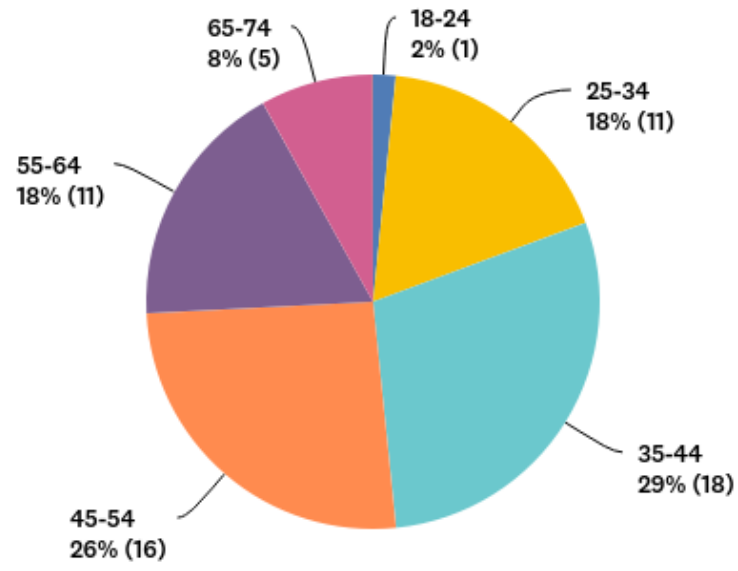
- *I do experience anxiety and depression at times and the SAD syndrome, but don't wish to identify with this condition as one day it will be no more*
- *Speech impediment*
- *Intellectual with anxious potential due to the restriction of Brighton*
- *Frequent pain*

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
No known health condition, impairment, learning difference, or neurodivergence	37%	23
Long-term illness or health condition (e.g. cancer, chronic heart disease, diabetes, epilepsy, HIV)	23%	14
Mental health difficulty (e.g. addiction, anxiety, depression, eating disorders)	39%	24
Physical impairment or mobility issues (e.g. difficulty using your arms, using a wheelchair)	6%	4
Neurodivergence, meaning your brain or mind works very differently from social views of what is 'normal' (e.g. AD(H)D, Asperger's syndrome/ other autistic spectrum condition, bipolar, dyscalculia, dyslexia, dyspraxia, Tourette syndrome)	10%	6
Social or communication condition (e.g. a speech and language impairment, Asperger's syndrome/ other autistic spectrum condition)	5%	3
Specific learning difficulty (SpLD) (e.g. AD(H)D, dyscalculia, dyslexia, dyspraxia)	2%	1
D/deaf or hard of hearing	2%	1
Prefer to self describe:	8%	5
Total Respondents: 62		

#### Q9 Age

*What was your age at your last birthday?*

Answered: 62



## LGBTQI+ prejudice in faith communities

This section of the survey specifically focused on respondents experiences of **LGBTQI+-based prejudice** in a **faith context**.

### Q10 Prevalence of LGBTQI+ prejudice in faith settings

*“Have you ever experienced LGBTQI+-based prejudice or hate crime from an individual/ group/ organisation from a faith/ religious/ spiritual community? Please select all that apply. It's not always obvious why someone has been targeted, but what is most important is if you were left feeling as if it was to do with your LGBTQI+ identity”*

Answered: 45

80% of participants had experience LGBTQI+ prejudice, either within their faith community (44%, 20) or from a different faith community (42%, 19). Only 18% (8) said ‘no’ they had not experienced any LGBTQI+ prejudice, and 1 (2%) said they were unsure.

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes - from my own faith/ religious/ spiritual community	44%	20
Yes - from a different faith/ religious/ spiritual community	42%	19
No	18%	8
I'm not sure	2%	1
Prefer not to say	0%	0
Comments welcome	40%	18
Total Respondents: 45		

18 respondents provided comments. These ranged from outright negative experiences of exclusion in faith settings and by people of faith to active and warm inclusion and acceptance.

Of these, some commented on receiving LGBTQI+ prejudice from people of other faiths out in public and online:

*“From Christian groups at the entrance to Preston Park at Pride. From Synods and Bishops via the media”*

*“I have experienced difficulties with other religious groups particularly those who protest at Pride celebrations, calling the LGBTQI community 'sinful' or an 'abomination' or from the devil.”*

This contrasted with some positive reports of welcome and inclusion as LGBTQI+ individuals and couples in a faith setting:

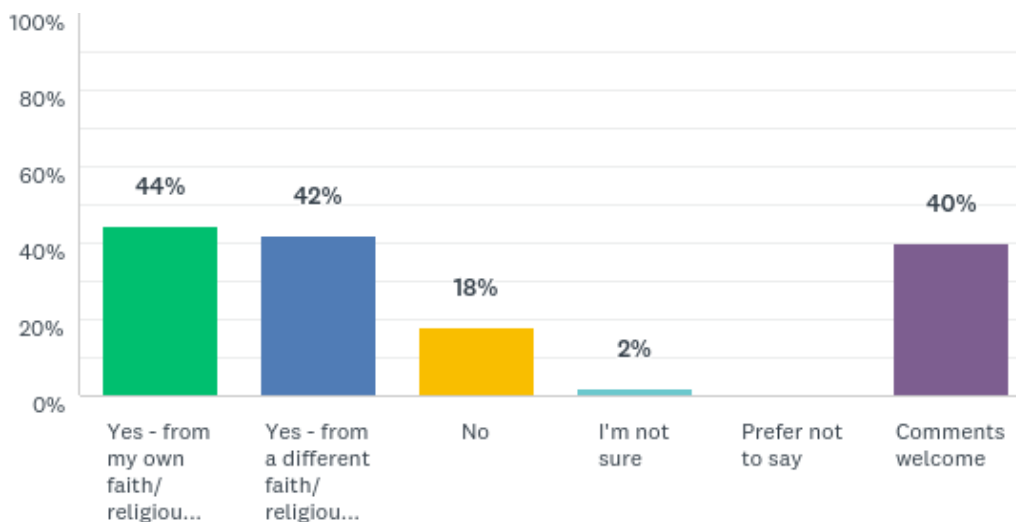
*“Me and my wife are very involved in our Quaker Meeting and have always felt welcomed, comfortable and sometimes even celebrated. Our Meeting were delighted that we were the first same sex couple to get married in our Meeting House.”*

Another shared about their experience of initial exclusion, and their successfully seeking out a more inclusive community:

*“I was in a certain church for twenty years but when I came out, I was not welcome anymore so joined a Metropolitan Community Church who were set up by LGBT leaders”*

Several people commented on their struggles integrating their faith and sexual identity, and helpfully and honestly commented how this could be internalised and projected onto others, too:

*“My experience is that sexuality and Christianity are problematic. I spent 10 years of my life struggling with being Gay and a Christian. This is still something that is an issue for me, as I do not feel comfortable practicing my spiritual self and am suspicious of those who do (although I acknowledge that this is my own inner prejudice).”*



#### Q11 Types of LGBTQI+ prejudice in faith settings

*If yes, which of the following forms of prejudice (if any) have you experienced? Please select all that apply.*

Answered: 39

The category of ‘microaggressions’ was included in the survey, to offer an opportunity to attempt to measure this often-subtle level of prejudice experienced by people of a targeted group, which accumulate to create a significant impact on the individual. Therefore, it is not surprising that this was the most commonly reported form of prejudice experienced, at 59% (23).

4 in 10 said they had experienced exclusion from events held by their faith community due to their LGBTQI+ identity, and a further 4 in 10 had experienced bullying or intimidation. Around a quarter had experienced anti-LGBTQI+ literature or material being shared.

More than one in ten had experienced a physical attack and an additional one in ten had received a threat of physical violence. Around a third had experienced verbal abuse, one (3%) had experienced hoax or abusive phone calls, and more than 1 in 10 (13%) had experienced cyber bullying. One (3%) had experienced sexual violence directly related to their LGBTQI+ identity from a person in their faith community.

Nearly 1 in 10 had experienced malicious complaints made about them by their faith community due to their LGBTQI+ identity, and the same number had also had their personal property damaged.

While it is possible that some who have not experienced these forms of prejudice may have skipped this question, only one respondent said they had not experienced any of these forms of prejudice.

In addition, 10 people chose 'other' and said:

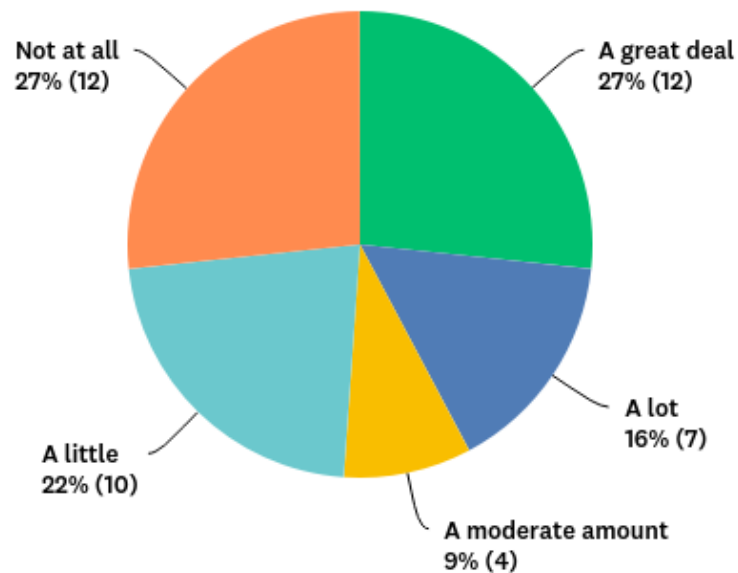
- *Exclusion from hero normative social events by not being invited*
- *tricked into being healed for being gay*
- *Attempts on my life*
- *Doctrine-based threat of hell*
- *Passive intimidation from others in Church when talking about LGBT people and seeing it as a sin/weakness. Love the sinner but hate the sin type beliefs.*
- *A silent oppressive expectation to conform*
- *Unthinking prejudice*
- *Erasure / denial of identity*
- *Exorcism*
- *Tried to stop my wedding*

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Verbal abuse (for example name-calling or offensive jokes)	31%	12
Threat of physical violence	8%	3
Bullying or intimidation	38%	15
Physical attacks (for example hitting, pushing or spitting)	13%	5
Hoax or abusive phone calls or text messages	3%	1
Cyber bullying or harrassment	13%	5
Sexual abuse/ violence	3%	1
Displaying or circulating discriminatory literature or posters	23%	9
Malicious complaints (for example about parking, smells or noise)	8%	3
Microaggressions: these are seemingly 'small' or unintentional acts of prejudice. They can accumulate over time to create an overall feeling of exclusion or disrespect. (e.g. incorrect name or pronoun being used, partners being referred to as friends)	59%	23
Damage or defacement of personal property	8%	3
Damage or defacement of home	5%	2
Exclusion from a Faith-based community event/ space	38%	15
I have not experienced any form of prejudice due to being LGBTQ+ from any faith community	3%	1
Prefer not to say	0%	0
Other experience not listed (please state)	26%	10
Total Respondents: 39		

#### Q12 LGBTQI+ prejudice as a barrier to faith participation

*To what extent, if any, has LGBTQI+ prejudice kept you from fully participating in your faith/ religious/ spiritual community?*

Answered: 45



43% of respondents said that LGBTQI+ prejudice kept them from participating in their faith community either 'a great deal' or 'a lot'. 31% said 'a little' or 'a moderate amount', and only 27% said 'not at all'.

Most respondents of the 16 who additionally commented said that that they did not feel they could fully participate in their faith life due to responses – or feared responses – to being LGBTQI+, resulting in anxiety, shame, sadness, anger and isolation.

Some respondents spoke about an ambivalent, 'in-between' state in their faith community, of being neither fully 'out' or fully 'in the closet', creating tension and anxiety, as well as vigilance about who 'knows' and who is safe.

For instance, one person commented on this, adding that although this tension exists, their experience has been that LGBTQI+ inclusion is better in some faith-spaces than in secular society at large:

*[Heteronormative attitudes in some spiritual groups] have led to me being more vigilant about what I reveal and ive concealed parts of my identity at times. This has affected the extend to which i've felt able to engage. My experience in faith spaces in relation to LGBTQI+ identities has been better than in relation to the attitudes in society at large, sometimes significantly so.*

Another commented honestly about their own internalised prejudice and how this kept them from engaging in their faith community:

*It is made me suspicious now-a-days and also I think that I still have my own internalised beliefs that the two identities conflict one another. I know that this is my own prejudice and misunderstanding, but nevertheless it is an honest response and one that keeps me from fully participating in my faith and spiritual community.*

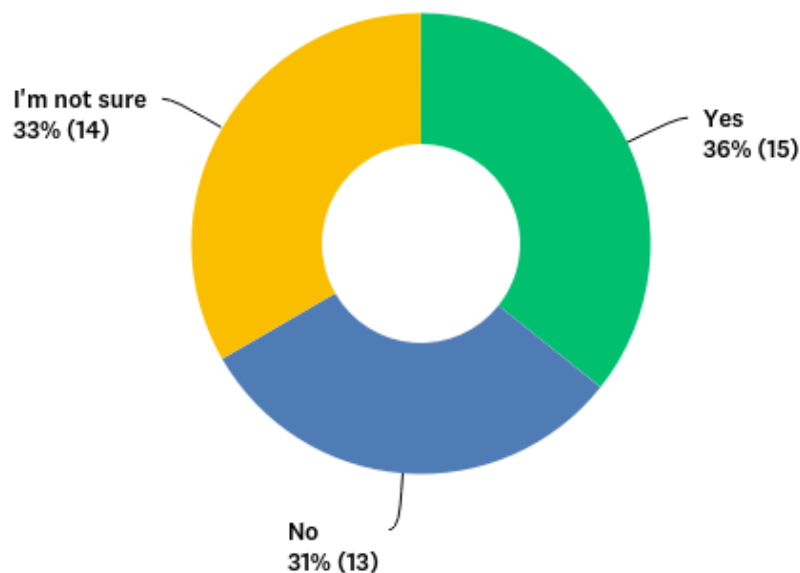
However, it is also notable that more than a quarter of participants (27%, 12) said this didn't affect them at all, and just over 1 in 5 (22%, 10) said only 'a little', reflecting that there are significant experiences of feeling at ease being included as an LGBTQI+ in some faith settings for some people.

#### Q13 LGBTQI+ Hate crime prevalence and perceptions

*Do you think of any of the above incidents as a 'hate crime', based on your current understanding of that term?*

Answered: 42

The largest proportion of respondent said they perceived the LGBTQI+ prejudice they had experienced in a faith setting as a hate crime, at more than a third - 36%, 15. This was followed by those who were unsure (33%, 14) and, finally, those who didn't identify themselves as having been targeted for hate crime for this reason (31%, 3).

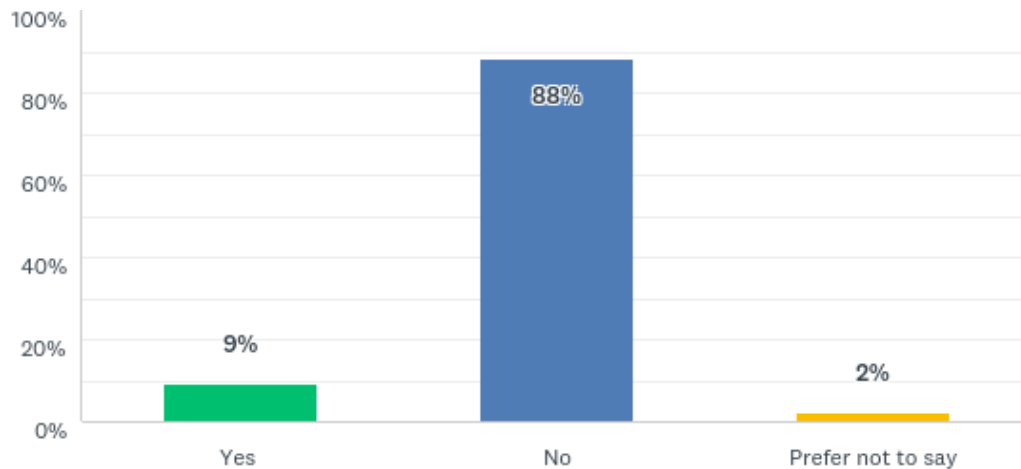


#### Q14 LGBTQI+ Hate crime reporting

*Have you ever reported any of these incident/s to the police?*

Answered: 43

A majority of respondents (88%, 38) had never reported an LGBTQI+ hate crime incident to the police, although 36% (14) felt they had experienced a hate crime, and a further 33% (13) were unsure. Only 4 respondents (9%) said they had reported an incident of LGBTQI+ hate crime to the police. Issues with under-reporting of hate crime are already well known. The following question addresses potential specific barriers for LGBTQI+ under-reporting, specifically when this prejudice comes from individuals or groups from their or another faith community.



#### Q15 Barriers to reporting LGBTQI+ hate crime

*What, if anything, has or would keep you from reporting an incident of LGBTQI+ prejudice from a person/ group of faith to the police? Please select all that apply.*

Answered: 42

10 respondents gave other reasons, including:

- Unaware this was an option
- Lack of faith in police to respond appropriately
- Past negative experiences of prejudice with police
- Lack of personal confidence
- Not wanting to 'criminalise' an action, but take a more nuanced approach
- Perception that prejudice perpetrated by Muslims would not be taken seriously

The leading reason for not reporting to the police was perceiving the incident to be not serious enough to report.

Following this, more than a third (36%) said they lacked confidence or trust in the police to take them or the incident seriously.

Nearly a third (31%) said that a lack of evidence for an incident had been a barrier.

A quarter, 24%, said they were unsure what legally, technically constituted 'prejudice' or a 'hate crime' and that this was a barrier to reporting.

17% (7) said they were worried reporting LGBTQI+ prejudice or hate crime would alienate their faith community.

1 in 5 said that they didn't report to the police because the incident had distressed them so much that they didn't want to talk about it.

1 in 5 were also worried about facing discrimination from the police themselves.

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Lack of trust or confidence in the police to take you or the incident seriously	36%	15
Unsure what technically 'counts' as 'prejudice' or a 'hate crime'	24%	10
Fear of discrimination from the police	21%	9
Fear of alienating my faith community	17%	7
Perception of the incident as not serious enough to report	43%	18
Fear of incidents escalating	14%	6
Unaware of options of how to report	10%	4
Personal inconvenience	10%	4
Feeling distressed and not wanting to talk about it	21%	9
Lack of evidence for incident	31%	13
Fear of being 'outed' to community as LGBTQI+	2%	1
Past negative/ disappointing experience of reporting	7%	3
Pressure from others not to report	0%	0
I reported the incident and did not feel reluctant to do so	10%	4
Another reason not listed (please state below)	24%	10
Total Respondents: 42		

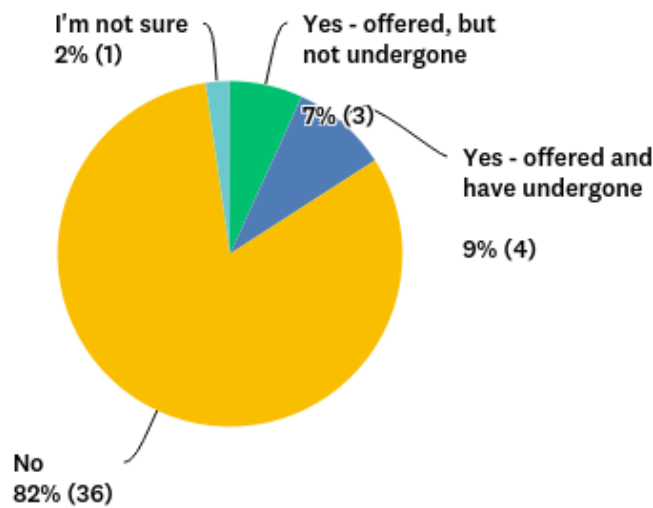
#### Q16 'Conversion' therapies

*Have you ever been offered or undergone so-called 'conversion' or 'reparative' therapy? This includes any intervention that aims to 'cure' you of being LGBTQI+*

Answered: 44

Considering 'conversion' therapies as a still prevalent form of LGBTQI+ prejudice and, in some cases, hate crime, the survey asked respondents about whether they had ever been offered or undergone this kind of 'intervention'.

Of the 44 individuals who answered this question, a worrying 16% - nearly 1 in 5 – had been offered it, with a majority of these (4, 9%) undergoing the so-called 'conversion therapy'. 1 (2%) was not sure whether what they had experienced constituted this kind of therapy.



Q17 'Conversion therapy', cont.

Who offered the so-called 'conversion therapy'? Please select all that apply, or leave blank if not relevant.

Answered: 14

Nearly a third, 29%, said a faith organisation had carried out the 'therapy'. One (7%) chose 'other' and said that a friend within their church had offered the therapy, but not the church itself. More than 1 in 10 (14%) had experienced this from a family member, parent, or guardian, with both elaborating in the comments section that these were carried out for religious reasons. Therefore, including faith-related conversion-therapies by individuals, 50% of the total conversion therapies offered were faith-related. Others commented that although they had not been offered this, they were part of a religious organisation that they were aware did offer 'conversion therapy'.

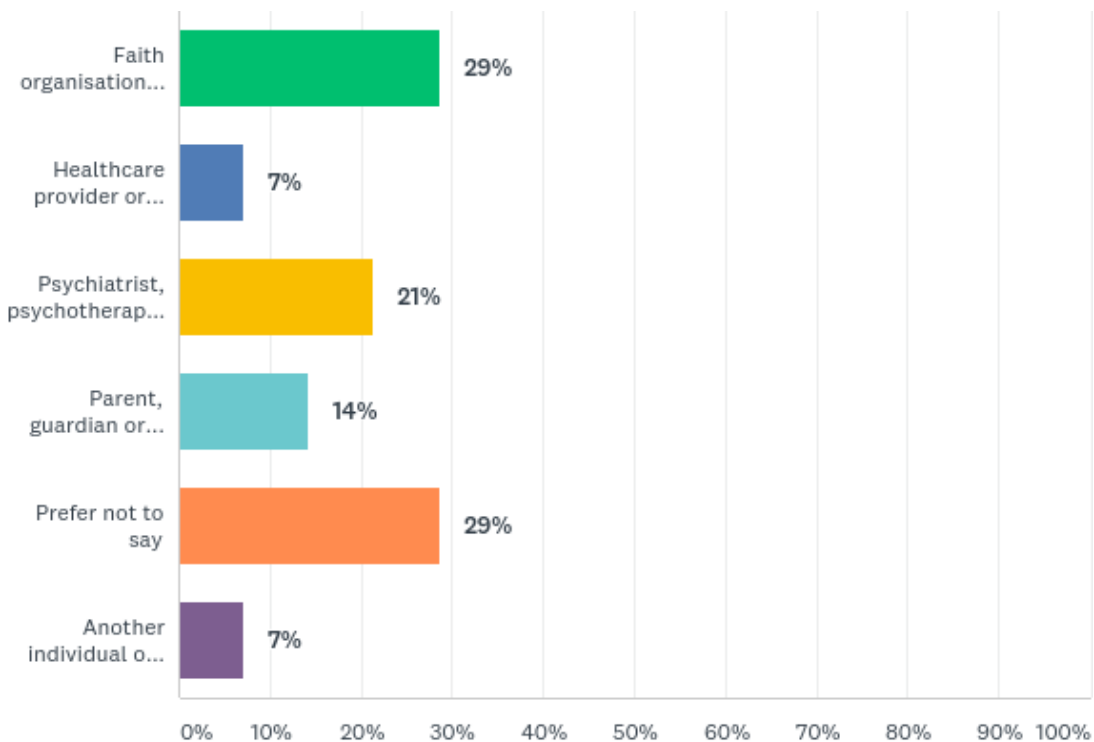
*I have been prayed over for healing. It was devastating and led to suicidal thoughts*

*My Dad once tried to pray the gay out of me. He closed his eyes and put his hand on my shoulder and started praying. I was only 16 and it messed me up and made me feel wrong and cursed.*

An equally high proportion of respondents (29%, 4) did not want to say who had conducted the so-called 'conversion therapy'.

More than 1 in 5 (21%) said it was carried out by a mental health professional such as a psychiatrist or psychotherapist, and 7% (1) was by a healthcare provider like a doctor.

*A psychiatrist once tried to get my parents to sign ECT [electro-convulsive] therapy*



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Faith organisation or group	29%	4
Healthcare provider or other medial professional	7%	1
Psychiatrist, psychotherapist or other mental health professional	21%	3
Parent, guardian or other family member	14%	2
Prefer not to say	29%	4
Another individual or group not listed (please state)	7%	1
Total Respondents: 14		

#### Q18 Helpful responses to LGBTQI+ prejudice

*What do you think you might find helpful following an incident of LGBTQI+ prejudice or hate crime from an individual/ group/ organisation from a faith community?*

Answered: 37

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Advocacy or other support for reporting to the police, where appropriate	51%	19
A carefully facilitated and supported mediation session with the person/ group who did the harm	43%	16
A one-off peer support circle with others of a shared identity with similar experiences	46%	17
A peer-support drop-in with others of a shared identity with similar experiences	49%	18
Total Respondents: 37		

When it came to options for positive steps in the aftermath of an incident on LGBTQI+ prejudice in the faith community, respondents didn't show a strong preference for any other the above options overall, with all ranging at around half – 43% - 51%, although the lowest ranked option – a carefully facilitated and supported mediation session with the harming party– was 8% lower than the highest ranked – advocacy and support for reporting to the police. An ongoing peer support drop-in (49%) or one-off circle (46%) were roughly equivalent in popularity.

#### Q19 Additional comments (LGBTQI+ prejudice)

*We would like to understand more about what it is like for you as an LGBTQI+ person when participating in your faith, religious or spiritual community. If you are willing, please can you share a little about this aspect of your experience?*

Of the 33 who answered this question, comments clustered around the following themes regarding their experience as an LGBTQI+ person within their faith community. The strongest theme throughout was the welcoming and inclusive nature of their faith community, at 48% (16).

*I feel very welcomed and included in my community. [...] I really appreciate that gender and sexuality is discussed and not ignored by Quakers and that generally they are super inclusive and are very open about looking at where they aren't doing so well (eg diversity within our communities) and how we may be able to change this.*

*Finding an inclusive church in Brighton has helped me to reconnect with my faith/spiritual practice*

*I worship with The Village MCC which is an inclusive fully affirming church, with a special outreach for LGBTQI+ communities. I am free to be me and to feel fully accepted by God. We have all had difficult faith journeys abs support one another, and seek to support the community at large.*

More than a third (36%, 12) described a precarious and anxious situation as an LGBTQI+ person in their faith context, feeling welcomed at times, and not at others, uncertain of who they were safe to share their identity with. Around 1 in 5 (21% 7) said they experienced their faith community as somewhat tolerant, but reluctant. A need for role models was also expressed:

*Growing up there were no role models of Jewish gay/queer people or families. When I tried to come out it was brushed away by friends.*

*I feel comfortable in MCC, however there are many Christians I would not feel safe with. Even recently I suffered abuse and attack for being Christian and Gay from someone who defined their faith in very different ways to me.*

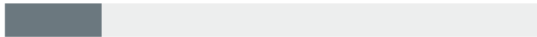


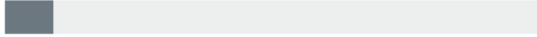
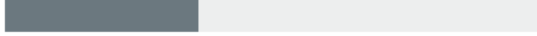
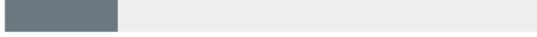

*Largely I feel alienated. It has taken a long time to stop blaming myself and accepting that my faith community lacks freedom, insight or understanding of LGBTQ issues. Although I have been depressed and even suicidal because of this in the past, this is no longer the case. I maintain good relationships with key allies but cannot regularly participate in the life of the church when it responsible for so much pain and oppression*

Nearly a quarter of people commented that they felt isolated as an LGBTQI+ person in their faith community (24% 8), and nearly 1 in 10 (9%, 3) experienced active anti-LGBTQI+ sentiment in their faith group. For some, this has meant disengaging from faith even though this has the potential to be an important resource for wellbeing for them.

*As a new Christian growing up, I was taught that being LGBT is a sin. I am transgender and sometimes fall back on the belief that 'God doesn't make mistakes' and that I shouldn't have transitioned.*

*I've always been a Christian and a lesbian but it took me so long to be ok with it in myself. Close friends of the family who went to our church growing up do not talk to me anymore because they disagree with my 'sinful life choice'. This has scared me off of going to church. I find it hard enough to accept me, so having negativity from others does not help.*

*I feel that a part of my identity has to be left aside, until there are better days. [...] More work should be done to promote the inclusion of LGBTQI+ people by creating safe spaces and allowing people to engage in self expression. All in all, all forms of prejudice should be eradicated from organised activities and the equality act should be applied to organised faith groups.*

Anti-LGBTQ		18.18%	6
Dismissive		18.18%	6
Isolation		24.24%	8
LGBTQ as anti-faith		9.09%	3
Precarious/ Anxious		36.36%	12
Reluctant / Tolerant		21.21%	7
Welcoming & Inclusive		48.48%	16

## Faith-based prejudice in the LGBTQI+ community

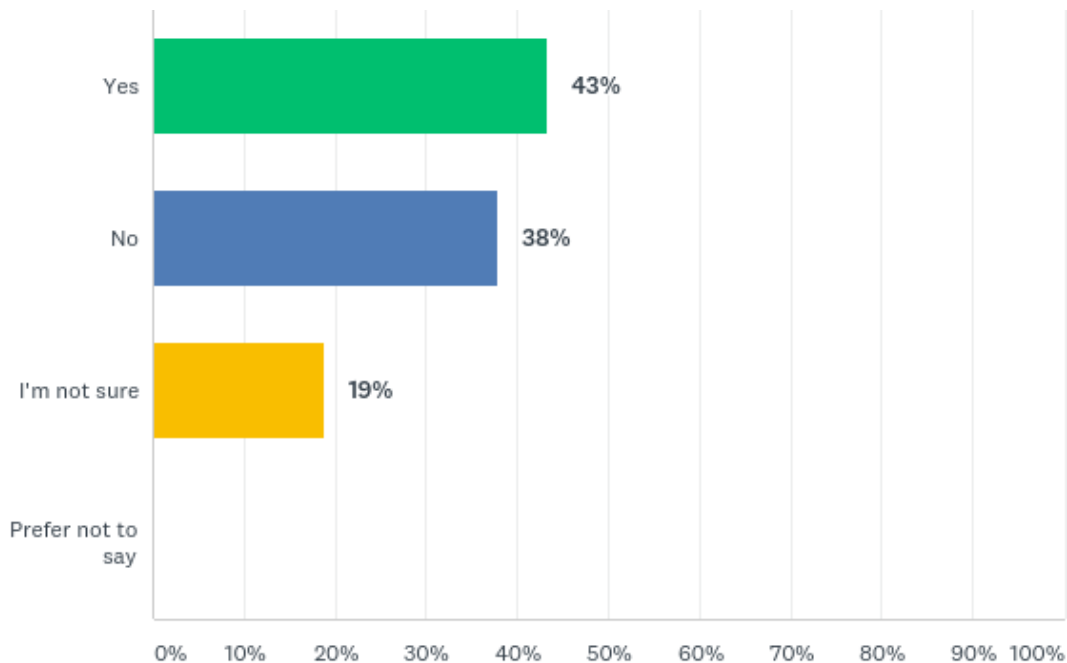
These questions ask specifically about experiences of **faith-based prejudice** in **LGBTQI+ settings**. This section asks many of the same questions as the prior section, with the important difference of focusing on faith-prejudice in LGBTQI+ settings rather than vice versa.

### Q20 Prevalence of faith prejudice in LGBTQI+ settings

*Have you ever experienced faith-based prejudice or hate crime from an individual/ group/ organisation from the LGBTQI+ community? It's not always obvious why someone has been targeted, but what is most important is if you were left feeling as if it was to do with your faith, religion or spirituality*

Answered: 37

The largest proportion of respondents, 43%, said they had experience some form of prejudice or hate crime from their LGBTQI+ community due to their faith. 38% said they had not, and 19% were unsure.



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	43%	16
No	38%	14
I'm not sure	19%	7
Prefer not to say	0%	0
TOTAL		37

Of the comments provided, there was a focus on the perceived ‘intolerant’ nature of the LGBTQI+ community at large when it came to faith. This can sometimes take the form of mocking or bullying:

*LGBT community are very intolerant of people with faith - I have been sniped at and told I am unintelligent for having a faith*

*I am sometimes mocked by non believing members of the lgbtqi+*

Others spoke about a perception that you must choose to be 'one or the other' and that faith and LGBTQI+ identity are inherently incompatible, with detrimental effects of LGBTQI+ people who do have a faith:

*There is an attitude sometimes when I share my background - others largely don't get it 'faith/religion' and mainly this is because they too do not see how being gay and having faith go together. I have a very close friend who believes that you can not be both - its gay or a Christian and he has chosen being gay.*

#### Q21 Types of faith prejudice in LGBTQI+ settings

*If so, which of the following forms of prejudice (if any) have you experienced? Please select all that apply.*

Answered: 27

As with LGBTQI+ prejudice in faith contexts, the most prevalent form of faith prejudice in an LGBTQI+ context was found to be 'microaggressions', small or subtle but cumulative acts or comments that undermine or insult a person on the basis of their marginalised identity, at 63%.

More than a quarter (26%, 7) had experienced some form of verbal abuse, while 1 in 5 had experienced bullying or intimidation. More than 1 in 10 had received a threat of physical violence due to their faith, and one person (4%) had suffered a physical attack. One each had also experienced having negative material being circulated about people of faith, and malicious complaints being made against them. 2 people (7%) said they had been excluded from an LGBTQI+ event or space due to their faith.

1 in 5 said that they had not experienced any of these forms of prejudice for being of faith within their LGBTQI+ community.

Two chose 'other' and said:

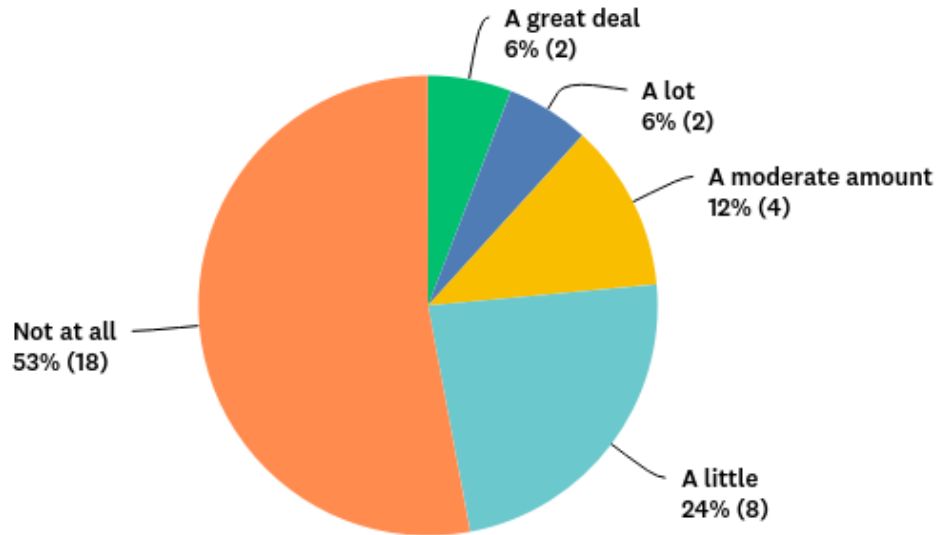
- *Jokes and comments*
- *This has been from lgbtqi+ identified individuals and not from the lgbtqi+ community as an entity.*

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Verbal abuse (for example name-calling or offensive jokes)	26%	7
Threat of physical violence	11%	3
Bullying or intimidation	19%	5
Physical attacks (for example hitting, pushing or spitting)	4%	1
Hoax or abusive phone calls or text messages	0%	0
Cyber bullying or harrassment	19%	5
Sexual abuse/ violence	0%	0
Displaying or circulating discriminatory literature or posters	4%	1
Malicious complaints (for example about parking, smells or noise)	4%	1
Microaggressions: these are seemingly 'small' or unintentional acts of prejudice. They can accumulate over time to create an overall feeling of exclusion or disrespect. (e.g. casual stereotyping about people of faith, assumptions that LGBTQI+ identity and faith don't mix)	63%	17
Damage or defacement of personal property	0%	0
Damage or defacement of home	0%	0
Exclusion from an LGBTQI+-based community event/ space	7%	2
I have not experienced any form of prejudice from the LGBTQI+ community due to my faith/religion/spirituality	19%	5
Prefer not to say	4%	1
Other experience not listed (please state)	7%	2
Total Respondents: 27		

Q22 Faith prejudice as a barrier to LGBTQI+ participation

*To what extent, if any, has faith-based prejudice kept you from fully participating in your LGBTQI+ community?*

Answered: 34



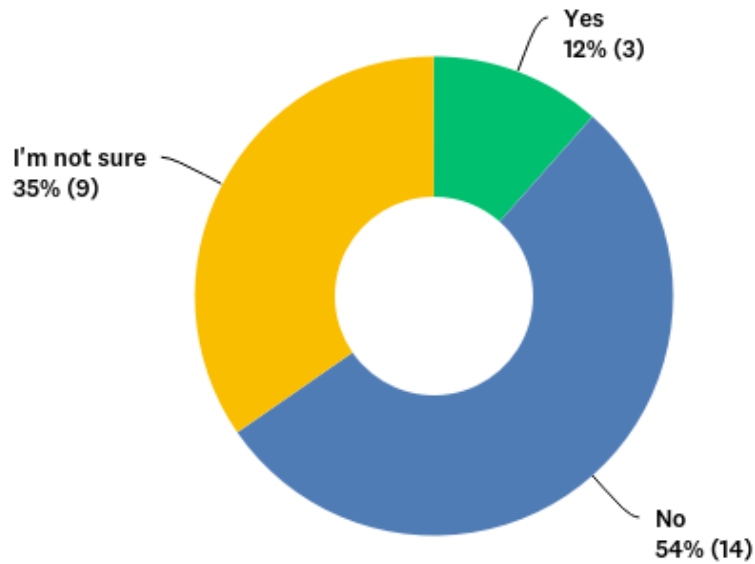
12% (4) said faith prejudice had kept them from participating in their LGBTQI+ community either 'a great deal' or 'a lot'. 36% (12) said it did so 'a moderate amount' or 'a little', and a majority, 53% (18) said 'not at all'.

#### Q23 Faith hate crime prevalence and perceptions

*Do you think of any of these incidents as a 'hate crime', based on your current understanding of that term? If you are willing, please can you share your reasons for your answer in the comment box. Leave blank if not relevant.*

Answered: 26

The majority, 54%, said they didn't consider the faith prejudice they had experienced in their LGBTQI+ community to be a hate crime. 12% however did, and 35% were unsure.



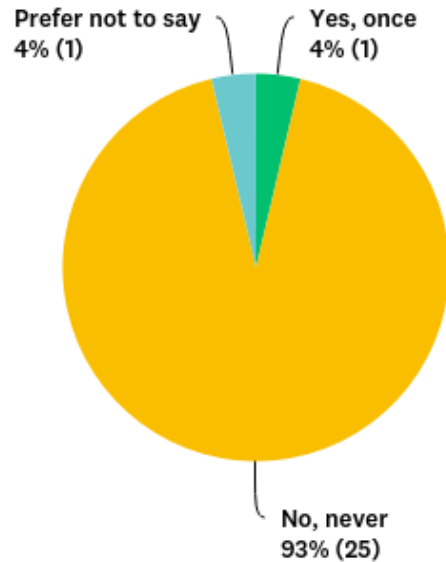
#### Q24 Faith hate crime reporting

*Have you ever reported any of these incidents to the police?*

Answered: 27

Only one participant (4%) said they had, on one occasion, reported an incident of faith-based hate crime or prejudice by a member or group in the LGBTQI+ community to the police, while 93% (25) said 'no' and one (4%) preferred not to say. No participants selected the 'yes, more than once' option.

*I don't trust police or support a system where issues are resolved by the state. I want to find alternative ways. The one person that clearly crossed the line with me was a 'friend' about this did low level stuff over a long period that made me doubt myself.*



#### Q25 Barriers to reporting faith hate crime

*What, if anything, has or would keep you from reporting an incident of faith-based prejudice from an LGBTQI+ person/ group to the police? Please select all that apply.*

Answered: 29

The most prevalent barrier to reporting faith hate crime experienced in the LGBTQI+ community was the perception that the incident was not serious enough to report (45%, 13), coupled with a lack of trust or confidence in the police to take them or the incident seriously (41%, 12).

However, fear of alienating the LGBTQI+ community was also a major factor for many, at more than a third saying this would keep them from reporting (34%, 10).

Nearly a third said that uncertainty about what constitutes a hate crime would keep them from reporting (31%, 9), and 8 (28%) said a lack of evidence for the incident would be a barrier.

A quarter (24%, 7) said they felt, or would likely feel, too distressed about the incident to talk to the police about it.

1 in 5 said they lacked confidence there would be an effective outcome from reporting (21%, 6), and the same number said they feared discrimination from the police.

1 in 10 feared the incidents escalating as a result of reporting (10%, 3) and the same number found that the inconvenience to them of going through the reporting process would keep them from doing so.

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Lack of trust or confidence in the police to take you or the incident seriously	41%	12
Unsure what technically 'counts' as 'prejudice' or a 'hate crime'	31%	9
Fear of discrimination from the police	21%	6
Fear of alienating LGBTQI+ community	34%	10
Perception of the incident as not serious enough to report	45%	13
Fear of incidents escalating	10%	3
Unaware of options of how to report	0%	0
Personal inconvenience	10%	3
Feeling distressed and not wanting to talk about it	24%	7
Lack of evidence for incident	28%	8
Fear of being 'outed' to community as LGBTQI+	0%	0
Past negative/ disappointing experience of reporting	0%	0
Low confidence that action would be taken as a result	21%	6
Pressure from others not to report	0%	0
I reported the incident and did not feel reluctant to do so	3%	1
Another reason not listed (please state below)	7%	2
Total Respondents: 29		

#### Q26 Helpful responses to faith prejudice

*What do you think you would you find helpful following an incident of faith-based prejudice or hate crime from an individual/ group or organisation from the LGBTQI+ community?*

Answered: 25

Respondents to this question were more like to be prepared to engage with the person who did the (faith-prejudice) harm in the LGBTQI+ community than were those who faced LGBTQI+ prejudice in their faith community, at 64% (16). This was phrased as “A carefully facilitated and supported mediation session with the person/ group who did the harm”.

An equal number (36%, 9 each) said they would choose advocacy support for reporting to the police, one-off peer support or an ongoing peer support group of with those of a similar identity/ shared experience.

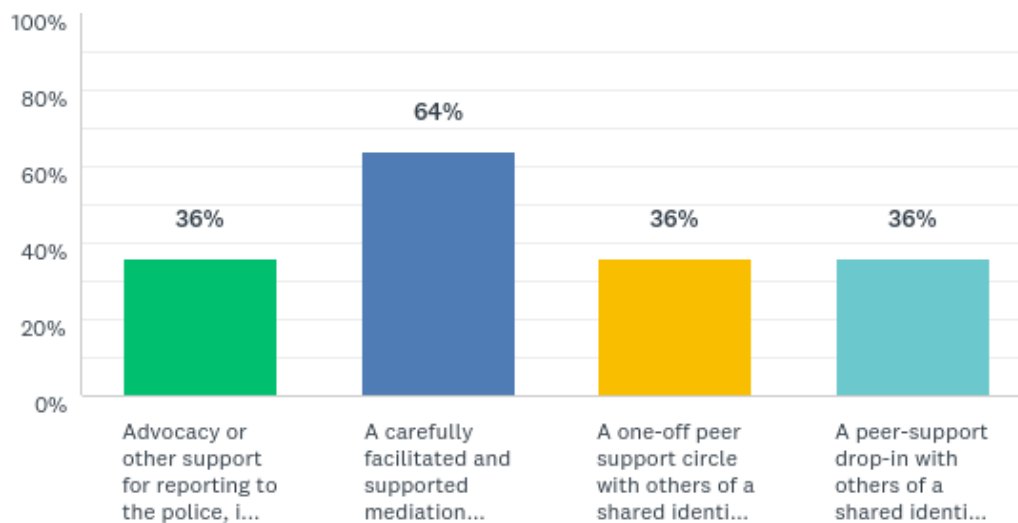
Comments included:

*I think that more work needs to be done around stereotypes - why can't someone be LGBTQ and a person of faith. Intersectionality works on a number of levels and I think that faith as an identity is often overlooked.*

*I would like to have the chance to talk to the person/organisation to see if we could work through the issue*

*Ability to talk to an affirming faith leader*

*I'm not sure that my relationship to spirituality would be relevant enough for many others for peer stuff to work, but I think it could be useful for other people.*



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Advocacy or other support for reporting to the police, if appropriate	36%	9
A carefully facilitated and supported mediation session with the person/ group who did the harm	64%	16
A one-off peer support circle with others of a shared identity with similar experiences	36%	9
A peer-support drop-in with others of a shared identity with similar experiences	36%	9
Total Respondents: 25		

#### Q27 Additional comments (faith prejudice)

*We would like to understand more about what it is like for you as a person of faith/ religion/ spirituality when participating in your LGBTQI+ community. If you are willing, please can you share a little about this aspect of your experience?*

Of the 22 responses to this question, themes clustered as follows:

The main theme was one of division (50% of comments, 11) – that as a person of faith in their LGBTQI+ community, there was a clear split and a belief that the two are not compatible.

*I do not feel I can be open about my faith to LGBTQI people I do not know. I even feel I will be judged by people I do know such as people I work with*

*I tend to keep quiet about my spiritual beliefs as people tend to think I'm weird if I voice them. People are often shocked and assume I'm joking. Worse still is when there is specific prejudice against my religion under the guise of wanting to be more open towards other faiths. E.g. excluding Christians because other faiths are not being represented. Also when I hear someone complain if a meeting is held in a religious venue (on the grounds that someone else \*might\* feel uncomfortable), that makes me feel like there is something wrong with my religious beliefs. It undoes my own emotional work to make my religion accepting of me. It's hard to explain how this makes me feel, but I end up feeling deeply misunderstood and like I can't be whole. I don't expect people to have the same religious and philosophical beliefs as me but I do expect them to be respectful.*

*Coming out as Gay and Christian can be as difficult as coming out as lgbtqi+*

*I have experienced more hate as a person of faith from the LGBT+ community than I have as a LGBT+ person from my faith group. I feel that this comes from a place of pain as many people of faith use their religion to justify anti-LGBT+ politics and viewpoints.*

10 people commented that they experienced judgment (45%). 3 (14%) said they encountered specifically anti-Christian views and 2 specifically anti-Semitism (9%).

*There is a lot of negativity around Christianity/religion in the LGBTQI+ community. Whilst it is understandable in many cases, the acts of some Christians are often seen to represent the will of all, which isn't the case.*

*It makes me really sad when Jews or anyone else are scapegoated or when liberation issues are manipulated to divide communities. I think intersectionality politics has fallen prey to division instead of using the recognition for each others different struggles as a tool for mutual understanding, support and strength.*

*If you say you are a Christian people think you are anti gay - I do understand because when new people say they are a Christian I worry about that too - but doing this survey has been shocking because my Christian friends are more tolerant than my lgbt community*

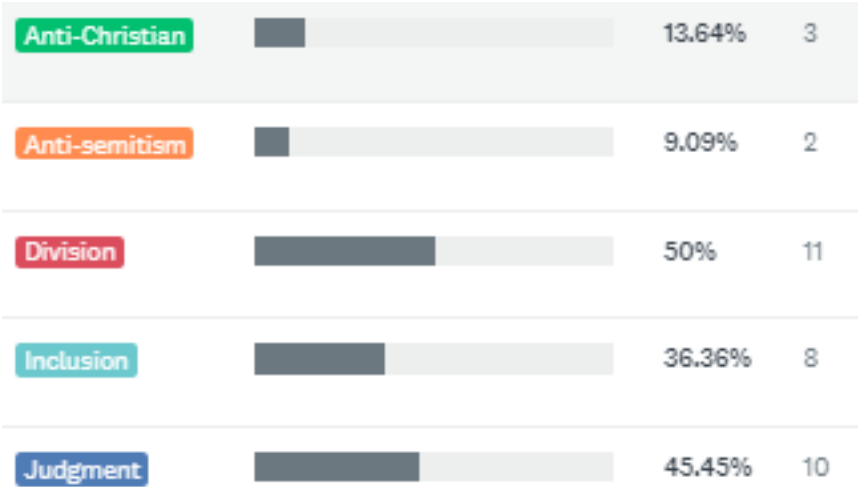
I feel the lgbtq community often don't like that I am Christian because they have had bad experiences with the religion, perhaps family members or friends have told them negative comments. It's difficult but I only use my religion to do good. I don't want to make others feel bad.

It is important to note that the majority of respondents overall were Christian or Jewish, so other experiences of faith prejudice – particular Islamophobic responses and those entwined with ethnic prejudice – were not captured in these comments.

However, 36% (8) responses were marked by the inclusion they experienced as a person of faith in their LGBTQI+ community, suggesting that positive examples of cohesion do already exist.

*I think people in the LGBTQ community are very open to spirituality and I appreciate our lack of deference and freedom of being. LGBTQ spritual communities in my experience are very sensitive and loving spaces.*

*I am treated with respect and really have had no issues*



## Avenues of support

The following questions asked about the avenues of support respondents would feel comfortable or uncomfortable seeking out after an incident of prejudice. We asked about both faith- and LGBTQI+ based prejudice separately to see if there were any significant differences in the kinds of people or organisations individuals would seek out for different kind of hate crime or prejudice. We found that the results were roughly similar for both, and are therefore presented together.

### Q28 Positive avenues of support (LGBTQI+ prejudice)

*If you were affected by an incident of LGBTQI+ prejudice in a an individual/ group/ organisation in a faith context, who **would** you feel comfortable turning to for support?*

Answered: 45

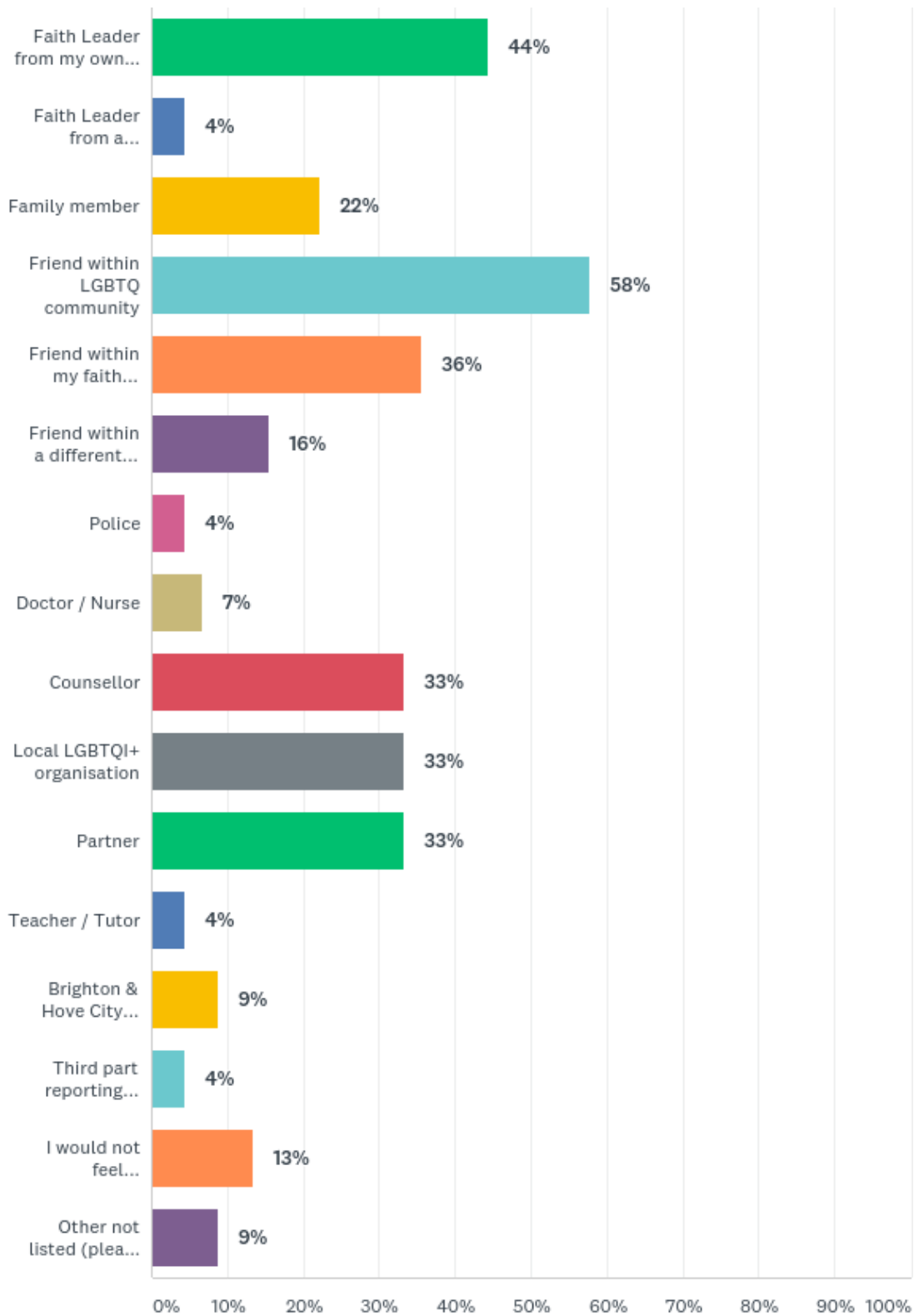
The most common sources of support were closely trusted individuals in the person's life, rather than statutory or other formalised organisations. A friend within the LGBTQI+ community was the most commonly cited source of support when faced with LGBTQI+ prejudice in one's faith community, with more than half giving this response (58%). This was followed by a friend in their faith community, at just over a third (36%).

A third (33% each) said they would seek out a counsellor, local LGBTQI+ organisation or partner.

Individuals with institutional associations – such as the police (4%), council community safety team (9%), medical professionals (7%) or teachers (4%), ranked the lowest. This is also reflected in responses to question 20 (who respondents would *not* feel comfortable turning to for support) and will be explored in more detail there.

Four (9%) chose 'other' and said:

- *LGBT community safety forum.*
- *My best friend who is profoundly non-faith orientated but totally inclusive of all faiths and sexual orientation*
- *Prayer*
- *It depends on the issue and specific group. In spiritual contexts i would find it hard to get support as there can be an oppressive rhetoric of being above the limitations of worldly identities. In my jewish community i would find it much easier.*



Support for LGBTQI+ prejudice - comfortable

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Faith Leader from my own community	44%	20
Faith Leader from a different community	4%	2
Family member	22%	10
Friend within LGBTQ community	58%	26
Friend within my faith community	36%	16
Friend within a different faith community	16%	7
Police	4%	2
Doctor / Nurse	7%	3
Counsellor	33%	15
Local LGBTQI+ organisation	33%	15
Partner	33%	15
Teacher / Tutor	4%	2
Brighton & Hove City Council Community Safety Team	9%	4
Third part reporting organisation	4%	2
I would not feel comfortable turning to anyone for support	13%	6
Other not listed (please state):	9%	4
Total Respondents: 45		

We also asked:

*Can you please say a little about why you **would** be comfortable turning to these people/ organisations?*

Of those who commented (38), the most common feature cited was a pre-established relationship of trust (23 comments, 61%). Referring to people or organisations they would feel comfortable reaching out to, commenters said:

*They are people I know and trust, with a proven track record of being safe*

*They are trusted people who I believe would understand and support me*

*I don't really trust the police*

This was followed by a pre-existing confidence that the source of support was LGBTQI+ friendly and affirmative (21%, 8 comments).

Confidence in the support skills of those sought out was mentioned by 4 commenters (11%), while 7 (18%) mentioned the need for friendliness and informality in the relationship.

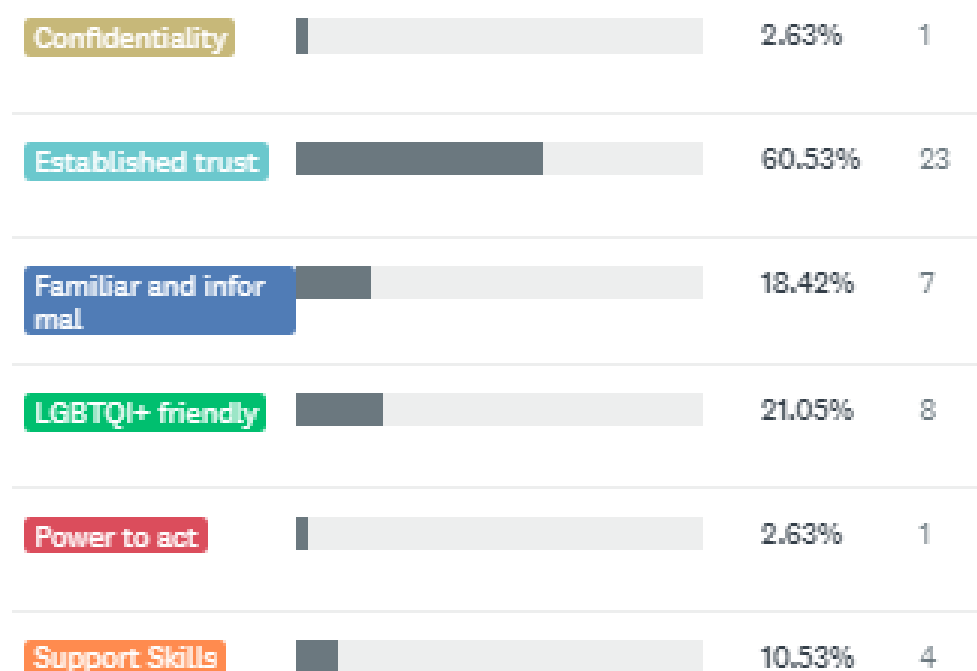
*Familiarity means a more relaxed and honest environment*

One commenter each said they'd need to know the supporter had the power to act to make a real difference, while another said confidentiality was key. Other respondents mentioned internalised barriers to reaching out for support, particularly around wanting to maintain privacy:

*I'm a private person who doesn't like asking for help*

And possibly down-playing the significance of events and their deserving of support:

*I don't want to make a fuss*



## Q29 Positive avenues of support (faith prejudice)

*If you were affected by an incident of faith-based prejudice or hate crime from an individual/ group/ organisation in the LGBTQI+ community, who **WOULD** you feel comfortable turning to for support?*

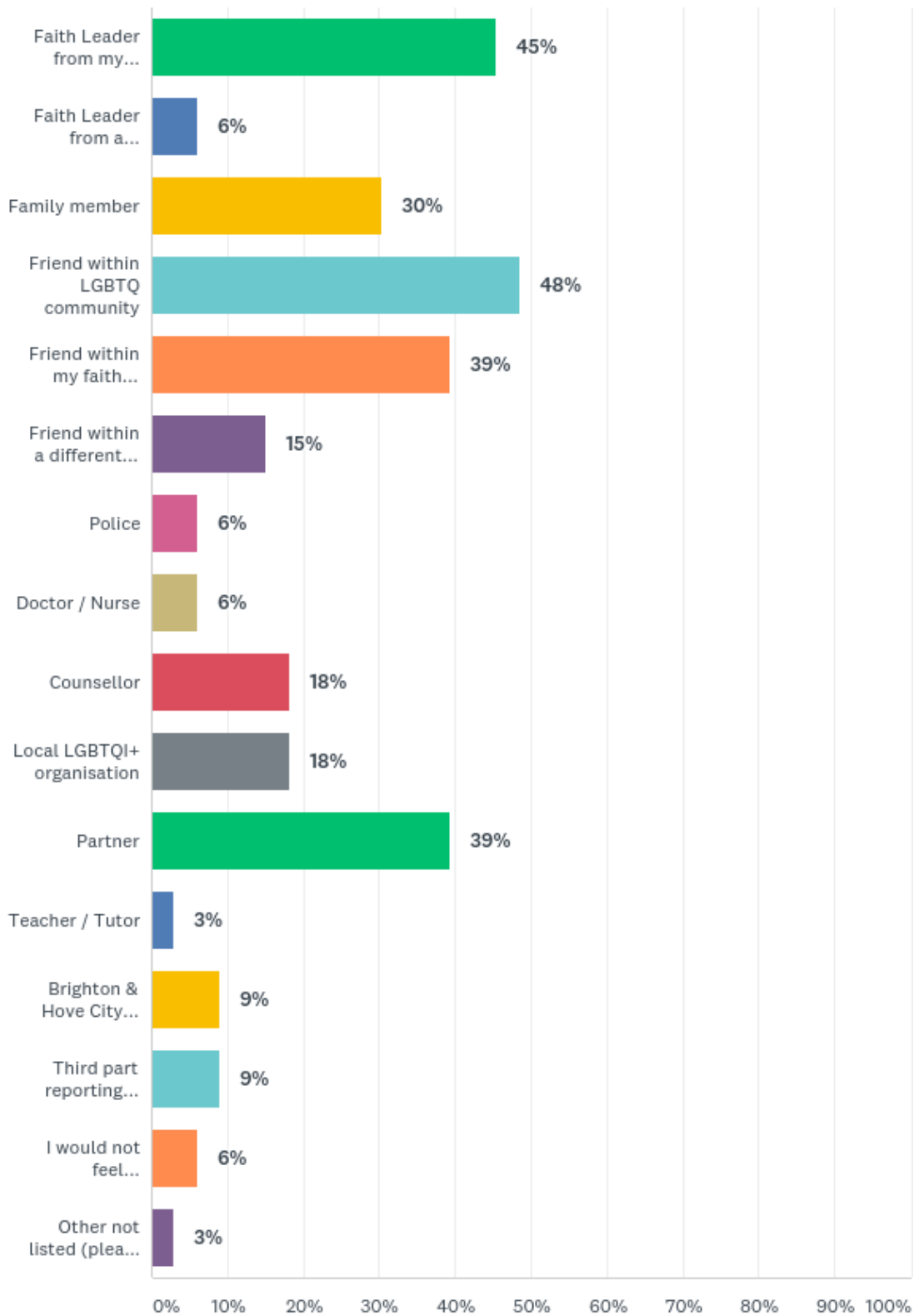
Answered: 33

When faced with faith prejudice in the LGBTQI+ the most prevalent source of support sought out was a friend within the LGBTQI+ community itself (48%, 16), followed by a faith leader from their own community (45%, 15).

39% each (13) said they would seek out a partner or friend within their faith community. Just less than a third (30%, 10) would seek out a family member, while nearly 1 in 5 (18%, 6) would seek out a counsellor or a local LGBTQI+ organisation.

Lower ranked options included faith leader from a different community (6%, 2), friend within a different faith community (15%, 5), Brighton & Hove City Council CST (9%, 3), a third party reporting organisation (9%, 3), the police, a medical professional (both 6%, 2) or a teacher (3%, 1).

2 people (6%) said they would not feel comfortable turning to anyone for support. One chose 'other' and said they would speak to their best friend for support.



*Faith prejudice support - comfortable*

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Faith Leader from my community	45%	15
Faith Leader from a different community	6%	2
Family member	30%	10
Friend within LGBTQ community	48%	16
Friend within my faith community	39%	13
Friend within a different faith community	15%	5
Police	6%	2
Doctor / Nurse	6%	2
Counsellor	18%	6
Local LGBTQI+ organisation	18%	6
Partner	39%	13
Teacher / Tutor	3%	1
Brighton & Hove City Council Community Safety Team	9%	3
Third part reporting organisation	9%	3
I would not feel comfortable turning to anyone for support	6%	2
Other not listed (please state):	3%	1
Total Respondents: 33		

We also asked:

*Can you please say a little about why you **would** be comfortable turning to these people/ organisations?*

Answered: 26

Of the 26 responses given, answers as to why they **would** feel comfortable turning to these people clustered around the following themes:

Understanding of LGBTQI+ and faith issues was the most commented upon reason for being prepared to turn to a person or organisation for support (23%, 6). More than a third of comments (35%, 9) mentioned trust being a factor, and 1 in 5 (19%, 5) said they would need to have an existing positive relationship with the person or organisation.

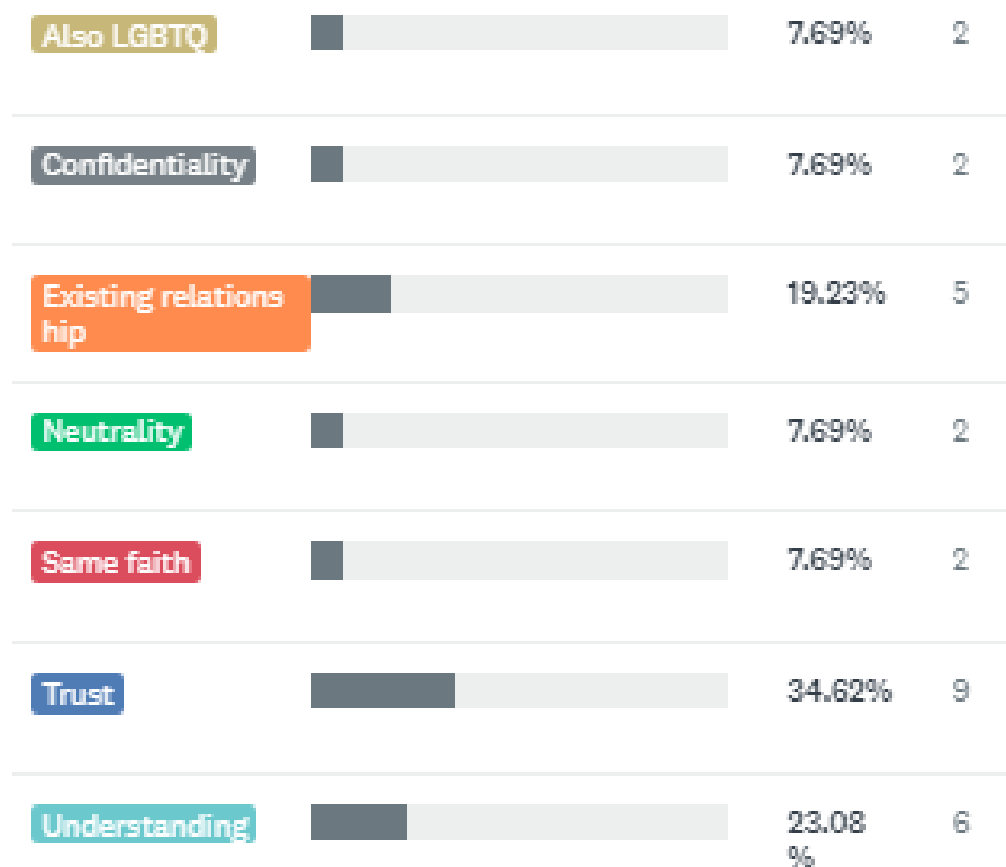
*I trust these people would understand me.*

*[About their friends and leaders in faith community] They live the same life as I do and so it is important for them to resolve*

2 comments each mentioned that they would want the party to be of the same faith, and/or be LGBTQI+. 2 comments each also mentioned the value of the neutrality of the support, and that it would be confidential.

*I can relate to people who are neutral.*

*A counsellor is confidential and would not be allowed to escalate it and break confidentiality or pressure me take things forward in a certain way that I didn't want to.*



### Q30 Negative avenues of support (LGBTQI+ prejudice)

*If you were affected by an incident of LGBTQI+ prejudice in a faith context, who **would you NOT** feel comfortable turning to for support?*

Answered: 42

More than a half of respondents (52%, 22) said they would *not* feel comfortable turning to the police for support when affected by LGBTQI+ prejudice in their faith community. Around half also said they wouldn't wish to turn to a doctor or nurse (48%, 20).

About a third (31%, 13) said they wouldn't turn to a faith leader in a different community, and 19% (8) wouldn't feel comfortable speaking to their family about it.

1 in 5 would not turn to the B&H Community Safety Team (21%, 9) and 19% (8) would not speak to a teacher or tutor.

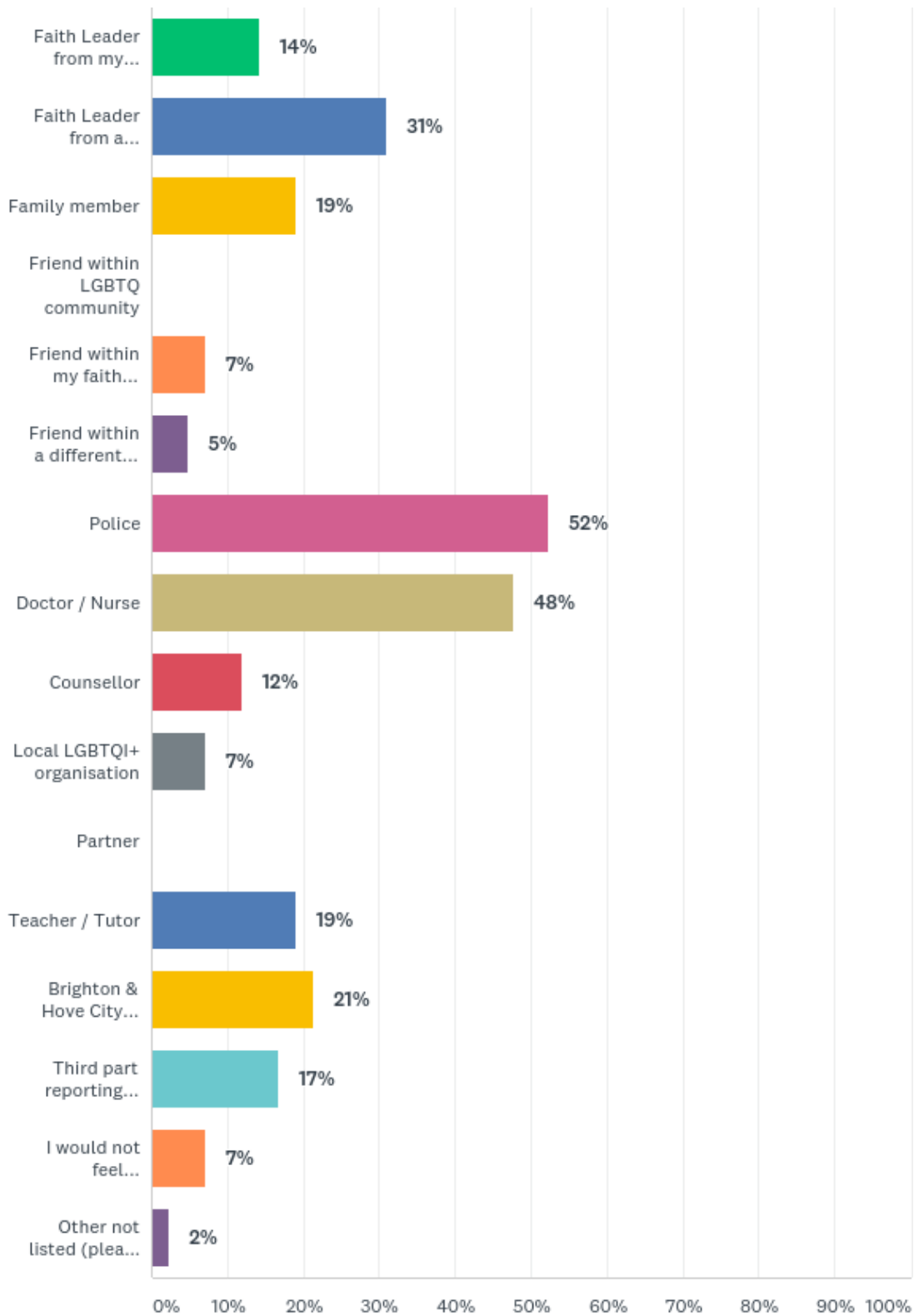
17% (7) would not go to a third party reporting organisation, and 7% (3) and 5% (2) respectively wouldn't speak to a friend within their faith community, or in a different one.

No-one said they would not feel comfortable speaking to a partner or friend in the LGBTQI+ community.

3 people said they wouldn't feel comfortable going to anyone for support (7%), and the same number said they would not go to an LGBTQI+ organization.

One chose 'other' and said:

- *Kind of depends really on the person facing the particular faith community or organisation. It is often the particular person that makes the difference and whether they give off a 'vibe' that is understanding and welcoming.*



LGBTQI+ prejudice support - uncomfortable

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Faith Leader from my community	14%	6
Faith Leader from a different community	31%	13
Family member	19%	8
Friend within LGBTQ community	0%	0
Friend within my faith community	7%	3
Friend within a different faith community	5%	2
Police	52%	22
Doctor / Nurse	48%	20
Counsellor	12%	5
Local LGBTQI+ organisation	7%	3
Partner	0%	0
Teacher / Tutor	19%	8
Brighton & Hove City Council Community Safety Team	21%	9
Third part reporting organisation	17%	7
I would not feel comfortable turning to anyone for support	7%	3
Other not listed (please state):	2%	1
Total Respondents: 42		

We also asked:

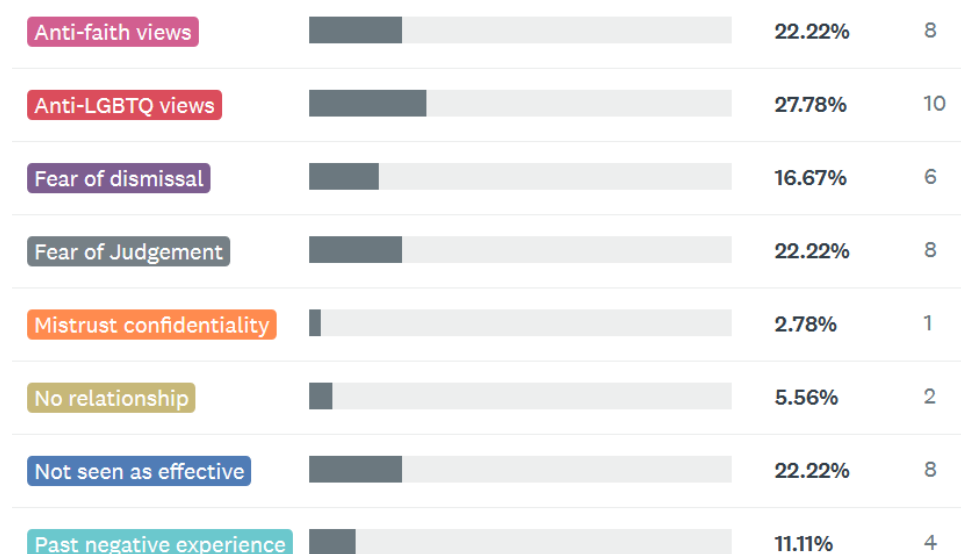
*Can you please say a little about why you **would not** be comfortable turning to these people/ organisations?*

Of the 36 comments provided, the main categories of responses covered the following key issues.

The most prevalent negative was a perception that the source of support would be anti-LGBTQ, by more than a quarter of respondents (28%, 10), and more than 1 in 5 were concerned about encountering anti-faiths views in individuals, organisations or institutions.

Nearly 1 in 5 (16%) were concerned they would be dismissed due to their LGBTQI+ or faith identity, and more than 1 in 10 had had a past negative experience with seeking support with the individuals or organisations named.

Equally prevalent were fear of judgment and the support not being seen as effective enough (22%). 2 commenters mentioned a lack of existing relationship as a barrier, and one mentioned mistrust that what they shared would be treated confidentially.



### Q31 Negative avenues of support (faith prejudice)

*If you were affected by an incident of faith-based+ prejudice from an individual/ group/ organisation from the LGBTQI+ community, who **would you NOT** feel comfortable turning to for support? Please select all that apply.*

Answered: 31

When faith prejudice occurred in their LGBTQI+ community, the leading support source **not** favoured was the police, at 42% (13), followed equally by doctor/nurse and a faith leader from a different community (both 35%, 11).

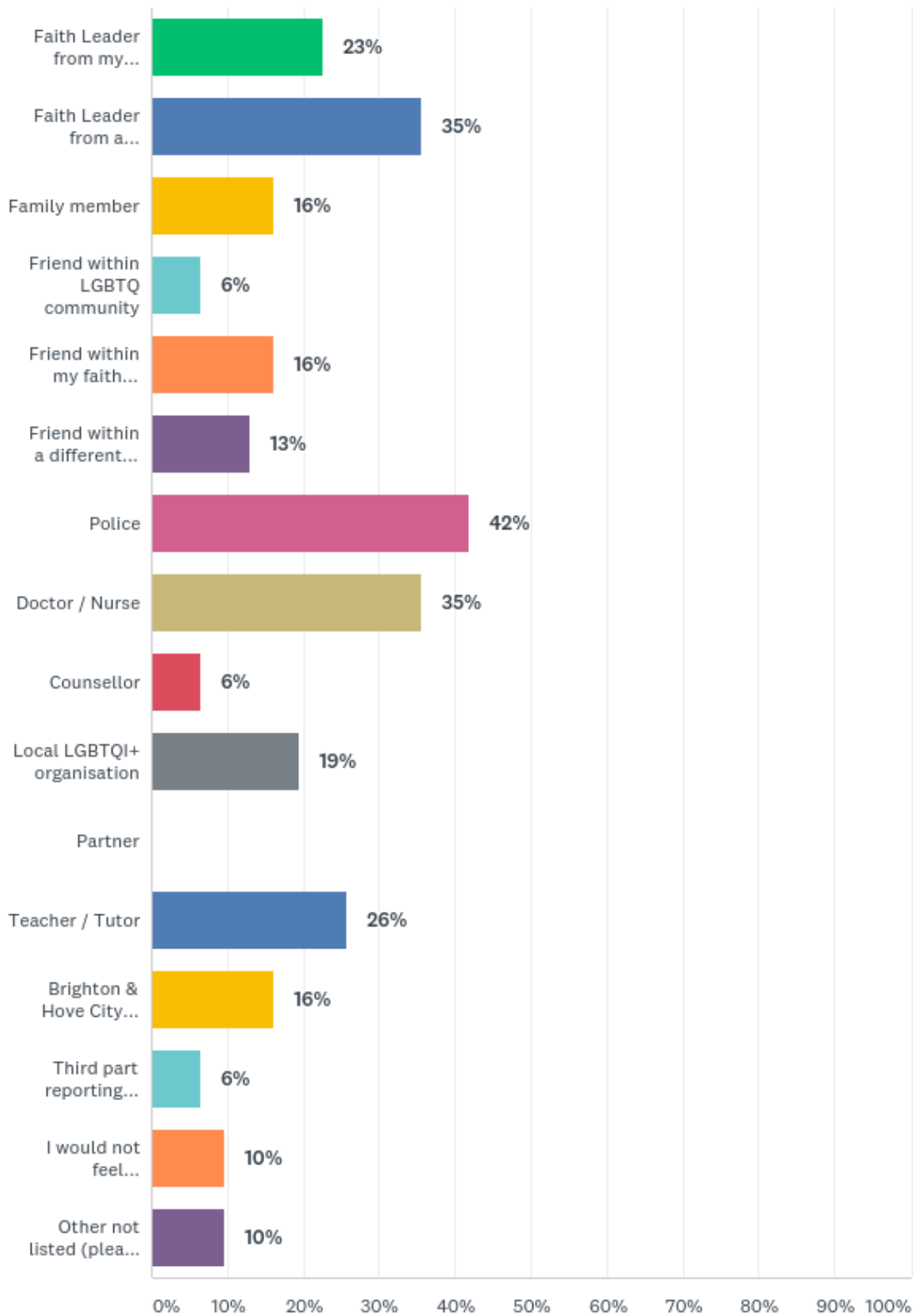
A quarter (26%) also said they would avoid speaking to a teacher, and a similar amount (23%, 7) said they would not speak to a faith leader from their community. 1 in 5 (19%, 6) also said they would not go to a local LGBTQI+ organisation for support.

16% wouldn't turn to a family member (5) or the Community Safety Team. 13% wouldn't feel comfortable going to a friend in a different faith community.

Only 6% (2) said they wouldn't speak to a counsellor about it, and the same number said they wouldn't want to seek out a third party reporting organisation.

1 in 10 (10%, 3) said they would not feel comfortable turning to anyone for support.

3 said 'other' and only 1 provided an answer: 'no confidence'



*Faith prejudice support - uncomfortable*

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Faith Leader from my community	23%	7
Faith Leader from a different community	35%	11
Family member	16%	5
Friend within LGBTQ community	6%	2
Friend within my faith community	16%	5
Friend within a different faith community	13%	4
Police	42%	13
Doctor / Nurse	35%	11
Counsellor	6%	2
Local LGBTQI+ organisation	19%	6
Partner	0%	0
Teacher / Tutor	26%	8
Brighton & Hove City Council Community Safety Team	16%	5
Third part reporting organisation	6%	2
I would not feel comfortable turning to anyone for support	10%	3
Other not listed (please state):	10%	3
Total Respondents: 31		

We also asked:

*Can you please say a little about why you **would not** be comfortable turning to these people/ organisations?*

Answered: 25

When asked why they would not be comfortable turning to these people or organisations when facing faith prejudice in their LGBTQI+ community, comments clustered around the following themes:

Echoing the need for understanding of LGBTQI+ and faith issues, lack of understanding was the leading reason given (36%, 9 comments).

*I would be worried about "I told you so"*

*I wouldn't trust them to take my spiritual life seriously, or understand the dynamics.*

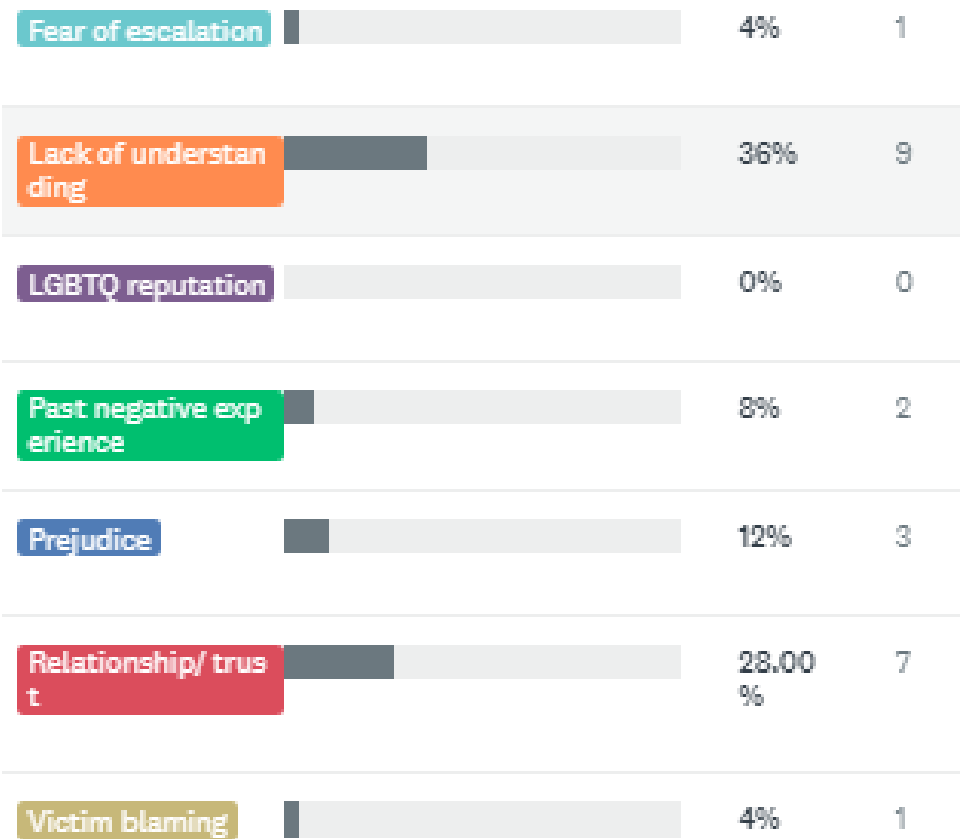
This was followed by poor relationships or trust (28%, 7) and concerns they would be met with prejudice (12%, 3). 2 comments mentioned a past negative experience, 1 a fear of escalation and 1 that they would be blamed for the incident, as the victim.

*Their bias would create more problems.*

*Because I wouldn't want to give a bad name to LGBTQI+ community and I feel it would be dismissed because of the perception that LGBTQI+ people cannot be prejudiced ie they are always inclusive*

*I might feel judged for my faith*

*I would not want to add to any stereotypes that LGBT+ people hate people of faith.  
Faith and LGBT+ communities are already regarded as dichotomies.*



# Key findings

These findings draw from the focus group and online survey for LGBTQI+ people of faith.

## Comparing faith and LGBTQI+ prejudice

While different forms of prejudice inevitably intersect, the engagement also looked into distinct experiences of LGBTQI+ and faith-based prejudice in different contexts. The survey found that the prevalence of prejudice experienced by LGBTQI+ people in/ from faith communities (80%) was significantly greater than that experienced by people of faith in the LGBTQI+ community (44%). However, this figure became much more equal when looking only at LGBTQI+ prejudice from a person's own faith community (not including prejudice from different faith communities), at 46%.

It is also notable that the severity of prejudice was – in general – greater when it came to LGBTQI+ prejudice in faith contexts than faith prejudice in LGBTQI+ contexts. Indeed, the levels of severity of these kinds of prejudice are not captured by the above statistic, and the survey reflected that more extreme forms of prejudice and even hate crime were significantly lower in the LGBTQI+ community (faith-based prejudice) than in faith communities, where LGBTQI+ prejudice tended to be, though not necessarily more prevalent, more severe in nature. For instance, 12% said they considered the faith prejudice they had experienced in their LGBTQI+ community to be a hate crime compared with 36% who felt LGBTQI+ prejudice in their faith communities constituted this. By the same token, rates of physical violence, threats and other serious forms of prejudice were also much lower.

Furthermore, LGBTQI+ based prejudice was more likely to keep people from participating in their faith communities than faith prejudice did in their LGBTQI+ community, with 53% saying faith prejudice didn't keep them from participating in their LGBTQI+ community at all, whereas only 27% of people said the same of their faith community regarding LGBTQI+ prejudice.

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*To my Muslim family I hide my LGBTQ lifestyle and to my LGBTQ friends and to other social circles, I downplay my Muslim identity. To the non-LGBTQ Muslims in Brighton, I completely hide my true nature.*

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However, it is important to remember that these statistics represent an overall, abstract picture, and that individual circumstances vary greatly, meaning that a person can certainly experience much worse effects of prejudice in their LGBTQI+ community due to their faith than vice versa.

Given this overall finding of greater severity of LGBTQI+ prejudice in faith communities, it is of note that many survey respondents, and a significant focus of the focus group, focused on and emphasised the difficulty of life as a person of faith in one's LGBTQI+ community, rather than vice versa. This may be due to a need to challenge the currently polarised and asymmetrical discourse that 'faith communities are LGBTQI+ intolerant' while 'LGBTQI+ communities are open and accepting'.

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*"I feel I'm caught inside this space that doesn't quite exist anywhere. It's been really difficult. I feel I'm in the closet more as a person of faith than I am as an LGBT person. I carry much more shame about my faith identity than I do about my LGBT identity."*

*– Focus Group Participant*

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Certainly, the findings of this engagement strongly counter this prevailing narrative, and provided an opportunity for the LGBTQI+ faith community to speak, many for the first time according to several focus group and survey comments, about the difficulties facing them as a person of faith in their LGBTQI+ community.

### Complexity

One thing is clear from the findings of the survey and focus group: the relationship between LGBTQI+ and faith identities, communities and experiences are far more complex and nuanced than the prevailing binary incompatibility-based 'either/or' view. A recurring theme throughout the engagement was the absence of and need for spaces to open up more nuanced discussions and encourage greater community cohesion and dialogue, challenging prejudice where it exists, but also supporting and creating a greater sense of identity for the large communities of LGBTQI+ people of faith who do exist, but who often feel so isolated and alone in their experiences.

*LGBT communities and faith communities are not polar opposites and are not excuses for hate.*

These are conversations and campaigns that can be had by statutory organisations, community and grassroots organisations and communities and individuals themselves.

### Community Cohesion

Division and a lack of cohesion rang as a major theme throughout the engagement. Around two thirds said that LGBTQI+ prejudice kept them from participating in their faith community to some extent (with 43% accounting for those who said it kept them from doing so 'a great deal' or 'a lot'), while 47% said faith prejudice kept them from participating in LGBTQI+ community to some extent (with 12% saying it did so 'a great deal' or 'a lot').

It is also clear from the engagement that, although LGBTQI+ prejudice does exist strongly in some faith settings, examples of inclusion do exist, while some felt that they felt greater exclusion, division and friction in their LGBTQI+ lives because of their faith. Indeed, a strong theme in the focus group was a widely felt sense of silence and shame around faith in LGBTQI+ community.

*"Doing the [LGBTQI+ and faith] survey shocked me because I realized I [...] don't feel compartmentalized [in my church] any more, but I do amongst my LGBT friends. [In my faith community] I can be LGBT and of faith and there's no issue there, but with my LGBT friends I'm quiet about my faith because I have encountered some quite aggressive and nasty responses. And I feel sympathetic to that, because if someone I don't know says they're a Christian the first thing I think is 'are you homophobic?'. So I relate to that but at the same time I don't think they realise the impact they're having."*

This counters and somewhat balances the dominant narrative of faith and spiritual groups as inherently anti-LGBTQ+ and LGBTQI+ groups as inherently inclusive. Again, this is not to suggest that examples of good practice, inclusion and integration do not exist in the LGBTQI+ communities, or that LGBTQI+

prejudice in faith-communities should be downplayed, but rather to introduce a more nuanced picture of the actual experiences of LGBTQI+ people of faith in Brighton & Hove.

*"There is a conversation to be had, because a lot of LGBTQ people have been very hurt by Christianity and different faiths, however, there's a culture of discrimination within the LGBT community that isn't being challenged. And how can there be trust in that situation?"*

*"Sometimes people in the LGBT community think your faith is 100% your choice. We choose to follow a particular faith trajectory, but there's something within us that makes us do so. There's actually quite a deep parallel between faith and sexuality and gender identity."*

Community cohesion issues not only add to increased levels of prejudice and the stress this incurs, but also have a detrimental impact on people's ability to reach out for support. For instance, comments in the survey revealed that a lack of cohesion keeps some people from reporting faith prejudice in their LGBTQI+ community, and vice versa, because they are concerned about giving the community a 'bad name' and fueling the sense of division.

*I would not want to add to any stereotypes that LGBT+ people hate people of faith.  
Faith and LGBT+ communities are already regarded as dichotomies.*

*Because I wouldn't want to give a bad name to LGBTQI+ community and I feel it  
would be dismissed because of the perception that LGBTQI+ people cannot be  
prejudiced ie they are always inclusive*

A third of survey respondents (34%, 10) also said they would be reluctant to report faith-based hate crime in their LGBTQI+ community for fear of alienating them, and a further 17% (7) said they were worried reporting LGBTQI+ prejudice or hate crime would alienate their faith community.

The survey and focus group both also reflected a need for a public forum for greater dialogue and open discussion around LGBTQI+ and faith identity and community cohesion. Several participants said that they thought it would be helpful for there to be a forum for LGBTQI+ people of any faith and none to explore and reflect on their personal relationship to faith and religion in their own lives – positive and negative -- to help break down the "polarization" of for or against faith that they experienced as currently existing, and build dialogue and understanding across the current divide that is still often experienced outside of the limited safe LGBTQI+ faith spaces that currently exist.

*"There is a conversation to be had, because a lot of LGBTQ people have been very  
hurt by Christianity and different faiths, however, there's a culture of discrimination  
within the LGBT community that isn't being challenged. And how can there be trust in  
that situation?"*

*Sharing spaces within LGBTQI+ spaces for people of faith to share what their  
faith/belief means to them. Eg I can imagine a community evening where this is the  
topic with invited speakers and also anyone could be welcome to share.*

*Maybe there's something about needing some forums to bring that conversation  
alive, so people can question their own mindsets, understand and learn.*

## Hate Crime

More than a third of survey respondents (36%) said they would consider the LGBTQI+ prejudice they had experienced in a faith setting to be a hate crime, while around one in ten (12%) considered the faith prejudice they had experienced in their LGBTQI+ as such.

However, it is clear that there is currently a lack of clarity about what constitutes a hate crime, with about a third of respondents reporting that they were not sure whether prejudice (LGBTQI+ - 33%; Faith – 35%) they had experience ‘counted’ as a hate crime or not.

The survey was not designed to assess whether those who perceived incidents as hate crime or not were legally accurate in this, however, but it is interesting to note the lack of confidence and perceived ‘grey area’ in around a third of cases.

While this is something that can be targeted via awareness raising campaigns and other methods for increasing hate crime and reporting awareness, it is important to note that most of the issues that create disharmony within and between the imagined divide of LGBTQI+ and faith communities can better be described as ‘prejudice’ than the technical term ‘hate crime’, encompassing a much wider range of incidents, attitudes and daily occurrences that shape people’s expectations and perceptions.

## Reporting barriers

It is clear that there are complex barriers to LGBTQI+ people of faith reporting prejudice, particularly to the police and issues with under-reporting of hate crime are already well known.

A majority of respondents (88%, 38) had never reported an LGBTQI+ hate crime incident perpetrated by a person or group of faith to the police, although 36% (14) felt they had experienced a hate crime of this nature, and a further 33% (13) were unsure.

The uncertainty about what ‘counts’ as a hate crime, discussed above, created a significant barrier to reporting, with between a quarter and a third (24%, LGBTQI+ hate crime and 31% for faith-based hate crime) saying that uncertainty about what constitutes a hate crime would keep them from reporting.

Overall around half, 42% and 52% respectively, said they would feel actively uncomfortable reporting faith or LGBTQI+ based prejudice to the police, while only 4% and 6% respectively said they would feel actively comfortable doing so.

Additionally, nearly half said this was to do with a concern that they are the incident would not be taken seriously, and more than a third said they lacked confidence or trust in the police to take them or the incident seriously when it came to faith or LGBTQI+-based hate crime or prejudice. 1 in 10 also feared the incidents escalating as a result of reporting.

Confidentiality and anonymity came up as important themes in reporting for these communities, given the tenuous nature of relationships in communities due to their faith or LGBTQI+ identity. More than a third said that fear of alienating their LGBTQI+ community or faith community would be a factor in not reporting.

A quarter said they felt, or would likely feel, too distressed about the incident to talk to the police about it, and about 1 in 5 said they feared discrimination from the police.

About 1 in 5 said they lacked confidence there would be an effective outcome from reporting, and a barrier for around 1 in 3 respondents was having a lack of evidence for the incident. This could be addressed via existing apps for reporting crimes, which could be further developed in partnership with the police and Brighton & Hove City Council to better include and protect those targeted by hate crime or prejudice.

### Ethnicity and race

A key limitation and challenge of the engagement is the lack of ethnic and racial diversity among respondents, who were majority White British (70%). 24% were from other white backgrounds, including European and Irish. Only two people of colour (4%) responded to the survey, and three people of colour participated in the focus group, either in person or via written statement.

While efforts were made to engage communities through existing and new community contacts, a combination of historic divides between the white-dominant LGBTQI+ and BAME communities, under-resourcing of grassroots BAME organisations, and a lack of ethnic diversity in Switchboard workforce limited the possibilities for meaningful engagement with LGBTQI+ people of faith who are also BAME and/or of colour. In order to address this, we attempted to extend the options for engagement by reaching out to existing contacts who had not been able to participate in the focus group and receiving statements on their experience to contribute to the report and engagement (one of whom was able to do so).

Further engagement addressing the intersection of ethnicity and race with faith and LGBTQI+ identity would be required to investigate the links that exist and the extent of the problem for BAME/PoC in Brighton & Hove, particularly those who are also of faith and LGBTQI+.

This was alluded to in the engagement, with a participant of colour in the focus group noting that there was often a perception of Brighton as “tolerant, liberal” and safe for LGBTQ+ people, but that in fact there does exist a significant amount of prejudice – particularly when it comes to ethnicity. Even white British respondents to the survey and focus group participants shared experiences of racially-motivated hate crime when they were mis-read as being from the BAME community.

### Migrants, Refugees and Asylum Seekers

While the voices and experiences of LGBTQI+ migrants, refugees and asylum seekers of faith are not widely present in this report, some suggestions of the issues faced by this population did emerge. In particular, the fraught and stressful nature of the need to hide identity and lead ‘double lives’ was expressed by one focus group participant, a Muslim-identified person who had migrated to the UK from overseas more than a decade ago.

*To be vocal about our sexuality to our faith leaders puts us at a lot of risk. In this day and age online news travel fast. We may get freedom in UK but risk losing freedom when visiting our home country, and risk losing contact with our family and loved ones back home.*

This population is at additional risk, both in terms of prejudice and hate crime, and also the mental health impacts of ongoing vigilance, isolation and fear.

### A need for support and community

Around 1 in 10 survey respondents said they would not feel comfortable turning to any individual or organisation whatsoever – including friends and family – for support after an incident of LGBTQI+ prejudice (7%) or faith-based prejudice (10%). Participants in the focus group also reflected that they felt that their avenues of support were very limited:

*“When it comes to [faith] prejudice towards me personally I don’t think I would go to anyone, and that means maybe one or two very close personal friends and that’s basically it.” - Focus Group participant*

While the majority said they would rely on friends or family members, it was also clear that the reasons for avoiding seeking support from the Community Safety Team or reporting the police were due in part to perceived barriers to these services. The reasons for these are explored in the sections below.

*Let LGBTQI+ people know of safe groups to meet with in the town of different faiths; and of where to get support if experiencing prejudice; get inclusivity awareness onto the agendas of faith communities, where possible.*

*More interfaith/lgbtqi get togethers and worshipping. Fun events that make us laugh and love together. Talks of positive experience (because the negatives we know too well). To be race/culturally aware and what that means outside white communities and how that affects being of faith and lgbtqi.*

*Greater signposting to affirming faith groups [would help]*

### LGBTQI+ Faith Peer Support

Participants in the focus group agreed that they would value a multi-faith LGBTQ space to share experiences, socialize and share informal support. It was felt that this would also help address the issues of isolation and a lack of representation of LGBTQI+ people of faith, and help to develop shared identity and a sense of community where currently this only exists in specific pockets of individual (and often exceptional) faith groups.

Indeed, while it is important to strengthen institutional and statutory capacities and pathways for support for those targeted by prejudice, a key finding of the engagement was that most respondents are most likely to reach out to a close person in their life – such as a friend, partner or a member of their faith community – suggesting that targeting community peer support could be a helpful pathway to improving community cohesion and resilience around prejudice.

Additionally, more than a third of survey respondents (36%, 9) said they would value either one-off peer support or an ongoing peer support group of with those of a similar identity/ shared experience if they experienced faith-based prejudice, and half of respondents (49%) said they would value an ongoing peer support drop-in related to LGBTQI+ prejudice in their faith community.

*“I genuinely think [the focus group] helped all of us participants as much as it may have helped the council. [...] I wondered if we might be able to do something sooner concerning a group; everyone seemed in warm agreement that a regular group meeting would be beneficial [...] There’s literally nothing of this sort in Brighton for LGBTQI+ people of faith.”*

Several comments in the survey also indicated LGBTQI+ peer support would be valued- not just around addressing prejudice – but for building community and identity:

*Bring people of different religious and philosophical beliefs, sexual and gender identities together to share their stories of self and in doing so create new stories of 'us', which can hopefully inspire a transformative moment and individual growth*

*Sharing spaces within LGBTQI+ spaces for people of faith to share what their faith/belief means to them.*

*A peer support group would be a great idea and a specific LGBTQI advocate or support worker who could help people report faith based hate crimes etc.*

### Advocacy

Advocacy support with reporting was the preferred option for the majority of survey respondents, 51%, when it came to support after an incident of LGBTQI+ prejudice in their faith community. This contrasts with the lower, but still significant, preference of more than a third (36%), who favored additional advocacy support for reporting prejudice or hate crime in cases of faith-based prejudice in their LGBTQI+ community.

### Meditation

In general, most respondents said that their preferred form of resolution for faith-prejudice in the LGBTQI+ community would be a carefully mediated session with the person or group who caused the harm, in an attempt to build awareness of the impact of prejudice and build dialogue, at 64%. This was in contrast with preferences for LGBTQI+ prejudice in the faith community, where a mediated session was the least favoured option, at 43%.

### Perceptions of Council and Accessing Support

Willingness to reach out to the Brighton & Hove City Council Community Safety Team (CST) was low for survey respondents, both in terms of LGBTQI+ and faith-based prejudice, with less than 1 in 10 (9%) preferring this option for both kinds of incidents. In addition to this, 16% said they would actively avoid reaching out to the CST for faith-based prejudice, and 21% said the same for LGBTQI+ prejudice.

Several focus group participants said they had had negative perceptions or experiences or of the council in the past that had led them to feel uncomfortable approaching them for support around faith-based prejudice. These included being declined funding to participate in Pride as part of their faith organisation, and a perception that there is a 'hierarchy' of faiths that are taken seriously when in need of prejudice-related support:

*"It's really hard to get a grant out of the council for Pride if you're part of a religious group. They just say we don't give to faith groups – or they did [a few years ago]. So I said we're an LGBT group and we want to march in pride, and they said they wouldn't give us any money, because we were a faith group."*

*"As a Hindu [...] I would have no problem approaching the council or law enforcement or any of the other statutory services, but my partner is a Roman Catholic, and he would never, ever go to the council. [...] there is still this element of: if you're a Christian or if you're Jewish then somehow you're a perpetrator – you're to blame for something, you've caused something. But if you're a Hindu or a Muslim or a Buddhist you're an acceptable victim and they will be there to help you."*

Other participants said that they would feel comfortable approaching the hate crime support team at the council for concerns around LGBTQ prejudice but not if it was to do with their faith:

*“When it comes to [faith] prejudice towards me personally I don’t think I would go to anyone, and that means maybe one or two very close personal friends and that’s basically it. But when it comes to LGBTQ related prejudice I feel comfortable to go to the council or the police without any problem at all [...] “For me, it comes from a place of being seen as if I’m kicking up a fuss about nothing.”*

*“I would happily go to the council about an LGBT related thing, but it wouldn’t even occur to me to go to them for a faith-related thing. Maybe there’s something about needing some forums to bring that conversation alive, so people can question their own mindsets, understand and learn. “*

It emerged that many respondents were not clear about the purpose of the council as a non-policing organization, and potentially connected to the police. Given the low levels of trust and confidence in the police within the LGBTQI+ community specifically, this may be a particular barrier to address in outreach, campaigns and communications about reporting and other support services.

*“I don’t feel like they have a very strong outward presence – I don’t see posters for them anywhere. I feel like if I didn’t have the job that I do, I wouldn’t know that they exist. I see the people that work in that team in a lot of different community spaces, but that’s as a professional, not as an individual person. I don’t think they’re very good at getting it out there that they’re a non-policing organisation that can support you.”*

Overall, it was clear from the survey and focus group findings that council support services could improve their approachability and effectiveness with the LGBTQI+ Faith community by addressing several key areas:

- Assuring confidentiality and safeguarding against potential escalation of incidents or ‘outing’ in communities
- Becoming outwardly LGBTQI+ and Faith affirmative – challenging the dichotomy and establishing trust with this intersectional community
- Clearly communicate about the options available within the Community Safety Team for reporting and other avenues of support, as well as the effectiveness and outcomes of these interventions
- Clarify the Council’s and CST’s non-policing role, the support services that are offered, and how these are distinct from other council departments individuals might be familiar with (and may have had negative experiences of) such as housing and benefits.

*“I like the neutrality of a statutory service, but I can understand how a lot of people are put off by it. I think the council is seen as one big blanket organization. If you’re a person that receives housing benefits, or you’ve had your disability benefits cut, you’ve experienced lots of issues that seems to stem from the council, perhaps people would be affected by those issues and would not want to go back to the council about something else that’s sensitive to do with their identity.”*

*“Have little rainbow symbols, have leaflets for LGBT organisations, because if you’re a young person looking for someone to come out to, you’re scanning for safe spaces and you’ll pick up on those really simple things. It could be something as simple as if the hate crime team at council did a statement for*

*Channukah – doing something nice for the different important dates for difference groups – doing something for the anniversary of the Stonewall riots, for Channukah, for Christmas, for Diwali – I think that would be a really cool way of putting it out there that these different groups exist in Brighton.”*

*“I would find [reaching out to a council service for support] really difficult, because you wouldn’t know if they were both on board with both of those sides of things [LGBTQ+ identity and faith]”*

*“I think definitely [it would help] the council making it feel like a safe space. I wasn’t even aware that there was someone you could report crime to in the LGBT community and that’s linked to religion as well. There’s so many people in Brighton that don’t know about that, but why don’t they know about it?”*

### ‘Conversion’ or ‘reparative’ ‘therapies’

The survey revealed a worrying prevalence of so-called ‘conversion therapy’ (or ‘reparative therapy’) in Brighton and Hove, at a much higher rate than currently captured in national statistics released in the 2018 National LGBT Survey. Switchboard’s survey defined ‘conversion therapy’ as any intervention designed to attempt to change a person’s sexual orientation or gender (to heterosexual and/or cisgender). Findings revealed that nearly 1 in 5 (16%) having been offered such an intervention and 1 in 10 (9%) have undergone this.

This finding echoes, but at more than double the rate, national statistics released in the 2018 National LGBT Survey, which reported that 5% of the LGBTQ population had been offered conversion therapy in the UK, and further 2% had undergone it.

With the most prevalent source of these interventions coming from a faith group or individual known to the person, in 50% of cases, it is clear that this is an issue that needs to be addressed in Brighton & Hove. This echoed the findings of the National LGBT Survey, where 51% of conversion therapy ‘interventions’ were instigation by a faith organisation or group. Given the potentially devastating impact on the mental health of those targeted, this is matter of significant concern, calling for greater measures to target and address this phenomenon.

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*I have been prayed over for healing. It was devastating and led to suicidal thoughts*

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*My Dad once tried to pray the gay out of me. He closed his eyes and put his hand on my shoulder and started praying. I was only 16 and it messed me up and made me feel wrong and cursed.*

*A psychiatrist once tried to get my parents to sign ECT [electro-convulsive] therapy*

### Isolation

While it is already widely known that the LGBTQI+ population experiences high levels of social isolation, the statistics from the survey and the findings of the focus group echo this, adding that the often double-stigma of being both LGBTQI+ and of faith increases their sense of isolation. Indeed, while faith communities are often beacons of support and community for people who might otherwise experience

social isolation, nearly a quarter of LGBTQI+ people said they felt isolated due to their sexual orientation or trans status within their faith community itself.

*I am really glad this is being researched and thought about as my faith is something I feel I need to keep to myself and can't be open to LGBTQI people but then I can't be open about my sexuality at church so it feels very sad and upsetting.*

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*"There's a sense of it being a dichotomy – you're one thing or the other, and they don't mix, and they're polarized politically."*

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*"I feel I'm caught inside this space that doesn't quite exist anywhere."*

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*Recently, I have come to terms with my spirituality and how this impact on my sexuality. I started going to the mosque, although I cannot disclose to the Imam and the other people of who I really am. There is fear that I would be negatively judged, and perhaps ostracised from the local Muslim community.*

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#### Invisibility, visibility and representation

As already discussed, many participants felt they could not safely be 'out' as a person of faith in their LGBTQI+ community, and vice versa, leading to a sense of invisibility and isolation. However, being visible as an LGBTQI+ person of faith come with its own risks, the engagement found:

*"There was a big [transphobic] sticker in the toilets. I ripped it off and looked to see if it was in any of the other cubicles, and it wasn't but there were swastikas drawn on things. It was a bit of a double-whammy of that moment of being by myself and wondering – you know, because I don't look [...] like a Hissidic Jew [...] and people don't assume I'm LGBT when they meet me [...] am I only safe because I'm invisible?"*

*"There's two sides to the invisibility coin – on one half I'm safe because I can choose when to speak and I'm safer when I do speak because I'm more palatable as a queer person or as a person of faith, but then there's also the invisibility of that people don't know that I exist, and that I'm impacted by things that they say or do."*

*I would feel safer if I didn't feel obliged to hide aspects of myself.*

This leads to a vigilance about the safety and views of others:

*"The writing's on the wall in a way – I wonder, is this what's happening in people's subconscious, and people feel able to wallpaper paste it or draw it on the wall but they wouldn't say it to my face? How do I respond? It's really difficult sometimes, and I didn't know what to do."*

It was felt that there was a need for positive, inclusive representation of LGBTQI+ people of faith, including positive examples and role models:

*“There’s such a lack of positive representation – or any representation at all – about what it means to be an LGBT person that comes from a faith group. There are so many myths and stereotypes that exist, and it’s really difficult to bust those myths without a platform from which to express those things.”*

*[It would help to have a] role models programme - making different identities visible.  
Making inclusive faith settings visible too and issuing statements of inclusivity.*

*[It would help to have] more representation of lgbtqi people of faith in the public sphere*

### Multiple Minority Status

As both people from LGBTQI+ and faith communities, the impact of being of multiple minority status – often with additional factors such as age, disability and ethnicity.

The additional stress and burden of this can lead to social isolation and poor mental health, the engagement found.

*“There’s a question of acceptance on both sides – in terms of how a faith community accepts you as a person from the LGBTQI+ community and also how that community accepts you as a person of faith. You tend to live in this hinterland of being regarded with suspicion by the LGBTQI+ community but you don’t quite fit in – from my perspective. [...] So you live in this weird world where you’re battling one side for the rights of a group that really can’t stick you anywhere because quite rightly they feel hurt and excluded from that so how dare you be part of it as well”*

### Mental Health

39% of LGBTQI+ people of faith who responded to the online survey and three quarters of focus group participants (6 in 8) reported that they live with a mental health condition, such as anxiety or depression, among others.

It is well documented that the LGBTQI+ community experiences poorer mental health than the general population, due to minority stress. While belonging to a faith community can be a protective factor for some, including some LGBTQI+ with positive experiences of inclusion in their faith communities, many LGBTQI+ people (around a quarter of respondents to the survey) do continue to face significant exclusion and prejudice to varying degrees within their faith communities, while even more experience lower levels of tension, uncertainty and anxiety due to faith-based negative perceptions of their LGBTQI+ identity. The detrimental impact of this on the mental health and wellbeing of LGBTQI+ people of faith cannot be underestimated.

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*I have been prayed over for healing. It was devastating and led to suicidal thoughts*

*Personally my faith is as an integral part of me as my gender identity. Sometimes I have felt as though I must choose between the two which result in cognitive dissonance and poor mental health. It is a constant struggle to align the two and remain sane...*

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*My Dad once tried to pray the gay out of me. He closed his eyes and put his hand on my shoulder and started praying. I was only 16 and it messed me up and made me feel wrong and cursed.*

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Coupled with this, however, is the finding that, when a faith community is explicitly LGBTQI+ inclusive, the positive benefits for the person are huge – suggesting that a focus on integration of these identities and communities is an important step for improving the overall wellbeing of LGBTQI+ people of faith.

*“One thing that has really moved me and made me feel more able to be a whole person is the strength of conviction within [my faith community] that LGBT will have a place within that community without question. That has enabled me to relax and explore myself and the interaction between religion, spirituality, faith and identity.”*

# Recommendations

These recommendations are divided into those for the Brighton & Hove City Council and the local LGBTQI+ community sector, including Switchbord and others.

## Brighton & Hove City Council

### **1. Actively support faith and LGBTQI+ community cohesion**

Take actions to help challenge the narrative of faith/LGBTQI+ dichotomy, and promote positive examples of faith and LGBTQI+ integration and inclusion, for example, to make a statement of LGBTQI+ and faith inclusion, and to open up dialogue between the Council, LGBTQI+ groups and faith groups around supporting LGBTQI+-affirming faith-inclusion in Pride with its grant scheme.

Many local faith groups are LGBTQ+ affirmative but are not linked up or linked in with other local initiatives tackling hate crime. The council could support integration by creating an interfaith LGBTQ+ inclusion charter that all local inclusive faith groups can agree to, setting a positive example and increasing community awareness and resources for LGBTQI+ inclusive faith spaces

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*“[It would help to] make inclusive faith settings visible and issuing statements of inclusivity.” - Survey Respondent*

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### **2. Further investigation and concrete actions on so-called ‘conversion therapies’ as a form of spiritual abuse**

‘Conversion therapy’ is still a significant problem in the community, with the engagement discovering rates around twice as high as those reported in the national LGBT Survey (2018). These so-called ‘reparative therapies’ have devastating effects on the lives and mental health of survivors, as well as contributing to tension and conflict between communities.

Outreach should be made into faith communities known to carry out these practices and interventions developed to prevent these and safeguard individuals at risk.

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*“I have been prayed over for healing. It was devastating and led to suicidal thoughts”  
- Survey Respondent*

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### **3. Increase the public profile of Community Safety Team (CST) and Brighton & Hove City Council’s broader roles in relation to prejudice/ hate crime support and resolution options**

Engagement found that, at present awareness of the CST is low, as is trust in ‘the council’ as a monolithic entity, in part due to negative experiences in specific council departments. There is also a lack of clarity about the connection between the council and the police, and – particularly due to negative perceptions of the police from the LGBTQI+ community – this deters some from seeking support.

The CST should develop and promote an awareness raising campaign, highlighting the services offered and their non-policing approach. A clear and consistent message about the relevant support services offered by the council, how they can be accessed, and their non-policing nature would help LGBTQI+ people of faith access these more readily.

Awareness of alternative non-police-reporting options, such as restorative circles for those who have been targeted and, where appropriate, mediation, would also empower communities to be aware of more of the available options and to access the right support for them.

Explore LGBTQI+ community access to and awareness of CST as a future HIP engagement topic

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*“[It would help to have] more representation of lgbtqi people of faith in the public sphere” - Survey Respondent*

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#### **4. Council to include LGBTQI+ and faith representation in Community Safety Team communications and outreach materials**

The need for trust and confidence in support services was paramount, with visible representation and demonstration of LGBTQI+ and faith inclusion being key factors in making LGBTQI+ people of faith feel more comfortable reaching out for support.

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*“Have little rainbow symbols, have leaflets for LGBT organisations [...] It could be something as simple as if the hate crime team at council did a statement for Channukah – doing something nice for the different important dates for difference groups – doing something for the anniversary of the Stonewall riots, for Channukah, for Christmas, for Diwali – I think that would be a really cool way of putting it out there that these different groups exist in Brighton.” – Focus Group Participant*

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#### **5. The Community Safety Team to access training on LGBTQI+ and faith**

In order to increase capacity to support LGBTQI+ people of faith, and increase community confidence, relevant workers within the CST should access specific LGBTQI+ and faith training to understand the intersectional needs and experiences of this community.

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*“I like the neutrality of a statutory service, but I can understand how a lot of people are put off by it. I think the council is seen as one big blanket organization. If you’re a person that receives housing benefits, or you’ve had your disability benefits cut, you’ve experienced lots of issues that seems to stem from the council, perhaps people would be affected by those issues and would not want to go back to the council about something else that’s sensitive to do with their identity.” – Focus Group Participant*

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## LGBTQI+ Community Sector

### **1. LGBTQI+ and Faith Peer Support**

Peer-support group for LGBTQI+ people of faith, highlighting wellbeing, community and dialogue across difference, to be led by a person from an LGBTQI+ and faith community.

Switchboard to explore opportunities for provision of an LGBTQI+ and faith peer support group, potentially in partnership with another local LGBTQI+ organisation.

### **2. Model positive LGBTQI+ and Faith inclusion and integration**

Organisations in the LGBTQI+ voluntary and community sector to take actions to improve internal attitudes and public-facing communications to be actively LGBTQI+ and faith affirming, highlighting this intersectional community and providing positive images and examples of cohesion and integration.

Awareness raising training for staff and volunteers, addressing any current blind spots around LGBTQI+ and faith. (Switchboard’s HIP project has attended LGBTQ and Faith training provided by the Faith and Belief Forum)

### **3. Work in partnership with inclusive faith organisations and improve signposting between faith and LGBTQI+ resources**

Where appropriate to take opportunities to partner and build relationships with local LGBTQI+ inclusive and affirming faith organisations with a view to improving community cohesion, integration and signposting between services.

Improving awareness and signposting capacity for a range of LGBTQI+ affirming faith groups.

Explore partnerships with national faith and belief organisations for training and awareness raising provision



# Acknowledgement and Thanks

We sincerely thank all those members of the LGBTQ+ community, professionals and volunteers who responded to our online surveys, and who supported the promotion and advertisement of the work.

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- The Brighton & Hove City Council Community Safety Team
- Hove Progressive Synagogue
- Interfaith Connect
- Brighton Metropolitan Community Church
- Brighton Village Metropolitan Community Church
- The Racial Harassment Forum
- Trust for Developing Communities
- Brighton and Hove Faith in Action
- MindOut
- And all who participated in the focus group, online survey, and who helped promote it through their networks.

Thank you!

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# Key Contacts

Daniel Cheesman, Switchboard CEO: [Daniel.Cheesman@switchboard.org.uk](mailto:Daniel.Cheesman@switchboard.org.uk)

Sophie Barnes, LGBTQ+ Engagement Officer [Sophie.Barnes@switchboard.org.uk](mailto:Sophie.Barnes@switchboard.org.uk)

Tel: 01273 234009

Switchboard  
Community Base  
113 Queens Road  
Brighton  
BN1 3XG

<https://www.switchboard.org.uk/>

Twitter: @LGBTSwitchboard

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/LGBTswitchboard>

