

“  
**There was  
nothing to fix**”

LGBT+ survivors' experiences  
of conversion practices

---

Galop 2022

the LGBT+ anti-abuse charity



## About Galop

---

Galop is the UK's LGBT+ anti-abuse charity. We work directly with thousands of LGBT+ people who have experienced abuse and violence every year.

We specialise in supporting victims and survivors of domestic abuse, sexual violence, hate crime, and other forms of abuse including honour-based abuse, forced marriage, and so-called conversion therapies. We are a service run by LGBT+ people, for LGBT+ people, and the needs of our community are at the centre of what we do.

We use what we learn through working on the frontlines with clients to work on national and local policy change, to improve outcomes for LGBT+ victims and survivors of abuse and violence. We build evidence through key pieces of research around LGBT+ people's experiences of abuse and violence. We push for legislative change, improved statutory guidance for victims, and better understanding of the needs of LGBT+ people around the country.

This report draws on data from a broader project on LGBT+ people's experiences of violence and abuse, and their access to formal support services, funded by the Home Office.

© Galop 2022

## Credits

---

Carlisle, E. & Withers Green, L. "There was nothing to fix": LGBT+ survivors' experiences of conversion practices. Galop; 2022.

Design by [studiosquid.co.uk](https://studiosquid.co.uk)

# Contents



<b>1</b>	<b>Foreword</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>2</b>	<b>The study</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>3</b>	<b>Key findings</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>4</b>	<b>Recommendations</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>5</b>	<b>Evidence &amp; the need for change</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>6</b>	<b>How common are conversion practices in the UK?</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>7</b>	<b>What do conversion practices look like?</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>8</b>	<b>Conversion practices in the UK</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>9</b>	<b>Methodology</b>	<b>34</b>
<b>10</b>	<b>References</b>	<b>37</b>

# 1 Foreword



Conversion practices are a distressing reality for LGBT+ people. In 2017, the UK Government's National LGBT Survey estimated that 2% of respondents had undergone so-called "conversion therapy". However, through the experiences of LGBT+ victims and survivors of abuse using Galop's helplines and advocacy services, we have long suspected that this figure didn't represent the true number of victims of so-called "conversion therapy" in the UK.

This report is the first nationally representative data of its kind which clearly shows the high rate at which our community has experienced people trying to change, "cure" or suppress their sexual orientation or gender identity.

The data in this report is drawn from the voices of over 2000 LGBT+ adults from across the UK. The results show that the rate of conversion practices in the UK looks different across sexual orientation, gender identity, location, age and religion. Yet each individual story carries such a depth that it shines a new light on what is known about this kind of abuse.

There is significant harm associated with all so-called 'conversion therapy', including, amongst others, a higher risk of depression, post-traumatic stress, suicidal ideation and increased risk of suicide attempts. We know that this trauma can negatively affect a person for an entire lifetime and forever shape the way they view and express their identity.

These findings should urgently inform the Government's plan to ban conversion practices to ensure that no further members of our community are subjected to this abuse. It's imperative that this ban has no loopholes, and protects the *whole* community, as our research found that trans and non-binary people are more likely to experience abuse and violence based on their identity.

It is vital that survivors of conversion practices have access to support from people who understand LGBT+ identities and experiences. In 2021, Galop launched the Conversion Therapy Helpline, a service run by LGBT+ people for LGBT+ people — the phone lines started ringing on its first day.

My thanks to the survivors who engaged with this research; to Dr Erin Carlisle, Lou Withers Green, and the team at YouGov for producing this timely and important report; and to the entire team at Galop who work hard every day to improve the lives of LGBT+ people across the UK.

**Leni Morris, Chief Executive Officer**

## 2 The study



Galop commissioned YouGov to survey 2,042 LGBT+ adults across the UK about their experiences of violence and abuse, and their access to formal support services.

As part of the survey, respondents were asked whether they had ever experienced someone taking any action to try to change, cure or suppress their sexual orientation or gender identity.

---

<sup>1</sup> Ban Conversion Therapy Coalition 2022

The question was designed to align with the Ban Conversion Therapy Coalition's definition of so-called "conversion therapy" or conversion practices, which includes any interventions "that seek to change, 'cure' or suppress the sexual orientation and/or gender identity of a person".<sup>1</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Galop 2022a

The wording of the question also reflects the ways Galop's service users talk about their experiences of conversion practices.<sup>2</sup> By including this item, the study collected the first nationally representative data on the extent of conversion practices in the UK, as well as qualitative information about the experiences of LGBT+ survivors.

# 3 Key findings

**3** See the methodology for more information about the trans and non-binary gender categories used in this report.

**4** In this report, \* denotes when a difference between two categories or groups is statistically significant. See the methodology.

- **Conversion practices are common: Nearly 1 in 5 (18%) LGBT+ people in the UK have been subjected to someone trying to change, cure or suppress their sexual orientation or gender identity.**
- **The prevalence of conversion practices varies within the LGBT+ community.**
  - More than 4 in 10 (43%) trans people have been subjected to conversion practices.<sup>3</sup>
  - Over 1 in 3 (36%) non-binary and gender-diverse+ people have been subjected to conversion practices.
  - More than 1 in 3 (35%) asexual/aromantic people have been subjected to conversion practices.
- **Conversion practices are current and ongoing.**
  - The prevalence of conversion practices was higher\* for LGBT+ people currently aged 18 to 24 years, compared with LGBT+ people currently aged 45 years and above.<sup>4</sup>
  - Around 1 in 5 LGBT+ people currently aged 18 to 24 years (22%) have been subjected to someone trying to change, cure or suppress their sexual orientation or gender identity.
- **Conversion practices take place, and survivors reside, all across the UK.**
  - LGBT+ people currently residing in rural areas are more likely\* than those currently living in urban areas to have been subjected to attempts by others to change, cure or suppress their sexual orientation or gender identity (26% compared with 17% respectively).
  - LGBT+ conversion practice survivors currently reside in all areas of the UK, with higher proportions of survivors currently living in some areas (e.g., Wales 25%) compared with others (e.g., north east England 11%).

# 3 Key findings



5 See the methodology.

- LGBT+ people of colour and white LGBT+ people are equally as likely to be subjected to conversion practices (18%).
- LGBT+ people currently belonging to a religion (22%) are more likely\* than non-religious LGBT+ people (17%) to have been subjected to attempts by others to change, cure or suppress their sexual orientation or gender identity.<sup>5</sup>
- Of the LGBT+ people who experienced conversion practices, the majority (56%) were subjected to attempts to change, cure or suppress their sexual orientation or gender identity by a family member.
- Conversion practices take many forms, including abuses that are existing offences, and some which are not.
- Conversion practices involve a pattern of multiple forms of behaviours and abuse, often enacted over a prolonged period of time — sometimes beginning in childhood.

# The UK Government should bring forward a comprehensive ban on so-called “conversion therapy” without delay.

To be effective this must include the following:

- Everyone in the LGBT+ community to be protected from conversion practices. This report highlights that trans, non-binary and gender-diverse people and people on the asexual and aromantic spectrums must be included within the ban on so-called “conversion therapy”.
- There must be no “consent” loophole included in the ban. Conversion practices are abuse and it is not possible to consent to abuse.
- The definition of conversion practices should include religious practices, in light of evidence in this study that shows survivors have been pressured or forced to seek or participate in faith-based practices or interventions (from individual and group prayer, to “exorcisms”).



# 4 Recommendations



- The definition must also include conversion practices that are currently existing offences, in order to recognise the specific harm of offences perpetrated as a conversion practice and ensure effective prevention and safeguarding frameworks.
- Victims and survivors of conversion practices reside across the country, but specialist LGBT+ support services are focused in London and other cities with large LGBT+ populations. Funding needs to be made available for specialist LGBT+ support services across the UK, including formal advice services, advocacy and therapeutic services.
- The ban must include training, frameworks and guidelines for statutory services to identify victims of conversion practices and those at risk, and to ensure that they receive appropriate, timely support.
- The ban must also provide protective measures to enable LGBT+ people who are, or at risk of, being subjected to conversion practices to live in safety. This means putting in place new Protection Orders and for councils to include conversion practices as a reason for priority need of emergency housing.

## Evidence, and the need for change.

This study presents two key pieces of evidence on the extent and nature of conversion practices in the UK: representative statistics on the prevalence of conversion practices used against members of the LGBT+ community, and qualitative evidence from the voices of survivors about their experiences of being subjected to conversion practices.

**6** Government Equalities Office 2018; Government Equalities Office 2021; Jowett et al. 2021.

This report provides, for the first time, nationally representative evidence on the scale of conversion practices used against LGBT+ people in the UK.<sup>6</sup> As part of Galop's survey on LGBT+ people's experiences of abuse, respondents were asked whether they had ever experienced someone taking any action to try to change, cure or suppress their sexual orientation or gender identity.

**7** Ban Conversion Therapy Coalition 2022

The wording of this item aligns with the Ban Conversion Therapy Coalition's definition of conversion practices, which includes any interventions "that seek to change, 'cure' or suppress the sexual orientation and/or gender identity of a person".<sup>7</sup>

**8** Galop 2022a

The language used in the study also reflects how Galop's service users talk about their experiences, where they rarely use the term "conversion therapy" and instead speak of other people's attempts to change, fix or suppress their identities.<sup>8</sup>

# 5 Evidence and the need for change

**9** United Nations 2020; Jowett et al. 2021; Equalities, Human Rights and Civil Justice Committee 2022; Kinitz et al. 2022; Ozanne Foundation et al. 2021; Galop 2022a; OutRight Action International 2019; Jones et al. 2018

**10** United Nations 2020, 9

**11** United Nations 2020; Donovan and Barnes 2020a; Donovan and Hester 2015

**12** Meanley et al. 2020; Jones et al. 2022; Lee et al. 2021; Chan, Leung, and Wong 2022; Goodyear et al. 2022; Higbee, Wright, and Roerman 2022; Ozanne Foundation et al. 2021; Jowett et al. 2021

**13** Olson-Kennedy 2022; Forsythe et al. 2022

In this study, LGBT+ conversion practice survivors were asked, in an open-ended way, to describe their experiences of someone trying to change, cure or suppress their sexual orientation or gender identity.

There is some, but limited, qualitative research evidence on what attempts to change, cure or suppress a person’s sexual orientation or gender identity can actually *look like* when they happen in LGBT+ people’s everyday lives; this prior evidence mostly focuses on specific groups within the LGBT+ community (such as minority ethnic LGBT+ people or LGBT+ people of colour) or specific settings of so-called “conversion therapy” (such as in health or faith-based settings).<sup>9</sup>

By asking LGBT+ conversion practice survivors to share their stories in an open-ended way, the qualitative findings help to provide a more detailed picture of what conversion practices can look like. Importantly, the findings fill a key evidence gap by providing insight into some of the more, what has been described as “clandestine”, kinds of conversion practices that LGBT+ people can be subjected to.<sup>10</sup>

The survivors’ stories offer important insights into how conversion practices fit within a broader culture of discrimination against LGBT+ people and systems of gender-based violence.<sup>11</sup>

---

**The evidence presented in this report underscores the need for a comprehensive ban on so-called “conversion therapy”, and the need for comprehensive support for survivors and those at risk of being subjected to these abuses.**

The impacts of being subjected to conversion practices are widely-evidenced — including long-term depressive symptoms, post-traumatic stress, increased suicidality or addiction, identity distress, and ongoing negative impacts on self-esteem, and personal relationships.<sup>12</sup> Emerging evidence from the United States also suggests that conversion practices have large economic and social costs: recent analysis suggests that the economic burden resulting from conversion practices in the US is estimated to be more than \$9USD billion each year.<sup>13</sup>

## 6 How common are conversion practices?

# How common are conversion practices in the UK?

Until now, there has been no nationally representative prevalence data on how many LGBT+ people in the UK are subjected to conversion practices.

<sup>14</sup> Jowett et al. 2021; Government Equalities Office 2021; Government Equalities Office 2018

From the representative data presented here, it can be concluded conversion practices are common in the UK — and more widespread than estimated in previous non-representative studies.<sup>14</sup>

A significant number of LGBT+ people have been subjected to conversion practices: **nearly 1 in 5 (18%)** LGBT+ people have experienced someone trying to change, cure or suppress their sexual orientation or gender identity.

“

Doctors and therapists insisting that my asexuality was a medical condition that could be fixed.

”

“

I had been seeing [a] counsellor for a couple of years [...] Over the course of our sessions the counsellor didn't help much, tried to convince me I was straight.

”

## 6 How common are conversion practices?

**15** Jowett et al. 2021; Government Equalities Office 2021; Government Equalities Office 2018

These findings represent a truer indication of the rate that LGBT+ people are subjected to conversion practices in the UK than the estimate from the 2017 National LGBT Survey (which indicated that, overall, 2% of respondents had undergone “conversion therapy” and that a further 5% had been offered it).<sup>15</sup>

**16** Galop 2022a, 6

Not only is this study nationally representative of LGBT+ adults in the UK, it also used terminology that aligns more closely with the ways survivors themselves describe or identify their experiences (compared with the term, “conversion therapy”).<sup>16</sup>

“

When I came out as being attracted to women I was repeatedly told that it wouldn't be accepted under my parents' roof and that I just needed to find my faith to fix the problem. I was pressured into therapy to cure me and was controlled and followed to ensure I wasn't being deviant.

”

“

Parent took me to a psychologist to 'fix' my sexual orientation.

”

## 7 What do conversion practices look like?



# What do conversion practices look like?

The qualitative findings in the following two subsections are drawn from the LGBT+ conversion practices survivors' free-text responses to the survey question asking them to describe their experiences of someone trying to change, cure or suppress their sexual orientation or gender identity.

---

These findings show what conversion practices can look like, from the voices of survivors.

## 7 What do conversion practices look like?

# Conversion practices take many forms.

Simply, attempts to change or cure or suppress a LGBT+ person's sexual orientation or gender identity can involve ***a variety of behaviours and forms of abuse***, often not as one discrete act but as a range of behaviours used in tandem.

**17** United Nations 2020, 9

Some of the conversion practices the LGBT+ survivors described being subjected to are existing offences (e.g., physical violence, sexual abuse, forms of coercive control). The findings from this study also show that LGBT+ survivors are subject to a range of other behaviours (e.g., "clandestine" mechanisms of family or community-based coercion into the cis and heterosexual norm, or tools of emotional abuse,<sup>17</sup> such as shame, exclusion, or manipulation).

**18** United Nations 2020, 4

All of these methods of abuse were described by the LGBT+ conversion practice survivors as harmful or hurtful. Many survivors themselves described how they felt the behaviours and abuse they were subjected to were aimed at policing, pathologizing, correcting or erasing their LGBT+ orientation or identity.<sup>18</sup>

## 7 What do conversion practices look like?

### The LGBT+ survivors of conversion practices described how they were:

- shamed, humiliated or made to feel guilty
- disbelieved or had their identity denied, ignored or disregarded
- made to feel or were directly told that being LGBT+ was “wrong”
- subjected to anti-LGBT+ prejudice or degradation
- manipulated, controlled or had their movements monitored
- excluded from family, social or community activities
- threatened with homelessness, or were made homeless
- threatened with, or were made to travel to another country
- pressured or forced to engage in so-called “normal” cisgender and heterosexual activities (including dating, marriage or sexual practices)
- pressured or forced to seek or participate in medical or psychotherapeutic practices and interventions (including counselling and medical examinations)
- pressured or forced to seek or participate in faith-based practices or interventions (from individual and group prayer, to “exorcisms”)
- verbally abused
- emotionally or psychologically abused
- sexually abused (including being subjected to unsolicited sexual images, being forced to watch heterosexual pornography, or being raped or threatened with it)
- physically assaulted (including beatings, threats of poisoning, and being physically restrained)



## 7 What do conversion practices look like?

“ My parents' homophobia and homophobic verbal abuse forcibly re-closeted me after I attempted to come out as a teenager. ”

“ [I] Was told it was wrong, an abomination, against God's word, would ruin my life, humiliate my family [...] it would make me ugly, that I needed to do the 'right' thing, mustn't talk about this to anyone ever again, must behave, [and] I was a disappointment. ”

“ I was actively told by a friend of mine at the time that I wasn't really trans and that I was doing it for the attention and that they'll never see me as trans and will actively go against it and tell people I'm lying. ”

“ Family member limited internet access so [I] wasn't able to see anything relating to my sexuality. ”

“ I was encouraged to subscribe to a 'porn addiction' online service called Fortify and met regularly with an accountability partner to see whether I was viewing pornography or masturbating. My accountability partner was five years my senior and frequently aired homophobic views. ”

## 7 What do conversion practices look like?

“

I was sent to a private counsellor/therapist in my home country after my relatives decided that I must have other issues which have caused my sexual orientation/gender identity.

”

“

Family threat to disown me — and on one occasion when I was living at home, I was told to leave immediately and not return.

”

“

I was told that I couldn't be gay whilst living under [my father's] roof, and was thrown out of home the week I turned 16.

”

“

My mother tried to exorcise me and recommended I go to conversion therapy after coming out with my first girlfriend at 16.

”

“

My partner ended our relationship because of God and then the people from church prayed for us to become straight.

”

“

My mother tried to make me date men when I was dating a woman, exposed me to images of male genitalia and heterosexual sex acts and pornography in an attempt to 'fix me', and threatened to poison my food on a regular basis when I refused to break up with my girlfriend.

”

# 7 What do conversion practices look like?

19 Galop 2022a

The range of ways that conversion practices can be used — some which are existing offences, some which are not and are more “clandestine” — can make it difficult for survivors to identify their experiences as attempts at conversion, or as abuse more generally.<sup>19</sup>

20 Calton, Cattaneo, and Gebhard 2016; Lysova et al. 2022; Donovan and Barnes 2020b; Scheer, Martin-Storey, and Baams 2020; Robinson, Ravi, and Voth Schrag 2021; Wright et al. 2022

Not recognising behaviours or interpersonal experiences as abuse has been widely evidenced as a barrier to help-seeking, both for LGBT+ people and for domestic abuse survivors more generally.<sup>20</sup>

“

Actual rape, attempted rape, serious sexual assault, name calling, frigid, beaten up. [...] Police said by the time they could get to my village they'd be too late and it would be over. So why I would I ask for help again?

”

“

Punishments; attempts at exorcism; physical restraint; being kept alone in a locked room for two days and nights; prevented from socialising with others in the group; being expelled from the organisation.

”

## 7 What do conversion practices look like?

# Conversion practices involve a pattern of multiple forms of abuse, often enacted over a prolonged period of time.

In their qualitative responses in the survey, the LGBT+ conversion practice survivors were rarely subjected to just *one* kind of abuse listed in the previous pages.

---

The survivors' stories show how conversion practices often involve subjecting an LGBT+ person to a *repeated or ongoing pattern of multiple abusive behaviours* that aim to change, cure or suppress their LGBT+ identity or orientation.

Survivors often described how they were subjected to a mixture of practices used to change, cure or suppress their LGBT+ identity, including those that are existing offences as well as those that are not.

“

Regular beatings by father and other children from a very early stage, extending to beatings from my brother and continuing through university. I have multiple old breaks in ribs, nose, cheekbone etc. Several hospital stays. Two suicide attempts.

”

## 7 What do conversion practices look like?

For example, some survivors described how family members shamed and emotionally abused them, while also pressuring them to engage in more formal conversion practices (such as seeking health or religious advice or treatment), as a multi-layered effort to change or “fix” their identity or orientation.

While some LGBT+ conversion practice survivors described one instance of being subjected to conversion practices (often in a range of forms), some went into more detail about how they faced attempts to change, cure or suppress their orientations or identities over a sustained period of time — starting from a young age or childhood and, for some, continuing well into adulthood.



I told my parents that I wasn't my agab [assigned gender at birth] when I was a child and they told me I was wrong and stupid. When I expressed attraction to women they started forcing me to wear dresses and set me up on dates with teen boys they knew. It was crushing and I became an alcoholic when I was 17.



## Conversion practices in the UK: Who is at risk, where are conversion practices happening, and who is harming the LGBT+ community?

Along with outlining the prevalence of conversion practices in the UK, the survey results also provide a detailed picture of who among the LGBT+ community is at risk, and who is already feeling the impacts of, being subjected to conversion practices.

---

The following subsections outline additional representative and descriptive statistics from the survey.

## 8 Conversion practices in the UK

### The prevalence of conversion practices varies within the LGBT+ community.

Some parts of the LGBT+ community are more likely\* than others to have been subjected to someone trying to change, cure or suppress their sexual orientation or gender identity.

**The nationally representative findings show that:**

More than **4 in 10** trans people (43%)

Over **1 in 3** non-binary and gender-diverse+ people (36%)

More than **1 in 3** asexual/aromantic people (35%)

Nearly **1 in 5** lesbians (19%)

Around **1 in 5** bi+ people (18%)

Over **1 in 6** gay people (17%)

**have been subjected to someone trying to change, cure  
or suppress their sexual orientation or gender identity.**

Trans and non-binary and gender-diverse+ people are more likely\* than cis LGB+ people to face attempts by others change, cure or suppress their sexual orientation or gender identity. Asexual/aromantic people are more likely\* than gay or lesbian people to be subjected to conversion practices.

The results confirm, and add a more detailed picture to, the prior evidence which estimated trans and non-binary people were subjected to so-called “conversion therapy” at higher rates than cis LGB+ people, and that asexual/aromantic face conversion practices at higher rates than other LGB+ orientations.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>21</sup> Government Equalities Office 2018; Government Equalities Office 2019

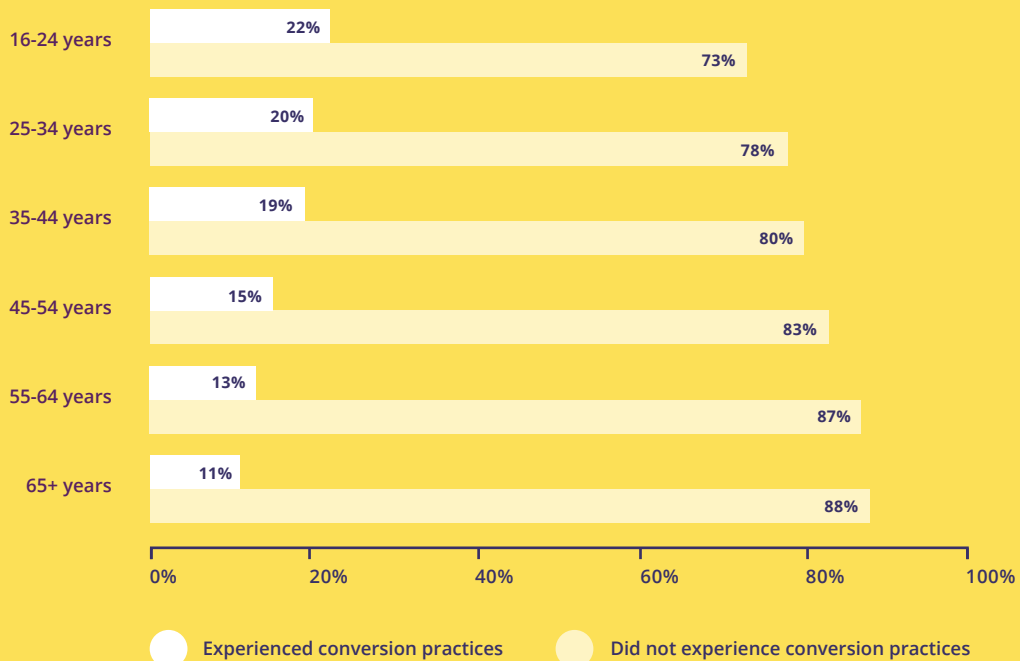
## Conversion practices are current and ongoing.

The prevalence of conversion practices was higher\* for LGBT+ people currently aged 18 to 24 years, compared with LGBT+ people currently aged 45 years and above.

Around 1 in 5 LGBT+ people aged 18 to 24 years (22%), 25 to 34 years (20%) and 35 to 44 years (19%) have been subjected to others' attempts to change, cure or suppress their sexual orientation or gender identity.

Around 1 in 6 (15%) LGBT+ people aged between 45 to 54 years have been subjected to conversion practices. Additionally, 1 in 8 LGBT+ people aged 55 to 64 years (13%) and over 65 years (11%) have experienced conversion practices.

Figure 1. Conversion practice prevalence across age groups.



*n=2042. Experienced conversion practices n=376. Percentages are rounded. Percentages do not total 100% because 'prefer not to say' has been excluded.*



# 8 Conversion practices in the UK

22 Galop 2022a

Although the survey did not ask when the abuse occurred, the fact that LGBT+ people currently aged between 18 and 24 years of age have been subjected to conversion practices — and that they are more likely\* than older age groups to have faced it — suggests these practices are current and ongoing, rather than something that only happened to previous generations of LGBT+ people.<sup>22</sup>

“

Being beaten by parents as a young teenager.

*65+ year old LGBT+ conversion practice survivor*

”

“

Being sent to a therapist to try and make me not trans. [It] Scarred me and destroyed the relationship with my parents.

*18-24 year old LGBT+ conversion practice survivor*

”

23 Jones et al. 2022; United Nations 2020; OutRight Action International 2019, 42; Kinitz et al. 2022

These findings confirm previous national and international research, which suggests that younger LGBT+ people are disproportionately subjected to practices which attempt to change, cure or suppress their LGBT+ identity.<sup>23</sup>

“

Brought up in a Christian household, I was reminded often by a parent that being gay meant I would go to Hell. Only a few years ago I was casually asked if I would consider conversion therapy (I am in my forties).

*35-44 year old LGBT+ conversion practice survivor*

”



## Conversion practices take place, and survivors reside, all across the UK.



**24** Donovan, Magić,  
and West 2021

The survey collected respondents' current place of residence. LGBT+ survivors currently reside across the country, with many living outside of London (where the majority of specialist LGBT+ services are available).<sup>24</sup>

LGBT+ people currently residing in rural areas are more likely\* than those currently living in urban areas to have been subjected to attempts by others to change, cure or suppress their sexual orientation or gender identity (26% compared with 17% respectively). Additionally, around 1 in 5 (22%) LGBT+ people currently residing in a town and fringe area also have been subjected to conversion practices.

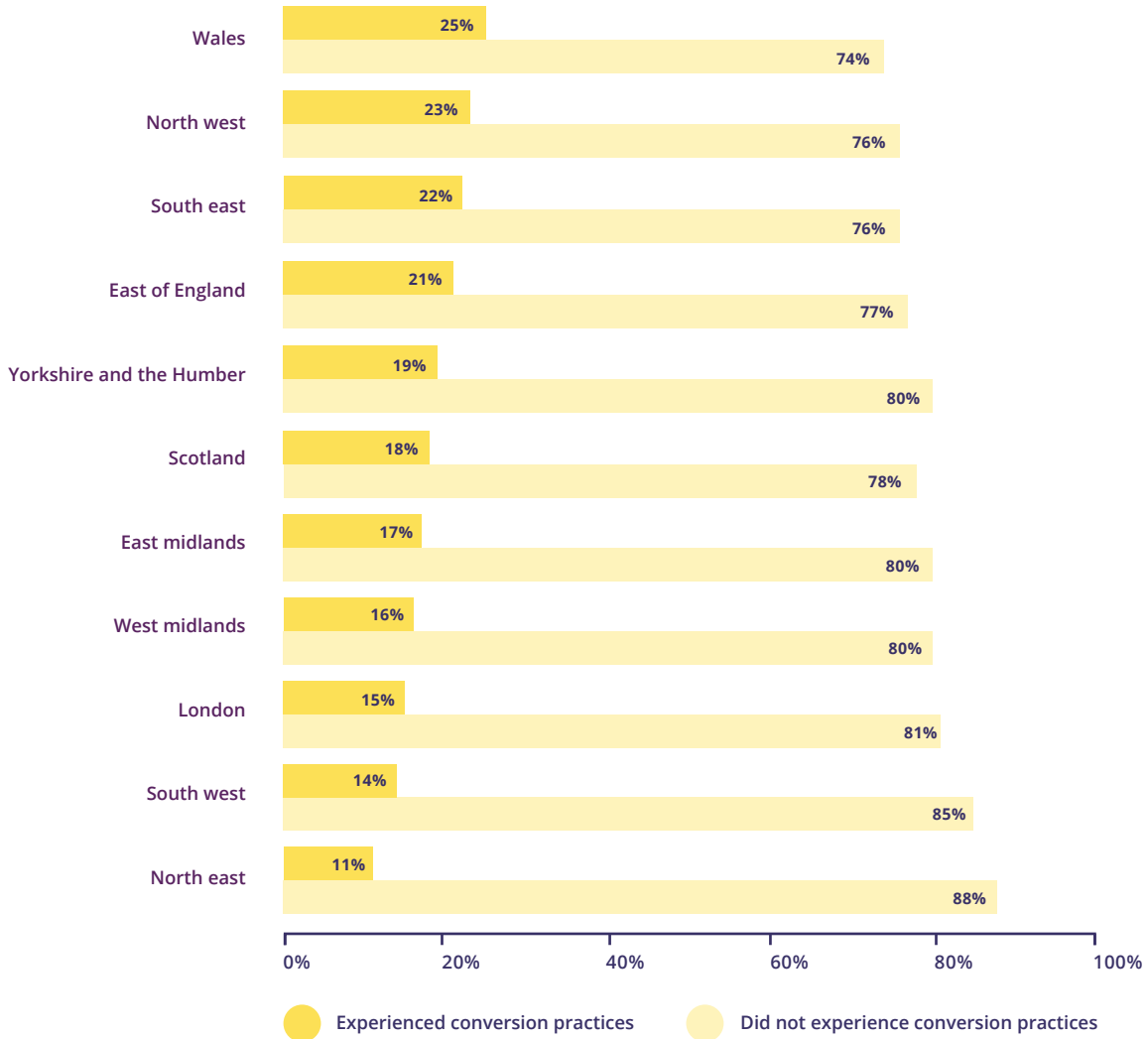
**25** Donovan, Magić, and  
West 2021; Donovan  
and Barnes 2020b

LGBT+ people currently residing in Wales, north west and south east England are more likely\* than LGBT+ people currently living in London to have been subjected to efforts by others change, cure or suppress their sexual orientation or gender identity. As noted above, the majority of specialist supports for LGBT+ victims of abuse are primarily focused in London and other cities with major LGBT+ populations.<sup>25</sup>

Only Galop's national domestic abuse and conversion therapy services operate nationally. The higher rates of conversion practice experiences in areas outside of London highlight a need for services across the country.

# 8 Conversion practices in the UK

Figure 2. Conversion practice prevalence across place of residence.

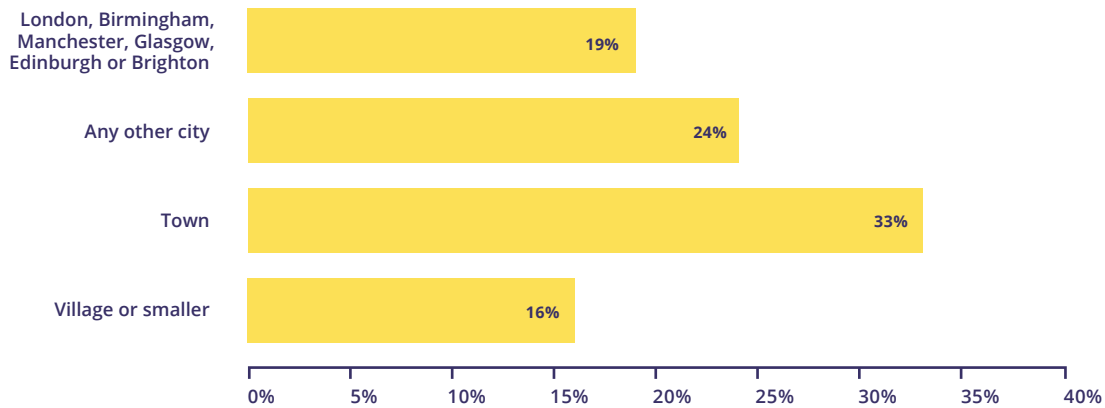


*n=2,042. Experienced conversion practices n=376. Percentages are rounded. Percentages do not total 100% because 'prefer not to say' has been excluded. The data for Northern Ireland has not been shown here because of the small base sample size (n<=50).*

Respondents were asked to identify which kind of location they were living in when they faced others' attempts to change, cure or suppress their sexual orientation or gender identity. Of those who were subjected to conversion practices, 1 in 3 (33%) were living in a town when they were subjected to someone trying to change, cure or suppress their sexual orientation or gender identity, while 1 in 6 (16%) were living in a village or smaller community. Nearly 1 in 4 (24%) were living in a city *other* than the major LGBT+ cities of London, Birmingham, Manchester, Glasgow, Edinburgh or Brighton when they were subjected to conversion practices.

# 8 Conversion practices in the UK

Figure 3. Conversion practice prevalence by type of location.



*n=376. Percentages are rounded. Percentages do not total 100% because 'don't know' and 'prefer not to say' have not been included in this chart.*



I came out as bi to some friends at secondary school, someone told some other people and by lunch that day the whole school knew. There were no other out LGBT+ people in the 1200 students at our rural secondary school, and bullying & abuse quickly started. No teachers did anything, and when my younger sister told my parents that she was being bullied because her sister was a dyke they forced me to deny my sexuality. Pretend I'd made it up for attention. And go back in the closet. It was made very clear that I had no place staying in the house or family if I was going to make choices that hurt other family members. [...] I went back in the closet for 8 years, 5 of which found me terrorised by an abusive partner that both hypersexualised and hated my bisexuality.



<sup>26</sup> United Nations 2020, 4; OutRight Action International 2019; Government Equalities Office 2018; Government Equalities Office 2019

These findings show that conversion practices take place all over the UK, and that LGBT+ conversion practice survivors currently live across the country. These results add to the prior national and international evidence that these practices happen in “every corner of the world”, including in the UK.<sup>26</sup>

## 8 Conversion practices in the UK

### The risk of conversion practices is similar for LGBT+ people of colour and LGBT+ white people.

LGBT+ people of all ethnic backgrounds are equally at risk of being subjected to conversion practices. No differences were found between LGBT+ people of colour and LGBT+ white people. Nearly 1 in 5 LGBT+ white (18%) and LGBT+ people of colour (18%) have been subjected to attempts by other to change, cure or suppress their orientation or gender identity.

These results suggest the scale of conversion practices is similarly high for LGBT+ people in the UK, regardless of their ethnicity.



I went to a professional hypnotist to deal with behaviour not connected with my sexuality, but the hypnotist focused his 'treatment' on attempting to change my sexuality.



My parents started phoning around and tried forcing me into conversion therapy. I actively resisted and disowned my parents as a result.



# 8 Conversion practices in the UK

## The risk of conversion practices is higher for disabled LGBT+ people.

Disabled LGBT+ people are more likely\* than LGBT+ people without a disability to have been subjected to conversion practices. Around 1 in 4 (24%) disabled LGBT+ people have been subjected to attempts to change, cure or suppress their sexual orientation or gender identity, compared with around 1 in 7 (15%) LGBT+ people without a disability.

The results here provide important evidence on the extent to which disabled LGBT+ people in the UK have been subjected to conversion practices, which fills a key gap in national and international evidence.

“

I was raped by men who told me I wouldn't like it (be gay) anymore after that.

”

“

All my family, except my mum, do not accept my sexuality. They all had parts to play in years of physical and mental abuse, telling me I was wrong and sick.

”

# 8 Conversion practices in the UK

## The risk of conversion practices is higher for LGBT+ people from religious and faith backgrounds.

Respondents were asked whether they currently belong to a particular religion or faith community. LGBT+ people currently belonging to a religion or faith are more likely\* than non-religious LGBT+ people to have been subjected to attempts by others to change, cure or suppress their sexual orientation or gender identity.

More than 1 in 5 (22%) of LGBT+ people currently from faith or religious backgrounds have been subjected to conversion practices. Around 1 in 6 (17%) of currently non-religious LGBT+ people have been subjected to conversion practices.

“

I was outed at a young age (~12/13ish) by a friend I had confessed feelings to. I went to a religious school and the gossip spread quickly. One of the other pupils advise I attend her church to help me become straight. I was confused and so agreed to go.

”

**27** Ozanne Foundation et al. 2021; Jowett et al. 2021; Jones et al. 2018; Jones et al. 2022; United Nations 2020; OutRight Action International 2019

**28** Government Equalities Office 2018, 84, 88-89, 92

These results confirm much of the previous research,<sup>27</sup> such as from the 2017 National LGBT Survey, which indicated LGBT respondents from religious or faith backgrounds were more likely to be offered or undergo so-called “conversion therapy” than non-religious LGBT people.<sup>28</sup>

“

Growing up I had expressed my gender dysmorphia, my family were conservative in their beliefs around LGBTQ+ and so my mum took me to church to have the father convince me that I was wrong, it was the devil, it was a sin, it was unnatural and that if I continued in this way I would be cast from the family, the church and the community and that I had expectations placed upon me because of how I had been assigned at birth.

”

## 8 Conversion practices in the UK

### Conversion practices are often perpetrated by families.

**29** See the methodology for more information about the list of perpetrators used in the survey.

Of those LGBT+ respondents who faced conversion practices, the majority (56%) reported they were subjected to attempts to change, cure or suppress their sexual orientation or gender identity by a family member. Family members were the most commonly identified perpetrators of conversion practices by LGBT+ conversion practice survivors of all sexual orientations and gender identities.<sup>29</sup>

“

My brother constantly beat the life out of me while shouting homophobic slurs. He also got his friends to do the same and one of his friends even sexually assaulted me.

”

“

My mother sent me to see her Catholic priest with the hope that he would convince me it was just a phase or that if I continued to explore my sexuality I would be damned for eternity.

”

**30** This finding cannot be said to describe queer relationships specifically. Respondents were not asked to specify the gender or orientation of their current or former intimate partner in the survey. When asked to describe their experiences of being subjected to conversion practices later in the survey, some referred to the gender or orientation of the partner, which included cis and heterosexual partners.

Much smaller proportions of conversion practice survivors reported they were subjected to attempts to change, cure or suppress their sexual orientation or gender identity by a partner or ex-partner (16%)<sup>30</sup> or by a friend (16%).



## 8 Conversion practices in the UK

31 Galop 2022a, Galop 2022b

The findings here add to Galop's other recent research evidence which shows that conversion practices often happen or begin at home,<sup>31</sup> enacted by the people they should feel safest and most comfortable with.

32 Government Equalities Office 2019

These findings also align with additional data from the 2017 National LGBT Survey which suggested LGBT+ respondents who had been offered "conversion therapy" reported that a parent, guardian or other family member had offered it (29%).<sup>32</sup>

33 United Nations 2020; OutRight Action International 2019; Kinitz et al. 2022; Ozanne Foundation et al. 2021; Jones et al. 2018; Jowett et al. 2021; Equalities, Human Rights and Civil Justice Committee 2022; Government Equalities Office 2018

The findings from this survey add further detail to the picture of conversion practices found in national and international research, which often focuses on medical, mental health and religious practitioners of so-called "conversion therapy".<sup>33</sup>

“

My father made constant references to how disgusting it was to be gay, quoting the bible, despite not being a believer.

”



## Between August and September 2022, 2,042 LGBT+ people aged 18 and over from across the UK completed an online survey about their experiences of accessing formal support for violence or abuse.

**The survey was administered by YouGov on behalf of Galop.**

The survey was conducted using an online interview administered to members of the YouGov Plc UK panel, comprised of 2.6 million individuals who have agreed to take part in a range of YouGov surveys.

Email invitations are sent to panellists selected at random from the overall YouGov panel. The e-mail invites the panellist to take part in a survey and provides a generic survey link. Once a panel member clicks on the link, they are sent to the survey that they are most required for, according to the sample definition and quotas. (The sample definition could be “GB adult population” or a subset such as “GB adult females”.) Invitations to surveys do not expire and respondents can be sent to any available survey.

YouGov provided comprehensive data tables to Galop, who analysed the quantitative data using descriptive statistics. Galop conducted conceptual qualitative content analysis on the free-text survey responses using Dedoose. The analysis involved both deductive and inductive coding of statements at the sentence and thematic level. Coding began with a preliminary coding framework which was then refined through successive rounds of coding and analysis.

The respondents who indicated they were lesbian/gay, bisexual, or another (non-heterosexual) orientation were weighted to be representative of the UK LGB+ population by age, gender (binary), region, ethnicity, and education level. The weighting targets for these factors were based on information from the Annual Population Survey, sourced from the Office for National Statistics. It should be noted that the sexual orientation and gender identity categories from the Annual Population Survey are less detailed than those included in this survey and analysis.

For weighting purposes, a single-coded sexual orientation and binary gender question were used to match the Annual Population Survey data. For the trans, non-binary, or gender diverse+ respondents, it was not possible to apply weighting due to a lack of official data on this population. Respondents who were classed as trans, non-binary, or gender diverse+ who did not also fall into one of the LGB+ categories were not weighted in the data.

All sample figures, unless otherwise stated, are from YouGov Plc. The total sample for the commissioned study was 2,042 LGBT+ adults.

### The weighted sample:

- 75% of the sample were cisgender (with 41% cis men and 34% cis women), 12% of respondents were non-binary and gender-diverse+, 6% of respondents were trans, and 5% used a different term to describe their gender or were unsure/questioning.
- Respondents were asked to report their sexual orientation, and to record multiple answers if their romantic orientation differed from their sexual orientation. 47% of the sample were gay or lesbian, 43% were bi+, 7% were asexual/aromantic, 3% were straight and 2% used other terms to describe their orientation (including demisexuality).
- 85% of LGBT+ respondents were from England, 8% were from Scotland, 5% were from Wales, and 1% were from Northern Ireland.
- 29% of the sample were aged 18 to 24, 21% were aged 25 to 34, 26% were aged 35 to 44, 7% were aged 45-54, 6% were aged 55 to 64, and 11% were over the age of 65.
- 91% of the sample were white and 9% of the sample were people of colour.
- 40% of the sample were disabled or had a lasting health condition.

## 9 Methodology

In this report, the term “trans” refers to trans people who self-identified as binary trans in the survey (i.e. trans men and trans women). In the gender demographic question in the survey, respondents could select if they were a “trans woman (my gender identity differs from my sex assigned at birth)” or a “Trans man (my gender identity differs from my sex assigned at birth)”, alongside other options for non-binary, gender queer and agender. The results for non-binary, gender queer or agender respondents have been kept separate from binary trans respondents in this data to enable exploration of any differences. Where necessary or applicable, the results for non-binary, gender queer and agender people have been combined under one grouping, reported here using the term “non-binary and gender-diverse+”. The results for people with bi, pan and queer orientations have also been combined into a single category and reported used the term “bi+”.

In this report, the \* symbol denotes when a difference between two categories or groups is statistically significant ( $p < 0.05$  to  $p < 0.001$ ). A statistically significant result means that the differences observed between the groups being studied are likely to be true in the broader population, and that the differences are unlikely to be due to chance.

The survey asked respondents to identify from a list which religion, if any, they currently belonged. While we recognise the diverse teachings and worldviews of the religions included in the survey, a single category (“currently belonging to a religion”) has been used in the data presented in this report due to small base sample sizes ( $n < 50$ ) for many religions listed in the survey.

As noted in the opening of this report, this broader survey project sought to capture information about LGBT+ people’s experiences of violence and abuse broadly, and their access to formal support services. The survey also sought information about who perpetrated the forms of violence and abuse. The question about perpetrators was general, for all types of violence and abuse, and not about conversion practices, specifically.

# 10 References

## Ban Conversion Therapy Coalition.

*Ban Conversion Therapy*. Ban Conversion Therapy. Published 2022. Accessed October 20, 2022. [Link](#)

## Galop.

*The Use of Sexual Violence as an Attempt to Convert or Punish LGBT+ People in the UK*. Galop; 2022. [Link](#)

## Government Equalities Office.

*National LGBT Survey: Research Report*. Government Equalities Office; 2018. [Link](#)

## Government Equalities Office.

*The Prevalence of Conversion Therapy in the UK*. Government Equalities Office; 2021. Accessed October 19, 2022. [Link](#)

## Jowett A, Brady G, Goodman S, Pillinger C, Bradley L.

*An Assessment of the Evidence on Conversion Therapy for Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity*. Government Equalities Office; 2021. Accessed October 19, 2022. [Link](#)

## United Nations.

*Practices of So-Called "Conversion Therapy": Report of the Independent Expert on Protection against Violence and Discrimination Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity*. Independent Expert on Protection against Violence and Discrimination Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity, United Nations; 2020. [Link](#)

## Equalities, Human Rights and Civil Justice Committee.

*Report on Petition PE1817: End Conversion Therapy*. The Scottish Government; 2022:45. [Link](#)

## Kinitz DJ, Goodyear T, Dromer E, et al.

"Conversion Therapy" Experiences in Their Social Contexts: A Qualitative Study of Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity and Expression Change Efforts in Canada. *Canadian Journal of Psychiatry*. 2022;67(6):441-451. doi:10.1177/07067437211030498

## Ozanne Foundation R, Gires, LGBT Foundation, Mermaids, Stonewall UK.

*2020 "Conversion Therapy" and Gender Identity Survey*. Ozanne Foundation, Gires, LGBT Foundation, Mermaids, Stonewall UK; 2021. [Link](#)

## OutRight Action International.

*Harmful Treatment: The Global Reach of So-Called Conversion Therapy*. OutRight Action International; 2019. [Link](#)

## Jones T, Brown A, Carnie L, Fletcher G, Leonard W.

*Preventing Harm, Promoting Justice: Responding to LGBT Conversion Therapy in Australia*. GLHV@ARCSHS; 2018.

## Donovan C, Barnes R.

*Queering Narratives of Domestic Violence and Abuse: Victims and/or Perpetrators?* Palgrave Macmillan; 2020. doi:10.1007/978-3-030-35403-9

## Donovan C, Hester M. Domestic Violence and Sexuality:

*What's Love Got to Do with It?* Policy Press; 2015. Accessed October 21, 2022. [Link](#)

## Meanley S, Haberlen SA, Okafor CN, et al.

Lifetime Exposure to Conversion Therapy and Psychosocial Health Among Midlife and Older Adult Men Who Have Sex With Men. *The Gerontologist*. 2020;60(7):1291-1302. doi:10.1093/geront/gnaa069

# 10 References

**Jones T, Power J, Hill AO, et al.**

Religious Conversion Practices and LGBTQA + Youth. *Sexuality Research and Social Policy*. 2022;19(3):1155-1164. doi:10.1007/s13178-021-00615-5

**Lee H, Streed CG, Yi H, Choo S, Kim SS.**

Sexual Orientation Change Efforts, Depressive Symptoms, and Suicidality Among Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Adults: A Cross-Sectional Study in South Korea. *LGBT Health*. 2021;8(6):427-432. doi:10.1089/lgbt.2020.0501

**Chan RCH, Leung JSY, Wong DCK.**

Experiences, Motivations, and Impacts of Sexual Orientation Change Efforts: Effects on Sexual Identity Distress and Mental Health Among Sexual Minorities. *Sexuality Research and Social Policy*. Published online January 8, 2022. doi:10.1007/s13178-021-00669-5

**Goodyear T, Kinitz DJ, Dromer E, et al.**

"They Want You to Kill Your Inner Queer but Somehow Leave the Human Alive": Delineating the Impacts of Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity and Expression Change Efforts. *The Journal of Sex Research*. 2022;59(5):599-609. doi:10.1080/00224499.2021.1910616

**Wright EN, Anderson J, Phillips K, Miyamoto S.**

Help-Seeking and Barriers to Care in Intimate Partner Sexual Violence: A Systematic Review. *Trauma, Violence, & Abuse*. 2022;23(5):1510-1528. doi:10.1177/1524838021998305

**Higbee M, Wright ER, Roemer RM.**

Conversion Therapy in the Southern United States: Prevalence and Experiences of the Survivors. *Journal of Homosexuality*. 2022;69(4):612-631. doi:10.1080/00918369.2020.1840213

**Olson-Kennedy J.**

When the Human Toll of Conversion Therapy Is Not Enough. *JAMA Pediatrics*. 2022;176(5):450-451. doi:10.1001/jamapediatrics.2022.0049

**Forsythe A, Pick C, Tremblay G, Malaviya S, Green A, Sandman K.**

Humanistic and Economic Burden of Conversion Therapy Among LGBTQ Youths in the United States. *JAMA Pediatrics*. 2022;176(5):493-501. doi:10.1001/jamapediatrics.2022.0042

**Calton JM, Cattaneo LB, Gebhard KT.**

Barriers to Help Seeking for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer Survivors of Intimate Partner Violence. *Trauma, Violence, & Abuse*. 2016;17(5):585-600. doi:10.1177/1524838015585318

**Lysova A, Hanson K, Dixon L, Douglas EM,**

**Hines DA, Celi EM.**

Internal and External Barriers to Help Seeking: Voices of Men Who Experienced Abuse in the Intimate Relationships. *International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology*. 2022;66(5):538-559. doi:10.1177/0306624X20919710

# 10 References



**Donovan C, Barnes R.**

Help-seeking among lesbian, gay, bisexual and/or transgender victims/survivors of domestic violence and abuse: The impacts of cisgendered heteronormativity and invisibility.

*Journal of Sociology.* 2020;56(4):554-570.

doi:10.1177/1440783319882088

**Scheer JR, Martin-Storey A, Baams L.**

Help-Seeking Barriers Among Sexual and Gender Minority Individuals Who Experience Intimate Partner Violence Victimization. In: Russell B, ed. *Intimate Partner Violence and the LGBT+ Community: Understanding Power Dynamics.*

Springer International Publishing; 2020:139-158.

doi:10.1007/978-3-030-44762-5\_8

**Robinson SR, Ravi K, Voth Schrag RJ.**

A Systematic Review of Barriers to Formal Help Seeking for Adult Survivors of IPV in the United States, 2005–2019. *Trauma, Violence, & Abuse.* 2021;22(5):1279-1295.

doi:10.1177/1524838020916254

**Government Equalities Office.**

*National LGBT Survey: Annex 5: Safety.*

GOV.UK. Published February 3, 2019.

Accessed October 19, 2022. [Link](#)

**Donovan C, Magić J, West S.**

*LGBT+ Domestic Abuse Service Provision*

*Mapping Study.* Galop; 2021. [Link](#)

**Galop.**

*LGBT+ Experiences of Abuse from Family Members.*

Galop; 2022. [Link](#)

## Get help

---

If you are LGBT+ and experiencing violence or abuse, such as hate crime, domestic abuse or sexual violence, you can contact Galop directly.

[galop.org.uk](https://galop.org.uk)

### National Conversion Therapy Helpline

0800 130 3335

[cthelp@galop.org.uk](mailto:cthelp@galop.org.uk)

---

### LGBT+ Hate Crime Helpline

020 7704 2040

[hatecrime@galop.org.uk](mailto:hatecrime@galop.org.uk)

---

### National LGBT+ Domestic Abuse Helpline

0800 999 5428

[help@galop.org.uk](mailto:help@galop.org.uk)

### Galop

[info@galop.org.uk](mailto:info@galop.org.uk)

[galop.org.uk](https://galop.org.uk)

Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual Anti-Violence and Policing Group, operating as Galop, is a charity registered in England and Wales under number 1077384, whose registered office is 8-9 Talbot Court, London, EC3V 0BP. Galop is a company limited by guarantee, registered in England and Wales under number 2969307.

