



Not So Private Lives:

National findings on the relationships and well-being of same-sex attracted Australians

Version 1.1

Sharon K Dane Barbara M Masser Geoff MacDonald Julie M Duck



**THE UNIVERSITY
OF QUEENSLAND**
AUSTRALIA



Funded by



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“Keeping families united”

PFLAG (Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays) is an international volunteer organisation supporting family and friends of same-sex attracted individuals who have disclosed their sexual identity.

PFLAG Brisbane Inc
Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays
Ph. (07) 3017 1739
www.pflagbrisbane.org.au

Sharon K Dane¹ Barbara M Masser¹ Geoff MacDonald² Julie M Duck¹

¹The University of Queensland

²University of Toronto

Address correspondence to Sharon K Dane, School of Psychology, The University of Queensland, St. Lucia, QLD 4072, Australia. [email: s.dane@psy.uq.edu.au]

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Executive Summary

Attractions

- A significantly greater number of participants identifying as female reported a romantic attraction exclusively to females, compared with a sexual attraction exclusively to females. This pattern was reversed for males with significantly larger numbers reporting a sexual attraction exclusively to males, compared with a romantic attraction exclusively to males.
- From the total sample, close to a third of participants (29.9%) indicated a difference between the extent to which they felt romantically attracted and the extent to which they felt sexually attracted to males and/or females. Only 1.2% indicated an exactly equal attraction to males and females, when it came to both romantic and sexual attraction. This suggests that even for people who identify as bisexual it is rarely a simple case of equal attraction to men and women.

Awareness and First Disclosure of Same-Sex Attractions

- Although males, as a group, were sure of their attractions before females, they took significantly more time on average to disclose these attractions. On average, female and gender different participants disclosed around one year after they felt sure of their sexuality, whereas for males the average was three and a half years. These results are discussed in terms of the higher levels of victimization reported by nonheterosexual males relative to their female counterparts.
- Females in the oldest cohort reported, on average, being sure of their same-sex attractions close to 7 ½ years later than females in the youngest cohort. This certainty was 3 years later for the oldest cohort of males and 4 years later for the oldest cohort of gender different participants, when compared with their younger counterparts. The greater differences found for females are discussed in terms of longitudinal evidence for the greater 'fluidity' of female sexuality.

Ongoing Disclosure of Sexuality

- Participants were presented with three scenarios in which they were asked to consider disclosing their same-sex attractions to a presumed to be 'straight' couple at a social gathering unrelated to work. Close to two-thirds (65.9%) of participants, who reported having a regular same-sex partner, selected an option to disclose now to a couple depicted as being possibly conservative, although for most this depended on its relevance to the conversation. By contrast, the majority (53.8%) of participants who reported not currently having a regular partner stated they were not likely to disclose at all or would most probably delay disclosure until another time. For those partnered, opting to 'come out' was even greater among those who reported a higher level of compatibility with their partner when it came to feeling comfortable with one's sexuality.
- The above findings suggest that, even for those who may wish to 'come out', deciding to disclose may be hampered by one's current single status or a lack of compatibility with a partner's level of disclosure comfort. Although casually introducing or mentioning a partner may facilitate disclosure, in much the same way heterosexual individuals convey the nature of their relationships, this option is not always possible for some.

- Findings revealed that it was only the extent of religious influence on disclosure (including the religious beliefs of others), rather than a person's own religious beliefs, that was related to the likelihood of 'coming out'. Specifically, the greater the religious influence the significantly lower the likelihood of disclosure, even for the 'most likely to be positive' outcome scenario.
- The above results are discussed in relation to recent experimental research in Australia which found heterosexual individuals responded more favourably to upfront disclosure of a person's same-sex attractions when compared with delayed.

Relationships and Recognition

- Although participants identifying as female were significantly more likely to report having a current same-sex partner, those identifying as male were significantly more likely to report being in a current relationship of a longer duration.
- The majority of participants (54.7 %) selected marriage as their personal choice for relationship recognition (when including participants who did not complete the survey in full, the figure was 54.2% - see Appendix for Auxiliary Report). A federally recognised relationship documented at a registry (other than marriage) was the second most popular option (27.6%) followed by de facto status (14.8%). Of the sample, 2.9% reported that they preferred no legal status.
- The younger the age of the participant the more likely they were to have selected marriage as their personal choice. For example, 66.7% of those 18-19, and 62.8% of those 20-29 selected marriage as their preference.
- The majority preference for marriage was larger for participants identifying as female (58.1%), when compared with male (50.7%) or gender different (44.7%). For the youngest cohort (< 25 years), however, differences between males and females were no longer observed with 63% from both groups selecting the option to marry.
- Irrespective of their personal choice, 78% reported that they would like to see marriage become available as an option for same-sex couples in Australia, 59.7% reported that they would like to see a federally recognised relationship other than marriage be made available and 48.4% stated that they would like to see de facto recognition remain. These percentages indicate that many participants selected multiple options, suggesting that simply having a choice was an important factor.
- Although a majority preference for marriage was found regardless of the legal status of a participant's same-sex relationship, preferences for marriage were higher among those currently in a relationship formalised through a state or municipal registry, an overseas recognised civil union/partnership, and an overseas recognised marriage.
- The more people felt their relationships were valued on a comparable level with different-sex relationships, the significantly greater their reported level of overall well-being.

Children

- Overall, 29.2% of those identifying as female, 10.0% of those identifying as male, and 25.5% of gender different participants reported having children in their lives, either their own or the result of a current or previous relationship. When considering the age group most likely to have children, given that people in general are having children in later years (ABS, 2008), 47.1% of female and 17.6% of male participants reported having children in their lives, whether their own or the result of a current or previous relationship.
- Close to a third of both young male and female participants (< 25 yrs) reported that they planned to have children at some stage in their lives.
- Of participants with at least one child in their lives under the age of 20, 64.7% of female, 24.1% of male and 40% of gender different participants were living with these children full-time.
- For participants with a same-sex partner and living full-time with children under the age of 13 (i.e., generally primary school age) 74.7% reported that they would prefer to marry. For those with children under the age of 5 (i.e., non-school age) 80.8% selected marriage as their preference.

Partners

- Higher levels of perceived partner support, relationship satisfaction, and partner similarity in being comfortable with one's sexuality, were all significantly related to higher levels of psychological well-being.
- Participants in the youngest cohort (< 25 years) reported significantly less similarity between themselves and their partner regarding 'coming out' to others, and being comfortable as a same-sex couple, when compared with those in the two older cohorts (i.e., 25-34 years and 35+ years).
- Participants identifying as female reported significantly higher levels of relationship satisfaction and partner support, relative to male and gender different participants. This is consistent with research in general, in which females tend to score higher than males for measures of positive relationships with others (e.g., Ryff & Keyes, 1995).

GLBTI Friends and Community

- Just over a third of participants reported that they did not have any contact with individuals (apart from friends) from the GLBTI community. The younger the cohort the less likely they were to have reported contact with the GLBTI community or feel connected to the GLBTI community, with this being the case for both metropolitan and rural areas of residence.
- Not surprisingly, those living in more populated areas were significantly more likely to report feeling a greater connection with the GLBTI community, relative to those living in less populated areas. For those with contact with the community, however, perceptions of support did not differ between metropolitan and rural areas.

Family and Heterosexual Friends and Community

- A majority of those under the age of 25 reported that ‘most’ to ‘all’ of their friends were heterosexual, whereas for those in the oldest cohort (35+ years) the percentage was less than a third. Nonetheless, and with the exception of those 60 years of age and over, older participants were significantly more likely to report that a greater proportion of their heterosexual friends were aware of their sexuality, relative to younger participants.
- Even when first taking into account the support participants received from their GLBTI friends and the GLBTI community, significantly higher levels of well-being were associated with greater perceptions of acceptance from heterosexual friends, parents and the wider community.
- The more people felt accepted by their heterosexual friends, parents and siblings the significantly greater the likelihood of them having reported an ongoing same-sex relationship.
- When taking into account age differences, people with a same-sex partner who felt more accepted by their heterosexual friends and siblings were more likely to report a current relationship of a significantly longer duration.

Stigma and Psychological Well-Being

- The highest perceptions of stigma related to issues regarding same-sex attracted people and the caring of children (e.g., a same-sex attracted teacher in a public school). Perceptions in relation to stigma and employment were much more positive, with 78% agreeing to some extent that employers would hire a same-sex attracted person if qualified.
- Gender different participants and transgender/transsexual and intersex participants scored higher on perceptions of stigma and lower on reported well-being, when compared with the general sample.
- Data were compared between a national American LGB sample (Rostosky et al., 2009), the current sample and a random sample of Australians (MacKinnon et al., 1999). Participants from both the American LGB survey and the current survey were found to score significantly higher on negative emotional experiences but did not report less positive emotional experiences, when compared with the Australian random sample. These differences for negative mood between nonheterosexual individuals and those from the Australian random sample were more pronounced in the case of male participants.
- Relative to an American national sample (MIDUS II), participants in the current survey scored significantly lower on the *Environmental Mastery*, *Purpose in Life* and *Self-Acceptance* dimensions of well-being (PWB: Ryff, 1989). Participants from the current survey, however, scored significantly higher on perceptions of *Personal Growth*. These findings are similar to those found for comparisons between a subsample of American sexual minority participants and their heterosexual counterparts (Riggle, Rostosky, & Danner, 2009)

Research Background

The *Not So Private Lives* online survey was conducted through the School of Psychology at The University of Queensland, Australia. The aim of the survey was to add to the growing body of research on the lives of sexual minorities in Australia. The questions within the survey focused on a) the timing of disclosure of same-sex attractions b) preferred relationship recognition c) same-sex attracted individuals' perceptions of how others value their relationships relative to different-sex relationships d) parenting, and e) the role of mainstream acceptance in relation to psychological well-being, even when in the presence of LGBTI support.

Not So Private Lives is the first national study to examine same-sex attracted Australians' preferences for various forms of relationship recognition since the introduction of de facto status for same-sex couples at a federal level. Further, it is the first major study to investigate preferences for relationship recognition while taking into account the current legal status (in Australia or overseas) of an individual's same-sex relationship. Findings in these areas were presented at the Australian Federal Senate hearing of the inquiry into the Marriage Equality Amendment Bill 2009 (Commonwealth of Australia. Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee, November 9, 2009).

The survey site was hosted as a secure site by Globalpark through its Unipark program for academic research. Globalpark has its headquarters in Germany and is one of the leading international suppliers of online software for academic and commercial research. All data collection and storage were provided by Globalpark. The URL for the web-page entry to the survey was www.notsoprivatelives.com. This report on the survey's findings is currently available at this site.

Recruitment

The survey commenced on the 3rd April 2009 and ran until midnight, 15th August 2009. Responses to the survey decreased substantially in the latter two weeks, suggesting the sample had reached its maximum uptake. The survey was advertised online in the GLBTQI press for every state and territory and in print in various GLBTQI magazines (e.g., LOTL, SX Magazine, Queensland Pride, AX National, MCV and Sydney Star Observer). Information on the survey was also circulated through sexual minority email networks across the country. Flyers and/or email information were sent to sexual minority - businesses, health and community centres, sporting clubs, reading groups, parenting groups, outdoor activity groups, city and country social clubs, chat rooms and coffee shops, as well as university queer collectives and sexual minority welcoming religious organisations. The survey was also promoted via Queer radio (e.g., JOY FM – Melbourne) and flyers were distributed at sexual minority events (e.g., Brisbane Pride Day and the Brisbane Queer Film Festival). Participants were also asked to consider informing their same-sex attracted friends/contacts about the survey.

Of the potential participants who started the survey, 192 did not pass the eligibility check (see criteria for eligibility on p. 6) and a further 121 did not proceed past the session information page or consent form. Of the 2,545 people who started the survey proper (i.e., answered Q.1), 2,056 completed the last question indicating a retention rate of 80.8%. Of this number, the responses of 24 participants were not included in the analyses due to a high percentage of missing data, leaving a total number of 2,032.

Eligibility

Participants were invited to take part in the survey provided they met the criteria of being:

- a) at least 18 years of age
- b) a citizen or permanent resident of Australia
- c) attracted (sexually and/or romantically) to people of the same sex

Participants, who did not select the 'Yes' option for all three of the questions addressing the criteria, were thanked for their interest and directed away from the survey. Identification as same-sex attracted was further verified by the Sexual Identity and Sexual and Romantic Attraction measures in the main body of the survey (see Chapter 2).

Gender Different, Transgender, Transsexual and Intersex Participants

To be consistent with earlier experimental and survey research, which served as foundations for the current study, this research focused on individuals who identified as same-sex attracted. Therefore, this survey also welcomed gender different, transgender, transsexual and intersex participants who felt that they met this criterion. It is acknowledged, however, that the term 'same-sex attracted', by definition, can be problematic for those whose biological sex and/or gender identity do not adhere to the assumptions that all people are born either strictly male or female, and that one's sex defined at birth is consistent with a person's gender identity. As the survey did not attempt to explore how participants might differentiate between their attractions in terms of sexual anatomy and their attractions in terms of gender role, the term 'same-sex attracted' is used to broadly define an individual's personal assessment of their sexual and romantic attraction to others.

Auxiliary Report

An auxiliary report, based on the responses of 2, 232 participants, was released in August 2009. This report detailed the findings in relation to a sub-set of questions presented in the first third of the survey on current relationship status and preferences for relationship recognition. The examination of these factors aimed to provide an insight into the preferences of same-sex attracted Australians with regard to the legal recognition of their relationships, following the introduction of de facto status for same-sex couples at a federal level. These findings were presented at the Australian Federal Senate hearing of the inquiry into the Marriage Equality Amendment Bill 2009 (Commonwealth of Australia. Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee, November 9, 2009).

Findings from this larger sample were found to be consistent with those of the current sample of 2,032 (200 fewer) participants who completed the survey in full. Nonetheless, it was deemed more appropriate to provide results to the inquiry based on the larger sample, to ensure the relationship findings were not representative of people who may have been more inclined to complete a lengthy survey. To compare 'relationship recognition' figures based on those who completed the survey in full with those including participants who did not, refer to the findings discussed in Chapter 5 and those provided in the Auxiliary Report provided in the Appendix.

Overview of Analytical Methods

A consistent analytical strategy was taken in that a variety of descriptive and inferential statistical methods were employed including, but not limited to, Independent Factorial Analysis of Variance (ANOVA), Factorial Repeated Measures ANOVA, Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA), Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA), Multivariate Analysis of Covariance (MANCOVA), Hierarchical Multiple Regression, Binary Logistic Regression, and Pearson's Chi-Square tests. For analyses involving multiple comparisons between groups, the Bonferroni method was used to control the familywise Type I error rate. For all analyses, results are discussed as being significant if $p < .05$.

In instances where a variable was both categorical and continuous (e.g., age group), analyses were conducted based on both characterisations of the variable. Results related to these variables are generally presented in bar graphs with the categorical data, to assist with the visual interpretation of findings.

For the analyses of age as a categorical variable, results were presented based on either six age groups (i.e., 18-19, 20-29, 30-39, 40-49, 50-59, 60+) or three age cohorts (i.e., <25, 25-34, 35+)¹. Although analyses were conducted for both numbers of categories, results are presented in the report based on the most meaningful interpretation of findings. For example, if significant differences were found between participants in the most senior age group (60+) relative to the rest of the sample, findings are reported based on the six age groups in order to highlight these findings.

As all participants who selected the transgender/transsexual or intersex response options identified as either male or female, these participants were included in all findings for the general sample. To help increase visibility of these individuals in sexual minority research, separate analyses were also provided, where appropriate.

For ease of interpretation, the 'Gender Different' and 'Other' response categories were combined to form a single category ('Gender Different') to represent those who identified as other than male or female. The most frequently described identity for those who selected the 'Other' option was 'gender queer'. Although the number of gender different participants was relatively small ($N = 47$), numbers were fairly well distributed across states/territories (NSW = 14, VIC = 12, QLD = 9, WA = 10, ACT = 2).

In all cases, analyses were conducted to examine gender differences, age differences and interactions between predictor variables. In the absence of any discussion of these findings, differences were not found to be statistically significant.

¹ The Australian Bureau of Statistics classifies youth as being from 15-24 years of age, young people generally as being up to the age of 34, and those 35 and older as no longer young adults (ABS, 2009a; 2010)

1. Demographics

A total of 2,032 participants completed the survey in full. This was 200 (9%) fewer than the number who completed the first phase of the survey which included the Relationship Recognition measures (see Appendix). Importantly, the characteristics of the sample on which the current report is based did not differ substantially from those of the larger sample. For comparative figures, refer to the Auxiliary Report in the Appendix.

1.1 Area of Residence

Participants were asked to select their state or territory of residence and the type of urban or rural area in which they lived (see Figure 1 and Table 1). For this sample, thirty-two participants selected the ‘currently living overseas’ option and were asked to provide the name of their home state or territory in Australia. These numbers are accounted for in Figure 1 below. The survey attracted a proportionately greater number of participants from Queensland, despite advertising across all states and territories. This is likely to have been a result of the survey being conducted in Queensland and advertised through The University of Queensland.

Figure 1.

Numbers and percentages of participants according to state/territory of residence

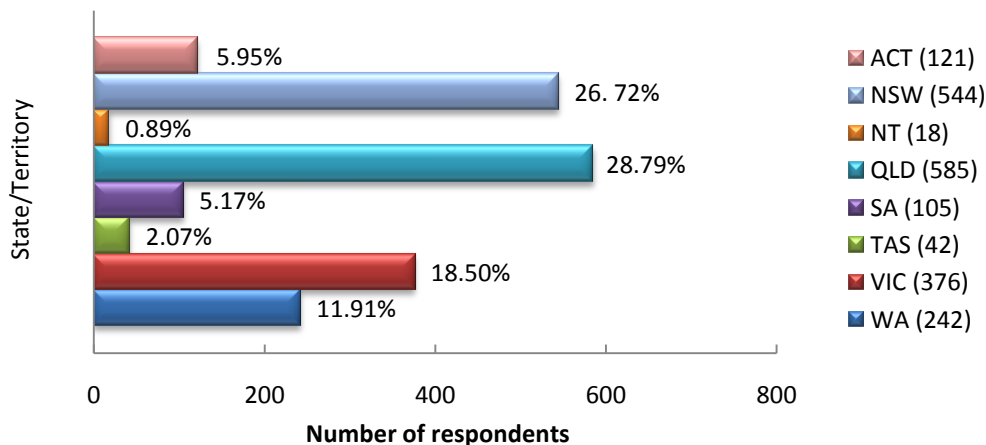


Table 1.

Numbers and percentages of participants according to area of current residence

	N	%
Capital City	1494	73.5
Other metropolitan area (population 100,000 or more)	287	14.1
Large rural centre (25,000 – under 100,000)	131	6.4
Other rural area	103	5.1
Remote	17	0.8

(N = 2032)

1.2 Cultural Ancestry

Participants were asked to indicate their cultural background by nominating up to two ancestries, as requested for the 2006 Australian Census. Thirty nine participants chose not to respond to this question leaving a total of 1993 respondents. As participants were able to select up to two ancestries (e.g., British and German), the percentages represent multiple responses and therefore add up to over 100%. Where numbers were very small for a particular ancestry, they were either grouped or represented as 'Other'. The most frequently listed ancestries, aside from Australian, New Zealander and British/Irish, were German, Italian, Chinese, Dutch, American, Greek, and Indian. With the exception of American ancestry, these results are in keeping with those from the 2006 Australian Census showing these six ancestries (Italian, German, Chinese, Greek, Dutch and Indian – order according to Census results) as having the highest number of responses after Australian and British/Irish (ABS, 2006). Eleven people (0.6%) self-identified as Indigenous Australians. As a group, these Australians were underrepresented in the current sample. As at 30 June 2006, Australia's Indigenous population was estimated to be 2.5% of the total population (ABS). Although not included in Table 2 below, 21 participants (1.1%) reported a Jewish ancestry, with this likely to be due to the close association between Jewish religion and ethnicity. All participants reported being an Australian citizen or permanent resident of Australia as part of the eligibility requirement of the survey. Close to three-quarters (74.6%) reported that they had lived in Australia all their lives, with the average duration for those who had not being 22.6 years (median = 21 years).

Table 2.

Cultural ancestry (up to two ancestries)

	<i>N</i>	%
Anglo/Australian/British Irish descent	1590	79.8
Australian Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander	11	0.6
East Asian		2.4
Chinese	41	
(Japanese, Korean, Mongolian, Taiwanese)	7	
Eastern and South-eastern European		3.6
Polish	13	
Russian	11	
Croatian	10	
Hungarian	7	
Czech	6	
Serbian	4	
Other	21	
Latin American/Caribbean	10	0.5
Middle Eastern		1.1
Lebanese	8	
Israeli	6	
Other	7	

North American		2.1
American (USA)	26	
Canadian	10	
Native American	5	
Northern European-Nordic (Danish, Swedish, Finnish, Norwegian)	16	0.8
Other Oceania		3.2
New Zealander	54	
Maori	6	
(Papua New Guinean, South Pacific Islander)	4	
South African	14	0.7
South Asian		1.6
Indian	20	
Sri Lankan	7	
Pakistani	4	
Southeast Asian		1.7
Filipino	14	
Malay	7	
Indonesian	5	
(Singaporean, Vietnamese, Other)	8	
Southern European		5.0
Italian	48	
Greek	25	
Maltese	11	
Spanish	10	
Portuguese	6	
Western European		5.6
German	55	
Dutch	32	
French	10	
Austrian	8	
Swiss	5	
Other	2	
Other		0.8
European unspecified	8	
Other African	7	

1.3 Age

The mean age of this sample was 35.8 years (standard deviation 12.4) with a median age of 34 years. Ages ranged from 18 to 82 years. Of the 81 participants in the '60 plus' age group, 17 were aged 70-82. The mean ages according to gender identity were 35.4 for female, 36.8 for male, and 30.0 for gender different participants. Table 3 below indicates the numbers and percentages of participants by age group and according to gender identity (for description of 'gender identity', (see section. 2.1).

Table 3.

Numbers and percentages of participants according to age group and gender identity

	<i>N</i>	% of total	% female	% male	% gender different
18 - 19	121	6.0	51.2	43.8	5.0
20 - 29	634	31.2	53.9	42.3	3.8
30 - 39	537	26.5	62.0	35.9	2.1
40 - 49	441	21.7	56.7	42.4	0.9
50 - 59	215	10.6	51.2	47.9	0.9
60 + (60-82)	81	4.0	33.3	66.7	0.0

Total *N* = 2029. Three participants (1 female, 2 male) did not provide their age.

1.4 Education and Employment

Participants were asked to select their highest level of education completed (see Table 4). Three participants did not specify their current level of education leaving a total of 2029 respondents for this measure. Consistent with research findings involving sexual-minority individuals both overseas (e.g., Cochran & Mays, 2009; Kurdek, 2008) and in Australia, the sample was highly educated when compared with the general population. For example, the Australian *Private Lives* GLBTI survey conducted in 2005, found 50.7% of participants reported having a university degree (Pitts, Smith, Mitchell, & Patel, 2006). In the current survey, 60.8% of participants reported having a Bachelor degree or above compared with 23% of the Australian population in general (ABS, 2009b). The percentage of people with university degrees in Australia has increased over recent years (ABS, 2009b) which may account for some of the discrepancy between the findings from the earlier and current Australian GLBTI surveys. It is also acknowledged that participants tend to be of higher education in survey research in general (Kaye & Johnson, 1999). The main issue, however, is being able to determine how representative this higher level of education status is of the sexual-minority population is extremely difficult, given the lack of a description of this group in large population-based studies and the stigma associated with reporting a sexual-minority status (Meyer & Wilson, 2009).

Table 4.**Numbers and percentages for highest level of education completed**

	<i>N</i>	%
Less than Year 10	27	1.3
Year 10 Certificate	78	3.8
Year 12 Certificate	358	17.6
Diploma/Trade Certificate	332	16.4
Undergraduate university degree	759	37.4
Postgraduate university diploma/degree	475	23.4

Total *N* = 2029 (three participants did not specify their education level).

For current employment status, participants were able to select multiple responses. The percentages in Table 5 below, therefore, provide a total over 100%. When taking into account multiple responses (e.g., a person who selected both full-time employment and being self-employed is counted only once as employed), 78.9% of the sample reported being employed. The employment rate for those not in full-time studies or retirement was 92.8%. Please note that the figures for currently 'not in paid employment' are not to be interpreted as 'unemployed'. Of the total sample, 27% reported currently being a student. According to a 2009 report from the Australian Bureau of Statistics, 19% of the Australian population aged 15-64 was enrolled in a course of study (ABS). As the current survey did not include individuals under 18, who as a group are more likely to be students, the discrepancy is likely to be even greater. However, the number of students in this survey is in keeping with the relatively high level of education of the sample.

Table 5.**Numbers and percentages for current work status**

	<i>N</i>	%
Full-time student	376	18.5
Part-time student	173	8.5
Full-time employment	1044	51.4
Part-time employment	404	19.9
Self-employed	194	9.5
Not in paid employment (incl. Volunteer work)	143	7.0
Retired	77	3.8

Total *N* = 2032 (number of participants who selected at least one response)

1.5 Religion

Participants were simply asked if they considered themselves to be a religious person rather than asked to state their religious background. For this sample, 19% (n = 385) selected 'yes', 81% (n = 1646) selected 'no' and one person did not respond. In the Australian *Private Lives* GLBTI survey conducted in 2005, close to 71% reported having no "current religion" (Pitts et al., 2006). The slightly higher figures found for the current survey may be due to the different wording of the question between the two surveys. Considering oneself to be non-religious and to have no current religion, might not be interpreted as being one and the same. For example, some people may retain a strong identity with a particular religion, due to the association with their school years, family background and/or ethnicity, but may not necessarily believe in the teachings of that religion. Importantly, 41.9% of participants reported that religion (including the religious beliefs of others) plays a role in their decisions to disclose their sexuality. Findings on religion as an influence on disclosure are discussed in Chapter 4.

2. Biological Sex, Gender Identity and Sexual Attraction

2.1 Sex, Gender Identity and Sexual Identity

Participants were first asked to select their biological sex as defined at birth. Of the sample, 56.8% (n = 1154) selected female, 43.1% (n = 875) selected male and 0.1% (n = 3) selected intersex. Four intersex individuals reported that they were defined as male at birth, resulting in a total of seven intersex participants. Five of these participants reported a female gender identity and two reported a male gender identity. As 'intersex' is not a gender identity, and many are not defined as such at birth, it is possible that larger numbers of intersex individuals participated in this survey. Some may have reported a female, male or gender different identity without also indicating that they were intersex. Percentages in relation to gender identity are provided in Table 6 below. The most frequently described identity for those who selected the 'Other' option was 'gender queer'. For ease of interpretation, the 'Gender Different' and 'Other' response categories were combined to form a single category ('Gender Different') to represent those who did not indicate a male or female identity. When examining the numbers of transgender, transsexual, intersex, and gender different participants, it is important to keep in mind that this survey was not open to all sexual minority individuals but only those who identified as same-sex attracted. This is likely to have reduced the participation of the already proportionately smaller number of transgender, transsexual and intersex people in the sexual-minority population. It is also acknowledged that the term 'same-sex attracted', by definition, can complicate matters for those whose gender identities and biological sex fall outside of the binary definitions imposed by society.

Table 6.

Current gender identity

	<i>N</i>	%
Female	1107	54.5
Transgender/Transsexual - Female	11	.5
Intersex - Female	5	.3
Gender Different - Female	2	.1
Total Female	1125	55.4
Male	851	41.9
Transgender/Transsexual - Male	7	.3
Intersex - Male	2	.1
Total Male	860	42.3
Gender Different	26	1.3
Other (e.g., gender queer)	21	1.0
Total Gender Different (incl. Other)	47	2.3

Total *N* = 2032

Participants were also asked to nominate a sexual identity. The most frequent responses for the total sample were gay, lesbian, bisexual, queer and no label, in that order. Table 7 below lists the numbers and percentages for sexual identity for the total sample and provides a separate breakdown by gender identity category. Consistent with research suggesting greater fluidity for female sexuality and that females tend to be less ‘category specific’ (e.g., Diamond, 2003;2008), larger percentages of those identifying as female, than male, nominated the terms bisexual, queer or no label. The terms queer and bisexual were also nominated by a larger percent of gender different participants of whom 83% reported being defined as biologically female at birth. The most frequent description of sexual identity under the ‘Other’ category was ‘pansexual’. Eight participants (7 female, 1 male), who identified as heterosexual, reported that they also had sexual and/or romantic attractions towards members of the same sex.

Table 7.

Sexual identity by gender identity category

Gender Identity	Female		Male		Gender Diff	
Biological Sex (as defined at birth)	98.4% F		99.0% M		83.0% F	
	Total Sample					
Sexual Identity	N	%	N	%	N	%
Gay	824	40.6	51	4.5	772	89.8
Lesbian	791	38.9	780	69.3	1	0.1
Bisexual	167	8.2	130	11.6	30	3.5
Queer	116	5.7	68	6.0	26	3.0
Heterosexual/Straight	8	0.4	7	0.6	1	0.1
No label	74	3.6	54	4.8	18	2.1
Not sure	16	0.8	15	1.3	0	0.0
Other (e.g., pansexual)	36	1.8	20	1.8	12	1.4

Total N = 2032, F = female, M = male

2.1.1 Transgender, Transsexual and Intersex Participants

Research findings for transgender, transsexual and intersex participants are often obscured due to their relatively small numbers. Therefore, and only where appropriate, figures are provided separately for these participants to provide greater visibility. However, results will also always be included in data presented for the general sample. Table 8 provides the numbers for the reported sexual identity of these participants. As noted earlier, all transgender/transsexual and intersex participants reported having same-sex attractions, as part of the eligibility requirement of this survey. This is likely to explain their smaller representation, as well as the smaller percentages reporting a heterosexual identity, when compared with the Australian *Private Lives* GLBTI survey (Pitts et al., 2006) conducted in 2005. For this earlier survey, 14% of these individuals reported a heterosexual identity compared with 0.5% for the current survey. However, consistent with the *Private Lives* survey, the most frequent response for transgender/transsexual females was ‘lesbian’ and for transgender/transsexual males was ‘queer’. Importantly, the small numbers of transgender, transsexual and intersex participants in both surveys make it difficult to draw any conclusions on the representativeness of the findings. Nonetheless, highlighting these responses is important in order

to create greater visibility, show the diversity within these groups, and identify consistencies between earlier and future research.

Table 8.

Sexual identity of transgender, transsexual and intersex participants

Sexual Identity	Trans-F (11)	Trans-M (7)	Intersex-F (5)	Intersex-M (2)
Gay	0	0	0	0
Lesbian	5	0	2	0
Bisexual	2	1	2	1
Queer	1	5	0	1
Heterosexual/Straight	1	0	0	0
No label	0	1	0	0
Not sure	0	0	0	0
Other	2	0	1	0

F = female, M = male

2.2 Sexual and Romantic Attraction

Participants were invited to select the extent to which they felt sexually and romantically attracted to either males or females. It is acknowledged that the modified version of the Kinsey Scale (Kinsey, Pomeroy, & Martin, 1948) used for these questions, and which is utilised extensively in research relating to same-sex attractions, is not inclusive of non-binary gender identities and intersex. The option to select attracted to ‘equally males and females’ on the mid-point of the scale is not one and the same as selecting an attraction to people who are biologically intersex or biologically either male or female but gender identify as another, or being attracted to people who identify as gender different. Although very few people did not respond to these questions (none of whom reported being transgender, transsexual, gender different or intersex), some participants commented that they felt quite constrained by the strictly binary options. Sexual and romantic attraction responses for the three gender identity groups are provided in Figures 2, 3 and 4. Please note that the figures for the two types of attractions do not necessarily represent the same participants at any given point on the scale. For example, a person identifying as male and selecting a romantic attraction to ‘only females’ may have also selected a sexual attraction to ‘equally males and females’.

Figure 2.

Sexual and romantic attraction towards others for participants identifying as male (N = 854)

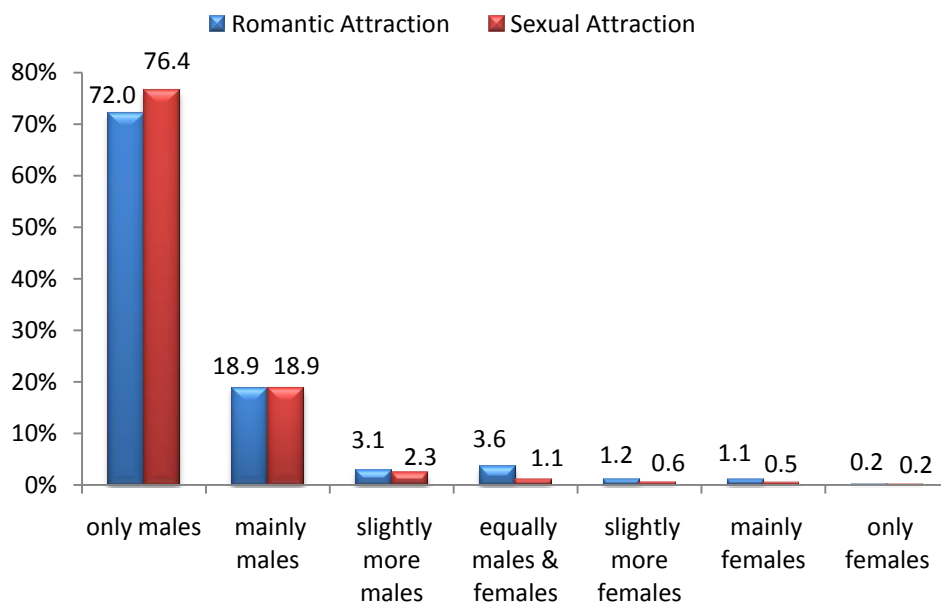


Figure 3.

Sexual and romantic attraction towards others for participants identifying as female (N = 1123)

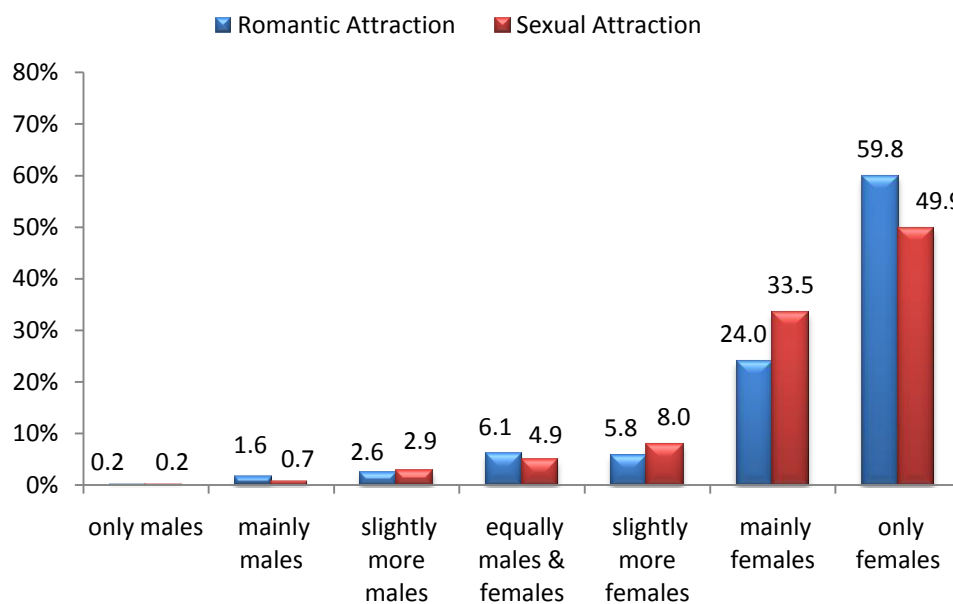
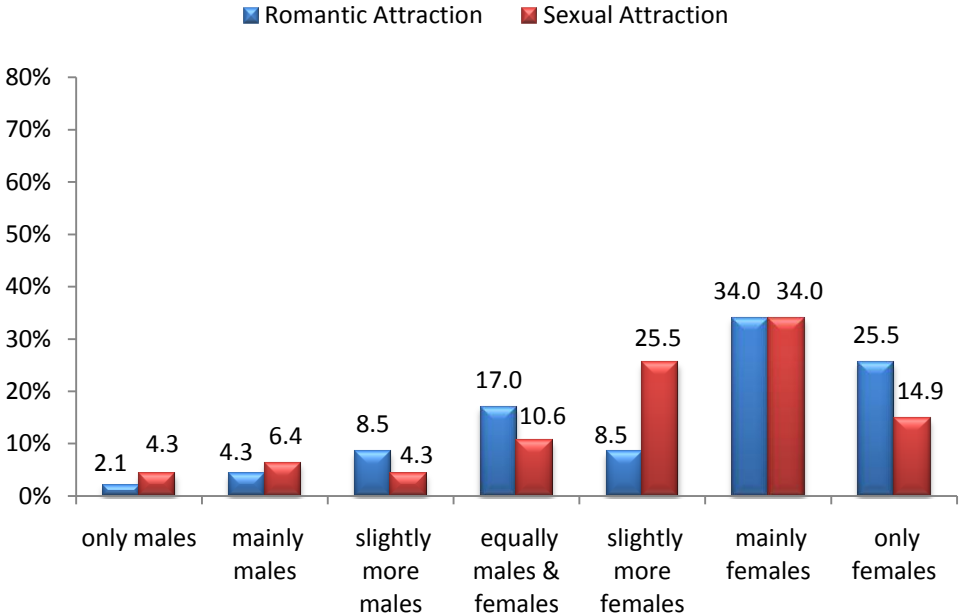


Figure 4.

Sexual and romantic attraction towards others for participants identifying as gender different (N = 47)



The large majority of participants identifying as male reported being sexually attracted exclusively or predominantly (95.3%) to males, as well as romantically attracted exclusively or predominately (91%) to males. Comparably, the large majority of participants identifying as female reported being sexually attracted exclusively or predominantly (83.4%) to females, as well as romantically attracted exclusively or predominantly (83.8%) to females. Responses on the attraction scales were more evenly distributed for participants identifying as gender different, although the majority reported attraction on the ‘female’ side of the scales. Consistent with prior research (e.g., Pitts et al., 2006), those who identified as male were significantly more likely than those who identified as female to report being exclusively attracted to members of the same sex. More interestingly, a significantly larger number of those who identified as female reported a romantic attraction exclusively to females when compared with a sexual attraction exclusively to females (see Figure 3). Although the statistical significance was less pronounced for those who identified as male, the pattern was reversed with significantly larger numbers having reported a sexual attraction exclusively to males compared with a romantic attraction exclusively to males (see Figure 2). In the case of gender different participants, larger numbers reported being romantically attracted exclusively to females than sexually attracted exclusively to females (see Figure 4). Although this was the same pattern found for those who identified as female, the numbers for this group were comparatively small with this difference not statistically significant.

2.2.1 Transgender, Transsexual and Intersex Participants

As well as being included in the findings for the general sample above, attraction responses relating to transgender, transsexual and intersex participants are provided separately. For this survey, the majority of female transgender/transsexual participants reported being sexually attracted exclusively or predominantly (63.6%) to females and romantically attracted exclusively or predominantly (54.6%) to females. Three participants (27.3%) reported an equal attraction to males and females for both

romantic and sexual attraction. The majority of male transgender/transsexual participants reported being sexually attracted exclusively or predominantly (54.2%) to males with one participant (14.3%) reporting a sexual attraction to mainly females and the remaining two participants an attraction between these scale points. On the other hand, the numbers for romantic attraction for transgender/transsexual males tended to be polarised with 42.9% reporting being romantically attracted exclusively or predominantly to males and an equal 42.9% being romantically attracted predominantly to females. The remainder responded between these scale points. For both sexual and romantic attraction, 100% of intersex participants reported being mainly or exclusively attracted to individuals of the gender to which they identified.

2.3 Sexual vs. Romantic Attractions

Overall, the findings from these measures indicate that sexual and romantic attractions are not necessarily consistent. From the total sample, close to a third of participants (29.9%) indicated a difference between the extent to which they felt romantically attracted and the extent to which they felt sexually attracted to males and/or females. Further, only 1.2% of the sample indicated an equal attraction to males and females when it came to both romantic and sexual attraction (for interpretation of percentages provided in Figures 2, 3, & 4, (see section 2.2). This suggests that even for people who identify as bisexual, it is rarely a simple case of equal attraction to men and women. Distinguishing between the two types of attraction also allowed a person to clarify if they were sexually attracted to neither males nor females but did have romantic attractions or vice versa. Although the numbers were small, some participants clarified in the comment box provided for each scale that they had only sexual attractions or only romantic attractions to people (e.g., “I’m romantically attracted...but not sexually attracted to [anyone]”).

3. Awareness and First Disclosure of Sexuality

3.1 Age First Aware

Participants were first asked to recall at what age they first became aware of sexual and/or romantic attractions to someone of the same sex. Due to the complexity of this question, particularly for people who are transgender, transsexual or intersex, participants were invited to describe their experiences if they preferred. The data provided in response to this question are likely to be imprecise for a number of reasons. Like all retrospective data, it relies on the accuracy of memory. Further, it is difficult to distinguish between the age at which a person realises at the time they have certain attractions to others and the age at which they now realise they had these attractions. Another issue is that what defines same-sex attractions for one person may be different for another. For some participants, and consistent with research in this area (e.g., Savin-Williams, 2005), the earliest memory was one of just feeling different from one's peers. Despite the nature of this question, the majority of participants were able to provide a specific age. In instances where a relatively small range in age was given, the figures were averaged (e.g., "13-14" to 13.5; "15-17" to 16). Where the range provided was wider than three years (e.g., "21-24, "my teens") or no age was made clear, the response was not included for this particular analysis, resulting in a reduction of 9.8% of the sample. Results for 'age aware' for the three gender identity groups are provided in Table 9 and Figure 5.

3.2 Age Sure

A second question asked participants at what age they felt sure within themselves that they had same-sex attractions. Perhaps as a result of this question being a little less open to distortion than the first, the sample size was reduced (based on criteria described above) by only 4.7% compared with 9.8% for the question on first awareness. For some participants the inability to provide a precise age was not due to memory issues but rather that they felt awareness was a subtle process, or was difficult to pinpoint, with there being no defining age at which they felt sure (e.g., "I don't think it was a defined point, more a growing awareness since childhood", "Sexuality is such a fluid thing"). Importantly, even for those who made it clear that they felt sure about their attractions at a certain age, several were not 'self-accepting' of their attractions at the time (e.g., "I felt sure...although I tried to avert it or deny it", "around 15...but denied it till around 17/18"). The findings for 'age sure' of same-sex attractions are provided for the three gender identity groups in Table 9 and Figure 5.

3.3 Age of First Disclosure

A third question asked participants at what age they first disclosed to others, including those with similar attractions, that they were same-sex attracted. A separate response option was provided for those who had never told anyone, with 23 participants (1.1%) reporting that this was the case. Of the remaining sample of 2,009, 0.6% was not included in this particular analysis based on the criteria stated in paragraph one above (i.e., the age range provided did not exceed 3 years). Results for 'age of first disclosure to others' are provided for the three gender identity groups in Table 9 and Figure 5.

Table 9.

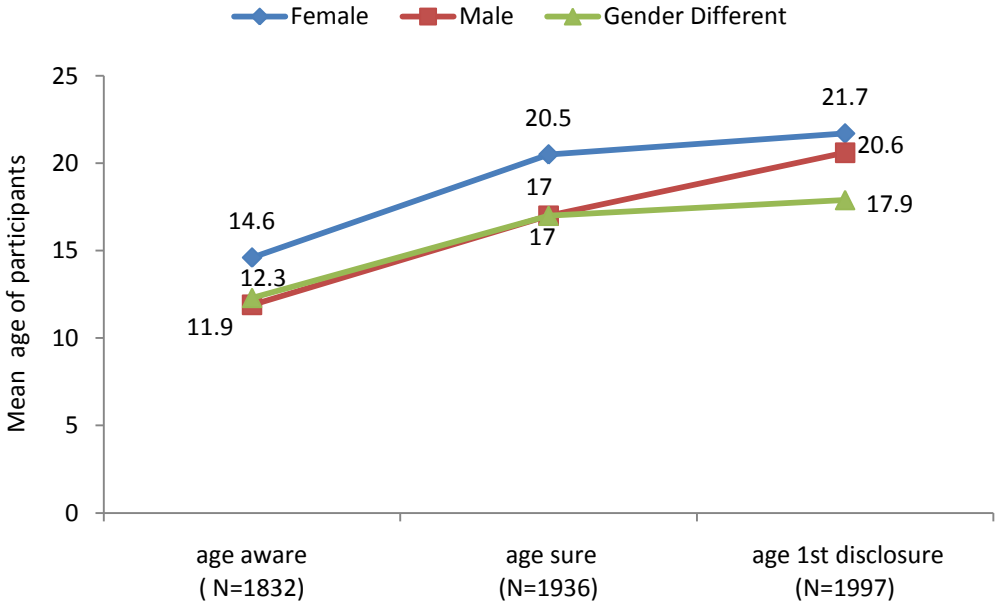
Percentile ages of participants by gender identity for age first aware, age sure and age of first disclosure of same-sex attractions

Gender Identity	Percentiles	Age Aware	Age Sure	Age First Disclosure
Female		(994)	(1070)	(1108)
	25% by	11.0	16.0	17.0
	50% by	14.0	19.0	19.0
	75% by	17.0	24.0	25.0
Male		(795)	(824)	(843)
	25% by	9.0	13.0	16.0
	50% by	12.0	16.0	19.0
	75% by	14.0	18.0	22.0
Gender different		(43)	(42)	(46)
	25% by	7.0	13.5	15.0
	50% by	12.0	16.0	17.0
	75% by	15.0	18.5	19.3
Total N		(1832)	(1936)	(1997)

Numbers of participants are provided in brackets ()

Figure 5.

Mean ages of participants by gender identity for age first aware, age sure and age of first disclosure of same-sex attractions (total sample)



Participants who identified as female were found to be significantly older at the age they were first aware of their same-sex attractions, as well as the age they were sure of these attractions, when compared with those who identified as male or gender different. For the reported age of a person's first disclosure of their sexuality to anyone, those who identified as male were found to be significantly younger than those who identified as female. Further, participants who identified as gender different were significantly younger for age of first disclosure than both these groups.

Comparisons were also made between the time a person became sure of their sexuality and the time it took to disclose their sexuality. Although males, as a group, were sure of their attractions before females, they took significantly more time on average to disclose these attractions. Female and gender different participants disclosed around one year after they felt sure of their sexuality, whereas for males the average was three and a half years. Although sexual minorities in general can experience negative reactions in relation to their sexuality, research has found higher levels of prejudice towards gay men from other men than towards lesbians from other women (Herek, 2000). Additionally, the *Writing Themselves in Again* national survey, involving sexual-minority youth in Australia, found that although both males and females reported abuse in relation to their sexuality, young males were more likely to state that they were targets of this abuse (Hillier, Turner, & Mitchell, 2005). As such, adolescent males, although sure of their same-sex attractions at younger ages, may, out of fear of these negative repercussions, deliberate for longer over when to first disclose their feelings when compared with females. Another possibility is that by the time females are sure of their sexuality they have, on average, reached a more mature age and may therefore feel more confident in disclosing soon after.

Although findings discussed above are based on the average ages of participants according to gender, it is important to note that both male and female participants who were most senior in this survey (i.e., 60 years of age or over) did not disclose their same-sex attractions, on average, until their early thirties (30.1 yrs for males and 32.6 yrs for females). Additionally, a quarter of the males and females in this 60+ age group did not disclose for the first time until their 40s, 50s, or 60s.

3.4 Gender Differences Based on Age Cohort

To provide a more meaningful interpretation of the findings for awareness and disclosure of sexuality based on gender identity, participants were grouped into one of three age cohorts (under 25, 25-34, and 35 or older²). As can be seen in Figure 6 (A, B and C), gender differences were less pronounced for younger cohorts relative to older with this mainly attributed to differences of those who identified as female. Although results clearly indicated differences between the genders, interpreting these findings in relation to age is restricted by the fact that the data do not allow for comparisons between similar age groups at different periods in time (e.g., youth in the 1980s with the youth of today). For example, the greater difference among females between cohorts may be due to the possibility that female sexuality, which is argued to be more 'fluid' relative to male (Baumeister, 2000), is likely to be influenced to a greater extent by the social conditions of the day (e.g., Udry, Talbert, & Morris, 1986). Longitudinal research, however, also supports the possibility that females, in their encounters with different relationships and situations, are likely to become more aware of the fluidity of their sexuality as time goes by (Diamond, 2008). The findings discussed below may be a reflection of both factors.

With the exception of the oldest cohort of females, awareness of same-sex attractions tended to occur between the ages of 11 ½ and 13½. On average, females 35 years of age and over reported becoming aware in their mid-teens, and for certain age groups within this cohort the average was not until the late teens or early twenties. For example, females aged 50-59 generally reporting becoming aware of their same-sex attractions at 19 years of age, and those 60 years, and over, at around 23 years of age. For their male counterparts, however, the ages were 12 ½ years and 14 years respectively (averages are not provided for gender different participants in this instance, due to the fact there were only two gender different individuals within these ages).

Females in the oldest cohort reported, on average, being sure of their same-sex attractions close to 7 ½ years later than females in the youngest cohort, whereas it was around 3 years later for the oldest cohort of males and 4 years later for the oldest cohort of gender different participants, when compared with their equivalent counterparts. When comparing age of first disclosure between the youngest and oldest cohorts within each gender group, females in the oldest cohort reported this occurring just over 8 ½ years later, whereas for males and gender different participants in the same age group it was 6 years later and 3 ½ years later respectively.

For those under the age of 25 (Figure 6C), there were no significant differences between the ages in which females, males and gender different participants first disclosed their same-sex attractions. However, females, on average, were still significantly older (although only by one year) when first aware and sure of their sexuality, compared with males. Also consistent with the results for the total sample, males, although sure of their attractions before females, took significantly more time on average to disclose these attractions. These young female participants disclosed approximately 4 months after feeling sure, whereas young male participants disclosed around one and a half years later. The number of gender different participants for this reduced sample of under 25 year olds is relatively small limiting the interpretation of any statistical comparisons (for numbers see Table 10).

² The Australian Bureau of Statistics classifies youth as being from 15-24 years of age, young people generally as being up to the age of 34, and those 35 and older as no longer young adults (ABS, 2009a; 2010). Analyses comparing gender differences between the six age groups of the survey (i.e., 18-19, 20-29, 30-39, 40-49, 50-59, 60+) revealed the same pattern of results for awareness and disclosure of sexuality as those found for the three main age cohorts.

Figure 6 (A, B and C).

Mean ages by gender identity, for age first aware, age sure and age of first disclosure of same-sex attractions according to age cohort

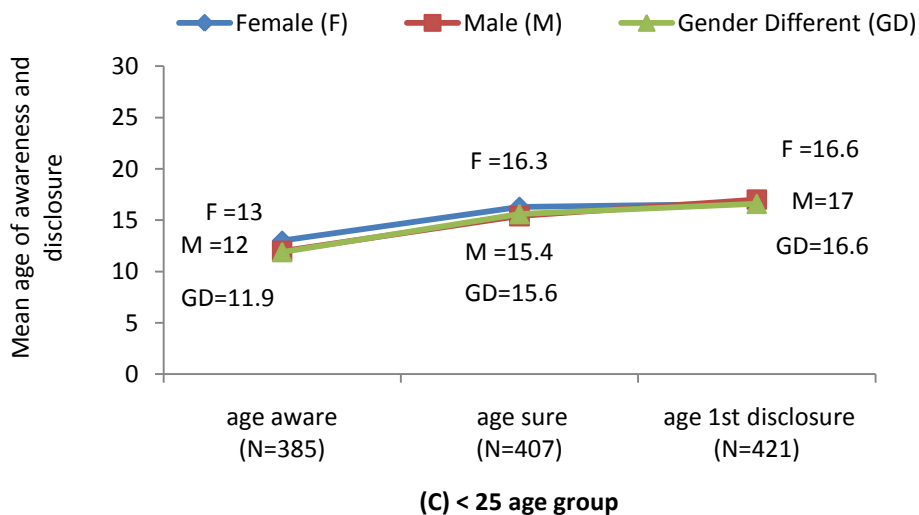
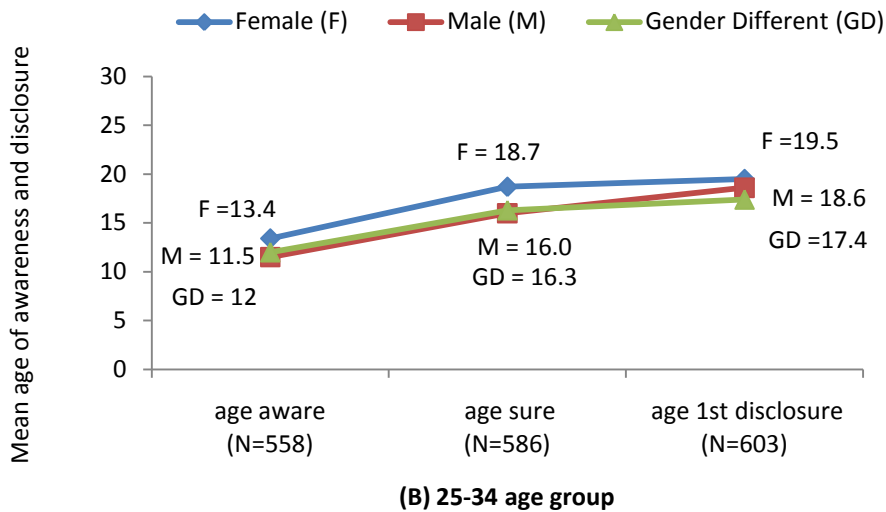
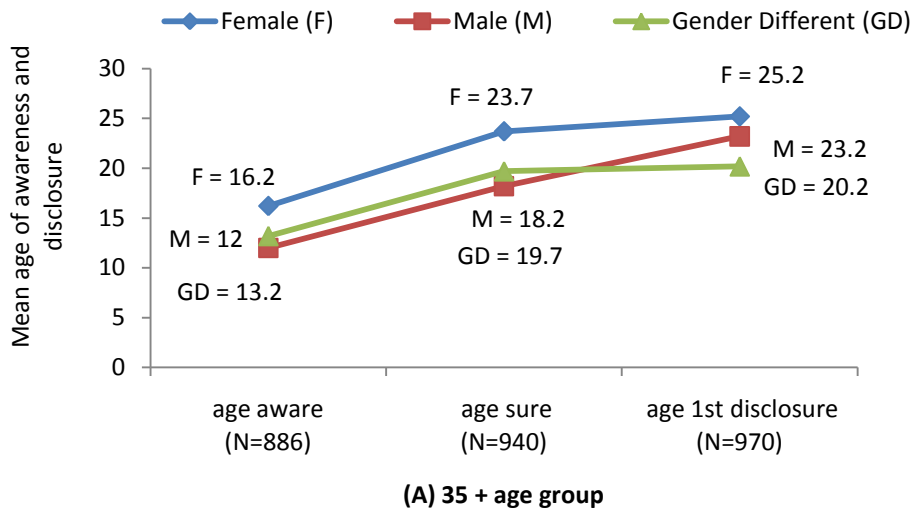


Table 10.

Numbers of participants corresponding to data presented in Figure 6 for gender differences by cohort, for age aware, age sure and age of first disclosure of same-sex attractions

	<i>N</i> Age Aware	<i>N</i> Age Sure	<i>N</i> 1 st Disclosure
<hr/>			
<25 yrs			
Female	185	199	206
Male	183	192	197
Gender different	17	16	18
<hr/>			
25 – 34 yrs			
Female	338	358	369
Male	205	214	219
Gender different	15	14	15
<hr/>			
35 + yrs			
Female	470	512	532
Male	405	416	425
Gender different	11	12	13

Note: The aware, sure, and disclosure questions were presented to all participants, with numbers varying due to number of invalid responses (refer to sections 3.1 – 3.3 for clarification).

3.5 Transgender, Transsexual and Intersex Participants

Participants who specifically selected the transgender, transsexual or intersex response options in this survey reported either a male or female identity. They are, therefore, included in the findings for these two larger groups presented previously. It is, nonetheless, important to acknowledge the very different experiences of these individuals. As discussed earlier in this report, the term ‘same-sex attracted’, by definition, can be problematic for those whose biological sex and/or gender identity do not adhere to the assumptions that all people are born either strictly male or female and that one’s sex defined at birth is consistent with a person’s gender identity. Although feelings of attraction to certain others may remain stable over time, having to classify these as either same-sex or different-sex attractions or identify at what stage they classify as one or the other, for those who transition, is far from straightforward. It is not surprising, therefore, that several of these participants did not provide a precise age for the awareness and first disclosure questions discussed above. Nonetheless, nearly all participants attempted to explain their unique experiences and how it related to their sex defined at birth, their current gender identity and/or time of transitioning. Importantly, all transgender, transsexual and intersex participants considered themselves eligible for this survey, given the ‘same-sex attracted’ requirement. As noted before, people who are transgender, transsexual or intersex may also identify as heterosexual (e.g., Pitts et al., 2006).

4. Ongoing Disclosure of Sexuality

In contrast to the experience of disclosing one's sexuality for the very first time, disclosure of sexual attractions can be an ongoing process for people in general. Although the remark "Heterosexuals don't go around disclosing their sexuality, so why should I/they" is not uncommon, men who are attracted to women and women who are attracted to men frequently disclose the nature of their relationships through their everyday conversations. Although it is unlikely that anyone with only 'different-sex' attractions would explicitly state that they were "heterosexual", they still convey a disclosure message through statements like "I need to hurry up, my wife is picking me up in an hour" or "my boyfriend makes the best chocolate cake". The same form of indirect disclosure is obviously also available to those with same-sex attractions. The difference is that, for this latter group, the consequences of not remaining gender neutral in such conversations are less clear.

4.1 Experimental Research

A series of experimental studies conducted at The University of Queensland between 2005 and 2008 aimed to identify the reactions of heterosexual participants when confronted by a person 'coming out' in the indirect manner described above. Male and female stage actors, who were in reality same-sex attracted, disclosed their sexuality to a participant of their own sex either very early during their interaction or much later. Findings showed that both male and female heterosexual participants (total number over three years = 461) sat closer to the same-sex attracted person, liked the person more, shared more about themselves with this person, reported that they were more likely to be willing to introduce this person to their friends and were happier about meeting this person in the future, when the same-sex attracted person disclosed earlier rather than later (Dane, Masser, MacDonald, & Duck, 2010). Importantly, the form of disclosure used in this research was one of low risk and was simply conducive to extending one's friendship networks.

4.2 Timing of Disclosure – Survey Scenarios

The survey included a set of scenarios, in order to identify to what extent same-sex attracted people are likely to use various disclosure strategies and at what stage of getting to know someone assumed to be heterosexual they are more likely to use these. These scenarios, like the experiments described above, involved a relatively low risk situation (e.g., not related to work or family) at a social event in which an equal number of men and women were in attendance. Each scenario described the same event, however, the people to whom disclosure was being considered appeared a) possibly open-minded, b) possibly somewhat conservative or c) their stance was not clear. The order in which participants were presented with the three scenarios in the survey was randomised. The wording of the scenarios and the response options that followed are provided on the following page.

Scenario A (possibly positive reaction)

*“You have been invited to a casual social gathering, unrelated to work, at which there are around 30 people (an equal mixture of men and women) in attendance. You are not familiar with most of these people, however, you assume you are in ‘straight’ company. Although these people are new to you, it is likely that you will have the opportunity to meet them again. At a small outdoor table, you find yourself having a chat with a man and a woman who arrived together. You do not know how these people feel about same-sex sexuality. **However, something about them gives you a hint that they may be open minded about things in general. This may be something about their appearance, body language or something they have said on another topic.** Nonetheless, you can’t be sure about their feelings on same-sex sexuality. If you have a same-sex partner, imagine he or she is also at this event. If you do not currently have a same-sex partner, imagine a friend (male or female) is also at this event.*

Scenario B (possibly negative reaction)

The same wording as Scenario A above with the wording in bold changed to **“However, something about them gives you a hint that they may be a little conservative (i.e., traditional) in their thinking on some issues. This may be something about their appearance, body language or something they have said on another topic.”**

Scenario C (reaction not clear)

The same wording as Scenario A above with the wording in bold changed to **“Nothing about their appearance, body language or their conversation provides any clue as to how they may feel.”** with the redundant sentence immediately following removed.

The Response Options

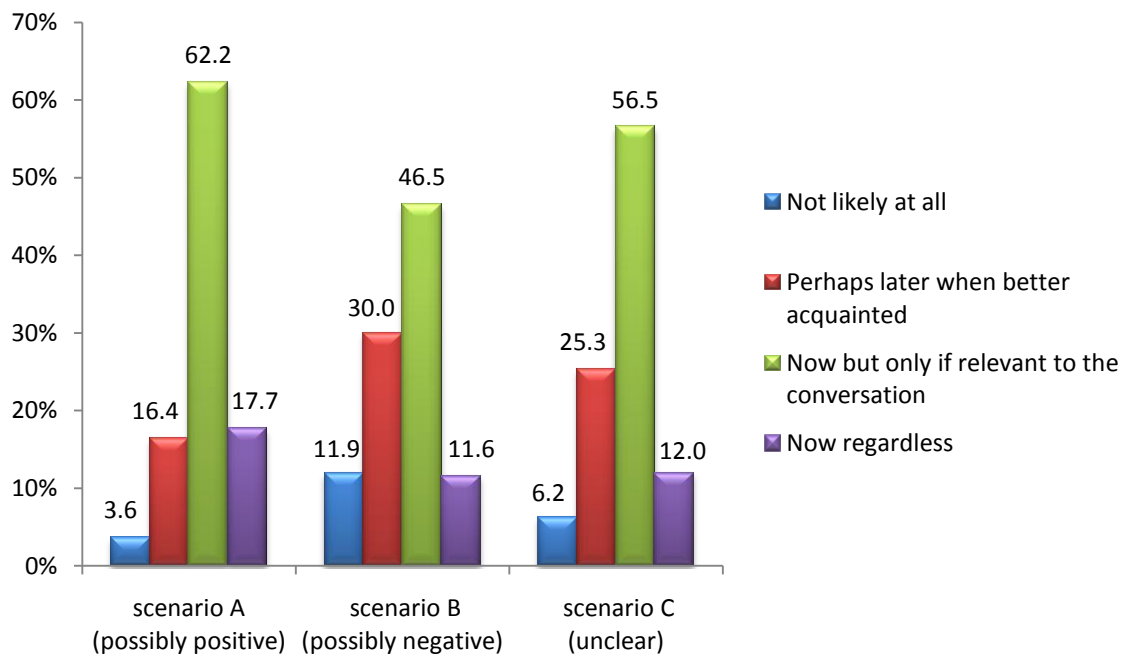
The same answer options were provided after each randomly ordered scenario and are detailed below.

Q. For the hypothetical situation above, which of the responses below most closely describes how you think you would most likely react given your current circumstances (e.g., single, partnered, not ‘out’, partner not ‘out’). Note: Disclosure means making it known in some way that you are same-sex attracted (e.g., introduce a partner, disclose the name of a past or present partner or offer some other information that implies you are same-sex attracted).

- I don’t think I would disclose to this man and woman now or in the foreseeable future (= 1)
- I would most probably wait to see if I got to know this man and woman better on another occasion before deciding whether to disclose (= 2)
- I would most probably disclose to this man and woman at this first meeting but only if it seemed relevant to the topic of the conversation (= 3)
- I would most probably disclose to this man and woman at this first meeting regardless of the topic of the conversation (e.g. make a point of mentioning/introducing a partner or offering some other information to make it clear) (= 4)

Figure 7.

Percentages of participants for likelihood of ‘coming out’ for possibly positive (A), possibly negative (B) and unclear (C) reactions to disclosure based on social interaction scenarios



4.3 Overall Findings and in Relation to Well-Being and Stigma

As expected, participants were significantly less likely to ‘come out’ when the people to whom they were considering disclosing were presented in the scenarios as being possibly somewhat conservative (scenario B) compared with possibly open-minded³ (scenario A) or their stance was unclear (scenario C). Nonetheless, even for the potentially least favourable situation (scenario B) a majority (58.1%) still indicated that they would most likely disclose ‘now’ (46.5% conditional and 11.6% regardless). The percentages for each of these scenarios are provided in Figure 7 above. As was also expected, higher levels of well-being and lower perceptions of stigma were associated with a greater likelihood of ‘coming out’ overall. Participants’ scores on well-being and perceived stigma are discussed further in Chapter 10.

4.4 Regular Partner and Partner ‘Disclosure Comfort’ Similarity

This research was also interested in the association between a person’s relationship status and their likelihood of ‘coming out’ to others. As discussed earlier, it is possible for a person to indirectly disclose their sexuality in much the same way heterosexual individuals⁴ disclose the nature of their relationships by simply referring to their partners in their everyday conversations. For this reason, it

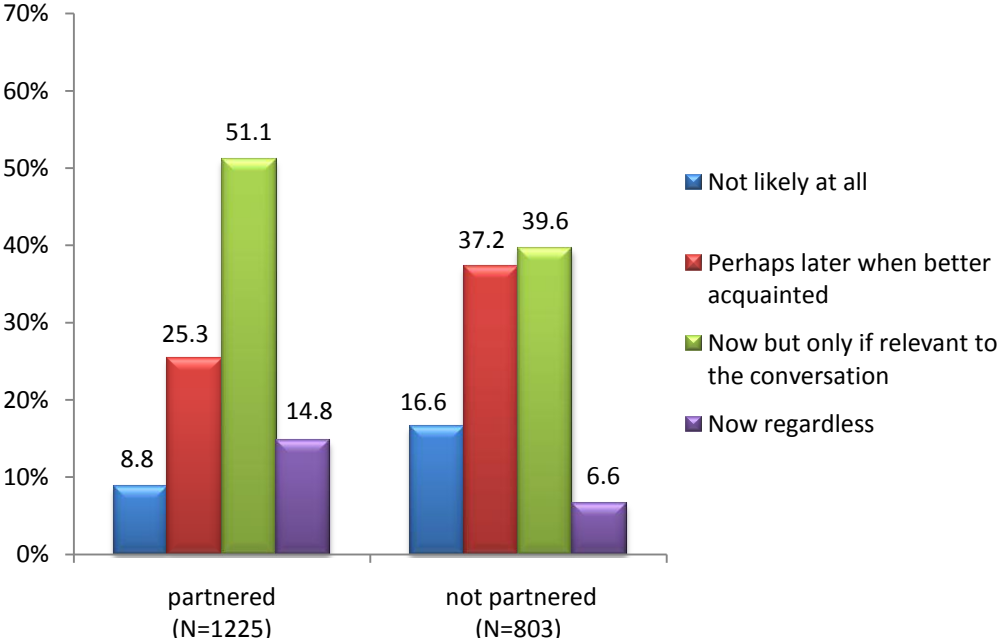
³ Although being open-minded and being conservative are not necessarily mutually exclusive, research has found a significant relationship between conservatism and less favourable attitudes towards homosexuality (Whitley & Lee, 2000).

⁴ It is acknowledged that simply because a person makes it clear that they are in a relationship with someone of a different sex it does not necessarily mean they are heterosexual. However, the same logic is less likely to apply when disclosing a relationship with a person of the same sex (i.e., that they are not nonheterosexual).

was anticipated that participants who reported currently having a regular partner⁵ would indicate, on average, a higher likelihood of ‘coming out’ when compared with participants who reported not currently having a regular partner or were in only casual relationships. Results showed that this was in fact the case. Perhaps for people who are partnered, referring to their relationships may allow disclosure to feel less awkward (or at least more relevant) in their casual conversations with others. Another contributing factor may be the level of support offered by the presence of one’s partner during the disclosure process. Results for being partnered vs. not partnered are provided in Figure 8 and those based on similarity to one’s partner in being comfortable about disclosing one’s sexuality are provided in Figure 9. Although findings were significant for the likelihood of disclosure across the three scenarios, for ease of interpretation and presentation, percentages are provided for scenario B which was presented as being potentially the least favourable for disclosure.

Figure 8.

Percentages for likelihood of ‘coming out’ for possibly negative (scenario B) reactions to disclosure for those currently same-sex partnered vs. not



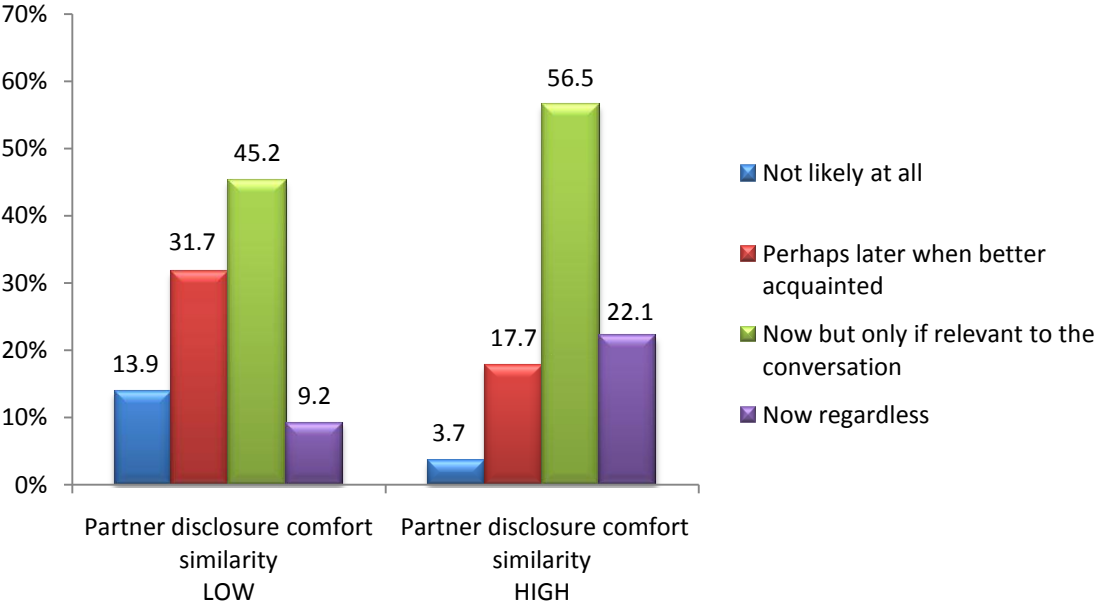
For scenario B, close to two-thirds (65.9%) of participants who reported having a regular partner selected an option to disclose now (51.1% and 14.8%), although for most this depended on its relevance to the conversation. By contrast, the majority (53.8%) of participants who reported not currently having a regular partner stated they were not likely to disclose at all or would most probably delay disclosure until another time (16.6% and 37.2%). Importantly, even when a person’s level of well-being was taken into account, having a regular partner was still significantly related to a greater likelihood of disclosure for each of the three scenario cases and overall.

⁵ ‘Regular Partner’ was made distinct from ‘casual relationships only’ and ‘no primary partner but regular sex partners’. It represents participants who selected either the ‘Regular partner (living together)’ or the ‘Regular partner (living separately)’ options for the ‘Current Same-Sex Relationship(s)’ question (see section 5.1.1). ‘Regular partner’, in all cases, refers to a regular same-sex partner. A separate question was presented regarding ‘different-sex’ relationships.

Although some people may be happy to ‘come out’ to others during casual social interactions, deciding to do so may hinge on their partner’s level of comfort with such disclosure. As such, this research also looked at the relationship between partner similarity in relation to comfort with disclosure/sexuality and the likelihood of ‘coming out’ for the three different scenarios. To assess ‘perceived partner similarity’ regarding this level of comfort, the survey included a five-item scale devised by Mohr and Fassinger (2006) and asked participants to what extent they agreed or disagreed with the statements. Examples of these items are “My partner and I are equally comfortable being ‘out’ in public” and “My partner and I are equally comfortable being a same-sex couple” (for more detail on this scale, refer to section 7.3). The low vs. high categories for partner disclosure similarity (see Figure 9) were based on participants’ responses that were below the median score and those that were above the median score.

Figure 9.

Percentages for likelihood of ‘coming out’ for possibly negative (scenario B) reactions to disclosure for low vs. high partner ‘disclosure comfort’ similarity for participants reporting a regular partner of the same sex



Results indicated that although having a regular partner was related to a higher likelihood of ‘coming out’ overall, having a partner with a similar level of comfort in disclosing was, not surprisingly, related to a greater likelihood. Using scenario B as an example, over three-quarters (78.6%) of participants, who perceived high levels of similarity with their partners regarding comfort in disclosing, selected an option to disclose ‘now’ (56.5% if relevant and 22.1% regardless) despite the prospect of encountering a possibly negative reaction by others (see Figure 10). For those who perceived low levels of similarity, 54.4% selected an option to disclose ‘now’ (45.2% and 9.2%) and for those with no current same-sex partner the numbers were under a majority at 46.2% (39.6% and 6.6%). Additionally, when considering the results for partner similarity for disclosure and perceptions of how supportive a partner was in general, it was only partner disclosure similarity that was significantly related to the likelihood of ‘coming out’.

4.4.1 Conclusion

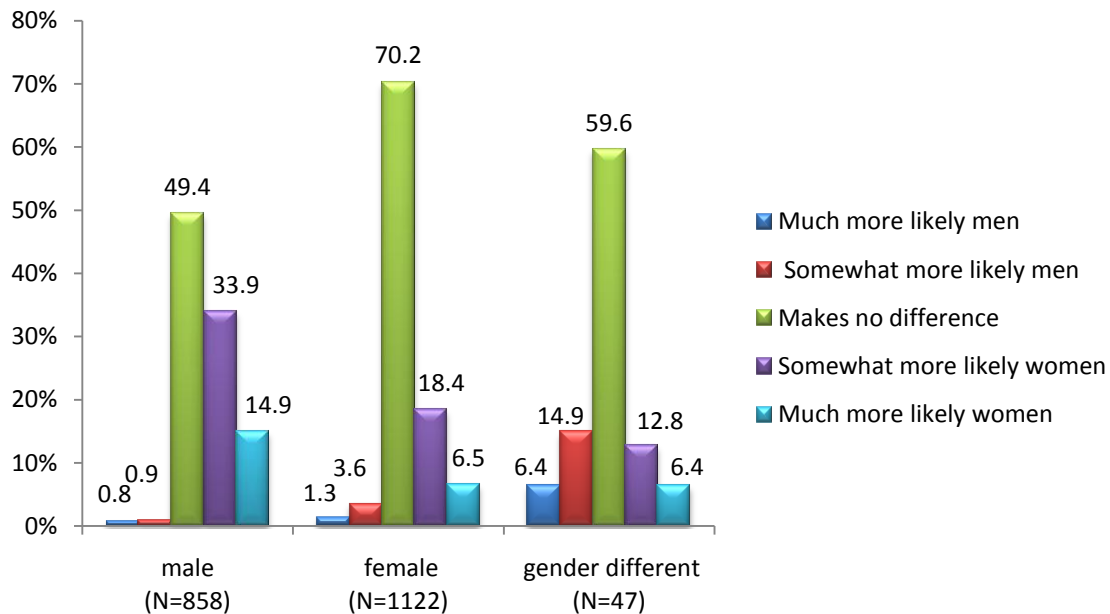
Researchers have frequently discussed the benefits of ‘coming out’ for personal well-being and in relation to changing societal attitudes (e.g., Herek, 2003). Further, recent experimental studies, involving low risk casual encounters, have shown that heterosexual individuals respond more positively to such disclosure when it occurs earlier rather than later (Dane et al., 2010). Overall, the majority of participants for the hypothetical scenarios presented in this survey indicated that they would most likely ‘come out’ during their first encounter to an assumed to be ‘straight’ couple at a casual social gathering. For some this was if it was relevant to the conversation and for others it was regardless. Interestingly, a majority was found for those partnered even when the situation was depicted as being potentially negative, albeit a low risk casual encounter (scenario B). Nonetheless, and although somewhat intuitive, it is important to acknowledge the additional challenges faced by some individuals. The findings from this survey suggest that even for those who may wish to ‘come out’, this decision may be hampered by their currently single status or a lack of compatibility with their partner’s level of disclosure comfort. Although casually introducing or mentioning a partner may facilitate disclosure in much the same way heterosexual individuals convey the nature of their relationships, this option is not always possible for some. Several participants made it clear in the accompanying comment boxes that if they had a partner they would be more inclined to disclose. Many who reported having a partner stated that they would simply discuss or introduce their partners. It is also acknowledged that relationship status and partner disclosure compatibility are just two of a myriad of factors that are likely to be associated with decisions to ‘come out’ to others.

4.5 Gender Identity and Disclosure

No statistical differences were found between participants identifying as male, female or gender different for the likelihood of ‘coming out’ to others for the hypothetical scenarios described above. It is important to keep in mind that the event in the scenarios was described as having an equal number of men and women in attendance. Further, the couple to whom ‘coming out’ was to be considered consisted of a man and a woman. The rationale for presenting these equal numbers was to ensure the scenarios, in terms of sex, were perceived similarly between participants. Nonetheless, ‘coming out’ in real life is not likely to always occur when in the company of both men and women. Therefore, participants upon completion of the scenario questions were asked about their preferences in relation to disclosing to heterosexual men vs. heterosexual women. As shown in Figure 10 on the following page, the most frequent response for participants, regardless of their gender identity, was that it made no difference whether a heterosexual person was male or female when considering disclosing their sexuality, with the largest number for this equal preference being for participants who identified as female (70.2%). For those to whom it did make a difference, the percentages overall were higher towards a preference for disclosing to women, with the percentage in this case being largest for participants who identified as male (48.8%). These results are consistent with numerous studies that have found heterosexual men generally hold more negative attitudes towards nonheterosexuals than do heterosexual women, and that this is mainly a consequence of their negative evaluations of gay men as opposed to lesbians (Kite & Whitley, 2003). Only in the case of gender different participants were the numbers very close to even when it came to a preference for disclosing to either men or women.

Figure 10.

Percentages in relation to participants' preferences for 'coming out' to heterosexual men vs. heterosexual women



4.6 Transgender, Transsexual and Intersex Participants

The findings for transgender, transsexual and intersex participants for the likelihood of 'coming out', based on the three scenarios presented, were in keeping with those of the general sample. In the case of preferences for 'coming out' to either heterosexual men or women, overall the percentages representing a preference for disclosing to women were higher compared with the general sample (see Table 11). This is consistent with research suggesting that heterosexual men are more likely than heterosexual women to negatively evaluate those who fundamentally challenge heteronormative assumptions about sex and gender identity, and that women appear to be more likely to make some distinction between sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender roles in their evaluations (Nagoshi, Adams, Terrell, Hill, Brzuzy, & Nagoshi, 2008).

Table 11.

Numbers of transgender/transsexual and intersex participants in relation to preferences for disclosing sexuality to heterosexual men vs. heterosexual women.

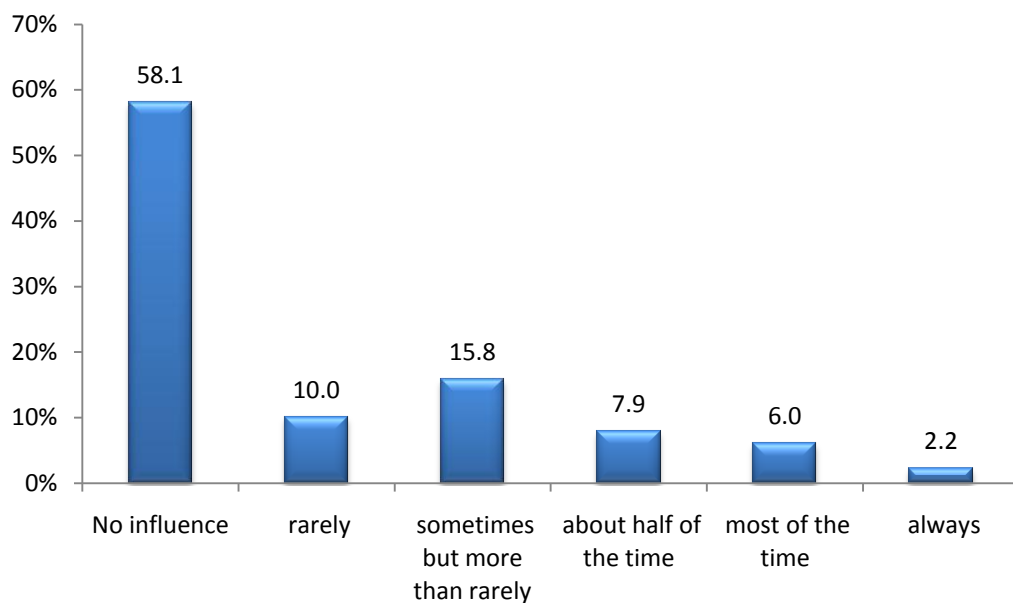
	Trans-F	Trans-M	Intersex-F	Intersex-M
Preference for disclosure				
Much more likely men	0	0	0	0
Somewhat more likely men	0	0	0	0
Makes no difference	5	3	1	1
Somewhat more likely women	2	3	1	1
Much more likely women	4	1	3	0

4.7 Religion and Disclosure

Identifying as a religious person was not significantly related to a person's likelihood of 'coming out' based on the social interactions described in the three scenarios. Of the 385 participants in this survey who stated that they considered themselves to be religious, less than half (48.3%) felt that religion (including the religious beliefs of others) had an influence on their decisions to disclose or not disclose their sexuality in everyday life. Further, of the 1646 participants who stated that they did not consider themselves to be religious, 40.5% nonetheless felt religion (including the religious beliefs of others) did have an influence on their decisions to disclose or not. Statistical analyses revealed that it was only the extent of religious influence in everyday life, rather than one's own religious beliefs, which was significantly related to the likelihood of 'coming out' during the social encounters depicted in the three hypothetical scenarios. Specifically, the greater the religious influence the lower the likelihood of disclosure for all three scenarios, with this association strongest for the 'possibly negative reaction' (scenario B) outcome. Figure 11 shows the percentages of participants based on the responses for extent of religious influence on disclosure in everyday life.

Figure 11.

Percentages of participants in relation to extent of religious influence (including the religious beliefs of others) on decisions to disclose sexuality (N = 2031)



4.8 Acceptance and Disclosure

As past experiences with disclosing one's sexuality are likely to have some impact on ongoing disclosure, this survey also looked at participants' perceptions of acceptance from various sectors and their association with the likelihood of 'coming out' during the social encounters depicted in the three scenarios. When considering all five areas of acceptance together (i.e., heterosexual friends, heterosexual contacts from the wider community, mother, father and siblings), it was perceived acceptance from heterosexual friends, contacts from the wider community and from a mother which were significantly related to a person's likelihood of disclosing in the scenarios. Of these, a mother's acceptance was the stronger predictor, followed by heterosexual friends. These findings suggest that experiences of disclosure to close others are, on average, likely to have some ongoing influence on decisions to be relatively upfront, or not, regarding one's sexuality.

5. Relationships and Recognition

NOTE: Findings for the ‘Relationship Recognition’ measures discussed in this chapter were presented in an earlier report (Auxiliary Report) which was submitted to the Federal Senate inquiry into the Marriage Equality Amendment Bill 2009 (Commonwealth of Australia. Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee, November 9, 2009). The findings from this earlier report related to the 2,232 participants who completed the ‘Relationship Recognition’ questions presented in the first third of the survey. Results were found to be consistent between this larger sample and the current sample of 2,032 (200 fewer) participants who completed the survey in full. Nonetheless, it was deemed more appropriate to provide results to the Senate inquiry based on the larger sample, to ensure the relationship findings were not just representative of people who may have been more inclined to complete a lengthy survey. For comparisons between the results provided in this chapter based on the responses of 2,032 participants with those of the larger sample of 2,232, please refer to the Auxiliary Report in the Appendix.

5.1 Relationship Background

Of the current sample, 94.6% reported being in some type of same-sex relationship (including casual) at some stage in their lives, with the remaining 5.4% stating that they had never been in any type of same-sex relationship.

5.1.1 Current Relationship

Of the sample, 8.4% reported currently being in a different-sex relationship (worded as ‘opposite-sex’ in the questionnaire) and 66% reported currently being in some form of same-sex relationship (note: 5.1% reported currently being in a same-sex and different-sex relationship). The numbers and percentages for ‘current same-sex relationship’ are provided in Table 12. The differences between the findings for the larger sample of 2,232 and the current sample of 2,032 for ‘current relationship’ were minimal with 33.7% vs. 34% having reported not being in a current same-sex relationship of any type and 60.7% vs. 60.4% having reported being in a relationship with a regular partner.

Table 12.

Type of current same-sex relationship

	<i>N</i>	%
Regular partner (living together)	919	45.3
Regular partner (living apart)	307	15.1
No primary partner but regular sex partners	36	1.8
Casual relationship(s) only	77	3.8
Not currently in a same-sex relationship	690	34.0
Total <i>N</i> = 2029 (three participants did not respond)		

Figure 12, on the following page, represents the percentages of participants who reported having a regular same-sex partner according to participants’ age group and gender identity. As the small number of gender different participants in this survey was reduced when considering only those with a regular partner, the numbers for these participants are provided in Table 13 below Figure 12.

When looking at the results for all ages combined, 66.0% of female, 54.2% of male and 38.3% of gender different participants reported having a regular same-sex partner. This outcome is consistent with that from the Australian *Private Lives* GLBTI survey (Pitt et al., 2006), which found higher percentages of women (59.5%) than men (42.9%) reported a current same-sex relationship. For numbers of participants represented in each of the categories, refer to Table 13 below Figure 12.

Figure 12.

Percentages of participants reporting a regular same-sex partner by age group and gender identity

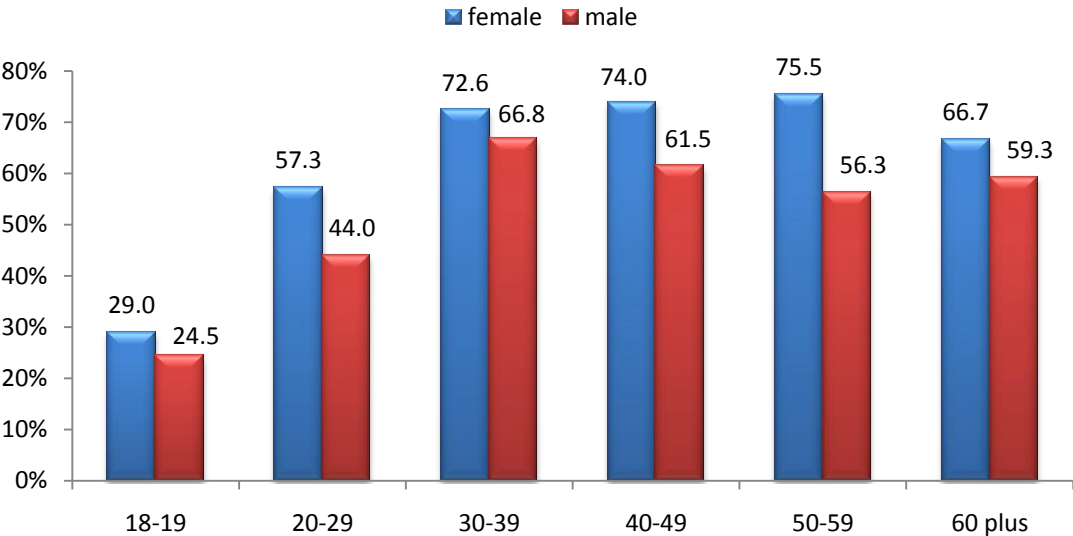


Table 13.

Number of participants with regular same-sex partner according to age group and gender identity

Age group	Female Yes (No)	Male Yes (No)	Gender different Yes (No)
18-19	18 (44)	13 (40)	1(5)
20-29	196 (146)	118 (150)	9 (15)
30-39	241 (91)	129 (64)	4 (7)
40-49	185 (65)	115 (72)	3 (1)
50-59	83 (27)	58 (45)	1 (1)
60 plus	18 (9)	32 (22)	No cases

Total N = 2028 (four participants did not provide an age and/or their relationship status)

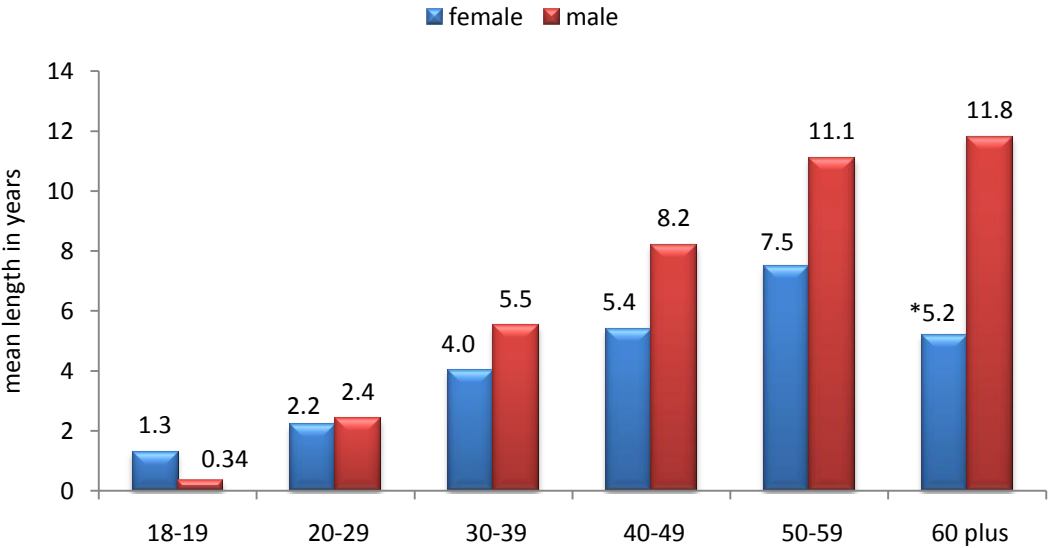
5.1.2 Length of Current Relationship

Figure 13 provides the average length of current relationship with a regular partner for participants identifying as female or male. Due to the small number of gender different participants for this reduced sample, the results for this group have not been included in Figure 13. The overall average length of current relationship for gender different participants was 2.9 years with 25% of this group having reported being in a relationship for 6 years or more. The longest current relationship for this group was 12 years. Results overall showed that although higher percentages of those who

identified as female reported having a regular same-sex partner (see Figure 12), the average length of these current relationships was significantly longer for those who identified as male compared with female (see Figure 13). Results from the earlier Australian *Private Lives* GLBTI survey (Pitts et al., 2006) found 41% of males reported being in their current relationship for 5 years or more compared with 32% of females. For the current survey, the pattern was similar with 47% of those identifying as male having reported to be in their current relationship for 5 years or more compared with 32.5% of females.

Figure 13.

Average length of current relationship with regular same-sex partner for participants identifying as male or female



* Numbers of female participants in the 60 + age-group were proportionately smaller relative to their representation in other age groups. For numbers refer to Table 13.

The findings for females 60 years of age and older should be interpreted with caution, given the relatively small number in this age group. Further, over half of the female participants in this older age group reported a fairly recent relationship of 1 year duration or less. When considering the longest reported relationship (rather than current) for female participants in this group, the average length was 8.6 years which is consistent with the overall trend. Thirty participants from the overall number of those identifying as male and female were not included in the data presented in Figure 13 above. Of these, 17 did not provide a duration and 13 stated that they were in a relationship for less than one month, with no specific duration obtained. Of these participants, 6 (2 female, 4 male) were from the 18-19 age group, 9 (6 female, 3 male) were from the 20-29 age group, 7 (6 female, 1 male) were from the 30-39 age group, 5 (3 female, 2 male) were from the 40-49 age group, and 3 (2 female, 1 male) were from the 50-59 age group.

Table 14 lists the minimum length of current relationship for 50% and 25% of the male and female gender identity groups according to age group. For example, 50% of male participants aged 40-49 reported being in a current same-sex relationship for 8 years or more, and 25% for 13 years or more with the longest for this male age group being 26 years.

Table 14.**Minimum number of years together in current relationship for 50% and 25% of male and female gender identity groups according to age**

Age group	Female 50%=>	Female 25%=>	Female longest	Male 50%=>	Male 25%=>	Male longest
18-19	1.0	2.0	4.0	0.2	0.6	1.0
20-29	1.2	3.0	10.0	2.0	4.0	11.0
30-39	3.0	6.0	15.0	5.0	9.0	17.0
40-49	3.0	9.0	23.0	8.0	13.0	26.0
50-59	5.0	11.0	31.0	7.0	19.0	33.0
60 plus	1.0	6.0	28.0	7.0	18.0	41.0

5.1.3 Transgender, Transsexual and Intersex Participants

Table 15 below lists the numbers of transgender, transsexual and intersex participants who reported that they had a current regular same-sex partner. The current length of these relationships ranged from 1 month to 10 years with the longest on average being for transgender/transsexual male participants. Transgender/transsexual male participants who reported currently having a regular partner were also younger relative to others listed in Table 15, with 80% being under the age of 35. The large majority of those partnered in the remaining three groups were over the age of 35.

Table 15.**Transgender/transsexual and intersex participants with regular same-sex partner**

	Yes (No)
Transgender/Transsexual - Female	4 (7)
Transgender/Transsexual - Male	5 (2)
Intersex - Female	3 (2)
Intersex - Male	0 (2)

5.1.4 Concluding Comment

Discussion of the findings in this chapter regarding the duration of same-sex relationships is not meant to imply that longer relationships are necessarily better relationships. Further, any interpretation of the length of relationships of participants in this survey is difficult due to a host of factors. First, the data represent ongoing relationships, including those which were just recently formed. Second, nonheterosexuals and their relationships continue to be perceived less favourably by certain sectors (e.g., Newspoll, 2006) and at this moment relationships are not affirmed by society through official registration or ceremonial process in Australian national law. Additionally, at the time the current survey was conducted, Australian national law recognising de facto status for same-sex couples had only just come into effect, and state and territory provisions for relationship registration were relatively recent and available only in some jurisdictions. This restricted access to any formal recognition of same-sex relationships in Australia may have some influence on the longevity of these relationships. For example, researchers have argued that socially sanctioned

relationships, such as marriages (between different-sex couples), may provide for more enduring relationships (albeit not necessarily positive) through perceptions of increased commitment and social support (e.g., Cherlin, 2004). In keeping with this argument, an American study, involving 552 married same-sex couples living in Massachusetts, found that a substantial majority reported that marriage had increased their commitment to their spouses, and that they felt more accepted by their communities and families as a result (Ramos, Goldberg, & Badgett, 2009). Lastly, it is important to acknowledge the many factors which could have inhibited the same-sex relationships of participants in the current survey from forming in the first place. For example, and as discussed earlier in this report (see section 3.3), those in older age groups ‘came out’, on average, to someone for the very first time at significantly older ages. Therefore, in the case of more senior participants, some would not have been able to even start a relationship with someone of the same sex until later years in life. This would naturally have an impact on the length of the relationship relative to a person’s age.

5.2 Current Legal Status of Same-Sex Relationship

Note: Findings were initially released based on a larger sample of participants, including those who did not complete the survey in full. For comparative figures see Appendix-Auxiliary Report.

Participants who reported that they currently had a regular same-sex partner (whether living together or apart) were asked how they would describe their current same-sex relationship in legal terms. To minimise confusion, participants were provided with examples for relationships formalised through a state or municipal registry in Australia. These were ACT Civil Partnership, City of Melbourne Relationship Declaration, City of Sydney Relationship Declaration, Tasmania Significant Relationship, Victoria Domestic Partnership and Yarra City Council Relationship Declaration. Examples of relationships recognised overseas were provided next to the relevant answer options (see Table 16 below).

Table 16.

Reported current legal status of same-sex relationship for participants with a regular same-sex partner, living together or apart

	<i>N</i>	%
No legal status	484	39.5
De facto	660	53.8
Relationship formalised through a state or municipal registry (see examples above)	46	3.8
Overseas recognised relationship other than marriage (e.g., UK Civil Partnership, NZ Civil Union)	39	3.2
Overseas marriage (e.g., Canada, Netherlands, South Africa, Massachusetts)	22	1.8

Note: Respondents were able to select more than one option.

Participants were able to select more than one option regarding the legal status of their current relationship with their regular partner, resulting in a total of over 100%. The question asking participants how they would describe the legal status of their same-sex relationship also provided the option of selecting ‘Other’. Forty-six participants (3.8%) selected this ‘Other’ option. However, the majority of these participants (29 out of 46) had also selected one of the categories listed in

Table 16 and simply utilised the ‘Other’ text box to clarify their selection. Three participants used the ‘Other’ option to state that they were unsure about the legal status of their relationship and 13 did not make the legal status of their relationship clear in their description.

Responses for this second report were very similar to those for the Auxiliary Report on relationship recognition (see Appendix). For example, 39.5% of this sample reported no legal status compared with 40.5% in the first report and 53.8% reported being in a de facto relationship in this sample compared with 53.1% in the first report.

5.2.1 Gender Identity and Current Legal Status

Table 17 lists the numbers and percentages of participants according to the reported legal status of their relationships and their gender identity. Larger percentages of gender different participants reported that their current relationship had no legal status when compared with those identifying as male or female. It is important to note, however, that gender different participants were younger on average when compared with the rest of the sample, with 50% aged 26 years or under. Legal status of relationships was markedly similar between male and female identifying participants. However, given the number of male identifying participants in this particular sample relative to female, larger percentages of those who identified as male reported being in a formally registered relationship whether in Australia or overseas. Small numbers of participants also selected the ‘Other’ option. For clarification of these ‘Other’ responses, refer to section 5.2.

Table 17.

Reported current legal status of same-sex relationship for participants with a regular same-sex partner according to gender identity

	N - F	% - F	N - M	% - M	N- GD	% - GD
No legal status	286	38.5	185	39.7	13	72.2
De facto	408	55.0	249	53.4	3	16.7
Relationship formalised through a state or municipal registry	26	3.5	20	4.3	-	-
Overseas recognised relationship other than marriage (e.g., UK Civil Partnership, NZ Civil Union)	20	2.7	19	4.1	-	-
Overseas marriage (e.g., Canada, Netherlands, South Africa, Massachusetts)	10	1.3	12	3.9	-	-

Note: Respondents were able to select more than one option.
 F = Female, M = Male, GD = Gender Different

5.2.2 Commitment Ceremonies

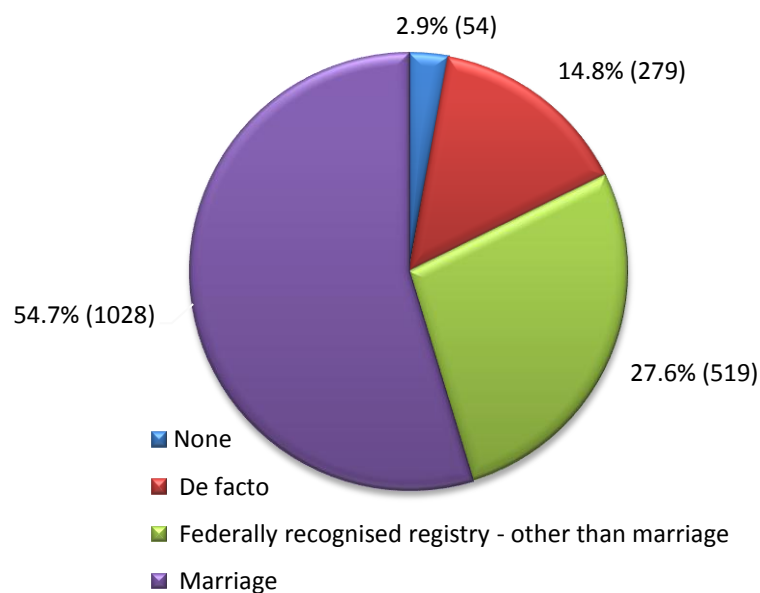
Of the participants with a current regular same-sex partner, 10.4% reported that they had a commitment ceremony unrelated to any official registration of a relationship. Of these individuals, 70% identified as female and 70% were from the older cohort of 35 years of age or over, when considering the three main cohorts in this survey (i.e., under 25 years, 25-34 years, 35+ years).

5.3 Personal Preference for Legal Recognition of Same-Sex Relationship

All participants, regardless of whether or not they were currently in a same-sex relationship, were asked about their personal preference for legal relationship recognition in Australia. Figure 14 below indicates the responses to the question “If you are or were to become involved in a long-term committed same-sex relationship, in what way would you prefer Australian law to recognise your relationship?”

Figure 14.

Personal preference for relationship recognition - general sample (including those not currently in a same-sex relationship)



The percentages for personal preference for relationship recognition were consistent with those for the earlier Auxiliary Report, which included the participants who did not complete the survey in full. In the earlier report, 54.2% reported a preference for marriage vs. 54.7% for the current sample, 27.8% for a federally recognised relationship documented at a registry other than marriage vs. the current 27.6%, 15.0% for de facto status vs. the current 14.8%, and 3.0% none vs. the current 2.9%. Further, a clear majority preference for marriage was found for all states and the Australian Capital Territory. The Northern Territory was the only area for which this was not the case with 23.5% indicating that they would prefer to marry and an even percentage of 35.3% for both de facto and a federally recognised relationship documented at a registry other than marriage. Although these findings may reflect genuine differences in relationship preferences for this group compared with the rest of the sample, the small number of participants ($N=18$) from this area very much limits the extent to which these results can be interpreted as being representative.

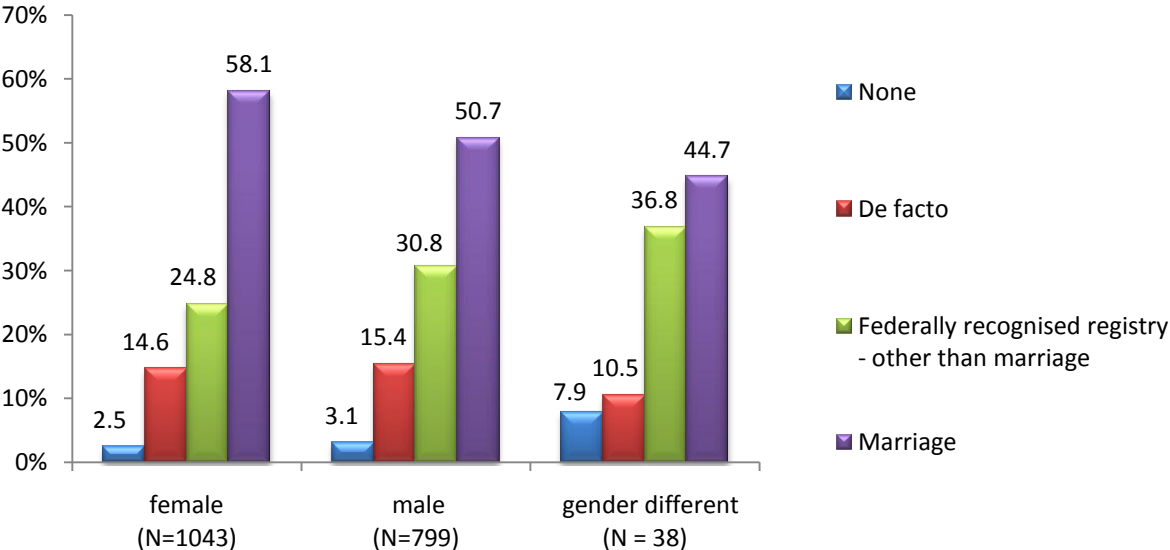
Of the total sample, six participants stated that they preferred a Civil Union and three stated that they preferred a Civil Partnership, in the 'Other' text box provided. As both types of relationships are forms of federally recognised relationships documented at a registry (other than marriage), these nine responses were included in the main category 'Federally recognised registry- other than marriage'. Nineteen participants from this sample selected the 'not applicable' option (e.g., never wish to be in a long-term committed same-sex relationship) and were therefore excluded from the analysis. From the remaining sample of 2,013, 133 participants selected the 'Other' option with the most common statement used to clarify this selection being that they simply wanted the same rights as heterosexuals (e.g., "identical to opposite-sex relationship recognition and rights", "exactly the same as heterosexual couples"). These responses, although making an important statement, did not make clear a single preference as instructed by the question. Therefore, these responses, along with those from others who did not indicate a specific preference, were not included in this analysis. However, it is acknowledged that making a specific choice may have been difficult for some participants, particularly those who were not currently in a committed same-sex relationship.

5.3.1 Gender Identity and Relationship Recognition

Figure 15 shows the percentages for personal preference for relationship recognition according to gender identity. Although the majority of both male and female identifying participants selected 'marriage' as their personal choice, the percentage was larger among those identifying as female (when considering younger-age participants, this difference between males and females was no longer observed - see Figure 17). Marriage was the most frequent option for gender different participants, however, unlike for male and female respondents, marriage was the preferred option of less than 50%. In all cases, a federally recognised relationship documented at a registry (other than marriage) was the second most frequent choice, followed by de facto.

Figure 15.

Percentages of participants for personal preference for relationship recognition according to gender identity groups

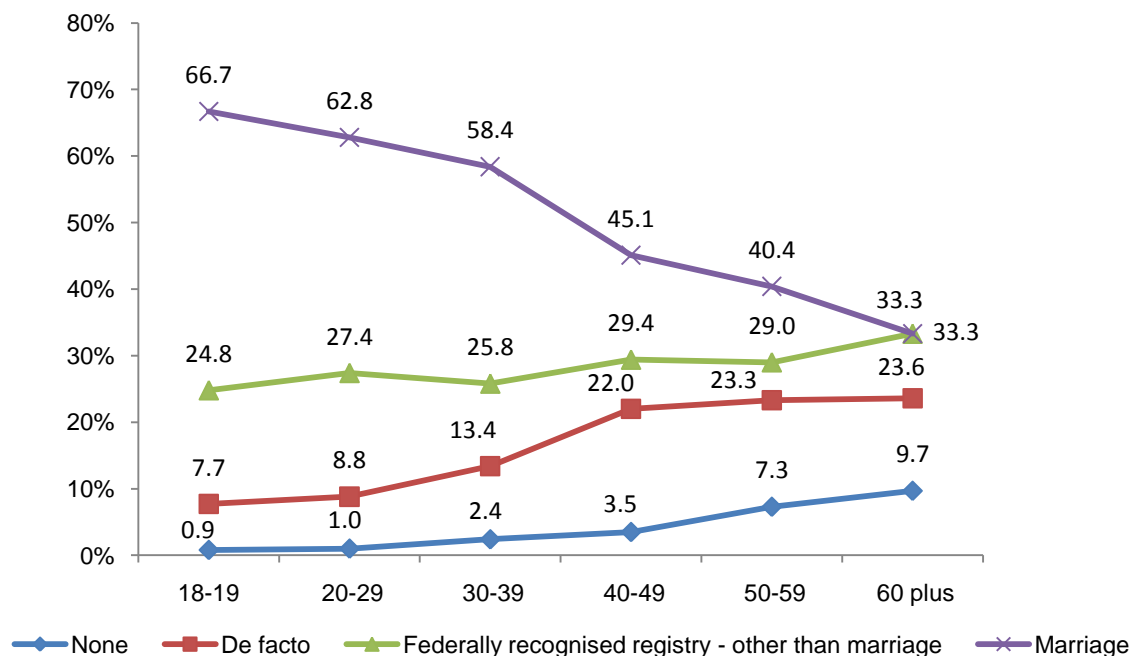


5.3.2 Age and Relationship Recognition

Figure 16 below shows the percentages for participants' personal preferences for relationship recognition by age group. As three people did not provide their age, the numbers are three fewer than those included in Figure 15 (for information on invalid responses refer to section 5.3). When taking into account a person's age, findings showed that the percentages of those who selected marriage as their personal choice increased as the age of participants decreased. For example, two-thirds of participants 18-19 selected marriage as their personal preference compared with one third of those 60 years of age or older. Percentages for de facto and no legal recognition increased as age of participants increased. Preferences for a federally recognised registry (other than marriage) varied slightly between age groups, relative to the other three options. The majority of both male and female participants in the three younger age groups (i.e., 18-19, 20-29, and 30-39) selected marriage as their personal choice. Although marriage remained the most frequent response for both male and female participants for the older age groups (except the 60+ group), the numbers in these cases were less than 50%. For gender different participants, results showing a majority for marriage was found only for those aged 18-19, with percentages evenly split between marriage and a federally recognised registry (other than marriage) for the remaining age groups.

Figure 16.

Percentages of participants for personal preference for relationship recognition according to age group (N = 1877)

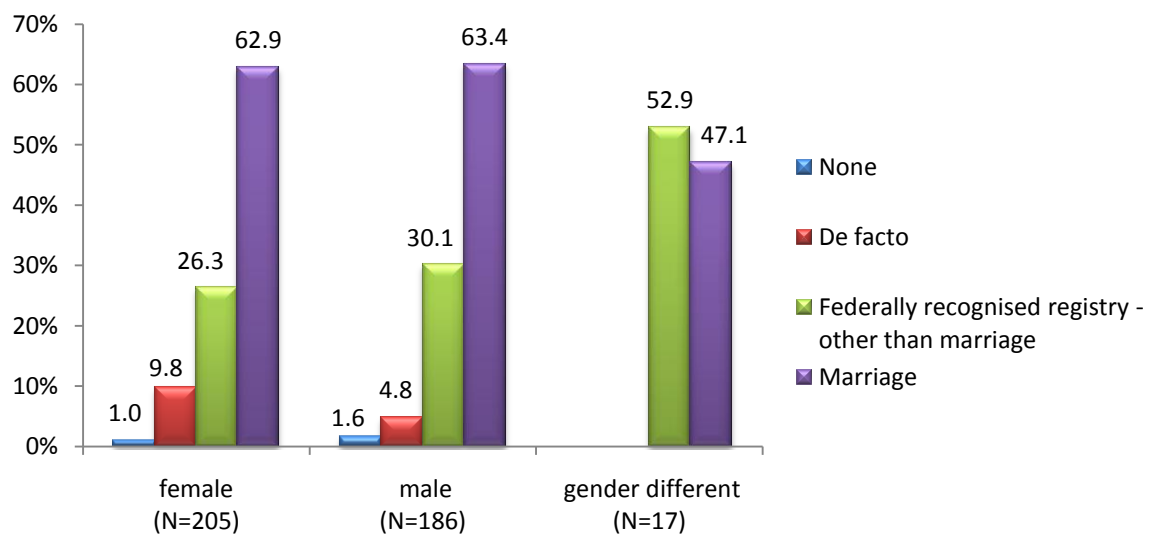


5.3.3 Relationship Recognition for Younger-Age Participants

As previously noted, although overall the majority of both male and female identifying participants selected marriage as their personal choice (see Figure 15), the percentage was larger among those identifying as female (58.1%) when compared with male (50.7%). When observing the findings for preferred relationship recognition for the three main age categories in this survey (i.e., under 25, 25-34, 35+), the greater preference for marriage among female participants, relative to male, was no longer apparent for the youngest cohort. Younger-age participants are more likely to have experienced greater mainstream acceptance relative to their years (Savin-Williams, 2005). Further, the youngest of these have approached and/or entered into their adulthood during a time when the definition of marriage, in a growing number of countries, has been extended to include two consenting adults. It is possible then that this experience of greater social inclusion at least partially explains the higher reported preference for marriage amongst these younger individuals (see Figure 16) and what appears to be a greater similarity between genders (see Figure 17).

Figure 17.

Percentages of participants for personal preference for relationship recognition according to gender identity for participants 18-24 yrs



5.3.4 Transgender, Transsexual and Intersex Participants

Table 18 provides the numbers of transgender/transsexual and intersex participants according to their personal preferences for relationship recognition. In the case of transgender/transsexual and intersex participants identifying as female, the majority selected marriage as their personal choice. For those identifying as male, the choice was more varied. Of the three participants with responses missing, two transgender/transsexual participants (1 female, 1 male) stated in the comment box that they simply felt all types of relationships should be available and treated equally. As this particular question requested a personal choice, these important statements were noted but not included with the main data. The remaining missing participant selected the 'not applicable' option.

Table 18.

Numbers of transgender/transsexual and intersex participants for personal preference for relationship recognition

	None	De facto	Fed. Registry	Marriage	Missing
Transgender/Transsexual - Female	1	1	2	6	1
Transgender/Transsexual - Male	1	2	1	1	2
Intersex - Female	0	0	0	5	0
Intersex - Male	0	0	2	0	0

5.4 Preferred Legal Recognition of Relationship for those Partnered

Figures 18 through to 22 indicate the personal preferences for the legal recognition of a committed same-sex relationship for participants who reported currently having a regular same-sex partner whether living together or apart (*N* = 1,226). Those with invalid responses, for reasons described in section 5.3, were not included in these particular analyses leaving a total of 1,143 responses across categories. Responses are grouped according to the current legal status of participants’ same-sex relationships. For findings on the majority preferences for marriage (75-80%) for those partnered and living with young children, refer to section 6.3.

Figure 18.

Preferred legal recognition for those currently in a same-sex de facto relationship (*N* = 620)

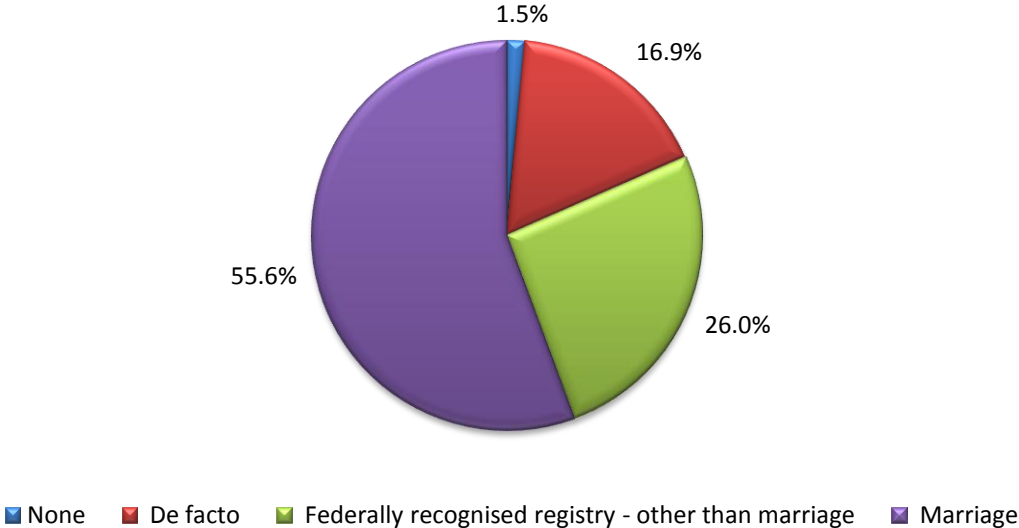


Figure 19.

Preferred legal recognition for those with a current same-sex relationship formalised through a state or municipal registry - for examples, see section 5.2 (N = 45)

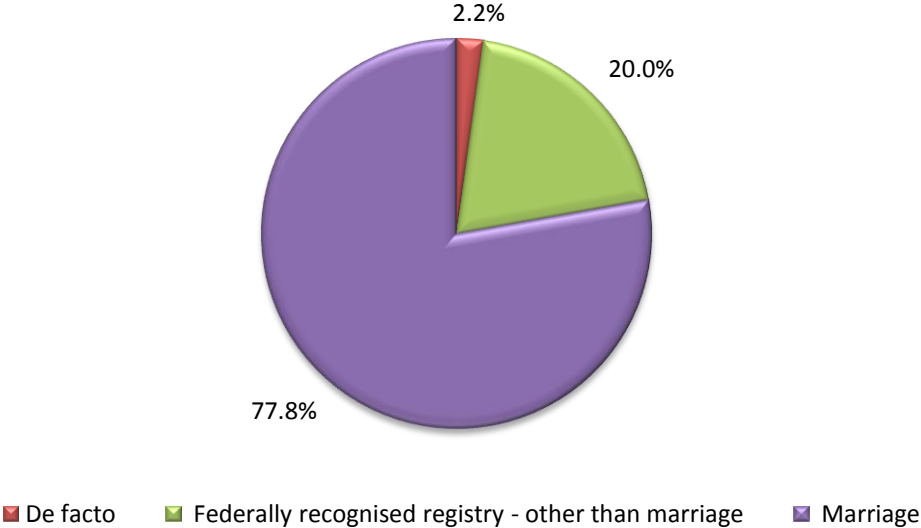


Figure 20.

Preferred legal recognition for those currently in an overseas recognised relationship other than marriage - e.g., NZ Civil Union, UK Civil Partnership (N = 39)

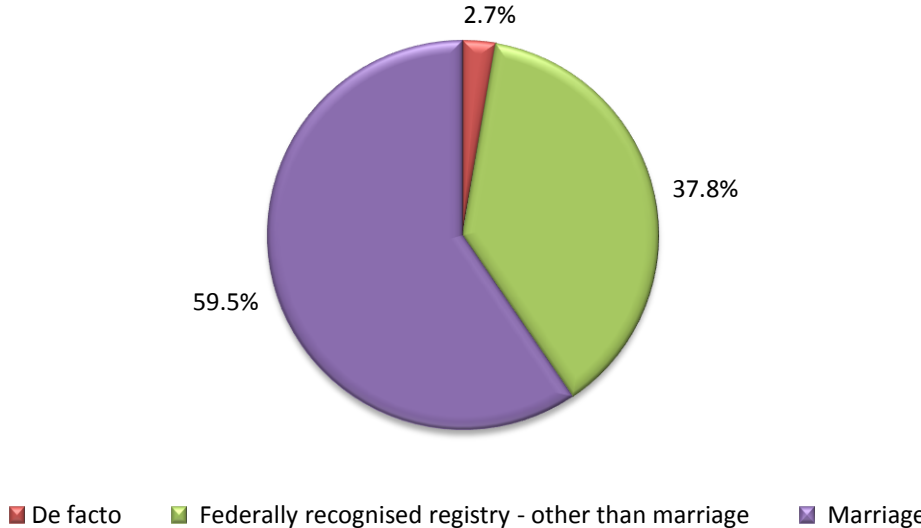


Figure 21.

Preferred legal recognition for those currently in an overseas marriage (N = 22)

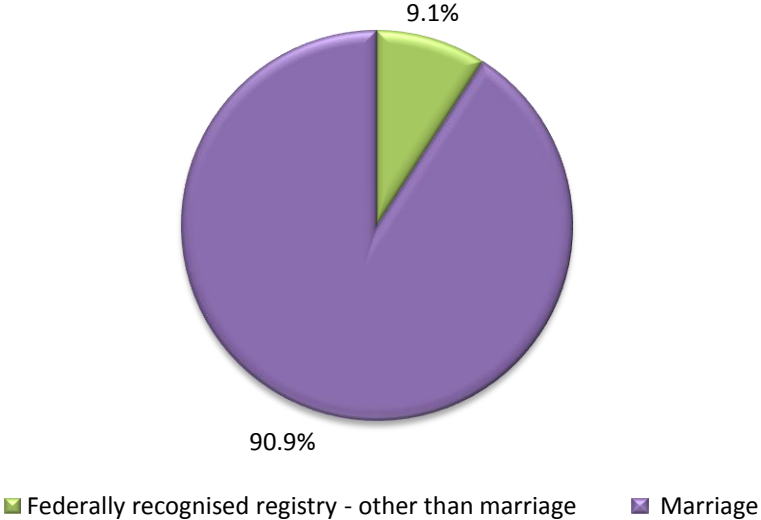
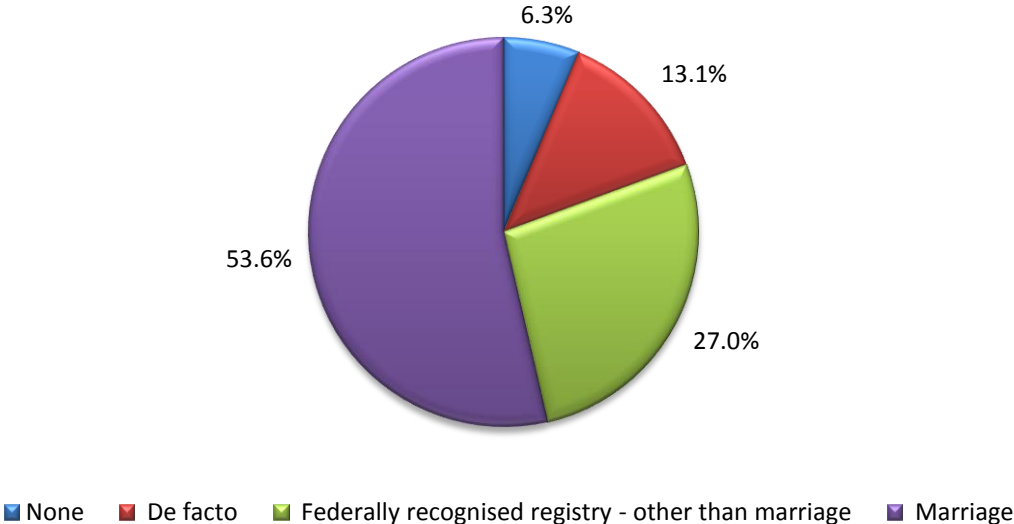


Figure 22.

Preferred legal recognition for those currently in a same-sex relationship with no legal status (N = 484)

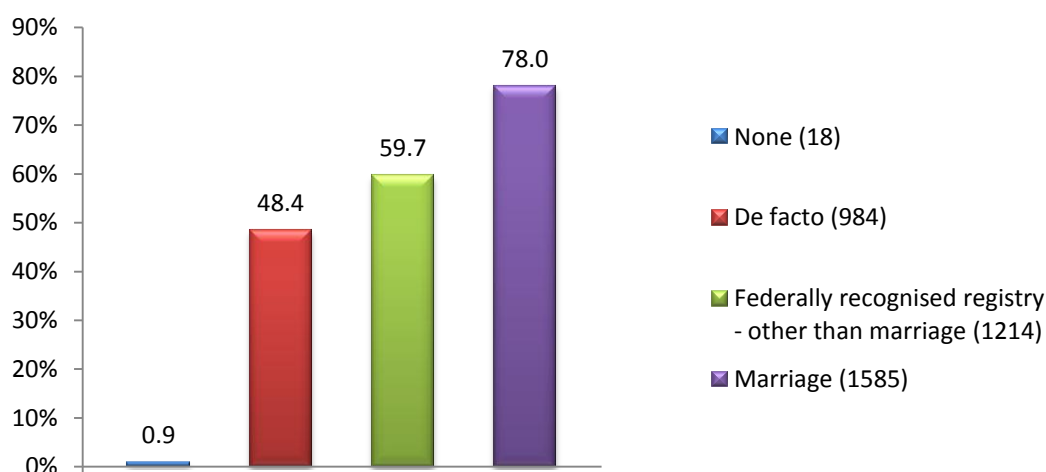


5.5 Preferred Options for Relationship Recognition in Australia

Participants were also asked about their preferences regarding legal recognition in Australia for same-sex couples in general. Figure 23 below shows participants' responses to the question "Irrespective of your personal preference, which form(s) of relationship recognition would you like to see remain and/or become available for same-sex couples in Australia?" Note: Participants in this instance were able to select multiple options.

Figure 23.

Percentages of participants for preferred legal options for same-sex couples in Australia (N =2032)



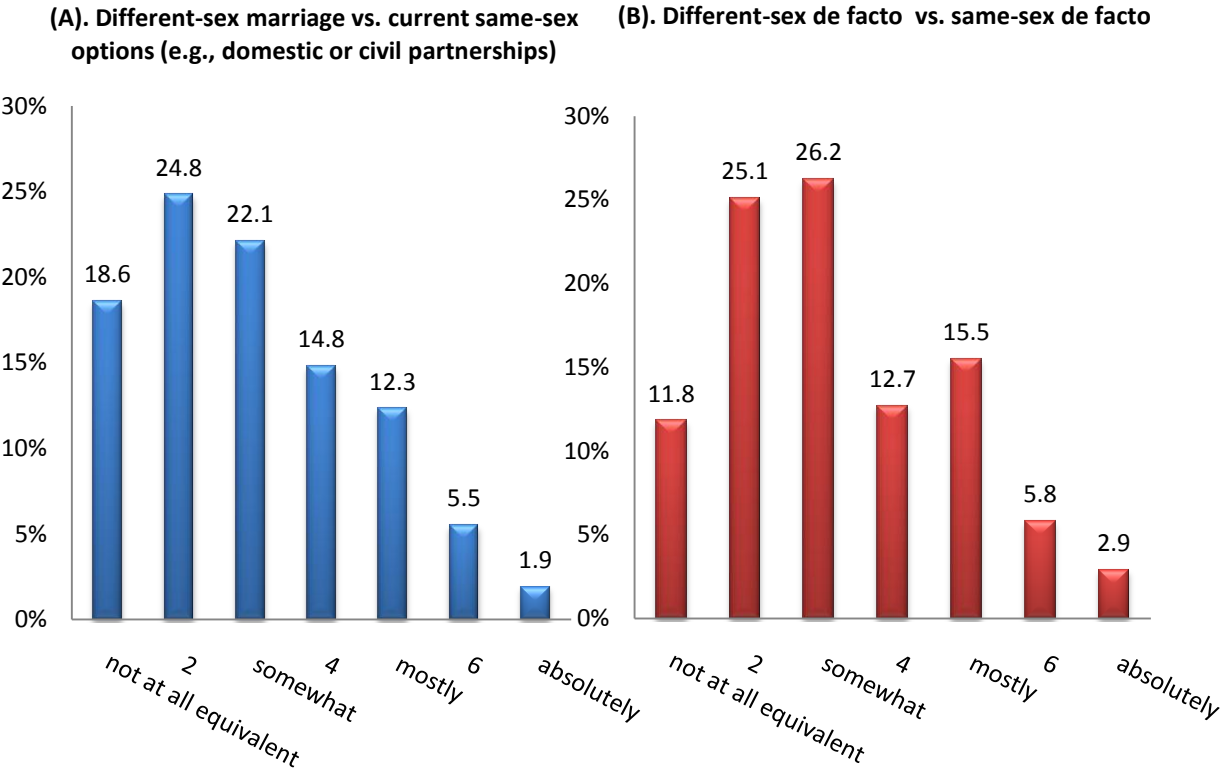
Of the total sample, 78% of participants reported that they felt marriage should be made available for same-sex couples in Australia, 59.7% were in favour of the availability of a federally recognised relationship documented at a registry, and 48.4% were in favour of the option for de facto status. As this question allowed for multiple responses, these figures indicate that many felt that nonheterosexual couples should simply be given a choice.

5.6 Perceptions of the Public's Attitude towards Same-Sex Relationships

The survey also asked participants how they felt the Australian public viewed legally recognised same-sex relationships relative to legally recognised different-sex relationships. Specifically, participants were asked how equivalent in value (i.e., worth) they felt the public viewed a) same-sex de facto relationships when compared with different-sex de facto relationships and b) current same-sex options for officially registered relationships (e.g., domestic and civil partnerships) compared with different-sex marriages. Figure 24 (A and B) provides the percentages of participants responding to the scale 1 = *not at all equivalent in value* to 7 = *absolutely equivalent in value*. These questions also included a separate option for those who felt unable to make a judgement. A total of 1,938 participants responded to both, 92 selecting 'unsure' for at least one of the questions and two chose not to respond.

Figure 24 (A and B).

Participants perceptions of the Australian public’s perception of the value (i.e., worth) of same-sex relationships relative to different-sex relationships (N = 1938)



Overall, both types of same-sex relationships were perceived by participants as being considered by the general public to be of lesser value than their different-sex counterparts⁶. Given the long and ongoing battle for relationship recognition for nonheterosexual couples, this is not surprising. More interestingly, and although the difference was not large, this discrepancy was significantly greater when it came to different-sex marriages vs. other forms of relationship registration available to same-sex couples. It is important to note, however, that de facto status for same-sex couples in Australia came into effect only months before the commencement date of this survey. Further, a relatively small number of same-sex couples have documented their relationships through a state or municipal registry (TGLRG, 2010). Given this, perceptions in most cases were not likely to have been based on any personal experience. Additionally, the responses to these questions do not necessarily reflect participants’ personal views on the value of these different types of relationships, rather simply how they feel they are valued by others.

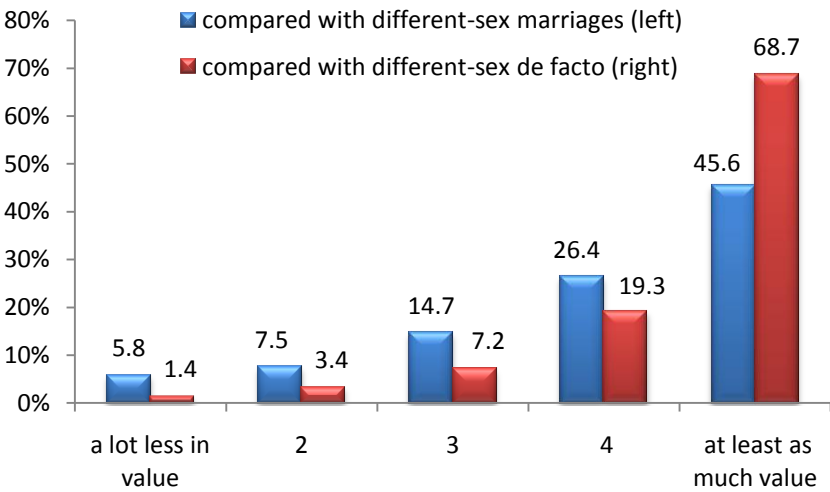
⁶ Marriage is currently not available to same-sex couples in Australia, however, same-sex relationships can be formally recognised through a state or municipal registry in some jurisdictions.

5.7 Perceptions of Others' Attitudes Regarding the Value of One's Same-Sex Relationship

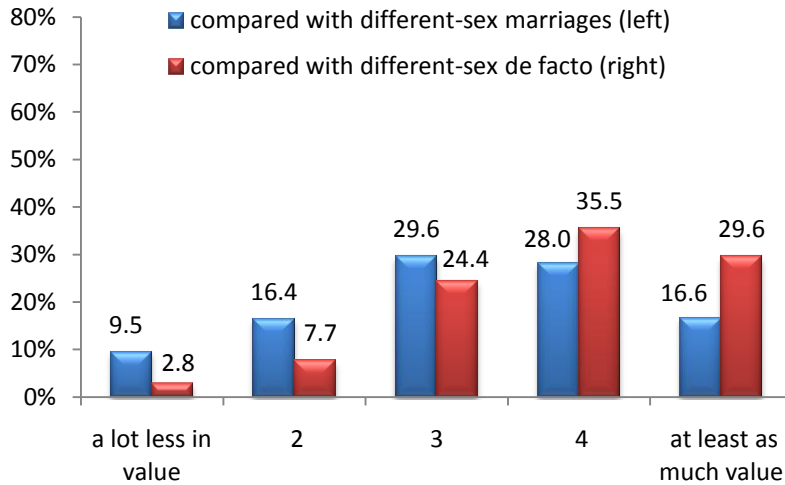
Participants who reported having a same-sex partner were asked how equivalent in value (i.e., worth) they felt others, who were aware of their relationships, viewed their particular relationship relative to different-sex de facto relationships and marriages. Unlike the previous questions, that focused on perceptions of the public's attitude towards same-sex relationships, these questions allowed for a more personal assessment based on one's own experiences. Response options ranged from 1 = *a lot less in value* to 5 = *at least as much value*. Numbers of participants represent those who answered both questions, had a regular same-sex partner and reported others were aware of their relationships for each of the areas assessed. Analyses revealed that, in all cases, a person's own same-sex relationship was perceived to be seen by others as being of lesser value to a significantly greater extent when compared with different-sex marriages than when compared with different-sex de facto relationships. When considering the views of heterosexual friends and contacts apart from friends (e.g., neighbours, co-workers, employers, and teachers) these findings were even more pronounced among participants who reported that they would prefer to marry. Figure 25 provides the percentages according to response options in relation to perceptions of heterosexual friends, heterosexual contacts (apart from friends), parents and siblings. For example, 68.7% of participants with a same-sex partner felt that their heterosexual friends, overall, considered their same-sex relationships to have at least as much value as different-sex de facto relationships, however, only 45.6% reported the same when it came to comparisons with different-sex marriages. In the case of family, 51.2% of participants felt that their parent(s) considered their same-sex relationships to have at least as much value as different-sex de facto relationships, however, only a third (33.6%) reported the same for the comparison with different-sex marriages.

Figure 25 (A, B, C and D).

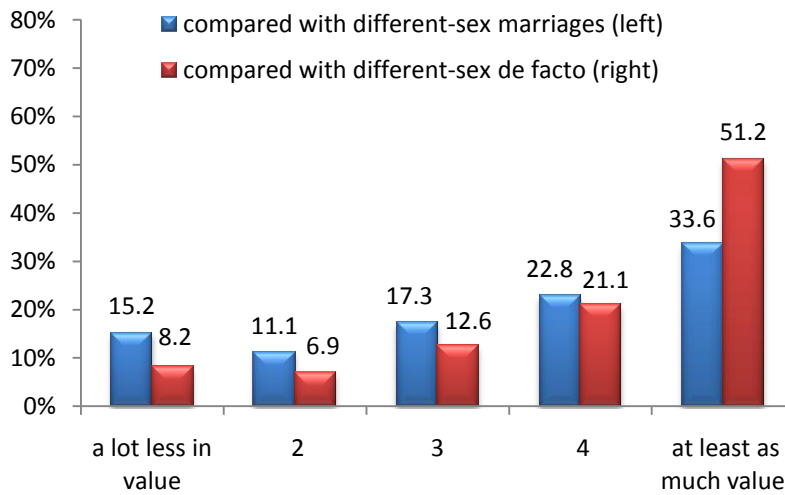
Participants' perceptions of how heterosexual friends, contacts and family members valued their same-sex relationships relative to different-sex relationships



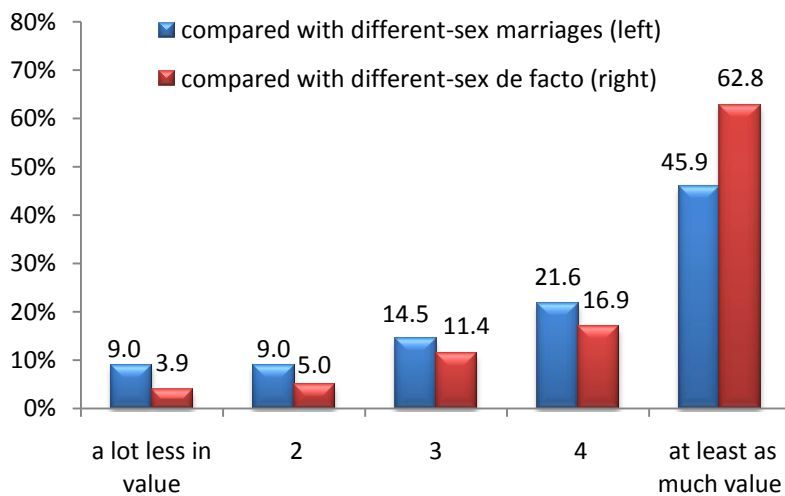
A. Perceptions of how heterosexual friends value one's same-sex relationship (N=1153)



B. Perceptions of how heterosexual contacts value own relationship (N = 1075)



C. Perceptions of how parent(s) value own relationship (N = 1085)



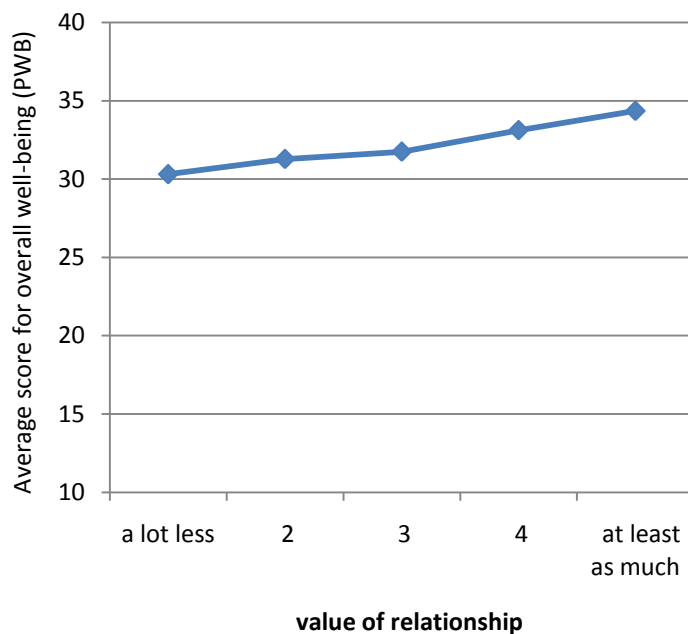
D. Perceptions of how sibling(s) value own relationship (N = 1080)

5.8 Well-Being and Perceptions of How Others Value One's Relationship

The more people felt their relationships were valued on a comparable level with different-sex relationships the significantly greater their reported level of overall well-being. This was found to be the case when considering the extent to which participants felt that their heterosexual friends, heterosexual contacts (such as neighbours, employers, teachers or co-workers), parents and siblings valued their same-sex relationships relative to different-sex de facto relationships and marriages. As an example, Figure 26 below shows the relationship between well-being and perceptions of how heterosexual friends value one's same-sex relationship relative to different-sex marriages.

Figure 26.

The relationship between overall psychological well-being (PWB) and perceptions of how heterosexual friends value one's same-sex relationship compared with different-sex marriages



5.9 Summary

Despite the reference to percentages regarding the relationship recognition measures presented in this survey, it is acknowledge that numbers are not necessarily relevant when it comes to the argument for relationship equality. As is often stated, it is about the right to choose. The rationale for obtaining figures for preferred relationship recognition in this survey was to be able to add to the current literature on nonheterosexual relationships and provide information to help address the many myths that propagate due to the limited information available.

This national survey was the first to examine same-sex attracted Australians' preferences for various forms of relationship recognition since the introduction of de facto status for same-sex couples at a federal level. It is also the first major study to investigate preferences for relationship recognition,

while taking into account the current legal status (in Australia or overseas) of an individual's same-sex relationship.

Findings from the relationship recognition measures of this survey demonstrate that same-sex attracted individuals, like other Australians, differ in the way they prefer their relationships to be formally recognised. However, the results showed that the majority of same-sex attracted participants selected marriage as their personal choice. A federally recognised relationship documented at a registry other than marriage was the second most popular option, and de facto status was the third. The preference for a relationship without any legal status was selected by only 2.9% of the overall sample.

Marriage was found to be the choice of the majority irrespective of the current legal status of participants' same-sex relationships (including no legal status). For example, of those currently in a de facto relationship, 55.6% stated they preferred marriage for themselves, 26% stated that they preferred a federally recognised relationship other than marriage, 16.9% selected de facto and 1.5% chose no legal status (Note: for similar figures, including participants who did not complete the survey in full, please refer to the Auxiliary Report).

Interestingly, the younger the age of the participant the more likely they were to have selected marriage as their personal choice. For example, 66.7% of those 18-19 and 62.8% of those 20-29 selected marriage as their personal preference. Although the majority of both male and female identifying participants reported that they preferred to marry, the percentage was significantly higher for females. For younger-age participants (under 25 years) differences between males and females were no longer observed with 63% from both groups selecting the option to marry.

Participants were also given the opportunity to select which forms of legal relationship recognition they would like to see remain and/or become available in this country for same-sex couples in general. Responses to this measure (which allowed for multiple selections) showed that 78% would like to see marriage become available as an option, 59.7% would like to see a federally recognised relationship other than marriage be made available and 48.4% would like to see de facto recognition remain. These percentages indicate that many participants selected multiple options, suggesting that simply having a choice was an important factor.

Participants with a regular same-sex partner reported that they felt their own same-sex relationship was seen by others (heterosexual friends, contacts other than friends, and family) as being of lesser value to a significantly greater extent when compared with different-sex marriages than when compared with different-sex de facto relationships. Further, these findings were even more pronounced among those who reported that they would like to be able to marry, supporting the argument that a desire to marry, among other factors, is likely to be influenced by one's perception of the value society places on such unions. Importantly, the more participants felt others valued their relationships, relative to different-sex relationships, the greater their reported psychological well-being.

6. Children

6.1 Children in a Person’s Life

Participants were asked if there were any children (young or adult) in their lives, whether their own or the result of a current or previous relationship. The response options were ‘No’, ‘Yes’ ‘Expecting a child’ and ‘Planning on having children’. As a person could have children but also plan on or be expecting another, participants could select more than one option. Those who responded with ‘yes’ were then asked about the extent to which they lived or spent time with the child/children and each child’s age.

When looking at the total sample, 29.2% of females, 10.0% of males and 25.5% of gender different participants reported having children in their lives, whether their own or the result of a current or previous relationship (see Figure 19). For those with a current same-sex partner, a third of both gender different and female participants reported having children in their lives compared with 13.9% of partnered males. The similar percentages for female and gender different participants may be largely attributed to the fact that 83% of gender different participants reported that they were defined as biologically female at birth. Although not included in the figures below, some participants mentioned in the comment box provided that although they did not have their own children, or those from a current or previous relationship, they were nonetheless a substantial part of their nieces and/or nephews lives. A more meaningful interpretation of these findings (i.e., percentages for those at ages most likely to have children) is provided on the following page.

Table 19.

Percentages of participants with children currently in their lives (one’s own or from a current or previous relationship), expecting a child or who plan on having children, for the total sample and those with a same-sex partner

Children	Female	Female	Male	Male	Gender	Gender
	Total	Partnered	Total	Partnered	Different	Different
	(1125)	(742)	(860)	(466)	(47)	(18)
Plan on having	19.4%	20.9%	13.1%	11.4%	23.4%	22.2%
Expecting	1.0%	1.1%	0.1%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Have	29.2%	33.4%	10.0%	13.9%	25.5%	33.3%

Numbers of participants are provided in brackets (). Multiple responses were possible.

6.1.1 Number and Ages of Children

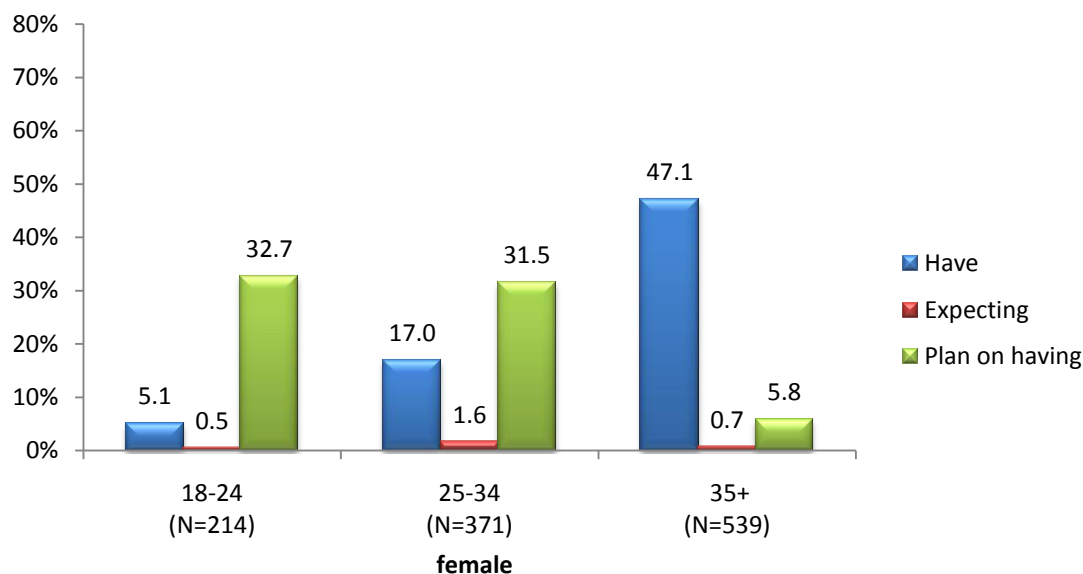
The average number of children for participants with children in their lives, whether their own or the result of a current or previous relationship, was 1.9. Fifteen participants did not provide a specific number. Of the remaining sample of 411, 41.1% reported one child, 35.8% two children and 23.1% three children or more. For participants in the youngest cohort in this survey (< 25 years) 50% reported the eldest child to be 3 years of age or younger, for those aged 25-34 years, 50% reported the eldest to be 7 or younger and for those aged 35 years or over, 50% reported the eldest to be 18 or younger.

6.1.2 Percentages with Children According to Gender Identity and Age of Cohort

Figures 27 through to 29 provide the percentages of participants who reported that they had children in their lives, whether their own or as a result of a current or previous relationship, according to gender identity and age of cohort. Also included are the figures for those who reported that they were expecting a child and those who reported that they planned on having children. More than one selection was made possible. Overall 29.2 % of participants who identified as female reporting having children in their lives, whether their own or as a result of a current or previous relationship (see Table 19), however, when considering those in the age group most likely to have children⁷ (i.e., those 35 years of age or over) the figure was 47.1% (see Figure 27). Although a high percentage (69.2%) of gender different participants 35 years of age and over reported that they had children in their lives, the interpretation of this finding is severely limited due to the small number in this age group (see Figure 29). For participants identifying as male, the overall percentage of those with children in their lives was 10%, however, for males 35 years of age or over it was 17.6% (see Figure 28).

Figure 27.

Percentages of female participants with children currently in their lives (one’s own or from a current or previous relationship), expecting a child or who plan on having children



⁷ According to data from the 2006 Census, the percentages of women from the general population who had not had children were 85.5% of those 20-24 years of age, 36.6% of those 30-34 years of age and 15.9% of those 40-44 years of age (ABS, 2008).

Figure 28.

Percentages of male participants with children currently in their lives (one’s own or from a current or previous relationship), expecting a child or who plan on having children

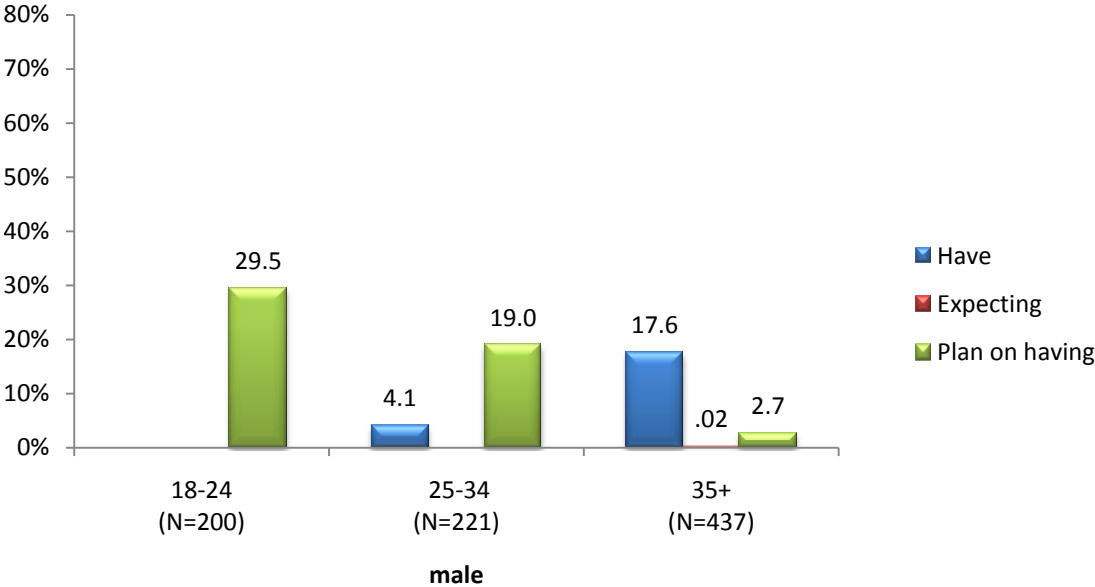
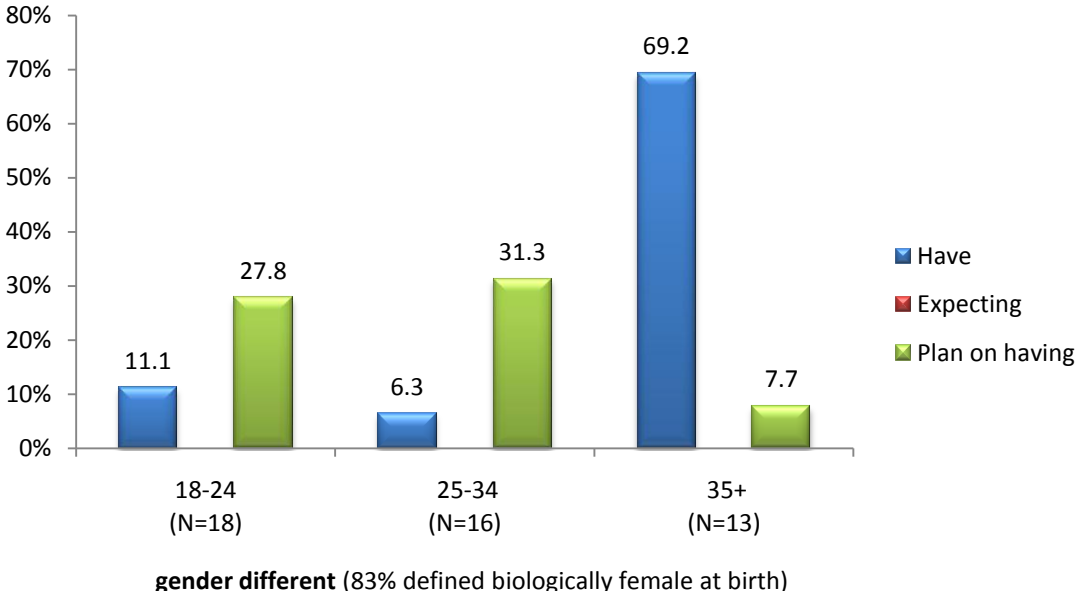


Figure 29.

Percentages of gender different participants with children currently in their lives (one’s own or from a current or previous relationship), expecting a child or who plan on having children



gender different (83% defined biologically female at birth)

6.2 Time Spent Sharing or Living with Children

Participants who reported having children as part of their lives (whether their own or from a current or previous relationship) were asked about the extent to which they lived or spent time with the child or children. As adult children are more likely to be living independently, analyses were first conducted for those who reported at least one child still under the age of 20⁸. As shown in Table 20 below, for those identifying as female, 95.3% spent time with these children, 89.7% spent time on a regular basis (ranging from sometime to full-time) and 64.7% were with these children full-time. For those identifying as male, 87% spent time with these children, 64.8% spent time on a regular basis (ranging from sometime to full-time) and 24.1% were with these children full-time. For gender different participants, 80% spent time with these children, 60% spent time on a regular basis (sometime or full-time) and 40% were with them full-time.

Table 20.

Percentages according to length of time spent with children for participants with at least one child still under the age of 20 years, for each of the three gender identity groups

Time with children	Female	Male	Gender different
	(232)	(54)	(10)
None	4.7%	13.0%	20.0%
Sometime (irregular)	5.6%	22.2%	20.0%
Sometime (regular)	5.6%	33.3%	20.0%
Half the time	9.5%	7.4%	0.0%
Most of the time	9.9%	0.0%	0.0%
Full-time	64.7%	24.1%	40.0%

Numbers of participants are provided in brackets ().

6.2.1 Time Shared for Those with All Children 20 Years of Age or Over

An additional 111 participants (74% female) had children in their lives of whom none were under 20 years of age. For this group, 61.3% spent time with these adult children and 25.3% spent time on a regular basis (ranging from sometime to full-time). In the case of participants identifying as female, with all children at least 20 years of age or older, 7.3% lived full-time with the adult child/children and a further 6.1% spent most of the time with them.

6.2.2 Transgender, Transsexual and Intersex Participants

Of those who identified as transgender/transsexual female ($N = 11$), intersex female ($N = 5$) and intersex male ($N = 2$), 40-50% reported having children in their lives, either their own or from a current or previous relationship. Further, two of the participants who identified as transgender/transsexual male ($N = 7$) and one who identified as transgender/transsexual female reported that they planned on having children. Of those with children in their lives, at least 40% spent time with these children on a regular basis and three of these participants lived with the child/children full-time.

⁸ Based on data from the 2006-07 Family Characteristics and Transitions Survey, a 2009 report from the Australian Bureau of Statistics revealed that women tend to first leave home at 19.8 years of age and men at 20.9 years of age (ABS, 2009a).

6.3 Marriage Preferences among those Partnered and Living with Children

A majority of participants (54.2%) who reported that children were not currently a part of their lives still selected marriage as their personal choice for relationship recognition. The percentages reporting a preference for marriage, however, were higher among participants with a same-sex partner and living full-time with children, particularly young children. For these participants, and where the eldest was reported to be under 13 years of age (generally primary school age or under), 74.7% reported they personally preferred marriage. In cases where the eldest was under 5 (generally non-school age) the figure for marriage was 80.8%. Perhaps for these couples, the need to have their relationships legitimised is of even greater concern, given the strong opposition to same-sex parenting from certain sectors (e.g., ACL, 2008). It is important to note, however, that 95% of participants partnered and living full-time with children, all under the age of 13, identified as female.

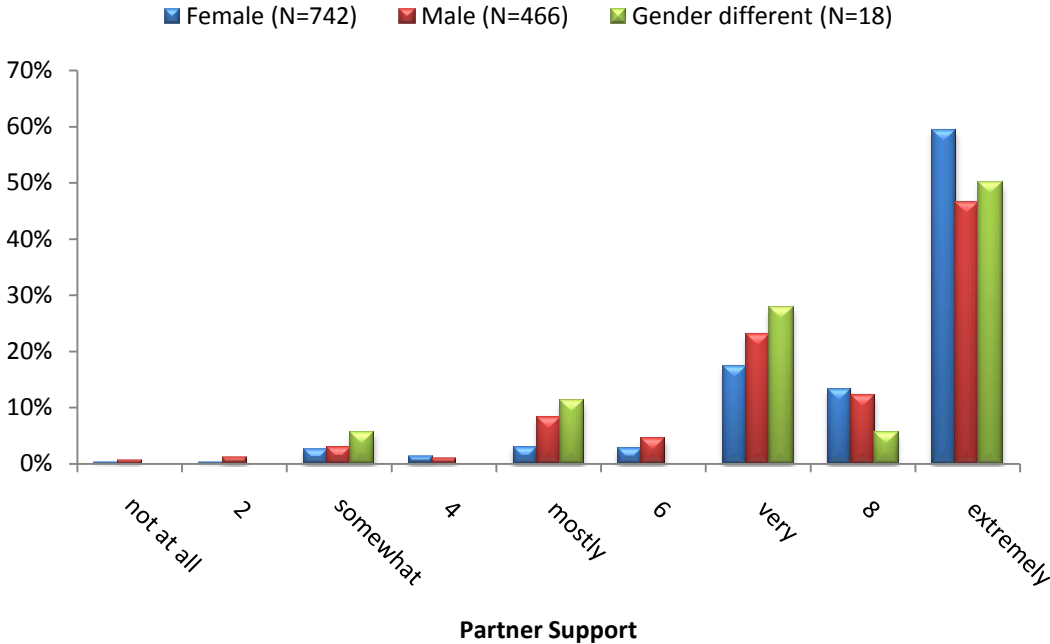
7. Partners

7.1 Partner Support

Participants were presented with the statement “Overall, I feel that when it comes to receiving SUPPORT from my same-sex partner (in the way of being helpful, caring, or encouraging) I generally feel she or he is:” with the response options ranging from 1 = not at all supportive to 9 = extremely supportive. Figure 30 shows the percentages for each response option for those who reported having a regular same-sex partner. Of this sample, 59.3% of female, 46.6% of male and 50% of gender different participants reported that they felt their partners were extremely supportive. Overall, over 80% of participants reported that their partner was at least very supportive. When looking at the averages of support scores (1-9), those identifying as female reported significantly higher levels of partner support ($M = 8.06$) compared with those identifying as male ($M = 7.61$). This is in keeping with findings for females in general, in that females tend to score higher than males for measures of positive relationships with others (e.g., Ryff & Keyes, 1995). The average score for gender different participants was the same as for males ($M = 7.61$), however, the number of participants in this case was small and no statistically significant differences were found between this group and those identifying as female.

Figure 30.

Percentages of participants for perceived partner support scores by gender identity

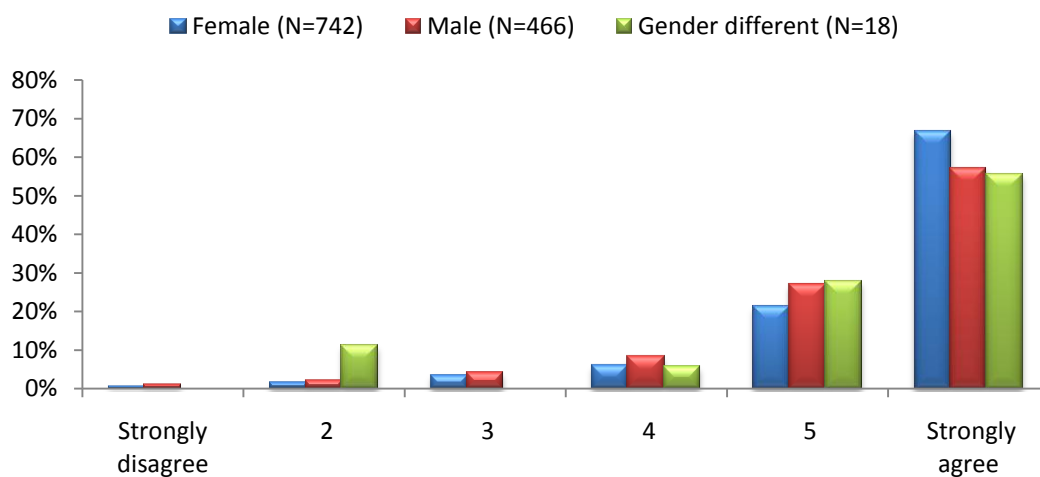


7.2 Relationship Satisfaction

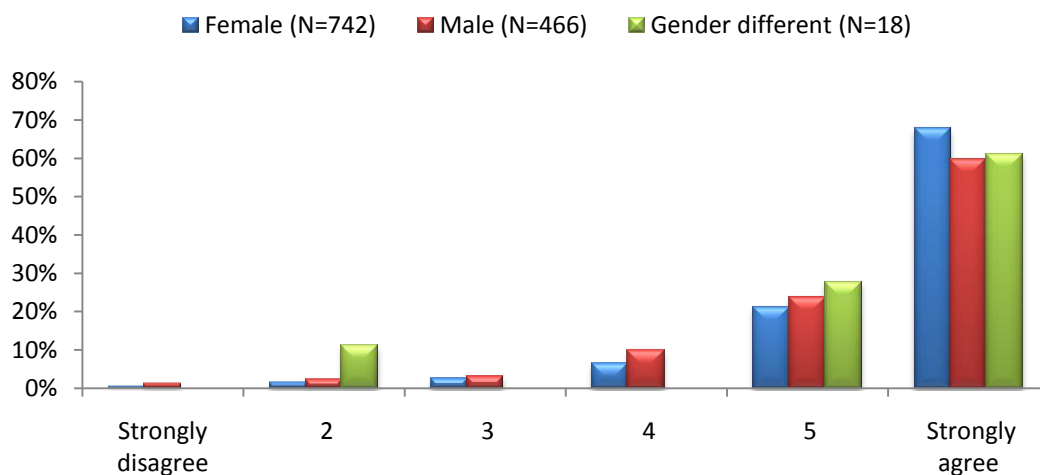
Relationship satisfaction was measured using two items, with the scores combined and averaged to form an overall score. The statements were “I am generally satisfied with my current same-sex relationship” and “I am generally happy in my current same-sex relationship”. Response options were 1 = *Strongly Disagree*, 2 = *Moderately Disagree*, 3 = *Slightly Disagree*, 4 = *Slightly Agree*, 5 = *Moderately Agree* and 6 = *Strongly Agree*. Percentages for these response options are presented in Figure 31 (A and B).

Figure 31 (A and B).

Percentages of participants for response options for being satisfied (A) and happy (B) in their current same-sex relationship by gender identity



A. Satisfied with Relationship



B. Happy with Relationship

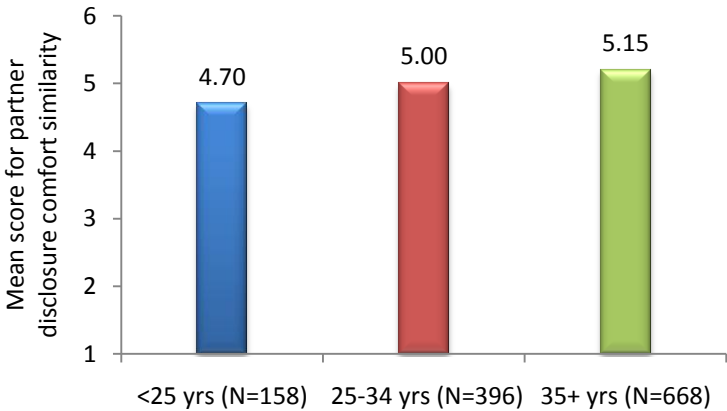
When observing the overall scores for relationship satisfaction, 64.6% of female, 54.7% of male, and 55.6% of gender different participants reported that they strongly agreed with the two statements (i.e., both happy and satisfied). Irrespective of gender, over 80% of participants indicated that they moderately to strongly agreed that they were satisfied with their current same-sex relationship. When looking at the averages for relationship satisfaction scores, the difference between females and males was statistically significant, although the difference was not large. The average score for those identifying as female was 5.48 and for those identifying as male it was 5.31. The average score for gender different participants was 5.22. Once again the numbers for this latter group were small, limiting the interpretation of these findings.

7.3 Partner ‘Disclosure Comfort’ Similarity

As discussed earlier in Charter 4, on issues relating to ‘coming out’, the survey included a 5-item partner similarity measure devised by Mohr and Fassinger (2006) which was found to predict relationship quality. Participants were asked to what extent they agreed or disagreed with five statements relating to the perceived similarity between oneself and one’s partner over the disclosure of, and comfort with, one’s sexuality. The items were “My partner and I are equally comfortable being ‘out’ in public”, “My partner and I are equally comfortable being ‘out’ to family”, “My partner and I are equally comfortable being ‘out’ to heterosexual friends”, “My partner and I are equally comfortable being a same-sex couple” and “My partner and I are equally comfortable about being same-sex attracted”. Response options were 1 = *Strongly Disagree*, 2 = *Moderately Disagree*, 3 = *Slightly Disagree*, 4 = *Slightly Agree*, 5 = *Moderately Agree* and 6 = *Strongly Agree*. Consistent with previous research (Mohr & Fassinger, 2006), the scores for each of these items were combined and averaged to provide an overall score for partner ‘disclosure comfort’ similarity. Figure 32 provides the average score for participants with a regular same-sex partner for each of the three age cohorts. The youngest cohort (<25) reported significantly less partner ‘disclosure comfort’ similarity when compared with the two older-age cohorts.

Figure 32.

Average scores for partner ‘disclosure comfort’ similarity by age cohort

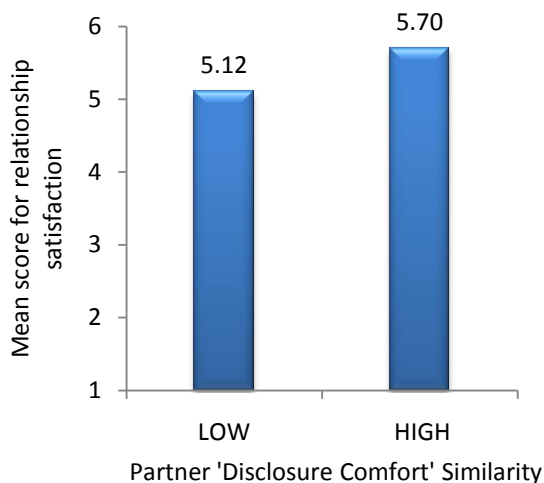


7.3.1 Partner 'Disclosure Comfort' Similarity and Relationship Satisfaction

The greater the extent to which participants felt that they were similar to their partners in being 'out' and comfortable with their sexuality, the significantly greater their reported level of relationship satisfaction⁹. Figure 33 shows the average scores for those who reported low levels vs. high levels of partner 'disclosure comfort' similarity. The low vs. high categories were based on participants' responses that were below the median score and those that were above the median score. Response options were 1 = *Strongly Disagree*, 2 = *Moderately Disagree*, 3 = *Slightly Disagree*, 4 = *Slightly Agree*, 5 = *Moderately Agree* and 6 = *Strongly Agree* to being generally satisfied with one's current same-sex relationship. As a whole, participants reported that they were relatively satisfied with their relationships. Those who scored low on partner 'disclosure comfort' similarity reported on average that they 'moderately agreed' that they were satisfied with their relationship ($M = 5.12$) whereas for those who scored high on partner 'disclosure comfort' similarity, the average was approaching 'strongly agreed' ($M = 5.70$). For findings on partner 'disclosure comfort' similarity and its relationship to likelihood of 'coming out' during the social encounters described in the three scenarios presented in this survey, refer to section 4.4.

Figure 33.

Average scores for relationship satisfaction for low vs. high levels of perceived partner 'disclosure comfort' similarity



7.4 Well-Being and Relationship Measures

Perceived partner support, relationship satisfaction and partner 'disclosure comfort' similarity were all significantly associated with participants reported level of well-being. Specifically, those who reported greater levels of perceived support, satisfaction, and similarity were more likely to report higher levels of psychological well-being. For findings on the role of partner support, alongside the role of heterosexual acceptance, in predicting well-being, refer to section 9.4.

⁹ Analyses were also conducted with 'Disclosure Comfort' Similarity as a continuous variable.

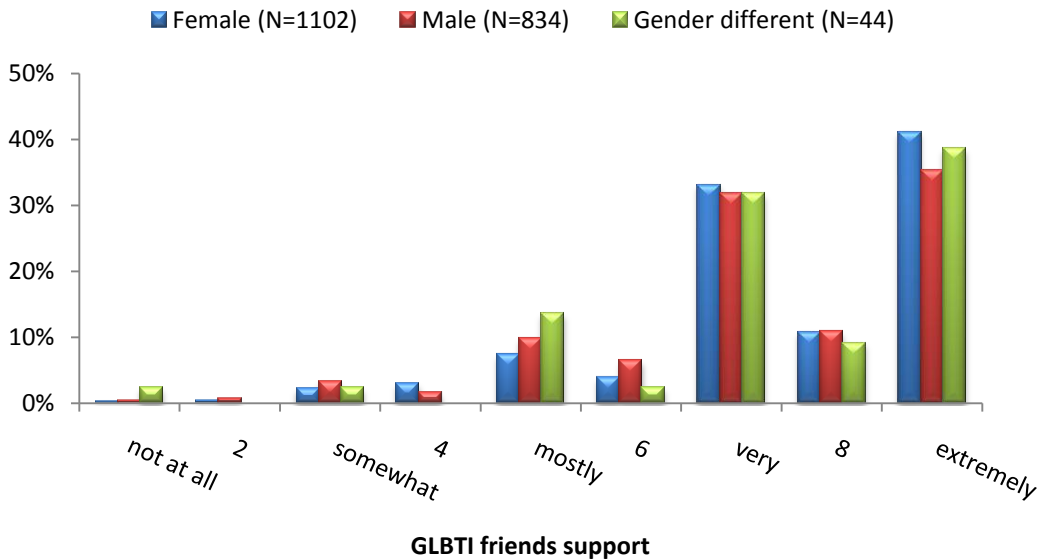
8. GLBTI Friends and Community

8.1 Support from GLBTI friends

Of the total sample, 51 (2.5%) participants reported that they did not have any GLBTI friends (22 females, 26 males, and 3 gender different). Close to 70% of these participants lived in capital cities. Those who reported having these friends were presented with the question “Overall, how supportive (helpful, caring or encouraging) do you find your GLBTI friends, NOT including a partner?” The response options ranged from 1 = not at all supportive to 9 = extremely supportive. One person did not respond to this question leaving a total of 1,980 participants. Of this sample, 41.1% of female, 35.3% of male and 38.6% of gender different participants reported that they felt their GLBTI friends were extremely supportive (see Figure 34). Among females, 85% reported that their GLBTI friends were very to extremely supportive. Among males the figure was 78% and for gender different participants it was 79.5%. When looking at the averages of support scores (1-9), those identifying as female reported significantly higher levels of GLBTI friendship support ($M = 7.60$) compared with those identifying as male ($M = 7.32$). Once again, this is consistent with findings for females in general, in that females tend to score higher than males for measures on positive relationships with others (e.g., Ryff & Keyes, 1995) and is in keeping with an earlier study involving same-sex attracted young adults in Australia (Dane & MacDonald, 2009). The average score for gender different participants were similar to those for males ($M = 7.34$), however, numbers were small and no statistically significant differences were found between this group and those identifying as female.

Figure 34.

Percentages for participants perceived support from GLBTI friends by gender identity



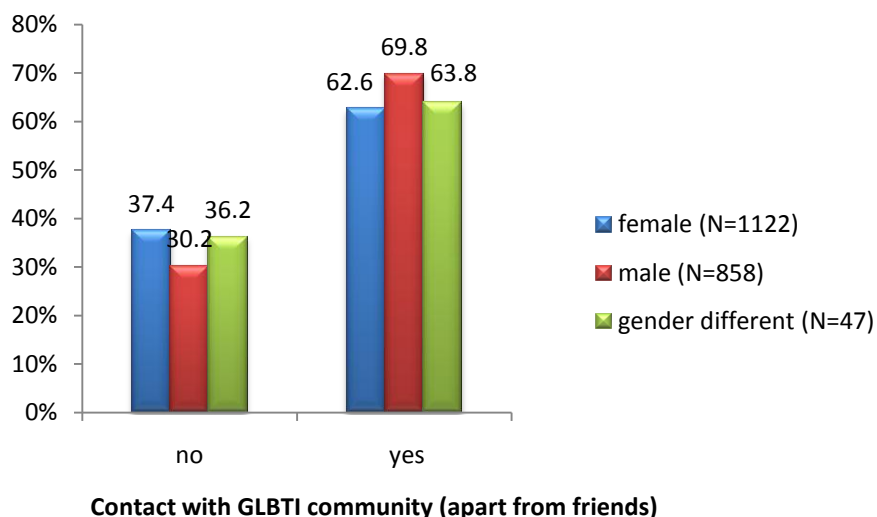
8.2 Contact with the GLBTI Community

8.2.1 Gender Differences

Following the question on support from GLBTI friends, participants were presented with the question “Do you have any contact with individuals (apart from friends) from the GLBTI community (e.g., a GLBTI employer, teacher, business or volunteer work associate, health professional)?” Response options were “Yes” or “No”. Overall, just over a third (34.3%) of participants reported that they did not have any contact with individuals from the GLBTI community when not including their GLBTI friends. As shown in Figure 35, a higher percentage of those identifying as male (69.8%) reported contact relative to female (62.6%), and gender different participants (63.8%). Five participants did not respond to the question.

Figure 35.

Percentages of participants who reported contact vs. no contact with the GLBTI community (apart from friends) by gender identity



8.2.2 Age and Area of Residence

Table 21 shows the percentages for those who reported contact with the GLBTI community based on area of residence and age cohort. Numbers in brackets represent the total number of participants in a particular category with figures representing the percentage of the total number who reported having GLBTI community contact, aside from GLBTI friends. Not surprisingly, people living in capital cities were more likely to have reported contact with the community relative to those living in other areas (for a description of population sizes for area of residence, refer to Table 1, section 1.1). Further, there was a significant relationship between age of participants and contact with the GLBTI community. Specifically, the younger the cohort the less likely they were to have reported contact.

Table 21.

Percentages of those who reported having contact with the GLBTI community (apart from friends) by area of residence and age cohort

	<25 yrs	25-34yrs	35+ yrs	Total
Capital City	(300) 54.0%	(469) 69.3%	(718)74.4%	(1487) 68.7%
Other large metro area	(90) 53.3%	(80) 58.8%	(116) 65.5%	(286) 59.8%
Large rural centre	(24) 33.3%	(38) 55.3%	(69) 52.2%	(131) 49.6%
Other rural area	(17) 29.4%	(16) 68.8%	(70) 67.1%	(103) 61.2%
Remote	(1) 00.0%	(5) 40.0%	(11) 63.6%	(17) 52.9%
Total	(432) 51.6%	(608) 66.8%	(984) 71.1%	(2024)

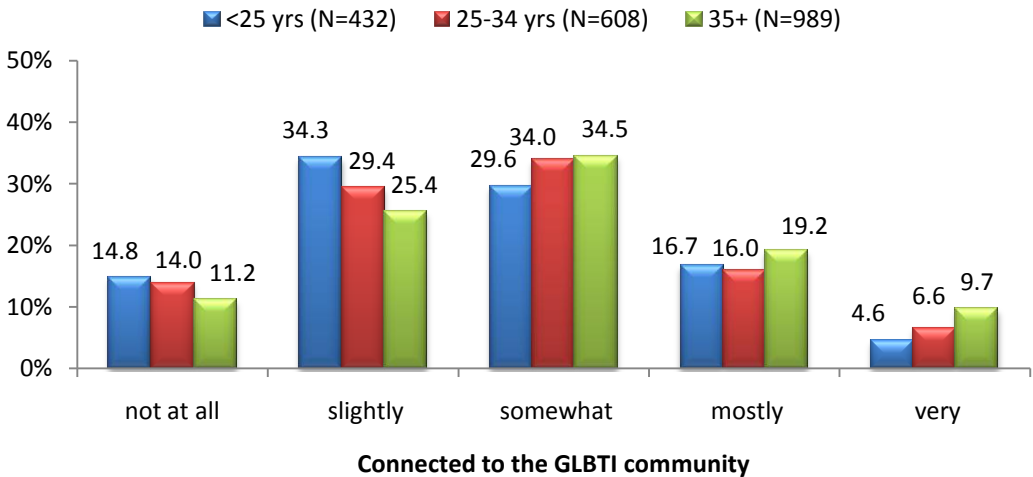
Five participants did not respond to the contact question and three did not provide an age. Refer to Table 1, section 1.1, for population sizes. Numbers in brackets represent total number living in area.

8.3 Feeling Connected to the GLBTI Community

To examine how connected people felt to the GLBTI community in general, all participants were asked “How connected to the GLBTI community do you feel in your everyday life?” with response options ranging from 1 = not at all to 5 = very. Although not all participants reported having contact with the GLBTI community, some may nonetheless have felt a connection in some way, with results indicating that this was in fact the case. For example, although 34.3% of the total sample reported having no contact, only 12.8% overall indicated that they did not feel at all connected (see Figure 36). When considering the age of participants, those of a younger age reported significantly less connection to the community than those of an older age, which is consistent with the findings discussed earlier, that younger participants reported significantly less contact with the community than older participants (see summary in section 8.7 for findings in relation to proportion of heterosexual friends). Further, living in more populated areas was significantly related to feeling more connected to the GLBTI community.

Figure 36.

Percentages of participants for reported connection to the GLBTI community by age cohort

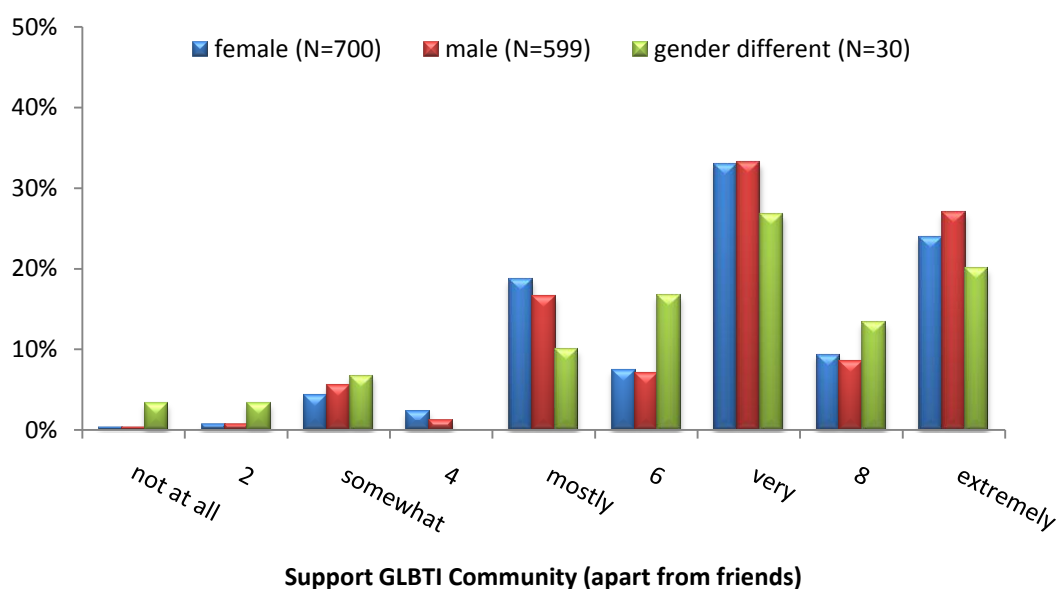


8.4 Perceived Support from the GLBTI Community

Participants who reported having contact with individuals from the GLBTI community (apart from friends) were then asked “Overall, how supportive (helpful, caring, or encouraging) do you feel people from the wider GLBTI community (e.g., a GLBTI employer, teacher, business or volunteer work associate, health professional) are for you”? Response options ranged from 1 = not at all supportive to 9 = extremely supportive. Two people did not respond resulting in a sample of 1, 329 participants. As shown in Figure 37, 27% of male, 24% of female and 20% of gender different participants reported that they considered the GLBTI community to be extremely supportive. The percentages for those who reported that they felt this community was at least very supportive (i.e., very to extremely) were 66.3% for female, 68.7% for male and 60% for gender different participants. The average scores for community support were not found to be significantly different between males ($M = 6.92$), females ($M = 6.83$), and gender different ($M = 6.53$) participants. Interestingly, no significant differences were found for perceptions of community support based on age or area of residence. It is important to keep in mind, however, that the scores represent only people who already had some form of contact with the GLBTI community (i.e., those who reported no contact were not included in this particular analysis). Further, the number of participants were small for those living in remote areas (see Table 21), with nine having reported contact with the GLBTI community. For differences found based on area of residence, refer to the findings on contact with and connection to the GLBTI community (see section 8.2.2).

Figure 37.

Percentages of participants according to responses for perceived support from GLBTI community (apart from friends) by gender identity



8.5 Transgender, Transsexual and Intersex Participants

Perceived support from GLBTI friends was relatively high among transgender/transsexual and intersex participants, with 80 -100% in these groups having reported that these friends were very to extremely supportive. Consistent with findings for the general sample, perceptions of support from the wider GLBTI community were lower than for friends. Table 22 provides average scores for this community support, the percentages of those who scores ranged from very to extremely supportive and the numbers in each group that reported having contact with the wider GLBTI community. For example, of the eight female transgender/transsexual participants with contact with the community, 75% reported that they perceived this community to be very to extremely supportive. Although the small number of participants limits the interpretation of these findings, the lower levels of perceived support, particularly for female intersex participants, should also be noted (for figures for the general sample, refer to figure 37). Although perceived support in some instances was lower among these groups, the extent to which these participants felt a connection with the community was in most cases higher¹⁰, when compared with the general sample. Once again, it needs to be kept in mind that all participants in this survey reported having same-sex attractions. An affiliation with the GLBTI community may not be as high for transgender, transsexual or intersex individuals who identify as heterosexual.

Table 22.

Average scores for and percentages of transgender/transsexual and intersex participants who reported finding the GLBTI community (apart from friends) very to extremely supportive

	Average score	% high support	Contact Yes (No)
Trans - Female	7.13	75.0%	8 (3)
Trans - Male	7.20	80.0%	5 (2)
Intersex - Female	5.25	25.0%	4 (1)
Intersex - Male	6.00	a	2 (0)

Note: Percentages for those who perceived high support (very to extremely) are based on the numbers of participants who reported having contact with the GLBTI community. Mean scores are based on a 1-9 scale. a = Figures are not provided as doing so would identify participants' scores due to the small number of cases.

8.6 Well-being and Perceived Support from GLBTI Friends and Community

On average, participants who reported having contact with the wider GLBTI community scored higher on psychological well-being than those who reported having no contact. The extent to which participants felt supported by their GLBTI friends and the community was also related to their psychological well-being, with those who reported higher levels of these types of support being more likely to have reported higher levels of well-being. Support from GLBTI friends and the community are discussed further in the next chapter (Chapter 9) in which their roles in predicting well-being are considered alongside the roles of acceptance from heterosexual friends, family and the heterosexual community.

¹⁰ Differences between groups are in these cases based on observed differences not statistical differences.

8.7 Summary

Although differences were not large when it came to the level of support participants felt that they received from their GLBTI friends, those who identified as female reported statistically significantly higher levels of support compared with those who identified as male. This is consistent with an earlier study involving same-sex attracted young adults in Queensland, Australia (Dane & MacDonald, 2009) and research showing that females in general tend to score higher for measures evaluating positive relationships with others (Ryff & Keyes, 1995). For findings from the current survey revealing higher scores for females on positive relationships with others, refer to Chapter 10.

When it came to contact with the wider GLBTI community (e.g., a GLBTI employer, teacher, business or volunteer work associate, health professional), higher percentages of those identifying as male reported contact relative to female and gender different participants. As expected, those living in capital cities were more likely to report having contact with this community, relative to those living in less populated areas. Further, people living in more populated areas were more likely to report feeling a greater connection to the GLBTI community than those living in less populated areas. More interestingly, younger participants were more likely to report less contact with the community and lower levels of connectedness with the community than older age participants, even when taking into account the population size of the areas in which participants lived. This is consistent with findings discussed in the following chapter showing younger participants were more likely to report having a greater proportion of heterosexual friends than participants of an older age, and that people with a greater proportion of heterosexual friends were less likely to have contact with the GLBTI community or feel connected with this community. Importantly, for those with contact, higher levels of support from GLBTI friends and the wider GLBTI community were both related to higher levels of overall well-being.

9. Family and Heterosexual Friends and Community

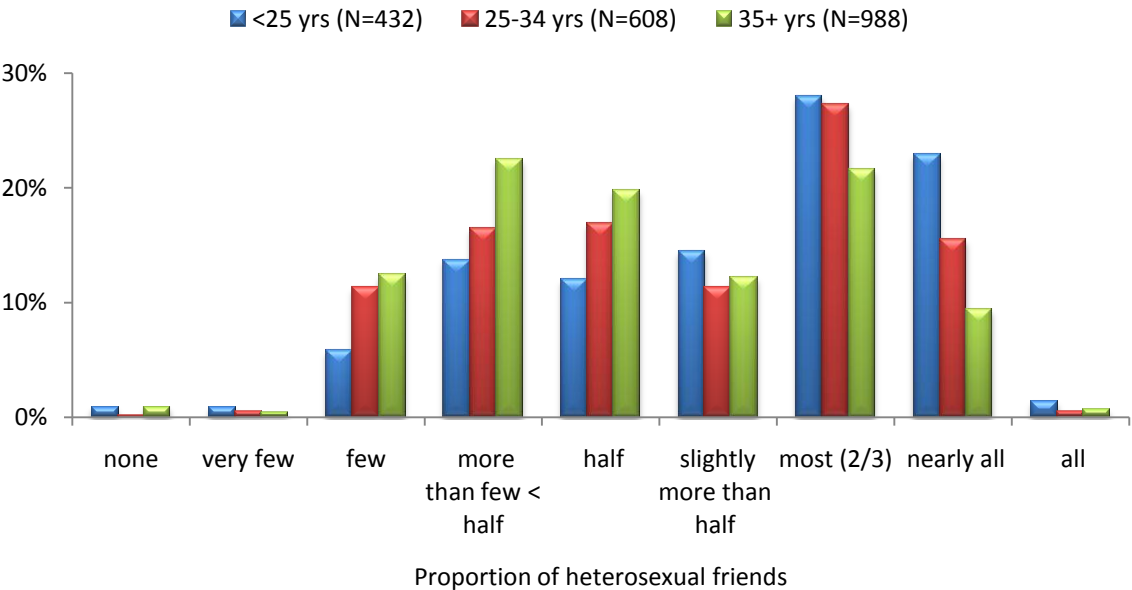
9.1 'Out' to Others

9.1.1 Proportion of Heterosexual Friends

Participants were first presented with the question “When you consider the number of friends you have in general, how many do you estimate to be heterosexual?” with response options ranging from 1 = none to 9 = all. One participant did not respond and three did not provide their age leaving a total of 2,028 represented in Figure 38 below. A majority (52.3%) of those under the age of 25 reported that ‘most’ to ‘all’ of their friends were heterosexual. For those 25-34 years of age this figure was 43.3% and for those 35 years and over it was less than a third (31.7%). The average scores (ranging from 1-9) were 6.13 for the youngest cohort, 5.73 for the middle cohort and 5.34 for the oldest cohort. Results showed that younger participants were significantly more likely to report having a greater proportion of heterosexual friends than older age participants.

Figure 38.

Percentages of participants according to responses for proportion of heterosexual friends



9.1.2 'Out' to Heterosexual Friends, Contacts and Family

Participants were then asked if they currently had any heterosexual friends to whom they had disclosed their same-sex attractions or who they were confident were aware of their same-sex attractions. The same question was presented in relation to heterosexual contacts other than friends (e.g., neighbours, co-workers, employers or teachers). They were then advised that if they considered any of these individuals to be more of a friend, then they were to include them only in the question about friends. Participants were also asked if they had disclosed their same-sex attractions to their mother, father or siblings, or felt confident these individuals were aware of their same-sex attractions. Table 23 presents the percentages of participants who reported that they had

disclosed their same-sex attractions', or felt confident others were aware of their same-sex attractions, for the five areas discussed above.

Table 23.

Percentages of participants 'out' to heterosexual friends, contacts, and family

	(N) Yes	(N) No	(N) Missing
Heterosexual Friends	(1965) 96.8%	(66) 3.2%	(1)
Heterosexual Contacts	(1724) 84.9%	(307) 15.1%	(1)
Mother	(1720) 84.8%	(308) 15.2%	(4)
Father	(1418) 70.0%	(609) 30.0%	(5)
Siblings	(1722) 88.8%	(217) 11.2%	92 no siblings, (1)

Note: Percentages are based on totals for each sector minus missing or not applicable data.

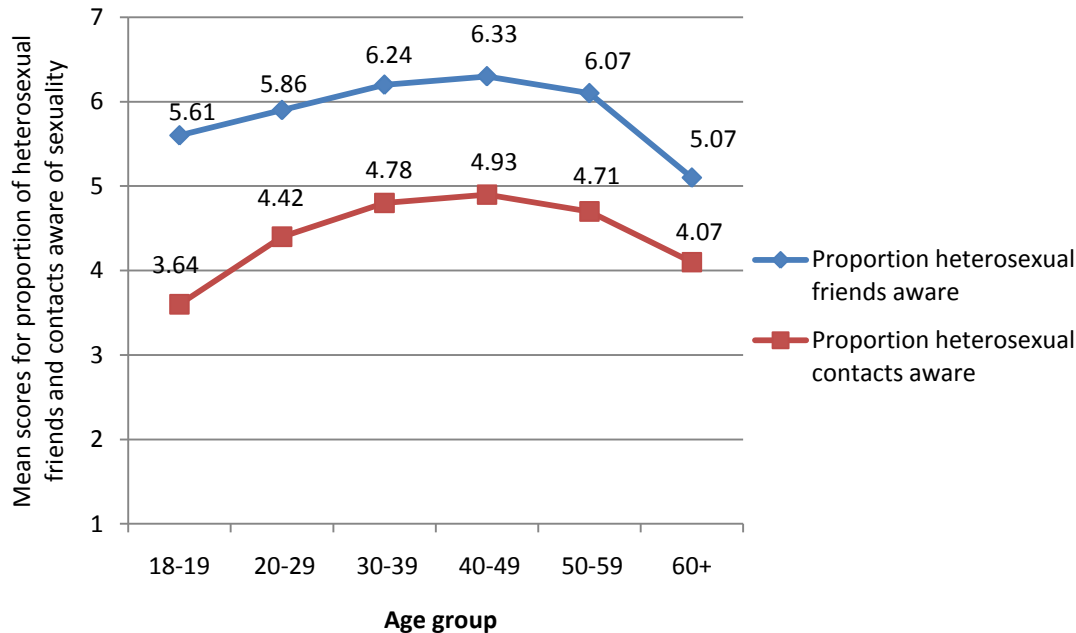
Consistent with research in this area (e.g., Hillier, Turner, & Mitchell, 2005) a higher proportion of participants reported their mother's knowledge of their same-sex attractions (84.8%) than their father's (70.0%), with friends being the most likely to be aware (96.8%). However, the extent to which individuals' interpersonal networks as a whole knew of their sexual orientation, varied between individuals. For example, of the total sample, only 60.5% indicated that others were aware of their same-sex attractions in all areas (note: as not all individuals have siblings, this sector was not included in the sum). This finding is consistent with an earlier study involving same-sex attracted young adults in Australia (Dane & MacDonald, 2009) which found 59% reported being 'out' in all of these four areas. This suggests that, although large percentages of sexual minority individuals report being 'out of the closet', many appear to still have reservations about revealing their same-sex attractions in certain sectors or at least feel less need to do so.

9.1.3 Proportion of Heterosexual Friends and Contacts Aware of Sexual Orientation

Participants who answered "Yes" to having heterosexual friends or contacts aware of their same-sex attractions were then asked about the proportion of these friends or contacts they felt confident were aware. Response options ranged from 1 = *very few* (e.g., one) to 7 = *all*. Findings revealed that a majority (57%) reported that all of their heterosexual friends were aware of their same-sex attractions and 87% reported that 'most' to 'all' were aware. In the case of heterosexual contacts (apart from friends), 11.9% felt all their contacts were aware and 60.9% reported that 'most' to 'all' were aware. When considering the three main age cohorts of this survey (< 25 yrs, 25-34 yrs, 35+ years) results showed that those in the two older cohorts reported having a significantly greater proportion of heterosexual friends and contacts aware of their same-sex attractions when compared with the youngest cohort. When taking a closer look at this data, however, it became apparent that there was a clear exception when it came to those 60 years of age or older, with this finding discussed further on. Figure 39 shows the average scores for the proportion of heterosexual friends and contacts aware for the six different age groups in this survey. The numbers represented in each age group vary depending on the number 'out' to heterosexual friends vs. heterosexual contacts. The numbers of participants were as follows: 18-19 (friends 114, contacts 83), 20-29 (friends 617, contacts 501), 30-39 (friends 525, contacts 475), 40-49 (friends 425, contacts 408), 50-59 (friends 205, contacts 195), and 60+ (friends 76, contacts 60). Three people did not provide an age, three of which were 'out' to friends and two of which were 'out' to contacts.

Figure 39.

Average scores (1 = very few to 7 = all) for proportion of heterosexual friends and contacts (apart from friends) aware of same-sex attractions



When comparing all six age groups, analyses revealed that generally those in older age groups reported having a greater proportion of heterosexual friends and contacts aware of their same-sex attractions relative to those in younger age groups. Although the data are cross-sectional, these findings overall suggest that perhaps over time individuals are likely to gradually increase the proportion of their friends and contacts to whom they have disclosed their same-sex attractions. Participants 60 years of age or over, however, reported a significantly smaller proportion of heterosexual friends aware of their same-sex attractions than all other age groups except those 18-19 years of age (although the mean score was also lower than for those 18-19 years of age, the difference in this case was not statistically significant). In the case of the proportion of heterosexual contacts aware, those 60 years of age or over reported a significantly smaller proportion of these contacts aware, compared with the younger age groups consisting of those 30 to <50 years of age. Recent public polls show that those in senior age groups are far more likely, on average, to have experienced higher levels of prejudice and discrimination relative to younger sexual minority individuals (e.g., Schafer & Shaw, 2009). These early negative experiences may have an ongoing impact on more senior individuals' decisions to be open about their sexuality. Additionally, senior sexual minority individuals are more likely to be surrounded by older-age heterosexual individuals from a less accepting era. Both these factors are likely to play a role in contributing to the lower proportion of their heterosexual friends and contacts aware of their sexuality when compared with younger generations. It is also important to keep in mind, when interpreting these findings, that the older the participant, on average, the smaller the proportion of friends they reported to be heterosexual (see Figure 38). Therefore, for younger people to increase the proportion of friends aware of their same-sex attractions, they would in effect have to tell more friends relative to those in

older age groups. The same logic obviously does not apply when it comes to disclosing to the wider community (i.e., heterosexual contacts).

9.2 Perceived Acceptance of Others

9.2.1 Age Differences for Perceptions of Acceptance

Participants who reported that at least some of their heterosexual friends were aware of their same-sex attractions were then asked about the extent to which they felt that these friends, overall, were accepting of their same-sex attractions. Response options ranged from 1 to 9 (1 = *not at all accepting*, 2, 3 = *somewhat*, 4, 5 = *mostly*, 6, 7 = *very*, 8, 9 = *fully*). Similar questions were presented to those who reported that at least some of their heterosexual contacts (apart from friends) were aware and to those who reported their mother’s, father’s or siblings’ knowledge of their same-sex attractions. In cases where a family member was deceased, participants were asked to consider how they felt now about that family member’s level of acceptance at the time the family member was still alive. Comment boxes were also provided in which participants could explain their relationship with a particular family member, should they prefer to do so (e.g., “I have never met my father/mother”, “my mother is a lesbian”, “I have two mothers”, “my mother/father died before I ‘came out’”, “my brother is gay”). Table 24 lists the numbers of participants and average scores for each area of acceptance by age group. As the numbers who reported being ‘out’ in these areas varied, the numbers of participants for each of the acceptance measures varied accordingly. In some cases, numbers were relatively small (e.g., 60+ age group for father’s acceptance) limiting the statistical power of some group comparisons. Figure 40, following Table 24, provides a visual interpretation of this data.

Table 24.

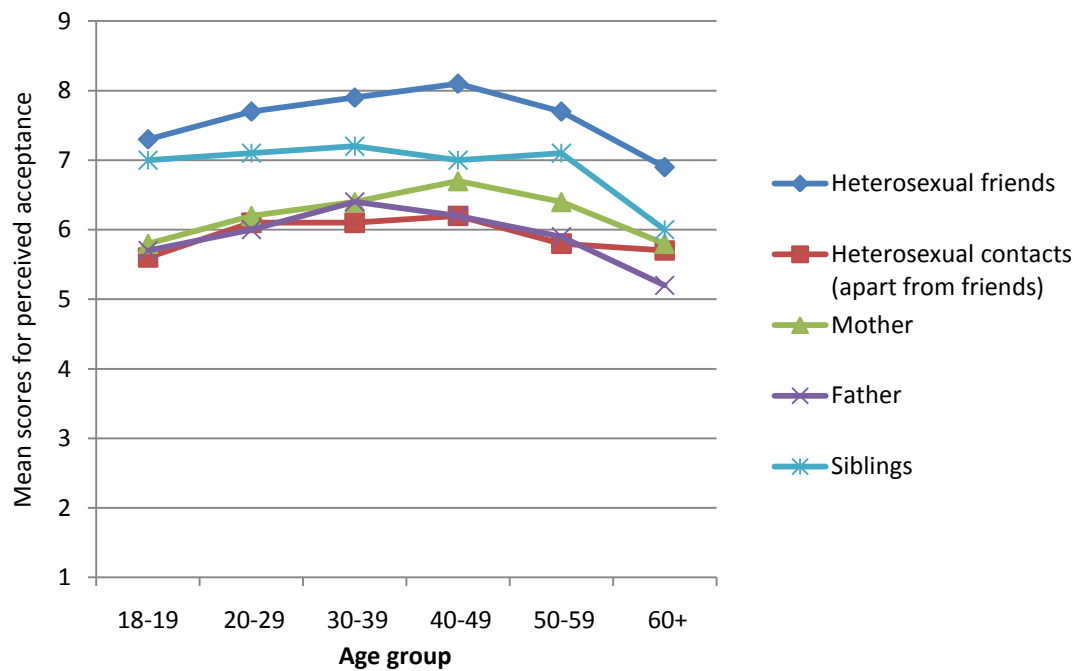
Average scores (1 = not at all accepting to 9 = fully) and number of participants for perceptions of acceptance by others according to age group

	Heterosexual Friends	Heterosexual Contacts	Mother	Father	Siblings
18 - 19	(114) 7.34	(82) 5.57	(93) 5.77	(75) 5.69	(83) 6.99
20 - 29	(617) 7.74	(498) 6.10	(535) 6.23	(454) 6.04	(503) 7.10
30 - 39	(525) 7.91	(475) 6.13	(487) 6.38	(410) 6.38	(476) 7.18
40 - 49	(425) 8.14	(408) 6.15	(382) 6.68	(325) 6.23	(409) 7.04
50 - 59	(205) 7.72	(193) 5.80	(173) 6.40	(125) 5.92	(188) 7.12
60 + (60-82)	(76) 6.92	(60) 5.70	(46) 5.80	(26) 5.19	(61) 6.08
Total	(1962) 7.81	(1716) 6.05	(1716) 6.35	(1415) 6.14	(1720) 7.07
Missing data	(3)	(8)	(4)	(3)	(2)

Note: Number of participants is provided in brackets (). Missing data represent participants who reported others were aware of their sexuality, but did not provide an age or did not respond to the question.

Figure 40 .

Average scores for perceptions of acceptance (1 = not at all to 9 = fully) for heterosexual friends, contacts (apart from friends), mother, father and siblings



When first looking at the results for the three main cohorts in this survey, findings revealed that the youngest cohort (<25 yrs) perceived, on average, significantly less acceptance from their heterosexual friends, and from their mother, when compared with the two older cohorts (25-34 yrs, and 35 yrs and over), and significantly less acceptance from their father when compared with the middle cohort (25-34 yrs). These findings, overall, suggest that perceptions of acceptance may increase with age for certain sectors. A frequent comment made by participants in the ‘comment boxes’ provided was that others seemed to become more accepting as time went by (e.g., “She had an extremely difficult time accepting this, however now accepts my partner as a member of the family”). Analyses comparing all six age groups, however, once again found a clear exception for those aged 60 and over. As a group they perceived significantly less acceptance from their heterosexual friends and their siblings compared with all other age groups except those 18-19 years of age (see Figure 40). Although scores for acceptance from friends and siblings for those aged 60 and over were also lower than the scores for 18-19 year olds, the differences in these cases were not statistically significant. This pattern, showing a marked difference for the most senior group of participants, was similar to that discussed previously regarding the proportion of heterosexual friends and contacts aware of one’s same-sex attractions (see Figure 39). As noted earlier in this chapter, these individuals were more likely to have experienced higher levels or prejudice and discrimination regarding their sexuality, relative to younger generations. Further, senior sexual minority individuals, relative to younger, are more likely to be in contact with heterosexual individuals from an older generation. Research, including recent findings from Australia (Galaxy, 2009; Newspoll, 2006), showed that less favourable views of homosexuality and same-sex relationships are still more likely to be held by those in more senior age groups (e.g., 50 yrs and above).

9.2.2 Overall Perceptions of Acceptance

Despite these differences between age groups, perceptions of acceptance were overall relatively high, with 84.4% having reported that their heterosexual friends were ‘very’ to ‘fully’ accepting (average scores for acceptance are provided in Table 25 with scores for transgender/transsexual and intersex participants). Although only 44.4% perceived their heterosexual contacts to be ‘very’ to ‘fully’ accepting, near double this figure (88.2%) reported that they were ‘mostly’ to ‘fully’ accepting. Among those ‘out’ to family members, siblings generally appeared to be a good source of support with over two-thirds (69.3%) of participants having rated their siblings as ‘very’ to ‘fully’ accepting. Although a smaller majority reported that their mothers (56.9%) and fathers (53.2%) were ‘very’ to ‘fully’ accepting, just over a three quarters indicated that mothers and fathers were ‘mostly’ to ‘fully’ accepting. Nonetheless, 23.3% reported that their mothers and 24.4% reported that their fathers were less than ‘mostly’ accepting. Approximately a quarter of these individuals were under the age of 25. Findings such as these continue to be of concern, particularly when it comes to a lack of parental acceptance for those in their youth. Further, the many stories provided by the participants in this survey were a stark reminder of the contrasting experiences of acceptance and rejection. For example, some wrote of their parents being fully accepting of both them and their partners, and how they were proud of them until the day they died, while others told of how they were described as being evil by their parents, who have not spoken with them since.

9.3 Transgender, Transsexual and Intersex Participants

Before discussing the findings for transgender/transsexual and intersex participants, it is acknowledged that trying to isolate perceptions of acceptance of one’s same-sex attractions from perceptions of acceptance based on gender identity and biological sex would be extremely difficult, if not near impossible. This issue was acknowledged in the survey. The responses from these participants are, therefore, likely to be influenced by their overall sexual minority status.

Relative to the general sample, perceptions of acceptance were in many cases lower for transgender/transsexual and intersex participants. This appeared to be particularly so when it came to acceptance from siblings, and a father’s acceptance for transgender/transsexual participants. It is important to keep in mind, particularly when the number of participants are small for certain groups, that average scores were based on responses from only those who reported others were aware of their attractions for each of the five areas assessed (refer to Table 25).

Table 25.

Average scores for perceptions of acceptance from others (1 = not at all accepting to 9 = fully) for transgender/transsexual and intersex participants, and the general sample

	H Friends	H Contacts	Mother	Father	Siblings
Trans - F (<i>N</i> = 11)	(11)6.91	(10) 5.30	(7) 5.29	(9)3.56	(10) 4.50
Trans - M (<i>N</i> = 7)	(7)7.86	(7) 6.57	(6) 6.50	(5) 4.80	(7) 6.86
Intersex - F (<i>N</i> = 5)	(5) 6.20	(3) 7.00	(5) 6.60	(2) 8.00	(5) 5.40
Intersex - M (<i>N</i> =2)	(2) 6.00	a	a	a	a

Note: Averages are based on responses from the number of participants (presented in brackets) who reported others were aware of their same-sex attractions for each of the five domains.

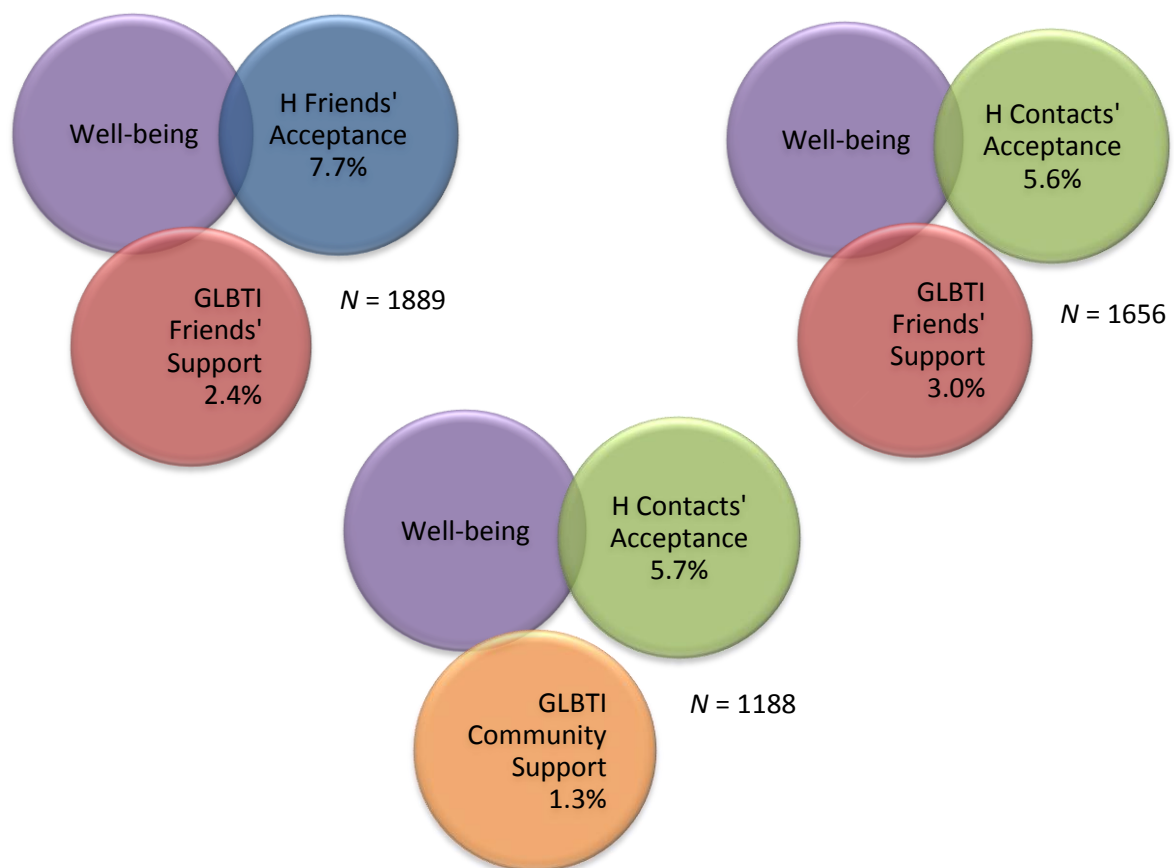
a = Figures are not provided as doing so would identify participants' scores due to the small number of cases. H = heterosexual, F = female, M = male, *N* = total number

9.4 Well-being and Perceptions of Acceptance and GLBTI Support

Greater perceptions of acceptance from all areas (heterosexual friends, heterosexual contacts apart from friends, mother, father and siblings) were related to higher levels of reported well-being. Likewise, perceptions of support from GLBTI friends, the GLBTI community and one's partner predicted well-being. What was of further interest, however, was the extent to which feeling accepted was related to well-being, when first taking into account the level of support received from similar others. For example, does acceptance from family, friends and the mainstream community still play a role for those who feel that they already receive support from other sexual-minority individuals? Results showed that this was in fact the case and built on similar findings from an earlier smaller scale study (Dane & MacDonald, 2009), conducted by two of the researchers involved in the current survey. Figures 41 to 43 provide a visual interpretation of the current survey's findings with results discussed in further detail in section 9.4.1.

Figure 41.

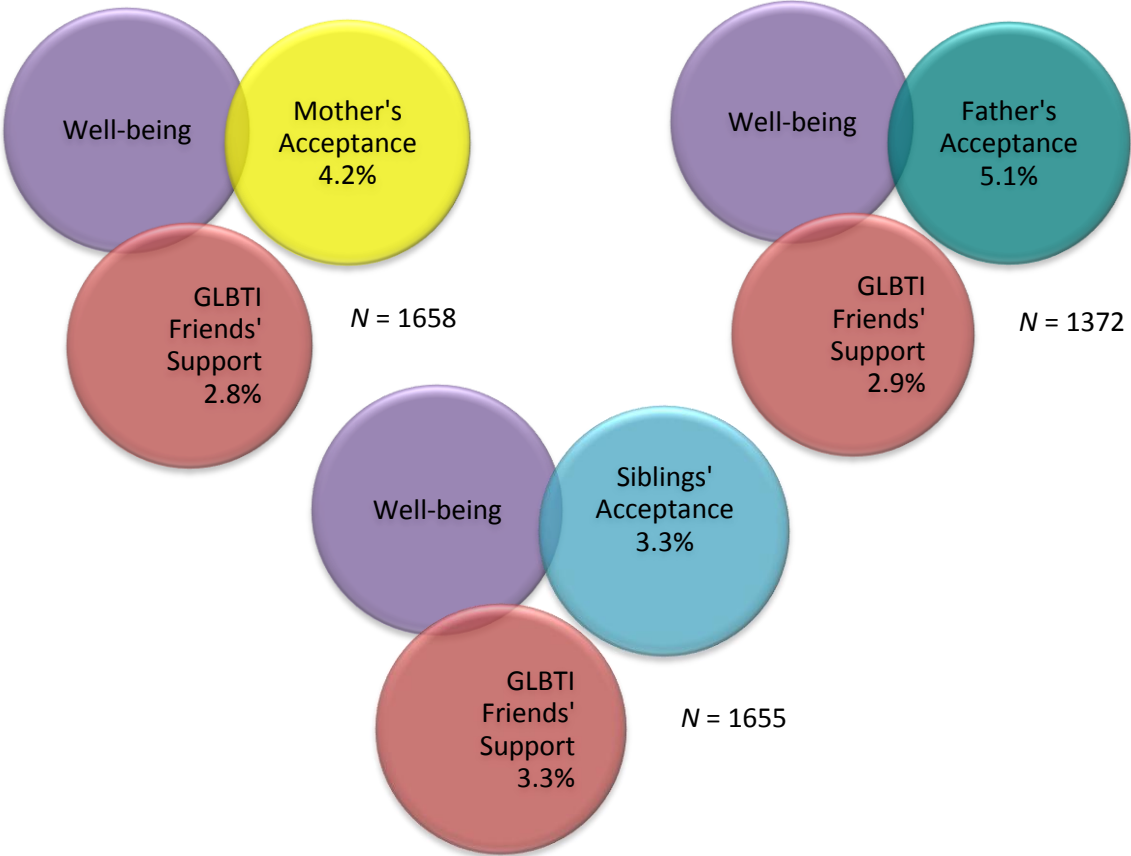
The contribution of heterosexual friends and heterosexual contacts acceptance in addition to GLBTI friends' and GLBTI community support in predicting overall well-being



H = heterosexual, GLBTI = gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, intersex, N = number of participants

Figure 42.

The contribution of family acceptance in addition to GLBTI support in predicting scores on overall well-being



H = heterosexual, GLBTI = gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, intersex, N = number of participants

9.4.1 Interpretation of Findings on the Roles of Acceptance in Addition to GLBTI Support

As the areas in which participants reported that others were knowledgeable of their same-sex attractions varied, separate analyses¹¹ (represented by each Venn diagram) were conducted for each area of acceptance, with numbers of participants varying accordingly. Additionally, 38 participants did not fully complete the questions on well-being and were therefore not included in this set of analyses. The percent figure provided in each of the ‘acceptance’ and ‘support’ circles represents the unique contribution of these measures in predicting well-being when taking both of these factors into account. The results in all cases showed that ‘GLBTI support’ significantly predicted well-being and that perceptions of acceptance from each of the five areas assessed in this survey, significantly

¹¹ Separate hierarchical multiple regression analyses were conducted for each of the five areas of acceptance. The percentages represent the unique proportion of variance in well-being scores predicted by the acceptance and GLBTI support variables. In each case GLBTI support significantly predicted well-being, and acceptance significantly added to this prediction. GLBTI support remained a significant predictor with the addition of the acceptance variables. There were no significant interactions found between the acceptance and support variables. A multiple regression analysis, in which all variables were considered when working together, is discussed in section 9.4.2.

added to the prediction of well-being. These findings held even when taking into account the level of perceived 'GLBTI support'. For perceptions of acceptance from heterosexual friends and from one's father, results showed that although these factors predicted well-being in addition to support from GLBTI friends for both male and female participants, acceptance from these sources were more strongly related to the reported well-being of those identifying as male. For participants with a same-sex partner, separate analyses revealed that perceived acceptance from heterosexual friends, contacts, mother, father and siblings significantly added to the prediction of well-being even when taking into account the reported level of support received from one's same-sex partner and GLBTI friends. Examples of these findings are presented in Figure 43.

Figure 43.

The contribution of heterosexual friends' and parents' acceptance in addition to support from one's same-sex partner and GLBTI friends in predicting overall well-being



H= heterosexual, GLBTI = gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, intersex, N = number of participants

9.4.2 Acceptance and GLBTI Support for Those Partnered and ‘Out’ in All Areas

A separate analysis was conducted for participants who reported having a same-sex partner, GLBTI friends, and reported that people were aware of their same-sex attractions in all areas assessed in this survey ($N = 846$). Results revealed that support from one’s same-sex partner was the strongest predictor of well-being, followed by acceptance from heterosexual contacts (apart from friends). Perhaps for individuals who have already dealt with the hurdles of ‘coming out’ to heterosexual friends and family, acceptance from the wider heterosexual community takes on a new importance. These findings were consistent with those from an earlier study conducted by two of the researchers involved in the current survey (Dane & MacDonald, 2009).

9.4.3 Acceptance and Relationship Status and Longevity

Findings also showed that perceptions of acceptance from heterosexual friends, parents and siblings predicted whether participants were currently in an ongoing same-sex relationship. Specifically, the more people felt accepted in relation to their sexuality, the greater was the likelihood of them having reported that they had a regular partner. Further, and when first taking into account age differences, participants with a regular partner who felt more accepted by their heterosexual friends and siblings were more likely to have reported a current relationship of a longer duration.

9.4.4 Concluding Comment

Unlike (heterosexual) racial/ethnic minority group members, sexual minority individuals may be less likely to experience the same sense of belonging provided by a shared minority status with family and similar community members (e.g., neighbours). Telljohann and Price (1993) noted that even when faced with high levels of social rejection, racial/ethnic and religious minority youth often had the opportunity to receive strong family support in relation to their subculture and identity. This critical difference may help explain why several racial/ethnic minority groups have been found to have equivalent, and in some cases higher, levels of well-being when compared with the dominant population (e.g., Breslau et al., 2006). This is not to suggest that sexual minority individuals lack resilience or that support from like-minded others is inferior by comparison. Further, in no instances do the results presented in this chapter suggest that perceptions of heterosexual acceptance are more important than GLBTI support. Rather, and due to the unique socialisation of sexual minorities, they simply suggest that even in the presence of receiving support from similar others, feeling accepted by one’s family, heterosexual friends and the wider community still play important roles in same-sex attracted people’s psychological well-being. The figures presented in all Venn diagrams represent the factors that uniquely contributed to the prediction of well-being when they were considered together. These findings concur with the argument that although support from other sexual minority individuals appears to be critical, this support is likely to be most beneficial when complemented by mainstream acceptance (Dane & MacDonald, 2009).

10. Stigma and Psychological Well-Being

This chapter focuses on participants' scores on various measures of psychological well-being, including perceptions of stigma in relation to being same-sex attracted. Well-being has been frequently discussed within this report in the context of how it relates to several other factors measured in this survey. For example, the relationship between well-being and the disclosure of one's sexuality is discussed in Chapter 4. The relationship between well-being and perceptions of how others value a person's same-sex relationship is discussed in Chapter 5, and its association with relationship satisfaction is discussed in Chapter 7. Well-being and connection to the GLBTI community is discussed in Chapter 8 and the findings on the relationship between well-being and perceptions of acceptance, in addition to GLBTI support, are discussed in Chapter 9.

10.1 Perceived Stigma

Participants were asked about the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with a series of statements relating to their perceptions of the stigma associated with nonheterosexuality. The 11-item scale was originally designed by Link (1987) in relation to mental illness and adapted by Martin and Dean (1987) to relate to the expectations of rejection and discrimination of homosexuals. It has been found to be a reliable measure when used with this population¹² (e.g., Meyer, 1995). For the purpose of the current survey, the word "homosexual" was replaced with the words "same-sex attracted person". The response options were 1 = *strongly disagree* to 6 = *strongly agree*.

Responses indicated that most participants felt that people with same-sex attractions were stigmatised to some extent. Of the 2,025 participants who responded to all 11 items, 84% agreed (between slightly and strongly) with at least one negative statement or disagreed (between slightly and strongly) with at least one positive statement. The circumstances for which participants appeared to have the highest perception of stigma were for those relating to the care of children. For example, 63.3% disagreed to some extent that most people would accept a same-sex attracted person as a teacher in a public school and 47.4% agreed to some extent that most people will not hire a same-sex attracted person to care for their children. In contrast, perceptions in relation to employment were much more positive. For example, 78.4% agreed to some extent that most employers will hire a same-sex attracted person if he or she is qualified for the job. Table 26 on the following page lists all 11 items and provides the percentages for those agreeing or disagreeing with each statement. Within this table, for ease of interpretation, the 'strongly agree' and 'moderately agree' responses were combined into a single 'agree' category, and the 'strongly disagree' and 'moderately disagree' responses into a single 'disagree' category.

¹² In the Meyer (1995) study involving gay men, the reported internal reliability coefficient for the Stigma scale was $\alpha = .86$. In the current survey, the internal reliability coefficient was $\alpha = .89$.

Table 26.

Percentages of participants agreeing or disagreeing with statements on perceived stigma

	Agree	Slightly Agree	Slightly Disagree	Disagree
“Most people would willingly accept a same-sex attracted person as a close friend.”	36.5%	31.5%	20.3%	11.6%
“Most people believe that a same-sex attracted person is just as intelligent as the average person.”	68.3%	18.3%	9.6%	3.8%
“Most people believe that a same-sex attracted person is just as trustworthy as the average citizen.”	50.7%	25.0%	15.5%	8.8%
“Most people would accept a same-sex attracted person as a teacher of young children in a public school.”	15.2%	21.7%	25.5%	37.6%
“Most people think that being same-sex attracted is a sign of personal failure.”	8.7%	15.5%	23.6%	52.3%
“Most people will not hire a same-sex attracted person to care for their children.”	24.5%	22.9%	25.6%	27.0%
“Most people think less of a same-sex attracted person.”	13.5%	24.3%	25.2%	36.9%
“Most employers will hire a same-sex attracted person if he or she is qualified for the job.”	55.7%	22.7%	14.6%	7.0%
“Most employers will pass over the application of a same-sex attracted person in favour of another applicant.”	9.9%	16.5%	24.7%	48.9%
“Most people in the community would treat a same-sex attracted person just as they would treat anyone.”	25.7%	24.6%	25.5%	24.1%
Once they know a person is same-sex attracted they will take her or his opinion less seriously.”	8.3%	15.5%	28.5%	47.6%

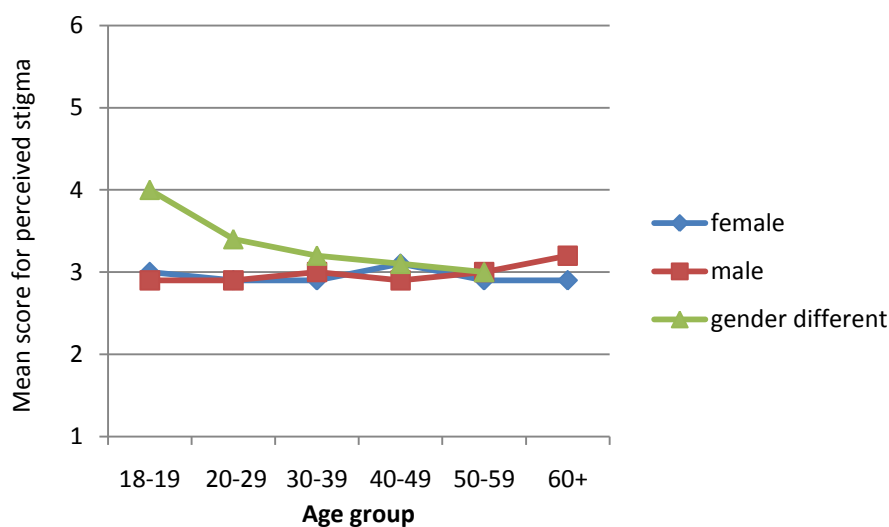
Note: The ‘strongly agree’ and ‘moderately agree’ responses are presented as a single ‘agree’ category, and the ‘strongly disagree’ and ‘moderately disagree’ responses as a single ‘disagree’ category. Total N = 2025

10.1.1 Age and Gender Identity Differences

To provide average scores for perceived stigma, positively worded items were reversed scored with the end result being the higher the score the higher the level of perceived stigma. Of the total sample, 50% scored an average of 2.90 or higher on the stigma scale (ranging from 1 = *low* to 6 = *high*), 10% scored an average of 4.00 or higher and 10% scored an average of less than 2.00. Results revealed that there were no significance differences between the average scores of those who identified as male (2.95) and those who identified as female (2.94), with results similar across all age groups. Herek (2009), based on a national sample from the United States, likewise found little difference between gay men, lesbians, bisexual men and bisexual women when using a modified and shortened version of the same scale. Both males and females in the current survey, however, reported significantly lower levels of perceived stigma compared with gender different participants (3.40). When taking into account a person's age and gender identity, the results revealed a trend which indicated that these differences were mainly associated with the higher level of stigma reported by gender different participants of a younger age (see Figure 44).

Figure 44.

Average scores, by age group, for the three gender identity groups for perceptions of stigma in relation to same-sex attractions



10.1.2 Stigma and Urban vs. Rural Areas of Residence

Perceptions of stigma were not significantly related to the area (e.g., rural, metropolitan) in which participants resided (see Table 1, section 1.1 for a description of area of residence). Although research has found that people living in rural areas are more likely to have negative attitudes towards homosexuality (Swank & Raiz, 2007), same-sex attracted people living in large cities may be more likely to experience different types of discrimination and abuse compared with those living in regional and remote areas. For example, findings from the Australian national *Private Lives* survey (Pitt et al., 2006) showed that those living in major cities, where sexual minorities are visible in larger numbers, were more likely to report personal insults or verbal abuse than people living in less populated areas. In contrast, people living in outer regional Australia were more likely to have reported experiencing threats of violence or physical attack relative to those in other areas. Put

simply, perhaps living in a highly populated area exposes one to more frequent homophobic behaviour even if, on average, it is less severe than that experienced in rural and remote areas. Another possibility, of course, is that people living in rural areas may be more likely to perceive high perceptions of stigma, be less open about their sexuality, and therefore may be less likely to participate in surveys of this nature.

10.1.3 Stigma, GLBTI Support and Well-being

Feeling supported by GLBTI friends and the GLBTI community were significantly related to lower levels of perceived stigma and higher levels of well-being. Research conducted with racial minority groups (e.g., Postmes & Branscombe, 2002) suggests that experiencing higher levels of support from similar others may work as a buffer against the negative effects of feeling devalued by the dominant population. In the case of concealable stigmas, however, such as sexual orientation, those who feel more devalued may be less inclined to want to seek high levels of support from similar others, for fear of increased visibility leading to further stigmatisation (Miller & Major, 2000). This could also explain the relationship found in the current survey between lower perceptions of stigma and higher perceptions of GLBTI support.

10.1.4 Transgender, Transsexual, and Intersex Participants

As discussed previously, it is unlikely that a transgender, transsexual, or intersex individual would be able to neatly disentangle their perceptions of acceptance or non-acceptance based on sexual orientation from the additional hurdles they are likely to face as sexual minorities (Lombardi, Wilchins, Priesing, & Malouf, 2001). It is not surprising, therefore, that average scores for perceptions of stigma were somewhat higher for this group when compared with the general sample (see Table 27). For example, 75.7% of participants from the general sample agreed, at least to some extent, that most people felt that a same-sex attracted person was trustworthy. Only 54.6% of transgender/transsexual female participants and 40.0% of intersex female participants agreed, at least to some extent, with this statement.

Table 27.

Perceived stigma scores for transgender/transsexual and intersex participants

	Average score	50% =>
Trans - F (N = 11)	3.35	3.27
Trans - M (N = 7)	3.08	2.27
Intersex - F (N = 5)	3.62	3.82
Intersex - M (N =2)	3.09	^a

^a = Figures are not provided as doing so would identify participants' scores due to the small number of cases. F = female, M = male, N = number of participants

10.2 Positive and Negative Mood

The PANAS (Watson, Clark, & Tellegen, 1988) is a widely used measure of both positive and negative mood states and has also been found to be a reliable instrument when used with nonheterosexual samples¹³ (e.g., Lee, Dean, & Jung, 2008; Rostosky, Riggle, Horne, & Miller, 2009). For this survey, participants were asked to rate how they feel “in general” (i.e., on average) when presented with 10 positive adjectives (interested, excited, strong, enthusiastic, proud, alert, inspired, determined, attentive, and active) and 10 negative adjectives (distressed, upset, guilty, scared, hostile, irritable, ashamed, nervous, jittery, and afraid). Response options ranged from 1 = *very slightly or not at all* to 5 = *extremely*. Of the sample, 2,018 participants completed items on both scales (as three participants did not provide their age, 2,015 are represented in the Figures 45 and 46).

The highest average scores for negative feelings (i.e., greater extent of a particular negative mood) were found for the adjectives “irritable” (2.41) and “nervous” (2.36), whereas the lowest scores for negative feelings were found for the adjectives “ashamed” (1.55) and “hostile” (1.70). The highest average scores for positive feelings were found for the adjectives “interested” (4.00), “determined” (3.93) and “proud” (3.81) and the lowest average score for positive feelings was found for the adjective “excited” (3.43).

10.2.1 Age and Gender Identity Differences

Average PANAS scores (ranging from 10 to 50) for the positive and negative mood scales represent the sum of the average scores for each scale’s items. Consistent with research findings based on a sample from the Australian general population (MacKinnon et al., 1999), greater negative mood was significantly associated with being younger. Gender different participants reported significantly greater negative mood (average score = 24.11) when compared with those who identified as male (20.10) or female (19.30), with differences still significant when taking into account participants’ ages. When taking into account age, there were also significant differences found between male and female participants. Males reported significantly higher negative mood, relative to females, with this difference more likely to be between males and females of an older age (see Figure 45).

Greater positive mood was significantly associated with being of an older age (see Figure 46). This latter finding is not consistent with those involving participants from the Australian general population (e.g., MacKinnon et al., 1999) in which younger people were found to report not only higher levels of negative mood on the negative PANAS subscale but also higher levels of positive mood on the positive PANAS subscale¹⁴. The average scores for the current survey were 37.50 for participants identifying as female, 36.91 for participants identifying as male, and 35.36 for gender different participants. When taking into account age differences, these gender differences for positive mood were not statistically significant.

¹³ The positive and negative affect subscales of the PANAS have been found to have good internal consistency with the internal reliability coefficient ranging from $\alpha = .83$ to $\alpha = .90$ for Positive Affect and $\alpha = .85$ to $\alpha = .90$ for Negative Affect (Watson & Clark, 1994). For the current survey the internal reliability coefficients were $\alpha = .88$ and $\alpha = .90$ respectively.

¹⁴ The PANAS subscales have been found to be quasi-independent (Watson & Clark, 1994), such that participants may score high on the positive affect subscale while still scoring high on the negative affect subscale.

Figure 45.

Average scores for the PANAS negative affect subscale by gender identity

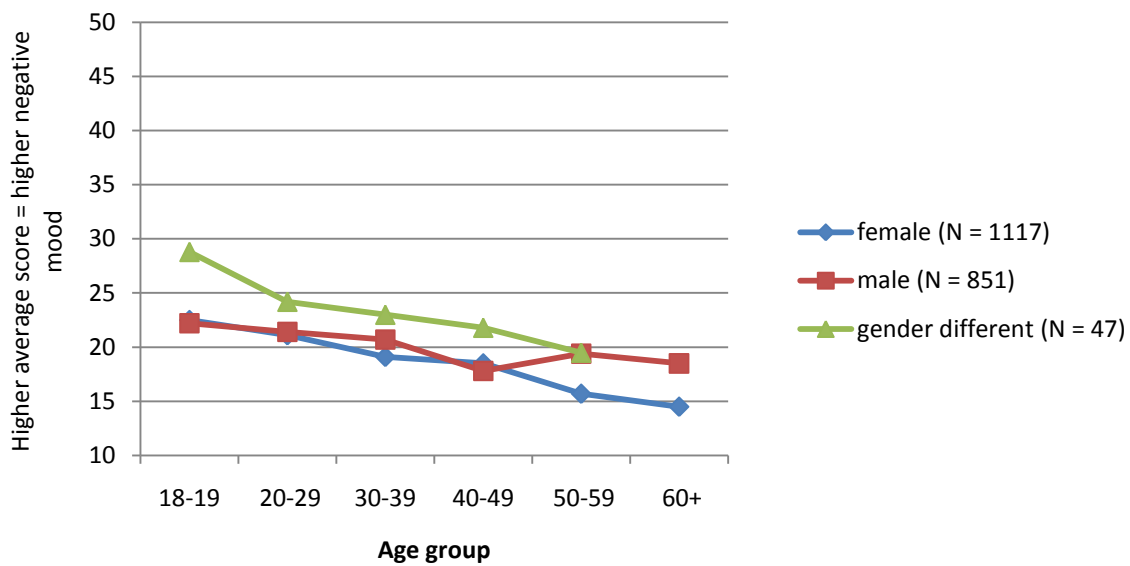
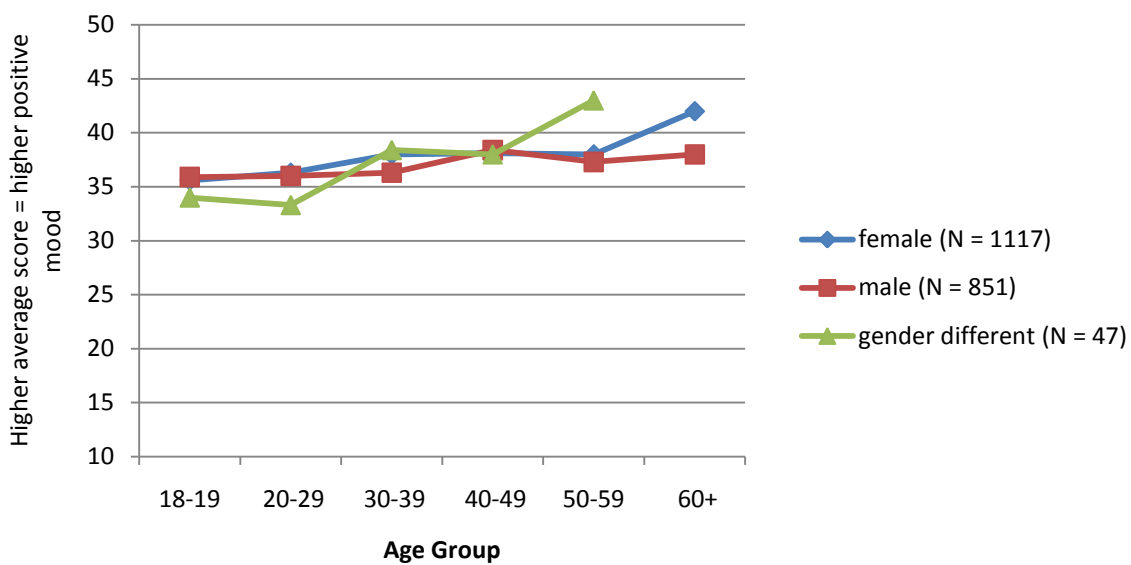


Figure 46.

Average scores for the PANAS positive affect subscale by gender identity



Note: Average scores for gender different participants in the age group 50-59 represent two participants.

10.2.2 Comparative Figures (US national LGB sample and Australian random sample)

Data from a US national sample of gay, lesbian and bisexual adults, reported in a paper by Rostosky, Riggle, Horne, and Mille, (2009), were made available to the authors for comparative purposes (E.D.B. Riggle, personal communication, April 10, 2010). Data from a random sample from the "The Stress and Well-Being Study", undertaken by the Centre for Mental Health Research at the Australian National University (ANU), were used to compare data from the current survey with that representing the general Australian population (T. Jacomb, personal communication, April 12, 2010). The ANU data, as described here, were based on figures provided in a study by MacKinnon et al., (1999). As the MacKinnon et al. (1999) study analysed a short 5-item version of the PANAS subscales, the scores for all three studies (see Table 28, Figures 47 and 48) have been presented as overall averages¹⁵, rather than a sum of item averages, to allow for comparisons between samples. The findings reported here, however, need to be interpreted with caution. Although the age ranges for the three samples were similar¹⁶, results do not take into account possible demographic differences.

Overall, the results based on the three samples showed that nonheterosexual participants reported greater negative emotional experiences, but not less positive emotional experiences, relative to a random sample from Australia. Female participants from the US national LGB survey scored significantly higher on the PANAS negative mood subscale compared with females from the random sample from Australia. Average scores for negative mood were similar between female participants from the current survey and those from the Australian sample, however, when including only the 5 items used in the Canberra study, female participants from the current survey also scored significantly higher for negative mood.^{17 18} Negative mood scores for male participants from the US national LGB survey and those from the current survey were similar, however, male participants from both these samples reported significantly higher negative mood relative to male participants from the Australian random sample. Gender different participants reported significantly higher negative mood relative to all other groups (see Figure 47).

For the PANAS positive mood subscale, scores for the US sample, the Australian random sample, and for gender different participants in the current survey were comparable. Both male and female participants from the current survey, however, reported significantly higher positive mood when compared with their counterparts from the Australian and US samples (see Figure 48). One possible explanation for the higher positive mood scores for the Australian same-sex attracted male and female participants, at least when compared with the US sample, is that the current survey asked participants about how they felt "in general" in relation to the 10 positive PANAS items (e.g., proud, determined, inspired). For the US study, participants were asked to rate how they felt "during the previous few weeks". Comparisons between studies using the PANAS over different time frames

¹⁵ Average scores can be converted to a sum of item averages by multiplying these scores by 10 for the *Not So Private Lives* sample and the US LGB sample, and by 5 for the ANU Canberra sample.

¹⁶ The age range for participants from the ANU study, reported in MacKinnon et al., (1999), was 18-79 and the mean age was 42.2 (SD = 14.0). The age range for the US national LGB study (Rostosky et al., 2009) was 18-82 and the mean age was 39.1 (SD = 12.8). For the current *Not So Private Lives* survey, the age range was likewise 18-82 and the mean age was 35.8 (SD = 12.3).

¹⁷ Analyses for the current survey were also conducted using only the 5 items used in the ANU study. Scores for positive affect remained unchanged, however, scores for negative affect increased for females from 1.93 to 2.03 (SD = .820), males from 2.01 to 2.08 (SD = .860) and gender different from 2.41 to 2.56 (SD = 1.102).

¹⁸ T-tests were conducted to analyse differences between groups.

indicated that scores tend to increase as the time frame considered lengthens (Watson & Clark, 1994). One of the studies included in Watson and Clark's (1994) comparison involved Australian men and women who, when presented with the PANAS subscales, were asked to rate how they felt "over the last week" as well as how they felt "in general". Findings showed that scores were higher for positive mood when feelings were considered "in general" compared with the one week assessment, and that this increase related to only positive mood scores not negative mood scores (Wilkinson, 1993; cited in Watson & Clark, 1994). Table 28 below lists the average scores (and standard deviations) for the three samples while Figures 47 and 48 allow for a visual interpretation of these results.

Table 28.

Average scores for the PANAS positive affect and negative affect subscales by gender identity and comparative figures based on a randomly selected Australian sample and a US national LGB sample

	<i>N</i>	PANAS - Positive	PANAS - Negative
NSPL – LGBTI sample			
Female	1118	3.75 (.645)	1.93 (.719)
Male	853	3.69 (.703)	2.01 (.767)
Gender different	47	3.54 (.809)	2.41 (.992)
Aust. random sample			
Female	1389	3.44 (.668)	1.92 (.814)
Male	1262	3.47 (.626)	1.70 (.656)
US LGB sample			
Female	958	3.41 (.764)	2.07 (.729)
Male	724	3.50 (.699)	2.00 (.666)

Standard deviations are provided in brackets (.). To convert to sum of item averages, multiply average scores and standard deviations for the NSPL and US samples by 10 and for the random Australian sample by 5. *N* = number of participants.

Figure 47.

Average scores for the PANAS negative affect subscale by gender identity, and comparative figures based on a randomly selected Australian sample and a US national LGB sample

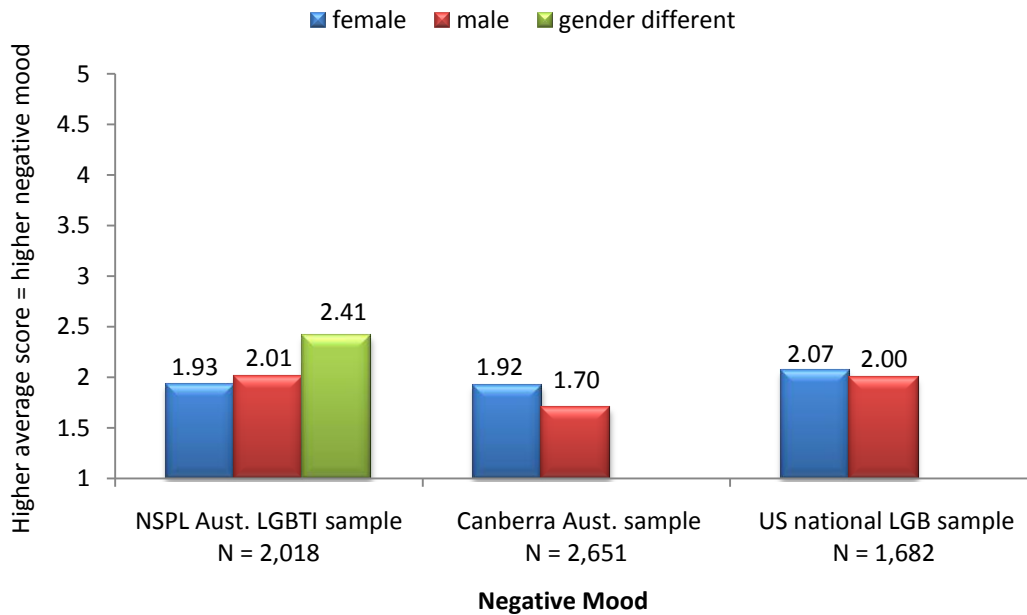
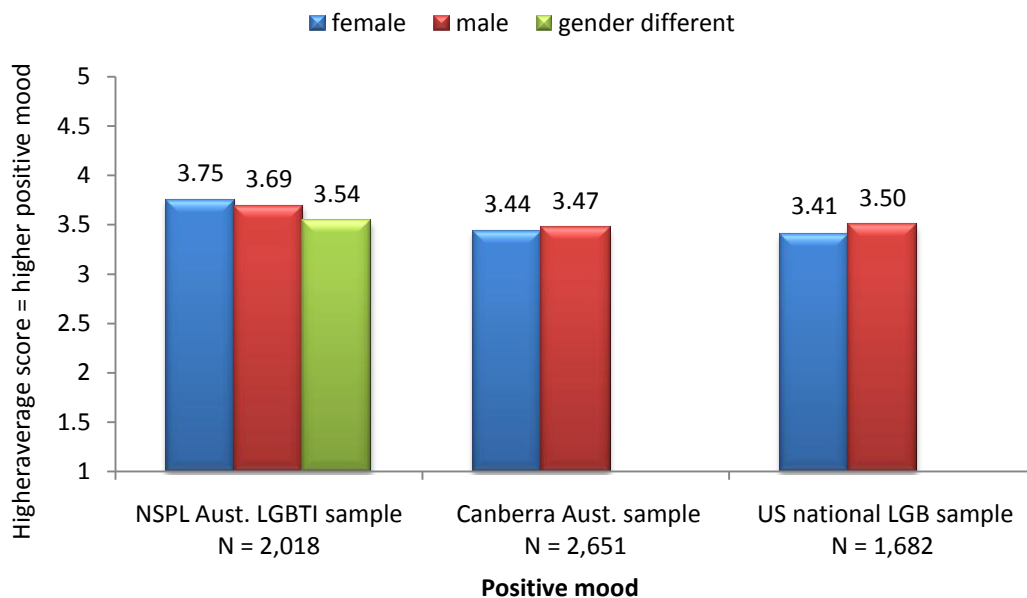


Figure 48.

Average scores for the PANAS positive affect subscale by gender identity, and comparative figures based on a randomly selected Australian sample and a US national LGB sample



10.2.3 Transgender, Transsexual, and Intersex Participants

Although included in the results for the general sample, scores for transgender/transsexual and intersex participants are listed separately in Table 29 below. In keeping with the overall general sample (see Figure 48), scores for positive mood were relatively high. Scores for negative mood for transgender/transsexual female and intersex female participants, however, were higher relative to the general sample and were more in keeping with those found for gender different participants (see Figure 47). These higher scores for negative emotional experiences are consistent with the higher scores found in the current survey on perceptions of stigma for transgender/transsexual female, intersex female and gender different participants (see section 10.1.4).

Table 29.

Average scores for the PANAS positive affect and negative affect subscales by gender identity and comparative figures based on a randomly selected Australian sample and a US national LGB sample

	Positive Mood	Negative Mood
Trans - F (<i>N</i> = 11)	3.61 (.822)	2.43 (.648)
Trans - M (<i>N</i> = 7)	3.74 (.860)	2.01 (1.229)
Intersex - F (<i>N</i> = 5)	3.42 (.867)	2.98 (.976)
Intersex - M (<i>N</i> = 2)	4.00 (.707)	1.95 (.919)

Note: Higher scores represent higher mood states. Standard deviations are presented in brackets (). To convert scores to sum of item averages multiply by 10. F= female, M = male, *N* = total number.

10.2.4 Summary

Overall, participants identifying as nonheterosexual scored higher in relation to negative emotional experiences but did not report less positive emotional experiences, relative to a random sample from Australia (MacKinnon et al., 1999). Scores for the positive PANAS subscale for same-sex attracted participants from a US national LGB survey (Rostosky et al., 2009) and the current national survey were comparable, and in some cases higher, when compared with those from the random Australian sample. In the case of negative emotional experiences, however, same-sex attracted participants from the US survey and the current survey scored higher on the negative PANAS subscale, although this finding was less pronounced in the case of same-sex attracted female participants relative to their female counterparts from the Canberra study. While acknowledging numbers are small, of greatest concern, and consistent with higher scores in the current survey on perceptions of stigma, were the higher levels of negative emotional experiences reported by gender different, intersex female, and transgender/transsexual female participants.

10.3 Psychological Well-Being Scales (PWB)

Participants were presented with the 42-item version of the Scales of Psychological Well-Being (PWB: Ryff, 1989), which have been used across various age groups and translated to over 25 different languages (MIDUS, 2010). The scales, which focus on positive psychological functioning, represent six dimensions of well-being: *Self-Acceptance* – positive evaluation of oneself and one’s past life, *Purpose in Life* – the belief that one’s life is purposeful and meaningful, *Autonomy* – a sense of self-determination, *Environmental Mastery* – the capacity to effectively manage one’s life and surrounding world, *Personal Growth* – a sense of continued growth and development as a person, *Positive Relations with Others* – the possession of quality relations with others. Participants were asked about the extent to which they agreed or disagreed (1= *strongly disagree* to 6 = *strongly agree*) with seven statements for each of these dimensions. Responses to negatively worded statements were reversed scored such that higher scores indicate greater well-being.

10.3.1 Age and Gender Identity Differences

When considering scores on all six dimensions of psychological well-being combined (i.e., overall well-being) older participants were significantly more likely to report higher well-being than younger participants. Those identifying as female reported significantly higher well-being compared with gender different participants and those identifying as male. Gender different participants reported significantly lower well-being relative to both male and female participants (see Figure 55). Figures 49 through to 54 present the average scores for each of the six dimensions of psychological well-being by gender identity and age group. For each of the six dimensions, older participants were more likely to report significantly higher levels of well-being compared with younger. Female participants scored significantly higher than male participants for *Personal Growth* and significantly higher than both male and gender different participants for *Positive Relations with Others* and *Purpose in Life*. Gender different participants scored significantly lower than female participants for *Purpose in Life* and significantly lower than both female and male participants for *Environmental Mastery*, *Positive Relations with Others*, and *Self-Acceptance*. The only dimension for which no significant gender identity differences were found was *Autonomy*¹⁹.

An evaluation of scores on the Scales of Psychological Well-being (PWB), from multiple sources, has shown that females in general tend to rate themselves higher on the *Positive Relations with Others* and *Personal Growth* dimensions (Ryff, 1995). Female scores for the current survey, however, were also higher for *Purpose in Life* and well-being overall. These higher female scores may, at least in part, relate to the more overt prejudice same-sex attracted males appear to face when compared with their female counterparts. Research from the Australian *Private Lives* GLBTI survey (Pitt et al., 2006) revealed that greater percentages of male participants, relative to female, reported acts of violence, and threats of violence or intimidation, with regard to their sexuality. Research has also found higher levels of prejudice towards gay men from other men than towards lesbians from other women (e.g., Herek, 2000).

¹⁹ Results described above are based on analyses of scores from participants who completed all items on all six well-being dimensions (N =1991). Additional analyses were conducted for each dimension, based on participants who completed all items on that particular dimension. The significance of the results remained unchanged, with the exception of those for *Self-Acceptance*. For this dimension, differences between male and female scores went from being close to significant to significant, with females having scored higher.

The significantly lower scores for gender different participants on four out of the six well-being dimensions is of great concern, particularly as these findings are consistent with this group’s significantly higher scores on perceived stigma and negative emotional experiences, when compared with participants identifying as male or female. It is unfortunate that in most survey research to date responses for this group of individuals have been masked, due to the inclusion of strictly male or female gender identity or biological sex category options.

Figure 49.

Average score for Self-Acceptance by gender identity and age group

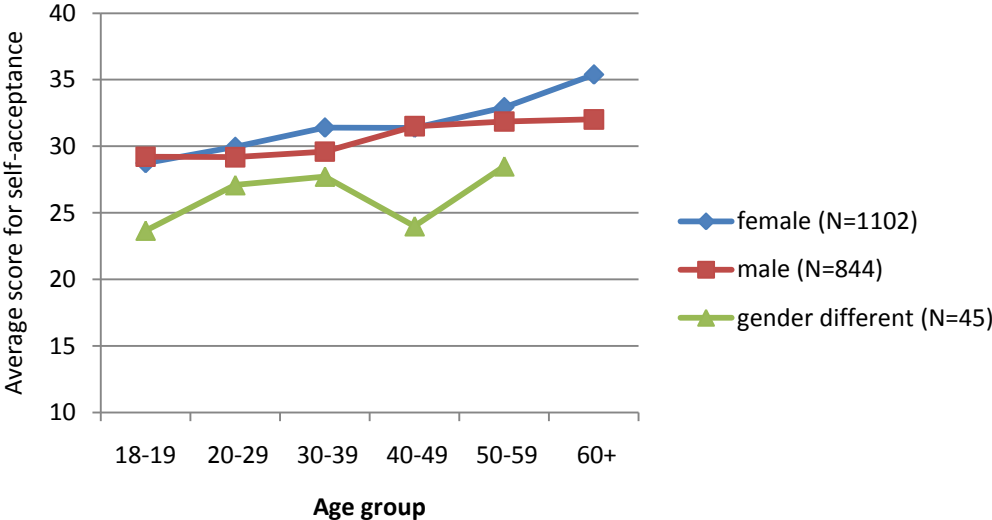
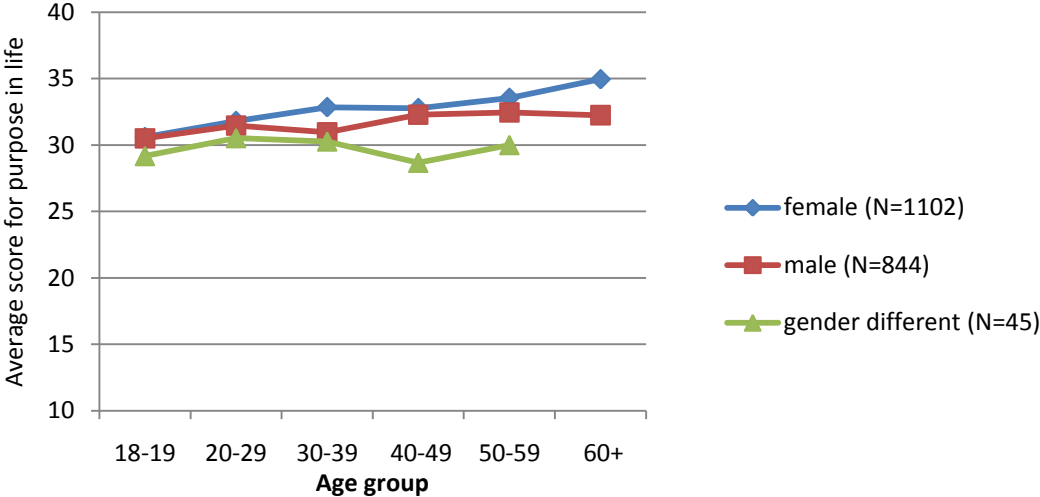


Figure 50.

Average scores for Purpose in Life by gender identity and age group



Note: Average scores for gender different participants in the age group 50-59 represent two participants.

Figure 51.

Average scores for Autonomy by gender identity and age group

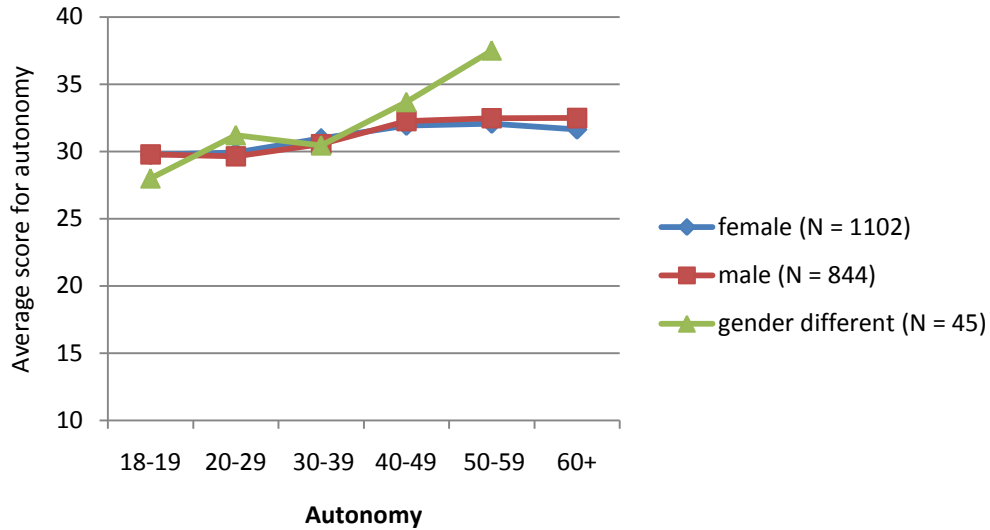
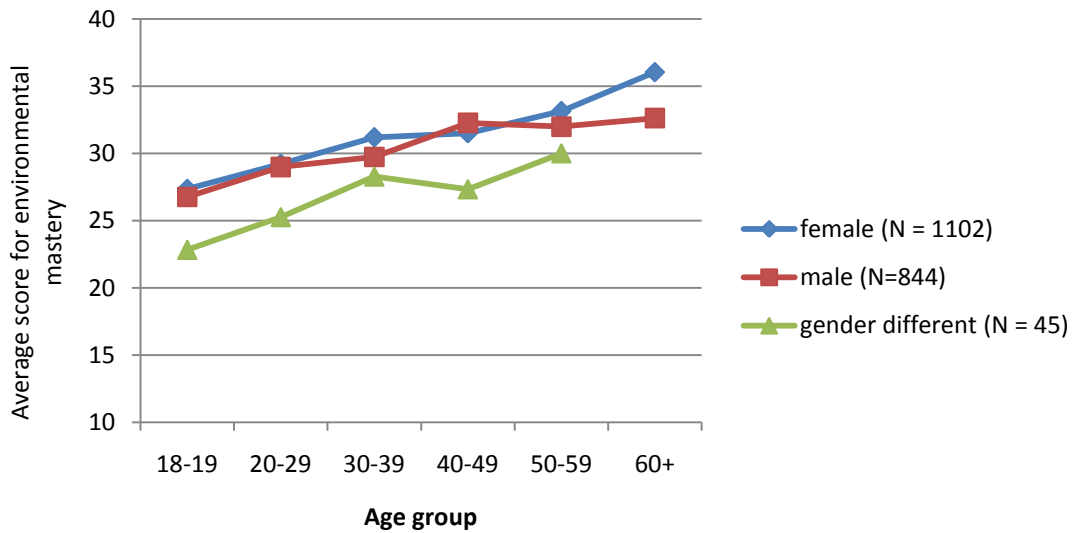


Figure 52.

Average scores for Environmental Mastery by gender identity and age group



Note: Average scores for gender different participants in the age group 50-59 represent two participants.

Figure 53.

Average scores for Personal Growth by gender identity and age group

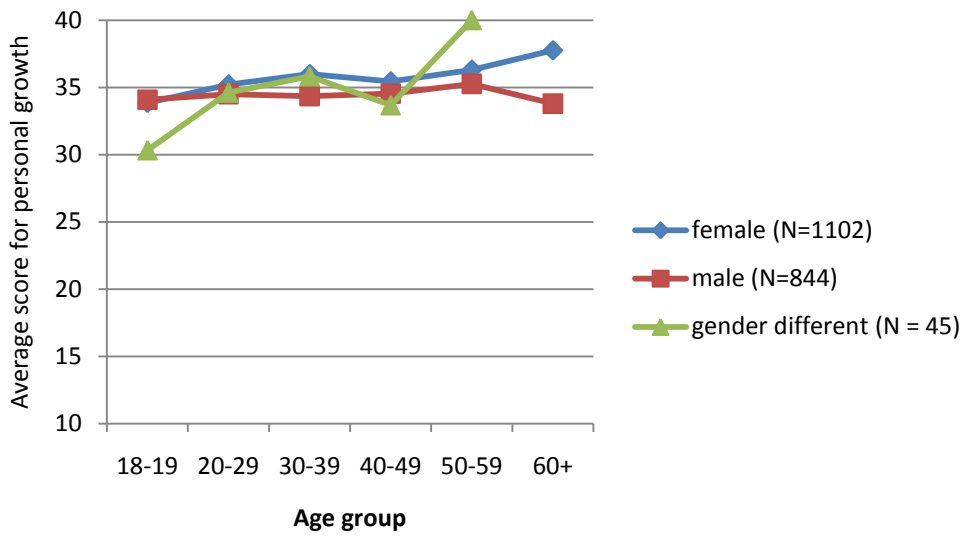
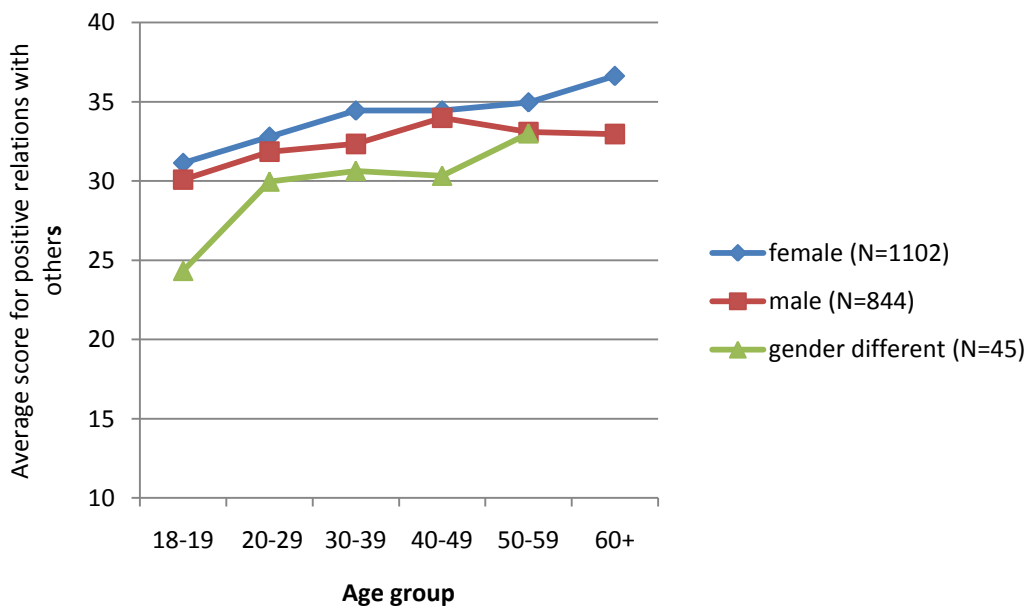


Figure 54.

Average scores for Positive Relations with Others by gender identity and age group



Note: Average scores for gender different participants in the age group 50-59 represent two participants.

Figure 55.

Average overall score for Psychological Well-Being (PWB) by gender identity and age group

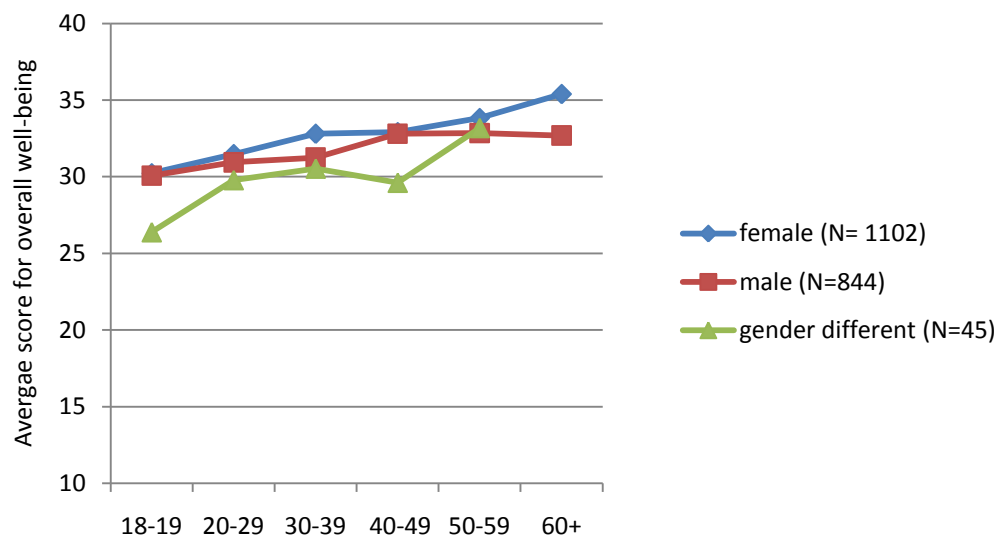


Table 30.

Average scores for each of the six dimensions of Psychological Well-Being (PWB) and overall scores by gender identity

	Female	Male	Gender Diff
<i>N</i>	1102	844	45
Autonomy ($\alpha = .77$)	30.91 (6.18)	30.93 (5.88)	31.04 (6.13)
Environmental Mastery ($\alpha = .85$)	30.74 (6.99)	30.31 (7.26)	26.02 (8.37)
Personal Growth ($\alpha = .80$)	35.58 (5.02)	34.49 (5.71)	34.51 (6.86)
Positive Relations with Others ($\alpha = .78$)	33.85 (5.86)	32.53 (6.12)	29.53 (8.39)
Purpose in Life ($\alpha = .80$)	32.51 (6.13)	31.64 (6.47)	30.13 (6.88)
Self-Acceptance ($\alpha = .88$)	31.04 (7.33)	30.28 (7.73)	26.64 (9.14)
Overall Well-being ($\alpha = .95$)	194.63 (30.47)	190.18 (32.58)	177.89 (37.89)

Total $N = 1991$. Numbers of participants (N) represent those who completed all items on the six dimensions (see footnote 19, p.91). Standard deviations are presented in brackets (). α = internal reliability coefficient.

10.3.2 Comparative Figures (US national sample)

Scores for the Scales of Psychological Well-Being (PWB: Ryff, 1989) from the current survey (NSPL) were compared with those from the second National Survey of Midlife Development in the United States (MIDUS II). Information on the use of these scales and how best to convert scores²⁰ based on the 7-point scale response format used in the MIDUS II survey to a 6-point scale response format used for the current survey was provided by the author of these scales, Professor Ryff (C. D. Ryff, personal communication, April 9, 2010). As the MIDUS II sample represented a larger number of participants in their senior years, scores were examined between a subsample of participants aged 30-60 from the MIDUS II dataset and a subsample of participants aged 30-60 from the current survey. Due to the mean age of the MIDUS sample still being higher, an additional subsample from the current survey, which included all participants aged 30 and over (i.e., 30-82), was also compared. As the number of participants over the age of 60 in the current NSPL sample was relatively small (n = 81), the average age for the two NSPL subsamples differed only slightly.

Results based on comparisons with the raw data from the MIDUS II survey showed that participants from the current survey (for both subsamples) scored significantly lower²¹ than the subsample of American heterosexual participants²² for *Environmental Mastery*, *Purpose in Life* and *Self-Acceptance*, and significantly higher for *Personal Growth*. These findings are similar to those based on a comparison by Riggle, Rostosky, and Danner (2009) of scores between American heterosexual participants and American nonheterosexual participants from the earlier MIDUS I dataset. Riggle and colleagues (2009) found that the sexual minority subsample scored lower on the same dimensions found for the current survey with the addition of *Positive Relations with Others*. Interestingly, *Personal Growth* was the one dimension for which they found sexual minority participants scored higher, although, unlike the current findings, scores were not found to be significantly different from the comparison group.

Although the consistencies found between the US findings for sexual minority participants' scores and those from the current survey are of interest, the interpretation of these findings are limited due to the fact that demographic differences were not taken into account for the Australian comparison. Further, in order to make comparisons with the MIDUS II data, which were based on an older-age sample, sexual minority participants who were under the age of 30 were not included in the analyses. As younger people were more likely to report lower well-being for all six dimensions, it would be of greater interest to compare reported psychological well-being between young heterosexual and young nonheterosexual national samples. Importantly, although the findings presented here provide some evidence of reported lower well-being for sexual minority individuals for certain aspects of well-being, results overall revealed that the majority of same-sex attracted people in the current survey reported positive well-being. Individuals who perceived higher levels of

²⁰ To convert scores from the MIDUS II dataset based on a 7-point scale response format to a 6-point scale format, half of the 'neutral' responses (i.e. a score of 4) were randomly assigned a score immediately above on the scale (i.e., slightly agree) and half immediately below (i.e., slightly disagree). Data were based on participants who completed all items on each of the 6 dimensions to be consistent with the current sample.

²¹ T-test were conducted to analyse differences between groups.

²² Participants who identified as 'Homosexual' or 'Bisexual' (the two nonheterosexual response options in the MIDUS II survey) were excluded from the MIDUS II subsample, in order to provide a heterosexual comparison.

stigma and lower levels of acceptance from others were more likely to report higher levels of negative mood and lower levels of psychological well-being.

Table 31.

Average scores for Scales of Psychological Well-Being (7-items per scale) for a subsample of heterosexual participants from the MIDUS II and subsamples from the current survey (NSPL)

	MIDUS II (30-60 yrs) N = 2350 30-60 yrs, M = 48.5	NSPL (30-60 yrs) N = 1182 30-60 yrs, M = 41.7	NSPL (30-82 yrs) N = 1249 30-82 yrs, M = 43.0
Autonomy	31.51 (5.78)	31.56 (6.00)	31.58 (5.98)
Environmental Mastery	32.10 (6.09)	31.41 (7.03)	31.53 (7.01)
Personal Growth	33.06 (5.68)	35.35 (5.35)	35.32 (5.42)
Positive Relat. w/Others	34.24 (5.83)	33.91 (5.89)	33.92 (5.88)
Purpose in Life	33.12 (5.68)	32.44 (6.21)	32.47 (6.20)
Self-Acceptance	32.17 (6.86)	31.27 (7.38)	31.35 (7.37)
Overall Well-being	196.19 (29.45)	195.93 (31.17)	196.18 (31.13)

M = mean age

10.3.3 Transgender, Transsexual and Intersex Participants

Similar to the scores for the general sample, transgender/transsexual and intersex participants scored highest for the *Personal Growth* dimension of well-being and lowest for *Environment Mastery*. Similar to gender different participants, however, scores were overall lower compared with male and female scores for the general sample, for all groups except intersex males²³. The average total well-being scores were 181.55 (SD = 34.90) for transgender/transsexual females, 190.57 (SD = 53.96) for transgender/transsexual males, 162.40 (SD = 37.90) for intersex females and 205.00 (SD = 8.49) for intersex males.

²³ These differences are based on observed differences not statistical differences.

Appendix – Auxiliary Report



NOT SO PRIVATE LIVES

The Ins and Outs of Same-Sex Relationships

Auxiliary Report

A report on the analyses of relationship recognition measures included in the Not So Private Lives online survey for same-sex attracted Australians

August 2009

Total sample - 2232

Ms. Sharon Dane, Dr. Barbara Masser and Dr. Julie Duck

School of Psychology – The University of Queensland

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Background

Not So Private Lives: The Ins and Outs of Same-Sex Relationships online survey was conducted through the School of Psychology at The University of Queensland, Australia. The aim of the survey was to add to the growing body of research on the lives of sexual minorities in Australia. The full report of this survey is expected to be completed by November 2009. The report provided here is based on the analyses of responses to a sub-set of questions within the survey. These questions focused on current relationship status and preferences for relationship recognition. The examination of these factors aimed to provide an insight into the preferences of same-sex attracted Australians with regard to the legal recognition of their relationships following the introduction of *de facto* status for same-sex couples at a federal level.

The survey site was hosted by Globalpark through its Unipark program for academic research. Globalpark has its headquarters in Germany and is one of the leading international suppliers of online software for academic and commercial research. All data collection and storage is provided by Globalpark. The url for the web-page entry to the survey was www.notsoprivatelives.com

Recruitment Strategies

The survey commenced on the 3rd April 2009 and ran until midnight, 15th August 2009. Responses to the survey decreased substantially in the latter two weeks, suggesting the sample had reached its maximum uptake. The survey was advertised online in the LGBTQI press for every state and territory and in print in various LGBTQI magazines. Information on the survey was also circulated through sexual minority email networks across the country. Flyers and/or email information were sent to sexual minority - businesses, health and community centres, sporting clubs, reading groups, parenting groups, outdoor activity groups, city and country social clubs, chat rooms, and sexual minority welcoming religious organisations. The survey was also promoted via Queer radio (e.g., JOY FM – Melbourne) and flyers were distributed at sexual minority events (e.g., Brisbane Pride Day and the Brisbane Queer Film Festival). Participants were also asked to consider informing their same-sex attracted friends/contacts about the survey.

Eligibility

Participants were invited to take part in the survey provided they met the criteria of being:

- a) at least 18 years of age
- b) a citizen or permanent resident of Australia
- c) attracted (sexually and/or romantically) to people of the same sex

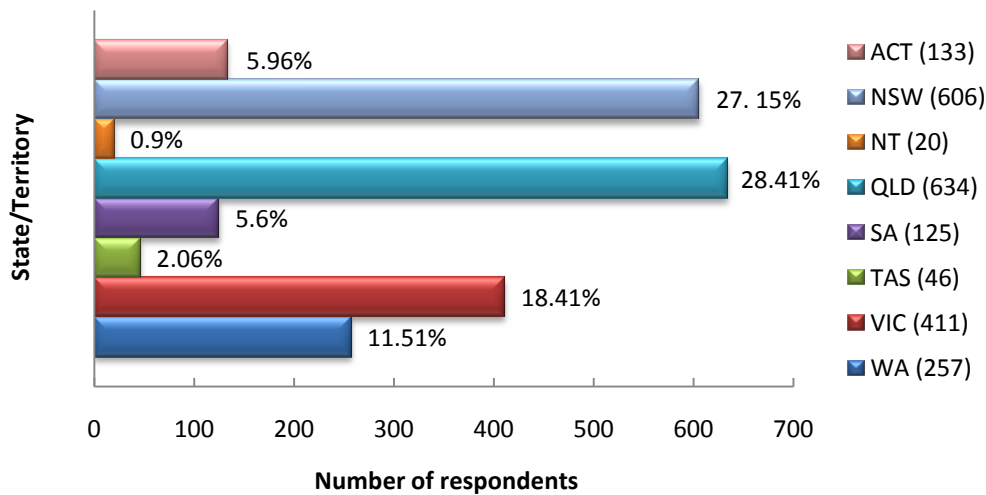
Participants, who did not select the 'Yes' option for all three of the questions addressing the criteria, were thanked for their interest and directed away from the survey. Identification as same-sex attracted was further verified by the Sexual Identity and Sexual and Romantic Attraction measures in the survey proper.

Demographics

The *Preference for Legal Recognition of Same-Sex Relationships* component of the survey was completed by 2,232 participants in total. Demographic information for these participants is provided below.

Figure 1:

Numbers and percentages of respondents according to state/territory of residence



All participants acknowledged that they were either citizens or permanent residents of Australia. Thirty-three participants selected the 'currently living overseas' option and were asked to provide the name of their home state or territory in Australia. These numbers (ACT - 3, NSW - 10, QLD - 8, VIC - 9 and WA - 3) are accounted for in Figure 1 above. The survey attracted a higher number of participants from Queensland, despite balancing advertising across states and territories. This is likely to have been as a result of the survey being conducted in Queensland and advertised under The University of Queensland logo.

Table 1

Numbers and percentages of respondents according to area of current residence

	N	%
Capital City	1643	73.6
Other metropolitan area (population 100,000 or more)	316	14.2
Large rural centre (25,000 – under 100,000)	144	6.5
Other rural area	111	5.0
Remote	18	0.8

Total N = 2232

Age

The mean age of this sample was 35.8 years with a range from 18 to 82 years. Table 2 below indicates the numbers and percentages of participants by age group.

Table 2

Numbers and percentages of respondents according to age group

	<i>N</i>	%
18 - under 20	131	5.9
20 - 29	701	31.4
30 - 39	585	26.3
40 - 49	484	21.7
50 - 59	236	10.6
60 - 69	74	3.3
70 - 82	17	0.8

Total *N* = 2228 (four participants did not provide their age).

Biological Sex, Gender Identity and Sexual Identity

Participants were first asked to select their biological sex as defined at birth. Of the sample, 56.2% (*n* = 1254) selected female, 43.6% (*n* = 974) selected male and 0.2% (*n* = 4) selected intersex. Participants' current gender identity is detailed in Table 3 below. When examining the numbers of transgender, transsexual, intersex, and gender different participants, it is important to note that this survey was not open to all sexual minority individuals but only those who identified as same-sex attracted.

Table 3

Current gender identity of respondents

	<i>N</i>	%
Female	1201	53.8
Transgender/Transsexual Female	13	0.6
Gender Different/Intersex Female	7	0.3
Male	948	42.5
Transgender/Transsexual Male	7	0.3
Gender Different/Intersex Male	2	0.1
Gender Different	30	1.3
Other	24	1.1

Total *N* = 2232

The most frequent responses for sexual identity were gay (40.9%), lesbian (37.9%), bisexual (8%), queer (5.7%) and no label (3.8%). Larger numbers of those identifying as female than

male nominated the terms bisexual, queer or no label. These terms were also nominated by the majority of gender different participants.

Employment

Table 4

Numbers and percentages of respondents according to current employment and/or education status

	<i>N</i>	%
Full-time student	412	18.5
Part-time student	189	8.5
Full-time employment	1156	51.8
Part-time employment	432	19.4
Self-employed	215	9.6
Not in paid employment (incl. Volunteer work)	160	7.2
Retired	81	3.6

Note: Respondents were able to select multiple responses for this measure.

Religion

Participants were simply asked if they considered themselves to be a religious person rather than asked to state their religious background. Of this sample, 19.2% (*n* = 428) selected 'yes', 80.8% (*n* = 1803) selected 'no' and one person did not respond. However, 41.6% of participants reported that religion (including the religious beliefs of others) plays a role in their decisions to disclose their sexuality.

Relationship Measures

Of the sample, 66.3% of participants reported currently being in some form of same-sex relationship. The numbers and percentages for these relationships are in Table 5 below.

Table 5

Type of current same-sex relationship

	<i>N</i>	%
Regular partner (living together)	1008	45.2
Regular partner (living apart)	345	15.5
No primary partner or casual relationships only	125	5.6
Not currently in a same-sex relationship	751	33.7

Total *N* = 2229 (three participants did not respond).

Current Legal Status of Same-Sex Relationship

Participants who reported that they currently had a regular same-sex partner (whether living together or apart) were asked how they would describe their current same-sex relationship in legal terms. To minimise confusion, participants were provided with examples for relationships formalised through a state or municipal registry in Australia. These were ACT Civil Partnership, City of Melbourne Relationship Declaration, City of Sydney Relationship Declaration, Tasmania Significant Relationship, Victoria Domestic Partnership and Yarra City Council Relationship Declaration. Examples of relationships recognised overseas were provided next to the relevant answer options (see Table 6 below).

Table 6

Reported current legal status of same-sex relationship for respondents with a regular same-sex partner, living together or apart (N = 1353).

	N	%
No legal status	548	40.5
De facto	719	53.1
Relationship formalised through a state or municipal registry (see examples above)	47	3.5
Overseas recognised relationship other than marriage (e.g., UK Civil Partnership, NZ Civil Union)	43	3.2
Overseas marriage (e.g., Canada, Netherlands, South Africa, Massachusetts)	23	1.7

Note: Respondents were able to select more than one option.

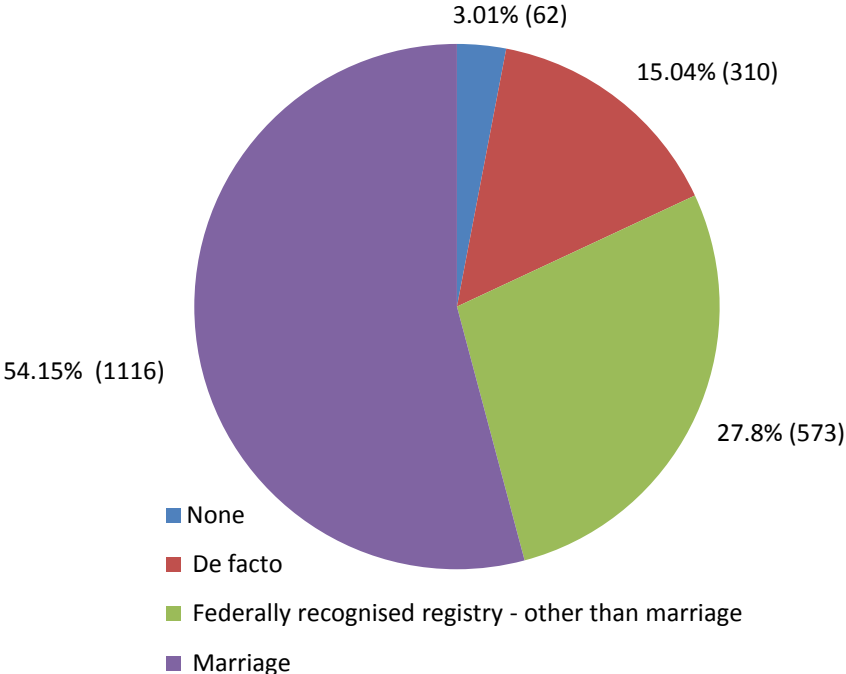
The question asking participants how they would describe the legal status of their same-sex relationship also provided the option of selecting ‘Other’. Forty-eight participants (3.5%) selected this ‘Other’ option. However, the majority of these participants (31 out of 48) had also selected one of the categories listed in Table 6 above and simply utilised the ‘Other’ text box to clarify their selection. Three participants used the ‘Other’ option to state that they were unsure about the legal status of their relationship and 13 did not make the legal status of their relationship clear in their description.

Preferred Legal Recognition of Same-Sex Relationship

All participants, regardless of whether or not they were currently in a same-sex relationship, were asked about their personal preference for legal relationship recognition in this country. Figure 2 below indicates the responses to the question *“If you are or were to become involved in a long-term committed same-sex relationship, in what way would you prefer Australian law to recognise your relationship?”*

Figure 2

Personal preference for relationship recognition - general sample (including those not currently in a same-sex relationship).



Six participants stated that they preferred a Civil Union and three stated that they preferred a Civil Partnership in the 'Other' text box provided. As both types of relationships are forms of federally recognised relationships documented at a registry (other than marriage), these nine responses were included in the main category 'Federally recognised registry- other than marriage'. Twenty-two participants selected the 'not applicable' option (e.g., never wish to be in a long-term committed same-sex relationship) and were therefore excluded from the analysis. From the remaining sample of 2210, 149 participants selected the 'Other' option with the most common statement used to clarify this selection being that they simply wanted the same rights as heterosexuals (e.g., "all ways permitted for opposite-sex couples", "exactly the same as heterosexual couples"). These responses, although making an important statement, were more in keeping with a later question on a person's general preference for relationship recognition in which participants could select more than one choice. Therefore, these responses, along with those from others who did not select a single preference as instructed by the question, were not included in this analysis. However, it is acknowledged that making a specific choice may have been difficult for some participants, particularly those who were not currently in a committed same-sex relationship.

Preferred legal recognition of same-sex relationship for participants with a regular same-sex partner.

Figures 3 to 7 indicate the personal preferences for the legal recognition of a committed same-sex relationship for participants who reported having a regular same-sex partner whether living together or apart ($N = 1353$). Those with invalid responses, for reasons described on the previous page, were excluded from analyses leaving a total of 1291 responses across categories. Responses are grouped according to the current legal status of participants' same-sex relationships.

Figure 3

Preferred legal recognition for those currently in a same-sex de facto relationship ($N = 677$)

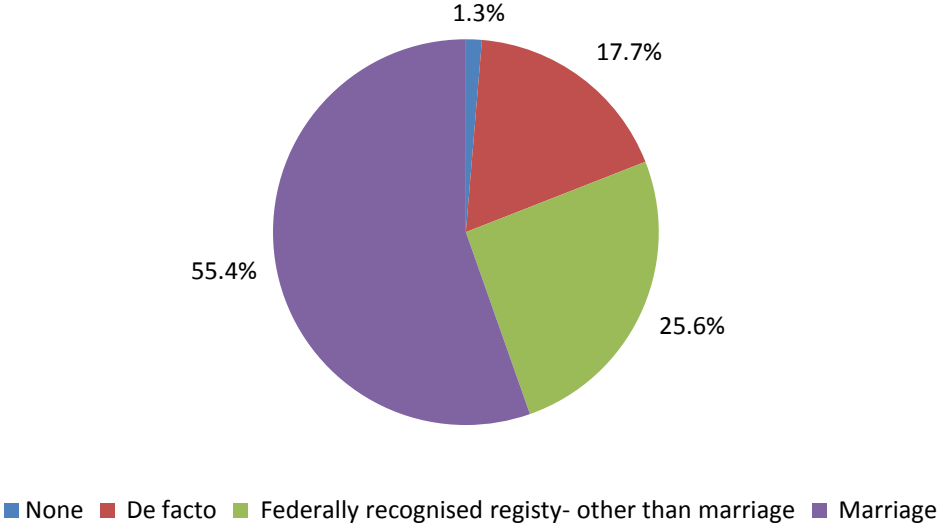


Figure 4

Preferred legal recognition for those with a current same-sex relationship formalised through a state or municipal registry.

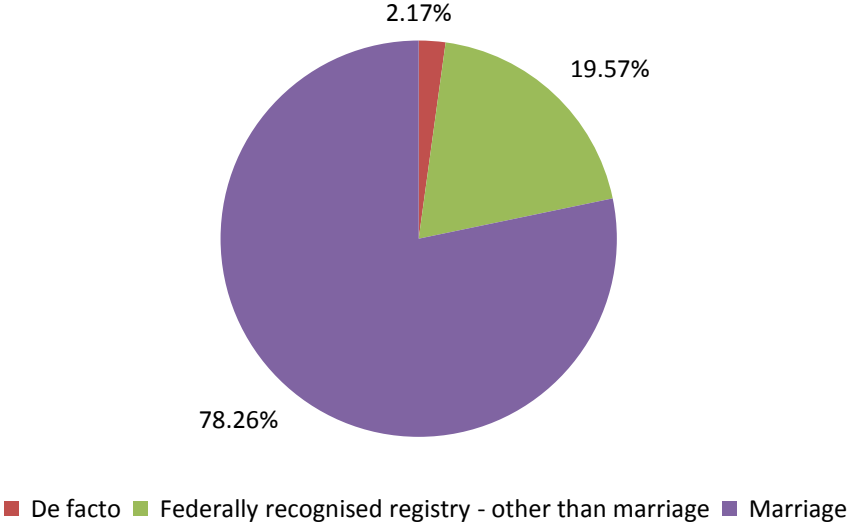


Figure 5

Preferred legal recognition for those currently in an overseas recognised relationship other than marriage - e.g., NZ Civil Union, UK Civil Partnership (N = 40)

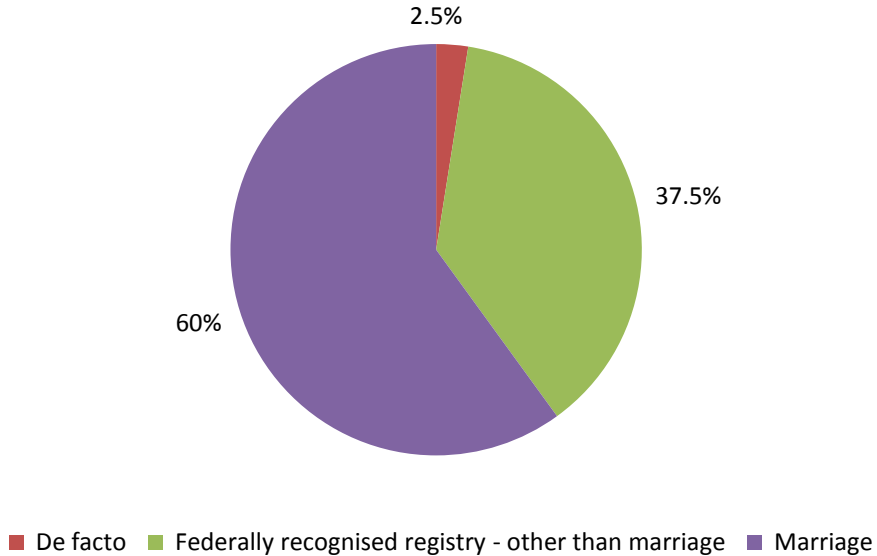


Figure 6

Preferred legal recognition for those currently in an overseas marriage (N = 23)

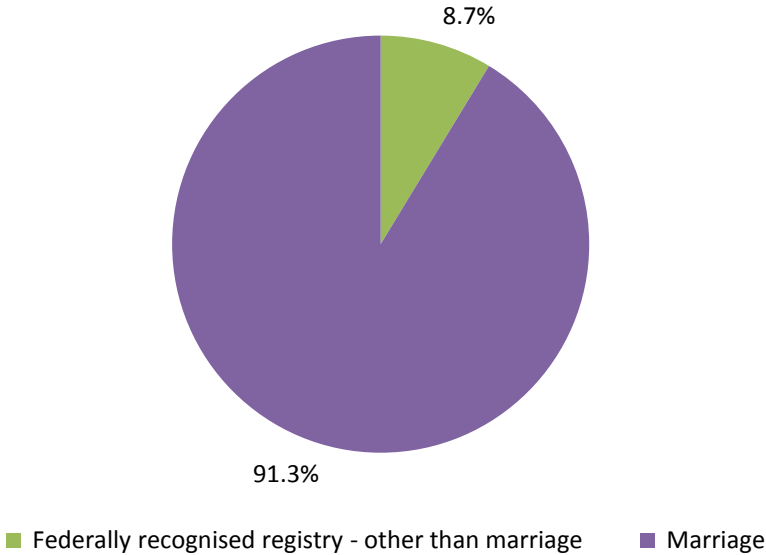
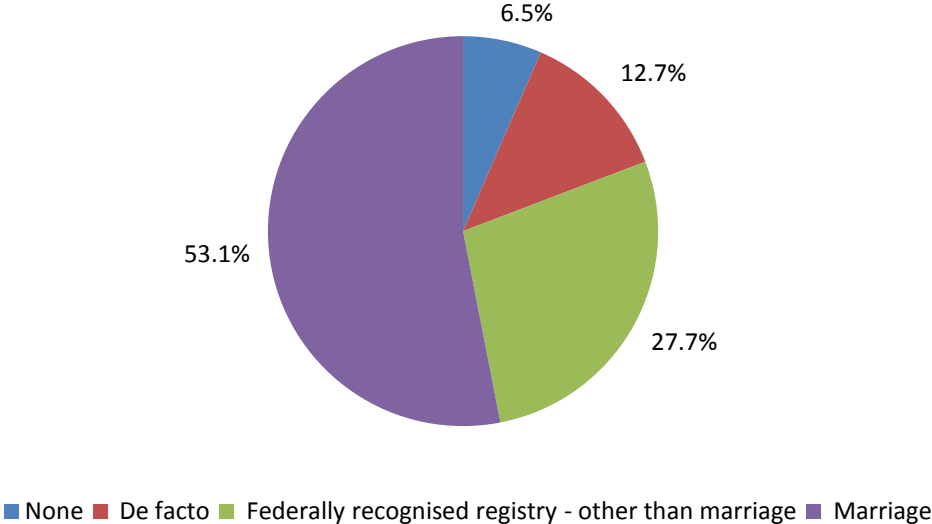


Figure 7

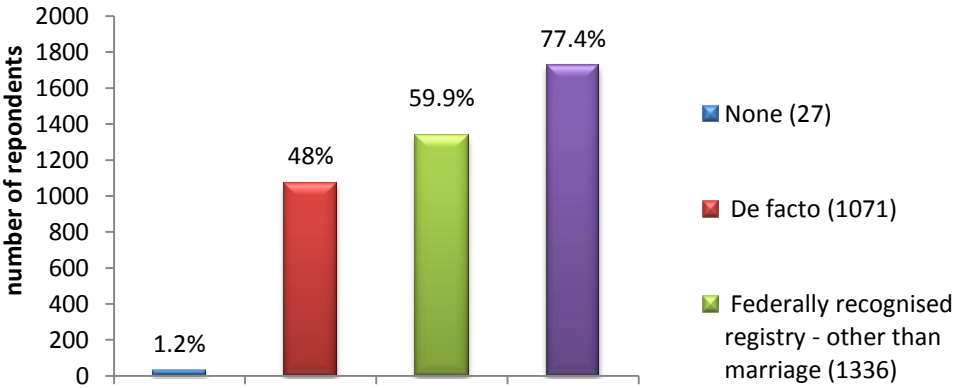
Preferred legal recognition for those currently in a same-sex relationship with no legal status (N = 505)



Participants were also asked about their preferences regarding legal recognition in Australia for same-sex couples in general. Figure 8 below shows participants’ responses to the question *“Irrespective of your personal preference, which form(s) of relationship recognition would you like to see remain and/or become available for same-sex couples in Australia?”* Note: Participants in this instance were able to select multiple options. One participant did not respond to this measure.

Figure 8

Respondents’ preferred legal options for same-sex couples in Australia (N =2231)



Auxiliary Report Summary

Not So Private Lives is the first national study to examine same-sex attracted Australians' preferences for various forms of relationship recognition since the introduction of de facto status for same-sex couples at a federal level. It is also the first major study to investigate preferences for relationship recognition while taking into account the current legal status (in Australia or overseas) of an individual's same-sex relationship.

Findings from the relationship recognition measures of this survey demonstrate that same-sex attracted individuals, like other Australians, differ in the way they prefer their relationships to be formally recognised. However, the results show that the majority of same-sex attracted participants in this survey selected marriage as their personal choice. A federally recognised relationship documented at a registry other than marriage was the second most popular option, and de facto status was the third. The preference for a relationship without any legal status was selected by only 3% of the overall sample.

Interestingly, marriage was still the majority choice irrespective of the current legal status of participants' same-sex relationships (including no legal status). For example, of those currently in a de facto relationship, 55.4% stated they preferred marriage for themselves, 25.6% stated that they preferred a federally recognised relationship other than marriage, 17.7% selected de facto and 1.3% chose no legal status.

Participants were also given the opportunity to select which forms of legal relationship recognition they would like to see remain and/or become available in this country for same-sex couples in general. Responses to this measure (which allowed for multiple selections) show that 77.4% would like to see marriage become available as an option, 59.9% would like to see a federally recognised relationship other than marriage be made available and 48% would like to see de facto recognition remain. These numbers indicate that many participants selected multiple options, suggesting that simply having a choice was an important factor.

Although the data from this survey indicate that marriage is not for everyone, the majority of same-sex attracted participants in this national survey selected this type of relationship recognition as their personal choice and as a choice to be made available for their fellow same-sex attracted Australians.

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