

# REPORTING ON LGBT ISSUES



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Pronouns: He/Him



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# WHAT WE'LL COVER TODAY

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1. General background
2. Terminology: What's appropriate and what's not
3. General considerations when covering LGBT stories
4. Covering the bi community
5. Covering the trans community
6. Questions



# LGBT People in the UK

The UK Government estimates that **six per cent** of the UK population identify as **lesbian, gay or bi**, and that around **one per cent identify as trans**.

While a 2015 YouGov survey that asked people to plot themselves on a 'sexuality' scale found that **23% of British people** chose something other than 100% heterosexual. This figure rises to **49% among 18-24 year old**.

LGBT people who have experienced a hate crime or incident due to being LGBT in the past 12 months

# LGBT in Britain

**1 in 5 LGBT people** have experienced a **hate crime** or incident in the last 12 months.

**1 in 8 trans employees** have been **physically attacked** by a colleague or customer in the last year.

Nearly **two in five bi people aren't out** to anyone at work. This includes **half of bi men**, and a **third of bi women**.

**Half of LGBT people** experienced **depression** in the last year.

**5%** of **LGBT people** have been pressured to access services to **question or change their sexual orientation** when accessing healthcare services.



# TERMINOLOGY

**Ace** – Umbrella term to describe a variation in levels of romantic and/or sexual attraction, including a lack of attraction. An ace person may describe themselves as: asexual and/or aromantic.

**Bi** – Umbrella term to describe a romantic and/or sexual orientation towards more than one gender. Bi people may describe themselves as: bisexual, pan, and/or queer.

**Cisgender (cis)** – Someone whose gender identity is the same as the sex they were assigned at birth.

**Deadnaming** – Calling someone from their birth name after they've changed their name. This term is often associated with trans people who have changed their name as part of their transition.

**Gender** – Often expressed in terms of masculinity and femininity, gender is largely culturally determined and is assumed from the sex assigned at birth.

**Gender Expression** – How a person chooses to outwardly express their gender, within the context of societal expectations of gender.

**Gender Identity** – A person's innate sense of their own gender, whether male, female or something else, which may or may not correspond to the sex assigned at birth.

# TERMINOLOGY

**Non-binary** – Umbrella term for people whose gender identity doesn't sit comfortably with 'man' or 'woman'.

**Person with a trans history** – Someone who identifies as male or female or a man or woman, but was assigned the opposite sex at birth. This is increasingly used by people to acknowledge a trans past.

**Queer** – Term used by those wanting to reject specific labels of romantic orientation, sexual orientation and/or gender identity. It can also be a way of rejecting the perceived norms of the LGBT community (racism, sizeism, ableism, etc). Although some LGBT people view the word as a slur, it was reclaimed in the late 80s by the queer community who have embraced it.

**Sex** – Assigned to a person on the basis of primary sex characteristics and reproductive functions.

**Trans** – Umbrella term to describe people whose gender is not the same as, or does not sit comfortably with, the sex they were assigned at birth.

**Transsexual** – Used more in the past as a medical term to refer to someone whose gender is not the same as, or does not sit comfortably with, the sex they were assigned at birth.

# WHAT TO WRITE V. WHAT NOT TO WRITE

Appropriate	Inappropriate
'Gay' and/or 'lesbian'	'Homosexual'
'Sexual orientation' and/or 'sexuality'	'Sexual preference'
'LGBT people and their lives'	'Gay lifestyle', 'homosexual lifestyle' and/or 'transgender lifestyle'
'Trans' and/or 'transgender' (people, men, women)  NB: 'Transsexual' is a contested term within the community, so should only be used if the person in your piece identifies as such	'Transgenderism', 'transgenders', 'transgendered', and/or 'a transgender'  NB: Language like 'Man who now identifies as a woman' in lieu of transwoman and vice-versa is deeply dehumanizing and should be avoided
Accurately describe the issues at hand	'Gay agenda', 'gay lobby', 'trans agenda' or 'trans lobby'



# WHAT TO WRITE V. WHAT NOT TO WRITE

Appropriate	Inappropriate
'Gender reassignment'	'Sex change', 'sex-nip' or 'sex swap'
'Transition'	'Pre-operative', 'post-operative', 'secret life as a' or 'turns into'
'Assigned male at birth' or 'assigned female at birth'	'Biologically male', 'biologically female', 'genetically male', 'genetically female', 'born a man' or 'born a woman'
'LGBT rights' or 'LGBT pride'	'Gay rights' or 'gay pride'
'Out' and/or 'openly'	'Admitted homosexual' or 'avowed trans person'

# FOUR GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

**1. Is the person's sexual orientation and/or gender identity relevant to the story?**

Would you write the same story if the person was straight and/or cis?

**2. Is it appropriate to mention the person's sexual orientation and/or gender identity in the headline or lead?**

**3. Who are your sources and/or spokespeople in the piece?**

Have you reached out to LGBT groups and individuals to speak on the story?

If so, consider the kinds of voices you are platforming. White, cis gay men are most often included, but do not represent the community's wider diversity.

**4. Educate and inform**

Where possible, try to include statistics and information relevant to your story. For example, a story about a young LGBT person in school can include stats on anti-LGBT bullying, etc.

# COVERING THE BI COMMUNITY

## **Identify individuals and couples accurately**

If someone identifies as bi, they should not be referred to as gay, lesbian, or straight. So instead of writing 'gay couple' or 'straight couple', you could say 'same-sex couple' or 'opposite-sex couple'.

## **Watch out for bi-erasure**

If you're reporting on an issue pertaining to the LGBT community, are you actually including the experiences of bi people? E.g., [The Guardian's](#) story on homophobic and transphobic hate crimes surging erased bi people.

## **It's not a phase**

Be wary of any language that might imply being bi is a phase or that a person is 'on their way' to being gay or lesbian.

## **Bi does not mean promiscuous**

A common trope in the media about bi people is that they cannot be monogamous. It is inaccurate and harmful to imply bi people are more 'promiscuous' than others.

# COVERING THE TRANS COMMUNITY

## **Always use a trans person's chosen name**

Just like anyone who uses a name other than their birth name (e.g., celebrities), trans people should be reported using their chosen name.

Using a person's birth name is known as 'deadnaming' and the implication when used is always that this is their 'real name'.

## **Respect a trans person's pronouns**

Similar to the above, a trans person should be referred to using their preferred pronouns. If you're unsure, just ask. For non-binary people, the singular *they* is appropriate.

## **Avoid focusing on medical issues**

It's inappropriate to ask a trans person questions about their genitals or other surgeries – just like it would be if you were speaking to someone who was not trans. Focusing on medical transition usually means trans people are seen as objects, rather than whole people.

## **Do not use inflammatory language**

Including: 'tranny', 'she-male', 'he/she', 'it', 'posing', 'pretending' and/or 'masquerading'.

# COVERING THE TRANS COMMUNITY

## **Think about the images you are using**

It is almost always unnecessary to show before/after pictures of a trans person being featured. Often these images are included to satisfy invasive curiosity and don't add anything to the story. Similarly, try to avoid cliched images of trans women putting on make-up, wigs, etc., and/or shots of trans men shaving.

## **Choose your expert opinions carefully**

Trans people are the experts on their lives and issues affecting them. Be very cautious bringing in non-trans people to comment on stories, especially if you have no trans people involved.

## **Don't only seek out trans people for trans stories**

While there are many issues specifically affecting trans communities, trans people live their day-to-day lives just like us and have opinions on other things going on in the community. This also applies to the wider LGBT community too.

**SOME  
PEOPLE  
ARE  
TRANS.  
GET  
OVER  
IT!**

 **Stonewall**  
Acceptance without exception

**Questions?**