Burning Issues:

LISTENING TO THE VOICES OF THE LGBT COMMUNITY IN IRELAND

Dr Seán Denyer, Orla Howard, Olivia McEvoy and Ciarán Ó hUltacháin

"My burning issue isn't so much gay rights as human rights. I want to belong; I want to be treated as I treat my fellow citizens, with respect. I simply want to be EQUAL. If society is equal, then it's balanced, anything else is simply unacceptable and can never ever be justified, either by religious or political beliefs. I want to take my place amongst my fellow citizens, regardless of gender, colour…. "

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Authors: Dr Seán Denyer, Orla Howard, Olivia McEvoy and Ciarán Ó hUltacháin

NLGF Board: Ailbhe Smyth (Chair), Dr Seán Denyer, Stephen Jacques, Richard Lucey, Patrick Lynch, Orla Howard, Olivia McEvoy, Ciarán Ó hUltacháin and Neil Ward.

Design: Fionán Healy

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"Employment equality for LGBT people employed in Catholic run institutions like schools and hospitals"

- Burning Issues Survey Respondent

"Respect and recognition in dealing with the health services"

- Burning Issues survey respondent

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BURNING ISSUES – FOREWORD

The National Lesbian and Gay Federation (NLGF) was founded in 1979 and works for the rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered (LGBT) people and to eliminate discrimination against them. To support that aim, the NLGF currently has two main areas of activity. The first is publishing Gay Community News (GCN), a monthly community-based newspaper and website that is a key networking tool for the Irish LGBT community. The second is influencing policy development at national and international levels, by developing proposals for policy change, and by networking with key groups, including other lesbian and gay organisations.

To this end, the NLGF decided to consult with LGBT individuals and organisations nationwide, on what they consider to be the most important policy areas affecting them. The first stage of this was undertaking an online survey of the community. We were delighted to receive over 1100 responses to the survey, which makes it one of the largest consultation exercises ever undertaken with the LGBT community. The results of the survey form the basis of this report.

The next stage will be a number of meetings with people and organisations across the country to discuss the issues and plot the way forward. This will help us prioritise our future work, and inform us as to how we may best continue to support the LGBT community.

The NLGF is very grateful for the generous financial support of SIPTU in helping us fund the publication of the report and for the financial assistance that we received from the Equality Authority and the EU Commission for the data collection of the survey. I would particularly like to thank all the local organisations and individuals who helped spread the word about the survey; the survey sub-group of the NLGF who put in a huge amount of time and effort into developing and undertaking the survey; GCN for advertising and hosting it and most of all the individuals who responded to the survey and took the time to let us know what they think.

Ailbhe Smyth
Chair of the National Lesbian and Gay Federation

"Acceptance as a healthy, natural part of society, with all the many issues inherent in such acceptance"

BURNING ISSUES SURVEY – EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Background to the research

In Spring 2009, the National Lesbian and Gay Federation (NLGF) conducted a survey to gain a comprehensive reading of the issues and priorities of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgendered people (LGBT) people in Ireland. Although surveys have been conducted on specific issues such as mental and sexual health amongst LGBT people, no major national survey has ever before been conducted amongst LGBT people to identify their key concerns and priorities as a community.

Ireland's LGBT Community is difficult to define. This group is not measured in any census calculations, nor has there been any official measurement undertaken to define the size, gender profile, age breakdown or geographical spread of people who are LGBT. Due to these restrictions it is not possible to conduct a fully representative survey of the Irish LGBT population. However the objective of the research was to gain an indicative overview of the attitudes and opinions of LGBT people. This was done by undertaking an Internet survey of the largest possible sample of LGBT people in Ireland, while ensuring that there was gender and regional balance in the responses.

The response to the survey surpassed all expectations with over 1,100 people taking part. The answers to the survey have been analysed using both quantitative and qualitative data analysis techniques and the findings of the research provide a unique insight into the key concerns of Ireland's LGBT community.

KEY RESEARCH FINDINGS

Key findings from the quantitative questions (Section 3)

The most important issues for all those surveyed were:

1. Equal rights at work
In the current economic climate issues in the workplace surfaced as the fundamental concern of all respondents. Being able to work in an environment where you can be fully open about your sexuality without fear of discrimination was rated the most important issue in the survey, with an overall importance level of 8.3, on a scale where 1 was least important and 10 was most important.

2. Personal security: bullying/violence against LGBT people
The personal security of LGBT people was highlighted as a paramount concern. Tackling bullying and violence against LGBT people throughout society, emerged very closely as the second most important priority of respondents, receiving an importance rating of 8.2.

3. Marriage equality
Securing full and equal access to the institution of civil marriage for LGBT people is the third most important issue of concern for people in the survey as a whole with an importance rating of 7.9. This issue also registered as people's top concern in their open-ended answers when they offered their own written response.

4. Support for younger LGBT people
Developing supports for younger LGBT people was the fourth most important issue of all those surveyed with a rating of 7.8.

5. Supporting people coming out
The related issue of supporting people of all ages who are coming out, was chosen as the fifth most important issue with a rating of 7.7.

"Not being recognised as a human being regarding marriage and adoption"

– Burning Issues survey respondent

"The social exclusion of older people in our community is shameful"

– Burning Issues survey respondent

Key findings from open-ended responses (Section 4)

The survey also had a set of qualitative questions where people could write their own responses. In the open-ended answers, respondents raised the following issues as their top priorities:

Marriage equality

Gaining the right to access the institution of civil marriage for lesbian and gay people is overwhelmingly the top priority of respondents with a quarter of them designating it as their most pressing priority. On the other hand, civil partnership rights were highlighted as just the twelfth priority of participants in their personal responses.

Equality in general

The issue of achieving full equality for LGBT people across all the dimensions of legal, political, social and cultural life is the second most important priority of the respondents, who raised the issue in their own words.

Lesbian and gay parenting rights

Parenting rights appears strongly as the third key priority in the open-ended answers. The issues of adoption rights for same-sex couples and securing the legal rights of non-biological LGBT parents were raised as fundamental concerns requiring government action.

Supporting LGBT people outside Dublin

The need to develop support systems for LGBT people outside Dublin and especially those who live in isolated rural areas arose as a key theme in the open-ended answers. Respondents raised this issue as a challenge for politicians and public policy makers, but also for national LGBT organisations to develop a regional presence in urban areas outside Dublin and in rural communities.

1. INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT

In order to secure a national mandate, the NLGF decided to consult with LGBT individuals and organisations nationwide, on what they consider to be the most important policy areas affecting the community. The survey is the first of a two part consultation process, the second will consist of the NLGF holding regional consultations with individuals and groups throughout the country. Both elements will shape the NLGF's future activities in working to achieve equality for LGBT people in Ireland.

The NLGF was founded in 1979 and works for the rights of and the elimination of discrimination against lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered (LGBT) people. It is a not-for-profit, voluntary organization with charitable status. The NLGF has no paid staff who work specifically for the organisation, although as publisher of GCN, it has paid staff who work for the magazine.

THE NLGF HAS TWO MAIN AREAS OF ACTIVITY:

1) PUBLISHING GAY COMMUNITY NEWS (GCN)
This is a monthly community-based newspaper and website and is a key networking tool for the LGBT community in Ireland.

2) INFLUENCING POLICY DEVELOPMENT AT A NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL LEVEL

This is done by developing proposals for policy change, and by networking with key groups, including other lesbian and gay organisations.

"Safety and visibility in work"

- Burning Issues Survey Respondent

"Recognition that there are other areas in Ireland besides Dublin"

- Burning Issues Survey Respondent

2. HOW WAS THE SURVEY CONDUCTED?

The research was conducted using the survey method of quantitative research. Surveys are most suitable for trying to gauge the attitudes and opinions of a big population on large scale policy questions. "Surveys are useful for describing the characteristics of a generalized population and standardized questions make measurement more precise" and answers easier to compare. However a "methodology relying on standardization forces the researcher to develop questions general enough to be minimally appropriate for all respondents", which can miss what is important to many respondents (Barribeau and Co., 2005). To address this shortfall, the survey contains five open-ended questions where respondents could provide qualitative answers in their own words, allowing greater room for the subjective understandings and feelings of the research participants to be conveyed. The survey draws upon the benefits of both quantitative and qualitative research, by using closed questions to report attitudes and opinions and open-ended questions to help reveal the meanings underpinning these attitudes (Mason, 2002).

2.1 SAMPLING METHOD

The survey was conducted using a non-random sampling method, where the respondents self-selected to participate in the research. This method was chosen as there is no reliable data on the whereabouts of LGBT people in Ireland and no statistically representative sample that can be used to access the LGBT population. The survey was administered as an online survey. This was advertised on key LGBT websites and publications and through the emailing of contact lists of LGBT organisations and individuals.

There are some disadvantages to undertaking a survey this way, as it depends on people having access to the Internet and thus may result in a sample biased to younger, middle class men, who are computer literate. (Ilieva and Co., 2002). The method of advertising the survey, also depended on individuals having some contact with the LGBT media or community organisations and those who don't access these LGBT resources may not have encountered the advertisements.

However there are also many advantages to using this method of data collection. It is quick and easy to complete. It requires minimal resources (very important for a voluntary organization) and it provides excellent tools to examine the findings. To counteract the bias towards men and younger people that may arise using the online survey method, the NLGF took out a half page advertisement in the April 2009 issue of GCN and on the GCN website, specifically targeting women and people over 35 years of age to participate in the survey.

Although traditionally, online surveys tend to have quite a low response rate (Dillman, 2007), there was an excellent response rate to the Burning Issues Survey. A total of 1127 people completed the questionnaire, making it the survey with the largest number of responses ever undertaken of the Irish LGBT community. Although it cannot be claimed that the sample is statistically representative, the particularly high response rate provides strong evidence that the findings are indicative of the attitudes and opinions of LGBT people in Ireland.

2.2 QUESTIONNAIRE DESIGN

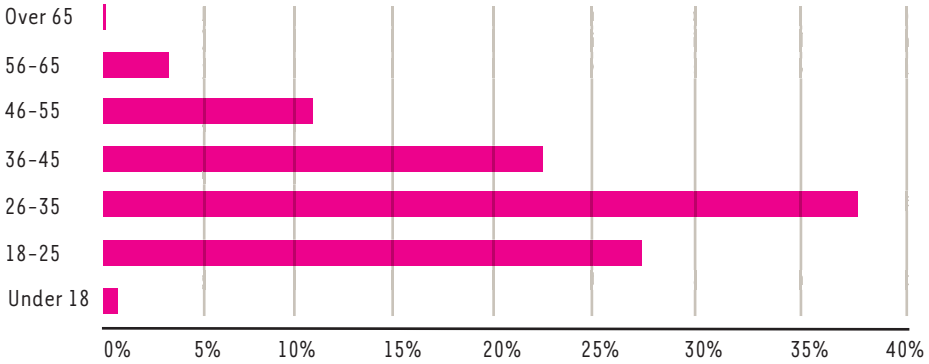
In the survey people were asked what they considered to be the burning issues in two ways. The first set of quantitative questions asked them to rank ten different issues according to their importance. The issues were identified by examining the key priorities of LGBT organisations and the findings of research conducted on the needs of LGBT people. Secondly a number of open-ended qualitative questions were included to allow respondents to write at length about any LGBT issues that are important to them. In addition there was a space provided where people could write more general comments.

2.3 SURVEY DEMOGRAPHICS

Anyone who self-identifies as lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgendered and who lives in Ireland was eligible to participate in the survey. The survey was completed by 1127 people over a period of four months.

AGE OF RESPONDENTS

Graph 1
n=961

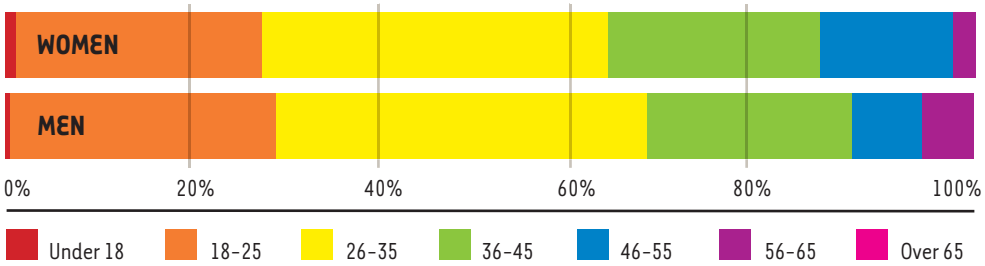


2.3.1 AGE OF RESPONDENTS

Over 60% of respondents were under 36 with the biggest group coming from the 26-35 age range. As there is no definitive age profile of the LGBT community in Ireland it is not possible to say how representative this is, but it seems likely that older people are substantially under-represented.

PERCENTAGE OF RESPONDENTS IN EACH GROUP BY GENDER

Graph 2
n=961

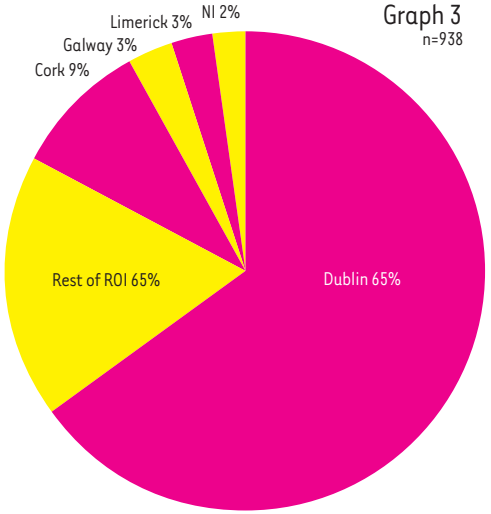


2.3.2 GENDER BREAKDOWN

Graph 2 shows that there was a similar pattern of respondents for men and women in the age demographic categories. In terms of gender 59% of the respondents were men and 41% were women. Furthermore 3.5% of the 948 participants who responded to question 5E "are you transgendered' answered in the affirmative. There is no reliable data on the gender breakdown of the LGBT community in Ireland, although the percentage of women that participated in the survey reflects participation rates in comparable surveys of LGBT people internationally. In addition, the 41% response rate of women is in a similar range to the 34% response rate of women in the GLEN and Belong To commissioned research on the mental health of LGBT people that was published in 2009 (Maycock et al).

WHERE DO RESPONDENTS LIVE?

Graph 3
n=938

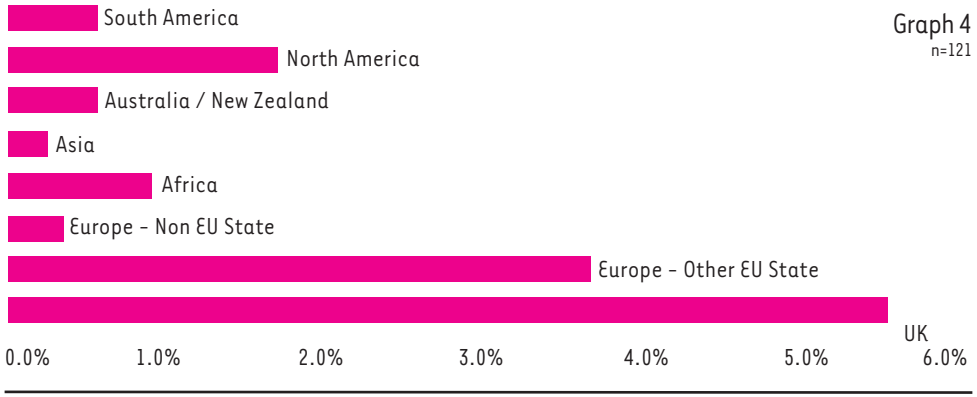


2.3.3 REGIONAL BREAKDOWN

Graph 3 reveals that nearly two thirds of respondents were from Dublin, although there were respondents from 31 out of 32 counties in Ireland. Of the general population of the Republic of Ireland of 4.24 million people, 28% live in Dublin city or county (CSO, 2006a). It is likely that there is an over-representation of LGBT people living in Dublin in the survey sample compared to Ireland as a whole. Nevertheless there are no reliable national figures on where LGBT people live to make a valid comparison. On the other hand 11.35% of the general population live in Cork city and county, while 9% of the survey respondents were from Cork. Moreover, 3% of respondents were from County Galway and Limerick respectively, while in the general population 5.5% of people live in County Galway and 4.3% of the population live in Limerick (CSO, 2006a). With regard to gender, the geographical distribution of respondents was very similar for both men and women.

PLACE OF ORIGIN OF RESPONDENTS NOT FROM IRELAND

Graph 4
n=121



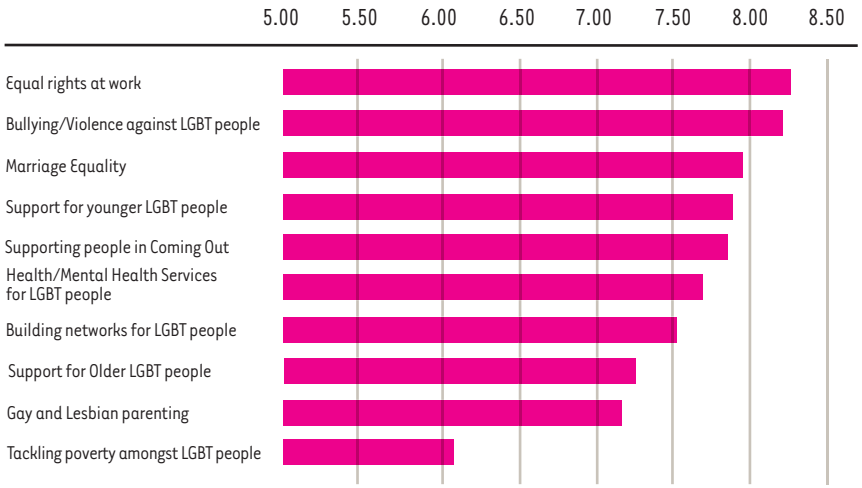
2.3.4 NATIONAL BREAKDOWN

In terms of country of origin, some 87% of respondents were Irish. The number of non-Irish nationals who completed the survey at 13% of the sample, compares favourably with 10.4% of the population recorded in the most recent census (CSO, 2006b). Graph 4 offers a breakdown of the place of origin of respondents who are not Irish nationals.

3. SURVEY FINDINGS: WHAT ARE THE BURNING ISSUES?

Graph 5 shows how all respondents ranked the issues listed. Respondents were asked to rank the issues on a 1 to 10 scale ranging from 'extremely important' to 'not at all important'. As the findings are displayed on the graph, the longest bar represents the most important issue and the shortest bar represents the least important issue

BURNING ISSUES: THE TOP TEN RANKINGS FROM ALL RESPONDENTS



Graph 5

n=1126

3.1 TOP THREE BURNING ISSUES:

As can be seen, the most important issue identified was equal rights at work, followed very closely by 'Bullying of /violence towards LGBT people'. 'Marriage equality' was ranked third, followed by 'support for younger LGBT people ' and then, 'supporting people in coming out'.

3.2 REGIONAL VARIATIONS IN ATTITUDES

Table 1 compares the rankings for the top five issues from a 'living in Dublin' and 'living outside Dublin' perspective.

RANKING	DUBLIN	OUT OF DUBLIN
1	Bullying/Violence	Equal rights at work
2	Equal rights at work	Bullying/Violence
3	Marriage equality	Marriage equality
4	Support for younger LGBT people	Support for people in coming out
5	Support for people in coming out	Support for younger LGBT people

Table 1

Table 1

There is agreement from those living both in Dublin and those outside the capital on the top five issues although they are in a slightly different order. Respondents from Dublin ranked 'bullying and violence against LGBT people' as the most important issue, just ahead of 'equal rights at work', with these two being reversed for those respondents outside of Dublin. Both groups ranked 'marriage equality' third. People from outside Dublin ranked 'support for people coming out' slightly higher than those in Dublin.

"Marriage equality – not treated as second class citizens and long-term same sex relationships being ignored and unrecognised by the state"

– Burning Issues Survey Respondent

3.3 AGE AND GENDER DIFFERENCES IN RANKINGS

The following tables show how different age and gender groups ranked the importance of issues.

3.3.1 TOP 5 ISSUES FOR MEN AND WOMEN UNDER 36

RANKING	WOMEN UNDER 36	MEN UNDER 36
1	Marriage equality	Bullying/Violence
2	Bullying/Violence	Equal rights at work
3	Equal rights at work	Marriage equality
4	Support for younger LGBT people	Support for younger LGBT people
5	Support for people in coming out	Support for people in coming out

Table 2

Table 2

The top five issues were the same for all age groups, although there were differences in the order in which they were ranked. Women under 36 ranked 'marriage equality' as the most important issue, whereas men under 36 ranked 'equality at work' as the most important issue as indicated in Table 2.

3.3.2 TOP 5 ISSUES FOR MEN AND WOMEN OVER 35

RANKING	WOMEN OVER 35	MEN OVER 35
1	Equal rights at work	Equal rights at work
2	Bullying/Violence	Bullying/Violence
3	Support for younger LGBT people	Support for older LGBT people
4	Support for people in coming out	Support for people in coming out
5	Marriage equality	Support for younger LGBT people

Table 3

Table 3

Men and women over 35 identified the same top two issues as most important to them, which were:

'Equal rights at work', followed by 'Bullying of /violence against LGBT people'.

Men over 35 ranked 'support for older LGBT people' third followed by 'supporting people in coming out' and then 'support for younger people'. Men over 35 are the only group not to place 'marriage equality' in the top five issues. Women over 35 ranked 'support for younger people' third followed by 'supporting people in coming out' and 'marriage equality' was ranked in fifth place.

"The opening of marriage to same sex couples will go a long way towards relieving other pressures experienced by LGBT people, such as homophobia, discrimination and negative self-image. Same sex relationships need to be seen as on a par with heterosexual relationships. It will help provide positive role models for younger LGBT people who are coming out"

– Burning Issues Survey Respondent

3.3.3 TOP 5 ISSUES FOR TRANSGENDERED PEOPLE

RANKING	TRANSGENDERED PEOPLE
1	Equal rights at work
2	Health/Mental health services for LGBT people
3	Bullying/Violence
4	Support for younger LGBT people
5	Support for people in coming out

Table 4

Table 4

Table 4 shows the top five issues ranked by those identifying themselves as transgendered. The key difference here compared to the other respondents is the importance given to the issue of health and mental health services. This is ranked as the second most important issue for this group after equal rights at work.

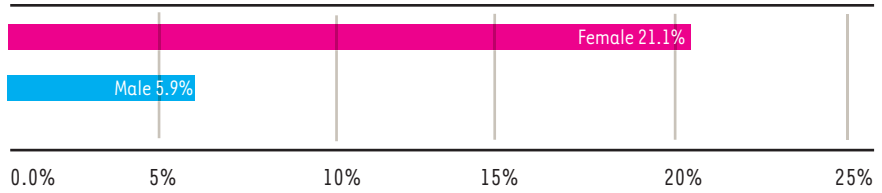
"Full inclusion for transgender people in the LGBT community is a real burning issue – to be seen simply as a male or a female and not as something in between… the LGBT organisations and GCN have a huge responsibility here and can change things for our betterment in the community…"

– Burning Issues Survey Respondent

3.4 CHILDREN IN LGBT FAMILIES

PERCENTAGE OF RESPONDENTS WITH CHILDREN

Graph 6
n=113

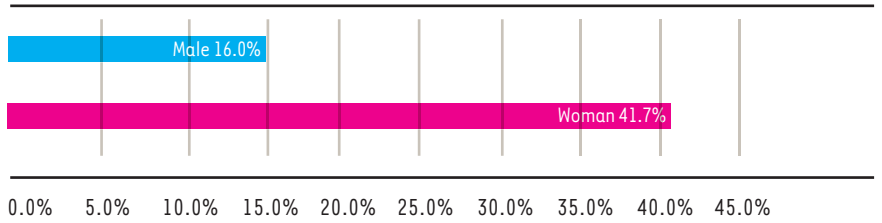


Graph 6

In the total survey sample, over one in five women and one in 14 men had children. However this is likely to be a considerable underestimate of the percentage of LGBT people with children given that the sample is skewed to the younger age cohort and on average women in Ireland are not having their first child until 31 years of age (CSO 2006c). It is more useful to look at the percentage of those over 35 with children as indicated in graph 7 that offers a more accurate picture of the prevalence of LGBT parents in Ireland.

PERCENTAGE OF RESPONDENTS AGED OVER 35 WHO HAVE CHILDREN

Graph 7



Graph 7

Graph 7 shows that 4 out of 10 women and almost 1 in 6 male respondents over 35 had children. This is very significant given the current debate over the rights of children in LGBT families and the failure of proposed legislation on civil partnerships to address the rights of parents or particularly of children in this context (Civil Partnership Bill, 2009).

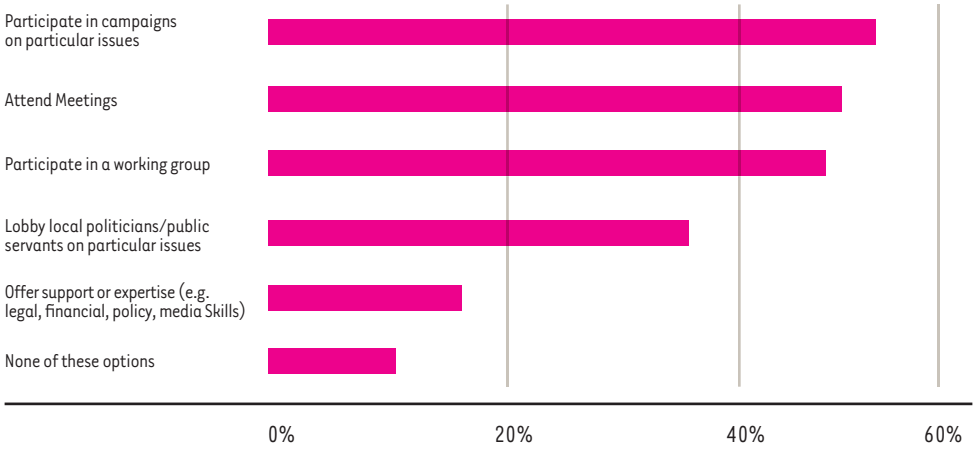
"I am a lesbian single parent and as such the main issues for me at present are in relation to parenting. I think there are very few supports for lesbian and gay parents and that there is no long term thinking in relation to the needs of the children of gay parents and the supports they might need as a result of having lesbian/gay parents. I think it would be useful if GCN had a more family focus and maybe a parenting section." Burning Issue Survey Respondent

3.5 ACTIVISM IN THE LGBT COMMUNITY

The following graphs offer an overview of willingness of respondents to become active on behalf of the LGBT community. Graph 8 illustrates that over 50% would be willing to participate in campaigns on particular issues, with around half of the respondents being willing to attend meetings or participate in a working group. Around a third said they would be prepared to lobby local politicians or public servants, a response that merits further study as it implies two thirds of people may not be prepared to do this. Nearly one in five respondents offered a particular skill or expertise which they would like to use to help the LGBT community. These will be followed up by the NLGF to determine how best these offers to volunteer can be utilised.

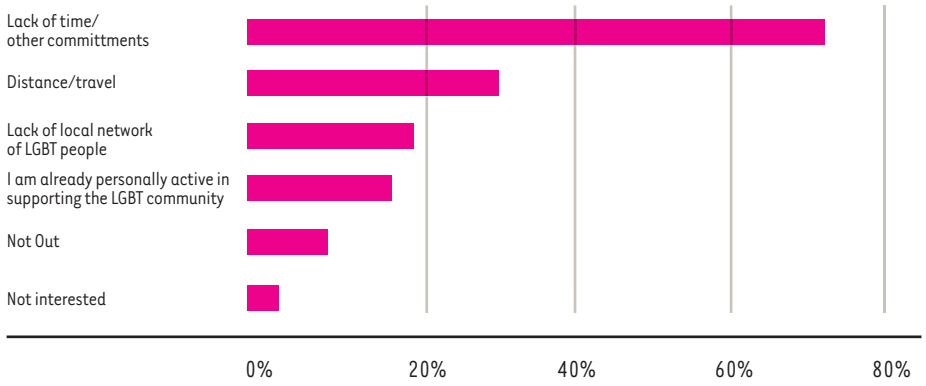
ACTIVISM: PREFERENCES FOR WAYS OF BECOMING INVOLVED

Graph 8
n=1029



Graph 9 outlines the barriers people have identified to becoming more actively involved in the LGBT community. By far the most important of these was 'lack of time' followed by 'distance' and 'travel time'. One in five people identified the 'lack of a local network of LGBT people' as a barrier, and around one in ten said 'not being out' was a barrier to getting more involved. The responses demonstrate that there is already a high level of activism with one in six already personally involved in some form of activity.

WHAT THINGS WOULD DISCOURAGE YOU FROM BECOMING MORE PERSONALLY INVOLVED?



Graph 9
n=978

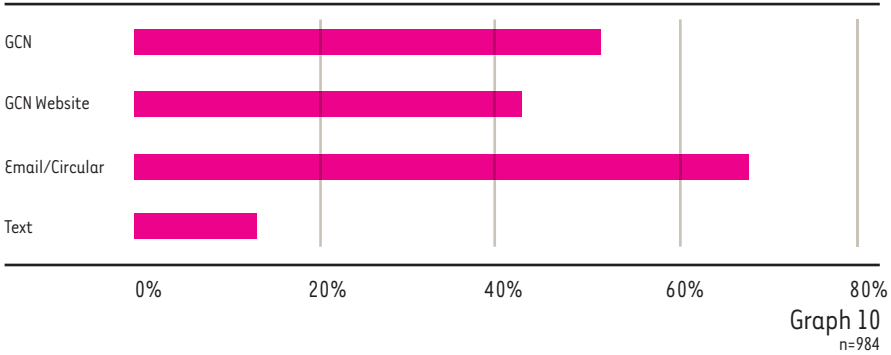
"The lack of understanding about gay/lesbian issues in rural Ireland and the lack of support"

- Burning Issues Survey Respondent

3.6 COMMUNICATION WITH THE LGBT COMMUNITY

The NLGF asked respondents what was the best way for the organisation to communicate with them about relevant issues. Graph 10 indicates that email/ circular was identified as the preferred method of communication by over 60% followed by GCN and the GCN website. A much smaller group felt texting was the best method of communication.

WHAT ARE THE BEST WAYS FOR YOU, OR YOUR ORGANISATION, TO HEAR ABOUT WHAT THE NLGF IS DOING AND TO PARTICIPATE IN DISCUSSION ABOUT THIS?



Graph 10
n=984

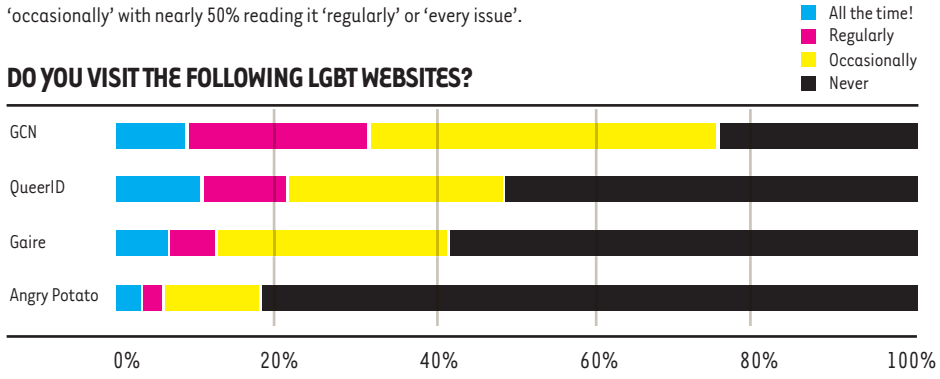
Respondents were asked which LGBT websites they were most likely to access and the results are shown in graph 11. There was some dissatisfaction expressed that the list of websites was not comprehensive enough, although space was given to identify other sites used. In particular, respondents from Cork felt that GayCork.ie should have been included in the list that was available. Other sites often cited by respondents included Sapphic Ireland, BeLong To, gaydar, gaelick and teni.

"It's all interlinked- we need visibility - offering positive images and stories to people so they can see the people homophobia actually affects" - Burning Issues Survey Respondent

3.7 GCN

The NLGF is the publisher of GCN. Graph 12 shows how frequently respondents read GCN. It is important to highlight that, as GCN and the GCN website were the key methods that were used to advertise the survey, this method of communication would impact upon the numbers of respondents who report reading the magazine. Nevertheless as graph 12 shows, nearly 85% of respondents read it at least 'occasionally' with nearly 50% reading it 'regularly' or 'every issue'.

DO YOU VISIT THE FOLLOWING LGBT WEBSITES?

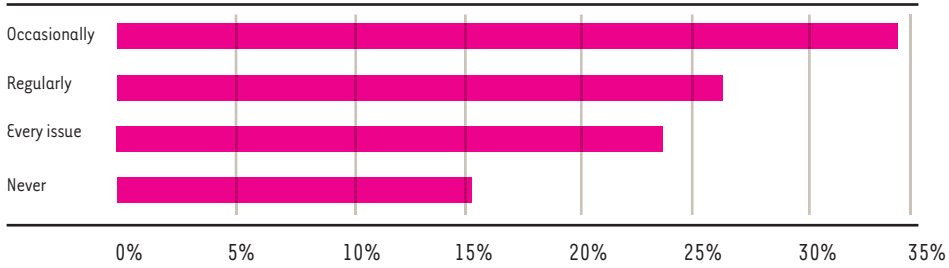


Graph 11
n=994

Comments regarding GCN were extremely positive overall, although some areas for improvement were identified. These included having more regional stories and news, better coverage of lesbian and parenting issues and more accurate and up-to-date listings for the regions.

DO YOU READ GCN (GAY COMMUNITY NEWS) MAGAZINE?

Graph 12
n=1009



4. SURVEY FINDINGS – QUALITATIVE QUESTIONS – ANALYSING THE BURNING ISSUES

The section that follows is the result of the analysis undertaken of the responses to the open-ended questions asked in the survey. The tables summarising the grouping of the responses into themes are given in Appendix 2.

4.1 MARRIAGE EQUALITY - PRIORITY 1

In question 4A, marriage equality was raised overwhelmingly by individuals as the most important priority for action by the LGBT community. The issue of marriage equality was raised by 486 respondents, in almost 20% of the 2470 open-ended responses. When the weighting of this open- ended question is taken into account - respondents provided answers listing their first, second and third most important issues, ranked in order of importance - marriage equality registered as the most important issue for over 25% of respondents. Marriage equality can be defined as extending the institution of civil marriage beyond heterosexuals, so that lesbian and gay people can avail of the right to marry their same sex partner and enter the institution of marriage.

In the words of one respondent it means "equal rights in marriage across the board and not civil partnership". Another participant demanded "full equal rights for lesbian and gay people and echoed the view that "marriage rights should not be watered down to civil partnership rights". Similarly another respondent urged the LGBT community not to "renege on the need for absolute recognition of same sex marriages". One respondent drew a parallel between marriage equality and the rights of children asserting their central priority to be: "same sex marriage" and "full equality so that people don't feel inferior. I think this would mean a lot not just to the couples who don't have equal rights, but to gay/bi kids worrying about their future and being accepted. Every kid expects to get married when they're older, but are bombarded with the idea that gay relationships aren't real relationships with real prospects".

In contrast just 2.3% of people (56) rated civil partnerships or civil unions as a top priority of the community. The provision of civil partnerships as distinct to marriage was the 15th most important priority of respondents in the open- ended answers, however when the weighting of question 4A is taken into account, civil partnership rises to 12th in priority.

Another 62 participants or 2.5% of the respondents to question 4A, demanded legal recognition of same sex relationships in general, without specifying a preference for marriage or civil partnership rights. Therefore almost 25% of respondents rated the issue of marriage, civil partnership or general recognition of LGBT relationships as their top priority and when the weighting is taken into account, legal partnerships of some form are the priority of over 30% of the research participants.

4.2 FULL EQUALITY IN GENERAL - PRIORITY 2

Campaigning for full equality in general was the key demand of over 10% of respondents to question 4A. Moreover, when the weighting of the question is taken into account, equality in general was prioritised by over 11.4% of people. There was a broad consensus amongst the respondents regarding what was meant by this. One participant proposed succinctly that LGBT organisations need to work for "complete equality in the community". This was reflected by another respondent who advocated "equal rights for everyone". A third respondent called for "equality in all forms, no half measures to be accepted". The legal dimensions of full equality were referred to by many respondents. One of them sought "full equality in every area in the eyes of the law". Another participant was more specific concerning the dimensions of legal equality defining it "in terms of marriage, gender reassignment and employment". On the other hand one respondent shifted the focus from the legal to the personal simply demanding "the freedom to express ourselves".

4.3 LESBIAN AND GAY PARENTING RIGHTS - PRIORITY 3

Parenting rights were chosen as the 9th most important issue in question 1A in the survey, where respondents were invited to rank their most important issues from a list of 10 pre-defined issues. However when the participants were given the opportunity to write freely about the issues of crucial importance to them, the priority of parenting rights rose to third place, with 231 people or 9.34% of respondents spontaneously raising the matter in their answers to question 4A. There was a chorus of responses indicating that the same rights and conditions with regard to adoption should apply to LGBT couples as currently applie to married heterosexual couples. One respondent stressed the need for "legal recognition of LGBT families" and for a "non-biological parent" be able to adopt and for "lesbian and gay couples to adopt" as a couple. Another respondent linked the issue to fertility treatment calling for the "provision of fertility services to gay people" pointing out that at present in Ireland almost all fertility services "refuse to treat gay people". Some respondents focussed on the position of children in LGBT families emphasising that the "rights of children with gay parents and in gay and lesbian families" were of paramount importance in the debate around LGBT families.

"I think rights for our children are the most burning issue because our children are in need of and deserve the same level of protection that other children already enjoy. As adults, we can make our own choices and take the consequences while children find themselves without rights without ever having made any choices themselves"

- Burning Issues Survey Respondent

4.4 HEALTH/MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES FOR LGBT PEOPLE - PRIORITY 4

The importance of providing LGBT-appropriate health services was raised as the fourth key concern of participants comprising almost 7.5% of the responses (185) to question 4A. All the key research that has been conducted on the needs of LGBT people in Ireland over the past decade, has identified the fundamental importance of health and mental health service provision to improving the lives of LGBT people (HSE, 2009; Maycock et al, 2009; Gibbons et al, 2007; Sarma, 2007; Breitenbach, 2004; Dillon and Collins, 2003). In Addition, health/mental health issues were the top priority of respondents in the open-ended answers to questions 1B and 4B of the survey. Health/mental health issues were chosen by 10.4% of these respondents to share top priority along with the need to "support the rights and visibility of transgendered people".

Mental health services in particular were deemed by respondents to be crucial. One participant suggested "mental health for gay people needs more attention particularly in relation to levels of suicide". The issue of disclosure is of vital importance to LGBT people who expect medical professionals not to automatically assume that their patients are heterosexual. One respondent summed up the desires of LGBT people in this regard to have "access to professional, non-judgemental support for mental health needs". Sexual health services were also raised as critical by a substantial number of respondents, both in relation to HIV services for gay men and the specific gynaecological healthcare needs of lesbians.

4.5 CHANGE SOCIETAL ATTITUDES: CHALLENGE HOMOPHOBIA AND ENCOURAGE ACCEPTANCE/TOLERANCE - PRIORITY 5

The necessity of bringing about attitudinal change in the wider society amongst heterosexual people was highlighted as the fifth most important priority of respondents to question 4A. Around 6.3% of people (156) wrote in general around the need for the LGBT community to challenge discriminatory attitudes and homophobia while encouraging acceptance and tolerance in wider society of LGBT people.

Furthermore almost 6% of respondents (146) raised the specific issue of challenging homophobic violence/bulling, 4.3% of participants (107) referred to challenging homophobia in the workplace and 3.3% of responses (81) focussed on the need to tackle homophobia in education. In addition another 1% of participants (25) identified the need to challenge institutional homophobia in society, both religious based discrimination against LGBT people and discrimination against gay men in the donation of blood. In total over 21% of respondents raised the issue of challenging the various forms of homophobia

"Ensuring adequate access to medical and psychological services and for those services to be well informed of the issues faced by LGBT people"

- Burning Issues Survey Respondent

"Helping and supporting the young homeless within the queer community"

- Burning Issues Survey Respondent

"Increase visibility in the mainstream media but at the same time challenges the stereotypes"

- Burning Issues Survey Respondent

in society and encouraging people in mainstream society to have a more positive attitude of LGBT people as a top priority.

One respondent viewed it as "increased awareness and understanding of LGBT issues amongst the wider community". Another participant described it as "establishing a common understanding between LGBT [people] and the straight community". This need was mirrored in another response which advocated "education, through conversation and debate, of the adult straight community of the need for LGBT equality".

4.5.1 PUBLIC VISIBILITY AND COMBATING STEREOTYPES

The importance of the public visibility of LGBT people in challenging discrimination and helping counteract negative stereotypes surfaced strongly in the research. Many respondents viewed public visibility as one of the key methods of bringing about attitudinal change amongst heterosexual people. Almost 3.7% of the answers to question 4A (91) drew attention to the power of representation and the necessity of achieving positive depictions of LGBT people in the media and visible manifestations of LGBT life on the streets. One participant argued for "visibility, particularly at local levels and in 'everyday' contexts". Another decried the "portrayal of gay and lesbian people in mainstream media and the lack of positive images, particularly of lesbians". Developing this theme, a similar response sought the "removal of stereotypes" to help effect social change [1].

1 The insidious effects of negative stereotypes which can stigmatise vulnerable groups and limit their life chances was highlighted by recent research conducted for the Equality Authority (2008). A key recommendation of this research - that concurs with the general consensus in the open-ended responses – is for stereotyping to be "challenged and addressed by employers, educators, public sector service providers and those involved in advertising and in the media" (Equality Authority, 2008: 1)

5. BURNING ISSUES REPORT – **CONCLUSION:**

The Burning Issues Survey is the first national survey to gauge the attitudes and opinions of the LGBT community in Ireland. This seminal scoping study of the Irish LGBT population has been conducted to contribute to the current public debate about same-sex partnership and civil marriage rights in Ireland and to provide a mandate for the future work of the NLGF.

The survey findings indicate that equality at work, personal safety and supporting both young people and same-sex parents are of vital concern to LGBT people. Moreover, the results clearly demonstrate that achieving access to the institution of civil marriage is the top political concern of the LGBT community. Full equality under the law is demanded by LGBT people, with only a small number of respondents identifying civil partnership rights as satisfactorily meeting their needs.

The results of the research also suggest that increased public visibility and positive media portrayals of LGBT people are key to tackling homophobia and improving the lives of LGBT people in Ireland. Finally, the research presents a challenge to politicians, policy makers and LGBT organisations to actively support LGBT people who live outside Dublin.

"Protecting the vulnerable and poorest people in society, as LGBT people are part of it"

"No legislation that doesn't include children"

- Burning Issues Survey Respondent

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APPENDIX 1

BURNING ISSUES: SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

1. TELL US WHAT YOU THINK?

Question 1A

Ten of the issues that are most relevant to LGBT people are listed below. Please rate each separate issue on a scale of 1 to 10, based on how important this issue is to you, where 1 is 'extremely important' and 10 is 'not at all important'.

1 Marriage equality
2 Equal rights at work
3 Gay and lesbian parenting rights
4 Supporting people in coming out
5 Building networks for LGBT people
6 Health/mental health services for LGBT people
7 Bullying/violence against LGBT people
8 Support for Older LGBT people
9 Support for younger LGBT people
10 Tackling poverty amongst LGBT people

Question 1B

Opportunity for respondent to provide an open-ended response for 'other' category not listed in Q1A on the "ten issues that are most relevant to LGBT people"

2. INVOLVEMENT IN THE NLGF

Question 2A

If you had the opportunity of becoming more actively involved in making progress on LGBT issues, what involvement would interest you/your organisation? (please tick one or more of the options)

1 Attend meetings
2 Participate in a working group
3 Participate in campaigns on particular issues
4 Lobby your local politicians/public servants on particular issues
5 None of the above
6 Offer support or expertise (e.g. ; legal, financial, policy, media skills) (Please specify what support or expertise you could give)

Question 2B

How often would you be able to participate?

1 Occasionally
2 Regularly (a few times a year)
3 Often (once a month or more)
4 Never

Question 2C

What things would discourage you from becoming more personally involved? (please tick one or more option below)

1 Lack of time/other commitments
2 Distance/travel
3 Lack of local network of LGBT people
4 Not Out
5 Not interested
6 Other (please specify)

3 COMMUNICATING WITH YOU/ YOUR ORGANISATION

Question 3A

What are the best ways for you, or your organisation, to hear about what the NLGF is doing and to participate in discussions about this? (Please tick one or more options below)

1 GCN
2 GCN Website
3 Email/circular
4 Text
5 Other (please specify) _____

Question 3B

Do you read the GCN (Gay Community News) magazine? (please tick one option)

1 Occasionally
2 Regularly
3 Every Issue

Question 3C

Do you visit the following LGBT websites (Never , Occasionally, Often or All the time)?

1 GCN
2 Queer ID
3 Gaire
4 Angry Potato
5 Other LGBT website (please specify) _____

4. BURNING ISSUES

Question 4A

In your opinion, what are the three most important issues for the LGBT community?
(opportunity for the respondent to provide 3 separate open-ended answers)

Question 4B

Have you any other comments?

5. A BIT ABOUT YOU

Question 5A

What is your age?
Under 18, 18-25, 26-35, 36-45, 46-55, 56-65, over 65

Question 5B

What is your gender?
Male, female, other

Question 5C

What is your sexuality?
Gay, lesbian, bisexual, other

Question 5D

Do you have children?
Yes or no

Question 5E

Are you transgendered?
Yes or no, rather not say

Question 5F

In which county do you live in?
List of each of the 32 counties in the island of Ireland to choose from

Question 5G

Where are you from?
Ireland, UK, Europe: other EU state, Europe: non-EU state, Africa, Asia, Australia-New Zealand, North America, and South America

"Tackling homophobic bullying at school level and ensuring all schools, regardless of ethos, are legally compelled to have specific procedures in place"

APPENDIX 2

ANALYSIS OF OPEN-ENDED RESPONSES:

Question 4A is the main open-ended question in the survey, where respondents provided a typed response in their own words to the most important issues of concern to the LGBT community. There were also two other qualitative questions in the survey where respondents had the opportunity to offer their own responses. In question 1B, they provided an alternative written response to the list of 10 policy priorities that were offered. In question 4B, the participants could add any additional comments they wished, before completing the survey. Unlike question 4A that allowed the respondents to rate the importance of their three possible answers, question 1B and 4B were unweighted, respondents could not prioritise the responses. Furthermore while a total of 2470 responses were provided for the three possible answers to question 4A, there were 202 answers to questions 1B and 4B combined.

DEVELOPING A QUALITATIVE CODING FRAME

The open-ended responses were analysed using a content analysis approach to qualitative research. The responses ranged from one word answers, to those that were a paragraph long. The responses were broken down and categorised initially into over fifty categories of answers that were in turn reduced to twenty eight thematic codes. A coding frame was developed that listed the key codes and grouped them according to the frequency of the responses. The three tables in this appendix provide an overview of the 15 most frequent qualitative responses in the survey grouped thematically. Table 1 presents the number and frequencies of the responses to question 4A (unweighted). Table 2 presents the weighted values and frequencies of the responses to question 4A, factoring into account the importance that was attached to the three answers by respondents. Finally Table 3 presents an overview of the collated answers to questions 1 and 4B, which are also grouped thematically and sorted by frequency of response.

Appendix 2: Table 1

BURNING ISSUES SURVEY: OPEN-ENDED QUESTION 4A UNWEIGHTED

Rank	Themes (Unweighted)	Total No.	Percentage
1	Marriage Equality	486	19.68
2	Equality in general	254	10.28
3	Lesbian and gay parenting rights	231	9.35
4	Health/mental services for LGBT people	185	7.48
5	Change societal attitudes challenge discrimination and homophobia and encourage acceptance and tolerance	156	6.32
6	Bullying/violence against LGBT people	91	3.68
7	Equal rights at work	107	4.33
8	Increase public visibilty: challenge stereotypes and stigma and negative media representations of LGBT people	91	3.68
9	Support for younger LGBT people	86	3.48
10	Supporting people in Coming Out	81	3.28
11	Tackling homophobia in school/education	81	3.28
12	Building networks for LGBT people/building sustainable communities	80	3.23
13	Support Diversity and minorities amongst LGBT people, community focus over the commercial scene	63	2.55
14	Legal Recognition for LGBT Relationships in General	62	2.51
15	Civil Partnership Rights	56	2.27

n=2470

Appendix 2: Table 2

BURNING ISSUES SURVEY: OPEN-ENDED QUESTION 4A WEIGHTED

Rank	Themes (Weighted)	Total No.	Percentage
1	Marriage Equality	1281	25.09
2	Equality in general	582	11.4
3	Lesbian and gay parenting rights	429	8.4
4	Health/mental services for LGBT people	347	6.8
5	Change societal attitudes challenge discrimination and homophobia and encourage acceptance and tolerance	314	6.43
6	Bullying/violence against LGBT people	287	5.62
7	Equal rights at work	218	4.27
8	Increase public visibilty: challenge stereotypes and stigma and negative media representations of LGBT people	163	3.19
9	Support for younger LGBT people	163	3.19
10	Supporting people in Coming Out	148	2.9
11	Tackling homophobia in school/education	147	2.88
12	Civil partnership rights	140	2.74
13	Legal recognition for LGBT relationships in general	139	2.72
14	Building networks for LGBT people/building sustainable communities	121	2.37
15	Support diversity & minorities amongst LGBT people, community focus over the commercial scene	101	1.98

weighting=5105

Appendix 2: Table 3

BURNING ISSUES SURVEY: OPEN-ENDED Q1 AND 4B THEMES

Rank	Themes	Total No.	Percentage
1	Health/Mental Health Services for LGBT people	21	10.4
2	Transgender Visibility and Rights	21	10.4
3	Support LGBT community outside Dublin and rural areas	19	8.91
4	Increase public visibility: challenge stereotypes and stigma and negative media representations of LGBT people	15	7.43
5	Tackling homophobia in school education	14	6.93
6	Equality in General	12	5.94
7	Lesbian and Gay Parenting Rights	11	5.45
8	Support Diversity and minorities amongst LGBT people, community focus over the commercial scene	11	5.45
9	More Democratic, accessible and activist LGBT community organisations	11	5.45
10	Support LGBT migrants and LGBT People in developing world	9	4.46
11	Civil Partnerships Rights	8	3.96
12	Feedback on GCN	8	3.96
13	Change societal attitudes: challenge discrimination and homophobia and encourages acceptance and tolerance	7	3.47
14	Legal Recognition for LGBT Relationships in General	5	2.48
15	Lesbian Visibilty and Rights	5	2.48

n=202

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– relaying the views of the stakeholders and the society at large.

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"Anything less than equal is NOT good enough"

"Helping LGBT people in minority groups such as Travellers and ethnic minority groups"

"Lift the religious exemption in the equality acts"

"Full human beings equals full civil rights"

"The right to live a happy life without fear of prejudice, bullying or violence"

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