

**KANTAR**

**DIVA**  **Stonewall**

# The DIVA Survey – LGBT+ Women and Non-Binary People's Insight 2021

April 2021

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# Introduction from Kantar

At Kantar, our mission is to understand people and inspire growth. As one of the world's leading Market Research agencies we are passionately committed to bringing meaningful, sustainable inclusivity to the diverse world we all live in.

2020 represented a year of unprecedentedly challenging and sobering events that caused a pivotal inflexion point for informing the agenda for how society, government and corporations need to better understand and support under-represented communities. We, therefore, feel incredibly privileged to be partnering again with DIVA and with Stonewall this year to shine an important, authentic spotlight on the diverse but under-represented voices of LGBTQI women and non-binary people. Given the uncertain and evolving landscape of easing COVID-19 restrictions that this year's Lesbian Visibility Week is taking place against, our collective ambition is to provide insights into where needs and experiences differ from cisgender and/or heterosexual counterparts that help form a roadmap for unlocking meaningful change and enable this community to emerge stronger than ever!

This work joins Kantar's established and expanding portfolio of inclusivity-driven focuses, including: The Reykjavik Index for understanding the role of women in leadership, our partnership with the Special Olympics on driving an inclusion revolution for people with intellectual disabilities, our commitment to the Valuable 500, and our internal Pride@Kantar group who provide a safe community at work for all our LGBTQI employees across the globe.



**Caroline Frankum**  
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# Introduction from DIVA

When DIVA magazine launched 27 years ago, the world was a very different place if you were L or G – the B barely got a look in, back then, and there was little visibility for trans people outside of punchlines and plot twists.

First published in 1994 with the aim of putting lesbians centre stage, we have fought hard, month after month, year after year, for visibility, for equality and for recognition for lesbians, yes, and for bi, trans, queer, intersex and non-binary people too. Today DIVA is proudly a magazine for LGBTQI women and non-binary people, and we recognise and celebrate our differences and our diversity as well as what unites us.

We've witnessed many wins, socially and politically, and in many ways, it's easier than it's ever been to live our authentic lives, thanks in large part to organisations like Stonewall, who we are proud to partner with, alongside Kantar.

But, as this research highlights, challenges remain around mental health, around work, around accessing healthcare. It also reveals how urgent and necessary it is that we work together to heal the wounds that our community is experiencing, and DIVA is committed to doing that work.

Thank you to everyone who took the time to respond to The DIVA Survey: LGBTQI Women's Insight 2021 and share your experiences with us, and to our sponsors, Citi, P&G and Tesco. This incredibly valuable data will not only help set our editorial agenda, but help us to press for further change, and put the needs of LGBTQI women and non-binary centre stage, as we've been doing for almost 30 years.



# Introduction from Stonewall

Lesbian Visibility Week is a vital opportunity to celebrate lesbians; to highlight the diverse lives of lesbian, bi, trans and queer (LBTQ+) women and non-binary people; and to draw attention to our communities' needs.

Stonewall is delighted to partner with DIVA and Kantar to conduct this crucial research into LBTQ+ women and non-binary people's experiences. Our communities are diverse, and we all have different experiences of being LBTQ+ women and non-binary people. As this research shows – we face distinct challenges around their mental health, coming out to those closest to us, and accessing appropriate healthcare.

Over a year into the COVID-19 pandemic, the impact of the crisis has never been more apparent. As the fallout of the pandemic continues to deepen inequality, young LBTQ+ women and non-binary people, particularly those of us who face discrimination on several fronts, will need specific resources and support as we move towards recovery.

However, there is much to be hopeful about in this research: LBTQ+ community events are creating opportunities for connection even in the midst of lockdown, and after twenty years of legal progress to support our families in the UK, the majority of younger LBTQ+ women and non-binary people want to start families of their own. Stonewall believes that every LGBTQ+ person should feel safe to be themselves, and feel free to achieve their potential, and we will continue to work to make sure that LBTQ+ women and non-binary people's experiences are celebrated.





# Who we spoke to?

The 2021 survey base size is 1,884 respondents. Of the people we spoke to, 72% identify as lesbian and a further 5% identify as gay. 16% of our sample identify as bisexual and 1% identify as asexual.

Regarding gender identity, 87% of respondents identify as cisgender, 6% identify as non-binary and 4% identify as transgender women.

13% of respondents are aged 16-24, 28% are 25-34, 25% are 35-44, 19% are 45-54, 10% are 55-64 and 5% are over 65.

The majority of respondents live in the UK (84%). The additional 16% are spread across 41 countries spanning six continents (Europe, North America, South America, Asia, Oceania and Africa). The top five most-represented countries outside of the UK are the USA, Canada, Ireland, Australia, and Spain.



# Highlight overview

## COVID-19:

The top three concerns related to lockdown and COVID-19 are: being unable to see family and friends (63%), being worried about the health of family and friends (51%) and decreased mental well-being (48%).

## Mental health:

Over 3 in 4 (77%) feel that their mental health has suffered as a result of COVID-19 and subsequent lockdowns.

## Physical health and fertility:

Of those with children, over 1 in 3 (36%) experienced barriers or challenges whilst trying to start or grow their family.

## Openness:

Over 4 in 5 (81%) of the LGBTQI women in our sample are open with most or all of their friends about their sexual orientation, while just over 4% are not open with any of their close friends.

## Bisexuality:

31% of bisexual respondents are open with all of their close friends about their sexual orientation, compared to 57% of their lesbian counterparts.

## Relationships:

Over 3 in 5 (61%) were in a relationship at the start of the pandemic in March 2020, with 87% still being in the same relationship one year later.



In depth





# COVID-19

In light of the pandemic, we wanted to capture the main concerns among members of the community, specifically related to COVID-19 and lockdown.

## What have been your top three concerns related to COVID-19 and lockdown?



N = 1,884 (All respondents)

Despite lockdown measures and other restrictions on face-to-face socialising and travel, 84% have still been able to connect with others they do not live with through phone, social media and video calls, etc.

**“It’s given me a lot of time to reflect on my sexuality and understand how I identify. Lots of time to self-educate on the spectrum of LGBTQIA+ issues and experiences.”**

In our 2020 study, we uncovered a demand for more events aimed at LGBTQI women, with bisexual erasure, transphobia, a lack of visibility for women in LGBTQI spaces and inaccessibility being key themes discussed.<sup>1</sup> Our 2021 study has indicated that the pandemic has opened up opportunities for LGBTQI spaces and events by creating a greater appetite for face-to-face connectedness and community.

**“I have been able to start University and make new friends even though it has been online - it has made me feel comfortable because I have had the choice of when to disclose my disability and sexuality.”**

38% of our sample claimed that they attended LGBTQI specific spaces and events in their local community at least once a month before the pandemic, with 10% attending such spaces/events at least once a week on average. Respondents who live in London reported attending such events more frequently, with 27% attending events once a fortnight or more compared to 15% of their counterparts in the rest of the UK.

<sup>1</sup> [Kantar: The generational shift in LGBTQI women ‘coming out’](#)

**“LGBTQI life can sometimes be very London centric but virtual events have meant I can attend even if I’m not in the capital.”**

Since the pandemic began, 42% have attended at least one LGBTQI event or space remotely/ digitally. Of these, 83% said they enjoyed the most recent LGBTQI-specific event they attended, and 74% said that, given the option, they would be more likely to attend a physical LGBTQI-specific event once it is possible to do so over a virtual event. This section also highlighted a disparity between LGBTQI women and non-binary people from racial minority backgrounds and their white counterparts, with 58% of BIPOC respondents attending LGBTQI-specific events and spaces virtually/digitally in the past year, compared to 41% of white respondents. BIPOC respondents, especially those of Black and mixed-Black backgrounds, also attended in-person community events and spaces more frequently than their white counterparts prior to the pandemic; 46% of BIPOC respondents attended these events at least once a month prior to the pandemic, compared to 37% of their white counterparts.



# COVID-19

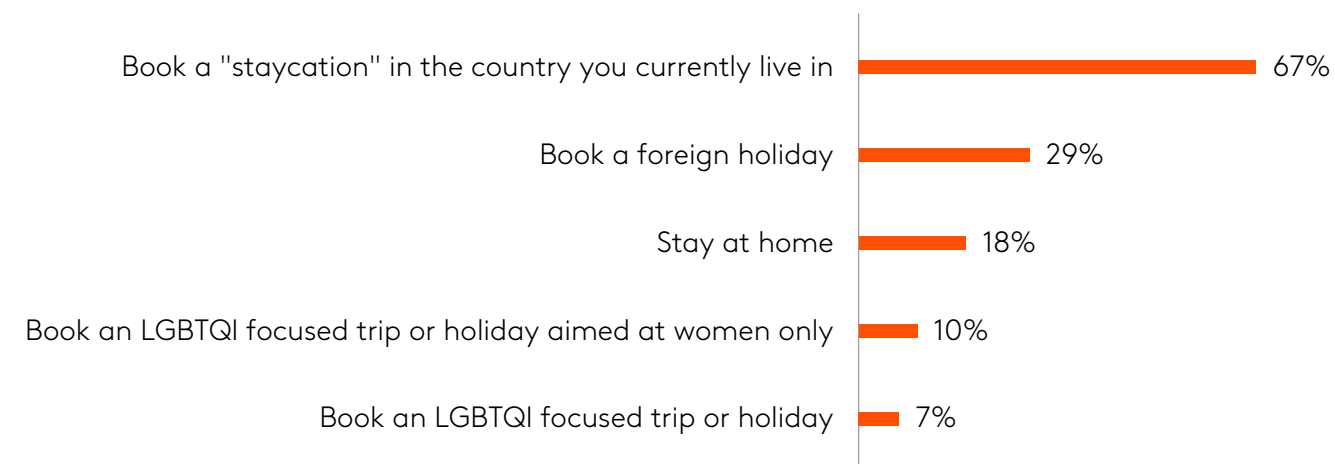
**"It's so much easier to attend online. No anxiety about travel, what to wear, where to park etc. Just log in and listen. So much more accessible. I miss seeing people, but I want stuff to be like this too in the future, everything should have this option."**

In our 2020 study, we found that LGBTQI women love to travel and have a desire to be social and active in their lives.<sup>2</sup> This year, we asked respondents to tell us what type of travel plans they would be most likely to undertake in the next 12 months (restrictions permitting). 67% are likely to book a "staycation" in the country they currently live in, while 29% are to book a foreign holiday.

17% are likely to book a LGBTQI focused trip or holiday, with 10% specifying a holiday/trip aimed at women only. Meanwhile, 18% are likely to stay at home in the next 12 months, rather than travel domestically or abroad; for 16-to-24-year-olds in the sample this figure was 28%. The latter statistic presents an opportunity for the travel industry to create offers that incentivise or facilitate travel for young LGBTQI women and non-binary people.

<sup>2</sup> [Kantar: The generational shift in LGBTQI women 'coming out'](#)

## In the next 12 months are you likely to:



N = 1,884 (All respondents)





# Mental health

Fifty-one percent of our sample consider themselves to have a mental health condition, and of these respondents, 52% have accessed mental health services in the past 12 months, while 12% tried to access mental health services but were unsuccessful. 35% of those who consider themselves to have a mental health condition did not access or try to access any mental health services in the past 12 months.

**"I can't go to my therapist's office. The people I live with can hear me when I'm doing it over the phone. I want that confidentiality back."**

The mental health of Generation Z (Gen Z) and Millennials has attracted considerable media attention in recent years and has been subject to large scale research. The 2020 Deloitte Global Millennial Survey found that young cisgender women express more stress than their cisgender male counterparts (53% to 42% among Gen Z and 47% to 40% among Millennials).<sup>3</sup> These results were attributed to factors such as climate change, the welfare of their families, financial instability and long-term career prospects.

In parallel to such studies, our research has revealed that young LGBTQI women and non-binary people are more likely to identify as having a mental health condition than their older counterparts. Our data also suggests that the mental health of young LGBTQI people has been further compounded by the pandemic.

**"Uncertainty about the future has left me very anxious and sometimes it's hard to push through feelings of despair and carry on. Concentration is difficult and things often feel hopeless."**

Younger respondents are more likely to consider themselves to have a mental health condition; 67% in the 16-to-24-year-old group and 60% in the 25-34-year-old age groups. Of the former group, 18% had tried to access services in the past 12 months but were unsuccessful.

**"I've felt very low every day. Having no motivation, no want to get out of bed, especially on the weekends. Continuously tired and fed up with being inside. Also, with the fear of not wanting to be outside, I found myself having multiple breakdowns a week."**

Disparities in identification with mental health conditions also emerge between lesbian and bisexual respondents. 59% of bisexual respondents consider themselves to have a mental health condition, compared to 48% of their lesbian counterparts. This builds on the findings of a recent study published in the *Journal of Bisexuality*, which found that bisexual and other non-monosexual (bi+) women are at higher risk for mental health problems than their monosexual counterparts.<sup>4</sup>

In addition, 66% of transgender respondents and 71% of non-binary respondents consider themselves to have a mental health condition, compared to 50% of their cisgender counterparts. This highlights the need for specific and affirming mental health resources that cater to the differences between different members of the LGBTQI spectrum, and that the community is not a monolith.

**"I've felt increasingly isolated and depressed because my transition has been completely stalled. I've already lost so many years not living as my gender, the pandemic couldn't have come at a worse time."**

Of those who consider themselves to have a mental health condition, 73% have received a diagnosis from a medical professional, 10% of whom received this diagnosis in the past 12 months. Meanwhile, 25% have not received a diagnosis from a medical professional regarding their condition(s). For 16-to-24-year-olds, the group most likely to have a condition and be unsuccessful in accessing services, 33% have not received a diagnosis.

**"I have an eating disorder, and the clinic was so busy that they had to change the definition of who qualifies for support so that you could only get support if you were literally on death's door."**

For UK-based respondents, those who live in London are much more likely to have accessed mental health services in the past 12 months; 66% of those who have a condition accessed services, compared to 48% of those who live in the rest of the UK.

Of our entire 2021 sample, including those who do not consider themselves to have a mental health condition,

**77% feel that their mental health has suffered as a result of COVID-19 and subsequent lockdowns.**

This figure was 88% for 16-to-24-year-olds. 16-to-24-year-olds also report being most concerned about their decreased mental well-being in the pandemic, with 68% citing this as a top concern in the pandemic, significantly higher than the average across the sample (48%).

<sup>3</sup> [Deloitte: Millennials, Gen Z and mental health](#)

<sup>4</sup> [Taylor & Francis Online: Outness, Discrimination, and Depressive Symptoms Among Bi+ Women: The Roles of Partner Gender and Sexual Identity](#)



# Physical health and fertility

Following the success of our 2020 study in unearthing the experiences and perspectives of LGBTQI parents,<sup>5</sup> we asked further questions in this year's study in order to better understand the barriers faced.

Of our sample of LGBTQI women and non-binary people, 21% have a child or multiple children. 72% of those with children had their children biologically via non-medical means, while 11% used IVF (In Vitro Fertilisation) via a clinic and 8% used IUI (intrauterine insemination) via a clinic. A further 7% used adoption, 2% foster and 1% used a surrogate.

Of those with children, 64% did not face any barriers or challenges when starting their family, while

## 36% experienced barriers or challenges.

The most common barrier or challenge was the high cost of private fertility treatment, with 19% citing this as a barrier/challenge they experienced whilst trying to start or grow their family. 7% experienced discrimination when accessing reproductive or adoption services. Of those who experienced barriers or challenges, 11% claimed that this prevented them from starting a family at one point.

The data reveals that those who started/grew their families using medical intervention (IVF or IUI) were far more likely to have experienced barriers or challenges (85% vs 36% of those who used non-medical intervention), with 70% of these respondents specifically citing the high cost of private fertility treatment as the barrier in question. In the UK, one cycle of IVF can cost up to £5,000 or more via a private clinic.<sup>6</sup>

**"I'm exhausted and alone with a high-risk pregnancy. The response from healthcare professionals has repeatedly been 'ask daddy to help more', despite no 'daddy' being mentioned anywhere on my pregnancy notes."**



**"[I've had] limited support with fertility treatment as my wife was unable to join me for inseminations and has not been involved in the process."**

Of those who do not have children, 30% would like to have them in the future, while 49% currently have no plans to have children at all. 60% of 16-to-24-year-olds expressed a desire to have children, potentially reflecting the gradual de-stigmatisation of LGBTQI family structures in UK policy in recent years.<sup>7</sup> However, our 2020 study highlighted that LGBTQI parents still face discrimination and barriers despite the progress that has been made.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Kantar: [The generational shift in LGBTQI women 'coming out'](#)

<sup>6</sup> NHS: [IVF Overview](#)

<sup>7</sup> UK government: [Parental rights and responsibilities](#)

<sup>8</sup> Kantar: [The generational shift in LGBTQI women 'coming out'](#)



# Openness

According to our 2020 study, LGBTQI women have experienced a generational shift in coming out, with Millennial and Gen Z LGBTQI women asserting their identity earlier than ever before.<sup>9</sup> In light of these findings, we sought to delve deeper into this important aspect of the LGBTQI experience.

**“With limited access to LGBTQ spaces and community, I have been left feeling more isolated and anxious about how the rest of the world views me and have retreated slightly into the closet.”**

81% of the LGBTQI women in our sample are open with most or all of their friends about their sexual orientation,

while just over 4% are not open with any of their close friends. Regarding family members, 72% are open about their sexual orientation with all of their family members, while 10% are not open with any family members. In the workplace, 68% are open with most or all of their colleagues, while 14% are not open with any of their colleagues.

<sup>9</sup> Kantar: The generational shift in LGBTQI women ‘coming out’



**“I came out very late in life, left a long-term hetero relationship. I’ve mostly had love and support from friends and family I’ve come out to. But there are still members I’m not out to due to their strong religious beliefs.”**

Bisexual respondents are less likely to be open about their sexual orientation.

31% of bisexual respondents are open with all of their close friends about their sexual orientation,

compared to 55% of their lesbian counterparts. Further, 50% of bisexual respondents are open with most or all of their family members about their sexual orientation compared to 81% of their lesbian counterparts. This disparity in experiences is echoed in many written responses submitted by our bisexual respondents; many highlight the impact of bisexual erasure and biphobia both in wider society and within LGBTQI spaces.

**“I worry that there is still a stigma around bisexuality, and I think people are still under the impression that you have to have had experiences with other sapphics in order to ‘qualify’ as bisexual...I hate how it’s seen as a fetish for straight men and unless it’s meeting their erotic expectations, we’re lying for attention.”**

Of the transgender women and gender non-conforming people in our sample, 69% are open about their gender identity with most or all of their close friends, while 12% are not open with any of their close friends. Regarding family, 54% are open with all or most of their family members about their gender identity, while 32% are not open with any of their family members. In the workplace, 53% are open with most or all of their work colleagues, whilst 34% are not open with any of their colleagues. Written responses from transgender and gender non-conforming people often reference transphobia both in the LGBTQI community and in wider society, and specifically the hostile media coverage of transgender issues in UK media.

**“Being trans in the UK is terrifying. The media coverage is consistently anti-trans, healthcare is basically not available, and my rights and welfare are consistently threatened.”**

Our study highlights the difficulties that LGBTQI women and non-binary people experience in the workplace, even during the pandemic. In the past year, 35% of our sample have hidden or disguised their LGBTQI identities at work out of fear of discrimination, either once or multiple times. 22% have experienced negative comments or conduct from colleagues because they are LGBTQI at least once in the past year. 28% have heard or seen negative comments or conduct because a colleague is perceived to be LGBTQI at least once in the past year, whilst 18% have felt excluded themselves because of their identity.

**“I feel like I do have to hide at work because I worry about people’s reactions and wish to remain professional. I hope this changes for future generations.”**



# LGBTQI relationships

Following the insights into LGBTQI women's relationships uncovered in LGBTQI Women's Insight 2020 study,<sup>10</sup> this year we're looking to understand the impact of the pandemic on the relationships of LGBTQI women and non-binary people.

Of our 2021 sample,

37% are single, while  
59% are in a relationship

(23% cohabiting, 12% not cohabiting, 20% married and 4% in a civil partnership).  
Of those who were in a relationship at the start of the pandemic in March 2020,

87% are still in this same  
relationship one year later.

With those identifying as gay (91%) or lesbian (88%) being particularly likely to still be in their relationship, this somewhat counters the wider narrative of relationships suffering as a result of the pandemic, which primarily focuses on those in heterosexual relationships.<sup>11</sup>

**"We are moving in together!  
Grown very close over lockdown and  
we feel it's benefitted our relationship  
to have lots of time talking just us."**

**"The lockdown caused a great deal  
of emotional distance as we don't  
live together and were unable to see  
each other. We ended the relationship  
but have since decided to get back  
together and see how it goes."**

**"Our relationship has been under a lot  
of stress due to the COVID pressures.  
Largely as parents we have had very  
little quality time as a couple."**

This year, we're also seeking to understand LGBTQI women and non-binary people's experiences of violence, abuse and coercive control from partners and relatives during the pandemic. Of those who were willing to participate in this section of the survey, 8% have experienced such incidents in the past 12 months. 39% of respondents with such experiences claim that the violence, abuse, or coercive control has increased since before the pandemic began, and 28% say it has stayed the same in this period.

<sup>10</sup> [Kantar: The generational shift in LGBTQI women 'coming out'](#)

<sup>11</sup> [BBC: Why the pandemic is causing spikes in break-ups and divorces](#)





# Conclusion

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The results of this survey further demonstrate the generational differences within the LGBTQI community. While the 2020 study highlighted generational differences in coming out and the language with which they identify, the 2021 study highlights the disparities in the experiences of the pandemic and of mental health more broadly.

Specifically, while the vast majority of respondents feel that their mental health has suffered as a result of COVID-19 and subsequent lockdowns, the effects of the pandemic have hit young LGBTQI women and non-binary people particularly hard, with the lack of physical LGBTQI spaces limiting their ability to immerse themselves in their community.

Further, the data has highlighted the differences between bisexual respondents and their lesbian counterparts, with the former being far less likely to come out even to their close friends about their sexual orientation or gender identity.

This disparity is further reflected in bisexual, transgender and non-binary respondents also reporting different mental health needs and experiences, which is often cited as a direct consequence of their identities and the specific discrimination they've witnessed and experienced.

Overall, these findings reveal the shortcomings in describing LGBTQI women and non-binary people as a monolith under the 'LGBTQI' umbrella and draws attention to the areas where specific resources and attention is required.



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## About **KANTAR**

Kantar is the world's leading evidence-based insights and consulting company. We have a complete, unique and rounded understanding of how people think, feel and act; globally and locally in over 90 markets. By combining the deep expertise of our people, our data resources and benchmarks, our innovative analytics and technology, we help our clients **understand people** and **inspire growth**.

## About **DIVA**

DIVA is the world's leading magazine for LGBTQI women and non-binary people. First published in 1994, this respected publication centres and celebrates women and non-binary people and tackles issues like racism, mental health and challenges facing queer youth while offering a queer perspective on pop culture. Part of DIVA Media Group, the leading entertainment brand, DMG's publisher, Linda Riley, is the driving force behind Lesbian Visibility Week, DIVA Awards, Rainbow Honours, DIVA Pride and more.

## About **Stonewall**

Stonewall is Britain's leading charity for lesbian, gay, bi, trans and queer (LGBTQ+) equality, working to create a world where every single person is free to achieve their potential. It campaigns to eliminate homophobia, biphobia and transphobia, and empowers LGBTQ+ people and their allies to be role models wherever they live, work, study, shop, socialise or pray ([www.stonewall.org.uk](http://www.stonewall.org.uk)).