



# LAY CATHOLIC LGB DISCRIMINATION IN THE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY



GLOBAL NETWORK OF RAINBOW CATHOLICS  
RESEARCH REPORT

BY RESEARCH CONSULTANT  
DR ANNE-MARIE  
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Queries about GNRC and this report can be addressed to GNRC at [secretary@gnrcatholics.org](mailto:secretary@gnrcatholics.org)

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## ACRONYMS USED IN THIS REPORT

<b>EU</b>	European Union
<b>GDPR</b>	General Data Protection Regulation
<b>GNRC</b>	Global Network for Rainbow Catholics
<b>HRC</b>	Human Rights Campaign
<b>ILGA</b>	International lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and intersex association
<b>LGBTI</b>	Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex
<b>NGO</b>	Non-governmental organisation
<b>PFLAG</b>	International LGBTQ organisation for individuals, family members and allies
<b>RCC</b>	Roman Catholic Church
<b>UN</b>	United Nations
<b>USA</b>	United States of America

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# GNRC RESEARCH REPORT SUMMARY

Lay Catholic LGB discrimination in the 21st century GNRC

## GNRC

The Global Network of Rainbow Catholics (GNRC) is an international LGBTI Catholic organisation which *'brings together groups and their members who work for pastoral care and justice for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) people and their families'* and *'works for the inclusion, dignity and equality of this community in the Roman Catholic Church and society'* GNRC (2019).

## Report aims

With funding from The Arcus Foundation GNRC commissioned research to explore lay Catholic LGB experiences of discrimination.

Whilst it is recognised that GNRC works towards full equality for transgender and intersex Catholics, it has not been possible

to explore these areas in the depth necessary during this short reporting period (four months). It is envisaged that future research and campaigns will focus on experiences of discrimination for transgender and intersex Catholics.

## The research

A rapid academic literature review was conducted to understand more about 21<sup>st</sup> century lay Catholic LGB discrimination. Based on the results of the review a semi-structured questionnaire was developed, amended and sent to member organisations for dispersal. 29 completed questionnaires were received and analysed using content analysis. Informed consent was gained from participants and best ethical practice was adhered to. Conclusions were drawn from the findings and recommendations were made.

summary

Key research findings

- Despite cultural and legal advances in LGB equality, research indicates that lay Catholic LGB people can still experience multiple forms of Church influenced discrimination in the 21<sup>st</sup> century e.g. in parishes and in Catholic places of education, health and social care.
- The rejection and exclusion of LGB sexuality by the Catholic Church has been found to have harmful and far reaching consequences for family of origin and other relationships; identity development; spirituality; education; employment and health.
- Research indicates that lay Catholic LGB people can: be afraid to come out; live conflicted fearful lives; be rejected and marginalised by family, friends, peers and clergy; suffer the effects of legal inequalities; face rejection, exclusion and marginalisation as parishioners and lose their jobs in Catholic educational, health care and parish settings even when equalities legislation is in place.
- The findings of this report indicate that the intrinsic dignity of lay Catholic LGB people can be undermined through the existence of Church influenced structural, inter-personal and spiritual homophobic discrimination.
- Whilst there are increasing examples of successful challenges to discrimination, and of some Catholic establishments e.g. parishes and schools being more affirmative and inclusive, progress can be slow and piecemeal.

Key recommendations: from papacy to parish

- 1.For the intrinsic dignity of all LGB people homophobic laws, policies and practices should be continually condemned at all levels of the Catholic Church, through all of its organisations, and in the world beyond.
- 2.Underpinning lay Catholic LGB discrimination are Church policies which equate homosexuality with ‘a propensity to evil’ and portray LGB people as being ‘intrinsically disordered’. Research indicates that these harmful LGB conceptualisations should be replaced with affirmative words, actions and laws which reflect the intrinsic dignity and equality of all persons. These affirmative changes should be publicised from papacy to parish and monitored in all countries and areas of life where the Church has reach and influence.

- 3.Research indicates that the false distinction between being LGB and its practice as espoused in ‘love the sinner not the sin’ has been used to justify homophobia<sup>1</sup> in Catholic establishments e.g. parishes, educational and health care settings which has led to discrimination, mental distress and diminished lives. The lives and health of lay Catholic and non-Catholic LGB people may well improve if this damaging, false duality is rejected.
- 4.For the structural, inter-personal and spiritual health and wellbeing of lay Catholic LGB people e.g. students, service users, volunteers, employees, parishioners and their families the Catholic Church should recognise and support LGB equalities legislation within and outside of Church settings wherever it has reach and influence.

For the purposes of this report the term homophobia also includes biphobia

1

# 1. INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Background

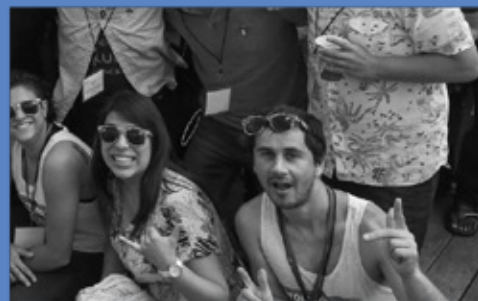
The Global Network of Rainbow Catholics (GNRC) is a global, Catholic LGBTI equalities organisation which *'brings together groups and their members who work for pastoral care and justice for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) people and their families. The Network works for the inclusion, dignity and equality of this community in the Roman Catholic Church and society'* GNRC (2019).

The funding for the research which has informed this report was provided by The Arcus Foundation. The Arcus Foundation (2019) funds LGBTQ projects which work towards social justice. GNRC commissioned this research to explore experiences of lay Catholic LGB discrimination. A rapid academic literature review was conducted (part 2.). The results informed the development of a semi-structured questionnaire (part 3.). A final version of the questionnaire was developed after consultation with GNRC board members and sent to member organisations for dispersal. The combined research conclusions and recommendations are presented in the final part (4.) of this report.

## 1.2 The need for the project

Whilst progress is being made towards the decriminalisation of homosexuality, the legal protection of LGB people and the recognition of same-sex partnerships and families in some parts of the world e.g. Europe there is still much to achieve in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. For example, international equalities organisation the International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association (ILGA) state that 68 countries still have laws which criminalise consensual same-sex sexual acts between adults (ILGA, 2019).

A key factor underpinning discrimination against lay Catholic LGB people identified in this report is the Church's official position on homosexuality. The Letter to Catholic bishops on the pastoral care of homosexual persons from the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (Vatican, 1986) is well documented in the academic literature review. This letter refers to *'homosexual'* persons as *'intrinsically disordered'* with a *'strong tendency ordered toward an intrinsic moral evil'*, and states that the *'inclination itself must be seen as an objective disorder'*.





It goes on to state that ‘*A person engaging in homosexual behaviour therefore acts immorally*’. Despite such negative sentiments the Congregation argued that the Church should not discriminate against LGB people

“It is deplorable that homosexual persons have been and are the object of violent malice in speech or in action. Such treatment deserves condemnation from the Church’s pastors wherever it occurs. It reveals a kind of disregard for others which endangers the most fundamental principles of a healthy society. The intrinsic dignity of each person must always be respected in word, in action and in law’ (Vatican, 1986).

Though this statement implies some sort of protection for lay Catholic LGB and non-Catholic people the Church has been criticised

- for artificially separating LGB sexuality from its expression (Callaghan, 2014a; 2016; Martino, 2014);
- having a poor history of standing against homophobia (Ferfolja, 2005; Figueroa and Tasker, 2014; Pietkiewicz and Kołodziejczyk-Skrzypek, 2016),
- and research identified in this report illustrates that the ‘the love the sinner not the sin’ duality has frequently been used as a justification for homophobic discrimination.

Evidence suggests that lay Catholic LGB people and their supporters are successfully challenging discrimination and that some clergy, religious and Catholic organisations are slowly becoming more inclusive (Radojic, 2016; Yip, 2016; Houghton and Tasker, 2019). However, the findings also indicate that official Church teaching can be a strong, negative influence used by national governments and Catholic led pastoral, educational, health and social care establishments to justify homophobic words, actions and laws to the structural, inter-personal and spiritual detriment of lay Catholic LGB people.

Pope Francis has made some encouraging declarations. Since 2014 he has met with LGBTI Catholic groups and individuals and potentially signalled the start of a more welcoming Vatican era (Hale, 2015). For example, responding to the attack on a gay Florida night club where 49 people died Francis hinted at an apology for the way in which LGB people have been treated ‘*I believe that the Church not only should apologize to the person who is gay whom it has offended*’...‘*I repeat what the Catechism of the Catholic Church says: that they (LGB people) must not be discriminated against, that they must be respected and accompanied pastorally*’ (Hale, 2015). More recently Pope Francis invited LGBT advocate Fr James Martin to the Vatican for talks (30.9.19). Fr Martin later tweeted ‘*...his time with me, in the middle of a busy day and a busy life, seems a clear sign of his deep pastoral care for LGBT Catholics and LGBT people worldwide*’ (Martin, 2019).

Whilst these papal engagements and words are welcomed and encouraged the findings of this report indicate that homophobic discrimination is institutionally embedded within the Catholic Church ‘*in word, in action and in law*’ (Vatican, 1986). Equalities legislation has achieved a great deal over the last two decades. However, secular advances on their own will not suffice. True lay Catholic LGB equality will require institutional change on a global scale by the Church ‘*in word, in action and in law*’ (Vatican, 1986).

### 1.3 Caveats

Whilst it is recognised that GNRC works towards full equality for transgender and intersex Catholics, it has not been possible to explore these subjects in the depth required during this short reporting period (four months). It is envisaged that future research and campaigns will focus on experiences of discrimination for transgender and intersex Catholics.

A questionnaire method was selected to fit in with the short project time frame. It is acknowledged that the use of semi-structured interviews, rather than self-report questionnaires would have provided richer, more complex, in-depth data on different types of lay Catholic LGB discrimination as well as affirmative experiences. Nevertheless, the 29 responses have provided an illuminating snapshot of everyday life, fear, non-disclosure, discrimination and acceptance.

Though this report has explored negative discrimination against lay Catholic LGB people the same literature also highlights the slow growth of inclusive LGB policies and practices e.g. in some parishes and educational establishments. GNRC may wish to explore the growth of LGBTI inclusion within the Church and highlight the successes of its member organisations in future campaigns to share good practice and progress.

Though this report has been rigorously researched and produced by an experienced academic researcher it has only utilised resources which have been available in English. The report will therefore be a partial linguistic and cultural account of a complex, global phenomenon. Future global LGBTI Catholic equalities research would benefit from a mix of academic and non-academic partners, and either a multi-lingual team or a mix of research partners with varying linguistic, research and cultural specialities. Nevertheless, this report provides a robust starting place from which to consider new allies, research and campaigns as GNRC looks to its future.



## 2. RAPID LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 Aim of the review

The aim of this rapid academic literature review is to explore lay Catholic LGB experiences of discrimination in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, to provide GNRC with rigorous evidence to:

- inform its work and the development of future campaigns;
- identify gaps in the evidence;
- provide a comprehensive context for the Phase Three discrimination questionnaire findings.

### 2.2 Introduction

Substantive bodies of research over recent decades have explored lesbian, gay and bisexual experiences of discrimination and violence; and aspects of lay Catholic life. There is far less empirical literature exploring what it means to be LGB and Catholic in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The purpose of this rapid review is to bring together academic literature which illuminates how being LGB and a lay Catholic intersect and are given meaning. The focus here is on lay Catholic LGB experiences of discrimination. Whilst not overlooking the serious nature and consequences of physical violence, one of the aims of this review is to explore the different forms of discrimination which may occur in everyday life. As Barrientos and Bozon (2014) argue there is a need to highlight and address the varied ways in which this may occur.

‘Apart from extreme forms of discrimination and victimization reported by LGBT organizations in the past few decades, such as assassinations and hate crimes, gay men, lesbians and transgenders are affected by violence in many other ways (Caceres, Pecheny, Frasca, Raupp Rios, and Pocahy, 2009; Ottoson, 2011). Therefore, it is essential to collect data gay men or lesbians may be treated worse or discriminated against more than other people in contexts such as the workplace, school, home or health care services...’ (p.325).

2.3 Search strategy

As with all reviews, boundaries need to be set around the focus, search terms, languages and timeframes being explored. The focus of this rapid literature review is 21st century lay Catholic LGB experiences of negative discrimination with a focus on empirical research which explores lived experience. Discrimination is not predefined but is generally understood as not receiving equal treatment when compared to lay Catholic heterosexual people.

Searches of academic databases were undertaken to identify research articles reported in English since the year 2000. Several search terms and combinations were used to ensure that all relevant articles were identified and added to the review list. Table 1 describes the search terms, inclusion and exclusion criteria in more detail. Any articles viewing LGB people negatively, for example as being evil, disordered, or arguing that they should not express their sexuality were excluded.



Table 1. Lay Catholic LGB literature searches

Database	Search terms
Inclusion criteria	
Language	English
Published	2000-2019
Exclusion criteria	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Focus not on LGB Catholics.</li><li>• Articles which view LGB Catholics and people as disordered.</li><li>• Articles published before 2000.</li><li>• Articles not published in English.</li><li>• Focus on LGB clergy and those in religious life.</li><li>• Articles purely of a theological, philosophical nature.</li></ul>
Academic databases	
ASSIA. Applied Social Science Index and Abstracts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Catholic AND Lesbian</li><li>• Catholic AND Gay</li><li>• Catholic AND bisexual</li></ul>
Google Scholar	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Catholic AND homosexual</li></ul>
JSTOR	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Catholic AND same-sex</li><li>• Catholic AND lesbian AND discrimination OR violence</li></ul>
Web of Science	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Catholic AND gay AND discrimination OR violence</li><li>• Catholic AND bisexual AND discrimination OR violence.</li></ul>

2.4 Overview of research review findings

106 articles were initially identified using academic search engines and the bibliographies of relevant articles. These were examined individually against the inclusion and exclusion criteria; 49 articles were deleted leaving 57 to inform the review. The articles were published between 2001-2019 and originated from a variety of disciplines including: religious studies; sociology; education; psychology; feminism; health studies; politics, and law. The findings are presented in three overlapping strands under the following headings:

- geographical region;
- sexuality;
- key areas of discrimination.

As GNRC is a global organisation the first strand explores discrimination by region, and associated countries. Unfortunately, the academic searches did not yield significant amounts of up to date area-based information, so they have been supplemented with contextual data from the 2019 ILGA Report on State Sponsored Homophobia by Lucas Ramón Mendos. As GNRC wanted to explore discrimination by same-sex sexuality a second strand reports on studies which exclusively examine

Catholic lesbian and bisexual women’s experience, and Catholic gay and bisexual men’s experiences. The final strand contains four key areas of discrimination arising from the articles: family and marriage; identity; education, and health. Content analysis was used to make sense of the articles and to identify the key areas of discrimination. Table 2 describes each strand of the findings.

Table 2. An overview of the literature review findings

Area	Strand 1	Strand 2	Strand 3
Focus	Geographical region	Sexuality	Key areas of discrimination
Sub-theme	Africa	Being a Catholic lesbian or bisexual woman	Family and marriage
	Asia and Pacific	Being a Catholic gay or bisexual man	Identity
	Europe		Education
	Latin America and the Caribbean		Health
	North America		

2.5 Results-Geographical region

2.5.1 Africa

54 African countries are listed by ILGA in their 2019 State Sponsored Homophobia Dataset. Of those countries 32 do not have any form of legal rights for LGB people, these countries are: Algeria; Burundi; Cameroon; Chad; Comoros; Egypt; Equatorial Guinea; Eritrea; Eswatini; Ethiopia; Gambia; Ghana; Guinea; Kenya; Liberia; Libya; Malawi; Mauritania; Morocco; Namibia; Nigeria; Senegal; Sierra Leone; Somalia; South Sudan; Sudan; Tanzania; Togo; Tunisia; Uganda; Zambia; Zimbabwe.

Of the 54 African countries listed only 22 have one or more elements of equalities legislation in place. Of those 22 countries 20 have legalised same-sex acts and only seven have at least one form of legal protection for LGB people. Only one country South Africa, has same-sex marriage and legal adoption protection for the first and second parent. Table 3 conveys these findings using an adapted version of the ILGA’s 2019 State-sponsored homophobia report. A lack of protection is indicated by a pink square.

Table 3. African countries with one of more elements of LGB equalities legislation

	Criminalisation?	Protection?		Recognition?	
Country	Consensual same-sex sexual acts	Protection against discrimination	Criminalisation of violence/ discrimination	Legal relationship status	Joint adoption/ second parent adoption
Angola	Yes	Broad Protections Employment	Hate crimes Incitement to Hatred/ Violence	No	No
Benin	Yes	No	No	No	No
Burkina Faso	Yes	No	No	No	No
Cape Verde	Yes	Employment protection	Hate crimes	No	No
Central African Republic	Yes	No	No	No	No
Congo	Yes	No	No	No	No
Côte d'Ivoire	Yes	No	No	No	No
DRC <sup>2</sup>	Yes	No	No	No	No
Djibouti	Yes	No	No	No	No
Equatorial Guinea	Yes	No	No	No	No
Gabon	Yes	No	No	No	No
Guinea-Bissau	Yes	No	No	No	No
Lesotho	Yes	No	No	No	No
Madagascar	Yes	No	No	No	No
Mali	Yes	No	No	No	No
Mauritius	No	Broad Protections Employment	No	No	No
Mozambique	Yes	Employment	No	No	No
Niger	Yes	No	No	No	No
Rwanda	Yes	No	No	No	No
São Tome and Príncipe		No	Hate crimes	No	No
Seychelles	Yes	Employment protection	No	No	No
South Africa	Yes	Constitutional Broad Protections Employment	Incitement to Hatred/ Violence	Marriage Civil unions	Joint Adoption Second Parent Adoption

<sup>2</sup> Democratic Republic of the Congo



Only one academic article focuses explicitly on Africa. Ward's (2014) research explores the role of Anglican and Catholic Churches in public discussions of homosexuality in Uganda. Ward (2014) argues that these Churches and their moral codes are closely linked to Uganda's colonial past. Both churches have rejected calls for LGB equality in Uganda. However, Ward (2014) argues that religious based homophobia is a recent phenomenon in Uganda, that Ugandan society is much more diverse, and that homophobia is being challenged by LGB groups from within.

‘The presence of LGBT groups and human rights activists within Uganda itself, and Anglican and Catholic individuals willing to challenge the hierarchy and the premises of the Anti- Homosexuality legislation, suggests that the debate within Ugandan society is much more pluralist, and that Christian voices are more diverse’ (Ward, 2014, p.142).

2.5.2 Asia and Pacific

45 countries and localities are listed in Asia by ILGA in their 2019 State sponsored homophobia database, 15 countries and localities as being in Oceania<sup>3</sup>. Of the 45 countries and localities in Asia 22 do not have any form of equalities legislation in place for LGB people, these countries are: Afghanistan; Bangladesh; Bhutan; Brunei Darussalam; Iraq; Iran; Kuwait; Lebanon; Malaysia; Maldives; Myanmar; Oman; Pakistan; Qatar; Saudi Arabia; Singapore; Sri Lanka; Syria; Turkmenistan; United Arab Emirates; Uzbekistan; and Yemen. Of those countries which have one or more protection all recognised same-sex sexual acts; only seven had some form of legal protection, only two had legal protections against criminal acts, and only Israel recognised civil unions and joint and second parent adoptions.

Four Oceanic/Pacific countries and localities out of the 15 listed do not have any form of equalities legislation for LGB people, these are: Papua New Guinea; Solomon Islands; Tonga; Tuvalu. The remaining 11 have at least one form of protection. Eight countries have protection for same-sex sexual acts; six have at least one form of legal protection against discrimination. Only Australia and New Zealand have same-sex marriage and protection for joint and second parent adoption. Table 4 conveys these findings.

3 For the purposes of this report Oceania will be synonymous with the Pacific region.

Table 4. Asia and Pacific countries and localities with one of more elements of LGB equalities legislation

	Criminalisation?	Protection?		Recognition?	
ASIA					
Country	Consensual same-sex sexual acts	Protection against discrimination	Criminalisation of violence/ discrimination	Legal relationship status	Parental status
Bahrain	Yes	No	No	No	No
Cambodia	Yes	No	No	No	No
China	Yes	No	No	No	No
East Timor	Yes	No	Hate crimes	No	No
Palestine	Yes	No	No	No	No
India	Yes	No	No	No	No
Indonesia	Yes	No	No	No	No
Israel	Yes	Employment	No	Civil unions	Joint Adoption Second Parent Adoption
Japan	Yes	No	No	No	No
Jordan	Yes	No	No	No	No
Kazakhstan	Yes	No	No	No	No
Kyrgyzstan	Yes	No	No	No	No
Laos	Yes	No	No	No	No
Macau	Yes	Employment	No	No	No
Mongolia	Yes	Broad Protections Employment	Hate crimes	No	No
Nepal	Yes	Constitutional Broad Protections Employment	No	No	No
North Korea	Yes	No	No	No	No
Philippines	Yes	No	No	No	No
South Korea	Yes	Broad Protections Employment	No	No	No
Taiwan	Yes	Employment	No	No	No
Tajikistan	Yes	No	No	No	No



	Criminalisation?	Protection?		Recognition?	
Country	Consensual same-sex sexual acts	Protection against discrimination	Criminalisation of violence/ discrimination	Legal relationship status	Parental status
Thailand	Yes	Employment	No	No	No
Vietnam	Yes	No	No	No	No
PACIFIC					
Australia	Yes	Broad Protections Employment	No	Marriage Civil unions	Joint Adoption Second Parent Adoption
Cook Islands	No	Employment	No	No	No
Fiji	Yes	Constitutional Broad Protections Employment	No	No	No
Kiribati	No	Employment	No	No	No
Marshall Islands	Yes	No	No	No	No
Micronesia	Yes	No	No	No	No
New Zealand	Yes	Broad Protections Employment	Hate crimes	Marriage Civil unions	Joint Adoption Second Parent Adoption
Nauru	Yes	No	No	No	No
Palau	Yes	No	No	No	No
Samoa	Yes	Employment	Hate crimes	No	No
Vanuatu	Yes	No	No	No	No

Only two research articles that have been identified explore LGB Catholic discrimination in Asia and the Pacific. Yip (2016) explores the influence of the Catholic Church, and Confucianism on homosexuality in Hong Kong. Like Ward (2014) she identifies a former British colonial influence on the Hong Kong Catholic Church. ‘*The absence of a tongzhi group* (Chinese term for LGBTQ people in Hong Kong, Mainland China and Taiwan since 1989) *may reflect the effect of the colonial power of the Church in silencing and marginalizing them*’ (Yip, 2016, pp.29-30). Yip (2016) states that the Church has supported anti-discrimination legislation, however it has not supported the legalisation of same-sex marriage. Despite these challenging circumstances Yip (2016) notes that tongzhi are mobilising and resisting discriminatory treatment.

The other study Ferfolja (2005) explores the marginalisation of lesbian teachers in Australian Catholic schools. She argues that institutional homophobia and discriminatory practices occur and arise at state level from the schools’ ability to ignore New South Wales anti-discrimination legislation. As Ferfolja (2005) concludes

‘These snapshots of lesbian identified teachers working in some religious-based New South Wales schools illustrate that silencing occurs on an institutional level overtly and covertly, frequently resulting in self-surveillance. Additionally, it demonstrates that in certain contexts, in/direct discriminatory actions are possible despite general prohibitions against workplace discrimination’ (p.63).

### 2.5.3 Europe

50 European countries and localities are listed by ILGA in their 2019 State Sponsored Homophobia Dataset, all had at least one element of LGB equalities legislation in place. All 50 allowed for consensual same-sex acts; 42 had one or more form of protection against discrimination; 34 had one or more type of criminalisation against violence; 28 had either civil unions, marriage or both; 17 had joint and second parent adoption rights, four had second parent adoption rights only. Using an adapted version of the ILGA’s 2019 Table 5 conveys the European findings.

**Table 5. European countries with one of more element of LGB equalities legislation**

	Criminalisation?	Protection?		Recognition?	
Country	Consensual same-sex sexual acts	Protection against discrimination	Criminalisation of violence/ discrimination	Legal relationship status	Parental status
Albania	Yes	Broad Protections Employment	Hate crimes Incitement to Hatred/ Violence	No	No
Andorra	Yes	Broad Protections Employment	Hate crimes	Civil unions	Joint Adoption Second Parent Adoption
Armenia	Yes	No	No	No	No
Austria	Yes	Broad Protections Employment	Incitement to Hatred/ Violence	Marriage Civil unions	Joint Adoption Second Parent Adoption
Azerbaijan	Yes	No	No	No	No
Belarus	Yes	No	No	No	No
Belgium	Yes	Broad Protections Employment	Hate crimes Incitement to Hatred/ Violence	Marriage	Joint Adoption Second Parent Adoption
Bosnia and Herzegovina	Yes	Broad Protections Employment	Hate crimes Incitement to Hatred/ Violence	No	No
Bulgaria	Yes	Broad Protections Employment	Hate crimes Incitement to Hatred/ Violence	No	No

	Criminalisation?	Protection?		Recognition?	
Country	Consensual same-sex sexual acts	Protection against discrimination	Criminalisation of violence/ discrimination	Legal relationship status	Parental status
Croatia	Yes	Broad Protections Employment	Hate crimes Incitement to Hatred/ Violence	Civil unions	No
Cyprus	Yes	Broad Protections Employment	Hate crimes Incitement to Hatred/ Violence	Civil unions	
Czechia	Yes	Broad Protections Employment	No	Civil unions	
Denmark	Yes	Employment	Hate crimes Incitement to Hatred/ Violence	Marriage	Joint Adoption Second Parent Adoption
Estonia	Yes	Broad Protections Employment	Hate crimes Incitement to Hatred/ Violence	Civil unions	Second Parent Adoption
Finland	Yes	Broad Protections Employment	Hate crimes Incitement to Hatred/ Violence	Marriage	Joint Adoption Second Parent Adoption
France	No	Broad Protections Employment	Hate crimes Incitement to Hatred/ Violence	Marriage Civil unions	Joint Adoption Second Parent Adoption
Georgia	Yes	Broad Protections Employment	Hate crimes	No	No
Germany	Yes	Broad Protections Employment	No	Marriage Civil unions	Joint Adoption Second Parent Adoption
Greece	Yes	Employment	Hate crimes Incitement to Hatred/ Violence	Civil unions	No
Hungary		Broad Protections Employment	Hate crimes Incitement to Hatred/ Violence	Civil unions	
Iceland	Yes	Broad Protections Employment	Incitement to Hatred/ Violence	Marriage	Joint Adoption Second Parent Adoption
Ireland	Yes	Broad Protections Employment	Incitement to Hatred/ Violence	Marriage	Joint Adoption Second Parent Adoption
Italy	Yes	Employment	No	Civil unions	No
Kosovo	Yes	Broad Protections Employment	Hate crimes	No	
Latvia	Yes	Employment	No	No	
Liechtenstein	Yes	Broad Protections Employment	No	Civil unions	No
Lithuania	Yes	Broad Protections Employment	Hate crimes Incitement to Hatred/ Violence	No	No

	Criminalisation?	Protection?		Recognition?	
Country	Consensual same-sex sexual acts	Protection against discrimination	Criminalisation of violence/ discrimination	Legal relationship status	Parental status
Luxembourg	Yes	Broad Protections Employment	Hate crimes Incitement to Hatred/ Violence	Marriage	Joint Adoption Second Parent Adoption
Malta	Yes	Constitutional Broad Protections Employment	Hate crimes Incitement to Hatred/ Violence	Marriage Civil unions	Joint Adoption Second Parent Adoption
Moldova	Yes	Employment	No	No	No
Monaco	Yes	No	Incitement to Hatred/ Violence	No	No
Montenegro	Yes	Broad Protections Employment	Hate crimes Incitement to Hatred/ Violence	No	No
Netherlands	Yes	Broad Protections Employment	Incitement to Hatred/ Violence	Marriage Civil unions	Joint Adoption Second Parent Adoption
North Macedonia	Yes	Broad Protections Employment	No	No	No
Norway	Yes	Broad Protections Employment	Hate crimes Incitement to Hatred/ Violence	Marriage	Joint Adoption Second Parent Adoption
Poland	Yes	Broad Protections Employment	No	No	No
Portugal	Yes	Constitutional Broad Protections Employment	Hate crimes Incitement to Hatred/ Violence	Marriage	Joint Adoption Second Parent Adoption
Romania	Yes	Broad Protections Employment	Hate crimes	No	No
Russia	Yes	No	No	No	No
San Marino	Yes	No	Hate crimes Incitement to Hatred/ Violence	Civil unions	Second Parent Adoption
Serbia	Yes	Broad Protections Employment	Hate crimes Incitement to Hatred/ Violence	No	No
Slovakia	Yes	Broad Protections Employment	Hate crimes	No	No
Slovenia	Yes	Broad Protections Employment	Incitement to Hatred/ Violence	Civil unions	Second Parent Adoption
Spain	Yes	Broad Protections Employment	Hate crimes Incitement to Hatred/ Violence	Marriage	Joint Adoption Second Parent Adoption
Sweden	Yes	Constitutional Broad Protections Employment	No	Marriage	Joint Adoption Second Parent Adoption

	Criminalisation?	Protection?		Recognition?	
Country	Consensual same-sex sexual acts	Protection against discrimination	Criminalisation of violence/ discrimination	Legal relationship status	Parental status
Switzerland	Yes	Broad Protections Employment	Hate crimes Incitement to Hatred/ Violence	Civil unions	No
Turkey	Yes	No	No	No	No
Ukraine	Yes	Broad Protections Employment	No	No	No
United Kingdom	Yes	Broad Protections Employment	Hate crimes Incitement to Hatred/ Violence	Marriage Civil unions	Joint Adoption Second Parent Adoption
Vatican City	Yes	No	No	No	No

ILGA data (2019) indicates that Europe has the largest number of legal protections and recognitions for LGB people, however there is still considerable variation in the timing and extent of legislation, and in perceptions of whether lay Catholic LGB people have the same religious and cultural freedoms and opportunities as their heterosexual counterparts. As Knill, et.al’s<sup>4</sup> (2014) research into the impact of the Catholic Church on morality policies in Western Europe indicates, culture and institutional context are also key ‘Catholic countries display considerable variation with regard to the speed and content of their policy reforms. Clearly, the extent to which Catholicism can decelerate a country’s reform progress is affected by additional factors’ including ‘culture’ and ‘institutional factors”. (p.846).

Review findings indicate that the Catholic Church can have a negative direct and indirect influence on: the speed and passing of LGB equalities legislation (Ayoub, 2014; Knill, et.al<sup>5</sup>, 2014; Hichy, et.al, 2015); conceptions of national identity (Gruszczynska, 2009; Belle, et.al, 2018) and the family (Mizielinska, 2001). These in turn can negatively influence self-perceptions, relationships with family members and peers, and can lead to diminished lives and well-being e.g. in Poland. Whilst legislation recognising same-sex partnerships and parental rights are warmly welcomed, it is evident that lay Catholic LGB people can still face discrimination when they try to enact them. Pichardo’s (2011) Spanish research indicates that some same-sex couples are choosing not to legalise their relationship in case they are subjected to: ridicule; family rejection; the loss of a job or worse working conditions. As Pichardo (2011) states legal equality does not necessarily protect against religious or cultural discrimination ‘Legal equality is certainly not social equality and homophobia is still an enormous threat. Marriage can make public and visible that one is gay or lesbian’ (p.555).

4 et.al means and others

5 et.al means and others

2.5.4 Latin America and the Caribbean

33 countries are listed in the Latin American and Caribbean region by ILGA in their State sponsored homophobia dataset (2019). Of those 33 countries eight do not have any form of legal equality for LGB people, these countries are: Antigua and Barbuda; Barbados; Dominica; Grenada; Guyana; Jamaica; St Kitts and Nevis, and St Vincent and the Grenadines. Using an adapted version of ILGA’s (2019) database Table 6 illustrates countries in Latin America and the Caribbean which have one or more element of LGB equalities legislation. Of those 25 countries with at least one form of protection only one legally recognises consensual same-sex acts. Of the 25 only 13 countries had at least one form of legal protection against LGB discrimination. Only four countries had both types of adoption recognition for LGB parents.

Aranda Arroyo, et.al contributors to the ILGA (2019) report argue that discrimination against LGB people in Latin America is a complex problem with structural roots. Though the Catholic Church is part of the problem there are other religious, political and economic elements which Aranda Arroyo, et.al (2019) argue also need addressing.

‘The elections of conservative right-wing governments, the rise to power of neo-fascist projects, strategic alliances of the Catholic, Evangelical and neo-Pentecostal churches and its growing influence in the public debate, increase in social exclusion and poverty in the region from the implementation of neoliberal economic policies, the growth in violence due to prejudice of sexual orientation and gender identity and expression, migration and the rise in the murders of human rights defenders, makes a panorama of regional complexity and alertness’ (p.103).

The authors go on to state that LGB discrimination is being met with resistance by powerful LGBTI and feminist groups.

Table 6. Latin America and Caribbean countries with one of more elements of LGB equalities legislation

	Criminalisation?	Protection?		Recognition?	
Country	Consensual same-sex sexual acts	Protection against discrimination	Criminalisation of violence/ discrimination	Legal relationship status	Parental status
Antigua and Barbuda	No	No	No	No	No
Argentina	Yes	No	Hate crimes	Marriage	Joint Adoption Second Parent Adoption



	Criminalisation?	Protection?		Recognition?	
Country	Consensual same-sex sexual acts	Protection against discrimination	Criminalisation of violence/ discrimination	Legal relationship status	Parental status
Bahamas	Yes	No	No	No	No
Belize	Yes	No	No	No	No
Bolivia	Yes	Constitutional Broad Protections Employment	Hate crimes Incitement to Hatred/ Violence	No	No
Brazil	Yes	Broad Protections Employment	No	Marriage Civil unions	Joint Adoption Second Parent Adoption
Costa Rica	Yes	No	No	No	No
Chile	Yes	Broad Protections Employment	Hate crimes	Civil unions	No
Colombia	Yes	Broad Protections Employment	Hate crimes Incitement to Hatred/ Violence	Marriage Civil unions	Joint Adoption Second Parent Adoption
Cuba	Yes	Employment	No	No	No
Dominican Republic	Yes	No	No	No	No
Ecuador	Yes	Constitutional Broad Protections Employment	Incitement to Hatred/ Violence	Civil unions	No
El Salvador	Yes	No	No	No	No
Guatemala	Yes	No	No	No	No
Haiti	Yes	No	No	No	No
Honduras	Yes	Broad Protections Employment	Hate crimes Incitement to Hatred/ Violence	No	No
Mexico	Yes	Broad Protections Employment	No	Marriage	No
Nicaragua	Yes	Employment	Hate crimes Incitement to Hatred/ Violence	No	No
Panama	Yes	No	No	No	No
Paraguay	Yes	No	No	No	No
Peru	Yes	Employment	Hate crimes Incitement to Hatred/ Violence	No	No
St Lucia	No	No	No	No	No
Suriname	Yes	Broad Protections	Incitement to Hatred/ Violence	No	No

	Criminalisation?	Protection?		Recognition?	
Country	Consensual same-sex sexual acts	Protection against discrimination	Criminalisation of violence/ discrimination	Legal relationship status	Parental status
Trinidad and Tobago	Yes	No	No	No	No
Uruguay	Yes	Broad Protections Employment	Hate crimes Incitement to Hatred/ Violence	Marriage Civil unions	Joint Adoption Second Parent Adoption
Venezuela	Yes	Employment	No	No	No

The academic research reflects this uneven picture (Coralles, 2015). In some countries the Catholic Church appears to have more direct power, for example when tied to governments such as in Chile (Barrientos, et al., 2010) or Nicaragua (ILGA, 2019). Multiple sources indicate that other conservative religions in the region such as evangelical, or pentecostal-ists also influence religious and cultural attitudes.

The ILGA (2019) report illustrates that LGB rights in Latin America are increasing. Nevertheless, academic studies highlight the direct and indirect influence of the Catholic Church on national structures and ideol-ogies and their influence on lives through the perpetuation of heteronor-mative conceptions of sexuality and the family, and rigid gender roles for men and women. Research indicates that many LGB people in Latin America can be frightened to come out even when equalities legislation has been passed. Barrientos, et.al, (2010); Barrientos and Bozon (2014); and Ogland and Verona’s (2014) research in Brazil illustrates this point and concurs with Pichardo’s (2011) Spanish findings.

‘In Brazil, a recent judicial ruling for the first time established the right for homosexual couples to enter into civil unions, despite the presence of widespread disapproval of homosexuality among the population and opposition from prominent religious groups...Using data from the Brazilian Social Research Survey, we find that the most restrictive views toward homosexuality and the strongest opposition to same-sex civil unions are most prevalent among devoted followers of historical Protestant, Pentecostal, and Catholic faith traditions’ (p.1334).

Additionally, even though same-sex unions in Chile were legalised the year after the publication of Figueroa and Tasker’s (2014) research into family of origin and religion they found that young gay men suffered with external and internalised homophobia, caused in part by their families religious beliefs, and negative perceptions of homosexuality. Changing the law on its own will not be enough to tackle the complex causes and consequences of homophobia.



‘Findings revealed feelings of self-rejection and self-recrimination featured in the life course development of participants’ sexual identities that were embedded within the familiar and sociohistorical context in which they lived. In particular, parents’ religious beliefs regarding the abnormal and unnatural view of “homosexuality” shaped by Catholic and Evangelical churches played a crucial role in lack of acceptance during their development. The study showed the internal struggle faced by these Chilean young gay men to achieve their own acceptance and perceived normalization of their sexual orientation’ (Figueroa and Tasker, 2014, p.269).

2.5.5 North America

Using an adapted version of ILGA’s (2019) State sponsored homophobia database Table 7 illustrates one or more element of LGB equalities legisla-tion in the United States and Canada. Same-sex acts are legal, both have legal relationship status and adoption protection for joint adoption and second parent adoption. However, the USA has slightly less protec-tion against discrimination, and Canada has more legal re-dress for victims of violence or discrimination.

Table 7. North American countries with one of more elements of LGB equalities legislation

	Criminalisation?	Protection?		Recognition?	
Country	Consensual same-sex sexual acts	Protection against discrimination	Criminalisation of violence/ discrimination	Legal relationship status	Parental status
USA	Yes	No	Hate crimes	Marriage Civil unions	Joint Adoption Second Parent Adoption
Canada	Yes	Broad Protections Employment	Hate crimes Incitement to Hatred/ Violence	Marriage Civil unions	Joint Adoption Second Parent Adoption

Evidence suggests that LGB rights are more developed in North America than in previous decades. However, the statistics belie the histori-cally powerful grip of conservative Christian denominations, specifically the Catholic Church in areas including Boston, Chicago and Ottawa. Research indicates that LGB educators, administrators, health workers, pupils and students can face structural and inter-personal discrimination in the pursuit of equality in their everyday lives. Maher (2007), Martino (2014) and Callaghan’s (2014a; 2014b; 2015; 2016) Canadian research



illuminates the negative influence of some Canadian bishops on state funded Catholic schools and highlights examples of their ability to deny pre-existing Canadian equalities legislation as Canon law prevails. As challenges by LGB students have become increasingly open the public has become more aware of discrimination and they have become more vocal in support of LGB pupils and students. As Callaghan (2016) notes ‘Although Catholic education leaders continue to deny that religiously inspired homophobia exists in Canadian Catholic schools, others are becoming increasingly aware of their Charter rights and expect them to be upheld in publicly funded Canadian Catholic schools’ (p.271). Whilst awareness, protest and utilising Canadian equal rights legislation is thought to be reducing inequality these authors argue there is still much to be achieved, for example through integrating LGB resources into the curriculum in Catholic schools.

This picture is also reflected in the USA. Research indicates that homo-phobic discrimination has been identified in American Catholic schools, universities and health care settings and that teachers, students, health care workers and patients can suffer as a result. However, research also indicates that LGB Catholic students and pupils are becoming more vocal about religious discrimination, and that some are starting to construct positive religious LGB identities (Loseke and Cavendish, 2001; O’Brien, 2004; Kocet, et.al, 2011). In doing so, Catholic educational establish-ments are having to devise policies to support people to publicly come out. This seems to be an area of development, and one which is not always supported by clergy (Maher and Server, 2007). There were fewer reports of LGB teachers or health workers being open at work in North American Catholic establishments in case of ridicule, loss of job, and future career damage (Hooker, 2019). As Kirby and Michaelson’s (2015) research found negative value judgments about LGB people as teachers and parents still exists ‘Although perceptions about lesbians and gay men have been changing in the United States...negative morality judgments remain prevalent and result in prejudice and discrimination’ (p.33).

2.6 Results-Experiences of lay Catholic LGBT discrimination by sexuality

Content analysis of articles focusing on Catholic women’s lesbian and bisexual experiences of discrimination revealed two key findings marginalisation and invisibility; and living with the threat of disclosure and associated discrimination.

2.6.1.1 Marginalisation and invisibility

Mizielinska (2001) and Ferfolja (2005) both found evidence of the institutional silencing and marginalisation of Catholic lesbian and bisexual women’s sexualities. For Mizielinska (2001) the strong influence of the Catholic Catechism on the Polish Constitution has reinforced notions of male dominance, heterosexual marriage and passive, domestic motherhood within the national identity. Mizielinska argues that this has disadvantaged Polish lesbians in two ways

‘The whole text of the Polish Constitution reflects the Church’s concept of family as a communion between father and son. Consequently, the Polish Constitution becomes a communion between the state and its male citizens...Polish lesbians are not only excluded or less valued as citizens because they are women, but they are doubly excluded as non-mothers, i.e. they are both juridically and socially invisible’ (2001, pp.288-289).

She found that the resulting invisibility of lesbians in official discourse could negatively influence public opinion and reinforce homophobia, and thus place pressure on lesbians to remain silent. Same-sex marriage is not currently legal in Poland.

Ferfolja (2005) found that lesbian sexualities could be silenced in Australian Catholic schools despite equalities legislation being in place. The New South Wales Anti-Discrimination Act (1982) protected gay and lesbian teachers in public schools from discrimination, though it did not apply to private, religious schools. Ferfolja (2005) found that several lesbian teachers had hidden their sexuality in case of rejection and/or being sacked. Though the official Church policy of ‘tolerating’ and ‘accepting’ gays and lesbians was in place, it was not always enacted. Ferfolja (2005) reported several instances of teachers being sacked if their sexualities were discovered ‘a lesbian colleague, upon the administration’s discovery of her sexuality, was informed by the principal that plans for the next year “did not include her.” Her dismissal served as a warning to others who dared transgress heterosexual boundaries’ (p.55).



‘I feel ok in myself as a gay Catholic...I can be totally honest with God, it’s hard to be or to feel that, that honest I suppose with, with other Catholics’ (Houghton and Tasker, 2019, p.14)

Concern about being outed and sacked could also influence outside lives and lead to a withdrawal from public LGBT activities ‘there was another young man at another Catholic school in the western suburbs who was filmed at the Mardi Gras and inadvertently appeared on the news and there was a kafuffle and he ended up losing his job’ (Ferfolja, 2005, p.57).

Houghton and Tasker (2019) explored Catholic and lesbian identity formation with six women living in England. Whilst all reported integrating their dual identities as women loving Catholics all were silent about their orientation at Church and there was some self-censorship and avoidance of parish life to avoid rejection.

‘I have deliberately excluded myself from nearly everything but the coffee rota, because um it just complicates things to have very friendly relationships with a priest who then can’t approve of you’ (Houghton and Tasker, 2019, p.14).

2.6.1.2 Living with the threat of disclosure

Living with the threat of discrimination was a key finding for two studies. Mizielinska (2001) found that Polish lesbians risked daily rejection from family, education and work if their sexuality was discovered

‘Besides the legal consequences of nationalistic discourse (i.e. constitutional laws), the real drama of lesbians’ daily lives is even more serious and painful. They deal with prejudices and biases on a daily basis, ranging from abandonment by the family to discrimination at school or in job hiring practices. Therefore, the majority of them choose not to disclose their sexuality. Some have come out to a small circle of friends, but they prefer not to inform their family because of their family’s traditional opinions about a woman’s proper future’ (p.292).

Ferfolja (2005) found that lesbian teachers in Catholic schools were reluctant to report homophobic discrimination as they were frightened of being dismissed, or of being subjected to further discrimination from staff and/or

‘One teacher in this study was harassed for a number of years by an adolescent, who labelled her a lesbian. The extensive abuse included stalking, property damage, threats to personal safety, and verbal violence. Even though the harassment was clearly anti-lesbian, for reasons of self-preservation and a fear of dismissal, the teacher did all she could to avoid her experience being “read” by others as lesbian-related’ (p.59).

pupils with no opportunity for redress

In summary it is evident that lesbian lives and identities can be silenced, marginalised and restricted through direct and indirect institutional Catholic policies and practices; nationally, via employment in Catholic schools, at parish level, and internally through self-censorship in response

to ongoing threats of family and social rejection, loss of job and earnings, and dismissal from parish life.

2.6.2 Catholic gay and bisexual men’s experiences

Three key themes emerged from the literature: the influence of the Church on social attitudes; coming out and early identity tensions, the dual role of the Catholic Church.

2.6.2.1 The influence of the Church on social attitudes

Negative Church pronouncements on homosexuality and its influence on social attitudes featured strongly. Pietkiewicz and Kołodziejczyk-Skrzypek (2016) found that young Polish gay Catholic men were very aware of negative attitudes towards homosexuality publicised by the Church. Participants reported feelings of ‘guilt’, ‘frustration’ and ‘trauma’ when they spoke about their sexuality and relationships during confession. ‘I left the confessional before getting absolution. The priest called me a pervert or something’ (Pietkiewicz and Kołodziejczyk-Skrzypek, 2016, p.1579). Concurring with these findings Liboro and Walsh (2016) argue there is a strong association between official Church teaching, the stigmatization of HIV-positive Canadian gay men and their decision to leave the faith. These men were reportedly facing a double blow, whilst the Church disapproved of their sexuality, it had also perpetuated negative attitudes to HIV which influenced public opinion and reactions to their condition.

‘Because of the recognized role that the Catholic Church has played in the promotion of public opinion against homosexuality, the inculcation of internalized homophobia and homonegativity, and the stigmatization of HIV/AIDS, it is not surprising that most HIV-positive gay men who were baptized and raised Catholic eventually decide to abandon their Catholic faith for the sake of their mental health and well-being’ (Liboro and Walsh, 2016, p.653).

Likewise, whilst anti-discrimination laws were passed in Chile (2012) making discrimination on grounds of sexuality illegal, Figueroa and Tasker (2014) argue that the historical influence of the Catholic Church on Chilean society has perpetuated a ‘medicalized paradigm of illness and deviation’ which still underpins ‘many Catholic pronouncements on homosexuality’ (p.272).



### 2.6.2.2 Coming out and early identity tensions

Evidence suggests that negative Church and socio-cultural pronouncements can influence how loved ones for example families perceive gay and bisexual men's sexuality, which can negatively influence how men feel about themselves. Figueroa and Tasker (2014) found that '*Chilean young gay men's narratives revealed a deep impact of family values and religious beliefs on sexual identity life course development from childhood onward*' (p.288). This can be illustrated in the following participant quote which is reflected in several of the studies

'It was a super heavy blow for her (mother). Especially, because of the Christian upbringing she had given us, and it was a really difficult process, super painful, where there was a breakdown in the relationship with my family, there was a before and after when I came out with my family, and it continues being painful...It is complicated for me because my mom does not accept me, my mom is like a pillar in my life' (Figueroa and Tasker, 2014, p.286).

Complications like internalised homophobia and self-rejection were explored by Nardelli, et.al (2019) in their study of internalized sexual stigma, dissociation, and the role of religion in Italian gay men. Dissociation is described as an adaptive functioning which allows a person to function under deep psychological distress. However, in the longer term the authors argue it can lead to reduced well-being including substance abuse, higher HIV risk sexual behaviours and intimate relationship difficulties. Nardelli, et.al's (2019) findings illustrated a '*clear relationship between ISS (internalized sexual stigma) and dissociation*' with '*the effect of the ISS...larger among Catholic participants than among atheist participants. This finding could be explained by the Catholic condemnation of homosexual acts...*' (pp.9-10).

### 2.6.2.3 The dual role of the Catholic Church

All four studies found that Church membership could provide solace, and spiritual support, and simultaneously led to rejection, marginalisation and poorer well-being for example when coming out to oneself, to religious family members, members of the clergy, and when trying to access Catholic health services. Liboro and Walsh's (2016) study into gay Canadian Catholic men with HIV found that the Church could provide spiritual support when trying to adjust to life with a diagnosis. However, it had also played a role in stigmatizing the condition and that individuals could face rejection from clergy when discussing the issue. The following quote from Liboro and Walsh (2016) is indicative of all four articles.

'As many participants struggled in their youth and young adult life to come to grips with the role that their religion played in the promotion of their personal suffering as gay and HIV-positive men, they eventually also came to realize that there were aspects of Catholicism that contributed to their own evolution into loving, compassionate, and just human beings' (p.665).

## 2.7 Results-key areas of discrimination arising from the literature

A thorough reading of the included articles identified discrimination and its effects in the following key areas: family and marriage; identity; education, and health.

### 2.7.1 Family and marriage

The 2019 ILGA report on State sponsored homophobia argues that religious institutions including the Catholic Church have tried to deny the existence of many types of family, LGB included (pp.29-30), this theme is reflected in the literature. Three key areas of discrimination are explored: the role and influence of the symbolic family and family of origin; attitudes and progress towards same-sex marriage, and attitudes and policies which concern same-sex couples wanting to start a family.

#### 2.7.1.1 The role and influence of the symbolic family, and family of origin

Evidence indicates that lay Catholic LGB people can feel pressured to uphold patriarchal, heteronormative images of the family promoted by the Catholic Church. Lay LGB Catholic people can feel these pressures symbolically and through their family of origin. Yip (2016) found that Chinese LGB Catholics could be marginalised by both 'Chinese culture' which promotes a 'patriarchal family-kinship system with the obligation of getting married' (p.29) and by the Hong Kong Catholic Church which has imposed a legacy of negative Western attitudes towards homosexuality. Not meeting heterosexual cultural expectations could lead to fear, exclusion and marginalisation. For example, where the role of a woman is constructed around being a (passive) wife and mother lesbians and bisexual women can feel hidden, silenced and absent from national and family of origin discourses. This finding is also present in the work of Mizielinska (2001), and Ayoub (2014) who conducted research with Polish lesbians.

'In the Church's statements about family and the role of women as mothers, lesbians are not mentioned. Women are always described as the foundation of the family and the primary caretakers of children. In its instructions, the Church promotes the traditional and patriarchal model of a family with many children' (Mizielinska, 2001, p.285).





‘nonheterosexuality is portrayed as a threat to the family and thus also to the nation. In Poland, the threat to the nation begins with the family...’ (Ayoub, 2014, p.345).

Research with Latin America gay and bisexual male Catholics found that they could feel pressure to conform to cultural and Church influenced ideas of masculinity e.g. being dominant, heterosexual, and married with children. Such pressures can lead to gay and bisexual men choosing to deny their sexuality, living with on-going internal conflict and with the threat of rejection and/or violence if they are perceived as gay, or if they are out as gay and do not conform to expected male gender roles. ‘...one study found that Latino gay men who identified as effeminate reported having experienced more homophobia, higher levels of mental distress, and a higher frequency of negative experiences such as childhood sexual abuse, verbal and physical abuse, and rape’ (Figueroa and Tasker 2014, p.274).

Figueroa and Tasker (2014) argue that the Catholic Church’s influence on nation states, national identities, culture and family life in Latin America is part of the problem

‘Existing studies have indicated that Latino gay individuals may experience greater rejection from their families and communities because of the importance attached to traditional and religious values that shape gender roles, sexuality, and family life... The institutionalization of a sexual morality based on gender norms in Latino culture has been associated with the influence of the Catholic Church’ (p.274).

#### 2.7.1.2 Attitudes and progress towards same-sex marriage

The ILGA (2019) dataset on State sponsored homophobia indicates that of the 199 countries and localities listed, only 41 have legalised same-sex unions (civil union or marriage). There are 28 in Europe (Andorra, Austria, Belgium, Croatia, Cyprus, Czechia, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, San Marino, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, UK); seven in Latin America (Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Mexico, Uruguay) with none in the Caribbean; three in Asia and the Pacific (Israel, Australia, New Zealand) two in North America (America, Canada) and one in Africa (South Africa). This research indicates that the legal recognition of same-sex partnerships is still lacking in many parts of the world, particularly Asia and Africa. Academic research indicates that the Catholic Church has played a role in

- hindering the legalisation of same-sex partnerships in some countries;
- that couples may avoid legal partnerships for fear of public discovery and discrimination;
- and that some may experience poorer treatment when they do disclose a partnership.

Knill, et.al (2014) and found that intervention by the Catholic Church may have delayed the legalisation of same-sex partnerships in Western Europe.

‘Whereas almost all non-Catholic Western European states had adopted at least the model of registered partnership after 15 years, Spain, Austria, Portugal, and Ireland followed suit only over the subsequent decade. Taking into account the religiosity and the church–state relationship in Catholic states, it appears that states with relatively high church attendance rates and high degrees of separation between public and religious institutions took longer to reform their marriage laws’ (p.855).

Using data from the Brazilian Social Research Survey Ogland and Verona (2014) found negative reactions to same-sex legal partnerships were more strongly identified in those with conservative religious identifications ‘the most restrictive views toward homosexuality and the strongest opposition to same-sex civil unions are most prevalent among devoted followers of historical Protestant, Pentecostal, and Catholic faith traditions’ (p. 1334). Hichy, et.al (2015) suggest that equalities campaigners in Catholically conservative countries may benefit from illustrating that all are equal ‘*the state must guarantee equal rights to all its citizens, regardless of religious beliefs*’ (pp.1368-1369).

Pichardo (2011) concluded that same-sex couples in Spain had benefited from recent legal changes, however strong Catholic values could still influence legislative processes and lead to homophobic attitudes.

‘Legal equality is certainly not social equality and homophobia is still an enormous threat...Marriage can make public and visible that one is gay or lesbian. In all legal documents it is written that one is married to a person of the same-sex and not everybody can afford such a coming out’ (p.555).

Pichardo (2011) identified a reluctance on the part of some family members to attend legal partnership ceremonies, for employers to try to avoid giving legally sanctioned time off afterwards, and for LGB people to self-discriminate to avoid recrimination

‘Abel’s boss pressured him not to take the 15 days off accorded to him by Spanish law after he got married. He is taking his days off but one of his colleagues, a lesbian who is getting married, is not doing so. One has never heard of a heterosexual couple asked not to take their honeymoon vacation time from their job’ (p.555).

**2.7.1.3 Same-sex couples wanting to start a family**

To provide some context for the findings the ILGA (2019) report on State Sponsored Homophobia states that of the 199 countries and localities listed, only 26 have legalised joint adoption and second parent adoption for LGB people. These are largely (16) to be found in Europe (Andorra, Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Iceland, Ireland, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Norway, Spain, Sweden, UK) with four in Latin America (Argentina Brazil, Colombia, Uruguay) three in Asia and the Pacific (Israel, Australia, New Zealand) none in the Caribbean, two in North America (America, Canada) and one in Africa (South Africa). Three countries have legalised second parent’s adoption only, these are Estonia, San Marino and Slovenia.

Two key themes emerged from the academic research, a lack of equality when trying to have children and perceptions of same-sex couples as a threat to child welfare. Pichardo (2011) found that despite legal progress Spanish same-sex female couples could be disadvantaged in two ways: firstly, through having to register a baby in advance; and secondly through not being able to access state funded conception services unlike heterosexual women

‘same-sex female marriages are discriminated in comparison to heterosexual marriages because they must present a document in the civil registries before the baby is born in which the non-pregnant mother recognizes her wife’s future new born as her own son or daughter...the husband of a pregnant married wife does not need to follow this procedure’ (p.557).

Ayoub’s (2014) Slovenian and Kirby and Michaelson’s (2015) American research found that same-sex couples wanting to start a family could be perceived as a threat to the heteronormative model of the family, and to children themselves through the wholly inaccurate association with paedophilia. This finding also had implications for LGB teachers, particularly those in Catholic schools as Callaghan (2014b; 2015; 2016) identified. In one example, she reports that a Canadian lesbian classroom assistant who disclosed to staff that she was planning to have a biological family with her same-sex partner was treated badly by the principal and forced to leave quietly, in spite of Canadian equalities legislation which enabled her to take time off for fertility appointments (Callaghan, 2016).

Kirby and Michaelson (2015) found that LGB parents and teachers were ‘judged more harshly’ by Catholics and concluded

‘Our research highlights the likelihood that gay and lesbian individuals continue to be subject to faulty morality-driven decision making related to children, whether that is about access to teaching positions or the possibility of entering parenting or other child-fostering relationships’ (p.48).

This finding is reflected in findings by Ayoub (2014) in predominantly Catholic Slovenia where ‘nonheterosexuality is framed primarily as a threat to children and reproduction’ (p.345). This inaccurate perception has implications not only for LGB families, but also for LGB teachers and those working with children. Callaghan’s (2014b) research found that LGB teachers in Canadian Catholic schools had been fired for being in same-sex partnerships, and/or raising families and that this could be traced back to Catholic doctrine

‘The authority that enables and facilitates the firing of LGBTQ teachers in Catholic schools who violate Catholic doctrine about non-heterosexuality by living with their same-sex partners or by raising children is traceable to various pieces of Catholic doctrine developed by the Vatican and reproduced in the Ontario Bishops’ pastoral guideline that is required reading in all Ontario Catholic schools’ (p.32).

As a way to mitigate against such discrimination Kirby and Michaelson (2015) call for greater visibility and equality of adults in same-sex relationships for their benefit and the children’s

‘It is important that gay and lesbian adults have protections in their personal and professional lives so that they experience equality of opportunity in their occupations and as they seek to build their families. It is equally important that children have the opportunity to learn from and perhaps be cared for by these same individuals and families’ (p.47).



2.7.2 Identity

Key themes identified within this sub-section were identity conflicts and Catholic doctrine; family as sources of support or tension, and identity integration.

2.7.2.1 Identity conflicts

Several studies noted tensions underpinning the integration of Catholic LGB spiritual and sexual identities, these included:

- trying to make sense of contradictory dualities like *‘love the sinner not the sin’* which imply that it is alright to be LGB as long as it is not acted upon (Callaghan, 2014a; 2015);
- differences in Church teaching and perceptions of one’s own emerging sexuality, and the anxieties these differences may cause (Rodriguez, 2010, p.9);
- divergence between the idea that God is a source of unconditional love and the idea of a *‘patriarchal god who, like the unchallenged parent, sets down rules that are not to be questioned’* (O’Brien, 2004, p.197);
- differences between *‘The Catholic understanding of the human person’* which clashes with *‘the modern liberal conception of individual autonomy’* (Cunningham, 2005, p.21), and
- the extent of the Catholic Church’s influence on national ideas of sexuality, gender and family (Fahie, 2016; Deguara, 2018).

These influences combined with the challenges of uncertain reactions from family; friends; peers at school/university; employers and/or clergy or could lead to a lack of identity integration and diminished well-being. The findings therefore indicate that identity integration is contingent on a plethora of connected internal and external factors which is reflected in this quote by Houghton and Tasker (2019)

‘the impact of cultural and social context on the development of an integrated LGBT Catholic identity has been revealed by studies indicating that growing up in a socially conservative, Catholic community can lead gay people to feel reconciling their Catholicism and homosexuality is impossible’ (p.3).



### 2.7.2.2 The role and influence of the family of origin

The fear of rejection from family of origin could lead to lay Catholic LGB people: taking longer to come out; living a lie; compartmentalising their lives and experiencing significant inner turmoil. These outcomes could negatively influence a person's health, faith, and relationships with family members as Figueroa and Tasker's (2014) and Pietkiewicz and Kołodziejczyk-Skrzypek's (2016) research with young Chilean, and Polish gay men found.

'parental rejection of a son's sexual orientation was closely related to the family's religious beliefs regarding the abnormal and unnatural view of homosexuality (Lyons, 2004; Cornejo, 2011). Pathologizing ideas of homosexuality promoted by Catholic and Evangelical churches had negative consequences for participants' attempts to establish a sense of an integrated sexual identity' (p.285).

**2.7.2.3 Integrating identities** Some authors found that LGB pupils, students, parishioners and employees in western Catholic environments might be more likely to disclose their sexual orientation than in previous decades, and that young people were also actively constructing positive LGB Catholic identities (Martino, 2014; Callaghan, 2014a; 2014b; 2016; Wedow, et.al, 2017). As Rodriguez (2010) found internal conflict does not always occur

'not all gay and lesbian Christians report experiencing conflict between their sexual orientation and their religious beliefs, and that the desire to merge one's homosexual and religious identities does not always follow a period of conflict between the two' (p.16).

Wedow, et.al (2017) explored student experiences of being gay and Catholic at a Catholic American University and found a more complex picture of identity integration for LGB Catholics, which was influenced by peer support and perceptions on Church doctrine. Pluralistic findings were also identified by Houghton and Tasker (2019) in their research into British LGB Catholic women's experiences of sexuality and spiritual identity formation. The fact that some participants in both studies either rejected their sexuality or remained celibate in accordance with Church doctrine illustrates that Catholicism can still be a powerful, divisive force in personal lives.

Drawing on this body of literature as a whole greater identity integration seems related to:

- LGB individuals finding a more inclusive church;
- remaining and reinterpreting their relationship with God with the support of allies (Radojcic, 2016; Houghton and Tasker, 2019);
- advances in secular LGB rights leading to greater visibility and confidence in some parts of the world (Callaghan, 2014b; 2015);
- the decline in the moral authority of the Church in the West, influenced by the recent paedophile priest scandal;
- and the growth, visibility and activism of lay LGBTI religious support and campaign groups (Loseke and Cavendish, 2001; Radojcic, 2016; Houghton and Tasker, 2019).

As Radojcic (2016) concludes American LGBTI organisation Dignity is much more than a Catholic community organisation, it seeks to empower members and articulate their special place within the Church

'its members, as individuals are taught that, as gay Catholics, they have a unique and divine role within the Church. Members share a common understanding of who is responsible for their marginalized status as they hold the church leadership responsible for their poor treatment. More importantly, Dignity's members are taught that they do not deserve the poor treatment that they have historically received from the Catholic Church, as members begin to replace feelings of shame with feelings of anger and pride' (p.1310).

### 2.7.3 Education

Three key findings in the area of education and lay Catholic discrimination emerged: unwelcoming institutions; the experiences of LGB teachers; and LGB students and pupils.

#### 2.7.3.1 Unwelcoming institutions

Several of the studies report that Catholic places of education can be unwelcoming for LGB students and teachers. Pressure applied by local bishops or archdiocese which focuses on official Church teaching, the promotion of heterosexuality, and the rejection of homosexuality can lead to the structural discrimination, silencing and marginalisation of LGB people in Catholic places of education. Authors including Wedow, et.al (2017) argue that part of the problem is the incompatibility of current dualist Church teaching which promotes the acceptance of LGB people whilst simultaneously denouncing any physical expression.



‘On one hand, the Catechism makes the point that “homosexual people must be treated with respect, compassion, and sensitivity”. On the other, the same document uses language such as “objectively disordered” or “grave depravity” to describe homosexual inclinations and homosexual acts’ (p.294).

Callaghan (2014a; 2014b; 2016) concurs with this argument and states that this contradictory duality has led to the silencing of LGB staff and students in Canadian Catholic schools, and the marginalisation of non-heterosexual expression through management and resourcing decisions and curriculum choices.

Maher and Sever (2007) found that whilst American Catholic schools in Chicago had not been welcoming places for LGB students and staff positive changes were starting to occur. Changes had included the flying of rainbow flags in counsellors’ offices; considering how best to support coming out; tackling homophobic bullying; training for teachers and identifying LGB resources and groups outside of school. Though the authors noted that policies and progress could be piecemeal, teachers were not necessarily supported by the Catholic Archdiocese of Chicago, and the curriculum remained largely unchanged.

2.7.3.2 LGB teachers

Evidence strongly suggests that LGB teachers in Catholic schools can be reluctant to disclose their sexual identity, partner, and family in case of homophobic bullying, marginalisation, lack of promotion, being fired, or in case it harmed future careers (Ferfolja, 2005; Fahie, 2014; Hooker, 2019). This can be illustrated using the example of Fahie (2014) who conducted research with LGB teachers in Ireland a country with a strong Catholic heritage

‘...for many members of the LGB community who work in education, there remain high levels of unease and fear, particularly in relation to any public manifestation of sexual identity. Echoing international research (Connell, 2015; Gastic and Johnson, 2009; Riggs et al., 2011), most Irish LGB teachers were reluctant to disclose their sexuality within a school context and were particularly fearful of the reaction from parents and pupils. As well as the obvious negative repercussions of simultaneously maintaining a dissonant public and private sexual identity, this fear impacted upon the teachers’ professional practice’ (p.406).

Teachers living with the threat of disclosure and its multiple consequences could internalise Catholic doctrine and self-police themselves; through denying their sexuality; avoiding contact with other LGB teachers refusing to come to the aid of a pupil or staff member being bullied for their sexuality; by marginalising themselves or their partners at staff social events, and by limiting their lives and activities outside of work to minimise the risk of being found out and sacked. For example, Hooker’s (2019) research into LGB teachers in Catholic schools in Midwest America found an inability to reconcile both LGB and teaching identities, which lead to a form of self-inflicted isolation and fear perpetuated by school-based homophobia

‘Most of these educators were unable to negotiate their sexual identity with their teacher identity due to fear of being authentic due to possible harassment and even being fired, keeping them from forming any meaningful relationships in their workplace settings’ (p.82).

Ferfolja (2005) found that homophobic bullying from pupils and other staff members towards lesbian teachers in Australian Catholic schools could be ongoing, difficult to live with, and that it could be ignored by school management which could result in some LGB teachers having to leave posts to protect their health. ‘...The only way that the teacher could successfully stave off the harassment was to leave her teaching position’ (Ferfolja, 2005, pp.59-60).

Research indicates that these words and actions are harmful to the health and economic well-being of LGB teachers; they can diminish the capacity of skilled professionals to fulfil their career potential and send negative messages to the next generation of LGB students.



### 2.7.3.3 LGB students and pupils, and wider attitudes

Studies report that positive changes have occurred in Catholic schools and universities during the 21<sup>st</sup> century (Maher and Sever, 2007). Callaghan (2015) and Martino's (2017) work on the development of Gay-Straight Alliance groups (GSA) in Catholic schools have illustrated that students can achieve progress in the face of on-going objections from the Ontario Catholic Bishops. Martino (2017) argues that the Church's efforts to silence LGB Catholic students has led to an '*incitement to discourse*' which has contributed to increasing public interest in '*discriminatory teachings and practices of the Catholic school*' (p.220). However, discrimination has still been identified. Where students do openly express their sexuality, it does not necessarily mean that they will be supported at the time or in the aftermath, rather it could lead to increased vulnerability and harassment. This quote by Maher and Sever (2007) is illustrative of several studies

'While many of the educators stated that adolescents are more accepting of homosexuality these days than in years past, most also reported some harassment of gay and lesbian students still exists. In some cases, coming out made students more vulnerable to harassment, while in other cases the treatment of students being harassed because they were presumed to be gay or lesbian caused them to come out. In a few cases, harassment even came from other educators in the school' (p.91).

Callaghan (2014a; 2014b; 2015; 2016) states that some publicly funded Catholic schools in the provinces of Alberta, Ontario and Saskatchewan, have refused to recognise Canadian equalities legislation to the detriment of LGB pupils. This has been made possible because the ruling authority in these schools is Canon Law, not Canadian common law. She argues that contradictory messages like love the sinner hate the sin have left teachers in a '*complex position*'. Callaghan notes that Ontario Bishops have publicly stated that chaplains should make all school staff and pupils aware that LGBT discrimination is unacceptable. However, the same group of Bishops has asked teachers to enforce Catholic teaching that '*romantic behaviour between homosexual persons is morally unacceptable*' (Callaghan, 2014a, p.229). Callaghan (2014a) argues that this contradictory dual position has led to Canadian Catholic schools becoming a '*hotbed of homophobia*'. Policies and practices have included: stressing a heteronormative family morality; rejecting calls for gay support group; and notifying parents when a pupil discloses a same-sex sexual orientation which could lead to parental rejection (Callaghan, 2016).

Several authors report that the rejection and silencing of same-sex sexuality in Catholic schools could have detrimental effects on pupils including: fear; repression; isolation and reduced health and well-being (Maher and Sever, 2007; Callaghan, 2014a; 2014b; 2015; 2016; Figueroa and Tasker, 2014; Kirby and Michaelson, 2015; Wedow, et.al, 2017; Hooker, 2019).

Some authors offered suggestions about how to tackle discrimination. Kirby and Michaelson (2015) and Hooker (2019) suggest greater LGB visibility and inclusion within education, child related services and wider society would help. Wedow, et.al (2017) concur, and state they would like to see more than just support systems for LGBTQ students, suggestions included social events held for students 'struggling with religious and sexual identities' with the full backing of the university to help promote well-being.

'Religious universities, even those officially against same-sex relationships, should be aware that they are catering to a student body for whom identity negotiation is particularly complex and challenging for sexual minorities, who are already at an elevated risk for depression and suicide' (Wedow, et.al, 2017, p.313).

### 2.7.4 Health

Research indicates that the Church has negatively influenced attitudes towards lay Catholic LGB people, and that this can negatively influence their everyday lives as employees and patients; lead to them being more vulnerable to attack with less chance of redress, and that internalised homophobia can have a negative impact on health. Three themes reflecting these findings are discussed here.

#### 2.7.4.1 Discrimination against LGB workers in religious health care settings

As with LGB staff in Catholic schools, Eliason, et.al (2011) found examples of LGBTQ nurses being discriminated against. Though not specifically focusing on Catholic health care institutions the study does indicate that nurses can be afraid to come out in a Catholic health care setting in case they are dismissed from work '*I lost my job after posting my wedding in the local paper, after over a decade at the same job. Never underestimate the power of a Catholic hospital (gay male)*' (Eliason, et.al, 2011, p.241).

'Another facility-related issue that was mentioned by several nurses was working at an institution affiliated with a formal religion. Participant 32, a bisexual female, said that the environment was unfriendly because it was "very religious. Catholic organization. No visibility whatsoever. I keep to myself. Very closeted. Scared to talk about it"' (Eliason, et.al, 2011, pp.241-242).

The authors conclude by calling for greater awareness of the needs of LGBT patients and nurses through training and the enforcement of human rights equalities policies and practices in all health care settings.

**2.7.4.2 The influence of Catholic teaching on LGB health**

Negative perceptions of LGB people perpetuated by the Catholic Church have been found to enhance the stigmatisation of gay people with HIV (Liboro and Walsh, 2015); lead to increased physical vulnerability (Barrientos, et.al, 2010; Yip, 2016), and the loss of a counselling service (Ward, 2014).

Liboro and Walsh (2015) explored the experiences of HIV positive gay Catholic men in Canada. Due to early negative associations about HIV by the Church, participants articulated on-going stigmatisation and rejection in everyday life

‘The Catholic Church had a large role in shaping public perceptions of the disease and those it affected, but more importantly, its teachings had a significant influence in the development of relevant AIDS policies all over the world... Although there was some increasing resistance to stigmatizing messages in Catholic archdiocese and parishes in the western world, the negative perceptions and misconceptions about HIV/AIDS continued to spread to continents such as Africa and Asia, where Catholicism found legions of new adherents to minister. To this day, HIV stigma, discrimination, and marginalization are enduring and experienced worldwide in the lives of people living with HIV and those who care for them’ (Liboro and Walsh 2015, pp.652-653).

Participants revealed the stigma and discrimination associated with having a positive HIV status meant having to hide their status and medications from family and friends in case of rejection, being rejected from paid and voluntary positions in the Catholic Church and receiving poorer health treatment. One participant was refused a blood test .

‘In retrospect, I recognize that I may have made a mistake making the conscious decision to let them know and have it on record that I was positive. When the nurse found out, she told me why she did not want to see me and that it wasn’t her responsibility to do so. She left the room...I realized she wasn’t coming back’ (Liboro and Walsh, 2015, p.658).

Research by Yip (2016) highlights the serious consequences of a lack of provision for LGB Catholics experiencing domestic and family violence in Hong Kong. Yip (2016) argues that the combined influences of the Roman Catholic Church and Confucianism have led to ‘homophobic and heterosexist teachings’ (p.44) becoming dominant in Hong Kong life and the silencing and marginalisation of Catholic LGB voices. Yip (2016) argues that one damaging outcome of this scenario is a lack of willingness to acknowledge or confront life threatening Catholic LGB experiences of violence

‘When several fatal cases of domestic violence have occurred, local groups have advocated for a comprehensive domestic violence legislation to include same-sex relationships in 2007. However, due to the translation of domestic violence into «family» violence in Chinese, the Diocese refuses the inclusion of same-sex relationships’ (p.46).

Finally, Ward’s (2014) research in Uganda found that a counselling service ran by a local Catholic priest for young people uncertain about their sexuality was discontinued by the Church after he publicly expressed ‘sympathy’ for gay people ‘(Fr) Musaala regretted that the Church authorities had now decided that his counselling service ‘was not required’. ‘This was sad, because many have left the church because they feel so condemned...’ (p.139).

Research indicates that the internalisation of negative Church teachings on LGB sexuality can be harmful. As Rodriguez (2010) argues these messages ‘may create a sense of confusion, self-loathing, and despair in a gay or lesbian person’ (p.9). Evidence indicates that internalisation of negative messages starts in childhood, continues into adulthood and can involve: family; education; state; healthcare; peers; employers; the local and institutional Catholic Church, and wider society (Dahl and Galliher, 2012; Baiocco, et.al, 2014; Callaghan, 2014a; Pietkiewicz and Kołodziejczyk-Skrzypek, 2016). Research by Baiocco, et.al (2014) found that the internalisation of ‘messages condemning their sexual orientation’ could leave LGB Catholics with an increased risk of ‘negative attitudes toward life’ (p.494).



#### 2.7.4.3 Implications for therapeutic services with LGB religious clients

One to one therapeutic interventions were suggested by some authors as a way to improve the mental health of LGB Catholics. Whilst not disagreeing Barrientos, et.al (2014) sound a note of caution stating that some so-called therapies in Chile could lead to additional harm as they erroneously sought to 'cure' the person of their sexuality and added to wider homophobic violence. *'in Chile, there are still therapists who consider homosexuality as an illness and apply reconversive therapies, thus contributing to stigmatization and violence toward sexual minorities'* (Barrientos, et.al 2014, p.332). To provide context for this finding the ILGA (2019) State sponsored homophobia report states that of the 199 countries and localities listed, only three have made so-called conversion therapies illegal, these are Malta, Ecuador and Brazil.

Kocet (2011), Kralove, et.al (2012) and Cerbone and Danzer (2017) discuss how the health and lives of Catholic LGB people can be improved using affirmative therapies. All concur that psychotherapists can find it challenging to help homosexual clients reconcile their faith and sexuality, particularly when religious beliefs can be critical of sexuality. They concur that understanding what it is important from the client's perspective is key, as is an understanding of discrimination, and its cultural context.

'Understanding the gay experience of discrimination is an important cultural competence that will enhance psychotherapy...The primary task for the psychologist in such cases is to help the client find a balance between faith and sexual identity that allows for integration of sexuality, a critical psychosexual developmental task, though without abandoning or rejecting the client's religious identity' (Cerbone and Danzer, 2017, p.6).

Concurring with these findings Figueroa and Tasker (2014) argue it is also important for therapists to understand the role of parental religious beliefs and their reactions when providing services to homosexual clients, and to make parents aware of the importance of family acceptance 'for the well-being and mental health of their offspring' (p.289). Pietkiewicz and Kołodziejczyk-Skrzypek (2016) argue that improving the health of LGB religious people should also include clergy, as they should be aware of the potential impact of religious discrimination on health. The authors also suggest that clients identify LGB affirmative clergy and religious support groups.

'Clergy should be educated about the potentially devastating effects of openly expressing prejudice against the LGBT community by people who represent authority. Therapists...should also encourage clients to explore their spirituality by examining their religious beliefs from different reference points (e.g., cultural, political), and seek religious support groups for sexual minorities' (Pietkiewicz and Kołodziejczyk-Skrzypek, 2016, p.1573).

Whilst the embodied well-being of individual lay Catholic LGB people may improve following health interventions, it is arguable that these treat the symptoms rather than the underlying causes of homophobia. As this quote by Pietkiewicz and Kołodziejczyk-Skrzypek (2016) illustrates the effects of internalised Church discrimination have external origins which need to be addressed and prevented *'Radek (aged 25) used psychiatric medication for 6 years to treat his panic attacks but was unable to understand reasons for his anxiety. He said he was only worried about how his (Catholic) family would react to learning that he was gay'* (p.1581).

#### 2.8 Key findings

- Being a lay Catholic LGB person can provide spiritual solace in the face of homophobic laws, actions and attitudes.
- The Catholic Church has used direct and indirect influence to discriminate against lay Catholic and non-Catholic LGB people in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.
- Discrimination has occurred at national, regional and local levels across the world which has negatively impacted on many facets of everyday life.
- Evidence indicates that the Church has fought the passing of equalities legislation and has refused to acknowledge it in certain settings e.g. Canadian and Australian Catholic educational establishments to the detriment of LGB people.
- The exclusive promotion of the heteronormative family by the Catholic Church in religious and national identities, and within families of origin has led to the rejection, silencing and marginalisation of lay Catholic LGB people as individuals, family of origin members, romantic partners and parents.
- Research indicates that lay Catholic LGB people can experience conflicted identities and reduced well-being, initially when they first become aware of their sexual orientation and the Churches position. Research indicates that this can lead to unhealthy states of disconnection from themselves and from others.
- Studies of Catholic schools and universities have illustrated that they can be hostile, homophobic environments where LGB students and staff can be subject to bullying and on-going harassment; with staff being at risk of dismissal if their sexuality is disclosed.



- Research into lay Catholic LGB health has indicated that LGB people can be at greater risk of physical violence and mental ill health due to the direct and indirect effects of religious homophobia, and that they can be treated less fairly than their heterosexual peers in Catholic health and social care settings both as staff and service users.
- At the core of this discrimination is the negative, confusing and contradictory Church position on same-sex sexuality as being a 'disordered' state, with a 'propensity towards evil', however it is deemed alright to be LGB as long as it is not acted upon, but when this happens we should 'love the sinner not the sin'.
- This does not imply that LGB people are without agency, that they accept discriminatory treatment or that the Catholic Church is homophobic in its entirety.
- Studies have indicated that lay Catholic LGB people have left the Church, joined more inclusive religious organisations or have found alternative positive ways to interpret messages of God's love.
- A growing number of pupils, students and their families and supporters are successfully challenging discriminatory Church policies and practices.
- Pockets of Church led LGB dialogue and inclusive practice are continuing to emerge though progress is perceived as slow and piecemeal.



## 2.9 Gaps in the academic literature

- Many of the studies are small scale, and there is a lack of large-scale data on lay Catholic LGB numbers at country and regional level which can make it more challenging to identify numerical patterns and any larger scale changes over time.
- Drawing on the sub-headings of the ILGA Report (2019) there is a lack of evidence focusing on the Catholic Church's influence (positive and negative) on various types of national equalities legislation e.g. legislation against domestic and family violence.
- In light of growing equalities legislation there is an emerging body of research exploring life after legal change. Future research could explore the quality of the provision and its implementation in countries which are largely Catholic, and where LGB people are trying to access Catholic run health, educational and social services from multiple perspectives including management; employee/volunteer and service user.
- Where same-sex couples have tried to have biological or adopted children, what have been their experiences and thoughts on legal options, of service access and provision, or nursery's and schools? In countries where the Catholic Church has an influence, or where services have been provided by a Catholic agency.
- Very little of the research explores the experiences of older lay Catholic LGB people, this could be a future area of study. For example, when accessing health or social care as a patient or for a partner. What are the experiences of legally and non-legally registered partners when trying to access Catholic run health care for example hospice, hospital, clinic, to find a priest to say last rites, conduct a funeral service, provide spiritual support to grieving loved ones?
- Future research conducted by GNRC could explore successful challenges to the discrimination of lay Catholic LGB people; examples of Church led positive, affirmatory LGB practice, and positive change following dialogue between Catholic LGBTI organisations and clergy/religious.
- Though research exists on migration, no studies were found on lay Catholic refugee experiences of discrimination. This could be a large area of study exploring: the link between state-sponsored violence and discrimination as a push factor (ILGA, 2019); experiences of migration, transition and arrival; Catholic LGB refugee's experiences of migration processes and policies, and proof-what counts as evidence?
- No academic research was found into the experiences of lay Catholic LGB people with disabilities or additional vulnerabilities e.g. poverty, this is an area for development and exploration.
- As this report has focused on experiences of discrimination by lay Catholic LGB people future research should explore lay Catholic trans gender and intersex experiences of discrimination and inclusion by the Catholic Church. As these two distinct but related areas have commonalities e.g. perceptions on gender, embodiment, identity, biology and the role of science they could be explored simultaneously.

# 3. PRIMARY RESEARCH RESULTS

## 3.1 Introduction

This part of the report is informed by the results of the questionnaire. A draft semi-structured questionnaire was developed utilising the findings of the literature review. It was shared with members of the GNRC board and amendments were made. A participant information sheet and a final version of the questionnaire were circulated to all GNRC member organisations and supporters between July and September (See Appendix Two and Three for a participant information sheet and a copy of the questionnaire). The questions were mostly open-ended to allow respondents to answer freely, in their own way, and at length if they chose to. The questions invited participants to discuss types of discrimination they may have experienced in their everyday lives as lay Catholic LGB people. The focus of questions included parish and Church life; Catholic educational settings; Catholic run health care settings, and same-sex relationships and families. Potential respondents were offered the opportunity to speak via phone instead of writing, or to respond in a preferred language if their written English was felt not to be as strong

## 3.2 Findings

### 3.2.1 Context

29 questionnaires were returned and subjected to anonymisation and storage in a secure place to comply with GDPR legislation and best ethical practice. Content analysis was used to assess the responses. Of the 29 respondents one was from Africa, four were from Asia and the Pacific, 17 were from Europe, six were from Latin America and one was from North America. 26 provided their age; ages ranged from 20 to 73, with 47 being the average age. 20 respondents were men, nine were women. In terms of sexuality: five were lesbian; two were bisexual women; 19 were gay men; one response was male 'other' but not elaborated on; the sexuality of one woman was not given, and one respondent was a heterosexual woman LGBTIQ advocate. Table 8 provides a summary of respondent breakdown by regional location, gender and sexuality.





Table 8. Contextual participant information: Lay Catholic LGB Discrimination

Respondents by Region	Respondents by country	Respondents by gender	Respondents by sexuality
Africa 1	Africa <sup>6</sup>	man 1	other, no details given
Asia and Pacific 4	China 1 India 1 Philippines 2	women 2 men 2	lesbian woman 1 gay men 2 heterosexual woman advocate 1
Europe 17	Britain 6 Europe <sup>7</sup> 1 France 1 Germany 1 Ireland 1 Poland 5 Slovakia 1 Spain 1	women 6 men 11	lesbian women and those who identify as women who love women 3 gay men 11 bisexual women 2 no response for sexuality 1
Latin American and Caribbean 6	Brazil 1 Mexico 5	men 6	gay men 6
North America 1	USA 1	woman 1	lesbian 1
	Total respondents=29	Total women=9 Total men=20	Total lesbian including women who love women=5 Total gay male=19 Total bisexual (women)=2 Total heterosexual woman advocate=1 Total other responses=2 (none, other)

<sup>6</sup> given as a response to protect anonymity

<sup>7</sup> given as a response to protect anonymity

3.2.2 Pre 21<sup>st</sup> century discrimination?

Though the focus of this report is 21<sup>st</sup> century lay Catholic LGB discrimination several responses contained examples of 20th century discrimination which had influenced lives, relationships, health, spirituality, careers, and present-day views on the Catholic Church. Two participants stated they had stopped going to Church as a result of assumed and actual homophobic discrimination by clergy. ‘When I was 20 and was discovering my homosexuality, I knew prejudice and discrimination would come up if people in the parish learned about it. So, I just quit going to church on Sundays and any other activity I was involved with at the time’ (gay Catholic man Brazil). Another moved to a different country to avoid religious homophobic convictions held by his parents.

‘I came to live in France to get away from my parents and live my life as I wished. I never spoke to them about my homosexuality. I recently found out that they knew about it from when I was 30. My parents’ homophobia was probably not due to religious convictions but just social pressure. If the Church had had a positive attitude that might have made my parents more open’ (gay Catholic man France).

Religious influenced homophobia resulting in strained relationships and anxieties between Catholic parents and their children was a key finding of the Family and marriage sub-section of the literature review.

Four participants spoke of experiencing difficulties in Catholic educational settings, two as students and potential employees, two as teachers. For example, a lesbian Catholic American woman spoke of being stripped of her master’s degree and having to fight to it to be reinstated, and a German gay Catholic man said that he had experienced several job rejections at Catholic establishments due to his sexuality.

‘I attended a Jesuit seminary for M.Div<sup>8</sup>. One professor tried to strip me of a preaching award because he thought that my inclusion of an example of how a caregiver for a person with AIDS lived the Gospel was inappropriate for a Catholic institution. This same professor, less than a month before graduation, challenged my degree by claiming that a chaplaincy assignment at an LGBT organization, although approved by the seminary’s administration, did not meet the requirements for field placement. Due to protracted appeals, I was awarded a lesser degree and it took 12 years to have my M.Div. restored’ (lesbian Catholic woman USA).

‘When I applied for the position of an assistant of theology...I was rejected with the argument that I wouldn’t have a future in Catholic academic theology...I have applied in three German dioceses as pastoral worker (based on my diploma in theology) but was rejected. The reason is not 100% clear, but I assume that it was because of my sexuality and of my publications about gay/queer theology. Also, when I applied in parishes in Switzerland this happened’ (gay Catholic man Germany).

<sup>8</sup> Master’s degree in divinity



Another two were uncomfortable with the negative reaction they might receive as teachers in a Catholic school so withheld their sexual orientation. *'In as much as someone who was developing my own understanding of my sexuality as a young teacher in a Catholic Primary, I felt I had to hide'* (gay Catholic man Britain).

One reported being subjected to physical violence and associated trauma through being beaten up outside of a gay bar.

'In my 20s, I was attacked, along with three other women, as we left a gay bar. We were kicked and beaten by a group of about five men, some of whom spouted religious condemnation of gay people as they beat us. They were eventually chased away, and we were given assistance, by other patrons leaving the bar, but I did sustain some fairly significant injuries and was quite traumatized by the experience' (lesbian Catholic woman USA).

Another consciously and unconsciously started to internalise the homophobic discrimination surrounding him on the realisation of his sexuality.

'From a very early age, you constantly hear that a gay person is a sinner and can't get into God's realm. From that scheme, you begin to build a way of thinking that leads you to hide -conscious or unconsciously- your actual being. But suddenly at the moment you realize that you have become exactly what they warned you about, the discrimination starts on your own' (gay Catholic man Mexico).

3.2.3. Discrimination in Church/parish life?

- Respondents were asked two questions on this theme
- Have you ever experienced discrimination by the Catholic Church in parish life because you are lesbian, gay or bisexual?
  - Have you ever experienced discrimination when trying to join a Catholic club or society?

These questions received the greatest number of responses of the questionnaire, and illustrated a mix of no experiences of discrimination, not out at Church, and several examples of direct and indirect homophobic discrimination against lay Catholic LGB people in parish life.

3.2.3.1 Parish life

23 responses exploring potential lay Catholic LGB discrimination in parish life were collated and analysed. One German Catholic gay man said he was not discriminated against in parish life. Another said that he had not openly been discriminated against because he had not always been honest *'I have self-censored in parish life, staying closeted and not answering questions as honestly as I should have done'* (gay Catholic man Britain). The other 21 responses contained examples of discrimination in the following three areas: dialogues with Catholic religious and lay people; sacraments, Mass and prayer; partners, children and young people.

Dialogues with Catholic religious and lay people

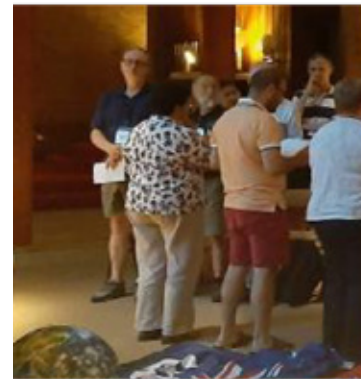
Nine respondents relayed experiences of having been told by priests, nuns, catechists and lay people that their sexuality was wrong, with some also relaying examples of having their sexuality dismissed e.g. through privately but not publicly supporting Catholic LGB people, which resulted in anxiety and suffering. One response also contained a positive example of a priest using affirmative theology. The following four quotes are indicative of the range of responses

'It's unthinkable, you can't talk or discuss it (LGB sexuality). But we exist. You are a reject. You are mentally disturbed etc.' (Catholic man Africa).

'When I asked a Jesuit priest to be more thoughtful in teaching after he made a homophobic comment during a sermon, I was told that I couldn't be queer AND a Catholic – I had to choose' (bisexual Catholic woman Poland).

'In 2004 I told my spiritual director, who was a nun, that I was in love with a woman and she said, "I disapprove." I had previously seen her for many years and found this experience troubling and hurtful. I felt judged and misunderstood' (lesbian Catholic woman Britain).

'lay Catholic people are not always merciful. They tell you that you are not well, they even suggest that you go to conversion therapies. For years they made me feel that I was wrong, but it was because a priest invited me to theology classes, I understood that it was not bad, but God loves me as I am' (gay Catholic man Mexico)



### **Sacraments, Mass and prayer**

Seven responses were analysed which spoke of experiences at a funeral, Mass, confession, prayer groups, and of applying for training. One Catholic gay man in France reported a largely positive experience when organising and attending the funeral of his first partner.

‘The actual ceremony was in the chapel of the municipal Funeral Service, but a priest friend came to preside, and two priests came from the Catholic Institute (university) as my partner had responsibilities as a theology student there. Our friend wouldn’t say a mass as he didn’t want to offend any atheists who might be present (my partner was a schoolteacher). Otherwise the ceremony went off smoothly. Even the priests from the Catholic Institute (both wearing vestments) were reasonably polite and friendly. One taught Moral Theology and had had some confrontations with my partner’ (*gay Catholic man France*).

Two respondents spoke of hearing homophobic messages from the pulpit, during Mass. ‘My worst experience in a Catholic church was on Christmas Day 2012...The young priest gave a violently homophobic sermon, not just against gay marriage but against all homosexuals as people. At the end of the sermon I got up and left’ (*gay Catholic man France*). The other respondent reported being told on more than one occasion that people in same-sex relationships should not take communion.

‘...On at least three occasions, the priest presiding announced that anyone who was in a same-sex relationship should not present themselves for Communion. (I went anyway.) One homily at a wedding focused on the fact that the straight couple being wed was honouring God’s plan for humanity, and that this was the only form of marriage or sexually intimate relationship that should be recognized by church or society’ (*lesbian Catholic woman USA*).

One gay Catholic Chinese man reported ‘a *very negative experience in confession*’ but did not elaborate. Two Catholic gay men reported negative experiences at prayer groups, one relayed indirect discrimination, the other direct discrimination which disrespected his ‘*intrinsic dignity*’ (Vatican, 1986) by erroneously attempting to alter his sexuality. ‘*When joining a Catholic prayer group, while not spoken, the fact that the organizations was meant for “members of the Catholic family,” aka heterosexuals, was often underscored*’ (*gay Catholic man Mexico*).

‘I underwent some sort of a “pray the gay away” when our catechist, an Argentine priest, asked me repeatedly if I believe Christ can change my homosexuality. I repeatedly said no until I got exhausted by his continual asking that in the end, I just said yes’ (*gay Catholic man Philippines*).

Finally, one Catholic gay Irish man spoke of mixed success when applying to train as a spiritual director ‘*I applied to train as a spiritual director in a Catholic Centre openly as a gay man and my application wasn’t successful. They told me of another Catholic centre, and I was successful there*’.

### **Partners, children and young people**

Five respondents wrote about their experiences of being partners, and either working with children or being a godparent in parish life. On learning about their sexuality two male participants were prevented from working with children, for example ‘*I was proposed to teach the catechism to youngsters, but a little while after I came out of the closet and they thought that I was not the most suitable person*’ (*gay Catholic man Spain*). Another two female Polish respondents said they had not been prevented from working with children and young people, but they had encountered resistance, ridicule and had been told not to disclose their sexuality as they were ‘*living in sin*’. One of them was initially refused a document allowing them to become a godparent due to assumed non-heterosexuality

‘Several years ago, I was refused a document proving I am a worthy parishioner – this document is necessary when you want to become a godparent. It wasn’t said openly that it was about my orientation, but it was strongly suggested. I had to convince a priest from another church which I sometimes attended (not a parish church), but it needed a lot of discussions about whether a homosexual person (I hadn’t come out as bi then) can be a good godparent’ (*bisexual Catholic woman Poland*).

### 3.2.3.2 Parish clubs and societies

10 responses were collated. Two said they were not discriminated against, one of which stated he was active in parish life ‘*No. At present I am a member of the Christian Life Community (a Jesuit movement) and I am quite well accepted as a married gay man. My husband and I are now well accepted in our Catholic parish in Nancy*’ (gay Catholic man France). Four said that tended to avoid such groups for fear of lack of acceptance. For example, ‘*I never tried as I was sure I would not be accepted if they knew I was gay*’ (gay Catholic man Brazil). Another two said they would be reluctant to disclosure their sexuality in such spaces ‘*I would be hesitant about sharing my sexuality in such situations*’ (lesbian Catholic woman Britain).

Two said they had been open about their sexuality and had been discriminated against. One Polish woman spoke of not being able to work with young people when she was a community leader ‘*being a leader at this community means doing a lot of things, including organising and leading meetings in small groups: the priest who was told about my sexuality was not likely to let me work with youths, was not likely to trust me with the formation (of teenagers)*’ (lesbian Catholic woman Poland). The second reported being denied participation in various Catholic religious and educational conferences.

The responses point towards a degree of self-censoring, either through not being open about ones sexuality or by leaving Catholic clubs/societies due to the threat or reality of discrimination/ rejection. For example, ‘*I was not seeking such places, because I feared I would not be accepted as gay... to join a Catholic club some years ago I concealed being gay*’ (gay Catholic man Slovakia). As one young Philippine woman said ‘*When I was younger, my parents made me join Youth for Christ, a Catholic club that serves as a community for teens who want to strengthen their spiritual needs. After I came out, I decided to stop participating in any church activities*’ (lesbian Catholic woman Philippines).

### 3.2.4 Discrimination in Catholic education?

The question asked was growing up, have you ever experienced discrimination at a Catholic school or university because of your sexuality? Five responses are relevant here, one as a teacher in Catholic schools (also see 20th century discrimination), one as the lesbian parent of a child choosing a school, and three from the perspective of being previous students. A former teacher, a lesbian working in a Catholic primary school stated ‘*I wasn’t fully aware/accepting of my sexuality when I was teaching in a Catholic primary school. People used to make comments about me not being in a relationship with a man. I would not have felt safe sharing my sexuality*’ (lesbian Catholic woman Britain). An American Catholic lesbian and her partner decided to change their daughter’s school after the homophobic treatment of LGB parents and their child was revealed at a neighbouring Catholic school. Whilst the respondent had received positive treatment the threat of discrimination was present.

‘We were concerned about the reception we might get, but the staff was very welcoming and supportive. However, near the end of the year, a small group of parents at a neighbouring Catholic school complained about a gay male couple having their child enrolled there, and they were asked by the principal to leave... we decided not to risk the possibility that our child would be subjected to similar protests and enrolled her elsewhere’ (*lesbian Catholic woman USA*).

Three participants, two Catholic men (Europe, Africa) and a Catholic lesbian woman identified homophobic discrimination in Catholic educational settings. A British gay man was on the end of homophobic bullying at school, an African man said that it was pervasive ‘...so many, schools, colleges, universities and the community at large. Abusive languages used towards LGBTI people, health services and many more’ (Catholic man Africa). Whilst a lesbian Catholic woman in the Philippines stated she faced rejection and isolation at Catholic high school when she came out.

‘I remember my years in high school, it is taught in our “Christian Living” class that being a lesbian or gay is a sin. I tried to hide my sexuality by keeping my head down all the time and try to act like a heterosexual. When I accepted my sexuality during my senior high school, it was a hard part of my life because that is when I lost a lot of friends and I isolated myself from everybody. Fortunately, I went to a university that doesn’t care about your sexuality or religion’ (*lesbian Catholic woman Philippines*).



3.2.5 Employment discrimination?

The questionnaire asked have you ever experienced discrimination at work, or when trying to get a job (voluntary or paid) because you are a lesbian, gay or bisexual Catholic? Three respondents said that they had worked in Catholic establishments but were not open about their sexuality. Two had previously been teachers

‘I wasn’t out at work. 2002-2008 I worked as a teacher at an Ursuline school while living with my female partner, I wouldn’t dream of coming out at work’ (Catholic bisexual woman Poland).

‘I worked as a catechist (teacher of RCC religion at public schools), but not as openly gay, otherwise I would risk to lose the canonical mission (Church permission for lay person to teach)’ (Catholic gay man Slovakia).

In addition to the 20<sup>th</sup> century examples of workplace discrimination two participants said they had experienced 21<sup>st</sup> century employment discrimination in Catholic settings. One man had been open about being married to a man and felt this had ruined his chances of progressing to the next round of job interviews. ‘We went through a group discussion and everyone’s was asked about their family. At the time I was married to another man and I told them that. Then I did not make it to the next round in the selection process’ (gay Catholic man Brazil). An American lesbian woman had been asked to undertake teaching by the Catholic Church. Though they knew she was lesbian and active in an affirming LGBTI Catholic group she was later fired, sought legal redress and won the case.

‘I taught at an Archdiocesan-sponsored institute on elder care. When I was approached by Archdiocesan staff to take on this role, I disclosed my...They insisted that was not an issue...I insisted on a contract that required full payment of my fee if I was terminated for any reason other than documented performance problems. Sure enough, in my third year of teaching, the Cardinal fired me...and claimed that was enough to invalidate the contract. I challenged that with legal assistance, and they wound up paying my full contract and legal fees’ (lesbian Catholic woman USA).

3.2.6 Partner and family discrimination?

- Three questions informed this sub-section
- Have you ever faced discrimination about same-sex relationships from the Catholic Church?
  - Have you ever approached Catholic adoption services to adopt a child/children? What was the reaction?
  - Have these experiences (referring to all Catholic LGBT discrimination) influenced your relationships with family?

The responses have been organised by theme arising family of origin, same-sex partner, and children.

3.2.6.1 Family of origin

Five responses revealed a complex picture of disruption to family life and relationships following the disclosure of non-heterosexuality. One Catholic Polish lesbian said that she was not out to her parents possibly because she expected a negative reaction based on other experiences. Negative perceptions of LGBT people in Poland kept her closeted and isolated when younger

‘I’ve never told my family and I’ve been kind of forced (ostracism) to change youth groups and communities I’ve been in, once because of members (I didn’t even bother to tell the priest, he would have told me to get healed or exorcized), once because of a priest (“We can tolerate you as long as you do not speak about that when you are within the community.”). As for friends, you know, I choose wisely, that’s it. I’m careful. I need to be. Hell, for my whole adolescence, for something like six years I denied myself thinking that I can be in a relationship. I denied myself the thought of being with someone on such level, I denied myself being close to people, I denied myself love, not only the romantic kind. I denied myself being close with people’ (lesbian Catholic woman Poland).



Though out to his parents one Catholic gay man in Mexico had also repressed his sexuality and consequently found romantic partnerships, and relations with his family ‘difficult’. The on-going challenges of relations with family of origin members were noted by two respondents. One was a Catholic American lesbian; the other was an LGBTI ally living in India who reflected that cultural aspirations, a powerful Church, and the misguided idea that sexuality could be changed were influencing parental attitudes and family relations

‘The biggest problem that gays and lesbians have in India is non-acceptance by families, especially parents. Parents drag them to shrines, novenas and “miracle centres” hoping to cure their children. There are even some priests who claim they can cure LGB persons. Parents believe the Catholic Church that says sexual identity is a choice. Priests offer all kinds of weird explanations to parents for the sexual orientation of their children. This makes parents feel a sense of guilt as well. The greatest problem for LGB persons is when parents force them into heterosexual marriages. In India marriage is seen as the goal of every person’s life’ (*heterosexual LGBTIQ advocate India*).

The fifth respondent found acceptance when she disclosed her sexuality to her mother, though she was told to prepare herself for a challenging future ‘...She told me that, I need to reconsider my sexuality because I’m choosing a difficult and harsh path. She told me this not to discourage me but to strengthen my resolve in whatever unfairness and discrimination I’ll face outside our home...’ (lesbian Catholic woman Philippines).

3.2.6.2 Same-sex partners

Five responses reported a mix of attitudes to same-sex relationships. Respondents from India, Poland and Mexico wrote that same-sex relationships could be negatively perceived by the Catholic Church where they lived, for example ‘Same-sex relationships in the Catholic Church in India is a complete NO. Only last year did the country decriminalise same-sex relationships. Marriage is still not legal!’ (heterosexual LGBTIQ advocate woman India). The other two respondents from the Philippines and Britain hinted at a more mixed, complex picture. A British respondent stated that whilst same-sex marriage was legal, the Church didn’t recognise ‘honest loving committed relationships between LGBT people’.

The Philippine respondent stated that despite the separation of law and state, the Catholic Church were active in preventing the passing of same-sex partnership legislation ‘...most lawmakers based their decisions on religion. In addition to this, the Catholic Church lobbies heavily to make sure that LGBTI civil union or marriage laws will not pass’ (lesbian Catholic woman Philippines).

3.2.6.3 Children

Two responses from Catholic lesbian women informed this sub-section. The first said it would be ‘impossible’ to ‘adopt a baby’ in Poland ‘via public adoption services’, ‘...non-heterosexuals are not being liked by the general public nor authorities’ (lesbian Catholic woman Poland). The second, an American in a same-sex relationship reported being turned down by a Catholic adoption agency so they had gone to a state agency and been successful.

‘When we decided to adopt, we first approached Catholic Charities. We were told they were required by their state contract to train us, but since we openly identified as a same-sex couple, no child/ren would be placed with us. The social worker with whom we spoke said that the frontline social workers would support placement, but no supervisor would sign off, and that this was agency policy. We were fortunate to live in a state where we could go directly through the state agency for training and placement, and were able to adopt two children, and are currently fostering a 10-month old’ (lesbian Catholic woman USA).

3.2.7 The impact of discrimination on lay Catholic LGB health and well-being

Two questions informed this sub-section

- Have you ever experienced discrimination when trying to access Catholic ran health care services? For example, clinics, hospitals, relationship guidance services, a care home.
- Have these experiences influenced your happiness...friends... or your opportunities in life?

### 3.2.7.1 Healthcare services

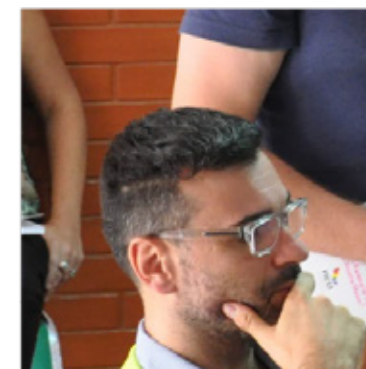
There were a number of non-responses to this question, while several respondents said that they avoided Catholic health care. No-one reported experiencing discrimination when accessing Catholic health service, or as an employee. One transgender Catholic Polish gay man said that whilst he had not been discriminated against at work, there seemed to be a lack of understanding. *‘I have worked in the hospital all my professional life as a medical doctor-paediatrician and infectious disease specialist. I am disclosed as a TG person. Rather, I don’t feel discrimination, although I don’t experience too much understanding either’* (gay Catholic transgender man Poland).

Three respondents, two Polish gay men and a lesbian Catholic American woman spoke of living with the threat and reality of physical violence: at a pride parade; and during everyday life. The Polish men spoke of having no legal protection when physical violence occurred; the American woman had a police liaison officer who advised her to move home following death threats.

*‘we were beaten and cursed with my friends during Pride parades, we were attacked by gas and stones...The police discontinued criminal proceedings against attackers every time, because there is no law in Poland that protects LGBT persons against discrimination’*  
(gay Catholic transgender man Poland).

*‘In my everyday life I’m afraid about my future and my life overall. Some people are becoming aggressive towards LGBT people. That’s the effect of Catholic homophobia... I need to think of my everyday decisions, behaviour and I’m feeling constant fear about my and my friend’s life. Hiding emotions during growing up has a huge impact on my life now’* (gay Catholic man Poland).

*‘I was sent death threats by people from two different states, one of which was quite close to where I lived. The police LGBT liaison advised me that the threats were specific and advised me to move to a secure building, which I did’*  
(lesbian Catholic woman USA).





### 3.2.7.2 Effects of discrimination

Nine respondents answered this question, all alluded to the periodic or ongoing presence of negative emotions e.g. sadness and a desire to emigrate due to contradictory, critical Church statements on LGB sexuality and its influence on their lives, family and partner relationships, Church membership and perceived futures. Two of the nine identified mixed emotional states, and discrimination as a catalyst for personal growth. The following three quotes are indicative of the range of responses.

... 'it affects me emotionally to a certain degree, and it hurts my partner very much, as she is much more vulnerable to hate speech that can be heard from priests, bishops and fellow Catholics. This is a burden sometimes so heavy that we decide not to go to Holy Mass in fear of being hurt during sermon, or simply because we feel hurt, disregarded and victims of unjustified violence. Some of the people we know bring about the issue of "sin" and "immorality" of our relationship, especially in internet discussions, which is also very demanding for my partner, and affects our well-being' *(bisexual Catholic woman Poland)*.

'Yes, they (Catholic LGB teachings) have certainly influenced my life and 'forced' me to explore other ways to grow. I am wary of who I share my sexuality with, particularly with Catholics' *(lesbian Catholic woman Britain)*.

'From my early 20's until I was 45, I kept a distance from the Catholic Church as an institution, after about 25 years of being an LGBT activist, I felt God was calling me back to make way for this discussion within the Church. So, I have experienced sometimes happiness, sometimes frustration because there are advancements as well as setbacks. Pope Francis has been a blessing in my life, and this affects positively my relationships in general' *(gay Catholic man Brazil)*.



### 3.2.8 Coping mechanisms

Participants were asked what coping mechanisms have you found useful, when dealing with discrimination? All 29 responded. Many answers contained multiple methods involving selves, others, sacred and secular strategies. Religious themed coping mechanisms included: avoidance or struggling with ones sexuality; avoiding the Catholic Church; hiding ones sexuality from others; suffering homophobic bullying/abuse and living in fear; finding inclusive LGB Christian groups and sharing with lay and those in Catholic religious life; growing from affirmative spiritual and moral support; finding solace in queer theology; experiencing God's love; reading the Gospels; trying to find ways to distance hurtful teachings and experiences of homophobia; prayer and contemplation, and fighting LGB discrimination on legal and religious fronts. Non-religious ways of coping with discrimination included: physical exercise; drinking alcohol; love and support from partners, friends and family; the positive acceptance and love of oneself and ones sexuality; therapy; creating a safe space at home; writing about experiences in books and other publications; ignoring harmful messages; ignoring LGB stereotypes, and sharing painful experiences when they occurred.

### 3.3 Messages for Pope Francis

The final question asked what messages lay Catholic LGB participants had for the Pope. These have been directly quoted for accuracy. The responses range from encouraging, supportive and thankful to sense making, to focusing on what needs to change in terms of rhetoric, policies, actions, geographical locations and levels of authority within the Church. Consequently, they have been placed under the following headings: thanks and encouragement; perspectives on what lay Catholic people want; challenging Church influenced discrimination; and changing official Church teaching and activity.

### Thanks and encouragement

- *'Keep up the good work! We support you even though we understand the limitations of your actions on behalf of women and LGBT Catholics'* (gay Catholic man Brazil).
- *'Dear Pope Francis, thank you for being so compassionate and empathetic with those excluded. I share your vision of welcoming and inclusive Church, a home for all human nations and minorities united by faith in Christ. Strengthened by your example I want to make the Church a better place'* (gay Catholic man Slovakia).
- *'First, thank you so much for being welcoming to us, your LGBTQ siblings in faith, and journeying with us. Thanks for the willingness to listen and accompany us. Second, there is still a long journey ahead towards care and justice for and with us in the church. May you continue to journey and be in solidarity with us, compañero! Please continue working and praying for and with us the same way that we your brothers and sisters continue praying for and with you'* (gay Catholic man Philippines).
- *'To keep doing and saying the right things to enable the average Catholic to live out the gospels in the light of social justice'* (Catholic woman Britain).

### Perspectives on what lay Catholic LGB people want

- *'We just want to be active part of the Church; to really feel we are part of the People of God and have a sit every Sunday, because Christ loves us, no matter what, and has died for ALL of us. I know it could be complex and difficult to break with centuries, but I think it is good to rethink about the diversity in a Church. Actually, Catholic means universal in Greek, so that implies diversity'* (gay Catholic man Mexico).
- *'All the LGBTI+ members of the Catholic Church wish for is to openly share in their Catholic beliefs with their fellow spiritual brothers and sisters. We do not need a decree from the Vatican. All we need is for the Catholic Church "to go back to the basics," the Gospel of Jesus Christ and work to make it a reality in every parish around the world. All that is needed is that the Catholic Church follow more closely and more strictly Jesus' message of love to all, and provide visible examples of this, starting with its hierarchy members'* (gay Catholic man Mexico).
- *'Let's better avoid labels; we all are the same. Gay Catholic people are as valid as straight people, with the same rights. Good or evil is not related to sexual orientation'* (gay Catholic man Mexico).
- *'The best experts on people's situations are the people themselves. Before releasing any documents, they should talk "with" people, not "about" them. Look for the Godlike truly everywhere and not in preconceived ideas. The Church needs to learn how to be much more authentic, (and allow its priests to be also) less contradictory and hypo critical and think more about people and less about its image'* (gay Catholic man Britain).

- *'We are an ally and not the enemy. Allow us LGBTI to help spread the love of God'* (Lesbian Catholic woman Philippines).
- *'He should be more Francisco than Pope in his pontificate'* (gay Catholic man Mexico).
- *'To continue trying opening the Church to everyone and begin a dialogue on the Church's teaching on homosexuality'* (gay Catholic man Ireland).
- *'The most important thing that is supposed to be put in the communique is that whether we don't allow the LGBTIs to take part in the Church programs as LGBTIs, that doesn't mean we don't exist. We do and are part of the Church in different capacities. Let them give us some space to be who we are. We are not taking over anything, but we would like to live freely as good Catholic Christians'* (Catholic man Africa).

### Challenging Church influenced discrimination

- *'It would be helpful if he gave a clearer lead in saying that discrimination is "un-Catholic"'* (gay Catholic man Britain).
- *'Pope Francis, we LGBT people in Poland suffer discrimination from bishops, priests and many people of Catholic faith. Now we find Jesus rather over the Roman Catholic Church, than inside. Some of us are still believers, some still attend RCC. Most of us is unable to do it. Some of us pray at home or together with LGBT Christians groups. Many LGBT people suffer from depression, have been kicked out of the home, many have committed suicide because of discrimination. We are waiting for bishops, priests and lay people to change their behaviour and apologize for slander and harm. Pope Francis, we beg You - do something, tell our bishops how wrong they are doing. Tell them to step down. Give us new, good and responsible shepherds, if there are available'* (gay Catholic transgender man Poland).
- *'We are being denied pastoral care and it is unacceptable'* (bisexual Catholic woman Poland).
- *'We need a fundamental change in many ways with regard to women and LGBTIQ+'* (Catholic woman who loves women Europe).
- *'I want the Pope to pay attention what polish bishops are saying in public in a matter of LGBT people—those words are unacceptable, and they are causing serious injuries in people's lives, not only LGBT people. A lot of Catholics are mad about bishops and their behaviour. Then I feel that the Pope should react properly on those words: for example, by keep saying that LGBT people have their dignity as any others and by taking this dignity back from them is not what Jesus Christ left us with. All people are making mistakes, even bishops, Pope. But as Christians we are invited to love and forgive. And I hope and I'm praying for everyone to live in the name of Love'* (gay Catholic man Poland).





- *'Lives are being destroyed because of the negative attitudes of the Church towards LGBT+ persons. The Church is supposed to bring fullness of life that Jesus promised to all people, instead the Church has developed attitudes and a culture that is destroying lives and depriving the whole LGBT+ community from living life in all its fullness. Compassion is not enough. A complete change of attitude and teaching is required to make LGBT+ persons welcome and included within the Church'* (heterosexual woman LGBTIQ advocate India).
- *'Dear Pope, I'm an RCC member and I do a lot of things there and I'm gay. And sometimes I do not believe that I exist. No creo en mi existencia, porque la Iglesia no cree en mi existencia. I would love you and my bishops, my brothers' bishops of Poland, to acknowledge my existence. You know, once a friend told me that he needs me in Roman Catholic Church just as I am, even more, that he needs me in RCC as a lesbian. But it happened once. I'd love that to happen more. I'd love for my bishops, for priests to see us. To speak about LGBTQ Church members. And to speak to LGBTQ Church members. Yes, that's the thing: Talk with us, not about us'* (lesbian Catholic woman Poland).
- *'I would like any form of discrimination to be challenged. Clear messages that we are equal to other people. For new documents to be written that include and celebrate LGB people'* (lesbian Catholic woman Britain).
- *'That he should make some decisive public statement in favour of welcoming LGBT+ people with the Church. I must be about the only gay Catholic who hasn't had a nice friendly (but private) phone call from Francis. It's time for him to go public'* (gay Catholic man France).
- *'Please, stop the Polish hierarchy of the RCC from hurting the LGBTQ community, from making scapegoats of us, and from standing hand in hand with our oppressors in the politics, in the Parliament and government, and in the public mass media. We need your action towards our hateful bishops'* (bisexual Catholic woman Poland).

### Changing official Church teaching and activity

- *'Delete the words of "an objective disorder" or "intrinsic disorder". So many gay Catholics suffering by these words'* (gay Catholic man China).
- *'...just sort it - to make excuses how about the slowness of change doesn't wash. The statement simply isn't true. Failure to make changes is tantamount to sanctioning the dire consequences that result to LGBTI People'* (gay Catholic man Britain).
- *'Any teaching or practice that says that LGBTQI are not full members of the human community just as we are, that invalidates our experience, or somehow indicates that we fall short of God's dream for humanity helps to foster violence and discrimination. We must be seen and treated as fully equal, as beloved, and as reflections of the Divine image in the same way as all other humans'* (lesbian Catholic woman USA).
- *'God is beyond gender. Therefore, God sees the quality and commitment of human love as key and I am sure does not obsess and worry over sexual orientation issues and gender identity'* (gay Catholic man Britain).
- *'The RCC needs to give access to priesthood to all women and men without discrimination based on sex and gender identity and without the requirement to live a celibate life. The core reason for the Catholic homophobia is the weird situation of gay clergy (that is to say: the majority of the clergy) and this can only be relaxed and overcome if access to priesthood is broadened beyond celibate men'* (gay Catholic man Germany).
- *'He must not be guided by conservative people. He must hear the cry that comes from the discriminated, from women, from the poorer, the immigrants, LGBTI...The real Church...He has to change the way the Church works and descend to the real society, not just issuing documents or speeches...Action is crucial'* (gay Catholic man Spain).

### 3.2.10 Summary

The results of the questionnaire have revealed a complex and nuanced picture indicating variations in experience depending on place, parish, culture and timeframe. Not everyone who responded had experienced Church related discrimination in all of the areas listed. Some had positive, affirmative experiences to relate, some were too frightened to come out and to manage assumed negative, reactions. Nevertheless, other responses indicate that the 29 lay Catholic LGB men and women who completed this questionnaire have experienced multiple forms of Church influenced discrimination during the 21<sup>st</sup> century e.g. education, work and parish life, and that it has negatively influenced lives, health and well-being .



# 4. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS: FROM PAPACY TO PARISH AND EVERYTHING IN BETWEEN

## 4.1 Conclusions

In the introduction to the literature review (2.2) Barrientos and Bozon (2014) were quoted as saying that discrimination against LGB people took multiple forms and that it was important to understand this diversity and its effects on everyday life. Evidence identified for this report indicates that Church influenced homophobic discrimination exists at international, national and local levels; in facets of everyday life such as pastoral and parochial life, identity

construction, family of origin relationships, education, employment, and in health and social care; it can be both direct and indirect and involve silencing and marginalisation, and it can negatively influence lives, health and opportunities. Following a synthesis of the secondary and primary research findings three important meta categories of discrimination emerged

1. structural discrimination;
2. inter-personal discrimination;
3. spiritual discrimination.

4.1.1 Structural discrimination

Structural discrimination occurs when damage is done to the dignity of lay Catholic LGB persons, relationships and families through campaigning against the decriminalisation of homosexuality; through not supporting the passing of legislation, policies and practices which seek to protect and recognise LGB equality; through the exclusive promotion of heteronormative values and attitudes; and through the promotion of values and attitudes which seek to undermine and silence LGB sexuality, relationships and families. Structural discrimination can occur at every level of Church and society.

At the core of structural discrimination is the existence and promotion of negative Church LGB law and teachings. Erroneous associations with LGB people as being ‘disordered’ and ‘evil’ have been used to delay or prevent the passing of national laws which seek to decriminalise homosexuality, protect LGB people in everyday life e.g. in employment, education, and from partner or other violence; and/or allow them to marry. Even when equalities legislation is in place it does not necessarily result in equitable treatment. Lay Catholic LGB people can suffer from direct discrimination when equalities legislation is ignored, and indirectly when legislation is in place, but people feel too frightened to be honest for fear of negative treatment. LGB employees, volunteers, students and service users have been bullied and mis-treated; sacked or not employed; and refused access to a service in Church settings and organisations. Evidence indicates that structural discrimination is not just about negative laws, activities and actions, silencing, and not challenging homophobia; it is also about what is not done namely recognising the lives and realities of lay Catholic LGB people at national level, at the organisational level e.g. in schools, and at local level e.g. in parishes.

4.1.2 Inter-personal discrimination

Inter-personal discrimination occurs when damage is done to the dignity of LGB persons through the communication and enactment of homophobic words, laws and actions, silencing and rejection, and through the internalisation of such messages and their effects.

Research has indicated that homophobic Church words, actions and laws (Vatican, 1986) and their use by political leaders; educational and health organisations; family of origin members and peers can have a negative impact on LGB health and well-being. Evidence cited here indicates that lay Catholic LGB people can suffer physically, psychologically, socially and emotionally when they are attacked, marginalised, silenced and edited out of Catholic life. Internalised forms of lay Catholic homophobia have been linked with depression, feelings of isolation, personal disconnection and anxiety, diminished quality of relationships and to feeling more negatively about life. Church teaching which requires the celibacy of lay Catholic LGB people is also a form of inter-personal discrimination as it seeks to silence embodied expressions of love and prevent LGB people from entering fulfilling, positive relationships.



4.1.3 Spiritual discrimination

Spiritual discrimination occurs when damage is done to the religious integrity of lay Catholic LGB persons through homophobic Church words, actions and laws (Vatican, 1986). The findings indicate that lay Catholic LGB people first experience spiritual discrimination when they start to become aware of their sexuality and its lack of congruence with official teaching. Homophobic spiritual discrimination stems from portraying LGB sexuality as morally wrong, ‘disordered’ and by linking being LGB to ‘evil’. Church spiritual discrimination also includes the silencing, marginalisation and editing out of lay Catholic LGB experiences and realities and through subscribing to the erroneous, harmful idea that so-called therapies can alter sexuality. These types of experiences can lead to feelings of anxiety, isolation and disconnection from oneself; parish and spiritual life; from the institutional Church, and from God. To protect their health and spiritual well-being research indicates that people have left the Church; constructed ways to mediate its homophobic messages; internalised the homophobia; and/or found affirmative ways to celebrate being a lay Catholic LGB person.

It is important to note that these meta forms of discrimination are not mutually exclusive; that lay Catholic LGB people might not experience all of them; that there will be differences between men and women’s experiences; and that other types of meta discrimination may exist which have not been captured by this report.

## 4.2 Recommendations arising from the research

Given the identification of 21<sup>st</sup> century Church influenced structural, inter-personal and spiritual homophobic discrimination the following six recommendations are made.

1. To prevent lay Catholic and non-Catholic LGB discrimination Church based homophobia *‘in word, in action and in law’* (Vatican, 1986) must be identified, addressed and eradicated between papacy and parish across the world. This includes direct and indirect forms of discrimination, rejection and silencing.
2. To prevent lay Catholic and non-Catholic LGB discrimination Church based homophobia *‘in word, in action and in law’* (Vatican, 1986) must be identified, addressed and eradicated in all facets of life where the Catholic Church provides a service e.g. international monitoring, national and regional governance, and in the provision of education, health and social care, and family services at all levels of organisation including service user. This includes direct and indirect forms of discrimination, rejection and silencing.
3. To prevent LGB discrimination *‘in word, in action and in law’* (Vatican, 1986) the Church should universally, publicly and continuously condemn all other forms of homophobia. This includes direct and indirect forms of discrimination, rejection and silencing.
4. For the intrinsic dignity and equality of all LGB people the Church should not hinder the passing nor implementation of LGB decriminalisation or LGB protection and recognition legislation wherever it has reach and influence.
5. Rejecting direct and indirect homophobia and pursuing equalities legislation will not be enough to achieve lay Catholic LGB equality. Homophobic words, actions and laws (Vatican, 1986) such as *‘love the sinner hate the sin’*, and associations with *‘evil’* and being *‘intrinsically disordered’* should be permanently removed from official Catholic teaching, and from every facet of Church influenced life. To recognise the intrinsic dignity of all LGB people these should be replaced with inclusive and affirmative words, actions and laws (Vatican, 1986) in all facets of Church life.
6. On-going global monitoring and support will be required to prevent further structural, inter-personal and spiritual discrimination and to promote all forms of lay Catholic LGB health and equality.

It is envisaged that continuing, meaningful engagement between key stakeholder groups including the Catholic Church (from papacy to parish); Catholic service providers; national and international LGBTI Catholic groups; and international equalities monitoring organisations will be required to support the implementation of these recommendations.

## 4.3 Final summary

The report has identified a nuanced, complex picture with greater legal equality and some inclusive, affirmative Church words and practice. Nevertheless, evidence indicates that lay Catholic LGB people continue to experience varied forms of Church influenced structural, inter-personal and spiritual discrimination in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and that these can negatively impact on lives, health, relationships and opportunities.

It is anticipated that advances in legal equalities together with the global condemnation of homophobia; the removal of homophobic Church words, actions and laws (Vatican, 1986) and their replacement with affirmative, inclusive ones will improve the structural, inter-personal and spiritual lives of lay Catholic LGB people and affirm the intrinsic dignity of all LGB people. For this to occur, on-going engagement between the Catholic Church and key stakeholder organisations will be necessary.





report appendices

## 5. REPORT APPENDICES

5.1 References

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**Participant  
Information  
Sheet**

**5.2 Participant Information Sheet**

GNRC Participant Information Sheet Final    Version 5    14.8.19

**Global Network of Rainbow Catholics (GNRC) Research 2019  
PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET**

You are being invited to take part in a research study. Before you decide to participate please read this information sheet and discuss it with others if you wish, please feel free to ask questions.

**Who will conduct the research?**

The research is being conducted by research consultant Dr Anne-Marie Martindale on behalf of GNRC. Anne-Marie is a Catholic, an experienced researcher and sympathetic to the aims of GNRC. The research is being funded by a grant from the Arcus Foundation (<https://www.arcusfoundation.org>) to support the development of GNRC and its future campaigns.

**What is the purpose of the research?**

GNRC aims to bring ‘together groups and their members who work for pastoral care and justice for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) people and their families’ and ‘works for the inclusion, dignity and equality of this community in the Roman Catholic Church and society’. As part of their on-going development **GNRC commissioned this research (March 2019) to explore**

- *lay LGB Catholics experiences of discrimination.*

**The resulting information will be anonymised and used to inform a report for GNRC (October 2019).**

**Why have I been chosen?**

You have been asked to take part because you are either part of a GNRC member organisation, or because you may have experiences of being discriminated against as a lay lesbian, bisexual or gay (LGB) Catholic.

**What would I be asked to do if I took part?**

You are being asked to complete a questionnaire in English, or to talk over the phone if your English is not as strong, or to write in your own language if you do not speak English. Whilst GNRC would really benefit from your involvement, participation is not compulsory. If you are uncomfortable answering a question you can leave it blank.

**What will happen to my personal information?**

During the questionnaire I would like to collect the following personal information/data:

- first name only (to be anonymised), age, an email address;
- gender identification and sexuality;
- member organisation;
- the country, region you live in.

This data is being collected and stored for research purposes in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and Data Protection Act 2018. Your data will be protected.

Only Dr Martindale and selected members of GNRC (Co-Chairs and Board members) will have access to this information. Following completion of the project Dr Martindale will not have access to any of the information, it will be stored securely by GNRC. You can request a copy of the information held about you at any time.

**Will my participation in the study be confidential?**

**The information collected will be kept strictly confidential, and your responses will be anonymised.** Only Dr Martindale and selected members of GNRC (Co-Chairs, Board) will have access to the study data. Data will be stored on a secure password-protected server. The data will be retained but contact details will be deleted as soon as they are no longer required. The report will disguise the identity of individuals.

**What happens if I do not want to take part or if I change my mind?**

**It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part.** *If you decide to take part, please make sure you write yes in response to the consent question at the start of one or both questionnaires.* If you feel uncomfortable answering a particular question you can leave it blank. If you decide to withdraw your completed questionnaire afterwards, you can. However, it will not be possible to remove your data from the project once it has been anonymised as I will not be able to identify your specific data. This does not affect your data protection rights.

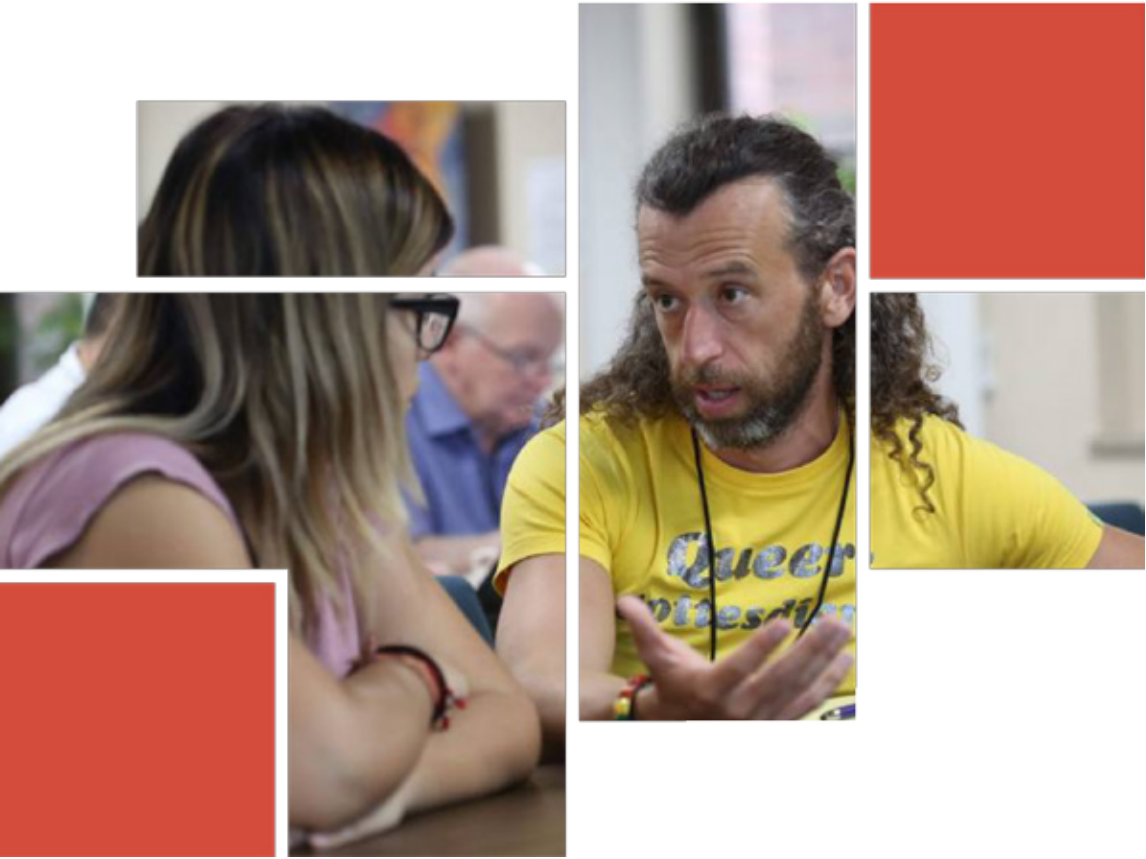
**Will I be paid for participating in the research?**  
Participants are not being paid to take part in this study.

**What are the benefits of taking part?**  
Your experiences will help to inform the work of GNRC in its efforts to work 'towards the inclusion, dignity and equality' of LGBTI people and their families 'in the Roman Catholic Church and society'.

**What are the risks of taking part?**  
Sharing your experiences might be cathartic and/or upsetting. If you are receiving treatment for a mental health condition, please do not take part. If you are unsure about your mental health capacity, please talk with your doctor/mental health practitioner in advance. If you feel upset afterwards you may wish to talk to someone.

**What if I want to make a complaint?**  
If you have a minor complaint, please contact Dr Anne-Marie Martindale in the first instance:  
[annemarie.martindale@gnrcatholics.org](mailto:annemarie.martindale@gnrcatholics.org)

**Formal Complaints**  
If you wish to make a formal complaint or if you are not satisfied with the response you have gained from Dr Martindale please contact Co-Chairs Ruby Almeida or Chris Vella at  
[chair@gnrcatholics.org](mailto:chair@gnrcatholics.org)



Lay Catholic  
LGB  
Discrimination



**5.3 Questionnaire: Lay Catholic LGB Discrimination**

Discrimination que v4 FINAL 15 8 19

**GNRC Global Network of Rainbow Catholics**  
**LAY CATHOLIC LGB DISCRIMINATION QUESTIONNAIRE**

**The need for the research**  
My name is Dr Anne-Marie Martindale and I am sympathetic to the aims of GNRC. I have been employed as a Research Consultant and Campaign Manager by GNRC rainbowcatholics.org (June-October 2019). **The purpose of this questionnaire is to learn more about lay Catholic LGB experiences of being discriminated against.** Later campaigns will focus on trans, and intersex discrimination.

**You are under no obligation to take part.** If you chose to take part it, would really help GNRC if you could answer these questions as fully and accurately as possible. If your written English is not as strong we can speak by phone e.g. using What's App. We will also take completed questionnaires in other languages. **To contact the researcher, and/or return completed questionnaires please email Anne-Marie at [annemarie.martindale@gnrcatholics.org](mailto:annemarie.martindale@gnrcatholics.org)**

**All questionnaires need to be returned by September 13th AT THE LATEST.**

Completed questionnaires will be stored securely on the GNRC website, anonymised, and **used to inform future GNRC strategies.** If you have concerns about the research you can contact the GNRC Secretary at [secretary@gnrcatholics.org](mailto:secretary@gnrcatholics.org).

**Many thanks for your time and input, it is greatly appreciated.**

**To illustrate your consent to take part please make sure you write the word yes here**

X.....

**Questions**

**Background**

- 1. First name (will be anonymised) member organisation and country, including region please.
- 2. Do you identify as lesbian, gay or bisexual? Please say which one.
- 3. How old are you and how long have you been a Catholic?

**Discrimination**

Being unfairly treated can come in many forms and could influence your quality of life, opportunities, and relationships. **If you have many examples for each question please write about your most important one, in as much depth as you can, including the year(s).**

- 1. Have you ever experienced discrimination by the Catholic Church in parish life because you are lesbian, gay or bisexual?
- 2. Growing up, have you ever experienced discrimination at a Catholic school or university because of your sexuality?
- 3. Have you ever experienced discrimination at work, or when trying to get a job (voluntary or paid) because you are a lesbian, gay or bisexual Catholic?
- 4. Have you ever experienced discrimination when trying to join a Catholic club or society?
- 5. Have you ever experienced discrimination when trying to access Catholic ran health care services? For example, clinics, hospitals, relationship guidance services, a care home.
- 6. Have you ever faced discrimination about same-sex relationships from the Catholic Church? Is it possible for same-sex couples to live freely, or to marry where you live? Does the Catholic Church have any influence over this?
- 7. Have you ever approached Catholic adoption services to adopt a child/children? What was the reaction?
- 8. Have you ever tried to plan a funeral for an out lesbian, gay or bisexual Catholic at a Catholic church? What was the outcome?
- 9. Does the Catholic Church have any influence over national policies or laws where you live? How does this influence your life?
- 10. Have these experiences influenced your happiness, your relationships with family, friends, partners, or your opportunities in life?
- 11. Do you have any other experiences of discrimination that are not covered by these questions?
- 12. What coping mechanisms have you found useful, when dealing with discrimination?
- 13. Finally, drawing on your experiences, what message would you like to give to the Pope?

**THANK-YOU FOR YOUR TIME AND INPUT.  
IT IS REALLY APPRECIATED.**