



Abstract: Out on the Fields

Aims: Out on the Fields is the first international, large-scale, quantitative research conducted into the prevalence and form of anti-gay (homophobic) attitudes and behaviour in sporting environments. The research also examined the experiences of lesbian, gay and bisexual (LGB) people, with a specific focus on team sport and English speaking countries. This study aimed to make strong conclusions based on data provided by a large sample.

Design and Methods: Participants (n = 7000 LGB; n=2494 heterosexual) were recruited broadly through a variety of methods to obtain a diverse sample and to minimise the impact of self-selection. Participants completed an online survey and were asked questions about adult or youth sport participation, their openness about sexuality in sport, reasons for hiding or revealing their sexuality, and any personal or witnessed experiences of anti-gay behaviour in sporting environments. Participants were also asked about perceptions around the inclusion and safety of LGB people in sport, and for recommendations around changing behaviour and improving sporting culture if required.

Results: Only 1% of participants believed LGB people were completely accepted in sport. A high percentage of participants of all sexualities (80%) reported witnessing or experiencing homophobia in a sporting environment. Slurs such as ‘faggot’ or ‘poof’ were the most common reported form. A higher percentage of LG participants under the age of 22 reported personally experiencing homophobia than did older participants. A higher percentage of gay male participants reported experiences of homophobic behaviour than did lesbians. A higher percentage of gay males also said they hid their sexuality from teammates in sport and believed sport is unsafe for LGB people.

Discussion and Conclusions: Without exception, higher than expected rates of homophobic behaviour were reported in all English-speaking countries and by all participants. There were few signs in any country studied that LGB people are, or feel, welcome and safe to play or engage with team sports without fear of discrimination. The majority of LGB participants reported hiding their sexuality from teammates with fear of homophobic discrimination cited as a main reason. Youth sport stood out as a particular area of concern; 76% of participants believed youth sport is not safe for LGB people. Participants provided similar recommendations to change sporting culture including the adoption of zero-tolerance of anti-gay language and improved training of players, coaches and officials.