



## Summary for United States of America on Homophobia in Sports

*Out on the Fields* is the first international study and largest conducted on homophobia in sports. Nearly 9500 people took part including **2064** lesbian, gay, bisexual and straight **Americans**. The study focused on issues of sexuality in team sports and the English speaking countries. Repucom conducted the research with the study being initiated by Bingham Cup Sydney 2014 and supported by a coalition of sports organisations. **The study methodology and results were reviewed by a panel of seven academics from six universities including Victoria University (Australia), Penn State University, University of Massachusetts (USA); Brunel University (UK); University of Winnipeg and Lavel University (Canada).**



### KEY FINDINGS

#### Sport Participation

- The majority of lesbian, gay and bisexual people said they played a wide variety of sports in the USA, particularly in their youth (under 22)
- 1 in 4 (24%) gay men did not play youth team sports with many of those men saying negative experiences in school PE class (45%) turned them off team sports or they feared they would be rejected because of their sexuality (31%)

#### Sporting Culture

- **54% of all participants and 60% of gay men believe LGB people are 'not accepted at all' or only 'accepted a little' in sports culture**
- 70% of all participants and 77% of gay men believe homophobia is more common in American sports than the rest of society

#### Homophobia and Discrimination

- **84% of participants witnessed or experienced homophobia in sports (both straight and LGB)**
- Participants were more likely to have witnessed homophobia than experienced it personally. Half (50%) of gay men and lesbians (53%) and 33% of straight men said they had personally experienced homophobia

#### Of those who have been personally targeted:

- **29% of gay men and 19% of lesbians have received verbal threats of harm**
- 35% of gay men and 20% of lesbians have been bullied
- 19% of gay men and 8% of lesbians have been physically assaulted
- 89% of gay men and 82% of lesbians have received verbal slurs such as "faggot" or "dyke"

Research Conducted by

Study Initiated and Managed by

REPUcom



Full report at [www.outonthefields.com](http://www.outonthefields.com)



## Youth Sport (under 22)

- **78% believe youth team sports are not safe for LGB people**
- 83% of gay youth and 63% of lesbian American youth said they were at least partially in the closet, keeping their sexuality secret from all or some of their teammates
- These youth said they stayed in the closet because they feared multiple forms of discrimination, for example 35% of gay youth and 24% of lesbians feared they would be bullied and 45% of gay youth and 18% of lesbians were worried about discrimination from coaches and officials. Meanwhile, 45% of gay youth and 50% of lesbians were worried about being rejected by teammates

## Spectator Stands

- **83% of American participants believe an openly gay, lesbian or bisexual person would not be very safe as a spectator at a sports event**
- Spectator stands (32%) followed by school PE class (24%) are the most likely locations for homophobia to occur

## How the USA Compares to other English speaking countries

- The USA fared the lowest and poorly on most of the key measures. For example Americans were the least likely to believe LGB people are accepted in sports culture. More than half of all participants thought they were 'not accepted at all' or only 'accepted a little' which is nearly double the number who believe this in Canada
- Americans were also the most likely to think homophobia is more common in sports than in the rest of society
- Americans were also the most likely to witness or experience homophobia and American lesbians were the second most likely (after the UK) to say they had been personally targeted
- The USA had the highest number of gays and lesbians saying they had received verbal threats and the highest number of gay men reporting slurs. The USA tied with the UK for the highest number of lesbians who said they had been bullied

- Americans were the most likely to believe youth sports are not welcoming to LGB people and second most likely (after the UK) to believe spectator stands are not safe
- Gay youth in the USA were the most likely to say they hid their sexuality because of a fear of discrimination from coaches and officials

## SOLUTIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

Participants were asked to select a range of possible solutions or could submit their own. The top three solutions selected were:

1. Start early with schools, coaches and parents taking homophobia and bullying seriously in sporting environments
2. National sporting organisations need to adopt and promote clear anti-homophobia and LGB inclusion policies for professional and amateur players
3. More LGB professional sporting stars need to come out of the closet to set an example

## Recommendations from Researchers

- In many parts of the world PE teachers receive no training about homophobia or supporting LGB athletes. Coaches, physical education teachers and sport officials need mandatory training on how best to support LGB athletes
- Sporting organisations, schools and teams need to adopt a zero tolerance for players and fans who engage in homophobic behaviour

## About the study

The data for Out on the Fields was collected through a 10-15 minute online survey with recruitment focused primarily on the UK, USA, New Zealand, Australia, Canada and Ireland. The study focuses on issues of sexuality, not gender, which is why LGB is used rather than the now standard LGBTI. People from all sexualities took part, including nearly 25% heterosexual.