



LGBT+ Histories and Historians

Report

Royal Historical Society

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Foreword

Margot Finn

President, Royal Historical Society
Professor of Modern British History, UCL

In their essay, 'A Future without a Past', musician, academic and LGBT+ activist CN Lester analyses both the barriers to the inclusion of transgender people at the level of the individual and the wider historical landscape in which these obstacles are embedded. Reflecting on 'the aspects of being trans that are hard to explain to people who aren't', they underline 'The leap of faith required to say "this is who I am" in the absence of a prepared and welcoming place to be'.

Challenges to gender equality and inclusion in daily life, Lester observes, can only be understood if we both acknowledge and historicise them:

"... history is not solely the record of our past and its teaching. Our society, our multiple cultures, the frameworks and ingredients into which and with which we are made, are products of our shared and contested pasts. Every part of who we are has its history: the processes and end results of those histories shape those parts. To talk about this openly, including its worst aspects, is not to ask for pity, but to invite the understanding necessary to make sense of what follows and to build a tenable future."

Erasures of transgender (and wider LGBT+) histories are rooted in distinctive historical structures as well as in culturally-specific belief systems. Urging recuperative histories that connect multiple narratives and experiences, Lester suggests that we are now witnessing a sharp transition, from a period in which 'being trans meant having no past and therefore no present, and no future', to one in which an 'honest recording of our history' will 'make way for something more'.¹

¹ CN Lester, '[A Future without a Past](#)' *Free Word* (undated post). CN Lester is the author of *Trans Like Me: A Journey for All of Us* (2017).

These insights and reflections on transgender history and historical experience reflect a much wider development of both academic and public understanding of LGBT+ lives in institutional teaching, learning and research contexts in the past few years. In their 2019 report, *Exploring the Workplace for LGBT+ Physical Scientists*, the UK Institute of Physics, Royal Astronomical Society and Royal Society of Chemistry concluded that LGBT+ inclusion is a vital component of excellence in science. Observing that ‘It is one thing to advocate for diverse workplaces, and another to create a climate that supports them’, their report drew attention to ‘multiple examples of LGBT+ scientists leaving workplaces, or leaving science completely, in order to feel more comfortable’. They asserted unambiguously that ‘This is not good for science’.²

In this Royal Historical Society (RHS) report, we extend these insights to put our own discipline under the microscope, focusing on experiences in British universities but also considering History in museums and other cultural organisations. What conditions, contexts, expectations and experiences mark LGBT+ and queer histories today? How can we best work both to celebrate major achievements in LGBT+ inclusion and to combat persistent bias, discrimination and exclusion when we encounter them?

We too argue that enhanced awareness, knowledge and understanding of LGBT+ experiences—and active work to disrupt discriminatory behaviours—will not only improve the day-to-day learning and working contexts of all students and all staff in History but also enrich the breadth and quality of teaching, research and public engagement in our discipline more broadly. Like our colleagues in the physical sciences, we believe that a fully inclusive workplace and teaching environment is ‘quite simply, more conducive to good science’.³

² Institute of Physics, Royal Astronomical Society and Royal Society of Chemistry, [Exploring the Workplace for LGBT+ Physical Scientists](#) (Institute of Physics, 2019), 34. Beyond the physical sciences, a growing constellation of research organisations, funding bodies and policy makers now increasingly understand ‘gender diversity as a key driver of excellence and innovation’. See for example Mathias Wullum Nielsen, Carter Walter Bloch and Londa Schiebinger, ‘Making Gender Diversity Work for Scientific Discovery and Innovation’, *Nature Human Behaviour*, 2 (2018), 726–734.

³ When defined in the European sense, ‘science’ encompasses the humanities and social sciences. Jennifer Dyer, [‘Working Together to Improve the Workplace for LGBT+ Scientists’](#), *Institute of Physics Blog* (2019).

This is the fourth report on equality and inequality in UK History produced by the RHS since 2015. Each has been based on large-scale open surveys of our discipline.⁴ Like our 2015 and 2018 reports on gender equality and our 2018 report on race, ethnicity and equality in UK History, this report navigates between recognising demonstrable advances and registering the persistence—and in some contexts worrying increase—of structural barriers to inclusivity in our discipline.

On the one hand, the past two decades have seen dramatic improvement in the statutory frameworks that shape LGBT+ and queer historians' experiences and opportunities as well as rising public support for LGBT+ and queer inclusion and equality. The most recent British Social Attitudes survey (2019) conducted by the National Centre for Social Research reports that 'attitudes to same-sex relationships is one of the most striking examples of liberalisation that BSA has recorded' since its launch in 1983.⁵

In History, the decades that witnessed these changes in attitudes and rights also saw the emergence of rich bodies of LGBT+ and queer scholarship (including queer theory and queer history), not only fundamentally transforming our understanding of histories of gender, identity and sexuality but also adding vital new dimensions to historical analysis of culture, society and politics.⁶ The annual celebration of LGBT+ History Month, first organised in the UK in 2005 and held each February to mark the abolition in 2003 of Section 28, is a prominent marker of these achievements.⁷

⁴ ['The RHS LGBT+ Survey 2019'](#), *Historical Transactions: The Blog of the Royal Historical Society* (1 July 2019).

⁵ 'In 1983, fewer than one in five people said that sexual relations between two adults of the same sex were "not wrong at all", compared with two-thirds now. This is not just a generational change: older people too have become more liberal in their views, and so have those without a religion'. National Centre for Social Research, [British Social Attitudes](#) 36th Edition (2019) 129.

⁶ Laura Doan makes a useful distinction between queerness as a way of being and queerness as a tool for historical analysis (with the focus on structures of knowing in specific timeframes): Laura Doan, *Disturbing Practices: History, Sexuality and Women's Experience of Modern War* (Chicago, 2013), esp. preface, introduction and part one. The Institute of Historical Research's online guide to their [History of Sexuality & LGBTQ Collections](#) provides a starting point to the literature.

⁷ Section 28 (also known as Clause 28) of the UK Local Government Act was enacted on 28 May 1988. It was specifically designed to 'prohibit the promotion of homosexuality by local authorities'. It was removed in Scotland in 2000, and in the remainder of the UK in 2003. See also the [LGBT+ History Month website](#).

On the other hand, shifts towards greater legal inclusivity and public acceptance have been neither straightforward nor continuous, as attested by the persistence and scale of reported bias and discrimination. Transgender people in particular encounter high levels of damaging prejudice. As the 2019 British Social Attitudes survey concludes, in Britain ‘while the population are very keen to be seen as not personally transphobic, they are less clear that transphobia is always wrong’.⁸

The presence of homophobic, biphobic and transphobic beliefs and practices in university settings is well attested, contributing to wider patterns of prejudice against LGBT+ people that degrade the quality of teaching, learning and research. *Exploring the Workplace for LGBT+ Physical Scientists* repeatedly found transgender and non-binary scientists to be disproportionately likely (among both LGBT+ and all scientists) to be subjected to bias or discrimination.⁹ Our own data for this report, based on over 800 respondents to an RHS survey conducted in 2019, demonstrate that History too often provides a hostile environment for LGBT+ and queer students and staff. No less worryingly, global developments are confronting LGBT+ and queer colleagues with challenges that—given the inherently international character of historical scholarship—demand our attention. In June 2020, Romania’s parliament voted to ban gender studies, a development that resonates with recent political and legal challenges to LGBT+ and queer rights in Hungary and Poland.¹⁰ As Susanne Baer, professor of public law at Humboldt University and a German constitutional court judge, argued at a 2020 University of Chicago/German Rectors conference on freedom of expression, ‘Those early attacks on ... gender studies or queer theory or critical race studies, are attacks against all of us’.¹¹

Universities, cultural organisations, heritage institutions and other workplaces in which historians study, teach and undertake research and public engagement face major challenges in 2020. The economic and human impacts of COVID-19 will pose threats to us all, and existential threats to at least some of our institutions. It will be easy

⁸ [British Social Attitudes](#), 36, 126.

⁹ See, for example, [Exploring the Workplace for LGBT+ Physical Scientists](#), 6, 18, 23, 34.

¹⁰ [‘Romanian rights groups condemn ban on gender identity studies’](#), Thomson Reuters Foundation News, (17 June 2020).

¹¹ [‘Academic ‘solidarity’ needed to save gender studies from populism’](#), Times Higher Education (26 June 2020).

in this context to lose sight of the need for equality, diversity and inclusion, including that of LGBT+ people. But it will be neither right nor wise to do so. As the UK's belated recognition of the disproportionate impact of coronavirus on Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic populations forcefully reminds us, the structures and the ideologies that underpin inequality run throughout society (and include the practice and discipline of History).

Attending to equality, diversity and inclusion is not a luxury in pandemic times. Rather, it is a continued imperative. As they grapple with the challenges posed by the 'new normal' of life with coronavirus, cultural and heritage organisations need new ways of engaging with existing audiences and welcoming new ones. In a higher education context in which teaching excellence is increasingly prioritised, we cannot neglect to incorporate LGBT+ and queer histories into our curriculum design for all students. In a rapidly changing political environment—shaped by new populisms—doctoral supervisors, research mentors, line-managers and funding bodies can only act responsibly if they educate themselves comprehensively with respect to LGBT+ working conditions at home and abroad. In keeping with our fellow twenty-first century professional bodies and subject associations, the RHS can fully exercise its role as an advocate for disciplinary excellence only if we embrace LGBT+ equality, diversity and inclusion. This report and its associated resources offer a first step toward that vital shared goal.

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Position Statement

The Royal Historical Society (RHS) is a Learned Society whose role is to represent, advocate for, and support the historical profession. Support for equality, diversity and inclusion is one of the six core goals of the RHS.¹²

We value the diversity of the historical community. As historians, we know that ideas of sex, sexuality and gender are complex and contingent, varying across time and space. Exploring that complexity can and should be a productive and intellectually stimulating exercise that furthers our understanding of the variety of past worldviews and practices. In order to do that, however, it is imperative that we engage respectfully with the identities and lived experiences of our colleagues, students and members of the public. This includes LGBT+ people and fully encompasses trans and non-binary people.

Inclusion and respect are not in opposition to academic freedom: they are fundamental to it.

Our position is that valuing diversity means listening to the voices, and respecting the experiences, of people whose lives and identities may be different to our own. This includes asexual or ace, bisexual, cisgender, gay, heterosexual/straight, lesbian, non-binary, pan/pansexual, queer and transgender people. All of these categories are—and need to be accepted as—integral to the richness of human diversity and experience.

The sum of historical research, teaching and public engagement is impoverished in both its understandings of the past and how it relates to our present condition if it fails to include diverse identities and experiences. Knowledge and recognition can help foster acceptance of both LGBT+ and queer people and histories as familiar ('usualised' is the term sometimes used) and valued within the historical community and its disciplinary practices.¹³

¹² This commitment is clearly articulated on the homepage of the [Royal Historical Society website](#), which states that the Society 'encourages, facilitates and supports work towards greater equality, inclusion and representation in historical practice, research and teaching'.

¹³ Schools OUT, '[Method 1. Usualising](#)', *The Classroom* (undated webpage).

However, as the authors of the *RHS Race, Ethnicity and Equality Report* (2018) noted, ‘questions of representation and inclusion are not solved by reforming the curriculum’ alone.¹⁴ In common with the efforts of cognate bodies elsewhere, this report seeks to make recommendations to promote LGBT+ historians’ and LGBT+ histories’ effective inclusion in the full range of our discipline’s practices.¹⁵

LGBT+ and queer histories are an integral part of human history. To reflect the methodological advances and rich research findings across a wide spectrum of fields, chronologies and geographical regions more fully, LGBT+ histories and perspectives in all their diversity need to be represented in teaching and university-based research, as well as in museums, galleries, archives and libraries.

LGBT+ and queer historians, working on a wide variety of periods and topics, have been central to our discipline's work for decades. As this report illustrates, however, the conditions of that labour have not been easy. For those undertaking teaching, research and/or curatorship explicitly on LGBT+ and queer histories the challenges have been particularly difficult. These historians are more likely to face harassment, marginalisation, isolation and discrimination both in the workplace and online. Within the survey data, it was not always possible to differentiate between those historians who worked directly on LGBT+ and queer histories and those who did not. Yet personal testimonies within and beyond the survey, as well as the digital resources written by experts in the field that accompany this report, attest to the long-lasting impact of prejudice.

As we have argued in each of our previous RHS reports on equality in History, diversity and inclusion are shared enterprises. To succeed, equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) initiatives must encompass the full range of stakeholders in our discipline. LGBT+ and queer historians have played central roles in enabling EDI in our classrooms, curriculums and workplaces and continue to do so. We should not,

¹⁴ The RHS has published two previous reports on gender (in 2015 and 2018) and one on race and ethnicity (in 2018). These reports can be accessed from the Policy pages of our website: [‘Policy’](#), *Royal Historical Society* (undated webpage).

¹⁵ [‘Trans and gender diverse inclusion in academia; or, why we need to get better at pronouns’](#), *Australian Historical Association* (20 May 2019). These recommendations were adopted unanimously by the Australian Historical Association in 2019. See also the American Historical Association’s LGBT Committee: [‘About’](#), *Committee on Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender History* (13 January 2019).

however, simply assume that it is the responsibility of those who identify as LGBT+ to carry this work forward. We realise that many non-LGBT+ people would like to do better as allies for LGBT+ and queer students and colleagues, but find knowing where to start daunting. In addition to reporting on LGBT+ and queer historians' experiences of History teaching, learning and scholarly employment, this report and accompanying data and resources are intended to foster non-LGBT+ allyship.

Who is this Report for?

Our primary audience for this report and the resources that accompany it is the university-based History community: students on taught programmes, doctoral researchers, postgraduate researchers, higher education teachers, professional services staff and senior managers.

History is, of course, a discipline that operates internationally, transnationally and globally. Although our findings predominantly reflect UK-based contexts and experiences, they connect with human conditions and scholarly developments across the globe. We hope that, as we have seen with previous RHS reports, our findings and recommendations will resonate outside the UK and encourage wider scrutiny of the contexts and constraints within which historians work internationally.

The academic historical community increasingly works with and benefits from historians based in archives and libraries, cultural and heritage organisations and in policy units. Many of these historians are also Members and Fellows of the RHS. We hope that the report will be of use in these important contexts as well.

In this report we aim to:

- **provide a snapshot of the key experiences of LGBT+ and queer historians in the UK as students and staff today;**
- **identify key barriers to full equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) in History as a discipline in British research organisations;**
- **provide pragmatic recommendations to ensure that our discipline offers a fully welcoming environment for all its practitioners and audiences.**
- **offer reflections on, and additional resources to support, the writing and teaching of LGBT+ histories.**

The format of this report differs from the three previous RHS reports on equality, diversity and inclusion. This difference partly reflects its completion and launch under COVID-19 pandemic conditions. In this context, the decision was taken to produce a shorter formal report, accessibly designed and better suited to online transmission.

This report includes a set of online resources, which are freely available through the RHS website at <https://royalhistsoc.org/lgbt/>.

The online resources consist of:

- **the raw statistical data from the survey;**
- **sample reading lists;**
- **a series of expert personal reflections on the writing and teaching of LGBT+ and queer histories, including accounts of sensitive handling both of the classroom environment and of approaches to reading material;**
- **links to further information and resources.**

The online part of this project, hosted on the RHS website, is designed to grow over time in order to include new or updated material, and to expand on some of the important topics and ideas raised here.

This approach will also allow us to integrate the digital resources that accompany this report into the RHS Teaching Portal, contributing to our goal of usualising LGBT+ histories within historical practice.

This report and its accompanying resources are a starting point: we welcome suggestions that will enhance its function as a live document over time. For this reason, the website offers a contact form for submitting further resources, reading list additions, or other suggestions for inclusion.

A note on terminology and quotes within the report:

In line with common usage, we employed 'LGBT+' as a shorthand, umbrella term for lesbian, gay, bi and transgender people in our 2019 survey. The use of LGBT+ is not a value-judgment, and it is not intended to imply a fixed or shared sense of identity, experience or viewpoint, nor to occlude those groups – such as queer and intersex – covered by the +.

In this report, we use 'LGBT+' when reporting on the survey data in general. Where we cite individual responses, we use the terms and categories that respondents used to define themselves. We use

‘LGBT+ and queer historians’ and ‘LGBT+ and queer history’ in order to signal the importance of ‘queer’ as an identity and a practice to many people who participated in the survey and in the production of this report.

All quotes presented in this report are drawn from the written responses to our survey, from respondents who agreed to allow their words to be cited. In each case we use up to two identifiers, in order to contextualise the diversity of experience and engagement with the survey. In line with our moral and legal responsibilities to maintain anonymity, we have restricted our descriptors to this limited number of declared elements of identity.¹⁶

A Glossary of Key Terms can be found at the end of this report. The first instance of each of these terms in the text that follows is highlighted in bold.

¹⁶ [‘Guide to Data Protection: What is Personal Data?’](#), *Information Commissioner’s Office* (undated page).

Key Findings

A significant number of LGBT+ historians in the UK are hesitant or uncomfortable disclosing their LGBT+ identity to work colleagues or students.

1 in 4

LGBT+ staff respondents were unsure about expressing their identity outside their department (or other 'home' unit) in situations such as conferences or online.

1 in 3

transgender historians were unsure, or uncomfortable expressing their LGBT+ identity outside their department.

1 in 7

LGBT+ respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they had modified their appearance and/or hidden their sexuality in response to concerns about discrimination.

1 in 5

surveyed LGBT+ historians were 'unsure' (that is, hesitant or uncomfortable), or did not feel able to disclose their LGBT+ identity to colleagues and students.

The presence of senior leaders with a clear commitment to LGBT+ equality and inclusion is recognised by LGBT+ historians as an important component of a positive working environment.

Only 1 in 3

LGBT+ survey respondents agreed that their department's approach to LGBT+ inclusion had a positive effect on their mental health. For postgraduate students, that figure dropped to 1 in 6.

A lack of LGBT+ peers, role models or colleagues was associated by many LGBT+ student and staff respondents with a sense of 'onlyness' or loneliness.

Experiences of harassment or discrimination based on LGBT+ identities are common in historians' learning and working environments, as well as the museums and heritage sector. Many historians lack a clear understanding of how to respond to discrimination and harassment against LGBT+ peers and colleagues.

1 in 4

LGBT+ staff in history reported that they have witnessed homophobic, transphobic or biphobic behaviour, attitudes or decisions between staff.

1 in 3

LGBT+ undergraduate historians have witnessed homophobic, transphobic or biphobic behaviour and/or attitudes between students.

1 in 5

transgender historians are not able to access key facilities (changing rooms, toilets and other gendered spaces) in their place of work or study.

Travel, research with living subjects (such as oral histories) and public engagement can pose significant obstacles to LGBT+ historians and to research on LGBT+ and queer histories. These limitations affect both UK-based and international teaching and research opportunities.

1 in 6

LGBT+ staff believed that they had been discriminated against or overlooked for opportunities and/or recognition due to their sexuality or gender, and 1 in 6 identified barriers to career progression for LGBT+ people within their institution. Qualitative data suggest this is a more acute problem for those working on identifiably 'queer' topics.

1 in 5

members of staff reported that they would be unsure or not know what to do if they witnessed discrimination, violence or hate incidents in their department, rising to nearly half of postgraduate students.

Historians working in museums and the heritage sector who host LGBT+ events and exhibitions, as well as undertaking research initiatives such as oral history projects, may experience particular challenges and/or exposure to prejudice.

Historians' knowledge and understanding of UK equalities legislation and institutional policies is poor.

One third of staff in History are either unaware, or only partially aware, of current UK Equality legislation.

University induction and training on equalities frameworks is limited, and often not provided for established members of staff.

Just under half of transgender historians were aware that their institution had policies and processes in place for transitioning or affirming gender identity at work. Of this group, just over half considered these to be adequate.

Provision for teaching and representing LGBT+ and queer histories needs to be better supported.

Two-thirds of LGBT+ staff in History were unsure or did not think that histories of diverse gender and sexual identities were adequately reflected in teaching in their department.

Half of LGBT+ undergraduates considered coverage of diverse gender and sexual identities to be inadequate.

None

of the transgender students in our survey considered that diverse gender and sexual identities were suitably reflected in teaching.

1 in 3

historians believes their department has sought to widen the curriculum with respect to diverse gender and sexual identities over the past 5 years.

1 in 3

LGBT+ staff in History were unsure, or did not think that they would be supported in challenging reluctance about, or hostility to, the teaching of LGBT+ histories in their department/classroom.

In the museums and heritage sector, some respondents pointed to colleagues' reluctance to engage with LGBT+ histories even when there was relevant material in their collections.

"Given how little Queer History [is] taught at school, I had to do my own research if I wanted to know more about this particular area of history significant to my identity. As a result, I have a particular interest in this area and have chosen modules that cater to this interest among others."

Lesbian undergraduate student

Context

Recent reports have consistently found high levels of discrimination against **LGBT+** and **queer** people in the UK, and there is growing evidence that academic institutions have little reason to be complacent in this respect. In June 2019, a joint report by the Royal Society of Chemistry, the Institute of Physics and the Royal Astronomical Society revealed the scale of the problem, finding that nearly a third (28%) of LGBT+ people working in the physical sciences reported having at some point considered leaving their workplace because of discrimination.¹⁷ The findings of their discipline-specific survey and report corroborate evidence presented in reports by the charity Stonewall and the TransEdu Scotland project, which have found that LGBT+ students commonly face high barriers to learning, and experience discrimination from both staff and fellow students.¹⁸

The RHS LGBT+ survey (described in the next section of this report), similarly revealed persistent patterns of prejudice in university-based History and in the wider contexts in which History is studied and researched in the UK. Both the quantitative data and the qualitative evidence from our survey speak forcefully of the prevalence of barriers to fostering an accepting and inclusive culture for LGBT+ and queer staff and students within History. In an already-challenging context, these barriers can have serious consequences for mental health, undermining undergraduate students' attainment, distorting or restricting postgraduate and postdoctoral historians' choices of research projects and affecting the career progression of staff.

As one student survey respondent commented:

"Erasure / mockery from peers is present and disheartening. I would be afraid to undertake this area of research and actively avoid it."

LGBT+ undergraduate student

¹⁷ Stonewall, *LGBT in Britain: Work Report* (2018); Trades Union Congress, *Sexual Harassment of LGBT People in the Workplace* (April 2019); *Exploring the Workplace for LGBT+ Scientists*, 5.

¹⁸ Stephanie Mckendry & Dr Matson Lawrence, 'TransEdu Scotland: *Researching the Experience of Trans and Gender Diverse Applicants, Students and Staff in Scotland's Colleges and Universities*' (2017) *TransEdu Scotland*, 1-2; Stonewall, *School Report* (2017) 4.

These challenges begin long before university entrance. University teaching staff often know little (if anything) about their students' school experiences, yet the quality of students' engagement at university can be profoundly shaped by them. In 2017, Stonewall found that almost half of all LGBT+ pupils face bullying at school for being LGBT+, and that more than two in five transgender young people had tried to take their own life. Very few school pupils reported visible bi, gay, lesbian or transgender teachers or role models. Stonewall found that more than half of bullied LGBT+ school pupils, and two-thirds of transgender pupils, felt that homophobic, biphobic, or transphobic bullying had had a negative effect on their plans for future education.¹⁹

Such evidence suggests that many LGBT+ and queer people may be discouraged by their experience at school from even attending university. Section 28 of the 1988 Local Government Act banned local authorities from 'promoting' homosexuality, publishing material with that intention, or promoting the teaching of the acceptability of homosexuality. Although this legislation was repealed in Scotland in 2000, and the rest of the UK in 2003, the influence of Section 28 has had a lasting effect.

Many LGBT+ students who go to university have little experience of discussing LGBT+ topics in formal education and have never had the support of a visible LGBT+ mentor or tutor. Some progress is being made in **usualising** LGBT+ topics in schools. From September 2020, English schools are required to include sexual orientation and **gender identity** as part of teaching 'Relationships and Sex Education' (RSE) at secondary level and different family types in 'Relationships Education' at primary schools. Scotland will become the world's first country to introduce LGBT+ inclusive teaching throughout the school curriculum in 2021.²⁰

Understanding this context, and learning from developments in Scotland's schools, will enable staff responsible for taught programmes to devise fully inclusive pedagogies from the outset.

¹⁹ [Exploring the Workplace for LGBT+ Physical Scientists](#), 5-7; Stonewall, [School Report](#) (2017), 4.

²⁰ ['LGBT inclusive education: guidance to education authorities'](#) Scottish Government (May 2019); ['LGBT-inclusive education: everything you need to know'](#), Stonewall; ['Relationships and sex education \(RSE\) and health education'](#), UK Government (9 July 2020).

Our survey evidence suggests that personal tutors, teachers on first year modules (including Graduate Teaching Assistants) and Directors of Teaching in particular may benefit from guidance and support that enables them to assist all new undergraduates to make a successful transition from school to university.

"Given how little Queer History [is] taught at school, I had to do my own research if I wanted to know more about this particular area of history significant to my identity. As a result, I have a particular interest in this area and have chosen modules that cater to this interest among others."

Lesbian undergraduate student

LGBT+ history is part of human history and should be acknowledged as such in core survey courses rather than left to specialist option modules taken by undergraduates or postgraduates at later stages in their studies. The resources to do this are now clearly available.

Both research on LGBT+ and queer lives and research undertaken by LGBT+ and queer historians are conducted and disseminated in a diverse range of contexts. These include archives, cultural organisations, heritage institutions, policy units and universities. The dissemination of this research is enabled by grant applications to funding bodies, conference participation and exhibitions as well as journal and book publishing. As both our survey results and the digital resources that accompany this report attest, the past several decades have seen major advances in the recognition and showcasing of LGBT+ and **queer histories** in these research sites and channels. However, these contexts are also powerfully shaped by absences, silences, **micro-aggressions**, **harassment** and overt discrimination.²¹

Systematic information about LGBT+ equality and inequality in UK research contexts is lacking, and funding bodies have only recently begun to address this aspect of their portfolios. In 2020, the

²¹ At law, harassment is unwanted and offensive behaviour (from the recipient's perspective) which reflects either the recipient's protected characteristic(s) and/or any connection with a protected characteristic. The protected characteristics are: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation. See '[What is Harassment and Victimisation?](#)', *Equality and Human Rights Commission* (16 January 2019).

Wellcome Trust launched both a ‘Research Enrichment’ scheme to allow its grant-holders ‘to identify and tackle barriers to diversity and inclusion in their work’ and a transgender inclusion policy dedicated ‘to creating an inclusive and safe working environment for trans people where they are treated with dignity, kindness and respect’.²²

Also in 2020, the UK government’s main research funding body (UKRI) published its first composite funding data, stretching from the Arts and Humanities to the Physical Sciences and covering the period 2014–2019. Tellingly, its diversity data refer to only four of the nine 2010 Equality Act’s **protected characteristics**: ‘Age’, ‘Disability’, ‘Ethnicity’ (which is denominated ‘Race’ in the 2010 Act itself, and includes but is not restricted to Ethnicity) and ‘Gender’. UKRI’s ‘Gender’ data are reported under only four rubrics: ‘Male’, ‘Female’, ‘Unknown’ and ‘Not disclosed’.²³

The survey data that underpin this RHS report have many limitations and do not reflect systematic random sampling. But our evidence and analysis nonetheless represent an important preliminary step—in a research funding landscape that has hitherto paid scant attention to LGBT+ and queer histories and historians—toward enriching our understanding of the constraints and the innovations that shape contemporary scholarship.

As our survey evidence abundantly attests, in recent decades LGBT+ and queer lives and experiences have been uncovered and woven into historical narratives. This report not only highlights this ongoing work, but also makes recommendations on supporting LGBT+ and queer historians and developing LGBT+ and queer histories. As our survey also shows, we still have some way to go to include both fully.

²² [‘Research Enrichment – Diversity and Inclusion’](#), Wellcome Trust; [‘Diversity and Inclusion - our people’](#), Wellcome Trust.

²³ UKRI, [Diversity Results for UK Funding Data 2014-15 to 2018-19](#) (2020). The authors note: ‘We are exploring adding additional gender categories’, 6.

**Find
out
more**

A longer discussion, and indicative reading list of recent studies giving context to our recommendations can be found in the Online Resources accompanying this report at:

<http://www.royalhistsoc.org/lgbt/>

"Being a lesbian, a woman, and an immigrant to the UK have all made me more acutely aware of current political developments that might endanger me in all three of these aspects."

Lesbian PhD Student

The 2019 RHS LGBT+ Survey

Within the context of both increasing national recognition of LGBT+ experiences and rights and the Society's established commitment to EDI, the RHS launched a survey in July 2019 to learn more about experiences of LGBT+ historians, and about approaches to and perceptions of LGBT+ teaching and research. It was hosted by JISC Online Surveys, with the generous support of the University of Edinburgh, and shared widely through RHS social media and online channels as well as member mailings. Questions were designed to elicit both quantitative and qualitative data, with the majority offering both multiple choice answers, and an opportunity to comment further in free text.

The survey recognised that human experiences reflect our multiple identities and orientations, and their many intersections. These include 'protected characteristics' other than gender reassignment, sex and sexual orientation such as age, disability and race.

We received 852 returns, the largest response to any of the four surveys we have conducted since 2014.

The data that resulted, and the frank and often extensive comments that respondents provided, form a substantial part of the evidence base on which this report is founded.

In summary:

852

individuals responded to the RHS LGBT+ survey.

421

(49.4%) respondents identified as LGBT+.

425

(50.6%) respondents identified as women.

321

(38.2%) respondents identified as men.

29

(3.5%) respondents identified as non-binary.

23

(2.7%) respondents identified as trans or transgender.

11

(1.3%) respondents identified as agender.

337

(40.7%) respondents identified as heterosexual.

67

(8.8%) respondents identified as lesbian.

142

(16.9%) respondents identified as gay.

163

(19.4%) respondents identified as bisexual.

124

(14.8%) respondents identified as queer.

47

(5.5%) respondents identified as being Black, Asian, minority ethnic or of a mixed ethnicity background.²⁴

23

(5.5%) of the respondents within the LGBT+ group also identified as being Black, Asian, minority ethnic or of a mixed ethnicity background.

225

(26.4%) respondents were undergraduate students.

151

(17.7%) respondents were postgraduate students, including PhD researchers.

143

(16.8%) respondents were primarily employed in either fixed term, hourly paid or zero hours contracts.

341

(41.7%) respondents were on permanent employment contracts.

66

(8.8%) respondents worked in a post-92 UK Higher Education provider.

²⁴ Categories for ethnicity derived from UK government frameworks are imperfect and several respondents highlighted this in their individual responses. The largest group of respondents who chose to specify their ethnic background were those who identified as Jewish (a group of 8), with one of this group making the important corrective that categories of whiteness 'can be taken away from you'. Others felt that existing categories did not encompass their ethnicities or mixed ethnicities, included individuals who self-identified as Romani, Slavic, Tatar, Native American and Latinx. For greater discussion see the Royal Historical Society, [Race, Ethnicity and Equality in UK History](#) (2018).

421**(49.4%) respondents were aged under 35.****36****(4.2%) respondents were 65 or older.****142****(17%) respondents considered themselves to have a disability - defined in the Equality Act 2010 as an impairment, health condition or learning difference with a substantial or long-term impact on their ability to carry out day to day activities.**

While overall, as these figures show, our survey respondents were divided nearly equally between historians who identify as LGBT+ and those who do not, the qualitative responses to the survey convey a very broad range of experiences, perspectives and values and significantly enrich the quantitative data.

The majority of respondents took time to engage constructively with the survey, and we are very grateful for the time and emotional and intellectual work this will in many cases have involved. The responses provide rich insights into a very broad range of issues.

In keeping with our goal of enhancing understanding of LGBT+ and queer histories and historians, this report foregrounds the voices and experiences of those more than 400 respondents who either identified their sexuality as one or more of: **asexual, bisexual, gay, homosexual, lesbian, pansexual, queer**, including those who chose to specify their sexuality in another way (such as demi-sexual, aromantic or androsexual); and/or those who identified their gender orientation as **trans or transgender, non-binary**, genderqueer or genderfluid. Throughout the report, this group is referred to as the LGBT+ respondents group (see Figures 1 and 2).²⁵

²⁵ No respondents to our survey identified as intersex, and of the respondents who identified as trans or transgender, none identified as straight/heterosexual.

Figure 1. The words survey respondents use to describe themselves.
Multi-answer: percentage of respondents who selected each answer option (e.g. 100% would represent all respondents selecting one answer).

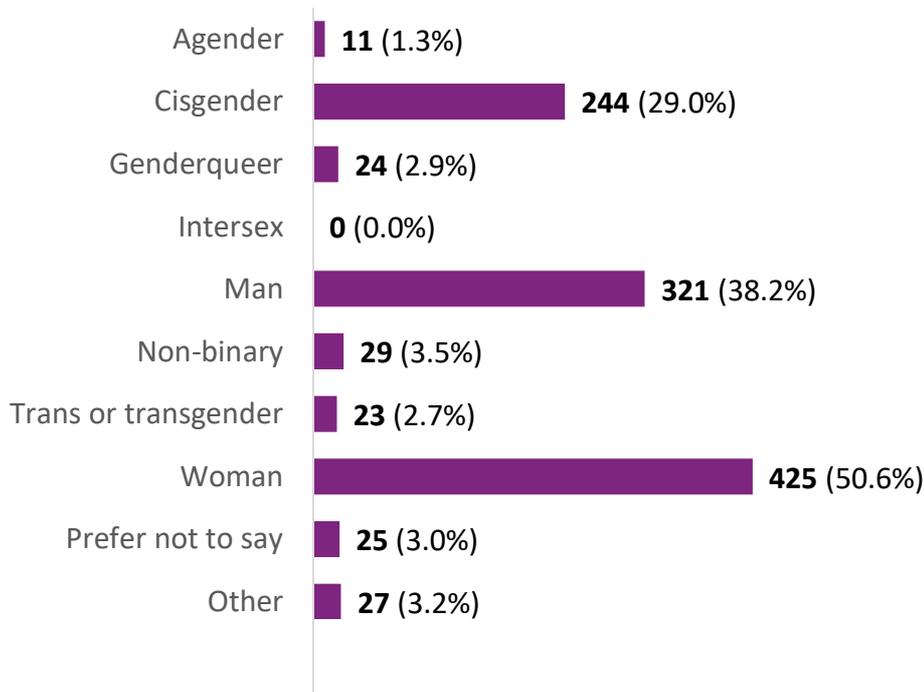
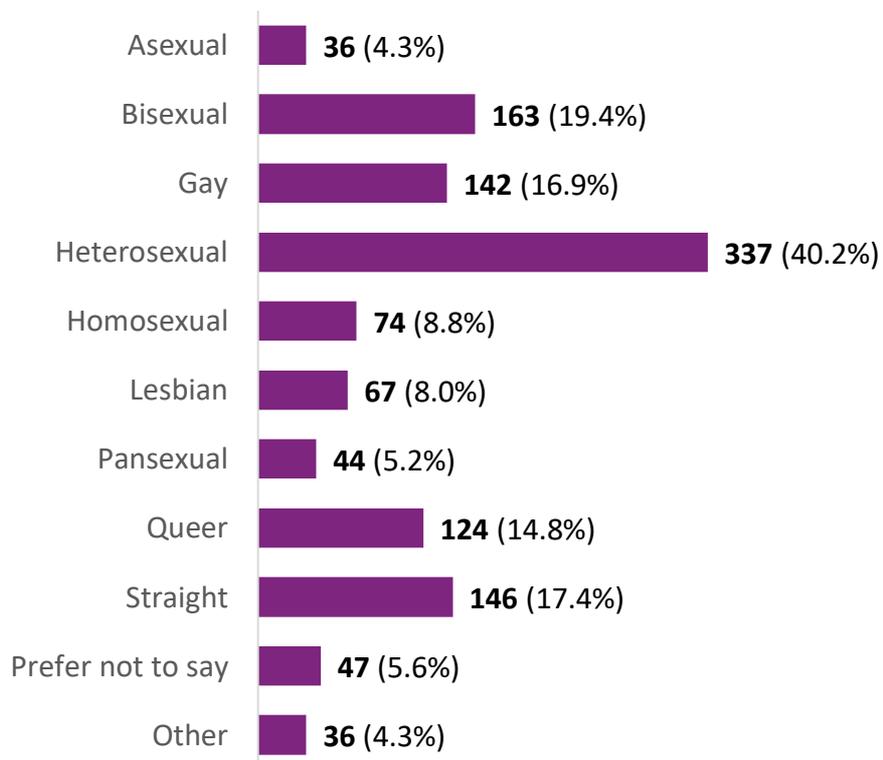


Figure 2. The words survey respondents use to describe their sexual/romantic orientation.



The survey was significantly less successful in registering Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic perspectives within any age group, a deficit we recognise. Within the category of **BME** respondents, those from Black, African, mixed White and Black, or mixed African ethnic backgrounds are significantly less well-represented than historians with Asian or mixed Asian and White backgrounds. For example, only 5 respondents (0.5%) identified as being of Black, African, or mixed White and Black or African ethnic background – groups that are also significantly underrepresented in UK university History.

We recommend reading this report alongside the RHS's previous reports into gender and race equality to gain further understanding of the ways in which **intersectionality** frames experiences of inclusion and difference.

"Being a lesbian, a woman, and an immigrant to the UK have all made me more acutely aware of current political developments that might endanger me in all three of these aspects."

Lesbian PhD student

The survey spanned multiple age groups and career stages: respondents were divided nearly equally between those under and over 35. Students were well represented in the survey, with just over a quarter being undergraduates and a little under 20% pursuing postgraduate studies.

This survey was also completed by more than 400 colleagues and students who did not identify as LGBT+. These responses provide important comparative perspectives. They are also significant – for the RHS itself as a subject association and for our discipline more broadly – because they reveal how many historians who do not themselves identify as LGBT+ wish to incorporate LGBT+ histories into their study, research and teaching, and seek better guidance in order to do so respectfully and effectively in classrooms, staff rooms and public forums.

"Though I identify as straight, I have always been puzzled by the cultural and intellectual work that goes into maintaining heteronormative structures in society. Understanding this work is the focus of my research, and

I would say I do this from within (or maybe indebted to?) a queer theoretical tradition and with a political commitment to undoing inequalities and challenging violence/erasure."

Male postdoctoral researcher

We received responses from across the range of education institutions, from schools to universities, and from many historians beyond academic institutions. These included heritage professionals working in archive, museum and gallery settings and historians who were working outside the UK. Respondents also represented all stages of the historian's career, from undergraduates to emeritus professors. These responses provide important perspectives on key workplaces in which History teaching and research is conducted, nationally and internationally.

In addition to the survey, the working group has considered supporting evidence from several recent reports published by other charities and funding bodies and consulted other experts in the field. Together this offers a strong basis for consideration of the experience of LGBT+ university staff and student historians, particularly in the UK.

Responses to the survey itself

This report is part of an ongoing commitment of the RHS to encourage, facilitate and support work towards greater equality, inclusion and representation in all historical practice, including research, teaching and public engagement. This work sits within a wider RHS policy portfolio that also includes attention to education policy, publication, open access, and research.²⁶

As with previous RHS surveys, there were a small number of negative reactions to the survey. Some objected to the premise of the RHS undertaking work to advance equalities. Others worried that drives for LGBT+ equality and diversity would weaken other, more established fields of history that they consider to be under threat in school and university curricula.

²⁶ For more on RHS policies see our website: ['Policy'](#), *Royal Historical Society* (undated page).

A small number of respondents objected to the idea of 'gender identity' and specifically to the survey's attention to issues facing trans and gender non-conforming people. Such responses provide important further evidence of the spectrum of hostility, from misunderstanding to outright prejudice and ***phobia**, that many LGBT+ and queer historians reported facing from within the profession.

Significantly more respondents considered the survey to be a valuable starting point for a contribution to LGBT+ inclusion in the discipline. As noted in our position statement, we believe advancing equality, diversity and inclusion is the right thing to do, and the Society continues to commit to, and build on, equalities work.

"RHS guidance and, where possible, intervention on/in this would really help to amplify less powerful advocates for the inclusion of these histories."

Teaching fellow on temporary contract

"At the very least what I would like to see is the RHS saying, loudly and strongly, that the world in which women, BAME people, working-class background people and LGBT people had to learn to 'adjust' to 'traditional' standards should be long gone but still isn't."

Gay professor

The working group that has produced this report shares these ambitions. We also know that there remains a long way to go.

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out
more**

The quantitative data from the survey questions are available to download from the RHS website at:

<http://www.royalhistsoc.org/lgbt/>

Experiences of LGBT+ Historians

Identity and belonging

Many LGBT+ historians responding to the survey reported that they worked in an inclusive and welcoming environment. However, this sense of equal belonging was far from universal. Only two-thirds of LGBT+ respondents agreed that they were comfortable being open about their sexuality or gender orientation in their own place of work or study. In our survey, LGBT+ respondents reported difficulties with, or reluctance to, disclosing their LGBT+ identity, or that they shaped their behaviours in response both to **heterosexual** and other LGBT+ colleagues' expectations or actions.

As other studies of UK workplaces have found, feeling comfortable disclosing or expressing LGBT+ identities is associated with higher levels of satisfaction with places of employment and study.²⁷ In this context, the number of RHS survey respondents who were uncomfortable expressing their identity should be a matter of concern for colleagues and managers alike. For students and staff who study, teach or research LGBT+ histories this barrier to full inclusion may be especially acute.

- **1 in 5 surveyed LGBT+ historians were 'unsure' (that is, hesitant or uncomfortable), or did not feel able to disclose their LGBT+ identity to colleagues and students;**
- **1 in 4 LGBT+ staff respondents were unsure, or uncomfortable expressing their LGBT+ identity outside their department (or other 'home' unit) in situations such as conferences or online;**
- **1 in 3 transgender historians were unsure, or uncomfortable expressing their LGBT+ identity outside their department.**

Some respondents saw sexuality and gender identity as central to their identity as historians, while others felt these were irrelevant or private. This range of approaches also emerged clearly in responses (from women and BME historians) to similar questions about identity in our earlier survey on race and ethnicity.²⁸

²⁷ [Exploring the Workplace for LGBT+ Physical Scientists](#), 20.

²⁸ RHS, [Race, Ethnicity & Equality in UK History](#), 51.

Differing responses to questions about identity reflect—but cannot be reduced to—the often distinctive experiences of LGBT+ and queer historians who do, or do not, research and/or teach LGBT+ and queer histories. Some respondents reported that their LGBT+ identity is simply assumed in relation to their research interests.

"Much of my work has been on LGBT histories, and until recently I think the assumption has been you would only do that work if you were queer yourself - hence it was my PhD and subsequent publications that 'outed' me well before I met colleagues or students in hiring panels, classrooms, seminars."

Gay professor

"I have always been out at work, partly because I work on lesbian history and therefore it is impossible to hide my sexuality, and partly because it is really important to me to be out, whatever people think."

Lesbian lecturer

"My own experience of heterosexual colleagues, as in life more generally, is very mixed. I have some who are very positive and well-informed about lives other than their own, and other colleagues who are clearly clueless about non-heterosexual lives."

Lesbian senior lecturer

Disclosure or expression of LGBT+ and queer identities may be particularly difficult for early career historians, those employed on short-term contracts or international staff and students with fixed-term, contingent visas. LGBT+ and queer identities can thus add to the precarity and lack of job (and other forms of) security that many professional historians now experience, particularly early in their careers. This is without considering the strain caused by the emotional labour of having to explain one's own identity to sometimes uncomprehending colleagues.

"It is not always easy to 'come out' all the time - I get 'coming out' fatigue between roles."

Gay fixed-term contract researcher

"Usually I do not bring up my sexuality in applications or I lie and say I am heterosexual in order to avoid the potential for missed opportunities which is unfortunate as I'd like to believe everywhere is inclusive but that is not the case and I don't want to take that risk."

Bi student

Respondents acknowledged a range of factors that compound such precariousness. These included research specialisms, gender, class, race, religious belief, disability, parenthood and other caring responsibilities.

Bisexual historians, and/or people who are polyamorous or have open relationships, for example, reported fearing prejudice and misunderstanding from both straight and LGBT+ colleagues.

"My current partner is male, but I feel I have to refer to my ex as they, not her, to avoid certain conversations."

Bi researcher

"I am very careful, perhaps needlessly. Sometimes colleagues have found out but when they have it spikes my anxiety, even though the response has been neutral/positive. Even around trusted colleagues, I tend to be cagey, which is a real shame."

Bi lecturer

Exclusion and disadvantage can be experienced both differently and more intensely by those who are multiply marginalised. The overlapping of different social, economic and cultural circumstances can have particularly negative effects on LGBT+ individuals, who are statistically more likely to have experienced familial rejection and/or homelessness. According to a 2015 survey, LGBT+ individuals make

up 24% of the youth homeless population and 69% of these are likely to have experienced familial rejection, violence or abuse.²⁹

"The fact that I am white and middle class gives me a lot of insider privilege in the academy, even if I am simultaneously a queer outsider."

Lesbian lecturer

Students may feel more comfortable expressing their sexuality and gender identity with fellow students rather than with staff (including 'admin' or professional support staff), and vice versa.

"Every lecturer who has taught me knows I'm a lesbian, as do the students. First year of uni this was not the case, but in second year after getting comfortable in an accepting environment I have been able to do this."

Lesbian undergraduate student

Mental health and wellbeing

Concerns about the mental health and wellbeing of university staff and students in the UK have risen sharply in the past few years, with 1 in 5 students having a diagnosis of a mental health disorder.³⁰ LGBT+ and queer individuals, not least LGBT+ and queer young people, are particularly likely to have mental health problems exacerbated by discrimination, family rejection, isolation or *phobia. A 2019 'Business In The Community' report found that nearly three-quarters of LGBT+ people experienced mental health problems relating to work.³¹ This risk if anything increases for trans people: a recent survey found 48% of UK trans people had attempted suicide.³²

²⁹ Albert Kennedy Trust, '[LGBT Youth Homelessness: A UK National Scoping of Cause, Response and Outcome](#)' (2018), *Proud Trust*.

³⁰ Liz Morrish, '[Pressure Vessels: The epidemic of poor mental health among higher education staff](#)', *Higher Education Policy Institute* (23 May 2019); Paul Gorczynski, '[More Academics and Students have Mental Health Problems than ever before](#)', *The Conversation* (22 February 2018)

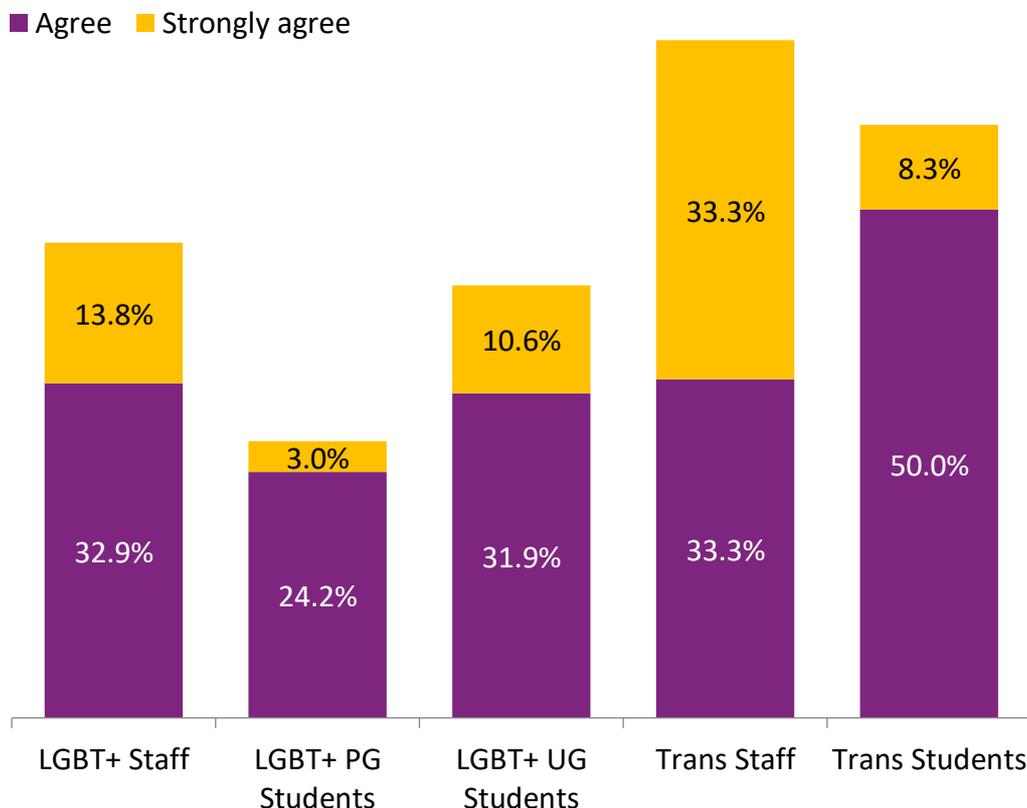
³¹ '[Mental Health Statistics: LGBT people](#)', *Mental Health Foundation*; Business in the Community, '[Working with Pride: Issues Affecting LGBT+ People in the Workplace](#)' (2019).

³² Louis Bailey, Sonja J. Ellis, Jay McNeil, 'Suicide risk in the UK trans population and the role of gender transition in decreasing suicidal ideation and suicide attempt', *Mental Health Review Journal* 19:4 (2014), 209–220.

Our survey suggests that History workplaces at present often fail to provide LGBT+ students and staff with supportive and welcoming environments and can in some instances be positively hostile. Efforts to foster LGBT+ inclusion succeed with at most half of all LGBT+ staff, and are largely failing the History postgraduate population (see Figure 3).

- **Less than half of LGBT+ historians agreed or strongly agreed that their department's approach to LGBT+ inclusion had a positive impact on their mental health.**
- **Only 1 in 4 postgraduate historians agreed or strongly agreed that their department's approach to LGBT+ inclusion had a positive impact on their mental health.**
- **Trans historians were most likely to agree that their department's approach to LGBT+ inclusion had a positive impact on their mental health.**

Figure 3: Percentage of respondents who agreed or strongly agreed that their mental health and general welfare had been positively affected by the way their department approaches and manages LGBT+ inclusion.



Some **departments** and institutions are seen by respondents as making determined efforts towards LGBT+ inclusion, which are having a positive effect on the mental health of LGBT+ historians.

Although many of the problems faced by LGBT+ historians require significant interventions to remove **structural barriers** and inequalities, some improvements are readily accessible. Relatively small gestures – such as not assuming people are heterosexual or ensuring that the correct **pronouns** are consistently used and respected – could make a big difference.

"Little things, such as colleagues using my pronouns (they, them) in passing has really helped boost my mental health."

Teaching fellow

"One of my friends in my halls last year was very supportive in helping me figure out my pronouns and gave me the space and time to make my own decision on when I wanted to tell the rest of our friends. When I did, everyone was extremely supportive and took it upon themselves to understand gender identity much more and trained themselves to say the correct pronouns, apologising when they make a mistake. I found out that 2 of my friends practiced a lot in their spare time together to make sure they had gotten saying the pronouns into their muscle memory."

Non-binary undergraduate

Pronouns

Not respecting the requests of students, colleagues or members of the public to use their correct name and pronoun and/or deliberately misgendering them are discriminatory behaviours which could place institutions in violation of the Equality Act 2010 (in the UK). Checking which pronouns to use is an easy way to ensure that the gender of all staff and students, regardless of identity or presentation, can be respected. Ask all seminar participants or committee members to let you know their pronouns by sending you an email, not in a setting (whether in person or online) which might force someone to identify in a way they are not comfortable doing in public. For cisgender or heterosexual people, including pronouns in your email signature line or other online identifier where this is possible is a way of signalling allyship, communicating kindness and normalising a practice which makes it safer and easier for people who are not.

Find
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More suggestions and links to resources about using correct pronouns are available in the Online Resources section:

<http://www.royalhistsoc.org/lgbt/>

Given that there is an important social dimension to how academic communities operate, some LGBT+ respondents found the heteronormative expectations of the routine events of scholarly life exclusionary. Such problems, which surfaced both in staff and student responses, can be compounded by a lack of peers, role models or colleagues with whom to share experiences, reinforcing a sense of 'onlyness' as well as loneliness.

"I have felt very lonely and excluded at times as postgrad socials are mainly attended by married, straight couples."

Graduate teaching assistant

"It is disappointing that there is virtually no visible LGBTQIA+ presence in my department. While I would not say that I have been actively adversely affected, I would say that it entrenches a feeling of marginalisation — it is a lonely existence."

Bi researcher

Many respondents to the survey observed that academia in general offers a poor environment for mental health. For LGBT+ and queer academics, experiences of marginalisation are likely to be compounded by the heavy teaching loads, administrative demands, and the increasing precarity of careers that are a feature of current international academic life.

Living, learning and working conditions following COVID-19 appear likely to place further pressures on LGBT+ mental health. A study of LGBTQ+ respondents conducted by University of Sussex and University College London researchers from 27 April to 13 July 2020 found that 69% had experienced 'significant depressive symptomology', with a three-fold increase in incidence for those who reported having experienced harassment due to their gender or sexuality. Younger, transgender and gender-diverse respondents were especially likely to report depressive symptoms, an association the authors conclude was 'partially explained by experiences of discrimination which had a large, consistent and pernicious impact on stress and mental health'.³³

Furthermore, in the context of COVID-19, teaching and studying online from home raises questions about privacy and safety. Teachers of LGBT+ and queer histories cannot assume that their students have a safe and private space at home in which to read and discuss LGBT+ subject matter.

Many historians who identify as LGBT+ undertake research which is not focused specifically on LGBT+ or queer-related topics. Staff who teach and research LGBT+ and queer histories are often presumed to

³³ Dylan Kneale and Laia Becares, '[The Mental Health and Experiences of Discrimination of LGBTQ+ People during the COVID-19 Pandemic: Initial Findings from the Queerantime Study](#)', *MedRxiv* (2020): [preprint, not yet peer-reviewed]

be LGBT+ themselves (even if they are not), which leaves them open to greater exposure of harassment and prejudice.

On being out

Institutions can help support LGBT+ and queer historians by fostering an environment that is aware of LGBT+ issues and actively encourages LGBT+ and queer histories. At the same time, however, it is important to respect individual colleagues' and students' right to privacy and to be aware of the fact that not all LGBT+ people necessarily want to 'come out' or to be 'out'. For some people, coming out is viscerally important and life-changing and does not feel like a choice, whereas for others it does not feel necessary or relevant to declare their gender and/or sexuality.

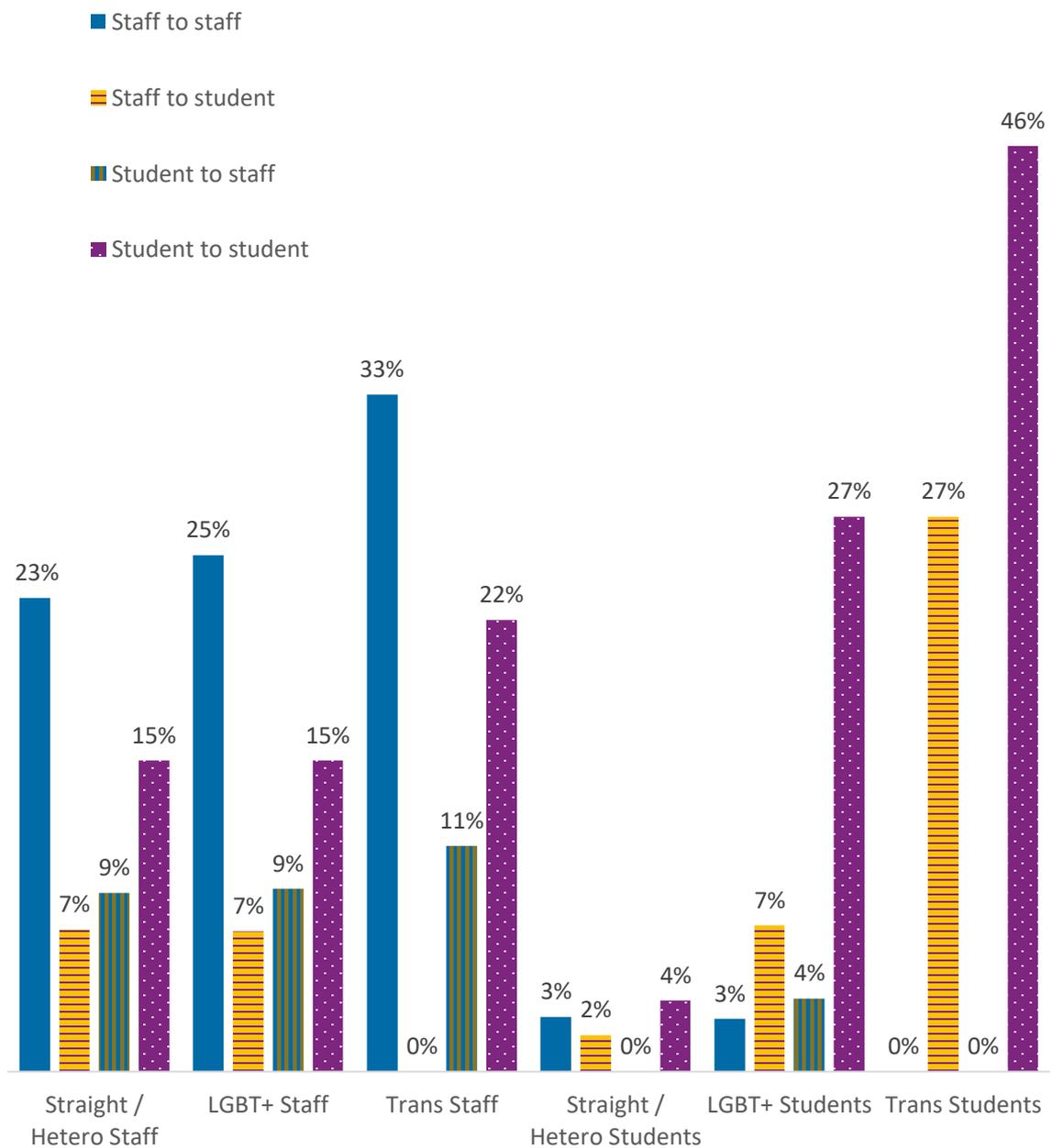
Discrimination and harassment

In addition to revealing significant cause for concern with respect to workplaces' success in fostering LGBT+ mental health and wellbeing, our survey registered both experiences of overt discrimination and harassment and significant uncertainty as to how such incidents could be challenged.

- **1 in 4 LGBT+ staff in history reported that they have witnessed homophobic, transphobic or biphobic behaviour, attitudes or decisions between staff;**
- **1 in 5 members of staff in history would be unsure or not know what to do if they witnessed discrimination, violence or hate incidents in their department or other home unit;**
- **nearly half of postgraduate historians would be unsure or not know what to do if they witnessed discrimination, violence or hate incidents in their department;**
- **more than a quarter of LGBT+ student historians have witnessed homophobic, transphobic or biphobic behaviour and/or attitudes between students;**
- **a quarter of staff have witnessed homophobic, transphobic or biphobic behaviour and/or attitudes between staff.**

As these data suggest, encountering attitudes and behaviours that are homophobic, transphobic or biphobic is a common experience for LGBT+ staff and students in UK History departments (see Figure 4). A quarter of our colleagues report experiencing such damaging encounters.

Figure 4: Percentage of respondents who witnessed homophobic, transphobic or biphobic behaviour, attitudes or decisions in their department.



References to overt instances of discrimination by respondents to our RHS survey were rare and sometimes historic, but this does not mean they do not still weigh heavily or that traumatic experiences have always healed. At their worst, instances unambiguously constitute harassment, as defined with reference to the Equality Act 2010's protected characteristics.

"I have been asked sexually explicit questions at work— e.g. if I need to use dildos, at a lunch welcoming me to a department—and responded appropriately, but then I've been avoided or ignored by the inevitably senior, male colleagues who asked."

Lesbian lecturer

"I have frequently been the subject of what I would call 'unwitting' biphobia. In which during department social events I have had comments about being "greedy" in my sexuality as a joke, or another colleague asking me out of curiosity 'you're "a bi", right?'"

Bi PhD student

"The 'lad culture' makes it difficult amongst students, usually of the male variety. Being asked to prove it when you reject someone because you're a lesbian is despicable."

Undergraduate student

In the RHS's 2018 Race report, micro-aggressions emerged as a significant barrier to inclusion for Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic historians.³⁴ Micro-aggressions were likewise repeatedly mentioned by respondents to our 2019 LGBT+ survey.

In considering micro-aggressions, it is essential to remember that repeated micro-aggressions create a hostile environment that leads to minority stress.³⁵ Consistent and seemingly deliberate mis-

³⁴ RHS, *Race, Ethnicity & Equality in UK History*, esp. 55-56.

³⁵ L.H. Meyer, 'Prejudice, Social Stress and Mental Health in Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual Populations: Conceptual Issues and Research Evidence', *Psychological Bulletin*, 129, 5 (2003), 674-697; Sam Hope, *Person-Centred Counselling for Trans and Gender Diverse People* (London and Philadelphia, 2019), 120-1.

gendering through wrong pronoun use is, moreover, not micro-aggression, but rather transphobia.

"Not that there is an official policy against queer people, but there [are] clearly some comments about body hair and the wrong type of looks."

Lesbian former PhD student

In History environments, challenges faced by LGBT+ and queer staff are exacerbated by lack of knowledge and understanding of how experiences of bias, discrimination and aggression should be reported and responded to, with one in five respondents uncertain of their options and obligations in these contexts.

Early career historians appear to be especially vulnerable to damaging behaviours due to departments' and universities' failure to ensure effective equality, diversity and inclusion training. Half of postgraduate respondents to our LGBT+ survey lacked knowledge of how to respond to hate incidents, violence and other forms of discrimination. This finding is of concern in the context of postgraduate student wellbeing. It is also significant given the role that postgraduate researchers play as teachers in undergraduate classrooms. As teachers—whether they find themselves the subject of discriminatory behaviours, are called upon to recognise and adjudicate instances of harassment or discrimination among other students, or are themselves conduits of these behaviours—our early career colleagues need and deserve effective guidance and training.

"I believe my department has no openly trans or non-binary staff members, even though we have a high number of trans and non-binary students; when I tried to introduce even the mildest of inclusive policies (having more than two genders listed on the application forms, for example), most senior staff members did not understand why it was an issue (again, no outright hostility, just ignorance which demands quite a lot of emotional labour)."

Bi teaching fellow

This point is underlined when we see that nearly a third of LGBT+ undergraduates have witnessed acts of discrimination against LGBT+ students within their university cohort.

Across Britain, university-based historians are committed to exercising their duty of care to students and staff, a point that emerges clearly in the RHS's annual site visits to departments and subject groups in universities across the four UK nations. Yet our survey responses repeatedly demonstrate that many colleagues and students do not find a safe and welcoming environment in which to study, teach and undertake research.

Creating a safe and welcoming environment requires emotional intelligence and knowledge of the issues at stake for LGBT+ and queer people. Further action to ensure that all colleagues and students are clear about how to respond to discrimination and harassment is essential, particularly for postgraduate students. More Information and Resources are on the RHS website at:

<http://www.royalhistsoc.org/lgbt/>

"I was part of a trans working group which spent a year developing recommendations for policies. I have not seen many of these recommendations actually implemented. There was a transitioning at work policy prior to our work but nobody knew about it (including line managers) or followed it."

Transgender lecturer

Knowledge of Equalities and Rights Legislation

The four equalities surveys undertaken by the RHS in recent years have each revealed significant lapses in UK historians' understanding of the legal framework that governs their rights and obligations in the workplace.³⁶ Among respondents to our LGBT+ survey:

- **One third of staff in History are either unaware, or only partially aware of current UK Equality legislation.**
- **More than half of historians gained the knowledge they have of the Equality Act 2010 outside their workplace.**

The 1998 Human Rights Act established a number of important rights for LGBT+ people in the UK. Articles such as the right to marry, respect for private and family life, freedom of thought, belief and religion and protection from discrimination have all proved important in subsequent extensions of protection specifically for LGBT+ and queer people. A particularly significant development in British legal protections came in 2010. Under the Equality Act of that year, in England, Scotland and Wales a person's sex, their sexual orientation and whether their gender identity is different from the **sex assigned** at birth are among nine 'protected characteristics'. The Act protects individuals from discrimination, of which there are four main types: direct, indirect, harassment and victimisation.³⁷ Being married or in a civil partnership is also a 'protected characteristic' under the 2010 Act. Same-sex marriage has been legal in England, Scotland and Wales since 2014, but in Northern Ireland it was only legalised in July 2019, and implemented during the period in which we have been writing this report.³⁸

While some respondents commented that they were aware of UK legislation relevant to LGBT+ rights because they were legal

³⁶ Previous RHS Reports can be viewed at on the ['Policy'](#) pages of the Royal Historical Society website.

³⁷ UK Government, ['Equality Act 2010'](#), *UK Legislation*; For more information see 'Sexual Orientation Discrimination' *Equality and Human Rights Commission* (11 October 2016).

³⁸ UK Government, ['Northern Ireland \(Executive Formation etc\) Act 2019'](#), *UK Legislation*. Further information about equality legislation in Northern Ireland can be found on the [Equality Commission for Northern Ireland website](#).

historians or took an interest through activism, it is striking that so many staff do not seem to be gaining knowledge about equality from their workplace. We know from previous RHS research that UK historians' understanding of race and ethnicity within the context of UK legislation is also poor, suggesting the need to locate this report's findings within intersectional analyses of discrimination and harassment.³⁹

External sources of information reported in the survey included trade unions, LGBT+ groups and other professional or community roles. Within the workplace common sources of information include training as preparation for serving on a hiring committee, an appointment to a management role, or through initiatives such as Athena SWAN.

There is a great deal of misunderstanding about employers' ability (and statutory responsibility) to take **positive action** (a term which is often confused with **positive discrimination**) to improve workplace equality. Although workplaces may be fulfilling their statutory duty to inform employees of EDI issues and the requirements of equalities legislation it is concerning that nearly half the survey respondents remained unclear on such issues. Action on equality legislation doesn't stop once someone is hired, but needs to be maintained within the working environment as a whole.

"My institution, like many, I fear, loves to promote diversity but does very little to empower people around protecting it."

Gay professor

³⁹ RHS, [Race, Ethnicity & Equality in UK History](#), 56.

Institutional Support

Respondents to our survey were very aware of the ways in which institutional support affected the quality of their environment. The presence or absence of institutional backing can play an instrumental role in encouraging or discouraging, enabling or dampening, inclusive or exclusive individual interventions.

As survey respondents made clear, policies and procedures alone do not offer a comprehensive solution to the challenges faced by LGBT+ historians with respect to identity and belonging, mental health and wellbeing or discrimination and harassment. The attitudes and commitment of programme leads, line-managers and senior managers are also essential to LGBT+ welfare and career development.

"My head of department is hostile to LGBTQ issues, my dean is also reluctant to discuss these issues and I am not aware of any LGBTQ colleagues I could approach for support on such an issue."

Lesbian lecturer

"at the moment... we have a head of department who knows his stuff on equality. I would have been rather less sure about the competence of other potential [heads of department]."

Bi/queer senior lecturer

The qualitative responses to our survey attest that personal and individual relationships, particularly in relation to reporting incidents of harassment or discrimination, are crucial to many LGBT+ historians' ability to avoid isolation and provide or benefit from professional support. Yet such relationships – especially when positions such as head of department rotate every few years – can often be contingent or temporary.

Our survey suggests that experiences of department-level support can often be at odds with support available at university level.

Respondents repeatedly expressed scepticism about wider institutional commitments to equality, diversity and inclusion. Blanket equality statements (whether or not they specifically mentioned LGBT+) are too often seen as ‘bland’ and ‘paying lip service’ rather than effective policies.

"I feel my university just likes to tick the boxes. It publicly supports LGBT+ issues, and likes to present that face for students, but it offers no support to staff. In terms of research LGBT+ issues are seen as very marginal and not worthy of study; we want to teach them because our students want to study them, but no more."

Gay senior lecturer

Only 1 in 4 of LGBT+ respondents indicated that training on issues such as **unconscious bias** or **implicit bias** was provided at their workplaces. More broadly however, the value of such initiatives remains unclear. An Advance HE report commissioned by UKRI in 2019 suggested that while equalities and bias training often raised awareness, there is less evidence that it changes behaviour.⁴⁰ This finding underlines the need for local action—at the level of subject groups, departments, schools and faculties, rather than reliance on institutional-level policies alone.

Even where individuals may feel confident that they know what action to take in the event that they witness discrimination, violence or hate incidents, many LGBT+ and queer historians do not believe that robust or adequate policies exist at an institutional level to deal with them. Others are worried about the ‘negative repercussions’ of reporting *phobic harassment.

"I'm personally eroded by dealing with 40 odd years of prejudice and don't have it in me any more for personal confrontation. Although I think I'd be supported in making a formal complaint, I also think - make that know - that I'd be encouraged to park the issue and let the organisation deal with the issue informally."

Historian in heritage organisation

⁴⁰ Kevin Guyan and Freya Douglas Oloyede, [*Equality, Diversity and Inclusion in Research and Innovation: UK Review*](#) (2019), UKRI, 26-30.

These findings make it imperative for subject units and departments (and the wider institutions that house them) to take their obligations to support EDI seriously to establish and maintain support structures that do not rely for their effectiveness or continuation on the appointment (or voluntary emotional labour) of specific individuals.

Heads of department and managers should be especially careful to exercise their duty of care towards staff and students likely to be more vulnerable to discrimination and remember that this includes LGBT+ and queer people. But policies need to be embedded in organisational culture, not dependent on individual leaders. One way to promote this is to ensure that colleagues read and discuss this report and the associated recommendations.

Gender-inclusivity

Just under half of transgender historians were aware that their institution had policies and processes in place for **transitioning** or affirming gender identity at work, and just over half of this group considered these to be adequate.

- **1 in 5 transgender historians has no access to suitable gender-neutral bathroom facilities.**

Within the broader context of LGBT+ experiences in History, transgender, non-binary and gender-diverse students and colleagues occupy a distinctive position. They are, for instance, defined by their gender rather than their sexuality, and may be heterosexual. They also face distinctive challenges and disadvantages. Our findings reflect those in the survey of transgender physical scientists in the UK, who reported that they experienced ‘significantly higher levels of exclusionary behaviour, compared to **cisgender**’ colleagues.⁴¹

In a society accustomed to binary frameworks for gender, non-binary and gender-diverse people may face particular discrimination. Indeed, recent research in both the UK and US has shown that non-

⁴¹ [Exploring the Workplace for LGBT+ Physical Scientists](#), 14.

binary people experience a 'lower quality of life and higher levels of current serious psychological distress' compared to both cisgender and other transgender people.⁴²

Additionally, whereas a number of cis gay respondents noted that they had perhaps avoided instances of harassment by not disclosing their sexuality at work, transitioning is often a very overt and visible act. It may involve medical interventions and lengthy bureaucratic procedures such as name changes.⁴³ Gender reassignment and transgender identity information are regarded as sensitive in data protection legislation. Policies need to reflect this and other statutory duties, such as a transgender person's right to a private life under the Human Rights Act 1998. In particular, the Equality Act 2010 specifically protects the right of transgender people – whether or not they are under medical supervision – with respect to gender reassignment. Offences under this legislation include discrimination against people because they are perceived to be transgender (even if that perception is incorrect), and discrimination against people because of their association with a transgender person. These statutory duties are not, however, always reflected in effective gender-inclusivity policies, not least when it comes to the management of name changes.⁴⁴ And even the best written policies are not always fully realised in workplaces.

"I was part of a trans working group which spent a year developing recommendations for policies. I have not seen many of these recommendations actually implemented. There was a transitioning at work policy prior to our work but nobody knew about it (including line managers) or followed it."

Transgender lecturer

⁴² Cristiano Scandurra et al., '[Health of Non-Binary and Genderqueer People: A Systematic Review](#)', *Frontiers in Psychology* (25 June 2019).

⁴³ Guidance and resources for supporting non-binary and gender diverse applicants, students and staff in Further and Higher Education are on the [TransEDU Scotland](#) and [Advance HE](#) websites.

⁴⁴ '[Gender Reassignment Discrimination](#)', *Equality and Human Rights Commission* (15 May 2019). Although the Equality Act uses the term 'transsexual' this term is now widely considered outdated and misleading. The Equality Act's provisions apply to anybody who proposes to change their gender. See House of Commons Women and Equalities Committee, [Transgender Equality: First Report of Session 2015-16](#) (8 December 2015), *United Kingdom Parliament*.

"Pronouns are not included in central information systems. Preferred name data storage for staff is not fit for purpose."

Transgender senior lecturer

"There [have] been many transgender students whose birthname has been kept on registers instead of their chosen name."

Transgender postgraduate

Having access to gender-inclusive spaces and provisions for gender-recognition can have a profound impact on transgender, non-binary and gender-diverse people's ability to work and study in our institutions. While transgender people can access gender-exclusive spaces under the Equality Act 2010 according to their gender (except under exceptional circumstances, on a case by case basis), there remains a need for universities to consider how appropriate gender-exclusive spaces are in provision such as housing or prayer rooms, and how exclusionary this can still be for non-binary people.

This includes access to spaces such as baby-changing facilities and toilets, which are fundamental to human dignity. Full access to these at archives and libraries, in cultural and heritage institutions and at schools and universities is an essential part of inclusivity. Although transgender people are legally entitled to access the toilet appropriate to their gender, many continue to fear hostility in doing so. Although gender-neutral toilets are increasingly available in many places, for 1 in 5 transgender respondents to our survey this was not the case. Furthermore, respondents reported that this provision is often either patchy, geographically-distant or unsuitable, and often concentrated in student-centred or social locations, particularly libraries, student unions, or cafés.

"[Gender-neutral facilities] exist but are mostly somewhat inaccessible - e.g. the top floor of buildings, tucked away in a corner, no wheelchair access."

Transgender undergraduate

"The only gender-neutral toilet is the disabled toilet, which puts colleagues in a difficult position of having to use a space reserved for another marginalised group if they want a gender-neutral facility."

Bi/queer senior lecturer

If you are in a decision-making position, or are offered an opportunity to influence decisions, ask for and promote inclusive policies. These include the ability to record preferred names and name changes, and making appropriate gender-neutral facilities widely available. Individuals can also practice allyship by countering heteronormative conventions and practices. As well as making your own pronouns known, avoid assumptions about gender on the basis of name or appearance. Rethink common gendered phrases and adjust by using more inclusive, gender-neutral language.

Careers and Research

- **1 in 6 LGBT+ staff said that they had been discriminated against or overlooked for opportunities and/or recognition due to their sexuality or gender;**
- **1 in 6 LGBT+ staff identified barriers to career progression for LGBT+ people within their institution.**

Career development is a vital aspect of History as a university discipline. Enabling career progression not only supports individual historians but also fosters the wider development and health of our subject. Attitudes, behaviours and policies that are inimical to LGBT+ equality and inclusion thus obstruct the practice of History in institutional settings. As a Learned Society, the RHS has a natural interest in – and commitment to – standards and expectations that maximise EDI for LGBT+ and queer people.

Our survey suggests several pinch points in the career cycle that are perceived as particular obstacles by LGBT+ historians. For those working in LGBT+ and queer history, a major concern was whether historians in this field would be hired and promoted, with the survey showing that only around half of LGBT+ respondents were clear that their departments support research in this area. Furthermore, a widespread presumption that only LGBT+ historians would or should be interested in LGBT+ histories has led to many feeling exposed and/or isolated within professional networks. A number of respondents also reported being given sole responsibility for diversification initiatives, a form of essentialist stereotyping that can create disproportionate workloads, lead to significant distress and be experienced as profoundly isolating (as reported by BME historians who responded to our 2018 survey).

"A consistent theme of student feedback in my department refers to the lack of diversity in teaching, in that we tend to deliver a very white, heterosexual version of history. As an academic who identifies as LGBT, my courses offer the only courses which engage with sexual minority dimensions."

Gay lecturer

Biases around the kind of research profile a scholar requires for promotion may also disproportionately disadvantage LGBT+ academics. Specific examples of reported discrimination include the impact of homophobic academics in senior positions and the gatekeeping of access to resources, positions and professional esteem.

"There is, at times, a lads club, where decisions get made, and as I am not one of them, I am not included and probably passed over for being selected for duties or promotion."

Gay senior lecturer

"I have had personal experience of reporting transphobia at a variety of institutions ... as well as intervening with colleagues expressing homophobia in the inappropriate form of what they took to be humour."

Transgender senior historian

One transgender lecturer believed that they were perceived as younger, and consequently more junior, than they actually are, with negative impacts upon their career prospects. Such issues of unconscious biases related to appearance are corroborated by other reports on workplace experience and impact particularly negatively on women, and even more so on LGBT+ women.⁴⁵ One in seven LGBT+ respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they had modified their appearance and/or hidden their sexuality in response to concerns about discrimination. It is important to register that these concerns relate not only to career progression but also to fears about harassment.

"Ever since my undergraduate days I have always been visibly queer... In the last 12–18 months I have had to rethink my privacy and security quite drastically in view of vulnerability to targeted harassment and am realising that I would feel more confident about pursuing all the research I used to do if my appearance was more

⁴⁵ McKinsey and Co., [LGBTQ+ Voices: Learning from Lived Experiences](#) (June 2020) 5-6.

anonymous (so that I'd be less likely to be recognised in the street if I were the victim of an online hate campaign). You asking this question has made me realise how sad I feel about having to make this choice."

Lesbian senior lecturer

LGBT+ identities intersect with race and a wide range of other factors having an impact on career progression, including age, class, disability and gender. Caring responsibilities or migrant status were also cited as limiting career advancement. For LGBT+ people these disadvantages can be compounded by exclusion, family rejection, and/or a lack of self-confidence stemming from having to hide aspects of themselves.

"Although there has been tremendous movement towards greater equality in HEIs, we still live in a world where discrimination against LGBTQ people is very real and where acceptance (including self-acceptance) has to be fought for. For young people, coming to terms with their sexuality, the whole business is often painful, and can undermine the self-confidence that helps get one a job or promotion."

Gay professor

Travel

Nationally and internationally, employers are increasingly alive to their responsibility to ensure the safety, wellbeing and equal opportunities of their staff, and increasingly cognisant that they cannot as responsible employers simply assume that LGBT+ staff will have equal access to these teaching and research conditions. In a recent report, McKinsey & Company for example observed that their LGBTQ+ staff faced 'overt discrimination, danger, and legal jeopardy' with respect to travel and immigration in particular, noting that same-sex sexual acts are criminalised in over a third of UN member states and that 'simply being transgender is illegal' in many nations in which they do business.⁴⁶

⁴⁶ McKinsey and Co., [LGBTQ+ Voices](#), 5-6.

The discipline of History as practised in the UK has been enriched at multiple levels by the global mobility of its practitioners. For many historians, freedom to travel internationally to enhance their language skills, to work in archives and libraries and/or to undertake oral histories or fieldwork is a cornerstone of their research careers. International mobility is also an important component of historians' ability to build and sustain careers by accepting short- or longer-term academic posts wherever they are located. Many LGBT+ historians, and around half of transgender historians, however, reported obstacles to international travel, whether to conduct research, attend conferences, or take up visiting fellowships.

"Some parts of the world are effectively barred to me."

Postgraduate researcher

As our survey responses attest, for some LGBT+ historians, research trips, conference attendance, or career moves, entail difficult decisions about personal safety. These range from making choices not to pursue certain research projects or attend international conferences in their field, to navigating cultural and legal discrimination in deciding whether to accept job offers. Expectations that university staff will be prepared to visit or work at overseas campuses in countries with anti-LGBT+ legislation are a real concern for LGBT+ staff respondents to our survey.⁴⁷ While some respondents acknowledged the difficulties all women face travelling alone in some places, transgender/gender non-conforming historians face specific or additional difficulties in travelling in hostile environments relating to their official identity documents as well as the use of body scanners when passing through airport security.

"I travel there often, but I can never be open about my identity as a gay man there."

Professor

Conversely, risk aversion strategies deployed by employers and their insurers are based on calculations of institutional risk that may arbitrarily reduce opportunities for international study and research. Reliance on reports that are insufficiently attuned to local context, or

⁴⁷ ['Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender foreign travel advice'](#), UK Government (5 March 2020).

ignoring researcher knowledge and expertise in negotiating those contexts, may falsely reinforce assumptions that the UK is by default universally safer for LGBT+ and queer people than other places.

"Part of my research could have included a research trip to Algeria, but I was put off from trying to arrange this due to concerns surrounding my safety."

Postgraduate students

Within university contexts, getting this right clearly matters for staff and students alike. Responsible supervision of research students and study abroad students, as well as effective line management, requires knowledge and understanding of LGBT+ experiences internationally. That necessitates headline risk assessments, such as those produced by the (recently reconfigured) Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, but also individualised assessments based on researcher knowledge and expertise. One respondent highlighted the lack of mechanisms to consider how to accommodate the safety requirements/challenges of LGBT+ researchers, which can have a profound impact on their ability to conduct research.

"I have PhD students in Brazil at the moment, but I would not join them under the current transphobic regime there."

Transgender historian

Similar issues are faced by historians working outside an academic environment or conducting research, for example, on oral history projects in the UK that engage with the general public and which might expose them to *phobic abuse. As the REF 'Impact' agenda has expanded in the UK – and come to bear increasing weight in processes such as promotions – these obstacles have become salient in new ways, requiring History departments to think more systematically and more effectively about ways to mitigate them.

"I have always felt that I need to hide my sexuality, especially when conducting interviews. Interviewees often ask about me in the pre- and post- interview chat"

and I feel that I'm too unsure of their views (especially older interviewees) to be honest."

Historian in heritage management role

"Visitors to exhibitions have expressed homophobic views in comments, some directed at the 'curator'."

Gay curator

Take seriously the personal risk to LGBT+ and queer staff and students involved in travelling to places that are not LGBT+ inclusive. Don't make travel a requirement and do provide as much support as possible for alternatives such as online contact. For public engagement work by LGBT+ and queer individuals make sure institutional ownership of the project is evident, to help reduce the impact of personal exposure to discrimination.

Research funding and publications

As we note in our section on 'Context', UK funding bodies have paid very little attention to LGBT+ identities in their collection of data on equalities. Unsurprisingly, few LGBT+ historians have a clear sense of whether their sexuality or gender identity has affected access to research funding. Although the data on research funding in the survey is limited, it does indicate that the experience is different for those working on LGBT+ and queer histories. This included institutional perceptions regarding whether LGBT+ and queer research was likely to generate grant funding.

"This [LGBT+ history] tends to be viewed as minority interest and unlikely to attract funding in ever more competitive research funding environment."

Gay lecturer

"For many years, since the late 1990s, I was advised by research offices in different institutions not to use the word lesbian in grant applications as it was too 'confrontational' ... I have never been successful in an application for funding from the AHRC or any national funding body in the UK (although I have in other countries)."

Lesbian lecturer

Respondents also registered concerns about the openness of funding agencies to support research in this field of history, although there was a perception for some that the situation might be improving.

"No one actively says 'do not apply', but I am left wondering if the content of my research (trans history) has been a reason for rejection from some funding bodies."

Teaching fellow

"This is changing, but even in the past decade I have been told that LGBTQ research is unfundable (by foundations)."

Gay museum researcher

The survey also highlighted the need for funding bodies to be aware of the particular challenges and alternative approaches taken by LGBT+ historians whose research related to hostile parts of the world.

"... there isn't really a mechanism for considering how to accommodate the safety requirements/challenges of LGBTQ+ researchers and their ability to conduct field research."

Transgender lecturer

The conspicuous absence of systematic data about the access to funding for LGBT+ research and researchers is a barrier to equality, diversity and inclusion. In October 2019, a UKRI response to a Westminster Parliamentary Science and Technology Select Committee's request for information about the impact of science

funding policy on equality, diversity, inclusion and accessibility contained no information about LGBT+ inclusion, the data not having been collected.

There are also several foundational issues relating to funding and research that require further work. These include (for example) a lack of guidelines around medical absences due to gender reassignment; a lack of visible trans-inclusive statements or guidelines for eligibility for gender-specific fellowship schemes, and difficulties in networking through international travel or events.⁴⁸

Our survey also asked about the publication process as the other key component of the research environment. A strong publication record is important for career progression and development, as well as contributing to a department's submission to the UK government's Research Excellence Framework (and equivalent schemes elsewhere). While the majority of LGBT+ staff were positive about the publishing process, with only one in ten having had negative experiences, the comments provided in the survey indicate some of the issues faced by academics.

"I have received some strange reviews on my work on sexuality and religion which I think may reflect concealed homophobia. In most cases more conservative journals will simply not review books in this area."

Gay professor

The survey revealed that some journals are unwilling to engage with LGBT+ histories. Some respondents had experienced comments through the peer review process as well as in published reviews that were dismissive of LGBT+ histories, questioned the integrity of this research and whether it was needed.

"I've been asked if I'm 'projecting' onto research subjects."

Bi senior lecturer

⁴⁸ TigerinSTEMM. ['Barriers LGBTQI+ People Face in the Research Funding Processes.'](#) *OSF Preprints*, (16 November 2019).

"I have experienced a refusal to take seriously the existence, and thereby historicisation, of non-binary genders in the review process."

Transgender historian

"A prominent reviewer of my first book commented that it would be good when we no longer needed lesbian history books such as mine because that would mean that people no longer recognised any difference between lesbians and other people. I think this reviewer believed their comment to be pro-LGBT+ rights, but to me, denying diversity is not tolerance but discrimination and a refusal to allow LGBT+ people to express their difference."

Lesbian lecturer

Problems specifically relating to the editorial process were also evident. These included failing to use or recognise gender inclusive language as well as the editing of supposedly 'salacious' details.

"... editors of a journal 'sanitized' primary quotes in one of my articles without telling me. I noticed and made some noise and the historical record was given its due right in the end. The editor's argument was that their readership could not digest the kind of language my sources used."

Gay lecturer

"I have been fortunate to not have experienced biphobia directly specifically at me. However, I have often had to explain the use of gender-neutral terminology when discussing non-binary or genderqueer historical subjects. This is often raised as a grammar issue or an issue of flow of writing rather than specifically transphobic, but the implications are the same."

Bi postgraduate student

A recent article published by *Nature* highlighted the particular difficulties faced by trans academics regarding the name they used for publications. Former or 'deadnames' survive in print long after a

change of name.⁴⁹ For transitioning postgraduates and early career researchers this may delay their willingness to publish, thereby impeding their career, while senior academics may disavow the research published under their 'deadname' or have to repeatedly 'out' themselves by linking it to their present name.

"I have had editors telling me how pleased they are that one of my first publications in my new name will be in their edited collection. However, as I am a well-established history professor who has not generally published on LGBT+ histories I do not think my experience can be taken as representative."

Transgender senior historian

Academic publishing should be committed to making the highest quality peer-reviewed research publicly available, as well as being open to all historical approaches and areas. The Code on Publication Ethics (COPE) recently engaged with the particular issues facing non-Science, Technology and Medicine subjects in its study *Exploring Publication Ethics Issues in the Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences* (2019) and a subsequent forum. Amongst the questions considered by the forum were 'what mechanisms might be introduced to deal with language quality and inclusivity' and whether the 'standards of expertise [are] different when addressing certain topics that have social, gender, transgender, race and ethnicity involved in the research'.⁵⁰ COPE has published a podcast on diversity and inclusivity in the peer review system, and is committed to developing further guidance.⁵¹

⁴⁹ Theresa Jean Tanenbaum, '[Publishers: Let Transgender Scholars Correct Their Names](#)', *Nature* 583 (2020), 493.

⁵⁰ COPE Forum 2 June 2020: '[What Does Peer Review Mean in the Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences?](#)', *Committee on Publication Ethics*.

⁵¹ '[COPE Podcast 2018: Diversity and Inclusivity in Peer Review](#)', *Committee on Publication Ethics* (2018).

When working as an editor or advisor for a journal or book series – or as an assessor for a funding body – proactively encourage submissions and applications for funding from LGBT+ and queer historians and include queer and LGBT+ histories wherever possible. If making appointments, make sure you ask LGBT+ and queer historians to be involved in review and assessment processes (without leaving all the work to them).

"In recent years modules on the history of sexuality and on queer history have been added to the curriculum and are now covered on all UG and PG levels... Every history gets better when it also considers sexual and gender diversity."

Gay researcher fixed-term contract

Teaching LGBT+ Histories

LGBT+ histories and queer histories amount to a very broad field which touches on all areas of historical practice, from macro approaches exploring themes such as legislation, religion and sexuality, to micro-histories of LGBT+ experiences and sub-cultures across time and space. The teaching of these histories has developed dramatically over recent years and the resources for this teaching are still growing dynamically. Specialist courses, such as the new MA in Queer History at Goldsmiths are starting to emerge, and there are also growing efforts to incorporate LGBT+ history, in all its diverse richness, as more than a token presence in history degrees.

"Studying history has made me far more comfortable with my experiences of my own gender and sexuality, because history gives you perspective and shows you that all the expectations around it are constructs [and that] people's imaginings of gender and sexuality have changed over place and time."

Straight undergraduate student

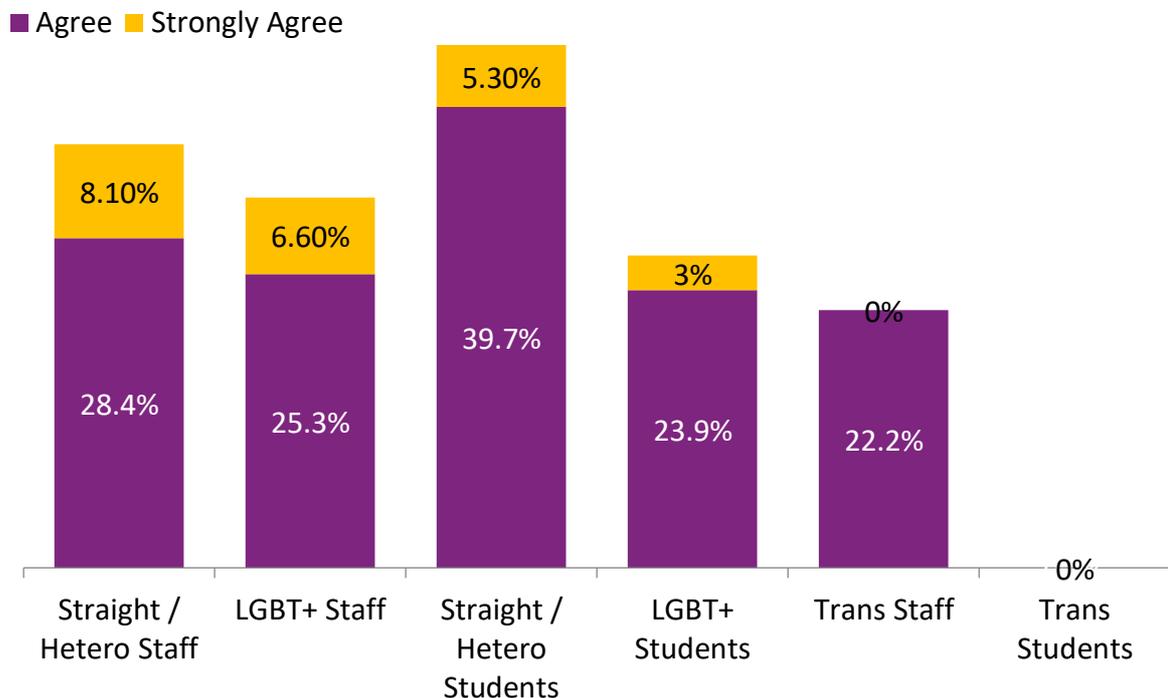
However, responses to the survey suggest widespread understanding that LGBT+ and queer histories are not adequately reflected in current history syllabi, despite stated commitments to diversity and some desire to move from an 'entrenched sense of how things used to be' (see Figure 5).

- **Two-thirds of LGBT+ staff in History were unsure or did not think that histories of diverse gender and sexual identities were adequately reflected in teaching in their department;**
- **1 in 3 historians believes their department has sought to widen the curriculum with respect to diverse gender and sexual identities over the past 5 years;**
- **Half of LGBT+ undergraduates considered coverage of diverse gender and sexual identities to be inadequate;**
- **None of the transgender students in our survey considered that diverse gender and sexual identities were suitably reflected in teaching in their department;**

- **1 in 3 LGBT+ staff in History were unsure, or did not think that they would be supported in challenging reluctance about, or hostility to, the teaching of LGBT+ histories in their department/classroom.**

Teaching is the way our discipline trains future generations of historians and a historically-literate public. Choices we make in our curriculums – including what we include in or exclude from core and optional modules – make emphatic statements to our students and our colleagues about what we do (and do not) value. In this context, decisions about LGBT+ inclusion in teaching have repercussions that extend significantly beyond individual students and individual modules.

Figure 5: Percentage of respondents who agreed that histories of diverse gender and sexual identities were adequately reflected in departmental teaching.



Even where these subjects are currently taught respondents were not confident that the way LGBT+ pasts were handled was appropriate. Other respondents expressed reservations about commenting on curriculum content without access to systematic evidence, but that systematic evidence is not readily available.

Respondents noted that ‘LGBT+ histories’ itself is necessarily a portmanteau term: the nuances and complexities within that broad field are not always captured.

"It's uneven across the department. For some, diverse identities are embedded into the curriculum and practice. For others, the assumption seems to be that historical actors and scholars are all upper middle class straight white men."

Heterosexual postdoc

"The topic is segregated and taught as a new LGBT+-themed optional module, but is not integrated into any of the other optional or core modules. It is taught as a separate, self-contained parallel history, not as integral to the topic."

Lesbian lecturer

"Though I'm pretty sure that these identities are covered adequately by at least two colleagues I don't know enough about the coverage and teaching methods of all our modules to be able to answer definitively one way or the other."

Non-LGBT male professor

Several respondents believed that lesbian histories were particularly marginalised or noted the very different nature of lesbian and gay male histories. Others reported active hostility to transgender history.

"History departments appear to have gradually come to accept the place of histories of male homosexuality in the field, but are still uncomfortable with lesbian and trans histories and as a result I feel marginalised as a historian ... I feel that I must accept every invitation to appear in the media discussing lesbian history, because otherwise such coverage will be overwhelmingly male, and when I do, they tend to edit out anything I say which is gender

specific in order to create a narrative which fits the experience of gay men."

Lesbian lecturer

Restricting discussion of gender and sexual orientations to 'modern topics', or indeed to other disciplines such as media studies or liberal arts was another commonly expressed concern, even though other respondents noted the wealth of work on LGBT+ experiences and identities in the premodern era, whether ancient or medieval. The conceptual and methodological opportunities for engagement beyond twentieth-century courses were frequently articulated.

"In the period that I teach (C16-C17) people had much more fluid sexual identities and this is something that I try to teach, introducing students to different ways of thinking about sexualities beyond modernist 'boxes'."

Straight male professor

"I have taught an optional Yr 2 module on early medieval sexuality with a European focus for 20 years. It has a significant LGBT+ element. It has always recruited well and student feedback has been very good."

Gay male professor

"I have found medieval history, specifically, to be very welcoming of various sexual orientations."

Bi school teacher

As Figure 5 suggests, the survey found widespread general support for further diversification of curriculums to include more on the histories of sexuality and gender. However, LGBT+ historians reported often having to cover the bulk of the teaching of these histories and feeling a personal responsibility to drive change. LGBT+ historians also expressed a range of views about this – from a willingness to teach and guide, to frustration at a lack of engagement by some non-LGBT+ colleagues.

"I'd like to see heterosexual people pick up the baton a bit more. We LGBT people are in a minority. I'm in a big dept but I'm representing all of LGBT history. Why can't more of my... colleagues read 5 books on queer history and feel capable of supervising an UG dissertation on the topic - why do these students and staff feel this is my job to do?"

Gay male professor

The need for leadership in this area, or subject 'champions', was commented on by several respondents.

"Most of my colleagues as individuals are very sympathetic towards [introducing new material but] they just don't know where to start ... Colleagues know they can turn to me for advice on teaching LGBTQ topics, managing classroom discussions about them, and supporting LGBTQ students - I'm very happy to do this as it means I can help spread good practice around the department."

Lesbian senior lecturer

"In recent years modules on the history of sexuality and on queer history have been added to the curriculum and are now covered on all UG and PG levels ... Every history gets better when it also considers sexual and gender diversity."

Gay researcher fixed-term contract

Some respondents reported actively attempting to embed histories of diverse gender identities and sexualities within teaching – a process one respondent described as 'curriculum queering':

"As the coordinator of our history course I have begun a process of 'curriculum queering' – this has included the introduction of LGBT+ history topics, adoption of queer pedagogical approaches and a variety of in-class and online initiatives designed to increase the visibility of LGBT+ perspectives and engage LGBT+ students. This ongoing process has been quite successful and has institutional support."

Straight woman lecturer

These initiatives, like others aimed at diversifying and **decolonising** curriculums, recognise a need for pedagogical change to go beyond diversification of content to address how knowledge is constructed and engaged with.

Queer history is a methodological approach to history that has developed over several decades, just as fields such as social, economic and cultural history have.

The emergence of queer history reflects a reclaiming of the term ‘queer’ by activists and academics in the 1980s. Queer historians emphasise the historical specificity and contingency of past lives and sexualities, and how these have changed over time. Their work often challenges the idea that as historians we can simply identify LGBT+ people in the past in ways that we might recognise today. At the same time, queer and LGBT+ histories are often entwined with advocating and fighting for the rights, legitimacy, and visibility of LGBT+ people in the present.

Taking seriously the historical lives and experiences of LGBT+ people, and asking critical questions about who gets to have a history, whose voices are heard, is about more than including and recuperating histories of sexuality and LGBT+ people in the historical canon. It also offers sophisticated tools to critique and analyse questions of power, politics, progress, and the creation of knowledge itself, in institutions, states and society.

Queer history is an exciting, dynamic field, rich in source material, and relevant across the broad chronological, geographical and topical scope of history. Its scholars are making critical and important interventions in social and cultural histories, but also military, political, legal, religious, colonial and economic histories. Cultural and heritage institutions, museums and archives are also taking queer history, and queer approaches seriously, thereby usualising the presence and experiences of LGBT+ people in historical and present communities.

"Queer theory is not covered in mainstream units, I had to go out of my way to study it."

Bi postgraduate student

"The lack of LGBT teaching across the department results in clusters of students signing up for these courses in search for diversity."

Gay lecturer

Several respondents also noted the 'whiteness' of queer histories, even when they were being taught, along with wider issues around intersectionality in history teaching. This is also the cause of some negative student feedback.

"Queer histories and historians are fairly well represented but some course content was fairly white. However, people have embraced my inclusion of black and indigenous gender studies and queer histories with enthusiasm."

Genderqueer lecturer

"Clear limitations remained around the inclusion of intersectional scholarship in curricula, especially at the intersections of LGBTQ studies and race studies, though in the case of modern British and European history I feel this somewhat reflects the troubling lack of scholarship in this area: the key historiographies and case studies remain white."

Straight male lecturer

"A consistent theme of student feedback in my department refers to the lack of diversity in teaching, in that we tend to deliver a very white, heterosexual version of history. As an academic who identifies as LGBT, my courses offer the only courses which engage with sexual minority dimensions."

Gay lecturer

As the RHS *Race, Ethnicity and Equality in UK History* report (2018) highlighted, efforts to incorporate diverse histories need to adopt a broad, intersectional remit. There is a considerable and growing body of research on LGBT+ histories on regions outside of Europe, or in global contexts on which we can draw, that both diversify historical understanding and challenge expectations and approaches.

There is a clear need for help and resources to guide discussion and tackle conceptual issues across different chronologies and historical contexts, as well as provide greater definitional clarity around key terms and debates.

"Though I think scholars who themselves work on LGBTQ or gender/sexuality studies feel relatively comfortable on this terrain, I hope for more training on this in the future and for all staff, especially as the broader conversation and the vocabularies and frameworks available to our students, is advancing rapidly."

Straight postdoctoral historian

Having these conversations, and advocating for change can be difficult, but the increasing recognition of diversity within HE classrooms makes them imperative. Creating classrooms, whether these are online or physical spaces, that are inclusive of ethnic backgrounds, gender, religion, or negotiation of evolving sexual subjectivities, requires new pedagogical techniques to ensure the teaching environment supports all students' learning.

Encourage all staff to engage with teaching LGBT+ and queer histories, to investigate the great variety of resources now available and make sure these are integrated at all levels from introductory survey to Masters courses, so that students engage with the range of human sexualities in their study of the past.

There are many examples of good practice in the teaching of LGBT+ and queer histories, from the Ancient World to the present day and these are applied innovatively to diverse fields around the globe. Not all of this work is being done in History departments: queer histories, not least for the non-Anglophone world, are also of course developed and maintained by researchers working in (for example) Anthropology, Area Studies, Art History, Geography, or Sociology.

**Find
out
more**

Some of the range of approaches to LGBT+ and queer history are explored in greater detail on the RHS website at:

www.royalhistsoc.org/policy/lgbt/

This includes reflections on practice from experts in LGBT+ history, suggested reading lists and links to resources.

"Though I think scholars who themselves work on LGBTQ or gender/sexuality studies feel relatively comfortable on this terrain, I hope for more training on this in the future and for all staff, especially as the broader conversation and the vocabularies and frameworks available to our students, is advancing rapidly."

Straight postdoctoral historian

LGBT+ Public History, Museums and Heritage

Our survey was intended to capture perspectives and experiences across the historical professions; we hoped people working in museums, galleries, archives and the wider heritage sector would feel their responses were welcome and valued. The working group recognise, however, that those professions might turn primarily to their own associations and networks and so we were grateful to those who found the time to contribute – particularly the 10 survey respondents who provided detailed comments.

Respondents from the heritage sector saw museums as key local sites for engagement with LGBT+ histories, not just by staging temporary exhibitions or informing gallery redevelopment but also by providing locations for Pride and other public events. There was also evidence of collaborative work between museums and archives with university departments and with community groups. Oral history was part of one institution's engagement with LGBT+ histories, which led to exhibitions reflecting the histories and experiences of local LGBT+ people.

"I feel the need to 'fight the corner' of LGBT+ areas and that it has somehow become my specific job to promote and record LGBT history in my department due to my own identity. I don't really mind this; but wish that queer history wasn't automatically handed only to queer people."

Bi archivist

However, a key note in museum professionals' responses was that projects involving LGBT+ histories tended to rely on the individual initiative of LGBT+ staff, sometimes using their own time. At issue here may be that LGBT+ histories are sometimes regarded as only of interest to or appropriate for LGBT+ visitors.

"LGBT histories are not commonly used for mainstream audiences... however, when museum programming

reflects LGBT histories, it is popular among the local LGBT community."

Gay curator

Heritage professionals recognise that the labour tends to fall on LGBT+ staff to create public histories inclusive of the range of human sexualities and gender identities. Yet these can also be positive opportunities. This work can be supported by allies, with one non-LGBT+ respondent praising their institution for actively 'collecting, displaying and archiving LGBT+ histories'.

"My own personal development in terms of my sexual and gender identity has caused me to re-evaluate what I understand of [LGBT+] historical heritages. What I find is that this heritage is lacking, and I am enthusiastic about adding to this."

Transgender researcher

Our survey revealed, however, that many respondents felt that their organisations were reluctant to undertake programming on LGBT+ history, even when relevant objects existed in their collections. One respondent, who had been able to organise a small exhibition, said it 'felt a bit like tokenism'. As another historian from the heritage sector incisively observed:

"We not only exist when Pride exists, we exist all the time and we always have."

Bi historian

LGBT+ people working in the museums and heritage sector face particular challenges through their regular, direct engagement with the general public. One undergraduate student also working as a heritage guide noted that parts of the sector 'remain a much more conservative arena than at university'; for them this meant being out on campus, but keeping 'my mouth firmly shut' at work. Several respondents commented that they had received criticism and homophobia for their work to highlight LGBT+ histories and identities.

"Yes, I have witness[ed] staring and comments about trans visitors by staff and homophobic remarks by visitors when the rainbow flag is visible during Pride and history month."

Gay curator

In this context, leadership by LGBT+ heritage professionals can be recognised as particularly important. As E-J Scott has argued with regard to transgender history (and the same would apply to LGB history and its overlap with the T): 'we will never halt the erasure or overlooking of trans history without having trans people within the heritage sector looking at and recognising the stories and reframing them ... Imagine if trans people were the surgeons, the historians. This would be more than them finding trans solutions, this would be about dismantling dysfunctional systems on every level.'⁵²

Sociologist Ruth Pearce has recently argued that if marginalised researchers are to be enabled to navigate academic environments, undertake often difficult research and care both for themselves and those within their communities, they 'should not be held individually responsible for their own survival; rather, they require the active support of research communities and institutional frameworks.'⁵³

This RHS report, like those we have previously undertaken, is a step towards 'active support' in the community of historians: students or their teachers, researchers and writers, whether working in universities, museums, archives or any other professional context. It expresses the Society's commitment to support for equality, diversity and inclusion, but this is also a commitment that requires action from us all.

⁵² E-J Scott quoted in Juno Roche, *Trans Power: Own Your Gender* (London, 2020), 236.

⁵³ Ruth Pearce, '[A Methodology for the Marginalised: Surviving Oppression and Traumatic Fieldwork in the Neoliberal Academy](#)', *Sociology* 54 (2020) pp. 806-824.

Key Terms

A number of these terms are common to the RHS *Race, Ethnicity and Equality Report* (2018) with thanks to the authors for allowing us to use and/or adapt them here.

BME

There are a number of terms and acronyms used to refer to people from ethnic minorities. In this report, we use BME (Black and minority ethnic) to reflect the prevalence of this term in the secondary literature on race and ethnicity in UK universities, and in associated UK statistical data such as that produced by HESA. We recognise that BME is an imperfect official category which greatly reduces complex ethnic, cultural and religious differences, and that it fails to include all minority groups.

Bi/bisexual

A romantic and/or sexual attraction, orientation and/or behaviour towards people of more than one sex or gender.

Cis/cisgender

Someone whose gender identity corresponds with the sex they were assigned at birth.

Decolonising

A conscious effort to go beyond increasing the diversity of curriculum material or hiring more people of different backgrounds. In drawing attention to the historical privileging of white, western and male viewpoints in the creation of organisations, and the formation of disciplinary traditions in western education, decolonising exposes the relationships of power which these engender. It seeks to change and/or replace discriminatory structures to build new and more equitable alternatives.

Department

In this report, the term 'department' is used to describe the full range of administrative units in which History is taught and researched, or staff are employed as historians. This includes UK universities, museums, libraries, archives, heritage organisations, schools and colleges. It encompasses History subject-units that are

located within wider multidisciplinary groupings, as well as History units that are denominated departments, faculties and schools. The term is used for clarity and convenience, not to imply preference or esteem for one form of organisation over any other.

Gay

A person who is romantically and/or sexually attracted to people of the same gender.

Gender identity

A person's deeply-held and often embodied sense of their gender as a male, female or a different gender (including non-binary, see below). Gender identity may or may not correspond to the sex assigned at birth and is separate from sexual orientation.

Harassment

Harassment is a legal term, defined as unwanted, offensive behaviour that relates to the recipient's actual or perceived 'protected characteristics' under the 2010 Equality Act. The three types of harassment that are unlawful in England, Scotland and Wales under the 2010 Equality Act are: harassment related to a relevant protected characteristic; sexual harassment; and less favourable treatment of a student because they submit to or reject sexual harassment or harassment related to sex.

Heterosexual/straight

A man who has a romantic and/or sexual orientation towards women, or a woman who has a romantic and/or sexual orientation towards men.

Homosexual

A person who is romantically and/or sexually attracted to people of the same gender.

Implicit bias

A bias that happens automatically and is triggered by our brain making quick judgements and assessments of people and situations. This is influenced by our background, cultural environment and personal experiences. It is akin to 'unconscious bias', but the term 'implicit bias' questions the level to which these biases are unconscious, especially due to increasing awareness of them. Once

recognised and acknowledged, ways to mitigate the impact of these biases on behaviour and decisions can be found.

Intersectionality

An approach to understanding discrimination, inequality and disadvantage that foregrounds the impact of power structures upon race and interlinked aspects of people's identities, including gender, class, sexuality and disability. The term was initially coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw in 1989 as a way to explain how race and gender intersect to shape the structural, political and legal marginalisation of, and violence against women of colour. More recently, interpretations of intersectionality have been extended to acknowledge that within any group - including the LGBT+ community - multiple overlapping identities and experiences of marginalisation may exist.

Intersex

Describes a person whose chromosomal and/or hormonal make-up and/or anatomical sex characteristics vary from society's perception of 'male' and 'female' bodies. Intersex people may identify as male, female, or under the transgender umbrella. Being intersex does not determine sexual orientation; intersex people may be straight, gay, lesbian, bi etc.

Lesbian

A woman who is romantically and/or sexually attracted to other women.

LGBT+

Although the acronym 'LGBT' refers specifically to 'lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender', we use the '+' to include (but not limit this definition to) intersex people, and people who identify as queer, pansexual, asexual, agender, bi-gender, hijra, genderqueer, gender fluid, two-spirit, non-binary, or any other diverse sexual or gender identity.

Micro-aggression

A term developed to capture the subtle and everyday indignities, assumptions, verbal or enacted communications—whether intentional or not—that suggest, imply or directly express prejudice against a marginalised group. Micro-aggressions create a hostile environment for the recipient based on their identity or their perceived identity.

Non-binary

An umbrella term for people whose gender identity doesn't sit comfortably with 'man' or 'woman', and whose identity falls between or beyond the gender binary. Other related terms include genderqueer, agender or bigender. While some transgender people identify as non-binary, others might identify as male or female.

Pansexual

A romantic and/or sexual attraction, orientation and/or behaviour towards people of all genders.

***phobia**

In the context of this report, *phobia refers to the fear or dislike of someone who identifies as LGBT+ based on prejudice or negative attitudes, beliefs or views. *phobic ideas, bullying, or harassment may be targeted at people who are, or who are perceived to be, bi, gay, lesbian or transgender. *phobias used in this report include biphobia, homophobia, transphobia.

Positive action

Positive action refers to measures which can be lawfully taken in England, Scotland and Wales under the Equality Act 2010 to encourage, train, recruit and promote people from underrepresented groups (with 'protected characteristics', see below) to help them overcome disadvantages in competing with other applicants. In employee recruitment, and promotion, these measures allow for an employer to select a candidate from a group underrepresented within their workplace over candidates not from that group, when the candidates are of equal merit.

Positive discrimination

Positive discrimination refers to measures which are generally unlawful as a way to help underrepresented groups overcome disadvantages in the workforce (including those with 'protected characteristics' within the Equality Act 2010 for England, Scotland and Wales, see below). When recruiting employees this would include hiring a candidate because they come from an underrepresented group when they are not the best candidate, or setting quotas to recruit a specific proportion of staff from a particular underrepresented group.

Pronouns

The words we use to refer to people's gender in written or spoken communication. While 'he/him' or 'she/her' are most common, some people may let others know that they wish to be addressed in gender neutral language using pronouns such as they/them or (less commonly) ze/zir or ze/hir. These refer to an individual whose gender identity is non-binary, and are often signalled in email footers or social media biographies.

Protected characteristics

The nine characteristics protected by the Equality Act 2010. It is unlawful for employers, and others, to discriminate against people on the basis of these characteristics. The nine protected characteristics are: age; sex; pregnancy and maternity; sexual orientation; gender reassignment; race; religion or belief; marriage and civil partnership; and disability.

Queer

A term used by those who may want to reject specific labels of romantic orientation, sexual orientation and/or gender identity. Although some LGBT+ people view the word as a slur, it has a long history and was explicitly reclaimed in the late 1980s by activists and academics, who have embraced it. In academic discourse, 'queer' refers to the process of questioning and destabilising structures and categories of identity based on sex, gender and sexuality. It often expresses a commitment to exposing the assumptions and exclusions inherent in heteronormative visions of society.

Queer history

In this document, 'queer history' refers to historical research into sexual practices and gendered expressions that resists or critiques a given society's sense of the norm. It can also provide tools for interrogating how historical knowledge of the past is produced. Queer history includes, but is not restricted to, histories of same-sex desire, gender non-conformity, and the experiences of people whose lived practices can be broadly understood as 'queer' (see above).

Queer theory

Refers to a body of inter-disciplinary scholarship that critiques the power of categorisation (including the categories of homosexuality and heterosexuality) and the role of discourse in structuring meaning and 'reality'. Queer theory provides a means of rethinking and

resisting societal assumptions about what constitutes ‘natural’ and ‘legitimate’ bodies, acts and desires.

Sex assignment

Refers to the act of labelling a body either male or female (although see ‘intersex’, above) based on observation of genitalia at birth, with the assumption that this will correspond to reproductive capacity or gender in adulthood.

Structural barriers/inequalities

The condition in which one category of people have an unequal status in relation to others. It is structural because this unequal status is perpetuated and reinforced by the historically conditioned differential allocation of societal, economic and political roles, rights, resources and opportunities.

Trans/transgender

Describes people whose gender does not fully correspond to the sex they were assigned at birth. ‘Trans’ is an umbrella term that encompasses a broad range of gender non-conforming people, including those who define themselves as transsexual, transgender, non-binary etc. While some transgender people take steps to undergo a medical transition through surgical interventions and/or hormone replacement therapy, others do not. In England, Scotland and Wales, transgender people (as well as cisgender people who are perceived to be transgender) are protected from discrimination under the Equality Act 2010. Being trans or transgender is not dependent upon cosmetic or medical procedures, neither does it determine sexual orientation.

Transition

A process—often complex and taking a long time—to describe the steps that a transgender person may take to express and live in the gender with which they identify. Transition can involve many different aspects, from telling friends and family, dressing differently, adopting different pronouns and changing official documents, to medical and/or surgical intervention.

Unconscious bias

A bias that we are unaware of and which happens outside of our control. It is a bias that happens automatically and is triggered by our brain making quick judgments and assessments of people and

situations, influenced by our background, cultural environment and personal experiences.

Usualising

A tacit method of inclusion through familiarisation with and acceptance of differences.

Recommendations

These paragraphs are organised by category of reader, following the model adopted in our Race Report. This requires some repetition but is intended to enhance the utility of each section.

In addition to the main body of this report, the online resources accompanying it provide further information and support.

A. For All Staff

Addressing issues openly (speaking up) is an essential component of effecting cultural change in all institutions. This strategic guide is designed to encourage an approach to equality in keeping with the evidence-based nature of History as a discipline.

Heterosexual or cisgender staff should not assume that effecting change is the responsibility of LGBT+ staff, nor should they assume that the difficulties outlined in this report affect small numbers and are therefore insignificant. Proactively pursuing positive change is important for the wellbeing of all staff and students.

Sector-wide advice and guidance is also available in the online information linked to this report.

1. **Consider your own assumptions:** Staff may be convinced by years of university, library, archive or museum experience that they 'know' 'their' students, colleagues or audiences, and are aware of these individuals' subject positions and the assumptions they draw from them. Students may similarly share erroneous preconceptions about staff and other students' attitudes, identities and experiences.
2. **Learn about the issues:** As historians, we possess excellent research skills. If you are new to this area, read up on LGBT+ histories and the issues facing LGBT+ historians, rather than expecting others to undertake this labour for you.

3. **Ask an expert before you consolidate your own views or strategies, and include a broad range of expertise:** Experts in LGBT+ equality work in many roles. They include students, staff and colleagues at every stage of the profession as well as community-based historians, staff in museums, university professional services staff engaged with equality initiatives and academics based at universities other than your own.
4. **Assess the quality and the character of your evidence:** Discipline-specific data for UK History programmes is scarce, and is especially lacking for LGBT+ historians and histories. Yet, as historians, we routinely navigate problematic evidence, using strategies that include listening for silences, reading across the grain and open acknowledgement of the limits of our own knowledge. These strategies – in combination with basic attributes of collegial behaviour such as respect for others and recognition of mutual duties of care – can help underpin effective collaboration even when the available evidence is patchy and the topic is fraught. One way to start might be to encourage specific discussions focused on history and the lingering effect of Section 28 on our knowledge base.
5. **Gather new and better evidence and make it easily available:** Take responsibility for improving the evidence and for pushing managers and central administrators for better data and to make use of it. Make sure you understand equality monitoring, the conditions in which data is used, and how providing equalities information matters in justifying interventions and promoting change. Structure your data collection so that LGBT+ staff and students feel able to answer questions about sex, gender, gender reassignment and trans status in a manner that reflects their lived experiences and make sure staff can always update their own equality data.
6. **Choose accessible insertion points:** Access to resources and to influence varies widely within institutions, among staff, students and over time. Inequality has a long and tenacious history. To subvert it, choose how best to use your resources, identify allies and effect change. Even modest revisions can make a valuable difference, especially if several are made at the same time.

7. **Don't under-estimate the importance of representation:** Websites, teaching aids, hand-books, reading lists, PowerPoint slides, social media accounts and other forms of communication send overt messages of inclusion and exclusion. These include inclusion of individuals' correct pronouns (they/them, she/her and he/him) in email signatures and Zoom meeting names, for example. Take action to make the various representations in your department more inclusive and rectify them when they are exclusive. Rainbow lanyards are not enough, but they do go some way towards signalling inclusion and raising awareness.
8. **Be aware of the impact of micro-aggressions:** The cumulative impact of micro-aggressions causes students and staff severe distress and harm. Assess the various ways in which micro-aggressions are operating in your work environment. Make sure that equality and diversity training challenges these behaviours and is not tokenistic.
9. **Work collaboratively, not in isolation:** Effecting change requires concerted and collaborative action (allyship). This both equalises labour and renders it sustainable. Collaborative and community action also has advantages of scale. For LGBT+, like BME staff, it may mean the difference between being isolated, building new networks of colleagues with shared identities and carefully choosing allies. As discrimination and abuse based on sexual or gender identity are psychologically and institutionally damaging, try to limit this damage—for yourself and for others—by working in formal or informal teams, both within and beyond your institutions. Include students actively in collaborative work, both to access their knowledge and to send strong signals about your commitment to diversity and inclusion.
10. **Speak up, keep a record, and don't accept unacceptable behaviour:** Pay attention and speak up. If practices require change, say so and/or encourage better-positioned advocates to speak out, or to work with you in so doing. If you witness bias, harassment or bullying, make a record of it. Calling out behaviours that are degrading to human dignity or illegal is vital. Document such instances close to the time of their occurrence and where possible prior to discussing them with others. Write an email to yourself as an aide-memoire, generating a date-stamped record of what happened and how it made you feel. If you don't

feel comfortable speaking up in the moment, or if the behaviour persists, this record will still be available to you. Resist the temptation to act defensively, whether through denial, making excuses or even bullying in order to silence concerns. Staff in leadership roles should take time and effort to make such scrutiny and critique both possible and welcomed.

B. For Heads of Subject or Department/Senior Teams/Appointment Panels:

If a culture of acknowledging and removing inequality and discrimination is to flourish in our universities, proactive structural engagement will be essential. Departmental leaders—heads of department or heads of school—should be especially careful to exercise their duty of care in this respect: the Equality Act 2010 employs the term ‘protected characteristics’ for good reason. All staff are responsible for the wellbeing of their colleagues and students. But if you are in a position of formal authority, you have accepted added responsibility for the culture, practices and policies of your workplace. Recommended actions based on our research include:

1. **Ensure that staff and students know your university’s policies, and the law:** Just under 50% of respondents said they had no or partial understanding of Equalities legislation; just 7.3% believe they have expert understanding of local or national equalities frame-works. Your ability to support cultures of inclusion will increase if your staff and students both know what is legally mandated and what your university’s policies and processes are to protect their rights. Equality policies should be quickly and easily locatable in student and staff handbooks and online. They should also be actively discussed with students and with staff — not relegated to handbooks or included only in induction meetings.
2. **Understand that many of your staff and students will identify as LGBT+:** include questions about LGBT+ equality in your staff and student surveys. Explain how monitoring this information helps organisations develop policy, plan and use resources appropriately and make sure that staff and students know what steps are being taken to guarantee confidentiality. Review harassment, grievance and disciplinary cases to see whether any

of them relate to sexual orientation. Ask the students' union and student support staff whether they have information they can share, and what support networks are available. Local LGBT+ groups and other organisations may also be sources of useful information.

3. **Improve upon your own organisation's training:** While equality and diversity or unconscious bias training is often available, this may not include LGBT+ identities, be available to all staff, or be compulsory. If institution-wide training is not effective, departments should take steps to go beyond it. Consider employing an organisation such as Gendered Intelligence, or a similar body who offer tailored LGBT+ training for educational contexts. If colleagues are not familiar with this area, introduce specific training on how to manage discussions about gender and sexuality in the classroom, or how to be inclusive of students with LGBT+ identities. We have included some longer reflections exemplifying good practice in the online resources accompanying this report.
4. **Facilitate student-led change:** Many students are eager to enhance the diversity and inclusion of History programmes. Make use of the knowledge and expertise of students to establish priorities.
5. **Engage with initiatives such as Athena SWAN, and check that you understand recent equality legislation such as the Equality Act 2010.** At institutional level, many HEIs have applied to become Stonewall Champions, an important tool for equality work. Using existing structures such as these can both reduce the transaction costs of new equalities initiatives and help to weave them firmly into established departmental structures but should not stand in for other recommendations in this report. If your department is not engaged with any existing scheme, consider setting up an equality and inclusion committee or put it on the agenda of any existing one.
6. **In advertising new positions,** appointment panels should not just rely on formulaic inclusion sentences but consider how to word the advertisement in order to attract a diverse field, making use where appropriate of the provisions for Positive Action enabled

by legislation such as the Equality Act 2010, and corresponding legislation for Northern Ireland.

7. **Be inclusive and proactively supportive of LGBT+ historians in post:** Departments need to recognise the difference between being diverse and being inclusive. Hiring people of different experiences may make an institution more diverse; it does not automatically make that institution a safe and welcoming environment for all colleagues.
8. **Make sure support is available for staff and students who could feel particularly vulnerable if *phobic speakers are invited to campus.** History departments should not invite propagators of hate speech. If another part of your organisation does so and all else fails, it is essential to make sure that colleagues and students who might be personally vulnerable to abuse in such circumstances are fully supported. The Crown Prosecution Service provides detailed guidance on homophobic, biphobic and transphobic hate crime. Information about this, and other sources of support, is available in the online resources accompanying this report.
9. **Make sure your department includes LGBT+ topics** within seminar and lecture programmes, not least (but not only) during LGBT+ History Month.
10. **Make sure staff and students know about LGBT+ networks or role models** where these are already in place. If they are not, invite colleagues to set them up and ensure that they have sufficient funding to be meaningful. And where they exist, make sure new staff learn about them on arrival and feel able to get involved.
11. **Embed a requirement in the approval process for all new modules/courses** to check the content for diversity and inclusion. Include questions to this effect in the documentation for module approval.
12. **Checking which pronouns to use** is an easy way to ensure that the gender of all staff, regardless of identity or presentation, can be respected. Ask participants in meetings to provide pronouns by sending you an email, not in a public setting (whether in

person or online) which might force someone to identify in a way they are not comfortable doing in public. For cis people, including pronouns in your email signature line or online identifier (such as in virtual meetings, where this is possible) is a way of signalling allyship, communicating kindness and normalising a practice which makes it safer for people who are not cis.

C. For Teaching Staff:

The silences of the current curriculum emerged repeatedly in our survey: 57.7% of our respondents either did not know or were unsure about good practice examples of the teaching of LGBT+ histories. Yet there are many excellent examples in UK university History curriculums. The recommendations below are designed to advance these developments.

The online resources accompanying this report on the RHS website aim to offer starting points and examples of good practice.

1. **Deepen coverage throughout the curriculum:** It is essential that LGBT+ histories are integrated fully into the curriculum, rather than being relegated to a single session or course. Nor can these be seen as subjects that only apply to modern history or to specific historical periods and places. Historical practitioners should be diverse, and historical explanations and study should encompass diverse agents, times and places.
2. **Integrate LGBT+ histories into core survey modules** so that all students get some exposure and see LGBT+ histories in wider societal context. When teaching a social or cultural history course, make sure that understanding the historically contingent qualities of sexuality and gender are included in the same way that the history of the economy or law might be.
3. **Always assume that you have LGBT+ students in your class and among your personal tutees.**
4. **Pronouns:** Checking which pronouns to use is an easy way to ensure that the gender of all students, regardless of identity or presentation, can be respected. Ask all students to provide pronouns by sending you an email, not in a class setting (whether

in person or online) which might force someone to identify in a way they are not comfortable doing in public. For cis people, including pronouns in your email signature line and Zoom meeting name is a way of signalling allyship, communicating kindness and normalising a practice which makes it safer for people who are not cis.

5. **Address the lack of confidence about teaching LGBT+ histories:** Make sure colleagues know about the many resources available: put them on library web pages or include them in discussions of new teaching. For historians it is, as one respondent to the survey put it 'particularly important to manage the relationship between our understanding, models and requirements today, and the understanding, models and experiences of the people we study'.
6. **Diversify the content of core methods and theory courses:** Any current historiography course that does not include queer histories or methodologies ignores significant interventions in the field. As with race, including works on these themes sends a clear message to students (and colleagues) about intellectual equality and the range of rich writing that they can draw upon in the discipline. Choosing not to include works such as these re-centres heterosexuality in the curriculum and in postgraduate research. To introduce students to the full range of historiography, courses on history and theory should include sexuality and gender as distinct topics and introduce a broad range of approaches including attention to queer histories and methodologies.
7. **For those whose teaching is not usually focused on LGBT+ or queer themes and content, consider using the process of usualising, which is promoted by the SchoolsOut teachers group, but is just as applicable to university level instruction.** Usualising familiarises learners with a subject's everyday occurrence or existence rather than expecting an in-depth understanding.
8. **When assessing course work and in exams, incorporate topics such as LGBT+ and queer histories** together with more traditional, mainstream ones in how students are asked to write essays or answer exam questions, so that they too become part of the mainstream.

D. For First-year Tutors, Personal Tutors and Directors of Studies:

LGBT+ students are drawn from all socio-economic groups. Our recommendations include generic as well as subject-specific suggestions, designed to address student needs from entry into university through to graduate careers and postgraduate study.

1. Support the move from school to university:

The adjustment from post-16 to higher education poses challenges to all students but LGBT+ students may have had particular negative experiences. More than most groups they are likely to have experienced estrangement from their families and/or homelessness. At individual universities, student LGBT+ societies and networks, for example, sometimes combine social events with academic engagement; at national level, the NUS has campaigned on these issues and has LGBT+ and transgender representatives who support students on all issues affecting them.

- 2. Ensure that induction processes specifically address respect and discrimination:** during the 18 months leading up to the publishing of this report there have been high-profile incidents of homophobic or transphobic aggression in the press and on university campuses. Departmental and university policies on student conduct—including how to recognise and report abuse—need to be made clear to incoming students. But they should also be readily accessible from student handbooks and student sections of departmental websites. Do not assume that a passing reference to equality in induction week is sufficient. Personal tutors and module tutors can and should participate in improving this flow of information and its absorption. Challenging prejudice is everyone's responsibility.

E. For Teachers and Supervisors of Postgraduates:

1. Be aware of subject positions in postgraduate supervision.

If the profession is to be more diverse and inclusive, it is critical that postgraduate supervisors are aware of their subject position as well as that of their students. Check to see whether your institution's training for supervisors addresses issues of sexual or gender orientation. If it does not, take steps to address that

deficit either at university or departmental level. More generally, we recommend that there is discussion in departments and subject groups about how inequality intersects with postgraduate supervision and with the progression of postgraduate students.

2. **Include equality best-practice as a regular part of postgraduate training and induction.** In many History postgraduate programmes, this will mean considering both generic issues of equality and inequality, and also specific forms of prejudice encountered by LGBT+ students. Assuming that these disparities do not exist or have no impact is unlikely to provide a welcoming environment for postgraduate students. Careful planning to ensure that events are inclusive should be a priority, and will send a clear message to students about the department's commitment to equality and diversity.
3. **LGBT+ mentorship.** Alongside mentors for BME and other groups, we recommend that units discuss and set in place forms of mentorship and networks of support for LGBT+ postgraduate historians.

F. For Conference and Seminar Organisers:

Recent years have seen important efforts to diversify the gender balance of academic conferences and seminars. Our race report recommended proactive measures should likewise be taken to address the underrepresentation of BME historians and BME histories at such events. Doing so sends strong signals to existing and aspiring student and staff cohorts. In both cases, there remains a lot to be done. This is also true of LGBT+ histories and historians. To this end, we recommend:

1. **Including LGBT+ scholars in defining the intellectual remit of events:** When organising events, aim to include LGBT+ historians in meaningful discussions about the intellectual scope and content of the event from the outset.
2. **Including LGBT+ speakers:** Before confirming your preferred speakers, routinely ask the question: does this event feature speakers from under-represented groups, including LGBT+ speakers? Ensure that it does. Subjects in which such insights

might not immediately seem relevant, such as histories of public space, for example, can certainly be enriched by reflections on how women, LGBT+ people and ethnic minorities have often been excluded from such spaces drawing on gender, LGBT+ and race histories.

3. **Don't assume a relation between gender, sexuality and research expertise:** It is important for departments or seminar series to ask LGBT+ scholars to speak on the full range of historical topics. Many respondents to our survey found it frustrating and even offensive when their sexual or gender identity was assumed to be a determinant of their research expertise. LGBT+ scholars may not themselves be interested in researching LGBT+ history.
4. **Ask participants for their pronouns** before the event and display them on any badges you are using. This will avoid putting the onus on transgender and non-binary identifying participants and help normalise respectful use of pronouns. Ensure that speakers are introduced and referred to using the correct pronouns.

G. For Authors and Editors:

While our survey found that most respondents did not identify difficulties for LGBT+ historians publishing in academic periodicals, there were concerns about the siloed nature of LGBT+ histories and exclusion from certain journals. There is an onus on academic journals to ensure that they embrace LGBT+ histories but also on historians researching in this field to consider submitting to a broader range of academic journals. It is incumbent upon History staff who are members of journal editorial boards, particularly those which have not previously published LGBT+ history, to ensure that these publications are supporting the research in this field and historians from different minorities.

1. **Editors and board members of mainstream journals should proactively encourage submissions on LGBT+ topics.** This includes encouraging colleagues, early career researchers and postgraduates to consider publication in these journals. Look out for interesting conference and seminar papers and invite submissions. Consider how to engage with LGBT+ practitioners outside a university context.

2. **Make sure the peer reviewers you use are aware of unconscious bias:** Put a paragraph in the guidance you provide and explicitly include LGBT+. Ensure that peer reviewers are sensitive to the use of pronouns in articles relating to LGBT+ history.
3. **Make sure that you have a diverse board:** A diversity of identities means that a wider range of perspectives and critical judgements can be voiced. It can help an editorial board identify and address any policies or processes that may be discouraging, or detrimental, to LGBT+ historians' submissions.
4. **Diversify your content:** While LGBT+ historians do not research and write only about subjects connected to their own experience, broadening a journal's content can be beneficial. The publication's mission statement might explicitly encourage submissions that broaden the range of articles to include LGBT+ histories. Editors should work with authors where these histories or approaches might be less familiar, including the use of pronouns.
5. **Editors should be familiar with the 'Core Practices'** outlined by the Code of Publication Ethics (COPE) particularly relating to working with authors and the peer review process; work to establish an inclusive policy that accommodates name-changes for digital publications.
6. **Encourage LGBT+ authors to submit their work for article and book prizes:** Many authors (mistakenly) assume that their editor or press will submit their work for relevant prizes. Any historian's chance of winning a prize (or being named onto a prize short-list) is increased by self-nomination. Postgraduate supervisors and departmental mentors can proactively support LGBT+ careers by recommending excellent research by these historians for academic prizes.

H. For Students

1. **Consider your own assumptions:** You may think you 'know' your teachers and the other students in your course, but we often adopt erroneous preconceptions about other people's attitudes, identities and experiences without realising it. Awareness of your

own subject position(s) opens up productive spaces for self-reflection, dialogue and analysis.

2. **Encourage your tutors to include LGBT+ content.** It takes a lot of work to come up with new courses, so encourage your teachers to try out new approaches by asking for LGBT+ content when you complete end of course questionnaires. Request that your university library purchases books on LGBT+ history. This will help make more books available for all students to undertake independent reading and research assessments
3. **Engage with LGBT+ initiatives in your department:** Student run activities are often the most imaginative!
4. **Don't forget that supportive classroom policies rely on everyone in the class engaging** and that how you behave will make a big difference to the dynamic for the whole group.

I. For Historians working in Heritage Organisations, Museums and Galleries

There are clearly significant differences between heritage organisations, national institutions, local museums and art galleries, and private charities, in size, outreach and financial resources. Our survey provided strong evidence of innovative work being undertaken by historians across these organisations to highlight and promote LGBT+ histories. This included working with universities on research initiatives relating to LGBT+ histories as well as public outreach activities, such as oral history projects. Further research has shown us just how much excellent work is being done in this sector. These suggestions draw on some of that activity.

1. **Make sure you have a representative governing body:** establish a LGBT+ working group and ensure LGBT+ representation is embedded in all aspects of the organisation's operations, including collections, exhibitions & education, volunteering and outreach.
2. **Ensure that there is staff training on responding to the public in relation to LGBT+ issues** (including for volunteers).

3. **Look at inclusion and LGBT+ representation in your collections and exhibitions:** display and increase awareness of LGBT+ items, including LGBT+ interpretations of them, even if these are contested; develop trails through your collections to explore LGBT+ histories; get involved in LGBT+ History month and encourage LGBT+ activities across the year.
4. **If the remit and funding of your organisation includes adding to the collections, ensure that LGBT+ histories are represented.**
5. **Be mindful of language use and LGBT+ terminology in relation to displays and notices.** Ensure that LGBT+ terms can be used to search online collections and databases. But don't make these the sole material that comes up when someone wants to find information about the history of sexuality, which would leave intact the idea that LGBTQ+ 'is sexuality' (in the same way that women constituted 'gender'). Identify material related to heterosexuality as well, so that this is not presented as the obvious 'normal' or standard against which otherness is necessarily defined.
6. **Temporary exhibitions relating to LGBT+ histories should have a legacy that remains accessible to the general public.**
7. **Engage with local LGBT+ groups in relation to collections and LGBT+ histories:** consult with them in the preparation of exhibitions and related publications.

Acknowledgments

This project was begun in early 2019. The working group analysed the data from the survey between periods of industrial action in the UK higher education sector, and as the UK entered the transition period to withdraw from the European Union. The report was written and re-written in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic in the spring and summer of 2020.

When we drafted the survey in the summer of 2019 we could not have envisaged the difficulties and pressures all historians, wherever they work or study, would soon be facing as a result of the pandemic. The possible effects of large-scale remote or online teaching were not on our radar, and as we go to press, the situation remains far from clear. As historians we are acutely aware of the differential socio-economic, emotional and mental health impacts of these crises and their potentially long-term effects. But this report is intended as a beacon of light, a sign that whatever hits us, professional historians of all backgrounds and identities will continue to work to remove structural inequalities, care about minorities and about those who are more vulnerable, celebrate our joint contributions and make it easier for these to grow.

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The working group collectively assumes responsibility for this report: Frances Andrews, Pippa Catterall, Imogen Evans, Margot Finn, Katherine Foxhall, Alix Green, Onni Gust, Alana Harris, Mark Pendleton, Andrew Spicer.

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