




SURVIVORSUK

SILENCED SURVIVORS

Understanding gay and bisexual
men's experience with sexual
violence and support services in the
UK.



2021



By Sam Thomson and Meka Beresford





CONTENT NOTICE

PLEASE READ BEFORE CONTINUING

The most important thing you can do is to keep yourself protected when encountering the topic of sexual violence.

For anyone feeling increasingly unsafe, worried, stressed or any other negative emotion related to this report, please ensure that you are taking time to process this information in a safe and patient way.

If anything is brought up for you as a response to this report, please contact help@survivorsuk.org or find other local services [here](#).

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A WORD FROM OUR CEO

Alex Feis-Bryce

This report is both timely and deeply personal to me. Ever since I was raped as a teenager, following one of my first ever nights out in a gay venue, I've reflected on the impact my experience as a survivor had on the process of me coming to terms with my identity as a queer man. The interaction between these particular parts of my identity – queer, male, survivor – has always felt central to my world view.

I've also always had the sense – perhaps my imagination or some projected internalised self-blame or shame – that many of the gay and bi men who I've told about what happened to me reacted in a way that suggests that they saw experiencing sexual violence as in some way a rite of passage or an inevitability for men who have sex with men.

My experience of being raped is not the only time I've experienced sexual violence in a queer setting and, as this research demonstrates, gay and bi men experience higher levels of sexual violence than reported in any studies of men of all sexual orientations.

In commissioning this research, we wanted to explore sexual violence experienced by gay and bi men to improve our knowledge about where and how it happens in the hope that we can raise awareness, improve service provision and, if required, advocate for preventative action.

It is absolutely crucial in opening up this challenging discussion that oxygen is not given to any of the dangerous homophobic rape myths which are prevalent in our criminal justice system; in particular, the assumption that gay and bi men are promiscuous so therefore their consent is somehow assumed or has less value.



A WORD FROM OUR CEO (cont.)

Alex Feis-Bryce

We must not forget that only 54 years ago consensual sex between men was illegal and prior to 2000 the age of consent for sex between two men was different to that for heterosexuals. This reminds us that, even in modern times, the sex lives of queer men were criminalised and even pathologized, irrespective of consent.

I also want to make it clear that in identifying spaces where sexual violence may occur more often, we are in no way victim blaming, making moral judgements or seeking to stigmatise any consensual sexual activities. Sexual liberation for queer people and sex positivity more broadly in society should be celebrated.

Modern sex lives are complex and nuanced, and as a society we tend to view sexual violence in a way that utterly detaches it from our lived, everyday experiences of navigating the modern world of sex and relationships. It is on that foundation that rape myths prevail and experiences of certain survivors are deemed to be less valid than others.

In this research we have sought to locate sexual violence within the authentic lived experience of gay and bi men whilst putting consent at the very heart of our questions and considerations.

We hope that this research and the excellent work being done by organisations we partner with like Galop, the LGBT+ anti-violence charity, we can help to foster a safe space for self-reflection and challenging discussions about consent in the context of modern queer sex lives.

FOREWORD

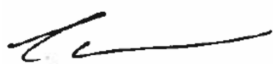
All victims have a right to justice and support; however, we know that for a variety of reasons many do not feel able to speak about their experience, or access the support needed to cope and recover, let alone engage in a criminal justice journey.

Tackling sexual violence and ensuring victims are supported has long been a focus of mine, and while there has been good progress in our research and work around this issue, there remain gaps in our understanding. Too often, men – and particularly gay and bisexual men – are overlooked in research, meaning that policies and services are not adequately meeting the needs of these victims.

This report from Survivors UK comes at a time when many people are particularly isolated and vulnerable, and our justice system has experienced a significant setback, impacting victims' confidence to report and seek help.

This research shows the shocking proportion of gay and bisexual men who have experienced sexual violence; sadly, a seemingly significantly higher proportion than among straight men.

I am pleased that victims in London indicated they were more likely to report sexual violence to the police, however the figure is still far too low, and so we must continue our work to ensure the voices of male survivors are heard and that appropriate services are there to help them feel empowered to report and seek support that helps them access justice and recovery.



Claire Waxman

Independent Victims' Commissioner for London



ABOUT SURVIVORSUK

Set up in 1986, SurvivorsUK support men and non-binary survivors over the age of 13 who have experienced sexual violence. We put our three values at the core of everything we do:

- Supporting individuals who have experience sexual violence.
- Challenging the stigma around sexual violence.
- Building communities that listen to survivors of sexual violence.

With these values in mind, we offer various forms of support for male and non-binary survivors and their allies supporting them. These include:

ONLINE HELPLINE

Our National Online Male Survivors Helpline is an emotional support service for survivors, as well as their allies/professionals supporting them.

This is a space, completely under the caller's control, where they can chat about what may be going on for them, whether that be their experience of sexual violence; the emotions and experiences that have followed; gain advice on next steps or to simply be in a non-judgmental space with someone who believes them and cares for their wellbeing.

This service is open seven days a week from 12pm-8pm and is always stationed by trained emotional support workers who will be as welcoming, kind and compassionate as possible.

[More info here.](#)

COUNSELLING AND GROUPWORK

Our two main forms of counselling are split into two streams: 1-to-1 counselling and groupwork. Our approach to 1-to-1 counselling and groupwork is to be empowerment based and trauma informed. What this means is we want to give a client the tools they deem useful for their own life. We will never try and tell someone how to live their own life, we simply want to empower them in their own decisions, and to encourage people to explore their experiences and emotions.

The main difference between 1-to-1 counselling and groupwork is the dynamic of the sessions. In 1-to-1 counselling, a client will speak with a counsellor directly about individual goals and explore them. Within groupwork, 12 survivors will come together and create shared aims through peer support with counsellors/groupwork facilitators.

[More about individual counselling.](#)

[More about groupwork.](#)

ISVA

An Independent Sexual Violence Advisor (ISVA) is someone who works with survivors of sexual violence who are considering reporting to the police and/or going through the criminal justice process. ISVAs can help in lots of different ways over different lengths of time, but they mainly:

- Help you understand how the reporting and criminal justice processes work.
- Support you in making your complaint and provide ongoing support throughout the entirety of criminal proceedings.
- Support you in a non-judgemental way to address your needs.
- Help you in accessing other services that you may want or need.
- Provide you with information on health services & help you to think about your safety.
- Listen to your experiences and give you emotional support.

[More about Independent Sexual Violence Advisors.](#)

OUTREACH AND ENGAGEMENT

SurvivorsUK are committed to challenging the silence around male and non-binary experiences of sexual violence. Through our training and lectures, we are challenging myths/misconceptions, addressing unique barriers as well as educating people to become supportive allies for survivors of sexual violence.

Our outreach & engagement also focuses on increasing safe and robust referral pathways to our service for specialist support through networks on an organizational, institutional, and individual level.

If you would be interested on receiving training around the topic of sexual violence in relation to male and non-binary survivors from SurvivorsUK, please email our Outreach & Engagement Officer:

sam.thomson@survivorsuk.org.

GALOP

SurvivorsUK work closely alongside Galop, the UK's LGBT+ anti-abuse charity, run by LGBT+ people, for LGBT+ people.

Galop provides various support services to LGBT+ survivors of sexual abuse and other forms of violence. You can find more information at www.galop.org.uk.



INTRODUCTION

Sexual violence is a topic that up until very recently was shrouded in silence. It wasn't until 2017 when Hollywood stars began to speak about being abused by the hands of higher ups that the conversation about sexual violence was allowed into the mainstream.

As more and more people became confident in telling their own stories of surviving sexual violence, the taboo began to fall away – but some people were left behind in the darkness of silence: men. While the media championed the voices of survivors, the coverage continued to perpetuate myths such as “men cannot be/aren't sexually assaulted” or that “men aren't affected by sexual violence”. You won't have to search hard to find a male rape ‘joke’ in the shows we watch, and the jokes aren't limited to adult shows either – even the cartoons we enjoyed as children allude to male prison rape¹.

When we dig deeper and look at marginalized communities within the male population, we are exposed to even more myths.

We are aware that suggestions such as “gay people are more likely to be sexually assaulted” can be harmful and can generate fear that expressing their sexuality could lead to an instance of sexual violence when in reality survivors, or their identity, should never be seen as the reason they experienced sexual violence.

For the most part, it is now generally socially understood that sexual violence wasn't the victim/survivor's fault. It wasn't what they were wearing, where they were, how they were travelling home, and it also has nothing to do with the victim/survivors' gender identity or sexuality. Yet, we can be exposed to these myths time and time again and can put ownership on victim/survivors to debunk falsities forced upon them.

The power of myths on a victim/survivor's journey can be significant, especially in the absence of accessible education around sexual violence and exposure to narratives where they can see themselves represented positively.

INTRODUCTION

(cont.)

Myths create significant barriers for seeking support and speaking out about what they have experienced. Society has built up complex obstacles for male survivors that are extraordinarily difficult to come through - meaning that it takes, on average, 26 years for men to tell someone about sexual violence. This silence could be interpreted as not needing support.

Again, when we look deeper, the intersectional, marginalised communities of gay and bisexual men who are also survivors of sexual violence face additional complex barriers which compound silence around the topic. These barriers, or myths, have created an idea that gay and bisexual men are unaffected by sexual violence.

The concerning lack of research into men and non-binary victim/survivors, especially those identifying as gay or bisexual, made it hard to debunk these myths - which was a driving factor behind our decision to commission this research.

From our work with gay and bisexual men, we are aware that they face specific issues that straight or cis-gendered men may not, but we didn't have a full picture of the sexual violence that the community faces. Indeed, we believe that this research may be the first of its kind in the UK with a sample as large as this.

It is certainly the first research to investigate emerging acts of violence such as image-based sexual abuse amongst gay and bisexual men.

Given its innovative nature, we understand that some of this research may leave us with more questions. However, it is a valuable first foray into the issue of sexual violence that gay and bisexual men face, and we hope it will inspire further research into a frequently misunderstood topic.

This survey was commissioned by SurvivorsUK and carried out by Survation, an MRS (Market Research Society) accredited partner and member of the British Polling Council (BPC). The questions were developed by a working group of SurvivorsUK staff and later refined by Survation. The survey was carried out for six days between August 13th and 18th 2020. The sample was made up of 505 gay and bisexual identifying men. The survey was conducted via online panel. Invitations to complete surveys were sent out to members of the panel. Differential response rates from different demographic groups were taken into account.

Margin of Error

Because only a sample of the full population was interviewed, all results are subject to margin of error, meaning that not all differences are statistically significant. For example, in a question where 50% (the worst case scenario as far as margin of error is concerned) gave a particular answer, with a sample of 505 it is 95% certain that the 'true' value will fall within the range of 4.4% from the sample result. Subsamples from the cross-breaks will be subject to higher margin of error, conclusions drawn from cross-breaks with very small sub-samples should be treated with caution.

Question presentation

All data tables shown in full below, in order and wording put to respondents, including but not limited to all tables relating to published data and all relevant tables preceding them. Tables for demographic questions might not be included but these should be clear from the cross-breaks on published tables. In all questions where the responses are a list of parties, names or statements, these will typically have been displayed to respondents in a randomised order. The only questions which would not have had randomised responses would be those in which there was a natural order to maintain – e.g. a scale from “strongly agree” to “strongly disagree”, a list of numbers from 0 to 10 or questions which had factual rather than opinion-related answers such as demographic information. “Other”, “Don't know” and “Refused” responses are not randomised.

Not all questions will have necessarily been asked to all respondents – this is because they may be follow-on questions from previous questions or only appropriate to certain demographic groups. Lower response counts should make clear where this has occurred.

This data was analysed by Survation. In order to request a full breakdown of the data collected by Survation, please email communications@survivorsuk.org.

TERMINOLOGY

Bisexual

Bisexual is a term for describing a person who has romantic and/or sexual orientation towards more than one gender. People who are bisexual may also describe themselves as pansexual, queer or do not wish to label their sexuality altogether.

Chemsex

Chemsex is the label for an activity involving taking drugs (or 'chems') and engaging in sexual activity, most common amongst gay and bisexual men. There are usually three specific drugs involved that work to limit inhibitions – Methamphetamine (Crystal Meth), Mephedrone (Meth) and GHB/GBL (G).

Consent

Consent is the term for describing a clear, freely given and enthusiastic agreement between participants to engage in sexual activity. Consent cannot be given by individuals who are underage, intoxicated, threatened, incapacitated or under pressure to engage in sexual activity due to power dynamics.

Gay

Gay is a term for describing a man who has romantic and/or sexual orientation towards men. Some non-binary people may also identify with this term.

LGBTQ+ community

LGBTQ+ is the acronym to describe the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer community. As the community is expanding and recognising more sexual orientations and identities, we include the '+' to show support for welcoming more individuals.

Non-Binary

Non-binary is a term for describing a person whose gender identity does not fall into the binary categories of 'male' or 'female'. Some non-binary people can identify with some aspects of binary genders and some can reject them entirely.

Rape

Rape is a term for describing any unwanted penetration of an individual's mouth, anus, or vagina with a penis. If another any other body part or object is used to penetrate, this is known as 'sexual assault via penetration'.

TERMINOLOGY

(cont.)

Sexual Abuse

Sexual abuse is a term for describing any unwanted physical or psychological sexual act performed against a vulnerable person, including children and people with disabilities.

Sexual Assault

Sexual assault is a term for describing any unwanted physical or psychological sexual act performed against someone, including forcing exposure to sexual activity.

Sexual Assault Referral Centre (SARC)

A Sexual Assault Referral Centre (SARC) is the name for a specialist facility where recent victims or survivors of sexual violence can receive immediate help and support. This can include forensic medical examinations, sexually transmitted infection (STI) and pregnancy tests, opportunities to speak with the police and speaking with crisis workers for advice on the next steps.

Sexual Violence

Sexual violence is an umbrella term for describing any kind of unwanted act performed against someone, including rape, sexual assault, sexual abuse, and many others.

Stealthing

Stealthing is the definition for the act of removing a condom during a sexual activity without the consent of the partner(s).

Victim-Survivor

Victim-survivor is a term for describing an individual who has been affected by sexual violence. Some people prefer other terms such as victim, survivor, or do not wish to label themselves as either. To be as inclusive as possible, this report will use the term victim-survivor wherever possible.

QUESTION 1

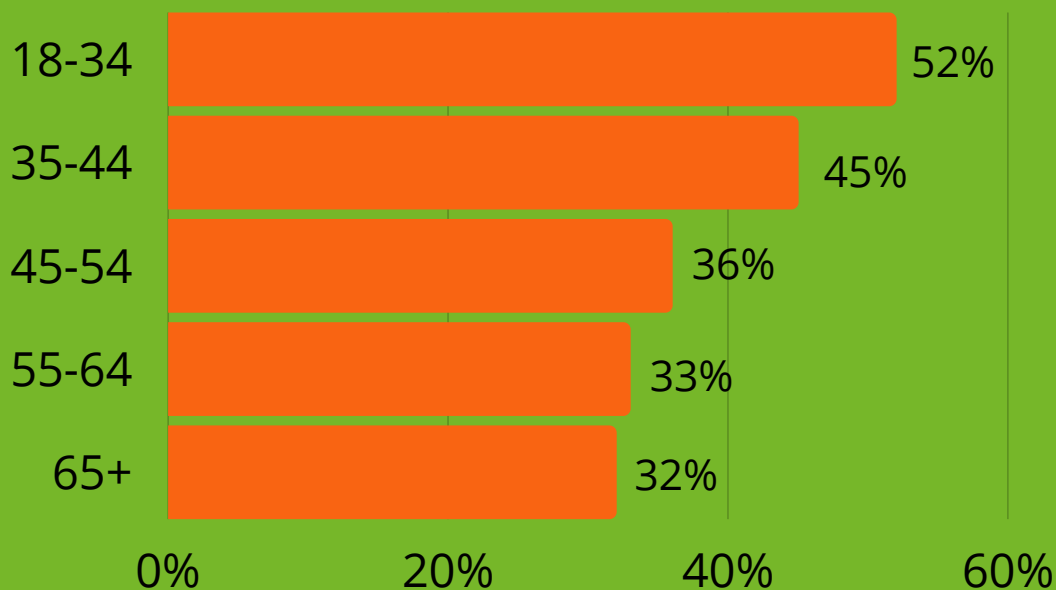
Have you ever experienced something you would describe as a sexual assault?



Base: All Respondents Unweighted Total: Total = 505

AGE BREAKDOWN

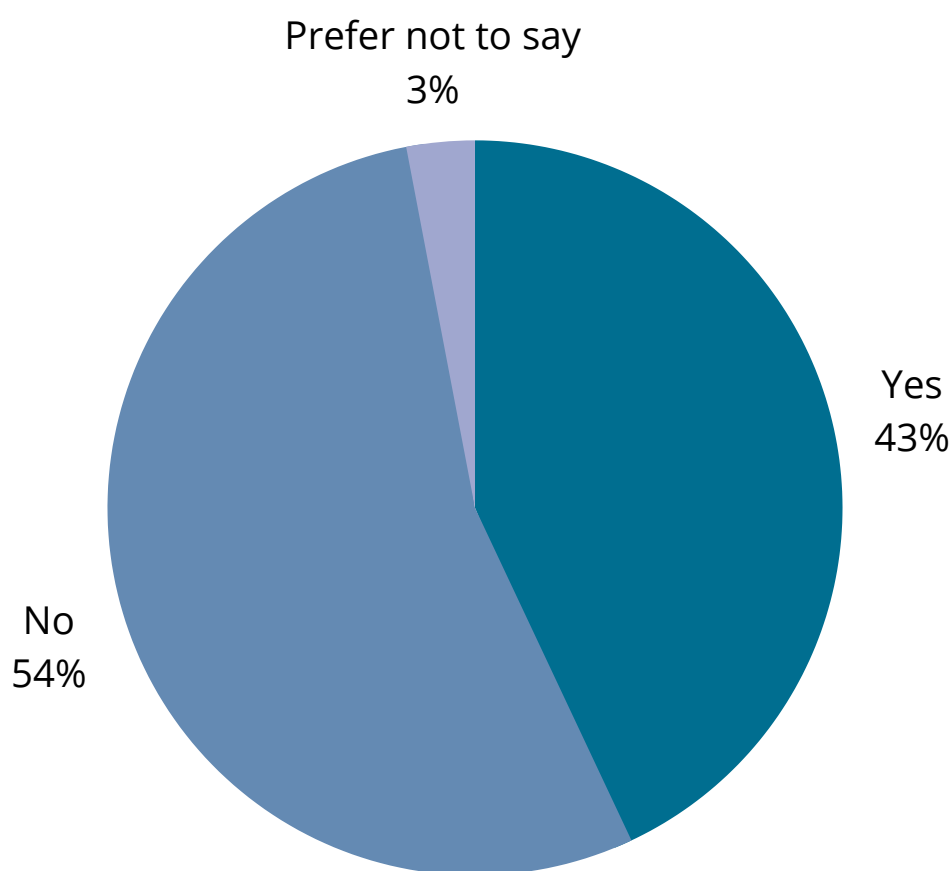
Of those who answered 'Yes'



Base: All Respondents who said 'Yes' to Q1. Unweighted Total: Total = 225

QUESTION 2

Have you ever been involved in sexual activity that you felt was a bad experience at the time but looking back believe it to be sexual assault?



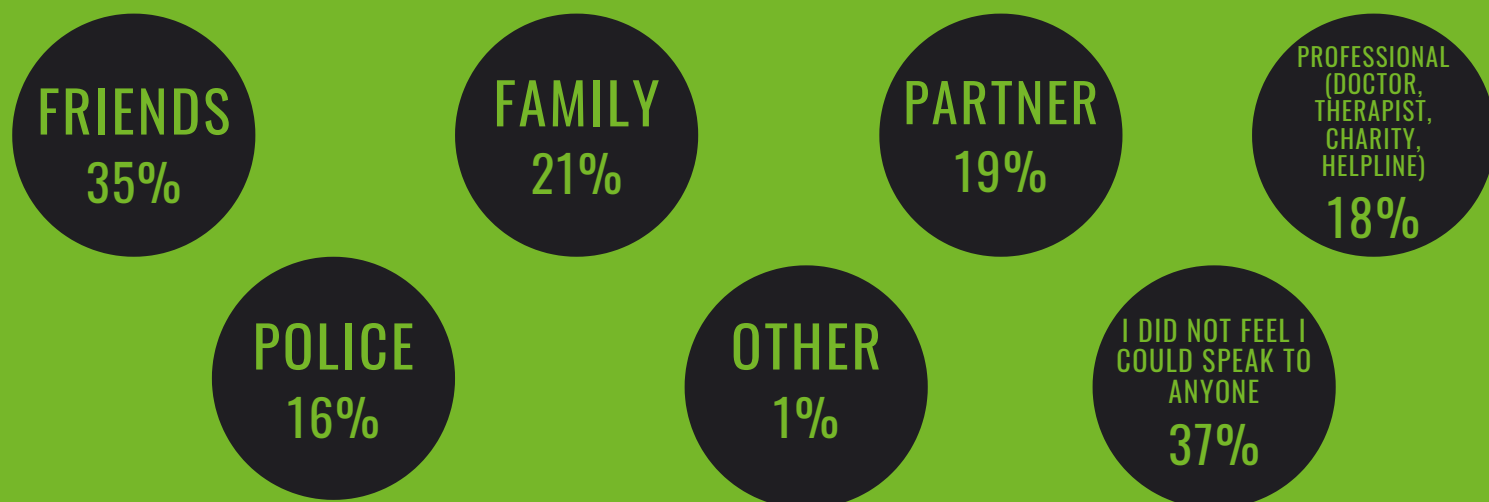
Base: All Respondents Unweighted Total: Total = 505

43% of 45 – 54 year-olds answered yes to this question, compared to 36% of 45-54 year-olds who answered yes to question 1, indicating that men aged 45 – 54 may be less likely to identify sexual violence at the time of the incident.

This could be in part because of the myths surrounding sexual violence against men.

QUESTION 3

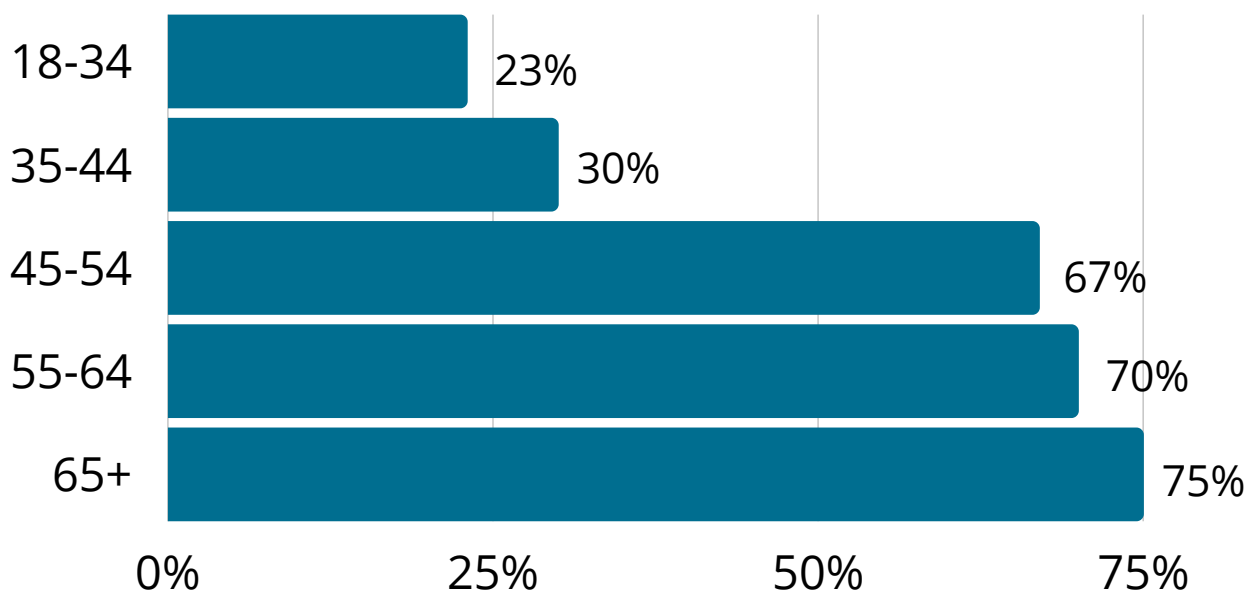
You said that you experienced sexual assault. Did you feel that you could speak to any of the following?
(please select all that apply).



Base: All Respondents who said 'Yes' to Q1 or Q2. Unweighted Total: Total = 263

AGE BREAKDOWN

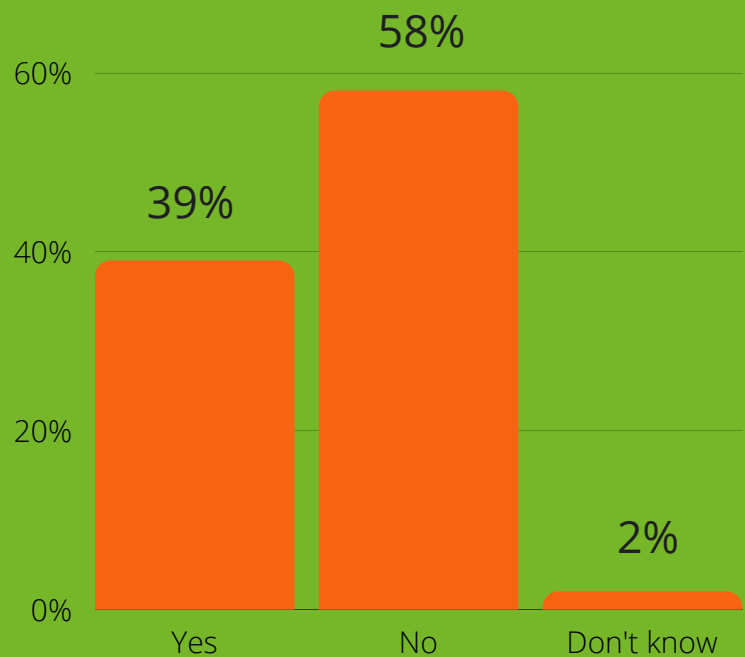
Of those who answered 'I did not feel I could speak to anyone'.



Base: All Respondents who said 'I did not feel I could speak to anyone about the experience' to Q3.
Unweighted Total: Total = 96

QUESTION 4

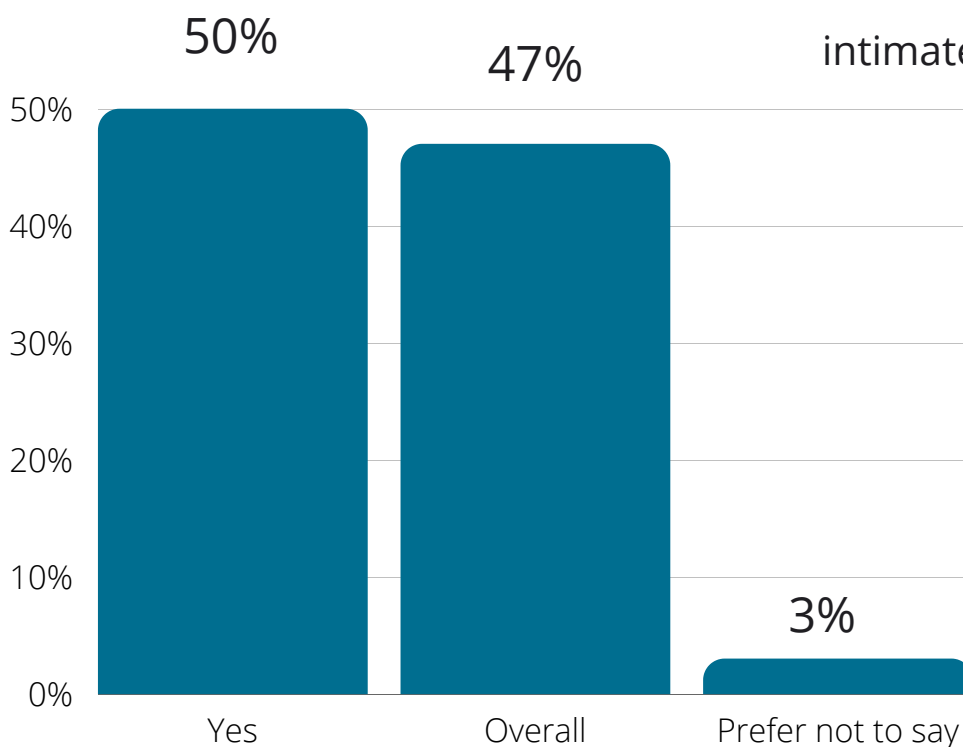
Prior to turning 16, did you ever engage in sexual activity with someone over the age of 16?



Base: All Respondents Unweighted Total: Total = 505

QUESTION 5

Has anyone ever touched you in a sexual or intimate way without your consent?



Base: All Respondents Unweighted Total: Total = 505

QUESTION 6

You said that someone touched you in a sexual or intimate way without your consent, where did this take place? Please select all that apply.

31%

A bar/club

24%

At a party

22%

In a public place

21%

Friend/family accommodation

17%

In your own home

11%

At an event

11%

In a workplace

9%

In a sauna

8%

Other

QUESTION 7

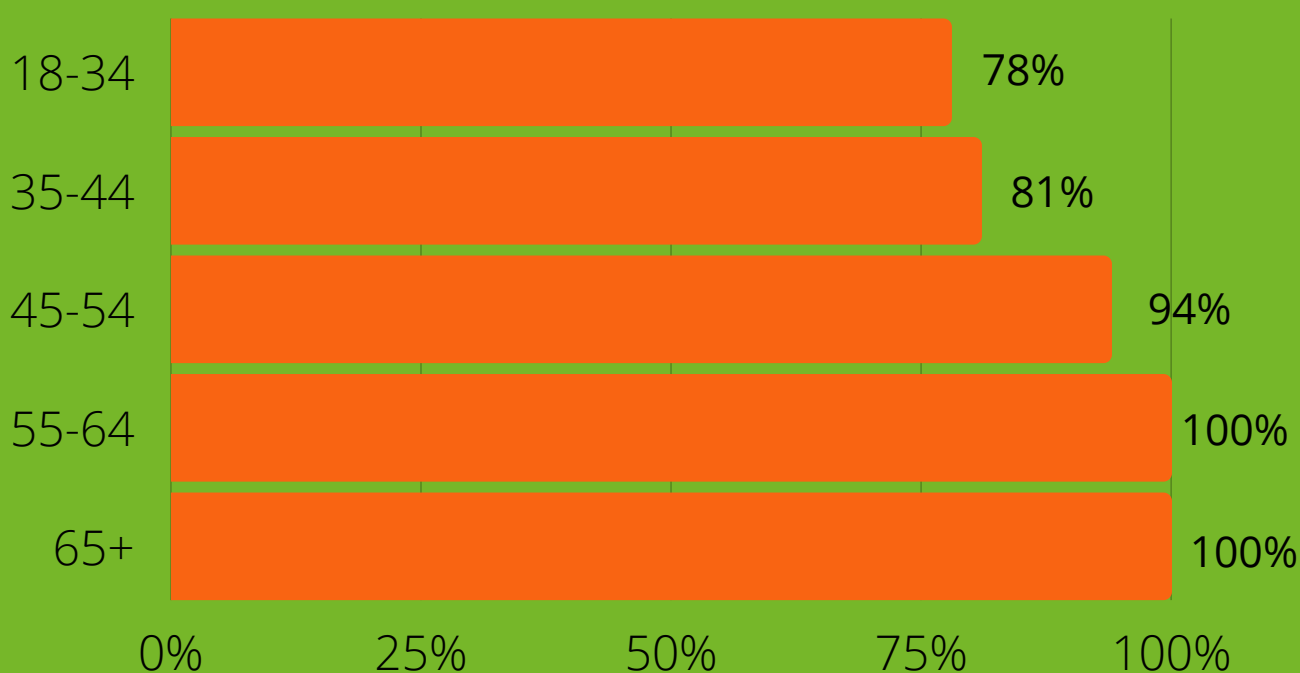
Have you ever reported an incident of sexual assault to the police?



Base: All Respondents Unweighted Total: Total = 505

ANSWERED 'NO'

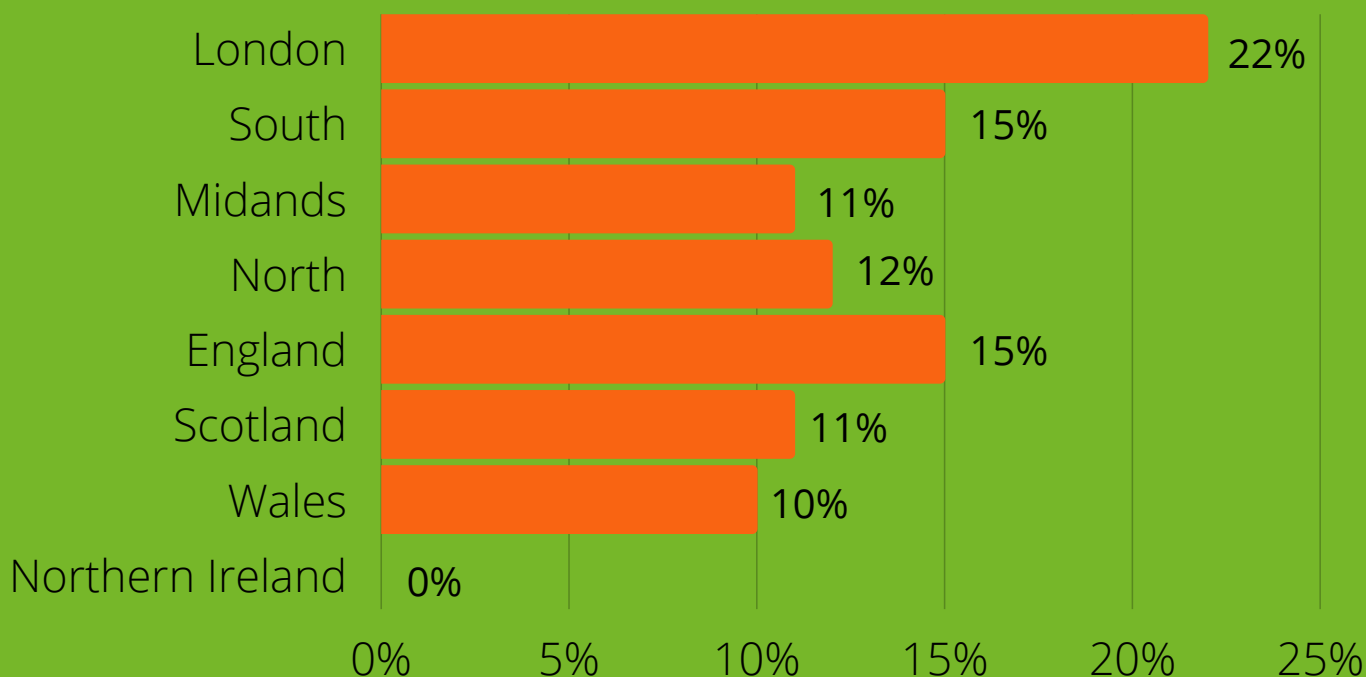
To have you ever reported an incident of sexual assault to the police?



Base: All Respondents who said 'No' to Q7. Unweighted Total: Total = 430

ANSWERED 'YES'

To have you ever reported an incident of sexual assault to the police?



All Respondents who said 'Yes' to Q7. Unweighted Total: Total = 70

**18-44-YEAR-OLDS
ARE MORE LIKELY
TO REPORT TO
POLICE THAN 45-
65+ YEAR-OLDS.**

**PEOPLE IN
LONDON ARE MORE
LIKELY TO REPORT
TO POLICE
COMPARED TO
REST OF UK.**

QUESTION 8

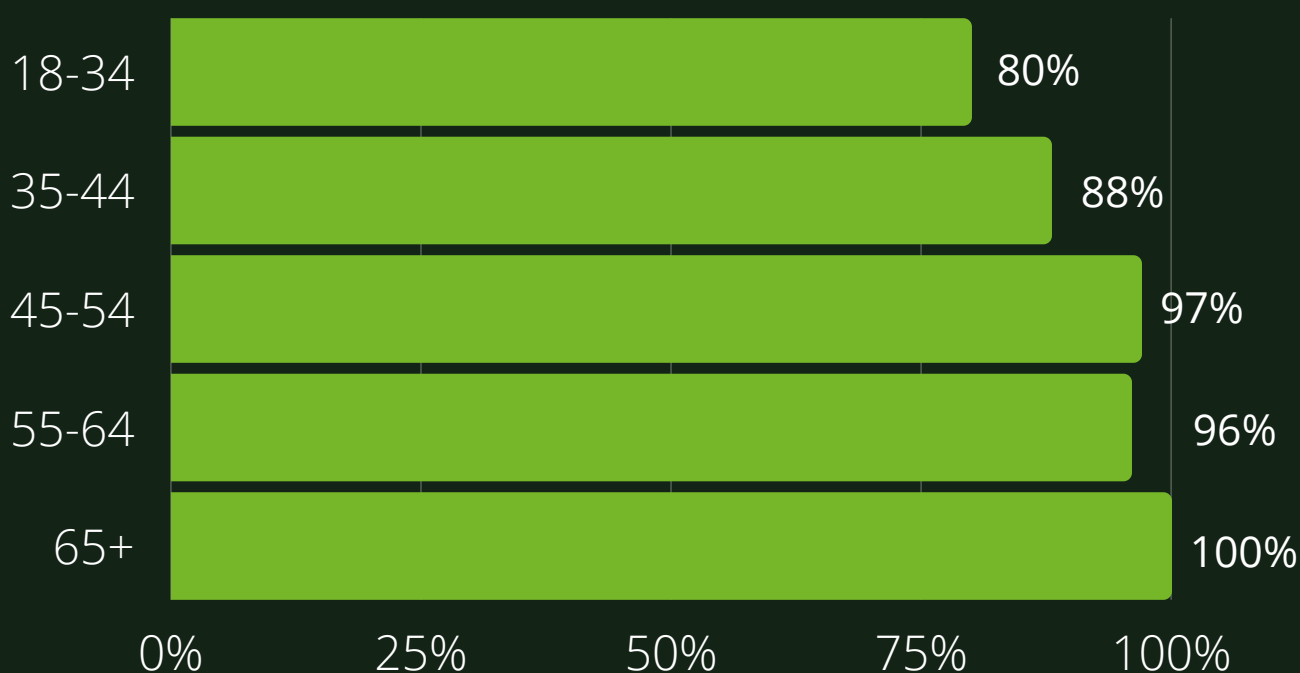
Have you ever reported an incident of sexual assault to a Sexual Assault Referral Centre (SARC)?



Base: All Respondents Unweighted Total: Total = 505

ANSWERED 'NO'

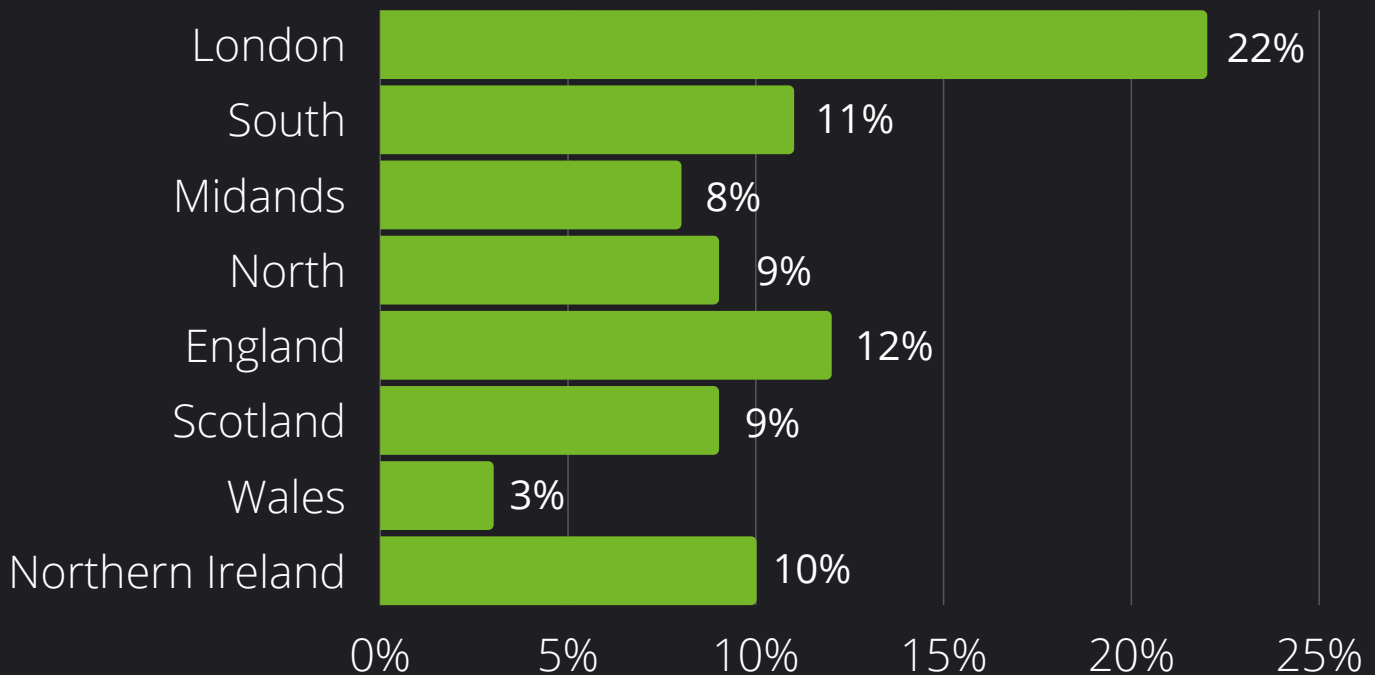
To have you ever reported an incident of sexual assault to a Sexual Assault Referral Centre (SARC)?



Base: All Respondents who said 'No' to Q8. Unweighted Total: Total = 441

ANSWERED 'YES'

To have you ever reported an incident of sexual assault to the police?



All Respondents who said 'Yes' to Q8. Unweighted Total: Total = 56

**Q7 AND Q8 SHOW
THAT THERE ARE
SIGNIFICANT
DIFFICULTIES WITH
THE RELATIONSHIP
BETWEEN GAY AND
BISEXUAL MEN AND
PROFESSIONAL
SERVICES.**

**Q3 FOUND THAT MOST
PEOPLE ARE NOT ABLE
TO SPEAK TO
PROFESSIONAL
SUPPORT SERVICES.
THIS MAY HIGHLIGHT
THE NEED FOR
FRIENDS/FAMILY TO
HELP.**

QUESTION 9

You said that you reported an incident of sexual assault to the police. Which of the following viewpoints best describes how you found the experience? Please select all that apply.

**I FELT
SUPPORTED**

36%

**I FOUND THE
EXPERIENCE
POSITIVE**

33%

**I FELT
JUDGED**

27%

**I FELT MY
COMPLAINT WAS
TAKEN
SERIOUSLY**

24%

**I FELT MY
COMPLAINT WAS
NOT TAKEN
SERIOUSLY**

24%

**I FELT
DISBELIEVED**

20%

**NONE OF
THE ABOVE**

6%

QUESTION 10

You said that you reported an incident of sexual assault to SARC, which of the following viewpoints best describes how would found the experience? Please select all that apply.

**I FELT
SUPPORTED**

29%

**I FOUND THE
EXPERIENCE
POSITIVE**

23%

**I FELT
JUDGED**

20%

**I FELT MY
COMPLAINT WAS
TAKEN
SERIOUSLY**

27%

**I FELT MY
COMPLAINT WAS
NOT TAKEN
SERIOUSLY**

32%

**I FELT
DISBELIEVED**

29%

**NONE OF
THE ABOVE**

0%

QUESTION 11

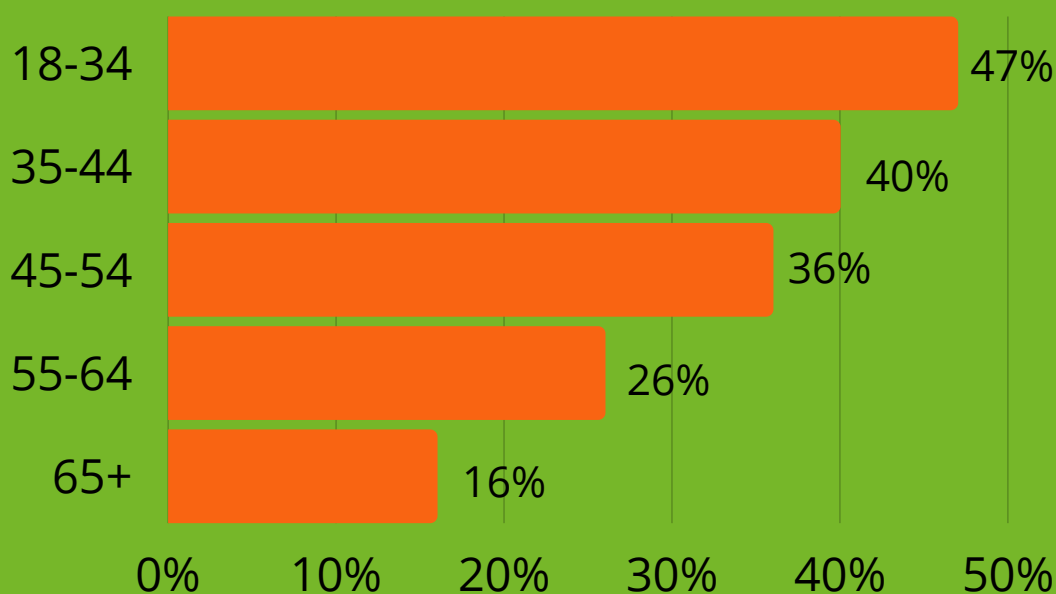
Have you ever felt pressured into sexual activity that you weren't comfortable with?



Base: All Respondents Unweighted Total: Total = 505

AGE BREAKDOWN

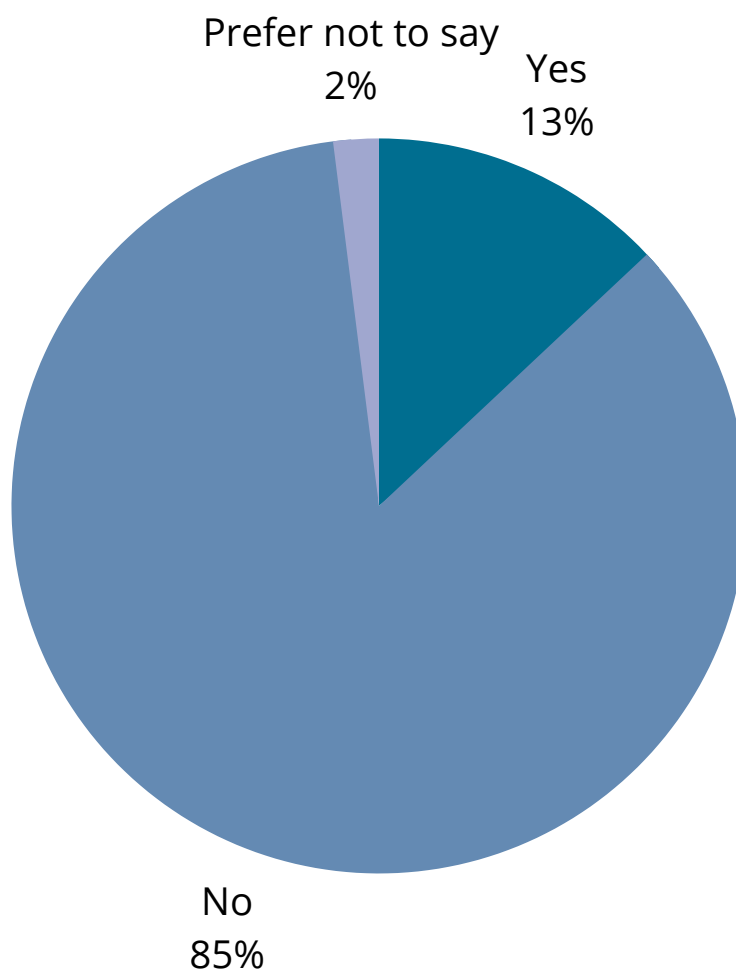
Of those who answered 'Yes'



Base: All Respondents who said 'Yes' to Q11. Unweighted Total: Total = 200

QUESTION 12

Have you ever coerced or pressured someone to have sex with you?

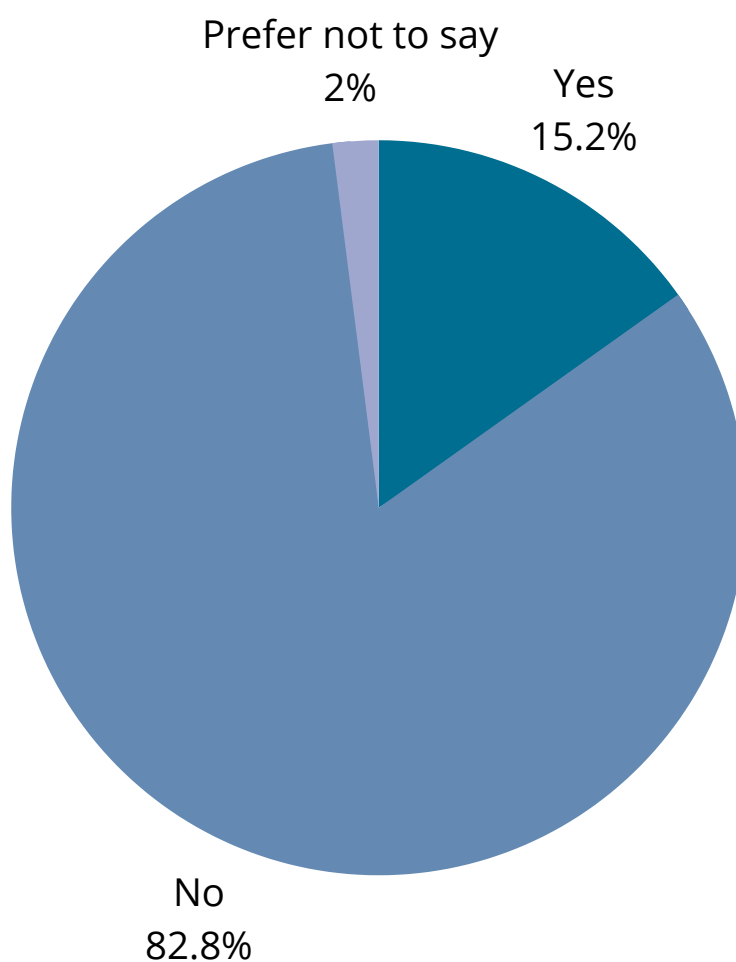


Base: All Respondents Unweighted Total: Total = 505

Note: This type of data is helpful for us as an organisation to inform our work with survivors/victims who are at risk of or already have perpetrated.

QUESTION 13

Have you ever had sex with someone where you felt you did something that your sexual partner(s) didn't consent to?



Base: All Respondents Unweighted Total: Total = 505

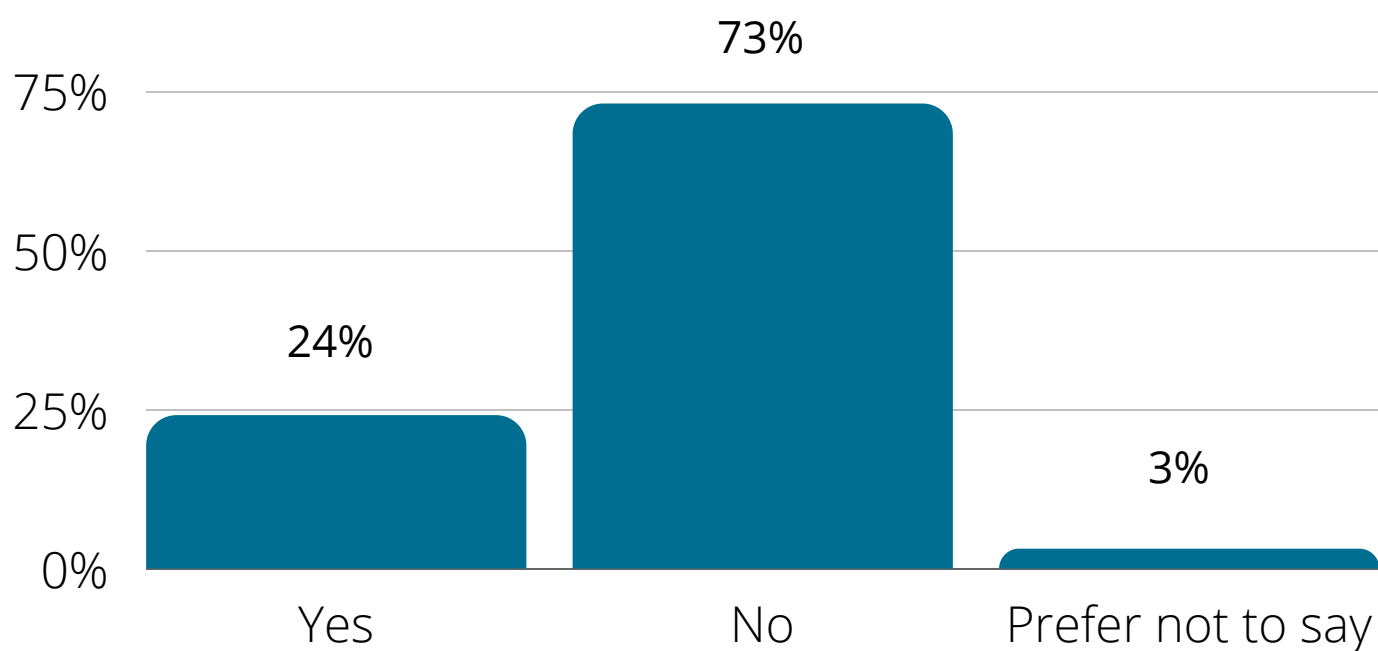
Note: This type of data is helpful for us as an organisation to inform our work with survivors/victims who are at risk of or already have perpetrated.

QUESTION 14

Has anyone ever shared an intimate picture(s) of you with a third party/parties without your consent?

“As a male survivor of image abuse, I know exactly how hard it is to step forward, out of the darkness, and cry out for help. Men, whether gay or straight, are judged on a gender stereotype that dictates that we should suffer our emotional pain in silence. We fear the judgement of others and the shame that they inflict upon us. There is no shame to be had in crimes of this nature, certainly none that the victim should feel at any rate.”

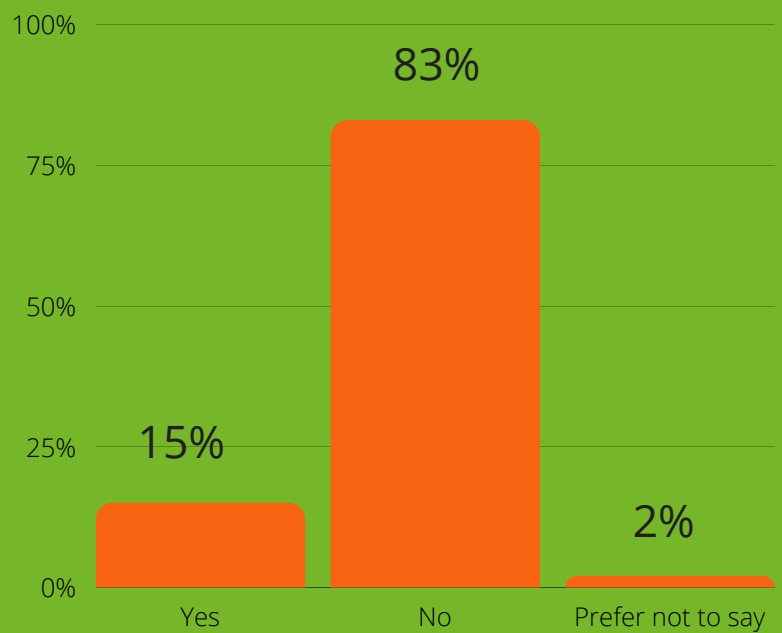
- IBA Survivor



Base: All Respondents Unweighted Total: Total = 505

QUESTION 15

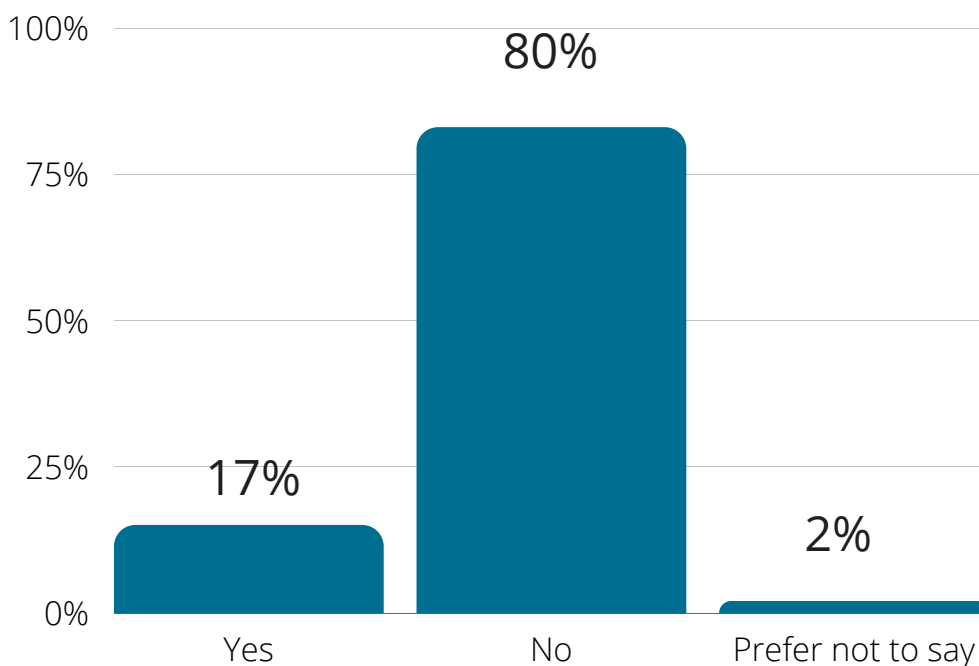
Has anyone ever threatened or blackmailed you using intimate pictures of you?



Base: All Respondents Unweighted Total: Total = 505

QUESTION 16

Have you ever been filmed whilst engaging in sexual activity without your consent?



Base: All Respondents Unweighted Total: Total = 505




IMAGE BASED ABUSE

OUR FINDINGS IN CONTEXT


Evidence is emerging that the LGBTQ+ and other marginalised communities are much more likely than heterosexual, cisgender communities to be victims of image based sexual abuse and to experience threats of image based sexual abuse.

Further, the research is suggesting that these communities display greater levels of harm from image based sexual abuse such as depression, anxiety and suicidality. *(Henry & Flynn, 2019)*

With the constancy of our online world, and the increase of society moving online, image based sexual abuse is becoming an increasingly worrying act of violence.

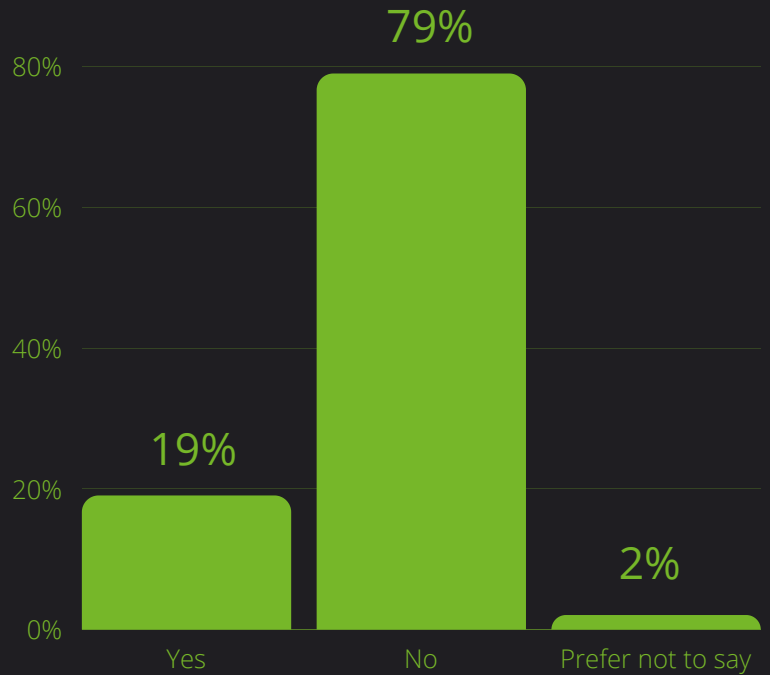


As highlighted throughout this report, more work needs to be conducted to identify gaps in current systems for all victim-survivors of sexual violence. This must include individuals from marginalised communities whose experiences remain widely under-researched.



QUESTION 17

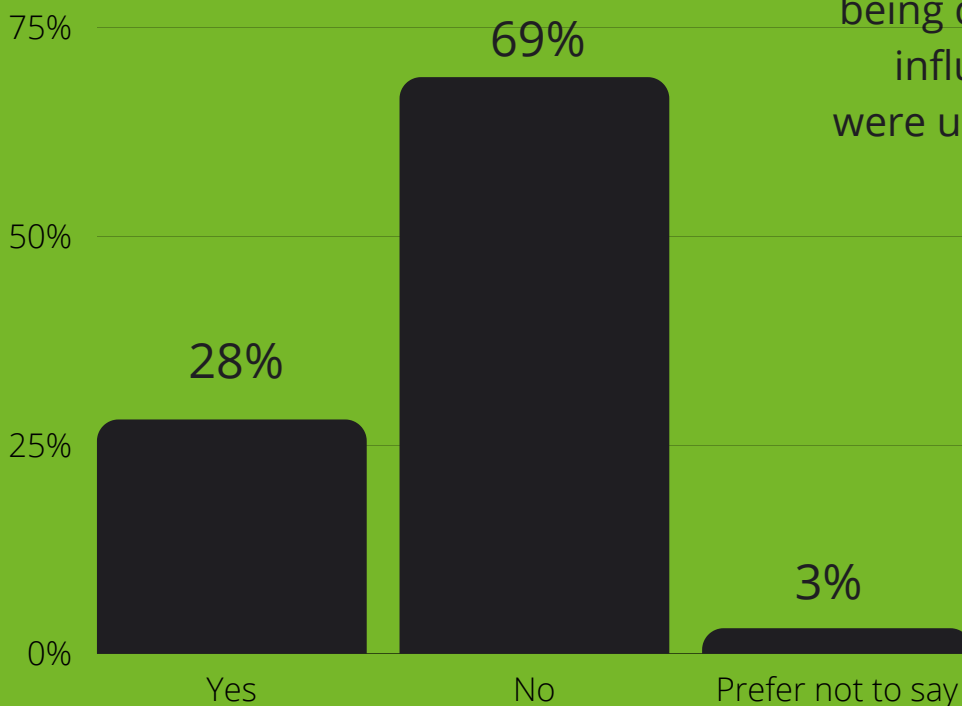
Has anyone ever removed a condom without you knowing or consenting during sexual activity?



Base: All Respondents Unweighted Total: Total = 505

QUESTION 18

Have you ever had sex when you feel that due to being drunk or under the influence of drugs you were unable to consent?



Base: All Respondents Unweighted Total: Total = 505

QUESTION 19

Have you ever had a sexual experience where you consented to something but it became something else that you didn't consent to?



Base: All Respondents Unweighted Total: Total = 505

QUESTION 20

Have you ever consented to have sex with one person but then it ended up involving someone else without your consent?



Base: All Respondents Unweighted Total: Total = 505

QUESTION 21

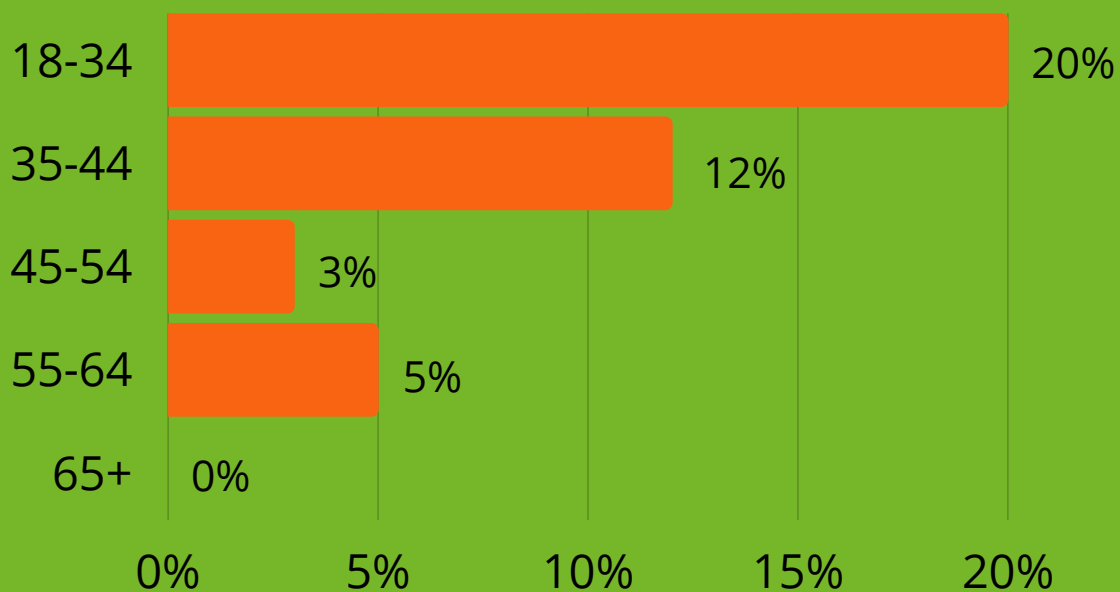
Chemsex is the use of crystal methamphetamine, mephedrone, and/or GHB during sex. Have you ever been involved in a Chemsex party involving sexual activity you didn't consent to?



Base: All Respondents Unweighted Total: Total = 505

AGE BREAKDOWN

Of those who answered 'Yes'



Base: All Respondents who said 'Yes' to Q21. Unweighted Total: Total = 65

QUESTION 22

What do you feel the attitude is in the LGBTQ+ community to sexual violence? Please select all that apply.

37%

Aware

32%

Supportive of
survivors

23%

Lack of
understand-
ing

19%

Fetishised

16%

Dismissive

15%

Normalised

12%

Hostile/Victim
Blaming

13%

Don't know

1%

Other

3%

None of the
above

CONCLUSION

This survey attempted to explore the prevalence of sexual violence and silence amongst men who identify as gay or bisexual. Overall, from the findings, we can confirm that gay and bisexual men are widely affected by sexual violence in various spaces, in various ways, and their journey of recovery (including accessing support) is highly variable. Recent research by Mankind which focused on a smaller sample of all men, not just those identifying as gay or bi, found that 16% of men have experienced some form of sexual violence, increasing to 50% when including other unwanted sexual experiences covered by the Equalities Act such as unwanted sexual innuendo or flirting or teasing or body shaming specific to genitals.

Before moving onto our recommendations, we want to acknowledge the sample size of 505 gay and bisexual men. Survation, an MRS (Market Research Society) accredited partner, provided us with a base size of 505 gay and bisexual men from across the United Kingdom from various demographics, enabling us to generalise these findings to the wider population.

To build on the validity of the findings, we would encourage further research in this field with larger base sizes to reliably assess trends relating to sexual violence for gay and bisexual men. Yet, echoing the theme of silence around this topic, the difficulties for gay and bisexual survivors speaking about their experiences may inhibit willingness to engage in research such as this.

There has been no other research of this kind published in the UK that we are aware of, and it will undoubtedly inform much of our work as we move forward – but we are aware that a significant gap in this data is feedback from BAM gay and bisexual men and more research is urgently needed in this area. We also recognize the need to further distinguish between gay and bisexual men, instead of men who have sex with men, due to very distinct differences in lived experiences within these communities.

Only 60 respondents identified as an ethnicity other than white, compared to 445 white respondents.

CONCLUSION

(cont.)

Of those 60, there were 33 Asian respondents, 13 respondents from multiple ethnic groups, 8 Black respondents and 5 respondents who identified as 'other ethnic group'. Of course, 8 gay and bisexual Black men cannot speak to the experience of all Black gay and bisexual men living in the UK and the same is to be said of the Asian, mixed and 'other' identifying men. However, they can give us a very preliminary insight into the issues that Black gay and bisexual men face when it comes to sexual violence. One such insight is that none of the 8 Black respondents had ever reported an incident of sexual assault to a SARC. Moreover, none of them had been to a Chemsex party involving sexual activity that they didn't consent to. This research also fails to cast a light on instances of sexual violence that may only affect BAME gay and bisexual men. We know that racism is prevalent amongst gay and bi men and undoubtedly impact on sexual interactions whether consensual or not. One recent example was popular gay dating app Grindr only removing its 'ethnicity filter' in 2020.

We are also conscious that we didn't gather any data on gender identity so we're not able to distinguish what proportion of trans men were surveyed and whether there was any substantial difference in their experiences of sexual violence compared to those of cisgender men.

A further gap in the data which warrants further research is from men outside of London and the south east, and more importantly outside of England. This data is useful to us as an organisation which primarily helps people in London, but it is less useful to providing a wider understanding of the sexual violence faced by gay and bisexual men throughout the UK.

The most concerning finding is that such a large proportion of victims/survivors felt entirely unable to speak about their experiences to anyone, and could not access specialist support services at all.

This variable and often unstable relationship with professional services such as Sexual Assault Referral Centres and the Police continues to occur,

CONCLUSION

(cont.)

despite these organisations attempting to outreach to communities affected by sexual violence. It would seem that these services have not been effective in solidifying relationships with gay and bisexual men. This indicates a call-to-action for these services to review their practices into why gay and bisexual men are feeling judged, disbelieved or did not feel able to speak to the services at all.

The data indicates that incidents of sexual violence occur in public venues, such as bars, clubs, public spaces and workplaces. More recently, local work around encouraging bystander intervention has been rolled out, however, there may be still be a need to expand these schemes in more areas, industries and institutions to enable more ownership from venues themselves to support survivors and challenge myths around sexual violence.³ Campaigns that proactively challenge myths around sexual violence as well as normalising open conversations around consent before incidents of sexual violence occur may be one solution to reduce this figure.

Due to prevalent myths in our society around rape and sexual abuse, robust barriers to speaking out are being formed, creating additional difficulties for survivors to access support. As a society, expecting survivors to shout louder in order to feel heard has been normalised, when perhaps this research reinforces our responsibility to listen more, and in more dynamic ways.

To move forward, we must learn to amplify survivors' voices and provide more platforms for their courage. This requires passionate, continuous input from all communities, and for research-led, systemic changes to ensure that all survivors feel seen, supported, and taken seriously.

Thank you again for reading.

Meka Beresford & Sam Thomson,
Authors




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RECOMMENDATIONS


Local and national authorities should:

- Introduce an inclusive Violence Against Men and Boys strategy which proactively includes the experiences of gay and bisexual male survivors.
- Ensure that the voices of male survivors are at the heart of the discussions on ending sexual violence.
- Increase funding for services with specialist expertise in supporting gay and bi male survivors.

Organisations and institutions should:

- Conduct more research on the impacts of sexual violence on BAM and transgender men.
 - Enhance relationships with gay and bisexual men.
 - Challenge the myths on sexual violence against men and non-binary people.
 - Provide resourced dedicated LGBT+ liaison officers in police forces to improve the experiences of gay and bi male survivors in the criminal justice system.
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Public venues should:

- Review sexual violence policy and implement a procedure which sees survivors supported in full and works to educate staff on spotting instances of sexual violence.
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THANK YOU

Thank you for reading our report on gay and bisexual men's experiences of sexual violence and accessing support. We would not have been able to provide this without the support of Survation and our generous funders and other supporters.

We would also like to thank Ronnie Meechan, Associate Dean Nursing at BPP University, school of nursing undertaking a PhD in the Risk Abuse and Violence research Programme in the school of nursing at the University of Birmingham, for his support and consultation around image based sexual abuse.

Our largest gratitude is with survivors and the courage, passion, and sheer strength of their voices. Without this, we would not be able to deliver this report or any of the work we do.

We recognize that this is a difficult conversation to engage with, and we want to ensure the safety of anyone reading this report.

If you feel that this has brought up any emotions or concerns, please do not hesitate to get in touch with us by emailing help@survivorsuk.org or [by following this link.](#)

This link will take you to our online helpline, which is a chat service for men who have experienced sexual abuse either as a child or an adult and allows you to have a confidential one-to-one chat with one of our trained emotional support workers.

We also support allies and loved ones.

