

BEING ME

INCLUSIVE AGED CARE

COUNTRY REPORT: IRELAND



University of Ljubljana



Foreword

The **BEING ME** project aims to support the social inclusion of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) older people who use care and wellbeing services. As the population of Europe is ageing, more and more older people are in need of care and support. This will include older LGBT people, who often need more professional care and support as many may not have children or the traditional support networks of the general population. Research has demonstrated that older LGBT people experience social exclusion while interacting with care providers and that their life stories and relationships are overlooked and undervalued. In some cases, they experience direct discrimination within health and social care environments.

This project aims to promote and support the social inclusion of older LGBT people in receipt of care through positive interaction with educational institutions that prepare future professionals to work with older people. By exchanging good practices, including good practice in teaching and learning and by developing tailored educational resources and pedagogies, we aim to improve the knowledge and competencies of future care professionals in the area of LGBT affirmative practices. By enhancing skills, knowledge and competencies, practitioners will be in a position to develop a culture of support, openness and respect for LGBT identities, which is essential to older LGBT people's inclusiveness in care environments.

www.beingme.eu

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About this report

The first stage of the BEING ME project was to compile information about issues that affect older LGBT people and health and social care provisions for them in each of the partner countries involved in the project. This report presents the findings of that review and includes information about good practices in working with older LGBT where applicable. An overview of the methodology that was used to compile this report is available at beingme.eu.

This report was compiled by:

Brian Keogh

Carmel Downes

Agnes Higgins

George Robotham

Trinity College Dublin www.tcd.ie

Contact: keoghbj@tcd.ie



Coláiste na Tríonóide, Baile Átha Cliath
Trinity College Dublin

Ollscoil Átha Cliath | The University of Dublin

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BEING ME COUNTRY REPORT: IRELAND

Introduction and Background:

Location	Ireland is an island in the North Atlantic. Ireland is the third-largest island in Europe, and is situated west of Great Britain. Politically, it is divided between the Republic of Ireland (officially named Ireland), which covers five-sixths of the island, and Northern Ireland, which is part of the United Kingdom. This report addresses the Republic of Ireland.
International affiliations	A member of the European Union since 1973.
Political	Ireland is a Parliamentary democracy and constitutional republic. Power is shared between a directly elected president (Head of State), an Taoiseach (Prime Minister and Head of Government), and a parliament composed of the Houses of the Oireachtas (Parliament): Dail Eireann and Seanad.
Population	4,761,865 million (CSO 2017)
Surface	84,421km ²
Capital	Dublin (population 1, 173, 179)
Border countries	There is a 'soft' border between the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland.
Languages	English and Irish are the two official languages spoken although recent CSO information suggests that one in ten people in Ireland speak a language other than English or Irish. There are 182 different languages recorded.
Ethnic groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • White Irish 82.2% • Other white background 9.5% • Non-Chinese Asian 1.7% • Mixed background 1.5% • Black or Black – Irish African 1.3% • Irish Travellers 0.7% • Chinese 0.4%

Religions	Roman Catholic 78.3%, No Religion 9.8%, Church of Ireland (including protestant) 2.8%, Muslim 1.3%, Orthodox 1.3%. Despite the high number of people identifying as Catholic, only 35% attend mass on a weekly basis and 61% do not agree with the Catholic church's teachings on same sex relationships or abortion (Association of Catholic Priests 2012).
Urban population	A Eurostat study shows that at 42% Ireland has one of the highest proportions of people living in rural areas. 35% live in cities and 23% live in towns and suburbs.
Way of life	In 2016, the labour market participation rate stood at 61.4% while the unemployment rate stood at 12.9%. A trend of higher educational attainment among the population in Ireland continues, with 42% of those aged 15 and over having a third-level qualification. Ireland has undergone rapid social change with a dramatic shift from religious conservatism to social liberalism. Contraception has only been widely available since 1985, and divorce was legislated for following a tightly contested referendum in 1995 although the law is quite strict. There were 22,626 marriages in 2016 and one third of births were outside marriage. The divorce rate in 2016 was 0.6% per 1000.
Policy on women	There were 2,354,428 men and 2,407,437 women in Ireland in 2016. More women have a third level education than men. Women represented more than three out of four (76.4%) graduates in health and welfare and 71.4% of graduates in education. According to the CSO, women are paid on average 14% less than men. Equality legislation prevents gender discrimination. Gender quotas have been introduced to allow for more women TDs (member of parliament). In 2018 there was a referendum to repeal the 8 th amendment which constitutionally stated that a foetus has the same rights as a person and essentially banned abortion in Ireland. This referendum was carried with a 2 to 1 majority in May 2018. In addition another article in the constitution states that 'the State recognises that by her life within the home, woman gives to the State a support without which the common good cannot be achieved' is set to be amended by referendum in October 2018 to reflect more gender neutral and equal language.
Older people	The population of older men and women (aged over 65) has increased substantially between 2011 and 2016, increases of 22% and 17% respectively. In terms of health, 87% of the population felt they had good or very good health and a disability was recorded for 13.5% of the population. There is a national positive ageing strategy and a national

	<p>dementia strategy. Most older people live at home and where necessary are supported by services provided by or on behalf of the Health Services Executive. There is marked regional variation in home care packages available around the country. Many family carers supplement home care packages with private arrangements for nursing care. There is emphasis on helping older people to remain at home and initiatives have emerged to prevent admission to residential care, for example the national clinical programme for older people, specialist geriatric services model of care and integrated care for older people. Where residential care is required this is provided in private or public nursing/residential homes. Under the Nursing Homes Support Scheme, people make a contribution towards the cost of their care and the State pays the balance.</p>
<p>Suicide rates</p>	<p>There were 399 deaths by suicide in Ireland in 2016 representing a rate of 8.5 per 100,000. In 2001 the rate was 13.5 per 100, 000. Men complete suicide at a rate of 4 men to 1 woman. The highest rates of suicide were among 45-54-year-olds, while the lowest were recorded among those aged 65 years and over. In addition, the rate of teen suicide is 10.4 which is the fourth highest in the EU (NOSP 2017). There is a national register for self-harm and all incidences of self-harm that present at the emergency department are recorded. In 2016 there were 11,485 incidents of SH by 8,909 people. Self-harm was more common in females aged 15 -19, the most common self-harm method was self-poisoning (overdose) (Griffin <i>et al.</i> 2017). Ireland has a national suicide prevention and reduction programme which is guided by the policy 'Connecting for life' which was published in 2015. It also has a national office for suicide prevention which oversees the implementation of the policy on behalf of the Department of Health.</p>

Background on LGBT rights in Ireland:

In the past 25 years, Ireland has witnessed significant legislative changes that impact on the lives of Lesbian Gay Bisexual and Transgender citizens. These include:

- The decriminalisation of homosexual acts between two consenting adult males aged 17 years or more in 1993;
- The inclusion of sexual orientation and gender-based discrimination in the Employment Equality Acts 1998-2008 and the Equal Status Acts 2000-2008;
- The passing of the new Passport Act in 2008 allowing transgender people to receive passports in their preferred gender; and
- The passing of the Civil Partnership Act in 2010 allowing same-sex couples to have their partnerships legally recognised for the first time. In 2015 the Irish people voted in a referendum to change the constitution to afford same-sex couples the rights of

civil marriage, making Ireland the first country in the world to legalise same-sex marriage by public vote.

The 2016 census was the first to record same sex civil partnerships and marital status. It showed that there were 6,034 same sex couples in Ireland, of whom 3,442 were male couples and 2,592 were female. There were 4,226 persons in same-sex civil partnerships. Further CSO data on marriage and civil partnerships showed that there were 1,056 same-sex marriages in 2016 and 759 same sex marriages in 2017. Both male and females in same sex marriages were found to marry at an older age on average than males and females in opposite sex marriages.

The Irish Government also passed the Gender Recognition Act in 2015, providing transgender people with full legal recognition of their preferred gender and allowing for the acquisition of a new birth certificate reflecting this change. In December 2015, the Equality (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill 2013 amended the provisions of Section 37(1) of the Employment Equality Act making it illegal for religious-run institutions to discriminate against workers on the basis of their sexuality. In addition, a bill to ban conversion therapy is currently being tabled in the Seanad (The Prohibition of Conversion Therapies Bill 2018).

Main issues facing older LGBT people in Ireland:

A 2012 online EU survey of 93,079 persons aged 18 or over who identified as lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender (LGBT) in the 27 EU Member States and Croatia found that fear of assault or harassment caused Transgender people in Ireland to avoid public spaces (FRA 2013). Ireland emerged as one of the countries where the social environment was deemed less inclusive towards LGBT people and where they were more likely to be victims of violence, harassment and discrimination. The survey found that LGBT people in Ireland were unlikely to disclose their LGBT status at work and 62% of respondents reported that discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation was fairly or very widespread. Further analysis of Trans respondents showed that 18% of Trans individuals in Ireland reported feeling discriminated against when accessing healthcare in the last 12 months (EU average: 22%). Hate motivated harassment, a negative school atmosphere for LGBT persons and discrimination in the workplace were also reported by the Trans sample (FRA 2014). In the Irish Sexual Health and Relationships study, more younger than older men felt able to be open about being sexually and romantically attracted to other men (Layte *et al.* 2006).

Higgins *et al.*'s (2011) Visible Lives study involving older LGBT people aged 55 and over indicated that many participants grew up in a strongly conservative culture and an environment where they faced heterosexism, homophobia and stigmatisation. Issues around sex and sexuality, even 'normative heterosexuality', were considered taboo subjects that were brushed aside and hidden. Within this context, the language and role models for LGBT sexual orientation and gender identity were virtually absent, with participants left to struggle alone with what they perceived as '*being different*' and '*other*'. While some people managed

to come-out successfully as LGBT persons, most had to hide their sexual orientation and gender identities for fear of discrimination and harassment. One-third of the survey participants (32.6%) reported having experienced a mental health problem at some point in their lives, with one in ten (11.1%) currently taking prescribed medication, suggesting that their mental health issues are ongoing. Within this study, one-quarter of the survey sample had been threatened with physical violence and one-fifth had been punched or kicked or had people threaten to 'out' them. Domestic and partner violence was also an issue for 15% of participants and 6.7% of participants reported experiencing sexual violence. Furthermore, one in ten participants had seriously thought about ending their life. Participants reported relatively high levels of involvement in both mainstream and LGBT-specific activities and events. Barriers to participation included difficulties with accessing events, a lack of variety in events away from the pub scene, the youth-focused nature of activities and feeling discriminated against by perceived ageism within the LGBT community. A high proportion reported regular access, use and comfort with using a computer. Whiles some perceived the internet to be a great opportunity for social networking, others expressed concerns over confidentiality, anonymity or the sexually explicit nature of some websites. The majority of the survey participants reported being neither religious nor involved with any particular church.

In terms of attitudes to LGBT people in Ireland, data from the European Values Study (EVS) and the European Social Survey (ESS) on attitudes towards LG people found that a majority of Irish people believe in gay and lesbian people's right to freedom of expression, however, 26% think that homosexuality can never be justified and 19% do not want homosexual neighbours (Kuyper *et al.* 2013). In terms of tolerance relative to other European countries, this placed Ireland in a cluster of countries ranked as the second most tolerant groups of countries out of four clusters. In 2018, Ireland was placed 11th out of 141 countries for social acceptance of LGBT people (Flores and Park 2018). A 2016 nationally representative survey of Irish adults found that attitudes towards LGBT were predominantly positive, with the majority feeling comfortable in the presence of LGBT people and viewing discrimination against LGBT people in services and employment as unacceptable. Furthermore, positive attitudes towards LGB people were evident from the fact that the majority of the population believed that LGB people's sexual orientation is 'normal' and disagreed with the statements that being LGB is something that can be cured (88%), is a sin (87%), a phase that the person is going through (78%), something that someone can be convinced to be (71%) or a choice (64%). However, the survey highlighted that a significant minority of the public in Ireland hold identity disconfirming attitudes towards LGBT people. One third of participants believed that individuals could not know their sexual orientation at the age of 12. This belief runs contrary to empirical evidence which established that the realisation of an LGB identity typically occurs around the age 12 in Ireland (Mayock *et al.* 2009; Higgins *et al.* 2016). Other identity disconfirming attitudes included one quarter of the sample believing that 'learning about LGBT issues in school might make a young person think they are LGBT', one fifth of

participants believing that bisexual people are 'just confused' about their sexual orientation and one quarter not accepting Transgender people as 'normal'. Furthermore, participants reported greater discomfort with being in contact with Transgender people compared to LGB people, and greater discomfort with same-sex displays of public affection compared to opposite-sex displays (Higgins *et al.* 2016). Negativity towards LGB individuals has previously been found in studies of Irish university students (Morrison *et al.* 2005; Morrison *et al.* 2010). Transgender people in Ireland and Northern Ireland are subjected to violence and discrimination in their everyday lives (McIlroy, 2009; McBride and Hansson, 2010; Transgender Equality Network Ireland, 2014).

A national survey conducted by the National LGBT Federation (2015) found that the provision of LGBT appropriate health services was a key 'burning issue' identified by the participants. Specifically referring to older LGBT people, the survey found that only 19% of the respondents agreed with the statement 'Health, social and care services for older people in Ireland are fully inclusive of LGBT people and respectful of their relationships'. Over half of the respondents (n=1358) believed that support groups for older LGBT people needed to be available.

Any specific issues in relation to older LGBT minority groups in Ireland:

There is some evidence to suggest that negative attitudes to Lesbian and Gay people exist among members of the Traveller Community (Pavee Point 2011a). Resources available from Pavee Point, a national organisation that advocates for the Traveller and Roma community mainly focuses on younger LGBT people. A position paper was also published by Pavee Point in 2011 about positive ageing and Travellers. While there was no mention of LGBT issues, it does suggest that policy makers and service providers need to be aware of how 'older' is defined given the shorter life expectancies of Travellers, especially Traveller men (Pavee Point 2011b).

In terms of other ethnic minority groups, BeLonG To (2012) has published guidelines for working with refugees and asylum seekers who identify as LGBT although the emphasis is on young people. The report identified a range of issues that affected refugees and asylum seekers on top of the reasons that they were seeking asylum. Many came from countries where homosexuality was either criminalised or intensely stigmatised which meant that they felt unable to be open about their identify or lived in fear of being 'outed' especially if they were living in shared accommodation with other asylum seekers. Research exploring the needs or experiences of older LGBT refugees and asylum seekers as a group in Ireland could not be located. Research is currently being conducted by the National LGBT Federation on the experiences of LGBT migrants in Ireland.

Main barriers to inclusive health and social care for older LGBT people in Ireland:

In Higgins *et al.*'s (2011) study on older LGBT people in Ireland, nearly one-quarter of survey participants reported receiving poor quality of treatment in health services with two-fifths reporting their negative experience to be at least somewhat related to being LGBT. Less than half of the survey participants felt respected as an LGBT person by healthcare professionals. While some participants were out and felt comfortable coming out to their healthcare providers, one in five feared revealing their LGBT identity to health professionals for fear of a negative reaction and two in three participants felt that healthcare professionals did not have sufficient knowledge about LGBT issues. Furthermore, some participants painted a picture of health services that assumed heterosexuality and are not responsive to the specific needs of LGBT people .

Current state of education of health and social care professionals on older LGBT issues in Ireland:

The Relationships and Sexuality Education Programme underpins sex education in schools at both junior and senior cycles. While there is a module on sexual orientation at both levels, Mayock *et al.* (2007) in a review of the literature found that the programme was unevenly implemented. While the entire programme is supposed to be delivered, a number of issues such as a lack of time, teacher discomfort and school ethos prevented this from happening (Mayock *et al.* 2007). The current arrangements for sex and sexuality education have come in for intense scrutiny and they have been described as 'not fit for purpose' by the author of the 'Objective Sexual Education Bill 2018'. The current Minister for Education has called for a review of the RSE curriculum so that among other things, LGBT issues will be more comprehensively managed. It is argued that legislation is necessary because most of the primary and secondary schools in Ireland are religious schools and will opt out of teaching sex education that does not fit with their ethos. In 2013, BeLonG To published a resource to be used with standard RSE programmes called 'Growing up Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender' which responded to the needs of LGBT school children and teenagers but has only been introduced in a minority of classrooms. Since the 1990's it has been recognised in Ireland that bullying in schools can have a long-term impact on a person's life and students that are different, including LGBT students, are more prone to bullying (O'Higgins-Norman 2009). Research in the Irish context has invariably demonstrated that many LGBT young people have negative experiences of school and are at greater risk of engaging in self-harming behaviour, experiencing mental health problems and low self-esteem, and leaving school early (Norman and Galvin 2006; Minton *et al.* 2008; Mayock *et al.* 2009; Higgins *et al.* 2016).

While issues around older people are commonly addressed with healthcare curricular, there is no mention in relation to older LGBT people. There is however a range of practice guidelines to assist practitioners to work more sensitively with LGBT people (links to these are available later in the document). While these are not written in the context of older people, they have general relevance. There is a lack of information regarding attitudes of Irish health practitioners towards

older LGBT people in long term residential care or indeed attitudes towards sexuality and older people in general. Although studies in other areas of health care suggest that Irish practitioners tend to ignore sexuality as a dimension of care (Higgins *et al.* 2008).

Nursing	LGBT issues not specifically addressed in 'Working with older people: Professional Guidance' (NMBI 2015) although implicit as part of person centred holistic care. Older people specifically mentioned in nurse registration programmes standards and requirements but not older LGBT people.
Occupational Therapy	LGBT people are not explicitly named anywhere in the standards and there is nothing anywhere that refers to older LGBT people. A best practice guide for working with LGBT people currently being written.
Physiotherapy	Not located.
Medicine	Not located.
Pharmacy	Not located

Good Practice Guideline Available in Ireland:

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Conclusion

2018 marks the 25th anniversary of the decriminalisation of homosexuality in Ireland. Since that time Ireland has undergone remarkable and rapid social change, moving from religious conservatism to a more socially liberal society and greater acceptance of sexual minorities although this is not perfect. Marriage equality was achieved in 2015 after a national referendum which was a worldwide first. Discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation or gender identity is prohibited by law in both employment and public accommodation. Within health and social care, there is a lack of data available to enable a full understanding of the experiences of LGBT people especially older LGBT people. The older population is recognised as a health care priority and the current emphasis is on helping older people to remain in the community should they require health care. There is some evidence to suggest that older LGBT people in Ireland fear discrimination in the provision of health and social care and this mirrors international research. However, there is evidence to suggest that sexuality is a neglected area in healthcare generally. It is worthy of note that there are several health professions who have published guidelines to deliver more sensitive care to LGBT patients and service users. However, they do not recognise the specific needs of older people or the range of diversity within society.

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Appendix 1: Core organisations/stakeholders involved in older LGBT in Ireland

Organisation/group Name	Mission of organisation/group Please indicate if organisation is specific to older LGBT people or LGBT people across the life span	Website address
Outhouse Community Centre Dublin	<p>Outhouse is a community and resource centre for LGBT people, their families and friends.</p> <p>It is based in central Dublin. Its primary goal is to offer a safe space for people to inform, meet, organise and make things happen.</p> <p>Outhouse is very often the first point of contact for people into the LGBT world and also the place in which lots of groups and organisations have been established.</p> <p>Out house hosts GOLD which is a peer support group for older gay men.</p>	<p>www.outhouse.ie 01 873 4932</p>
Amach	Supporting LGBT people in the Galway and the surrounding areas.	www.amachlgbt.com
Belong to	Supporting young LGBT people in Ireland	www.belongto.org

Transgender Equality Network Ireland Teni	Transgender Equality Network Ireland (TENI) seeks to improve conditions and advance the rights and equality of trans people and their families.	www.teni.ie 01 633 4687
LGBT Ireland	LGBT Ireland provides access to a network of trained volunteers who provide a non-judgemental, confidential, listening support and information service for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people as well as their family and friends. Specifically mention older LGBT people.	www.lgbt.ie
Outcomers	For Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual & Transgender people in the North East region of Ireland.	www.outcomers.org
Dublin Lesbian Line	Support all member of the LGBTQ community.	www.dublinlesbianline.ie
LINC	LINC aims to: Improve the quality of life, health and well-being of all women who identify as lesbian or bisexual in Ireland.	www.linc.ie

Cork gay project	To ensure that the Gay community is enabled to fully participate in the social, economic, cultural, political and artistic life of the wider Cork and Kerry area. Targeting gay, bi, trans, MSN, queer men.	https://www.facebook.com/gayprojectcork/
Outwest	Supporting the LGBT community in the west of Ireland.	www.outwest.ie
National LGBT federation	Established in 1979, the NXF is the oldest LGBT NGO in Ireland. The NXF publishes <i>Gay Community News (GCN)</i> and campaigns for the equal rights of, and to combat discrimination against, LGBT people in Ireland & internationally.	www.nxf.ie
OWLs	Meet up group for lesbians who are over 40.	https://www.meetup.com/older-wiser-lesbians/