

Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Gender Diverse and/or Intersex People

Factsheet



Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Gender Diverse and/or Intersex(LGBTQI+) people make up about 11% of the Australian population.¹ Although grouped together, the LGBTQI+ community is made up of a huge variety of different people, all of whom have individual needs, preferences and experiences. People from all population groups may identify as LGBTQI+.

Considerations when Engaging with LGBTQI+ People

- Be aware of terminology associated with the LGBTQI+ community including the meanings of the terms like sex and gender. It is also important to consider the preferred pronouns people wish to be identified by.
- There is no single governing body or organisation for the LGBTQI+ community. Instead, there are a number of smaller, local organisations. There may also be organisations dedicated to one aspect of the community.
- Many services and organisations are perceived as catering only to heteronormative people. It is important to make members of the LGBTQI+ community feel comfortable, welcomed and respected.
- It may be difficult to engage the LGBTQI+ people without the aid of organisations and key people who already have their trust.

Barriers to Engagement for LGBTQI+ People

1. Language

- a. Individuals will have a preference for how they wish to be identified or addressed e.g. pronouns such as him/he, her/she, they/them. The best way to discover what these are is to ask.
- b. Using general or non-binary terms e.g. they/them, partner instead of wife/husband/girlfriend helps to promote inclusivity and acceptance.
- c. Understanding and appropriately using terminology is extremely important as some terms and words are offensive (see Resources section for a guide to terminology).
- d. Follow their lead. If an LGBTQI+ person refers to themselves by a term then you should follow suit e.g. queer and if you are unsure, it is advisable to politely ask.

2. Lack of specific material and information

- a. LGBTQI+ people need to know that a service understands and caters to them. Many people from this group face specific issues, particularly when it comes to health and legal issues. They are more likely to engage if they know their concerns will be understood.
- b. Openly display materials that include LGBTQI+ people e.g. feature same-sex couples on promotional materials to promote inclusivity.

3. Safety

- a. People may not feel comfortable engaging as they fear their safety will be at risk if they openly identify as an LGBTQI+ person. They may feel doing so will leave them open to harassment or discrimination.
- b. Previous negative experiences may prevent people from wanting to be involved with or openly identify as part of the LGBTQI+ community.
- c. Providing a safe space that supports the needs of LGBTQI+ people is key. Simple steps such as having “gender neutral” or “all gender” bathrooms with clear signage can have a positive impact on engagement.

4. Privacy and confidentiality

- a. It is very important to keep in mind that some LGBTQI+ people may not identify publicly for fear of retribution. Respect their right to disclose their gender identity and sexual orientation if and when they feel comfortable.
- b. Having written privacy and confidentiality statements displayed reassures clients that any disclosures will remain confidential.

5. Lack of staff awareness and training

- a. Appropriately training staff to understand LGBTQI+ people builds their knowledge and capability. It also means LGBTQI+ people feel more comfortable engaging.
- b. Visibly show support for the LGBTQI+ community by displaying the rainbow flag or rainbow lanyards.

¹ - Australian Human Rights Commission, 2014, Face the Facts: Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex People
<https://www.humanrights.gov.au/sites/default/files/7_FTF_2014_LGBTI.pdf>



- c. Identify key LGBTQI+ allies and people within an organisation for people to contact. This encourages people who may not feel comfortable with assurance they will be speaking to someone who is familiar with their concerns.

Tips for Engaging with LGBTQI+ People

- *Intersectionality.* The challenges faced by LGBTQI+ people may be compounded if they identify with other marginalised or vulnerable groups e.g. from a culturally and linguistically diverse background, live in a rural or remote community. It is important to be aware of all aspects of an individual's identity.
- *Mental health.* People who identify as LGBTQI+ are more likely to experience poor mental health than the general population. It is important to keep specific issues like this in mind and ensure that adequate support is provided.
- *Discrimination.* It is unlawful to discriminate against a person on the basis of a number of, sex, intersex status, gender identity and sexual orientation. Actively promoting zero tolerance for discrimination is extremely important when engaging with LGBTQI+ people and ensuring they are safe and comfortable.

Additional Resources

Here are some additional resources available to help engage with and learn more about Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Gender Diverse and/or Intersex People:

[Queensland Public Sector: LGBTQI+ Inclusion Strategy](#)

[Including You: A Practical Guide to Engaging with Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex and Queer \(LGBTIQ\) Communities and Developing LGBTIQ Inclusive Services](#)

[Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex. A Guide to Engagement](#)

[Is your service GLBT Friendly?](#)

For a list of some appropriate terminology when working with or discussing LGBTQI+ people, please refer to:

[An Ally's Guide to Terminology](#)