

This factsheet gives advice on staying safe in a variety of situations where you might experience homophobic or transphobic hate crime.

As LGBT people we sometimes choose to change our behaviour to avoid putting ourselves at greater risk of being victimised. For example, we may change the way we present ourselves to avoid disclosing our sexuality or gender identity in public places. We may also avoid physical contact with their partner and friends, such as holding hands or kissing. In some cases we may even chose to avoid certain areas, or events, or travelling by public transport because we feel unsafe.

Whether or not you change your behaviour you should never be made to feel that you are to blame for a homophobic or transphobic attack or that you should 'tone down' the way you dress or act - you have the same right to go about your life as anyone else. Galop would never advocate advising people to change their behaviour – we are behind people's right to dress or present themselves as they like and show affection in public. These guidelines include some basic tips which you can consider as an alternative, to minimise risk.

Street Safety

Although you can't predict when violence may occur, and neither should you be in a state of fear when you go out, there are some strategies you can adopt to try to minimise the chances of being attacked or abused by a stranger.

Take note of your surroundings, and of the people around you. If there are choices about where to walk, always choose well-lit, populated areas and stay near to main roads, avoiding lonely short-cuts at night. Move away from groups of people behaving in an erratic or provocative manner. Cross the street, change direction, or grab a taxi cab (if this is a possibility) if you think there is danger.

Appear confident

Walk with your head up and in a determined manner, and look like you know where you are going, even if you don't. If you feel nervous, or alone, tell yourself you can cope with any situation, and that you have as much right to be walking the streets as anyone else.

Stay with others

If you can, be with others for as much of your journey as possible when travelling at night. If you are left alone on top of a bus, or in an empty tube or train carriage, move as soon as you can to where there are other people, or get off if you feel it might be safer to do so. If you can afford it, get cabs for lonely journeys.

Alcohol or drugs make you more vulnerable

You are more vulnerable to attack if you are drunk, or under the influence of drugs. Try to plan beforehand if you know you will be drinking or taking drugs; travel with friends and avoid difficult or isolated journeys, either by staying with a friend or by booking a cab.

Plan your journey

Booking a minicab beforehand is safer than getting into one of the many cars that hang around nightclubs that might not be genuine cabs. Never get into an unlicensed cab or accept a ride from someone you don't



SAFETY TIPS

**HOMOPHOBIC
TRANSPHOBIC
ABUSE?**

TELL US ABOUT IT

020 7704 2040
www.galop.org.uk

Homophobia and transphobia are crimes. Report them by calling or texting our helpline or online at our website.

Galop is part of the LGBT community. You do not have to give your name and we will treat what you tell us in confidence.

know – you could be putting yourself at risk, including being robbed or sexually assaulted. You can use the Cabwise service by texting HOME to 60835 to get the numbers of one taxi and two licensed minicab firms, in the area you are texting from.

If you are using public transport, cycling or walking late at night it's a good idea to plan your journey home so that you avoid becoming lost or stranded. See the Transport for London website: www.journeyplanner.tfl.gov.uk or telephone London Travel Information on: 020 7222 1234 (24 hours a day).

Avoid conflict

If a situation looks like it might turn violent, try not to engage or 'fight your corner' if you are outnumbered. Try to calm the situation down or look instead for ways of getting out of the situation. There is no shame in refusing to fight or trying to get away, especially if the odds are against you.

If you are attacked

Hopefully this will never happen to you, but if you are attacked, you may decide to fight back, but try to get help and attention. Shout to bring others to your assistance. Sometimes shouting 'Fire!' will bring people more quickly. If your attacker has a weapon, try to run. Get help as soon as you can. See our What to Do Following an Incident factsheet for further advice.

Stay safe when meeting someone in a bar or club

When you are in a bar or club try not to leave your drink unattended or accept drinks or drugs from someone without knowing where they came from. If you do begin to feel unwell contact a member of staff in the club and ask for medical attention. Don't accept an invitation to go home with someone if you feel unwell.

When you meet a stranger you want to leave a club or bar with, try to introduce them to a friend before you leave, or let someone you know, maybe a barman or doorman, know you are leaving together. If you live alone and are taking them home, mention that you have a flat mate who is probably in (or a friend sleeping on your sofa) – even if you don't. Someone who intends robbing or harming you may be deterred if they think you have company.

If going to a stranger's place, think about getting their address before you go and leave it with a friend. Use your judgement and trust your instincts – if you feel unsafe, say you've changed your mind. Again, your judgement may be impaired if you are drunk/have taken drugs.

Safety on the internet/when using personal ads

If you chose use the internet or personal ads to meet for people for sex or socialising it's worth having a few basic safety strategies.

People can lie! People may not be who they say they are, and you won't know for sure until you meet them. Chat as much as you can to someone before meeting – find out as much as you can. If they are reluctant to give any info, think carefully about them.

Meet in public: if you meet them, insist in meeting in a bar, café, or somewhere public. Then you can check them out for real. Avoid inviting them round or going to their home before meeting them first, even for a short while, so you can trust your instincts better.

Tell someone: not always possible, we know, especially if you're not out, but try to leave some indication of where you are going with someone you trust.

Safety when cottaging and cruising

It's unlikely that you will encounter any trouble while cruising or cottaging. However, the following are some

basic tips to consider minimising the risk or responding to an incident.

Try to let a friend or flatmate know where you've gone.

Leave valuables at home and try not to be conspicuous with items such as mobile phones or wallets. If you are driving, don't leave valuables on display in your car and park in a well lit area.

Be aware of your surroundings, such as exits and dead-ends – especially at night. You are safer in areas where other men are cruising, so try to avoid becoming isolated.

Trust your instincts if you feel unsafe or when you see someone behaving oddly. Steer clear of large or rowdy groups that you're not sure about. Avoid confrontation; if you feel you're in danger try to move away to a safer place.

If you are attacked or see someone else being attacked, shout for help to attract others' attention. Don't put yourself at unnecessary risk by intervening – shout, alert others nearby and call the police immediately, dialling 999.

For more information about cottaging and cruising see Galop's factsheet; Cottaging and cruising; your safety, your rights and the law.

Always dial 999 if it is an emergency and you think you are in immediate danger.