ONLINE HATE CRIME REPORT 2017
Challenging online homophobia, biphobia and transphobia

Melanie Stray
The growth of online spaces has brought many benefits to LGBT+ people, providing unprecedented access to information, opportunities for self-exploration, and ways to connect with other LGBT+ people and communities. Unfortunately, the downside of the anonymity and lack of usual social boundaries in these spaces is that the online environment can be permissive of abuse and hate. Sometimes this is defended as ‘free speech’. Although abusers often hide behind the idea that all they are doing is expressing an opinion or a belief, no-one has the right to behave in a way that is abusive towards others. Everyone has the right to be protected from discrimination and violence.

Galop has worked to combat violence and discrimination against LGBT+ people for nearly 35 years. Online anti-LGBT+ hate crime is an issue facing our clients in ever growing numbers, but it often proves difficult to tackle, and is poorly understood and under-researched. The existing laws were designed without an understanding of how the online world would develop. The threshold for prosecuting online hate crime is very high, and the investigative process is often too slow and cumbersome to respond to the fast-moving online world. The police find it difficult to investigate online hate crime effectively, leading to cases frequently ending in ‘No Further Action’.

In 2016, the second edition of Galop’s LGBT Hate Crime Report was published, providing evidence about hate crime against LGBT+ people, as well as survivors’ experiences of the criminal justice system. We are proud to present our first Online Hate Crime Report, to provide deeper insight into the nature and scale of online anti-LGBT+ hate crime in the UK.

Our ambition is that this report informs, raises awareness, and provides a deeper understanding of the needs of our community in tackling this problem. We believe that the recommendations made in this report, if acted upon, will continue to ensure that the UK remains a world leader in tackling anti-LGBT+ hate crime. I would like to take this opportunity to thank Melanie Stray for producing this report and the whole of the Galop team who work hard to make life safe, just and fair for LGBT+ people.

Nik Noone, Chief Executive
This report presents evidence about the scale and nature of online hate crime and hate speech against LGBT+ people in the UK. It sets out the impact and consequences of online hate crime and hate speech, LGBT+ people’s experiences of reporting to social media platforms and to the police, and what support is needed. This evidence includes an analysis of qualitative interviews with 10 LGBT+ people who experienced online hate crime, published here for the first time. It also includes analysis of, as yet, unpublished Galop survey data, from the Stop Online Abuse Survey 2016 and the Police Responses to LGBT+ Hate Crime Survey 20171, and secondary analysis of the LGBT+ Hate Crime Survey 2016. It also uses case study examples from Galop’s advocacy services. The results in this report show the significant impact that online hate speech and hate crime can have, and that we are far from a satisfactory response to this problem.

Key findings

Scale and Nature

- 84% of respondents experienced more than one occurrence of online abuse
- 59% of respondents experienced six or more occurrences of online abuse
- Verbal abuse, insults, threats, intimidation, harassment, outing and doxing are common components of anti-LGBT+ online hate crime
- Online hate speech often aims to silence LGBT+ people who speak out about identity issues
- Online abuse is not experienced as distinct from everyday life, but as a part of a wider experience of LGBT+ prejudice that cuts across both online and offline worlds
- Gay and bi men are often the target of hate crime on dating apps
- Trans, non-binary and intersex people were subjected to more frequent online hate speech, which was generally more severe, more threatening, and had greater impact and consequences
- Characteristics such as race, ethnicity, faith, disability, gender and socioeconomic status also intersect with LGBT+ identity to create distinct experiences of online hate speech and hate crime

1. Full results from this study will be published and available by December 2018
Marginalised groups under the LGBT+ umbrella often experience abuse within online LGBT+ communities.

Online hate speech is often not taken seriously and does not reach the threshold for social media platforms and police to take action.

Impact and Consequences

- Interview participants experienced:
  - Shock, fear and anger
  - Deterioration in mental and physical well-being, including sleep disturbances, depression, anxiety and paranoia
  - Feeling a loss of control over their identities when outed
  - Social isolation, both online and in everyday life
  - Self-blame and feeling that the abuse was deserved
  - Fear for physical safety
  - Long lasting sense of wariness and heightened sense of threat
  - Relationship breakdown
  - Ripple effect on partners, families and friends
  - Changed patterns of behaviour to avoid victimisation, such as self-censorship and changes in use of social media
  - Changed patterns of behaviour showing constructive reactions to a negative experience, such as increased LGBT+ activism
  - Practical consequences such as relocation, debt and being unable to work.

Reporting

- 72% of respondents experiencing online hate crime had not reported their most recent experience
- Nearly half of those that did report online hate crime, said they did not find it easy to report
- 34% of respondents that had experienced online hate crime said they would not consider reporting any hate crimes in the future
- Experiences of reporting to online platforms were poor; interview participants were dissatisfied with the automated responses and that no action was taken.
LGBT+ people need an improved response from the police, including:

- Quick response with regular follow up communication
- Good knowledge of LGBT+ issues
- Respectful, non-judgmental approach
- To be believed and listened to
- Have the incident recorded as a hate crime
- For the perpetrator(s) to be stopped.

LGBT+ people need an improved response from social media platforms, including:

- Easy to use, visible reporting systems
- Personalised responses when reports are made
- Flagged hate content to be removed effectively
- Systems that allow easier identification of the perpetrator(s)
- Visible information defining online hate speech and warning that it is unacceptable on the platform
- Application of UK values in approach to hate speech
- Preventative work challenging hate crime
- Advertisement of support and reporting services on online platforms.

LGBT+ people need improved services including:

- Increased provision of specialist LGBT+ advocacy and support services
- Information resources about what constitutes online hate crime and how to respond to it
- Online methods for reporting and getting support, including a reporting website or app, and online webchat service
- Awareness raising around the impact and seriousness of online hate crime, and working with social media platforms to improve their reporting systems and response.
You ought to be killed

Why do you have to be a sissy and flaunt it to everyone?

You’re not a true Muslim if you’re a poof

I’m going to fucking tie you up and fucking sort you out

You should both be in concentration camps

I have the technology to track where you are located so I know where you live and I can send nasty people round

You’re not a man, you’re just a confused girl and you should accept that

You’re a fucking queer and abnormal

I will find you and I will strike you down because you’re faggot and an Arab. I have weapons for Arabs. I have a gun and a knife ready

You’re a fanny and a tranny and we will get you

I think you ought to consider paying me to keep quiet

The next time I see you I’ll beat you up

I have the technology to find you on other social media formats and I will tell your family and friends that you are a paedophile and a slag

Abusive content reported by interview participants:

FAIRY

DESERVE

TO BE

GASSED

YOU

YOU

OUGHT

TO BE

RAPED

FAG

POOF

QUEER

FAGGOT

DYKE

I KNOW WHERE YOU LIVE
In the Galop LGBT+ Hate Crime Survey 2016, 30% of respondents reported experiencing online LGBT+ hate crime. The abuse experienced is often not a one off-occurrence. In the Stop Online Abuse Survey 2016:

- 84% of respondents experienced more than one occurrence of online abuse
- 59% of respondents experienced an occurrence of online abuse six or more times
- 24% of trans respondents had experienced online abuse more than 100 times
- Two thirds of the incidents were sustained over a week or more, 21% of respondents experiencing an incident lasting a year
- Trans people received higher numbers of abusive comments over the course of an incident, with 70% experiencing more than 20 comments
- 35% of trans people received more than 100 abusive comments in the course of one incident
- 73% of respondents were targeted by more than one person. 80% of queer people reported being targeted by 6 or more people, whereas the majority of lesbian, gay, bisexual and asexual people reported being targeted by 5 or fewer people.

‘Outing’, which is disclosing a person’s gender history, sexual orientation or HIV status without their consent, emerged as a theme in the interview study. This also a very common issue identified by Galop’s advocacy service. Many LGBT+ people explore their sexuality, gender identity, and community online. They may do this discreetly and choose not to out themselves in all online contexts. Galop frequently deals with hate incidents in which threats to out people - and actual outing – are a central component. Furthermore, hate-motivated outing can often overlap with other issues including online blackmail, defamation, and domestic abuse. Being outed can have a massive effect on an individual, leading to so-called ‘honour-based violence’, forced marriage and breakdown of family relationships. It can affect the victim’s career and work, and cause neighbourhood-based harassment and homelessness. Outing someone without their consent is wrong but not necessarily unlawful, unless it is prohibited by a specific law or it is done to harass, blackmail, threaten or incite violence.

Doxing is the publishing of private or identifying information about a particular individual without their consent. Often LGBT+ people who are doxed are simultaneously outed as the information disclosed.
relates to their identity, and has the added threat that hostile strangers now know their personal information such as their home address and place of employment.

A non-binary person in their 20s was outed over Facebook and received transphobic abuse about their gender identity, and threats of physical violence. Interview participant

A trans woman who exchanged sexual photos with a man on a dating site was coerced into further sexual exploitation by threats to out her as trans. When she chose to end the contact, the man posted some of the sexual material online. It was reported to the police and the man was charged. Advocacy client

A gay man from a BAME community ended an abusive relationship with his male partner. He was not out to his family but his ex-partner sent photos of them as a couple to the family, which lead to homophobic ‘honour-based violence’ by the family. The photos were not sexually explicit but did ‘out’ him as gay. Advocacy client

‘I asked a conservative pro-life charity to stop sending their printed newsletter to my office. They responded by printing my name, job title and employer in their national newsletter, referring to me as a pro-abortionist, pro-sodomite, and inviting their members to contact me personally to put me straight.’ Stop Online Abuse Survey Respondent

Threshold for action

Online hate speech and hate crime is aimed at people’s core identities, not just their views, behaviours or beliefs. Even if there is no physical danger attached to online hate speech, the damage caused by denying, degrading, threatening or ‘making fun of’ people’s identity and expression is deeply traumatic for victims. For example, there were questions raised about the link between Lucy Meadows being outed and mocked about her trans identity by a national newspaper and her suicide. The coroner highlighted these links during the inquest, as did many in the trans community.

Because this sort of abuse is perceived as low-key violence and thus less serious, it can be difficult to prosecute.

A gay man experienced targeted online abuse from an unknown person, including the posting of a photo which he viewed as a death threat. The police were unable to apply for release of the IP address of the abuser because the threat level was not perceived as high enough. *Advocacy client*

A trans woman in her 50s faces abuse whenever she publishes articles on gender, feminism or trans issues. She has faced a number of sexist, homophobic and transphobic incidents, from insults and contempt to instances of serious threats and intimidation. She receives so much abuse that she only reports threats to herself or her family that seem realistic. *Interview participant*

**Silencing LGBT+ people who speak out**

As the previous example shows, the interview data suggested that hate speech is often aimed at LGBT+ people who speak out. An interview participant reported feeling that their online presence and visibility is monitored by people with anti-LGBT+ prejudice, and that the hateful comments they receive are an attempt to silence them and restrict their freedom to talk about identity issues.

A lesbian woman in her 50s tweeted support of LGBT+ and feminist causes. She received a barrage of insults and doctored images of her with slurs written across them. The abuse received was both misogynistic and anti-LGBT+. *Interview participant*

A bisexual trans teenager was discussing trans issues with a friend on Twitter, resulting in a stranger sending them threats of violence alluding to neo-Nazism. *Interview participant*
Abuse within LGBT+ communities

An interview participant stressed that online hate crime does not only happen on mainstream social media platforms. They reported regular occurrences of transphobia and biphobia and negative attitudes towards specific subgroups of the LGBT+ community on LGBT+ forums and websites. This is also an issue identified by Galop’s advocacy service. Hate speech and abuse in LGBT+ forums and websites can make people feel excluded from their own community and lead to social isolation. This is particularly an issue encountered by marginalised groups under the LGBT+ umbrella, including bisexual, asexual, intersex, trans and non-binary people, as well as BAME people and people with disabilities.

A trans woman in her 40s withdrew from an LGBT+ group, because she had concerns about transphobia within it. She received transphobic harassment and abuse on Facebook from group members, and then from LGB people more widely, including threats to find out where she lived in order to harass her in person. Interview participant

Dating apps

Dating apps are sometimes used to target gay and bi men with sexual and physical violence, for example in the case of Stephen Port. It has been identified by Galop’s advocacy service that dating apps are a forum also used to target gay and bi men with hate speech and hate crime. 29% of gay and bisexual Stop Online Abuse survey respondents reported experiencing online abuse on dating apps. This finding also emerged in the interview study.

A gay man in his 40s received homophobic abuse on a dating app, including threats to track his location, of physical violence and to tell his friends and family that he was paedophile unless he paid money. Interview participant

A gay man in his 20s was targeted on a dating app with racist and homophobic abuse. His personal images and phone number were obtained via another social media site and used to create several profiles advertising him as an escort. Consequently, he started receiving unwanted explicit messages and calls on his personal number. Interview participant

5. Stephen Port was convicted of sexually assaulting and killing four young men, who he targeted through Grindr. www.galop.org.uk/news/ stephen-port-found-guilty/
The online world is increasingly integrated into everyday life, meaning that the distinction between offline/online hate crime is often blurred. It was apparent that many of the interview participants did not experience the online abuse they received as distinct from their everyday lives. Rather, it was a part of a wider experience of LGBT+ prejudice that cut across both online and offline worlds. For example, interview participants reported: experiencing online hate crime that acted as a trauma trigger for past physical violence; receiving abuse both online and offline simultaneously; experiencing online abuse that was triggered by an offline incident; and experiencing abuse that started online but had offline consequences.

In the Galop LGBT+ Hate Crime Survey 2016, 30% of respondents reported experiencing online LGBT+ hate crime. Of these 140 respondents, 96% had experienced both online and offline hate crime:

- 98% reported verbal abuse
- 59% reported threats
- 42% reported physical violence
- 17% reported hate motivated sexual violence.

Trans women and non-binary people were more likely to experience threats: 75% of trans women and 95% of non-binary people reported experiencing this type of abuse. Some groups experienced higher rates of sexual violence: 45% of asexual, 45% non-binary people and 29% of bisexual and pansexual people reported experiencing sexual violence.

Following a court case regarding a transphobic incident, an intersex woman in her 40s was harassed with homophobic and transphobic abuse both online and in public by family members of the perpetrator, including intimidation and threats of physical violence. Interview participant

A queer non-binary person in their 20s was outing on Facebook. Whilst the abuse online lasted two weeks, a neighbour saw the post and subsequently subjected them to homophobic and transphobic abuse for the next three years. Interview participant
'The online incident made me feel the same as when I was attacked on the street. It’s scary to think that someone can also get to you psychologically, in addition to physically attacking you.’
Gay man in his 40s, interview participant

‘I didn’t report the online incident because it happened shortly after a homophobic incident on public transport, which I had already reported to police.’ Lesbian woman in her 50s, interview participant

Experiences of marginalised groups

Not all LGBT+ people experience online hate crime equally and in the same forms. Any LGBT+ person can experience online hate speech and hate crime, but marginalised groups in the LGBT+ umbrella are often particularly targeted. Trans, non-binary and intersex people in the study were subjected to more frequent hate speech, which was generally more severe, more threatening, and had greater impact and consequences. This is also evident in the survey findings set out above, in Galop’s advocacy work and in our monitoring of public hate speech on social media.

Characteristics such as race, ethnicity, faith, disability, gender and socioeconomic status intersect with LGBT+ identity to create distinct experiences of online hate speech and hate crime. These factors also mediate perception and experience of the police and criminal justice system, and affect the resources available to individuals facing online hate crime.

‘Just usual transphobia. Calling me a man, sick etc. It’s routine.’
Stop Online Abuse Survey Respondent

A lesbian woman in her 50s stated that even though the posts were homophobic, she felt the motivation was mostly misogyny rather than homophobia – therefore she’s more reluctant to post now on feminist issues as opposed to LGBT+ issues. Interview participant

A young Muslim lesbian was subjected to Islamophobic, sexist and homophobic abuse online, including rape threats. She reported this to the police, who told her that there was nothing they could do because there wasn’t a specific threat to her life. Advocacy client

A respondent reported abuse containing disability slurs and pathologising her gender identity as part of her mental health condition. Stop Online Abuse Survey Respondent
Interview participants reported a range of emotional responses, including shock, fear and anger. They experienced deterioration in mental and physical well-being, including sleep disturbances, depression, anxiety and paranoia.
The impact of the online hate speech experienced does not only affect the LGBT+ person targeted, but often their partners, families and friends, and other relationships in their life. Sometimes the abusers also targeted their family and friends.

‘I felt my privacy was violated. It all felt out of control, because I saw the post too late to delete it... Who will know something private about me, that doesn’t need to know? Am I now the talk of the town? Will people still see me the same way?’ Gay man in his 30s, interview participant

‘The fact that so many people were being told, it felt out of control… I was worried people will see me out and about and will know something very personal about me.’ Queer non-binary person in their 20s, interview participant

The interview participants who had been outed described feeling loss of control of their identities and disclosure of their identity. They also worried that the information would spread beyond the immediate incident, and were concerned about the reaction of family members, friends and neighbours.

On relationships with others

The impact of the online hate speech experienced does not only affect the LGBT+ person targeted, but often their partners, families and friends, and other relationships in their life. Sometimes the abusers also targeted their family and friends.

A gay man in his 30s was targeted by a homophobic flat mate who used Facebook to send harassing and abusive messages to the victim and his friends and family. The perpetrator posted comments publicly and across many groups, and sent private messages, sending altogether over fifty messages to different people in one day. In addition to threats and intimidation, the messages also disclosed that the victim was gay and suggested he was HIV positive. Interview participant

A lesbian woman in her 50s reported that her daughter was also implicated. Her main concern was to protect her daughter from further abuse, so she did not initially take any action in case it made things worse. Interview participant

A gay man in his 30s reported family relationship breakdown after being outed, and a negative behaviour change in a small group of online and offline friends. Interview participant
‘The harassment is having an impact on my day to day wellbeing and I'm worried about my integrity being questioned. I'm a professional woman with a very responsible job... and I worry that the bullying will start to impact on my ability to function... It's causing my two adult children a great deal of distress also. I just want it to end.’ Stop Online Abuse Survey Respondent

**Social isolation**

As with other types of hate crime, people experiencing online hate crime often experience social isolation, through exclusion from spaces or withdrawal from their friends and family. Significantly, the isolation is not only experienced online, but in everyday life and public spaces too. Interview participants cited public and private support from friends and LGBT+ groups as pivotal to them coping with the aftermath of an online hate incident.

A queer non-binary person in their 20s reported that they weren't comfortable going out on their own and socialising was difficult. They were afraid of negative comments based on their appearance and people yelling their birth name at them. They gradually unfriended all the people they went to school with as they feared further abuse. Interview participant

A gay man in his 40s reported that for several days after the incident, he was afraid to go out in case the perpetrator would recognise him from his profile picture and attack him. He is still fearful and anxious in new social situations. Interview participant

A gay man in his 30s reported that since the incident, he is more cautious about who he interacts with online. Interview participant

**Self-blame and shame**

LGBT+ people experiencing online hate speech and hate crime often feel that they are to blame for the incident, or wonder what they could have done differently. For some people, this extends into self-doubt, guilt for being LGBT+ and feeling like they deserved the abuse they received. This brings to the surface forms of internalised homophobia, biphobia and transphobia that many LGBT+ people experience as a result of growing up in a heteronormative society.
‘I kept on thinking, if anything on my profile might have led him on.’ Gay man in his 40s, interview participant

[These events trigger] ‘... something primal and negative, that you haven’t experienced since your early days of coming out.’ Lesbian women in her 50s, interview participant

A trans woman in her 50s reported that what was happening online magnified other problems and unleashed a lot of self-doubt. Interview participant

**Fear for physical safety**

Even when the incident was online only, the interview participants expressed feeling worried about their physical safety.

A bisexual trans woman in her 40s stated that she perceived the threat as real, because she is very active in the field of LGBT+ rights and her location is not secret. She was afraid of people coming around and potentially damaging her property. Interview participant

A gay man in his 20s reported that during the incident, he didn’t feel safe in public, as the perpetrator was resident in the same area and knew what he looked like. Interview participant

**Downplaying online experiences**

Interview participants reported downplaying online hate speech and minimising incidents as a way of coping, for example by characterising them as low-level and not serious, especially when they had experienced other hate crimes in person. They expressed wanting it to just go away and be able to forget about it.
A gay man in his 30s stated that he was diminishing the effect of the incident as a way of coping with it, so it wouldn’t take over over his life. Interview participant

‘There’s an element of wanting this to go away, when you’re a victim of something.’ Gay man in his 50s, interview participant

Long-lasting impact

The interview participants displayed extraordinary resilience. The immediate acute impact usually lasted a few days or few months, depending on severity and time span of the incident. Most felt that they had since worked through what had happened and were now coping well. However, many were left with a long-lasting sense of wariness and heightened sense of threat.

‘This does leave a scar; it does leave a mistrust in people.’ Gay man in his 30s, interview participant

A gay man in his 20s reported that he still feels like he has to watch his back in public, especially at night and out on his own. Interview participant

An intersex woman in her 40s reported that she is more cautious when in public and doesn’t socialise as much, even in LGBT+ venues. She still feels under threat and in danger of being attacked online or in public. Interview participant

Self-censorship and changes in use of social media

All interview participants reported changing their online behaviour as a result of the abuse, and many also changed their behaviour offline. Some reported becoming more cautious about voicing opinions online, joining online conversations, sharing content, and publicly stating which causes and organisations they support. Many reported tightening privacy controls, using the platform less, or leaving the platform altogether. Some reporting switching platform, for example from Twitter to Facebook, Twitter to Tumblr, and Grindr to other dating apps.
'Will it make a positive impact, or will it make a negative impact? I now have to consciously think around what I post.' Gay man in his 30s, interview participant

A trans woman in her 50s reported that she now self-censors both the substance and style of what she posts online. She’s become hesitant to discuss certain topics and uses social media much less than she used to. Interview participant

Increased LGBT+ activism

Other interview participants reported that the incident spurred them to engage in LGBT+ activism and speak out more.

‘I’m more political and more energetic around my identity now.’
Interview participant

One participant who had been outed reported now being more open and sharing content promoting equality, anti-discrimination and anti-homophobia more often and with a more relaxed attitude. Whilst he saw this as something positive, he also reported feeling that he had to come out to new people immediately, to avoid future conflicts, and felt somewhat forced to share information about himself.

‘The incident made me more open. Without a choice.’
Gay man in his 30s, interview participant

Practical consequences

Some interview participants experienced severe material consequences:

- Relocation as their home was no longer safe
- Debt due to relocation and privacy software costs
- Being unable to work for three months during and after the incident.
In the Galop Police Responses to LGBT+ hate crime survey 2017, 18% of respondents reported that online abuse was part of the hate crime(s) that they experienced. None had reported their experiences to the police. Similarly, in the Galop LGBT+ Hate Crime Survey 2016, 72% of people experiencing online hate crime had not reported their most recent experience of hate crime. The lowest rates of reporting were among asexual people (only 9% reported) and trans men (only 13% reported).

Interview participants who didn’t report to the police gave the following reasons:

- Not being sure if it was a hate crime
- Fear that responding in any way, including reporting to the police, would make it worse: ‘It felt terrifying as if any kind of reaction, could turn the 20 tweets into hundreds.’
  Lesbian woman in her 50s, interview participant
- Wanting it to blow over: ‘When it happens you just want this to be gone. You just think like, at that time you just want this to go away, and you want it to stop.’
  Gay man in his 30s, interview participant
- No energy or time to deal with reporting
- Fear of homophobia and judgement because it took place on a dating site
- Didn’t think the police could do much and so didn’t see the benefit of reporting
- ‘If I reported everything cruel and insulting that is said to me online, then I’d never be out of the police station.’
  Trans woman in her 50s, interview participant
In the Galop LGBT+ Hate Crime Survey 2016, of those that did report online hate crime, nearly half said they did not find it easy to report.

Why?

- 72% said ‘not encountering a trained professional on LGBT+ issues’
- 50% said ‘having to repeat what happened several times’
- 39% said ‘too many steps to go through’
- 33% said ‘having to disclose my sexual orientation and/or gender identity to several people’

34% of respondents that had experienced online hate crime said they would not report any hate crimes in the future.

Why?

- 50% said ‘I’m afraid my complaint will not be treated seriously’
- 38% said ‘I don’t think it’s worth it’
- 33% said ‘I’m afraid the police will react negatively to my sexual orientation and/or gender identity’

Interview participants’ experiences of reporting to the police were mixed:

- Some had positive experiences, reporting that they received a quick response, that action was taken, that they were happy with the outcome, and that they were then referred to support services. Comments included that the police ‘were extremely polite and respectful’.

- Others had negatives experiences, reporting that the process was slow, they were not happy with the outcome and they were not referred to support services. Comments included that the police ‘lacked sufficient knowledge on LGBT+ issues’ and that they were ‘professional, but not very effective’.

- Those that had reported via Galop, said that they felt ‘safe and assured with the organisation’ and that Galop ‘exceeded expectations in terms of professional approach.’ They felt positively about not having to deal directly with the police, preferring that Galop managed as much of the communication with police as possible.
Despite some progress by Twitter and Facebook, there has been much less progress to acknowledge and tackle online abuse by other platforms. Dating and hook up sites seem particularly resistant to addressing safety concerns of their users.

The interview participants were extremely dissatisfied with reporting mechanisms and responses received from all social media platforms.

- Some didn't know how to report to platforms: ‘I’m a 50-something year-old woman, I wouldn’t even know how to report online’

- Others reported content but received no response

- Those that did receive a response, expressed disappointment and frustration at receiving an automated reply, and then no further action being taken.

- These experiences deterred interview participants from reporting online abuse to platforms in the future.

A gay man in his 20s said that he initially reported the incident to Grindr, but was disappointed with the lack of response and that the platform’s mechanisms could not prevent the perpetrator from making fake profiles repeatedly. The reporting process wasn’t clear and straightforward and he would often need to wait for six to eight hours for a response. Interview participant

A trans woman in her 50s stated that she used to report abuse Twitter and Facebook, but that it was a ‘waste of time’ so she gave up. There was hardly any response from either platform, and nothing came of reports made. She felt that their interpretation of free expression was based on US values, which do not correspond to UK definitions. ‘[Facebook] tend to downplay any form of abuse and violence. It has very American values.’ Interview participant
Analysis of Galop’s *Police responses to LGBT+ hate crime 2017* survey data showed that the top 5 priorities for LGBT+ people reporting online hate crime to the police were to:

- Be treated with respect
- Be responded to quickly
- Be listened to
- Have the incident recorded as a hate crime
- Show the perpetrator(s) that their actions are unacceptable.

Interview participants wanted the police to take action, protect them from the perpetrator, and provide more regular contact and follow up. They’d like to see more visible involvement of police tackling online hate and calling for increased reporting of online hate crime.

### Social media platforms

Interview participants wanted an improved response from social media platforms, including:

- Easy to use, visible reporting systems
- Personalised responses when reports are made
- Flagged hate content to be removed effectively
- Systems that allow easier identification of the perpetrator
- Visible information defining online hate speech and warning that it is unacceptable on the platform
- Application of UK values in approach to hate speech
- Preventative work challenging hate crime
- Advertisement of support and reporting services on their platforms.

[Twitter needs to] *‘have more of a face to it... like they actually care.’* Bisexual trans teenager, Interview participant
'It would help enormously if Facebook actually have a physical presence responding to these things. Receiving a hate comment, can be enormously distressing. There is a feeling Facebook are not doing anything about it, which makes it even worse.'

Bisexual trans woman in her 40s, Interview participant

**Advocacy and support services**

83% of LGBT+ people who experienced online hate crime would report a hate crime in the future if there was a website and app to report. *Galop Hate Crime Survey 2016*

In the *Stop Online Abuse Survey 2016*, LGBT+ people experiencing online abuse reported that they would find the following services useful:

- 61% online chat
- 50% information resources
- 30% helpline
- 26% face-to-face advocacy
- 22% therapeutic support.

Interview participants wanted improved reporting, advocacy and support services including:

- **Increased provision of specialist LGBT+ advocacy and support services**
- **Information resources about what constitutes online abuse and how to respond to it**
- **Online methods for reporting and getting support, including a reporting webpage and webchat service**
- **Awareness raising around the impact and seriousness of online hate crime.**

Interview participants said that it would be useful for Galop to:

- **Work with police and social media platforms to improve reporting systems and response**
- **Advocate for victims of online hate crime**
- **Have greater visibility and a stronger online presence**
- **Make it clear that experiences of online hate are serious and shouldn’t be downplayed**
- **Raise awareness and increase reporting around online hate crime**
- **Produce information resources for LGBT+ people experiencing online hate crime**
- **Advocate for application of UK law and values in approach to hate speech taken by social media platforms.**
## Recommendations

### Galop calls for:

1. **Review of existing laws and their effectiveness in combatting online hate crime.**
2. **Improved regulation of social media platforms to make them accountable for tackling hate speech and hate crime on their platform.**
3. **Improved reporting systems and response from social media platforms to combat online hate speech more effectively.**
4. **A faster, more informed response by the police to investigate online hate crime.**
5. **Increased specialised advocacy and support services for LGBT+ people experiencing online hate crime, including provision for marginalised LGBT+ groups, such as intersex, trans and non-binary people, BAME people and people with disabilities.**
6. **Increased visibility of existing reporting and support services available online, and resources to maintain these services.**
7. **Improved public awareness about what is legal/illegal in terms of expressing views, and the impact and seriousness of online hate crime.**
8. **Improved information online for LGBT+ people experiencing online hate crime and the organisations supporting them.**
9. **The international dimension to online abuse requires a joined up approach. Legislative provisions domestically and internationally need to provide a framework that supports access to appropriate criminal and civil justice outcomes.**
10. **Coordinated efforts by statutory agencies, NGOs and social media platforms need to be made to enable stronger, quicker investigation and prosecution of online hate crime in the UK, so that the UK takes the lead in shaping better global online cultures.**
Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 10 LGBT+ people who had experienced online hate crime. The data was analysed using open coding method. The findings were supplemented by analysis of Galop survey data, from the Stop Online Abuse Survey 2016 (64 LGBT+ respondents) and the Police Responses to LGBT+ Hate Crime Survey 2017 (271 LGBT+ respondents), and secondary analysis of the LGBT+ Hate Crime Survey 2016 (467 LGBT+ respondents, data originally published as part of the Galop Hate Crime Report 2016). The report also draws on case study examples from Galop’s advocacy services.

The online surveys were distributed through online community networks of LGBT+ activists, individuals and professionals. Attempts were made to reach LGBT+ individuals from a range of identity, social and geographical groups. The interview participants were identified through Galop’s contacts in voluntary sector organisations combatting hate crime. Purposive sampling was used to capture a diverse range of experiences from across the UK. Significant efforts were made to ensure the experience was as comfortable and positive as possible for these individuals.

Community-focused research
Galop’s role as an LGBT+ anti-violence organisation is important contextually in understanding the findings of this study. Our day-to-day work on this issue over the past 35 years has given us a depth of knowledge on hate crime faced by LGBT+ communities. Our understanding of this issue is rooted in direct work with individuals. This perspective as a community-based organisation has shaped our approach to designing and conducting this study.

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