

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY | 2021

# CILIA LGBTQI+ LIVES

Comparing Intersectional Lifecourse Inequalities amongst LGBTQI+ Citizens in Four European Countries



## DEMOGRAPHICS

### About CILIA LGBTQI+

CILIA LGBTQI+ looked for the first time at the intersectional inequalities experienced by lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, queer and intersex (LGBTQI+) people across the life course in **England, Scotland, Portugal and Germany**. It also examined how inequalities relating to gender identity and sexuality vary and intersect with other factors such as social class, ethnicity, citizenship status, health, dis/ability, religion and geographical location. Through **different work-packages** and with a **mixed-method approach**, our focus is inequalities at **key points of transition** in the life course, including school to work, employment progression in mid-life, and the transition into retirement and later life. Our **qualitative data** collection involved over 200 participants, gathering extensive insights on the life course of **self-identified LGBTQI+ people**. This original dataset offers first-hand access to the complexity of lived experiences, revealing areas that require urgent action. The project was approved by University Ethics Committees in the four countries.

The sample was diverse considering age, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, race, disability, health, religion and spirituality, education, social class and place of residence. Interviews were fully transcribed and analysed thematically. Participants were aged between 18 and 84 years old. Concerning gender identity, participants identified themselves as cisgender women, cisgender men, non-binary, genderqueer or gender diverse, trans women, trans men, intersex and questioning (in order of numbers in the sample). At the point they were interviewed, participants identified themselves as gay, lesbian, bisexual, queer, pansexual, queer bisexual, heterosexual and other (in order of numbers in the sample).

## Research Team

In **England**, research was conducted at the Department of Sociology, University of Surrey. The team involved in collecting and analysing the qualitative interview data were Andrew King (PI), Jo Smith, Matthew Hall, Sait Bayrakdar and Peter Barbrook-Johnson. In **Germany**, research was conducted by Maria do Mar Castro Varela (PI) and Yener Bayramoğlu at the Alice Salomon Hochschule Berlin, University of Applied Sciences. In **Portugal**, research was conducted at the Centre for Social Studies, University of Coimbra, by Ana Cristina Santos (PI), Rita Alcaire and Ana Lúcia Santos. In **Scotland**, research was conducted by Yvette Taylor (PI), Matson Lawrence and Maja B. Andreasen at the School of Education at the University of Strathclyde, Glasgow.



## Funding

CILIA LGBTQI+ is funded by **DIAL – Dynamics of Inequality Across the Life-course**, a multi-disciplinary research programme consisting of thirteen European projects. The projects examine the sources, structures and consequences of inequalities in contemporary societies. The programme is funded by the European agency **NORFACE** Consortium of European Research Councils for the period 2017–2021.

## Key findings

Claims that **life has got better** for LGBTQI+ people **do not always hold up to scrutiny** nor match the **lived experiences** of individuals;

**Invariability in legislation, policies and existing data** in different countries creates **obstacles** to evidence-based **research** and informed **policy-making**;

**Past experiences** of inequality and discrimination continue to impact **present lives and thoughts about the future**;

**Politicization and anti-discrimination activism** appear to be an endurance **strategy** against challenges at different stages of the life course;

**Younger** LGBTQI+ citizens continue to experience **inequality** and **prejudice** during **school** and at the start of their **working lives**. **Older** LGBTQI+ citizens continue to experience **inequalities later in life**;

Implementation of **equality legislation and policy** in the **workplace** remains **uneven**, and for many LGBTQI+ people the workplace can be a **challenging environment** in terms of **visibility** and **acceptance of their identities**;

For **older** LGBTQI+ citizens, **stigma and discrimination** at the **workplace** can affect **material resources** during **retirement**;

A general **absence of networks of care and support** in daily life, **lack of end-of-life plans** and recognition of how ageing intersects with the issues faced by this group can **magnify** existing **inequalities**;

**More research** is required to specifically understand the inequalities experienced by people with **intersex** variations to properly inform **policymaking**;

Looking at LGBTQI+ lives through a **life course approach** has demonstrated that **forms of discrimination change over time**, as people get older, go through major turning points, and adapt to new identifications.

# Action points

## Visibility

- More **representation** and **representativeness** in media and the public sphere.
- More **antidiscriminatory** and **inclusive language**.



## Research/Education

- More studies about **older** LGBTQI+ individuals, particularly BTQI+.
- Investment in **cultural competency** for a wide variety of authorities, education and health and social care professionals.
- Involvement of civil society organizations in **knowledge exchange workshops**.

## Policy

- Inclusion of questions about sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression, along with intersex variations in official **demographic surveys and statistics**.
- Practical implementation of **awareness** and **non-discrimination policies** in the workplace.
- Implementation of policy at national and local levels is uneven and lacks **monitoring, consolidation** and **mainstreaming**.

## EVIDENCE-BASED RESULTS

*A selection*

### Education

LGBTQI+ people tend to remain in the closet throughout school years, but University is reported as a "safer" space;

Ongoing impacts of past criminalization: none or little sexual and gender diversity in school curriculum; absence of LGBTQI+ role models in schools;

LGB individuals are "coming out" at a younger age compared to older participants and therefore need for schools to protect them;

Prevailing discourses of academic success as a shield from discrimination.

### Workplace

Careful management of one's identity in the workplace with "layers of outness" depending on context, work place policies and career stage;

Occurrence of the "don't ask, don't tell" policy; Additional concerns amongst trans and bi employees;

Prevailing discourses of professional success as a shield from discrimination;

Trans participants talked about the impact of economic inequalities with their transitions.

# EVIDENCE-BASED RESULTS

*A selection (cont.)*

## Law and Safety

Strong legal frameworks do not automatically translate into adequate impact upon workplace policies;

The onus to report discrimination is often placed on the victims themselves;

LGBTQI+ people still have to manage carefully their visibility in the public sphere;

Prejudice and discrimination persist in more subtle ways, subverting legal frameworks, often expressed in terms of unconscious bias and micro aggressions.

## Age and Caring

Participants discussed ageing and end-of-life decisions, and expectations regarding care, but many felt that these conversations could be deferred: this was true for younger and older respondents;

Some expressed concern about ageing in the context of requiring care, including personal care and residing in supported/assisted living spaces such as care homes, and whether care providers would be knowledgeable, respectful and non-discriminatory;

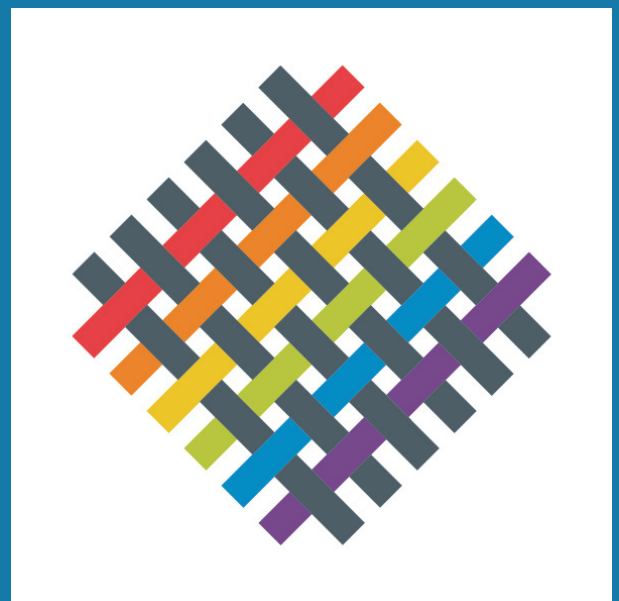
There was some awareness of LGBTQI+ specific retirement homes and supported living facilities and this was welcomed.

## Mental Health

Several reports of coping with fears, generalized anxiety, isolation, suicidal ideation;

Teachers, close family or conservative work contexts are identified as sources of distress;

Some mental health services and professionals are referred to as welcoming, important in their reintegration into a daily functional dynamic, strengthening their self-esteem and self-determination in making decisions about employment, family and breaking with violent relationships.





**CILIA LGBTQI+**

intersectional lifecourse  
(in)equalities

# “ WHAT ABOUT THE FUTURE? ”

We deliberately asked about the future, particularly whether participants thought that any progress they felt might have happened in terms of equalities for LGBTQI+ people could be undone. People expressed concerns about populism and anti-gender perspectives as indicating a less accepting social climate and possibly heralding a new conservatism.

## Resources

All information regarding publications, events, and other resources can be found in each country's website:

**England:** <https://cilia.surrey.ac.uk>

**Germany:** <https://cilia-lgbtq.de>

**Portugal:** <https://ces.uc.pt/ces/projectos/cilia>

**Scotland:** <https://lgbtqilives.wordpress.com>

## Editorial board

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Available at [www.ces.uc.pt/projectos/cilia](http://www.ces.uc.pt/projectos/cilia).