

# Navigating Intersectionality:

**Multicultural and Multifaith LGBTIQ+ Victorians talk about Discrimination and Affirmation**





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This Report was researched and written on Wurundjeri land. During COVID, further drafting was undertaken on Kaurna land.



We acknowledge the traditional custodians of country and their enduring sovereignty. We bear witness to their diversity, strength, and resilience. We honour the elders past and present, and emerging.

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We thank Elena Maria from the Ascolta Italian Women's Group for the exquisite front cover photo, 'In Memory of My Brother, Bruin'. We love the symbolism of the dandelion and its dispersal of precious seeds, rainbow coloured in the sunlight, like so many of our MCMF LGBTIQ+ diasporic communities. We live like dandelions, releasing experience, wisdom and pieces of ourselves on the winds of life for future generations.



Cover dandelion image  
'In memory of my brother, Bruin'  
Elena Maria

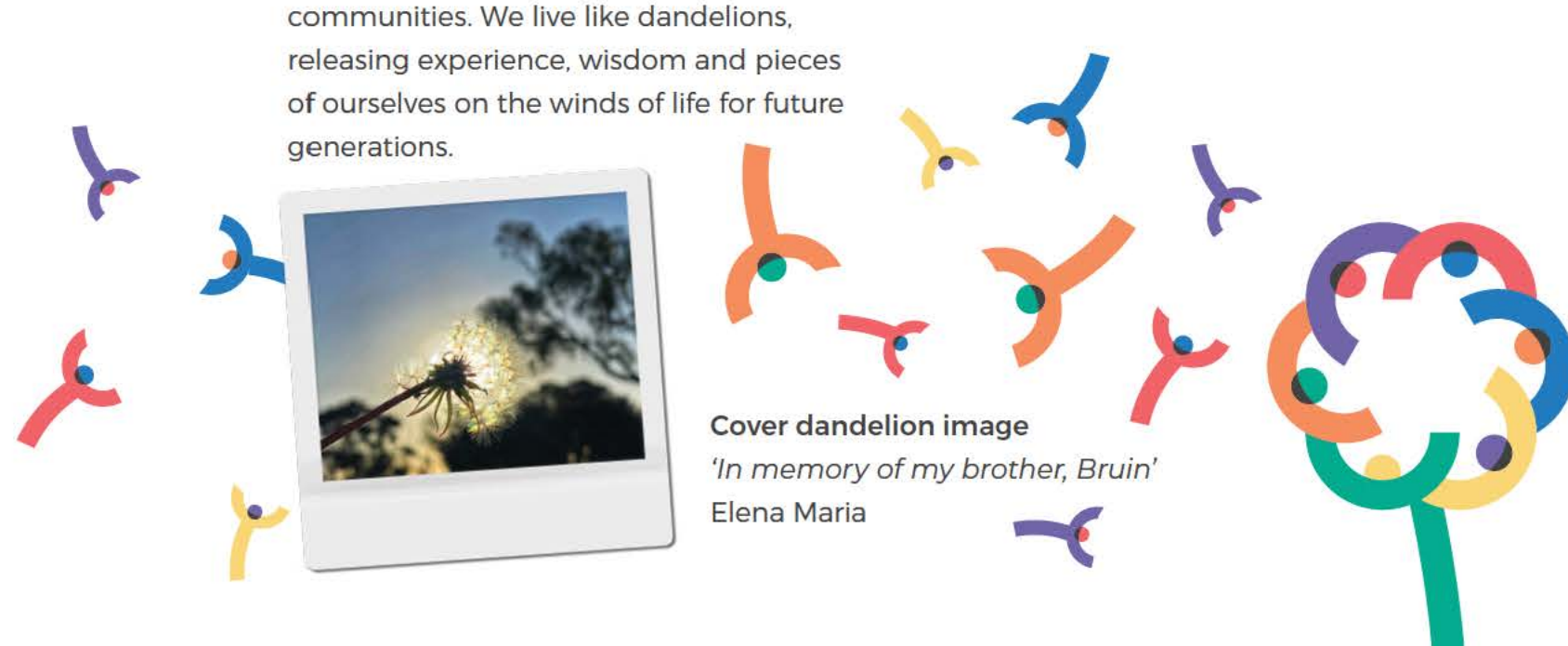
We thank the allies who do not behave badly, who know when to step up and when to step back, and assisted with setting up focus group nibbles and venues.

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And in memory of Ayman Barbaresco, AGMC member. We miss you achingly. We see you in the rainbow of the dandelion seeds.





## Dedication

Dedicated to those who walked with us in this research.  
We hope this research creates paths for future walking  
forward and toward.

*Walking away isn't what people do in the  
beginning, it's not their first response.*

*What happens is first we try to raise an issue,  
then we try to raise it again and again and  
again,*

*and after repeatedly raising an issue and  
not being listened to,*

*and after receiving backlash and hostility and  
bullying and harassment for raising the issues,*

*it becomes such a toxic environment that  
the only way to maintain their own wellbeing  
is to walk away.*

*So walking away is the final sign  
that the relationship between the person  
and the community*

*has broken down irreparably.*

*They've tried to repair it,  
but that takes the community also doing  
its part, that's a relationship.*

*And if the person is trying to rectify something  
that the community is not receptive to  
acknowledging,*

*then the person is left with no other choice  
because if they raise the issue and nothing  
changes,*

*then they're dehumanised, and that takes  
a toll (I20).*



# Contents

<b>Executive summary</b>	<b>6</b>
Key findings	8
Recommendations	10
<b>Introduction</b>	<b>14</b>
Research scope and terminology	16
Research objectives	19
This report	19
<b>Methodology</b>	<b>20</b>
Research design and practice	21
Methods	28
Key concepts	41
<b>Findings and analysis</b>	<b>48</b>
LGBTIQ+ spaces and settings	49
Cultural settings and spaces	76
Religious settings and spaces	90
Higher education settings and spaces	107
Workplace settings and spaces	118
Healthcare settings and spaces	138
LGBTIQ+ media sites and spaces	147
Culturally-specific media settings and spaces	151
MCMF LGBTIQ+ multiple selves and self-learning in relation to ROFD	155
Trolls do intersectionality	159
<b>Summary of research findings</b>	<b>162</b>
Key findings	163
<b>Concurrence with recent Victorian reports and discussion papers</b>	<b>166</b>
Racism in Victoria and what it means for the health of Victorians	167
Discussion Paper for the Victorian LGBTIQ Strategy	168
Policing for Same Sex Attracted and Sex and Gender Diverse (SSASGD) young Victorians	173
<b>Promoting positive intersectionality</b>	<b>176</b>
Conclusion	177
Recommendations	179
References	183



# Executive summary

## Introduction

An increasing amount of Australian research, particularly in Victoria, has been conducted over the past 15 years into the health and wellbeing of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and queer (LGBTIQ+) communities, and it is well established that LGBTIQ+ communities experience disproportionate mental and physical health inequities compared to the general population.

More recent research studies conducted in Victoria recognise the specific issues and needs of multicultural and multifaith (MCMF) LGBTIQ+ communities, such as fear of rejection and social exclusion often leading to concealing one's identity, and increased feelings of internalised shame and negative perceptions of one's sexuality. Furthermore, repeated exposure to discrimination results in isolation, social withdrawal, anger, depression, fatigue, physical and emotional withdrawal, concerns over one's physical safety, and is considered to be a chronic stressor.

The Australian GLBTIQ+ Multicultural Council (AGMC) received a research grant from the Multicultural Affairs and Social Cohesion (MASC) Division, Department of Premier and Cabinet (DPC), to conduct research on racism and other forms of discrimination (ROFD) faced by MCMF LGBTIQ+ communities.

## Research aims

The aim of this research was to identify ROFD in a range of settings: in LGBTIQ+ settings, cultural, religious, higher education, healthcare, workplace, and media settings and sites.

The research used an intersectional framework to understand the complex lived experiences of MCMF LGBTIQ+ communities and to unpack the dominant power structures of white, patriarchal, heteronormativity and gendernormativity that continue to create systemic marginalisation, resulting in inequality and inequity.

The research findings will be applied in the development of recommendations to formulate tangible actions to ensure that MCMF LGBTIQ+ individuals and communities feel a greater sense of inclusion and belonging as they navigate their identities across multiple settings.

## Methodology

The research used mixed methods to collect information: an online survey, focus groups and individual interviews.

The online survey was promoted on the AGMC Facebook page. Of the 203 responses received, 95 respondents were identified as MCMF LGBTIQ+. Ninety-seven respondents were tagged as 'trolls' or not applicable as they did not identify as LGBTIQ+ and/or did not identify as MCMF. Due to the volume and types of trolling, we have added a brief analysis of the comments we received to further understand which factors of a person's identity are being targeted for discrimination.

Twenty-six people participated in 9 focus groups and 20 guided, semi-structured interviews were conducted face-to-face or over the phone according to the preference of the interviewees. Focus group and interview participants were recruited by contacting people who had expressed interest in an interview at the end of their survey, and MCMF LGBTIQ+ individuals known to the researchers through work, social and other settings. The project was able to purposively invite people from a range of backgrounds who had not previously participated in an AGMC research project. New participants were deliberately sought to avoid previous knowledge of AGMC research, repetitive information and research fatigue.

In keeping with AGMC community collaboration ethics, the research methodology was based on community development, capacity-building principles, and fostering research work experiences and opportunities for members of MCMF LGBTIQ+ communities. The aim was to prevent participants feeling exploited, unsafe or dispensable.

A Project Steering Committee/Advisory Group (SCAG) was established at the beginning of the research to discuss the methodology, read and review drafts, and participate in two forums held during the research. The initial critical literature review, which informed the research, involved a comprehensive and systematic search of online databases and organisational websites relevant to Australian MCMF LGBTIQ+ communities. Predominantly Australian literature published after the year 2000 was used, with international studies included if relevant to the Australian context. Each article was critically appraised and the literature was grouped thematically.



## Key findings

1. Participants reported that covert racism has replaced overt racism across all settings, but racism still exists.
2. ROFD often manifests as microaggressions, micro-assaults and micro-invalidations, such as verbal abuse, covert and casual discrimination, and unconscious and unintentional bias and discrimination (UUBD).
3. Most ROFD occurs in everyday interactions despite various sites and settings having diversity and inclusion, anti-discrimination and other policies.
4. Racism, race-based and faith-based discrimination are more prevalent than homo/bi/trans/intersex phobia except within religious settings, followed by cultural settings.
5. The types, regularities and intensity of ROFD is also based on a range of other intersectional factors which create inter- and intra-hierarchical divisions, such as class, disability, level of education, established or emerging ethnic community, skin colour, and age.
6. White privilege and white-passing are significant themes in relation to the ROFD experienced by MCMF LGBTIQ+ people, particularly people of colour. Whiteness includes white privilege and white-normativity as key factors that operate behind racism. White-passing can be seen in two ways: as a strategy to maintain emotional and physical safety without the emotional burden of having to explain and justify complex intersectional identities; and as a way to establish a sense of belonging in a community that has normalised white identity at its core.
7. Allyship as either appropriate and useful, or inappropriate and detrimental, were strong themes in relation to what MCMF LGBTIQ+ individuals require from allies.
8. The navigation of intersectional identities is context-specific. Participants reported the least ROFD in healthcare settings and services, more ROFD in tertiary educational settings, and the most in workplace settings.
9. Repeated exposure to individual or institutional ROFD, or repeated exposure to the ROFD experienced by peers, loved ones and others in the setting, can result in stress due to association. Apprehended discrimination and vicarious trauma are significant factors in the avoidance of certain settings.
10. The most common response to ROFD is removing oneself from the setting or event and not returning, or avoiding the setting from the onset, thereby indicating a strong insecurity with, and lack of trust in, official channels of reporting and addressing ROFD.
11. Removal of the self as a response to ROFD exacerbates feelings of isolation, marginalisation and mental health concerns as the individual is removing themselves from the very sites and spaces that they believe could offer support, security and belonging. However, it is also a form of maintaining emotional and physical safety instead of engaging in confrontation that is emotionally laborious.
12. Removal of the self may provide a convenient excuse for an institution or setting to not address ROFD as it may believe multiple-minority groups are not accessing their services, not attending their spaces, or are not experiencing ROFD as no complaints have been made.
13. Management is rarely contacted to address any issues of ROFD. When management is contacted, such as in workplace settings, the outcomes are mostly unsatisfactory.
14. Police are rarely contacted to address any issues of ROFD. The main reasons are: fear and shame regarding the stigma it will bring to their families, even if they are 'out', and the status of their families in their communities; the lack of cultural understanding among police; and the lack of MCMF LGBTIQ+ police officers who could work with their families and communities.
15. The increase in ROFD trolling online on MCMF LGBTIQ+ sites shows the use of media-influenced stereotypes and sensationalism, and the intersectional connecting of various minorities within one homogenous group as not-white, not-heterosexual, not-Christian, not-cisgender, and therefore, not-Australian.



# Recommendations

We offer the following recommendations based on four broad categories:

## Leadership

- Senior leadership: to incorporate an intersectional lens as part of LGBTIQ+-inclusive practice across organisations, and authorise and support initiatives so that MCMF specificities are not overlooked.
- Government leadership: for government agencies and leaders to incorporate an intersectional lens as part of LGBTIQ+ inclusive strategies across government agencies, including multicultural commissions, LGBTIQ+ commissions, and police commissions.
- Organisational leadership: for MCMF, LGBTIQ+ and all organisation leaders to focus on intersectionality and address the ongoing power inequality and systemic discrimination that negatively affect MCMF LGBTIQ+ communities and all of their intersectionalities.
- Religious leadership: to understand and guide faith communities in understanding how religious exemptions prevent the LGBTIQ+ community from practising and engaging in their cultural and faith beliefs and working in religious spaces.
- Educational leadership: to understand the unique challenges faced by MCMF LGBTIQ+ students, with specific strategies for international students that incorporate intersectionality, cultural safety, and affirmative actions instead of deficit-based measures.
- Workplace and service management: to design and implement programs in regard to the ongoing power structures that privilege normative identities and result in microaggressions, unconscious biases, microinvalidations and overt discriminations, and to establish culturally safe environments that embrace intersectionality. Management to work collaboratively with MCMF LGBTIQ+ community organisations to establish policies and strategies that maintain the safety of MCMF LGBTIQ+ people through an open channel where concerns are adequately addressed without jeopardising the safety and positions of MCMF LGBTIQ+ individuals.

## Inclusion through visibility

- Promote inclusion of MCMF LGBTIQ+ people through culturally safe visibility that embraces intersectionality as an integral part of LGBTIQ+, MCMF, as well as the diversity that exists within MCMF LGBTIQ+ communities. This is to be implemented across various services, social venues, community venues, the media and other settings through meaningful engagement and participation of MCMF LGBTIQ+ people who are not reduced to 'special features' but as part of the everydayness of multiple communities.
- Implement a multisectoral approach to increase the knowledge of MCMF LGBTIQ+ people's experiences and needs by organisations, institutions and governments, ending exposure to ROFD; to draw knowledge from the strengths and resilience of MCMF LGBTIQ+ people through meaningful collaboration; and for their participation to be properly acknowledged through employment, financial contribution and public acknowledgement. Note that this must be done after creating a culturally safe environment for MCMF LGBTIQ+ people to meaningfully contribute to the process.
- Ensure media representation and reports consider the unique experiences and identities of MCMF LGBTIQ+ people without stereotyping and homogenising the complex group, and to consider the safety and wellbeing of MCMF LGBTIQ+ individuals.
- Demand greater responsibility from social media, including dating apps, by government agencies, community organisations, advocacy organisations and individual agencies to remove racism, trolling, sexism, transphobia and all forms of discrimination in their medium.
- Increase governmental capacity to liaise and collaborate with organisations to increase meaningful engagement and participation as part of inclusion strategies that follow justice and human rights principles while maintaining cultural safety.



## Capacity building

- Government to facilitate discussion and engagement between MCMF communities and MCMF LGBTIQ+ communities in order to create a culturally safe environment for MCMF LGBTIQ+ that adheres to cultural and religious values.
- Reframe LGBTIQ+ training with an intersectional lens, greater LGBTIQ+ community engagement, and cultural safety that places MCMF LGBTIQ+ people at the centre.
- LGBTIQ+ and intersectionality training for the general public
- LGBTIQ+ training specific to MCMF communities
- Actively update the training for Victoria Police as part of an ongoing long-term strategy to change and improve the organisational culture.
- Work collaboratively with LGBTIQ+ venues and event organisers, MCMF event organisers and venues to address discrimination and create a clear strategy for reporting that honours individuals' experiences, as well as a strategy to counter community resistance and complaints using human rights and justice principles.
- Provide funding to explore intersectionality within MCMF LGBTIQ+ communities, such as people with disability, individuals with intersex variations, aged and the elderly, LGBTIQ+ asylum seekers, refugees and newly arrived migrants; and evaluate capacity-building and implementation post-research.
- Fund services that provide financial, housing and employment support for MCMF LGBTIQ+ people that are culturally safe and accommodate intersectional identities.
- Fund programs that are culturally safe and follow the cultural values of specific ethnic communities, to be implemented with the families of MCMF LGBTIQ+ people in repairing relationships and understanding more effective ways to respond to LGBTIQ+ family members.

## Reporting

- Government to work collaboratively with LGBTIQ+ organisations, MCMF organisations, and MCMF LGBTIQ+ community groups to create grievance strategies for MCMF LGBTIQ+ people to report discrimination using a trauma-centric approach.
- Victoria Police to establish a reporting pathway for MCMF LGBTIQ+ people to report discrimination without fear of being silenced, ignored and undermined due to their intersectional identities.
- Develop effective first contact points for reporting in government, the Police, LGBTIQ+ advocacy groups and MCMF advocacy groups, to engage with those who are less likely or unable to report.
- Diversify reporting mechanisms including anonymous online and third-party reporting.



# Introduction

An increasing amount of Australian research, particularly in Victoria, has been conducted over the past 15 years into the health and wellbeing of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and queer (LGBTIQ+) communities. It is well established that LGBTIQ+ communities experience disproportionate mental and physical health inequities compared to the general population (AIHW 2018; Couch et al. 2007; Hillier et al. 2010; Leonard et al. 2012; Pitts et al. 2006). Furthermore, research uniformly demonstrates that systemic discrimination impacts the wellbeing of LGBTIQ+ individuals and their communities, and structural barriers present obstacles to improving their health status (Carlton et al. 2016; Hillier et al. 2010; Leonard et al. 2012; Pitts et al. 2006; Robinson et al. 2014). This existing research has been used to inform policy as well as increase the knowledge of services, both mainstream and specific to LGBTIQ+ communities, of best practice frameworks (McNair 2017).

More recent research studies conducted in Victoria recognise the specific issues and needs of multicultural and multifaith (MCMF) LGBTIQ+ communities. These studies include the evaluation of the needs of LGBTIQ+ refugees (Mejia-Canales & Leonard 2016; Noto et al. 2014; Raj 2017); LGBTIQ+ young people with MCMF backgrounds (Ward 2017); potential services to support LGBTIQ+ immigrants (Poljski 2011); reconciling religious beliefs with sexuality (Wong 2017); and diversity within LGBTI immigrants (Giwa & Chaze 2018).

What remains largely unknown is the health status of MCMF LGBTIQ+ individuals. Given they identify with more than one minority identity and belong to or border more than one social/community setting or space, they are likely to be exposed to a range of intersecting discriminations. Therefore, it is expected they will have higher levels of adverse mental and physical health outcomes.

*So you pretty much factionalise your life according to the situation and where you are. (GAF1)*

Individuals identifying as MCMF LGBTIQ+ report fear of rejection and social exclusion often leading to concealing one's identity (Kassisieh 2011; Rajkhowa 2019), and increased feelings of internalised shame and negative perceptions of one's sexuality (Brown et al. 2016). Furthermore, Weber et al. (2018) found that repeated exposure to discrimination by MCMF LGBTIQ+ individuals resulted in isolation, social withdrawal, anger, depression, fatigue, physical and emotional withdrawal, concerns over one's physical safety, and it was considered to be a chronic stressor.

To be clear, it is not belonging to one or more minority groups that leads to poorer health outcomes, but the stigma and discrimination from external groups and systems to being MCMF LGBTIQ+ (Sondik et al. 2010). Further research is required into **racism and other forms of discrimination (ROFD)** through the lens of intersectionality, wherein multiple minorities and multiple systems and structures of power and privilege, such as racism,



heterosexism and cisgenderism, construct hierarchies and inequities (Crenshaw 1989; Cyrus 2017; Lim & Hewitt 2018).

Following the 2018 launch of *Living and Loving in Diversity; an Anthology of Multicultural Queer Adventures*, which included many renowned MCMF LGBTIQ+ artists, writers, leaders and activists, the Australian GLBTIQ+ Multicultural Council (AGMC) received a research grant from the Multicultural Affairs and Social Cohesion (MASC) Division, Department of Premier and Cabinet (DPC), to conduct research on ROFD faced by MCMF LGBTIQ+ communities. This follows two DPC-funded reports that became instrumental in MASC and Equality departments holding forums with MCMF and LGBTIQ+ community leaders and service providers, resulting in various implementation strategies (Pallotta-Chiarolli 2016b; 2018b).

## Research scope and terminology

The aim of this research was to identify ROFD in a range of settings using an intersectional framework to understand the complex lived experiences of MCMF LGBTIQ+ communities; and to unpack the dominant power structures of white, patriarchal, heteronormativity and gendernormativity that continue to create systemic marginalisation, resulting in inequality and inequity.

A list of recommendations and future directions have been developed based on this research and in relation to the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) *Racism in Victoria and what*

*it means for the health of Victorians* report (2017), and the development of the *Victorian LGBTIQ+ Strategy* (2020). This information will then be applied in the development of future recommendations to identify tangible actions to ensure that MCMF LGBTIQ+ individuals and communities feel a greater sense of inclusion and belonging as they navigate their identities across multiple settings.

With cultural respect for First Nations People and acknowledgement of their traumatic and unique histories of colonisation, often from MCMF settler-colonisers, this review does not include **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (ATSI) LGBTIQ+ communities**. This is the strongly held position of most First Nations leaders, including the Wurundjeri in Victoria, who stipulate the separateness and uniqueness of ATSI LGBTIQ+ experiences from MCMF LGBTIQ+ communities, cultural respect for their traumatic histories of colonisation within which MCMF communities are complicit, and the need to understand how such histories result in significant differences between ATSI and MCMF LGBTIQ+ communities (Pallotta-Chiarolli 2019; Xiberras 2018).

As Muller writes, racism 'is not a black and white issue, and new immigrants and settlers, regardless of skin colour, who seek to gain integration and/or acceptance into mainstream Australia can sometimes absorb non-Indigenous society's false beliefs' (2014: 131). New settlers may seek to align themselves with, and strive to be accepted into, the mainstream society which constructs a form of 'conditional

whiteness' that can be removed at will by the dominant society (Ladson-Billings & Donnor 2008: 62). For further information regarding ATSI LGBTIQ+ communities, Hodge (2016) provides an account of the perspectives of individuals within these communities.

'Defining the problem' involves 'the problem of defining' when applying existing and/or constructing terms and acronyms for social diversities (Asquith et al. 2019: 313). Cultural and linguistic diversity (CALD) is a policy term developed in the Australian context to represent the hundreds of cultural, religious, ethnic and nationality differences. However, this term does not specifically name and include faith diversity in both its cultural and religious practices. Thus, we adopt **the use of MCMF** as defined and explained in Pallotta-Chiarolli and Rajkhowa (2017).

**LGBTIQ+** is a common acronym to represent sex, sexuality and gender diversity. We acknowledge it is reductive given that, as Miller (2017) has identified, there are approximately 500 different terms for sex, sexuality and gender identity, many of which do not align with the normative Western frame of LGBTIQ, particularly given the need to decolonise and acknowledge 'neocolonial assemblages' (Pallotta-Chiarolli 2020). The plus sign is used to acknowledge that the current acronym of LGBTIQ is not fully inclusive of all sex, sexuality and gender identities. For the purpose of this research, MCMF LGBTIQ+ communities include individuals from Muslim, Jewish and Christian faiths; African, Asian, Middle Eastern, Pasifika and

South American backgrounds; individuals identifying as refugees and asylum seekers; and international students. Thus, we are conscious of including both what we call established-ethnic and emerging-ethnic communities, with shifting people of colour communities.

Given the above neocolonial complexities of naming and framing multiplicity and intersectionality, the following comments provide examples from our research participants of living in MCMF LGBTIQ+ communities, the systemic and structural inequities they experience and navigate, and the strengths and resistances to be upheld rather than subjugated.

*A queer kid from the bush kicked out of home at 15 and on and off the streets for 10 years. Jewish, autistic, trans, bisexual, fired from a job for using the women's bathroom, refused work cause people like me aren't welcome, and had to leave my teaching degree cause I couldn't pass prac due to being placed in a homophobic school. Excluded from all queer spaces due to racism. (14)*

*You gain insight into multiple communities and also into the ways in which these different facets can intersect and can bleed into each other in a way that people from the outside of one or both of those experiences will never be able to understand. I think there's a lot of power in being a queer of faith. ... I've found a lot of strength moving beyond narratives of religion bad or queerness bad. (15)*



*My Dad is Muslim and he's agnostic. He's always saying like, 'We're Muslim on paper'. My Mum, she's originally from Georgia, which is Eastern Europe. She's a Christian, and my grandma, she's Jewish. So this is the combination. (I10)*

*Judaism isn't just a religion, it's a religion and a culture and a geography and a history and a language and a people ... I can be any sort of Jew I like. But other people will see me as whatever Jew they like. (J2)*

The following narrative, told by a participant about a typical morning in their life, shows how the intersections of ROFD are experienced, and the necessity of self-regulation and navigation.

*I want you to imagine yourself waking up as me. One, it's a hot day. I want to wear a singlet, but I'm a gender-diverse person, and if I dressed too femininely, I could end up in a violent predicament. So, I'm going to need to layer on X amount of clothes so I can be ambiguous enough that I won't face violence.*

*Now, I want you to walk out your door. You can't walk like a woman even though you were born in a female-assigned body. You need to now face men and, almost like in drag, I now have to assume a certain way of moving my body so that I'm not clocked as not being in the binary.*

*Now, get onto the bus. My sister is texting me because she's in a crisis, but I can't answer the phone because if I talk, I will out myself as not being a cis male. What is more important? Knowing my sister's well-being or being alive? On this bus last week, there was someone in cultural garb, and a white person said, 'White power!' So I already know some of my neighbours are not receptive to difference.*

*Now, this is just you waking up and getting onto the bus. Now, you go about your day. There's so much intricacy that comes with survival, and this is just 6:00 a.m. to 7:30 a.m. Now, times that throughout life, and we're talking about compounded experiences of different levels of oppression, and I'm also navigating living and growing up in family violence, and have a history of sexual abuse ...*

*So, when I arrive to [a tertiary education campus] and I have an incident of bullying and you're [the teacher] asking me, the only visibly gender-diverse person in my radius, to stand up to someone, what I need to do is drop out of this course ...*

*The system is set up for us to step aside. (I19)*

## Research objectives

This research seeks to understand the current, shifting and emerging needs of MCMF LGBTIQ+ individuals and communities in order to better support policy and program development. This report and its subsequent publications, forums and media interactions will present findings and provide recommendations for state, societal and cultural/faith/LGBTIQ+ community engagement with:

- experiences of racism, ethnic-based and faith-based discrimination, and homo/bi/transphobia/intersexphobia
- the perception, prevalence and impact of overlapping/intersecting forms of discrimination in ethnic, faith and LGBTIQ+ communities
- the attitudes, responses and behaviours of MCMF LGBTIQ+ individuals towards racism and other forms of discrimination
- levels of affirmation, acceptance and support for MCMF LGBTIQ+ in both MCMF and LGBTIQ+ communities
- best practice strategies for creating a safe and inclusive environment for MCMF LGBTIQ+ Victorians across various settings and contexts by dismantling the dominant power ideologies that contribute to on-going marginalisation and oppression.

The report also provides a unique preliminary exploratory analysis of the trolls who undertook the survey and commented on the AGMC Facebook and other community sites where the research was publicised.

## This report

This report outlines the methodology used to collect information, the associated challenges and the limitations of the research.

It provides the key findings of the research, identifying the experience of ROFD in a range of settings: in LGBTIQ+ settings, cultural, religious, higher education, healthcare, workplace, and media settings and sites.

The key findings are summarised and recommendations are made.

This report reproduces the input from participants, including key impressions and experiences.



# Methodology

The research used mixed methods to gather information from respondents, namely an online survey, focus groups and individual interviews.

The focus groups and interviews were professionally transcribed verbatim and integrity-checked by the participants and researchers. As some participants were concerned about their limited English or particular speech inflections, we assured them that when we reproduced their narrative, the focus would be on their content and any irrelevant speech inflections or idiosyncrasies would be removed.

Data from the focus groups and interviews was combined then thematically coded and analysed, unless it was relevant to specify whether the data was collected from a focus group or an interview. Thematic analysis is 'a method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within the data' (Braun & Clarke 2006: 79). Given we were undertaking inductive analysis, whereby the development of the themes is driven by the data and less by existing theory, research or hypothesis, this process was comprehensive and inclusive (Braun & Clarke 2006).

## Research design and practice

In keeping with AGMC community collaboration ethics, a research methodology based on community development, capacity-building principles and fostering research work experiences and opportunities for members of MCMF LGBTIQ+ communities was implemented. Thus, **decolonising research design and practices** (Moreton-Robinson 2013; Smith 2012) was fundamental to this research, as was dismantling of the researcher's own positionality in relation to power and privilege to build genuine rapport through cultural humility, mutual respect and curiosity instead of investigation.

The research design and practices focused on:

- being sensitive to the safety and anonymity of participants
- empowering participants to voice their perspectives and continue their own important personal, creative and professional journeys
- allowing the conversations to be participant-driven, so that any areas not raised within the research guidelines but of significance to the research participant could be raised and discussed
- providing audios and transcripts of interviews, as well as a draft of this report, to participants to edit, add to, veto, and keep for their own future purposes and projects



- foregrounding participant voices as much as possible in the report; the 'their lives, their voices' decolonising research method.

The research approach, values and ethics detailed above were endorsed by the Islamic Council of Victoria (ICV). ICV calls for **Ethical Principles of Respect, Beneficence, Justice and Research Merit and Integrity**. The five key strategies in the *Guidelines for Muslim Community-University Research Partnerships* (ICV 2017) were incorporated into the research:

1. **Train Research Partners:** in designing and conducting research, and the evaluation of its effectiveness
2. **Share Decision-Making:** in the planning, review and approval of community-based research.
3. **Share Benefits:** the rewards derived from research should be shared in ways that reflect the needs and contributions of each member of the research partnership.
4. **Create an Ethical Framework:** a set of operating principles must be agreed upon early to define the ethical conduct of the research partnership.
5. **Promote Diversity:** recognizing the diversity within the community and the significance of intersectionality.

The role of the researchers within this project can be described as what Valadez and Elsbree call 'queer coyotes' (2005: 175), fulfilling the four characteristics of **border crossing research**:

1. **operating in 'secreto':** being secretive and protective of the research participants while simultaneously using the research process to help them move forward and cross borders;
2. **knowing 'los codigos':** knowing and working with the codes of both the marginal and the mainstream, such as relaying the needs of the participants to service providers, government and community leaders; as well as conveying the existence and resources of useful services, political allies and community leaders to the participants;
3. **having 'la facultad':** reading different situations and contexts as quickly and accurately as possible; and seeing into the deeper realities below the surface such as understanding the wider hegemonic heteronormativity and gendernormativity framing particular cultural, religious and LGBTIQ+ hierarchies, within which the participants experienced oppression and/or were unable to demonstrate and act upon their strengths and resilience; and
4. **expressing sincere 'compromiso':** having a commitment toward social transformation, social justice and the politics of recognition which includes ongoing relationships, collaborations and actions with participants, including media advocacy, after the official project has been completed (2005:176-177).

In adopting all the above ethics and methods for this research, the aim was to prevent participants feeling exploited, unsafe or dispensable. Indeed, it was heartening to receive feedback from participants that the transparency of the research process, the inclusion of their feedback, and the opportunity to check for de-identification and accurate quoting and representation right up to the penultimate draft, were greatly encouraging and enhancing of their health and wellbeing. They looked forward to future research, discussions and implementations of the report.

In line with Valadez and Elsbree's (2005) model and the characteristic of expressing sincere 'compromiso', participants discussed the reassurance and trust they felt in being able to remain in contact with the researchers if they wished. Likewise, they commented on community groups, such as AGMC, that would support the **continuation of connections and ongoing collaborations**, and how in minority communities the roles and relationality of researcher and researched would swap and blur.

*So, once the research is done, it doesn't mean it's [my life's] done. Because the experience goes on. ... it's important to not think of any type of research like, 'Oh, looking into a microscopic little dooda. Oh, look at that'!... because we've already had enough white people [do that to our cultures] ... And although this will be used as data, I'm not data. I'm a human being. So, long after this, I will continue to evolve on earth (I19)*

This dynamic challenges the Western concept of objectivity, the very notion that has been critically examined by decolonial research practice as a fallacy due to the researcher having bias stemming from white, colonial norms. Indeed, the ability to navigate various roles and wear different hats, to be reflective of power dynamics and dismantling power to build a rapport, learn through curiosity and establish connections based on similarities, add richness to the stories collected. Such connections also enable post-research relationships as a form of community development and mobilisation.

Specifically mentioned as a setting to be discussed in relation to ROFD, research participants were also very aware of **universities as prime research institutions** and often critiqued their practices, asking for that critique to be included in this report.

*How can you make sure that university research ethics is not making it harder for our minority researchers to do the research that needs to happen? Because it's so much easier to go outside the university space [to do research] and we're meant to be in the university to do that. (I18)*



*They have the power to exclude us because they feel what they are doing is right. I often get [university] people saying, 'Oh, but where you come from, it's shit anyway'. So there is some superiority complex there, and sexual identity and gender identity, stories, mythology, narratives that have existed in other cultures in other parts of the world, never get included. So especially academics, every time you speak about stories and mythology and history, they usually go, 'Oh, but where's the evidence, where's the research?' I feel that's how people of colour and Aboriginal culture, we get minimised and erased. The evidence has been desecrated and destroyed through invasions and colonisation anyway; it shuts you down and it makes you feel inadequate ... that your culture is just based on mythology and is wishy washy. (I17)*

Researchers experienced bureaucratic processes in one university that was opposed to decolonising research practice. When the researchers requested that an international student focus group be advertised via the university's LGBTIQ+ networks, the response received was that the request had been forwarded up through various managerial levels and had been declined. There had been no consultation with LGBTIQ+ international student representatives; the clear statement of the anonymity and voluntary nature of student participation was not acknowledged; and the fact that the project had ethics approval from government and our community organisation was undermined.

Also problematic was that toward the top of the corporate hierarchy, the executive responsible for students was not trusted or respected by some of the research participants and Steering Committee/Advisory Group (SCAG) members. Therefore, the research continued independently of this university and other universities in order to maintain the trust and comfort of international students in their disclosure of ROFD in their education settings. We did reply to the university referred to above:

"the LGBTIQ+ international student leaders in our research have decided against any university systemic involvement as a) we are all covered by DPC and AGMC Ethics processes; b) they query why universities need to regulate their independent involvement and c) they feel it would not be in the spirit of decolonial research practice given they wish to not fear speaking out against educational settings. ... part of our MASC/VMC research brief was to create safety, confidentiality and leadership opportunities for our research participants."

The above reflections about **relationality with participants and positionality within or outside a research institution** are important when working with minority groups. As Gupta and Kelly write, when we are interviewing individuals 'about intimate and sometimes painful details, we cannot help but become woven into the fabric of their lives in one way or another' and often 'feel compelled to reciprocate the generosity of those whom we encounter' (2014: 2). As part of decolonising

research practice, 'informants' become 'collaborators' and we need to make a distinction between charity, which is giving, and reciprocity, which is giving back. Ways of giving back include knowledge collection, resource development, resource sharing, exchange, activist and social interactions, and everyday actions such as hospitality through providing transport and sharing food. Reciprocity requires decolonial recognition that:

*We can never fully reciprocate the time, kindness, company, and resources shared with us and we will be taking away possibly more than we give back. We understand that we can never actually know all the ways in which power and difference operate, and thus we are unlikely to fully address these relations in ways that might bring about complete equity (Gupta & Kelly 2014: 8-9).*

Brown and Strega understand that 'relationship-based research ... can frustrate timelines and well-charted research designs' but research, 'like life, is about relationships' (2005: 30) and being 'as attentive to process as we are to content' (2005: 39). 'Ex-centric' researchers can undertake academic responsibilities, methods and processes while challenging investments in academic interests that promote existing power structures and hierarchies of knowledge. This decentring of academic privilege and hierarchy fosters research participation for it is seen to enact social change and promote advocacy, support knowledge production, and provide safe opportunities for introspection, therapy or catharsis (Schmitz 2019).

It was concerning that the **decolonising research, relationality and co-review ethos** and actions, as outlined above, were not considered to be standard practice in participants' experiences of other research projects. For example, some participants objected to the way they were often labelled as problematic or 'hard-to-reach'.

*[In white academic terms] I'm a hard-to-reach minority. I'm a highly vulnerable person. I'm a hidden population. All that garbage. (I5)*

Some participants found the very reflections they were being asked to convey made them aware of how their cultural ways of being had been omitted or misconstrued in other research by 'white people'.

*I'm tearing up because we never get asked these questions. AGMC seems to be the saving grace. I can see the years and years and years of frustration that's turning into anger and resentment and it's unhealthy ... we are already a damaged community and when we don't have a voice, we start getting angry, then we all live up to the stereotype that the mainstream white community is looking out for anyway. ... As an ethnic person, I don't like this 'Let's just be silent and let's not trigger anyone and let's just not talk about issues because it's too painful for some people to hear'. (I17)*



*It doesn't look very nice white people studying Asian ... I've read some of the reports, it comes from a background of an outsider studying another population. The language and the kind of areas they will be investigating would be different if it's somebody from the inside, somebody who was a member of the community. So an outsider go into the field not knowing anything or has biases that shape the kind of questions. (GAF4)*

Research participants also appreciated the fact that **most of the research team had lived experience** as MCMF LGBTIQ+ individuals and experienced ROFD in their personal and professional lives. One researcher, when asked to review a project that had been completed without MCMF LGBTIQ+ partnership or consultation in co-design, commented that:

*Whitewashing in an era with heightened awareness of racial inequality in social research... a box ticking exercise, and I refused to be reduced down to a box to tick. I am disappointed that despite many efforts to include multicultural/multifaith LGBTIQ in social research, the responsibility falls back on us to advocate for ourselves. It is tiring, insulting, and doesn't reflect a sense of inclusion and belonging (Budi, personal correspondence).*

Alongside the importance of lived experience, some participants reflected on effective and sensitive ways **allies** can undertake research, and the concern when 'ally' is blurred into 'lived experience':

*As an ally, you just know when to pull back. You just read the spaces so beautifully. ... You and [name of white queer woman], I see you both as the two most quintessential allies to queer people of colour. ... particularly around decolonisation practice. (I9)*

*It troubles me greatly, people using the phrase 'lived experience' to describe knowing people but it was meant to describe your own personal experience as in if I say, 'I have lived experience as a gay man,' that means I'm a gay man and I have experienced being a gay man. So you don't equally listen to the parents of intersex people and intersex people ourselves, you have to actually talk to intersex people. Parents represent a valuable perspective, but it's not a lived experience perspective. I could have a million Aboriginal friends and live in an Aboriginal community, if I'm not an Aboriginal person, then I don't have lived experience as an Aboriginal person. (I20)*

The researchers were very aware of what Steers-McCrum cautions allies to address, '**self-appointed speaking-for**', which occurs when one speaks on behalf of or in place of another individual or group without their authorisation (2020: 241). The researchers were mindful that the research did not convey the message that 'outside experts are enough to represent the marginalized group, that insiders' voices are unnecessary or impossible to find' (2020: 244). Maria was particularly mindful of 'how to dislodge heteronormativity' as a straight-identified researcher given that not re-inscribing heterosexuality as 'normal' 'does not

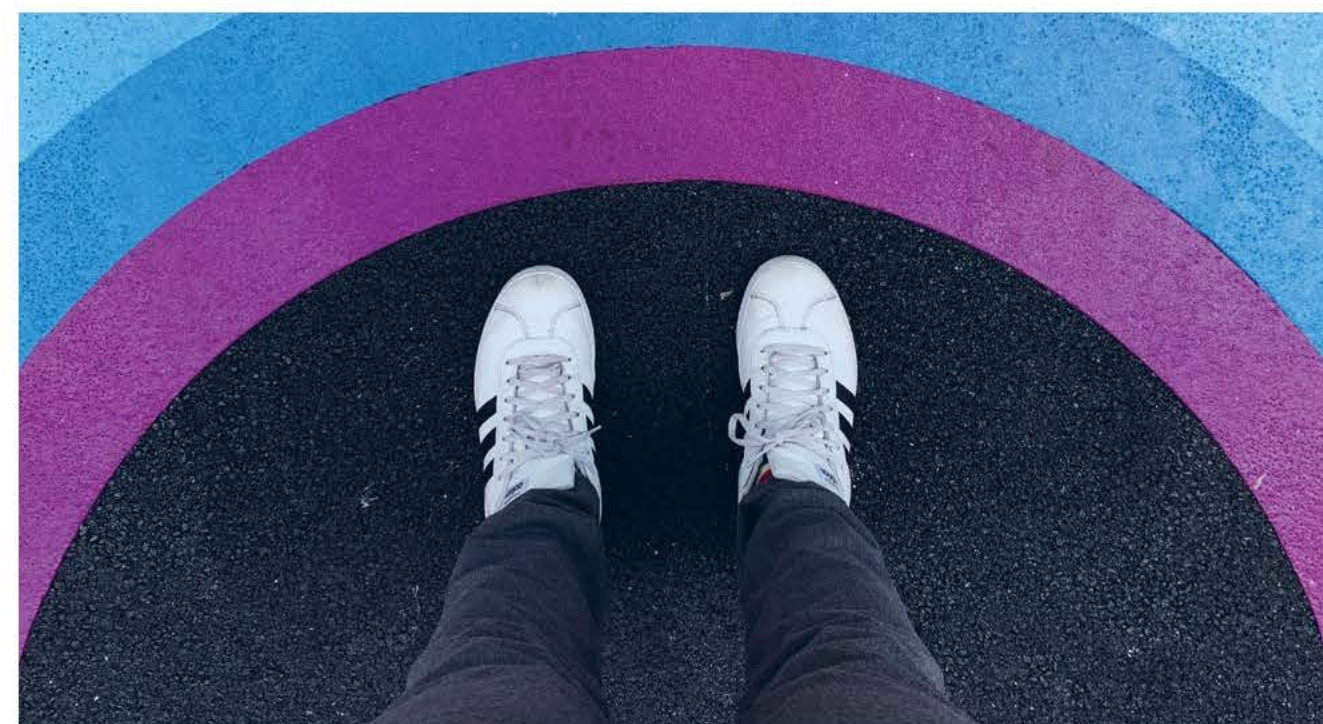
guarantee escape from participation in heteronormative practices' (Allen 2020: 149). An ally-researcher recognises the 'normative heterosexual social and institutional order by which I benefit, and that I simultaneously seek to change' (Allen 2020: 161). Or as Desnoyers-Colas writes:

*Merely engaging in ally-ness is not something that whites should be rewarded for. ... White allies need to determine just how willing they are to personally disrupt the powers of whiteness in their jobs and lives ... Don't just talk about it, be about it (2019:104).*

In her aptly named article, 'Allies Behaving Badly: Gaslighting as Epistemic Injustice', McKinnon calls for replacing the concept of 'ally' with 'active bystanders' (2017: 172). McKinnon also asserts the active bystander has to be 'open to criticism on how to perform better in future instances' (2017: 172).

Added to this discussion of lived experience and allyship, the researchers recognised that an intersectionality lens points out that a 'shared sexual identity does not automatically make researchers more sensitive. ... Other elements of researchers' and participants' biographies will inevitably influence the research process' (Rasmussen 2006: 47).

As the project evolved, the research team was heartened with the level of trust in the research ethics and practices, and the increasing involvement of research participants who felt comfortable and confident to discuss their personal participation, the research practices and findings.





## Methods

### Project Steering Committee/Advisory Group

A Project Steering Committee/Advisory Group was established at the beginning of the research. Various members of Victorian LGBTIQ+, MCMF, DPC, health and community services were invited to join. The group was given opportunities to discuss the methodology, read and review drafts, participate in two forums held during the research (at Hares & Hyenas as part of Midsumma 2020 and Better Together Conference 2020), and will be invited to participate in post-completion launches and forums.

### Critical literature review

The initial critical literature review, which informed the research, involved a comprehensive and systematic search of online databases and organisational websites relevant to Australian MCMF LGBTIQ+ communities. Predominantly Australian literature published after the year 2000 was used, with international studies included if relevant to the Australian context. Each article was critically appraised and the literature was grouped thematically.

Three **major limitations** identified in the literature review are: first, the small number of MCMF LGBTIQ+ participants in most studies; second, that they were often highly educated, fluent in English, and under the age of 60; and third, the lack of intersectionality that discusses other factors such as disabilities, geographical location and socioeconomic status.

We **recommend** that these factors be taken into account when designing, recruiting and undertaking future research studies.

### Online survey

The quantitative method was an online survey. This allowed respondents to answer when convenient and take as much time as they needed to answer individual questions. It also ensured anonymity and privacy as no names or emails were requested (Evans & Mathur 2005). Respondents could voluntarily provide contact details if they wanted to participate in a follow-up interview or focus group or request a conversation about the survey.

The research team discussed the potential lack of online experience in MCMF LGBTIQ+ individuals and hoped that the opportunities to engage through other research methods or to write to AGMC as a well-known and trusted community group helped ameliorate those potential limitations. Indeed, no participants contacted the research team to say they were unable to access the survey or that they found the survey difficult to complete.

### Limitations

Three limitations were pointed out by survey respondents in subsequent interviews.

#### First limitation

The first limitation raised was that separate questions on culture and faith settings were potentially problematic.

*There was a section on culture and then a section on religion, but for me it's literally the same thing, so I think I tried to put the same answers in both. (I5)*

We **recommend** future quantitative research questions to address and allow for the interweaving of culture and faith.

#### Second limitation

The second limitation raised was that the question, 'What did you do?' could be interpreted as a neoliberal blaming of the individual for not initiating action rather than focusing on systemic culpability that prevents individual action. This was raised by participants in the survey, focus groups and interviews.

*When you're laying out the equation, 'what did you do', it's removed the complexity of me as a human being who's carrying such tremendous intergenerational wisdom and trauma, but also healing that needs to be done. (I19)*

We **recommend** a more careful questioning of individual responses within a clear framing of structural and systemic accountability.

#### Third limitation

The third limitation, raised anonymously, was that specifying intersex variations may have been difficult.

*Perhaps, don't require intersex people have to specify their intersex variations. For some there may be some difficulty answering that (survey respondent).*

It must be noted that the intersex communities comprise individuals with varying sexual and gender identities, with various level of involvement and engagement with the broader LGBTIQ+ communities. The small number of participants who identify as intersex may be reflective of the number of people with intersex characteristics who also intersect with the LGBTIQ+ community.

We **recommend** consulting with MCMF Intersex community leaders for future research regarding appropriate questions.

#### Trustworthiness

The trustworthiness of the survey was only raised in relation to questions about policing, as illustrated by the following respondent:

*Why are you asking participants about their experiences with the police? Where will this information be shared? Is this contributing to an external or an internal review of the police?*

The researchers advised participants that the question about involving the police was intended to explore some work that still needs to be conducted with Victoria Police to build rapport and trust with various communities, including MCMF LGBTIQ+ communities that continue to have a complex relationship with police and authoritative figures. This was done to ease participants' anxiety due to both perceived and real discrimination where law enforcers were the perpetrators of violence.



### Respondents - number

Of the 203 responses to the online survey, and after a laborious but necessary checking and filtering for 'troll respondents', 95 respondents identified as MCMF LGBTIQ+. Although a larger number of respondents was sought, the results indicated saturation point had been achieved. The low response rate was a concern but should be seen in context. Some MCMF LGBTIQ+ individuals may not associate themselves with a multicultural identity or community and this could limit their participation in the survey.

Similarly, the Western terminology of LGBTIQ+ may not resonate with multicultural communities, especially in situations where sexuality is seen as a private matter and following cultural and religious gender expectations is viewed as an integral part of their identities. We recommend broadening the reach by using culturally safe terminology, such as diverse sexualities, relationships, and gender identities to accommodate for varying ways that LGBTIQ+ is interpreted in multicultural communities. Some communities have their own language and terminology that indicates same-sex attractions and relationships, transgender, intersex, and non-heterosexual, non-cisgender identities.

Another potential reason for the low response rate is that the same cohort of potential respondents is being asked to fill in multiple surveys, thereby leading to 'panel fatigue' or 'panel conditioning' over time (Evans & Mathur 2005: 211). Brown (2004) notes that it is not the number of questions that affect the response rate, but the amount of time and effort needed to complete a survey. Our research was intended to take 20 minutes and was designed so the respondent could progress through the survey without having to respond to every question before being allowed to proceed to the next one.

Ninety-seven respondents were tagged as 'trolls' or not applicable as they did not identify as LGBTIQ+ and/or did not identify as MCMF. Identifying troll respondents was complicated as they were intent on skewing and ruining data by falsifying information. However, it appeared that most trolls were cisgendered male, white, and heterosexual, and wrote blatantly heterosexist, misogynist, racist and Islamophobic comments, indicative of the ongoing enforcement of the core markers of the Australian identity by delegitimising diverse populations.

## Respondents - demographic data

## Faith identity

45% (48 respondents) reported being a person of faith.

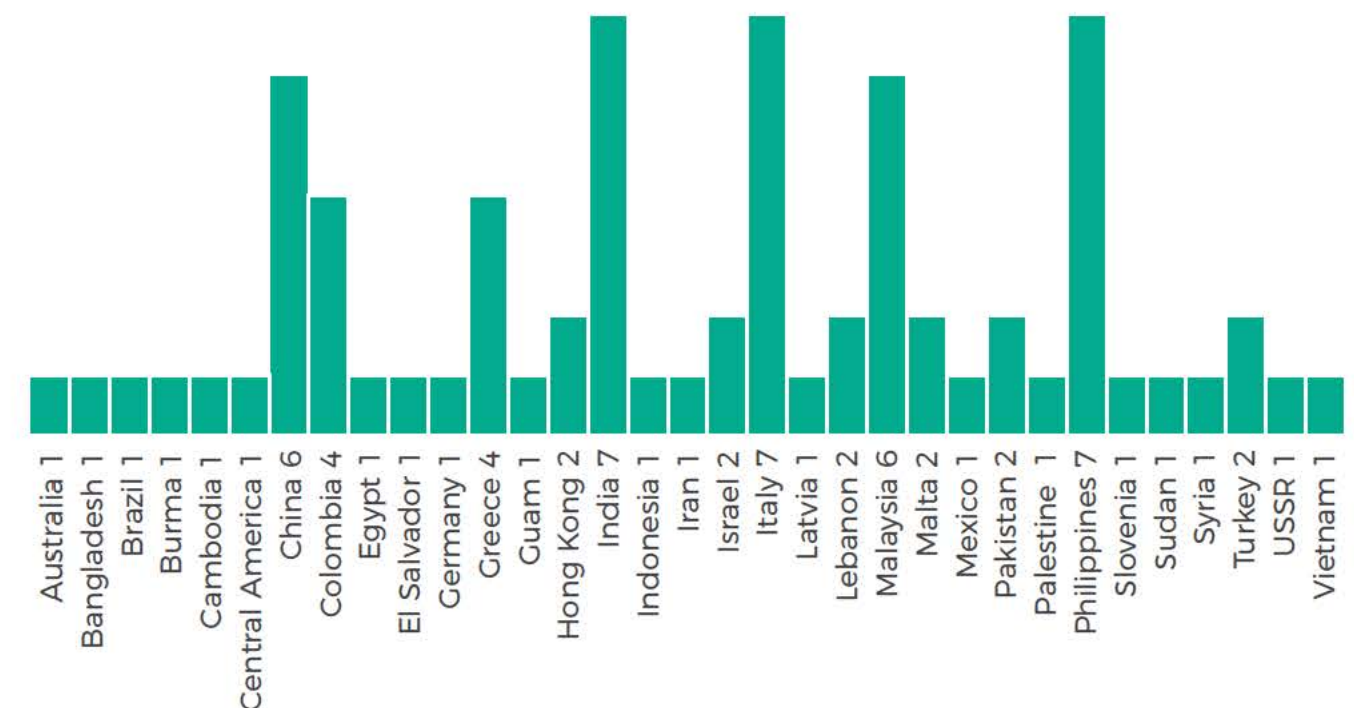
### Ethnicity

The word cloud demonstrates the respondents' ethnic identities. A higher proportion of respondents stated their ethnicity as Chinese, Filipino, Greek, Indian and Italian. Please note, there were respondents who indicated they were mixed heritage, or included Anglo, Maori or Aboriginal as part of their identities.



### Parent country of origin

78% (73 respondents) reported their parents were born overseas.





Age

More than half of the survey respondents were under 36 years of age.

Answer Choices	%	#
Under 25	12.36%	11
25 - 35	42.70%	38
36 - 45	23.60%	21
46 - 55	11.24%	10
Over 55	10.11%	9
Total		89

Sexual identity

94% (87 respondents) were attracted to people of their own gender, with most of the research participants identifying as gay.

Answer Choices	%	#
Gay	46.67%	42
Lesbian	11.11%	10
Bisexual	12.22%	11
Queer	15.56%	14
Pansexual	2.22%	2
Asexual	0.00%	0
Heterosexual	3.33%	3
I use a different term	8.89%	8
Total		90

When asked if they wished to provide further specific information about their sexual identities, the following alternatives and comments were provided:

- Bi+
- Queer, Nonbinary & Trans
- Polysexual
- Asexual
- Kinnara

Since I don't know my gender, when I describe my sexuality I prefer to say that up to this moment in my life I feel attracted by masculinity in male bodies.

Gender identity

The following survey responses indicated a predominance of cisgendered male-identified respondents.

Answer Choices	%	#
Male (including cisgender men, transgender men, intersexmen and Brotherboys)	57.78%	52
Female (including cisgender women, transgender women, intersex women and Sistergirls)	23.33%	21
Non-binary / gender diverse (including feminine, masculine and other identities that are not exclusively male or female)	14.44%	13
Different identity (any other personal gender identity not reflected above)	4.44%	4
Total		90

The following three responses were given after respondents ticked 'Different Gender Identity':

- Female, but as a butch lesbian my gender identity is deeply attached to sexuality
- Jewish Third Gender - Tumtum
- Demigirl

Intersex variations

3.2% (3 respondents) stated they had intersex variations. When asked to name the intersex variation, two wrote:

- they don't have a name
- Klinefelter syndrome

'Outness' to family

Although 38% of respondents indicated their families knew they were LGBTIQ+, were supportive and did speak openly about it, if we add the percentages of the other responses, it is evident that a large percentage may have been out but this was not spoken about and/or not supported by their families. This suggests that some respondents are still navigating their identities within the family context.

However, this should not be interpreted as an indication that all multicultural families are not receptive of LGBTIQ+ identities. In many cultural contexts, sexuality remains a private topic. This can result in families not openly talking about LGBTIQ+. Indeed, the notion of 'speak openly about it' as a signifier for acceptance is problematic, as it follows the Western model of family dynamics and 'coming out'. Future research needs to consider how to engage with each community's own cultural scripts, norms and expectations on family dynamics and family relationships.

Answer Choices	%	#
Does not know I am lesbian/ gay/ bisexual/ transgender/ intersex/ queer	5.81%	5
Probably knows I identify as LGBTIQ, but we do not speak openly about it	12.79%	11
Knows I identify as LGBTIQ, is not supportive and we DO speak openly about it	10.47%	9
Knows I identify as LGBTIQ, is not supportive and we DO NOT speak openly about it	18.60%	16
Knows I identify as LGBTIQ, is supportive and we DO speak openly about it	38.37%	33
Knows I identify as LGBTIQ, is supportive and we DO NOT speak openly about it	13.95%	12
Total		86



## Focus groups and individual interviews

Both focus groups and individual interviews were conducted, as the existing research comparing the effectiveness of interviews and focus groups in investigating **sensitive topics** has generated mixed results. Lee and Renzetti's (1990) typology of sensitive topics was useful to consider in order to provide safe and synergistic interpersonal environments:

- personal experiences, feelings, and attitudes
- socially controversial attitudes or behaviours
- issues related to power and privilege
- sacred or religious beliefs.

Some researchers believe interview participants may disclose more personal stories, thoughts and feelings, and have more positive perceptions of the supportive environment and interpersonal connections with the interviewer than participants in focus groups (Kruger et al. 2019). Other researchers believe focus groups have potential advantages, such as generating more ideas and disclosure than interviews due to participants supporting one another in sharing sensitive information (Guest et al. 2017). Other researchers point to the possible disadvantages of focus groups, such as comments perceived to violate the group's norms of acceptable attitudes or perceptions may be inhibited from disclosure (Acocella 2012). Focus group participants with demographically similar backgrounds might be more willing to share

their honest opinions with one another, although a pre-existing social connection might inhibit participants from making personal self-disclosures (Kruger et al. 2019).

Ultimately, researchers agree that the **'interpersonal climate'** is a major factor in determining whether or not an individual shares sensitive information (Kruger et al. 2019: 245). Davis et al. (2010) believe the interviewer's gender and race can impact the responses of participants. West and Blom (2017), however, found mixed results on the effectiveness of matching the demographics of the interviewer and participants.

In light of the above positions, all of the participants said they felt **comfortable and confident**. Over food and beverages in warm environments, the focus groups and interviews were filled with laughter, conviviality, empathic listening and understanding of difficult personal stories. The following is an example of a **shared in-joke** between international students and the facilitator, a former international student, about students seeking free food:

*Budi: Now, let's talk about your family. What's the story there? What's your relationship with your family?*

*IS2: You wait until the end when we're eating pizza to throw this question at us!*

*Budi: At least you'll be full.*

*IS2: I was like, 'This is not a free meal.'*

*IS1: Yeah, we had to pay something.*

*IS2: Pay you with my-*

*Budi: Your story, yeah.*

There were also examples of **mobilisation** resulting from focus groups and interviews. One example is the South Asian queer men who felt so affirmed and connected after their two-hour focus group they decided to organise a new South Asian Queer social group with AGMC's support:

*This is the moment that I love being South Asian, even though we came from Malaysia, Sri Lanka, India, Pakistan, we can actually sit at the table and laugh and share our experiences. There's something that binds us together and that feeling of brotherhood, that feeling of unity, and I cherish it, I feel like it's clearly something that I need. (unidentified SAGM participant)*

In another example of mobilisation, an interview was the impetus for establishing QMEACA (Queer Middle Eastern and African Christians in Australia), again with AGMC's support. Likewise, several focus group and interview participants took up invitations from AGMC, other organisations and government to participate in forums, attend and speak at community events and national conferences, join groups, explore professional, leadership and educational opportunities, and develop their own writing and arts projects. Indeed, after the focus groups and interviews, the researchers were invited by the participants to social events and to collaborate in publications and other projects.

Below are some of the responses from participants who were asked to provide honest feedback to the researchers about the interviews:

*I think it's really important to check in with people after they do an interview with you, so thank you for asking me if everything is okay. I think a lot of the time we assume that sharing a story or opening up, it's just like, 'Oh, yeah. Cool story.' I think you've done it a very respectful way. You're a very friendly person, very flexible with my timing. (I1)*

*It's been quite therapeutic. (I3)*

*You make it so easy to chat and divulge all my secrets. (I7)*

*I don't mind this interview to take another hour. I talked about all the shit that I face here. (I10)*

*I loved it. You let the person talk, no matter how long it takes to get to the point. Someone like me takes a long time. (I16)*

*You asked a lot of open-ended questions, you didn't guide me to saying what you wanted to hear. So I had the freedom, which is beautiful ... And this is also a very, very tough, painful, tricky conversation that I feel people of colour can only speak about to people that they really trust, and you're an ethnic woman and I feel very comfortable talking about this with you, which I would never speak about this with anyone else. It's so empowering. (I17)*



The researchers wanted to ensure that participants were leaving the interviews feeling safe and strong. They were mindful of the damage that ‘damage-centred’ research, which ‘intends to document peoples’ pain and brokenness to hold those in power accountable for their oppression’, can simultaneously reinforce and reinscribe ‘a one-dimensional notion of these people as depleted, ruined, and hopeless’ (Tuck 2009: 409). Thus, the research also asked about joys and strengths, to fulfill what Tuck calls ‘desire-based’ research that documents ‘the hope, the visions, the wisdom of lived lives and communities’ (2009: 417).

### Focus groups

Focus groups were conducted by a person who is a highly respected MCMF LGBTIQ+ support group facilitator, a professional trainer in intersectionality, and whose own story is publicly available (Sudarto 2018).

It was not compulsory for participants to disclose demographic data at the beginning of the focus group; it was often given as part of the conversation if and when the participants thought it was relevant or wished it to be included. In some focus groups, the participants knew each other, while in others some participants were meeting for the first time. Usually participants came together for between 1.5–2 hours under one common factor, such as faith, culture, international student status, refugee status, or living in a particular area of Melbourne. A concerted effort was made to vary the kinds of groups made available. In a few focus groups,

and if permitted by the participants, an ally was present who had facilitated the organisation of the event and venue. Allies mainly listened, answered questions directed at them, and assisted with serving food and drinks.

Eleven focus groups were initially planned; however, 2 groups had only one person attend so they were added to the interview list. Overall, **26 people participated in 9 focus groups** as listed in the following table.

### Focus group participants – gender, sexuality, age, cultural heritage, religion

D	Darebin Intercultural Centre
GAF	Gay Asian Friends, South Yarra
IS	International Students (Study Melbourne Student Centre)
J	Jewish Group
L	LAHRC Latinx
LD	Library at the Docks, Docklands
LJA	Louis Joel Arts Centre, Altona
RAS	Refugees and Asylum Seekers
SAGM	South Asian Gay Men

The researchers recommend that a major **limitation** that should be addressed in future research is not holding focus groups in rural and regional areas. AGMC has fostered growing connections with MCMF LGBTIQ+ communities outside metropolitan Melbourne via its DPC-funded United We Feast social gatherings. Unfortunately, given time limitations and resource restrictions, it was not possible to hold focus groups in regional centres for this project.

ID	Gender and sexuality	Age	Cultural Heritage	Religion
D1	cisgender lesbian	Late 50s	El Salvadorean	Jewish
D2	cisgender gay man	60s	Maltese	Catholic
D3	cisgender lesbian	Late 20s	Chinese	Catholic
GAF1	cisgender gay man	49	Filipino	Catholic
GAF2	cisgender gay man	39	Filipino	Catholic
GAF3	cisgender gay man	52	Malaysian	Christian
GAF4	cisgender gay man	41	Filipino	Catholic
IS1	cisgender gay man	19	Vietnamese	atheist
IS2	cisgender bisexual woman	30s	Taiwanese	Christian
J1	cisgender gay man	50s	Jewish	Jewish
J2	cisgender gay man	30s	Jewish	Jewish
L1	cisgender lesbian	30s	Chilean	
L2	cisgender ally	60s	Spanish	atheist
L3	cisgender gay man	20s	Chilean	Catholic
LD1	cisgender man		Indian	Hindu
LD2	cisgender gay man		Maltese-Turkish	Catholic-Muslim
LJA1	cisgender lesbian	Early 30s	Vietnamese-Chinese	
LJA2	cisgender gay man		Russian-Polish	Russian Orthodox
RAS1	transwoman		Malaysian-Indian	Hindu
RAS2	cisgender gay man	32	Malaysian	Muslim
RAS3	cisgender bisexual man	50s	Eastern European	Eastern Orthodox
SAGM1	cisgender gay man	30s	Malaysian Indian	Hindu
SAGM2	cisgender gay man		Sri Lankan	Christian
SAGM3	cisgender gay man		Indian	
SAGM4	cisgender gay man		Indian	
SAGM5	cisgender gay man	30s	Pakistan	Muslim



## Interview participants – ethnicity, religion, age, sexuality, gender

Code	Ethnicity	Religion	Age	Sexuality	Gender
I1	Bangladeshi	Muslim	25	Gay	cisgender male
I2	Indian	Agnostic	30	Gay	cisgender male
I3	Samoa	Christian	48	fa'afafine	fa'afafine
I4	Jewish	Jewish	33	Bisexual	Tumtum
I5	Jewish	Jewish	31	Queer	Transwoman
I6	Hong Kong	Catholic	35	Lesbian	cisgender female
I7	Greek	Greek Orthodox	late 50s	Gay	cisgender male
I8	Singaporean-Irish	agnostic	31	Gay	cisgender male
I9	Filipino	spiritual	35	Queer	cisgender female
I10	Jordanian	agnostic	31	Bisexual	cisgender male
I11	Japanese	Buddhist	26	Gay	cisgender male
I12	Filipino	atheist	43	Queer	cisgender male
I13	Egyptian	Coptic Christian	27	Gay	cisgender male
I14	Moroccan-Sudanese	Muslim	34	Queer	cisgender female
I15	Malaysian-Chinese	Muslim	late 20s	Queer	Transwoman
I16	Colombian	Catholic	39	Gay	cisgender male
I17	Malaysian-Indian	Hindu	39	Gay	cisgender male
I18	Mauritius-black South African	Catholic	34	Queer	cisgender male
I19	Samoa	spiritual	25	Queer	non-binary
I20	Mixed Asian	Strict Jewish	35-45	Attracted to masculine; dome	intersex man

## Interviews

Twenty guided semi-structured interviews, between 30–60 minutes, were conducted face-to-face or over the phone according to the wishes and convenience of the interviewees. Locations included cafes, universities, community centres and homes. In one example, the participant was walking in the CBD searching for a Midsumma Pride costume. The researcher and participant were talking about the participant's faith when he noticed lots of fundamentalist Christian posters in one area. That facilitated the conversation about religion:

*As I'm speaking to you I've got the sign right in front of me that says Jesus died for our sins. ...it's so tricky because they're a very powerful institutionalised faith and they've created so much damage too. But it leaves the rest of us a little bit powerless, we're all being put into the same dirty basket. (I17)*

Interviewees were recruited by contacting people who had expressed interest in an interview at the end of their survey, as well as MCMF LGBTIQ+ individuals who the researchers met as part of their work, in social and other settings. The researchers were able to purposively invite people from a range of backgrounds, at various points of connection to them personally and professionally and, most importantly, who had not previously participated in an AGMC research project. The project deliberately sought new participants in order to avoid previous knowledge of AGMC research, repetitive information, and 'research fatigue'.

## Concerns and limitations with methods

### Low participation rate

Despite the extensive work to engage MCMF LGBTIQ+ communities, and the enthusiasm for this research from many members and leaders of the communities, the outreach did not translate into the desired numbers. Many studies report difficulty in engaging participants from MCMF LGBTIQ+ communities (Lim & Hewitt 2018), with one major study of refugee youth in Victoria only having one participant (Noto et al. 2014). A later study of MCMF LGBTIQ+ refugee youth had only four male participants (Mejia-Canales & Leonard 2016).

The issues that created low participation in our research appear to be individual, organisational and social media related.



## Individual

- Some MCMF individuals do not self-ascribe a multicultural identity nor align themselves with multicultural communities, therefore they may not consider the research to be relevant to them.
- The Western terminology of LGBTIQ may not resonate with some multicultural communities.
- There is suspicion and anxiety over the purpose of research projects involving government agencies, especially with questions about the police.
- Research fatigue due to several previous and concurrent organisational, state and national surveys and research projects, either specifically MCMF or broader LGBTIQ+.
- Many individuals felt they had given their information and recommendations several times over the years and were calling for action and implementation rather than further research.
- Trolling made the online survey site threatening to confidentiality and safe community engagement.

## Organisational

- Many organisations, communities and service providers were undertaking their own research and competing for grants. Subsequently, there was a reluctance to share or diffuse resources, research participants and findings.
- Many organisations, communities and service providers were under-staffed, time-poor and unable to commit to short-term timelines.

## Social media

- Increasingly, trolls and publicly voiced right-wing attitudes are creating anxiety about sharing research information on social media.

## Lack of diversity

Another limitation was the **lack of diversity** of research participants who identified as intersex, asexual, or disclosed or were asked about having a disability. A lack of intersex or asexual participants could be due to the small number of individuals with intersex characteristics and individuals who are asexual and aromantic who also identify as part of LGBTIQ+ communities. This, coupled with being MCMF, could result in a low number of participants.

We **recommend** future research addresses the need for a stronger intersectional focus when engaging research participants.

A larger number of participants from a more diverse range of communities in regards to different abilities, rural and regional locations, and socioeconomic status will support a more accurate representation of MCMF LGBTIQ+ communities in the future.

## Key concepts

For the purposes of this report, this is an overview of key concepts that are pertinent in the discussion of the findings

## Intersectionality and multiple-minority theory

'**Intersectionality**' is a theoretical concept termed by Crenshaw (1989). It was developed to inform professionals and policy makers of how the presence of more than one minority identity overlaps and interacts with differing layers of marginalisation to produce a unique way in which the individual perceives and responds to the world around them, and is responded to by the world around them (see also Collins 2019; Dominguez 2017). For MCMF LGBTIQ+ communities, minority status is considered to be based predominantly on sexuality, gender diversity, and cultural and religious affiliations (Cyrus 2017; Zimmer-Gembeck & Nesdale 2013).

*Culturally I'm very Australian, and I do all the traditional Aussie stuff. But I'm not really because I'm still physically Asian. But then when I hang around with Asians, I'm too Aussie for them. Yeah, you're the inbetween.... That's with being gay as well, it's being stuck into this western society in the public, but then at home being stuck in this very traditional Asian society. It's like you have to balance those two aspects of yourself. (LJA1)*

*People often assume falsely that I have a particular view on Israel and start making Islamophobic and anti-Palestinian comments to me just because I'm Jewish when they don't even know my views... [or they] start talking about bagels, which is, by the way, a European Jewish thing, it's not something that Jews from Asia always have. (I20)*

An intersectional lens uncovers various other factors, such as disability, socioeconomic status, geographical location, length of time in Australia, levels of education, visa and migration status, and pre-migration experiences (Weber et al. 2018). For example, some members of established migrant communities (such as Italian or Greek) may discriminate against emerging and/or newly arrived communities (such as diverse North African and Middle Eastern groups).

Ghabrial's (2019) theory of '**positive intersectionality**' describes how embracing one's and others' multiple, marginalised identities can facilitate confidence, health and wellbeing, resistance and resilience among MCMF LGBTIQ+.

Multiple-minority status occurs at the intersections, borders and overlaps of multiple factors, and the prevalence of multiple, intersecting and overlapping sites of **power, privilege and hierarchy**.

The following explains privilege quite simply:



*Privilege is like an invisible weightless knapsack of special provisions, maps, passports, codebooks, visas, clothes, tools, and blank checks...[which I] did not earn but which I have been made to feel are mine by birth, by citizenship, and by virtue of being a 'normal' person (McIntosh 1988: 3-4, 7).*

Increasingly, the term 'gay capital' as a form of privilege is being applied to white, cisgendered, affluent gay men: 'Through shared knowledge of gay cultures, belonging to gay social networks, and having one's gay identity recognized as a form of prestige, gay capital supplements cultural, social, and symbolic forms of capital' (Morris 2018: 1183).

The **minority stress model** (Meyer 2006; 2010) is absolutely relevant to our research in its analysis of the complex relationship between external (discrimination/prejudice) and internal (self-doubt/guilt/shame) stressors that shape the experience of multiple-minority groups who are 'more likely to be exposed to experiences of stigmatization, discrimination, and fear of rejection' and the 'the impact of hypervigilance, personal identification with minority status, and negative self-perceptions' (Cyrus 2017: 194-195).

Simultaneously, a minority identity can 'be a source of strength if it is associated with opportunities for support that can offset the impact of stress' (Cyrus 2017: 195-196). These supposedly 'contradictory dynamics' have been framed in the literature as 'risk versus resilience'. The resilience hypothesis states that because of experiences with ROFD, MCMF LGBTIQ+ individuals may

have 'a greater capacity to cope with the minority stress they experience' (Cyrus 2017: 197). Exploring how MCMF LGBTIQ+ individuals recognise and strategically navigate minority stress in different contexts and settings provides important insights into various forms of resilience that encourage access to and use of services and settings. For example, as this research will show, individuals within MCMF LGBTIQ+ communities may feel the need to adopt strategic silence, 'pass', and exist 'under the radar' to avoid ROFD.

For individual and community resilience and strategic agency to be successful, a critical examination and dismantling of structural and institutional discrimination must be prioritised (Pallotta-Chiarolli & Rajkhowa 2017). The concept of 'situated agency' (Pallotta-Chiarolli & Pease 2014: 35) allows for the scrutiny of cultural, religious, political, economic, social and health systems and their constraints within which MCMF LGBTIQ+ individuals are trying to nurture a healthy multiple-within self. Individualistic endorsements of 'personal choice' do not sufficiently allow for an understanding of and response to 'coerced choice', whereby systems and external contexts limit and constrain the available options (Pallotta-Chiarolli & Pease 2014: 44).

Identifying as MCMF LGBTIQ+ exposes the individual to a larger number of systemic, structural and societal contexts in which ROFD occur in response to a greater number of multiple, marginalised identities (Lim & Hewitt 2018). The increase in discrimination across a greater number of contexts is considered cumulative and

interactive, resulting in multiple layers of disadvantage (Cyrus 2017; McNair 2017). Even within these layers of disadvantage, privileges exist, and participants' narratives reflect the constant interplay between marginalisation and privilege in different settings. As Tang et al. explain:

*Intersectionality is more than the exploration of systemic oppression and marginalisation... It is also about the exploration of the social, political and ideological context in which these identities intersect. A marginalised identity in one social context can be positioned at the top of the power hierarchy in a different context. This means that intersectionality should be seen as a lens to investigate complexity, rather than a tool that provides the 'fix' to addressing this complexity (2020: 2).*

This, however, should not be seen as a distraction from the key efforts of ending the '-isms' of society. It must be seen as a lens in which the -isms are interwoven as an integral part of one's lived experiences in a white, Christian, hetero- and cis-normative society.

## Vicarious trauma and apprehended discrimination

Linked to minority stress is '**vicarious trauma**' in its past, present and predictive forms, whereby 'members of a non-dominant group must witness attacks on other group members' (Dominguez 2017: 212). MCMF LGBTIQ+ individuals may experience the anticipation of ROFD and the resulting vigilance from anticipation when they witness or hear about what has happened to others (Chan & Erby 2018).

Similarly, in relation to ATSI people with disabilities, and very applicable to MCMF LGBTIQ+ individuals, Avery (2018) defines '**apprehended discrimination**' as frequent exposure to discrimination which leads to an avoidance of social situations in which a person could expect to be discriminated against' as 'every incident adds the weight of evidence to their rational judgment of discrimination, its frequency and its impact upon them' (2018: 42-43).

Self-exclusion or avoidance of situations where the discrimination is expected to occur may mean MCMF LGBTIQ+ individuals are not accessing the very social and support networks and services they need due to perceived discrimination. Negative stories and experiences from peers can hinder access to services, as well as the uncertainty of cultural safety that caters for their multifaceted identities. This can have an impact on their overall wellbeing, indicating the need to address the system that replicates societal norms



in various settings, such as education, healthcare and LGBTIQ+-specific services.

## Microaggressions

The theory of microaggressions is pertinent to the research as ROFD can take many covert or subtle forms as well as overt or blatant physical, verbal and other forms. Sue et. al. (2007) set out three **forms of microaggression**:

- micro-assaults: verbal or non-verbal insults and behaviours
- micro-insults: stereotypic statements or actions that may slight or demean
- micro-invalidations: when perceptions of discrimination are considered unfounded and refuted.

Evans-Winters and Hines (2020) also name three forms of microaggression:

- passive-aggressive non-verbal behaviour: 'angry looks, becomes obstructive, invokes silence, and/or expresses sullenness'
- group think: taking on the ideas, behaviours or traits of others in the group to 'outsiders', and any group members who wish to challenge the aggression are 'pressured into silence through accusations of disloyalty'
- bystanders' effect: when an observer fails to call out, prevent or intervene in the perpetration of the microaggression (2020: 9).

'**Everyday racism**' (Essed 1991) is one form of microaggression. It is the everyday manifestations and reproduction of systemic inequality based on race and/or

assumptions around race, whether intended or unintended. Covert, 'ambiguous and nebulous' acts of racism are often difficult to pinpoint (Sue et al. 2007: 272). They are very likely to be overlooked, undermined, easily dismissed and invisible 'to the perpetrator and, oftentimes the recipient' (Sue et al. 2007: 275). This is because racist talk has been constructed as the norm, and concerns over racism have been reduced to interpersonal conflicts instead of structural issues. 'Everyday heterosexism and cisgenderism' can also be manifested as the above. Muller believes that a new, covert form of racism is less about supposed racial superiority/inferiority and more about threats to 'social cohesion' and 'national unity' of the dominant (Anglo-Celtic) 'host' society (2014: 130). Indeed, Lomash et al. (2019) believe subtle discrimination is experienced with higher frequency and impact than overt discrimination.

'**Institutional microclimates**' refers to settings we are exploring in the research, such as religion, employment, education, media and health care. These are 'localized institutional settings (e.g., campuses, buildings, offices, synagogues, community groups)' where LGBTIQ+ people 'can experience both interpersonal and environmental microaggressions' (Vaccaro & Koob 2019: 1330-1331).

An intersectional lens illustrates that institutional microclimates can exist simultaneously across multiple settings, but the overarching power structure that affirms white, heterosexual, cisgender and Christian identity, still exists.

Sue (2010) proposes a five-phase

microaggression process model where individuals:

- experience the microaggression incident
- question the incident
- engage in internal and external reactions
- interpret the incident and attribute meaning
- incur the consequences and impacts of both the microaggression and their responses.

Other researchers have explored the **range of responses or 'coping domains'** to microaggressions including behavioural (passive, confrontational, protective); cognitive (resiliency, empowerment, conformity, vigilance, acceptance); and emotional (discomfort, unsafe, anger, frustration, sadness, embarrassment, exhaustion, hopelessness, distress, shame) (Nadal 2013). For individuals with intersectional identities, it is important to consider context when investigating coping domains as they can be both assertive and feel unsafe in one setting or be assertive in one setting and feel unsafe in a different setting, due to the persistence of overarching power dynamics that continue to marginalise them based on their multiple-minority identities.

Vaccaro and Koob (2019) list '**engagement responses**' such as advocacy, activism or resistance to a person, issue or context in order to enact change at the intimate, institutional, microclimate and/or sociopolitical level. 'Disengagement responses' include avoidance, walking away from an incident or delaying an outward reaction. These are due to being unsure of how to best respond, questioning their capacity to effectively challenge depending on power differentials and the context within which a microaggression occurs, whether it is worth their emotional energy, and if it is safe and healthy to do so. Vaccaro and Mena (2011) documented burnout and compassion fatigue among queer activists of colour who alternated between engagement and disengagement responses. They also found that 'temporary disengagement' might be necessary to prioritise self-care (for example, through help seeking, self-soothing or avoidance).

## Unconscious and unintentional bias and discrimination

Unconscious and implicit biases can be defined as attitudes or stereotypes that affect our understanding, actions and decisions in an unconscious manner, and may be both favourable and unfavourable assessments (Pallotta-Chiarolli 2004; 2020).



Commonly used to identify racism, we extend the explanations of unconscious and unintentional bias and discrimination (UUBD) in the following to identify heterosexism and cisgenderism:

- **Exoticisation:** overreacting or constantly referring to 'the difference', such as in dress, adornment or physical features even if it is to compliment the person or group. A major form is sexual in nature and also known as fetishisation, where certain racial features have been romanticised and sexualised based on white desire and imagery.
- **'Cultural know-it-all':** acting as the expert about someone's culture because they have travelled to the home country, studied the language or art, seen a film or TV program, read news items, and have contacts with members of the cultural group that leads to over-generalisation and stereotyping. For example, acting as the expert regarding someone's sexual identity, gender identity, and LGBTQ+ cultures, such as 'I have a gay friend so I know about ...'.
- **Objectification:** the MCMF or LGBTQ+ culture are commodities, objects for white, heterocisgendered audiences to purchase, enjoy and consume, and are usually presented in folkloric and fossilised ways, as a 'dead culture' or as 'status-enhancing' and 'decorative'.
- **Pedestalling:** romanticising and idealising an MCMF or LGBTQ+ culture, thereby denying it of its human complexities, based on white heterocisgendered imagination that relates to the exotic other while still positioning itself as the universal norm.

- **Centring:** using MCMF LGBTQ+ for own gain without awareness of the assertion of privilege that positions white heterocisgendered thoughts, opinions and identities at the centre.
- **Negative allyship:** overtly demonstrating allyship to MCMF LGBTQ+ people without real discussion and engagement to understand what they require or do not require from allyship.
- **Overcompensation:** seemingly taking an extra measure to engage MCMF LGBTQ+ people out of guilt without real commitment to challenging the structure that enables racism, biphobia, transphobia and any other forms of discrimination.
- **Tokenism:** engaging MCMF LGBTQ+ people as a tokenistic gesture without the willingness to examine one's own personal and structural power and privilege that contributes to systemic inequities.

As discussed by DiAngelo (2011), a range of limitations and contexts that create UUBD toward MCMF LGBTQ+ communities and individuals include:

- **Segregation:** white heterocisgendered people tend to live in homogenous communities and have limited contact (if at all) with MCMF LGBTQ+ people.
- **Ghettoization:** where minority groups are denied entry to certain neighbourhoods or workplaces through unconscious and systemic discrimination, resulting in minorities forced to live in certain areas or have limited job opportunities.

- **Good/bad binary:** the perception that ROFD are only acts performed by 'bad people'; and the binary that has been created to reinforce 'bad' versus 'good' people does not address the continuation of power structures that privilege white, heterocisgender and Christian normativity.
- **Individualism:** white heterocisgendered people are individuals whereas MCMF LGBTQ+ people are a group, hence ROFD are seen as interpersonal conflicts instead of a product of power structures that create the dichotomy between 'us' and 'them'.
- **Entitlement to comfort:** white heterocisgender comfort dominates discussions, which prohibits discussion about the impact of systemic racism and heterosexism (amongst others) because it creates discomfort for the dominant group.
- **Ignorance:** white heterocisgender people have limited understanding of ROFD and do not think outside of their own grouping; when confronted with ROFD, they deflect the issue as irrelevant to them or as an issue for MCMF LGBTQ+ minorities to solve.
- **Psychic freedom:** white heterocisgendered people don't bear the social burden of race and being LGBTQ+.
- **Constantly valued:** white heterocisgendered people are centred and valued in society at the expense of MCMF LGBTQ+ people's invalidation.

If UUBD is called out, people in dominant groups, such as white heterocisgendered people, may react with '**white fragility**'

(DiAngelo 2018). This involves defensive responses to 'reinstate white equilibrium as they repel the challenge, return our racial comfort, and maintain our dominance in the racial hierarchy' (2018: 3). Though 'triggered by discomfort and anxiety, it is born of superiority and entitlement' and 'is a powerful means of white racial control and the protection of white advantage' (2018: 4).

Ultimately, the result is a neoliberal, colourblind view that normalises white heterocisgenderism at the expense of the rights and dignity of MCMF LGBTQ+ people. Indeed, DiAngelo points out that 'white progressives cause the most daily damage to people of color' as they consider themselves non-racist and incapable of it, or believe it invalidates the oppressions they experience, or that good intentions cancel out the impact of their behaviour (2018: 5). Often, respect is used to silence as 'what feels respectful to white people can be exactly what does not create a respectful environment for people of color' such as 'no conflict, no expression of strong emotion, no challenging of racist patterns' (2018: 127).

White fragility is triggered when MCMF people talk directly about their own racial perspectives, choose not to protect white people's feelings, challenge meritocracy and point out inequities in access, and challenge universalism that white people do not speak about all humanity. Desnoyers-Colas coined the term '**Racial Battle Fatigue**' as the 'cumulative impact of endless battling in white institutions ... racialized insults, stereotypes, microaggressions, and discrimination' (2019: 101).



# Findings and analysis

The research aimed to identify racism and other forms of discrimination (ROFD) faced by MCMF LGBTIQ+ communities in a range of settings. The findings are presented by the following:

- LGBTIQ+ spaces and settings
- Cultural events, settings and spaces
- Religious events, settings and spaces
- Higher education setting and spaces
- Workplace settings and spaces
- Healthcare settings and spaces
- Media sites and spaces

For each setting/space, the research asks about the participants' experience of ROFD and responses to ROFD. A summary of the findings and relevant recommendations are also included in each setting section.

Please note throughout the presentation of the survey data, 'n' will vary as different numbers of respondents answered each question.

## LGBTIQ+ spaces and settings

### Experiences of ROFD: LGBTIQ+ spaces and settings

91% attended LGBTIQ+ settings and spaces

\*Almost 91% (n=80) of survey respondents had attended LGBTIQ+ settings and spaces in the last three years, such as Midsumma events, Pride March, bars, clubs and other social/sexual venues.

Of those experiencing some form of ROFD (n=59), 71% reported experiencing microaggressions, and around one-third had experienced verbal aggression or feeling unsafe.

71% reported experiencing microaggressions

Answer Choices	%	#
Verbal aggression/abuse (e.g. name calling)	28.81%	17
Physical aggression/abuse (e.g. assault)	3.39%	2
Sexual aggression/abuse (e.g. inappropriate touching)	18.64%	11
Microaggressions (e.g. Passive aggressive behaviours)	71.19%	42
Feeling not safe	40.68%	24
Total		59

Written comments in the open-response section included:

*Feeling unsafe*

*Feeling unwelcomed*

*Laughed and stared at*

*Feeling sexualised*

The following table illustrates that over half of the respondents believed the discrimination was race-based, racist or because of their ethnicity; and just over 40% of respondents felt that they experienced discrimination specifically because of their skin colour. Interestingly, just over 40% of the respondents believed the reason for their negative experiences was their sexuality, possibly indicating lateral discrimination from gay and lesbian to bisexual, trans and gender diverse individuals.



Answer Choices	%	#
Because of my race/ethnicity	58.06%	36
Because of my skin colour	40.32%	25
Because of my sexuality	40.32%	25
Because of my gender	22.58%	14
identity		
Because of my gender	20.97%	13
expression		
Other (please specify)	12.90%	8
I don't know	8.06%	5
Because of my religion	6.45%	4
Total		62

When asked if they wished to provide further details, some survey respondents wrote the following, indicating a wider range of intersecting factors:

*Asexuals are a minority within a minority. Even other queer people tell us we don't belong.*

*Age. A young white gay man mocked my dancing and filmed me to share with his friends.*

*Because of my disability*

*My refugee status*

One respondent provided an example of vicarious trauma:

*People were being racist, the racism was not directed at me specifically, but it still made me feel unsafe*

Our focus groups and interviews provided many examples of ROFD in LGBTIQ+ settings and spaces that support the relevance of intersectionality, multiple minority stress, vicarious trauma, microaggressions and UUBD.

## Covertness of racism and other microaggressions

Most of our participants identified racism as a major discrimination which manifested as microaggressions:

*A lot mispronounce my name and do the incorrect spelling and it's as if it doesn't matter. So I politely raise these issues but what I find troubling is that it's like Anglo people expect you to be deferential when you raise things. (I20)*

*It's very, very subtle. You just feel it. You can't even confront them about it, but it's happening. ... Like if it was in your face, you could just like, 'Hey, that's not cool to say. That's not cool to do'. But when they don't even say it to you, how would you retaliate to that? I suffer from that a lot. (LD1)*

The covertness of ROFD made it difficult to name and address. It led to self-doubt regarding which parts of oneself were not accepted and whether to deny those facets of identity, endure the isolation, or just not attend certain spaces. Self-doubt about whether the situation was real/true also occurred, especially after encountering denial from the perpetrators and bystanders (gaslighting).

*A much more diffuse kind of exclusion, which I can't quite define. Not being comfortable enough to approach people. (I2)*



*It's more silent kind of racism. I think usually when you walk into a queer space, it is dominated by gay white males, so straight away you get that impression that you're a bit different. Then you'd have a pocket of people who are together who are people of colour. It's kind of an eerie feeling. I basically whitewashed myself and I chose to ignore my cultural identity and kind of give that up so I could fit in. But obviously being a person of colour, you can't hide that ... And so we're quite guarded in those spaces and come up with these boundaries within ourselves of who we should interact with and where we feel most safe ... I don't feel comfortable with my last name being affiliated so religiously. It is quite sad though that I've kind of given up on so many aspects of my culture and my religion. (I1)*

The microaggressions of UUBDs, such as from cultural-know-it-alls, were also described:

*He said, 'Oh, I've been to Mumbai'. I said, 'Oh fantastic, I'd like to go one day', so I'm trying to be nice. So he said, 'Oh, are you South Indian?' All these assumptions, questions, don't come from, 'I'm interested in you, I want to find out about you'. No. It's, 'I already know who you are and let me see how quickly I can put you in a box'. Then he said, 'Oh, so what do you do on weekend?' So my interest is theatre and music and I had been to an opera so I told him, and he was like really looking at me, and he said, 'Oh, mate, you don't have to do that just so you fit in with us. I accept you, just be yourself'. So he assumed that I was presenting myself as an acceptable package for him, integrated in to your culture, I'm a little puppy. I was just being who I am, that's what I do every weekend. There are multiplicities within the South Asian community and in any community and you are not given the dignity of your multiplicity but forced to fit in to that one little box that you're allowed. (SAGM unidentified member)*



The following is a vignette of a particular situation of bordering various communities, multiple positionalities and blatant racism:

*Last Mardi Gras, after the parade, two American tourists and someone from Turkey, we all walking on Oxford St and we all talking in different accents. There was this white woman, she asked, 'So where are you from?' So the actual tourists answered, and I said, 'Oh, I'm from here'. And she said: 'No, you're not from here! You're Indian, we don't like you!' I failed to show my ID; I failed to show up to her expectations. And this happened at Mardi Gras which is supposed to be a celebration, LGBT space, and in reality I'm from Sri Lanka, not India. Who's from here unless you're an Indigenous person? I should've asked, 'Where are you from?'*

*So I now felt embarrassed in front of these guests who are coming to my country and I'm hosting them. And the tourists are embarrassed on my behalf and said, 'Oh sorry mate, does it really happen often?' I thought, everyone so happy and in the parade there's Thai, there's Indonesian, there's Indian, there's all the communities, such an inclusive community, what a great country. And then it's happening in front of him so I'm kinda feeling negative and grieving. I had to justify my country and said, 'No, it doesn't happen a lot, she was probably drunk'.*

*I'm trying to come up with excuses for her because someone from my country done that to me in front of other people so I'm neither here nor there. All the sudden, my notions of belonging was shattered and I was left to reconstruct my inner peace. (SAGM unidentified member)*



## Microaggressions due to white privilege and power

Some focus group and interview participants understood how white privilege and power led to both deliberate and unconscious ROFD perpetration.

*Particularly amongst gay Anglo people, they say, 'Oh, we're inclusive'. But they're only words, not actions. They say, 'Oh no, no, the rainbow flag mustn't have the black and brown on it. That was not the spirit of the rainbow flag'. I said, 'But hang on a second, you're being exclusive. That means you're not being inclusive.' 'No, no, no but we are inclusive.' And so it's almost like this cognitive dissonance. People don't realise how blind they are to their conditional inclusion. (LD2)*

In an environment that promotes diversity, the heteronormative model is still being performed through cisgenderism, monogamy and class structure in addition to cultural capital that places non-white LGBTIQ+ at the margins. Indeed, the intersectionality of being white, and with inherited class and cultural capital, was understood as leading to some LGBTIQ+ individuals being unaware, unable or unwilling to relinquish their position at the top of the homonormative hierarchy.

*It's not just being a different colour, it's also being a migrant. You don't have the same circles, or the social network. So if you have friends from your university days, for example, it's easier to go to clubs and bars and places like that. But if you're a newly-arrived migrant, it takes a lot of time to build those social networks, and until you do, you do experience that sense of isolation. (I2)*

Although not having 'those social networks' was considered a deficit, in other ways our participants found their experiences of being 'pushed out of our comfort zones' was a strength in their skills of navigation and appreciation of diversity.

*This is your country, white people. You're in your comfort zone. Why would you want to go out of your comfort zone? What happens is your scope of knowledge, your scope of understanding other cultures becomes a little limited. Whereas people like me, sometimes we don't have a choice. I mean, the very fact that you move to a different country, you have actually pushed yourself out of your comfort zone. You don't really get to make a choice who you want to be friends with. You will go with whatever you're getting. So you get to know all the other cultures as well. So that's why I think you might find non-Anglo people more friendly to you because we don't necessarily restrict ourselves to our people. (LD1)*



Due to their white privilege and power, well-known LGBTIQ+ community leaders and significant events planners were sometimes seen as disinterested, lacking cultural humility or a humble and respectful attitude toward other cultures that includes challenging their own cultural biases and learning about other cultures as a lifelong goal and process (Tervalon & Murray-Garcia 1998). They were seen as unable to understand intersectionality and undertake an "inclusion with specificity model" in their policies and events planning (Pallotta-Chiarolli, 2016a). In some cases, being LGBTIQ+ is seen as diverse enough and there was resistance to investigate the societal power structures that exist within, and continue to shape, the LGBTIQ+ community.

*It's more than just, 'Let me get one of those', like a topping on a pizza. Do you have a pre-set structure you're inviting a little sprinkling of colour to join you so you look cool? Or are you actually trying to do something meaningful and actually make people feel included, and include their wisdom, because there's a real difference between having something facilitated by someone from a marginalised group versus you facilitate, where you tell them what to say and how to say it and what the structure is ... a lot of cultures don't work by committees and agendas and sitting around a little table. So people think that's the only way to get things done, but it's excluding a lot of people. (I20)*

*Pacific culture, we're quite a polite culture that has been taught that no, you wait until you're asked. That's something that white men need to go 'Oh, we didn't realise that'. ... I get frustrated when they say inclusiveness and diversity yet they can't even think 'Hey look, there are no females on this panel. There are no people with disabilities on this panel. There's no people of various cultures'. ... I don't want us to be tokenized, 'Oh, we need to have them'. I said, 'No, it's not just the once, it needs to be ongoing'. (I13)*

*I felt that [AGMC conference and social events] was a space entirely owned by queer people of colour and queer people of different faiths. And it was not driven by, to bluntly say, white-Anglo LGBTIQ community. And there were lots and lots of talks and workshops around faith and identity and culture, which I found very refreshing. (I17)*

Some participants were aware of how there were 'far-right white' LGBTIQ+ community members blatantly perpetrating ROFD. This was particularly pertinent on social media in regard to anti-Islamic sentiments.

*The racism and discrimination on social media from the far-right LGBTI groups. ... And they're always putting anti-Islamic material on there, always with skull and crossbones and it is just absolutely awful. And several times I've replied - they've blocked me from posting. And so many people are supporting these movements. (LD2)*

The following examples illustrate how 'white friends' are unaware of or do not address intersectional exclusion and fears experienced by MCMF LGBTIQ+ individuals. Also of concern is negative allyship, where participants felt unable to address these experiences and concerns with their friends and establish the strategies of allyship and bystander intervention they required.

*Having a lot of white queer friends introduce me into those spaces, and feeling like no one really wanted me there but they were really quite inclusive of my white queer friends ... and I'm like 'What's this about? I'm not horrible'. (I19)*

*A group of guys targeted me on the train. And they were videoing me, taunting me. And no one did anything, as the bystander effect would have it. And I was with a friend and she was white, and she was asleep. And the taunting was so subtle that it didn't disturb her. But even the sight of them come onto the train was enough for me to realise I was in danger. So, I think it's important to realise that there are people even within our own communities who have more of a voice, who have more pull, simply because of race. And that means being honest about how that shows up ... And that looks like me not saying anything, because I was silenced. And that then looks like going home and breaking down. I was in acute grief, with trauma, then comes the emotion of it, then comes the layering of it, then comes the processing, then comes the way that the brain stores something, then comes the readiness of the psyche to open it up, if it ever is ready.*

*Then comes the anger and before the anger, can I even feel into the anger? ... Do I have the economic resources to seek out the therapy to get to this understanding? Do I have the luxury of time? Am I in a violent home that doesn't allow me to do A, B and C? (I19)*

Some participants pointed out how awareness of white privilege and active allyship against ROFD were important factors in who they chose as Anglo-Australian partners and friends.

*The reason I pick out my partner was because he knew a lot of political, economic, anthropology about my country. Since then, we have eleven years and his family is also very well educated. They have sensitivity. One of my brothers-in-law is Aboriginal. My other brother-in-law's Italian and I'm Colombian. So they are used to seeing the multiculturalism or the diversity that we have to offer. So that makes very positive family bonds. (I16)*

## Faith-based discrimination

Discrimination against one's spiritual beliefs and practices was considered very prevalent in LGBTIQ+ communities in the form of exclusion or being placed in positions of having to explain and justify.

*Even in daily day-to-day conversation, I've had people say, 'Oh those are weird practices and we don't get it'. So it's very silencing. (I17)*



She asked me, 'Are you Muslim? So how come you be lesbian or queer?' So I told her you can be whatever you want to believe. And the other one said to me, 'Do you fast, do you pray?' I said, 'I'm fasting. Fasting is good anyway for health.' So I found myself give her a lecture about what it is. ... So she said to me, 'Do you go to mosque?' I say, 'Yes, I go twice a year, but you can pray to God wherever you are even within your toilet.' (I14)

Because many people did face and still do face really bad discrimination in religious communities I think that people often thought of religious people as somehow they can't properly be part of the community and it's really difficult.... a response I got [from an LGBTIQ+ event planner] actually said, 'There are people who didn't even want religious people included at all.' So it was basically a grudging, 'Yeah, okay, we can tolerate you, but you religious people, shut up and go to your corner'. (I20)

Faith-based discrimination also resulted in inter-faith and intra-faith contestations and hierarchies. In other words, LGBTIQ+ members of certain faiths could discriminate against members of other faiths, but there was also discrimination within a faith according to the intersections of other factors such as class, culture, and non-adherence to some tenets.

Jews are intentionally excluded. ... it's okay to put it [an event] on when Jews can't come but it's not okay to put it on when Muslims can't come. ... And so I have to choose whether I'm Jewish or I'm queer, and that only happens in queer spaces. (I4)

## Sexual racism

ROFD was described by many as sexual rejection, stereotyping, objectification or fetishisation.

People have this construct of who you are, and how you'd [sexually] perform, 'How do I now categorise this creature? This is brown, it's supposed to be this, it's supposed to be that, he has to smell like that' ... You're either rejected by the vast majority or the minority that likes you fetishises you. They're not into finding out about my South Asianness, but I need to fit into his idea of that. I internalise this. (SAGM unidentified)

I'm a Latino. I'm male, I'm gay, I'm tall. And they said, 'Oh you have a big dick. We expect the Karma Sutra from you.' And they reduce you to your genitalia. (I16)

It's the typical ignorant shit. You get the direct racism that AIDS started from Africa because someone fucked a monkey. You certainly get the fetish thing, because you're dark, you're obviously well hung. It's just bizarre. Because of online space, generally people are a bit more of a keyboard jockey, so they're going to say things that they probably wouldn't say in person. They feel more safe to shoot off stupid commentary. (I18)

LGBTIQ+ dating apps, online porn sites and sex-on-site venues were viewed as blatantly racist and requiring much emotional and mental labour. Sexual racial hierarchies however still centre around whiteness and white sexual desire. This can create a situation where non-whites are 'competing' with each other and unintentionally creates lateral violence with the racial group seen as the 'most desirable' by whites oppressing those who are seen as 'less desirable'. The power dynamics that operate behind this internal hierarchy still privilege whites and an extension of sexual racism which was designed to put white desire at the centre.

Me being relatively new in the community, my experience is more or less limited to the saunas. And some guy opens the door, takes a look, closes the door and continues on. That happens to me so many times. And I don't know if it speaks to my body shape, or if it's because I just don't fit in within their stereotypical desires. But then when non-Anglo people come into the sauna, they're usually a bit more open to actually sit down, have a chat. I've even engaged in some conversations with some Anglo people, and they say, 'Oh, too many Asians here'. (LD2)

It has affected my self-esteem a lot. I've been suffering from anxiety because you message like 50 people and not even one person responds. And I look at myself, I'm young, I look okay, and I have a proper job. I stay in my own apartment and I do save money and I have good social skills. I am part of some sports groups as well. What else a gay man wants other than this? ... Let's be honest, Europeans and UK people are considered first choice or a high class choice for a lot of Aussie people. ... when you put a person of colour, I don't think it's about attraction at all, it's like 'That's an unknown territory, I want to explore that'. ... yesterday on Grindr two people verbally abused him [friend]. Apparently one of them said, 'You Indians are disgusting. You're spreading HIV'. And another, 'You are as engaging as a bus driver in Delhi'. Now I don't necessarily know the evilness in being a bus driver; but telling someone that you fucking Indians are spreading HIV is a bit much. (LD1)



The following is a conversation in one of the focus groups. The researcher deliberately does not intervene. The participants seem comfortable discussing issues of racialised desire and hierarchies and sharing strategies of resistance in mindset and action.

**GAF3:** I'm becoming more of a hermit nowadays. I'd rather stay home in my jammies... when I was still new in the country, I explored everywhere the gay scene. Discrimination comes in because I'm Asian and I'm big, so very difficult. Even in those Asian nights, I'm not getting any looks at all because I'm not the slim, feminine type. ...

**GAF4:** I guess sexually we're not attractive to white people. There are a few white men who are attracted to Asian, but they're few and far.

**GAF3:** Nowadays, I take up a niche market. Someone who prefers me. So if you don't like it [Asian man], then that's about it. But at least I put my mindset more stable.

**GAF1:** Yeah, he [my friend] strategically go to the Gold Coast to study because the Asians are a lot less.

**GAF3:** And older demographics in Gold Coast, right?

**GAF1:** Yeah, and then he decided to go to Tasmania to further his study because less competition, he has pretty much become the prize chased-

**GAF4:** Very strategic.

**GAF1:** Definitely. If you go to Sydney and Melbourne, you'll be just another Asian person who likes white person.... I think it's just a power deduction essentially.

**GAF4:** I've been fairly lucky because I'm not attracted to white men. So there are white men who approach me, I'm like, 'Sorry, I'm not a potato queen sweetheart'. I like dark skin guys. Most of my Asian gay friends chase after the white people. They fight with each other. Friendships are broken over a white guy.

**GAF1:** I've always presented me as me. I always come across as this is what you get ... I think we're maturing in terms of A acceptance and B sense of worth and C community.

**GAF2:** Especially for new generations of Asians, they don't feel what we felt in past years. And also Caucasians are more exposed to Asians now.

**GAF1:** Yeah, the younger Asians also know about sense of worth, so it's not necessarily, 'Here I am checking white person', it's more, 'Here I am just chasing a gay person and it doesn't have to be white background'.

**GAF4:** And also the diversity is there because now more types of Asian nationalities ... I think the future Asian LGBT, LGBT people of colour in Melbourne, strategically it will only get better.

For one participant, being Singaporean-Anglo led to experiencing mixed responses on dating apps according to how he was perceived and defined. He refused to internalise external scrutiny and indeed turned it into a signalling of men he would want to engage with or dismiss.

*Growing up, I never thought of myself as anything other than just Australian. And it wasn't until I was on those dating spaces that I was kind of forced to realise that I was slightly not Australian in the eyes of some people. I'm sometimes perceived as white, I'm sometimes perceived as Asian. I literally can't go back to where I'm from, because I'd have to split myself in two. I've never found those [dating app] experiences super damaging just because my perspective was if you're going to put that content on your profile, you're just signalling to me that you're not someone I want to know. I've also received positive discrimination like, 'Oh I'm so glad to see a white guy on here finally. There's too many Asians'. And I have to point out, 'Actually I'm half-Asian and thanks, but no thanks'. (18)*

Sexual aggression, fetishisation and exoticisation were considered prevalent examples of ROFD among Latino and Arabic cisgendered masculinities and femininities.

**L3:** Gay guys spend too much time on their computers looking at porn, and they go into porn movie mode when they try to approach you and they're sexually aggressive, and I am feeling very uncomfortable sometimes. I want to avoid that so I mostly keep to myself and I don't go to the parties that much. I love to interact with people during the daylight. That's amazing. But when they start using substances, I don't trust anyone ... I've gone to places and they've grabbed my balls without me wanting ... And it's just a normal thinking in gay world. They believe it's, 'Oh yeah, this is hard. I'm liking it. You like it right?' And I'm like 'Get out! Cut your cock and put it inside of the trash bin please'.

**L2:** You want to say to them, 'I am a human being, I'm not just my accent'.

**L3:** I contracted HIV here because the guy lied to me and the condom broke. So I didn't want to engage anymore because every time someone would approach me I wasn't being taken seriously. And I'm Latino, I was trying to engage passionately but no one wanted to engage in talking subjects. They just wanted to drink, sex, fun, destroy the world.



*Sometimes they're shocked up, 'You're from Middle East, and you're bisexual. How come?' ... and an old man started debating on Grindr, 'Why are you guys circumcised, why?' And he starts putting up examples, and I just put this, 'You know what? There's a good friend can have a good answer for you. Google. You can ask Google. I'm not in charge to educate you'. (I10)*

External racialised hierarchies then lead to internalised hierarchies.

*Internalised racism and collusion ... a lot of Asian men say things like, 'I'm brown on the outside but I'm white on the inside', and it makes me cringe, and I just want to reach out to them and say, 'You know, it's okay if you're brown on the inside as well. If you talk with an accent or have some cultural quirks or whatever, that's okay'. (I12)*

White racial hierarchies lead to racial hierarchies within and between non-white groups as evidenced in this conversation between an Asian and a Latino participant in a focus group:

**LD1:** *If I can take your heritage, I would take it.*

**LD2:** *I'm not sure how to react to that. I'd like it as a compliment.*

**LD1:** *It is a compliment. I'm just saying that you have a good demand. I would say Latinos have a stereotype of they're aggressive, they have big cocks, they're usually tops.*

Some participants explained that being 'in demand' for casual sex did not translate into developing a long-term relationship:

*We would catch up and have a hookup. Then after four months I was like, this is going well, we can hang out, I'll cook something and we can have dinner and watch a movie instead of just having sex. They would come up with some excuse, and they basically stop interacting with me. I ask myself like, 'Okay, am I doing something wrong? Am I giving them an impression that I'm very good as a fuck buddy or very good as a friends-with-benefits but not as a potential boyfriend-slash-partner?' And then I realised that, 'Oh maybe it's that exotic thing, he's a brown-skin, it's different from white. So that should be fun'. But they don't see you as someone who they can live their life with. I just don't know how to break that cycle. ... It's not something that happened to me back in India. So definitely there is something wrong with the culture here or the people here. (LD1)*

## Barriers due to parenting responsibilities

A discrimination or barrier to social connection raised by several participants was cultural assumptions about the importance of parenting in the lives of MCMF LGBTIQ+ people.

*Generally from gay men you certainly experience judgement. I don't know if it's because people just assume we are from big African families ... Sometimes, it's just appropriate to shut down the conversation. Sometimes, it might start a bit judgy, but when you unpick it a little bit, they might be a bit envious. Sounds funny, but a lot of people might have that assumption they'll never parent. ... I'm much more vocal in the multicultural space than I probably am in the LGBTI space in terms of having my opinions out there [about being a parent]. (I18)*

Some MCMF LGBTIQ+ parents experienced a persistent reinforcement of the homosexual-heterosexual binary. This reflects the power of heteronormativity where a person with a history of heterosexual relationships and attractions is seen as aligning with the dominant group even though their identities and lived experiences sit outside of heterosexuality. The intersectionality of MCMF and previous heterosexual relationships and parenting, as well as the reinforcement of the construction of white homonormativity or 'gay lifestyle', were discussed.

In the following, cissexism, the internal hierarchies between cisgendered lesbian and gay and trans and gender diverse and the intersection of parenting, ethnicity and class, are evident:

*In a way I was targeted, that I had a previous marriage and from an ethnic background ... my mind was still set on, you eat at 6 o'clock because you've got kids. Coming into the gay community they don't eat till 8.30 - 9 o'clock and I'd sit there falling asleep because I was so used to the straight life with kids ... One gay partner we actually lived together and I had my children every second weekend and half of every holidays. He didn't like me having my children ... my youngest one is non-binary so when I told his [my partner's friendship] group this, they were so judgemental. ... [another time at a party] a community worker working with single mums started to say how they were milking money from government and I told her, 'But you know I always work. I have never received support for my kids'. ... it's that sort of discrimination that if you are a queer parent or if you are a single parent, they have the right to push you around and your kids don't have value. (D2)*



## Financial constraints and class

Several participants experienced alienation and marginalisation if they could not meet affluent or middle-upper class norms and codes in the LGBTIQ+ community which focus on hyper-consumption and material possessions. This affects MCMF LGBTIQ+ individuals who find it difficult to obtain employment and upward career mobility due to their intersectional identities.

*I wasn't that financial. But gay guys would think nothing of flying up to Queensland for a weekend. I would say, 'I'm sorry, I can't afford it'. I was a teacher paying maintenance and child support and I was not making good money. ... It was we go out for dinner and they would have champagne and champagne and champagne and I'd have orange juice and then they say, 'Split the bill'. I'd think, 'Oh God, I can't afford it'. I suppose that's why I don't have any gay friends and I don't particularly like them because they made me feel uncomfortable, they did not make me feel as part of them. (D2)*

## Being newly-arrived or from refugee and asylum-seeking backgrounds

Intersections of ethnicity, recent migration, refugee status, asylum-seeking, class, lack of English, precarious employment, limited cultural capital, as well unfamiliarity with the social and political system, were experienced as potentially leading to increased exploitation and ROFD.

*A guy dislocated my finger. I was attending to people at the bar. He came, grabbed my finger, started looking at me in a very harsh way and clapped it. I shouted, 'Hey it's hurting, why are you doing that?' And then he disappeared. Then they gave me the free day so I could go check [with the doctor]. But yeah, I started crying because like, do you know the guts that it take and the amount of money and the amount of resources and the amount of calculations and thought process you have to go through in order to decide to come and stay? And you're alone in another country and in another language? It's too much and suddenly one guy gives you this one very intense interaction and it fucks you up. (L3)*

*It is a class thing. I never understood the concept of class. As long as you're a good person, you're earning your pay yourself, you deserve to get respected. ... So there was some rice and dahl and I started eating with my hand (from my plate). This couple was standing next to me, they just went to the other corner. They were telling another couple that I'm eating in a really disgusting way. ... I did a lot of hard work because of my skillset before I came to this country. I didn't have like them with their Dads' money. (LD1)*

*Not everyone can understand what is our pain we are carrying from our country to here. That's a big challenge for us to express because our culture is very different to this culture. So the baggage and the heavy sad we carry, not everyone listening. The LGBT community born here is super duper judging LGBT from other countries. I'm so sorry to say this. It's too fucking bitchy. I really get angry with that. But I have to be in the community to change it. (RAS3)*

## Ageism

Age intersecting with MCMF cultural expressions was also identified as significant by some participants, such as disrespect towards and exclusion of older MCMF gay men in venues and other settings considered youth domains.

*Gay people are very ageist. The last time I went to a gay pub, I was 45, and I was walking through by myself. This complete stranger looked at me and said, 'What are you doing here grandfather?' What cheek to say to a complete stranger that you're too old to be here. (D1)*

## Being transgender and gender diverse

Some participants identified convoluted forms of biphobia and transphobia as the prevalent discrimination they experienced from cisgendered gay and lesbian individuals and groups, such as denying the reality of bisexuality.

*It kind of largely felt around my gender and my gender presentation and how it connected to my sexuality as someone who was assigned male at birth and largely was in relationships with cisgender women until my mid 20s. ... most people read me as a cis man unfortunately, and so my relationships with women have become invisibilized and almost kind of het-coded again. I'll get stared at, particularly because I'm very tall, and particularly in the first couple of years that I was transitioning, I was wearing a lot of dresses and makeup. A lot of it is really covert and you can just tell by the way people talk to you that even queer people don't necessarily understand me and know what I am. (I5)*





## White-passing

Being constructed and complimented as 'white-passing' was considered a form of racism as it was judging a person according to a set of white-normative standards, rules and stereotypes. Passing was also related to power dynamics, whereby a minority group was seen as gaining or increasing power by complying to the dominant skin-power hierarchy.

*Being told by white guys that I've gone on dates with that I come across as a more white Asian ... they think it's a compliment, it's meant to be positive. If I dig deeper into it, it's really about racial hierarchy. Which is very racist and white-centred. It implies a certain kind of power dynamic, that they still have a need to tell me that they accept me on those parameters so yeah, it's kind of shocking. ... And even when you're in certain Asian countries you can get a whiteness hierarchy. ... [so] can we describe it [the world] as post-colonial when in reality it's still very much our value systems dominated by colonial thought? (I11)*

Hierarchical positioning according to skin colour demonstrates how power and privilege markers permeate multiple settings and intersectional communities, yet white as the pinnacle of the skin colour hierarchy remains unchallenged. The very use of the term 'white' was seen as homogenising and perpetuating this hierarchy.

*I am the only CALD person in the group and I was told to not speak because I am white. I have never hated the colour of my skin so much in my life, I wish I was my mum's colouring, or my brothers. Then I would be seen as having a right to my culture. Sadly this is perpetuated by people of colour who use white instead of Anglo. And Anglos who use white to describe themselves when talking about Anglo things. I don't identify as white, but I am fully aware of how my skin colour is perceived. I get safety and privilege, minus my visible queerness. (I14)*

Passing could also be about white cultural ways of being or speaking, even if one does not physically pass.

*I don't think I have experienced any direct racism. Maybe because I go in knowing that I'm Australian, though I look Asian. And because I can sometimes sound quite Australian and I know what they're talking about. (I16)*

Passing as a concept is potentially problematic if it positions the person as 'deceptive and duplicitous' or benefiting from privilege. However, we need to remember the act of passing, whether deliberate or not, 'may allow respite from social stigma and access to resources and safety'. Thus, it can be 'strategic passing' which can be protective and also be used as a tool for advocacy (Ghabrial 2019:171). Regardless of multiple views on passing, the power structures that place whiteness at the top of the racial hierarchy remain, with passing being deployed as a strategy of navigation.

## Responses to ROFD: LGBTIQ+ spaces and settings

When asked how they responded to ROFD in LGBTIQ+ settings and spaces, the majority of survey respondents either left the space or venue and/or avoided returning.

Answer Choices	%	#
I physically removed myself from the situation	37.10%	23
I avoided going there again	29.03%	18
I did nothing	19.35%	12
I reacted back (e.g. yelled back, hit back)	6.45%	4
I told my family and/or friends	4.48%	3
I notified management	1.61%	1
Other (please specify)	1.61%	1
I contacted the police	0.00%	0
Total		62

Only one respondent indicated a physical response:

*I got the person's hands off me and told them to F Off.*

Our focus group and interview participants predominantly said they would remove themselves from a situation in the LGBTIQ+ setting, mainly because it was so difficult to have the language or evidence of microaggressive ROFD.

*When people are just being kind of weird or uncomfy or confused, there's not really a lot of action that you can take. You've just got to sort of slither away from them as quickly as possible. (I15)*

Some participants discussed the constant balancing between emotional labour, physical and emotional safety, in their various responses: walking away; trying to re-engage in the space, event or community by membership of more accepted groups; or accentuating more accepted facets of their identities. In every strategy, participants discussed the mental and emotional labour required not to internalise the exclusion.

*Internalising 'Oh, there's actually something really wrong with me. Maybe I'm not good at making friends', and going through a bit of a spiral in terms of anxiety, depression. And also being really quite forthcoming in saying 'Well, maybe that's not a community I want to be part of', so taking control of that. So instead of feeling left out, I just chose not to be wanting to be part of them, not want to identify as part of a lesbian community, which is why I'm not a lesbian, I don't like identifying that way because of those experiences. And then later trying to get back into that queer space going, 'Oh, maybe it's different now. Different city, I'm older, I feel more stronger in myself', and then finding 'Ah, well, maybe not much has changed'. (I19)*

Even participants whose professional selves meant they were advocates for others experiencing marginalisation in



other settings said they were unable to advocate for themselves in LGBTIQ+ settings, or found their efforts were met with negativity, blame or denial.

*I'm all for social justice, I'm all for anti-discrimination. I'm a social worker by background, so I'm used to advocating for other people, but for some reason when it comes to myself, no way. I just don't have the energy to do that. It's that internalised shame that I've been made to feel since very early instances of racism, even when I was a toddler. As much as I can intellectualise it, I think inherently I still believe there is something wrong with me. ... it's complex trauma, those messages that you pick up throughout your whole life to go, 'Yeah, maybe you're a little bit deserving of this treatment'. (I9)*

*No matter how many times I raise the issue they always schedule events at times that are not possible for me religiously, during my religious holy times, [or] where there is no food that is kosher ... and if I raise the issue people often act hostile and belligerent, like I'm creating a problem or I'm criticising them. You have some people who really don't give a damn and then you have some people who care but constantly forget, and then you have a lot of well-meaning people, but somehow this is just such a low priority that it's not on anyone's radar ... so it really interferes with my ability to socialise and to get connections in the community. And it interferes with the activism I do because I'm shut out of all the environments where I could be getting support. (I20)*

Vicarious trauma based on witnessing what happened to others, listening to peers' experiences, and reading social media accounts of what would happen if a person responded more proactively, increased the likelihood of not reporting the ROFD.

*I've been exposed to the kind of narratives and the kind of vicarious experiences via other people that this is not for me. I've sort of checked out in a lot of ways. (I5)*

*I can think of at least 10 other people who got nasty messages for raising inclusion issues (I20).*

### Contacting management of LGBTIQ+ spaces and settings

Only one survey respondent and very few focus group and interview participants had contacted management, with most saying it would require 'too much energy' for no, or at most, minimal results.

*I just don't think anything would change ... they're a product of a racist community. And so I feel disheartened about trying to kind of chase down every incident. I mean, that would be too much energy on my end. (I11)*

*Management have heard him say things like, 'There are far too many Indians here', and 'Chinese people are taking over our country', and haven't actually done anything. I sometimes feel like I'm one of those bystanders who don't do anything. But it's really difficult. I did one time hear one of the workers say to him, 'I can't believe you just said that', but then didn't do anything. I don't think there are any policies around that actually say, 'We don't accept racist talk or behaviour, or any form of discrimination'. (I12)*

*The response I got from them was very much like, 'Why are you talking about this?' because the organisers didn't like that people knew what had happened, so they were like, 'Oh, you're being so negative. We're just three people, how can we possibly do better?' And I was like, 'Well, if there's only three of you, that's your problem right there, I'm not giving you a free pass because of that. ... This is really crossing a boundary here. This is gaslighting. If you're not interested in hearing and listening to what I have to say, but more interested in explaining to me why I should be happy with what happened, then I really can't expend my emotional labour if it's not going to go anywhere.' (I20)*

### Contacting police

No survey respondent and very few focus group and interview participants said they would contact police. Fear of negative police treatment and the repercussions from their families; shame for tarnishing a family's honour within a system where they are already under social scrutiny; and apprehended discrimination over negative previous experiences, were the three major factors. The critique of what it means to be an ally was also made.

*There's the fear and the embarrassment. The fear of going to the police and having to explain who or what I am ... I would never want anybody else that came after me, a transperson of colour, go through some of the stuff that I've encountered or seen or heard... When I talk about embarrassment, I think it's from a cultural perspective, not wanting to do my family or my culture any dis-justice by shaming them. ...[Police] should really sit back and go, 'We probably need to have a different approach in the way we are engaging with the community ... We need you to help us take actions, not just, 'Oh we'll be an ally''. It doesn't quite cut it because that's what you've been telling us for the last few years and it's still an issue. (I3)*



Those few focus group and interview participants who said they would seek police assistance explained that police in Australia were different to police in their countries of origin. However, they also understood why other MCMF LGBTIQ+ people would not contact police. For example, one participant talked about her friend who was a transwoman, international student and sex worker, and who was hospitalised after severe violence from a client:

*In Malaysia, no, I wouldn't go to police. But in Australia, I think there'll be more chance for me to get justice ... police have to protect. Because that's their job, right? But my friend was sex working while doing her study, she's on student visa, it's illegal, she's scared of her visa rejected. (I15)*

Others, particularly trans and gender diverse people of colour, said that the likelihood of contacting police had increased over the last few years as they had gained more confidence in themselves and stability in their lives.

*If you asked me in my journey of transition, no, because I couldn't go through being questioned about who I was and constantly that feeling of harassment. (I13)*

*If you'd ask me even one year ago, I would have said no, but a theme in my life has been coming into my voice and using it and owning it. And then, if there are negative actions that impact me, I will report them. (I19)*

Those few who reported 'neutral' or 'good' interactions with police were cognisant of having certain intersectional privileges in gender expression, skin colour and class capital that aligned more closely with societal norms.

*There are others who will say that they hate police because police hate the queers, but I don't see that. ... I'm an affluent white man, so I have a different view ... If I was black, I'm aware that is a badge on my skin everywhere I go, they'd probably target me. If I act like I'm acting right now, I pass as a straight person. So even if there was a police officer who was deeply homophobic, they probably wouldn't target me anyway, because I don't read as gay. (J2)*

## Reflections on participation: LGBTIQ+ settings and spaces

Survey respondents were almost equally divided on whether LGBTIQ+ spaces and places welcomed MCMF individuals and considered their needs.

Answer Choices	%	#
LGBTI events and places welcomes people like me...		
Disagree	11.11%	9
Somewhat disagree	22.22%	18
Somewhat agree	35.80%	29
Agree	30.86%	25
Total		81

Answer Choices	%	#
LGBTI events and places consider the needs of people like me...		
Disagree	22.78%	18
Somewhat disagree	25.32%	20
Somewhat agree	29.11%	23
Agree	22.78%	18
Total		79

Focus group and interview participants reflected this division in their perspectives and experiences. Some celebrated LGBTIQ+ spaces and settings as places of unity and strength against the broader unwelcoming and problematic heteronormative gendernormative society, as well as a space to learn about and develop empathy for other minority groups.

*It makes us more compassionate and empathic towards other people who are vulnerable. For example, refugees. I think if I wasn't like this, I would be a lot more arrogant, because I think, 'Now I'm the weird one'. And I think it makes us tough and more resilient, because we have to fight for our rights. And I think we have learned that we need to be smart and we know our worth as people. (I6)*

Some focus group and interview participants affirmed survey respondents' perspectives and experiences of the increasing opportunities to express their intersectional selves in LGBTIQ+ spaces and find points of connection between shared MCMF and LGBTIQ+ histories and contexts.

*I remember the day gay marriage was legalised. I thought to myself, 'I'm going to do it, I'm going to wear a kippah and I'm going to go into a gay club. Let's embrace both aspects of my identity at the same time'. And I was in the club dancing with my kippah. (J2)*

*Being part of something that's quite diverse has been very empowering. ... mainstream society is like vanilla ice cream, and this is Neapolitano with hundreds of thousands on top ... the Jewish community and the queer community are similar in the sense that a lot of what brings us together is our shared sense of trauma. ... It's a group of people doing the best they can even when the world has told them that they don't have a right to exist. Or that they're rejects and outcasts and freaks. It's a community of resilient, incredible people who have accomplished a lot, and I can't tell you how thankful I am to be part of that. (J1)*

Other participants positively compared their experiences in Australia of a welcoming and diverse LGBTIQ+ community to their experiences in countries of origin.

*In Malaysia, if I see transwoman I'm very scared. I will run one hundred metres back. We are part of one family here. So now I have three sisters and they all love me like a brother. (RAS2)*

Many survey respondents and focus group and interview participants provided positive reasons for why they wanted to participate in the LGBTIQ+ community,



and what they appreciated about the LGBTIQ+ community. These seemed to be based on two major perspectives: inclusion with specificity and inclusion with intersectionality/diversity.

### Inclusion with specificity

This is where people were able to locate others like themselves, share values and free themselves from 'hyper-awareness' around factors such as culture, gender, respect for elders and knowledge around colonial histories.

*I appreciate other LGBTIQ+ people of colour / non-white folks, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander folks - their work within communities. (survey respondent)*

*I feel very connected to other lesbians and sense that we share similar worldviews ... a very powerful feeling of being supported and being in solidarity with each other. (survey respondent)*

*What I love about the queer young people of colour, there's this respect. And it's a beautiful thing. They refer to me as aunty. I love it. ... I don't see it in the white spaces and there's almost like a cold feeling where it's young white LGBTI people ... from the Pacific perspective we see everybody as family. So there's a big thing in our culture where you respect your elders regardless. ... and also remembering not to leave anybody behind. Bring your whole community with you. And that's a beautiful feeling when I'm around my own Pacific people, because they share the same sense of humour. They love food. They love to sing and dance. (I3)*

*If I'm going to queer events, I'm going to make an intentional choice to be in a diverse inclusive space ... I'm able to drop my hyper-awareness of how I'm being perceived, because I have iterations of myself reflected immediately back at me. And people of different cultures, yeah, just get it. (I19)*

*Usually third world country LGBTIQ have that common background, we tend to show more sympathy and we know more about cultures than white people do. For example, if I talk to Filipino, I can talk about the Spanish colonisation. If I talk to my fellow Africans and I say, 'Oh my God, I love Yemi Alade [Nigerian singer] because her beats remind me the African regions in Colombia'. So it's more like the multiculturalism is there between us because we have been forced to mix with each other. And we have common ancestors in some ways, so it makes the conversation rich. But when you talk with the other side of the fence, you find out that they stereotype you a lot. (I16)*

Thus, racism may be a major factor in ethno-specificity or faith-specificity, whereby people find comfort and support with their own MCMF groupings, or a 'bricolage' of difference within (Pallotta-Chiarolli, 2016a).

*I've worked very hard to make my own bricolage community that is largely made up of trans or gender diverse and sex workers and people with disabilities. So I've sort of assembled my own kind of dream team of people, a lot of whom have been disenfranchised by the 'queer community'. So, I think the impact encourages you to step out of the templates, and as much as that's exhausting and taxing, it also feels a lot more mature in a way. ... I am not interested in making friends with people just because they're trans, or I'm not interested in being friends with people just because they're Jewish. I just don't really care about their stats, I care about their attitudes. Which is why I have friends who are cisgender, heterosexual. One of them is getting married at the end of the year, and I put him behaviourally above a lot of interactions I've had with queer people as far as respecting me and working with me and treating me with not just dignity but also with actual kind of nuance. (I5)*

However, some participants did criticise these specific groupings as separatism within the broader LGBTIQ+ community.

*There are still these somewhat silos, particularly in the multicultural different communities where people do like to gather towards their own communities. How open are these communities and where is my place? (LD2)*

### Inclusion with intersectionality/diversity

This is where people enjoyed the diversity within the LGBTIQ+ community.

*Our sexuality brings us together in ways heterosexuals may not get to. My friendship groups are quite diverse occupationally (e.g. project manager, designer, florist, teacher, hairdresser). (survey respondent)*

*Queer organisations are doing such an amazing job in terms of promoting cultural diversity, as well as accessibility. I think it comes from that whole background of we are different, we know what it's like to be a minority and we know what it's like to not have our needs met. (I7)*

Many survey respondents and focus group and interview participants believed positive changes were occurring in the LGBTIQ+ community, or at least hoped they would occur. Other participants offered definite or possible reasons for why they did or did not feel welcomed. These were based on intersectionalities where the constant interplay between marginalisation, power and privilege exists continually in a community that mirrors societal white heteronormative values (including cisgenderism, Christian-centric and monogamist).



The LGBTIQ communities are constantly evolving to be more inclusive of people of different race, ethnicity and religion. There's still a lot of work to do, but we are slowly moving towards a greater inclusion. (survey respondent)

A slow decline in white queers racially fetishising QPoC [queer people of colour]. (survey respondent)

Maybe because I don't wear a scarf, so it's very hard to tell I'm Muslim unless I speak (I14)

It's a scale. It's like you have the white cisguy that sits right at the top that has all this privilege and right at the very bottom is a transperson of colour ... there are only those few that will realise it's that thing of privilege. Being able to step back from their privilege and acknowledge it and also see that there are other people in that LGBTIQ acronym that need to be able to have a safe space with them or be able to engage in conversation with them. (I3)

Some participants shared how finding welcome and consideration for all parts of one's intersectional self was difficult:

I feel like an outsider, the gay world is very focused on aesthetic, whether you're gym built or by cliques, and I'm not a drinker ... I feel uncomfortable in the excessiveness of it ... I think I'm still unlearning and re-learning in many ways ... I am trying to work out the kind of baggage which was compounded by conversion therapy too ... people like me exist who identify as belonging to Christian but also identify as queer, and hold the two together but it is very lonely. (I13)

Feeling unwelcomed or not considered was often seen as occurring due to LGBTIQ+ community norms emulating or being framed by a broader Western society with certain individualist or neoliberal cultural values and systems. This created frictions and factions rather than cohesion and communities of care.

Western values are more around individualism and in the Eastern cultures it's about collectivism, about looking after one another, looking after your family, looking after the society, the village, the community ... [In LGBTIQ+ communities] it just doesn't seem to be that sort of cohesion or camaraderie or that spirit of community. But when I do connect with people, I establish really truly meaningful relationships and I do allow myself to open up about my life. I have to say though, that's more of an exception than a rule. (LD2)

There's a big disengagement that I see between white Australian gay culture compared to queer people of colour. Pacific people have a term 'talanoa' which is the sitting around and talking, having an open discussion. That you can come with your differences but allow the person to speak in the circle, and it's a beautiful way of communicating. ... there's not massive protocols or set in concrete that you have to speak a certain way. It's pretty chilled, and not feel that your answer is wrong, or you're going to be attacked for it. So it's civil discussion, which I think my Western counterparts could learn ... For my white counterparts to realise the way we do things is not necessarily the same, so don't expect us to think the same ... And those who are not Pacific Islanders, you're welcome at my table. You see, I no longer wait for an invite to the table. I come to rearrange the table (I3)

I sadly find the 'queer community' online deeply cannibalistic. ... a lot of fragmentation and factions and a lack of focus on what does solidarity look like in practice ... it's just this bizarre kind of battlefield that doesn't need to exist. I used to be in some queer groups and I just burnt out on how people treated each other. I just went, 'Okay, I'm going to leave. I don't actually have the energy to fight you on Facebook or to respond to comments calling me a tranny on Instagram. I'm just kind of done with it'. I largely deleted all of my social media which is frustrating because it was definitely in a way good to be in a group but then the cost was too high for me. (I5)

## Summary and recommendations: LGBTIQ+ spaces and settings

ROFD was experienced in LGBTIQ+ settings and spaces, although it was described as far more microaggressive than overt.

We **recommend** LGBTIQ+ community leaders set an example by leading the community to end ROFD in all its forms (over, covert, macro, micro) to truly embody diversity, inclusion and justice that applies to all.

Racism was the prevalent form of discrimination experienced by MCMF LGBTIQ+ and often in conjunction with other intersecting marginalities due to multiple minority realities and context.

We **recommend** the creation of practical and achievable actions to end ROFD in the LGBTIQ+ community, with the implementation of an intersectional framework to address multiple layers of discrimination based on multiple marginalised identities within the LGBTIQ+ community (such as race, ethnicity, faith, age, disability, class).

This work also needs to be directed to established, predominantly European LGBTIQ+ people who may be racist to the more recent arrivals. The shifting MCMF and people of colour LGBTIQ+ groupings requires a stronger responsibility and commitment of white LGBTIQ+ people



to interrogate 'whiteness', 'white fragility as power', class and other intersectional factors, such as pre-migration trauma, and how these continue to be normalised in the LGBTIQ+ community.

The degree of ROFD that was experienced was often related to the level of passing or being able to conceal one's minority identity, and as a form of navigation that is complex depending on the situation. Our findings concur with Chan and Erby's view that concealment 'simultaneously serves as a stressor and a privilege in which queer-identified individuals have the option to move more easily in society without being outed, contrary to most racial minorities and those with visible disabilities. An intersectionality approach recognizes the 'both/and' of invisibility' (2018: 1254). Lim and Hewitt (2018) also write about how passing or approximating whiteness can occur through sexual attractiveness, wealth and, with specific regards to queer men of colour, the successful enactment of normative masculinity. Lim and Hewitt conclude that 'this misidentification was seen as a byproduct of structural hierarchies of race that assume that whiteness is the 'default' (2018: 133).

Of concern in the research was the feeling of being unable to respond to ROFD through interpersonal, management or police channels. The most common response was leaving and/or not returning to the space. Often, the negative experiences of others as conveyed to MCMF LGBTIQ+ individuals influenced their decisions regarding the uselessness of

emotional and mental energy in making complaints and pursuing other responses.

We **recommend** official policies, management and policing against ROFD be activated and implemented in venues, events and festivals for the LGBTIQ+ communities to recognise and address covert microaggressions which, through their everyday regularity, cause mental, emotional and physical health concerns.

While ROFD did make LGBTIQ+ spaces unwelcoming or inconsiderate, MCMF LGBTIQ+ spaces also provided many positives about being part of LGBTIQ+ communities, whether it was the opportunity to find and curate their specific grouping or enjoy the diversity within the community as a whole. Thus, while the term 'communities' is often applied as an umbrella term, it is important to identify the specificities within such as social scenes (clubs, pubs) and interest-based groups (for example, dancing, running). This concurs with Ghabrial's (2019) theory of positive intersectionality, which describes how embracing one's multiple, marginalised identities as strength and insight can facilitate resilience among MCMF LGBTIQ+ people.

There was a hopefulness that covert ROFD in LGBTIQ+ communities was decreasing, although it was still commonly manifested in microaggressions.

We **recommend** campaigns and strategies to continue to promote positive intersectionality. LGBTIQ+ communities need to recognise ROFD as community issues and communities need to create allyship with MCMF LGBTIQ+ people to combat their persistence.

This means that the strength and resilience of MCMF LGBTIQ+ communities as a collective exists simultaneously with broader anti-discrimination work in the white-majority LGBTIQ+ community.

A major improvement was the decline in sexual racism in online settings. Persistent energy into raising awareness and calling for action was being increasingly met by structural and systemic shifts, such as dating and hook-up service Grindr announcing its intention to remove the 'ethnicity filter' (Lim et al. 2020).

The function allowed paying users to filter out prospective partners based on ethnicity labels such as 'Asian', 'Black' and 'Latino' and created 'a culture where users were emboldened to express their racism' (Lim et al. 2020). However, though the presence of 'no Asians, no Blacks, no Indians' has declined, this is not to be read as indicating sexual racism does not exist. Indeed, our participants pointed to covert racism where MCMF individuals do not receive replies, are blocked or are harassed in private messages. This indicates that further work is still needed for the LGBTIQ+ community to consider sexual racism as a form of racist ideology where one racial group (white) is positioned at the top of the racial hierarchy with other racial groups categorically positioned underneath white-on-white desire.





## Cultural settings and spaces

### Experiences of ROFD: cultural settings and spaces

68% attended cultural events, settings and spaces with family and friends

68% (n=65) of survey respondents said they attended cultural events, settings and spaces with family and friends. One respondent wrote about why they did not attend events:

*I am not in touch with any people from my country as I do not want to be excluded by them because of my sexuality, or violated. I've fled that country, why would I put myself through this again here.*

Of those who did attend cultural events, settings and spaces, the majority reported not experiencing any ROFD aggression or prejudice. Several focus group and interview participants positively compared the ROFD in their cultural communities in Australia to what they had experienced at cultural events in their countries of origin.

*Back in our country, you can't talk about stuff, you can't use the word gay that openly, you can't hold hands and do public display of affection that easily. You have to assume that the guy's not comfortable with talking about his sexuality, he might get married, and all the worse case scenarios. I had to dial it back in India. But after coming here, I see people [from my culture] being very open, talking about stuff as if very common. (LD1)*

68% (n=25) of the survey respondents who had experienced ROFD in cultural settings in Victoria reported experiencing microaggressions and 56% (14) had felt unsafe.

68% reported microaggressions

Answer Choices	%	#
Microaggressions (e.g. Passive aggressive behaviours)	68.00%	17
Feeling not safe	56.00%	14
Verbal aggression/abuse (e.g. name calling)	28.00%	7
Physical aggression/abuse (e.g. assault)	8.00%	2
Sexual aggression/abuse (e.g. inappropriate touching)	8.00%	2
Total		25

76% reported ROFD due to their non-heterosexuality

76% (n=25) of survey respondents who had experienced ROFD in cultural spaces reported that it was due to their perceived or known non-heterosexuality.

Answer Choices	%	#
Because of my sexuality	76.00%	19
Because of my race/ethnicity	24.00%	6
Because of my skin colour	20.00%	5
Because of my gender expression	20.00%	5
Because of my gender identity	16.00%	4
Other (please specify)	12.00%	3
Because of my religion	8.00%	2
I don't know	8.00%	2
Total		25

This was similar to focus group and interview participants who also spoke of a hierarchy of acceptance of their sexualities in their families and cultural communities based on adherence to cultural norms and heteronorms around gender expression, having children and passing in their 'mainstream' cultural ways of living. It must be considered that, for some ethnic communities, forms of sexuality, gender and relationship that do not follow heteronormative codes are not widely discussed. Community members and families may not be aware that these exist within their own cultures, historically and currently, and they are yet to develop the language and confidence to address these topics in a way that resonates with their cultural norms and values.

*I often get, 'It's okay because you're not camp. It's okay, you have a daughter, you're living a mainstream life'. I'm a cis male and I present in that, inverted commas 'normal' space. People rationalise it in their head, 'You're just like everyone else, you're accepted because you're taking those traditional steps'. (I18)*

*With my mum, there was a very difficult time coming out. The first thing she was like, 'Are you going to cut your hair now?' I was like, 'Well no, I like my hair'. I think it would have been hard for her if I had made really big changes like if I shaved my head. (LJA1)*

*I still really struggle with figuring out how Filipino I really am, because there's inherently a lot of stuff that I do, that I know I operate in, that is so much to do with my culture. But I do find it hard to identify that way when it's not a culture I feel part of. I took a friend to the Filipina festival, and there was lots of food, singing, dancing. And everyone's just really heteronormative and I'm just going, 'Yep, I'm lasting about half an hour here. Let's go after we've eaten'. I can't actually sit there and enjoy a lot of those cultural events. (I9)*

Some focus group and interview participants believed much of the ROFD they experienced in Australia in their own cultural communities was due to traditions and prejudices brought over from pre-migration countries of origin. This issue of country of origin values and their families' position within those communities was particularly pertinent for international students and other participants whose



families still resided in countries of origin. We consider this the microaggression trajectory within a family.

*The last time I went to South Africa, it certainly wasn't homophobia, but it was discomfort. I know that most people in my family are progressive in Australia. It's still the question of how much do I actively speak about it in my family in South Africa? (I18)*

*When my partner and I are walking around Box Hill, we're holding hands or linking arms. I can be a bit absentminded, so I don't notice people staring at us. My partner does point out when people do stare at us, because it is a very Asianational area. And that's partly why I do it, because how many of those people staring at me are staring out of ignorance and how many are staring because they've never actually seen a same-sex couple express affection? (I18)*

*Whatever I'm posting on my social media, they're saying, 'Whatever you are doing in this country is unacceptable for our cultures'. There's still a pressure on my parents there: 'Why your son do like this?' And then all of a sudden to me, 'Why are you doing like this? We are ashamed. Even though you are going there [Australia], we are your parents. You our responsibility'. My family is more traditional. My uncle was a priest. So they don't accept me coming out. So there still is a big shock and big shame that one son is like this. I say, 'I can't do anything. God give me like this. I have to go this way'. (RAS3)*

*They were brought up in a very different culture and also very different world of learning. Just as we're still learning about the LGBT community with more letters being added on, and some of the stuff is still to me a little bit like, 'Wait, what's going on? Is this real?' When you think back where they're coming from, and when they get a lot older, it's harder to view the world in a different way ... I left for a year and when I did come back she [my Mum] had her time to research whatever she needed to research and I had space to live my life. ... My mum told me that once she thought she was a lesbian. She was like, 'I had a friend who I thought was really cute and I thought I was in love with her. But look, I married your dad', and I was like, 'No, you just thought a girl was cute. I think some guys are cute'. Sometimes it's hilarious ... It doesn't happen overnight, and maybe because the younger generation is the impatient generation where everything is instant gratification, instant everything, they want the instant acceptance of their parents. Ideally, in the next maybe 10, 15 years that would happen because it's our generation growing up, and we're going to be the parents. (LJA1)*

*My parents are quite traditional in their upbringing, and Confucianism is lived and practised ... there's a strong call to a filial piety. So, you honour your parents and don't ruin the family name, don't ruin your parent's reputation. It's not about your reputation, it's about the bigger community, or your family, or clan. If you upset your parents then it's your fault. Even if you're an adult. So, while we know through Western individualism that your parents' feelings, or others' feelings, are not your responsibility, I feel that doesn't quite work in the Eastern way of doing things ... I believe the Anglo-Australian people, you do your thing and, as long as you are happy, then that's all good. And there's not much focus on harmony. Or how the family works, as a whole. While in most Asian cultures that practise Confucianism it is about how you move together as one unit. And, if you are different, which means you are being individualistic, and you stand out, then there's something wrong because everyone should be uniform ... I only came out to my parents two years ago. My extended family in Hong Kong, and also other parts of the world, they don't know yet. I don't want to disappoint them and shock them. (I16)*

Many focus group and interview participants explained that the discrimination from their families was due to the microaggressions they received in not meeting the criteria for cultural community status, such as not having grandchildren, the shame or 'failure' of having an HIV+-positive son, and the implications around 'immoral' sexual behaviour.

*Mum was very angry. Initially she thought it was a choice, and our relationship is strong Russian family. We kept a secret from Dad for a year. He didn't speak to me for three weeks. It was tears and it was very awkward. ... The first two things my Mum asked, 'What about grandkids?' I'm like, 'My sister can deal with that'. 'What about HIV?' and to be diagnosed with HIV a few years later, I felt like a failure to my Mum. ... The relationship is still not quite the same or as close. This death of this ideal or dream, because the future is painted you will marry, you will have the picket fence. Even if the signs are there, it's fucking in their face. ... you continue to lead a double life in a way to keep others happy. (LJA2)*

*You get educated, get a good job, get married, have kids. Continue being a member of the faith. Bring up your kids the same way you were brought up. Be obedient and whatever your parents tell you is gospel. ... And we're so far away from the home country, and also there's the impact of what the rest of the Greek community will say if they find out things. A lot of people don't have it that hard because the parents and the family don't want it getting out there. So, they may yell and scream, and they don't understand, but at the end of the day, we're still their children. And I think that takes priority over everything else. ... A lot of our members of our community will leave home and move interstate. Far enough that you're not in your family's face every day. So that you can live your life the way you want to, and then you go back in the closet when you go and visit. And progressively, you may come out. (I17)*



Mum'll always warn me, don't tell extended family. It's like she loves me but still doesn't want people to know. It's like the sexuality is dirty laundry and you don't air it out. I think that's the Asian community. ... I don't even know if my dad knows. I think my mum told him, but he's never confronted me with it. He's driven me home from gay clubs and he knows the area is gay, but he just doesn't talk about it. It's awkward for him. It's like it doesn't exist. My mum on the other hand, she's more curious and she likes to know more. But if we're at a family function, she doesn't want me to be discriminated against. 'Don't tell your grandparents or your uncles and aunties because they might tell other people and then we don't need people gossiping about us.' ... Asian families are all about face and esteem and how they stand within the community, competition with the other people in the extended family, and you can't compete with your sexuality. She says, 'LJA1 is focusing on her career'. Sometimes I hear her just blatantly lie, 'Yeah, LJA1 is seeing people, but they just not right for her'. I'm like, 'I'm not seeing anyone'. ... also I'm female, your biological clock is ticking so you have that pressure from your family. (LJA1)

I think it comes more down to the way I express my gender than my sexuality. It's never directed at me, it's always directed at my mother, who might be standing right next to me. 'Oh, why does she look like a boy? Why does she look like a man?' And my mum's just like, 'Oh, you know, she's just alternative,' or 'She's just modern'. Or lots of different family friends will always say things like, 'Why does she dress like that? Why do you have short hair? Grow your hair'. So that's probably where I feel it the most, a lot of that invalidation. And I feel really bad for my parents because I know that both of them have really struggled with both me and my brother being queer. I know my mum is all about reputation. She comes from a good family, that's really important to her. I almost feel bad for being queer, almost feel bad for dressing the way that I do, because it's not what she wanted from her daughter. They all live in Sydney, so I know that I've kind of separated because I just don't want to feel that I'm shaming my family so much. (I9)

The 'mingling' of diverse cultures and communities in Australia, sometimes from the same continents, led to intercultural ROFD occurring in various degrees.

Venezuelans, Colombians and other Latino communities and Spaniards as well, mingling here and not everyone comes from a country where it's so supporting. For example, Venezuelans are very not supportive of homosexuality. ... And they don't express it as much because they're not in their territory. (D1)

I think there could be internalised exclusion. I've had friends who are people of colour, whose behaviour as well as their thinking leads them to exclude other people of colour. (LD1)

Mum knows my best friend's a lesbian and she's from Germany and I have to thank her mum because we decided to get the two mums together and had a dinner. When my mum could see that, well she has a daughter that's gay and she's fine, well, obviously there's nothing wrong with it. I do feel parents go in the closet and they don't talk to anyone and then they don't see that there are others that are in the exact same shoes and they're still living their life. (LJA1)

Reasons for the marginalisation of LGBTIQ+ individuals in family and cultural settings were identified as interconnections of migration stress, ROFD in Australia, and the impact of colonisation and Christianisation both in countries of origin and in Australia.

It's like a waterfall of colonisation. The impact is really widespread and pervasive ... There have been such oppressive forces that have made their dent in our culture. But when I hear that the Samoan fa'afafine communities do their own thing still, I think being in a colonised identity, it has brought about a huge erasure, but as hard as people have tried, I don't think a whole bunch of people just disappear. And once the process of life comes to pass, life comes again. (I19)

When you leave your country and you come to a new place, you lost all your connections. It takes a while for you to settle down and you need to connect with someone who you can relate to, language wise, culture wise ... and with interaction, people learn. It doesn't happen overnight because you come with a prejudice that your society has given you about all other groups and some of you have been in war as well ... And if we connect and we start talking and we create a relationship, we leave behind those things. ... I believe it happens in Australia because of what Australia has to offer. (L3)



However, there were participants who had experienced more ROFD in Australia than in their countries of origin.

Australia has always had an issue with race. The government has an issue with race. That has wider implications, and it reflects back on my cultural community. And we've got all these other beautiful cultures around us that we can learn something about. As we've seen with my culture it's very warming to fa'afafine. There's a lot of laughing but it's not laughing at them, it's laughing with them. And the fact that we have the Prime Minister as our patron of our fa'afafine association. In Tonga one of the princesses is the patron of their Fakaleiti pageant. These are two Christian dominated nations. ... Fa'afafine, they're like a fresh breath of air in Samoan culture. I got to go back to Samoa two years ago and I hadn't been in 40 years. And I was totally gobsmacked because it was like 'I don't have to prove anything to anybody' ...

you can go down the road, nobody's going to hassle you and look out if they do because they got a whole line of fa'afafine that will come marching after them. But it was just like this appreciation or just this normalisation of fa'afafine being in community spaces. They're in church spaces, they're in general cisgender straight spaces. ... And I noticed the difference with transwomen here compared to fa'afafine back in Samoa. ... So I lean on my cultural identity. It's only when I have to explain it to people here who have been set on this binary, this colonised way of thinking ... Sometimes I wonder why my mum and dad migrated from there because I didn't realise the lessons for me here were going to be so challenging. But if there's any consolation I'm glad that I've become a lot stronger and wiser and that I always hold firm to what my mum and dad taught me, my cultural beliefs and my love for people and community. (I3)



## Responses to ROFD: cultural event, settings and spaces



In response to ROFD in cultural settings, events and spaces, 54% (n=26) of survey respondents physically removed themselves, avoided attending or returning.

Answer Choices	%	#
I physically removed myself from the situation	30.77%	8
I avoided going there again	23.08%	6
I told my family and/or friends	19.23%	5
I did nothing	15.38%	4
I reacted back (e.g. yelled back, hit back)	7.69%	2
Other (please specify)	3.85%	1
Total		26

Focus group and interview participants largely responded in similar ways: avoidance and leaving. Fewer participants claimed their right to be in familial, community and cultural settings and making it the responsibility of anyone with a concern to be the one to leave.

In these gatherings I am very outspoken about my sexuality and I just don't care about the reaction. It's like better for me if you keep away from me, thank you. I don't want to be surrounded by people who will step over me or believe that I'm less of a human being. (L2)

Other participants navigated the avoidance of problematic cultural spaces while simultaneously acknowledging they needed to be visible and vocal in these cultural spaces in order to make it safe for others now or in the future.

I don't put myself in those situations anymore. But in saying that, it is important that we have visibility and representation. I decided it was important that even if I'm not in that community, I should still tell people who are in the community so that they know there are people out there. I had someone come up to me and said, 'I'm Bengali and I had no idea that there were queer people in the Bengali community'. ... maybe if there was more acceptance in the cultural community, maybe I would have held onto it more. That's why we do these things, so that we can create more acceptance. (I1)



*They're not discriminatory, but they're highly heteronormative and always ask me questions like, 'Do you have a girlfriend? Do you plan to get married?' ... There are quite a few Indian community events and if I meet people through those things, I never talk about my personal life, unless I have very clearly determined that this person is progressive. But I haven't actually [heard] at any Indian event a serious or sensible conversation about diverse gender and sexuality. (I2)*

### Contacting management

No survey respondent or focus group or interview participant had contacted management of any cultural events, spaces or settings in response to any form of discrimination.

### Contacting police

In response to discrimination in cultural settings, no survey respondent had contacted police.

Focus group and interview participants were generally reluctant to contact police, fearing they would not be believed or understood, their experience would be trivialised, or the microaggressive forms of ROFD were difficult to articulate or pinpoint.

*There's nothing meaty enough for you to respond and present to an authority, unless someone throw a stone at your face. They would be, 'Oh yes, you're being a princess, you need to toughen up'. (L3)*

*You know when your alarm bells are ringing, your guard is going up, you can't quite point a finger to what's actually happening. That's where it gets really disempowering to actually go and make a report because it can sound like you're just making a big deal, this is all just happening in your head. How do you fight that? How do you present that as an issue? (IS2)*

*I think it's very, very hard to get the police involved. You would go to your family and say that something happened and hope that they would kind of say something to that other family. It operates in a domain outside of Western law in terms of what should happen and who's in charge, because in a cultural space it's about the cultural leaders or the families, it's kind of just dealt with there. I don't think there's much interaction with the police and cultural communities. ... And it's scary. You think of the police, you think of a white cop. Will he understand or she understand my circumstances? I can't imagine what that would be like.... I think I've had the pleasure of meeting a few Vic police who, in terms of the queer world, they are amazing. They have a big GLLO network, which I heard about through interacting with more people. So probably that representation of queer police as being multicultural would be something that would help people feel like they can go to someone of their own culture in the police. (I1)*

*I've had a real mixed feeling about the police and whether they know their job. Sometimes they're quite useful, sometimes they've got a horrible history. They're not my automatic go-to person whereas your social network is probably my automatic go-to people. (I18)*

*I think the police need to step in and work with the communities, more of an educational thing, because there is this view that Mum and Dad or brothers have the right to force God's laws or moral laws onto kids, in any way, shape and form. But the education can't come from police only because like, none of your business. It has to come from people like me who can speak the language, Arabic, but also I was born here, I was raised here, we can talk, whether it's a teenager being set affront for being gay or a teenager set affront for doing drugs. Family is very touchy, but I think the police need to get involved, like, when there was an accusation being made that I was a child molester. I said, 'If you are adamant of the things that I've done, bring it to the police', but no one did, because I was using the law first. (I13)*

The very few focus group and interview participants who did have interactions with the police reported dissatisfaction with the process and outcome, particularly in relation to multiple-minority identities.

*It was as a result of being the victim of a crime, a group murder attempt a few years ago. They were fucking useless and not a lot of empathy. You know, all of my friends who are activists and definitely quite a few of my friends who are lower socioeconomic status and people of colour have had to eat shit and deal with the police in very gnarly ways for a very long time, but I've just largely hidden in academia, largely stayed at home and tried to keep myself out of trouble ... I always struggle with talking about how the police can do things better, because I just think that the fundamental frequencies of the police system are just completely fucked and totally oriented against difference. I don't have any faith that they are capable of legitimately bettering the community beyond perhaps their own really individual actions. But I think that the police, as a system, and also a community, it's nasty, nasty, nasty, and oriented around power and a sort of manual handling of justice in a way that I just think is beyond salvation. (I5)*



# Reflections on cultural events, settings and spaces

Survey respondents were almost equally divided on whether cultural spaces welcomed or considered the needs of people like themselves.

Answer Choices	%	#
My cultural events and settings welcome people like me...		
Disagree	30.36%	17
Somewhat disagree	23.21%	13
Somewhat agree	33.93%	19
Agree	12.50%	7
Total		56

Answer Choices	%	#
My cultural events and places consider the needs of people like me...		
Disagree	36.36%	20
Somewhat disagree	29.09%	16
Somewhat agree	25.45%	14
Agree	9.09%	5
Total		55

Many survey respondents and focus group and interview participants spoke positively about their cultural settings as being welcoming and considerate.

My food is flavourful because we know how to use spices! Also my culture is rich in stories, songs, art, history, myth, legends and lore. I have ancestors who have achieved great things and I am indebted to them. My language is rich and expressive in ways English could only ever hope to be. My customs are strong, proud, and have deep roots. (survey respondent)

I appreciate that homosexuality is a very visible part of my culture's history. It is well documented in temples and cave paintings and architecture. No one can deny its existence. (survey respondent)

My culture has a strong emphasis on questioning and learning, and a long history of social justice. (survey respondent)

That my cultural background is a mixture of cultures (Malay, Indian, Chinese, etc.) and has enriched my environment of upbringing. (survey respondent)

Intergenerational connections make me strong. I share experiences of migration and racism with my older family/ community members who are also part of diasporas. I derive a sense of strength, continuity and pride from hearing about our ongoing resilience ... having that cultural identity has done a lot for me in terms of being a lifesaver mentally, therapeutically, on so many levels. Like people have this thing of coming out but I never had a coming out, and if I had a coming out it was coming out of my mum's stomach. (I3)

A few survey respondents expressed their desire to be involved in their cultural communities, acknowledging they needed their cultural community due to shared oppressions and shared affirmations.

My inner identity is gay but the world responds to me on another identity that affects me more on a daily basis because they can't necessarily always understand my queerness but they can always see my skin. So seeing someone else who looks like me, that's the thing we are coming together. (survey respondent)

The survival of my community through colonisation, through war, through famine, through migration, through anti-immigration policies (White Australia Policy). Making the most of our lives even under very serious situations of inequality based on race and class and gender. (survey respondent)

Other survey respondents had made difficult, coerced choices about what facets of their heritage were welcoming and to be embraced, and what needed to be let go.

I rejected Islam a long time ago, but I have embraced my Turkish culture a lot more over the last five years and my Asian heritage. (survey respondent)

Some focus group and interview participants did not feel welcomed or considered in their cultural settings and spaces, although they were hopeful that with time and sustained energy the current prevailing cultural attitudes toward LGBTIQ+ would shift.

I'm more interested to build an Australian society more than a Latin society because I hate segregation ... creating the different intersectionalities is positive. But there's a block that we need to get better rights, better benefits. In this society, we need to work as a block. And if we want to get integration in a society, we have to produce an Australian multicolour, Australian multifaith, Australian politically diverse. (I16)

## Summary and recommendations: cultural events, settings and spaces

In summary, improvement in affirmation and understanding of sexual and gender diversity in cultural settings and spaces was noted. While heterosexism and cisgenderism did make cultural spaces seem unwelcoming or inconsiderate, MCMF LGBTIQ+ people believed they provided many positives in relation to their race or ethnicity – such as pride, belonging, shared oppressions, a sense of familiarity – and they expressed the need and desire to belong to and enjoy one's cultural community. Our results concur with Galupo et al. (2019) who identified four major strengths and affirmations of being MCMF LGBTIQ+ in cultural settings: uniqueness of being; multiplicity of experience; richness of community connections; and shared strengths and stresses.



MCMF LGBTIQ+ individuals' relationships with family serve as a vital source of information and pathway regarding their cultural background and identities, often shaping if, how and when they disclose their sexuality and/or gender identity. As Yip (2004: 336) identifies, negotiating these relationships is often a complex interplay of 'secrecy, silence and discretion in balancing individualism (i.e. expression of sexuality)' and familial-cultural-religious obligations.

Homo/bi/trans/intersexphobia were the prevalent forms of discrimination in cultural settings and spaces, although it was considered mainly microaggressive rather than overt. Families were often the purveyors of cultural norms, and considerations about families' status, honour and wellbeing in the cultural community were the major factors in both if and how the cultural setting was navigated, and the extent to which the cultural setting was a place of disclosure or concealment.

The degree of discrimination was largely related to the level of 'passing' or navigating the concealment of one's sexuality and gender identity, or performing a heteronormative and gendernormative life, while maintaining a sense of cultural pride and belonging.

We **recommend** engagement with MCMF LGBTIQ+ people to navigate the multifaceted aspects of their identities in culturally safe ways across various settings without jeopardising their safety and wellbeing.

We also **recommend** awareness campaigns led by MCMF LGBTIQ+ people and allies around the diversity of ways of living healthy, fulfilling, loving lives.

As Asquith et al. write, 'cultural and linguistic diversity does not necessarily equate with rejection of sex, sexuality and gender diversity. In many CALD communities, diversity of this type has been traditionally integrated into cultural and religious beliefs, only to be pathologised in the process of colonisation' (2019: 329). Their research identified the many ways in which families accept and celebrate their MCMF LGBTIQ+ family members' lives. These experiences provide evidence for building the capacity of other MCMF families to 'similarly integrate sex, sexuality and gender diversity into the cultural and religious practices so central to their lives in Australia' (2019: 329).

Our results concur with Merighi and Grimes (2000) who identified four dominant MCMF family and cultural responses to LGBTIQ+: support through action; support that preserves a kinship bond; avoidance; and distancing and disengagement. In our research, the latter two are the most common responses of MCMF LGBTIQ+ individuals if support through public action in the cultural space or, at least, support within the family and kinship bond, were not available. Not being present at cultural events and spaces does not mean LGBTIQ+ do not want to be present.

We **recommend** increased engagement with multicultural communities to explore LGBTIQ+ people's rights in ways that are culturally safe and relevant to cultural values. Such initiatives are to be held in conjunction with government agencies, state advocacy organisations, such as Ethnic Communities Council of Victoria (ECCV) and AGMC, and led by MCMF LGBTIQ+ individuals with the provision that their safety and wellbeing are prioritised.

We are cognisant of the increased emotional burden self-advocacy places on MCMF LGBTIQ+ individuals and communities.

We **recommend** state and national ethnic bodies initiate anti-discrimination strategies as allies in support of, not speaking for, MCMF LGBTIQ+ people who can share their lived experiences to demonstrate the negative impact of ongoing discrimination on their sense of belonging, health and wellbeing.

Initiatives such as art projects need to be well funded for MCMF LGBTIQ+ people to safely share their stories in order to initiate change.

Of concern was individuals feeling unable to respond to ROFD by contacting cultural site management or the police. Not reporting to event organisers can be due to lack of confidence that the

organisers know about LGBTIQ+ issues and have the resources needed to address the discrimination. The most common response was avoiding, leaving and/or not returning to the space. Often, the lack of cultural diversity and cultural understanding among police, the avoidance of shame on one's family within the cultural community, and apprehended discrimination from previous negative experiences of self and others with police, influenced decisions about making complaints and other responses.

We **recommend** strategies to ensure cultural events and spaces provide a safe space for MCMF LGBTIQ+ people as part of funding agreements with both the State and Commonwealth governments.

This is to be conducted in conjunction with education and support structures to provide event organisers and community leaders with the tools to engage members of their communities on inclusion strategies.

We **recommend** event organisers be provided with the required support and resources to counter discrimination, including responding to criticism from members of their own groups.

We **recommend** site managers develop stronger inclusion and anti-discrimination policies, and codes for confidentiality and respect when receiving a complaint.





We **recommend** Victoria Police strengthens its community engagement strategies by incorporating intersectionality as part of education and engagement, and for Gay and Lesbian Liaison Officers (GLLO) and the Multicultural Reference Group to work collaboratively to ensure the safety of MCMF LGBTIQ+ communities in cultural spaces and events. MCMF LGBTIQ+ police officers can undertake community engagement strategies in relation to complaints and legal procedures with the provision their safety and wellbeing are prioritised.

## Religious settings and spaces

### Experiences of ROFD: Religious events, settings and spaces

63% attended a religious event, celebration or place of worship

Approximately 63% (n=63) of survey respondents had attended a religious event, celebration or a place of worship in the past three years. Though these respondents did not report overt ROFD, approximately 25% reported experiencing microaggressions or feeling unsafe in a religious setting. This was similar to the results of our focus group and interview participants.

*I go with my partner and my parents. I know that there are other gay people in the Buddhist community I've never heard being talked about negatively. (I11)*

Focus group and interview participants explained microaggression was still experienced and they used strategies of concealing their sexuality and gender identity and not critiquing oppressive faith teachings and traditions when they were with their devout families.

Other survey respondents and focus group and interview participants had left their faith of origin because they had felt unsupported or could not find a place for their multiple identities.

*It's not something I speak about within Russian Orthodox Church where we go. I think that the traditions and teachings are so strict that there's not much room to leverage. I think the up and coming generation might be a little bit more open and younger priests. ... there are certain topics in religion that I would not even go to dig about. (LJA2)*

*I go to mosque two times a year when they celebrate Eid ... I don't spend a lot of time there. I just go pray and finish the personal and go out. (I14)*

*I've always wanted to challenge them [priests], but I was just too afraid because I went to the same church as my parents, a local Chinese Catholic community. So, everyone's so tight, and if one person knows, it means 300 people know the next day. I don't regret not coming out at that time because it just wasn't safe to do so. Like, [they say] we are demonised, living a homosexual lifestyle and no respect for our bodies ... They say 'We are like the lighthouse in a sea, we are here to provide guidance to the rest of society; and we have to stand up for what's right'. (I16)*

*I was, but I'm not. I was educated within the Catholic church, but I think they didn't really understand the message of Christ, of unconditional love. (L1)*

*I was brought up in a very rich Catholic school, so much competitiveness and so much pressure that these kids learn that applying pressure to everyone and to every system that you encounter is the only way to live ... It was very Pavlovian for me, like trying to domesticate an animal by pushing the knowledge inside, and stopping your own curiosity because your curiosity is sexually like something that is vibrating inside you. [I left because] you're able to imagine different futures for yourself and propel yourself towards them. (L3)*

*I don't go. Why would I waste my time ... I believe that something created all this. ... And what is important for me is understanding our differences, our beliefs, our traditions instead of criticising. (I16)*

*It's a business at the end of the day, religion, so if people choose to keep going, and they have their beliefs, I'm not going to sit there and disagree with their beliefs, but as an institution, I don't have much respect for it anymore. ... as we change as a generation, these people are going to die out and it's not going to be a problem anymore. You know, my kids don't go to church, it's not something that's pushed on them, as it was when I was growing up. ... I don't expect the church to change their rules, and I don't expect to marry my [gay] son in a church. (I17)*



*I think a lot of LGBT people grew up in faith. And so they have left the church and all they remember was what happened to them when they were a child. And I understand that because it's better to be safe than open your heart again and be vulnerable to the church. (I16)*

25% reported microaggressions or feeling unsafe in a religious setting

Approximately 25% (n=20) of survey respondents reported experiencing microaggressions or feeling unsafe in a religious setting.

Answer Choices	%	#
Microaggressions (e.g. Passive aggressive behaviours)	85.00%	17
Feeling not safe	35.00%	7
Verbal aggression/abuse (e.g. name calling)	10.00%	2
Physical aggression/abuse (e.g. assault)	5.00%	1
Sexual aggression/abuse (e.g. inappropriate touching)	0.00%	0
Total		20

The written responses included a specific mention of how a rural location intersected with religion and being LGBTIQ+ in increasing the discrimination:

*Homophobia is rife in small country towns (survey participant).*

Similar to cultural spaces and events, survey respondents who had attended a religious space or event felt that they experienced these aggressions predominantly due to their perceived or known sexuality, 75% (n=20).

Answer Choices	%	#
Because of my sexuality	75.00%	15
Because of my gender identity	35.00%	7
Because of my gender expression	30.00%	6
Other (please specify)	15.00%	3
Because of my religion	10.00%	2
Because of my race/ethnicity	10.00%	2
Because of my skin colour	10.00%	2
I don't know	10.00%	2
Total		20

Focus group and interview participants' discussions supported this finding.

*The spaces I used to frequent was Church. And that's all I knew for almost 26 years of my life, and in being gay, I'm now being forced 'out' to survive. ... [in religious events I get] panic attacks and a sense of overwhelming guilt, a sense of overwhelming fear of being unsafe ... I'm the terrible, heretic, gay, sinner that's unrepentant. People just disregard all the horror and trauma I went through. It shocked me because I don't understand how you can be so oblivious about pain, it is evil, and it's not being challenged by example ... as a theological person the direct correlation between the martyrs who died because of their faith and for refusing to give up, and there's queer people who refuse to give up their Christianity, who refuse to give up their gayness, because it's authentic, and that in itself is martyred. The very people being persecuted are the same people who are doing the persecution. (I13)*

*I had a member of the modesty police visit my home and tell me that if I didn't stop doing what I was doing that they would not be responsible for my safety walking down the street. Also, I showed up to a prayer service and was turned away, welcomed by a person with a gun, so I left quietly. (I20)*

The interconnectedness of faith, cultural and family values, class, education and other facets of identity and belonging led to complex navigations.

*It was from the pulpit, at Mass. From some conservative priests. 'These gay people, they're just trying to ruin family values. They're misleading our children.' (I16)*

*there's a strong tie between Coptic Church and Coptic traditions or events, whether it's baptism or parties. ... It's sad because my family's stuck in the crossfire too because when they're asked why I haven't been to the Church for so long, why I'm not married, my parents don't answer, and they feel scared because they would be ostracised too. And it's just sad because I feel for them but at the same token, unfair for me that they can't acknowledge that I exist. (I13)*

*Judaism is a culture and an ethnicity and a religion, and so when I hear the word events, I think about get togethers, and so I kind of most likely avoid it. ... I've gone to progressive sort of synagogue things here and there, and they were fine on the whole, but I think that that's where other things about me become more pronounced, like I might go to a LGBT Shabbat service, but I'm the only person with a head tattoo and a punk shirt on. I'm still a freak even in those kinds of scenarios. I was having a look at the book that we read out of for services, and I found it still had the fucking bullshit about 'Thank you God for not making me a woman'. I was just like, 'Fuck why is it still happening?' So, it's kind of like I'm too poor for the wealthy Jews, too tattooed for those more conservative Jews and too queer for them, but also I'm too freaky and critical for a lot of the queer people of faith. ... I pray every single morning and I thank the creative spirit for making me exactly what I am, which is queer, trans, kinky, fat, all of it. I've found a lot of strength moving beyond narratives of religion bad or queerness bad. (I15)*



I go in knowing that this is what the church thinks of LGBT people. The Catholic church has a lot of influence and money. For example, someone who's LGBT could be fired from a Catholic institution, like a school or a hospital. And that is discrimination ... Every month, when we meet for Mass, half of us are from a non-Anglo background. And the multicultural ones are the young ones. And they know that they don't have to stick to their faith. But somebody will feel like if they lose their faith then they lose their identity. (I6)

Other focus group and interview participants pointed to the diversity of values and beliefs in their religions within which they found their place, felt displaced, or dismissed it altogether as being too unstable or contradictory for their spiritual health. Thus, our research shows that there are varying degrees of relationship with faith that cannot be easily interpreted as a binary between acceptance and renouncement of faith.

Lack of consistency between rabbis ... You shouldn't lie with a man as you lie with a woman. You interpret that how you want. Two rabbis won't agree on what it means (J1)

You have conservative Judaism, and Orthodox Judaism, and humanist Judaism, and reformed Judaism, and people who were born Jewish but they associate in no way possible, because you're Jewish if your mother's Jewish, that's basically the citizenship test to be a Jew ... There's also a Zionist or pro-Israel spectrum ... So there's more division in the communities based on if you agree with what Israel's doing, or if you think that Israel should exist. And there's some religious Jews in Israel who don't have to serve in the army for religious reasons, and that causes issues. (J2)

I definitely do feel as someone from a polytheistic culture, there's a very strong dominance of monotheistic attitudes out there, so Hinduism gets appropriated and erased even more. There are so many belief systems within one belief system and to say this is what my faith represents is a bit difficult to explain to someone who comes from very monotheistic thinking. I always give example of the Indian head nod, people poke fun of it, because they don't know what it means. But it actually has very deep philosophical significance. It means neither yes or no, that 'Your truth is in within Your context'. But to people who come from very binary, monotheistic culture, they get very frustrated with it because 'Is it black or white, right or wrong, is it yes or no?' Through this, it exposes the thinking of 'order' and a 'one size fits all' system. (I17)

The Catholic church teaches that any same-sex sexual behaviour is immoral, because sex should be between the man and the woman, for procreation. And with transgender people, the church teaches that God made a man and a woman. And so you shouldn't be changing that ... But what the Catholic church also teaches is to be compassionate and respectful towards people who are different. ... I think a lot of conservative priests, or groups, don't look at the pastoral side. (I6)

Also discussed were the interconnections between faith and cultural history. For example, some discriminations were justified from within a religious framework but appeared to be equally linked to addressing intergenerational trauma over certain historical events, such as the Holocaust or colonial missionaries.

The very first commandment in the Torah is to be fruitful and multiply. So that is a huge thing for Jewish people, that ability to procreate and to have a family, and passing on to the next generation. And what ties into that is the Holocaust guilt of all these people who died just so you may live. Just so you may be Jewish. And this was actually said to me at an assembly in school, 'People died in the Holocaust. We are few, we need to multiply and pass our Jewishness on'. And if you're gay that's the end of the food chain. End of the tree. (J2)

Starting this South Asian group we have Muslim, Buddhist, Atheist, Christian, Jain, Sikh and Hindu members ... among the Hindu members of the group, we are planning to approach the Victorian Hindu Council to see if they have any priests who can perform queer marriage rites because in India they do that. Indian culture has special allocated days in the year or in the month where they invite the Hijra community to come and perform pooja. In our culture Hijras are people of the 'Third Nature'; their presence is auspicious and they have powers to bless. Queer identities have always been viewed as sacred in Hindu society prior to colonisation. (I17)



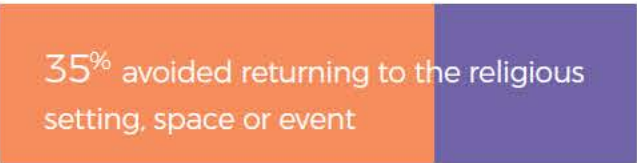
The following reflection reveals how an intersectional life is navigated on the border of past and present; precolonial, colonial and neocolonial; and the border labour required to "hold" the resulting complexity and contradiction.

As someone who sits living in more than one identity, I can see how you can hold more than one. I'm sure my family know our spiritual history before colonisation, but also who am I to say how profound the effect was of being wiped out that, out of survival, you would then cling onto what was being forced. So I can see why Catholic religion was my grandma's anchor, and I can see how the belief that having a man is the salvation of a life for someone in my mum's generation, because that was a very real reality and still is, especially living in a village when I operate from a different land. So, I think I'm beginning to build more compassion, because while there have been negative effects on me, my mum also has her own story and her own trauma.

And for the effects of colonisation to trickle down to me, it has to have hit her. ... community is so important, but especially in the village, this is how you survive. That church, there's a bell that rings every day and lets you know it's time for us to be in our houses and pray. The same way it is for people in the West, people here. Your alarm clock goes off. You don't think, 'Yes. Now, what are the intergenerational impacts of this alarm clock?' It just rings. And that bell just rang every day for my mum. And then it would ring on Sundays and they would be in the church, and then they would have the feast after, and then you would sleep. I don't want to undermine the cultural richness that comes from the church in the community, and a sense of structure. So, to hold the two ideas of, there is trauma here, but there is also community made from it. It can be one and the other 10 things, because it's not linear. (119)



## Responses to ROFD: Religious events, settings and spaces



After experiencing ROFD, most survey respondents avoided returning to the religious setting, space or event (35%), did nothing (25%), or left the situation (15%) (n=20).

Answer Choices	%	#
I avoided going there again	35.00%	7
I did nothing	25.00%	5
I physically removed myself from the situation	15.00%	3
I told my family and/or friends	10.00%	2
I reacted back (e.g. yelled back, hit back)	5.00%	1
I notify the management and/or religious leader	5.00%	1
Other (please specify)	5.00%	1
Total		20

Many of our focus group and interview participants discussed similar responses, or explained their multiple failed attempts to create change.

I have very little faith in terms of bringing an issue to an organised religion whether it's a question of discrimination or just poor treatment. I mean, it's horrible that they won't address child sex offence. The organisations will do diddly squat. (118)

On the next page, a participant explains repeated attempts to respond to his own and others' experiences of discrimination. Also of concern, and as evident in every setting, were 'allies behaving badly' (McKinnon 2017) who are 'self-congratulatory' and 'so invested' in their status as progressive that they 'refuse' to address reports of discrimination. Examples of 'straight fragility' are given where those with power and privilege centre their own feelings rather than those of the LGBTIQ+ members of their faith communities who are repeatedly calling out the discrimination they are experiencing:



I would show up early to help with prayers and this person was very nasty to me and after being spoken to multiple times, nothing changed and it finally came to a head when I was engaged in a particular leadership role and this person started verbally abusing me and no one said or did anything to stop him. At that point I actually just left and when I told people that I wasn't coming back, their version of the story was that I had just stormed off and didn't give them a chance to address it. But I had been putting up with this for years, reporting it constantly and no one did anything to stop it ... I heard a story in my religious community about a young man who was trans and he had wanted to sit in the men's section and people were saying to him, 'Oh, you've got to sit in the women's section because the rabbi won't like it'. The man ended up killing himself. And the story was he was just a troubled man, but my take on the story was he was searching for supportive community and the community failed him, and now the community washes its hands of its responsibility when actually according to our law the community is responsible. ... Then on the other hand sometimes people do take responsibility. There was a situation where people were basically asked to leave because they were a same gender couple, were stopped from praying when they were trying to commemorate the death of a relative. They did contact the person in charge to complain and that person was so conscientious and empathetic that it really changed the situation. Yet it often is the places where people are the most

self-congratulatory about how forward thinking they are and how inclusive they are, that they're so invested in that identity that they completely refuse to acknowledge anything they do that isn't inclusive, and so they then don't have any opportunity to fix it.

I have had situations where I was bullied, where I was verbally abused. Sometimes it was raising issues on my own behalf, sometimes I was advocating for other people, but I ended up having to leave because what would happen many times was that I would raise an issue gently, I would raise it repeatedly, and each time I would raise it slightly more pointedly, but because I was doing that so gently, it doesn't rock the boat and they basically just don't pay attention to you. So when I finally did raise it in an explicit way people couldn't handle it because it wasn't deferential enough for them. If you say something has to be done, then you are perceived as hostile and your tone is judged, even though it's not about your tone, it's about their privilege and their being unwilling to acknowledge it and make changes. ... there's also this infantilising that happens where if other people are upset when I raise an issue of inclusion, instead of being able to hear that they've caused pain and hurt and exclusion, they break down and it becomes all about them and their pain. And it becomes my non-consensual emotional labour to make them feel better about the crappy behaviour they've engaged in. And yet at no point do they express the slightest empathy about the person that they've actually hurt. (I20)

Other participants remained within or on the borders of their faith, and used the faith space and their own experiences of ROFD within it to encourage people to connect with both their faith and sexuality and expend emotional and mental energy if possible, to create institutional shifts.

Deep down, I knew there's nothing wrong with me and what I felt more was a fear. And I think having a faith really helped me. How ironic is that? And a lot of the times I prayed that, if what I did, or what I'm inclined to do, was so wrong, and offended Him and angered Him, why was I still alive? I wondered why did You create me, to offend You? And then I continuously compared myself to people who are murderers or drink drivers, and thinking how can I be just as bad a criminal as the rest of them? (I16)

If everyone leaves, who's going to be there to stand for people like myself? So I'm in a no win situation ... I think there's a positive shift because young people are saying, 'Hey, I recognise you, I think it's safe to talk to you about this'. Now I would have killed for that as a teenager, but I'm trying to do what never happened to me so others don't have to go through the same thing. ... Christian communities need to have people who stand up and say 'We exist, this stuff happened to me years ago', because young people like myself, young in both gay and young in age, need to be told, 'It's ok if you're angry, it's ok if you're upset, because it does get better'. (I13)

## Contacting management

One survey respondent and few focus group and interview participants contacted management or faith leaders in response to ROFD. Mixed results include coming head on into hierarchies and intersections of oppressions. Some are considered more important to address than others.

My mum and my sister and my brother-in-law, we performed Hajj in Mecca. And part of it was like an attempt to change my trans identity. They thought, 'This is the last resort, if you pray there probably God will answer'. But I feel God has called me, and I wanted to go. The religious department said this was the first time trans people want to go Hajj. And so they brought me one of the mufti who is progressive. And he's like, 'She's a woman. You're allowed to wear female clothes'. But it's not a majority view. I met with another mufti who is not progressive, and he said, 'Look, I don't give a shit about other mufti said. If you want to perform this, you have to wear men's clothes'. And then they have to put me in a special place with all these VIP high-level people and the admin, because they don't want to create chaos if I'm with other people. But in ritual things I had to wear male clothes. But outside of that ritual, I was allowed to wear female clothes, but during that whole thing, I've got five people like bodyguards around me to protect me. ... At one point, I was like to God, 'So if you really don't want me to be a trans, please don't change me'. I told my mum, 'If God really wanted to change me, he would have changed me already.' (I15)



The following story is an example of how raising concerns with faith leaders or management can lead to reactions of 'straight fragility' and reveal the hypocrisy of the oppressed becoming the oppressor.

*I looked out from the regular prayer space, which is separated between women and men, and I saw one of my non-binary friends in the dark behind the curtain trying to pray all alone, looking really sad and forlorn. So I went up and said 'Would you like me to get you a chair? Can I make you a non-binary section?' And they said, 'No, it's okay. I don't want to cause any trouble', and just watching them there broke my heart and I thought, 'This is wrong, someone has to do something'. So I took aside one of the main people running things, and said, 'Look, here's what's happened, and here's what you can do to fix it'. They burst into tears and started making it all about them saying, 'Why is everyone criticising me?' They didn't end up ever actually fixing it. When I raised this at a higher level I got verbally abused and, 'Well, they just have to understand that we didn't mean anything bad and not everybody knows about this stuff'. Again, these are the same people who as white Anglo feminists who are upper middle class get so upset about the wage gap and that someone else is making this many*

*more in six figures than this many more in six figures, while the non-binary people I'm talking about were having trouble finding employment at all. There was just no empathy. There was just the attitude of, 'Well, you know we can't do that', and it was just, kill the messenger because I was holding a mirror up to the fact that they had pretty rhetoric that was empty and that they were actually hypocritical, that they only cared about inclusion when it was about people exactly like them or people that were easy to include. ... It's as if they were more interested in making sure that other people would think that they were trans-inclusive than actually doing what they would have to do to be trans-inclusive ... I was told 'We all have to move on' and it's so easy for people to move on when it's not about them, but there's no way that the kind of deeply spiritual ethical people I'd want to share my religious life with would be able to move on without doing something about other people's suffering. They wouldn't move on if a man who was in that sphere told them to move on and just get over it. So they're engaging in the same kind of patriarchal behaviour that they hate other people doing to them. So after that I was quite isolated and really struggled to find a place to call home. (I20)*

## Contacting police

No survey respondent indicated they had contacted police and only a very few of the focus group and interview participants had even considered contacting police.

*If you asked me this question two or three years ago, I would say, 'I don't know,' or 'Maybe not'. But now I think I can do it. But at the beginning of my time here I couldn't have this confidence. ... Maybe because of our culture, you automatically think, 'It's not my right'. And you're suddenly surprised like, 'Yes, this is your right'. (I14)*

*I don't feel the police is safe and I don't feel understood by the police. I think that they're people who have weapons and who know how to have confrontations with people. And some of them are well meaning, but I don't think they have the training and knowledge to protect people like me, and I don't think it's their priority either. (I20)*

## Reflections on religious events, settings and spaces

48% did not feel that religious settings, spaces or events welcome people like them

Unlike cultural events and spaces, the majority of survey respondents did not feel that the religious setting, space or event welcomed (48%) or considered the needs of people like themselves (54%).

Answer Choices	%	#
My religious/faith events and settings welcome people like me...		
Disagree	47.92%	23
Somewhat disagree	16.67%	8
Somewhat agree	18.75%	9
Agree	16.67%	8
Total		48

Answer Choices	%	#
My religious/faith events and places consider the needs of people like me...		
Disagree	54.17%	26
Somewhat disagree	16.67%	8
Somewhat agree	16.67%	8
Agree	12.50%	6
Total		48

This finding is even more compelling when contrasted to survey respondents' desires to be involved in their ethno-religious communities. They could write many positives about their faith as spiritual and social, even if they did not feel affirmed due to their LGBTIQ+ identities. The following are 5 examples from survey participants:

*Family connection with traditions like Easter*

*The Christian understanding of what it means to be human is a lofty and noble gift to have acquired.*



*My religion is an inherent part of me. It provides me in Australia with a sense of identity and belonging, even though they are yet to truly embrace diverse gender and sexuality.*

*I only appreciate the good things - such as treating people with respect. I love how eclectic and deep Judaism is, how far the roots go.*

*I appreciate the focus on forgiveness and compassion that Jesus taught.*

Many focus group and interview participants also highlighted the richness of their religions in relation to interconnected spiritual, cultural, historical and familial minority identities.

*Judaism is a religion, it's a cuisine, it's a language, it's a geography, it's a history, it's all those things sort of gobbled up into one. So it permeated into every part of my life from a very early age. And no matter how far I tried to run away from that, and I did at some points in my life, it'll always find a way of chasing me back. And regardless of how Jewish I define myself or how Jewish the people around me define me as, I would have been sent to the Holocaust. For two reasons, actually. So, whether I like it or not, I'm part of this amazing, incredibly crazy, incredibly diverse, incredibly rich community, and that's something that I've been grateful for. I can walk into a room with another Jew and we know that we have some undefinable thing in common. (J2)*

*The very same Christian belief that tells me that I'm going straight to hell, and that I'm living a life miserable and I'm excluded from God and the rest of the world, is the very same Christian conscience and strong belief that says I have to stand for justice for those who are being oppressed. ... I don't understand how I'm still Christian and as much as I want to disassociate myself from my Christianity, it would rob me from being authentic ... the level of hospitality for Egyptians, for foreigners, for strangers, food, drinks, the whole lot, and hospitality is to be welcoming, to bring the estranged, the gay, the other, which everyone else excluded, and to welcome them with open arms. So it's taking all these strengths and just refashioned it into returning it to its original meaning as opposed to its corrupted meaning. (I13)*

*After having gone through a process of renouncing my faith, identity and culture, and then coming to Australia ... I've learned how to accept and view it for what it is, which is very unique ... I suppose there's a whole load of other stories that comes behind it as well. Of the experience of my grandparents and my great grandparents from Colonial British India, and so it's very messy. It's a journey of unpacking and picking what's left of it, and what is ours and what is not. Most of what was ours has been destroyed. And so what if it's not ours, this is what it is now. (I17)*

*I believe your connection with God is your connection with God, not anyone else's. I speak to many, many other LGBTQ Muslims and some of them, they'll be like, 'I'm sorry, I cannot feel God anymore. I don't believe. I don't believe if you do good things, God will give you good things'. I'm blessed that I have a strong connection, and this is the thing I will never change for anything. I would die for my religion. I respect other people who are Atheist. But when it comes to my own understanding, I feel blessed every day because even for me to be able to just walk on a street, feel safe in Australia, it's blessed. (I15)*

When asked what positive changes and perspectives survey respondents and focus group and interview participants had seen in their ethno-religious communities in relation to LGBTIQ+, several themes of survival, strength, and signs of hope for the future were raised.

*Even though we have been oppressed and lied about constantly, we are still here and eventually all the lies that have been told about us will come crashing down and once again our people will have peace and prosperity! :) (survey respondent)*

*I tell them [LGBTIQ+ friends] to go back to their faith and find something, find some narrative, find an ally. Because faith is so diverse and people don't have to be part of the wider, bigger institution to get that validation because there are LGBTIQ people of faith who can give you a positive experience and have a different interpretation of their faith. (I17)*

*The Catholic church is losing its authority, and it can't scare people anymore. And especially after the sex abuse crisis, this is just a reminder that the church makes a lot of mistakes. And maybe how it treats and views the LGBT community is one of those mistakes ... And nowadays people can disagree without threatening that you're going to go to hell. Or you're a representative of Satan. And then recently I was invited to present at a local church on ministering to LGBT people. And this wouldn't have been done ten years or even five years ago. And so I think the signs of change are in the daily lives of our community. ... In the last couple of years, I've heard of lesbian or gay couples having their child baptised in the church. And the transgender having their funerals in a church. They're not being refused communion. (I6)*

## Summary and recommendations: Religious events, settings and spaces

In summary, there has been some improvement in affirmation and understanding of sexual and gender diversity in religious settings and spaces, with hope for this shift to continue in the future. Ongoing work to reconcile faith and LGBTIQ+ identities is required, with participants reflecting on the complex navigation between multiple identities. Some participants expressed the ability to reconcile these two aspects of their



identities, while others are still on a journey towards reconciliation, and a few are renouncing their faith altogether.

Our results regarding religious attendance or affiliation concur with the findings of the Australian AGZ Study (Singleton et al. 2019) that 58% of teens never attended religious settings such as churches, and just 12% attended weekly or more often. Pentecostals, Muslims, conservative Protestants and other kinds of evangelical Christians were the groups mostly likely to attend with any kind of regularity. Singleton et al. categorised six different 'types' that move beyond conventional understandings of the religious/non-religious identity:

- 'This Worldly' (23%) – the largest group are young people who have no space in their worldview for religious, spiritual or non-material possibilities. They never or rarely go to religious services and do not identify with a religion.
- 'Nominally Religious' (20%) – are largely culturally religious, following the religious identity of their parents or community such as attending a religious school or social event. They believe in God, but faith is not important in their daily lives and they do not often go to a temple, church or mosque.
- 'Spiritual but not Religious' (18%) – young people for whom God, faith and religion are not important but they are open to spiritual possibilities, including belief in life after death, reincarnation, and belief in a higher being '(but not really God)' (2019: 10).

- 'Religiously Committed' (17%) – regularly attend services of worship, believe there is life after death, and believe religious faith shapes how they live their lives and make sense of the world.
- 'Indifferent' (15%) – undecided about religion, spirituality and atheism.
- 'Seekers' (8%) – who self-describe as 'spiritual' who believe in life after death and repeated experiences of a presence or power that is different from their everyday selves.

ROFD was identified in religious settings and spaces, although it was considered mainly to be in the form of microaggression rather than overt. Homo/bi/trans/intersexphobia were the prevalent forms of discrimination experienced by MCMF LGBTIQ+ individuals in religious settings and spaces. Exclusion and shame were major strategies of discrimination, as well as the threats and fears of hell in the afterlife. Likewise, knowing that their LGBTIQ+ identities would not be met with acceptance, strategic decisions about whether and when to make their identities known were constantly assessed. The research results concur with Lomash et al. (2019) that, given religious and spiritual communities are often sought out for support, it is likely that receiving microaggressions in these settings may drive MCMF LGBTIQ+ people away from the very support they are seeking.

We **recommend** engagement with faith leaders to understand LGBTIQ+ communities and find links between LGBTIQ+ rights and human rights with religious teachings to start the process of inclusion.

We **recommend** the state government to be the main driver of this conversation and engagement, and to work with MCMF LGBTIQ+ communities for reconciliation of faith and LGBTIQ+ identities that is specific to their belief system, and for faith leaders to be equipped with practical tools and strategies for LGBTIQ+ inclusion that relate to religious values and teachings.

We **recommend** religious leaders focus on their socio-spiritual leadership that upholds their religious teachings about human rights and valuing human lives to welcome and support MCMF LGBTIQ+ individuals and their families and communities.

This will also counteract those MCMF LGBTIQ+ individuals who feel they have no other option but to disengage from communities of faith.

Of concern was the prevalence of being unable to respond to ROFD through contacting religious leaders, events managers or the police. The most common response was avoiding, leaving and/or not returning to the space.

We **recommend** police be across all the intersectionalities without negative repercussion to faith communities, and to listen to and work with religious leaders in undertaking welcoming campaigns for LGBTIQ+ people and clear procedures for addressing reports of ROFD.

While discrimination did make religious spaces unwelcoming or inconsiderate, MCMF LGBTIQ+ individuals believed they provided many positives, such as a set of values and spiritual strength that were seen as separate to institutional heteropatriarchal religion, which they believed was increasingly revealing its flaws and commanded less power. Our results concur with Rosenkrantz et al. (2016) that individuals who identified as both LGBTIQ+ and religious/spiritual described a number of positive aspects of their experience at this intersection: finding love and acceptance for their LGBTIQ+ identity, finding a deeper meaning and purpose, having a passion to live religious/spiritual values, drawing on spiritual strength for facing stigma and prejudice, and experiencing positive relationships with families/partners/communities in a shared religious/spiritual identity. "This highlights navigation as a legitimate strategy to manage complex and diverse identities, and that rather than an indication of shame, navigation allows for the retention and strengthening of all aspects of one's identities" (Budi, personal correspondence).



Our results support and **recommend** establishing what Akande (2019) terms the 'Third Space', a religious and social institution that seeks to fulfil the particular needs of a faith community which are not being met by mosques, schools or traditional religious institutions.

It can be more informal settings such as a community centre, café, library or social media networking site that seeks to provide a safe space free from religious, racial and cultural discrimination, and a greater focus on social, economic, cultural and spiritual needs. Akande's concept is very similar to what Abdou (2019) proposes as integral to a 'queer Muslim critique' which 'seeks to counter colonial representations and affirm queer Muslim intellectual histories to foreground multiplicity amongst Muslims' (2019: 83).

We **recommend** applying a queer decolonial critique to all faiths to allow for the creation of diverse spaces that cater for intra-faith diversity (Pallotta-Chiarolli 2020).

We **recommend** supporting faith-based LGBTIQ+ groups for inter-faith peer connections, and spiritual health and wellbeing, with state government playing a key role in this.

As we write this report, the Religious Discrimination Bill is under debate. It specifies religious exemptions, allowing for the rejection of MCMF LGBTIQ+ communities from religious schools and

churches (Gogarty et al. 2018). It results in a conflict between the rights of religious institutions and the rights of MCMF LGBTIQ+ communities, without considering individuals and groups on the borders within and between (Baines 2015; Zaharin & Pallotta-Chiarolli 2020).

To be clear, MCMF LGBTIQ+ individuals are not always rejected from religious institutions. For example, many churches and places of worship, as well as cultural groups, are taking actions to be more inclusive and accepting of gender and sexual diversity. For example, Jewish communities and the Jewish Communities Council of Victoria (JCCV) are implementing supports and inclusive strategies for LGBTIQ+ members (Abramovici 2018; Ansara 2018; Barnett 2018); some Catholic and other Christian groups are communicating their acceptance (Oh 2018); and some Muslim organisations are supporting the intersectionality of Islam and being LGBTIQ+ (Mohammadally 2018; Sweid 2018).

We **recommend** that MCMF LGBTIQ+ groups be supported to develop and support specific cultural or faith groups, providing necessary support to the individuals within them (Pallotta-Chiarolli 2018a; 2019).



## Higher education settings and spaces

### Experiences of ROFD: Higher education settings and spaces

51% studied at a university/TAFE or at another adult education setting such as CAE.

51% (n=58) of survey respondents self-reported they had studied at a university/TAFE setting or taken a course at an organisation such as CAE in the last three years. The majority of respondents did not experience ROFD in their educational institutions.

These results were similar for our focus group and interview participants. For example, international student participants explained the intersectionality of living and studying in Australia:

*IS2: Being LGBT and being an international student, it's two different things. In terms of international students, it's because we're coming to a new country. We need to adjust. We need to try to make a living here, so that's establishing a life. I don't think being an LGBT member plays a big part of that, because I do feel that it's really progressive here. So, you can just be yourself and people respect you for that.*

*IS1: They even have Christians who are queer groups. Especially in a very multicultural city like Melbourne, everywhere you go you hear all kinds of different languages. People are from everywhere. I actually live with two lesbians. We share the same culture. We cook the same stuff, so we always share with each other.*

Of the 29 respondents who had experienced discrimination, microaggressions were the most common (83%), followed by feeling unsafe (45%).



Answer Choices	%	#
Microaggressions (e.g. Passive aggressive behaviours)	82.76%	24
Feeling not safe	44.83%	13
Verbal aggression/abuse (e.g. name calling)	20.69%	6
Physical aggression/abuse (e.g. assault)	3.45%	1
Sexual aggression/abuse (e.g. inappropriate touching)	3.45%	1
Total		29

Similarly, focus group and interview participants who had experienced ROFD described most as being covert, such as being ignored and undervalued.

*I and my Asian friend, we talked about how different we felt we were being treated compared to other students and during informal discussions, some of our opinions would be just ignored as if they don't make sense. But it's not very explicit kind of discrimination. It's like I'm a fly on the wall, it's as if they didn't hear anything. (GAF4)*

Having 'passing privilege' was a factor in how much discrimination was experienced in educational settings and spaces. Rather than an indication of shame, passing was a strategy to navigate intersectional identities based on context.

*I get the experience of being rejected because I'm not white. And then being loved because I am white [because half-Anglo]. I think it's fascinating, but it's really quite troubling. (I8)*

*[They say] 'Look at the transwoman, she looks so big', but she doesn't know that next to her is a transwoman, me, as well. [RAS2]*

*When I first came to Australia, I attached myself to the Muslim students and I didn't tell them that I'm a trans, and they accept me because I have this thing called passing privilege where they didn't know, they never questioned. (I15)*

Australian-born MCMF LGBTIQ+ students and graduates working at universities were aware of the particular issues international students experienced but felt unable to offer assistance.

*Especially the Chinese international students, even if they wanted to discuss that [their sexuality] with me and they noticed that, 'Oh, I8 talked about his sexuality in day one', I think their cultural approach to teachers and how they revere teachers so much, you don't dare go and bother the teacher. Even though I tell them I want them to ask me questions, that prevents them. (I8)*

The lack of support offered to international students by university systems and structures in relation to the ROFD they were experiencing, and would experience in the workplace, was the most significant issue.

In the following, a participant who works with international students in a university describes the injustices he witnesses within a corporatised university sector more focused on 'cash cows' and 'profit business' than human rights.

*Half of me wanted to tell international students that some of your names are going to be a barrier in their hunt for jobs, here in Australia. But then, do I want to tell international students, 'I'm sorry. Your lovely culturally appropriate Indian name or Chinese name, throw that away. You've got a wasted name'. I don't want to. How do you balance the need to be in your own culture and the need to manage a slightly racist workforce, or slightly racist or bigoted recruiters. And perhaps they're not getting the support from their family or have been cut off from their family or just having to deal with the stress of being not normal, as far as their home country is concerned. ... I think that we need legislation that we have a duty of care to these people that come to us for education.*

*They're not cash cows. These are vulnerable human beings, especially if their home country has anti-queer laws or strong anti-queer sentiments. ... our duty of care doesn't end once they can't pay their fees. And so, some sort of training or education or service that happens before they start studying, so that all international students understand life in Australia. And there's no shame. There's no judgement in accessing support services. Like, 'We have this student who is quite possibly eligible to be some sort of refugee. Because if he goes back home, they're going to get abused' .... It's not a profit business. It's human rights. And if we have enough international students who are returning home damaged, who are not getting a good experience, then our international education export is going to dry up and our economy is going to tank. So, it's not just a moral issue. It has economic realities. ... I put so much more blame on the government and the university for not enabling them to engage. (I8)*





This concurs with Wilkinson's findings that the attitudes of institutions and professional staff were positive overall 'but possibly more passive than pro-active' (2016: 14). When asked if being LGBTQ had affected respondents' experiences of studying in Australia, 23% said positively, 3% said negatively, and 23% said both positively and negatively (Wilkinson 2016).

The survey respondents who did experience ROFD (n=32) reported it was due to their sexuality, ethnicity, skin colour or gender identity/expression.

Answer Choices	%	#
Because of my sexuality	53.13%	17
Because of my race/ethnicity	50.00%	16
Because of my skin colour	46.88%	15
Because of my gender identity	28.13%	9
Because of my gender expression	28.13%	9
Other (please specify)	15.63%	5
Because of my religion	9.38%	3
I don't know	3.13%	1
Total		32

Our focus group and interview participants expressed similar experiences of microaggression, such the following example of exoticisation.

*I definitely had a lot of anthropological experiences with people. I felt quite dissected. And sort of poked and prodded at. I invite conversation, but I don't invite being touched. I don't invite people asking me if this or that body part is like a woman's. People are so astonished by the things that I am that they forget that they're not in a fucking zoo. (I5)*

Focus group and interview international students were aware of ROFD experienced from other international students according to hierarchies of class, culture, country of origin and sexuality. This was framed by a university system that did not offer 'inclusion with specificity' interventions and programs, and indeed constructed a conservative insularity that segregated international students from domestic students and wider Australian historical and contemporary learnings. LGBTIQ+ inclusion policies in higher education may alienate international students as the strategies may not be culturally safe or speak to their identities and lived experiences.

In the following, an international student describes a range of intersectional experiences of ROFD within a system that does not undertake 'inclusion with specificity' programs and practices.

*It's like discussion with a Chinese guy in the training centre. My name's very Middle Eastern and he asked, 'Why you guys have four wives?' And my answer, 'Look, I cannot afford to fuel my car when I was in Jordan, do you think that I can afford four wives?'... [international student services] are struggling with hybrid cultures. Like I'm out of their plan. I'm not one of their rich clients. 'We have a Middle Eastern guy, he's bisexual, he's agnostic and he's not right on money stuff'... Other students know that they are important. One of Saudi students say 'You are from Jordan. You are from a country that's not rich, so they don't care about you'. And also the visa application and the university application, they keep asking, 'Are you terrorist? No, I'm not a fucking terrorist'. Universities don't have the initiative to make events to meet locals. Sounds like 'we don't like our local kids meeting these rich aliens. You coming from developing countries, you have to be in your own spaces. Don't socialise with us'. And that's obvious and offensive ... Somebody talk to me about Australia, about the diversity of this country. ... Something that shocked me, that the Australians working there, they become also conservative in a way. Even the books, it's an English book about research skills and academic writing. All of our examples come from two countries, China and Saudi Arabia. Why? I'm in Australia. And nobody talks*

*about Aboriginals. I mentioned that to our teacher. 'Guys, you have three flags on the reception desk, and nobody talks about the third one'. And I use the statement, 'Money, they blind the universities. This is disgusting'... There's not any kind of activities related to LGBT. Where's the events? In this college, there is no posters holding the rainbow flag, or LGBT friendly stuff. But on the other hand, they are in some areas in the university that they know international students will not go there. Actually after four months in Australia, I started reconsidering my decision. I'm kind of stressed all the time, because I'm putting on masks. I have concerns about safety, somebody rape you, somebody take your money. In a language class, I choose a topic about LGBT. And while I'm presenting, some people go out the room, nothing was done about that. We're going to lose 170 for \$10,000, but we're not going to lose 20 Saudi students with millions of dollars. So I felt like I'm stuck again with dealing with conservative cultures. They care about their customer and the customers are the majority from conservative cultures. And some don't know what's the meaning of LGBT. They overlook people from minorities, or from different gender identity. They label me with the Saudi students because they assume that we come from the same background, but we are not. ... they teach us don't over-generalise, and they over-generalise and assume if you are Middle Eastern students, you're straight, you're praying five times a day. Look, I have a very liberal lifestyle in my home country. (I10)*



# Responses to ROFD: Higher education settings and spaces

39% did nothing in response to ROFD in education settings and spaces

When asked how they responded to ROFD in educational settings and spaces, the majority of students (n=33) mostly did nothing (39%), followed by sharing the situation with family and friends, leaving the situation, or notifying management or teachers.

Answer Choices	%	#
I did nothing	39.39%	13
I told my family and/or friends	15.15%	5
I physically removed myself from the situation	12.12%	4
I notified the teacher and/or mgmt at school/college/university	12.12%	4
Other (please specify)	12.12%	4
I reacted back (e.g. yelled back, hit back)	6.06	2
I avoided going there again	3.03	1
I contacted the police	0.00%	0
Total		33

Those survey respondents who did undertake some action added the following in the open-ended section of the question. They indicate actions were undertaken with peers rather than with administration/management.

I named the behaviour, bringing it to the attention of the group

Had help from student advocates

I sought an ally in the group and challenged the person's behaviour

Focus group and interview participants explained they 'did nothing' and gave reasons for this:

The Catholic uni has a small population of queers and so when you're visibly queer, you're a target, and the uni is full of kids who have gone through the Catholic school system. So I've been assaulted on campus, and I can't report it because there's no reporting for bullying for queers specifically. And I've been arguing since I've been there to have a way for queers to report things, and there's a queer society now. And one of the teachers had been fighting to be able to put rainbow flags on his door so that people knew they could talk to him, and the university's response was, 'We've done enough for the queers'. ... No, I didn't bother, it's just another thing that I take on. There isn't a process, there's no point. ... it's very intimidating to know that my university could expel me before I apply for my qualification, it's defining my future. (14)

Refugee and asylum seeker student focus group and interview participants had mixed responses regarding when they might approach universities for help. In the following, a participant discusses how international students may do sex work if they find themselves cut off from family support, given the sexualisation and fetishisation of Asian trans and gender

diverse young people in Australia. She explains how she would turn that into an income and was fortunate to be at a university that quickly attended to her needs.

I decided, if you have sex with me, you have to pay. If I met someone and he's willing me 10,000 grand a month to meet him every now and then, I'm like, why not ... Yeah, Muslim transwomen, especially from Malaysia that I know, and I don't know whether they like it, or whether it's the way they need to do, is that they become like sex workers ... we're cut from our families, so scared not having my scholarship money since I was still waiting for my settling the visa asylum case. One time they just cut my payment and they were like, 'Oh, we have a new policy now'.

Even when I wanted to get explanations for why, 'You're just not entitled to any payments anymore'. ... but I was lucky after that because I changed to a university that is very supportive of LGBTQ people. When I told them about my issues, they said, 'Oh, yeah, we're going to give you scholarship' ... (115)

Some focus group and interview students talked about how it took strength and 'walking away from that damaging educational institution' before they could pre-empt any ROFD in the next place they attended.





The following story provides examples of ROFD experienced in the past by a student and the strength required to self-advocate and pre-empt any future discrimination.

*I am really at a place where my self-respect is so grounded. In the beginning of my new course, I went up to my two teachers and said, 'Look, I'm non-binary. This means this. This means that. These are my pronouns. I just wanted to let you know moving forward because if not, I would be mis-gendered and that would cause harm.' They were really receptive, I felt good about it. Whereas last year, I wasn't in a place where I felt like I could advocate in that way. Take the gender stuff out of it, there was still such prevalent racism. ... the racist teacher would be like, when I was laughing about [Christian] religion, 'I19, it's okay if you're religious, because it's so deeply ingrained in your culture'. I was gobsmacked because 'Is this just colonisation 3.0?' It's like I've*

*de-colonised and now you're telling me 'This is your faith'. ... that's one of the main reasons I stopped going to the campus I went to last year, and because there was a bullying incident. It was just so disheartening. I was sitting on the steps of a spiral staircase, and then I realised that something was dripping and I was like, 'Oh, is it raining?' No. I was having water poured on me, or what I think is water I'm hoping. And there was laughter. And someone was also walking down the staircase, looked up and continued to walk away. And then, the facelessness of it, because they were above, they could then move back. I guess that just speaks to how the feeling of racism can't be pinned down and how it's so faceless, how it moves, how it's very like a chameleon. Well, being someone who's still doing intensive work on myself that brought out so much. So I stepped away from learning there because I realised my mental health came before this. (I19)*



## Contacting management

Of the four survey respondents who contacted management or reported incidences to staff, only one was satisfied with the outcome. This was similar to the few focus group and interview participants who contacted management, such as the postgraduate tutor in the following first example who lost faith in 'official channels'.

*I actually had a student from the Christian group last year try and convert me to Christianity. The university completely and utterly mishandled it and the student was allowed to continue to study, so it was just fucking ridiculous. [The student] asked me to meet and wouldn't tell me what it was about, and when we met, they launched into this half hour trying to convert me to Christianity. Then they found my personal email a couple weeks later and emailed me for an entire day, like every half hour to hour just asking me to explain to them why Jews don't believe in Jesus. ... The student got a slap on the wrist and I got sweet fuck all. ... I think it obviously varies from university to university, and I would say that if that sort of thing happened to me at a different university, or the university where this happened originally, yeah, I would initially try to go through official channels, but my faith in those channels supporting me is eroding. I would potentially feel prompted to actually take things into my own hands. I'm sweet as pie and I do everything to make things go by the books and be as easy and painless as possible, but if I get pushed, no one is going to have a good time, basically. (I15)*

*Actually when you say, 'I want to complain', they're going to be happy because it's a kind of, 'Okay, it's another way to relieve his stress'. At the meeting they asked me, 'Did you improve your English language here?' And I said, 'Do you want me to be honest?' And they said, 'Yeah'. And his face like embarrassing. And I said, 'Yeah, I'm improving my language, my Arabic language, in Saudi slang, and I improve some Chinese vocabulary. I need to speak with Aussies to improve my language, to improve my pronunciation'.... [After the meeting, I received a letter]. I'm going to read it. 'As a result of our meeting, I have made the following suggestion for actions with management. I have been assured that this will be taken into consideration for planning for 2020 and beyond. The first one, professional development for staff dealing with the students around the different cultures, and beliefs in Middle Eastern countries ...[second] changing the culture of interfaith prayer room spaces to explore opportunities for different spiritual sessions'. But no actions followed the suggestions. (I10)*

## Contacting police

No police contact was reported by either survey respondents or focus group and interview participants.



# Reflections on higher education settings and spaces

Overall, the majority of survey respondents felt that their educational institutions were welcoming and considerate of their needs.

Answer Choices	%	#
My education setting welcomes people like me...		
Disagree	9.26%	5
Somewhat disagree	16.67%	9
Somewhat agree	40.74%	22
Agree	33.33%	18
Total		54

Answer Choices	%	#
My education setting considers the needs of people like me...		
Disagree	18.52%	10
Somewhat disagree	22.22%	12
Somewhat agree	33.33%	18
Agree	25.93%	14
Total		54

Focus group and interview participants who were not 'out' at the beginning of their studies found these settings positive enough to gradually disclose.

*It's normal being gay. I think most people in college be friendly, maybe ask why you're here. And mostly they know Malaysia is a Muslim country, they accept. So our college give us any help, it's like family. Everything is safe. (RAS2)*

*If you start to know someone and you be friends with him, and he meet me every day in the school so he starts to know me more, and later it's like, 'Oh, this is my sexuality' and he doesn't mind it. (I14)*

Also significant was the number of students, particularly international students, who proactively selected the universities they would attend based on how welcoming they were to LGBTIQ+ people and cultural/faith diversity.

*When I'm choosing regions, I want to be in a city or an environment where it is more accepting of who I am. ... I thought that it would be nice to come to a city where it's open arms to people about their sexualities. (IS2)*

This concurs with Wilkinson's (2016) findings that 40% of respondents felt that their sexual orientation/gender identity made Australia more attractive as a study destination.

## Summary and recommendations: Higher education settings and spaces

In summary, our results regarding higher education settings demonstrate that only a minority of research participants experienced overt ROFD, while it still exists as forms of microaggression. Racism and religious bigotry were the prevalent forms of discrimination.

Of concern was the larger number of international students who experienced a range of ROFD based on their intersectionalities. This discrimination came from other international students, the wider student population, the university system, the broader faith and cultural communities, and wider society due to the power structures that support white heterocisgenderism.

We **recommend** a stronger focus on policies, resources and strategies to develop a more inclusive educational setting that equally addresses inter- and intra- minority group specificities, such as LGBTIQ+, class, faith and cultural intersectionalities.

Also of concern was participants feeling unable to respond to ROFD through official university channels or the police. The most common response to ROFD was not responding, leaving the university, or trying to deal with it themselves or with student allies. Responding required various personal and interpersonal skills, such as language proficiency, knowledge of the university system, and self-advocacy. Responding to ROFD may be seen as emotionally laborious, especially against a bureaucratic tertiary education system. This concurs with Asquith and Ferfolja's (2020) finding that fear of discrimination, harassment and violence, in itself affects LGBTIQ+ staff and students significantly, leading to an avoidance of participation in some activities because of possible prejudice or discrimination, and believing they are safer if they hide their sexuality or gender identity.

We **recommend** a streamlined process for MCMF LGBTIQ+ individuals to address discrimination based on their intersectional identities with a clear grievance procedure in place, including identifying an ally network with competency in intersectionality.

We also **recommend** Victoria Police establish relationships with the tertiary education sector as a prevention strategy against discrimination through ongoing engagement and education that caters for the needs of MCMF LGBTIQ+ and its intersectionalities.

Finally, although the brief for this report was researching ROFD in higher education settings, we acknowledge that early education, primary and secondary school settings are still places where intersectional attributes can be issues that lead to bullying and harassment. Indeed, our focus group and interview participants who were teachers discussed this.

We **recommend** ongoing policy, program and practice that engages with intersectionality in students, staff and the broader school communities of families and community organisations.



# Workplace settings and spaces

## Experiences of ROFD: Workplace settings and spaces

95% were employed in some capacity

95% (n=82) of our survey participants said they were employed in some capacity. Almost two thirds of the employed individuals (n=51) experienced ROFD within their workplace, with the majority of these, 84% (n=43), being microaggressions.

Answer Choices	%	#
Microaggressions (e.g. Passive aggressive behaviours)	84.31%	43
Feeling not safe	45.10%	23
Verbal aggression/abuse (e.g. name calling)	37.25%	19
Sexual aggression/abuse (e.g. inappropriate touching)	11.76%	6
Physical aggression/abuse (e.g. assault)	3.92%	2
Total		51

In the open-ended section, a survey respondent added:

*For several years I was bullied by exclusion - e.g. boss buying gifts for my team members but not for me, being refused promotions, and then me eventually missing out on an education opportunity due to him causing me mental harm.*

Likewise, only a minority of our focus group and interview participants had experienced complete acceptance of their intersectional selves.

*I work at an Italian biscuit company and I love my job. My workplace, I'm free. Free like a brother, like a son. My boss is like, 'When are you getting married? Are you going to find your man to marry you or not?' (RAS2)*

*My mum's like, 'Don't tell anyone at work, they're going to discriminate against you, they might bash you'. That's what happened in her era when people do discriminate really heavily against LGBTQ. But what they don't realise is that it's different now. We have laws against that now. (LJA1)*

57% felt discrimination was directed towards them mainly due to their ethnicity

Survey respondents (n=53) felt that the discriminations were directed towards them mainly due to their ethnicity (57%), their skin colour (40%), and their sexuality (38%)

Answer Choices	%	#
Because of my race/ethnicity	56.60%	30
Because of my skin colour	39.62%	21
Because of my sexuality	37.74%	20
Because of my gender expression	20.75%	11
Because of my gender identity	16.98%	9
Other (please specify)	15.09%	8
I don't know	7.55%	4
Because of my religion	5.66%	3
Total		53

Most of the focus group and interview participants recounted examples of ROFD they had experienced in their workplace settings and spaces from recruitment to everyday workplace interactions, to familial and personal entitlements, to promotion and leadership opportunities. Again, ROFD was undertaken in microaggressive ways, which made it very difficult to name and address, and was not recognised by white, heterosexual, cisgendered colleagues.

*One of the trickiest forms of discrimination is when you never hear back ... So if, for example, I have applied for 100 jobs and only heard back about one, that might be something, but I can't say for sure because no-one has actually said, 'Well, we don't want you for the job because you are a foreigner'. Like, no-one's going to say that, because there are anti-discrimination provisions in the law. ... When I first started working, it took me maybe even 70% more applications to get the job that I have now than certain other people, like you get colleagues from lectures who were Anglo-Australian, they found jobs maybe with 10% of the effort that I had to put in ... The other thing is, once you've become part of the workplace you still encounter subtle forms of discrimination ... people ignore you at meetings. ... I think when I'm talking to people who I work with closely, any preconceptions disappear because we have moved past that point. But when you meet people you haven't worked with before, and they have certain implied or explicit cultural prejudices, then it's very hard. (I2)*

On the next page, is one participant's experiences of everyday microaggressions, UUBD, objectifications and cultural know-it-alls, and how they can accumulate to make a workplace stressful due to the lack of consistency in the application of workplace codes to all employees:



One of the directors in the lunchroom was trying to do chit-chat with me and she was like, 'Oh, I went to the Philippines. I ate really great food. Do you cook a lot?' I'm like, 'No'. And she's like, 'Oh, you should, because you should bring it to work. Oh, what about your parents? Did they cook a lot?' I'm like, 'No' because I was just trying to shut the whole conversation down. And she's like, 'Oh, okay. Maybe you should get some really good recipes from them' and I'm like, 'I just said they don't cook'. And then, 'You should write them down, and it'd be really good to get some good recipes.' I'm thinking, why are we continuing this conversation, because all you think you know about my culture is my food ... She's gone on her honeymoon to the Philippines, she knows all about the culture. But it's those kinds of experiences that I've accumulated over time.

For white folks, you kind of go, 'Sure, it's the too hard basket. You don't know what to do about it. I cannot believe you are in charge of needing to address anti-Semitic bullying because you're basically discussing the validity of whether or not it's racism. Anti-Semitism is just anti-Semitism. It gets treated both around culture and religion. Why are you picking it apart as if you've got to put it in a particular category? Just deal with it'. And it was just weird, the way that they were talking about it, as if it was something to be debated. Just do something.

I recently got a new boss and felt like she was treating me really differently compared to the rest of my team. And I really couldn't pinpoint why. I feel like she was almost undermining me on purpose. Praising my team members for silly things, like printing out a piece of paper for her. She would be so effusive about that, but when I did something really great I would have no response or no praise. The difference was really quite stark. She would just not respond to my emails. Sometimes I would email the team and cc her in, she would cut me out of the email chain and direct emails to my team members to basically get my team to verify if I was correct, instead of just asking me directly. It's unprofessional, absolutely ... I was really seeing it through a racism lens, and whether or not because I'm a queer person of colour, the double discrimination that might be going on. As an Asian person I'm not rare in Melbourne but I'm probably one of four people of colour in a division of maybe 60.... And then, I'm the only queer person of colour. I've even spoken to other people who have been in her team. One person who is of Armenian background was like 'Yeah, for sure she's racist'. ... The thing is it's really hard. All I've got to go on is what my white colleagues see, and they see it through another lens. They go, 'Well, it's probably not that. Maybe she's threatened by you, maybe she's this, maybe she's that.' I'm like, 'Well, I'm telling you how it feels. I feel like it is racist, I feel like it is that sort of double discrimination.' (I9)

A lot of erasure, a lot of silencing ... with my colleagues, I think there's a lot of ignorance. One of my colleagues who's in the art department said, 'Just because people are gay, they don't have to announce it to the world'. And it's like, you're an art teacher. The art world is full of queer people. What the heck? (I12)

It's more what I call unconscious ignorance because in some cases when you introduce yourself, 'I'm from Colombia', they always tell something about what they know from your culture to show sympathy and create an affiliation. It goes, 'Oh, I was watching Narcos'. Seriously? It's very shocking because you're offending me as a Colombian relating me with drugs as usual. But to engage with you they say, 'Oh yes, I know Colombia'. They throw the most horrible political incorrect comments. But sometimes you just smile and you try to educate them. But it's like talking to incompetence. (I16)

Lack of leadership at the executive level in recognising and taking action against ROFD was raised, and prevarication was seen as demonstrating a position of power and privilege.





This story is an example of lack of vocal support and equity in everyday staff relations and workplace culture, such as who and what gets celebrated. While laws around diversity and inclusion are in place prohibiting overt ROFD, it can manifest covertly in everyday interactions and attitudes, and yet also lead to minorities meeting on the borders.

*Company's values were inclusive. Multiculturally very diverse. And they knew we were married, because I referred to him as my husband, but at no stage leading up to marriage equality passing did any of my colleagues actually ever say anything. Nothing about 'Congratulations the law changed'. I just didn't understand. And it made me very angry. ... the day that the law actually passed in Australia, it was coming to the end of my workday. I was very excited that this had happened. I have to hand over to the UK, and they hand over to America, and America hands over to Australia. Three geographies. And so I sent an email, the work-related stuff, and I also put that I was really excited that after 14 years of working hard at it, my marriage is now going to be recognised. Well, within five minutes of leaving work, my manager had emailed me and said that was not appropriate to put in the email. And this is to my team of people around the world, to share that this wonderful*

*thing has happened in my life. And that absolutely shattered me ... And I know that one of my colleagues was congratulated in a team meeting for having gone overseas for their honeymoon. But you know the ironic thing? Next morning, one of my US colleagues, a man of South Asian background, congratulated me, and then the next night in the UK, a Pakistani man who's Muslim, from a small sect who had told me about his persecution, and I had told him I come from a Jewish background, and I was in a same-sex relationship, and he had kind of gone silent. After this email, he congratulated me and said, 'I understand that is fantastic. I'm really happy for you. I understand what it's like having been through persecution and getting better.' That's the only person who actually said anything seriously meaningful, who wouldn't want his kids to be gay. But it was really quite a rewarding revelation. ... Was the reason that he [the manager] didn't want me to send that email because it might offend those people in the States who are gun-toting rednecks?... I just said I won't do it again. I didn't ask why... So on Wear It Purple Day, when I signed my email off, I changed the font colour to purple. A little bit subversive. No-one would know except me. I got away with it. (J1)*

*They ask, 'Are you out? Do your parents know? Oh you speak English so well'. I once had this lady on the phone saying, 'What's the weather like in your part of the world?' And then she started asking me questions as if I was a newly arrived foreigner to Australia. And she really probed me. The part that you're putting me in a box is what affects me. I feel like I'm a walking representative of my country sometimes, like anything that you do, anything that you say, will be taken as something that typically Indians do. (LD1)*

While some participants noted the presence of an ally network, they also felt that whiteness dominated this space with little attention given to the intersectionality between LGBTQ+, ethnicity and faith. This can result in the ally network and self-appointed white allies seemingly reluctant to understand intersectionality and increase their knowledge through additional training:

*Anti-Semitism and transphobia are the two biggest I've dealt with. I spent 15 years in community development and I've worked with diverse populations and hiding my sexuality and hiding my culture because you need to work in those places as a useful secular person on the outside viewing in ... And so I had to work with my boss and other staff, 'We actually need to talk about queerness with these communities so that I can do my job.' I ended up losing my job instead because what happens if the community can't access because you have a queer person they're not allowed to hang around? (I4)*





The following problematises policies and networks which in practice remain dominated by heterosexual, white and economically privileged groups.

*We do have a workforce inclusion strategy which does incorporate all the different diversities to ensure that staff are trained, that executives and leaders are trained. I don't really see it. The only visible thing is the Pride Network, and that's very white queerness. Of course that's important but we've got to elevate all diversities, not just one over another, because we can't silo. I can't separate my queerness from my experience of a person of colour. ... I remember he [branch leader] said 'What about unconscious bias training for the branch?' And they basically said, 'Oh, we don't need it, because you'd be preaching to the converted'. So they kind of feel like they're already knowledgeable, that they're not racist, that they're not homophobic. I think that was his way to try and insert it, but not successfully. ... We also have the survey every year. So every staff member gets asked if they've experienced discrimination. And I think for our branch it was a little bit higher than usual. And then because it was lower than other people's experiences of stress, workload management, change management,*

*it was like 'Nup, we don't need to deal with that because the majority of people are experiencing this. We need to address this first'. And it's kind of like you're prioritising workload management over discrimination, they're all interconnected. ... I also think about who occupies diversity and inclusion roles, and for a large part it is white, straight, middle to upper class people in the most powerful positions of those diversity inclusion spaces. ... How do you structurally ensure that there are people with the right passion and skillset to go into roles, as opposed to just finding your generalist HR person or someone who just went to a workshop once? They occupy roles of D&I advisors, D&I consultants. It's not about genuine engagement or understanding. My cousin went to a big, week-long diversity inclusion conference and she showed me photos, and it was just a whole bunch of white people. There was about two people of colour including my cousin amongst 40 people. ... It is hard unless you've had that conscious awakening to pick up on these things in strategies, in policies. Everyone needs that conscious awakening to never not see it ever again. (19)*

Given their multiple-minority identities, some participants felt various facets of themselves were either accepted or prevented them from being treated equally in the workplace, in promotions and in career advancement. In relation to LGBTIQ+ people of Asian heritage, this is often colloquially referred to as the 'bamboo ceiling' intersecting with the 'rainbow ceiling':

**GAF3:** *I have no issue when it comes to talking about homosexuality. However, it's different when talking of Asian. So I don't know, is it [discrimination] dealing with homosexuality or dealing with Asian? Or there's a bit of both that you don't know because of that unconscious bias?*

**GAF2:** *I feel that at work as well. I can feel my experience is more qualified than these Caucasian guys and when we applied for a job together, it's because I'm Asian, he's got the priority one. This is a behind doors decision.*

**GAF4:** *At first it wasn't very obvious until the first staff meeting, there are only two brown skin people here. With my dealings with some colleagues, if they find you to be opinionated and it's not what they think about Asian people, then they're like, 'I thought he's less intelligent.' Or like, 'How come he speaks English?' or, 'How come he can articulate this'... It's not really because I'm gay, but we're outsiders and these white people are mostly local. White Australians don't really have a lot of experience of working in other countries. So they're probably inward looking.*

Sometimes focus group and interview participants displayed intracultural bias themselves, based on intersectional factors such as class, level of education, and whether one is Australian-born.

**GAF2:** *I think it's ignorance because they don't know much about Asians, and then their perceptions about Asians is the one who come from the boats, they don't speak English and they're rough people, and they just generalise everyone. When they see us, they're like, 'Oh, shit this is an Asian. Sucky! Sucky! Five bucks.'*

**GAF1:** *Don't forget us as Asians, we do have our own unconscious biases.*

Sometimes focus group and interview participants found ROFD came from other LGBTIQ+ people in the workplace if they were not conforming to particular constructions of 'a proper gay person'(J2). This indicates a level of policing of identities in the workplace, whereby LGBTIQ+ people are still expected to conform to a set of standards set by the white, heterocisnormative system.

The issue of degrees of assimilation or passing to white/hetero/gendernormativity were also noted as either decreasing or increasing the likelihood of experiencing ROFD.

*When you have white skin, but you have a different culture, you don't have a right to practise your culture at work at all because the colour of your skin denies it to you. ... So maybe I should be a person of culture instead. (14)*



I don't think I have ever been denied a promotion because of my race. And, once again, maybe it's because I'm quite Australian, and the employer knows it, because I keep quite up to date with what's happening. Like I don't go to the footy match, but I do go for Essendon. And this is something that my parents told me, 'You're now in a new land, so try to immerse yourself into the new culture. You can't always just stand out'. So when at home we were always speaking Cantonese, but out in the rest of society, you just blend in. (I6)

I'm quite lucky because I can pass as a straight male. But maybe because I'm quite forward and I tell people that I'm gay and I have a husband, people don't want to attack me. I don't really have an accent ... I think, because I'm in a position of authority, it [ROFD] doesn't seem threatening to me and I'm quite willing to give them a straight answer as well. (I12)

Many focus group and interview participants found themselves navigating both the positive facets of being at work, such as earning an income and social connection, and the problems or potential for discrimination if their sexuality was openly expressed.

I'm working at a supermarket over the weekend. The owner is Jordanian. Even in Australia, I'm putting on a mask. I have a lot of masks. I have to go to Venice to bring another mask. ... But I like this work. And I mentioned that to the English school, 'Look guys, my experiences in the supermarket much better for improving the speaking skills'. And they ask me why? 'I met a lot of Australians. A lot of people from different backgrounds. And I have satisfaction in myself because, yeah, finally I found Australia. Finally I speak to Australians'. (I10)

I have [work]friends who told me that they voted no in the plebiscite. And they gave me their reasons, the yes campaign was just too forceful, it was too in their face. Maybe they thought that it would open the floodgates to whatever else people wanted.... Now I've decided to remain friends with some of these people. I have to remind myself that they're not bad people, they're just victims of the context they've grown up in. Which is tough, but I'm just one person and I'm fighting against a system, it's going to take time.... I've had jobs where I've been terrified to mention it in case I was fired. An employer would find a way to fire you. (J2)

## Responses to ROFD: Workplace settings and spaces

25% did nothing

In response to ROFD, most survey respondents (n=55) said they did nothing (25%), notified management (20%), or removed themselves.

Answer Choices	%	#
I did nothing	25.45%	14
I notified management	20.00%	11
I physically removed myself	18.18%	10
Other (please specify)	12.73%	7
I told my family and/or friends	10.91%	6
I avoided going there again	5.45%	3
I reacted back (e.g. yelled, hit)	5.45%	3
I contacted the police	1.82%	1
Total		55

The following written responses were by survey respondents. Note the description of action being seeking health support after experiencing very dire health circumstances:

I stood firm. talk rationally and reasonably.

I disassociated from everyone and attempted suicide

I told my parents and the workplace psychs who accused me of being schizophrenic. I told my boss that I was disappointed in him.

spoke to my very expensive, privately paid, therapist

Most focus group and interview participants also believed that addressing ROFD in workplace settings and everyday relations would have negative effects on their work standards, wellbeing and employment. Apprehended discrimination, vicarious trauma and fatigue were evident.

GAF2: I'm not out at work. I don't say anything about gay because they're all men, strong, and they don't even tolerate gay words and they make fun of all those gays come on TV. I feel kind of really hurt inside because they don't know that I'm gay. Or sometimes I feel I'm going to open, 'Don't say that because it's not right thing to say', but deep inside for me it's not a good place to open up being who I am, I just go there to work. ...Yeah, it is a male dominated area. They're all married guys and straight guys.

I do this as my job but I can't do it for myself. But I am my job. There's so much about what I do that is my personal. If you're experiencing something in the professional, it hits the personal, and then it'll hit back to your professional to want to just tap out of being a queer person of colour altogether. Feeling like shit because you feel like there's something wrong with you, which then starts to create scenarios of actually being shit because you don't have much energy, and all the flow-on effects from that. I don't have much faith in the structures of big giant organisations to handle the complexities of the micro-invalidations, the microaggressions, the real subtleties of those experiences, because we don't have a united front. (I9)



## Contacting management

20% notified their management, line supervisor or executives

Only 20% (n=11) of the survey respondents who had experienced ROFD had notified their management, line supervisors or executives. One respondent added:

*It was unsafe to make the manager aware. I moved jobs.*

Most focus group and interview participants also felt that contacting management and going through official complaints procedures would either be futile or detrimental to their health.

*Our Deputy Secretary basically addressed the whole group, 'Yes, we see that there is discrimination'. And I did give her feedback via anonymous text, 'I'm glad you called it out and will continue to call it out' because she basically said, 'Look, you can approach any one of our senior executives'. Problematic, number one, when I would not feel safe to tell this stuff to the executives because I know of incidences of bullying, and even my own experiences from those executives. But she's [Deputy Secretary] now got a whole new job, she's gone, and I have no faith in the new person who's a straight white man. I haven't really seen any focus on diversity inclusion in his leadership style ... It's like some of these people in management are waiting for someone to step forward. You have to have the energy. There's no pro-active, pre-emptive from them. (I9)*

*It's like if I did come across an issue it would be too much of a headache to try to deal with it (III)*

90% who contacted management did not feel the situation was adequately resolved

Unfortunately, 90% (n=10) of the survey respondents who did contact management did not feel the situation was adequately resolved. This was very similar to focus group and interview participants who were dismissed by managers who did not equally apply workplace policies to all faiths or, as I9 describes on the next page, their calling out of ROFD as middle managers means they are prevented from further career advancement.

*When we had Yom Kippur on a Saturday, which is a once in a lifetime thing, it's a big deal, I asked my boss if I could have the day off, which would be the first time I had ever asked for a day off. I was working seven days a week as a casual, and the rest of the staff were Muslim and I'm working in the Muslim community. My boss' response was, 'You get Christmas off'. And I said to him, 'You know they get Christmas off too? It's a public holiday'. Because I knew it was a comparison between me and the Muslim staff and since they got Eid off, I thought I'd ask, and it's a very conflicting blatant response. (I4)*

*I raised it with my ex-boss and she said, 'Let me just play devil's advocate' and basically just poo-pooed all my ideas that it could be some form of discrimination. She said, 'Think about what you could have done differently to prevent her cutting you out of that email chain. To make her feel more trusting of what you said'. And I'm like, 'Well, no, because it was so trivial, she just wasn't trusting the facts that had happened in the past'. And so I felt really unsupported. I started to go into that space of, 'Yeah, maybe I'm just a shit worker. I probably need to drop the level that I'm at, I should step down from being manager' ... And I wanted to step into this role because I wanted to ensure that queer people of colour are represented and can hold these positions ... but yeah, it's become untenable for me, I just can't operate in that space where I don't feel supported to be who I am or to be treated with respect. I raised the issue with my boss's boss. I'm like 'I've just run out of steam. I feel like I do get treated differently, I feel like there is unconscious bias there'. And he said, 'Okay, that's food for thought. I'll reflect on what I need to do about that'. And that was two months ago. ... no follow-up ... If anything, my boss just gets more praise. I'm the one that's still leaving. And he basically said, 'If there's anything I can do to help you find another job, cool', working from that discourse of, 'Okay, you might as well go'. He's not going to actually deal with the system and the issues. (I9)*

One participant describes similar discriminations as a teacher and having to proactively challenge without systemic support:

*One of the sports teachers actually complained to the principal that I was making the boys gay by being there. ... One of the things that I think I can rely on is my competence as a teacher, it's a protective factor. So I did get protection [but] nothing was done to that teacher. I did have a much bigger discrimination incident at another school, they describe themselves as a non-denominational school. I actually put in a formal letter of complaint of bullying from another PE teacher. He was going around telling the kids that I was gay and not to associate. And so in the hallways, I would get called names and I was physically pushed into lockers. ... There was a process where they investigated, and the student who told me denied the fact that he told me that it was going on. And so it didn't really go anywhere, but at least I felt good that the school had investigated it. I stayed on there a year after I made that complaint and it was really uncomfortable so I had to leave. But there are actual teachers who are not out, and I see these teachers struggling emotionally. ... [At my current school] I think my principal is quite nice and he wants to do things, but the Board is actually quite conservative because the community is very conservative. There are still a lot of race issues. I think it needs to come from a policy level, at the top, to give principals the permission to be stronger. To stand up to the Board and say, 'Hey, no, you can't tell me what to do around these issues because this is the policy, and we've been told it's okay to be visible'. (I12)*



In the following we see how multiple intersectional factors come into play when the participant tries to voice his concerns with certain practices at his workplace, even when the organisation espouses diversity and indeed conducts workshops on LGBTIQ+ inclusion. Also significant is the interconnection of personal work histories and vicarious trauma in witnessing what work colleagues have been through when they attempt to critique certain practices at work.

*There was a workshop on LGBTIQ and they produced a flyer which had symbols of the cross, the Aum, and a crescent moon and the Star of David, and representing all the faiths with a slash across it. And I was a bit offended not because I'm religious but this is a common theme. So when I saw that flyer I questioned it, 'Look, here am I working with multi-faith, multicultural people, queer people of colour, and that's not a narrative or an image that is going to be helpful with the work I do, that's not in line with "We're there for all". And the feedback I got was very vague. I only had two colleagues who've come up to me and said, 'What can I do?' and they're not people with power, whereas I have tried talking about this to my manager. I thought about it many times and I don't know where that dismissive behaviour is coming from, and I feel like maybe people think that faith is not such an important thing ...*

*After having a colleague at my workplace who went through bullying and racism and not validated, it took me some time to just sit in the closet and just shut up. Because I had seen him being treated very badly and dismissed so much that I felt he was isolated at work. And that caused massive fear in me. And the white workers all ended up blaming him saying he was rude. They blamed the individual rather than look at the system and the structure around him, because he was the only person of colour who was working there for so long...*

*I brought up the subject about a party on Invasion Day. And I just said, 'I think it's insensitive because we have Aboriginal workers and it's a dark history in Australia and is not a day that we want to celebrate'. And then I got a massive backlash. I was told, 'This has got nothing to do with Invasion Day, does that mean that we've got to stop all the celebration and sit at home and feel sad?' and that was the person I thought would at least listen. ...I always constantly have to check the safety. If I don't feel safe, I would draw back, so much so that I had to say like, 'Oh yeah, you're right' just so that I'm not at risk because I feel people are starting to get a bit anxious around me at work.*

*(Continue on next page)*

*It's tricky. I'm a migrant here, I'm trying to live, I'm trying to assimilate and be part of the mainstream workforce. ... I need to earn an income and feel safe at work. And I know how difficult it was for me when I first started. Yeah, because I came here with decent qualification and I think I speak fluent English. It took me three years to get a decent job. And every time I would go for an interview, I was told that there's 200 other migrants waiting for this job. I promise you that's what the employment agency told me. So it took me a really long time to start all the way from scratch, just to build myself up again. So sometimes I do have that fear that if I lose this job I don't know what my reputation would be as well.*

*I feel like the system wants us all in a glass case on their windows showing the world how diverse they are, but that's where it ends because they do not include what we think. So we are almost like dolls sitting in a glass case being displayed. (I17)*





## Contacting police

Only one survey respondent contacted the police; and reported not being satisfied and the situation not being adequately resolved.

Several focus group and interview participants discussed the questions and dilemmas that arise for them if they wish to take work-related ROFD to the police:

*Racial discrimination in any shape or forms is not acceptable, whether it's subtle or whether it's blatant, it's illegal, so you have the right to say to the police, 'I was discriminated against' without having to have a scar or blood or anything that extreme happen to you. I understand that now. But even now I feel very hesitant to report something which was subtle because I fear that I won't be taken seriously, or people would say you're making a big fuss over something that's minor, which is I think the casual racism. (SAGM2)*

*I think my support system would be my parents because I'm very afraid to go to the authorities and reporting to them that racism happened to me, because I don't want to be labelled as a troublemaker. If you report things, they say, 'He's a shit stirrer, he's a troublemaker, stay away from him, he's too sensitive'. Because I have a friend who runs an NGO specifically against racism, and everywhere he goes he's labelled a troublemaker because he reported the discrimination instead of just bearing it (SAGM5)*

## Reflections on workplace settings and spaces

The majority of survey respondents (n=74) felt that, overall, their workplace setting welcomed them and considered the needs of individuals like them.

Answer Choices	%	#
My workplace setting welcomes people like me...		
Disagree	10.81%	9
Somewhat disagree	16.22%	12
Somewhat agree	31.08%	23
Agree	41.89%	31
Total		74

Answer Choices	%	#
My workplace setting considers the needs of people like me...		
Disagree	16.44%	12
Somewhat disagree	21.92%	16
Somewhat agree	31.51%	23
Agree	30.14%	22
Total		73

Some focus group and interview participants agreed with this view.

*I can 100 percent say to you I had a very smooth ride from the get go from the leaders to working flexibly, parenting responsibility. I was very lucky. I work for a very progressive organisation, I was treated as I should be treated. In fact, credit to my employer. (I18)*

Having LGBTIQ+ leaders, managers and employers was considered a prime factor in workplaces being welcoming and considering their needs.

*My boss is gay as well, and we seem to have this relationship where he can come to my side on a quiet day and we can have more of a casual chat. (J2)*

*I've been very fortunate to work in my LGBTI community. Where I've had issues is the employment agency. 'Well are you going to change gender today? Are you going to live as a woman and swap as a man tomorrow?' I was absolutely mortified when they said that. (I3)*

Some participants said they actively searched for a workplace with strong visible diversity and inclusion policies and marketing.

*I looked for a company that was big on diversity and inclusion. I wanted to see that they had a multicultural group, I wanted to see that they had an LGBTI support network. I wanted to see that they were out there in the community. Because I chose a workplace based on that, I didn't actually experience racism. I probably had the opposite where there was a lot of celebration in the fact that I was diverse ... But in saying that, I work in banking, and if you look at the top bank executives, it probably used to be white males as the heads, now I think there's a real push to gender equality as well as cultural metrics so you see a bit more diverse representation. ...*

*I would say advertising makes a difference, so the perception of the company when you look at who are they representing in their ads. Then looking at the social media, who are they posting, and then talking to people who work there and are culturally diverse and getting a firsthand kind of experience of that. Those were probably my main categories. (I1)*

**J2:** *My first interview I wore a kippah on my head because I wanted to make a statement to be both gay and Jewish. And they were like, 'You're great, you've got the job'. And I was like, 'Woo hoo!'*

**J1:** *You ticked all our diversity boxes! Quota filled!*

J1's comment, 'quota filled', draws attention to an issue for some focus group and interview participants: the need to differentiate between feeling welcomed and being tokenised; having specific cultural, faith and other needs met and being minoritised or harmed by visibility.

*A problem that I have with some allies who are overly enthusiastic and who don't really understand sexuality. ... I think you just need to ask people who identify before you do anything. Make sure that there's consultation. And that people will be willing to put their hand up .... I felt a bit uncomfortable or unsafe and put a lot of responsibility, 'Well, I feel this way, should I be out?' (I12)*



Focus group and interview participants appreciated everyday workplace cultures where relations with peers, management and employers were good-humoured, comfortable with cultural and sex/gender differences, and equitable in relation to facets such as promotions.

*There weren't queer men and you had to have the guts to work in this tough environment of the mining industry and I'm so happy that my employer has a strong inclusivity diversity policy in practice. You see all the beautiful things that they promote on LinkedIn and I will love to work back with them if I had the opportunity. ...*

*[At my current job] I expect that when the opportunity will come, I will get promoted. If I'm going to have a performance review, it will be a fairest performance review. It's not like they're going to bring your self-esteem down with horrible comments. But say, 'Unfortunately in this journey, these people are running ahead of you. For A or B reason, they will get the flower first'. And I say, 'Okay, I'll wait for my time, no drama'. But you don't tell me that I'm misbehaving or underperforming when you know that is not true. I don't feel myself judged or discriminated. It's more like, 'Okay, prove me. Okay Cinderella, get that shoes and run. Show me'. Look, they don't care who you are, what you do, just perform, deliver and work. So that's a positive challenge for me. It's an equal around...*

*Generally my colleagues see me as a person that they can trust, so they come to talk to me and they also vent when they don't feel happy with some situations at the workplace and I try close those gaps and avoid the misleading and the misunderstanding. So generally when I go talk to my leaders or my peers, it's more like, 'Guys, what's going on here? But, okay, what is your side of the story? What can we work together to get this done?' With my boss I have a laugh sometimes. I know he likes when I have my sassiness and he reply back trying to imitate me, and I don't see him that he's trying to offend me. I think that he's a kind gentleman ... the guys are pretty open and I like it that the jokes are adult and are inclusive, cheerful. You don't feel like they are trying to shoot you down. ... if there is a Christmas party, we'll bring our partners and they integrate, or sometimes they show up in our building and we introduce to our colleagues. So they create an idea of who you are in and outside of work, the conversation includes that part of your life. (I16)*

*I don't want to be the token queer person of colour on the pedestal just for show. You feel like the show pony, 'We'll just roll out this person because it makes the rest of us look good,' rather than wanting me to look good because I am good. I was doing multicultural work but then a part of me was like, 'Am I being used? Am I the token queer person of colour that has to do this work because I'm the only one, visibly, that could? More about my attributes than about my skill?' where I want it to be a bit of both. Don't include me for your purposes. Include me because I should be included. Hear me because I should be heard. Don't hear me and include me because this benefits you for whatever reason. (I19)*

Having other LGBTIQ+ employees increased the likelihood of being out and being accepted, albeit with ambiguous caveats regarding how deep was the acceptance and did it rely on certain 'eccentric', entertaining or expected behaviours, or on knowing the employee would 'stand up for himself'.

**GAF3:** *They hired a fixed-term who is as gay as Judy Garland but everyone loved him.*

**GAF1:** *Because he is quite an eccentric, yeah.*

**GAF3:** *Yes. I think he can stand up for himself as well. So I think it's accepted and because he fights as well. ...*

**GAF1:** *I'm pretty lucky. I'm a lot more extrovert. It's sort of you're putting on an extra personality because you double up your gayness. I must confess that when I walk into a room at work I will actually kind of like, 'Come on, hello, look at me. I'm here now, let's start this thing'. I don't shy away from that. But personally, I'm a lot more quieter when I'm at home.*

In workplaces that were supportive and welcoming, participants enjoyed some respectful questioning of their cultures, genders and sexualities and saw it as a teachable moment.

*My colleagues are inquisitively curious, you know, why do you fast, why do you do this, why is your Easter so late? Why your Christmas is so late? They weren't, in any way, disruptive or discouraging or dispiriting, they weren't intolerant or anything. If anything, they would open their eyes. (I13)*



## Summary and recommendations: Workplace settings and spaces

In summary, our results regarding workplace settings demonstrate that a majority of participants experience ROFD, and it was considered microaggressive rather than overt. Racism was the prevalent form of discrimination.

Of concern was the feeling of not having issues resolved by management despite diversity and inclusion policies. Existing policies were often dismissed as ineffectual and insignificant or not implemented. And if participants were in positions of leadership, their efforts to use the policies could easily be undermined. Willis found a number of reasons for not using formal mechanisms, including 'feeling deterred by the burden of proof, difficulties in seeking other witnesses and the potential risk to their employment and the way they may be treated in the future' (2012:1602). Chan & Erbey (2017) also write of the 'burdens of proof', having to constantly work extremely hard to prove themselves competent.

The most common response to ROFD was not responding, leaving the workplace, or trying to deal with the situation themselves. Apprehended discrimination and vicarious trauma greatly affected whether and how a person would respond. Our findings concur with those of Willis (2012) regarding how witnessing discriminatory commentary can both constrain and mobilise how

LGBTIQ+ workers express their sexuality at work and workplace discriminations. Willis called for further 'examination of the experiences and effects of witnessing the discriminatory treatment of others – being a third party to the exchange of homophobic commentary in organizations' (2012: 1590). In earlier work, Yep described the effects of 'discursive violence': 'The words, tone, gestures, and images that are used to differentially treat, degrade, pathologize, and represent lesbian and gay experiences' (2002: 170). These microaggressions 'reiterate collective beliefs about sexuality based differences and reinforce heterosexuality as the invisible norm' (2002: 170).

In our research, responding required strong leadership, a comfortable workplace environment, self-confidence and equity. Participants were aware of inauthentic inclusion or diversity such as tokenism and the performance of a particular stereotype palatable to and enjoyed by colleagues. As Willis writes, not responding can be seen as negatively constraining the expression and disclosure of their sexual identity and/or as an active means of avoiding the sexual stereotypes and potential hostility of others (2012: 1650). However, this leaves the perpetrator's or dominant group's systemic and structural inequities unaddressed and limits the scope for employees to seek support from others. It remains the sole responsibility of the individual to speak out.

As Willis (2020) reported, LGBTIQ+ people in organisations with strong LGBTIQ+ leadership were one and a half times as likely as workers with none, to be out at work. 'It's more than policies, though. Workplace culture counts' (2020: 40).

We **recommend** that workplace inclusion and diversity policies address power structures and power dynamics that can result in an inclusion/exclusion binary, especially for MCMF LGBTIQ+ employees.

We **recommend** LGBTIQ+ inclusion policies specify the unique needs of MCMF LGBTIQ+ people by addressing intersectionality and creating a culturally safe environment that embraces racial, ethnic, faith backgrounds amongst other intersectionalities such as age, disability and migration status.

We **recommend** LGBTIQ+ allies to be well-versed in intersectionality and MCMF LGBTIQ+ communities, and for MCMF people to be encouraged to join the ally network to provide support for MCMF LGBTIQ+ people.

We **recommend** a transparent grievance process concerning MCMF LGBTIQ+ employees, and for workplaces to challenge the status quo by addressing power imbalances that negatively impact MCMF LGBTIQ+ employees.

Hence, addressing ROFD is constructed as a shared responsibility of allies, leaders and peers without 'spotlighting' the victim, for if the labour required to address issues for oneself become too exhausting, 'discriminatory encounters remain unreported and therefore unrecognized and unacknowledged by management' (Willis 2012: 1650).





## Healthcare settings and spaces

### Experiences of ROFD: Healthcare settings and spaces



96% of survey respondents had visited a health service in the last three years. Within these healthcare settings, the majority of respondents had not experienced ROFD.

The majority of focus group and interview participants described a range of positive experiences, including those who had attended health services chosen by family members in their hope of a 'cure' for their sexuality or trans or gender diversity.

The doctors were very supportive. They said, 'Look, it's just a natural occurrence'. Mum would make excuses like, 'No, this is an Anglo doctor. Obviously, we have to go to an Asian one.'. We went to an Asian one and same thing but, 'No, he's a man, he doesn't get it so we have to go to a woman doctor'. We went through the whole gender diversity, ethnic, they all said, 'No, there's nothing wrong with her'. It was when we finally came to the last doctor and I was getting a bit tired of it and I was like to the doctor, 'Look, we've been to five, and you're going to say the same thing, but maybe send us to a specialist' because my mum thought there was something wrong with my hormones or genetics or something, so the doctor sent me to a specialist. I had my blood test and I had my hormones tested, made sure my genes were all good, and once those results came back it was like, 'Yep, you've been tested. It's in print'. It's not much more Mum can do. (LJA1)

Many focus group and interview participants were very selective of the health services they attended or shopped around to ensure safe and supportive spaces. These could be in the LGBTIQ+ community, family doctors who had known them since they were children, or doctors of similar cultural and faith heritages.

It's in the queer community, I go to the GP every three months and get my STI test done. They've always been quite friendly and kind of non-judgmental. Which I think is a really important thing to ensure people will go back and get tested regularly, having that space where you feel safe. (I1)

I went to an Aussie doctor first and I had a blood test and he said I'm a bit anaemic and I need to eat more red meat. I said, 'Oh, I'm actually vegetarian, that's part of my cultural belief, it goes back generations'. And then he just nodded his head and he was like, 'Oh, well, this is the problem, you don't eat meat. You're going to have severe iron deficiency'. And then I went to an Indian doctor and he said, 'Look, South Asian people generally have higher white blood cell count because it's part of the body's way of protecting itself from malaria because it's prevalent in those countries. And that's how biologically we evolved, so there's nothing to be freaked out about, you're fine'. I didn't think the Aussie doctor's being blatantly racist, I just thought that was just ignorance through a cultural misunderstanding. (I17)

I've had the same GP since I was born. I came out to her when I was 15. And it was essentially, 'Yeah, thanks, we knew.' And so I never had any issue discussing anything with her so that better education has allowed me to not need much healthcare. I felt comfortable to say no to bareback sex. I know that I could say no to drugs. (I8)

A small proportion of survey respondents (n=20) who had experienced ROFD listed microaggressions as prevailing (85%):

Answer Choices	%	#
Microaggressions (e.g. Passive aggressive behaviours)	85.00%	17
Feeling not safe	35.00%	7
Verbal aggression/abuse (e.g. name calling)	10.00%	2
Physical aggression/abuse (e.g. assault)	5.00%	1
Sexual aggression/abuse (e.g. inappropriate touching)	0.00%	0
Total		20



These survey respondents said that the microaggressions and other forms of discrimination were due to their ethnicity (64%), sexuality (51%), gender identity (50%), and skin colour (41%).

Answer Choices	%	#
Because of my race/ethnicity	63.64%	14
Because of my sexuality	59.09%	13
Because of my gender identity	50.00%	11
Because of my skin colour	40.91%	9
Because of my gender expression	22.73%	5
Because of my religion	9.09%	2
I don't know	4.55%	1
Other (please specify)	4.55%	1
Total		22

The written survey responses also included other intersecting factors:

*Having a STD in a small country town and all the hospital staff discussing that in public.*

*My sex re-assignment surgery scars*

Several focus group and interview participants confirmed that it was difficult to have all one's past and present intersectional contexts and factors equally supported and understood in one health service.

*I think healthcare is improved because of a lot of awareness-raising and a lot of systemic improvements ... I think there are more cultural barriers than there are sexuality-related barriers. I would say that if doctors and nurses think that you are not a local Australian patient, like I'm not an Australian citizen yet, and I'm on a visa, there's a bit less willingness to explain things. ... I was in a room with an old Anglo-Australian white lady, and an Anglo-Australian white man. And all three of us had traumatic injuries out of car accidents, and all of us couldn't move. The other two patients actually received more information than I did. I suspect if I asked 100 patients who were not Australian citizens, who happened to be foreign patients, I suspect they might say that they also received less information. So it doesn't mean that the quality of care is poor. I'm sure that the doctors treat every patient the same. I think it's just the engagement, like every patient has some anxiety, but you don't necessarily spend time assuaging each patient's concern. There's an element of discretion in whether you answer questions or not, and I didn't get that much engagement from the nurses or the doctors. (I2)*

*Just a shit load of assumptions. 'You were straight, you were married'. I get that all the time with health professionals when they're doing their risk assessment, an STI screen. They just assume low risk because I was heterosexual. (I18)*

Other focus group and interview participants identified specific concerns and experiences due to white/hetero/gender privileged systems of practice and marketing that lacked intersectionality and 'inclusion with specificity' strategies (Pallotta-Chiarolli, 2016a). They also drew attention to recognising what makes a relationship personable, and what makes it intrusive and UUBD.

*They come at it too much of a white thing. I think to myself if that person comes from a different culture dynamic and if they [health service] wonder why people of colour don't come to them I just said, 'Well, you're actually not catering for them. And second of all, you actually haven't made an approach to go sit with those specific communities'. Like no agency has had meals and that's a good starting way to do it, and I know a sexual health service where they know they've got a high rate of Asian community and Latinx community. Well those people need to be included in your advertising material, they need to be included in any working party discussions pertaining to them utilising your service, translating stuff into different cultural languages, and to have a proper relationship with them you also need to make it personal, like find a way to engage with them. (I3)*





Experiences of objectification, coercion, condescension and 'vivisection' in healthcare settings are described in the following.

*I reckon I got denied informed consent because the doctor didn't read me as a transwoman, and therefore thought it was suss that I was getting these meds. Whereas if this doctor just had any kind of critical thinking capacity embedded into their education and embedded into their practice, they would go, 'Yeah, this person is telling me that they take this stuff, and maybe I should ask them if they're trans. If they are trans, maybe I need to think about what that means or ask them how crucial these meds are. If they're crucial, maybe I should just shut the fuck up and give them this'. ... I've definitely had sexual health clinic encounters where I was asked every disgusting question about my body by the person who realistically just needed*

*to give me the cup to piss in and take my blood. But instead I got asked about my body hair and I got told that I have less hair than her. Basically being told I look quite convincing. Very, very cringey, and unfortunately I've just had that stuff happen so, so much. I mean, I would say it leans on the edge of abuse by an endocrinologist who certainly touched me in ways that, as I found out later, were completely irrelevant to my clinical treatment. ... Honestly if you just preface any of that shit with, 'I just want to ask you some questions because I haven't really worked with a lot of people in your position', I'm actually super happy to educate people and super happy to have conversations about my lived experience, whether it's gender stuff, whether it's sexuality, whether it's cultural stuff. But yeah, it's definitely that vivisection where the patient is still alive. (15)*



Accessing healthcare from within one's cultural or faith community could be deeply problematic or encouragingly positive.

*In essence, I was given two choices by the psychiatrist during the conversion therapy: you either become asexual or you become heterosexual. And then he was basically telling me that this is a disease, it's not how God intended to be, and this leads to a disease with animals, and I was bound to a life of misery and hatred and death and the brain is like an elastic that you could mould, and if I could just mould it the right way ... however, on the flip side, there was my local doctor, one time during the depression, anxiety, he looked at me and said, 'Is there something troubling you from within because I keep referring you new medication, it's not working, is there a question of sexuality?' I didn't want to admit it, I didn't say anything. He looked at me and, very serious face, compassionately, 'It's ok if you're different, it's perfectly fine, there's nothing wrong with it, you're good'. And then I said to him, 'I think I might be gay', and he said, 'That's fine'. ...he was Ethiopian or Mauritian, born and raised there, but he was very professional but also very empathetic. (113)*

*The GP was from Egypt, and maybe because she speak Arabic too, I felt like, 'No, I'm not comfortable to tell her'. So I changed for another GP. And I told her, 'I'm queer,' and she say, 'It's fine. It's cool'. So from that time, when I go to a new GP like, 'Okay, this will be my GP, I'll tell from the beginning'. (114)*

Some international students were not accessing the appropriate health information they required in order to undertake healthy sexual experimentation in Australia:

*Gay international students all gravitate at some point towards the gay sexual health clinic. I mean, that's if you live in the city. What if you're a gay international student in the country? ... there are these young international students want to engage in S&M stuff, BDSM. And exciting, but do they know what it means to do all of that? This 19 year old, I asked him, 'What's your safe word?' And he said, 'What do you mean?' And I was like, 'Sorry but if you want to ask to engage with me in BDSM, I'm not doing that without a safe word. And the fact that you say that you've done this before and that you don't know what a safe word is, what have these guys been doing to you?' (118)*



# Responses to ROFD: Healthcare settings and spaces

65% reported not returning to the healthcare setting

In response to their experiences of ROFD, most survey respondents (n=23) reported not returning to the healthcare setting (65%), while others reported they did nothing (22%).

Answer Choices	%	#
I avoided going there again	65.22%	15
I did nothing	21.74%	5
I physically removed myself from the situation	8.70%	2
I notified management	4.35%	1
Other (please specify)	0.00%	0
Total		23

In the open-ended section, the following examples of the actions were added:

I wrote to the CEO of the hospital that I would never go there ever again.

I completed a patient survey laying out the complaint in writing

I pointed out to the person what I perceived, they apologised and said they were not aware that they had offended me

Focus group and interview participants gave several reasons why they would not complain, or expressed self-blame, confusion or discomfort with themselves about why it was so difficult for them to complain.

If they're a small practice, they are the practise manager, so what's the point of even complaining? ... It's literally perpetually like coming out each time, particularly if it's a new doctor and sometimes you're just tired so you're like, 'I'm just going to try to find somewhere that's easier to deal with than this place'. (I18)

Unfortunately I would say that largely my response has been to just kind of take it, particularly with medical practitioners who are literally holding your capacity to continue your access to medications, you just need to shut the fuck up. With this woman who dissected me at the sexual health clinic when I was getting an STI test, I wasn't going to tell her to get fucked. I needed to make it through that interaction to get my STI test and get out of there. I went to get put on antidepressants a few months ago and the GP started asking me questions about whether I've had surgeries, and I actually stopped him after a couple of minutes and I was like, 'Babe, why is this relevant? Why are you asking me about my genitals? This is about my brain'. And he gave me some bullshit about a holistic approach. Unfortunately for him, he met the most grim and passive aggressive patient that he's probably ever met in his life. ... Here and there I feel emboldened enough to say something but a lot of the time I just kind of take it or I find the softest way to kind of say something, and usually the softest way is to be quiet, sadly. (I15)

Why I would not make a complaint? It's almost like I'm physically bracing myself to be assumed to be a straight woman who just operates in the same way as a white person. And also not knowing who to make a complaint to, and how much that they're going to do something about it, or if they hear it, 'We can excuse it or explain it away' rather than something being done about it ... if people are making a complaint about an experience of homophobia or racism and all they do is to mediate, that requires energy. I just want to tap out and just not go back to them, without saying anything, the experience zaps you of energy. (I19)

There were so many struggles with one doctor, the system was saying I'm now due for my new set of mental health care plan covered sessions. And he would say, 'Oh, no, no, no, no. You've already had your X, Y, and Z for the year'. ... And he was so dismissive. So it was only when I changed doctors, but still within the same clinic, that she said, 'Oh, you're totally eligible for a new plan'. That's when my best friend [who is white] was saying, 'If you need me, I will come with you to the appointment and advocate, because they unfortunately will listen to me'. I began to realise that I deserve to be respected, that there are laws in place. The first one is do no harm. So I wasn't going to wait around for the harm to stop. I was going to find a practitioner who, off the get-go, would be respectful. (I19)

## Contacting management

Only one survey respondent said they had contacted the management of their health service but did not provide the outcome of the contact.

## Contacting police

No respondents said they contacted police.

# Reflections on healthcare settings and spaces

Overall, the majority of respondents felt that their healthcare services were welcoming and/or considered the needs of people like them.

Answer Choices	%	#
My healthcare setting welcomes people like me...		
Disagree	3.17%	2
Somewhat disagree	19.05%	12
Somewhat agree	25.40%	16
Agree	52.38%	33
Total		63

Answer Choices	%	#
My healthcare setting considers the needs of people like me...		
Disagree	7.81%	5
Somewhat disagree	18.75%	12
Somewhat agree	26.56%	17
Agree	46.88%	30
Total		64



The findings from focus group and interview participants supported the above.

*I have been fortunate to have well educated family doctors where I found positive posters talking about PrEP or Hepatitis B, A vaccination. Even information for transgender people. Even that juggle with some doctors that you will expect that because of their background, there will be an uncomfortable conversation and you get a slap in the face. But no, it ended to be amazing experience for my mental health, my physical checkout. Sometimes I even go with my partner for that common appointment for vaccination or whatever we need to discuss. (I16)*

In relation to the above survey percentages, it is important to note that the combination of 'somewhat agree' and 'agree' responses (total=78%) may indicate that respondents appear to be selective in choosing healthcare providers. However, this should not be interpreted as the selected health care provider being inclusive, but that respondents are able to navigate different aspects of their identity, and only disclose certain aspects that they feel comfortable in doing.

## Summary and recommendations: Healthcare settings and spaces

In summary, our results regarding healthcare settings demonstrate that a majority of participants do not experience

ROFD, and any forms of discrimination were microaggressive and UUBD rather than overt. Trans and gender diverse clients appeared to experience the most intrusive services and UUBD.

The most common response to ROFD was not responding or finding another health service. Of concern was how the decision to not complain or respond, particularly by trans and gender diverse clients, was due to the necessity of requiring the medications and service, the fear that it would be denied, and the unhealthy energy required to undertake an official complaint. However, this leaves the health service's practices unchallenged.

We **recommend** legislation to ensure all healthcare providers, including private practitioners, to be trained on LGBTQ+ inclusive practice focusing on intersectionality.

We also **recommend** government facilitate this training as part of practitioners' professional development scheme/training/requirements.

We **recommend** the government guide healthcare providers and practitioners in inclusive practices, such as forms, record keeping, language use, and interpersonal interactions that are culturally safe and accommodate the unique identities and lived experiences of MCMF LGBTQ+.

## LGBTIQ+ media sites and spaces

98% reported having either read, watched and/or listened to LGBTQ+ media

The vast majority (98%) (n=63) of survey respondents reported having either read, watched and/or listened to LGBTQ+ media, such as print, digital, social media, cinema, broadcasting and advertising, in the last three years.

56% of survey respondents felt welcomed, and 50% responded that their needs were considered. Most respondents (68%) felt that they were seldom portrayed in LGBTQ+ media. When they were portrayed, however, the majority of the sample (78%) felt that these portrayals were of unsatisfactory quality.

These findings indicate that the media is a contentious issue when it comes to including the needs of MCMF LGBTQ+ people as part of its contents. While LGBTQ+ media may offer some affirmation and representation in regard to sexuality and gender identity, the intersections of being MCMF are largely absent in the contents.

Answer Choices	%	#
LGBTIQ media welcome people like me...		
Disagree	16.13%	10
Somewhat disagree	27.42%	17
Somewhat agree	27.42%	17
Agree	29.03%	18
Total		62

Answer Choices	%	#
LGBTIQ media consider the needs of people like me...		
Disagree	24.19%	15
Somewhat disagree	25.81%	16
Somewhat agree	22.58%	14
Agree	27.42%	17
Total		62

Answer Choices	%	#
People like me are seen in LGBTQ media...		
Disagree	41.94%	26
Somewhat disagree	17.74%	11
Somewhat agree	20.97%	13
Agree	19.35%	12
Total		62

Answer Choices	%	#
LGBTIQ media adequately portray people like me...		
Disagree	52.46%	32
Somewhat disagree	21.31%	13
Somewhat agree	16.39%	10
Agree	9.84%	6
Total		61



Focus group and interview participants provided similar reflections about LGBTIQ+ media welcoming people like them.

*I think LGBT media has been instrumental to actually dismantling a lot of the prejudice and discriminatory thinking. I think LGBT media has really taken a proactive role in challenging people's prejudices and assumptions about others. I don't think this issue would have received as much recognition had it not been for the work of LGBT media. (I2)*

Some participants believed their needs were less accommodated, not often accurate nor positive, nor culturally or faith diverse. This could entrench certain stereotypes for participants' families, thereby preventing an engagement with the media with their MCMF family and community members.

*When I started questioning my sexuality, YouTube has been good for me because I was able to learn and know things that was never taught. But that only happens within the English-speaking community. But there's no way you going to find an Arab lesbian on YouTube talking about her experiences, or someone from Africa. It's a shame because the LGBTIQ YouTubers have played quite a large role in helping a lot of the youth accepting themselves ... When you talk about LGBTIQ representation on TV, on the media, it's always portrayed as overly sexualized. Recently I've been asked to come on board a TV series as a writer because it's a lesbian based show. The main producers and writers they're a heterosexual couple. ...*

*The hard and fast rule was the episode always has to open with two girls kissing and that's because that's what the audience wants. It's their show, I can't do anything about it. I'm trying very hard to direct it in a different way, but it's an uphill battle. It just shows the LGBTQ community as being promiscuous, as being cheaters, as being you cannot have a monogamous relationship, or a loving relationship. Which is a load of crap ... but the new writers they've gotten on board are all part of the LGBTQ community. We're banding together on this, that we can steer it in a different direction. Media portrayal of the queer or gay man has to always be loud, obnoxious and flamboyant, and there's nothing wrong with it, but that's not how everyone is. (LJA1)*

Participants also felt LGBTIQ+ media promoted or catered for a certain intersectionality of social, physical and racial factors.

*If it's not white centred, it's all the stereotypical stuff. ... and I've emailed the media and they didn't bother responding but if I was a white person and in the specific category of good looks, muscles, or successful, however you define that, or I'm from the law, I would have been heard in a jiffy. None of the queer papers picked up what I wrote but they all picked up other opinion pieces which happened to be from white people. (I13)*

*I don't spend too much time attached to queer media anymore because I got sick of during the plebiscite it was obsessed with promoting palatable queers. (I4)*

*When people get in those social media groups, or even in magazines when I read those stories, they've probably done university degrees, and quite academic in the language. And then I start to go, 'Ooh, I'm not part of them either. Ooh, what if I say something wrong, and you're going to get on me about being a shit queer person of colour? And you're just going to cut me off as well'. I kind of feel like that might have happened once by someone who runs one of the queer Asian Australian magazines. And I'm like, 'Ooh, did I say something wrong?'. ... It's a real elitism. These power structures and paradigms, they infiltrate every single space. So as soon as people start to feel heard in their niche community, then something happens around power where people start to become the thing that they've been fighting, and they're not even realising that you're excluding people who need those spaces too. (I19)*

## Summary and recommendations: LGBTIQ+ media sites and spaces

Our research found that while there appears to be some diversity and inclusiveness in LGBTIQ+ media, there is still more to be done.

We **recommend** LGBTIQ+ media increase its MCMF representation by challenging the normalisation and homogenisation of LGBTIQ+ communities as white, middle class, not living with disability, not living with mental health conditions, and agnostic.

We **recommend** the government facilitate discussion with LGBTIQ+ media to incorporate intersectionality as an integral part of the media culture and to diversify its representation of LGBTIQ+ communities. We also encourage the government to work collaboratively with MCMF LGBTIQ+ communities and organisations to establish media channels that address the unique needs and experiences of MCMF LGBTIQ+ that are culturally safe, affirming, and celebratory.

Past research has identified positive representations of LGBTIQ+ individuals in popular media as an important catalyst for resilience and empowerment (Capetola & Pallotta-Chiarolli 2017). It can foster positive self-perception and identity formation, while also providing a common cultural touchstone that facilitates social connection and companionship. Media and arts portrayals of LGBTIQ+ minorities with particular cultural backgrounds or religious faiths shape the potential for affirming attitudes of communities and the wider society (Ayres 2018; Di Chiera 2018; Mama Alto 2018).



This includes positive portrayals of MCMF LGBTIQ+ people that do not follow the white imaginary of the 'exotic other' which often leads to exoticisation and overt-sexualisation of racialized physical and cultural attributes leading to members being sexually objectified (Robinson et al. 2014; Weber et al. 2018). Similarly, when MFMC LGBTIQ+ people are featured, it is often presented in a special edition or in derogatory ways that emphasise their 'otherness'. This can further create division whereby MCMF LGBTIQ+ people feel alienated from the mainstream LGBTIQ+ community, while strengthening the pre-conceived and pre-existing negative stereotypes of MCMF LGBTIQ+.

We **recommend** LGBTIQ+ media explore its unconscious biases in media reporting, and for the government to work alongside LGBTIQ+ media to produce contents that portray MCMF LGBTIQ+ people as part of the everyday lives of LGBTIQ+ community. Likewise, the reporting of only negative behaviours perpetuates negative stereotypes, the de-personalisation of individuals and high levels of discrimination (Blair et al. 2017).

We **recommend** the promotion of positive intersectionality through visual, written and other texts.

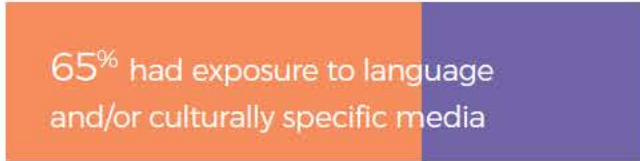
Yu and Blain discuss the importance of digital/social media for LGBTIQ+ migrants to:

*Reconstitute their home abroad and to live out their transnational gay identity, politics and desire. Their placemaking practices take place in the intersections of the Internet and outernets, as well as the interzones of one's gay desires for sexual fulfilment and cultural empowerment.... and yearnings for sexual and cultural belonging to a community, culture, and the nation (2019: 66, 68).*

Thus, Yu & Blain (2019) believe MCMF LGBTIQ+ navigate placemaking according to three main meta-narratives: race, sexuality, and digital technology. At this interface also comes sexual racism, sense of displacement and other ROFD which require further media policies, engagement and strategising. Indeed, the constant navigation of intersecting identities that exist simultaneously should be seen as enriching media content by exploring this intersectionality, not as a special feature, but as a daily reality of both MCMF LGBTIQ+ as well as the wider LGBTIQ+ communities.

# Culturally-specific media settings and spaces

Language and/or culturally-specific media within the current context collectively refers either to media produced by and for ethno-culturally diverse communities and/or media produced within the countries of origin of diaspora communities. These forms of media can be integral to community connectedness, may be an important source of resources and services for ethno-culturally diverse persons, may function as a source of news and information from across the community, and provide a cultural link to one's country of origin.



When survey respondents were asked about their exposure to language and/or culturally-specific media in the last three years, the majority (65%) had read, heard, watched or listened to these forms of media. However, it was noticeably lower than accessing LGBTIQ+ media with 32% indicating they did not access or use language and/or culturally-specific media.

Survey respondents were asked about 'people like me' without specifying if the questions were referring to ethnicity, faith or LGBTIQ+, thereby allowing them to self-determine what facets mattered to them

in media representation. The majority perceived culturally-specific media as unwelcoming to LGBTIQ+ audiences (60%) and as seldom considering the needs of LGBTIQ+ individuals (70%). Likewise, most respondents (78%) seldom encountered portrayals of LGBTIQ+ individuals within culturally-specific media. Additionally, most (78%) appeared to perceive the few instances where LGBTIQ+ individuals were portrayed as inadequate.

Answer Choices	%	#
Cultural media welcome people like me...		
Disagree	46.00%	23
Somewhat disagree	14.00%	7
Somewhat agree	32.00%	16
Agree	8.00%	4
Total		50

Answer Choices	%	#
Cultural media consider the needs of people like me...		
Disagree	50.00%	25
Somewhat disagree	20.00%	10
Somewhat agree	24.00%	12
Agree	6.00%	3
Total		50

Answer Choices	%	#
People like me are seen in Cultural media...		
Disagree	52.00%	26
Somewhat disagree	26.00%	12
Somewhat agree	14.00%	7
Agree	8.00%	4
Total		50



Answer Choices	%	#
Cultural media adequately portray people like me...		
Disagree	61.22%	30
Somewhat disagree	16.33%	8
Somewhat agree	16.33%	8
Agree	6.12%	3
Total		49

Focus group and interview participants provided similar reflections and experiences. Of significance was the common perception that media from countries of origin instilled negative sensationalist views.

*In Vietnamese, the gay male is always played up real flamboyant, and real snarky and bitchy. That's the perception the Asian community does have of us, because of the way it is played out on screen, on theatre, on stage. ... In Indonesia, there was a lesbian where she followed her girlfriend, poisoned her and she died. That was all over the Asian news, and my mum read it and she was like, 'You better be careful with who you date because it happens a lot in your community'. She has this thought we're very needy and that mentality where you're a niche so there might be three other lesbians and if they break up with you, then you're going to want to kill them. Or if you break up with them, they're going to kill you. The dating pool is small so that's why crimes of passion happens a lot. (LJA1)*

*It's still kind of portraying an image of us being so wildly different and so interesting to look at like a zoo animal...*

*Poetry, art, all these things aren't being talked about or really handed down. It's just the scripture that's handed down.*

*Whereas in actual fact, Islam was a very creative culture which had definitely many queers. ... I feel like we're on the precipice of a lot of change. There's a lot happening in this community, and I think that we're getting better and better every day. (I1)*

*When we came to Australia, the only gay icons my parents knew would be George Michael and Elton John. And we are nothing like George Michael and Elton John. And they probably didn't even know Ellen De Generes, because they don't watch Western TV. And so, when I came out to my parents they were sad. (I6)*

Language and culturally-specific media in Australia was seen as lacking sufficient informed LGBTIQ+ content from within the ethnic communities here.

*I'm sick and tired of the Greek media bringing up these disgusting issues, ... first, I thought it must be all the oldies, but then I realised that, hello, the oldies are not on Facebook. It didn't matter whether the LGBTIQ+ article was Greek or English, they'd go for it, but then at the same time, it was good to see a lot of other people supporting the article. And negating their comments and referring them back to the Bible, so if you believe so much in this Leviticus paragraph, do you also believe that a woman should be stoned. They'd give other examples of things that are in the bible that are no longer legally allowed, let alone morally acceptable, to try and shut them up, but they never did. (I7)*

*The only Indian media I read here is SBS Punjabi. ... once in a while you do see a story about some gender, sexuality-related topic, but otherwise, everything is geared towards the assumed heteronormative audience. (I2)*

*When you speak to the cultural media organisation as a journalist and putting yourself that I'm gay, they don't want to hear it. There's not even an acknowledgement, like, 'Hey, thanks for the email, but no thanks', kind of thing. ... I'm blessed to be able to speak and read and write in both English and Arabic. And I can do an SBS interview in Arabic too. ... The way we speak about gay people in ethnic communities must be spoken: a. in their language, b. in their accent. We can't use an Australian, white, colonised version to speak to people who come from a persecuted minority, you need to speak the language they speak. It is speaking to tap into their history, you draw parallel, 'Look, you were persecuted by people, we're also persecuted, there's commonalities'. But it can't come from the outside, because for a lot of Middle Eastern countries, they see gays as Western influenced. But if someone from inside, I can't be accused as Western influenced. (I13)*

## Summary and recommendations: culturally-specific media settings and spaces

In summary, there is less engagement with culturally-specific media than LGBTIQ+ media. This may reflect a degree of estrangement from their MCMF communities, difficulties in accessing these media, and intentional decisions to avoid these forms of media.

As Epstein strongly states, 'we might read books to see ourselves reflected (i.e., mirror books) and we might also read books to see other selves (i.e., window books)' (2012: 111). Our research confirms the importance of accurate MCMF media representations to learn about the self and to learn about others.

This calls to mind two theories conducive to analysing the relationship between text and ROFD.

First, cultivation theory (Gerbner et al. 2002) states that exposure over a prolonged period of time to portrayals of reality as defined by the text will lead to perceptions of reality that are consistent with these portrayals. Thus, erasing or negatively representing MCMF LGBTIQ+ people in media leads to internalised negativity and ROFD in other media consumers.

Second, social cognitive theory (Bandura 2002) states that individuals may observe media portrayals for insight into how they



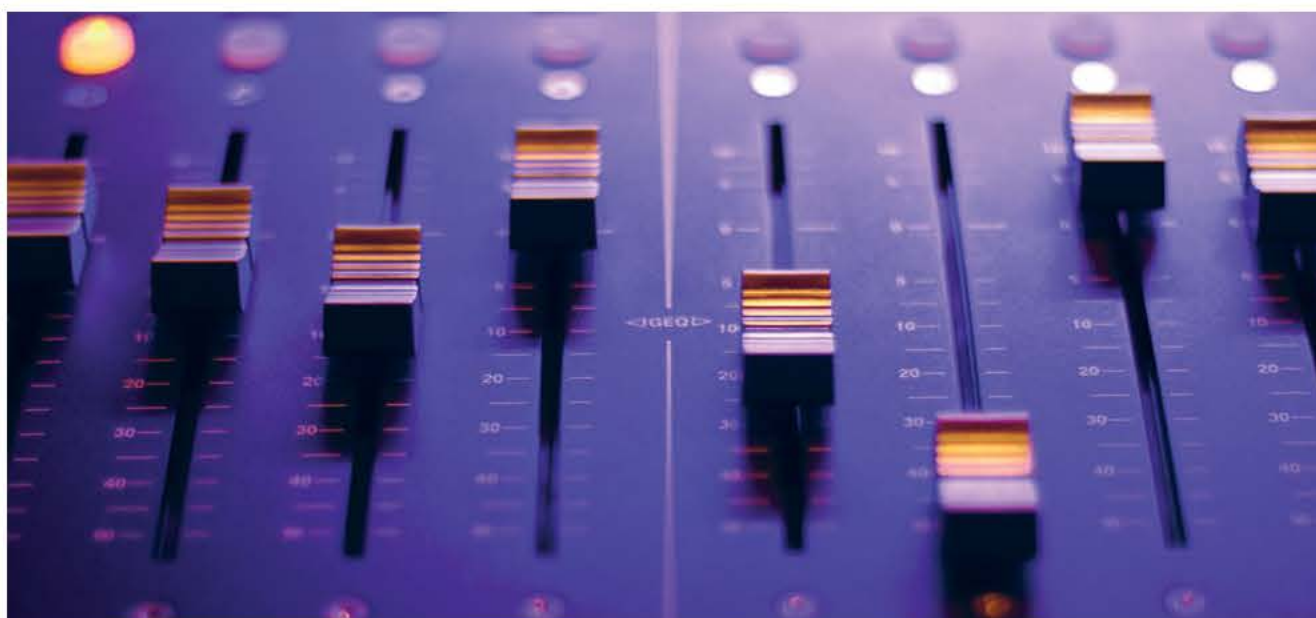
themselves could behave—especially if the behaviours in question are performed by individuals perceived as attractive, powerful, and popular, and if the outcomes are viewed as appealing. So, if an observed behaviour of an MCMF LGBTIQ+ person results in a desired outcome in the media text, individuals will engage in similar behaviour believing that in doing so they will gain the same benefits (see also Capetola & Pallotta-Chiarolli 2017).

We **recommend** the government facilitate an active engagement with cultural media to build strategies for LGBTIQ+ inclusion, including responding to negative criticism by members of one's own communities.

We **recommend** cultural media work collaboratively with MCMF LGBTIQ+ organisations to publish stories that embrace intersectionality in ways that are culturally safe and speak to the values of ethnic communities.

We **recommend** both state and national advocacy organisations, such as ECCV and FECCA, be involved in education and building strategies for cultural media to be well versed in intersectionality and the importance of positive representations of MCMF LGBTIQ+ people in the media.

We **recommend** cultural safety in the portrayal and representation of MCMF LGBTIQ+ people that adheres to the cultural values of MCMF LGBTIQ+ people and maintains their wellbeing. This can include stories about culturally-specific histories of sexualities and genders, reporting affirming and celebratory MCMF LGBTIQ+ events, groups and leaders, and providing consumers with LGBTIQ+ terms and information in their specific languages.



## MCMF LGBTIQ+ multiple selves and self-learning in relation to ROFD

In the light of Tuck's (2009) 'desire-based research' and Ghabrial's (2019) 'positive intersectionality', we wanted the final questions of the survey and focus group and interviews to ask about the multiplicity and intersectionality of themselves, their skills and celebrations, their positive and problematic manifestations, and their self-learning and situated agency.

*It's awful that we have to have that resilience in the first place. But I think it's such a show of strength to be able to endure and grow because of that. (I11)*

*I've always been on this balancing point. It's finding that point where you're in a bit of discomfort, but you're also comfortable. It's sort of on this knife edge (LD2).*

Many focus group and interview participants talked about how their multiple selves required ongoing navigation, compartmentalisation and celebrating points of connection.

*I can only be gay when I'm going out with my gay friends and going into gay community, but at home and work I'll just suppress. I feel like living in two different worlds, one world just pretending to be straight. (GAF2)*

*[Being Asian Australian] I know where all the great Asian restaurants are. I think they're the best of both worlds. I am so grateful that I can speak two languages. ... when you are influenced by different cultures, I have learned to be aware of how people do things different. And I'm proud to call myself an Australian ... I think being able to integrate slowly ... and it's a journey. I'm hardly close to the end point. To be able to say, 'Hey, I think I'm okay being a woman, a lesbian, being a Catholic, being Asian'. Have I missed anything? No. That I am willing to integrate and that I am on the journey of integrating and I want to help others, especially in the area of faith, to integrate their sexuality and faith. I'm in a place where I can do that, because if I was in Hong Kong maybe I would never have reached this point. And knowing that at least in this particular state of Victoria, people are quite progressive, and there are groups like AGMC. (I6)*

*One of the reasons I love being gay or queer is that it's not all of me, but it is something that touches every part of my life, a gaysian. This is the reward of being able to navigate all of that and have a lot more agency, you actually enjoy more of the communities that maybe most heterosexual people don't get to enjoy. (I8)*



Look where I am, where's my community? How do I navigate? Alright, what happens if I press that button? So there is the curiosity of still trying to develop and explore. I'm trying to keep things at an equilibrium or I'm going mad, there's a minefield of faith, of culture, of therapy, which each on their own is a disaster, put them all together it's even more of a disaster. And then you put on top of that you're ostracised because you don't do bars and clubs and sports and all the other traditional gay things. (I13).

I stand on the intersections of my identity. Those are the anchors which give me the most joy. These are the identities that enrich my life. And being a complex human being, these are the communities where I find home.... So maybe it's a bit slower because there's some bumps along the way of just learning curves. But not pitying people who have marginalised identities. And it's like marginalised, even that word I think it makes something small, but there's such a complex richness of having more than one, being more than just one something. (I19)

When asked what positive attributes survey respondents appreciated about themselves, statements such as the following were given:

Adaptability

Humour and strength

I come from a long, long, long line of strong, proud people that have overcome all manner of adversity so I could be here today.

I'm a major survivor and have come through the shit

I am smart, confident and good at what I do. I feel that my experiences of marginalisation have led me to challenge dangerous norms and understand myself and my place in the world more deeply/critically than my straight/white/male/gender conforming peers. I have a strong capacity to question myself and others and am motivated to grow.

My creativity and my individuality. I like how I can be unique and independent, really determined in myself.

I have a successful job, an amazing support network, proud of my religion, gender and sexuality and not shy to express myself in a world that often tell us to fit into a box that doesn't represent who we are.

The above thoughtful reflections on the strengths and insights of positive intersectionality from survey respondents were also made by focus group and interview participants.

I think number one is resilience. Like, if I experience a setback, I try to go past it. ... I think I'm quite compassionate. Like, if they're doing something good, congratulate them and if they're going through hardship, I should help them out. (I2)

I know our government is trying, and also people like you and AGMC and there are lots of grassroots organisations that are advocating for me. (I6)

We need to look for positives, for the good things we are doing and seeing. That some of us come from a position of privilege and we can build a positive road for others. There can be too much negativity which leads to more distress. I've lost everybody, my parents, and I have my boyfriend and I think we can learn to create love, transfer love to others you do have in your life. (I16)

I'm open to everything, so right now I arrived to Australia, like I'm free. It's like freedom here. Whatever I can't get in Malaysia, everything I can one hundred percent get here. (RAS2)

I think if I wasn't queer, being other, I don't think I'd be as emotionally intelligent or as sympathetic. Being gay doesn't mean that I have to brew the alphabet soup, it doesn't mean that I have to agree with all the other letters, it just means that we're in the same boat. ... it's a sense of wonder, it's a sense of curiosity, but it's also I think, in a Christian sense, no matter how long evil goes, no matter how bad it gets, somehow, somewhere, grow with love. (I13)

[Being a leader in community] it's an interesting concept that I would not have felt I could inhabit until now. I think what makes strong leaders is that we have fought to even be sitting where we are sitting. There's such a level of tenacity. And as my friend called me, an intrepid warrior. It's always not optional because, for me, it was about surviving. And there's just such an innate zest for life that I have, a love for wanting to experience life in all its fullness, to feel joy deeply and continue on. So, I think that as I'm coming to now find my voice and step even more into my power, I'm really excited to see what leadership looks like, because I am profoundly moved by the leadership that is guiding me in the elders and the community, and even people of my age. There is such a wisdom in tapping into a collective wisdom beyond myself .... And there are so many people who've already been blazing the trail and I'm doing the same. .... a talk that I went to, this First Nation's person was saying just from birth, we are already standing on our ancestors' shoulders. (I19)





We **recommend** the celebration of intersectional identities as an integral part of the LGBTIQ+ communities, MCMF communities, and wider society by embracing 'positive intersectionality' (Ghabrial 2019).

We **recommend** the government, advocacy organisations, community organisations, and individual agencies work collaboratively to construct MCMF LGBTIQ+ as part of the everydayness of multiple communities in ways that are culturally safe, affirming, and celebratory.

We **recommend** MCMF LGBTIQ+ to not be seen through a deficit lens, but through a positive intersectionality lens to eliminate the persistence of ongoing and systemic marginalisation while, at the same time, drawing knowledge and strategies that focus on strength and resilience.

We **recommend** policies, strategies, resources, public and media campaigns to implement justice and human rights principles for the elimination of discriminations faced by MCMF LGBTIQ+.

We **recommend** programs and initiatives to address discrimination through a positive intersectionality lens to be well-funded with clear outputs and outcomes.



## Trolls do intersectionality

Due to the amount and types of trolling, we decided to analyse the comments to further understand which factors of a person's identity are being targeted for discrimination. This research into trolling is a byproduct of the larger research and therefore limited. However, it does provide some insights pertinent to policy development and implementation as it uncovers discriminatory attitudes, values and language that often remain covert.

### Survey trolls

The majority of troll responses in the survey were racial and religious slurs. However, many comments were intersectional, drawing upon multiple minority factors such as faith, gender and sexuality. For example, in response to how they would respond to ROFD in an LGBTIQ+ setting, an answer was 'I bombed a church and cried Islamophobia and transphobia'.

In many cases, trolls did not reply to the actual question but inserted random discriminatory and abusive comments. For example, in response to how they would respond to ROFD in an LGBTIQ+ setting, replies included 'Fkn bullshit' and 'Goat fukkers are misunderstood'.

Islam was the faith most commonly abused or discriminated against. For example, country of origin was given as 'ISIS', faith identity was given as 'Infidel killer', 'Allah Akbar', 'Jihad', and 'I sooked

and cried Islamophobia'. In relation to their ethnic identity, troll responses included 'Aryan', 'Akbar', 'Cakeistani' and many saying they were 'Anglo-Australian'.

Another common theme was the assertion of whiteness as superior and the claim of whiteness being victimised and discriminated against. For example, being white was 'normal' and in response to what they appreciated about their culture: 'That we created Western civilization.'

Whiteness and heteromascularity were often presented together in claiming discrimination: 'Less rights than non-Australians and discriminating against me because I'm a white straight male'. In response to why survey respondents were discriminated against in the workplace:

'Because I'm a normal white man'

'Because I am not interested in same sex because I am Caucasian'

'Because I was Caucasian and Christian'

Intra-white hierarchy was also a theme. For example, in response to what positive changes survey respondents had seen in the LGBTIQ+ community: 'Dumb whites support you.'

Heteropatriarchal and misogynist masculinities also featured in written responses such as 'Lezzo movies' in response to what they appreciated about LGBTIQ+ community.



When replying to how they responded to ROFD at cultural events, one response was: 'I told all my mates down the pub, full bragging rights, the boys think I'm some kind of God cos I just seem to be always pulling these hot AF chicks'. Indeed, spread across several questions, this respondent continued his hyperheteromisogynist narrative about the 'nymphs' who 'just couldn't get enough of me' because he is 'awesome in the sack' in language we choose not to quote in this report. The sequential narrative also included his sexual exploits at 'Oktoberfest. October 1st is a German festival'.

In relation to the survey question about sexual identity, homophobic violence was verbalised, which we choose not to quote except for this media-stereotyped one: 'All gays should be killed and thrown from a building'. Random comments were also written such as 'normal' and 'shoving their sexuality into your face'. The word 'normal' also appeared often in relation to the survey question on gender identity such as 'normal male' and 'normal straight female'.

The survey questions regarding sex assigned at birth and intersex variation also resulted in highly offensive responses we choose not to quote, as well as random racist comments such as 'dirty arab'.

In response to the survey question on any further feedback, comments became less violent and hyperheteromascuine, and more politically right-wing, including 'The alphabet crew want respect but they need to show respect and stop telling us how to raise our kids'.

## Facebook trolls

The AGMC Facebook page and group where the survey was being promoted was regularly trolled. As the administrator of the site, the researcher would quickly delete the comments in order to prevent deterring interested MCMF LGBTIQ+ people. The majority of troll posts were racial, religious and homo/transphobic slurs. From what we could surmise from names, images and self-disclosure, the majority of Facebook trolls were white heterosexual men, again intersecting with Christian faith, patriotism, traditional family values and moral panics regarding their 'right to protect my kids from weirdo freaks!!!'

'Keep Australia White and pervert free.'

'Multiculturalism is a failing project. All cultures are not equal.'

'Spreading your delusions to children now. Well, fuck you!!'

'You're doing more damage than good, cause your pissing normal decent Australians off. If Muslims don't assimilate and bring violence to my country, they shouldn't be in this country! Transgender people have a mental illness and that's a proven fact! I don't want them anywhere near my kids!'

'If you stop this political correctness and stop certain cultures from having communities, people will assimilate better! Accommodating minorities and shoving it in my kids' faces. Not the answer!'

White Australians, particularly white heterosexual men, or Christian, again presented themselves as victims and minorities:

'How about a survey among heterosexual faith communities to see if they feel discriminated against by being forced to accept gay marriage?'

'White Australians are being discriminated against. Sort that out!'

'Pandering to the minority seems to be the norm these days and stuff everyone else.'

Troll 1: 'PEOPLE KEEP CALLING ME RACIST, because I love being a straight white male. Can someone help me?'

Troll 2: 'you poor dear, I'm with you honey bun, as I'm a white straight male as well. I could hold your hand, but not too hard.'

What was uncomfortable and yet understandable was the lack of response from LGBTIQ+ individuals on the site, given the ongoing attack. For example, when someone who appeared to be white did reply: 'How exactly would you keep this country white? Fucking redneck', a response was, 'By giving all you white traitors a fitting end.'

AGMC and the DPC funding for this research was derided, as well as the researcher's attempts to remove troll comments:

'Okay. I looked it up. This is not a Monty Python-ish joke organisation. It actually exists.'

'Surely this is a parody account.'

'A-B-C-D-E-F-G-H-I-J-K-L-M-N-O-P-Q-R-S-T-U-V-W-X-Y-Zed. There you go. Multi-faith, multicultural and multi anything else you want.'

Troll 1: 'Apparently most 'comments' are not relevant on this post. One out of sixteen is shown. That shows how ridiculous the whole thing is.'

Troll 2: 'I bet the 'filtered out' comments were critical of the very existence of this 'council'.

'Taxpayer funding touting for business. Ridiculous. Stop searching for issues to justify your stipend.'

'Is this a moron Daniel Andrews project? Using more taxpayers' funds to boost his ego?'

'Australians need a leader someone who won't backdown, stand his ground. Not afraid to talk about religion, united nations, corruption. A true independent, with no alliances. Australia can be great again, vote one Frasier Anning.'



## Summary of research findings

### Key findings

1. Participants reported that covert racism has replaced overt racism across all settings, but racism still exists.
2. ROFD often manifests as microaggressions, micro-assaults and micro-invalidations, such as verbal abuse, covert and casual discrimination, and UUBD.
3. Most ROFD occurs in everyday interactions despite various sites and settings having diversity and inclusion, anti-discrimination and other policies.
4. Racism, race-based and faith-based discrimination are more prevalent than homo/bi/trans/intersex phobia except within religious settings, followed by cultural settings.
5. The types, regularities and intensity of ROFD is also based on a range of other intersectional factors which create inter- and intra-hierarchical divisions, such as class, disability, level of education, established or emerging ethnic community, skin colour, and age.
6. White privilege and white-passing are significant themes in relation to the ROFD experienced by MCMF LGBTIQ+ people, particularly people of colour. Whiteness includes white privilege and white-normativity as key factors that operate behind racism. White-passing can be seen in two ways: as a strategy to maintain emotional and physical safety without the emotional burden of having to explain and justify complex intersectional identities; and as a way to establish a sense of belonging in a community that has normalised white identity at its core.
7. Allyship as either appropriate and useful, or inappropriate and detrimental, were strong themes in relation to what MCMF LGBTIQ+ individuals require from allies.
8. The navigation of intersectional identities is context-specific. Participants reported the least ROFD in healthcare settings and services, more ROFD in tertiary educational settings, and the most in workplace settings.



9. Repeated exposure to individual or institutional ROFD, or repeated exposure to the ROFD experienced by peers, loved ones and others in the setting, can result in stress due to association. Apprehended discrimination and vicarious trauma are significant factors in the avoidance of certain settings.
10. The most common response to ROFD is removing oneself from the setting or event and not returning, or avoiding the setting from the onset, thereby indicating a strong insecurity with, and lack of trust in, official channels of reporting and addressing ROFD.
11. Removal of the self as a response to ROFD exacerbates feelings of isolation, marginalisation and mental health concerns as the individual is removing themselves from the very sites and spaces that they believe could offer support, security and belonging. However, it is also a form of maintaining emotional and physical safety instead of engaging in confrontation that is emotionally laborious.
12. Removal of the self may provide a convenient excuse for an institution or setting to not address ROFD as it may believe multiple-minority groups are not accessing their services, not attending their spaces, or are not experiencing ROFD as no complaints have been made.
13. Management is rarely contacted to address any issues of ROFD. When management is contacted, such as in workplace settings, the outcomes are mostly unsatisfactory.
14. Police are rarely contacted to address any issues of ROFD. The main reasons are:
  - fear and shame regarding the stigma it will bring to their families, even if they are 'out', and the status of their families in their communities;
  - the lack of cultural understanding among police and the lack of MCMF LGBTIQ+ police officers who could work with their families and communities.
15. The increase in ROFD trolling online on MCMF LGBTIQ+ sites shows the use of media-influenced stereotypes and sensationalism, and the intersectional connecting of various minorities within one homogenous group as not-white, not-heterosexual, not-Christian, not-cisgender, and therefore, not-Australian.



## Concurrence with recent Victorian reports and discussion papers

### Racism in Victoria and what it means for the health of Victorians

Our research concurs with the findings of this 2017 Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) report that racism is damaging to both the mental and physical health of Victorians; and Victorians who speak a language other than English at home, and are not of Northern European or North American origin, are most likely to experience racism. In the 12 months preceding the survey, 9% of Victorian adults experienced discrimination or were treated unfairly because of their racial, ethnic, cultural or religious background. The types of emotions evoked by racism included anger (26%), sadness (20%), pity for the perpetrator (12%), shame and worry (4%) and/or 'felt sick' (2%).

Our research also points to:

- the accumulative effect of multiple minority status such as MCMF LGBTIQ+ experiencing racism from a range of settings
- the harmful impact of regular exposure to microaggressions, multiple-minority stress and UUBD may be under-estimated.

We concur ROFD affects health directly and indirectly. It causes adverse cognitive and emotional responses that are associated with depression and anxiety. It reduces access to employment, healthcare and education, participation in supportive social and cultural communities, aspiring to leadership positions, and seeking support from police and management when ROFD does occur.



## Discussion Paper for the Victorian LGBTIQ Strategy

Our research findings both align with and critique the Discussion Paper for the Victorian LGBTIQ Strategy (2020). Like the discussion paper, our research highlights how much Victoria has achieved and what still needs to be done. Both show that community attitudes have changed considerably but discrimination and abuse do continue, with verbal abuse being the most prevalent alongside the range of microaggressions.

The following are our responses to specific statements and sections of the discussion paper.

- a. In relation to the section on the 'extent to which LGBTIQ people feel the need to hide their sexual orientation or gender identity', we would add the 'extent to which LGBTIQ people feel the need to remove themselves, avoid or never return to a place, service or setting because of their multiple-minority status'. We also caution against the assumption that non-disclosure is necessarily negative. Selective disclosure, passing and compartmentalisation are ways to navigate and reconcile different aspects of identity, community and belonging as presented by Hammoud-Beckett's (2007) 'Coming In' model. The Western model of 'coming out' and 'being out' as a signifier of self-acceptance and

pride should not be constructed as the norm. It should be seen as one expression of embracing multiple facets of one's identity alongside the aforementioned strategies, depending on contexts that are deemed culturally safe and appropriate. All of these strategies must be valued on equal standings so as not to create a dichotomy that can result in conflicts and have a negative impact on the health and wellbeing of multicultural and multifaith LGBTIQ+ individuals and communities.

- b. Our research, including our troll analysis, concurs with the paper's discussion of an increase in trolling on social media. For MCMF LGBTIQ+ individuals, their intersectional and multiple marginalised identities mean that they are being targeted on all aspects of their identities that do not fit with the white, Christian, hetero and cis normative. This has a significant impact on their wellbeing and can further exacerbate the feeling of exclusion, oppression and marginalisation. Online trolling has been used to further reassert the power structure that privileges one group over another.
- c. Our research particularly aligns with the following sectors and settings listed in the discussion paper:
  - **Safe learning environments:** In line with the paper's focus on international students, our research found international students reported the most significant levels of ROFD, requiring specific policies

and implementation that address intersectionality, as international students are faced with discrimination based on their visa status, country of origin, ethnicity, faith and LGBTIQ+ identities, amongst others.

- **Equality before the law:** Religious exemptions have created difficult experiences in religious settings for MCMF LGBTIQ+ people navigating their intersections of faith, gender and sexuality. Dialogue with faith community leaders must clearly state the intention is not to challenge their belief system, but to find commonalities that value human lives and human rights to build understanding, acceptance and inclusion.
- **Economic security:** Our research found both everyday and structural ROFD and barriers to safety in the workplace. Our findings also agree that 'significant numbers still hide their LGBTIQ characteristics at work' (2020: 30) and that LGBTIQ+ individuals continue to face abuse and discrimination in the workplace. Our participants found that having LGBTIQ+ peers, managers and leadership in the workplace was conducive to safety and wellbeing if they were aware and active allies of culture, faith and other intersectionalities. Although our data on LGBTIQ+-owned workplaces was limited, it did demonstrate a lack of diversity and inclusion implementation in relation to culture and faith; and

a lack of an intersectional lens as participants are faced with racism, ethnocentrism and faith-based discriminations alongside LGBTIQ+ discrimination.

- **LGBTIQ+ allies:** Our research demonstrated the importance of families, friends, faith groups and cultural groups as allies in the lives of MCMF LGBTIQ+ people. We also agree with the importance of 'opportunities for LGBTIQ community members to be better allies to each other' (2020: 30), particularly in relation to being appropriate and non-appropriating white allies. There is a need to recognise that the label 'allies' may not resonate with multicultural communities, as support is often given as an integral part of cultural practices and norms that stress maintaining family connections. For some faith communities, valuing other human beings despite differences is seen as an integral part of their faith. There needs to be a better recognition of the one-on-one support that individuals provide that may not sit under the label of 'allyship'.
- **Health and wellbeing:** Our research found that health settings and services were the least likely places where MCMF LGBTIQ+ people experienced ROFD. This, however, should be interpreted carefully, as it is possible that MCMF LGBTIQ+ people do not consider disclosing their identities as relevant to obtain health services.



- **Victoria Police responses:** Our research concurs with the need to establish stronger connections of trust, with the added dimensions of racism, religious bigotry and other prejudices creating further lack of trust and feeling unsafe to contact police. There must be a recognition that some MCMF LGBTIQ+ people perceive the police to be a source of discrimination, indicating ongoing work that is needed across various levels of Victoria Police to address intersectionality.
  - **Media portrayals:** Our research concurs that cultural media representations and commentaries about LGBTIQ+ people can be negative and reproduce stereotypes, thereby further reinforcing marginalisation and justifying the perpetration of violence. These concerns of misrepresentation are heightened with the under-representation and absences of MCMF LGBTIQ+ people across mainstream, queer, cultural and faith media, and the limited representations are often marred with stereotypical images and exoticisation based on the white gaze. In addition, MCMF LGBTIQ+ people are often presented as a 'special feature' and rarely portrayed as an integral part of the wider LGBTIQ+ communities.
  - **LGBTIQ+ community organisations, groups, programs and initiatives:** Our research concurs and extends the paper's awareness of the importance of these groups by pointing out the need to fund, support and develop existing and emerging MCMF LGBTIQ+ organisations, initiatives and visibility using a community development framework based on equity and justice.
  - **Power and privilege exist within LGBTIQ+ communities:** Our research concurs that ROFD harassment and abuse occur within LGBTIQ+ communities, particularly racism, cissexism and transmisogyny. We found a range of intersectional factors led to ROFD in LGBTIQ+ settings, such as being bisexual and Muslim, or trans or gender diverse and Jewish. In line with the paper, our research agrees that 'a greater understanding of power and privilege will enable people to call out these issues more broadly' (2020: 16). Our report calls for a critical analysis of the power structures that privilege white, Christian, LGBTIQ+ identities that mirror the power ideologies that exist in the broader Australian society. We call for all levels of the LGBTIQ+ communities to undertake the work of dismantling white privilege to create an inclusive community that embraces ethnic, cultural and faith communities.
- d. We recommend and support the call for the *LGBTIQ Strategy* to assess power, privilege, oppression and discrimination, and adopt an intersectional lens that considers multiple factors of identity and belonging of multiple-minority MCMF LGBTIQ+ people. We support the need to question future LGBTIQ+ policies, resources and structures, and offer the following alternative wording:
- How can current services, initiatives and legislation incorporate an intersectionality lens as an integral part of design, implementation, and evaluation?
  - What work needs to be done to dismantle power and privilege in order to remove systemic and structural barriers for LGBTIQ+ communities using an intersectionality framework?
  - How can the government change the internal system that reflects societal power structures to ensure that the diverse and complex needs and experiences of LGBTIQ+ people are not overlooked?
  - How can we change our thinking to incorporate an intersectional framework in addressing the multilayered, complex, and contextual system of discrimination that exists within the LGBTIQ+ communities and in the broader society?
- e. We agree with the paper's attention to the research methods, policy and resource development processes as well as outcomes in developing the *Strategy*. Our research supports the need for inclusion and a thorough understanding of intersectionality through constant reflection and critiques of power dynamics already in existence and as developed in the following:
- implementing equity and justice when engaging with LGBTIQ+ people in the planning, design and implementation of all prevention efforts so intersectionality is included as part of the system
  - being specific about who prevention efforts are tailored for; ensuring planning allows time, space and resources for ongoing critical reflection, and reflective practice; and honouring the time and expertise of the LGBTIQ+ community through honorarium (no more work for free!)
  - implementing a decolonial approach in evidence-based and evidence-building that values oral history and personal narratives as evidence of discrimination while minimising members of the LGBTIQ+ communities reliving trauma, and creating concrete and tangible actions for change.
- f. In relation to MCMF LGBTIQ+ communities, we agree with the following questions as drivers of future implementation but call for their extension and broadening to all organisations, services and communities beyond government specificity:
- How can the government develop a more in-depth understanding of the intersection between culture and LGBTIQ+ identities to frame legislation, policy strategy and services?
  - How can the government build on the work it has begun with multicultural communities to support LGBTIQ+ equality and inclusion?
- g. In regard to the following questions, the pairing of asylum-seekers and refugees is white-centric as it homogenises two minority groups who have different priorities and experience differing systemic and structural barriers. These



questions can be increased, written more specifically, or prefaced by a critical analysis of the use and misuse of these categories. The involvement of people with lived experience is crucial in this work and they should be financially compensated for their contribution to the process.

- How can we change our internal system to create a culturally safe environment for people seeking asylum to meaningfully contribute to policies and strategies that address discriminations based on race, ethnicity, nationality, visa status, LGBTIQ+ identities amongst others?
  - How can we dismantle power and privilege to engage with asylum seekers' organisations and refugee organisations and start a collaborative dialogue to create a culturally safe environment for LGBTIQ+ asylum seekers?
- h. Our strengths-based and affirming questions regarding MCMF LGBTIQ+ individuals' achievements, resilience and pride in their MCMF selves, as well as their LGBTIQ+ selves, concurs with the paper's statement: 'it is important to acknowledge the achievements of LGBTIQ people, consolidate what is working well and strengthen successes', making 'visible the assets' and 'thereby highlighting their potential for growth and greater empowerment' (2020: 25).
- i. Specifically, we recognise and value the work that has been done to reconcile multiple aspects of identity that can exist in various forms: one-on-one
- j. The discussion paper calls for attention to disabilities and rural and regional locations. These were two major limitations in our research, and AGMC would seek to play a prominent research and advocacy role with MCMF LGBTIQ+ people with disabilities, and MCMF LGBTIQ+ people living in rural and regional areas.

support, friendship networks, peer groups, faith groups, and community groups. We recognise the persistence of white-centric services that often place MCMF LGBTIQ+ communities at the margin and/or as an afterthought, resulting in members of our communities having to create and recreate their own spaces that cater for their complex identities (Bradshaw & Seal, 2017). We believe that MCMF LGBTIQ+ communities already have strengths, and the work is not to use the Western model of empowerment, but to build on existing strengths based on community development and social justice principles where all aspects of their identities are recognised, valued, protected and embraced as an integral part of the LGBTIQ+ communities, faith communities, cultural communities, and the wider Australian society.

## Policing for Same Sex Attracted and Sex and Gender Diverse (SSASGD) young Victorians

Our findings regarding not accessing police concur with Leonard and Fileborn's (2018) findings that being both young and LGBTIQ+ affects young people's perceptions, interactions and willingness to engage with Victoria Police. We note, however, that the policing report lacked a comparable MCMF representation, with just over 10% of respondents speaking a language other than English at home, and over 80% of respondents identifying as atheist, no religion or agnostic.

In recent years, Victoria Police has taken steps to improve its relationships with both MCMF and LGBTIQ+ communities, including through diversity training, expanding the GLLO program, and establishing Priority Communities Groups. However, the survey with Victoria Police found almost 60% of respondents said they had not received any training on LGBTIQ+ issues, while a further 11% were unsure or could not remember if they had received training. Respondents lacked knowledge of how comfortable SSASGD young people would be reporting prejudice-related crime. Over half of the participants (54%) believed that young SSASGD Victorians respected police only 'somewhat' or 'not at all'.

Our research findings on the significance of apprehended discrimination and vicarious trauma concurred with the commonly identified barriers to SSASGD young people reporting offences to Victoria Police in the policing report: previous negative experiences with Victoria Police (84%); fear of being outed (82%); fear of further discrimination (81%); and the perceived homo/bi/transphobia of the organisation (80%). More specifically related to MCMF LGBTIQ+, police are rarely contacted because of the shame it will bring to their families, even if they are 'out', the status of their families in their communities; and dependence on families for wellbeing, economic needs and transport. Common suggestions for improving relationships between Victoria Police and SSASGD young people included further training and education, facilitating better interactions between police and LGBTIQ+ communities, and enhancing the role of GLLOs. Indeed, GLLO participants typically have a more comprehensive understanding of the roles that stigma, fear of discrimination, and historical relationships between Victoria Police and the LGBTIQ+ communities might play.

The SSASGD Young Victorians Survey found there were mixed levels of trust in Victoria Police, with only 42% of respondents saying they 'agree' or 'strongly agree' that they could trust Victoria Police. Our research concurs that trans and gender-diverse participants were particularly likely to report experiences of abuse and harassment from police (see also Callander et al. 2018). Participants in Leonard and



Fileborn's (2018) research were unlikely to report sexual assault (32%) or prejudice-motivated crime (51%). Heterosexist abuse was under-reported, with only 13% of respondents having reported the most recent incident to Victoria Police. The majority (58%) 'strongly disagree' or 'disagree' that Victoria Police understand SSASGD young people's issues.

Our findings of the significance of apprehended discrimination and vicarious trauma concurred with the policing report, which found that the major influences on SSASGD young people's perceptions of Victoria Police are other LGBTIQ+ people, their LGBTIQ+ friends, and the queer media. Over 61% of respondents in the policing report identified perceived bi/trans/homophobia of Victoria Police as a major disincentive to reporting prejudice-related crime. Suggestions for improving relations between Victoria Police and SSASGD young people focused on cultural change, education and training, recruiting more LGBTIQ+ people to the police force, and promoting and expanding the role of the GLLOs.

We agree with Leonard and Fileborn's (2018) concerns that the lack of engagement suggests that rates of violence are under-reported. This leaves the underlying causes of ROFD intact, and hides the need for greater legal, criminal and social supports for MCMF LGBTIQ+ people.

We also agree with the findings and recommendations of the *LGBTIQ Legal Needs Analysis* (St Kilda Legal Service/ THH 2020) of the need for a specialist

LGBTIQ legal service. Eighty per cent of the LGBTIQ Legal Service legal needs survey participants would prefer to get legal help from a specialist LGBTIQ legal service because a 'permanent and expanded LGBTIQ Legal Service ... [which] employs members of LGBTIQ communities, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island, multicultural and multifaith and diversely able, is best equipped to meet the diverse legal needs of Victorian LGBTIQ communities' (2020: 43).





## Promoting positive intersectionality

### Conclusion

*I consider myself one of the fortunate ones to still be alive in the present moment and be able to do what I do. You know this is my privilege, the privilege when I get to be able to engage and be given these platforms because I know there's other people never did. I'm so humbled by that. (I3)*

This research has contributed to the knowledge about the complex interactions of multiple minorities and multiple intersectional forms of ROFD experienced by MCMF LGBTIQ+ communities in Victoria. It has identified improvements and ongoing needs for intervention at systemic, social and individual levels across a range of settings and spaces.

*People are much more aware about certain issues, and I think there's less prejudice in general, and that's a change that's occurred because of awareness-raising. (I2)*

Even though participants self-reported that they rarely experienced overt racism, the prevalence of covert racism through microaggression and microinvalidation indicates the persistence of racism in everyday interpersonal contexts framed by systems of power and privilege (Cyrus 2017; Lim & Hewitt 2018). Similarly, discriminations based on intersectional identities such as sexuality, trans and gender diverse identities, and any non-normative identity, exist through microaggression. This indicates that systemic and structural discrimination that places white, hetero and cisnormative

identity at the top of the social hierarchy has been translated through everyday language and interactions and, to a degree, normalised as part of socialisation. This can result in MCMF LGBTIQ+ people not reporting ROFD due to its pervasiveness and the difficulty of finding the language to prove such incidences in social interactions.

The regular exposure to microaggressions is likely to lead to significantly worse mental and physical health outcomes given the presence of multiple intersecting identities and the increased mental health declines associated with increased exposure to ROFD (DHHS 2017). The cycle of covert but collective and continuous ROFD, invisibility and 'exclusion by inclusion', whereby intracategory diversity is homogenised into overarching categories, needs to be addressed. An 'inclusion with specificity' approach allows for points of connection and points of difference (Pallotta-Chiarolli 2016a).

In relation to faith groups, there needs to be an acknowledgement of Christian normativity in Australian society, and how this has a negative impact on non-Christian faith communities who are faced with multiple forms of discrimination based on their beliefs in a Christian-majority society. This can have an impact on the way non-Christian LGBTIQ+ people are perceived in the wider LGBTIQ+ communities and the Australian society (that is, the emphasis on Christian-based religious holidays while ignoring and overlooking non-Christian religious dates, such as Eid, Divali, Vesak, Lunar New Year and Yom Kippur). There needs to be an acknowledgement that



there is no one size fits all approach, and valuing the work on individual levels, such as the 'Coming In' model of Sekneh Hammoud-Beckett (2007), in addition to structural levels such as faith community leadership, as legitimate forms of embracing, reconciling and celebrating the intersections between faith, LGBTIQ+ and various marginalised identities. There also needs to be an acknowledgement that not all faith groups, or members of faith groups, are homophobic/biphobic/transphobic.

In relation to multicultural groups, there needs to be an acknowledgement that multicultural communities are not a homogenous group, with varying degrees of understanding, acceptance and inclusion of LGBTIQ+ individuals within their communities.

Some multicultural communities are yet to develop an understanding of the Western model of LGBTIQ+ identities and, as such, may consider the terminology to be foreign or irrelevant to their communities. There needs to be ongoing attention to the persistence of racism against LGBTIQ+ communities from multicultural backgrounds, and the persistence of systemic racism within the LGBTIQ+ communities that have a negative impact on health and wellbeing.

There needs to be an acknowledgement that equality and inclusion cannot be achieved without a dialogue with multicultural communities to build a common understanding of equality, equity, inclusion and belonging that are culturally safe and resonate with the values of various multicultural communities.



## Recommendations

We offer the following recommendations based on four broad categories:

### Leadership

- **Senior leadership:** to incorporate an intersectional lens as part of LGBTIQ+-inclusive practice across organisations, and authorise and support initiatives so that MCMF specificities are not overlooked.
- **Government leadership:** for government agencies and leaders to incorporate an intersectional lens as part of LGBTIQ+ inclusive strategies across government agencies, including multicultural commissions, LGBTIQ+ commissions, and police commissions.
- **Organisational leadership:** for MCMF, LGBTIQ+ and all organisation leaders to focus on intersectionality and address the ongoing power inequality and systemic discrimination that negatively affect MCMF LGBTIQ+ communities and all of its intersectionalities.
- **Religious leadership:** to understand and guide faith communities in understanding how religious exemptions prevent the LGBTIQ+ community from practising and engaging in their cultural and faith beliefs and working in religious spaces.
- **Educational leadership:** to understand the unique challenges faced by MCMF LGBTIQ+ students, with specific strategies for international students that incorporate intersectionality, cultural safety, and affirmative actions instead of deficit-based measures.
- **Workplace and service management:** to design and implement programs in regard to the ongoing power structures that privilege normative identities and result in microaggressions, unconscious biases, microinvalidations and overt discriminations, and to establish culturally safe environments that embrace intersectionality. Management to work collaboratively with MCMF LGBTIQ+ community organisations to establish policies and strategies that maintain the safety of MCMF LGBTIQ+ people through an open channel where concerns are adequately addressed without jeopardising the safety and positions of MCMF LGBTIQ+ individuals.



## Inclusion through visibility

- Promote inclusion of MCMF LGBTIQ+ people through culturally safe visibility that embraces intersectionality as an integral part of LGBTIQ+, MCMF, as well as the diversity that exists within MCMF LGBTIQ+ communities. This is to be **implemented** across various services, social venues, community venues, the media and other settings through meaningful engagement and participation of MCMF LGBTIQ+ people who are not reduced to 'special features' but as part of the everydayness of multiple communities.
- Implement a **multisectoral approach** to increase the knowledge of MCMF LGBTIQ+ people's experiences and needs by organisations, institutions and governments, ending exposure to ROFD; to draw knowledge from the strengths and resilience of MCMF LGBTIQ+ people through meaningful collaboration; and for their participation to be properly acknowledged through employment, financial contribution and public acknowledgement. Note that this must be done after creating a culturally safe environment for MCMF LGBTIQ+ people to meaningfully contribute to the process.
- Ensure media representation and reports consider the unique experiences and identities of MCMF LGBTIQ+ people without stereotyping and homogenising the complex group, and to consider the safety and wellbeing of MCMF LGBTIQ+ individuals.
- Demand **greater responsibility from social media**, including dating apps, by government agencies, community organisations, advocacy organisations and individual agencies to remove racism, trolling, sexism, transphobia and all forms of discrimination in their medium.
- Increase **governmental capacity to liaise and collaborate with organisations** to increase meaningful engagement and participation as part of inclusion strategies that follow justice and human rights principles while maintaining cultural safety.

## Capacity building

- Government to facilitate discussion and engagement between MCMF communities and MCMF LGBTIQ+ communities in order to create a culturally safe environment for MCMF LGBTIQ+ that adheres to cultural and religious values.
- **Reframe LGBTIQ+ training with an intersectional lens**, greater LGBTIQ+ community engagement, and cultural safety that places MCMF LGBTIQ+ people at the centre.
- LGBTIQ+ and intersectionality training for the general public
- LGBTIQ+ training specific to **MCMF communities**
- Actively update the **training for Victoria Police** as part of ongoing long-term strategy to change and improve the organisational culture.
- Work collaboratively with LGBTIQ+ **venues and event organisers**, MCMF event organisers and venues to address discrimination and create a clear strategy for reporting that honours individuals' experiences, as well as a strategy to counter community resistance and complaints using human rights and justice principles.
- Provide funding to **explore intersectionality within MCMF LGBTIQ+ communities**, such as people with disability, individuals with intersex variations, aged and the elderly, LGBTIQ+ asylum seekers, refugees and newly arrived migrants; and evaluate capacity-building and implementation post-research.
- Fund services that provide **financial, housing and employment support** for MCMF LGBTIQ+ people that are culturally safe and accommodate intersectional identities.
- Fund programs that are culturally safe and follow the cultural values of specific ethnic communities, to be implemented with **the families of MCMF LGBTIQ+ people** in repairing relationships and understanding more effective ways to respond to LGBTIQ+ family members.



## Reporting

- Government to work collaboratively with LGBTIQ+ organisations, MCMF organisations, and MFMC LGBTIQ+ community groups to create grievance strategies for MCMF LGBTIQ+ people to report discrimination using a trauma-centric approach.
- **Victoria Police to establish a reporting pathway** for MCMF LGBTIQ+ people to report discrimination without fear of being silenced, ignored and undermined due to their intersectional identities.
- Develop effective **first contact points** for reporting in government, the Police, LGBTIQ+ advocacy groups and MCMF advocacy groups, to engage with those who are less likely or unable to report.
- **Diversify reporting mechanisms** including anonymous online and third-party reporting.

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