

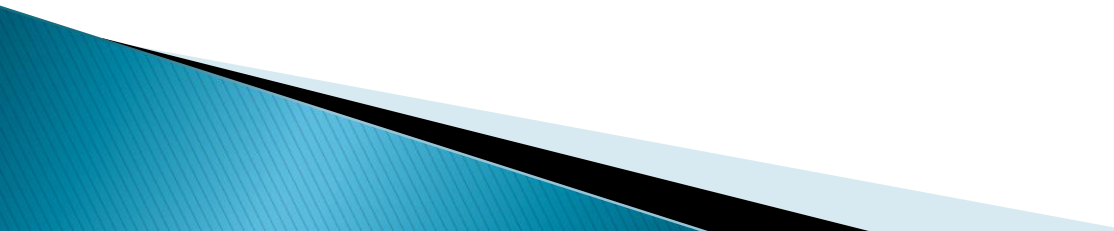
Religion, Youth and Sexuality: Attitudes and Experiences'

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Introduction

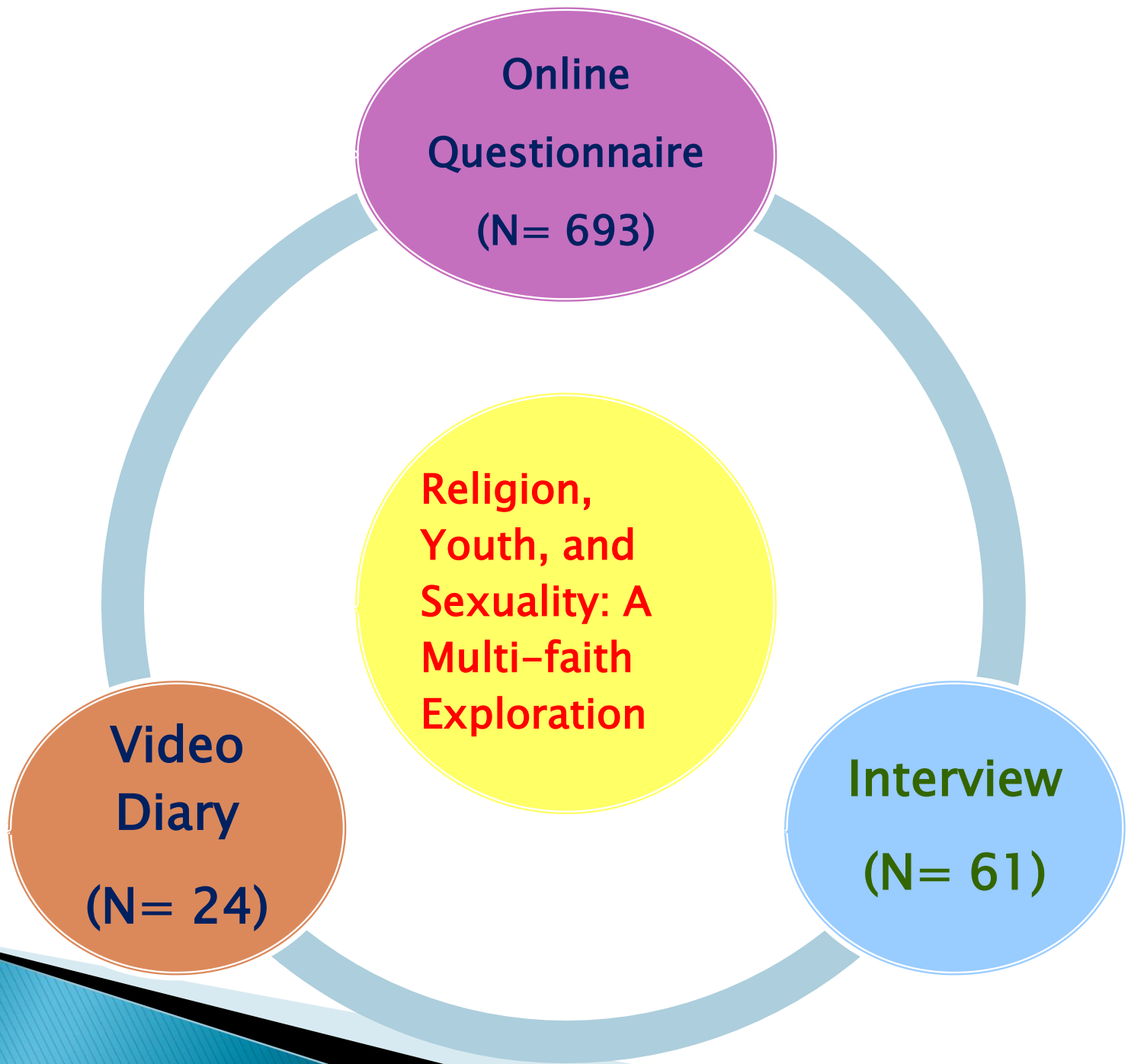
- ▶ Project – aims, methods, demographics
 - ▶ Salience of religion
 - ▶ Heterosexual attitudes to LGBTQI sexualities
 - ▶ Quantitative and qualitative differences
 - ▶ LGBTQI experiences
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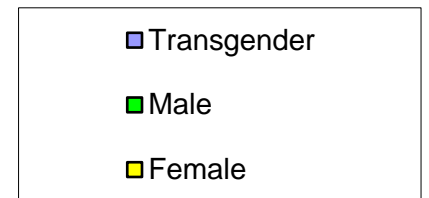
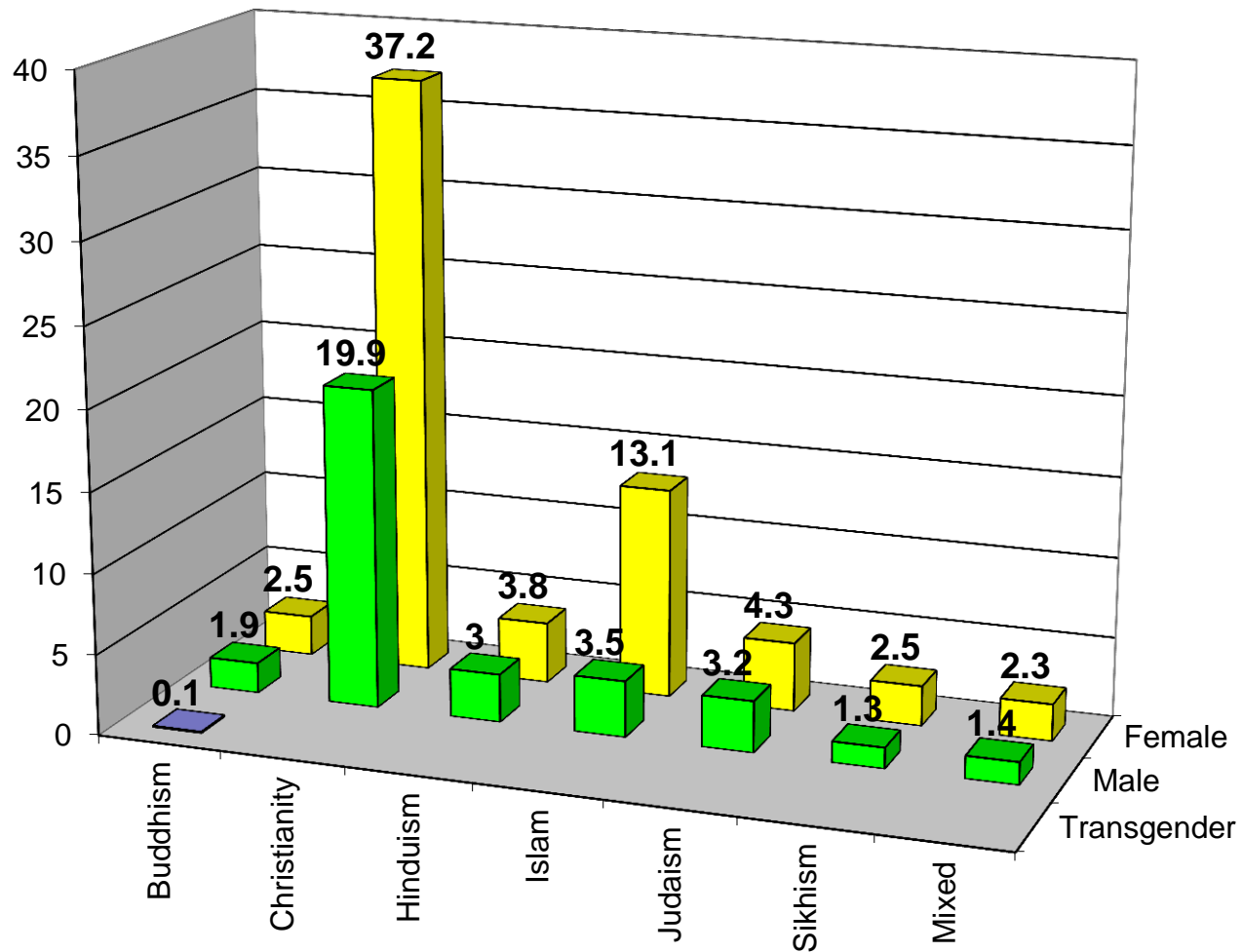
Research Aims

To explore sexual and religious values, attitudes and practices of young adults – aged 18–25, of different sexual orientations, from six religious traditions

To examine the strategies they employ to manage and negotiate their identities and everyday life

▶ To study the religious, social, cultural, and political factors that inform their sexual, religious, youth and gender identities





	%
Heterosexual	74.3
Lesbian/Gay/Homosexual	10.0
Bisexual	7.5
Do not define sexuality	5.9
Did not answer	1.0
Asexual	0.7
Bi-curious/heteroflexible	0.4
Queer	0.1

Various meanings of 'religion'

Personal God

Enlightenment and self-improvement

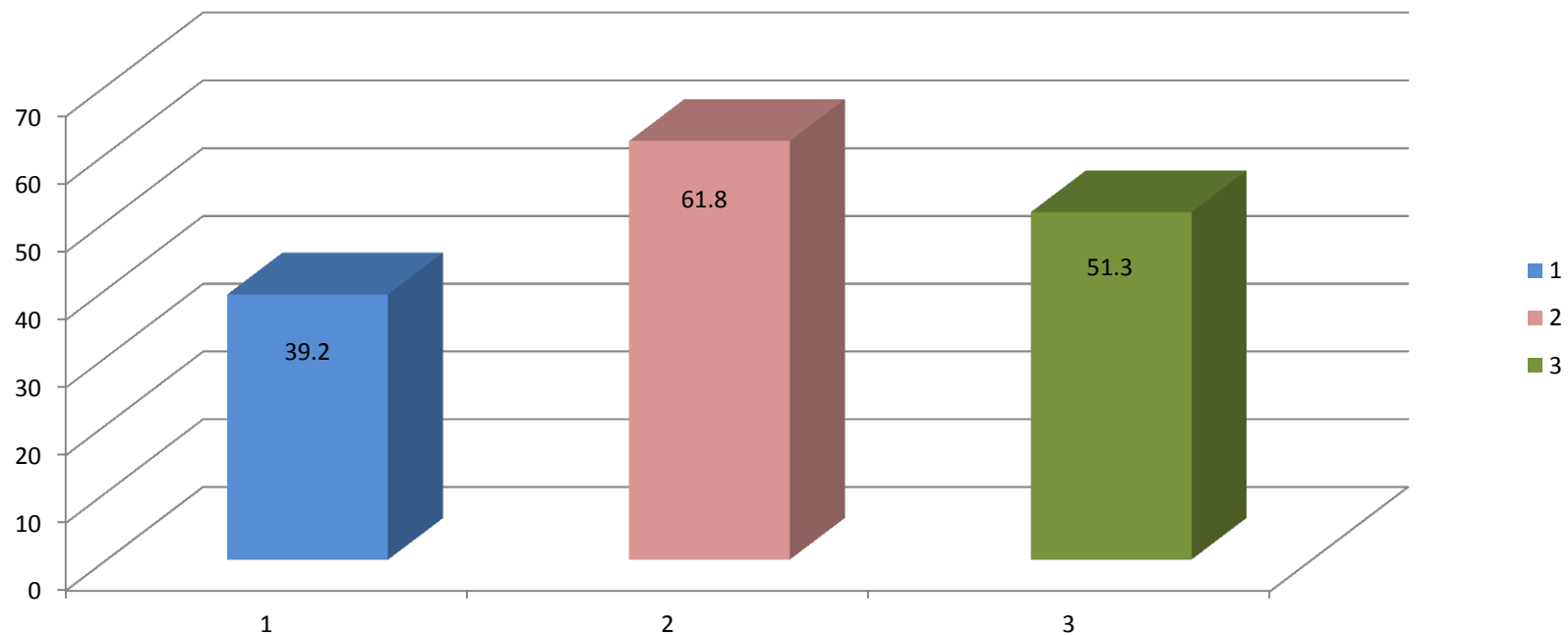
Community belonging

I think the best thing is that ... God is always with me and He would always help me out with everything, so I am never alone
(Angela, bisexual Christian woman)

The mindfulness that you develop in meditation is observing [life] as a non-judgemental watcher ... and that's the key to how you develop the wisdom to deal with your daily life (Robert, gay Buddhist man)

I am not religious. I do not believe in god. I do not engage in any Jewish practices. But being Jewish is important to me, it gives me an identity, a community, a social network, values, a heritage – a sense of who I am (Suzannah, heterosexual Jewish woman)

Heterosexual Attitudes to Homosexuality



Proportion of heterosexuals agreeing or strongly agreeing with the following statements:

Statement 1: Heterosexuality should be the only expression of human sexuality

Statement 2: Heterosexuality is the ideal for human sexuality

Statement 3: Heterosexuality and homosexuality should be treated equally

KNOWLEDGE OF AUTHORITY FIGURES

51.1% of participants felt the priests/leaders in their religion were knowledgeable about sexuality in general

Buddhist – 65.5%
Christianity – 51.7%
Hinduism – 26.3%
Islam – 60.4%
Judaism – 57.5%
Sikhism – 30.4%
Mixed – 35.0%

42.6% of participants felt the priests/leaders in their religion were knowledgeable about young people's sexualities

Buddhist – 55.2%
Christianity – 45.6%
Hinduism – 28.9%
Islam – 48.4%
Judaism – 40.0%
Sikhism – 8.7%
Mixed – 20.0%

“You might have the occasional lesson at Evensong... St Paul’s teaching on fornication, but nine times out of ten the preacher will choose the other text to preach about and that lesson will fade back into obscurity for another year” (Adam, heterosexual Christian man)

“We are told we are not supposed to but I don’t understand why. There are a lot of things I don’t... I’m not a theologian; I did science and deal with practicality and deal with what is here in front of me. Some things I take your word, you know more about it” (Nick, gay Christian man)

“I don’t see the value in kind of discussing it openly... they will just get angry... [My viewpoint] is different, but they won’t see it like that; a lot of people will just kind of see it as an attack on their belief so there is no value really in kind of trying to explain to them” (Dharam, heterosexual Sikh man)

Managing Religion and Sexuality

Tension and Conflict

Compartmentalisation

Accommodation

I am bisexual, and my decision [is] that I want to actively try to limit myself living a long-term relationship with a woman because of my community and my religion ... I couldn't leave Orthodox Judaism. That was my home, my people, where I feel comfortable.

I was willing to give up a good relationship [for it] (Jodie, Bisexual Jewish Woman – Video Diary)

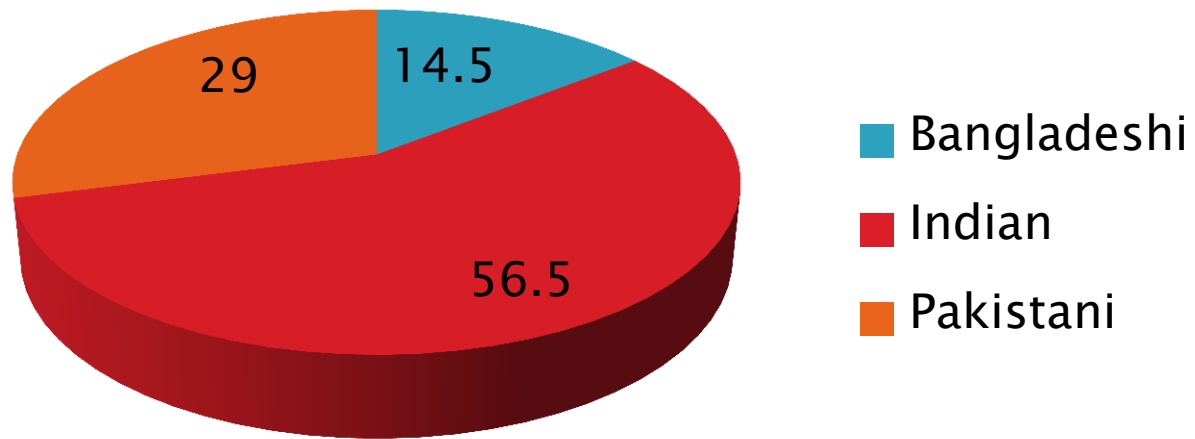
Everyone has desires, I don't particularly listen to mine ... sex before marriage ... is completely unlawful so you have to try and avoid that ... you avoid people who you like, people you have lust with or crushes (Isma, heterosexual Muslim woman)

I couldn't be part of a religion that didn't accept me ... it hasn't even crossed my mind that that's not acceptable in Buddhism until you kind of asked the question ... So I suppose they are very interlinked otherwise I just wouldn't be a Buddhist (Tamara, Bisexual Buddhist woman)

- ▶ Looking at the sample through the lens of individuals with South Asian heritage
 - ▶ Very diverse group
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Ethnic heritage

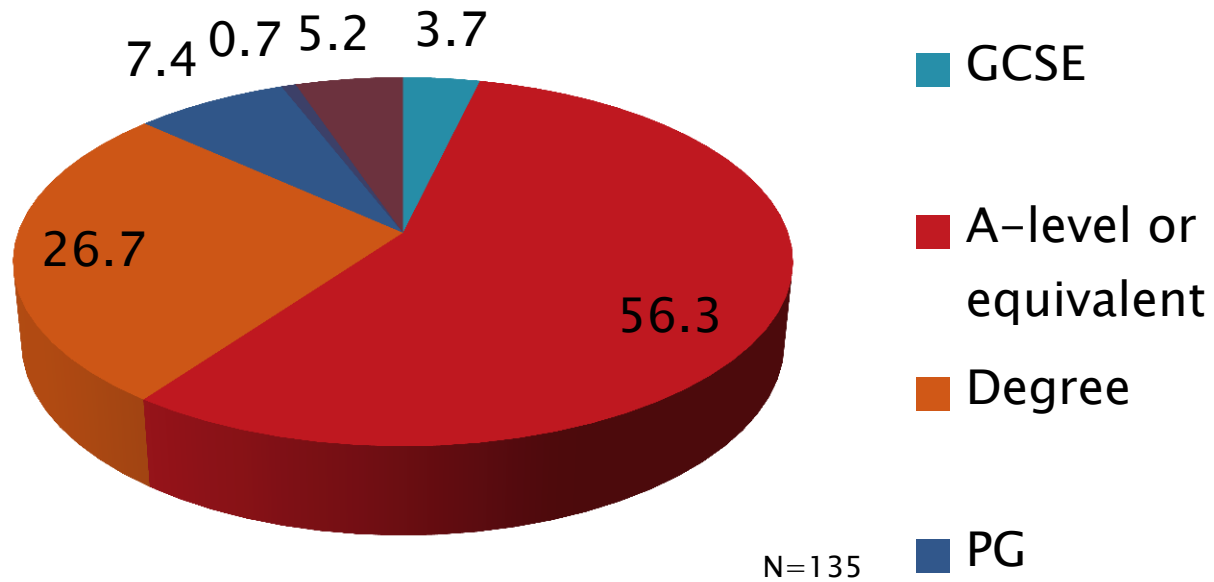
Ethnic heritage %



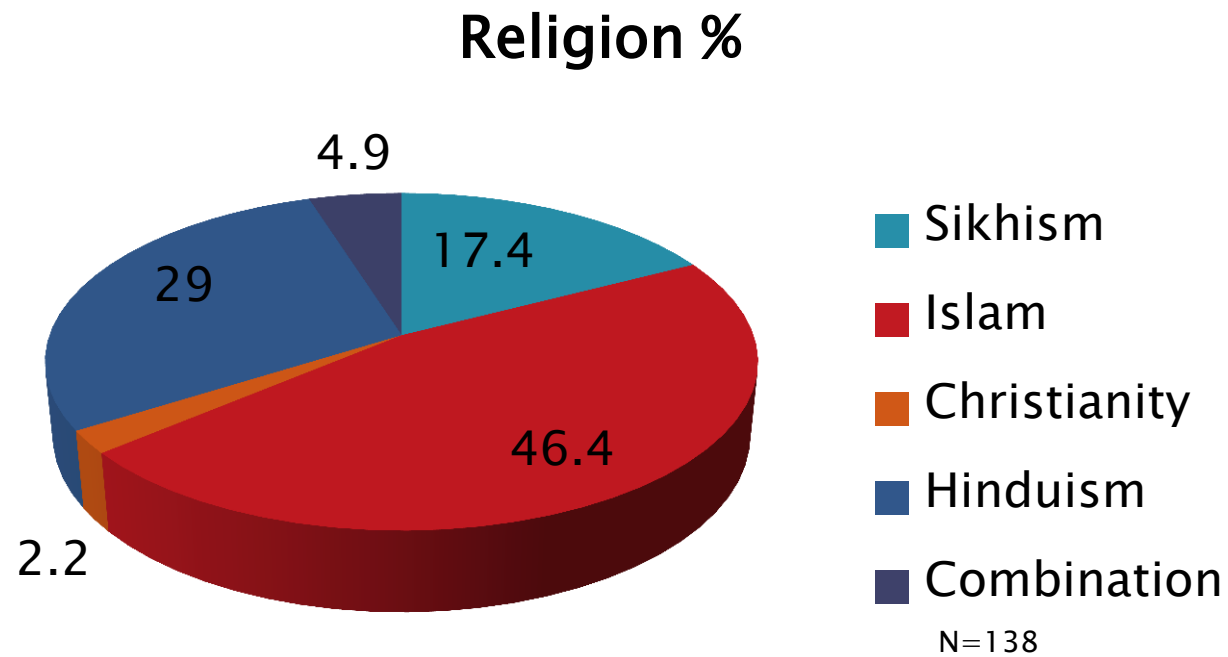
N= 138

Education

Levels of education %

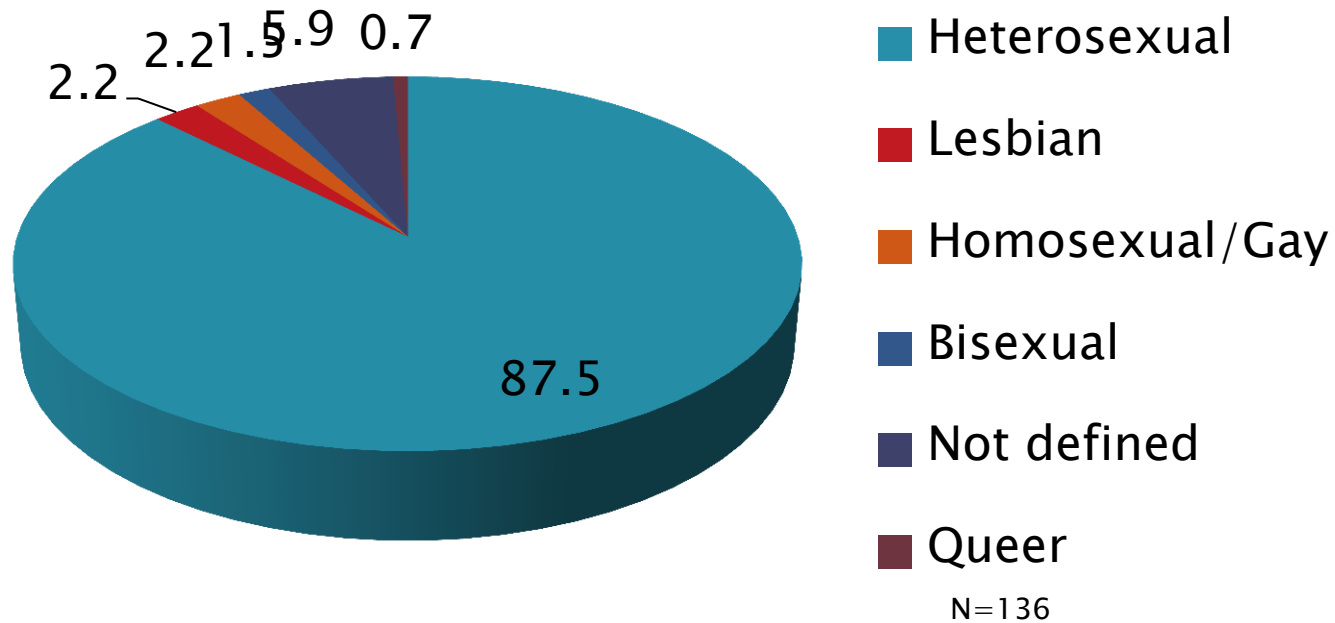


Religion



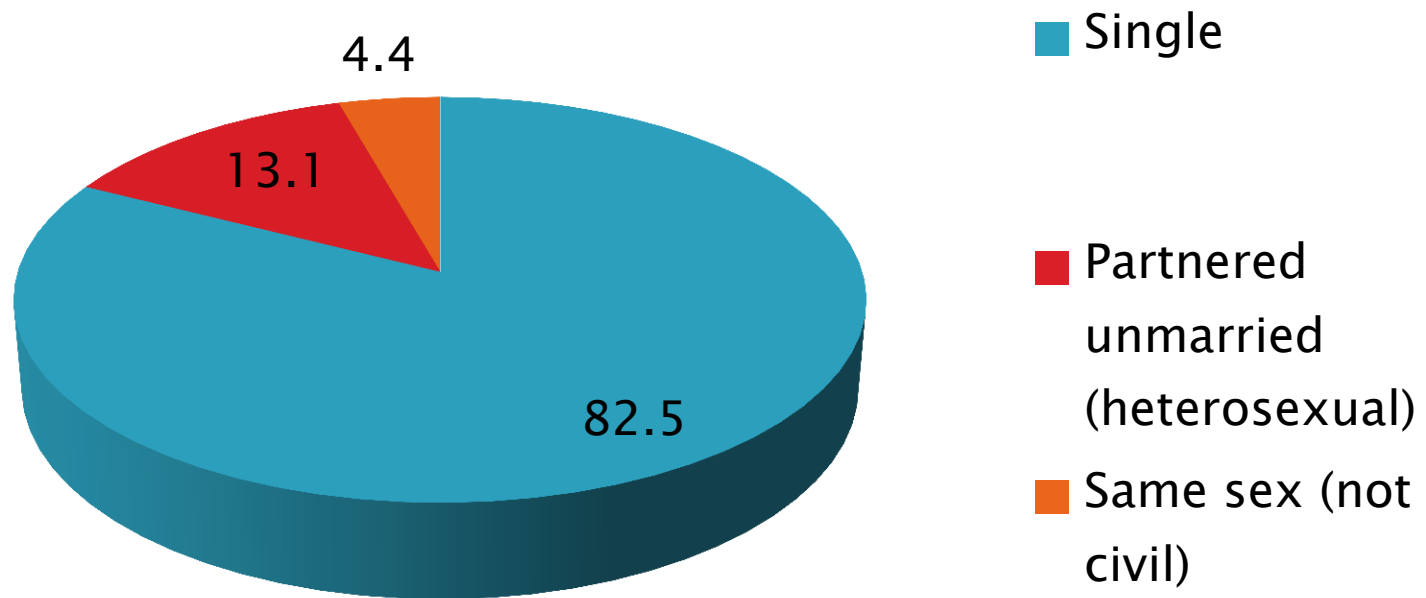
Sexual Orientation

Sexual orientation %

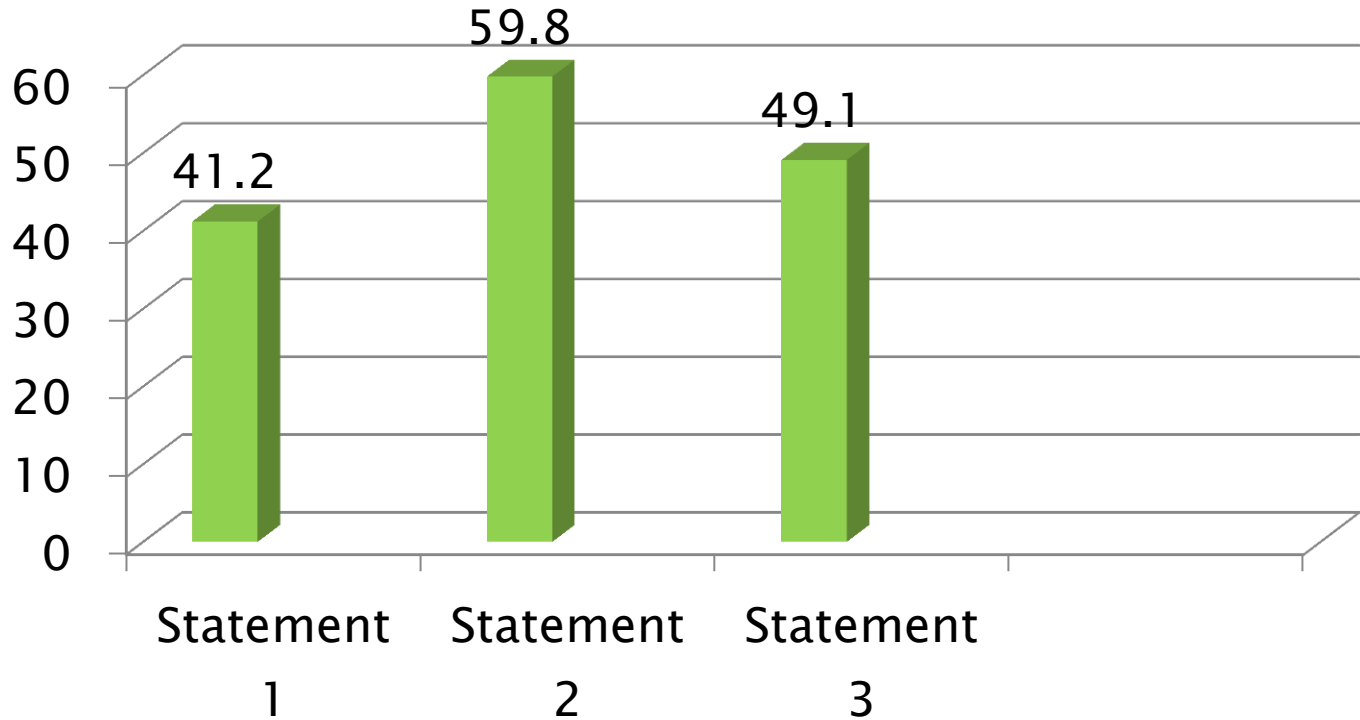


Relationship Status

Relationship status %



Heterosexuals only: attitudes



Proportion of heterosexuals agreeing or strongly agreeing with the following statements:

Statement 1: Heterosexuality should be the only expression of human sexuality

Statement 2: Heterosexuality is the ideal for human sexuality

Statement 3: Heterosexuality and homosexuality should be treated equally

By religion

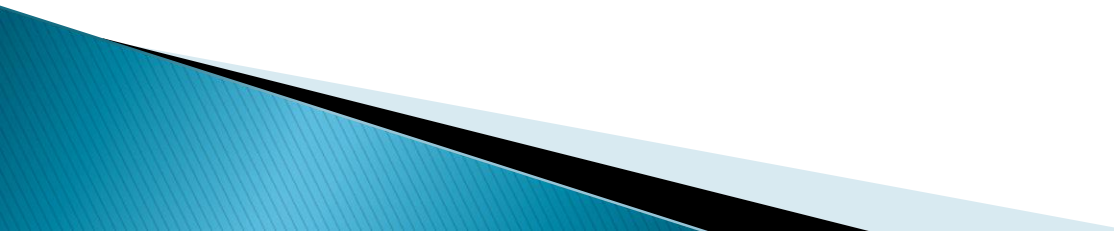
- ▶ Heterosexuality and homosexuality should be treated equally:
- ▶ 81.3% Sikhs
- ▶ 25.9% Muslims
- ▶ 79.4% Hindus

- My attitude has become less conservative
- “When I was younger I was quite intolerant to homosexuals but now I have calmed down and have a few friends like that. At university you mature up. When you are kids, when you are trying to insult someone you call them gay. You have the mindset that if you are gay you are going to get bullied. At uni you live with it and you can’t force anything upon them. In my religion it is not allowed, but I can see, you can’t force anything upon them” (Iqbal, heterosexual Muslim man of Pakistani heritage)

- ▶ They're just normal people:
- ▶ “I got talking to them and they're just normal people... I care about them now. But with the personal life and sexuality and having boyfriends or girlfriends that's just very personal to them and they keep that to themselves. And then when we were discussing anything from art to what they're going to eat, food and what not, that's just normal conversation. But their personal life, that's kept to themselves” (Sabrina, heterosexual Muslim woman of Pakistani heritage)

- ▶ God judges, not humans:
- ▶ “like what I said about homosexual people, even if they’re Muslim, I don’t mind at all what they’re doing. And to be honest, I don’t think anybody’s got the right to judge them. Even if they are really practising Muslims... I know Allah, that’s the Muslim God, did say that you can’t judge other people. Now me not being a perfect Muslim at all, cannot turn round and say to somebody else, “Why have you got a boyfriend when you’re a boy?” they could turn round and say “Why don’t you wear the hijab?” you know. I think there’s a lot of judgemental people and they should be looking at themselves first”. (Adala, heterosexual Muslim woman of Pakistani heritage)

- ▶ It creates an everyday conflict for me:
- ▶ “I think like because I don't...I think just because I don't know how I feel about homosexuality and stuff. I don't really...actually no I do believe that my religion just doesn't allow it but for people who are gay and stuff and are Muslim I just don't...I don't...I just feel a lot of sympathy for them because I think if I was in the same situation, and I feel as a bisexual or lesbian I would feel like I cannot do anything. And so...I'm trying really hard to reconcile my beliefs and my own religious beliefs with my religion and I have never had that before – this massive gap between the two” (Jasmina, heterosexual Muslim woman of Bangladeshi heritage)

- ▶ ‘If my religion said homosexuality is wrong I couldn’t respect my religion’ (Shalini, heterosexual Hindu woman of Indian heritage)
 - ▶ ‘I don’t have any issues with Sikhs being gay or anything, and actually I think it’s quite a natural thing that exists in the world... It is completely kind of misunderstood, you know, people just don’t really think it exists’ (Dharam, heterosexual Sikh man of Indian heritage).
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Stories of Conflict

- ▶ ‘Sexuality means that my family life is difficult. I find I am doing the one thing I hate the most day in, day out – lie! I feel like as long as I live at home I will have to lie... My sexuality has been the most difficult thing in my life to come to terms with. I wish I was attracted to males as it would make my life easier and I know my family would be happy if I got married’ (Amrit, lesbian Sikh woman of Indian heritage – questionnaire)

Stories of Accommodation

- ▶ ‘I am gay, I am proud to be gay, and I find no difficulty between my sexuality and my religious beliefs. Unfortunately other people who claim to be practicing Sikhs may not take the same approach that I do’ (Jasvinder, gay Sikh man of Indian heritage)

Conclusion

- ▶ Attitudes to LGBTQI sexualities are complex; questionnaire data is only partially helpful.
 - ▶ LGBTQI individuals of South Asian heritage are experiencing a heteronormative environment, with negativity experienced even in contexts where congruence between religion and sexuality is emphasised
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