



Executive Summary

February 2019



The 2018 Faith & Sexuality Survey was the first of its kind in the UK and gained a high level of response, particularly amongst those who had undergone efforts to change their sexual orientation (**458 out of 4613 respondents**). As such, it gives insight into the impact that attempts to change sexual orientation are reported to have on well-being and religious belief. It was overseen by an influential Advisory Board and managed by the Ozanne Foundation.

The survey attracted a higher than average level of white, English and Christian responses compared to UK census data, and a lower than average participation rate amongst those from minority ethnic, racial or religious groups. In order to help with the statistical analysis and comparisons, those who defined themselves as either “lesbian”, “gay”, “bisexual”, “queer”, “asexual”, “pansexual” or “same-sex attracted” were grouped together under “LGBTQ+”.

The results provide **strong evidence of the harm** that attempts to change sexual orientation are reported to inflict:

- More than half of those who had attempted to change their sexual orientation reported **mental health issues** and less than a third said that they “*have gone on to lead a happy and fulfilled life*”. Nearly half stated they had “*found it hard to accept myself for who I am*” and that they had “*had to leave or change*” their faith group.
- Of those who suffered mental health issues (281 people), nearly a third (91 people) said they had **attempted suicide** while over two-thirds (193 people) said they had had **suicidal thoughts**. Two in five said they had **self-harmed** (significantly higher amongst **women**) and a quarter said they had suffered from **eating disorders**.
- 43 people said they had been “*given no choice and had to undergo it*” and 22 people said they had undergone “*forced sexual activity with someone of the opposite gender*” in order to attempt to change.

It is clear that this is an issue that **affects vulnerable LGBTQ+ teenagers** given that over half of respondents said they had attempted to change their sexual orientation whilst 18 or under. Several reported they had been under 12.

Few said they had sought advice from the medical profession but nearly half said they had sought it from religious leaders and a fifth from “*specialised religious ministry/faith healer*”. The **influence of religious leaders** is profound. They were the most likely to be identified as the person who had advised or forced attempts at sexual orientation change, far more so than parents, and yet were the least likely person respondents said they were open with.

The primary motivations given for attempting to change were due either to their **religious beliefs or internalised homophobia**. This was evidenced by the fact that nearly two-thirds of those who admitted attempting to change their sexual orientation said they had done so because they were “*ashamed of my desires*” and a quarter “*did not want to be associated with LGBT people or their lifestyle*”. Nearly three quarters said they had done so “*because I believed that my desires were “sinful”*” and over half said it was “*because my religious leader disapproved*”.

The survey shows that these **attempts were overwhelmingly unsuccessful**. Nearly three-quarters stated that “*it did not work for me and I do not believe it works for others*” whilst only 13 people out of 361 respondents said “*it worked completely*”. One in six (60 out of 361) agreed that it had “*seemed to work for a while but it then wore off*”.

As such, the majority (51.1% of respondents) were **in favour of criminalising** “sexual orientation change therapy”.

- Over half agreed that it should be made a criminal offence. This rose significantly amongst those with experience of attempting to change their sexual orientation, as well as “gay” and “lesbian” respondents.
- The overwhelming reasons given is that it “*is damaging to a person’s mental health*” and “*causes self-hate*”.
- Those who defined themselves as “same-sex attracted” were the least likely to want it criminalised and the most likely to believe it “*should be practised with informed consent of the individual*”.

There is clear evidence that the **well-being of the LGBTQ+ community is said to be significantly impacted** by the experience of attempting to change sexual orientation, and that their **spiritual well-being and religious faith is said to be negatively affected** by the inner conflicts they have experienced because of their sexual orientation.

- Each of the weighted average **mental, emotional and spiritual well-being** scores of the full group of LGBTQ+ respondents were significantly lower than “heterosexuals”. These scores were significantly lower still amongst those who had experience of trying to change their sexual orientation. The exception to this was the group of “same-sex attracted” respondents, whose spiritual score was reported to be on a par with “heterosexuals”.
- LGBTQ+ respondents were significantly more likely to agree that religion had been “*a source of conflict in my life*”, that it had “*caused me to hate myself for being who I am*” and that religion no longer played a central part in their lives. This was more so amongst those with experience of attempting to change their orientation.

The **2018 National Faith & Sexuality Survey** was designed to examine the role religious belief has on people’s understanding and acceptance of their sexual orientation in the UK. It was overseen by an influential Advisory Board consisting of some of the most senior statistical, religious and healthcare professionals in the UK and was managed by the Ozanne Foundation. The survey was promoted through a range of social media platforms and national newspapers and ran from 9th to 31st December 2018. It attracted 4613 eligible responses.

The **Executive Report** can be found downloaded in full at www.Ozanne.Foundation and the sections viewed at:

Foreword – Rt Revd Paul Bayes, Bishop of Liverpool and Chair of the Ozanne Foundation

www.bit.ly/NFSS_Foreword

Director’s Report – Jayne Ozanne, Director of the Ozanne Foundation

www.bit.ly/NFSS_DirectorsReport

Executive Summary

www.bit.ly/NFSS_ExecSummary

Section 1 – Demographic & Religious Belief Profile of Respondents

www.bit.ly/NFSS_Section1

Section 2 – Sexual Orientation & Relationship Status

www.bit.ly/NFSS_Section2

Section 3 – Experience of Attempting to Change Sexual Orientation

www.bit.ly/NFSS_Section3

Section 4 - Impact of Attempting to Change Sexual Orientation

www.bit.ly/NFSS_Section4

Section 5 - Attitudes Towards Criminalising Sexual Orientation Change Therapy

www.bit.ly/NFSS_Section5

Section 6 - Measures of Well-being – Physical, Mental, Emotional & Spiritual

www.bit.ly/NFSS_Section6

Advisory Board

Dr Jamie Harrison, Chair of the House of Laity, Church of England; Rabbi Laura Janner-Klausner, Senior Rabbi to Reform Judaism; Martin Pollecoff, Chair of UK Council of Psychotherapists; Teddy Prout, Director of Community Services Humanists UK; Khakan Qureshi, Founder of Birmingham South Asian LGBT+ – Finding a Voice; Professor Sir Bernard Silverman, Former President of the Royal Statistical Society; Rt Revd Dr David Walker, Bishop of Manchester