



Bisexual+ Caucus Report 2023 Sydney World Pride



02/03/2023

Conveners:

Ruby Mountford, Melbourne Bisexual Network
Penny McKay, Melbourne Bisexual Network
Ian Lawrence-Tourinho, Bi Foundation, ILGA World

Attendance:

Sandra Perrin, Australia
Luz Elena Aranda, Mexico
Kim Vance-Mubanga, Canada
Mino Likwasi, Zambia
Shane Bhatla, Thailand
Maria Garcia, USA

Introduction

While participation was significantly smaller than expected (30 registrations), the delegates who attended the 2023 Bi+ Caucus represented a wide spread of regions and countries and all were happy to provide contact details so as to connect post-conference.

The discussion focused on:

- Identifying Bi+ specific challenges
- Research and population data, both existing and aspirational
- Bi+ community engagement and sense of identity
- Finding opportunities for collaboration and resource sharing
- Priorities for action

Delegates expressed a range of reasons for attending the caucus:

- Education on bi+ issues
- Perspectives from other countries
- Sharing recent projects and research
- Meeting other Bi+ people

Context:

Bisexual people have been systematically removed from LGBTQ+ discourse. Human rights campaigns that oppose criminalisation, discrimination and social exclusion continue to treat bisexual+ people and experiences as complicating and detracting factors. This has enforced a societal perception of sexual orientation as a binary of gay/straight which exists both within and outside of SOGI communities. This erasure both creates unique challenges for bisexual+ people, and prevents targeted responses to those challenges.

We can see this in the distribution of global funding for LGBTIQ+ initiatives and organisations. The 2019-2020 Global Resources report showed that out of over \$200 million USD provided that focused on sexual orientation, only \$35,000 was specifically bisexual focused, representing eight grants. (source: <https://globalresourcesreport.org/>)

Key Takeaways from Caucus Discussion:

Negative narratives, stigma and stereotypes about bisexual+ people are deeply embedded and are not being sufficiently challenged. These stereotypes and narratives are weaponised by perpetrators of sexual violence and domestic violence, and are internalised in bisexual+ people, result in high levels of mental ill health as well as low levels of community engagement and participation.

- Bisexual+ identity being treated as a disqualifier in adoption processes due to belief it signifies instability and deviance (Canada)
- Bisexual+ identity being weaponised against bisexual victim/survivors of domestic violence within the judiciary system (Australia)
- Research consistently shows Bi+ people, particularly Bi+ cis and trans women, are at a higher risk of sexual assault and domestic violence than gay men, lesbian women, and “straight” men and women
- Negative experiences at both mainstream and LGBTQ specific health and mental health services

Sexual orientation and identity being defined by the gender and/or sex of romantic and sexual partners which erases bisexual+ identities and experiences.

- Census questions focusing on the gender and/or sex of a partner rather than identity (Canada)
- Bisexual+ identifying people are significantly less successful than other sexual minority groups in obtaining refugee status as their sexual orientation is seen as less legitimate or suspicious to those making the decision (Canada, the USA, Australia)

- Low rates of Bisexual+ people participating in LGBTIQ+ community
- Bisexual+ people reporting their sexuality is of low importance in their sense of self, resulting in low levels of community engagement, and high levels of internalised biphobia.

Enforcement of gender binary on cisgender and transgender peoples

Research in Australia and elsewhere suggests up to 51% of people identifying as transgender also identified with multi-gender attraction. However, enforcement of binary gender roles, hyper-masculinity for trans men and hyper-femininity for trans women, can prevent trans people from expressing or discussing non-heterosexual sexual orientations, especially bisexuality+.

Call to Action:

Funded initiatives and research focusing on sexual violence and intimate partner violence/domestic violence in SOGI communities must address unique drivers of violence against bi+ people, particularly bi+ trans women of colour, in consultation with Bi+ communities and organisations.

Greater education and awareness of biphobic stereotypes and stigma is needed for attitudinal change. This can be done by Interpride and other LGBTIQ+ organisations proactively engaging with Bi+ advocates and organisations, and by actively seeking out and amplifying the research and initiatives of Bi+ advocates, researchers and organisers working in these spaces.

The many benefits of programs and funding for LGBQ communities are not reaching bisexual+ people and are not addressing biphobia. Initiatives and organisations focusing on LGBTIQ+ and SOGI human rights and services should be transparent about what they are doing for bisexual+ people, and champion inclusion measures to improve representation and meaningful participation.

Meaningful inclusion initiatives that ensure bisexual+ people are represented in consultations, conferences, and on decision making bodies. This must be done

The unchallenged negative stigma and stereotypes about bisexual+ identities and paradoxically simultaneous commitment to bisexual+ erasure is enforcing the harmful binaries of sexuality, gender and body diversity that are weaponised against us. Acknowledge biphobia in the same way we acknowledge homophobia, transphobia and intersex discrimination, and call it out within your circles of influence.

Additional Resources and Websites:

- <https://www.shoutout.ie/blog/asylum-for-bisexual-people>
- <https://www.melbournebisexualnetwork.com/>
- <https://bi.org/en>
- <https://biresource.org/>
- <https://www.ambi.org>

Research:

- <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/31256471/>
- https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pdf/nisvs_sofindings.pdf
- <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/35662651/>

Books:

- *Bi: The Hidden Culture, History, and Science of Bisexuality* by Julia Shaw
- *Bi: Notes for a Bisexual Revolution* by Shiri Eisner