



SILENCED BY SOCIETY

2026 SURVEY REPORT

The lives of Australian
lesbians in The Lesbian Club



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This report and survey prepared by:
Carole Ann, Kathy Chambers, Jan Browne,
Spider Redgold, Stacey McCaig, Wendy Suiter
and one who must remain anonymous for
her job security.

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Layout Design: Spider Redgold

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**We acknowledge that we
are on Aboriginal Land.
This land was never ceded.**

**We honour past present and
emerging Indigenous leaders.**

We thank all the radical lesbians
who have gone before us.

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GLOSSARY OF TERMS AND ACRONYMS

The following are the terms and acronyms used in this report.

ABS Australian Bureau of Statistics

AHRC Australian Human Rights Commission

GNC Gender non-conforming

Gender critical The belief that sex is binary, and that no human can change sex

Gender ideology A belief that human beings can change sex

LAG Lesbian Action Group Incorporated

Lesbian An adult human female (female meaning biological with XX chromosomes), exclusively attracted romantically and sexually to other women

LGBAA Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual Alliance Australia. This is part of LGBA founded in London in 2019¹.

LGB(TQIA+) Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex, Asexual and others. Throughout this document we have written the widely used acronym LGBTQIA+ as LGB(TQIA+). Where it appears in participant quotes, it has not been changed. Only the LGB letters of this acronym refer to sexual orientation, the rest do not.

SDA Sex Discrimination Act (1984). It also refers to SDA after significant amendments were made in 2013.

Sex Self-ID is the term used to refer to legislation at State and Territory level that allow for a man to self-declare that he is a woman and to change official documents such as a birth certificate to reflect this. Such documents then have official and legal status.

TERF Trans-exclusionary radical feminist. This term is embraced by many lesbians to signify their support for women's sex-based rights. It is used as a term of abuse by those who insist that men can be women and lesbians. (In this report, this term is only included when used by participants).

TLC The Lesbian Club Incorporated

Usurper A person who takes a position of power or importance illegally or by force

Woman A member of the female sex irrespective of age. This definition is taken from the original (1984) SDA.²

¹ LGB Alliance Australia You've Found Your People, <https://www.lgballiance.org.au/>. Last accessed 17/5/2026.

² Australian Government Federal Register of Legislation 2026 Sex Discrimination Act, No 4 1984, <https://www.legislation.gov.au/C2004A02868/asmade/text> Last accessed 17/5/2026

PREFACE

Silenced By Society is a report from a survey of lesbians³ in Australia in 2025. All 158 participants in the survey are members of The Lesbian Club Vic Inc (TLC), an association specifically for lesbians.

Research on lesbians, especially in Australia, is scarce and difficult to find.⁴ This survey sought to provide information for the TLC committee about its membership and their lives as lesbians. The survey provides valuable information for TLC and the lesbian community, and makes recommendations for future research and directions. It aimed at starting to fill this research gap. We hope that other surveys will follow so that lesbian lives in Australia are better represented.

Participants were asked both qualitative and quantitative questions about their lives, as well as their involvement with TLC. This report sets out the main findings under five sections: demographics and who we are; the joy of all things lesbian; silenced by society; usurpers in our midst; and TLC matters. A conclusion and appendices follow.

The key findings indicate that:

- Participants came from a **diverse range** of backgrounds
- We⁵ overwhelmingly **loved all things about being lesbian** with community, connection and shared experience with lesbians being central to our lives
- The Lesbian Club has provided **safe opportunities for connection, community and affirmation** for the participants
- In the current political climate and legal landscape, a significant number of participants felt **silenced, fearful or guarded** in public, at work or among their social or family networks
- There has been a **loss of events and groups** specifically for lesbians and a **loss of spaces** in which we feel welcome and comfortable. As a consequence of the current dominant gender ideology, lesbians have been forced back into the closet.

This report illustrates the need for safe lesbian-only spaces protected in law, and funded appropriately.

³ Lesbian An adult human female, (female meaning biological with XX chromosomes), and exclusively attracted romantically and sexually to other women

⁴ APPENDIX 1 ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY contains links to surveys, reports and information about the lives of lesbians

⁵ In this report “we” is used to refer to the members of TLC who responded to the survey



RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the analysis of participants responses the following recommendations are offered:

1.

Promote the sense of joy, power and acceptability of being a lesbian and the sense of pride we have in our community. Promote positive messages about being lesbian to younger lesbians

2.

Continue to explore ways of reaching more lesbians in all states and territories and expand state-based networks

3.

Create more opportunities for intergenerational connections between TLC members

4.

Review and support the use of technology by TLC members

5.

Conduct further research to identify other aspects of lesbian concerns

6.

Conduct a pilot to trial any future surveys, before disseminating to members, in order to eliminate confusion over the meaning of terms

7.

Continue to support lobbying at local, state and federal levels for the voices of lesbians to be heard in policy and decision making

8.

Engage with all forms of the media to highlight the need for single-sex, and specifically lesbian, spaces

9.

Disseminate this report as widely as possible

INTRODUCTION

There is little data available in Australia about lesbians, their specific needs, their lives, their concerns, their health, their desires. The Australia Bureau of Statistics does not collect any data specifically about lesbians⁶. ABS data combines lesbians, men who claim that they are lesbians, gay men, bisexual men and women, together with those who use a different term to describe their sexuality such as pansexual or asexual, as well as those with a queer identity, into the one category that is referred to as LGBTQI+ Australians. Much research on small populations, and more specifically lesbian populations, use purposeful sampling (including some of the largest surveys on LGBT+ populations in Australia), which can result in smaller sample sizes than standard quantitative survey research. It can be difficult to obtain larger sample sizes of lesbians as we are considered a 'hard-to-reach' or 'hidden' population.^{7 8}

One known survey about lesbians was conducted in Australia in 2005. It surveyed 59 lesbians who were planning to attend a private event, Sappho's Party, in South Australia in January 2006⁹. The survey was very targeted, only seeking information about participants' attitude to men who claim to be women attending the event. It found that male-free, lesbian-only events were important to lesbians. The need for lesbian-only space has become even more urgent In the intervening twenty years, as this report demonstrates.

To compound the invisibility of lesbians in research, the Australian Human Rights Commission (AHRC) has declared that any man who says he is a lesbian must be allowed into lesbian events.¹⁰

⁶ Australian Bureau of Statistics 2024 Media Release ABS releases first ever estimates of LGBTI+ Australians <https://www.abs.gov.au/media-centre/media-releases/abs-releases-first-ever-estimates-lgbtiaustralians> (2022). ABS data combines lesbians, men who claim that they are lesbians, gay men, bisexual men and women, together with those who use a different term to describe their sexuality such as pansexual or asexual, as well as those with a queer identity, into the one category that is referred to as LGBTQI+ Australians.

⁷ Sue Westwood, "Researching Older Lesbians: Problems and Partial Solutions," *Journal of Lesbian Studies* 17, no. 3–4 (2013): 380–392, DOI: 10.1080/10894160.2013.773840

⁸ Isabelle Savard and Kelley Kilpatrick. "Tailoring research recruitment strategies to survey harder-to-reach populations: A discussion paper". *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, 78, no. 4 (2022): 968–78. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jan.15156>

⁹ See the Coalition of Activist Lesbians for a detailed account of Sappho's Party. <https://coal.org.au/lesbian-space/> Last accessed 23/4/2026. And "Sappho gave a party:..." *International Feminist Summit* (2007) https://www.femininebyte.org/sapphos_party/SPI_files/frame.htm

¹⁰ Cockburn, P., 2026 ABC News Banning transgender women from lesbian groups could 'undermine their dignity', court hears. <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2026-02-24/trans-women-ban-could-underminedignity-court-hears/106379566>. Last accessed 23/4/2026.



This interpretation of the Sex Discrimination Act (2013 amendments) by the AHRC was successfully challenged in the Australian Federal Court by the Lesbian Action Group (LAG) (2026)¹¹ The matter will now return to the tribunal for another determination¹².

In this political climate, lesbians are being silenced, vanishing into secret gatherings advertised by word of mouth, and losing connections and many of their human rights. These include, among others, freedom to speak and express opinions publicly without sanction, and freedom to meet collectively without men. Lesbians experience lesbophobia and misogyny and the crucial loss of lesbian spaces. Lesbians are losing the ability to reach out to isolated lesbians and those just 'coming out', missing out on funding¹³, and losing the communities and lesbian culture that has been built over many decades^{14, 15}.

The Lesbian Club

The Lesbian Club Vic Inc (TLC), with the motto 'every lesbian needs TLC', is an incorporated membership-based lesbian-only association registered in Victoria, Australia. TLC was incorporated in 2023.

The Lesbian Club was established to:

- Provide and promote social and cultural events for members.
- At its discretion, organise events for both members and their invited guests.
- Assert the right of lesbians to freedom of association and freedom of speech, exclusively with other lesbians.

Every membership application for TLC is vetted to ensure that all members are born female, are lesbian, and understand the biological reality that humans cannot change sex.

¹¹ Lesbian Action Group Inc 2026 State Government Inquiry into anti-LGBTQIA+ hate crimes in Victoria Submission by Lesbian Action Group Inc. <https://lesbianactiongroup.org.au/> . Last accessed 24/4/2026.

¹² Cockburn, P. 2026 ABC News Lesbian Action Group wins Federal Court appeal in bid to exclude transgender women, Accessed at: <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2026-04-15/lesbian-action-group-court-judgment/106561902>. Last accessed 22/4/2026.

¹³ LGB Alliance Australia 2025 Why won't State Governments fund LGB projects??? <https://www.lgballiance.org.au/news/why-wont-state-governments-fund-lgb-projects>, Last accessed 13/5/2026.

¹⁴ Frei, S. 2026 'Desexing Society' Season 2 Episode 4 <https://desexingsociety.com/s2/s2e4/> Last accessed 10/9/201

¹⁵ Lesbian Action Group Inc 2026 State Government Inquiry into anti-LGBTQIA+ hate crimes in Victoria Submission by Lesbian Action Group Inc. <https://lesbianactiongroup.org.au/> . Last accessed 24/4/2026.

The survey

A small team of TLC members, with assorted professional skills and a lot of enthusiasm, volunteered to create the survey during August–September 2025, and launched it at a national club event in October 2025. The survey provides valuable information for TLC and the lesbian community, and makes recommendations for future research and directions.

Aims

- The primary aim of the survey was designed to inform club committee members and members about the make-up of the membership, levels of satisfaction with the leadership, and to assist in planning future activities.
- The secondary aim was also to provide a publicly available report with useful data for others seeking information specifically about lesbians.
- Questions about the experience of lesbian life were included to expand TLC's understanding of current lesbian culture and members' lives.

Method

The survey was conducted over a two-month period in 2025 and 158 of the 309 TLC members at the time completed it. This response rate of 51% is excellent for such a survey and provides much useful information as well as pointing to issues for further consideration.

The quantitative data was analysed using simple descriptive statistics. Qualitative responses were reviewed and grouped into themes, with participants' own words used, where possible, to form the analysis.

The structure of the survey revealed some problems with unclear language or terms that were open to different interpretations by the participants. Examples included 'cultural heritage', 'dependents' and 'shared house'.



Structure of the report

After a glossary of terms and acronyms, a list of graphs, Preface and Recommendations, the report is divided into 5 main sections.¹⁶

The first section describes the demographics of the survey participants.

The second section describes participants' enjoyment in the company, community and friendship of lesbians; being free to be oneself; the romantic connection with lesbians and lesbian sex; being politically active together and the absence of the male gaze.

Section three of the report describes how many TLC members feel silenced by society through forced anonymity, and the very real legislative and legal consequences for lesbian lives of being outed as a person who does not believe that men can be women, or lesbians.

The fourth section discusses how lesbians are, legally, required to allow men who claim to be women to attend their events. It noted the changing nature of LGB or "Rainbow" events over the years, and how many survey participants now feel awkward, uncomfortable, disrespected and sidelined at such events.

In the fifth section TLC organisational matters are raised such as the use of technology by members, and attendance and accessibility of events. Further it provides information about communication within the club and how this could be improved.

The report finishes with a summary conclusion of the survey findings. Appendix 1 provides an annotated bibliography and further information.

¹⁶ The structure of this report does not follow the order of the survey questions, which are available in Appendix 2.

FINDINGS:

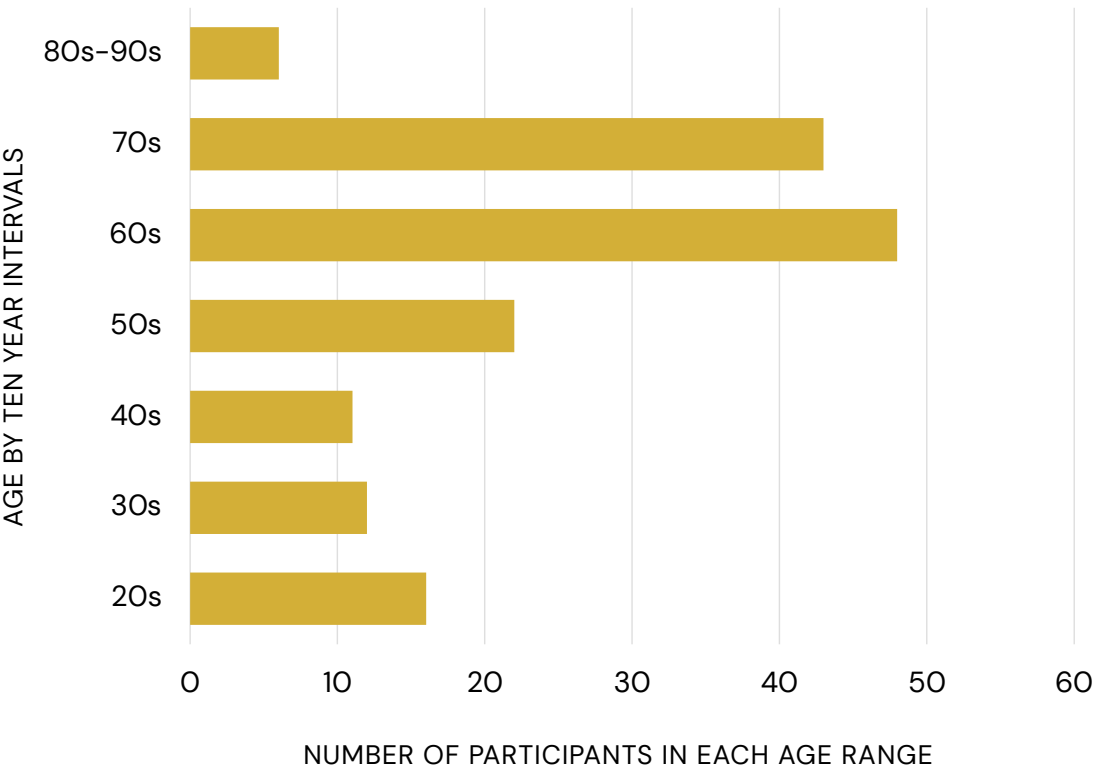
SECTION 1 OUR TLC SISTERS – WHO WE ARE

The survey sought information on the demographics of TLC members. It covered such matters as age, living situation, and relationship status. Questions were also asked about employment, children and dependents, how members named themselves as lesbians and the cultural heritage of members.

How old are we?

The data shows that 60% of the participants are over 60. The other 40% spans more or less evenly across the 20s to 50s age groups.

FIGURE 1: HOW OLD ARE WE?



This can be contextualised by the existence of lesbian networks which have been organising lesbian-only gatherings in Australia since the 1980s and earlier.¹⁷ These lesbian events were driven underground in the 2000s, first by anti-discrimination challenges by men who felt excluded, and then by legal changes in favour of these men. In this context, lesbians in Australia continued to secretly organise annual, monthly and weekly lesbian-only events.¹⁸ The older lesbian activists were a significant body who formed the nucleus of the TLC membership in the beginning. This skewed the early TLC membership toward an older demographic.

Consequently, from its inception, the TLC committee made a concerted effort to reach out to young lesbians.¹⁹ Membership data reveals that the numbers of elders/young people are slowly being balanced. Of the new members joining in the last half of 2025, 12 are under 50. This compares favourably with only 4 members being under 50 in the first 6 months of TLC.

How we name ourselves

In 2024, the University of Sydney found that only 38% of non-heterosexual women chose “lesbian” as their sole label, down from 69% in 2014²⁰. The TLC survey found the opposite to be true of the 158 participants who completed this survey. Six specific labels were available to choose from, as well as an ‘other’ category. Participants could choose more than one label.

Lesbian was the primary choice of 156 of 158 responses. Dyke (83), Gay (36) and Homosexual (31) were the other main choices. Amazon (11) and Queer (5) were less popular. Nine labels were used under the ‘other’ category including same-sex attracted (1), feminist (2), and Friend of Dorothy (1).

¹⁷ Frei, S. 2026 ‘Desexing Society’ Season 2 Episode 4 <https://desexingsociety.com/s2/s2e4/> Last accessed 10/9/2026

¹⁸ Hawthorn, S. 2024 Lesbian Erasure? <https://arena.org.au/lesbian-erasure/> Last accessed 23/4/2026.

¹⁹ The Lesbian Club (TLC) newsletters from 2024 onwards document the development of a young lesbian network, meeting regularly via Zoom as well as a camp in rural Victoria for young lesbians. Fundraising among members was carried out to subsidise the travel and accommodation expenses to enable young lesbians from interstate to attend.

²⁰ Mooney-Somers, J, Deacon, R.M., Richters J., Parkhill N., Kean, J. 2024 Report of the Sydney Women and Sexual Health (SWASH) Survey 2006, 2008, 2010, 2012, 2014 survey, University of Sydney and AIDS Council of New South Wales (ACON) Accessed at https://www.acon.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/SWASH-Report_2014.pdf. Last accessed 20/4/2026.

Our cultural backgrounds

When asked about cultural background, the responses revealed multiple interpretations of the concept of culture. Nationality, ethnicity and lesbianism were named by participants as cultural heritage. Many chose to name complex combinations of cultural heritage, in some cases going back several generations. Qualitative descriptions were categorised for de-identification and clarity; if multiple cultures were listed then they have all been reflected.

The largest group of responses (54 out of 158 (34.2%)) described their cultural heritage as Australian, white Australian or Anglo-Australian. Another 22% of participants (35), while describing themselves as Australian, made reference to another cultural or ethnic group. These included Irish, Maori, Celtic, Dutch, Indonesian, Danish, Latin, Croatian, Italian, Ashkenazi Jewish and French. Others mentioned dual national heritages with mixed ethnic backgrounds – Hawaiian, Portuguese, Chinese, Sicilian, Russian, Irish. What is not known is how strongly this group of lesbians identify with the other cultures they have named.

A further 37 (23.4%) responses made no reference to an Australian heritage, describing their cultural heritage as a single nationality or ethnicity. Sixteen (10%) members named a single cultural heritage.

In answer to the question about cultural heritage, some lesbians also used a racial identifier such as 'Caucasian' or 'Pakeha'. For a small number of participants, it was their lesbianism that described their heritage such as *'Lesbian, English heritage Australia'*.

In summary, the TLC membership demonstrated a significant diversity of cultural identity.

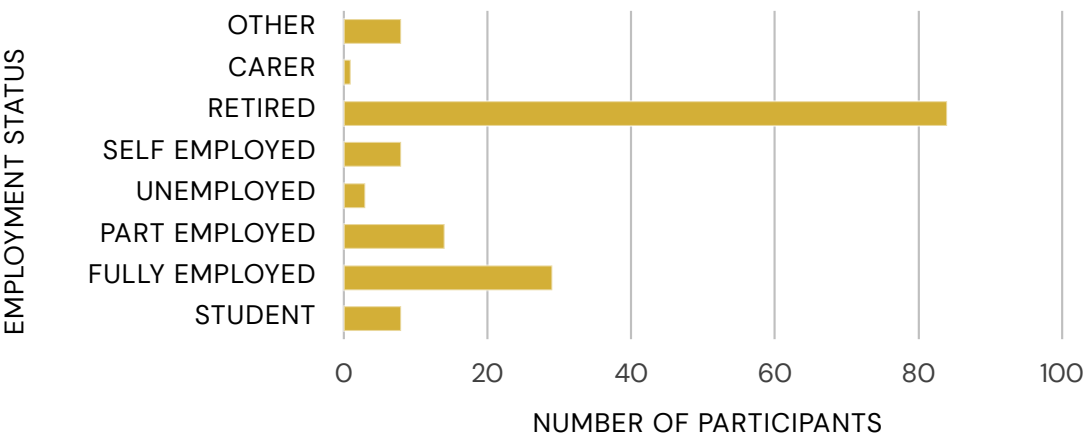
Our employment

Participants were given seven employment categories to choose from and an option of 'other'. They could select more than one category.

Not surprisingly, as participants were predominantly over 60, the largest category was retired (84 of the 156 responses (54%)). Thirty-seven (23.4%) were fully employed or self-employed. A further 15 identified as casual or part employed and three said that they were unemployed. The eight members who indicated 'other' were receiving disability pensions.



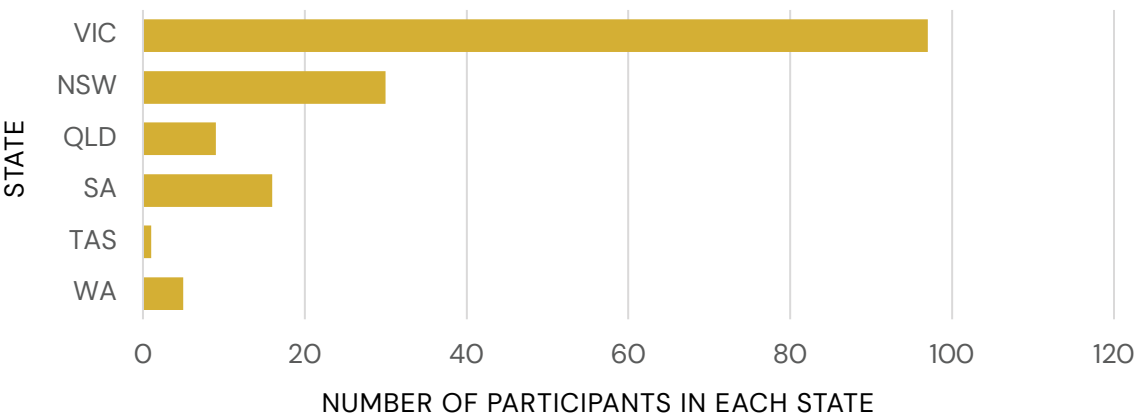
FIGURE 2: OUR EMPLOYMENT STATUS



Where we live

Most participants (97) live in Victoria. This is explained by the fact that TLC was established in Victoria amongst an existing cohort of friends and community members. Membership across all states has, however, been increasing.

FIGURE 3: WHERE WE LIVE



When considering regions (metropolitan, regional, rural), the percentages for each regional category were approximately equal in New South Wales (NSW) and Victoria (Vic). South Australia (SA) had equal rural and metropolitan with no regional participants. There were so few participants in Queensland (Qld), Tasmania (Tas), and Western Australia (WA) that no trends in regional distribution could be distinguished.

Our relationships

The survey asked participants about the nature of their lesbian relationships. Four different categories of relationship status as well as an option to describe in other terms was given. Self-identifying single lesbians were asked if they were looking for a partner or were content with their current situation.

Participants in their 20s were more likely to be coupled than not (11 of 16), and those who were not coupled were actively looking or hoping for a partner. This preference for and search for coupling declined for those in their 30s (50%) and this trend continued into the 40s where 70% were single but 5 out of 6 were still hopeful of finding a partner. We found a change for those in their 50s where overall the proportion of lesbians in partnership was nearly 70%. The percentage of coupled lesbians increases to 73% in their 50s and returns to balanced equal numbers in their 60s. For lesbians in their 70s the number of single and content (21) is greater than the total of all other relationship choices. The 6 oldest participants were either partnered, or content with their solo lives.

Two participants who selected the 'other' category said:²¹

- Currently involved, with no commitment
- I share a lot of my life with my closest friend

This data is a snapshot of the relationship status of TLC membership at the time of the survey. No generalisation from this data can be made.

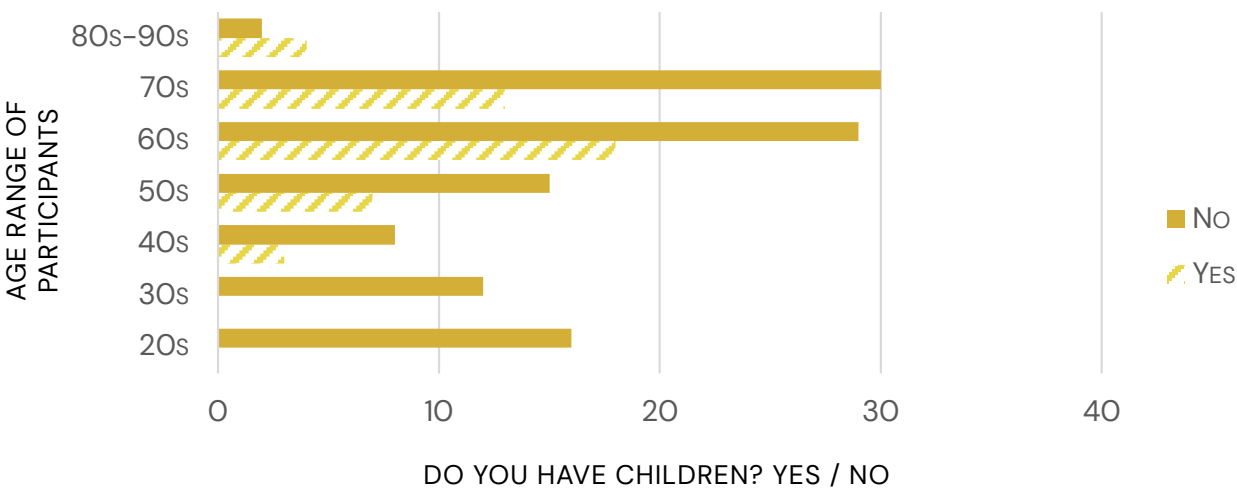
Our children and dependents

Seventy one percent of the participants had no children (111 out of 156). It is significant that no participant under 40 had children. Of the 45 with children, only 10 were under 60 years of age. There are several possibilities for the numbers of older lesbians with children, which is a topic for further research.

²¹ All quotes in this document are direct quotes from the data, and are shown with dot points. Quotes at the start of a section are in italic.

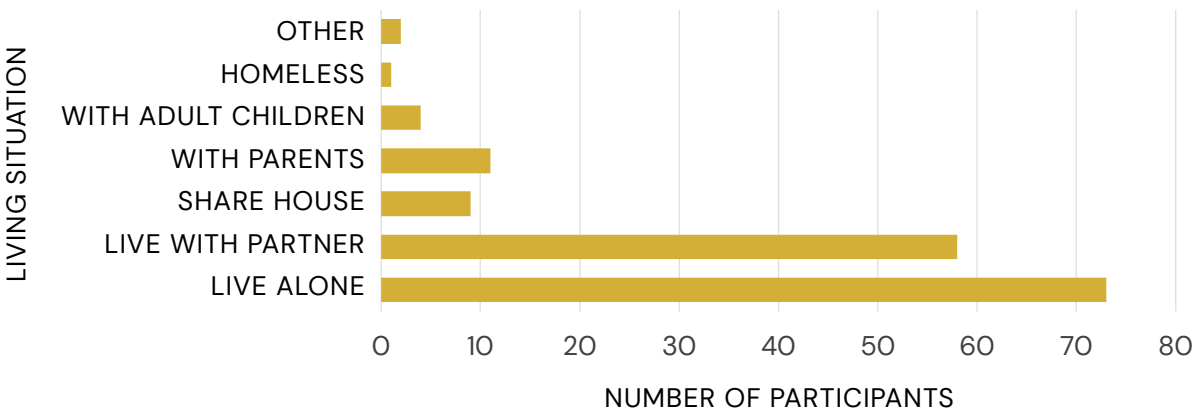


FIGURE 4: HOW MANY OF US HAVE CHILDREN



Participants were also asked a related question as to whether or not they had any dependents. One hundred and twenty-one (77.6%) out of the 156 who responded to this question do not have dependents. The 22 participants who had dependents named those dependents as their child, parent, stepdaughter, adult child with a disability, grandchild, friend, and partner. Eight participants mentioned pets as dependents.

FIGURE 5: OUR LIVING SITUATIONS



Our living situations

Participants were asked about their living situation. Seventy-three (46%) participants lived on their own, while 90 lived with at least one other person, either a partner (57), family, or in a shared household. One participant was homeless.

Our support networks

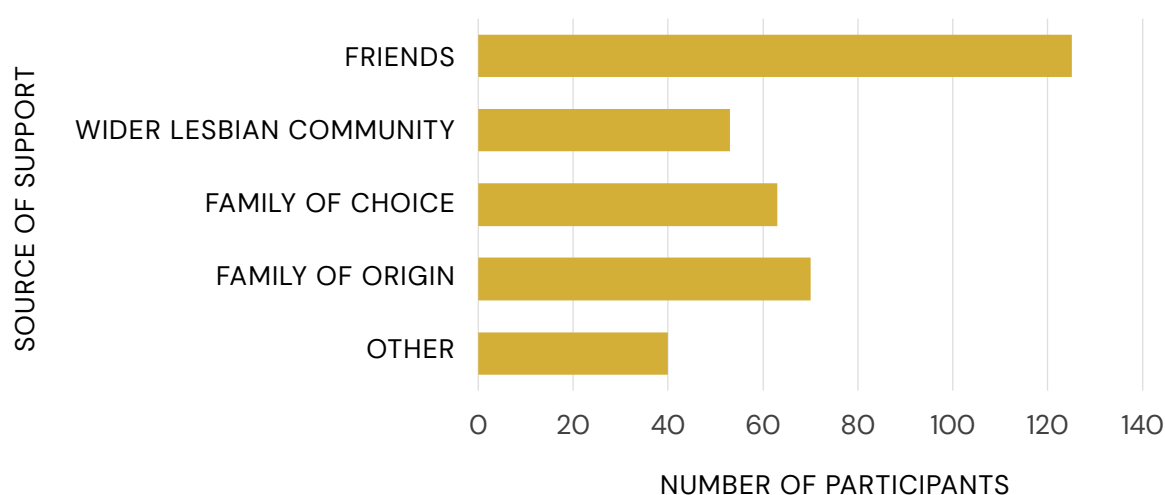
One hundred and fourteen (72%) noted that they have a supportive network of lesbians. Forty-three of the participants stated that they do not have a network of supportive lesbians in their lives. Most of the 43 participants who stated that they do not have a network of supportive lesbians listed other sources of support such as friends (25), family of origin (13), family of choice (8), wider lesbian community (4), partner (3), therapist (3). Significantly, five (3.2%) had no, or little, support outside themselves. An explanation was not sought, and so it is not known whether not having a supportive network of lesbians was by choice, nor what effect that had on them.

Some comments stood out in the qualitative responses:

- Due to TLC I am just starting to feel part of a lesbian community
- My local community is pretty supportive, but not for any lesbian issues
- Myself. My very close friends have recently died or pulled away
- I rely on myself heavily.

This part of the demographics is one of several that warrants further research. As lesbians are often believed to be isolated, it would be very useful to find out what support structures are important, what sort of support is needed, and what is possible.

FIGURE 6: WHERE WE LOOK FOR SUPPORT



Summary

This section of the report aimed to understand the demographics of the TLC membership. The majority of participants were older, lived in Victoria, and were retired. Most identified having a supportive network of lesbians in their lives, although some noted an absence of a lesbian support network. It was interesting to note that there was more diversity among participants than had been expected, in particular regarding culture.

SECTION 2 THE GREAT JOY OF ALL THINGS LESBIAN

Women! Women are amazing!

The great joy of being a lesbian stood out in the written responses. The survey asked TLC members what were some aspects of being a lesbian that they enjoyed. With only three exceptions, all 134 who responded to this question (98%) loved being a lesbian and being a woman. The participants love lesbians, and love associating with lesbians. The cohort had many ways of expressing the same passion. Twenty-three responded with 'Everything' or 'Women', while three participants (2%) were not enjoying being a lesbian at the time of the survey. The survey did not ask for further explanation for their answers.

Community, friendship and connection

A very important component of being lesbian was identified as the social connection that it brings, the joyful community, the many activities that women enjoy doing together, the feeling of safety within women's company, and the lifelong friendships that are established and maintained.

- Everything. I love being a lesbian. It makes sense to me emotionally, physically and politically
- I love that I get to love women. I love being around other lesbians, the energy, the joy. I like that there is a level of understanding that many lesbians have when we are together. I love that my life is centred around women. I think that in particular has improved my life so much
- Seeing the world uniquely, having a special place for women in my heart and soul, knowing just how powerful, stoic and connected women are. Being around women who get it
- The lesbian culture, laughing, playing, cooking, eating, camping – just having fun together – just being together and being gentle with each other
- Sisterhood with lesbians of all ages, such as at the TLC/LAG events and conference
- Lesbian spaces – being around other lesbians. Talking about lesbian art, culture, pop culture
- Being with my tribe = Relating to women, lesbian creativity, playing with lesbians, lesbian humour.



Being oneself

Sixteen participants (10%) stated that they were able to be free to be true to themselves, and to hold and express their opinions safely. Six women talked about living their truth or being able to be themselves. Some examples include:

- It feels authentic, comfortable and real
- Being a lesbian has meant feeling a sense of freedom, free to feel real
- I like the opportunity to be with women that accept me as I am and that share similar lifestyle
- I prefer mixing with my own kind where I am known, respected and I can fully be myself and express my opinions safely.

Lesbian herstory and culture

Five participants talked about the pleasure of discovering lesbian herstory and enjoying lesbian culture.

- I love discovering lesbian literature, culture and history. It fills me with joy. In this day and age, it is much easier to find tribes and like souls in these areas. I would love to find more lesbian women who share similar interests
- The conversations, the activism, the very rich history, the dances, the films, the laughter, the sense of solidarity
- Having our own rich subculture to explore and create.

Empowerment and the collective strength of women

Life as a lesbian was described by participants as empowering and autonomous:

- Company of like-minded, strong, independent women
- I have faced some hardship for being lesbian and I love that it's made me more resilient.

Two women talked about the strength of lesbians coming together for political purposes.

- Solidarity between political Lesbians. The collective strength of women
- Being with other politically like-minded lesbians. Political discussions and actions.

Joyful romantic connection and sexual expression

Lesbian sex and the romantic connection possible between women was also a joy mentioned by two lesbians in the cohort.

- Being surrounded by women only. I like being attracted to other women, it's liberating knowing I am seeking intimacy with my equal as opposed to someone trying to oppress me
- Lesbian sex.

Summary

The survey data showed overwhelmingly that the participants loved being lesbian and that the community and connection that they had with other lesbians was of paramount importance, as was a shared culture and history. Participants were able to be themselves, including sharing political views and actions.



SECTION 3 SILENCED BY SOCIETY

I feel silenced by society, for fear I will be labelled a bigot for being same-sex attracted and wanting spaces that are for women

The current political climate is beyond surreal

The survey invited members to share the issues that most concern them as a lesbian. One hundred and fifty-three participants (97%) answered this question, with only three of them stating that they currently had no issues of concern as a lesbian. Participants identified being silenced through a range of mechanisms related to gender ideology. These concerns included: loss of freedom of speech, loss of freedom of assembly, increasing invisibility, lesbophobia and misogyny, the impact on dating for young lesbians, social isolation, and the personal impact of maintaining public anonymity as someone who does not believe in the current model of gender ideology. As direct quotes in the section will show, participants no longer feel that they can speak their minds or argue their case about gender ideology without significant sanction.

Such social sanctions have been widely seen in the media. Loss of employment is just one sanction feared by participants as a consequence of their beliefs. In addition, there have been costly legal cases in which women seek to have their voices heard and to regain rights to assembly without invasion by men who say they are women.²²

The silencing impact of gender ideology on lesbians

In 2023 Reem Alsalem, Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women and Girls, said that she was deeply concerned by “attempts to silence women based on the views they hold regarding the scope of gender identity and sex in law and in practice and the rights associated with these, severely affects their participation in society in dignity and in safety, as well as their country’s prosperity and development” (p1).²³

²² See for example, the case of Sall Grover <https://adfinternational.org/news/australian-court-dismisses-appeal-to-uphold-biological-reality-in-what-is-a-woman-case> last accessed 12/06/26, and the case of Kirrille Smith <https://www.hrla.org.au/the-high-cost-of-speaking-the-truth> last accessed 12/06/26

²³ Alsalem, R. 3034 Statement by Ms. Reem Alsalem Special Rapporteur on violence against women and girls <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/issues/women/sr/statements/2023-05-19-statement-sr-vawg.pdf>, Last accessed 4/5/2026.

The survey showed that participants were also concerned about the impact of the current dominant gender ideology for lesbians and lesbian community:

- I'm sick of being pushed back into the closet because trans politics has taken over LGBTI organisations, all levels of government, teaching institutions, the law etc etc
- Trans takeover of womanhood and lesbian
- Finding a community where everyone isn't trans/non-binary. I also dislike constantly having people use they/them pronouns for me, or specifically ask me my pronouns... because they assume I mustn't identify as a woman
- Modern day homophobia / queer theory
- Erasure by gender ideology
- I am immensely saddened by the gender ideology contagion and would like that resolved
- The trans agenda
- End of gender surgery and intervention of youth
- I'd like cross dressing men to stop calling themselves lesbians
- The Trans cult.

Freedom of speech

Participants wanted the freedom to speak their minds as a normal human right, and not to be discriminated against for holding views based in biological reality. Ironically, as one participant noted:

- It is easier in this political climate to be 'out' as a lesbian, than it is to be 'out' as someone who knows that people can't change sex, and men can't be lesbians.

Participants stated concerns around freedom of speech:

- TLC has been a great stop gap – but nothing beats our freedom of speech and expression that has been eroded by trans ideology
- Not being able to be honest about trans-ideology
- Trans ideology being the most powerful social narrative and the inability to actually speak my politics without being a target
- The ability for lesbians to openly discuss issues, politics, ideas without broader public judgement. Both in person and online
- Being judged as discriminatory for wanting lesbian-only spaces, women born women sport, prisons.



Freedom of assembly

Changes to the Sex Discrimination Act (SDA) made in 2013 (1984, 2013)²⁴ significantly impact lesbians' ability to meet together. The laws in Australia currently restrict single-sex events to private incorporated membership clubs such as The Lesbian Club Inc. Lesbians in Australia are unable to advertise their events without the legal constraint that any such event must be open to everyone. Any events that are not private for club members and their guests have to be fully "inclusive" of anyone who claims to be a lesbian, with a result that lesbian-only events are rare. No lesbian group to date has been granted an exemption from the enforced requirement to allow men entry if the man says he is lesbian (SDA s44). TLC members stated in the survey that they want to go to events where they know that all the other participants are women born women.²⁵

Others stated clearly that they want the Federal SDA and the various State-based sex self-ID legislations changed to legalise lesbian/women-only events, to stop men from claiming to be women and/or lesbians, and to allow public advertising of TLC events and lesbian assembly without men.

- I would love LAG and Sall Grover to win their legal cases. We need to have women and men defined legally. That is fundamental²⁶
- I would like the lesbian gatherings to be able to be publicised freely so all Lesbians who are women born women can attend these events
- Change of law so we can publicly advertise for LESBIAN only events
- Definitely the increasing legal attacks on lesbian rights (i.e. the criminalisation of public lesbian events) is very concerning
- Overturning sex self ID legislation
- I would like to be able to advertise lesbian events and be sure I could prevent men from attending.

²⁴ Australian Government Federal Register of Legislation (2025) Sex Discrimination Act 1984 Compilation No. 47, <https://www.legislation.gov.au/C2004A02868/latest/text>. Last accessed 24/4/2026.

²⁵ Australian Government Attorney-General's Department 2026 Australian Government Guidelines on the Recognition of Sex and Gender, <https://www.ag.gov.au/rights-and-protections/human-rights-and-anti-discrimination/australian-government-guidelines-recognition-sex-and-gender>. Last accessed 24/4/2026.

²⁶ A summary of the Sal Grover legal case – Tickle v Giggle can be found at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tickle_v_Giggle. The LAG case is explained on the LAG website. <https://lesbianactiongroup.org.au/>. Both cases involve the conflict between womens' sex-based rights and the rights of men who claim to be women. At the time this survey was undertaken, the decisions on both legal cases had not been handed down.

One woman mentioned how confusing the legal situation is now:

- Confusion/frustration about law changes being taken out on us.

Many participants talked about the need for lesbians to be able to gather with their own group – lesbians. There are examples throughout the report, but the following four quotes are very specific to these needs:

- I would like to be able to go to events and be sure they are actually female only. To be able to meet without men who say they are lesbians
- Finding more lesbian friends and attending spaces that are welcoming of us. There are few ways to do this openly, and nowhere to catch up in person openly or make a public event without ideological pushback
- Lack of lesbian-only community connection to enjoy a full and sustaining lifestyle. Transgender ideology has removed this possibility in Queensland
- Isolation from lesbian-only gatherings. I want men who pretend they are women out of lesbians spaces!!!!

Invisibility

Lesbian invisibility was discussed by survey participants. Three participants stated that they felt invisible in society through the lack of acknowledgement in public media of lesbian specific events such as International Lesbian Day, lack of strong role models in the community, and denial of Government funding²⁷ for lesbian events.

- Lesbian invisibility eg no acknowledgement of International Lesbian Day in media or on social media of politicians – unlike IDAHOBIT, Wear it Purple etc.
- Need positive lesbian stories in the media
- I'd love to see some strong role models in the community.

²⁷ LGB Alliance Australia 2025 Why won't State Governments fund LGB projects???
<https://www.lgballiance.org.au/news/why-wont-state-governments-fund-lgb-projects> Last accessed 13/5/2026.



Lesbians need funding for their events, just as any other community organisation. However, as researched and demonstrated by the LGB Alliance²⁸ and LAG (2025)²⁹ participants in this TLC survey also demonstrated that they are further silenced and invisible in Government funding rounds, and may be denied funding as a sanction for not accepting gender ideology. Participants in this survey would like to see this situation change:

- To get more funding and support for lesbian events, services, organisations etc
- No trouble being out as a lesbian but [I] need to be highly circumspect about expressing gender critical views due to potential funding threats to the voluntary women's organisation I work for.

The silence of isolation

Isolation is a well known process in silencing voices. The issue of isolation from lesbian community connections was a common theme across all age ranges and locations. This has likely been impacted by the loss of lesbian spaces, lesbians seeking public anonymity because of sanctions, the problems with advertising publicly and the pressures from gender ideology proponents to accept their belief that men can be lesbians. Nine participants specifically mentioned their own isolation. For instance:

- Even though I have some lesbian friends, and my girlfriend, I sometimes feel isolated and would like to make more friends, especially for in person activities. But it's so difficult
- I would like to be a part of a wider lesbian community and to make long term friendships
- Until recently – Isolation and no tribe
- Difficulty making lesbian friends.

²⁸ LGB Alliance Australia 2025 Why won't State Governments fund LGB projects??? <https://www.lgballiance.org.au/news/why-wont-state-governments-fund-lgb-projects>, Last accessed 13/5/2026.

²⁹ Lesbian Action Group Inc (LAG) 2026 State Government Inquiry into anti-LGBTQIA+ hate crimes in Victoria Submission by Lesbian Action Group Inc. Last accessed 24/4/2026.lgbaa

Some participants gave other reasons for feeling isolated, such as living location and personal issues.

- Social isolation. Need more groups for lesbians outside major cities
- Isolation due to being in an outer suburb of Melbourne and reliant on public transport
- Isolation from others – but I have chosen to live where I am
- In a small rural area. Few lesbians around. Like to meet more online
- It is even harder for me as an autistic lesbian to meet other women for friendship and relationships.

Dating dilemmas

A concern, especially for younger lesbians, was the lack of dating opportunities with other lesbians. It has become increasingly difficult to meet other lesbians who do not involve themselves in the ideology of gender identity.

Sixty eight participants stated that they object to the expectation that they should behave contrary to their sexual orientation as lesbians by accepting men as lesbians and partners. A few examples of participants' concerns around this issue are:

- The decimation of our once thriving community under the LGBTIQ who now tell us we can no longer have single-sex events, that we must declare pronouns and accept males in our dating pool. I say no!
- I hope one day, it becomes normalised to not expect us to consider trans-identified males in the dating pool. And to no longer have to be in the closet about this assertion
- Hearing that young lesbians are expected to have sex with trans
- The way the TQ+ have destroyed purely lesbian events – and hence lesbian dating in person is difficult to achieve
- Having single friends not wanting to deal with trans women on dating sites, hearing that young lesbians are being expected to have sex with trans men [sic] by other lesbians



- Can't find other young lesbians easily

Some participants had suggestions regarding dating such as:

- Lesbian dating events that exclude men
- A lesbian only dating site, but I feel that ship has sailed
- I would really like to be able to meet a woman for a relationship who knows she is a woman because she has the XX chromosomes and knows we are bound to a biological sex.

Lesbophobia and misogyny

A number of participants spoke about the misogyny and lesbophobia that they experienced in various aspects of their lives such as the work place, society in general and within the LGB(TQIA+) community.

According to the Merriam-Webster dictionary, misogyny is: hatred of, aversion to, or prejudice against women. Lesbophobia is: discrimination against lesbians, sometimes referred as lesphobia, is a form of homophobia, often paired with misogyny, that comprises various forms of prejudice and negativity towards lesbians as individuals, as couples, as a group, or lesbianism in general.

The Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual Alliance

Australia (LGBAA) provides evidence that gay men have been issued with exemptions to the SDA to hold men-only functions.

They conclude that lesbians are being treated in a discriminatory way because: "trans identifying males are challenging lesbians who apply for single sex exemptions, whereas this is not happening for gay men."

Participants of this survey described how lesbophobia works both to silence lesbians so that they are afraid to come out as lesbian, and also the need for participants to seek public anonymity (discussed below) because of the potential consequences of their disagreement with gender ideology. This is similar to what was found by Frei (2026)³⁴.

- Lesbophobia is on the rise. Young people are telling me that 'lesbian' has a stigma attached to it. They find it more acceptable to call themselves pan sexual and/or trans...
- Finding lesbians that feel proud to be called lesbians. If they go by queer, pansexual, demisexual, I don't know if we are on the same page and feel they support a movement that is eroding the rights of lesbians and women...

³⁴ Frei, S. 2026 'Desexing Society' Season 2 Episode 4 <https://desexingsociety.com/s2/s2e4/> Last accessed 10/9/2026

Three participants noted various forms of homophobia rife in society – hostile ‘allies’, patriarchy and increased misogyny on the web, and oppression on a global scale. A fourth noted that adolescents in regional settings continue to experience homophobia.

Participants commented on the stigma that is still attached to being a lesbian and the way in which this contributes to lesbians being erased and oppressed:

- The erasure of us!! We are here. We are (biological) women who love (biological) women. We shouldn’t be shamed for that
- Probably society’s attitude towards lesbians as a whole needs an upheaval
- If people in general would educate themselves and not stereotype lesbians
- There is still some stigma in society
- General societal acceptance of lesbians
- Wimmin/Lesbians not liberated yet (same shit/different century)
- I really don’t want to hide who I am but at the same time, I don’t want to have to keep ‘outing’ myself every time I need or want something done – I’m tired of having to put up a shield or a sword

Two participants described the urgent need for social acceptance of lesbians and ‘promotion’ of being lesbian as a wonderful thing:

- I would like same-sex attracted women to feel safe to be called lesbians and that this word no longer carries stigma but instead holds a sense of pride and community
- We need to promote to the world that there’s nothing wrong with being a lesbian and try to reach out to the younger generation.

One person also mentioned lack of broader and deeper feminist analysis within sections of the lesbian community.

- Misogyny, including but not limited to the gender identitarian movement. Ageism. Lack of broader and deeper feminist analysis in sections of the lesbian community.



Young lesbians and lesbophobia

Lesbophobia is particularly pressing for young lesbians, especially for those under 30. The pressures on young lesbians to name themselves something other than a “lesbian” were very apparent in the data, in particular if they did not wish to live according to the stereotypes of ‘gender’ currently being expected. The silencing pressures were visible in two ways. First, young lesbians were under a lot of pressure to conform to the homophobic concepts of gender ideology and to eradicate their ‘lesbianism’. Second, as noted above, finding other lesbians for friends and partners in a society in which lesbians are silenced through gender ideology and increasingly hidden is very difficult.

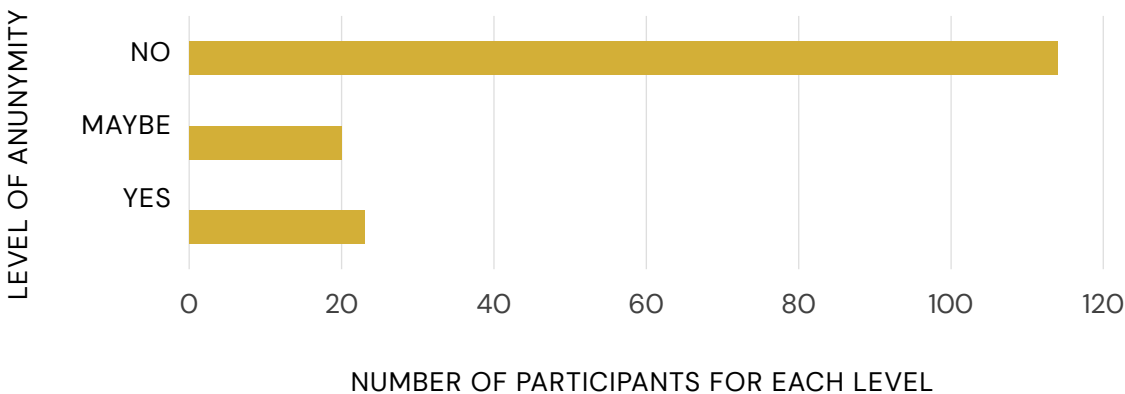
- The pressure on young GNC (gender non-conforming) lesbians to adopt a ‘non-woman’ identity if they are not comfortable with performing femininity
- Transing away the young lesbians causes suffering.

Public anonymity

Participants were asked if they needed to remain anonymous at public events. The question did not define whether anonymity referred to being a lesbian or being gender-critical. The majority, 114 (72.6%) of 157, who answered this question are willing to be known publicly on all occasions. However, as the following graph shows 43 participants would prefer to remain anonymous always or on some occasions.

- I can’t be out as a TERF anywhere. I am out as a lesbian everywhere.

FIGURE 7: OUR NEED FOR PUBLIC ANONYMITY



The sense that one needs to remain anonymous is a powerful source of silencing and discrimination for the 43 lesbians who want to remain anonymous, who made up a significant 28% of the sample. A further examination of the 43 lesbians revealed that almost 50% are in their 20s or 30s even though these age groups only comprised 18% of the total number of participants. A range of reasons why they preferred to remain anonymous when attending public TLC events included: work-related impacts, as well as consequences for mental health, relationships, their privacy, and for others that they care about.

Work related impacts

Twenty-five participants mentioned work related impacts. These included: the potential for being fired; losing one's career; loss of, or refusal of funding (as noted in section on Invisibility above); being ostracised by colleagues and friends; having complaints made to professional bodies; and the potential failure of private businesses for holding views known to disagree with gender ideology.

The real consequences of being identified as gender critical in workplaces have been experienced by some participants.

- Last year I lost my career because of trans activists forcing me to resign. I'm still a bit raw and went underground for a while but I think I'll have the courage to be more out there with my views in the future – I've lost my career now so I guess I have nothing else to lose!
- I fear it could jeopardise my career prospects, if I was publicly outed.

Three participants noted that they are particularly concerned to remain anonymous at public TLC events as they work for the government or 'transgender positive' workplaces such as universities or professional organisations.

- I work in [the] government so it's a bit risky.
- Afraid of being doxxed by trans activists / having a vexatious complaint made about me to AHPRA – which would then require time/energy/money to manage. I don't have the energy for it
- I work for a very gender affirming university.

Three participants noted that although they are out as a lesbian for social purposes, they need to keep their activism quiet.

- No issues with having my name on social events but need to keep my activism quieter



- Political stance of wanting women-only spaces could cause issues at work
- My opposition to gender ideology could result in job loss and harassment.

Others were concerned about being ostracised in an arts-related workforce if they were identified as not accepting of gender ideology:

- I am a theatre human. I work and participate in community level theatre and arts scenes. I produce events and my own creative works. The colleagues, collaborative creatives, and friends I have in this sector would likely ostracise me if they found out about my rejection of trans ideology. I fear for my career (creative and financial) and interpersonal relationships.

One woman who was establishing a business was concerned that her new business will not be supported if her political beliefs become known.

- I intend to run my own business (in the process of setting up) which comes with significant financial risk, so cannot risk people knowing my personal politics until I'm well established.

A few participants noted that being out as gender critical would take up time and energy:

- Don't want to be out at work due to time.

Consequences for mental and emotional health

Five individuals mentioned the consequences of being identified as a person who does not accept gender ideology. Shattering of friendships, threats to physical safety, and lack of acceptance in social contexts were all cited as the real or potential consequences of being known not to accept gender ideology. Several participants shared comments about mental health, noting the lack of funding for mental health services specific to lesbian needs.

- I am wanting to be openly [gender] critical but have experienced strong backlash within my friend circle and that knock has me tentative of facing a wider backlash at this point
- Oh idc (I don't care) about work or family, everyone knows I'm TERF, I just don't want randos stalking me
- I worry about homophobia and my mental + physical safety

-
- Funding for mental, physical, and sexual health resources for lesbians. I have a lot of trauma and mental health issues and some of it is related to being a lesbian under patriarchy, but mental health services are terrible in addressing them. And I have had previous experiences where mental health professionals questioned my gender. There is also little to no information about sexual health for lesbians. Losing the definition of these words has affected my mental health significantly the last year – plus my deep sadness at so many young lesbians transitioning. It's broken my heart.

One woman notes that she is determined to protect her mental health regardless of current trends:

- Although I'm an educated lesbian feminist who deplores the current ridiculous trend, including legal requirements, of accepting male appropriation of femininity and such mental illness delusions of being 'born in the wrong body', I cannot and will not live my life angry. It's too debilitating.

Consequences for relationships with family and friends

Six participants noted that they expect negative consequences if family or friends find out that they do not accept gender ideology, and therefore prefer to retain their public anonymity. One person felt that she could not come out safely to family – there was clearly some concern of what may happen to her:

- I cannot come out to family safely
- My family doesn't know and I don't want to further strain my relationships.

Consequences for others one cares about

One participant remained anonymous as gender critical as she was concerned about the potential impact on those that she cared about:

- I am also sensitive to the social and professional pressures my girlfriend experiences ..., and I prefer to remain relatively anonymous to prevent her from being implicated in my activities.



Privacy

For three participants, protecting privacy is an important goal. One participant questioned how much other people need to know about her, and some participants noted that they would choose to be anonymous depending on the circumstances. Interestingly, one participant noted that the name “The Lesbian Club” is very specific and therefore identifying.

- I generally guard my privacy fiercely
- It depends on the circumstances. In my life I have generally preferred people to get to know me first before I tell them deeply personal things... What do others need to know about me in any situation?
- Too unique a name. Want privacy.

Summary

A central theme of the report was the perceived silencing of lesbians through social, legal, and political pressures linked to the current model of gender ideology in Australia.

Participants reported reduced freedom of speech and assembly, increased invisibility, and fear of professional, personal or social repercussions for expressing their views.

Legal changes, particularly to the SDA, were described as limiting the ability to organise and advertise lesbian-only events, giving rise to a loss of community spaces and a growing sense of isolation.

Many respondents, especially younger lesbians, expressed difficulty meeting potential partners because of a lack of female-only dating venues and opportunities, and an inability to advertise freely to find partners.

Experiences of misogyny and lesbophobia were reported across workplaces, society, and within LGB(TQIA+) communities.

Ultimately, the participants advocated for a return to sex-based protections to regain their visibility and rights within the community. The fear of workplace consequences for advocating for sex-based protections and holding gender critical views is one that silences not only lesbians but other women as well.³⁵

³⁵ See, for example, the cases of Jasmine Sussex <https://www.hrla.org.au/free-speech-on-trial-over-breastfeeding-case-in-queensland> last accessed 12/06/25 and Jillian Spencer <https://www.hrla.org.au/jillian-to-get-her-day-in-court> last accessed 12/06/26

SECTION 4 USURPERS IN OUR MIDST

*It is shocking that **men can now claim to be lesbian and demand access to lesbian spaces**, with lesbians having no legal right to exclude them.*

As seen in the previous section, the legal inclusion of men in lesbians' spaces, and the laws that classify opposition to this intrusion as a 'hate crime', are part of the social silencing of lesbians. Significant lesbophobia, a major reason for seeking public anonymity, usurps our personal and collective power as women and lesbians.

Participants in this survey see men coming into lesbian-only spaces as usurpers – they have taken over lesbian spaces and taken a position of power or importance in those spaces with legal backing.

Lesbian boundaries matter

In Section 2, this report presented data about how much lesbians love being lesbians, and find joy in who they are. This section describes participants' experiences in terms of the presence of unwanted men in lesbian spaces. Twelve participants (7.8%) stated that one thing that they love about being a lesbian is that they do not have to mix, rely on, or be intimate with men; that they are independent of men and do not have to think or consider men, or behave according to patriarchal or misogynistic expectations. Some mentioned that not having men in their lives is safer. Four participants mentioned how boundaries for lesbians have been eroded as they are not allowed to say 'no' to men coming into lesbian spaces.



- Respect for lesbians' social, sexual and safety boundaries (no males)...
- Not having to relate to men or care about what they may think about me
- I enjoy the freedom it gives me – I feel free from patriarchal pressures to dress and act in ways that would be more palatable to men
- More open social events that are women-only and don't include men even if they identify as women
- Freedom to network and outreach to other lesbians who do not want to be in male company
- Males, whether "cis" or trans identifying, are allowed to come. And in these spaces men are dominating and some are creepy and make me uncomfortable
- Lack of acceptance of lesbianism in religious contexts is the biggest issue I face, but there is also the issue that one faces hostility for being a lesbian even in ostensibly accepting places. For example, it is common that the only churches that do accept lesbians are also accepting of men as lesbians.

Responses highlight participants' search for and need for the company of other lesbians. They state that they seek lesbian company, while Australian society denies lesbians the right to lesbian-only spaces.

Lesbian spaces

The survey asked participants whether they believe lesbians need spaces just for lesbians. One hundred and fifty seven of the 158 (nearly 100%) said "Yes" and one said 'Maybe'. As the report by Equality³⁶ also showed, as women, participants are also demanding **women-only** spaces – such as fairness through sport for women born women; safety for women in women's prisons that do not allow men entry; and same-sex toilets and changing rooms for women and girls. These views are currently considered 'transphobic', rather than pointing to the unfair, dangerous and discriminatory, situation for women and children.

- Our lesbian spaces and women's safe spaces are being invaded by men and we are expected to just put up with it and step aside (once again) for them
- Losing our hard fought rights, losing our rights to separate spaces
- Erasure of lesbian spaces by allowing males in. Presence, or potential presence, of men in women's private spaces – lesbian gatherings, men in our toilets/ change rooms
- Lack of single-sex spaces or understanding of the need for single-sex spaces

³⁶ Equality (2023) LGBTIQ+ groups come out in full force to reject trans exclusion from lesbian event <https://equalityaustralia.org.au/reject-trans-exclusion/>. Last accessed 24/4/2026.

- Presence, or potential presence, of men in women's private spaces – lesbian gatherings, men in our toilets/change rooms (particular concern for my granddaughters)
- Erasure of lesbian spaces by allowing males in
- Men pushing their asses into our spaces! Not accepting it!
- Keeping female spaces safe
- I'd love to have safe spaces for lesbians and also just as a woman.

Some participants particularly mentioned their concerns about the changes made in 2013 whereby Australian legislators removed the definition of man and woman and introduced gender identity as a protected characteristic in the Sex Discrimination Act.³⁷

In theory, sex discrimination protections still exist in the Act, but it is diminished by the fact that men can claim to be women. In Australia since 2013, sex Self-ID laws exist in every state, allowing anyone to legally change their sex on legal documents and claim to be the opposite sex for all purposes.³⁸

Noting their major concerns about lesbian issues, four participants stated that these laws have made life very difficult for lesbians and they call for legislative change:

- Australia's first female PM known world-wide for her "I will not be lectured about sexism and misogyny by this man" oversaw the removal of the definition of sex, man, woman so that the current Sex Discrimination Act does not refer to or protect a person according to their sex
- Having to share previously women's only spaces with men eg change rooms in local pools – repeal disastrous changes to laws initiated by Gillard government
- I'd like to have my human rights respected & validated, as a woman and as a lesbian e.g. definitions of 'sex' & 'woman', reinstated into Australian law – and to be able to assert my rights as per the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, CEDAW, ICCPR etc etc.
- Overturn sex self-ID legislation.

³⁷ Australian Government Federal Register of Legislation (2025) Sex Discrimination Act 1984 Compilation No. 47, <https://www.legislation.gov.au/C2004A02868/latest/text>. Last accessed 24/4/2026.

³⁸ Australian Government 1 July 2013, Australian Government Guidelines on the Recognition of Sex and Gender <https://www.ag.gov.au/rights-and-protections/publications/australian-government-guidelines-recognition-sex-and-gender>, Last accessed 16/6/2026.



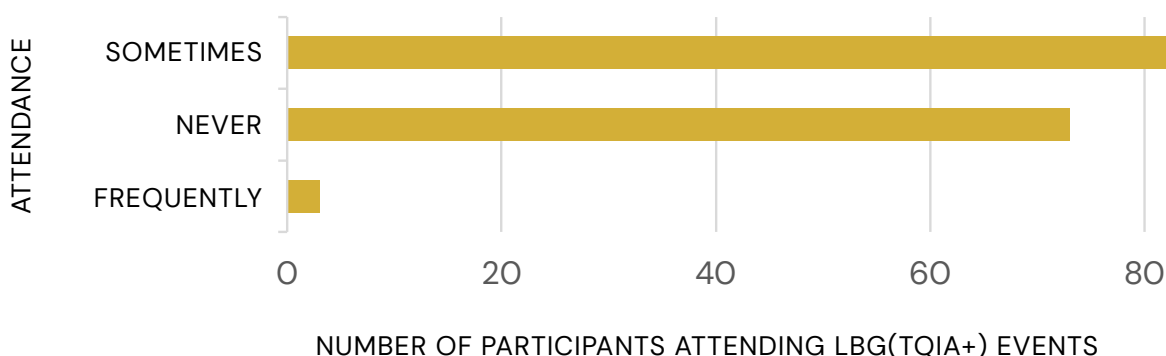
Social spaces and events

Whereas once there was a thriving lesbian presence in Australia, with lesbian bars, dances, conferences, camps, festivals, groups, networks, publications, music and more, this has largely disappeared.³⁹ Participants noted this loss in their lives:

- We are being erased. There are no safe spaces for us
- Lack of lesbian-only venues
- Missing the Lesbian community, and the freedom to associate with Lesbian friends without the underlying anxiety about being invaded
- Not enough separate lesbian spaces, bars and the like
- Not being able to organise and publicise lesbian only events leading to erasure of cultural events, venues and gatherings
- The ability to attend physical, in person spaces for lesbians (or women only) to address our issues and socialise without the constraints of online (socialising). For me, socialising online alone is not enough
- I would love to have spaces just for lesbians
- The lack of meeting spaces and community
- Erasure of lesbian spaces, difficulty in forming a lesbian support network
- I'd like to be able to talk about sex and same-sex attraction again, and never discuss gender! I want safe spaces and specificity.

³⁹ The LGBAA has documented the loss of lesbian spaces <https://www.lgballiance.org.au/lost-lesbian-space/>

FIGURE 8 OUR ATTENDANCE AT LGB(TQI+) EVENTS



Attending LGB(TQIA+) events

Participants were also asked if they ever attended LGB(TQIA+) events and how often. Those who responded 'YES' were asked to describe the experience in terms of, for example, acceptance and safety. The graph shows that of the 158 participants, 3 frequently attend LGB(TQIA+) events, 82 attend only sometimes and 73 never attend.

- I go because I believe it's important for lesbians to take up space and not self-exclude, but I'm always a bit wary.

Subsumed by LGB(TQIA+)

Participants noted that they are further silenced by the sense that they are an unwanted subgroup within the overall cohort described as the 'Rainbow' or 'LGB(TQIA+)' community. Those using the term LGB(TQIA+) claim it to be 'inclusive'. Yet participants do not feel included, and feel erased and disrespected by those who claim to include them.

- We want L to be taken out of LGBTQI+
- Being lumped in with TQI+
- Would like to see more social acceptance of lesbians in the LGBT community
- The decimation of our once thriving community under the LGBTIQ who now tell us we can no longer have single-sex events, that we must declare pronouns and accept males in our dating pool. I say no! We are doing all we can to rebuild our community but it's still hard for other lesbians to find us
- The way the TQ+ have destroyed purely lesbian events and hence, lesbian dating in person is difficult to achieve.



From LGB to LGB(TQIA+)

Participants noted that 'Rainbow' events, and their engagement with such events, have significantly changed over time and that they now lack interest in current directions. Some participants noted that they once believed that the 'Rainbow' represented them, but that it no longer does.

Many participants do not believe LGB(TQIA+) is their community, nor do they see it as describing them. Few participants used the 'alphabet soup' LGBTQIA+ acronym in their answers when asked about attending LGB(TQIA+) events, even when discussing the challenges in being included into that set by research tools such as the ABS census and research surveys:

- Nowadays I avoid all rainbow organisations, which is such a shame to me, as for a long time rainbow places felt like home, felt like community
- Who knew that the early 2000s and right up until 2016 when we received the right to marry our female partners, that this would herald the end of an era and that for the last decade we would see all that we all worked so hard to establish crumble in our hands
- It's getting worse the last few years, overwhelmingly pan or bi women who are with men or trans people claiming womanhood and lesbian

- The last event I went to in Australia was a year and a bit ago. I hated seeing mostly men pretending to be women and so-called lesbians fawning over them. I didn't feel I fitted in, particularly as a mature lesbian
- Men in these spaces tend to dominate vocally and with their physicality. They are also emotionally centred by everyone else.

Feeling uncomfortable at LGB(TQIA+) events

Of the 85 participants who sometimes or frequently go to these events, 37 (43.5%) specifically commented on how awkward, uncomfortable or sidelined they feel at such events.

- It's very awkward and it feels like there is no interest in lesbians or lesbian issues in these spaces. People tend to look at me and make me feel like I don't belong by the way they look, or by ignoring me, or not engaging in more than a few words before pretending I am not there. But they don't treat others this way. I am visibly gender non-conforming and dykey, in a way that some can tell is female / not trans. I do wonder if this plays a part in the way I am treated so coldly.

Others noted that LGB(TQIA+) events were not lesbian oriented, and no longer represent lesbians or lesbian interests. One participant noted that there was minimal celebration of ordinary lesbian life.

- There wasn't enough lesbian-only representation. The last Midsumma [Festival] I went to was full of boys and men dressed up as women; kinky seemed to be the vibe of the day. There was no atmosphere of ordinary lesbians raising families or having raised families
- Also sapphic and broadly lesbian events basically let anyone attend, including 'cis' men. There are no boundaries and lesbian boundaries are not respected by organisers nor attendees
- Often feel that the events forget about Lesbian
- Feel out of place and definitely erasure of women
- I went to a march for something, I felt alien and not included.

LGB(TQIA+) events are male dominated

In addition to feeling sidelined and unwelcome, 69 participants who had attended these events in the past stated that such events are now male dominated and there is very little room for lesbians.

- At LGBTQIA+ events, I feel like a minority within a minority. Those events are barely comfortable for lesbians. Those events are so centred on men in one way or another. We're not men, and we're not interested in men. It's easy to feel like an outsider there as a lesbian
- I only attend if it is of specific interest to me. Never as comfortable as lesbian only because usually dominated by gay men & trans
- Fucking ugly drag queens and they thems parading around the place, reminded me of one flew over a cuckoo's [sic] nest ...
- Often feel that the events forget about Lesbians and are dominated by trans males, ie biological men
- I usually avoid as lesbians are not a priority & you must be accepting of trans in your lesbian space
- The increase in trans-identifying men are off-putting
- Won't go - don't want to hang around with creepy men in dresses - yuck.



Conditional safety at LGB(TQIA+) events

Twenty-seven (32%) participants of those who had attended LGB(TQIA+) events identified no safety concerns.

- It was fine. Felt accepted
- Always feel safe
- Mainly MQFF (Melbourne Queer Film Festival) volunteer and member: Experience is very positive
- I joined the Midsumma Pride March for the past 3 years. Good vibes to enjoy.

Generally, participants who do go to these events described themselves as 'safe enough'. The type of events attended, for this group of lesbians, were festivals, movies or other larger public events where individual interaction is not required. The experience of safety was attributed to remaining with female friends or the nature of the events attended.

- I feel uncomfortable but usually okay at LGBT+ events with regards to safety because I go to them with other women and lesbians
- As these events are like movies, plays, festivals, gay and lesbian choir they are pretty neutral and safe.

Feeling safe at such events was, for others, dependent on remaining silent about one's views. For example:

- You have to be careful what you say
- ...but of course there are some topics that I can't be honest about how I feel

- Safe but kept my head down regarding trans people
- The reason I now avoid these events is because you still have to be "in the closet" as a lesbian who doesn't bow to gender ideology.

Ten of those who had attended LGB(TQIA+) events said that they felt actively unsafe at LGB(TQIA+) events. Lack of attendance at the events was described as being due to discomfort, being under scrutiny, being "hit on" by men and being actively harassed. Some examples:

- Went to quite a bit, in the past, e.g. Pride March, Film Festival. Now, being a somewhat 'known' lesbian, I don't feel safe. It'd be REALLY BAD for me if I was knocked over
- I got hit on by men in Adelaide's one gay club. And the people of Adelaide Uni's Queer club have actively harassed and plotted against me – being a terf
- Discomfort and not safe
- I did go to so-called gay events in the past. After our community was captured, I no longer feel safe to attend, nor interested
- Feel like an outsider and in danger of attack if I reveal my lesbian politics. Feel disrespected
- Sometimes when it's male dominated I feel physically and emotionally unsafe. I'm ostracised now – so not friendly at all.

The need to carefully choose events

Nine participants stated that they carefully chose which events they would attend in order to only attend those at which they believed they were welcomed. This included feeling OK at events like film festivals or marches, but not so in smaller groups.

- Only Seniors events, consider others not worth the effort of either arguing about gender, or shutting up and seething
- The whole atmosphere was all about and around the TQ alphabet, so I have refused to go to any event that is labelled queer
- Only going to LGB Alliance events or Matrix or those for older lesbians
- I stay away from anything “inclusive” because I know who will be there.

Summary

The survey highlighted that one of the key concerns for participants was the loss of lesbian-only spaces and identity. Participants described men entering lesbian spaces as undermining lesbian boundaries and autonomy, at the same time as lesbians were criticised in society for seeking male exclusion. Participants largely valued independence from men and saw female-only environments as important for safety and wellbeing. The changing nature of LGB(TQIA+) events was highlighted with fewer participants attending such events in recent years. Furthermore, participants reported feeling marginalised within the broader LGB(TQIA+) community, describing a sense of erasure and declining connection to “Rainbow” spaces and events.



SECTION 5 THE LESBIAN CLUB MATTERS

It all feels very grass roots and wonderful

Finding TLC

A key criterion for membership of The Lesbian Club Inc is that members agree that 'lesbians are female'. Because of the current social and legal climate towards lesbians, and in order to ensure this key criterion is met, TLC cannot be found through advertisements in public and social media or flyers on community notice boards. Consequently, it is important to know how lesbians find TLC in order to be able to grow the organisation.

Five lesbians who completed the survey were founding members of TLC. The majority of its other members 114 (76.5%) found TLC through word of mouth, with the remaining 30 (20%) through social media (Total 149 participants).

Word of mouth about TLC occurred in a number of ways.

Predominantly, TLC was found through lesbian social networks, friends and friendship circles, partners, lesbians who were already members, and at lesbian social gatherings.

The second most common word of mouth method was through membership of other formal lesbian organisations and events such as The Lesbian Action Group (LAG); the Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual Alliance (LGB Alliance); the TLC Young Lesbians group; conferences such as the Meanjin IWD conferences and the Seahorse summit⁴⁰ 2025; and rallies (eg Women Will Speak). Lesbian camps and social gatherings also provided an introduction to TLC.

Social media was also used by lesbians to discover TLC. Facebook, Google, X, the TLC website and emails were mentioned.

Additionally, one person found out about TLC at a Tribunal, one through political activism and two others through their own or other's research online.

⁴⁰ Coalition of Activist Lesbians COAL 2025 A special welcome to Lesbians who follow the Seahorse Podcast, <https://coal.org.au/a-special-welcome-to-lesbians-who-follow-the-seahorse-project-podcast/>. Last accessed 17/5/2026.

Growth of TLC

At the time of conducting this survey (Oct-Dec 2025), TLC had been in existence for 2 years with the first members joining in November 2023. New members continue to join, and membership has been increasing since 2023. Fifty-six participants (48%) had been members for more than 18 months at the time of the survey; 42 (26%) had been members for between 12 and 18 months; 35 (22%) were members for between 6 and 12 months; 25 (16%) became members in the six months leading up to the survey. This shows that TLC is still gaining members. However, as we reach the outer limits of the existing networks that have survived since the 2013 SDA Amendments,⁴¹ the rate of new memberships has been slowing. This could be explained by the inability to advertise our club events beyond our existing membership.

How TLC members use technology

The Lesbian Club committee communicates with members predominantly through emails. There is a monthly email with news, updates and a calendar of events, as well as periodic emails with new information or notices. TLC also has a private and hidden Facebook group where members can post items of interest. There are also regular and 'one off' zoom sessions for discussion and information. In addition, there is a private members' area on the website where members can get details about upcoming events as well as view photos of past events.

Emails: A majority of participants (127 (80%)) read all the emails from TLC organisers, but 27 do not always read them. Further research could explore how the committee could address this issue.

TLC Facebook group: Members were asked whether or not they had joined the private and hidden Facebook group. The data revealed that TLC members who responded were divided equally (YES 78 and NO 79). We are interested in exploring whether the use of the Facebook group is age related through future research.

Of the 79 who are not on the Facebook group, we asked what the barriers are that have prevented them joining.

Forty-seven of the 79 do not use Facebook or social media at all, or only use it minimally. There was a very clear dislike of Facebook and social media from them, and a preference not to use it at all from 39 participants.

A smaller group of 25 participants were unable to find the instructions for joining Facebook or had technical difficulties joining. This is clearly an area for follow up by the TLC committee.

Two noted either literacy or visual ability barriers to using Facebook. Two others stated that they were fully satisfied with information through emails, so were not interested in accessing Facebook.

⁴¹ Australian Government Federal Register of Legislation (2025) Sex Discrimination Act 1984 Compilation No. 47, <https://www.legislation.gov.au/C2004A02868/latest/text>. Last accessed 24/4/2026.



One participant provided an answer which is of general concern as she feared the consequences of being 'outed' as a user of any Facebook page related to not accepting gender ideology:

- If I am outed as a TERF I will lose job opportunities.

This indicates the importance of protecting the privacy of the TLC membership and the Facebook group. In addition, it indicates the need for educating members about the safety features that are embedded in the page.

TLC members area: When members are accepted into TLC, they are given a login to the secure private members area on the club website. This area has more information about the calendar of events, including contact details, reports on past events, and a photo gallery. This website is managed by TLC volunteers.

The data shows that significantly more (101 of the 158 participants) have set up the private members area on the website than use the Facebook group as discussed previously. Of the 57 participants who had not set up their login to the private members area, the two main reasons given were a lack of technology know-how and a lack of time. Other reasons mentioned were a preference for emails and Facebook for communication and a lack of awareness of the member area or a disinterest in it.

Committee communication to TLC members

The survey asked whether members are satisfied with how TLC communicates with its members.

All of the participants were either satisfied or usually satisfied with TLC communication with members. Participants were also asked for any suggestions as to how communication could be improved.

Of the 71 responses to this question, a clear majority (47 responses) were happy with the communication to members. Many of those participants took the opportunity to express their gratitude for the existence of TLC and what it does:

- I think you're awesome.

Some suggestions were made as to how the newsletters and emails could be improved with clearer formatting or the use of MailChimp. New forms of communication including Discord, Signal and WhatsApp were suggested by the younger members with one member noting:

- We use Discord for the young lesbians already and I think it could be a useful platform for broader TLC as well because it allows you to have different channels for different topics, ... My only hesitancy with this is that moving to a different software may be less accessible for older or less-tech savvy TLC members.

Some participants suggested more interactive forms of communication such as chat rooms and text messaging.

- I'm wondering if an online chatroom on the website in the members area would be good so TLC members can chat in real time and hang out together online.

TLC members get together

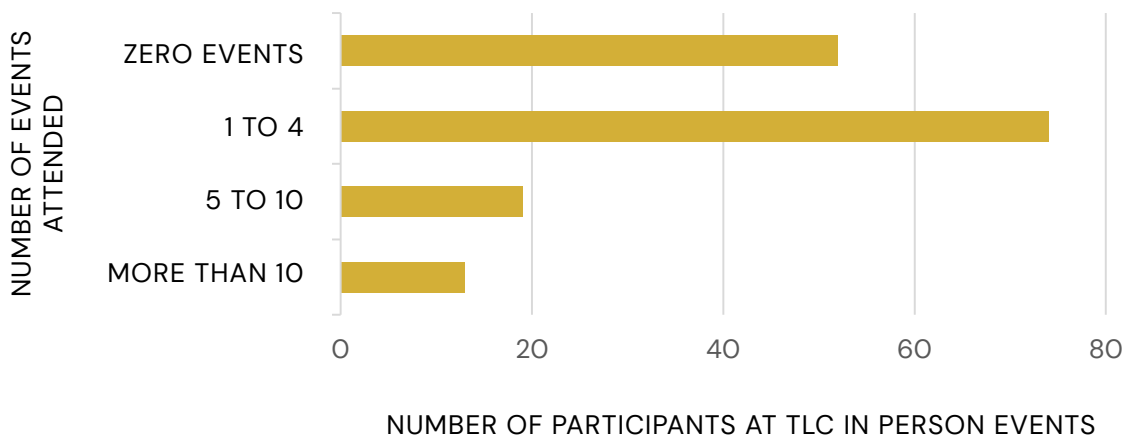
TLC has held many events since its inception, both in person and online. It has also promoted events held by other lesbian-only groups.

In person events

In person events held over the two-year period included regular in person weekly or monthly meet-ups, in regional areas as well as major cities; one off outings such as to exhibitions and films; specific social events such as dances, card and games days and book launches; camps in regional areas; a TLC annual conference; political activism such as attending rallies and lobbying.

The state attendances reflect the number of events organised or advertised by TLC for each state in the 2-year period since its beginnings. As TLC was set up in Victoria, there were more events held in that state. Most events were attended by Victorian participants, however several events such as the conferences and the camps were also attended by participants from interstate.

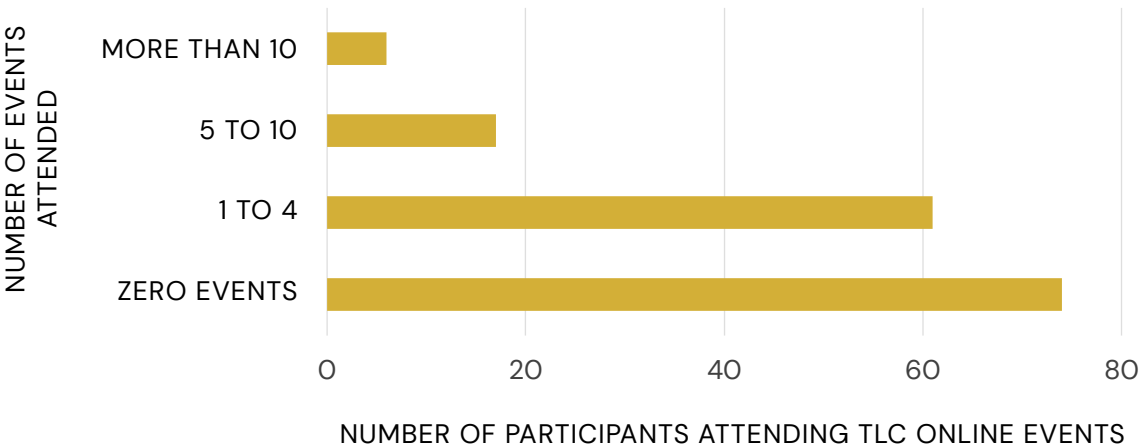
FIGURE 9 OUR ATTENDANCE AT IN PERSON EVENTS



Online events

Overall, 84 have attended some online events, while 74 participants have not attended any.

FIGURE 10 OUR ATTENDANCE AT TLC ONLINE EVENTS



TLC online events have included discussion groups on a variety of topics, such as chat specifically for young lesbians, country lesbians, the 30–50 age group, and the Annual General Meetings (AGM).

Issues around attendance and accessibility

The survey asked participants who had been to few or no events to give some reasons and 87 participants gave feedback which covered a range of reasons.

Location: It is unsurprising that in a country the size of Australia and with members living in every state, 26 participants expressed concerns about location as a barrier to attending events. This included difficulty with transport to events because of living interstate, in regional areas or places poorly served by public transport.

- The commute for in person events is often long enough that it is a barrier to coming. Not an impossible amount but it means a significant effort that I don't often have readily available
- Public transport problems. I don't drive so I am dependent on trains & buses.... I also have to travel with a dog that is not allowed on replacement buses.

Time constraints: A total of 18 participants mentioned that time was a barrier to their attendance at events, especially for those who were working or involved in other groups.

- Simply don't have the time! I work 50 hours a week as well as study and am struggling with the cost of living, so I don't get out and about with the dykes as I'd like to
- Working takes up available time when events are on. There's also less time to fit tlc events in with other events in my free time.

Scheduling issues: Seventeen of the participants mentioned scheduling as a barrier. This included work or study commitments as well as involvement in other lesbian groups.

- I am a shift worker and usually work afternoon shifts, and also work weekends so most times for events do not suit me
- If I don't attend an event, it's because of scheduling issues and university takes priority
- One participant commented specifically about the clash each year between the TLC conference in October and the FiLiA conference that takes place in the UK at that time
- Clashes with other things: notably, your national conference has clashed with FiLiA which is Europe's and arguably the world's biggest women's liberation conference and at least one third of participants are lesbians.

These scheduling issues present an ongoing challenge for TLC organisers, especially as the club continues to grow.



Personal preferences: Twelve participants noted that personal preferences were a factor in not attending many events. This included not wanting to do Zoom events; having to be discreet because of work; and confusion about the nature of some events:

- I don't like zoom much and prefer real life events
- Sometimes being busy / having a clash with another commitment, less likely to go to events that are far away from the city, less likely to go if my girlfriend isn't available to go as well, sometimes lack of clarity about certain events.

Personal issues: Some participants gave more personal reasons such as anxiety, shyness or health concerns. For others, their lack of attendance at events was a disinterest in the events offered, or only having joined TLC very recently.

- Health issues (surgery and a few other things)
- My life has been very messy the past while and I've been self excluding from most things, even the things I'd really like to get along to. I am hopeful that this might change in the new year
- Anxiety & stress after the death of my long-term partner.

Age also played a role in participants' ability to attend in person events. For instance, one participant who was once active continues her involvement online rather than at in-person events:

- In the past I've enjoyed getting together with lesbians at a couple of camps and conferences. Nowadays I enjoy the chance to connect with other lesbians via the monthly CLA zooms. I also enjoy listening to the Lesbian Podcast and all things TERFY.

The survey asked a more targeted question about the access needs of participants in order for them to be able to attend events. Thirty six of the 157 participants gave a variety of needs they had that could be barriers to their attendance at events. These fell into the following four broad categories.

Physical constraints: Twelve participants mentioned physical constraints of the venues, which included negotiating stairs, having to walk a distance to get there, noise levels, and ventilation.

- Activities which involve a lot of walking or stairs, I just don't attend
- Good ventilation and attention to protecting lesbians with low immunity
- Mobility issues, so need activities where there are seats & I don't have to walk far or stand for long.

Transport: Ten participants noted that transport was a barrier to participation, especially when distance from an event was considered. Some relied on public transport; others had to drive long distances or rely on lifts or car-pooling. Easy parking close to the venue was also mentioned.

- For me, events need to be within easy access to Melbourne as I have to use taxi transport
- Must be accessible by public transport. Otherwise help organise a potential pickup or carpool
- It's a long drive to get to events, so I don't always feel like spending the extra 3 hours in the car for the travel to Melbourne and back.

Emotional and psychological needs:

Eight participants described their care and self-care needs. Anxiety and autism were specifically mentioned with further elaboration about the need for supportive and welcoming spaces.

- It would be good to hold events in spaces that are big enough and easy to access where events aren't crowded or too noisy
- I have noise sensitivity – prefer less noisy venues
- It's more about me – I find human interactions confronting.

Finance: Money was mentioned by 4 participants as a consideration when attending events.

TLC is an important social network for lesbians in Australia. Doing as much as possible to ensure that events, particularly in person events, are accessible to as many members as possible is an important criterion for building lesbian community. It is vital therefore that organisers pay attention to accessibility needs whenever possible.

Suggestions for events

One of the aims of TLC is to build a lesbian community. The email newsletter, the website and the Facebook group all emphasise events available for members.

The survey asked what other types of events members would like to see organised. Of the 85 participants who responded to this question, 24 expressed satisfaction with the range of events offered, with comments such as:

- Everything has been great
- I'm really glad you do what you do.

Another 25 participants saw TLC as a means of social connection with other lesbians and suggested informal events such as picnics, pub meetings and cafe catch-ups. There was support for more dances and games and one participant in her 40s specifically mentioned dating events.



A participant in her 70s, mentioned 'speed befriending' which could suggest the difficulty that older lesbians may face in making new friends. One participant saw TLC primarily as a support group, but did not elaborate further.

Other participants had a clear preference for more literary or artistic events with film nights and a book club being popular choices as well as poetry reading events. A small group of six participants was keen for more outdoor events such as bushwalking as well as dog walks. These suggestions reflect the diversity of TLC membership.

It was interesting that four participants were keen for more political activities such as discussion groups on political and feminist issues with specific mention being made of consciousness-raising (CR) groups. As the participants making these suggestions were older members (one in their 60s and 3 in their 70s), these suggestions could reflect the importance that CR groups played in the lives of older lesbians, and the desire for intergenerational learning.

Consciousness raising group/s

- Cultural/political cells/affinity (closed) groups to develop skills and current lesbian culture
- Political discussion group and intergenerational learning from each other

Mention was also made of events for specific age groups, events for grandmothers and their grandchildren as well as more events in other states.

Women of colour

Women of colour were asked whether they would be interested in an online group specifically for them. While 18 participants answered this question as a woman of colour, only one was interested in joining such a group.

Organising TLC events

Twenty one of 154 participants have been involved in organising TLC events. As one of the goals of TLC is to encourage members to contribute to building community, this was seen as encouraging.

Supporting organisers

Of those members involved in organising events, 16 felt supported enough by the membership. Four did not feel supported.

Information about how best to support members organising events was sought.

The most common suggestion, (15 participants), was to support the organisers by actually turning up to the events.

Several responses mentioned event etiquette such as timely RSVPs, and sending apologies to indicate an interest in a specific event, or unavailability at the time planned.

- Don't leave it till the last minute to respond – this leads to events being cancelled.

A small group (4) saw the events as a means of recruiting new members by telling their lesbian friends to 'join us and come to events'. Some participants commented on the need for TLC members to volunteer to help with events and another said that the organisers need to ask for help. One participant, in her 60s, gave the following comprehensive response:

- Help advertise the events more. Attend and participate, ensure other members can get there and get home again – pickups, offer spare room accommodations, offer childminding if we want more younger/middle years women etc. Participate on special interest subcommittees. Suggest and organise

their own events. RSVP promptly. Pay up promptly so organisers know how much \$\$ they have to use to organise things. Make donations.

As a membership-based club, TLC has at its heart the provision and promotion of opportunities for lesbians to come together with other lesbians in safe and supportive ways – providing events for this to happen is its key mission. Supporting those who do the essential work of organising events, will ensure that more events are organised.

TLC means the world to me

It means the world to me and really changed my life.

The final question on the survey gave participants an opportunity to share any other comments that were not covered in the previous questions. Responses overall showed that participants in this survey valued the existence of The Lesbian Club Inc.

A total of 76 responses were received. The most common response, from 26 participants, was one of gratitude for the existence of TLC.

- Thank you for existing!
- It is terrific to have a Lesbian Club and all the benefits and potential it provides.



These responses demonstrated both the need for a private club and the importance of it to Australian lesbians. One participant went even further, commenting on the importance of TLC to her as a younger lesbian.

- I'm so grateful for TLC! **It means the world to me** and really changed my life. I... .. have only been out for a few years – before that I just never had a relationship and I felt very down and distressed about being gay. TLC has been transformative for me.

Along with gratitude, many of the responses were full of praise for the work done by the organisers of TLC and the various events with comments such as:

- Thank you all so much for all of the work and effort you put into TLC!
- Keep up the good work and thank you for your dedication to lesbians.

One participant, although not active, loved hearing about the various events.

- Even though I'm not very active at the moment, I still love reading about all the events and checking out the pics. And I'm grateful for all the work that is put into running the club.

Another participant, reflecting the intergenerational nature of TLC, commented on the way in which the club could be empowering especially for younger lesbians.

- TLC gives me hope that my community, my life blood, may survive and that our young ones will be able to find empowerment by finding each other.

While participants commented on the importance of the club, they used this question to express the desire for lesbians to meet publicly and regain visibility.

- Brilliant organisation but I'd like our visibility and agency back
- I look forward to one day having the right of exclusive association outside a private association.

Summary

This section of the report outlined how participants discover, engage with, and participate in the club. Most members found TLC through word of mouth within lesbian networks or, to a lesser extent, via social media. Communication was primarily maintained through emails, with mixed engagement in other platforms like Facebook and the members' website due to personal preferences, technical barriers, and privacy concerns. Participation in events—both in-person and online—was generally strong but varied depending on the nature of the event along with barriers that included location, scheduling, health, and accessibility needs.

TLC is valued by its members for filling a significant gap in lesbian community in Australia. It was seen as being intergenerational, empowering and transformative, but as some participants pointed out, lesbians should be able to organise and hold events without the need for a private club.



CONCLUSION

This report sought to obtain information for the TLC committee and members about its membership, and to fill an existing gap in data about lesbians in Australia.

The sample size of 158 from the total TLC membership of 309 represented a very good response rate compared to the average survey. The survey showed very clearly that:

- overall, participants loved being lesbians
- many of the participants were concerned about the erosion of their sex-based rights, especially since the amendments to the SDA in 2013
- the preservation of single-sex spaces is vital to the continuing sense of lesbian community for the participants
- the LGB(TQIA+) umbrella no longer represents the concerns of many TLC members.

These key findings point to the need for the voice of lesbians, such as those who participated in the survey, to be heard and respected by governments, policy-makers and community groups, when addressing issues that have an impact on the lives of lesbians. We need a seat at the table.

Specifically for the TLC committee, the data shows that:

- there is overall satisfaction with TLC, the way we communicate, and the events we provide or promote
- there are areas for improvement in connecting members with each other
- there are areas that warrant more data in a follow up survey.

This report and the data that it is based on are an important step in giving a voice to those lesbians in Australia who are concerned about the loss of lesbian specific spaces⁴², culture and story.

⁴² The LGBAA has documented the loss of lesbian spaces <https://www.lgballiance.org.au/lost-lesbian-space/>

APPENDIX 1 ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

The annotated bibliography contains a list of surveys, reports and information about lesbian lives.

Alsalem, Reem. 22 May (2023) *Statement by Ms. Reem Alsalem Special Rapporteur on violence against women and girls*

<https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/issues/women/sr/statements/2023-05-19-statement-sr-vawg.pdf>, Last accessed 4/5/2026.

The Special Rapporteur on violence against women and girls, as a Special Procedures mandate of the Human Rights Council, serves in her individual capacity independently from any government or organization. Alsalem stated:

“I am deeply concerned at the escalation of intimidation and threats against women and girls for expressing their opinions and beliefs regarding their needs and rights based on their sex and/or sexual orientation. Disagreement with the views of women/girls including politicians, academics, and women rights advocates should never be used as grounds to justify violence and intimidation. In addition, discrimination based on sex and sexual orientation is prohibited in international and regional instruments. I am concerned about the decreasing space available for women and women’s organizations to organize and/or express their opinion peacefully in several countries in the Global North. Women coming together to demand

the respect for their needs based on their sex and/or sexual orientation have been threatened, attacked, and vilified (p1).”

Coalition of Activist Lesbians

<https://coal.org.au/lesbian-space/>
Last accessed 23/4/2026.

This webpage is a summary of the Desexing Society podcast (<https://desexingsociety.com/s2/s2e4/>) dealing with the loss of lesbian spaces and in particular the Sappho’s Party issue. There are links to the court ruling as well as a submission to the AHRC by Erinyes Autonomous Activist Lesbians that contains, on p38–39, the full data set for that survey.

Cockburn, P. (2026) *Lesbian Action Group wins Federal Court appeal in bid to exclude transgender women*, Accessed at: <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2026-04-15/lesbian-action-group-court-judgment/106561902>.

Last accessed 22/4/2026.

This article describes the outcome of a legal appeal brought by the Lesbian Action Group (LAG) to the Federal Court. LAG sought an exemption to the Sex Discrimination Act so that it could hold public events exclusively for lesbians for five years. On 15 April 2026, Justice Mark Moshinsky allowed LAG’s appeal, ruling the decision of the tribunal should be set aside and that the matter would now return to the tribunal for another determination.



Douglas, Lorraine and Willmott, Jenny. (2023). *'This is who I am': Lesbian coming out experiences and barriers to acceptance*. Scottish Lesbians. <https://img1.wsimg.com/blobby/go/571aa49f-c57c-4592-8025-97f9a242321e/downloads/Study%20final%20print%20PDF.pdf?ver=1744907951452>. Retrieved 12 April. 2026.

This is a qualitative study based on 73 lesbian participants from a variety of countries. Participants were invited to share their experiences of 'coming out' and it covered a range of age groups and time periods of coming out.

Douglas, Lorraine and Willmott, Jenny. (2025) *The Lesbian Survey 2025*. Scottish Lesbians. <https://img1.wsimg.com/blobby/go/571aa49f-c57c-4592-8025-97f9a242321e/downloads/ecf8a86d-6dc9-442b-aecd-5b67560a7c02/Scottish%20Lesbians%20Survey%202025.pdf?ver=1768483778396>. Retrieved 13 April 2026.

This report, based on a survey of 692 lesbians, identified the loss of lesbian spaces as the most significant concern for lesbians.

Frei, S. (2026) *'Desexing Society'*: A gender critical podcast. <https://desexingsociety.com/>. Last accessed 10/9/2026

This podcast covers gender critical issues

Lesbian Action Group Inc (2026) *State Government Inquiry into anti-LGBTQIA+ hate crimes in Victoria* Submission by Lesbian Action Group Inc. <https://lesbianactiongroup.org.au/>. Last accessed 24/4/2026.

This submission by LAG to the Victorian State Government notes that lesbians were unwillingly grouped under the collective rainbow umbrella of LGBTIQ+. Since then, lesbians are seeing more and more homophobia and misogyny coming from within the LGBTIQ+ towards the LGB. The submission details these issues of violence and homophobia for homosexual and bisexual people coming from within the LGBTIQ+, as well as homophobia that comes from the Government, both State and Federally.

Mooney–Somers, J, Deacon, R.M., Richters J., Parkhill N., Kean, J. (2024) *Report of the Sydney Women and Sexual Health (SWASH) Survey 2006, 2008, 2010, 2012, 2014 survey*, University of Sydney and AIDS Council of New South Wales (ACON)
Accessed at: https://www.acon.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/SWASH-Report_2014.pdf.

Last accessed 20/4/2026.

The Sydney Women and Sexual Health (SWASH) and the AIDS Council of New South Wales (ACON) survey is a comprehensive survey of health issues relevant to lesbian, bisexual and queer (LBQ) women including sexual health and wellbeing, violence, mental health, tobacco use, illicit drug use, alcohol consumption, and cancer screening behaviours.

Note: this report does not refer to biological women only. Questionnaires were offered to everyone identifying as a woman who was willing to respond, and therefore includes men.

Merriam–Webster Dictionary ‘misogyny’ meaning <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/misogyny>.

Last accessed 22/4/2026

Hatred of, aversion to, or prejudice against women. Misogyny refers specifically to a hatred of women. Misogyny may be distinguished from the closely related word sexism, which signifies discrimination based on sex (although it most frequently refers to discrimination against women) and also carries the meaning “behavior, conditions, or attitudes that foster stereotypes of social roles based on sex.”

The Lesbian Project (2023). *Lesbian erasure in the UK*. <https://www.thelesbianproject.co.uk/resources/lesbianerasure>

Retrieved 22 April 2026.

This report reviews existing data about the use of the word ‘lesbian’ in reports and academic articles and how this has declined sharply in recent years, reflecting an increasing invisibility of lesbian lives. It also examines funding to lesbian organisations over time as well as the allocation of academic grants for lesbian-centred research.



Stoianov, Diane. (2025). *The 2017 LGBT Survey: A critique of the definition and analysis of lesbians*. The Lesbian Project.

Retrieved 13 April 2026. https://static1.squarespace.com/static/6377568471806f6c30273d9b/t/680a145277334365255a15f2/1745491026828/The+2017+LGBT+Survey_A+critique+of+the+definition+and+analysis+of+lesbians.pdf

This report is a critique of a report published in 2017 by the UK National Institute of Economic and Social Research. It examines the negative impact for lesbians if sex is not used as a default, consistent measure in research on sexual orientation.

Wild, Angela C. (2019). *Lesbians at Ground Zero. Get the L Out, UK*. <https://www.gettheloutuk.com/attachments/lesbiansatgroundzero.pdf>.

Retrieved 12 April 2026.

This report, based on a survey of 80 lesbians, demonstrates that gender identity ideology and trans activism are negatively affecting the lives of lesbians, particularly through experiences of social pressure, exclusion, coercion and social pressure.

Woman is This. (2021). *Lesbian Erasure*.

<https://witsurveyreport.org/lesbian-erasure/>
Retrieved 13 April 2026.

This survey and report was conducted by the UK collective 'Woman is This' (WIT). It surveyed women from the UK and more than 50 other countries. As well as the summary report, the WIT website contains a full breakdown of the data.

Wikipedia (2026) *Lesbophobia definition* https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Discrimination_against_lesbians.

Last accessed 23/4/2026.

According to Wikipedia, discrimination against lesbians, sometimes referred to as lesbophobia or lesphobia, is a form of homophobia, often paired with misogyny, that comprises various forms of prejudice and negativity towards lesbians as individuals, as couples, as a group, or lesbianism in general.

Examples of discrimination against lesbians include, but are not limited to, discrimination in housing and employment, physical or sexual abuse including corrective rape, lack of legal protections for lesbian couples to care for one another, removal of children from lesbian mothers, negative stereotypes and negative media representation, verbal harassment, legal persecution and imprisonment, government censorship, and familial and/or community rejection.

APPENDIX 2 THE SURVEY INSTRUMENT

No	Question	Response options
1.	Please select your age category	Under 20 20-29 30-39 40-49 50-59 60-69 70-79 80 or more
2.	How would you describe your cultural heritage (eg. Indigenous Australian, Chinese, Greek, Maori, woman of colour...)	
3.	Which of the following apply to you? (Select all that apply)	Student Fully employed Part employed Unemployed Self employed Retired Carer Other
4.	Tell us where you live	VIC NSW QLD SA WA TAS ACT NT
5.	Is your location	Metropolitan (eg Melbourne, Adelaide, Sydney) Regional city (eg Bendigo, Toowoomba) Rural Other



No	Question	Response options
6.	TLC started in November 2023. How long have you been a member of TLC?	more than 18 months 1 year to 18 months 6 months to 1 year less than 6 months
7.	How would you describe your lesbian relationship status?	Single (but looking/hoping Partnered Married Solo (and content)
8.	Do you have children?	Yes No
9.	Do you currently have responsibility for any dependents? (Select all that apply)	No Child Grandchild Parent Sibling Partner Friend Other
10.	What is your living situation?	Live alone Live with partner Share house Live with parents Live with adult children Homeless Other
11.	How did you find out about TLC?	
12.	Are you a member of TLC Facebook group?	Yes No
13.	If you answered No, can you tell us the barriers that have prevented you from being in the Facebook group.	

No	Question	Response options
14.	Have you set up your log in to the members area of TLC website?	Yes No
15.	If you answered No, can you tell us of any barriers that have prevented you from setting this up.	
16.	Each month, members are sent an email with news updates and details of upcoming events. How often do you read the emails?	Always Sometimes Never
17.	Are you satisfied with how TLC communicates with members?	Yes No Usually
18.	Do you have any suggestions as to how communication with members could be improved? Please write your ideas in the text box	
19.	TLC has organised many events and promoted events that were organised by other groups. Thinking back over your time as a member of TLC how many in person events have you attended	I haven't attended any in person events 1 to 4 5 to 10 more than 10
20.	Thinking back over your time as a member of TLC how many online events have you attended?	I haven't attended any online events 1 to 4 5 to 10 more than 10
21.	If you haven't been to any or many events can you tell us more about why that is.	



No	Question	Response options
22.	Here is a list of the main types of events that TLC has organised or promoted. Please highlight or circle any that you have attended.	Online events eg discussion groups, AGM Regular monthly or weekly events eg cafe meetups One off outings eg art exhibitions, Werribee zoo Specific social events eg dances, card and games, book launches Camps Conference Political action eg attending rallies, lobbying Other
23.	What events would you like to see organised for members?	
24.	In order to attend events, do you have any access needs? eg cultural, physical, neurological, mental health, transport, other	Yes No
25.	If you answered Yes to the previous question, please tell us how we might be able to support you in order to attend events	
26.	If you are a woman of colour, would you be interested in being part of an online group for women of colour?	Yes No
27.	Have you been involved in organising any TLC events?	Yes No
28.	If your answer is Yes, have you felt that your efforts were supported enough by the membership?	Yes No
29.	How could the members better support event organisers?	

No	Question	Response options
30.	Are you interested in being part of the TLC committee?	Yes No
31.	How do you refer to yourself? Select all that apply.	Lesbian Dyke Gay Queer Homosexual Amazon Other
32.	Do lesbians need spaces just for lesbians?	Yes No Maybe
33.	Do you attend any LGBTQIA+ events?	Never Sometimes Frequently
34.	If you have attended any LGBTQIA+ events, could you describe your experience eg safety, acceptance...	
35.	Do you have a supportive network of lesbians in your life?	Yes No
36.	Where do you turn to for support? Select all that apply.	Family of origin Family of choice Friends Wider lesbian community Other
37.	Do you prefer/need to remain anonymous to the general public when attending in-person events?	Yes No Maybe



No	Question	Response options
38.	If you answered Yes or Maybe to the previous question, please explain your reason eg can't be out at work, family don't know.	
39.	What issues are you facing as a lesbian that you would like to see changed?	
40.	What are some aspects of being lesbian that you enjoy?	
41.	Is there anything else you would like to share with us about your membership of TLC?	

