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RESEARCH & CONSULTANCY

Highlights of the Gay Life and Style New Millennium Survey

- ❑ To coincide with this year's Gay Life and Style Exhibition, held at Olympia (July 14-16), **Stormbreak**, an independent market research company specialising in gay-related issues, in association with **Rainbow Network**, conducted a survey amongst 283 of the exhibition visitors.

Growing Up Gay

Lonely Young Things Have A Tough Time Of It

- ❑ The average age at which people realised they were gay was 15 for men and 18 for women. One in 3 knew they were gay by the age of 12.
- ❑ But the average age of 'coming out' was 23 for men and 25 for women - leaving a 7-8 year gap during which people kept their sexual identities to themselves.
- ❑ Four out of 5 gay people found it either quite or very difficult to come out - and only 2% said it had been very easy for them.

Secrets And Lies

- ❑ Fewer than 2 in 5 men and 1 in 3 women were out to everyone who knew them.

Unwanted Straight Sex

- ❑ One in 3 gay people surveyed either have felt at some point, or continue to feel, pressurised into having heterosexual sex.
- ❑ Two-thirds of gay people had at some point had heterosexual sex - much more commonly lesbians (which was the case for three quarters of them) than gay men (of whom 2 in 5 had experienced heterosexual sex).
- ❑ The average age of having sex with a same-sex partner was 18 for men and 21 for women.

Someone To Turn To? - Families Come Up Trumps

- ❑ Only 1 in 10 said they knew of an adult role model while they were at school who was identifiably gay, and, for the majority of them, this person was not seen to have been helpful in their 'coming to terms' with being gay.
- ❑ One in 6 gay people was still not out to their families (more commonly the youngest and the oldest participants in the survey).
- ❑ The large majority (75%), however, had found at least some family members to be supportive when they came out to them.
- ❑ In addition, 9 in 10 gay people found their families currently to be either quite or very supportive, and 4 in 5 were in regular contact with their families.

How Many Gays Are There In The UK?

- ❑ All sorts of (possibly spurious) figures have been bandied around about the estimated size of the gay population. The Thatcher Government said it was 3%, but most of us think it is substantially higher. Previous research conducted by Stormbreak has demonstrated that a 7% incidence level would not be far wrong in terms of an under-estimation of the size of the gay population. We're not suggesting that we have the final word on the matter, but the logic applied below is probably as good as any used to date.
- ❑ An interesting survey finding was that 1 in 8 gay people knew of another gay person within their *immediate* family (and 1 in 5 knew of a gay person within their wider family). This means that in every 8 families there are 2 gay people.
- ❑ Since the average UK family size is estimated to be 3.5 people (taking into account lone parent families), it follows that for every 28 people, 2 will be gay.
- ❑ Grossed up in percentage terms, this indicates that 7% of the UK population is gay.
- ❑ Since there are approximately 45.5 million adults in the UK, this suggests that roughly 3.2 million of them are gay. Gays are a huge minority!

Gay Sexual Behaviour and Sexual Health

Naughty Boys!

- With regards to sexual activity, it would appear that boys will be boys! Moreover, age did not appear to be a particularly significant factor governing sexual behaviour.

	Men	Women
A strictly monogamous relationship	27%	59%
A mainly monogamous relationship	24%	24%
Multiple partners/encounters	31%	4%
One main non-monogamous partnership	12%	8%
Celibate	5%	5%
Occasional different partners	1%	1%

Causes For Concern - Some Gay Men Need To Get Real!

- One in five had had a sexual health check within the past 3 months (the case for 23% of men and 18% of women), but a similar number had never had a sexual check up (more commonly women, 27%, than men 16%). Almost half of gay men and a third of gay women had had a sexual check up in the past year.
- One in 10 gay participants in the survey knew their HIV status to be positive, all of whom were men. One in 4 were unsure of their HIV status.
- Only 2/3s of gay men said they always practised safer sex, and 1 in 10 said they rarely or never practised safer sex. This is particularly worrying given that the definition of safer sex was extended to include unprotected sex within a strictly monogamous relationship. Only 63% of those who knew their HIV status to be positive said they always practised safer sex.
- A fifth of gay men said they were very worried about becoming infected with HIV and a further two-fifths said this worried them to some extent. Alarming, of the 19 men who rarely or never practised safe sex, 15 of them claimed not to be worried about HIV infection.
- Practically all gay men felt they were at least quite well informed about safer sex, and over two-thirds felt they were very well informed.
- Whilst 1 in 3 gay men had had an HIV test within the past year, the same number had never had an HIV test. This is concerning in the light of recent advances in drug therapies which have proved more successful in preventing the development of AIDS the earlier the detection of the HIV virus. The average number of HIV tests ever undertaken was 3. The large majority, 88%, of those who had had HIV tests within the past 3 months were those who always or nearly always practised safer sex.

Pink Culture

The Myth Of The Gay Ghetto

- Three in five gay people said they socialised in mixed gay and straight company, and only 4% said that all their social contacts were gay.
- In addition, only the minority (40%) said they went to gay pubs and clubs once a week or more often, much more commonly gay men (50% of them) than women (at only 17%). The large majority (three-quarters of gay people) did not belong to any specifically gay social groups.

The Pink Press Is Read

- The pink press was found to be widely read, with only 8% saying they never read a gay newspaper. The Pink Paper was read by 2/3s of the sample (similarly men and women). Boyz had a strong male following (read by 60% of gay men) and, quelle surprise, Diva had a similar readership level amongst women. The Gay Times and Attitude were read by about 1 in 3 gay survey participants, although their readers were much more commonly males (indeed, exclusively so in the case of Attitude).

Lesbians Take More Of A Political Stand

- Over half attended Mardi Gras and about a third attended Summer Rites (similarly men and women). However, women were more likely to go on the Pride March than their male counterparts (41% of them versus only 30% of men).

Gay Consumer Behaviour

Posh Gays

- Gay Life and Style Exhibition visitors were upmarket, with two-fifths falling into professional social classes AB, and a further one-third were C1s (basically office workers).
- Salary levels were much higher than the national average (of around £18k) at £30k per annum. Gay men earned more than their lesbian counterparts (averaging £31k compared with £26k per annum).
- The amount of monthly disposable income was £663, but far higher for men, at £743, than for women at £493. Frequenters of the gay scene were found to be higher earners than non-scene gays, both males and females.
- Average monthly amounts spent on consumables were as follows:

	All	Men	Women
Alcohol	£29	£34	£18
Food	£132	£141	£112
Clothes	£88	£95	£71
Toiletries	£26	£28	£22
Cigarettes	£23	£22	£24
Music/CDs	£22	£24	£18
Books	£18	£21	£11
Pubs/Clubs	£81	£86	£69
Restaurants	£94	£103	£76

- Over 4 in 5 gay people had Internet access by some means, with 64% having access in the home, and 51% having access at work.
- On average, gay survey participants were taking 1 holiday in the UK and 2 holidays abroad per year. In addition, an average of 3 short breaks were taken per year. The average cost of the last main holiday taken was £636.67.

UK Gays Like Spaniards

- The most common destinations for the last holiday taken were:

Spain	16%
North America	14%
UK	10%
Other Europe	8%
Greece/Turkey	8%
Italy	7%
Africa	6%
France	5%

Canaries	4%
Australia/NewZealand	4%
Asia	4%
Caribbean	2%
Eastern Europe	1%
South America	1%

BA - Gay Britain's Favourite Airline

- ❑ BA, with 35% of those casting a vote, and Virgin, with 29%, emerged as the only significant favourite airlines amongst the survey participants.
- ❑ Over two thirds specified no particular favourite Travel Company, with Respect being the only named company receiving a mentionable percentage (5% of the participants, and, therefore, 16% of those naming any company at all).
- ❑ Four in 5 gay people did not name any Bank or Financial Service Provider that they considered to be pro-gay. Massow came top, with 40% of all those answering this question, although this accounted for only 7% of all the survey participants.
- ❑ Almost a third of gay people claimed not to read any mainstream National press on a regular basis. The Guardian emerged as the main paper read by 1 in 5 gay people (20%), followed by The Times (15%), The Daily Mail, The Evening Standard, and The Independent (all with a 10% gay readership).

Thumbs Up For The Guardian

- ❑ The Guardian was considered to have the most positive gay stance by 34% of the survey participants, followed by The Independent (22%), then The Times and The Observer, both with 5%.

Thumbs Down For The Daily Mail

- ❑ The Daily Mail was seen as having the most negative gay stance by 40% of people who answered the survey, followed by The Sun (35%), The Telegraph (12%), The Mirror (9%), and The Express (7%).

The Pink Pound Won't Go To Homophobic Companies

- ❑ Three quarters of gay people said they avoided buying from companies with a reputation for being homophobic. Moreover, 4 in 5 gay people made a positive point of buying from companies that have a pro-gay stance.

Being Gay in the UK Today

Gay People Still Feel Quite Marginalised

- How much a part of UK society do gay people feel they are able to be? This was gauged by asking people to score their perceived level of integration on a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 was 'totally isolated' and 10 was 'totally integrated'. The mean average score was 6, which demonstrates that, whilst not completely marginalised, gay people do not feel able to play a full part in UK life.

British Attitudes Towards Gays Are Getting Better...

- Some good news is that the overwhelming majority of gay people interviewed (96%) thought that public attitudes towards homosexuality in the UK had become more positive in the past five years.
- In addition, 68% felt that British current attitudes towards homosexuality were 'quite' positive although only 4% considered attitudes to be 'very' positive.
- More good news was that 61% of people interviewed believed that, generally, society is becoming more tolerant towards gay people.

Britain Still Has Some Catching Up To Do!

- But the UK appears to be lagging behind its continental neighbours. Almost half saw the UK as being less positive than the rest of Europe in its attitudes towards homosexuality.

The Dutch Are Cool!

- Countries voted as having the most positive attitudes towards gay people were:

Holland	48%
Denmark	8%
U.S.A	6%
UK	6%
Spain	4%
Australia	3%
Germany	3%
France	2%
Sweden	2%
Scandanavia	1%
New Zealand	1%
Belgium	1%

Abuse Is Still Rife

- What levels of abuse do gay people have to contend with? To gauge this, people were asked to record any experiences of verbal and physical abuse on account of being gay in a variety of contexts. Some alarming results are shown below, demonstrating that most gay people have at some point suffered verbal abuse in public, and 1 in 6 have actually been beaten up, both at school and on the street.

	Verbal abuse	Physical abuse
At school	45%	18%
Within the family	28%	4%
In the workplace	38%	4%
In a public place	68%	12%
On the street	66%	16%

The Church Is The Worst Offender

- People were also asked to record areas of life where they had experienced discrimination. Most common mentions were:

At church	21%
In hotels	19%
In pubs/clubs	19%
Applying for a mortgage	17%
At work	17%
Applying for insurance	17%
At school	16%
Within the family	10%
In other financial matters	10%
In other retail outlets	10%

Bombarded With Anti-gay Comments - Or Are All Gays Paranoid?

- Nearly everybody (**99%** of survey participants) had at some point heard anti-gay comments being made in public, with 35% stating that this was a regular occurrence.
- Everybody (**100%** of survey participants) had heard or seen anti-gay comments made in the media, with 42% stating this occurred frequently.

How Does Discrimination Affect Gay People?

- Half of the people interviewed believed that the majority of gay people in this country stay in the closet because they are fearful of the consequences of being openly gay (a view more strongly held by lesbians).

- ❑ Almost half also felt that gay people suffer from low self esteem as a result of discrimination against their sexuality.
- ❑ Two in 5 gay people said they felt frequently compromised about disclosing their gay identity in the presence of straight people.
- ❑ Half of gay people also felt that the bombing of the Admiral Duncan pub was an indirect consequence of gay discrimination in society at large.
- ❑ A substantial minority, 18% of survey participants, felt that their mental health had suffered on account of being gay.
- ❑ A similar number (17%) felt that their career had been hampered because they were gay.

Gays and Politics

The Labour Government Is OK, But Could Do Better

- The current Government was seen by 62% of gay people to have a positive stance towards homosexuality, although only 5% considered its stance to be very positive.
- How did gay participants vote in the last general election and for which political party did they intend to vote for the next time around?

	Last General Election	Next General Election
Labour	46%	34%
Lib/Dems	12%	18%
Conservative	11%	11%
Green	2%	3%
No political party	18%	15%
Not stated	10%	13%
Not yet decided	-	7%

How Safe Is The Labour Vote?

- Whilst the Labour Party is still clearly in the lead with regards to voting intentions for the next general election, the Gay Swingometer is signalling a fair amount of Pink Vote dissatisfaction with the current government and the Lib/Dems gaining reasonable ground. Importantly, 83% of those who saw the current government as having a positive stance towards homosexuality intended to vote Labour in the next general election. Clearly, **a positive stance towards homosexuality is a voting preference driver amongst the gay community**. The Conservative Party would appear to have few gay friends, and now not even Ivan Massow!

Gays Love Ken (and Madonna and Kylie!)

- Ken Livingstone emerged as the most pro-gay British politician (with 31% of votes cast), followed by Chris Smith (19%), Tony Blair (11%), Mo Mowlam (9%), Peter Tatchell (4%), Steven Twigg (4%) and Edwina Curry (3%).
- When asked to nominate the most pro-gay public figures who were not themselves gay, Ken Livingstone came top again (with 29% of votes cast), followed by Madonna (15%), Kylie Minogue (11%) - that London Mardi Gras appearance obviously worked! - Mo Mowlam (10%), Tony Blair (9%), Edwina Curry (7%), Elizabeth Taylor (6%), Cherrie Blair (6%), Richard Branson (5%) and dear old Barbara Windsor (5%).

Boo to Baroness Young and Brian Souter

- Politicians gay people love to hate were, you guessed it, Baroness Young (getting 30% of the votes cast for the most anti-gay politician), followed by William

Hague (24%), Anne Widdecombe (21%) and Michael Portillo (8%) - who, by definition, no doubt also hates himself!

- The most anti-gay public figures were nominated as Brian Souter (with 28% of all votes cast), Baroness Young again (17%) and the Pope (12%) - God Bless Him!

What Do Gay People Want Changed?

- The overwhelming majority of gay people (95%) would like to see gay marriages recognised in law. Well over half, 56%, would also like to see The Church recognise gay marriage.
- A similar number (93%) believed that Section 28 should be repealed.
- Almost three quarters of gay people also felt that gays should have the same adoption rights as heterosexuals.

Sample Profile

- A total of 283 exhibition visitors filled in a self-completion survey, of whom 2/3s were gay men and 1/3 were lesbians. Half were under and half were over the age of 35. Just over half lived with a partner, in an average household size of 2 people. Three in 5 owned their own homes. Two-thirds lived in London and a further 1 in 5 in other parts of the south-east. A reasonable ethnic mix was achieved, with 1 in 4 being non-white British. Almost half claimed not to ascribe to any religion, although 44% identified as Christian.

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Stormbreak is a market and social research consultancy offering qualitative and quantitative research methodologies. Specialisms in international and business to business markets and social research. French speaking. Member of The Market Research Society (MRS) and Association of Qualitative Research Practitioners (AQRP).

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