“Community is Where the Knowledge is”

The Adhikaar Report

Ministry for Ethnic Communities
Te Tari Mātāwaka

RULE FOUNDATION
rulefoundation.nz

Adhikaar Aotearoa

Content Warning

This report contains discussions of suicide, mental illness, racism, queerphobia, poor mental health, violence and trauma non-exhaustively.

Copyright and Citation

© Adhikaar Aotearoa 2022

No reproduction of *any* part of this report is allowed unless it is cited as below, or if the report's authors grant permission. The citation information is as follows:

Bal, V., & Divakalala, C. (2022). Community is Where the Knowledge is: the Adhikaar Report. *Adhikaar Aotearoa*.

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements

Our work does not occur within a silo. All around us, we have a plethora of individuals, groups, funders and organisations that enable us to do what we do. This is indeed true for our community consultations, the subject of this report.

We acknowledge the 43 participants in these community consultations. You all graciously gave us your time, your knowledge and experiences, and your emotion to us. We acknowledge your strength, resilience and power. We acknowledge the tears you shed, the words you struggled to get out, and the relationships you said you lost because you are who you are. We acknowledge all that you are, the adversity you have faced, and the longing for acceptance that you exhibit. Thank you for being a part of Adhikaar Aotearoa's first major project - one that is transformational. We hope we have done justice to your words.

We acknowledge LGBT+ people of colour, specifically LGBT+ South Asians, here in Aotearoa New Zealand. Our communities are communities of strength, love, and humility. We share our joint struggles and work for a future where we can all be our authentic selves.

We acknowledge LGBT+ people of colour, specifically LGBT+ South Asians, overseas. It is not lost on us that we would not be able to undertake such community consultations in our part of the world, South Asia, where most countries still criminalise being LGBT+. We acknowledge the fact that 83% of all LGB individuals are still hidden, predominately in our parts of the world.[1] We will never stop fighting for you.

We acknowledge those in our communities that are no longer with us. Our communities experience high levels of suicidality due to queerphobia, racism, conversion practices, and physical and sexual violence, among other factors. We know our communities face threats against their lives that others do not. Adhikaar Aotearoa operates in your memory.

We acknowledge our ancestors, particularly those who were LGBT+ people of colour that fought for our rights to be who we are. Our work is built on the backs of your efforts. We will never forget your sacrifices, your strength and your determination. We will carry the torch forward; LGBT+ emancipation is far from achieved.

We acknowledge the next generation of LGBT+ people of colour, particularly those who are change-makers. Change does not come from inaction. It comes from the sustained efforts of people that care, many of whom are from the next generation. We are excited to see how your efforts continue to enact meaningful difference to the world.

We acknowledge our supporters. Without our friends and family, we would not have had the emotional grit to carry out this project. Thank you for giving us a place to recharge and reflect. We acknowledge our sister organisations and individuals who supported the dissemination of marketing material. We acknowledge the academics and researchers who supported us throughout the process and are filling the

information void with their own projects. We ought to mention that many of these aforementioned individuals are not LGBT+, they are allies. Thank you for being by our side.

We acknowledge the tangata whenua of Aotearoa, iwi Māori. In particular, we acknowledge Waikato Tainui, in whose land Adhikaar Aotearoa is based, and whose history of resistance and fortitude we have much appreciation for. It is not lost on us that we are only here because of your magnanimity. We will always be allies to the cause of the realisation of te Tiriti o Waitangi.

We acknowledge Kiran Patel, one of our trustees for reviewing, editing and finessing this report. Kiran is a word-sleuth, and we are grateful to his keen eye and intellect. We are lucky to have such motivated, competent and change-oriented people involved in Adhikaar Aotearoa.

Lastly, we acknowledge our generous funders, the Ministry of Ethnic Communities and the Rule Foundation. We understand that we were one of the first LGBT+ people of colour organisations to be funded by the Ethnic Communities Development Fund. We acknowledge this move and sincerely appreciate it.

The Rule Foundation is an organisation set up to administer the estate of Peter Rule, a Royal New Zealand Air Force pilot who was forced out of a job he loved and eventually committed suicide due to the shame that society projected onto him for being a gay man. Peter Rule's story should have had a different ending; an ending where he found love, passion and purpose, an ending where he was able to be himself. Peter's memory is indelible in the work we do. We do what we do for stories like his, and particularly for those from ethnic LGBT+ communities, to live out their lives they are meant to.

None of this work would have been possible without grants from these two organisations. We thank you sincerely.

About Adhikaar Aotearoa

The idea for this charity came from the story of Sanjeev, born and raised in Aotearoa New Zealand to an Indian family, and a closeted gay man. He knew that he could never come out to his family, because if he did, he would be disowned and shunned by the people he loved. So, with the fear that had been instilled in him from a young age, Sanjeev pretended to be a certain way. He started to date women, stopped hanging out with his closest friends, and convinced himself that if he "acted" straight for long enough, he would not be shunned from the only people he had ever known. Sanjeev is one of the hundreds, if not thousands, of South Asian LGBT+ people in Aotearoa New Zealand with the same experience.

Adhikaar, in many South Asian languages, means "right". Sanjeev has the right to be free, the right to love, and the right to be himself. In creating this organisation, we are re-instilling the rights that our ancestors had to be queer and trans without fear. While Adhikaar Aotearoa is for all people of colour, we are specifically focused on supporting those with South Asian ancestry. The eight South Asian countries that derive this ancestry include: Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka.

Adhikaar Aotearoa is all about flax roots and systemic change underpinned by our three focus areas: education, advocacy, and support.

Education is all about producing, disseminating and using knowledge and information in a way that benefits our communities. Education is key to filling the information gaps that many in our community, and more generally, society, has. We have four focus areas when it comes to education: providing information for LGBT+ people of colour, providing information for the families of LGBT+ people of colour, enhancing the awareness of LGBT+ persons within the South Asian community, and providing education for broader society.

Advocacy is all about using your voice to support and propel a particular cause when things are wrong, or when things are fine but could be better. Advocacy to us is about talking to our communities, seeing what they need and getting it. Advocacy to us is about ensuring that the work we do has a large-scale and long-lasting impact, and manifests the hope that we hold in the world and the promise of change.

Support is all about making sure you are there when someone needs it. It is about listening, caring, encouraging and organising with a profound sense of connectedness and shared queer politics. It is about ensuring no one feels alone or left out should they seek connections. It is about travelling with someone in their journeys of self-realisation.

We work both domestically and internationally (particularly in South Asia and the Pacific, where many people of South Asian ancestry are based) to create the conditions for our people to not only survive, but thrive. We will never stop.

Our Team

The community consultations that this report is based on and the writing of this report were carried out by our co-founders, Cayathri Divakalala (she/her) and Vinod Bal (he/him). One of our trustees, Kiran Patel (he/him) proofread and edited this report. Residual support was provided by our other trustees, Shaneel Lal (they/them) and Shawn Dellon Wimalaratne (he/him).

Cayathri Divakalala is an activist researcher with over 20 years of experience in community work and advocacy. She is a doctoral candidate at the University of Waikato, focusing on queer feminist social movements in Sri Lanka. Cayathri has taught at universities in Aotearoa New Zealand and Sri Lanka, researched at the Ivy League University of Pennsylvania, and has a Master of Arts in Development Studies from the prestigious International Institute of Social Sciences based in The Hague, The Netherlands. She also has an undergraduate degree in Psychology from Lady Sri Ram College, University of Delhi, India. Cayathri's background is developing psychosocial opportunities, resources and interventions for marginalised communities, namely LGBTQIA+ people of colour. Beyond this, Cayathri has worked on a plethora of topics, including the sexual and reproductive health rights of trans persons and women in Sri Lanka, theorising solutions to violence against women, investigating the effects of war trauma, working with ethnic riot survivors in India, and deliberating over feminist solutions to conflict through to consulting for well-known development organisations such Habitat for Humanity and Oxfam. In Aotearoa New Zealand, Cayathri is one of the advisory members of SHAMA, a charity that supports ethnic women survivors of domestic and family violence, based in Kirikiriroa Hamilton. She is one of the Board of Trustees of Hohou Te Rongo Kahukura, a charity dedicated to building Rainbow communities in Aotearoa New Zealand that are free of family, partner and sexual violence.

Vinod Bal is an activist, policy practitioner, researcher, writer and teacher with seven years of experience in LGBT+ advocacy. Vinod has a Bachelor of Laws (First Class Honours) conjoined with a Bachelor of Social Sciences (Political Science and Sociology) from the University of Waikato. He has also studied human rights at the Humboldt University of Berlin, Germany, and international law more generally at the world's preeminent international legal institute The Hague Academy of International Law, The Netherlands. He has also completed non-degree coursework on international criminal law at Florida State University, United States of America. He has a background in law, policy, diversity and inclusion, and people management. He is an active researcher, and publishes and presents on how the international legal system can be used to provide redress for LGBT+ victims of atrocity crimes. He is a commentator on LGBT+ rights, sits on the Wellington City Council's Takatāpui and Rainbow Advisory Council, and has tutored and lectured law at the University of Waikato. He is also a policy practitioner, giving him a vast insight into government relations. He has a penchant for people-to-people connections and advocating for and with marginalised communities.

Shaneel Shavneel Lal is the founder of the Conversion Therapy Action Group, a group working to end conversion therapy in Aotearoa New Zealand. Lal is an

executive board member of Auckland Pride Festival. Lal is a signed model, a political commentator on queer and indigenous rights issues and a law and psychology student at the University of Auckland.

Kiran Patel is a queer writer and activist living in Te-Whanaganui-a-Tara Wellington. Growing up in Aotearoa in the early 2000s, Kiran has struggled with understanding his place in the world as both queer and Indian in the context of the heteronormative, Pākehā-centric society he existed within. This experience was extremely isolating and took most of his teenage and adult life to arrive in a place of self-acceptance and celebration of his identity. After hearing about Adhikaar Aotearoa indirectly through his therapist and a bit of social media-sleuthing, Kiran reached out. From there, Kiran met Vinod, and learnt more about the incredible work being done by the organisation in the policy and advocacy space. This developed a keen interest to get involved himself and become a more visible part of the community. Kiran's writing often comes from a place of introspection, and explores themes such as internalised homophobia, teenage angst and loneliness, edge-walking, intersectionality, coming out, and the power of vulnerability. Kiran has a Bachelor of Arts in English Literature from Victoria University of Wellington and is keen to explore the history and literature around queer, POC (particularly South Asian) identity in Aotearoa New Zealand.

Shawn Dellon Wimalaratne is a queer man whose roots lie in the tropical Island of Sri Lanka. As a Burgher/Sinhalese boy from the metropolitan capital of Sri Lanka, Shawn carries on his shoulders a plethora of challenges and trauma he wishes to mitigate through his mahi. His ultimate life goal is to create a better place for the next generation than what was left for him, and most importantly to provide a voice he wishes he had when he was a young queer boy growing up in Sri Lanka and Aotearoa. His journey into this space is still rather fresh, however he harbours the passion and drive to catch up to it all while using his strengths of writing, storytelling and facilitation. Shawn's journey with this kaupapa is dictated heavily by his queerness, accompanied by his rich 'fruit salad' whakapapa and his newly discovered adult diagnosed neurodiversity. As an immigrant, Shawn's work also carries an undertoned kaupapa of displacement and identity study, which he explored in his Masters (First Class) thesis and also through his continued art of storytelling. Shawn is currently employed as Human Centred Design Practitioner in Te Whanganui-a-Tara Wellington, where his soul sings and sinks in the kaupapa aimed at creating a more equitable Aotearoa New Zealand.

Executive Summary

"Community is Where the Knowledge is" is the namesake of this report, and with good reason too. The community consultations, undertaken by Adhikaar Aotearoa, expertly show that those with lived experiences of issues affecting their community are also those with the knowledge, drive and passion to make a change. Made up of at least 13,800 people, Aotearoa's LGBT+ South Asian community's collective traumas, adversities, triumphs, and self-awareness, as revealed in this report, prove that we are best placed to provide the answers and solutions to questions that have pervasively troubled us.

As one participant expertly put it, existing as LGBT+ South Asians in societies, communities, and spaces not catered to our needs often feels like being "marginalised twice over".

Our unique identities, experiences, ideas, perspectives and emotions are often not accounted for, or made invisible, in the three different speres of relationality we exist in: the South Asian community, the mainstream LGBT+ community, and Aotearoa New Zealand society. More often than not, these three different worlds are in transit simultaneously, creating a jarring dissonance between many LGBT+ South Asians and their sense of grounding: they question where their home is, who their true family is, and what their place in the world is. Pressure points at the intersects of these three different worlds are often causes for hopelessness too: if we are excluded by our LGBT+ community for being people of colour, by our South Asian community for being LGBT+, and by Aotearoa New Zealand society for being both - where exactly do we belong? Will we ever feel like we belong? This report provides a crucial first step for our community to find our sense of belonging.

While our community has had its fair share of systemic struggles, and many of those in our community were not able to face the dilemma of existing as themselves in a world that was not made for them, a common theme throughout this report and exemplified by our participants was strength and resilience. They have derived great strength in using the barriers that they once believed to be life-threatening to pave the way towards happiness, self-acceptance, and authentic expression. They have developed resilience to overcome violence and abuse, resilience to overcome strained relationships with parents, resilience to overcome racism and queerphobia, and resilience to face with the world with their authentic identities bared openly.

However, resilience should not be the default. Our community should not need to face the obscene number of hurdles placed in their way to simply exist. Our systems, intentional or not, should not be an obstacle that we have to overcome. We should not need to resort to self-inflicted harm in the absence of responsive healthcare. We should not need to be fearful of being outed by trusted professionals. We should not need to be fearful of discrimination when using mainstream platforms, accessing mainstream spaces or being out in public. We should not need to live our lives dictated by fear. We should not need to live our lives through resilience.

Despite this, we can also see hope growing in small, but powerful, ways. Many participants expressed the significance that having supportive friends and LGBT+ allies have had in their journey of self-discovery. Many participants have seen family members change ingrained attitudes and beliefs, both because of the participants efforts and their families' own efforts to learn and grow. Many participants expressed the profound impact that visible, ethnic LGBT+ representation has had on their internalised beliefs and feelings of self-worth. These inklings of hope are pertinent reminders that it is our responsibility, and need, to continue fighting the good fight, and ensuring that our voices, experiences, and lived realities are never made to feel taboo or invisibilised again. We must continue to pave the way forward, but we cannot do this alone.

In light of this report, and our hope for the work that these insights inspire, we strive for a reality in which one's "adhikaar" – the right to be free, the right to love, the right of be oneself – is truly realised in Aotearoa New Zealand.

Introduction

LGBT+ South Asians in Aotearoa New Zealand are a population invisibilised in popular discourse. We do not exist according to many ethnic communities as LGBT+ persons, while our ethnic identity is denigrated and erroneously amalgamated by the mainstream LGBT+ community. This is despite our experiences being vastly different, particularly in light of the historical, social, religious and cultural contexts in which we are positioned. Instead of facing queerphobia as our predominant oppressor, we also face racism, xenophobia and fetishisation. Despite these differences to the mainstream LGBT+ community, there is a lacuna in effective social, psychological and health interventions, supported by evidence-based research on LGBT+ South Asians, that are culturally-astute for our community. To remedy this, Adhikaar Aotearoa embarked on our inaugural project - community consultations.

In early 2022, we undertook a community consultation process that sought to ascertain the experiences of LGBT+ South Asians in Aotearoa. We were particularly interested in two things: firstly, our community's experiences of being LGBT+ within the ethnic community, and secondly, our community's experiences of being ethnic within the LGBT+ community. Using semi-structured and narrative-based interviews, we collected the stories of 43 individuals within this community, a community that we estimate to number between 13,800 to 17,000 individuals.[2] These stories offered novel insights into collective experiences and revealed information that should be the cause of much introspection, change and reform within society.

This report presents the findings of our community consultations. The title of our report, "Community is Where the Knowledge is," identifies a simple but poignant notion: the answers to the problems that our communities face, are found within the community. It should be no surprise that for Adhikaar Aotearoa's inaugural project, we chose to listen to our own community. To do anything else, in our view, would have been, self-evidently, a function of arrogance. This report recognises that within our community, there is a longing for our collective "adhikaar [right]" to be realised. Using three themes: self and society, ethnic families and communities, and mainstream LGBT+ communities, we systematically lay bare the truths of our participants' lived experiences - their struggles, their triumphs, and their aspirations. We do so in pursuance of a society where our community can be themselves, free of fear and full of blissful ambition.

We always knew that change was needed. This report is a response to that need, through ensuring that service providers have the information that was not previously available to meaningfully support our community. This report charts a path forward by looking at our history. As the Māori whakataukī goes, "I walk backwards into the future with my eyes fixed on my past".

This report is for Arfi, who after listening to one of her father's queerphobic outbursts at a young age, believed that she would "burn" if she lived life as her authentic bisexual self. This report is for Bhagat, who faced a horrific instance of immense physical and psychological violence after coming out to his father. This

report is for Premkumar, who lived a life of inauthenticity so that he could "preserve" his family's honour. This report is for Kalani, who, because of her sexuality, grew up as a "criminal" in her home country; an identity that shaped her view of her sexuality as deviant. This report is for Ishan, who believes his family will kill him if they find out that he is gay.

This report is for the LGBT+ South Asians that are no longer with us, because the shame that they were forced to feel because of their LGBT+ identity was too much for them to bear. This report is for our ancestors, who before the violence of Victorian puritanism was inflicted upon them, lived lives of sexual and gender diversity in a hospitable cultural environment. But most importantly, this report is for the next generation of LGBT+ South Asians – kids that, we hope, will not have to hide themselves from their families, will not be afflicted by feelings of shame and dirtiness, and will not have to feel the pain of being unwanted.

Methodology

We employed the use of semi-structured and narrative-based interviews with our 43 participants. Further, all participants filled out a ten-question survey to provide quantitative data that is presented in appendices one to ten of this report. The interviews were carried out via Zoom and Google Meet, with the option of an in-person interview, if the participant was based in Wellington and Hamilton, and desired this. Participants were remunerated for their time. All ethical procedures were adhered to, including, but not limited to, consent being obtained for the collection, retention and use of information, and holding information in congruence with the Information Privacy Principles of the Privacy Act 2020.

In relation to gender, our participants were composed of mostly cisgender men, followed by cisgender women, non-binary individuals, transwomen, and lastly, gender fluid, agender, gender queer, and unsure individuals. In relation to sexuality, our participants were composed mostly of identified as gay, followed by bisexual, queer, lesbian, those unsure of their sexuality, and lastly, pansexual and asexual. In relation to age, our participants were aged between 17 and 51, with predominantly younger people being interviewed. In relation to ethnicity, five of the eight South Asian ancestries were represented. The following demographic data only assesses South Asian ancestry; however, it is salient to note that many of our participants held multiple ethnicities, including Māori, Pākehā , Fijian and Malaysian. The predominant ethnicity of our participants was Indian, followed by Sri Lankan, Pakistani, and lastly, Bangladeshi and Afghan. We did not manage to interview Bhutanese, Maldivian or Nepalese LGBT+ individuals. Please refer to appendices eleven to fourteen for charts of demographic information.

In this report, we use a variety of terminology. For example, we refer to the acronym “LGBT+,” meaning lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and more. We use this term as an all-encompassing term including all those that are sexual and gender minorities. The term “queer” has the same meaning in this report. We recognise that the term “LGBT+” is Eurocentric and does not affirm our cultural identities. “LGBT+” does not explain the plethora of South Asian identities that describe our community, and before we were LGBT+ persons, we were Hijra, Aravani, Thirunangaigal, Khwajasara, Kothi, Thirunambigal, Jogappa, Jogatha, Nachchi, and Shiva Shakti. We use the term “LGBT+” because it is commonly understood and used, including by our participants and by those in power, who need to be able to understand us for change to be a result of this report. When referring to the term “mainstream LGBT+ community”, we mean Aotearoa New Zealand’s predominantly white and dominant LGBT+ community.

When using the term “queerness”, this refers to diverse sex characteristics, gender and sexual identities and expressions.

All names in this report have been changed to protect the identities of our participants.

Findings

Self and Society

The sense of self is profoundly intertwined with many questions around identity. Race, ethnicity, gender, sex, sexuality, caste, class, disability, and mental health are the predominant intersections where identities are created, forced upon, negotiated and transformed. None of these processes occurs straightforwardly or organically for ethnic LGBT+ persons. Often, the determination to find a sense of safety and comfortability in their identity is an arduous, complex and compromising task due to societal norms and structures. Culturally, geopolitically, and historically, the sense of self is predominantly influenced by relationality. This is not just based in kinship relations, but also in how one is perceived and related to by others in their social sphere. Being a person of colour comes often first, as it is more visible through the colour of skin, and brings profound challenges to the formation of the self. In this section, we share the ethnic LGBT+ experiences in Aotearoa under three themes: prejudice, dissonance and resilience.

Prejudice

The experiences of prejudice illustrate discrimination against LGBT+ South Asians both within and between communities (inter and intra-community discriminations).[3] They offer insights on the racism, sexism, homophobia, queerphobia, biphobia, casteism, ageism, and profound ignorance of mental health wellbeing faced by these individuals. Ethnicity, class and disability also have been sources of prejudice. All these forms of discrimination often manifested through discriminatory attitudes and behaviours in multiple facets of life, and often LGBT+ South Asians' sense of safety is threatened. They must fight many tides at various scales to find a place in society.

Self-Loathing Due to Multiple Forms of Discrimination

Racism often operates in subtle ways, and individuals may find it challenging to identify or call out. This is may be especially relevant if a person of colour does not take all forms of racism seriously, or does not wish to be confrontational. Instances could be casual remarks, such as a racist joke by a colleague or acquaintance. 100% of our participants believed that racism was everywhere in Aotearoa, and notably, 84% of them have been discriminated against due to their race or ethnicity (refer to appendix nine).

The prevalence of racism, even within the Pākehā LGBT+ community or by other people of colour, are experienced from childhood. Many participants recalled being the only person of colour in their classes at school, and this confliction between their home and school lives can be detrimental to their self-formation process. Navigating these differences, where they are seen and made to feel different to others in certain spaces, can negatively influence their self-confidence and self-respect.

LGBT+ South Asians grow up with a constant sense of threat as they are subjected to racism and other forms of discrimination. Savithra, a 24-year-old queer person of colour, stated: "when I go shopping with my white friends, I am treated differently by sales persons. I have had boys (Pākehā) shouting - go back to your country". Similarly, a few participants stated that they are called names and shouted at publicly on the streets. Most often, they do not react or respond to these racist remarks because their sense of safety is profoundly threatened. In some cases, the silencing nature of racism contributes to racialised self-loathing.[4]

Participants' also experienced self-loathing in relation to their gender and sexual identity. Many ethnic gay men and trans women spoke of being forced to do "boy things" at home and school. They expressed that they were expected to dress in specific ways, behave in specific ways, choose certain subjects and play certain

games - all of which had to reflect their masculinity. Gay men were forced to appear attracted to and make fun of girls, and some shared that performing as dominantly masculine often felt toxic, unrelatable and deeply problematic. However, it is unsurprising that the participants displayed this behaviour, as it is likely that being a part of small minority that did not conform to these toxic attitudes and behaviours would have ostracised them.

LGBT+ South Asians face inter and intra-community racism, stereotyping, and exclusionary behaviour on social media and dating apps, including problematic racialised and sexualised fetishes and fantasies.

Sundar, a 37-year-old gay man, shared frustratingly: "I could not relate to the gay scene in Delhi. I find it difficult in Aotearoa too. Internally, it makes me feel like less of a human. I feel judged for it. I could not fit into the gay culture of parties, drinking and smoking weed. Here, it is predominantly white and very difficult to feel part of. To many white gay men, where I come from matters. Some would tell me that they are not into Indian men. They do not think it is racist to say this. To some, the colour of my skin is one of their fetishes. They just like the colour of my skin and not my personality. Some fetishise our culture – they wanted me to be a cultural hooker to satisfy their fetishes".

For many ethnic LGBT+ persons, experiences related to coming out and being out are not the same as Pākehā LGBT+ persons.[5] Most participants shared that they had never come out to their families, particularly not in the traditional way that coming out is understood in the Pākehā LGBT+ community. Some have used creative outlets, such as plays and creative writing pieces, to explain their gender identity and/or sexual orientation to their parents. For most of our participants, their immediate families are still struggling to reconcile with the fact that their offspring identifies as LGBT+.

Given that the concept of family is not a nuclear structure among ethnic communities, coming out, letting in and being out is not an option for a significant portion of the ethnic LGBT+ population. For instance, 69% of our participants stated that they were not out to their extended families (refer to appendix four). Many shared that they do not come out due to a deep sense of responsibility towards their parent's reputation and the family's honour, which are culturally sensitive. In other words, they do not want to come out due to an overwhelming desire or socio-cultural expectation of them to prevent putting their parents in a compromised societal position. This idea is explored further in the 'Ethnic families and communities' section.

Some participants highlighted the connection between racialised self-loathing and internalised queerphobia. Many participants shared that racism, both within their own community and between other ethnic communities, played a significant role in how they viewed themselves and ethnic persons generally. This influenced discriminatory thinking towards ethnic persons based on racial characteristics and assumptions, such as the colour of their skin, the caste they were born into, and

their status/class. Racialised self-loathing, in terms of inter- and intra-community discriminations, were often intertwined with the colour of one's skin, where one was born, the caste one was born into, and their status/class. Stephen, a 43-year-old gay cisman, emphasised that "internalised racism and discriminatory thinking within/intra-ethnic communities are significantly high and that it needs to be addressed".

Perceptions towards being transgender or having a variation of sex characteristics profoundly shapes self-formation. The data shows greater invisibility and silencing around issues related to ethnic transgender and intersex persons, and the general lack of information and awareness makes it much harder for ethnic persons to share and discuss their needs and challenges, while also struggling to get their needs met in a significantly binary society. For instance, the medical process of transitioning takes a significant toll on physical and psychological well-being.

Workplaces are not designed to accommodate the requirements of trans persons, and as of this report, no structural changes in national policies recognise these shifts in the labour force of trans persons. Another common issue is a lack of gender-neutral toilets in workplaces, which affects intersex and non-binary persons as well in this sense of safety and inclusion. Some participants shared horrific experiences of being shamed and ill-treated by colleagues. Similar to the subtle forms of racism, transphobia in the workplace often manifests in the form of jokes and casual talks, where trans people are expected to take it "easy". Many transgender participants expressed the sentiment that if discrimination against Pākehā trans people is already bad, discrimination directed towards them would only be exacerbated by being both trans and a person of colour.

The Stigma Around Mental Health

The process of self-understanding can be deeply scarred by unaddressed mental health issues. Those participants who were born in Aotearoa or migrated to Aotearoa before kindergarten have been slowly reconciling with their mental health needs more than the others. They feel like the minority within the minority at various intersections. However, seeking support for mental health issues is culturally stigmatised among ethnic communities, and can cause significant hurdles to maintaining wellbeing.

The stigma around mental health can be a common barrier for many Pākehā LGBT+ persons. However, for many LGBT+ South Asians, acknowledging mental health issues is seen as a failure and would bring significant shame on their extended families. Participants expressed that there would be no time or space to share how they were feeling, or express negative emotions, including being sad or depressed. Usually, death and bereavement are accepted as significant enough to show emotions in most ethnic LGBT+ experiences, and this is the only time they see their family members express their emotions.

The stigmatisation of mental health in the community is also contributed to by the "migrant mentality", where a migrant is characterised by their strong work-ethic and assimilation to the dominant culture, all in the effort to build a decent life for themselves and their family. If a migrant does not prove to society that they bring a positive migrant experience, or are perceived as needing additional support to survive and adapt, they may be seen as a failure and often rejected by society-at-large.

However, going to a therapist is not an option for many LGBT+ South Asians. Culturally speaking, they were brought up believing that mental health issues are not real issues in the first place, and seeking the help of a therapist or counsellor would bring a significant amount of shame on the individual and the family, including the extended family. Some participants pointed out that issues related to being on the autism spectrum were the most misunderstood mental health struggle. At times, they were treated like less than human.

The data shows that even if LGBT+ South Asians managed to overcome cultural and social stigmatisation, such as the denial of mental health issues in their community, they still struggle to access mental health services that are culturally apt. All participants shared the view that these services lack knowledge of LGBT+ sensitive approaches and practices, let alone culturally sensitive approaches and practices. Many participants expressed feeling that there was a mental health crisis amongst ethnic LGBT+ persons and limited appropriate support available, echoing the sentiment of Banu, a 24-year-old non-binary person, who stated: "[The] mental health struggle is real and huge. It needs to be addressed with these specifics." Banu went on to state:

> "Last year, I was hospitalised after [attempting suicide]. When I tried to find a therapist, I did not feel like they would understand me or my problems. Also, I do not want to contribute to the stigma about my ethnic communities. It is a huge challenge. Confusing. We do not get the kind of support we need".

Internalised Queerphobia

Due to the extreme normalisation of heterosexuality and the focus on binary sexes and genders, most LGBT+ South Asians experience internalised phobia around these identities. It is predominantly referred to as homophobia, transphobia, bi-phobia, or queerphobia. Some gay male participants shared that it was complicated to challenge toxic hyper-masculinity, even within the gay community.. The pressure to partake in hyper-masculine ways of living is profoundly high in society, especially among ethnic men who have lived their lives dominated by patriarchal norms, values, and practices that are closely connected to the socio-cultural and historical backgrounds of their ancestry. Despite having diverse gender identities, sexual orientations, and sex characteristics, this conditioning often creates tension within LGBT+ South Asians as they struggle to overcome deeply rooted prejudices.

Many participants stated that having a lack of self-confidence manifested through internalised queerphobia. As a result, reconciling with the fact that they are an LGBT+ person can be profoundly painful, and can take a long time to become comfortable with their identity and accept themselves for who they are. Some shared that they have ethnic LGBT+ friends that are still struggling to reconcile with their identity.

Violence

Our data shows that 44% of our participants are survivors of violence (refer to appendix ten). This includes verbal, psychological, physical, and sexual violence, and most instances having connotations to their sexuality, gender identity, or ethnicity. Participants expressed that these characteristics were often used against them as justification to be violated by the perpetrator. The perpetrators identities were often mixed in terms of their sex characteristics, gender identity, sexual orientation, race, and ethnicity.

Our data showed that transgender and intersex persons were more vulnerable to violation. Angel, an early 50s, Indian and Māori, transwoman, is a survivor of a long history of physical and sexual violence. She explained:

> "I was ripped apart when I was seven. I thought I was born wrong. My father was embarrassed by me. He would beat me every couple of days for years. I was not allowed outside the house. I had to hide when visitors came home. I have a twin brother. My family celebrated my twin brother's birthday and never mine. I was sexually abused at the age of seven. It lasted until I turned 14. It was constant and by two different people. They were family friends. I could not read. Because of the heavy beating, my brain did not get enough oxygen. I was always treated differently. I felt more like a girl than a boy."

Angel dressed according to her gender identity as a female when she escaped the violent household at 16 or 17. She recalled that the immense violence she faced: "rape, sexual abuse, abandonment, severe beating up."

In addition to the forms of violence that other marginalised persons are subjected to, transgender and intersex persons face an added layer of violence through medical malpractices. Angel was one of the few to undergo a medical transition in 2005. The government-funded her sex reassignment surgery, but sadly, the experience was painful and unethical. In Angel's words:

> "The surgery went majorly wrong. Four days before the surgery, the surgeon wanted a story. I was ensured that my identity will not be revealed. I wanted full anonymity. All confidentiality was broken. The next day, a reporter called. I was not given enough information about the procedure and how to take care of myself after. I wish I had chosen a different surgeon. At that time, doctors did not know much. I had to

> undergo two major surgeries in 10 years. It was quite painful. No doctor in New Zealand helped me other than to operate on me and not do a good job. I went to a surgeon in Auckland. She did not want to do it because the damage caused in the previous ones was too bad. I am still fighting with ACC for over 17 years to cover the costs. I still cannot do most work that requires moderate physical strength."

Ethnic LGBT+ persons are at a higher risk of being abused or violated because of their ethnicity. Angel stated that she had been bullied at school almost every day, while also being called a "fucking Māori", "kunta", and "the N word". She also discussed experiencing inter-community racism and transphobia, adding that: "some trans and intersex people hated me because I look more like a woman. One time, years ago, I entered a beauty pageant and came second. I gained some hate within our community as a result."

The participants highlighted that trans healthcare is still not adequate in Aotearoa New Zealand. They have repeatedly been discriminated against and denied access to healthcare, especially those with mental health issues. Participants repeatedly emphasised that all human rights should be respected, ensured, and advocated for when accessing necessary healthcare services, and they wished to see non-judgemental and improved healthcare facilities that are accessible for trans people of all races and ethnicities.

Dissonance

The concept of dissonance is expanded through experiences of dilemmas around selfhood, exclusion vs inclusion, and belonging. The following subsections offer insights that highlight forms of marginalisation that are often interlocking and thrive at each intersection.[6] All participants have highlighted the significance of such intersections in shaping various aspects of their lives.

The Nexus of Sexuality and/or Gender Identity and Ethnicity

Queer academia on sexually marginalised sections of society across the world often highlights that queerness and ethnic identity are perceived and lived to the detriment of one another.[7] Often, these identities do not fit into the frameworks of heterosexuality, heteronormativity, and the binary of sex and gender. Our data supports these claims.

Some participants stated that they have only recently started to make sense of their selfhood as queer peoples of colour, such as queer Afghan, queer Indian, queer Pakistani or queer Sri Lankan. Others are still contemplating them as they do not see many representations of these intersectional identities in mainstream society or the community. Appendix one shows a significant under-representation of ethnic LGBT+ voices and experiences in Aotearoa.

Sarika, a 34-year-old, lesbian, cisgender woman, stated that: “whilst I fully accepted that fact that I was lesbian, I rejected the fact that I was Indian”. Many other participants echoed this sentiment. Some of them expressed that they cannot relate to their ethnicities, even now, as they experience layers of discrimination within the ethnic community.

The data confirms that acceptance of queerness within ethnic communities is low. As queerness is often seen as a Western concept by South Asian communities and made a taboo topic of conversation, most participants shared that many of their cultural events disapprove of anything related to queerness, such as drag shows. Some shared that their parents are accepting of other queer people within ethnic communities, but not of their own queer children or grandchildren.

All of the above makes it more difficult to reconcile with one’s queerness and ethnic identity when also dealing with inter-community racism. The participants emphasised the jarring marginalisation they faced when their Kiwi-ness was scrutinised and not accepted, while simultaneously having their ethnicities misappropriated based on the colour of their skin. The dilemmas of selfhood manifest through self-doubting questions.

Preemptive Distancing

Preemptive distancing was a unique theme that some of our participants reported. This phenomenon describes a situation where LGBT+ South Asians purposefully distance themselves from their parents and wider family during their adolescence in an attempt to protect their emotional and psychological safety. This phenomenon indicates that some of our community feel obliged to apply a rational framework to their relationships, which results in a lack of openness on the part of LGBT+ South Asians, and a tenuous, impersonal relationship with their parents.

Kalwant, an early 20s, Indian, gay, cisgender male notes that during his adolescence, his LGBT+ identity affected his relationship between him and his parents. He noted that he held back a bit more and was intentionally distant. When asked why he initially distanced himself from his parents, Kalwant noted that he engaged in pre-emptive distancing to "mitigate losses" if things did sour after he informed his parents of his LGBT+ identity. This phenomenon should be considered troubling by ethnic families and communities, as their potential queerphobia may inoculate preemptive distancing.

Historical and Residual Trauma

Although our community consultation was not conducted as a research study focusing on understanding residual trauma, we would like to highlight that the multiple reporting of fear, anxiety, disappointment, insecurity, exclusion, isolation, rage, and self-harm are alarming. Making sense of the experiences of ethnic communities, especially those from countries that had been colonised for centuries, cannot happen without the lenses of historical trauma due to various forms of violence and intense suffering. Additionally, religious extremism, ethnic conflicts, and civil war have instigated generational trauma, pain, and suffering in the South Asian region. Hence, the awareness of actual and anticipated threats based on previous experiences or the experiences of others with similar issues makes residual trauma visible among the ethnic LGBT+ community

The idea of home is multidimensional for most immigrants. Almost all of them have strong kinship connections back in their countries of origin or heritage. Our data shows that their LGBT+ identity results in anxieties around visiting their places of origin or heritage. Either growing up or having kinship connections in countries where anything other than heterosexuality has been criminalised is significantly daunting. Those whose families do not live in Aotearoa and are not planning to come out to their families suffer the most from this dilemma. They do not want to come out in a desire to prevent putting their parents in a compromised position. In some cases, they are also worried that it might risk the lives of their parents and extended families.

Many participants spoke of significant difficulties when trying to fit their mental health struggles into approaches based on frameworks developed by Pākehā people studying Pākehā populations. Often, Pākehā therapists do not understand the socio-cultural nuances of LGBT+ South Asians and the intersections of residual trauma based on historical violence. Some of them have also suffered due to unethical practices of therapists and mental health workers in Aotearoa. According to the participants, there are multiple forms of discrimination made against ethnic LGBT+ communities within the structures of service provision. A few participants stated that assumptions made by therapists and mental health workers based on their class and inability to speak and share feelings and emotions in English can lead to humiliation and dehumanisation. Some have quit therapy because they think it does not work for them when their therapist or counsellor do not understand them well enough to provide support, while some resort to self-harm as a coping mechanism. This, combined with the stigma around mental health, contributes to a sense of dissonance for LGBT+ South Asians.

In the context of Afghanistan, Arfi, an early 20s, bisexual, cisgender woman, shares the trauma of potentially being out to society and Afghan society-at-large. In the context of embedded heteronormativity and patriarchy, Arfi stated that she does not know how to express her sexuality or preferences in this rigid context:

> "Society is so tied up in religion, the law, and culture. Everyone is vocally homophobic and anti-LGBTQIA+. There are generations and generations of Afghans in New Zealand, I am not aware of a single out person that I know of. The day you realise [that you're LGBT+], you start living a double life".

Those LGBT+ South Asians who fear telling their families and extended families based on genuine threats to their lives navigate trauma on a daily basis. Kalwant, an early 20s, gay, cisgender man, expressed the unfairness of hiding his identity, which most other participants echoed: "it was like shutting off a part of yourself when you come home; living two different lives, mindful of not giving things away when I was home; exhausting and mentally draining; you are supposed to feel that your home and your room is a safe space to be you and I was robbed of that; a lot more exhausted at home; it is so unfair that I'm being robbed of these opportunities, that other people not of my ethnicity have".

In the absence of a sense of belonging and being excluded from the mainstream society, including the Pākehā LGBT+ community, most LGBT+ South Asians live dual lives if they are unable to talk about their gender identity and/or sexual identities with their families. Almost all participants shared that they are the 'tokenistic brown person' in the mainstream LGBT+ community, and the illusion of inclusion is profoundly hurtful when unnoticed or not spoken about, with a rare exception of sharing this frustration with some Pākehā LGBT+ friends who understand.

Resilience

Resilience is expressed as reconciling with the inner voice towards self-acceptance, voices of change for appropriate representation, and policies and practices. As discussed, becoming comfortable with your identity is a complex process for LGBT+ South Asians. Most participants spoke of consistent fights with their self-destructive inner voice that devalued their self-worth and eventuated in them turning to self-harm or suicide. Remaining hopeful was a nightmare for many, and some still do not understand how they overcame that alone due to the absence of support. For some, having a chance to speak of their ethnic LGBT+ experiences with Adhikaar Aotearoa, was helpful. Having the opportunity to exercise their agency to participate in this community consultation was helpful in remaining resilient and fighting their self-destructive inner voice.

Representations

Our data shows that LGBT+ South Asians sustain their choices and preferences of identities and use of pronouns despite a profound awareness of the struggles they face. A collective sense of their agency makes them empathetic towards the ethnic LGBT+ communities and other causes, especially for the most marginalised. For instance, many cisgendered participants highlighted that ethnic transgender and intersex persons' rights are not spoken about as widely as any other sex or gender identities. The demand for aptly adequate representation of people of colour in LGBT+ communities is high.

The following quote from Malar, a late 20s, queer, gender unsure person, depicts the essence of representation and frustrations lack thereof:

> "There is a lack of representation of queer people of colour, especially from a South Asian background, in Aotearoa. There is no educational information or resources focused on their experiences. There is no culturally sensitive information that one could share with their parents when they come out to them. This needs to change."

Another significant frustration was that the government was not doing enough to bring visibility to ethnic LGBT+ issues. The participants highlighted that Pākehā persons, including those that are LGBT+, need to be educated on these issues and have an open mind to learn and understand without framing ethnic or people of colour experiences in general and erroneous categories. Queerness, defined by whiteness as the norm, creates symbolisations and representations around this narrow belief, and the gatekeeping of how to be LGBT+ must be challenged.

Erasure of Colour in LGBT+ Representation in Media

Most participants shared that the invisibility, erasure and misrepresentation of stories and experiences of LGBT+ South Asians by the mainstream media is frustrating. Our data shows that the LGBT+ South Asians struggle with the lack of representation of people like them in media or mainstream public spaces. Many participants expressed sentiments such as: "a lot of people in the media are white" and "I never see people like me in the media".

Some participants have also shared their disappointments over people who, like them, are ridiculed in media. Some gay participants shared that they feel like gay characters seem to make fun of them as they are seen as different or not complying with gay culture as defined through whiteness.

The heightened focus on Pākehā LGBT+ persons' pain and suffering in mainstream media makes LGBT+ South Asians feel excluded and misunderstood due to erroneous amalgamation. According to Malar:

> "We need to turn their heads. We are not all out. We do not like or are represented by the rainbow. We cannot constantly post on social media. We need non-Eurocentric ways of addressing our issues and working towards change. We must start at our homes. We cannot bring our parents to support groups. White peoples' way of talking about the nuclear family does not apply to us. We have more than that."

White supremacy, combined with other forms of hierarchies within ethnic communities, often limits or control what kinds of ethnic LGBT+ stories are highlighted by the media. Hence, most participants advocated for multiple processes of diversifying and normalising ethnic LGBT+ presence in media that consciously moves beyond the dominant narratives. While many stated that the film industry is slowly making a positive difference in representing ethnic LBGT+ persons, it is not yet at place where ethnic LGBT+ experiences are not over-romanticised or over-generalised.

Simultaneously, a few participants have shared that social media could be used to advocate for ethnic LGBT+ communities.

Hope

Many middle-aged participants believed that the younger generations, generally, are more understanding and open to the diverse identities. This was commonly stated by many participants that were born and bought up outside of Aotearoa. They state that they are still healing from their childhood trauma due to not complying with societal norms and practices in home countries where queerphobia felt more

prevalent. Some of them have shared diverse identities with their nieces and nephews back in their countries of birth, who they think are more understanding and accepting.

Hope for many of the participants remains with the community. The profound belief that community is where the knowledge is and where the answers are has been highlighted when thinking about shaping their futures and advocating for desired changes. Many reemphasised that support services must listen to their community to understand their needs and requirements before planning intervention programmes. They must be open-minded to learn from the community and apply or transform this knowledge into practice. Hence, they wish to advocate for putting the community first and do not trust the existing policies and structures that are hierarchical, oppressive, and problematically political for the benefit of the hegemonic powers. 98% of our participants agreed that policy makers, service providers and legal reform must pay particularly attention to ethnic LGBT+ voices to make them ethnic LGBT+-friendly and more accessible (refer to appendix eight).

Findings

Ethnic Families and Communities

This section focuses on the relationships between our participants, LGBT+ South Asians, and their wider ethnic families and communities. It discusses the beliefs about LGBT+ South Asians that ethnic families and communities hold, their reactions to LGBT+ South Asians coming out/letting in, and their understandings (or lack thereof) of LGBT+ themes. It identifies that there is some work to do to decolonise the community's and families' beliefs, and to regain a culture that is hospitable to LGBT+ identity.

It is important to note that while much of the information posited in this section is negative in nature, this should not be used to affirm already existing stereotypes of ethnic communities "being backwards". Further, this information should not be weaponised against ethnic communities. We are the products of their environment, and ethnic communities' environments have been infiltrated by colonisation and Victorian puritanism, both of which turned cultures of acceptance to cultures of non-acceptance. We bring up negative information because it is our duty to show where improvement can be made, not because we intend to be accusatory.

Conflation of LGBT+ Identity with Mental Illness

The conflation of LGBT+ identity with mental illness, by ethnic families and communities, was an often-cited sentiment by participants. For many ethnic families and communities, they consider that being LGBT+ is a mental illness, an ailment associated with arrested development, or conversely, some type of disease. In our discussions with participants, some of them often cited their ethnic families and communities as mentioning this belief fleetingly, with little residual and emotional response. This indicated a normalisation of this shared sentiment.

Sarika, an early 30s, Indian, lesbian, cisgender woman, provided an example of this sentiment. When in New York City for a family holiday, Sarika's father was prompted to discuss homosexuality. Sarika's father said of being gay: "[i]t's like a chemical imbalance," conflating homosexuality with mental illness as opposed to a natural variation of the human condition. While it is not up to us to assess the aetiology of this sentiment, it is sufficed to say that a lack of culturally-astute messaging, LGBT+ education, and LGBT+ visibility within the ethnic community, would contribute to the lack of opposition to such a sentiment. Sarika noted that at the time, as a closeted lesbian, hearing this sentiment from her father was "devastating," and that it acted as a mediating factor regarding how she would express her sexuality.

Conflation of LGBT+ Identity with Westernism, and South Asian Exceptionalism

The conflation of LGBT+ identity with westernism and a sense of South Asian exceptionalism was commonly discussed by our participants. Our participants noted that there is a sense among their ethnic families and communities that being LGBT+ is a western thing, or expressed more simply: "a white people thing." Our participants also noted that their ethnic families and communities discussed LGBT+ identity as a form of western corruption, "anti-national," "un-South Asian," and "unnatural." In this way, ethnic families and communities were able to ostracise LGBT+ identity as something that was "foreign" and unwelcome. This rationalisation legitimises the "othering" of ethnic LGBT+ individuals. With this being said, there is a growing understanding within LGBT+ South Asian circles that South Asian cultures historically had acceptance towards LGBT+ communities, and that queerphobia was colonially-imposed. This sentiment was well understood by LGBT+ South Asians, and assisted in reconciliation of their ethnic identity with their LGBT+ identity.

Aadvika, an early 20s, Indian, lesbian, cisgender woman, noted that her family believed that homosexuality was "away from the Indian narrative of things". To her family, LGBT+ identity could not exist concurrent with Indian ethnicity. Yaso, a mid-20s, Sri Lankan Tamil, bisexual, cisgender woman, shared a similar experience. She noted:

> "My mum is homophobic. She thinks that it is a Western concept that was brought to Sri Lanka and does not approve of it. I am worried how she would take it if I share that I am queer. I will cross that bridge when it comes to that."

Kalwant, an early 20s, Indian, gay, cisgender male, noted that being gay in his ethnic community often goes against "dominant conceptions of what it means to be Indian". In this way, Kalwant suggests that his ethnic community is one that considers heterosexuality as "normal", and that any other sexuality is a deviation that challenges the normative notions of "Indianness". Kalwant went on to state that heteronormativity is further entrenched by Indian institutions, such as Bollywood and arranged marriage. He asserted that in Indian communities, it is never considered that one could be gay - "it wasn't even acknowledged". Kalwant affirms his ethnic community's perception of homosexuality as a "white people thing – white people are gay, Indians aren't".

It was asserted by participants that there is a sense among ethnic families and communities that South Asians resist moral corruption by rejecting LGBT+ identities, and "retaining" their normative heterosexual and/or cisgender identity. For many participants, their ethnic family and community's consideration that only Pākehā people could be LGBT+ produced effects of dissonance on them between their LGBT+ identity and their ethnic identity. Sarika, an early 30s, Indian, lesbian, cisgender woman, asserted that: "[w]hilst I fully accepted that fact that I was lesbian, I rejected the fact that I was Indian". While we cannot suggest that this occurred due to their ethnic family and community's consideration that only white people can be LGBT+, we strongly suggest that this is a key contributor to this phenomenon; in many cases, individuals internalise the beliefs of those in their environment. However, for Sarika, greater visibility of LGBT+ South Asians contributed to the denigration of this idea. She noted:

> "Club Kali [a gay South Asian club in London] stands out. It is so vivid in my mind because it is the first time I saw both parts of me being celebrated. I thought that being gay was just a western idea, and seeing lots of Indian gays celebrating their queerness was something that I didn't think was possible."

It was also suggested by participants that there is a sense among ethnic families and communities that South Asians are made for "better things", and in this way, South Asians are exceptional. Adam, a mid-20s, Sri Lankan, gay, cisgender man, noted that he believes it is a commonly-held ethnic family and South Asian community belief that "[we're] too smart for that, we're born to be scholars." In this

way, Adam identifies that ethnic communities and families consider that South Asian exceptionalism will act as a "protective factor" against LGBT+ identity. Any form of exceptionalism is erroneous, but particularly when it is used in this way.

Yaso, a mid-20s, Sri Lankan Tamil, bisexual, cisgender woman, shared a similar sentiment. She spoke of introducing her openly LGBT+ friends (from East and South East Asian heritage) to her mum, who accepted and was nice to them. However, Yaso stated that this is an example of where 'it is okay for them, but not for us' – in other words, it happens in their families and cultures, and not in Tamil families or culture.

Concern for the "Reputation of the Family"

A commonly cited concern from our participants was when deciding to come out/let in, choosing how to express their LGBT+ identity, and/or when their family becomes aware of the LGBT+ individual, their family's key concern is the impact that this awareness will have on the statute or reputation of the family. Gossip culture is rife within South Asian communities, and as LGBT+ identity is considered as a source of shame for some South Asian communities, it is often discussed with the intent of tarnishing the reputation of a family. The politics of shame and respect manifest through this concern. This concern is both from the family, but also has been socialised into the individual in question. As such, for LGBT+ South Asians, a concern for the reputation of their family may act as a chilling factor and forces them to mediate their expression in spaces where "people will talk". A secondary consideration for LGBT+ South Asians is for them not to become the "failure of the family" or a source of externalised shame.

Natasha, an early 30s, Indian, bisexual, non-binary person, told us that: "[p]ublic appearances matter a lot to South Asian parents. They did not like the way I described my sex, gender and sexuality on social media. They asked, why did you have to put it online?". Natasha's sentiment indicates that their parents took exception to the promulgation of their identity online. While we are unable to assess the aetiology of this, it is a fair assumption to make that it is because Natasha's parents derived a sense of shame from this openness. This is largely congruent with what other participants noted as well. Devika, an early 20s, Indian, queer/bisexual, cisgender woman, noted the following:

> "Although my parents know of my queerness and do not have a problem with it, they do wish that I get married and get settled down in life. That worries me. They might expect me to get married to a man. It is that fear of being a disappointment to them – especially in immigrant families. There is this focus or desire not to be a failure of the family."

Devika's assertion is that while her parents have no qualms with her queerness, they still expect a normative linear progression through to marriage and settling down, perhaps ideally to a man. Devika's concern for the reputation of their family is evident in the passage above. While not specifically stated by Devika, for many others, this concern for the reputation of the family can inevitably be a mediating factor for whether or not they engage in a heterosexual relationship, even if they are not heterosexual themselves, or if they express their gender in way that is not congruent with their gender identity.

Shailendra, a late 20s, Indian, gay, cisgender male, noted that his parents are based in India, while he is based in New Zealand. Shailendra's predominant concern about not wanting to inform his parents of his sexuality lies in the fact that he does not want to put his parents in a socially compromising position. This is especially in light of the notion that he expects that his extended family, and wider community in India, will "talk shit about my parents." In this way, Shailendra's lacklustre desire to inform his parents of his sexuality is a mode of him protecting his parents' reputation.

Sarika, an early 30s, Indian, lesbian, cisgender woman, stated in regards to informing her parents of her sexuality: "[i]t's not the best thing they want to hear". Tacit in this assertion is that her lesbian identity would be a matter that would be viewed negatively by her family. Sarika continued by saying that, while her father indicated that he was happy for Sarika and fine with her sexuality, "I'm not sure he felt genuinely happy for me – [this] was frustrating and upsetting". When asked why this was the case, Sarika posited that "[he] would put [his] own concern about [the family's] reputation before my happiness". While Sarika was understandably upset by this, she noted that "I understand it to be honest, not that I agree with it". The fundamental role that reputation plays in the mediation of a family's social standing and relationships is not lost on LGBT+ South Asians. Sarika indicates this sentiment, albeit, wishing that a child's happiness should trump concerns about the reputation of the family.

The Importance of Extended Family

In South Asian cultures, it is not just one's immediate family that mediates LGBT+ identity, but rather extended families as well. The nuclear family, in South Asian cultures, is not a structure of predominance. Families are extended by norm, and extended family elders (such as uncles, aunties, and grandparents) often have the same or more cultural rights over a child than the child's parents, and there are extremely salient in the mediation of an ethnic LGBT+ individual's expression. Further, interfamily competition is rife in ethnic communities, and considering that LGBT+ identity can be considered a source of shame in ethnic communities, this competition is often an internal mediating factor of LGBT+ expression. The process of coming out/letting in, in South Asian cultures, is not just a question of letting your

parents and siblings know. It is often a greater consideration than that, because of the importance and influence of extended families.

Our data demonstrates that 69% of our participants are not "out" to their extended families – the imputation being that only 31% is (refer to appendix four). Ketish, an early 50s, Indian, gay, cisgender male, stated, when asked if he is out to his extended family: "[n]o, [I'd be] an embarrassment to [the] family". Ketish's sentiment demonstrates the above sentiment well; his consideration of being "out" includes an assessment of whether being out would cause any harm, through the manifestation of shame, to his wider family.

Ishan, an early 30s, Pakistani, gay, cisgender male, also affirms this sentiment. When asked how he believes his extended family would respond to him being out, he stated: "I think that there is a 90% chance that they will beat the shit out of me". Elaborating further, Ishan said: "[b]ack in India and Pakistan, relatives play a really important role." For Ishan, being out to his family is not conceivable; even if his immediate family were to accept him, his extended family would not. For Ishan, and for many other LGBT+ South Asians, the saliency of the extended family as entrenched in the nuclear family structure produces a chilling effect on LGBT+ expression around them. Ishan suggested that: "[even] if my parents don't do anything to me, my relatives will. I'll be dead for sure, I know that". Despite this, Ishan exhibits magnanimity: "I don't blame my parents or relatives, it's just the time they grew up in, the system just says you're going to burn."

Queerphobia

Queerphobia was a ubiquitous theme as indicated by our participants. The term "queerphobia" is being used in this report as any type of discrimination and hate exhibited against individuals because of their sexuality, gender identity and expression or variation of sex characteristics. Queerphobia, as reported by our participants, was raised by families both as a matter of course, and in response to LGBT+ expression.

Sriansh, an early 20s, Sri Lankan, gay, cisgender male, remembers the night after marriage equality was legalised in Aotearoa. While he should have positive memories of this night, his predominant memory is the queerphobia exhibited by his father. While he was watching with his father, a story about marriage equality was shown which included gay men carefreely dancing with each other in flamboyant attire. Sriansh's father exclaimed upon seeing this: "ew, that's so gross, two guys can't do that". Upon hearing his father exclaim this sentiment, Sriansh internalised this thought and decided that he would marry a female and live a heterosexual life.

Queerphobia in ethnic communities and families also often involves humiliation in front of other family members. This serves two purposes: the first, to "deter" other family members from homosexuality, and the second, for the queerphobic individual to externalise a sense of moral superiority and brute masculinity that others take

note of. Queerphobia in ethnic environments also often involves "digression" or chastising of sexual and gender identities and LGBT+ expression that will bring shame to the family and community. Bhagat, a late 20s, Indian, gay, cisgender male, stated that he was called a "faggot" by both immediate and extended family members. His uncles, especially when they consumed alcohol, would exhibit horrifically queerphobic behaviours and sentiments towards Bhagat. Bhagat stated that one uncle exclaimed: "[y]ou'll bring shame to our family. You don't sit or talk like a man, you're like a girl. Why do you have so many girl friends?". Inherent in this queerphobia are notions of masculinity, and the opinion that to be gay is to not be masculine. Bhagat was then publicly shamed by this uncle in front of his cousins, who told them: "eshe dekho [look at him], he's never going to become anything. Don't be like him". This comparative and public form of shaming was commonplace in Bhagat's childhood. Occasionally, Bhagat's aunty would come to his defence when his uncle was humiliating him: "[b]ut look at his [good] grades!"

Queerphobia was exhibited by both liberal and traditional families – there were many examples of this juxtaposition. However, liberality in South Asian cultures is very much a sliding scale and relative. Ishan, an early 30s, Pakistani, gay, cisgender male, noted the following:

> "My family is still liberal compared to other Muslim families, [but] if I tell them that I am gay and I want to be with a guy, there is no fucking way [that they will accept this]. They will fire a bullet from there [Pakistan] and it will come here [New Zealand]."

While much of the aforementioned queerphobia has focused on actions, Saanvi, an early 20s, Fijian Indian, pansexual/queer, cisgender female, asserted that queerphobia can be considered "inherent in the culture". She suggested that: "[i]t's implicit, it's the expectation that you will marry a man" and that "femininity in a man is something to be laughed at." In this way, Saanvi suggests that queerphobia in ethnic communities and families is not just interpersonal, but systemic and cultural.

Queerphobia in ethnic families and communities was also often based upon religion. While religion is different to culture, it does inform culture. Many participants indicated that the queerphobia that was present within their ethnic families and communities was based upon religious dogma and interpretation of such dogma, which was non-permissive to LGBT+ identity. It is not to us to assess the veracity of such interpretation, suffice to say that we do not believe that religious doctrine should allow a person to externalise hatred and concerted dislike. Arfi, an early 20s, Afghan, bisexual cisgender female, described her parents as "very religious […] I legitimately believe that my parents would threaten my life if they knew. They would think they are doing me a favour." Arfi based this assertion on her parents' heavily textualist interpretation of religious dogma, and her personal experiences with them. In particular, Arfi cited a moment from when she was in her early teens, after marriage equality had been passed in the United States of America. New Zealand news outlets ran stories on it, including gay men in flamboyant attire

dancing with each other outside of the United States Supreme Court. Arfi's dad, in response to seeing this, stated that "these people should all burn." In Arfi's view, her father genuinely believed this. Upon hearing this, Arfi was struck, still coming to terms with her own sexuality, and considered a question in her mind: "does that mean that I deserve to burn?."

Protective factors against queerphobia were also discussed by our participants, and resulted in the mitigation of queerphobic beliefs and sentiments. Sarika, an early 30s, Indian, lesbian, cisgender woman, shared that her mother was queerphobic and had previously said homophobic remarks. However, after Sarika introduced her mother to an openly gay person, her mother, while initially apprehensive (but more curious), acknowledged that it was her "first time" meeting a gay person and was overwhelmed by a sense of normalcy. Sarika asserted that this broke down some of the prejudice that her mother held towards LGBT+ individuals. Sarika further suggested that LGBT+ representation in the media that her mother consumed also lessened her mother's homophobic sentiments: "she watches a lot of soap operas, so it was quite normal to her." This story indicates the saliency of LGBT+ (ethnic) visibility and personal relationships to break down queerphobia.

Families Ignoring LGBT+ Identities

Many participants reported that once they had come out/let in to their family, their family ignored their LGBT+ identity. We are not here to assess the aetiology of why this is, however, from what our participants have told us, we have surmised that this behaviour may come from ignorance (not knowing what to talk about), a desire not to indicate acceptance and approval (through discussing LGBT+ identity openly), thinking that ignoring LGBT+ identity will enable a "reversion back to default settings," or being in denial. While many LGBT+ individuals posited that their LGBT+ identity is only a small part of them, when this identity is internally repressed, and externally oppressed, they feel hesitant to celebrate, discuss and nurture this part of their identity. Some participants felt disheartened that their families take no interest, purposeful or not, in that part of their life.

Ketish, an early 50s, Indian, gay, cisgender male, stated, when asked if his immediate family were aware of his sexuality: "[y]es, they know, but no one talks about it". Arjun, an early 30s, Indian, gay, cisgender male/non-binary person, asserted that his family "talks about almost everything but never about my personal life – "am I single?" They never really ask." Following this, Arjun noted: "[i]t's a good thing I guess, but I would also like to see a little bit more effort from my family to get to know who I really am." Arjun reveals that, despite the duality of his answer, it would be welcome by him for his family to take more of an interest in his LGBT+ identity. These sentiments echo that LGBT+ identity should not be considered a taboo topic, and open and respectful dialogue between families and their LGBT+ family members should be encouraged.

Sita, a late teen, Indian, panromantic asexual, non-binary person, stated that after their father found out that they were queer from their Year 13 Ball photos (where Sita dressed in a certain manner), their father asserted: "you're ruining your sister's life. You need to change. You're a disgrace. You can't be like this". Sita's parents have not discussed their queerness in the year (at the time of their interview) since their father's initial outburst. Sita stated: "my parents are great at denial. We just ignore it; it doesn't exist to the family. We don't talk about the queer thing". It is Sita's view that discussion does not occur about their queerness because their parents live in hope that they will absolve themselves of their queerness after their father's initial chastising. In conclusion, they posited: "it is a case of denial and ignoring the issues."

When Krishna, a late teen, Fijian Indian, gay, cisgender male, informed his father of his sexuality, his father said: "who told you about this? You're just confused. You just need to focus on your studies, you're not gay". Instead of having an open dialogue about Krishna's sexuality, Krishna's father resorted to denial. It could be contended that Krishna informing his father of his sexuality challenged his father's expected trajectory for him, including marriage to a woman, or having a daughter-in-law that could look after him in his old age, for example. Instead of revaluating this plan in light of this new information, which would have caused psychological angst, it was easier for him to be dismissive. At the time of interview, Krishna noted that "to this day, my dad doesn't believe that I am gay."

Families ignoring their family member's LGBT+ identity does not only have an impact on this specific part of their life, but also has a widespread impact on the propensity of that family member to be open about other things beyond LGBT+ identity. Umesh, an early 20s, Indian, asexual, cisgender male, asserted that his parents would complain about his lack of openness to them generally, not specifically about LGBT+ matters. To contextualise, when Umesh came out as bisexual to his parents, they did not accept him and instead, engaged in dismissive conversation. Umesh explained: "[t]he one time I tried [being open with them], [they] ended up butchering it so I don't want to do it [again]."

Coming Out and Letting In

Coming out and/or letting in was a key theme discussed by our participants. As scholarship observes, for LGBT+ ethnic individuals, "coming out" may not be the most accurate conceptualisation of LGBT+ identity reveal.[8] Instead of a single significant "coming out" event, LGBT+ ethnic individuals often engage in a "letting in" process whereby they reveal their LGBT+ identity, explicitly or tacitly, to those that they feel safe doing so, across time. "Letting in" is a process rather than a single event. Most of our participants described this process in their identity reveal journey. In this section, the term "coming out" will refer to circumstances whereby LGBT+ ethnic individuals inform their immediate family of their LGBT+ identity.

However, we note that for LGBT+ ethnic individuals, “coming out” is a part of “letting in.”

70% of our participants noted that they were “out“ to their family (refer to appendix three).Our participants reported that their families had both positive and negative reactions to them coming out. Many families did not accept the person’s LGBT+ identity and asserted that it was “just a phase.” Many families raised concerns about what their LGBT+ identity would mean for the reputation of their family. Others engaged in a mourning process, in what they perceived to be the “end of the bloodline.” Some families refused to discuss the matter at all. However, some families kept an open mind. Some accepted their children/siblings without any consternation. Please refer to the support, love, and care section of this report for greater elucidation upon this.

Our participants reported that a key mediating factor of whether they would come out to their parents was the fear of being disowned, and tarnishing the family’s honour. Further, financial, and emotional security were highlighted as salient factors contributing to the decision as well. Negative reactions to coming out often mediated how the relationship moved forward. Our participants highlighted that as diasporic communities, their lives were not confined to Aotearoa. Some participants stated that they needed to be “closeted” when they went back to their ancestral lands. Changes in legal and social environments were mentioned as factors that made families in participants’ ancestral lands more accepting of LGBT+ identity.

In this section, we will outline the experiences that a few of our participants had when they came out to their parents.

Umesh, early 20s, Indian, asexual, cisgender male

As a prefacing note, Umesh now identifies as asexual. However, his coming out story entails his experience of his parents learning that Umesh was bisexual.

After telling his older brother about his bisexuality, Umesh’s older brother informed his parents. Umesh was not able to come out on his own terms - he was outed. When coming back home, Umesh, unaware that his parents had been informed about his bisexuality, asked his parents “what’s wrong?,” clearly apprehending concern from his parents. His mother responded and asked: “you’re bisexual?” Umesh affirmed this. His mother responded in denial: “nope, it’s just a phase, I don’t want to hear about it.” After this assertion, an argument ensued whereby Umesh tried to explain to his parents that he was bisexual. His parents continued: “this is not acceptable. I’m not talking about it, it’s my house”. This exchange resulted in Umesh leaving the house and sleeping on a park bench - “it was freezing cold,” Umesh told us. In response to the interviewer offering sympathy to him, Umesh exclaimed that: “it’s a part of the experience.” Inherent in this sentiment is the normalisation of temporary houselessness in events where LGBT+ ethnic individuals come out to their parents. After a while of “sleeping on [the] cold bench,” Umesh’s mother came to get him and spent another 50 minutes trying to tell him it

was “just a phase”, “stupid” and “it’s always a male and a female.” Umesh went back home with his mother and “just went to bed”. To this day, his parents pretend that this never happened.

Sriansh, early 20s, Sri Lankan, gay, cisgender male

Sriansh has not explicitly “come out” to his parents; however, his story indicates a process of letting in. Back when he was young, Sriansh stated that there was “nothing about sexuality” in his family discussions. When Sriansh wanted to start exploring his sexuality, he queried his parents as to whether he was able to attend a pride event. His father asserted: “you can’t go to those; you’d bring embarrassment on us.” When Sriansh’s father proceeded to ask him if he was gay, Sriansh noted: “if I said yes, it would be social suicide.” Sriansh said no. However, he started to undertake a process of tacit “letting in,” specifically, through the use of symbols. He would put rainbow stickers on his laptop. Sriansh said that in doing this, he was “integrating this stuff slowly into everyday life.”

When asked whether he would come out to his parents, Sriansh stated: “once I have finished my degree, I will come out. Right now, they are funding my studies.” Here, Sriansh indicates that financial security is a mediating factor. Sriansh asserted that when he comes out: “[if my parents] don’t like it, then tough titties.” Sriansh affirmed that he is who he is and that his parents will need to accept him - stating: “[t]hey wouldn’t like it initially, but they will need to accept it somehow […] or they will cut me out of their life and move on that way.”

Rishi, early 20s, Indian, queer, cisgender male

In 2021, Rishi came out digitally to his parents that are in India, while he was in Aotearoa. Rishi’s father was initially amused – “he thought it was a phase.” However, after realising that this was not the case, Rishi’s father “was not happy, but he was okay with it.” However, Rishi’s mother, on the other hand, “threw a tantrum.” Rishi stated that she was shocked, and “[was] worried about what others might say.” Rishi held resentment towards his mother for this: “she didn’t check in with me to ask if I was okay, but she was worried about what other people would say.” After Rishi informed his mother of the homosexual relationship that he was in, his mother doubled down and said: “that is not how it works, you should come out of it.” This sentiment is an inherent normative assessment of the situation. This sentiment also demonstrates the notion that for many ethnic families, they consider homosexuality as a choice, something that their kin has chosen, rather than something innate.

Rishi said that if his mother “denies my queerness, I can’t have a meaningful relationship with her.” As such, Rishi asserted that his relationship with his mother is “very superficial” and does not traverse what he would normally expect a mother-son relationship to consider. Rishi concluded: “it makes me feel a little sad, because I trusted them to come out to them. I can’t bring that up with them [anymore]”.

Kaylia, early 20s, Fijian-Indian, queer, transgender woman

Kaylia "had to live two lives" growing up. Coming out, to her, was a way of being able to amalgamate her lives into one. Initially, Kaylia came out to her parents individually (as they are separated) as gay. Kaylia stated that her mother "did not take it well, of course." Explicit in this sentiment is that "not taking it well" is a normal response from ethnic communities. Kaylia continued that her mother gave a "pretty typical, Karen speel," expressing to her that: "I'm never going to have grandkids, you're sinning in the eyes of god." Kaylia's mother expressed a mourning for what was a perceived loss of grandkids, and the invocation of religious dogma. Kaylia came out to her father as gay, and he was quite abusive in response. He has not talked to Kaylia since.

For Kaylia, coming out as gay was not final. She also came out as transgender, hence, incurring a form of double jeopardy in terms of her parents' negative reactions to her. Upon coming out as transgender, Kaylia's mother's visceral response was: "my son has died and I have lost him." Instead of providing a safe space for Kaylia to discuss her identity, Kaylia's mother responded with a sentiment that denigrated the trust and courage that Kaylia invested into this discussion. Since then, Kaylia has maintained a relationship with her mother, however, she stated that she gets "deadnamed and misgendered," a symptom of the lack of care exhibited by Kaylia's mother over Kaylia's gender identity.

Malar, late 20s, South Indian, bisexual, unsure of gender identity

Malar was "quite lucky" when they told their parents about their sexuality. Instead of a negative response, Malar's parents "were sad that [they] did not tell them earlier." Malar asserted that the fact that their parents are educated made a huge difference in their acceptance of them. Malar's assertion has credence. Some of our participants reported that education enhanced the openness of their parents. However, Malar's coming out to their grandmother went a bit differently, and did not accept Malar's bisexuality in the way that Malar would have liked. Malar's grandmother believes that "only a man and a woman can marry." Their grandmother's knowledge is a result of her socialisation and environment, both of which lacked LGBT+ ethnic visibility in her formative years.

Premila, early 30s, Bangladeshi-Pākehā, queer, gender queer

Premila's story indicates that while coming out is one part of the equation, it may be obfuscated by other elements. Premila stated, in regards to their parents, that: "when I originally came out, it was difficult for them." However, they believed that coming out is "an ongoing process. My dad has done a lot of work to accept everything that I am. We are in a good place at the moment." Premila asserted that it was not only queerness that their parents needed to consider, but also the fact that they are a sex educator, that they do not date men, and that they are polyamorous. However, Premila stated that for their mother, it is not their

queerness that is the most troubling reality, but rather "the fact that [they] might not have kids through traditional means."

Sundar, late 30s, Indian, gay, cisgender male

Sundar lost his mother in 2014. Around the same time, he was also coming out of a relationship. When he went back to India for his mother's funeral and told his father and brother that he is gay, they did not understand him. His father had told him that it was not natural to be gay.

However, Sundar thinks that the vitiation of section 377, the Indian Penal Code criminalised same-sex intimacy in India, in 2018 played a positive role in changing the mindsets of his father and brother, something he did not see coming. They began showing a greater understanding towards Sundar's sexuality. Just before the peak of the COVID-19 pandemic, Sundar and his partner had visited India, and Sundar's father welcomed his partner with a hug.

Sundar and his partner had a wonderful time. Sundar fondly remembered the sweet conversations his partner and sister-in-law had in the kitchen. Sundar's story indicates that, more than anything, the law has a symbolic and signalling effect that lends itself to more freedom and security to come out.

Ignorance

Ignorance on the part of ethnic families and communities was a key theme that our participants reported. Ignorance manifested in a variety of ways, namely being misinformed, a lack of understanding, and misapprehensions about the origins of queerness. While we are not here to assess the aetiology of this ignorance, it would be disingenuous of us to suggest that this ignorance is purely a result of environmental factors. It is true that there is a lack of education, visibility and discussion about LGBT+ identity in ethnic families and communities, and as such, ethnic families and communities are influenced by their environments. However, ignorance in ethnic families and communities is also wilful. Many segments of the ethnic community hold a lack of openness to learning, in lieu of denial and deflection. This has stymied intervention efforts from LGBT+ South Asians.

Yaso, a mid-20s, Sri Lankan Tamil, bisexual, cisgender woman, noted that she once shared a flat with a transgender man. Yaso's mother took exception to this, and believed that living with a transgender man presented a safety risk to her. Yaso explained the man's sexuality, and though it took a while, her mother eventually understood and accepted Yaso's point of view. This story shows the misinformation and lack of understanding of transgender people, where Yaso's mother immediately associated being transgender with being a potential perpetrator of violence. While ignorance exists regarding sexual minorities, ignorance about gender minorities in ethnic communities is compounded by a greater lack of education, visibility, and the pathologisation of transgender individuals. However, as aforementioned, this ignorance is not just a symptom of environmental factors. As Yaso explained:

> "There are a lot of barriers within the Tamil community, despite the exposure in media and social media to queerness. There is ignorance, and people do not want to understand or accept [queerness]."

It is hard to assess where wilful ignorance comes from, however, South Asian communities hold many truths to be self-evident, particularly in relation to reified ideals about sexuality and gender.

Kalani, an early 30's Sri Lankan, bisexual, cisgender woman, believes that: "many men, including my dad, think that women become lesbians or bisexual because they have not found the right man for them yet." Kalani's assertion reflects a commonly-held heteronormative and misogynistic belief, that these women will revert back to default settings of heterosexuality when they find the "right man." This sentiment is also incredibly problematic and dangerous, as in some minds, it may suggest the logical inference of conversion practices for LGBT+ women, such as "corrective rape." Kalani's mother also shares ignorance of the LGBT+ community and the community's multiple identities. Kalani explained that her mother, who is a gynaecologist, "told me that I do not need the HPV vaccine, because it is only for those from the lower caste and therefore, I did not need to have it." This sentiment demonstrates that ignorance against LGBT+ communities is not only drawn on the lines of LGBT+ identity, but also caste and other factors. In this way, the positionality of a LGBT+ individual is incredibly salient.

Harry, a late teen, Punjabi Indian, gay/aromantic/asexual, cisgender male/non-binary person, shared a story that indicated parental ignorance about the origins of homosexuality. Harry stated that he had not told his father about his sexuality, however, someone had suggested to his father that he could be gay. As a result, he scolded Harry's mother for allowing Harry to behave in stereotypically feminine ways, linking Harry's behaviour to being homosexual. While not explicitly noted, this tacitly infers that Harry's father considers homosexuality as malleable, and is manifested as a result of behaviour and upbringing. This a commonly-held belief in ethnic families and communities, and indicates that misogyny is often intertwined with queerphobia, in that Harry's father blames his mother for Harry's potential homosexuality. Instead of reflecting on the innate nature of sexuality, Harry's father deflects to offer a chastising of the quality of his mother's upbringing of Harry. Harry's father's sentiment also reflects genderphobia in that he looks down on feminine behaviour generally, rather than disliking his son, who he perceives to be male and heterosexual and therefore should display stereotypical masculine behaviour.

Marriage

Marriage, both as a tool of avoidance and oppression, was a commonly-cited theme. For LGBT+ individuals who wished to conceal their LGBT+ identity, or who wanted to avoid the realisation of their identity, heterosexual marriage was utilised as a tool to enable those goals. However, some of our participants reported that they

married into a heterosexual relationship, despite not being heterosexual, as they believed it was the "normal trajectory" of South Asian life. They also reported that they considered it was their duty to continue the bloodline of the family. Some ethnic families considered that marriage would be a tool of reform, and would assist in the suppression of their LGBT+ identity.

Mala, a late 20s, Indian, lesbian/queer, gender fluid individual, stated that her parents and sisters were looking for a groom in India for her. At the time of the interview, they did now know Mala's sexual orientation, and despite telling her sister that she wouldn't accept the marriage proposal, Mala's family continued to look. Mala's story indicates that heterosexual marriage is considered the normative way forward, and any derogation from this, such as being in a non-heterosexual relationship, is considered deviant.

Yaso, a mid-20s, Sri Lankan Tamil, bisexual, cisgender woman, stated that there is very limited queer representation and acceptance among Tamil communities. She stated that most of her queer female friends had to suppress their sexual identities and enter heterosexual marriages that were arranged by their families. She believes that there is a significant cultural barrier to being queer in the Tamil community, which contributes to instances where individuals choose or are forced into heterosexual marriage.

Premkumar, a late 30s, Indian, gay, cisgender male, stated that he was previously married a woman due to the notion that in Indian culture, heterosexual marriage is considered the normative progression. However, once realising that he was not heterosexual, decided that he needed to end his marriage for both his and his wife's sake. Although he knew that he was attracted to men prior to his marriage, he wanted to comply to being heterosexuality, and believed that being married might change his attraction to men. Although Premkumar "came out" after ending his marriage, he is not out to his parents in India, and has not been back to India since coming out. His mother still blames him for breaking up his marriage. His niece, who is 18 years-old, is understanding and supportive of him.

Arfi, an early 20s, Afghan, bisexual, cisgender woman, stated that there is a belief in ethnic communities around women who remain unmarried by a specific age "not fulfilling their purpose in life". She suggested that this would also spark thoughts from others as to whether this is linked to their sexuality. Arfi stated that her parents set up an arranged marriage for her with a man from Afghanistan. She stated that this was the "beginning of the downfall". Arfi did not agree to this marriage, and stated that it caused "absolute trauma", not only because it conflicted with her LGBT+ identity, but because of the potentialities associated with marriage. Arfi explained that "the next step after marriage is sex, and essentially, it is sex against one's will."

Support, Love and Care

While, in this section, there has been a dominant focus on things that may be considered negative, and people need to be informed on what needs to change, not all is bad. Our participants also shared stories of receiving support, love and care from those outside of the LGBT+ community that have been significant allies to LGBT+ South Asians and LGBT+ causes. In this section, we share two positive experiences of this.

Krish, early 20s, Indian, gay, cisgender male

Krish "came out" to his mum in 2018, while he was still gaining confidence in his LGBT+ identity. Krish reported that initially, he hadn't had a good relationship with his mother because he "felt very unsure about [himself]". One day, while his mother was supervising him driving, exclaimed: "you know, there is something that I need to talk to you about, and I hope you're not angry". Krish thought to himself: "oh shit, she knows, she definitely knows", and parked the car. Krish stated that his mother, who was visibly emotional, revealed that she had read his journals, where he had written about struggling with his sexuality, depression and angst. Krish confirmed to his mother that he was gay, but that he was not ready to talk about it at the time. Krish stated that he never felt afraid of what her reaction would be when she learned that he was gay, because "she's always been a cool mum". Counting his blessings, Krish stated that: "I know a lot of queer kids who don't have that opportunity to have a mum that is cool about it [sexuality]". Krish stated that his mum had friends who were transgender, and even brought Krish "a little pride flag" after their interaction. Krish's mum is Indian, and despite the cultural norms and stigma prevalent in the Indian community around sexual orientation, was supportive and accepting of her son's LGBT+ identity.

Uma, early 30s, Sri Lankan- Pākehā, pansexual, cisgender woman

Uma came out to her mother, who is Sri Lankan, when she was 26. She noted that she didn't "remember being really stressed" about it. Uma stated that her mother "didn't bat an eye-lid, she was very calm. It was just such a non-reaction". While we cannot assess the cause of this non-reaction, Uma suggested that "she's seen to be one way and then goes away privately and comes back differently". A few moments after this, Uma's mother asked: "is queer the word that I should use?". The openness and tacit acceptance that this question conveyed is a testament to the support, love and care that Uma's mother exhibited. Upon learning that Uma was in a relationship, Uma's mother was "more interested in my girlfriend's career [rather] than the fact she was a girl". Uma stated that her sister knew that she was pansexual, and upon her mother asking what her sister thinks about her pansexuality, Uma replied that: "she doesn't give a single fuck, she was born not caring". Noting that her sister is a part of Generation Z, Uma stated that "she's really good at swiftly correcting if anyone misgenders anyone", suggesting that the next generation of South Asians have a fair understanding of LGBT+ identity.

Findings

Mainstream LGBT+ Communities

This section focuses on the relationships between our participants, LGBT+ South Asians, and the mainstream, predominantly Pākehā, LGBT+ community. It discusses factors mediating this relationship, such as racism, xenophobia, queerness as whiteness, and fetishization. Like others, this section mainly focuses on negative experiences that LGBT+ South Asians have had with the mainstream community. This is not to say the totality of this experience is negative, however, it is to suggest that there is work to do, and the mainstream LGBT+ community must be a part of it.

Racism

Racism, specifically interpersonal racism, was identified by our participants as a key issue they faced from mainstream LGBT+ communities. We use racism as a term that describes when a Pākehā individual, acting upon stereotypes and misinformation, engage in harassment, exclusion, marginalisation, discrimination, hate or violence against a person of colour. 84% of our participants identified that they had been discriminated against due to their ethnicity, immigration status, and/or their gender and sexual identities in Aotearoa New Zealand (refer to appendix nine). While this data is not disaggregated to explain the racism that our participants specifically experienced by the mainstream LGBT+ community, as racism is present in Aotearoa New Zealand society, it would logically follow that racism is present in LGBT+ communities as well. Indeed, as our participants have told us, they have faced numerous and varied instances of racism from the mainstream LGBT+ community, a community that already faces marginalisation itself. They also told us that racism affirmed the dissonance they held about being ethnic and being LGBT+. Racism against LGBT+ ethnic individuals resulted in those LGBT+ ethnic individuals prioritising one identity over the other.

Our participants told us that there seemed to be an understanding in the mainstream LGBT+ community that if you are LGBT+, you cannot be racist, however being LGBT+ does not absolve white privilege, or make you less likely to hold and manifest racially prejudicial behaviour.

We consider that the racism of the mainstream LGBT+ community carries higher culpability than the racism of society-at-large, because the mainstream LGBT+ community is one that propounds acceptance and inclusivity. Our data shows that the mainstream LGBT+ community is not very accepting or inclusive, and this community needs to do better. This starts with introspection, such as challenging their own prejudice, racism, and ideas of beauty standards.

The racism perpetrated against LGBT+ South Asians by the mainstream LGBT+ community manifests in a variety of ways including dating, inherent beliefs, interactions, and as the result of systemic racism. As Harry, a late teen, Punjabi Indian, gay/aromantic/asexual, cisgender male/non-binary person, contended:

> "Racism is everywhere. The Pākehā rainbow community can be racists, especially the gays. I find connections with trans and non-binary persons more than others in the rainbow community. I do not do labels and the rainbow community is predominantly white. I feel like I am misjudged and not understood all the time."

Premkumar, a late 30s, Indian, gay, cisgender male, shared a similar sentiment:

> "Once I came out, I thought life would be better. But it is not. Life is hard even within the queer community. We – as people of colour – have to push through to make space for us. They call it preference within the gay

> community. But it is racism. Being a brown gay man caused me immense anxiety. When I came out, no one accepted me. I did not look like the rest within the gay community. Everyone else was white. I had suicidal thoughts."

Our participants stated that the main way that racism from the mainstream LGBT+ community had afflicted them was through dating. Premkumar, a late 30s, Indian, gay, cisgender male, said:

> "There is a lot of racism on dating apps. It kills you from inside. The white gay boys need education."

Premkumar's story was not dissimilar to what most of our other participants mentioned. Explicit in Premkumar's story is the toll that racism takes on one's mental health. When racism is perpetrated through dating, an often-intimate process, and rejection occurs on the sole basis of race without any other considerations, the emotional impacts are also intimate. Self-esteem, self-image and self-confidence are all negatively affected.

Bhagat, a late 20s, Indian, gay, cisgender male, shared a similar story. Bhagat stated that he would chat with people on gay dating apps, however, once he sent photos of himself, would get an "instant block." Bhagat believed that his race was the causative factor of this "instant block," as when he used gay dating apps, the passage, "not into rice or spice," was predominant. He noted in his interview that this phrase, "still sticks with me," suggesting that instances of racism are often indelible. Bhagat noted that he thought to himself when seeing that passage: "wow, isn't this racist? How is this allowed to be on a public platform?," and opened his eyes to a new world beyond just "gay or straight." The gay world, Bhagat asserted, has "all these rules and regulations," where you couldn't be "too femme, too [much of a] bottom, too [much of a] top, it was much more complicated than I first thought." Bhagat's story indicates a phenomenon known as intra-minority stress, a status-based competitive process whereby gay men compete with other gay men for social and sexual status.[9] The "rules and regulations," as Bhagat mentioned, are mediators of this intra-minority stress, and mechanisms upon which gay men may "out-compete" other gay men. Simply put by Bhagat, in the gay community, "you're not a person, you're all these labels."

The manifestation of inherent beliefs is also a mechanism of racism. Veer, a mid-20s, Indian, queer, cisgender man, when questioned about experiences of racism by the mainstream queer community, stated that: "I'm real nervous to talk to you about this". Discussions of racism caused Veer much angst, indicating the often trauma-inflicting scars racism leaves behind. Veer continued by saying: "I had a person tell me how he didn't like me because all Indians are the same, they smell like curry." Veer said of this racism: "it was very basic racism, not intellectual at all."

Racism has also been manifested by the mainstream LGBT+ community through their interactions (or lack thereof) with the LGBT+ South Asian community.

Attending a gay drinks event organised by the pride committee of a major South Island city, Shailendra, a late-20s, Indian, gay, cisgender man, asserted that he "never felt welcome going there". Shailendra noted that he was not sure if this was because of his race, however, he acknowledged that it is a likely contributor. Shailendra continued by saying: "it was always strange where most of the other people are in groups, no one approached me and talked to me." Instead, Shailendra noted that "everyone was looking at me, judging, [giving] different kinds of looks." The mainstream LGBT+ community has many cliques and, while these cliques may not intentionally do so, are often based upon race. Shailendra explained that "so many people here have never been outside of their [gay clique] groups, their community." Because of these closed-circuit groups in the gay community, and therefore, the lack of openness to others, Shailendra asserted that he does not have many gay friends.

Some of our participants reported that they had not experienced racism. However, some within this cohort suggested that if they were more South Asian presenting, such as possessing dark-skin, then they would apprehend racism from the mainstream LGBT+ community. Ishan, an early 30s, Pakistani, gay, cisgender male explained that: "my mum is from Iran and my dad is from Pakistan, therefore people think I am from South America. If I looked [more] Pakistani, I would probably face discrimination."

Fetishisation was another theme that our participants raised as a function of racism. Fetishisation refers to the act of making an individual an object of sexual desire based upon some element of their identity, in this case, their race. Sundar, a late 30s, Indian, gay, cisgender male, noted that: "within the gay community, racism is hidden within the pretext of preferences. Even when they say yes, I was part of their fetishes - due to the colour of my skin and [my] cultural background." Sundar continued: "I have been asked if I can wear a turban as a part of sexual role playing."

The manifestations of structural racism were also discussed by our participants. Kaylia, an early 20s, Fijian-Indian, queer, transgender woman, noted:

> "Money is a huge aspect for transgender people and it can directly affect one's mental health as it costs quite a lot to be able to be 'passing' in everyday life, and even being accepted by the LGBTQIA+ community. Luckily for us in Aotearoa, medication is free but things like a name change and sex marker change can cost over $1,000 due to needing to go to Family Court, needing a lawyer to sort out paperwork and things like that not to mention gender affirming surgery."

Kaylia explained that she considers transgender South Asians have more difficultly accessing such things because of a lack of access to financial means:

> "I feel that most South Asian queer people in Aotearoa aren't able to get access to that sort of thing due to parents not wanting to give money for

> transitioning, probably because of generational trauma, and that whole thing about wanting to look good in front of other South Asians, whereas white queer people tend to be able to access that sort of money much easier, in my experience, which makes them more 'acceptable' to the LGBTQIA+ community."

Kaylia's story indicates the effects of structural racism in that South Asian parents may not be in the financial position to offer support, as they are more likely than Pākehā parents to be in precarious and low-income employment, a direct result of structural racism. Further, because of the imposition of structural racism through colonisation, South Asian parents may also be more likely to hold discriminatory views towards their transgender children, and therefore, may not support them even if they did have the financial means.

Racism against LGBT+ South Asians had wide-spread mental, emotional, social effects on our participants, both in the immediate and long-term. Krish, an early 20s, Indian, gay, cisgender male, thought: "as soon as I am out, I'm going to be living my happy queer life, dating [other gay men], but there was never that click, no matter how confident I was". Krish explains that for white gay men, "it was as if they just came out and all these options became available to them". Krish internalised a negative self-image, and his self-esteem took a hit. He considered that: "maybe I'm not attractive or I'm not just people's types." To become more congruent with people's types, Krish considered that:

> "I need to get better skin; I need to lose weight - it was a list of things that I needed to do to get to this point [of getting a partner]. There must be something that I can fix to get to that place, [but] I can't fix my skin colour. Surely I can't be that much of a terrible person."

Krish's exposure to gay spaces that were predominately occupied by Pākehā gay individuals was also an illuminating experience for him. He explained that in those environments, "it is very much us and them." When Krish would attend gay shows, he would "go to these events and get dirty looks." He notes "it was very cliquey." Speaking of these spaces now, Krish stated that "I don't want to be somewhere where I am made to feel marginalised twice over." When asked why some white gay men are racially exclusive in their interactions, Krish posited that "they've gotten to a place that is very like-minded to them. They've found their club, and have found their sameness". In this way, Krish explained that perhaps those who engage in racially exclusive behaviours do so because of custom, psychological and social safety, and the use of race as a mechanism for intra-minority competition. Because of this racism from the mainstream LGBT+ community, Krish "feels safer talking to a person of colour over a white queer."

Krish concluded: "it just sucks, like fuck, I've got this far and now I have to overcome this other hurdle. It's just really shitty".

Xenophobia

Some of our participants reported that it was not just their race that they were targeted by the mainstream LGBT+ community for, but rather their status as an immigrant to Aotearoa. In this way, these participants not only faced racism, but xenophobia as well. Hence, one's positionality as being a South Asian immigrant is a salient point of assessment.

Mukesh, a late 20s, Indian, gay, cisgender male explained that on gay dating apps, there is a preference of "no Indians, no browns", and that there are "high expectations of how one should look." Mukesh further elucidates that: "their [white gay men] preference is not to be with someone who is Indian." While no one should have to tolerate such sentiments, Mukesh reflected that: "I'm an immigrant living in their country, so I just ignore it. It's just a part of life I guess." This passage suggests that Mukesh should tolerate the racism and xenophobia of white gay men as a form of deference to the "magnanimity" that white gay men exhibit by allowing people like Mukesh in their country. This is a problematic sentiment, but one that nonetheless has become internalised by the likes of Mukesh because of the environment that has been created. He noted that: "immigrants should be grateful to be in New Zealand."

Rishi, an early 20s, Indian, gay, cisgender male, noted that his experience of discrimination by the mainstream LGBT+ community "is not just about being not white, but also being an immigrant." Rishi explains that "there are not many spaces that cater to immigrants of colour." Hence, in Pākehā LGBT+ spaces, "once I start talking to them [white gay men], I don't have a New Zealand accent - that identifies me as an immigrant". As such, "they'll say [they're] not interested." Further, Rishi noted that because he did not grow up or go to school in Aotearoa New Zealand, he is "not aware of the mannerisms and cultural aspects of the country." In Pākehā gay spaces, spaces that have developed their own mannerisms based upon those in the national psyche, not possessing knowledge of such mannerisms acts as an impeding factor.

Queerness as Whiteness

The most dominant theme that we heard from our participants about their positionalities was that the understanding that to be queer, is to be white. In other words, queerness is whiteness, and whiteness is queerness. The dominant discourses and understandings of queerness in Aotearoa New Zealand happen within predominantly white spaces, within the white ecosystem, and reproduce the notion of queerness as whiteness. In doing so, the understanding that to be queer is to be of any ethnicity, is removed. Indeed, our participants told us that only 7% of them had access to ethnic queer stories when they first identified as LGBT+ (refer to appendix one). As Lakshmi, an early 20s, Indian, lesbian, agender person told us:

"it [queerness as whiteness make it] insanely isolating [for LGBT+ people of colour], I can't even put it into words". Shanaz, a late teen, Pakistani, bisexual/pansexual, cisgender woman, stated that: "the [LGBT+] community itself is predominantly white and isolating of ethnic queers."

The sentiment of queerness as whiteness is affirmed by the ethnic community at-large through a lack of visibility. However, it is namely affirmed by the mainstream, predominately Pākehā LGBT+ community. Our participants noted that Pākehā LGBT+ persons affirm this idea through a variety of their actions and omissions. Further, a lack of visibility in media, namely Pākehā-controlled, and the non-culturally astute interventions offered by some LGBT+ NGOs in Aotearoa New Zealand, affirmed this idea. 74% of our participants reported that they considered ethnic LGBT+ voices are not represented in Aotearoa New Zealand (refer to appendix two). However, our participants were unequivocal regarding work needing to be done moving forward; 100% of them agreed that more work needs to be done to give visibility to ethnic LGBT+ voices, their struggles, and their stories (refer to appendix six). In pursuance of this, we share stories of our participants.

Umesh, early 20s, Indian, asexual, cisgender male

Umesh told us that when he wanted to join his high school's LGBT+ student support club, he attended an event they ran. He wore a rainbow badge and, referring to the Pākehā LGBT+ students in the club, stated that they "couldn't gauge the idea that me, as a brown person, could be a part of the LGBT+ community." Umesh's story indicates that the Pākehā LGBT+ students in the club conceptualise queerness as something that only Pākehā people can exhibit. In this way, they consider queerness as a quasi-racial identity.

Arfi, early 20s, Afghan, bisexual cisgender female

Arfi told us that Pākehā LGBT+ individuals are often intimidating to her because of their gatekeeping of LGBT+ expression. Speaking of "the very pretty rainbows, the glitter gays", the stereotypical archetype of queerness – white, attractive, muscular (for men), butch (for women) – with the use of gay vernacular, Arfi stated that: "if you don't adhere to that specific type of expression, [others consider] you're not valid". Arfi's story indicates that whiteness often has the ascriptive power to define what is, and what isn't queerness. To many Pākehā LGBT+ individuals, only white queerness can be considered queerness. Other expressions of queerness are not as valid of white queerness, or are not valid at all, in their conceptions.

Krishna, late teen, Fijian Indian, gay, cisgender male

Krishna told us that he "found it difficult to be a South Asian person and a queer person." For Krishna, the dissonance between ethnicity and sexuality was pronounced and affirmed by the notion of queerness as whiteness. Krishna explained why this dissonance was created: "a lot of people in [LGBT+] media are white, I never see people like me in media." Indeed, for Krishna, the lack of LGBT+ ethnic representation in LGBT+ media productions was an often-reaffirming factor

regarding queerness as whiteness. This lack of visibility has negative implications for self-image; one is unable to see themselves as both ethnic and LGBT+, if all they see are LGBT+ individuals that are white. Krishna explains that he had to "navigate it [his sexuality] on [his] own," because "out of all of the gay people [he] knew, [he] was the only South Asian." In Krishna's view, while he knew other LGBT+ people who could have supported him, they did not "have the same cultural barriers as [he] did." Queerness as whiteness meant that Krishna was forced into an environment of solitude during his formative sexual development years.

Kalwant, early 20s, Indian, gay, cisgender male

Kalwant told us that "being the only South Asian queer person – there was only one of me, but I had heaps of white gay friends." This lack of visibility meant that Kalwant often felt out of place in environments that he should have felt safe in, including queer spaces. Kalwant explained: "the spaces that I'm supposed to feel safe in, [that] isn't what I necessarily felt." To Kalwant, being in queer spaces was tantamount to being in white spaces because of the predominance that whiteness has in such spaces. Kalwant said that he "always thought about how I felt in [a gay club] compared to how they [his white gay friends] did." While there is a practice of concluding that the LGBT+ experience is singular, this is erroneous - the experiences of LGBT+ people of colour are vastly different to the experiences of Pakeha LGBT+ persons. Kalwant stated that Aotearoa New Zealand, being a country that is small and arguably and therefore holds a more regressive LGBT+ popular culture than others, meant that he "always felt a bit better in queer spaces overseas." He continued: "New Zealand is smaller, and we are a bit more laddier, weirdly conservative in some ways such as the way we view beauty standards". Kalwant's story indicates an interesting finding about New Zealand masculinity that, as defined by the majority as including brute force, muscularity and whiteness, has become transcribed on the LGBT+ community, and the gay community in particular. Kalwant explained that "the archetype of the person they [his gay friends] find attractive is not a gay person of colour." Concluding, Kalwant said that there have "been many instances where [he] has been reminded of [his] race and made to feel insecure about it."

Devika, early 20s, Indian, queer/bisexual, cisgender woman

Devika told us simply that "the queer culture is very white." She discussed how the expression of white queerness means that she is often excluded because of her expression of coloured queerness, and is not considered valid by the LGBT+ majority. Devika said:

> "It [LGBT+ culture] is not accessible to me as we do not have common grounds in terms of what we do or how we express our queerness. I am an introvert and I do not like the party culture or drinking to socialise. I do not know how to relate to the white culture within which queerness is constructed. It is their experience. That is fine. I have nothing against it. But I do not fit in with that."

To Devika, queerness defined by whiteness is often limiting and gatekeeping of how to be queer, particularly in regards to the symbolisations and representations that are used and enacted. This is very different to the experiences of ethnic LGBT+ individuals, many of whom do not have many spaces to show and share their own ways of being queer.

Malar, late 20s, South Indian, bisexual, unsure of gender identity

Malar told us that the ethnic LGBT+ community cannot rely upon tried and tested means of intervention, namely because they are Eurocentric in origin and function. When speaking of ethnic LGBT+ communities and the support they need, Malar added:

> "We need to turn their heads. We are not all out. We do not like or are represented by the rainbow. We cannot constantly post on social media. We need non-Eurocentric ways of addressing our issues and working towards change. We must start at our homes. We cannot bring our parents to support groups. White peoples' way of talking about the nuclear family does not apply to us. We have more than that. We do not go to support or therapy. It is a huge taboo in our cultures. Normalising has to happen, however, not in the white man's world."

Intervention for our communities must be culturally-astute. Malar's story indicates that the mechanisms of LGBT+ emancipation that Pākehā LGBT+ persons have used across time and space are not applicable to the LGBT+ ethnic experience.

Arjun, early 30s, Indian, gay, cisgender male/non-binary person

Arjun told us that when he first came to Aotearoa, he went to a "[New Zealand LGBT+ NGO] but the space was really white and people were already really comfortable about who they were. No one asked me about my experiences or was willing to listen to my background and what I was looking for." For Arjun, instead of being a liberating experience, going to that space made him feel even more isolated. Continuing this line of discussion, Arjun said that: "as South Asians, in any social spaces with white people, there is an expectation that we should bring something to the table, for example, appearance or intellect, to gain their respect." Arjun notes that for LGBT+ people of colour in white spaces, being one's self is not enough. To "prove your worth" in such a space, you are expected to bring something else to the table, something that Pākehā LGBT+ persons do not need to bring; their whiteness is enough. Arjun explained: "it's always this hidden expectation that you have to prove your worth in a white space to gain acceptance."

Saanvi, early 20s, Fijian Indian, pansexual/queer, cisgender female

Saanvi told us that she "hasn't really tried to engage with them [Pākehā LGBT+ individuals], and maybe there is a reason why that is, to be honest. I'd rather reach out to people who understand me more". Saanvi continued: "there's not the same understanding that there is in the rainbow ethnic community." To Saanvi, the white

LGBT+ community represents individuals who do not understand, or care to understand, the ethnic LGBT+ experience. As such, to secure her own psychological, emotional and social safety, Saanvi chooses not to engage with that community. Providing an example of this lack of understanding, Saanvi believed that many LGBT+ South Asians "choose to value [their] family relationship through not coming out, and not being a source of conflict in the family dynamic. This is not recognised in the mainstream white narrative."

Recommendations

In the absence of official statistics on ethnic LGBT+ South Asians, Adhikaar Aotearoa extrapolated figures from the 2018 census. We estimate that there are, at least, 13,800 LGBT+ South Asians in Aotearoa.[10] Furthermore, ethnic populations (mainly youth) are one of the fastest-growing populations in Aotearoa. With this population increase, the number of LGBT+ South Asians is expected to grow. The lack of information on this population is a significant indication that their voices, experiences and issues need to be systematically visibilised by many individuals and institutions. The following general recommendations emerge from the findings of our community consultation.

To Policy- and Law-makers

- Mandate representations of ethnic and people of colour LGBT+ in all state and non-state institutions.
- Strengthen the capacity of law enforcement officers to understand and empathise with diverse backgrounds of ethnic and people of colour LGBT+ population.
- Develop, strengthen, and sustain structures to foster community-driven intervention programmes for ethnic and people of colour LGBT+ communities.
- Develop and strengthen structures to address and prosecute hate speech in real and virtual spaces and platforms.
- Make the official process of changing preferred gender and pronouns the same for all living in Aotearoa New Zealand in spite of their immigration status.
- Bring structural changes to ensure the rights and wellbeing of ethnic and people of colour LGBT+ will be addressed in all sectors and practices.
- Mandate institutional infrastructure building and strengthening to ensure the overall wellbeing of ethnic and people of colour LGBT+ population.
- Develop historically-specific and culturally-sensitive approaches to prevent harm, harassment, abuse, and violence against ethnic and people of colour LGBT+ persons in various spaces.

To Practitioners, Service Providers and Community Workers

- Understand that ethnic and people of colour LGBT+ experiences are vastly different to Pākehā LGBT+ experiences, particularly concerning the historical and cultural contexts they are situated within.
- Address the history of the normalisation of violence in families and communities.

- Look beyond the dominant narratives, through actively searching for the marginalised within the marginalised (inter and intra-community).
- Identify and move beyond one's own prejudices.
- Work within the intersections of discrimination.
- Have an open mind to ask questions to clarify without relying on generalised assumptions based on locations, histories, and socio-cultural backgrounds of people of colour and ethnic LGBT+ persons.
- Educate yourselves about the nuances of ethnic and people of colour LGBT+ experiences within the context of historical trauma, colonisation, migration or national and international displacements and movements and the reasons for the same, such as the history of violence, religious extremisms, socio-cultural discriminations, geopolitical locations, intergenerational trauma, internalised queerphobia and racism, and stigmatisation of mental health and other kinds of support.
- Develop support frameworks based on understanding the nuances of ethnic and people of colour LGBT+ experiences (and not based on Eurocentric approaches that work for Pākehā communities).
- Plan and implement prevention work with the community, who know what works and what does not – we emphasise that community is where the knowledge is.
- Develop and strengthen culturally sensitive support structures to help and assist survivors of violence and discrimination and gain the sense of justice they seek.

To Educational Institutions

- Provide educational information and resources focused on ethnic and people of colour LGBT+ experiences.
- Ensure LGBT+ person' education is not interrupted due to their identities and/or expressions.
- Design and implement programmes to visibilise ethnic and people of colour LGBT+ experiences.
- Amend curriculums of training practitioners and service providers of all sectors, community workers, and researchers to develop a profound understanding of ethnic and people of colour LGBT+ experiences.
- Build and strengthen systems to stop bullying, harassment, abuse, and violence against ethnic and people of colour LGBT+ population within educational institutions.
- Include people of colour and ethnic LGBT+ persons in all stages of planning and implementing programmes to benefit this population.

To Media

- Allocate resources to visibilise the stories and experiences of people of colour and ethnic LGBT+ persons.
- Expand the scope of media coverage on people of colour and ethnic LGBT+ communities.
- Refrain from over-romanticised and generalised interpretations of people of colour and ethnic LGBT+ population.
- Develop culturally sensitive media ethics when covering people of colour and ethnic LGBT+ experiences.
- Consider narratives of people of colour and ethnic LGBT+ experiences in media training and induction programmes to media personnel.
- Diversify the politics of media to capture the nuances of people of colour and ethnic LGBT+ experiences.
- Hire more people of colour and LGBT+ South Asians in both public and behind-the-scenes media professions.

To Society-At-Large

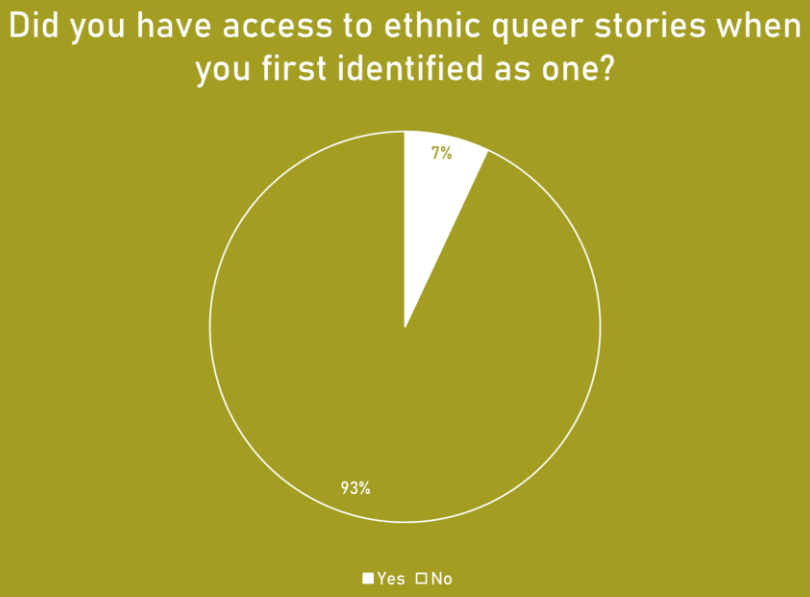
- Have an open mind to understand people of colour and ethnic LGBT+ experiences and struggles.
- Support people of colour and LGBT+ South Asians by accepting and understanding them for who they are.
- Foster beliefs, values, and practices that do not exclude people of colour and LGBT+ South Asians.
- Stop exhibiting racist, xenophobic and queerphobia attitudes.
- Challenge and support changing discriminatory attitudes, norms, and practices towards people of colour and LGBT+ South Asians.
- Build and strengthen community support structures to empathise with people of colour and LGBT+ South Asians.
- Stop conversion attitudes and practices of any kind or form, or shape.

Endnotes

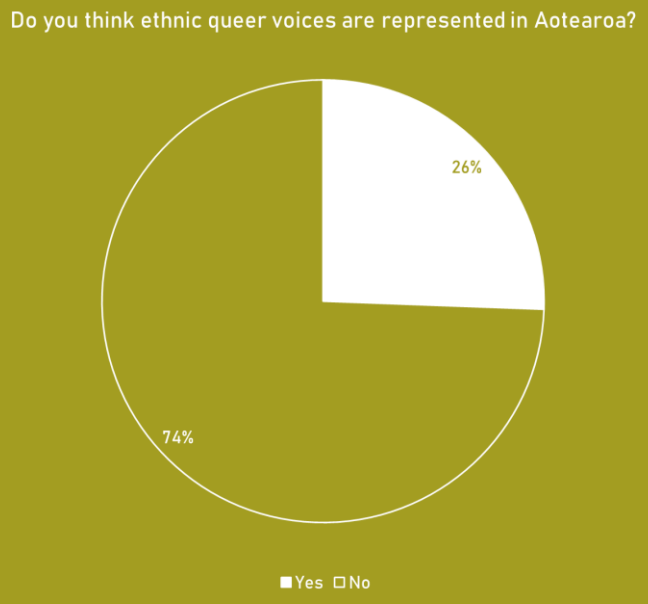
1. Pachankis, J., & Bränström, R. (2019). How many sexual minorities are hidden? Projecting the size of the global closet with implications for policy and public health. *PLOS One*, 14(6).
2. It is hard to say that this figure is an estimate because it is based on a sample. We concluded such a number based upon the notion that one in 20 adults identifies as LGBT+ in Aotearoa New Zealand, as per the 2020 Household Economic Survey, and based upon the fact that in the 2018 Census, the number of South Asians usually resident in Aotearoa was 276,258. This number included all those with census-codified ancestry from any of the eight South Asian countries.
3. Pachankis, J.E., Clark, K.A., Burton, C.L., White Hughto, J.M., Bränström, R., & Keene, D.E. (2020), Sex, Status, Competition, and Exclusion: Intra-Minority Stress from Within the Gay Community and Gay and Bisexual Men's Mental Health. *J Pers Soc Psychol*, 119(3), 713–740.
4. Nakhid, C., Tuwe, M., Abu Ali, Z., Subramanian, P., & Vano, L. (2022). Silencing Queerness – Community and Family Relationships with Young Ethnic Queers in Aotearoa New Zealand. *LGBTQ+ Family: An Interdisciplinary Journal*, 18(3), 205-222.
5. Ibid.
6. Collins, P. H. (1990). *Black feminist thought in the matrix of domination. Black feminist thought: Knowledge, consciousness, and the politics of empowerment*, 138, 221-238; Combahee River Collective (1977). A Black Feminist Statement. *Off Our Backs, 9(*6), 6–8; Crenshaw, K. (1991). Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color. *Stanford Law Review*, 43(6), 1241-1299.
7. Morales, E. S. (1989). Ethnic minority families and minority gays and lesbians. *Marriage & Family Review*, 14(3-4), 217-239.
8. Nakhid, C., Fu, M. & Yachinta, C. (2020). Letting In - Closing Out: Perspectives and experiences of 'coming out' for queer/rainbow ethnic young people in Aotearoa New Zealand.
9. As note three.
10. As note two.

Appendices

Appendix One

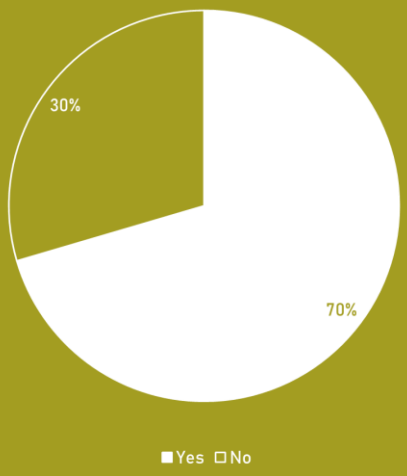


Appendix Two



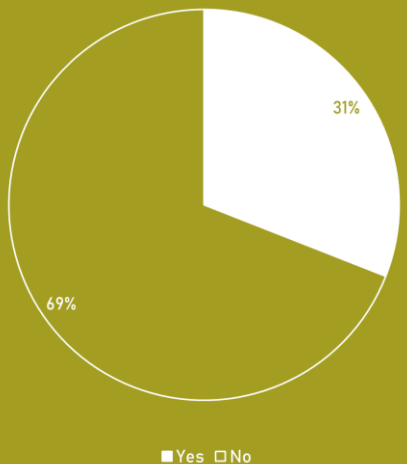
Appendix Three

Does your family know of your gender and/or sexual identities?



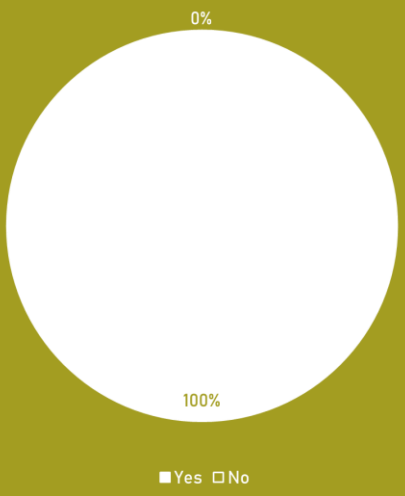
Appendix Four

Does your extended family know of your gender and/or sexual identities?



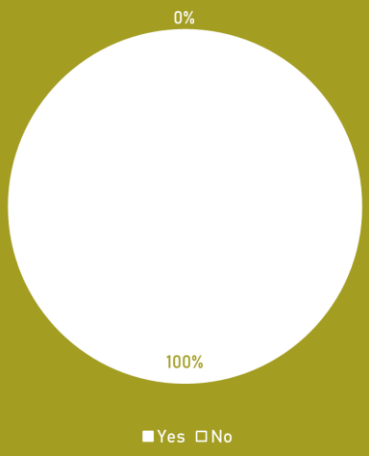
Appendix Five

Do your friends know of your gender and/or sexual identities?



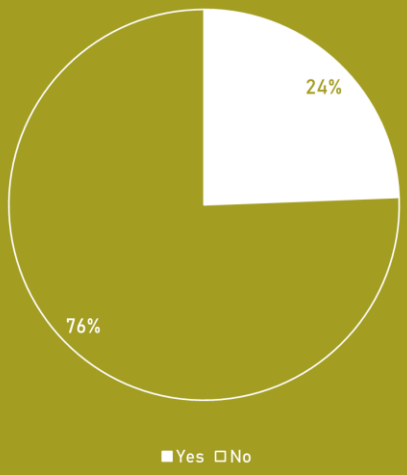
Appendix Six

Would you agree that more work needs to be done to give visibility to ethnic queer voices, their struggles and their stories?



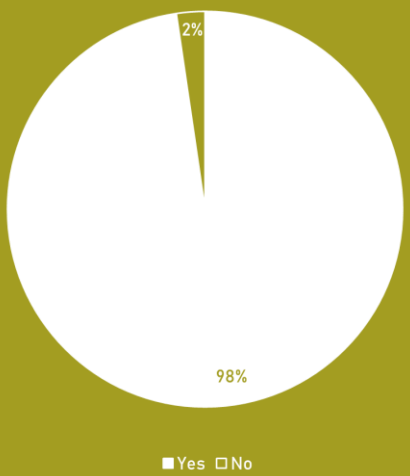
Appendix Seven

Are you happy with access to support services for ethnic queer persons in Aotearoa?



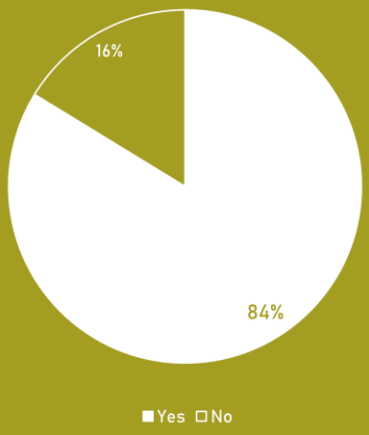
Appendix Eight

Would you agree that policymakers, service providers, and legal reform must pay particular attention to ethnic queer voices, to make them more ethnic queer-friendly and accessible?



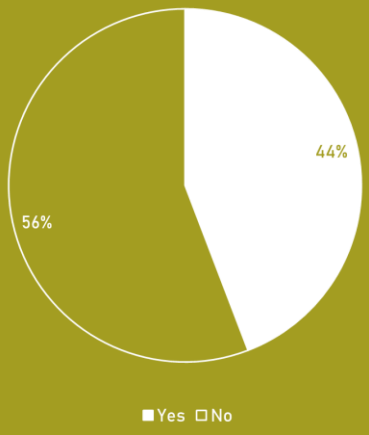
Appendix Nine

Have you ever been discriminated against due to your ethnicity, immigration status and gender/sexual identities in Aotearoa?

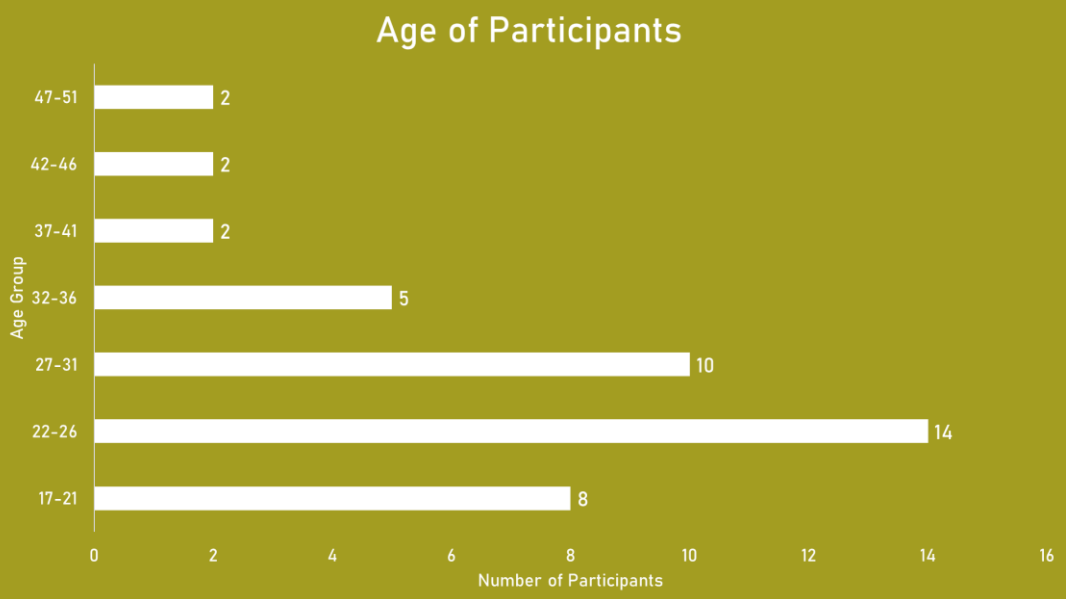


Appendix Ten

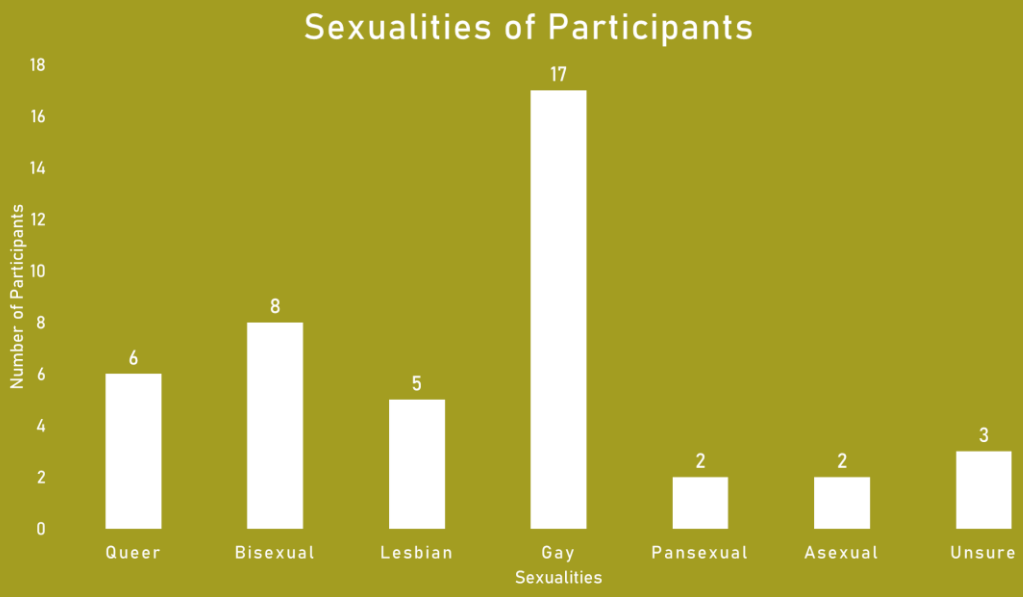
Have you experienced violence due to your ethnicity, immigration status and gender/sexual identities in Aotearoa?



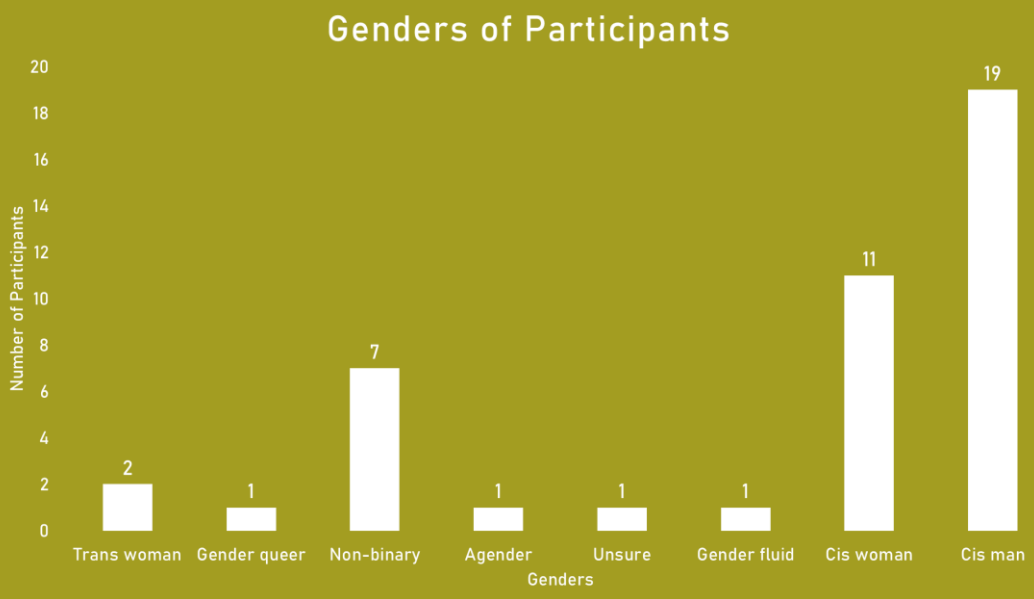
Appendix Eleven



Appendix Twelve



Appendix Thirteen



Appendix Fourteen

Connect with Us

Please connect with us to find out what we do, explore potential collaborations, support us and donate. Get in contact as noted below.

Website: adhikaaraotearoa.co.nz

Email: vinod.bal@adhikaaraotearoa.co.nz or cayathri.divakalala@adhikaaraotearoa.co.nz

Follow us on Facebook: facebook.com/adhikaaraotearoa

Follow us on Instagram: instagram.com/adhikaaraotearoa

Follow us on LinkedIn: linkedin.com/company/adhikaar-aotearoa

Ministry for
Ethnic
Communities
Te Tari Mātāwaka

RULE FOUNDATION
rulefoundation.nz

Adhikaar Aotearoa