

# WHAT IS IMPORTANT IN ONLINE SEXUAL HEALTH PROMOTION FOR YOUNG QUEER PEOPLE? CONSIDERATIONS FROM A QUALITATIVE STUDY WITH QUEER, YOUNG, QUEENSLANDERS

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## Background

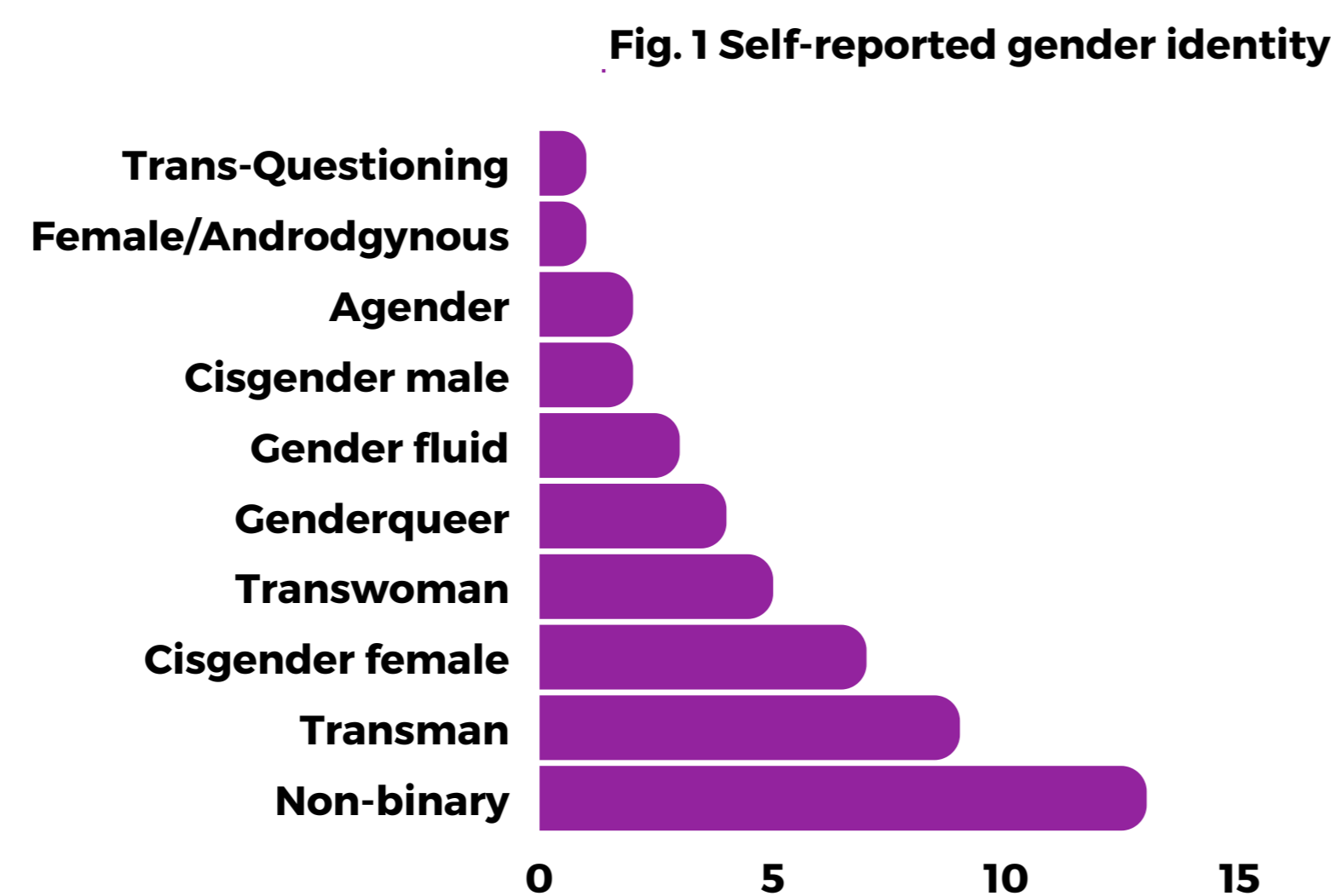
The digitalisation of health promotion through the use of online platforms, programs, resources, and health information offers LGBTQ+ individuals access to affirming health resources and information that are not always readily available in their offline worlds (1-4). Despite the utility of online spaces, little is known about what is important in digital health promotion for LGBTQ+ communities beyond the perspectives of men who have sex with men. This research aims to understand experiences of digital health promotion for young gender and sexual minority people living in South-East Queensland.

## Methods

Between 2018-2020, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 40 young (aged 16-24) people who were gender and/or sexuality diverse across South-East Queensland to explore their sexual health practices and access to healthcare. In 2020-2021, a subsample of 20 participants were re-interviewed. Interviews were conducted by two researchers including LGBTQ+ community peers. To explore participants digital health experiences for this paper, a process of reflexive thematic analysis (5) was used to analyse round one and two interviews by a Queer community peer.

## Results

Within the sample (N=40) there was a wide range of sexual and gender identities reported, as shown in Figures 1 and 2. Predominantly participants were aged between 21-24, see Figure 3.



### Theme 2: "If I have questions I'll go to the Internet, sometimes it will pop up on my dash"

Some participants described actively searching for health-related information, and fact-checking that information across multiple platforms, whereas others were happy to use the information on the first hit they get on Google.

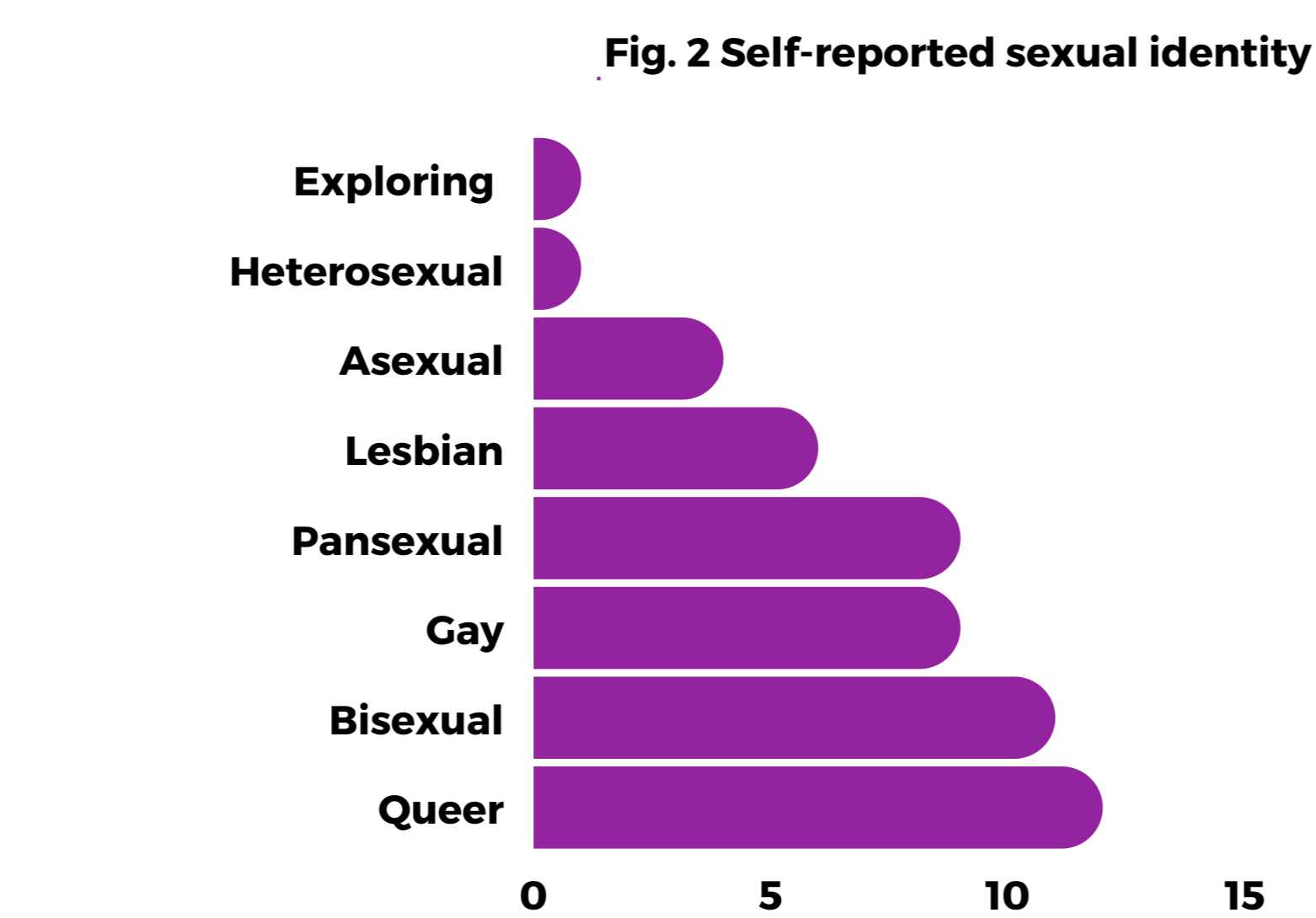
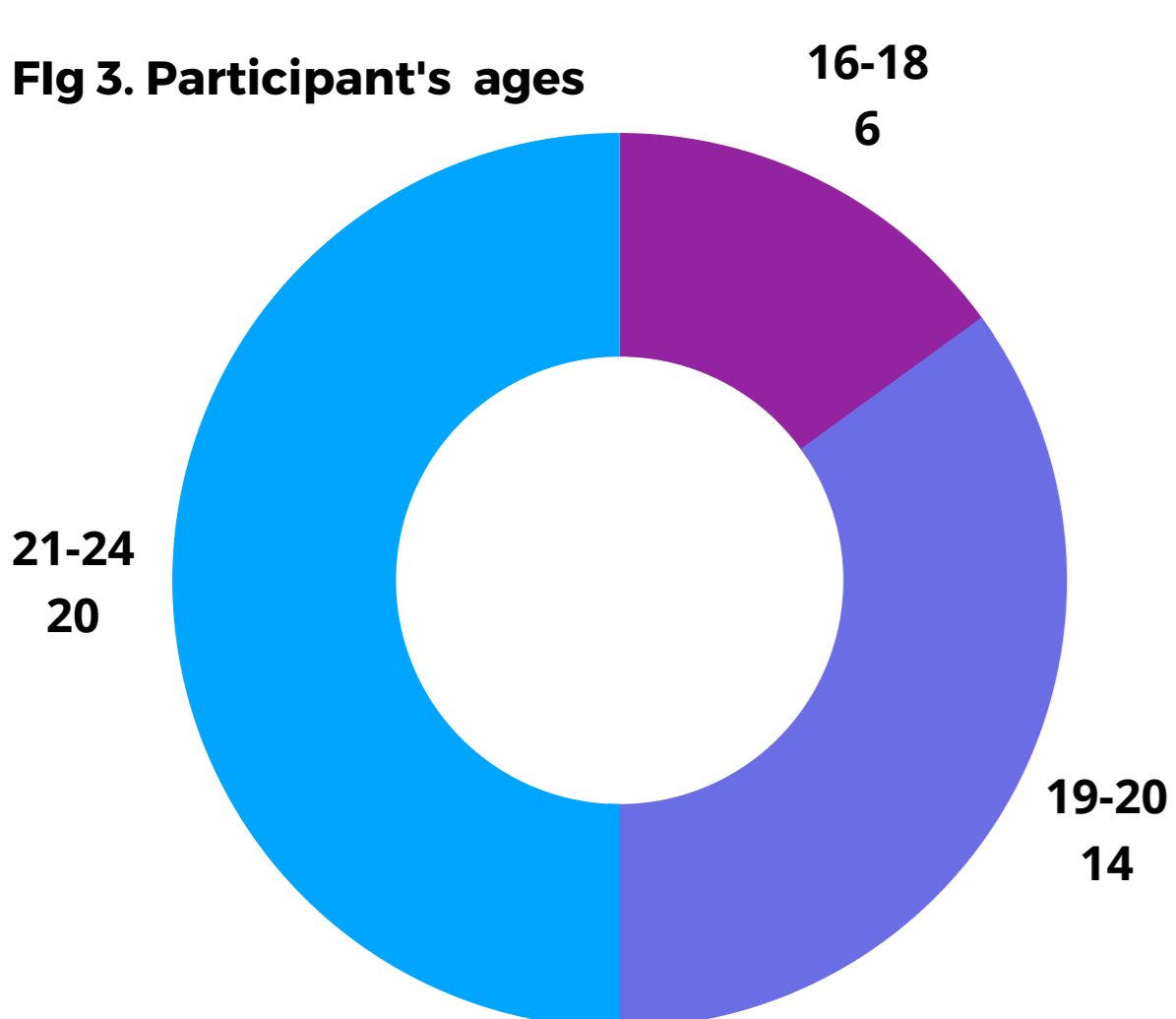
"I'd just Google it and go for the first result. Probably Web MD or something like that would have some information on it. That's probably the only website I can think of." - Ocean

Some participants did not have to search at all as information would appear when they were using the Internet for other things, such as when they were using Grindr or watching pornography.

"Just sort of... I don't even know, to be honest. Just reading stuff, you know. The odd porn would come up, and I'd be like, 'Interesting'." - Armani

YouTube and online social groups were also common places where health information would appear without needing to search for it.

"Reddit, Tumblr, and I'm not even fucking kidding, Dungeons & Dragons communities...somebody had made a channel, and had put up a whole bunch of information about STDs, and safe sex, and shit." - Jules



Note. Numbers may exceed 40 due to participants selecting multiple identity and demographic options; \*\*Participants whose identities and living situations changed between Time 1 and Time 2 interviews have their Time 2 information reported.

### Theme 1: Shared and/or acknowledgement of Queer identities influences online sources chosen

Participants often spoke about choosing specific sources of health information because they held a shared identity with the source. For example, some trans folk felt that online groups specifically focused on supporting trans people were useful. As stated by Storm below, the shared identity meant the source of information was valuable as it may imply there are shared experiences.

"So, if I ever had a question, I could put it in there and get some answers from people who have had similar experiences, which is good." - Storm

It was also important for some Queer people to have their personal identities acknowledged in Queer-focused digital health contexts. Without it, even well-intended promotional efforts may be ignored.

"[when I see stuff just for gay men] I ignore it. I'm like whatever, not for me." - Jaidyn

## Discussion

It is important that efforts are taken to ensure digital health promotion is inclusive in recognition of the heterogeneity of identity within the Queer community. Participants described how health information was sometimes found without searching on platforms such as Grindr and social sites. Therefore, researchers need to tap into platforms that Queer people use for connection and entertainment to drive health promotion and make the most out of digital health promotion. This should be done concurrently to having visible and accessible resources for Queer people to actively seek. To better understand the target audience for health promotion and devise community-informed health promotion strategies, models of community-based participatory research may be useful. Important to consider is that a portion of the Queer community will not be receptive digital health promotion, therefore where possible, consider using multi-modal promotional strategies.

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### Have further questions? Please reach out!

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