

Domestic Abuse Consultation Summary

Domestic abuse has a significant effect on victims and their family, friends and carers and it is of paramount importance that Reading Borough Council, service providers and partner agencies work collaboratively to limit the emotional distress experienced. Domestic abuse is a priority for Reading Borough Council and this consultation has enabled us to gather the opinions of a variety of people who have experienced domestic abuse or who have provided support to victims or perpetrators.

The draft Domestic Abuse Strategy outlines Reading Borough Council's priorities moving forwards from 2019 to 2022. These priorities incorporate raising awareness of domestic abuse and healthy relationships amongst all communities; a focus on a multi-agency approach to support perpetrators of domestic abuse; and responding to coercive control.

The consultation period for the draft Domestic Abuse Strategy spanned from 12th August to 13th September.

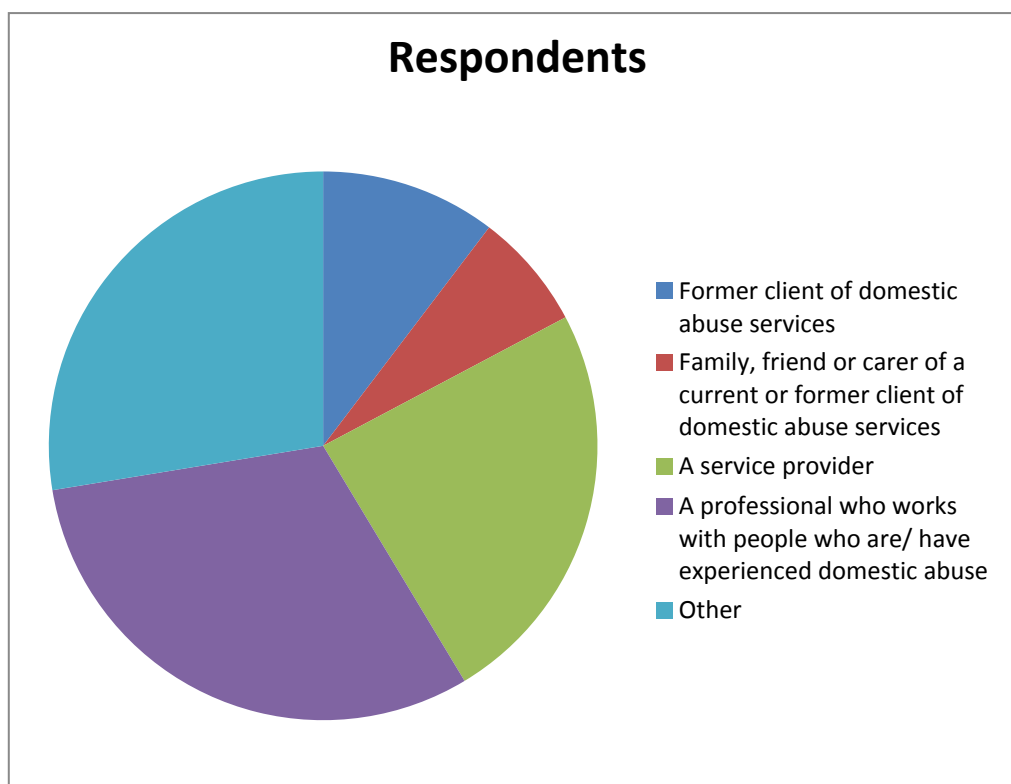
The Consultation

The consultation for the draft Domestic Abuse strategy was published on Reading Borough Council's website alongside a full version of the draft strategy. Respondents were able to mark their agreement or disagreement with each of the three priorities and answer questions around these priorities by using a free text box. The consultation asked for each respondent's profile to enable Reading Borough Council to understand the diversity of responses.

The consultation was shared with Reading Borough Council partners and was advertised through Reading Borough Council's website.

The Respondents

The consultation received responses from a total of 24 people who are former clients of domestic abuse services, family, friends or carers of current or former clients of domestic abuse services, professionals and service providers as shown in Chart One.



(Chart One – Respondents of the draft domestic abuse strategy consultation)

Respondents were from a variety of voluntary and statutory organisations including;

- Brighter Futures for Children
- Launchpad
- PACT
- SAFE! Support for Young People Affected by Crime
- Families Need Fathers - Reading branch
- Healthwatch Reading
- Youth Offending Service
- Reading Voluntary Action
- Free Legal Advice Group for Domestic Violence (Flag DV)
- Crossroads Care
- Reading Refugee Support Group
- Reading Deaf Centre
- Royal Berkshire Hospital NHS Trust
- Berkshire Healthcare Foundation Trust

A breadth of responses from different perspectives proves beneficial for finalising the strategy, and both Thames Valley Police and BWA provided significant input into the draft strategy; however the consultation could have been enhanced through receiving responses from, members of marginalised communities, current victims of domestic abuse and perpetrators.

A full display of the respondent profiles can be found in Appendix One.

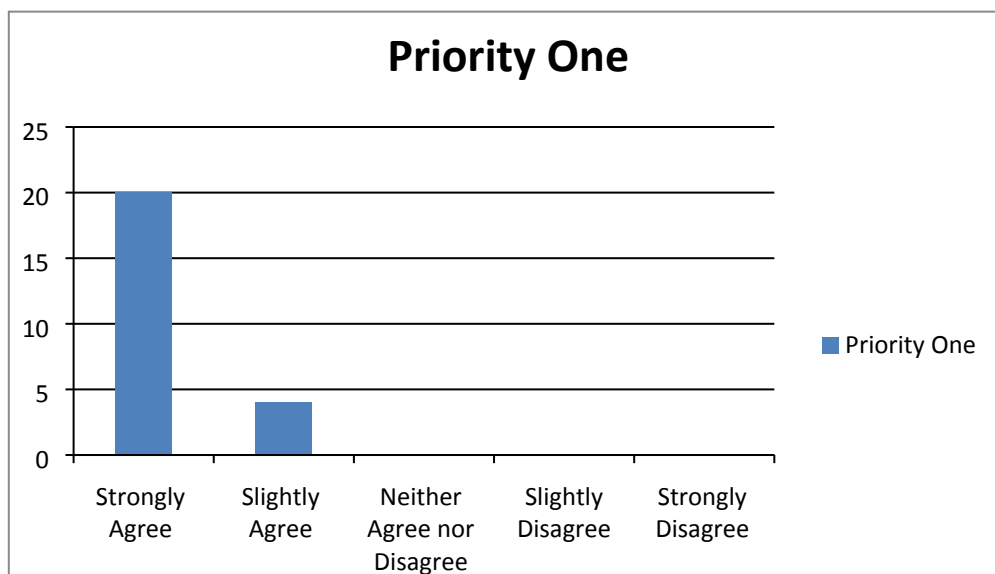
Key messages

The respondents felt that there is a good organisational understanding of domestic abuse and how to support victims in Reading and acknowledged the ease of having a clear referral point for concerns to be expressed. Support provided by BWA, Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub with Brighter Futures for Children, the Police, Support U and Alana House were all identified as being beneficial to victims of domestic abuse and their families.

It was noted that more could be done to increase accessibility to domestic abuse services for all victims, including men and people with disabilities such as deafness. Respondents are keen for further focus to be placed on providing an effective multi-agency response and for more refuge places to be provided, particularly to men and individuals with complex needs. It was felt that the support that is available needs to be publicised further and greater help could be provided with outreach support, counselling and legal advice.

Priority One: Raising awareness about domestic abuse with a focus on workforce development, healthy relationship education and engagement with marginalised communities.

All of the respondents agreed with priority one with most strongly agreeing and a small number slightly agreeing (Chart Two);



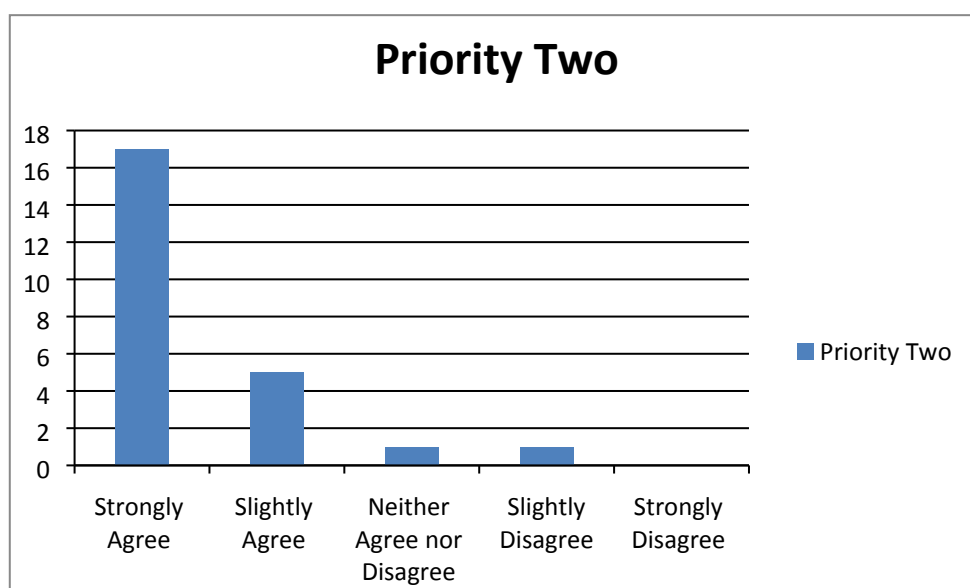
(Chart Two – Respondent’s Agreement/Disagreement to priority one)

Respondents provided the following comments in response to questions asked around priority one;

- Awareness of domestic abuse should be raised through social media, posters and adverts that represent both female and male victims
- Training, education and workshops with a focus on healthy relationships, recognising domestic abuse and signposting and safeguarding victims should be provided in schools and workplaces
- Domestic abuse services could engage better with BAME¹ communities and those that define as LGBTQ+² through employing a culturally diverse workforce and engaging volunteers from these communities to aid the building of positive relationships
- Engagement could be improved through accessing community hubs and informing the communities of available services in an accessible way such as translating service information into multiple languages

Priority Two: Developing a multi-agency approach to working with perpetrators.

The majority of respondents strongly or slightly agreed with priority two, however one respondent neither agreed nor disagreed and another slightly disagreed (Chart Three);



(Chart Three - Respondent's Agreement/Disagreement to priority two)

Respondents provided the following comments in response to questions asked around priority two;

- Agencies should work positively with perpetrators and focus on early intervention
- Perpetrators would benefit from access to appropriate support such as counselling and other services such as drug and alcohol treatment.

¹ Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic

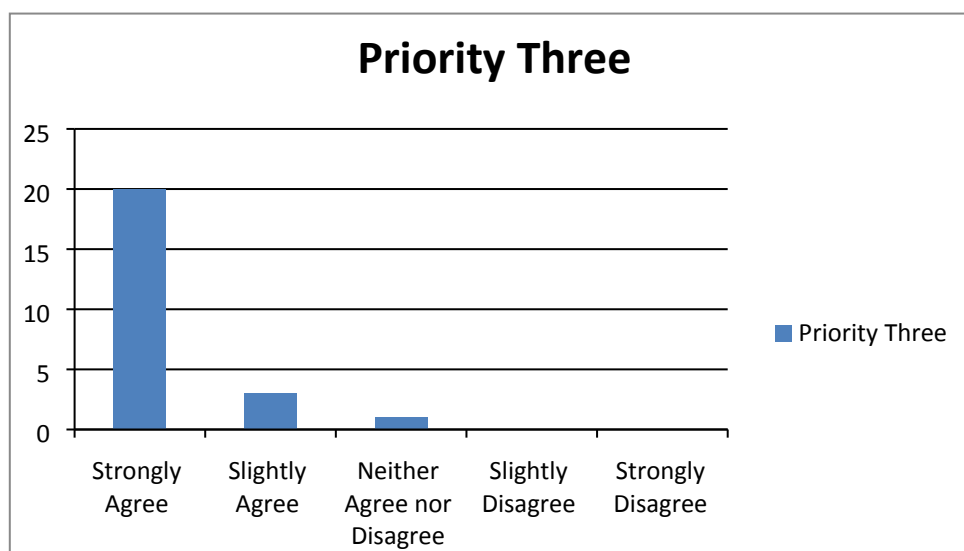
² Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer (or questioning) plus other identity terms

- A victim led response to domestic abuse should be practiced, ensuring victim's safety through providing protection and support
- Emotional and financial support should be received by victims and their families
- Victims should feel confident and assured by the enforcement action taken with perpetrators

The respondents who 'neither agreed nor disagreed' or 'slightly disagreed' with priority two felt that further training should be provided to help professionals to understand how to help perpetrators and a trauma informed approach should be taken to understand the causes of a perpetrator's behaviour.

Priority Three: Improving our partnership response to Coercive Control.

The majority of the respondents strongly agreed or slightly agreed with priority three with one respondent neither agreeing nor disagreeing (Chart Four);



(Chart Four - Respondent's Agreement/Disagreement to priority three)

Respondents provided the following comments in response to questions asked around priority three;

- Effective partnership working between BWA, the Police, criminal justice services, health services, social services, schools and housing services would provide an efficient coordinated response to coercive control
- Workforce training provided by professionals and experts by experience around understanding, recognising and reporting coercive control would improve partnership knowledge

The respondent who 'neither agreed nor disagreed' with priority three felt that professionals need to understand how relationship dynamics and coping behaviours can effect coercive control. This could be provided through training to professionals which would improve the partnership response to coercive control.

Respondent's suggested changes to the final Domestic Abuse Strategy

1. Support for children who have witnessed or been victims of domestic abuse should be prioritised as well as early intervention to prevent child to parent violence.
2. Accessibility to services and information for people with disabilities
3. More refuge places and support available for male victims of domestic abuse
4. Inclusion of the issue of 'Child to Parent' violence

Changes to the final Domestic Abuse Strategy

Reponses to the above:

1 - Reading Borough Council recognises the impact that domestic abuse can have on families and children. Providing support to children who have witnessed or who have been victims of domestic abuse has consistently been a priority for Reading Borough Council and Brighter Futures for Children and continues to be in the forefront of our approach. This activity is already part of our response to Domestic abuse and will continue to be prioritised as part of 'business as usual'.

2- The strategy already sets out an intention to make information, advice and support readily available for a range of clients including those from BAME communities, LGBTQ+ communities and with disabilities.

3- The request for additional refuge provision will be factored in to the next procurement exercise. Priority one will be amended to ensure that support services for men will be publicised.

4 – This issue will be included in the final version of the strategy.

Classification: OFFICIAL-SENSITIVE

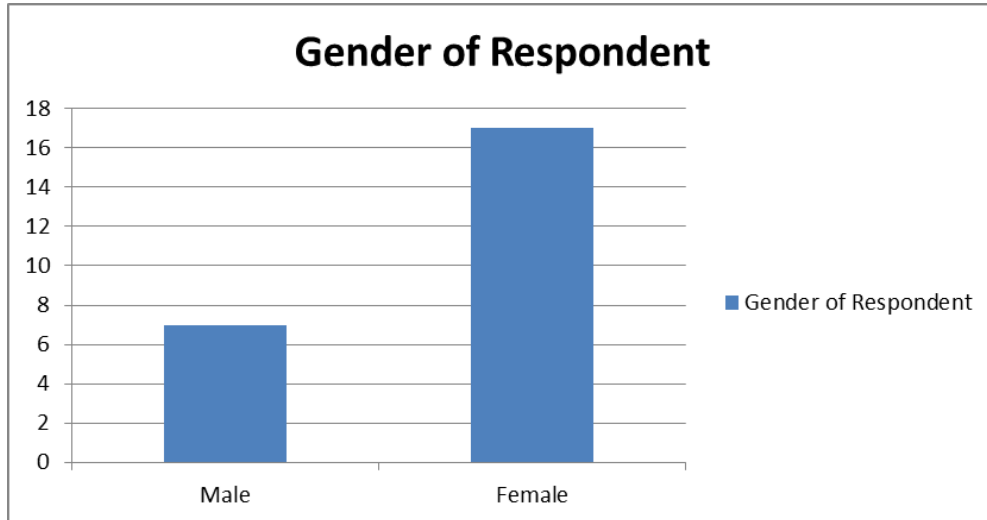
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Appendix One

Gender:

Male: 7

Female: 17



Age:

16-25: 1

26-35: 5

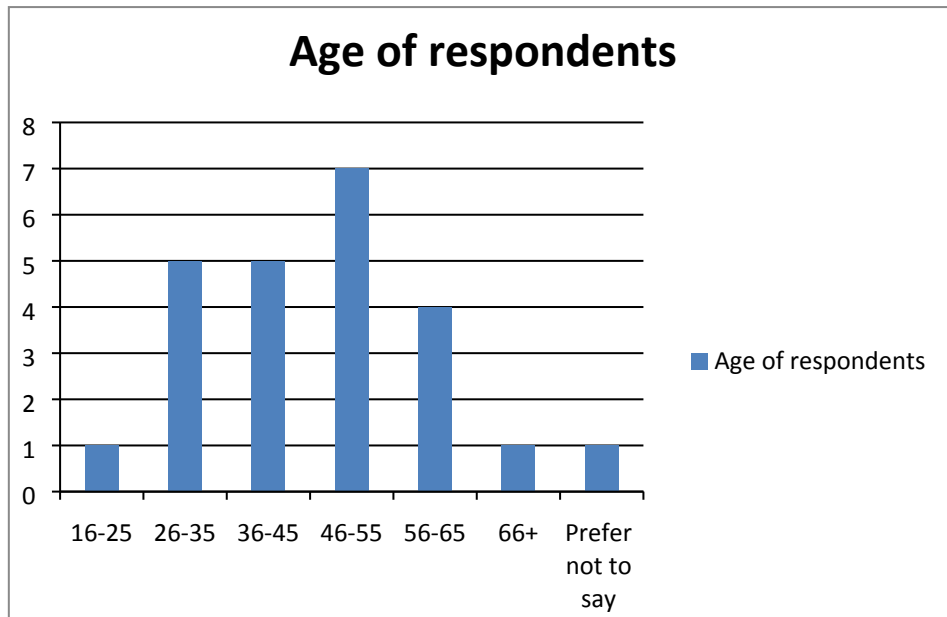
36-45: 5

46-55: 7

56-65: 4

66+: 1

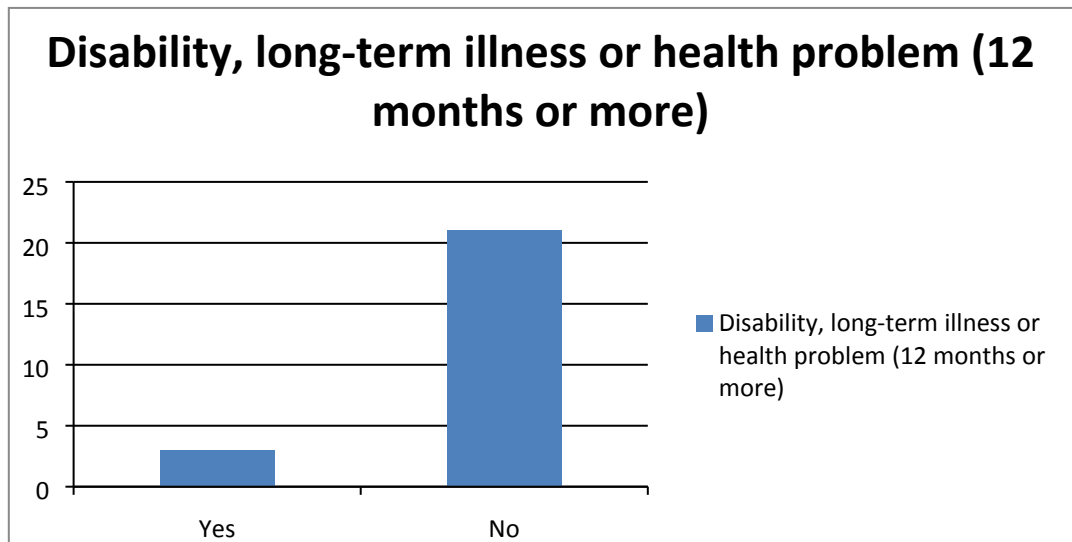
Prefer not to say: 1



Disability, long-term illness or health problem (12 months or more):

Yes: 3

No: 21



Ethnicity:

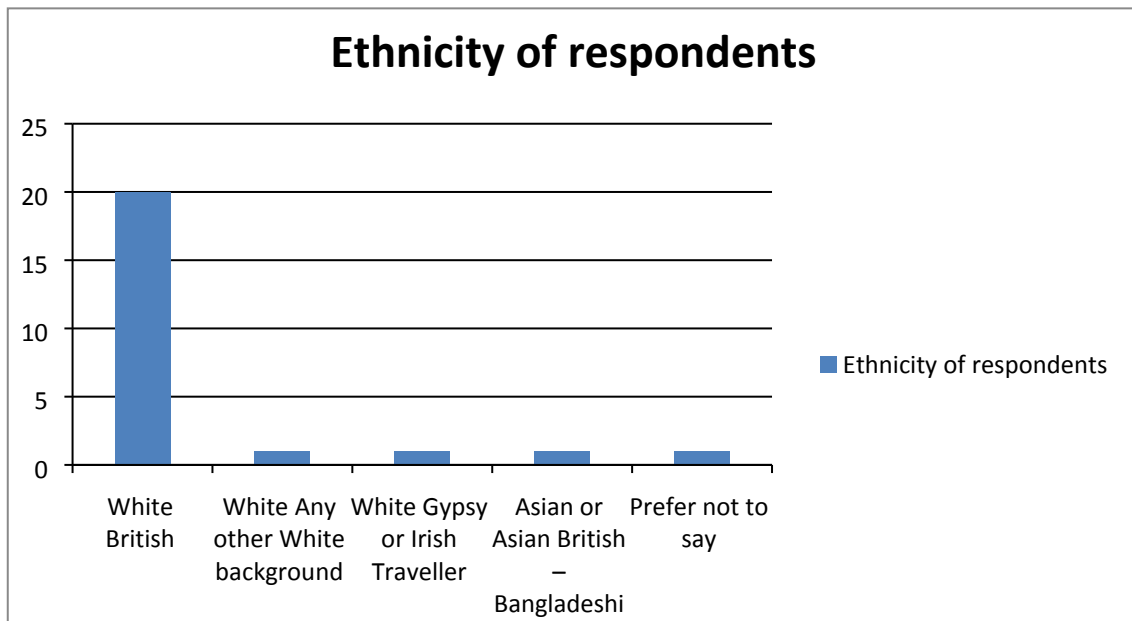
White British: 20

White Any other White background: 1

White Gypsy or Irish Traveller: 1

Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi: 1

Prefer not to say: 1



Religion or Belief:

Christian: 7

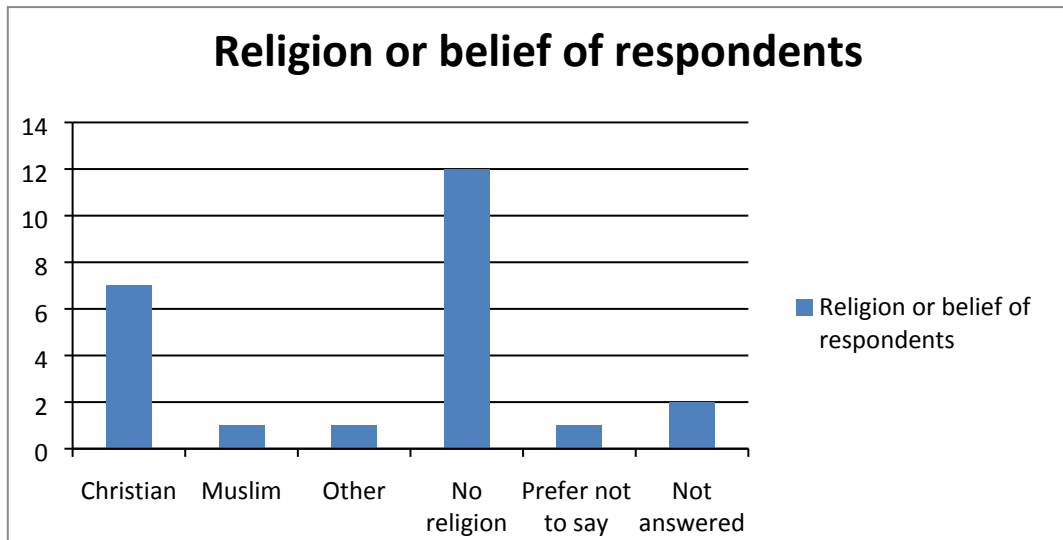
Muslim: 1

Other: 1 – this respondent then listed themselves as spiritual

No religion: 12

Prefer not to say: 1

Not answered: 2 – one of these respondents then listed their religion as Catholic



Sexual Orientation:

Heterosexual/Straight: 17

Bisexual: 1

Gay or Lesbian: 3

Prefer not to say: 3

