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Reporting Anti-LGBTQI Hate Crime to the Police

First-Hand Experiences and Reasons for not Reporting

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Abstract
This study investigates the views and experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer or intersex (LGBTQI) people in Norway of reporting hate crimes to the police, using more than 3000 responses to open-ended survey questions. We used thematic analysis to identify the variety of experiences of reporting hate incidents and the reasons for not reporting them. We identified a range of barriers to reporting incidents, and a few positive experiences, across the five dimensions of reporting we conceptualised. Our findings indicate a widespread lack of trust among LGBTQI citizens in the police's ability to provide justice and protection in relation to hate crime victimisation. The different experiences and views of barriers to reporting we identified are clearly related to issues of police legitimacy, procedural justice, and legal cynicism. The findings help explain why underreporting of anti-LGBTQI hate crimes is a major issue in Norway, as it is elsewhere.

Keywords
hate crime, LGBTQI, reporting to police, police legitimacy, procedural justice, Norway

1. Introduction

Hate crime results in a wide spectrum of negative consequences for individuals, communities, and society (Bell & Perry, 2015). Hate crime is commonly defined as criminal acts motivated by prejudice against particular groups of people (ODIHR, 2024). There is considerable variation across jurisdictions in the definition of which minority groups are protected by hate crime legislation (Godzisz & Pudzianowska, 2016). This study examines the experien-

ces and views of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer or intersex (LGBTQI) people on reporting anti-LGBTQI hate crime to the Norwegian police. The aim is to describe their experiences of reporting and reasons for not reporting hate incidents, to identify key barriers to reporting, and to relate these findings to the international literature.

Some African countries criminalise same-sex relations and certain gender expressions, and these are punishable by death in certain countries (Human Rights Watch, 2023). This contrasts with Western Europe, where the law makes some anti-LGBTQI acts punishable. However, despite such protective legislation, negative attitudes towards LGBTQI people continue to exist (European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights [FRA], 2020a). Recent mobilisations against diverse gender expressions by the 'anti-gender movement' has contributed to an upsurge of anti-LGBTQI sentiment (Kuhar & Paternotte, 2017). In the past decade, European countries have also seen terrorist attacks and violent hate crimes target this community. In the most recent terrorist attack in Norway, on 25 June 2022, an Islamist extremist killed two people and wounded more than 20 in an attack targeting the LGBTQI community on the eve of the Pride parade in Oslo (Jansen et al., 2023).

Norway is often portrayed as a pioneer of state protection for LGBTQI people and in combating hate directed at them (Ministry of Culture and Equality, 2023). In 2020, Norwegian legislation was extended to protect people against hateful acts targeting their 'gender identity' and 'gender expression' (Lovdata, 2020). A national police unit was established in 2021 to work exclusively on hate crimes and enhance police competence on this issue. Our study of LGBTQI people's views on the police's handling of anti-LGBTQI hate crimes sheds light on whether the prioritising of this issue in policy is reflected in the self-reported situation of this community.

LGBTQI individuals who suffer hate crimes are less likely to report these crimes than non-victims (Feddes & Jonas, 2020). This underreporting is due to a lack of trust in the police; the resultant impact dark figures (i.e., victimisations that are never reported) have on official statistics for these crimes is addressed in the international literature (Chakraborti, 2018). Understanding why victims of anti-LGBTQI hate crimes choose not to report them to the police is therefore a core issue for global hate crime scholarship, and one we address by focusing on the underexplored situation in Norway. Compared with other countries, Norway has markedly higher levels of trust in the police and state institutions (OECD, 2022), so one might expect hate crime reporting and views about police legitimacy to be similarly exceptional. We therefore compare our findings with international findings to see whether this is the case.

To this end, this study examines Norwegian LGBTQI respondents' experiences of and views on reporting anti-LGBTQI hate crimes. With a qualitative thematic analysis of open-ended responses, combined with descriptive statistics, we illuminate the range of experiences these LGBTQI people have had when reporting hate crimes to the police and the most common reasons for not reporting them. We conceptualise five dimensions of hate crime reporting that we use to report findings, and which could be useful for future studies.

2. Hate crime reporting and barriers to reporting

A substantial body of literature has explored the barriers to reporting hate crimes across minority groups (e.g., Chakraborti & Hardy, 2015; Swadling et al., 2015). LGBTQI individuals report such crimes to the police less frequently than other groups (Dunbar, 2006; Pezzella et al., 2019) and are reluctant to seek help from public agencies when they do not believe these agencies will address their needs (Vergani & Navarro, 2023).

Reporting behaviour is bound up with perceptions of the police, lack of trust in the police being a common reason for not reporting either hate crimes or non-hate crimes (Bradford et al., 2009; Cuerden & Blakemore, 2020). Lack of trust usually arises from previous negative experiences of reporting, such as having rude and prejudiced treatment from officers (Wickes et al., 2016; Wong & Christmann, 2016). In the United States, interactions between LGBTQI people and police are frequently negative, with one in four involving harassment, threats, or physical violence (Wolff & Cokely, 2007). Distressing interactions with police, expectations of unsympathetic treatment, and the belief that the police are doing an ineffective job because of prejudice are even more common among transgender people (Walters et al., 2020).

LGBTQI individuals are also made aware of police hostility through media stories and exchanges within the LGBTQI community long before they may consider reporting a hate crime (Herek, 1990). Victims of hate crimes are more likely to distrust law enforcement because they belong to marginalised groups with a history of poor relations with authority (Perry, 2001), and this applies to the historically tense relationship between the police and LGBTQI communities (Dwyer & Tomsen, 2016).

The age and intersectionality of LGBTQI individuals may further affect their relationship with the police. One-third of the participants in a US study involving LGBTQI people of colour said they would never seek assistance from the police, while two-thirds stated that they would only consider contacting them in very limited circumstances (Shields, 2021). Another US study found LGBTQI participants had a range of perceptions of the police: positive, negative, and neutral (Nadal et al., 2015). The negative perceptions were connected to their intersectionality: their sexual or gender identity in tandem with other characteristics such as race and ethnicity. LGBTQI people of colour had particularly mistrustful views of the criminal justice system (Nadal et al., 2015).

Legal cynicism and views about police legitimacy are statistically significant predictors of willingness to report hate crimes, and several studies show that LGBTQI people are less likely to view the police as legitimate than non-LGBTQI people (Miles-Johnson, 2013; Owen et al., 2018). The propensity to report to the police and the barriers to doing so, may, however, differ across jurisdictions and socio-cultural contexts.

Minorities subjected to hate crimes frequently opt not to report because they fear further victimisation or retaliation by the offender (Culotta, 2005; Vergani & Navarro, 2023). Another common barrier to reporting among LGBTQI people is the fear that negative interactions with law enforcement will result in 'secondary victimisation' – that is, being outed or blamed for one's victimisation (Berrill & Herek, 1990); other minorities do not have to 'come out' to the police in order to report a crime (Briones-Robinson et al., 2016). Research suggests that hate crime victims first report their victimisation to other people, before reporting it to the police (Wong et al., 2020). The availability of options for such third-party reporting may thus increase hate crime reporting (Schweppe et al., 2020).

Lack of awareness about what constitutes a hate crime may also reduce reporting by LGBTQI individuals, especially regarding less violent crimes (Chakraborti & Hardy, 2015). The victim's assessment of a crime's severity is important when they decide whether to report a hate crime, in the case of both LGBTQI and other minority groups, with serious and violent incidents being more likely to be reported (Herek et al., 2002; Vergani & Navarro, 2023). These factors and barriers have hitherto been unexplored with regards to anti-LGBTQI hate crime in Norway.

Experiences of reporting to the police are not exclusively negative. Australian LGBTQI individuals have described positive encounters with the police and interactions marked by

a 'sense of respect', with transgender people appreciating the use of correct pronouns (Fileborn, 2019, p. 448). Respectful treatment can help form positive relations between police and marginalised groups, such as the LGBTQI community, and it is a precondition for establishing mutual trust (Miles-Johnson, 2013).

The literature on hate crime reporting mentioned above clearly connects with broader issues to do with citizens' perceptions of police legitimacy and procedural justice; how minorities view the legitimacy of the police, and the ability of law enforcement agencies and the wider legal system to provide justice and security. Research also finds widespread legal cynicism among minorities regarding how the police and the judiciary handle crime generally (Tyler, 2011). (Dis)trust with regard to law enforcement and the judiciary are thus key factors for understanding why people decide to report, or not to report, to the police.

There is limited research on the importance of perceptions of police legitimacy in decision-making about reporting in the wake of hate crime incidents (Wiedlitzka et al., 2018). This study contributes insights into the barriers and factors influencing Norwegian LGBTQI citizens when deciding whether to report hate crime to the police: in this, their views on police legitimacy and trustworthiness are core factors. The question of whether the international findings mentioned above are applicable to the Norwegian situation will also be explored.

2.1 Five dimensions of hate crime reporting

Based on a narrative review of literature on the reporting of hate crime compiled in the course of this study, we identified five dimensions of reporting hate crime incidents. Table 1 below outlines these dimensions, what each of them involves and their core issues (see also Vergani & Navarro, 2023).

The first dimension, the nature of the hate incident, relates to the characteristics of the incident. The second and third dimensions concern the police: how the procedure for filing a police report is organised, and what the interaction with police is like; they involve police behaviour and procedures in relation to reporting. The fourth dimension, the outcome of reporting, consists of the police response to a report, including what happens during the later stages of the criminal justice process or other forms of conflict resolution. The last dimension is the personal cost of reporting, including actual and anticipated negative repercussions for the victimised person.

Table 1: The Five Dimensions of Reporting Hate Crimes to the Police

Dimension	Involves	Core issues
1. Nature of the hate incident (Chakraborti & Hardy, 2015 Culotta, 2005; Herek et al., 2002; Vergani & Navarro, 2023; Wong et al., 2020)	Interaction between victim/s, perpetrator/s, witness/es, and bystander/s	• Type and severity of incident • Availability of evidence • Available witnesses • Whether the incident is seen as serious enough to be reported
2. Filing a report (Chakraborti & Hardy, 2015 Miles-Johnson, 2013; Swadling et al., 2015)	Police behaviour and reporting procedures	• Available options for reporting • Requirements for filing a report • Practical challenges of reporting • Available information about what reporting and the subsequent process entails
3. Interaction with police during and after reporting (Briones-Robinson et al., 2016; Chakraborti & Hardy, 2015 Culotta, 2005; Cuerden & Blakemore, 2020; Fileborn, 2019; Shields, 2021)	Interaction between victim and the police	• Initial contact following a hate incident • Asking for advice on how to report • The interrogation • Post-reporting communication
4. Outcome of reporting (Chakraborti & Hardy, 2015 Pezzella et al., 2019; Wong & Christmann, 2016)	The results of the police's handling of a filed report	• What the act of reporting leads to if the report is not dismissed • Other types of outcomes like gaining victim support, a court trial, or another form of conflict resolution
5. Personal cost of reporting (Chakraborti & Hardy, 2015 Culotta, 2005; Herek et al., 2002; Vergani & Navarro, 2023; Wickes et al., 2016; Wong et al., 2020)	The personal cost to the victim as a result of reporting and the ensuing process within and beyond criminal justice	• Actual or anticipated personal costs and risks involved with reporting • What the reporting itself might lead to for the person reporting • Indirect consequences of reporting via the person's social networks or at the hands of the accused perpetrator

We argue that distinguishing these dimensions has analytic utility for this and future studies of the reporting of hate crimes to the police, because it helps make analysis more specific and mindful of the differences between each dimension. Below, we link these dimensions to the themes we identified in data.

3. Anti-LGBTQI hate and state responses in Norway

Norway sees punishable hate speech as a type of hate crime, unlike countries that put speech acts in a separate category (Solhjell & Klatran, 2024). In Norway, the LGBTQI population is exposed to hate speech to a much greater extent than cisgender heterosexuals (Fladmoe & Nadim, 2023). Harassment, threats, and violence related to sexual orientation and gender expression are often directed at the LGBTQI population (Anderssen et al., 2016; Anderssen & Malterud, 2013). About 23% of LGBTQI people in one study had experienced hate speech during the previous year, while around 15% had experienced threats related to their sexual orientation (Fladmoe et al., 2019). Higher rates of threats, violence, and abuse consistently target trans people (Anderssen et al., 2021).

For many years, the Norwegian Director of Public Prosecutions has made hate crime a priority (Riksadvokaten, 2023). A hate crime unit was established in Oslo in 2014, and this later developed into the National Police Competence Group on Hate Crime, tasked with supporting police on this issue throughout the country (Solhjell, 2023). In 2023, the government launched

an action plan for sexual and gender diversity, which included several measures to fight anti-LGBTQI hate crime, such as improving police statistics and fostering productive dialogue between the police and LGBTQI communities (Ministry of Culture and Equality, 2023).

The number of reported hate crimes listed by the Director rose between 2017 and 2022, but this is probably a reflection of the increased attention paid to hate crime by the public and police (POD and OPD, 2023). In 2022, 923 hate crime cases were reported, and there was an appreciable rise in anti-LGBTQI cases from 2021 to 2022 (POD & OPD, 2023). It is unclear whether this increase is reflective of an actual rise in such incidents or of an increased propensity to report. Whichever is the case, online anti-LGBTQI hostility in recent years has risen (Analyse & Tall, 2023). Victimisation surveys generally uncover a greater number of hate crimes than appear in police statistics, either in Norway or elsewhere (Hall, 2013; Thorsen et al., 2009). According to a Norwegian self-reporting survey, the hate crime victimisation rate is 3.8% in the general population, far higher than is shown in official crime statistics (Løvgren et al., 2022). Victimisation rates may be even higher because many hate crimes go unrecognised both by police and by victims, who do not necessarily self-identify as a victim of hate crime (Farrell & Lockwood, 2023; Solhjell, 2023).

Among the 37 member countries of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 2023), Norway is one of those with the highest levels of trust in public institutions. However, while 72% of the general population report high or very high trust in the Norwegian police, only 37% of LGBTQI citizens feel the same way (Jakobsen, 2023).

Below, we outline first-hand experiences of reporting anti-LGBTQI hate crime and hate incidents to the police and the reasons given not to make such reports. Hitherto there has been no research based knowledge about this in Norway.

4. Methods and data

The data came from responses to two open-ended questions in an online survey of Norwegian LGBTQI individuals: 'Do you have any experience of reporting an incident that you would like to share?' (N=530) and 'Can you tell us why you did not report the matter to the police?' (N=2583). The survey (N=10237) consisted of closed and open-ended questions relating to experience of hate crime and attitudes towards the police. The survey was conducted by the Norwegian Police Directorate in collaboration with the National Police Competence Group on Hate Crime (see Jakobsen, 2023).

The authors are involved in a research project on hate crime in which the National Police Competence Group on Hate Crime is a partner. The Norwegian Police Directorate was asked for permission to access and use the anonymous open-ended answers of the police survey for research, as these had not been analysed by the police. The third co-author is employed by the the Norwegian Police Directorate and was responsible for conducting the survey.

The survey was designed for internal police educational purposes, not for scientific research purposes. This limited the data collected and the opportunities for more detailed analyses, such as examining differences in experiences in subgroups of the LGBTQI respondents. The survey was anonymous, with no demographic data being collected on variables like age or place of residence (whether in an urban or rural area). Our study therefore cannot distinguish between subgroups within the sample, and treats the sample as the aggregated category of LGBTQI individuals, despite their diversity. Our analytical approach is thus primarily qualitative, aiming to provide an aggregated descriptive overview of LGBTQI experiences of reporting anti-LGBTQI hate crime to the police, and reasons for not reporting such crime.

There are no registers of individuals who identify as LGBTQI in Norway. The survey was therefore based on self-recruitment and is not representative in the statistical sense. Respondents were recruited through offline and online platforms to an openly available online questionnaire. The survey was spread across social media platforms by members of the public.

The survey was available from 22 June to 16 September 2022, and the terrorist attack targeting LGBTQI people which occurred in Oslo on 25 June, likely impacted the attention the survey attracted, its spread in social media, and how respondents answered: many of the respondents gave their answers shortly after the attack. It is hard to know if responses about reporting would have been different if this attack had not taken place. This context should, therefore, be taken into consideration when assessing the data and results.

It is important to recognise that not all incidents described by respondents would match the legal definition of a hate crime used by police and the judiciary. We will therefore sometimes refer to 'hate incidents' rather than 'crimes' to acknowledge that, while respondents may perceive certain behaviours as hate crimes, these actions may not meet the formal criteria of a criminal offence under Norwegian law. Our data is based on respondents' own perceptions and includes descriptions of what they themselves perceived as hate crime.

Data was coded in accordance with the principles of inductive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Three researchers were involved in the two-step, collaborative coding process: first, they assessed part of the data individually, before meeting to draw up an initial code book. The code book laid the foundation for the second stage – coding all the data – mostly done by one researcher. The researchers thereafter worked together on organising the codes into overall themes that captured the most prevalent patterns in the data, as shown below. Coding the responses made it possible to quantify and compile descriptive statistics on the prevalence of the themes identified. These are presented in the tables below, adding to the thematic analysis.

Respondents sometimes addressed both open-ended questions when answering one of them, and we coded their responses accordingly. In other cases, we coded the response to one question as multiple themes if the response provided several different views or experiences. This makes the number of respondents to each question inconsistent with the number of coded responses in Tables 2 and 3 below.

Inductive thematic analysis aimed to capture the diverse experiences of reporting, and the reasons for not reporting, anti-LGBTQI hate incidents to the police. The set of themes identified are described in the two sections below and linked with the five dimensions of reporting hate crime to the police outlined above (Table 1).

5. Reporting anti-LGBTQI hate incidents to the police

Different experiences of reporting incidents, and reasons for not reporting them, were identified. The first section outlines various first-hand experiences of reporting, while the second describes reasons for not doing so. Both sections explain factors and barriers central to personal decision-making about whether to report hate crime to police.

5.1 First-hand experiences of reporting hate incidents

Out of 9508 respondents, 3780 (40%) had experienced a hate crime due to their sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression during the previous two years. Of these, only 8% reported the incident to the police. However, 14% answered the open-ended question about experiences with the reporting process, including descriptions of contacting the police but ultimately not filing a report. This section outlines the main kinds of experiences these 530 (14%) respondents described.

Table 2: Experiences of Reporting, by Dimension

Dimension	Theme	Coded responses
Outcome of reporting	Reporting led nowhere	184
	Inadequate police investigation	13
	Dissatisfied with trial or sentencing	7
	Percentage of all responses in this dimension	62.2% (204)
Interaction with police during and after reporting	A positive experience	31
	Negative attitudes from police	21
	Percentage of all responses in this dimension	15.9% (52)
Filing a report	Contacted police, ended up not reporting	35
	Filing a report too demanding	15
	Percentage of all responses in this dimension	15.2% (50)
Personal cost of reporting	Too great personal costs	16
	Time-consuming process	6
	Percentage of all responses in this dimension	6.7% (22)
Nature of the hate incident	Percentage of all responses in this dimension	0% (0)
		100% (328)

5.1.1 The outcome of reporting

The most common experience among the respondents was dissatisfaction with *the outcome of reporting*. For 184 respondents, reporting 'led nowhere' and thus resulted in no charges, court case or conviction. In some cases, they did not receive any feedback. Many spoke of having their cases dismissed even when they presented evidence and there were witnesses. As one respondent noted, 'despite the fact that I had much of the incident recorded on video, including the name and picture of the person [it went nowhere].'

Many individuals expressed frustration about not receiving information from the police on the assistance available post-reporting: 'I received no help or assistance, no information about where I could possibly get help. I was left feeling that I was not being taken seriously.' The respondent's case was eventually dismissed. Some said they felt the police did not do enough to pursue their cases, which were dismissed without them, or witnesses being questioned. The widespread experience of having their reports dismissed and not receiving any guidance or response from the police was seen as evidence of the low priority they gave anti-LGBTQI hate crime. Sometimes the police went as far as identifying and interrogating the suspected perpetrators, but the cases were still dismissed.

Seven respondents said that, while reporting led to reaction by the police and criminal justice, they were still ultimately dissatisfied, either by the sentence given or by lack of support during court proceedings. For one person, 'reporting it was no problem. But when the person being reported denies the crime, even if the police arrested the person, but then there is no punishment, that hurts.' In another case, a victim was offered, as an alternative to a criminal trial, assistance from the National Mediation Service, which would have seen the parties involved meeting face to face for a 'restorative process' guided by a mediator. The respondent said: 'I politely declined as I did not need an apology from the person who carried out the violence, I needed the person to be punished.'

Having a case dismissed was usually a negative experience, especially when the police failed to look at security camera footage before it was deleted because they had other 'more

important things to do', as one respondent recalled. For many respondents, having no or minimal results from their reporting, other than dismissal, led to anger and frustration. These experiences deterred several respondents from reporting subsequent hate crimes. The respondents in this category mainly spoke of their reporting as a negative experience that led nowhere and was likely to influence their future reporting behaviour, reduce their trust in the police, and increase their cynicism towards the justice system.

5.1.2 Interaction with police during and after reporting – negative experiences

Twenty-one responses gave examples of negative *interactions with police during and after reporting*. One person said, '[I] didn't feel I was taken seriously when I went to the counter at the police station to say I wanted to report it. I was taken very seriously when I was first brought in for an interview, but the first interaction [at the counter] made me feel like they didn't believe me.' This, and the examples in the "Filing a Report" section below, illustrate the pivotal nature of the initial interaction with the police – the risk of victims being discouraged from reporting at that point is real. Negative interactions with police at this stage may also make people feel unsafe, which decreases the likelihood of subsequent hate crimes being reported.

One respondent described the difficulty of interacting with police during the investigation of the case: 'The police officer did not believe what I said during the interrogation was true. That made it very difficult and painful to carry on with it'. Many responses described being met with suspicion and disrespect because they were LGBTQI (see also Shields, 2021; Wickes et al., 2016). One person said, 'I was treated in a very inhumane and unprofessional manner by the police. The police officer I met was very dismissive, showed zero understanding, and I was also consistently addressed with the wrong gender at the police station'. Some negative experiences were related to police officers lacking knowledge about the variety of gender expressions and identities that exist, and their incorrect use of pronouns.

One person's view was that: 'The police have little knowledge about how to interact with someone who has experienced hatred and violence, and are much more interested in what you did, said, and were wearing than in what was done to you and by whom'. According to the respondent, this amounts to 'poorly disguised dislike and little goodwill towards LGBTQI people'. The same person argued that this could mean that the police 'do not understand what is being said or that it amounts to hatred towards LGBTQI people'. Others reported feeling unsafe when interacting with the police because they were afraid that they would not be LGBTQI-friendly (see also Fileborn, 2019; Shields, 2021). This connects clearly to respondents' perceptions of procedurally unjust police behaviour.

5.1.3 Interaction with police during and after reporting – positive experiences

In contrast to such dissatisfaction with the police and reporting, positive experiences were also reported (see also Fileborn, 2019). This was mostly related to *the interaction with police during and after reporting*. Thirty-one responses described mainly positive experiences, irrespective of their case's outcome. Some expressed disappointment because they 'never heard anything more until much later, when we were told that the case had been dismissed', but at the same time they emphasised that the 'meeting with the police was fine, they were nice and respectful.' Another person said 'the case was dismissed because of a lack of resources' but maintained that the police 'investigated it and did thorough work'. The respondents who had positive experiences also said they were glad they had reported, even though their cases were dismissed: 'I was received and treated well. Admittedly it was said that nothing further could be done, but it was not the police's fault.' Unlike responses discussed above, some respondents described the

police as treating them politely and respectfully, and doing the best they could, even though their reports led nowhere. These respondents frequently maintained that it was not necessarily the fault of the police or a lack of investigation that led to the case being dismissed.

The police in the Oslo district, as well as the National Police Competence Group on Hate Crime, located in Oslo, were mentioned in a few responses: 'Oslo Police gave me good treatment and, should it happen again, I have been told I can call a policewoman directly to assess whether I should report it.' Another respondent who had been in contact with the same unit was pleasantly surprised because 'the police took it [the report] seriously and even bothered to start an investigation.' Even though the case did not lead to a conviction, the police's behaviour and handling of the case made the respondent exclaim: 'with this I feel safer!' These examples, like the other responses, make it clear that it is not just the outcome of reporting that is crucial to the respondents' experience, but also the way in which the police welcome those targeted by hate crime or hate incidents. This underlines the importance of officers' attitudes for the respondents' perceptions that police behaviour is procedurally just.

However, though these respondents spoke of positive interactions with the police, the majority had negative experiences when reporting anti-LGBTQI hate crime.

5.1.4 Filing a report

Negative experiences of *filing a report* to the police were also evident in the data. In 35 open-ended answers, respondents described contacting the police or starting to file a report, and then not finishing it or being discouraged from doing so. One respondent was met with condescension, which put them off reporting:

> I was assaulted by a man in a tunnel in [district in Oslo]. It took me two days to process what had happened before my colleagues talked me into calling the police. When I did, the policewoman that picked up the phone suggested that being out alone at 9 pm on a Saturday was of course dangerous in [district in Oslo] and that they probably wouldn't catch anyone because I had taken so long to call them, and it would be my own fault that they couldn't investigate it.

The reason that people contacting the police to file a report then gave up, was often the negative nature of this encounter. This included the police not trusting their explanation of the incident, describing the incident as not serious enough to report, or treating them in ways that respondents described as patronising and dismissive. The police also blamed them, for example, for frequenting queer meeting places: 'I was beaten up outside a gay bar a few years ago and went to the police with a big black eye. The officer was condescending and rude and said I should stop going to places like that.' Some respondents were also discouraged by officers advising them not to report their case or telling them that a report was likely to be dismissed. One respondent said: 'On one occasion, I wanted to report a hate crime but was told by a police officer that there was no point because the burden of proof was so great.'

Several (N=15) respondents described the process of filing a police report as too onerous. In many cases, this led victims to decide against reporting (see also Miles-Johnson, 2013): 'I was going to report, but then I checked the police website, found no way of reporting except by meeting at an office or phoning. I ended up not reporting.' Some people found it difficult to acquire information on how to file a report, while others were deterred from completing the report by a lack of information about the post-reporting process. Most of these respondents never went through with reporting, unlike those discussed in the next section. The respondents gave up because they were dismissed or had received a negative reaction from the police and faced practical obstacles to filing a report that they could not handle.

5.1.5 The personal cost of reporting

Responses about *the personal cost of reporting* to the police focused on the risks involved and possible unwanted repercussions (see also Wong et al., 2020). Six responses pointed out that reporting and the subsequent proceedings were time-consuming, while 16 said the personal costs were too great – such as the risk of retaliation by perpetrators and an escalation of conflict. For some, reporting also carried the risk of being outed, as they were not openly known as LGBTQI in their social or professional networks (see also Chakraborti & Hardy, 2015; Herek et al., 2002). Muslim respondents mentioned fear of repercussions from other Muslims. One respondent recalled the personal cost of the court trial:

> You kind of become detached from the whole incident, summoned as a witness in a criminal case, and yeah… it's tough to meet the perpetrator again. He gets a lot of attention, and that's probably good, but I thought afterwards that I should have had legal aid. It would probably have made it easier to comprehend the situation at the time, and I might have felt more taken care of.

The process of reporting compromised some people's mental health, because they did not feel they were taken care of, either by the police or during court proceedings. There were other adverse effects on their personal well-being. This telling example was given: 'the process of filing a report was far too demanding, cumbersome, and painful. It just requires yet more from the person who has to go through this process of filling in countless forms about this and that.' Another respondent spoke emotionally about being left to fend for themselves, without any help from the police or other public services: 'It feels like you are very alone in the support system when you are in an actual crisis and have to escape from violence, threats, and fears for your life.' These experiences of personal costs and risks might well be reduced if they could be (or feel) better supported and protected throughout the criminal justice process.

This personal cost of reporting, in combination with being dismissed and having negative interactions with police officers during and after reporting, creates a body of experience that discourages hate crime reporting to police in the future. A small minority of respondents, however, had positive interactions with police that increased police legitimacy and encouraged future reporting.

5.2. Reasons for not reporting hate incidents

Of the 40% (3780) of respondents (N=9508) who had been exposed to hate crimes because of their sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression in the last two years, 89%[1] did not report the incident to the police. This section outlines the reasons 2583 (83%) of these respondents gave for not reporting the matter to the police.

1. Of the 3780 respondents who had been exposed to hate crime in the last two years, 3% answered 'Do not want to answer' in response to this question: 'Did you report the hate incident you experienced to the police?'

Table 3: Reasons for Not Reporting, by Dimension

Dimension	Theme	Coded responses
Outcome of reporting	No point, leads nowhere	1354
	Percentage of all responses in this dimension	44.8% (1354)
Nature of the hate incident	Incident not seen as serious enough	398
	Weak or no evidence	233
	Unsure what police assess as hate crime	145
	Used to hate, try to ignore it	125
	Close relationship with the perpetrator	58
	Happened online or abroad	49
	Victim or perpetrator were minors	18
	Percentage of all responses in this dimension	34% (1026)
Personal cost of reporting	Personal cost and fear too great	439
	Not yet come out	17
	Percentage of all responses in this dimension	15.1% (456)
Interaction with police during and after reporting	Lack of trust in the police	109
	Contacted police, ended up not reporting	41
	Negative attitude of police	33
	Percentage of all responses in this dimension	6,1% (183)
Filing a report	Percentage of all responses in this dimension	0% (0)
		100% (3019)

5.2.1 The outcome of reporting

The anticipated *outcome of reporting* was the most common reason given for not reporting incidents: reporting to the police was seen as futile: 1354 respondents expected it to lead nowhere (see also Pezzella et al., 2019). This response encapsulates the experience of many:

> I have seen what the police did about similar incidents, and things that were worse and where there was more evidence than for what happened to me. Dismissal. I don't see the point of reporting when the police never act on hate crimes. Out of my group of 10 queer friends, five have reported one or more incidents, and nothing has been done.

The expectation that reporting will lead nowhere was often rooted in the experience of people in the respondents' social networks, where cases reported by LGBTQI individuals had frequently been dismissed. Another respondent spelled out how being LGBTQI impacted reporting: 'It seems as if the police do not deal with queers' cases because they either have too high a threshold or they simply have no understanding of how queer people can be exposed to hate crime.' This was how respondents explained their non-reporting: 'It just doesn't seem like anything will actually come of reporting it.' Some respondents said that the police ignored hate crimes in the form of hateful speech because freedom of speech and freedom of religion trumped hate speech, thus making it pointless to report it. If reporting is understood to have no tangible results, it is understandable that few should bother with it.

Other respondents could not imagine that reporting to the police would be of any use and saw other ways of responding as more worthwhile: 'I feel it is easier to get through hate crime on your own and with the help of talking to others in the same situation, rather than

having to report something that is most likely to be dismissed.' This indicates little trust in the police's ability to provide support and justice to those who have been victimised.

5.2.2 The nature of the hate incident

Another reason for not reporting a hate incident was the feeling that the incident was not serious enough (see also Herek et al., 2002; Vergani & Navarro, 2023). This dimension (*the nature of the hate incident*) was not discussed in the section on first-hand experience because it has to do with the nature of the incidents, rather than what the experience of reporting was like. One person expressed a view held by many respondents: 'Getting abuse while walking along the street and unpleasant comments when going home from a night out are not fun to experience. The thought of reporting it has never occurred to me, and it doesn't feel like something to be reported either.' Non-reporting because an incident is not considered serious enough can be problematic if the decision arises from uncertainty about where the line between lawful speech and punishable hate speech is drawn.

Many respondents distinguished between verbal and physical incidents, noting that verbal harassment and hate speech were often below their threshold for reporting: 'It was only verbal, along with threats that I did not experience as real, so did not seem serious enough for me to report. The threshold for going to the police with something like this is high.' Others distinguished between online and real-life incidents, making the threshold for reporting online incidents higher: 'I don't feel that getting hate online is "worthy" of reporting.' Some described physical violence as something they would definitely report but still described serious incidents that they would not report: 'I don't feel it's being prioritised [by police] and it might not have been "such a big deal" to be spat on compared to being knocked down, for example, which others in my circle have experienced.'

For some respondents, the threshold of seriousness for reporting an incident was influenced by external expectations: 'When you are part of a minority or vulnerable group, you are constantly told to stop "being so sensitive"'. However, had incidents involved serious threats or violence, most respondents said that they would have reported them.

Another reason for not reporting, given in 233 answers, was weak or no evidence. Many described incidents happening so suddenly or fleetingly that there was no time to secure evidence: 'I thought there was no point because I had no evidence. It was sexual harassment by a person going past me. As a rule, this happens very quickly when it happens, and you don't have time to pick up your mobile phone to film it, or you just want to get away due to fear of possible escalation and violence.' In other incidents, the evidence was not strong enough to warrant a report. This was most often the case with hate speech incidents, as one respondent explained: 'I got the impression that "the-other-person's-word-against-mine" cases usually end up being dismissed, and I would therefore not file a report unless there was clear evidence such as wounds/scratches/other visible marks.' Respondents also mentioned not being able to identify the perpetrator, since hate speech was often uttered in public spaces by strangers, which made it difficult to obtain evidence or solid information: '[these incidents happen] in public places such as nightclubs, on the street or public transport, and from people I don't know, so I don't know if anything would be done about it since I don't have the name or a clear description of the person.'

In a good number of responses (145), uncertainty about what the police regard as punishable was the reason for not reporting (see also Culotta, 2005; Chakraborti et al., 2014). This relates both to *the nature of the hate incident* and to *filing a report to the police*. This reason for non-reporting differs from the one above, where respondents themselves did not consider the incident serious enough to report. Respondents often saw incidents as worthy of being

reported but were still hesitant because it was 'difficult to know where the line is drawn for what is actually criminal'. Related to this was uncertainty about what constitutes a criminal offence in the view of the police: 'I don't know if it's a hate crime or not, because it's not just me who is the target, but everyone [all LGBTQI people], for example, in a post saying "all gays should burn"'.

Respondents emphasised how difficult it was to decide when and whether hateful speech acts were criminal offences and when it was worth reporting them. One respondent mentioned a crucial issue: 'I think it is difficult to distinguish between freedom of expression and hate crime.' Some respondents connected this to not having learned in school or elsewhere what hate crime is and what to report. Several said the police had a responsibility to inform the public: 'The police must make it clearer what queers can report and what behaviour we should not accept.'

Being used to hate crime was given as a reason by 125 respondents for not reporting it (see also Cuerden & Blakemore, 2020; Wong et al., 2020); people in the LGBTQI community are used to getting hateful remarks, comments, and threats:

> As queers, we start our lives in the famous 'closet'. By the time we've dared to open the door a crack, many have already experienced harassment, comments, and other remarks due to a difference that we might not even have figured out ourselves yet. Once the door is open, the comments can continue, for example about how a person looks, talks, or walks. Comments like 'yuck', fucking gay', 'scum', 'stay away from me', 'I'll beat you up', 'you deserve to die'. There's a perception of being second-class citizens because we do not live up to a heteronormative standard. For my part, this means that I don't report hate speech because I'm so used to it.

Several respondents described hateful remarks as a part of their everyday lives, something they had been taught to manage by giving them as little attention as possible: 'We are so used to it. We accept far too much, perhaps because we live in Norway and the conditions here are, after all, better than elsewhere. Another reason could be that you want to put it behind you as soon as possible.' In this sense, reporting may be unappealing because it involves magnifying hate incidents by giving them increased attention.

One person expressed a sentiment held by many: 'Because it happens so frequently, you eventually learn to live with the hate.'

5.2.3 The personal cost of reporting

Great personal risks and the possibility of negative repercussions were described in 439 responses as reasons for not reporting. Many respondents expected that the post-reporting process would involve significant stress, including the fear that state institutions would not support them or ensure their well-being: 'Unfortunately, I still have a fundamental doubt whether the system cares about me. I can't bear to put myself in that situation if it only leads to more strain and no other outcome'.

Numerous responses referred to the personal costs that other LGBTQI people had experienced when reporting hate crimes. This led one respondent, like many others, to conclude that 'reporting to the police and sitting in an interview is extremely demanding, and the questions the police ask are also offensive. It requires too much.' Another person gave an example of the risk of repercussions, which echoed many other responses (see also Shields, 2021; Wong et al., 2020): 'Potentially, I would be forced to walk around unprotected, with the fear that it would get worse when the person was reported, and if the police did nothing, I would be exposed, and the other person would be angrier.' Of the 439 responses, 129

referred specifically to fear when speaking of the anticipated costs of reporting. One person said 'many were afraid that the case would become even bigger. Afraid of the burden it could cause.'

In addition to fear, respondents frequently weighed the expected costs of reporting against the potential benefits. Several underscored the stress that sexual and gender minorities routinely experience because of who they are and said this could be intensified by unrealistic expectations and investing too much effort in reporting: 'It is emotionally and psychologically exhausting to go through a process that will most likely be dropped.' The same person went on: 'Minority stress is triggered by having to hand yourself over to an agency that you feel has little knowledge of the minoritised group you are part of, with the fear you will not be looked after or dealt with in a humane way.' The personal costs of reporting were thus expected to be too burdensome and emotionally exhausting, rather than representing an opportunity to be acknowledged and see justice done. The costs were thus expected to outweigh the potential benefits of reporting.

5.2.4 Interaction with police during and after reporting

Interaction with the police, more specifically lack of trust in the police engendered by the interaction, was given as another reason for not reporting hate crimes in 109 answers (see also Cuerden & Blakemore, 2020; Culotta, 2005). This included not trusting officers or not expecting to be treated with respect: 'I have no confidence that I'll be received with respect, heard, or that it would lead to any kind of action.' Lack of trust was often the result of negative personal experiences with the police or of those of their acquaintances and others in their social networks. One respondent described their experience thus: 'I have myself been harassed by the police several times. I have no confidence in the police and have chosen not to report ANY of the times I have been a victim of hate crime, as I feel that involving the police will make me even less safe than I already am.'

Distrust also arose from cases that attracted widespread news media attention and involved serious hate crime against queers but were nonetheless dismissed. Because of this, some felt that reporting to the police would only further compromise their safety, as they did not expect the police would be able to protect them. Some individuals said their trust in the police decreased when they advised the cancellation of all Oslo Pride events following the terrorist attack on 25 June 2022, as they could not guarantee the security of people attending them. A few people did, however, express hope that the police might change: 'Unfortunately, I have zero trust in you [police], but I hope you will work on yourselves so that I and many others can regain faith in you.'

The less common reasons for not reporting (below 100 responses) in this dimension are not described here but are listed in Table 3.

6. Discussion and conclusions

The findings of this first study of Norwegian LGBTQI people's experiences of reporting and reasons for not reporting hate crimes parallel those of numerous international studies. Norway represents a positive case of state authorities mobilising against hate crime by making hate crime a priority for police and prosecutors, and the country has an exceptional level of public trust in state institutions. However, this study makes it clear that the LGBTQI community has largely negative experiences of reporting to the police and low trust in police officers. Our findings show there is a substantial gap between the official aspirations of policy makers and criminal justice actors, and the real-life experience of LGBTQI people.

The Norwegian respondents' reasons for not reporting anti-LGBTQI hate incidents are similar to those given by LGBTQI people in EU countries, where one of the main reasons for not reporting is the perception that police will not or cannot do anything about the matter (FRA, 2020b). This resembles the commonest barrier to reporting – the negative expectations and experiences of respondents: it 'leads nowhere' (*the outcome of reporting* dimension). Perceptions that reporting leads nowhere indicate a negative image of police legitimacy, which is critical to a positive relationship between any citizen and the police (Hawdon, 2008).

Barriers to reporting were also evident across the other dimensions of hate crime reporting. One key barrier in *the nature of the incident* dimension was the difficulty of securing evidence. Another was related to LGBTQI people struggling to decide whether the incident was serious enough to report. This barrier seemed to be connected with respondents' internalised efforts to downplay anti-LGBTQI hostility in order to 'get by' in their everyday lives (see also Lamont et al., 2013), which may seem unconnected with issues of police legitimacy and legal cynicism. However, a lack of support and protection by criminal justice agencies, whether experienced or perceived, may play an important part in this 'normalisation' of everyday experiences of hate crime (Wiedlitzka et al., 2018).

Another common reason for not reporting was expectations of *the high personal cost.* However, while 15.1% of respondents mentioned personal cost as a reason for not reporting, only 6.7% of those who had reported described finding the personal cost too great. The fear of negative costs and the other factors and barriers mentioned above influence how LGBTQI individuals calculate the potential costs and benefits of reporting and whether it is worthwhile.

When the general view among LGBTQI people is that reporting does not have clear benefits and may involve substantial personal costs, non-reporting is to be expected. Non-reporting should, therefore, be understood as the outcome of a decision-making process during which victimised people weigh the anticipated costs and benefits of reporting (Tarling & Morris, 2010). Our findings help explain why a considerable number of hate crimes targeting the Norwegian LGBTQI community are never reported. The lack of trust in the police and criminal justice process is made clear by these findings. Low trust and numerous barriers to reporting makes the dark figures of these crimes substantial. Our findings thus help illuminate why official statistics on anti-LGBTQI hate crime are not reflective of the experiences of LGBTQI individuals, as is also the case in other jurisdictions (see Pezzella et al., 2019).

Almost 10% of the responses from people with first-hand experience of reporting were positive. Some expressed optimism about the police's handling of anti-LGBTQI hate crime or were willing to give the police the benefit of the doubt as long as their performance improved; if that happened, respondents' reporting behaviour would change. Positive interactions between officers and LGBTQI citizens could lead to more positive perceptions of the police (Gillespie, 2008). Numerous respondents emphasised how they learned to trust the police and felt secure when they were treated with respect and understanding, even when their reports were dismissed. Being taken seriously by the police may thus, in some cases, be even more important for victimised people's trust in them than reporting having a positive outcome. Being recognised as a victim of a hate crime may both alleviate insecurity in the wake of victimisation and constitute procedurally just practice (Klatran, 2019).

Trust in the police is crucial to citizens' views about police legitimacy (Hawdon, 2008), and most of the barriers we found reflect a lack of such trust regarding protection for the minority group respondents belong to. People care about procedural justice during inter-

action with authorities because 'procedural justice conveys messages about one's standing within society', with experiences of unfair treatment confirming one's marginality (Murphy & Barkworth, 2014). This is particularly critical for members of minority groups whose standing is frequently challenged by hostility.

This study's findings could help criminal justice agencies, policy makers, and civil society organisations to address the barriers to reporting anti-LGBTQI hate crime that we have identified. Some countries have established third-party reporting as an alternative to reporting to the police. This may be provided by formal national support groups or local informal self-help groups that assist victims with reporting or anonymously pass on details of victimisation to the police, with the aim of preventing future victimisation (Giannasi, 2014). Institutionalising such options for reporting hate crimes through civil society organisations may make reporting less personally onerous and result in more accurate statistics that would shine a light on the dark figures of hate crime (Schweppe et al., 2020). Research has suggested other initiatives to improve trust in the police: the adoption of community-based strategies to liaise with local LGBTQI communities, along with normalising LGBTQI issues in the police to strengthen officers' knowledge about LGBTQI identity, language, and culture (Pickles 2020).

As our data did not include demographic variables such as gender identity, ethnicity, or area of residence, we could not distinguish experiences and perceptions across geographical regions, intersectional identities, or other key factors for identifying varieties within Norway's diverse LGBTQI population. The fact that the survey was open to respondents 12 weeks after the terrorist attack in Oslo against the LGBTQI community should also be taken into consideration when assessing the results. It is hard to know to what extent this influenced the responses.

Despite these limitations, our qualitative study provides unique insights into LGBTQI people's views and experiences of reporting anti-LGBTQI hate crimes to the Norwegian police. It also provides knowledge that could be used for initiating change in the police and beyond.

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