

# Queer Caring - Exploring the Experiences of LGBTQ+ Family Carers in Ireland



Zoë Hughes (MSW) - Doctoral Student, University College Cork



## Background & Context

### Family Care

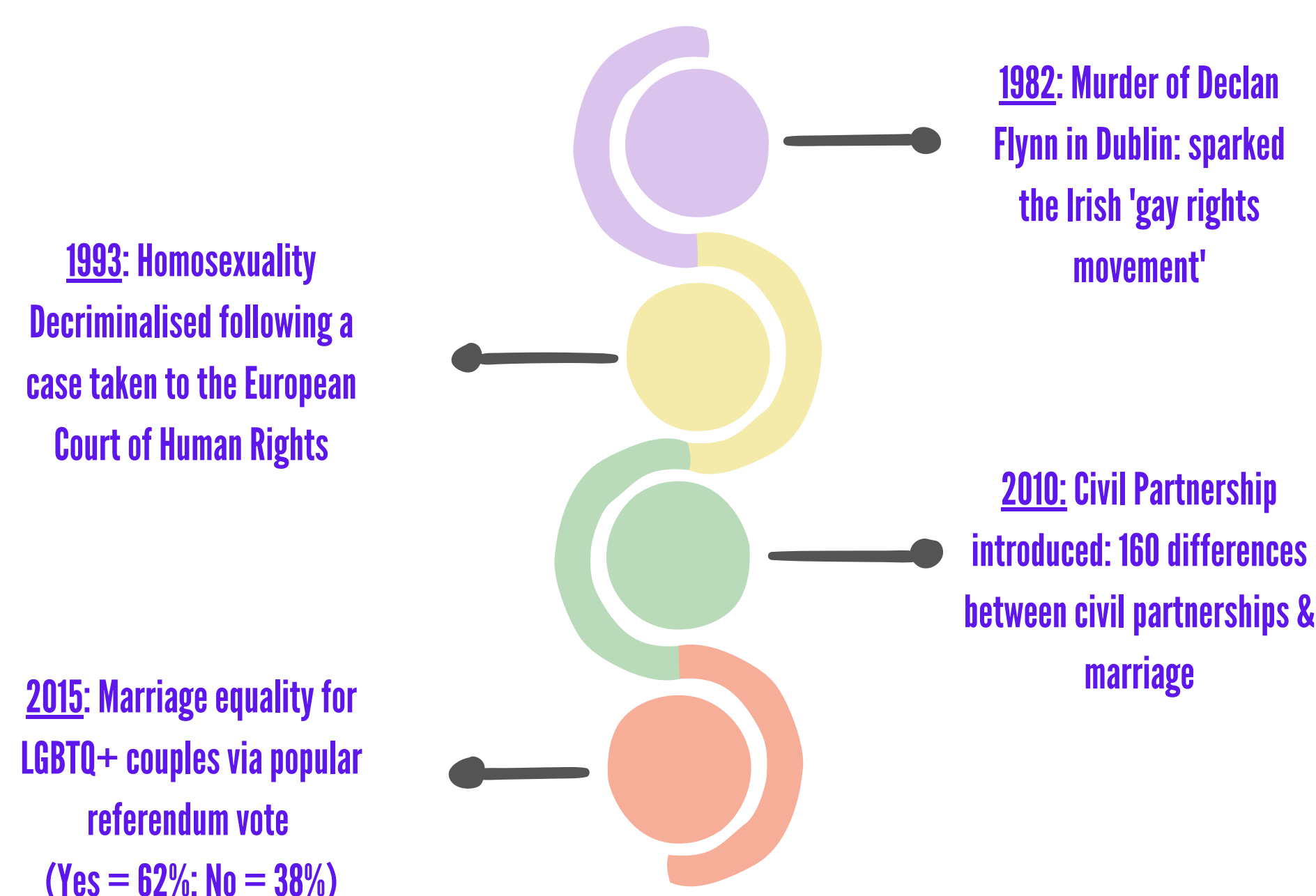
A **family carer** is someone who "provides regular unpaid personal help or support to a family member, neighbour or friend with a long-term illness, health issue, an issue related to old age or disability." (CSO, 2022)

There are **c.516,770** family carers in Ireland (CSO, 2022)

Some impacts of family caring include:

- Economic: 68% experiencing financial distress (Family Carers Ireland (FCI), 2022)
- Exclusion: 71% feel 'left out' of society (FCI, 2022)
- Mental health: family carers 31% higher probability of experiencing depression (Gallagher & Wetherell, 2022)

### Sexual & Gender Minorities in Ireland



### Queer Caring - Existing Studies

- LGBTQ+ individuals twice as likely (per population) to be acting as a family carer (Croghan et. al., 2014)
- Up to 40% of LGBTQ+ family carers & those they care for report feeling discriminated against due to their sexuality (Cantor et.al., 2004)
- 60% of FC support groups see 'no need' to address LGBTQ+ issues specifically (Croghan et. al., 2014)
- The day-to-day tasks of caring do not differ due to the sexuality of the carer, but the structural issues surrounding them are obviously different (Frederiksen, 1999; Bohmer et. al., 2018)
- Majority of studies of this intersection are US, UK, or Australia based

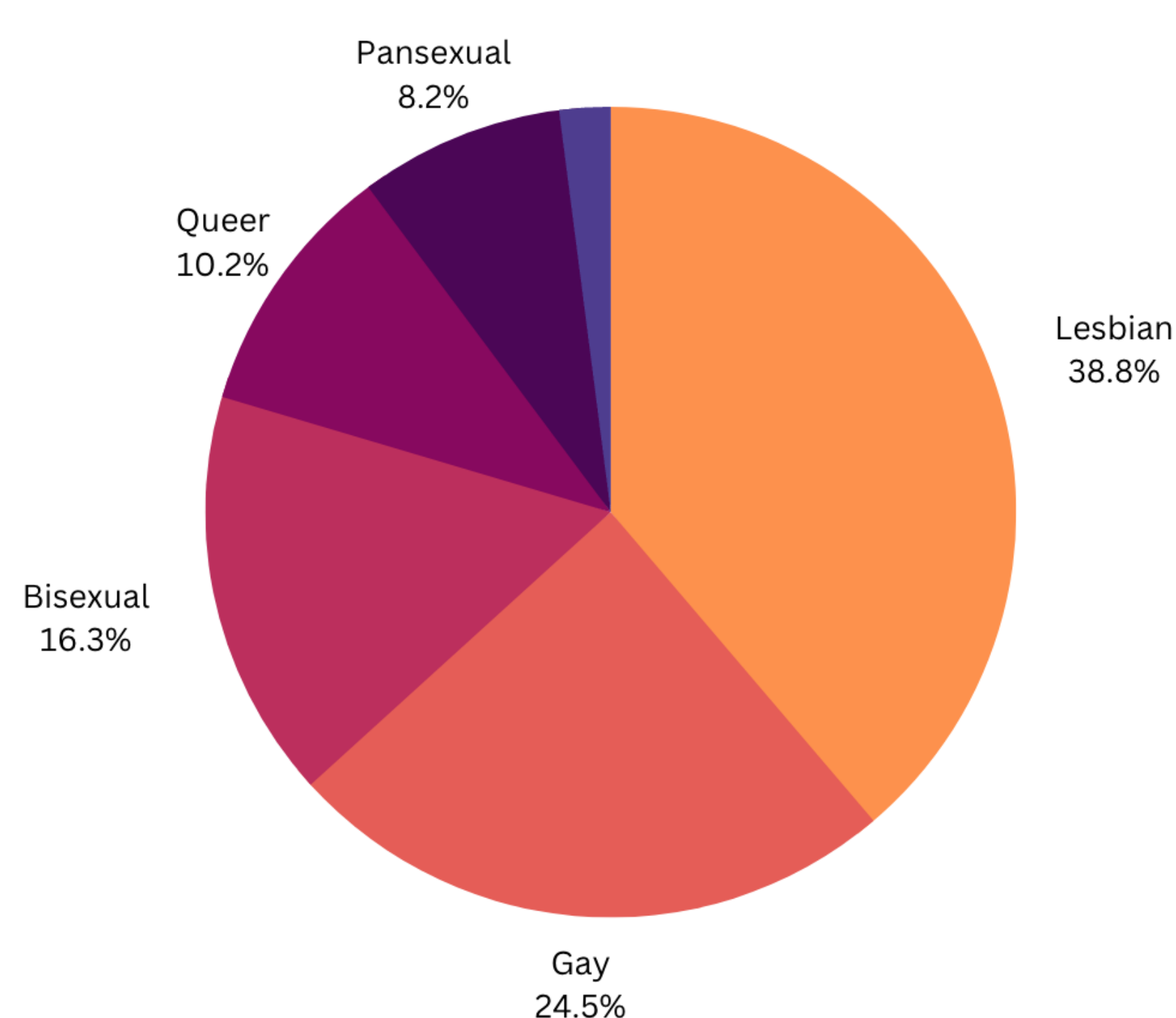
*This is the first (known) study of the intersection of family care and sexuality in Ireland*

## Results of small scale (n=49) survey of Irish LGBTQ+ family carers

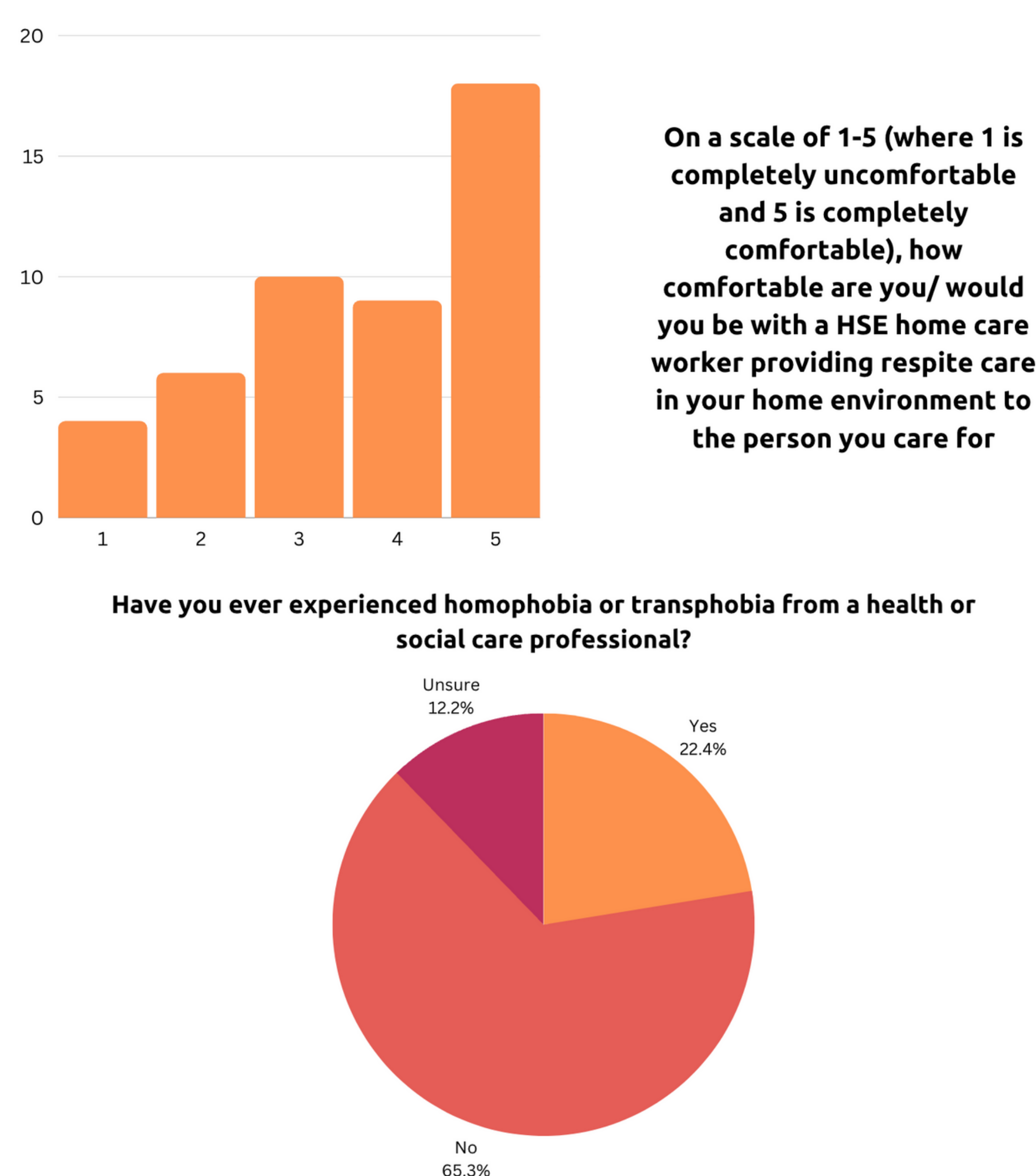
### Demographics

- Average age of respondents – 42.
- Oldest – 70.
- 2/3 of respondents under 55; if 55 or under then they would be 30 or under when decriminalisation happened in '93.

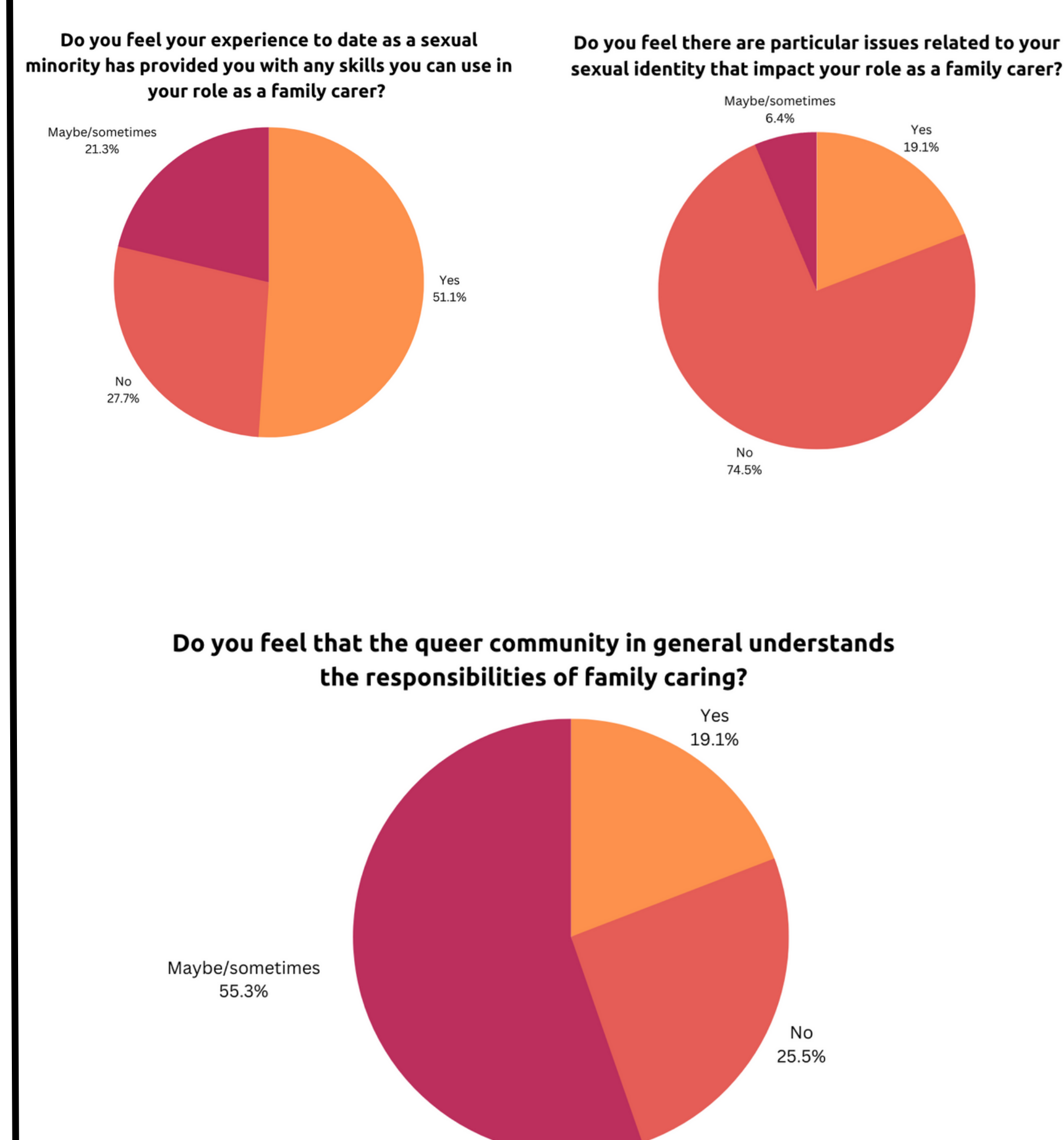
Sexual identity



### Attitudes towards Health & Social Care Professionals



### The impact of sexuality on the caring experience



## Discussion & Conclusions

### Initial findings

- Attitudes towards health & social care professionals
  - Most respondents had little to no wariness regarding their sexuality and how professionals would treat them or those they care for
- Majority of respondents had not felt that their sexuality impacted their inclusion in services and supports
  - The most likely issue for feelings of exclusion was that they were younger than other family carers who were availing of supports
- The older LGBTQ+ respondents had more negative experiences with health & social care professionals in general

- These results indicate more positive experiences in Ireland vs international studies
- It is not clear why this is;
  - Is it due to the Irish policy landscape changing positively quite rapidly in the 30 years since decriminalisation?
  - Is it due to the openness of discussion around LGBTQ+ lives facilitated/ demanded by the 2015 Marriage Equality referendum?
  - Is it due to developments in health & social care training in Ireland?

### Next steps for the research

- Interviews with LGBTQ+/queer family carers to go deeper on the topics and surprises raised via the survey;
  - exploring the lived experiences of queer carers in Ireland and how these cohere or contrast with the experiences of queer carers in other countries;
  - examining the intersections between caring communities and queer communities and how both can better understand and support each other;
  - examining how allied social and health professionals (such as social workers) can practice in affirming ways towards queer carers.

### References

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Project Website: Scan QR Code  
or visit [www.queercaring.com](http://www.queercaring.com)  
Email: 117221797@uamail.ucc.ie

