

**G-Force
5 Year Member
Satisfaction Survey**



Supporting Professional Policing

**A report on the views of G-Force members
on the success of the group since it's
formal establishment in 2009.**

This is a confidential document prepared for members of G-Force,
the G-Force Committee.

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1. Introduction & Research Objectives

G-Force is the support network for LGBT employees in An Garda Síochána. It has been in existence, informally, since 2005. The Group established itself formally with a constitution in 2009. The aims and objectives of the group are contained in its constitution and are listed hereunder.

Aim of Support Network

- To provide a confidential support structure for LGBT members, both personally and professionally, within An Garda Síochána.

Objectives of Support Network

- To provide a support structure to assist LGBT members of An Garda Síochána who may require assistance in dealing with issues arising from their sexual orientation or gender identity.
- To provide a forum for social interaction and peer support for LGBT members of An Garda Síochána.
- To provide information on internal and external support service providers.
- Assist the Garda organisation in its implementation of its Diversity Strategy.
- To provide assistance to An Garda Síochána in the development of policy relating to LGBT/Diversity issues, if requested.
- To assist An Garda Síochána in the provision and delivery of Diversity training to employees, if requested.
- To increase the visibility of LGBT staff in An Garda Síochána through a variety of communication initiatives.
- To provide assistance to An Garda Síochána when dealing with its LGBT customers in a variety of policing situations, if requested.
- To assist Garda LGBT Liaison Officers (external liaison officers) in their role, if requested.
- To advocate the business value of Diversity.
- To assist Garda Human Resource Management in its recruitment function, if requested.

- To provide information and support for members experiencing bullying, harassment and/or sexual harassment in the workplace.
- Promote equality and understanding within An Garda Síochána.
- To liaise with other LGBT organisations (including police organisations) to ascertain best practice, nationally and internationally on a range of LGBT issues.
- Liaise with Staff Associations on areas of concern.
- Secure adequate funding.

The group is open to all sworn and civilian employees of the service, Garda Reserves, Student Gardaí and retired members who identify as LGBT.

Five years since the formal establishment of G-Force, the committee undertook a study of the views of the members of the group. This was to ascertain how the members perceive it was progressing in the context of the aims and objectives, which it originally set out to achieve.

Member's views provide important indicators of both our success and areas where further work is required.

It is noted that the views expressed are specifically those of members of G-Force and not of the overall LGBT population of the organisation. Given the closeted nature of LGBT people within the general population, the age group of Gardaí and the conservative/macho profession that is policing, the views of the people who associate with G-Force, may be the views of people who are more comfortable with their sexual orientation. In this survey, members were not asked if they were 'out' in their workplace. This makes interpreting results more challenging. It is an area which should be examined in further surveys.

The G-Force Strategy 2010-2012 outlined the work plan for that two-year period and was reported upon in 2013. The results from this survey will inform the development of the G-Force Strategy 2013-2015.

Note: Where the document refers to members, it refers to members of G-Force, not Members of An Garda Síochána as defined by the Garda Síochána Act 2005. The views expressed in this report are solely those of the G-Force Committee. We do not purport to represent the views of Garda management.

2. Methodology

An on-line survey was developed. It asked questions relating to the areas listed in the aims and objectives of the G-Force Constitution.

Respondents were self-selecting. All members of G-Force were requested to complete the survey. Members were sent one email and a reminder email. Members who had provided G-Force with a mobile phone number received two additional text messages.

30 members provided responses. G-Force does not disclose it's membership details or numbers thus the total population is not provided in this report.

The data was analysed using Microsoft Excel. No identifying features were recorded. Completion was voluntary and a declaration of consent was included at the start of the survey.

3. Executive Summary

Overall the respondents indicated that they believed G-Force is a welcoming group, however, work remains to be done to ensure the group is more welcoming to civilian staff.

Respondents identified confidentiality as being important for group membership. An extra effort is needed to ensure that this is understood by all members on an ongoing basis.

G-Force provided support for LGBT members in a variety of areas, however a small number of respondents indicated that G-Force needs to do more to support individuals. There is a need to provide a confidential, discrete and sensitive support service to the small number of people who present with personal difficulties.

Members indicated G-Force had been successful at supporting the Garda organisation in developing it's capacity to provide a professional service to the LGBT community.

G-Force, according to respondents, had been very successful in raising the visibility of LGBT people and building relationships with internal and external stakeholders. G-force was also seen as a professional organisation.

Work remains to be done in the areas of bullying and use of homophobic language in the workplace.

Overall, members indicated that they believe G-Force had been successful in it's goals over the 5 year period.

4. Results

4.1 Demographics

80% of respondents were full time serving members. 10% were Garda Reserve members and 3% civilian staff.

Garda members were spread across operations and administration in urban, country and specialist areas. 77% of respondents were on operational units or specialist units.

The average length of employment of respondents was 11.6 years. The average age was 36 years of age. 76% of respondents were male, 21% female. No respondents identified as transgender.

94% of respondents identified as gay or lesbian, 3% identified as bisexual.

4.2 A Welcoming Group

The survey sought views on how welcoming the members perceived the group is or would be to different groups, namely retired members, civilian members, Garda Reserve members Student Gardaí and Transgender members.

80% of respondents indicated their view that G-Force is 'Very Welcoming' or 'Welcoming' to retired members.

66% of respondents indicated their view that G-Force is 'Very Welcoming' or 'Welcoming' to civilian employees. 30% believed it was not very welcoming.

78% of respondents indicated their view that G-Force is 'Very Welcoming' or 'Welcoming' to Garda Reserve members.

92% of respondents indicated their view that G-Force would be 'Very Welcoming' or 'Welcoming' to Student Gardaí.

85% of respondents indicated their view that G-Force would be 'Very Welcoming' or 'Welcoming' to transgender members.

Suggestions were sought as to how we could make G-Force more welcoming to new members. The following is a synopsis of the responses;

- More civilian staff,
- Events outside Dublin/Nationwide,
- Emphasise confidentiality,
- A bigger social emphasis.

4.3 Confidentiality

The survey asked about the importance of confidentiality within the group for its members. 86% of respondents stated that confidentiality was 'Very Important' or 'Important' for them. Only 10% said it was 'Not Very Important' or 'Not Important'.

62% of respondents stated that they thought G-Force as a group respected members confidentiality enough. 18% said 'Yes but could be more confidential' and 17% of respondents stated that the group did not respect it's members confidentiality enough.

Suggestions were sought as to how G-Force could improve it's service in terms of confidentiality. It was suggested that a more private venue for general meetings would help.

4.4 Providing Support

A key goal of G-Force is to provide a support structure for LGBT employees. The survey asked if G-Force had been successful at helping respondents with issues relating to their sexual orientation. 41% of respondents said 'No Opinion', 34% said it has been 'Successful' or 'Very Successful' at helping them. 22% said it had been 'Unsuccessful' or 'Very Unsuccessful' at helping them.

As there are no active members of G-Force identifying as Transgender, the survey asked if G-Force had been successful in identifying workplace issues relating to gender identity. 41% of respondents thought the group had been 'Very Successful' or 'Successful' and 41% of the group responded 'No Opinion'. 18% of respondents indicated 'Not Very Successful' or 'Very Unsuccessful'.

76% of respondents stated that G-Force had been 'Very Successful' or 'Successful' at providing a forum for social interaction for LGBT employees. 8% had 'No Opinion'. 22% stated that it was 'Not Very Successful' or 'Very Unsuccessful' at providing a forum for peer support.

56% of respondents stated that G-Force had been 'Very Successful' or 'Successful' at providing information on internal and external support providers for it's members. 19% had 'No Opinion'. 22% however, stated that it was 'Not Very Successful' or 'Very Unsuccessful' at providing information on internal and external support providers.

77% of respondents had been to social events. Work commitments, time and working/living a significant distance from events were the reasons provided by those who did not attend events. Of those who did attend events, 78% would recommend events to LGBT employees and 83% would recommend them to retired employees.

When asked how G-Force could support members better, members indicated they wanted to see, more events, more nationwide events, better inclusivity of civilian staff, women and a broader age group.

4.5 Supporting the Organization

86% of respondents indicated that they believed G-Force had been 'Successful' or 'Very Successful' at supporting the Garda organization in its implementation of its Diversity Strategy. 7% responded 'No Opinion' and 7% responded 'Not Very Successful'. 76% of respondents indicated that G-Force had been 'Successful' or 'Very Successful' at assisting the Garda organization in the development of policy relating to LGBT/Diversity issues. 12% of respondents replied 'No Opinion' and 12% 'Not Very Successful'.

Half of the members surveyed indicated that they would be willing to assist in the delivery of diversity related training.

52% of respondents indicated that they believed G-Force had been 'Successful' or 'Very Successful' at supporting the Garda organization deal with its LGBT customers. A further 32% indicated that they had 'No Opinion'. 16% indicated that G-Force had been 'Not Very Successful' or 'Unsuccessful' in this area.

A number of suggestions were made on how G-Force could assist the Garda organization in providing a better service to its LGBT customers. These involved supporting LGBT awareness training and encouraging development of the LGBT liaison officer network. It was reported that G-Force can't do anything in this area without first being asked by the organisation to assist.

4.6 Visibility

84% of respondents indicated that they believed G-Force had been 'Successful' or 'Very Successful' in increasing the visibility of LGBT staff in An Garda Síochána. 8% of respondents reported that G-Force had been 'Not Very Successful'.

81% of respondents stated that they believed G-Force represents LGBT employees in a 'Very Professional' or 'Professional' manner. 15% had 'No Opinion'. 4% indicated a belief that G-Force is 'Unprofessional'.

4.7 Building Professional Relationships

92% of respondents indicated that they believed G-Force had been 'Successful' or 'Very Successful' at networking both nationally and internationally. 80% of respondents indicated that they believed G-Force had

been 'Successful' or 'Very Successful' at researching and promoting best practice both nationally and internationally.

73% of respondents indicated that they believed G-Force had been 'Successful' or 'Very Successful' at developing a positive working relationship with the Garda Staff Associations on areas of concern. 15% indicated 'No Opinion' and 12% 'Not Very Successful'. 16% of respondents indicated that they believed G-Force had been 'Successful' or 'Very Successful' at developing a positive working relationship with the civilian unions. 56% had 'No Opinion', and 28% indicated 'Not Very Successful'.

4.8 *Bullying and Harassment*

35% of respondents stated that G-Force had been 'Very Successful' or 'Successful' at providing information and support for members experiencing bullying, harassment or sexual harassment in the workplace. 38% had no opinion. 27% however, stated that it was 'Not Very Successful' or 'Very Unsuccessful' at providing information and support in these circumstances.

62% of respondents stated that they had been bullied by a colleague because of their sexual orientation. When asked if G-Force was able to assist, two respondents said G-Force were not able to assist them, others said it happened prior to joining G-Force. One member stated that they joined G-Force after being bullied so they could assist other members who had experienced bullying or harassment. Other members stated that they had been assisted or didn't ask for assistance.

38% of respondents were not aware that there is a LGB liaison officer provided for under the Garda Síochána Bullying Policy.

85% of respondents stated they had overheard or been subjected to homophobic comments in the workplace from colleagues in the previous two years. When asked how often, 36% of respondents reported 'Regularly', 36% reported 'Occasionally' and 23% said rarely.

4.9 *Funding*

68% of respondents stated they believed that G-Force had been 'Successful' or 'Very Successful' at securing adequate funding to achieve it's goals. 20% had no opinion. 75% of respondents stated they would be willing to make a monthly contribution to support the group.

4.10 *Inter Group contact*

Email, social media and text messages were the most popular means by which members received information about G-Force.

4.11 Overall Success

76% of respondents stated that they believed that G-Force had been 'Successful' or 'Very Successful' at achieving it's aims and objectives since it was established (formally) in 2009. 8% had no opinion and 8% stated they believed we had been 'Not Very Successful' or 'Very Unsuccessful'.

5. Discussion

5.1 Demographics

The survey sample is roughly in line with the organisations gender make-up. The sample is somewhat representative of overall Garda Reserve participation, however civilian staff were under represented.

This result is reflective of the fact that there has been a significant challenge in getting civilian employees involved in G-Force to date. When asked in the past, civilian members stated they believed G-Force was more a group for Garda members and not for civilian employees. This may be reflective of existing cultural differences that exist between civil servants and sworn staff. It is, however, an issue that is referred to a number of times by respondents.

A priority for G-Force for the period 2013-2015 is to work to increase the participation of civilian staff in G-Force activities.

5.2 A Welcoming Group

Overall the groups members indicated that they believed the group was welcoming to retired members, Student Gardaí, Garda Reserves and transgender members (if they were to join). It is noted again that an extra effort will be required to make civilian staff feel welcome at the group.

In order to make the group more welcoming, members suggested encouraging more civilian staff, holding events outside Dublin, having a bigger emphasis on social events and emphasising confidentiality.

A priority task for G-Force for the period 2013-2015 is to hold events outside Dublin subject to ascertaining demand for a location/event.

A task for G-Force for the period 2013-2015 is to organise a social event aimed specifically at welcoming civilian staff.

5.3 Confidentiality

Members indicated that confidentiality was a very important factor for them when engaging with G-Force. They also indicated that a greater effort in terms of ensuring confidentiality was required. The groups members must

ensure that it's members feel that their confidentiality will be respected within the services provided by the group. A significant number of members are not openly LGB in their workplaces and have a fear of a negative reaction should they be 'outed'. Confidentiality of members identities, as long as they want to remain private, must be central to G-Force activities.

Confidentiality is an issue that causes a level of conflict within the groups aims and goals, it likewise causes conflict for some of it's members. This was indicated by members responses. The existence of G-Force, and it's many activities, raises an awareness of LGB staff in AGS. Raising visibility of a once invisible group is a clear goal of the group. For many LGB staff this causes concern. The appearance of an article in the Garda Review, or a conference or meeting of LGBT police officers will cause discussion and debate in the Garda workplace.

This will in certain cases lead to homophobic comment, while in other cases it will just lead to discussion. That discussion alone in the workplace can cause significant discomfort for LGB people who are not out. G-Force as a group must help change the culture of the organisation to being one where all employees can be themselves. At the same time we must support those that do not feel able to be themselves in work. For the sake of future generations of Gardaí the visibility/high-profile work will have to continue. We must at the same time be sensitive to those who fear the attention, which they think may be drawn on them.

A priority task for G-Force for the period 2013-2015 is to emphasise the importance of confidentiality of members' sexual orientation at G-Force events.

5.4 Providing support

22% of respondents stated that G-Force were not in a position to assist them with issues relating to their sexual orientation in the workplace.

Further analysis needs to be done to ascertain how G-Force can provide a better peer-support service. Issues surrounding members personal difficulties with sexual orientation in the workplace are highly complex. Where G-Force is not qualified as a resource to deal with the more acute difficulties people may sometimes face, appropriate referrals should be made to internal or external support providers, if the member so wishes.

Results indicate that G-Force needs to improve the information we provide to members on internal and external support providers.

An identified task for G-Force for the period 2013-2015 is to liaise with our Gay Switchboard contact to acquire a comprehensive list of external support providers. These will be placed on the G-Force website, forward to all

members and all Employee Assistance Officers. G-Force will maintain contact with Employee Assistance Officers.

The lack of Transgender members within G-Force makes it difficult to ascertain views on Transgender issues. 41% of respondents had no opinion on how successful the group had been on raising Transgender awareness within An Garda Síochána. G-Force moved from being a LGB to a LGBT organisation in January 2012 and Transgender issues were not discussed or considered before this point.

An identified task for G-Force for the period 2013-2015 is to contact Transgender organisations to build knowledge and capacity on how to support Trans staff if they approach us and how to best support the organisation from an employee network perspective.

A significant number of members had been to social events, a large majority of these stated they would recommend them to LGBT employees, serving and retired. A number of respondents made reference to the lack of a countrywide group and the difficulties attending events, which are mainly held in Dublin. Shift-work was also identified as causing a difficulty for people making G-Force events. Members indicated that they wanted G-Force to host more social events and in different locations.

A priority task for G-Force for the period 2013-2015 is to ensure forward planning of events so people on shift work can plan the necessary time off.

5.5 Supporting the Organisation

The majority of G-Force members believed that we had successfully supported the implementation of the organisations Diversity Strategy, a sizable number also indicated that we had helped shape organisational policy in this area. Considering G-Force is not part of the official organisation and that we are not requested to assist from a community policing or policy development perspective, this is an indication that our members see our ongoing high profile work influencing thinking within the organisation.

5.6 Visibility

A key goal of G-Force from day one, was to increase the visibility of LGBT staff, a group of people who had been invisible in An Garda Síochána up until very recently. The survey results indicate that the group has been successful from the perspective of its members. Members also believed that G-Force represented LGBT employees in a professional manner, something which is vital to help progress a challenging cultural change programme in a formal organisational setting.

5.7 Building Professional Relationships

G-Force members indicated that they believed the group had been very successful at networking nationally and internationally. Similarly it was indicated that members believed the group had been successful at researching and promoting best practice nationally and internationally.

While it was indicated by members that they felt the group had been successful at building relationships with the Garda Staff Associations, 56% of respondents had no opinion on how successful we had been in building relationships with civilian unions, 28% indicating that we were 'Not Very Successful'. As indicated above, this finding is indicative of a need to work harder to provide the same level of service to civilian employees as sworn members.

A priority task for G-Force for the period 2013-2015 is to establish contact with and build working relationships with all of the unions representing civilian staff in An Garda Síochána.

A priority task for G-Force for the period 2013-2015 is to continue to forge positive relationships with the Garda Staff Associations.

5.8 Bullying and Harassment

The issue of bullying is a matter of concern for G-Force based on the results of the survey. 38% of G-Force members are not aware of the specific LGB Liaison Officer in place to provide information and support to LGB staff if bullying occurs. 62% of respondents stated they had been bullied by a colleague as a result of their sexual orientation. 85% of respondents indicated they had overheard or been subjected to homophobic comments in the workplace in the last two years, with 72% of these indicating it happened 'regularly' or 'occasionally'.

It appears from the responses of the members that the culture which permits the use of homophobic language, as reported in the original research conducted by G-Force prior to its formation in 2009, and in the research of Dr Sheridan and Dr Duffy in 2012, is still in existence in the workplace. This presents a serious issue which needs to be addressed.

A priority task for G-Force for the period 2013-2015 is to make members aware of the LGB Liaison Officer facility available to them under the Garda Síochána Policy on bullying, harassment and sexual harassment.

A priority task for G-Force for the period 2013-2015 is to engage with the Garda organisation on the use of language in the workplace.

5.9 Funding

Responses indicated that members are willing to make a financial contribution to support the workings of the group.

5.10 Inter Group Contact

Email, social media and text messages were the most popular means by which members received information about G-Force.

5.11 Overall Success

Overall the responses from members indicate that they are satisfied that the group has been successful in achieving it's aims and objectives since it's formal establishment in 2009. While challenges have been identified, the survey results provide us with an opportunity to develop a strategy for 2013-2015 that will help us to provide a better service, meeting the needs of LGBT employees of An Garda Síochána.

6. Priority tasks for G-Force - 2013-2015

Events

- *to hold events outside Dublin subject to ascertaining demand for a location/event.*
- *to ensure forward planning of events so people on shift work can plan the necessary time off.*

Civilian Staff

- *to increase the participation of civilian staff in G-Force activities.*
- *to organise a social event aimed specifically at civilian staff.*
- *to make contact with and build working relationships with all of the unions representing civilian staff in An Garda Síochána.*

Bullying and Homophobia

- *to make members aware of the LGB Liaison Officer facility available to them under the Garda Síochána Policy on bullying, harassment and sexual harassment.*
- *to engage with the Garda organisation on the use of language in the work place.*

Confidentiality

- *to emphasise the importance of confidentiality of members' sexual orientation at G-Force events.*

Provision of Information

- *to liaise with our Gay Switchboard contact to acquire a comprehensive list of external support providers. These will be placed on the G-Force website, forward to all members and forwarded to all Employee Assistance Officers. G-Force will maintain contact with Employee Assistance Officers.*

Transgender Issues

- *to contact Transgender organisations to ascertain views on how to support Trans staff if they approach us and how to support the organization best from a employee network perspective.*

Maintaining Relationships

- *to continue to forge positive relationships with the Garda Staff Associations.*



Garda LGBT Employee Network

www.g-force.ie