

# Should gay celebrities be outed?

## What they said...

*'Your paper has no God-given right to know anything about the private life of anyone'*

**Gay actor Magda Szubanski complaining to the editor of The Sydney Morning Herald about the pressure his paper is alleged to have applied to Rebel Wilson**

*'Everyone knew all at once [that I am gay]...There was no turning back and it was a relief'*

**Gay actor Portia de Rossi commenting on her forced coming out in 2005**

## The issue at a glance

On June 10, 2022, actor Rebel Wilson announced on Instagram that she was in a gay relationship with fashion designer Ramona Agruma.

<https://www.instagram.com/p/CelyiLZLHa2/?hl=en>

The announcement prompted congratulations from many on Instagram and other social media sites.

However, the nature of public comment changed when, on June 11, The Sydney Morning Herald published a piece by its social columnist Andrew Hornery in which he complained that Wilson had 'gazumped' a column he had been working on in which he intended to make Wilson's new relationship public. He stated that he had contacted Wilson giving her two days in which to respond. Instead of contacting him, Wilson announced the relationship herself.

<https://www.elle.com.au/news/rebel-wilson-sydney-morning-herald-explained-27197>

Hornery's piece provoked widespread criticism on social media and in other newspapers. The columnist and his paper were condemned for threatening to 'out' Wilson. That is, they were accused of threatening they would make Wilson's gay relationship known without her consent and possibly against her wishes.

<https://www.theguardian.com/media/2022/jun/18/bad-press-the-rebel-wilson-debacle-that-rocked-smh-to-its-core>

The Sydney Morning Herald took Hornery's original column down and it was replaced with an apology from the columnist. Hornery stated that he regretted any distress he had caused Wilson and her partner and denied that his intention had been to out them.

<https://www.skynews.com.au/australia-news/sydney-morning-herald-retracts-rebel-wilson-article-following-backlash-claiming-the-publication-planned-to-out-her/news-story/88aa9bbaa97d777b746545dcdf65537d>

The episode has led to widespread debate around the ethics of outing.

## Background

The following treatment is an abbreviation of a Wikipedia entry titled 'Outing'. The full text can be accessed at <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Outing>

Outing is the act of disclosing an LGBTI person's sexual orientation or gender identity without that person's consent. It is often done for political reasons, to use homophobia to discredit someone. However, gay activists have sometimes outed prominent, well-regarded people in an attempt to break down prejudice against those who are not heterosexuals.

The ethics of outing are highly contested as it can often have a negative effect on the target's personal life or career. Some LGBTI activists argue that gay individuals who oppose LGBT rights do not enjoy a right to privacy because of their perceived hypocrisy. In an attempt to

pre-empt being outed, an LGBTI public figure may decide to come out publicly first, although controlling the conditions under which one's LGBTI identity is revealed is only one of numerous motives for coming out.

Using outing to discredit individuals and attack gay rights

In the 1950s during the Lavender Scare, tabloid publications like Confidential emerged, specializing in the revelation of scandalous information about entertainment and political celebrities. Among the political figures targeted by the magazine were former United States Under Secretary of State Sumner Welles and Arthur H. Vandenberg Jr., who had briefly served as President Eisenhower's Appointments Secretary.

During the 1970s, some political conservatives opposed to increased public acceptance of homosexuality engaged in outing with the goal of embarrassing or discrediting their ideological foes. Conservative commentator Dinesh D'Souza, for example, published the letters of gay fellow students at Dartmouth College in the campus newspaper he edited (The Dartmouth Review) in 1981; a few years later, succeeding Review editor Laura Ingraham had a meeting of a campus gay organization secretly tape-recorded, then published a transcript along with attendees' names as part of an editorial denouncing the group as "cheerleaders for latent campus sodomites." In the 1980s, the AIDS pandemic led to the outing of several major entertainers, including Rock Hudson.

Often outing is used solely to damage the outed person's reputation and has thus been controversial.[original research?] Some activists argue that outing is appropriate and legitimate in some cases — for example, if the individual is actively working against LGBT rights. The British activist Peter Tatchell has stated, 'The lesbian and gay community has a right to defend itself against public figures who abuse their power and influence to support policies which inflict suffering on homosexuals.' In 1994 Tatchell's activist group OutRage! alleged that fourteen bishops of the Church of England were homosexual or bisexual and named them, accusing them of hypocrisy for upholding the Church's policy of regarding homosexual acts as sinful while not observing this prohibition in their personal lives.

Using outing to promote gay acceptance

After the Stonewall riots of 1969, swells of gay activists came out aggressively in the 1970s, crying out: "Out of the closets, Into the streets!" Some began to demand that all homosexuals come out, and that if they were not willing to do so, then it was the community's responsibility to do it for them. One example is the outing of Oliver Sipple, who helped save the life of United States President Gerald Ford during an assassination attempt. Sipple was outed by gay activists, most prominently Harvey Milk. The negative impact the outing had on Sipple's life later provoked opposition. Some argued that privacy should prevail, and felt it was better for the movement to protect closeted gays, especially in homophobic religious institutions and the military. Despite their best efforts, many gays and lesbians were still unwilling to come out.

## **Internet information**

On June 18, 2022, the ABC published a comment by ABC radio commentator and television public affairs moderator Virginia Trioli titled 'The Rebel Wilson affair reveals how inadequate the humble columnist is in the new empire of the celebrity god'. Trioli argues that the Rebel Wilson issue reveals the extent to which print media columnist have lost their power to shape the public narrative.

The full text can be accessed at <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2022-06-18/rebel-wilson-relationship-reveal-entirely-predictable/101162502>

On June 18, 2022, The Age published a comment by columnist Parnell Palme McGuinness titled 'Gay, straight or whoever we are, our secrets need not be fodder for public curiosity'. McGuinness argued that not only was it unethical to publish people's sexual orientation but many other aspects of their which have no claim to being in the public interest should remain private.

The full text can be accessed at <https://www.theage.com.au/national/gay-straight-or-whoever-we-are-our-secrets-need-not-be-fodder-for-public-curiosity-20220617-p5aui3.html>

On June 15, 2022, Lawyers' Weekly published an analysis by Simon Levett titled 'Is law reform needed following the disclosure of Rebel Wilson's new relationship?'. The piece presents the argument of one prominent law professor who argues that the intrusive treatment of Rebel Wilson's sexuality demonstrates 'the need for strengthened privacy laws and anti-discrimination legislation.'

The full text can be accessed at <https://www.lawyersweekly.com.au/wig-chamber/34641-is-law-reform-needed-following-the-disclosure-of-rebel-wilson-s-new-relationship>

On June 14, 2022, The Guardian published a comment by Eleanor Morgan titled 'Nobody should be forced to come out as Rebel Wilson was, famous or not'. Morgan argues that being a celebrity does not make a person's private life public property and that that 'outing' is arrogant and intrusive.

The full text can be accessed at

[https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2022/jun/14/nobody-should-be-forced-to-come-out-famous-rebel-wilson?ref=upstract.com&curator=upstract.com&utm\\_source=upstract.com](https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2022/jun/14/nobody-should-be-forced-to-come-out-famous-rebel-wilson?ref=upstract.com&curator=upstract.com&utm_source=upstract.com)

On June 13, 2022, news.com.au published a report titled 'Backlash over Sydney Morning Herald's Rebel Wilson article'. The report details the widespread social media criticism of The Sydney Morning Herald's claimed mistreatment of Rebel Wilson and disregard for her privacy.

The full text can be accessed at <https://www.news.com.au/entertainment/celebrity-life/backlash-over-sydney-morning-heralds-rebel-wilson-article/news-story/b967ad99dbbcd4f139d9cda79b8dc7e4>

On July 13, 2022, SBS News published a report titled 'Equality advocates take aim at "outing" amid backlash over Rebel Wilson story' which gives a range of authorities stating that long-lasting personal harm can be done to gay people by forcing them to declare their sexual orientation before they are ready to.

The full article can be accessed at <https://www.sbs.com.au/news/article/immense-pain-equality-advocates-take-aim-at-outing-amid-backlash-over-rebel-wilson-story/18v0hktd8>

On June 13, 2022, Medium published a comment by Shannon Ashley titled 'What Just Happened to Rebel Wilson Is Not Okay'. The opinion piece criticises The Sydney Morning Herald for placing pressure on Wilson regarding her private life and further argues that fans have no right to the details of celebrities' personal lives.

The full text can be accessed at <https://medium.com/honestly-yours/what-just-happened-to-rebel-wilson-is-not-okay-a649e84b0e29>

On June 13, 2022, National World published a comment by Nick Mitchell titled ‘The Sydney Morning Herald has done a disservice to journalism with its Rebel Wilson stance’. The comment condemns the Sydney Morning Herald’s initial attempt to defend its treatment of Rebel Wilson’s private life.

The full text can be accessed at <https://www.nationalworld.com/opinion/sydney-morning-herald-rebel-wilson-disservice-to-journalism-3729402>

On June 10, 2022, The Tab published a comment by Georgia Mooney titled ‘These reactions to Rebel Wilson coming out prove why we still need Pride’

The article details and criticises some of the online hostility that has greeted Rebel Wilson’s announcement that she is in a lesbian relationship.

The full text can be accessed at <https://thetab.com/uk/2022/06/10/rebel-wilson-coming-out-reactions-girlfriend-255232>  
<file:///C:/Users/AlienWare/Downloads/lawreview-4015-guzman.pdf>

On April 20, 2020, Daily Grit published a comment by Olivia Smith titled ‘We Are Not As Entitled To The Lives of Celebrities As We Think We Are’ Smith argues celebrities wealth and fame does not entitle the general public to access to their private lives.

The full text can be read at <https://gritdaily.com/we-are-not-as-entitled-to-the-lives-of-celebrities/>

On August 7, 2019, The Authentic Gay published an opinion piece by Christian Cintron titled ‘Do Celebrities Have a Responsibility to Come Out?’ Cintron argues that despite the sensitivity of the issue, gay people have an obligation to other gay people in their community to come out and so help to normalise homosexuality.

The full text can be accessed at <https://www.theauthenticgay.com/do-celebrities-have-a-responsibility-to-come-out/>

On October 12, 2018, CBN News published a comment by John Paul Brammer titled ‘Social media lets celebrities control their own “coming out” stories’. The piece argued that the prospect of being outed should now be less confronting for gay people because social media gives them the opportunity to shape their own story.

The full text can be accessed at <https://www.nbcnews.com/feature/nbc-out/social-media-lets-celebrities-control-their-own-coming-out-stories-n918941>

On November 28, 2016, The Sydney Morning Herald published an article by gay activist Joel Meares titled ‘Gay celebrities have a platform - they should use it.’ The comment argues that gay celebrities should use their public profile to help normalise homosexuality. He argues that this is especially important for young people who need positive role models to help them accept their sexuality.

The full text can be accessed at <https://www.smh.com.au/opinion/gay-celebrities-have-a-platform--they-must-use-it-20161128-gsz0kn.html>

On July 29, 2016, SBS News published a comment by Jayden Masciulli titled ‘Why coming out is still so important’. Though Masciulli does not favour forced outing, he does argue that coming out is important for both the individual concerned and for the positive message it sends to the while gay community.

The full text can be accessed at <https://www.sbs.com.au/topics/pride/agenda/article/2016/07/29/comment-why-coming-out-still-so-important>

On June 29, 2015, Variety published an article by Bret Lang titled ‘Why Gay Movie Stars Are Staying Locked in the Closet’ The piece detailed some of the harm that actors careers can suffer as a result of it being publicly known they are gay.

The full text can be accessed at <https://variety.com/2015/film/news/gay-lgbt-movie-stars-staying-locked-in-the-closet-1201529581/>

On July 2, 2012, The New York Times published a comment by Kate Aurthur, the West Coast editor for The Daily Beast. The comment is titled ‘Be a Hero, Not Part of the Problem’ and argues that gay celebrities should out themselves as a way of normalizing diverse sexual orientations and acting as role models for young gay people.

The full text can be accessed at <https://www.nytimes.com/roomfordebate/2012/07/02/do-gay-celebrities-have-an-obligation-to-come-out/be-a-hero-not-part-of-the-problem>

## **Arguments in favour of gay celebrities being outed**

### **1. Being outed benefits gay celebrities personally**

It has been claimed that gay people benefit personally from having their sexual orientation publicly known and that the same benefits are available to celebrities who are known to be gay.

Those who support non-celebrities either coming out or being outed claim that this allows them to be true to themselves and live a more open and authentic life. Many gay people who are now living openly gay lives have told the Pew Research Center about the sense of freedom and personal authenticity it has given them. The Center has published the following comments. The first comment was made by a gay man aged 59 at the time he was quoted, who was 21 when he came out. He states, ‘In the beginning, it was difficult, but always ended up positive. Nowadays, there really is no decision. I simply have a sexual orientation the same as anyone else, and talk about my partner, etc., the same way anyone mentions their opposite-sex spouse, and there’s no “event” associated with it.’

<https://www.pewresearch.org/social-trends/2013/06/13/chapter-3-the-coming-out-experience/>

The following comment was made by a man who was 43 at the time he was quoted and who announced his sexual orientation when he was 21. He states, ‘I wish I would have told people sooner. I came of age when AIDS first emerged, and homophobia was acceptable. I wasted too many years being afraid of my sexuality and making choices that allowed me to hide in the background of life. I was sort of a professional wallflower.’

<https://www.pewresearch.org/social-trends/2013/06/13/chapter-3-the-coming-out-experience/>

The last remark cited here was made by a woman who was 25 at the time she was quoted and who first revealed her sexual orientation when she was 13. She states, ‘It is always nerve-racking when I come out to someone, but I have had a positive reaction from everyone I have told, except for my dad. My mom and I were already very close, so it didn’t affect our relationship. Nearly everyone in my life knows, and if someone new comes into my life, I tell him or her. If this person cannot accept that I am gay, then he or she does not need to be a part of my life.’

<https://www.pewresearch.org/social-trends/2013/06/13/chapter-3-the-coming-out-experience/>

Those who support gay celebrities being outed or being pressured to reveal their sexual orientation claim that it offers them a similar freedom to live openly and freely. This point has been made by actor Sir Ian McLellan who posted the following Tweet in 2018 to celebrate the three-year anniversary of his coming out. McLellan stated, ‘I’ve never met a gay person who regretted coming out — including myself. Life at last begins to make sense when you are open and honest.’

<https://www.sheknows.com/entertainment/slideshow/2464713/celebrities-who-came-out->

[later-in-life/](#) Many celebrities who have been outed have similarly noted that their lives have become less difficult once the need for secrecy was removed. Arrested Development actor Portia de Rossi was forced to acknowledge her sexuality in 2005 after paparazzi snapped photos of her and her then-girlfriend. Years later, de Rossi stated that she looks back on the experience with nothing but positivity. ‘Every single family member [except grandma], every person I worked with, everybody knew all at once [that I am gay]... There was no turning back, and it was a relief.’ <https://www.nickiswift.com/14413/gay-celebrities-forced-closet/> The actress battled different eating disorders while she was starring in 'Ally McBeal' from 1998 to 2002, and she believes they were symptoms of her hiding her sexuality. She has stated, ‘The thing that kept me company was my eating disorder... it was like somebody who never ever left me.’ <https://tinyurl.com/26vba5rz> Actor Neil Patrick Harris was similarly threatened with being outed in 2006 by celebrity commentator Perez Hilton. He has since claimed that his coming out was a positive experience. He has stated, ‘When I came out, the ceiling didn't crash in — I was able to stand taller and be more ... transparent about who I was.’ Harris also stated that he believed coming out had helped his acting career. He stated, ‘I didn't have to be so guarded. And in turn, I think that allows your light to shine a little bit brighter.’ <https://www.goodmorningamerica.com/culture/story/neil-patrick-harris-discusses-national-coming-day-light-58415869>

2. By encouraging public exposure, celebrities forfeit their right to privacy

People in favour of outing gay celebrities argue they cannot claim a right to privacy because they rely on being in the public eye. It is further argued that this supposed right to privacy becomes particularly suspect when celebrities use their personal lives as a means of attracting attention.

Many celebrities present themselves as a marketable product. They have created personal brands that attract attention and that they use commercially to promote whatever creative work they are involved in or to attract advertisers.

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/steveolenski/2018/04/02/brands-branding-and-celebrities/?sh=41483a364db9>

At a certain level of fame some celebrities have been said to become ‘human brands’. <https://isidl.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/E4174-ISIDL.pdf>

It has been claimed that those celebrities who exploit details of their personal lives to attract a fan base have largely forfeited their right to privacy. Kim Kardashian is one of the best-known examples of a celebrity who has used aspects of her personal life to build a public profile. She first came to prominence after the leaking of a private sex tape involving her and a male partner. It has long been suggested that she was involved in the leak. Whether this is true, she later gained financially from the tape's commercial distribution.

<https://www.complex.com/pop-culture/2017/03/kim-kardashian-sex-tape-10-years-ago> Eight months after the tape surfaced, Kim Kardashian, along with the rest of the Kardashian-Jenner family, began starring on their own reality TV series on E!, ‘Keeping Up With The Kardashians.’ At about the same time, Kardashian also posed for Playboy. She has since acknowledged that the way she became known has lost her an expectation of privacy; however, she has claimed she is prepared to accept the potential downfalls of her fame. She has stated, ‘There are pitfalls. Lack of privacy, loss of privacy. That's not for everyone. For me, I can handle it.’ <https://www.usmagazine.com/celebrity-news/news/kim-kardashian-talks-lack-of-privacy-in-pre-robbery-interview-w446257/>

Some in the media and public relations industry claim there is a trade-off celebrities make between fame and privacy. Jeremy King, editor of the British industry paper Media Week, has stated, ‘If you court the media in the first place and don't like it when they say something nasty, then unfortunately once you push the toothpaste out of the tube it's hard to get it back in.’ Celebrity PR consultant Max Clifford has similarly stated, ‘If you use the media, you

can't complain too much when the media uses you.'

<https://www.bbc.com/news/entertainment-arts-14151678>

Critics of gay celebrities complaining about being outed suggest that they are often being inconsistent, if not hypocritical. They will make some relationships public but not others, or they will make their relationships public on some forums but not on others. In the article in which The Sydney Morning Herald's gossip columnist Andrew Hornery protests that Wilson 'gazumped' his proposed story outing her and her partner, he complains that she had previously used Instagram 'to brag about her handsome ex-boyfriend, wealthy American beer baron Jacob Busch.' Hornery's implication appears to be that if Wilson had already used social media to advertise an earlier personal relationship, it is inconsistent for her to then object to her most recent relationship being made public. Referring to Wilson's current gay relationship, Hornery notes, 'She even had her "bestie", the actor Hugh Sheridan, doing radio interviews on breakfast FM... during which he gloated about introducing the women to each other six months ago.' Again, Hornery appears to be accusing Wilson of inconsistency in that she would promote her current gay relationship through some media outlets but not others.

<https://www.pedestrian.tv/news/sydney-morning-herald-rebel-wilson-smh/> In his subsequent apology to Wilson, Hornery again noted that she had already put her gay relationship in the public arena. He wrote, 'So, after months of posts of the women together on Rebel's Instagram account – from Oscars parties to Valentine's Day, and most recently as VIP guests at the gay and lesbian World Pride Polo match in Florida – I assumed there was a good chance she might be happy to discuss it. She had already revealed a month ago that she had been dating and was very happy.' <https://www.smh.com.au/culture/celebrity/i-made-mistakes-over-rebel-wilson-and-will-learn-from-them-20220613-p5at9e.html> The overall implication of Hornery's remarks is that celebrities should not be able to pick and choose what aspects of their private lives they make public and in what contexts they do so.

### 3. Social media gives outed gay celebrities the power to take control of their own stories

There are those who argue that even if gay celebrities are unhappy at being outed, social media gives them the power to take control of their own story.

It has been noted that social media allows gay celebrities to present their story in their own terms. Trish Bendix, managing editor of LGBTQ news site INTO, has stated, 'Social media has allowed celebrities and public figures to control their own narratives, and that includes coming out... Nothing is getting lost in translation or editorialized by a reporter or editor or publication.' Bendix, who has covered a number of celebrity coming out stories, said this direct-to-follower approach also 'allows for fans to feel like the messaging is more authentic.'

<https://www.nbcnews.com/feature/nbc-out/social-media-lets-celebrities-control-their-own-coming-out-stories-n918941> Underscoring the importance of social media as a coming out tool, Facebook has introduced a new feature allowing users to select 'Came Out' as a 'Major Life Event' on their timeline. Tudor Havriliuc, a vice president at Facebook, has stated, 'For the LGBTQ community, Facebook is a way for you to come out, celebrate your pride and find support. Visibility is so important because it changes hearts and minds about being LGBTQ when friends and family see us living our true lives.'

<https://www.nbcnews.com/feature/nbc-out/social-media-lets-celebrities-control-their-own-coming-out-stories-n918941> Jordan Reeves, founder and CEO of VideoOut, built a virtual library specifically to allow people to easily share their coming out stories. Reeves has similarly stated, 'Social media allows you to control your story. You can craft it in a way that makes sense to you. And in doing so, you tell your story the way you want it to be told. That's empowering!'

There are those who have suggested that coming out on social media may be more comfortable and effective for some people than coming out face to face. LGBT youth have

indicated that the Internet is a space that offers safer opportunities to express who they are, find peer support and gain access to resources not necessarily available in person. LGBT youth were more likely to have searched for health and medical information compared to non-LGBT youth (81 percent vs. 46 percent), and half (50 percent) reported having at least one close online friend, compared to only 19 percent of non-LGBT youth.

<https://www.glsen.org/news/out-online-experiences-lgbt-youth-internet>

British research has demonstrated that for large numbers of gay adolescence social media provides a safe place for them to begin to establish a sexual identity. The study found that its participants' stories of safety and acceptance had translated from "safe" online environments into participants' offline contexts. In line with previous research, online is largely a safe space for many LGBTQ+ youths. The oldest participant in the study, who identifies as queer and uses the pronoun "he," was bullied offline for much of his early childhood. He explains that his adolescence would have been much easier had had access to the social media connections he now has. He stated, 'In terms of forming identity I think it's good, because there are lots and lots of people putting their own experiences forward, and that makes room for validation and self-discovery, and I think, you know, 11-year-old me wouldn't have gone through that oh my god everyone around me's straight, and I'm gay, if I had social media because I would have seen there were more people out there.'

<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/0743558419884700>

Some commentators have seen Rebel Wilson's story as an example of a celebrity seizing the initiative and removing the power of the print media to shape how her story is presented.

ABC commentator Virginia Trioli has argued that social media has effectively removed the power of the print media to tell a celebrity's story and put that power directly in the hands of celebrities themselves. She notes, 'When Justin Bieber wanted to inform the world that he'd been struck down by a virus that has paralysed one side of his face, he posted a video on Instagram. He has more than 240 million followers.' <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2022-06-18/rebel-wilson-relationship-reveal-entirely-predictable/101162502> The Saturday edition of The Sydney Morning Herald in which the Rebel Wilson story appeared has only 489,000 readers. Rebel Wilson has 11.2 million followers on Instagram

<https://www.instagram.com/rebelwilson/?hl=en> and 2.6 million followers on Twitter.

[https://twitter.com/RebelWilson?ref\\_src=twsrc%5Egoogle%7Ctwcamp%5Eserp%7Ctwgr%5Eauthor](https://twitter.com/RebelWilson?ref_src=twsrc%5Egoogle%7Ctwcamp%5Eserp%7Ctwgr%5Eauthor) In terms of capacity to reach a readership, Wilson has vastly more influence. This gives Wilson and others in her situation the capacity to not only shape their story but to reach a large sympathetic audience. The result of The Sydney Morning Herald's attempt to publish a story on Wilson's gay relationship was that the paper was widely condemned on social media and the journalist who had proposed the story and complained about being 'gazumped' was forced to apologise. <https://www.perthnow.com.au/entertainment/confidential/sydney-morning-herald-slammed-for-threatening-to-out-rebel-wilsons-new-relationship-with-ramona-agruma-c-7145517>

#### 4. Today gay celebrities face relatively little prejudice

Those who argue that gay celebrities should be outed or actively encouraged to come out argue that they have an obligation to do so because they can help to further normalise sexual diversity while facing little personal risk. It is claimed that their risk is slight because anti-gay prejudice is in general decline and there is little prejudice today against gay celebrities.

Anti-gay prejudice is diminishing across the Western world. An Opinion poll conducted in Britain in March 2022 found that anti-LGBT sentiments are now restricted to a tiny minority of the public. Fewer than one in ten of those surveyed said they felt disgust towards LGBT people (9 percent for gay, falling to 8 percent for trans and bi and 7 percent towards lesbians). And fewer than one in 20 said they felt either envy, resentment, or fear. Of the options



presented, the most common feeling respondents reported towards the LGBT population was respect. Overall, the data shows that the British public are four times more likely to feel positively towards LGBT people than they are negatively. <https://www.mirror.co.uk/news/uk-news/lgbt-prejudice-restricted-tiny-minority-27117116> This data shows a remarkable change in attitudes in Britain in little more than a generation. Data from historical British Social Attitudes surveys reveals that just 35 years ago two-thirds of Britains felt same-sex relationships were ‘always wrong.’

Surveys conducted ten years ago in the United States suggest that there is also a softening of anti-gay prejudice there. A Pew Research Center document stated (referring to the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century), ‘Americans’ attitudes about gays and lesbians have changed dramatically over the past decade or so, and the LGBT adults are acutely aware of this. These changing attitudes have meant that LGBT adults feel more accepted by society now than in the past. They have also given rise to a nearly universal sense of optimism about what lies ahead for this community.’ <https://www.pewresearch.org/social-trends/2013/06/13/chapter-2-social-acceptance/>

In the eyes of LGBT adults in the United States, greater social acceptance has come because of more Americans knowing someone who is lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender as well as the efforts of high-profile public figures. A large majority (70 percent) says individuals simply knowing someone who is LGBT has helped a lot in terms of making society as a whole more accepting. Similar-sized majorities say well-known public figures—both LGBT (67 percent) and non-LGBT (66 percent)—have helped change societal views.

<https://www.pewresearch.org/social-trends/2013/06/13/chapter-2-social-acceptance/>

These findings have been confirmed by a 2020 study titled ‘A Psychological Account of the Unique Decline in Anti-Gay Attitudes’. The study found that many people have discovered that a close friend, family member, or admired individual is gay, motivating them to identify the harm and discrimination faced by the individual they know.

<https://europepmc.org/article/ppr/ppr324007>

Within more exclusive worlds, such as within the entertainment industry, the decline in anti-gay prejudice seems to be even greater. There was a time in the American entertainment industry when anti-gay prejudice was general. During the Golden Age of Hollywood in the 1920s, actors and actresses had to tailor their images to the demands of the big studios. For LGBT actors, that often meant marrying a person of the opposite sex. Queerness could be appreciated on stage, but in the everyday lives of major stars it was often hidden in sham unions known as ‘lavender marriages.’

<https://webcache.googleusercontent.com/search?q=cache:UL4wr8DjLNwJ:https://www.history.com/news/hollywood-lmarriages-gay-stars-lgbt+&cd=6&hl=en&ct=clnk&gl=au> Film studios employed moral clauses that could have actors fired for improper behaviour. By the 1950s this had come to include homosexuality. <https://harvardjssel.com/2019/02/convicting-celebrities-how-the-morals-clause-continues-to-shape-american-culture/>

Such prejudice is now largely a thing of the past. On May 24, 2018, Scholars Strategy Network published an article outlining the growing pro-gay stance visible in the United States media and entertainment industry. It stated, ‘Increases in representations of gay people in news, television, and movies started in the 1990s – prominently exemplified by Ellen DeGeneres’s coming out on mainstream American television in her portrayal of Ellen Morgen in the ABC-sitcom, *Ellen*. Portrayals of lesbian women and gay men have continued to increase over the two decades since they were featured in popular shows like *Will and Grace* and *Modern Family*; and these portrayals have recently spread to shows for teenage audiences such as *Glee* and *Teen Wolf*. Beyond entertainment, the news media has also increasingly covered gay rights as such issues have become politicized.’

<https://scholars.org/contribution/how-media-has-helped-change-public-views-about-lesbian->

[and-gay-people](https://www.etonline.com/a-decade-of-coming-out-how-lgbtq-celebs-changed-the-game-in-the-2010s-137933) Since the start of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century there has been an increasing incidence of gay celebrities coming out to increasing social acceptance. <https://www.etonline.com/a-decade-of-coming-out-how-lgbtq-celebs-changed-the-game-in-the-2010s-137933> On June 14, 2022, US Weekly published an article listing celebrities and other prominent people who are active supporters of gay rights. Included on this list, with quoted statements indicating their support and accounts of their pro-gay public activities are Prince William, Joan Fonda, Hugh Jackman, Kylie Minogue, Prince Harry, Meghan Markle, George Clooney, Taylor Swift, Lady Gaga, Miley Cyrus and dozens of others. <https://www.usmagazine.com/entertainment/pictures/celebrity-lgbt-allies-2011216/sally-field-3/>

5. Gay celebrities act as role models for people struggling to find their sexual identity Those who support gay celebrities being outed or strongly encouraged to come out claim that their high public profile helps other gay people accept their sexual identity. Young people often struggle because of a lack of gay role models in their immediate lives. Gay celebrities can fill this void.

The importance of role models for young gay people has been frequently highlighted. Many young gay people have explained the vital difference that having a celebrity role model has made in their lives. On July 22, 2020, BuzzFeed published posts from young gay people acknowledging the role models who had helped them accept their sexuality. One young woman referred to Troye Sivan, an Australian singer-songwriter, actor, and YouTuber. The commentator explained, 'His music has always been very important to me. I'm a lesbian from Australia, so discovering an artist who is also Australian, gay, and makes beautiful music about his queer experience meant so much to me. He has inspired me in so many ways!' <https://www.buzzfeed.com/angelicaamartinez/lgbtq-people-and-role-models> Another poster referred to English singer, songwriter, and actor Harry Styles. The commentator stated, 'He's always made it clear that everyone is welcome and loved. He would dance around at concerts with pride flags and he's just so unapologetically himself. He has said many times in interviews that he doesn't label himself and that gender doesn't play a role for him.' <https://www.buzzfeed.com/angelicaamartinez/lgbtq-people-and-role-models> Another poster acknowledged Hayley Kiyoko, an American singer, songwriter, dancer, and actress. The poster stated, 'She really helped me feel okay about being openly gay and calling myself a lesbian. When her "Girls Like Girls" music video came out, I wasn't out to many people because I was still working through a lot of internalized homophobia. The song really helped me see that it's not just okay to be gay, but it's something I can be proud of.'

<https://www.buzzfeed.com/angelicaamartinez/lgbtq-people-and-role-models> Sexual minorities deprived of appropriate role models can suffer serious personal distress and mental health issues. The publication Preventing Alcohol and Other Drug Problems in the Lesbian Gay Community listed a range of factors that encourage alcohol abuse among young gay women. These include lack of connectedness to supportive adults and peers, lack of alternative ways to view 'differentness' and lack of access to role models.

[https://www.ijims.com/uploads/cae8049d138e24ed7f5azppd\\_597.pdf](https://www.ijims.com/uploads/cae8049d138e24ed7f5azppd_597.pdf) The lack of positive role models can have fatal consequences for gay young people. On November 28, 2016, Sydney Morning Herald columnist Joel Meares was moved by the suicide of a 13-year-old gay schoolboy from Brisbane, Tyrone Unsworth, to call on all gay celebrities to out themselves and act as role models for gay youth. Meares wrote, 'I cannot honestly say what an "out" celebrity or sportsperson actually does for a vulnerable young Aussie. But I have some experience of looking out into the world as a kid struggling with his sexuality and seeing no one I resembled. When I was Tyrone's age, there was nobody I could point to on

my TV and say, with pride, "They're just like me." He goes on to speculate that if there had been gay celebrities he was able to identify with then his journey toward self-acceptance would have been less painful. He suggests this is the case for all gay youth, including the young Brisbane boy who took his life after being subjected to bullying about his sexuality. <https://www.smh.com.au/opinion/gay-celebrities-have-a-platform--they-must-use-it-20161128-gsz0kn.html>

Not only can celebrity role models help young gay people avoid severe psychological distress, but they also have the capacity to help gay adolescents strive to be the best people they can. On May 18, 2020, Medium published a comment by LGBTQ activist Jace Matthew. Jace (who writes under his first name) noted, 'Role models are important to the development of youth, especially in minority groups. They help influence our actions and push us to be our best selves. Every great person has strived to emulate their role models and have succeeded in surpassing them. In particular, LGBT role models help young people see that they have a voice. If their role models can show the world that it is perfectly okay to be gay or transgender — then young people can see that it is okay to be their authentic selves.'

<https://medium.com/@jacefrazel/lgbt-youth-need-role-models-88df0bd21b11>

On February 1, 2029, the international child support organisation Bernardo's published an article titled 'Why young people need famous LGBTQ roles models' which made a similar point. The comment argued, 'Famous role models can...play a part in inspiring young people, particularly in terms of success and the attainability of that success... A combination of social barriers and the stigma attached to coming out has meant that in the past, young people were not used to seeing people like them represented in society and the media. Thankfully, our LGBTQ young people today are growing up in a world where this is changing. It's certainly heading in the right direction, to the point where our young people's role models aren't necessarily "the first openly gay rugby player" or "the first trans person on TV"... From actors Ellen Page and Russell Tovey to Olympic diver Tom Daley and LGBT Rights Activist Aderonke Apatá, visible role models for our LGBTQ youth to look up to are on the increase. And that can only be a good thing.' <https://www.barnardos.org.uk/blog/why-young-people-need-famous-lgbtq-roles-models>

## Arguments against outing gay celebrities

### 1. Sexual orientation is a private matter

Critics claim that celebrities have a right to privacy and that this is especially important in regard to their sexual lives. If a celebrity has committed a sexual crime, that may need to be public knowledge; however, sexual practices that take place between consenting adults are matters that concern only the parties involved. Critics argue that sexual privacy is vital because sexuality is a sensitive issue fundamental to people's identity. Disrespecting sexual privacy ignores a person's humanity.

Australia has limited protection for its citizens' sexual privacy. In Australia, the Human Rights (Sexual Conduct) Act 1994 (Commonwealth of Australia) aims to provide individuals with a shield against Commonwealth, State and Territory laws which arbitrarily interfere with their sexual privacy. Section 4 of the Act invalidates any law which constitutes an arbitrary interference with privacy as it relates to 'sexual conduct involving only consenting adults acting in private'.

<http://classic.austlii.edu.au/au/journals/AUJHRights/1995/4.html#Heading4>

However, the Australian Law Council has argued that there need to be greater legal protections put in place to protect the privacy of Australian citizens. The Council has stated, 'If an individual is harmed by a serious invasion of their privacy – such as someone's private activities being watched or recorded, or private information...being made public – there is currently no tortious right of action... This limits a person's ability to pursue compensation or

an injunction.’ <https://www.lawcouncil.asn.au/media/media-releases/law-council-supports-statutory-tort-for-serious-invasion-of-privacy> This means that the Australian Law Council wants Australian citizens to be able to sue if their privacy is violated by the media or others. In an article published in The Guardian on June 14, 2022, Eleanor Morgan explained from personal experience why it was so important that sexual privacy be respected. Morgan writes, ‘Some people find [coming out] relatively straightforward. Others experience layers of inner conflict, fearing discrimination or potential marginalisation from their families or communities.

Being in the public eye doesn’t shelter you from this. If we ignore these individual differences, we turn someone’s sexuality into a commodity.’

[https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2022/jun/14/nobody-should-be-forced-to-come-out-famous-rebel-wilson?ref=upstract.com&curator=upstract.com&utm\\_source=upstract.com](https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2022/jun/14/nobody-should-be-forced-to-come-out-famous-rebel-wilson?ref=upstract.com&curator=upstract.com&utm_source=upstract.com)

On June 14, 2022, Celebrity Land published an opinion piece defending celebrities’ right to privacy regarding their sexual orientation. It stated, ‘We are all brought up under different circumstances and the same holds true for how our sexual worldviews are shaped. Despite all the acceptance out there, people may not feel comfortable coming out or need more time to figure things out. More than encouragement, what such people need is our patience and discretion. And this holds true for celebrities too.

Seeing celebrities only as public figures rather than people dehumanises them and allows others to believe that their right to privacy is not important. Like us, they deserve time and space to come out of the closet, because being a celebrity doesn’t mean signing away...your rights as a human.’ <https://celebrity.land/en/rebel-wilson-almost-outed-by-publication-do-celebrities-have-no-right-to-privacy/>

Legal authorities, gay lobby groups and commentators have argued that sexual privacy protections are particularly important for gay celebrities. On June 14, 2022, Elle Magazine defended Rebel Wilson’s right to reveal her sexual orientation only when she chose to. It stated, ‘The ownership of a person’s sexuality belongs to them, and them alone.’

<https://www.elle.com.au/news/rebel-wilson-sydney-morning-herald-explained-27197> In a conversation with Lawyers Weekly, Professor Paula Gerber of the faculty of law at Monash University emphasised the human impact of ‘outing’ Rebel Wilson, saying that such ‘outings’ used to be a quite common occurrence by the media and that ‘it is less common today, but there is obviously still work to be done in ensuring that everyone understands that when and how a person chooses to come out is their decision alone. It can be one of the biggest decisions an individual makes, and they should never be pressured into doing it before they are ready.’ Professor Gerber further stated, ‘We need stronger protections against discrimination based on sexual orientation, gender identity and intersex status.’ The professor suggested that violating someone’s privacy based on their sexual orientation should be seen as an act of discrimination. <https://www.lawyersweekly.com.au/wig-chamber/34641-is-law-reform-needed-following-the-disclosure-of-rebel-wilson-s-new-relationship>

## 2. There is still widespread prejudice against homosexuality

Critics claim that widespread anti-gay prejudice still exists and that therefore no celebrity should be outed or compelled to make their sexual orientation public.

Although attitudes toward homosexuality are becoming more positive, there remain large areas in all countries where homosexuals face discrimination and abuse, both physical and verbal. A 2006 survey conducted across Australia made the following findings. Overall, the most homophobic areas were the Moreton area of country Queensland (excluding the Gold Coast and Sunshine Coast), Central/South-West Queensland and the Burnie/Western district of Tasmania where 50 percent of those surveyed believed homosexuality is immoral. The least homophobic region was the Inner City of Melbourne (14 per cent), followed by Central

Perth (21 per cent) and Central Melbourne (26 per cent). [https://australiainstitute.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/WP79\\_8.pdf](https://australiainstitute.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/WP79_8.pdf) The same survey also found older Australians were considerably more homophobic than young adults. However, those in the 14 to 17 age group, especially boys, were much more inclined to hold antigay views than young and middle-aged adults. Homophobic attitudes were closely related to levels of education – 25 per cent of those with tertiary education held homophobic views compared to 40-50 per cent among those who did not complete high school. [https://australiainstitute.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/WP79\\_8.pdf](https://australiainstitute.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/WP79_8.pdf)

Recent studies have indicated that gay hate groups are increasing in the United States. A report published in 2020 by the Southern Poverty Law Center stated, ‘Groups that vilify the LGBTQ community, in fact, represented the fastest-growing sector among hate groups in 2019.’ The report detailed that the number of anti-LGBTQ hate groups rose by 43 percent, from 49 groups in 2018 to 70 in 2019. <https://www.nbcnews.com/feature/nbc-out/anti-lgbtq-hate-groups-rise-u-s-report-warns-n1171956> There is also a growing movement in the United States against education programs providing education about sexual variation and gay rights. The most famous of these anti-LGBTQ+ laws is the piece of Florida legislation banning instruction on sexual orientation or gender identity in schools between kindergarten and third grade, the so-called ‘don’t say gay’ law. <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2022/apr/28/lgbtq-rights-us-dont-say-gay>

In October 2020, a study published by GLSEN, a United States LGBTQ+ education advocacy group, found that just under 99 percent of lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender students aged between 13 and 21 reported hearing disparaging comments about their sexuality or gender identity. Almost 97 percent of respondents stated that they had heard the phrase “no homo” at school, while more than 95 percent reported hearing homophobic terms such as ‘dyke’ and ‘faggot’. About 69 percent said they had experienced verbal harassment because of their sexual orientation, while just under 57 percent said they had also been called names or threatened because of their gender expression. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-education-lgbt-students-trfn-idUSKBN2741GO>

On May 17, 2022, (International Day Against Homophobia, Biphobia, Interphobia, and Transphobia) the U.S. Department of State issued a statement which included, ‘Too many LGBTQI+ persons live under the shadow of discrimination, violence, and fear. Global data makes clear that the dehumanization of LGBTQI+ persons is systemic, pervasive, and often violent. Homophobia, biphobia, interphobia, and transphobia are deeply entrenched in societies across the world, including here in the United States. Countless persons are at extreme risk for being themselves.’ <https://www.state.gov/on-the-international-day-against-homophobia-biphobia-interphobia-and-transphobia/>

Those who defend the right of all gay celebrities to keep their sexual orientation private argue that as public figures they face special dangers from homophobia. They have fair wider social contact and so are at greater risk of attack both on social media and in person. As figures known around the world, they also risk the abuse they may encounter from audiences in less tolerant countries. Magda Szubanski, an Australian actor who came out in 2012, has said of Rebel Wilson, after she revealed her sexual orientation, ‘For someone like Rebel, who’s an international person, that’s a big step to take. I know, for me, once I came out, it was like, “OK, now I’m a publicly gay person, it’s going to be a different experience for me going to some countries, potentially.”’ <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2022-06-16/beccy-cole-magda-szubanski-rebel-wilson-andrew-hornery-herald/101156526>

### 3. Being out may damage the careers of some gay celebrities

It has been claimed by some celebrities that coming out or being outed has damaged their career prospects. This claim has been made by some actors who have said that being

homosexual has restricted the roles they are offered and limited their appeal to fans. Other celebrities, such as some singers, have claimed that anti-gay prejudice among some sections of their potential fan base has limited their popularity.

Numerous actors have explained that becoming known as gay damaged their careers. This claim has been made by actor Anne Heche. During the 1990s, Heche's film career was developing rapidly. She co-starred in several high-profile movies with some of Hollywood's most recognized actors. After she became involved romantically with Ellen Degeneres, her prospects of becoming a leading lady seemed to decline. According to Heche, people told her that she was not getting jobs because she was gay. <https://www.fame10.com/entertainment/5-gay-celebrities-who-claim-coming-out-ruined-their-careers/>

It has been argued that there is limited acceptance of gay actors playing straight roles and that this seriously restricts their career opportunities. Jesse James Keitel, a nonbinary actor who plays a transfeminine nonbinary character on ABC's 'Big Sky' has stated, 'I've only played queer roles in my professional career, and I am looking forward to the day when I can play a role that has nothing to do with my gender or sexuality, or my character's gender or sexuality. I think that's a privilege that many straight and cis actors don't realize is even a thing.'

<https://www.nbcnews.com/feature/nbc-out/should-straight-actors-still-play-gay-characters-it-s-complicated-n1252603> Other actors have similarly claimed that their opportunity to play heterosexual roles was seriously reduced when it became known they were gay. In 2010, English actor Rupert Everett stated that he was 'very lucky at the beginning' of his career, but that after he came out, his opportunities dried up. He said the movie business is 'a very heterosexual business' that's 'run mostly by heterosexual men.'

<https://www.nbcnews.com/feature/nbc-out/should-straight-actors-still-play-gay-characters-it-s-complicated-n1252603> These prejudices also seem to be shared by audiences. In a survey commissioned by Variety, six in 10 adults say they would be less likely to see an action film with a gay leading man or woman, while four in 10 say they'd be more likely to skip an action film with a lead gay character. <https://variety.com/2015/film/news/gay-lgbt-movie-stars-staying-locked-in-the-closet-1201529581/> Writing in 2015, commentator Rebecca Shaw noted the limiting effect that prejudice within the film industry continued to have on gay actors. She stated, 'Doubts about gay actors' ability to play straight characters will persist as long as the perception remains that being queer is abnormal, and that heterosexual actors inherently have more legitimacy and versatility.'

<https://www.killyourdarlings.com.au/2015/10/playing-it-straight/>

Similarly, it has been suggested that some singers' careers have been damaged by becoming known as gay. This claim has been made several times about American Idol runner-up Adam Lambert. British pop singer Boy George has claimed that anti-gay prejudice in the United States has limited Lambert's career success. George has claimed that Lambert's success would be far greater if he were based in Britain where there is far greater acceptance of homosexuality. <https://americanidolnet.com/boy-george-says-adam-lambert-being-gay-hurts-his-career-in-america/>

A similar claim has been made by Gene Simmons, the bassist and co-lead singer of the American rock group, Kiss. Simmons has stated that there is significantly less acceptance of gay performers in more conservative American states. He has observed, 'He's enormously talented, best talent American Idol has had, but I think he killed his career because now the conversation is not about his talent but about his sexual preference. You're forcing people to deal with issues they may not be interested in. Life is unfair, and the masses don't all live in L.A. They live in Wisconsin and Nebraska, and you're on crack if you think the same rules apply there.'

<https://www.fame10.com/entertainment/5-gay-celebrities-who-claim-coming-out-ruined-their-careers/> American country singer Country singer Chely Wright has similarly stated that going public with her sexual orientation harmed her career. Her album sales were reduced by half after she came out and she received death threats.

Wright has noted, 'It didn't help my career. If it appears from the outside that it helped my career, it could be because I haven't talked about the negative. You won't hear me b-tching and moaning on my Facebook about the hate mail I've gotten. My life has been threatened. I get nasty letters every day.' <https://www.fame10.com/entertainment/5-gay-celebrities-who-claim-coming-out-ruined-their-careers/>

4. Fans and media have no right to know the details of celebrities' personal lives  
Psychologists and social commentators claim that many fans' have distorted relationships with celebrities, characterised by a sense of entitlement to information that is not theirs. It is claimed that some fans mistakenly see celebrities as public property. Media outlets trespassing in celebrities' private lives encourage intrusive and obsessive fans. According to Psychology Today, fans who obsess over celebrities' actions often display a behaviour disorder referred to as celebrity worship syndrome. Despite the term 'worship', there is nothing respectful about many fans' behaviour. At the extreme end of this syndrome, fans can even be a threat to those they follow. The situation is exacerbated by celebrity press and social media whose insensitive, stalking behaviour serves to normalise intrusions into celebrities' lives. [https://dailytitan.com/opinion/fans-obsession-can-damage-celebrities-relationships/article\\_be91a5ea-85ed-11eb-b3bb-1b12b05f3b55.html](https://dailytitan.com/opinion/fans-obsession-can-damage-celebrities-relationships/article_be91a5ea-85ed-11eb-b3bb-1b12b05f3b55.html)

Many celebrities have started to object to intrusive fans and media failing to treat them as human beings. In recent years, for example, celebrities have begun to complain that fans believe they are entitled to take photos of them. In 2016, Justin Bieber made an announcement through an Instagram post that he would no longer co-operate with fan photographs. He stated, 'It has gotten to the point that people won't even say hi to me or recognize me as a human, I feel like a zoo animal, and I wanna be able to keep my sanity.' [https://www.instagram.com/p/BFPj2VRAvn9/?utm\\_source=ig\\_embed&utm\\_campaign=em%20bed\\_ufi\\_test](https://www.instagram.com/p/BFPj2VRAvn9/?utm_source=ig_embed&utm_campaign=em%20bed_ufi_test) In November 2017, a similar Twitter post was made by actor Lili Reinhart who is known for portraying Betty Cooper in the teen drama series Riverdale. Reinhart stated, 'This is what's wrong--- you think you're entitled to take a photo of me while I'm alone and eating because I'm on a TV show. So, I asked for it, right? Wrong. I am a human being. I am not Betty Cooper. You aren't entitled to me. At all.' <https://tinyurl.com/36m53b59> One of the fans responding to Bieber's post stated, 'So you're sayin that you are obsessed with yourself and possibly take pictures of yourself wherever and whenever you go! But you're pissed when people who loves you does the same! Haha...'  
[https://www.instagram.com/p/BFPj2VRAvn9/?utm\\_source=ig\\_embed&utm\\_campaign=em%20bed\\_ufi\\_test](https://www.instagram.com/p/BFPj2VRAvn9/?utm_source=ig_embed&utm_campaign=em%20bed_ufi_test) Such a response treats celebrities as commodities.

Critics of excessive fan and media interest claim that celebrities' families, friends and intimate partners can also suffer. Obsessive fans fail to recognise boundaries between themselves and the celebrities on whom they fixate. This means they are also ready to obsess about the people with whom celebrities have relationships. Recently supermodel Gigi Hadid requested the media and her fans not post photographs of her young daughter. She stated, 'To the paparazzi, press and beloved fan accounts: you know we have never intentionally shared our daughter's face on social media. Our wish is that she can choose how to share herself with the world when she comes of age and that she can live as normal of a childhood as possible, without worrying about a public image that she has not chosen. It would mean the world to us, as we take our daughter to see and explore NYC, and the world, if you would please, please, please blur her face out of the images, if and when she is caught on camera.' <https://www.vogue.in/culture-and-living/content/gigi-hadid-demands-privacy-child-daughter-khai-open-letter>

Celebrities' intimate partners can also suffer from excessive fan and media interest. For example, some fans form fantasy attachments to the celebrities they follow and then abuse

their real-world partners. When singer Harry Styles was reported to be dating Olivia Wilde, some fans congratulated the couple while others harassed Wilde on her Instagram comment section. Fans claimed Wilde 'stole' Styles from them and should be 'ashamed' for what she did, prompting the actress to restrict her comments and only allow people she follows to comment on her posts. [https://dailytitan.com/opinion/fans-obsession-can-damage-celebrities-relationships/article\\_be91a5ea-85ed-11eb-b3bb-1b12b05f3b55.html](https://dailytitan.com/opinion/fans-obsession-can-damage-celebrities-relationships/article_be91a5ea-85ed-11eb-b3bb-1b12b05f3b55.html)

These same problems exist when fans and the media claim an entitlement to know a celebrity's sexual orientation. In an article published in US Today on April 5, 2019, David Oliver argued that fans and media outlets have no right to demand to know a celebrity's sexual orientation. He stated, 'We shouldn't. It's damaging to the LGBTQ community at large. It ...assumes people have an obligation to share this information with their fans; and sends a message to queer people everywhere that their identity is something to gossip about and not celebrate.' <https://www.usatoday.com/story/life/people/2019/04/04/ariana-grande-bisexual-problematic-lgbtq-community/3363665002/>

5. Outing a gay person can harm their psychological health and endanger their lives  
Critics of outing and forcing people to out themselves claim that such behaviour can endanger mental health and risk individual's lives. They argue that LGBT people around the world have an increased incidence of depression and other mental health disorders and that outing generally only increases the stress that gay people face. In a context where being outed still triggers fear and anxiety it is not helpful to gay people to see celebrities being outed or forced to out themselves.

Numerous studies have indicated that gay people are at increased risk of mental ill health and suicide. The United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has found that gay and bisexual men have higher chances of having major depression, bipolar disorder, and generalised anxiety disorder. <https://www.cdc.gov/msmhealth/mental-health.htm> Similar findings have been made in Britain where more than half of LGBT people (52 percent) said they have experienced depression in the last year. One in eight LGBT people aged 18-24 (13 percent) said they have attempted to take their own life in the last year.

[https://www.stonewall.org.uk/system/files/lgbt\\_in\\_britain\\_health.pdf](https://www.stonewall.org.uk/system/files/lgbt_in_britain_health.pdf)

A report published by Reuters on October 8, 2018, detailed recent Italian research that had found an increased risk of suicide among LGBT adolescents. Data pooled from 35 earlier studies shows that sexual minority youth were more than three times as likely to attempt suicide as heterosexual peers. The 35 studies in the analysis involved a total of nearly 2.4 million heterosexual youth and 113,468 sexual minority youth, ages 12 to 20, from 10 countries. The study's lead author, Dr. Ester di Giacomo, a researcher in psychiatry at the University of Milano-Bicocca, in Italy, has stated, 'Adolescents facing "non-conventional" sexual identity are at risk of higher self-threatening behaviors, independent of bullying and other risk factors. I think that a difficulty in self-acceptance and social stigmatization might be keys for understanding such elevation in the risk of self-threatening behaviors.' The Trevor Project is an American nonprofit organisation founded in 1998. It focuses on suicide prevention efforts among lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and questioning (LGBTQ) youth. The Trevor Project states, 'LGBTQ youth are not inherently prone to suicide risk because of their sexual orientation or gender identity but rather are placed at higher risk because of how they are mistreated and stigmatized in society. Most profoundly, they experience rejection or lack of support from their family members much more often than their heterosexual peers.' <https://www.newportacademy.com/resources/mental-health/lgbt-suicide-rates/> Such vulnerability triggered by a lack of family support makes being outed particularly problematic for gay young people.



<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-lgbt-teen-suicide-idUSKCN1MI1SL>

Research has indicated that being ‘out’ to people who react negatively can add to the stress experienced by gay and bisexual adults and adolescents and can lead to discrimination and poorer mental health. <https://www.cdc.gov/msmhealth/mental-health.htm>

An article published by Psych Central on June 22, 2021, stated, ‘In recent years, there’s been criticism of the very concept and paradigm of “coming out” as unfairly burdening LGBTQIA+ people rather than empowering them. After all, do straight or cisgender people have to come out and announce their identities?’ <https://psychcentral.com/health/coming-out-later-in-life#what-is-the-closet>

Research has also indicated that although the age at which gay people are choosing to disclose their sexual orientation is falling, most people take nearly a decade before they do so and then only to select people. Francis Kuehne, writing for Psych Central, has noted, ‘A key 2013 survey from the Pew Research Center found that folks reported feeling like they might be lesbian, gay, or bisexual around age 12, and they told a close friend or family member around age 20.’ <https://psychcentral.com/health/coming-out-later-in-life#what-is-the-closet> Such delay indicates the difficulty of making the decision to come out and shows this decision should not be forced or taken by other people.

Rebel Wilson’s forced outing has been condemned for the message it sends to all gay people and for the additional harm it could do them. Elizabeth Walker, writing for Mamamia on June 15, 2022, stated, ‘What happened to Rebel Wilson, what happens to so many members of the LGBT community, is a form of abuse.’ <https://www.mamamia.com.au/rebel-wilson-coming-out-opinion/>

## Further implications

There appears to be agreement that gays (whether celebrities or otherwise) may find they can live more satisfying lives once their sexuality is generally known. Research conducted in the United States by the Pew Research Center in 2013 indicated that the vast majority of LGBT respondents (86 percent) say they have told one or more close friends about their sexual orientation or gender identity. And some 54 percent say all or most of the important people in their life know that they are lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender. However, the gay individual’s ongoing life satisfaction seems to significantly depend on how well their sexual orientation is socially accepted. <https://theconversation.com/if-your-sexual-orientation-is-accepted-by-society-you-will-be-happier-and-more-satisfied-with-your-life-117110>

It has recently been noted that gay people in Britain, whether ‘out’ or not, experience lower levels of satisfaction with their lives than heterosexual people. The reason offered for this was their experience of discrimination. Some 12 percent of all hate crimes in England and Wales in 2015 to 16 were related to sexual orientation, according to Home Office figures, with 7,194 sexual orientation hate crimes recorded.

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/culturalidentity/sexuality/articles/lesbian-gay-and-bisexual-people-say-they-experience-a-lower-quality-of-life/2017-07-05> High though this figure is, the extent of these crimes is under-acknowledged as victims often do not report them. It is estimated that only a quarter of people who are victims of hate crimes go to the authorities.

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/culturalidentity/sexuality/articles/lesbian-gay-and-bisexual-people-say-they-experience-a-lower-quality-of-life/2017-07-05> The situation is similar in the United States, where hate crimes based on sexual orientation, race or ethnicity are believed to be dramatically under-reported. One of the primary reasons suggested for this is that where hate crimes are reported they are often not successfully prosecuted. Victims, therefore, see little reason to subject themselves to the ordeal of reporting the offence against

them if there is likely to be no effective action taken against their abusers.

<https://news.northeastern.edu/2021/08/23/why-hate-crimes-are-underreported-and-what-police-departments-have-to-do-with-it/> Perhaps, not surprisingly, gay people surveyed in the United States have also revealed lower levels of life satisfaction than heterosexual people. The Pew Research Center has indicated, ‘When they are asked, in the most general terms, how happy they are with their life overall, LGBT adults are less upbeat than the general public. Only 18 percent of LGBT respondents say they are very happy compared with 30 percent of the general public. About two-thirds (65 percent) of LGBT respondents say they are pretty happy and 16 percent say they are not too happy. Among all adults, 57 percent say they are pretty happy and 13 percent say they are not too happy.’

<https://www.pewresearch.org/social-trends/2013/06/13/chapter-3-the-coming-out-experience/>

The question of whether gay celebrities should be outed is, therefore, a complex one. Though there may be some psychological value for those who are outed in being able to live more authentically, ongoing encounters with hostility and verbal and physical abuse is likely to reduce the benefits that can come from publicly acknowledging one’s sexuality. The situation appears to have become more problematic for gays in Australia over the last few years. Gay-hate crimes in Victoria have seen a sharp upturn in 2019 – 2020, with the problem becoming especially pronounced during lockdown. In 2014, the number of such offences climbed to 102, before dropping the next year to 87. Anti-gay hate crime offences then maintained their upward trajectory from 2016 onwards (160), except for 2018 when they fell to 79. For the other years, the annual number of gay-hate offences were 102 (2017) and 121 (2019). Data from the Crime Statistics Agency revealed that in 2020 around 148 offences were registered with the classification ‘Prejudicially Motivated Crimes – Sexual Orientation’. More than half of the offences were registered during the state’s COVID-19 lockdown.

<https://www.starobserver.com.au/news/victoria-records-spike-in-gay-hate-crimes-in-2020/201820> As in the United States, Victorian authorities have been accused of not handling such crimes effectively. Nevena Spirovska, co-convenor of the Victorian Pride Lobby (VPL), has stated, ‘There is a need for Victoria Police to improve its data collection on prejudice-motivated crime and to include prejudice motivation in sentencing submissions. The Government must also urgently enact laws to protect LGBTIQ+ Victorians from hate-based conduct, as recommended by the parliamentary inquiry into anti-vilification protections.’

<https://www.starobserver.com.au/news/victoria-records-spike-in-gay-hate-crimes-in-2020/201820>

There are two main reasons why gay people might be reluctant to have their sexual orientation revealed. Either they have internalised the negative attitudes to homosexuality of some of those within their society or they are fearful of the hostility and abuse they may encounter. It is tempting to see the apparent acceptance of gay marriage in many jurisdictions around the world as indicating that Western society has largely accepted homosexuality.

<https://www.usnews.com/news/best-countries/articles/countries-where-same-sex-marriage-is-legal> However, the prevalence of gay hate crime in Britain, the United States and Australia indicates that such acceptance is not total. Interestingly, in a recent United States Supreme Court ruling removing Constitutional protection for women’s right to access abortion, one of the judges suggested that homosexuality and same sex marriage may also not be constitutionally guaranteed. <https://www.vanityfair.com/news/2022/06/supreme-court-roe-v-wade-clarence-thomas-contraception-same-sex-marriage-sodomy>

Ultimately, it seems that the individual must be able to decide when and if they wish to make their sexual orientation public. The motivation to ‘out’ people is sometimes well-meaning;

however, it must be up to the individual to decide whether the benefits outweigh the significant risks involved.