

# **SITUATION OF LGBT PERSONS IN GEORGIA**

**WOMEN'S INITIATIVES SUPPORTING GROUP**  
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# PART ONE

## PROHIBITING DISCRIMINATION AGAINST LGBT PERSONS: REVIEW OF NATIONAL LEGISLATION

Sophio Japaridze

***Within this article the author will review Georgian legislation with regards to the prohibition of discrimination, although, in consideration of the aim of the article, the main stress will be made on prohibition of discrimination against LGBT persons and the main problematic legal provisions will be analysed. ■***

It should be mentioned from the very beginning that there is no anti-discrimination law in place in Georgia. The anti-discrimination provisions are spread over variety of laws or regulations.

The supreme law of the country – the Constitution of Georgia – sets out the fundamental equality before the law principle, thus, prohibits discrimination on various grounds<sup>1</sup>, including the gender discrimination<sup>2</sup>. It should be mentioned that unlike discrimination prohibiting norms set out in various international acts<sup>3</sup>, Article 14 of the Constitution of

Georgia is not open ended provision, and it does not directly prohibit discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation and gender identity. However, in consideration of the 2008 judgement of the Constitutional Court of Georgia<sup>4</sup>, the mentioned shall not hinder protection of any person against discrimination on any other grounds. The Constitutional Court has clearly explained that the list of the grounds set out in Article 14 of the Constitution is not exhaustive and also implies protection from the discrimination on the grounds that are not directly stipulated in it. However, due to the fact that the courts of Georgia have not tried these type of cases up until now, it is hardly possible to make any evaluation of existing practices.

Violation of the equality before the law principle is a criminal offence<sup>5</sup>. Despite the fact that legislation of Georgia does not explicitly prohibit violation of equality before the law on grounds of sexual orientation or gender identity, in accordance with the abovementioned judgement of the Constitutional Court and addendum of March 27, 2012 to the Article 53 of Criminal Code of Georgia<sup>6</sup>, in case of exist-

1 See Article 14 of the Constitution of Georgia.

2 See *Toonen v Australia*, UNHRC, CCPR/ C/50/D/488/1992, UN Human Rights Committee (HRC), 4.04.94, para. 8.7. In the given case, the Committee stated that the word 'gender' shall also mean 'sexual orientation'.

3 See, for instance, Article 14 of European Convention for Human Rights and Freedoms (ECHR), as well as Article 1 of 12<sup>th</sup> Additional Protocol of the Same Convention; see also Article 2 of International Charter of Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR); and Article 2 of International Charter of Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR).

4 See the decision of the Constitutional court of Georgia on Case Beridze and Others vs. Georgia; 31.03.2008

5 See article 142 of Criminal Code of Georgia.

6 See Part 3<sup>1</sup>, Article 53 of CCG. According to addendum, committing crime on the grounds of intolerance based upon sex-

ence of the offence envisaged under Article 142 of the Criminal Code, the criminal responsibility will be brought upon in case the crime has been committed on the grounds of sexual orientation or gender identity. It should be mentioned that, also before 2012, racial, religious, ethnic or national intolerance underlying certain types of the crimes constituted the aggravating factor<sup>7</sup>. However, according to the recent addendums to the Article 53 of the Criminal Code, along with the other grounds, intolerance based on the sexual orientation or gender identity also became the aggravating factor for all the offences under CCG.

Introduction of the above amendments is undoubtedly the positive change; however, the main point is how efficiently the legislative innovations will be enforced. Unfortunately, it is impossible to make any conclusions with this regard, since there is no information whether this article has been applied or not so far<sup>8</sup>. The existing practices (to be more precise, their non-existence) are also giving little possibility of making optimistic conclusions. With this regard, one could mention *Aghdgomelashvili and Japaridze vs. Georgia*<sup>9</sup>, which was the first homophobic behaviour of police officers case ever submitted to the European Court for Human Rights (hereinafter, the European Court) from Georgia<sup>10</sup>. Plaintiffs, along with the other violations, also filed the complaint against their real or alleged discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation. Despite the fact that the mentioned incident caused quite a big reso-

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ual orientation, gender identity, religion, disabilities, nationality, ethnical belonging, or any other grounds of discrimination constitute the aggravating factor for all the crimes set out in this Code.

7 See, for example, Paragraph d, Part 2, Article 109; Paragraph d, Part 5, Article 117, etc.

8 It should be mentioned that organisation Identity after the events that have taken place on May 17, 2012 – the International Day Against Homophobia – has addressed the General Prosecutor of Georgia with request of starting investigation on basis of Part 3<sup>1</sup> of Article 53 of Criminal Code. Organisation has not received the answer yet. For the detailed information on events that took place May 17, 2012 visit: [http://www.gyla.ge/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=1303%3A2012-05-18-12-34-17&catid=1%3Alatest-news&Itemid=177&lang=ka](http://www.gyla.ge/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=1303%3A2012-05-18-12-34-17&catid=1%3Alatest-news&Itemid=177&lang=ka)

9 See *Aghdgomelashvili and Japaridze v Georgia*, no 7224/11.

10 For additional information on the case visit: <http://www.in-terights.org/aghdgomelashvili/index.html>

nance among the both, local and international human rights organisations, the investigation, it seems, commenced only after sending the case to the European Court, and the charges brought against defendants were implying just the abuse of power<sup>11</sup>. This example tells us that Article 142 of CCG (offence under the equality of all persons principle) was actually the dead provision, especially in the matters concerning discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation.

Currently, the existing legislation allows adequately responding to hate crime, including starting the criminal proceedings against the offender (of course if the will exists). However, struggle against the use of hatred language against LGBT persons is more limited and is mainly implemented within the frames of self-regulation of the broadcasters<sup>12</sup>. The above is due to the fact that the hate speech is not punishable under the criminal code, but this does not exclude possibility of developing and implementing the efficient strategy of struggling against it, strategy that will be mainly oriented on rising the public awareness.

Homosexuality is decriminalised in Georgia since 2000, although some provisions of the criminal code are still formulated the way that marginalises and stigmatises homosexuals<sup>13</sup>.

One can find the provisions in the Georgian legislation that are setting the requirements/conditions, which might seem neutral at the first glance, but which are having negative impact on certain groups (the cases of so called indirect discrimination)<sup>14</sup>.

For instance, in accordance with the new code of prisoners, the short date can be given to the persons who were not married to the prisoners, but who were living together and having the common

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11 See Article 333 of Criminal Code.

12 See the Law of Georgia on Broadcasting, the Broadcasters' Behaviour Code and Charter of Journalistic Ethics.

13 See, for example, Articles 138 and 140 of Criminal Code, which, due to the wording used, identify the homosexual sexual intercourse with the "pervert sexual intercourse".

14 According to the case law of European Court of Human Rights: "when the general policy or measure cause the non-proportional adverse effect for specific group, this can be considered discrimination, despite the fact that the mentioned policy or measure was not elaborated for or directed towards this specific group".

economy with them during last two years before the person got to the penitentiary institution<sup>15</sup>. Despite the fact that this norm seems neutral at the first sight, it can cause non-proportional adverse effects for the LGBT couples. Of course, this norm can also adversely affect the not-married heterosexual couples, because it is unclear, what document can serve as prove of living together and which authority shall be issuing it. However, it's a fact that, in consideration of general homophobic attitudes existing in the country, obtaining such document will be much more difficult for the LGBT couples. As for the right to the long date, based on the wording used in the mentioned provision, LGBT couples do not have this right at all<sup>16</sup>.

One more example of indirect discrimination can be considered the deficiency in Georgian legislation, according to which the higher educational institution can issue the diploma only once. This adversely affects the persons, who changed their sex by surgical intervention. In case of them seeking employment, this makes them potential victims of discrimination. This also strongly violates the rights of privacy of LGBT persons, because to prove that the person changing the sex is really the person indicated in the diploma, he/she shall present to the respective authority diploma, accompanied by certificate issued by the court<sup>17</sup>.

In general, it should be mentioned that despite the fact that the services of changing sex are available in Georgia, the process itself is not regulated on the level of legislation, and this creates the threat of introduction of the discriminating practices. The vaguer the law is, the more space it leaves for arbitrary and selective decisions<sup>18</sup>.

The Labour Code of Georgia is one of the ex-

ceptional documents, which directly prohibits discrimination on grounds of sex or sexual orientation<sup>19</sup>. However, taking into consideration that prohibition relates only to the labour relations, which commence only after the certain person is hired to the job (the labour contract is signed), any person can become the victim of discrimination in the hiring process itself<sup>20</sup>. The mentioned is especially relevant with regard to the LGBT persons, who in the most cases are rejected jobs exactly because of their sexual orientation/gender identity (cases of latent discrimination).

According to the Civil Code of Georgia, two persons can adopt a child only if they are married. In consideration of the fact that spouses can be only the persons of the opposite sex<sup>21</sup>, LGBT couples are automatically denied the right of adopting child. As for the adoption of child by one person, based on the wording of Article 1245 of the Civil Code, there is no limitation for LGBT person of age adopting the child<sup>22</sup>, although, due to the homophobic attitudes existing in the country, there is a threat that child care authority will not allow LGBT persons performing parent's duties due to their 'moral properties'<sup>23</sup>. On the other hand, if we take into the consideration the fact that Georgia is member of the Council of Europe and is a signee to the European Convention, denying the single parent adopting child on the ground of sexual orientation will be clear violation of the commitments under the Convention<sup>24</sup>.

It should be mentioned that if the differentiated approach is based upon the reasonable an objective criteria it does not represent the prohibited discrimination. According to the case law of European Court,

15 See Part 2, Article 17, Penitentiary Code.

16 See Part 2, Article 17<sup>3</sup>, Penitentiary Code.

17 See the study by independent researcher Ana Natsvlishvili on discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation and gender identity, homophobia and transphobia, 2010, p. 22. Can be accessed at the following link: [http://www.coe.int/t/commissioner/source/lgbt/georgialegal\\_e.pdf](http://www.coe.int/t/commissioner/source/lgbt/georgialegal_e.pdf)

18 Term "Law" also implies the qualitative requirements, including accessibility and predictability of the law. See *L. v. Lithuania*, no 27527/03, judgment of 11 September 2007.

19 See Part 3, Article 2 of Labour Code of Georgia. Although, the mentioned provision does not set the prohibition of use of gender identity as a ground for discrimination.

20 See Part 8, Article 5 of Labour Code of Georgia, according to which "the employer is not obliged to justify decision on denying the job to the person". For the termination of labour contract, see also Article 38.

21 See Article 1106 of Civil Code.

22 See Article 1245 of Civil Code, which prohibits adopting the child only to those persons who have been deprived of parental rights or are unable to perform parental duties due to their moral properties.

23 See Article 1242 of Civil Code.

24 See *E.B. v. France*, no. 43546/02, judgment of 22.01.2008.

in order to be justified, the differentiated approach shall: a) be based upon the solid grounds; b) serve for the lawful purpose; and c) be proportional to the set goal<sup>25</sup>. When the differentiation is based on the sexual orientation, the justification shall be especially strong<sup>26</sup>. In such cases, the discretion/margin of appreciation given to the state is extremely narrow and the principle of proportionality implies that the measures taken were absolutely necessary in the given circumstances<sup>27</sup>.

In consideration of the above criteria, the Ordinance of Minister of Labour, Health and Social Security of Georgia<sup>28</sup> setting the blanket prohibition for homosexuals being the blood donors as belonging to HIV/AIDS risk group is absolutely unjustified, because it is based just on the sexual orientation and not on the (risky) sexual behaviour<sup>29</sup>.

We welcome the antidiscrimination provision<sup>30</sup> of the Law of Georgia on Healthcare, which, along with the other reasons, sets prohibition of discrimination of the patients on the grounds of sexual orientation or personal negative attitude, although, the matter of strong concern is the amendment to be introduced to the same law<sup>31</sup>, according to which the surrogation services can only be used by the childless couples married in accordance with the Geor-

gian legislation. This, in its turn, unambiguously excludes possibility of using surrogation services by the lesbian or gay couples.

Before introduction of the amendments of May 25, 2012, the Law of Georgia on Protection of Personal Data – defining the rules for processing<sup>32</sup> of the data of specific categories<sup>33</sup> (including information on the sexual life of the person) by public and private organisations – was also allowing the space for abuse and arbitrary application<sup>34</sup>. The biggest threat was contained in the provision that envisaged right of processing specific categories of data without the consent of the person for the purposes of protection of ‘important public interests’<sup>35</sup>. In the conditions of the non-existence of definition of ‘important public interests’, this provision created space for the arbitrary decisions and abuse of power<sup>36</sup>. Accordingly, the amendments and addendums introduced into Article 6 of the Law on May 25, 2012 were significant step forward made by the government on the way of prevention of discrimination.

The above analyses of the legislation demonstrate that although, save the rare exceptions, the laws are not discriminative towards the LGBT persons, in some cases, due to vague wording of certain norms and leaving some issues beyond the regulation, there still is the large space for application of the differentiated approaches. The mentioned is further aggravated by the negative prejudices towards the LGBT persons existing in Georgian society, which eventually manifest themselves in discrimination practices.

25 See *Timishev v. Russia*, nos. 55762/00 and 55974/00, judgment of 13.12.2005, § 57. See *Rasmussen v. Denmark*, no. 8777/79, judgment of 28.11.01.1984, § 38.

26 See *Salgueiro da Silva Mouta v. Portugal*, no. 33290/96, judgment of 21.12.1999, § 36.

27 See *Kozak v. Poland*, no. 13102/02, judgment of 02.03.2010.

28 See Ordinance No 241/n dd. DECEMBER 5, 2000 ON Identification of the Indications Against Donors of Blood and Blood Components; see also Ordinance dd. September 27, 2007 on Approval of the Mandatory Norms for Functioning of Blood Transfusion Institutions.

29 With regard to the abovementioned, on July 10, 2012, organization Identity has filed the case into the Constitutional Court of Georgia, requesting declaring the norms under question unconstitutional. Organization that along with the other articles, due to their discriminational character, the articles under question contradict Article 14 of the Constitution. For more information visit: <http://www.argumenti.ge/?p=1588>

30 See Paragraph 1 of Article 6.

31 See the law of Georgia on Introduction of the Amendments to Some of the Legal Acts of Georgia, draft, reg. # 07-3/639; 08.06.2012.

32 *Ibid*, Paragraph d.

33 *Ibid*, Paragraph b, Article 2.

34 December 28, 2011.

35 *Ibid*, Article 6. (Before the amendments introduced on May 25, 2012).

36 See the Shadowy Report to the Committee for Elimination of Any Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), p. 8 <http://www.scribd.com/doc/91638027/WISG-LBT-CEDAW-Shadow-Report-geo>

## HOMOPHOBIC HATE SPEECH AND POLITICAL PROCESSES IN GEORGIA

Eka Aghdgomelashvili

*The economic and socio-political crisis existing in the country, as a rule, strengthens the phobias in the society. The present xenophobic attitudes towards ethnical and religious minorities or homosexuals create the fertile soil for manipulation with the public opinion. The election campaigning technologies, along with the expectations of the potential voters, strive towards analysing and studying the social phobias. It is hard to say to what extent these technologies are spread or applied in Georgia. However, the election campaign of 2012 has clearly shown what can be the effect of negative PR that relates to the fears and hatred having deep roots in the society. Demonstrating the documentaries of the scenes of humiliation, physical abuse and sexual torture of the prisoners on TV that had the decisive influence on the majority of the population, has brought the large number of people out into the streets. Along with the other important factors (the violence to the prisoners, as one of the most vulnerable groups, especially from the law enforcement authorities), the number of the people who joined the protests, were actually imposed to the kind of cultural shock by the fact of the sexual violence over the males, which fact has been reflected in the social media or in the other forms of the protest. ■*

Almost 20-year experience in the field of research of homophobic hate speech allows us speaking about certain dynamics and its links with the socio-political events taking place in the country.

Interest of the press in LGBT issues is inconsistent. The peak of the use of homophobic language in the country coincides with the moments of redistribution of the power. At the same time, within the stated period, the users of the abuse become different. Accordingly, the context under which homosexuality is considered and mobilisation strategies for achieving problematisation of homosexuality are also changing.

No in-depth study of the societal attitudes towards the LGBT group has been conducted in Georgia so far. The singular researches that study the development in the dynamics in the approaches and attitudes towards the specific values/issues and/or groups (including homosexuals), do not allow speaking about the depth or forms of homophobia. However, the majority of these researches show that LGBT in Georgia are still remaining the group that is receiving least tolerance from the society in compare to the other marginalised groups<sup>1</sup>.

1 To the question: "Do you consider the existence of the listed below groups beside you undesirable?", the most undesirable group named were homosexuals, followed by the drug addicts and psychically unstable persons. N. Sumbadze, *Gen-*



Besides this, the studies conducted in 2003-2006 demonstrate the growing dynamics of homophobic attitudes: according to the 2003 Study by the Institute of Public Policy, the 84% of the respondents had the negative attitude towards the homosexuals, 14% were neutral, while 2% - positive<sup>2</sup>. According to the survey of 2006, 81.4% said they would not make friends with homosexuals, and 71.4% claimed that they would not work with homosexuals<sup>3</sup>. 2009-2011 studies by CRRC demonstrated that the situation with homosexuals did not significantly change within the last two years and the share of persons considering homosexuality unacceptable remains at the same level – 90%<sup>4</sup>.

The growth of the negative attitudes towards LGBT group is also witnessed by the group members themselves. According to the 2012 survey, the number of persons who thought that the attitude of the society towards the LGBT group is non-tolerant increased from 57% to 78%, compared to 2006<sup>5</sup>.

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*erations and Values*, Institute of Public Policies, Tbilisi, 2012. [http://www.ipska.techtone.info/files/4313/4245/8451/Taobebi\\_da\\_Girebulebebi\\_-\\_Book\\_1.pdf](http://www.ipska.techtone.info/files/4313/4245/8451/Taobebi_da_Girebulebebi_-_Book_1.pdf); While the study conducted by Heinrich Boll Foundation South Caucasus Office on the attitudes of the population towards the minorities demonstrated that the biggest pressure is imposed right on the LGBT groups. Heinrich Boll Foundation South Caucasus Office, *Study on Attitudes and Approaches of the Population towards the Minorities*, June, 2011.

- 2 Sumbadze N., Tarkhan-Mouravi G., *Transition to adulthood in Georgia: Dynamics of generational and gender roles in post-totalitarian society*, Institute of Policy Studies. Tbilisi. 2003.
- 3 Caucasus Research Resource Centre, Programme of Eurasia Foundation: *Short Review of the Results of Caucasus Research Resource Centre's Data Initiative Survey* – December 2006
- 4 *Evaluation of attitudes towards and knowledge about EU in Georgia*. Caucasus Research Resource Centre (CRRC). Eurasia Cooperation Fund, 2011. [http://www.epfound.ge/files/eu\\_report\\_geo\\_12jan2012\\_final\\_1\\_.pdf](http://www.epfound.ge/files/eu_report_geo_12jan2012_final_1_.pdf)
- 5 According to the results of 2006 study by Fund Exclusive, 57.5% of the LGBT community representatives assessed the attitudes of the society as non-tolerant; 24.2% stated that the society is indifferent towards them, and 10% answered that the society is tolerant. (*Study on LGBT Discrimination in Georgia*, Fund Inclusive, 2006). In 2012, the joint research of Women Initiatives Support Group and Organisation Identity showed that the number of LGBT group representatives thinking that the attitude of the society towards them in non-tolerant has increased to 78%. 15% of the interviewed assess the attitudes as “more non-tolerant than tolerant”; 4% – “more tolerant than non-tolerant”; 3% did not answer the question, while the share of those who assess the attitudes of the society as tolerant is less than 1%. *Research on LGBT*

The different approach towards the LGBT group in EU countries is clearly demonstrated by both European<sup>6</sup> and national studies. Such difference is based upon two important aspects. The first aspect is linked with the national, religious and traditional values with regard to the gender, sexuality and family issues. The second aspect relates to the different perception of the public and private spheres and visibility of LGBT group<sup>7</sup>.

With regard to the gender, sexuality and family issues, Georgia can be characterised as the country with deeply patriarchal culture, including the concepts of masculine and feminine<sup>8</sup>. As the recent media analyses show, the problematisation of the issue is taking place right under the concept of “Georgian/Orthodox/Traditions”.

As for the visibility of LGBT group in the public space, their appearance is automatically considered the “propaganda of homosexuality”. Purification of the public space from LGBT persons is still remaining the main mobilisation strategy, which is actively used by the representatives of both, religious organisations<sup>9</sup> and some political parties<sup>10</sup>.

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*Discrimination in Georgia*, WISG, Tbilisi, 2012.

- 6 See Eurobarometer 296 (2008), chapter 9, [http://ec.europa.eu/public\\_opinion/archives/ebs/ebs\\_296\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/ebs/ebs_296_en.pdf) (24.01.2009); Eurobarometer 66 (2006), pp. 43-46, [http://ec.europa.eu/public\\_opinion/archives/eb/eb66/eb66\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/eb/eb66/eb66_en.pdf), (16.12.2008); Eurobarometer 263 (2007), [http://ec.europa.eu/public\\_opinion/archives/ebs/ebs\\_263\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/ebs/ebs_263_en.pdf) (12.01.2009); Eurobarometer 317 (2009); European Values Study (1999) <http://www.jdsurvey.net/web/evs1.htm> (13.11.2008)
- 7 *Discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation and gender identity in Europe*. 2nd edition. Council of Europe. 2011. [http://www.coe.int/t/Commissioner/Source/LGBT/LGBT-Study2011\\_en.pdf](http://www.coe.int/t/Commissioner/Source/LGBT/LGBT-Study2011_en.pdf)
- 8 *Study on Homophobia, Transphobia and Discrimination on Grounds of Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity*. Sociological Report: Georgia. COWI. 2011. [http://www.coe.int/t/commissioner/source/lgbt/georgiasociological\\_e.pdf](http://www.coe.int/t/commissioner/source/lgbt/georgiasociological_e.pdf)
- 9 “Certainly it is totally unacceptable that such people appear on the screen. They are shown as if they are miserable and we have to pity them. By no means! We should not encourage and applaud their actions but the society should rather speak about how such person dares to make his/her ugly sexual orientation visible and promote such action.” Father Michael: The participants of (TV programme) “GeoBar” and its author will be severely punished. Author Rusudan Advadze. Magazine Sarke. 24-30.10.2007.
- 10 See for instance the speech of leader of Christian Democrats



From the standpoint of media coverage of issues related to homosexuality, the last 20-year period can be divided into the several parts.

Georgian media started openly speaking about the homosexuality only by the end of 1990-ies. In the soviet period, not only any discussion of the “different” sexual behaviour/identity, but also the culturally acceptable sexuality was strictly regulated and ideologically controlled. The myth on western origin of homosexuality created by the soviet regime, along with the other soviet myths, has continued existence for quite long time and even after the taboo on sexuality was lifted in 1990-ies, homosexuality has been considered in Georgian press exactly in the same context. For the first time the term homosexual appeared in Georgian media in connection with AIDS and prostitution topics. In the following years, up to 1998, most of the times the word “homosexual” could be encountered only in the articles about the foreign show business representatives reprinted and translated from the western editions. Such method represents one of the means of distancing from the “different” sexuality. The above pieces showed mainly neutral attitudes or slight irony. Development of such attitudes is conditioned exactly by such distancing – abstract discussions of people living “somewhere in the west” and their homosexuality did not create any threat for the sexual identity of the respondents.

Since 1998, begins step-by-step transformation of homosexuals/homosexuality from “stranger” to “our”, but “diseased”. The process of “pathologisation” of homosexuality, which has been transformed first to “social deviation” and then to the “sin” that “creates threat to our national self-identity and traditions”, farther strengthened the homophobic attitudes existing in the society<sup>11</sup>. Politisation of the

topic began in the same period.

The first peak of homophobia can be observed in media in 1998-2003, and it has been growing along with the split of Citizens’ Union. In parallel with introduction of the liberal discourse into the Georgian politics, the topic of homosexuality is getting the political fleur. The aggression against the Witnesses of Jehovah is strengthening; media is saturated with armenophobic statements. Sexual orientation, along with the religion and ethnic belonging, becomes the most popular method of “discrediting” of the political opponents. Especially active in this area was the mock-opposition faction then – Aghordzineba. Following the leader<sup>12</sup>, the other members of the faction are openly making fascistic statements:

*“Frankly, deep in my heart, I would be pleased to agree with Adolph Hitler, who has sent several ships with the certain kind of persons to the sea. At the same time, I cannot agree with the fact that we are receiving in the Parliament the recommendations from the Council of Europe requiring providing the maximum support to the homosexuals. And they have sent this several times. I think that we shall adopt the legal framework that will require the compulsory treatment for such people and if they cannot be treated, then...”<sup>13</sup>*

In parallel, the myth on the “gay conspiracy” (they are planning to come to power) is being spread. The soviet myth of the western origin of homosexuality is still valid. All this made possible artificially linking the homosexuality concept with the western, liberal values and with the specific political group that has been appealing to those values in the period of striving to power. Depicting homosexuality as a danger that “threatens existence of Georgian nation” and “contradicts Georgian traditions and orthodox Christianity” has been transferred to the political context.

*“Is not the “non-traditional sex” the prerequisite and necessary precondition for depletion of everything traditional? If such “non-traditionalists”*

of May 22 on the topic of constitutional amendments <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0yflbSWF-K8&feature=plcp> or the election clip of Tavisupali Sakartvelo (Free Georgia), where the slogan “We will prohibit unbridled propaganda of homosexuality and religious sects” goes on the background of May 17 march dedicated to Idaho Day. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L9HZljogclc>

11 E. Aghdgomelashvili. *Representation of Homosexuals in Georgian Media*, 2006. [http://women.ge/wp-content/uploads/2011/04/media-analysis\\_homophobia\\_un.pdf](http://women.ge/wp-content/uploads/2011/04/media-analysis_homophobia_un.pdf)

12 “Cambodia has been flooded by the Red Khmers, and Georgia - by blue ones”. *Aslan Abashidze Attacks Tbilisi with All Remaining Power to Remove the Chair Prepared for Zhvania*; *Apkhazetis Khma*, # 29 (July 20-26, 2001)

13 Sandro Bregadze, TV Station Mze, July 4, 2003.

*come to the power, this will be the end, which might not be visible right now, to national awareness and self-identity of the country..."*<sup>14</sup>

One after another, the articles with the loud titles appear in print: "Georgia is Governed by Homosexuals", "Despite the Fact That Gays Do Not Breed, Their Numbers Increase", "From Blue to Black... Political Palette", "Assy European Machos", "Foes of People, KGB Agents and... Pederasts".

Analyses of media of 2005-2006 showed that after the Revolution of Roses the panic around "Gay Conspiracy" calmed down. Little by little the articles about homosexuals/homosexuality moved from the front pages of the serious editions to the pages of yellow press<sup>15</sup>. After depoliticisation of the topic, interest of media towards LGBT issues has significantly changed, and this has been witnessed not only by the wording, but also by the number of articles<sup>16</sup>.

From the point of view of the assessment, according to 2006 monitoring, 65% of the articles were negative, while 35% – neutral. Ratio between negative, neutral and positive assessments has abruptly changed in 2007 (negative – 86%, positive – 21%, neutral – 4%). Such drastic increase of the number of negative/positive assessments on the account of reduction of neutral ones can, on the one hand, be attributed to the increased visibility of LGBT group. On the other hand, it reflects the beginning of socio-cultural developments, which we can currently observe in the country. Such redistribution of the assessments is characteristic for the value polarisation process accompanying the crisis period<sup>17</sup>.

The second wave of moral panic could be observed in media in 2007, when Alia newspaper has published information on gay parade planned in Tbilisi. In reality, it was the action planned by the Council of Europe – Everybody Different, Everybody Equal – in which the LGBT organisation Fund Inclusive was also to participate. Due to this incorrect information spread by the media, major part of the population was convinced that this action was an attempt to conduct the gay parade. It should be mentioned that Alia has published the materials with similar contents several times during 2007. However, the desired result (creation of agiotage around the topic) was achieved only when journalist indirectly "accused" the government in supporting this mythical parade:

*"According to unofficial information huge gay parade, approved by Saakashvili's government, will be conducted in Tbilisi... say, they were mocking at Putin, when he broke up the gay gathering in Moscow – they said he's violating the rights of sexual minorities. Let's see, if Saakashvili becomes the subject to jeer."*<sup>18</sup>

The hysteria started by the newspaper has been transformed little by little. The topic has been picked up by the oppositional political forces and some religious groups<sup>19</sup>.

Since 2007, "threatening" society with the invented gay parades, "accusing/warning" the government and arranging the anti-gay marches became kind of a tradition. In its turn, the government, that was claiming a monopoly for the liberal discourse, has been firmly linked with the image of political force having "anti-national, anti-orthodox" position, which was made much easier due to the homophobic attitudes existing in the society.

14 I. Gorelishvili. „Today's Georgia is the balloon inflated with a harmful gas which is dangerously floating between West and North". Newspaper Meridiani. #44/2. 17.01.2001.

15 E. Aghdgomelashvili. *Coverage of Sexual Orientation/Gender Identity Issues in Media*; Media Development Fund; November 2011. <http://www.mdfgeorgia.ge/index.php?menuid=16&lang=1&id=78>

16 The study conducted in 204-2006 by Media Diversity Institute, Press Coverage of Minority Groups in the South Caucasus, showed that the issues of the sexual minorities were receiving the less coverage in compare to this of the other groups in all three countries. Media Diversity Institute, *Press Coverage of Minority Groups in the South Caucasus*, 2004-06;

17 E. Aghdgomelashvili. *Representation of Homosexuality in Georgia Media*. 2006. [http://women.ge/wp-content/uploads/2011/04/media-analysis\\_homophobia\\_un.pdf](http://women.ge/wp-content/uploads/2011/04/media-analysis_homophobia_un.pdf)

18 I. Mamaladze. *Pederasts are Preparing for Parade in Tbilisi*. Newspaper Alia, #82, July 17-18, 2007.

19 *I believe that this idea comes from chancellery. The homosexuals' parade is planned by the existing regime, since they want to demonstrate to the world and the Council of Europe that democracy in Georgia is developing and human rights are protected, and receive the grants in return".* M.Khorguashvili. „Gay-pride in Tbilisi? This idea comes from chancellery". Newspaper Sakartvelos Respublika. #140. 21.07.2007. „This is the action arranged by president Saakashvili, because there are many people of unclear gender and orientation in his regime, and they are lobbying such parade along with their president". Newspaper Alia. #83(2056). 19–20.07.2007.

*“After pseudo-liberal and pseudo-democratic government of Saakashvili came to power, ped-erasts, who previously were hiding in the bushes, increased in number, became stronger and grew bolder. The so called “blues”, who, while ago, even wanted to conduct the gay parade in Tbilisi...”<sup>20</sup>*

While in 1999-2003, turning homosexuality into the “problem” was attempted with the use of more or less rational arguments (for instance, to justify existing homophobic ideas, media was inviting supportive experts or specialists), in 2007-2011, “incompatibility/contradiction with Georgian and orthodox traditions” was considered the sufficient ground for problematisation of the “different” sexuality<sup>21</sup>. Such a change in discourse is directly linked with the increased influence of the church, as a social institute, and its active involvement into the political processes taking place in the country<sup>22</sup>.

The discourse is also influenced by the political culture existing in the country: authoritar-

ian regime of the Soviet Union had very uniform and clear approach to everything different, which implied attempts of unification of everything and everybody. Being different was considered not expression of diversity, but a threat directed against the solidity of state, homogeneity of the society. Unfortunately, such a discourse is still popular in our political environment, leaving very little space for articulation of real meaning of the “foreign”. The uniform and clearly negative attitude towards everything different and diverse, as the threat directed against unity, solidity of the society characteristic for the authoritarian regime, proved to be extremely viable. It is exactly speaking on behalf of the majority and depicting everything “stranger”, “different” as an icon of the enemy that represents the main strategy of the political groups in the election process.

At the previous elections, the government assigned the role of such enemy to territorial “stranger” – Russia, which was said to threaten the integrity, economic welfare and political security of the country. Accordingly, the political opponents were marked as “betrayers” and “agents of Russia” within the frames of the same discussion.

In their turn, oppositional parties were trying to mobilise electorate through creation of negative icon from the government. The counter-discourse propaganda of one part of the opposition is based upon “Georgian/Orthodox/Traditions” trinity. Marking political opponents as homosexuals, accusing them in propaganda of homosexuality, in this case, is used, on the one hand, as amplifying effect in construing “strangers” from the representatives of the government, and on the other hand – for generalisation of the threats coming from the “strangers”, threats that the entire country is facing<sup>23</sup>.

Despite the fact that, in quantitative terms, the interest to the topic constantly increases, in parallel to the new wave of political and social crisis, the as-

20 J. Khubua. “Misha’s Omsterdam”. Newspaper Asaval-Dasavali, August 3-9, 2009, #31 (776).

21 In 2010, before discussion of the resolution on LGBT rights by the Parliamentary Assembly of Council of Europe, various religious organisations of Georgia spread the common statement: “It is intended to consider draft legislation about discrimination on the ground of sexual orientation and sexual identification, which will legalize homosexuality, bisexuality and other sexual deviations. At the same session they will discuss a document, which portrays abortion as a right of the woman and a method for family planning...It is unconceivable that Europe, which is the ancient part of the Christian world and whose culture is so inherently linked to the religion, supports portrayal of sexual deviations as “normal” from the tribune of the Council of Europe. Homosexuality, bisexuality and similar activities are considered to be the greatest sins not only in the Christian religion, but in all traditional religions, because it causes degeneration of a human being, his physical and moral illness.” Joint written statement by the Patriarch of the Georgian Orthodox Church, the Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Holy See to Georgia, Head of the Georgian Eparchy of the Armenian Apostle Church, Acting Chief Rabbi of Georgia and the Plenipotentiary Representative of the Caucasian Muslims’ Organisation in Georgia, 29 January 2010.

22 Despite the fact that the representatives of the religious organisations were the smallest group of the users, they were the leaders in use of discriminative and humiliating terminology. Their mobilization strategies are often directed towards “cleaning public space from sin”. The ultimate benefit of such strategy is obtaining the symbolic power, in order to increase their sphere of influence. E. Aghdgomelashvili. *Ideological Homophobia*. Magazine Solidaroba (Solidarity). 2009, №3 (30). [http://tolerantoba.ge/tolerantoba\\_jurnali/30.pdf](http://tolerantoba.ge/tolerantoba_jurnali/30.pdf)

23 E. Aghdgomelashvili. *Coverage of Sexual Orientation/Gender Identity Issues in Media*; Media Development Fund; May 2011. <http://www.mdfgeorgia.ge/index.php?menuid=16&lang=1&id=54>

assessment dynamics remain practically unchanged in 2008-2011 (positive varies between 6 and 8%, neutral – 16-22%, and negative – 60-70%). The qualitative analysis of the coverage demonstrates that the reasons shall be sought in the politisation of the topic again: manipulation with the issues related to homosexuality and their use for marking the political opponents in elections period was as popular, as in 1999-2003<sup>24</sup>.

In 2012, the march dedicated to Idaho Day was ruined by the religious groups, and this caused the international resonance. This time, the statements were made directly from the parliamentary tribune. The leader of Christian Democratic Party, who submitted the package of the constitutional amendments to the parliament, assessed the action as “the beginning of very far going and important process, the ultimate goal of which is moral and judicial legalisation of homosexuality, pederasty, debauch, deviations and pervert lifestyle in Georgia”. For the first time, the members of parliamentary majority have fixed their position towards the homophobic hate speech: the proposal submitted by the Christian Democrat leader was declared unconstitutional, and the speech itself - homophobic<sup>25</sup>.

Nowadays, the majority in the Parliament is represented by the former opposition, many of members of which were fostering or openly expressing homophobic attitudes during the years. The time will show, whether the minority issues and anti-xenophobic discourse (at least at the declaration level) will remain the part of the political mainstream or not. Currently, this issue is still remaining the subject of the political speculations.

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24 E. Aghdgomelashvili. *Coverage of Sexual Orientation/ Gender Identity Issues in Media*; Media Development Fund; May 2011. <http://www.mdfgeorgia.ge/index.php?menuid=16&lang=1&id=54>

25 *Christian Democratic Movement Comes Forward with the Constitutional Amendments Initiative After LGBT Activities*. Civil Georgia Portal, Tbilisi, May 22, 2012. <http://www.civil.ge/geo/article.php?id=25490>

## HOMOPHOBIA: SOCIO-CULTURAL ENVIRONMENT IN GEORGIA

Tamta Melashvili

***What conditions the strong negative attitudes towards the LGBT people in Georgia? What is the reason for persistence of such attitudes? Why is not homophobia recognized as a social problem by the society?***

***This article represents the attempt to answer these questions in consideration of the existing context; analyse the collective negative attitudes towards LGBT people in Georgia in consideration of the cultural and social factors supporting wide spread and persistence of homophobia and transphobia at the societal level. The article will stress attitudes towards homosexuals, because the issues of rights differently influence gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people. Despite the discriminatory attitudes existing towards them, each group has its own peculiarities and these peculiarities require application of the different approaches. Today, homosexuality, and especially male homosexuality, is perceived as the biggest threat in our country and, accordingly, this group is the main target of homophobic discourse. Therefore, this article will analyse the attitudes towards gays and lesbians. ■***

Georgia is one of the most homophobic countries in Council of Europe. This is also witnessed by local or international studies. Although the focus of these stud-

ies was not the in-depth investigation of the attitudes towards LGBT group specifically, they allow making conclusions on the general trends. According to 2003 study conducted in Georgia, 84% of the respondents showed acutely negative attitude towards homosexuals<sup>1</sup>. The values did not change much in 2006 – negative attitude has been demonstrated by 81.4%. In 2009-2011, the surveys conducted by Caucasus Research and Resource Centre showed that the negative attitudes towards homosexuals did not reduce either. Quite on the contrary, they have increased – 90% stated that homosexuality is unacceptable.

Despite the fact that homophobia, at individual level, is mainly irrational and unconscious fear of homosexual persons based upon the prejudices and superstitions, at the collective level it might be quite conscious and planned behaviour. In such cases, individual prejudices often intersect with dominant cultural and ideological visions of homosexuality in general, discourse on which is created by power holding institutions, as a rule, together with media or through it. In Georgia such institution, in the first place, is Orthodox Church.

It is believed that the level of homophobia in the society is influenced by several socio-cultural fac-

1 Quinn S. "Forced Out: LGBT People in Georgia", ILGA Europe/COC Netherlands, 2007. p.26



tors. It is known that expression of collective hatred is especially strengthening in the periods of social crisis, when it is easy to cause the moral panics on the background of creation of the visible or invisible enemy icon. Such enemy in Georgia, already in the soviet times, was made of the “pederasts”, who, on the one hand, were meant to represent the male homosexuality and, on the other hand, were “strangers”, “dangerous”, “non-traditional” and “hostile”<sup>2</sup>. Homosexuality was punishable in the Soviet Union, and homophobia was an ideology. In the post-soviet period, this ideology gained more aggressive expression form. Hatred towards homosexuals became more explicit and visible. In Georgia, since the day it gained independence, the conspiracy theories saturated by homophobia started to appear, these theories successfully used in the political discourse up until today. “Pederasts” became “enemies”, “perverts”, “non-Georgians”, who betrayed their homeland, traditions and nationality. Soviet myth on western origin of homosexuality made the least equal to the liberal values, which in their turn became perceived as the threat to national identity and gave homophobia the political context. It should be mentioned that such attitudes take their roots in specific perception of nation or state, according to which the nation shall necessarily be homogeneous, has its own written or unwritten moral laws and order that should be obeyed by everybody, and the homosexuals are depicted as the violators of this order. As it has already been mentioned, the special role in creating the enemy icon of homosexuals, their marginalisation and dissemination of the homophobic attitudes in general is played by the church, which is dangerously powerful institution having permanently increasing influence. The homophobic discourse of the church is based upon the incorrect interpretation of the Bible and religion in general, and is constantly calling the society to marginalise homosexuals. Often and successfully are used the demographical manipulations stating that same sex couples will cause farther extinction of such a small nation.

Besides this, in the countries (including Georgia), where homosexuality has been criminalised

for a long time, the trend of identifying LGBT people as criminals can be observed<sup>3</sup>. This further supported the process of their stigmatisation. In Georgian homophobic discourse gays and lesbians are also often depicted as diseased, despite the fact that WHO has removed homosexuality from the list of diseases as far back as in 1990. Depicting LGBT people as diseased or criminals by Georgian society is conditioned not only by low awareness. Here, the other factors also play their roles – for average Georgian his church preacher is higher authority than the law or WHO. Accordingly, the opinion of the church representative on LGBT people, mostly ungrounded, saturated with hatred and violence, based on his phobias, is perceived as the ultimate truth by the parishioners, who consequently develop and/or promote extremely homophobic attitudes.

Manipulation with traditions and traditional values in the society that is oriented towards the very same traditions is not exercised purely through the homophobic discourse. Traditional values also intersect with the general understanding of gender and sexuality. From this standpoint, LGBT people are also perceived as the violators of normative boundaries, at which the society plays the role of gender police and strictly defines requirements and expectations from “real man” and “real woman”. In such cases, being man or woman is “naturally”, and similarly “natural” is their heterosexuality. Accordingly, there are distinctly different “naturally masculine” and “naturally feminine” properties. In such a patriarchal and masculine culture as we have in Georgia, dominating, of course, are masculine properties. While homosexuals, who are carriers of the properties that are coded as feminine, are not real men anymore, they are deviants, devaluated and even dangerous, because they arouse suspicions on masculinity and manhood, as well as the heterosexuality itself, being natural. Therefore, it is believed that sexism, heterosexism and homophobia are indivisible. American sociologist Michael Kimmel has different and interesting opinion on homophobia. He believes that is not so much the fear of gay males, but the fear of

2 Giorgi Maisuradze. *The Lost Contexts*. Bakur Sulakauri Publishing House, 2012. P. 105

3 *Discrimination on Grounds of Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity in Europe*. 2nd edition, Council of Europe Publishing p.23

the other males in general, who might “deprive us of our manhood, show us our real image, and make us feel that we are afraid”.<sup>4</sup> Fears and concerns of the males not to be perceived as homosexuals by the others make them to exaggerate and excessively demonstrate their masculinity. And this is especially accepted and widespread practice in such collective and traditional societies as Georgia is.

As for the sexuality, the attitudes of the traditional ideology (and especially religion) play the significant role in creating the homophobic attitudes at the societal level. It is believed that homophobia is characteristic to those societies, which are having extensive sexual taboos. For the majority of people not only others’, but even their own sexuality is unacceptable. Unacceptability and permanent suppression of the own sexuality, as a rule, results in sexual uneasiness, which, in its turn, generates the acute intolerance towards the sexuality of the others. Also very important is the general level of sexual culture and education of the society. The education is significant prerequisite for overcoming superstitions and prejudices. As a rule, the level of homophobia in educated people is lower. If we take into consideration that there is practically no sexual education in Georgia, and what’s more, neither any attempt to introduce the sexual education, and even speaking about this publicly makes Orthodox Church and majority of the society aggressive, since the sexual education is associated rather with corruption and extermination of the nation than with awareness or safe sexual lifestyle, it is clear that this is one more aspect causing high level of homophobia in the country.

Recently, increased visibility of the LGBT issues in the country became some kind of test of homophobic attitudes. Appearance of LGBT people in public space has automatically been perceived as propaganda of homosexuality. This has increased the collective fears and uneasiness, as well as the aggression and made intolerance more acute. The march of May 17, 2012 dedicated to the International Day of

Homophobia and Transphobia has been forcedly broken up by clericals and religious extremists. Not only the real march, but also the previously several times advertised mythical parade has become the most efficient means for “national” mobilisation. This once again has demonstrated the extremely homophobic attitudes of Georgian society.

One more recent test demonstrating the homophobic mood of the society was the public debates on the candidacy of Public Defender. For the candidates themselves, the decisive issue was the attitude towards LGBT people<sup>5</sup>. For the biggest part of the society, the candidate openly declaring friendliness towards LGBT people appeared to be unacceptable. Ultimately, the choice was made in favour of the candidate of majority, whose attitude towards LGBT group is not explicitly aggressive, but perfectly reflects the recent trend appearing in Georgian society of falsely less homophobia, which recognises the existence of homosexuality, but considers any kind of their self-expression (which is again perceived as propaganda) unacceptable. Such “let them be, but don’t touch me” approach is undoubtedly homophobic, since it denies the LGBT people the right of self-expression granted by the constitution and results in dividing people into first and second sort, where the destiny of the second sort – minority – is determined by the first sort. In such case, the majority, at its own good will (which it often does not possess), sets the boundaries of the rights for the minority, which totally contradicts the democratic values and principles of equality.

The recent events once again made visible that the collective homophobic mood is closely related to the general level of society’s social and cultural tolerance. And reality demonstrated that idea about tolerance of Georgian people is just a mythical construction built during Soviet Union times. It appeared that pluralism is an unknown fruit in Georgia and diversity is unacceptable. Everybody different is “other”, “stranger” and, therefore, unwanted.

It should be mentioned that the above socio-cultural factors are closely interrelated. Combined,

4 Michael Kimmel, “Masculinity as Homophobia: Fear, Shame and Silence in the Construction of Gender Identity” in Peter Murphey (ed) *Feminism and Masculinities*, Oxford University Press, 2004, p. 193

5 Eka Aghdgomelashvili, Homophobia in Discussing the Ombudsman Candidates, Netgazeti, 05.11.2012.



they ultimately condition the level of homophobia in the society. It shall also be stressed that homophobia negatively influences not just the specific group of people against which it is directed, but also those, who is exercising such practices. The society that recognises and allows the existence of the “second sort” of citizens, will find extremely difficult to get accustomed to the idea of equality and other most important democratic values. For the closed and traditional society, such as Georgia, it will be very lengthy and painful process, because reduction of homophobic attitudes and reappraisal of values is linked not only with homosexuality, but also with gender, sexuality and family institute in general. With this regard, the first step that the society could make would probably be recognising that homophobia is social problem.

## PART TWO

### TRANSGENDER PERSONS IN GEORGIA

Natia Gvianishvili

*Speaking of transgender issues in Georgia, they rarely recall (or rarely know) that the notion of gender implies not only problems of equality among men and women, and that violence and discrimination on the grounds of gender can be experienced by any gender-wise non-conforming person. With this regard, it is important to identify the transgender persons, because their status in the society is defined exactly on the grounds of their gender identity and, as we will demonstrate below, the system built upon the notion of two, strictly separated and clearly identified genders does not fit their needs.*

*Very few information is available on the transgender persons living in Georgia, since they are often left beyond the academic or social studies, or do not receive the relevant attention. In 2012, organisation Women Initiatives Supporting Group, together with organisation Identoba carried out the study on discrimination of LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender) persons in Georgia. Despite the fact that within the framework of this study information was being collected in writing, through the special questionnaires, we considered necessary conducting in-depth interviews with the transgender persons, in order to receive more comprehensive information. ■*

#### WHAT IS 'TRANSGENDER'

Before we start speaking about the results of the study itself, we deem necessary to clarify some terms that are important for understanding identity and status of transgender persons. Transgender persons are the persons, whose gender identity differs from this assigned to them at birth. Transgender persons might identify themselves with man, woman, neither or both of them<sup>1</sup>. Transsexual is more medical term and denotes the transgender person, who decides to change the gender through medical or surgical intervention. Process of changing assigned gender to the desired one is called the transition. It is lengthy and complex process, which might include the dress and accessories reflecting the gender self-perception by the person, hormonal therapy and surgery.

Based on the fact that often there is confusion with the notions of gender identity and sexual orientation, we shall stress that transgender persons, just like any others, can have heterosexual, bisexual, homosexual, asexual or any other sexual orientation.

#### PARTICIPANTS

Within the framework of 2012 discrimination study six transgender persons have been interviewed (2

1 <http://www.glaad.org/reference/transgender>

transgender males, 3 transgender females and one respondent, who does not identify with any gender). The small number of interviewees is due to the fact that there is no organised transgender community in Georgia. Our respondents are right those active persons, who are more or less involved in LGBT activities. The article also uses the materials on transgender persons' problems and needs collected by the organisation Identoba.

All six participants belong to various age groups (19-39) and are at the various stages of the transition. They also have different social, economic, educational and employment status. Out of six respondents only two transgender males (28 and 39) and one transgender female are able to represent themselves in daily life in the desired gender, while the others, due to various reasons (violence, mockery and fear to lose the achieved social status), are to conform to the gender assigned to them at birth. For the moment of interview, two transgender males (28 and 39) and one transgender female (27) were employed, and one transgender female (19) was a student.

## CHILDHOOD

It appeared that all six interviewees were showing the gender non-conformity from the very early childhood and were punished for this by their family members. As we have seen in case of our respondents, this punishment by the adults could be exercised in various forms: shaming, abusing, criticising and even physical violence. This is the very reason for the fact that often transgender persons (including our participants) are studying to control their self-expression<sup>2</sup> and are able to modify it in accordance with the situation:

*„...I was deliberate child...I mean I could not do some things in certain situations, because, say, some would be unable to see it and they would not perceive it, as I wanted and I would feel comfortable then; accordingly, I would behave as the situation required...” (Bamby, 27)*

<sup>2</sup> The respondents consider gender self-identity to be the expression of the emotions, dressing style, manners, behaviour and taste.

They do not discuss their gender with parents and relatives, do not wear the clothes and accessories of the desired gender and can change the dress only when they are alone or with the closest friends.

Beka (39) recalls the facts of systematic physical violence from his family members in childhood. According to him, in the adolescence, when the parents saw that he has not been “corrected” either by beating or by criticism, he was taken to the psychiatrist. The latter promised Beka’s parents that if they would regularly bring the daughter for the treatment for a certain period, they would receive the “ideal Georgian woman”. For the certain reasons, this therapy was not arranged and it’s already several years that Beka is expressing himself as a male in the daily life.

All six interviewees experienced psychological pressure from the peers and their parents. According to Bamby (27), she guessed from the very early age that she was to hide her wishes, and was extremely cautious in selecting with whom she could reveal her being different; while Salome (21) states that she was often criticised by the parents of those girls, with whom she was playing in childhood. They, it seems, were very surprised by the fact that “this boy” always wanted to be with girls.

## PHYSICAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL VIOLENCE IN ADULT AGE

Facts of physical violence in adult age are described only by Leo (28). The case that he recalls happened 7 years ago in the circle of those, with whom he was taking the drugs. The cause of the incident, according to him, was his gender identity, although he does not speak about the details. Bamby says in passing that such cases happened, but does not wish to recall them, since she is trying to eliminate everything negative from her life. None of them has reported to the police, because they think that the police officers can be even more transphobic<sup>3</sup>, then the offenders.

Social violence has been experienced by all six respondents, and they still continue experiencing it in the various layers of their social life. Maia (19) says

<sup>3</sup> Transphobia: irrational fear of and hatred towards transgender persons.

that psychological pressure experienced by her is, as a rule, expressed in the form of verbal offence: the family is permanently requiring from her to change the behaviour, manners and dressing style and her feminine behaviour does not go unnoticed by the strangers in the street. Some of them even allow themselves commenting on her appearance and call her gay or even swear at her.

According to Beka, he has often times experienced the psychological violence from the strangers in the street. He even recalled one fact, when two unknown for him persons approached him and said that they had a bet, whether Beka was a man or a woman, and to resolve the issue they decided to ask directly:

*„This block comes and says: we have a bet, and which are you? So I told him: if you give me a share, I will say. What one shall answer in such case? Weird moment, isn't it? They are standing there and you are alone, you are not protected. I am not afraid of fighting... I am little bit afraid of getting disabled; otherwise I am never afraid of fighting or something.” (Beka, 39)*

In Beka's opinion, the fact that such incidents become rarer nowadays does not make them less irritating.

Interesting was also Lasha's (24) opinion on the psychological violence from the society, which relates to his four-year working experience in the Georgian Army. He says that there he had no problems due to his gender identity, save maybe some gossips, which he considers unavoidable. He thinks that the reasons for tolerance demonstrated towards him lay in his personal features and devotion to friends, and that in the outer society, despite the better access to the information, aggression is stronger.

## FAMILY AND FRIENDS

It is important to mention that transgender (as well as lesbian, gay and bisexual) persons are often lacking the support from their families and friends. Living in the homophobic family and environment, as well as relationships with transphobic friends creates tensions and often results in reduced self-appraisal

in humans, causes them to lock inside themselves and control their self-expression at the expense of the huge psychological stress.

Fear of violence and losing beloved people are the key factors influencing coming out<sup>4</sup> of the transgender persons. However, the process is not always going by the same scenario. For instance, Nino (25) voluntarily came out before her mother and several relatives, and thought that she would lose many people surrounding her. Quite on the contrary, she discovered that she have gained many friends after coming out. Despite the fact that Nino's mother is still “praying for such thing not to happen” (Nino is planning to undergo surgery to regain the gender), she considers her coming out successful. In case of Maia, her mother stopped making humiliating comments about the transgender persons, although she still does not fully understand the status of her daughter.

Bamby's coming out was conditioned by the circumstances: her mother has by accident discovered her certificate of “real transsexual”. They never discuss this issue, though. She has voluntarily come out before her sister in-law, who strongly supports Bamby. Psychological pressure is mainly imposed by her brother, who often makes humiliating comments on Bamby's “womanish manners”. She tries not to disclose her gender identity to her father, because she is afraid that his bad health condition will worsen. It is interesting that from the very childhood Bamby is involved in arts and her behaviour and manners are attributed rather to her profession than to her gender identity.

Transphobia is quite strong in Salome's family. Currently she lives alone, since mother and grandfather do not support her. Despite the fact that mother tries to provide her the financial assistance, she also regularly calls Salome and tells her, how embarrassed she is because of daughter's behaviour. Grandfather threatens killing her.

Everybody in Beka's family knows about his gender identity. He came out before the parents in childhood, when they discovered that he is in love

<sup>4</sup> Coming out: person revealing his sexual orientation or gender identity before other persons.

with the girl of his age. Parents were trying hardly to change his identity and after such a prolonged pressure he agreed to marry a friend. Some time later Beka became pregnant and delivered a child. As he himself says, he was not ready to be a parent then, and he even had attempted the suicide. However, he overcame the difficulties with the assistance of his friends and religion:

*„I reckon it’s even good that I have a kid. At least I am true before myself and before the society in general. When they say that [it is possible] to change, I’ve tried to become what I am biologically, but I failed... I failed so much that I should not have existed then... then I thought, why should I not exist, is not it better to annoy you? ... so I made a correct decision, I reckon.” (Beka, 39)*

Currently, the family does not interfere with his gender identity related issues. This, according to Beka himself, might be resulting from the fact that he is the main provider of the family, and they consider themselves to be obliged to respect his opinion. Five interviewees stated that the friends are one of the main sources of the support they get. Maia says that discussing her identity with friends, she does not get any support or advice, so she tries not to speak about this very often.

The facts of violence from the family members are also described by the specialists:

*„Speaking of the forced treatment I recall one patient, FtM, who directly told his mother that he was a boy and asked to live him alone. Mother would bring him to the doctors, made the endocrinological tests. He was already 25, person who knew that he is male and had a wife, with whom he lived in full harmony; he had fully established sexual repertory and was just laughing at such speeches of his mother”<sup>5</sup>*

This person obeyed his mother’s request for undergoing “treatment” only because he was unable to provide for him and his wife himself. Financial dependence on the family often becomes the reason for transgender persons making some compromises with regard to their gender identity. At the same

time, their financial independence, along with the other factors, depends on their legal status.

## MEDICAL AND LEGAL ASPECTS AND EMPLOYMENT

Notion of transsexual is also closely linked with the diagnosis of gender dysphoria or gender identity disorder, which is included into the Mental Diseases Guidelines of American Psychiatric Association (DSM-IV TR)<sup>6</sup>. Diagnosis of gender dysphoria is required in many countries to grant the transsexual person right of changing sex through surgery or achieve legal recognition of the desired gender. In Georgia this requires certificate of “true transsexual”. Nowadays, the term “true transsexual” is an obsolete notion, which takes its origin from the practice of German endocrinologist Harry Benjamin. It was Benjamin, who classified the various levels of gender identity disorders. According to this classification, “true transsexual”<sup>7</sup> has been defined as the extreme form, in case of which hormonal therapy or surgical intervention is necessary for ensuring the wellbeing of the patient. Out of our six participants, the certificate of “true transsexual” has been taken only by three (one transgender female, one transgender male and one, who does not identify himself with any gender). Only two transgender males of them are receiving the hormones, and one has undergone bilateral mastectomy. One should stress that procedures necessary for receiving the certificate of “true transsexual”, hormonal therapy and surgery, as well as post-surgery rehabilitation process are quite expensive<sup>8</sup>. We have discovered that our respondents cannot afford such procedures. According to Leo, for instance, in order to get certificate and undergo the bilateral mastectomy, he had to sell the apartment. According to the practices existing in Georgia, in order to change the sex in ID, the person has to

6 <http://behavenet.com/apa-diagnostic-classification-dsm-iv-tr>

7 [http://www.genderpsychology.org/transsexual/benjamin\\_gd.html](http://www.genderpsychology.org/transsexual/benjamin_gd.html)

8 According to the studies conducted by the organization Identity, the amount necessary for passing all three stages of the transition makes approximately 19,000 Lari and neither of these procedures are reimbursed by the state or insurance.

5 Materials from CEDAW shadow report on conditions of LBT women in Georgia; interview with Maia Chavchanidze, Women Initiatives Supporting Group, 2012.

undergo the total gender regaining surgery<sup>9</sup>. In consideration of the fact that many are unable or unwilling to undergo the surgery, they remain suspended between two genders for years. All six respondents think that sex in ID shall be changed rather on basis of the certificate of “true transsexual” than of the surgery.

Lasha found the alternative way for bringing his body in harmony with self-perception. He made bilateral mastectomy in mid-September 2008, when he was serving in the army:

*„I have undergone surgery after the war to avoid the questions from the neighbours. Friends and family members new everything and the others thought I was wounded... Surgery was made under fake diagnosis – as though I had the nodes in the breast. In such case, doctor does not bear the responsibility. If I would not like anything, I would be unable to make him responsible. I am still illegally taking the hormonal therapy. This surgery costs 900 Laris in the other places, but since he knew that I am transsexual, he charged my 2000 Laris in cash, and without any receipt”<sup>10</sup> (Lasha, 24)*

By the time of the interview, Beka has already changed his name in ID and since the old IDs did not indicate the sex, his problems were smaller. However, once, during the visit to the bank, he was addressed as “misses”, which was very humiliating for him, because already for years he positions himself as a man.

Leo’s circumstances are more problematic, because he has the new ID, in which the sex (female) is indicated. He is trying to maximally conceal the document, and when presenting it is unavoidable, says that it was a mistake made by Civil Registry. In 2005 he was denied the employment in one of the restaurants:

*„I have resigned by my will and when later I asked them to hire me again, they said: you know that they know that you are transgender, and we cannot hire you. They denied me on this ground... it was just like this, no official statement, just on words.” (Leo, 28)*

For the moment of study, only three out of the interviewees were employed. Bamby describes her working environment as friendly. This, in her opinion, is due to personal features of her and her colleagues, and has nothing to do with the gender identity.

Salome worked as a waitress in one of the popular cafes, and there was quite favourable environment. In 2010, however, when her interview was published in one of Tbilisi magazines, she was fired. Her boss said that her being there created discomfort for the clients. Salome says that, due to unemployment, her economic conditions were so bad that if not the help from her mother, she might even get involved into the commercial sex. She also faced the employment-related discrimination in 2011, when she took M-Group trainings, where she could feel askance looks of both, the trainers and participants. After trainings, every participant got employment except Salome, despite her very good results at the final tests.

Few years ago Beka was fired from the police, but as a lesbian, and not as a transgender. The colleagues claimed that “women were calling him” and this was “embarrassing” for the police. As a result, the new boss called him and requested to leave.

Nino has never stayed for a long time at the same place. She mainly worked as a waitress or a bartender, and was forced to change the jobs frequently because of increasing negative attitudes. Once, two clients said that they would be waiting outside to “talk” to her. Nino was frightened and did not return to the job the next day. The only positive case she recalls from her working experience was when her boss said that only thing he cared was the quality of job, and not who performs it.

Most of the participants say that they have not experienced any discrimination on the gender identity grounds in receiving public services. However, Bamby remembers the homophobic and transphobic attitudes of the hospital staff, where she went to get the certificate of “true transsexual”:

*„As soon as they would learn that I was trans, terrible things happened... I have taken some tests in Zhordania Hospital. Some doctors greeted me normally; spoke warmly, but in general... I found*

9 Monitoring of implementation of Council of Europe CM REC(2010)5 recommendation in Georgia, WISG. 2012

10 From the materials of organisation Identity.

*myself in a very bad situation actually... I have received lots of offences... but, when I thought about this later, maybe it was not exactly an offence... this person (one of the doctors) was really concerned with all this... "I don't know what I would do, have I found my child in the similar situation"... I asked him: "and what would you do? Would you kick him out of home? Or kill him?" There also were offensive things; I just do not want to recall all this..."*  
(Bamby, 27)

## CONCLUSION

Although, the discussion of transgender persons' problems cannot be exhausted by one study or one article, we tried to describe in detail those issues that are important for our respondents. The study materials demonstrate that persons living in Georgia often become victims of physical and psychological violence at the various stages of their lives both from their family members and the society. The system built upon two clearly separated genders does not leave the space for self-determination of gender non-conforming persons; procedure of regaining the gender requires improvement and development of regulation mechanisms; needs of transgender persons are not reflected in the state policies and practices. All this influences the self-perception, self-realisation possibilities and financial independence of such persons, which, ultimately, hinders their full integration into the society.



## LGB DISCRIMINATION STUDY IN GEORGIA

Irakli Vacharadze

### STUDY DESCRIPTION

A research was conducted with participation from 150 members of LGB community, in April 2012. The aim of the research was to study the social environment, in which, the members of the above mentioned community live. This research provided us with the opportunity to evaluate how widespread is discrimination against LGB people in different spheres, what forms of physical and psychological violence take place and how often, how do the group members themselves evaluate the attitudes of the society towards them.

### METHODOLOGY

A structured questionnaire has been used as a study instrument, compiled with open and closed question<sup>1</sup>. Separate boxes were considered in the questionnaire for the description of concrete incidents. The questionnaire consisted of several blocks with 71 detailed questions. In addition, some of the questions permitted the respondent to choose several answers at the same time (for instance: forms and site of physical violence).

The questionnaire encompassed the following issues:

- General data (sex, sexual orientation, age, education, the size of city/town/village where the respondent lives/lived)
- Experience of physical and psychological violence (whether or not the participant had such experience and how often); description of the incident (who was the perpetrator, when and where the incident took place); whether or not the police had been informed about the incident and if not, what was the reason; if the incident was reported, what were the measures taken by the law enforcement structures.
- The workplace violence: denying employment or promotion, dismissing from the job, or having higher demands in comparison to other co-workers; having to conceal one's sexual orientation at work (to what extent, from whom, for what reason) – in case the participant was employed at time of the research.
- Cases of different/discriminatory treatment (based on knowledge or suspicion about participant's sexual orientation) within the service sphere: healthcare and state institutions (for instance: local governments,

1 For the study we used the adopted version of the questionnaire prepared by Polish organizations: „Poland, Campaign Against Homophobia“ and „Lambda Warsaw Association

court of law), places of public assembly (for instance: bar, club, public transport etc.)

- Coming out to the family members and relatives (who knows, who accepts the identity of the participant, how did the family members find out about the respondent's sexual orientation); do they experience pressure from family/relatives and how is this pressure expressed.
- Sense of freedom in terms of showing affection towards the partner in public settings.
- The evaluation of societal attitudes towards the members of LGBT community.

## SCOPE OF THE STUDY AND LIMITATIONS

150 members of LGBT community participated in the research<sup>2</sup>. The questionnaire was filled in by the interviewers trained in advance, who met the participants in different places of assembly of LGBT people: offices of Women's Initiatives Supporting Group and Identoba, apartments, clubs, bars etc. 2 questionnaires were filled using Skype. This sampling method influenced the division of the participants according to residence and age groups. The majority of the participants are currently residing in the capital city. Notwithstanding our efforts to cover all the age groups from 16-60 (included), the majority of the participants has been distributed into age groups of 18-25 and 26-40<sup>3</sup>.

## RESULTS INTERPRETATION

Data was elaborated via analytical software SPSS. Descriptive and explanatory statistical methods have been used.

1. Frequencies and percentages
2. Regressive and dispersive analysis

2 In-depth interviews were conducted with Transgender people. The results are included in the publication as a separate article.

3 LGBT community members, who are in the age groups 41-50 and 51-60 do not use the same places for socialization as the representative of lower age groups.

## MAIN FINDINGS

Nearly a third of all respondents, 32% (N=48) said they did experience violence at least for once, while 68% (N=102) either declined to reveal such incidents, or didn't have anything to report in this regard.

Out of those 48 individuals, who experienced violence within the recent 24 months, 60.87% experienced it once, 17.39% twice and 21.74% three or more times.

The majority of the respondents who experienced physical violence within the recent two years were more likely to be men than women (N=33 for men and N=15 for women). More men will have experienced at least 1 attack than women in the sample interviewed. For these individuals, gender factor doubles the likelihood of being subjected to physical violence. However, repeated experience of violence is stabilized for both genders. Thus we could speculate that those men, who were subject to physical violence, quickly adjusted their behavior, possibly by avoiding situations where violence was likely to be repeated or resorted to passing and to other tactics of disguising one's behavior. Most widespread form of physical violence was beating (N=35), sexual harassment (N=7), sexual assault (N=6).

The risk of being attacked is at its peak for the second age bracket (18-26), with most incidents reported by the representatives of this group. While other age groups reported less experience of violence, age group 16-18 demonstrates that as these individuals graduate from teenage years into adulthood, they will be at even greater risk of being attacked. And at this point we simply do not know how much experience the representatives of age groups 4 (41-50) and age group 5 (51-60), have due to lack of such respondents. Thus sharp fall-off of violence reporting is explained by lack of data, not by decrease of violence as age increases. However, a moderate downward trend is still evident for age group 3 (Age 26-40) and indicated that as people mature and engage in less public or social interactions where they might encounter unpredictable

attitudes, their chances of being physically attacked gradually shrinks too.

The data reveals that, gay men are most at-risk group to be attacked (N=21), especially as we have shown above, if they come from age groups 2 and 3. Bisexual men (N=11) and Lesbian women (N=9) are next high risk groups, whereas, bisexual women (N=4) and others (N=3) report less experience of being subjected to physical violence.

Most widespread form of physical violence were beating - 58.33% (N=35) and sexual harassment 11% (N=7), sexual violence and assault with the use of a gun, as well as other forms of violence (destruction of property, choke attempts, having things thrown at, fight, use of weapon for self-defense and being thrown of the door etc,) were 10% each (N=6).

The study revealed that streets and parks are the most dangerous and insecure places with most (45.83) incidents taking place there. However, home was listed as the second most likely location to endure violence, (18.75%). Cafes and bars had 14.58% of incidents.

From 48 individuals who has experiences physical violence 27.08% (N=13) said they did notify police, while 72,92 of all victims (N=35) did not do so. As for the reasons for not reporting to the police 8 said that they believe police is ineffective in such cases, 11 was scared off by their homophobic reactions, while 10 didn't think the incident was worthy of reporting at all.

Out of those who did seek help from the police, 46.15% regretted doing so because police reacted in non-friendly and homophobic manner, 30% individuals received friendly attitude and 23.08% of respondents said they were treated in a neutral manner.

The experience of psychological violence is rather widespread and frequent. 89.33% of respondents (N=134) said they did experience some kind of mental violence within the last two years, merely because they are lesbian, bisexual or gay men and women. On average, of the 134 individuals that reported experience of attacks, 75.37% (N=101) experienced it three and more times, 11.94%- twice and 12.69% once. This leads to conclusion that once a person is exposed and rendered vulnerable, assault

on person's mental integrity doesn't stop and only few manage to escape the cycle of bullying. Most stay in this vicious cycle of violence mounted against them.

Of 134 respondents who reported being subjected to psychological violence, experiences of both sexes were more closely related. 64 women and 70 men endured mental violence. Looking from the perspective of sexual orientation, however, the picture is not so uniform. Cross-tabulation analysis shows that the single most distressed group among the 150 interviewed individuals, gay men (N=48), constitute almost the third of all the interviewed experiencing mental violence. They are followed by lesbian and bisexual women (each N=28 and N=28).

The most widely spread form of psychological violence is derogatory statements and being ridiculed (N=110); verbal abuse was reported by 85 individuals. 74 individuals had gossips spread about them, as much as 50 were blackmailed, 6 had their property destroyed and 27 received hate mail.

When faced with violence, how did the respondents fare as far as seeking help from police was at stake? Turns out not even 1% would trust or otherwise be demotivated to ask police for help when in psychological distress.

Physical violence mostly occurs in the street/parks, and also happens to be the place where psychological assaults take place (N=115), which leads to the conclusion that for all those interviewed, being attacked by people they do not know is the highest risk compared to all other types of risks. This highlights how public security and sense of insecurity is the largest problem LGB individuals face in our sample. In addition to streets, public transport is the place one can expected to be mentally (N=32) and physically attacked (N=5). Bars and clubs occupied third place as being most physically dangerous (N=7) and psychologically distressing environment to be in (N=49).

Domestic violence is also very significant issue for the interviewees, since 41 individuals reported being mentally assaulted at their own homes (26 women, 15 men), and 11 said they were physically attacked in their domiciles (5 men, 6 women). The

same number of respondents (N=41) names working place and educational institution as the place where they experienced psychological violence. As for category “other” (N=56), almost the half (N=26) goes to internet space.

The sources of psychological attacks were friends (N=61), class and group mates (N=23), mothers (N=35), neighbors (N=23), co-workers (N=18). It make us think that the settings that do not encourage physical contact or settings that legally regulate relationships between individuals and impose time and other limitations on human interactions (e.g. public service agencies, etc.), may be more effective in guarding people from the threat of violence. Fear of sanctions may be an explication here. Fathers were reported as the source of mental distress (N=19), and other family members (N=28) as well.

However, as with physical violence, the single largest group of mental violators are those who are unknown to the victims - 31% (N=96). This suggests that visibility and long term exposure of LGB community members to people around them, will eventually lead to more acceptance and hence lower reported rate of psychological attacks.

79.33% (N=119) said they did work within the last two years, and 20.67% (N=31) said they didn't. The majority of employed respondents (N=104) have not experienced discrimination at workplace during last two years. which is explained by the fact that majority of them choose not only not to come out, but to actually “pass” as non LGB person at work. 42.37% (N=50) say they hide their orientation, another 42.37% say they selectively hide it, and only 15.25% are out at work.

Out of 150 participants, 19 stated that the healthcare services are not available to them, 39 interviewees believe, that they have access to these services, 92 do not have the answer to this question (latter also includes cases in which participants haven't had the necessity to use healthcare service in the last two years).

Everyone, who said they experienced discrimination at healthcare providers, were those who say they have experienced psychological violence within the last two years. Thus, every victim had experi-

enced at least this kind of discrimination at healthcare providers.

Within the service sphere, gay men are those who experience most discrimination (N=20). This group is followed by lesbians (N=16). As for bisexual women (N=11) and men (N=9), no difference has been revealed between them. Out of those who indicated “other” while identifying their sexual orientation, 4 stated that they have had this experience within the service sphere.

The research revealed that, when it comes to service sphere, members of LGB community face most discrimination in public transport (N=49). In terms of frequency, the next spot is occupied by bars/clubs (N=29) and shops (N=21). There are rare reports of discrimination within the state institutions (N=5). Victims of psychological violence, not surprisingly, were the same people who experienced discrimination in service fields: 61 victims of psychological violence comprised the absolute majority of the group of 62 individuals who experienced discrimination in service fields. Those, who did not experience psychological violence were 3 times less likely to experience discrimination in services (28>9 ratio).

Out of 150 interviewed, 28 individuals said they were discriminated in religious institutions (N=3, N=11, and N=14 across first three age groups, respectively). Majority of the respondents didn't have any relationship established with the church, and didn't have an answer (N=112) to the question. There was no significant difference among sex or orientation groups who experienced discrimination in churches

As for coming out with family members/relatives: In total, 34,67% of the participants have come out to their mothers, 12,67% to their fathers, 12,67% to their brothers, 20,67% to their sisters, 6% to their grandmothers and only 0.67% to their children (1 person); 30,67% are out with their cousins, 8% with their aunts and 7,33% with their uncles.

More than one-third of the participants – 35% (N=54) states that they conceal their sexual orientation completely from their family and relatives. Men are hiding their sexual orientation more (N=29) than women (N=25).

56% of the participants (N=84) has at least

once experienced pressure from family members/relatives. The most common form of pressure among those listed above, is criticism regarding clothing, behaviour, lifestyle 48.67% (N=73). 26% of the participants (N=39) states that they were forced to get married, or that they were pressured because they were not married. Almost one-fifth of the participants 18% (N=27) was banned from contacting their friends. 7,33% (N=11) participants experienced forced isolation at home and the same number experienced financial pressure from the family, other kind of pressure was 2% (N=3). No difference was revealed in terms of age groups, although there is a difference in terms of biological sex (48 women, 36 men). As for the sexual orientation, it was revealed that lesbian and bisexual women experience more psychological pressure from their families, than men. This is applied to all the age groups (total of N=40, 21 lesbians, 19 bisexual women).

60.67% of respondents believe that public attitudes towards lesbian and bisexual women are negative, 26% believes the attitude is partly negative, 8% think the attitudes are more positive, than negative. Only 33% thinks that attitude is positive, 4% is unsure about this.

86.67% of the sample believe that public attitudes towards gay and bisexual men are negative, 11.33% think the attitudes are partly negative, 0.67% (N=1) considers the attitude is partly positive, 2 respondents are unsure about this.

84% of the interviewed believe society has negative views about transgender people, 8.67% think the attitudes are partly negative, and 3.33% think the attitudes are partly positively, while another 4% are unsure about this.

An experience of previous physical or psychological violence, while strongly correlated itself, didn't predict outcomes to awareness on societal attitude questions. It can only be suggested that the previous absence of physical violence experience was slightly negatively correlated to how these individuals thought society treated transgender people, or other sexual orientation and gender identity groups. However, the victims of psychological violence, seemed to be slightly more aware of LB wom-

en's and transgender people's issues, but less likely to be aware about GB men's issues.

To avoid violence and harassment LGBT community members feel the need to restrain from showing emotions towards loved ones in public. In total 47.3% of all respondents are always hiding romantic affection in public, 37,3% does this sometimes, while only 6.67% do not hide it, and 8.67% didn't have partner and didn't feel the need to do so within the last two years.

Gay men are mostly secretive about showing affection in public (N=35). 9 persons said they do this sometimes, and only 2 gay men were able to hold hands or kiss their partner in public. 10 bisexual men were always hiding affection, 5 were partly hiding it, and 2 were not doing this.

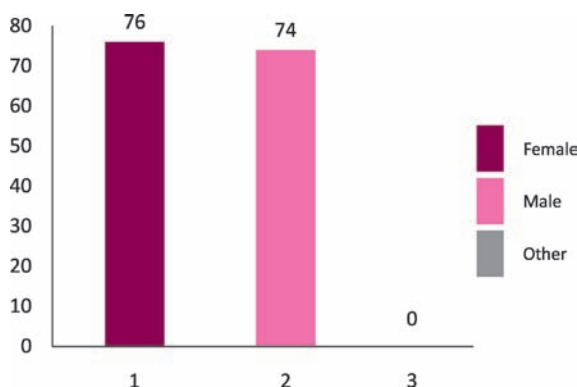
13 lesbian and 9 bisexual women were hiding romantic affection to their partners in public, 15 bisexual, and 18 lesbian women were doing this sometimes, and 4 bisexual women and 1 lesbian woman made no effort to hide their affection from the public.

Out of those who have experienced physical violence (N=48), at least once, 25 always hide their affection towards their partners in public settings, 15 – sometimes, 6 – do not hide it, 2 do not have partners. As for the psychological violence: out of 134 participants who have experienced psychological violence, 65 always hide their affection, 50 sometimes, 8 do not hide it, 11 do not have partners.

***Scope of the study and limitations does not give us the opportunity to generalize the results to the country. However, the results of this survey provide us with certain information about the discriminatory practices and experiences, encountered by the participants of the research. This information is sufficient to shed the light on the type of problems that LGBT people face in their daily life. The results of the survey remind us, that discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity is an important human rights issue, which requires response both from the government and from the society. ■***

## GENERAL DATA

**Figure 1: Quantitative distribution of respondents by biological sex (N=150)**

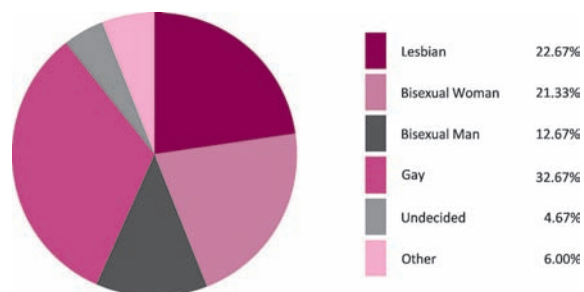


The analysis presented includes responses collected among 150 respondents. Respondents had the option to indicate their biological sex either as a “Woman”, a “Man”, or “Other”. Out of 150 individuals polled, 76 opted to indicate their sex as “female”, 74 as “male” and none as “other” gender. Thus, the responses collected are slightly skewed but in most parts, is balanced biological sex-wise. In the analysis that follows, where the differences occur between these sex groups, data will be broken down by sex-specific groups.

**Figure 2: Percentage distribution of the respondents by sexual orientation (N =150)**

Out of all (N=150) respondents, 7 declared they were “Undecided”, while 9 chose to self-identify as “Other”. Of the largest group, by biological sex “Women”: 34 self-identifies as “Lesbian”, while 32 as “Bisexual Woman”, 49 as gay and 19 as bisexual men.

Among men, belonging to one definite sexual orientation category was more strongly felt. Even



though men were not the majority of those polled, “Gays” are the largest sub-group of the survey. 32.67% of all respondents, or to be more precise, said they consider themselves “Gay”. “Lesbian” women are the second largest group with 22.67%, closely followed by “Bisexual Women” with 21,33% share. On the fourth position we see bisexual men 12.67%, followed by “others” 6% and “undecided 4.67%.

Correlation between individual’s biological sex and sexual orientation with perfect credibility shows that biological sex is a very strong predictor of the respondent’s sexual orientation. What this means is that if the respondent identified either as “Woman” or “Man” the person was very likely to have strong gender identity as well and self-identify as either gay or bisexual man and, lesbian or bisexual woman. This is further confirmed in Figure 2: only 7 individuals were “Undecided” and 9 said they were neither gay, bisexual or lesbian. „Other” is interpreted as queer, and/or open gender.<sup>1</sup>

This finding may speak to the issue of identity politics and where these 150 representatives of LGB

<sup>1</sup> Please note that the N=150 excludes transgender individuals, the in depth interviews with transgender people is included in the publication as separate article



communities stand in relation to that. One may speculate that the sense of belonging to strictly defined sexual orientation categories is high and it is firmly predicted by one's sex: This rigidity between gender and sex could also be explained by the selection bias: interviewers first sought respondents by their sexual orientation (as they needed to collect data from lesbians, gays, bisexuals). Had the data from the interviews with transgender individuals be fused with LGBT data, the correlation between sex and gender would have been significantly altered.

**Figure 3: Quantitative distribution of respondents by age groups (N=150)**

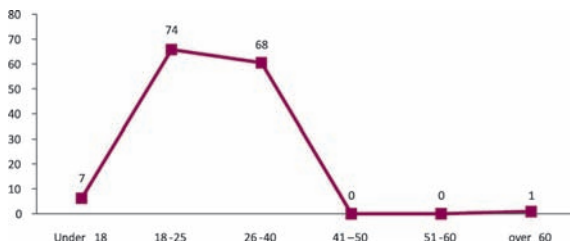


Figure 3 is a graphical representation of age groups. The survey didn't ask the respondents about their age, but rather, broke them down into subgroups of those who are under 18, 18-25, 26-40, 41-50, 51-60 and over 60. It must be no coincidence that despite the intention and the attempt to have all age groups represented in the sample, only 1 representative was polled in the age group over 60. We couldn't collect responses from anyone aged 41-50 and 51-60. Problems arise when one attempts to survey these age groups and is widely expectable: LGBT individuals who outlived Soviet times, have either left the newly independent Georgia in early 1990s and emigrated in search of better future, or they have remained closeted even after slow democratic development took place in the country accompanied by more visibility of queer issues in public and resulting hate towards the representatives of these groups. Representatives of the two upper aged groups are not frequent visitors of venues where the interviewers hired by us could easily cross paths with them and this could be seen as one of the limitations of the research methodology. Mostly younger interviewers have fewer

opportunities to cross paths with people above 41 so this may have additionally diminished their opportunities to be identified and approached by the interviewers. However, the bulk of the issue lies, in addition to emigration, in approachability and closetedness, in the fact that people above 41 frequent less the locations where younger generations of LGBT communities tend to gather. They do not frequent those very few LGBT moderately 'friendly' cafes, bars and clubs in Tbilisi. They tend to either be already settled down in partnerships, are more inclined to live in heterosexual marriages or to simply avoiding social interaction and live in close-knit communities that are not easily identifiable and approachable. Hence, it must be emphasized that this report is the report of the situation of the younger and middle-aged generations and LGBT communities in Georgia. Only 7 individuals (4.67% of the respondents) were interviewed from age under 18, thus results will not be skewed favorably to the youngest group. The responses and consequent analysis that follows will equally be dominated by answers given by 75 individuals, who come from age group 18-25 making up nearly perfect half of all respondents at 49.33%. They are closely followed by 68 individuals from age group 26-40, awarding them 45.33% share of all answers.

**Figure 4: The percentage distribution of respondents according to the size of the current city of residence (N=150)**

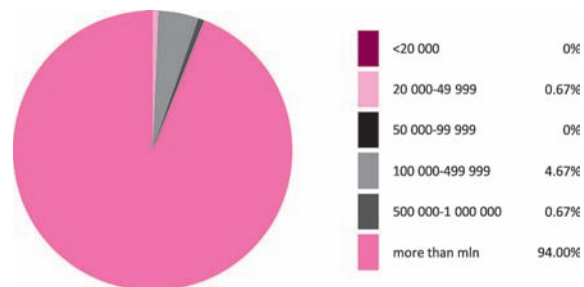
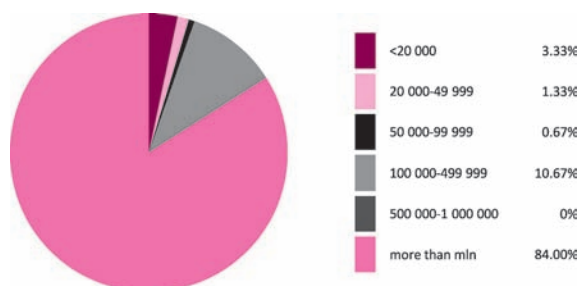


Figure 4 is a standard part of the questionnaire administered across European countries within the frame of similar studies. Georgia, is a small country with very few, evenly distributed cities, Therefore, the answers doesn't give us right results: Georgia's second largest city, Kutaisi has the population less



than 250,000, while the capital city Tbilisi has roughly 1,250,000, total population of Georgia is less than 4.5 million. Given this extremely uneven distribution, coupled with the intra-country migration pattern that has been well established for LGBT individuals, it must be no surprise that a 94% or 141 out of total 150 identify Tbilisi as their current residence. Other options on the scale had 1 response each, with group “100 000-499 999” having 7 individuals (4.67%) who were polled for the survey.

**Figure 5: The percentage distribution of respondents by the size of the city, where they spent the most of their life-time (N=150)**



Now, we also asked the respondents if the town they spent most of their lifetime was the same one they currently live in. Turns out, only 126 have spent greatest share of their life-time in Tbilisi, thus making them 84% of all respondents. The group that previously indicated they come from towns of population 100 000-499 999 and less, has now increased its share from 4.67% to 10.67%. However, due to the selection limitations and very limited visibility or accessibility of LGBTs in the regions, we cannot assume this to be the national representative sample. What the distribution shows is that out of total LGB population in the Capital, those that are most well-connected and readily available to interviewers, roughly 12% has changed residence and moved to Tbilisi during last two years. However, at this point it cannot be known why these individuals moved. We ran correlations test but it didn't demonstrate significant correlation between any age group and previous residence. Thus we will not be able to tell whether these individuals moved to Tbilisi due to educational purposes, due to family relocation or any other reason.

**Figure 6: The percentage distribution of respondents by level of education (N=150)**

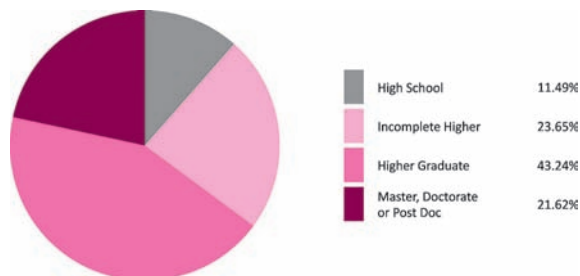


Figure 6 is a pie-chart representation of education level attainment by the 150 individuals interviewed. In this particular community, people with higher education prevail at 43.24%. 64 respondents said they have attained the equivalent of BA degree, while additional 23.65% have said they have incomplete higher education level, which should be interpreted so that these people stand as current students 35 individuals said they have “incomplete higher education” degree. The third larger group that follows are those with advanced graduate degrees (Master and Doctorate or post-doctorate degree holders): 32 individuals or 21.62% of total respondents. Smallest group with 11.49% share (17 individuals) are with High School diploma holders. The result should not be surprising as education in Georgia is traditionally considered a high value that people of all walks of life aspire to. It would be interesting to know if Georgian LGBTs have higher education attainment level than similarly aged non-LGBT groups. This can be the question for further research.

We ran test to see if education level was correlated with respondent age. Significant correlation was found (N=148) with age and education. Higher the age, higher the level of education aspirations for those 148 individuals out of total 150 interviewed. This is a welcome trend for the group and may speak about survival strategies or resiliency of the group. However, since the survey didn't intend to research resiliency and survival tactic, this suggestion must only be taken as suggestive and speculative, albeit something that could be further explored in the future.

## EXPERIENCE OF PHYSICAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL VIOLENCE

The assumption of the questionnaire is that physical violence against gay, lesbian and bisexual persons stands as both widespread and most underreported practice. Violent and semi-violent attacks on bodily integrity of LGBT individuals may range from bodily harm and may result in disability or other type of infringement of bodily integrity of these individuals. Psychological violence is understood as verbal or non-physical attacks on individuals that may lead to stress, development of the sense of guilt and self-victimization of LGBT individuals, depression, withdrawal or panic attacks.

### PHYSICAL VIOLENCE

**Figure 7. The percentage of physical violence experienced by LGBT group (N=150)**

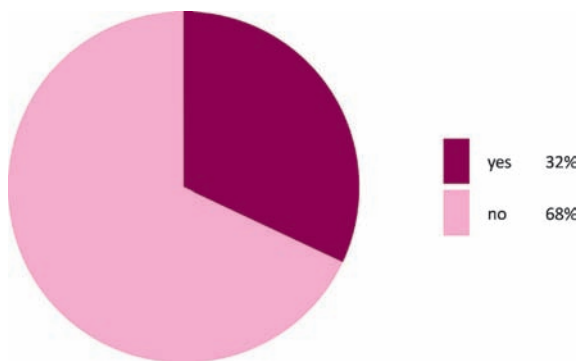
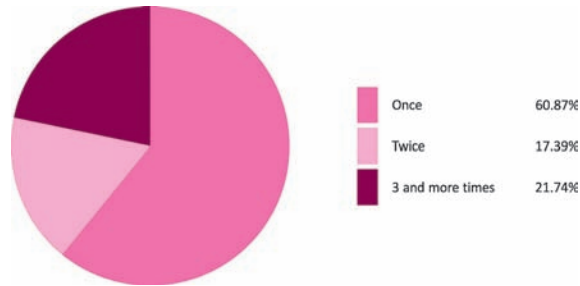


Figure 7 depicts experience of physical violence within the last two years because someone knew or suspected these individuals belonged to LGBT community. We asked them to report beating, pounding, kicking, throwing over, pulling, armed menace or armed assault, sexual pressure (touching against person's will), sexual violence (rape or attempted rape), etc.

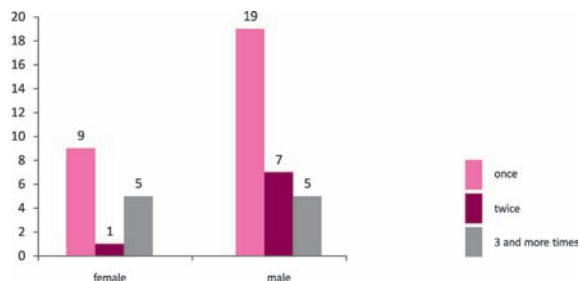
Nearly a third of all respondents, 32% (48 individuals) said they did experience at least one of these forms of violence, while 68% (N=102) either declined to reveal such incidents, or didn't have anything to report in this regard.

**Figure 8. Percentage distribution of the frequency of physical violence (N=48)**



Out of those 48 individuals, who experienced violence within the recent 24 months, 60.87% experienced it once, 17.39% twice and 21.74% three or more times.

**Figure 9. Frequency of physical violence cases by biological sex (N=48)**

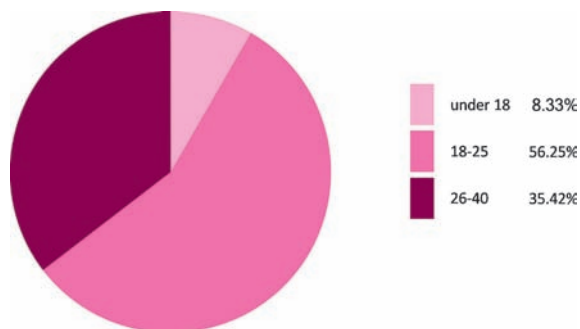


In Figure 9 it can be seen that those who confirmed the experience of being attacked within the recent two years were more likely to be men than women (N=33 for men vs. N=15 for women). More men will have experienced at least 1 attack than women in the sample interviewed. For these individuals, gender factor doubles the likelihood of being subjected to physical violence. However, the figure also shows that, repeated experience of violence is stabilized for both genders. Thus we could speculate that those men that were subject to physical violence quickly adjusted their behavior, possibly by avoiding situations where violence was likely to be repeated or resorted to passing and to other tactics of disguising one's behavior.

However, relative balance between sexes where multiple violence was reported, may allow for suggestion, that if violence cannot be avoided, aggres-

sors will not prefer men over women as the targets of attack, or other forms of assault. Thus, we ran test to examine the hypothesis that those few individuals with the recent history of violence, perhaps due to strong gender or sexual orientation identifiers, stood equal chances of inviting violence from aggressors. Individual's biological sex was did not predict the frequency of attacks. There was a negative correlation between the general experience of physical violence, and a person's biological sex that affirms the findings of the Figure 9, that men are more likely to experience physical violence than women among our target group of 150 LGBs. In other words, individual's gender negatively predicts the violence one may have to endure. It also could be suggested, that gender will matter less as the frequency of attacks will increase. However, due to extremely low number of responses, this finding is highly speculative and statistically non-significant.

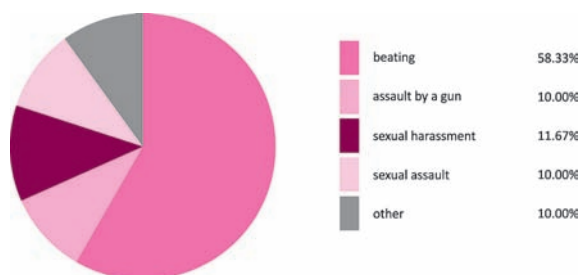
**Figure 10. Percentage distribution of physical violence cases by age groups (N=48)**



Age is a strong predictor of violence; Figure 10 shows what the risk of being attacked is at its peak for the second age bracket (18-25), with most incidents reported by the representatives of this group. While other age groups reported less experience of violence, age group 16-18 demonstrates that as these individuals graduate from teenage years into adulthood, they will be at even greater risk of being attacked. And at this point we simply do not know how much experience the representatives of age groups 4 (41-50) and age group 5 (51-60), have due to lack of such respondents. Thus sharp fall-off of violence reporting is explained by lack of data, not by decrease of violence as age increases. However, a moderate downward trend

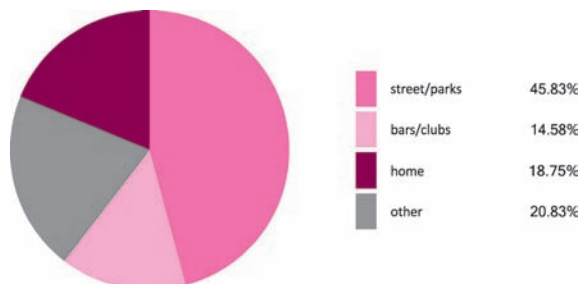
is still evident for age group 3 (Age 26-40) and indicated that as people mature and engage in less public or social interactions where they might encounter unpredictable attitudes, their chances of being physically attacked gradually shrinks too.

**Figure 11. Percentage distribution of physical violence cases by the forms of violence (N=60)**



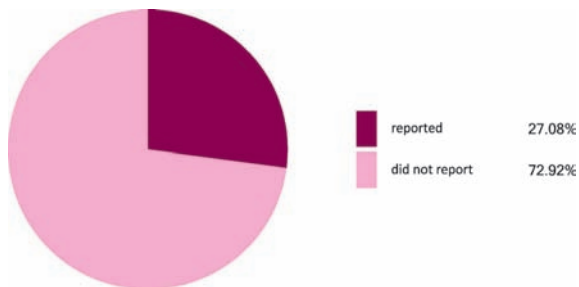
Most widespread form of physical violence were beating - 58.33% (N=35) and sexual harassment 11%(N=7), sexual violence and assault with the use of a gun, as well as other forms of violence (destruction of property, choke attempts, having things thrown at, fight, use of weapon for self-defense and being thrown of the door etc,) were 10 % each (N=6). When asked about the identities of the aggressors, in 8 cases friends or acquaintances initiated violence, 3 were class/group mates, 3 cases came from neighbors, 2 from mothers, 4 times from fathers, on 1 occasion from other member of the family and 2 others. On 3 occasions, respondents said police attacked them. However largest single group 56.7% (N=34) were the people the victims did not know or didn't know well enough to place in one of those identifiable categories.

**Figure 12. Percentage distribution of physical violence cases by the place of violence (N=48)**



We asked the victims to list the locations where these incidents took place. They have identified streets and parks as the most dangerous and insecure places with most 45.83% (N=22) incidents taking place there. However, home was listed as the second most likely location to endure violence, 18.75% (N=9). Cafes and bars had 14.58% (N=7) incidents 4 incidents took places in public transport, 2 in shops, 4 in other places.

**Figure 13. The percentage of reporting to the police in cases of physical violence (N=48)**



We asked all 48 individuals if they had notified police about the incidents. 27.08% said they did notify police (N=13), while 72.92% of all victims (N=35) did not do so. As for the reasons for not reporting to the police 8 said that they believe police is ineffective in such cases, 11 was scared off by their homophobic reactions, while 10 didn't think the incident was worthy of reporting at all and 7 respondents did not answer the question.

Out of those who did seek help from the police, 46.15% regretted doing so because police reacted in non-friendly and homophobic manner, 30% individuals received friendly attitude and 23.08% persons said they were treated in a neutral manner.

The data reveals that, gay men are most at-risk group to be attacked (N=21), especially as we have shown above, if they come from age groups 2 and 3. Bisexual men (N=11) and Lesbian women (N=9) are next high risk groups, whereas, bisexual women (N=4) and others (N=3) report less experience of being subjected to physical violence.

In general, physical violence is positively correlated to educational achievement, which is interpreted as the education level grows; people are more

likely to not only notice, but also to report violence. These people are mostly from the higher age group. This however, cannot necessarily be explained by their longer life experience, which allows higher number of violent incidents timewise. Our respondents were asked to report only the incidents that took place within the last two years.

## PSYCHOLOGICAL VIOLENCE

Interviewees were asked whether they had been verbally assaulted because of their gender identity and sexual orientation, if they had to endure degrading comments directed at them, whether they were ridiculed or not, if they had to hear and respond to gossips mounted against them, if they were menaced, blackmailed or received hate mail, if they were boycotted and forced to restrain from contacts/jobs, if they were forced into marrying someone they didn't want to marry, etc. within the previous two-year period.

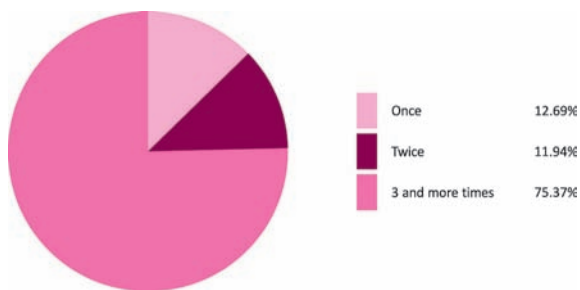
**Figure 14. Percentage distribution of psychological violence cases in LGB group (N=150)**



The experience of psychological violence makes the incidents of physical violence as though seemingly infrequent, due to its widespread and frequent nature. Almost everyone interviewed, a whopping 89.33% (N=134) said they did experience some kind of mental violence within the last two years, merely because they are lesbian, bisexual or gay men and women.

**Figure 15. Percentage distribution of frequency of psychological violence cases (N=134)**

On average, of the 134 individuals that reported experience of attacks, 75.37% (N=101) experienced it three and more times, 11.94%- twice and 12.69%

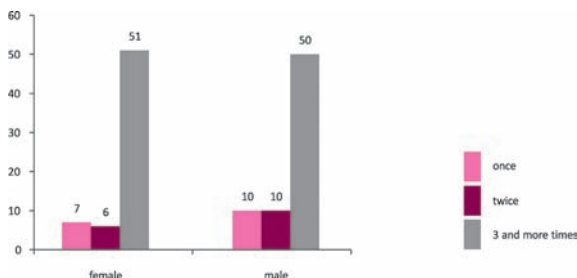


once. This leads to conclusion that once a person is exposed and rendered vulnerable, assault on person’s mental integrity doesn’t stop and only few manage to escape the cycle of bullying. Most stay in this vicious cycle of violence mounted against them.

Participants, who identified themselves as lesbian turned out to be victims of psychological violence in 28 cases. Bisexual women reported psychological violence in 28 cases, bisexual men in 18 cases and gay men in 48 cases. Out of those participants, signed undecided while identifying their sexual orientation, 4 have, at least once, been victim of psychological violence. Eight participants out of those 9 who identified their sexual orientation as “other” also reported having experience of psychological abuse.

Out of total respondents interviewed, only 16 individuals did not report psychological attacks within the last two years. In total, 48 persons experienced both: physical and psychological violence. In summary, of the 48 respondents who reported being subjected to violence in physical manner, 33 were men and 15 were women.

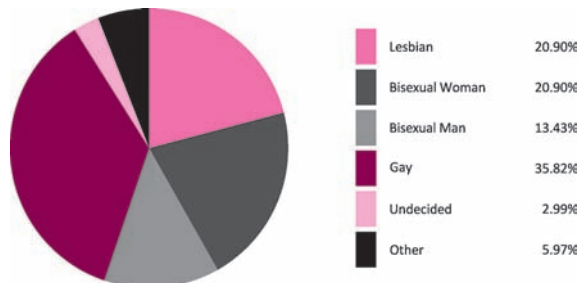
**Figure 16. Frequency of psychological violence by biological sex (N=134)**



Of 134 respondents who reported being subjected to psychological violence, experiences of both sexes

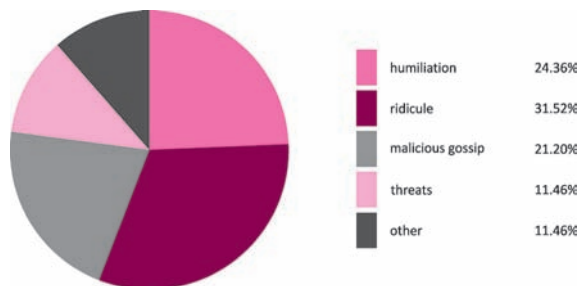
were more closely related. 64 women and 70 men endured mental violence.

**Figure 17 Percentage distribution of psychological violence by sexual orientation (N=134)**



Looking from the perspective of sexual orientation, however, the picture is not so uniform. Cross-tabulation analysis shows that the single most distressed group among the 150 interviewed individuals, gay men 35.82% (N=48), constitute almost the third of all the interviewed experiencing mental violence. They are followed by lesbian 20.9% and bisexual 20.9% women (each N=28 and N=28). After comes Bisexual men 13.43% (N=18), undecided (N=7) and other (N=9).

**Figure 18. Percentage distribution of psychological violence cases by the forms of violence (N=349)**



The respondents listed the forms of violence they endured most frequently within the last two years. Verbal abuse was reported by 24.36% (N=85) individuals, 31.52% (N=110) said derogatory statements and being ridiculed was what they experienced most. 21.20% (N=74) individuals had gossips spread about them, 11.46% (N=40) of respondents were threatened, 2,1% (N=7) were blackmailed, 1.72% (N=6) had their property destroyed and 7.74%



(N=27) received hate mail.

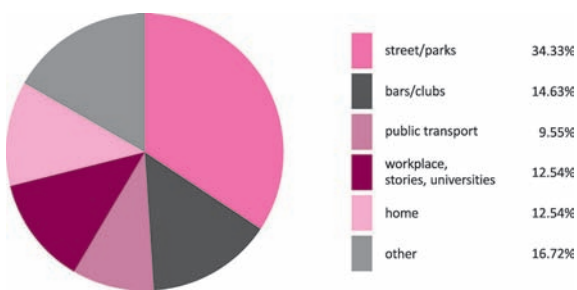
When faced with violence, how did the respondents fare as far as seeking help from police was at stake? Turns out not even 1% would trust or otherwise be demotivated to ask police for help when in psychological distress.

The sources of psychological attacks were friends (N=61), class and group mates (N=23), mothers (N=35), neighbors (N=23), co-workers (N=18).

Settings that do not encourage physical contact or settings that legally regulate relationships between individuals and impose time and other limitations on human interactions (e.g. public service agencies, etc.), may be more effective in guarding people from the threat of violence. Fear of sanctions may be an explication here. Fathers were reported as the source of mental distress (N=19), and other family members (N=28) as well.

However, as with physical violence, the single largest group of mental violators are those who are unknown to the victims 31% (N=96). This suggests that visibility and long term exposure of LGB community members to people around them, will eventually lead to more acceptance and hence lower reported rate of psychological attacks.

**Figure 19. Quantitative distribution of psychological violence cases by the place of violence(N=335)**



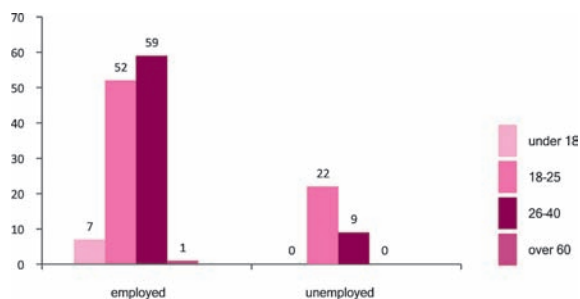
Physical violence mostly occurs in the street/parks, and also happens to be the place where mental assaults take place (N=115), which leads to the conclusion that for all those interviewed, being attacked by people they do not know is the highest risk compared to all other types of risks. This highlights how public security and sense of insecurity is the largest problem LGB individuals face in our

sample. In addition to streets, public transport is the place one can expect to be mentally (N=32) and physically attacked (N=5). Bars and clubs occupied third place as being most physically dangerous (N=7) and psychologically distressing environment to be in (N=49).

Domestic violence is also very significant issue for the interviewees, since 41 individuals reported being mentally assaulted at their own homes (26 women, 15 men), and 11 said they were physically attacked in their domiciles (5 men, 6 women). The same number of respondents (N=41) names working place and educational institution as the place where they experienced psychological violence. As for category "other" (N=56), almost the half (N=26) goes to internet space.

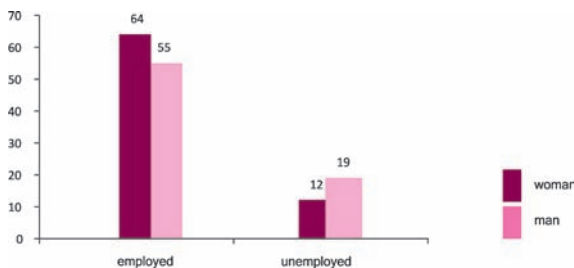
## WORKPLACE

**Figure 20. Quantitative distribution of employed respondents by age groups (N = 119)**



79.33% (N=119) said they did work within the last two years, and 20.67% (N=31) said they didn't. This is how employment was distributed across age groups. In the age group 16-18 everyone had working experience (N=7), 52 individuals worked in age group 18-25, slightly more, 59 individuals worked in an age group 26-40 and 1 person from age group above 60 worked as well. It is interesting that unemployment rate is extremely high for the age group 18-25 (N=22), and drops significantly in the next tier (N=9).. There are differences in the level of employment by biological sex: 64 of employed respondents are women and 55 men, 12 of unemployed respondents are women and 19 men.

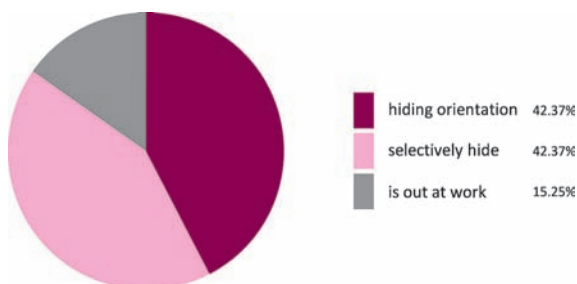
**Figure 21. Quantitative distribution of employed respondents by biological sex (N=119)**



1 person was refused job and contract in the age group 18-25, and 6 in age group 26-40, 3 women and 4 men. 3 out 4 refused were gay. 4 were higher graduates and 3 advanced degree holders. 1 bisexual woman was refused promotion due to homophobic motives. 2 persons from age group 18-25 and 4 from age group 26-40 lost their job for the same reason: 2 were lesbian, 2 were gay, and 1 was a bi man and 1 was a woman.

5 individuals felt that they had to work more, because they were, or were suspected to be LGB: 4 women and 1 man. Majority of respondents said they didn't encounter any of these forms of discrimination (women N=56, men N=48). Women were not more likely to say they didn't suffer any of these forms of discrimination than men. More educated the respondent was, less likely it was for them to face discrimination in working place. However, overall no particular group reported significant correlation to workplace discrimination which is explained by the fact that majority of them choose not only not to come out, but to actually "pass" as non LGB person at work.

**Figure 22. Percentage distribution of employed respondents by coming out (N=119)**



42.37% (N=50) say they hide their orientation, another 42.37% say they selectively hide it, and only

15.25% are out at work. All the respondents under 18 are in closet in the working place. Only 10 in age group 18-25 were out at work and 8 in group 26-40.

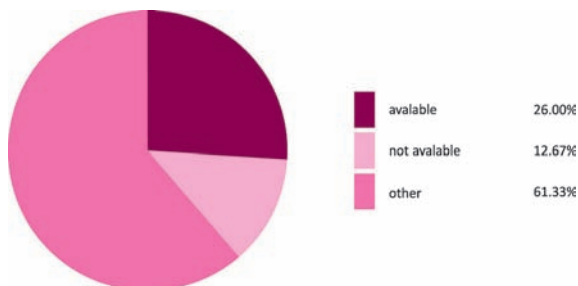
Lesbian and bisexual women were more selective in coming out to some people (N=16) and (N =15), while more gays preferred to remain closeted (N=18) than bisexual men (N=11). However, given the largest share of the "Gay group" in the total sample, this is not surprising. Gay men's was also the single largest out group (N=9) at workplace. Only 1 undecided person and 1 "Other" were not hiding their questioning or queer status at work.

Education did affect coming out rates at work, as 27 individuals with higher education degree and 12 advanced degree holders were partly out. High school diploma holders and students or others with incomplete higher education remained closeted. Seems like graduation (holding diploma) and professional growth positively impacts one's decision to be out. Experiences of physical violence in the past didn't seem to have any impact on coming out rates at work, neither was it strongly predicted by educational level overall.

**HEALTH**

6 individuals from age group 18-25 and 3 from 26-40 said they were discriminated by medical personnel. No one under 18 reported this. Clearly, teenagers are least likely to seek medical help on their own, and are probably accompanied by their parents when seeking such services.

**Figure 23. Access to health services for LGB group (N=150)**



Out of 150 participants, 12.67% (N=19) stated



that the healthcare services are not available to them, 26% (N=39) interviewees believe, that they have access to these services, 61.33% (N= 92) do not have the answer to this question (latter also includes cases in which participants haven't had the necessity to use healthcare service in the last two years).

Only 1 person under 18 said health services were accessible, 2 said such services were not accessible, and 4 weren't sure about accessibility. 25 individuals aged between 18-25 said they could access health services and 4 didn't have access; however, 45 individuals weren't sure about this at all and only 13 individuals aged between 26-40 had access to healthcare services, and 13 didn't. Again, largest group was composed of 41 individuals, who couldn't identify if they had secured health providers if the need arose.

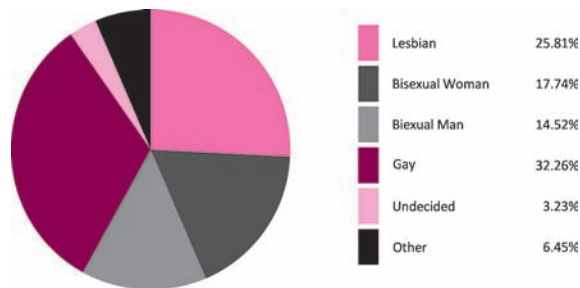
We asked about experiences of discrimination at healthcare providers. Everyone, who said they experienced discrimination at healthcare providers, were those who say they have experienced psychological violence within the last two years. Thus, every victim had experienced at least this kind of discrimination at healthcare providers. Only 35 victims of psychological violence said they had access to health services (out of 134 total victims). In sum, 18 individuals were confident they didn't have access to health services and 80 were unsure about this.

## SERVICES

Out of 150 respondents, 62 have the experience of discrimination within the service sphere (37 participants have not experienced discrimination, whereas 50 respondents do not have an answer) this number is evenly distributed across almost all the age groups.

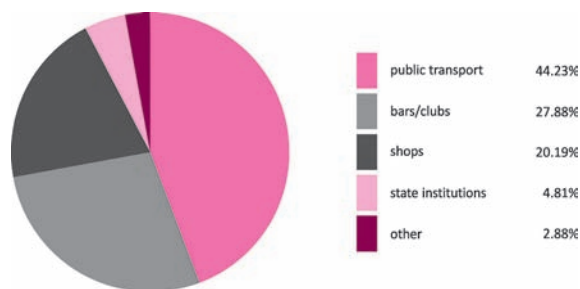
**Figure 24. Percentage distribution of discrimination experience by sexual orientation (N=62)**

The research revealed, that within the service sphere, gay men are those who experience most discrimination 32.26% (N=20). This group is followed by lesbians 25.81% (N=16). As for bisexual women 17.74% (N=11) and men 14.52% (N=9), no difference has been revealed between them.



Out of those who indicated "other" while identifying their sexual orientation 6.45% (N=4) stated that they have had this experience within the service sphere. In category "undecided" only 2 cases were identified- 3.23%.

**Figure 25. Percentage of discrimination cases in services by the place (N=104)**



The research revealed that, when it comes to service sphere, members of LGB community face most discrimination in public transport 44.23% (N=49). In terms of frequency, the next spot is occupied by bars/clubs 27.88% (N=29) and shops 20,19% (N=21). There are rare reports of discrimination within the state institutions 4.81% (N=5).

Victims of psychological violence, not surprisingly, were the same people who experienced discrimination in service fields: 61 victims of psychological violence comprised the absolute majority of the group of 62 individuals who experienced discrimination in service fields. Those, who did not experience psychological violence were 3 times less likely to experience discrimination in services (28>9 ratio). For example 29 people experienced discrimination in bars and 28 of them separately said they were the victims of psychological violence in the same reporting period.

Victims of physical violence said that in 62 cases,

when they experienced discrimination in service fields, 30 had separately experienced physical violence and 32 had not. Thus, this leads us to speculate that service field is a major source of psychological, but not physical distress, and may further aggravate the negative experiences of victims of previous discrimination. Although bar discrimination was not predicted by the experience of physical violence, 11 out of 29 had also been physically abused before. Government discrimination however, neither predicted, neither negated the ratio of those who had been physically abused in the same 2 year window (N=21 total, 11 victims, and 10 non victims)

## RELIGION

Out of 150 interviewed, 28 individuals said they were discriminated in religious institutions (N=3, N=11, and N=14 across first three age groups, respectively). Majority of the respondents didn't have any relationship established with the church, and didn't have an answer (N=112) to the question. Only 10 persons were confi-

dent they did not experience discrimination in churches, or personally from the priests. There was no significant difference among sex or orientation groups who experienced discrimination in churches: 9 gay men, 8 bi women, 6 lesbian women, 2 bi men, 1 "undecided" and 2 "other" persons reported discrimination in churches. As far as non-discrimination was concerned, 5 gay men were confident about not being discriminated which could simply be reflecting their larger share in the survey sample. Per established pattern, the more educated respondents were, the more they perceived discrimination (22 highly educated vs. 6 high school and 2 incomplete high educated individuals).

## FAMILY

Respondents were asked about their coming out and relationship status with their families. We wanted to know how many had come out to parents, to siblings and to other immediate relatives in the family, and how much of this was on a voluntary basis?

**Table 1. Which member of the family knows about your sexual orientation**

Person	N	%
Mother	52	34.67%
Father	19	12.67%
Brother	19	12.67%
Sister	31	20.67%
Grandparents	9	6.00%
Children	1	0.67%
Aunt	12	8.00%
Uncle	11	7.33%
Cousins	46	30.67%
Nobody	54	36.00%
Other	6	4.00%

34.67% (N=52) say they are out with their mothers, 55.77% of which is made voluntarily. From 52 respondents 26.92% thinks mother is positively disposed to their sexual orientation. 30 individuals in age group between 26-40, 21 individuals in age group between 18-25, and 1 individual under 18 were out to their mothers.

Gay men were most likely to be out with their mothers (N=17), followed by bisexual women (N=12), and lesbian women (N=11), bisexu-

al men (N=6) and "Undecided" (N=4) persons. No group was more likely to report mothers' positive attitudes towards their sexuality. Gay men were most confident about this (N=7), but this is related to their larger share in the sample, and not to higher acceptance rate among their maternal parents.

Only 12.67% (N=19) of the respondents were out with their fathers. From the respondents out with their father Only 26.32% came out voluntarily, and

**Table 2. Who told about your sexual orientation to your family members/relatives?**

Person	Voluntary coming out		Forced coming out		Favorably disposed	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Mother	29	56%	23	44%	14	27%
Father	5	26%	14	74%	3	16%
Brother	9	47%	10	53%	5	26%
Sister	22	71%	9	29%	18	58%
Grandparents	1	11%	8	89%	2	22%
Children	1	100%	0	0%	1	100%
Aunt	5	42%	7	58%	5	42%
Uncle	4	36%	7	64%	4	36%
Cousins	34	74%	12	26%	25	54%
Nobody	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Other	0	0%	6	100%	0	0%

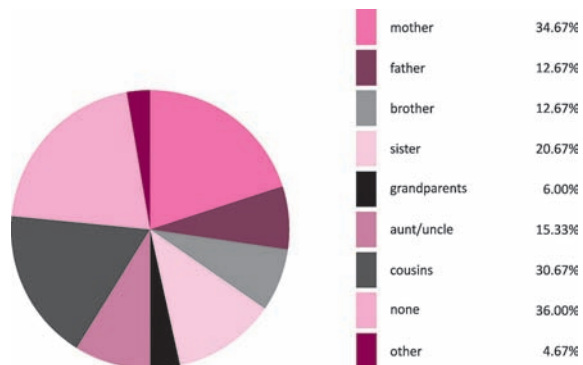
73.68% had forced coming out. 15.8% said their fathers are positive about their orientation. 9 gay men, 5 bisexual women, 5 lesbian women were out with their fathers. 3 lesbian women and 4 gay men came out voluntarily. 6 men and 6 women were forced out. As far as positive attitudes were concerned, all sub-groups had similar experiences. Only 3 individuals felt their fathers accepted them.

12.67% of the respondents are to their brothers: 14 individuals aged between 26-40, 4 individuals aged between 18-25, and 1 individual aged under 18.

10 individuals out of 19 who are out with their fraternal siblings had forced coming out with their brothers, and only 26.32% think their brothers have positive attitudes towards their homosexuality. Women were more likely to come out voluntarily (N=6 vs. N=3 for men), and they were also more likely to be forced out (N=6). Only 3 bisexual women and 2 gay men said their brothers were positive about orientation.

20.67% of the respondents are out with their sisters (N=31), 71% of those who are out with their sisters, came out voluntarily, while 29% were forced out to their sisters. Only 58.06% felt they were accepted. 12 individuals from 31 came out voluntarily 9 of them were below 25. Younger ones had highest rates of being forced out: 6 individuals. As far as acceptance was concerned, all age groups reported similar acceptance rates.

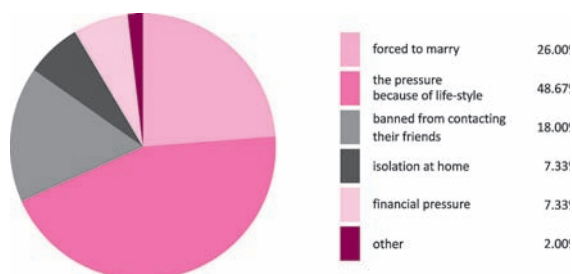
According to the results, after mother the most representative group who knows about respondents sexual orientation is cousins – 30,67% (N=46) and 73,91% of all surveyed came out voluntarily to them (N=34), while the remaining 26,09% were forced out (N=12), 54,35% of the total sample think their cousins are positive about their orientation. All age groups were similarly out to their cousins and so was the forced out statistics.

**Figure 26. Percentage of coming-out with family members/relatives (N=150)**

In total, 34.67% of the participants have come out to their mothers, 12.67% to their fathers, 12.67% to their brothers, 20.67% to their sisters, 6% to their grandmothers and only 0.67% to their children (1 person); 30.67% are out with their cousins, 8% with their aunts and 7.33% with their uncles.

More than one-third of the participants – 36% (N=54) states that they conceal their sexual orientation completely from their family and relatives. Among the cases, in which participants signed “other” (N=6) it has to do mostly with former spouses and coming out was forced. Men are hiding their sexual orientation more (N=29) than women (N=25).

**Figure 27. Cases of harassment from family members /relatives (N=150)**



We asked the respondents if they were under pressure from their family members. Such as forced to marry, or felt the pressure to marry due to the fact that they hadn't already done so. Pressure because the way they dress, their life-style, with whom they are friends, or because of their masculine or feminine mannerisms. (The questionnaire allowed the participants to choose several answers/

options at the same time).

56% of the participants (N=84) has at least once experienced pressure from family members/relatives. The most common form of pressure among those listed above, is criticism regarding clothing, behaviour, lifestyle 48.67% (N=73). 26% of the participants (N=39) states that they were forced to get married, or that they were pressured because they were not married. Almost one-fifth of the participants 18% (N=27) was banned from contacting their friends. 7,33% (N=11) participants experienced forced isolation at home and the same number experienced financial pressure from the family, other kind of pressure was 2 % (N=3). No difference was revealed in terms of age groups, although there is a difference in terms of biological sex (48 women, 36 men). As for the sexual orientation, it was revealed that lesbian and bisexual women experience more psychological pressure from their families, than men. This is applied to all the age groups (total of N=40, 21 lesbians, 19 bisexual women). Among men this kind of pressure was experienced more by gays (N=19). The same kind of pressure was experienced by those 5 participants who did not wish to identify themselves with any of the listed sexual orientations and 7 participants who identified their sexual orientation as “other”.

## SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

### SOCIAL ATTITUDE TOWARDS LGBT PEOPLE

The survey intends to find out how LGBT community members perceive themselves in society. They were asked about how they felt the society in general was

disposed to LGBT individuals.

60.67% of respondents believe that public attitudes towards lesbian and bisexual women are negative, 26% believes the attitude is partly negative, 8% think the attitudes are more positive, than negative. Only 33% thinks that attitude in positive, 4% is unsure about this.

**Table 3. Social attitude towards LGBT people**

Answers	LB women		GB men		Transgenderers	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
<b>Positive</b>	2	1.33%	0	0.00%	0	0.00%
<b>More positive than negative</b>	12	8.00%	1	0.67%	5	3.33%
<b>More negative than positive</b>	39	26.00%	17	11.33%	13	8.67%
<b>Negative</b>	91	60.67%	130	86.67%	126	84.00%
<b>Unsure about it</b>	6	4.00%	2	1.33%	6	4.00%

86.67% of the sample believe that public attitudes towards gay and bisexual men are negative, 11.33% think the attitudes are partly negative, 0.67% (N=1) considers the attitude is partly positive, 2 respondents are unsure about this.

84% of the interviewed believe society has nega-

tive views about transgender people, 8.67% think the attitudes are partly negative, and 3.33% think the attitudes are Respondents' experiences were connected to church. That is the reason why other religious institutions are not represented in the research partly positively, while another 4% are unsure about this.

**Table 4. Society attitude towards LB women**

Answers	woman		man	
	N	%	N	%
<b>Positive</b>	0	0.0%	2	1.3%
<b>More positive than negative</b>	4	2.7%	8	5.3%
<b>More negative than positive</b>	16	10.7%	23	15.3%
<b>Negative</b>	53	35.3%	38	25.3%
<b>Unsure about it</b>	3	2.0%	3	2.0%

Only 4 women (N=76 total who responded to this question) felt they were more or less respected by the society, 53 reported negative attitudes, and 16 reported partly being disrespected. 38 men though LB women were treated disrespectfully, 23 thought LB women were partially respected, and 8 thought they were partially respected, 2 men thing that the attitude is positive. This shows that GB men, in general had very limited knowledge about how LB women feel they are treated by the society in general, and hold higher positive outlook

than these women do about themselves. This may be explained by the relatively low intra-group communication or low sensitivity of GB men about the issues LB women face in the society.

One more reason, why GB men hold more positive outlook about LB women's experiences is the fact that little is known about these women in general. This is not the case with GB men at all. In fact, more women thought GB men were treated disrespectfully, than the GB men themselves felt so.

Table 5. Social attitude towards GB men

Answers	woman	man	woman	man
	N	%	N	%
Positive	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
More positive than negative	0	0.0%	1	1.4%
More negative than positive	7	9.2%	10	13.5%
Negative	67	88.2%	63	85.1%
Unsure about it	2	2.6%	0	0.0%

67 women out of total 76 said GB men were not respected, while only 63 GB men out of 74 confirmed this for their group. 10 men said GB men were probably not respected, while only 7

women were hesitant on this. Only 1 man said he thought GB men were more respected than not. No women thought the same about either GB men, or LB women.

Table 6. Social attitude towards transgender people

Answers	woman	man	woman	man
	N	%	N	%
Positive	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
More positive than negative	0	0.0%	5	6.8%
More negative than positive	5	6.6%	8	10.8%
Negative	69	90.8%	57	77.0%
Unsure about it	2	2.6%	4	5.4%

69 women and 57 men said they believed transgender people were not respected at all, 4 men and 2 woman were not sure, 8 men and 5 women said transgender people were more disrespected than respected and no woman, but 5 men thought transgender people were respected. This again, shows that women in general have more awareness of their own and other sexual orientation groups issues than men do. They hold more negative expectation as to how others are treated, which may come either from their awareness, or exaggerated views how other groups experience societal attitudes. Men, in general tend to underestimated how women feel social pressure, and display very low awareness about how women and transgender people experience societal attitudes.

The level of education in our sample is positively correlated to awareness of discrimination in the Georgian society. The more educated the respondents are, the more equally aware they seem to be about societal attitudes towards both LB and GB groups. Education showed stronger correlation (P.328

and Sign.000). Education didn't predict awareness about transgender issue but no significant or strong correlations was suggested by the findings.

An experience of previous physical or psychological violence, while strongly correlated itself, didn't predict outcomes to awareness on societal attitude questions. It can only be suggested that the previous absence of physical violence experience was slightly negatively correlated to how these individuals thought society treated transgender people, or other sexual orientation and gender identity groups. However, the victims of psychological violence, seemed to be slightly more aware of LB women's and transgender people's issues, but less likely to be aware about GB men's issues.

## ACTION TO AVOID VIOLENCE AND HARASSMENT

We asked respondents if within the last two years they felt the need to restrain from showing emotions



**Table 7. How open are respondents about showing affection in public**

Answers	Lesbian	B women	B men	Gay	Undecided	other	total	
	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	%
always	13	9	10	35	1	3	71	47.3%
sometimes	18	15	5	9	5	4	56	37.3%
never	1	4	2	2	1	0	10	6.7%
Does not have a partner	2	4	2	3	0	2	13	8.7%

towards loved ones in public out of the fear of inviting violence.

In total 47.33% of all respondents are always hiding romantic affection in public, 37,33% do this sometimes, while only 6.67% do not hide it, and 8.67% didn't have partner and didn't feel the need to do so within the last two years.

Gay men are mostly secretive about showing affection in public (N=35). 9 persons said they do this sometimes, and only 2 gay men were able to hold hands or kiss their partner in public. 10 bisexual men were always hiding affection, 5 were partly hiding it, and 2 were not doing this.

13 lesbian and 9 bisexual women were hiding romantic affection to their partners in public, 15 bisexual, and 18 lesbian women were doing this sometimes, and 4 bisexual women and 1 lesbian woman made no effort to hide their affection from the public.

Out of those who have experienced physical violence, at least once (N=48), 25 always hide their affection towards their partners in public settings, 15 – sometimes, 6 – do not hide it, 2 do not have partners. As for the psychological violence: out of 134 participants who have experienced psychological violence, 64 always hide their affection, 50 sometimes, 8 do not hide it, 11 do not have partners.

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# TERMINOLOGY

**BISEXUAL** refers to a person who is attracted to both sexes.

**GAY** is a synonym for homosexual. It is sometimes used to describe only males whose primary emotional and physical attraction is to other males.

**GENDER** is a socially constructed concept, or social classification, of certain sets of behaviors, character traits and roles as “feminine” or “masculine.” Though the specifics of what may constitute feminine/female and masculine/male behaviors can vary across cultures, they uniformly impose a set of restrictions and rules on how each man or woman should behave in all areas of life.

**GENDER EXPRESSION** refers to the external manifestation of one’s gender, usually expressed through “masculine,” “feminine” or gender variant dress, appearance, mannerisms, speech patterns, and behavior. Gender expression is not necessarily an indication of sexual orientation or gender identity.

**GENDER IDENTITY** refers to a person’s deeply felt sense of identification with a specific gender, in relation to the social construction of masculinity and femininity. A person’s gender identity may be male, female, or something other than or in between male and female. A person’s gender identity may or may not correspond with the sex assigned at birth. Since gender identity is internal, one’s gender is not necessarily visible to others. Gender identity is different from sexual orientation.

**GENDER NON-CONFORMING OR GENDER VARIANT** describes individuals who do not conform to prescribed social “norms” regarding “gender appropriate” conduct and presentation, whether or not they identify with the gender associated with their sex assigned at birth.

**HOMOPHOBIA** refers to an irrational fear or hatred of homosexuality and people who are (or are perceived to be) homosexual. Similarly, biphobia refers to an irrational fear or hatred of bisexuality and transphobia refers to an irrational fear or hatred of transgender people. All of these phobias manifest themselves in harassment, prejudicial and negative treatment, violence and other forms of discrimination.

**HOMOSEXUAL** refers to a person whose primary emotional and physical attraction is to people of the same sex.

**INTERSEX** refers to when a person’s biological anatomy varies from the standards usually used to classify bodies as male or female. Intersex variations describe a large variety of conditions where a body varies from the male or female standard in areas such as chromosomes, hormonal makeup and genitalia. Intersex variations may be noticeable at birth or develop later in life.

**LESBIAN** refers to a female whose primary emotional and physical attraction is to other females.

**LGBT** is an abbreviation for Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender. This umbrella term is meant to include lesbians, bisexual women, transwomen (male-to-female transgender persons) and transmen (female-to-male transgender persons). LBT women are sexually marginalized in their societies on the basis of their sexual orientation, gender identity and/or gender expression.

**SEX** is the classification of bodies as male or female. At birth, infants are assigned a sex based on the socially constructed understanding of a certain combination of biological characteristics as representative of either male or female. These characteristics include: chromosomes, hormones, internal reproductive organs, and genitals.

**SEXUAL ORIENTATION** describes an individual’s physical, romantic, emotional and/or spiritual attraction to another person, including lesbian, gay, bisexual and heterosexual orientations.

**TRANSGENDER** is an umbrella term for people whose gender identity, expression or behavior is different from that typically associated with their assigned sex at birth, including but not limited to transsexuals, travestis, transvestites, transgenderists, cross-dressers, and gender non-conforming people. Transgender people may be heterosexual, lesbian, gay or bisexual.