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FRA's EU LGBT survey

This is a brief overview of some of the findings. The key findings with relevant graphs and opinions are contained in the 'At a glance report'. Full findings are in the 'Main results report'.

1. Why and how was the EU LGBT survey carried out?

FRA conducted an online survey covering discrimination and hate speech against LGBT people, as well as other issues, in all EU Member States and Croatia, following a European Commission request. The survey consisted of large-scale empirical data collection and targeted people in all EU Member States and Croatia, aged 18 or over, who consider themselves lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender. The anonymous survey was made available online in all 23 official EU languages (except Irish) plus Catalan, Croatian, Luxembourgish, Russian and Turkish. FRA designed the survey which was carried out, from April to July 2012 - under contract to FRA following an open call for tender – by Gallup Europe in partnership with ILGA-Europe (European Region of the [International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association](#)). ILGA-Europe, the European umbrella organisation representing LGBT civil society organisations, supported the work through its national experts.

The results reflect the experiences of over 93,000 individuals who completed the questionnaire. While the data are not representative of all LGBT people in the EU, this number is a very large group, and is by far the largest collection of empirical information of its kind in Europe to date. As the most wide-ranging and comprehensive survey of reported experiences of LGBT people in the EU and Croatia, it collects a reasonable diversity of opinions, behaviours and attitudes from LGBT groups that allows detailed analysis of the data. More information can be found in the [technical report](#).

2. What questions did the survey ask?

Respondents were asked about their experiences of discrimination, violence and harassment at work, in education, healthcare, social services and in public places such as cafes and restaurants, banks and shops. The questions drew on rights protected under EU law and other international standards. If respondents had experiences to share, further details were asked. The questionnaire also asked respondents about key elements of their daily lives, including their assessment of the public attitudes towards LGBT people, the visibility of LGBT people in public life, and negative reactions from the general public. Transgender people were also asked specific questions on access to transgender-specific healthcare and their experiences in changing the gender marker in official documents.

In addition, the survey collected a large amount of socio-demographic data, such as respondents' educational background, employment status, relationship and civil status, parental status and income.

3. How common is discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation or gender identity?

About a half of all respondents said that they had personally felt discriminated against or harassed on the grounds of sexual orientation in the year before the survey. Lesbian women (55%), young respondents (aged 18–24 years) (57%) and those with the lowest incomes (52%) were most likely to say they had personally felt discriminated against or harassed.

One in five of those respondents who were **employed and/or looked for work** in the year before the survey felt discriminated against. For transgender respondents it was one in three. In every country surveyed, two-thirds of respondents had witnessed negative comments or conduct towards a LGBT colleague while at work.

A third of respondents stated that they felt personally discriminated against because of being LGBT in at least one of the following areas: housing, healthcare, education, social services, and access to goods and services.

4. What was school life like for LGBT students?

During schooling before the age of 18, 2 out of 3 LGBT respondents were hiding or disguising being LGBT at school. At least 60% personally experienced negative comments or conduct at school because they were LGBT while over 80% of all respondents in each LGBT group, and in every country, had witnessed negative comments or conduct because a schoolmate was perceived to be LGBT. Two-thirds said these comments or conduct had occurred often or always during their schooling. Two-thirds also said they often, or always hid or disguised that they were LGBT while at school. This particularly applied to gay and bisexual men.

5. How common is hate crime against LGBT people?

In the last five years, 26% of all respondents had been attacked or threatened with violence. This figure rises to 35% among transgender respondents. Of those who had experienced violence in the past year, 59% said that the last attack or threat of violence happened because they were perceived to be LGBT. In the year before the survey, 19% were victims of harassment which they thought was because they were perceived to be LGBT.

Incidents most often took place outdoors in public places and were perpetrated by more than one person, usually male, whom the victim did not know. However, 7% of the most recent violent incidents in the last year were committed by a member of the victim's family or household.

About three in 10 of all transgender respondents said they were victims of violence or threats of violence more than three times in the past year.

6. How do LGBT people feel treated by society?

The EU is founded on values of equality and respect yet three-quarters of all LGBT respondents felt that discrimination based on a person's sexual orientation is widespread in the country they live in. Other examples of what it is like to be LGBT include:

- 48% are open about being LGBT to family members and 28% are open to none or a few of their friends. Just 21% are open to their work colleagues or schoolmates.
- Almost a half of all respondents believe that offensive language about LGBT people by politicians is widespread in their country of residence.
- Two-thirds avoid holding hands in public with a same-sex partner for fear of being assaulted, threatened or harassed for holding hands. This figure is three-quarters among gay and bisexual men respondents.
- 50% of all respondents avoid certain places for fear of being assaulted, threatened or harassed because of being LGBT. This particularly applies to public transport, on the street or in other public places, and in public buildings.
- Of all groups, transgender respondents are most likely to say that they had personally felt discriminated against or experienced violence.

7. What can be done to improve equality and respect for LGBT people?

EU law protects against discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation in employment, yet discrimination persists in this area. To counter this, the EU could use several legal and policy tools to develop **systematic initiatives to combat discrimination** on the grounds of sexual orientation and gender identity. Equally, Member States should use the survey findings to further develop, implement and monitor relevant policies. EU Member States that have set up specific LGBT action plans or integrated these issues in national human rights action plans can make use of country specific data to further shape their actions.

Equal protection against discrimination across all EU Member States would significantly improve if **non-discrimination measures were extended beyond employment**. The EU's proposed 'horizontal directive', would extend the principle of equal treatment to cover religion, belief, disability, age and sexual orientation.

As for the school setting, Member States should work towards providing a **school environment that is safe and supportive for LGBT youth**, free from bullying and exclusion. This includes awareness raising among teachers and students to encourage respect and understanding, and to learn how to approach LGBT issues in class, for example by ensuring that objective information on sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression is part of school curricula and teacher training. Governments and schools should also set up and promote anti homophobic and transphobic bullying policies.

According to the findings, LGBT people often do not report instances of discrimination as they believe nothing will change (60% of respondents) or they do not know how or where to report incidents (30%). Only 22% of the most serious hate crime incidents were brought to the attention of the police. Almost half of the respondents who did not report to the police felt the police would do nothing. Such patterns emerge from FRA's [work with other groups](#) (such as minorities and migrants). EU and national law should protect against homophobic and transphobic hate speech and crime. Rights awareness, and the means to report discrimination and hate-motivated violence should be promoted. Member States should also **tackle underreporting** by supporting equality bodies and other national complaints mechanisms to raise awareness of discrimination and what LGBT people can do. Member States should also train law enforcement officials on how to respond to LGBT issues or encourage civil society organisations to report on behalf of victims. Hate crime data, including noting the motivations behind the crime should also be recorded to help Member States take appropriate action. EU and Member States should also specifically address and make homophobic and transphobic **hate speech and hate crime punishable by law**.

8. Other FRA work on the rights of LGBT people

FRA began working on the fundamental rights of LGBT people in 2007 following a request by the European Parliament to investigate LGBT discrimination and homophobia in the EU.

- In 2008, FRA reported on the [legal situation of LGBT people](#) in the EU. This was [updated in 2010](#).
- A 2009 report looked at the [social situation of LGBT people](#) in the EU.
- In 2011, a [summary of the socio-legal findings](#) was released, including an analysis of trends, challenges and promising practices, which pointed to the differences across the EU in terms of protecting against LGBT discrimination.
- Currently, the agency is [interviewing public authorities and teachers, law enforcement staff and health workers, about the fundamental rights of LGBT people](#), focusing on employment, education, health, law enforcement and public policies.

The results are [visualised online](#) and contained in two reports available from the FRA website:
[EU LGBT Survey results: at a glance](#)
[Technical report](#)

FRA's work on the rights of LGBT people and related publications can be found at:
<http://fra.europa.eu/en/theme/lgbt>

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