

FRA's LGBTI survey

Questions & Answers on the main LGBTI survey findings

This is an overview of the Fundamental Rights Agency's [2019 LGBTI survey](#). The survey builds on the Agency's 2012 [LGBT survey](#).

With 140,000 respondents from 30 countries, it is the world's largest survey of the LGBTI community ever. For the first time, it covers intersex people as well as 15-17 year olds.

The below questions and answers are based on the results of the survey and the response of LGBTI people who took part in it.

See our [methodology Q&A](#) for more about how FRA did the survey.

See our [DATA EXPLORER](#) for detailed information about each country.

1. Why is this survey needed?

Despite some positive developments, many LGBTI people in the European Union (EU) still feel that they need to hide who they truly are to avoid discrimination, hate or even violence.

In 2012, FRA carried out the first ever EU-wide survey of everyday experiences of LGBT people. Over 93,000 LGBT people from across the EU (including Croatia, which at the time was not an EU Member State) took part. The results showed that fear, isolation and discrimination were all too common in Europe's LGBT community.

Since then, several EU countries have put in place measures to better protect the rights of LGBTI people. These range from legal gender recognition, to victim support and promotion of equality. Many have put in place same-sex partnership legislation.

Following calls from the European Commission and the Council of the European Union, FRA repeated the survey in 2019 to see how has the situation of LGBTI people changed. This time, about 140,000 LGBTI people took part in the survey. Intersex people and those aged 15 to 17 were included for the first time in this listening exercise.

In the 2019 survey, the LGB categories cover respondents who self-identified as lesbian women, gay men, bisexual women or bisexual men. Trans or intersex respondents who also identified as L, G or B are covered by the trans and intersex categories.

The findings provide national and European policymakers with much needed evidence on progress made in the EU, as well as in the United Kingdom and in the candidate countries of North Macedonia and Serbia. It gives them evidence-based information so that they can put in place measures to effectively protect and promote the rights of LGBTI people.

2. What has changed since the 2012 LGBT survey?

Comparing the results of the 2012 and 2019 surveys shows little, if any, progress. In some areas, the situation got even worse. Importantly, the EU averages mask huge differences between countries. In some, over 70% LGBT people say society is more tolerant while in others, up to 68% say it is less.

- **Openness in everyday life**
More people are now often or always open about being LGBT – 52% compared to 36% in 2012. Less young people (18-24) hide being LGBT at school – 41% in 2019 compared to 47% in 2012. However, 61% of LGBT people still avoid often or always holding hands in public with their same-sex partner.
- **Discrimination in everyday life**
Discrimination still affects many areas of life, such as going to a café, hospital or to a shop. Overall, in 2019 43% LGBT respondents above 18 felt discriminated against in their everyday life in the year before the survey compared to 37% in 2012. The situation is much worse for trans people: 60% felt discriminated in 2019 compared to 43% in 2012.
- **Discrimination at work**
Discrimination at work also remains high: 21% of LGBT respondents felt discriminated against at work in 2019 compared to 19% in 2012. This rises to 36% for trans people, compared to 22% in 2012.
- **Harassment and violence**
In 2019, 58% LGBT respondents said they experienced harassment during the five years before the survey. Five percent (5%) had been physically or sexually attacked (excluding violence), with higher rates among trans people. In 2012, 45 % of LGBT people said that they had been personally harassed.
- **Underreporting**
Reporting rates remain low. Only 14% went to the police to report attacks or threats of violence compared to 17% in 2012. Seventeen percent (17%) reported their discrimination experiences to an equality body or any other organisation, up from 13% in 2012.
- **Prejudice**
Some 40% say that LGBTI prejudice and intolerance has dropped in their country while 36% say that they have risen. Less trans (31%) and intersex (29%) people mention improvements. There are important differences among countries. For instance, in Ireland, Malta and Finland, over 70% say intolerance has fallen. In Poland and France, 68% and 54% say it has risen.
- **Satisfaction with governments**
Only one in three believe their national government effectively combats prejudice and intolerance against LGBTI people. This proportion is lower for trans people (24%). There are striking differences between countries – in Malta 83% LGBTI people believe their government effectively combats discrimination, while only 4% think so in Poland.

3. What is it like being LGBTI at school?

For the first time ever, FRA gathered evidence from 15-17 year olds. The survey gives reason for both concern and cautious optimism.

LGBTI people aged 15 to 17 experience more harassment than their older peers. However, almost half of them (48%) say someone supported, defended or protected them and their rights as LGBTI people at school. This support drops to 33% for people aged 18 to 24 and to 7% for those 40 and over.

LGBTI issues are also more positively addressed at school. 47% of 15-17 year olds say that LGBTI issues were addressed at school and 10% say they were addressed negatively.

4. What are the experiences of lesbian women?

Lesbian women are the most likely to be open about being LGBTI, including at school. However, they still suffer significant discrimination. Over half of them are still afraid to hold hands with their partners for fear of being assaulted – compared to over two thirds of gay men.

Over 41% say they were harassed in the last year. But compared to gay or bisexual men, lesbian women are less likely to report harassment or any physical attack to any authority.

They also have less confidence in their government when it comes to effectively combatting prejudice and intolerance against LGBTI people than gay men.

5. What are the experiences of gay men?

Together with lesbian women, gay men are the most likely to be open about being LGBTI. But despite being more open and having more confidence in their governments to address prejudice than other LGBTI people, gay men across Europe still suffer significant violence and discrimination in their daily lives.

Gay men (together with bisexual men) are the most likely to avoid holding hands with their partners in public. They are also more likely to avoid certain places for fear of being attacked than lesbian or bisexual women.

Almost 38% were harassed and over a quarter do not report incidents out of fear.

6. What are the experiences of bisexual men and women?

Bisexual men and women are the least likely to experience discrimination at work or when looking for a job. However, they still suffer significant discrimination in their daily lives.

Bisexual women are least likely to avoid certain places for fear of being assaulted or harassed. But almost a half say they were harassed because of their sex in addition to being LGBTI. This is considerably more than any other group.

Hate crimes against bisexual women are the most likely to result in sexual violence. At the same time, they are the group least likely to report these incidents.

Bisexual men are the least likely to be open about being LGBTI. The more open they were about their bisexuality, the greater the risk of physical violence and harassment.

At the same time, bisexual men in a relationship are the most likely to have a family of their own. Almost one-third of bisexual respondents with a partner are raising a child.

7. What are the experiences of trans people?

Most (60%) trans respondents are 'rarely' or 'almost never' open compared to 40% of gay men and 35% of lesbian women.

Over a half of trans people have been discriminated against over the last year, compared to 39% of lesbian women and 32% of gay men. Trans teenagers suffer much more discrimination than their lesbian, gay or bisexual peers.

A higher proportion of trans people felt discriminated at work in 2019 compared to 2012.

The trans community suffers more harassment and assaults than their lesbian, gay and bisexual peers. They have the most doubt that governments are doing enough to ensure the safety of the LGBTI community.

8. What are the experiences of intersex people?

Intersex people suffer more discrimination than any other LGBTI group, with almost two thirds (62%) facing discrimination in at least one area of life in the year before the survey.

One in 3 consider bullying and violence as the main problem of intersex people and just under 1 in 3 (29%) say the main problem is that people wrongly see intersex as a disease.

Intersex people are twice as likely to experience a physical or sexual attack for being LGBTI than the group average. Twenty-two percent (22%) report such attacks, compared to 12% of gay men and 10% of lesbian women.

Many intersex people highlight the absence of informed consent for medical procedures they had to go through. 62% say that they did not provide a fully informed consent before their first surgical treatment to modify their sex characteristics. Almost a half say that informed consent was not provided for hormonal treatment or any other type of medical treatment.

The situation for intersex people is further complicated when dealing with everyday bureaucracy. Among those who registered their civil status or gender in public documents, 60% say they had to provide excessive documents or medical certificates, while 40% say they were denied service or ridiculed and harassed by officials.

9. What affects progress?

The findings show that discrimination falls in places where LGBTI equality is more publicly discussed. Prejudice, intolerance and violence towards LGBTI people can also drop as they become more visible in daily life.

LGBTI people also think that 'positive changes in law and policy' and 'support by public figures and civil society' lower discrimination. Countries which openly debate single-sex marriage or LGBTI equality tend to have less discrimination.

The situation deteriorates when society is negative towards the LGBTI community, when public figures, politicians and political parties have negative stance and public discourse, community leaders and civil society are unsupportive, and existing laws are not enforced.

10. What does FRA recommend to do to advance equality of LGBTI people?

Building on the survey findings and FRA's previous work, FRA recommends the following:

Build a culture of zero tolerance towards violence and harassment of the LGBTI community

- Inform and sensitise police officers about hate crime against LGBTI people, so they recognise it, record it and properly investigate it.
- Civil society can help train police to be more supportive when victims report such crimes. All this will encourage more victims to reach out to them.
- Make it easier to report hate crime, let people report online or through another person.

Ensure that nobody needs to hide their sexual orientation or gender identity

- Help local authorities promote respect for LGBTI rights in places like schools, offices, and in public spaces, by giving them guidance through action plans and strategies. Encourage them to work with civil society and community partners.
- Focus especially on trans and intersex people, as well as young LGBTI people – they often suffer the most.
- At workplaces, these efforts will be more effective if you join forces with various groups, such as trade unions and employers' organisations.

Create a safe and supportive environment at school

- Create safe and supportive environment for young LGBTI people at school.
- Work with teachers and school administrators to stop bullying, including ensuring educational materials at all levels don't equate being LGBTI with having a disease.

Tackle discrimination in all areas of life

- Make clear that discriminating against someone because they are LGBTI is prohibited, not just at work, but everywhere: adopt the Equal Treatment Directive.
- Equality bodies are important allies. Make sure they have the resources and authority they need to better inform everyone about LGBTI people's rights and the support available to those who suffer discrimination or abuse.

Confront multiple and intersectional discrimination

- Some people face discrimination because they are LGBTI and because they are female, an ethnic minority, have a disability or have certain other characteristics.
- Legal measures need to acknowledge and address this reality.

Require full informed consent of intersex people for medical interventions

- Intersex people, and parents of intersex children, sometimes agree to medical treatments without being fully informed about what this means.
- Work with healthcare professionals to stop this and ensure that full information is provided prior any medical treatment. This includes better informing professionals about the rights of intersex people.