

Situation of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, Intersex and Plus Employees in Public Sector in Turkey

2021 Research

Prepared by

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Doğancan Erkengel

Editorship

Murat Köylü

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Chapter 1

Analysis



Date	24.12.2011
Crew name/in-charge	
Your Name	

27311	100	51.89	22.50
27311	100	51.89	22.50
27311	100	51.89	22.50

This is the 5th year for The Situation of LGBTI+ Employees in the Public Sector in Turkey Research conducted by Kaos GL Association. We, as Kadir Has University Gender and Women's Studies Research Center are happy to have been a part of this research for the last 4 years.

The 2021 research consisted of an online survey conducted through SurveyMonkey Pro. Participants comprised 221 people who declared themselves to be LGBTI+ and who work in a public institution. Similar to previous years, our respondents were primarily young, highly educated (above high school) individuals who are in the workforce for a relatively short time with 78.2% are between 18-35 years of age, 87.8% have associate, undergraduate or graduate education and 60.2% work in their current workplace for less than 6 years. When we look at our participants, the majority work in the education, healthcare and academic sectors, similar to previous years. Their statements also suggest that our sample represent a wide range of professions. This year, just like last year, we asked the participants about the city they live in but we also included "I do not want to share" answer as an option in case people would like to keep this information private due to security issues. As a result, 37.6%, very close to last year's 34.9% did not disclose their city. Between those who did declare however, 36,9% of the participants live in Istanbul, followed by Ankara (12,8%) and İzmir (9,9%). While three-fifths of our participants are from these 3 major cities, LGBTI+ employees from at least 28 different cities participated.

In 2021 46.6% of the participants declared their gender identity as man, trans man, or cis man and their sexual orientation as gay. This group is the largest one in the sample. In addition, similar to last year, the ratio of those who chose "other" for gender identity is roughly 8%. Compared to 2019 and previous years, also this year, more people defined themselves outside the gender binary system in terms of gender identity.

In 2021 only 5% of our participants declared they were completely disclosed in their workplaces in terms of gender identity, sexual orientation and sex characteristics. In our research on the private sector the same ratio was 17.2%. Last year the rates of being completely open were 3.4% and 14.8% respectively while in 2018, they were 7% and 22% and in 2019 4.4% and 17.4%. The fact that this rate is lower in the public sector every single year suggests that LGBTI+ employees in public sector have a higher risk to experience discrimination and hate speech compared to the private sector.

According to 2021 data, 95% of LGBTI+ public workers are not completely disclosed in the workplace in terms of their gender identity, sexual orientation and sex

characteristics. Despite the fact that they were undisclosed, two out of 105 people were subject to discriminatory attitudes or practices during the hiring processes and 7 experienced the same during employment. At the same time, 40.3% of our participants witnessed hate speech against LGBTI+ individuals. The same rate was 30.5% in the private sector research. While 16% did not disclose their city in the private sector research, the ratio doubled for those working in the public sector (37.6%). It would appear that the conditions reproducing discrimination and hate speech against LGBTI+ individuals are worse in the public sector compared to the private sector. Similar to previous years, this year's results suggest that discrimination based on gender identity, sexual orientation and sex characteristics is an important obstacle for LGBTI+ individuals in accessing employment. They are often forced to hide their identities to avoid risk of unemployment. Since the risk of facing discrimination also continues after the hiring process, this strategy defines their work lives as a whole. Non-disclosure seems to become inevitable in the public sector compared to the private sector.

In 2021, 4.5% of our participants experienced discriminatory attitudes, discourses, behaviors or practices during the hiring processes. At the same time, 71% believed they did not experience discrimination because they were hiding their gender identity, sexual orientation or sex characteristics, or their gender identity, sexual orientation or sex characteristics were not detectable by their appearance. Following their hiring, 15.8% reported that they experienced discrimination during employment. Again, 66.1% believe they did not experience discrimination because either they were hiding their identity or their gender identity, sexual orientation or sex characteristics were indeterminable by their appearance.

We should note that the percentage of those who reported experiencing discrimination during or after hiring processes was higher than those who were disclosed at that point. This finding indicates that this forced strategy of non-disclosure does not always eliminate the risk of discrimination. In addition, even the number of those reporting having experienced discrimination is low; we should remember that in 2021 3 out of 4 LGBTI+ employees either experienced discrimination based on their gender identity, sexual orientation or sex characteristics, or they did not experience it due to the fact that they were assumed to be cisgender and heterosexual since they hid their gender identity, sexual orientation or sex characteristics, or since their identity was not detectable by their appearance. We should also consider the number of those who declared they did not experience discrimination without stating a reason together with the rate of being completely open. To remember, only 4.1% of participants were completely open about their identity during hiring processes and again 5% were completely open in their workplaces once they were hired.

In 2011, the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights issued a detailed report regarding discrimination based on gender identity and sexual orientation where it is pointed out that the non-disclosure strategy LGBTI+ employees are obliged to practice in order to prevent the risk of discrimination and harassment makes it more difficult to analyze the actual dimensions of homophobia, transphobia and discrimination in the workplaces.¹ Looking at our own survey data, the Commissioner's statement, although based on a research in different countries, is also valid for Turkey. Data also suggests that when this strategy is not practiced, the feared discrimination actualized.

As in previous years, our study suggests that LGBTI+ public workers in Turkey would not disclose their gender identity, sexual orientation or sex characteristics unless the risk of discrimination is eliminated completely. In 2020, only 6.3% of the participants were disclosed or partially disclosed during hiring processes and 6.9% of the participants experienced discriminatory practices. These numbers rose to 17.7% and 10.9% respectively during the employment. When writing the key findings for the last year, we stated that it could be concluded that being fully or partially open increased the rate of discrimination for LGBTI+ employees by looking at only these rates. However, when the answers to questions about discrimination given by those who stated they were disclosed or partially disclosed were examined, it was clear that the rates of discrimination among these people were well below the rates of general discrimination in the sample. In line with the data, we concluded that LGBTI+ public employees did not give up the closure strategy unless they were sure that the risk of discrimination was close to none, and in those cases, the risk rarely became a reality. We have underlined that in workplaces where heteronormative and cisnormative gender perceptions based on the gender binary system were very strong, the closure strategy did not always work, and that even the smallest word, behavior or attitude that was not compatible with gender roles could cause a person to face a discriminatory practice, even the person was not open about their identity.

In 2021, 7.3% of participants were completely or partially open during the hiring processes and 4.5% of participants reported that they experienced discriminatory practices and attitudes during these processes. The rate of being completely and partially open rose to 21.3% and the rate of experiencing discrimination to 15.8% during the employment. There is no significant difference compared to last years' results, however, when we examine the answers of those who are completely or partially disclosed, the ratio of experiencing discrimination is higher in this category than the rest of the sample. Of the 16 participants who were open or partially

¹ Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights, *Discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation and gender identity in Europe*, s. 166, 176.

open during the hiring process, 3 (18,8%) and 13 (27,7%) of 47 participants who are open or partially open at work experienced discrimination. We should note that the same ratios are 4,5% and 15,8% respectively in the sample. In the previous years, we should follow up the finding that the ratio of experiencing discrimination among the participants who were completely or partially disclosed is higher than the sample this year even though there was no significant increase in the percentage of those participants. For now, it will suffice to state that the recent public use of discriminatory discourses against LGBTI+s by officials at various levels of the government can be considered a factor that increases the risk of discrimination for public employees if they are partially or totally disclosed regarding their identity in the workplace.

A further reason for the difficulty of analyzing all dimensions of discrimination against LGBTI+ employees in Turkey is the low number of official complaints using non-discrimination mechanisms. Similar to previous years, this year's research suggests that LGBTI+ employees do not use official channels to report the discrimination they experience. Only one out of 10 individuals who experienced discrimination during the hiring processes made a verbal complaint, and only one notified their union or professional organization. The remaining participants made no complaint or directly addressed the issue with the person involved or settled for sharing with those close to them.

Only three out of 35 individuals who experienced discrimination in the workplace made an official complaint, three individuals made a verbal complaint, one reported the incident to Ombudsperson (Kamu Denetçiliği Kurumu), and one complained to the Human Rights and Equality Institution of Turkey (TİHEK). Only one of these participants took the incident to court. The statements of the survey participants show that they do not believe that official complaints are effective when it comes to discrimination against LGBTI+ employees. Additionally, they are concerned about further victimization, losing their job, experiencing hate speech and prejudice, and involuntary disclosure of their identity in the reporting processes.

It is clear that LGBTI+ employees in Turkey need empowerment mechanisms in access to employment and work-life in the public sector. Unfortunately, this study shows that such mechanisms are uncommon and/or ineffective within the public sector. Only 5,9% of participants reported that there were rules and boards in their institutions to prevent discrimination based on gender identity, sexual orientation and sex characteristics. A further 5,4% stated that these mechanisms existed but were not well known or ineffective. Examples of rules and practices that they cited as causing discrimination included unequal access to social rights largely due to a heteronormative understanding of family and marriage, discriminatory interpreta-

tions of Law No. 657 regarding public officials, and practices like denying promotion or transferring individuals to undesirable locations.

In line with previous years, our research suggests that the strategy of remaining undisclosed that LGBTI+ employees feel forced to follow prevents them from creating empowerment mechanisms like communication and solidarity networks. Only 6.3% of participants stated there were such networks in their institutions and that they were part of them, while 3.6% were not members of any existing networks. Among these individuals, only one was completely disclosed regarding their identity. The study also reveals that the rate of membership in a union or professional organization among LGBTI+ public workers is low. Among those who are members, they do not consider these organizations as centers of resistance against discrimination against LGBTI+ people. Only 38% of participants stated that they are members of a union, which is below the general average among public sector employees of 64.6%.² Among participants, just 19% were members of a professional organization. The rate of individuals who are open about their identity in their unions or professional organizations was higher than the rate in the workplace but remained at 8.4%. As mentioned earlier, only one individual who experienced discrimination reported the case to a union or professional organization. When respondents were asked to name three measures to be taken to prevent discrimination against LGBTI+ employees, only 9.2% of participants mentioned “organized struggle and solidarity networks”.

Our research shows that the ratio of experiencing discrimination in a union or professional organization (0.9%) is lower than experiencing discrimination in the workplace. The number of those experiencing hate speech is quite lower in unions and professional organizations (15.9%) than in the workplace. This shows that unions and professional organizations are relatively speaking safer places compared to public institutions. Nevertheless, the findings of the research in general demonstrate that we need unions and professional organizations to be more active in the fight against discrimination and empowerment of LGBTI+ employees, and that these organizations should prioritize anti-discriminatory policy-making. In 2016 the International Labor Organization (ILO) published the findings of its Pride Project where they note that economic and social rights of LGBTI+ people are not a priority for unions. The result of our survey shows that this statement is also valid for unions in Turkey. The same report also indicates that LGBTI+ are the major group to experience discrimination and harassment in employment, and that job seeking LGBTI+ are undisclosed about their gender identity, sexual orientation or sex characteristics as a strategy which continues during the employment. The

2 The Ministry of Labour and Social Security, Official Gazette No: 31529 (July 2, 2021).

ILO study also shows that LGBTI+ employees that are able to safely disclose their identities suffer less from anxiety, depression and burnout syndrome, and in order to provide these working conditions workplaces should implement supportive and inclusive policies.³

These statements are in line with both the findings of this year's survey and those of previous years. Participants in this research stated that being subject to discrimination based on sexual orientation, gender identity and sex characteristics and hate speech or the risk of experiencing them paired with the continuing strategy of non-disclosure of their identities created a series of difficulties. LGBTI+ employees reported being unable to have real and intimate relationships with their colleagues, feeling little or no sense of belonging in their companies and that they often feel hopeless, sad, anxious and angry. They also stated that their performance was lacking along with their motivation which all led to depression, stress, and burnout syndrome due to psychologically and physically overwhelming conditions. Their efficiency and job satisfaction dropped decidedly. Since we spend most of our time at our workplaces, the negative aspects of the situation are obvious.

Even though the non-disclosure strategy seems to provide some level of protection against discrimination and hate speech, the seeming obligation to remain undisclosed is a form of discrimination itself. LGBTI+ employees feel certain that they will face discrimination and thus take measures even before employment. During their employment LGBTI+ individuals hide their identity or share it with close colleagues or other LGBTI+ individuals so they separate their work life and their private life. Some even have to pretend in terms of body language or the way they express themselves in public in order to remain undisclosed. This strategy of non-disclosure and caution against potential discrimination turns into a continuous form of discrimination and has a negative impact on LGBTI+ employees both mentally and physically that exceeds the limits of work life. Answers to open ended questions revealed that the primary concerns for LGBTI+ employees were freedom and visibility. In order to guarantee these, they pointed out the need for raising social awareness and creating effective legal protection mechanisms.

This year we added a question regarding the Covid-19 pandemic and its impact on the work life and working conditions of LGBTI+ employees. The answers of the participants support our findings mentioned above. We asked our participants if the new conditions created by the pandemic affected their lives differently because of their gender identity, sexual orientation and sex characteristics. The majority (90,5%) of the participants answered negatively or had no opinion on the subject.

3 International Labour Organization. *Gender identity and sexual orientation: promoting rights, diversity and equality in the world of work. Results of the ILO's PRIDE Project. Briefing note.* s. 1. 2. 3.

At the same time, 21 participants responded positively to the question above their responses give us some interesting insights. Forty-five percent of these individuals stated that the pandemic effected their working conditions positively, where 55% believe that the effects were negative. Statements of those who mentioned positive effects show the level of stress, anxiety and distrust caused by the necessity to remain undisclosed. Almost all these employees stated that home-office conditions helped them physically distance themselves from heteronormative, cisnormative and male-dominant work environment, decreased the risk of possible hate speech and discrimination, helped them feel safer since the only interaction with their superiors and colleagues was online and decreased the pressure to look and behave according to gender norms. Most of the participants who underline the negative effects of the pandemic mentioned the loss of limited social relationships where they can disclose their identity, have the sense of support and solidarity, and its isolating effect and its result on work efficiency. They also mentioned their concern for the future might deepen because of the pandemic, the risk of unemployment and difficulty of finding a job would hit LGBTI+ workers harder.

In conclusion, this year again demonstrates that we have a long way to go in order to prevent discrimination based on gender identity, sexual orientation and sex characteristics, to provide LGBTI+ individuals a peaceful and efficient work environment, to eliminate disadvantages to access employment, and to generate legal and corporate policies and civic strategies to guarantee equality in terms of social and economic rights. We hope that our research will contribute to policy-making processes to empower LGBTI+ employees and eliminate discrimination.

Prof. Mary Lou O'Neil and Dr. Reyda Ergün

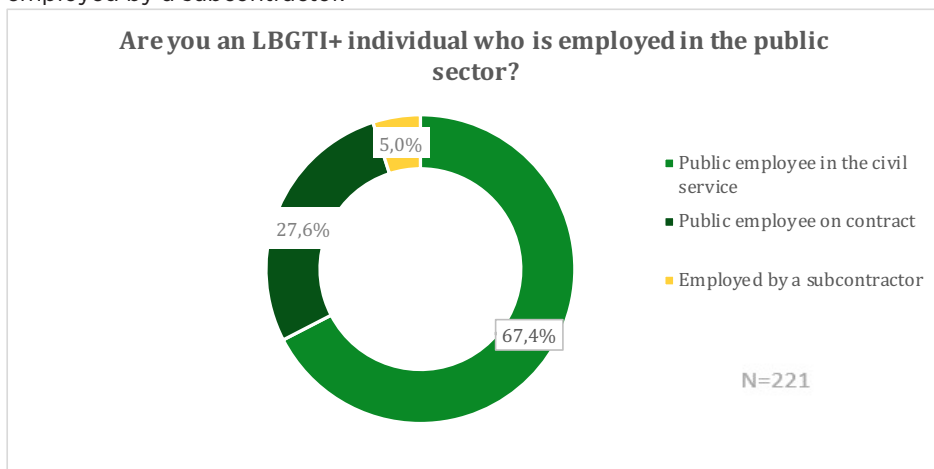
Chapter 2

**SITUATION OF LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL,
TRANS, INTERSEX AND PLUS EMPLOYEES
IN PUBLIC SECTOR IN TURKEY IN 2021**

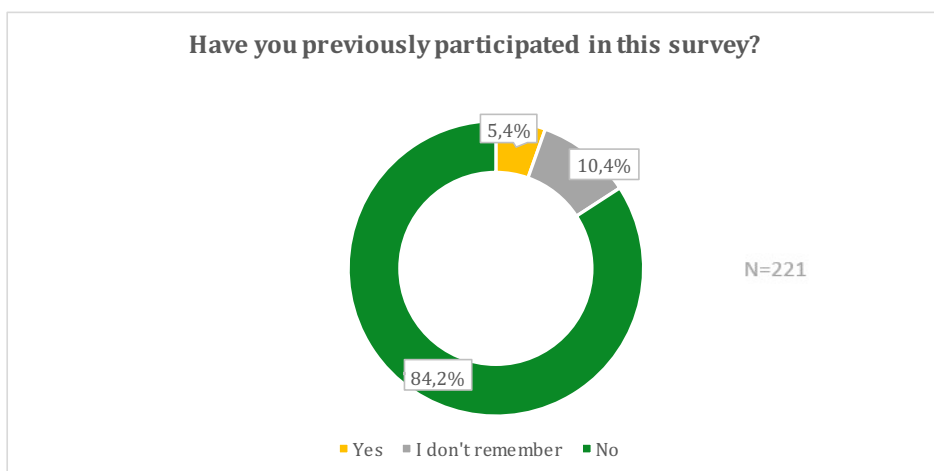


1. Research sample

The survey was conducted using *SurveyMonkey Pro*, an online survey platform. The final sample consisted of 221 individuals who declared themselves to be lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, intersex or plus (LGBTI+). In the sample, 149 of respondents (67.4%) worked as civil servant, 61 (27.6%) worked under contract and 11 (5%) were employed by a subcontractor.

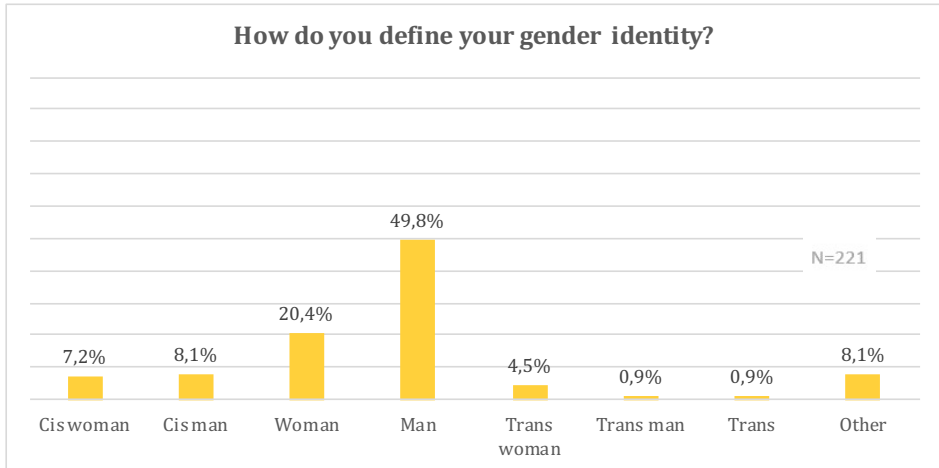


In 2021, 186 of the participants (84.2%) declared they had not participated in the research in previous years, 23 people (10.4%) said they did not remember whether or not they had previously participated and 12 (5.4%) had participated in former years.



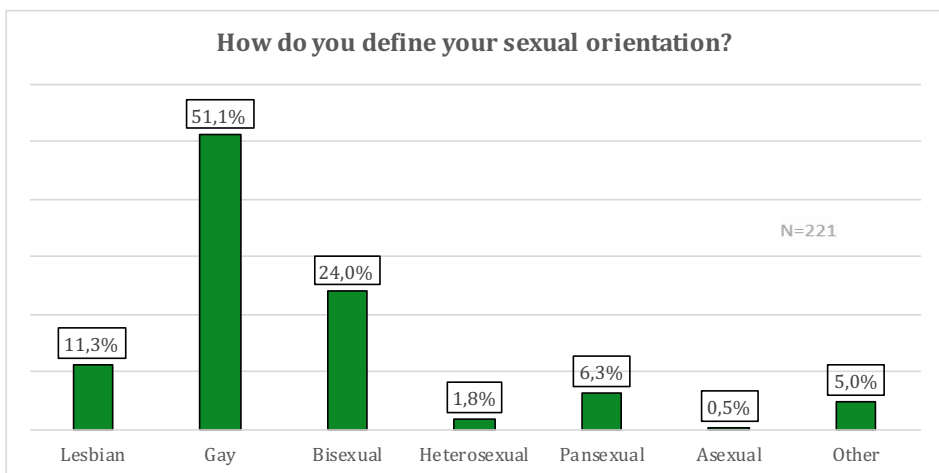
1.1 Gender identity, sexual orientation and sex characteristics

The survey included three questions regarding their gender identity, sexual orientation and sex characteristics along with their sex assigned at birth. Most of the participants responded as “Man” or “Woman” while some declared that they are “Cis Woman”, “Cis Man”, “Trans”, “Trans Man” or “Trans Woman” or chose the category “other”.



Other: non-binary (5), gay (2), fluid (2), gender non-conforming, feminine non-binary, genderfluid (2) bisexual but I usually imagine myself as a passive gay, I cannot define (2), intersex, pangender

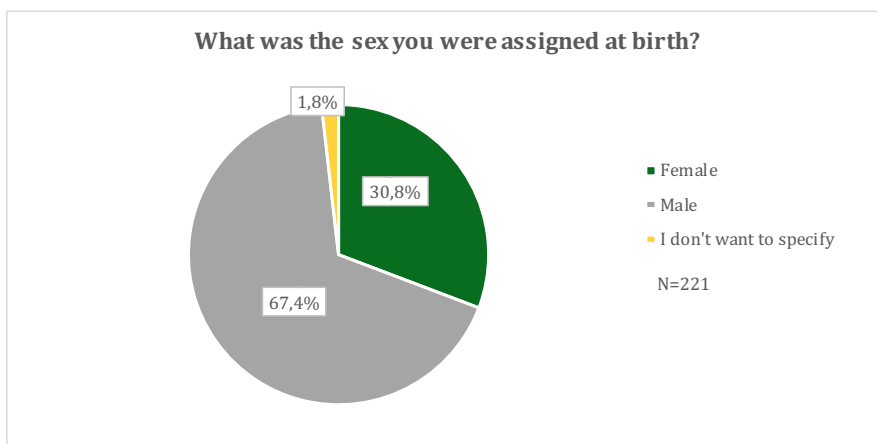
Those who identified their sexual orientation as gay comprised the largest group in the sample (51.1%).



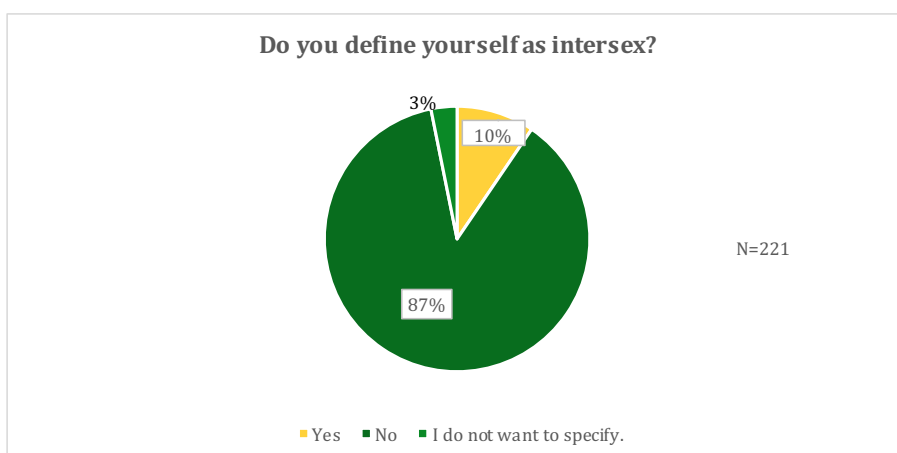
Other: Trans, feel like a woman, mostly women bisexual, transexual, uranic, asexual+pansexual, i cannot define, i cannot define since it's so fluid, sexual, Ki

In the sample as a whole, 57.9% (128) declared their gender identity as man/cis man and 113 people (51.1%) declared their sexual orientation as gay. Therefore, it can be assumed that the majority of the sample (103 people) consists of cisgender gay individuals.

To the question “What was your sex assigned at birth?” 67.4% responded as male, 30.8% as female and 1.8% decided not to answer the question.

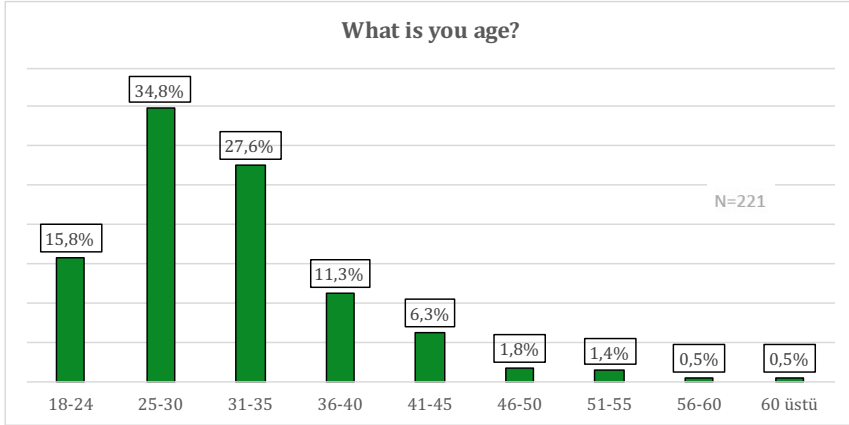


To the question “Do you define yourself as intersex?” 21 people (9.5%) responded “Yes” and 193 people (87.3%) replied “No”. Seven participants (3.2%) decided not to answer the question. Among the 21 individuals who identified as intersex, five declared themselves as woman, two as cis woman, eight as man, one as cis man, one as non-binary, one as feminine non-binary, two as trans woman and one as a intersex. Regarding sexual orientation six people identified as bisexual, nine as gay, four as lesbian, one as pansexual and one as other.

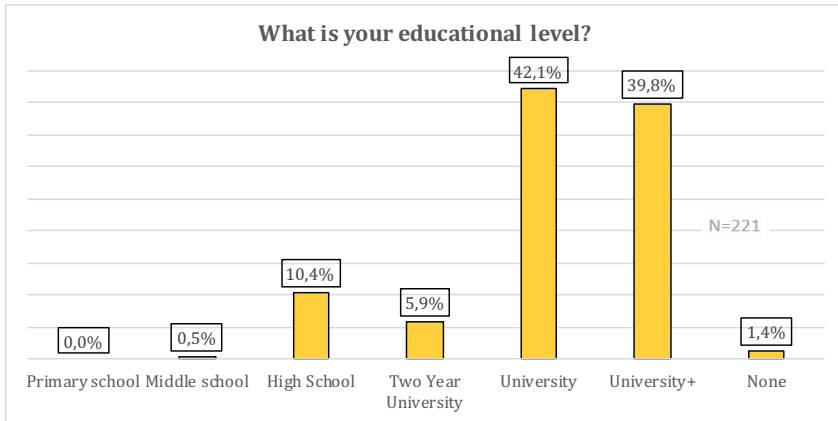


1.2 Age, education level and location (city) of the participants

The table below describes the age distribution of the sample. Almost three-quarters of the participants (73.7%) were between the ages of 25-40 with 15.8% were between 18-24 years of age. The remaining 23 people were over 40. There were only five participants over 50 years of age.



The following table shows the level of education of the participants. The majority had at least some form of university education; 42.1% of the sample were university graduates and 39.8% had received graduate education.

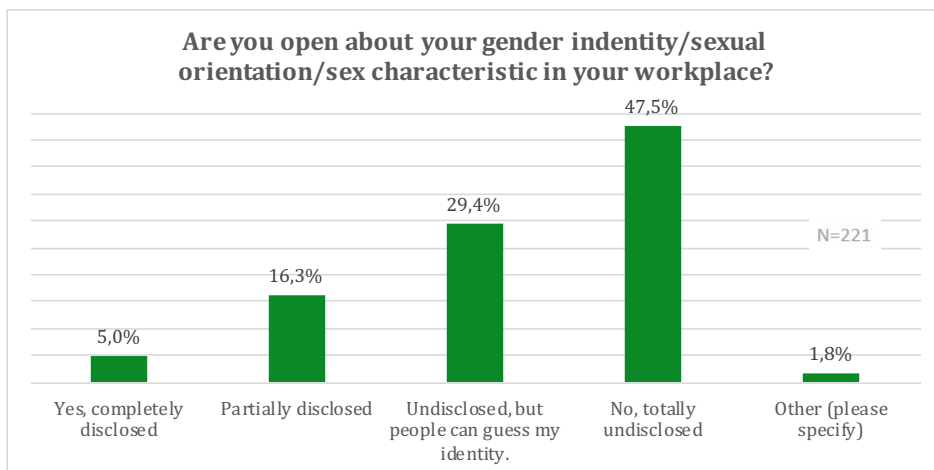


This year, for the 2nd time, we asked participants the city in which they live. Eighty-three participants (37.6%) chose not to declare their location. The remaining 138 (62.4%) respondents came from 28 different cities. The most common places of residence were as follows: Istanbul (36.9%), İzmir (12.8%) and Ankara (9.3%). These three cities were then followed by Mersin, Bursa and Eskişehir.

1.3 Disclosure of gender identity, sexual orientation and sex characteristics in the workplace

To the question “Are you open about your gender identity/ sexual orientation/ sex characteristics in your workplace?” 105 participants (47.5%) answered they were “completely undisclosed”, 36 people (16.3%) were partially disclosed and only 11 people (5%) were completely open in terms of their gender identity, sexual orientation or sex characteristics. There were 65 people (29.4%) that reported that they assumed their gender identity, sexual orientation or sex characteristics were apparent despite being undisclosed. The lowest percentage in the sample was the participants that were completely disclosed. Another interesting fact is the high ratio of those who believed their identity was apparent despite the fact they had not disclosed it.

According to the findings of the research conducted by Kaos GL and Kadir Has University Gender and Women’s Studies Research Center about private sector employees in 2021, 17.4% of participants stated they were “completely open”. The same rate was 14.8% in 2020. It appears that it is easier to disclose one’s identity in the private sector. The situation is of concern considering that the state, as an employer, should be in line with international agreements and national regulations that prohibit discrimination.



Other: No way to disclose/ I disclosed to trusted colleagues/ I disclosed, got fired, won the case, but can’t get reappointed now.

Comparing these results, it is clear that more individuals were able to disclose their identities in the private sector than the public. Another remarkable piece of data is the answers of the participants, who stated that they were completely disclosed in

the institution where they work, given to the questions, whether they have faced discrimination personally and whether they have witnessed hate speech against LGBTI+s in the relevant institution. Among the 105 participants who reported being completely undisclosed, two-faced discriminatory behavior during the hiring process, seven faced direct discrimination and sixty-four witnessed hate speech during employment.

Sometimes I feel like I am drowning because there is a strict corporate culture. I am worried that my sexual orientation might be disclosed (gay man, executive official)

I am only open to my close colleagues. I would not like others to find out. I think some of them are homophobes. And my superior has a sexist mentality (gay man, academic personnel)

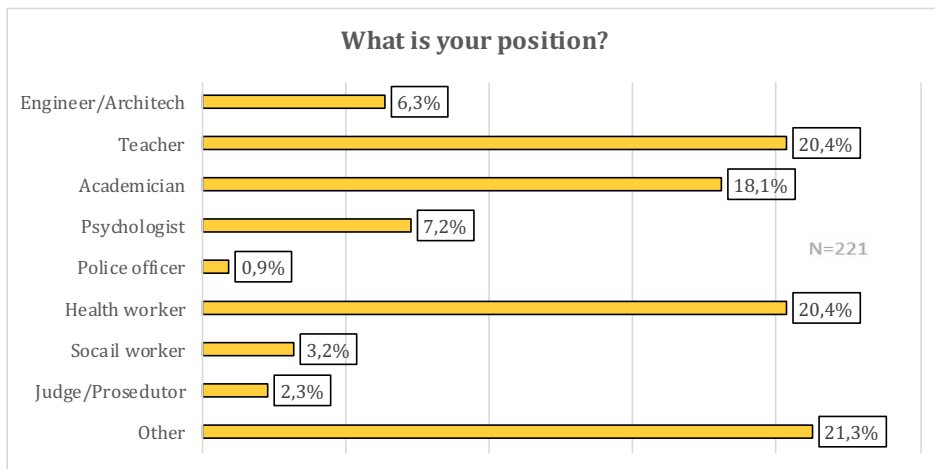
First of all, I am open about my sexual orientation and my gender identity. I don't share it with people. People I am close to know my sexual orientation. Even if people suspect it, they are not sure because they did not hear it from me. Being open makes me feel free and brave. Even though sometimes people react because I do something that was assigned to women, I use my legal rights and say that I only want to be communicated based on my profession. In this way I don't get hurt. And people know their boundaries (gay man, health personnel).

I am a trans woman, I started the hormone process, but I cannot apply officially since I am afraid of getting fired. They sense my feminine situation, but I can't openly be a woman. I can deal with how people look at me but being fired would be a big problem for me (bisexual trans woman, health personnel).

I would not want to think about it, not to be forced to think about it. I would like to talk about my partner and myself easily like other people. It's sad (lesbian woman, academic personnel).

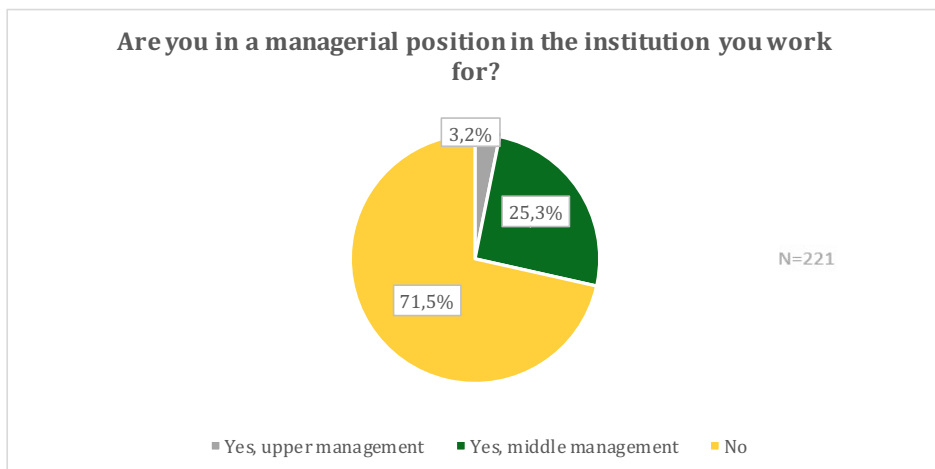
1.4 Properties of the Institutions for which the Participants Work and Positions of the Employees

LGBTI+ employees in the sample were working in many different institutions and positions. The table below reflects the various positions held by participants. The majority of respondents worked in education or healthcare sectors (45 teachers, 40 scholars, 16 psychologist/psychiatrists and 45 health personnel) at the time of the survey. This year 20.4% of the participants (45 people) defined their position as scholar and 20.4% of the participants (45 people) defined their position as health personnel. The group “other” is the second largest subset with 47 people (21.3%).



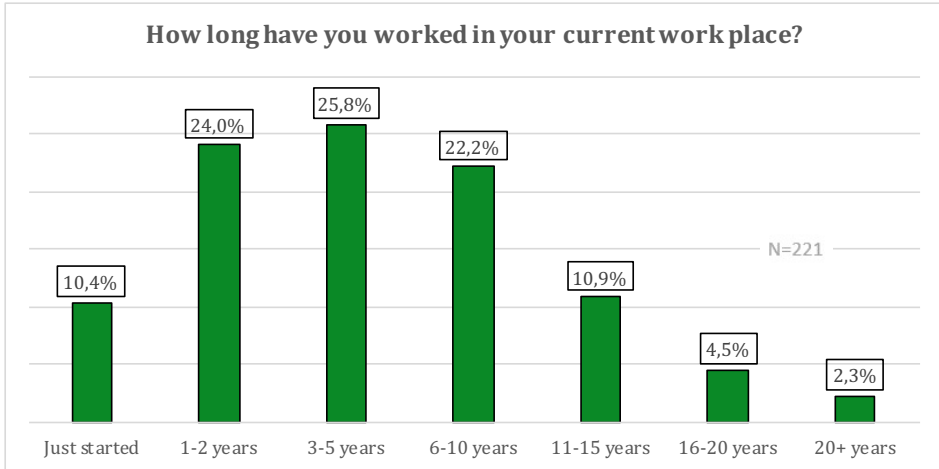
Other: official in foreign branch of a public institution, visiting scholar, dentist, civil servant (9), cleaner, correction officer, nurse, doctor, publishing, teller in transportation, stewardess, executive personnel, office clerk, chemist, security, hospital cleaner, scholar, archeologist, museum personnel, student (2), security in health sector, academic, worker, electrician, contracted officer, assistant cleaner, actor, lawyer, legal counselor, tailor

To the question “Are you in a managerial position in the institution you work for?” 158 people (71.5%) answered as “no” and only seven people (3.2%) declared they were high level executives. Only one of those high-level executives is disclosed in the workplace and two others think their identity is already assumed. Out of 56 mid-level executives only three are disclosed.



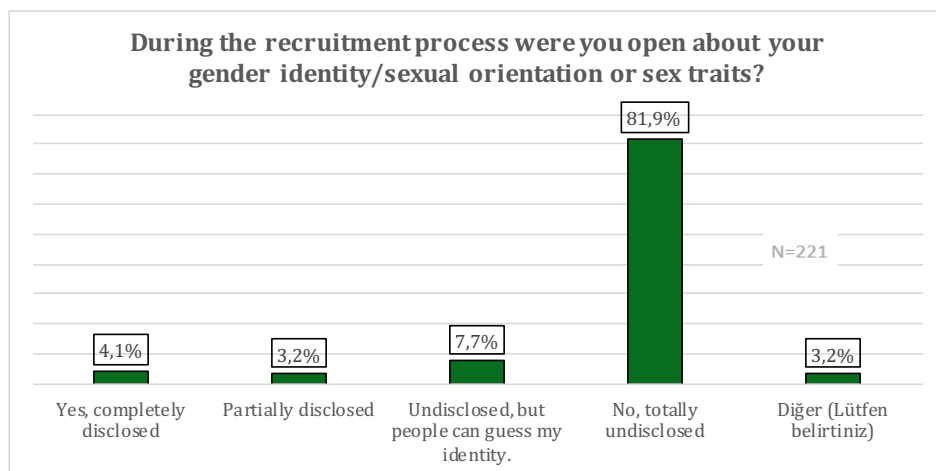
1.5 Duration of employment in the current institution

Similar to research results in previous years, most of the participants have been employed in their institution for between 1-5 years. A majority of participants (133, 60.2%) has worked in the same place for 5 years or less and 78.9% of those working 2 years or less are between 18-30 years of age (44.7% between 25-30, 34.2% between 18-24).



2. Findings regarding the recruitment processes

Another question we asked our participants was “During the recruitment process were you open about your gender identity/ sexual orientation or sex characteristics?” Only nine participants (4.1%) declared they were open during the process while seven people were partially open (3.2%). Those who are completely undisclosed were 81.9% of the total (181 people).



The “other” option also included those hired through the civil servants exam (KPSS) or appointed by exams. Some of them explained why they were undisclosed during the hiring process.

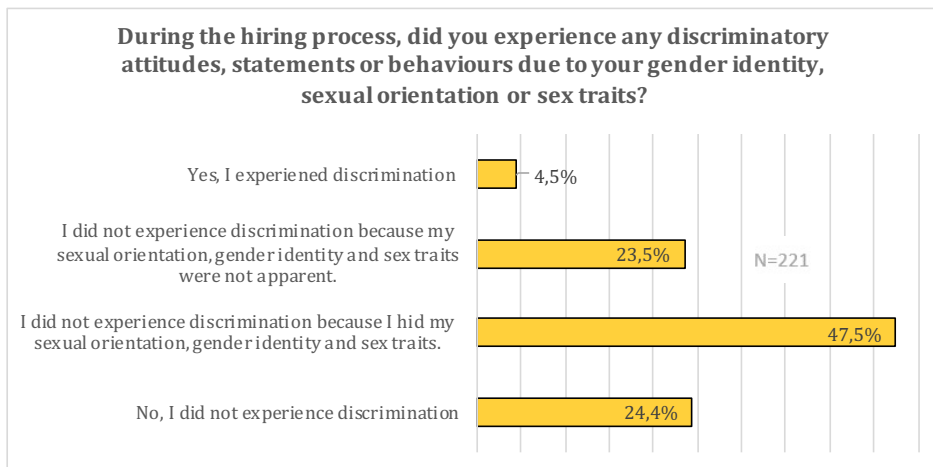
It was not necessary for me to be open or state my sexual orientation during the hiring process (gay cis man, academic personnel).

I was not deliberately closed, but later I talked about my sexual orientation everywhere (bisexual cis woman, office clerk)

I was not aware and conscious enough about myself (lesbian woman, lawyer).

2.1 Experiences of discrimination during the hiring process

Another question asked to LGBTI+ employees was “During the hiring process, did you experience any discriminatory attitudes, statements, behaviors or practices due to your gender identity, sexual orientation or sex characteristics?” The fact that 47.5%, 105 people, answered as “no because I hide my identity” shows clearly that LGBTI+ individuals fear discrimination regarding their access to employment in the public sector.



Most respondents hid their gender identity/ sexual orientation/ sex characteristics during the hiring process to avoid discrimination. 52 participants (23.5%) in the sample stated they did not experience discrimination not because there was no such risk but because their gender identity/ sexual orientation/ sex characteristics was not apparent. These LGBTI+ employees anticipate potential discrimination and start their work life with this information in mind.

When I was first assigned in public service, they asked for a mental health report. The doctor I saw at the public hospital asked me unrelated questions looking at the hemorrhoid medicine on my medical history and tried to dig my sex life. It was degrading and disgusting. When I went to drop off my document they pointed at my earrings and told me that I cannot work with those (gay man, health personnel)

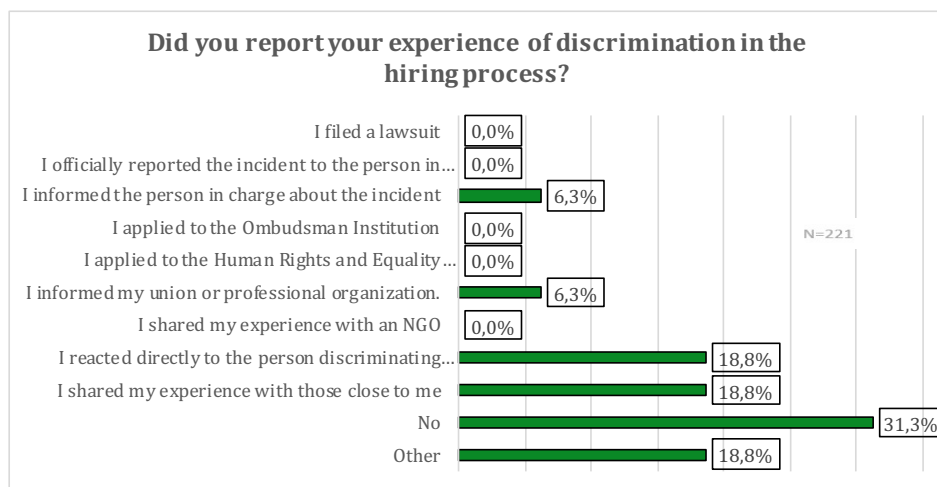
I heard some implicit comments. They tried to use the “politeness” angle (gay man, officer)

They told me I was too naïve and that they cannot work with me. I am still traumatized (gay man, teacher)

During the hiring process participants experienced different levels and forms of discrimination. This finding was similar to last year’s where discrimination in the hiring and interview processes was evident. There is also a social reality that has to be considered in this matter. LGBTI+ employees are aware of possible discrimination during interviews and job applications, so they take a series of precautions in advance related to their sexual orientation, gender identity and sex characteristics. Some of these precautions continue after being hired and during the whole work life. To hide one’s identity, to be self-conscious about one’s look, body language and other essential characteristics may be more of a burden than the experience of direct discrimination.

2.2 Reporting discrimination during the hiring process

Of the 221 LGBTI+ employees participating in this research, only 10 stated that they experienced discrimination in different ways during the admission process. To those who experienced discrimination, we also asked if they reported that discrimination. Three of these participants said they reacted directly to the person in question, three more shared the experience with people close to them while five chose not to report the incident(s). Only one person shared their experience with a state official and one reported it to their union or professional organization. It would appear from these findings that LGBTI+ individuals lack trust in the judicial authorities, Ombudsman Institution, Turkish Human Rights and Equality Institution and other public institutions and NGOs.

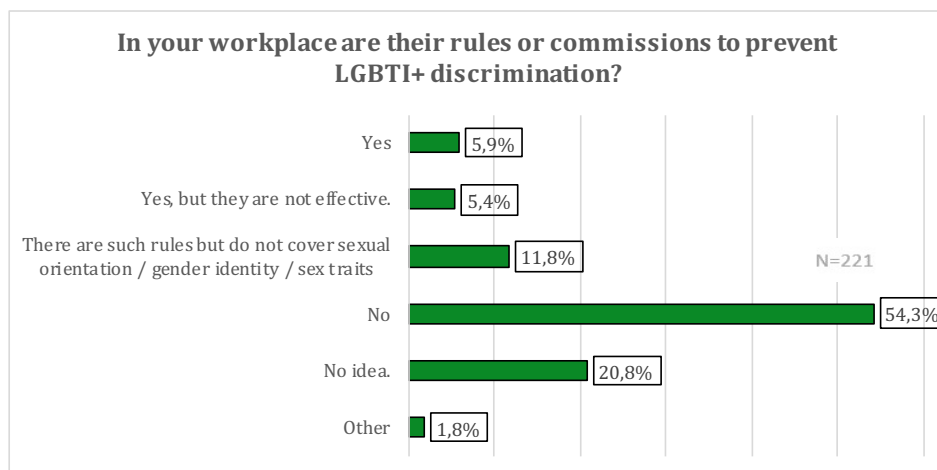


Other: actually I could not do anything other than arguing with the doctor I was young and scared / I had no reaction since I was hiding at the beginning

3. Institutional protection against discrimination

To the question “In your institution are there rules or boards to prevent discrimination against LGBTI+ people? (Boards of equal treatment or disciplinary boards, units for prevention of harassment and mobbing, regulations etc.)” 13 participants (5.9%) responded positively while 12 participants (5.4%) said “yes but not well-known and affective”. Similar to findings in previous years, a large percentage (120 people/ 54.3%) of participants declared that no rules or boards to prevent discrimination existed in their workplace.

A further 26 participants (11.8%) stated there were rules or boards to prevent discrimination, but they did not include gender identity/sexual orientation/sex characteristics. A significant number of employees (46 people / 20.8%) said they were unaware of such rules or boards.

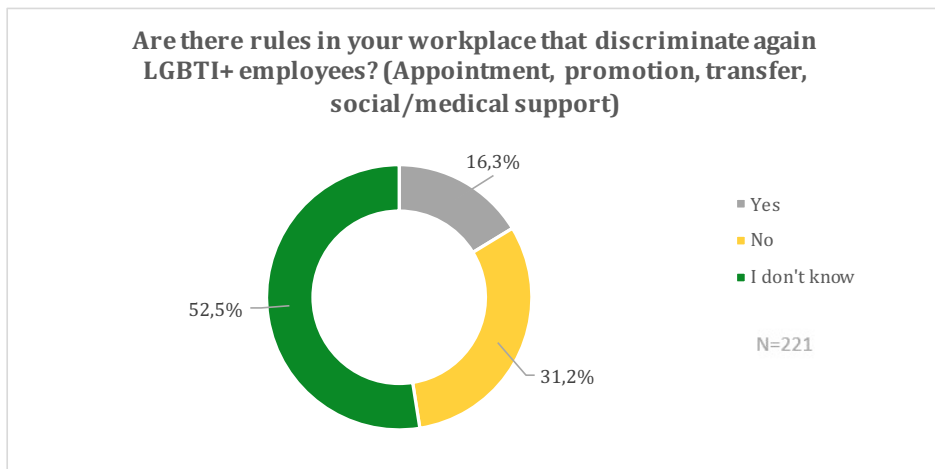


Others: In the correction institution I work LGBTI+ inmates are kept in single cells for their safety and with their request of course / there is a mobbing mechanism but works for heteros / I recently saw a statement regarding gender equality but I don't think it is applied generally.

The data show that in the public sector there are few, if any, mechanisms to prevent discrimination based on gender identity/sexual orientation/sex characteristics. In some rare cases when they exist, their effectiveness is debatable. In fact, the existence of such mechanisms is not enough but there needs to be a belief that they will be effective in protecting the rights LGBTI+ employees.

Institutional rules and regulations that cause discrimination

Another question we asked our participants was “Are there rules, customary attitudes, practices in your institution that discriminate against LGBTI+ employees?”



Examining the answers, one of the most important findings was that 116 people (52.5%) were unaware of such rules. This finding was similar to previous years.

Nearly a third of participants (69 people, 31.2%) stated there were no such rules or practices in their institutions and 36 people (16.3%) stated that there were in fact such rules and practices that cause discrimination.

As the quotes below demonstrate, most of the participants provided similar examples such as: terms like “general morals” are used against LGBTI+, there is hate speech in the workplace, LGBTI+ employees do not have access to the privileges of married couples, their identity might be disclosed against their will, it is difficult to get promoted and they are at risk of being fired or transferred.

In public service there are advantages that LGBTI+ individuals can never legally benefit from like marriage leave, child support, green passport for the spouse and kids, leave related to the spouse’s assignment etc. (lesbian woman, public official in a foreign branch)

Thanks to marriage they can do their obligatory work in the same city as their spouses. Since we cannot legally get married, we cannot do the same with my partner of 5 years (bisexual woman, health personnel)

Could be a reason for a dismissal. I don’t know personally but I heard about a uniformed LGBTI+ public official like me that was dismissed because of a sexual experience but I don’t know the current situation (gay man, correction officer)

Institutional functions, leaves etc. all planned according to heterosexuals and couples. There are practices like giving gift for people who get married or have kids (pansexual man, teacher)

The fact that I could not get the promotion I deserve is that I am “not mature enough” or “too emotional and naïve” proves the discrimination I experienced (gay man, archeologist)

Partners outside what they call a normal marriage are not accepted (trans man who is attracted to females, director)

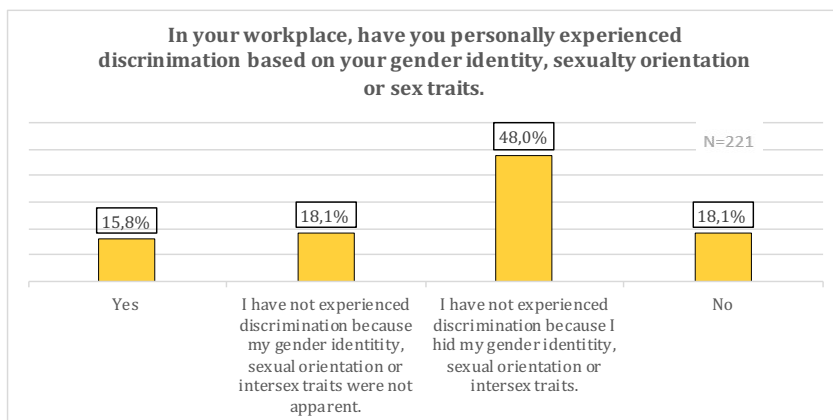
Not officially but they can do things to make life more difficult for LGBTI+ employees. I see that potential in the executive level (bisexual - mainly female - trans woman, health personnel)

I cannot marry the person I love, and I cannot be considered “spouse-related” (gay man, health personnel)

Participants point to different levels of discriminatory legal framework, attitudes and practices. For example, the heteronormative structure of the institution of marriage based on gender binary empowered by law results in unequal access to rights in work life as well as in their private life. Promotion and assignment processes are also used as mechanisms of punishment and threat when it comes to LGBTI+ employees. The idea of “general morals” represents a discriminatory ideology not only in workplace but in society in general and apart from discrimination it furthers the exclusion and stigmatization of LGBTI+ employees.

4. Experiences of discrimination

Answers to the question “In your workplace, have you personally experienced discrimination based on your gender identity, sexuality orientation or sex characteristics” are displayed in the table below. To this question, 35 people (15.8%) said “yes, I have”, 106 people (48%) said they had not experienced discrimination because their gender identity/sexual orientation/sex characteristics was not disclosed. Forty people (18.1%) said they had not experienced discrimination because their gender identity/sexual orientation/sex characteristics was not apparent while only 40 people (18.1%) answered the question negatively.



When we assess all the answers together, 81.9% of the participants either experienced direct discrimination (15.8% or 35 people) or hid their identity to prevent discrimination (48% or 106 people) or link the fact that they didn't experience discrimination to the fact that their identity was not apparent (18.1% or 40 people). Another finding of our research is that LGBTI+ employees not only experience discrimination from their superiors and colleagues but also among the people they serve. Many of them related instances where they were humiliated, isolated and gossiped about. Below you will find some the examples of discriminatory behavior or discourse:

Why do you make your voice deeper? Like a man? Does she have a girl-friend, really? (bisexual woman, health personnel)

I experienced it indirectly. My roommate told a girl friend of mine that we talked “girl to girl” when I was not there. I was not surprised. People are not blind, I can't be friends with men, I can't join their conversations, I am tense if there are other men around, I don't know what to do. Probably there are other people who have thoughts that would make me uncomfortable, but they don't speak openly (gay ma academic personnel)

I was harassed because of my masculine appearance, they pretended it was a joke (bisexual woman, nurse)

They did not include me in some archeological excavations saying I was too naïve. I had to work harder and prove myself. It took years. At the end I was more successful academically, compared to all those more masculine men, then I was let go (gay man, archeologist)

I witnessed with people younger or lower, especially in my 20s. There were attitudes I consider discriminatory like judging looks, being distant besides a few cases of verbal abuse (gay cis man, academic personnel)

Even though I am more qualified by many of them they don't promote me to upper level (pansexual man, architect/engineer)

Someone told me "You, man of straw, I heard things about you, I guess they are all true" (bisexual trans woman, health personnel)

Even today my boss said "I am calling all the men, not you!" in front of everybody and humiliated me (gay man, actor)

According to the experiences shared by the participants shows that LGBTI+ employees have to live in an implicit discriminatory environment constantly even when they are not open about their sexual orientation, gender identity and sex characteristics.

4.1 Reporting discrimination in workplace

We asked the participants who experienced discrimination in their workplaces the question, "Did you report any kind of discrimination you experienced?" When assessing the answers to this question one should keep in mind that most of the LGBTI+ employees in the public sector have hidden or partially hidden their gender



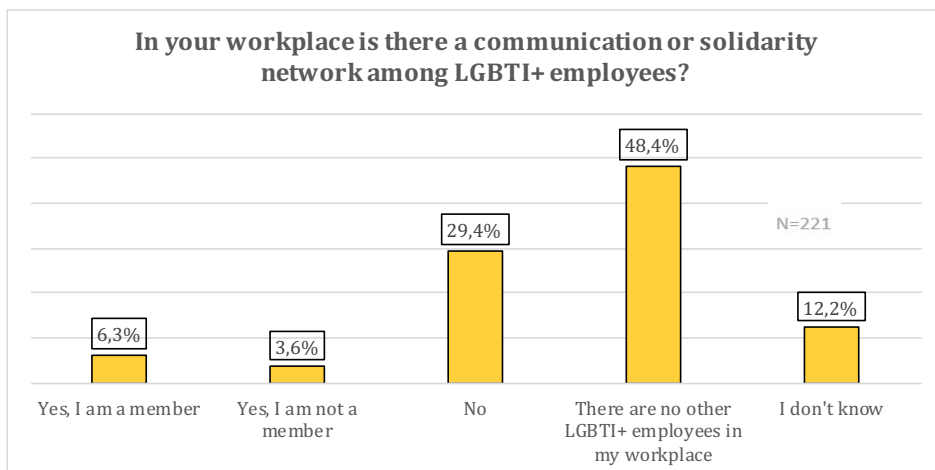
Other: I bought chocolate / I shared with a superior as disrespectful, in other situations I did not think it would make a difference and I hesitated, and I did not share.

identity/sexual orientation /sex characteristics. As you can see in the following table, only one participant who experienced discrimination took the case to the court. Only three verbally reported the incident and three officially reported the incident inside the institution. None of them consulted the Ombudspersons Institution and only one person reported a case of discrimination to the Turkish Human Rights and Equality Institution. Out of 35 instances, 19 individuals did not report, 10 reacted to the person in question and none of them reported the case to the union or professional organization.

5. Witnessing discrimination towards other LGBTI+ employees

5.1 Communication and solidarity networks for the LGBTI+ employees

We asked participants “In your workplace is there a communication or solidarity network among LGBTI+ employees?” and the answers point to a near complete lack of communication and solidarity mechanisms in the public sector. Among participants, 107 people (48.4%) stated there were no communication or solidarity networks, 27 people (12.2%) said they did not know. A further 65 people (29.4%) believed there were no other LGBTI+ individuals in their institution.

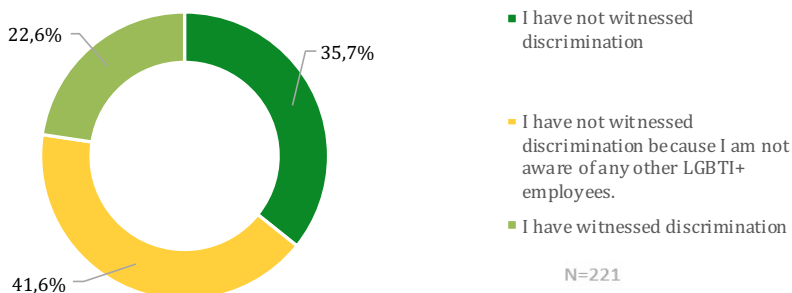


As you can see in the table only 14 people (6.3%) reported the existence of such networks and that they were a part of it, where 8 people (3.6%) said they were not a part of any existing networks.

5.2 Experiences of discrimination towards other LGBTI+ employees

To the question “In your workplace, have you witnessed discrimination against other LGBTI+ employees?” 79 people (35.7%) responded negatively while 92 people (41.6%) believed the reason why they did not witness such behavior was because there were no other LGBTI+ individuals working in the same place. Fifty people (22.6%) said they were witnesses of such situations. We should interpret these answers keeping in mind that in the public sector the majority of the LGBTI+ employees are not open about their sexual orientation, gender identity, and sex characteristics.

In your workplace, have you witnessed discrimination against other LGBTI+ employees?



I never witnessed any psychological or physical torture to any LGBTI+ inmate where I work but sometimes, they make homophobic comments behind their back (gay man, correction officer)

I know they believe that my openly gay friend is “not trustworthy, might bully same sex colleagues” (bisexual woman, psychologist)

I witnessed my nonbinary, male assigned and “manly looking” friend being teased about his “manhood” and discriminated against verbally because of his disclosure (bisexual woman, office clerk)

A trans individual came to the emergency and people changed, like they put a mask, a mask of hatred (gay man, health personnel)

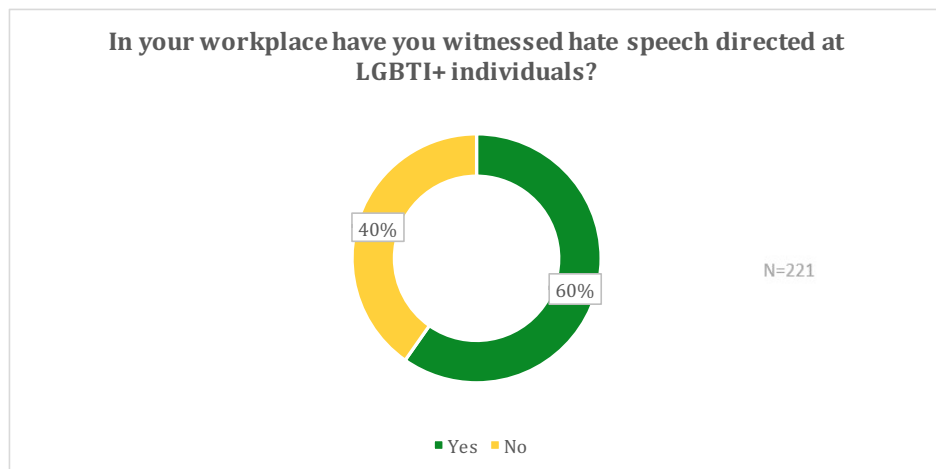
It generally happens. They act like calling someone a fag and attack someone with homophobic comments and behavior is a normal thing. As if that person is a freak who can be with anyone. They think I am going to rape them because of my sexual orientation, especially men, they are both afraid and aggressive (gay cis man, officer)

They did it to a trans friend, they humiliated her many times. We could not say anything because we are scared of getting fired (bisexual woman, social services expert)

At the university I work, a student who is trans woman was gossiped about by scholars. That person had to leave the school, because of her open trans identity she was discriminated against and isolated by the students, and I believe, by the scholars (bisexual cis woman, academic personnel)

6. Hate speech against LGBTI+

To the question “In your workplace have you witnessed hate speech directed at LGBTI+ individuals?” 89 participants (40.3%) answered negatively while 132 participants (59.7%) reported that they have.



I had a colleague who used to say that men should act like men (cis men) and women like women (cis women). They also used “homo” and “fag” to humiliate gay people (bisexual woman, psychologist)

They said if Netflix is spreading deviances like LGBTI+, it should be shut down. A friend of mine told me that they met a trans individual during the holiday and they went swimming to go away from them and one of their friends who cannot swim started shouting at them. They say lots of this kind of things that look like jokes, very often (bisexual non-binary, academic personnel)

Everything that does not fit in the gender roles is considered wrong or a freak. Jokes in the daily language and sexist comment they use to insult shows the level of hatred. So that if you are a man with a pink shirt, they are going to make fun of you (gay man, teacher)

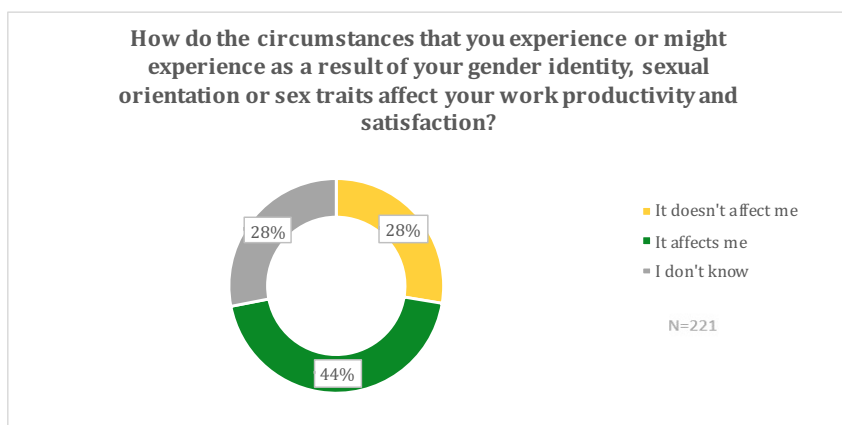
I hear many statements like they should be isolated from the society, religiously speaking it's normal to kill them or they are perverts (gay man, health personnel)

If someone looks or behaves outside gender roles, insulting comments or gestures turn into homophobia immediately. This is the general profile (bisexual woman, architect/engineer)

Lady-like, fag, feminine, sarcastic looks, implicit eye rolls. Should I continue? (bisexual man, teacher)

7. The relationship between discrimination, job satisfaction and productivity

In order to illuminate the relationship between discrimination, productivity and job satisfaction, we asked the question “Do the discriminatory attitudes, discourses, behaviors or practices that you experience or might experience because of your gender identity, sexual orientation or sex characteristics affect your work productivity and satisfaction?” Sixty-two participants (27.6%) answered negatively, 62 participants (28.1%) said they don’t know while 98 participants (44.3%) stated that discriminatory attitudes, statements, behaviors or practices have an impact on their efficiency and satisfaction. According to our results, different forms of discrimination that people suffer or might suffer at work have a negative effect on their efficiency and satisfaction. This effect manifests itself in different ways.



I am afraid that I could be exposed any minute. It is tiring. The problem is not the exposure but discriminatory behavior that would follow (gay man, academic personnel)

My sexual orientation affects my quality of life in general. My work is affected as well. If I did not have this orientation, I would not care about appearances that such and spend hours getting ready to work. If I had a proper love life and a partner to have sex regularly, I could focus more on my work and would not spend most of my time on those stupid dating applications. Of course, I think my sexual identity would be exposed any minute and I would be treated differently at work, after one mistake. I am anxious and I am trying to be careful. But that's all my life. It is not any different at work (gay man, academic personnel)

Sure, it affects. I have to pretend or lie about the questions from my colleagues related to my personal life. We, LGBTI+ public workers with uniforms, have to be very careful when choosing new friends (gay man, correction officer)

My job is already exhausting, facing discriminatory behavior just makes it more difficult psychologically. I already have a bad feeling since I am not being myself completely (bisexual - mainly female - trans woman, health personnel)

I can't perform as I would like. People accepting me or not, being free or not is a tiresome thought process (bisexual woman, health personnel)

I am confused and sad, makes me worry and triggers my anxiety, all that affects my quality of work naturally (pansexual woman, architect/engineer)

I am always tense, always on the edge. Naturally my anxiety limits my productivity (lesbian trans, teacher)

It affects my job satisfaction. I am always under pressure and edgy. I am tired of people expressing ideas when they don't have the right to do so, of being in a conservative and phobic environment all the time (asexual+pansexual cis woman, teacher)

Definitely. Possible affirmations regarding my sexual orientation - not where I work right now but could happen in the future - makes me anxious. This possibility decreases my sense of belonging to my company and to my country, affects negatively my motivation and my productivity (gay man, academic personnel)

Not me being gay, but even me being not married is considered weird. Executives have a more professional relationship with married heterosexuals. I strongly believe I would be under a lot of pressure if I disclosed myself (gay man, teacher)

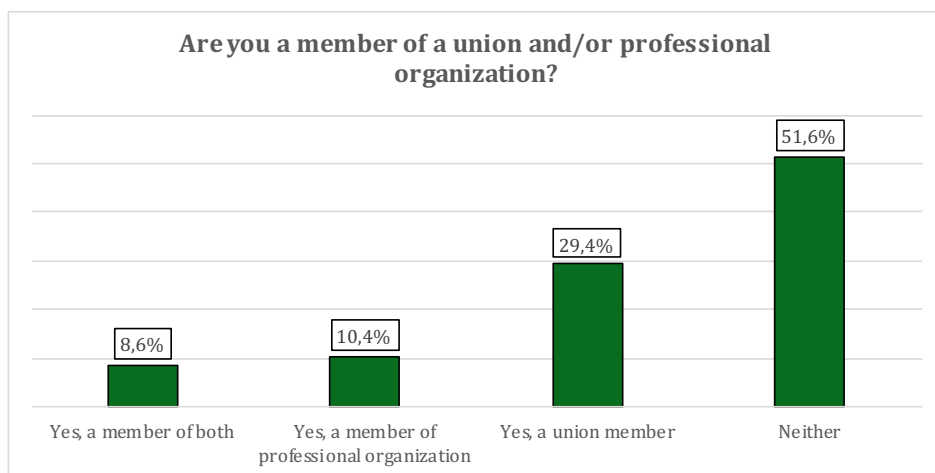
Feeling anxious all the time, not feeling equal, not being yourself, being obliged to hide even social media accounts, it is so saddening. I have to censure many things that I want to do (pansexual man, teacher)

I work based on my performance. My pay is down to half (trans woman, dentist).

Work hours take up a large part of people's daily life and being forced to hide one's identity causes people to live under great pressure. Trying to be careful all the time, controlling one's feelings (which most of the time are negative due to discrimination), not reacting to jokes, insinuations or hate speech (even indirectly) creates stress and anxiety all day, every day. This kind of a working environment would certainly negatively affect productivity. Shared experiences suggest that not being able to feel attachment or a sense of belonging are also reasons for the lack of productivity and job satisfaction to fail. The majority of participants stated that they also experienced health problems, were depressed and that they were in a constant state of worry. In addition, a person trying to survive under such circumstances would most likely experience low self-esteem and a general lack of well-being which in turn would decrease creativity.

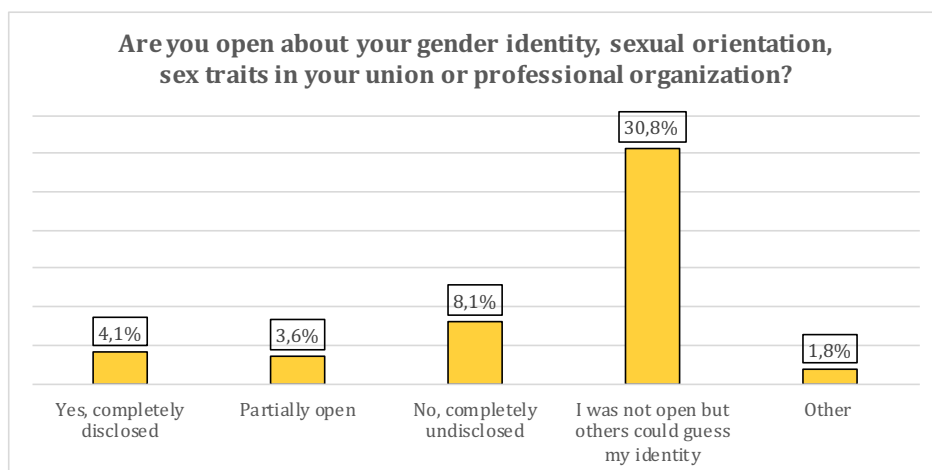
8. The situation in unions and professional organizations

To the question “Are you a member of a union and/or professional organization?” 29.4% (65 people) answered “yes, member of a union” and 10.4% (23 people) “yes, member of a professional organization” and 19 people (8.6%) reported being members of both. Unfortunately, 114 people (51.6%) are not part of any union or professional organization.



8.1 Disclosure in unions and professional organizations

To those who are members of a union and/or professional organization, we asked the question “Are you open about your gender identity, sexual orientation, sex traits in your union or professional organization?”

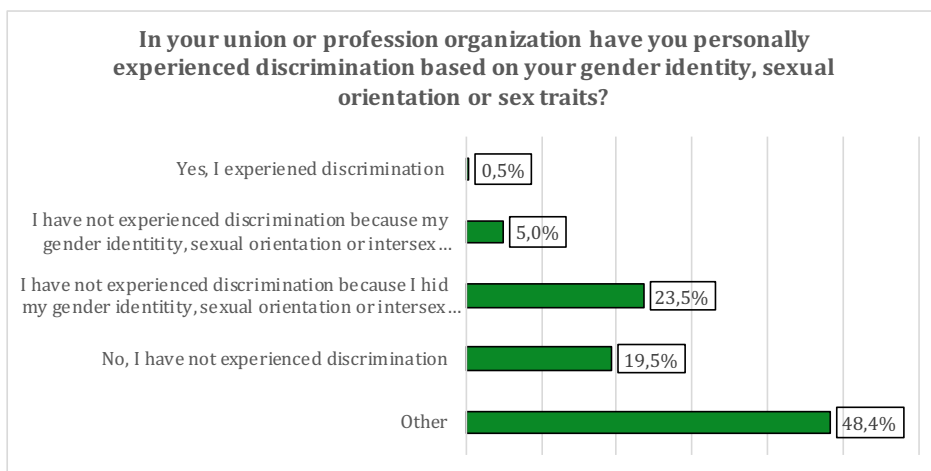


Other: I am a member but not active / I did not communicate directly / I did not feel the need to specify / no one asked.

characteristics in your union and/or professional organization?” Of the 107 participants, 9 people (8.4%) were members of an organization and were completely open about their gender identity/sexual orientation /sex characteristics, 68 people (63.6%) were completely closed, and 8 people (7.5%) were partially open.

8.2 Personal experiences of discrimination in unions and professional organizations

To those who were members of a union and/or professional organization at the time of the study, we asked if they had personally experienced any kind of discrimination in the union or professional organization to which of 107 participants who are a member of a union and/ or professional organization, 43 people (40.2%) declared that they had never witnessed any discrimination while only one reported experiencing direct discrimination. On the other hand, 58.9% believe the reason they had not experienced any discriminatory behavior or attitude regarding their gender identity/sexual orientation /sex characteristics was that they hid their identity or their identity was not apparent.



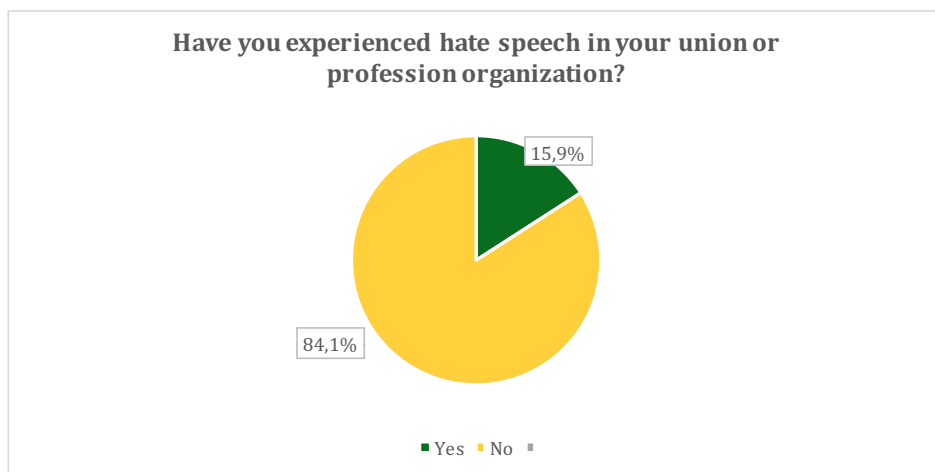
This data may indicate that unions and professional organizations are unable to create trust among their LGBTI+ members. The only participant who answered the question about discrimination in the union and/or professional organization positively was asked whether they filed a complaint regarding the discrimination they experienced and responded to the question by stating that they did nothing about it.

8.3 Hate speech against LGBTI+ members in unions and professional organizations

To those who were members of a union and/or professional organization, we asked the question “Have you witnessed any hate speech against LGBTI+ in the union and/or professional organizations to which you belong?” and 84.1% said “no”. The one person who reported that they had experienced discrimination in their union and/or professional organization did not report the incident. Those witnessing hate speech in the workplace was 59.7%, among the members of a union and/or professional organization the same percentage was 15.9%. It appears that relatively speaking LGBTI+ employees experience less hate speech in unions and professional organizations.

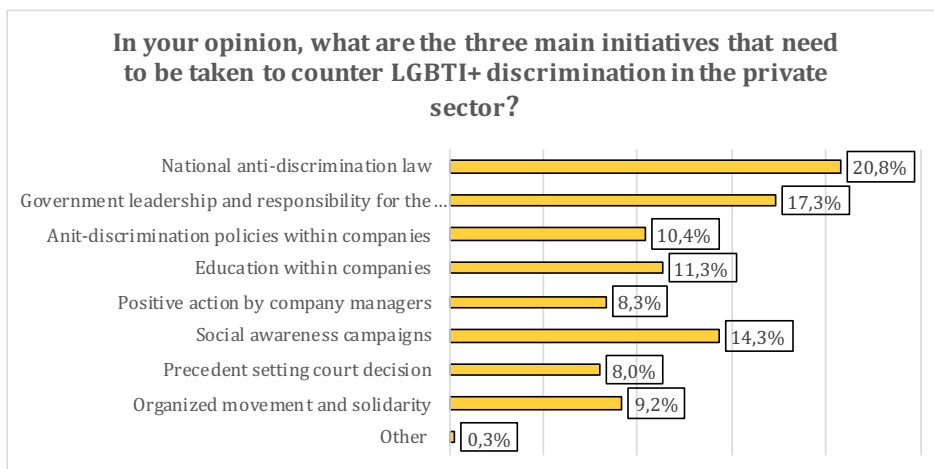
My union is a conservative one and it is publicly known that they consider LGBTI+ as immoral (gay man, teacher).

They called me names, daily language nicknames, like fag. Some people invited me home (gay woman, architect/engineer)



8.4 Measures against discrimination

We asked participants, “In your opinion, what are the three main initiatives that need to be taken to counter LGBTI+ discrimination in the public sector? When we grouped the answers according to their content, what became clear was that participants wanted to see “legal measures” being taken regarding LGBTI+ rights. The suggested measures started with current legislation being updated according to universal human rights criteria, followed by the government taking on responsibility and leadership and prohibition of discrimination in institutional regulations.

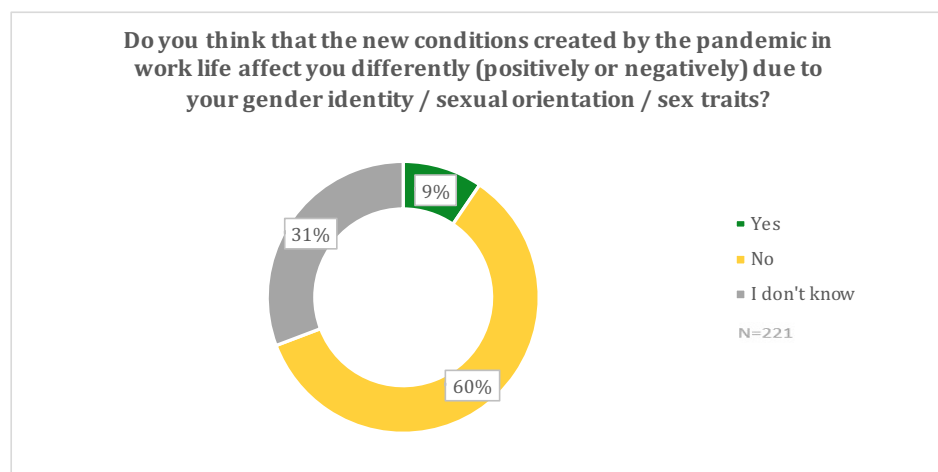


Participants also listed in-house training, positive statements, attitudes and behaviors of managers, solidarity networks and organized resistance, court decisions setting precedents, and campaigns for social awareness as other measures that could help prevent discrimination.

Most of the answers fell in line with Turkey's responsibilities regarding human rights stemming from national and international law. A large part of the participants stated that in order to prevent discrimination, current legislation should be updated. Legal regulations would provide LGBTI+ employees in public sector job security and change their work environment where they are obliged to work under the constant threat of discrimination. The need for in-house rules was also mentioned. Some of the participants stated that society as a whole should change but many were hopeless that such a transformation could happen.

9. The situation of LGBTI+ employees during the pandemic

In order to gather data regarding the effects of Covid 19 pandemic on work life and conditions of LGBTI+ employees, in 2021 we asked our participants the question “Do you think the new conditions caused by the pandemic had a different (negative or positive) effect on you because of your gender identity/sexual orientation/sex characteristics?”. 9.5% of participants (21 people) said they were affected where 59.7% (132 people) believe they were not affected, and another 30.8% has no idea (68 people). Those who are affected (64 people) had different answers. Some believe the pandemic had a negative effect on work life and their life in general. Others believe being away from the phobic work environment was actually good, and they felt more relaxed.



It affected negatively. The most important effect of the pandemic was that my already limited social life ended completely. I don't see people from my own community, and I am having a stressful period. And I think that had a more negative impact compared to my hetero friends. They have more opportunities before and during the pandemic. I am actually working at home, but I spend most of my time admiring other people's life and getting depressed and jealous. This is my least productive period in terms of work (gay man, academic personnel)

Since we work at home, we have minimum communication, so even if there is a discrimination it is not applicable. The only possibility is being discriminated verbally by other research assistants. We don't even see each other anymore (gay gender non-conforming, academic personnel)

I think it had a positive effect. Digitalization that overruled every area of life had an effect on me as well. I think that effect is a positive one because I had

the opportunity to comfortably work on my own. Since I had less physical contact with people, I was more relaxed (gay man, academic personnel)

Even if not openly, people have this perception that married cis hetero employees with kids have more things to do so they need to be tolerated. During the pandemic we had to work more flexibly and longer hours so LGBTI+ employees were always disadvantaged since they don't have spouses and kids. It is the same for all single people but undisclosed LGBTI+ individuals are trapped in this perception of "availability" (gay cis man, academic personnel)

10. Quotes from our participants

At the end of the survey the participants were asked to add or share any comments that were not included in the questions. Below you will find some of their thoughts and ideas.

Even though I work in an institution with predominantly female employees there is a sexist environment, (heterosexual) men are favored, and female employees torture each other psychologically. This general atmosphere that generates from sexist codes has a heteronormative function, which obliges me to hide my sexual orientation. Even though I am not discriminated because of my gender identity/sexual orientation I believe the most important factor is that I am hiding it (gay man, academic personnel)

Me and other LGBTI+ individuals I know believe the country is going worse every single day. We follow especially phobic comments coming from high offices and its repercussions in the society as violence with concern, therefore we want to leave the country and migrate to a more tolerant one (gay cis man, teacher)

People are scared of opening up and living as they are. I can relate to them but sometimes we have to do what we can for our own lives. Even though we are in a hopeless geography we have to be able to build our own spaces and take that respect that was robbed from us. It is important to get organized, to support each other and to show people they are not alone in some way. I think I can make a difference for many people at my office. And I see the feedbacks. That makes me happy. It's hope, what can I say... (gay man, health officer)

As a trans woman, I cannot start my process officially. As far as I understand, I would be dismissed. Did I have to change my gender at university? I have a right, but I cannot use it. I am also about to get divorced, and again I cannot apply for the process. With all these obstacles, one uses hormones unofficially and has health risks. I am thinking about resigning from public service if I can find a way out. If you are going to be a public servant, either you have to get your ID before, or you have to face dismissal. It is really not fair. Trans women are forced to sex work by the government. I would not believe it if I did not live in this country (lesbian woman, health personnel)

In every sector there is a different attitude towards different individuals. In healthcare sector we don't have the pressure that teachers have, nurses and delivery nurses have a different situation. The institution, whether its family health center, hospital, or district health directorate, makes a difference. As far as I see, the periphery is easier compared to big cities (bisexual - mainly female - trans woman, health personnel)

At the institutions of the Ministry of National Education all executives are conservatives because of the current government. This creates a pressure not on the LGBTIQ teachers but on the LGBTIQ students. Since most of the

teachers are conservative or feel they have to behave like that, kids are left by themselves (gay man, teacher)

As an educator, I'm worried about the anti-LGBTI+ attitude that has become institutionalized. If we don't see it get better soon, I fear this rhetoric might have long-lasting effects on society. This is also true for every identity (religion, language, ethnicity, etc.) that is not mainstream, just like LGBTI+. On the other hand, I am hopeful because I think that new generations will feed less on these outdated ideas. Still, we need to plan democratic reforms that put people at the center (gay cis man, academic personnel)

I want to live freely, without being harassed, without the fear of being beaten, killed, or fired (bisexual woman, teacher).

