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საზოგადოების ცოდნის, ინფორმირებულობისა
და დამოკიდებულების კვლევა ლგბტ(ქ)ი თემისა
და მათი უფლებრივი თანასწორობის მიმართ

FROM PREJUDICE TO EQUALITY

Study on Public Knowledge, Awareness and Attitudes
Towards LGBT(Q)I Community and Legal Equality

ნაწილი
PART 2



FROM PREJUDICE TO EQUALITY. VOL. 2

STUDY ON PUBLIC KNOWLEDGE,
AWARENESS AND ATTITUDES TOWARDS
LGBT(Q)I COMMUNITY AND LEGAL EQUALITY

WISG
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წინარწმენიდან თანასწორობამდე. Vol.2

საზოგადოების ცოდნის, ინფორმირებულობისა და დამოკიდებულების კვლევა ლგბტ(ქ)ი თემისა და მათი უფლებრივი თანასწორობის მიმართ

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Study on Public Knowledge, Awareness and Attitudes Towards LGBT(Q)I Community and Legal Equality

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შვედეთი
Sverige



**UN JOINT PROGRAMME
FOR GENDER EQUALITY**

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ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ARBS-F	Attitudes Toward Bisexual Women
ARBS-FM	Attitudes Regarding Female and Male Bisexuality
ARBS-M	Attitudes Toward Bisexual Men
ARC	Applied Research Company
ATG	Attitudes Toward Gay Men
ATL	Attitudes Toward Lesbians
ATLG	Attitudes Toward Lesbians and Gay Men
CRRC	Caucasus Research Resource Centers
CSO	Civil society organization
EU	European Union
FtM	Female-to-male
GTS	Genderism and Transphobia Scale
IDAHO	International Day Against Homophobia, Transphobia and Biphobia
LGBTQI	Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and intersex
MtF	Male-to-female
SOGI	Sexual orientation and gender identity
UN Women	United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
WISG	Women's Initiatives Supporting Group

FOREWORD

The Women's Initiatives Supporting Group (WISG) is a feminist organization focusing on women's issues and has been working on issues related to gender and sexuality, empowering members of the LGBT(Q)I community, delivering services, and advocating issues related to crimes based on sexual orientation since 2000. In addition to activities raising public awareness, research is one of the most important strategic directions for the organization.

The first large-scale study of LGBT(Q)I people and their legal equality was conducted by WISG in 2016 under the auspices of the EU-funded LGBT Solidarity Network in Armenia and Georgia with the support of the Heinrich Böll Foundation South Caucasus Office. The present study was carried out with the most analogous methodology, which, in addition to assessing the current situation, allows us to analyze the changes in the country in terms of dynamics based on the comparison of data. The research enables the development of an effective policy to prevent and combat violence and discrimination based on gender or identity, as well as a large-scale communication strategy to combat homo/bi/transphobia.

The study of the knowledge and attitudes toward LGBT(Q)I people and their equal rights in Georgia was made possible through a partnership with

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Eka Tsereteli

Director of the Women's
Initiatives Supporting Group

I. TERMINOLOGY

Asexuality – a sexual minority that describes people who do not experience sexual attraction or aspiration. Those who identify themselves as asexual often experience marginalization and discrimination related to their sexual orientation.

Attitude – the inner readiness to perform any behavior, during which the necessary skills are activated and mobilized, and the psyche is rearranged so that the individual can perform the required behavior¹. In the research, attitude is considered as the internal relation convictions of an individual or group that exists, creates a precondition for action and is manifested in social or political strategies.

Bisexuality – a form of sexual orientation that describes an individual's persistent physical, romantic, emotional, and/or sexual attraction to both: people of the same and the opposite sex.

Biphobia – negative attitude toward people of bisexual orientation. Like homophobia, it may be expressed in the form of disgust, hatred, aggressive behavior, and discrimination.

Cisgender – refers to individuals whose gender identity and expression are matched with the sex assigned to them at birth.

Coming out – a period in a homosexual's life when he/she/they notice(s) that he/she/they is/are different from heterosexuals in terms of sexual orientation and learn(s) to accept oneself. It is a process of self-acceptance that goes on throughout life and at its various stages. People form gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender identities first for themselves and then reveal them to others. Declaring your sexual orientation or gender identity to any person, either publicly or not, can be considered as a coming out.

Exoticism – a very different, strange, and unusual representation of an individual or a group.

Gay – synonymous with a homosexual. The term is often used only regarding men and refers to a man who is emotionally and physically attracted to men.

Gender – the attitudes, feelings, and behaviors that an existing culture associates with the biological sex of a person. Gender is a socially constructed concept of social classification of certain behaviors, signs, and roles into “feminine” and “masculine” groups. The specifics of the behaviors associated with femininity and masculinity are different in different cultures. Yet in almost every culture, certain prohibitions and rules regulate and define the behavior of women and men in different areas of life.

Genderism – describes an ideological system (analogous to heterosexism). Genderism based on the belief that there are only two sexes and that gender is inextricably linked to biological sex. Like heterosexism, it marginalizes and stigmatizes people and groups who do not conform to public perceptions of gender/gender norms.

Gender nonconformity and gender variation – the expression of a person's protest and resistance to gender “norms” and “conformities” established in a particular culture. Gender nonconformity can be manifested regardless of whether a person combines his/her birth sex with his/her gender identity.

Gender “bashing” (harassment, violence) – a term coined by researchers to study the nature and manifestations of transphobia. Describes aggressive behavior toward trans people, as well as the harassment of gender-nonconforming people.

Gender (self-)expression – the presentation of an individual, including their physical, external side, their chosen clothes/accessories, and their behaviors, that expresses aspects of gender identity and role. Gender

¹ Center for Social Sciences, Online dictionary ““Explanatory Dictionary-Reference in Social Sciences: Psychology, Gender, Applied Statistics, Public Policy and Management”” (2016). Available at <http://dictionary.css.ge/content/set> (March 10, 2022).

expression may or may not correspond to a person's gender identity.

Gender identity – an integral, inherent sense of being a girl, a woman or a female, a boy, a man or a male, or an alternative gender (e.g., genderqueer, gender-nonconforming, gender-neutral) that may or may not match with the sex assigned at birth or the primary or secondary sexual characteristics. Because gender identity is inherently internal, a person's gender identity does not have to be visible to others. Gender identity is different from sexual orientation.

Gender minority – a group of individuals whose gender identity or gender expression differs from the social norms associated with the sex assigned at birth. Gender minority is separate and distinct from sexual minority just as gender identity is different from sexual orientation.

Gender nonbinary and gender diverse – more inclusive terms that describe those who are beyond the male-female binary, including those who do not identify with either or both genders. The term refers to those who identify themselves as nonbinary, genderqueer, bi-gender, or pangender.

Heterosexual orientation – a form of sexual orientation that describes an individual's persistent physical, romantic, emotional, and/or sexual attraction to a person of the opposite sex.

Heterosexism – refers to the notion or idea that heterosexuality is the norm, while other sexual orientations (e.g., lesbian, gay, bi+) are beyond the norm. It is also a system that gives heterosexual norms and ideals privileges over other equally valid sexualities.

Homosexual orientation – a form of sexual orientation that describes an individual's sustained physical, romantic, emotional, and/or sexual attraction to a person of the same sex.

Homophobia – irrational fear and hatred of lesbians, gays, bisexuals, and transgender people based on prejudice and is similar to racism, xenophobia, anti-Semitism, and sexism.

Ill-treatment – treatment that causes physical or emotional harm, including various forms of violence, neglect, and exploitation, that poses a real or potential threat to a person's (victim's) life, health, development, and dignity.

Internalized (assimilated) homophobia – a negative feeling evoked due to one's own sexual orientation, which may become general and seriously affect one's human worldview and process of self-perception. The range of consequences is quite wide: from feelings of inferiority to open hatred and self-destructive behavior.

Intersectional – an understanding of identity that recognizes the existence of multiple and simultaneous crossing points of identity. This approach does not look at identities in a collective form (e.g., *female + lesbian + black* is more discriminated against than *female + lesbian*) but perceives them as a whole, in combination. These combinations give people a certain social position, which may mean both limitations and privileges.²

Intersex a person who is born with physical, hormonal or genetic features that are neither wholly female nor wholly male; or a combination of female and male; or neither female nor male. Many forms of intersex exist; it is a spectrum or umbrella term, rather than a single category.

LGBT(Q)I – an abbreviation used to refer to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and intersex people.

Lesbian – a woman who is emotionally and physically attracted to women.

Prejudice: a negative attitude (i.e., evaluative response) to a group or to an individual based on her or his group membership

Political instrumentalization – the use of different issues to achieve narrow political goals. The term politicization is sometimes used synonymously with the term used in qualitative research reports, based on respondents' responses. When the term depoliticization is used as an antonym of the practice, which

² Gabunia, S. and Vacharadze, I. *Introduction to LGBT Psychology*. Tbilisi: Identoba. 2013.

is seen in the respondents' responses, as well as in their interpretation, it refers not to the exclusion of the queer community from the political field but to the restriction of instrumentalization of LGBT issues by other political actors through supportive policies.

Queer – an umbrella term that primarily describes non-heterosexual and noncisgender people but, in a broader sense, refers to not normative sexual and gender identities and policies. In academic disciplines such as queer theory and queer research, the term implies a general opposition to binary, normative, and intersectionalism in social, cultural, and political life.³ Some groups of activists, such as Queer Nation, use the term to describe a radical political alternative to the LGBT(Q)I community's assimilationist strategy.⁴

Sex – a set of biological characteristics (anatomical, physiological, biochemical, genetic) that distinguish the female and male organism. The assignment of sex is usually based on the external genitalia at birth. When the external genitalia is indistinct, sex is assigned according to other indicators (e.g., internal genitalia, chromosomes, and hormones), with the intention that the assigned sex will most likely be consistent with the child's gender identity. Gender is usually categorized as male, female, or intersex (such as sexual anatomy that includes both male and female characteristics, or atypical characteristics).

Sexuality – a combination of biological, psychological, spiritual, and emotional feelings and behaviors related to the expression and satisfaction of sexual desire. It is an innate requirement and function of the human body. A person is born with a certain (sexual) potential, which is then formed based on individual life experiences. Sexuality includes sex, gender identity and expression, sexual orientation, eroticism, pleasure, intimacy, and reproduction. It is experienced and expressed in thoughts, fantasies,

beliefs, attitudes, values, behaviors, practices, roles, and relationships. While sexuality includes all of the above, not all of them may be experienced or expressed. Sexuality is influenced by a combination of biological, psychological, social, economic, political, cultural, ethical, legal, historical, and religious factors. Sexuality, like other aspects of human behavior, is both biological and social in nature. The following five components distinguish human sexuality:

1. Biological sex (which in turn means the combination of genetic, gonadal, hormonal, and genital sex)
2. Gender identity (psychological affiliation to either sex; may not match with biological sex)
3. Gender expression (related to human behavior that conforms to cultural norms and stereotypes about "masculine" and "feminine" behavior in a particular society)
4. Sexual orientation (more or less sustained sexual, emotional, erotic, and romantic desire for a person of a certain sex)
5. Sexual identity (self-perception as an individual with a specific sexual orientation; may not match the person's actual sexual orientation)

Sexual identity – the expression of one's sexual orientation through its recognition, acceptance, and self-identification.

Sexual orientation – an individual's sustained physical, romantic, emotional, and/or sexual attraction to another person. It includes homosexual, bisexual, and heterosexual orientations.

Sexual fluidity – changes in attraction, sexual identity, and orientation over time. These changes are reciprocal, which means that such change implies both attraction and dis-attraction to the same sex/gender.

Transgender – an adjective and umbrella term used to describe people whose gender identity, or gender role, does not correspond to what is usually associat-

3 Oxford English Dictionary, "queer" (Oxford University Press, 2014); Sycamore Mattilda Bernstein, "THAT'S REVOLTING!: Queer Strategies for Resisting Assimilation" (Counterpoint Press, 2008), p. 1.

4 Queer Nation, "Queers Are Reading This!" (June 1990).

ed with the sex assigned at birth. Although the term “transgender” is widely accepted, not all transgender and gender-nonconforming people identify themselves as transgender. Transgender people can be heterosexual, lesbian, gay, or bisexual.

Transgender man – a person whose sex assigned at birth was female but identifies himself as a man. Transgender men are also called FtM (female-to-male).

Transgender woman – a person whose sex assigned at birth was male but identifies herself as a woman. Transgender women are also called MtF (male-to-female).

Transphobia – negative attitude toward trans people. Like homophobia, it may be expressed in the form of disgust, hatred, aggressive behavior, and discrimination.

II. INTRODUCTION

Homo/bi/transphobic attitudes in society have a significant impact on the lives of LGBT(Q)I people. Even though negative attitudes are not always manifested in behavior (as the dominant discourse in a country is critical to the expression of anti-LGBT attitudes), studies show that there is a close link between those two (Bernat et al., 2001; Franklin, 2000; Parotti, 2008). In countries with strong anti-LGBT sentiments, members of the group are often victims of violence and discrimination across various aspects of life.

At the same time, public attitudes influence the formation of policies and legislative frameworks that address the equal rights of LGBT(Q)I people (Lax and Philips, 2009; Rigl et al., 2010; Takacs and Szalma, 2011). This process is not one-sided; politics and the legal environment, in turn, influence the dominant public discourse and regulate violent behavior and discriminatory treatment (Broer, 2006; Williams et al., 2014). Of course, the relationship between public sentiment and politics in different countries varies in content and quality. Another policy-making component is being introduced regarding LGBT(Q)I issues in Eastern Europe and post-Soviet countries that is related to the integration into the common European space and harmonization of the legislative sphere.

Studies examining public attitudes alongside the dynamics of the EU's relationship with the declared aspirations for democracy in Europe show that there is a significant gap between the desire to join the EU and the belief in and values of democracy⁵ and that, despite the significant progress on certain issues,

those are still perceived as fragmented, unrelated issues.⁶ According to a 2021 study, more than half (54%) of society does not fully or partially share the opinion that the EU poses a threat to Georgia's national traditions (the share of such respondents has increased by 20% compared to 2015); however, 35% of the respondents agree with this statement.

Clearly, skepticism about the EU is also influenced by other factors; however, it is not doubt that Russian propaganda plays a key role in stirring up this skepticism. The Kremlin's disinformation machine turns the ambiguity surrounding the prospect of EU membership into an ideological discourse in which Russia, a fighter against the "perverted West" and a defender of Orthodoxy and traditional values, plays the role of an alternative leader.

Studies examining the effects of Russian disinformation show that issues related to the visibility and legal equality of LGBT(Q)I people play a crucial role in their narrative. According to the researchers, Eastern and Central European countries, due to their geographical proximity to Russia, were particularly vulnerable to this type of propaganda (Korolczuk and Graff, 2018). The results of the media monitoring process conducted by the Media Development Foundation from 2017 to 2020 show that the use of homosexuality to reinforce anti-Western sentiments is still an important part of homophobic rhetoric in Georgia.⁷

Although Russian disinformation and anti-Western propaganda do not create, but reinforce, negative sentiments and feelings of danger in society, the ab-

5 See, for example: CRRC, "Knowledge and Attitudes towards the EU Integration in Georgia" (2009-2019); National Democratic Institute, "Public Attitudes in Georgia" (2014-2019); and others.

6 Shubladze, R. and T. Khoshtaria. The Gap Between Supporting Democracy and Liberal Values. *Caucasus Analytical Digest No. 116* (2020). <https://www.laender-analysen.de/cad/pdf/CaucasusAnalyticalDigest116.pdf> (March 10, 2022).

7 See the results of the media monitoring process conducted by the Media Development Foundation in 2017, 2018, 2019, and 2020.

sence of appropriate state policies have a significant impact on the political climate in Georgia and play the role of a type of enzyme in terms of uniting and radicalizing the conservative part of society, anti-liberals, and right-wing groups.

The link between homo/bi/transphobic prejudice and discriminatory behavior, on the one hand, and the specific nature of the relationship between public opinion and existing politics, on the other, makes an in-depth, complex study of the public opinion regarding LGBT(Q)I people and their legal equality particularly important.

A brief overview of the studies conducted in the country

Studies conducted in Georgia between 2016 and 2021 that studied attitudes toward homosexuals and/or the LGBT(Q)I community, among other things, show that homo/bi/transphobic attitudes are still strong. Compared to other minority groups, negative attitudes and distancing are most pronounced toward the LGBT(Q)I community. However, these negative attitudes tend to decrease over time.

According to a study conducted by UNDP and UNFPA in 2019 that examined attitudes toward gender equality: “Homophobic attitudes continue to persist among men and women in Georgia. [...] Respondents, especially men, hold deeply homophobic views.”⁸

The results of the study of the public attitudes conducted by CRRC Georgia between 2015 and 2019 show that the share of the population who believe that protecting the LGBT(Q)I community’s rights is

important has increased from 21% to 27%.⁹ However, the changes are mainly due to the attitudes of female respondents. Male respondents hardly changed their minds on this issue (the share of such respondents among men increased from 20% to 23% in the aforementioned five-year period, while the difference between female respondents is quite impressive, with their share increasing from 22% to 31%).

According to the study conducted in 2018 by the Council of Europe, the protection of LGBT(Q)I people’s rights was the least important to society, compared to other minority groups. Protecting LGBT(Q)I rights is automatically understood as a violation of the rights of the majority (“LGBT(Q)I people should not bother ‘society’ and should not limit’ heterosexuals’ rights”), while the rights themselves are perceived as things “incompatible” with Georgian culture and traditions, i.e., something borrowed from the West. Members of the focus group also say that LGBT(Q)I people are being paid to protest against the violation of their rights.¹⁰

After three years, according to the results of a repeated study, knowledge of and appreciation of diversity in Georgian society has increased between 2018 and 2021 “Awareness of the problems that the minorities are facing has also raised.”¹¹

These studies do not have a direct aim to study attitudes toward LGBT(Q)I people and their legal equality; they use different methodologies, consider the LGBT(Q)I group as a homogeneous group, and do not allow in-depth conclusions. However, on the whole, their results indicate a tendency toward positive change in the country, which supports the results of our research.

8 The quantitative part of the study shows that the attitudes toward homosexuality differ in female and male respondents: 83% of men and 74% of women who participated said they would be ashamed to have a homosexual child; 83% of men and 64% of women are against the employment of homosexual people in the education field; and 81% of men and 54% of women believe he/she/they will never have a homosexual friend. See: Rakshit, D. & Levto, R. *Men, Women, and Gender Relations in Georgia: Public Perceptions and Attitudes*. (Tbilisi: UNDP & UNFPA Georgia, 2020) p.17.

9 CRRC, Public attitudes in Georgia, NDI time-series dataset Georgia 2015-2019. Available at <https://www.caucasusbarometer.org/en/ndi-ge/MSEXUAL/> (retrieved through ODA on March 10, 2022).

10 Council of Europe, *Hate Crime, Hate Speech and Discrimination in Georgia: Public Attitudes and Awareness* (Tbilisi: CoE, 2018). p.24

11 Council of Europe, *Hate Crime, Hate Speech and Discrimination in Georgia: Public Attitudes and Awareness* (Tbilisi: CoE, 2022). p.8

III. A BRIEF SUMMARY OF THE RESEARCH RESULTS

Homo/bi/transphobia index and attitudes toward gender-nonconforming people

A comparison of the study results conducted in 2016 and 2021 shows that the homo/bi/transphobia indexes show a tendency to decrease. The share of respondents who hate LGBT(Q)I people, perceive their relationships as depraved, or morally judge those people has significantly reduced.

The results of the study show that the **transphobia index decreased more sharply than homophobia or biphobia**. The binary model of sex and gender is less popular.

Such unequal dynamics in the change of attitudes may have several reasons: attitudes toward gender roles and equality have changed, which in turn is a significant predictor of homo/bi/transphobia and has the greatest impact on the transphobia index compared to homophobia and biphobia indexes. In addition, a significant portion of the community organizations' agenda over the past 6 years has focused on strengthening the trans group and advocating trans issues. This has helped to raise awareness of both group members and the public about the violence and discrimination against them and to raise media interest in this issue.¹² Gender asymmetry in changes of attitudes toward trans people (**acceptance of gender-nonconforming men has increased,¹³ more than gender-nonconforming women**) further reinforces the following point of view: in recent years, there has been a sharp increase in the visibility of trans women and problems/violence/discrimination cases, while trans men remain an “invisible” group nowadays.

Despite the above, similar to the results of the 2016 study, attitudes toward trans and gender-nonconforming people remain more negative than those toward bisexuals or homosexuals. The results echo the conclusions of a quantitative research study conducted among members of the LGBT(Q)I community: according to community members, negative attitudes in society toward trans women and gays are more visible than such attitudes toward lesbians, trans men, or bisexuals.¹⁴ Community organizations and the Ombudsman's reports also highlight that trans people are one of the most vulnerable groups, whose members are often victims of intersectional discrimination.¹⁵

Community members and professionals participating in qualitative research studies, including police officers, also agree that transgender and gender-nonconforming people, as the most visible part of the LGBT(Q)I community, are more likely to be victims of hate crimes and discrimination due to their incompatibility with conventional gender norms. As transgender women themselves say, coming out is often forced on them: unlike lesbian, gay, and bisexual individuals, transgender people's disclosure of their gender is associated with a change in attributes such as name, appearance, social role, etc., which in itself makes their gender identity more visible and makes it public.

Compared to 2016, homophobic sentiments also decreased significantly. The change in attitudes toward gays/lesbians is also asymmetric (**acceptance of lesbians increased more than that of gays**); however, compared

12 Particularly prominent in this regard is the online media, which systematically covers cases of violence and discrimination against trans people, covers the problems that trans people face due to the lack of legal recognition of gender in the country, and often gives voice directly to trans activists.

13 The change in attitudes toward trans women should also be reflected in the fact that in the early wave of the COVID-19 pandemic, to help the transgender group involved in sex work (one of the most vulnerable groups and severely affected by pandemic prevention measures), community organizations and civic activists also got involved and set up special aid groups on social networks.

14 Aghdgomelashvili, E et al., *Impact of COVID-19 on the Situation of LGBT(Q)I people in Georgia* Tbilisi: WISG, 2021. https://wisg.org/Data/docs/publications/research-study/WISG_Covid-impact-on-LGBTQI-community-EN.pdf (March 10, 2022).

15 Bakhtadze, K. *Litigation Report: Intersectional Discrimination and LGBTI People* (Tbilisi: WISG, 2017). https://women.ge/data/docs/publications/WISG-LGBTI-Persons-and-intersectional-discrimination_WISG_2018_GEO&ENG.pdf (March 10, 2022). See also the Public Defender's annual report on the situation of human rights and freedoms in Georgia (2020).

to the attitude toward trans men/women, such dynamics of change are related to the specificity of the relationship between the respondent's gender and homophobia.¹⁶ **Despite the change, the tendency seen in the study conducted in 2016 showed and distinguished it from the results of studies conducted in other countries. As the study show that aggression toward lesbians is unusually high.** There is no statistically significant difference in attitudes regarding the right of adoption for gay/lesbian couples. In addition to the negative attitudes toward lesbians and gays, except the general, there are various other predictors: the attitude toward lesbians is strongly influenced by the factor of family asymmetry¹⁷ and the double standards regarding women's/men's sexuality, which remain strong in society. Such attitudes support the point of view expressed in the previous study that primarily a lesbian violates the asexual image of a Georgian mother in culture. Lesbian identity is perceived as a woman who is naming her sexual desire and manifests it in her behavior. The refusal of heteronormative relationships separates her from the narrow space of the traditional family where society can control female sexuality through men.

The change was least reflected in the attitudes toward bisexual people. The present study replicates the results of a study conducted in 2016: **biphobic attitudes in society are expressed more strongly than homophobic ones.** A significant proportion of respondents found it difficult to answer questions related to biphobia that measure the respondent's perception of bisexuality as one of the categories of sexual orientation. Respondents were more likely to answer questions that measured tolerance for bisexuals but found it difficult to consider bisexuality as their "solid", stable sexual orientation. In addition to group invisibility,¹⁸ such attitudes toward bisexuals lead to a lack of knowledge and perceptions of bisexuality as an unstable, "fluid" form of sexual orientation.

Awareness and attitude toward the condition of LGBT(Q)I people

For the LGBT(Q)I respondents in the focus group, it is especially important to raise public awareness about the real situation of LGBT(Q)I people: "Often, queer activists and organizations think that the problems of LGBT(Q)I people are automatically known, and this is where they make a strategic mistake. Based on complete alienation, even basic knowledge is inaccessible to society, which is likely to increase acceptance. According to a community member respondent, often homophobic behavior is not due to a negative attitude but to a lack of knowledge about reliable and supportive or, conversely, damaging relationship patterns." The analysis of the focus group results shows that professionals (e.g., social workers, journalists, prosecutors) who have direct contact with victims of violence or discrimination are more empathetic and receptive than other groups. However, it would be wrong to project this experience onto the whole of society: the variables involved in quantitative research show that **there is no such linear relationship between LGBT(Q)I awareness and attitudes toward legal equality and that this link is mediated by many variables**, such as right-wing authoritarianism, symbolic and realistic threats to the group, the of religiosity, the hierarchy of values, factor of radical gender asymmetry, etc. However, the low awareness of the respondents may not be dictated by a lack of knowledge but, on the contrary, by a high level of prejudice, with people consciously avoiding receiving this type of information.

More than half of the respondents still perceive the LGBT(Q)I community's fight for legal equality/self-expression as "imposing one's lifestyle on others" and/or propaganda. The statement "LGBT(Q)I people should be protected, but gays/lesbians should not impose their

16 According to the data from 2016, the homophobia index for lesbians is lower among female than among male respondents. However, in general, women are less homophobic. Female respondents were less likely to express negative attitudes toward gays than male respondents. Moreover, male respondents change their attitudes toward the positive more "heavily" than female respondents.

17 The factor of family asymmetry combines statements that make a woman's role and functions unique in heteronormative family relationships.

18 Bisexuals remain one of the most invisible groups compared to lesbians, gays, and trans women.

lifestyle on others” is fully or partially shared by 55.9% of respondents.¹⁹ Over the past five years, the share of respondents who assessed the work of activists negatively has decreased by almost 20% (from 74.5% to 56.8%). However, the trend that existed in 2016 is maintained here as well: **society is more negative toward activists than toward homosexuals in general.**²⁰ The attitude is also indirectly reflected in people’s trust in group members: in terms of being informed about LGBT(Q)I issues, as in 2016, Georgian society has the least trust in community organizations and community members.

Compared to 2016, the percentage of respondents who considered the LGBT(Q)I community to be one of the most discriminated in the country decreased.²¹ In 2016, more than half of the respondents (55%) agreed with this opinion, while the number of such respondents decreased to 38.8% in 2021.

Almost half of the respondents (48.2%) agree with the statement that “LGBT(Q)I people are really fighting for privileges and not for equality”,²² while 39.5% believe that the rights of LGBT(Q)I people are protected in Georgia.²³ Despite this, **the state’s efforts to respond to the reality of violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation were assessed negatively. Two in five respondents (38.6%) think that the state does not respond properly to the incidents of violence and discrimination against the LGBT(Q)I community.** Only 30.7% of respondents rate the state’s response as adequate.

Participants in the focus group also talk about some problems within the system when it comes to responding to hate crimes: “According to some prosecutors, the motive of hate is excluded from investigative and court proceedings, which prevents the proportional punish-

ment of the perpetrator.” From their point of view, in all other law enforcement agencies, an executive should be appointed based on special competencies. However, it should be noted that the representatives of the same departments speak more confidently about the acceptance of the LGBTQ community rather than the representatives of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, who admit that the attitudes in some departments are heterogeneous, and sometimes they even say that the ethical behavior of police officers with LGBT(Q)I members is only dependent on the law.

The analysis of the results of the studies conducted in 2016 and 2021 shows that **society’s attitude toward the legal equality of LGBT(Q)I people has significantly changed.** The share of the respondents who support the restriction of certain rights for LGBT(Q)I community members has significantly reduced. However, it should be noted that this change is not naturally converted into positive attitudes: compared to 2016, the share of respondents who are neutral or avoid answering the question has increased. However, the homo/bi/transphobia index of these respondents is often higher than that of those who openly express negative attitudes. It could be argued that **openly expressing a negative position about LGBT(Q)I human rights and equality issues is considered as less acceptable.**

To assess society’s attitudes toward the equal rights of LGBT(Q)I people, the study covers only the issues that are frequently speculated by radical groups: the right to marry, the right to adopt, the freedom of assembly, the freedom of expression, and the restrictions on their employment in the education sector.

19 In all, 18.7% of respondents partially or completely disagree with the statement, while 14.7% take a neutral position.

20 Such aggression towards the activities of activists and human rights defenders is directly related to the group’s increased visibility, as well as bringing legal issues into the public discourse, which is automatically perceived as “propaganda of depravity”.

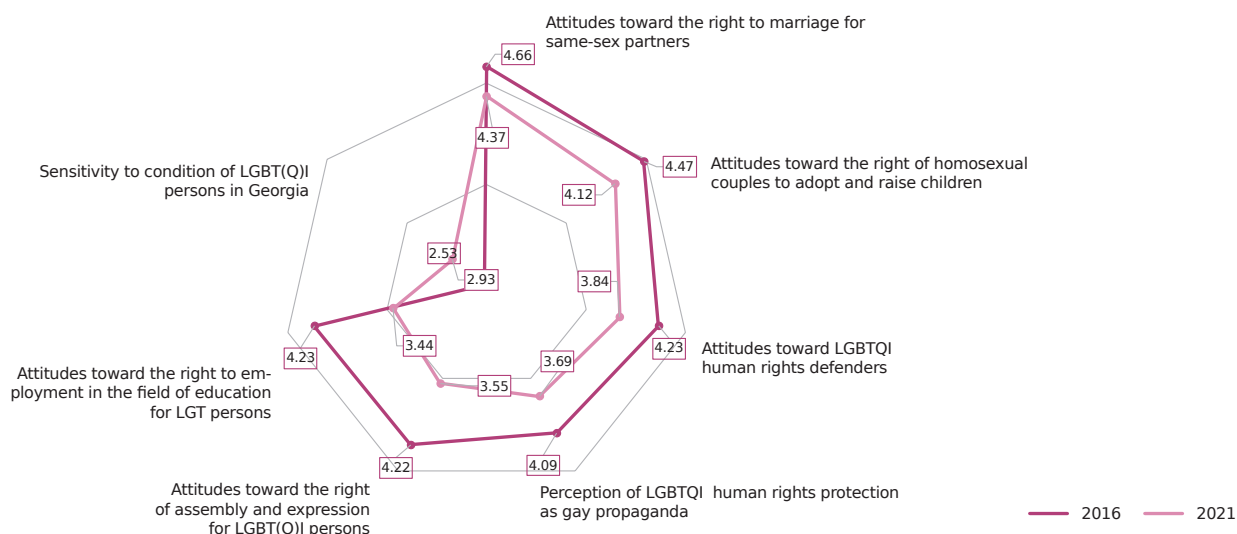
21 As in the study conducted in 2016, about one in ten respondents found it difficult to assess the situation of LGBT(Q)I people in the country. Of the 193 respondents who found it difficult to answer, more than half (53.9%) were over 55 years old.

22 Moreover, 19% of respondents completely or mostly disagree with the statement, 15.1% neither agree nor disagree, and 17.7% found it difficult to answer or refused to answer.

23 Every fifth respondent (22%) believes that LGBT(Q)I human rights are not adequately protected in the country. Almost as many (20.8%) found it difficult to answer or refused to answer, while 17.7% neither agreed nor disagreed with the statement.

Figure #1

Attitudes towards LGBTQI Equal Rights and Human Rights Defenders by Average Score of Provisions in 2016 and 2021



Despite the positive changes, the ranking of the issues looks the same as it did five years ago: compared to other issues, society shows the least acceptance when it comes to issues of marriage and adoption by same-sex couples. The right to adopt for lesbian and gay people, as well as the right to marry, is seen not as a fight for equality but as a struggle for “privileges.” Despite this, the percentage of gay marriage opponents decreased by 15.4% (from 88.8% to 74.6%) compared to 2016, while the number of supporters increased by 5.4%. As for the right of same-sex couples to adopt, the share of its opponents decreased by about 12%-13% (from 81.3% for homosexual couples to 67.6% for gay couples and 66.9% for lesbian couples).

The changes are sharper regarding freedom of expression and employment in the education sector. In 2016, the share of respondents who fully or mostly supported restricting homosexuals’ employment in the field of education was 77.5% (and especially

large was the share of respondents who took the most radical position, with 65% fully supporting such a restriction). Although a direct comparison of these data with the questions used in the study conducted in 2021 is problematic,²⁴ according to the responses on the restriction of employment in educational institutions separately for gay, lesbian, and transgender people, the share of the respondents who support such a restriction is less than 50%. Slightly more than half (53%) of the respondents do not want to employ trans people in this field. Almost every third respondent disagrees with such a restriction.

Exercising freedom of expression remains a significant challenge for members of the LGBTQI group. **The inconsistent policy of the state directly affects the activity of homophobic groups and the scale of aggression.** The sharp change in the government’s rhetoric during the past two years, which is already evident in the aggressive statements made against the West, the EU, US diplomats in the country, and West-

²⁴ In the new study, the question was broken down into three independent questions about the right of gays/lesbians and transgender people to be employed in the field of education, which is likely to also have an impact on the responses of the respondents.

ern European diplomats, has also had a profound effect on the LGBT(Q)I group's freedom of assembly/ expression. While assessing the events of July 5, 2021, the Prime Minister appealed to the "will of 95% of the population" to oppose the "propagandistic march".²⁵ Leaving aside the content of the statement and attempts to legitimize violence, the results of the study show that the government's appeal to the majority of the Georgian population when talking about legal equality issues is out of context and that the overall picture of "moving forward toward Europe" undermines the political image, which hinders this process.

Even though more than half of the respondents (53%) still support the point of view that LGBT(Q)I people should be legally prohibited to have the right to assemble and express themselves, compared to 2016 (78.1%), the share of such respondents has reduced by almost a quarter, and the share of those respondents who consider such a restriction unacceptable has doubled (the share of such respondents was only 14.6% in 2016 and 27.1% in 2021). A change in attitudes toward assembly/ expression does not mean that society generally accepts public visibility of sexual identity and intimacy, including in the case of conventional sexuality.²⁶ Given this context, the search for alternative ways to increase visibility of the community is of particular importance.

Unlike advocacy for legislative or other changes, where decisions are made by politicians, the street is perceived as a space where hostile groups are giv-

en some sort of legitimacy to violently express their homophobic attitudes. After the group attack on participants of the march observing the International Day Against Homophobia, Transphobia and Biphobia (IDAHO) in 2013, May 17 was declared by the Georgian Orthodox Church as a day of "family purity" in 2014, and it is celebrated annually with a public procession. Although the Georgian Orthodox Church still denies that the main purpose of this day in 2014 was to replace IDAHO, the strategy is to celebrate this day with a public procession in the central streets of the capital city (as an important physical venue for potential LGBT(Q)I rights activists). Despite that, **the public perception and attitude toward May 17 in the context of the settlement type accurately reflects the localized nature of the holiday introduced by the Orthodox Church in the artificial and physical space.**²⁷

For a third of respondents (33%), May 17 is not associated with either "Family Purity Day" or IDAHO. For almost as many respondents (35.3%), this day is associated with Family Purity Day, and for 13%, it is associated with either both topics or just as a day against homo/bi/ transphobia. Most of the ethnic minorities found it difficult to answer this question or indicated that this day was not associated with any holiday. Respondents for whom this day is associated with a holiday introduced by the church are ethnic Georgians or Armenians. None of the ethnic Azerbaijani respondents found this day to be associated with Family Purity Day.

²⁵ The Prime Minister said: "When 95 percent of our population is against a demonstrative propaganda march or parade, my friends, we must all obey it. This is the opinion of the vast majority of our population. As a government elected by the people, we must take it into account. We will always pay attention to it. It will not be in the same way as the minority always decided the fate of the majority when they made any decision in Georgia with their violent signature." Available at <https://1tv.ge/news/irakli-gharibashvili-me-vici-erti-aghlumi-es-aris-chveni-jaris-aghlumi-skhva-ghonisdziebibstvis-arsebobs-nebismieri-skhva-lokacia-romelic-policiam-shestavaza-lgbt-tems/> (March 10, 2022).

²⁶ For 8.7% of the respondents, it is largely or completely unacceptable for a woman and man to walk hand in hand in the street. It is unacceptable for 66% when a heterosexual couple kisses each other in public. Compared to heterosexual couples, the demonstration of such behavior by gay couples is unacceptable to a larger share of society: 68% say that it is unacceptable for gay couples to walk hand in hand with each other, while 81% say it is unacceptable for a gay or lesbian couple to kiss each other in public.

²⁷ Respondents living in Tbilisi are more likely to associate this day with "Family Purity Day" than respondents living in urban or rural areas. The distribution of responses by place of residence shows that this date is associated with Family Purity Day mainly by respondents living in Tbilisi (52.5%). The day is not associated with anything for 25.4% of the respondents living in Tbilisi, 34.8% of respondents living in rural areas, and 38.4% of respondents living in other urban areas. Moreover, 28.5% of respondents living in rural areas and 17.6% of respondents living in urban areas had difficulty answering the question at all or refused to answer.

The geopolitical dimension of anti-LGBT(Q)I sentiments

The study conducted by WISG in 2016 found no association between homo/bi/transphobia and foreign policy orientation. Compared to the results of the study from 2016, on the one hand, the geopolitical orientation of the respondents became clearer,²⁸ and on the other hand, its correlation with both the homo/bi/transphobia index and individual myths in the ethical framework was revealed.

Ethnic Georgian respondents who support the same or a distant relationship with the EU are more homophobic than those who openly express a desire for a closer relationship. The popularity of the myth for ethnic Armenian respondents is linked to the desired relationship with both the EU and Russia, and in the case of ethnic Azerbaijani respondents, the link between the popularity of the myth and foreign policy orientation is not clear at all.²⁹ In the case of relations with Russia, the homophobia index of those respondents who favor closer relations is higher than those who choose to maintain existing relations or distanced relations.

The popularity of the myth that “Georgia must legalize gay marriage to join the EU” among ethnic Georgian respondents is reflected in their attitudes toward the relationship with the EU: the respondents who support a closer relationship with the EU are less likely to believe in the myth than those who say that Georgia’s relationship with the EU must remain the same or distant. The same tendency is evident with other myths related to perceived symbolic threats and that repeat the basic messages of Russian

disinformation. Clearly, it is impossible to speak of an unambiguous connection, although it seems that **symbolic myths about homosexuality contribute to the attitudes of those who are more distant from the EU or those in favor of maintaining the status quo between ethnic Georgian and Armenian respondents.**

Predictors of homo/bi/transphobia

The participants of the focus group agree that education lessens damaging prejudices against minorities, while a vicious education system exacerbates inequality and creates conflicting human rights narratives, thereby hindering the development of critical thinking at the individual level and in micro societies, which creates a profitable environment for manipulation for the interested parties. Practically this point of view is confirmed by representatives of the community organizations when they assume that the systemic shortcomings of general education directly affect the condition of LGBT(Q)I people. According to them, in the absence of a decent general education, vulnerability becomes universal, skepticism decreases, and conformism increases, which increases the possibility of politicization and instrumentalization by power institutions.

As in the study from 2016, this time too, **the level of formal education neither shows a linear relationship with knowledge nor with the spread of myths and stereotypes. This suggests that the education system is not the basis for reproducing knowledge about gender and sexuality, nor is it focused on cultivating tolerant attitudes.**

28 The share of respondents who support a distant relationship with the US and the EU has almost halved. It should be noted that this change was not directly proportional to the rate of closer relations: the share of supporters of closer relations with the US and the EU is less increased than the frequency of respondents who support the maintenance of the status quo. The share of supporters of closer relations with Russia has hardly changed; however, the share of supporters of closer relations has decreased by 11% at the expense of respondents who are supporting maintaining the same relationship.

29 Low support for EU membership is not a new tendency in areas mostly populated by ethnic minorities. “This difference between ethnic Georgians, Armenians and Azerbaijanis can be explained by the lack of information about EU available to minority groups. This is due to several factors, including the problem of Georgian language proficiency, and lack of quality information on the languages of ethnic minority groups. It is also noteworthy that they are separated from the center and the rest of Georgian society.” See: Minesashvili, S. *EU and Ethnic Minorities in Georgia: Information Vacuum and Misinformation*. Policy Essay. (Tbilisi: Georgian Policy Institute, 2020).

The results of the study show that television remains the main source of information about the LGBT(Q)I group; however, compared to 2016, the share of respondents who named social networks as their main source of information has almost tripled. Nevertheless, despite the heterogeneity and inaccuracy of information spread on social networks, etc., respondents who cite social networks as their main source of information are less likely to share stereotypes and myths and instead have a lower rate of homo/bi/transphobia.

Knowledge and perceptions about gender and sexuality have different effects on both: gender variables and homo/bi/transphobia levels. For example, the views of the respondents on the “etiology” of homosexuality affect on perceived “realistic” threats (e.g., all gay men are pedophiles or only homosexual men abuse other men). Respondents who believe that homosexuality is shaped by social factors are more vulnerable to both perceived symbolic and realistic threats.

Those respondents who support biological theories and believe that orientation is biologically determined are less likely to believe in realistic myths but are just as vulnerable to perceived symbolic threats as proponents of social theories. Perceptions of sexuality constructs – such as binary models of gender and orientation – have a stronger influence on anti-LGBT(Q)I attitudes than knowledge of the etiology of homosexuality.

Gender expression and sexual orientation are different aspects of human sexuality that are related to each other but are not mutually exclusive. Nevertheless, homosexual orientation in public perceptions is closely linked to gender nonconformity. Gays and

lesbians are often credited with feminine or masculine behaviors that are characteristic of other genders. According to such expectations, homosexuals violate not only sexual but also “traditional” gender norms. Certain studies show that such **stereotyping** reinforces prejudices and increases the risk of violence against lesbians and gays. As both the studies from 2016 and 2021 show, inverted gender stereotypes about gay men are more popular than those about lesbians.³⁰ At the same time, attitudes in society toward gender-nonconforming men are more negative than those toward gender-nonconforming women. Regression analysis shows that the stereotype about gay femininity is a predictor of negative attitudes toward not only gays but also lesbians and trans people, in contrast to the existing stereotype about lesbians.

Myths about the LGBT(Q)I group have a strong influence on both homo/bi/transphobia and attitudes toward legal equality. The list of myths was selected from the statements used in 2016, chosen from the media monitoring reports conducted between 2016 and 2020³¹ and based on the results of focus groups. As a result of factor analysis, statements that are symbolic and include threats to morality, values, traditions, norms, religion, ideology, or worldview were grouped, such as “LGBT(Q)I people are fighting against the Orthodox Church”, “LGBT(Q)I people are subverting our traditional values” and many more. The second factor combined statements related to threats, such as myths about gay pedophilia, the spread of HIV/AIDS, engaging in sex work, and violence by homosexual men. Based on grouping theory, we have conditionally combined these factors in the name of perceived symbolic and realistic threats, and this is how they are included in the regression anal-

30 Almost half (47.6%) of the respondents fully or partially share a gender stereotype about gays. The share of respondents who disagree with the opinion about gay femininity is almost half that (23.7%), while 12.1% chose a neutral position. In contrast to gays, respondents’ opinions are less radicalized about the masculine appearance and manners of lesbians (“Most lesbians look and act like men”): 34.7% partially or fully agree with the stereotype, 31.1% completely or partially disagree with this opinion, and 14.9% chose a neutral position. Almost one in five respondents found it difficult to answer the question (19.2%).

31 Media Development Foundation, *Anti-Western Propaganda*. Media monitoring reports for 2016-2020.

ysis.³² Both factors have a moderating effect and reinforce the effect of right-wing authoritarianism and religiosity index on homo/bi/transphobia.

Some of the myths that can be conditionally perceived as realistic threats (myths about violence, pedophilia, etc.) are less supported and shared despite active propaganda. However, at the same time, there is a lack of relation to these issues: the respondents most often had difficulty answering and taking a position on these statements. In terms of the prevalence of myths and stereotypes, there is a sharp asymmetry when comparing settlement type, age and ethnicity: respondents living in rural areas, those aged 55+ and ethnic minorities were more likely to choose the option “difficult to answer” than young respondents, capital residents and ethnic Georgians. Nearly a third of ethnic Armenian respondents found it difficult to answer or refused to answer the questions. The frequency of non-response among ethnic Azerbaijani respondents is the lowest, although these myths are more widely believed than among ethnic Georgian respondents.

The statements related to perceived symbolic threats are more popular among ethnic Georgians than among ethnic minorities. Lower sensitivity to perceived symbolic threats among ethnic minorities may also be related to the specifics of national discourse: the content of the statements is closely linked to the idea

of creating a threat to national identity. The target audience of these myths are primarily Georgian, Orthodox citizens. The narrative of “Georgia is being taken away” is perceived as less of a threat to ethnic minorities.³³

Unlike the results of 2016, this time, the **connection between the hierarchy of values and LGBT(Q)I rights has been revealed.**³⁴ Just like in 2016, the family, as a priority value, is unequivocally dominant. At the same time, the priority value of family, homeland, and religion was reduced. In 2021, health, financial well-being, friends, and social connections are given more priority by society.³⁵ **According to the integrated index of the three highest ranked values, the share of respondents who named religion in the top three has almost halved.** This tendency is especially pronounced in the youngest age group (aged 18-24). Among other values, “human rights” and “freedom of speech” occupy the last place in the hierarchy. Nevertheless, their priority value compared to 2016 has increased in all age groups.

This change is most pronounced in the first age group: in 2016, only 3% of respondents aged 18-24 named “human rights” as one of their top three values, while in 2021, 15.2% did so. Respondents who name human rights/freedom of speech in their top three values have a markedly different, positive attitude toward human rights and equality issues for LGBT(Q)I people.

32 The authors of the Intergroup Threat Theory emphasize that they study subjectively perceived threats in the process of research and analysis because they believe that threat perception can cause prejudice, regardless of how real it is (Stephan et al., 1999; Semyonov et al., 2004; Coenders et al., 2008). Studies also show that the realistic threats – difficult economic conditions, the large proportion of minorities or immigrants, etc. – increase negative attitudes toward outsiders, and often national problems, including economic hardships, are attributed to and perceived to be the fault of external forces (Riek, Mania and Gaertner, 2006). In contrast to realistic threats, symbolic threats include threats to morals, values, traditions, norms, religions, ideologies, or worldviews (Stephan, Ybarra and Bachman, 1999; Stephan, Ybarra and Morrison, 2009). The perception of symbolic threats has more in common with personal characteristics, especially values: the more different traditions and ideologies the outside group carries, the more the group is perceived as a symbolic threat (Stephan et al., 1999).

33 This is another interesting tendency that cannot be generalized or analyzed in this study due to selection and lack of data. However, it will be interesting for future research, linking ethnicity and religiosity to homo/bi/transphobia and vulnerability myths: ethnic Georgian Muslims and non-Georgian Orthodox respondents are more vulnerable toward perceived symbolic threats and have a high degree of homo/bi/transphobia compared to others.

34 The hierarchy of values in the study from 2016 also showed no connection to geopolitical orientation. The study from 2021 shows that the connection between the hierarchy of values, geopolitical orientation, and homo/bi/transphobia is clear.

35 Those changes can be partly explained by the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and the anti-crisis measures on the health and socio-economic conditions of the population.

Alongside the declining priority value of religion in the hierarchy of values, the frequency of attendance at religious services and other practices is also declining.³⁶ A report prepared by the CRRC in 2020, which analyzes data from 2008 to 2019, shows a declining tendency in trust in the church as an institution, reflecting the impact of the church scandal on believers' attitudes.³⁷

Another important change is manifested concerning age and religiosity: the index of religiosity increases with age and reaches a peak in the 45-55 age group for both women and men and then shows a downward trend. According to a study conducted in 2012, the younger generation was more religious than the middle and upper age groups (Sumbadze, 2012).

Research shows that, like right-wing authoritarianism, the religiosity index is closely linked to perceived symbolic threats to LGBT(Q)I and homo/bi/transphobia: the more importance a respondent gives to his/her religion, the more often he/she engages in religious rituals and practices respondents are more inclined to believe in perceived symbolic threats associated with the group.³⁸

The concept of femininity and masculinity in a particular culture, especially the relationships toward gender roles and equality, has a significant impact on the acceptance of LGBT(Q)I people in society (Takacs and Szalma, 2011; Nierman et al., 2007; Keuzenkamp et al., 2013).

A cross-cultural study of EU countries shows a strong correlation between attitudes toward homosexuals and gender roles: in countries, where most

people believe that a woman's function and responsibilities are related to the family, homophobic attitudes are more pronounced. In EU member states, this relationship is also reflected at the policy level in the close correlation between attitudes toward homosexuals and the Gender Inequality Index (Keuzenkamp et al., 2013; Henry et al., 2017).

Both the 2016 and 2021 studies have shown that attitudes toward gender roles and equality vary in intensity but have a significant impact on both the overall homo/bi/transphobia index and attitudes toward LGBT(Q)I rights and equality. The community/service provider organizations and community members participating in the qualitative study emphasize that homophobia and misogyny are closely linked. A comparison of the results of the quantitative study has shown that overall, **compared to the results of 2016, society shows less traditional approaches to gender roles and equality.** However, the gap in gender, age, and settlement types widened: men, respondents in the upper age group and rural and urban (except the capital) respondents were also more rigid toward change than women, members of 18-24 age group and respondents from the capital city. **This kind of changing tendency with the corresponding asymmetry was reflected in the homo/bi/transphobia indexes as well.** During the analysis process, the statements related to gender roles and equality were grouped into three factors using the factor analysis method. The first factor is conventionally called the factor of general radical gender asymmetry because the statements combined in it express a strongly dis-

36 Instead of the scale of religious fundamentalism used in 2016 to measure the impact of religiosity on homo/bi/transphobia, we have introduced three questions that show the different dimensions of a respondent's religiosity: attitudes on the importance of religion in daily life, frequency of engagement in religious services, and frequency of private religious rituals. A comparison of frequency distributions of responses shows that the rate of attendance at religious services has decreased since 2015. As the study from 2016 did not take into account such dimensions of religiosity, to show the general tendency, we used the results of Eurobarometer's study from 2015 to compare the data, in which the questions are formulated in the same way. See: CRRC, "Caucasus Barometer 2015 Georgia" (2015). Available at <https://caucasusbarometer.org/en/cb2015ge/RELSERV/> (retrieved through ODA on March 10, 2022).

37 Shubladze, R. and T. Khoshtaria. The Gap Between Supporting Democracy and Liberal Values. *Caucasus Analytical Digest* No. 116 (2020).

38 For Muslim and Orthodox respondents, the effect of the index differs not only on a statement that directly addresses Orthodoxy but also on myths related to other perceived symbolic threats. The reason for such a "scattered" effect must be the specificity of the link between ethnicity and religiosity; however, the data available in this study do not allow such in-depth analysis.

criminatorial attitude toward the role of women in various aspects of personal development and function. The second factor is usually called the family asymmetry factor because the statements contained in it mainly reflect the distribution of family status roles.³⁹ The third factor included only one variable/statement: “Feminists and women’s human rights activists are valued for their courage.” Both radical gender and family asymmetry **factors have varying degrees of influence on both homo/bi/transphobia and the legal equality of LGBT(Q)I people.**

Overall, contact/knowing has a positive effect on attitudes toward LGBT(Q)I persons. The homo/bi/transphobia index of respondents who know at least one member of the group has a much higher acceptance rate than those who do not know anyone. Compared to 2016, the overall visibility of the group has not changed significantly (every tenth respondent (11.8%) says they know at least one member of the LGBT(Q)I group). However, there is a tendency for diversity: when referring to the sexual identity of a member of a familiar group, respondents are more likely to name lesbians, bisexual women, and trans people.

In terms of contact/knowing, the analysis of information sources showed that in 2021, voluntary coming out as a source of information about the sexual/gender identity of a member of a familiar LGBT(Q)I group is one and a half times more common than it was in 2016. For their part, studies show that “voluntary” coming out increases the degree of acceptance: respondents who answered that they learned information from a community member were less homophobic than those who responded that they “heard it from someone else” or “figured it out themselves.”⁴⁰

As for knowing a member of the group, in 2021, participants of the study were more likely to associate with LGBT(Q)I friends. These features may explain the fact that, **compared to 2016, the positive effect of contact on homo/bi/transphobia has increased.**

At the individual level, visibility and coming out remains a significant challenge for LGBT(Q)I community members. Focus group participants agree that “it is easier for lesbian, gay, and bisexual individuals to avoid visibility if they come out without it.” Consequently, they are more likely to not notice their own sexuality as a distinguishing and provocative sign of a critical attitude. This is exactly how the respondents explain that homophobic attitudes expressed through aggression or attack are less often directed at lesbians, whom most respondents name as the least vulnerable group in the community. This is confirmed by one of the employees from the Prosecutor’s Office via the statistics on the crimes committed based on gender orientation. However, representatives of the community and service providers do not consider the extent to which violence against queer women is known or reported to be a valid indicator of public attitude. More often, they connect this pattern to the lesser visibility of queer women. “Eventually, respondents will conclude that **if the queer discourse is silent, on the one hand, we will avoid conflict and controversy with the actors, while in this silence, the oppression of more and more people will become invisible.**”

The individual **visibility** of the members of the LGBT(Q)I community is higher in Tbilisi than in other urban areas and rural areas: 23.8% of respondents living in Tbilisi say they know at least one

39 The integration of the statement “Equality between women and men has already been achieved” into this factor can be explained by the fact that the role of the woman as a mother caring for the family occupies one of the highest levels in the hierarchy of values within Georgian traditional culture.

40 A thorough assessment of the role of a contact is problematic in our case. Due to the lack of data, it is difficult to generalize how the respondent’s religiosity, right-wing authoritarianism, traditional gender roles, and attitudes toward nonconforming people affect this relationship. An analysis of the available data shows that all of the above-mentioned factors play a buffer role and not only reduce the effect of the contact on both groups’ attitudes toward their legal equality, but also often give it a negative value. To draw more solid conclusions, it is necessary to include such contact characteristics in the analysis as distance and the source of the coming out.

member of the LGBT(Q)I group, while the share of such respondents in urban and rural areas is 11.3% and 5.1%, respectively. The peculiarity of the internal migration of the LGBT(Q)I group shows that young members of the group often try to choose a place to live that, on the one hand, allows them to be away from family and relatives to avoid being “controlled”. At the same time, in big cities, there is more diversity and less pressure on self-expression. Young people living in rural areas try to move to the city, move from one city to another, and so on. Consequently, in Tbilisi and other cities, the respondents are more likely to know a person who does not hide his/her/their sexual identity.⁴¹

While discussing **urban contexts**, the focus group members noted that “acceptance or hostility is not just an indicator of cultural arrangement. Respondents often point out that small towns and villages have less influence over civic organizations, friendly, inclusive initiatives, access to information, and access to other social and economic benefits, which also determine priorities, areas of interest, and attitudes in small peripheral communities.”

The asymmetric nature of the changes

A comparison of the results of the studies conducted in 2016 and 2021 shows that the changes are asymmetric in nature: the difference between groups in terms of gender, age, and **settlement** type has increased. Specifically, positive changes are more pronounced in women, young people and respondents in the capital city than men, the elderly and urban and rural respondents (except the capital).⁴² Research has shown that situational predictors that influence the homo/bi/transphobia index and attitudes toward legal equality of the LGBT(Q)I group include

the following: the main sources of information about LGBT(Q)I people, keeping contact with/getting to know LGBT(Q)I members, knowledge, stereotypes and common myths, attitudes toward gender roles and equality, the hierarchy of values, and the index of religiosity.

Another socio-demographic characteristic that was not the subject of a separate analysis in the study from 2016 was ethnicity. Overall, ethnic minorities in Georgia have a more negative attitude toward LGBT(Q)I people and their legal equality than ethnic Georgians. The reasons for this are also related to the lack of awareness on both sexuality and gender issues, as well as on the legal status and equality of the LGBT(Q)I group. Ethnic groups are also characterized by different vulnerabilities in terms of the prevalence of myths and stereotypes: almost a third of ethnic Armenian respondents reject or find it difficult to respond to knowledge-related myths and stereotypes. The share of such respondents among ethnic Azerbaijanis is lower than among ethnic Georgian and Armenian respondents, although the frequency of incorrect answers among ethnic Azerbaijanis is much higher than among ethnic Georgians. Ethnic Georgians are more vulnerable to myths about perceived symbolic threats than ethnic Armenians and Azerbaijanis, which must be due to the religious and ethnic-nationalist content of the myths associated with the symbolic threats. Attitudes toward gender roles and equality, which is one of the important predictors of homo/bi/transphobia, also show significant differences across ethnicities.

The asymmetric nature of the changes emphasizes the need for differentiated approaches to the planning and implementation of public awareness campaigns.

41 This tendency is also supported in the studies conducted in the LGBT(Q)I group. According to a survey conducted in 2020, more people know about the orientation and identity of the respondents living in Tbilisi than in the regions. Specifically, 76.45% of respondents living in Tbilisi say that most or almost all of their friends know about them, while the share of such respondents among the residents of the regions is a little over 56.3%. See: Aghdgomelashvili et al. *Impact of COVID-19 on the Situation of LGBT(Q)I people in Georgia* (Tbilisi: WISG, 2021).

42 As for the level of formal education, it only matters to female respondents: the level of higher education predicts less prejudice among females, something we cannot say about male respondents.

A comparison of the results of the studies conducted in 2016 and 2021 shows that the perceived symbolic threats to the LGBT(Q)I group are still relevant to the majority of society. The attitude toward LGBT(Q)I activists and human rights defenders remains sharply negative, while public display of affection such as holding hands or kissing, remains taboo regardless of orientation or gender.

Nevertheless, overall, the dynamics of change in attitudes toward LGBT(Q)I people and their legal equality are positive. This is due to such factors as the changes in the hierarchy of values, a decrease in the degree of religiosity, an increase in the acceptance of gender equality, and increased acceptance of nonbinary constructs of gender and sexuality. In addition to these changes, the decrease in the homo/bi/transphobia index and the increase in the acceptance of LGBT(Q)I people's legal equality suggest that the positive tendency shown by the study cannot be understood as merely ordering political correctness and/or as a conscious moral compromise of the conservative part of society on the road to Europe”.

IV. RESEARCH TOOLS

The main objective of the study was to analyze the variations in attitudes toward LGBT(Q)I individuals in 2016 and in 2021 to create effective communication and awareness-raising activities and plan future initiatives.

In addition to reflecting on the real situation, one of the aims of the present study was to compare the data from 2021 with the results of the baseline study in terms of general tendencies. For this reason, the survey methodology and key tools for measuring prejudices against the LGBT(Q)I group and their legal equality are identical to those used in the study conducted in 2016. Changes and additions related to myths and stereotypes are described in detail in a separate chapter below. The research design considered both quantitative and qualitative approaches.

Fieldwork, data entry in SPSS, and an initial technical report on individual issues were provided by the Applied Research Company (ARC). The qualitative component of the research and the preparation of the report were provided by the Women's Initiatives Supporting Group (WISG), with the involvement of an invited expert.

Quantitative research methodology

Target population

The project aimed to study public attitudes toward LGBT(Q)I people. The national study covered the territory controlled by the Georgian government.

The target population of the study included members of a private household aged 18 and over who had lived at the address for the preceding six months.⁴³

Designing the basic research tools (questionnaires)

The main tools of the research study were two structured questionnaires: the first was a “basic” questionnaire focused on the expression of attitudes, while the additional questionnaire, which was filled in by the respondent independently, included questions about sexual attraction, behavior, and sexual self-identification and experience.

The questionnaires were designed in Georgian and then translated into Armenian and Azerbaijani. The translated questionnaires underwent linguistic adaptation.

The “basic” questionnaire consisted of the following blocks:

1. Socio-demographic characteristics;
2. Value orientation and sources of information;
3. Knowledge, stereotypes, and myths;
4. Contact/acquaintance with members of the LGBT(Q)I group;
5. Attitudes toward gays, lesbians, bisexuals, and trans people;
6. Awareness and attitude toward the issues of legal equality of the LGBT(Q)I group;
7. Attitudes toward sex education issues and behavioral norms in public spaces.

The additional questionnaire on personal sexual identity and experience consisted of a single block.

Both questionnaires were based on research tools from the research conducted by the WISG with the support of Heinrich Böll Stiftung South Caucasus, which was refined based on the fieldwork experience in 2016 and recommendations from a research team in 2021.

⁴³ A household is defined as the main household economic unit of society – a group of people who are subject to the common rules of cohabitation in one dwelling unit and are related to one another by a common budget (part of it), as relatives and/or non-relatives. A household may also consist of one person. See: Legislative Herald of Georgia, *On the General Census of Georgia*. <https://matsne.gov.ge/ka/document/view/15694?publication=2> (March 10, 2022)..

Namely:

1. The wording of the statements was changed in the block of questions describing behavior, which added more clarity to the content of the question;
2. Verbal values of scales were specified;
3. The scale of religious fundamentalism was removed from the questionnaire. Questions about the various dimensions of religiosity were added instead (see below for details);
4. The block of myths and stereotypes was clarified, to which the statements were added (see details below);
5. One question was added to the block of rights, two statements related to adoption and employment in the field of education were divided by gender (see below for details);
6. Two questions were added to the block on gender roles and equality (see details below).

The changes did not apply to the major scales and counting rules that measure homo/bi/transphobia levels. The following changes did not result in substantial changes that would call into question the possibility of comparing the main results of the studies from 2016 and 2021.

Scales and tools used in the study

Value orientation and sources of information

The tools of the study from 2016, without making any changes to them, were used to measure the foreign policy orientation and hierarchy of values of the respondents.

Respondents' *foreign policy orientation* was measured by three statements: "Given the current situation, what kind of relationship do you want with [the United States/the EU/Russia]?" The answers included three possible options: "a more distant relationship", "a closer relationship", and "the same relationship".

The hierarchy of values was given in the form of a preliminary list, which was prioritized by the respondent.

The Public Defender's Office has been added to the instruments that measure the reliability of key sources of information on LGBT(Q)I issues.

Right-Wing Authoritarian Scale (RWA)

As in the 2016 study to measure right-wing authoritarianism, the 2021 study used a modified version of the scale (RWA) developed by Altemeyer (Altemeyer, 1988, 1990, 1996) consisting of 20 statements. The scale measures submission to authority, conventionalism (i.e., rigidity of changes in traditions and social norms), and authoritarian aggression (i.e., support for aggression and the use of force against individuals/groups who violate traditional social norms). Answers are rated on a Likert scale from -4 (strongly disagree) to +4 (strongly agree). The answer to the 10 reverse wording questions was replaced by the opposite score. As a result, the minimum score can be 20 and the maximum 180. The average score was calculated according to the total scores of the respondents. Respondents who refused to respond to more than five statements, or found it difficult to respond, were excluded from the index. If the respondent found it difficult to respond to fewer than five statements or refused, the omitted statements were given the average score of the rest of their statements.

Religiosity

Instead of the 2016 study's scale of religious fundamentalism, which we used to measure the impact of religiosity on homo/bi/transphobia, three questions were introduced that show the different dimensions of the respondent's religiosity: self-identification as religious, attitudes on the importance of religion in daily life, attendance at religious services, and frequency of private religious practices. A religiosity index was developed based on factor analysis as part of the research.⁴⁴

⁴⁴ The rule for developing the index is described in detail in the relevant chapter.

Attitudes toward gender roles and equality

As in the 2016 study, a set of questions was used to measure respondents' attitudes toward gender roles and equality, based on the International Men and Gender Equality Survey (IMAGES) questionnaire, which, in turn, was contextually adapted based on findings from two related studies conducted in 2014 and 2019, respectively: "Men and Gender Relationships in Georgia" (UNFPA) and "Men, Women, and Gender Relations in Georgia: Public Perceptions and Attitudes" (UNDP and UNFPA). The block consists of 11 statements, which are measured using a four-point Likert scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 4 (strongly agree).

Three statements were removed from the 2016 version that showed no connection to any form of prejudice ("Today, the struggle for equality between women and men only benefits the rich"; "For a man, it's more important to have a male friend than a female"; and "Women usually deserve to be beaten more than men"). Two statements were added to the new version: "Feminists and women's human rights activists are valued for their courage"; and "Higher education is more important for a boy than for a girl."

Knowledge, stereotypes, and myths about homosexuality

As the questionnaire was accompanied by a note explaining the meaning of the terms, only the extent to which respondents knew the etiology of homosexuality was widely checked in terms of knowledge. The statements were selected based on a combination of different questionnaires: The Knowledge about Homosexuality Questionnaire developed by Harris, Nightengale and Owen (1995); and the Haslam Essentialist Belief Scale (Haslam et al., 2000, 2002). The number of questions was kept to a minimum. Some of them were transferred to a separate block that deals with the myths about LGBT(Q)I people in society. A five-point Likert scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) was used

to evaluate the statements. The higher the score, the stronger and more the solid stereotype/myth.

Statements related to the aggressive behavior of lesbian, gay, and transgender people were added to stereotypes related to gender inversion. New statements were added to the list of statements used in 2016 that refer to myths related to the LGBT(Q)I group. These new statements were selected based on the media monitoring reports⁴⁵ conducted between 2016 and 2020 and the results of the focus groups.

The myths selected based on media monitoring reports are analyzed in the relevant chapter as separate statements. To check the effect on homo/bi/transphobia, the general variables obtained from factor analysis were used in the regression model.

Contact/acquaintance with a member of the LGBT(Q)I community

The tool used to measure personal contact/acquaintance with a member of the LGBT(Q)I group remained unchanged. The block included questions about an acquaintance's sexual identity, distance, frequency of relationship, and source of the information about an acquaintance's sexual identity. Respondents were asked whether they had a homosexual acquaintance (answers were presented as a dichotomous variable: yes/no). For those who answered affirmatively to the question, we asked for the number of such acquaintances. After that, we asked the respondent to name the identities of the first five acquaintances. After naming the five, respondents were asked three questions: what these people's relationship were to them (e.g., family member, friend, relative, neighbor, acquaintance, etc.); how often they interacted with them (e.g., daily, several times a week, several times a month, several times in six months, several times a year, or more rarely); and how they found out about each person's sexual orientation/gender identity (e.g., "He/she told me", "I figured it out by myself"). The recording was made while processing the data (see the relevant chapter for details).

⁴⁵ Media Development Foundation, *Anti-Western Propaganda*. Media monitoring reports for 2016-2020.

Attitudes toward LGBT(Q)I people

Attitudes Toward Lesbians and Gay Men Scale (ATLG)

As in the study conducted in 2016, a shortened version of the ATLG scale (ATLG-R, Revised Short Version #1) of Herek (1988) was used to measure homophobia.⁴⁶ In this version of the scale, subscales (ATG-R-S5, ATL-R-S5) include identical questions that not only allowed us to measure attitudes toward lesbians and gays separately but also were fully comparable even with each other (Herek and McLemore, 2011).

The scale consists of 10 questions (five statements on attitudes toward homosexual women and five toward men). The scale is measured on a five-point Likert scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The minimum possible score is 10, and the maximum is 50; for the respective subscales, the minimum score is 5, and the maximum is 25. The higher the score, the stronger the negative mood. When calculating the index, four reverse wording questions (two in each subscale) were replaced by scores with opposite scores, and the scores obtained were summed for each respondent; then, the average score of the respondents was calculated. When deriving the subscale index, respondents who refused to answer more than one of the five statements given, or had difficulty scoring, were not taken into account when deriving the index. In case the respondent did not have a response to just one of the five statements, this statement was given the average score of the remaining four responses and was calculated accordingly.

Attitudes toward bisexual women and men (ARBS-FM)

As in the study from 2016, to measure attitudes toward bisexuals, the ARBS-FM scale was used (Mohr and Rochlen, 2009). The scale consists of 18 questions

and is divided into two subscales, one of which measures stability – ARBS-FM Stability (10 questions) – and determines whether bisexuality is considered as a stable sexual orientation. The second subscale (8 questions) measures the level of public acceptance of bisexual people – ARBS Tolerance. The scale is measured on a five-point Likert scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The minimum possible score for ARBS-FM is 18, and the maximum is 90. For the respective subscales, the minimum score for ARBS-FM Stability is 10, and the maximum is 50, while the minimum score for ARBS Tolerance is 8, and the maximum is 40. The higher the score, the stronger the negative attitude.

The answer to the four reverse wording questions was replaced by opposite scores, and the scores obtained were summed for each respondent. Then the average score of the respondents was calculated. Respondents who refused to answer more than 4 of the 18 statements, or found it difficult to answer, were not taken into account when calculating the index. In other cases, the missed statements were given the average score of the remaining statements.

To measure biphobia toward bisexual women and men, Mohr and Rochlen also developed two independent scales: ARBS-F (Attitudes Toward Bisexual Women) and ARBS-M (Attitudes Toward Bisexual Men). Both scales each consist of 12 questions. Due to the volume of the entire questionnaire, we were unable to use these scales in the study. However, to get an overview, since 9 of the 18 ARBS-FM regulations apply to bisexual men and 9 to bisexual women, we also calculated the indexes separately for each.

Attitudes toward transgender people: GTS (Genderism and Transphobia Scale)

As in the study from 2016, the Genderism and Transphobia Scale (GTS) (Hill and Willoughby, 2005) was used to measure attitudes toward trans-

⁴⁶ The full version of the scale (ATLG) consists of 20 questions (10 for lesbians and 10 for gays). The short version strongly correlates with the shortened version (e.g., $r_s > 0.95$ ATL and ATG for short and shortened, respectively).

gender and gender-nonconforming people. The GTS was chosen not only for its size but also for its inclusiveness: it measures attitudes toward transgender and gender-nonconforming people. The scale consists of 32 questions and two subscales, one of which measures the behavioral component (GTS gender bashing) while the other measures the cognitive and affective components (GTS genderism and transphobia). The scale is measured on a seven-point Likert scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). The higher the score, the stronger the negative mood. Out of 30 statements on the GTS,⁴⁷ the scores for four questions were replaced by opposite scores, and the scores obtained were summed for each respondent; then the average score of the respondents was calculated. Respondents who refused to respond to more than five statements, or found it difficult to respond, were excluded from the index. If the respondent found it difficult to respond to five or fewer statements or refused, the omitted statements were given the average score of the remaining answered statements.

Attitude and awareness of LGBT(Q)I groups' rights issues

As in the study conducted in 2016, this block includes statements on marriage, adoption, employment in education, and assembly/expression rights. The block consists of 11 statements measured on a five-point Likert scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

The statement related to the state's response to the reality of violence against LGBT(Q)I people was added to the block of questions about rights: "The state responds to incidents of violence and discrimination against LGBT(Q)I people appropriately".

Two questions related to adoption for homosexual couples and employment in the education sector were broken down into several questions. In particular, the

statement in the 2016 questionnaire "A homosexual couple should have the same right to adopt a child as a heterosexual couple" was divided into two statements: "A gay couple should have the same right to adopt a child as a heterosexual couple" and "A lesbian couple should have the same right to adopt a child as a heterosexual couple". The statement "Homosexuals should not have the right to work with children and adolescents" was divided into three statements, which allows us to assess whether the attitude of the respondents differs in terms of gender/gender identity: "Gays should not have the right to work with children and adolescents", "Lesbians should not have the right to work with children and adolescents", and "Transgender people should not have the right to work with children and adolescents".

Due to the specific attitude toward the issue of freedom of assembly and expression and the context in the country, the Georgian Orthodox Church declared May 17 to be "Family Purity Day" in 2014, and it is celebrated annually with a public procession. A separate question was added to the questionnaire to assess the attempt to replace IDAHO with Family Purity Day. The question was formulated as follows: "What do you associate the celebration of May 17 with?" The respondent had to choose the answer from the provided list: "Family Purity Day", "The Day against Homophobia", "Both", or "None".

Attitudes toward the integration of sexuality education in school curriculums, sexual behavior, and public display of affection

The questionnaire used in 2016 was updated with questions that measure respondents' attitudes toward sexuality education issues and public display of affection.

The respondents were asked whether they agree with the integration of human sexuality issues in school education (as a dichotomous variable: yes/no).

⁴⁷ In the Georgian version, two questions were removed that the group of researchers considered irrelevant to our context.

In the case of an affirmative answer, we specified the respondents' opinion on whether the subject should cover issues related to sexual orientation/gender identity (yes/no answers) and, in their opinion, who should provide this the information to adolescents (suggested options: teacher, specialist, doctor, etc.).

Attitudes toward public display of affection were measured by a set of statements addressed to heterosexual and homosexual couples: "How acceptable is it for you when a man and a woman/a gay couple/a lesbian couple walk hand in hand in the street" and "kiss each other in public"). The statement was evaluated using a five-point Likert scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

Two pairs of questions were asked about attitudes toward female/male behavior in heterosexual relationships: "How acceptable is it for you when a married man/woman has sexual relations with someone other than his/her spouse?" and "How acceptable is it for you when an unmarried man/woman has a sexual partner?" The statement was evaluated using a five-point Likert scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

Three questions addressed the respondent's perception of sex, formulated as follows: (a) "The main purpose of sex is the birth/reproduction of children"; (b) "The main purpose of sex is to get pleasure"; and (c) "The main purpose of sex is to satisfy one's main physiological need". The statements were evaluated using a five-point Likert scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

Additional block

The main block of the questionnaire was accompanied by a one-page questionnaire about the respondent's sexual self-identification, behavior, and experience, which the respondent voluntarily filled in independently and handed to the interviewer in a tablet and/or sealed envelope.

General questions on respondents' **sexual experiences** included the following: "Have you ever had sex?" (yes/no); "Did you have sex before the age of

18?" (yes/no); and "Have you had sex with a casual partner?" (never; once; more than once; including in the preceding two years). The rest of the questionnaire was about the respondent's sexual and gender identity and experience, and it covered such issues as the respondent's **sexual attraction**: "Who are you more attracted to as a sexual partner?" (only females; more females than males; only males; more males than females; I have never felt sexually attracted to anyone at all). Depending on the gender of the respondent, the extreme answers were recoded as "Only or mostly same-sex partners" or "Only or mostly opposite-sex partners". **Sexual behavior** in the preceding two years was also covered (only with a female partner; mostly with a female partner; with both sex partners; mostly with a male partner; only with a male partner; I haven't had sex with anyone). Depending on the gender of the respondent, the extreme answers were recoded as "Only or mostly with same-sex partners" or "Only or mostly with opposite-sex partners". **Sexual self-identification** was covered with the question "Which of the following best describes your sexual orientation?" (only one answer is allowed: heterosexual (attracted to the opposite sex); bisexual (attracted to both sexes); homosexual (attracted to the same sex); other (*please specify*); I haven't found out yet). **Gender self-reflection** had the respondents complete the statement "You perceive yourself as" (woman; man; other (*please specify*); haven't found out yet). **Gender expression** was covered as follows: "Appearance, style, or dress affects the attitude of those around a person. How do you think people around you perceive your appearance and style?" (only one answer is allowed: They think I'm very feminine; they think I'm more feminine than masculine; they think I am both masculine and feminine; they think I'm more masculine than feminine; they think I am very masculine). Depending on the gender of the respondent, the responses were recoded as "cisgender", "gender-nonconforming" or "gender-neutral". **In the case of self-identification as a member of an LGBT(Q)I group, the experience of coming out** was covered by

the question “If you belong to the LGBT(Q)I group, have you told others about it?” (I have talked about it publicly using media (social networks, TV, print and online publications, etc.); I’ve told my family members, relatives, classmates/fellow students, and/or a friend; other (*please specify*); I haven’t told anyone).

Selection of field staff and training

Due to the sensitivity of the research topic and the specifics of the target audience, the interviewers were selected based on special competencies. Each selected interviewer had several years of experience working on similar issues, and those interviewers who had to conduct interviews with Armenian- or Azerbaijani-speaking populations possessed relevant language competencies. Taking into account the 10 regions of Georgia, the number of field staff was 59 people. Among them, 10 were regional supervisors and 48 were interviewers.

Training of the field staff was carried out according to a pre-designed plan by a working group involved in the development of research tools and methodology through the online platform Zoom and lasted for five days.

Testing/piloting research tools

After the training of the field staff, the research tools were tested. That process revealed several technical errors, and appropriate adjustments were made to the research tools. Unlike the study conducted in 2016, the study in 2021 was conducted using tablet computers, so it became necessary to technically adapt the questionnaire into an electronic version. The electronic version of the questionnaire was prepared on the electronic portal of the app ODK Collect.

Sampling design

According to the purposes and objectives of the study, two-stage stratified-cluster sampling was chosen. The Population Census Database of 2014 was

used as the sampling frame. The first sampling unit (SU1) was the census district, and the secondary sampling unit (SU2) was the household address. The function of stratification was to reduce sampling errors. The region and the type of the settlement were defined as stratifying variables. A total of 20 strata were allocated.

Quotas

The sampling procedure was based on the sampling model of the study conducted in 2016, which provided the basis for introducing quotas under the following conditions:

- Tbilisi: no fewer than 400 respondents;
- Other urban population (city or small town): no fewer than 400 respondents;
- Rural population: no fewer than 400 respondents;
- Representatives of ethnic minorities: no fewer than 400 respondents; among them, at least 200 ethnic Armenians and no fewer than 200 ethnic Azerbaijanis.

After the database was created, the data were weighted according to the general set of parameters.

Stages of the sampling

At the initial stage of sampling:

1. 400 respondents were selected in the capital and distributed proportionally according to the districts of Tbilisi;
2. 400 respondents were selected in the urban settlements of the regions and distributed proportionally according to the size of the urban settlements;
3. 500 respondents were selected in the rural settlements of the regions, which were distributed proportionally to the rural populations of the regions.

The second stage of sampling was carried out according to the first stage after the completion of the fieldwork to meet the quotas.

Based on the criterion of “design effect” scarcity, the number of respondents interviewed in the census precincts (clusters) was determined by five respondents.

Areas in the strata were selected using the method of probability proportional to size (PPS).

After selecting the clusters, one address in each cluster was selected as the cut-off point. The cut-off point was given to the interviewer in advance. The step was for every eighth family from the cut-off point in the right direction. The interviewer turned in every right direction, returning from the lane, continuing to move in the right direction, following the traffic rules in the alleys, and leaving out uninhabited areas. Those households where the patrons visit only for leisure or on weekends have not taken into account the steps and were left aside. For households where the patrons were absent from home during the fieldwork, interviewers returned three times, as well as three times they returned to a place where a potential household respondent, according to the date of birth, was not at home. In case there was no answer (the interviewer after three attempts could not contact the household, or contacted the family, but could not meet the selected household member, or the household member did not want to or could not participate in the survey), the interviewer did not change the step and continued to search for the eighth household. The counting of the buildings started from the extreme right entrance as a starting point, and the household was chosen according to the “right door from the stairs” principle. In the case of a so-called Italian courtyard, the building was similarly counted from the right flats. etc. In the case of a village too, the interviewer selected households in the right direction according to the **step**. Starting from the **cut-off point**, the survey was performed until the object specified in the cluster was covered. **Respondents at the selected address** were identified based on the principle of the nearest birthday.

Weighting and weights in the case of cluster sampling:

Indicators:

N_i – the number of objects in the i stratum from the selection frame

N_{ik} – the number of objects in the k cluster of the i stratum from the selection frame

P_{ik} – the probability of being selected in the k cluster of the i stratum

P_{iku} – the probability of being selected as object in the k cluster of the i stratum

K_i – the number of qualifying clusters in the i stratum

n_{ik} – the number of objects to be selected in the k cluster of the i stratum

$n_i = \sum_{k=1}^n n_{ik}$ – the number of objects to be selected in the i stratum

n'_{ik} – the number of objects selected in the k cluster of the i stratum

$n'_i = \sum_{k=1}^n n'_{ik}$ – the number of objects selected in the i stratum

$P'(u|ik) - u (u=1,2,3,...,N_{ik})$ – the probability that u object will participate in the study

The **first stage** of cluster sampling was carried out by the SSP method. In the database from which the clusters were selected, each cluster is placed as many times as there are objects in that cluster, so the probability of being selected in the k cluster of the stratum, or P_{ik} , was determined by the following formula:

$$P_{ik} = K_i \frac{N_{ik}}{N_i} \quad (1)$$

In the **second stage**, from the selected stratum n_{ik} , a random number of the objects were selected.

The probability of $u (u=1,2,3,...,N_{ik})$ object being selected within the k cluster of the i stratum:

$$P(u|ik) = \frac{n_{ik}}{N_{ik}} \quad (2)$$

When selecting a respondent in a cluster, there is a likelihood that he or she will refuse to participate in the selection. $P'(u|ik)$ indicates the probability that the selected object will participate in the survey. Accordingly:

$$P(u|ik) = \frac{n_{ik}}{N_{ik}} \times P'(u|ik) \quad (3)$$

If $P'(u|ik)$ is not dependent on the personal information of object, then for the probability of $P'(u|ik)$:

$$P'(u|ik) \approx \frac{n'_{ik}}{n_{ik}} \quad (4)$$

Accordingly, the probability of participation of u object in the selection is determined by the formula:

$$\begin{aligned} P_{iku} &= P_{ik} \times P(u|ik) = \left(K_i \frac{N_{ik}}{N_i} \right) \left(\frac{n_{ik}}{N_{ik}} \right) P'(u|ik) = \\ &= \left(K_i \frac{N_{ik}}{N_i} \right) \left(\frac{n_{ik}}{N_{ik}} \right) \left(\frac{n'_{ik}}{n_{ik}} \right) = K_i \frac{n'_{ik}}{n_{ik}} \quad (5) \end{aligned}$$

While the weight of the (iku) object is determined by the following formula:

$$\begin{aligned} W_{iku} &= \frac{1}{P_{iku}} = \left(\frac{N_i}{K_i n_{ik}} \frac{n_{ik}}{n'_{ik}} \right) \times \left(\frac{n_{ik}}{n'_{ik}} \frac{1}{P'(u|ik)} \right) = \\ &= \frac{N_i}{K_i n'_{ik}} \times W_{iku}^{kor} = \frac{N_i}{K_i n'_{ik}} \quad (6) \end{aligned}$$

where

$$W_{iku}^{kor} = \frac{n'_{ik}}{n_{ik}} \frac{1}{P'(u|ik)} \quad (7)$$

is the **weight-adjusted for non-response**, which according to formula (4) is equal to one.

In the case of simple random selection in the stratum, while $K_i = n_i$, $n'_{ik} = 1$ formula (6) will make as follows:

$$W_{iku} = \frac{N_i}{n_i} \quad (8)$$

which is the weight of stratified objects in the case of simple random selection.

And when the same number of respondents are in the clusters:

$$n'_{ik} = n_0 \Rightarrow n'_i = \sum_{K=1}^K n'_{ik} = \sum_{K=1}^K n_0 = K n_0 \quad (9)$$

Using formula (9), formula (6) will make the up:

$$W_{iku} = \frac{N_i}{K_i n'_{ik}} = \frac{N_i}{K_i n_0} = \frac{N_i}{n'_i} \quad (10)$$

As a result, each member selected in the precinct

will have the same weight. According to formula (6), in the case of cluster selection, the weight of the object iku will be W_{iku} :

$$W_{iku} = \frac{N_i}{K_i n'_{ik}} \quad (11)$$

Weight adjustment:

If each stratum of the general assembly is divided into an additional group ($s = 1, 2, 3, \dots, S$), the volume of each of these groups is known by the strata and their number is M_{is} , while n'_{iks} is the number of selected objects from the additional s group of the k cluster of the i stratum; according to formula (11), their number in the stratum equals:

$$\sum_{K=1}^S n'_{iks} W_{iku} = M'_{is} \quad (12)$$

which is different from the size of M_{is} . Respectively, adjusted individual weights are determined, i.e., weights are obtained for each individual/respondent:

$$W_{ikus} = W_{iku} \times W_{iks}^{kor}, \quad W_{iks}^{kor} = \frac{M_{is}}{M'_{is}} \quad (13)$$

Reliability and accuracy:

With a 95% reliability rate, the accuracy of the present study is 2.44%, according to the following formula:

$$e = \sqrt{\frac{z^2 pq(N-n)}{(N-1)n}}$$

Fieldwork

Fieldwork was conducted from September 27 to October 18, 2021. The survey was conducted using the face-to-face interview method. The main questionnaire was filled out by the interviewer, while the answers in the self-administered questionnaire were registered by the respondents themselves. Initially, the interviewer filled in the main questionnaire and

then asked the respondent to complete a self-administered questionnaire. The answers to the main questionnaire were recorded in the electronic questionnaire during all interviews, and the respondent could complete the self-administered questionnaire both electronically, using the tablet, and by registering the answers in the printed version. If the respondent filled in the printed questionnaire, the answers were transferred by the interviewer to the electronic questionnaire before being sent to the database. A unique number of questionnaire was used for identification.

Regional supervisors were responsible for conducting fieldwork in the regions. Field supervisors' preparatory activities included organizing and managing fieldwork, as well as conducting the initial logical control of the completed questionnaires.

Editing, processing, and analysis of the data

Since the fieldwork was carried out using questionnaires in different formats (electronic and paper-based), two systems for managing the logical control of data, the detection of possible errors, and the prevention and/or editing of errors were developed.

Control schemes were prepared from the beginning for electronic questionnaires with detailed consideration of possible errors, while for the paper questionnaires, a scheme was prepared according to which the questionnaires entered into the database were checked. Specifically, the accuracy of the input of the questionnaires entered by each interviewer was checked. While checking the paper questionnaires, incomplete or inconsistent information was checked by auditing the completed questionnaires, and unit inconsistencies were checked with field staff. In the process of verifying the accuracy of the paper questionnaires, no cases were identified that would require contacting the respondent. After completing the logical control, the database was edited – that is, “cleaned”. The computer software SPSS was used at all

stages of data processing and analysis and MS Excel for visualization of the results.

Quality assurance mechanisms

The following mechanisms were used for quality assurance:

1. The study involved a consultant conducting external monitoring.
2. The research group consisted of monitoring specialists, whose duty was to carry out observations within three days from the beginning of the fieldwork until its completion. They performed the following observations for the purpose of **sampling protection**:
 - a. GPS coordinates were checked to confirm whether they matched the area of the sampling points' coordinates. GPS coordinates were recorded at the filling-in point of the questionnaire.
 - b. The address specified by the interviewer was checked to confirm whether it matched the approximate address in the selection step.

In case of any selection errors, the interviewer was contacted, and an explanation was obtained. After receiving a positive explanation, the fieldwork continued. The questionnaires whose exact GPS coordinates could not be fixed were additionally checked by address and/or telephone call.

Telephone monitoring

About 30% of the face-to-face interviews conducted by each interviewer were checked by telephone. A total of 490 completed questionnaires were checked. Due to the sensitivity of the topic, the pre-designed monitoring telephone questionnaire included only neutral questions⁴⁸ (e.g., whether the survey was conducted or not, who participated, whether the respondent was selected following the procedure, and demographic questions).

⁴⁸ About 70% of the respondents handed over the telephone to the interviewer for monitoring purposes, on the same phone number where the monitoring group could contact them.

Ethics and security issue

Sensitive nature of the study

Attitudes toward LGBT(Q)I people are a rather sensitive topic. However, it should be noted that during the research period, this topic was at the epicenter of polarized political controversies.

As the current experience shows, however, it is possible to research such topics in families while still respecting ethics and safety issues. There is also a tendency for many people to not only express a desire to talk about relevant issues but also find such discussion necessary and useful, as in the case of a confidential and non-judgmental survey and an appropriate environment.

Informed consent and voluntary participation

Before each interview, the respondent was provided with oral information about the purpose and objectives of the study, the procedures, and the expected risks and benefits. After being informed, the interviewer asked the respondent for verbal consent to conduct the interview and then indicated in the questionnaire whether the relevant permission to conduct the interview had been obtained. In case of refusal, obviously, the interview was terminated. Verbal consent is the best international standard practice in quantitative research, complies with the requirements of the Georgian normative framework, and is also shared by ARC, the Applied Research Company. Participation in the study was voluntary and did not involve encouragement of any form.

Confidentiality

The confidentiality of the information was ensured through the following mechanisms:

- All interviewers were informed about their responsibility for the identification information of the respondent and followed the relevant norms;
- The respondent's identification information was stored separately from the questionnaires and was destroyed after the survey's completion;

- Digital codes were used for each subsequent analysis to distinguish the questionnaires;
- To protect confidentiality, the statistical analysis and presentations of research reports were monitored with the involvement of all parties conducting the research.

Physical safety of respondents and researchers

The fieldwork coincided with one of the waves of the COVID-19 pandemic, so for the safety of the respondent and the interviewer, special rules were developed: interviewers used individual means of transportation (e.g., taxis, rented cars, one's own car) as much as possible; interviewers were provided with disinfectants and personal protective equipment; and interviewers were given special training in security protection that they then applied during their communication with the respondents.

Qualitative research

Due to the qualitative methodological framework of the study, **non-random sampling** was used.

The target group of the study was the social and professional groups, which, according to researchers and experts working on the issue, are strategically important for the LGBT(Q)I community in Georgia. A targeted selection of specific groups was made, taking into account their role related to various demographic factors and public attitudes.

Data were mainly collected in Tbilisi and four regions: Adjara, Samegrelo-Zemo Svaneti, Imereti and Kakheti.

A total of 20 focus groups were conducted for the research study, in which 150 representatives of different social and professional groups participated:

No.	Location	Sampling	Number of respondents
1	Tbilisi	Community and service-provider organizations	6
2	Tbilisi	Representatives of LBQ community	6
3	Tbilisi	Representatives of GBQ community	6
4	Tbilisi	Representatives of the trans community (FtM)	7
5	Tbilisi	Representatives of the trans community (MtF)	8
6	Tbilisi and regions	Police officers	7
7	Tbilisi and regions	Employees of the Prosecutor's Office	7
8	Tbilisi and regions	Employees of the Witness and Victim Coordinator Service (under the MIA)	9
9	Tbilisi and regions	Employees of the state shelters	10
10	Tbilisi	Representatives of the health sector	6
11	Regions	Representatives of the health sector	5
12	Tbilisi	Teachers	8
13	Regions	Teachers	8
14	Tbilisi	Social workers	8
15	Regions	Social workers	8
16	Tbilisi and regions	Journalists	8
17	Batumi	Representatives of local NGOs	9
18	Kutaisi	Representatives of local NGOs	6
19	Telavi	Representatives of local NGOs	8
20	Zugdidi	Representatives of local NGOs	10
		Total	150

Secondary data were analyzed in the first phase of the study. This analysis proved to be an important guide for researchers as it formed factual knowledge for the conceptual framework of the research.

The second stage of the research was dedicated to defining the indicators of the research topic. Several underlying concepts were conceptualized and operationalized. The main variables of the study and their measurement mechanisms were identified. As a result of this work, a discussion plan was developed as the main support tool for the focus group, which included the following research questions:

- What is the state of the general public's attitudes toward the LGBT(Q)I community? How are these attitudes created? In which social envi-

ronments and groups are those attitudes viable? What is their causality like?

- What is the state of the attitudes toward the LGBT(Q)I community in strategic professionals' groups? Where and why do we see differences?
- How much is the reliable information and knowledge about gender and sexuality accessible, and what role does it play?
- Who are the main agents of change regarding overcoming homophobic attitudes, and with which strategies should they work?

The respondents were selected in the third stage of the research. This process involved the formation of different homogeneous survey groups based on the

purpose and objectives of the study. At this stage, a special group of staff was involved in the study, which was individually selected in separate groups based on a high degree of integration and trust in this particular social/professional group.

In the fourth stage of the research, 20 focus groups were conducted through the online platform Zoom, with 6-10 respondents in each group and with an average duration of 90 minutes. The focus groups were moderated by two researchers.

Informed consent

Each survey participant was briefed by recruiters on the purpose and objectives of the survey, as well as the specifics of the survey, including the fact that a video recording of the discussion would be made. In addition, most of the groups, other than those whose official authority conflicted with this form of cooperation, were provided with information on the amount of the monetary incentive and the payment procedure.

Taking into account all of these aspects, if the potential respondents provided their verbal consent, they were included in the list of participants, and a link to the online discussion was sent to them. However, both participation and commenting on various issues during the study discussion were voluntary.

Confidentiality

As already mentioned, a video recording of each discussion was prepared as part of the research. Only the research group had access to the existing records, in particular three people: two researchers and one trusted contractor who prepared detailed transcripts with the researchers. As was the case with the researchers, the contractor was bound by confidentiality and non-disclosure obligations. The videos were deleted from all electronic devices as soon as the transcripts were prepared. In addition, before the processing of the raw material, all data were anonymized; in particular, all identifying marks/data of the respondents were deleted or generalized in the existing transcripts.

Research limitations

Due to the spread of COVID-19, the focus groups were conducted through the platform Zoom. While online surveys are often a convenient, safe, and fast way for a research project to gather data, face-to-face interaction with the respondent in the physical space is an important determinant of a successful interview. The environment, tone of voice, body language, emotional reactions and other non-verbal signs are important for the quality of the interview and its analysis, making the physical environment more visible to the researcher. Consequently, online interviews, on the one hand, made the data-collection process more flexible but, on the other hand, made it more difficult for researchers to observe respondents and analyze non-verbal data.

V. QUANTITATIVE RESEARCH RESULTS

5.1. Socio-demographic characteristics

Characterization of respondents by gender, place of residence, and age group

In total, 1,610 respondents participated in the survey. Of them, 29.3% are residents of the capital, 28.0% are residents of other urban settlements, and 42.7% are residents of rural settlements.⁴⁹

Table #1
Distribution of the respondents, by region

Region	%
Tbilisi	29.3
Imereti	14.8
Kvemo Kartli	11.0
Samegrelo-Zemo Svaneti	9.3
Adjara	8.8
Kakheti	8.7
Shida Kartli	7.1
Samtskhe-Javakheti	4.3
Guria	3.2
Mtskheta-Mtianeti	2.6
Racha-Lechkhumi and Kvemo Svaneti	1.0

In all, 53.7% of respondents are women, and 46.3% are men. Among the possible answers were “inter-sex” and “other”; however, these categories are represented with zero frequencies (there were no cases of them being cited).

Table #2
Distribution of the respondents, by age group

Age group	%
18-24	12.7
25-34	18.7
35-44	17.2
45-54	17.8
55-64	15.5
65+	18.2

Ethnicity and religious affiliation

Only two respondents did not indicate their ethnic identity. One refused to answer, while the other found it difficult to determine their ethnic identity. The general picture of the distribution according to ethnic identity is shown in table #3.

Table #3
Distribution of the respondents, by ethnic self-identification⁵⁰

Ethnicity	%
Georgian	73.2
Armenian	13.1
Azerbaijani	12.7
Other	0.9
Refuse to answer	0.1
Difficult to answer	0.1

⁴⁹ Semi-urban type of settlement (“daba”) is integrated with the urban-type settlements.

⁵⁰ Table #3 presents the weightless data considering the quotas. However, it should be noted that ethnic identity is one of the variables according to which the data were weighted according to the parameters of the general population.

The vast majority of respondents, 88.5%, answered that he/she is an Orthodox Christian; 2.3%, a representative of the Gregorian/Armenian Apostolic Church; 7.0%, a Muslim; and 2.0%, the total share of the remaining answers.

Table #4
Distribution of the respondents, by religious affiliation

Religious affiliation	%
Orthodox Christian	88.5
Muslim	0.4
Apostolic	2.3
Catholic	7.0
Nonbeliever	0.4
Other	0.4
Refuse to answer	1.0

Education and employment

The distribution of respondents based on education is bimodal. The groups with the highest frequencies are the respondents with general (43.3%) and higher education (34.9%).⁵¹ 4.4% indicated incomplete general education, 16.3% - professional education, other – 1.1%.

In total, 44.1% of respondents are employed. Slightly more than a third of them (34%) work full-time or part-time, while 10.1% are self-employed.

Moreover, 20.3% of respondents are unemployed, 18.3% are pensioners who do not work, 10.3% are housewives, and 4.4% are students who do not work.

The majority of employed respondents, 70.7%, work in the private sector and 25.6% in the public sector. A small proportion of respondents are employed in the non-governmental sector (2.6%) and in international organizations (0.1%).

Family-related settings

More than half of the respondents, 57.7%, are married; 23.2% of the respondents have never been married; 13.1% are widowed; and 5% are separated. The divorce rate is 0.9%. Only one respondent is living with a partner.

Moreover, 43.6% of respondents live with at least one family member (child or adolescent) under the age of 18.

The self-assessment of families' economic situation reveals a rather worrying socio-economic background: the most numerous group (42.4%) are those respondents whose family income is sufficient for food and clothing but not for household goods, while 26.9% indicate that their household income is just enough to buy products. According to the answers of 15.2% of the respondents, they can hardly afford to buy products for their families. In 14.3% of cases, the family income is enough to buy goods, clothes and household products, but to buy real estate or movable property, they would need to save or borrow money; their affirmative response to the statement "We can afford to buy whatever we want anytime" is only 0.9%.

The percentage of respondents who, while assessing the economic situation of their family, say that they only need to borrow or save money to buy a car or an apartment or that they can buy everything is almost equal across settlement types (in Tbilisi, other cities, and rural areas) and ranges from 13.4% to 16%. However, the ratio of the respondents who assess their situation as severe or extremely severe ("We hardly have any money to buy food" or "We have money to buy food, but we have to save or take out a loan to buy apparel or shoes") is almost twice as high in urban and rural areas as it is in the capital.

⁵¹ The answer "other" mainly includes the cases where, due to multiple changes in the education system in Georgia or due to having received their education abroad, the respondents found it difficult to specify their level of education.

Respondents' sexual behavior and self-identification

The main block of the questionnaire was accompanied by a one-page questionnaire about the respondent's sexual self-identification, attraction and behavior, which the respondent voluntarily filled in independently and handed to the interviewer in a sealed tablet and/or envelope. The frequency of both the response "I do not want to answer" and the unanswered questions makes us think that respondents find it difficult to answer questions about their own sexuality, even under conditions of confidentiality.

Answers to questions about sexual activity and experience vary considerably according to gender and age group. When asked "Have you ever had sexual intercourse during your lifetime?", 88.2% of the respondents answered affirmatively, 7.9% negatively, and 3.9% refrained from answering.

The majority of respondents who answered the question negatively are females aged 18-24.

More than half of the respondents did not have sex before the age of 18 (59%), 9.5% refused to answer, and 0.3% found it difficult to answer. About a third of the respondents (31.1%) answered the question affirmatively. The distribution of answers shows a significant asymmetry in terms of gender: 83.5% of female respondents answered the question negatively, while only a third of male respondents said they had their first sexual experience after the age of 18.

Only 27.2% of respondents reported having sex with a casual partner (13.7% of respondents refused to answer), while 59% answered the question negatively. The redistribution of answers differs by the gender of respondents: specifically, 88.8% of females answered the question negatively while only 29.9% of male respondents found that they had never had sexual intercourse with an casual partner.

Characteristics of sexuality

Human sexuality is a multidimensional quantity whose individual components are interrelated but not interdependent. The gender assigned to a person at birth may not correspond to his/her gender identity or gender self-expression; sexual attraction toward another person is not always reflected in sexual behavior. In turn, homosexual behavior and/or attraction to the same sex is not automatically "translated" into sexual self-identification.

Sexual attraction

In all, 14.9% of the respondents refused to answer the question of who they are more attracted to as a sexual partner. Of the remaining 1,370 respondents, 95.4% indicated that they were only or mostly attracted to an opposite-sex partner; 0.8% answered that they are attracted to no one; and the same number of respondents found it difficult to answer the question.

Sexual behavior

When asked who they have had sex with within the preceding two years, 17.3% of respondents left the question unanswered, 82.3% indicated that they had had sex with an opposite-sex partner, 15.7% had had no such experience at all, 1.2% indicated that they had mostly or only had a relationship with a same-sex partner, and one respondent had had it with both a woman and a man, while 0.8% found it difficult to answer the question.

Sexual orientation

A total of 1,441 respondents answered the question about the term that best described their sexual orientation (10.5% of respondents left the question unanswered). Of them, 96.3% described their orientation as heterosexual, two respondents (0.2%) indicated "bisexual", four (0.3%) indicated "homosexual", and 46 (3.2%) found it difficult to answer the question or indicated that they "haven't found out yet".

Cross-tabulation analysis shows that the relationship between sexual attraction and sexual behavior

is statistically closer in the male group than in the female group,⁵² which may indicate that men are more inclined to express their erotic feelings through their behavior than women. As for the relationship between behavior and sexual self-identification, it is statistically significant in the group of men, but not for women.⁵³ Unfortunately, without analyzing socio-cultural context, the scarcity of data, does not allow for discussing existed substantial incongruity between the dimensions of sexual orientation by respondents sex.

Gender expression

In all, 7.2% of respondents left a question about gender expression unanswered. Of those who answered the question about how their appearance and style are perceived by those around them, 95.7% described their expression as gender conforming, 2.3% found it difficult to answer the question, 1.5% answered that they look gendernonconforming, and 0.5% look gender neutral.

Gender self-perception

Of the 1,588 respondents who answered the question about gender self-perception, 97.7% indicated that their gender self-perception corresponded to their gender assigned at birth, 16 respondents (1%) identified themselves as the opposite gender, and 1.2% found it difficult to answer the question.

5.2. Value orientation and characteristics

Hierarchy of values

- As in the study of 2016, “the family” unequivocally dominates as a priority value among the others, while “human rights” and “freedom of speech” occupy the last position in the hierarchy of values.

- Overall, compared to 2016, the priority value of family, homeland, and religion has decreased. Society gave more priority to health, financial well-being, friends, and social connections. These changes can be partly explained by the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and anti-crisis measures on the population’s health and socio-economic status.
- Compared to the data from 2016, according to the integrated index of the three highest ranked values, the share of respondents who named religion in the top three has almost halved (from 63% to 35.7%).
- Although “human rights” and “freedom of speech” are the most rarely mentioned in the top three, their priority value has increased compared to 2016 in all age groups. This change is most pronounced in the first age group: in 2016, only 3% of respondents in the 18-24 age group named “human rights” as a value in the top three, while in 2021, the share of such respondents in the same age group was 15.2%.

To explore value orientations, respondents had to rank the ten-item list, assigning a position to each value starting from the first to the tenth.

According to the results, the family is unequivocally dominant as a priority value among other values, while health was also noted with particular frequency. The statistics of the other values lag significantly behind these two.

52 For male respondents, chi-square = 934.493, $df = 6$, $p = 0.000$. For female respondents, chi-square = 139.934, $df = 6$, $p = 0.000$.

53 For male respondents, chi-square = 934.493, $df = 6$, $p = 0.000$. For female respondents, chi-square = 139.934, $df = 6$, $p = 0.000$.

Table #5

Frequency distribution of values, by top priority, 2016 and 2021

Values	First position (%)	
	2016	2021
Family	70.1	59.7
Health	11.5	23.3
Homeland	8.4	5.3
Religion	8.0	3.5
Financial well-being	0.3	2.3
Friends and social relations	0.2	1.9
Career	0.2	1.8
Human rights	0.4	1.0
Traditions	0.7	0.9
Freedom of speech	0.3	0.3

Compared to 2016, the first four positions (family, health, homeland, religion) remained the same in terms of rankings. However, a smaller proportion of respondents named family, homeland, and religion as the priority, while health was the opposite – almost twice as many respondents indicated it as the highest priority. According to the 2016 data, only 2% of respondents named other values as the priorities. In 2021, the picture changed, relatively speaking, with respect to other values: apart from freedom of speech, which was named by 0.3% in both 2016 and 2021, a relatively higher percentage of respondents named financial well-being, friends and social ties, career, human rights, and traditions as the priorities.

The picture obtained from the integrated data of the first three positions (first, second, or third places) is maintained, and the main trends of the first-place indicators are maintained; however, there is some small-scale shift between the values presented at relatively low frequencies. Namely, religion is represented more frequently than homeland, and the frequency of traditions has exceeded similar rates of career and human rights.

Table #6

Frequency distribution of values, by the first three priorities, 2016 and 2021

Values	First three positions (%)	
	2016	2021
Family	95.9	90.9
Health	48.8	63.1
Religion	63.0	35.7
Homeland	48.0	33.9
Financial well-being	14.9	32.8
Friends and social relations	4.3	13.3
Traditions	15.6	10.9
Career	3.4	9.2
Human rights	3.9	7.1
Freedom of speech	2.9	3.1

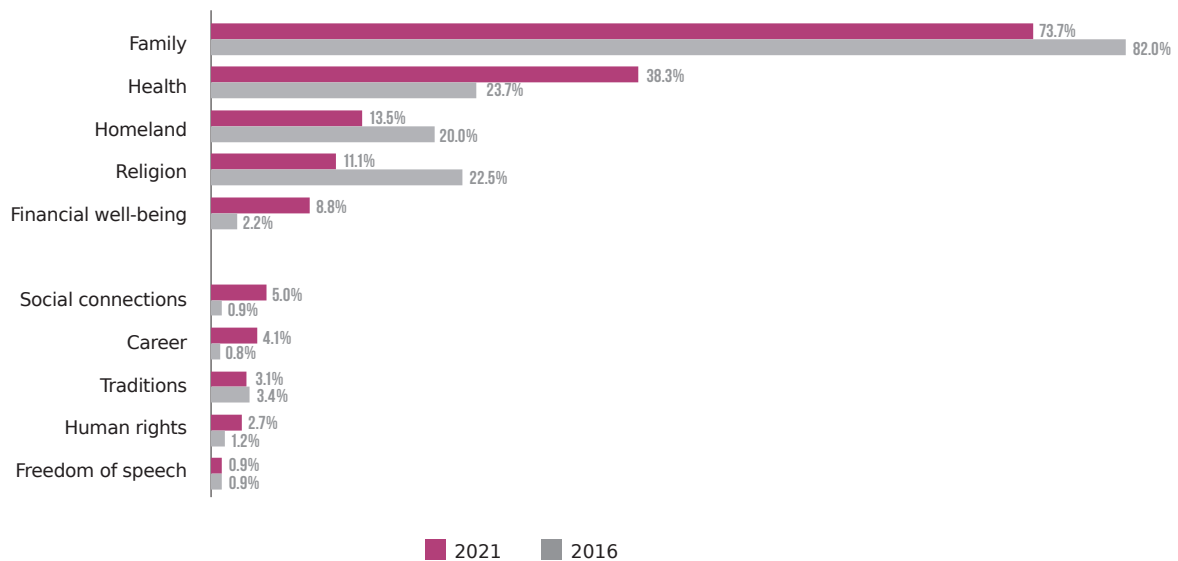
Compared to the data from 2016, according to the integrated index of the first three positions, the share of respondents who named religion in the top three has sharply decreased. The same tendency is observed regarding “tradition” and “homeland”. Changes in the ranking in terms of health, career, and financial well-being are almost equally reflected in the first three age groups, while a sharp change is observed only in the youngest age group in terms of prioritizing human rights and freedom of speech. In 2016, “human rights” and “freedom of speech” in the 18-24 age group were named among the first three priorities by 3% and 5.6% of respondents, respectively. According to the data from 2021, 15.2% and 9.3% named them.

The difference between the frequencies of the first position and integrated indicators of the first three positions is so small that it may be coincidental, but to study the matter more in detail, a coefficient was formed using a geometric average⁵⁴ combining both the first position and the first three positions.

54 $K1 = (P1 \times Q1)^{1/2}$, where P1 is the relative priority of the priority, and Q1 is the relative index of the denomination in the first three.

Figure #2

Frequency distribution of values, by the geometric mean of the first three positions, 2016 and 2021



As a whole, compared to 2016, there is a tendency to reduce the priority value of family, homeland, and religion. Society gives more priority to health, financial well-being, career, and human rights. These changes can be partly explained by the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and anti-crisis measures on the population's health and socio-economic status.

Religiosity index

- For the majority of respondents, religious beliefs are important in daily decision-making: three in five respondents (61.8%) answer that religious beliefs are very important or important, while almost every third respondent (28.1%) finds them somewhat important.
- Despite the high importance given to religious beliefs, the rates of religious behavior are not high: the majority of respondents attend religious services only on special holidays (39.9%) or more rarely (21.4%). Religious practices, such as prayer, meditation, reading religious literature, etc., are practiced by 39.6% of respondents once a week or more often, by 17.5% at least once a month, and by 43% more rarely or never.⁵⁵
- Respondents who consider themselves Orthodox Christians are characterized by a relatively higher index of religiosity than members of other religions/denominations.
- Excluding the 18-24 age group, female respondents are characterized by a higher degree of religiosity than male respondents. There is a difference between perceptions and practices of the

⁵⁵ As such dimensions of religiosity were not considered in the study from 2016, to show the general tendency, we used the results of the Eurobarometer study conducted in 2015 to compare the available data, in which the question is explained by: CRRC, "Caucasus Barometer 2015 Georgia". A comparison of the frequency distributions of the responses shows that the rate of attendance at religious services is characterized by a declining tendency. The report prepared by the CRRC in 2020, which analyzes data from 2008 to 2019, also shows a downward trend (see <https://www.laender-analysen.de/cad/pdf/CaucasusAnalyticalDigest116.pdf>, (March 10, 2022)).

importance of religion: even though male and female respondents place equal importance on religion in their daily decisions and attend religious services with almost equal frequency, men spend less time praying/meditating than women.

Instead of the scale of religious fundamentalism used in 2016, which we used to measure the impact of religiosity on homo/bi/transphobia, statements were used that show different dimensions of the respondent's religiosity: religious affiliation, the importance of religion in daily life, the frequency of attendance of religious services, and the frequency of private religious rituals.

Based on the variables related to religious practice, the religiosity index was formed.

In the first stage, factor analysis was performed for these variables. Factor analysis revealed that variables related to religious practice were perceived as one factor (all three variables were combined into one factor):

1. How important are religious beliefs in your daily decision-making?	.775
2. How often do you attend religious services?	.748
3. How often do you spend time on activities such as prayer and meditation...?	.818

In the second stage, using regression analysis, the religiosity index was formed based on non-standardized regression coefficients, which were normalized between 0 (minimum degree of religiosity) and 1 (maximum degree of religiosity). In the third stage, based on the religiosity index, four groups (clusters) were identified through cluster analysis, with four degrees of religiosity.

The main characteristics of the separated groups are presented in table #7.

Table #7
Degrees of religiosity

Degrees of religiosity	The average value of the index	The lower limit of the index	The upper edge of the index
Minimum degree	.3701	.23	.43
Relatively low degree	.5235	.45	.60
Relatively high degree	.6850	.60	.76
Maximum degree	.8434	.77	1.00

Moreover, the distribution of the groups is presented in table #8.

Table #8
Degrees of religiosity (percentage distribution)

Degrees of religiosity	%
Minimum degree	16.9
Relatively low degree	40.1
Relatively high degree	24.8
Maximum degree	18.2

The distribution of the average values of the religiosity index according to religious affiliation shows that respondents who consider themselves Orthodox Christians are characterized by a relatively higher degree of religiosity than those of other religions/denominations.

Table #9
Religiosity index, by religious affiliation

Religious affiliation	Religiosity index
Orthodox Christian	.6074
Apostolic	.5352
Muslim	.5123
Other	.5016

Analysis of the religiosity index according to gender and age shows that, on the whole, female respondents are characterized by a higher rate of religiosity than males (excluding the 18-24 age group).⁵⁶ The degree of religiosity increases with age and reaches a peak in the 45-55 age group for both women and men and then shows a downward tendency.

Right-wing authoritarian scale

In the study in 2021, we used the same version of the abbreviated variation of the Altemeyer-developed scale that was included in the study conducted in 2016 to measure right-wing authoritarianism.

The overall index of right-wing authoritarianism is lower than in 2016. Confirmatory factor analysis identified three factors that correspond to the three conditional clusters of the Altemeyer scale: authoritarian aggression, authoritarian submission, and conventionalism.

The first factor combines statements related to the expression of aggression toward individuals and groups who violate recognized social norms and against whom the expression of aggression is encouraged by the government officials and/or authorities. The average score of the factor is 6.5.

Item number	Statement	Index score
5	The only way our country can get through the crisis ahead is to get back to our traditional values, put some tough leaders in power, and silence the troublemakers spreading bad ideas	0.845
15	There are many radical, immoral people in our country today, who are trying to ruin it for their own godless purposes, whom the authorities should put out of action	0.834
10	The “old-fashioned ways” and the “old-fashioned values” still show the best way to live	0.832
17	Our country will be great if we honor the ways of our forefathers, do what the authorities tell us to do, and get rid of the “rotten apples” who are ruining everything	0.825
8	Our country will be destroyed someday if we do not smash the perversions eating away at our moral fiber and traditional beliefs	0.825
20	This country would work a lot better if certain groups of troublemakers would just shut up and accept their group’s traditional place in society	0.812
12	What our country really needs is a strong, determined leader who will crush evil, and take us back to our true path	0.806
3	It is always better to trust the judgment of the proper authorities in government and religion than to listen to the noisy rabble-rousers in our society who are trying to create doubt in people’s minds	0.761
14	God’s laws about abortion, pornography, and marriage must be strictly followed before it is too late, and those who break them must be strongly punished	0.755
1	Our country desperately needs a mighty leader who will do what has to be done to destroy the radical new ways and sinfulness that are ruining us	0.730

⁵⁶ $M = 0.58$ for male ($N = 726$, $SD = 0.15$), $M = 0.62$ for female ($N = 842$, $SD = 0.17$); $F(1,1566) = 20.880$, $p = 0.000$, although the effect of the difference between the averages of the groups is small, $ES = 0.013$.

The second factor mainly combined the statements related to the individual's blind submission to the au-

thorities and an uncritical attitude toward the official government. The average score of the factor is 6.12.

Item number	Statement	Index score
19	Homosexuals and feminists should be praised for being brave enough to defy "traditional family values"	0.736
13	Some of the best people in our country are those who are challenging our government, criticizing religion, and ignoring the "normal way things are supposed to be done"	0.706
4	Atheists and others who have rebelled against the established religions are no doubt every bit as good and virtuous as those who attend church regularly	0.684
7	Our country needs free thinkers who have the courage to defy traditional ways, even if this upsets many people	0.634
2	Gays and lesbians are just as healthy and moral as anybody else	0.621
11	You have to admire those who challenged the law and the majority's view by protesting for women's abortion rights, for animal rights, or to abolish school prayer	0.549
6	There is absolutely nothing wrong with nudist camps	0.526

The third factor includes only three statements, all of which address conventionalism and imply adherence to traditions and established social norms and rigidity concerning the revision or amendment of

these norms. The average score of the factor is 3.91. The low average score of the third factor allows us to conclude that these issues are less relevant to the study population.

Item number	Statement	Index score
16	A "woman's place" should be wherever she wants to be. The days when women are submissive to their husbands and social conventions belong strictly in the past	0.767
18	There is no "ONE right way" to live life; everybody has to create their own way	0.748
9	Everyone should have their own lifestyle, religious beliefs, and sexual preferences, even if it makes them different from everyone else	0.621

The other three statements of conventionalism have been subdivided into subscales of authoritarian aggression and submission ("What we call old life and old traditions is still the best way to live", "Gays and lesbians are as 'healthy' and moral as other people" and "I don't see anything wrong in

nudist camps where people go naked"). It can be said that the part of the statements related to traditions and established social norms, which are considered important by society, are integrated with the unified scheme of submission/aggression.⁵⁷

⁵⁷ The subscale of conventionalism formed as a result of factor analysis shows a moderate correlation with the subscale of authoritarian submission but not with the subscale of aggression. The subscale of obedience (second factor) correlates equally with both subscales. The subscales separated by the first and second factors are characterized by a high internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha 0.94 for authoritarian aggression and 0.79 for authoritarian obedience), which cannot be said for the third subscale. Additional analysis is needed to analyze what causes such redistribution of statements between subscales. Factor analysis was also done separately in terms of ethnicity, where the scale in ethnic minorities was divided into not three but five factors. Presumably, this affects such a distribution of factors. However, this issue needs further study.

Average rates of the first and second factors are statistically significant concerning gender. For male respondents, the average value of both factors is higher than for female respondents.

The importance of religiosity in everyday life is also closely correlated with the factors of authoritarian aggression and submission. Respondents who give high importance to the factor of religiosity in making daily decisions differ sharply in the indexes of the average importance of factors related to authoritarian aggression and submission.

Attitudes toward gender roles and equality between women and men

- Comparisons with the results of 2016 show that public attitudes tend toward less traditional approaches to gender roles and equality issues.
- Asymmetric attitudes toward the statements in terms of gender, type of settlement and ethnicity are particularly pronounced regarding the statements that reflect the gender relations in the family: women and respondents living in the capital have a higher share of supporters of marriage between men and women in society.
- Compared to those living in the capital, the proportion of respondents who believe that a woman should endure verbal and physical abuse to maintain a family is higher among the people living in rural and urban areas.
- Women, young people, rural and urban, and ethnic Georgian respondents rated the work of women's human rights activists more positively than men, the older age group, residents of the capital, and ethnic minorities.

A set of statements was used to measure the gender roles of women and men and their attitudes toward

equality, most of which were included in the study conducted in 2016.⁵⁸ Comparisons with the results from 2016 show that public attitudes became less traditional toward gender roles and equality.

The distribution of the responses shows that the tendencies identified in the survey conducted in 2019 by UNDP and UNFPA are more or less accurately maintained.⁵⁹ The changes are mainly related to the sharp decline in the popularity of the statements among female respondents and the 18-24 age group. Except for two statements ("A woman must endure physical abuse in order to preserve the family" and "It is a woman's responsibility to avoid getting pregnant"), all statements differ in terms of gender.

The gender difference is most pronounced in the statements related to the redistribution of rights and responsibilities in the family (e.g., "A man should have the final word about decisions in his home", "A woman's principal duty is to care for the family", "Changing diapers, bathing, and feeding children are primarily a mother's responsibilities"). Nearly three in five male respondents (67.3%) believe that "The final word belongs to the man of the house", while only 46.2% of female respondents think so (the difference is maintained in terms of age).

Attitudes toward the statements differ in terms of ethnicity: respondents who indicated their ethnicity as Georgian were less likely to agree with statements related to asymmetric gender relations. Ethnic Georgian respondents evaluate the activities of feminists and women's human rights defenders more positively than those of ethnic minorities (chi-square = 43.458, df = 3, $p = 0.000$). Analysis of the data according to the type of residence shows that compared to rural and urban areas, respondents who live in the capital also show a less traditional attitude. In contrast, the work of feminists and women's advocates is more positively evaluated in rural and urban areas than in

⁵⁸ The set of questions is based on the questionnaire developed in the framework of the International Men and Gender Equality Survey (IMAGES), which is also used in other studies conducted in Georgia (2014, 2019).

⁵⁹ Rakshit, D. & Levitov, R. *Men, Women, and Gender Relations in Georgia: Public Perceptions and Attitudes*. (Tbilisi: UNDP & UNFPA Georgia, 2020).

the capital (chi-square = 47.205, df = 6, $p = 0.000$).

Overall, the distribution of average scores tends to be asymmetric/unequal concerning gender roles.

As a result of the factor analysis conducted related to the study statements, three factors were identified.

The first factor, which we conventionally called the factor of “general radical gender asymmetry” because the statements combined in it express a strongly discriminatory attitude toward the role of women in various aspects of personal development and function, combined the following statements:

- “When women work, it means they deprive men of their job opportunities”;
- “Women’s empowerment means that men are deprived their rights”;
- “It is a woman’s responsibility to avoid getting pregnant”;
- “Women should endure violence in order to maintain family integrity”;
- “Higher education is more important for a boy than for a girl”.

The second factor, which is conventionally called the *family asymmetry factor*, combined the statements that mainly reflect the distribution of family roles. The integration of the statement “Equality between women and men has already been achieved” into this factor can be explained by the fact that the role of the woman as a mother caring for the family occupies one of the highest levels in the hierarchy of values within Georgian traditional culture.

- “Woman’s most important role is to take care of her home & cook”;
- “Equality between women and men has already been achieved”;
- “Changing diapers, giving a bath, and feeding kids are the mother’s responsibility”;
- “A man should have the final word about decisions in his home”;

- “To be a man, it is important to be a tough”.

The third factor included only one variable/statement: “Feminists and women’s human rights defenders are valued for their courage”. We have conventionally called this factor the *supporter of equality*.

Two statements, “A woman must endure verbal abuse to maintain a family” and “To be a man, you need to be physically strong”, were associated with none of the factors, nor were they distinguished as separate factors. The first of these shows a tendency to be associated with the first two factors, while the second tends to be associated with none of the factors.

The average score of the first factor is 1.52, while the average of the second factor is 2.48 and the third is 2.35. Such a distribution of average scores allows us to conclude that the radical gender asymmetry factor is the least acceptable for the study population, but the family asymmetry factor shows a tendency to deviate toward acceptance. Consequently, attitudes toward family roles can be considered one of the most pressing issues.

As for the fact that the statements of advocates of equality between women and men have emerged as a separate factor altogether (i.e., it matters throughout society but is not related to other, more specific statements), it may indicate the need for more detailed research of the more relevant aspects of the issue.⁶⁰

It should be noted that the average indexes of the second and third factors are statistically significant in terms of gender. Namely, the values of the second factor are lower than average in females and higher than average in males, while the average indexes of the third factor, in contrast, are higher than average in female respondents and lower than average in male respondents. Females less acknowledge the family asymmetry factor and more appreciate the work of feminists and women’s advocates than male respondents.

⁶⁰ The asymmetry in the attitudes toward feminists and women’s human rights activists is particularly evident in terms of ethnicity.

Foreign policy orientation

- Compared to the results of the study from 2016, the geopolitical orientation of the respondents is more pronounced: the share of respondents who were in favor of a distant relationship with the US and the EU has almost halved. It should be noted that this change was not directly proportional to the rate of closer relations: the share of supporters of closer relations with the US and the EU is less increased than the frequency of respondents who support the maintenance of the status quo.
- Amid the decline in the share of supporters of distanced relations with the US and the EU, the share of supporters of distanced relations with Russia has hardly changed. The share of supporters of closer relations with Russia decreased at the expense of those respondents (11%) who are in favor of maintaining the same relations.
- The desire for closer relations with both the US and the EU is highest in the 18-24 age group and lowest in respondents over the age of 65.
- Closer relations with Russia are less supported in all age groups; the lowest rate was observed in the 18-24 age group, the highest in the 65+ age group.
- Respondents living in the capital are more likely to support closer relations with the US and the EU than those living in urban and rural areas. The higher the self-assessment of the respondent's economic situation, the more he/she expresses a desire for closer relations with the United States and European Union and distant relations with Russia.
- In respondents who consider themselves Orthodox Christians, the degree of religiosity is related to the quality of relations with Russia. Respondents who want closer relations with Russia have a higher degree of religiosity than

respondents who favor similar or more distant relations.

- In terms of foreign policy orientation, there are significant differences in terms of ethnicity. Ethnic Georgians express their desire for more distant relations with Russia more clearly than representatives of ethnic minorities.

The geopolitical dimension of anti-homosexual sentiments is strongly linked to Russian disinformation and anti-Western propaganda. According to the researchers, Eastern and Central European countries, due to their geographical proximity, were particularly vulnerable to this type of propaganda (Korolczuk and Graff, 2018). A study that measured the direct impact of such instrumentalization of homosexuality on the dynamics of relations with the EU in Georgia was not conducted.⁶¹ However, recent media surveys show that the use of homosexuality to reinforce anti-Western sentiments is still an important part of homophobic rhetoric.⁶²

A study from 2016 found no association between homo/bi/transphobia and foreign policy orientation. Moreover, "cross-tabulation analysis has shown that the hierarchy of values in terms of the top five is unchanged, regardless of which external orientation the respondent chooses. It is likely that the foreign strategy is more about improving security and the economic situation for the respondents and not about value." (WISG 2016, 199)

Compared to the results of the study conducted in 2016, the geopolitical orientation of the respondents is more pronounced: the frequency of respondents who support closer relations with the US and the EU has increased. The share of supporters of closer relations with Russia has been significantly reduced; however, the number of supporters of distanced relations has hardly changed (see figure #3).

61 According to the study "Future of Georgia" conducted in 2020, 42% of respondents said that they think that Russia's anti-Western propaganda is harmful to Georgia. See: http://mikeladzefoundation.org/uploads/files/2021-05/1620724323_final-fog_geo_08_04_2021.pdf (March 10, 2022).

62 See the results of the media monitoring process conducted by the Media Development Foundation in 2017, 2018, 2019, and 2020.

Analysis of the respondents' foreign policy orientation in terms of socio-demographic variables shows that age, educational level, self-assessment of economic status, type of settlement, and ethnicity are significantly related to the foreign policy orientation of the respondents.

The desire to get closer to both the US and the EU is highest in the 18-24 age group (66.3% and 70.2%, respectively), while respondents aged 65 and over (42.5% and 41.6%) are the least enthusiastic. However, those who want to get closer to the EU are slightly more numerous in all age categories, except the 65+ group. Closer relations with Russia are less supported in all age groups; the lowest rate was observed among respondents in the 18-24 age group (13.7%), the highest in the 65+ age group (34.1%).

more he/she expresses a desire for closer relations with the United States and European Union and distant relations with Russia. A very small proportion of the capital's residents (6.6%-7.6%) support more distant relations with the US and Europe, while 50.9% of them support more distant relations with Russia.

Studies from the past decade examining attitudes toward the EU and their dynamics⁶³ also show that the idea of integration with the EU has fewer supporters among the ethnic minorities living in Georgia than among ethnic Georgian citizens.

An interesting picture emerged in the context of ethnic minorities: 44.9% of Georgian respondents are supporters of distancing themselves from Russia, while more than half want closer relations with the US and the EU (51.6% and 54.1%, respectively).

Ethnic Azerbaijani respondents were greater supporters of closer relations with the EU (57.5%) than with the US (43.1%). Almost equal is the ratio of respondents who want to maintain closer (34.9%) or existing (36.9%) relations with Russia, while fewer respondents (26%) support distanced relations.

The picture is different for ethnic Armenian re-

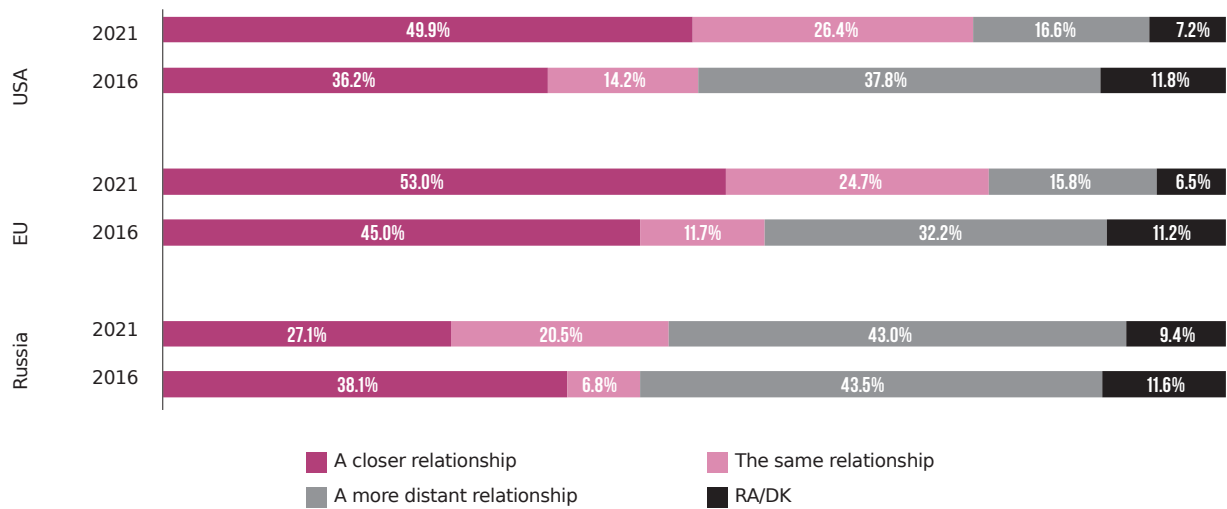
spondents. Only 16.6% of respondents support closer relations with the US, while 41.7% are supporters of a more distant relationship. With the EU, one in five want a closer relationship (22.2%), and 37.2% are in favor of a more distant relationship. As for relations with Russia, 59.2% want closer relations with Russia, 15.5% are supporters of maintaining the status quo, and 13.8% want a distanced relationship (see figure #4).

Among respondents who indicated Orthodox Christianity as their religion, the religiosity index reveals some correlation with the quality of relations with Russia, while in terms of relations with the US and the EU, the differences between the religiosity indexes are statistically insignificant. The religiosity index of those who support distant relations is the lowest, and vice versa: those who support close relations with Russia have a higher degree of religiosity than others. It can be assumed that the non-alternative narrative of rapprochement with the "same religion neighbor", which has been propagated intensively by the Georgian Orthodox Church over the past two decades, has a significant impact on the position of Orthodox believers in terms of rapprochement with Russia.

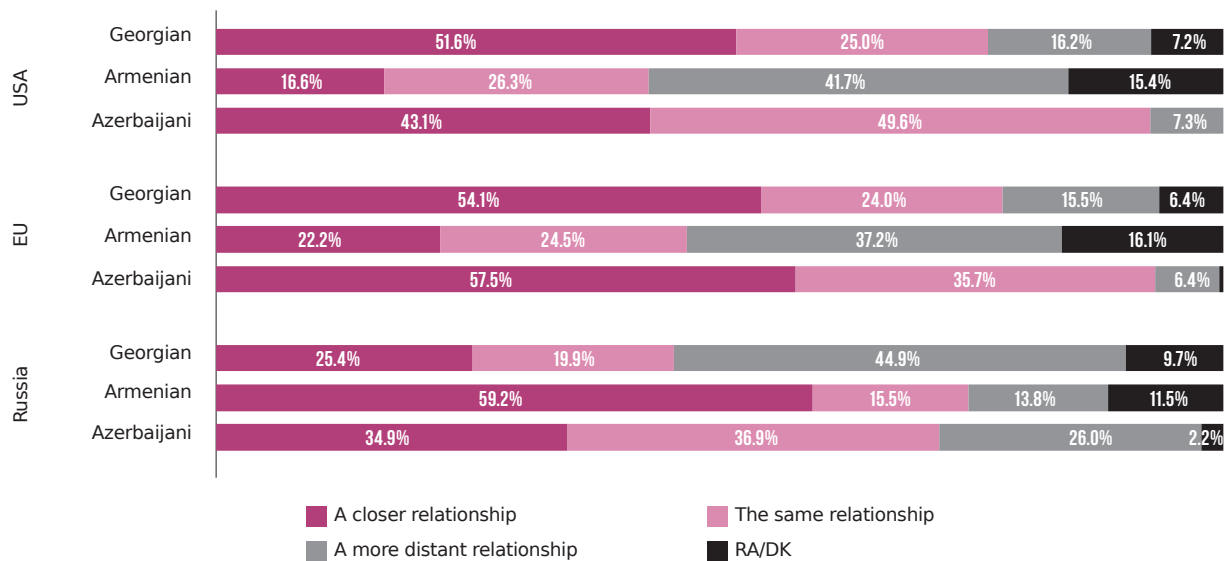
63 See: Europe Foundation's studies in 2013-2021 - *Knowledge and Attitudes toward the European Union in Georgia*; and CRRC Georgia, *Future of Georgia* (Tbilisi, 2021).

Figure #3

Foreign policy orientation of the respondents, 2016 and 2021

**Figure #4**

Foreign policy orientation of the respondents, by ethnicity, 2021



5.3. Knowledge, myths, and stereotypes about homosexuality/homosexuals

Sources of information and credibility on LGBT(Q)I issues

Language for receiving basic information

The state language of Georgia (Georgian) is the dominant main information language for the study population: the vast majority of the respondents (94.5%) named Georgian as one of the alternatives, while 70.7% named Georgian as the only language through which they get their news. . Other languages are presented at much lower rates.

Table #10a
General frequency distribution of languages through which people get news⁶⁴

Language	%
Georgian	94.5
Russian	17.8
English	10.5
Azerbaijani	4.0
Armenian	2.5
Other	0.8

A similar tendency is reflected in the results of the ranking of major information languages, with 25.5% of total respondents naming more than one language as their main information language. The representatives of the aforementioned group were asked to sort languages according to their priorities. The vast majority (79.0%) named Georgian as the priority.

Table #10b
General frequency distribution of languages through which people get news, after ranking

Language	%
Georgian	79.0
Russian	8.4
Armenian	3.9
English	2.6
Azerbaijani	1.1
Other	1.1

There is a stable tendency in the case of the first three choices and, consequently, in the geometric average.

The frequencies of naming Georgian, English and Russian as the main information languages show a direct correlation to the level of formal academic education.

The main information language has statistically been linked with the type of residence. Namely, the frequencies of naming Georgian, English, and Russian languages in urban settlements are higher than in rural settlements, while the opposite tendency is observed regarding Azerbaijani and Armenian languages.

⁶⁴ The sum of the answers exceeds 100%, as it was permitted to answer with more than one answer.

Table #11
General frequency distribution of languages through which people get news, by settlement type

Language	%		
	Capital	Other urban areas	Rural areas
Georgian	99.0	97.4	89.4
English	22.5	8.1	3.9
Russian	25.1	16.8	13.5
Armenian	0.4	1.0	4.9
Azerbaijani	0.4	1.6	8.1
Other	1.4	0.9	0.3

Information sources

- The share of respondents who answered that they do not receive information about LGBT(Q)I people and issues at all (26.6%) is almost twice the share in 2016 (13.2%).
- Representatives of the ethnic minorities indicated that they did not receive information about LGBT(Q)I people and issues from any source more often than ethnic Georgians (25.2% Georgians, 41.2% Armenians, 45.3% Azerbaijanis). Compared to rural areas and other urban-type settlements, the share of respondents who say that they do not receive information from any source is the smallest in Tbilisi (21.8% in Tbilisi, 28.2% in other urban areas, 28.7% in rural areas).
- As of 2016, television is the most popular source of information about LGBT(Q)I people and issues (49.7%).
- The share of respondents who answered that they get their information about LGBT(Q)I people and issues from social networks (35.6%) has almost tripled compared to the data from 2016 (12.7%).

- The frequency of naming social networks and social media as the main source of information on LGBT(Q)I issues decreases with age, while the frequency of naming television increases.
- The frequency of naming television, social networks and social media is related to the settlement type: respondents living in the capital less often name television and more often name social networks and Social media as their main source of information on LGBT(Q)I issues than respondents living in urban and rural areas.

Television is the most common source of information about LGBT(Q)I people and issues: 49.7% of respondents say that they receive the most relevant information through television. Social networks take second position (35.6%), while social media takes third (13.5%).

The volume of the group whose members answer that they do not receive information about LGBT(Q)I people and issues at all (26.6%) is quite large. However, for some members of this group, this may be more of an attitude than the actual situation.

More specifically, according to the answers to the question “**Where do you get the most information about LGBT(Q)I people and issues?**”, the frequency distribution of news sources is as follows:

Table #12

Frequency distribution of basic sources of information on LGBT(Q)I people and issues⁶⁵

Source of information	%	
	2016	2021
Television	63.3 ⁶⁶	49.7
News	35.0	n/a
Entertainment shows	28.3	n/a
Social networks	12.7	35.6
Social media	13.0	13.5
Acquaintances, friends	0.7	5.2
Family members, relatives	–	2.1
Print media	3.5	0.9
Radio	2.8	0.6
Lessons, lectures	0.5	0.4
Trainings, seminars	1.0	0.4
Sermons	0.9	0.2

Television

Naming the television as the most common source of information about LGBT(Q)I people and issues is correlated with age, education, nationality, and type of residence. The frequency of naming television is the highest in the group of respondents whose national identity is Georgian and the lowest in the group whose members indicated their nationality as Azerbaijani (51% Georgians, 43.1% Armenians, 22.9% Azerbaijanis). Television as a source of information is more often mentioned in rural settlements than in urban settlements (35.6% in Tbilisi, 44.9% in other urban areas, 55.2% in rural areas). In the context of the study, television was named with the lowest frequency in the 18-24 age group, while the frequency increased dramatically in the 25-44 age group and peaked in the 55+ age group.

Respondents with higher education were less likely to indicate television as a source of information about LGBT(Q)I issues than people with other levels of academic education.

Social media

The naming of Social media as the most frequent source of information about LGBT(Q)I people and issues is correlated with age and education. We can conclude that naming Social media is inversely proportional to age. The frequency of its naming increases in direct proportion to the degree of education.

Social networks

The naming of social networks as the most common source of information about LGBT(Q)I people and issues is correlated with age and type of residence. Namely, the younger the respondent, the more often they name social networks as their information source. At the same time, the frequency of naming social networks in urban settlements is higher than in rural settlements. More than half of Tbilisi residents (51.5%) name social networks as information channels, while 37.3% of urban respondents and 23.5% of rural respondents pointed to the same source.

No sources for information

The group whose members responded that they do not receive any information from any source about LGBT(Q)I people and issues became the object of an extraordinary observation. The corresponding variable is correlated with age, education, nationality, and the type of residence. Ethnic minorities were more likely than ethnic Georgians to indicate that they did not receive information about LGBT(Q)I people and issues from any source (25.2% Georgians, 41.2% Armenians, 45.3% Azerbaijanis). Compared to villages and other urban-type settlements, the percentage

⁶⁵ The sum of the answers exceeds 100%, as it was permitted to answer with more than one answer.

⁶⁶ In 2016, Television as a source of information was represented through two variables. To compare to the data from 2021, the data for both variables (TV news and TV entertainment shows) were recalculated.

of respondents who say that they do not receive information from any source is the smallest in Tbilisi (21.8% in Tbilisi, 28.2% in other urban areas, 28.7% in rural areas).

The answer “none” was named with the lowest frequency in the 18-24 age group, while the frequency increased in the 25-64 age group and reached the highest maximum in the 65+ age group, compared to all of the other groups. The answer “none” was presented with the lowest frequency in the respondents with incomplete secondary education and with the highest frequency in the group of people with a full secondary education.

Most reliable source on LGBT(Q)I issues

- Indicators of trust in information sources/agents show a decreasing tendency: the share of respondents who trust at least one source decreased from 56.1% (2016) to 40.5% (2021). As for the frequency of naming sources, in 2016, respondents named more sources on average than in 2021.
- As in 2016, the public had the least trust in politicians, teachers, and members of the LGBT(Q)I group themselves on LGBT(Q)I issues.
- The highest level of trust is still held for scientists/researchers or experts. In terms of rankings, in 2016, clerics and family members were named in the top three credible sources on LGBT(Q)I issues, in 2021 they have been replaced by friends and journalists.
- Young people are more likely to express trust in LGBT(Q)I organizations and group members: as individuals grow older, the frequency of naming the aforementioned sources as credible decreases.

- The opinion of a scientist/expert is trusted more by women than by men. The frequency of trust is higher in urban settlements than in rural settlements, while the rate for Tbilisi residents is significantly higher than the rest. Ethnic Georgians, compared to other groups, have a high degree of trust in the “scientist/researcher/expert”.

Trust rates for news sources/agents can be rated as very low. Almost half of the respondents do not trust any source (46.9%), 3.3% refused to answer, and 9.3% found it difficult to answer.

In all, 13.4% of respondents consider a scientist/researcher/expert to be the most reliable source on LGBT(Q)I issues. The indicators of other groups lag significantly behind this, while politicians were mentioned with the lowest rate of credibility (0.2%).

The answers to the question “**Who do you consider the most reliable source on LGBT(Q)I issues?**”, according to the frequencies, were distributed as follows⁶⁷:

⁶⁷ The sum of the answers exceeds 100%, as it was permitted to answer with more than one answer.

Table #13

Frequency distribution of reliable sources of information on LGBT(Q)I people and issues, 2016 and 2021

Source of information	%	
	2016	2021
Scientist, researcher, expert	16.5	13.4
Friends	11.9	9.9
Journalists	11.6	6.8
Representative of the Public Defender's Office	-	5.3
The clergy	10.6	4.6
Representative of an LGBT(Q)I organization	3.6	4.3
Family member, relative	9.1	3.6
Member of the LGBT(Q)I community	2.1	2.1
Teacher, lecturer	1.3	1.3
Politician	1.6	0.2
Society	0.4	-
None of them	11.8	46.9
Difficult to answer	31.7	9.3
Refuse to answer	0.4	3.3

The ranking of sources is presented in a similar order. Respondents who named more than one source were asked to rate the sources according to priority: the public trusts scientists/researchers/experts, friends, and journalists the most on LGBT(Q)I issues, while politicians, teachers, and members of the LGBT(Q)I community themselves are the least trusted.

Compared to 2016, the last three and the least trusted by the public remained unchanged, with the clergy and family members being replaced by friends and journalists in the top three.

Knowledge, stereotypes, and myths about LGBT(Q)I people

- Compared to 2016, the change least affected the popularity of the myths associated with the knowledge component.
- The distribution of answers about the “causes” of homosexuality is strongly influenced by age and contact/acquaintance with members of the LGBT(Q)I group. Compared to others, respondents in the 18-24 age group and those who know at least one member of the LGBT(Q)I group are most likely to associate sexual orientation with a person's conscious choice and, more rarely, with social factors.
- Among the “reasons” for the formation of homosexual orientation, the “theory of the influence of social factors” is the most popular among the respondents who indicated that LGBT(Q)I people do not receive information about LGBT(Q)I people at all from any source.
- Social networks, which, unlike traditional media, provide more opportunities for self-presentation and feedback, have the strongest effect on the prevalence of stereotypes and myths. Those who cite social networks as their main source of information are the least loaded with stereotypes and are less likely to share myths, unlike those who do not name social networks in the top three of their main sources of information on LGBT(Q)I people and issues.
- The level of formal education does not show a linear connection with the spread of knowledge, myths, and stereotypes, which indicates that the education system is not the basis for reproducing knowledge about gender and sexuality, nor is it focused on cultivating tolerant attitudes.

- Myths that serve to universalize and legitimize homophobic attitudes have been and continue to be most popular.
 - Although age groups differ in all myths and stereotypes, age shows a direct link only to myths associated with perceived symbolic threats: the older the respondent, the more he/she/they agree(s) with the statements on symbolic threats associated with the LGBT(Q)I group.
 - The 55+ age group has a very high percentage of respondents who find it difficult to answer questions about knowledge, stereotypes, and perceived “realistic” threats and who share myths about perceived symbolic threats, more so than other age groups.
 - Television, most often cited as the main source of information on LGBT(Q)I issues, has minimal impact on knowledge and stereotypes about homosexuals.
 - Myths and stereotypes about LGBT(Q)I people are most popular among respondents who say they do not get information about LGBT(Q)I people and issues from any source.
 - Attitudes toward gender roles and equality have a strong influence – not only on homosexual stereotypes but also on the popularity of other myths.
 - Some of the myths that can be thought of as conditionally perceived realistic threats (myths about violence, pedophilia, etc.) are less supported and shared despite active propaganda. However, at the same time, there is a lack of knowledge related to these issues: the respondents most often found it difficult to answer and have a position on these statements.
 - In terms of the prevalence of myths and stereotypes, there is a sharp asymmetry when comparing settlement type. In terms of age and ethnic minorities, rural residents, those aged 55+ and ethnic minorities were more likely to choose the option “difficult to answer” than young respondents living in the capital and ethnic Georgians.
 - Analysis of the data across ethnic minorities shows that ethnic Armenian respondents found it most difficult to respond to myths and etiologies related to homosexuality and LGBT(Q)I people.
 - Attitudes toward gender norms and equality are closely linked to stereotypes about lesbians and gays.
- Some studies show that there is a relationship between prejudices and essentialist ideas about the nature of homosexuality and the “reasons” for its formation (Haslam, 2007). Those who believe that sexual orientation is due to biological factors are more receptive to both lesbian and gay people and their legal equality than those who believe that orientation is a moral choice for human beings (Whitley, 1990; Herek and Capitanio, 1995; Tygart, 2000; Arnesto and Weisman, 2001; Hegarty and Pratto, 2001; Haider-Markel and Joslyn, 2008; Lewis, 2009; Swank and Raiz, 2010). In turn, relating sexual orientation, and in particular homosexuality, to choice and social factors leads to the rationalization of homophobic attitudes and practices: society seeks, on the one hand, to “correct”, “cure” or even exclude such people and, on the other, to justify discriminatory and violent manifestations of attitudes under the pretext of protecting other members of society (especially adolescents).
- Just like in the study from 2016, the various theories in the present study are grouped into several main positions:
1. Sexual orientation is determined by biological factors (genetics and hormones);
 2. The formation of orientation is influenced by social factors (upbringing, traumatic childhood experiences, family conditions, and environment);
 3. Sexual orientation is an individual’s conscious choice, the result of self-determination;
 4. I do not agree with any theory.

Instead of one of the possible answers in the version from 2016, “Scientists don’t yet have an answer on how sexual orientation is formed,” the new answer points to a theory that combines both factors: “Both biological and social factors influence the formation of sexual orientation.”

Table #14
Frequency distribution of responses on the “reasons” for homosexuality

Beliefs about the etiology of homosexuality	%	
	2016	2021
Both biological and social factors	-	23.1
Social factors	36.6	20.0
I don’t agree with any theory	0.4	18.9
Biological factors	38.3	18.0
Choice	7.8	10.4
Scientists have not yet formulated an answer	13.2	-

The view “Sexual orientation is an individual’s conscious choice, the result of self-determination” is most common among respondents aged 18-24 and 25-29 (20.8% and 15.9%, respectively). The least shared view in the first age group is related to the influence of social factors (12%), while 24.5% of them do not share any of the statements.

The answer “Homosexuality is shaped by social factors” is most common in the group that indicated that it does not receive information about LGBT(Q)I people and issues from any source, making up almost a third of respondents (32.5%).

Respondents’ responses also differ according to whom they consider the most reliable source of information on LGBT(Q)I issues: those who also named a scientist/researcher/expert in the top three when ranking reliable sources have little in common with social factors and the “choice” theory. More

common among such respondents is the theory of biological factors and mixed (biological and social) factors (36.9%).

The theory of social factors is the most popular (35.7%) among those who also trust the opinion of family members and relatives. The answers of the respondents who say that they do not trust anyone are almost equally distributed among the “beliefs”.

Myths and stereotypes about LGBT(Q)I people⁶⁸

A comparison of the data shows that the widespread myths about homosexuality that were included in the survey conducted in 2016, except for one (“Georgia is obligated to legalize same-sex marriage to join the EU”), are less common.

Two of the myths, which relate to the etiology of homosexuality and integrate into social factors, were stated separately (“Women become lesbians because they haven’t had a relationship with a ‘real’ man” and “A child raised in a homosexual family will definitely be homosexual”) to be able to see their relationship to traditional gender norms and to examine their direct impact on gender differences in attitudes toward lesbians and gays and their right to adopt.

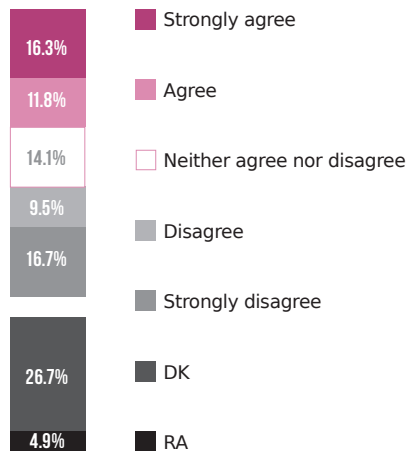
The first statement is based on the heterocentric notion of society, according to which all people are automatically heterosexual. The implication is that lesbians have had no luck in life, but if they meet a “real” man, they will become heterosexual; this myth is often used against them when they are forced into heterosexual relationships and/or marriage. This myth also reflects the gender and sexual asymmetry in a patriarchal culture, where a woman’s desire and choice of partner is completely ignored. Almost a third (31.6%) of respondents found it difficult to answer the statement **“Women become lesbians because they haven’t had a relationship with a ‘real’ man.”** There are no radical positions among the respondents who answered the question. The percent-

⁶⁸ In the list of statements used in 2016, which refers to the myths related to the LGBT(Q)I group, new statements were added that were selected based on the media monitoring reports conducted between 2016 and 2020 and the results of the focus groups.

ages of respondents who completely or partially agree (28.1%) and completely or partially disagree (26.2%) are almost equal, while 14.1% of respondents assessed the statement as neutral.

Figure #5

Frequency distribution of responses to the statement “Women become lesbians because they haven’t had a relationship with a ‘real’ man”



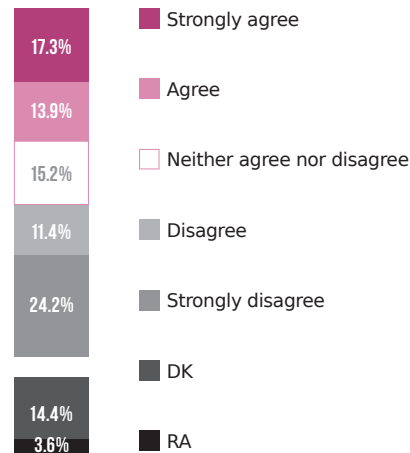
The statement is more shared by male respondents than by women. The difference in the gender of the respondent is maintained in terms of age, education, and contact/acquaintance. There are statistically significant differences between responses of the respondents within age groups (respondents who belong to the 18-24 age group are the least likely to agree with the statement). The myth is less popular among respondents who know at least one member of the LGBT(Q)I community. The strongest effect on the prevalence of this myth was found in traditional gender norms; the statement is influenced both - by family as well as radical gender asymmetry factors.

Respondents did not express a clear position on the second statement either (“**A child raised in a homosexual family will definitely be homosexual**”). In all, 14.9% of respondents found it difficult to answer the question. The share of respondents who do not share this opinion (37%) is slightly higher than

those who fully or partially agree with this statement (32.3%), while 15.8% have a neutral position.

Figure #6

Frequency distribution of responses to the statement “A child raised in a homosexual family will definitely be homosexual”



This statement is more shared by male respondents than by females. Respondents who belong to the 18-24 age group least agree with the statement, compared to other age groups. The myth is less common among respondents who know at least one member of the LGBT(Q)I group.

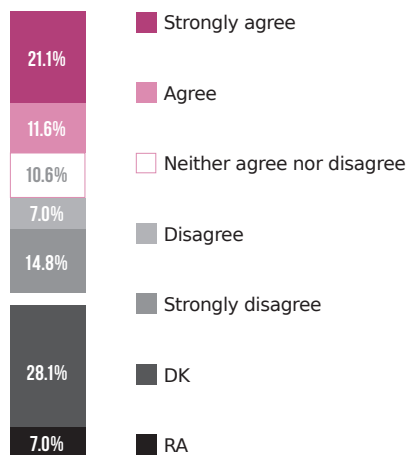
Sources of information have a moderate effect on the popularity of both statements: respondents who noted that they do not receive information on LGBT(Q)I issues at all from any source are most likely to believe in existing myths. Unlike social networks, the influence of Social media can be moderately assessed in the case of the first statement, while in the case of the second statement (“A child raised in a homosexual family will definitely be homosexual”), we have an inverted image. As for television, its effect is insignificant in terms of impact on both statements.

The “unnatural” statement about homosexuality (“**Homosexuality isn’t found in animals and other living beings except humans**”) is another myth

that is indirectly related to etiology and the refusal of which calls into question the truth of the theory of the influence of social factors on sexual orientation. More than a third of respondents found it difficult or refused to answer. Almost a third of respondents (32.7%) support this view, 10.6% have a neutral position, and 21.7% believe that this statement is not true.

Figure #7

Frequency distribution of responses to the statement “Homosexuality isn’t found in animals and other living beings except humans”

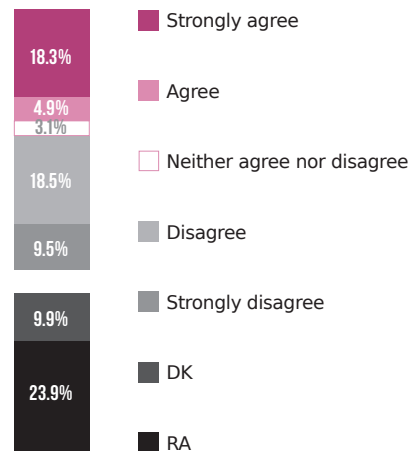


Like other myths, females, young people with higher education and respondents living in the capital are less likely to believe in this myth than males, respondents with lower levels of formal education, members of the upper age group, and respondents living in urban areas (except the capital) and villages. Contact/acquaintance with an LGBT(Q)I group member also influences the popularity of the myth: those who know at least one member of the group are less likely to agree with this view. The myth is also less popular among those who named Social media and social networks as sources of information, as well as among respondents who receive information on LGBT(Q)I issues from at least one source and those who do not receive information from any source.

In 1973, the American Psychiatric Association removed homosexuality from its list of mental disorders, recognizing that homosexuality is an acceptable form of expressing human sexuality. In 1975, this decision was accepted by the American Psychological Association, and in 1990, the World Health Organization (WHO) confirmed this decision by amending the International Classification of Diseases (10th Revision).⁶⁹ Nevertheless, the opinion that **“homosexuality is a disease that needs to be treated”** is fully or largely shared by 28% of the respondents. Only a third completely or partially disagree (33.8%), while 15% neither agree nor disagree. Almost one in five say that they find it difficult to answer this question (23.2%).

Figure #8

Frequency distribution of responses to the statement “homosexuality is a disease that needs to be treated”



Female respondents and young people are less likely to believe in this myth than males and the older age group (while it is less popular among respondents living in the capital than in other urban and rural areas). Those who know at least one member of the LGBT(Q)I group are less likely to agree with this view. The myth is less popular among those who

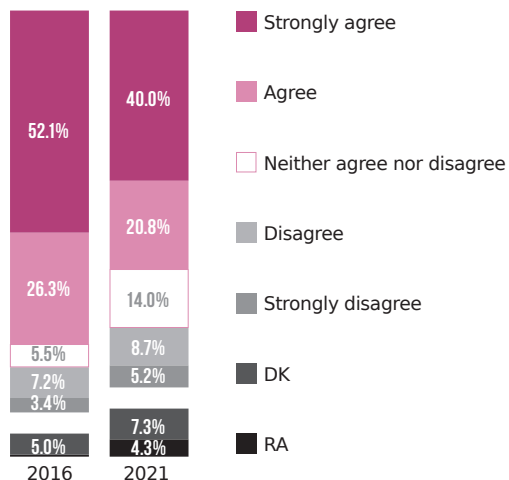
69 International Classification of diseases. 10th Revision. <https://icd.who.int/browse10/2019/en#/> (March 10, 2022).

named Social media and social networks among their sources of information. In terms of the popularity of the myth, the difference is most evident between respondents who receive information on LGBT(Q)I issues from at least one source and those who do not.

Two myths that serve to **universalize and legitimize homophobic attitudes** were the most common ones in 2016. The myth regarding the universality of homophobia (“Attitudes toward homosexuality have always been negative and remain so everywhere”) remains one of the most popular myths to this day. In all, 60.8% of the respondents fully or largely agree with this opinion, 13.9% do not fully or partially share it, and 14% express a neutral position.

Figure #9

Frequency distribution of responses to the statement “Attitudes toward homosexuality have always been negative and remain so everywhere”, 2016 and 2021



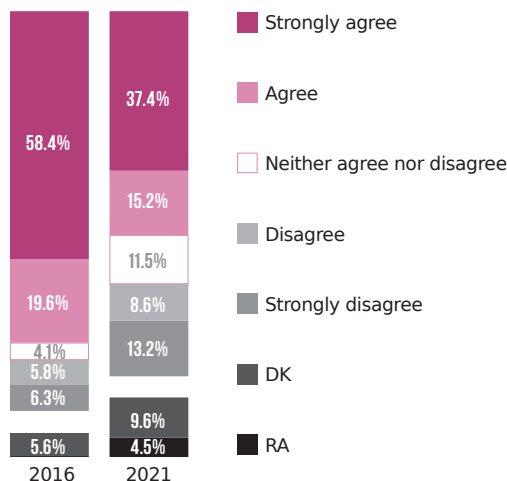
Unlike the other myths, this statement is equally popular in almost every stratum of society; any differences according to gender, education, and contact/acquaintance are not statistically significant. As for the socio-demographic variables, a difference is observed according to the type of settlement: the myth is more popular in the urban areas (except the capi-

tal) and rural settlements than in the capital. Among the age groups, the myth is most rarely shared by respondents in the 18-24 age group. Those who do not receive information on LGBT(Q)I issues and do not use any sources are more likely to agree with this view than those who receive information from at least one source.

The notion that “**the number of homosexuals will increase if society does not assert heterosexuality as the only correct form of relationships**” is another popular myth that is often used to legitimize the expression of homophobic attitudes. More than half of the respondents (53.6%) largely or completely agree with the statement, 21.8% do not agree with it, and 11.5% neither agree nor disagree.

Figure #10

Frequency distribution of responses to the statement “the number of homosexuals will increase if society does not assert heterosexuality as the only correct form of relationships”, 2016 and 2021



The myth is less popular among female than among male respondents. The older the age group of the respondent, the more he/she/they agree(s) with the myth. Consideration of the variable in terms of education shows that the statement is more shared by those respondents who have incomplete, full sec-

ondary, or vocational education. Students, respondents with incomplete higher education and higher education are less likely to agree with this myth. The myth is more popular in rural-type settlements than in urban-type settlements. There is also a statistically significant difference between the responses of respondents who know/do not know a member of the LGBT(Q)I group: the myth is less common among respondents who know at least one member of the LGBT(Q)I group. The myth is also more popular among respondents who do not use any source to get information.

At first glance, the etiology influences the popularity of this statement: the view is most shared by respondents who believe that homosexuality is shaped by social factors. On the other hand, the illogical redistribution of responses among proponents of different theories (e.g., even the majority of respondents (54.6%) who believe that homosexuality is caused by biological factors) at the same time agrees with the point of view that the number of homosexuals may decrease or increase according to what most of society believes; vice versa, those who consider homosexuality to be a human choice are the least likely to agree with this opinion (39.1%).

The statement shows a strong correlation between gender-inverted stereotypes about gays/lesbians, attitudes toward nonconforming women/men, prejudices against LGBT(Q)I members, and perceived symbolic or realistic threats to the group.⁷⁰ Such correlations may indicate that, on the one hand, the number of LGBT(Q)I people is equated with their visibility, and on the other hand, this statement is a manifestation of the negative attitudes toward the

LGBT(Q)I group rather than a myth based on a lack of knowledge about sexual orientation.

The myth that **“Georgia is obligated to legalize same-sex marriage to join the EU”** is one of the “oldest” homophobic myths that emerged in the early stages of political instrumentalization of homosexuality and has long been an important and unchanging issue in anti-Western propaganda. Same-sex marriage was one of the most important counterarguments of the opponents to the adoption of the anti-discrimination law. Although the law did not address the issue at all, it was interpreted by opponents as an attempt to legalize “same-sex marriage.” Because of this, “in the process of passing the anti-discrimination law, some parliamentarians who supported the adoption of the law clarified their negative position on same-sex marriage from the rostrum of the Parliament.”⁷¹ Then the government itself decided to make appropriate changes to the Constitution “for prevention” regarding the definition of marriage.⁷² Despite the manipulation of the issue, both in 2016 and in 2021, this myth is the least popular. This statement is not shared by the vast majority of respondents (66.2%), and especially high is the percentage of radical respondents (54.4% indicating “I completely disagree”). The share of respondents who partially or completely agree with this statement is small (11.5%), while 11.8% neither agree nor disagree with the myth.

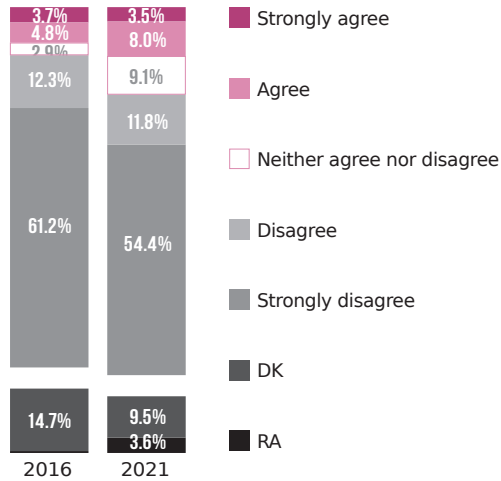
⁷⁰ $r_t = 601, p = 0.000$ and $r_t = 518, p = 0.000$

⁷¹ Aghdgomelashvili, E. *From Prejudice to Equality: Study of Societal Attitudes, Knowledge and Information Regarding the LGBT Community and Their Rights* (Tbilisi: WISG, 2016), 167.

⁷² “On March 28, at the government session, the Prime Minister Irakli Gharibashvili, while talking about the anti-discrimination bill, voiced a new constitutional initiative: ‘This is what Latvia did, and last year Croatia did it before joining the European Union.’ The Prime Minister explained that the decision was aimed at preventing ‘misinterpretation’ of the anti-discrimination bill.” See: <https://wisg.org/ka/news/detail/22> (March 10, 2022).

Figure #11

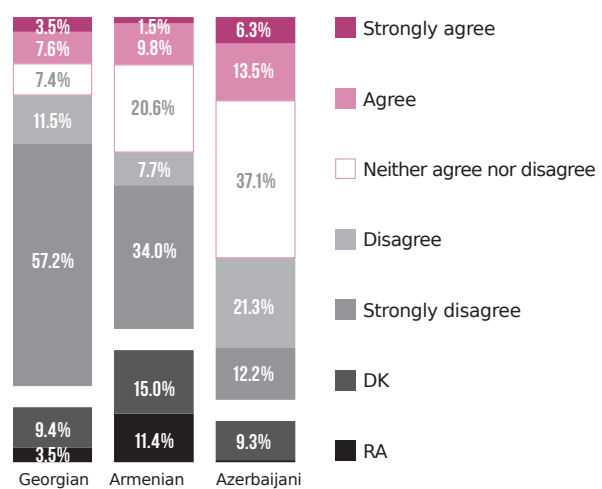
Frequency distribution of responses to the statement “In order to join the European Union, Georgia must legalize same-sex marriage”, 2016 and 2021



The asymmetric nature of knowledge and awareness about the EU in the ethnic context is reflected on myth's popularity: two-thirds (68.7%) of ethnic Georgians, are completely or mostly disagree with the myth, while almost half of the ethnic Azerbaijani and Armenian respondents neither agree nor disagree with the statement or found it difficult to answer the question.

Figure #12

Frequency distribution of responses to the statement “In order to join the European Union, Georgia must legalize same-sex marriage”, by ethnicity, 2016 and 2021



If according to the results of 2016, this statement was not related to the respondent's foreign policy orientation, then this time, there was some correlation between the aforementioned myth and the respondent's attitude toward the intensity of relations with the EU. According to the survey from 2021, of the respondents who identified themselves as Georgian, the myth's popularity is directly related to their attitudes toward the EU: respondents who support closer relations with the EU are less likely to believe in the myth than those who support the same or more distant relationships. The popularity of the myth for ethnic Armenian respondents is related to both the EU and the desired form of relations with Russia. In the case of ethnic Azerbaijani respondents, the relation between the myth's popularity and their foreign policy orientation is not clear at all.⁷³

73 For ethnic Georgians, the difference between the groups in terms of the desired relationship with the EU: $F(2,962) = 7.352$, $p < 0.005$, $ES = 0.015$. For ethnic Armenian respondents in terms of the preferred relationship with the EU: $F(2,141) = 10.632$, $p = 0.000$, $ES = 0.131$. In terms of relations with Russia: $F(2,146) = 16.226$, $p = 0.000$, $ES = 0.181$.

Perceived “realistic” threats

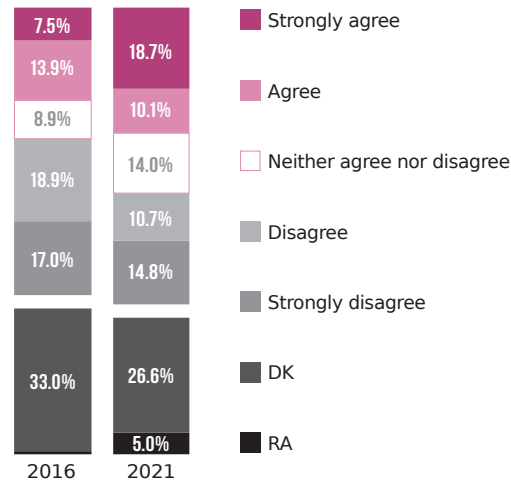
Some of the common myths and stereotypes about members of the LGBT(Q)I community, which were divided into two separate groups during the factor analysis, were combined in the name of perceived symbolic and “realistic” threats and are included in the regression analysis in this way. However, for the study, it is better to consider separately all of the myths and stereotypes used in the questionnaire.

Of the statements below, which are conditionally related to the “realistic” threats perceived by the respondent, two were also included in the research from 2016. A comparison of the data shows that the number of supporters of both statements has not only decreased but has increased even more over the ensuing five years.

Studies show that the risk children would identify recognizably homosexual adults as the potential abuser, are from 0% to 3.1%. These limits are within current estimates of the prevalence of homosexuality in the general community (Jenny et al., 1994). Among pedophiles, 60–65% of men are attracted to young girls, and about 10% to boys. (Cohen et al., 2002). Nevertheless, the myth that **“most gay men are pedophiles”** is actively used to reinforce the “threat” posed by homosexuals in society. This statement also hit the field of negative evaluation in 2016 and 2021; however, in both cases, the percentage of respondents who say they find it difficult to answer is very high (33% in 2016 versus 26% in 2021). In 2016, only 21.4% of respondents agreed with this statement, while in 2021 their percentage increased to 28.8%. Conversely, the frequency of respondents who did not associate pedophilia with sexual orientation decreased from 35.9% to 25.5%.

Figure #13

Frequency distribution of responses to the statement “Most gay men are pedophiles”, 2016 and 2021

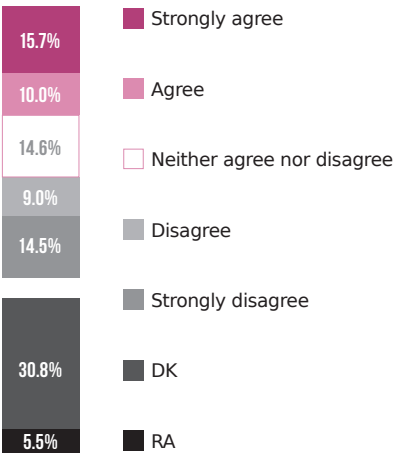


Like most other myths, the popularity of this statement varies by gender (females believe it less), age (but not linearly), type of settlement (less popular in the capital than in other urban and rural areas), and contact/acquaintance (someone who knows one member of the group). Still, those who believe in the etiology of homosexuality (those who share the theory of social factors) are less likely to agree with this view than proponents of other theories.

However, most theories are popular among respondents who found it difficult to answer the “causes” of homosexuality (for example, in terms of sources of information, the difference is most pronounced between respondents who do not turn to any source of information and those who used at least some source of information). Ethnic Azerbaijani respondents believe in this myth less than ethnic Armenian and Georgian respondents.

Sexual violence and rape, like other forms of violence, are related not to pleasure, sexual desire, or attraction but to aggression and the desire to control another individual regardless of orientation. The statement that “**only homosexual men sexually abuse other men**” is shared by almost as many respondents (23.5%) as those who consider it unreasonable (25.7%), while 14.6% neither agree nor disagree with the statement.

Figure #14
Frequency distribution of responses to the statement “Only homosexual men sexually abuse other men”

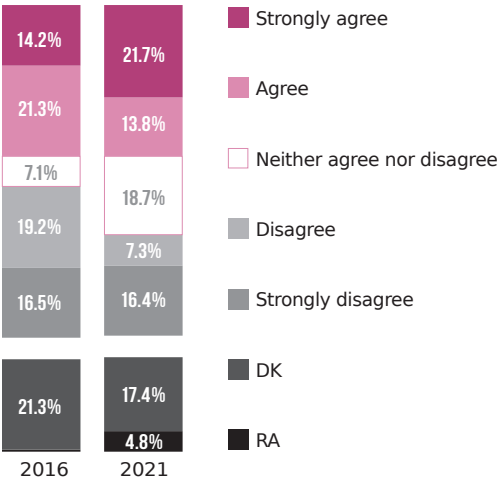


The myth is less popular among female than among male respondents. As age increases, so does the popularity of the myth, although the myth is less popular in the capital than in urban and rural areas. The popularity of the myth also varies in terms of contact/acquaintance: those who know at least one member of the LGBT(Q)I group believe in this myth less than those who do not know anyone. Those who consider LGBT(Q)I group members, representatives of organizations, the Ombudsman, and scientists/experts to be a credible source have little or no share in this statement. The myth is popular only among respondents who do not consider any source on LGBT(Q)I issues to be credible. In terms of etiology, the statement is more supported by those who consider social

factors as the “cause” of homosexuality. Within those who get information about these issues through Social media, including social networks, the myth is less popular. The most pronounced difference is between the respondents who do not turn to any source of information and who still get information from any source.

The positive assessment field includes the opinion that “HIV/AIDS is primarily a disease among gay men”. A large share of respondents fully or mostly agree (35.5%), 23.7% completely or partially disagree with the opinion, and almost a fifth (18.7%) indicated that they neither agree nor disagree with the opinion, with a similar share indicating difficulty answering (17.4%).

Figure #15
Frequency distribution of responses to the statement “HIV/AIDS is primarily a disease among gay men”, 2016 and 2021

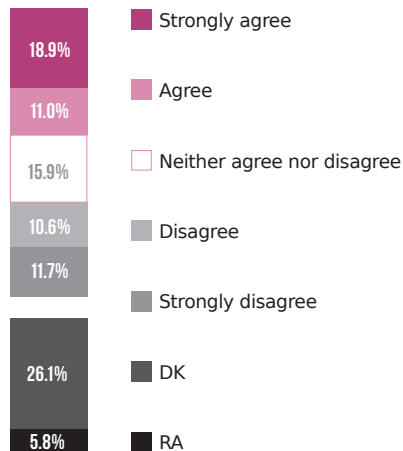


The younger the respondent, the less he/she/they agree(s) with the opinion. Unlike other myths, this statement has more supporters in the capital than in villages and cities. Ethnic Azerbaijani respondents believe in this myth more than ethnic Georgians and Armenians or those who indicate their ethnicity as “other.”

Experiences of discrimination, violence, and marginalization, the lack of support from family members and the threat of homelessness often force LGBT(Q)I youth to engage in commercial sex work. Experience shows that the risks are especially high in the case of trans women. However, this does not mean that all of them are, a priori, involved in sex work. In this case, the negative attribution is related to the behavior itself, which is recognized as a social and/or sexual deviation and increases the “threat” coming from the group.

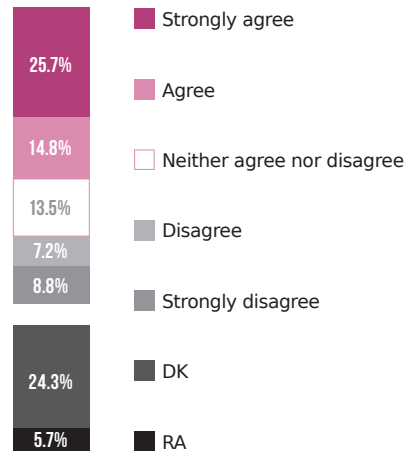
The opinion that **“most gay men are sex workers”** is more or less shared by almost a third of respondents (29.9%), while 15.9% neither agree nor disagree and 22.3% do not fully or partially agree with the statement.

Figure #16
Frequency distribution of responses to the statement
“Most gay men are sex workers”



The statement about trans women’s involvement in sex work is shared by more respondents than in the case of gay men. The opinion that **“most trans women are sex workers”** is more or less shared by almost a third of respondents (40.5%), while 13.5% neither agree nor disagree and 16% do not fully or partially agree with the statement.

Figure #17
Frequency distribution of responses to the statement
“Most trans women are sex workers”



Female respondents are less likely to agree with these statements than male respondents, although the influence of sex as a factor on both stereotypes is small or insignificant. The popularity of both views varies between age groups.; however, we cannot say that the number of supporters of these notions increases with age. The statement on gay sex work is less widely shared in the capital than in rural and urban areas, with the difference in the case of trans women being statistically insignificant. The same tendency applies to contacts/acquaintances: those who know at least one member of the LGBT(Q)I group are less likely to believe that most gays are involved in sex work. In the case of trans women, contact/acquaintance does not affect the distribution of proponents or opponents of this view. Social media has an equal effect on both stereotypes, and social networks only help to dispel the stereotype of gay involvement in sex work. And traditionally, the most pronounced difference about both stereotypes is between respondents who do not use any source of information and those who use at least one of them.

The frequency of responses to statements related to perceived realistic threats varies markedly across ethnicities: about one-third of ethnic Armenian respondents found it difficult to answer or refused

to answer the questions. The frequency of refusal among ethnic Azerbaijani respondents is the lowest, although these myths are more widely shared among them than among ethnic Georgian respondents.

Perceived symbolic threats

As a result of factor analysis, **statements that are symbolic and include threats to morality, values, traditions, norms, religion, ideology, or worldview** were grouped.

Respondents' responses differed in terms of gender, age, and Social media consumption (female respondents, members of the 18-24 age group, respondents with at least a secondary education, and those who use Social media are less likely to believe in this myth); however, in terms of effect, these differences are small. Perceived symbolic threats are more related to personal characteristics such as right-wing authoritarianism.

Perceived symbolic threats are also correlated with the index of religiosity (although the effect is moderate in contrast to right-wing authoritarianism): the more important religion is to the respondent, the more often they participate in religious rituals, and the more time they devote to religious practices such as prayer or meditation, the more inclined the respondent is to believe in perceived symbolic threats associated with the group.⁷⁴

The popularity of myths also differs in terms of ethnicity. Statements related to perceived symbolic threats are more popular among ethnic Georgians than among ethnic minorities. Lower sensitivity to perceived symbolic threats among ethnic minorities may also be related to the specifics of the national discourse: the content of the statements is closely related to the idea of creating a threat to national identity. The target audience of these myths are primarily Georgian, Orthodox citizens. Clearly, the narrative of "Georgia is being taken away" is perceived as less of a threat to ethnic minorities.

The statement "LGBT(Q)I people fight for privileges and not for equal rights" is shared the least by ethnic Azerbaijani respondents and the most by ethnic Armenians. The following five statements ("LGBT(Q)I people are fighting against the Orthodox Church", "LGBT(Q)I people are against our culture", "LGBT(Q)I people are undermining our traditional values", "LGBT(Q)I people's views on morality and religion are completely different from those of heterosexual people", and "LGBT(Q)I people want to morally corrupt our youth") is more popular among ethnic Georgian and Armenian respondents than among ethnic Azerbaijanis.

Aggression among the members of the LGBT(Q)I group is another stereotype often used to justify homophobic practices; in such cases, public homophobia

Table #15
Perceived symbolic threats

Statement	N	M	Std.
1. LGBT(Q)I people fight for privileges and not for equal rights	1325	3.62	1.377
2. LGBT(Q)I people are fighting against the Orthodox Church	1365	3.73	1.439
3. LGBT(Q)I people are against our culture	1439	3.91	1.371
4. LGBT(Q)I people undermine our traditional values	1443	3.91	1.384
5. LGBT(Q)I people's views on morality and religion are completely different from those of heterosexual people	1291	3.86	1.359
6. LGBT(Q)I people want to morally corrupt our youth	1403	3.72	1.465

⁷⁴ For Muslim and Orthodox respondents, the effect of the index differs not only on a statement that directly addresses Orthodoxy but also on myths related to other perceived symbolic threats. The reason for such a "scattered" effect must be the specificity of the link between ethnicity and religiosity; however, the data available in this study do not allow for such in-depth analysis.

Table #16
Mean values of the statements on aggression stereotypes

Statement	N	M	Std.
Gay men are characterized by aggressive temperament and behavior in relationships	1014	2.71	1.379
Lesbians are characterized by aggressive temperament and behavior in relationships	1014	2.79	1.410
Transgender people are characterized by aggressive behavior in relationships	1012	2.92	1.418

translates as “retaliatory aggression” against the group. All of the statements were negatively evaluated; however, most of these respondents indicated “I find it difficult to answer”. Because of this, these stereotypes were no longer used in the next analysis (see table #16).

All three opinions fell into the negative evaluation field, and the answers were distributed in almost equal proportion across all three questions.

In terms of the type of settlement, the only difference is observed with regard to transgender people: surprisingly, many respondents in the capital share the point of view that transgender people behave more aggressively in relationships than the respondents in other urban and rural areas. Age differences are not linear (we cannot say that the younger he/she/they is/are, the less he/she/they agree(s) with the stereotypes). The greater the respondent's religiosity in everyday life and the more he/she/they engage(s) in religious practices, the more he/she/they support(s) the stereotype associated with aggression. Those who know at least one member of the LGBT(Q)I group are less likely to share this opinion than those who know no one. Those who receive information through the Internet and social networks are less likely to agree with these stereotypes. The big-

gest difference is seen in the answers of those who do not get information from any source and those who use at least one source.

Gender stereotypes

Gender expression and sexual orientation are different aspects of human sexuality that are related to each other but are not mutually exclusive. Nevertheless, homosexual orientation in public perceptions is closely linked to gender nonconformity. Gays and lesbians are often credited with feminine or masculine behaviors that are characteristic of other genders. According to such expectations, homosexuals violate not only sexual but also “traditional” gender norms. Separate studies show that such stereotyping reinforces prejudices and increases the risk of violence against lesbians and gays.

In the field of positive evaluation, you can see stereotypes about homosexual persons according to which behaviours characteristic of masculine or feminine gender roles are attributed to homosexual women or men. . Inverted stereotypes (“All men with ‘feminine’ manners are gay” and “All women with ‘masculine’ manners are lesbians”) were quite common among respondents.⁷⁵

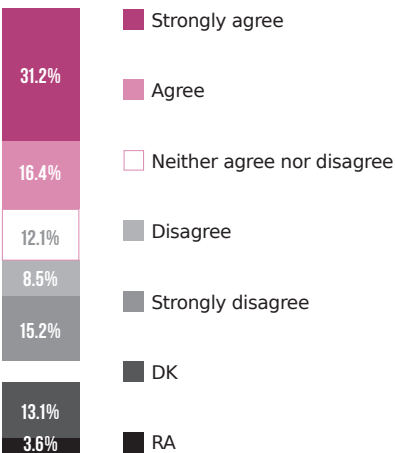
Table #17
Mean values of the statements on gender stereotypes

Statement	N	M	Std.
Most gay men look and act like women	1341	3.48	1.516
Most lesbians look and act like men	1301	3.07	1.544
All men with “feminine” manners are gay	1364	2.52	1.501
All women with “masculine” manners are lesbians	1344	2.39	1.463

⁷⁵ Questions about gender stereotypes about lesbians and gays were difficult to answer or were refused to be answered for 15% and 19% of respondents, respectively. The rate of refusal to answer is closely related to age. The answer to the question was mainly difficult for the participants aged 55+.

Almost half (47.6%) of respondents fully or partially agree with the gender stereotype about gays that **“most gay men look and act like women.”** The share of respondents who disagree with the opinion about gay femininity is almost half that (23.7%), while 12.1% chose a neutral position.

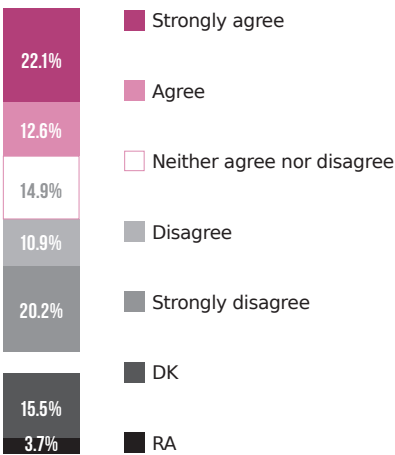
Figure #18
Frequency distribution of responses to the statement
“Most gay men look and act like women”



This stereotype is more “popular” among male respondents than among female respondents. Answers vary across age group, settlement type, education, and contact/acquaintance.

In contrast to gays, respondents’ opinions about the masculine appearance and manners of lesbians regarding the stereotype (**“Most lesbians look and act like men”**) are less radicalized: 31.1% partially or fully disagree with this view, 34.7% partially or fully agree with the stereotype, and 14.9% chose a neutral position. Almost one in five respondents found it difficult to answer the question (19.2%).

Figure #19
Frequency distribution of responses to the statement
“Most lesbians look and act like men”



Contrary to the stereotype of gay “femininity”, the notion of lesbian “masculinity” is equally prevalent among both male and female respondents. Answers differ in terms of other socio-demographic variables, specifically age group, education, and contact/acquaintance.

“All men who have ‘feminine’ manners are gay” and “All women with ‘masculine’ manners are lesbians” were less common statements: almost half of those interviewed disagreed that **“all men who have ‘feminine’ manners are gay”** (47.2%), which is almost double the share of respondents (24.9%) who fully or partially agree with this opinion, while 12.6% chose a neutral position.

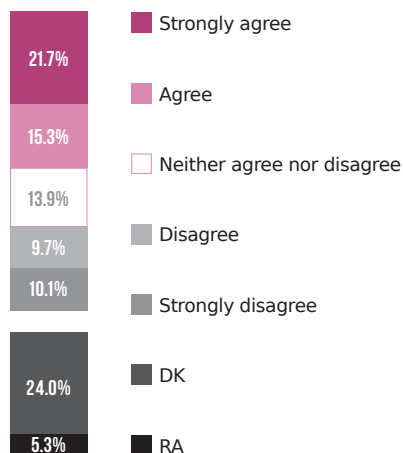
This stereotype, as well as the notion of “gay femininity”, is more common in men than in female respondents. Responses also vary by level of formal education, information sources, and age group: it is less common in 18-to-24-year-old people than in older age groups.

The opinion that **“all women with ‘masculine’ manners are lesbians”** has a more established position among the respondents: 49.6% completely or partially disagree with this opinion, 12.4% have a neutral position, and 21.4% partially or completely agree with the stereotype.

Answers differ in terms of gender, level of formal education, age, theories of the etiology of homosexuality, and information sources: women, young people aged 18-24, respondents with higher education, and those who consider homosexuality a human choice are less likely to share this view. Traditionally, the stereotype is less popular among the respondents who name social networks as their main source of information and who get information from at least one source.

Almost one-fifth (19.8%) of respondents do not agree with the statement that all trans people want to have a surgical sex change, 37% fully or largely agree with the statement, and 13.9% neither agree nor disagree. Unlike other myths and stereotypes, this view is more shared by respondents who name at least one source of information.

Figure #20
Frequency distribution of responses to the statement
“Every transgender person wants to have sex
reassignment surgery”



5.4. Contact/acquaintance with a member of the LGBT(Q)I community

- Every tenth respondent (11.8%) says they know at least one member of the LGBT(Q)I group.
- Compared to 2016, the overall level of individual visibility of the group has not changed significantly (the percentage of respondents who say they know at least one member of the LGBT(Q)I group has not increased but slightly decreased). However, there is a tendency for diversity: among those who know at least one member of the LGBT(Q)I community, when referring to sexual identity, respondents more often name lesbians, bisexual women, and trans people.
- Among the members of the LGBT(Q)I group, gays remain the most visible: more than half of respondents who know at least one member of the LGBT(Q)I group (56.3%) name a gay person as one of their acquaintances.
- In terms of contact/acquaintance, the analysis of information sources showed that compared to 2016, voluntary coming out as a source of information about the sexual orientation/gender identity for those who know at least one member of LGBT(Q)I group is one and a half times more common.
- Young people more often answered that they knew at least one member of the LGBT(Q)I group. The older the age group of the respondent, the lower the chance of the respondent knowing a member of the group.
- The level of individual visibility of LGBT(Q)I people is higher in Tbilisi than in other urban and rural areas: 23.8% of respondents living in Tbilisi say they know at least one member of the LGBT(Q)I group, while the share of such respondents in urban and rural areas is 11.3% and 5.1%, respectively.

- From the characteristics of the contact/acquaintance, the source of the information (from whom the respondent learned information about the identity of the acquaintance) and the distance (how he/she/they characterize(s) the relationship with an acquaintance, e.g., as a friend, family member, neighbor, etc.), influence on the attitude toward LGBT(Q)I persons and their legal equality.⁷⁶
- Compared to 2016, overall, a tendency to distance oneself from the group is seen less. In 2016, only six respondents named a relative, while no one named an immediate family member. Only 5% of the respondents indicated the status of a friend, 11.4% were a neighbor, and 76.1% indicated the status as simply an acquaintance. In 2021, among 58.1% of cases, the representatives of the LGBT(Q)I group were granted mostly the status of acquaintance in general; in 22% of cases, they were a friend; and in 9.1%, a neighbor.

To the question “Do you know a representative of the LGBT(Q)I group?”, the vast majority of respondents (84.3%) answered negatively, 1.5% found it difficult to answer, and 2.5% refused to answer. Only 11.8% of respondents confirmed a personal acquaintance with members of the LGBT(Q)I group.

Table #18

Acquaintance with LGBT(Q)I persons, 2016 and 2021

Contact/acquaintance	%	
	2016	2021
Yes	15.3	11.8
No	83.8	84.3
Refuse to answer	0.4	2.5
Difficult to answer	0.7	1.5

Such a high rate of denial of acquaintance with a member of the LGBT(Q)I community, along with the actual situation, may also be an expression of addiction.⁷⁷ However, it should be noted that compared to the results of the 2016 survey, the contact/acquaintance rate shows a small but still decreasing trend: according to the results from 2016, 15.2% of respondents said they knew someone who is a member of the LGBT(Q)I group. This slight difference may also be due to situational factors (during the study period, issues related to the LGBT(Q)I community were in the context of intense political confrontation), but, in favor of the conclusion, the situation is unchanged.

Ethnic Georgian respondents are more likely to say that they know at least one member of the group than the ethnic minorities interviewed (12.8% Georgians, 0.5% Armenians, 10.4% Azerbaijanis).

⁷⁶ Other characteristics of the contact/acquaintance factor – such as the number of members of a familiar group, sexual identity, and frequency of contact – are not evident in homo/bi/transphobia. However, this picture may be affected by both the unified index calculation rule and the lack of data.

⁷⁷ In addition to the fact that more respondents avoided answering, it should also be noted that respondents who refused to answer (n = 40) were more tolerant of LGBT(Q)I people than they were in terms of attitudes.

Respondents living in Tbilisi are more likely to answer the question affirmatively than those living in other urban and rural areas. Almost one in five respondents (23.8%) living in the capital said they knew at least one member of the LGBT(Q)I group, while 11.3% of urban residents and only 5.1% of rural respondents answered the same.⁷⁸

The peculiarity of internal migration of the LGBT(Q)I group shows that young members of the LGBT(Q)I group often try to choose a place to live that, on the one hand, allows them to be away from family, relatives, and acquaintances who “control” them, and on the other hand, they avoid big cities where there is more diversity and less pressure on self-expression. Young people living in rural areas try to move to the city, move from one city to another, and so on. Consequently, in Tbilisi and other urban areas, the respondent is more likely to know a person who does not hide his/her/their sexual identity.⁷⁹ The lower the age group, the greater the share of respondents who know a member of the LGBT(Q)I community (see figure #21).

Of those who confirmed an acquaintance with a representative of the LGBT(Q)I group, 54.7% have only one acquaintance, 23.2% have two, 9.4% have three, 4.3% have four, 2% have five, and 6.3% have more than five acquaintances. The group’s central trend indicator – the median value – is the same as in 2016. These data can be considered as an indicator of the urgency of more in-depth and detailed research on the issue of establishing contact/

acquaintance, as well as its expansion and transmission.

Respondents were asked to name/recall the sexual orientation/gender identity of members of their familiar LGBT(Q)I group. It should be noted that in about 95% of cases, they were able to name/remember them. Compared to the results of the 2016 survey, the distribution of respondents’ responses is more diverse according to the identity of an LGBT(Q)I acquaintance,⁸⁰ and it should be noted that the individual visibility of other members of the LGBT(Q)I group is also slowly increasing. For the time being, however, compared to others, gays remain the most visible group. When naming the identities of members of a familiar LGBT(Q)I group, the frequencies were distributed as follows: 56.3% were gay, 23.9% lesbian, 9.8% female bisexual, 3.2% male bisexual,⁸¹ 3.8% trans women, and 2.5% trans men. Only one respondent mentioned that they know an intersex person (0.4%). Female and male respondents mentioned having a gay acquaintance with equal frequency (56.1% and 56.7%, respectively). Male respondents named lesbians and trans women (30% and 5.1%, respectively) more often than the female respondents (19.6% and 2.9%, respectively), while female respondents were more likely to cite bisexual and trans men (17.2% and 3.5%, respectively) than the male respondents (6.3% and 1.1%, respectively).

The questionnaire also included a question asking from whom the respondent learned about the identity of an acquaintance. In 42.4% of cases, the source of information about the sexual orientation/gender identity of the acquaintance was the repre-

78 According to the 2016 results, the difference in terms of settlement type was not statistically significant.

79 This tendency is also supported by studies conducted in the LGBT(Q)I group. According to a survey conducted in 2020, more people know about the orientation and identity of the respondents living in Tbilisi than in the regions. Specifically, 76.45% of respondents living in Tbilisi say that most or almost all of their acquaintances know about them, while the share of such respondents among the residents of the regions is a little over 56.3%. See: Aghdgomelashvili, E et al., *Impact of COVID-19 on the situation of LGBT(Q)I people in Georgia* (Tbilisi: WISG, 2022).

80 The majority of respondents (64.1%) attributed the sexual orientation or gender identity of their LGBT(Q)I acquaintances as gay men. Also mentioned more often than others were lesbians (14.7%) and bisexual men (10.6%). See: (Aghdgomelashvili, 2016, 225).

81 Such asymmetry in terms of contact/acquaintance between bisexual women and men may not be related to the visibility policy. Data from periodic violence and discrimination surveys with members of the LGBT(Q)I group since 2012 show a strong trend despite non-representation. In the case of male respondents, sexual attraction, behavior, and self-identification are more closely related than in the case female respondents. In other words, female respondents of the study are more likely to be identified as bisexual than male respondents.

sentatives of the LGBT(Q)I group who were in direct contact; in 32.6% of cases, it was revealed by another person; and in 24.1%, the respondents indicated that they found out about the sexual orientation/gender identity of the LGBT(Q)I group member themselves. Compared to the data from 2016,⁸² voluntary coming out as a source of information is named one and a half times more often.

LGBT(Q)I community members seem to be more open with women than with men: in the case of female respondents, the frequency of the answer “He/she/they told me himself/herself/themselves” is 45.5%, while for male respondents, the same index is only 38.3%. The frequency of the answer “I learned from someone else” is almost no different in terms of gender. The frequency of “I found out for myself” answers, on the contrary, is higher among male respondents (29.7%) than among female respondents (19%).

Status of the representative of the LGBT(Q)I group in relation to the respondent

Compared to the results of 2016, the situation has changed dramatically. There is still a tendency⁸³ to distance oneself in the distribution of the status of representatives of the LGBT(Q)I group. In almost three in five cases (58.1%), the respondents use the status of an acquaintance toward the LGBT(Q)I group; in 22% of cases, a friend; in 9.1%, a neighbor; in 4.2%, a student; in 4.0%, an employee; in 1.6%, a relative; in 0.5%, an immediate family member; in 0.3%, a teacher/lecturer; and in 0.3%, a pupil/student.⁸⁴

Men tend to distance themselves more than fe-

male respondents: in the case of male respondents, 64.1% of their named acquaintances have the status of “acquaintance” and only 17.5% of cases say that the LGBT(Q)I acquaintance is their friend, while in the case of female respondents, the LGBT(Q)I person is their friend. Only 53% give the status of acquaintance, while 25.4% give the status of friend.

Frequency of communication

In 76.4% of cases, the frequency of contact with an LGBT(Q)I acquaintance is quite low, specifically “less often than several times a year”. In 30.7% of cases, contact is established several times a month; in 21.7%, several times a week; in 20%, six times a month; and in 24.3% of cases, several times a year. In 5.6% of cases, respondents completely cut off contact with a person when they heard that he/she/they was/were a member of the LGBT(Q)I group.

82 Most of the respondents (43.3%) receive information about the sexual orientation/gender identity of an LGBT(Q)I person they are familiar with from someone else. In a quarter of cases (25.3%), they stated that they had figured it out themselves, while slightly more respondents (26.2%) had LGBT(Q)I people as a source of the information. See: (Aghdgomelashvili, 2016, 226)

83 In the 2016 survey, only six respondents named a relative, while no one named an immediate family member. Only 5% of the respondents indicated the status of a friend, 11.4% were a neighbor, and 76.1% indicated the status as simply an acquaintance. See: (Aghdgomelashvili, 2016, 226)

84 Most of the members of the group (especially those who are gay and, due to stereotypes) are less “suspicious” of their family members; and without their desire, the immediate environment is less able to “identify” as a LGBT(Q)I members. Coming out to friends is different from coming out to family or relatives. They may choose to be friends or break off relationships with them, but they do not have that choice when it comes to family relationships (Cain, 1991, p. 349), so for fear of deteriorating relationships, most community members take special care with family members when coming out.

Figure #21
Frequency distribution of responses to LGBT(Q)I community encounters, by age and settlement type

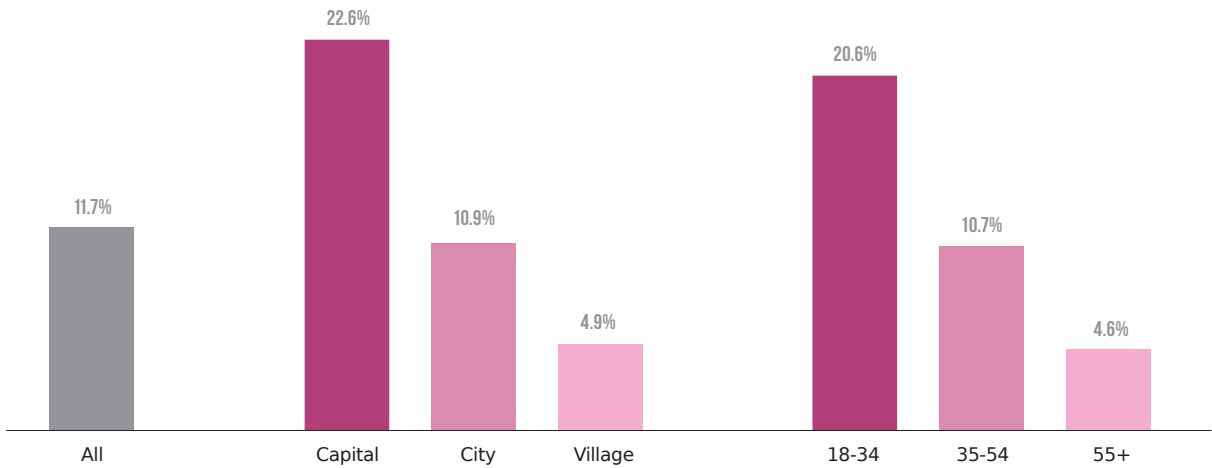
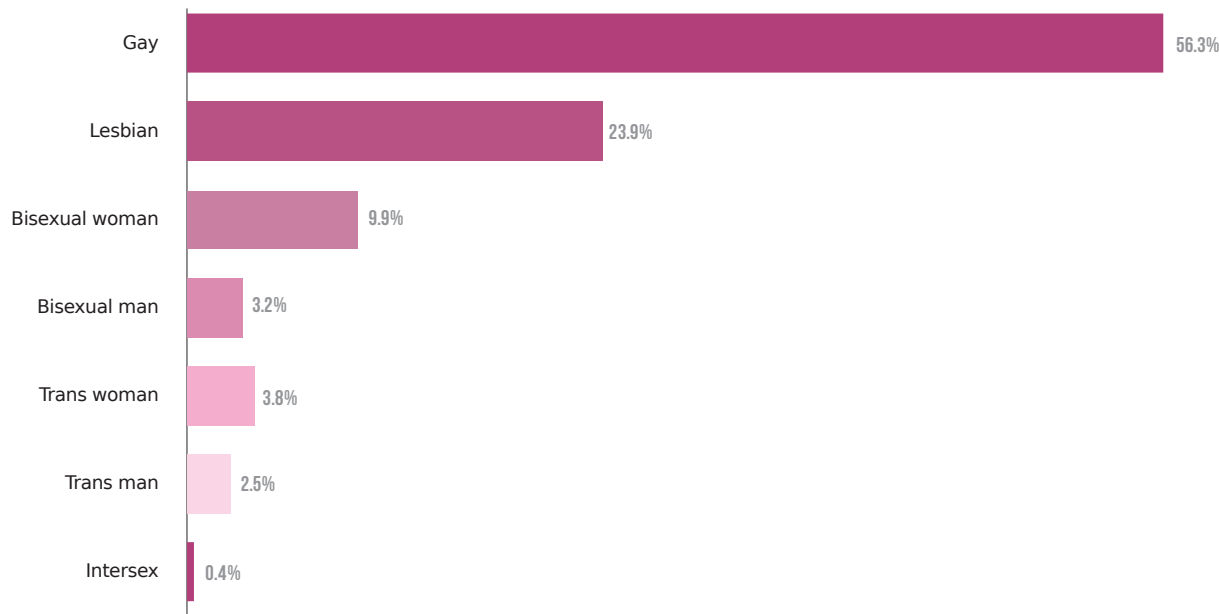


Figure #22
Frequency distribution of responses to LGBT(Q)I community encounters, by identity of LGBT(Q)I acquaintances



5.5. Attitudes toward LGBT(Q)I people

Homophobia

- Compared to 2016, homophobic sentiments are less pronounced. The share of respondents who are disgusted by gay/lesbian people and perceive their relationships as “perversion” or “wrong” has significantly reduced.
- As in 2016, gender, age, and settlement type remain significant predictors for homophobia. Men and older respondents living in urban areas (except the capital) and rural areas have a more negative attitude toward gay and lesbian people than women, young people and respondents living in the capital.
- Contact/acquaintance has a positive effect on attitudes toward gays/lesbians. The homophobia index of respondents who know at least one member of the group has a much higher acceptance rate than those who do not know anyone. The homophobia index is affected not only by acquaintance but also by other characteristics of contact/acquaintance, including distance and the source of the coming out: those who describe a familiar LGBT(Q)I group member as a “friend” are more receptive than those who indicated a “family member”/“relative”, a “neighbor”, or a “stranger”. Respondents who say that the source of information about a member of an LGBT(Q)I group was the member himself/herself/themselves are more accepting than respondents who cite other people as a source (“I heard it from someone else”) or say they “figured it out themselves”.
- The changes are markedly asymmetric and are more pronounced in female, young, and respondents living in capital than in male, older, and other urban or rural respondents.
- Compared to 2016, acceptance of lesbians has increased more than that of gays.
- Attitudes toward gender norms and equality (both, family and radical gender asymmetry factors) have a significant impact on the homophobia index.
- The homophobia index is higher in ethnic Armenian respondents than in ethnic Georgian or ethnic Azerbaijani respondents.
- Among other variables, among ethnic Georgian respondents, the negative impact of right-wing authoritarianism on the degree of homophobia is reinforced by both perceived symbolic and “real” threats. In the case of ethnic minorities, only perceived “realistic” threats matter.
- The prevalence and attitudes of gay/lesbian stereotypes about inverted gender roles toward gender-based nonconforming women/men affect people’s prejudice against lesbians and gays and reduce the positive effect of contact on homophobia.
- In contrast to 2016, the link between foreign policy orientation and homophobia is clear: respondents who are more supportive of having closer ties with the US and the EU are more accepting of homosexuals than the respondents who support more distance or maintaining similar relationships. Moreover, those who clearly express desire for a more distant relationship with Russia are more tolerant than those who support maintaining the same relationship or even a closer relationship.

A short version of the Herek scale was selected to measure homophobia.⁸⁵ The scale consists of two subscales, which, along with the overall level of homophobia, allow us to measure attitudes toward lesbians and gays separately and to compare them evenly with each other.⁸⁶

85 ATLG-R, Revised Short Version. The overall index of homophobia in the present study was 34.86 (SD = 9.291, N = 1382).

86 In this version of the scale, the subscales (ATG-R-S5, ATL-R-S5) include identical questions.

Table #19

Mean scores of the homophobia scale and subscales, 2016 and 2021

Index	2016			2021		
	N	M	Std.	N	M	Std.
ATL	1779	3.90	0.813	1359	3.45	0.998
ATG	1787	3.82	0.832	1387	3.46	0.939
ATLG	1759	3.85	0.782	1382	3.45	0.935

Abbreviations: ATL – attitude toward lesbians; ATG – attitude toward gay men; ATLG – Overall Homophobia Index (0 minimum, 5 maximum).

In the present study, the overall homophobia index as well as the subscales that separately measure attitudes toward gays and lesbians are lower than what the study conducted in 2016 showed.⁸⁷ However, the analysis of the homophobia index in terms of socio-demographic variables repeats the tendency identified in the study conducted five years ago almost unchanged.

According to the study from 2016, the homophobia index in the capital is lower than in rural and urban areas, which can be explained by the diversity of large cities. Unlike people living in small settlements, people living in large cities are more likely to interact with members of different groups who are different from them, and they are generally more receptive to different groups than respondents living in rural and urban areas.

Homophobic attitudes differ by gender: male respondents are more likely to be hostile to homosexuals than female respondents. Compared to 2016, the homophobia index is lower in both groups; however, data analysis shows that the dynamics of positive changes are more pronounced in female than in male respondents.

The homophobia index also varies by age, with respondents aged 18-24 showing the most acceptance of homosexuals. The older the age group of the respondent, the higher their homophobia index score; however, the difference between the age groups over 44 years of age is no longer statistically significant.

There is also no linear relationship between formal education level and the homophobia index. As in the case of biphobia and transphobia, respondents who indicated higher vocational education as their highest level of formal education have the highest degree of homophobia. The level of formal education has a different effect on men and women. The level of homophobia in female respondents with higher education drops sharply, while in male respondents it decreases slightly.

Respondents who said they knew at least one member of the LGBT(Q)I group were much more tolerant of homosexuals than those who answered that they did not. Compared to the results of a study conducted in 2016, the impact of having a contact/acquaintance on the homophobia index is more pronounced.⁸⁸

Knowledge/perception of the “causes” of homosexuality also affects the homophobia index. Respondents who believe that homosexual orientation is formed as a result of the influence of social factors are most negative toward homosexuals. Respondents who believe that sexual orientation is biologically determined or, in addition to social, also consider genetic factors to be among the “causes” are relatively more tolerant of gays and lesbians. Paradoxically, those who think that sexual orientation is a human choice are the most receptive to homosexuals.⁸⁹

87 ATL: $t(1351) = -16.672, p = 0.000$; ATG: $t(1385) = -14.124, p = 0.000$; ATLG: $t(1333) = -15.756, p = 0.000$

88 In the 2016 data, $(F(1, 1740) = 65.37, p < 0.001)$, $ES = 0.036$. In the 2021 data, $(F(1, 1335) = 166.64, p < 0.001)$, $ES = 0.111$.

89 $F(1, 1242) = 47.739, p = 0.000, ES = 0.131$. In the factorial analysis of the statements of right-wing authoritarianism, a statement that applies to gays and lesbians but addresses the subscale of conventionalism (“Gays and lesbians are just as healthy and moral as other people”) describes attitudes toward critical people. The post hoc test shows that this statement is more shared by those respondents who associate sexual orientation with human choice or disagree with any of the statements. Perhaps homosexuality in youth is more related to rebellion, disobedience, and positioning than to one aspect of the diversity of human sexuality.

Compared to the study from 2016, respondents' foreign policy orientation is more pronounced concerning the US, the EU, and Russia, and it also shows some tendency to associate with the Homophobia Index. In particular, respondents who support closer ties with the US and the EU are more accepting toward homosexuals than those who prefer more distant or similar relationship.

Myths and notions about other aspects of homosexuality also affect the homophobia index. Respondents who fully or partially agree with the myths surrounding the universality of homophobia, historical immutability ("Attitudes towards homosexuality have always been negative and still stand so everywhere"), legitimacy ("the number of homosexuals will increase if society does not assert heterosexuality as the only correct form of relationships"), the "unnaturalness" of homosexuality ("Homosexuality is not found in animals and other living beings other than humans") and its pathology ("Homosexuality is a curable disease") have a higher homophobia index than those who disagree or have a neutral position.⁹⁰

The parts of the myths that are combined with conventionally perceived symbolic and realistic threat factors, along with right-wing authoritarianism, attitudes toward gender roles and equality, and gay/lesbian stereotypes, along with the binary model of sex, have a significant impact on the homophobia index.

Much of the research conducted abroad shows that public attitudes toward gays are more hostile than toward lesbians. The scale used in the study allows for an assessment of attitudes toward lesbians (ATL) and gays (ATG) separately. The results of the 2016 survey showed different results from other countries in terms of attitudes toward lesbians/gays: attitudes toward lesbians were more negative than toward gays. A comparison of the mean rates of subscales

in terms of different socio-demographic characteristics showed that this tendency was maintained in terms of place of residence, age group and education. According to the study of 2021, homophobia is less pronounced toward both, gays and lesbians, although the difference between attitudes toward gays and lesbians is statistically insignificant. It can be said that the attitude toward lesbians/gays in Georgia is not asymmetric, as it is in other countries.

Changes in attitudes toward both lesbians and gays are more pronounced in female respondents than in male respondents. As in 2016, female respondents are less hostile to both gays and lesbians than male respondents. Negative attitudes toward lesbians among respondents of both sex decreased more than such attitudes toward gays.

Analysis of the data by age shows that changes in attitudes toward lesbians were reflected in almost all age groups, while changes in attitudes toward gays in the older age group were less pronounced.

Attitudes toward gays/lesbians are influenced by attitudes toward gender-neutral women/men ("Feminine men cause discomfort", "Masculine women cause discomfort") and stereotypes about lesbians and gays that look more like gender inversions ("Most gays look and act like women", "Most lesbians look and act like men"). However, low acceptance of a nonconforming man has a stronger effect on attitudes toward both lesbians and gays than a negative attitude toward a non-gender-nonconforming woman.

90 $F(1, 1258) = 41.568, p = 0.000, ES = 0.117$; $F(1, 1225) = 196.249, p = 0.000, ES = 0.391$; $F(1, 1120) = 54.804, p = 0.000, ES = 0.164$; $F(1, 957) = 40.038, p = 0.000, ES = 0.144$.

Biphobia

- Like homophobia and transphobia, compared to 2016, biphobia also shows a decreasing trend.
- The present study replicates the following trends identified in the study from 2016:
 - o A significant proportion of respondents found it difficult to answer questions related to biphobia that measure respondent perceptions of bisexuality as one of the categories of sexual orientation. Respondents were more likely to answer questions that measured tolerance but found it difficult to answer questions concerning “stability” of bisexual orientation.
 - o Biphobic attitudes in society are more powerful than homophobic ones.
 - o Attitudes toward bisexual men are more negative than toward gays.
 - o Contact/acquaintance with a member of the LGBT(Q)I group affects the level of biphobia.

In contrast to the study from 2016, the difference in the biphobia index was statistically significant in terms of respondents' gender and age as well as place of residence: women, young people and respondents living in the capital were less likely to express negative attitudes than older men in rural and other urban areas. In other words, changes in attitudes are more pronounced among young people, women, and respondents living in the capital.

To study bisexuality and attitudes toward bisexuals, the questionnaire used in the study (ARBS;⁹¹ Mohr and Rochlen, 1999) included two subscales, one of which assesses attitudes toward members of the group (ARBS

Tolerance) while the other shows how respondents perceive bisexuality as an orientation (ARBS Stability).⁹²

Table #20

Mean scores of the biphobia scale, the tolerance and stability subscales, and bisexual female/male attitudes, 2016 and 2021

Biphobia index	2016			2021		
	N	M	Std.	N	M	Std.
ARBS_FM	1288	3.93	0.512	1168	3.53	0.817
ARBS_tolerance	1720	4.36	0.642	1303	3.82	1.068
ARBS_stability	1143	3.60	0.529	1042	3.32	0.693
ARBS_M	1331	4.07	0.624	1064	3.52	0.816
ARBS_F	1324	3.79	0.534	1176	3.47	0.92

Abbreviations: ARBS_FM – biphobia; ARBS_tolerance – subscale of tolerance; ARBS_stability – subscale of stability; ARBS_M – attitude toward bisexual men; ARBS_F – attitude toward bisexual women (0 minimum, 5 maximum).

Like homophobia and transphobia, the biphobia index also shows a declining tendency, compared to the results of 2016. The changes were almost equally reflected in both the stability and tolerance scales.⁹³

As in the 2016 study, in contrast to the ARBS Tolerance subscale, respondents found it difficult to respond to knowledge-related statements regarding the stability of bisexuality as an orientation (e.g., “Bisexuality is a stable sexual orientation for men”, “Women who call themselves bisexual are temporarily experimenting with their sexuality”). Such a distribution of responses clearly indicates a lack of adequate information about sexuality, sexual orientation and, in particular, bisexuality in society.⁹⁴ Respondents found it particularly difficult to respond in the older age group and in rural and urban areas (except the capital).

91 For the Biphobia index, Cronbach's alpha = 0.85. For the Tolerance subscale, Cronbach's alpha = 0.88. For the Stability subscale, Cronbach's alpha = 0.67.

92 Correlation between subscales $r(1303) = 0.759$, $p < 0.001$.

93 For the Biphobia index ARBS_FM: $t(1167) = -16.935$, $p = 0.000$; ARBS_tolerance: $t(1303) = -18.26$, $p = 0.000$; ARBS_stability: $t(1041) = -12.894$, $p = 0.000$.

94 Respondents who answered questions about tolerance but left unanswered or “difficult to answer” referred to stability-related statements, not only on the tolerance scale, but also on those with higher rates of homophobia, transphobia, and right-wing authoritarianism scale. We can assume that the position of a significant part of such respondents is not only related to the problem of knowledge but also relates to a negative attitude.

The percentage of respondents who expressed a clearly negative attitude toward bisexuals and agreed with the opinion that bisexuality is “sick” (“Bisexual men are sick”), immoral and depraved (“Male bisexuality is immoral”, “Male bisexuality is a perversion”, “Female bisexuality is unnatural”) decreased by an average of 10%-15%.⁹⁵

As in the 2016 study, attitudes toward bisexual men are more negative than toward bisexual women ($t(1033) = 3.306, p = 0.000$). The trend is maintained in terms of gender and age as well. The results of the present study show that there was a significant difference between attitudes according to the gender of the respondent: just as in the case of homophobia and transphobia, female respondents are less likely to have a negative attitude toward bisexual people than male respondents. The tendency is maintained in terms of age and settlement type as well.

According to the Tolerance subscale, respondents living in Tbilisi have a higher acceptance rate than those in rural and other urban areas. Attitudes toward bisexuals also differ in terms of age: 18-to-24-year-olds are more tolerant of bisexual people than older respondents. The Tolerance index decreases with age: the older the age group of the respondent, the more negative his/her/their attitude toward bisexual women and men. Contact/acquaintance with a member of the LGBT(Q)I group affects the level of biphobia. Attitudes toward bisexual men are more negative than toward bisexual women ($t(1036) = 3.306, p < 0.005$).

Research has shown that biphobia is closely related to both homophobia ($r(1333) = 0.665, p < 0.001$) and transphobia ($r(1293) = 0.700, p < 0.001$). Respondents with high levels of homophobia and transphobia also show more negative attitudes toward bisexuals.

The comparison of the homophobia and biphobia indexes echoes the trend shown in the 2016 study: biphobic attitudes in society are stronger than hom-

ophobic ones ($t(1112) = -4.982, p = 0.000$). This can be explained by the dichotomous model of sexuality (hetero/homosexuality), which views bisexuality as an “unstable” orientation, a kind of transitional phase between heterosexuality and homosexuality. In other words, bisexuals are perceived as people who violate the existing two-dimensional model of gender/sexual stratification.

Attitudes toward trans people and gender-nonconforming women/men

- Compared to 2016, transphobic attitudes are less pronounced. The changes affected the knowledge and emotional component of the scale more than the willingness to engage in aggressive behavior.
 - Significantly reduced is the share of respondents who perceive transgender, nonconforming gender expression, and cross-dressing as a disease or who morally judge such people.
 - The binary model of gender (“People are either men or women”) is less popular.
- The proportion of respondents who are willing to support a friend if he/she/they decide(s) to have sex reassignment surgery has increased.
- The changes are markedly asymmetric and are more pronounced in female, young, and respondents living in capital, than in male, older, and other urban or rural respondents.
- As of 2016, gender remains a significant predictor of transphobia. Men are markedly more negative toward transgender and gender-nonconforming people than women are. This tendency is maintained in terms of age and education.
- In terms of acceptance, asymmetry is also noticeable with respect to gender. Compared to 2016, the acceptance of gender-nonconforming men has increased more than that of gender-nonconforming women, which can

⁹⁵ The share of negative attitudes has been reduced mainly at the expense of those who this time take a neutral position or choose to find it “difficult” to respond.

be explained by the group's different visibility policy in recent years.

- Attitudes toward gender norms and equality (both, family and radical gender asymmetry factors) have a significant impact on the transphobia index.
- Like homophobia, in ethnic Georgian respondents, the negative impact of right-wing authoritarianism on the degree of transphobia is reinforced by both perceived symbolic and “realistic” threats. In the case of ethnic minorities, only perceived “realistic” threats matter.

The Genderism⁹⁶ and Transphobia Scale (GTS) was used to measure attitudes toward trans people and gender-nonconforming people (Hill and Willoughby, 2005).⁹⁷ The scale consists of 30 questions and 2 subscales, one of which measures the behavioral component of addiction (GTS gender bashing) while the other measures the cognitive and affective components (GTS genderism and transphobia).

Table #21
Mean scores of the transphobia scale and subscales, 2016 and 2021

Index	2016			2021		
	N	M	Std.	N	M	Std.
GTS	1915	4.70	0.885	1516	4.15	1.295
GTS_gender bashing	1918	2.65	1.399	1537	2.34	1.471
GTS_genderism and transphobia	1839	5.34	0.897	1481	4.70	1.444

Abbreviations: GTS – attitude toward trans people and gender-nonconforming women/men; GTS_gender bashing – readiness for aggressive behavior toward trans and gender-nonconforming people; GTS_genderism and transphobia – a subscale of genderism and transphobia (0 minimum, 7 maximum).

Like homophobia and biphobia, the mean values of both the GTS and its subscales are lower than in 2016.⁹⁸

The changes affected the cognitive and affective components of the transphobia index more than the behavioral ones. Attitudes toward individual statements have changed so much that they need to be evaluated separately. For example, the attitude toward the statements that describe the binary model of sex has changed dramatically and, like essentialist notions about other aspects of sexuality, has had and continues to have a significant impact on homophobia and biphobia; these statements include “God made two sexes and two sexes only” and “People are either men or women”. Compared to 2016, both the first statement and the second statement have a smaller share of respondents (16.7% and 17.9%, respectively) who have the same perceptions about the binary model of sex. The share of respondents who consider sex reassignment surgery to be morally wrong has decreased by 18.3%. The proportion of respondents who considered cross-dressing as a disease (“A man who dresses as a woman is sick”) or considered transgender as a disease (“Women who see themselves as men are abnormal”) decreased by almost one-fifth (20.1%), to 20.5%. The incidence of those who believe that gender nonconformity needs treatment is reduced by a quarter (24.7%) (“Feminine boys should be cured of their problem”). The share of respondents who fully or more or less agree with the opinion “I would avoid talking to a woman if I knew she had a surgically created penis and testicles” decreased by 15.7%. The distribution of responses to the statement “If a friend wanted to have his penis removed in order to become a woman, I would openly support him” shows that the share

⁹⁶ Genderism (like heterosexism) is an ideology that reinforces the discrepancy between biological sex and gender or reinforces the assessment of gender nonconformity. It is a cultural notion, a belief that seeks to judge and evaluate people who do not conform to stereotypical notions about women and men. Genderism, like heterosexism, is also used for social pressure to instill feelings of shame and guilt in a person who is gender-nonconforming and/or inconsistent with popular perceptions of gender roles and related behaviors (Hill and Willoughby, 2005).

⁹⁷ The overall transphobia index in our quantitative study is 125.40 (N = 1516, SD = 39.631).

⁹⁸ GTS: $t(1515) = -16.572, p = 0.000$; GTS_bashing: $t(1505) = -8.216, p = 0.000$; GTS_genderism and transphobia: $t(1511) = -17.355, p = 0.000$.

of “supporters” increased by 10%, while the share of those who refused support in 2016 was reduced by 20.5%.

As in the study from 2016, both the overall transphobia index and the mean scores of both subscales differed significantly in terms of gender: male respondents were much more negative toward transgender and gender-nonconforming people than female respondents were. It should be noted that the difference between female and male respondents is more pronounced in 2021 than in 2016, which indicates that male respondents find it more difficult to change their attitudes than females.

The trend is maintained in terms of age, contact/acquaintance and education: all three variables affect women’s attitudes more than men’s. For example, the difference in age groups between men in terms of the transphobia index is smaller than in the case of women. Settlement type and education level in men do not show a statistically significant relationship with the overall transphobia index and the subscale of genderism and transphobia. As for gender bashing, men with incomplete general education are more likely to show a willingness to engage in aggressive behavior than respondents with higher academic education. The difference in the type of settlement is also interesting: the negative attitudes of male respondents living in Tbilisi are less often “converted” into aggressive behavior toward transgender and gender-nonconforming people than in other urban and rural areas. Even in the case of contact, having an acquaintance has a moderate effect on the degree of transphobia for men, while for women the effect is quite high.⁹⁹

Generally, both the overall GTS index and the mean rates of the subscales, like those of homophobia and biphobia, differ significantly by type of settlement. Respondents living in Tbilisi are more accepting of transgender and gender-nonconforming people than the respondents living in other urban or rural settlements.

The older the age group of the respondent, the more negative his/her/their attitude toward transgender and gender-nonconforming people.¹⁰⁰ Respondents of the 18-24 age group show the highest acceptance. The difference between the attitudes in the upper age groups is less pronounced.

Contact/acquaintance with a group member also affects acceptance of transgender and gender-nonconforming people. Those who know at least one member of the group are more sympathetic to trans and gender-nonconforming people than those who know no one.¹⁰¹

Analysis of the indexes by ethnicity showed that there is a statistically significant difference between the overall index and the subscales of genderism and transphobia; however, the effect of the variable is quite weak. When it comes to aggressive behavior, the differences between groups are statistically insignificant. Based on the comparison of regression models, it can be said that despite the different predictors, no significant differences in ethnicity were observed in terms of the transphobia index.

99 ES = 0.045 for men and ES = 0.101 for women.

100 For the GTS: $F(1,1515) = 30.027$, $p = 0.000$, $ES = 0.090$. For gender bashing: $F(1,1505) = 10,562$, $p = 0.000$, $ES = 0.034$. For the Genderism and Transphobia subscale: $F = 30,830$, $p = 0.000$, $ES = 0.093$.

101 In this study, we also checked the indexes of respondents with missed answers: those who refused to share information about contact/acquaintance with a group member had the same low rates of transphobia as those who knew group members and, conversely, respondents who found it most difficult to answer.

The degree of transphobia, in addition to socio-demographic variables, is influenced by the RWA, perceived symbolic and “realistic” threats, and respondent’s attitude toward gender roles and equality. As in the case of homophobia, if the level of transphobia for ethnic Georgian respondents is affected by both perceived symbolic and “realistic” threats, then in the case of ethnic minorities, only “realistic” threats affect the degree of transphobia. Such a picture, on the one hand, is due to the greater prevalence of myths about perceived “realistic” threats among members of ethnic minorities and, on the other hand, the content of the statements united under the factor of perceived symbolic threats.

The correlation matrix shows linear positive correlations between homophobia and transphobia ($r = 0.708$, $p < 0.001$). In addition to common predictors, the close link between the homo/transphobia scales also suggests that gender nonconformity is often seen as a “sign” of homosexuality; common stereotypes about gays and lesbians are linked to gender inversion (“Most gays look and act like women”, “Most lesbians look and act like men”). Studies show that masculine women, feminist men, and transgender people may be at higher risk of violence not because they are homosexual but because they violate gender norms (Namaste, 1996). It is, therefore, logical to assume that those who exhibit a high degree of transphobia will also be homophobic and vice versa.

The Genderism and Transphobia Scale includes several identical questions, three of which address gender-neutral women and three men, which allows us to compare attitudes and willingness to engage in aggressive behavior toward gender-nonconforming women and men.

- Feminine men make me feel uncomfortable. / Masculine women make me feel uncomfortable.
- I would tease a man because of his feminine appearance or behavior. / I would tease a woman because of her masculine appearance or behavior.
- I would behave violently toward a man because he was too feminine. / I would behave violently toward a woman because she was too masculine.

A comparison of the data shows that attitudes toward a gender-nonconforming man have changed more than toward a woman. Although the trend remains the same as in 2016 – society has a more negative attitude toward gender-nonconforming men than toward women ($t(1491) = -2.609$, $p = 0.009$) – the difference in attitudes has narrowed (“Feminine men make me feel uncomfortable”, “Masculine women make me feel uncomfortable”), as well as in terms of the readiness for aggressive behavior (“I would behave violently toward a man because he was too feminine”, “I would behave violently toward a woman because she was too masculine”) ($t(1491) = -4.044$, $p = 0.000$). As for the statement “I would tease a man because of his feminine appearance or behavior”, “I would tease a woman because of her masculine appearance or behavior”, the paired t-test showed that the difference is not statistically significant. The unequal nature of the change in attitudes can be explained by the higher visibility of trans women: the visibility of trans women has increased dramatically in the past few years, and there is only one activist among trans men who is openly positioned and seen in the media.

Figure #23
Homophobia index, by foreign policy orientation

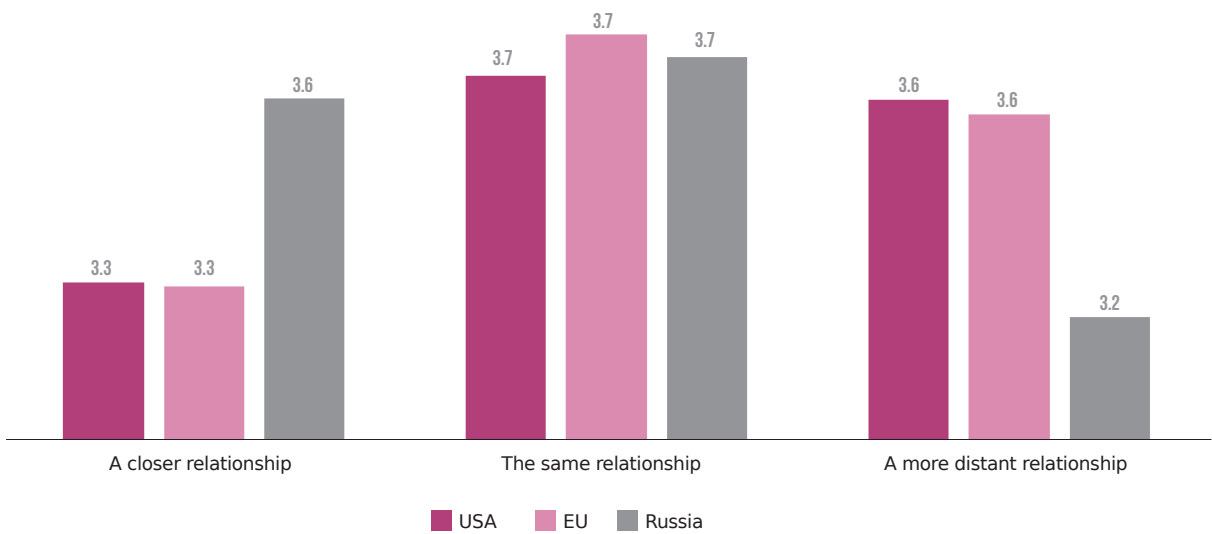


Figure #24
Homophobia index, by sex, age, and settlement type, 2016 and 2021

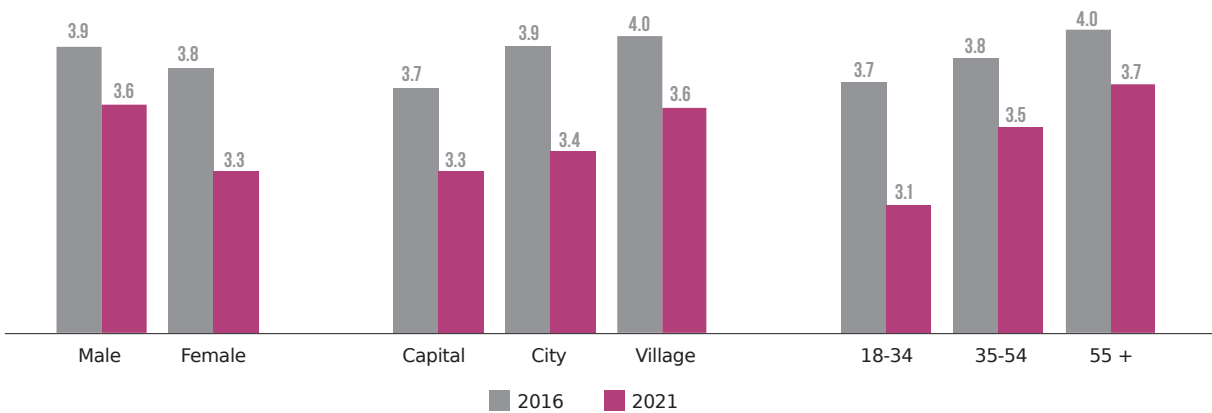


Figure #25
Biphobia index, by sex, age, and settlement type, 2016 and 2021

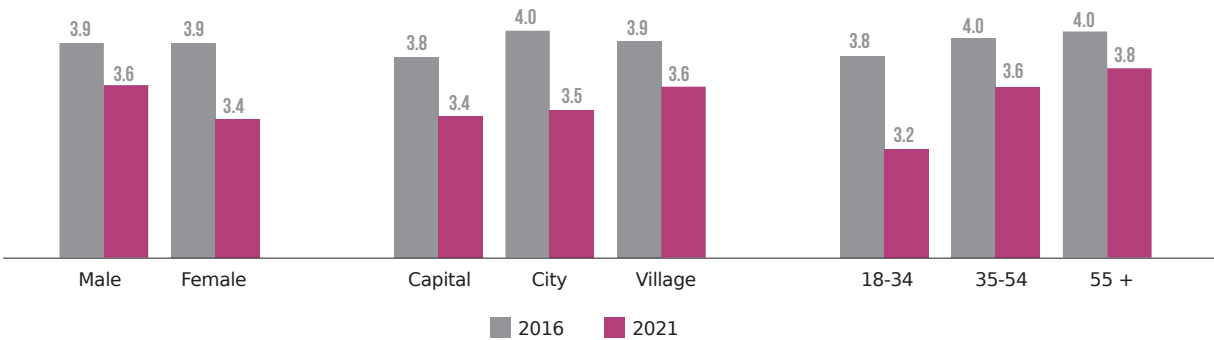


Figure #26
Transphobia index, by sex, age, and settlement type, 2016 and 2021

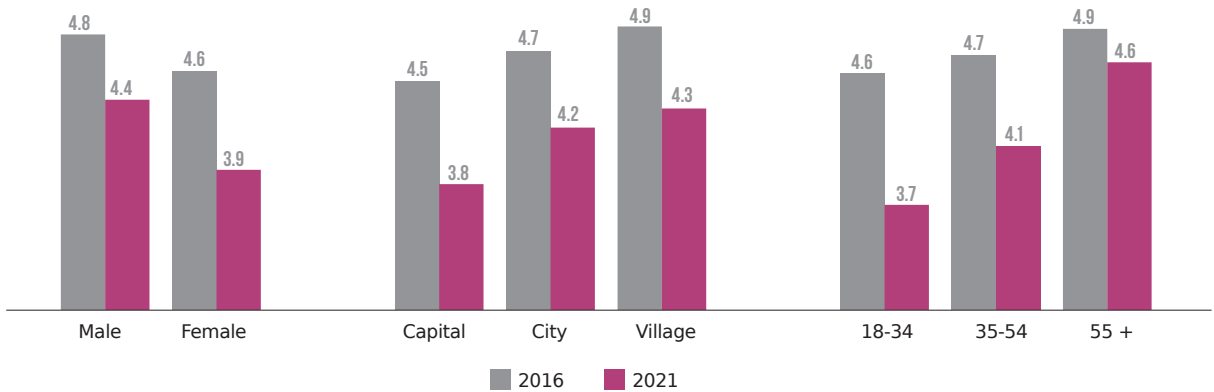


Figure #27
Attitudes toward lesbians and gays, by sex, 2016 and 2021

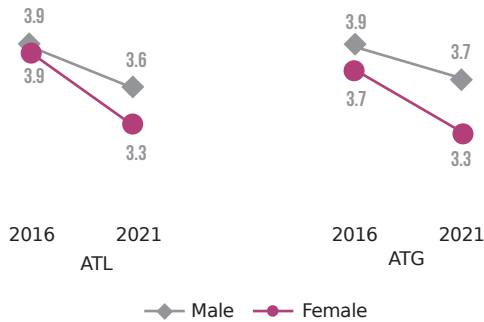
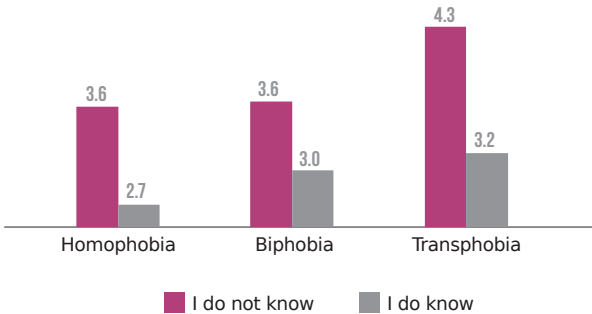


Figure #28
Homo/bi/transphobia index, by existence of a contact



5.6. Attitudes toward the civil rights of LGBT(Q)I people¹⁰²

- Compared to 2016, the public is more positive about LGBT(Q)I rights activists and more accepting of the group's legal equality issues. Among society's views:
 - o The percentage of opponents of gay marriage decreased by 14.4% (from 88.8% to 74.6%), while the number of supporters increased from 4.7% to 10.3%.
 - o Opposition to the right of adoption for gay/lesbian couples fell from about 82.3% to 67.6% and 66.9%, respectively; the number of those who did not agree with the ban increased by 15%.
 - o Attitudes toward activists have also changed. The share of respondents who evaluated their activities negatively decreased by almost 20% (from 74.5% to 56.8%), while the number of supporters almost doubled. However, as in 2016, respondents have a more negative attitude toward activists than toward homosexuals in general.
 - o Fewer respondents perceive talking about the legal equality of the LGBT(Q)I group as "gay propaganda" and "imposing their lifestyle on others" (76.5% in 2016 versus 55.9% in 2021).
 - o Although more than half (53%) of respondents still support the view that LGBT(Q)I people should be barred from the right to assemble and express themselves by law, compared to 2016, the percentage of such respondents has decreased by almost 25%; and the share of those respondents who consider such a restriction unacceptable have doubled: only 14.6% in 2016 versus 27.1% in 2021.

- Two in five respondents (39.5%) believe that LGBT(Q)I people are protected in Georgia. More than one-fifth of respondents (22%) completely or largely disagree, and almost as many (20.8%) found it difficult to answer or refused to answer.

The state's efforts to respond to the reality of violence and discrimination based on SOGIE have come under negative scrutiny. Almost two in five respondents (38.6%) think that the state does not respond properly to the incidents of violence and discrimination against the LGBT(Q)I group. Only 30.7% of respondents rate the state's response as appropriate.

Unlike the results of 2016, this time the connection between the hierarchy of values and LGBT(Q)I rights was revealed. Respondents who name human rights/freedom of speech in the top three values take a markedly different, positive stance on LGBT(Q)I human rights and equality issues.

The changes are most pronounced concerning issues such as employment in the field of education and freedom of assembly and expression.

The changes affected women, young people and respondents living in the capital more than men, the elderly and other urban/rural respondents.

Despite the increase in acceptance, the ranking of issues looks the same as in 2016: society has the lowest acceptance rate of same-sex marriage and adoption issues.

The right of same-sex couples to adopt, as well as the right to marry, is equated with "privilege" and not with equality. Respondents who largely or completely agree with the view that "LGBT(Q)I people are fighting for privileges and not for equality" are extremely negative about the right to adopt.

Attitudes toward gender norms and equality (family and radical gender asymmetry factors) have a significant impact on both marriage and adoption rights. Those who see the idea of gender equality

¹⁰² Rights-related statements include discrimination in the workplace (restriction of the right to work with children and adolescents) and the right to freedom of marriage, adoption, assembly, and expression. These are the issues that radical groups, politicians, and clergy who are the main actors in the language of homophobic hatred are endlessly speculating on.

as the oppression of men and take a radical stance strongly agree that “when women get rights, they deprive men of those rights” and that “when women work, they deprive men of the opportunity to work”.

The right to adopt, among other variables, is influenced by perceived symbolic threats and not perceived “realistic” threats or considerations of etiology.

Compared to lesbians and gays, the employment of transgender people in the field of education is assessed negatively by more respondents. Men, respondents who have a teenager under the age of 18 in the family, and ethnic Azerbaijanis find it more justified to restrict the right of LGBT(Q)I people to employment in the field of education.

For a third of respondents (33%), May 17 is not associated with either Family Purity Day or the International Day Against Homophobia. For almost as many respondents (35.5%), this day is associated with Family Purity Day; and for 12.9%, it is either associated with both topics or is just a day to fight homophobia. Most of the ethnic minorities found it difficult to answer this question or indicated that this day was not associated with any of the options. Respondents for whom this day is associated with a holiday introduced by the church are ethnic Georgians or Armenians. None of the ethnic Azerbaijani respondents found this day to be associated with Family Purity Day. Respondents living in Tbilisi are more likely to associate this day with Family Purity Day than respondents living in urban or rural areas.

Contact/acquaintance with an LGBT(Q)I group member has a significant impact on attitudes toward both human rights defenders and legal equality issues.¹⁰³

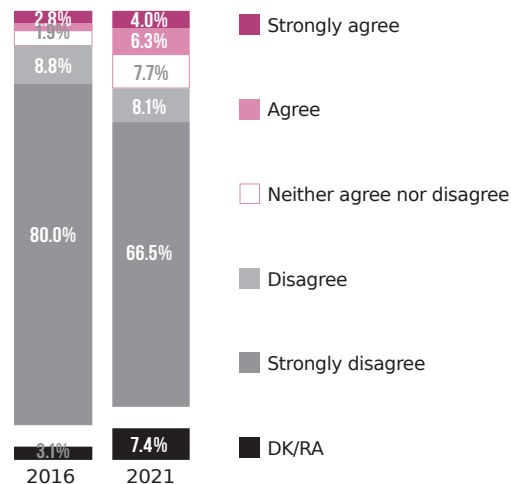
Attitudes toward same-sex marriage

Overall, compared to 2016, the right to same-sex marriage was considered unacceptable by a smaller proportion of respondents (88.8% in 2016 versus 74.6% in 2021).

Regarding legal issues, the view of marriage and adoption rights is the least shared among the respondents. The share of respondents who take a radical position (“I completely disagree”) is 66.5%, while 7.7% of respondents choose a neutral position, and 10.3% fully or somewhat support the statement.¹⁰⁴

Figure #29

Attitudes toward the right to marry for same-sex partners (“The law should allow marriage between same-sex partners”), 2016 and 2021



¹⁰³ The assessment of the role of a contact may be exaggerated in this case. Due to the lack of data, it is difficult to generalize how the respondent's religiosity, right-wing authoritarianism, traditional gender roles, and attitudes toward nonconforming people affect this relationship. A superficial analysis (used to test the moderation effect (PROCESS v3. 5, by Andrew F. Hayes)) shows that all of the above-mentioned factors play a buffer role and not only reduce the effect of the contact on both groups' attitudes toward their equal rights but also are negative. Contact features such as distance and the source of the coming out are necessary to draw more solid conclusions, but the data are scarce.

¹⁰⁴ According to a survey conducted in 2012, marriage is widely perceived as a social status, i.e., a means of self-realization (according to 75.4% of respondents). Moreover, 95.4% believe that marriage is important for the upbringing of a child, while for 81.6%, marriage is important for the material support of the family. To what extent marriage is perceived as a contract between two adults that gives rise to adding new rights, this study does not provide an answer. See: Kekelia, T. Gavashelishvili, E. and T. Bregvadze, *Sexuality in Modern Georgia: Discourse and Behavior* (Tbilisi: Ilia State University Publishing, 2012).

Respondents who know at least one member of the LGBT(Q)I group are relatively less likely to express a negative attitude toward their right to marry than respondents who do not know anyone.

Those who did not name “family” in their top three values expressed less categorically negative attitudes toward the right to gay marriage. Specifically, 82.6% of respondents for whom the family has a high priority value oppose gay marriage, in contrast to respondents whose three priority values do not include “family” (59.2%). The differences are relatively weakly highlighted between respondents who named or did not name religion and homeland in their top three. Respondents who named human rights and freedom of speech in their top three also show a markedly different attitude toward gay marriage.

Unlike other rights, the position against the right to marry is almost equally “fed” by both mythical and realistic threats to myths and opinions about the universality of homophobia and the “unnaturalness” of homosexuality. Inverted gender stereotypes about gays and lesbians and heteronormative perceptions of the family also influence attitudes toward the right to marry. The index of religiosity contributes to negative attitudes toward the right to marry.

Analysis of the data by ethnicity shows that respondents who identified themselves as ethnic Armenians and were particularly conservative about gender and sexual norms¹⁰⁵ had radically negative attitudes toward both same-sex marriage and adoption rights.

Attitudes toward the right of same-sex couples to adopt and raise children

In the study from 2016, a question was formulated (“**A homosexual couple should have the same right to adopt and raise a child as a heterosexual couple**”) that did not allow direct comparisons. Although, like the right to marry, society as a whole maintains a sharply negative attitude toward the issue, the 2021 survey shows that attitudes toward gay and lesbian couples regarding adoption are much softer.

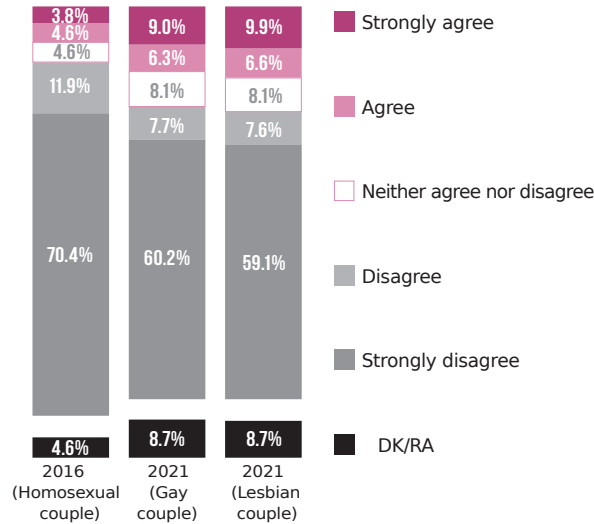
For the statement “A gay couple should have the same right to adopt a child as a heterosexual couple”, 67.9% of respondents completely or largely disagree, with the share of respondents who take a radical position being particularly high (60.2% stating “I completely disagree”). Moreover, 8.1% of respondents choose a neutral position, while 15.3% fully or somewhat agree with the statement. As for lesbian couples, the opinions of the respondents are distributed in almost the same ratio; however, the comparison of the data shows that there is a small but statistically significant difference between the attitudes ($t(1457) = 4.891$, $p = 0.000$). Male respondents are equally negative about lesbian and gay parenting, while female respondents are relatively more receptive in terms of lesbians.¹⁰⁶

105 Both family and radical gender asymmetry factors are higher than average among ethnic Armenian respondents compared to other ethnic Georgians and Azerbaijanis. Ethnic Armenian respondents also show more radical attitudes toward female/male sexual behavior. (In the regression model, when controlling ethnic Armenians with other variables, the factor of family asymmetry weighs heavily; for Georgians, both the factor of family and radical gender asymmetry is important; and for Azerbaijanis, the factor of radical gender asymmetry is important).

106 Paired T test shows that for men $p > 0.05$, for female respondents the difference is statistically significant: $t(777) = 3.505$, $p = 0.000$.

Figure #30

Attitudes toward the right of gay/lesbian couples to adopt and raise children (“Homosexual/gay/lesbian couples should have the same right to adopt and raise children as heterosexual couples”), 2016 and 2021



The knowledge about “etiology” of homosexuality has no influence on the attitude toward adoption right.¹⁰⁷

Respondents’ attitudes toward gender norms (family asymmetry factor) have a significant impact on their opinion about adoption rights. The differences are obvious even in terms of separate statements: respondents who more or less share the statements that “a woman’s main duty is to take care of the family” and “changing diapers is mostly a woman’s business” are extremely negative regarding adopting rights.¹⁰⁸

Among respondents who ranked human rights and the freedom of speech among the top three priority values, the proportion of supporters of adoption right for same-sex couples was almost twice as high

(30%) as the respondents who were not mentioned (15%).

Index of religiosity and respondents’ contact/acquaintance with an LGBT(Q)I group member also affect their attitude toward the right to adopt. Those who have a higher index of religiosity or do not know any members of the group show a less tolerant attitude toward the issue of adoption.

The right to adopt for lesbian and gay people, as well as the right to marry, is equated with “privilege” and not with equality. Respondents who largely or completely agree with the view that “LGBT(Q)I people are fighting for privileges and not for equality” is extremely negative about the right to adopt.¹⁰⁹ The impact of perceived symbolic threats on the right to adopt is stronger than perceived “realistic” threats or knowledge about the “etiology” of homosexuality.

In some cases, lesbian couples’ right to adopt is faced with even more hostility than gay couples’ right, particularly for respondents who see the idea of gender equality as oppression against men (strongly agreeing that “when women get rights, they deprive men of them” and “when women work, they deprive men of the opportunity to work”). As such, respondents are more opposed to the right of adoption for lesbians than for gay couples.¹¹⁰

Attitudes toward LGBT(Q)I human rights activists

It can be said that the attitude toward LGBT(Q)I people’s rights have changed compared to the results of 2016: the number of respondents who positively assess the activities of activists has almost doubled. This time, almost every fifth respondent (18.4%) fully or largely agrees with the statement “LGBT(Q)I peo-

107 Differences between proponents of different theories are statistically insignificant, $p > 0.05$.

108 Differences between attitudes towards adoption rights for gays and for lesbians are insignificant. It seems that lesbianism itself is excluded from the gender category of “motherhood”.

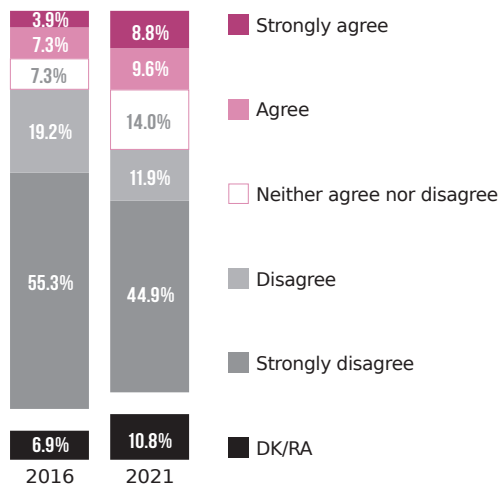
109 $F(4,1276) = 38.172$, $p = 0.000$, $ES = 0.107$ in the case of gay couples; $F(4,1277) = 36.163$, $p = 0.000$, $ES = 0.102$ in the case of lesbian couples.

110 Lesbians, like feminists, may be perceived as an interventionist group that deprives men of “privileges”.

ple who do not hide their orientation/identity and fight for their rights are valued for their courage”. However, the attitude toward them as a whole remains in the field of negative evaluation: 56.8% of the respondents partially or completely do not agree with the statement, and 14% neutrally assess the activities of LGBT(Q)I human rights defenders. The share of respondents who have an extremely negative attitude toward LGBT(Q)I human rights defenders is particularly high (44.9%).

Figure #31

Attitudes toward LGBT(Q)I activists and human rights defenders (“LGBT(Q)I people who do not hide their orientation/identity and fight for their rights are valued for their courage”), 2016 and 2021



Among those who know at least one member of the group, the share of respondents who positively assess the activities of LGBT(Q)I human rights defenders is almost two and a half times higher (37.1%) than among those who do not know any member of the group (15.7%).¹¹¹

Respondents who shows high rate on the RWA scale, believe in myths and shares opinions about the

„universality“ and „rationality“ of homophobia, tends to assess LGBT(Q)I human rights defenders more negatively.

Overall, as in 2016, respondents are more negative toward activists than toward homosexuals in general ($t(1245) = -10.021, p = 0.000$). Such aggression toward the activities of activists and human rights defenders is directly related to the issue of increasing the group's visibility, as well as bringing legal issues into the public discourse, which is automatically understood as “propaganda of depravity”. Given these factors, those who see social factors as the “cause” of homosexuality are more aggressive toward LGBT(Q)I human rights defenders.

Perceptions of the struggle for legal equality as gay propaganda

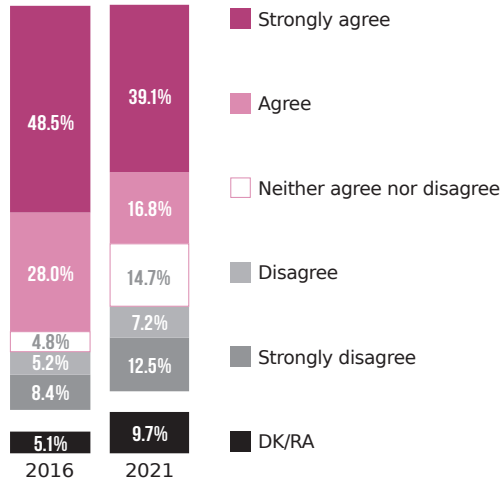
To rationalize anti-LGBT(Q)I behavior or other expression of homophobic attitude, aggressive homophobes used the same mechanisms as in case of violence against women and try to shift the burden of responsibility from the aggressor to the victim.

In the case of the LGBT(Q)I group, the struggle for legal equality or self-expression is seen as “imposing one's way of life on others” and/or gay propaganda. Regarding the statement “**LGBT(Q)I people should be protected, but gays/lesbians should not impose their lifestyle on others**”, 55.9% of respondents fully or partially agree, 19.7% partially or completely disagree, and 14.7% have a neutral position.

¹¹¹ Respondents (30%) who refused to answer and did not indicate whether they knew a member of the group also showed kindness to LGBT(Q)I people.

Figure #32

Perception of LGBT(Q)I equality as propaganda (“LGBT(Q)I people should be protected, but gays/lesbians should not impose their lifestyle on others”), 2016 and 2021



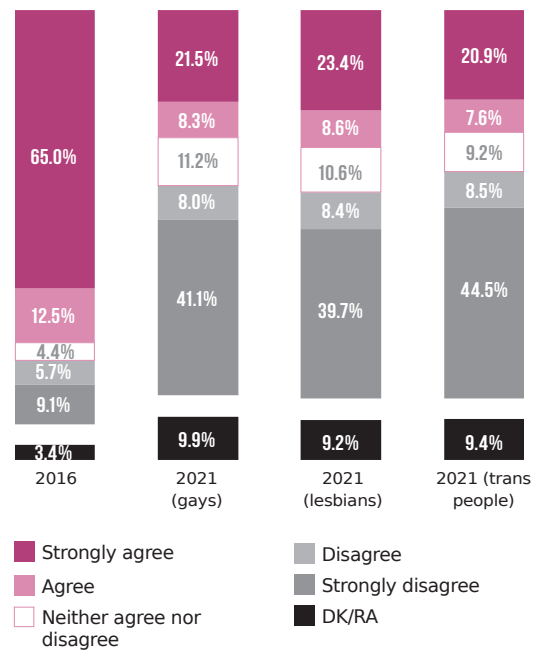
Although more than half of the respondents (55.9%) still perceive LGBT(Q)I people’s fight for legal equality as “gay propaganda”, compared to 2016, the share of such respondents has decreased by 20.6%. Respondents who live with a teenager under the age of 18 in the family are more likely to agree with this view. In terms of marital status, respondents who have never been married are less likely to agree with this statement than those who are currently or were previously married. The opinion is mainly supported by those who believe in the myths and opinions about the universality of homophobia (“They have always had and still have a negative attitude toward homosexuals”) and rationalization (“the number of homosexuals will increase if society does not assert heterosexuality as the only correct form of relationships”). The “unnaturalness” of homosexuality (“Homosexuality is not found in animals and other living things other than humans”) does not recognize the problems of LGBT(Q)I equality (“In fact, LGBT(Q)I people are properly protected in our country”) and has a high rate on the scale of right-wing authoritarianism.

Attitudes toward employment at educational institutions

The statement used in the 2016 survey (“Homosexuals should not have the right to work with children and adolescents”) was divided into three statements (to specify gay, lesbian, and trans people), which allows us to assess whether respondents’ attitudes differ in this respect in terms of gender or gender identity. Although the results of the answers to these statements cannot be directly compared to each other, as a general trend, it can still be said that the strongest change in terms of attitudes toward legal issues has occurred concerning these issues.

Figure #33

Attitudes toward the restriction of employment of LGBTI persons at educational institutions (“Homosexuals/gay/lesbian/trans people should not have the right to work with children and adolescents”), in 2016 and 2021



For the statement “Gays should not have the right to work with children and adolescents”, 49.1% of respondents fully or largely agree, 11.2% choose a neutral position, and 29.8% largely or completely disagree with the opinion. In the case of lesbians, 48.1% of respondents oppose their employment in the education sector, 10.6% choose a neutral position, and almost one in three (32%) do not agree with such restrictions. As for transgender people, 53% of respondents believe that they should not have the right to work with children and adults, 28.5% do not agree with the opinion of having such a restriction, and 9.2% have a neutral position.

Men and those who indicated that an adolescent under the age of 18 is living with him/her/them have a more negative attitude toward the employment of LGBT(Q)I people in the field of education.

Respondents who named family in their top three values have a more negative attitude toward the employment of LGBT(Q)I people in education. Those who named career, social ties, freedom of speech and human rights, however, do not agree with restrictions of a similar nature.

Respondents’ attitudes toward the employment of gays/lesbians in the education sector are not affected by their knowledge on “etiology” of sexual orientation.

The stereotype that LGBT(Q)I people are aggressive is influenced by their attitudes toward the employment of LGBT(Q)I people in education: those who believe in the myth of aggression are less likely to support the employment of lesbian, gay, and transgender people in the field.

In addition to perceived realistic threats (“Most gay/transgender women are sex workers”, “Most gay people are pedophiles”),¹¹² in the case of trans people, perceptions of inverted gender stereotypes have an amplifying effect on negative evaluations.

Knowledge and attitudes toward the condition of LGBT(Q)I persons

Compared to 2016, the percentage of respondents who considered the LGBT(Q)I group to be one of the most discriminated groups in the country decreased.¹¹³ In 2016, more than half of the respondents (55%) agreed with this opinion, while in 2021, the number of such respondents decreased to 38.8%.

Compared to 2016, differences in settlement type and gender are pronounced: residents of the capital and women share this view more than male and rural respondents living in villages and other urban areas.

Direct contact/acquaintance with a group member, as in 2016, remains one of the prerequisites for raising public awareness about the condition of the group.

Those who receive information about the LGBT(Q)I group’s condition and issues from television, the online media or social networks are more likely to support the group’s vulnerability. The opposite is true of respondents who indicated that they did not receive information about these issues from any source.

State response to the violence and discrimination of LGBT(Q)I persons

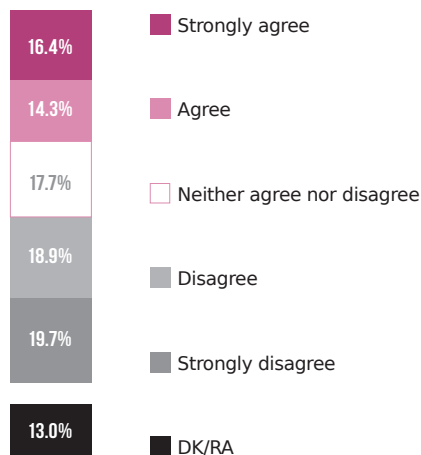
One question was added to the block of questions on rights, specifically about assessing the response of the government to the reality of violence toward LGBT(Q)I persons. In all, 13% of the interviewees found it difficult to answer the question. The share of those respondents – two in five (38.6%) – who think that the government does not respond adequately to the incidents of violence and discrimination of LGBT(Q)I group is more than the share of those who think that the government responds adequately (30.7%). Moreover, 17.7% neither agree nor disagree with this assessment, while 13%, as mentioned above, find the statement difficult to assess.

¹¹² Ethnic Azerbaijanis, who share most of these statements, are more negative about the employment of lesbian, gay, and transgender people in education field than any other ethnic group.

¹¹³ As in the 2016 survey, about one in ten respondents found it difficult to assess the situation of LGBT(Q)I people in the country. Of the 193 respondents who found it difficult to answer, more than half (53.9%) were over 55 years old.

Figure #34

Frequency distribution of responses to the statement
“The government responds adequately to the incidents of
violence and discrimination of LGBT(Q)I persons”



Those who believe in the myth that “LGBT(Q)I persons have their lobby in politics and show business” and think that “LGBT(Q)I persons are fighting for privileges and not for equality” give a positive answer to the question more frequently. A negative answer was chosen by those respondents too who mentioned that they know at least one member of the LGBT(Q)I group. As expected, right-wing authoritarianism significantly influences the assessment of the work done by the government.

Attitudes toward the freedom of assembly and expression

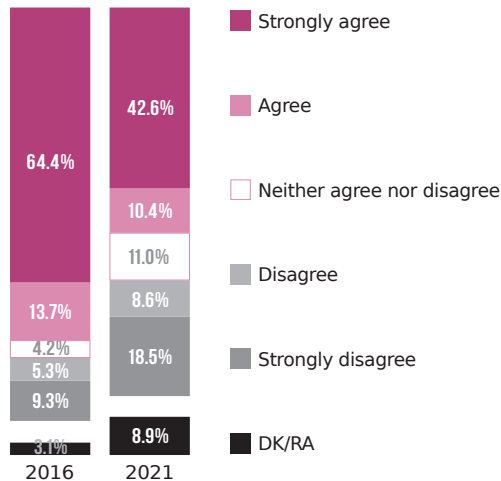
To this day, freedom of assembly and expression for the LGBT(Q)I group remains an issue that is most frequently used in the political instrumentalization of homosexuality. Specifics of the organized anti-gay expressions and their open anti-Western character, the history of which goes further back than the history of the LGBT(Q)I community’s attempt to use the freedom of assembly and expression,¹¹⁴ clearly indicate the geopolitical context of the issue. Even the government representatives who are under the immediate obligation to protect the freedom of expression, in addition to carrying out preventive measures and responding to crime, are frequently trying to justify their inactivity with the “will of the majority”. In his assessment of the tragic events of July 5, 2021 – when aggressive, homophobic groups invaded and destroyed the offices of the organizations “Tbilisi Pride” and “Shame Movement” and attacked the journalists who were there for the Tbilisi Pride March – the Prime Minister of Georgia made a statement in which he mentioned the “will of the 95% of the population” who are against organizing the propagandistic parade in Georgia.¹¹⁵

114 Aghdgomelashvili, E. “The Fight for Public Space”, in *Anti-Gender Movements on Rising the Rise?: Strategizing for Gender Equality in Central and Eastern Europe* (Tbilisi: Heinrich Böll Foundation, 2015).

115 “When the 95% of our population is demonstratively against holding the propagandistic parade, this is something to which we all should obey, my friends. This is the view of the absolute majority of our population and since we’re the government elected by the people, we should consider it, as we have always done. There will be no more cases when it was a minority who used to decide the fate of the majority, the cases of making violent decisions in Georgia.” The statement of the Prime Minister of Georgia on July 12, 2021. Available at https://www.gov.ge/print.php?gg=1&sec_id=556&info_id=79787&lang_id=GEO (March 10, 2022).

Figure #35

Attitudes toward the restriction of the right to assembly and expression for LGBT(Q)I persons (“LGBTI rallies should be banned by law”), 2016 and 2021



Even though more than half of the respondents (53%) are for **legally restricting the right of assembly and expression for LGTBT(Q)I people**, the share of such respondents, in comparison to 2016, is 25% less, while the share of those respondents who find such restrictions unacceptable has grown two-fold (only 14.6% in 2016 versus 27.1% in 2021).

Besides the socio-demographic variables, the positions of respondents also differ in terms of values. Those who mention family among the first three priorities show a drastically negative attitude toward the freedom of assembly and expression for LGBT(Q)I group members. In the case of those who mention either tradition or homeland, the difference is insignificant. The differences are also clear in the case of those respondents who do not name human rights and the freedom of speech among the first three priorities.

After the group attack on the participants of IDAHO in 2013, which was initiated by the Orthodox Church of Georgia, May 17 was declared Family Purity Day in 2014, and it is annually celebrated by a public march. A separate question was added to the questionnaire to try to ascertain the result of replacing IDAHO with Family Purity Day. The question was formulated as follows: “What do you associate with May 17?” Respondents could choose from the given list: Family Purity Day, IDAHO, difficult to answer, both, neither. In all, 18.5% of the respondents found it difficult to answer the question or refused to answer, while for a third (33%) of them, it is associated with neither IDAHO nor Family Purity Day. For almost the same number of respondents (35.5%), this day is associated with Family Purity Day; for 8%, this day is associated with both; and for 4.9%, it is definitively associated with IDAHO. Analysis of the data in terms of ethnicity shows that May 17 is associated with Family Purity Day for 32.4% of ethnic Georgians and 18.4% of ethnic Armenians. For 32.4% of ethnic Georgians and half of the ethnic Armenian respondents (50.1%), this day is associated with neither of the two. More than half of ethnic Azerbaijani respondents (54%) found it difficult to answer (39.2%) or refused to answer (14.8%), while a third of them chose the answer “neither of them”, 8% indicated “IDAHO”, and 6.7% “both”.

Figure #36
Frequency distribution of responses to the question “What do you associate with May 17?”, by ethnicity

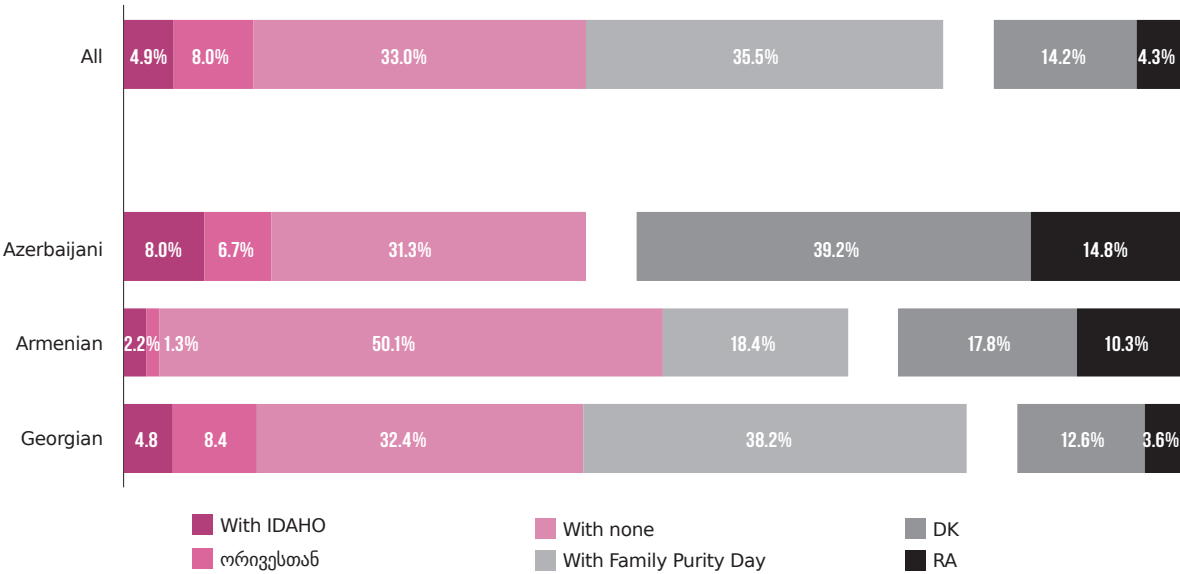
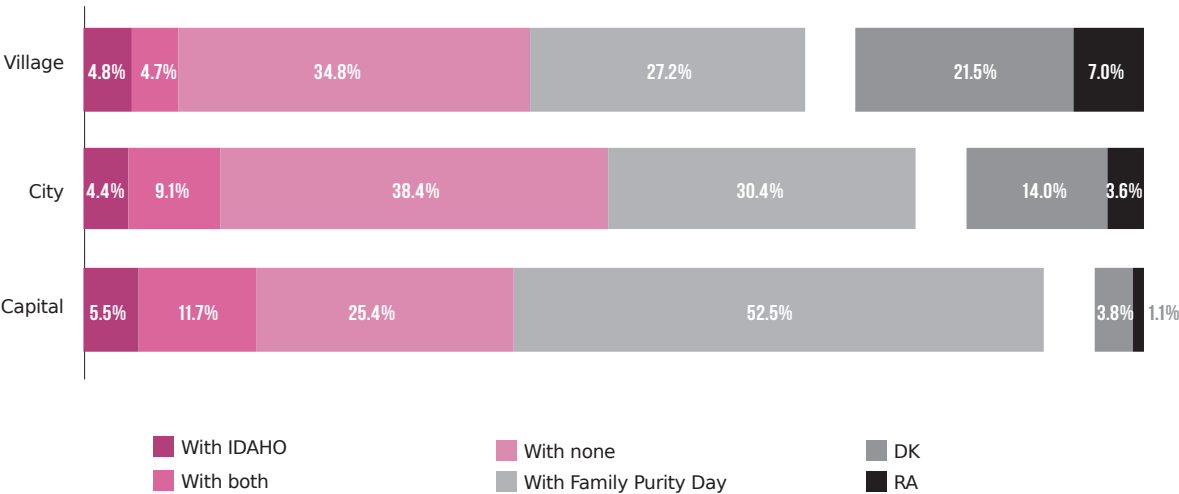


Figure #37
Frequency distribution of responses to the question “What do you associate with May 17?”, by settlement type

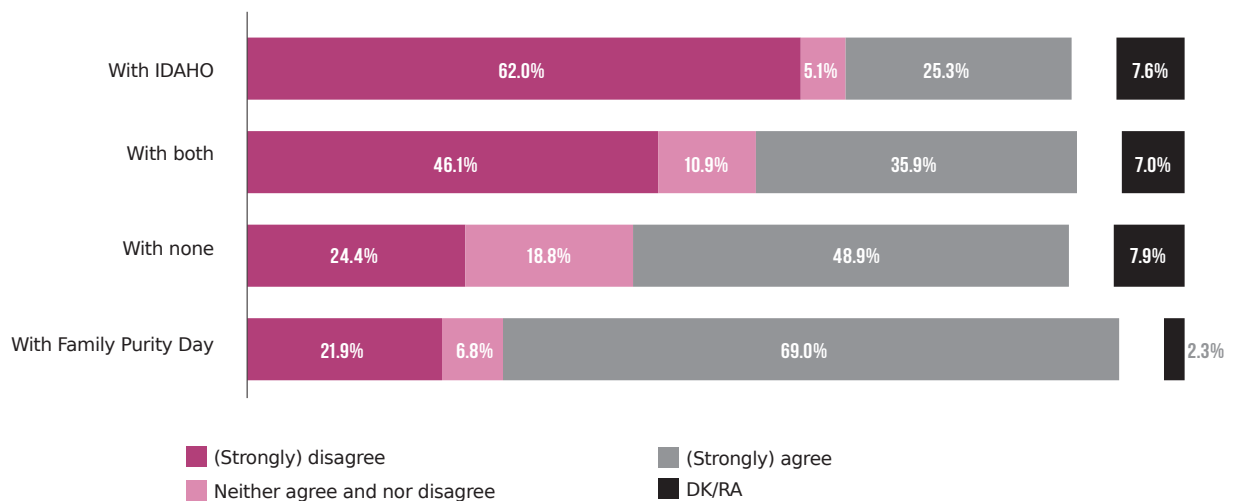


The distribution of the answers in terms of living place shows that the date is associated with Family Purity Day mostly for the respondents living in Tbilisi (52.5%). The day is not associated with anything for 25.4% of the respondents living in Tbilisi, 34.8% living in rural areas, and 38.4% in other urban areas. Moreover, 28.5% of the respondents living in rural areas and 17.6% of those living in other urban areas find it hard to answer or refused to answer at all. To this day, the Orthodox Church of Georgia denies that the main goal of the annual celebration of Family Purity Day is to replace IDAHO; it is clear, however, that their strategy is to hold a public march in the central streets of the capital city in order to physically control and prevent demonstrations by LGBT(Q)I activists. Such a distribution of answers shows how the character of the church-instituted celebration, which is localized in a physical space, is reflected in public opinion.

Conceptualizing May 17 as IDAHO versus Family Purity Day does not automatically imply the attitude of respondents toward the freedom of assembly and expression of the LGBT(Q)I group. Almost a fifth of those respondents (21.9%) who perceive May 17 as Family Purity Day agree completely or partially with the restriction of freedom of assembly and expression for the LGBT(Q)I group. In the same way, those respondents who perceive May 17 as an international day against homophobia (25.3%) agree with the restriction of these constitutional rights for LGBT(Q)I group members.

Figure #38

Attitude toward restricting the freedom of expression of the LGBT(Q)I group, by respondents' perception of May 17



5.7. Views and attitudes toward PDA and sexuality education

- When it comes to public display of affection, society shows limited tolerance not only for gay/lesbian couples but even for heterosexual ones. Indeed, 66% of the respondents find it unacceptable when a heterosexual couple kisses in public (and especially high is the share of those respondents who show a categorically negative attitude toward it: 56.6%). In the case of gay and lesbian couples, such behavior is unacceptable for 82.4% and 81.4% of the respondents, respectively.
- Almost three in five interviewees (57.3%) do not agree with the view that sexuality education should be part of the school curriculum (12.4% found it difficult to answer, while 30.3% agreed with the view).
- Respondents with a higher level of formal education support introducing more comprehensive sexuality education into school curriculums than those who have general or incomplete education (except for students).
- Respondents who have never been in a marriage show more support for sexual education (43.2%) than those who are in a marriage or live with a partner (26.3%) or who are separated, divorced or widowed (26.8%).
- On the whole, more than a third of female participants (34.6%) support integrating sexual education into school education, whereas the percentage of males in this regard is 25.3%. Male respondents, despite their ethnicity, marital status, and sexual experience, tend to be less supportive of integrating the given subject into school curriculums than female respondents.
- The majority of those respondents who support the above-mentioned integration think that the subject should be led by an invited expert (50%), while 29% give preference to a doctor and 15% to a teacher.
- Topics related to sexual education are perceived from the point of view of medicine more by the aged respondents. Accordingly, the share of those respondents who think that the subject should be led by a person with medical education also increases with age.
- Specifically, 68.7% of those respondents who agree with introducing sexuality education into the school curriculum think that the subject should also cover topics related to sexual orientation and gender identity (SOGI).

Society shows less tolerance when it comes to expressing intimate relationships in a public setting. For 8.7% of the interviewees, it is completely or largely unacceptable for a man and a woman to stroll hand in hand in the street; and for 66%, it is unacceptable that a heterosexual couple kisses in public. In comparison to heterosexual couples, such behavior from gay couples is less tolerated by a greater part of society: 71.3% say that it is not acceptable for them to see a gay couple holding hands; for 82.4%, it is unacceptable that a gay couple kisses in public (in terms of its acceptability, society sees such behaviors from lesbians and gays almost equally negatively; see figures #39 and #40).

Figure #39

Frequency distribution of responses to the question “To what degree is it acceptable for you to see a man and a woman/a lesbian couple/a gay couple holding hands in the street?”

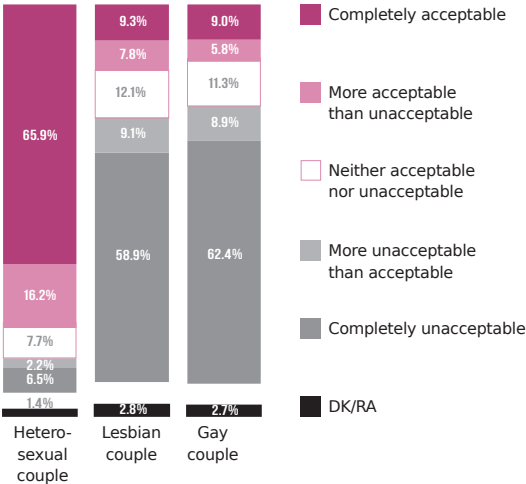
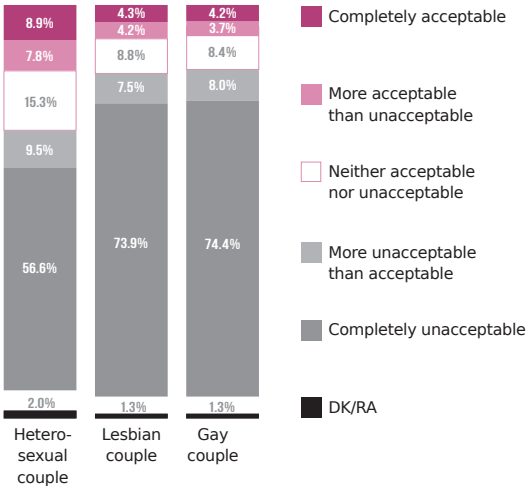


Figure #40

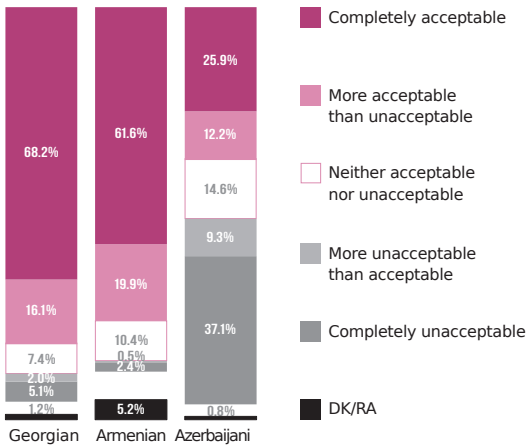
Frequency distribution of responses to the question “To what degree is it acceptable for you to see a man and a woman/a lesbian couple/a gay couple publicly kissing each other?”



Despite the inner differences in the group, the attitude toward kissing in a public place, even in the case of heterosexual couples, did not receive positive feedback regardless of age, gender, settlement type, or other socio-demographic characteristics. As for holding hands in the case of women and men, except for the Azerbaijani respondents, other ethnic groups find such behavior acceptable in a public place.

Figure #41

Frequency distribution of responses to the question “To what degree is it acceptable for you when a man and a woman stroll hand in hand in the street?”, by ethnicity



More than half of the interviewees (57.3%) do not agree with the view that sexuality education should be part of the school curriculum; 12.4% found it difficult to answer; and 30.3% agreed with the view.

Respondents with incomplete and complete higher education are more likely to agree with introducing sexuality education into school curriculums than those who have incomplete or general education (except for current students).

Respondents who have never been in a marriage show more support for the issue (43.2%) than those who are in a marriage or live with a partner (26.3%) or who are separated, divorced or widowed (26.8%). On the whole, more than a third of female participants in the survey (34.6%) support integrating sexuality education into school curriculums, whereas among males, the share of such respondents is only 25.3%. Male respondents, despite their age, settlement type, level of formal education, ethnic belonging, marital status, and sexual experience, are less supportive of integrating sexuality education into school curriculum than female respondents. In urban areas other than the capital, male and female views on this topic are almost the same (42.9% and 42.5%, respectively), while in rural areas, these views differ to a certain degree: 33.9% of female respondents and 28.1% of males support introducing the subject. Differentiation in terms of gender is especially striking in Tbilisi, however: 41.7% of female respondents living in Tbilisi think that integrating sexuality education into school curriculums is necessary, whereas the share of male respondents is 18.1%. Such a distribution of answers shows an interesting picture. Besides the difference in views between respondents (in this survey, we did not specify what was meant to be covered under sexuality education), it might be related to the

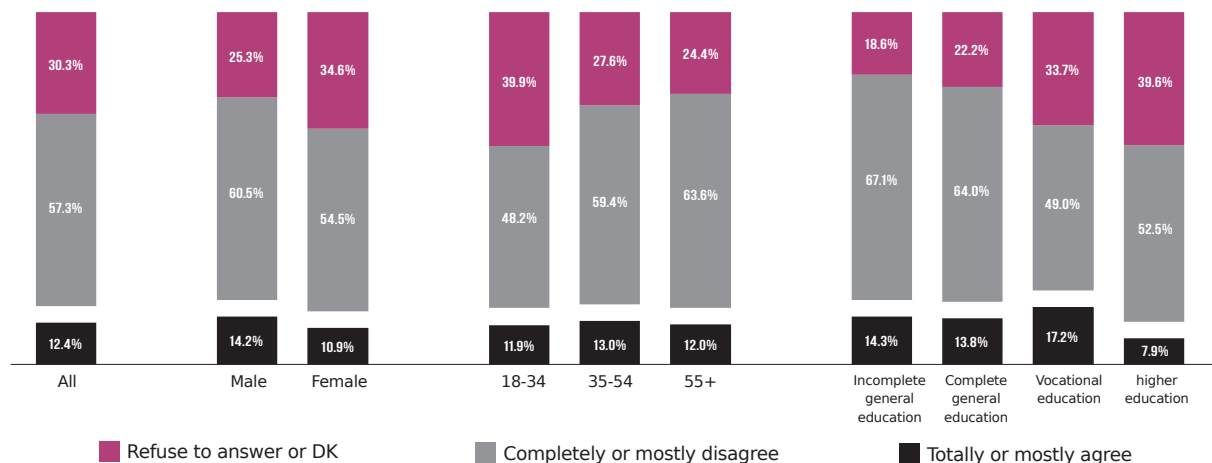
accessibility and specificity of information in terms of gender and settlement type. Yet this issue requires a deeper analysis.

Of the 488 respondents who answered the question positively, 3% found it difficult to determine whose role it is to provide this kind of knowledge to the pupils. Only 15% gave preference to a teacher, while the majority think that the subject should be led by an invited expert (50%) or by a doctor (29%). Moreover, the majority of the aged respondents see sexuality education-related issues in terms of medicine: accordingly, the share of those respondents who think that the subject should be led by a person who has a medical education also increases with age. The skills and competency of teachers are given the lowest assessment by the students: only 2% of them think that this function should be taken on by teachers, while 26% think it should be a doctor, and 71% would prefer an invited expert.

Of those respondents who agree with integrating sexuality education subjects into the school curriculum, 68.7% think that the subject should cover SOGI-related topics too, while 13.3% found it difficult to answer, and 18.1% are against the idea. The number of supporters of this idea decreases proportionally with age: the older the age group of the respondent, the less he/she agrees with integrating SOGI topics into sexuality education courses.

Figure #42

Frequency distribution of responses about the inclusion of sexuality education in the school curriculum, by sex, age, and education level



VI. RESULTS OF THE QUALITATIVE SURVEY

The present study examines public attitudes toward LGBT(Q)I people from different strategic perspectives. Within the study, attitude is seen as the internal relationship of an individual or group that exists, creating a precondition for action to be revealed in social or political strategies. The perception of the environment and the discussion of the significance of homophobia, including its determinants, indicators, and the vision for how to solve the problem, change according to the demographic variables of the surveyed groups. This report is dedicated to the analysis of these diverse perspectives.

Key findings

- In every interviewed group, a large number of respondents think that homophobia is widely spread in Georgian society and discourse and that we may come across it at every level of socio-political life. Moreover, a large number of the interviewees think that the state does not recognize homophobia as a systemic problem and that this circumstance encourages instrumentalizing LGBT(Q)I issues and makes the polarization in society even more severe.
- The majority of respondents, while talking about the factors that impact vulnerability within the LGBT(Q)I community, say that in the LGBT(Q)I community, individuals are equally vulnerable to the attitudes of society. The degree of vulnerability in individual cases is dependent on various factors. Most often, respondents indicate publicly visible sexual orientation or gender identity, nonconforming appearance, and confrontation with the heteronormative order as additional factors contributing to such vulnerability.
- The oppression, which is conditioned by visibility in any kind of space, makes transgender persons seen under a critical light. As transgender women say, their coming out is often forced. The respondents explain this fact by the circumstance that, in contrast to lesbian, gay, and bisexual individuals, transgender persons change such attributes as name, appearance, and social role when revealing their gender, which makes them more visible and their gender identity more public.
- Respondents name hostile semiotics as the most widespread illustration of homophobic aggression. This widespread hostile semiotic content is often based on the embedded myths or stereotypes that, on their part, reflect the value system of the dominant culture.
- Homophobic aggression is not decentralized and self-organized, coming from people; rather, it is centralized and political, initiated from above and personal. Respondents believe that homophobia on an individual level is often unconscious and intuitive and that it is not based on definitive knowledge or belief.
- Respondents are unanimous that education takes vital force away from the harmful prejudices that are directed against minorities. The deficient education system is reinforcing the inequality, is producing the narratives against human rights and is inhibiting the formation of critical thinking on an individual level and in micro-social groups, and this creates a convenient environment for the interested parties to engage in manipulation. This view is practically repeated by the representatives of the community organizations who conclude that the systemic deficiency of general education is reflected directly in the rights and conditions of LGBT(Q)I persons.
- It became evident that, on the one hand, it is a challenge to produce knowledge related to gender and sexuality, and civil society organizations

(CSOs) are trying to take up this function together with other responsibilities; on the other hand, it remains a question whether the already accumulated knowledge will be accessible only for the relevant professional circles since there is a problem of its spreading and its linguistic adaptation.

- The majority of the respondents are united by the view that in overcoming and reducing homophobia, the main goal should be the protection of the LGBT(Q)I community from violence and those consequences from which queer individuals suffer in cases of humiliating treatment motivated by hate.
- It is noteworthy that in the majority of discussions, the family of an LGBT(Q)I individual is automatically seen as one of the sources from which homophobia is created, which is especially harmful. Yet several respondents, mostly the community members themselves, also talk about the role of the family in the process of overcoming homophobia. In this context, every discussion confirms the special importance of the support received from family: on the one hand, this support is helpful in the process of self-determination and self-acceptance, and on the other hand, it also provides security in a homophobic environment.

6.1. Review of homophobic discourse

It is noteworthy that, in all of the surveyed groups, a large part of the respondents believe that homophobia is widespread in modern Georgian public discourse and that it is found at all levels of social and political life. Different groups indeed have different perspectives on the prevailing discourse and individual attitudes; however, according to the majority of respondents, for LGBT(Q)I individuals, the prevailing culture and its social indicators on their own have the risk of perpetuating homophobic attitudes. Combining the individual cognitive system with the

general social order, especially in collectivist societies, is a particular challenge for the minority groups.

Based on the respondents' assessments, in the context of a collectivist culture, it is logical that individuals seek to compromise with society, and such entreaties, in turn, successfully create dominant institutions that take the reins of social control at the level of public micro-systems. In some groups of respondents, hostility toward the LGBT(Q)I community is normalized and is perceived as a compromise.

Among the institutions conducting homophobic discourse, a large proportion of respondents primarily name the Orthodox Church. In addition to the church itself trying to gain mentorship in creating and controlling hostility toward the LGBT(Q)I community, some of the respondents said that the hostile narrative produced by the church is weakly argued and that its success goes beyond the institutional mandate of uncritically accepting dogmatic teachings. Under these conditions, the lack of awareness, education, and critical analysis of LGBT(Q)I issues creates the grounds for legitimizing the aggression of the parish and the clergy.

Respondents from different groups named semiotics and the language of power as the most common forms of aggressive or hostile attitudes, which, in addition to demonstrating a declared homophobic attitude, may also reflect pettiness or positive discrimination. It is noteworthy that some members of the surveyed community are less critical of the latter, and in some cases, they relate such attitudes not to homophobia but to acceptance.

During the discussions, members of the community, as well as representatives of other social or professional groups, frequently named common myths and stereotypes that, in turn, produce or reinforce homophobic attitudes. According to the perceptions of the respondents, including the members of the community, the myths and stereotypes related to gender and sexuality present the not-normative identities mainly as pathological, immoral, and dangerous for society. However, fears of LGBT(Q)I identities are largely ir-

rational and related not only to disturbances in the heteronormative order but also to national, demographic, and geopolitical threats.

6.2. Silence or conflict of the actors?

Agreement on the dominance of negative attitudes is characterized differently in the different groups. For example, members of the LGBT(Q)I community, experts working on the issue, journalists, and representatives of NGOs working in the regions highlight hostile attitudes in society, excessive aggression, and homophobia. However, teachers, representatives of the medical field, and staff of the state shelters spend more time discussing heterogeneous attitudes and questioning the perceived “realistic” threats to the LGBT(Q)I community.

Representatives of community service organizations expressed the view that homophobia is invisible in the social field and that society is still fighting against the concept of “pride”. As LGBT(Q)I people continue to raise their voices and demand the legitimacy of the visible rights of real people, we will find that the hostility against them is much deeper than realized. This view is echoed in the experience of community members that the ephemeral acceptance of supporters disappears as soon as the legitimate rights of the community are voiced and that such support is viable as long as the community is invisible. Representatives of the surveyed groups from the regions, including the representatives of the Ministry of Internal Affairs and civil society organizations, highlight the impact of taboos on gender, sexuality, and self-expression in local communities, which exclude members of the LGBT(Q)I community from social life. This order creates the illusion that, on the one hand, “there are no homosexuals” and that, on the other hand, the environment is less homophobic, as homophobic violence or discrimination is less common.

Interesting in this context is the experience of community members who, like others, often have to com-

promise with a dominant culture, at the expense of giving up fundamental freedom of self-expression in a process of self-determination. On the other hand, internalized homophobia, as a reflection of the homophobic attitudes in society toward oneself, hinders the process of self-determination, can turn into a destructive mental state, and can become the basis of self-destructive behavior. Speaking of local contexts, respondents from the regions and community members noted that the process of self-determination is highly autonomous in urban settings, where the social and public space is relatively diverse, as there is less power to compromise on taboos and public norms. In addition, with less influence on welfare institutions and with CSOs in the peripheries, inclusive or supportive spaces are less available.

A large share of respondents from all of the surveyed groups believe that visibility-induced oppression in any space critically distinguishes transgender people. First of all, unlike members of the LGB community, transgender people’s disclosure of their gender is related to changes in such attributes as their name, appearance, social role, and so on, which in turn makes their gender affiliation more visible. The challenges of transgender legal recognition are added to this “forced visibility”, as members of the surveyed community themselves call it, as a condition of vulnerability. In particular, the fact that the gender identity of trans people does not match the gender marker in their personal documents poses an additional obstacle in the process of obtaining education, employment, and other basic benefits. As both community members and members of other groups say, it is easier for lesbian, gay, and bisexual individuals to avoid visibility and, consequently, hate-motivated assault – whether or not they have come out. This is how respondents explain that often homophobic attitudes expressed through aggression or assault are less prevalent among lesbians, whom most of the respondent name as the least vulnerable group in the community.

Finally, the respondents conclude that if the queer

discourse is silent, we avoid both conflict between the actors and discursive confrontation, on the one hand, while on the other, the oppression of people will become even more invisible in this silence.

6.3. The dilemma of self-expression

Based on their professional practice, representatives of the community organizations and state shelters offer a specific vision for consideration: provocateurs of hostile attitudes are not sexual orientation and gender identity but, in general, non-heteronormativity and nonconforming self-expression.

According to them, if a person is presented in the social context as a realized individual, positioned with social capital (education, status, power, etc.), homophobia loses strength, and vice versa: in the dominance of nonconforming self-expression, homophobia becomes stronger. Interestingly, while talking about the psychological challenges most often caused by public attitudes and coping strategies, members of the interviewed community cite internalized homophobia, self-realization of problems, environmental distrust, and nihilism.

Respondents agree that the refusal of LGBT(Q)I people to freely express themselves is often driven not by autonomous choices but by cultural and religious discourses that operate with binary determinism. Some respondents also present homophobic acts as a radical manifestation of a compromise with culture, which is defined by the motive of identifying with the majority and is often manifested in a carnalized struggle.

In this context, it is not surprising that some of the respondents associate self-expression with courage, which is considered an unequivocally positive internal resource. However, a large share of respondents focus on the difficulty of self-expression in a highly hostile environment, with increased risks to mental health and violence as a result of visibility. The latter is most often mentioned by community members and other respondents

when talking about homophobic, hate-motivated forms of crime.

In stories shared by community members, abusers include family members as well as strangers or intimate partners. As the representatives of the community and service providers say, there is often a risk of physical violence in domestic relationships as well – while receiving services from neighbors or landlords.

Discussion among the representatives of regional CSOs about the risks of physical violence is also interesting. It is important that in these discussions, the following data became clearer according to the example of local, relatively small communities: the risk of homophobic violence, along with the existing cultural stigma, is the main reason for community members' social isolation, mental health problems, and desire to hide their identity. An indicator of this fact is that according to the representatives of regional CSOs, queer people are not visible in the regions. The members of the interviewed community also speak about this kind of forced social isolation.

Logically, a large part of the respondents, mainly community members and respondents from the regions, cite hiding their sexuality and gender identity as a mechanism to prevent violence on the one hand and social self-isolation on the other hand.

6.4. Political instrumentalization

Some of the respondents consider that the people who are spreading homo/bi/transphobia in the public sphere are not naturally self-organized people but are politically interested parties and purposefully mobilized groups. A large share of the respondents from all interviewed groups believe that homophobia, as well as LGBT(Q)I issues in the public sphere, are instrumentalized by various interest groups. Consequently, aggression against the LGBT(Q)I group is not so much local, decentralized, and self-organized as it is “top-down” initiated and political. Some of the respondents talk about the damaging consequences that this agenda brings not only for queer people but

for society in general as a whole. Even those members of the interviewed community, who feel hopeless about positive changes when evaluating social and political discourse, relate their attitude to the instrumentalization of the issue. Their assessments show that the cause of nihilism and distrust in the community is not only related to the open and unequivocally homophobic groups but also to the pseudo-supporting actors. The members of the interviewed community, mostly from a group of trans men, cite the events of July 5-6, 2021, when groups mobilized to disperse the Pride March announced by Tbilisi Pride began to persecute and abuse journalists in the streets of Tbilisi. In the ensuing days, declared pro-community actors appealed not against homophobic hatred but against narrowed political/partial confrontation.

It is noteworthy that the discussions were held at the end of July 2021 and that, consequently, the events of July 5-6 were actively discussed – on the one hand, as an indicator for assessing public attitudes and, on the other, as a critical experience useful for planning future strategies. In addition to the community members' assessments of the supporting political actors regarding this event, we also see severe criticism of the position of the government and the church among the majority of respondents. In particular, the latter is seen as promoters of homophobic aggression through their public positioning. It is important that this criticism is shared by interviewed community members, representatives of community or regional CSOs, and representatives of state structures. However, a significant proportion of community members, community/service providers, and representatives of regional CSOs often find critics of decision makers – that efforts to combat homophobia are insufficient and that the state is not allowed to care for marginalized groups, including the LGBTI community, and that it even encourages homophobia. To confirm this statement, the respondents most often cite the events of July 5-6, 2021 and the accompanying response of Prime Minister Irakli Gharibashvili. In the same context, community/service providers and repre-

sentatives of regional CSOs argue that the problem is not recognized as a systemic social and political challenge that prevents instrumentalization of the issue and reinforces polarization.

The fact is that the mentoring of powerful institutions is not one-sided but rather fits into the general collective framework, namely public expectation. In such kind of relationship, it is difficult to ascertain whether the value space of society gives birth to controlling institutions or whether the institutions themselves generate widespread value discourses. This Möbius strip, where causal values always point to one another but never intersect, creates vague appeals for research and action and complicates the planning of strategic activism. In addition, on the one hand, it deepens hopelessness and nihilism among the members of the community and, on the other hand, prevents the creation of necessary preconditions for the peaceful coexistence of society, particularly through knowledge and information on sexuality and gender issues.

6.5. Information as a strategic tool for change

While assessing attitudes toward LGBT(Q)I people, respondents suggest many variables that contribute to positive or negative, hostile or supportive attitudes in different groups of society, although most often they cite knowledge about the issue.

The respondents agree that education removes vital force from harmful prejudices against minorities, while a vicious education system exacerbates inequality and creates narratives conflicting with human rights, preventing the formation of critical thinking at the individual and micro-social levels. Practically, representatives of community organizations repeat this point of view when they conclude that the systemic shortcomings of general education directly affect the legal status of LGBT(Q)I people. According to them, in the absence of a decent general education, vulnerability becomes universal, skepticism decreas-

es, and conformism increases, which is reflected in the potential for politicization and instrumentalization.

Although attitudes toward the importance of knowledge and awareness in the process of changing attitudes are more or less identical, different groups differ in their perceptions of the persons and institutions responsible for informing the public and the ways for achieving this goal. First of all, it should be noted that according to the respondents, most members of the community, the activists, and the parties interested in the issue think that many challenges of LGBT(Q)I people are well known – and this is exactly where they make a strategic mistake. Due to complete alienation, the public cannot access even basic knowledge that would likely increase the acceptance rate. According to the community member respondent, bullying behavior is often motivated not by a negative attitude but by inadequate knowledge of reliable and supportive or, conversely, damaging relationship patterns. However, even when these interested parties are aware of this problem and their role to plan and carry out relevant activities, other challenges arise. Interviewed experts mentioned that, on the one hand, the challenge is to reproduce academic knowledge for society to try to combine this function with other responsibilities and, on the other hand, for accumulated knowledge to still be available to professionally interested parties, as we also have the challenge of disseminating and linguistically adapting it. Often, the work done by civil society organizations, research reports or blogs, letters, and announcements can be directed to donors or, again and again, to activists.

A large proportion of respondents believe that to overcome this problematic context, it is important to target the general public and the LGBT(Q)I community as an audience for information dissemination. The latter is the responsibility of the state, which shows political blindness to the needs of the community. Universally available information about gender and sexuality is important not only for changing

public attitudes for the better but also for community members on the path to self-determination. According to the members of the interviewed community, the main source of information in some cases are micro communities, queer friends, and social networks.

During the discussions, respondents described practices of interest in knowledge and relevant sources of information: it was found that vocational training courses were, for the most part, accessible to social workers. Interestingly, social workers declared their support for the group openly. The main source of reliable information for journalists is the competent respondent, while health workers mostly receive information from the media. The research also allows us to see the causality between the source of information and the age of the respondents: young people, while receiving information, prefer social networks, movies, and TV series, while relatively older respondents prefer the traditional media or vocational training. Interestingly, representatives of state shelters who claim that universal knowledge about minorities is available rarely seek additional information themselves because, due to professional practice, they have not been required to do so. It is also implied that social workers and teachers almost never seek additional information on LGBT(Q)I issues, arguing that they did not feel the need for it in their work. Nevertheless, the interviewed teachers and social workers are aware of their professional role in the process of social change and the dissemination of universal knowledge and, consequently, openly express their readiness for new, relevant knowledge. However, when it comes to assessing the general interest in LGBT(Q)I issues, a large share of respondents believes that in the context of poverty and a socially stressful environment, people have less motivation to obtain such information/knowledge. In the same discussions, we find a point of view according to which access to objective information, as well as access to sources and reliability, is some kind of privilege.

According to a significant share of respondents from different groups, the modern education system

does not promote value inclusion, which makes the process of self-determination for LGBT(Q)I people vague and full of obstacles. The efforts of the systems implementing socialization are directed toward information inequality, the value center of which is heteronormative. It is on account of the participants that the socialization of adolescents does not take place only with the considered influence. The family, the teachers, and the micro social systems that carries a strictly homophobic attitude have a big impact on the final modification of their attitudes.

When discussing the spread of knowledge about LGBT(Q)I issues, it is important to include modern information in the field of criticism, as knowledge of the latter is new, and the reasoning is more or less unscientific and concentrated in digital media where the creation and dissemination of information are commercialized and often misinformed. Consequently, it is true that gaining knowledge in an information-based society, unlike in the past, is no longer a major challenge, but access to reliable information in the “digital jungle” has become a challenge indeed.

6.6. Summary: Actors and strategies

At the end of the focus groups, respondents were asked to present their views on the process of reducing homophobic attitudes, specifically who are the responsible actors and with which strategies should they work. We think, first of all, that it is important to determine the characteristics of the strategy that the respondents offer.

The point of view that unites the answers of the majority of the respondents is that the main goal of overcoming homophobia should be protecting the LGBT(Q)I community from violence and from the consequences of hate-motivated, ill-treatment of queer individuals. In addition, homophobic attitudes are not considered in discussions as a separate phenomenon from other social problems. Consequently, social, cultural, religious, and ideological diversity is presented as an objective circumstance in the main

part of the views. Responding to these factors, respondents mention that the process of change in attitudes is, on the one hand, long and continuous and, on the other hand, requires systematic, proactive, consolidated efforts.

Representatives of civil society organizations and community members working in the regions mostly say that it is necessary to purposefully consolidate resources to achieve the goal effectively. Representatives of regional organizations emphasize the consolidation of civil actors, which includes prioritizing solidarity, incorporating LGBT(Q)I issues in their activities, and working closely with one another to accomplish various tasks. Given the invisibility of the issue in the regions and, as noted so far, the prevalence of negative attitudes, they suggest that the set tasks, which are the same as those in awareness campaigns or training, respond to universal values such as human rights, inclusion, well-being and more. In the same context, some of the respondents spoke about the presence of homophobia among the representatives of civil society organizations and how this attitude contradicts the goals and specifics of their activities. Nevertheless, the non-governmental sector is named as the main sector responsible for the process of reducing homophobic attitudes in the regions – in the ideal case, as an actor focused on creating centers of non-formal education and disseminating adequate information.

Community members and community organizations also discuss their responsibilities while discussing strategies. In particular, most of them agree that there should be agreed-upon approaches among the organizations in order to communicate both within the community and with external actors. They point out that these approaches need to be based on solidarity with one another, directed against the harmful practices of the issue, and aimed at the safety of LGBT(Q)I individuals. This opinion is echoed in the comment of one of the respondents from the group of civil society organizations working in Adjara, who deemed it necessary for the community members

to realize their rights in the context of systemic oppression and to have bottom-up activism. Representatives of community organizations express concern over the prospect of such association due to the lack of solidarity and the discriminatory attitudes toward each other (biphobia, transphobia, etc.). In this group too, a fundamental understanding of oppression was named as the solution.

The views of participants from the regions involved in discussions on LGBT(Q)I activism are partly in line with the views of community organizations and community members. In particular, community members express the desire for public advocates, organizations, and activists to highlight their diversity in terms of identity, ideology, and belief within the community itself. As their comments show, LGBT(Q)I individuals are perceived as carriers of liberal ideology solely because of their own gender identity and sexual orientation, and they are often associated with specific political and partisan interests as well. Practically speaking, this both deepens the politicization of the issue and causes the stigmatization of queer individuals, not only based on sexual orientation and gender identity but also in terms of political viewpoint and, as they say, exacerbates critical public attitudes toward them. This is confirmed by the representative of the civil society organization from Adjara, who says from the perspective of the people that “political beliefs and sexual orientation are very intertwined.”

Some of the interviewed representatives of the community and service providers attributed this tendency to the local practices of the community’s visibility policy. The vision of alternative visibility in this group is largely based on a critique of Pride’s strategy, as activists view it as a superficial, artificial intervention that is often even harmful to the LGBT(Q)I community in its current social and political context and, instead of overcoming homophobia, is deepening it. In contrast, representatives of community organizations, such as regional groups (civil society organizations and professional groups), think that to over-

come homophobic attitudes, it is necessary to use a visibility strategy that takes into account the social, cultural, and political context. In the same context, an intersectional approach is considered, which involves the cooperation of activists and groups working on various social and political issues. This is important as, on the one hand, queer people have similar social and economic needs to other vulnerable groups, while on the other hand, such collaborations would help other groups of activists see and recognize specific challenges, potentially fostering solidarity with the LGBT(Q)I community. However, as respondents say, this tool is often not available to queer activists – again due to homophobia and misogyny, which is quite common among activists working on other social issues.

Given that the vast majority of respondents from the interviewed groups characterize homophobia as a nonhomogeneous, structural problem, the community level is not the only direction where the importance of consolidating resources between different actors was discussed during the discussions. Most of the respondents name the state as the main responsible actor for this process and talk about the need to see, recognize, and cooperate with other actors. Most of the respondents also named non-governmental organizations, including queer-community and service-providing organizations, as major actors in both policy planning and public mediation.

During the discussions, what was called the specific responsibility of the state was the political will to recognize homophobia as a social problem and, consequently, to depoliticize issues related to the LGBT(Q)I community. It should be noted that depoliticization, both in this context and in the discussions as well as in the study in general, meant limiting the means of instrumentalizing the issue by other political actors through supportive policies rather than excluding the queer community itself from political life.

The largest share of respondents spoke about the critical importance of education and awareness across all groups in the process of reducing homophobic atti-

tudes. The respondents assign a special role to the state in this process as well. In practice, the role of the state in this regard is defined by ensuring universal access to objective, impartial, and evidence-based information, which in turn would guarantee the social security and well-being of LGBT(Q)I individuals. Moreover, this strategy would avoid the risk of political instrumentalization, as the possibility of manipulating the sentiments of public groups is only possible under conditions of low awareness of the issue and loses its meaning and power when there are informed citizens.

The interviewed social workers and witness and victim coordinators (of the Ministry of Internal Affairs), most of whom are social workers by profession, emphasize that objective knowledge about gender identity and sexual orientation should not be exclusive, accessible only in professional curriculums, but should be equally accessible to all. Representatives of civil society organizations working in the regions and police officers, like others, talk about fundamental reform in education and mention that acceptance of the LGBT(Q)I community should start at an early stage (e.g., kindergartens and elementary schools). It should not be based on specific knowledge about gender and sexuality, but it should cultivate such general values in minors and adolescents as tolerance, mutual respect, and recognition of diversity. Given that in some cases respondents say that hate-motivated crime affects not only people with specific traits, they suggest that learning these values from early childhood may work as a prevention mechanism for all forms of violence in society.

We think that it is also interesting to learn the point of view of the education workers themselves – the interviewed teachers – on the importance of strategic changes on the part of the state in the general education system to reduce homophobic attitudes. Teachers also agree with the need for reform; however, in the discussions they mostly talk about the importance of being aware of their professional community. In particular, some of them say that it is important not only for teachers of specific subjects to be informed about

gender and sexuality issues but also for teachers of all subjects to be able to talk to students at appropriate times and if necessary within their curriculum. To do so, as they say, it is necessary to involve this group in non-formal education activities and consider it strategically important. Some of the community members also emphasize the importance of teacher awareness as they can be potential supporters for adolescent queer people during the process of self-determination. In the assessments of the representatives of the regional CSOs, we also find the assessment of the teacher's role as a potential participant in the prevention of bullying and domestic violence.

Respondents also see the mass media as a guarantor of universal access to information. Teachers and social workers emphasize the subjectivity of the media in the current situation and the fact that in broadcasting, we almost cannot find educational programs related to gender and sexuality. In contrast to these groups, criticism of community members and community organizations is based on the practice of victimizing and exoticizing community members in the media. According to some members of the community, the aim of adequate coverage should be to not only spread the right information but also normalize being queer, which requires the creation of a positive collective image of LGBT(Q)I people by the media. Some members believe that the media should cover stories of successful queer people, emphasizing their social status and achievements. Nevertheless, the main demand is still not to portray queer individuals as privileged or oppressed but to make the media interested in queer people's real-life, tangible problems in order to cover the issue impartially and ethically.

Respondents also intensively cite issues related to the law and its enforcement as a means of preventing homophobic attitudes and its consequences, and it is not surprising that in this case too, the state is named as the main responsible actor. First of all, it should be noted that in some discussions, respondents did not overlook the Law of Georgia on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination, and the fact that this

law was adopted is an indicator of positive social dynamics for some respondents.

The answers of the representatives of different groups are qualitatively different in terms of the law and its enforcement. For example, representatives of civil society organizations working in the regions emphasize the so-called “impunity syndrome”, which creates the feeling that the law is less enforced against members of a particular social group who have committed a particular crime. To oppose it, these respondents consider it necessary for the state to uphold the principle of the rule of law, to not compromise on any crime, and at the same time to ensure freedom of expression for all social groups.

A large part of the community members cites the tightening of the law as the main lever of the state in the process of eliminating homophobia to prevent hate crimes based on fear. Interestingly, like members of the community, some police officials believe that to prevent crime out of fear, criminal policy toward the perpetrator should be tightened. In this context, the point of view of the representatives of the Prosecutor’s Office differs from the answers of the representatives of the Ministry of Internal Affairs. Representatives of the Prosecutor’s Office speak, on the one hand, about the role of their agency as an independent actor and, on the other hand, about the will and effort that this agency will make in the process of overcoming homophobia. The representatives of the Prosecutor’s Office also have very clear and solid strategies to eliminate homophobic hate crimes. In particular, the practice, according to which the mandate to work on a particular case is given to the prosecutor based on him/her having obtained specific knowledge (training), in their estimation, would enable effective protection of the best interests of the victim in the case of hate crimes. Only this practice in a particular specialization field allows prosecutors to identify the motive and file adequate charges. It is clear from the statements of some prosecutors that often the motive of hatred in a particular case is rejected in investigative and court proceedings, which

prevents the proportional punishment of the perpetrator. In their view, in all other law enforcement agencies, an executive should be appointed based on special competence. However, it should be noted that the representatives of the same agency speak more confidently about the acceptance of the LGBT(Q)I community in the agency than the representatives of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, who admit that the attitudes in some departments may be heterogeneous; they also say that sometimes the ethics of police officers’ work with LGBT(Q)I members is based only on the law. Prosecutors talk not only about the role of law enforcement but also about the role of their agency in crime prevention, emphasizing the role of the Prosecutor’s office project - Public Prosecutor.

In addition to systemic and institutional interventions, respondents actively talk about the individual responsibilities of different groups in the process of overcoming homophobic attitudes. Here in assessments, individual responsibilities are mainly analyzed again in the context of the need for peaceful coexistence based on mutual respect.

A large share of the respondents mentions the important role of social networks in various contexts, both in providing access to information and as an effective platform for implementing LGBT(Q)I community visibility strategies. Some of the community members confirm the latter view, as they purposefully use social networks to spread information about issues related to sexual orientation and gender identity (both for community members and for other interested people), while others say that they received great help from social networks in the self-determination process.

In addition to social networks, many of the respondents talk about the importance of open discussions by community members and supporters in micro societies. Moreover, the group of lesbian/bisexual women argued that a more effective and rapid way to achieve change in attitudes at the individual level is possible through personal conversations and that without this effort by all community members and

supporters, all systemic and institutional efforts are powerless. The representatives of regional organizations mainly have the same opinion, that the solution to the problem starts from conversation; and in conditions when the spread of knowledge on the issue is politically undesirable, informal communication and exchange of information become especially important in micro communities.

It is noteworthy that, in most discussions, the families of LGBT(Q)I individuals are automatically seen as one of the main space for manifesting homophobic attitudes, which, in turn, causes particular harm to queer people. Consequently, families are mostly assessed by respondents as objects of information strategies and other support. However, some of the respondents, mostly the members of the community themselves, also talk about the role of family in overcoming homophobia. All of the answers in this regard confirm the special importance of family support – on the one hand, as a contributing factor in the process of self-determination and self-acceptance and, on the other hand, as an unconditional guarantee of safety in a homophobic environment.

“If I accepted my child as he/she/they is/are, no one in the whole country can insult him/her/them or not accept him/her/them as he/she/they is/are.”

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