

ACCEPTANCE

from a distance

Attitudes towards Homosexual, Bisexual, Trans
and Intersex People in Bosnia and Herzegovina

SARAJEVO, 2023.

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and Intersex People in Bosnia and Herzegovina

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Executive Summary

The aim of this research was to provide a deep understanding of the position of LGBTI people in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) and the factors that shape their daily lives, as well as to provide insight into the views and offer an understanding of the attitudes and opinions of the general population in BiH towards LGBTI people, their rights and freedoms, and LGBTIQ activism. Through a selected representative sample of 1,023 respondents aged 18 to 65, the research examined the level of awareness and support for LGBTI people and their human rights. The methodological approach included an online survey via the CAWI platform and analysis through descriptive statistics and relations between demographic variables.

Research findings indicate a positive trend in the knowledge of LGBTI topics and people in the immediate environment, as well as changes in the attitudes of the general population. The key findings are presented below:

• Awareness and level of connection with LGBTI people:



45,6%

of respondents personally know someone from the LGBTI community, highlighting a relatively large group with direct experience

Personal contact contributes to changed attitudes and empathy towards LGBTI people.

• Understanding homosexual/transgender people:

35,3%

of respondents think that LGBTI people are sick



41,8%

believe that they are not sick and do not need treatment

This change in attitudes compared to previous similar surveys indicates a positive trend towards acceptance.

• Acceptance in the family:

43%

of respondents believe that it is unacceptable for their child to be an LGBTI person

34%

of respondents consider it unacceptable to have an LGBTI family member

Research reveals that the level of acceptance decreases within families.

However, the answers indicate that the initial reactions would mostly be non-violent conversations in order to dissuade the child from their sexual orientation and/or gender identity.

• The role of the media:

53,4%

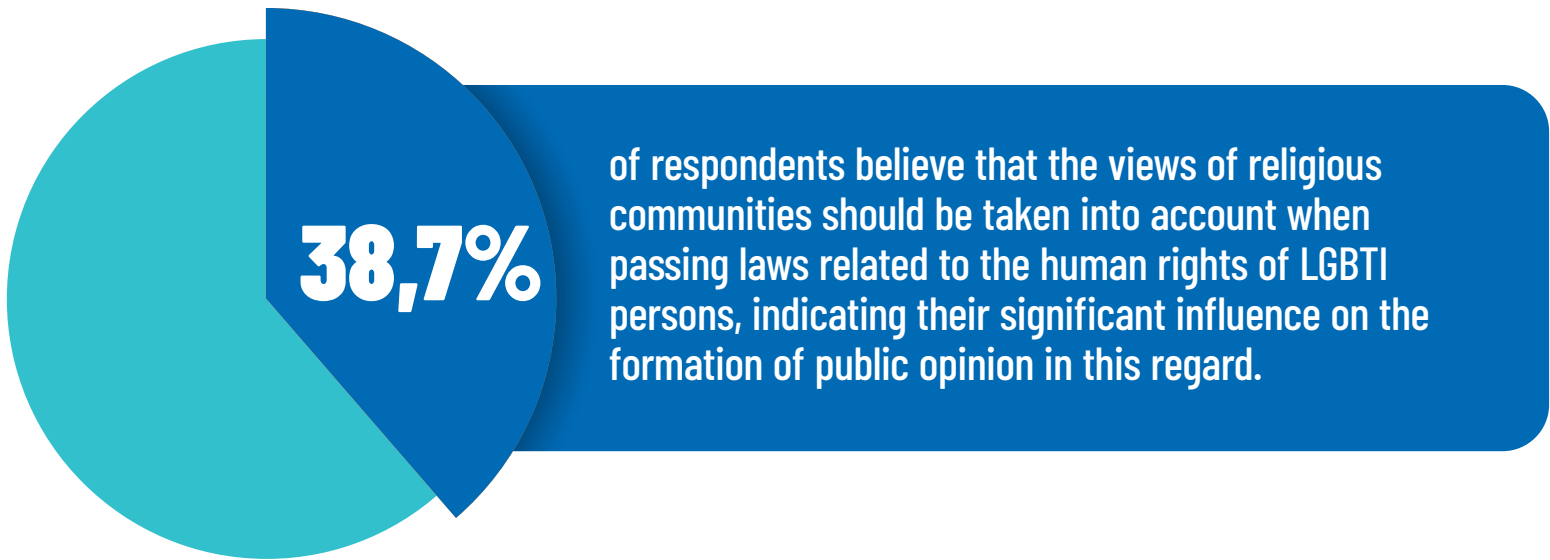
of respondents believe that the media report professionally on LGBTI topics

43,7%

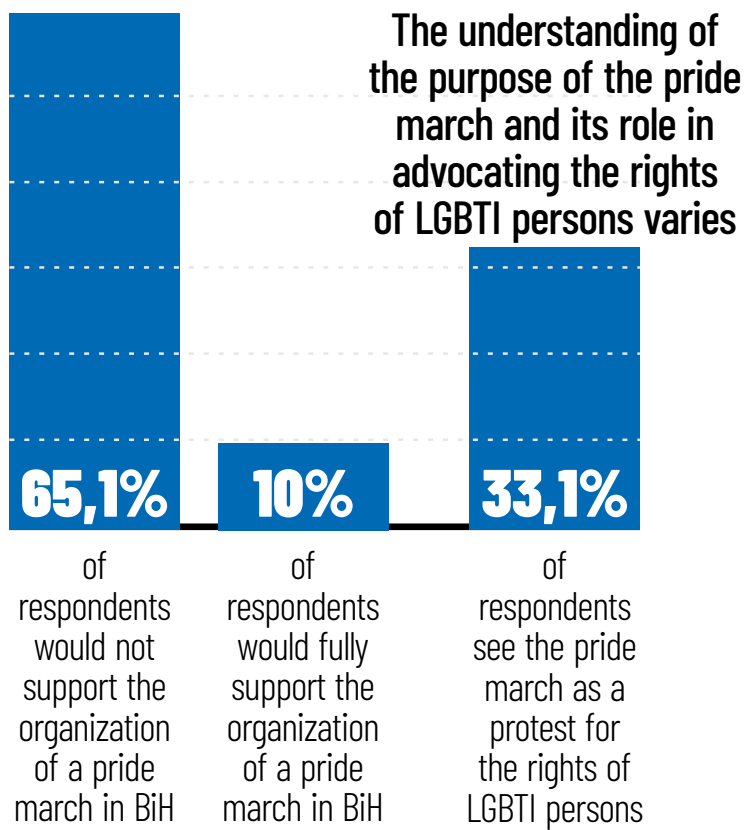
of respondents recognize a real interest of the media in covering these topics

These answers suggest the media's contribution to increasing public awareness.

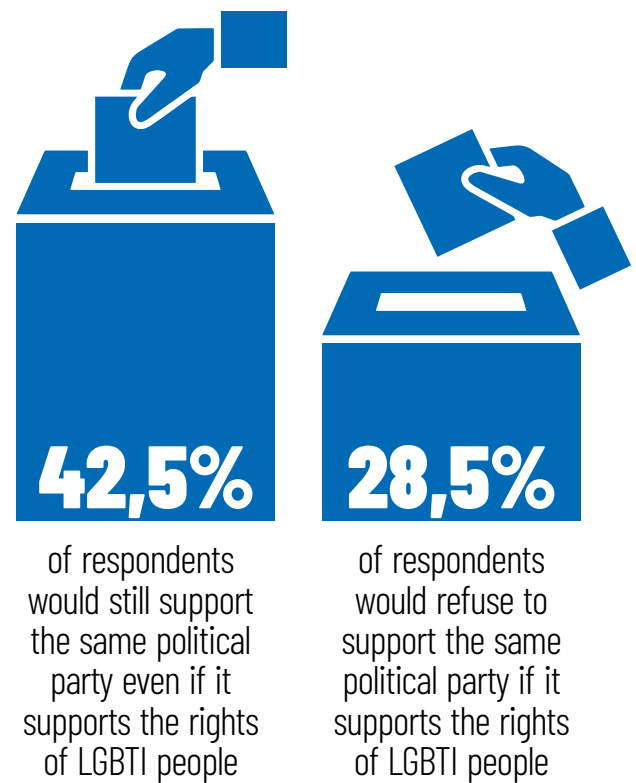
• **Influence of religion:**



• **Support for LGBTI rights:**



• **Political affiliation:**



• **Understanding the negative consequences of social distance:**



The survey identifies respondents' prevailing perceptions of the challenges facing LGBTI people, including violence, discrimination and lack of rights. However, the majority of respondents recognize a lack of understanding by society and a high level of homophobia as key problems for the inclusion of LGBTI people.

1. Introduction

With respect to human rights of lesbians, gay men, bisexual, transgender and intersex people in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the social and legal/political progress do not necessarily correspond, with the legislative and administrative changes, after years of failing to reflect the social attitudes towards LGBTI persons, definitely starting to lag behind.¹

Bosnia and Herzegovina has a track record of four pride marches and one pride car-ride, 10 years of a queer culture and art festival, and almost 20 years of activism and activities of LGBTI organizations and activists to improve the position and respect for the human rights of LGBTI people. In 2022, after 6 years of advocacy, the Action Plan to Improve the State of Human Rights of LGBTI People in BiH² was adopted – the first country-wide public policy, aiming to comprehensively define clear measures and obligations of competent institutions at all levels of government in respecting and improving human rights and addressing the needs of LGBTI people in BiH. Although slow, the initiated process of regulating same-sex partnership received an additional impetus with the official conclusion of the expert meeting of representatives of social welfare, the interior and justice institutions from the entire Federation of BiH, brought together by

¹Dizdar, Amina, Delila Hasanbegović, Liam Isić, Darko Pandurević, Jozo Blažević, and Lejla Huremović. 2019. *Pink Report 2019. Annual Report on the State of Human Rights of LGBTI People in Bosnia and Herzegovina*. Sarajevo: Sarajevo Open Centre.

Pandurević, Darko, Delila Hasanbegović, Jozo Blažević, and Nejra Agić. 2020. *Pink Report 2020. Annual Report on the State of Human Rights of LGBTI People in Bosnia and Herzegovina*. Sarajevo: Sarajevo Open Centre.

Hasanbegović, Delila, Darko Pandurević, Amina Dizdar, Dajana Bakić, Jozo Blažević, and Branko Ćulibrk. 2021. *Pink Report 2021. Annual Report on the State of Human Rights of LGBTI People in Bosnia and Herzegovina*. Sarajevo: Sarajevo Open Centre.

Brković, Amil, Branko Ćulibrk, Delila Hasanbegović, Dina Bajrektarević, and Jozo Blažević. 2022. *Pink Report 2022. Annual Report on the State of Human Rights of LGBTI People in Bosnia and Herzegovina*. Sarajevo: Sarajevo Open Centre.

Brković, Amil, Branko Ćulibrk, Delila Hasanbegović, Dina Bajrektarević, and Jozo Blažević. 2023. *Pink Report 2023. Annual Report on the State of Human Rights of LGBTI People in Bosnia and Herzegovina*. Sarajevo Open Centre.

²"USVOJEN AKCIONI PLAN ZA UNAPREĐENJE PRAVA LGBT OSOBA U BIH" arsbih.gov.ba. August 4, 2022. <https://arsbih.gov.ba/usvojen-akcioni-plan-za-unapredjenje-prava-lgbt-osoba-u-bih/>.

the FBiH Ministry of the Interior for a public debate at the end of 2022.³ The conclusion underlines that it is necessary for the Federation of BiH to pass a law on same-sex partnership that will include the widest possible range of rights for partners, and it remains an obligation for the new FBiH Government to form a working group to draft the law.

Although the above indicates progress and increased social acceptance and support, LGBTI people in BiH continue to face problems such as: hate crimes (especially domestic and peer violence), hate speech, discrimination, and complete marginalization in smaller places in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The attacks on the LGBTI community and activists that took place in Banja Luka in March 2023 are of particular concern here, as they revealed inertness and lack of support from institutions, homophobia in the public and institutional sphere, as well as the disproportionality of the activist impact in Bosnia and Herzegovina.⁴

Human rights cannot exist in a vacuum, nor be separated from social reality. The long-term activism promoting human rights of LGBTI people focused both on the empowerment of LGBTI persons and on advocacy for LGBTI inclusive laws and policies, as well as on raising the awareness of BiH citizens about the lives of their fellow citizens of different sexual orientations, gender identities and sex characteristics, trying to contribute to combating xenophobia and prevailing stereotypes and prejudices, and bring about increased social inclusion and acceptance.

Therefore, we cannot have the full picture of the life and position of lesbians, gays, bisexuals, transgender and intersex people in BiH without knowing the level of social understanding, acceptance and attitudes of the BiH general public towards LGBTI people and topics.

This research aims to examine these attitudes, indicate their potential progress in comparison to similar research conducted in 2013⁵ and 2015⁶, examine the effects that primarily activist efforts have had in the previous period on social inclusion and acceptance of LGBTI people, and offer findings and recommendations that can serve to further direct all strategic stakeholders relevant to the rights of LGBTI people.

³Brković, Amil, Branko Ćulibrk, Delila Hasanbegović, Dina Bajrektarević, and Jozo Blažević. 2023. *Pink Report 2023. Annual Report on the State of Human Rights of LGBTI People in Bosnia and Herzegovina*. Sarajevo: Sarajevo Open Centre.

⁴"Saopštenje: ovo je bio organizovani zločin iz mržnje usmjeren prema LGBTIQ osobama." *povorkaponosa.ba*. March 19, 2023. <https://povorkaponosa.ba/2023/03/19/saopstenje-ovo-je-bio-organizovani-zlocin-iz-mrznje-usmjeren-prema-lgbtiq-osobama/>.

⁵Popov Momčinović, Zlatiborka. 2013. *Ko smo mi da sudimo drugima? Ispitivanje javnog mnijenja o stavovima prema homoseksualnosti i transrodnosti u Bosni i Hercegovini*. Sarajevo: Fondacija CURE, Fondacija Heinrich Boell – Ured U BiH, Sarajevski otvoreni centar.

⁶"NDI Public Opinion Poll in the Balkans on LGBTI Communities", Ndi.Org. October 28, 2015. <https://www.slideshare.net/NDIdemocracy/ndi-public-opinion-poll-in-the-balkans-on-lgbti-communities>.

2. Research Methodology

2.1. Aim of the Research

This research aims to understand and analyze the attitudes and opinions of the general population in Bosnia and Herzegovina towards lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and intersex (LGBTI) people, their awareness of the position and rights of LGBTI people, as well as understanding of the complex factors, circumstances and situations that shape everyday life and affect the well-being of LGBTI people living in BiH. Relying on a robust methodology and a representative sample, the research provides valuable insights that can inform discussions, policies and actions related to the rights of LGBTI people and thus contribute to their inclusion and acceptance.

The data will be used for further guidance of all strategic civil society stakeholders in the field of LGBTIQ rights in BiH, primarily Sarajevo Open Centre.

Target group: the general BiH public, especially people who are not familiar with nor are they sensitized in relation to homosexual, bisexual, transgender and intersex people.

2.2. Key Methodological Notes

Sampling: The research targeted a representative sample of the general population in Bosnia and Herzegovina, aged 18 to 65. The sample size was 1023 respondents. The sample was stratified according to important demographic variables, including gender, age, region, place of residence, and education. Such an approach ensured an accurate reflection of the diversity of the population.

Data collection: Data were collected in June 2023, on the online survey platform CAWI (Computer Assisted Web Interviewing) through the Valicon panel of Jaznam.ba. Respondents were asked to fill out the questionnaire, which required an average of 15 minutes.

Questionnaire design: The questionnaire was carefully designed to collect opinions, perceptions and attitudes regarding the LGBTI population. Questions were structured in the closed format and a Likert scale was used to allow for quantitative analysis.

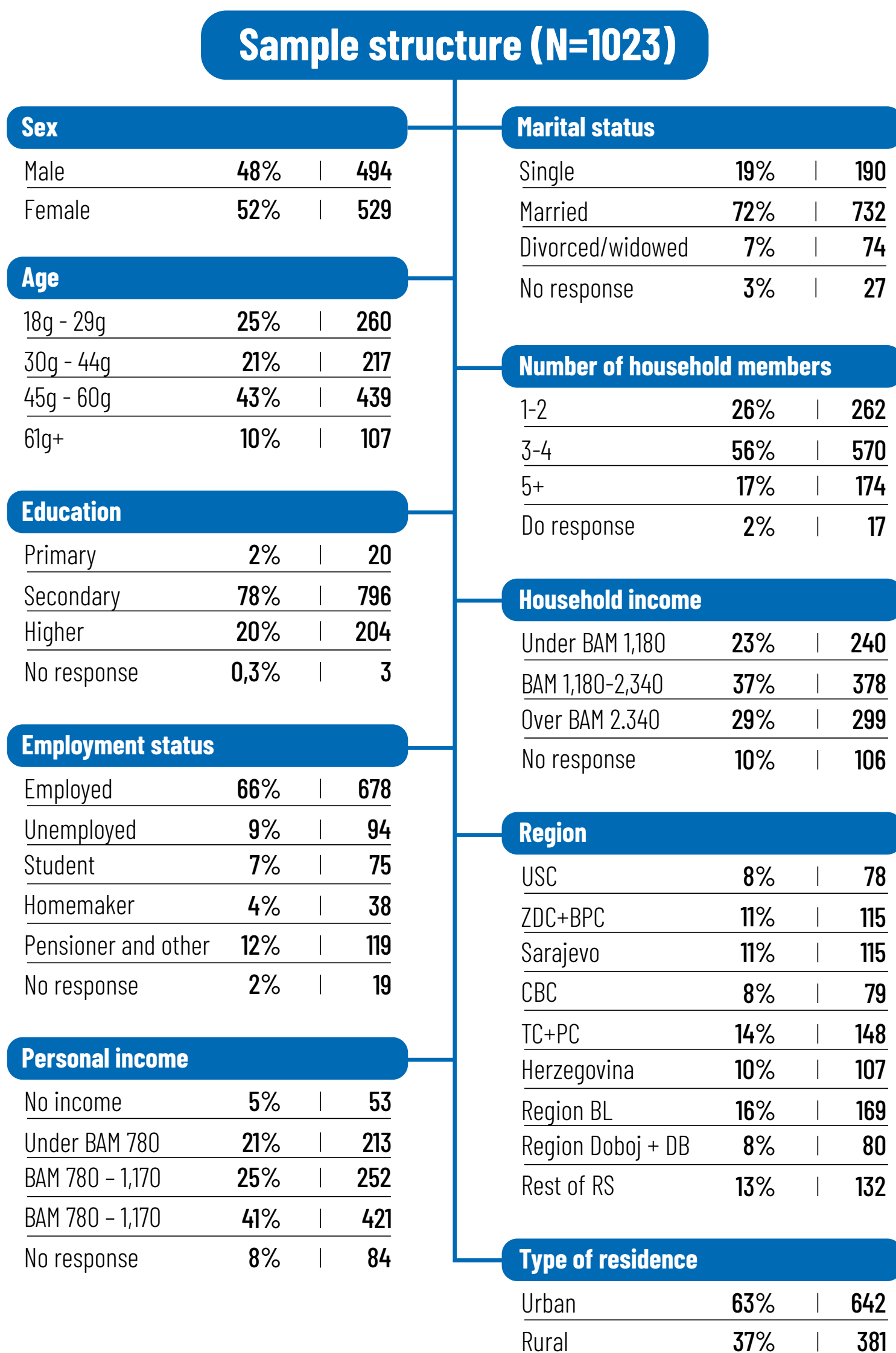
Data analysis: The collected data underwent descriptive statistics analysis, allowing the identification of prevailing trends and patterns. Relationships between demographic variables and attitudes were explored using techniques such as cross-tabulation.

Ethical considerations: Ethical guidelines were followed throughout the research process, including ensuring participant consent, ensuring confidentiality and anonymity. Data were managed securely and used exclusively for research purposes.

Limitations: The research recognizes potential limitations, including participant self-reporting bias and bias towards online participants, which may not capture all segments of the general population.

2.3. Sample Structure

The structure of respondents in this research is presented in the table below:



3. General Findings of the Research

3.1. Knowledge of the Acronym LGBTI

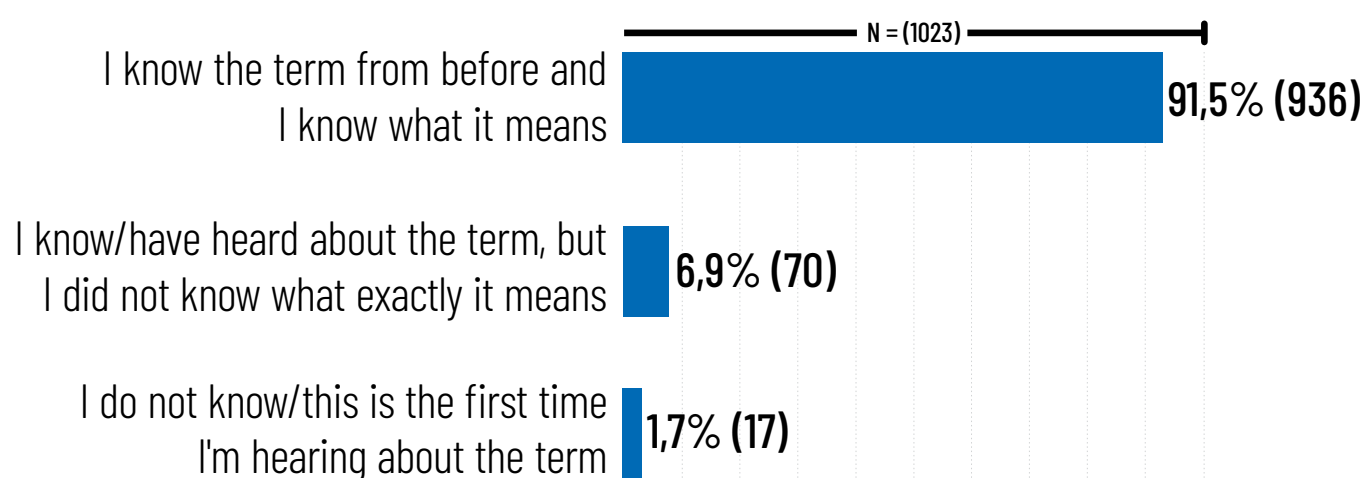
The aforementioned surveys of attitudes towards the LGBTI community in BiH and the Western Balkans, especially those conducted in 2013⁷ and 2015,⁸ indicated a very low level of knowledge of LGBTI topics and sensitivity to this topic.

The 2015 survey recorded a high level of ignorance of the acronym LGBTI with only 45% of respondents being familiar with the terms lesbian and gay or that they were part of the acronym LGBTI. As for bisexual people, only 35% of respondents knew that they belong to the acronym LGBTI, 25% for transgender people, and only 22% for intersex people.

This research, in terms of respondents' general awareness of terminology related to LGBTI people and their human rights, showed that 91.5% reported that they know the acronym and what it represents, while only 1.7% said that they never heard of the acronym and do not know what it means.

Respondents in the 30-39 age group are somewhat more familiar with the term compared to other age groups, as are those with personal monthly incomes above BAM 1,200. In addition, those who consider themselves not religious know the meaning of the term LGBTI to a slightly greater extent.

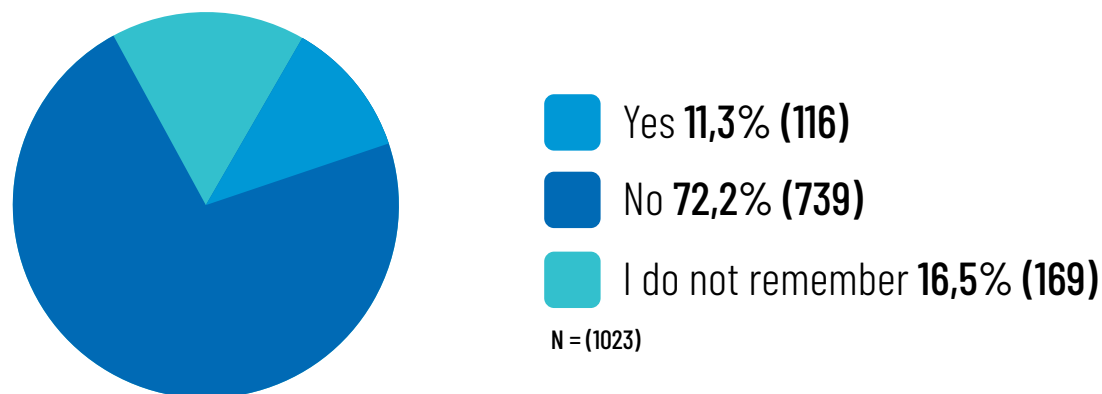
LGBTI is an acronym that refers to lesbians, gay men, bisexual, transgender and intersex people, and is used as a single term to denote different sexual orientation and sex/gender of people. To what extent was this known to you previously?



⁷Popov Momčinović, Zlatiborka. 2013. *Ko smo mi da sudimo drugima? Ispitivanje javnog mnijenja o stavovima prema homoseksualnosti i transrodnosti u Bosni i Hercegovini*. Sarajevo: Fondacija CURE, Fondacija Heinrich Boell – Ured U BiH, Sarajevski otvoreni centar.

⁸“NDI Public Opinion Poll in the Balkans on LGBTI Communities.” Ndi.Org. October 28, 2015. <https://www.slideshare.net/NDIdemocracy/ndi-public-opinion-poll-in-the-balkans-on-lgbti-communities>.

During your education, did you come across topics related to the human rights of LGBTI persons?



If we take into account that 72.2% of respondents never came across this topic during their education, that 41.6% of them believe that topics related to the LGBTI community are (mostly) not discussed publicly, and that 14.8% do not know or have no opinion about it, this indicates a very high and significant level of information among citizens, and the success of awareness-raising campaigns on this topic among the general population.

Awareness of the topic, the very concept of LGBTI, and further understanding of the position of LGBTI persons in BiH is associated with direct contact and knowledge of LGBTI persons. Namely, in a survey conducted in BiH in 2013,⁹ as many as 73.4% of respondents stated that they did not know a single LGBT person personally; the 2015 research for the Western Balkans¹⁰ showed a high degree of non-knowing LGBTI persons, where 90% of respondents stated that they did not know a single LGBTI person.

In the period between these surveys, there was a positive shift in the knowledge of LGBTI topics and people, therefore, the repeated survey of attitudes towards LGBTI people in the Western Balkans¹¹ in 2023 revealed that 27% of respondents from BiH stated that they personally know LGBTI persons.

Direct contact and personal knowledge of LGBTI persons undoubtedly contribute to changing attitudes and opinions, as well as familiarity with LGBTI topics. This research showed a positive trend in the knowledge of LGBTI persons in the immediate environment – 45.6% of respondents stated that they personally know an LGBTI person. This percentage suggests that there is a relatively large group of people who have direct experience and contact with LGBTI people, which can contribute to understanding and empathy for their experiences.

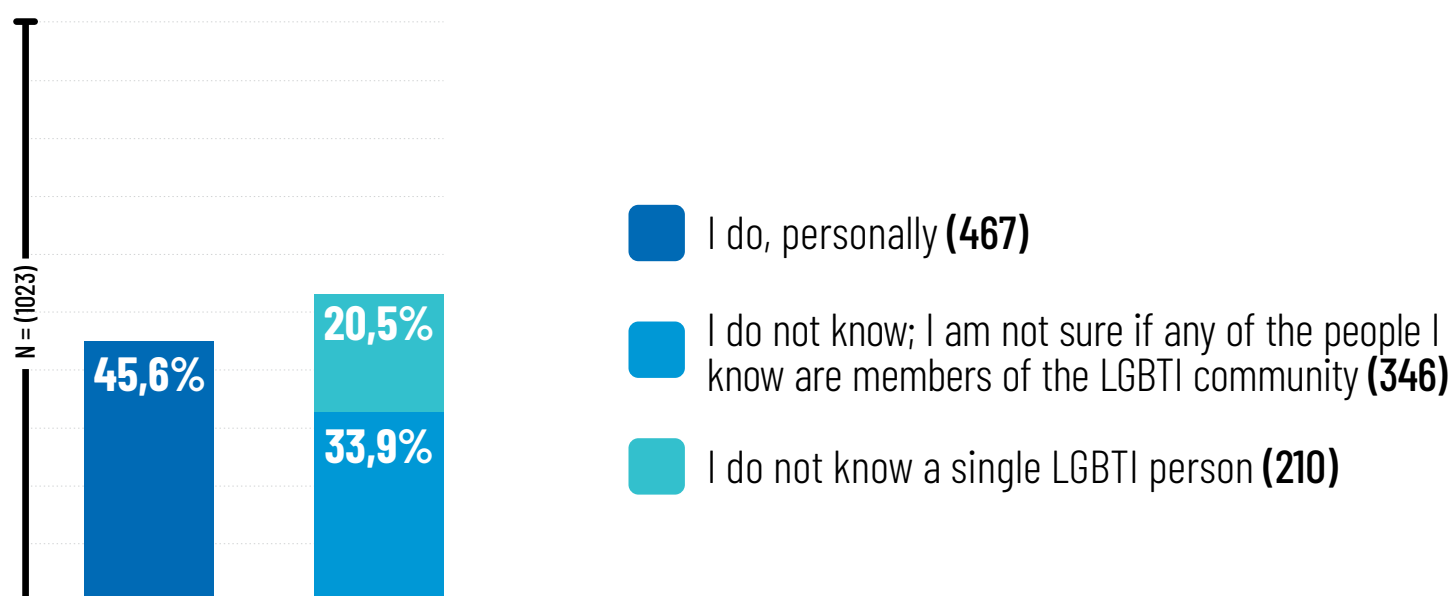
That LGBTI people are still not completely safe in expressing their LGBTI identities freely in society, and that they are forced to appear invisible among the general population, for fear of stigmatization and rejection, is shown by the fact that a significant group of 33.9% of respondents are not sure whether or not some of the people they know were members of the LGBTI community; and by the fact that 20.5% respondents do not know a single LGBTI person.

⁹Popov Momčinović, Zlatiborka. 2013. *Ko smo mi da sudimo drugima? Ispitivanje javnog mnijenja o stavovima prema homoseksualnosti i transrodnosti u Bosni i Hercegovini*. Sarajevo: Fondacija CURE, Fondacija Heinrich Boell – Ured U BiH, Sarajevski otvoreni centar.

¹⁰"NDI Public Opinion Poll in the Balkans on LGBTI Communities." Ndi.Org. October 28, 2015. <https://www.slideshare.net/NDIdemocracy/ndi-public-opinion-poll-in-the-balkans-on-lgbti-communities>.

¹¹Fecanji, Amarildo. 2023. *Attitudes towards LGBTIQ+ People in the Western Balkans. Analytical Report of Public Opinion Poll*. ERA - LGBTI Equal Rights Association for the Western Balkans and Turkey.

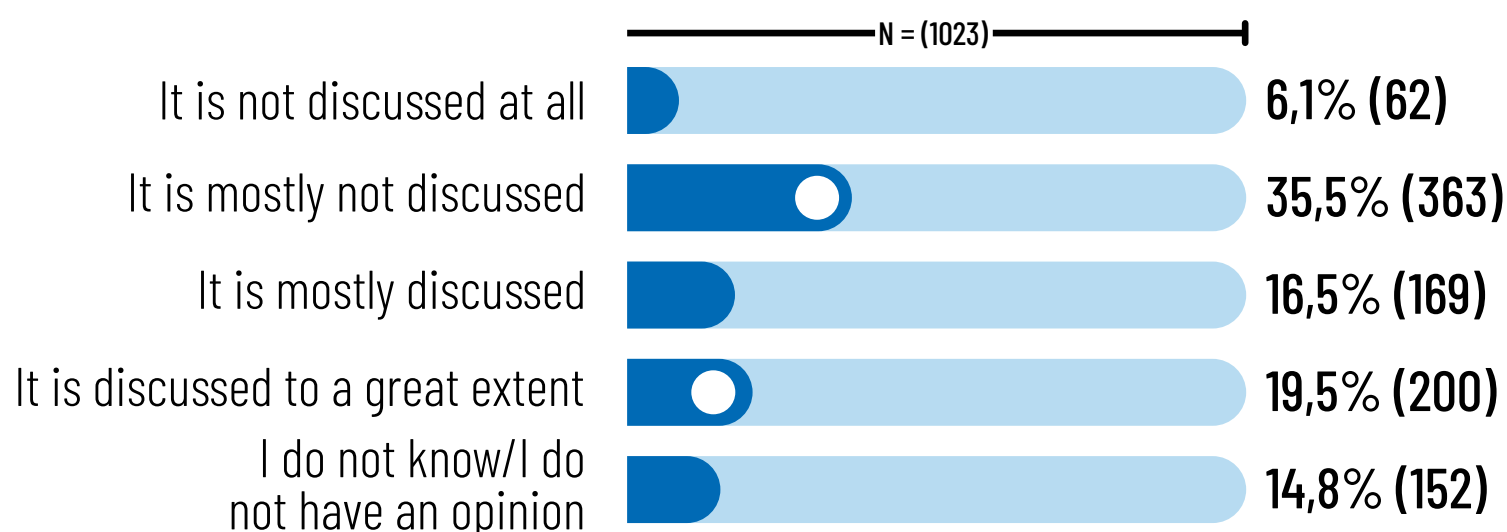
Do you personally know an LGBTI person?



These findings indicate a need for a higher degree of public awareness and information, in order to raise awareness of LGBTI issues and provide support to people within the community.

Regardless of the positive developments in the knowledge of terminology, the general population believes that there is a lack of information on LGBTI topics in the public space, and as many as 35.5% think that these issues are mostly not discussed. 16.5% of respondents claim that these issues are mostly discussed, while 19.5% believe the position of LGBTI people is discussed to a great extent. Although the percentages indicate a growing awareness and openness towards LGBTI rights topics in society, they warn that, despite the fact that there are discussions in the public discourse, there is a lack of deeper dedication and continued public and media interest in LGBTI topics and developments.

In your opinion, to what extent is the position of LGBTI people publicly discussed today in Bosnia and Herzegovina?



Overall, the data show that there are different perceptions about the extent to which the position of LGBTI persons in Bosnia and Herzegovina is publicly discussed. Differences in perception indicate different levels of awareness, engagement and acceptance of these issues in society.

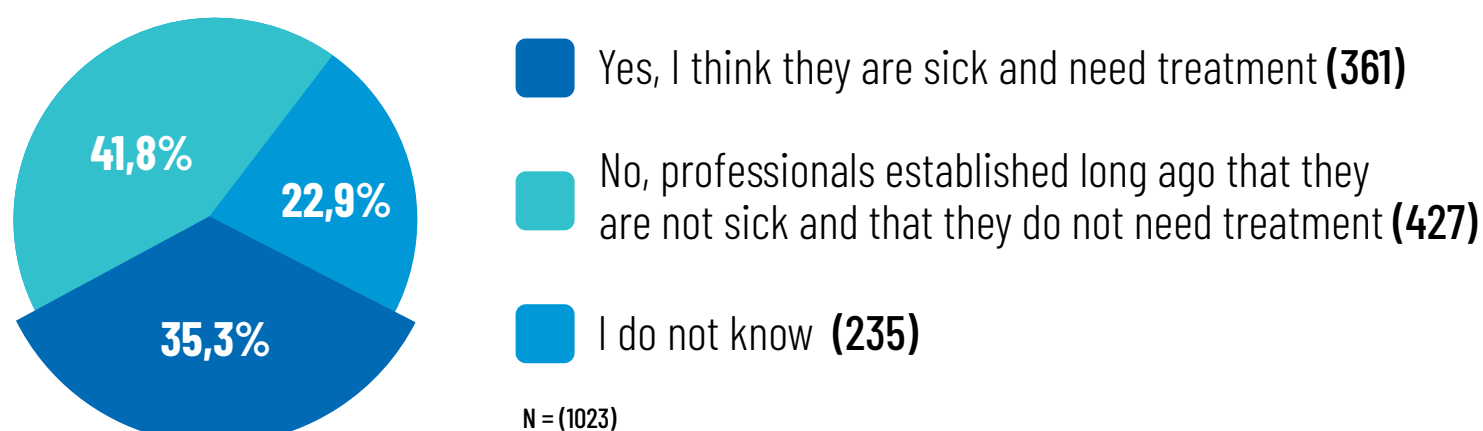
3.2. Opinions and Attitudes towards the LGBTI Community

Just as knowledge of the term LGBTI and knowledge of LGBTI persons, opinions and attitudes towards the LGBTI community have also changed. In the 2015 survey for the Western Balkans,¹² as many as 59% of respondents from Bosnia and Herzegovina considered LGBTI people to be sick. A similar figure was repeated in the 2023¹³ survey for the Western Balkans, where 54% of respondents stated that they consider LGBTI people to be sick.

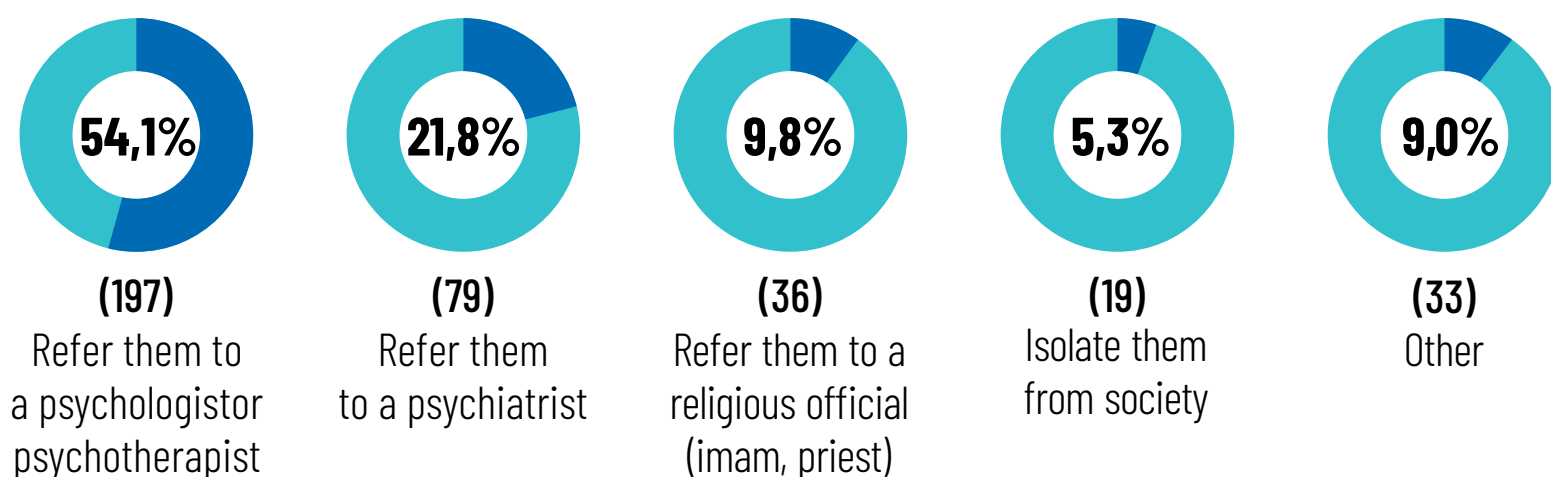
This research, however, indicates a significant change in the attitudes of the general population, with only 35.3% of respondents stating that they consider LGBTI people to be sick, while 41.8% believe that LGBTI people are not sick and that they should not be treated and 22.9% do not have an opinion on this issue.

Respondents in the 18-29 age group who live in predominantly rural areas of BiH and who consider themselves religious are more inclined to the views that LGBTI people should be treated.

Do you think that LGBTI people are sick and should be treated?



What do you think needs to be done?



The fact is encouraging that even among the 35,3% of respondents who believe that LGBTI people are sick, there are those (76.9%) who would refer LGBTI people to psychological/psychiatric help, while 9.8% would send them to religious officials, and only 5.3% would isolate them from society.

¹²“NDI Public Opinion Poll in the Balkans on LGBTI Communities.” Ndi.Org. October 28, 2015. <https://www.slideshare.net/NDIdemocracy/ndi-public-opinion-poll-in-the-balkans-on-lgbti-communities>.

¹³Fecanji, Amarildo. 2023. Attitudes towards LGBTIQ+ People in the Western Balkans. Analytical Report of Public Opinion Poll. ERA - LGBTI Equal Rights Association for the Western Balkans and Turkey.

Nevertheless, the potential danger of such a “helping” approach is that conversion therapies could also be considered psychological/psychiatric help, and due to ignorance and lack of information, some BiH citizens would be willing to expose LGBTI persons to this type of psychological violence, as will be discussed in more detail in the section on the relationship between parents and children. This finding certainly calls for a deeper analysis of the responses, in order to gain a qualitative insight into the ultimate goal of referral to psychological/psychiatric help. Given that psychology and medicine, as sciences, have a history of homo/transphobic treatment of LGBTI persons and approaches marked by personal bias, it is necessary to raise this topic in the public, to work in a targeted manner with experts from this field, and to ensure that both LGBTI persons and the general public have sufficient quality information, on the basis of which they can reach sensitized and professional experts in these fields.¹⁴

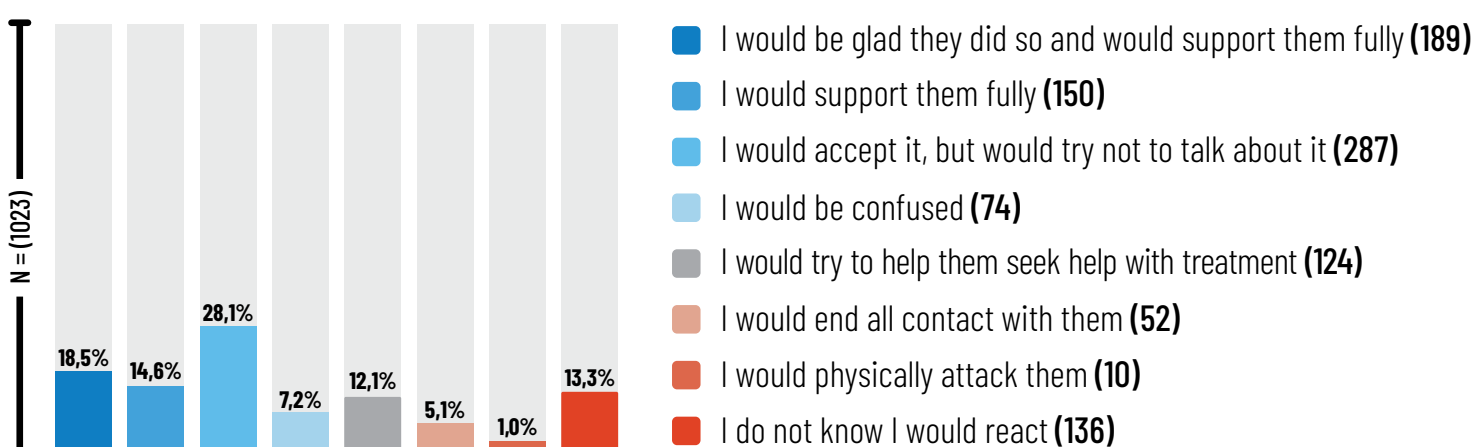
3.2.1. Coming out

The change in attitudes between 2015 and 2023 is evident also in the expected reactions of respondents to LGBTI people coming out in their immediate environment. The 2015 survey for the Western Balkans¹⁵ reported that only 11% of respondents from Bosnia and Herzegovina stated that they would fully support LGBTI people in their environment after coming out, 25% would support them, without talking about it; 23% would refer them to treatment, and as many as 30% would stop communicating with them. In the 2023 survey for the Western Balkans,¹⁶ as many as 24% of the respondents from Bosnia and Herzegovina would support LGBTI people after coming out, 32% would accept them without discussing it further, 24% would refer them to treatment, and only 16% would stop communicating with them.

This research reveals that as many as 33.1% of respondents would support LGBTI people from their immediate environment, after coming out, while 28.1% would accept them, but would try not to talk about it, 12.1% would refer them for treatment, and only 5.1% would end contact with them.

Although statistically insignificant, the percentage of 1% of respondents who would react violently in the event of an LGBTI person coming out in their immediate environment, indicates that society has not yet reached zero tolerance for violence and is concerning in terms of the consequences that homophobic and transphobic violence has on LGBTI people in BiH, their mental health and well-being.

If a person you meet on a daily basis or socialize with told you that they are an LGBTI person, how would you react?



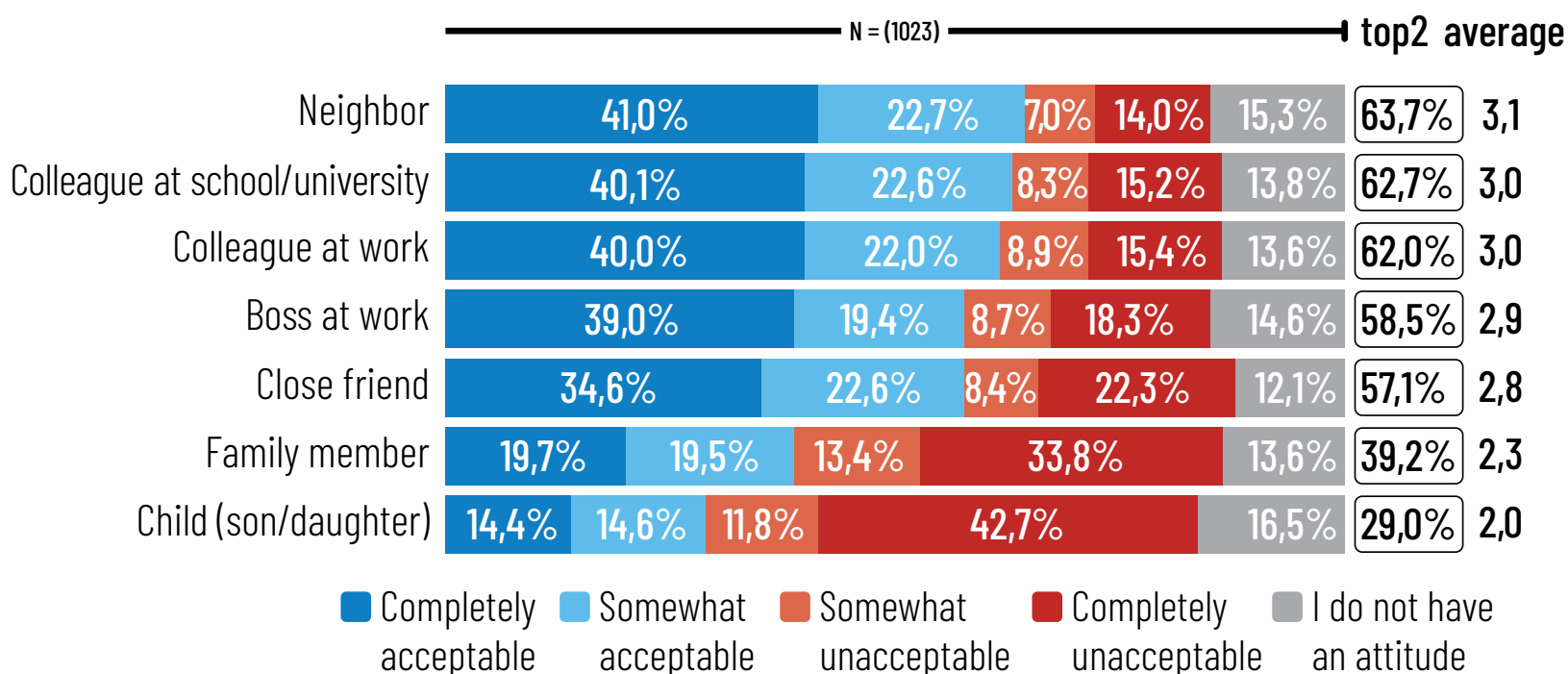
¹⁴Vasić, Vladana, Marija Šarić, and Zvezdana Savić. 2020. *Od podrške do prihvatanja: Priručnik za inkluzivnu psihološku, psihoterapijsku i druge vidove sveobuhvatne podrške LGBTI osobama*. Sarajevo: Sarajevo Open Centre.

¹⁵“NDI Public Opinion Poll in the Balkans on LGBTI Communities.” Ndi.Org. October 28, 2015. <https://www.slideshare.net/NDIdemocracy/ndi-public-opinion-poll-in-the-balkans-on-lgbti-communities>.

¹⁶Fecanji, Amarildo. 2023. *Attitudes towards LGBTIQ+ People in the Western Balkans. Analytical Report of Public Opinion Poll*. ERA - LGBTI Equal Rights Association for the Western Balkans and Turkey.

The research indicates that the polarity of the respondents' attitudes depends on the closeness and degree of emotional attachment in interpersonal relationships – the greater the degree of social distance, the easier the respondents accept LGBTI persons. Thus, 40% of them stated that it is largely acceptable for them to have their neighbor, colleague at university or work, and their boss be members of the LGBTI community.

However, in family relationships, this level of acceptance decreases – for 34% of respondents, it is still unacceptable for their family member to be a member of the LGBTI community, with attitudes becoming even more harsh when it comes to their own children – as many as 43% of respondents believe that it is unacceptable for their child to be an LGBTI person.



These percentages indicate the necessity of continuing the work and increasing the visibility of the group of parents and family members of LGBTI people, as well as sensitizing the general population on issues of family support and acceptance of LGBTI persons. A network of support and personal knowledge of the parents of LGBTI people can lead to an additional change in perception and reconciliation of emotional and affective attitudes with general support for the LGBTI community in BiH.

3.2.2. Attitudes about LGBTI People

It is evident that some prejudices in the attitudes and opinions of the public are more difficult to eliminate over time, and that they persist among the general population and influence its attitude towards and acceptance of LGBTI people.

In public opinion 2015 survey of the Western Balkans¹⁷ and in the repeated 2023 survey,¹⁸ over 66% of respondents from BiH believed that LGBTI people should not express their identity outside their four walls.

Although the regional survey from 2023 showed that 70% of respondents from BiH have this attitude, the public opinion survey by Sarajevo Open Centre, also conducted in 2023, indicates a significantly

¹⁷NDI Public Opinion Poll in the Balkans on LGBTI Communities." Ndi.Org. October 28, 2015. <https://www.slideshare.net/NDIdemocracy/ndi-public-opinion-poll-in-the-balkans-on-lgbti-communities>.

¹⁸Amarildo Fecanji. 2023. Attitudes towards LGBTIQ+ People in the Western Balkans. Analytical Report of Public Opinion Poll. ERA - LGBTI Equal Rights Association for the Western Balkans and Turkey.

¹⁹Ibid.

smaller percentage of people who share this opinion – only 16% of them, while an additional 4% are exclusively against the promotion of LGBTI people. The difference in percentage can be attributed to various factors, mostly to the difference in research methodology and the representativeness of the sample of respondents.

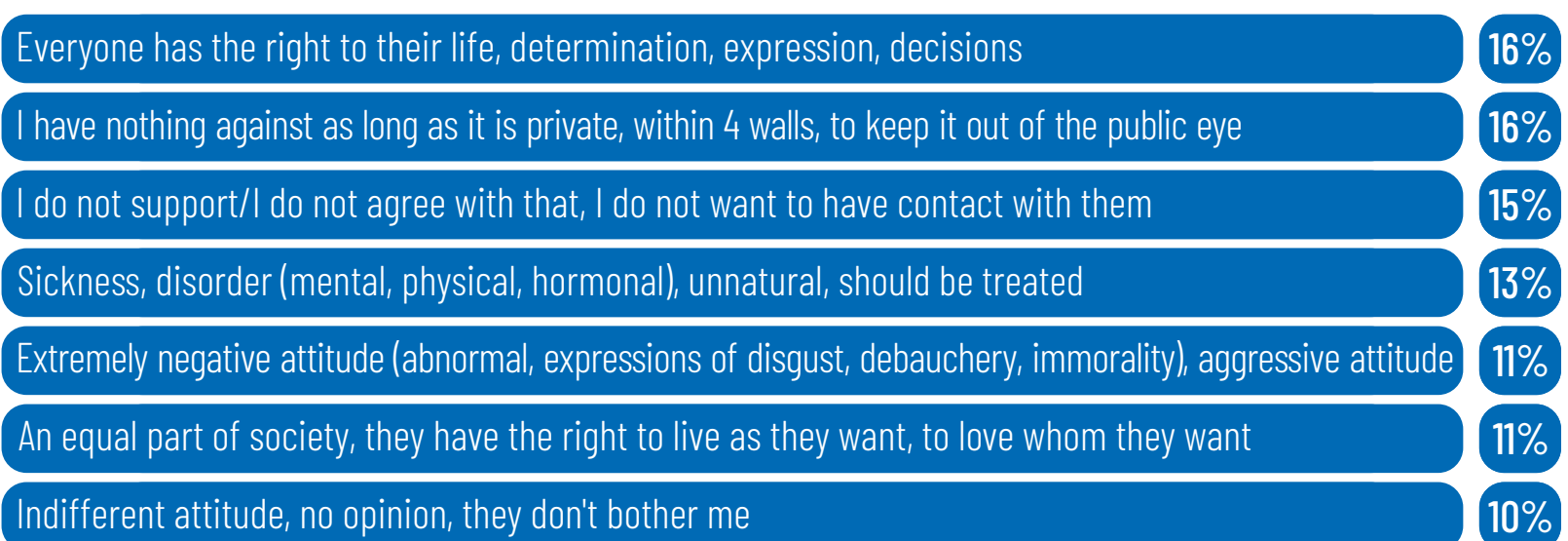
This research indicates that in the context of LGBTI topics there are still different perspectives within BiH society, and that attitudes vary from positive and neutral to negative and conflicting opinions towards LGBTI people. It is encouraging that only 11% of respondents have extremely negative attitudes, and that only 13% believe that LGBTI people need treatment, indicating a misunderstanding of sexuality and gender and confirming the necessity of additional informing and sensitizing of the general public.

The expressed negative attitudes fall under maintaining social distance from LGBTI people, and not under the sphere of negative actions towards the community or the human rights of LGBTI people; 15% of respondents do not support LGBTI people and avoid contact or confrontation with them, suggesting that they express negative attitudes from a distance, without directly affecting the position or well-being of LGBTI people in BiH society. We can add into this group the 10% of respondents who are indifferent to the LGBTI community, i.e., they do not have a strong opinion on this topic. The findings point to the need for additional examination of the extent to which this expression from a distance tends to affect the position of LGBTI people in BiH, especially if we take into account that such expressions online can contribute to a general atmosphere of intolerance and potentially convince other groups that their more extreme reactions are supported by the majority in society, and can influence the LGBTI community's perception of acceptance in BiH society and leave consequences for their mental health and well-being. Taking into account these consequences, and the potential multiplication of such attitudes and the finding of like-minded people on social media, the question arises of the possibility that mutual support and validation can lead to a move from expressing negative attitudes from a distance to more direct and extreme expressions of negativity and intolerance.

32% of respondents expressed extremely positive attitudes towards LGBTI people, where 16% of them emphasize respect for the right of every individual to lead their life, make their own decisions and express their identity, 11% support equality and the right of LGBTI people to live and love as they wish, and 5% of them see LGBTI people as ordinary people without prejudice.

Other responses include less frequent attitudes and indecision.

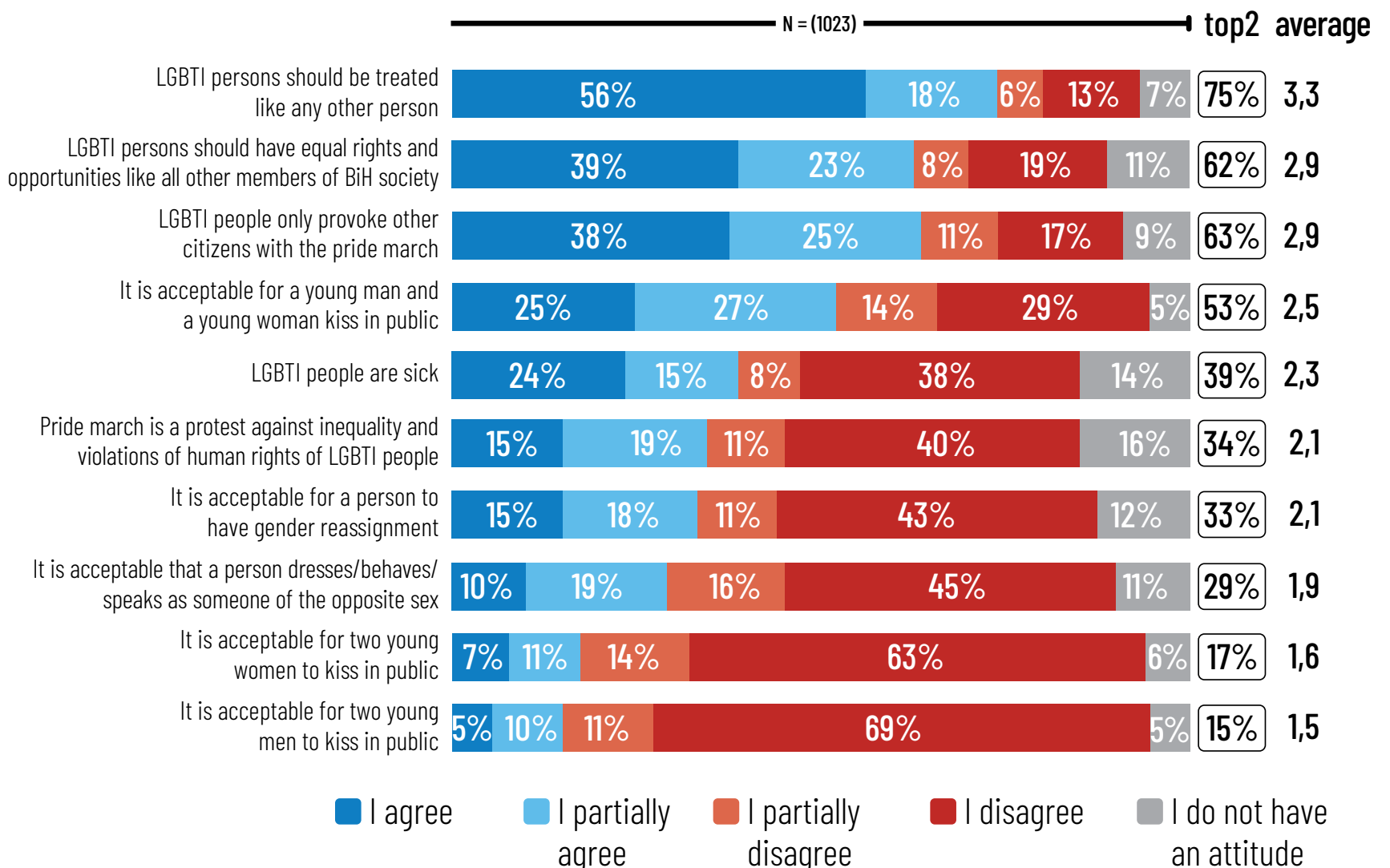
OPINIONS AND ATTITUDES TOWARDS THE LGBTI COMMUNITY Spontaneous associations – open answer





Likewise, when they expressed agreement with the statements offered (Likert-type scale, 1 to 4), the answers followed the ratio of positive, negative and neutral distributions.

In summary, if we take the answers of full agreement and partial agreement, 74% of respondents agree with the statements that LGBTI people should be treated like any other person, and 62% of them believe that LGBTI people should have equal rights and opportunities like all other citizens of BiH.



We see that both in the open answers and offered statements, neutral and positive attitudes prevail, while negative attitudes are reserved for public display of sexual orientation (public expression of tenderness) and gender identity (clothing and speaking), for most public manifestations of sexuality and gender, and for protests (pride march).

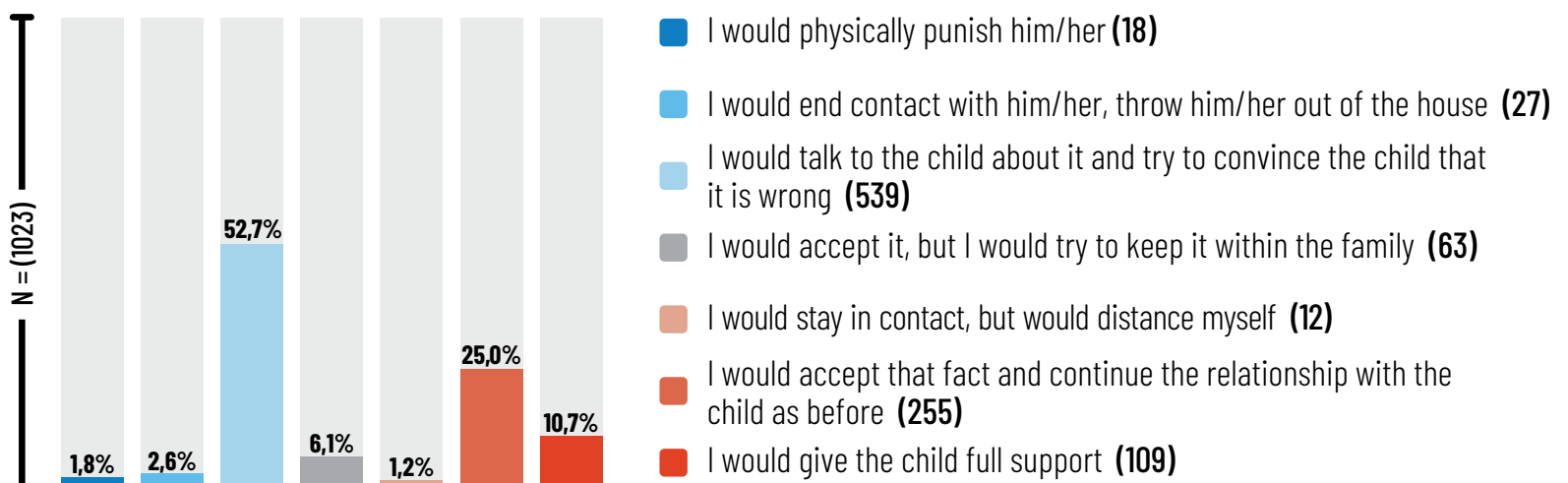
3.2.3. Parent-Child Relationship

Given the previous finding, which indicates that the respondents are the least inclined to accept the LGBTI identity of their own children, one could expect that the initial reactions to their own children coming out would be mostly negative. However, the majority of reactions refers to non-violent persuasion and conversations, while 53% of them would try to convince the child that it is wrong.

On the other hand, 25% of respondents would accept their child and continue to have a normal relationship with them, and 10.7% would give the child full support, which means that 35.7% of respondents would fully accept and support their child.

A very small percentage of the population states that they would end all contact with the child or punish him/her physically.

If you found out that your child is an LGBTI person, what would be your first reaction?



When we look at the results of the regional survey from 2015,²⁰ where only 8% of respondents from BiH would support their child, and the regional survey from 2023,²¹ where 22% of respondents would do so, the data from this survey indicate a positive trend acceptance of LGBTI persons within the closest family.

Considering that the research from 2015²² indicates that 44% of respondents from BiH would help the child get treatment, that in the regional survey from 2023²³ that percentage is 53%, and that in this research, 52.7 % of respondents would talk to their children with the intention of convincing them that being an LGBTI person is wrong, we recognize the danger that, out of ignorance, fear and misunderstanding, parents can direct LGBTI children into negative patterns of suppressing and hiding their own sexual orientation, gender identity and sex characteristics, which can result in difficulties for their mental health, isolation or, in more extreme cases, deciding on some of the more harmful forms of

²⁰“NDI Public Opinion Poll in the Balkans on LGBTI Communities.” Ndi.Org. October 28, 2015. <https://www.slideshare.net/NDIdemocracy/ndi-public-opinion-poll-in-the-balkans-on-lgbti-communities>.

²¹Fecanji, Amarildo. 2023. Attitudes towards LGBTIQ+ People in the Western Balkans. Analytical Report of Public Opinion Poll. ERA - LGBTI Equal Rights Association for the Western Balkans and Turkey.

²²NDI public opinion poll in the Balkans on LGBTI communities, (2015, NDI)

²³Fecanji, Amarildo. 2023. Attitudes towards LGBTIQ+ People in the Western Balkans. Analytical Report of Public Opinion Poll. ERA - LGBTI Equal Rights Association for the Western Balkans and Turkey.

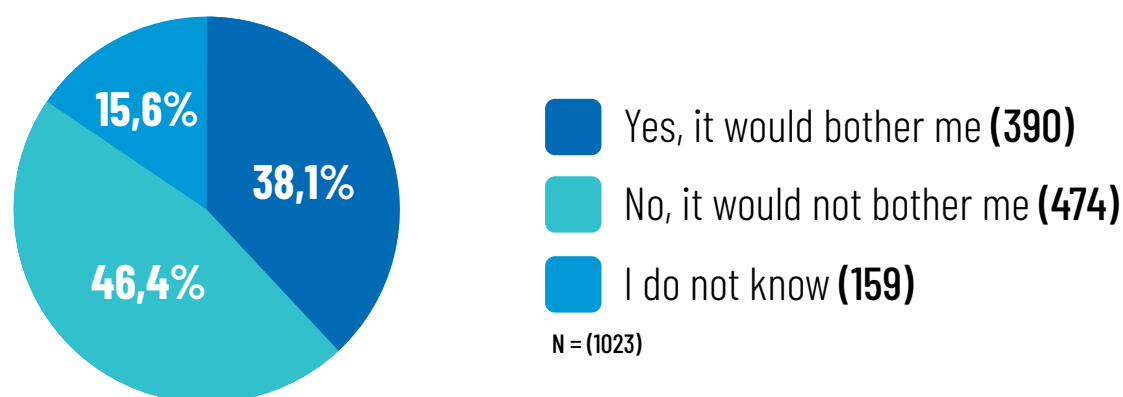
trying to change their identity, such as conversion therapy.

Namely, answers like “I would talk to the child about it and try to convince the child that it is wrong” may indicate the parents' desire to change their child's LGBTI identity through arguments or persuasion. Such reaction can be associated with conversion therapy, which often applies psychological or spiritual methods to “heal” the LGBTI person.

As for the most extreme forms of reaction to the LGBTI identity of one's own children, regional surveys from 2015²⁴ and 2023²⁵ indicate that 9% of respondents from BiH would physically punish their own child or completely end the relationship with them. This research, however, portrays a more positive picture of the shift in BiH society's attitude towards LGBTI people, with this percentage reduced to only 4.4% of respondents, of which 2.6% would end the relationship with their child, and 1.8% would react with physical violence.

With regard to children's exposure to LGBTI topics in the educational system, the majority of respondents have a positive (46.4%) or undecided (15.6%) attitude. Although media and public narratives indicate that the issue of education and exposure of children to LGBTI topics in schools is often perceived as “indoctrination” and is met with fierce reactions from parents, this research indicates an emergence of more relaxed attitudes on informing children about LGBTI topics in academic settings.

Would it bother you if your child attends classes at school that talk about LGBTI people from a scientific, social, and cultural perspective?



Analysis of the sample indicates that attitudes towards LGBTI topics in education are influenced by sex, gender, age and level of education; middle-aged and older women with higher education are more inclined to the attitude that they would not mind if their children attend lectures at school that are related to LGBTI topics, compared to other society categories.

3.2.4. Violence against LGBTI People

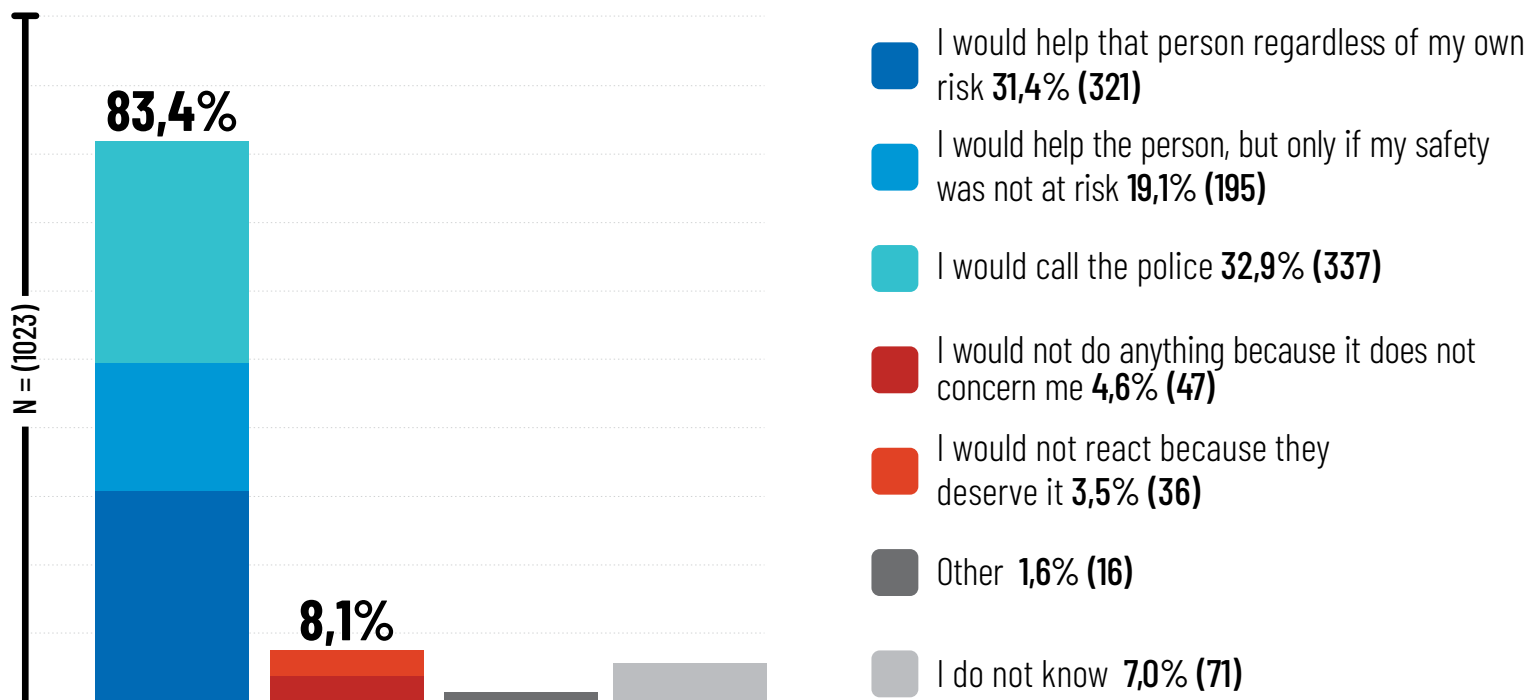
Although the previous results indicate that we have not reached zero tolerance towards violence against LGBTI people in BiH society, the majority of respondents express their willingness to help, regardless of their own risk, with a certain caution or calling the police. If they witnessed violence against an LGBTI person, 64.3% of respondents would actively intervene – call the police or help the person(s) themselves, regardless of the potential risk. An additional 19.1% would decide to help only if they knew that their own safety would not be threatened, indicating careful balancing between helping others and their own safety.

²⁴NDI public opinion poll in the Balkans on LGBTI communities, (2015, NDI)

²⁵Fecanji, Amarildo. 2023. Attitudes towards LGBTIQ+ People in the Western Balkans. Analytical Report of Public Opinion Poll. ERA - LGBTI Equal Rights Association for the Western Balkans and Turkey.

However, there are also people who show a lack of empathy or even have negative attitudes towards victims of violence, such as 8,1% of those who would not help because they believe that it does not concern them or they think that LGBTI people deserve it. Among this population, there are slightly more young people (18-29), living in rural areas with a high degree of religiosity.

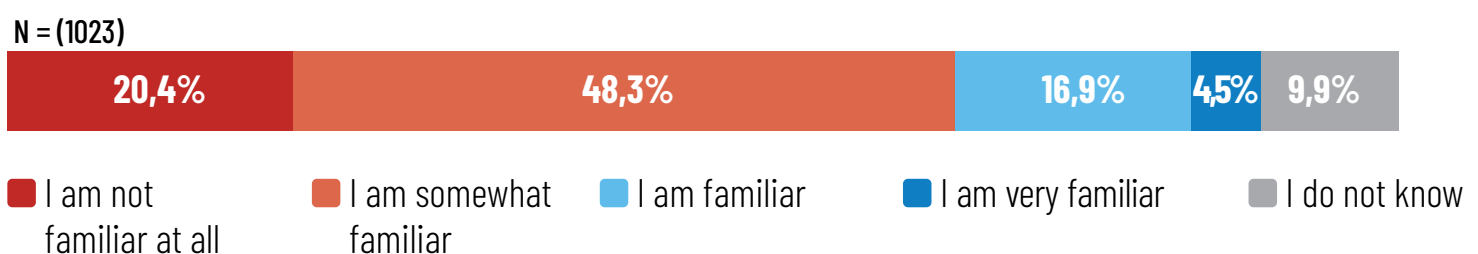
If you witnessed violence against an LGBTI person, what would you do?



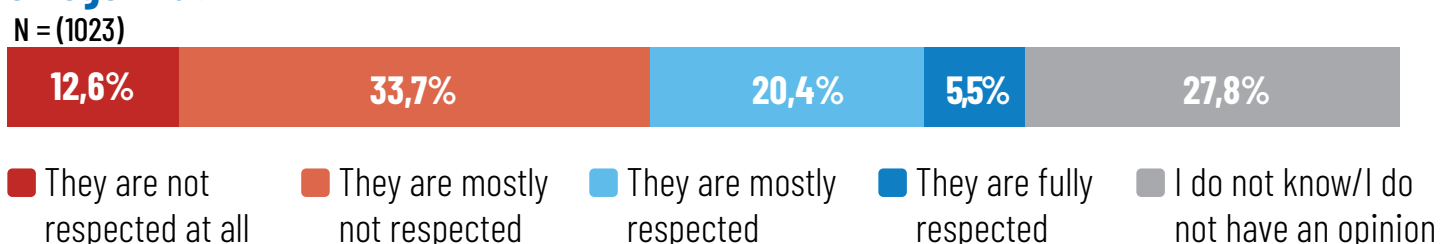
3.3. Opinions and Attitudes towards the Human Rights of LGBTI People

The findings of this research underline to a large extent the necessity of deepening social discussions and targeting information to the public about the specifics of the position and respect for the human rights of LGBTI people in BiH. Namely, although 91.5% of respondents know the meaning of the term LGBTI, only 21.4% of them claim to be familiar with the rights of LGBTI persons, and 48.3% claim to be somewhat familiar with this topic. This difference in the findings indicates that, although they followed content about LGBTI people in public, the respondents are not as exposed to content that thematizes their human rights. It is positive that only 20.4% of respondents do not have any knowledge about the human rights of LGBTI people in BiH.

To what extent are you familiar with the rights of LGBTI persons?



In your opinion, to what extent are the rights of LGBTI people respected in Bosnia and Herzegovina?



Respondents' answers to the question about the level of respect for the human rights of LGBTI persons in BiH indicate that over a third of them are aware of violations of the rights of LGBTI people, and that only 5.5% believe that these rights are fully respected. Although 46.3% of respondents are aware that the human rights of LGBTI persons in BiH are being violated, it is worrying that almost a third of them, 27.8%, do not know or have no opinion on this topic, which also indicates the necessity of more intensive communication and informing the public about human rights of LGBTI people in BiH.

3.3.1. Legal Recognition of Same-Sex Partnership

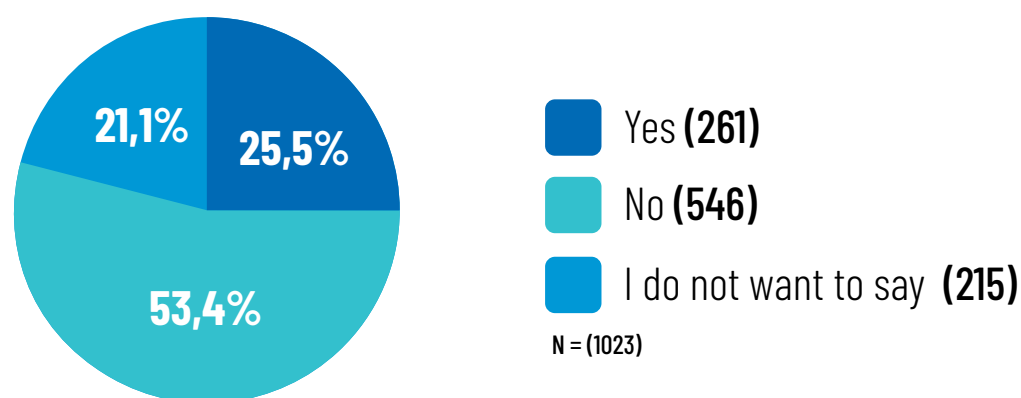
Compared with the results of the 2015 regional survey,²⁶ according to which only 9% of respondents from BiH supported the legal recognition of same-sex partnership, both the regional survey from 2023²⁷ and this survey show a significant increase in the level of support, in both cases amounting to about 26% of respondents.

These percentages reveal that there is a part of society in BiH that supports the legal recognition of same-sex partnership, but also an increased support through continuous work, activism and awareness raising of the public about the necessity of regulating unions of same-sex couples.

The majority of respondents, 53.4% of them, are still opposed to the regulation of same-sex partnerships, indicating significant social resistance that may be the result of ignorance and lack of information about the human rights of LGBTI people and of conservative social beliefs often present in some parts of BiH.

Furthermore, 21.1% of respondents did not want to express their attitude towards the legalization of same-sex partnerships, which may indicate uncertainty regarding this issue, and which confirms the necessity of additional awareness raising on the human rights of LGBTI people, particularly on same-sex partnerships and their legal aspect.

Do you support the legalization of the right to same-sex partnership?



In summary, BiH is a country with a diverse ethnic and religious structure, and often faces challenges in harmonizing different attitudes and values. Attitudes about the rights of LGBTI people are often closely related to traditional values and social norms. These data reflect the need for further dialogue and education to increase understanding of this topic and achieve progress towards equal rights for all citizens, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity.

²⁶“NDI Public Opinion Poll in the Balkans on LGBTI Communities.” Ndi.Org. October 28, 2015. <https://www.slideshare.net/NDIdemocracy/ndi-public-opinion-poll-in-the-balkans-on-lgbti-communities>.

²⁷Fecanji, Amarildo. 2023. Attitudes towards LGBTIQ+ People in the Western Balkans. Analytical Report of Public Opinion Poll. ERA - LGBTI Equal Rights Association for the Western Balkans and Turkey.

3.3.2. Level of Support for the Human Rights of LGBTI People

Respondents showed greater awareness of the individual human rights of LGBTI persons when presented to them individually, as shown in the table below:

In your opinion, what rights LGBTI people do not have in Bosnia and Herzegovina?

	n	%
The right to enter into a same-sex partnership/marriage	595	58,1%
The right to adopt children	535	52,3%
The right to protection from violence	211	20,6%
The right to protection against hate speech	227	22,2%
The right to protection from discrimination	233	22,8%
The right to privacy	155	15,1%
The right to freedom of assembly	181	17,7%
The right to adequate health care	59	5,7%
The right to change their gender marker in accordance with their gender identity (transgender people)	282	27,5%
They have all the rights	195	19,0%

When given the opportunity to state what rights LGBTI persons in Bosnia and Herzegovina should or should not have, the respondents answered in line with their own beliefs and opinions. Respondents expressed the greatest support for health care issues, with 88% believing that LGBTI people should have the right to health insurance; 81% believe that LGBTI people should have the right to visit their partners in the hospital as closest family members, even in situations where only the “closest family members” are entitled to this right. Although the above findings show a lower level of support for same-sex partnership, this percentage here indicate understanding and support for same-sex partnerships.

With regard to property rights, it seems that the initial reaction of not supporting legal recognition of same-sex partnership is not so uniform after all. Namely, 2/3 of respondents (74%) believe that LGBTI people should have the right to inherit their partners' property after death, 2/3 of respondents (71%) also believe that LGBTI people should inherit their partner's pension after death, and 70% also support the obligation of legal support for the partner.

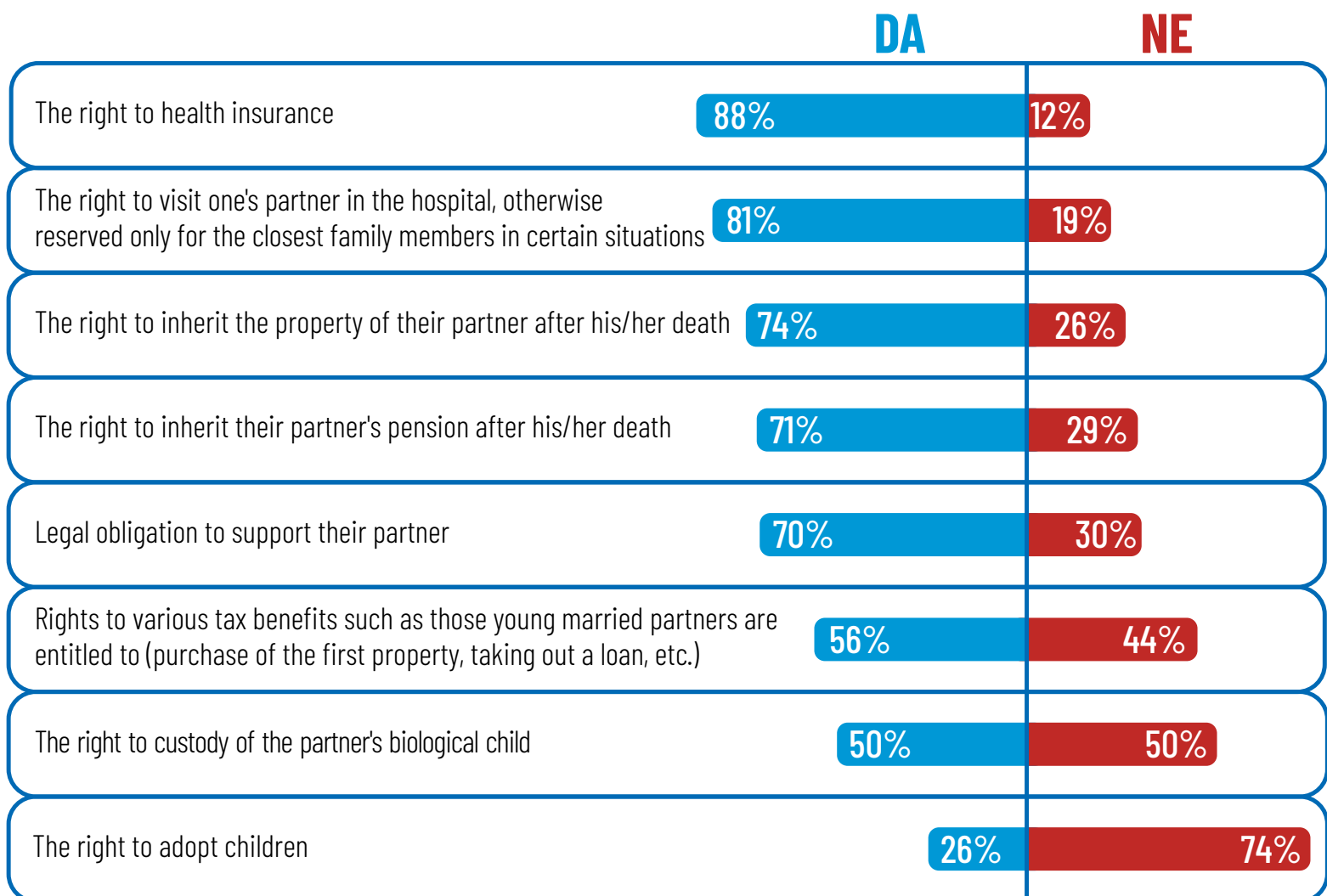
With respect to affirmative economic measures towards married and cohabiting couples, the support is slightly lower, however, more than half, namely 56%, of respondents believe that same-sex couples should be entitled to various tax benefits based on partnership status.

As for individual rights that same-sex couples could exercise through life partnerships, the views of respondents are most polarized on issues of parenting and guardianship.

The right to custody of the partner's biological child is supported by half of the respondents, while the other half do not support this right, which still indicates more liberal attitudes and potentially greater support for same-sex partnerships than the initial findings signal.

However, attitudes significantly change with respect to the right to adopt children, where only 26% of respondents believe that LGBTI people should be able to adopt children without parental care.

Rights that LGBTI people should/should not have



In comparison to the regional public opinion survey 2015,²⁸ we note significant increase in support, especially for the economic and property rights of same-sex couples, as 28% of respondents from BiH supported the possibility of inheriting a pension, 28% of inheriting property, 36% of the right to visit partner in the hospital, and 29% the right to health insurance through the partner. Support is also evident in the area of parenting and guardianship; in 2015,²⁹ only 9% of respondents supported the right to adopt children. The regional survey from 2023³⁰ also indicates a positive trend of growing support, where 59% of respondents from BiH supported the possibility of inheriting a pension, 65% of inheriting property, 76% of the right to visit their partner in the hospital, and 80% of the right to health insurance through partners, while 27% of respondents supported the right to adopt children.

Overall, the interpretation of these data indicates a mix of attitudes, but with strong support for most LGBTI rights, including health insurance, hospital visits, inheritance and pensions, and to some extent for custody and adoption of children.

²⁸NDI Public Opinion Poll in the Balkans on LGBTI Communities." Ndi.Org. October 28, 2015. <https://www.slideshare.net/NDIdemocracy/ndi-public-opinion-poll-in-the-balkans-on-lgbti-communities>.

²⁹NDI Public Opinion Poll in the Balkans on LGBTI Communities." Ndi.Org. October 28, 2015. <https://www.slideshare.net/NDIdemocracy/ndi-public-opinion-poll-in-the-balkans-on-lgbti-communities>.

³⁰Fecanji, Amarildo. 2023. Attitudes towards LGBTIQ+ People in the Western Balkans. Analytical Report of Public Opinion Poll. ERA - LGBTI Equal Rights Association for the Western Balkans and Turkey.

Given that the institutions of BiH, despite the fact that they operate in a secular state, take into account the level of social awareness and acceptance when passing laws and policies relevant to the rights of minorities, especially LGBTI people, these percentages are encouraging and can be a strong incentive for the entities to take a more serious approach to recognition of same-sex partnership as an obligation they have according to the case law of the European Court of Human Rights and, thereby, according to the Constitution of BiH. We should underline that the regulation of same-sex partnership is a legal matter that exclusively falls under the competence of state institutions, which should not be influenced by public opinion, and that institutions have an obligation to fulfill their international obligations in this regard, and provide protection and ensure respect for same-sex partnerships of BH citizens. Therefore, the aforementioned attitudes may support their arguments, but may not be used as a reason to avoid fulfilling legal obligations.

3.4. Perception of the Problems of the LGBTI Community

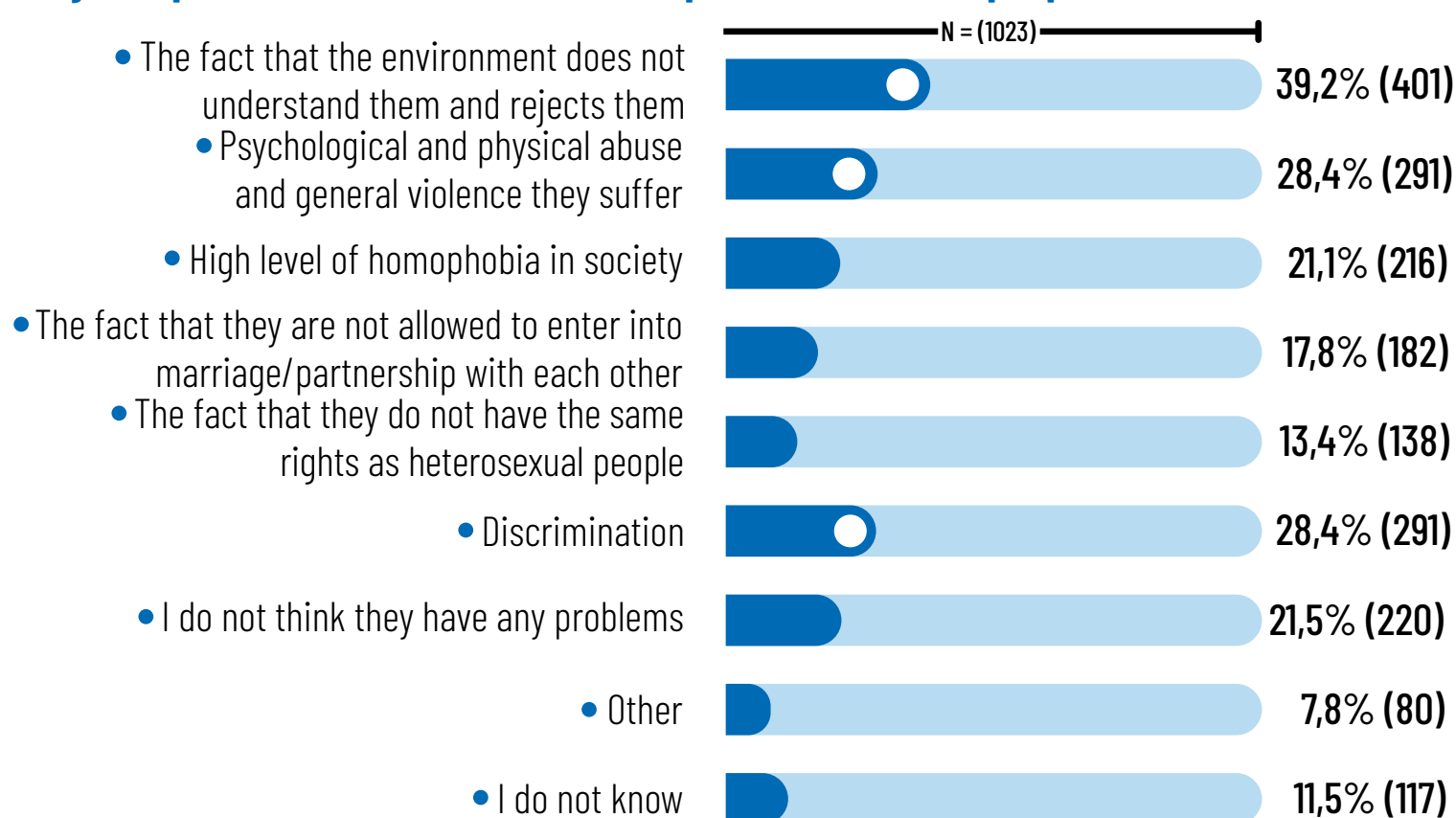
Although the respondents show a poor understanding of the human rights of LGBTI people, they show a high level of perception of the problems faced by LGBTI people in BiH, which are most often the result of non-respect for or violation of their human rights.

Thus, 28.4% of respondents are aware that violence and discrimination are among the main problems of LGBTI people in BiH, 17.8% believe that it is the impossibility of entering into same-sex partnerships, and 13.4% believe that the problem is that LGBTI people do not have the same rights as other citizens of BiH.

The majority of respondents believe that the main problem of LGBTI people in Bosnia and Herzegovina is that the environment does not understand them and rejects them – almost 40% believe that this is one of the three main problems, while 21.1% believe that the high level of homophobia in society is a problem, which indicates that the respondents are aware of the necessity of working on social awareness and inclusion of LGBTI people in BiH.

Only a fifth of BiH citizens believe that LGBTI people in BiH do not have any problems.

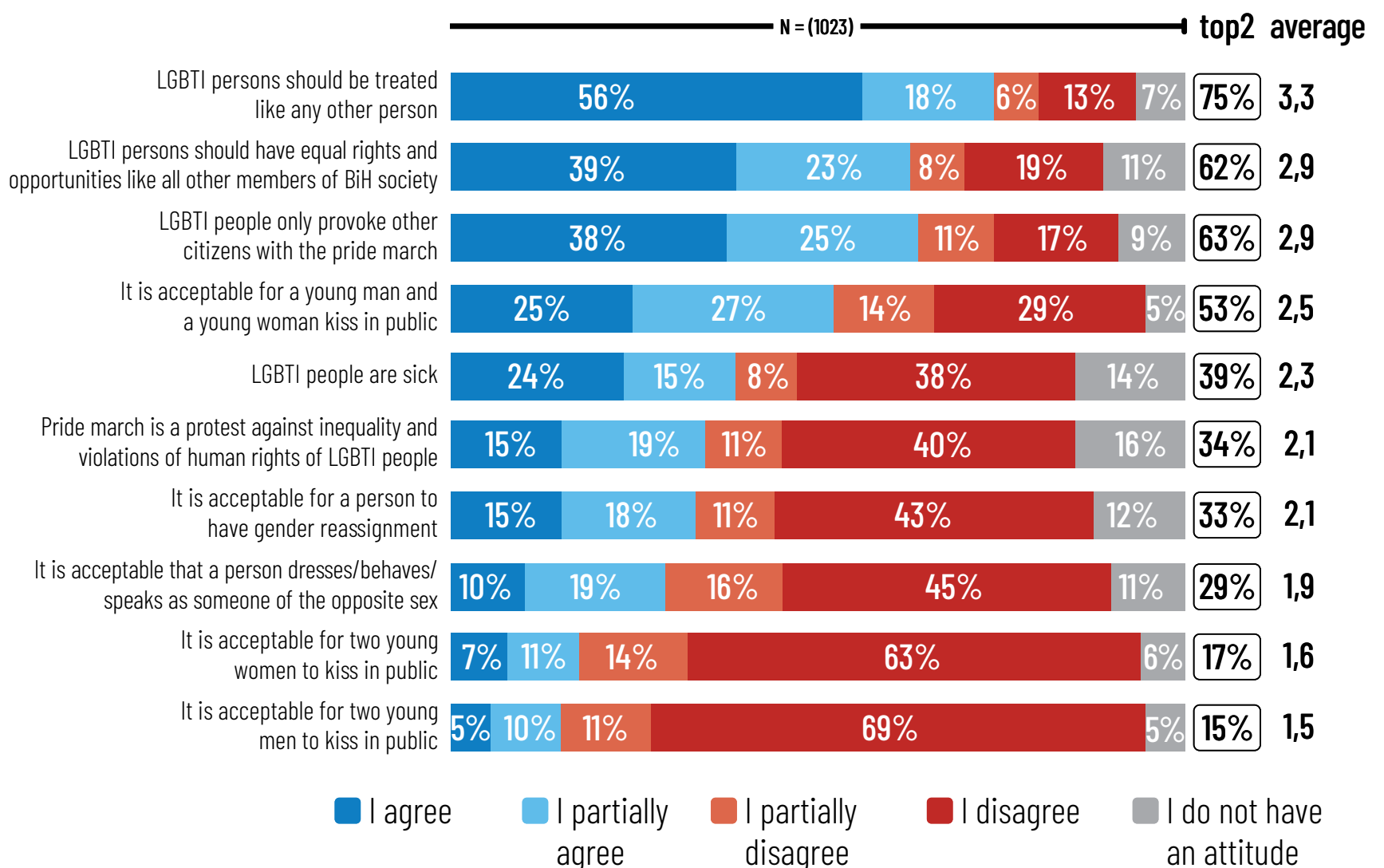
In your opinion, what are the three main problems of LGBTI people in BiH:



3.5. Attitudes towards Transgender People

A 2013 public opinion survey³¹ conducted by Sarajevo Open Centre examined attitudes toward gender reassignment. 59.5% of respondents considered it completely unacceptable, while 3.5% considered it partially acceptable. A noticeable share (15.8%) was indifferent. Similar attitudes of respondents were expressed in the answers to the question about the acceptability of someone behaving as a person of the opposite sex.

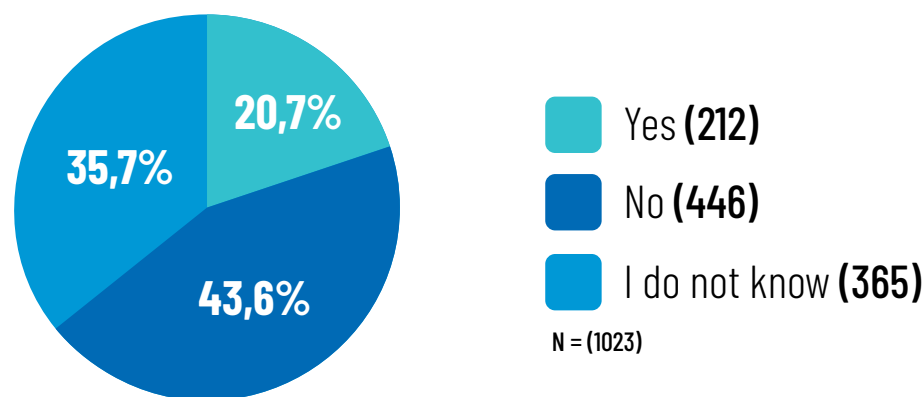
In this 2023 survey, 43% of them reported that it was unacceptable for a person to change their sex, while 15% of them supported the right to self-determination. With respect to acceptability of someone behaving as a person of the opposite sex, the numbers are a little different. 45% of them believe that such behavior is unacceptable, while 10% support a person behaving like a person of the opposite sex.



In the context of the rights of transgender people, the data from 2023 also illustrate the respondents' attitudes towards the right of transgender people to change the gender marking in their personal documents on the basis of self-determination, without mandatory surgical gender reassignment. Support for the right to self-determination was expressed by 20.7% of respondents. The assumption is that this group believes that every person has the right to their own identity and that transgender people should have the right to change the gender marker on their identity documents based on self-determination. However, the vast majority, about 43.6%, oppose such a right for transgender people.

³¹Popov Momčinović, Zlatiborka. 2013. *Ko smo mi da sudimo drugima? Ispitivanje javnog mnijenja o stavovima prema homoseksualnosti i transrodnosti u Bosni i Hercegovini*. Sarajevo: Fondacija CURE, Fondacija Heinrich Boell – Ured U BiH, Sarajevski Otvoreni Centar.

Do you think that transgender people (people who were assigned a gender at birth that they later do not feel as their own) should have the right to change the gender marking in personal documents on the basis of self-determination (without surgical gender reassignment)?

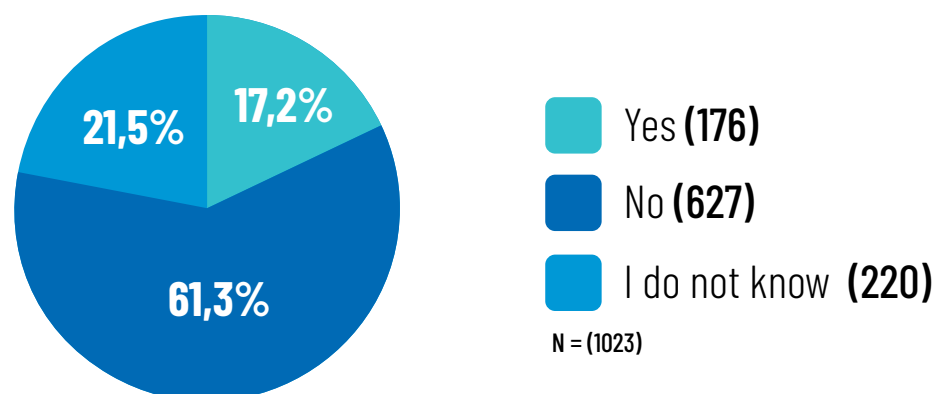


A significant number of respondents (about 35.7%) were not sure of their position. This, as well as the previous findings, particularly relating to human rights of LGBTI people, may indicate a lack of information on this issue and the necessity of additional awareness raising and sensitizing for issues of transgender people and the right to self-determination.

The combination of support, opposition and uncertainty shows that people face different moral, ethical and social dilemmas when taking a stand on this issue.

The attitudes of respondents regarding medical gender reassignment costs and their coverage by public health insurance for transgender people who have health insurance are shown in the table below.

Do you think that the costs of medical gender reassignment should be covered by public health insurance for transgender people who have health insurance?



The majority of respondents, 61.3% of them, do not support the idea that public health insurance covers the costs of medical gender reassignment for transgender people who have health insurance. As previously suggested, these attitudes are potentially the result of ignorance and lack of information about what medical gender reassignment includes, the costs involved, and the potential burden that covering them would have on the budget of the health insurance institute.

Overall, the data indicate the presence of diverse attitudes on the right of transgender people to change the gender marking in personal documents and the coverage of the costs of medical gender reassignment. The issues are complex and reflect deep social, cultural and personal beliefs, and the attitudes of respondents from BiH do not deviate from the current trends and turmoil globally and in the LGBTI community itself, around the transgender issues and providing support to transgender

people. In this area, potentially more than in others, it is necessary to work on sensitization, education, raising awareness and mobilizing support for transgender people, as well as protecting their human rights and breaking ubiquitous negative trends.

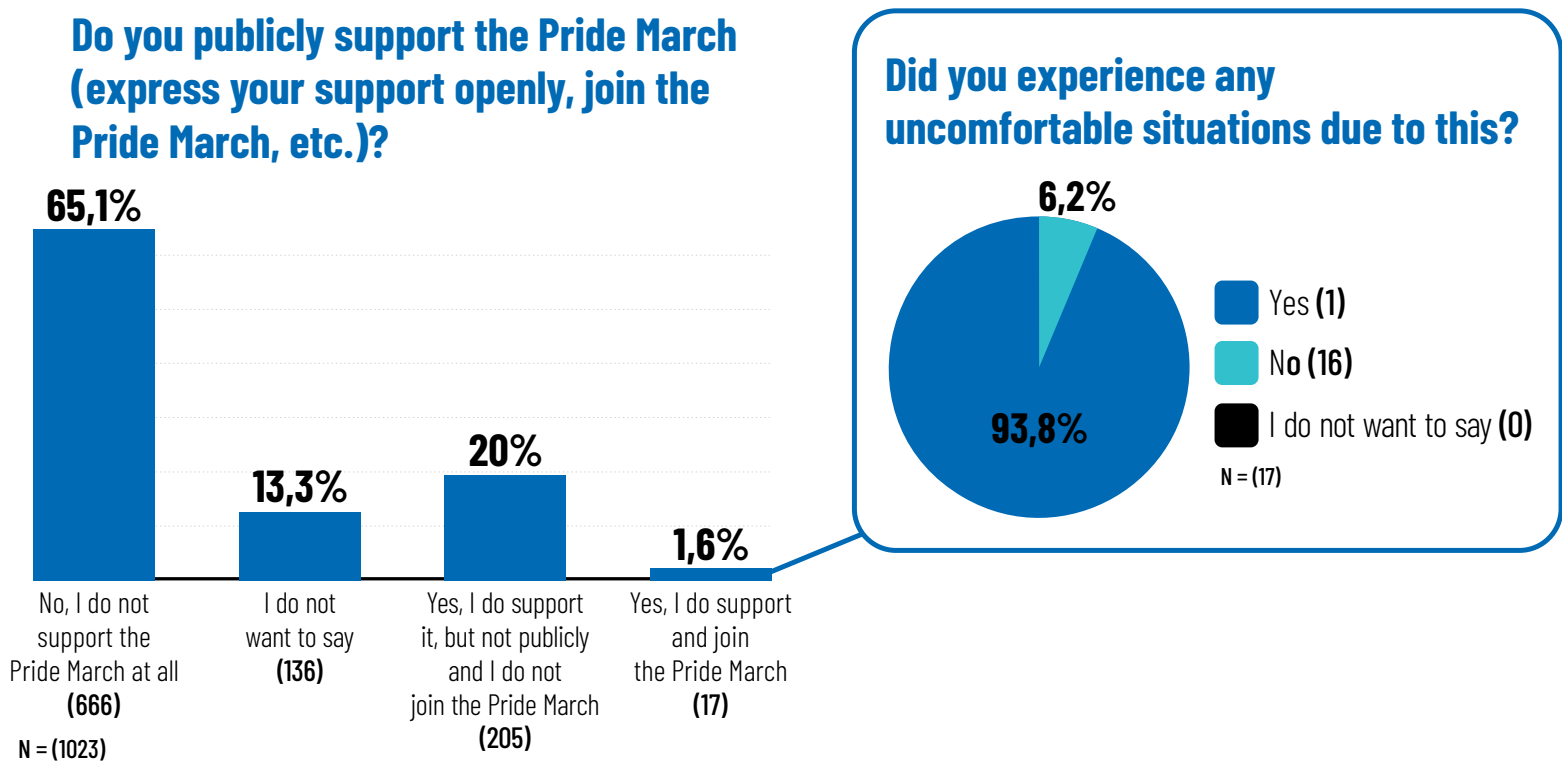
3.6. Social Influence on Public Opinion

3.6.1. Support the Pride March

The most entrenched views of respondents of all the aforementioned studies are certainly those related to support for pride marches. The 2015³² survey reports only 13% of BiH respondents supporting a pride march in BiH, while 82% were expressly against it.

These findings do not overly conflicting with the findings of the research from 2013,³³ where the question of the perception of the pride march was asked, and 32.4% of respondents believed that LGBTI people provoked other citizens with the pride march, while 32.7% of respondents had an opposite view on this issue. The regional survey from 2023³⁴ shows that 38% of respondents from BiH share the same opinion, i.e., that they believe that the pride march is a form of provocation of the citizens of BiH; however, this survey showed that 54% of respondents still believe that the march is an attempt LGBTI people to bring attention to their unequal position in society, indicating an increase in awareness of the march as a democratic tool of the fight for the human rights of LGBTI people and the present, although still symbolic, influence of pride marches on the public's perception thereon.

When asked whether they would support the organization of a pride march in their country, 62% of respondents from BiH still said that they would not, while only 10% of them fully supported the march, which is in line with the findings of this research, where as many as 65.1% of respondents reported that they do not support the pride march at all.



³²“NDI Public Opinion Poll in the Balkans on LGBTI Communities.” Ndi.Org. October 28, 2015. <https://www.slideshare.net/NDIdemocracy/ndi-public-opinion-poll-in-the-balkans-on-lgbti-communities>.

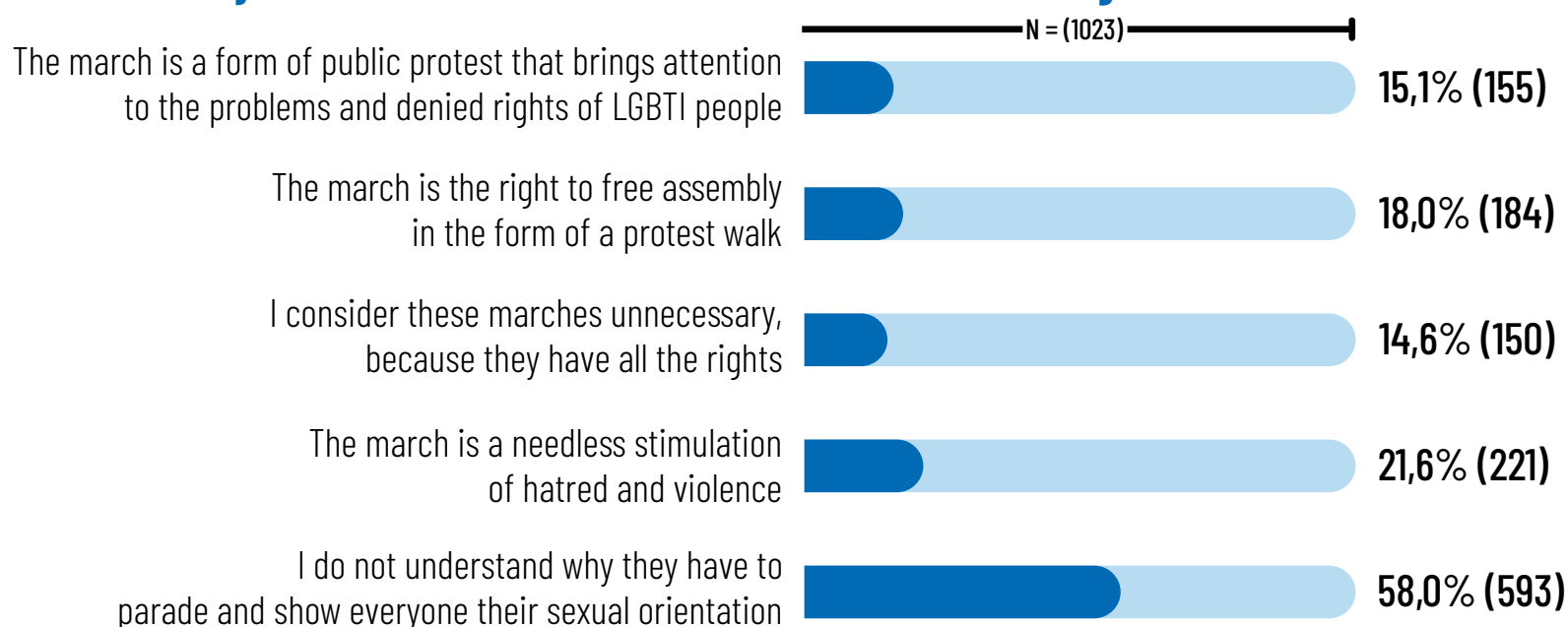
³³Popov Momčinović, Zlatiborka. 2013. *Ko smo mi da sudimo drugima? Ispitivanje javnog mnijenja o stavovima prema homoseksualnosti i transrodnosti u Bosni i Hercegovini*. Sarajevo: Fondacija CURE, Fondacija Heinrich Boell – Ured U BiH, Sarajevski otvoreni centar.

³⁴Fecanji, Amarildo. 2023. *Attitudes towards LGBTIQ+ People in the Western Balkans. Analytical Report of Public Opinion Poll*. ERA - LGBTI Equal Rights Association for the Western Balkans and Turkey.

Of the 1.6% respondents who reported that they support and join the pride march, 93.8% confirmed that they did not experience any uncomfortable situations due to their decision to support this form of protest.

The findings of this research show that 33.1% of respondents are aware of the goal and purpose of the pride march as a protest for human rights of LGBTI people and a means of bringing attention to their problems; however, 58% do not understand the purpose of displaying sexual orientation, and 21.6% believe that the march needlessly stimulates hatred and violence.

What do you think about the Pride March in Bosnia and Herzegovina?



The findings of the respondents' attitudes regarding the pride march are not surprising either in the context of this form of free assembly or with regard to the findings on the general knowledge of the human rights of LGBTI persons. While some see the March as an important way to point to the injustices and rights of LGBTI people, others are skeptical of its significance or oppose it for various reasons, including fear of violence, security concerns or lack of understanding. These results indicate the need for continued education, dialogue and awareness raising to reduce the level of non-acceptance and stigmatization of LGBTI persons.

Although the majority of respondents express a negative attitude towards the pride march, its transformative potential,³⁵ contribution to visibility and awareness-raising, which few other activist actions can achieve, should not be ignored. Proof of this is certainly the continuity of the BiH pride march, which takes place from year to year with a decreasing scope of mandatory protective measures, and by that smaller financial burden on the organizers, and increasingly takes on the contours of a regular civil protest.

3.6.2. The Media and Reporting on LGBTI Issues

With regard to the media and their reporting on LGBTI topics, 25.9% of respondents believe that the media report neutrally and professionally, while 17.8% believe that they write positively about and advocate for LGBTI rights. Furthermore, 12.9% of respondents state that the media in BiH report negatively and critically on LGBTI topics, while 13.6% think that they report in a sensationalist and inaccurate way.

³⁵AYOUB, PHILLIP M., DOUGLAS PAGE, and SAM WHITT. 2021. "Pride amid Prejudice: The Influence of LGBT Rights Activism in a Socially Conservative Society." *American Political Science Review* 115(2). Cambridge University Press: 467-85. doi:10.1017/S0003055420001082.

It is interesting that the largest percentage (29.7%) are respondents who do not have an opinion on this issue, i.e., who do not know how to classify media reporting on LGBTI people.

In your opinion, what is the prevailing way the media in BiH report about LGBTI people and their position in society



In the context of the previous long-term work with the media, the fact is encouraging that 43.7% of respondents see professionalism and recognize the media's interest in reporting on topics related to LGBTI people and their human rights. With regard to other research findings, it is evident that from 2013, when the first measurement was carried out, until 2023, there has been a big shift in the field of informing the public about LGBTI topics, in which the media, work with the media, and the progress in the quality of reporting undoubtedly played a big role.

The findings also indicate that the role of the media and cooperation with them will be of crucial importance in the coming period for improving the awareness of the public and mobilizing the support for human rights of LGBTI people which, due to lack of knowledge and information, are currently polarizing the BiH public.

In order to encourage greater sensitivity in reporting on LGBTI topics within the media landscape of Bosnia and Herzegovina, it is necessary to introduce innovative strategies and approaches aimed at achieving transformative changes and creating stronger cooperation.

After years of interactive workshops and trainings for media professionals for the purpose of continuous education and encouraging empathy and understanding of the complexity of LGBTI issues, the next step could be to encourage collaboration between the media and the civil society/LGBTI activists to delve deeply into the complex layers of the LGBTI narrative and ensure a fuller understanding of the challenges the community faces. In addition, the establishment of a digital repository would ensure a one-stop shop that would provide media professionals with easily accessible and reliable resources for reporting, research work, and the development of other stimulating media formats on this topic.

There is an unquestionable need for continuous education, enriched, however, with new multimedia content and innovative approaches such as storytelling, where the skillful sharing of personal stories and experiences ensures a human dimension and identification with LGBTI people, thus fostering empathy and understanding. In order to ensure continuity in the improvement of reporting, and to nurture the relationship between the media and the LGBTI audience, it is necessary to find a mechanism for the continuous collection of feedback, i.e., to open a two-way channel of communication between the media and the community, strengthening the bond of responsibility and encouraging a continuous cycle of improvement.

3.6.3. Religious Communities and Attitude towards LGBTI People

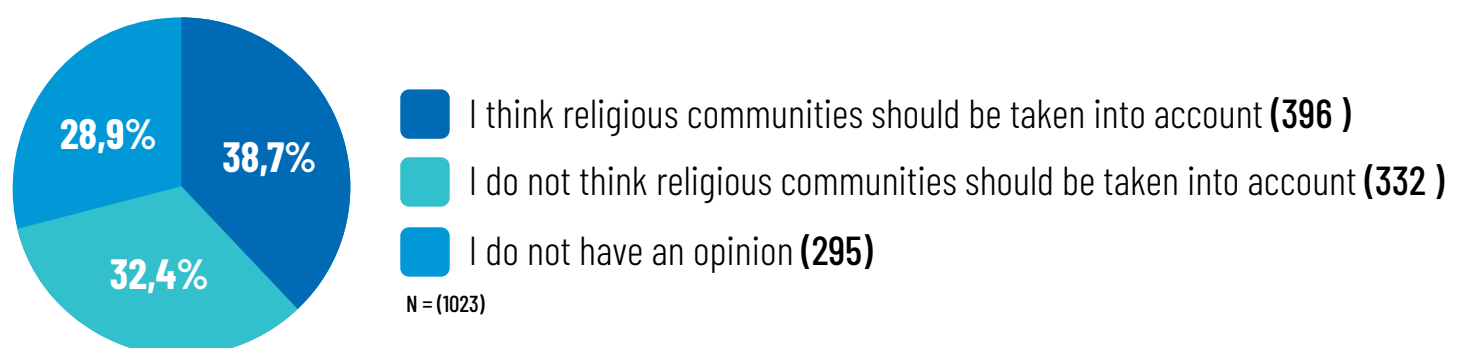
It has been clear that the role and attitude of religious communities play a significant role in the acceptance of the human rights of LGBTI people in BiH since 2008 and the first Queer Sarajevo Festival, where the support of religious authorities to the media and political storming on the festival contributed to the atmosphere of xenophobia and intimidation that culminated in attacks on the visitors and organizers. In addition to media headlines and public speeches of religious leaders, the arguments in both internet comments and parliamentary debates referred to religion and the views of monotheistic religions in BiH were used as reasons for disrespecting and violating the human rights of LGBTI persons.

However, the first BiH pride march showed that the attitudes of religious communities can significantly contribute to the reduction of violence, to tolerance and acceptance. Before the march in 2019, representatives of the Islamic Community and the Catholic Church in BiH, repeating the attitude of religion towards homosexuality, emphasized that these religions are also against violence; the Orthodox Church remained restrained, and the Jewish community emphasized that it is up to the individual whether to participate in the march or not because "what the holy books say is one thing, and what life brings is another".³⁶ Such a neutral attitude and the affirmative action of religious communities, contributed to the first pride march being held without incidents, with occasional counter-protests, without the atmosphere that prevailed in 2008, and for BiH to be, next to Macedonia, the first country in the region where religious communities did not support the inciting homophobic atmosphere before their first marches.

A survey from 2015,³⁷ showed that the attitude of religious communities is important for the attitude of citizens towards LGBTI people, where 57% of respondents confirmed that they consider homosexuality not normal, because their religious communities do not approve of it.

The data obtained from this research also indicate that the respondents still tend to respect the views of religious communities about human rights of LGBTI people in BiH. The majority, 38.7% of them, believe that the views of religious communities should be respected when laws and policies related to the human rights of LGBTI persons in BiH are enacted and adopted. Although a similar percentage, 32.4% of respondents, think exactly the opposite, it is clear that the influence of religious communities in the field of human rights of LGBTI people is very strong, and that they have the ability to shape the attitudes and reactions of citizens in BiH.

Do you think that the position of religious communities on the rights of LGBTI people should be taken into account when laws and policies related to LGBTI people in BiH are drafted and enacted?



³⁶Treslo se Sarajevo, rodila se povorka." povorkaponosa.ba. September 12, 2019. <https://povorkaponosa.ba/2019/09/12/treslo-se-sarajevo-rodila-se-povorka/>.

³⁷"NDI Public Opinion Poll in the Balkans on LGBTI Communities." Ndi.Org. October 28, 2015. <https://www.slideshare.net/NDIdemocracy/ndi-public-opinion-poll-in-the-balkans-on-lgbti-communities>.

However, as many as 28.9% of respondents do not have a firm position on this issue, which indicates the need to inform on ways of reconciling religious rights and freedoms and human rights and freedoms in a secular society, as BiH strives to be.

These findings reflect the current dynamics in the society of Bosnia and Herzegovina, where different views on the role of religious communities in the enactment of laws and policies related to LGBTI rights can influence social, legislative and political processes. The importance of religion and religious values in society, especially in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the significance it has in the context of respect for national and ethnic identities, traditions and culture, is undeniable. Respecting the diversity of identities is precisely an additional incentive to tackle the challenges of harmonizing religious teachings with contemporary concepts of human rights and inclusiveness, and to address the need for dialogue and understanding between different social groups.

3.6.4. Political Parties and Support for LGBTI Human Rights

Like the views of religious communities, the views of political parties, more precisely their leadership and prominent members, significantly contribute to the acceptance or violations of the human rights of LGBTI people in BiH. As mentioned, the atmosphere of xenophobia, incitement and intimidation that culminated in the attack on the organizers and visitors of the first Queer Sarajevo Festival in 2008 was greatly fueled by statements of the leaders of political parties active in the Federation of BiH, who called for the defense of traditional values and morality.

The aforementioned attacks on the LGBTI community and activists that took place in Banja Luka in March 2023 show that the influence of political leaders can still lead to violent reactions from citizens. These attacks underlined the lack of response or support from institutions, highlighting deep-rooted homophobia in the public and institutional sphere. The attacks happened immediately after the statements of the mayor of Banja Luka against holding the pride march, as well as the homophobic statements of the president of the Republika Srpska, which further aggravated the atmosphere and created unfavorable conditions for the activities of LGBTI activists.

The presence of the leaders of political parties at every pride march so far was not only covered by the media, but also assumed as a prerequisite for it to take place without an incident.

The attitudes of political parties towards the human rights of LGBTI people, however, are also shaped by the political parties' perception of the number of voters that their support for LGBTI persons will potentially hold off or attract.

In this context, the survey from 2015³⁸ showed that a political party's support for LGBTI human rights would potentially lead to 52% of respondents giving up voting for that party, while only 6% of them would be encouraged by such support to vote for it. The regional survey from 2023³⁹ showed a change in voter awareness, and found that 41% of respondents would reject the support of a political party for LGBTI human rights, while 17% would encourage them to vote for that party.

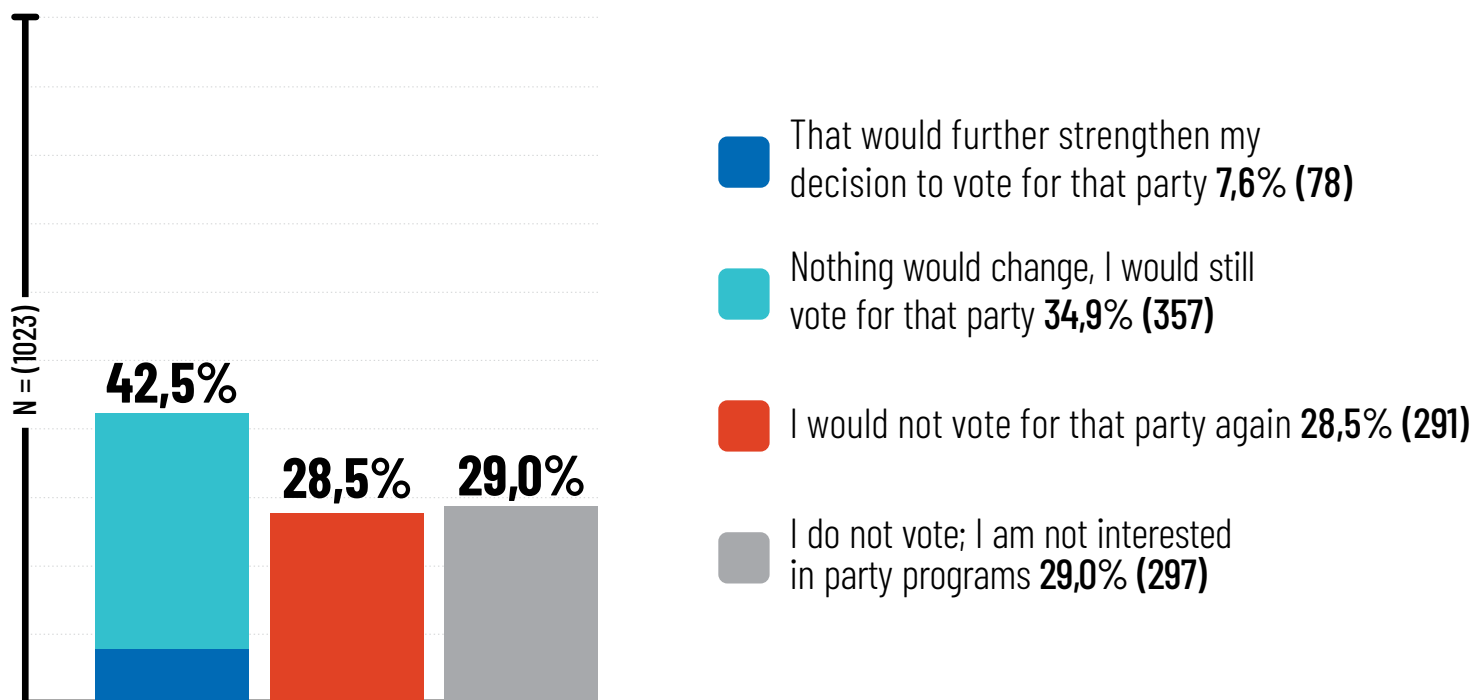
This research strived to examine the views of voters on whether the potential support of LGBTI human rights and their inclusion in their program would lead them not to vote for the party they normally vote

³⁸NDI Public Opinion Poll in the Balkans on LGBTI Communities." Ndi.Org. October 28, 2015. <https://www.slideshare.net/NDIdemocracy/ndi-public-opinion-poll-in-the-balkans-on-lgbti-communities>.

³⁹Fecanji, Amarildo. 2023. Attitudes towards LGBTIQ+ People in the Western Balkans. Analytical Report of Public Opinion Poll. ERA - LGBTI Equal Rights Association for the Western Balkans and Turkey.

for. As many as 42.5% of respondents would still vote for the same party, while 28.5% would reject to do so.

If the political party you vote for were to include LGBTI rights in its program, how would that affect you?



As many as 29% of respondents stated that they do not vote, and that they are not interested in the programs of the parties, which leaves room for the question of whether some other form of support for the human rights of LGBTI persons would potentially lead to a change in their attitudes towards voting.

Although the findings indicate a positive shift and the acceptance of the necessity of political parties' stand on LGBTI human rights, it is necessary for the parties themselves to make an additional effort to bring the topic of human rights of LGBTI people closer to their voters, and the necessity and mechanisms for representing diverse social interests in a democratic society with the goal of achieving a more just and more equal society for all.

3.6.5. Key Stakeholders in Combating Homophobia in Society

As part of the research and for the purpose of understanding the role that respondents assign to different social actors and institutions, their views were examined as to which stakeholders dealing with human rights, their protection and respect should have the most important role in combating homophobia.

According to the aforementioned findings, underlining the significance and impact that continuous information and the availability of relevant sources had on the knowledge of the term LGBTI, and the high number of respondents who see media coverage as professional and positive, it is not surprising that as many as 26.7% of respondents assigned the most important role award to the media. 18.5% of respondents put educational institutions in second place, which can also be interpreted in light of the recognition of the necessity of information through real and verifiable sources. About 15% of respondents placed the BiH Ministry of Human Rights and Refugees and non-governmental organizations in third place, while according to the opinion of 13% of respondents, the BiH Institution of the Human Rights Ombudsman is in fourth place.

The police, prosecutor's offices and courts are low on the list of stakeholders – the respondents identified international organizations and political parties as the most important stakeholders before them. As many as 14.3% of respondents think that no stakeholder is sufficiently combating homophobia in society, whereas 18.4% think that there is no need for institutions to combat homophobia in society at all.

Which stakeholders, in your opinion, have the most important role in combating homophobia in society?

	n	%
Educational institutions	189	18,5%
Ministry of Human Rights and Refugees	152	14,9%
Nongovernmental organizations	151	14,8%
Media	273	26,7%
International organizations	113	11,0%
Human Rights Ombudsman	134	13,1%
Police	55	5,3%
Prosecutor's offices and courts	55	5,4%
Political parties	72	7,1%
I think that no stakeholder is sufficiently combating homophobia in society	147	14,3%
I think there is no need for any institution to combat homophobia	189	18,4%
Other	21	2,0%
I do not know	133	13,0%

The findings obtained through the answers to this question indicate that the respondents see the fight against homo/bi/trans/interphobia primarily as the role of stakeholders who have the opportunity and possibility to influence the level of awareness, information and knowledge of society about LGBTI people in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

More precisely, the respondents rated as top five most important stakeholders those whose primary role is awareness-raising, education, adoption of policies and recommendations, and preventive action on the causes of non-acceptance and prejudice towards LGBTI people in BiH society, which indicates that the respondents see a way to improve the position of LGBTI people in BiH by acting on the causes of social distance and xenophobia, and creating conditions for a more inclusive society for LGBTI, and applying the law only in cases of violence and discrimination.

4. Segmentation: Interpretation of Data According to the Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

To achieve a more detailed insight into the research sample and to try to find specifics in relation to their views and support for LGBTI rights, we performed a segmentation of the sample. Several of the most important questions/areas were taken into account and analyzed, and the greatest variability of answers and greater discrimination among the population was observed with respect to the following:

- Personal views of acceptance of LGBTI people in their close or immediate environment
- Attitudes towards public display and expression, pride march, and the perception of LGBTI people, in the context of rights and equality
- Attitudes about whether LGBTI people are sick or not

Based on the answers to these questions and their combination, subgroups were first formed with regard to different categories of answers, and then overall segments with regard to the similarity of attitudes and perceptions. Therefore, based on the personal views of acceptance of LGBTI people in their close or immediate environment, the population was divided into 3 categories:

- those who do not accept (fully or to an extent do not accept LGBTI in any relationship),
- neither, nor (different level of LGBTI acceptance, depending on possible relationships),
- those who accept (fully or to an extent accept LGBTI in all relationships).

With regard to attitudes towards public display and expression, pride march, and the perception of LGBTI people, in the context of rights and equality, the population is divided into those who:

- disagree (completely or somewhat disagree with any forms of display),
- neither, nor (different level of agreement on individual aspects),
- agree (completely or somewhat agree with all or most of expression, display by the march and other aspects).

Based on the attitude about whether LGBTI people are sick and should be treated or not, the population is divided into 3 categories, those who think LGBTI people:

- are sick and need treatment,
- are not sick and do not need treatment, and
- those who do not know, who do not have an attitude.

A total of five segments or groups of attitudes were identified in the research through this approach. The segments reflect the diversity of opinion within society and provide a deeper insight into the complex attitudes towards LGBTI issues.

The presented segmentation of the respondent sample created on the basis of similar tendencies in answers do not serve as a classification of individual social groups, but rather offer an insight into the circumstances and context in which they live, act and form opinions and attitudes. Therefore, the presented findings are not a characterization of social groups, but a tool for interpretation and facilitation of information campaigns and content that can bring LGBTI topics closer to each of these groups, in accordance with their interests and pursuits.

SEGMENTS: Anti LGBTI, Passively against LGBTI, Neutral, Passively LGBTI-Friendly and Pro LGBTI

ANTI LGBTI

17%



of respondents fall under to this segment, which has completely anti-LGBTI attitudes – they categorically do not accept them in their immediate or wider environment, nor do they accept any public expression. They believe that it is a disease and that they should be treated (psychiatrist, religious official, they should be isolated). They would not react in case of violence. They are of the opinion that the LGBTI community has no problems and that they are talked about too much in the public – positively and in an advocating manner. They more frequently state that they do not know any LGBTI person and that they are not familiar with the rights of LGBTI persons, but they think that the rights are respected. They are against the legalization of same-sex partnerships and other rights. They believe that religious communities should be taken into account with respect LGBTI issues. They are completely against Pride March and do not support public expression and consider it a disease.

In this segment, there are statistically significantly more men and people of a younger age (18-29). According to their work status, they are students or housemakers. They live significantly more in the Zenica-Doboj Canton and Bosansko Podrinje Canton and the rest of RS, and generally in rural parts of BiH. They are religious; in terms of political orientation, they are mostly autocrats or politically undecided.

PASSIVELY AGAINST LGBTI

21%



of respondents fall under the segment characterized by negative attitudes towards the LGBTI community – they do not accept them in their immediate or wider environment and do not accept public expression, however, they are not too exclusive. They are not entirely sure that LGBTI people are sick. They would react in case of violence against members of the LGBTI community. They are of the opinion that the LGBTI community has no special problems, that their rights are generally respected. They are against the legalization of same-sex partnerships. They are not exclusive about some of the rights that LGBTI people should have. They are not entirely convinced that religious communities should be taken into account with respect LGBTI issues. They are against Pride March.

This segment consists mostly of older people, ages 45 to 60. A significant number of them come from the Tuzla and Posavina cantons, as well as the Doboj region and the Brčko District. These people are religious and politically undecided.

NEUTRAL

24%



of respondents make up the neutral segment, which mainly expresses neutral attitudes or reticence regarding the acceptance of LGBTI people in their environment and their public expression. Their views are not extreme and often show moderate agreement or disagreement with aspects related to the LGBTI community. They are not sure if they know an LGBTI person, although they would probably accept them, but they would not want to talk about it openly. Also, they are not sure if LGBTI people are sick or not. They are mostly not familiar with the rights of LGBTI people and are not sure if these rights are respected. They have not completely decided their position on the legalization of same-sex partnerships, but they mostly support the rights of LGBTI people. This group does not have a clear position on the role of religious communities.

The identified segment mainly includes women, as well as people aged 30 to 44 and over 60. In addition, there is a greater number of housemakers among them. The majority of respondents live in Central Bosnia Canton and the rest of the Republika Srpska. They do not have a clear stand in relation to religious beliefs and are somewhat uncertain about political preferences.

PASSIVELY LGBTI-FRIENDLY

26%



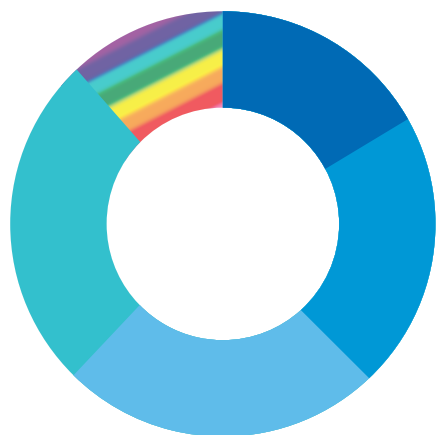
of respondents make up this segment that mostly accepts LGBTI people in their immediate or wider environment and support some degree of public expression. Most of them think that it is not a disease. They recognize the problems faced by the LGBTI community and believe that they are not sufficiently discussed in public. They know LGBTI people personally, but they are not entirely sure whether they would stand up for them. To some extent, they would support and accept that their child is an LGBTI person. They are somewhat familiar with the rights of LGBTI people, and partly think that they are not respected. They support that LGBTI people have certain rights. In part, they believe that religious communities should not be taken into account with respect LGBTI issues. They are not entirely in favor of Pride March.

This segment includes people between aged 45 to 60. Among them, there is a noticeably larger number of pensioners. Most of these people live in the Una-Sana Canton and the Banja Luka region, mostly in urban parts of Bosnia and Herzegovina. They are not particularly religious. When it comes to political orientation, democratic attitudes prevail among them.



PRO LGBTI

12%



of respondents fall under the segment that fully accepts LGBTI people in their immediate or wider environment and support public expression. They do not think it is a disease. They see the problems faced by the LGBTI community and think that they are not sufficiently discussed in public, and when they are, the attitude is negative, critical, sensationalistic. They know LGBTI people personally and would stand up for them. They would support and accept that their child is an LGBTI person. They are familiar with the rights of LGBTI persons and think that they are not respected. They support that LGBTI people have all the rights, including the legalization of same-sex partnerships, gender reassignment, etc. They believe that religious communities should not be taken into account with respect to LGBTI issues. They support Pride March and plan to attend it.

This segment is made up of significantly more women, and people aged 45-60. There is a noticeable larger number of the unemployed among them. They live in Sarajevo and the Banja Luka region, in urban parts of BiH. They are not religious at all and, in their political views, they are completely democratically oriented.

5. Conclusion

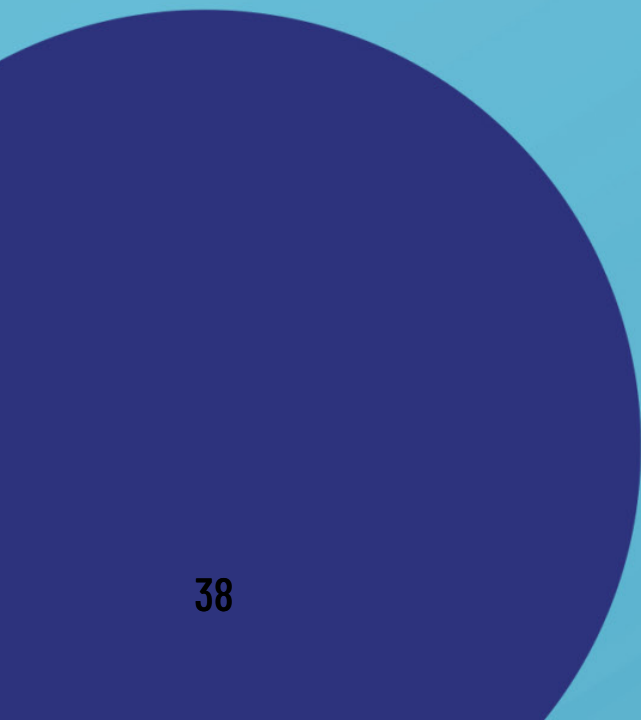
This research on the attitudes of the public on LGBTI people in BiH and their human rights reveals that 91.5% of respondents know the acronym and understand its meaning. Direct contact and personal knowledge of LGBTI people undoubtedly contribute to changing attitudes and awareness about LGBTI issues. By comparing the findings of this research with the previous ones, a positive trend in knowing LGBTI persons in the immediate environment was confirmed, with as many as 45.6% of respondents stating that they personally know an LGBTI person.

The research also indicates a significant change in the attitudes of the general population regarding sexual orientation and gender identity. Only 35.3% of respondents consider LGBTI people to be sick, while 41.8% believe that LGBTI people are not sick and do not need to be treated. Furthermore, the research shows that as many as 33.1% of respondents would support LGBTI people from their immediate environment after coming out, while 28.1% would accept them, but avoid further discussions about it.

In the context of family relationships, acceptance declines. For 34% of respondents, it is still unacceptable for their family member to be an LGBTI person, and this resistance increases when it comes to their own children. In particular, 43% of respondents consider it unacceptable for their child to be an LGBTI person. However, most reactions would be non-violent persuasion and conversation, with 53% of them trying to convince the child that being LGBTI is wrong.

Overall, this research reveals that there are still different perspectives in BiH society regarding LGBTI topics, and attitudes range from positive and neutral to negative and conflicting towards LGBTI people. It is noteworthy that only 11% of respondents have extremely negative attitudes, and only 13% believe that LGBTI people need therapy. All these findings confirm the necessity of further education and sensitization of the general public.

6. Recommendations



MEDIA:

- Introduction of innovative strategies: media outlets and professionals in BiH should develop and apply new approaches to achieve transformative changes in reporting on LGBTI topics, including cooperation with the civil society and LGBTI activists for a deeper understanding and more credible presentation of LGBTI topics.
- Creation of a digital repository: establishment of a digital resource center would provide media professionals with quick access to reliable information, research and content, encouraging quality reporting and quality media formats on the topic of LGBTI rights.
- Multimedia education and storytelling: continuous and accessible dynamic trainings that include multimedia content and storytelling to develop society's empathy and understanding through the sharing of personal stories and experiences of LGBTI people in BiH.
- Two-way communication: creating a mechanism to continuously collect feedback from the LGBTI community would allow the media sector to adapt accordingly and ensure better reporting and relations with the audience.
- Inclusion and diversity in the media: encouraging diversity and inclusion within newsrooms, including recruitment of LGBTI journalists and editors, and planned interventions in editorial policies, will contribute to the authenticity and quality of reporting, and to the promotion of balanced and impartial narratives.

RELIGIOUS COMMUNITIES:

Encouraging interreligious dialogue and education: establishing a platform for interreligious dialogue that would bring together representatives of religious communities, activists for LGBTI rights and advocates of human rights, as well as LGBTI believers. This platform can provide space for open discussions, sharing of perspectives and joint efforts to bridge the gap between religious teachings and modern concepts of human rights. Workshops, seminars and information campaigns could help educate religious leaders and followers about the importance of inclusiveness, respect for diversity and the positive impact of supporting LGBTI rights on social cohesion.

Engagement in religious communities: developing a targeted engagement strategy in order to promote an inclusive approach within religious communities and encourage discussions on the reconciliation of faith with the acceptance of LGBTI persons. Cooperation between LGBTI organizations and religious leaders that would result in educational materials that deal with incorrect understandings and highlight the common values of compassion, empathy and non-violence. Highlighting positive examples, such as the support shown by some religious leaders during events such as Pride March, can serve as examples that encourage similar attitudes and the basis for future dialogue and cooperation.

Promotion of inclusive theological interpretations: encouraging and supporting religious scholars who are ready to explore inclusive theological interpretations in accordance with modern understandings of human rights and social justice. Providing resources for research, publications and public discussions that will present alternative views and interpretations within religious texts on LGBTI rights and acceptance.

POLITICAL PARTIES:

● Sensitization of political leadership: organizing mandatory trainings and workshops on LGBTI issues for members of the political party leadership. These trainings should ensure a better understanding of the complex challenges that LGBTI people face, and the need to protect their rights, and ensure that management monitors the progress made by individual members through similar trainings, as well as create a basis to advocate for improvement of policies within parties in the context of human rights of LGBTI people.

● Institutional advocacy: establishing mechanisms within political parties for LGBTI rights advocacy. This includes the creation of specific policies, declarations and action plans by which the parties commit to support and protect the rights of LGBTI people. Regular evaluation of progress and transparent reporting of these efforts can help maintain party accountability and build trust with the LGBTI community.

● Strengthening political support at events: initiating active participation of members of political parties at LGBTI events, such as pride marches. This will send a strong message of support for the LGBTI community and human rights. The presence of politicians at such events can help create an atmosphere of inclusiveness and tolerance and send a clear message that violence and discrimination will not be tolerated.

PRIDE MARCH:

- Education and raising awareness about the importance and significance of Pride March: organizing information campaigns aimed at communicating the purpose and goals of pride march. Through workshops, campaigns and media materials, it is necessary to emphasize that the march is a means of expressing dissatisfaction, pointing to injustice and fighting for the human rights of LGBTI persons.
- Dialogue and inclusion: creation of a platform for open dialogue between the organizers of the march and skeptical citizens (movable middle), through the organization of round tables, public debates and panel discussions where concerns can be expressed, questions asked and views exchanged.
- Promotion of positive experiences and the impact of the March: promoting positive experiences and the contribution of Pride March to society, through media stories, documentaries and social campaigns, showing examples of how pride marches have contributed to increasing the visibility of LGBTI people, reducing stigma and encouraging changes in social norms and attitudes.

PARENTS AND CHILDREN:

- Strengthening the support network for parents and families: strengthening the reach of support programs for parents and family members of LGBTI people through workshops, discussion groups and resources that enable them to share experiences, information and support.
- Education and sensitization campaigns: conducting educational campaigns and organizing public events aimed at sensitizing the wider population about the need to support families of LGBTI people. Raising awareness of the challenges these families face and of the importance of family acceptance and support through the media, social networks and local events in order to break down prejudices and contribute to the creation of a more tolerant and understanding social environment.
- Personal stories as an instrument of change: promoting the personal stories of LGBTI parents in order to humanize their experiences and make the public aware of their challenges and journeys towards acceptance, and of their fears and hopes for their LGBTI children. Through videos, articles, interviews and campaigns, strengthen the platform that enables parents to share their stories of support and understanding, which can empower other parents and contribute to the transformation of attitudes and the spread of positive messages about inclusion.

EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS:

- Education for understanding and inclusion: organizing educational programs for educational staff and conducting campaigns to raise awareness of LGBTI people and their challenges, with a focus on promoting understanding, empathy and inclusion in education in order to overcome prejudice and stigmatization.
- Social engagement and the fight against homophobia: encouraging the activism and proactivity of educational institutions that already fight against homophobia, transphobia and discrimination of LGBTI persons through concrete recognition, support in joint initiatives, public appearances and the potential awards of recognition for inclusivity.
- Cultural sensitivity training: develop an interdisciplinary approach involving educational institutions, professional associations and psychosocial and health care providers to create comprehensive cultural sensitivity training that addresses the unique needs and challenges faced by LGBTI people.
- Inclusion of different social segments: implementation of information campaigns on the necessity of inclusion and participation of different social groups in the processes of education and information on LGBTI issues. In particular, target segments that are more inclined to understand and support, such as parents of LGBTI children who can be strong allies and advocacy voices in educational institutions, and encourage them to dialogue and exchange opinions in order to create a positive atmosphere for inclusion in educational environments.

SAME-SEX PARTNERSHIP:

Strengthening awareness of the rights of LGBTI people: organizing campaigns and educational programs to increase the general population's awareness of the rights of LGBTI people. In the context of same-sex partnership, potentially communicate individual aspects of the right to family life, particularly focusing on support for health care, hospital visits, and property inheritance and pensions, which enjoy greater public support. Raise public awareness of the legal aspects of entering into same-sex partnerships.

Dialogue and opinion exchange: creating a platform for dialogue and opinion exchange between different social groups to clarify doubts and conflicting views, especially encouraging constructive discussions on issues such as the right to custody and adoption of children, in order to achieve understanding and reduce polarization. Consider personal stories as an instrument of change and sharing of the experiences of same-sex families with children in Bosnia and Herzegovina, for the purpose of creating empathy and potentially mobilizing stronger support from the population that expresses disapproval in this regard.

Representation of rights at the institutional level: strengthen public political and institutional support by insisting that the rights of minorities must not be subject to public opinion, but must be based on international obligations and principles of equality and respect for human rights. Strengthen more concretely the human rights discourse of institutions and political parties in communicating their work on LGBTI human rights, avoiding affective and moral arguments.

TRANSGENDER:

Raising awareness and education on transgender issues: intensify educational programs and campaigns that aim to raise awareness and understanding of the rights of transgender people in BiH, and simplify for the public the complexity of issues related to changing the gender marking in personal documents and aspects of medical gender reassignment. Emphasize the importance of inclusion and support for transgender people, and consider the use of personal stories of transgender people from BiH as a platform for opening dialogue and mobilizing support for continued work on these issues, working to break existing negative narratives, and share positive narratives about transgender in the media and the general public.

Engaging the LGBTI community: opening a dialogue within the LGBTI community about the rights of transgender people and the support they need through events, platforms and other formats that will enable discussion on these issues, break prejudices and stereotypes within the community, and encourage solidarity and joint action for protection of the rights of transgender people.

Opening the discussion about alliances and the TERF movement in the region within the BiH women's movement: creating conditions for an open discussion with the women's movement in BiH about their attitudes towards transgender people, creating joint actions and strategies to counter the TERF narrative.

CONVERSION THERAPIES:

- Public information campaigns: creation of information campaigns to educate the public about the dangers of conversion therapy and its harmful consequences for LGBTI people through various means of information in order to ensure the greatest possible reach of campaign messages.
- Cooperation with mental health experts: improve cooperation with mental health experts, organizations and institutions to develop guidelines and resources that clearly define ethical and supportive approaches to work with LGBTI people to be applied in all institutions and potentially institutionalize them within competent ministries/institutions/ departments and use as the basis for continuous education.
- Support for LGBTI people: maintain safe spaces where LGBTI people can seek support, counseling and resources related to their mental health.
- Involvement and empowerment of the community: organizing thematic workshops, seminars and panel discussions to address the issue of conversion therapy within the LGBTI community and wider society. Empower LGBTI people to share their stories and experiences related to conversion therapy, in order to raise awareness about its use in BiH and the consequences it has on the life and well-being of the community.
- Mapping harmful practices of conversion therapy in BiH: conduct comprehensive research that will map the practices of conversion therapies in BiH, identify actors who implement and support these therapies, and shed light on the negative consequences they have for LGBTI people in BiH.

About Sarajevo Open Centre

Sarajevo Open Centre (SOC) works on promoting human rights, particularly the position and human rights of LGBTI people and women in Bosnia and Herzegovina, by interpreting, presenting and representing the authentic experiences of persons suffering from human rights violations and inequalities, and by advocating for legal, political, economic, social and cultural changes in all areas of life. We will mention only some of the achievements related to the equality of LGBTI people and women.

In addition to psychosocial and legal counselling, we continued running the only LGBTI medium in the country – www.lgbti.ba portal. We organized training for the police, prosecutor's offices and courts, with a focus on hate crime, hate speech and the application of anti-discrimination law; for medical professionals and health workers, with a focus on trans-specific and trans-inclusive gender reassignment; for LGBTIQ community. We have worked intensively on creating a local institutional support network for LGBTI people in Sarajevo, Tuzla, Zenica, Mostar, Prijedor, Bijeljina, improving sexual and reproductive health and rights, the rights of workers in relation to maternity/parental leave, introducing gender-sensitive language in parliaments and universities, adopting and implementing cantonal gender action plans, but also raising awareness of gender-based violence in BiH.

Over the past years, several of our legislative and policy initiatives have entered government or parliamentary procedure. We focused our advocacy activities on policies for equality of women and LGBTI people in BiH, reproductive rights of women and men, parenting in the context of reconciling private and business life, freedom of assembly of LGBTI people, improvement of the institutional framework for the protection from violence and discrimination, and we intend to continue working on issues concerning transgender persons, intersex persons, same-sex partnerships, their social inclusion, but also the position of LGBTI people in education, health, work and employment. We have carried out media campaigns that have reached over one million citizens of BiH, and we also organized LGBTI film festival Merlinka, which, in cooperation with Tuzla Open Centre, became the local festival Kvirhana in 2021.

This publication is part of the Human Rights Series, published by Sarajevo Open Centre.



Other relevant publications in the Human Rights Series

In the Human Rights Series, we publish different online reports, texts and publications related to the human rights of women, lesbians, gays, bisexual and transgender persons.

Some of Sarajevo Open Centre publications related to research on the public opinion of the LGBTIQ+ community, are:

1. Amar Numanović (2017). Numbers of Equality 2 Research on Problems and Needs of LGBTI Persons in Bosnia and Herzegovina in 2017.

Links for the Bosnian and English language version:

[Numbers of Equality 2 - Bos](#)

[Numbers of Equality 2 - Eng](#)

2. Jasmina Čaušević (2013). Brojevi koji ravnopravnost znače – Analiza rezultata istraživanja potreba LGBT osoba u Bosni i Hercegovini.

Links for the Bosnian language version:

[Brojevi koji ravnopravnost znače - Bos](#)

3. Amil Brković, Branko Ćulibrk, Delila Hasanbegović, Dina Bajrektarević, Jozo Blažević (2023). Pink Report 2023 – Annual Report on the State of Human Rights of LGBTI People in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Links for the Bosnian and English language version:

[Pink Report 2023 - Bos](#)

[Pink Report 2023 - Eng](#)

4. Admira Sitnić, Amina Dizdar, Delila Hasanbegović Vukas (2022). Orange Report 7: Report on the State of Human Rights of Women in Bosnia and Herzegovina in 2021.

Links for the Bosnian and English language version:

[Orange Report 7 - Bos](#)

[Orange Report 7 - Eng](#)

5. Lejla Gačanica (2021). Socio-ekonomski položaj lezbijki, gej, biseksualnih, transrodnih i interseksualnih osoba u Bosni i Hercegovini.

Links for the Bosnian language version:

[Socio-ekonomski položaj lezbijki, gej, biseksualnih, transrodnih i interseksualnih osoba u Bosni i Hercegovini - Bos](#)

6. Zlatiborka Popov-Momčinović (2013). "Ko smo mi da sudimo drugima?" Ispitivanje javnog mnijenja o stavovima prema homoseksualnosti i transrodnosti u Bosni i Hercegovini.

Links for the Bosnian language version:

["Ko smo mi da sudimo drugima?" - Bos](#)

