

# **Experiences of the LGBT Community**

A Survey of the LGBT  
Community in Kosovo



June 2016





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"The content and views expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect the views of United States Agency for International Development or the United States Government."



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## **Executive Summary**

The Aim of our research and report is to support the interest of the LGBT community in Kosovo, and to serve as a tool for measuring how the “Kosovo is Ready Program” has benefited the LGBT community in Kosovo. The study provides important insights into the violence, discrimination, and harassment experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender community (LGBT) in Kosovo. It is very important to take into consideration that this report might also serve as a tool for other LGBT organizations, civil society organizations in general, and the government of Kosovo on how to best address LGBT issues.

Violence is a serious public health problem worldwide and it is well documented that it has immediate health effects, such as injuries and death from physical and sexual assault, anxiety, suicide, and substance abuse.

Numerous researches show that among the groups at a higher risk of violence, discrimination, and harassment, lesbians, gays, bisexual, and transgender people are frequently victims of prejudice, physical or sexual violence, verbal harassment, discrimination, and homophobia because of their sexual orientation or gender identity. Such episodes may occur in the workplace, at school, in the form of violence and abuse from family members, and very often, in access to health care services.



There have been several researches made in Kosovo (see reference list) regarding the LGBT community and society – whereas the focus has been the view of the general population towards the LGBT community. Those researches have had one main goal: to measure the attitude and level of homophobia/transphobia that exists in the Kosovar society. However, there has not been any research actually directed towards the LGBT community itself. To be able to provide the right services, to work for LGBT rights, it is crucial to first examine the nature of the problems and difficulties that the LGBT community faces. Only then, it is possible to provide the right services.

Participants of this survey were explicitly familiarized with the definition of discrimination, harassment, and violence by the interviewer; however, we believe that many participants did not have a sufficiently comprehensive understanding, or did not recognize each incident as such. When such human rights violations are a part of our everyday reality, they become normalized and often invisible to those who experience them.

### **LGBT Situation in Kosovo**

Although the LGBT community has been formally organized in Kosovo since 2002, it has remained somewhat hidden from the public eye due to the fear for the persons' physical, mental, economic, and social safety. Awareness and respect from the general public for

LGBT individuals continues to remain low, resulting in daily discrimination, harassment, and violence in all sectors of life. Often, homophobia, transphobia, heteronormativity, and denial of rights are only fueled by justifications of Kosovar “tradition” and culture - an attempt to normalize such discrimination, social exclusion, and violence. Those same values that place a high level of importance on family honor, often make demands on LGBT individuals to verbally acknowledge their sexual orientation or gender identity, thus contributing to the norm of many individuals living ‘double lives’. As Kosovo remains in a unique socioeconomic and political situation, these realities are only further exacerbated.

In Kosovo, rights to freedom of expression are frequently denied through threats, family shaming, further social exclusion, and a myriad of resulting ‘consequences’. Serious threats have forced LGBT organizations to maintain office locations undisclosed to the public for a long period of time. The LGBT community lacks any public place to gather and while some have opened only recently, there are still a very few ‘friendly’ coffee shops. Following the hate-fueled violence that occurred against the LGBTQ community in December 2012, during the launching of Kosovo 2.0 sex issue, and the subsequent attack of the LGBT organization “Libertas” during which one person was severely physically harmed, the need for immediate protection of the

LGBTQ community in Kosovo became even more evident and crucial.<sup>1</sup>

As the youngest country in Europe with a vast international influence and the extensive work of LGBT NGOs, the LGBT community in Kosovo maintains broad and formal legal protections to some extent. These protections include the protection under the constitution, as well as inclusion in the anti-discrimination law. Other protections under the law, such as hate speech and hate crime legislation, exist but are less clear and more difficult to implement. However, the implementation, knowledge, and respect of any legislation among the LGBT community, Kosovo judicial sector, and the Kosovar society is highly limited. Partly due to the judicial sector's lack of knowledge on how to proceed with such cases, but also due to the victims' fear that they will be “outed” and face further victimization.

Past and recent research continually shows many LGBT persons fear being “outed” as they often economically depend on their rather conservative families, due to Kosovo’s current high unemployment rate and high population of youth. These societal realities, coupled with distrust from the LGBT community towards the Kosovo government, mean that the majority of cases are not reported to the authorities, and sometimes not even to the local LGBT NGOs.

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<sup>1</sup> Eulex (2014) *Verdict in "Kosovo 2.0" case*

At the end of 2014, the rights of the LGBT community had begun to receive more attention from the civil society and governmental institutions due to pressures and conditions from the European Union for Kosovo to receive visa liberalization. Yet, proper knowledge and dedication from those actors continues to remain low.<sup>2</sup> This has become particularly apparent in the recent dismissal of the aforementioned and rather public case regarding the attacks against the LGBT community that took place in 2012, despite the clear evidence and a connection to another case. Often, those actors assume and suggest marriage legislation for LGB individuals as the end-goal for the rights of LGBT people, which is quite the opposite in the eyes of QESH and the Kosovo LGBT community. Although some politicians are willing to speak about the rights of the LGBT community, their actions have only further increased distrust from the community and given the perception to the general public that our rights are not important.

Even though Kosovo remains in a difficult and transitional stage, especially regarding LGBT rights, the LGBT community in Kosovo is growing every day. In the past year, the number of engaged activists and the number of visible women have risen substantially, from less than five before. However, much work is still to be done before LGBT people in Kosovo can fully enjoy the rights they are entitled to.

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<sup>2</sup> U.S. Department of State. (2014). *Kosovo 2013 Human Rights Report*

## **Methodology**

This report is based on primary and secondary research, consisting of structured interviews with Kosovo LGBT community members, as well as the analysis, expertise, and research conducted by experts working with LGBT issues in Kosovo. The survey was administered by experienced QESh staff and trained volunteers. In the first survey, a total of 203 LGBT individuals were identified through a chain-sampling method, in which each participant identified further participants from their network. In the second survey, 98 LGBT individuals were identified through the same method. Other respondents were identified through convenience sampling, in which the survey was administered in specific places and events where the LGBT community is present. Due to the sensitive nature of the survey, researchers who have established trust with the LGBT community also represent a diversity of origin, age, gender, ethnicity, and sexual orientation, and were specifically selected to ensure a diverse and quality research. Each survey was anonymous and lasted approximately 20 minutes, consisting of 85 multiple choice and fill in the blank questions; 8 of these questions were filled only by individuals who identified as transgender.

## **Limitations of the Survey**

Due to the hidden nature and the tight network of the LGBT community in Kosovo, the individuals who are already a part of the LGBT network in some way were those most easy to identify and reach. Thus, LGBT persons who are isolated or not connected to any

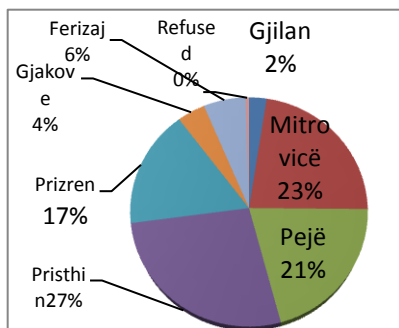
part of the LGBT community were more difficult to reach. Additionally, this report is not representative of a random sample of participants, which would be impossible when researching a specific group of people.

## **Extracted Data 2014**

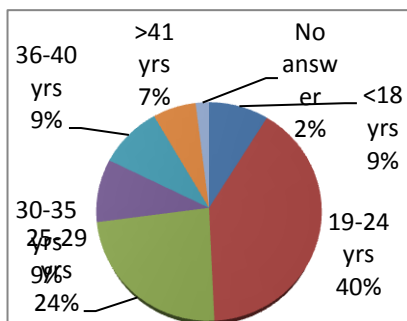
### Basic Demographics

The sample population is representative of the seven districts of Kosovo, with Prishtina, Peja, and Mitrovicë comprising the largest number. However, this can not necessarily be used to evaluate the number of LGBT individuals from or residing in each area. The majority of respondents stated they come from a city rather than a village, and a slightly higher number of them currently live in the cities.

The sample population consisted of individuals between the ages of 16 and 58, the majority of respondents were under the age of 30 (73%), while the



largest demographic of the sample was between the ages of 19 and 24, comprising 40%. Such figures indicate the important need to focus on



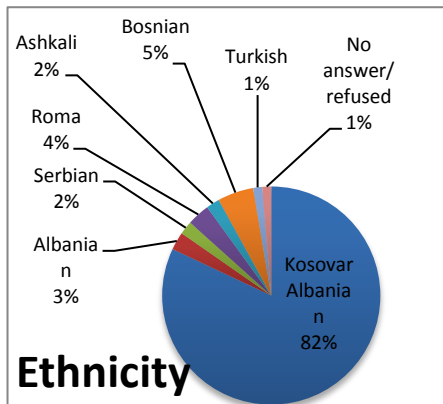
issues affecting the LGBT youth, as the youth have the largest representation both within the LGBT community and in Kosovo<sup>3</sup>. However, it is important to note that, despite misconceptions that

<sup>3</sup> Republic of Kosovo Government Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sport. (2013). *Kosovo Strategy for Youth 2013-2017*.



being a part of the LGBT community is the phenomenon only observed among the youth, over 15% of respondents were between 36 and 58 years of age. This indicates that older LGBT individuals are present in Kosovo, and the smaller number is more likely the result of general population demographics, coupled with a different level of awareness, social acceptance for older generations, and support mechanisms and networks that exist for LGBT individuals.

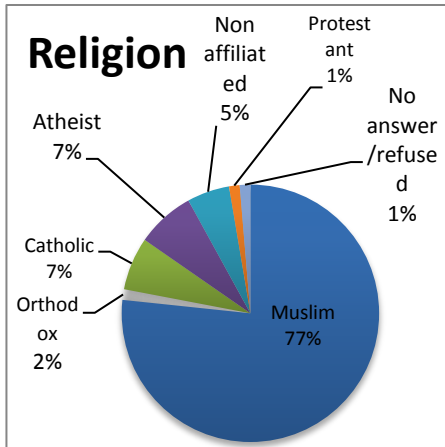
Similar to Kosovo's population demographics, the majority of respondents identified as Kosovar Albanian or Albanian, while 13% identified as Serbian, Bosnian, Roma, Ashkali, Bosnian, or Turkish.<sup>4</sup> Such representation of ethnicities demonstrates that LGBT identities



are not defined to one ethnicity and/or culture. Similarly, the majority identified themselves as Muslims (77.8%), while a few identified as Catholic (6.4%), atheist (6.9%), or non-affiliated (5.4%), and less than 2% identified as orthodox or

protestant. Religious representation is slightly more diverse among the

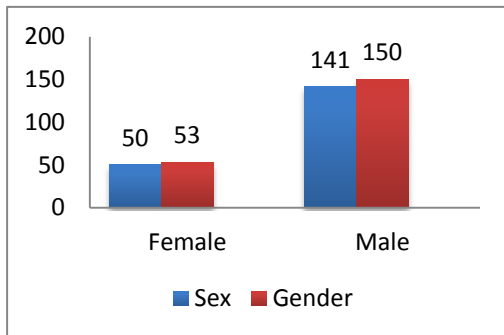
<sup>4</sup> Republic of Kosovo Agency of Statistics. (2013). *Kosovo Census Atlas*.



sample population than in general demographics.<sup>5</sup>

In order for this research to be accurate, we asked our respondents questions related to their self-identification regarding sex and gender, and 26% of individuals identified their sex as female, while

74% identified as male. However, 28% of respondents self-identified as women while 70% identified as men, and 2% identified as transgender or other. It is important to note that such gender representation is, in fact, different than how individuals identified their sex, and making the distinction between sex and gender is crucial for comprehensive analysis.<sup>6</sup> Clearly, it was easier to identify male participants possibly because they are greater in numbers, have a



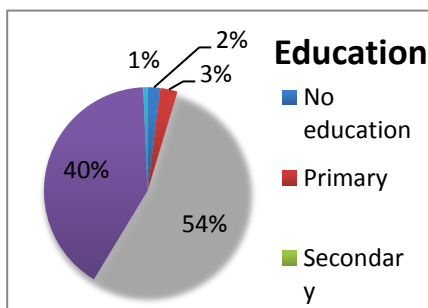
<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> See Section VI Gender Identity

more extensive network, or have greater freedom to express their orientation. It should be noted that some male participants were identified in public areas where they are known to congregate in search of sexual activity (the so-called cruising areas); such areas are not known to exist for female participants from the LGBT community.

### Education

Less than 5% of respondents had not finished secondary school, while more than 54% reported having a university level education; data for those over 25 years is similar. Compared to the general population demographics, our sample has significantly higher levels of education for both males and females.<sup>7</sup> In fact, although the sample of female participants was smaller, they had achieved higher levels of education than males, defying general education statistics.<sup>8</sup> Likewise, 46.7% of respondents were currently gainfully

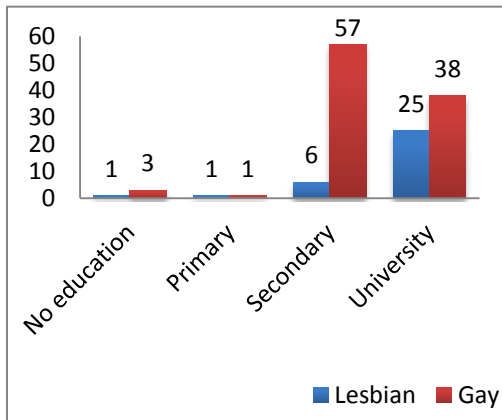


<sup>7</sup> Republic of Kosovo Agency of Statistics. *Kosovo Population and Housing Census 2011- Final Results: Quarterly Report*

<sup>8</sup> Republic of Kosovo Agency of Statistics. (2011). *Series 5: Social Statistics Education Statistics 2011-2011*

employed, almost 22% were currently students, while 28% were currently unemployed and looking for work or volunteer positions.

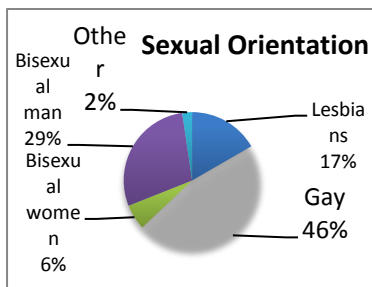
The majority of employed respondents work in the private sector



(32%). Among those who were not currently students, 47% were unemployed. In general, the lesbian community had higher level of education than the gay community.

### Sexual Orientation

Sexual orientation in this research is defined as the emotional, intellectual, and physical attraction towards one gender or another. We have listed four categories, which are: lesbian, gay, bisexual, and



queer or other. We found that 49% of our responders identify as gay, 18% identify as lesbian, and 31% identify as bisexual. Less than 2% identify as queer or had refused to answer. It is a given fact that most of the

individuals currently out to LGBT organizations are gays. However, the number of lesbians is increasing every day, especially when out to LGBT organizations that existed back in 2005, when QESh was created, and when there was only one out lesbian.

The number of bisexual individuals is very high; however, it is worth noting that many people who identified themselves as bisexual did so because of their marital status, or because of the fear from further segregation from the family. Most of the self-identified bisexual individuals are men (29% of total sample), while only 6% of total sample are bisexual women.

### **Gender Identity**

Although only three individuals self-identify as transgender, 12 individuals recognize their gender as being different than their sex. For the remainder of this report, in order to simplify reading, we will refer to all these individuals as trans, unless it is important to otherwise note the distinction. This is not a phenomenon unique to Kosovo, but rather a general reality of transgender communities. Globally, it is difficult to estimate or map the number of transgender individuals.

An even larger number of individuals reported that they agree (9) or strongly agree (8) that they wish to change their gender or sex. Of these, 13 individuals did not identify as trans or as having a gender identity opposite to their assigned sex. It is important to note that not

all of those who did identify differently than their sex, or as trans, reported wanting to medically adjust their gender/sex.

Twenty-seven participants who did not identify as trans or as having a gender identity opposite to their assigned sex also reported they strongly agree (7) or agree (20) with wishing to be more masculine or feminine, opposite of their sex. When asked about feeling and looking feminine or masculine, men reported a broader range, with an even higher number feeling feminine (32). Additionally, 16 males who did not identify as trans strongly disagreed (4) or disagreed (12) with feeling masculine. All trans women reported strongly feeling feminine. This data shows the broad range of genders within the LGBT community identities, and it appears that some do not fully understand or recognize their gender, or fully understand the concept of gender identity.

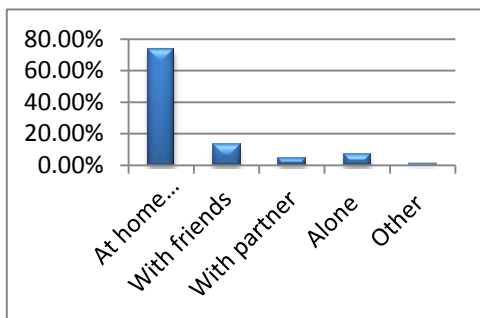
Individuals who reported having a gender identity opposite to their assigned sex related their sexual orientation to their sex rather than their gender. While less than 2% self-identified as trans, it could be estimated there are more transgender persons; as defined by those who identify as being of different sex than their gender along with those who strongly wish to adjust their sex/gender.

A larger percentage of males have also reported that they feel they 'look' feminine, compared to female participants. Of the 8 individuals who self-identified as trans women (M2F), each individual agreed they often receive negative opinions from the public for their gender

presentation, while trans men (F2M) reported not receiving negative opinions to the same degree.

### **Transgender Realities**

While only 3 out of 203 respondents self-identified as transgender, 9 others saw their gender as being different than their sex. At the end of the survey, a series of questions was posed to transgender individuals only, asking about their more specific experiences. Of the 12 individuals who recognized their gender as being different than their sex, 6 opted to answer these questions. Overwhelmingly, all individuals responded that they have never sought medical services for being trans. Common reasons for not seeking services was due to fear of negative reactions, not knowing where to seek services, or believing that services do not exist. Many also stated that it is not possible to receive hormone replacement therapy, genital reconstructive surgery, or change personal identification documents in Kosovo. Only one individual indicated that they believed a person can receive hormone replacement therapy. Additionally, individuals reported having gone abroad to seek services, or wanting to go abroad. Yet, it is important to note that some individuals stated they are not currently seeking services, nor do they want to. Similarly, all those who responded strongly agreed that more options for medical treatment, procedures to change documents, gender identity inclusion in the law, public figures speaking up for trans individuals, a stronger justice system, training of public servants, and public awareness



campaigns on trans issues and rights would have a positive impact on trans lives.

Of 12 individuals who identified as having a gender identity

opposite to their sex, 7 had been kicked out of their homes.

### **Social Situation**

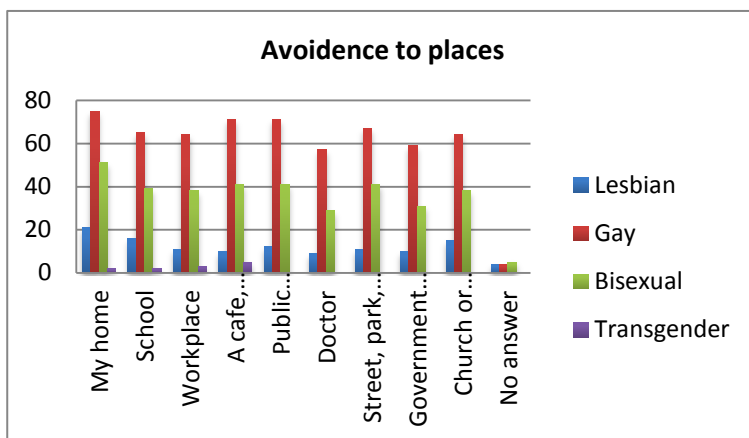
About 73% of respondents reported currently living at home with family, while 13% reported living with friends, 7% alone, 5% with a partner, and 1% with others. About 13%, most of them gay men, have been kicked out of their homes because of their sexual orientation or gender identity; however, it is important to note that four lesbians have been kicked out of their homes as well. Only a small number were not allowed back home, but 85% of those who were allowed to return stated that the permission was based upon certain conditions.

Some of the most common conditions respondents reported were that they must get married or find a partner of the opposite sex, change their sexual orientation, be isolated, or for 'it' to never happen again. Often in these cases respondents stated they were 'caught' with someone else rather than 'coming out' to their family members.



Comparatively males had been kicked out of the home at a higher rate than females.

It is highly concerning that, when asked if they avoid going to a variety of places out of fear of discrimination, harassment or violence, the respondents' overwhelmingly common response was their home



(76.4%), followed by public transport (64%), and then by café, restaurant, bar, club (63.1%). In regards to their home, 86% of those who reported living at home stated fearing home. Of those who feared home, 82.5% were currently living at home with family.

Further 72% of those individuals who feared home and lived at home reported that they were not students, so it is safe to assume that they are living at home full-time. This reflects the significant amount of

influence that family has on LGBT individuals, as do the socioeconomic<sup>9</sup> forces.

Interestingly, male participants reported fearing public places at a higher rate than female participants; however, both feared their home at approximately the same rate. One possible explanation for this is that one half of female respondents came from Prishtina district, while only 19% of male respondents came from there.

In general, women in Kosovo are very often isolated and have little access to the “public space”. Cultural, religious, and gender norms very often limit the women in Kosovo, whereas the men have access to all public “spheres”. Hence, gay men often have more “freedom” and are able to move away from home to study in the capital.

More than 40% of respondents stated that they are in a heterosexual relationship in order to hide their sexual orientation. It is fairly common that gay and bisexual men choose partners of the opposite sex in order to hide their sexual orientation and to avoid suspicions from family, friends, and colleagues. 23% of male participants (all of whom identified as gay) answered that they are married to a partner of the opposite sex, while only 4% of female participants who identified as lesbians answered that they are married. This again indicates that lesbians are in a slightly better position socially, or are keener to overcome the pressure as their female social role is generally less

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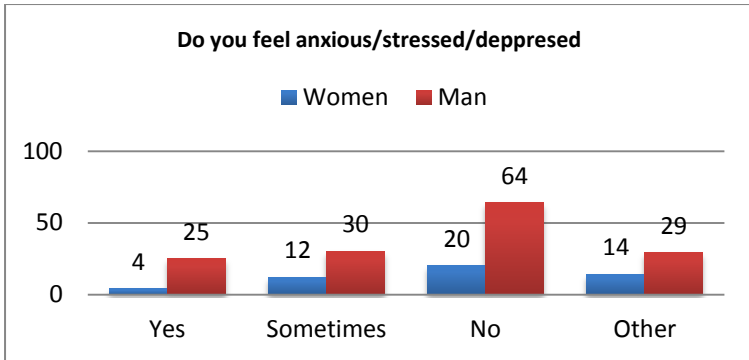
<sup>9</sup> Savić, Marija. *Invisible LGBT: Report on the position of the LGBT community in Kosovo*. Belgrade: Heartefact Fund, 2013.

important than male social role. Although the majority of older respondents stated being in heterosexual relationships, hiding it was not restricted only to older participants. Least likely to claim that they will hide due to their sexual orientation were the youngest respondents. Additionally, some community members have stated that, although they are in homosexual relationships presently, they plan to marry someone of the opposite sex in the future. This is much more common in the gay community rather than the lesbian community – In order to avoid confrontation regarding their sexual orientation, many gay men choose to marry a woman.

24.6% of males reported not being ‘out’ to anybody, while all female participants reported being out to somebody. This indicates that women from the LGBT community are more open about their sexual orientation than men from the LGBT community.

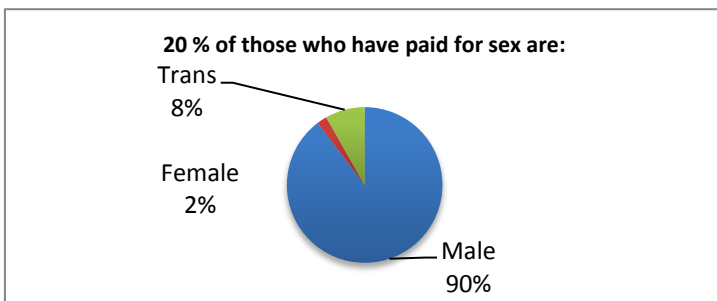
### **Mental Health**

Respondents were not asked about attempting suicide or having suicidal thoughts, but were rather asked about their level of anxiety and/or depression due to the fact that they are part of the LGBT community. We learned that most of them do not feel any anxiety, stress, or depression, while some of them do feel the above mentioned symptoms sometimes. It is important to mention that the number of men who responded yes is higher than women, but please note this is because there were more male respondents than female.



Almost 50% of respondents claimed that they are currently trying to leave Kosovo or seek asylum because of their sexual orientation or gender identity, while 60% stated they have thought about it or tried in the past. This also suggests that the majority of the LGBT community experience some kind of stress related to living in a homophobic and transphobic environment.

Although the reason was not asked or stated, almost 20% reported having paid for sex (87% of them were males, 2% female, and 8% trans), while 13% reported that they themselves had received payment for sex, which might be an indicator that sexually transmitted infections are higher within the gay community rather than the lesbian



community. Not being able to meet in safe spaces, many gay men from the community seek sex partners in the so called “cruising areas” – which very often increases the chances to be attacked by individuals who share homophobic values or views. Basic healthcare and mental healthcare providers are rarely sensitive or trained for dealing with LGBT issues and in many cases, medical professionals have had a biased and discriminatory approach. For the moment, there is no identified health or mental health care at all for transgender people.

### **Alcohol and Drug Abuse**

Various international researches show that individuals within the LGBT community are more prone to alcohol and drug abuse than are their heterosexual peers. Also, our research shows that the LGBT community in Kosovo, for the most part, indulges in overconsumption, mainly of alcohol. There is no research that we can use for comparison, to assess whether the use of alcohol and drugs are consumed at a higher rate in the LGBT community or the heterosexual community in Kosovo, but the main reasons for overconsumption of alcohol is related to high levels of stress and anxiety, and social isolation.

Several options were given when it comes to substances classified as drugs, among them cocaine, ecstasy, heroin, LSD, marihuana and, most commonly, hashish. 22% of female respondents answered that they consume alcohol a few times a week, while 28.4% of male

respondents consumes alcohol several times a week. 6% of female respondents consume hashish several times a week, compared to 5% of male respondents. All respondents have previously tried drugs such as heroin, ecstasy, and heroin.

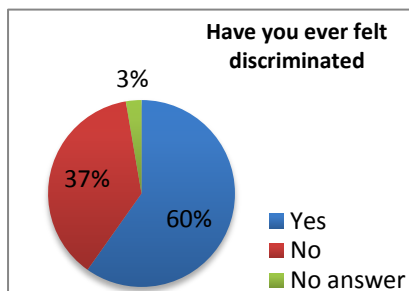
### **Rights Violations**

Participants were explicitly familiarized with the definition of discrimination, harassment, and violence by the interviewer; however, we believe that many did not have a sufficiently comprehensive understanding; or did not recognize each incident as such. When such human rights violations are part of an everyday reality, they become normalized and often invisible to those who experience them.

### **Discrimination**

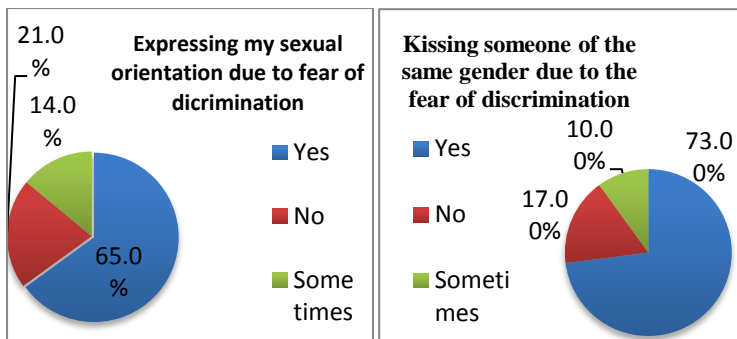
All respondents overwhelmingly agreed that gay men or trans individuals are the most discriminated group in the society; this might be because most of the respondents were men, but it can also be due to the femininity that they in line with patriarchal society.

It is important to note that the fear of discrimination is very high in the

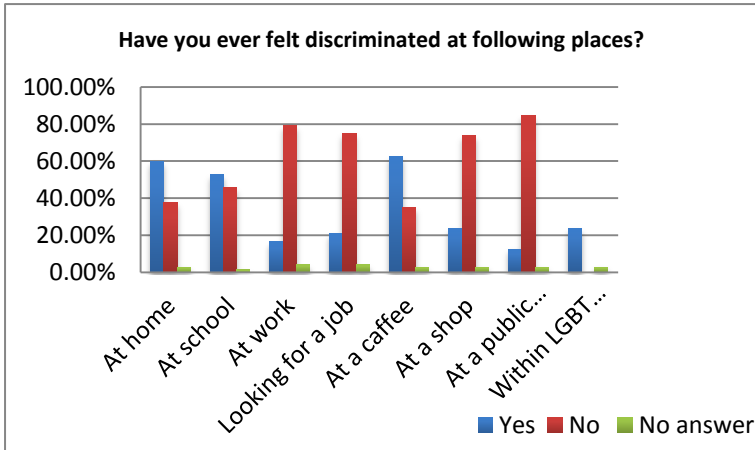


community, where 65% responded that they are afraid of being discriminated. However, the number of those who were actually discriminated is slightly lower at 60%. This indicates that

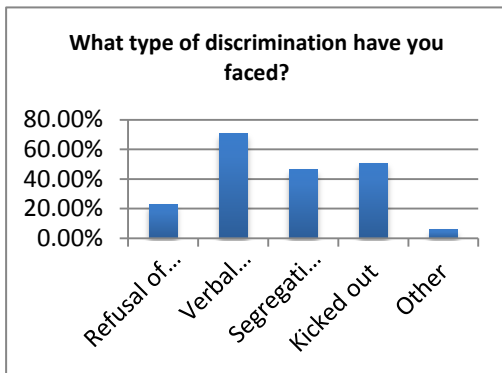
even though a person has not been a victim of discrimination, they still live in constant fear that it might happen. Furthermore, 73% have said that they would not kiss someone of the same gender in public due to the fear of discrimination.



Discrimination happens in almost every sphere of people’s life. Following question clearly shows that discrimination for LGBT persons has mostly happened at home and in cafés/restaurants, both of which scored higher than 60%. Discrimination is becoming more widespread at school, with more than 50% participants reporting as having experienced it, which is an increase from previous years. One assumption we can make is that discrimination in schools increases with higher visibility of the LGBT community, but it is also due to the fact that more and more youth LGBT persons are coming out.



It is worth mentioning that there are some individuals (around 20%) who have stated that they have felt discriminated within the LGBT community. The level of discrimination is very low at public institutions (around 10%), but this does not mean that public institutions do not have a discriminatory attitude towards the LGBT

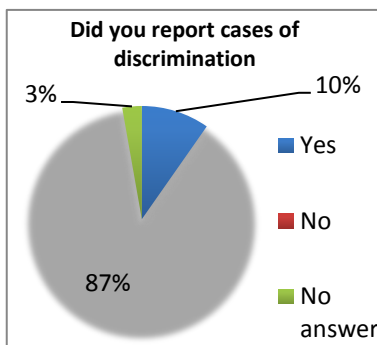


community. Rather, it shows that, most commonly, public institutions are not even aware that they are serving a member of the LGBT community.



We have asked the respondents of what type of discrimination they have they faced, and according to our data, the LGBT community mostly faces verbal abuse (67%), followed by being kicked out of places (50%), while segregation is also very high with around 42%

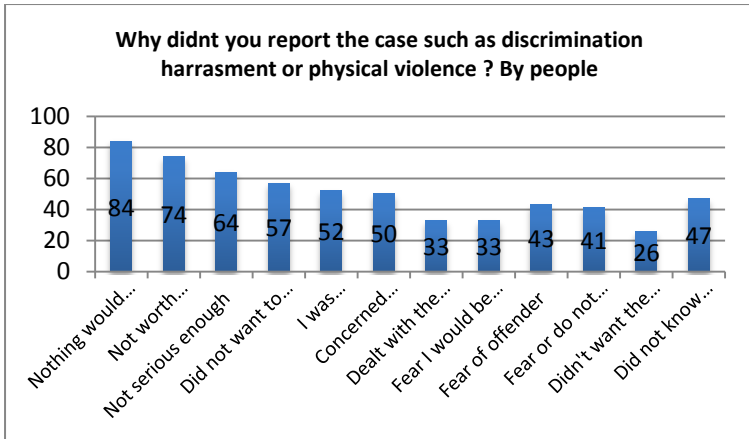
For the question if the respondents have reported cases of discrimination, 87% have answered that they have not reported cases, while only 7% have reported then.



We have further asked those who did not report to specify why they did not. Most of the respondents (84%) have answered that they believe that “nothing would happen”, 74% have answered that they believe it is “not worth reporting”. Interestingly, 43 % of the respondents have answered “Fear of the offender” as a reason to not report cases.

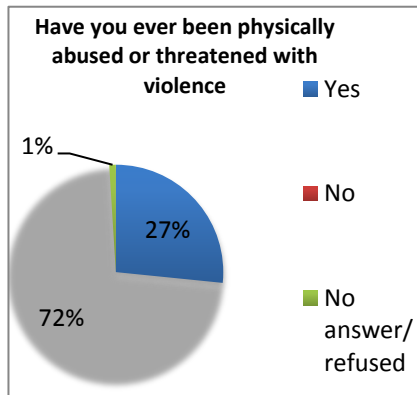
In general, it appears that most reasons why cases are not reported are due to the lack of trust in institutions, and due to the fact that the perpetrator was a family member.

When asked for the reasons why an individual did not report the case when they experience discrimination, violence, or harassment, the majority of the respondents claimed that ‘nothing would happen’, that it is ‘not worth reporting - it happens all the time’, or ‘not serious enough’, ‘did not want to reveal my sexual orientation or gender identity’.



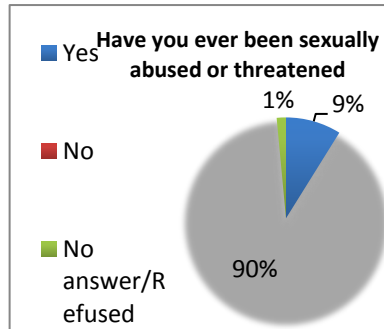
## Violence

Violence is an ongoing challenge that LGBT persons face in their everyday life. We have asked the respondents if they have ever been physically abused or threatened with violence. The survey shows that 27% of the respondents have been physically abused/threatened. This is a very high number, especially considering that we did not have full access to all members who are part of the LGBT community while many of them might be abused/threatened and might not have any access to LGBT organizations.

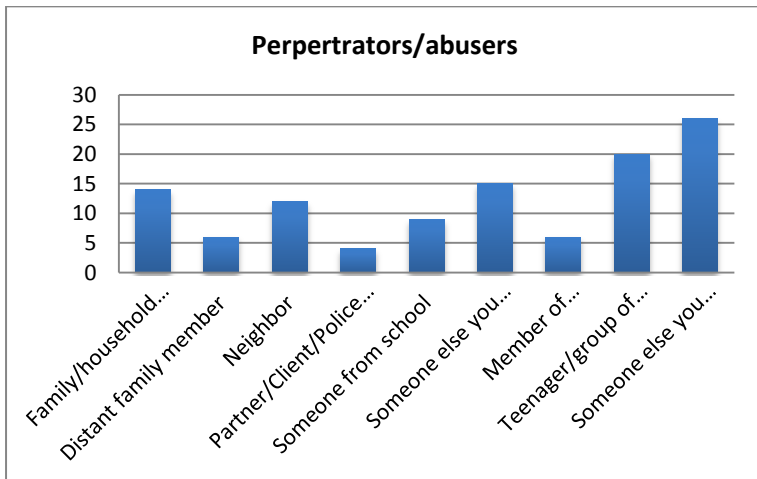


The LGBT community does not only face physical abuse, but also faces sexual abuse, with 9% of the respondents stating that they have faced sexual abuse/threats. This is very alarming considering the small

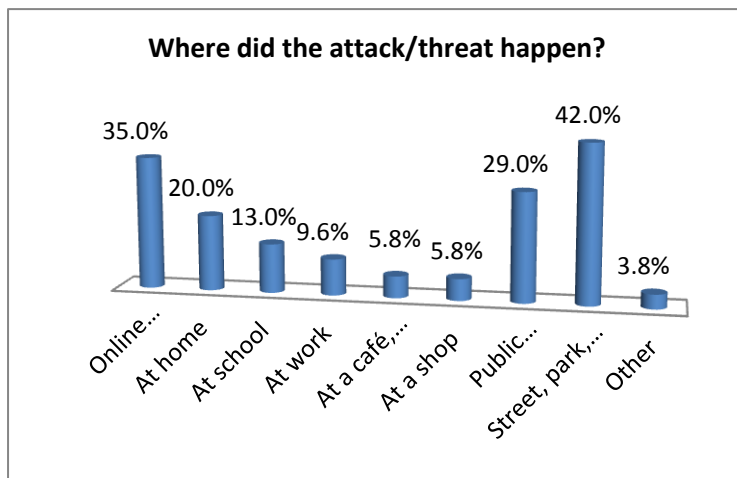
number of 203 respondents who participated in the survey. The survey also shows that 5 of the individuals who had reported having been sexually abused/threatened, have been victims of sexual abuse more than 10 times.



The abuse mostly takes place in the house (home) or around the house (home), either by an immediate family member (26%) or distant family member (11%), and/or neighbor (23%). The violence that LGBT community faces happens from different individuals/groups; usually, those who were abusive towards LGBT members are not able to be identified (50%). It is alarming to know that teenagers or groups of teenagers are the second most frequent group abusive towards their family members (38%). Six individuals (11.5%) have said that they have been physically abused/threatened from members of extremist/radical group.



According to the respondents, the following chart shows the places where abuse mostly has taken place. The highest percentage of abuse (42%) occurs in the streets or other public area. We can make the assumption that streets/parks or other public areas are high-risk since



many gay men use them as a cruising area, where the risk of various kinds of abuse is higher. It is important to mention that most cases of abuse in park or other public area were all reported by either gay men, bisexual men or male-to-female transgender persons.

It is worrying that 20% of the respondents have reported that the abuse has happened at home. The LGBT community is neither safe at home or in public. Cases where a person is abused in the park may lead to that person refraining from going home due to the fear of further abuse.

School environment is not a safe place for LGBT individuals, and for many school represents a constant fear; 13% of the LGBT community have faced discrimination in the school environment, while many others face cyber bullying on a daily basis.

## **Knowledge of Rights & Reporting of Cases**

More than 80% of respondents were aware that the law in Kosovo protects individuals against discrimination based on sexual orientation, since both the Constitution of the Republic of Kosovo and the Anti-Discrimination Law/Law on Protection against Discrimination both prohibit discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation, on a variety of levels<sup>10</sup>. On the other side, slightly less than 50% of respondents believed there is a law that protects against discrimination based on gender identity. Although only recently included in the Draft Law on Protection from Discrimination<sup>11</sup>, Article 19 and Article 22 of the Constitution of the Republic of Kosovo give precedence to a variety of international human rights instruments and mechanisms as superseding the constitution of Kosovo, such as the European Convention on Human Rights and Universal declaration of Human Rights. Additionally, they state that human rights shall be interpreted in a manner consistent with the European Court of Human Rights<sup>12</sup>. The LGBT community has a particular precedence in this regard since the ECHR has already recognized LGBT rights in numerous aspects of life, but specifically on grounds of gender identity.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Article 24.2, Constitution of the Republic of Kosovo

<sup>11</sup> Article 3, Law on Protection from Discrimination

<sup>12</sup> Article 53, Constitution of the Republic of Kosovo

<sup>13</sup> GI ECHR

Despite the knowledge of being protected by the law, LGBT people did not report cases of the violations they experienced. The fact that witnesses are afraid to take the stand in Kosovo courts speaks volumes about the inadequacy of the current program to guarantee protection to the witnesses.<sup>14</sup>

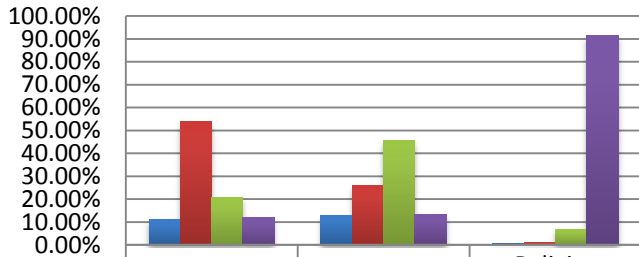
### **LGBT perception of media, politicians, and religious leaders**

The chart below clearly shows that the LGBT community has little trust in public media and very often media are responsible for allowing or spreading negative or/and offensive comments towards the LGBT community. More than 97% of the respondents believe that the negative and/or offensive comments are mostly used from religious leaders. According to the respondents, also politicians use or make negative or offensive comments with around 30%, which is slightly lower than religious leaders. It is important to mention that the questions are related to all politicians and not the current government. However, we have failed to ask the question if politicians speak about LGBT community, which is a weakness for this survey.

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<sup>14</sup> Gall, L. (2014). A Challenge for Kosovo: Justice for All. New York City: Human Rights Watch.

**How common are negative/offensive comments from:**



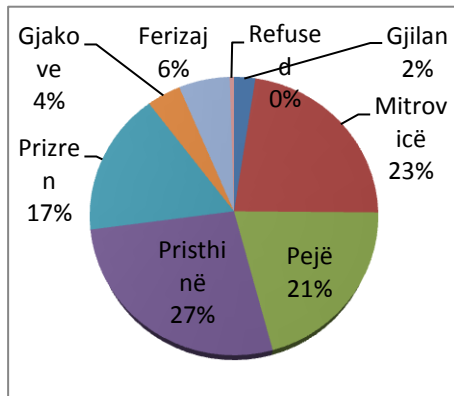
	Politicians	Media	Religious leader
Very rare	11.30%	12.80%	0.50%
Rare	53.70%	26.10%	1.00%
Common	20.70%	45.80%	6.90%
Very common	11.80%	13.30%	91.60%

## **Extracted Data 2016**

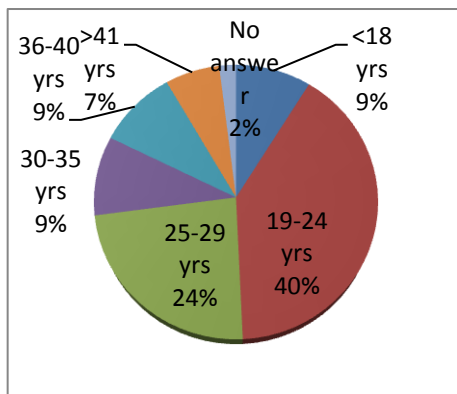


## Basic Demographics

The sample population is representative of the seven districts of Kosovo with Prishtina, Peja, and Mitrovica comprising the largest number. However, this cannot necessarily be used to evaluate the number of LGBT individuals from or residing in each area. The majority of respondents stated they come from a city rather than a village, and a slightly higher number are currently living in cities.

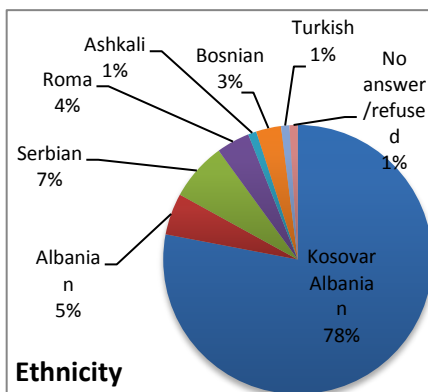


The sample population consisted of individuals between the ages of 18 and 74, the majority of respondent were under the age of 30 (77%), while the largest demographic of the sample was between the ages of 19 and 24, comprising 41%. Such figures indicate the important need to focus on issues affecting LGBT youth, as the youth



have the largest representation both within the LGBT community and Kosovo<sup>15</sup>. However, it is important to note that, despite misconceptions that being a part of the LGBT community is a phenomenon only observed among the youth, over 25% of respondents were between 30 and 74 years of age.

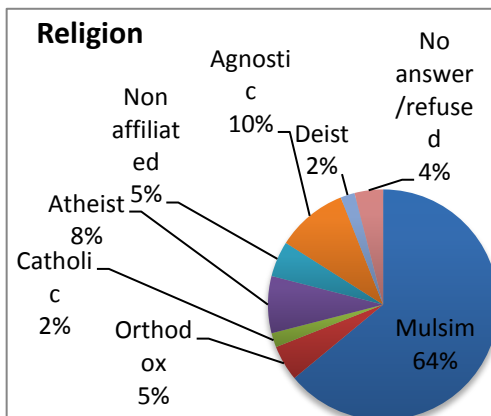
Similar to Kosovo's population demographics, the majority of respondents identified as Kosovar Albanian or Albanian, while 16% identified as Serbian, Roma, Ashkali, Bosnian or Turkish. Such representation of ethnicities demonstrates that LGBT identities are not defined to one ethnicity and/or culture. Similarly, the majority identified themselves as Muslims (63.9%), while others identified as agnostic (9.6%), atheist (8.4%), Orthodox (4.8%), or non-



<sup>15</sup> Republic of Kosovo Government Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sport. (2013). *Kosovo Strategy for Youth 2013-2017*.

affiliated (4.8%) and less than 3% identified as catholic or protestant. Religious representation is slightly more diverse among the sample population than in general demographics.<sup>16</sup>

In order for this research to be accurate, we asked our respondents questions related to their self-identification regarding sex and gender, and 13% of individuals identified

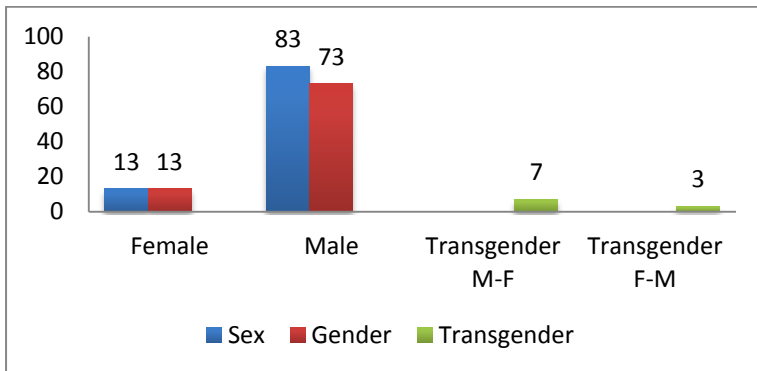


their sex as female, while 87% identified as male. However, 13% of respondents self-identified as women while 75% identified as men, 10% identified as transgender, and 2% refused to answer. It is important to note that such gender representation is, in fact, different than how individuals identified their sex, and making the distinction between sex and gender is crucial for a comprehensive analysis.<sup>17</sup> Clearly, it was easier to reach out to male participants, possibly because they are greater in numbers, have a more extensive network, or have greater freedom to express their orientation. It should be noted that some male participants were identified in public areas where they

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

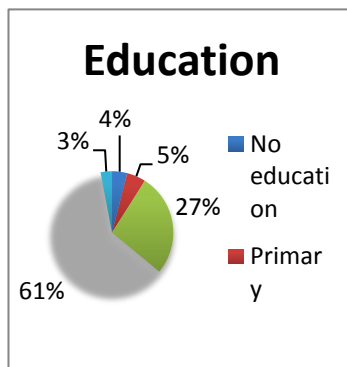
<sup>17</sup> See Section VI Gender Identity

are known to congregate in search of sexual activity (the so-called cruising areas); such areas are not known to exist for female participants from the LGBT community.



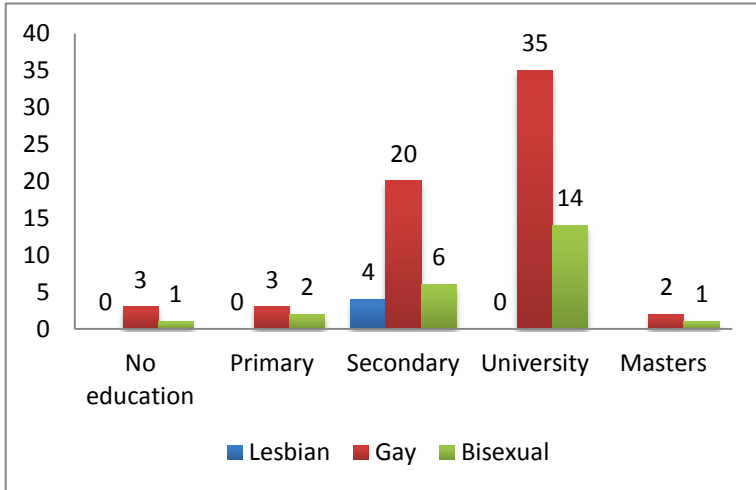
### Education

Less than 5% of respondents had not finished secondary school, while more than 60% reported having a university level education. Compared to the general population demographics, our sample has significantly higher levels of education for both males and females.<sup>18</sup> Likewise,



<sup>18</sup> Republic of Kosovo Agency of Statistics. *Kosovo Population and Housing Census 2011- Final Results: Quarterly Report*

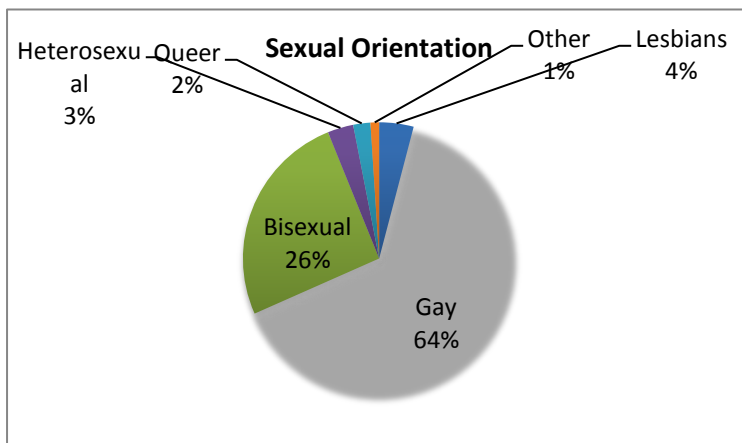
57.7% of respondents were currently gainfully employed, almost 18% were currently students, while 19.6% were currently unemployed and looking for work or volunteer positions. The majority of employed work in the private sector (33%). In general, the gay community had higher level of education than the lesbian community.



### Sexual Orientation

Sexual orientation in this research is defined as the emotional, intellectual, and physical attraction towards one gender or another. We have listed four categories, which are: lesbian, gay, bisexual, and queer or other. We found that 64% of our respondents identify as gay, 5% identify as lesbian, and 26% identify as bisexual. Less than 3%

identify as queer or had refused to answer. It is a given fact that most of the individuals currently out to LGBT organizations are gays.



The number of bisexual individuals is very high; however, it is worth noting that many people who identified themselves as bisexual did so because of their marital status, or because of the fear from the further segregation from the family.

### **Gender Identity**

Although only 10 individuals self-identify as transgender, 5 more individuals recognize their gender as being different than their sex. For the remainder of this report, in order to simplify reading, we will refer to all these individuals as trans, unless it is important to otherwise note the distinction. This is not a phenomenon unique to Kosovo, but rather a general reality of transgender communities.

Globally, it is difficult to estimate or map the number of transgender individuals.

An even larger number of individuals reported that they agree (4) or strongly agree (11) that they wish to change their gender or sex. Of these, 12 individuals did not identify as trans or as having a gender identity opposite to their assigned sex. It is important to note that not all of those who did identify differently than their sex, or as trans, reported wanting to medically adjust their gender/sex.

Thirteen who did not identify as trans or as having a gender identity opposite to their assigned sex also reported they strongly agree (7) or agree (21) with wishing to be more masculine or feminine, opposite of their sex. When asked about feeling and looking feminine or masculine, men reported a broader range, with an even higher number feeling feminine (31). Additionally, 16 males who did not identify as trans strongly disagreed (2) or disagreed (5) with feeling masculine. All trans women reported strongly feeling feminine. This data shows the broad range of genders within the LGBT community identities, and it appears some do not fully understand or recognize their gender, or fully understand the concept of gender identity.

Additionally, individuals who reported having a gender identity opposite to their assigned sex related their sexual orientation to their sex rather than their gender. While only 10% self-identified as trans, it could be estimated there are more of transgender respondents; as

defined by those who identify as a different sex than their gender along with those who strongly wish to change their sex/gender.

### **Transgender Realities**

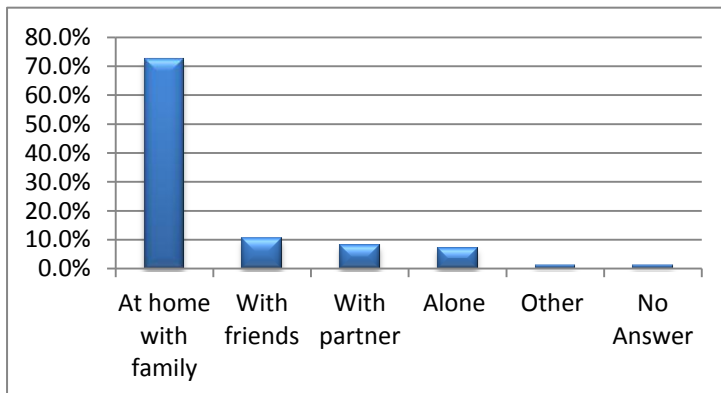
While 10 out of 98 respondents self-identified as transgender, 5 others saw their gender as being different than their sex. At the end of the survey, a series of questions was posed to transgender individuals only, asking about their more specific experiences. Of the 5 individuals who recognized their gender as being different than their sex, 2 opted to answer these questions. When asked if they sought medical services for being trans, all transgender male-to-female participants responded that they have not sought medical services, in contrast with 4 transgender female-to-male participants, 3 of whom have looked for medical services for trans persons. Common reasons for not seeking services were due to fear of negative reactions, not knowing where to seek services, or believing services do not exist. Many also stated that it is not possible to receive hormone replacement therapy, genital reconstructive surgery, or change personal identification documents in Kosovo. Only one individual indicated that they believed a person can receive hormone replacement therapy. Additionally, individuals reported having gone abroad to seek services, or wanting to go abroad. Yet, it is important to note that some individuals stated they are not currently seeking services, not do they want to. Similarly, all those who responded strongly agreed that more options for medical treatment, procedures to change documents,



gender identity inclusion in the law, public figures speaking up for trans individuals, a stronger justice system, training of public servants, and public awareness campaigns on trans issues and rights would have a positive impact on trans lives.

### **Social Situation**

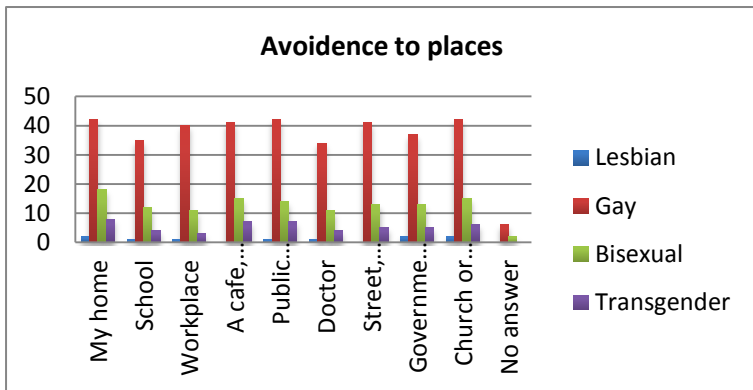
About 74% of respondents reported currently living at home with family, while 7% reported living with friends, 7% alone, 9% with a partner, and 1% with others. About 9% of participants have been kicked out of their homes due to their sexual orientation or gender identity; 3 were gay men, 2 were lesbians, and 2 were transgender. All 7 of these members of the LGBT community were allowed to go back home, but 4 of them were allowed to go back home under a certain condition.



In these cases, the respondents often stated that they were ‘caught’ with someone else rather than ‘coming out’ to their family members.

Comparatively, males had been kicked out of their homes at a higher rate than females.

It is highly concerning that, when asked if they avoid going to a variety of places out of fear of discrimination, harassment, or violence, the respondents' overwhelmingly common response was their home (74.5%), followed by church or mosque (62.2%), and public transport (61%). In regards to their home, 73.4% of those who reported living at home stated that they fear their home. Of those who feared home, 82.5% were currently living at home with family.



Further 78% of those individuals who feared home and lived at home reported that they were not students, so it is safe to assume that they are living at home full-time. This reflects the significant amount of

influence family has on LGBT individuals, as do the socioeconomic<sup>19</sup> forces.

Interestingly, male participants reported fearing public places at a higher rate than female participants; however, both feared home at approximately the same rate. One possible explanation for this is that more than half of female respondents (67%) came from Prishtina district.

In general, women in Kosovo are very often isolated and have little access to the “public space”. Cultural, religious, and gender norms very often limit the women in Kosovo, whereas the men have access to all public “spheres”. Hence, gay men often have more “freedom” and are able to move away from home to study in the capital.

More than 44% of respondents stated that they are in a heterosexual relationship in order to hide their sexual orientation. It is fairly common that gay and bisexual men choose partners of the opposite sex in order to hide their sexual orientation and to avoid suspicions from family, friends, and colleagues. 13 % of male participants answered that they are married to the opposite sex, while none of the female participants who identified as lesbians answered that they are married. This again indicates that the lesbians are in slightly better position socially or are keener to overcome the pressure, as their female social role is generally less important than male social role.

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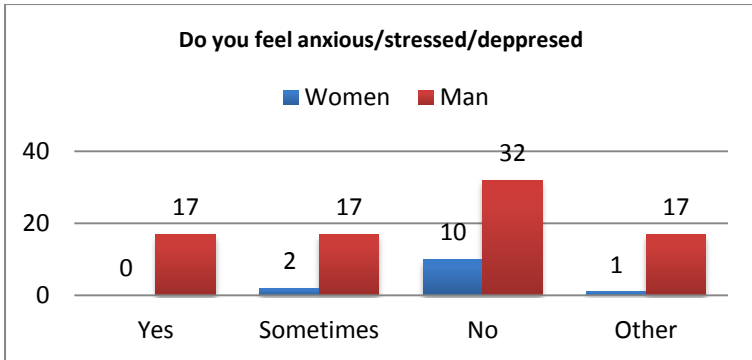
<sup>19</sup> Savić, Marija. *Invisible LGBT: Report on the position of the LGBT community in Kosovo*. Belgrade: Heartefact Fund, 2013.

Although the majority of older respondents stated being in heterosexual relationships to hide their true sexuality, this was not confined only to older participants. Least likely to claim that they have a heterosexual relationship in order to hide their true sexual orientation were the youngest respondents. Additionally, some community members have stated that, although they are presently in homosexual relationships, they plan to marry someone of the opposite sex in the future. This is much more common in the gay community rather than the lesbian community – in order to avoid confrontation regarding their sexual orientation, many gay men choose to marry a woman.

30% of male participants reported not being ‘out’ to anybody, while 92.3% of female participants reported being out to at least somebody. This indicates that women from the LGBT community are more open about their sexual orientation than men.

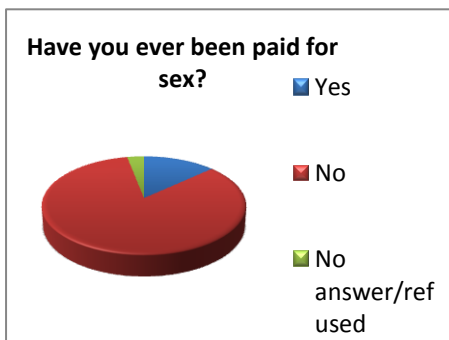
### **Mental Health**

Respondents were not asked about attempting suicide or having suicidal thoughts, but were rather asked about their level of anxiety and/or depression due to the fact that they are a part of the LGBT community. We learned that most of them do not feel any anxiety, stress, or depression, while some of them do feel the above mentioned symptoms sometimes. It is important to mention that the number of men who responded yes is higher than women, but please note this is because there were more male respondents than female.



Almost 50% of respondents claimed that they are currently trying to leave Kosovo or seek asylum because of their sexual orientation or gender identity, while 60% stated they have thought about it or have tried in the past. This also suggests that the majority of the LGBT community experience some kind of stress related to living in a homophobic and transphobic country.

Although the reason was not asked or stated, almost 20% reported having paid for sex (87% of them were male, 2% female, and 8%



trans), while 13% reported that they themselves had received payment for sex, which might be an indicator that sexually transmitted diseases are higher within the

gay community than in the lesbian community. Not being able to meet in safe spaces, many gay men from the community seek sex partners in the so called “cruising areas” – which very often increases the chances to be attacked by individuals who share homophobic values or views. Basic healthcare and mental healthcare providers are rarely sensitive or trained for dealing with LGBT issues and in many cases, medical professionals have had a biased and discriminatory approach. For the moment, there is no identified health or mental health care at all for transgender people.

### **Alcohol and Drug Abuse**

Various international researches show that members of the LGBT community are more prone to alcohol and drug abuse than are their heterosexual peers. Also, our research shows that the LGBT community in Kosovo, for the most part, indulges in overconsumption, mainly of alcohol. There is no research that we can use for comparison, to assess whether alcohol and drugs are consumed at a higher rate in the LGBT community or the heterosexual community in Kosovo, but the main reasons for over consuming alcohol are related to deep stress and anxiety and social isolation.

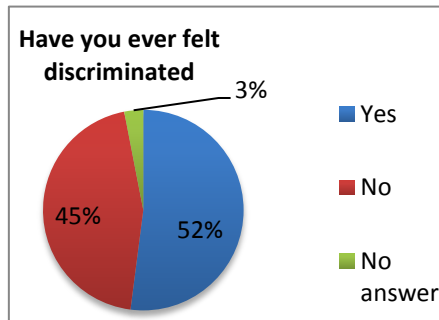
Several options were given when it comes to substances classified as drugs, among them cocaine, ecstasy, heroin, LSD, marijuana and, most commonly, hashish. 16.2 % of female respondents answered that they consume alcohol a few times a week, while 18.8 % of male respondents consume alcohol several time a week. 7 % of female respondents consume hashish several times a week, compared to 15 %

of male respondents. 47% of male respondents have tried drugs such as heroin, ecstasy, and heroin previously, in comparison to 30% of female respondents.

### **Rights Violations**

Participants were explicitly familiarized with the definition of discrimination, harassment, and violence by the interviewer; however, we believe that many participants did not have a sufficiently comprehensive understanding, or did not recognize each incident as such. When such human rights violations are part of an everyday reality, they

become normalized and often invisible to those who experience them.



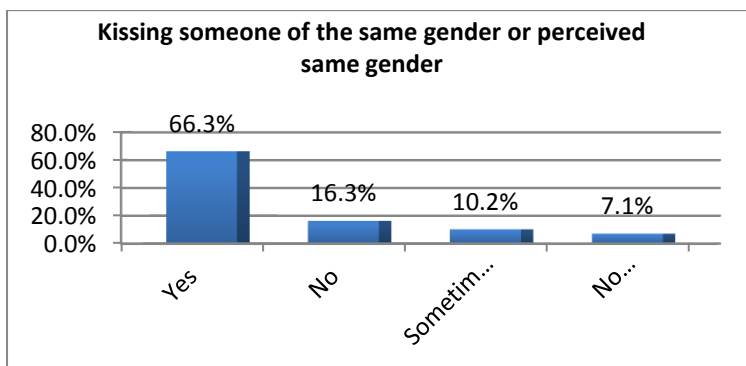
### **Discrimination**

All respondents overwhelmingly agreed that gay men or trans individuals are the most discriminated group in the society; this might be because most of the respondents were men, but it can also be due to the femininity that they inline with patriarchal society.

It is important to note that the fear of discrimination is very high in the community, where 65% responded that they are afraid of being

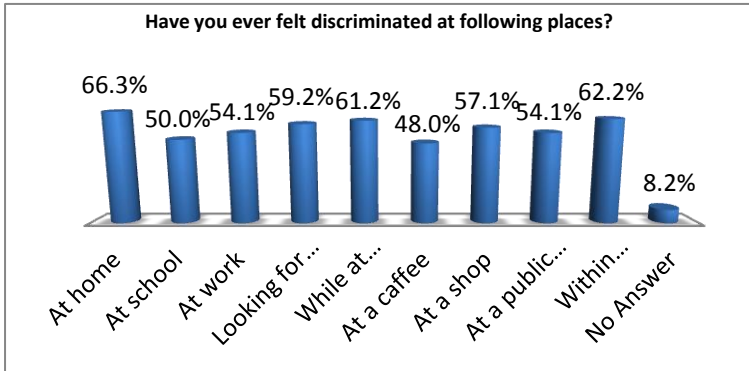
discriminated. However, the number of those who were actually discriminated is slightly lower at 53%.

This indicates that, even though a person has not been a victim of discrimination, they still live in constant fear that it might happen. Furthermore, 66% have said that they would avoid kissing someone of the same gender in public due to the fear of discrimination.



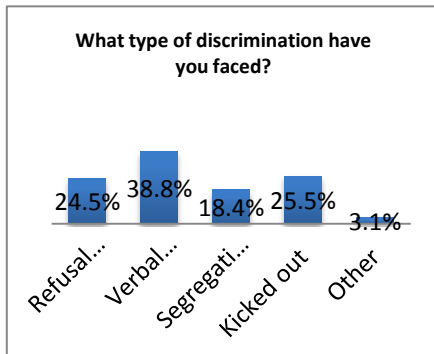
Discrimination happens in almost every sphere of people's life. Following question clearly shows that discrimination for LGBT member has mostly happened at home and in coffee/restaurants, both of which scored higher than 60%. Discrimination is becoming more widespread at school with 50% participants reporting as having experienced it. One assumption we can make is that discrimination in schools increases with higher visibility of the LGBT community, but it is also due to the fact that more and more youth LGBT members are coming out.





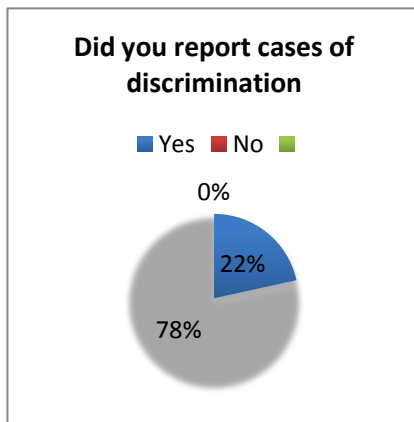
It is worth mentioning that there are many individuals (around 68%) who have stated that they have felt discriminated within the LGBT community. The level of discrimination is also high at public institutions (around 54%), but this does not mean that public institutions have a discriminatory attitude towards the LGBT community. Rather, it shows that, most commonly, public institutions are not even aware that they are serving a member of the LGBT community.

We have asked the respondents about the type of discrimination they have faced, and according to our data, the LGBT community mostly faces verbal abuse with (38.8%),



followed by being kicked out of places (25.5%), while refusal of service is also high (24.5%)

For the question if the respondents have reported cases of discrimination, 78% have answered that they have not reported cases, while only 22% have reported them.



We have further asked those who did not report to specify why they did not. Most of the respondents (84) have answered that they believe that “nothing would happen”, 74%

have answered that they believe it is “not worth reporting”. Interestingly, 43% of the respondents have answered “Fear of the offender” as a reason to not report cases.

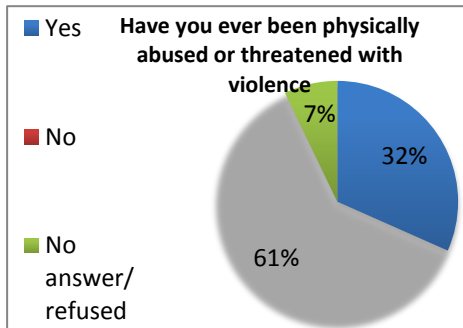
In general, it appears that most reasons why cases are not reported are due to the lack of trust in institutions, and due to the fact that the perpetrator was a family member.

When asked for the reasons due to which an individual did not report the case when they experienced discrimination, violence, or harassment, the majority of the respondents claimed that ‘nothing would happen’, that it is ‘not worth reporting- it happens all the time’, or ‘not serious enough’, ‘did not want to reveal my sexual orientation or gender identity’.

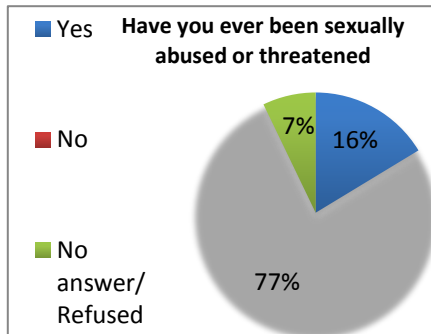
## Violence

Violence is an ongoing challenge that members of the LGBT community face in their everyday life. We have asked the respondents if they have ever been physically abused or threatened with violence.

The survey shows that 32% of the respondents have been physically abused/threatened. This is a very high number, especially considering that we did not have full access to all individuals who are part of the LGBT community, many of whom might be abused/threatened and might not have any access to LGBT organizations.

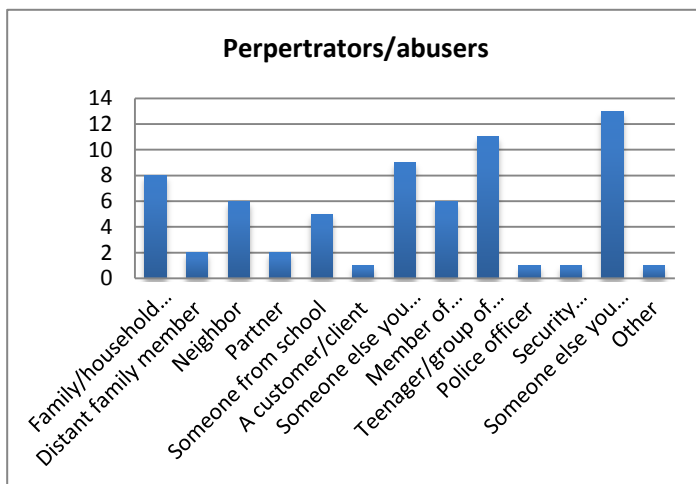


LGBT community does not only face physical abuse, but also faces sexual abuse, with 16% of the respondents stating that they have faced sexual abuse/threats. This is very alarming considering the small number of only 98 respondents of only 98 who participated in the survey.



The abuse mostly takes place in the street, perpetrated either by a teenager/group of teenagers (11%), or by someone they don't know

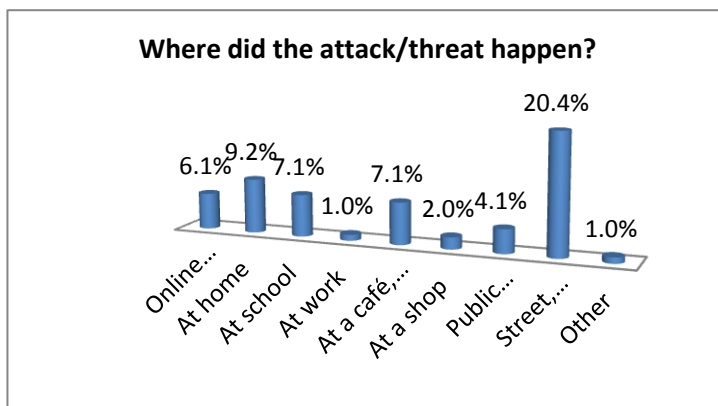
(13%), and/or by someone else they know (9%). The violence that LGBT community faces is caused by different individuals/groups; usually, those who were abusive towards LGBT members are not able to be identified (40%). It is alarming to know that teenagers or group of teenagers are the second most frequent group abusive towards someone they don't know (13%). Six individuals (6.1%) have said that they have been physically abused/threatened by members of



extremist/radical groups. During this survey, the family members who have been abusive towards the LGBT community came in fourth place, as opposed to the survey that was administrated in 2014, when it was the most common case.

According to the respondents, the following chart shows the places where the abuse mostly has taken place. The highest percentage of abuse occurs in the streets, park, or other public area, with 35%. We can make the assumption that streets/parks or other public areas are high-risk since many gay men use them as a cruising area, where the risk of various kinds of abuse is higher. It is important to mention that most cases of abuse in parks or other public areas were all reported by either gay men, bisexual men, or male-to-female transgender persons.

It is worrying that 9% of the respondents have reported that the abuse has happened at home. The LGBT community is neither safe at home or in public. Cases where a person is abused in the park, might lead to that person refraining from going home due to the fear of further abuse.



School environment is not a safe place for LGBT individuals, and for many school represents a constant fear; 7% of participants from the LGBT community have faced discrimination in the school environment, while many others faces cyber bullying on a daily basis.

### **Knowledge of Rights & Reporting of Cases**

More than 81% of respondents were aware that the law in Kosovo protects individuals against discrimination based on sexual orientation, since both the Constitution of the Republic of Kosovo and the Law on the Protection against Discrimination both prohibit discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation, on a variety of

levels<sup>20</sup>. However, only 70% of the respondents were aware that the new Law on Protection against Discrimination includes gender identity as a ground for protection against discrimination. Article 19 and Article 22 of the Constitution of the Republic of Kosovo give precedence to a variety of international human rights instruments and mechanism as over seeing the constitution of Kosovo, such as the European Convention on Human Rights and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Additionally, they state that human rights shall be interpreted in a manner consistent with the European Court of Human Rights.<sup>21</sup> The LGBT community has a particular precedence in this regard since the ECHR has already recognized LGBT rights in numerous aspects of life, but specifically on the grounds of gender identity.<sup>22</sup>

Despite the knowledge of being protected by the law, LGBT people did not report cases of the violations they experienced. The fact that witnesses are afraid to take the stand in Kosovo courts speaks volumes about the inadequacy of the current program to guarantee protection to the witnesses.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Article 24.2, Constitution of the Republic of Kosovo

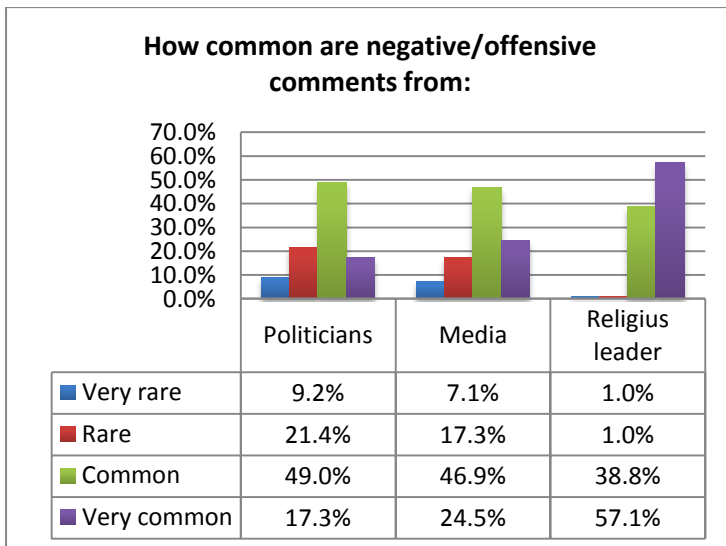
<sup>21</sup> Article 53, Constitution of the Republic of Kosovo

<sup>22</sup> GI ECHR

<sup>23</sup> Gall, L. (2014). *A Challenge for Kosovo: Justice for All*. New York City: Human Rights Watch.

### **LGBT perception of media, politicians, and religious leaders**

The chart below clearly shows that the LGBT community has little trust in the public media and the media are very often responsible for allowing or spreading negative and/or offensive comments towards the LGBT community. More than 57% of the respondents believe that the negative and/or offensive comments are mostly made by religious leaders. According to the respondents, politicians also use or make negative or offensive comments at around 25%, which is slightly lower than religious leaders. It is important to mention that the questions are related to all politicians and not the current government. However, we have failed to ask the question of whether the politicians talk about the LGBT community at all, which is a weakness for this survey.

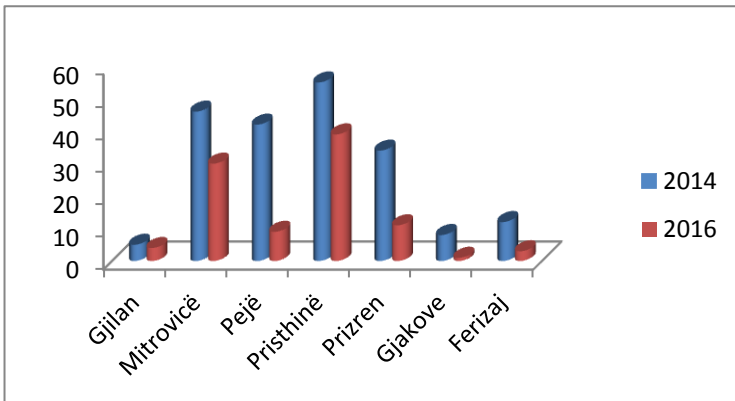


## **Comparison of Data 2014 - 2016**



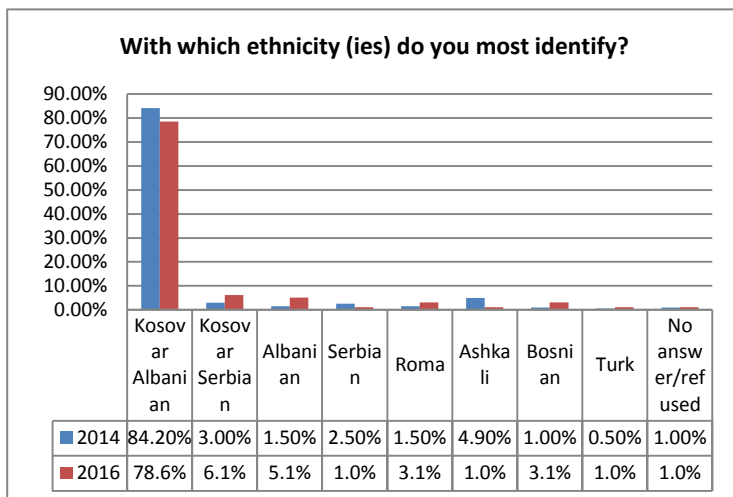
## Basic Demographics

The surveys were administered in the largest cities of Kosovo. The cities where the highest number of interviews were conducted were Prishtina, Mitrovica, and Prizren, but this does not necessary mean that the number of members of the LGBT community in these cities is higher than elsewhere. During the first survey that was administered in 2014, QESH was able to interview 203 members of the LGBT community, but for the second survey in 2016, QESH was able to interview only 98 persons. The major reason for the lower number of interviews in the second survey was the illegal migration wave during 2014 and 2015<sup>24</sup>, where a large number of Kosovo's population migrated to EU countries, and members of the LGBT community were also among them. The age of the participants in both surveys is basically the same, with a slight difference on the second survey where one member is 74 years of age. The largest demographic of the sample was aged between 19 and 30 in both surveys.



<sup>24</sup> Study: An overview of migrations of Kosovars into the EU: Migration as a Multifaceted Phenomenon - INDEP

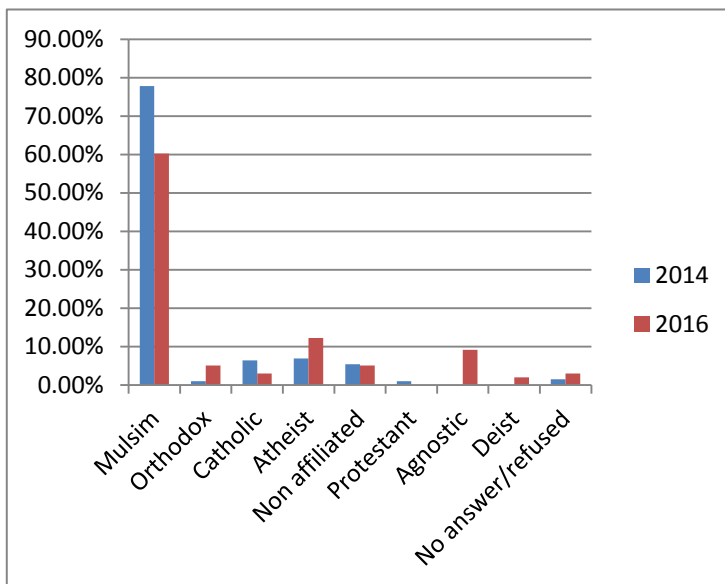
Similar to Kosovo's population demographics, the majority of respondents identified as Kosovar Albanian or Albanian, while we have a slight difference between the two surveys in terms of respondents identifying as Serbian, Bosnian, Roma, Ashkali or Turkish, 13% in the first survey 16% in the second.



However, when it comes to religion there is a greater difference, as in the second survey many more respondents than in the first survey state that they identify as atheist, while fewer respondents identify as Catholic and none of them identify as Protestant. This representation shows that the sample population is completely different than the general demographics.<sup>25</sup>

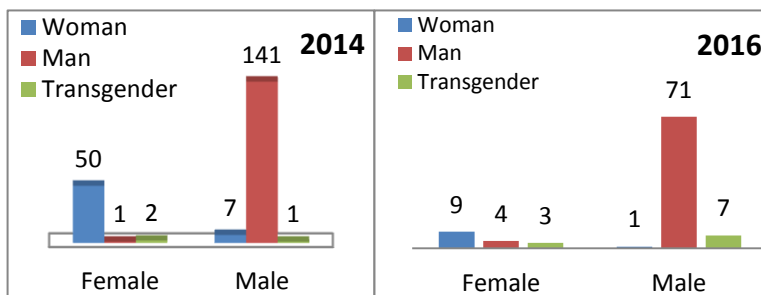
<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

Furthermore, in the second survey we had respondents who identify as agnostic and deist, something that was not seen in the first survey.



In order for this research to be accurate, we have asked our respondents questions related to their self-identification regarding sex and gender, where we have a difference in percentages: 26% in the first survey, and in the second survey there were 13% individuals who identified their sex as female. However, when we asked the question about gender, the differences are higher: in the first survey, 28% of the respondents self-identified as women, 70% as men, and 2% as transgender, while in the second survey 13% of the respondents identified as women, 75% as men, 10% identified as transgender, and 2% refused to answer the question about their gender. During the second survey, we could see that more respondents identify themselves as transgender and are accepting their gender identity;

however, we can also see that 2% of the respondents still do not want to say or are unsure what their gender identity is.

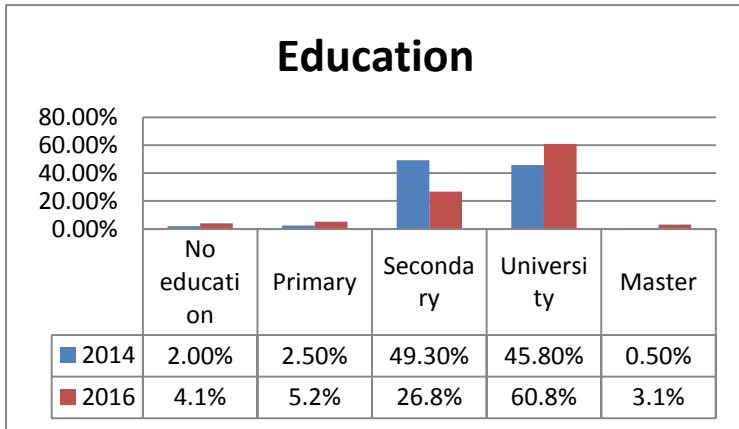


## Education

In the field of education, we see a small difference between the two surveys. Less than 5% of the respondents claim not to have any education in both surveys, but we see the difference at the university level: in the first survey, 54% of the respondents claimed to have a university degree or are finishing university at the moment, while in the second survey the percentage is higher (60%). As mentioned above, in comparison to the population demographics, the sample population has obtained significantly higher levels of education, for both male and female participants.<sup>26</sup> Additionally, when we observe the statistics on which gender has obtained higher education, we see that, during the first survey, female participants have obtained higher education in comparison to male participants, but this is not the case in the second survey where male participants were the ones who more

<sup>26</sup> Republic of Kosovo Agency of Statistics. *Kosovo Population and Housing Census 2011- Final Results: Quarterly Report*

frequently had university level education, and of the 3.6% of respondents who stated to have obtained a masters level education, all of them are male. However, it is also important to mention that all of the respondents who have primary or no education are male; female participants have at least secondary or university education.



Furthermore, we also have a difference in the employment field, from 46.7% in the first survey, the number of respondents who are currently gainfully employed has increased to 57.7%, while the unemployment percentage has decreased by 8.4%.

### **Sexual Orientation**

Sexual orientation in this research is defined as the emotional, intellectual, and physical attraction towards one gender or another. We have listed four categories, which are: lesbian, gay, bisexual, and queer or other. There is a difference in percentages between the first and second survey. In the second survey we see a higher number of respondents who identify as gay (64%), only 5% as lesbian, 26%

identify as bisexual, and less than 3% of the respondents identify as queer or other; in the first survey, we had a greater number of lesbian respondents (18%), 49% were gay, 31% were bisexual, and less than 2% were queer or other. This furthers the conclusion that the gay community is more out to the LGBT organizations; however, this fact can not be taken into consideration when we talk about the number of gays and lesbians, because lesbians are more prone to avoid going to LGBT organizations and since, in the general population, women have less freedom from their families.

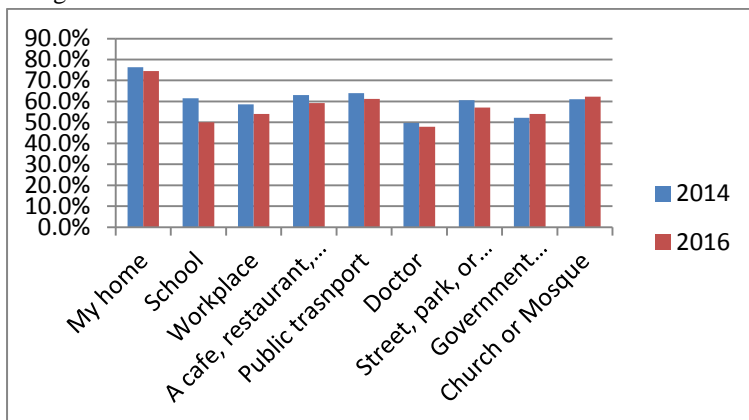
### **Gender Identity**

Gender identity has been one of the challenges in both surveys. Although a very small number of individuals identify themselves as transgender, there are individuals who recognize their gender as being different from their sex. Furthermore, a larger number of individuals identified as transgender in the second survey, which shows that the transgender community has started to become educated and empowered in the last two years. As a result of that, from three individuals who identified themselves as transgender in the first survey, the number has increased to 10 in the second survey. This is not a phenomenon unique to Kosovo, but rather a general reality of transgender communities. Globally, it is difficult to estimate or map the number of transgender individuals.

Additionally, when we asked the question whether they wish to change their gender or sex, 9 individuals agreed in the first survey and 8 individuals strongly agreed, while in the second survey 4 responded that they agree with wishing to change their gender or sex, and 11 responded that they strongly agree. We can see that, in the second survey, there are fewer participants who wish to change their gender or sex while not identifying as transgender, but the number of individuals who identify themselves as transgender is higher.

## Social Situation

In this section, we see a very slight difference between two surveys. However, when we asked the question of whether the respondents have ever been kicked out of home, 13% responded affirmatively in the first survey, while the number has decreased to 9% in the second survey. When asked if they were allowed to go back, in the first survey only 85% of persons who were kicked out of home responded that they were allowed back, but under certain conditions, while in the second survey all of them were allowed back home, with conditions. Even if the question was not on the questionnaire, the interviewers asked about the conditions they had to fulfill in order to go back home, and most of the participants answered that they had to get married to the opposite sex, and/or not do such “a thing” anymore, and change their sexual orientation.



The most concerning fact that was extracted from these two surveys was the fact that, when we asked whether the respondents avoid going to a variety of places out of fear of discrimination, harassment, or violence, the respondents marked home as one of the most places they fear to go in both surveys, with a slight difference: 76.4% on the first survey, and 74.5% on the second one, while the second and third place vary from one survey to the other. The concern of these responses is

that 82.5% of those who marked home as the place they mostly fear to go, actually live at home with their families.

Worth mentioning for this section is that the number of male participants who are out at least to somebody has decreased from 76% in the first survey to 70% in the second survey; the same is true for female participants: 100% of female participants in the first survey claimed to be out to at least somebody, as opposed to 92% in the second survey. Moreover, when asked the question of being out publicly, 3 responded that they are publicly out. However, while in the first survey there were 2 lesbian participants and only one gay man who stated that they are publicly out, in the second survey there were 2 publicly out gay men and only one lesbian.

### **Alcohol and Drug Abuse**

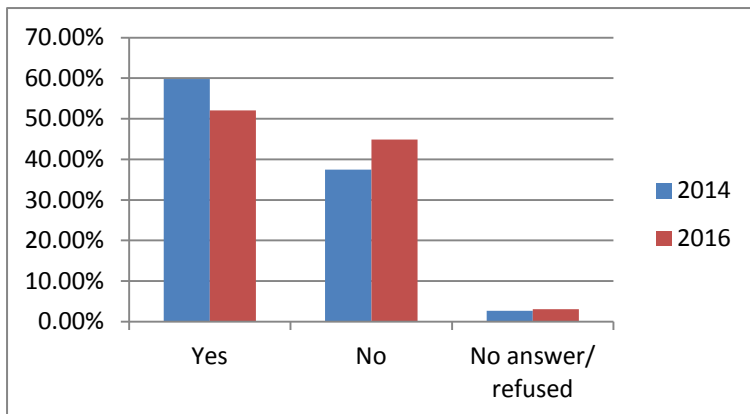
In the Alcohol and Drug Abuse section, respondents were asked if they use alcohol and drugs and several options were given where the most common drug that the sample population uses is marijuana/hashish. Regarding the alcohol, in the first survey we have a higher percentage of consumption of alcohol: 22% of female participants responded that they consume alcohol several times a week, in comparison to 28.4% of male respondents; in the second survey, the number decreases to 16.2% of female participants who consume alcohol several times a week, and 18.8% male participants.

On the other hand, regarding the more dangerous drugs, during the first survey all respondents stated that they have tried drugs such as heroin, ecstasy, and cocaine at some point of their life, while less than 50% of the respondents stated to have tried such drugs during the second survey.



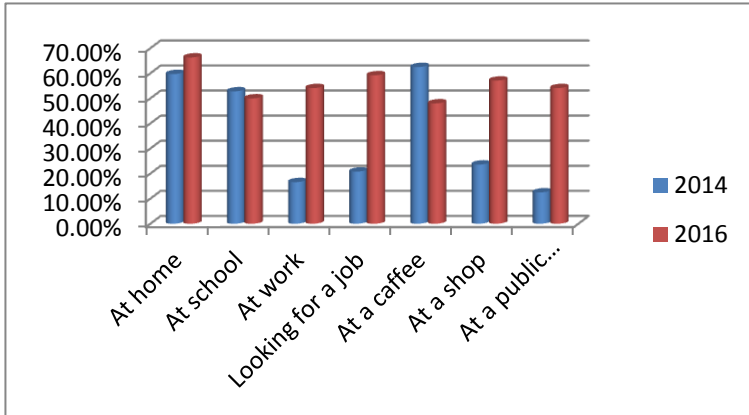
## Discrimination

Fear of discrimination is very high in both surveys, even among the respondents who never faced discrimination of any kind. In the first survey, 65% of participants said that they are afraid of being

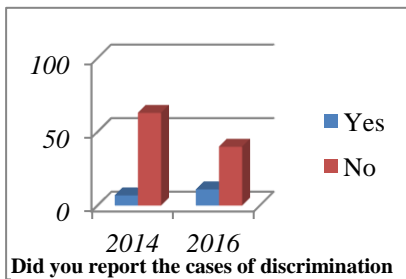


discriminated, with only 60% of them having been discriminated at least once in their lifetime; in the second survey, also 65% of the respondents said they fear being discriminated, while the percentage of people who actually experienced discrimination fell under 53%. This shows that with the increase of visibility of the LGBT community, the fear of being discriminated has increased among the sample population.

Further on, when we asked whether they would avoid kissing someone of the same gender in public, 73% of the respondents said that they would not do that in the first survey, while a lower percentage (66%) of participants responded the same to the abovementioned question.



As mentioned above, discrimination happens in almost every sphere of life. When respondents were asked where they fear discrimination the most, over 60% cited home as the most discriminatory place in both surveys, while other places differ from the first and second survey. Worth mentioning is that more than 50% of the respondents have also stated that they felt discriminated at school: in the first survey, we have 52% who marked school as one of the places they have been discriminated, while on the second survey the percentage decreases to 50%. While we look at the chart, we can see that the

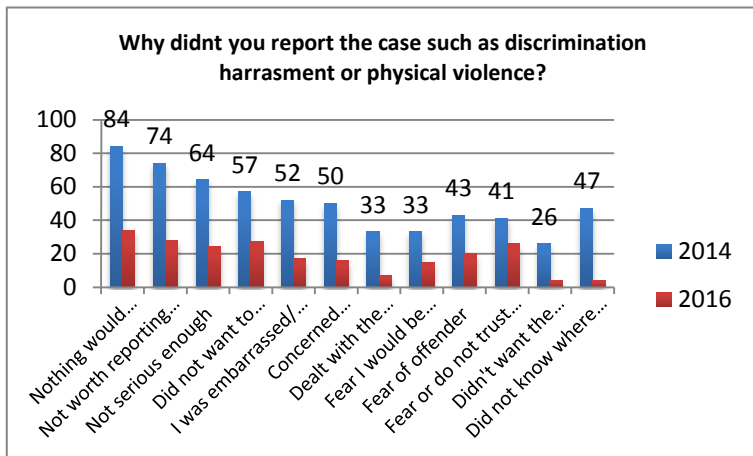


discrimination towards the LGBT community has increased drastically in the second survey in places such as work, while looking for a job, at a shop, and at public institutions (police, bank, government etc.), which is a very concerning fact.

However, this does not mean that public institutions have a discriminatory attitude towards LGBT community, but rather it shows that, most of the time, public institutions are not even aware that they are serving a member of the LGBT community.

As for the question if the respondents have reported cases of discrimination, in the first survey 87% have answered that they have not reported these cases, while only 7% have. In the second survey, 78% answered that they did not report these cases, while 22% did report these cases. We can see that members of the LGBT community have started to report cases of discrimination to the relevant institutions since the first survey that was administered in 2014.

We have further asked those who did not report to specify why they did not, and most of the respondents (84% in the first survey and 67% in the second)

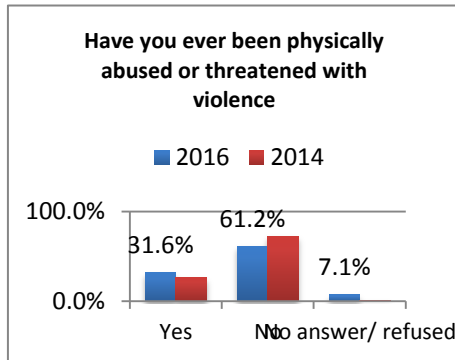


**Please note that this chart shows the total number of respondents, which means that the number of respondents in the second survey is much lower.**

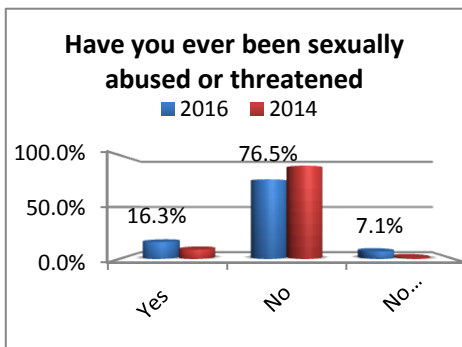
in the second) have answered that they believe “nothing would happen”, while 74% in both surveys also said that it was “not worth reporting” these cases.

## Violence

Violence is an ongoing challenge that members of the LGBT community face in their everyday life. We have asked the participants if they have ever been physically abused or threatened with violence; in the first survey, 27% of the participants stated that they have been physically abused/threatened, while in the second survey the number is higher at 32%.

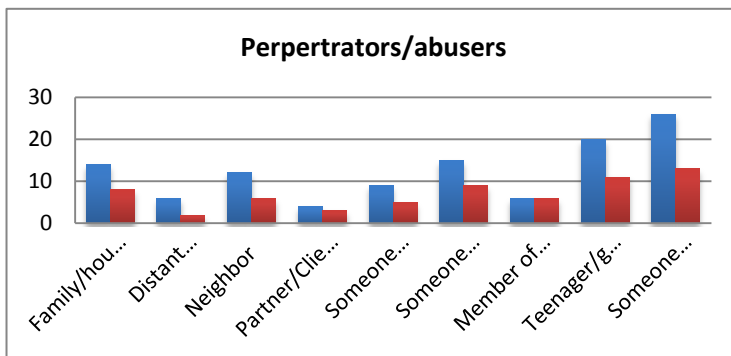


LGBT community does not only face physical abuse, but also sexual abuse; in the first survey, 9% of the participants stated that they have faced sexual abuse/threat,

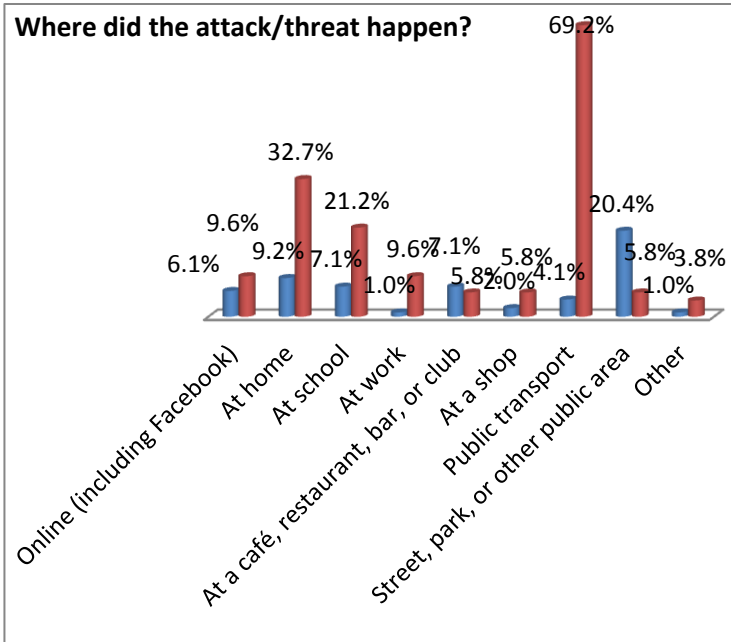


while in the second survey the number is much higher at 16%. This clearly shows that as the higher the visibility of a community, the more discriminated, violated, and threatened it is.

In the first survey, the participants stated that the place they mostly faced abuse was in their house (home) or around their house, either by immediate family members (26%) or by distant family members (11%), which was an alarming fact. In the second survey, the community faced violence mostly by someone they don't know (13%) or from a teenager/group of teenagers (11%), while the family came in fourth with 8.1%.

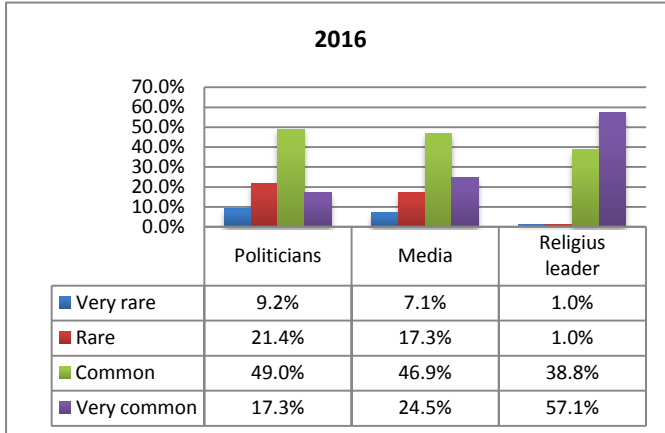
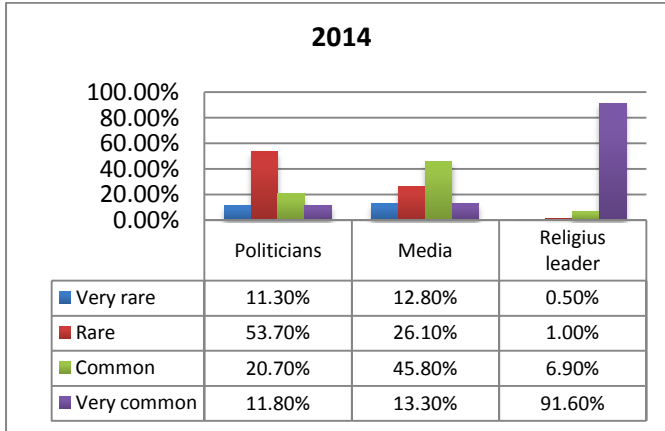


Furthermore, we have asked the participants about where the attack/threat happened. In both surveys, the respondents stated that the places where abuse mostly has taken place were the streets, parks, and other public areas, 42% in the first survey and 35% in the second survey. The worrying part of this data is the fact that 10% of the participants in the first survey and 9% in the second stated that they have faced violence in their home. Since there were 203 respondents in the first survey, we can clearly see that more than 20 members of the LGBT community have faced violence in their own home, from their family members.



## LGBT perception of media, politicians, and religious leaders

When it comes to negative comments, the participants have stated in both surveys that the most negative comments come from religious leaders (91% in the first survey and 57% in the second).



## Conclusion

The major objective of this survey was to reveal the experiences of discrimination, violence, and stigmatization of the LGBT community in Kosovo. Although it is evident from those interviewed that some positive changes have been made in the past two years, the situation of the LGBT community in Kosovo is still a challenging topic to work on. Accordingly, we can draw the following conclusions:

- Although positive changes have been made during these two years, the LGBT community continues to face discrimination, violence, and stigmatization in their everyday life.
- Reaching out to the community has been one of the main challenges of this survey, but the most concerning part is that female participation in both surveys has been very low, which clearly shows that women in Kosovo, even as part of the LGBT community, have limited access to the “public sphere” in comparison to men.
- The surveys show that members of the LGBT community attend higher education at a higher percentage than the general demographics in Kosovo.
- Many participants still have problems with identifying themselves; there were participants who did not identify as transgender but who said that they would like to be more feminine/masculine, and a few even responded that they wish to change their gender/sex.
- When it comes to identification, the other problem is that some participants were married to partners of the opposite sex but wanted to be identified as gay, which shows that many gay men were forced to get married in order to hide their sexual orientation and/or gender identity.



- A considerable number of participants said that they have been kicked out of their home because their family found out they were members of the LGBT community; however, they were allowed to go back if agreed to change their sexual orientation/gender identity, and/or get married to the opposite sex.
- One of the most concerning facts in this survey is that a majority of members of the LGBT community live at home with their family, but almost all of them said that one of the places they mostly fear they would be discriminated, violated, or harassed at is their home.
- Violence is also one of the most concerning facts in this survey: 1/3 of the participants of this survey have experienced violence/threat of violence and/or sexual abuse. What is most concerning in this sector is that a considerable number of these cases have happened at their homes, by members of their close family and/or extended family such as uncles and/or cousins.
- Discrimination and violence is not always seen as a case by the LGBT community due to the intensity of these cases happening in their everyday life, where these cases become seen as normal.
- Reporting cases of discrimination is a very challenging issue the LGBT organizations face when working directly with the community. Almost all cases of discrimination, violence, and sexual abuse are not reported by the community due to fear or distrust in the institutions. Other reasons are that the community doesn't believe something would happen with the case, and also that they do not want the perpetrator to get in trouble, which is a typical reason when the case happens at home by members of the family.
- One of the reasons that the community does not want to report such cases perpetrated by the members of their family is that they would have to leave home due to fear of further violence, and

Kosovo government or civil society do not provide shelter for members of the LGBT community.

- Surprisingly, in terms of consumption of alcohol and drugs in comparison to international demographics, members of the LGBT community in Kosovo are not as regular consumers of drugs and alcohol as in the other advanced countries.
- In 2014 and 2015 a concerning number of Kosovo's population left Kosovo in search of a better life in Europe, and among them members of the LGBT community. This fact can be seen best in the second survey. Most of the members of the LGBT community answered "yes" to the question if they wish to leave Kosovo.
- Members of the LGBT community believe that the most hate speech comes from the religious leaders; the second is media and lastly politicians.

### **Recommendations**

Based on the conclusions, QESh would like to make the following recommendations:

- Awareness-raising campaigns regarding the rights of LGBT people in Kosovo need to be carried out to educate the general population as well as the members of the LGBT community who have no access to LGBT organizations.
- Awareness-raising campaigns and manuals should be carried out on how to report cases of discrimination, violence, and harassment to the relevant institutions.
- Rule of Law institutions should properly classify when accepting cases of discrimination against the LGBT community.

- Ombudsperson institution should take cases of discrimination coming from the LGBT community more seriously and be keener on dealing with such cases.
- Ministries need to adapt policies, manuals, and curricula to address the needs of the LGBT community in Kosovo.
- LGBT organizations and other human rights organizations need to continue the work on creating a better platform for women in Kosovo to have better opportunities in the “public sphere”.
- Families of LGBT need to be addressed as many LGBT members have their first cases of violence and harassment within their home.
- As seen in the survey, a shelter for the LGBT community is essential as cases of violence from their families are very common, and when such cases happen, members of the LGBT community have to continue facing such violence in their everyday life, without having a choice to leave. More so, there are cases of LGBT members being forced to marry partners of the opposite sex and live a double life in order to return home because they have nowhere else to go.

## **Glossary of Terms**

### Definition of Terms

**Sex** - refers to a person’s biological status and is typically categorized as male, female, or intersex

**Gender** - refers to the attitudes, feelings, and behaviors that a given culture associates with a person’s biological sex. Behavior that is compatible with cultural expectations is referred to as gender-

normative; behaviors that are viewed as incompatible with these expectations constitute gender non-conformity.

**Gender identity** - refers to “one’s sense of oneself as male, female, or transgender” When one’s gender identity and biological sex are not congruent, the individual may identify as transsexual or as another transgender category

**Gender expression** - refers to the “...way in which a person acts to communicate gender within a given culture; for example, in terms of clothing, communication patterns and interests. A person’s gender expression may or may not be consistent with socially prescribed gender roles, and may or may not reflect his or her gender identity” (American Psychological Association)

**Sexual orientation** - refers to the sex of those to whom one is sexually and romantically attracted. Categories of sexual orientation typically have included attraction to members of one’s own sex (gay men or lesbians), attraction to members of the other sex (heterosexuals), and attraction to members of both sexes (bisexuals).

**Homosexual** - A clinical term for people who are attracted to members of the same sex. Some people find this term offensive.

**Bisexual** - A person who is attracted to both people of their own gender and another gender. Also called “bi”.

**Lesbian:** A woman who is attracted to other women.

**Heterosexual:** A person who is only attracted to members of the opposite sex. Also called “straight.”

**Gay:** A person who is attracted to members of the same sex. Although it can be used for any sex (e.g. gay man, gay woman, gay person), “lesbian” is sometimes the preferred term for women who are attracted to women.

**Discrimination** – means someone who is treated less favorably because of a specific personal feature such as gender identity or sexual orientation.

**Harassment-** is offensive behavior from someone such as name-calling or ridicule but does not involve violence or threats of violence.

**Homophobia:** A range of negative attitudes and feelings toward homosexuality or people who are identified or perceived as being lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender (LGBT). It can be expressed as antipathy, contempt, prejudice, aversion, or hatred, may be based on irrational fear, and is sometimes related to religious and cultural beliefs.

**Transphobia:** The fear or hatred of transgender people or gender non-conforming behavior. Like biphobia, transphobia can also exist among lesbian, gay, and bisexual people as well as among heterosexual people.

**LGBT-** The umbrella term for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender.

**Queer:** 1) An umbrella term sometimes used by LGBTQ people to refer to the entire LGBT community. 2) An alternative that some people use to "queer" the idea of the labels and categories such as lesbian, gay, bisexual, etc.

**Trans:** shorthand term for a variety of transgender identities.

**Transgender-** literally "across gender"; sometimes interpreted as "beyond gender"; a community-based term that describes a wide variety of cross-gender behaviors and identities. This is not a diagnostic term, and does not imply a medical or psychological condition. Avoid using this term as a noun: a person is not "a transgender"; they may be a transgender person.

**Transsexual** - a medical term applied to individuals who seek hormonal (and often, but not always) surgical treatment to modify their bodies so they may live full time as members of the sex category opposite to their birth-assigned sex (including legal status). Some individuals who have completed their medical transition prefer not to use this term as a self-referent. Avoid using this term as a noun: a person is not "a transsexual"; they may be a transsexual person.

**Intersex** - is a general term used for a variety of conditions in which a person is born with a reproductive or sexual anatomy that doesn't seem to fit the typical definitions of female or male.

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