

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

2018 Research



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LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL,
TRANSGENDER AND INTERSEX
EMPLOYEES IN PUBLIC SECTOR
IN TURKEY
2018 RESEARCH**

Prepared by

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Editorship

Murat Köylü



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Friedrich Naumann
STIFTUNG **FÜR DIE FREIHEIT**



SWEDEN

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CHAPTER 1

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT



As Kaos GL Association, we care about lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and intersex (LGBTI) individuals in Turkey and their labor conditions. As the European Court of Human Rights has stated numerous times, the enjoyment of economic rights has effects that transcend the area of labor and paves the way for the enjoyment of other rights such as housing, health, education, expression and participation in the public sphere. The Court also underlines that the level of socialization in the workplace defines a person's social world and shapes their private life. In that sense, research such as you are about to read is important to be aware of the discrimination and exclusion that LGBTI employees experience in the labor market, in order to render them equal and free to access their rights. Problems and demands for solutions that the research reveals are keys to creating new policies for social inclusion that are sensitive to LGBTI individuals, both in the private and public sectors. A labor market that includes LGBTI individuals in the labor force is not only critical for private and public institutions to exercise universal human rights but is also in line with goals like employee efficiency, peace in the workplace and competition.

In order to contribute to this framework, we have conducted research on LGBTI employees in these two sectors since 2015. We are thankful to Prof. Dr. Melek Göregenli for creating the survey and her analysis and comments that demonstrate the academic value of the study. We should also thank Prof. Dr. Mary Lou O'Neil, Dr. Reyda Ergün, Selam Değirmenci and Doğanca Erkenel from the Kadir Has University Gender and Women Studies Research Center that began cooperating with Kaos GL in 2018 for this research. We hope to have a long and fruitful cooperation. We would like to thank Friedrich Nauman Foundation for their support and their partnership in overcoming every obstacle we encountered in order to conduct the study. And of course, we owe a great debt of gratitude to all lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and intersex individuals that participated our survey and shared their thoughts and experiences.

We hope that these efforts would contribute to the fight for a world where every individual, including LGBTIs, can exercise their full and equal rights.

Murat Köylü, Kaos GL

CHAPTER 2

FOREWORD



The Project titled The Situation of LGBTI Employees in the Public Sector in Turkey carried on by Kaos GL Association was conducted in 2018 in cooperation with the Kadir Has University Gender and Women Studies Research Center. We are proud to be a part of this project and hope it will be successful in the long term, together with the research on private sector employees. We believe such research creates a data pool that will feed academic research and policies regarding rights movements and LGBTI rights advocacy. We value the importance of the relationship between academia and activism the academy's role and responsibility as an important part of democratic society in its struggle against discrimination.

Compared to the 80 public worker LGBTIs that participated in the research in 2017, this year we had 89 employees. The number of public officials remained the same with 2017, the number of contracted personnel increased from 14% to 25% in 2018. The rate of subcontracted employees decreased by 9% in the same period.

As was the case last year, our sample consisted mainly of employees in education, the academy and health sectors. Similar to 2017, 55% of the employees declared their gender identity as man and 60% their sexual orientation as gay. Our sample was not as diverse as we would have liked. We could not reach any employees who identified as intersex.

In terms of positions of the participants, there was an increase in mid-level executives and experienced officials from 2017 to 2018. High level executives that were not represented last year, are in the sample in 2018. In terms of duration of work, the last two year's did not show any significant difference.

To the question regarding the disclosure of sexual identity in the workplace 39% replied as partially disclosed the highest percentage. This year we had fewer completely undisclosed participants (36%) but the rate is still higher than 1/3. Eighteen percent declared that they are not open in their identities, but that people probably guess it. Therefore we understand that more than half of the sample is not disclosed in their workplaces. In fact only 7% declared being completely open in their identities. Compared to 22% in this year's private sector report, LGBTI workers face bigger visibility problems in the public sector.

Examining data regarding support and solidarity mechanisms in the workplace, we can conclude that the fact that individuals are not disclosed is also an obstacle on the way to unionization and organization for LGBTI persons. The answers “yes” and “there are people I suspect” regarding the existence of other LGBTIs in the workplace increased, just like the number of LGBTI being a part of a support network in the workplace. Nevertheless, the number of negative answers regarding the membership to a support network was still half of the sample.

Research results showed that there were no encouraging criteria in the job application processes for LGBTI candidates. At the same time any preventive or discriminatory criteria was the direct result of legislation, according to our participants. Only 3% said that they witnessed a discriminating question during the interviews. Nevertheless, 58% stated that the fact that they did not experience discrimination was because they either did not disclose their gender identity or sexual orientation, or their identity was not visible and/or obvious. When we consider that only 7% were completely open about their identities, we cannot conclude that sexual identity-based discrimination is not an issue in job application procedures in the public sector. Public sector LGBTI employees are forced to hide their identities to prevent any discrimination both in the hiring process and in daily work life. This pressure itself becomes a form of discrimination. They do not officially report discriminatory attitudes or experiences. Most of the participants stated the difficulty in job application was particularly related to the military service issue and social media posts.

On the issue of LGBTI visibility in the public sector, a total of 93% of the participants stated that in-house mechanisms to prevent discrimination do not exist, they exist but they don't cover sexual orientation and gender identity issues, they exist but are not effective, are unknown, or unknown to the participant. In very few case these mechanisms only exist in the health and education areas. Compared to last year (0%), this year's rate is can be considered as progress (7%).

An interesting picture emerges as we compare this year's results on the existing rules and applications causing sexual identity-based discrimination with last year. Last year 39% of the participants stated that such rules and practices existed. This year the number dropped to 19%. However, last year 39% claimed to not have any knowledge regarding the subject, whereas this year the rate was 54%. Therefore, it is not possible to say that these rules or regulations decreased in the last year.

These discriminatory rules and practices are diverse, our participants said heteronormative and cisnormative interpretations of the idea of “general morale”, hate speech, the lack of equality in social rights due to the heteronormative implications of “family”, mobbing, firings, and discrimination regarding promotions were given as examples.

In fact, 22% stated they were not victims of discrimination where 14% experienced it directly. A total of 64% were not victims because they either hid their identity (44%) or their identity was not obvious (20%). We should remember that only 7% were completely open in their workplaces. Therefore, just being spotted from the outside can be a reason for discrimination. The rates of reporting discrimination show that public employees refrain from reporting such cases. There were no participants in our sample who reported discrimination to in-house or legal authorities. In only one case was the case reported to the union.

Nine of the participants declared that they witnessed sexual identity based discrimination towards other LGBTIs in the workplace. The same number was 23% last year. But one should also consider the fact that most of the LGBTI employees in the workplace are not disclosed. In fact, 48% declared that they did not witness such a case because they do not know any other LGBTI in the institution. The same number was 56% last year.

Forty-seven percent responded negatively to the question regarding how gender-based discrimination affected their efficiency and job satisfaction. Again, we should remember that just 7% reported being completely disclosed and 14% of those stated they had been a victim of discrimination. Even though not being open seems like a protection for LGBTI employees, the fact that they are forced to conceal their identity a violation of their rights. These employees are certain that they would experience discrimination therefore they take precautions starting from the job application processes. They hide their gender identity throughout their employment and sometimes they only share it to a close circle of colleagues or other LGBTIs. They separate work life and private life, try not to get close with other colleagues, they are forced to act in terms of body language, articulation and gender expression.

The answers regarding efficiency and job satisfaction made clear that that not being open in their identities becomes a continuous discrimination in itself and creates heavy psychological burden on LGBTIs. Participants stated that they are unable to feel the sense of belonging to the institution, they feel constant fear, anxiety and hatred, and they are exhausted because of the roleplay. Considering that work is the place most of us spend most of our time in modern society, the size of the negative effects is even more evident.

Answers to the question regarding LGBTI visibility in unions and professional organizations, revealed that one-third were not a member of any organization. Twenty-eight percent declared they did not experience any discrimination in these organizations. Twenty-five percent believe they did not experience discrimination

because they hide their identities and 10% because their identity is not obvious. These numbers show the necessity of unions and professional organizations to create inclusive policies towards LGBTIs.

In fact, when our participants were asked to name 3 measures to prevent discrimination in the workplace, the 3rd most selected measure was unionization and solidarity networks. The 2nd answer was campaigns for social awareness and 75% pointed out the need for a ban on discrimination on the national level. It is interesting that the order of these answers is different from the private sector report. For private sector LGBTI employees, the most important measure was social awareness. Since discriminatory practices in the public sector derive mainly from legislation, the priority of the demand seems understandable.

Finally, the research from both 2017 and 2018 demonstrated that the state of emergency had a negative impact on the conditions of LGBTI employees. These employees feared that in case their identity is disclosed, willingly or not, they might face different forms of discrimination including losing their jobs. Therefore, the use of decree-laws for dismissals during the state of emergency decreased their feeling of job insecurity, as personal statements suggested.

In conclusion, in order to prevent gender-based discrimination, to create a peaceful work environment for the LGBTI and transform their disadvantaged position, to establish equality of social and economic rights there are steps to be taken and arguments to be made in terms of public policies and NGO strategies. We hope this research contributes to those efforts.

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

İstanbul, 2018

CHAPTER 3

SITUATION OF LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL, TRANS AND INTERSEX EMPLOYEES IN PUBLIC SECTOR IN TURKEY - 2018



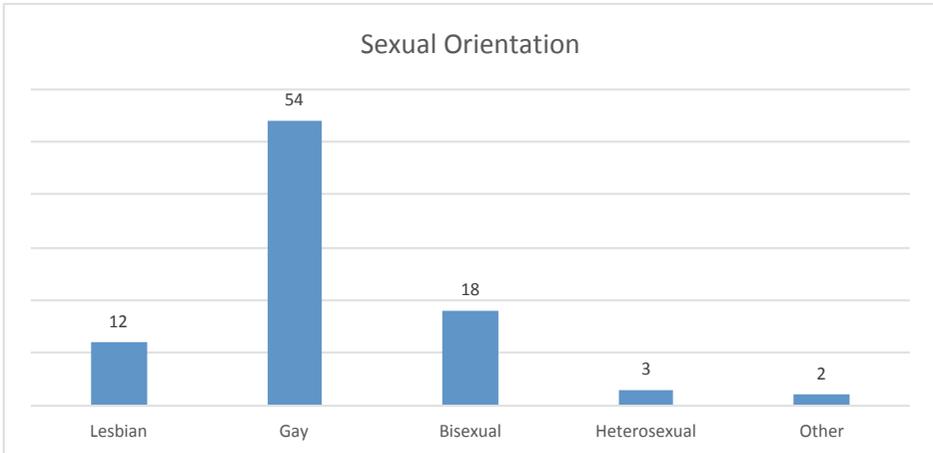
Research Sample

Our survey was conducted using SurveyMonkey Pro. The sample consisted of 89 individuals who identified themselves as lesbian, gay, bisexual trans or intersex. 64 of them (71,91%) work as public employees, 22 (24,72%) work by contract and 3 (3,37%) work as a subcontractor. Even though this year our research seems to be focused on education (15 people), academia (21 people) and health (11 people), there are individuals from different sectors that are a part of the sample.

You will see a table showing the gender identities and sexual orientations of all 89 participants. Those who identify as gay are in the majority and intersex individuals are not represented at all. Trans persons represent a very small segment. Bisexuals increased in comparison to the numbers from 2017.



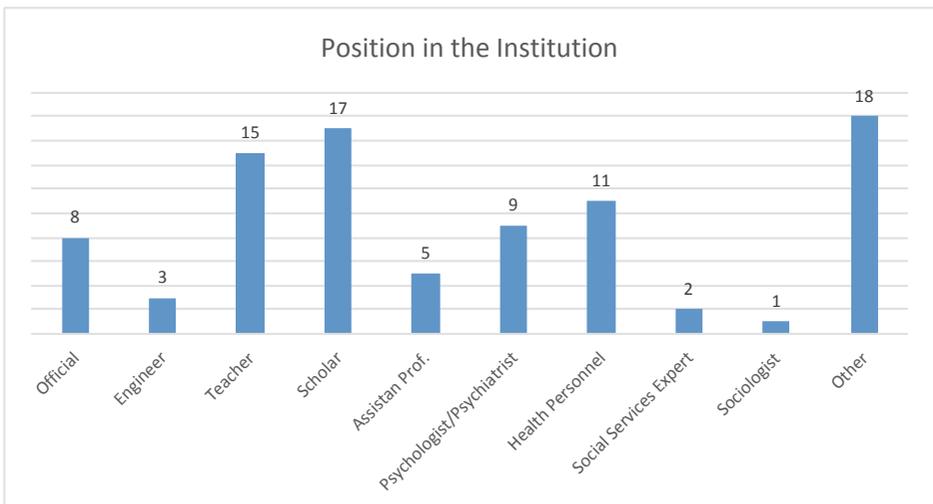
Other: "Mostly Gay Bisexual", "Trans".



Other: "Sexuality does not matter, I don't have an identity. I would like men if I was a woman", "Transsexual".

Types of Institutions for which the Participants Work and Specialties of the Employees

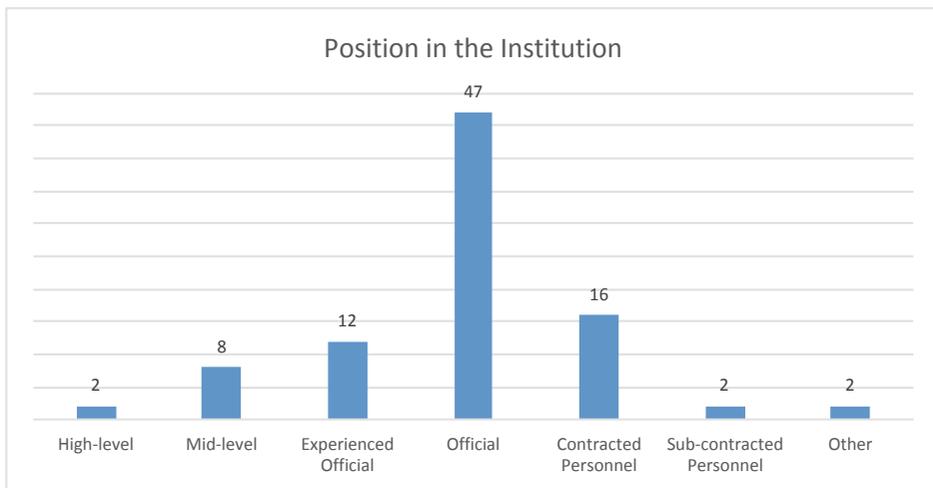
We had LGBTI employees from different institutions and positions. Below you will see a table, which shows the distribution of participants according to their positions. As you can see, most of them work in the education or health sectors (15 teachers, 17 lecturers, 5 assistant professors, 9 psychologist/psychiatrists and 11 health officers).



Other: Police officer, psychological counselor, research assistant (2), guardian (2), lawyer, technician, gardener, judge, researcher, project manager, specialist, cargo clerk, banker, coordinator, scholar, psychiatrist, health personnel.

These results do not necessarily demonstrate that many LGBTIs work in health or education in Turkey, rather that our research was able to reach these sectors more than others. One might argue that according to these findings, these sectors have higher LGBTI awareness and probably awareness in general. Additionally, both in the 2017 and 2018 research, we had a higher diversity of positions showing that our research is more visible and reaches a wider spectrum in time.

When we look at the different professions of our participants, there is a shift that we have not previously witnessed. According to 2018 findings, most of the participants were government employees (52,82%) including an increased number of senior officials and mid-level executives, and a small number of high-level executives who also participated in the research. Another important change in 2018 was the increase in the number of contracted personnel. This could indicate that this type of less secure positions are taken a larger place in the public sector.

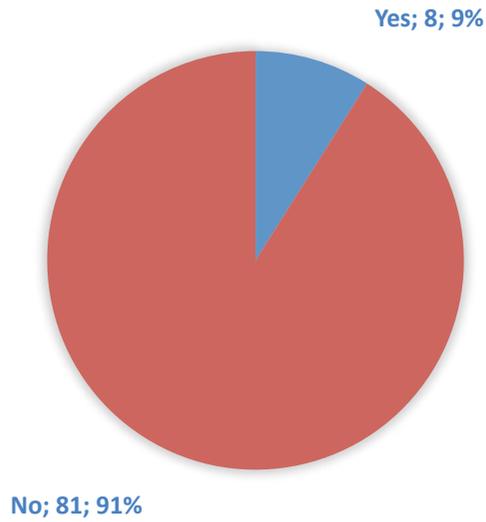


Other: intern (2)

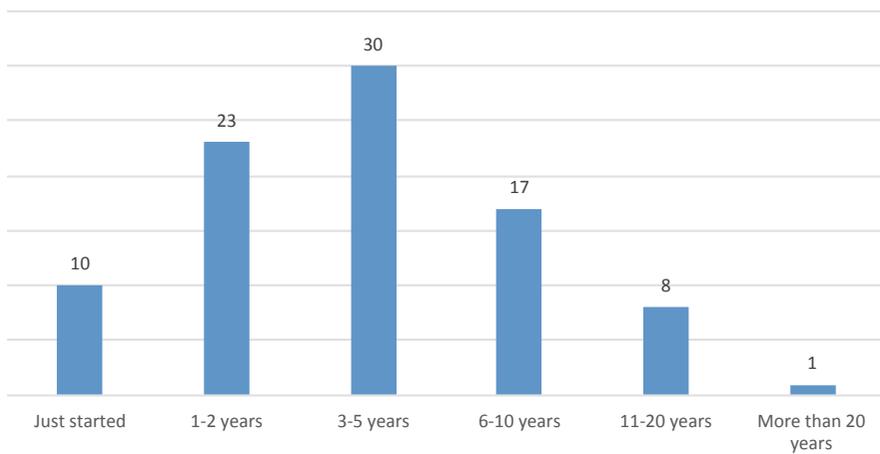
Regarding the question whether they have administrative duty in the institution, 81 participants, 91 % said “No”. Those who answered positively are low-level executives, coordinators, group heads, area heads, director or vice directors, student exchange coordinators and in-house trainers.

Similar to research results in previous years, most of the participants this year have a worked for their current employer for 1-5 years. However, there was a small increase in long-term employees. LGBTI employees often have experience short-term employment resulting from discrimination, change of jobs or dismissal due to disclosure. In Turkey, in general employees often have a high rate of job change. The increase in low-security positions and contracted employment are also often a cause of high circulation between jobs in Turkey.

Does the Employee Have any Administrative Duties?



Duration of Employment in the Current Workplace



Assessments regarding Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Intersex Status

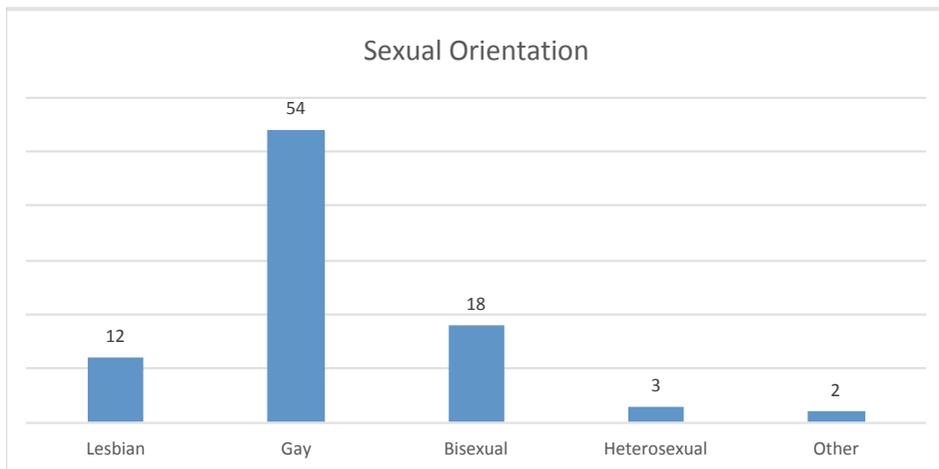
The survey included two questions regarding sexual orientation, gender identity and intersex status. Most of the participants responded as “Man” or “Woman” and

very few declared that they were “Trans Man” or “Trans Woman”. There were no intersex participants in the public sector research.

When evaluating sexual orientation, the largest group was gay individuals, followed by bisexuals (according to their gender identity 5 men, 11 women and 2 trans women) and lesbians. Some participants also did not identify with a single category preferring more transitive categories.



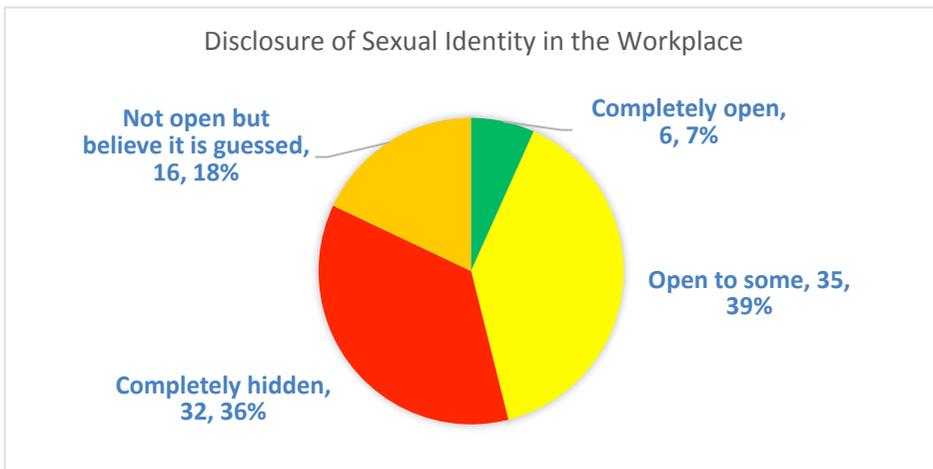
Other: “Mostly Gay Bisexual”, “Trans”.



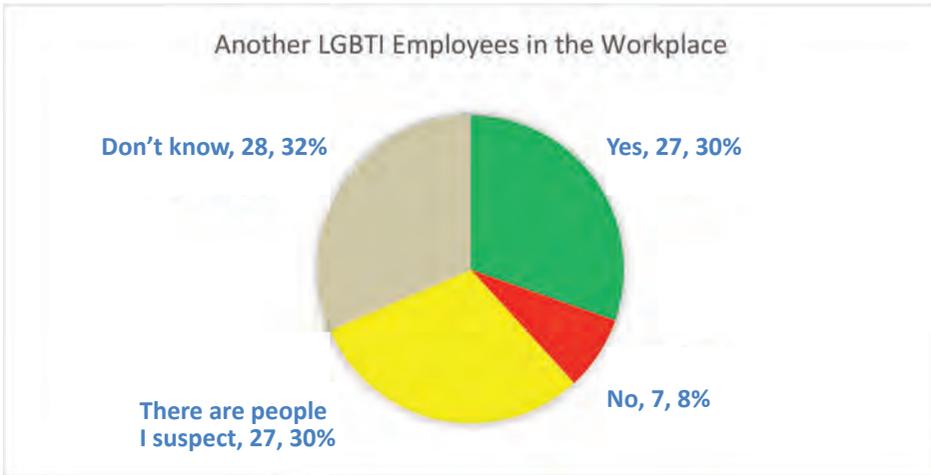
Other: “Sexuality does not matter, I don’t have an identity. I would like men if I was a woman”, “Transsexual”.

Disclosure in the Workplace in terms of Sexual Identity

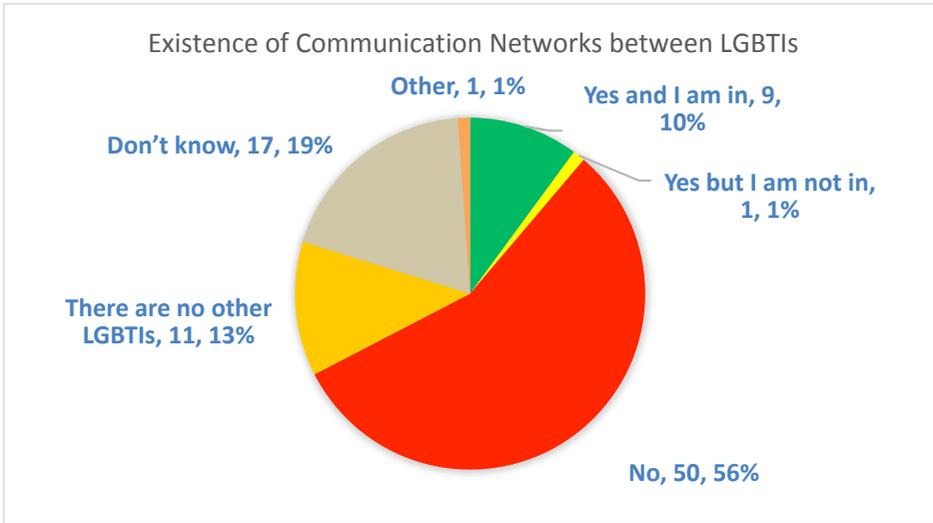
To the question “Do you think you can be open about your sexual identity in your work place?” 36% 32 out of 89 participants responded as “completely hidden”. Thirty-five individuals (39%) state they are “partially open” and only 6 (7%) are “completely open”. There are 16 people (18%) who believe that people guessed their identity even though they are not open about it. These numbers are similar to last year’s research results. This year there were fewer “completely hidden” cases and the “partially open” category was the most frequently occurring. Even though there was the same ratio for “completely open”, the increase in “partially open” was significant considering the variety of work fields. These findings show that in public workplaces the possibility to be open about one’s gender identity and sexual orientation is quite low. Nevertheless, most of our participants state that they are able to share their gender identity/sexual orientation with some of their colleagues. However, it is difficult to see this situation as a positive change regarding the issue. Similar to previous findings, the ratio of “completely open” has not changed and “completely hidden” participants remain present. According to the findings of the research conducted by Kaos GL and Kadir Has University Gender and Women’s Studies Center about private sector employees in 2018, participants stating they are “completely open” represent 22% of the total. Comparing the two results one can conclude that in the private sector it is relatively easier to be open about one’s gender identity/sexual orientation. The state, as an employer, should be in line with international agreements and national regulations that prevent discrimination; therefore, the current situation is highly disconcerting.



Another survey question was “Are there any other LGBTI employees in your workplace?” In 2018 those who answered “Yes” were higher compared to other years (27 people – 30%) and the same ratio was also valid for “there are people I guess they are LGBTI”. These results suggest that the ratio of LGBTI employee in public sector is higher than it may appear. On the other hand, 32% of the participants (28 people) choose “I don’t know” which might be the result of current corporate-social discrimination and pressures stemming from the state of emergency. Communication and solidarity among LGBTI employees are weakened by these conditions.



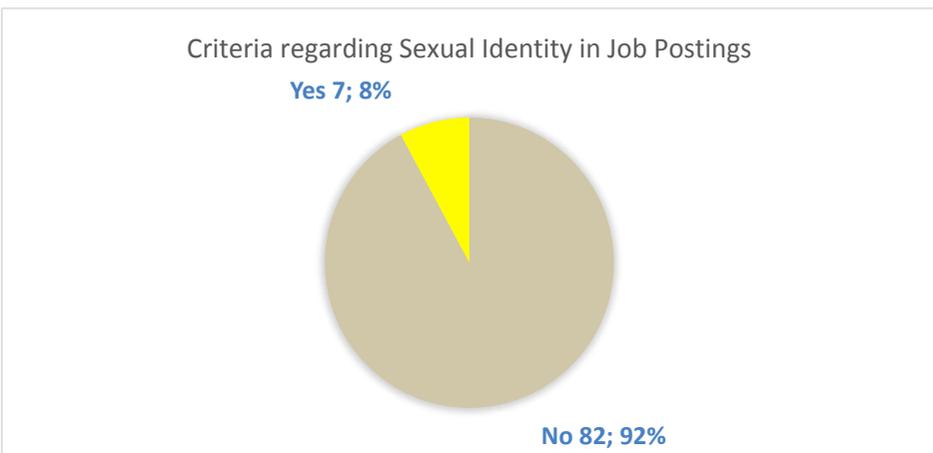
Weak communication and solidarity is demonstrated in the question “Is there a communication or solidarity network among LGBTI employees in your workplace (union group, group among colleagues etc.?)”. These networks are rarely seen in the public sector. While there was one more “Yes” answer (9 people – 10%) this year, the ratio of “No” increased from 18,23% in 2017 to 56% (50 people) in 2018. The continuation of state of emergency and general conservative tendencies of the country might be the answer to this change. In fact, public sector should support official and special “social inclusion groups” that would protect and strengthen LGBTI individuals against violations of rights related to labor, help LGBTI solidarity, advocate their existence and fight against discrimination in the society. Public institutions’ current gender equality, social inclusion and human rights units should be re-designed within this framework. Unions have similar duties as well. Unions that support public sector employees should regulate their commissions, create new structures and policies.



Assessments regarding Recruitment Procedure

The majority (82 people – 92%) of answers given to the question, “Have you ever encountered any open or implicit supportive or hindering criterion or statement in the job postings of the institution you work for?” showed that respondents encountered neither—supportive or hindering statements in job postings. Only 7 (8%) mentioned this kind of criteria or negative applications of the past.

However, participants mentioned that legislation regarding public officials, judges, prosecutors, and especially legislation surrounding the Ministry of National Education contain articles that may result in discrimination against LGBTI persons. In fact, what these public institutions are expected to do is to encourage LGBTI persons

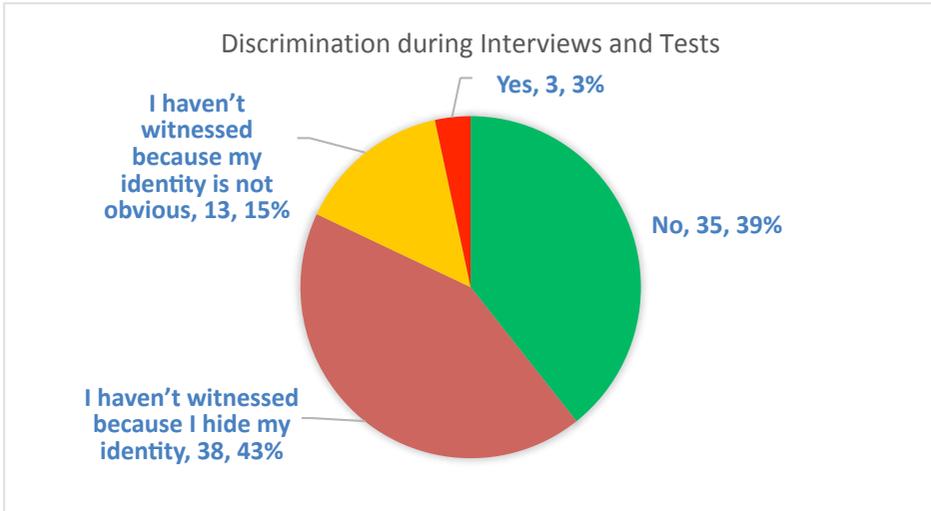


as a disadvantaged group and design recruitment procedures and job listings accordingly.

“The law related to judges and prosecutors lists behavior against general morals as a reason for dismissal. They use this as a reason to fire or not to hire people” (gay, judge)

Discrimination Experiences during Job Application Procedure

Another question in the research was, “Have you ever experienced any situation where you thought your sexual identity hindered or might hinder your recruitment ‘after’ the job application stage (examination, interview, internship, acceptance for the job, etc.)?” Forty-three percent of respondents (38 people) stated, “No, I haven’t because I hide my identity” which illustrates that LGBTI persons in the public workforce already accept the existence of discrimination.



Most of those who participated in the survey felt the need to hide their sexual identity during the hiring process or at least at the beginning of their new job to avoid being a victim of discrimination.

13 people, 15 % of the sample, believe they did not experience discrimination not because there is no such risk but because “their sexual identity is not obvious”. Therefore, these LGBTI employees already acknowledge a “potential discrimination” and start their new position with this information in mind.

Another important issue is obligatory military service. As reported in previous years’ research, military service might cause individuals’ identities to be revealed

involuntarily. In fact, some participants stated that the document stating their exemption from military service became a source of discrimination against them.

Another discriminatory factor is internet usage. In some cases, what people share on the web might also be a means to track down their sexual identity and use the information against them. This might then prevent their freedom of expression even outside the work place.

During the hiring process, participants experienced different levels and forms of discrimination. This finding was similar to last year where discrimination in the job application and interview processes was evident. In addition, social reality has to be considered in this matter. LGBTI employees are aware of the possible discrimination during interviews and job applications so they take a series of precautions related to their sexual orientation or gender identity. Some of these precautions continue after the application and during work. To hide one's identity completely, to be self-conscious about one's look, body language and other characteristics is often more difficult in comparison to a discriminatory experience that has a start and an end. As some participants stated, documents like "record of military service" are among concrete means of discrimination. The experience of hiding creates a continuum in discrimination forcing the individual to live under an identity threat not only at work but also in social media, during and after work hours.

Participants also stated that heteronormative systems and norms against gender equality also affect hiring processes. In addition to sexual orientation and gender identity, sexism is also a cause for discrimination. Below you can see personal statements of some of our participants.

"Not to me personally. They do not care because I am a bisexual woman. But I know they mob gay men until they force them to resign." (public official, bisexual woman)

"They increase my work load. They mob me and discredit me. No one cares if I say the right thing or I say the obvious thing." (police officer, gay)

"I have been advised not to come forward about this matter." (health personnel, gay)

These statements illustrate that sexism and discrimination against gender identity and sexual orientation are two sides of the same ideology. Heteronormative and binary understanding of gender ignores the difference between gender identity and sexual orientation and paves the way to suppress any kind of differentiation in the society. Heteronormative manhood forces a uniform understanding of gender in society and in work life.

Reporting the Discrimination Experienced during Job Application Procedure

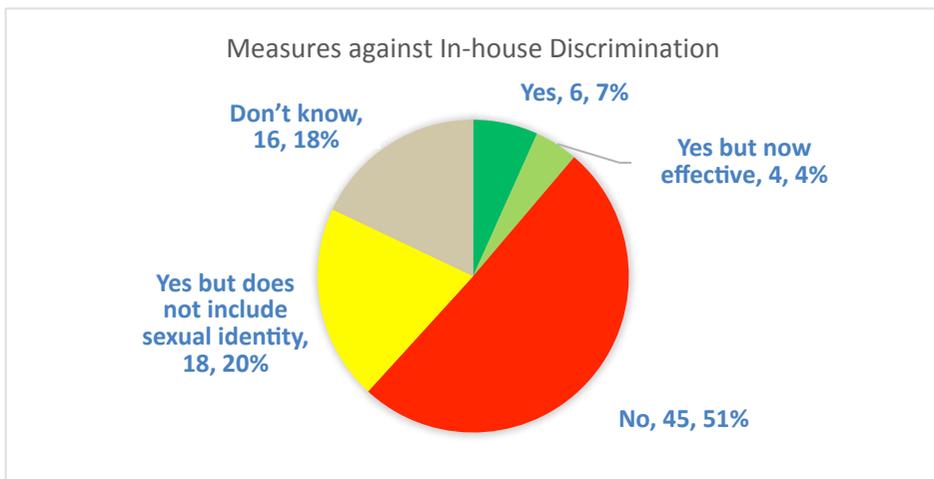
In 2018, 3 out of 89 LBGTI employees stated that they experienced discrimination during the hiring process. We asked these people specifically the question, “Did you report this situation to higher management or any other public office?”

Only one participant reported the experience to an NGO. The other two only shared with people around them. The finding may suggest that LGBTI persons lack trust in the Ombudsman Institution, Turkish Human Rights and Equality Institution and other public institutions and NGOs. There may be a fear of exposure and further discrimination. The state of emergency conditions might have forced them to waive their rights. Mechanisms of right to legal remedies become obsolete by this fear of further discrimination at the work place and in public sphere in general.

In-house Discrimination: Obstacles and Supports

To the question, “Are there any rules or committees that would prevent discrimination against LGBTI employees?” 6 people answered as “Yes” and 4 answered as “Yes but they are not known”. Most of these answers come from people working in the field of public health. This shows the concentration of awareness and it is different from last year’s results. However, similar to last year, most of the participants, (45 people) answered the question “No” stating there were no rules or regulations to prevent LGBTIs from discrimination.

As mentioned above, 4 of participants stated that existing rules and regulations were not known or that they were not effective. Similarly, 18 participants (%20) stated that the current committees and regulations on discrimination do not apply to



gender identity or sexual orientation. A significant number of participants (16 people, %18) stated that they had never heard about such committees or regulations.

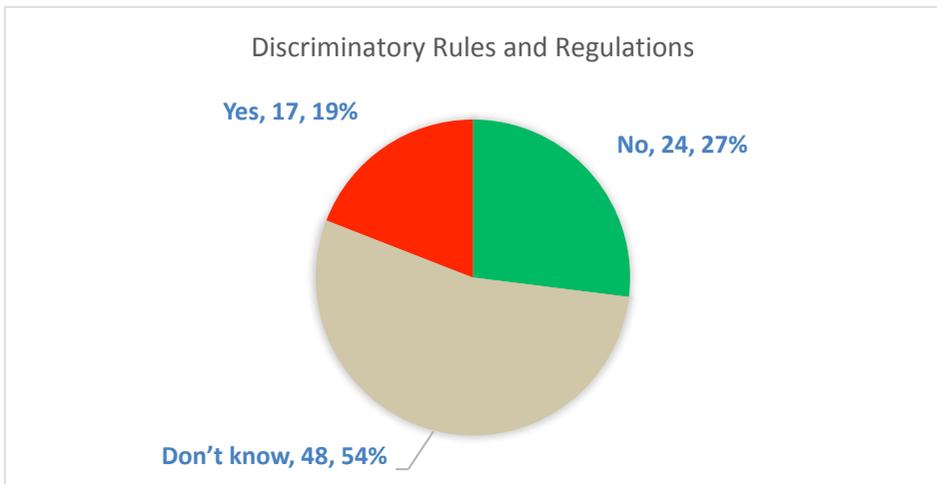
Taken together these findings tell us that in the public sector in Turkey, there are few, if any, in-house mechanisms to prevent sexual identity related discrimination. Where they do exist, their effect is questionable. Yet, it is not enough to have these mechanisms; an institutional or social understanding in their effectiveness to protect LGBTI employees' rights is also necessary.

Rules and Regulations that Create In-house Discrimination

Another question asked in the survey was, "Are there any rules or regulations in your institution that generate discrimination against LGBTI employees? (promotion, suspension, social help or health benefits related to marriage etc.)". The most shocking result is that most of the participants did not have any information on the subject. In 2017, 39% reported no knowing whereas in 2018 it was 54% (48 participants).

On the other hand, the answers of 17 people (19%) revealed the existence of discriminatory factors against the LGBTIs in the public sector. Only 24 people, 27% of the participants stated there were no discriminatory factors in their institutions regarding LGBTIs.

As you can see in the quotes below, most participants pointed to the idea of "general morals" in various regulations as discriminatory tool. Respondents also stated that hate speech in the workplace, the fact that LGBTIs never have the privileges of married couples, disclosure without consent, discharges, removals and difficulties in the promotion were also sources of discrimination.



“Married heterosexual couples have personal rights’ advantages.” (teacher, gay)

“No matter how good you do your job, they try to send you from their department claiming they don’t want to work with you or even lying about you. They prevent you from taking your annual leave or medical leave when necessary. They do it on purpose; they want you to die...” (police officer, gay)

“Spouse-related assignment is only applicable to heterosexuals.” (public official, gay)

“State office. Discharge with ignominy.” (public official, gay)

“It is obvious that you will be dismissed when something like this comes up.” (teacher, gay)

“As far as I know, homosexuality is against public morale and State Officials Law no: 657 has this section about penalties for behavior against public morale, I think.” (teacher, lesbian)

“You have to hide that you are a LGBTI. I am always afraid of losing my job. On the long run, I do not see myself as a part of that institution. I will be let go when they figure it out. Hiding is very painful and very hard. I want to live my life as a woman and every single day I do not. Feels like a loss.” (engineer, trans woman)

“A scholar was accused of being indecent (sexual jokes over Facebook) and had to negotiate with the upper management.” (public official, gay)

“Rules that support family and marriage but ignore everything else.” (banker, bisexual woman)

Participants also pointed to different levels of discriminatory behavior and regulations. Since their sexual orientation and gender identity are not recognized legally, they cannot benefit from various rights granted to other employees. Social rights that come with marriage become a tool for discrimination that excludes LGBTI persons. Promotion and assignment processes are also used as a mechanism of punishment and threat. The idea of “general morals” is a discriminatory ideology not only in the workplace but also in society in general; and apart from discrimination, it contributes to the exclusion and stigmatization of LGBTIs. The state of emergency regulations and other means of discrimination create even bigger problems for the community.

“It is not certain, but nobody knows why a person fails the security investigations during hiring processes. Even though they claim it is always related to FETO organization, we hear that there are also people failing this back-

ground check because they are leftists or have disclosed sexual identity. We don't have clear decisions coming from the courts or most of these processes are on hold, so we can't be sure." (health official, bisexual woman)

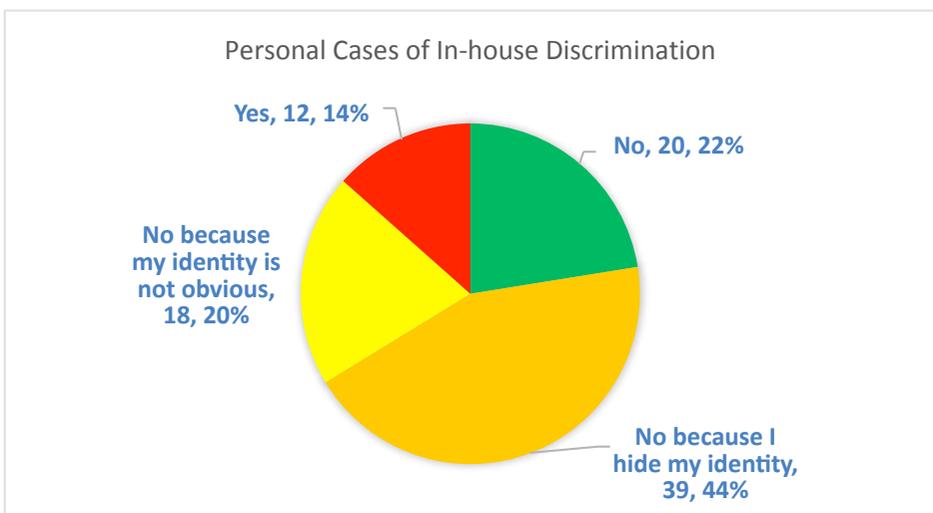
Some people also point out that it is impossible to be promoted in a public office.

"Those who have an open identity cannot expect to be promoted. In fact, even not adopting to certain gender roles is enough for not being promoted. Moreover, it is a hidden threat for every little situation. However, we should thank them for working next to us. We should not oppose everything!" (public official, bisexual woman)

The quotes above point to situations in which participants had to hide their gender identity and sexual orientation. Nevertheless, the threat of being outed is so real and the anxiety this generates can be seen in the quotes. The unrest is even bigger when it comes to official documents such as previous identity records or military records. In addition, the participants who were subjected to homophobic and transphobic environment in the workplace and keep working with a fear of violent discrimination. The fear of losing one's job is also disturbing in a country where unemployment and youth unemployment is so high.

Experiences of In-house Discrimination

Another question in the survey was, "Have you witnessed sexual identity discrimination or hate crime against you personally? How did these progresses?" As one can see from the table below, 14% (12 participants) responded "Yes". However, 44% (39 participants) believed that they had not witness discrimination or hate crime



because they kept their sexual identity hidden. Being forced to hide one's identity at work is a sign of extreme discrimination. According to the table, 20% (22 participants) of the participants responded "No".

When these answers are taken together, the results are similar to 2017. Fifty-eight percent of the participants either experienced direct discrimination (14%) or had to hide identity to prevent discrimination (44%). We should also consider that in cases "when sexual identity was not disclosed" (20%) the identity was also hidden. Another finding from this research is that LGBTI employees not only witnessed discrimination from their colleagues but also from people they serve. This shows that discrimination does not start and end at work places or work hours, but potentially exists everywhere as a result of social mentality.

"They guess my gender identity is different than theirs and sometimes they ask me. I deny in order to hide; but they mock, humiliate and insult with their attitude or behavior. They try to explain that what I do is against society or religion. They threat secretly talking about other people who got fired." (scholar, trans woman)

"I was excluded!" (psychologist, lesbian)

"My patients, especially old man patients, don't like me for some reason and they show it by staring at me." (health personnel, gay)

"Clichés such as 'I cannot work with him, at nights especially'. Even if you show them the law or a related paragraph from the ordinance, they say 'This faggot does not work' or 'Sir, nobody wants to work with this homo', sometimes to my face!" (police officer, gay)

"I build friendships. But when I start disclosing my identity, my friendships tend to end. Terms like homo and faggot are used a lot around me. When I express my sexual identity in a joke, they treat me as if I am a pervert or child molester. I am the leper everybody is ashamed of. There are threats, sarcasm. They joke about me reporting these things." (psychologist, gay)

"I had people making jokes about me being gay because I don't have a girlfriend." (public official, gay)

"I did not experience; I hide it. But even my close friends react when I try to tell them. I had a facial and I was not acceptable. Work is my life and I can never be myself." (engineer, trans woman)

"Not institutional but my superior used his promotion power against me saying I should 'have pretty clothes in my closet.'" (public official, trans man)

“My activism during university was remembered to intimidate me.” (teacher, gay)

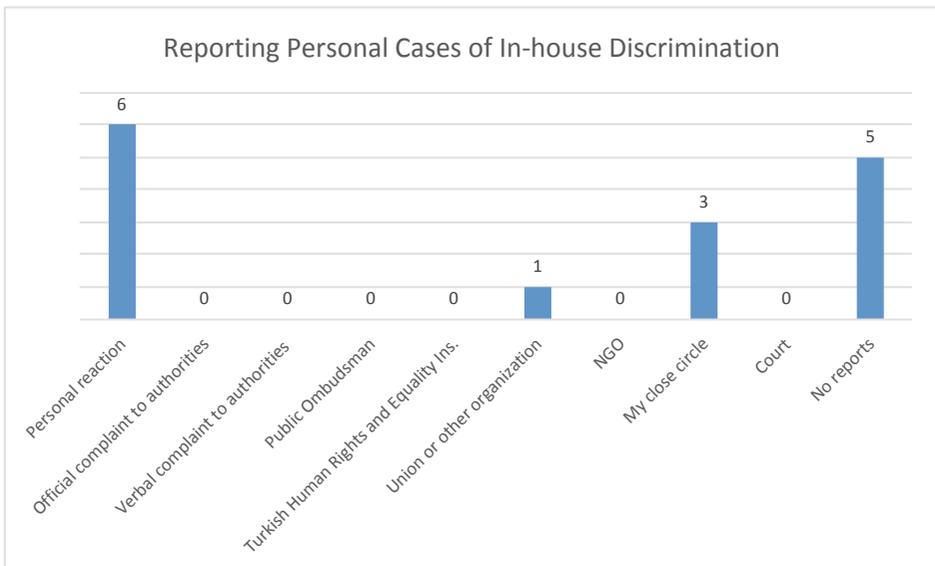
“Not directly because of my sexual identity, but my superior warned me about the NGOs I volunteer. They were talking about being sacked. I, because of my LGBTI network, and other friends, because of their ideologies, were warned.” (social service expert, bisexual woman)

“I married my boyfriend in a foreign country, but I did not have leave of marriage or other things. I did not receive any gifts, even from people who knew.” (scholar, gay)

According to testimonies, participants were almost forced to disclose their identity when it was hidden, and they had to live under constant discrimination.

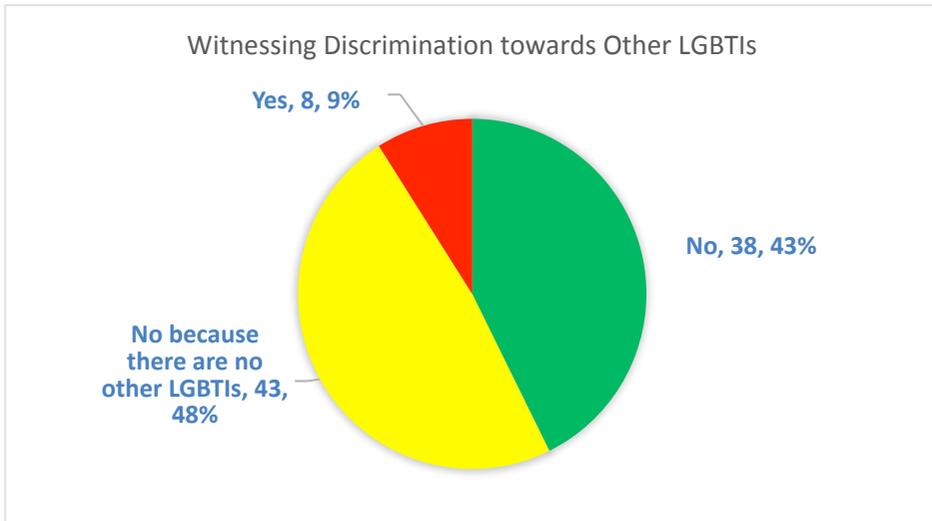
Reporting Discrimination in Workplace

When assessing the answers to this question, one should keep in mind that most of LGBTI persons in the public sector have hidden or partially hidden their sexual identities. As is evident in the following graph, victims of discrimination never referred to incidents to the courts. None of them made an official complaint within the institution or consulted the Ombudsperson or Turkish Human Rights and Equality Institution. In a total of 15 cases, 5 individuals did not report anything, 3 of them shared it with people around them, 6 reacted to the person in question and only 1 reported it to the union.



Witnessing Discrimination towards Other LGBTI Employees

The survey asked, “Have you witnessed cases of discrimination towards other LGBTI employees? How did these proceed?” According to the answers, 43% (38) of participants “did not witness” anything similar. Another 48% (43) stated that they were not witnesses because they did not know any other LGBTI employee in their institution.



We should interpret the answers keeping in mind that in many institutions there are LGBTI employees with undisclosed identities. In a sector where the majority of LGBTIs hide their identities, 9% stated that they witnessed discrimination.

“I experienced mobbing personally and I also know that in many departments known with their homophobia, people are being mobbed until they quit. So LGBTI persons do not prefer these departments and choose other alternatives.” (health personnel, bisexual woman)

“A friend of mine who hides his identity – and recently got married – was humiliated and subjected to gossip just because he had a close relationship with me. In police business, it is not important to do your job according to the law. You are a good cop if you look at girls around you as fuckable pieces of meat.” (police officer, gay)

“A student of mine was harassed and subjected to hate speech because he was thought to have a feminine side. When I talked to him, he identified himself as gay. I informed him about LGBTIs. I also organized a presentation to other kids and to my class; entitled respect.” (psychologist, gay)

“Nurse was masculine in her behavior and clothing; and patients were disturbed by her.” (doctor, gay)

“Indirect discrimination is very common actually. If it is a feminine man, they tend not to consider his professional opinion. Butch women are the least effected.” (social service personnel, bisexual woman)

“He was let go because he had social media posts in opposition to the government.” (working under subcontractor, gay)

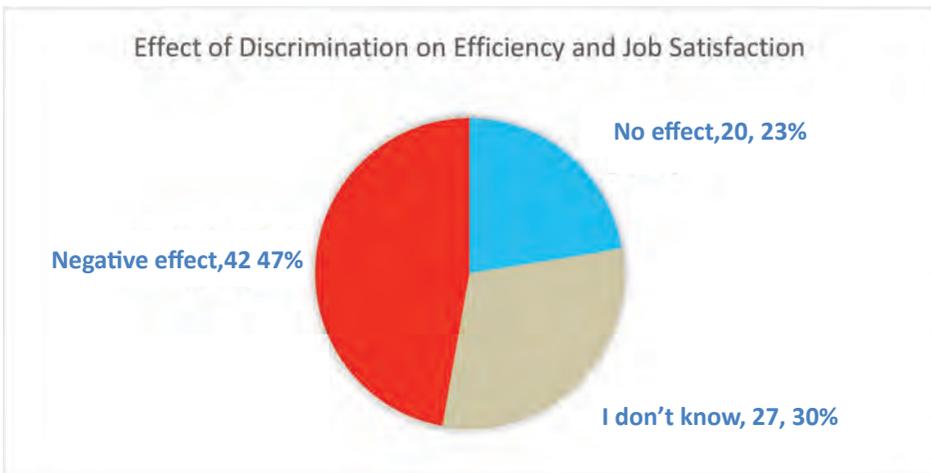
“He was blackmailed by somebody he had been with before. The management did not protect him, but the court decided to bring the guy in.” (scholar, gay)

“Maybe not systematic but I’ve seen mocking by superiors and colleagues.” (scholar /psychologist /health personnel, gay)

According to the participants in this survey, LGBTI employees are often subject to discriminatory actions like difficulty in promotion and assignment or even being fired when they disclose their sexual identity. In cases where gender identity or sexual orientation are hidden, actions like participating in Pride creates visibility that may lead to mocking, harassment and insinuations. Even though LGBTI persons may not experience discrimination directly, these employees may be subject to discrimination through other means.

The Relationship between Discrimination, Productivity and Job Satisfaction in the Workplace

In order to understand the effects of discrimination, we asked the question, “How is your productivity or job satisfaction affected by the problems you had or might have in your workplace because of your sexual identity?” According to the results, different forms of discrimination that people suffered at work have a negative effect on their efficiency and satisfaction. This effect manifested itself in different ways.



“My mind is full of insults that I had to or will have to tolerate and since I am at risk of being fired, a major depression keeps coming back. The situation decreases my efficiency.” (scholar, lesbian trans woman)

“When I choose a subject regarding LGBTI individuals, I have to consider the obstacle I’ll be facing.” (scholar, gay)

“I see everybody as potential threat. My environment disgusts me. They make me hate everything.” (police officer, gay)

“I cannot express myself freely in my workplace. I get angry when I feel I am not free. I cannot be myself. I feel hopeless, artificial, inadequate and deficient. Therefore, I have difficulty focusing on my job. I should overcome personal problems to focus on other things.” (psychologist/psychiatrist, gay)

“We are public officials anyway. We are on a knife-edge, especially as research assistants. Who wants to start a chain that would get one fired because of one’s sexual orientation? You cannot share anything with other people. It is weird to take your partner to an event where there are married couples. You are lower rank even if you are single. Worst of all, any professor in the academy can make me suffer if he or she wants. What if there are homophobes around? One day, a friend of mine told me that there was no such thing as homosexual, that they were all deviants looking for adventure. I made tons of explanations but what happens if this guy knows who I am; how am I going to work with him?” (research assistant, bisexual woman)

“I think I would have more difficulty because of my political views so I hide my identity and feel guilty about it.” (scholar, bisexual woman)

“I feel anxious all the time, I can’t talk, I do my job far away from others and try to go somewhere without making others notice.” (public official, gay)

“I fear the prejudice about myself in case I reveal my sexual orientation. Because I think people I work with are not mature enough to accept it.” (prison guard, gay)

“My performance, my motivation and my morale are negatively affected. I am tired of acting like someone I am not.” (teacher, gay)

“Even if I don’t feel constant or current pressure, I am anxious about being disclosed and facing discrimination.” (scholar, bisexual)

“People assume directly that I am heterosexual. Since people approach me with that assumption without asking my sexual orientation, I find myself in marginalizing, ‘straight’ conversations.” (scholar, bisexual woman)

“Not being open is a major problem; not only in work efficiency but in every aspect of life.” (scholar, lesbian)

“I have no expectations. People are clearly against my situation. Days go by with a fake identity. My life is meaningless; I envy and admire others. I am not efficient at work, I do not like it and I cannot identify with it. I go to work because I have to.” (engineer, trans woman)

“I refrain from everything all the time. I am anxious about being stigmatized because of my social media posts. I am in an environment where people insult gay people constantly. It ruins my spirit. When somebody insinuates something I always fear it's me because I would lose my job.” (gardener, gay)

“It's limiting since I can never use my full capacity. I can do better but I refrain from it.” (public official, trans man)

“I fear of being discharged. I need my income.” (public official, lesbian)

“I feel like I have to keep the distance and be careful with my students. Because our society looks at gays as criminals.” (teacher, gay)

“When you get close with people at work, in time, people tend to intervene with your private life. You have to work a lot not to be exposed to it. To act like somebody you are not is a great afford. And it affects efficiency and satisfaction, of course.” (psychologist/psychiatrist, gay)

“Low motivation and high anxiety prevents effective work. Since you work in a limited environment under threat, you can't have no satisfaction.” (teacher, lesbian)

“I can't talk to my colleagues sincerely the way they talk to me; can't talk about my problems. And even though not directed to me, I am sad and frightened by personnel's negative comments about LGBTIs.” (prison guard, gay)

“My hidden identity forces me socialize less with my colleagues. That is why I am treated for OCD. To not to be the focus of attention at work, I always take a step back. I can't be active enough.” (researcher, gay)

“I socialize less with my colleagues because my identity is not open, which makes me a lonely person.” (researcher, gay)

“I separate my private and work life to remain hidden and I am always anxious that this will come out. That is why I am being treated for OCD. I am trying not to be the focus of attention, so I withdraw myself and cannot be active enough. And sometimes, when I hear homophobic and discriminatory speeches, I feel lonely. So, I usually have motivation issues.” (public official, trans bisexual woman)

“Sometimes I feel like I have to limit my words next to my colleagues. So, my feeling of belonging goes down.” (research assistant, gay)

“I feel like I have to work more than everybody, I always overperform.” (teacher, gay)

“Stress and anxiety. Knowing that I will never have managerial duties makes me lose motivation.” (scholar, gay)

“I don’t want to be there. I am tired of jokes. I am tired of faking a boyfriend because I am not married.” (banker, bisexual woman)

“I have to live with the fear that I would lose my job if they knew.” (scholar, bisexual)

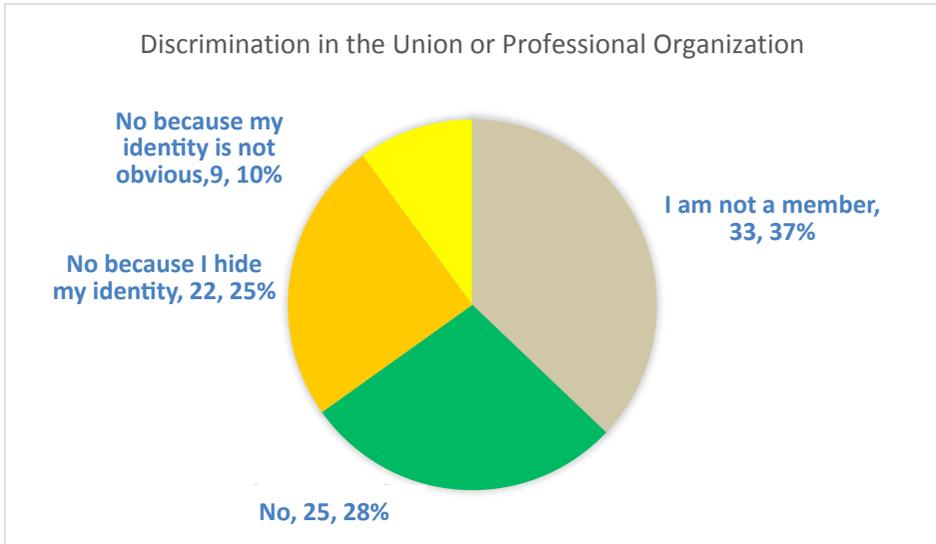
Work hours take the bigger part in people’s daily life. Therefore, being forced to hide one’s identity makes one live under great pressure. Trying to be careful, control feelings (which most of the time negative due to discrimination), to not to react to jokes, insinuations or hate speech (even indirect) creates stress and anxiety all day, every day. This kind of a working environment would certainly and negatively affect productivity. Shared experiences suggest that not being able to feel attachment or a sense of belonging are also reasons for efficiency and job satisfaction to fail. In addition, a person trying to survive under these circumstances would probably have low self-esteem and general well-being, which in turn would decrease creativity.

The Situation in Unions and Professional Organizations

To the question, “Have you experienced personal cases of sexual identity based discrimination or hate crime in your union or organization? How did they proceed?” twenty-nine percent answered that they were not part of any union at all. Twenty-five percent of the participants stated that they had not witnessed any discrimination and 25% told us they faced no discrimination because they hide their identities (32% in 2017). There were no participants who claimed that they faced discrimination in unions or any other professional organizations.

These answers give the impression that LGBTI employees hide less or face less discrimination in their unions compared to their workplaces. We should also keep in mind that LGBTI employees of the public sector participating in this research are members of relatively more LGBTI friendly unions or organizations.

The participants in this survey are, for the most part, not part of any union or professional organization. This can perhaps be explained by an increase in sub-contractor or by-contract types of labor that tends to decrease the percentage of unionization.



Results that show that there is a significant number of participants stating that they hide their sexual identity in their unions suggests that unions are unable to create trust among LGBTI union members.

Demands and Measures against Discrimination

The question related to the issue was, “What three measures you would think against discrimination towards LGBTI employees in the public sector?” When we group the answers, what comes to the fore is the need for “legal measures” on LGBTI rights. The requests start with current legislation being updated according to universal human rights criteria and follow as “solidarity networks and organized resistance” and “campaigns for social awareness”. In-house trainings, prohibitions against discrimination in legislation, government responsibility and leadership, court ruling examples and positive statements of managers are other measures that our participants mentioned.

Most of the answers are in line with Turkey’s responsibilities regarding national and international human rights agreements. More than 75% stated that in order to prevent discrimination, current legislation should be updated. Legal applications would provide LGBTIs in the public sector job security and change their work environment where they are obliged to work under threat. The need for in-house legislation is also mentioned. Differently from last year, resistance and solidarity networks were underlined.

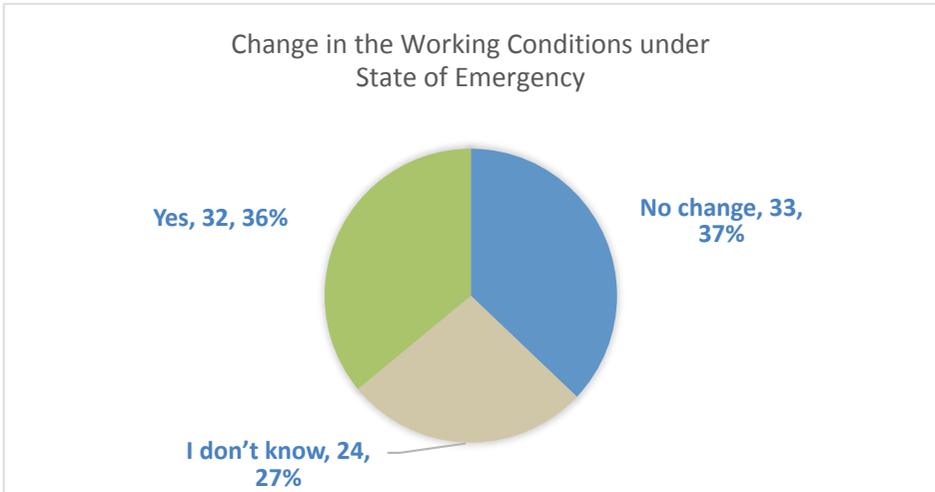


A large number of answers was related to education, information and awareness raising processes regarding sexual orientation and gender identity. One of the main reasons for discrimination was considered to be ignorance; and resolving it might help resolve ignorance-related discrimination. There should be seminars and workshops to inform people from different channels and these efforts to raise awareness should aim the whole society. In addition, participants underlined the importance of the creation of organized solidarity networks starting from public institutions and how crucial it is to fight against discrimination towards the disadvantaged groups in the society.

The Situation under the State of Emergency

Last question asked in this year’s survey was, “Do you think there are any changes in your working conditions under the state of emergency?” As can be observed in the following table, 36% of the participants stated that there have been some changes and the situation went even worse. When assessing the answer “No”, we should consider that under “the state of normality” most of these people work under a lot of pressure facing prejudice, threat and discrimination in their institutions.

The quotes below underline that pressure in general was increased under state of emergency. Therefore, working conditions for LGBTIs worsened in this period. LGBTI employees were afraid of being discharged by executive orders, a common practice in this period. One of the biggest problems under the state of emergency was the abolishment of previously weak or not existing channels to seek one’s rights.



"I can give lots of examples on how the macro reflected on the micro, but we don't have enough space." (scholar, gay)

"Heads and people in charge are more aggressive than usual." (scholar, lesbian, trans)

"We had problems related to work hours and leaves at the beginning, but it all turned back to normal." (gay, scholar)

"I had no problems but under the state of emergency they banned people from resigning. Therefore, many doctors and health officials that were mobbed, could not use their rights to resign. They stopped showing up and they were told their diplomas would be seized." (health personnel, gay)

"Not having permission to organize any event." (scholar, lesbian)

"Management increased the pressure." (health personnel, gay)

"It was a tougher environment." (teacher, gay)

"Many things were up to the rector or the political power. Promotions, leaves... We faced disciplinary investigations all the time." (scholar, bisexual woman)

"It is easier to lose my job so it's more stressful. It is more difficult to seek for my rights. The state has a frightening attitude towards LGBTIs." (contracted engineer, trans woman)

"Apart from criminals against the state, there are people sacked because there were complaints from their colleagues about them. Everybody was scared." (public official, lesbian)

“The atmosphere of sharing and friendship among colleagues has worsened because people feel the stress and can’t share their thoughts.” (teacher, gay)

“Democratic attitude is going backward. Managers are unable to make decisions. Constant environment of uncertainty. Job security, job descriptions, working conditions, student placements, central exams, promotion procedures, all changed. Vital decisions like these can’t be discussed under state of emergency.” (teacher, lesbian)

“I feel under surveillance because of all the security investigations.” (public official, trans bisexual woman)

“I am under the radar of the management.” (social services expert, gay)

“I feel like I don’t have the right to disagree.” (health personnel, gay)

“Everybody is tense, unhappy and without trust.” (sociologist, bisexual woman)

“All kinds of pressure increased.” (psychologist, gay)

“I faced investigations. Some people was discharged. It’s a bad feeling.” (scholar, gay)

“I am so anxious, and I am trying to cover up.” (scholar, gay)

“More bans, more conservative executives.” (banker, gay)

“Pressure, discipline, means of power up to panopticon level.” (scholar, gay)

“Fear of discharge every day.” (coordinator, trans woman)

Quotes from our Participants

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

These quotes underline the close link between the situation of LGBTI employees in public and the situation of employees in general. Therefore, a collective action is a must. However, LGBTI employees need special legal changes and mechanisms that would give them more liberty. Increase in LGBTI visibility in public just like in every other area would change positively the working conditions. Some of our participants pointed out the systematic nature of discrimination and believed that there would not be any improvement in the work environment without radical transformations.

“People have wrong ideas about homosexuality. Some see it as perversion. It is wrong to point out repeatedly that this is a choice. I am gay and I do not feel comfortable among men, women or homosexuals. It makes me feel bad and I see myself marginalized.” (psychologist/psychiatrist, gay)

“Our existence should be thought to people by the state starting from the primary schools.” (police officer, gay)

“What we need is a social reform for our rights.” (health personnel, gay)

“There are regulations against discrimination, but it is problematic. It does not mention ‘gender identity’ but just ‘sex’. Moreover, ‘sexual orientation’ is not mentioned at all. This should change.” (public official, bisexual)

“I would like these studies to have an effect on legal changes.” (teacher, gay)

“At the end, it is individuals who solidify policies or positions in the public sector. So it all starts and end with the individual. Public sector should not be Don Quixote’s mills. Individuals should have the awareness and education. The manifestation of social state and roles is the self-expression of these individuals actually. Good luck. It’s nice to see you here.” (public official, trans man)

“We cannot prevent discrimination against LGBTI students. Kids are being the center of jokes, even among instructors. We are constantly stigmatized with pedophilia, immoral behaviors and propaganda. It’s like Damocles’ sword; teachers can’t disclose themselves.” (teacher, lesbian)

“I haven’t faced any discrimination in my institution not because it has a positive attitude towards LGBTI persons but because the institution thinks these individuals does not exist.” (sociologist, bisexual woman)

“I don’t believe in a short-term legal transformation considering the situation the country is in. All we can do is campaigns and trainings for social awareness. Individually, disclosing ourselves and not hiding our identities would be the step towards awareness.” (specialist, gay)

