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

2020 Research
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Published by: Kaos Gay Lesbian Cultural Research and Solidarity Association (Kaos GL) and Kadir Has University Gender and Women’s Studies Research Center

First edition: Ankara, 2020

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This book is published by Kaos GL Association and Kadir Has University Gender and Women’s Studies Research Center with the support of Friedrich Naumann Foundation and Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA). This does not mean that the content of the book reflects official views of Friedrich Naumann Foundation and SIDA.
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Chapter 1

Key Findings
This is the 4th year for The Situation of LGBTI+ Employees in the Private Sector in Turkey conducted by Kaos GL Association. We, as Kadir Has University Gender and Women Studies Center are happy to be a part of this research for the last three years.

The 2020 research used SurveyMonkey Pro to conduct and an online survey. More than 175 people who declared to be LGBTI+ and who worked in a public institution participated in the survey. The sample consisted of mainly of young, highly educated (above high school) individuals who have been in the workforce for a relatively short time. Nearly eighty percent (78.9%) were between 18-35 years of age. At the same time, 91.4% have an associate, undergraduate or graduate education and 62.9% have worked in their current workplace for less than 6 years. Similar to previous years, the majority of participants worked mainly in the education, health and academic sectors. The remaining respondents represented a wide range of professions. For the first time this year we asked participants which city they lived. We also included “I do not want to share” answer as an option for those who wanted to keep this information private due to security concerns. As a result 34.9% of participants did not provide their city. Among those reported their residence, 62.9% of lived in Istanbul followed by Ankara and İzmir.

In 2020, 57.7% of the participants declared their gender identity as male or trans man and sexual orientation as gay. This constituted the largest group within the sample. Similar to last year, the ratio of those who chose “other” as their gender identity increased from 5.7% to 8%. In comparison to 2019, in 2020 more people defined themselves outside the binary gender system in terms of gender identity.

In 2020 only 3.4% of participants stated that they were completely disclosed in their workplaces in terms of gender identity, sexual orientation and sex characteristics. In parallel research on the private sector, the same rate is 14.8%. Last year the number of those who were completely open about their identities were 4.4% and 17.4% respectively while in 2018, 7% in the public sector and 22% in the private sector claimed their were completely disclosed about their identity. In order to comment on the significance of these changes, we need to look at the results in the coming years. The fact that the rate is lower in the public sector each year suggests that LGBTI+ employees in public employment are at higher risk to experience discrimination and hate speech compared to the private sector.

According to this year’s data, 94% of public sector LGBTI+ employees were not completely disclosed in the workplace regarding their gender identity, sexual orientation and sex characteristics. Despite the fact that they were undisclosed regarding their identity six out of a total of 86 people were subject to discriminatory
attitudes or practices during the hiring process and 5 experienced the discrimina-
tion during employment. More than half (56.6%) of the participants witnessed hate
speech against LGBTI+ individuals while it was 36.9% for the private sector. While
17.2% of respondents did not disclose their city in the private sector research, this
number was double for the public sector. It would appear that the discrimination
and hate speech are more prevalent in the public sector that the private. Similar
to previous years, the results from this year suggest that gender based discrimi-
nation is an important obstacle for LGBTI+ individuals in accessing public sector
employment. Many feel forced to not disclose themselves in order to avoid the
risk of unemployment. Since discrimination continues after the hiring process, this
strategy defines their lives as a whole. At this time, non-disclosure seems inevitable
in public sector.

In 2020, 6.9% of participants reported facing discriminatory attitudes, discourse,
behaviors and/or practices during the hiring processes. Two thirds (66.3%) be-
lieved they did not experience discrimination because either their identity re-
mained undisclosed or their gender identity, sexual orientation or intersex situation
was not detectable by their appearance. At the same time, 10.9% of participants
experienced discrimination after the hiring processes, during employment. Again,
66.3% stated they did not experience discrimination because either they were un-
disclosed or their gender identity, sexual orientation or intersex situation was not
apparent.

We should make clear that the percentage of those who reported experiencing
discrimination is higher than those who were open about their identity at that
point. This forced strategy of non-disclosure does not appear to eliminate the risk
of discrimination even if the rate of experience remained low. In 2020, three out
of four LGBTI+ employees either experienced gender based discrimination or be-
lieved that they did not experience it due to the fact that they were assigned a
non-trans or heterosexual identity since they did not disclose their gender identity,
sexual orientation or sex characteristics. Furthermore, we need to consider the rate
of disclosure along with the number of those who declared they did not experience
discrimination without stating a reason. Only 3.4% were disclosed during hiring
processes and again 3.4% were open in their workplaces.

In 2011, European Council Commissioner for Human Rights issued a detailed re-
port regarding discrimination based on gender identity and sexual orientation that
highlighted the non-disclosure strategy LGBTI+ employees are often obliged to
adopt in order to prevent the risk of discrimination and harassment. The often-ob-
ligatory use of non-disclosure as a strategy makes it more difficult to analyze the
real dimension of homophobia, transphobia and discrimination in the workplace. Looking at our own survey data, the European Council’s statement, based on research in different countries, is also valid for Turkey. Data also suggests that when this strategy is not employed or not effective discrimination occurred. LGBTI+ employees in Turkey do not disclose their identities to avoid discrimination and harassment.

Our study suggests that public sector LGBTI+ employees in Turkey would not disclose their gender identity, sexual orientation or sex characteristics unless the risk of discrimination is eliminated. In 2020, only 6.3% were disclosed or partially disclosed during hiring processes and as previously mentioned 6.9% experienced discriminatory practices. These numbers increased to 17.7% and 10.9% during employment. Answers to open ended question made clear that public sector LGBTI+ participants give up the nondisclosure strategy only when they are sure that there is little risk of discrimination.

Our research reveals that LGBTI+ employees in public sector are not open about their gender identity, sexual orientation and sex characteristics unless the risk of discrimination is close to zero. In 2020, just 6.3% of the sample state they completely or partially disclosed during the hiring processes 6.9% experienced discriminatory practices and attitudes during these processes. Once employed, the rate of disclosure rose to 17.7% and the rate of experiencing discrimination to 10.9%. Disclosure of identity appears to increase the chance of being discriminated against for LGBTI+ employees. However, among disclosed or partially disclosed participants the rate of discrimination among was far lower than the general discrimination rates in the sample. Responses to open ended questions made clear that public sector employees end their strategy of non-closure once they believe there is no risk for discrimination. As such, they seem to experience the less risk of discrimination. In workplace where binary heteronormative or cisnormative systems are powerful the strategy of non-disclosure does not always work and any statement, behavior or attitude deemed outside acceptable gender role norms can result in discrimination.

The low number of cases of gender based discrimination, homophobia and transphobia in Turkey where anti-discrimination mechanisms of solidarity and protection were used makes it more difficult for us to analyze the real dimensions of discrimination. Similar to previous years, this research suggests that LGBTI+ employees

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did not engage official channels against discrimination they experienced. Only one out of twelve individuals who experienced discrimination during the hiring process made a verbal complaint and only one out of nineteen individuals who experienced discrimination in the workplace made an official complaint. One individual spoke with the authorities, one reported the incident to a union or professional organization and one complained to the Human Rights and Equality Institution of Turkey (TİHEK). None of these participants took legal action. Their statements showed they do not believe official complaints are effective when it comes to gender based discrimination. Additionally, reporting processes could further victimize LGBTI+ individuals because they fear losing their jobs, experiencing hate speech and prejudice and involuntary disclosure of their identity.

It is clear that LGBTI+ employees in Turkey need mechanisms to better access employment. Unfortunately, this study shows that such mechanisms are uncommon and/or ineffective within the public sector. Only 6.9% of participants reported that there were effective rules and regulations in their companies to prevent discrimination based on gender identity, sexual orientation and sex characteristics. A further 7.4% stated that these mechanisms exist but are not well known or are ineffective. Examples of rules and practices that they cited as causing discrimination included unequal social rights largely due to a heteronormative understanding of family and marriage, discriminatory interpretations of Law No: 657 regarding public officials and practices like denying promotion or transferring individuals to undesirable locations.

Our research suggests that similar to previous years, the strategy of remaining undisclosed that LGBTI+ employees feel forced to follow prevented them from creating communication and solidarity networks. Just 6.9% stated there were such networks in their institutions and that they were part of it while 2.9% were not members of any existing networks. Among these individuals only one was completely disclosed regarding their identity. The study also revealed that rate of membership in a union or professional organization was also low. Among those who were members, they did consider these organizations as the center of resistance against discrimination. Just 32% of participants stated that they are members of a union, below the general average among public sector employees of 65.4%. Among participants just 16% were members of a professional organization. The rate of individuals who are open about their identity their professional organizations was higher than in the workplace but remained below 5%. As mentioned earlier, only one individual who experienced discrimination reported the case to a union or professional organization. When asked provide name three measures to be taken to prevent discrimination against LGBTI+ employees, only 20.6% of participants mentioned “organized struggle and solidarity networks”.
These findings demonstrate that we need unions and professional organizations to be active in the fight against discrimination and that these organizations should prioritize the creation anti-discriminatory policies. In 2016 the International Labor Organization (ILO) published the findings of its Honor Project where they note that economic and social rights of the LGBTI+ are not a priority for unions, this includes unions in Turkey. The same note also indicates that LGBTI+ are the major group to experience discrimination and harassment, that job seeking LGBTI+ are closed about their gender identity, sexual orientation or intersex situation as a strategy which continues during the employment. The ILO study also shows that disclosed LGBTI+ employees suffer less from anxiety, depression and burnout syndrome, and in order to provide these working conditions workplaces should implement supportive and inclusive policies.2

Participants in this research stated that being subject to gender based discrimination and hate speech or the risk of experiencing them paired with continuing a strategy of non-disclosure created a series of difficulties. LGBTI+ employees reported being unable to have real and intimate relationships, little sense of belonging in their companies and they often feel hopeless, sad, anxious and angry. They also stated that their performance was lacking along with their motivation which all led to depression, stress, and burnout syndrome due to psychologically and physically overwhelming conditions. Their efficiency and job satisfaction dropped decidedly. Since in modern societies we spend most of our time at our workplaces, the negative aspects of the situation are obvious.

Even though the non-disclosure strategy seems to provide some level of protection against discrimination and hate speech, the obligation to remain undisclosed is a form of discrimination itself. LGBTI+ employees feel certain that they will face discrimination and thus take measures even before employment. During their employment LGBTI+ individuals hide their identity or share it with close colleagues or other LGBTI+ individuals so they separate their work life and their private life. Some even have to pretend in terms of body language or the way they express themselves in public in order to remain undisclosed. This non-disclosure and caution against potential discrimination turns into a continuous form of discrimination and has a negative impact on LGBTI+ employees both mentally and physically that exceeds the limits of work life.

Answers to open ended questions revealed that the primary concerns for LGBTI+ employees were freedom and visibility. In order to guarantee these they pointed

2 International Labour Organization. Gender identity and sexual orientation: promoting rights, diversity and equality in the world of work. Results of the ILO’s PRIDE Project. Briefing note. p. 1. 2. 3.
out the need for raising social awareness and creating functioning legal protection mechanisms.

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

Prof. Mary Lou O’Neil and Dr. Reyda Ergün
Chapter 2

SITUATION OF LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL, TRANS, INTERSEX AND PLUS EMPLOYEES IN PUBLIC SECTOR IN TURKEY IN 2020
Research sample

The survey was conducted using SurveyMonkey Pro. The final sample consisted of 175 individuals who declared themselves to be lesbian, gay, bisexual trans or intersex. In the sample, 125 of respondents (71.4%) worked as public officials, 34 (19.4%) worked under contract and 16 (9.1%) were employed by a subcontractor.

In 2020, 139 of the participants (79.4%) declared they had not participated in the research in previous years, 19 people (10.9%) said they did not remember whether or not they had previously participated and 17 (9.7%) had participated in former years.
Sexual orientation, gender identity and intersex traits

The survey included two questions regarding sexual orientation, gender identity and intersex traits. Most of the participants responded as “Male” or “Female” and some declared that they are “Trans Male” or “Trans Female” or chose the category “other”.

Those who identified their sexual orientation as gay comprised the largest group in the sample (64%).

Other: Queer (2), pansexual (5) Trans male, I am interested in women, I don’t know
Out of the sample as a whole, 62.9% (110) declared their gender as male and 112 people (64%) declared their sexual orientation as gay. Therefore, the sample majority consisted of non-trans gay individuals.

To the question “Do you define yourself as intersex?” 18 people (10.3%) responded “Yes” and 157 people (89.7%) replied “No”. Among the 18 individuals who identified as intersex, 6 declared themselves as male, 4 as female, 1 as trans, 1 as a trans female, 2 as trans male and 3 as other. Regarding sexual orientation 4 people identified as bisexual, 8 as gay, 3 as lesbians and 6 as other.

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

The table below describes the age distribution of the sample. Almost three-quarters of the participants (73.1%) were between the ages of 25-40. Twenty percent were between 18-24 years of age. The remaining 14 people were over 40. There were only 3 participants over 50 years of age.
The following table shows the level of education of the participants. Nearly half of the sample (45.7%) were university graduates and 39.4% had received graduate education.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Education Level</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Primary school</td>
<td>1.7% (3)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle school</td>
<td>0.6% (1)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High School</td>
<td>6.3% (11)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two Year University</td>
<td>6.3% (11)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University</td>
<td>45.7% (80)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University+</td>
<td>39.4% (69)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This year for the first time we asked participants the city in which they live. Sixty-one participants (34.9%) chose not to declare their location. The remaining 114 (65.1%) respondents came from 28 different cities. The most common places of residence were as follows: Istanbul (39.5%), Ankara (14.0%) and Izmir (9.7%). These three cities were then followed by Gaziantep, Bursa, Antalya and Adana.

**Disclosure of sexual orientation, gender identity and intersex traits in the workplace**

To the question “Are you open about your gender identity/sexual orientation/intersex traits in your workplace?” 896 participants (49.1%) answered they were “completely undisclosed”. Twenty-five people (14.3%) were partially disclosed and only 6 people (3.4%) were completely open in terms of their gender identity, sexual orientation or intersex traits. There were 53 people (30.3%) that reported that they assumed their gender identity, sexual orientation or intersex traits were apparent despite being undisclosed. In this group, the lowest percentage was among those that were completely undisclosed. Another interesting fact is the high ratio of those who believed their identity was apparent despite the fact they had not disclosed it.

According to the findings of the research conducted by Kaos GL and Kadir Has University Gender Center about private sector employees in 2020, 14.8% of participants stated they were “completely open” The same rate was 17% in 2019. It
appears that it is easier to disclose one’s gender or sexual identity in the private sector. The situation is of concern and the state, as an employer, should be in line with international agreements and national regulations that prevent discrimination.

According to the findings of parallel research conducted by Kaos GL and Kadir Has University Gender Center among private sector employees in 2020, 14.8% of participants in the private sector stated they were “completely disclosed” and the same rate was 17% in 2019. Comparing these results it is clear that more individuals were able to disclose their identities in the private sector than the public. Among the 86 participants who reported being completely undisclosed, 6 faced discriminatory behavior, 5 faced direct discrimination and 57 witnessed hate speech. The current situation is of concern and as such the state, as an employer should adhere to international agreements and national regulations that prevent discrimination.

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

LGBTI+ employees in the sample were working in many different institutions and positions. The table below reflects the various position held by participants. The majority of respondents worked in education or health sectors (28 teachers, 39 scholars, 13 psychologist/psychiatrists and 31 health officers) and the time of the survey. This year 22.3% of the participants (39 people) defined their position as scholar and the group “other” is the second largest subset with 36 people (20.6%).
Other: civil servant (6), worker (3), administrator, expert (3), prison guard, dishwasher, attorney, customer service, programmer, No. 657 civil servant, computer operator, cashier, artist, banker, student (2), soldier, graphic artist, chief expert, chauffeur, director, music sector, doctor and academician, communications intern, assistant, project expert

To the question “Do you hold a management position in your workplace?” 141 people (80.6%) answered as “no” and only 5 people (2.9%) declared they were high level executives. Only 1 of those high-level executives is disclosed in the workplace and 2 of them are partially disclosed. 2 others think their identity is already assumed. Out of 29 mid-level executives only 1 is disclosed.
Duration of employment in the current workplace

Similar to research results in previous years, most of the participants have been employed in their workplace for between 1-5 years. One hundred and ten (62.9%) people have worked in the same place for 5 years or less and 85% of those working 2 years or less are between 18-30 years of age (42.9% between 25-30, 41.4% between 18-24).

Disclosure of gender or sexual identity in the workplace

Another question we asked our participants was “Did you disclose your gender identity/ sexual orientation/ intersex traits during the hiring process?” Only 6 participants (3.4%) declared they were open during the process. Five people were partially open (2.9%). Those who are completely close are 80% of the total (140 people).

Another interesting issue concerns the personal experiences of discrimination, discrimination towards others and hate speech of those who reported being completely undisclosed in their workplace. Among the 86 individuals who stated they were undisclosed, 6 reported facing discriminatory behavior, 5 faced direct discrimination and 57 witnessed hate speech.
Experiences of discrimination during the hiring process

Another question asked to LGBTI+ employees was “During the hiring process, did you experience any discriminatory attitudes, statements or behaviors due to your gender identity, sexual orientation or intersex traits?” The fact that 42.9% or 75 people said yes, and 80.0% or 140 people said no, indicates that discrimination is still a concern in the public sector in Turkey.

The “other” option also included those hired through KPSS or appointed. Some of them explained why they were undisclosed during the hiring process.

“There was no need for me to be open, so I was not open or closed.” (gay male engineer/architect)

“They don’t ask these question to appoint a doctor.” (lesbian female health personnel)

“There were no condition since it was a public hiring.” (gay male engineer/architect)

“Not closed or open. My job interview has nothing to do with my gender identity. I don’t think one should be open or closed. It was about personal skills and knowledge and I was accepted.” (gay male scholar)
Most respondents hid their gender identity during the hiring process or at the beginning of their new job to avoid discrimination. Interestingly, 41 participants (23.4%) of the sample stated they did not experience discrimination not because there was no such risk but because their gender identity was not apparent. These LGBTI+ employees anticipate potential discrimination and start new positions with this information in mind.

“Looks of suspicion. Asking what this is. Maybe it’s about my perception. But that’s how I felt.” (gay male scholar)

“I experience mobbing and judging because of my appearance.” (queer female teacher)

“I was asked to fill out a form on military service. They openly ask if I did my service and if not, why. At that time I was delaying it but I was uncomfortable with the question. Later on I told people about my military situation.” (gay male engineer/architect)

“When I shared it with a friend she told me it was a disease and that I should see a psychologist.” (bisexual female public official)

“There were insinuations about my clothes and my hair.” (gay male health personnel)

“They told me that a woman has to act like a woman. And since I was a woman I had to stay away from that kind of perversions.” (genderfluid bisexual female health personnel)
During the hiring process participants experienced different levels and forms of discrimination. This finding was similar to last year where discrimination in the hiring and interview processes was evident. There is also a social reality that has to be considered in this matter. LGBTI+ employees are aware of possible discrimination during interviews and job applications so they take a series of precautions in advance related to their sexual orientation and gender identity. Some of these precautions continue after the application and during work. To hide one’s identity, to be self-conscious about one’s look, body language and other characteristics may be more difficult a burden than the experience of discrimination.

**Reporting discrimination during the hiring process**

Of the 228 LGBTI+ employees participating in this research, only 12 stated that they experienced discrimination in different ways during the admission process. To those who experienced discrimination, we also asked if they reported that discrimination. Most respondents (11 people) did not report their experience of discrimination. Six of these participants said they reacted directly to the person in question while eleven chose not to report the incident(s). Only one person shared their experience with a state official. It would appear from these findings that LGBTI+ individuals lack trust in the Ombudsman Institution, Turkish Human Rights and Equality Institution and other public institutions and NGOs.
Institutional protection against discrimination

“To the question “Are there any rules or commissions to prevent discrimination based on gender identity/sexual orientation/intersex traits in your institution?” 12 participants (6.9%) responded positively while 13 participants said “yes but not known”. Similar to findings in previous years, a large percentage (97 people/55.4%) of participants declared that no rules or commissions to prevent discrimination existed in their workplace. Twelve participants (12%) stated there were rules or commission to prevent discrimination but they did not include gender identity/sexual orientation/intersex traits. A significant number of employees (28 people /16%) said they were unaware of such rules or commissions.

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

Rules that cause discrimination

Another question we asked our participants was “Are there rules in your workplace that discriminate again LGBTI+ employees?” Examining the answers, one of the most important findings was that 99 people (56.6%) were unaware of such rules.
This finding was similar to previous years. Fifty people (28.6%) stated there are no such rules or applications in their institutions and 26 people (14.9%) stated that there were in fact such practices that cause discrimination.

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

“Not officially, it’s not possible. I haven’t seen anyone being fired or promoted for being gay or lesbian but we never know how bad it can be when an executive has homophobic attitudes. I cannot be open, I think. As I said, knowledge and awareness make a difference, even if it’s small. But the same knowledge doesn’t guarantee a sensitivity towards people who are not heterosexuals.” (gay male scholar)

“I am in the medical report process. I will probably be subject to a disciplinary investigation once I start the legal process for sex-change.” (heterosexual trans male engineer/architect)

“One can have sanctions like warning, reprimand, fine or removal from the office depending on an investigation due to the ‘immoral behavior’ clause.” (lesbian female psychologist/PCG)

“Those who are known to be non-heterosexual cannot teach, they are just civil servants.” (gay male teacher)
Situation of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, Intersex and Plus Employees in Public Sector in Turkey in 2020

“Even if not stated openly, from graduate school to professorship nobody wants to have a LGBTI+ individual next to them. People with that kind of orientation don’t even want to mentioned with them. That’s why they react more than the heterosexuals.” (gay male scholar)

“They do not accept the idea of a partner except for what they call a normal marriage.” (trans male director/executive who is into females)

“To be invisible, like in health system or other mechanisms, the lack of them. Transition periods but the faculty of medicine is an exception. Civil partnership and marriage are none existing.” (non-binary lesbian scholar)

“Since we are seen as singles we get to be the weakest links. We worked harder during the pandemic. Married people had more days off.” (gay male assistant)

“Married people have rights like healthcare or green passport for their spouses. People working for public sector receive aid through their husbands and wives who are unemployed but me and my partner don’t have these rights.” (pansexual female specialist)

Participants point to the different levels of discriminatory behavior and regulations. Since their sexual orientation and gender identity are not recognized legally, they cannot benefit from various rights that other employees can. Social rights that come with marriage become a tool for discrimination that exclude LGBTI+ individuals. Promotion and assignment processes are also used as mechanisms of punishment and threat. The idea of “general morals” represents a discriminatory ideology not only in workplace but in society in general and apart from discrimination it helps exclusion and stigmatization of LGBTI+s.

Experiences of discrimination

Answers to the question “In your workplace, have you personally experienced discrimination based on your gender identity, sexuality orientation or intersex traits” are displayed in the table below. To this question, nineteen people (10.9%) said “yes, I have”, 76 people (43.4%) said they had not experienced discrimination because their gender identity/sexual orientation/intersex traits was not disclosed. Forty people (22.9%) said they had not experienced discrimination because their gender identity/sexual orientation/intersex trait was not apparent while only 40 people (22.9%) answered the question negatively.

When we try to assess all the answers, 77.2% of the participants either experienced direct discrimination (10.9% or 19 people) or hid identity to prevent discrimination (43.4% or 76 people). We should also consider that in cases “when gender identity was not disclosed” (22.9% or 40 people) identity was also essentially hidden. An-
other finding of our research is that LGBTI+ employees not only witness discrimination from their colleagues but also among the people they serve. In the workplace. Many of them related instances where they were humiliated, isolated and gossiped about. Below you will find some the examples of discriminatory behavior or discourse:

“I told a friend, he told someone else. That person looked at me with disgust. I still cannot believe that’s what happened. I don’t want to believe a teacher could behave like that.” (gay male teacher)

“One of the students disclosed my identity to the administration making a complaint as if it was a crime. The Administration tried to corner me and make me confess. But I didn’t give them the chance.” (gay male scholar)

“I am a doctor. Male nurses and paramedics were gossiping about me and asked my friends if I was gay. They thought I was dressed gay-like.” (gay male health personnel)

“That is, from a pejorative perspective, they asked me if I was with other men.” (gay male scholar)

“I told them I was a transsexual, I was about to complete my transition, I was going to have an operation and have a medical report. So I was let go.” (heterosexual trans female head specialist)

“They opened a fake account and attacked my identity and orientation.” (gay male health personnel)

“They told me I had men’s hairstyle, that I had male genitalia, that I should walk like a woman and show more cleavage.” (genderfluid bisexual health personnel)
According to the experiences shared by the participants many were almost forced to disclose their identity when it was hidden, and they had to live under constant discrimination.

**Reporting discrimination in workplace**

We asked the question “Did you report any kind of discrimination you experienced?” When assessing the answers to this question one should keep in mind that most of the LGBTI+ individuals in the public sector have hidden or partially hidden gender identity/sexual orientation/intersex traits. As you can see in the following table, most victims of discrimination never went to the court. One person officially complained and one verbally reported the incident inside the institution. None of them consulted the Ombudspersons Institution and only one person reported a case of discrimination to the Turkish Human Rights and Equality Institution. In a total of 19 cases, 11 individuals did not report, 6 reacted to the person in question and only one reported the case to the union and one to an NGO.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Did you report your experience of workplace discrimination? (N=31)</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I reacted directly to the person discriminating against me.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I officially reported the incident to the person in charge.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I informed the person in charge about the incident</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I reported it to the Ombudsperson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I applied to the Human Rights and Equality Commission of Turkey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I shared my experience with those close to me</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I shared my experience with an NGO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I informed my union or professional organization.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I filed a lawsuit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Witnessing discrimination towards other LGBTI+ employees

Communication and solidarity networks for the LGBTI+ employees

We asked participants “In your workplace is there a communication or solidarity network among LGBTI+ employees?” and the answers point a near complete lack of solidarity mechanisms. Among participants, 82 people (46.9%) stated there were no communication or solidarity networks, 24 people (13.7%) said they did not know. A further 52 people (29.7%) believed there were no other LGBTI+ individuals in their institution.

As you can see in the table only 12 people (6.9%) reported the existence of such networks and that they were a part of it, where 2.9% said they were not a part of any existing networks.

Experiences of discrimination towards other LGBTI+ employees

To the question “In your workplace, have you witnessed discrimination against other LGBTI+ employees?” 56 people (32%) responded negatively while 79 people (45.1%) believed the reason why they did not witness such behavior was because there were no other LGBTI+ working in the same place. Forty people (22.9%) said they were witnesses of such situations. We should interpret these answers keeping in mind that in many institutions there are LGBTI+ employees with undisclosed identities.
“I think there are situations like the movie Philadelphia with Antonio Ban-
deras. The company cannot use homosexuality as an excuse to fire people
so they sue about something else. I was not involved so I don’t know the
details but I think one employee payed the price. He wasn’t fired but he was
paid.” (gay male scholar)

“My friends going to the Friday prayer were talking about how right was
the speech afterwards. The subject was LGBTI+ people having no honor.”
(heterosexual trans male engineer/architect)

“A friend of mine was talking about other two married and hetero friends
and saying all kinds of things since they were really close. I wondered what
did he was saying behind my back. What if they are lovers, what’s it to you?”
(gay computer operator)

“A gay friend of ours is feminine and he thinks he can hide it. But he was
ridiculed by other teachers. The students call him girl teacher.” (gay male
teacher)

“I know that a successful psychologist could not get tenure because of their
sexual orientation. That person went to a university.” (gay male scholar)

“They use terms like ‘softy’ and ‘poof’ to insult the person they thought was
gay.” (lesbian female social service specialist)

“In a company that works closely with out institution someone I know, a les-
bian was mobbed to make her leave. She was not disclosed (regarding her
identity). It was just gossip for being masculine.” (lesbian female engineer/
architect)

“There are people bothered by the rainbow.” (gay male teacher)
Situation of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, Intersex and Plus Employees in Public Sector in Turkey in 2020

“They make fun of polite and gentle people and gossip about their identity. And no one wants to talk to a masculine female friend for being too manly.” (gay male assistant)

“I have seen senior doctors using humiliating language regarding gay people to each other as a ‘joke’. Some were laughing. That person could even be gay, they made the joke just looking at the way he was dressed.” (pansexual female health personnel)

Hate speech against LGBTI+

To the question “Have you heard hate speech against LGBTI+ individuals in the workplace?” people (25.1%) answered negatively while 99 participants (56.6%) said they had heard hate speech and 32 others (18.3%) reported that they didn’t know.

The relationship between discrimination, job satisfaction and productivity

In order to illuminate the relationship between discrimination, productivity and satisfaction, we asked the question “How do the circumstances that you experience or might experience as a result of your gender identity, sexual orientation or intersex traits affect your work productivity and satisfaction?”

To this forty-seven participants (26.9%) answered negatively, 54 participants (30.9%) said they don’t know while 74 participants (42.3) stated that discriminatory attitudes or behaviors have an impact on their efficiency and satisfaction. Ac-
According to our results, different forms of discrimination that people suffer or might suffer at work have a negative effect on their efficiency and satisfaction. This effect manifests itself in different ways.

“*I paused my work. Anxiety affects my motivation. I became phobic. My asthma attacks increased. I became diabetic.*” (gay male scholar)

“*On way or another they make me feel like I am the first that will dismissed in case of firings. I feel that and if my colleagues work one unit, I work three. That is tiresome. And since I am not married with kids, it makes me more accessible in terms of work.*” (gay male scholar)

“*I feel like I shouldn’t stick out, I should be perfect and I get stressed out. Like an attempt to compensate. I imagine defense scenarios in case someone accuses me, I am ready.*” (queer gay psychologist/PAGC)

“*Definitely affects. Even though I didn’t experience personally, I know what people have been through for being LGBTI+ in the public sector and being disclosed. I have no loyalty to my institution, I have to live with the fear of getting fired one day. My effectiveness drops significantly. It destroys any hope of being promoted. I don’t make an effort. I am anxious if my situation is examined if I ever get promoted.*” (gay male engineer/architect)

“I don’t feel peaceful at work, I am shy, I am shy even about demanding my share about other things. I get tired even if I don’t work hard. I feel the need to spend time with people I am comfortable with outside work.” (gay male health personnel)

“I am tired of worrying about my health, I am scared.” (lesbian female graphic designer)
"I find it risky to get promoted. I prefer low profile positions instead of being under focus." (lesbian female engineer/architect)

"Since we don’t have rules and regulations to prevent discrimination, I am afraid that students would report me to Cimer/Bimer or the school administration, that my colleagues would gossip about me and engage in hate speech, that I would lose my job related to any of these, because I am queer. I care about my job and I think I do it right. But I am always restless in my mind. So I make the effort that none-queer people don’t have to just to exist at work. And I might be assigned as hetero, I am cis. Trans individuals, feminine gays or masculine lesbians have to make an even bigger effort. This means we don’t have the same conditions with cis-het people. Prejudice, discrimination and hatred in the society is triggered by the state through shameful institutions like the Department of Religious Affairs. We are targeted every day. Therefore, it is not surprising to live/work on the edge under these conditions that get worse.” (bisexual cis female scholar)

“Even though they don’t know my orientation, they tease me using my feminist identity. Men say ‘Feminists say this, how absurd’ or ‘Feminists say this, why?’ as if I am the spokesperson for feminists or that I should talk to them about feminism.” (pansexual female scholar)

“If they knew about my sexual orientation that is part of my identity I was born with, I might lose my job or get exiled saying I am a bad example for the people I work with. When I think about that I go back into my shell. And the anxiety prevents me from concentrating on my work.” (gay male psychologist/PGC)

“Most of the time I get called the wrong pronouns. Creates psychological frustration.” (bisexual non-binary communications specialist)

“To be ignored, seen as taboo, to have no mechanisms against hatred or discrimination, the fact that they change the subject when it comes to LGB-TI+ rights and act as if the problem doesn’t exist makes me feel lonely, like everyone is talking behind my back like in the Painted Bird novel. I wait for them to do something bad. It gets difficult to be friends with my colleagues or make joint studies at the university.” (lesbian non-binary scholar)

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

To the question “Are you a member of any union or Professional organization?” 28.6% (50 people) answered “yes, member of a union” and 12.6% (22 people) “yes, member of a Professional organization”. Six people (3.4%) are members to both. Unfortunately, 97 people (55.4%) are not part of any union or professional organization.

![Pie chart showing membership](chart.png)

Disclosure in unions and professional organizations

To those who are members of a union or professional organization, we asked the question “Are you open about your gender identity, sexual orientation, sex characteristics in your union or professional organization?” Four people (5.1%) were members of an organization and are completely open about their gender identity/

![Bar chart showing disclosure levels](chart2.png)
sexual orientation /intersex situation, 49 people (62.8%) were completely closed and 14 people (17.9%) are partially open.

“I don’t feel the need to share my gender identity with the union. I am not open or closed.” (gay male scholar)

“Yes, but they provided no support.” (heterosexual trans female head specialist)

Personal experiences of discrimination in unions and professional organizations

To those who were members of a union or professional organization at the time of the study, we asked if they personally experienced any kind of discrimination in the organization. Thirty people (38.5%) who were also members of an organization declared that they had never witnessed any discrimination and only one reported experiencing direct discrimination. On the other hand, 55.1% believe the reason they did not experience any discriminatory behavior or attitude regarding their gender identity/sexual orientation /intersex traits was because they were undisclosed.

This data makes clear that unions are also unable to create trust among LGBTI+ individuals. Of the five people who stated that they experienced discrimination only one reported it. The other four chose not to report.

“They issued a statement saying LGBTI+ and women studies had become more important that the union issues and a man physically threatened me at the meeting.” (teacher who doesn’t want to identify)
Hate speech against LGBTI+ employees in unions and professional organizations

To those who were members of a union or professional organization, we asked the question “Have you witnessed any hate speech against LGBTI+ in your organization?” and 59% said “no” and 20.5% said “I don’t know”. While the percentage of witnessing hate speech in the workplace was 64%, within the member of a union or organization the same percentage was 20.5%. It appears that relatively speaking LGBTI+ employees experienced less hate speech unions and professional organization.

Measures against discrimination

We asked participants “What do you think three measures against discrimination against LGBTI+ employees in the public sector?” When we grouped the answers, what became clear was that participants wanted to see “legal measures” on LGBTI+ rights. The suggested measures started with current legislation being updated according to universal human rights criteria followed government responsibility and leadership, and a ban against discrimination in legislation. Participants also listed in-house training, positive statements of managers, solidarity networks and organized resistance and campaigns for social awareness as other measures that could help mitigate discrimination.
Most of the answers fell in line with Turkey’s responsibilities regarding national and international human rights agreements. Participants stated that in order to prevent discrimination, current legislation should be updated. Legal applications would provide LGBTI+ employees in public sector job security and change their work environment where they are obliged to work under the constant threat of discrimination. The need for in-house rules was also mentioned. Some of the participants stated that society as a whole should change but many were hopeless that such a transformation can happen.

Quotes from our participants

At the end of the survey the participants were asked to add or share any comments that were not included in the questions. Below you will find some of their thoughts and ideas. These quotes underline the close link between the situation of LGBTI+ employees in the public sector and the situation of employees in general making collective action a must. However, LGBTI+ employees need special legal changes and mechanisms that would give them more freedom. An increase in LGBTI+ visibility, in the public sector, as elsewhere, would change working conditions for the better. Some of our participants pointed out the systematic nature of discrimination and believe they there will not be any improvement in the work environment without radical transformation.

“One day I will move my life to a country where LGBTIQ+ can exist freely. Then I will disclose all the homophobia that I came across at the public sector.”
sector, the private sector and during all those years of education. When I was working in a private university I was subject to homophobia from our female dean graduate of XXX high school and XXX university. This person looked very enlightened and critical but he told me he was scared of her son being gay and that she was going home to read verses from Koran. And many other things... These people don’t know what it means to be the other, to be isolated, they live comfortably in their statuses approved by the society. We get beaten, crushed and even killed. We will not forget.” (gay male scholar)

“I hope one day I will see that kids are educated with their parents during puberty, not only on HIV and other STDs but also on sexual orientation and intercourse, not as something shameful but about saving lives and respect.” (queer female teacher)

“We need legal guarantees that our situation is not shameful so it should not be a situation that is considered unsuitable for public offices. Every situation that is banned is a violation of basic rights and freedoms.” (trans heterosexual male engineer/architect)

“We as LGBTI+ individuals live too much together as a commune. But we have a majority outside that is conservative, ignorant of our situation, rejecting it with religious reasons. If the state won’t support us and give us security, we will have to live hiding ourselves. Public service announcements and trainings can be used for awareness but we need legal guarantees as a priority.” (lesbian female manager)

“Every sector has different attitudes towards individuals. In the health sector they don’t have the same pressure that doctors and teachers experience. Nurses and midwives have a different situation. The institution you work in, the primary care clinic, hospital or health department makes a big difference. From what I observe, the periphery is more peaceful.” (lesbian female health personnel)

“As a public servant and a scholar I have to censor myself during classes because I was reported to CIMER many times about my comments on other issues, human rights or the situation of our country. So being disclosed scares me, I get anxious about losing my job and get medical help. But encouraging and guiding my LGBTI+ students implicitly increases my self-esteem. Thank you.” (gay male scholar)

“no one cares about LGBTI students and attacks against them at schools. The society ignores them. Students and kids are not seen, there is no information about them in the curriculum.” (gay teacher)

“Public employees don’t know if they have job security. There is no regula-

3 Details were removed to maintain anonymity.
tion about sexual orientation and job security protection. Therefore, people spend their whole life in a small Anatolian city with an identity they can’t have.” (gay male scholar)

“Having mechanisms against hatred and discrimination at the institutions regarding LGBTI+, the increase in those who serve with an open identity, knowing the risks and protecting themselves, these could mean big achievements. Politics and law should give the importance we need to LGBTI+ rights...” (non-binary lesbian scholar)