

REPORT



on the Life of LGBTQ+ People in Russia in 2023

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LGBTQ+ Non-Profit Organization Coming Out

Since 2008, Coming Out has been protecting the rights of the LGBTQ+ community and helping queer people of Russia live more peacefully.

Our main goal is to establish equal legal and social rights for everyone regardless of their sexual orientation and/or gender identity.

Our psychologists and lawyers provide free consultations for LGBTQ+ people and their loved ones. We monitor discrimination to collect evidence of the experiences of LGBTQ+ people in Russia, and work with the authorities on cases of discrimination and violence. We teach journalists to use inclusive language when reporting on the LGBTQ+ community and educate doctors, psychologists, and HRs to work with queer communities.

All services we provide are free of charge.

Book a consultation

- [Therapy services](#)
- [Legal assistance](#)
- [Career consultation](#)

Our social media

 [instagram.com/comingout_eng/](https://www.instagram.com/comingout_eng/)

 t.me/keepcalmandcomingout

 facebook.com/comingoutspb

 twitter.com/comingoutspb

 youtube.com/user/ComingOutSP

Contact us

contact@comingoutspb.org
<https://comingoutspb.com/en/>

Sphere Foundation

Sphere Foundation is a human rights organization that was created in 2011. We provide help and support for LGBTQ+ people and work with other organizations that have similar goals.

Our mission is to contribute to the creation of an environment in which people will not experience violence or discrimination on account of their sexuality or gender identity.

For legal assistance, mental health support, and emergency services, please use our Telegram bot.

Request help

- [Telegram bot](#)

Our social media

 [instagram.com/spherequeer/](https://www.instagram.com/spherequeer/)

 t.me/spherequeer

 [facebook.com/spherequeer](https://www.facebook.com/spherequeer)

 twitter.com/SphereFund

 [youtube.com/@spherequeer](https://www.youtube.com/@spherequeer)

Contact us

spherequeer.org

Glossary

We believe that it is vital to use inclusive language in this report; however, we understand that some readers may be unfamiliar with it. Here are the key terms and abbreviations that have been used throughout the report, the meaning of which may not be as obvious.

Aromantic People: People who do not experience romantic attraction or experience it only partially.

Asexual People: People who do not experience sexual attraction or experience it only partially.

Bisexuality: The quality of being able to experience emotional, romantic, and/or sexual attraction to both men and women, not necessarily equally and not necessarily simultaneously.

Cisgender People: People whose gender identity corresponds to the sex assigned at birth.

Deadname: The name that a transgender person no longer uses; usually the name given at birth. It can be a legal name (i.e., the one listed in their passport), or it can simply be "dead," not listed anywhere, if the records in documents have been changed.

Fake Dates: A type of felony usually committed against gay and bisexual men. Using dating apps, the perpetrator arranges a "date" with the victim. Other perpetrators arrive during "the date", sometimes posing as police officers or journalists, and extort money from the victim through blackmailing them with distribution of "incriminating" videos or other information, physical violence, or threats of calling the police or journalists.

Gay People: People who experience emotional, romantic, and/or sexual attraction exclusively or primarily to others of the same gender identity.

Gender Dysphoria: Discomfort associated with a mismatch between a person's gender identity and the sex assigned at birth, as well as between gender identity and the body and/or how a person's gender is perceived by others.

Gender Expression: The way a person expresses different aspects of their gender identity or gender role through appearance, behavior, choice of clothing, and accessories.

Gender Identity: How a person feels about themselves, how they define themselves in gender categories. A person may identify as male (boy, man), female (girl, woman), or alternative (non-binary). Gender identity is an internally experienced feeling and therefore not necessarily visible to others.

Gender Non-Conforming People: People whose gender expression and behavior differ from those associated with their gender and do not conform to societal stereotypes about how men or women should behave.

Intersex: A term used to describe the experience of a person born with sex characteristics (including genitals, gonads, reproductive organs, and chromosome patterns) that do not fit the typical definition of a male or female body. Intersex variations may be apparent at birth (for example, if a child is born with "atypical" genitals), manifest during puberty (when puberty does not occur or does not proceed as it does in most people), during an attempt to become pregnant, or later in life. In some cases, people may never know that they are intersex.

LGBTQ+ (or LGBT+, LGBTQIA+): An established abbreviation that includes lesbians, gay men, bisexual, transgender, and queer people. The plus in this abbreviation is used to denote inclusivity and other groups and identities.

Non-Binary People: People whose identity does not fit into binary gender (i.e., a person who does not identify fully as either female or male).

Outing: Forcing a person to come out, revealing information about their sexual orientation and/or gender identity, or another stigmatized characteristic, without their consent.

Pansexuality: The quality of being able to experience emotional, romantic, and/or sexual attraction to people regardless of their sex or gender. Gender and sexual characteristics do not play a significant role in building relationships for pansexual people ("I love the person, not their gender").

Polyamory: A form of ethical, consensual non-monogamous relationship involving more than two people.

SOGIE: Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity, and Expression.

Transgender People: People whose gender identity does not correspond to the sex assigned at birth.

Research Methodology

The primary aim of our study was to determine the number of discrimination incidents based on homophobia and transphobia that occurred in Russia in 2023. Additionally, we wanted to evaluate the quality of life for LGBTQ+ individuals in Russia, encompassing their financial standing, living conditions, educational access, healthcare availability, and overall access to various services. Furthermore, we sought to evaluate the impact of the recent surge in repression against LGBTQ+ individuals in Russia, triggered by Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, alongside assessing the ramifications of the conflict itself and the processes associated with it (such as heightened censorship, repression, sanctions, and mobilization) on Russian LGBTQ+ individuals.

Data collection took place from December 11, 2023, to February 14, 2024, via an online questionnaire. Our survey was distributed through multiple channels: Firstly, via the Coming Out and Sphere social media platforms. Secondly, it was actively promoted by our partners (LGBTQ+ organizations, media outlets, bloggers, and influencers). Finally, the queer dating site Hornet suggested its users to fill in the questionnaire, which allowed us to broaden our sample to gay men from diverse regions across Russia, beyond the immediate audience of Coming Out and Sphere.

The data were collected from respondents residing solely in the officially recognized territories of the Russian Federation, excluding the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and other occupied territories from our dataset. This exclusion aligns with the principles of public international law as outlined in the UN Charter (1945), the Declaration on Principles of International Law concerning Friendly Relations and Cooperation among States (1970), and the Helsinki Final Act of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (1975).

Regrettably, the constraints imposed by Russian legislation, combined with censorship and blocked websites, severely limited our ability to conduct widespread distribution of the survey. For instance, targeted advertising based on gender or region was unfeasible. Moreover, potential respondents may have been deterred from participating due to fears about government persecution. Given that our survey was launched shortly after the Russian Supreme Court deemed "The International LGBT Movement" as extremist, such concerns were likely widespread. Some respondents who completed the survey expressed their worries about submitting their responses or providing their email addresses to subscribe to Coming Out and Sphere newsletters (the latter being optional).

Our survey had single-choice, multiple-choice, and open-ended questions, asking respondents to recount their experiences and share various instances of discrimination or challenges they encountered. This year's survey featured minor changes to the questionnaire introduced in the collaborative Coming Out–Sphere study of 2022, which includes language clarifications and some additional questions.

Duplicated or evidently implausible responses were removed from the dataset, along with those containing homophobic or aggressive rhetoric

against LGBTQ+ individuals, as well as responses from straight cisgender individuals.

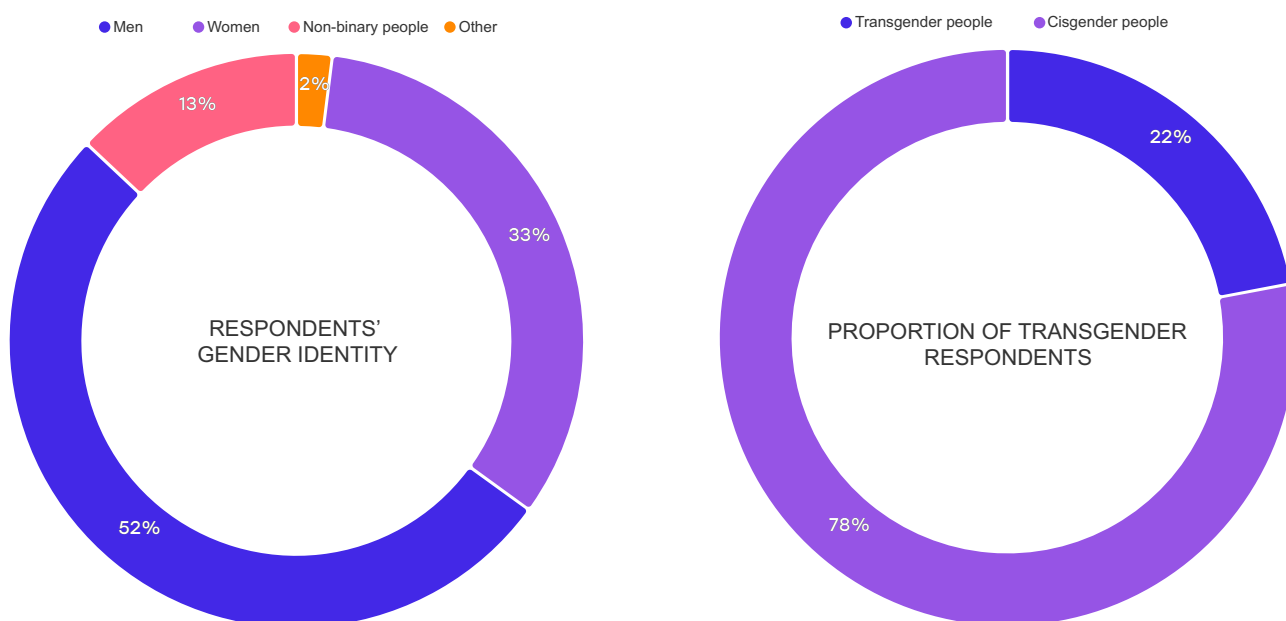
The report includes excerpts from research participants along with labels used by the individuals. All data and quotations have been anonymized.

It is crucial to acknowledge that the data we analyze reflects our respondents' subjective evaluations of their own circumstances and the discrimination they have faced. Consequently, it is plausible that certain instances of discrimination may have been omitted from our dataset due to differing perceptions among survey participants. Conversely, some cases classified as rights violations may involve situations that do not align with the legal categories considered when we were compiling the questionnaire and analyzing the results. Moreover, there is a slight possibility that respondents, whether inadvertently or in a bid to share their experiences, may have cited pre-2023 incidents in the questionnaire. Thus, we rely on the subjective discernment of our respondents and their candidness and attention when responding to our questions.

Demographics

Our dataset encompasses 4,701 responses, with 3,026 collected via social networks and targeted advertising, and 1,675 received through the Hornet newsletter.

Participants' ages span from 12 to 66 years, with an average age of 26.4 years and a median¹ age of 24 years. Notably, this year's sample skews slightly younger compared to 2022, when the average age was 27.9 years and the median was 26 years.



Similar to 2022, individuals identifying as male are significantly overrepresented, constituting 52% of our sample, while those identifying as female comprise 33%. Non-binary people make up 13%, with the remaining 2% choosing other gender identities.

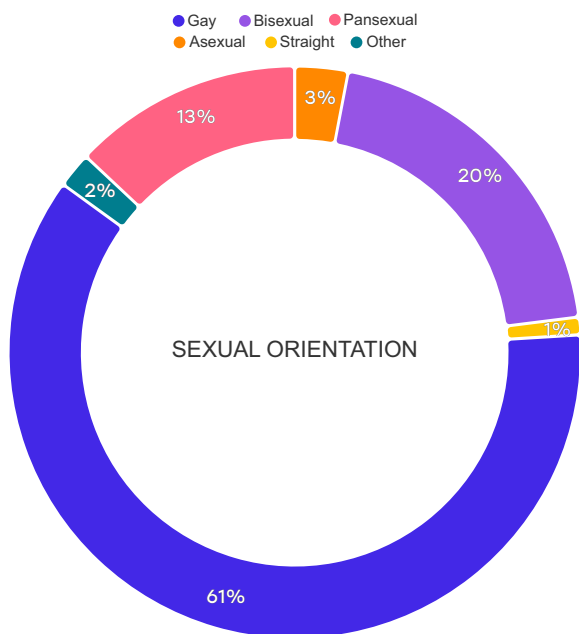
Among respondents recruited through Hornet, 90% identify as men, with an average age of 30.9 years. Thus, it's imperative to acknowledge the substantial demographic disparities between these respondent groups, which we will delineate throughout our analysis.

Transgender respondents constitute 22% of our sample, with a younger statistical profile, averaging 24.3 years old, and a median age of 21 years. Nearly two-fifths of transgender respondents (39%) reside in Russia's largest cities, primarily Moscow (24%) and St. Petersburg (15%).

A minority of participants (2%, 98 individuals) identify as having intersex variations.

¹ Median age serves as a distinctive feature within a sample concerning age, denoting the point at which half of the sample (50%) is not younger than the specified age, while the other half (50%) is not older.

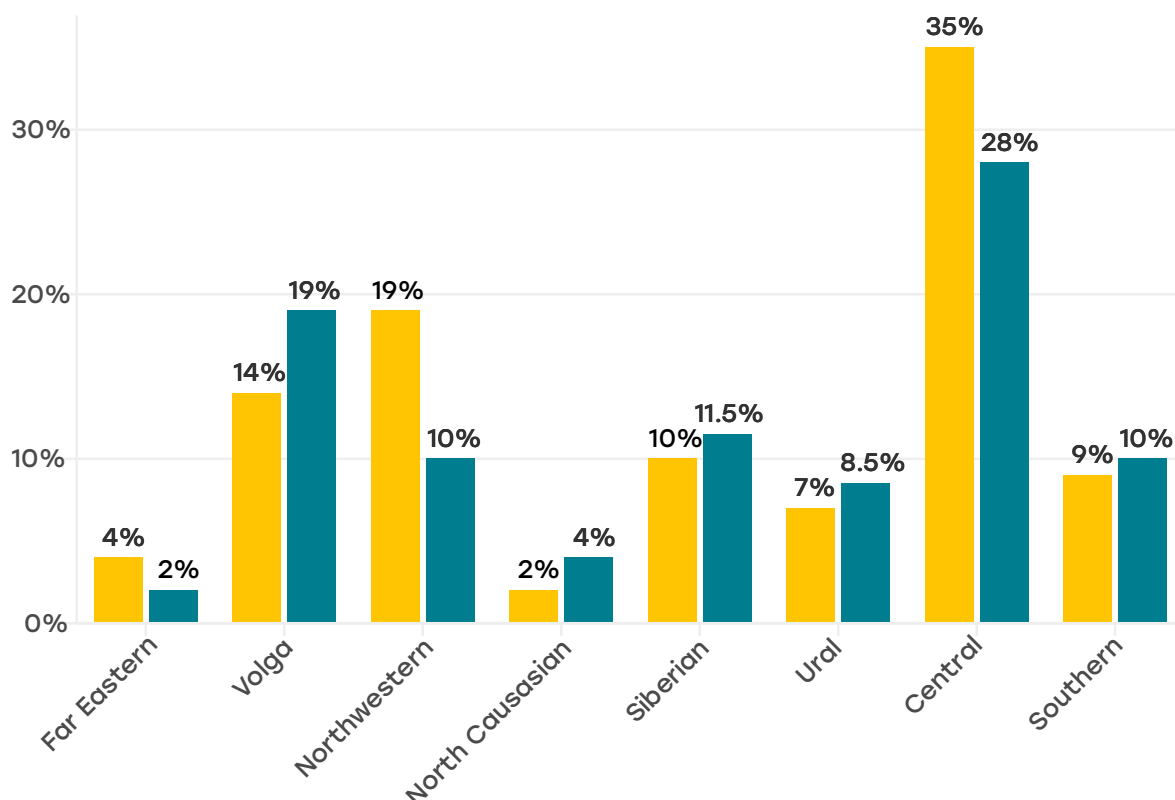
The majority of respondents (61%) identify as gay, 20% as bisexual, 13% as pansexual, 3% as asexual, 1% as straight, and 2% have chosen other gender identities. Additionally, 25% of respondents identify as polyamorous.



Most participants reside or have resided in Moscow (22%) and St. Petersburg (13%), thus offering a more comprehensive representation of these cities and their respective federal districts (Central and Northwestern) in our research. Conversely, the Far Eastern, North Caucasian, and Volga federal districts are underrepresented. This skew is attributed to legal constraints and censorship, which impact our data collection methodology. We duly consider it in our analysis.

● Sample Distribution by Federal District

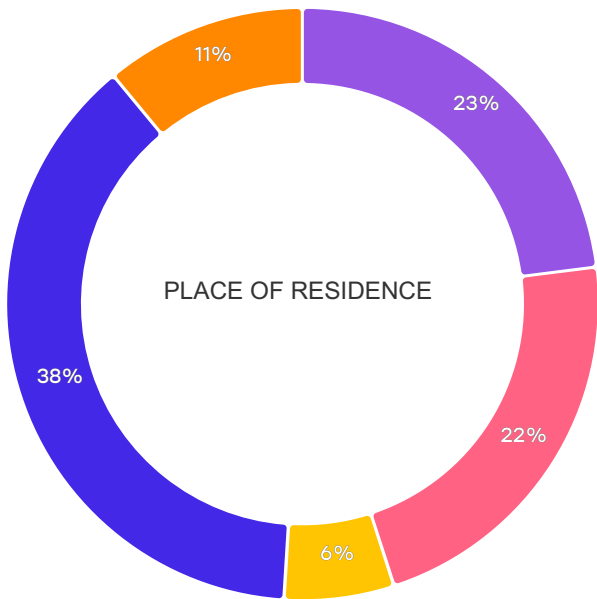
● Population Distribution by Federal District



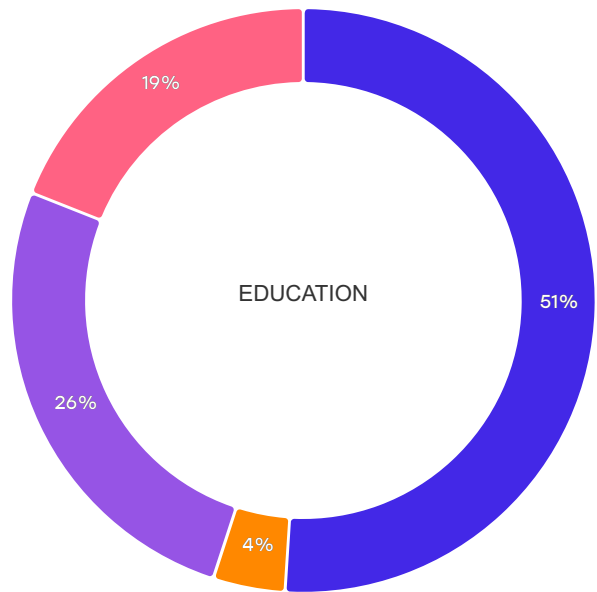
The majority of respondents live in metropolises (cities with over 3 million inhabitants, 38%), followed by cities with populations exceeding a million (23%), and large cities (ranging from 250 thousand to a million inhabitants, 22%).

Similarly to the 2022 study, the majority of our participants have or are pursuing higher education (51% of the entire sample).

● Metropolis (>3M inhabitants, Moscow or St. Petersburg)
● Million-plus cities (1M–3M inhabitants) ● Large city (250K–1M inhabitants)
● City (50K–250K inhabitants) ● Town, settlement, or village (<50K inhabitants)



● Higher ● General secondary ● General Vocational ● Elementary

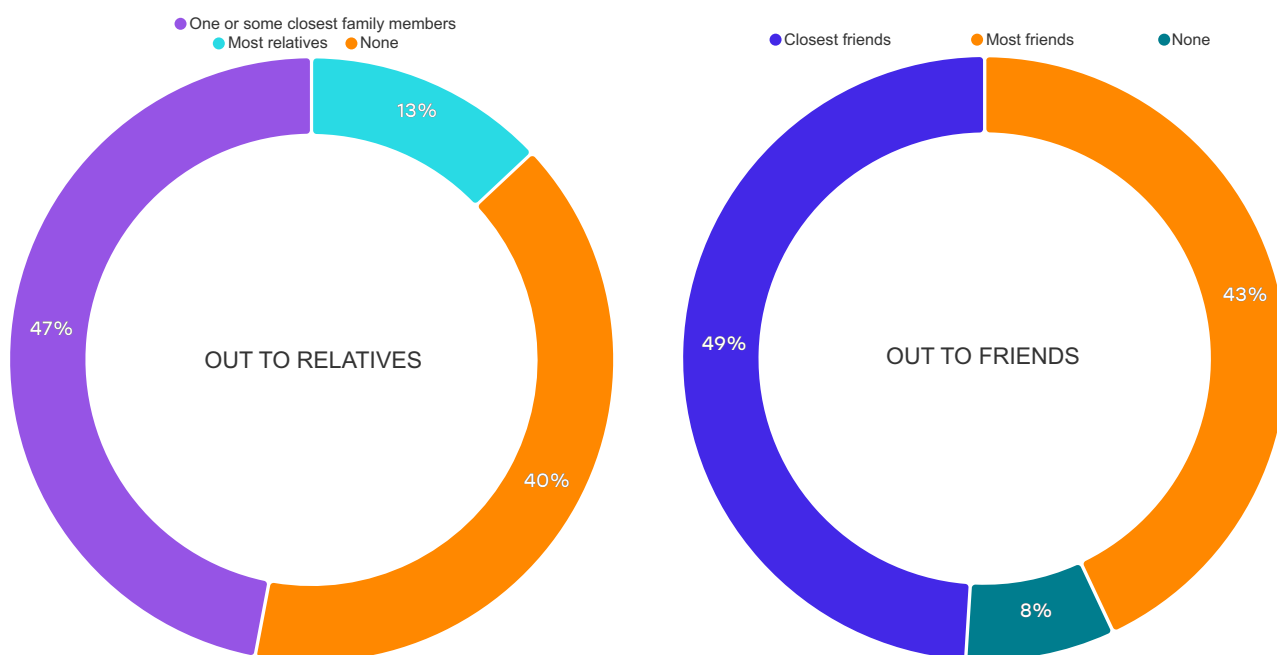


Coming Out

In comparison to the data of 2022, we have observed important changes in terms of how often LGBTQ+ people come out to others.

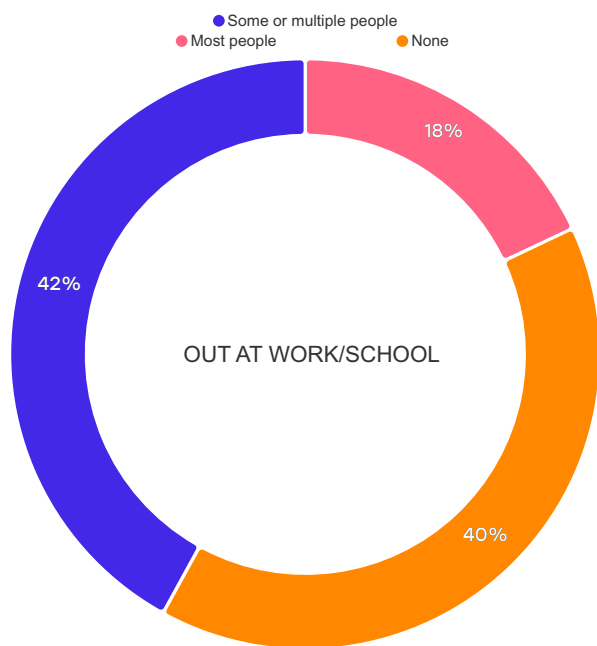
In 2022, when talking about their coming-outs to friends, the largest proportion of respondents reported that the majority of their friends knew about their sexuality and/or gender identity (49%). In 2023, the proportion of respondents who are out to the majority of their friends has noticeably decreased; now they represent only 43%. The majority of respondents this year (49%) are only out to their closest friends. The proportion of those who are totally closeted with their friends increased by 2 percentage points compared to last year's data – from 6% to 8%.

Only 13% of respondents are out to most of their relatives (14% in 2022). The majority of respondents (47%) indicated that only one or a few closest relatives know about their sexuality or gender identity (48% in 2022). The proportion of those who are closeted with all relatives, including parents, has increased by 2 percentage points since last year – from 38% to 40%.



There have also been some changes in whether our respondents are out in work or school communities. The proportion of those who did not tell anyone about their sexuality and/or gender identity at work or school has increased by 3 percentage points – from 37% to 40%. Simultaneously, the proportion of those who were out to most colleagues or classmates decreased by the same number – from 21% to 17%.

On average, it is more common for transgender people to be out to their relatives, as well as in work or study groups, than others in our sample (20% of transgender respondents are out to relatives, 23% are out to most coworkers or classmates). At the same time, transgender people are out to their friends



as frequently as the rest of the sample, although last year, transgender people were out to friends more often. Comparing the indicators of whether transgender respondents are out, we can see that over the year the proportion of transgender people who are out to most friends has decreased by 10 percentage points, i.e., the difference from last year is more significant for them than the sample average.

Hornet users, similar to the previous year, appeared to be much more closeted than other respondents (among them, the proportion of those who are closeted with all friends, all

relatives, as well as all colleagues or classmates is higher: 10%, 45%, and 45%, respectively). At the same time, when compared to the data from 2022, Hornet users remained approximately just as closeted or out, with no significant differences in this category of respondents, unlike the rest of the sample.

Saint Petersburg can still be considered the most “out” region of Russia (57% of respondents are out to most friends, 19% – to most relatives, and 24% – to most classmates or colleagues). It is important to note that there are no significant changes compared to 2022 among the answers received from St. Petersburg residents.

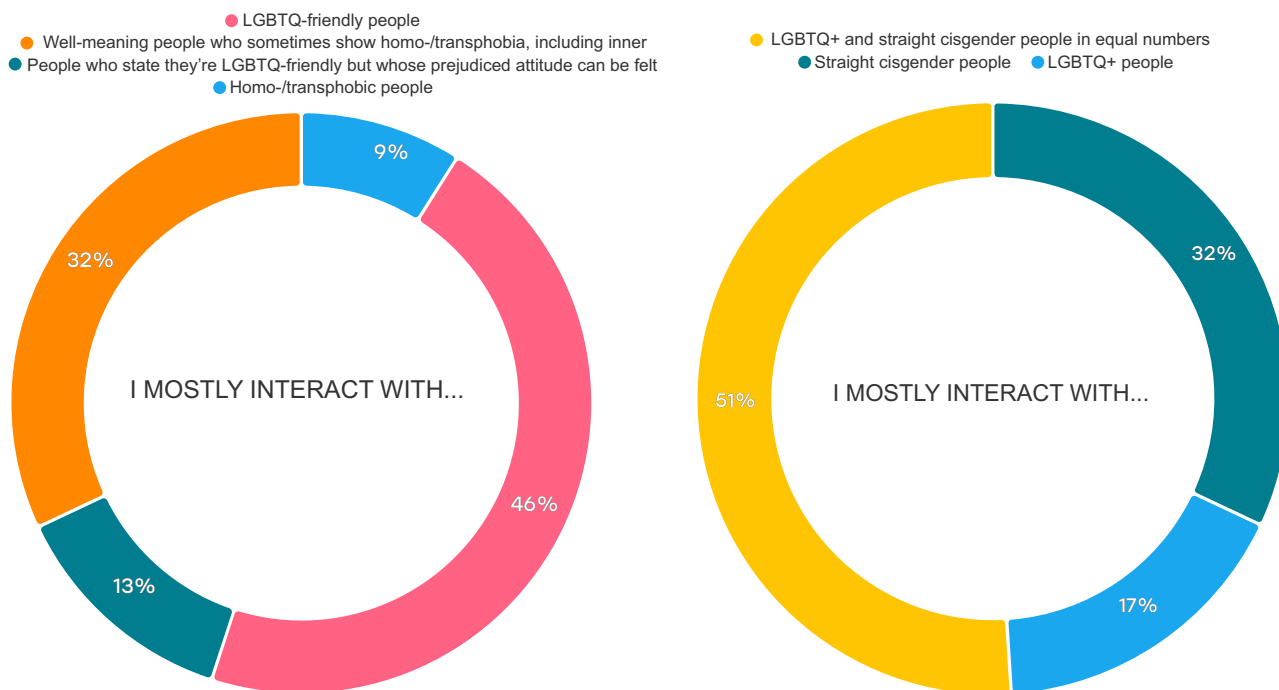
As of 2022, Moscow ranks second in terms of the number of LGBTQ+ people who are out, but unlike St. Petersburg, it shows the same trends: there are now fewer respondents who are out, which is similar to the sample overall. The proportion of Moscow respondents who are out to most friends has decreased from 56% to 50%; the proportion of those who are out to most relatives has decreased from 18% to 15%; and the proportion of those who are out in work or study groups has decreased from 23% to 19%.

Among “the most closeted” federal districts are:

- North Caucasus (with the highest proportion of those who are not out to their friends, relatives, and at work or studies: 16%, 46%, and 49%);
- Siberian (the proportion of those who are closeted with all relatives, colleagues, or classmates is higher than the sample average: 45% and 47%);
- Ural (the proportion of respondents who are not out to any of their relatives is higher than the sample average: 45%, as in the Siberian Federal District);
- Volga (the proportion of respondents who are not out to any of their relatives is higher than the sample average: 44%).

Compared to 2022, the most 'closeted' federal districts remained the same, with the exception of Siberia, where respondents demonstrated being closeted much more commonly in 2023 than in the previous year.

Half of the respondents (51%) indicated that their social circle consists equally of straight cisgender people and LGBTQ+ people. A large proportion of the respondents (46%) indicated that the people around them are mostly LGBTQ-friendly.



However, the proportion of those who stated that their people around them were mostly LGBTQ-friendly has decreased by 4 percentage points compared to last year (50% in 2022). On the contrary, the proportion of those who are surrounded by primarily homophobic and transphobic people has increased (by 2 percentage points: from 7% to 9%).

Participants from the North Caucasian Federal District were most likely to indicate that their social environment mostly includes cisgender straight people (42%). This can indirectly indicate the isolated and closeted existence of the LGBTQ+ community in the region. The North Caucasian Federal District also demonstrates the highest proportion of those whose social environment is mostly homophobic and transphobic: 21%, which is three times higher than the sample average. Last year, this proportion was also the highest, but it was 15% and only two times higher than the average.

The majority of those who described their social environment as mostly supportive used to live or still live in Saint Petersburg (56%, last year – 57%) and Moscow (52%, last year – 55%).

The lowest proportion of those who are surrounded by LGBTQ-friendly people is among respondents from the North Caucasian (34%), Far Eastern (36%), and Southern Federal Districts (40%).

Summary

In 2023, we can see that our respondents are more closeted than in 2022. Despite the fact that, according to some indicators, the changes are not so great in percentage points, the dynamics are the same: there have become more people who are closeted with all friends, relatives, colleagues, or classmates, while the number of those who are out to the majority in their social environment has decreased. The same applies to the attitudes of the immediate social circle towards LGBTQ+ people: there are fewer people who consider their close ones to be LGBTQ+ friendly, and more people who describe their environment as mainly homophobic and transphobic.

Despite all these noticeable changes, it is important to emphasize that there has not been much disparity among the most closeted and the most out categories of respondents compared to last year's data. Thus, this year there have not been significant changes in the responses of St. Petersburg residents, who have been consistently demonstrating the highest coming-out indicators compared to other regions. Hornet users, who are one of the most closeted groups in our sample, still demonstrate low levels of being out to others, which are approximately equal to those of last year.

In the North Caucasus, the proportion of those whose social environment is mainly homophobic and transphobic has increased significantly, while in St. Petersburg, the proportion of such respondents remained as small as it was in 2023 (4%). Therefore, we can conclude that homophobic and transphobic attitudes have significantly increased where they had already been strongly expressed. On the contrary, homophobia and transphobia remained at approximately the same level in friendlier regions.

Transgender respondents demonstrate a unique dynamic: according to our data, while they are still more often out to their relatives, co-workers, or classmates than the sample on average, they now come out to their friends less commonly, being more selective in their approach to coming out to them than the year before.

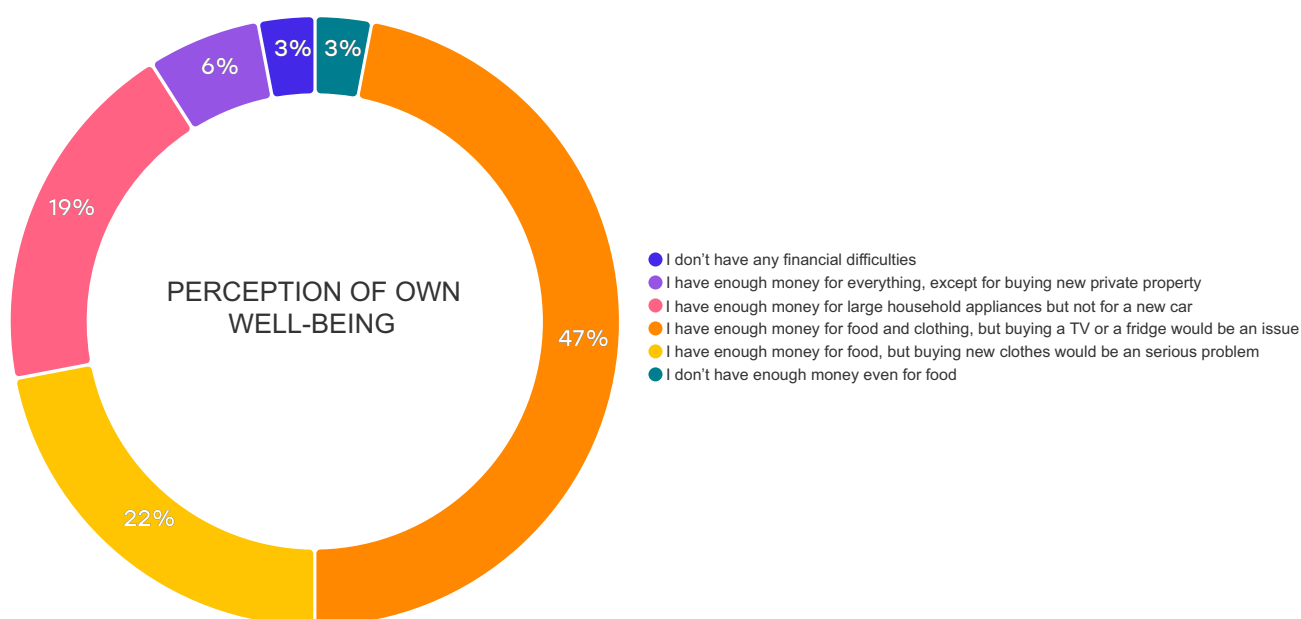
All the changes that we have recorded indicate that LGBTQ+ people have become more closeted within their close social circle. They are more careful in choosing whom to come out to and are much less willing to open up to others, even to those they consider their friends. This dynamic emphasizes the high degree of distrust and anxiety that had surrounded LGBTQ+ people in Russia by the end of 2023. In addition, these data confirm the growth of homophobic and transphobic rhetoric in Russian society.

Financial Shape of LGBTQ+ People

Income Level

Nearly a quarter of our respondents (22%), according to their own estimates, can afford no more than to cover food expenses and, therefore, are on the verge of poverty, while a solid 3% of the participants can't even afford to satisfy their basic needs, making them lie below the poverty line. This percentage is significantly higher among transgender people - 7%, whereas 33% are struggling to pay for food, which indicates that they are especially vulnerable in terms of financial stability.

The majority of the surveyed, nearly a half (47%), can afford to buy food, clothing and small household appliances, but struggle with bigger purchases. A fifth of the respondents (19%) can afford bigger purchases, another 6% are able to buy such expensive goods as an apartment or a country house, and no more than 3% say that they have no financial difficulties and can afford anything.

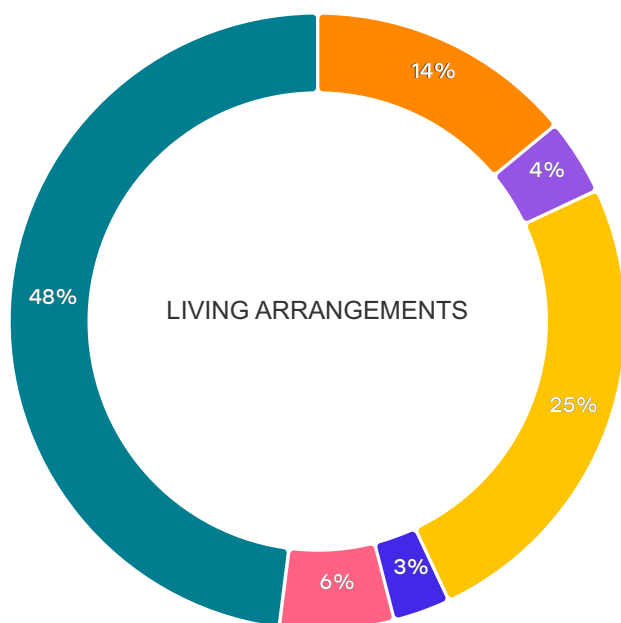


Compared to last year's data, the proportion of those who can afford food, clothing and small appliances has increased due to the reduction in the number of those who can afford more expensive purchases. Such changes may be the result of the general economic decline in Russia, however, they may also be related to our current sample being younger on average than last year.

The largest proportion of our respondents (48%) reside with their parents on a permanent basis, which may imply their economic dependence on their family members.

A quarter of the participants (25%) live in a rented apartment, and only 14% are property-owners and live in their own houses.

- I don't have a permanent living arrangement
- I live at my own property
- I live at my partner's place
- I live in a student dormitory
- I live in a rented place
- I live with my parents



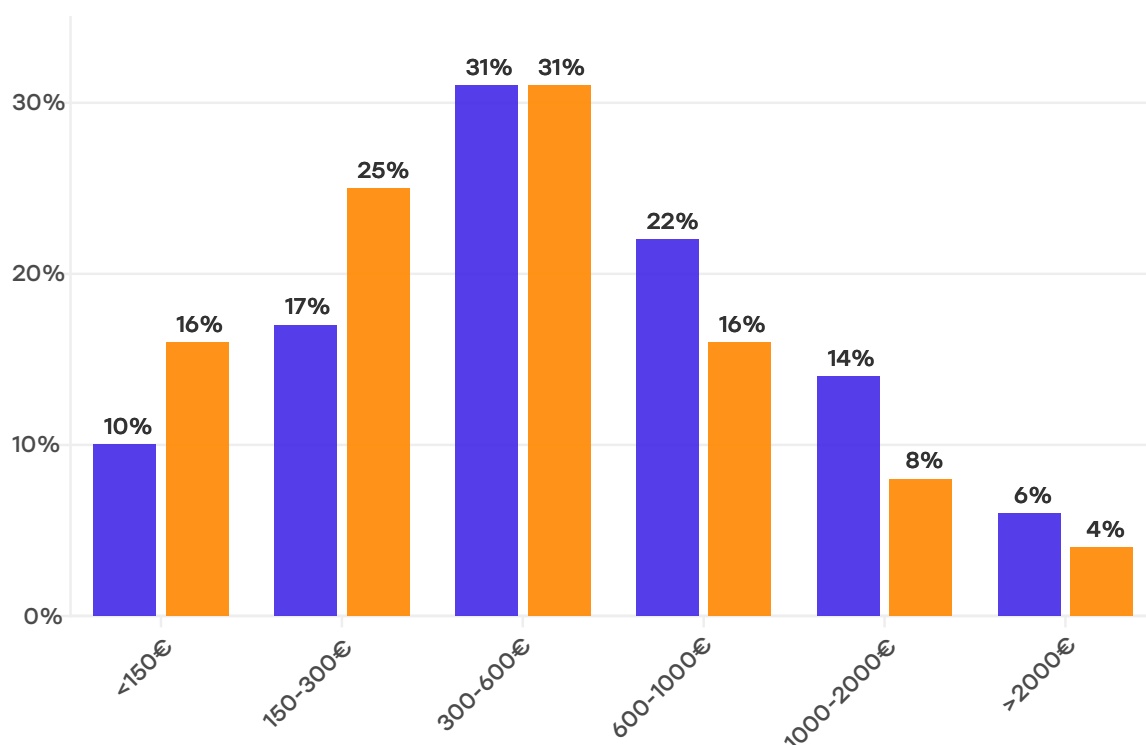
A small percentage of respondents (12%) are supporting those who are dependent on them - those who do not have a regular income and may need financial assistance - e.g., their children, relatives or partners.

The majority of those surveyed (70%) have a regular income. However, the proportion is lower among transgender people - 56%. This may be related to the difficulties that transgender people encounter all throughout employment, the social stigma they encounter, as well as to the rather young age of transgender respondents on average this year.

Among those who have a steady income, the level of income can be described the following way. A third of the participants with a steady income (31%, the major part) are paid a salary within the range of 30 000 - 60 000 rubles (300€-600€), for 17% the numbers are 15 000 - 30 000 rubles (150€-300€), and other 10% are paid no more than 12 000 rubles (120€), which is below the subsistence minimum (since January, 2023, the subsistence minimum for working people has been set at 15 669 rubles [~156€]).

More than half of those surveyed (58%) have an income that is significantly lower than the average salary in the country. According to the preliminary data by Russian Federal State Statistics Service, the average nominal salary pre-tax in 2023 was 73 709 rubles (~737€) nationwide.

- All respondents
- Transgender respondents



When compared to the average income of those surveyed, the level of income among transgender participants clearly shows that their proportion is notably higher among low-income respondents and just as notably lower among high-income respondents. This fact clearly demonstrates that many transgender people remain in a difficult financial situation.

Taking into account the young age of our sample, as well as the proportion of those residing with their family members and the income rates, it is fair to conclude that the majority of the surveyed are partially or fully dependent on their family members and do not have their own sufficient income. That is why our subjective estimation of income is somewhat higher than the data on the average monthly income shows.

Some respondents (15%) consider their SOGIE to affect their financial situation, the same proportion as in 2022. Another 28% find it difficult to answer whether that is true: the proportion has increased by 4% compared to last year.

The percentage of those who believe that their SOGIE (however, gender identity seems more relevant in this case) affects their financial situation is significantly higher among transgender people - 32%, yet another 37% find it difficult to give a definite answer. Thus, many transgender people consider their financial situation to be precarious and their gender identity to be the reason. The proportion of those in doubt has also increased by 4%.

Elaborating on how their SOGIE affects their financial situation, the respondents have mentioned several factors:

- Losing financial support from family members after coming out to them, as well as housing and inheritance;
- Being dismissed from work due to SOGIE;
- Encountering prejudice and disrespect at work;
- Struggling with employment due to paperwork issues (e.g., when gender assigned at birth and/or name is stated on ID but does not match actual gender identity and/or name used by a person)
- High costs of gender-affirming therapy;
- Career start being delayed due to long and tiring gender journey;
- Not being able to pursue good education due to bullying and/or lack of support from family members;
- Not being able to make money on queer-related art.

“ The thing is that it’s impossible for me to get a job with a ‘female’ passport and a ‘male’ name. I can lie my way through to get a bank account, I can ask my mom or a friend to rent an apartment in their name for me, but how can you get a job with nothing on your hands? That’s why I worked first in a cemetery, barely making my ends meet with what I was paid, then - at an underground computer club. ”

Pansexual transgender man, 18, Rostov Region

“ I mean, I could go to university if I wouldn't be bullied and discriminated against there. Could spend time with my family, could count on their support while getting a degree. But here I am, somewhat working, somewhat living, but all this is kind of hard and frustrating: without adequate documents, I feel like an illegal immigrant in my own country. ”

Pansexual transgender man, 18, Rostov Region

“ I was discriminated against in school and in college. After that, I lost all hope of getting a good education. Available to me are mostly low-paid jobs in transphobic workplaces where I am being bullied. I have no idea how to meet new people and earn a living in such circumstances. ”

Straight transgender woman, 29, Altai Territory

“ Unequal opportunities from the very beginning, losing time and energy on self-discovery, losing time and energy on gender affirming practices, not being able to go to university and losing your home because of parents' prejudice, just having no family support, unequal access to healthcare (due to both discrimination and stigmatization, as well as financial reasons), intersectional stigmatization - it all plays its role. ”

The only thing I haven't encountered (I actually have, but only before I changed my documents) is discrimination in employment and workspace. But I'm sure it has been so only because I was stealthy. ”

Bisexual transgender woman, 23, Moscow Region

“ It's difficult to be a part of any workspace, always fearing to get busted and outed because of something I may accidentally say about my personal life. I mean, working in a team isn't for me, cause it's much more comfortable to work alone. But there're very few jobs where you don't have to work in a team and even fewer of those that are well-paid, especially in my hometown. That's why I think that my sexuality, well, people's prejudice towards it, to be precise, and therefore towards me affects my financial situation. ”

Gay cisgender man, 26, Vologda Region

“ My parents have removed me from their will. Even though I am their only son. ”

Gay cisgender man, 29, Primorsk Territory

“ I create LGBTQ+ art and merch, and it's no longer possible to sell it in Russia, abroad is also not an option due to sanctions. ”

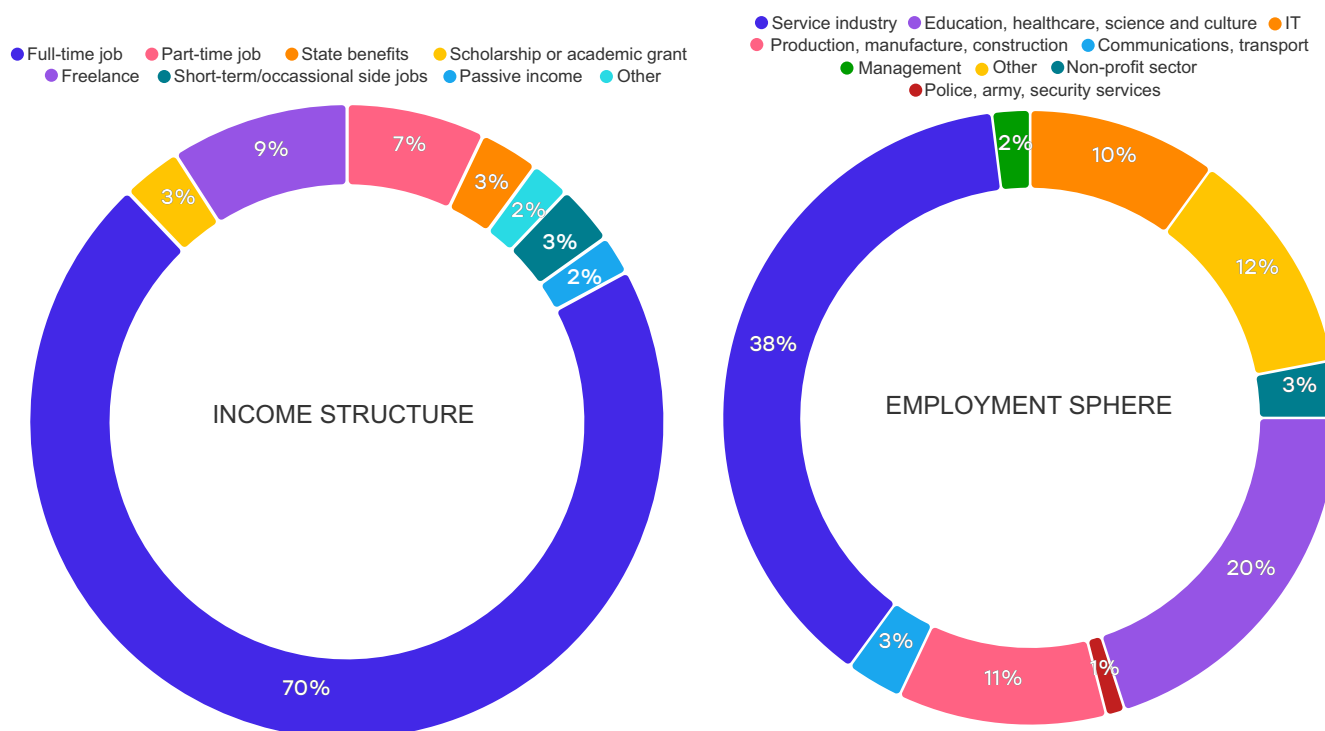
Gay transgender woman, 36, Saint Petersburg

“ I have to always think about whether people at work will be okay with my sexuality. I have to literally monitor every single thing about my life and pretend to be ‘normal’, even on my social media and off-work, so that nobody could find out anything about me and report me to my employer. By profession, I’m involved with the government and work in school, and it’s common knowledge that they know to bully teachers who have stepped out of the line even a little. I know for sure that if I didn’t have to think about that, it would be much easier to look for a job, to work somewhere and to live in general - if there were no pressure and total control all the time ”

Bisexual cisgender woman, 23, Moscow Region

Income Structure

Out of those who have a steady income (70%), the majority (70%) are employed full-time, 9% are freelancers, and 7% have a temporary job. Other types of income that comprise a smaller proportion are presented in the following table. Among transgender respondents, the proportion of those working full-time is notably smaller - 62%, however, this may be related to their age: on average, transgender people are younger than the rest of those surveyed.



A third of those who have a steady income (38%) are employed in service industry. A fifth (20%) work in education, healthcare, science or cultural sector, 11% - in production, manufacture or construction industry, another 10% are involved in IT. Other sectors of employment comprise a smaller proportion and are presented above.

Financial Support

The majority of the respondents (66%) have stated that they have back-up resources of financial support (e.g., friends, family members or partners). The proportion is notably higher among transgender people - 72%, which is likely related to the young age of transgender participants on average. Among Hornet users, the percentage of those who have back-up financial support is much smaller - only 51%.

As little as 5% of the respondents have reached out to LGBTQ+ organizations or the LGBTQ+ community in general for financial support or employment assistance. The proportion is twice bigger among transgender people - a whole 10%. Out of all regions of Russia, most often to reach out to LGBTQ+ organizations for such support were the respondents from Saint Petersburg. This may speak to the fact that both among transgender people and in Saint Petersburg the mechanisms of community support are developed better, as well as the people being more aware of such support being available.

Elaborating on the nature of such support, our respondents have most frequently mentioned their friends supporting them financially. Furthermore, according to our participants, some of them have also received financial support from LGBTQ+ organizations assisting them to pay for housing, move to another city or leave the country. Besides, some of them mentioned having stayed in LGBTQ+ shelters.

“ A person bought me groceries, enough for a whole week, and in this time I found a job and got my first money there. I'll do my best to return the favor to those who helped me. To this day, I'm still deeply grateful. ”

Pansexual transgender non-binary person, 36, Leningrad Region

“ My LGBTQ+ friends helped me to get a job in the beauty industry! ”

Gay cisgender man, 22, Novosibirsk Region

“ They helped me to go through [gender-affirming] medical assessment and to pay for my apartment when my partner and I were nearly evicted for not being able to cover the bills. ”

Bisexual transgender man, 22, Saint Petersburg

“ I have stayed in a queer shelter and also reached out for support to pay for a plane ticket out of the country. ”

Polysexual transgender man, 23, Tyumen Region

“ During the pandemic, an LGBTQ+ organization helped me to pay my rent. In my profession, it's common for members of the LGBTQ+ community to give good references on each other to our clients. ”

Pansexual transgender non-binary person, 36, Leningrad Region

Attitude to Sex Work

Approximately 6% of the respondents (86 people) have been paid for sex work, escorting services, porn modeling or webcam modeling in 2023. Among those Hornet users who did not have a steady income at the time of the research, every fifth (19%, 51 people) has been paid for sex work.

Elaborating on their experience in sex work, some respondents have mentioned that they were in a difficult financial situation (they couldn't afford to pay for food, housing, medicine or drugs - for those who were drug addicts) and were involved in sex work or escorting services but at the same time felt major discomfort, guilt, shame, remorse and struggled with mental health issues. Some respondents have explained that they worked in escort or webcam because they considered it the only possible way to earn money with no university degree, or because they wanted to make a 'fast buck'. Transgender participants have stated that they no other option but to do sex work as they couldn't get a job due to Russian anti-LGBTQ+ laws. Besides, transgender people who were involved in sex work, thus, being in a particularly vulnerable position, began to encounter additional issues related to the discriminatory legislation: various platforms are refusing to publish their profiles.

“ Since July 2022, I've been earning money by creating sexual content on Fansly platform. It's really exhausting and has a negative effect on my mental health (I started objectifying myself, comparing myself to other models and so on). Whereas during the first few months I enjoyed it, now it has become just a way to survive. ”

Non-binary pansexual person, 23, Moscow

“ I was in a very difficult situation and I had to do it. ”

Non-binary gay person, 23, Stavropol Territory

“ I used to do sex work, but the platforms have removed the 'trans' category, and the administration told me not to post there anymore and warned that they would delete such profiles either way. Now I'm trying to make money in webcam industry. ”

Bisexual transgender woman, 35, Khabarovsk Territory

“ There’s not much to say about that. I need the money so in order to survive I have to do it. But it’s always a risk. ”

Pansexual transgender woman, 24, Saint Petersburg

“ I have a degree in marketing. I worked by profession for two years. I was constantly neglected, constantly under pressure and underpaid (even though I worked for an international IT company), so I had to find a side job (webcam). After six months of combining them, I left IT. It’s been three years on webcam for me already. I’m sick of it but I don’t see any other options. ”

Demisexual cisgender woman, 26, Tomsk Region

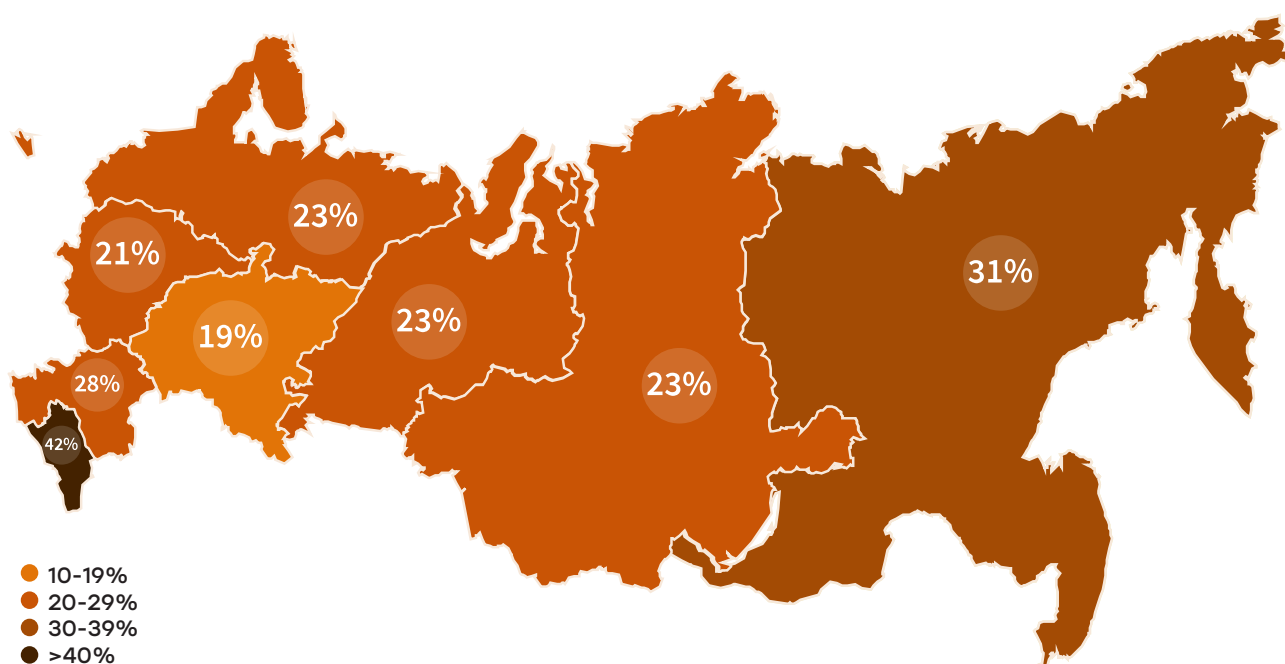
Employment and Education

A significant part of our respondents have sought employment or education in 2023. Among those who have looked for employment or a place of education, nearly a quarter (23%) encountered difficulties in doing so due to their SOGIE. Their proportion has increased by 3% compared to last year’s data.

Nearly a half of those transgender participants, who have sought employment or education, faced issues due to their SOGIE (46%). The contrast, compared to last year’s numbers, is also 3% to the upside.

Out of all federal districts of Russia, the majority of the respondents who have encountered such difficulties when seeking employment or education reside in the North Caucasus (42%), Far East (31%) and in the South (28%).

DIFFICULTIES SEARCHING FOR WORK OR SCHOOL



Nearly a third of the respondents have felt under pressure due to their SOGIE at work (31%). The proportion of those who have been pressured at work or in school has increased by 4% since last year. At the same time, among transgender people the numbers are higher, nearly a half (44%) have experienced pressure at work or in school. This proportion has also increased by 4% since last year.

Out of all federal districts of Russia, being dismissed from work due to SOGIE was reported most common in the North Caucasus (43%), the South (36%) and the Urals (35%).

In 2023, as much as 5% of the participants have been fired from work due to their SOGIE. However, transgender participants lose jobs due to their SOGIE twice as frequently. Based on the ratio of those dismissed, the situation is again most common in the North Caucasus (8%).

Elaborating on their experience at work or in school, our participants most frequently mentioned encountering prejudice, homophobic and/or transphobic comments and mocking. Many have reported having to stay in the closet in their place of work or study. Prejudiced environment at work forces people to resign and has a negative effect on academic performance of those getting an education.

“ My boss feels it’s okay to curse at me, physically abuse me, insult me behind my back and spread nasty rumors about me...I work at a small gift store in Saint Petersburg and I have to bear with assaults from both my boss and customers: once there was even a customer who had a knife in his pocket and just stood and stared at me, so I had to pretend I called the security, even though they also hate me there and are often calling me some random male names so that everybody could hear. ”

Straight transgender woman, 21, Saint Petersburg

“ After the ‘extremism’ law was passed, I don’t feel free to express myself anymore: last week I was criticized for my outfit at a corporate event, even though it was more than appropriate. All I heard was prejudice: ‘A man shouldn’t wear jewelry’, ‘You can’t dress like that in Russia any more’. ”

Gay cisgender man, 35, Moscow

“ From September, 4, to October, 30, 2023 I worked as an administrative specialist at a college and taught Physics and Math to freshmen there as well. I did my job quite duly, but there was prejudice and pressure coming from the management because of my ‘feminine’ appearance (not having changed my gender marker on my ID but having started gender-affirming therapy, it’s not that easy to pass as the gender assigned at birth anymore). Eventually, I was fired without explanation but with clear homophobic bias. ”

Pansexual transgender woman, 26, Khabarovsk Territory

“ I worked at a beauty salon and the manager ‘warned’ clients about my sexuality. So that if they weren’t okay with it, they could get an appointment with someone else. ”

Gay cisgender woman, 40, Bashkortostan Republic

“ At the university, they threatened to expel me if I kept talking about my sexuality openly. As for work, my bosses always pressured me to leave as soon as they found out about my identity, so I’ve switched many jobs. ”

Gay transgender man, 24, Saint Petersburg

Summary

Nearly a quarter of our respondents are on the verge of extreme poverty: they can only afford to buy food.

LGBTQ+ people are being dismissed from work due to their SOGIE, or are forced to resign due to discrimination or homophobic and transphobic environment; their opportunities in education and career are often very limited. Many lose the financial support coming from family members after their coming out (and those staying in the closet are at constant risk of such), thus, lose housing, inheritance and the ability to pay for education without having to hustle (which is not possible in some cases).

Discrimination at work or in school is most common in the North Caucasus, the Urals and the South of Russia.

Transgender people are especially vulnerable: they are less likely to have a steady income and more likely to have a lower income, encounter difficulties while looking for a job and experience discrimination at work. Transgender participants are the ones to most commonly confirm that their SOGIE affects their financial situation. At the same time, transgender people are twice more likely to reach out to LGBTQ+ organizations or the community in general for financial support or employment assistance.

Compared to last year’s data, it has become more common for our participants to encounter discrimination at work or in school, however, the variance makes up several percent for now. Furthermore, according to our respondents, the new oppressive legislation has had a negative effect on the situation at work and in school: the environment has become more homophobic and transphobic, and queerness itself has become a matter of constant criticism and scrutiny.

Discrimination in Healthcare

Among the LGBTQ+ people we surveyed, 77% of respondents (3,602 people) requested healthcare in 2023. Of those, 25% noted that their doctor knew about their sexuality and/or gender identity. Questions about discrimination in the healthcare sector were only addressed to them.

Among those who requested healthcare and disclosed their SOGIE to a doctor or other medical professional, almost one out of five encountered discriminatory or violent actions by healthcare workers (19%, 174 people). Transgender people faced discrimination from doctors much more frequently (29%, 94 people). There have been no changes in these figures since last year.

In the North Caucasian Federal District, a third of the respondents (33%) experienced discrimination from doctors who knew about their SOGIE, and the proportion was also large in the Southern and Siberian Federal Districts - 27% and 24%, respectively.

82 people (9% of those who were out to their healthcare workers) were denied healthcare because of their sexuality or gender identity in 2023. Among transgender people, one in five (20%) has been denied care. When compared to data from the previous year, the proportion of those who were denied has increased by 3 percentage points in the sample average and by 7 percentage points among transgender people.

Out of all federal districts, denying healthcare was (found) most common in Southern (16%) and Siberian (16%) districts.

When describing their experience of being discriminated against by doctors, people most often reported insulting and receiving inappropriate comments, jokes, persistent questions about personal life that had nothing to do with treatment, statements about the need to "cure" their sexuality or gender identity, and attempts to blame sexuality or gender identity for the health issues that caused them to contact doctors. Besides, participants have mentioned cases of blackmail, bullying, and disregard for their pain during medical procedures.

Transgender people have also reported difficulties accessing gender-affirming hormone therapy (being rejected by endocrinologists, in pharmacies and procedure rooms), and sometimes not being able to make an appointment (for technical reasons as well) with a gynecologist using documents with a male gender marker.

Some respondents noted that even though they had not encountered prejudice due to their sexuality or gender identity, doctors appeared to be incompetent to provide healthcare to LGBTQ+ people, and sometimes feared the consequences because of new discriminatory laws.

“ Since I am asexual, I am not sexually active. My gynecologist tried to persuade me that it was necessary. Now I'm lying to her about having a partner. ”

Asexual cisgender woman, 28, Republic of Bashkortostan

“ After changing my gender marker to male, I could not get an appointment with a gynecologist, even at the clinic where they had my medical record prior to the change of documents. I provided all the papers that proved that I was the same person (me), but the system itself did not let me sign up. At first, the woman at the reception signed me up under her last name, but the next day they called me and said that there had been a new order from the head of the clinic and I would not be admitted under the OMI (obligatory medical insurance), only for a fee. ”

Pansexual transgender non-binary person, 25, Saint Petersburg

“ I got to the hospital with cystitis and told them about my sexuality as an explanation for the lack of pregnancy. The doctor sarcastically said that lesbians are prone to cystitis because ‘they shove their hands where they shouldn’t’ (that’s a direct quote). ”

Pansexual cisgender woman, 43, Saint Petersburg

“ I ended up in the intensive care unit. The doctor gathered a whole board to look at ‘the woman who sawed off her tits’ and gave a long speech about whether he should treat me at all, because ‘this was already a freak, physically and mentally’. ”

Bisexual transgender man, 26, Moscow

“ The doctor simply refused to help, saying that he does not help such people. The head doctor kicked me out of the clinic several times, saying that the state does not provide assistance to trans people under the OMI (it was an ordinary local clinic). ”

Straight transgender woman, 21, Saint Petersburg

Summary

One out of five LGBTQ+ people who reach out for medical help and disclose their SOGIE to doctors, encounter discrimination. Commonly, there are homophobic or transphobic comments, but sometimes people are denied healthcare.

Transgender people are especially vulnerable to discrimination in the healthcare sector: one in three transgender respondents has experienced prejudice from doctors, and one in five has been denied healthcare. Moreover, denying healthcare was significantly more common than last year – this could be explained by the adoption of the anti-gender transition law in July 2023.

Healthcare discrimination is particularly common in the North Caucasus, the Far East, and Southern Russia.

Discrimination in the Service Industry

In 2023, 4% of all respondents experienced difficulties accessing various commercial services due to homophobia and/or transphobia. This proportion is higher among transgender respondents, which is 7%. Last year, 3% of the entire sample and 5% of transgender respondents encountered discrimination in the service sector. Thus, we can observe a slight increase in the level of discrimination against LGBT+ people, transgender people in particular.

3% of all survey participants and 10% of transgender respondents have been denied state services. Among transgender people, the proportion of those who experienced denial of public services has doubled since 2022. This could also be a consequence of the legislative ban on gender transition.

Answering the open-ended question about issues in the service sector, respondents reported that they had to hide their identity when applying for services, fearing discrimination. Among those who had experienced difficulties, many noted various problems regarding changing their gender marker in documents, as well as trying to change their name to a gender-neutral one or giving up their patronymic (both before and after the adoption of the law banning gender transition). Difficulties have occurred both when dealing with state agencies (the Civil Registry) and when visiting banks, medical and educational institutions. LGBTQ+ people have been insulted, denied having their documents changed, and served with delays. Difficulties not directly related to changing documents were also generally expressed in insulting comments, denial of service, and sometimes threats and physical violence. Many people also noted difficulties accessing LGBTQ+ literature and items with LGBTQ+ symbols: due to recent laws (the tightening of the law banning LGBTQ+ propaganda and the designation of the “LGBT movement” as extremist), many products have disappeared from sale.

“ I went to the registry office to change my name to a gender-neutral one (no one would give me a man's name without a certificate). At first, a civil servant tried to persuade me to change my decision. Then she refused to issue a certificate to change my name, explaining her decision with some orders from above, which she refused to show me. August 2023. ”

Bisexual transgender non-binary person, 21, Sverdlovsk Region

“ 10 minutes after I'd paid for their services, the administrator of the barbershop texted me that they serve 'only men', that I was lying about everything, and that I was not allowed to visit them again. It's a silly situation, but after this, I felt even worse than before. As a result, now I'm afraid to go to regular hairdresser's and to talk to strangers in general. My trust has completely dried up. ”

Bisexual transgender agender person, 21, Murmansk Region

“ My partner and I were not allowed to attend a workshop for a couple’s discount fee. This has happened twice. ”

Lesbian cisgender woman, 19, Saint Petersburg

“ I work in a mall and there is a perfume shop. I had bought their goods several times as I had made friends with the girls who worked there. But once one of them told me that their boss found out about my sexuality and forbade them to say hello to me, to talk to me and to sell anything because ‘they can’t have anything to do with people like him. ”

Gay cisgender man, 23, Moscow

Summary

LGBTQ+ people occasionally encounter difficulties accessing both commercial and state services due to their SOGIE. Transgender respondents are denied providing both commercial and state services (e.g., change of documents, issuance of certificates, etc.) more frequently. With the passage of the law banning gender transition, transgender people have been denied to provide state services twice as often. As we can see from the detailed responses, people are being denied not only changing their gender marker (which was prohibited by law in 2023), but also changing their name to a gender-neutral one (which is not regulated by the law) or changing their documents according to the previously updated gender marker.

Discrimination in the Housing Sector

Similarly to last year, conflicts with neighbors because of homophobia and/or transphobia appeared to be the most common problem in the housing sector among our respondents. 7% of those surveyed have encountered this issue. Transgender people find themselves in conflicts with neighbors more often (11% of respondents). In the Far Eastern and North Caucasian federal districts, the proportion of those who have had conflicts with neighbors is higher than the sample average: 12% and 9%, respectively. There are no significant changes compared to last year.

Difficulties finding housing due to sexuality and/or gender identity have been noted by 6% of those surveyed in 2023, with this proportion being higher among transgender people - 9%. There is no significant disparity between federal districts compared to the previous year's data.

3% of all survey participants were deprived of housing due to their sexuality or gender identity in 2023, with the number increasing to 5% among transgender respondents. There have been no significant changes between federal districts compared to last year's data.

Only 2% have encountered conflicts with landlords due to their sexuality and gender identity. This remains the least common problem in the housing sector. However, the proportion of transgender people who faced this issue is twice as high - 4%. No notable differences were found across federal districts compared to the 2022 data.

Most respondents have mentioned that they have to hide their sexuality or gender identity from neighbors or landlords, as they often make homophobic and transphobic remarks and make prejudiced statements against the LGBTQ+ community. Transgender people specify that they encounter significant difficulties finding housing due to discrepancies in their appearance, voice, and legal gender marker. In responses to open-ended questions, conflicts with neighbors due to the SOGIE of respondents are often mentioned, as are threats of police involvement or social services (brought up by respondents with children), prejudices against non-conforming appearance, biased attitudes, and accusations of "non-traditional relationships propaganda". In addition, our respondents have mentioned being verbally abused and threatened with physical and sexual abuse by those neighbors who suspect the respondents' SOGIE. Some of the respondents who live with their parents have noted that they have been evicted or threatened to be so after coming out or being outed.

“ When landlords asked, ‘Who will you be living with?’ or ‘Who will be living here?’, we would say, ‘Two girls’. At first, it was fine, we thought it was temporary. But the longer you rent, the more questions arise: ‘Where are the guys? How do you manage your personal life? Are you... one of those???’ ”

Gay cisgender woman, 26, Rostov Region

“ I was evicted from the rental property with the words, ‘Don’t profane, don’t mess up our apartment.’ I guess they meant it in the spiritual sense, as I am extremely neat. ”

Gay cisgender man, 21, Moscow

“ A neighbor mistook my friend and me for lesbians, even though we aren’t in any relationship other than friendship. He threatened to pour boiling water on us and drag us by the hair if we didn’t leave ‘his’ bench in the entrance hall (he didn’t know I was his neighbor). ”

Gay cisgender woman, 18, Saint Petersburg

“ During a drunken party, my neighbors came down and punched me in the face, assuming I was gay. They aren’t sure about it, even though it is true. There was a quarrel [between us]. ”

Gay cisgender man, 28, Vologda Region

“ I had difficulties getting a place in a student dormitory after changing documents. For over a month, it wasn’t clear where and when I would be accommodated. I also feared being assigned to a room with my classmates, who might have reacted in a transphobic way to my presence. ”

Gay non-binary person, 20, Novosibirsk Region

Summary

Due to homophobia or transphobia, LGBTQ+ people regularly encounter difficulties in the housing sector. Most of the time, there are conflicts with neighbors that make living at home uncomfortable. Transgender people experience housing-related issues more often, including conflicts with neighbors, difficulties finding housing, and eviction. Nevertheless, housing problems are common for only a small proportion of our respondents, and no increase in this proportion has been observed compared to the previous year. This is most likely due to the young age of most of our survey participants and the fact that the majority of them live with their parents. Consequently, housing issues are not yet relevant for many of them.

Parental Rights

Among our respondents, only 5% stated that they have children (229 people). These respondents are generally older: their average age is 40.5 years old.

Our research shows that the most common problem for LGBTQ+ parents is conflicts with other relatives of the child due to one of the parent's sexuality and/or gender identity. In 2023, one in five respondents with children (21% of those surveyed) encountered this problem. This number is higher among transgender people – 23%. Since 2022, the proportion of those who faced this issue has increased by two percentage points (when considering all parents in our sample).

In 2023, 6% of the respondents with children encountered difficulties when interacting with educational or medical institutions due to their sexuality and/or gender identity. Among transgender parents, this number is nearly three times higher - 17%. The proportion of transgender people who experienced difficulties interacting with educational or medical institutions has increased by four percentage points compared to last year.

Only 3% of parents in our sample (7 people) experienced difficulties interacting with social services due to their sexuality and gender identity.

Describing their experience in more detail, respondents have indicated the following problems. Many LGBTQ+ parents are criticized for their parenting, most commonly by their relatives and acquaintances. LGBTQ+ parents are sometimes threatened with being reported to child services and having their children taken away from them. Being in a particularly vulnerable position, LGBTQ+ parents often try to hide their sexuality or gender identity from others. Transgender parents encounter difficulties proving their parental status after changing documents.

“ My mother threatens to take my child away so that I don't have access to them, because, from her point of view, people like me shouldn't be trusted with children. ”

Gay cisgender woman, 36, Altai Region

“ My ex-spouse reported my relationship with a woman to child services so that he could get custody over our child. ”

Bisexual cisgender woman, 36, Moscow

“ I am forced to hide the fact that I am a parent for the sake of my child's safety. Legally and in public, there is only one parent – my partner. ”

Pansexual transgender woman, 33, Yaroslavl Region

“ My partner’s children are like my own to me. But I have no right over them, and I cannot adopt them. Even though my partner and I, and the girls themselves, want that. ”

Gay transgender man, 37, Murmansk Region

“ My children’s kindergarten told me that there would be difficulties after changing documents and that it would be better to have my ex-partner re-sign the contract. Fearing any legal complications, we also transferred all extracurricular activity contracts to my ex-partner. It is awfully inconvenient, since now I need my ex-partner to sign or register everything. For me to register or sign anything, I now have to prove that I am also their parent, because they refused to change my full name on the birth certificates of my children and to add their information to my passport. As a result, my passport has my new full name and the current gender marker, while their birth certificates have the old data, and now I have to show a certificate from the registry office about changing personal information to prove that I am their parent, which makes me uncomfortable as it makes me feel dysphoric and anxious. ”

Bisexual transgender woman, 31, Ulyanovsk Region

Summary

LGBTQ+ parents face additional difficulties due to their SOGIE. Most of the time, these are conflicts with other relatives of the child who seek to limit the parental rights of LGBTQ+ people. Compared to last year’s data, we see that there has been a slight increase in the proportion of parents who have encountered issues when interacting with their children’s relatives. Additionally, there has been an increase in the proportion of transgender people who have faced difficulties in interacting with various educational and medical institutions. This may also be a direct or indirect consequence of the gender transition ban.

Hate Crimes

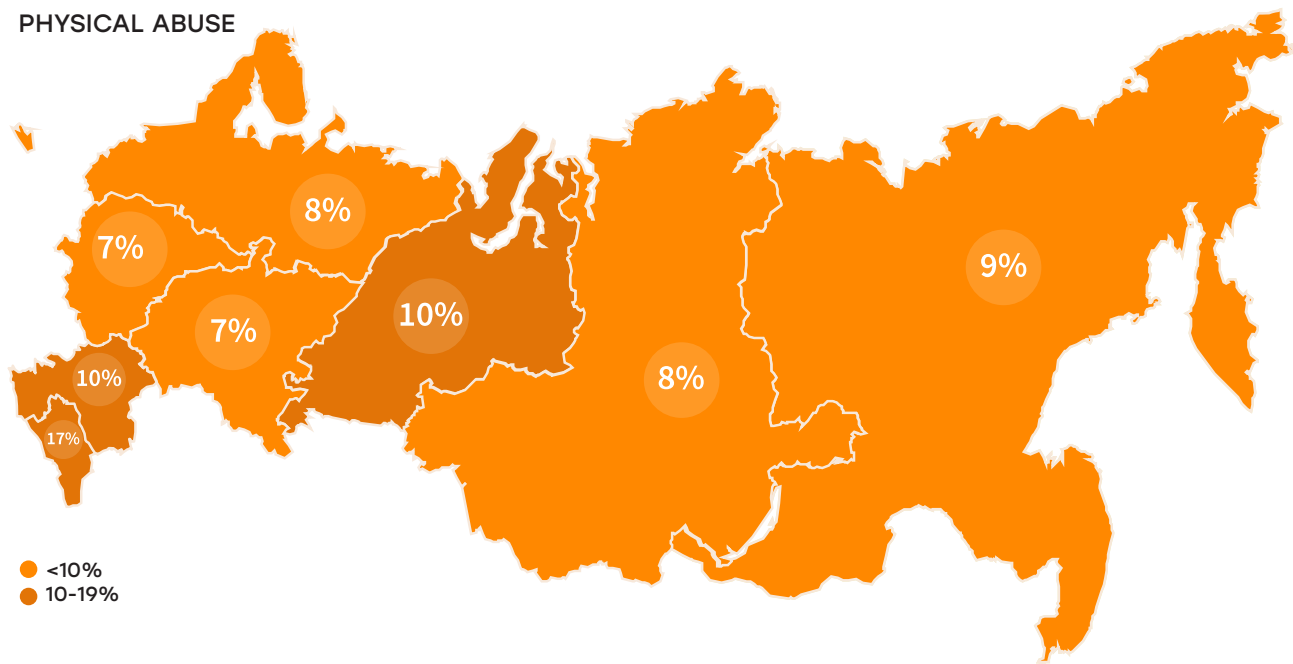
43.5% of our participants experienced one or several forms of violence or pressure based on their sexuality and/or gender (2045 people). Last year, that figure was just 30%. In other words, hate crime rates have increased significantly.

Physical Abuse

In 2023, 381 people (8%) experienced physical abuse motivated by homophobia or transphobia. Transgender people are physically abused more frequently (13%, 134 people). This year, the number of participants who experienced physical abuse has increased by one percentage point compared to last year.

The highest percentage of physical abuse victims were from the North Caucasian Federal District (17%). This district has also seen a significantly higher increase in physical abuse cases compared to the national average: in 2022, the number of participants who experienced physical abuse in the North Caucasus was only 12%.

PHYSICAL ABUSE



“ Two key instances of physical abuse happened in February and September 2023. In February, a couple of guys assaulted me downtown, with ten or so people backing them up. I ended up losing a tooth. In September, one person assaulted me together with four accomplices, which left me with a concussion and a fractured upper jaw bone. The first incident was because of my appearance (catcalling and the violence that followed), and the second one was because of my ‘mannerisms’, which, in the opinion of the assailants, didn’t match my gender. ”

Gay transgender non-binary person, 23, Tomsk Region

“ A man tried to hit on me; I very politely turned him down. After that, he started yelling that I’m a ‘dyke who should be murdered’, and that he would do it himself. He hit me on my back and my face. ”

Gay cisgender woman, 20, Kaliningrad Region

“ My own mother read the texts on my phone where I was flirting a little, in a friendly manner, with another woman. I accidentally left my phone on the table after work. As a result, she beat me with her fists, busted my lip, knocked me down to the floor, and kicked me in the stomach, the head, and wherever she could reach. She took an aluminum rod and struck me several times. She threatened to cut my tongue out with a pair of scissors, but I managed to hide them under the bed in time. The physical and psychological torture continued for about two hours, and none of the neighbors came to help. The police officer refused to accept my statement, so I immediately left town – I had no desire to deal with any of it. I feared punishment... ”

Gay cisgender woman, 22, Moscow Region

“ It happened in winter. I used to look a little unconventional for my town (piercings, dreadlocks). I got punched and kicked in the face for being a ‘fag-got’. At the time, I hadn’t yet changed my documents, so when that ‘champion of traditional values’ found out at the police station that he had assaulted a ‘woman’ (legally), he kept apologizing and begged me to retract the statement. ”

Straight transgender man, 22, Saratov Region

“ Some strangers saw me in the street and figured that I was gay from how I looked. One of them yelled that it was now legal to eliminate gay people, and they started beating me. I ended up spending five days in the ICU with a concussion. ”

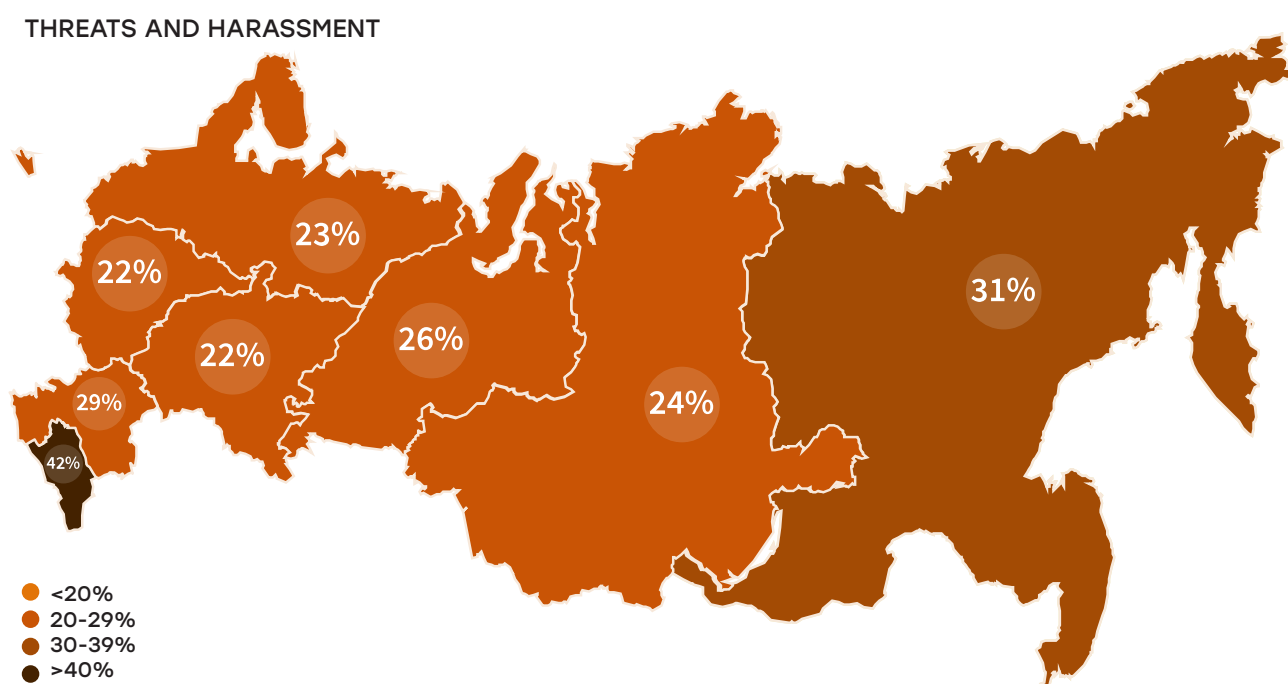
Gay cisgender man, 22, Novosibirsk Region

Threats and Hostility

In 2023, one in four participants were threatened with physical abuse because of their sexuality or gender identity (24%, 1115 people). The percentage of those who have received such threats has increased significantly (by four percentage points) since last year.

Transgender people are threatened with physical abuse much more frequently. In 2023, every third transgender participant received threats of physical abuse (34%). This is not significantly different from last year: in 2022, 33% of transgender participants received threats of physical abuse.

The North Caucasian (42%), Far Eastern (31%), and Southern (29%) federal districts of Russia saw the highest percentages of those who were threatened with physical abuse. The figures for these districts also increased significantly compared to last year (in 2022, those numbers were 22%, 27%, and 23%, respectively).



671 (14%) participants experienced hate-motivated harassment, bullying, and online threats in 2023. That percentage is higher among transgender people (22%). These numbers are similar to last year's data (14% and 21%, respectively). Across federal districts, the highest percentage of those who faced online harassment was found in the North Caucasian (21%) and Far Eastern (19%) districts.

When describing the threats they had received, the participants most often mentioned verbal abuse from strangers, threats on social media and dating apps, verbal abuse due to gender non-conforming appearance, and death threats. Participants have also reported being abused by their parents, who threatened to revoke their legal capacity and take away their documents due to their SOGIE. Parents of LGBTQ+ people also threaten to relinquish their

parental rights, force their children to undergo conversion therapy, or involuntarily commit them to a psychiatric hospital. It is also worth noting the instances of verbal abuse and aggression from the Russian military in the participants' examples.

THREATS AND HARASSMENT ONLINE



“ My parents threatened to put me in a psychiatric hospital and disown me. There were threats of physical violence, too. My father said that if I didn't ‘get better’, he’d kill me so I wouldn’t dishonor our family. My mother said the same thing. ”

Gay non-binary person, 16, Murmansk Region

“ For a year now, I’ve been receiving threats from strangers on dating apps. They shared my private photos and spread rumors. One time, someone asked my friends if they would bring me on a ‘fake date’ for 15,000 roubles and then disappeared. They’ve found my parents’ address and are threatening to murder me. ”

Gay cisgender man, 21, Primorsk Territory

“ I’ve been harassed on social media, was blackmailed by anonymous accounts who said they would out me to my family and colleagues, and sent me death threats, saying that they would murder and bury me. They had my personal information: my address, my workplace, and my relatives’ information. I’m terrified. ”

Gay cisgender man, 21, Sakhalin Region

“ I was targeted by Russian Russia [ultra-right nationalist group] and other far-right organizations because I’m a trans activist. They found my number, sent me death threats, DMed swastikas and pictures of dismembered bodies, leaked my private information in their channel, and encouraged people in the comments to find me. ”

Straight transgender woman, 19, Moscow

“ At the start of 2023, I was openly transgender and queer. Other students found out and started making jokes about what was in my pants, but later turned to threats of corrective rape. I managed to transfer to a different school before anything serious happened. ”

Bisexual non-binary person, 17, Moscow

“ In December 2023, I was approached by a ‘special military operation’ soldier in the smoking area of Sheremetyevo airport (I’ve seen a lot of aggressive ‘special military operation’ soldiers in airports lately). He called me a ‘fag’ and started walking towards me, looking agitated. I felt very unsafe and managed to escape him before he could physically harm me. I boarded my plane, hoping he wasn’t on the same flight. I got lucky. ”

Gay non-binary person, 22, Moscow

Sexual Abuse¹

In 2022, 8% of the participants (392 people) encountered a form of sexual abuse due to their sexuality or gender. The data has remained unchanged since last year.

The percentage of transgender people who suffered from sexual abuse is higher – 11% (compared to last year's 10%).

SEXUAL ABUSE



The highest percentages of victims of sexual abuse across federal districts were found in the Far Eastern and Siberian districts (12% and 11%, respectively).

Describing their experiences, participants have often mentioned the following places where sexual abuse occurred: workplaces, healthcare facilities, educational facilities, public places, and public transport. According to the responses, the most common perpetrators of sexual abuse are coworkers, friends, and family members. Another frequent setting for sexual abuse is the so-called “fake dates”. Many participants have mentioned that, by subjecting them to sexual abuse, the perpetrators were trying to “fix” them.

“ People have tried to ‘fix’ me; men have touched me; forced me. There was one guy who just wanted to see what it’s like to be with a trans person, just as a joke, and took me by force. ”

Bisexual transgender man, 18, Saint Petersburg

Bisexual transgender man, 18, Saint Petersburg

¹ Sexual abuse – any non-consensual sexual behaviour towards a person (including non-consensual touching), as well as sexual coercion (e.g., psychological pressure).

“ The person I was on a date with drugged me and sexually assaulted me. ”

Gay cisgender man, 21, Khabarovsk Territory

“ For some reason, my friend’s acquaintance decided that he should come home with me. He was drunk, which, of course, doesn’t justify his actions. Until the very last moment, I thought that he was just going to walk me to the taxi. Instead, he started harassing me in the elevator and outside. I couldn’t do anything because he was holding my arms and covering my mouth. He was saying something like, ‘You’re going to find out what it’s like to be a real woman, not a dyke.’ I was rescued by the taxi driver, who was waiting outside. ”

Gay cisgender man, 21, Khabarovsk Territory

“ I was sexually harassed and assaulted by my manager at work. Because of my sexuality, among other things. He also tried to coerce my partner into a threesome. ”

Pansexual cisgender woman, 20, Novosibirsk Region

Domestic Abuse

In 2023, 659 participants (14% compared to last year's 15%) suffered from domestic abuse driven by homophobia or transphobia.

That percentage is much higher among transgender participants, at 24% (247 people). As such, every fourth transgender participant of our research experienced domestic abuse in 2023. Last year, the number of transgender victims of domestic abuse amounted to 28%.

DOMESTIC ABUSE



The highest percentage of domestic abuse victims across federal districts was found in the North Caucasian district (18%).

Describing their experience of domestic violence, our participants have mostly opened up about physical and psychological abuse. Often, the perpetrators were the participants' parents, and the abuse occurred after they came out. Psychological abuse includes attempts by relatives to "fix" the participants, systematic verbal abuse, and disregard for their identity.

“ I once tried to hint at my sexuality to my mother (I'm gay), but I regretted that right away because she almost choked me to death. ”

Gay cisgender man, 18, Samara Region

“ When my father saw my chat with another woman, he slapped me across the face and broke my phone on his knee. ”

Gay genderfluid person, 19, Yaroslavl Region

“ When my mother found out that I was gay, she threatened to kill herself. It's a very sensitive subject in my family (several of my loved ones committed suicide), so that situation really shook me and affected my psychological well-being. Currently, my mother thinks that I'm bisexual and that at some point I will marry a woman and start a family. ”

Gay cisgender man, 23, Moscow

“ My parents had me committed to a psychiatric hospital under the guise of improving my psychological well-being. I ended up receiving treatment for depression after all, but only thanks to the doctors' professional integrity. My father has repeatedly insulted and verbally abused me because of my sexuality. My mother calls me insane and says that I should be treated with strong medication. ”

Asexual cisgender man, 25, Sverdlovsk Region

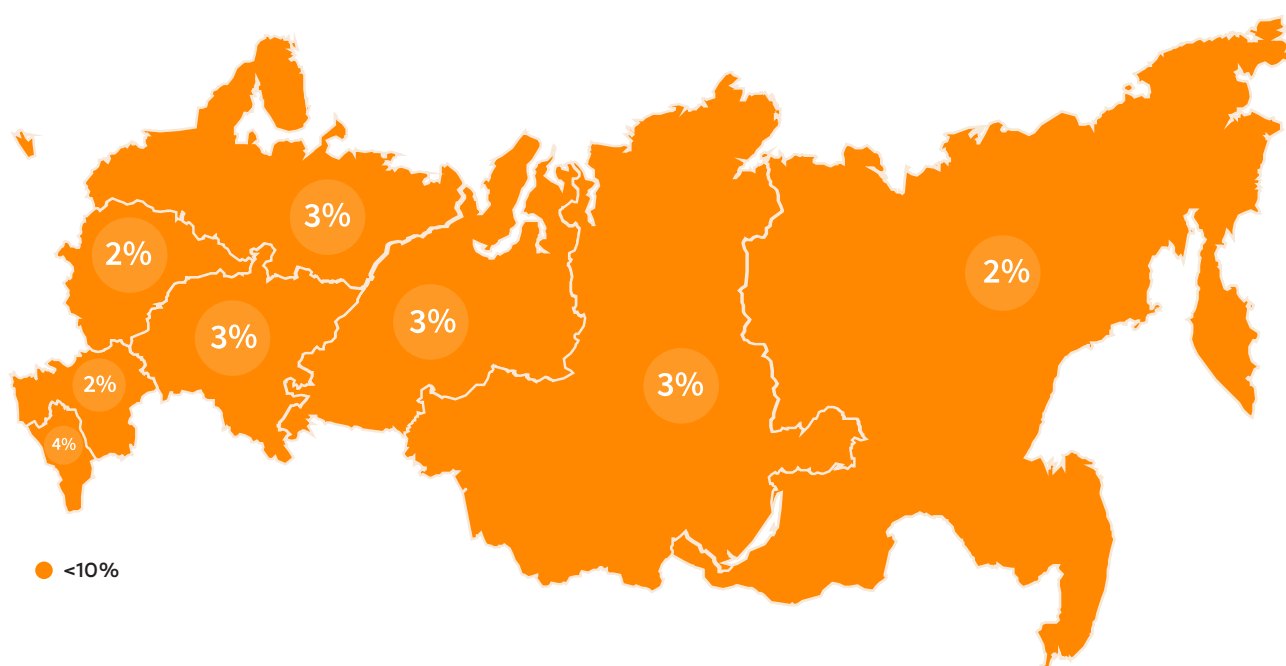
Conversion Therapy¹

In 2023, 3% of the participants underwent a form of conversion therapy (125 people). 50 of them (40%) are transgender (5% of all transgender participants).

We have not asked this question in previous surveys; therefore, there is no existing comparative data on conversion therapy rates.

The percentage of conversion therapy victims in the North Caucasian Federal District was twice as high as the nationwide rate (4%).

CONVERSION THERAPY



“ Psychiatrists tried to convince me that God would never forgive me. In 2023, social workers and my own mother put me in a psych ward, where they stuffed me with medication that turned me into a vegetable. ”

Gay genderfluid transgender intersex person, 18, Yamalo-Nenets Autonomous Area

“ In rehab, I was treated by a ‘doctor’ who claimed that gay people have one chromosome less than ‘normal’ people. Referring to biblical texts, he tried to convince me that there couldn’t be any ‘fiends’ in Russia, that I became that way for the sins of my ancestors, and that I needed to ‘undergo sex reassignment’. Throughout all that, he kept making unambiguous advances at me. ”

Gay non-binary person, 24, Saint Petersburg

¹ Conversion therapy – the unscientific and often violent practice of attempting to change a person’s sexuality or gender identity. It includes medical, psychiatric, and religious methods.

“ I told a psychiatrist about my sexuality during an appointment, and she said that it could be cured. I didn’t come back after that. ”

Gay demiboy, 28, Udmurt Republic

“ I worked with a psychiatrist who tried to ‘cure’ my transgender identity with religion. ”

Polyromantic transgender man, 16, Moscow Region

“ In 2022–2023, my mother tried to ‘fix’ me; she paid different psychologists and psychiatrists just to hear what she wanted to hear. They had different methods, but the overall message was that I was possessed by the ‘male spirit’ of an ancestor. I couldn’t stand that lunacy and went home. ”

Gay transgender man, 21, Rostov Region

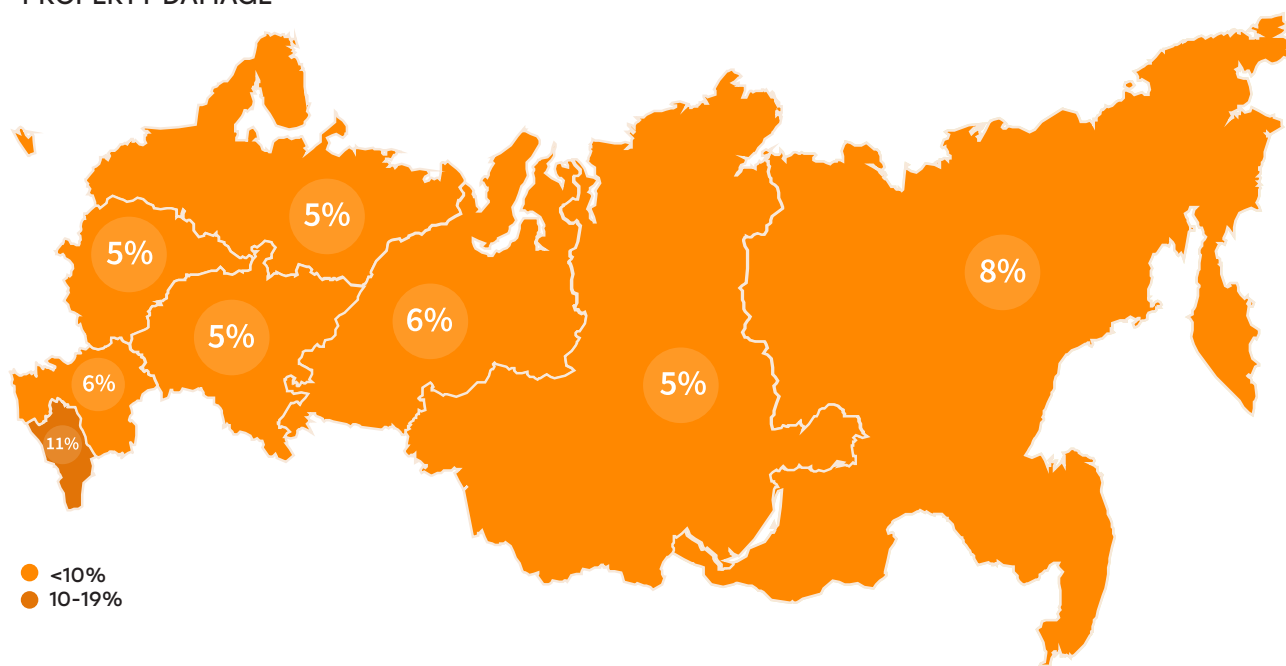
Property Damage and Theft

In 2023, 264 participants reported property damage or theft motivated by their sexuality or gender identity (6%, same as in 2022).

The percentage of transgender participants who reported property damage or theft was higher, at 9% (93 people). No change occurred in this category of participants compared to last year, either.

In the North Caucasian Federal District, the percentage of victims of property damage or theft motivated by SOGIE is almost twice as high as the national average (11%).

PROPERTY DAMAGE



In most cases, the property that was stolen or damaged featured LGBTQ+ symbols. Such crimes are often committed by strangers in the street or in public places. Sometimes, participants' relatives were also to blame for property damage. In those cases, the objects that were damaged extended beyond those featuring LGBTQ+ symbols to include other personal belongings. Additionally, homophobic or transphobic neighbors, colleagues, and classmates were also sometimes responsible for property damage.

“ People often look at rainbow-colored things or feminist symbols with disgust. This year, the bag with all my pins got torn apart; I was devastated to lose such a high-quality item. At work, I’m usually asked to hide my pins or earrings and constantly told that I shouldn’t flaunt my ‘indecent’ in front of other people. ”

Gay cisgender woman, 18, Saint Petersburg

“ I was busking with a rainbow-strapped guitar. Some guys came up to me; at first, they were yelling, filming me, and threatening to call the police. In the end, they tore the strap off and broke my guitar...”

Gay cisgender woman, 20, Kaliningrad Region

“ Some strangers at the beach broke my trans pin, saying ‘y’all would wear any random shit.’ My parents tried to tear my binder off me; they still threaten to burn it or wash it the wrong way.”

Pansexual transgender non-binary person, 15, Kaluga Region

“ My girlfriend’s family went through and damaged everything in our wardrobe while we were away. When we expressed how upset we were, they started yelling, mocking, belittling, and verbally abusing us, etc.”

Gay cisgender woman, 22, Saint Petersburg

“ They wrote the word ‘faggot’ all over my personal coat rack at work.”

Pansexual cisgender man, 22, Khabarovsk Region

“ My boss smashed my phone when I tried to defend my rights as a queer person.”

Gay cisgender man, 24, Kostroma Region

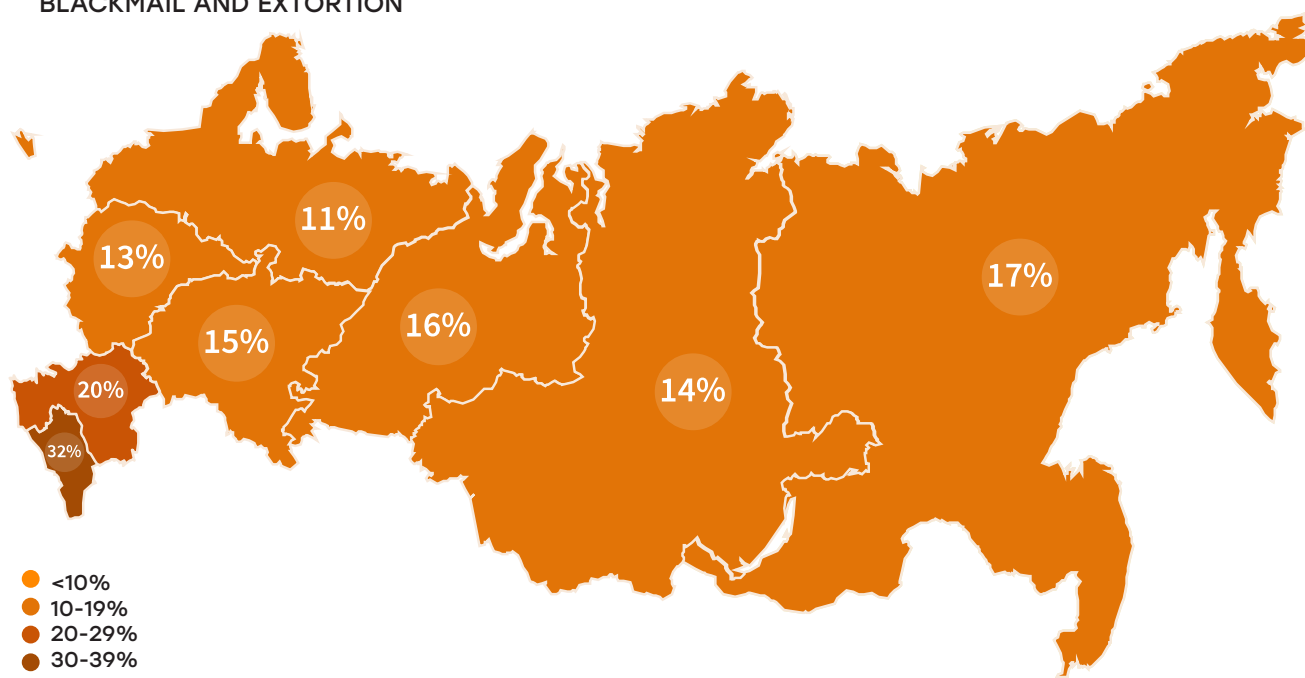
Blackmail and Extortion

In 2023, 14% of the participants have been blackmailed or preyed upon due to their sexuality or gender identity (668 people). This figure is higher among Hornet users – 18%. There has been no significant change compared to last year's data.

The highest number of blackmail and extortion victims was found in the North Caucasian (32%), Southern (20%), and Far Eastern federal districts.

In 2023, 9% of our participants had their personal data leaked because of their sexuality and/or gender identity. The figure is higher among Hornet users and transgender participants: 11% and 13%, respectively. The highest proportion of SOGIE-motivated personal data leaks across federal districts was found in the North Caucasian (21%) and Far Eastern (13%) districts.

BLACKMAIL AND EXTORTION



Describing their experiences, many participants mentioned non-consensual distribution of their private messages and photos, as well as being blackmailed or extorted under the threat of such distribution. Offenders often managed to obtain the home or work address, phone number, and other personal information of victims and their families, which was then used for blackmail and extortion.

“ I used to hang out in gay chat rooms, and some ‘kind people’ managed to find my personal information and leak it to my parents. They didn’t want anything back for it, they were just average homophobes who made my life a living hell. ”

Gay cisgender man, 16, Saint Petersburg

“ This has been going on for years. A transphobic group obtained my partner’s and mine information. I keep an eye on them sometimes, and they post awful things about us. So far, they haven’t spread our personal information outside their private chat (they have a public one as well). Unfortunately, they can do whatever they want with it, including using it to stalk or harm us. With the new legislation now in place, they’re entirely off the hook, so we can expect anything, like being reported to the authorities for further prosecution, or direct violence, etc. – there’s no one to protect us. ”

Bisexual transgender woman, 23, Moscow Region

4% of the participants (168 people) became victims of fake dates¹ in 2023. That figure doubles among Hornet users – 8%. According to our participants, Hornet and other dating apps are often used as a platform for offenders to find their victims. The highest number of fake date victims across federal districts was found in the North Caucasian District (13%).

Many victims of fake dates were also physically abused. Some participants mentioned that, while they did not have such experience themselves, they knew about it from their friends or acquaintances. Others mentioned that they were too afraid to go on dates with strangers due to the fear of a date being fake.

“ I met a guy online, and we decided to go on a date. When I arrived, I realized that it was a set-up. There were four guys, not one. They psychologically abused me, pressured me, and threatened to assault me. In the end, they robbed me and took all my money and some phone accessories. I cannot go to the police because of my sexuality. ”

Gay cisgender man, 26, Stavropol Territory

“ They got caught relatively quickly, only a day later. It turned out that they weren’t even from Moscow, they just came here on holiday for a few days and, it seems, decided to make some money along the way. The investigator was a great woman, she defended me against homophobic slurs when I was summoned for identification, which I’m very grateful for. I don’t know what the status of the case is now, there should be a trial at some point, but I haven’t been informed yet, and the perpetrators are currently in jail. ”

Gay cisgender man, 19, Moscow

“ No, [I haven’t been a victim of fake dates], but I wanted to add that I avoid ANY dates because of the danger of fake dates. ”

Non-binary transgender person, 30, Moscow

¹ Fake dates – a type of felony usually committed against gay and bisexual men. Using dating apps, the perpetrator arranges a ‘date’ with the victim. Other perpetrators arrive during the ‘date’, sometimes posing as police officers or journalists, and extort money from the victim through blackmailing them with distribution of ‘incriminating’ videos or other information, physical violence, or threats of calling the police or journalists.

Summary

Most commonly, LGBTQ+ people encounter threats, domestic abuse (usually from homophobic or transphobic parents), blackmail and extortion, as well as online stalking.

Transgender people are much more vulnerable; they experience almost all forms of violence and discrimination more frequently than cisgender participants. This especially applies to death threats, violence, and online stalking: the difference between cisgender and transgender participants is most notable. 'Fake dates' are the only exception to this; the most frequent victims of 'fake dates' are gay cisgender men, the majority of whom are Hornet users.

In terms of the geographical distribution of our participants, the North Caucasian Federal District was the champion of hate-motivated violence and abuse in 2023. The North Caucasian Federal District ranked first in 9 out of the 10 forms of violence and abuse evaluated in our research. LGBTQ+ people in the Far Eastern Federal District also experienced higher rates of violence. The rates of threats, blackmail, and extortion were particularly high in the Southern Federal District.

Compared to last year's data, this year shows a significant increase in the number of victims subjected to some form of violence (at least one). Looking at each form separately, however, the percentage of threats received by the participants was the only figure to have increased significantly this year.

We must remember that a singular case may include several forms of violence: for example, if during a fake date the victim was assaulted, robbed, and blackmailed into giving up a large sum of money under the threat of being outed. We do not, however, account for singular cases but for the number of participants who experienced abuse not once, but possibly several times during the year. As the number of abuse victims is significantly higher this year, whereas the rate of various forms of violence has not changed as much, we can conclude that multiple people have reported different cases of abuse, which means that the overall frequency of such cases has increased.

The number of abuse victims has also increased in the most homophobic and transphobic districts of Russia - the North Caucasian and Far Eastern districts. These changes, however, have occurred in the first place due to the demographic changes in the participants' characteristics: this year, most participants from the North Caucasus identified as gay cisgender men, whereas last year most participants identified as gay cisgender women.

Encounters with Law Enforcement

Out of those respondents, who have stated to not have encountered any hate crimes in 2023, the majority (56%) have noted that if they do encounter such, they would not report to the police, which clearly demonstrates that, similar to last year, a low level of credibility for law enforcement remains.

Among those who have been victims of hate crimes in 2023, as little as 14% (70 people) reported to the police. Last year, the proportion was 20%, which can speak to the fact that victims of hate crimes are reporting to the police even less frequently.

Out of those who reported to the police, 54% had their statements accepted. Meanwhile, 44% were pressured by the police. More than a third (34%) of those who have reached out to the police stated that their case was denied, 29% noted that they are not aware of the status of their case since it had been filed. No more than 10% reported that their case had been filed and the investigation conducted, and only 9% had their offender caught and prosecuted.

Only 4% of those respondents, who have reported to the police, had their hate crime case brought to court (3 people).

“The district policeman refused to file my case [I was trying to charge my parents with domestic violence], even though there were witnesses and pictures of my barely healed beating injuries. The neighbor who worked at the precinct called my mother. They mocked me and suggested that I make peace with my parents. Eventually, I couldn’t handle the pressure and left, fearing that I may end up meeting my parents face to face.”

Gay cisgender woman, 22, Moscow Region

“When I was being threatened to be outed and have my nudes sent out to my friends, I decided to go to the police. I came to the police station and explained the situation. The cop started making jokes about ‘faggots’, insulted and humiliated me together with his coworkers, then he said they wouldn’t file my case. Quoting him: ‘I don’t give a fuck about you, we could all bugger you here and get away with it.’ Then he made it quite clear that he doesn’t want to have anything to do with my problems and my case, and that if I kept pushing I would get in trouble. After that, I never reported anything.”

Gay cisgender man, 22, Vologda Region

“My partner and I were assaulted by some strangers, so I reported to the police providing all the evidence on our injuries, videos, etc. They did accept my statement, but three weeks later I received an email saying that the case was dismissed due to the absence of crime.”

Gay cisgender man, 38, Moscow

In 2023, 47 participants (1%) have been unlawfully detained or arrested due to their SOGIE.

Among those who have been victims of hate crimes but did not report to the police, the most common reason for doing so was doubt that reporting to the police will be effective (78%). Fear of police officers was another common (73%) reason among our respondents, which is rather valid, judging by their experience with law enforcement. Approximately 50% of those who refused to go to the police, explained that they decided to do so in fear of being outed which could have happened along their filing a case; 23% mentioned fearing that their offender could have found out about them having reported to the police.

The proportion of those, who fear being outed as a result of going to the police, has drastically increased (by 15%) since last year. Besides, the proportion of those refusing to go to the police due to fear of the institution itself, has grown by 5%.

Summary

LGBTQ+ people still have little trust for Russian law enforcement, our surveys have been reporting a consistently low level of credibility two years in a row. Although the level of credibility for law enforcement has not changed since last year, fear of police has become more common, as well as fear of being outed and concerns for the negative consequences that may follow.

Crime victims are now reporting to the police even less frequently, and the efficiency of such reports is still on an extremely low level. Furthermore, police officers are often prejudiced and hateful towards LGBTQ+ people; they may insult, humiliate and sometimes even threaten with violence or prosecution those who decided to report a crime.

Places of Detention and Confinement

Out of all our respondents, 63 people (1%) have been detained or confined in 2023. The majority (27%) have been placed in ‘nursing homes for mentally disabled’, 19% have been confined in mental wards by a court order, 17% have been locked up in a detention room. Less commonly have our respondents been in temporary detention facilities (6%), jail (5%), prison (2%) and juvenile detention centers (2%). Furthermore, some of our participants have reported having been forced to go to rehabilitation centers and mental wards by their relatives.

The majority (63%) of those who have been detained or confined somehow in 2023, noted that in corresponding places their SOGIE was known of. Nearly a half of them (45%) have been outed in places of their detention or confinement.

Many respondents, whose identity was revealed in places of detention or confinement, have encountered prejudice and discrimination due to their SOGIE coming from staff members: they mentioned having been verbally abused (57.5%), threatened and harassed (42.5%), as well as physically assaulted (7.5%) by staff members.

Those detained or confined together with our respondents have also often been homophobic and transphobic: 47.5% of the surveyed have been verbally abused by other patients or detainees, 27.5% have been threatened, 15% reported having been stripped of their belongings. Four people have been physically assaulted, another four have been assaulted sexually, and one person has noted having been raped in prison [buggered].

“ It was awful. Every single day I was mocked at and bullied, and it went on like this for 18 months. ”

Asexual transgender woman, 24, Saint Petersburg
(of her experience in a ‘nursing home for mentally disabled’)

“ The worst thing happened when one of the nurses wasn’t pleased with me. I’m sure that my identity had something to do with it but I don’t want to go into details much. That woman was in a position to tie me to the bed and inject me with some unknown medicine by force, and she took advantage of her position quite often, like when I was crying. After those injections I couldn’t talk properly, or move, or even lie, because I was all wringing, my muscles were twitching, I couldn’t sit straight. But they didn’t do such things to other patients in similar situations. ”

Gay transgender non-binary person, 24, Saint Petersburg
(of involuntary confinement in a mental ward)

“ In 2023, I went to the Sukhareva’s Youth Mental Health Research and Practice Center in Moscow twice. There was no prejudice from the kids who were there, as many of them were also members of the LGBTQ+ community. But counselors across all departments prohibited boys from cuddling, justifying it with the ‘It’s not acceptable’ [for boys] argument. But it worked for boys only. ”

Bisexual cisgender woman, 17, Moscow

This year, it was the first time we included the questions about places of detention and confinement in our report, so there is yet no previous data to compare our findings to.

Russian LGBTQ+ People amid War in Ukraine & Repressions

The majority of respondents (73%) acknowledged that Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, initiated in 2022, affected them personally. Among transgender respondents, this percentage is higher (78%), with even higher proportions observed among residents of Moscow and St. Petersburg, standing at 80% in each megacity. Nonetheless, the percentage of those affected by the war has slightly decreased from the previous year's average of 82%.

Furthermore, 78% of respondents expressed feeling more vulnerable and unsafe as LGBTQ+ people since the onset of the full-scale war in February 2022. This sentiment is particularly pronounced among transgender people, with 83% reporting increased vulnerability. This figure is consistent with last year's data.

The majority of study participants (87%) have observed a surge in homophobic and/or transphobic sentiments within Russian society following the escalation of armed conflict between Russia and Ukraine on February 24, 2022. This represents a 4-percentage-point increase from last year's figures. Among transgender respondents, 89% noted the rise in hateful sentiments, reflecting a 2-percentage-point increase from the previous year.

While the proportion of those noticing increased homophobic and/or transphobic sentiments in their immediate circle post-February 24, 2022, remains lower at 43%. This figure has risen by 4 percent since the previous year. Among transgender respondents, this percentage is 49%, compared to 43% the previous year. Notably, in the North Caucasian Federal District, the proportion of people witnessing heightened levels of homophobia and transphobia in their environment surpasses the national average, standing at 55% (compared to 49% in 2022).

A third of participants (32%) reported that the armed conflict between Russia and Ukraine in 2022 impacted their access to necessary medications. Among transgender people, 47% encountered difficulties in accessing medicines, which is consistent with last year's figures.

Approximately 59% of respondents noted a deterioration in their economic situation due to the armed conflict between Russia and Ukraine in 2022, representing a significant decrease of 10 percentage points. Among transgender respondents, 63% reported worsened economic conditions, down from 72% the previous year.

Only 13% of respondents reported being affected by mobilization. Those affected described experiencing anxiety, depression, and fear due to the risk of mobilization and conscription for military service. Some respondents mentioned having people in their immediate social circles who were mobilized or conscripted.

“ My close friend’s brother was mobilized, another friend received a conscription notice, and many of my friends left Russia. Those who remain fear persecution/mobilization. ”

Bisexual cisgender non-binary person, 25, Saint Petersburg

Numerous respondents have voiced encountering challenges stemming from the absence of a military ID.

“ Now you can’t even go to a clinic for a doctor’s appointment without a military ID. ”

Gay cisgender man, 26, Stavropol Region

“ My lawyer warns that obtaining a military ID is now risky, yet lacking one makes it difficult to get a job or a passport for international travel. ”

Asexual transgender man, 22, Khanty-Mansiysk Autonomous District

Moreover, the majority of respondents express concern for their relatives and friends who are liable for military service.

“ I am deeply concerned about my male friends and female healthcare workers, as they are highly likely to be conscripted during another wave of mobilization, and their financial circumstances make fleeing Russia challenging. ”

Gay cisgender woman, 27, Leningrad Region

“ My partner, who has a B-category military ID, could have been drafted into this horrific war. It caused immense stress and conflict; I urged him to abandon everything and flee, but he hesitated. Our life has been a tinderbox ever since. ”

Gay cisgender man, 35, Bryansk Region

Several respondents indicated that they had to flee Russia or be in the wind within the country due to the risk of conscription.

“ I had to immigrate despite having category D on my military ID. Upon receiving a conscription notice, I deemed it too risky to contest because of potential repercussions. ”

Gay cisgender man, 30, Saint Petersburg

“ I had to seek refuge in an abandoned house in an abandoned village that my partner and I are now trying to make into our home. A conscription note can come any time and we need to be prepared for that. ”

Gay transgender non-binary person, 24, Saint Petersburg

The vast majority of respondents (83%) perceive certain risks for themselves following the Russian Federation Supreme Court decision to label the "international LGBT movement" as extremist. Another 10% find it challenging to provide a definitive response to this question, while only 7% do not believe they face any personal risks due to this decision.

Detailing the personal impact of war and repressions, respondents frequently described heightened levels of anxiety and exacerbated or new-onset depression. Some recounted experiencing suicidal ideation or even carrying out suicide attempts. Many mentioned abandoning outward displays of their identity, such as bright clothing, unconventional hair and nail styles, piercings, or LGBTQ+ symbols, in favor of safety. Additionally, several respondents observed increased attention to their non-conforming appearance. A significant number of respondents reported being affected by heightened censorship and self-censorship, making it difficult to access LGBTQ+ content or openly share creative work on LGBTQ+ themes. Some respondents noted turning to alcohol or substance use as a coping mechanism due to war and new laws. Some respondents noted that coming out became impossible. Teenagers expressed anxiety over patriotic lessons at school, government agendas, and heightened scrutiny from teachers regarding their personal lives and appearance. Transgender people discussed the loss of options for legal and medical transition and the inability to access necessary medical care.

“ Before the war, I built my income and socialized only with the so-called West. Due to the inability to receive direct income from abroad, my financial situation tanked greatly, and all plans had to be radically changed. Because of the 'ban on gender reassignment,' I lost the opportunity to change my gender marker. The general emotional state against the background of what is happening prevents me from working effectively and efficiently. There is no support in the family; they seem to be happy about what is happening. ”

Gay transgender man, 27, Moscow Region

“ After the start of the war, I began to experience depression (this was not the main reason but served as the last straw), which I struggled with for about six months, and I still feel its consequences (problems in relationships with my partner, parents; dropped out of university due to a nervous breakdown). After the discussion of the law on extremism began, the only currently available way to protect oneself seems to be to limit one's social circle (I deleted my accounts on social media platforms, stopped using masculine pronouns and masculine gender words while talking to my colleagues and some of my friends). It is very worrying that now this is not a way to hide from problems but a necessary measure. ”

Bisexual transgender man, 22, St. Petersburg

“ Because of the war outbreak, we had to postpone all plans for further life in Russia and begin planning to move. For now, we are staying here, and it is truly scary. It scares me that someone at work might find out about my sexuality. Overall, I'm very scared. I feel unprotected, and I have no idea how to protect my family if it suddenly becomes necessary. ”

Gay cisgender woman, 32, St. Petersburg

“ Fear literally soaked into my head and body. ”

Bisexual non-binary transgender person, 16, Moscow Region

“ I don't feel at all that I can count on the police to help me if a hate crime is committed against me. ”

Gay cisgender man, 27, Moscow

“ Now I feel not just in a cage, but in a sinking cage. ”

Gay cisgender woman, 26, Republic of Tatarstan

“ It became scary to even like posts on the Internet. I'm in the closet. Those who knew before still know, but I don't tell new acquaintances. ”

Bisexual cisgender woman, 21, Nizhny Novgorod Region

“ I'm afraid to even take this survey, I expect nasty tricks from everywhere. ”

Gay cisgender man, 25, Moscow Region

“ My depression worsened, and I attempted suicide. Fear and anxiety increased. I stopped participating in the life of LGBTQ+ community due to the threat of persecution. ”

Gay cisgender man, 21, Khabarovsk Region

“ Anxiety rose greatly. After that, I had to seek professional help, but antidepressants disappeared from the shelves of pharmacies. The attitude of relatives, their words, the mood at the university, and the expulsion of a classmate because of his sexuality became the reason for the deterioration of my mental state on an even larger scale. I often think about suicide, but I don't want to leave my partner and our pets in this terrible world. ”

Gay cisgender woman, 32, St. Petersburg

“ I planned to go through a medical board to change my legal gender marker, but ran out of time. I had no money, my family would not help me financially with this, and the condition 'to be over 18.5 years old' pushed my transition until May. After the gender reassignment ban was adopted, my depression worsened. I can't start hormone therapy to make me feel better because of current laws. I do not have the opportunity to emigrate due to my poor financial situation. ”

Straight transgender woman, 19, Perm Region

LGBTQ+ People in Emigration

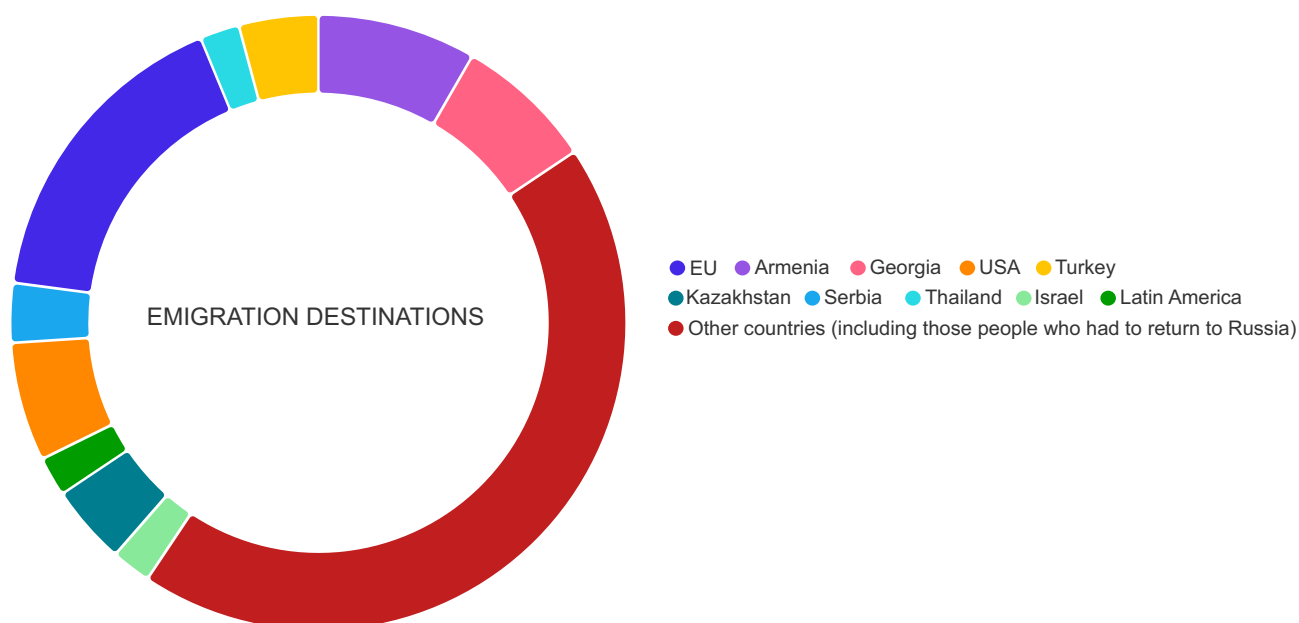
In 2023, only 6% of respondents (286 people) indicated that the war and repressions compelled them to leave Russia. Last year, the number of those who left was almost three times higher (16%). It stands to reason that those who left in 2022 did not partake in our survey, as they have not been to Russia since. Our findings indicate a substantial dip in LGBTQ+ migration from Russia in 2023, albeit without cessation.

The bulk of departures occurred post-mobilization announcement (September–December 2022), accounting for 24% of emigrants. In 2023, two notable emigration waves emerged: following the ban on gender reassignment (July – November 2023) – 18%, and after the "international LGBT movement" was proclaimed extremist (post-November 2023) – 19%.

Primary reasons cited for emigration included severe anxiety and psychological distress (86%). They were followed by other reasons, such as:

- concerns for personal safety (77%),
- escalating censorship (69%),
- increasing homophobic and transphobic sentiments in Russian society (69%),
- reluctance to stay and aversion to Russia (66%),
- new "propaganda" law (57%),
- new law on extremism (51%),
- risk of mobilization (48%),
- ban on gender reassignment (23%).

European Union countries emerged as the most preferred destinations for departing individuals (16% of those who left the country), followed by Armenia (8%) and Georgia (7%).



A noteworthy subset of emigrants (29%, 82 people) entertain the prospect of returning to Russia, while a slightly lower percentage (28%, 79 people) remain uncertain. Conversely, nearly half (44%) harbor no intentions of returning. Notably, the proportion considering a return has increased marginally since last year (by 5 percentage points).

Almost half of those who emigrated (43%) reported that they had to come back to Russia temporarily, till their next attempt at migration, or permanently.

Among emigrants, a quarter (25%) reported encountering discrimination based on SOGIE in their host countries, with Armenia recording the highest incidence at 22.5%.

Describing their experiences and encounters with homophobia and transphobia in host countries, our respondents detailed cases of outing, harassment, and violence. In addition, transgender respondents experienced difficulties accessing medical care, for example, when undergoing hormonal therapy.

Among the reasons for forced return to Russia, respondents most often highlight running out of funds and the inability to earn money in the host country. Lack of language proficiency and integration difficulties also force people to return to Russia.

“ I left due to mobilization since my clearance level didn't guarantee 100% draft deferment. I visited Georgia and Armenia. Finding a doctor who was willing to prescribe hormones was tough. Georgian human rights activists didn't respond. Later, I learned they don't assist Russians. I am grateful to Armenian activists for their support. But life was tough in Georgia and Armenia due to patriarchal norms and societal hostility toward transgender people. I returned to Russia when I couldn't afford to cover my basic needs. ”

Straight transgender man, 32, Moscow

“ We had to leave because it got scary, thinking my stepdad might actually go to the cops and his threats would go beyond words. The fear of losing my child was overwhelming. I was left without any medical support. Sure, there were other reasons to leave, but the biggest fear was losing custody over my child. ”

Gay transgender man, 37, Murmansk Region

“ I had to scram real quick because my life was on the line when conscription started. Then, in a new country, it was tough dealing with everyday stuff, like not speaking the language and having no remote job options. But eventually, the cash dried up, and I had to head back. Now, I'm prepping emergency funds and planning to leave for Canada. ”

Gay cisgender man, 30, Moscow

“ Migration to Georgia was absolute hell. You're not just facing oppression from your own government, but now you're hated in another country, too. Just because you're Russian. Just because you're queer. Probably gonna head back to Russia soon, lay low, and try to sort out my finances. Right now, it's just figuring out how to put food on the table and scrounging up rent money. ”

Bisexual cisgender woman, 29, Moscow

Summary

As we can observe, in 2023, the war continued to significantly impact the lives of Russian LGBTQ+ people. The mobilization announced in 2022 still instills concern, as people remain on edge, awaiting the possibility of a new wave. Our respondents also point out the notable economic toll of the war on their lives, although the percentage reporting a worsening economic situation due to the war has decreased since the previous year. The situation regarding access to necessary medications remains restricted, unchanged since last year, with limitations persisting due to the war and sanctions against Russia, albeit without any noticeable deterioration recorded.

A substantial escalation in anti-LGBTQ+ repression, including the adoption of new laws on “propaganda” and the ban on gender reassignment, along with the designation of the “LGBTQ+ movement” as extremist, has profoundly influenced our respondents. This year, they were more likely to discuss the intensification of homophobic and transphobic sentiments within both Russian society at large and their immediate circle. The vast majority of respondents perceive risks to themselves following the decision to label the “LGBTQ+ movement” as extremist. These developments have had an extremely adverse impact on their psychological well-being: respondents frequently express ongoing feelings of fear and anxiety, chronic stress, depression, and even suicidal ideation. While many view migration as a potential solution, it remains out of reach for many people.

We observe a significant decrease in migration in 2023 compared to the previous year. However, according to our data, the legislation prohibiting gender reassignment and the Supreme Court's extremism ruling have prompted minor spikes in migration trends among Russian LGBTQ+ people. At present, it's difficult to gauge the true scale of the situation as not much time has passed, and preparing for departure can be a lengthy process, which may involve waiting several months for a humanitarian visa. Furthermore, our data indicate that a considerable proportion of those who left were compelled to return to Russia, primarily due to financial constraints. Nonetheless, these findings only offer a partial perspective, as LGBTQ+ people who departed in 2022, had not returned to Russia in 2023, and had adapted to life in a new country, were out of scope of our survey, which targeted individuals who had spent at least some portion of the year in Russia during 2023.

Conclusion

During 2022-2023, significant changes occurred in Russian legislation that impacted the situation of LGBTQ+ people in Russia. At the end of 2022, the law against the "propaganda" of so-called "non-traditional sexual relationships" was tightened, and its widespread enforcement began in early 2023. In 2023, a law banning gender transition was adopted, and at the end of the year, the Supreme Court recognized the "international LGBTQ+ movement" as extremist. All these events have significantly impacted the lives of our respondents.

According to the findings of our research, LGBTQ+ people across Russia face various forms of hate-based discrimination. Many respondents have reported encountering violence, threats, prejudice, insensitive language, and other forms of physical and verbal abuse in a range of settings: the workplace, educational institutions, and healthcare, as well as from relatives, neighbors, landowners, and even random passersby.

Last year, despite a noticeable upsurge of homophobic and transphobic rhetoric on the state level, there was no increase in violence and discrimination, but this year has seen significant changes in how LGBTQ+ people live in Russia. Although the changes have not yet been drastic, there is a clear trend toward a rise in discrimination and hate-motivated violence. People are more frequently experiencing discrimination in the employment and educational sectors (dismissals, expulsions, prejudice, threats from employers or educators, difficulty finding work, etc.). We observe a considerable increase in the percentage of those who have encountered some kind of violence and pressure (such as blackmail) because of their sexuality or gender identity. If last year, every third person had such an incident, the number of victims now approaches half of those surveyed. Physical threats, which were previously a prevalent form of violence against LGBTQ+ people, have become noticeably more common. Aside from that, our data show that LGBTQ+ people are now less likely to contact the police if they have witnessed or become victims of a hate crime. LGBTQ+ people have grown to fear law enforcement more: even filing a police report by itself may pose a risk for them.

Our annual research has consistently been demonstrating that transgender people are one of the most vulnerable groups within the LGBTQ+ community, facing various forms of discrimination, including hate crimes, far more frequently. This year has also seen a noticeable growth in the level of discrimination against transgender people in particular. Transgender people are increasingly being turned down when they seek medical care or receive government services. This is an immediate consequence of the ban on gender transition; however, as we can see from the clarifications provided by respondents, the restrictions that are presently in place concern not only actions that have been prohibited explicitly but also many other services. Examples include medical help for post-transition transgender people and changing one's name to a gender neutral one (without changing one's gender marker).

In addition, transgender parents have started to face more issues when interacting with their children's medical and educational facilities. It has become increasingly difficult for them to confirm their parental status.

Apart from a spike in the level of discrimination and violence, we also conclude that LGBTQ+ people are becoming more private. They are afraid of coming out to new acquaintances. Previously, most of our respondents were out to most of their friends, but now it is much more common for people to say that they are out only to their closest ones. People's perceptions of their immediate environment have also changed: they feel that there has been an upturn in aggression in Russian society, even among people they know. All these factors have had a significant impact on the psychological well-being of the LGBTQ+ community, with many people mentioning constant feelings of fear, anxiety, depression, and apathy, as well as suicidal thoughts.

As of the end of 2023–beginning of 2024, the Russian government is exerting tremendous pressure on the Russian LGBTQ+ community, which goes hand in hand with an ever-growing level of violence. Because of this, many LGBTQ+ people live in a state of constant danger. We can observe that the situation is worsening gradually; however, if this trend continues, we run the risk of collecting even more depressing data next year.

Recommendations

To the Human Rights Commissioner of Russia:

- Facilitate the recognition of LGBTQ+ people's equal rights and prevent the consolidation of discrimination on a normative level.
- Engage in a dialogue with both Russian and international LGBTQ+ organizations and activists to gain a better understanding of the communities' needs and demands.
- Facilitate investigations into human rights violations committed against LGBTQ+ people in Russia.
- Include data on SOGIE discrimination, as well as other violations of LGBTQ+ rights, in the annual Commissioner's report.

To the Federation Council and the State Duma:

- Bring forward a legislative initiative that would introduce a federal law repealing Article 6.21 of the Code of the Russian Federation on Administrative Offenses, "On propaganda of non-traditional sexual relationships and (or) preferences and sex reassignment," Article 6.21.2, "On distribution of information among minors that either demonstrates non-traditional sexual relationships and (or) preferences or that may cause the desire to undergo sex reassignment," as well as other changes in legislation introduced by a Federal Act on 05.12.2022, №478-FA that mention the "propaganda of non-traditional sexual relationships." Render invalid those amendments to Federal legislation "On fundamental healthcare principles in the Russian Federation", "On civil status" legislation, as well as the Family Code that introduce the ban on gender transition ("sex change" in the original text) introduced by a Federal Act on July 24th, 2023, №386-FL.

To the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Russian Federation:

- Ensure effective investigations into acts of violence caused by hate motives on the grounds of victims' SOGIE, as well as into acts aimed at inciting hatred or hostility based on SOGIE.
- Account for the hate motive in investigations in relation to LGBTQ+ as a social group.
- Resume international cooperation in the fight against hate crimes.
- Ensure the possibility of holding peaceful meetings on LGBTQ-related topics, as well as the safety of their participants.
- Educate law enforcement officers on the proper and respectful treatment of LGBTQ+ people.

To private organizations:

- Do not allow SOGIE to be used to reject candidates' resumes, terminate employees, or violate other working rights of LGBTQ+ people.
- Provide services on an equal basis, regardless of the client's SOGIE.
- To organizations providing medical and psychological help: educate their staff on the unique ethics of working with LGBTQ+ people.

To international human rights organizations:

- Demand that Russia upholds its international human rights obligations.
- Introduce measures to ensure that the sanctions imposed on Russia do not affect vulnerable social groups, including but not limited to LGBTQ+ people.
- Implement measures to ensure that Russian citizens from vulnerable groups have access to essential medication, both inside and outside of the country.
- Collect data on discrimination against LGBTQ+ rights in Russia, including the findings of this research, publish them, and draw international attention to them.
- Introduce measures to support journalists and human rights defenders, including LGBTQ+ activists and lawyers who were forced to flee Russia due to political persecution and who advocate for LGBTQ+ people in Russia.
- Increase humanitarian and financial help for programs supporting the LGBTQ+ community.

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