



**NISO PROJECT**

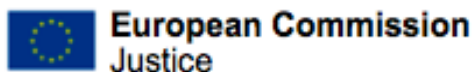
***“Fighting homophobia through active citizenship and media education”***

No. JUST/2009/FAC/AG/1179 – 30 – CE – 0377095/00/44

## **WS1: Analysing homophobic attitudes and stereotypes**

### **D1.3: National report on homophobic attitudes and stereotypes among young people**

**Estonia**



Project co-funded by the European Commission, Directorate General Justice, within the Specific Program “Fundamental Rights and Citizenship”

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## **Summary**

Current research is part of the project NISO – Fighting homophobia through active citizenship and media education, led by Province of Rome, Italy and in co-operation with three other EU member states (Belgium, Estonia, Netherlands). The project partner in Estonia is NGO Sexual Minorities Protection Union (hereinafter SEKÜ, abbreviation from *Seksuaalvähemuste Kaitse Ühing*).

In total two studies were carried out – one targeted at collecting experiences related to unfair treatment in LGBT community and the other analyzing attitudes towards LGBT people amongst school pupils. The current research report focuses on the results of the LGBT community research.

The situation of LGBT people in Estonia has not been very well researched, and there are significant gaps in what we know about LGBT people. In December 2011 The Human Rights Centre at Tallinn Technical University published a study conducted by Ülle-Marike Papp and Riina Kütt that also gave an overview of all of the LGBT related studies made in Estonia. In addition the research points out the needs for further research.

First part of this study aims at getting the experiences of unfair treatment felt by LGBT people in different environments. It also tackles the issue of stereotypes and the effects of stereotypes faced by LGBT people. However, most importantly, this research is an input for comparison with the research conducted amongst the school pupils on LGBT people.

The second part of the study focused on school environments and pupils' views on gender, sexual orientation and gender identity.

Studies show that a greater deal of awareness raising on LGBT issues is necessary for the stereotypes on LGBT people still prevail.

The survey was conducted and analyzed by NGO Seksuaalvähemuste Kaitse Ühing during the period of October 2011 until December 2011.

## 1 LGBT people's experiences of unfair treatment in Estonia

This part of research report focuses on LGBT people's experiences of unfair treatment that is perceived to be related to their sexual orientation or gender identity. Other aspects of LGBT people's experiences and perceptions are targeted too (*eg developments in the Estonian society with regards to LGBT issues*).

First, the description of the sample and introduction of methodology will be given. It is followed by the overview on which situations respondents have felt they were treated unfairly because of their sexual orientation.

The third chapter shows the most common societal stereotypes towards LGBT people as perceived by the respondents and what might be the reasons behind these stereotypes.

Finally, an overview of the developments in the Estonian society in 2011 with regards to LGBT issues will be given.

### **Methodology and presentation of the sample**

The objective of the research questions were agreed together with the project partners from Italy, Belgium and Netherlands. As agreed all the countries had to use the same questions in order to make research results comparable between the countries. The delivery of the questionnaires was left to the project partners' themselves. No accordance related to the sample was made.

In Estonia, the questionnaire targeted to LGBT community was entered into web environment e-formular.com, which is an on-line tool to conduct sociological research. The website allows sending of research questionnaires directly to possible respondents via e-mail. However, to get a higher number of respondents, a link to the questionnaire was posted on social network sites (LGBT community Facebook pages) and LGBT portals (eg KISS, HMSX etc)

In total 135 respondents answered the questionnaire. Two of the questionnaires were taken out from the overall analysis as these contained virtually no information (including the person's age, gender, experiences of discrimination, etc.) on the respondent.

In the following table respondents are broken down by age:

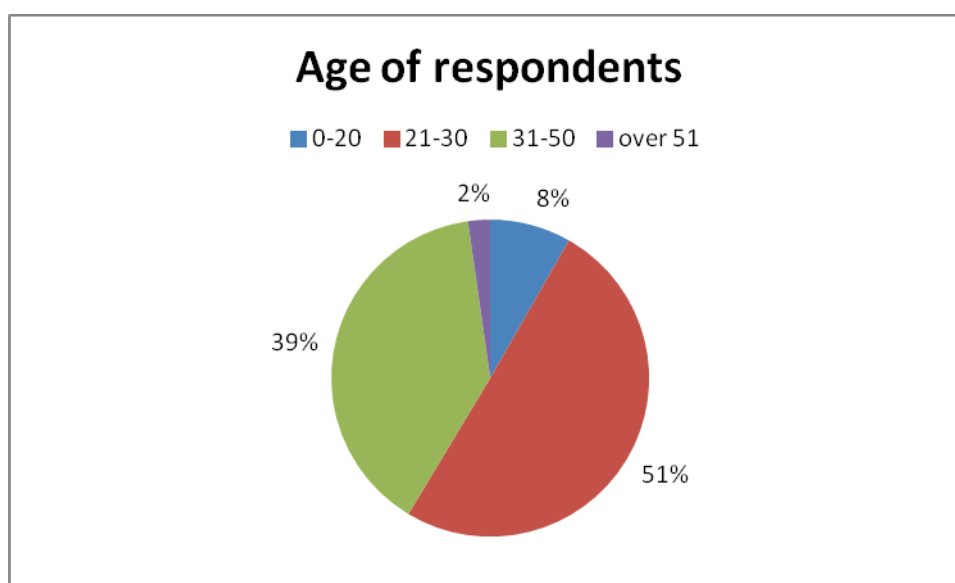
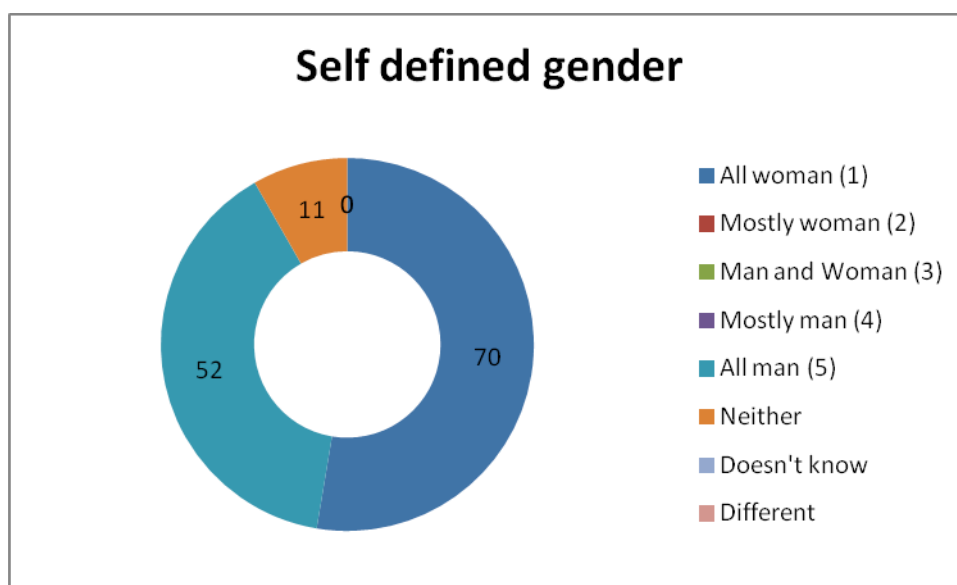


Table 1. Age of respondents

As seen from the table half of the respondents fall to the age group from 21 and 30 years, followed by respondents aged from 31 to 50 years. Unsurprisingly the lowest rate of respondents was people over 51 as the overall use of internet is lower in that group. In future research a special strategy to get the results from people 51+ is necessary.

Within the sample there were 55 respondents (41%) born as males, 77 persons (58%) as females and 1 as intersexual person.

Respondents defined their current genders as can be seen from the table number 2. The majority of respondents defined themselves clearly as male or female. Eleven respondents defined themselves “neither” or “don’t want do define”. Altogether there were three transgender respondents and one intersexual respondent. Out of the total number of respondents there were 47 gay men, 57 lesbian women, 2 bisexual men and 17 bisexual women. Five respondents identified themselves as heterosexual (felt attraction only to opposite sex) and the rest were either mostly drawn to opposite sex or did not know their preferences.



*Table 2. Self defined gender*

Most of respondents held higher degree (37% BA degree, 25% MA or higher). Only primary school educational attainment was completed by 4 respondents (3% of total). It is important to note that in Estonian questionnaires there was also another option: vocational school. These results were added to the category of “secondary education”.

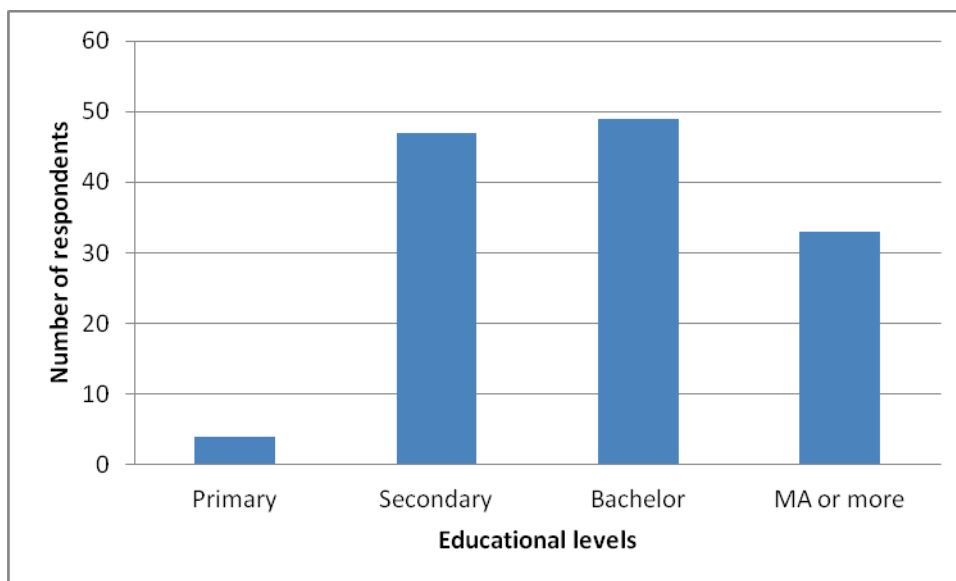


Table 3. Educational attainment of the respondents

The majority of respondents speak Estonian in their homes (81% of total), 17 (equals to 13% of total number) respondents came from mixed family (Estonian and Russian or other combinations). The rest of the respondents spoke at home either only Russian (4%) or only English (2%).

Unsurprisingly, since Estonia is not very religious country, most of the respondents (84%) did not associate themselves with any religious community. Nine respondents were Protestants, 4 respondents Orthodox or other Christian, 3 respondents marked “Catholic” and 5 respondents quoted “other religion”.

Only one about one fifth (38 respondents) of the respondents disclosed their sexual orientation (came out of the closet) during their school time to someone at the school. Women were more likely to reveal their sexual orientation (23 respondents vs 15 male respondents). Main reasons behind not coming out at school were psychosocial (eg not knowing of one’s orientation, fear of bullying, fear of being alone etc), as are shown in the following table:

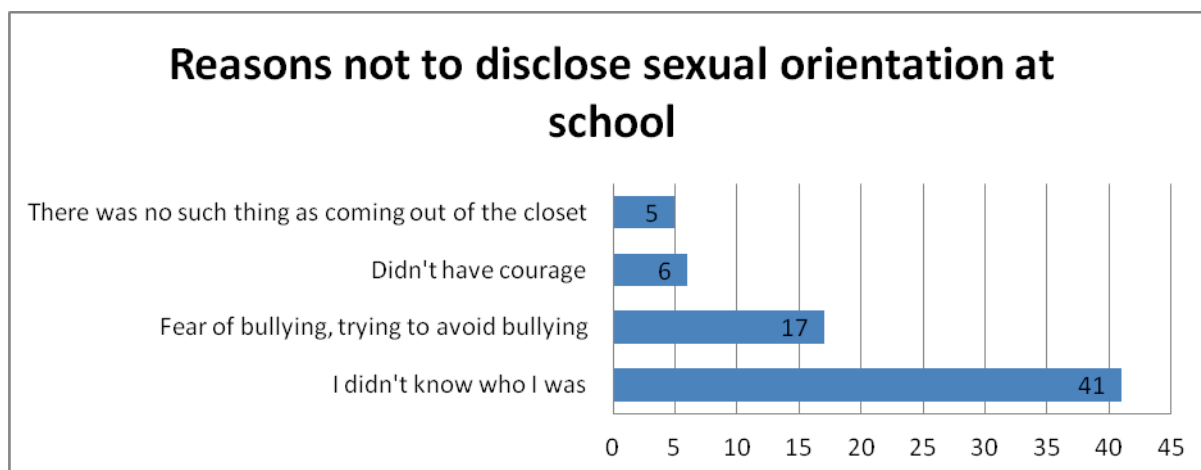


Table 4. Reasons not to disclose one’s sexual orientation at school.

The number of respondents who were not certain of their sexual orientation (eg didn’t know that two persons of the same sex could be emotionally and sexually attracted to each other)

is surprisingly high and would need further analysis since according to the existing research most commonly youngsters start to reflect on their sexual orientation in their teenage years and this is the period where the stress on the individual is the highest (*ie* important are the questions how does one relate to the surrounding environment).

Another reason that respondents brought out was the fear of being bullied. This should send a strong message on policymakers as it implies that schools are not safe environments for youngsters to be who they are.

### ***Experiences of unequal treatment***

Unequal treatment of LGBT individuals related to their sexual orientation or gender identity is widespread in Estonia, with 86% of respondents reporting at least one situation where the reason behind unequal treatment was believed to be their sexual orientation. Few respondents (14%, n=19) did not report experiencing unequal treatment.

It is important in this chapter to make the distinction between experiences of unequal treatment felt on a personal level and a general level. Whilst on the personal level a respondent reported perceived unfair treatment where one of the parties was the respondent, the reported experience on the general level occurred in more abstract terms (eg negative comments in the media towards LGBT people, cases where respondent had seen or heard unequal treatment, but was not directly involved in it).

By far most of the experienced unequal treatment due to sexual orientation is felt from the media. It is important to notice here that this takes place more in general terms in the on-line commentaries of the newspapers. On the positive side, it was noted that the media itself (newspaper articles, TV programmes) does not anymore allow hostile content towards LGBT people.

In addition to experienced unfairness in the media, most of the respondents reported unfair treatment at home (see table 5). Incidents involved were mostly related either to refusal or non-acceptance, insults or end of communication. This context of unfair treatment, however, is on the personal level.

Occurrence of unfair treatment	Number of respondents	% of total respondents	% of total respondents who reported at least one form of unfair treatment
Family	54	41%	47%
Work	25	19%	22%
Close circle of friends	32	24%	28%
Religious community	12	9%	11%
Any community	12	9%	11%
School	34	26%	30%
Bar, pubs	42	32%	37%
Media and internet	89	67%	78%
Others	27	20%	24%

*Table 5. Contexts in which perceived unfair treatment has taken place*

Various strategies were described by the respondents in order to avoid unfair treatment, most common being trying to blend in and live life so that other would not notice any difference (eg not holding hands with the partner on the streets, staying in the closet etc).



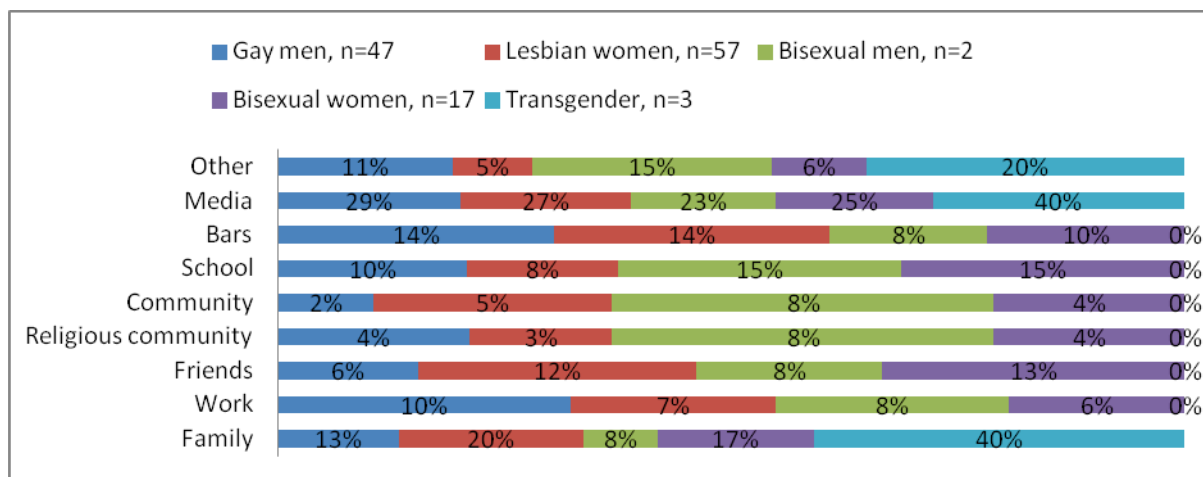


Table 6. Environments where perceived unfair treatment has taken place.

Analysis of the environments where perceived unfair treatment has taken place according to sexual orientation or gender identity is due to the small number of respondents limited. Therefore it is possible to compare only gay men and lesbian women as those groups constitute the biggest number of respondents.

Mostly gay men and lesbian women experience unfairness in similar settings. Biggest difference in reporting the incidents was in the categories of “friends” and “family” where lesbian women reported higher number of occurrences.

Respondents described various types of unfair treatment. These were categorized according to the list suggested by the Italian partner, T6 Cooperativa.

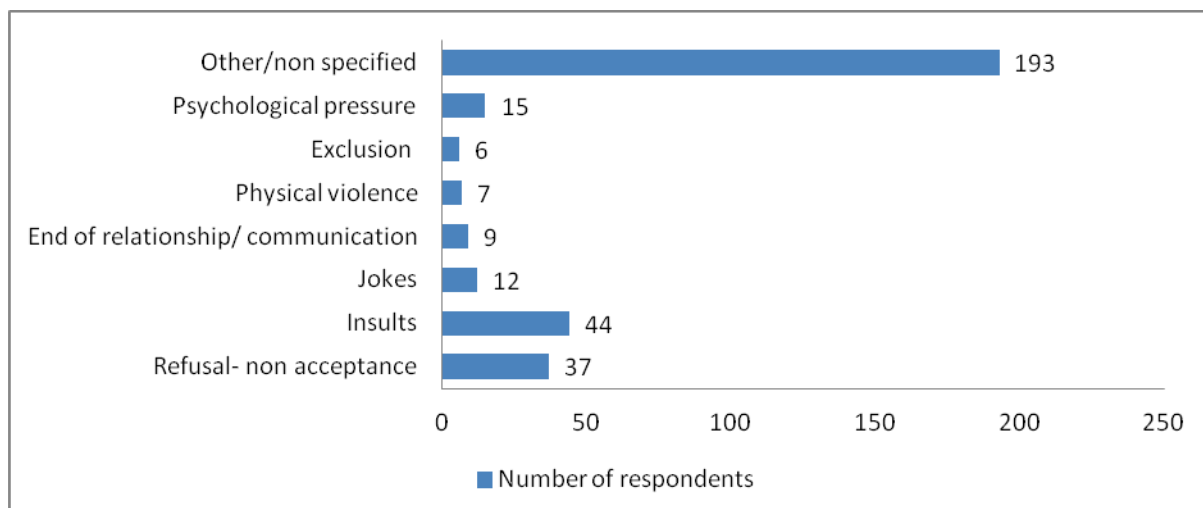


Table 7. Categories of experienced unfair treatment

As can be seen from the table, most of the respondents did not specify how the unfair treatment was manifested. However from the ones that did specify the most common incidents involved insults about their sexual orientation (44 respondents), followed by refusal or non acceptance by their families, at work or amongst friends.

### **Stereotypes and reasons behind them**

In this section we analyzed which were the most common stereotypes that respondents believed are prevailing about LGBT people in the society. Respondents were asked to name the prevailing stereotypes that they perceived society has towards gay men and lesbian women. The first question is followed by the explanation given by LGBT people on how these stereotypes and homophobia exist.

By far most of the respondents described prevailing stereotypes through the terms of masculinity and femininity. Gay men are perceived by the society to be effeminate and hypersexual and lesbian women are perceived by the society masculine. In the following table most occurred responses are displayed.

<b>Gay men</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Lesbian women</b>	<b>Number</b>
<b>Effeminate</b>	68	<b>Masculine</b>	65
<b>Hypersexual</b>	39	<b>Ugly</b>	31
<b>Flamboyant</b>	19	<b>Hasn't found a man</b>	15
<b>Mentally ill</b>	17	<b>Wear manly clothes</b>	14
<b>Well groomed</b>	16	<b>Aggressive</b>	9
<b>Paedophiles</b>	15	<b>Hate men</b>	8
<b>Emotional</b>	9	<b>Vulgar</b>	7
<b>Weak, hate sports</b>	7	<b>Fat</b>	7
<b>Cat owners</b>	1	<b>Truck driving</b>	5

*Table 8. Perceived stereotypes prevailing in the society on gay men and lesbian women*

As stated above most of the stereotypes expressed were connected to either perceived masculine or feminine behaviours and dominant relationships between genders. Stereotypes about gay men include femininity, flamboyancy, weakness and these are combined with constant seeking of sexual pleasures. Stereotypes that are prevailing about lesbian women (by the perception of respondents) include dominant masculine traits. Respondents feel that the stereotypes on lesbian women also include terms that describe their looks in a negative way (eg ugly, fat, vulgar). Many of the respondents also added that the stereotypical view of gay men as well as lesbian women is that of gender binaries („who is the man and who is the woman in the relationship“?).

### **How do stereotypes effect the daily lives of LGBT people?**

The effects of stereotypes on people's behaviour could be range from attempts to conform with the majority to thoughts of escape through suicide. Studies on effects (eg Inzlicht, M.) of stereotypes have shown that prejudice and stereotypes have long lasting effects and the subject of prejudice is more likely to perform worse in different taskings. This has a very real impact on people's lives.

The respondents in the Estonian survey reported that LGBT stereotypes have had an effect on their lives in many ways, ranging from the emotional sufferings (emotions like fear, humiliation, low self esteem, depression) to using strategies in order not to be visible, to conform to what is expected (eg controlling one's bodily movements, clothing). Two male respondents also reported that they have had suicidal thoughts.

Most of the respondents (those who open about their sexuality) who answered to the question also stated that they have to constantly explain their sexuality (eg it is not just a phase, gay doesn't mean paedophile, etc).

When looking at these responses it is clear that stereotypes do have an effect on LGBT people's daily lives and by reducing societal pressure on LGBT people improvement on their life quality could be made.

### Reasons of stereotypes and exclusion according to LGBT people

LGBT people perceived that the main causes for the exclusion of LGBT people are related to traditional views and heteronormativity of the society as well as lack of education. Following table (table 8) shows the responses to the question: „What are the main causes for the exclusion of LGBT people in Estonian society?“

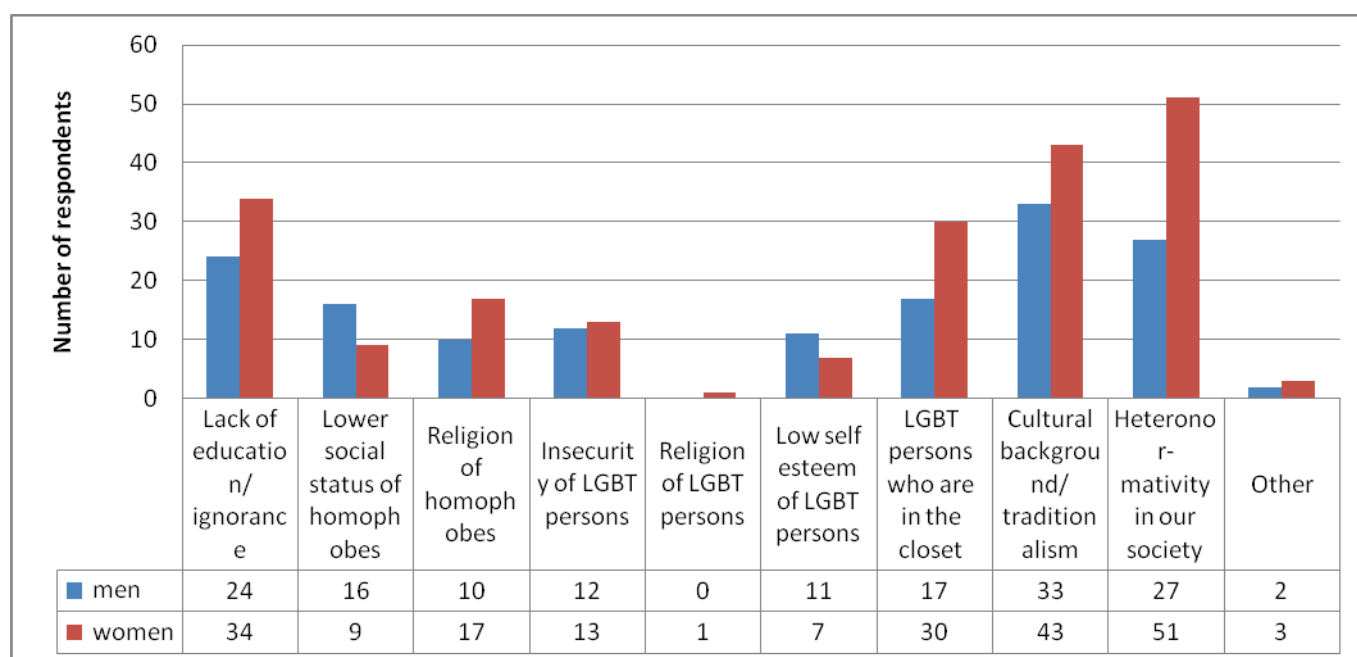


Table 9. Reasons behind exclusion of LGBT people as perceived by respondents.

According to the respondents, another important factor for the exclusion of LGBT people in the society is LGBT people being in the closet. Normally though coming out of the closet is related to the cultural background and traditionalism of the society. The more open society is, the more LGBT people are out of the closet whereas in the traditional societies LGBT people are forced more to stay in the closet.

### Sexual orientation/gender identity in the school context

High number of respondents said that in their view one of the reasons behind homophobia in society is lack of education. When asked respondents' experiences in schools then nearly three quarters responded that LGBT wasn't a topic in the school curriculum. The following table (Table 9) shows the answers to the question: „Were the topics of gender identity and/or sexual orientation covered in your school curriculum?“

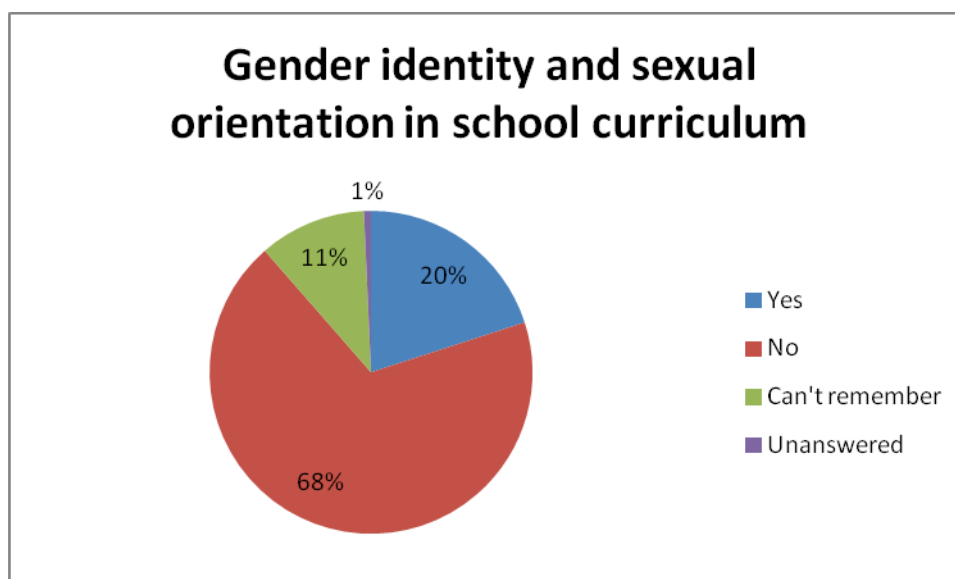


Table 10. Topics of gender identity and sexual orientation in school curriculum.

Maximum age of the respondents who answered „yes“ to the previous question was 32. Mostly the age of the respondents who answered „yes“ to the question was between 20-30 which is explainable by the fact that during the Soviet period and early re-independence period these topics were not dealt at all within the school environment. Only 6 respondents found something useful from the way the LGBT topics were covered.

The following are some examples cited by respondents:

*„For example in the literature lessons when we were studying a homosexual writer, the teacher also said about the writer’s sexual orientation and not in a negative way. I think it was helpful, I could relate to it.“*

24 years old woman

*„I understood in the lesson that I like both – men and women“*

32 years old male

*„Well, it was in the secondary school when I got to know that people are like this and it is not known why, but the main theories are related to genetics and the way person is raised or the combination of both. It was comforting to know at the time, no matter even what the classmates thought, that perhaps I am not that weirdo if these (homosexual) people have always existed.“*

21 years old male

Respondents that told that there was something useful in the school curriculum with regards to LGBT people, mentioned that LGBT topic was covered either in biology or literature lessons.

Many more respondents (24) however said that they have had experiences at school where the way teacher covered topic of LGBT was negative. Most respondents told that it was mostly teacher’s attitude towards LGBTs that was either negative or mocking. The following are some examples cited by the respondents:

*„In the health studies lesson the teacher was speaking about homosexuality. As a conclusion the teacher said that we don’t have this sort of people amongst us. All of the class started to giggle and looked at me...“*

30 years old male

*„...we were talking about adoption possibilities for gay couples. Some teachers said that gay people are not right, normal I mean“*

17 years old female

*„In the health studies lesson the teacher argued that men who perform anal sex will have such „loose“ muscles down there that they are not able to hold themselves back.“*

*30 years old male*

The national curriculum<sup>1</sup> stipulates that the school's learning and educational objective is (not full list) development of an individual who is kind towards other people, respects other people's freedom and dignity (1); in his/her choices and actions is directed by the ethical basic principles, such as sacredness of human life, avoidance of violence, freedom, justice, honesty and responsibility.

### **Developments in society**

The year of 2011, when the research took place, was significant in terms of LGBT visibility in Estonia. In summer 2011, Baltic Pride took place in Tallinn (under the name of OMA festival). During the time of the Pride festival 41 well-known people (politicians, actors, artists etc) signed a petition in support for a partnership law for same sex couples. In September, a LGBT resource centre called OMA Keskus was opened. In spring, Chancellor of Justice submitted the opinion to The Ministry of Justice that the situation where same sex partners cannot register cohabitation is not in accordance with Estonian Constitution. In this chapter the main developments are brought out more in detail. Also, the respondents' feedback on the developments will be analyzed here.

### **Governmental bodies and civil society organizations related to LGBT topics in Estonia**

LGBT organizations continued their development and worked toward finding their respective niches in 2011. The main LGBT organizations in Estonia are outlined in table 11:

<b>Organization</b>	<b>Main field of activities, remarks</b>
<b>NGO Gendy</b>	Established in autumn 2011 as the first registered transgender people's organization.
<b>NGO Eesti Gei Noored (Estonian Gay Youth)</b>	Established in 2008, main organizer of Baltic Pride in Tallinn, running LGBT centre OMA Keskus
<b>NGO SEKÜ (Sexual Minorities Protection Union)</b>	NGO SEKÜ's main field of activity is legal help for LGBT community, advocacy, lobby
<b>NGO Geikristlaste Kogu (Association of Gay Christians)</b>	Main purpose is advocating equal civil and social rights, supporting individual's spiritual and emotional growth

*Table 11. Main LGBT organizations in Estonia*

LGBT organizations in Estonia face the same financing issues as most of non-governmental organizations – lack of core funding. Therefore most of the work is project based and is highly dependent on projects. Main supporters for LGBT work are The Gambling Tax Council, The Ministry of Social Affairs, The Open Estonian Society Foundation, local embassies (UK, US, Norwegian, Dutch etc) in Estonia.

In addition to representative organizations listed above, The Human Rights Centre at Tallinn University of Technology has been active in addressing LGBT issues through the campaign Diversity Enriches.

<sup>1</sup> Available at: <https://www.riigiteataja.ee/akt/174787>

The most visible LGBT organization in 2011 was Eesti Gei Noored (hereafter EGN; main organizer of Baltic Pride in Estonia, running the LGBT resource centre, etc). According to EGN, the main positive developments with regard to LGBT issues in 2011 were:

- Discussion about the partnership law in media;
- Support letter from 41 well known people;
- Intervention from The Chancellor of Justice and readiness of The Ministry of Justice to go forward with the partnership law;
- Opening of OMA centre in Tallinn;
- Establishment of NGO Gendy;
- Activities in Tartu and some smaller towns

Governmental bodies working on LGBT issues remains fractionalized. There is no coherent policy on LGBTs. The main fields of intervention are statements. The following table (table 12) details the field of intervention employed by each governmental body dealing with LGBT issues.

<b>Organization</b>	<b>Field of intervention</b>
<b>Chancellor of Justice</b>	Gives opinions on legislation and accordance of laws with the constitution, helps with discrimination cases
<b>Gender Equality and Equal Treatment Commissioner</b>	Impartial expert, gives opinion whether discrimination has taken place
<b>Ministry of Social Affairs</b>	Gender Equality department is responsible for co-ordinating equal treatment-related work (including LGBT); Public Health department is responsible for transgender policies.
<b>Ministry of Justice</b>	Has analyzed scenarios for non-marital cohabitation (incl same-sex partners), will co-ordinate and write the partnership law
<b>Ministry of Foreign Affairs</b>	Foreign policy representation of Estonia, has given support for LGBT-related resolutions in UN, COE and EC.

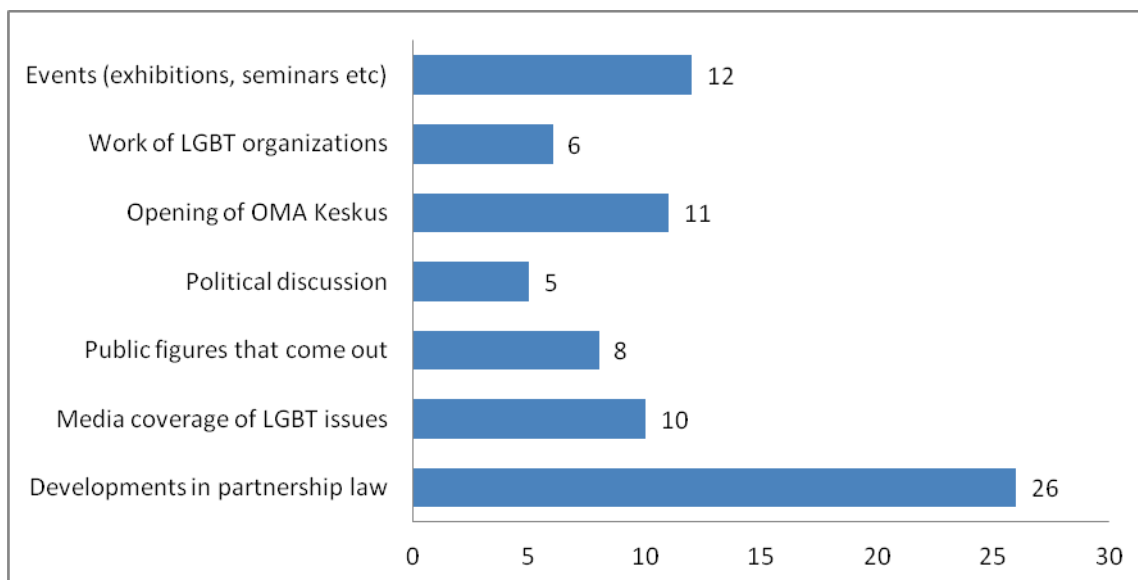
*Table 12. Governmental bodies related to LGBT work in Estonia.*

Last year (2011) was, however, important also with regard to the work of governmental bodies. The Ministry of Social Affairs continued to support The Human Rights Centre at Tallinn Technical University with their campaign Diversity Enriches, and also supported Baltic Pride financially. The major backlash however was the minister's decision to change The Ministry of Social Affairs' Development Plan<sup>2</sup>. Previously LGBT policies (awareness raising and data collection) were visible as a separate section in the development plan. In the current year, however, the Minister decided to change this and now LGBT is only mentioned under the section 1.7.4 in relation to equal treatment (reducing stereotypes). However, on the other hand, The Ministry of Social Affairs organized jointly with The European Commission a LGBT roundtable, under the EC's governmental expert group of non-discrimination activities.

<sup>2</sup> Available at: <http://www.sm.ee/meie/eesmargid-ja-nende-taitmine/ministeeriumi-arengukava.html>

**Respondents' perception of recent developments in society with regard to LGBT topics**

Generally, respondents felt that there have been positive developments in society with regard to LGBT issues. Respondents brought out that the overall tolerance level towards LGBT people has raised and felt that the government is moving forward with LGBT issues. Table 13 shows the number of respondents who felt that there have been positive developments in society.



*Table 13. Have there been any recent positive developments regarding LGBT*

Most mentioned were the developments in partnership law. The Ministry of Justice stated at the end of 2011 that the preparation of a partnership law will be in the year 2012 working plan. Respondents also mentioned that during the past year there were a number of LGBT events (eg exhibitions, seminars, film screenings), which was seen as positive.

## **2 Sexual orientation, gender identity and gender roles as perceived by young people in Estonia**

This part of the report focuses on how young people view their world related to the questions of sexual orientation, gender identity and gender roles. Completing questionnaires was completely voluntary to pupils.

First chapter describes the sample and methodology used. It is followed by overview on how respondents view genders, what are their views gender roles, etc. Third chapter describes the attitudes towards LGBT people and part two is concluded by the respondents personal experiences in the school environments.

### **2.1 Methodology and description of the sample**

This part of the research was carried out in parallel with the research described in part one. However, many different aspects were necessary to consider. These will be described below. Also current research questions were agreed between project partners in order to make research reports comparable. In Estonia, some extra questions that relate to violence, were added as this issue is particularly salient in the Estonian context.

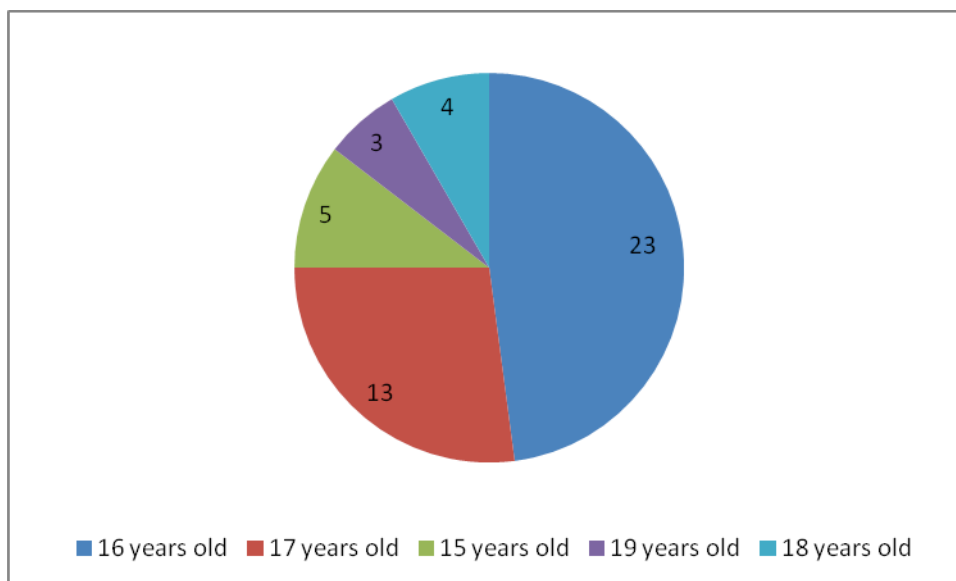
Before the research, contact was made with The Estonian Ministry of Science and Education's general education department, in order to inform it about the planned research. As schools are rather independent in Estonia, the research team had to approach school principals directly to get permission to carry out the research in the schools. In total, 62 different schools were approached, out of which only 5 schools responded (and three of those rejected the request for research).

It became clear that another strategy to get to the possible respondents was necessary. The research team contacted then The Estonian Youth Centre network, that forwarded the invitations to participate in the research to their mailing lists and youth centres.

Despite the different strategies, the number of respondents remained very low – 48 respondents. Therefore, the results of this part of research are shown here more in detail, but cannot be generalized.

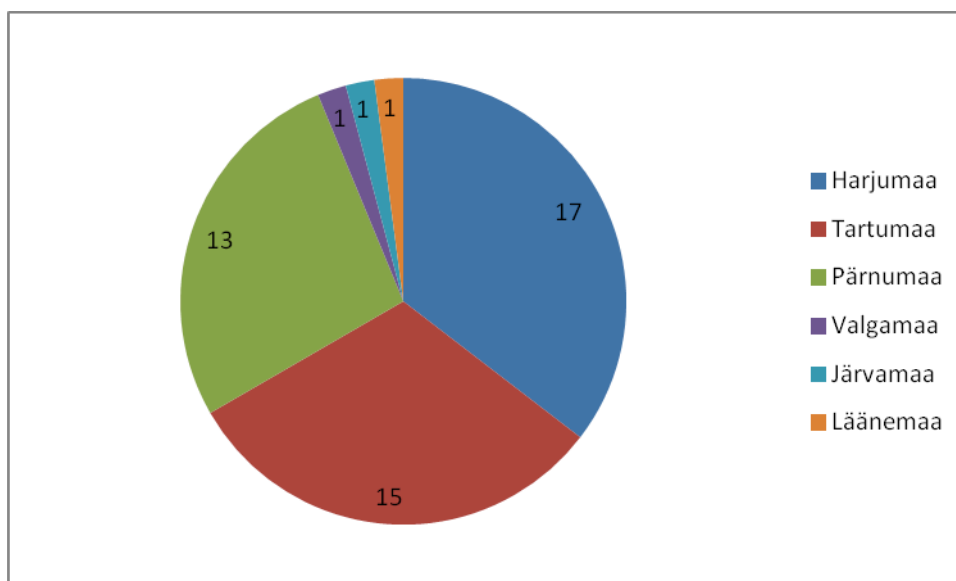
The following table shows the number of respondents broken down by age.





*Table 14. Age of respondents*

Out of the 48 respondents, 27 were female, 20 male and one respondent marked the gender as “other”. Nearly all of the respondents were studying at gymnasiums, with just two exceptions (vocational schools). Three respondents were studying in small schools (less than 200 pupils), and the rest studied in medium (201-500 pupils) or large sized schools (501-1000 pupils).



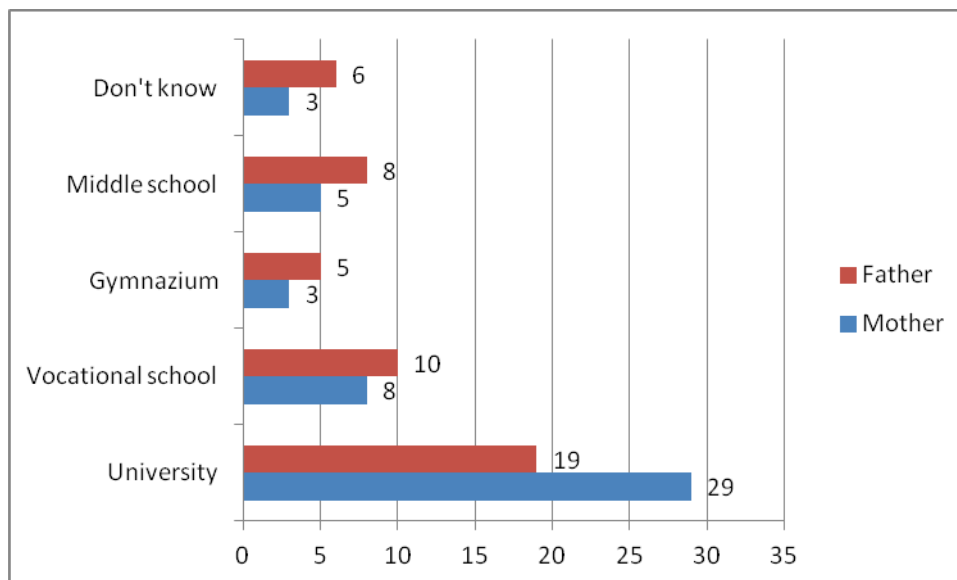
*Table 15. Counties represented by the respondents.*

Most of the respondents were from Harjumaa (Tallinn) followed by Tartu county (Tartu is the second largest city in Estonia) and Pärnu county. More than three quarters (79%) of respondents live in urban areas while the remainder answered that they live in rural areas. Most of the respondents speak Estonian at home (n=32) whilst the remaining speak Russian or Estonian and Russian at home.

Similar to part one of the research, most of the respondents (n=34) did not associate themselves with a religious community. The remaining respondents stated their religious

background as Catholic (4 respondents), Orthodox (4 respondents), Protestant (2 respondents), other religion (2 respondents) and other Christian (2 respondents).

Most of respondents' parents had higher education. The following table shows the educational background of respondents' parents.



*Table 16. Educational background of respondents' parents.*

## **2.2 Respondents' views on genders**

Gender is performed in everyday situations constantly. Non conformation to expected gender can have serious consequences on a person's safety. At school, it can manifest itself in bullying, refusal to communicate etc. Michael Kimmel names this phenomena gender policing.

The Estonian Gender Equality Monitor (2009)<sup>3</sup> shows that Estonians have relatively traditional expectations with regard to gender. This becomes evident when we look at the respondents' expectations on which traits and skills should be developed for boys and girls. Girls are expected to know more how to groom themselves, how to look pretty. Boys are expected to know how to use technology, etc.

Following two charts give an overview which are the expectations to gender of female and male respondents. The numbers in the charts represent the number of respondents.

<sup>3</sup> Available at:

[http://www.sm.ee/fileadmin/meedia/Dokumendid/V2ljaanded/Toimetised/2010/toimetised\\_20101.pdf](http://www.sm.ee/fileadmin/meedia/Dokumendid/V2ljaanded/Toimetised/2010/toimetised_20101.pdf)

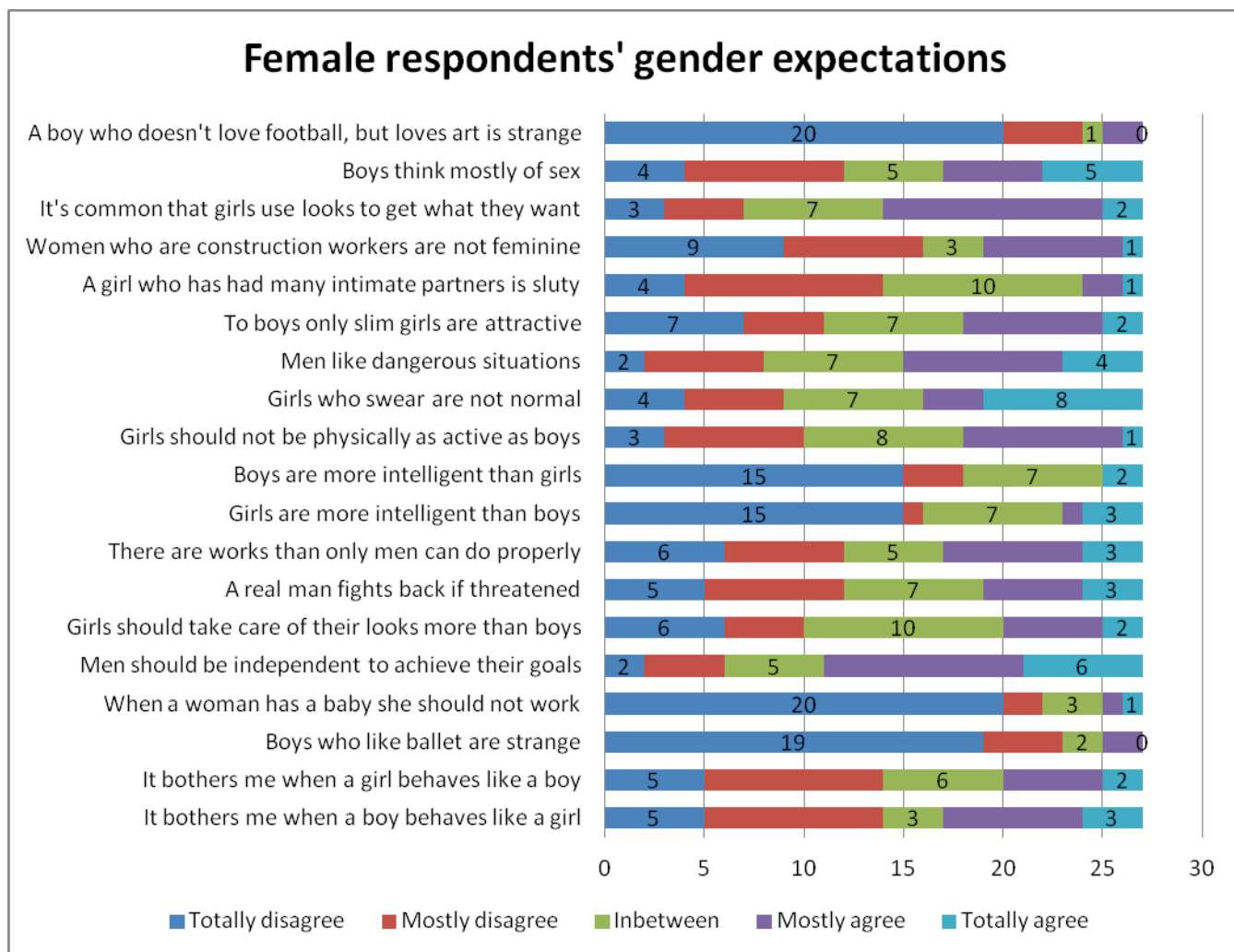


Table 17. Female respondents' expectations of genders

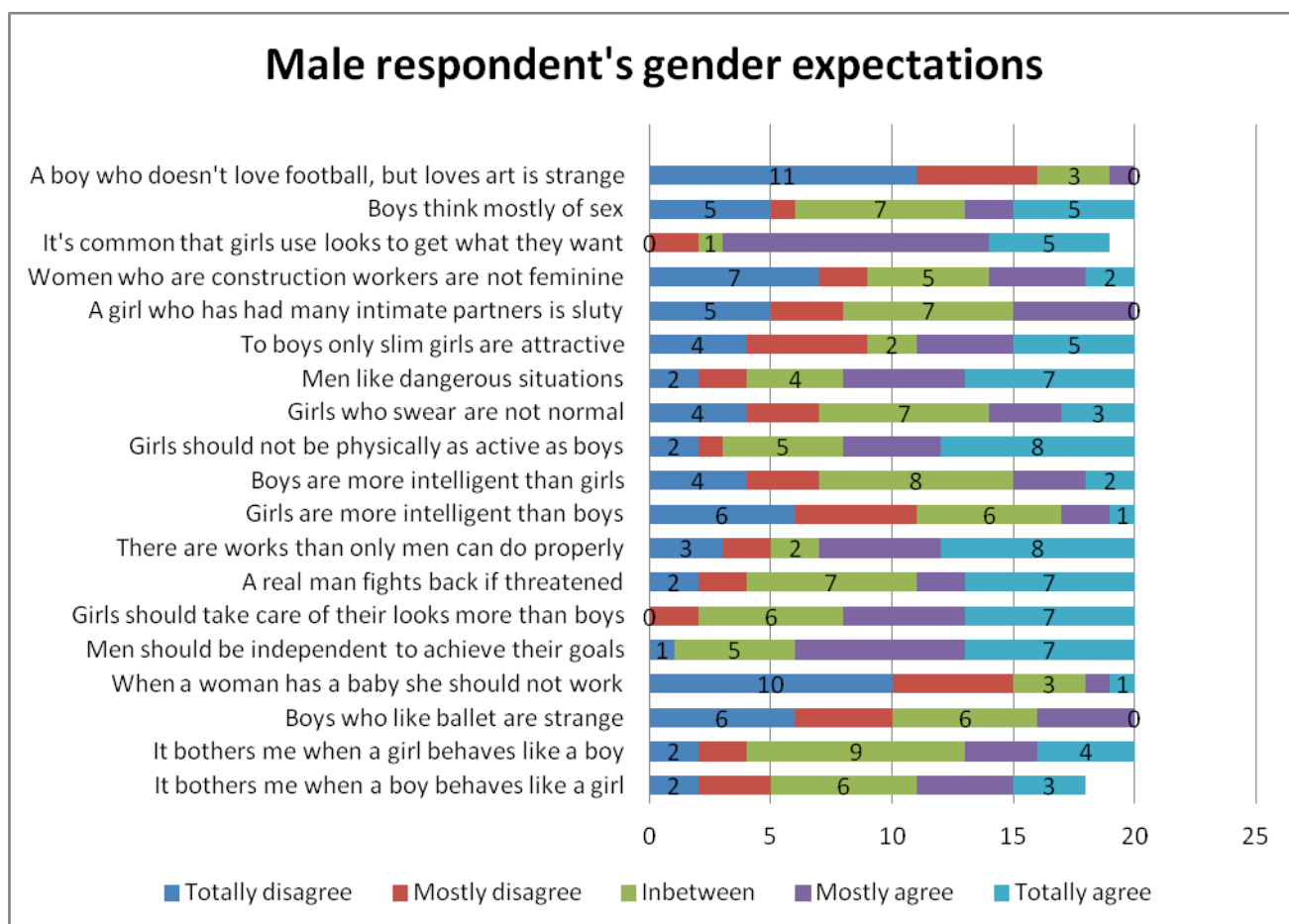


Table 18. Male respondents' expectations of gender

As can be seen from the two charts above, there is no significant expectation to conform to traditional gender markers. The responses are rather mixed, but tend to lean on the side of more egalitarian views for girls and more “traditional” for male respondents.

However, boys as well as girls think that it is all right for a boy not to like “traditionally” masculine things (*eg football*) and like what is often perceived as feminine (*eg ballet, art etc*), yet at the same time male respondents were more in favour of associating men with typical masculine traits (*eg strength, independence*).

### 2.3 Attitudes toward and experiences with LGBT people

In this chapter, respondents' views, attitudes and stereotypes will be presented and analyzed. The overall attitudes towards LGBT people in Estonia are somewhat ambiguous. The European Social Survey (2005) showed that a majority of Estonians believe that gays and lesbians should be able to live their lives as they choose. The special Eurobarometer from 2007<sup>4</sup> puts Estonia close to The EU average on tolerance towards LGBT people. Yet, at the same time LGBT visible events are frowned upon - pride marches are heavily criticized in media and the general discourse in online commentaries suggest that “if they do it in the privacy in their homes it does not bother me, it’s when they come on the streets to show off their sexuality that is not acceptable”.

<sup>4</sup> Available at: [http://ec.europa.eu/public\\_opinion/archives/ebs/ebs\\_263\\_sum\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/ebs/ebs_263_sum_en.pdf)

The following table shows how respondents in school define homosexuality. In the questionnaire, statements regarding homosexuality were made. Respondents could choose the statements (maximum 3) with which they agreed most.

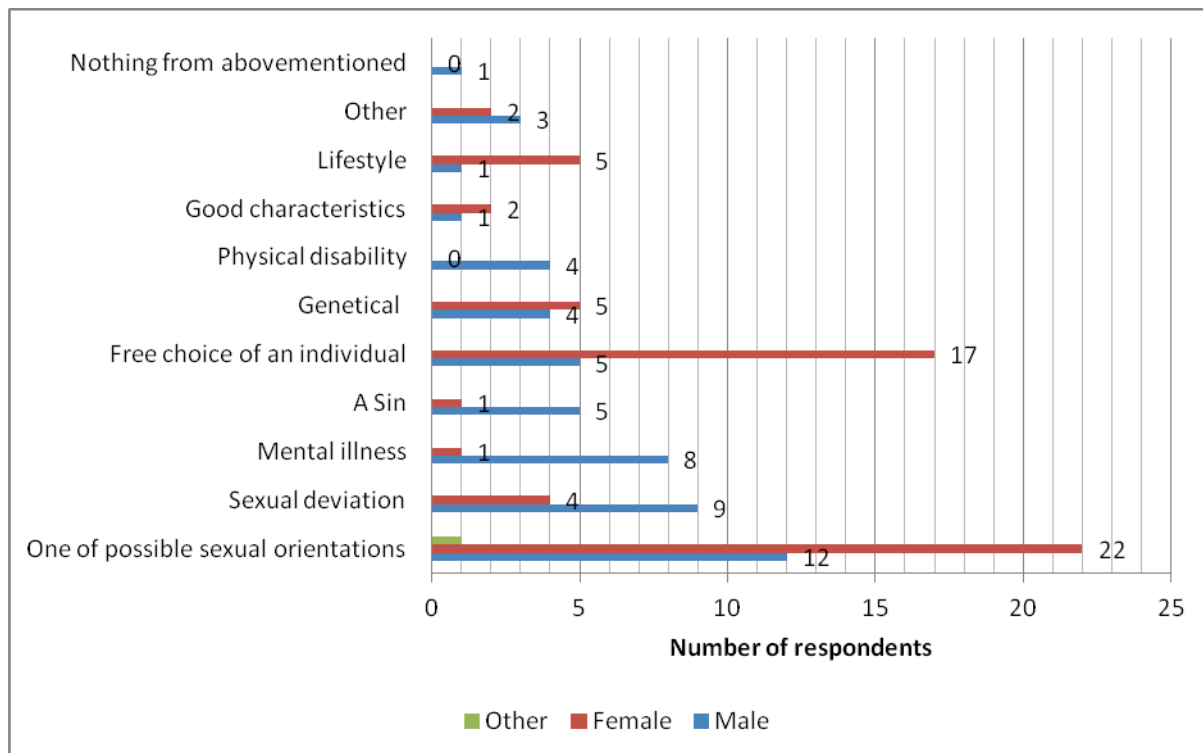


Table 19. Respondents' definitions of homosexuality.

Whilst male respondents described homosexuality more in terms of illness or deviation, female respondents mostly felt that homosexuality is one of the possible sexual orientations and a free choice of the individual.

This corresponds also to the notion of Michael Kimmel who argues that homophobia is an underlying factor in constructing today's heterosexual masculinity.

Interestingly (if compared with the results above) nearly all of the respondents know personally at least one LGBT person (m=19; f=27). Respondents stated in 17 cases that this person is their friend in their own age.

**Respondents' assessment on the LGBT friendliness of their environment**

Following section of the questionnaire asked how respondents perceive their surrounding environments in terms of LGBT friendliness.

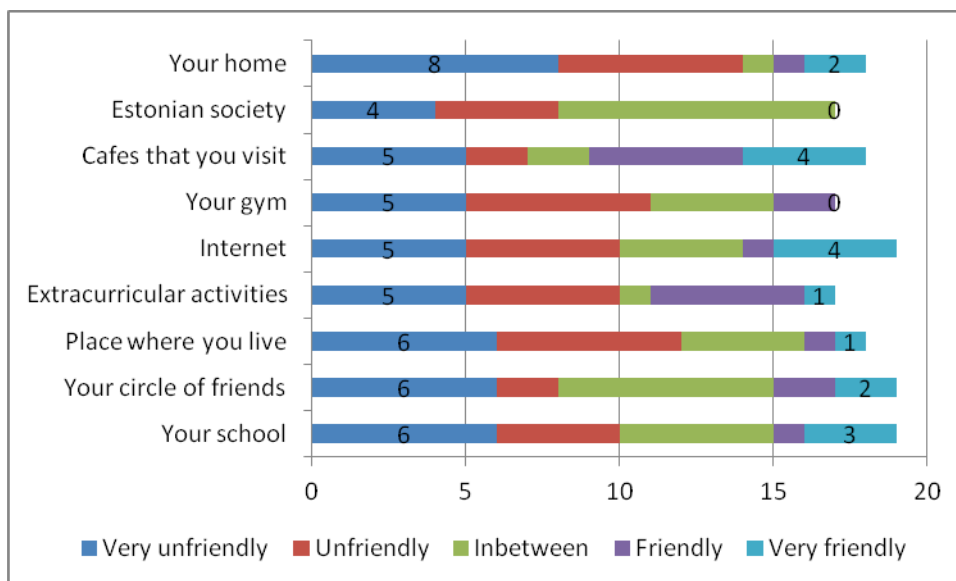


Table 20. Environments in terms of LGBT friendliness perceived by the male respondents,

As shown on the chart male respondents view their environments rather LGBT unfriendly with the home being the most unfriendly environment towards LGBT people.

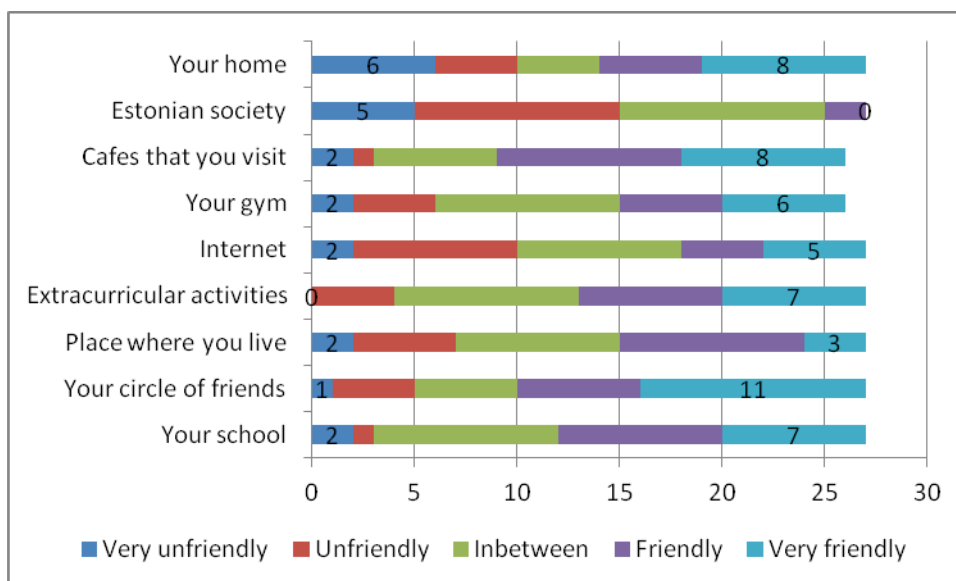


Table 21. Environments in terms of LGBT friendliness as perceived by the female respondents.

When comparing the two charts above it becomes evident that female respondents have much more positive views on their surrounding environments in terms of being LGBT friendly. Further research is necessary to explain this difference in the perception.

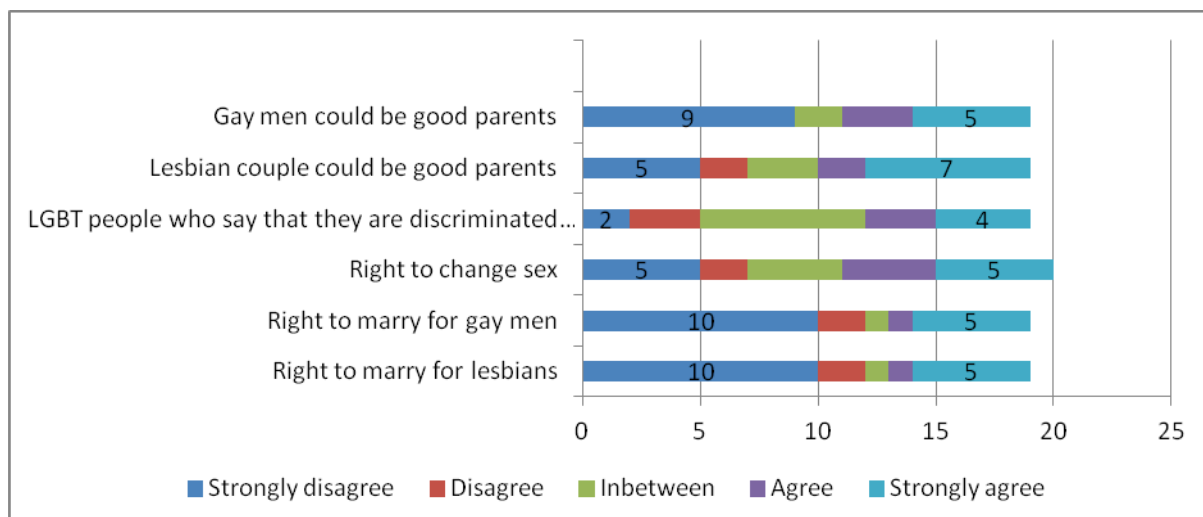


Table 22. Male respondents opinions on LGBT people and their rights.

Most of male respondents disagreed that gay men or lesbian women should be allowed to marry if they choose. In comparison to female respondents (table 23) it can be said that males are more conservative in their perceptions and attitudes.

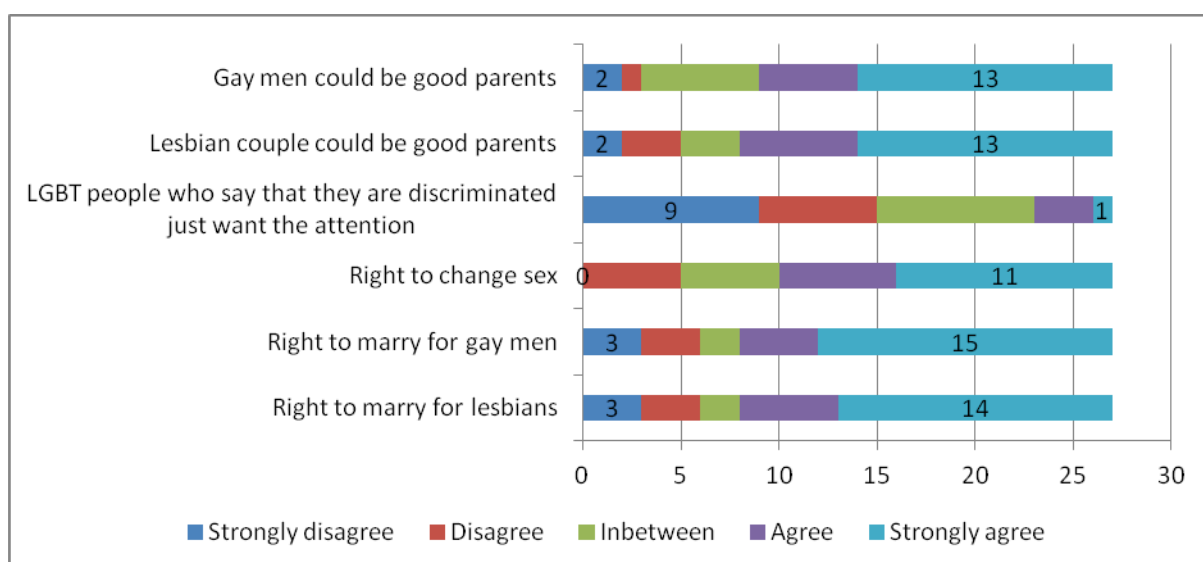


Table 23. Female respondents opinions on LGBT people and their rights

Female respondents were more likely to say that LGBT people should have the right to marry and good be good parents. In comparing the last two tables to the previous (respondents assessment of the environments) it becomes plausible that females, being more tolerant themselves also experience their surroundings more tolerant.

## 2.4 Respondents' personal experiences at school

This section concentrated to respondents' personal experiences in terms of LGBT issues in the school system. Current section is extra that was specific to Estonia, to meet the local needs.

Firstly a question regarding about the prevalence of negative speech about/towards LGBT people was asked. According to female respondents the negative speech is not very common in the school. Male respondents have however different experience in that.

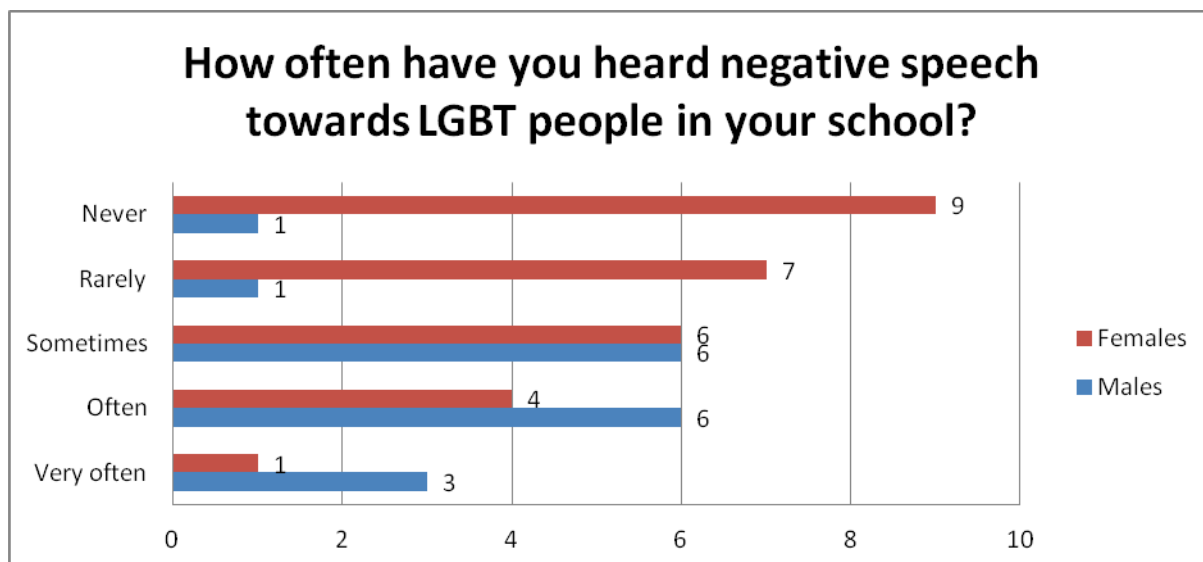


Table 24. Prevalence of negative speech in the school environment.

In addition the research team asked if any of the negative speech was targeted towards the respondents themselves regardless of their own sexual orientation. Most of the respondents (n=38) have not experienced negative speech which implies to their sexual orientation. However, 7 respondents reported the negative speech targeted at them. In the following chart (table 25) the forms of hostility is shown.

Table shows that the most common form of bullying is humiliating and saying insulting comments to the person that is perceived to be gay, bisexual, lesbian or transgender. Especially serious are threats to kill or physical violence towards the victim perceived to be LGBT. The fact that there are young people in the school environments that are bullied because of their perceived sexual orientation should have a clear input for the Ministry of Education in terms of school safety issues.

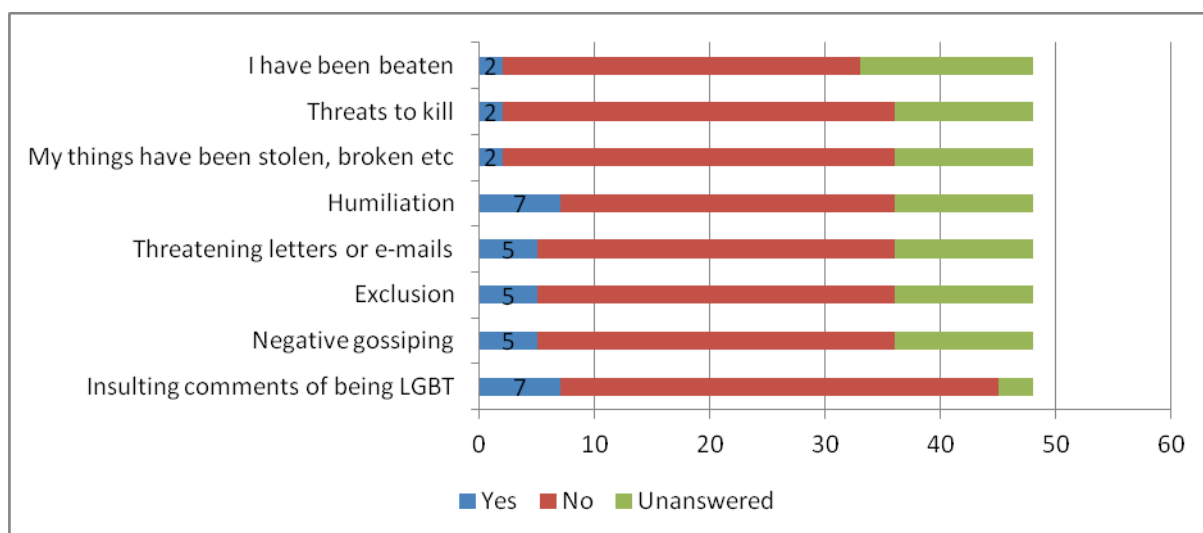


Table 25. Question: what kind of negative attitude, actions have you experienced because of your perceived homosexuality

The existence of violence in the school environments is a serious issue which needs to be tackled to the fullest extent.



### **3 Comparison of the results of surveys. Conclusions**

Sexual orientation and gender expression are integral part of a person's life. Yet, at the same time these private aspects of a person's identity that have been and still are under the sphere of interest (whether visible or not visible) of the society and other people. The unexpected gender expression or sexual orientation is often policed and sanctioned by peers. This may have serious consequences on person's self esteem and therefore person's quality of life.

As became evident from current research, LGBT people feel that they are treated unfairly because of their sexual orientation or gender identity in very diverse environments. The most homophobic environment is perceived to be newspaper's on-line commentaries. However, other, more close environments were mentioned. Unfair treatment in forms of insults, refusal, jokes, takes place also within the families, at schools and also bars and pubs.

When compared this to the research carried out in the schools we can see that also youngsters see their homes to be rather unfriendly places in terms of LGBT issues.

High number of LGBT respondents felt that the reason behind homophobia in the society is the lack of education. Yet, only one fifth of the respondents remember that questions of sexual orientation or gender identity were discussed in the school. As the national curriculum does not foresee how the topics of sexual orientation and gender identity should be taught, it is up to teachers themselves how they talk about these issues.

A big point of concern is the safety in the school environments. There were two young kids who have been beaten up because of their perceived sexual orientation. Two youngsters also reported threats to be killed because of their perceived sexual orientation. Clearly these are worrying signals.

Boys also tend to hear negative speech towards LGBT people more in the school environment. The terms like "pede" and "lesbar" ("faggot" and "dyke") are commonly used.

#### **Conclusions**

As the number of respondents in schools was too small to make any far reaching conclusions further study with larger number of respondents is necessary.

Studies show that young people (especially males) have rather mixed views on LGBT people. On one hand it is stated that homosexuality is one of the many possible sexual orientations, yet on the other hand youngsters claimed that homosexuality is a deviation.

Therefore better teaching materials for teachers are necessary to talk about LGBT issues. Another aspect that was already mentioned above: school safety and LGBT peoples' safety. Teachers should be trained on how to recognize homophobic bullying and how to tackle with it. To improve the LGBT peoples quality of life in terms of personal safety, it is important to deal with these issues on the state level. Awareness raising campaigns, trainings, changes in legislation are all appropriate means.

The following sums up the recommendations:

- Ministry of Education and Science should in co-operation with LGBT organizations produce materials on LGBT issues for teachers and pupils;
- Topic of LGBT should be added to national curriculum;
- Training to teachers should be provided;
- Instead of trying to dissolve the topic of LGBT under general framework of non-discrimination, specific actions should be taken;
- Clear and coherent policy in different policy sectors should be established