

LGBT+ People  
in Russia:

# 2022 FULL REPORT



 **COMING  
OUT**

 **sphere** 

## Contents

<b>Glossary</b> .....	<b>3</b>
<b>LGBT+ group Coming Out</b> .....	<b>5</b>
<b>Sphere Foundation</b> .....	<b>6</b>
<b>LGBT+ PEOPLE IN RUSSIA: 2022 QUANTITATIVE RESEARCH</b> .....	<b>7</b>
<b>Methodology</b> .....	<b>7</b>
<b>Demographic analysis of survey participants</b> .....	<b>8</b>
Social life and social circle.....	11
<b>Financial well-being of LGBT+ people</b> .....	<b>14</b>
Income level.....	14
Income structure.....	17
Attitude towards sex work.....	18
Workforce and education sector.....	19
<b>Discrimination in healthcare</b> .....	<b>20</b>
<b>Discrimination in goods and services</b> .....	<b>22</b>
<b>Discrimination in housing</b> .....	<b>23</b>
<b>Parental rights</b> .....	<b>25</b>
<b>Violence and hate crime</b> .....	<b>26</b>
Physical violence.....	27
Homophobic and transphobic threats and hostile actions.....	28
Sexual violence.....	29
Domestic violence.....	30
Property damage and theft.....	31
Blackmail and extortion.....	32
<b>Interactions with law enforcement</b> .....	<b>34</b>
<b>Impact of the war in Ukraine on LGBT+ people of Russia</b> .....	<b>35</b>
Impact of the war on day-to-day life.....	35
Impact of mobilization.....	39
<b>LGBT+ people and emigration</b> .....	<b>39</b>
<b>IMPACT OF THE WAR IN UKRAINE ON LGBT+ PEOPLE IN RUSSIA'S REGIONS: QUALITATIVE RESEARCH</b> .....	<b>42</b>
<b>Methodology</b> .....	<b>42</b>
Barents Region.....	43
Kazan.....	44
Yaroslavl.....	45
Rostov-on-Don.....	46
Yekaterinburg.....	47
Omsk.....	48
Vladivostok.....	48
<b>Conclusion</b> .....	<b>50</b>
<b>Recommendations</b> .....	<b>52</b>

## 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.

**Outing** — involuntary disclosure of information about sexual orientation and/or gender identity or any other minority characteristic of a person without their consent.

**Bisexuality** — the quality of being emotionally, romantically, and/or sexually attracted to both men and women, not necessarily to the same extent or at the same time.

**Gender dysphoria** — discomfort related to the discrepancy between a person's gender identity and their birth sex, as well as gender identity and others' perception of the person's gender.

**Gender identity** — a person's innate sense of their gender. A person can identify with the male gender (boy, man), the female gender (girl, woman), or other gender identity (non-binary). Gender identity is an internal feeling that is not always visible to others.

**Gender non-conforming person** — a person whose gender identity and behavior are different from the ones associated with their birth sex and defy the social stereotypes linked to male and female representation.

**Gender expression** — expression of different aspects of gender identity or gender role through appearance, behavior, clothing, and accessories.

**Heterosexual person** — a person who is emotionally, romantically, and/or sexually attracted exclusively or primarily to people of the opposite gender.

**Homosexual person** — a person who is emotionally, romantically, and/or sexually attracted exclusively or primarily to people of their own gender.

**Deadname** — the name that a transgender person no longer uses, typically their birth name. It can be their passport name or simply their 'dead' name, not listed anywhere after their official documents have been changed.

**Intersex** — a term used to describe the experience of people born with sex attributes (including genitalia, reproductive glands, reproductive organs, and chromosomes) that do not fit the typical definition of a male or female body. Intersex variations can be seen at birth (if the baby is born with 'atypical' genitalia), during puberty (when puberty does not occur or occurs in a unique way), when trying to conceive, or later in life. In some cases, one may never realize that they are intersex.

**LGBT+** — an abbreviation for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people. The 'plus' indicates all other groups and identities.

**Non-binary person** — a person whose identity does not fit the binary gender norms (a person who does not identify fully as a woman or a man).

**Pansexuality** — the quality of being emotionally, romantically, and/or sexually attracted to people regardless of their sex or gender. Sex and gender of the other person hold little to no significance for pansexual people (they like ‘people, not their gender’).

**Fake date** — a crime committed with the intent of robbery, usually committed against homosexual and bisexual men. Once the connection is made online, an in-person meeting is arranged, during which the men are threatened with disclosure of information about their sexuality.

**SOGIE** — sexual orientation, gender identity, and expression.

**Transgender person** — a person whose gender identity does not match their assigned gender at birth.

**Cisgender person** — a person whose gender identity matches their assigned gender at birth.

**Peer-to-peer consultation** — a one-on-one consultation with a transgender person about their experience with transitioning.

**HRT** — hormone replacement therapy.

# LGBT+ group Coming Out

Since 2008, Coming Out has been protecting the rights of the LGBT+ community and helping queer people in 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 LGBT+ people and their loved ones and host support groups for LGBT+ families and parents of queer people. We monitor discrimination to collect evidence of the experiences of LGBT+ 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 LGBT+ 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](#)
- [Peer-to-peer consultation](#)

## Our social media

- 📌 [t.me/keepcalmandcomingout](https://t.me/keepcalmandcomingout)
- 📷 [instagram.com/comingoutspb/](https://www.instagram.com/comingoutspb/)
- 📘 [facebook.com/comingoutspb](https://www.facebook.com/comingoutspb)
- 🐦 [twitter.com/comingoutspb](https://twitter.com/comingoutspb)
- 📺 [vk.com/comingoutspb](https://vk.com/comingoutspb)
- 📺 [youtube.com/user/ComingOutSP](https://www.youtube.com/user/ComingOutSP)

## Contact us

[contact@comingoutspb.ru](mailto:contact@comingoutspb.ru)

[comingoutspb.com/eng/](https://comingoutspb.com/eng/)






# Sphere Foundation

[Sphere Foundation](#) is a human rights organization that was created in 2011. We provide help and support for LGBT+ 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](#).

## **Our social media:**

-  [t.me/spherequeer](https://t.me/spherequeer)
-  [instagram.com/spherequeer/](https://www.instagram.com/spherequeer/)
-  [youtube.com/@spherequeer](https://www.youtube.com/@spherequeer)
-  [facebook.com/spherequeer](https://www.facebook.com/spherequeer)
-  [twitter.com/SphereFund](https://twitter.com/SphereFund)
- [spherequeer.org](https://spherequeer.org)

2022 was a year of fear and trauma for the people of Russia — and much more so for the people of Ukraine. LGBT+ people ended up in a particularly vulnerable position, having already been the target of societal pressure long before that. Coming Out and Sphere have united their efforts in order to portray the experiences of LGBT+ people in Russia, account for cases of discrimination, and uncover new issues they have encountered in the year 2022.

## **LGBT+ people in Russia: 2022 quantitative research**

### **Methodology**

The main purpose of our research was to determine the number of cases of discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation and gender in Russia in 2022. We intended to assess the quality of life of LGBT+ people in Russia: their financial well-being and housing situation, access to education, healthcare, and other services. We aimed to evaluate the impact of the war in Ukraine and all associated changes (reinforcement of censure and repressions, sanctions, mobilization, etc.) on Russian LGBT+ people.

We had been gathering data via survey between December 5, 2022, and February 12, 2023. The survey was distributed through different channels. Firstly, it was published across Coming Out's and Sphere's social media. Secondly, it was advertised on Hornet, which allowed us to reach gay men from different regions of Russia who do not tend to be involved with Coming Out's and Sphere's content. Thirdly, we distributed the survey using targeted advertising, which allowed us to branch outside the bubble of LGBT+ initiatives. Fourthly, we engaged social workers who work with isolated, vulnerable groups within the LGBT+ community (for example, HIV-positive people and closeted LGBT+ people), who distributed our survey in gay saunas and clubs in Saint Petersburg. The latter allowed us to reach participants who were least likely to come across our survey online. We did our best to represent different groups within the LGBT+ community across Russia.

Unfortunately, the new Russian laws (the 'foreign agents', advertising, and 'gay propaganda' laws) and online bans significantly limited our options when distributing the survey. For example, we could not use targeted advertising on VKontakte [a social network widely popular in Russia], and advertising on Instagram and Facebook could not be catered to Russian regions since these networks are officially banned in Russia. These limitations affected specific aspects of our survey: we were unable to balance gender representation as well as regional disproportionality. However, we managed to compile a solid amount of data that reflects the differences in the experiences of Russian LGBT+ people and paints a bigger picture of the state of LGBT+ rights in the country.

Our survey included single-choice questions, multiple-choice questions, and open questions, which prompted the participants to share their experiences and give details about the various cases of discrimination or other difficulties they have encountered. In this year's survey, we have combined the surveys that had been used by Coming Out and Sphere previously by making them applicable to all regions of Russia.

Between 2018 and 2021, Coming Out had been conducting research across Saint Petersburg and the area, and Sphere (under the name 'Russian LGBT+ Network') did their



yearly survey across Russia using less detailed questions. After merging the two surveys, we found that the possibilities of combining the new data with the data from previous years were limited. We aimed to track the tendencies and changes in accordance with those limitations by comparing the data we received with the data we already had.

We disregarded all duplicate responses, as well as those that were obviously false, those that contained homophobia and aggression towards LGBT+ people, and responses from cisgender heterosexual people.

Some quotes from the participants are provided in this report. They are signed the same way their authors identify as. All data and quotes are presented anonymously.

It is important to note that the data we are working with is a subjective assessment of our participants' personal situations and the cases of discrimination that they have encountered. Therefore, there is a possibility that some instances of discrimination are not represented in our data because they were not deemed as such by the participants. In turn, some responses that we got this year may be better represented by other legal categories than the ones that were originally outlined when creating and analyzing the report. Moreover, there is a small possibility that some of the participants included their responses prior to 2022 due to inattentiveness or out of their desire to share their experiences. We are forced to rely on the subjective assessments of our participants and their judgment of the unlawful encounters they have had, trusting their honesty and attentiveness towards the questions we put before them.

## **Demographic analysis of survey participants**

Our data consists of **6439** surveys. **104** of those were collected in a personal conversation with social workers, **4480** through social media, and **1855** via advertising on Hornet.

The age of the participants varies between **13** and **70** years old. The mean age is **27.9** years old, and the median age<sup>1</sup> is **26** years old.

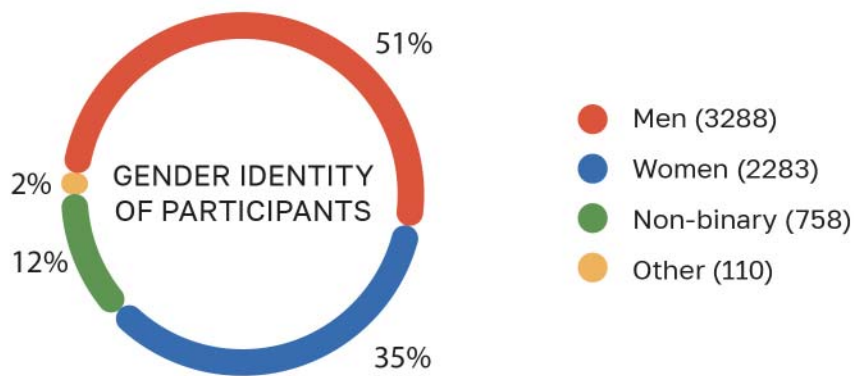
Due to the challenges of survey distribution that were determined in the previous section of this report, there is a prevalence of participants with male gender identity. 51% of the participants identify as men, 35% as women, 12% as non-binary, and 2% as other gender identities. The same challenges affected the age of our participants: on average, the men surveyed are older than the women, with the mean age for men being 30.4 years old and for women being 25.7 years old.

This gender divide complicates the comparison process of old data with new data since in the 2021 Coming Out survey, the gender distribution of the participants was almost equal, and in the Sphere survey of the same year, female-identifying participants were prevalent (57.7% cisgender women). The percentage of non-binary participants in both surveys is comparable (11.8% for Coming Out and 9.44% for Sphere).

---

<sup>1</sup> Median age — age that divides the participants into two equal-sized parts where half of the participants (50%) will be below the median age and the other half (50%) will be above it.

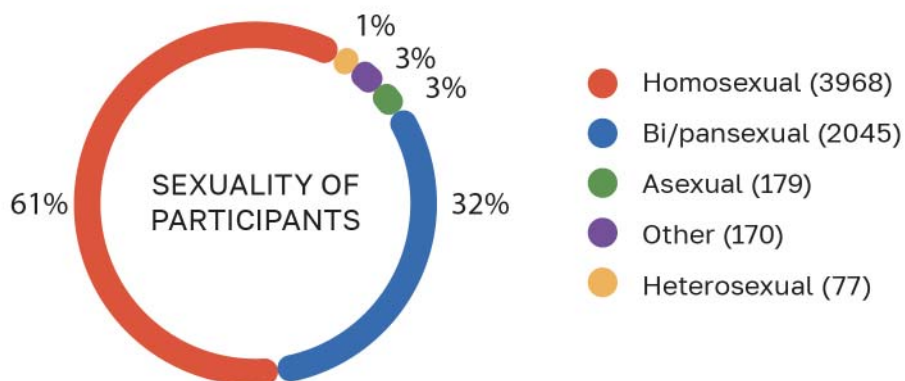




Transgender participants account for 18% of all participants. On average, transgender people are younger: their mean age is 25.2 years old, and their median age is 23 years old. Almost half (48%) of all transgender participants live in Moscow (26%) or Saint Petersburg (22%).

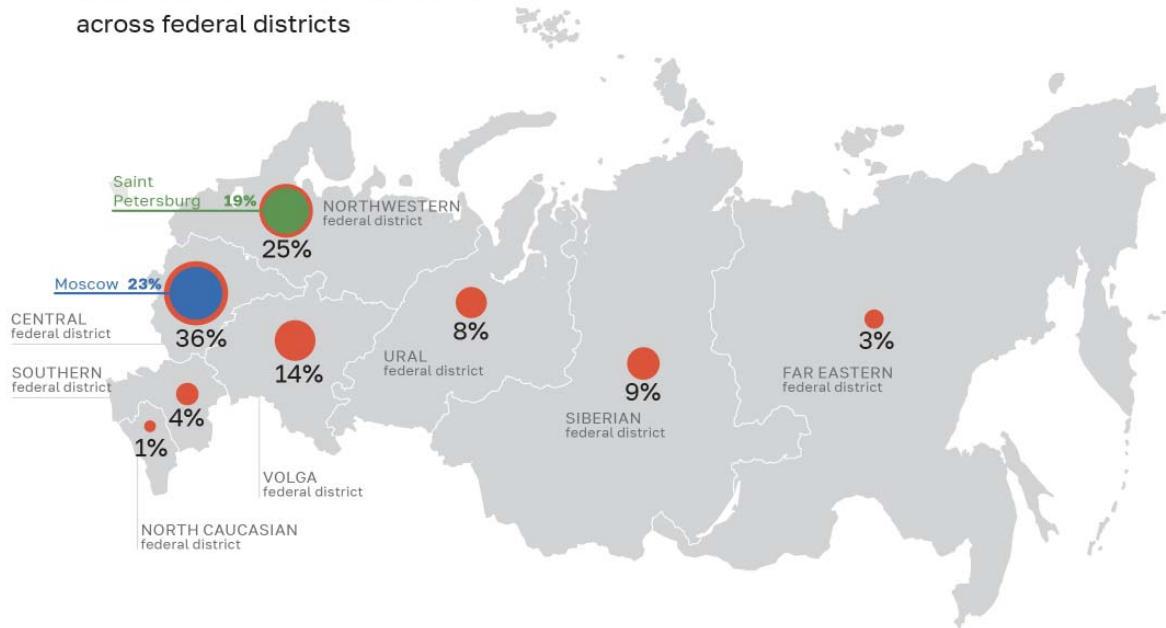


Our data also contains a small number of intersex participants (148 people, or 2%). Most participants identify as homosexual (61%). Bisexual and pansexual people account for about a third (32%). 3% identify as asexual, 1% as heterosexual, and another 3% choose a different way to identify their sexuality.

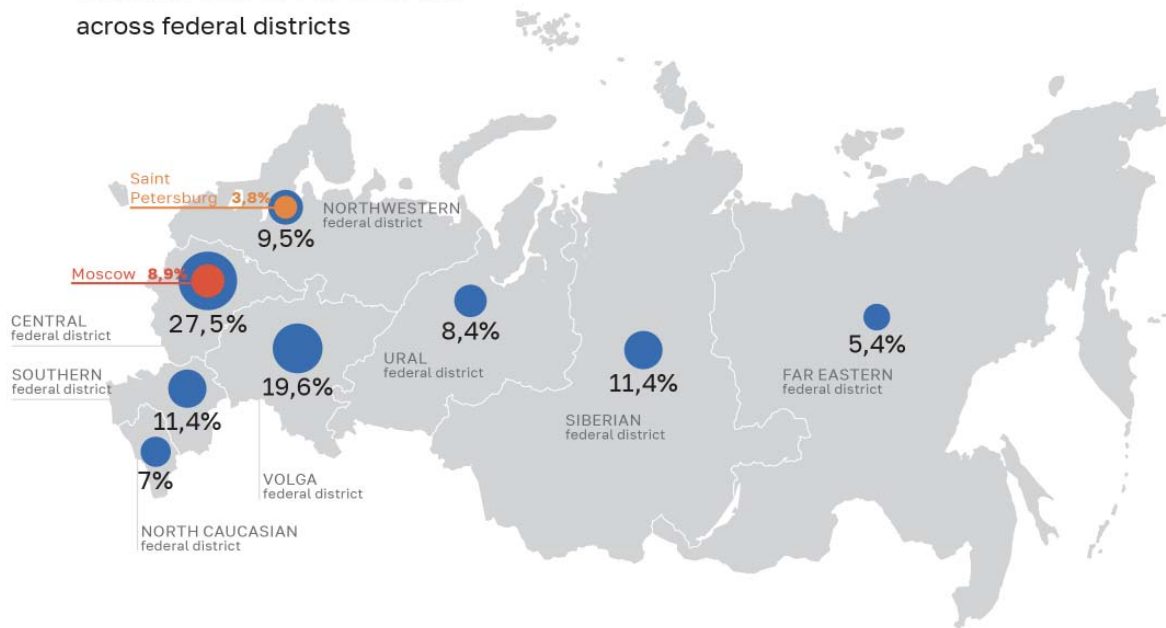


Most participants currently live or have previously lived in Moscow (23%) and Saint Petersburg (19%). Accordingly, the situation in those cities and the federal districts they belong to (Central and Northwestern, respectively) is best represented in our report. The Southern, North Caucasian, and Volga districts are significantly underrepresented. Unfortunately, we were unable to balance out this inequality due to the latest legal restrictions, which is why our data leans heavily towards Moscow and Saint Petersburg. We have taken that into account when analyzing the data.

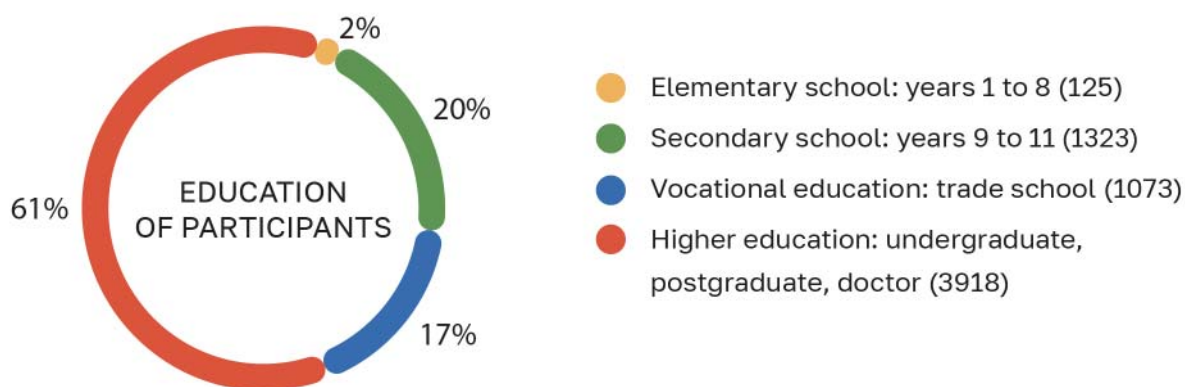
DISTRIBUTION OF PARTICIPANTS  
across federal districts



DISTRIBUTION OF POPULATION  
across federal districts



Similar to the previous surveys from Coming Out and Sphere, the majority of the participants in this survey have a higher education degree or are in the process of receiving one (61%).



## Social life and social circle

**The majority of the participants (49%) are out to most of their friends.** A significantly smaller number (21%) are out to their classmates or colleagues, and an even smaller number are out to their family members (14%). At the same time, 38% of the participants have never told anyone in their family about their sexuality and/or gender identity. 37% are not out to their classmates or colleagues, and only 6% are not out to any of their friends.

Transgender people are, on average, more likely to be out than other participants (55% are out to most friends, 20% to most family members, and 25% to most classmates or colleagues). Hornet users and participants surveyed by social workers are less open compared to other participants (only 35% are out to most friends, 16% to most classmates or colleagues, and 46% have not shared their identity with anyone in their family).

**Saint Petersburg can be named the most LGBT-friendly region in Russia** (58% of the participants are out to most friends, 17% to most family members, and 26% to most classmates or colleagues).<sup>2</sup> It is closely followed by Moscow (56% out to most friends, 18% out to most family members, and 23% out to most classmates or colleagues).

Some of the least queer-friendly federal districts are:

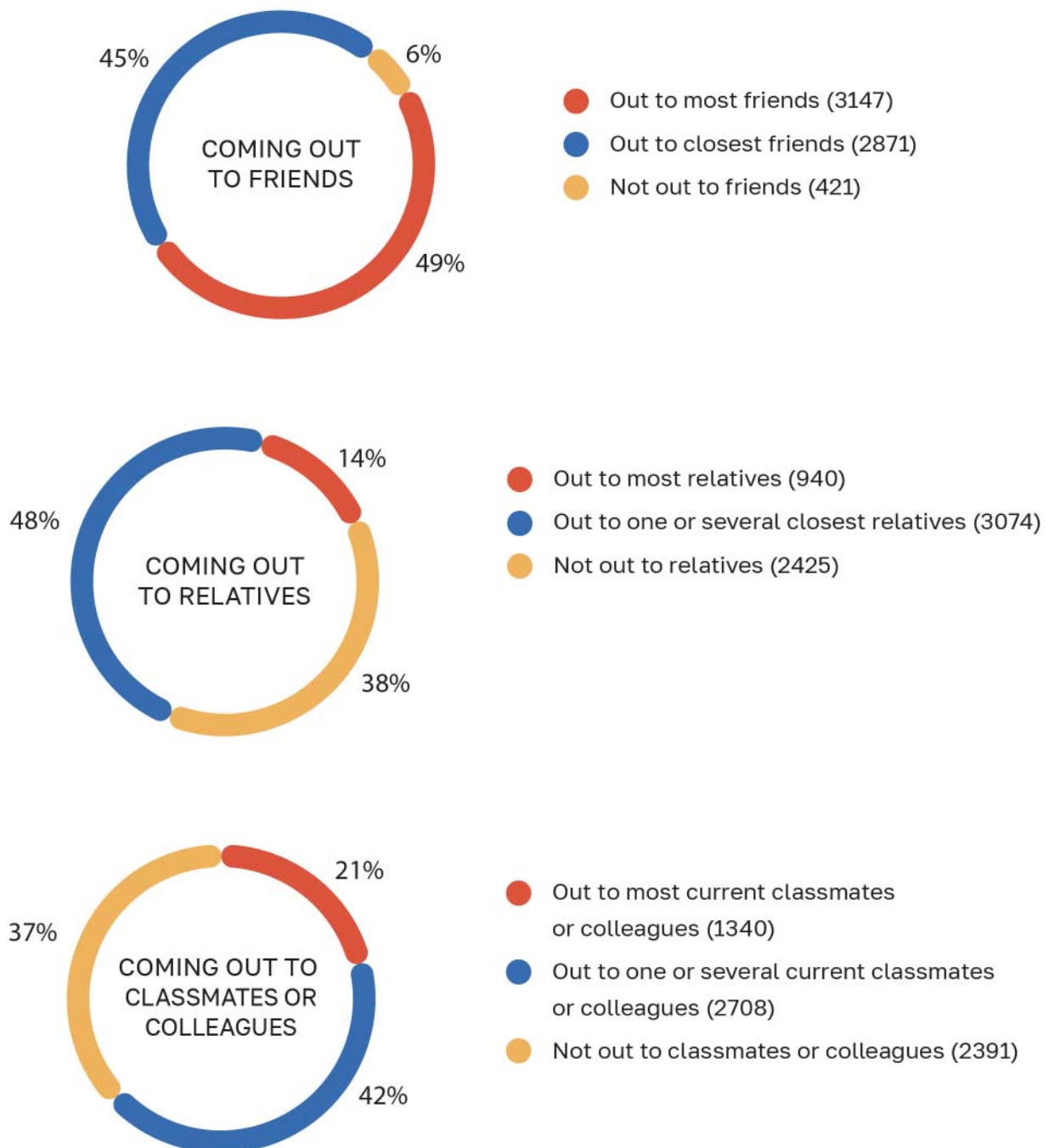
- North Caucasian District (where most participants have never shared their identity with classmates or colleagues: 46%);<sup>3</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Compared to Coming Out's 2021 data for Saint Petersburg, the percentage of people who are not out to any of their family members decreased significantly from 41% to 33%. However, the percentage of those who are out to their classmates and co-workers went down from 29% to 26%, and the percentage of those who are not out to any of their classmates or co-workers increased from 27% to 31%. Such changes can be a collateral indication that people have more trust within their families than with the people they know less intimately. At the same time, it can be presumed that some participants revealed their SOGIE to family members during the many conflicts surrounding the war and politics, which are frequently mentioned in the open responses for the survey. There are no significant changes to other statistics.

<sup>3</sup> Our data for the North Caucasian District is not entirely representative since young cisgender women from Stavropol Krai are the majority among those participants. Besides, they only account for a few dozen of all participants (59 people), while other regions are represented by several hundred. For this reason, we are inclined to believe that the data we have for the number of participants being out to their friends and family does not accurately represent the situation in the region (59% are out to most friends and 12% to most family members). In Sphere's survey, the number of participants who were out to their friends was considerably lower (60% compared to 80-85% in other regions). However, our data cannot be directly compared to Sphere's data since the question was posed differently.

- Ural District (least number of people (41%) out to their friends and highest number of people (9%) who have never shared their SOGIE with any of their friends);
- Volga and Southern districts (both districts have the smallest number of participants who are out to their relatives (11%) and the highest number of people who have never shared their SOGIE with any of the family members (43% and 42%, respectively));
- Far Eastern District (the least number of people who are out to their classmates and colleagues: 13%).

At the same time, the Ural and Volga districts have the highest number of male participants (69%) compared to the average.



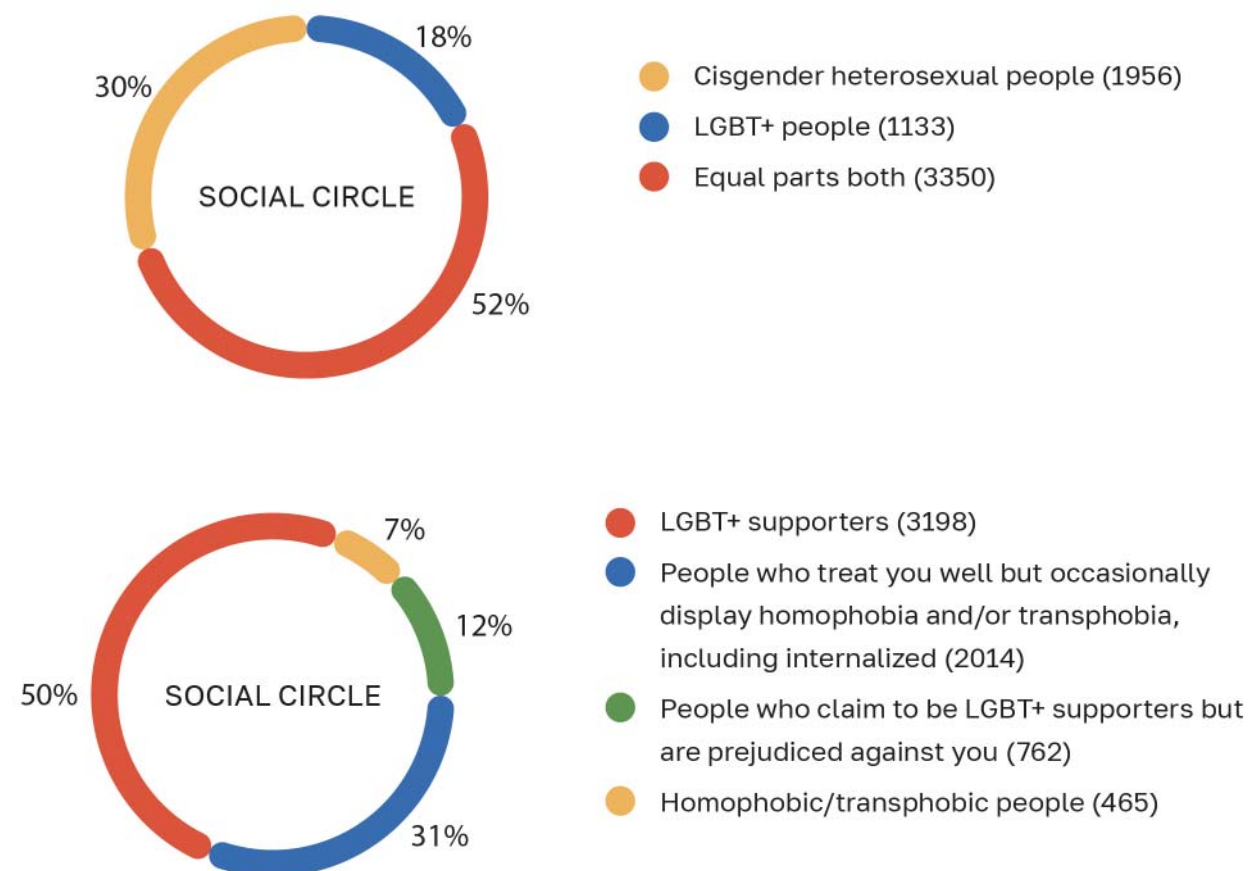
**More than half of the participants (52%) have stated that their social circle consists of equal parts cisgender heterosexual people and LGBT+ people. Half of the participants (50%) have reported that the people in their social circle are accepting of the LGBT+ community.**

Among the participants from the North Caucasian Federal District, the number of those whose social circle consists of mostly cisgender heterosexual people is the highest. That can be seen as evidence of the fact that the LGBT+ community in that district is present in limited and secret ways. The percentage of those whose social circle is homophobic or transphobic is also the highest (15%, twice as much as the average) in the North Caucasian District.

About a third of transgender participants (29%, 10% more than the average) have stated that most of their social circle consists of LGBT+ people. This data can be seen as evidence of the transgender community’s isolation and their desire to create a safe environment for themselves.

The majority of the participants whose social circle is supportive of the LGBT+ community are current or former residents of Saint Petersburg<sup>4</sup> (57%) and Moscow (55%).

The lowest number of participants surrounded by supportive people are from the Far Eastern (37%), North Caucasian (39%), and Southern (40%) federal districts.



<sup>4</sup> The data for Saint Petersburg is comparable to Coming Out’s data for 2021: no significant changes.



## Summary

LGBT+ people are more likely to come out to their friends than family members, colleagues, or classmates.

Transgender people are more likely to be out. It can be assumed that it is more difficult for transgender people to hide their identity from others.

Half of the participants have a supportive social circle; however, in some districts, the level of support is significantly lower (especially in the North Caucasian, Southern, and Far Eastern districts).

Our data confirms the data from other surveys in terms of the Russian society's attitude towards the LGBT+ community: there are more people who know and support LGBT+ people in Moscow and Saint Petersburg (therefore more LGBT+ people are out in those regions).<sup>5</sup>

## Financial well-being of LGBT+ people

### Income level

According to their subjective assessment of the situation, a quarter of our participants can only afford essential supplies (food and medication) and are therefore below the poverty threshold. 5% cannot afford even that and are destitute. That percentage is higher (9%) among transgender people, which indicates their financial vulnerability.

The majority of the participants (40%) can afford to purchase food and medication, as well as clothing and small household appliances. The remaining third (31%) can afford bigger household appliances.

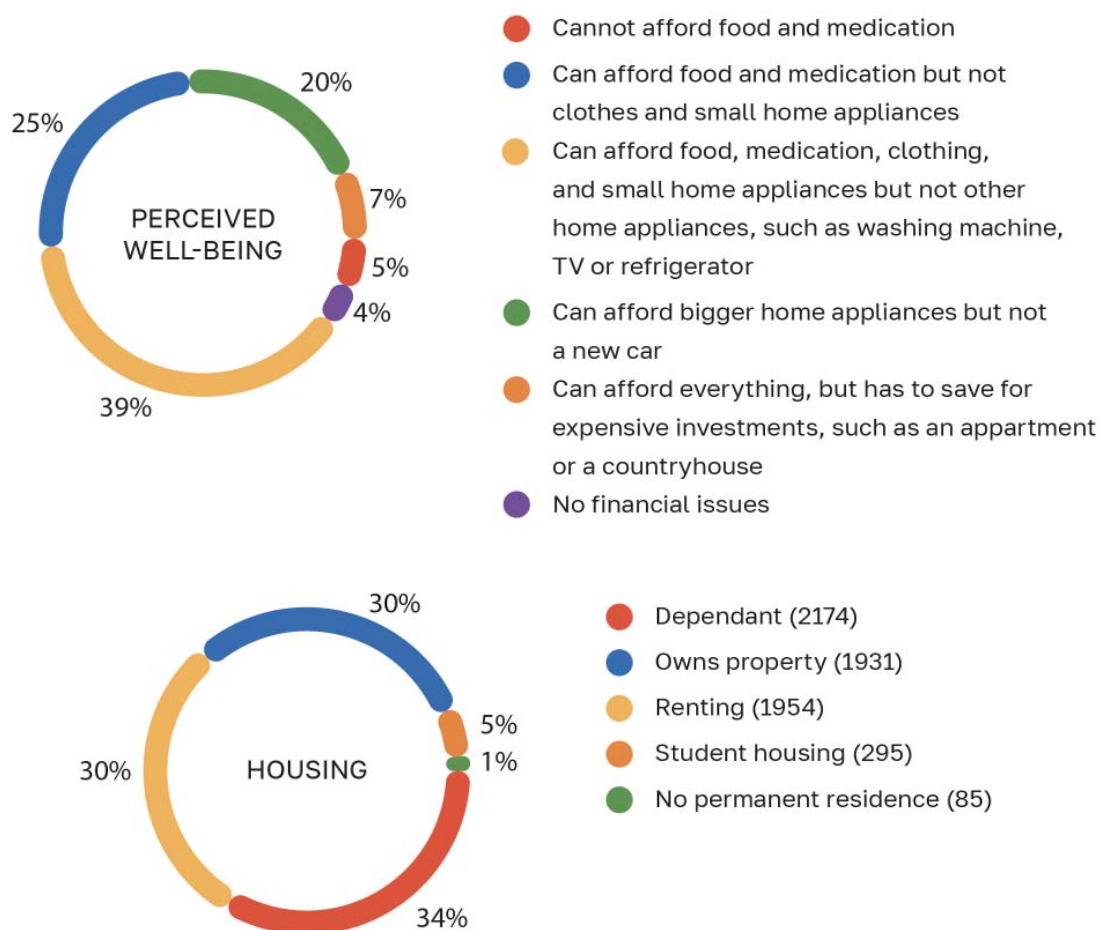
The new data for Saint Petersburg is comparable to Coming Out's data from 2021; there are no significant changes despite the expectation of a downturn due to the war and sanctions. This could be explained by this year's higher average age of the participants compared to 2021. It is also true if we were to only include respondents from Saint Petersburg. Therefore, respondents this year are more likely to have a higher income.

**Most participants (34%) do not own private property and are currently living with someone else** (considering the predominantly young age of those participants, it could be their parents). 30% of the participants own private property, and another 30% are currently renting.

15% of the participants do not have dependents or anyone without their own income, whom they would be supporting on a daily basis (such as children, relatives, partner(s)). Among the participants from the North Caucasian Federal District, the number of those who have dependents is significantly higher (20%).

---

<sup>5</sup> Non-traditional relationships, their propaganda, and their effect on sexual behavior // August 11, 2022 <https://wciom.ru/analytical-reviews/analiticheskii-obzor/netradicionnye-otnosheniya-ikh-propaganda-i-vlijanie-na-seksualnoe-povedenie>  
Russian Public Opinion Research Center: yearly nationwide phone survey // July 11, 2021 [https://bd.wciom.ru/trzh/print\\_q.php?s\\_id=340&q\\_id=37424&date=11.07.2021](https://bd.wciom.ru/trzh/print_q.php?s_id=340&q_id=37424&date=11.07.2021)



72% of the participants have a steady income (4655 people). Out of all transgender participants, only 58% have a steady income.

Among those with a steady income, the income level distribution is as follows: a third of the participants (33%, the majority) earn between 30 thousand rubles (383 USD) and 60 thousand rubles (766 USD) per month. 20% earn between 12 thousand rubles (153 USD) and 30 thousand rubles (383 USD). 7% earn less than 12 thousand rubles (153 USD), which is **below the minimum wage** (between the months of June 2022 and January 2023, the minimum wage amounted to 13 919 rubles, or 177 USD). This means that **more than half of the participants (60%) earn less than the average salary across the country**. According to the data provided by Rosstat (Federal State Statistics Service), in 2022, the average nominal wage in Russia amounted to 64 191 rubles (819 USD) per month before tax.

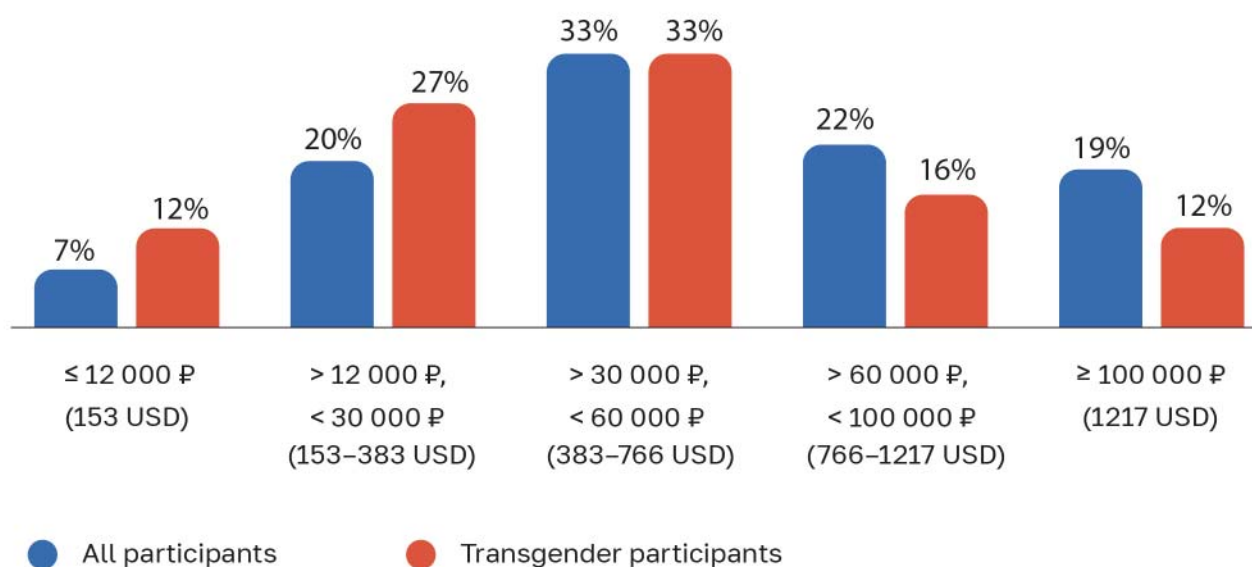
When comparing the income of all participants with transgender participants, it is evident that the percentage of transgender people is significantly higher in low-income categories and significantly lower in high-income ones. **This data indicates a difficult financial situation for most transgender people in Russia.**

65% of the participants reported having external means of income (relatives, partner(s), friends). **13.5%** of the participants who do not have a steady income also reported not having any external financial aid.

**15%** of the participants believe that **their sexuality and/or gender identity have an influence on their financial situation**. 24% of the participants were undecided.



## MONTHLY INCOME



The number of people who believe that their SOGIE is responsible for their income levels is **significantly higher (33%)** among transgender participants. Another 33% of transgender participants were undecided. It can be inferred that transgender people themselves see their financial situation as difficult and connect it with the fact that they are transgender.

Across all federal districts, participants from the North Caucasian and Far Eastern districts were the most likely to associate their SOGIE with their income levels (22% and 21%, respectively), which could be indicative of high levels of homophobia and transphobia in those districts, including homophobia and transphobia in the workplace.

When comparing the new data for Saint Petersburg with Coming Out’s old data from 2021, it is evident that the number of people who associate their SOGIE with their income level has increased from 11.2% to 15%. This could be seen as indirect evidence of an increase in homophobia and transphobia or the fact that people have started noticing it more.

When explaining how exactly SOGIE influences their income levels, the participants have indicated the following factors:

- lack of financial support from family members after coming out;
- termination of employment on the grounds of SOGIE;
- a prejudiced and disrespectful work environment;
- inability to receive family support services for non-heterosexual couples;
- difficulty finding work for transgender people due to the discrepancy between their gender and their passport name;
- heavy costs of hormone replacement therapy for transgender people.

*“I’ve lost jobs after being outed at the workplace before. Now I tend to consider many different options that interest me before applying.”*

Cisgender bisexual woman, 33, Saint Petersburg

*“Because my police certificate has my old male name on it, employers refuse to hire me, but they never say that directly, finding other reasons not to employ me instead.”*

Non-binary transgender bisexual woman, 29, Republic of Tatarstan

*“I was banned from working with children and pressured into resigning.”*

Cisgender homosexual woman, 29, Saint Petersburg

*“I cannot get an official job because I’m transgender, and when applying for unofficial work, I don’t mention my gender identity.”*

Transgender homosexual man, 21, Stavropol Krai

## Income structure

Out of the participants with a steady income (4655 people, or 72%), the majority (70%) are employed full-time, 10% are freelancers, and 6% are employed part-time. Other sources of income amount to an even smaller percentage and are represented in the table below. The number of full-time employed participants is lower among transgender people (61%), but that could be due to their age: transgender participants are, on average, younger than other participants.

Primary means of income	Number of responses	Percentage of those who have a steady income
Full-time job	3275	70%
Freelance	449	10%
Part-time job	260	6%
Government allowance	173	4%
Stipend or grant	156	3%
Passive income	145	3%
Short-term or occasional work	103	2%
Other	94	2%

Over a third of participants with a steady income (36%) are employed in services. About a quarter (23%) work in education, healthcare, the sciences, or the arts. 13% work in IT. Other areas of employment amount to even smaller percentages and are represented in the table below.

Area of employment	Number of responses	Percentage of those who have a steady income
Services	1665	36%
Education, healthcare, sciences, and arts	1084	23%

IT	586	13%
Manufacturing, production, and construction	513	11%
Management	138	3%
Connections, transportation	124	3%
Law enforcement, military, and security	57	1%
Other	488	10%

## Attitude towards sex work

In 2022, 5% of the participants (339 people) have previously received payment for sex work, escort, erotic modeling, or webcam modeling. Most of them are men (cisgender and transgender, 225 people, or 66%). A quarter of the participants (25%) who have received payment for sex work are transgender people (9% trans men, 9% trans women, 8% non-binary and trans people of other genders). **Out of the Hornet users and participants who were surveyed by social workers, every tenth has received payment for sex work (205 people, or 10%).**

Some participants have described their experiences in open answers. Many have indicated going into sex work due to financial difficulties.

*“Since I don’t have any professional education and I still want to eat, I had to turn to webcam modeling. It’s quite alright, though I wasn’t very happy about the shift length.”*

Cisgender homosexual man, 18, Yakutia

*“I needed money for moving and medication for certain mental health conditions, which forced me to leave my last workplace. I had sex with people I had previously known for money.”*

Non-binary homosexual person, 23, Perm Krai

Some participants have spoken about webcam studios being closed down after the invasion and how that negatively affected their employment.

*“I used to work in a wonderful studio, but it closed down because of the war, and now I can’t find a job. Potential employers either don’t like the fact that I was unemployed for six months or the fact that I covered it up with a call center job that I found online. I tried working for other studios in my city, but 90% of them don’t employ trans people. The higher-ups in the studios I did end up in treated me worse than they did their cis workers. They cut my salary and increased my workload, which they didn’t do for cis workers. The owner of the studio was a retired ex-military.”*

Transgender bisexual woman, 21, Samara Region

Some have opened up about the detrimental effects of sex work on their psychological and physical well-being.

*“I am psychologically and physically destroyed; I don’t see any point in life anymore; I can’t trust people or communicate with gay or bi people, and especially not with straight*

*people; I feel like a piece of meat that will go bad and get thrown away. The money I make isn't enough for anything; I can't help my parents; I can't tell people that I've made something of myself; I can't get another job; I'm embarrassed, and I regret not getting a degree and working at a normal place; webcam and escort have killed me."*

Cisgender homosexual man, 22, Republic of Bashkortostan

## Workforce and education sector

Almost half of the participants (47%, or 3039 people) were looking for a new place of work or study in 2022. **Every fifth of them has encountered difficulties with securing employment or education due to their SOGIE** (20%, or 619 people).

**Transgender people are twice as likely to encounter difficulties when looking for work or study (43%).**

**Every third participant from the North Caucasian and Far Eastern Federal Districts has encountered difficulties searching for work or studies** (33% and 32%, respectively). In other districts, this percentage is closer to the average.

Over a quarter of the participants have faced pressure on the basis of their SOGIE in the workplace or place of study (27%, or 1743 people). This number among trans people amounts to 40%.

Across all federal districts, the highest numbers of participants who have encountered pressure due to their SOGIE were observed in the **Far Eastern** (40%), **Southern** (37%), and **North Caucasian** (34%). The participants who have encountered such pressure the least are current or former residents of Saint Petersburg (22%).

280 participants (4%) have faced termination of employment on the basis of their SOGIE. **Transgender people are twice as likely to end up in this situation (9%).** Across all districts, the majority of such cases are once again restricted to the North Caucasian (14%), Southern (8%), and Far Eastern (7%) districts. The least number of such cases was found in Saint Petersburg (3%).

When describing the kind of pressure they have experienced in the workplace or place of study, the participants have mostly mentioned prejudice, homophobic and transphobic remarks, and taunts. Many have stated that their colleagues or classmates consider LGBT+ people mentally ill. Many have also stated that they have to hide their sexuality or gender identity in the workplace or place of study.

*"My colleagues are very prejudiced against the LGBT+ community. I don't talk about my sexuality, but sometimes I say things like 'a six-year-old boy won't become gay after playing with dolls'. Such things should be obvious for child psychologists, but no. They dislike me for saying those things, but they're not aggressive towards me. They just think I'm young and stupid and ignore my recommendations."*

Cisgender bi/pansexual woman, 25, Primorsky Krai

*“Classmates don’t abuse me physically, nor do they bully me, but many of them laugh at me. For many of them, words like ‘liberal’ or ‘gay’ (by the way, they really like using homophobic language when talking about the LGBT+ community) are offensive, so they also mock me for my ‘liberal’ views.”*

Non-binary bi/pansexual person, 16, Sakhalin Region

*“In March 2022, I spoke out against the war in Ukraine at my university, after which the head of the lab I was on placement at banned me from talking about politics at the university and threatened that they could have easily not offered me a place if they wanted to, and made homophobic comments about me. He told my intersex friend and me that he doesn’t care ‘who’s top and who’s bottom’ and advised me to never show up to class in a bad mood. I asked him for help with emigration, and he suggested that I take a year off, stating that the professors had wasted too much time and resources on me. In October 2022, the head of our department banned me from participating in a study abroad support program for scholars in emergency situations with my dissertation topic.”*

Cisgender bi/pansexual woman, 29, Republic of Tatarstan

## Summary

A quarter of our participants are below the poverty threshold: they only have enough means to afford food and medication.

LGBT+ people encounter termination of employment on the basis of their SOGIE, are forced to leave their workplace or place of study due to discrimination, and their career opportunities are often limited. Many lose financial support from their families after coming out (or risk ending up in this position while hiding their identity).

The least amount of discrimination in the workplace was found in Saint Petersburg, and the most in the North Caucasian, Far Eastern, and Southern Federal Districts of Russia.

Transgender people are an especially vulnerable group: they are less likely to have a steady income, they make less money, they encounter discrimination in the workplace more frequently, and it is harder for them to find a job. Transgender participants were the most likely to agree that their SOGIE affects their financial status.

Financial vulnerability forces some LGBT+ people (especially homosexual men) to turn to sex work. More than half of people who resort to sex work (66%) identify as men.

As seen from the participants’ experiences, anti-war sentiment can be an additional reason that leads to SOGIE-based discrimination in the workplace or place of study.

## Discrimination in healthcare

In 2022, 5172 of our participants have interacted with the healthcare system. 27% of them (1386 people) stated that their doctor knew about their sexuality and/or gender identity. They were the only participants who received follow-up questions about discrimination in healthcare.

Out of the participants who have interacted with the healthcare system and whose doctor or any other medical professional knew about their SOGIE, **almost every fifth has faced discrimination or abuse** (18%, or 251 people). Transgender people have encountered discrimination in healthcare even more frequently (28%, or 125 people).

50% of the participants (2 out of 4 people) in the North Caucasian District encountered SOGIE-driven discrimination from medical professionals. In the Far Eastern District, this number amounted to 34% (11 out of 32 people).

In 2022, 88 people (6% of those who were out to their medical professionals) were denied medical assistance because of their sexuality or gender. Two-thirds of them were transgender people (59 people).

Across federal districts, the districts with the highest number of such cases were the Southern (8 out of 49, or 16%) and North Caucasian (1 out of 4, or 25%).

When describing the discrimination and abuse they have experienced, the participants have mentioned:

- reproductive violence;
- suggestions to treat gynecological conditions through pregnancy and heterosexual sex;
- usage of incorrect or outdated language and terminology during treatment;
- conversion therapy for transgender and homosexual people;
- SOGIE-driven insults from medical workers;
- breach of medical confidentiality;
- refusal of healthcare services due to sexual orientation, gender identity, or HIV status.

*“Ob-gyn suggested that I treat my uterine fibroids with ‘male hormones’, ‘penis’, and ‘pregnancy.’”*

Non-binary homosexual person, 28, Primorsky Krai

*“In May of this year, my endocrinologist refused to give me HRT even though I had the F64.0 diagnosis and the approval of the medical board. She said that I ‘don’t look trans’, that my ‘trousers are feminine’, and that I ‘need to wear male clothing and copy male behavior for a few months.’ She insisted on having my uterus and ovaries removed as part of HRT. My ob-gyn tried to convince me that I was attractive as a woman: ‘You need to start loving yourself, and then you won’t need to transition anymore.’”*

Transgender bisexual person, 46, Saint Petersburg Region

*“I saw a private urologist at a state hospital, but once the urologist found out about me being trans, he refused to treat me and asked me to leave the room.”*

Transgender heterosexual woman, 30, Ryazan Region

*“A dentist refused to treat me once he found out I was gay and HIV-positive.”*

Cisgender homosexual man, 30, Saint Petersburg

*“They refused to see me. They threatened to call the police because I was ‘propaganda’, because people like me are ‘banned in Russia’. It happened in the summer when I was trying to see an endocrinologist. I was denied medical services because supposedly ‘the healthcare*



*system doesn't cater to transvestite perverts' — this is a direct quote. I snapped and left. I would have stressed myself out even more if I tried to persuade them."*

Transgender man, 19, Moscow

*"I had my official documents changed. I cannot see a gynecologist or even be assigned to a hospital as I have the male gender marker. The only option left for me is private healthcare."*

Non-binary bi/pansexual man, 28, Moscow

## Summary

Every fifth LGBT+ person who has disclosed their SOGIE to their medical professional has encountered discrimination. Most of the time, it is restricted to unwanted remarks and questions, but it can also sometimes lead to services being denied.

Transgender people are the most vulnerable group when it comes to discrimination in healthcare, and they are most likely to be denied medical services.

The districts where discrimination in healthcare occurs most frequently are the North Caucasian, Far Eastern, and Southern Federal Districts of Russia.

## Discrimination in goods and services

In 2022, 192 participants encountered issues accessing different private goods and services because of homophobia and/or transphobia (3% of all participants). 110 were denied public services (2%). Transgender people face such discriminatory denials more frequently: 5% of all transgender participants have been denied private services, and 4% have been denied public services. No significant differences were found across federal districts.

When explaining what kind of discrimination in goods and services they have encountered, the participants have mentioned the following: many have specified their inability to form a legal partnership with the person they love.

*"I couldn't get married in Russia; I had to do it abroad, which was so much more time-consuming and expensive."*

Cisgender homosexual woman, 34, Saint Petersburg

Many have also mentioned difficulties acquiring queer literature after the introduction of the new 'gay propaganda' law.

*"Because of the new law, some of my packages with LGBT+ symbols were returned to their sender, and I was unable to receive eight books from my order at Chitai-Gorod [Russian bookstore] during the first two weeks of the law being in force."*

Cisgender homosexual man, 21, Smolensk Region

Transgender and non-binary people encounter various issues when changing their official documents, as well as disrespect from the institutions and services where they are supposed to present their passports before the document change.



*“Civil registration office straight up refused to change my name when I changed my gender marker. Because of that, I spent a month and a half walking around with a deadname sort of like Ivanov Yelena Ivanovich (translator note: ‘Ivanov’ is a common Russian male surname; ‘Ivanovich’ is a common male patronymic; Yelena is a common female name; the ridiculousness of this is that the person in question had to have mismatched gendered names). I keep having to explain and embarrass myself at the bank, the cinema, if I want to buy cigarettes, and at immigration services; all of this causes me massive stress. My old schools also refused to change my high school and university diplomas until I made it clear that I was willing to file official complaints against them.”*

Transgender bi/pansexual man, 24, Tula Region

*“They often refuse to give me my packages at the post office or sell alcohol because it’s ‘not my passport.’”*

Transgender bi/pansexual man, 19, Sverdlov Region

Many have reported issues accessing different private services because of homophobia or transphobia.

*“At the store, they didn’t let me purchase clothes and shoes that, according to the cashiers, did not match my gender identity.”*

Agender bi/pansexual person, 29, Oryol Region

*“They don’t let me into barber shops because I don’t look masculine enough and say that ‘whatever I wear is my personal business, but our policy is that we only serve men.’”*

Transgender bi/pansexual man, 34, Moscow

## Summary

Sometimes LGBT+ people encounter limitations when accessing private or public services due to their SOGIE. Transgender people are more likely to be denied such services (e. g., when changing their official documents, receiving certificates, etc.)

## Discrimination in housing

484 participants have reported having **neighborhood conflicts because of their sexuality and/or gender identity** (8%). This is the most common issue in housing among our participants. Transgender people encounter neighborhood conflicts more frequently; the number of those who reported this issue amounts to 12%. In the Southern and North Caucasian Federal Districts, the percentage is higher than average: 11% and 10%, respectively.

In 2022, 433 people have encountered issues finding a living space due to their SOGIE; a quarter of them are transgender (107 people, or 25%). There were no significant variations across federal districts.

In 2022, 219 people lost their accommodations due to their SOGIE; a third of them are transgender (69 people, or 31.5%). There were no significant variations across federal districts.

163 people have encountered issues with their leaseholders due to their SOGIE. This was the least common issue in housing (3%), perhaps because leaseholders are less likely to interfere with the personal lives of LGBT+ renters unless they are rejected at the letting stage. For transgender people, this issue is more significant, over a third of the participants who have faced issues with their leaseholders are transgender (57 people, or 35%). There were no significant variations across federal districts.

When describing their experiences with discrimination in housing, participants have mentioned day-to-day homophobia from their neighbors or leaseholders (insults, judgment, outing, conflict, violence, threats, eviction), as well as fear and inability to come out to them, being forced to lie about their identity and relationship status (pretending to be sisters or friends for women and brothers for men) in order to get a contract, and non-‘straight-passing’ queer couples or LGBT+ people being denied to rent an apartment.

*“The letting agency rejected a lesbian couple. There were a few times when a WLW couple was denied to rent a one-bedroom apartment with a double bed because those apartments are better suited for straight couples (they are more of a priority).”*

Cisgender homosexual woman, 24, Nizhny Novgorod Region

*“My male roommates refused to live in the same dorm room with me, so I was moved to a single. The option of evicting me was also considered.”*

Cisgender homosexual man, 18, Republic of Tatarstan

*“I was rejected as a tenant because ‘you will turn this into a gay brothel with infections and drugs.’”*

Cisgender homosexual man, 25, Vologda Region

*“My landlord is pro-war, and he tried to get me and my trans woman roommate to get drafted, he threatened to out her and guilt-tripped her. We ended up moving out.”*

Transgender asexual man, 21, Saint Petersburg Region

*“I had a [rainbow] flag in front of my window, and the neighbors threatened to call the cops on me (I also had a lot of tropical plants with heat lamps for them, so they hinted at me growing something illegal). The neighbors opposite my window never said hello and made a show of dragging their children away from me when they saw me.”*

Transgender non-binary demisexual bisexual person, 30, Saint Petersburg

## Summary

LGBT+ people encounter housing issues due to their SOGIE. Often, those include neighborhood conflicts, which make living at their place uncomfortable. Such conflicts most frequently occur in the North Caucasian and Southern Federal Districts.

Trans people are more likely to encounter discrimination in housing: they face neighborhood conflicts, difficulty finding accommodation, and eviction.

## Parental rights

411 of our participants have children (6%). Those participants are mostly older; their average age is 41, and their median age is 40. The percentage of parents is higher than average (9%) among Hornet users and participants who were surveyed by social workers — those are mostly cisgender men. This percentage is also higher among current and former residents of Moscow and Saint Petersburg (8% each).

According to this survey, the most common issue queer parents face is **conflict with other relatives** due to their SOGIE. **In 2022, every fifth participant with children has encountered such issues** (80 people, or 19%). Transgender people face such issues more frequently: **every fourth transgender person has reported arguments with relatives because of their transphobia and/or homophobia** (16 people, or 26%).

Despite the fact that in our survey the percentage of male queer parents is higher, **female queer parents are three times more likely to encounter issues with other relatives**: 31% of women with children compared to 12% of men with children.

29 people (7% of queer parents in our survey) have faced issues when interacting with educational and/or healthcare services due to their SOGIE. **That percentage is doubled for transgender people**: 13% of trans parents in our survey have encountered this issue. Women are also more likely to encounter this problem: 14% of women with children compared to 2% of men with children.

11 people (3% of queer parents in our survey) have faced issues with child services due to their SOGIE. 7 of them are women, 5 of whom are cisgender and 2 are transgender, and 4 are men (3 are cisgender and 1 is transgender).

When elaborating on their experiences, participants have reported the following: queer parents are often forced to hide their sexuality and/or gender identity out of fear of discrimination and bullying from their children's educational institutions, healthcare services, other relatives, and acquaintances.

*“We taught our son not to talk about our family, which is why no one knows the details, but some of the other kids’ parents are homophobic, and we are scared that they will find out. We are scared for our kid. When it comes to relatives, some of them have stopped our kids from interacting because our child has two moms.”*

Cisgender bi/pansexual woman, 37, Penza Region

*“When interacting with my kids’ teachers and doctors, I had to talk about myself in the female gender and hide my real gender identity in order to protect my kids from bullying.”*

Transgender bi/pansexual person, 46, Saint Petersburg Region

Some LGBT+ parents are essentially denied certain parental rights: they cannot see their child because of the other parent or other relatives, are constantly checked by social services, lose their parental rights, and are forced to leave Russia due to threats:

*“My ex-husband had social services and the school board visit our house on the grounds of parental neglect. Of course, I denied everything he had claimed, explaining his behavior as personal enmity. The potential neglect was ruled out, and the court ruled in my favor. So far, we’ve had no guests from the social services. However, my ex-husband tells everyone he meets about my personal life and acts like the victim of our divorce. It’s hard to live constantly expecting unwanted guests.”*

Cisgender bi/pansexual woman, 27, Krasnodar Region

*“My parents tried to make me give up my parental rights in favor of my children’s father, because I’m a ‘bad influence’ on my kids. By ‘bad influence’, they mean my romantic, tender, and caring relationship with the woman I love. My parents said that my kids would be bullied at school because their mom is a lesbian. Their father threatened to call social services on us and go to court to get the kids. In June 2022, he put his email address online and asked others to help him save the kids from the ‘rainbow world’. We ended up leaving Russia.”*

Cisgender homosexual woman, 35, Permsky Krai

*“My son’s mother (my ex-wife) doesn’t let me see him because of my sexuality.”*

Cisgender homosexual man, 39, Tver Region

*“After my wife died in a car accident, the social services took my child away from me in favor of another family, first limiting my parental rights, and then terminating them altogether.”*

Transgender homosexual woman, 50+, Krasnodar Region

## Summary

LGBT+ parents face additional issues due to their SOGIE. Oftentimes, those issues include conflicts with other relatives who try to limit LGBT+ people’s parental rights.

Cisgender women are more likely to face issues with parenting than cisgender men. This could be due to the fact that cisgender women are the ones taking care of the child more frequently<sup>6</sup> and therefore interact with educational and healthcare services more. Cisgender men are more likely to be ‘weekend’ parents or leave their children from previous marriage(s) with the mother.

Transgender people (both men and women) are also more likely to face issues with parental rights compared to cisgender men.

## Violence and hate crime

**Every third participant in our survey has encountered one or several forms of violence or discrimination based on their sexuality and/or gender identity (1955 people, or 30%).**

<sup>6</sup> Zdravomyslova E., Temkina A. 12 lectures on gender sociology: a study guide. Saint Petersburg, European University Press, 2015 [https://eusp.org/sites/default/files/archive/gender/12\\_LECTURES.pdf](https://eusp.org/sites/default/files/archive/gender/12_LECTURES.pdf)

## Physical violence

In 2022, 476 participants (7%) have encountered SOGIE-driven physical violence. Hornet users and participants surveyed by social workers are more likely to suffer from physical violence (10%). **An even higher percentage is reported for transgender people (12%).**

Across federal districts, the highest percentage of victims of physical violence was found in the North Caucasian District (12%).



*“My neighbor instigated a conflict because of a domestic issue, he came to our doorstep to ‘sort it out’. During the fight, he resorted to physical violence, and at some point, he said, ‘I don’t like you at all’ and punched me in the face. Then, he called my boyfriend a ‘faggot’ and punched him as well.”*

Cisgender homosexual man, 37, Primorsky Krai

*“I said that it was okay to support the LGBT+ community, and someone slapped my face and told me to watch my tongue. It was someone I didn’t know that well.”*

Cisgender homosexual woman, 22, Saint Petersburg

*“I was attacked on the streets three times, once I was beaten quite violently, and twice I had to use pepper spray on my attackers. They found my address in the Yandex database leak and tried to knock down my apartment door. The police refused to do anything.”*

Transgender bi/pansexual woman, 21, Moscow

*“They beat me up for having glitter on my face at a festival and broke my phone (there were three of them). My main attacker said that I supposedly called him a ‘faggot’, then threatened to ‘rape this faggot’ (i. e., me), called me ‘an outlander it’ and all that.”*

Transgender bi/pansexual man, 24, Moscow



## Homophobic and transphobic threats and hostile actions

In 2022, **every fifth participant encountered threats** of physical violence due to their SOGIE (1320 people, or 21%).

Transgender people face such threats much more frequently. In 2022, **it was every third transgender participant (33%)**.

Across federal districts, the highest percentage of those who have faced threats was found in the Far Eastern (27%), Siberian (27%), and Ural (26%).

### THREATS



In 2022, 884 participants (14%) were harassed online because of their SOGIE. Hornet users and participants surveyed by social workers are especially vulnerable to such harassment; their number amounts to 18%. Among transgender people, this percentage is even higher (21%). Across federal districts, this issue was most apparent in the Siberian (18%) and Volga (17%) districts.

*“Someone started harassing me at the store because of my tote bag. I’m not an aggressive person, so I tried to stay out of it, but they grabbed me by the hood and started yelling something like ‘Faggot! You should die and not embarrass your city and country!’ Thankfully, the cashier called security just in time and then took me outside through the backdoor.”*

Cisgender queer man, 25, Irkutsk Region

*“My dorm roommate threatened to beat me up if I didn’t move out.”*

Non-binary bi/pansexual person, 20, Saint Petersburg

*“When I went to the bathroom at a fast-food chain restaurant, I encountered threats of physical violence from a cisgender man who went to the same bathroom. When I refused to leave, he threw me out and kicked me. There was also a case related not to my gender or sexuality directly, but to the LGBT+ community in Russia as a whole. I was taking a walk with*

*my friend, and my appearance didn't correspond with the typical male presentation (long hair, light make-up, nail polish). Essentially, I looked like a butch lesbian in the eyes of strangers, which is why some drunken passer-by thought we were a lesbian couple and started harassing us, blocking our way, and threatening us. That situation didn't end in physical violence; we managed to get rid of the man with the help of a few other passers-by, but the situation was obviously traumatizing and unpleasant for many reasons."*

Transgender homosexual man, 22, Moscow

#### ONLINE THREATS AND PERSECUTION



*"A man texted me the following: 'People like you should be murdered'; 'I will rip your legs out.'"*

Cisgender homosexual woman, 17, Saint Petersburg

### Sexual violence

In 2022, 532 participants (8%) have suffered from sexual violence because of their SOGIE.

Hornet users and participants surveyed by social workers, as well as transgender participants, were more likely to suffer from sexual violence (10% each).

Across federal districts, the highest percentage of victims of sexual violence was found in the Siberian, Ural, and Southern districts (10% each).

*"I often get insulted because of my hair length. In 2022, I encountered sexual violence from a cisgender man. When I was at a bar, he grabbed my hand and dragged me to a dark corner. He ripped my clothes off and groped me. I shook him off and ran away. He thought I was a woman. It happens a lot, people think I'm a woman and harass me, and when I say I don't mind and I'm actually a man, they start insulting me instead."*

Transgender non-binary homosexual person, 20, Saint Petersburg



## SEXUAL VIOLENCE



*“Men have harassed and catcalled me if I was with another woman and held her hand or just stood very close. Taxi drivers also harassed me a few times; they wouldn’t let me out of the car, made me take their number, and said, ‘I will teach you right; you just haven’t had a proper man yet.’”*

Cisgender homosexual woman, 28, Moscow

*“My mother’s husband got me drunk and tried to rape me in order to, and I quote, ‘fix my lesbianism.’”*

Cisgender homosexual woman, 18, Moscow

## Domestic violence

In 2022, 945 participants (15%) have suffered from SOGIE-driven domestic violence.

**That number is significantly higher for transgender participants: 28% (329 people).** Therefore, every third transgender participant in our survey has suffered from domestic violence in 2022.

The highest percentage of victims of domestic violence was found in the North Caucasian district (20%) as well as the Far Eastern district (17%). Both percentages are higher than the average.

*“I suffer from regular psychological abuse from my mother. Mostly she just ignores the fact that I have a personal life; she dreams of me getting married and insults me (this is an abomination, you’re sick, etc.). It used to be much worse (psychiatric ‘treatment’, church), but now I live in another city, and the distance helps us co-exist.”*

Cisgender homosexual woman, 20, Novosibirsk Region

## DOMESTIC VIOLENCE



*“The day I got my new passport, my father beat me up really badly, and when the police came, they said, ‘You’re an adult; deal with it, nobody is going to sit and talk to your father’. A lawyer I know just shrugged and said that it was a regular occurrence with domestic violence. I didn’t file a report because there was no proof except the bruises that I had, and my grandmother (his mother), who witnessed the whole thing, claimed that she hadn’t seen anything and nothing had happened.”*

Transgender bi/pansexual woman, 21, Samara Region

*“When I tried to talk to my mother about being trans, she just dragged me through the mud for like an hour: told me that I only have humiliation and the noose ahead of me, that I will never achieve anything as a woman or as a man, and that people like me don’t belong in a normal society. The next day, she searched my room while I was out and found my antidepressants and epilepsy medication hidden in a secret place! She took them away, started arguing again, and then hit me on the head with my own phone.”*

Transgender non-binary homosexual person, 20, Penza Region

## Property damage and theft

In 2022, 373 participants (6%) have encountered property damage or theft due to their SOGIE.

This percentage is higher for transgender participants (9%, or 104 people) and twice as high as the average in the North Caucasian District (14%).

*“They broke my bike that I had left by the building entrance. They left a note: ‘Russia without faggots.’”*

Cisgender homosexual man, 25, Stavropol Region

*“They wrote ‘faggots live here’ on my apartment door.”*

Cisgender homosexual man, 38, Kaliningrad Region

*“They scratched my car and set my mailbox on fire.”*

Cisgender homosexual man, 37, Moscow

#### PROPERTY DAMAGE



### Blackmail and extortion

In 2022, 850 participants (13%) encountered SOGIE-driven blackmail or extortion. This percentage is higher (23%, or 454 people) among Hornet users and participants surveyed by social workers. In other words, the most isolated group of our participants is the most likely to suffer from blackmail and extortion.

Across federal districts, the highest numbers were found in the Ural (19%), Far Eastern (18%), and Siberian (18%) districts.

In 2022, 653 people (10%) have reported illegal use of their SOGIE-related personal information. This percentage is higher among Hornet users and participants surveyed by social workers, as well as transgender participants: 17% and 14%, respectively. Across federal districts, the highest percentage was found in the North Caucasian and Siberian districts (14% each).

236 participants (4%) have been victims of ‘fake dates’<sup>7</sup>. The highest number within this percentage was found among Hornet users and participants surveyed by social workers (179 people, or 76%). According to the statements from the participants, Hornet and other social networks and dating apps are most likely to become the platforms for ‘fake dating’.

<sup>7</sup> ‘Fake date’ is a crime committed with the intent of robbery that usually target homosexual and bisexual men. It happens the following way: the victim receives a date invitation via a dating app; criminals show up during the date, sometimes pretending to be the police or journalists, and extort money from the victim, blackmailing them and threatening them with the distribution of the video tape and/or information about their sexuality, physical violence, or calling the police or journalists.

## BLACKMAIL AND EXTORTION



*“I paid 8 thousand rubles (100 USD) so that my private pictures and screenshots from Hornet would not be sent to all my friends on VK [Russian social network], including my university administration.”*

Cisgender queer man, 21, Kemerovo Region

*“There were a few incidents. The first one happened on Hornet. I was blackmailed with my own pictures and screenshots. They extorted money from me so that those pictures and screenshots wouldn’t get to my family and friends.*

*The second incident was not as bad; it was a meet-up with a guy from a social network. I booked a table at a restaurant; we had a good time, and then I was blackmailed to pay him. Presumably, he had information about my sexuality. He knows my colleagues and everything. Sure, we were talking for over three months online... We spoke about all kinds of things. This must be how he gathered information about me.”*

Cisgender homosexual man, 21, Novosibirsk Region

*“It was the beginning of the year. I met a young man, probably 19-23 years old in appearance. We agreed to meet up. When I arrived, I saw a group of men, so-called ‘activists’ who fought against pedophilia. It was weird. There were no direct threats. They said that they had put a picture of a 15-year-old boy on the dating profile (which was obviously not true). It was my luck that a friend came with me that day. In the end, they stole my portable charger and 300-400 rubles in cash (4-5 USD).”*

Cisgender bi/pansexual man, 23, Sverdlov Region

## Summary

LGBT+ people often encounter threats, domestic violence (mostly from homophobic and transphobic parents), and harassment online.

Transgender people are much more vulnerable, they encounter almost all forms of violence and discrimination more frequently than cisgender participants. The only



exception is blackmail and extortion, which mostly happen to cisgender homosexual men, primarily Hornet users.

The highest amount of SOGIE-driven violence was found in the North Caucasian, Ural, Far Eastern, and Siberian Federal Districts.

Comparing the new Saint Petersburg data to last year's data, the level of SOGIE-driven violence has not changed.

## Interactions with law enforcement

Out of the participants who, according to their subjective assessment, have not been victims of any hate crimes in 2022, the majority (58%) have responded that they would not turn to the police were they to suffer from SOGIE-driven violence. This indicates a high level of distrust towards law enforcement structures. When comparing the new Saint Petersburg data to last year's data, it is evident that those levels have risen dramatically: last year, the majority (52%) of Saint Petersburg residents were inclined to report the hate crime to the police.

Among the participants who have encountered SOGIE-driven violence in 2022, only 20% (117 people) have contacted the police. 59% of them had their reports accepted; 47% faced pressure from the police officers; 38% responded that they did not know what happened to their report after it had been filed, whereas only 13% responded that their report resulted in an investigation, and for just 9%, the perpetrator was found and punished. 7 participants said that their reports had been rejected.

*“When I was attacked on the subway, the police stopped listening to me as soon as the attacker said that I looked like a ‘homo.’”*

Cisgender homosexual man, 32, Moscow

*“They tore my report to shreds in front of my eyes and said: ‘We don’t have time for faggots, it’s your fault.’”*

Cisgender homosexual man, 24, Rostov Region

*“I found a threatening note in my mailbox and reported it to the police. Police officers did not accept my report and laughed at me and my boyfriend because the note contained a homophobic slur.”*

Cisgender homosexual man, 31, Saint Petersburg

82 participants reported being unlawfully detained or arrested due to their SOGIE in 2022. Besides, according to our participants' statements, police officers were inclined to use violence and threaten them on the basis of their SOGIE when they were detained for other reasons (such as during protests).

*“It was spring, I was walking with a friend of mine when we were approached by the National Guard. They assumed that we were in a homosexual relationship (it was, in fact, a date, but we weren’t doing anything romantic or sexual). At first, they noticed that I had dilated pupils and accused me of drug use. My friend was taking antidepressants. He had the*

*prescriptions with him. They still took us to the police station.”*

Transgender polysexual man, 25, Moscow

*“At the police station, they hit me once and then threatened me by saying, ‘People like you get murdered here’, and threatened to sexually assault me with a rubber stick.”*

Cisgender homosexual man, 31, Moscow

Among those who have encountered SOGIE-driven violence and did not report it to the police, the main reason was **doubt that it would be effective** (75%). Another common reason was **fear of the police** (65%), which, judging from the experiences participants have described, is completely justified. 35% of those who refused to go to the police said that they did so because they were afraid of being outed. 18% feared the attacker finding out that they reported the crime.

## Summary

LGBT+ people do not trust Russian law enforcement structures. The level of police trust decreased dramatically compared to last year, and it is a growing trend if we look at last year’s Saint Petersburg data and earlier.

Out of those who suffer from SOGIE-related violence, only every fifth reports it to the police (considering the limitations of our data, this number is probably even lower). Among those who do report the crime to the police, most face rejection (as well as homophobic and transphobic insults), and even if the report is accepted, the investigation is never opened.

LGBT+ people do not interact with the police because they have no faith in its effectiveness.

## Impact of the war in Ukraine on LGBT+ people of Russia

### Impact of the war on day-to-day life

82% of the participants have responded that the 2022 war in Ukraine has affected them personally. Across federal districts, the highest percentages were found in the Southern and Northwestern districts (85% each) and Saint Petersburg (88%).

78% of the queer participants reported feeling more vulnerable and unsafe after the invasion on February 24th, 2022. This was especially true for transgender participants, 85% of whom noted a high level of distress. Across federal districts, the highest percentages were observed in the North Caucasian and Southern districts (83% and 82%, respectively) as well as Saint Petersburg (83%).

After Russia’s invasion of Ukraine and a new wave of conflict with the West and ‘Western values’, homophobic sentiment has grown among Russian government officials. This led to the introduction of a new law that bans the distribution of ‘propaganda of non-traditional relationships’ not only among minors but among adults as well. In their responses, participants have often noted the new ‘propaganda’ ban as a factor in their increased vulnerability.



*“The ‘gay propaganda’ law has had an even greater impact.”*

Cisgender bi/pansexual woman, 25, Chelyabinsk Region

*“Since mid or late summer, when they first proposed to introduce the ‘gay propaganda’ ban, and since fall, I have started to feel more vulnerable.”*

Cisgender bi/pansexual woman, 25, Novosibirsk Region

83% of the participants noted the growth of homophobic and/or transphobic sentiment in Russian society after the war in Ukraine began on February 24th, 2022. That number is higher (87%) among transgender participants. The highest percentage of those reporting the growth of homophobia and transphobia in society was found in the Southern District (88%).

When describing what exactly indicated the growth of homophobic and transphobic sentiment in society, most participants mentioned the increased presence of hate speech in pro-government media and among government officials. Many participants have also noted that they did not notice such changes in the general public.

*“From the general public, no, but from the government, of course, yes.”*

Cisgender bi/pansexual woman, 30, Moscow

*“More of a conflict from ‘above’ rather than from ‘below’. Regular people either don’t care or are understanding and nonplussed.”*

Cisgender bi/pansexual woman, 25, Saint Petersburg

*“More in politics than in people.”*

Transgender bi/pansexual man, 19, Sverdlov Region

39% of the participants, however, noticed the growth of homophobia and/or transphobia in their social circles. For transgender people, that percentage was 43%. In the Northern Caucasian District, that percentage is 10 points higher than the average — 49%. It is also significantly higher in the Southern (48%) and Far Eastern (45%) districts. Many participants have noticed the growth of homophobia and transphobia, specifically among their relatives and not friends.

*“My father used to be fine with LGBT+ people, he listened to music written by gay people, was generally positive towards them, but now he’s very aggressive whenever this topic arises and says they should all be killed and abused.”*

Non-binary bi/pansexual person, 19, Moscow Region

*“Not among friends but among relatives, yes.”*

Non-binary bi/pansexual person, 17, Moscow Region

Some participants have noticed an increase in homophobia and transphobia in those who already had such views, as well as in those susceptible to government propaganda. Some have also noticed that their close friend circle has begun to show even more support and sympathy to counteract that.

*“The opposite, really. There are more people I know who are now openly supporting the LGBT+ community. My parents are victims of propaganda, so they often have something negative to say.”*

Cisgender homosexual woman, 27, Moscow

**A third of the participants** (32%) responded that the war in Ukraine affected their ability to **access necessary medication**. For transgender people, that number is **50%**. Across federal districts, the highest number of those who encountered this issue was found in the Northwestern and Central districts (36% and 34%, respectively), and especially in Moscow and Saint Petersburg (38% each). Participants have mentioned problems with accessing HRT, ART, antidepressants, and, in some cases, asthma and mastopathy treatment.

*“They stopped supplying medication that is more effective and has fewer side effects compared to its Russian counterparts.”*

Cisgender homosexual woman, 44, Moscow

*“You can still buy the medication, but the prices have shot up, which is why it’s not always possible to get it in time, so you have to take breaks taking hormones.”*

Transgender heterosexual woman, 30, Ryazan Region

*“It’s so much harder now to find Oestrogel; I have no idea where to get Androcur, which I wanted to switch to from Verospiron; it’s a lot harder to get other medication as well; my friends don’t know where to find antidepressants, and I can’t always get my asthma medication. Besides, the prices are 1.5 times higher, which is a serious hit to my bank account.”*

Transgender woman, 30, Sverdlov Region

69% of the participants said that the war in Ukraine had impacted their financial situation. This number is higher for transgender participants (72%). The highest percentage of those whose financial situation worsened due to the war was found in Moscow (74%) and the Central Federal District (72%), and the lowest in the Far Eastern District (63%). Many participants have mentioned losing their jobs at international companies (including Ukrainian companies), inflation, a decrease in income and purchasing power, and limited career prospects.

*“I lost my job at IKEA, and now I’m struggling to find a new one.”*

Cisgender homosexual man, 24, Nizhny Novgorod Region

*“My income stayed the same, but I wanted to get a new job, which is more difficult now that the number of job offers is lower as is the prospective salary.”*

Cisgender bi/pansexual woman, 29, Republic of Tatarstan

The percentage of those who noticed the negative impact of the war in Ukraine among Hornet users and participants surveyed by social workers is lower as well: the difference is between 8 and 20 percent. It can be inferred that older cisgender homosexual men with higher incomes were not as impacted by the war (this may be not only due to objective factors, e. g., income level, but also due to subjective factors: some of those men were supportive of Russian politics).

When explaining how the war has impacted their lives in more detail, some participants have opened up about their own moral struggles, compassion for those who suffered directly, and lack of perspective.

*“It’s disgusting to think that my country could have done something like this. I feel distressed because Russia was overly militarized even before that. I feel like it will only get worse if this continues. I ache for the people.”*

Cisgender homosexual woman, 23, Saint Petersburg

When talking about how the war impacted them directly, participants have often mentioned their psychological well-being, which deteriorated significantly. Many have mentioned family conflicts as well as the polarization of society as a whole. Some have reported a new or increased sense of fear for themselves and their loved ones.

*“My mental health suffered a lot; there’s a never-ending sense of despair now. The financial situation is worse. Some family ties are now broken forever because of political differences.”*

Transgender demisexual man, 17, Amur Region

*“I have new fears and anxiety. I’m scared for my friends who could get drafted. It’s terrifying that I can protect neither them nor myself. I don’t have a way to leave the country. I’m scared to live. There’s so much despair.”*

Non-binary bi/pansexual person, 22, Primorsky Krai

*“My family, whom I still depend on, became more radical compared to their earlier apolitical stance. My only friend supported the new homophobic law. My husband’s best friend was drafted. All of this sobered me up and increased my sense of loneliness.”*

Cisgender bi/pansexual woman, 21, Primorsky Krai

*“Worsened depression and suicidal thoughts; increase in medication prices; inability to find some of the medication I need; increased tension in my family. I want to leave, but I have no means of doing that. My family doesn’t support my desire to emigrate.”*

Transgender non-binary homosexual man, 20, Penza Region

Some transgender people (mostly transgender women) sped up their process of official document change and hormonal therapy.

*“I had to take out a loan in order to get assessed and change my documents out of fear of mobilization.”*

Transgender homosexual woman, 27, Saint Petersburg

At the same time, other transgender people delayed their process of official document change and HRT either due to a lack of funds or due to fear of getting drafted (mostly transgender men).

*“I’m afraid to have my documents changed and draw the attention of the recruitment officers because I have no way of leaving the country right now.”*

Transgender demisexual man, 26, Saint Petersburg

*“I had to delay my transition because of financial issues.”*

Transgender bi/pansexual man, 23, Saint Petersburg

## Impact of mobilization

Some of the participants have reported being impacted more by mobilization than the actual war. 56% of the participants were impacted by mobilization in one way or another. The most common response to exactly how they were affected was heightened anxiety and worsened mental health (82%). 23% (817 people) of those impacted by mobilization noted that one or several of their loved ones received a draft card. 15% (535 people) said that their loved one(s) were mobilized. 14% (518 people) did not get a draft card but were at high risk of receiving one in the future as they were eligible for military service. 4% (173 people) received a draft card.

*“After mobilization was announced, my employer sent me on leave so that they would not have to give me away to the authorities. We waited for the police and the military services every night, afraid to leave the house, and stayed away from our permanent address. We took a bunch of antidepressants and drank a lot of alcohol.”*

Cisgender homosexual man, 37, Primorsky Krai

*“I’m unable to get a travel passport because when the application is filled out, the authorities send it over to the recruitment office for a check-up, and I’m eligible for military service, so if I were to get a travel passport, I would be at risk of getting drafted.”*

Cisgender homosexual man, 25, Penza Region

*“I thought of killing myself just to avoid mobilization.”*

Transgender homosexual woman, 32, Permsky Krai

## LGBT+ people and emigration

16% of the participants (1028 people) were forced to leave Russia because of the war. 80% of them were previously residents of the Central and Northwestern federal districts (primarily Moscow and Saint Petersburg).

Among those who left Russia, the majority (60%) did so **from September 2022 and onwards**. It can be inferred that mobilization, which was announced on September 21st, 2022, was the final straw. 29% left between February and May of 2022. 11% left in the summer of 2022 (June to August).

The most common reason for emigration was **severe anxiety and psychological discomfort** (38%). Other common reasons include:

- concern for one’s own life (31%);
- intensified censorship (30%);
- growth of homophobic and transphobic sentiment in Russian society (28%);
- reluctance to remain in Russia and be associated with it (28%);
- introduction of the new ‘gay propaganda’ law (27%);
- threat of mobilization (19%).

European Union countries were the most popular destination among those who left Russia (22%), followed by Georgia (16%), and Turkey (11%).

Current country of residence	Number of people	Percentage
EU countries	228	23%
Georgia	160	16%
Turkey	112	11%
Kazakhstan	90	9%
Armenia	79	8%
Serbia	51	5%
USA	39	4%
Thailand	32	3%
Israel	28	3%
Argentina	24	2%
Montenegro	19	2%
Other countries	142	14%

25 people (2%) were forced to go back to Russia. Some of them are planning to emigrate to a different country in the future.

*“I didn’t want to go back to Russia, but money isn’t infinite. If I could leave forever, I would.”*

Cisgender homosexual man, 32, Republic of Bashkortostan

*“Kazakhstan is no less homophobic than Russia. I was planning to seek asylum in the US, but I didn’t have my travel passport with me and couldn’t even get residence in Kazakhstan. I had to come back, but I’m planning to leave again.”*

Cisgender asexual man, 29, Moscow

Among those who left Russia, 16% (163 people) still face SOGIE-driven discrimination in their new country of residence. The highest percentage of them are in Georgia (21%, 34 people), EU countries (17%, 27 people), Kazakhstan (13%, 21 people), Armenia (12%, 20 people), and Turkey (10%, 16 people).

24% (245 people) see themselves coming back to Russia. A third (32%, or 326 people) were undecided on the question of coming back to Russia. Almost half (45%) don’t see themselves coming back to Russia.

When describing their experience of emigration, our participants have mentioned the following as the most common SOGIE-driven issues:

- homophobic and/or transphobic sentiment in the society of the current country of residence (or in certain social groups);
- homophobia and/or transphobia from other Russian immigrants;
- access to healthcare and medication (especially for transgender people and people with health issues);
- accommodation (for same-sex couples);
- issues with emigrating together with a partner or partners (paperwork, job, etc.);
- loneliness, feeling disconnected from the LGBT+ community, difficulty building new relationships;
- extortion, blackmail, and exploitation at the expense of the vulnerable position of LGBT+ immigrants.

*“Here [in Israel], I encountered homophobia from people who left Russia just as I did.”*  
Cisgender homosexual woman, 31, Moscow

*“Access to healthcare in the new [European] country [is a problem], as is the inability to get HRT here due to a language barrier and not having a residence permit.”*  
Non-binary bi/pansexual person, 18, Moscow

*“Armenian citizens are very homophobic; a non-conforming appearance can lead to conflicts and assaults, difficulty accessing HRT, and difficulty renting property.”*  
Transgender homosexual man, 24, Yaroslavl Region

*“In Germany, we have been insulted and once groped (someone grabbed my butt) by Muslim men because of the LGBT+ flag that we had with us.”*  
Cisgender homosexual woman, 38, Saint Petersburg

*“The main issue is trying to emigrate together [to an EU country]. Either you have to be married or all the people in the relationship have to find a job.”*  
Non-binary bi/pansexual person, 38, Saint Petersburg

## Summary

Most LGBT+ people have been impacted by the war. It mainly affected their psychological well-being: people have gone through a lot of war-induced anxiety about violence, death, repressions, and increasing homophobia and transphobia. They found themselves in a significantly more vulnerable situation once the new propaganda law was implemented.

Most have seen an increase in homophobia and transphobia in the government, in pro-government media, and among government officials, but significantly fewer people have noticed such changes in their social circles.

Most have experienced negative changes to their financial situation, especially residents of big cities (Moscow and Saint Petersburg).

Many LGBT+ people’s access to necessary medication was limited. This mostly impacted transgender people due to inability to access HRT.



Mobilization impacted LGBT+ people greatly, causing profound concern for their own safety and the safety of their loved ones. The percentage of those who received a draft card, however, is relatively small (4%).

A significant number of the participants (16%) left Russia because of the war. Residents of Moscow and Saint Petersburg were the most successful in doing so. Most left in September 2022 after mobilization was announced. Only a quarter of those who emigrated are considering coming back to Russia.

## **Impact of the war in Ukraine on LGBT+ people in Russia's regions: qualitative research**

### **Methodology**

This part of the report is dedicated to an evaluation of the changes in LGBT+ people's lives in Russia's regions after the beginning of the full-scale war in Ukraine. To assess those changes, we interviewed experts — activists and employees of LGBT+ organizations from different cities. Most interviews were held online via Zoom or Telegram. The geographical reach of those interviews includes Rostov-on-Don, Omsk, Kazan, Yaroslavl, Yekaterinburg, Vladivostok, and the Barents Region. All the experts interviewed currently live or have previously lived in large cities, which means that the information they provided may not be representative of the situation in smaller residential areas. We specify 'previously lived' because some of them were forced to leave the country, the main reason for this being prosecution and pressure from the so-called 'law enforcement structures'.

We chose to include the interviews with the experts who did not immediately emigrate after February 24th, which makes them first-hand witnesses of the changes that had occurred in their region before they left. Furthermore, they have stayed in touch with those back in Russia — their colleagues, friends, and loved ones — and have been monitoring the situation in their regions via different media channels. Besides, most of them are still (remotely) involved in the work of their local LGBT+ organizations.

The experts used different sources in their interviews: media outlets, professional resources, personal experience, and the experiences of their social circle. The accessibility of those sources depended greatly on the situation in the regions. The experts from those regions where LGBT+ organizations are still operating had access to monitoring data, as well as information from support groups and requests for therapy services and other assistance. The experts from regions where LGBT+ organizations have discontinued their operations due to pressure from the authorities or safety reasons in light of the new propaganda law had limited access to such professional resources.

Despite all the limitations, the information presented to us by the experts is invaluable. It allows us not only to track the changes in the lives of LGBT+ people in different cities but also to see the overarching patterns. This research does not provide a full picture of the events, but it allows us to better understand what has been happening with the LGBT+ community in different regions since February 24th, 2022.

**Anonymity.** We do not mention names or other data that could be used to identify our experts, nor do we name the organizations they represent. Those decisions were made out of safety concerns.

## **Barents Region**

We spoke to a representative of one of the LGBT+ organizations that focuses on human rights, support, and education in the Barents Region, mainly in the Karelian Republic, Arkhangelsk, and Murmansk regions.

The expert stated that, on the whole, compared to other regions of Russia, the Barents Region is ‘not that homophobic’. Still, just like in any other region of Russia, the beginning of the war in Ukraine and the events that followed, such as mobilization and the introduction of the new ‘propaganda of non-traditional sexual relationships and change of sex’ law (hereafter referred to as ‘the law’) have impacted the LGBT+ community in a negative way.

First of all, it is the general feeling of fear and anxiety. Such feelings are common in Russian society overall, but for LGBT+ people, they are directly connected to the intensification of anti-LGBT+ sentiment from the government and propagandistic institutions.

Many LGBT+ people have left the region. Due to its location close to the border, it was easier to get visas thanks to cross-border cooperation programs — residents have visited the neighboring countries many times. Many people who have the male gender marker in their passport left the region after mobilization was announced. Emigration of LGBT+ people was also brought about by the new ‘propaganda’ law.

Overall, the expert described the situation in the region as ‘**a loss of community**’. There has been a decrease in meet-ups and event attendance, and people have been avoiding public assemblies. More LGBT+ people, especially homosexual couples with kids as well as older people, have become increasingly private. The number of requests for legal assistance has also decreased — people no longer believe in the judicial system; they are ‘**more afraid of interacting with the police than they are of violence**’.

Even before the law was implemented, there was an increase in hate speech against LGBT+ people on social media. After the new law was introduced, regional media outlets stopped reporting on the LGBT+ community altogether, being cautious of ‘propaganda’ accusations. In order to preserve some notion of activity, the LGBT+ community has been forced to limit its visibility and use newspeak instead of naming things for what they are or speaking openly. LGBT+ groups and organizations have begun to use private accounts on social media and switched to Telegram, a safer alternative to VK and a more accessible one compared to Instagram and Facebook, which have been banned in Russia.

The financial situation in the region has also deteriorated due to a lack of connection with neighboring countries, which has also had a negative effect on medium-sized and small businesses. Inflation has only worsened the situation in the region, which was already being subsidized.

Despite the difficulty of the situation, new people have joined LGBT+ volunteering and activism because **'it's impossible to do nothing'**. The expert has also noted the emergence of a new LGBT+ art group. It is worth mentioning that the region has maintained its civic society and horizontal connections between different civic organizations. Connections with organizations that represent native peoples, such as Saami activists, have also been maintained.

There has been no increase in violence against the LGBT+ community so far; no increase in pressure from the authorities has been reported either.

## Kazan

We managed to secure five interviews from Kazan, three of which were in writing (from people associated with a local feminist organization), and two were Zoom interviews with ex-employees of an LGBT+ organization that discontinued its activity after the new 'propaganda' law was introduced.

Out of the five people interviewed, two encountered pressure from the authorities directly. They were called to the police station, their homes and the homes of their relatives and acquaintances were searched, and their workplaces were visited. One of the experts has already left Russia, and three more have been considering emigration. Overall, a significant number of people from our experts' social circles have left the country since February 24th, 2022. According to one of our experts, **'everyone who could leave did so'**. Mobilization led to a second wave of emigration, especially for people with a male gender marker. The third wave was brought about by the 'propaganda' law. Kazakhstan became one of the most popular emigration destinations.

The expert who used to organize therapy support groups for LGBT+ people noticed an increase in the number of requests after February 24th. People were in a state of shock for a few months; however, three or so months later, they got tired of discussing politics during the sessions and asked for that topic to be left untouched.

One of the experts described the dynamics within the local LGBT+ community as 'gradually fading'. Due to pressure from the authorities and a part of the community emigrating, there have been fewer and fewer public events since February 2022. Everything stopped after the 'propaganda' law was introduced. The local LGBT+ organization discontinued all official activities, including the film society and board games. The media, including YouTube channels, started to delete their LGBT+ content. Communication happens in private chats; strangers and less familiar people have been removed from old chats. Many LGBT+ people have made their lives more private; they are afraid to be visible and to discuss their political views. One of the experts stated that **'it's dangerous to even turn up the volume on a video when you're home — the neighbors could report you'**. She also said that 'people have stopped fighting for their rights'. Another expert mentioned that the current situation has led to **'LGBT+ people losing their voice'**.

LGBT+ clubs have continued working and holding theme parties; however, they are forced to use euphemisms to announce their events. Therefore, even though all

initiatives directed at helping and supporting the LGBT+ community have discontinued their functions, the entertainment industry has persevered, although it has become more private.

Three experts have mentioned issues with accessing essential medications: antidepressants and hormonal therapy. The supply of antidepressants was affected soon after February 24th. Later, the medication returned to pharmacy shelves, but its prices increased dramatically. The situation was similar for hormonal drugs.

All experts have mentioned a downswing in the financial situation. It was mostly caused by inflation, whereas income levels have not changed or decreased. Freelancers and those in precarious occupations suffered the most financially. Those who left the country also faced financial difficulties.

While noticing a rise in hatred against the LGBT+ community in the media and government propaganda, all experts have said that so far, there has been no increase in day-to-day homophobia, transphobia, or violence against LGBT+ people.

## **Yaroslavl**

An ex-employee of one of the local LGBT+ organizations was interviewed. The expert currently does not reside in Russia; however, he takes part in the life of the local community remotely, including help with monitoring cases of discrimination.

The start of the war in Ukraine led to an increase in social stress and tension. People started leaving the region and the country after February 2022. Activists, including LGBT+ activists who were openly protesting the war, faced pressure from the authorities. The expert's partner was one of the people unlawfully detained by the police. The arrest was accompanied by threats of physical violence. The expert himself was declared a 'foreign agent'. Overall, persecution and pressure intensified for all opposition activists, human rights advocates, and representatives of civic society.

Representatives from Center E [Center for Combating Extremism] tried to recruit some members of the LGBT+ community, using threats and pressure in order to get them to spy on and provide information about others. One of the ways of pressuring the LGBT+ community is by gaining access to their phones, personal data, and photos, followed by blackmail. At least one successful case of such recruitment is known.

The changes that affected the LGBT+ community in the region included an increase in atomization, individualization, and isolation. Public assemblies, such as therapy support groups and discussion groups, have been discontinued. People have begun avoiding everything political and are afraid to stand up for their rights. LGBT+ clubs in the city are still working, but they are controlled by the authorities and are sometimes used as platforms for recruitment.

Anti-LGBT+ rhetoric spread by the government propaganda promoted the new isolated state of the community; however, there has been no increase in violence against the LGBT+ community so far. It can be explained by the fact that people are afraid to

report cases of violence, fear the police, or do not see a point in contacting support organizations: ‘Why? How is that going to help?’

Another negative factor was the ‘propaganda’ law. **LGBT+ organizations, which already faced pressure from the authorities, discontinued their work.** Social media groups have switched to Telegram. There have been fewer mentions of the LGBT+ community in the media.

The supply of antidepressants was affected after February 24th, first by disruptions and then by inflation. There were similar disruptions and changes in prices for hormonal therapy (Sustanon, Nebido), but access to them has ‘normalized’ since then. There is, however, another issue when it comes to accessing HRT: transgender people are wary of contacting medical institutions for prescriptions due to an increased risk of discrimination.

According to the expert’s observations, the negative impact of the war on financial well-being was mostly experienced by the creative class, including people whose work was connected to social media, which was either banned or demonetized for users from Russia.

## **Rostov-on-Don**

We spoke to an expert who is involved in private therapy services. The beginning of the war in Ukraine led to increased anxiety for everyone.

**The situation for LGBT+ people has not changed much — it was already bad.** Rostov-on-Don and the Southern Federal District are generally quite homophobic and have an active community of ultra-nationalists, Cossacks, and religious communities. It should be noted that the authorities began pressuring the LGBT+ and feminist communities in the city back in 2018, which led to a dramatic decrease in the number of educational and political events on queer issues.

Levels of emigration from the region and the country increased after February 24th. Many people with a male gender marker left after the mobilization was announced. People looked for other ways to avoid mobilization, such as disability cards, medical contraindications, etc.

The ‘propaganda’ law did not affect local media outlets much — there were no LGBT-friendly media outlets in the first place. Professionals started to delete any mentions of working with the LGBT+ community from their pages. It is now harder for clients to find decent specialists.

Just like in other regions, there were disruptions in the supply of antidepressants and antipsychotic medication in Rostov after the beginning of the war in Ukraine. Later, foreign brands were substituted with more expensive Russian analogs of worse quality.

The financial situation in the region suffered greatly. There are many refugees, a high level of unemployment, a decrease in income levels, and overall inflation. The



expert has encountered those changes personally — there are fewer new clients and some old clients no longer have the means to afford therapy. The clubs are still working and holding theme parties.

## Yekaterinburg

Our expert from Yekaterinburg is an employee of one of the local LGBT+ organizations that monitors cases of discrimination and violence and provides different forms of help and support, including legal and psychological assistance.

Similar to other cities, the beginning of the war in Ukraine led to an increase in stress and anxiety in Yekaterinburg. There have been more requests for therapy services; many of those were from people experiencing suicidal thoughts and depression and people with neurological differences. There have been more urgent requests. The situation worsened when popular antidepressants and other medicines disappeared in March 2022. They were later replaced by more expensive and less effective Russian analogs.

The situation with HRT was similar. Transgender people were forced to replace the medication they could no longer access with different medication, which, for many, **led to a change in their hormone therapy scheme.**

The second wave of overwhelming therapy service requests happened after mobilization. The majority of those requests were from people who were unable to leave the country. The therapy services released a cheat sheet for what to do next and how to support oneself for people who are afraid of mobilization but cannot leave the country. The sheet became very popular on social media. According to the expert, even homophobic people shared it with comments such as **‘ignore the rainbow, the post is good’.**

More people have left the region. Before February 24th, the requests for emigration consultations were rare, but in 2022, their number increased by dozens. Most of them came from homosexual men and transgender people aged 25 to 35.

Legal services got a lot of mobilization-related requests for assistance, too. Most came from homosexual men and transgender people. Transgender women requested support with document changes; transgender men — with interactions with military recruitment offices and acquisition of a foreign passport. The demand for legal assistance also increased due to LGBT+ people being arrested at protests.

Kazakhstan became the most popular destination for emigration since its border is near the Sverdlov Region. The expert stated that emigration and associated support lead to stronger connections with the LGBT+ community and organizations in Kazakhstan and Central Asia in general.

The Yekaterinburg organization received more requests for financial help, which has not happened since the end of the COVID pandemic. The number of career consultations has also increased.



There has been no intensification of organized homophobic group activity or day-to-day homophobia in the city so far. There has, however, been **an increase in spontaneous violence against transgender sex workers**.

The civic community in Yekaterinburg is strong, and LGBT+ organizations receive support from other NGOs and human rights organizations.

## Omsk

The expert is an employee of one of the LGBT+ organizations in the city.

The main effects of the war in Ukraine that affected the LGBT+ community were changes in the political climate in the country and an increase in political pressure on activists, which concerned the more active and publicly visible representatives of the community.

LGBT+ activism has been directly impacted. There has been a decrease in the number of new volunteers and activists, some people have left the initiatives due to increased safety concerns. Some sponsors had left the country, which has led to a smaller budget. Some projects have been postponed, and the number of activities has decreased dramatically. One LGBT+ organization had to move offices and relocate to a smaller space.

The new 'propaganda' law also had an impact: names, descriptions, and any mentions of LGBT-related projects have changed; organizations use newspeak and euphemisms, and social media pages have been edited or deleted altogether. LGBT+ content has been moved to Telegram.

There has been no targeted pressure on the LGBT+ community from authorities so far. The expert explains that the local organizations are oriented towards working within the community and are not as publicly visible.

People have left the city due to mobilization and the new law. The leading destination is Kazakhstan, whose border is two hours away.

There have been no major issues with accessing antidepressants. It is possible to acquire medication in Kazakhstan.

There has been an increase in hate speech against the LGBT+ community online and an increase in violence — more fake dates with the purpose of blackmail and extortion.

The financial situation in the city has improved since it has a developed military sector. The creative middle class was the most affected in terms of income.

## Vladivostok

The expert is an employee of one of the LGBT+ organizations in the city and has currently left Russia. She has maintained connections with the local community and is currently working for the organization remotely.

In terms of the financial situation, the service industry and small businesses were the most impacted. People who work for government agencies were affected the least. Quite the opposite: there are more job offers in such agencies, including the police. They are popular among closeted LGBT+ people. There have been no requests for financial assistance.

Emigration has also had quite an impact. **Many LGBT+ activists have left.** There have been many requests for assistance with emigration. Three emigration waves can be determined: right after the beginning of the war, post-mobilization (mostly homosexual men), and after the introduction of the new 'propaganda' law.

No increase in the number of cases of violence against the LGBT+ community has been detected so far.

There was a crisis with accessing antidepressants and antipsychotic medication in the first few months.

One of the outcomes of the new law is a decrease in community's activity: people less frequently come to events or ask for help; **they have become more isolated.**

The law has also led to an increase in pressure on LGBT+ organizations: government investigations, private LGBT+ events being raided by the police (who used fake identities to get the information about the event), and online censorship. Center E has been trying to recruit members of the LGBT+ community using threats.

The club is still functioning; however, it has been visited by the police, who checked the documents of those present.

## Summary

The LGBT+ community in different parts of Russia has been greatly impacted by the war in Ukraine and its consequences. **An increase in social stress, the feeling of anxiety and fear, as well as the emigration of many LGBT+ people,** have been mentioned by experts in all seven regions. The pattern of LGBT+ emigration differs slightly from that of other social groups. Two waves of emigration are reported among the general public – the first one after February 24th and the second after mobilization – but there is a third one for LGBT+ people, which started in December, following the introduction of the new 'propaganda' law.

**The new law had a significant effect on the visibility of LGBT+ people and organizations.** The media have either started to write less or have stopped writing about the LGBT+ community completely. **Many organizations have discontinued their operations;** their employees were forced to leave the country. The remaining organizations and projects face issues with financing, marketing, and recruitment of new members.

Social media groups and channels with LGBT+ content have either been suspended or switched to private. Many have moved to other platforms, especially Telegram.

Experts from every region noted the effects of the anti-LGBT+ rhetoric of the government, which is spread via government-controlled media outlets. It has led to fear and isolation among the members of the LGBT+ community, a feeling of defenselessness, and distrust towards law enforcement structures. Oppositional LGBT+ activists have faced pressure and persecution from the authorities in all regions. In Yaroslavl, Kazan, and Vladivostok, **LGBT+ activists who did not partake in protests** and organizations whose activity is restricted within the community have also encountered such pressure. The feeling of fear, tension, and pressure from the authorities, a decrease in media presence, the suspension of LGBT+ content online, and the mass emigration of queer activists have all resulted in '**LGBT+ people losing their voices**'. There are, however, some cities where LGBT+ organizations did not encounter pressure from the authorities and have continued their active role in the life of the local community.

The war and its consequences had a negative impact on other areas of LGBT+ people's lives. People with mental conditions encountered disruptions in the supply of antidepressants and antipsychotics in the first few months following February 24th. Transgender people faced issues with accessing HRT; and some were forced to alter their transition timeline. Many encountered financial difficulties, especially LGBT+ people in small businesses, the service industry, and the creative arts.

The entertainment industry was seemingly the least affected of all. LGBT-friendly clubs and bars continue their normal functioning almost everywhere and face no significant pressure from the authorities. A potential collaboration between entertainment institutions and LGBT+ organizations could prove favorable for the LGBT+ community. Such collaborations, however, are challenging to realize due to increased censorship and the new law, both of which result in significant limitations and the inability to support LGBT+ people publicly.

## Conclusion

As seen from the results of our survey, LGBT+ people all across Russia face SOGIE-driven discrimination. Many participants have encountered violence, abuse, threats, prejudice, and offensive remarks in different areas of their lives: at work or place of study, from medical professionals, relatives, neighbors, landlords, and strangers. After the beginning of the war in Ukraine in 2022 and the introduction of the new 'gay propaganda' law, many LGBT+ people noticed a rise in homophobic and transphobic rhetoric from pro-government media and government officials. Many have also noted an increase in homophobic and transphobic aggression within their social circles, especially from older relatives who are more susceptible to government propaganda. Those changes in society, however, did not lead to an increase in violence or cases of discrimination if we look at the data from previous years. This claim is supported by the aforementioned data (interviews with experts from different regions). It can be inferred that hateful sentiment and new laws have not yet led to an increase in violence and discrimination, but this tendency should be monitored in the future.

Transgender people are one of the most vulnerable groups within the LGBT+ community. They are more likely to face all forms of discrimination, including hate crimes. Their financial situation is significantly more fragile because it is more difficult for them

to find jobs; further, hormonal therapy and document changes require great expenses. War and mobilization also impacted transgender people more than other groups, especially when it came to accessing hormonal therapy.

The following can be concluded from comparing the levels of discrimination across federal districts. It is easier to name the districts where SOGIE-driven discrimination occurs less frequently, which are, as expected, the Northwestern and Central districts, especially Saint Petersburg and Moscow. It is much harder to determine the most homophobic and transphobic district based on just our data. Taking our limitations and other known data into consideration, we could name the North Caucasian District as such. The level of SOGIE-driven violence is significantly higher in the Siberian, Far Eastern, and Ural districts. Day-to-day homophobia and transphobia, such as discrimination in the workplace or the place of study, conflicts with other people, and denied services, are very widespread in the Southern District.

A significant number of LGBT+ people left Russia in 2022: over a thousand among just our participants, which is confirmed by our interviews with the experts. The majority of those who left do not plan on coming back to Russia anytime soon. That being said, many of them still encounter discrimination and other issues specific to LGBT+ immigrants (access to HRT and ART, lack of connection to the LGBT+ community, inability to legalize the relationship with their partner, local homophobic and/or transphobic laws and sentiments) in their new country of residence. We must consider this category of LGBT+ people in future research and strategic planning of supportive initiatives.

# Recommendations

## **Commissioner for Human Rights in the Russian Federation**

- To promote equality for LGBT+ people and denormalize discrimination;
- To hold conversations with Russian and international LGBT+ organizations and activists in order to gain a fuller understanding of the community's needs and requirements;
- To promote investigations of LGBT+ people's rights violations in Russia;
- To include SOGIE-driven discrimination data and other violations of LGBT+ people's rights into the commissioner's annual report.

## **Federation Council of the State Duma**

- To introduce a legislation terminating Article 6.21 of the Code of Administrative Offenses of the Russian Federation 'Propaganda of non-traditional sexual relationships or inclinations and change of sex' and 6.21.2 'Distribution among minors of information that demonstrates non-traditional sexual relationships and/or preferences or is capable of causing minors to desire to change their gender.'

## **Ministry of Home Affairs of the Russian Federation**

- To ensure effective investigation of SOGIE-driven acts of violence and incitement of SOGIE-driven hatred;
- To consider hate and violence against LGBT+ people as a possible motive for investigations;
- To resume cooperation with international organizations regarding hate crimes;
- To ensure the possibility of peaceful assemblies on LGBT+ issues and the safety of their participants;
- To educate law enforcement officials on LGBT+ matters.

## **Private organizations**

- Not to allow SOGIE-driven discrimination of LGBT+ people in the workplace (rejecting applications, contract termination, etc.);
- To provide services equally regardless of the client's SOGIE;
- For organizations providing medical and psychological services to educate their staff on the specifics of working with LGBT+ clients.

## **International Human Rights Organizations**

- To demand from Russia to fulfill its international obligations in the field of human rights;
- Take measures to ensure that sanctions imposed on Russia do not affect vulnerable groups, including but not limited to LGBT+ people;
- To ensure that citizens of the Russian Federation from vulnerable groups both inside and outside the country have access to essential medication;
- To collect data on LGBT+ people's rights violations in Russia, including the data from this research, to publish it, and draw international attention to it;
- To support journalists, human rights activists, including LGBT+ activists, legal practitioners who have left Russia due to political persecution, as well as those who support LGBT+ people in Russia;
- Strengthen humanitarian and financial assistance for the programs working with the LGBT+ community.

LGBT+ People in Russia: 2022 Full Report. – Coming Out; Sphere, 2023. – 53 pp.