

FACT SHEET

EXAMINATION OF LGBT PEOPLE'S LIVED EXPERIENCES AND PUBLIC PERCEPTIONS OF SEXUAL AND GENDER MINORITIES IN RWANDA

This fact sheet summarizes evidence from a study conducted in Rwanda by the Health Development Initiative (HDI) Rwanda and the African Population and Health Research Center (APHRC). The study's aim was to understand the lived experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people, as well as the public's perception of LGBT issues. It explored the current situation for LGBT people in terms of factors contributing to, and the nature and forms of social exclusion. Specific aspects examined in the study included daily experiences of stigma, discrimination, human rights abuses, the well-being of and legal framework for LGBT people.

The study used a concurrent, equal status, mixed-methods approach consisting of a quantitative survey of 499 and 1,243 respondents for the lived experiences and public perceptions surveys respectively. The study team also conducted six focus group discussions (FGDs) with a total of 59 participants as well as 16 key informant interviews.

KEY FACTS

Experiences of discrimination

- About two-thirds of survey participants had experienced at least one form of discrimination. Respondents said that this occurred most often when participating in religious (44.9%) or cultural events (41.7%) and when looking for (or in) housing (30%).



Challenges in accessing basic services

- More than half of the participants reported that they had experienced challenges in accessing food services (64.1%). Approximately half of the survey participants experienced challenges while accessing social services (54.3%), health services (47.3%) and financial services (42.9%).

Experiences of domestic abuse

- Close to two in every three respondents had experienced psychological abuse, while one in every ten respondents had experienced physical abuse. Common forms of psychological abuse included being called negative names, being taunted and subjected to isolation as well as being associated with the devil.

Awareness of LGBT rights, freedoms and available support systems

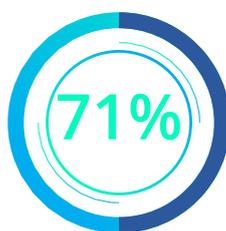
- A minority (13%) of LGBT respondents confirmed knowledge of their rights and freedom in the context of the Rwanda's legal framework.

Awareness of human rights and laws concerning LGBT Rwandans

- The majority of participants surveyed (71%) were not aware of human rights issues concerning LGBT individuals. Only about 29% confirmed awareness of human rights protections for the LGBT community. In addition, 86% of the participants were not aware of laws protecting LGBT individuals in Rwanda.



Aware of human rights protection for LGBT individuals



Not aware of human rights protection for LGBT individuals



Not aware of laws protecting LGBT individuals

State attitudes

- Majority of respondents thought that the LGBT community should not be accepted in either the community (62%) or the country (56%). About half of them (48%) stated that LGBT individuals are feared in the community.

Self-reported actions against members of the LGBT community

- More than half of the study participants reported holding a negative attitude towards LGBT individuals. While one in four participants reported not having attempted to take any action against LGBT individuals, the same participants stated that they would do anything to harm an LGBT person. Conversely, close to half (47%) of the respondents reported that they had not and would not avoid someone because they are LGBT. Only 17% affirmed that they had avoided someone in the 12 months preceding the survey because of that person being LGBT while 21% of the respondents stated that they had used derogatory names to refer to someone because that person was LGBT. Three percent of the respondents reported that they had physically harmed an LGBT individual in the 12 months preceding the survey.

We recommend that:

1. The government and civil society partners should conduct awareness campaigns among LGBT people to ensure that they know their human rights and the legal protections available to them.
2. The government and civil society partners should implement programs and campaigns that raise societal awareness about the LGBT community and which foster acceptance of gender and sexual diversity. One avenue to raise awareness may be through community dialogues which bring together LGBT and non-LGBT people for open discussions. In implementing such programs, it is important to identify strategies that frame LGBT people's rights in ways that will resonate with the local communities.
3. The government should enact and implement comprehensive anti-discrimination legislation and policies that address all forms of direct and indirect discrimination including sexual orientation and gender identity. This should be supplemented with capacity strengthening of law enforcement officials to implement and monitor these laws and policies in an accountable manner.



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