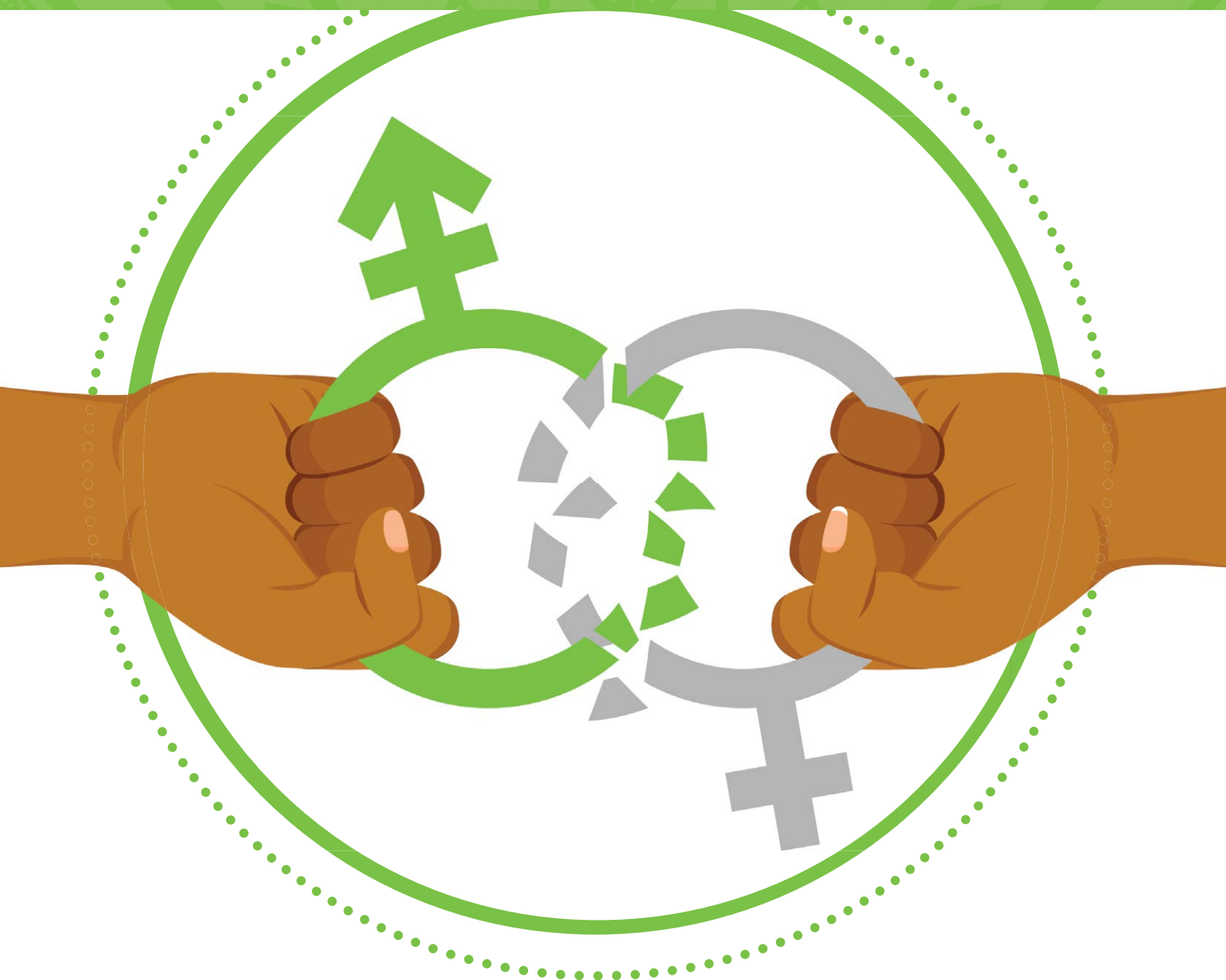


Individual Views and Actions, and Public Perceptions Towards Sexual and Gender Minorities in Kenya



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Acronyms



CSOs	Civil society organizations
GALCK	Gay and Lesbian Coalition of Kenya
KHRC	Kenya Human Rights Commission
LGBTQ+	Lesbian, gay, bi-sexual, transgender, queer and other sexual and gender diverse people
SOGIE	Sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression
SSA	Sub-Saharan Africa

Key Definitions

Asexuality: The sexual orientation of a person with an enduring absence of sexual attraction. People who do not experience sexual attraction often identify as “asexual.”

Bisexuality: The sexual orientation of a person who is emotionally, romantically, or sexually attracted to people of more than one gender. People with attraction to more than one gender identify as “bisexual.”

Discrimination: The act of treating someone differently; prejudice directed toward anyone perceived as a sexual and gender minority, in which they are deprived of opportunities and access to services.

Gay: The sexual orientation of a person who is emotionally, romantically, and/or sexually attracted to people of the same sex or gender; a male whose primary and romantic attraction is toward other males.

Gender: The attitudes, feelings, norms, and behaviours a given culture associates with a person’s biological sex. Behaviour that is compatible with cultural expectations is referred to as gender-normative; behaviour that is viewed as incompatible with these expectations constitutes gender non-conformity.

Gender diversity: The extent to which a person’s gender identity, role, or expression differs from the cultural norms prescribed for people of a particular sex. This term is becoming more popular to describe people without reference to a particular cultural norm.

Gender expression: External characteristics, behaviours, and expressions that are socially constructed within the culture as either masculine or feminine, such as clothing, chores, social interactions, mannerisms, and hairstyles.

Gender identity: The internal sense of who we are and how we see ourselves as a man, a woman, or somewhere in between or beyond these identities.

Gender-sensitive approach: Laws, policies, programs, or training modules that recognize that there are different-gendered actors (women, men, girls, boys, transgender, and gender-diverse individuals) within a society, that these individuals are constrained in different and often unequal ways, and that they may therefore have differed and sometimes conflicting perceptions, needs, interests, and priorities.

Homophobia: A discriminatory or prejudiced action or idea related to someone’s actual or perceived gay or lesbian sexual orientation.

Lesbian: The sexual orientation of a female whose primary sexual and romantic attraction is toward other females.

Lesbophobia: A discriminatory or prejudiced action or idea related to females whose primary sexual and romantic attraction is toward other females.

Non-binary person: A person identifying as either having a gender that is beyond the two categories of socially constructed “man” and “woman.”

Sexual orientation: is a socially constructed identity that is based on physical, spiritual, emotional, and romantic sexual attraction to another based on their sex, gender identity, and gender expression. It is not correlated to gender identity or gender expression.

Transgender: An umbrella term referring to an individual whose gender identity is different from the sex assigned at birth. A transgender person usually adopts or would prefer to adopt, a gender expression in consonance with their preferred gender.

Transphobia: A discriminatory or prejudiced action or idea related to someone’s actual or perceived gender identity or gender expression.

Gender pronouns: Gender pronouns are a word or group of words that one substitutes for a noun that is gendered.

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Executive Summary

Background

Sexual and gender minorities (also known as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and other sexual and gender diverse [LGBTQ+]) people in Africa face the risks of stigma, prejudice, and violence. While there is a rise in tolerance of LGBTQ+ people in several African countries, harsh anti-homosexuality laws persist, and intolerance towards this already marginalized community is increasing in countries in eastern Africa, including Kenya. The LGBTQ+ landscape in Kenya is complicated. While same-sex sexual relations are illegal, Kenya is also a signatory to several international and continental human rights instruments that guarantee LGBTQ+ rights as human rights. Since 2009 when HIV prevalence was highest among key population including men who have sex with men, there has been an increase in the visibility of LGBTQ+ groups. Such visibility portends gains and disadvantages to LGBTQ+ organizations and persons. While LGBTQ+ people live in and interact with wider society, it is worth exploring further these interactions to inform inclusive laws and policies.

Methods

We conducted a descriptive study in four counties in Kenya: Mombasa, Nairobi, Kisumu, and Eldoret. Enumeration areas (EAs) in each study site were selected using systematic random sampling. We then employed a convenient sampling strategy to select 1,652 participants. Study participants included males and females aged 18 years and above.

Key findings

The findings reveal that over half of participants stated they have never and would never avoid (56.5%), physically injure (89.6%) or refuse to hire (71.2%) someone because they are LGBTQ+, use derogatory language to refer to LGBTQ+ (76.6%), or tease someone dressed like opposite sex (70%). Further, a high proportion of participants agreed that people who identify as LGBTQ+ should be treated equally under the law, and should not be discriminated at workplaces (74%), educational institutions (69%), homes (71%), health facilities (81%) and places of worship (65%). While 39% of participants agreed that they support LGBTQ+ rights, majority were unsupportive of marital union between same sex partners with 84% of participants agreeing that marriage should only be between a man and a woman. Further, more than half (57%) of participants held the view that LGBTQ+ couples should not have the rights to adopt children.

Four out of five participants (80.5%) agreed that same-sex orientation or gender diversity expressions are against what "God intended." About six in ten (57%) agreed that expressions of sexual orientation and gender identity were the result of too much freedom. More than half (59%) disagreed that an individual is either gay, straight, or bisexual from birth. Six in ten (61%) agreed that gay people can eventually grow up to become heterosexual. The majority of participants (64%) did not think that LGBTQ+ people were mentally sick. Almost six in ten (57%) disagreed that LGBTQ+ were sexual perverts. Almost two-thirds of the participants endorsed community-based education to inform Kenyans about LGBTQ+ rights, and almost half of the respondents agreed that students should be taught about LGBTQ+ rights in schools.

Participants perceived that in Kenya acceptability of LGBTQ+ people in Kenya is at 25%. Almost half (47%) of the participants indicated that it was unsafe to discuss LGBTQ+ issues. Overall, more than half (53%) half of participants agreed community members had beaten people for being gay; five in ten (49%) agreed people had been evicted from their homes being LGBTQ+; almost four in ten (38%) agreed people had been killed for being LGBTQ+. About a third (28%) agreed that LGBTQ+ people had been arrested by the police, and over half of the participants (55%) agreed lawmakers have negative attitudes toward LGBTQ+ people.

Discussion

Study findings point to contradictions in discrimination, acceptance, laws and support for LGBTQ+ related rights. There is significant support for equality irrespective of sexual orientation and gender identity with many participants being supportive of equal treatment for LGBTQ+ people at workplaces, educational institutions, homes, places of worship and health facilities. However, there is prejudice towards LGBTQ+ people with many participants believing that LGBTQ+ people should not be allowed to marry or adopt children. The findings underscore the potential value that open dialogue can have to increase awareness of LGBTQ+ issues and to rally support to protect the rights of LGBTQ+ people.

Recommendations

- **Stakeholders implementing interventions to support sexual and gender minorities should leverage on positive public views to garner public support for interventions to support sexual and gender minorities.** Widespread endorsement of the rights of LGBTQ+ to equal treatment in workplaces, educational institutions, homes, places of worship and health facilities may be critical in expand ally networks, especially community and religious leaders. Allies can rally support for LGBTQ+ individuals and communities. For instance, church leaders can promote messages of love and acceptance of all people among their followers.
- **Programs to improve awareness and knowledge of community members and related stakeholders on LGBTQ+ rights are needed.** Low public knowledge of sexual and gender minorities and rights concerning LGBTQ+, the persistence of stigma and discrimination, including violence, necessitates a strategic focus on awareness-raising campaigns to support shifting public attitudes toward greater social acceptance and understanding of sexual orientation and gender diversity and related human rights. Civil society organizations should implement programs that raise community awareness on sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression issues, as well as educate community members and institutions such as places of worship and work, health facilities, and learning institutions on these issues.
- **It is important to enhance access to justice to protect LGBTQ+ rights and mitigate discrimination** through relevant training for legal and law enforcement officers, and human rights defenders on reporting violence and supporting victims of violence to access justice for LGBTQ+.
- **Further research** to document extent of violence and discrimination against LGBTQ+ people is needed. Studies to design and test interventions aimed at shifting attitudes towards LGBTQ+ people and periodic public perception surveys to measure changes in attitudes are also needed.

Introduction

Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and other sexual and gender diverse (LGBTQ+) people often face the risks of discrimination, violence, and stigma. Discrimination and stigmatization of LGBTQ+ people are widespread in many countries in sub-Saharan Africa (SSA), including Kenya (Lewis et al. 2023; Human Rights Watch. PEMA Kenya 2015; Kenya Human Rights Commission [KHRC] 2011; Harper et al. 2021; Jauregui et al. 2021). Discrimination and stigmatization of LGBTQ+ individuals are embedded in various cultural and religious traditions and beliefs (Bowland, Foster and Vosler 2013; Chadee et al. 2012). These include beliefs around traditional family values, stereotypes of abnormality and sexuality, colonial Christian practices, and laws against sodomy (Muzenda and Kessman 2017; da Costa Santos 2013; Okal et al. 2008; Kalenda 2014; Anderson et al. 2015; Eppretch 2013; Namwase and Jjuuko 2017; Risher et al. 2013; Peirce et al. 2000). Due to these and other reasons, same-sex relationships are proscribed in many contexts in SSA (Koama 2018; Msibi 2011; Makumba 2007; Reddy 2001; Van Klinken 2016).

Most African societies view homosexuality as a sinful and un-African (Dulani et al. 2016; Koama, 2018; Msibi 2011; Igonya 2017; Reddy 2001; Van Klinken 2016). People in same-sex partnerships are therefore prone to stigmatization and discrimination, as well as human rights violations such as physical assaults, emotional and sexual abuse, arbitrary arrests, blackmail, ostracization, eviction from homes, dismissal from employment, and denial of justice (ILO 2015). The hostility and marginalization experienced by LGBTQ+ people in SSA countries have been attributed to the existence of criminal laws that stipulate severe penalties, including death, for same-sex acts (Itaborahy and Zhu 2014; Evaristo 2014; Muzenda and Kessman 2017; da Costa Santos 2013; Anderson et al. 2015; Igonya 2017; Eppretch 2013; Namwase and Jjuuko, 2017; Risher et al. 2013). There is some evidence that several SSA countries are reforming their laws and changing their attitudes toward LGBTQ+ people. For example, acceptance levels for the LGBTQ+ community in Kenya have increased from 1% in 2002 to 14% in 2019 (Pousher and Kent 2020). However, recent trends indicate an increase in the agitation for harsher anti-LGBTQ+ laws and rising intolerance across sub-regional blocs, with Eastern Africa showing more intolerance than Southern Africa (Adebanjo 2021). For instance, Uganda passed into law the Anti-Homosexuality Act in 2023, which imposes a penalty for 'aggravated homosexuality' as well as harsh punishments and fines on financiers and promoters of LGBTQ+ rights.

Numerous studies conducted in South Africa, one of the few African countries where same-sex relationships are legal, have documented widespread stigmatization and discrimination against LGBTQ+ people (Koraan 2015; Morrissey 2013; Brown 2012; Brown et al. 2020). LGBTQ+ people face discrimination in different ways, including homicide, corrective rape of lesbians, and denial of access to healthcare, education, employment, and housing. They also face arbitrary arrests by law enforcement officers and conversion therapy (Duby et al. 2018; Zahn et al. 2016; Graham et al. 2018; Kokogho et al. 2021; Fay et al. 2011; Altman et al. 2012).

There has been both progress and backlash against the social inclusion of LGBTQ+ individuals. Studies on public perceptions show that many people believe that LGBTQ+ individuals are not entitled to the same rights as their heterosexual counterparts, are less desirable as parents, and that same-sex sexual relations are wrong and unacceptable (Wang et al. 2019). Mucherah et al. (2016) indicate that most students believe being LGBTQ+ is abnormal and that prayers and counseling can "prevent" it.

The legal and policy landscape in Kenya regarding LGBTQ+ people is complicated (Igonya 2017; Human Rights Watch 2015; Kenya Human Rights Commission 2012; Van der Elst et al. 2013). Despite the illegality of same-sex sexual conduct in Kenya, these relations have long been a part of sexual relations in the country, even before colonization (Arimoro 2021). While Kenya's Constitution is broadly inclusive, same-sex sexual conduct and marriage are criminalized (Government of Kenya 2010), even though Kenya is a signatory to several international and continental agreements that guarantee LGBTQ+ rights as human rights (United Nations 1948; 2015).

While reviewing the human rights situation of LGBTQ+ people during Kenya's Universal Periodic Review in January 2020, the UN Human Rights Council raised concerns about rising intolerance against members of the LGBTQ+ community in the country (OHCHR 2021).

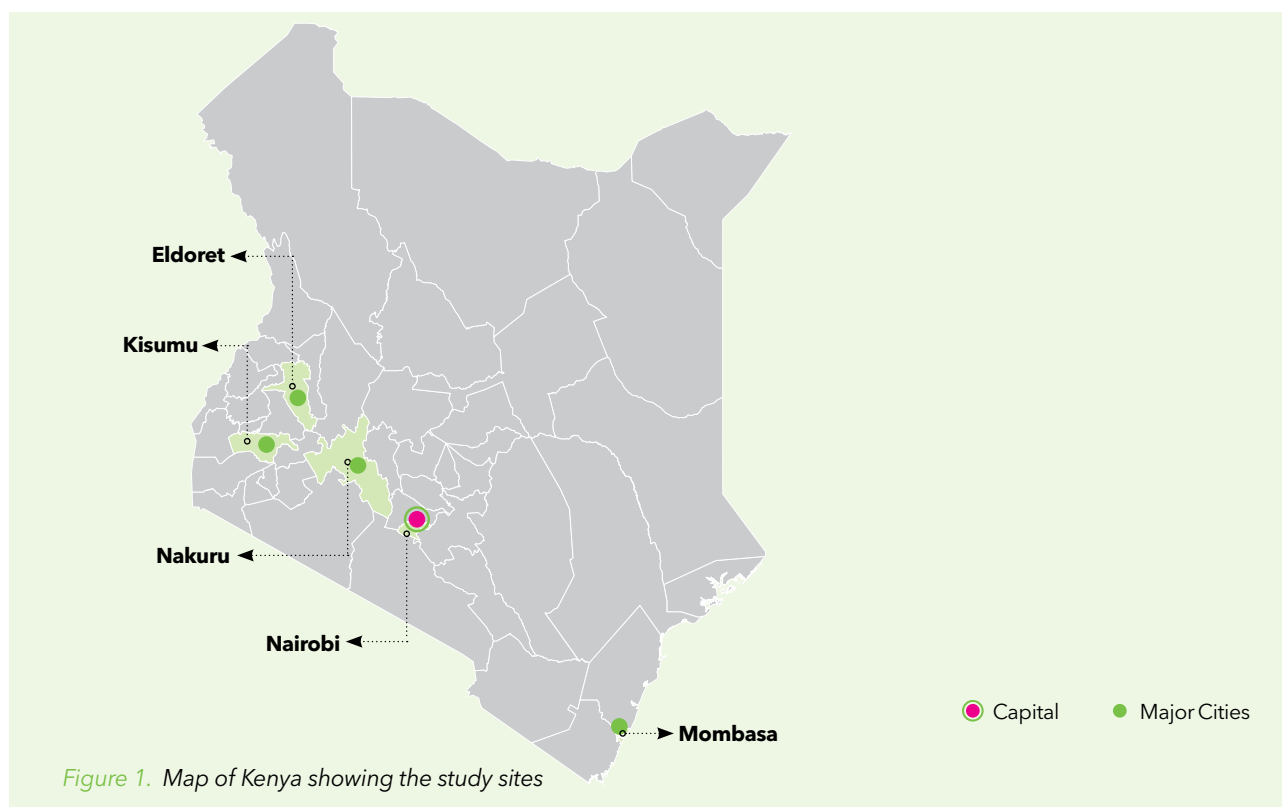
The intolerance of dominant cultural, traditional, and religious systems in Kenyan society makes it difficult for members of the LGBTQ+ community to live their lives freely (ILO 2018; Ghoshal et al. 2015)

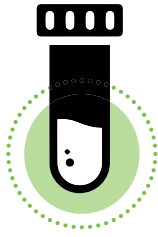
Since 2009, there has been an increase in the visibility of sexual and gender minorities (Mung'ala and de Jong 2020). Such visibility portends gains and disadvantages to LGBTQ+ organizations and persons. While LGBTQ+ people live in and interact with broader society, it is worth exploring their interaction in society to inform inclusive laws, policies, and programming. Reports on violations of human rights and instances of homophobia, stigma, and discrimination currently only provide qualitative, non-generalizable statistics (Gay and Lesbian Coalition of Kenya [GALCK] 2005). To address this gap, we conducted a survey in Kenya to assess the public's knowledge and perceptions of the rights and acceptability of LGBTQ+ people.

Methodology

Study sites

We conducted a descriptive quantitative study in four purposively selected Kenyan counties: Nairobi, Uasin Gishu, Kisumu, and Mombasa (Figure 1) between June and July 2022. We selected the counties based on the number of civil society organizations (CSOs) working with LGBTQ+ people in the county. Nairobi, Kenya's capital, has the highest number of development partners and CSOs countrywide, including the main LGBTQ+ networks and a sizable number of LGBTQ+ individuals. Mombasa is Kenya's second-largest city with a sizeable LGBTQ+ population (Geibel et al. 2009). The city also has several CSOs targeting key populations, including the LGBTQ+ community, as well as many LGBTQ+-led organizations. Kisumu also has many development partners and national CSOs, as well as a vibrant LGBTQ+-led network organized under Kenya's largest regional LGBTQ+ umbrella organization, the NYARWEK (Nyanza, Rift Valley, and Western) network. In the expansive Uasin Gishu county in the Rift Valley region, we focused on its headquarters, Eldoret town and its environs. We chose Eldoret because it is both urban and suburban and has a significant but hidden LGBTQ+ community and one LGBTQ+ organization with emerging LGBTQ community-based organizations in neighboring towns. (Figure 1). The population of these counties, the notable presence of CSOs, and the sizeable number of LGBTQ+ individuals make these counties most suitable for this study.





Sample

Eligible participants were aged 18 years and older, able to answer questions in either English or Kiswahili, and had resided in the area for at least a year. We only interviewed those who provided informed consent. We worked with a minimum sample size of 1,111 generated using the Cochran formula for calculating a sample for proportions from a known population (n) of approximately 25 million adults at 95% confidence interval and $\pm 2.94\%$ precision level. We targeted about 350 participants in each county.

We used a systematic random sampling to select enumeration areas. We then employed convenient sampling to pick participants while maintaining age and gender balance through an alternate recruiting method. This means that for every male participant recruited, we recruited a female participant in the same age group. To recruit participants, field supervisors and research assistants identified places where people were likely to congregate in large numbers, such as markets, construction sites, bus stops, and places of worship and approached potential participants to invite them to participate in the study. We also recruited a handful of participants from residential neighborhoods.

In Eldoret (Uasin Gishu County), we collected data from urban, peri-urban, and rural areas. Rural areas included Kapseret, Kepkenya, Soy, and the communities around Moi University such as Kesses, Chebarus, Talai, and Tolgos. In peri-urban Eldoret, we recruited participants from Langas, Roadblock, Kimumu, Peris, Kapsoya, Action, Pioneer, Kokwasi, West Indies, and Marura areas. In urban Eldoret, participants were from the West Market, Trokadero, Main Stage, Market, and Petrisha areas. In Kisumu County, many participants were [drawn] from urban, peri-urban, and rural areas. Urban Kisumu central included Arina, Kibuye, Nyalenda B, Kaloleni, Milimani, Manyatta B, Kondele, and Migosi, and Kisumu East covered East Kajulu, Manyatta A, and Nyalenda A. Rural Kisumu included Nyakach and Ahero villages, namely: Lela, Korowe, Rabour, Kobura, and Kochogo. Participants drawn from peri-urban Kisumu West were from Riat, Arina, Otongolo, Kiboswa, Kisian, and Maseno. In Nairobi County, which is primarily urban, participants were from ten sub-counties: Dagoretti, Embakasi, Lang'ata, Kamukunji, Kasarani, Kibra, Madaraka, Mathare, Starehe, and Westlands. In Mombasa County, we identified participants from the following areas: Mvita, Likoni, Ganjoni, Mikindani, Magongo, Jomvu, Kisauni, Bamburi, Nyali, Lights, Sabasaba, Majengo, King'orani, Bombolulu, Mama Ngina, and the Mombasa Central Business District.



Data instruments

We examined societal and cultural attitudes towards members of the LGBTQ+ population, awareness of human rights, and perceptions of the legality of same-sex relationships. Specifically, we sought information on participants' awareness of the laws around and rights of LGBTQ+ people in Kenya, societal actions and perceptions towards LGBTQ+ people, and participants' self-reported behaviors, actions, and attitudes toward LGBTQ+ individuals. Five-point Likert scale with responses ranging from 'strongly agree' to 'strongly disagree' were used to capture participants' perceptions and personal actions and attitudes. We also collected information on participants' sociodemographic characteristics.



Data collection and management

We used a SurveyCTO platform installed on Android tablets to collect data. Research assistants include both LGBTQ+ people and non-LGBTQ+ individuals. All research assistants participated in a five-day training workshop focused on the study design, the study instruments, ethical issues in research, interviewing skills, and the use of Android-based devices for quantitative interviewing. We piloted the questionnaire to test the Kiswahili language translation and acceptability of the questions. The questionnaire was revised based on feedback from data collectors after the pilot test. To assist study participants with answering the questions, we trained and provided research assistants with definitions of key LGBTQ+ terminologies.

We conducted face-to-face interviews in spaces offering privacy and safety for both researchers and study participants. Research assistants identified private spots around construction sites, places of worship, bus stops, and marketplaces where interviews were taken. The interviews took 20 to 30 minutes. The study team closely supervised data collection to ensure the study was implemented according to specified guidelines. Further, the study team met with data collectors weekly to discuss quality and performance issues and address deviations from the protocol.

We synchronized data daily to a central storage system (SQL Server) with scheduled backups and archiving. We downloaded and cleaned the data using Stata at the end of data collection.



Data analysis

We weighted the data by age, gender, and residence. Analysis was performed using Stata 15 (StataCorp LP, Texas, USA). We used descriptive analyses to summarize the quantitative data, including describing the respondents' characteristics (e.g., age, gender, education, and religious affiliation). We also used cross-tabulations to compare results by study sites.



Ethics

AMREF Health Africa's Ethical and Scientific Review Committee provided ethical approval for the study. The National Commission for Science, Technology, and Innovation granted the research permit. Members of the data collection team informed study participants about the purpose of the study and obtained written informed consent before conducting the interviews.



Methodological limitations

In Eldoret, we encountered some hostile study participants. While it would be valuable to include those potential participants, who were hostile to discussing LGBTQ+, such participants refused to take part in the study, and disrupted the data collection. Such actions might have influenced refusals from other potential participants. To minimize the risk of harm to participants and the research staff, field coordinators from the LGBTQ+ community conducted intensive community mobilization and accompanied research assistants during fieldwork. During data collection training, we emphasized the need for an appropriate introduction to the research and information on dealing with difficult study participants.

Interpretation of study findings should be in light of the following limitation: people in conservative countries, including Kenya, consider discussing sexuality and LGBTQ+ issues a taboo. Those who consented to participate in this study may, therefore, differ significantly from those who refused to participate in the study.

Findings

Sociodemographic characteristics

Study participants' median age was 29 years, with a range of 25 to 36 years. A total of 1,652 residents of four counties: 502 in Mombasa, 450 in Nairobi, 372 in Kisumu, and 328 in Eldoret (Table 1) took part in the survey. Most participants (69.7%) were urban residents. The ratio of men to women was almost equal at 50.2% (males) and 49.6% (females). Almost all the participants, 1,626 (98.4%), had received a formal education, with 81 percent having completed secondary school or higher. Most participants were either employed (31.5%) or self-employed (41.7%). Majority of participants were Christians (81.9%).

Table 1: Sociodemographic profile of participants

	Frequency	%
Region		
Eldoret	328	19.9
Kisumu	372	22.5
Mombasa	502	30.2
Nairobi	450	27.2
Place of residence		
Urban	1151	69.7
Peri-urban	314	19.0
Rural	187	11.3
Gender		
Female	819	49.9
Male	830	50.2
Other	3	0.2
Highest education level completed		
Ever attended school	1,626	98.4
Pre-primary/primary	290	17.6
Secondary	584	35.4
Undergraduate	405	24.5
Vocational/tertiary	304	18.4
Masters/PhD	43	2.6
Unknown	26	1.6
Occupational status		
Employed	520	31.5
Self employed	690	41.7
Unemployed	442	26.8
Religious affiliations		
None	81	4.9
Christian (Catholic)	416	25.2
Christian (protestants)	945	57.2
Muslim	170	10.3
Traditional	15	0.9
Other	25	1.5

Awareness of and attitudes towards LGBTQ+ laws and rights

Participants' awareness and attitudes towards LGBTQ+ -related laws and human rights is reflected in Figure 2 below. Overall, 43.9% of participants were aware of human rights concerning LGBTQ+ individuals. The proportion of participants who were aware of laws and human rights concerning LGBTQ+ people did not vary significantly by county.

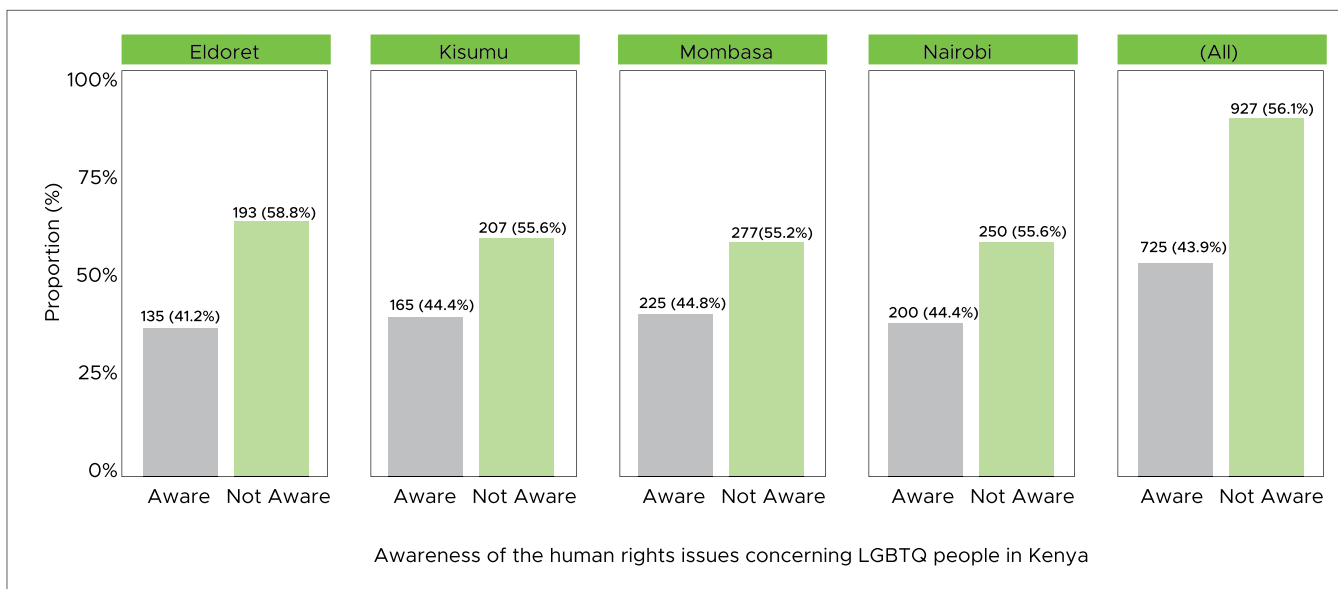


Figure 2: Awareness of human rights issues concerning LGBTQ+ people

Figure 3 below shows participants' awareness on laws affecting LGBTQ+ individuals. More than one-third (35.9%) of participants were aware of laws affecting LGBTQ+ individuals. Across the counties, the proportion of participants who were aware of laws concerning LGBTQ+ people did not vary significantly.

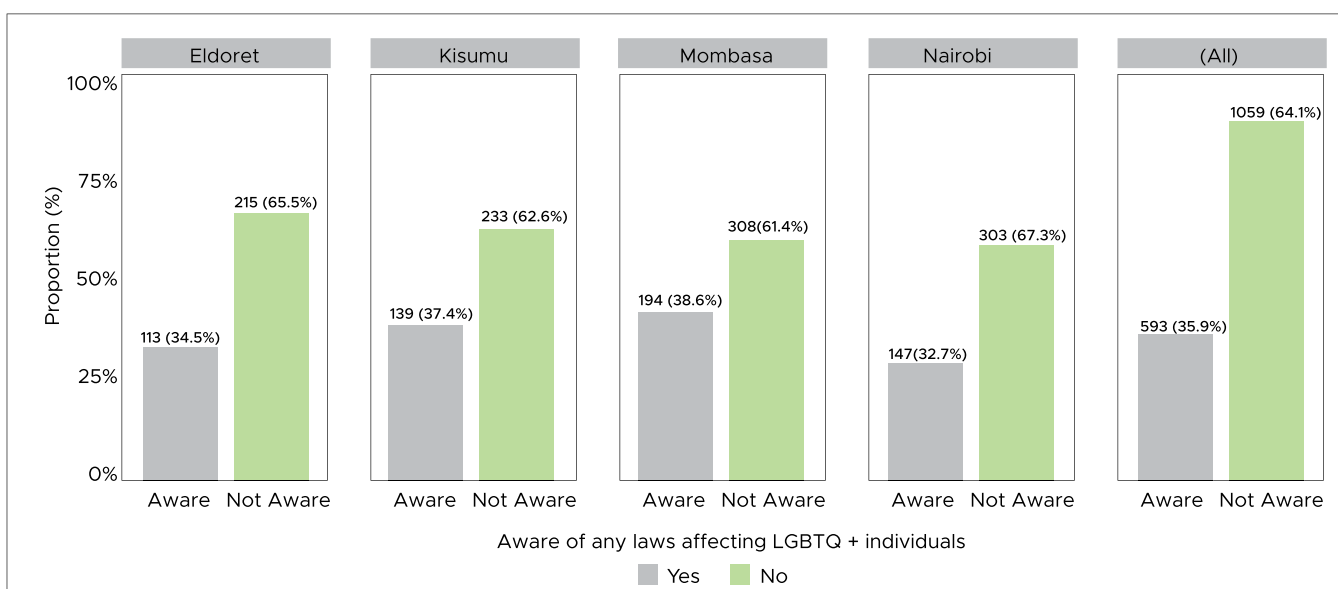


Figure 3: Awareness of any laws affecting LGBTQ+ people

Participants' feelings about LGBTQ+ people and rights

Participants' feelings about LGBTQ+ people, and related rights were assessed. More than two-thirds (71%) agreed or strongly agreed that people who identify as LGBTQ+ should be treated equally under the law (Figure 4). Meanwhile, thirty-seven percent of the participants agreed or strongly agreed that they felt positive towards LGBTQ+ people, and about four in ten (39%) participants agreed or strongly agreed that they supported LGBTQ+ rights.

Across counties, 75% of the participants in Mombasa believed that LGBTQ+ people should be treated equally under the law, 44% of participants in Kisumu felt positively towards LGBTQ+ people, and 43% in Mombasa supported LGBTQ+ rights. Participants in Eldoret were the least likely to endorse the statements that LGBTQ+ people should be treated equally under the law, that they felt positive towards LGBTQ+ people, or that they supported LGBTQ+ people.

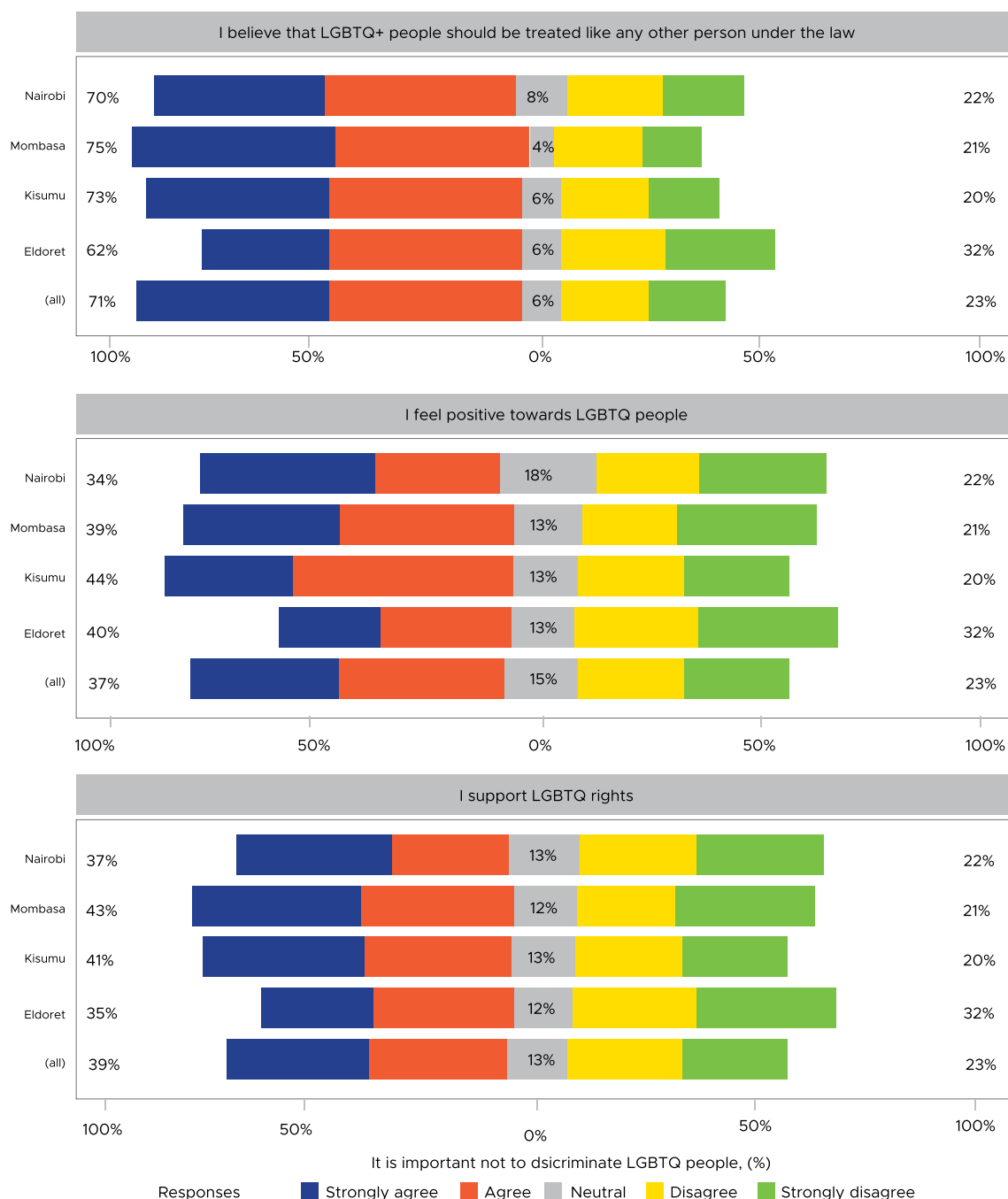


Figure 4: Participants' feelings about LGBTQ+ people

Perceptions of societal attitudes and actions towards LGBTQ+ people

Figure 5 illustrates participants' perceptions on societal attitudes and actions towards LGBTQ+ individuals, with a particular focus on acceptance and discrimination were assessed. The data suggest that 17% agreed that LGBTQ+ people are accepted in the community, while 25% agreed that they are accepted in Kenya. Mombasa had the highest proportion (20%) of participants who agreed that LGBTQ+ people are accepted in their community. Kisumu had the highest proportion (31%) of participants agreeing that LGBTQ+ people are accepted in Kenya. Six in ten participants (60%) agreed that people in their community are fearful of LGBTQ+ people. At the county level, 61% of participants in Kisumu agreed that people in their community were fearful of LGBTQ+ people. Just over half (55%) of participants reported that lawmakers in Kenya have negative attitudes toward LGBTQ+ people. About 59% of participants in Nairobi agreed that lawmakers in Kenya had negative attitudes towards LGBTQ+ people.

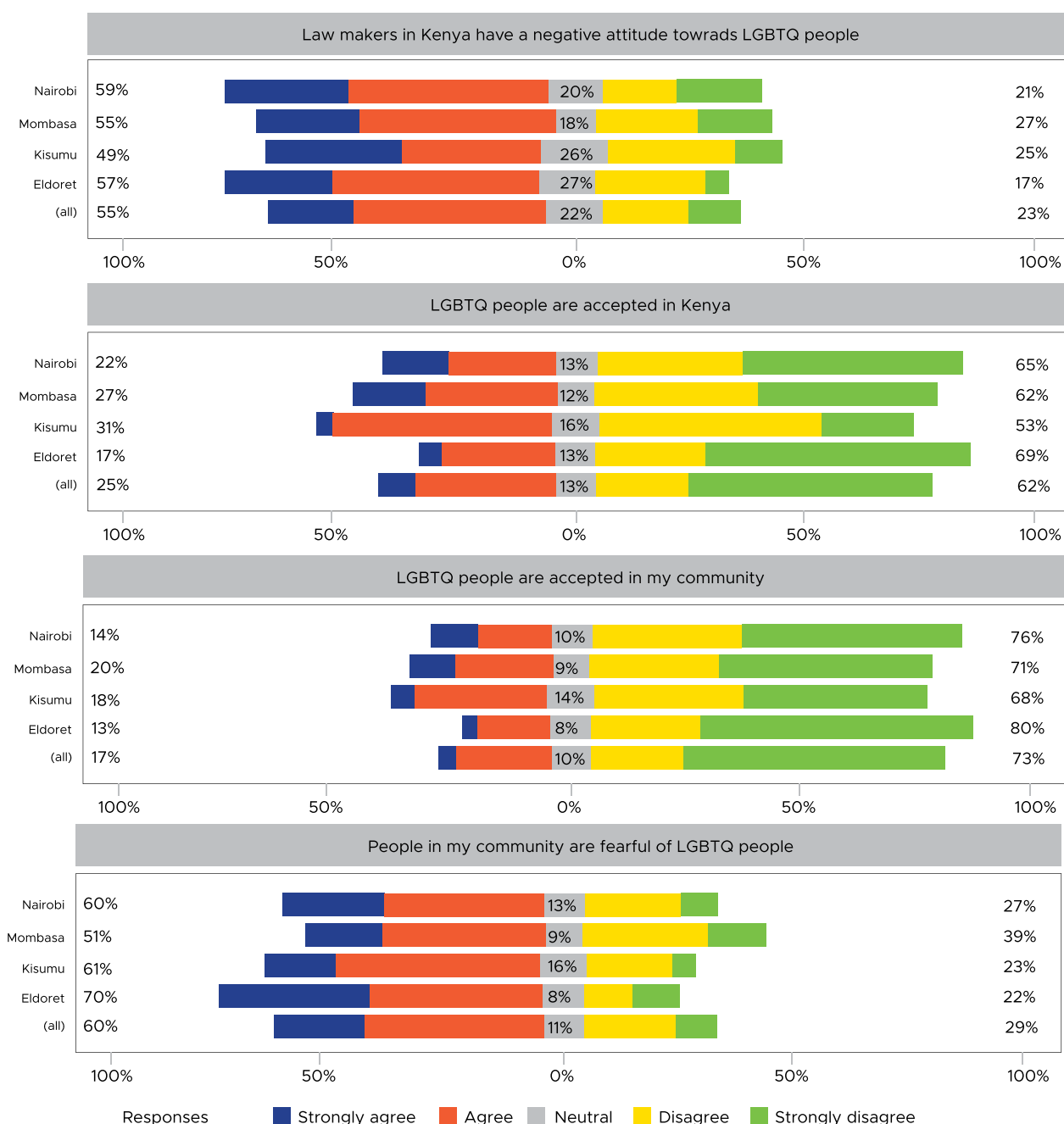


Figure 5: Perceptions of societal attitudes and actions towards LGBTQ+ people

Figure 6 shows participants' perceptions on the safety of LGBTQ+ people. Almost half (47%) of the participants agreed that it was unsafe to discuss LGBTQ+ issues in Kenya. At the county level, the highest proportion was in Eldoret, where 58% of participants agreed that it was unsafe to discuss LGBTQ+ issues in Kenya. One in four participants (26%) agreed that people were arrested for LGBTQ+ identity. Nairobi and Eldoret counties had the highest proportion (27%) of participants who agreed that people were arrested for being LGBTQ+. In addition, overall, 38% of participants agreed that LGBTQ+ people were killed in Kenya, with Nairobi County having the highest proportion of participants (44%) who agreed with this statement while Eldoret had the lowest proportion of participants (34%) who agreed with the statement. Approximately half of the participants (49%) agreed that people had been evicted from their houses because they identified as LGBTQ+. A similar proportion of participants (50%) in Eldoret, Kisumu and Mombasa agreed with the statement, while 44% of participants in Nairobi agreed or strongly agreed with the statement. More than half of the participants (53%) agreed that in Kenya community members beat people who identified as LGBTQ+. Eldoret had the highest proportion (56%) of participants who agreed with this statement.

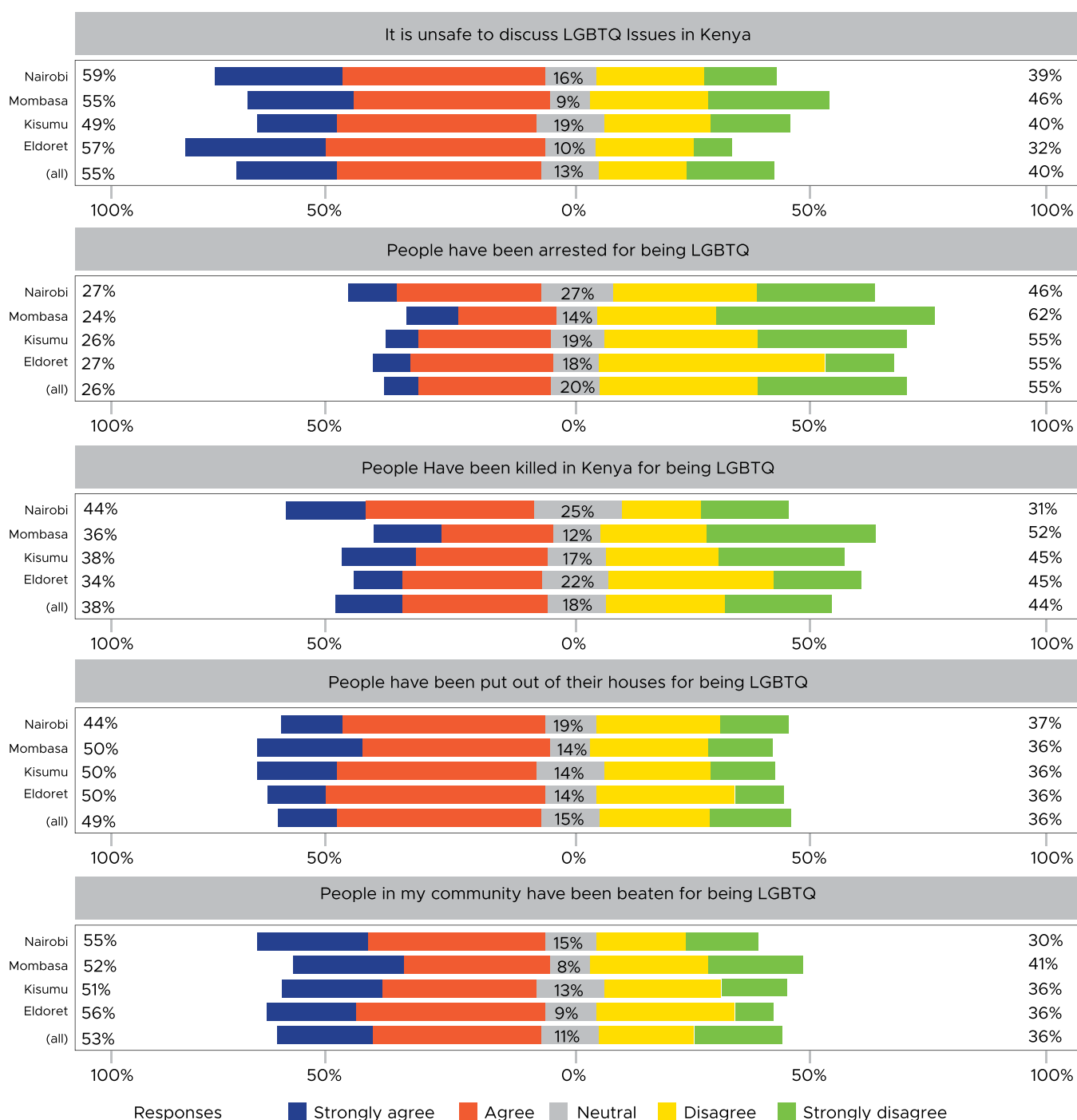


Figure 6: Perceptions of societal attitudes and actions towards LGBTQ+ people

Discrimination against LGBTQ+ individuals

The survey aimed to determine participants' perspectives on the importance of not discriminating against LGBTQ+ people in different places, including within the community and at service delivery points. The findings (Figure 7) show that most participants agreed or strongly agreed that it is important to not discriminate against LGBTQ+ individuals at workplaces (74%), educational institutions (69%), homes (71%), and places of worship (65%).



Figure 7: Agreement with statements on discrimination against LGBTQ+ people

Figure 8 illustrates perceptions on discrimination against LGBTQ+ people. The majority of participants (81%) agreed or strongly agreed that LGBTQ+ people should not be discriminated against in health facilities or social protection or welfare programs (76%). Support for exclusion of LGBTQ+ persons was low, with one in five participants approving of discrimination against LGBTQ+ persons in public spaces (20%) and within communities (23%). Across counties, Mombasa had the highest proportion of participants who agreed with the statement that it is important not to discriminate against LGBTQ+ people in health facilities (85%), social protection programs (81%), public spaces (75%), communities (72%), and educational institutions (70%). Eldoret had the lowest proportion of participants agreeing that LGBTQ+ people should not be discriminated against in various spaces.



Figure 8: Agreement with statements on discrimination against LGBTQ+ people

Knowledge and views about sexual orientation and gender identities and practices

The survey aimed to determine participants' knowledge and views about sexual orientation, gender identities and practices. Overall, a substantial number (81%) of participants indicated LGBTQ+ people's sexual orientation and gender expressions are against what God intended. Nearly two-thirds (64.5%) did not believe that LGBTQ+ people were mentally sick or that they would grow up to become mature heterosexual men and women. Overall, participants displayed mixed reactions on whether LGBTQ+ individuals were unnatural, with 45% agreeing and 43% disagreeing.

Across the counties, 80% of participants in Mombasa and 81% in Eldoret, Kisumu, and Nairobi either strongly agreed or agreed that sexual acts or gender expressions by LGBTQ+ people are against what God intended. Majority of participants in Mombasa (70%), Eldoret (64%), Kisumu (63%), and Nairobi (60%) either disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement that LGBTQ+ people were mentally sick or did not grow up to become mature heterosexual men and women. There were variations across counties on whether LGBTQ+ people are unnatural. A third (33%) of participants in Nairobi and half (50%) of participants in Mombasa strongly agreed with the statement that LGBTQ+ people are unnatural, while slightly more than half (55%) of participants in Kisumu endorsed this statement. Eldoret reported mixed reactions.



Figure 9: Knowledge of sexual and gender minorities' identities

More than half of the participants (57.1%) agreed or strongly agreed that being LGBTQ+ was the result of too much freedom in a society that is losing its traditional family values (Figure 10 below). About two in five participants (39%) strongly agreed or agreed that intersex individuals were a mistake of nature. Across the counties, Eldoret had the highest proportion (65%) of participants either agreeing or strongly agreeing that being LGBTQ+ was the result of too much freedom in a country that is losing its traditional family values. In comparison, Nairobi and Mombasa counties had the lowest proportion (54%) each. In terms of the belief that intersex people are a mistake of nature, Mombasa (62%) had the highest proportion of participants disagreeing, while Kisumu (41%) had the lowest. Meanwhile, the findings also showed that 58% of participants in Nairobi, 57% in Mombasa, 58% in Kisumu, and 55% in Eldoret disagreed that LGBTQ+ people are sexual and gender perverts.



Figure 10: Views on sexual and gender minorities' identities

As illustrated in Figure 11, only 27% of participants agreed with the notion that an individual is either gay, straight, or bisexual from birth, while 61% agreed that LGBTQ+ people can become heterosexual. Similarly, about a third (30%) agreed with the idea that an individual can be transgender at birth. Further, 76% and 63% agreed that being bisexual and transgender were a choice, respectively.

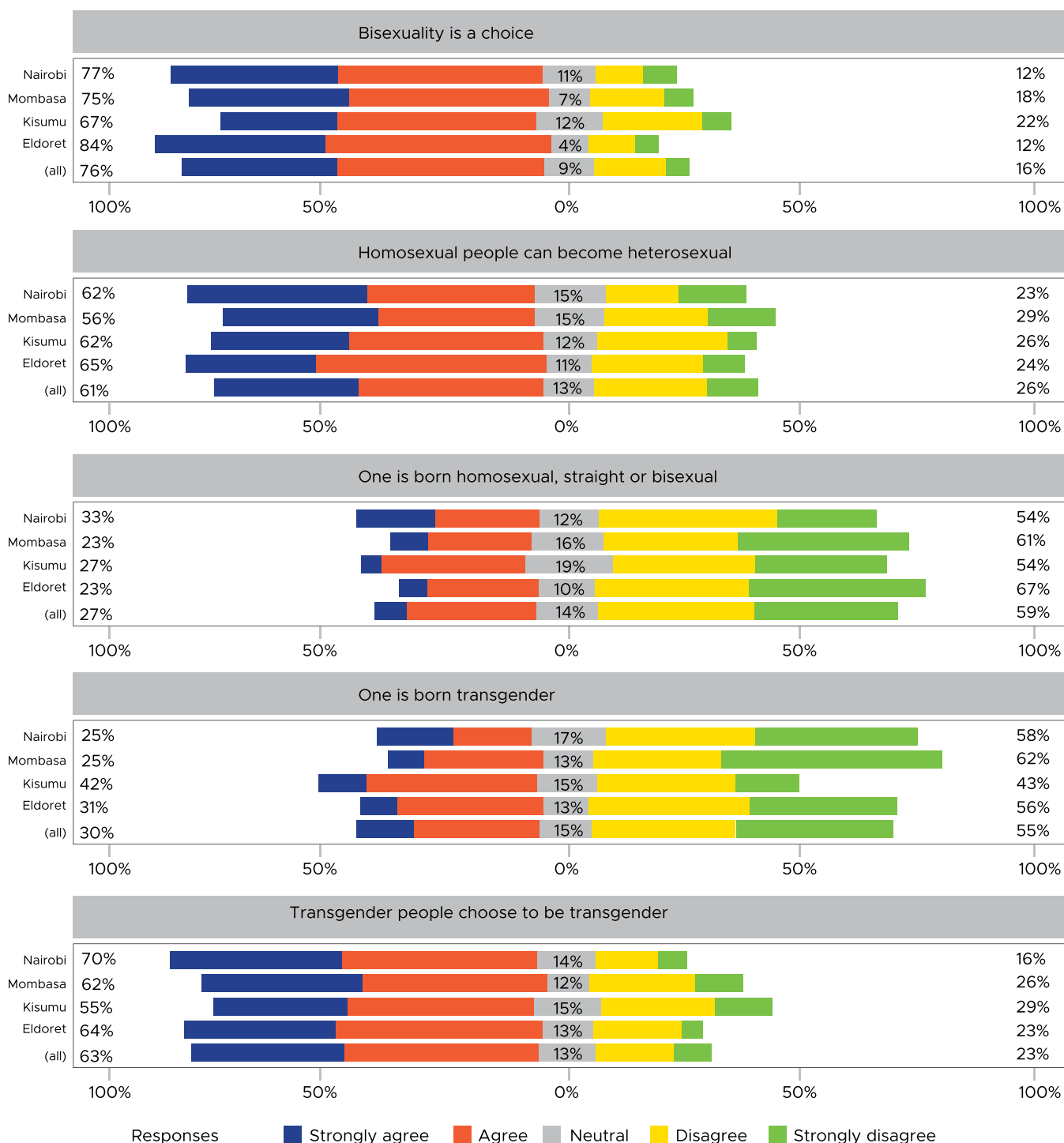


Figure 11: Agreement with general statements about the origins of sexuality and gender

On views about same-gender relationships, Figure 12 illustrates that the vast majority of participants agreed that marriage should be between a man and a woman (84%). Almost three-quarters of participants perceived sex between two men (78%) as wrong. More than half (55%) were against LGBTQ+ couples being able to adopt a child.

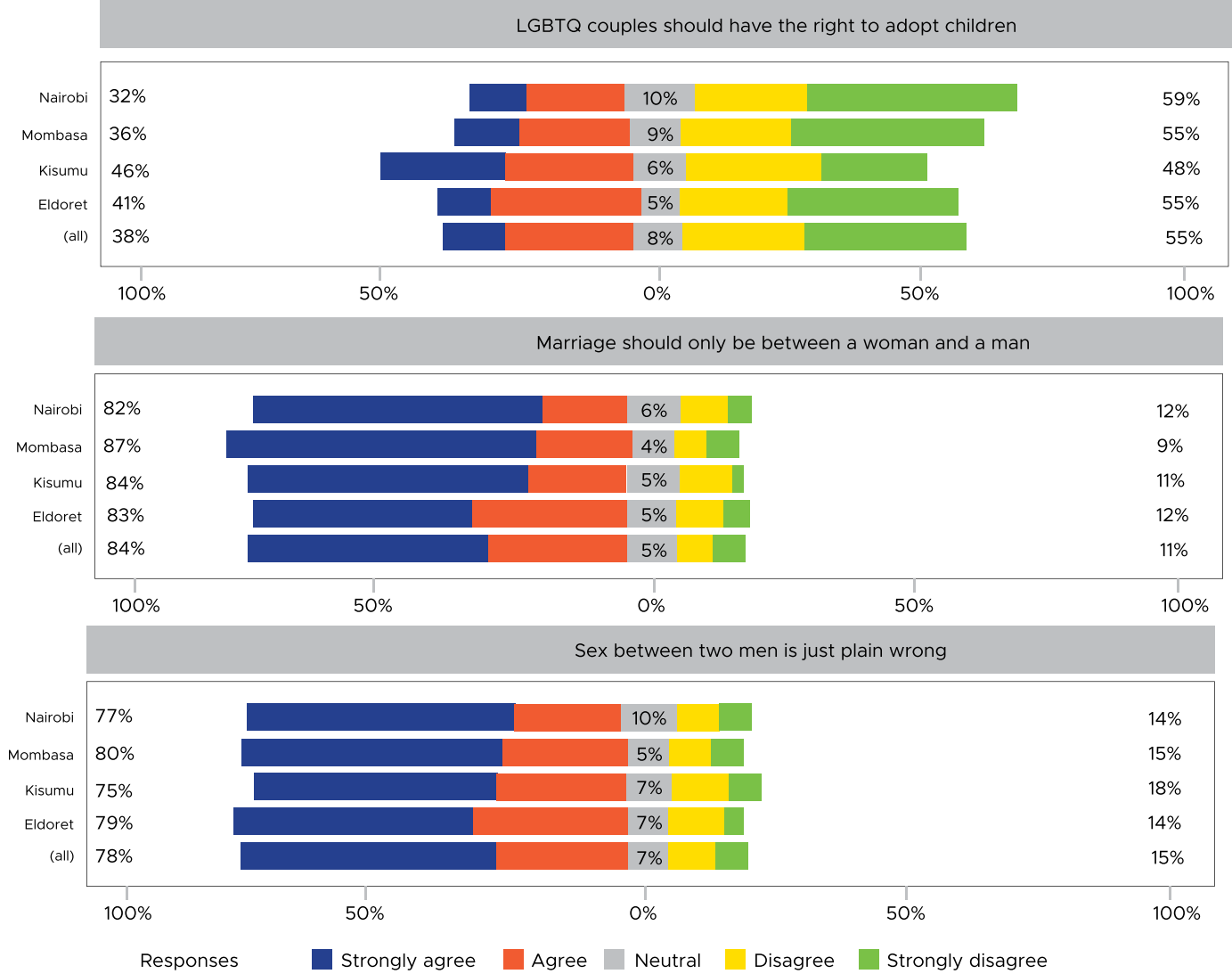


Figure 12: Agreement with general statements about the origins of sexuality and gender

The survey further aimed to determine participants’ views on awareness of LGBTQ+ rights (Figure 13). When asked whether there should be community-based education to inform Kenyans about LGBTQ+ rights, 63% agreed. Almost half (49%) of the participants agreed that students should be taught about LGBTQ+ rights at schools.



Figure 13: Agreement with general statements about the origins of sexuality and gender

Participants' actions towards LGBTQ+ people

The survey aimed to determine if participants actions towards LGBTQ+ people. Table 3 shows most participants (90%) had not and would not beat or physically injure someone because that person was LGBTQ+. A substantial number (77%) had not and would not use a derogatory name to refer to someone who is LGBTQ+ (77%) or refuse to hire or work with someone because they were LGBTQ+ (71%) or tease someone who dressed up and acted like someone of the opposite sex (70%). Slightly over half (56.5%) stated they have never and would never engage in such behavior. Meanwhile, one in five (22.3%) reported having either avoided someone because they are LGBTQ+ in the past year or at a more distant point in time or if not done it are likely to do it, and, relatedly, one in five (21%) indicated having refused to hire or work with someone because they were LGBTQ+, if not already done it they might do so. Across the study sites, Eldoret recorded the most negative actions towards LGBTQ+-oriented people with about one-third (27.7%) of participants mentioned that they avoided LGBTQ+ people and 22.9% had not done it but might do so. One in five (24.4%) in Eldoret had teased someone who dressed up and acted like someone of the opposite sex while 12% reported had not done it might do it. In the same site 20.7% of participants had used derogatory names when referring to LGBTQ+ people in the recent past. Mombasa, on the other hand, a significant number of participants indicated they have not and would not avoid LGBTQ people (65%), tease someone who dressed up and acted like someone of the opposite sex (78.5%), used derogatory name to refer to someone who is LGBTQ+ (85.7%), physically injure LGBTQ+ people (95.2%), or refuse to work with or hire someone because they are LGBTQ+ (76.7%).

Table 2: Percentage of participants reporting various actions towards LGBTQ+ people

Self-reported actions	Overall, N = 1,652	Region			
		Eldoret, N = 328	Kisumu, N = 372	Mombasa, N = 502	Nairobi, N = 450
Avoided someone because they are LGBT					
Have done it in the past year	14.0%	19.5%	17.2%	10.0%	11.8%
Have done it in the more distant past	8.3%	8.2%	8.3%	6.6%	10.2%
Have not done it, but might do it	18.0%	22.9%	18.3%	15.7%	16.7%
Have not and would not do it	56.5%	47.6%	51.6%	65.9%	56.7%
I don't know what I would do	3.2%	1.8%	4.6%	1.8%	4.7%
Teased someone who dressed up and acted like someone of the opposite sex					
Have done it in the past year	11.9%	16.5%	12.9%	10.6%	9.3%
Have done it in the more distant past	6.1%	7.9%	4.8%	4.4%	7.6%
Have not done it, but might do it	10.2%	12.5%	14.5%	5.4%	10.2%
Have not and would not do it	70.0%	61.9%	65.9%	78.5%	69.8%
I don't know what I would do	1.9%	1.2%	1.9%	1.2%	3.1%
Used a derogatory name to refer to someone who is LGBT					
Have done it in the past year	8.1%	14.6%	6.7%	6.6%	6.2%
Have done it in the more distant past	4.7%	6.1%	6.5%	3.6%	3.3%
Have not done it, but might do it	7.8%	9.1%	8.9%	3.0%	11.3%
Have not and would not do it	76.6%	67.4%	75.3%	85.7%	74.4%
I don't know what I would do	2.8%	2.7%	2.7%	1.2%	4.7%
Beat/physically injured someone because they are LGBT					
Have done it in the past year	0.8%	0.9%	0.8%	0.4%	1.1%
Have done it in the more distant past	0.9%	1.2%	0.3%	0.4%	1.8%
Have not done it, but might do it	6.6%	10.7%	4.6%	3.2%	9.1%
Have not and would not do it	89.6%	86.0%	92.5%	95.2%	83.8%
I don't know what I would do	2.1%	1.2%	1.9%	0.8%	4.2%
Refused to hire or work with someone because they are LGBT					
Have done it in the past year	2.1%	1.5%	2.2%	0.6%	4.2%
Have done it in the more distant past	1.1%	0.3%	0.8%	0.4%	2.7%
Have not done it, but might do it	20.7%	28.4%	17.7%	20.1%	18.2%
Have not and would not do it	71.2%	64.0%	75.5%	76.7%	66.9%
I don't know what I would do	4.8%	5.8%	3.8%	2.2%	8.0%

Conclusion

The survey results provide critical information on societal attitudes and actions toward LGBTQ+ persons in four counties. Despite study's limitations, including the topic's sensitivity, we were able to reach a broad demographic to elicit data that can inform policies and laws, as well as community-based activities centered on LGBTQ+ persons in Kenya. The study demonstrates that research on LGBTQ+ in public can be done despite the obstacles such as religious and cultural beliefs, stigmatization, discrimination and illegality.

Overall, participants endorsed non-discrimination of LGBTQ+ people. However, participants' views about LGBTQ+ marriages, adoption of children by LGBTQ+ couples, and same-sex relations indicate fragmented support for LGBTQ rights with majority being unsupportive of marriage (84.3%), viewing same-sex acts between two men (77.8%) or two women (74.5%) as wrong; and being unsupportive of child adoption by LGBTQ+ couples (55%). In part, the contradictory laws in Kenya could inform this position. While the constitution of Kenya champions equality or inclusivity under the law, the penal code bars rights such as same-sex relations, marriage, and LGBTQ+ freedom of association. Religious and cultural beliefs could also influence these views.

The findings align with previous studies that show how the public's beliefs are often discriminatory, such as being LGBTQ+ is learned, a personal choice, or a consequence of too much freedom in a country that is losing traditional family values (Koama 2018; Msibi 2011; Mukumba 2007; Kalende 2014; Reddy 2001; Van Klinken, 2016; Anderson et al. 2015; Eppretch 2013; Namwase and Jjuuko 2017). Other studies have also found widespread public perception that same sex relations are wrong, unnatural, aberrant, and unsuitable lifestyles, and LGBT individuals are not fit to become parents (Yang, 1997; McCoy et al. 2016). However, unlike previous studies (Yang, 1997; McCoy et al., 2016), the survey findings point to a large number of adults in Kenya holding tolerant views about LGBTQ+ people. A considerable proportion (64%) of the participants do not hold the perception that LGBTQ+ people were mentally sick and disagreed with the statement that being LGBTQ+ was a common mistake and that LGBTQ+ individuals were unnatural. This could mean an increase in the acceptance of LGBTQ+ people in Kenya (Pousher and Kent, 2020). Such shifts echo findings from a political economy analysis highlighting positive changes in the societal acceptance of LGBTQ+ individuals. (c.f. Political economy analysis study). Interestingly, although comprehensive sexuality education is highly contested, nearly half of the participants endorsed the teaching of LGBTQ+ rights in schools. They also overwhelmingly endorsed community-based education to improve knowledge and awareness of LGBTQ+ rights among the public.

The study confirms that individuals who identify as LGBTQ+ in African countries, including Kenya, face multiple risks. Despite an increase in acceptance and positive attitudes on some of the aspects concerning sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression (SOGIE), violence toward LGBTQ+ people in communities is still a problem. LGBTQ+ people are at risk of being killed, beaten, evicted from houses, beaten by community members, and arrested by the police. The study also shows participants' self-reported actions and convictions show stigma and discrimination, which manifests through avoidance of people identifying as LGBTQ+ and being unsupportive of LGBTQ+ rights, including marriage, same-sex acts, and adoption of children. Four in ten participants indicated they avoided in the past and might still avoid people who identify as LGBTQ+. While avoiding LGBTQ+ people is not a common manifestation of stigma and discrimination and may appear to be a non-homophobic tactic, it is nearly impossible to separate avoidance from stigma and discrimination. For instance, while overwhelmingly endorsing non-discriminatory acts, they unknowingly show their stigma and discrimination by avoiding people who identify as LGBTQ+. An overwhelming number of participants believed that sexual acts or gender expressions of LGBT people are against God's intention and that they [participants] do not support LGBT marriages affirms the centrality of cultural, religious beliefs and social norms regarding attitudes and perceptions on SOGIE issues (Whitehead and Baker 2012). It is an indication of othering LGBTQ+ individuals.

Overall, the findings point to regional differences in public perceptions and attitudes. Mombasa, a county in which anti-homosexuality protests by the public are a common practice, has the highest proportion of participants accepting LGBTQ+ people in their community and indicating LGBTQ+ individuals should be treated equally under the law. The county also posted a high proportion of participants agreeing that it is important to not discriminate against LGBTQ+ people in health facilities, social protection programs, public spaces, communities, and educational institutions. Eldoret, on the other hand, had the lowest proportion of participants who agreed that LGBTQ+ people should be treated equally under the law or who reported having positive feelings toward LGBTQ+ people. The county also had the lowest proportion of participants who agreed that it is important to not discriminate against LGBTQ+ people in workplaces, homes, public places of worship, and educational institutions. It also had the highest proportion agreeing that being LGBTQ+ is a result of too much freedom in a country that is losing its traditional family values, that LGBTQ+ people in Kenya have been beaten by community members, and had the highest proportion (56%) of participants agreeing that LGBTQ+ are beaten by community members. Research validation participants in Eldoret and Nairobi asserted that matters of sexuality are a taboo and a private affair that is not to be discussed in public.

In conclusion, the study points to contradictions in discrimination, acceptance, laws, and support for LGBTQ+-related rights. While there is overwhelming support for laws that support equality irrespective of gender, acceptance of LGBTQ+ people is low and support for their rights divided. There are contradictory opinions on how LGBTQ+ people are treated and should be treated. On the one hand, there is prejudice and stigma towards LGBTQ+ people, while on the other hand, there is overwhelming support for equal treatment for LGBTQ+ people at workplaces, educational institutions, homes, places of worship, and health facilities.

Recommendations



- **Stakeholders implementing interventions to support sexual and gender minorities should leverage on positive public views to garner public support for interventions to support sexual and gender minorities.** Widespread endorsement of the rights of LGBTQ+ to equal treatment in workplaces, educational institutions, homes, places of worship and health facilities may be critical in expand ally networks, especially community and religious leaders. Allies can rally support for LGBTQ+ individuals and communities. For instance, church leaders can promote messages of love and acceptance of all people among their followers.



- **Programs to improve awareness and knowledge of community members and related stakeholders on LGBTQ+ rights are needed.** Low public knowledge of sexual and gender minorities and rights concerning LGBTQ+, the persistence of stigma and discrimination, including violence, necessitates a strategic focus on awareness-raising campaigns to support shifting public attitudes toward greater social acceptance and understanding of sexual orientation and gender diversity and related human rights. Civil society organizations should implement programs that raise community awareness on sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression issues, as well as educate community members and institutions such as places of worship and work, health facilities, and learning institutions on these issues.



- **It is important to enhance access to justice to protect LGBTQ+ rights and mitigate discrimination** through relevant training for legal and law enforcement officers, and human rights defenders on reporting violence and supporting victims of violence to access justice for LGBTQ+.



- **Further research** to document extent of violence and discrimination against LGBTQ+ people is needed. Studies to design and test interventions aimed at shifting attitudes towards LGBTQ+ people and periodic public perception surveys to measure changes in attitudes are also needed

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