

OUT in Ethiopia



ReportOUT

A Research Report Examining the Human Rights Abuses, and Development Needs, of Sexual and Gender Minorities in Ethiopia



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Registered Charity Number (England and Wales): 1185887

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Who are ReportOUT?

Since 2019, ReportOUT have been at the forefront of protecting the human rights of sexual and gender minorities in the United Kingdom and globally. As a registered charity in England and Wales (registered charity number 1185887) we are **fearless, determined and relentless** in our belief that human rights are fundamental to advancing the lives of sexual and gender minorities, and their communities.

We recognise that we need to succeed in our aims and objectives by also using principles from international development alongside human rights frameworks, and we believe that both of these approaches should **always include sexual and gender minorities as part of them**. We align all of our work with Agenda 2030, in that no one should be left behind.

ReportOUT's official aim and objectives are:

To promote human rights (as set out in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and subsequent United Nations conventions and declarations) throughout the world for sexual and gender minorities by all or any of the following means:

- Eliminating infringements of human rights;
- Research into human rights issues;
- Raising awareness of human rights issues;
- Educating the public about human rights;
- Monitoring abuses of human rights;
- International advocacy of human rights;
- Providing technical advice to government and others on human rights matters.

Our guiding principles:

- **Principle 1:** No one should be left behind in delivering the articles set out in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.
- **Principle 2:** Every person has a part to play in achieving the goals and targets set out in the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.
- **Principle 3:** Positive change should be led by communities within a nation state and ReportOUT will support them to do this.

Executive Summary: ReportOUT's Chair

ReportOUT is delighted to present the findings of our 'OUT in Ethiopia' research study. We worked in close partnership with the House of Guramayle in Ethiopia over a 2 and a half year period and we are extremely grateful to have been able to work with such a knowledgeable and generous partner as the House of Guramayle. We encourage all readers to follow them on social media.

The aim of our research is to shine a light on the lived experiences currently faced by LGBTQI+ Ethiopians and this study demonstrates comprehensively that the Ethiopian government is failing to protect the basic security needs of queer Ethiopian citizens in contravention of its commitments under UN treaties it is a signatory to. In the absence of any legal protection against discrimination, nearly nine in ten respondents to our study report being victims of abuse, which originates from strangers, acquaintances and family members. A similar proportion consider Ethiopia to be fundamentally unsafe for sexual and gender minorities and helps explain why such a majority of respondents would leave Ethiopia given the opportunity.

Further worrying trends can be seen in the fields of education, employment and training. Despite over 80% of survey respondents being educated to degree level and the majority being employed, 42% of those in employment live on less than \$1.25 per day. Of those unemployed, one in five rely on sex work to earn income, which creates obvious risks to health that are not being met by the Ethiopian healthcare service, with over three quarters of respondents being afraid to disclose their sexual orientation or gender identity to healthcare providers.

As always, our report cannot tell the whole story. Our survey shows a clear need for more research into the experiences of older LGBTQI+ Ethiopian and those living in rural areas. Given the high proportion of respondents to our survey who identified as intersex (29%) or non-binary, further specific research into these lived experiences would be recommended.

The Ethiopian government has stated a commitment to meeting the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Our study provides a clear and stark warning that they are categorically failing to do so when it comes to protecting their LGBTQI+ citizens. We end this report with recommendations which, if implemented, would aid Ethiopian authorities in fulfilling their obligations under the SDGs towards the LGBTQI+ community, which, in turn, would benefit Ethiopian society as a whole.

Lastly, thank you to our volunteers who managed this study over a 2½ year period. ReportOUT only exists because of the dedication, passion and commitment of its volunteers and this focus has been clear throughout this project.

Drew Dalton
Chair of Trustees



Drew Dalton
Chair of Trustees
ReportOUT

Our Research Partner



House of Guramayle

House of Guramayle is co-founded by Ethiopian LGBTQI+ community members and allies based around the world, including in the UK, Austria and the USA.

The name House of Guramayle is of enormous cultural and political value to us. Home is somewhere anyone can seek refuge and shelter in. The idea of a home that always has its doors open for those who need a safe space is something we hold very dearly to our hearts. House of Guramayle as a platform itself has always had the vision of a safe space for the Ethiopian LGBTQI+ community.

As Ethiopian LGBTQI+ identifying individuals born and raised in Ethiopia, our lives were filled with feelings of constant inadequacy. We never experienced a sense of belonging to our society because we were brought up to believe that as an Ethiopian, you can never claim any other identity. We created House of Guramayle for people who feel as marginalised as we did growing up, envisaging it as a home that anyone can seek refuge and shelter in.

As for Guramayle, it is the art of merging superficial divides and is of enormous cultural and political value to us. It means reclaiming our Ethiopian identities from those who would exclude us, through embracing our personal choice to live our lives freely. Guramayle means finding yourself again; to us, it represents survival.

ReportOUT Team and Acknowledgements



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ReportOUT Lead Trustee
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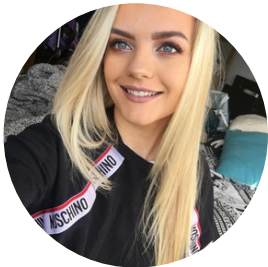
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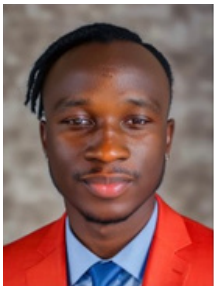
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ReportOUT Team and Acknowledgements

ReportOUT must give special thanks to **our partner organisation in Ethiopia, House of Guramayle**, who helped to design, collate and inform the research project at every stage. Their tireless fight for LGBTQI+ equality in Ethiopia and the diaspora is admirable and we all hope that this research will make an impact on their work. We encourage you to read the organisational descriptions about our partners on the following pages to find out more about the work of House of Guramayle.

A project of this size cannot be driven forward without a significant cast and we thank **Drew Dalton, Chair of Trustees at ReportOUT** for developing the partnership with the House of Guramayle and establishing the project. Thank you to **ReportOUT Trustee, Phil Thomas** and volunteers **Riley Campbell, Jess Peck, Tayler Kane, Jessica Lee, George Bell, and Papa Kojo Ampofo** for taking the project forwards, analysing the data and for writing up the final report. ReportOUT remains an entirely volunteer-led organisation and we remain extremely grateful for the motivation and passion of our volunteer researchers. Riley in particular deserves immense credit for her leadership to finalise this report.

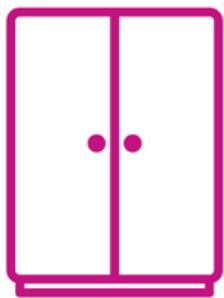
Please note that ReportOUT and our Ethiopian partner organisation received no funding for this project from nation states, organisations or affiliated bodies.

Suggested citation:

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Key Research Findings



The majority of LGBTQI+ Ethiopians remain in the closet:

- 41% of respondents did not share their sexual or gender identities with their families
- 57.6% of participants did not share their sexual or gender identity with their neighbours and local community
- 15.2% of respondents hadn't shared their LGBTQI+ identity with anyone



Almost all participants (94%) did not believe Ethiopia was safe for LGBTQI+ people:

- 54.5% of participants did not feel safe walking around where they lived at the time the survey was conducted
- 62.1% of participants were threatened or attacked with physical violence at least once between 2021 and 2022
- 51.5% of respondents were threatened or attacked with sexual violence over the same period
- Strangers, family and friends made up the largest groups of perpetrators of violence against LGBTQI+ Ethiopians



LGBTQI+ Ethiopians remain distrustful of government institutions, actors, and the legal system:

- Respondents were discriminated against by social service workers (25.8%), government departments (22.7%), and other government agents (28.8%)
- 62.1% of participants believed police brutality was very widespread, and 42.4% were victims of police brutality



Religious leaders and institutions encourage exclusion and the use of violence against LGBTQI+ Ethiopians:

- 65.2% of respondents did not share their sexual or gender identities with their religious communities, even though 74% identified as religious
- 25.8% of participants were subjected to conversion therapy through means including religious exorcism and corrective rape

Key Research Findings



LGBTQI+ Ethiopians face discrimination in education and are more likely to experience unemployment than the general population:

- 24.2% of respondents experienced educational discrimination, including stigma and bullying which had adverse mental health effects
- 66.7% of participants earned less than the Ethiopian average salary in 2022 despite their high levels of education
- Roughly one third of respondents were unemployed or engaging in sex work at the time our survey was conducted



LGBTQI+ Ethiopians healthcare and basic needs are not being met:

- 60.7% of participants experienced some form of food insecurity
- 40.9% of respondents experienced barriers when accessing healthcare, and 25.8% had been discriminated against by healthcare staff
- 16.7% of participants reported being in poor physical health, while 27.3% reported being in poor mental health. 12.1% reported being in very poor mental and physical health, no doubt due to their social vilification



An Overview of the Literature

Introduction

Ethiopia has an estimated population of 126 million people (Ethiopia Population, 2024). There is no official estimation of the number of LGBTQI+ people in Ethiopia, due in a large measure to the active hostility of state institutions towards LGBTQI+ identities. That said, Ipsos' worldwide survey indicated that about 10% of the global population identify as LGBTQI+ (Ipsos, 2021). If accepted, this means there are roughly 12.6 million LGBTQI+ Ethiopians. Despite this, LGBTQI+ Ethiopians are de facto criminalized and excluded from all facets of Ethiopian society.

Tolerance and acceptance of LGBTQI+ people is very low in Ethiopia and the surrounding region of East Africa (Dulani, Sambo and Dionne, 2016). Afro Barometer found that out of all regions in Africa, East Africans were the least tolerant of homosexual identities (Dulani, Sambo and Dionne, 2016). Whilst there is even less literature available on the trans/non-binary experience on Ethiopia and the surrounding region, it is reasonable to assume that similar hostility exists given the same laws criminalizing homosexual identity and activity are often used to persecute those behaving in a manner not conforming to the sex assigned at birth.

Flores collected and analyzed survey data from 174 countries between 1981 and 2017 to produce a Global Acceptance Index Towards LGBTQI+ People with scores for each participating country (Flores, 2019). Ethiopia was among the five least accepting countries of LGBTQI+ people between 2014 and 2017 with a rank of 170th of 174 participating countries (Flores, 2019). The least accepting countries, including Ethiopia, became less accepting over time (p. 20, Flores, 2019). This finding was further corroborated by Equaldex (2022) which found that Ethiopia is one of the most unequal countries for homosexuals. Roughly 80% of Ethiopians surveyed by Equaldex indicated they were opposed to homosexuality, and roughly 70% would not accept homosexuals as neighbors (LGBT Rights in Ethiopia, 2022).

Low acceptance rates result in high levels of stigmatization, discrimination, exclusion, criminalization, and violence against LGBTQI+ Ethiopians (Ethiopia, 2023). In 2019, The Human Dignity Trust found that "37% of LGBT people had experienced physical violence in their lifetime, with 22% reporting incidents in the last year" (Ethiopia, 2023).

They are also not offered any legal acknowledgement, protections, or support since LGBTQI+ oriented charities and advocacy groups are illegal (ILGA, 2023), resulting in an isolated and underground experience for many LGBTQI+ Ethiopians, particularly those in rural areas without internet connection or caught in the Tigray conflict zone.

An Overview of the Literature

There are many factors that contribute to LGBTQI+ discrimination and exclusion, including politics and legislation as well as cultural and societal institutions. The following literature review will explore these areas to provide insight into what life is like for LGBTQI+ people in Ethiopia.

Politics and Legislation

In 2004, Article 629 of Ethiopia's Penal Code was passed, which criminalizes same-sex activity, which is punishable by imprisonment for a minimum of one year (ILGA, 2023). While this Article was passed in 2004, there have been few documented arrests, and few if any prosecutions (Ethiopia, 2023). The US Department of State reported that up to 12 people were arrested in 2015 for engaging in same-sex activity, but it's unknown if they were convicted and imprisoned (Ethiopia, 2023). Between 2016 and 2020, there were no known instances of arrests for homosexuality (Ethiopia, 2023), though there have been several unverifiable reports (ILGA, 2023). In 2021, two men were arrested for "looking gay" (ILGA, 2023). These arrests did not lead to prosecution; however it did out the victims to their families, resulting in one of the victims committing suicide (ILGA, 2023). Most recently, in 2023, the Addis Ababa Peace and Security Administration Bureau and police forces have announced that they plan to take steps to crack down on homosexuality (Ethiopia, 2023). These government actors are planning to crack down on businesses and institutions where 'homosexual acts are being carried out', including hotels (ILGA, 2023). The police department has also opened a hotline for reporting homosexuality (Ethiopia, 2023). Even if this does not lead to active prosecutions, these recent announcements are clearly extremely dangerous for LGBTQI+ Ethiopians, given the very real threat of family-based violence, which we describe in more detail below.

Furthermore, there is no concept of 'hate' crimes (a crime committed against an LGBTQI+ individual, motivated by hostility due to their – real or perceived - sexual orientation or gender identity) (ILGA, 2023). Given the criminalization of LGBTQI+ identities, it is doubtful that any LGBTQI+ Ethiopian would feel comfortable reporting such a crime.

Aside from the outright criminalization of homosexuality, there are no legal protections against discrimination based on sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression or sex characteristics in the following areas:

- The provision of goods and services
- Healthcare
- Education
- Housing
- Employment (ILGA, 2023).

An Overview of the Literature

There are also no known laws that regulate or restrict conversion therapies, which can be extremely traumatizing for LGBTQI+ (ILGA, 2023) and are common in countries with an established religion focused on persecuting LGBTQI+ citizens. Forms of conversion therapies can include but are not limited to religious exorcism, corrective rape, aversion treatment and castration. No specific study has been undertaken on the practices and victims of conversion therapy in Ethiopia, which would be a worthwhile study for future analysis. There are also no laws in place to prevent medically unnecessary interventions that modify sex characteristics of intersex minors without their consent (ILGA, 2023).

In addition to these gaps in protective legislation, Article 69 of the Charities and Societies Proclamation Law has made the registration of groups that don't support "public morality" illegal (ILGA, 2023). The effect of this is that any NGOs, charities, advocacy groups or support groups of LGBTQI+ communities are effectively outlawed (ILGA, 2023) and can only operate underground with no legal recognition or protection – many decided that it was simply too dangerous to do so unless the organizational leaders were already part of the diaspora outside Ethiopia. As a result, there is no visible LGBTQI+ community in Ethiopia, as people are forced to hide their identities (ILGA, 2023) and the government can claim – falsely – that no such population exists.

Finally, it is important to note that although Ethiopia is a signatory of multiple declarations on human rights issues within the scope of the United Nations, they are also a signatory of the objection of LGBTQI+ rights. This effectively shows that Ethiopia is picking and choosing who gets human rights. It's safe to say that those that they don't deem worthy don't receive the same rights.

Cultural and Societal Institutions

Family

As a collectivist society, Ethiopian culture revolves largely around family with strong inter-personal relationships based on loyalty (Baker and Campbell, 2016). Family is "the basis of people's support networks, with relatives often being mutually reliant on one another to meet everyday challenges" (Evason, 2018). In 2022, the average Ethiopian woman had four children, and family structures in the country tend to be large. In rural regions, it is common for multiple generations to live together while the nuclear family structure is more common in urban areas (Irenso et al., 2021). Ethiopia is largely patriarchal as well, resulting in any deviation from the expected societal norm most often being ostracized and persecuted (Evason, 2018). This is especially problematic for LGBTQI+ individuals because in patriarchal societies, there is an inherent belief that men are above women and LGBTQI+ people are deviants worthy of ostracization (Arceneaux, 2022).

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In East Africa, there have been many accounts of LGBTQI+ people being blackmailed or extorted, as the perpetrators threaten to out them to their families or employers, or even to the authorities (Langat and Kushner, 2015). Ethiopian activist and DANA Social Club co-founder Beki Abi attests that “being outed to family, employers, the church, or neighbors” is a more pervasive and serious threat to LGBTQI+ people than being outed to authorities (Overs, 2016). Abi went on to say that “only a tiny percentage of Ethiopians can maintain livelihoods and carry out the ordinary functions of life without the support of their family and local community” (Overs, 2016). This heavy reliance on family for support means that being outed can lead to very swift withdrawal of social, physical, and economic support. Combine this with the lack of visible support organizations for LGBTQI+ populations and it is easy to understand why the closet remains the safest option for the great majority of LGBTQI+ Ethiopians, as demonstrated by Tadele and Amde’s (2019) research on the health needs of lesbians, gays and bisexuals (LGB) in Ethiopia’s capital, Addis Ababa. This study found that only 21.5% of participants disclosed their sexual identities to their families and many participants described “negative reactions including being disowned by their families, facing violence or shame” (Tadele and Made, 2019). Many participants also reported feelings of anxiety over being exposed and potentially bringing shame to their families (ibid).

Religion

Religion in Ethiopia is highly influential in both day-to-day life and government policy as it is closely tied to national identity and pride (Evason, 2018). Ethiopia was one of the first countries to practice Christianity in the world, adopting it as the national religion as early as 333CE (Evason, 2018). With this, religious institutions have claimed repeatedly that homosexuals and other gender/sexual identities are dangerous pedophiles (Littauer, 2012) and lobby ferociously against any form of legal protection or societal acceptance for LGBTQI+ communities (House of Guramayle, 2023). This has led to different religious associations lobbying the government to crack down on homosexuality. Examples of this persecution are seen increasingly through use of social media, including Tik Tok, and are highlighted in the ‘Media’ section below. Even within a broadly hostile context, it is worth noting that the majority of participants in our study declared themselves to be members or followers of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, demonstrating the hold religion has over all swathes of Ethiopian society.

Healthcare

Sexual and gender minorities have unique healthcare needs, which the literature demonstrates categorically are not being met in Ethiopia. Tadele and Amde (2019) surveyed and interviewed lesbian, gay, and bisexual (LGB) individuals in Ethiopia to better understand their experience with and access to healthcare. Their research indicated that sexual and mental health were the top priorities for LGB

An Overview of the Literature

people in Ethiopia and that poor mental health is linked to participants' risky sexual behavior (ibid). Participants cited the following barriers as preventing them from adequately accessing healthcare: stigma, shame and embarrassment, fear of being discovered, lack of LGB friendly services, affordability, distance, and health care professional refusal (ibid).

Healthcare stigma is linked strongly to HIV/AIDs in Ethiopia. Diress, Ahmed and Linger's (2020) research found that Ethiopians hold strong discriminatory attitudes towards people living with HIV, as 93.8% of men and 64.5% of women reportedly held these negative beliefs. While Ethiopia has reduced the incidence rate of HIV/AIDs by 50% between 1990 and 2016, the mortality rate has remained mostly unchanged (Deribew et al., 2019). In Ethiopia, and other countries in Africa "HIV is viewed widely as a consequence of sexually immoral behaviors, thus people living with HIV are severely stigmatized regardless of how they actually became infected" (Diress, Ahmed and Linger, 2020).

It's no secret that stigma around HIV/AIDs disproportionately affects LGBTQI+ people who are preposterously perceived as engaging in "sexually immoral acts". Misinformation and low testing can largely account for the high mortality rate (Tadele 2010 and Deribew et al., 2019). The results of a study with sexually active homosexual men revealed that many of them believed HIV/AIDs could only be transmitted through heterosexual sex (Tadele, 2010). Due to this belief, they did not use protection (ibid). These findings show that "current efforts aimed at preventing the spread of HIV are not reaching some high-risk populations" (ibid). Additionally, social stigma and discrimination reduce people's willingness to be tested. Factors such as low education level and living rurally can also impact accessibility to testing, as well (Deribew et al., 2019).

Given this context, it is unsurprising that Tadele and Amde (2019) found that 62.5% of their LGB participants did not always seek medical care when sick despite roughly 66% of participants believing they were high risk for HIV/AIDs. Finally, Deribew et al. (2019) found that medical professionals reproduce stigma when treating patients in Ethiopia, which would indicate that LGBTQI+ people are not safe sharing their identities with medical professionals about their lifestyles and medical concerns.

Education and Employment

As previously mentioned, no laws exist to protect LGBTQI+ people from discrimination in education or employment (ILGA, 2023). Walker (2020) found that LGBTQI+ people faced discrimination in the workplace, which negatively impacts their mental health and increases their risk of living in poverty and experiencing homelessness.

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Aside from Walker's (2020) findings, there is a distinct gap in the literature when it comes to education and employment of LGBTQI+ people in Ethiopia. Our survey will aim to fill this gap. While it is unclear how LGBTQI+ fare in education or employment based on the literature, there are national statistics and cultural trends we can draw from to later compare against our findings.

In 2018, roughly 70% of all youth aged between 15-24 years old had not completed primary school in Ethiopia (FHI360, 2018). Specifically, 16% had no formal education at all, while 54% had not completed primary school (ibid). There are many challenges preventing students from attaining their education (Kamanga, 2023). Roughly 85% of Ethiopians live in rural areas with limited infrastructure which can impact students' ability to access school (ibid). Education quality is also not very high as many students struggle with literacy and number skills (ibid). Language is another educational barrier as at the higher levels as lessons are only taught in English (ibid). Staff shortages and classroom overcrowding are also common (Britannica, no date).

3.3% of the population was unemployed in 2023 (Statista, 2024). The average monthly salary in Ethiopia is roughly 8,900 ETB (Wakjira and Teshome Kefale, 2022). About 60% of Ethiopians are under the age of 30 years old (World Bank, 2024). This rapidly growing population "presents a significant employment challenge" as "2 million new job seekers enter the market" each year (ibid). Women are disproportionately affected by unemployment, experiencing it at nearly twice the rate as men (ibid).

While the literature does not explore LGBTQI+ experiences of education or employment, it does provide some context at the national scale which we will compare to participants' education and employment experience.

Media

Ethiopian media is largely supportive of the government and the church's condemnation of LGBTQI+ Ethiopians (Baker and Campbell, 2016). In 2023, activists have documented numerous TikTok videos encouraging violence against LGBTQI+ Ethiopians (House of Guramayle, 2023). One such TikTok video was posted in August 2023 by a popular Evangelical Christian pastor with over 250,000 followers. In the video, the pastor said that homosexuals should be "stripped naked and publicly whipped" (Ethiopia, 2023). Many homophobic social media users have been emboldened to "take matters into their own hands" and commit crimes of violence against LGBTQI+ Ethiopians due to these aggressive calls to action on social media (House of Guramayle, 2023).

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Prior to the rise of social media, newspapers were the main instrument used to spread homophobia in Ethiopia (Ethiopia, 2023). In 2012, Littauer reported on an Ethiopian news article that alleged that homosexuality was being imported to Ethiopia from the West, a common homophobic trope within the region, resulting in an infestation of homosexuals (Littauer, 2012). The article described LGBTQI+ Ethiopians as promiscuous child abusers with up to nine sexual partners per day to satiate their sexual appetite (Littauer, 2012). These types of inherently false and negative media portrayals of LGBTQI+ Ethiopians encourage intolerance and help to justify homophobia and homophobic hate crimes (Littauer, 2012).

Whilst the printed and online press has become no less hostile to LGBTQI+ communities, the viral nature of social media can be seen as the biggest continual threat, perpetuated largely by organized religion.



Methodology

Research Aim

The aim of our research project was to find out the lived experiences of Ethiopian sexual and gender minorities, both those living in Ethiopia and within the Ethiopian diaspora. We launched this survey so we can use the outcomes to support our Ethiopian partners achieve their objectives to bring about social change and greater acceptance of the Ethiopian LGBTQI+ community.

The objectives of this survey were:

- to examine the lived experiences of Ethiopian sexual and gender minorities;
- to explore the barriers that Ethiopian sexual and gender minorities face in their everyday lives;
- to measure social, legal, political and cultural pressures faced by Ethiopian sexual and gender minorities
- to evaluate any issues raised by this research so that it may feed into policy decisions and activism moving forward.

Literature Review

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The report draws from relevant published sources; including United Nations documents, reports by other human rights organisations, Ethiopian LGBT organisations, reputable news sites, surveys and academic articles. This was in order to triangulate the literature already published to mirror this against our own findings.

Survey Method

After several meetings and co-construction of the survey questions between ReportOUT and our partners, the survey went out via our partner organisation to their service users and community members. The survey was also informed by previous survey design from ReportOUT's research projects. The survey topics and specific questions were designed to be relevant to Ethiopia and the lived experiences of Ethiopian sexual and gender minorities. A comprehensive survey of 92 questions was devised to ask about both opinions of how sexual and gender minorities in Ethiopia (and those who have lived in Ethiopia but now live overseas) view homo/bi/transphobia in their society, as well as questions about their own particular lived experiences within Ethiopia itself as well as how they have been impacted by homo/bi/transphobia. The survey was conducted in English.

You can request a copy of the survey questions by contacting us at: contact@reportout.org

Data Collection and Analysis

This report is based on information collected from our partner organisation from May to September 2022. A total of 68 respondents completed the survey (via Microsoft Forms). All responses were anonymous. The findings of the survey were analysed by ReportOUT researchers and given to our partners for quality checking before publication. Both parties agreed on the recommendations.

Participants and Ethics

Participants in this research were voluntarily asked to take part in this study and were given information about the survey via an information and gave explicit consent process to take part. Participants were not compensated for taking part and neither ReportOUT nor our partner, House of Guramayle, received any financial gain for this research study. Survey respondents were anonymous and treated with strict confidentiality. In some cases, potentially identifying information has been withheld to protect the privacy and safety of participants. The survey was conducted in line with the UK Data Protection Act (2018). This research was guided by the University of Sunderland's ethics processes to ensure that all appropriate ethical safeguards were in place.

Limitations

As with all research there are limitations. We recognise that we have very small sample sizes of people who are trans and hope that an additional study can rectify this. We recognise that many of our respondents are urban based, well-educated younger and with access to the internet and this is a natural limitation of web-based surveying. A future study of both rural and older people would be recommended to provide a more complete picture, as only two respondents to our survey were over 45 and only two respondents lived in rural areas of Ethiopia. It would also be a worthwhile future study to consider differences in lived experiences of respondents still living in Ethiopia with those in the Ethiopia diaspora overseas.

Nonetheless, with no funding behind this survey, we believe we have managed to attain a comprehensive picture of what life is like for many Ethiopians from sexual and gender minority communities and we are proud to present this comprehensive study, which combines quantitative results with real-life insights from survey respondents into their lived experience.

Respondent Demographics

About a third of respondents no longer live in Ethiopia. Those that do are most likely to live in urban areas:

- 69% of respondents still live in Ethiopia. Of this population 79% live in a city, 13% live in a town with the remaining 8% living in villages or rural areas. 13% of respondents consider themselves internally displaced within Ethiopia.
- The 31% of respondents living overseas currently reside in a wide range of countries with the UK the most populous (21% of those living overseas) but with respondents currently living in the US, Norway, Austria, Canada, Qatar and Luxembourg.

The age range of respondents was 18 - 45 with the majority aged under 30:

- 25-30 year olds accounted for 45% of respondents, followed by the age brackets of 31-40 (31%), 19-24 (19%), 40+ (3%). No age ranges reported over 45 years of age.

Respondents defined their gender identity in many ways:

- 28% of respondents identified as non-binary, 3% of respondents identified as a transgender man and 5% as genderqueer.

Those considering themselves intersex accounted for nearly a third of respondents:

- When asked 'do you consider yourself intersex', 29% of respondents answered in the affirmative.

Gay men represented the largest group responding to the survey:

- Gay men (56%) provided the most responses to the survey, followed by lesbians (15%), bisexual men (12%) and bisexual women (4%). 4% identified as pansexual whilst no respondents considered themselves as asexual.

The majority of respondents followed Ethiopian Orthodox Christianity:

- 56% considered themselves as Ethiopian Orthodox Christians. Minority beliefs represented included Protestant Christianity (12%) and Islam (6%) while 13% considered themselves to be atheist or agnostic.

A significant minority of respondents considered themselves differently abled or living with a long-term health condition:

- 26% of respondents considered themselves to be differently abled (often seen as analogous to living with a disability) whereas 24% said they lived with a long-term health condition, e.g. HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis or cancer. The survey did not ask for further details of these conditions.

Respondent Demographics

Respondents were largely degree-level educated but were currently in a mix of employment or training situations:

- 81% of respondents held either a bachelor's or master's degree, qualifications that had been obtained from Ethiopian institutions in two-thirds of cases.

47% of respondents are in full or part-time paid employment (albeit nearly half of respondents reported living on less than \$1.25 per day):

- 7% are self-employed and 6% in education or training programmes. 19% of respondents are unemployed, of which a quarter take part in sex work to earn income.



Findings: Introduction

Introduction

The results of our survey found that LGBTQI+ people’s human rights are not being met in Ethiopia. Many of their basic needs are not being met and participants reported experiences of discrimination and violence in every facet of life, including employment and healthcare.

LGBTQI+ Ethiopians live in fear of being outed and many don’t share their identities with the people in their lives, as seen in the table below.

Table 1: Who knows about your LGBTQ+ identity?

	<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Not Applicable</i>
<i>Close Friends</i>	80.3%	6%	13.7%
<i>Family Members</i>	47%	41%	12%
<i>Work Colleagues and/or School Peers</i>	45.4%	42.4%	3%
<i>Employer</i>	35%	56%	9%
<i>Medical Staff</i>	33.3%	56%	10.6%
<i>Neighbors and Local Community</i>	30.3%	57.6%	12%
<i>Acquaintances</i>	27.3%	59.1%	13.6%
<i>Customers / Clients at Work</i>	21%	59.1%	19.6%
<i>Religious Community</i>	19.7%	65.2%	15%
<i>Other Professionals</i>	18%	59.1%	22.7%

As Table 1 shows, the participants were more likely to share their LGBTQI+ identity with their close friends than any other group, including family members. This is perhaps not surprising given the patriarchal nature of Ethiopian society and the economic isolation and threats of violence commonplace within the family structure when a member’s sexual orientation or gender identity is disclosed (Evason, 2018 and Overs, 2016). It should also be noted that a considerable number of our participants live in diasporas outside Ethiopia, which could make them more comfortable sharing their identities with friends, colleagues, etc and skew the results.

Notably, 65.2% of participants did not share their LGBTQI+ identity with their religious community, despite the majority of participants declaring a religious faith. Again, this is unsurprising in the context of an aggressively hostile religious context (House of Guramayle, 2023).

In addition, roughly 60% of participants did not share their LGBTQI+ identities with their employers, medical professionals, neighbors and their local community, acquaintances, customers/clients at work, or other professionals. The absence of any anti-discrimination legislation and the broader ramifications for disclosing sexual orientation or gender identity (e.g. loss of employment combined with potential isolation from family) renders this an understandable if extremely disturbing result.

Findings: Introduction

15.2% of participants hadn't shared their LGBTQI+ identity with any of the groups displayed in Table 1 and remained completely in the closet. Given the hostile societal context, it is maybe surprising this number is not higher, but it demonstrates the importance of trusted and close-knit friendship groups as the sole channel by which many LGBTQI+ Ethiopians feel they can be their authentic selves. However, based on these findings overall, it can be reasonably concluded that LGBTQI+ Ethiopians can experience isolation and do not feel safe enough to share their identities with those around them.



Findings: Safety and Violence

We included many questions about the violence experienced by participants to attempt to fill the gap in literature on LGBTQI+ people’s safety in Ethiopia.

A remarkable 94% of participants did not regard Ethiopia as a safe country for LGBTQI+ citizens: 57.6% of participants reported that Ethiopia is not safe at all for LGBTQI+ people with an additional 36.4% who stated it was very unsafe. 54.5% of participants didn’t even feel safe walking around where they lived at the time the survey was conducted. Almost all participants, whether still living in Ethiopia or in the diaspora, experienced some form of violence or harassment due to their LGBTQI+ identity as well.

“Violence within the community is very rampant due to the discrimination we face, our capacity to form family and community is very limited and we have many isolated groups of folks or couples being together with a very imbalanced power dynamic which silence the most vulnerable the most.”

62.1% of participants were threatened or attacked with violence at least once between 2021 and 2022. Additionally, 51.5% were threatened or attacked with sexual violence over the same period. Our findings suggest that LGBTQI+ Ethiopians are at significantly greater risk of violence than previous studies have indicated. The prevalence of violence experienced by our participants over the course of 12 months significantly dwarfed the Human Dignity Trust’s finding that only 37% of LGBTQI+ people faced violence over the course of their lifetime in Ethiopia (Ethiopia, 2023).

The figure and table below outline the different types of abuse the participants experienced and the perpetrators committing these acts of violence against them.

Figure 1: Types of Violence Participants Experienced

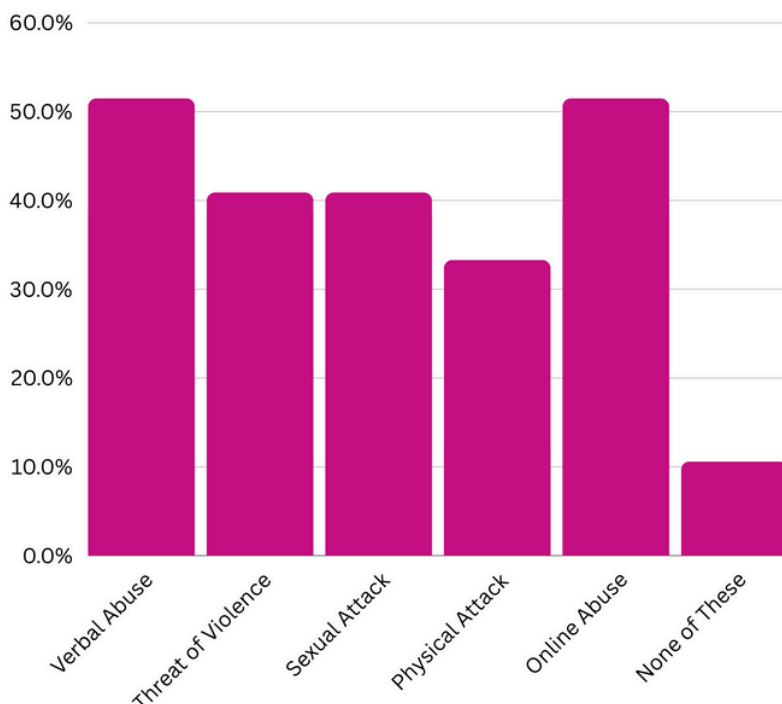


Table 2: Who Committed Violence Against Participants

<i>Strangers</i>	66.7%
<i>Friends</i>	40.9%
<i>Family</i>	28.8%
<i>Friends of Friends</i>	22.7%
<i>Police</i>	22.7%
<i>School Friends</i>	22.7%
<i>Colleagues</i>	21.2%
<i>Neighbors</i>	16.7%
<i>Partners</i>	10.6%
<i>Clients</i>	3.0%

Findings: Safety and Violence

While strangers make up the largest perpetrator group, it is concerning that the second largest group of perpetrators are friends, followed by family members. Many participants whose family knew of their LGBTQI+ identity reported being violently abused by them:

"I used to hear my family members casually make death threats against gay people and rape threats against lesbians around me. They said this because they assumed I was queer."

One participant's family member tried corrective rape as a means of forcibly changing their sexual orientation and/or gender identity. Examples such as these provide an insight into familial violence experienced and endured by LGBTQI+ people in Ethiopia.

Along with familial violence, 37.8% of participants indicated they had been victims of intimate partner violence (IPV). They reported different types of IPV, including physical violence (40%), sexual violence (40%), blackmail (40%), coercive/psychological violence (28%), and control of property and money (24%).

Aside from the abuse they had personally experienced, we also asked how widespread participants perceived other types of violence against LGBTQI+ people in Ethiopia to be. 63.6% of respondents believed that mob violence was fairly to very widespread. This is a finding consistent with Bekele's (2022) work which indicated that mob violence was increasing in Ethiopia. To the best of our knowledge, our findings are the first to establish conclusively that LGBTQI+ people are the targets of mob violence in Ethiopia. Further, 57.6% believed that torture of LGBTQI+ people was fairly to very widespread. This finding is also in line with ILGA's (2023) findings. Finally, 60.6% of participants also believed blackmail against LGBTQI+ individuals was fairly to very widespread, which corroborates Langat and Kushner's (2015) findings.

These findings have clearly demonstrated that LGBTQI+ people are not safe from violence in Ethiopia and that the violence they experience permeates every sphere of life. It acts as an inevitable follow-on from a political and societal culture that facilitates and promotes discrimination against LGBTQI+ individuals across all spheres of life and is exacerbated by the prohibition of LGBTQI+ support groups or networks.

In totality, these results conclude categorically that there are very few, if any, safe spaces for LGBTQI+ people in Ethiopia.

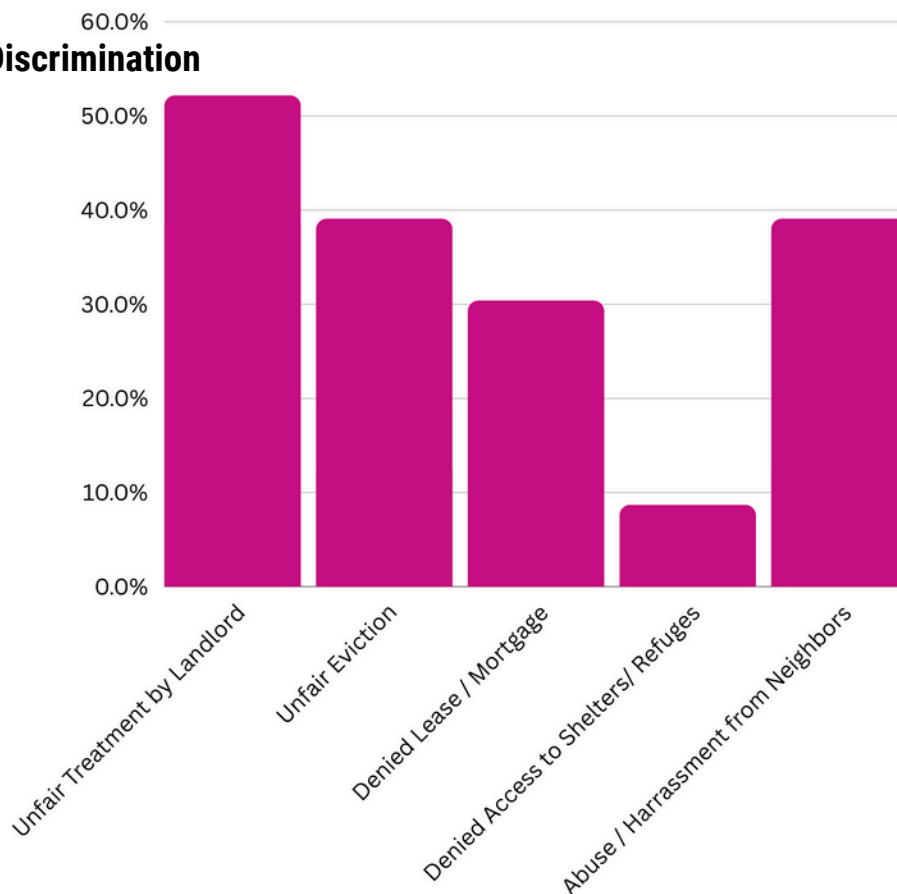
Findings: Basic Needs

Throughout the survey, questions were asked about participants' access to basic needs, including items on food security, housing and access to housing amenities. Overall, LGBTQI+ Ethiopian's basic needs are not being met in any of these aspects.

60.7% of participants experienced some form of food insecurity. Specifically, 12% of participants indicated they were always hungry, while an additional 22.7% indicated they were often hungry. These findings were higher than the national average in 2019, as 52.1% of the population experienced moderate to severe food insecurity (Telila & Sima, 2024).

Furthermore, 34.7% of participants rarely had access to nutritious food at the time the survey was conducted. It's important to note that most of the food secure participants no longer lived in Ethiopia and had migrated to Europe, where such concerns are far less commonplace.

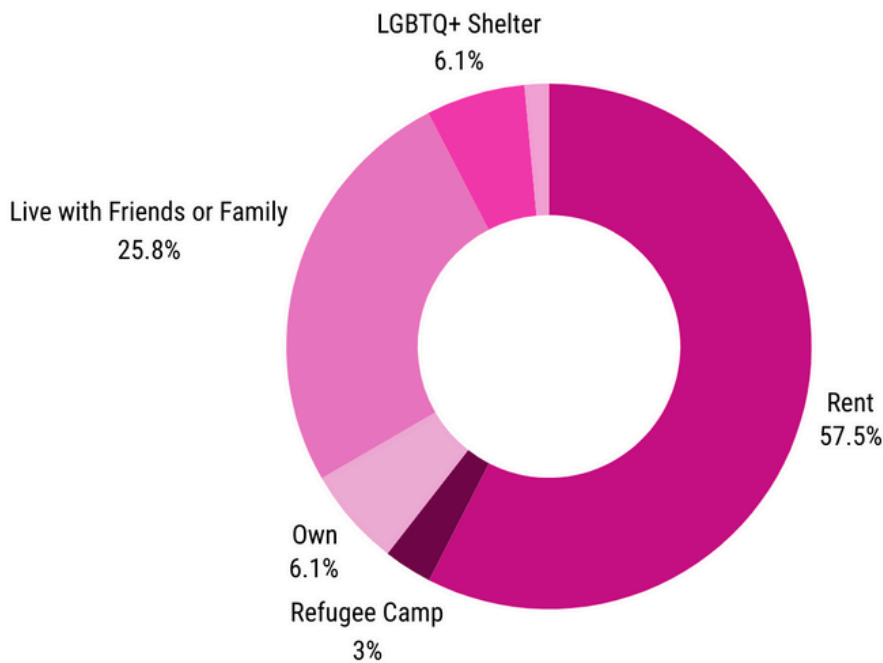
Aside from food insecurity, many participants experienced housing insecurity and discrimination. As can be seen in the figure below, roughly 40% of participants experienced discrimination that blocked them from attaining housing (denied lease/mortgage and denied access to shelter/refuge). 90% were discriminated against by their landlords or neighbors once housed and c. 40% of all participants reported being unfairly evicted due to their LGBTQI+ identity. This demonstrates a practical 'real world' impact of an absence of laws prohibiting discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity.



Findings: Basic Needs

In addition to housing discrimination, many respondents reported living in precarious or dependent situations. 37.8% of participants indicated they lived in a slum, shanty, or semi-permanent dwelling. 16.6% of participants did not have access to housing amenities, such as a shower. Whilst we did not ask specific questions relating to an individuals' circumstances, it can be deduced that there is a connection between those who have been excluded from their family units (and the financial dependency that is common throughout Ethiopian society) and are equally challenged entering the job market or retaining employment whilst being 'out'. Most of those without access to housing amenities resided in slums or semi-permanent dwellings. Figure 2 illustrates the different housing situations that participants reported living in.

Figure 3: Housing Situation



At least 10.6% of participants live in extremely precarious situations, either in LGBTQI+ shelters, refugee camps, or outside due to homelessness. As previously discussed, Walker's (2020) research found that LGBTQI+ Ethiopians are at heightened risk of experiencing homelessness and living precariously due to the discrimination they face in every facet of their lives. Given that many participants expressed being discriminated against by friends and family members, it's possible that many of those who reside with friends (the most common support network for LGBTQI+ Ethiopians) or family are exposed to violence and threatening behavior.

Findings: Healthcare Discrimination

We asked participants about their mental and physical health, as well as their experience of healthcare in Ethiopia as LGBTQI+ individuals.

16.7% reported poor physical health, while a thoroughly disturbing 27.3% reported poor mental health. 12.1% reported very poor physical and mental health. When asked why they gave the scores they did, participants expressed fear at being found out, depression, anxiety, and lack of access to appropriate care for mental or physical health, resulting in their low scores – a very similar finding to Tadele and Amde's (2019) research.

“Queer-phobia has a heavy emotional burden at large and when you work as an activist you get a lot of hate and attack, and it has an impact on your mental health.”

“Feel very alone and sad most of the time and passing through what am going on that affects my mental health.”

As was seen in Table 1, only 33.3% of participants felt safe enough to share their LGBTQI+ identity with medical professionals while 56% did not. Furthermore, 25.8% of all participants faced discrimination from healthcare staff. They reported that healthcare staff ignored their needs or treated them without dignity, unsurprising given the prohibition of any support networks relating to health issues for the LGBTQI+ community. One participant stated that “all Ethiopian medical health centers are not knowledgeable about homosexuality,” a sentiment echoed from Deribew et al.'s (2019) research which found that medical professionals reproduce stigma against LGBTQI+ people.

Additionally, 40.9% of respondents faced barriers when attempting to access healthcare services. These barriers included challenges navigating the healthcare system, doctors not being knowledgeable about LGBTQ+ health needs, and doctors gaslighting LGBTQI+ patients. These experiences are best exemplified by this participant's response on healthcare barriers:

“I wouldn't know where to start. There hasn't been an age where I haven't faced obstacles when accessing some kind of healthcare service. Whether it's testing for physical and mental health disorders, treatment for physical or mental health issues, or just having my voice & concerns heard, I've always been met with barriers & obstacles in healthcare.”

The above demonstrates Ethiopia's failure to adhere to the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goal 3, which will be examined in greater depth later in this report.

Findings: Educational Discrimination

81% of participants in this study were highly educated and had completed a bachelor's or master's degree, which is a stark contrast to the general population's education level given that roughly 70% of youth had not completed primary education in 2018 (FHI360, 2018).

There was a distinct lack of literature on LGBTQI+ Ethiopians' educational experience. We attempted to fill this gap somewhat by asking questions about whether they faced discrimination in education. Many participants had negative experiences due to their LGBTQI+ identities. 24.2% of participants experienced some form of educational discrimination, which often has a lingering effect into adult life. The most common theme to emerge surrounding stigma and bullying.

"I used to be bullied because of my gender and sexuality issues, and it was disturbing me to not to focus on my education".

Other participants expressed that educational discrimination led to mental health issues, such as anxiety or low self-esteem:

"I faced a lot of stigma when I was in university...even if I lose my confidence because of that."

Others reported hearing homophobic and inherently untrue claims made by educators at school:

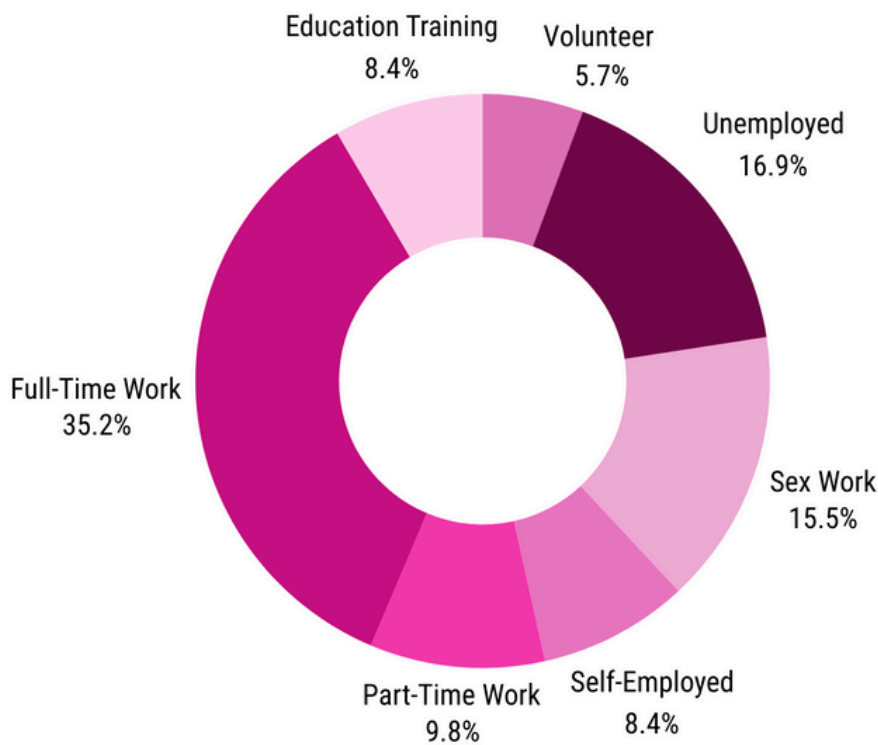
"Repeatedly taught that issues LGBT were Western and inherently un-Ethiopian. Had teachers say slurs when I dressed not masculine. Comments on how LGBT brought COVID."

The combined impact of such institutional discrimination can be seen in LGBTQI+ Ethiopians not being able to fulfill their economic potential due to being unable to solely focus on educational achievement due to bullying and stigmatization, to the extent that a significant proportion feel obliged to leave the country – a clear loss to broader Ethiopian society. Failure to provide quality education to LGBTQI+ Ethiopians also shows a failure to adhere to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 4 as well.

Findings: Employment Discrimination

Despite participants' high level of education, 42.4% were earning less than \$1.25 per day at the time of the survey. Also, 66.7% of the participants who resided in Ethiopia earned less than the average salary of 8,900 ETB per month (Wakjira and Teshome Kefale, 2022). Furthermore, 23.8% of the participants who lived outside Ethiopia earned less than minimum wage in their new countries of residence albeit this is likely to be related a complex web of issues, not merely anti-LGBTQ+ sentiment, which falls outside the scope of this research. The figure below shows a full break down of participants' employment status at the time the survey was conducted.

Figure 4: Employment Status

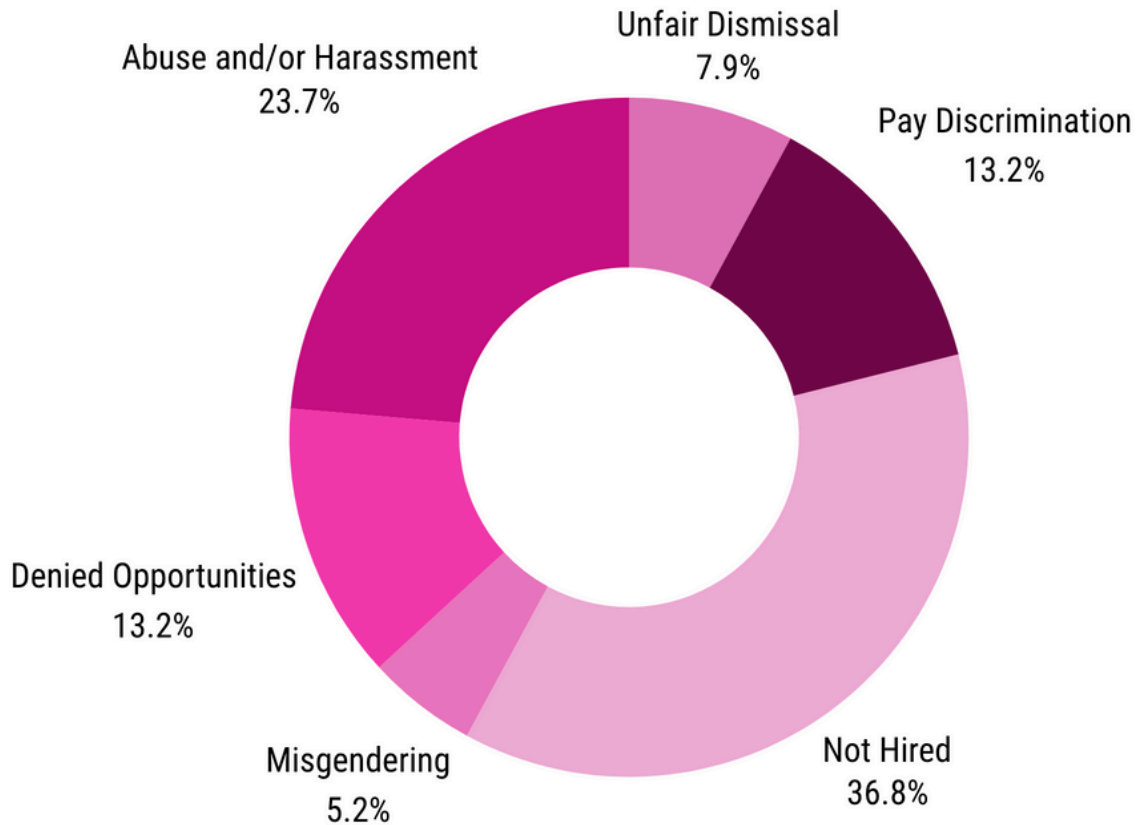


Notably, about one third of participants were unemployed or engaging in sex work at the time the survey was distributed. Our finding of 18.2% unemployment is particularly striking given that the national unemployment rate was 3.3% in 2023 (Statista, 2024). Based on our findings, it's clear that the LGBTQI+ are significantly more likely to be unemployed than the general population, which likely stems in part from the absence of any anti-discrimination laws protecting their rights. This absence of protection and inability to earn a living seems to have pushed participants to engage in sex work to survive. The dangers of sex work include but are not limited to contracting HIV/AIDs, being physically and sexually abused, as well as socially excluded and discriminated against. Further, since LGBTQI+ Ethiopians are largely excluded from the healthcare system, sex workers' health needs are likely not being sufficiently met.

Findings: Employment Discrimination

To get a better sense of the employment discrimination faced by the LGBTQI+ community, we asked about their experiences, which are detailed in the Figure below. 33.3% of participants experienced direct employment discrimination. To the best of our knowledge, no other work has attempted to understand employment discrimination faced by LGBTQI+ people in Ethiopia.

Figure 5: Employment Discrimination



As can be seen in Figure 4, 50% of participants expressed that they had not been hired, while 32.1% expressed that they were abused or harassed at work. Participants' employment discrimination is not altogether surprising given the findings of Table 1 which indicated that roughly 56% of participants did not share their LGBTQI+ identity with their employer. About 42% did not share their identity with their colleagues or classmates, and roughly 60% did not tell their clients. Based on these findings, it is reasonable to conclude that the job sector is largely unfriendly and intolerant towards LGBTQI+ Ethiopians and the best way to find and maintain employment is to remain in the closet.

Findings: Religious Discrimination and Conversion Therapy

As indicated in the literature review, Ethiopia is a very religious society. This leads to the discrimination or vilification of LGBTQI+ by religious institutions, leaders and followers (House of Guramayle, 2023). Our survey found that 36.4% of respondents experienced discrimination at a place of worship due to their LGBTQI+ identity. Furthermore, 60.6% of participants indicated that religious leaders often use offensive language towards LGBTQI+ people, often scapegoating them – a finding consistent with Littauer’s (2012) work. One participant captured this phenomenon by saying:

“Whenever the country struggles, religious leaders blame queer ppl for our ‘sin’ [because they think it] is what brings the problems.”

A horrific 25.8% of participants experienced some form of conversion therapy. While participants underwent different types of conversion including corrective rape and family intervention, 11.6% underwent religious exorcism as a means of conversion. Unsurprisingly, As Figure 1 showed, 65.2% of participants stated they did not share their LGBTQI+ identities with their religious community, even though the majority of respondents remained aligned to a religious faith. This disturbing finding was not unexpected given that there are no laws in place to restrict conversion therapy in Ethiopia to date (ILGA, 2023).




Findings: Media

We found that participants perceived the media in Ethiopia to be discriminatory against LGBTQI+ individuals. 56.1% of participants agreed that offensive language towards LGBTQI+ individuals was fairly to very widespread. This finding was in line with the literature on LGBTQI+ media portrayal and scapegoating (Ethiopia, 2023 and Littauer, 2012).

The survey also asked questions about social media and the safety of using social media and dating apps by LGBTQI+ people. 51.5% of participants reported experiencing some form of online abuse. When it came to the utilization of dating apps, 47% of total respondents felt these apps were somewhat to very unsafe. Further, 57.6% of total participants felt that social media was somewhat to very unsafe for LGBTQI+ Ethiopians.

This finding is somewhat unsurprising given the recent rise in hateful social media trends that incite violence against members of the LGBTQ+ community (House of Guramayle, 2023) and serves to further close potential safe spaces available to LGBTQI+ individuals.

A photograph of a person's hands holding a white rectangular sign. The sign has handwritten text in black ink. The person holding the sign is wearing a grey t-shirt and a colorful beaded bracelet (yellow, green, red) on their left wrist. The background is a plain, light-colored wall.

I'm Gay
I'm Your Family
I'm Not Broken
Do Not Try To
FIX ME

Findings: Government Actors and Police Violence

Many participants experienced discrimination based on their LGBTQI+ identities by government actors, including social service workers (25.8%), government departments (22.7%) and other government agents (28.8%). Furthermore, 62.1% believed police brutality was very widespread, and 42.4% of participants experienced police brutality themselves and none of them reported the abuse to authorities.

When asked to elaborate on their experiences of police brutality, themes of physical assaults, threats, blackmail/extortion, harassment and arbitrary arrests came to light.

“The reason I had to run away from Ethiopia was due to the constant police brutality I face both as a sexual and gender minority and activist/advocate. Before I left, I was arbitrarily arrested, my house was ransacked three times in the span of one month and constantly blackmailed by Police.”

“I have been caught in my mom’s car with my ex by 3 federal police that were armed! I have been slapped, beaten and intimidated. I bribed myself out luckily but the feeling of having no system of justice is more frustrating.”

With this brutality, 27.3% of LGBTQI+ individuals have been blackmailed by police, while 30.3% had been arbitrarily arrested. 22.7% were arrested for “offenses” relating to their LGBTQI+ identity and 40% of those arrested were brought to court. This was an interesting finding because it stands in direct contrast with ILGA’s findings that very few, if any, crimes of homosexuality were brought to court (ILGA, 2023). It could be that such charges did not expressly mention an LGBTQI+ identity but was implicit in the decision to prosecute – a topic that warrants further investigation outside of this study.

Findings: The Tigray War

The respondents were asked to what extent the war in Tigray had affected LGBTQI+ minorities more than other people and their responses were very divided. 42.4% did not believe that LGBTQI+ minorities were affected more than other people. Their reasons for believing this were due to lack of knowledge or due to isolation of LGBTQI+ people in the region:

"I cannot say because we have no means of communication with community members in conflict areas."

On the other hand, 33.3% believed that LGBTQI+ minorities would be affected much more than other people. One such participant said:

"The war in Ethiopia is impacting Queer community in Ethiopia in three major areas- 1. In these war areas, queer folks are not getting safe. 2. When the country is not stable, queer Ethiopians as a punching bag and political pawn that is being considered as a glue that sticks divided Ethiopia. 3. It is dividing the queer community at large and silencing us."

The second point above backs up the sentiment expressed towards religious communities and political institutions that in times of trouble, LGBTQI+ minorities are frequently weaponized and used as a scapegoat or as a 'common enemy'.

Other participants believed that LGBTQI+ people were disproportionately affected by the conflict due to the lack of health facilities and the cost-of-living crisis caused in part by the ongoing war.

"[The Tigray War] has affected the majority since living expense has sky-rocketed and many of the LGBTQI+ family is facing that too and most are unemployed"

"The conflict has blocked many health facilities and therefore making it complicated or even impossible to access medical attention. Safe spaces are non-existent and violence has increased significantly"

"[The Tigray War] has affected the mental and physical well-being of the LGBTI+ community, LGBTI+ identifying persons stuck in the conflict areas, online harassments and scapegoating, government scrutiny"

Findings: Climate Change

30.3% of participants believed climate change was impacting LGBTQ+ people more than other groups in Ethiopia. When asked how, themes of displacement, elemental exposure, and access to clean water emerged. Five participants also expressed that climate change will make LGBTQ+ people and the most marginalized (such as sex workers) more vulnerable. One such participant stated:

“LGBTI+ persons living in rural or semi-urban areas are likely to be affected with changing weather and drought because of lack of national support or safety nets. Access to clean water is also another issue that is not necessarily related to climate change (as it is often because of development issues) but it affects LGBTI Ethiopians nonetheless”.



Ethiopia and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

Ethiopia has been used as a framework for many countries due to the methods used to progress the SDGs. This is evident through Ethiopia's 2024 spillover score of 95.08 on the Sustainable Development Report, indicating that they are having a more positive impact on other countries. However, Ethiopia's index score of 55.24 out of 100 reflects their progress at achieving all 17 SDGs. Regardless, it has been noted that there is still significant inequality, peace, and justice challenges that still exist throughout the country, which is reflected in their SDG index ranking of 145 out of 166 (Sustainable Development Goals, 2024). Overall, it was found that Ethiopia has a moderate level of commitment, with 0% of their SDG progress being on track, 29.4% moderately improving, and 70.6% of the goals remaining stagnant or with no information available. Of these goals, only 2 of the goals have been met, while the remaining 15 have major or significant challenges remaining (Sustainable Development Goals, 2024). It is also worth mentioning that at the time of this report, Ethiopia's government still has not issued an official statement endorsing the implementation of these SDGs.

Ethiopia has also developed a 10-year plan spanning 2019 to 2030 (Figure 6) which is designed to be aligned towards the United Nation's 2030 agenda and SDGs. To ensure the smooth implementation of this plan, Ethiopia has assigned a National Taskforce specifically meant to ensure the effectiveness of this plan, specifically by providing guidance and policy support (United Nations Ethiopia, 2024).

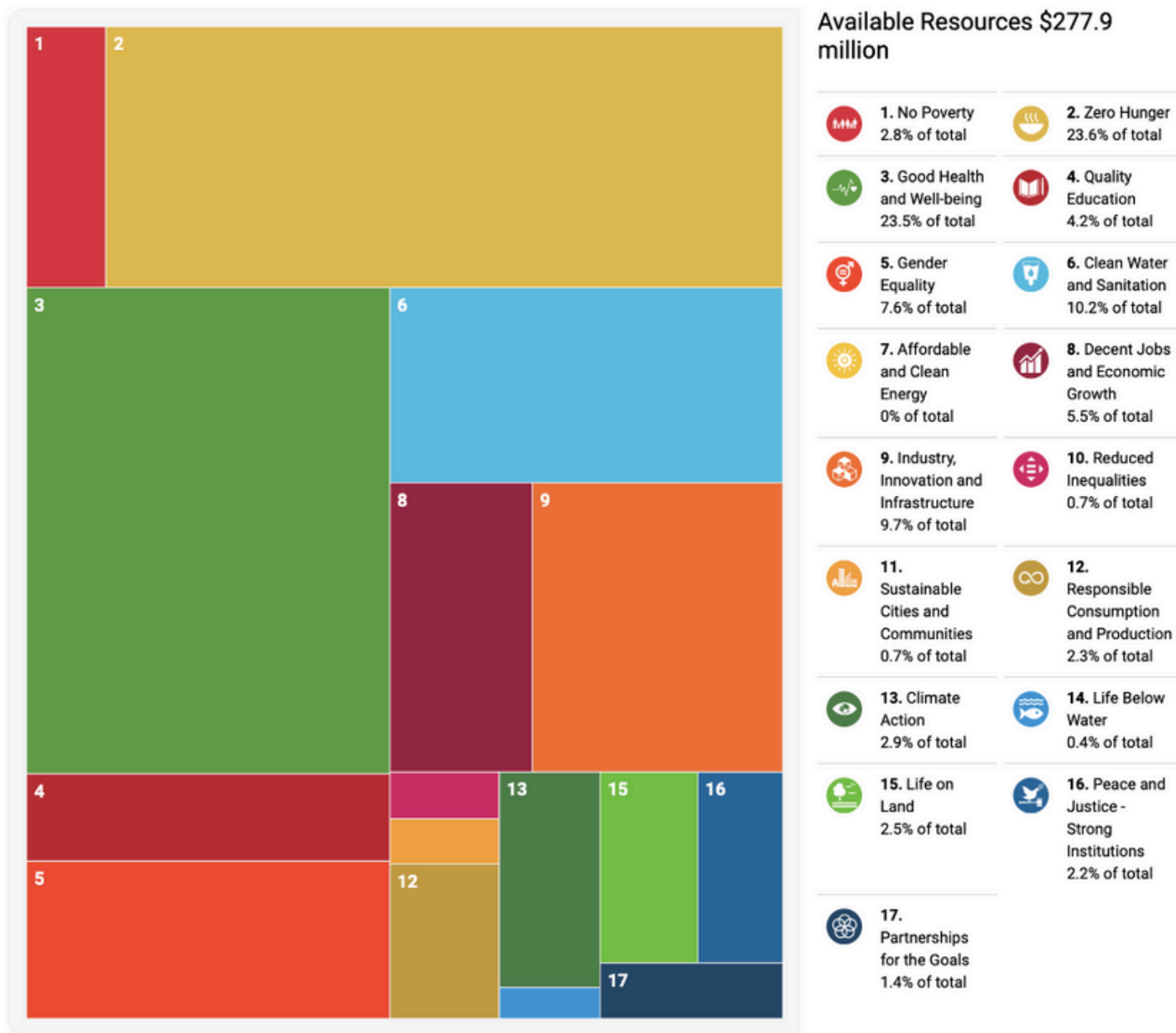
In addition, the spending for these goals has also been released, noting that only 7.29% or \$28.1 million of the \$385.5 million in available resources to improve these goals are going towards reduced inequalities (United Nations Ethiopia, 2024).

Overall, the political state of Ethiopia and their current stances on LGBTQI+ human rights pose significant challenges regarding the progression of many SDGs.

It should also be noted that while conducting research on the progress of the relevant SDGs, there was varying conflicting answers on the progress made, the amount of money dedicated to helping the progression of each SDG, and the amount of money dedicated to each goal.

Ethiopia and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

Figure 6: Ethiopia 10 Year SDG Spending Plan



These figures exclude an additional \$1.3m of programmes available resources that are currently not yet attributed to a particular SDG on UNINFO.

(United Nations Ethiopia, 2024)

Ethiopia and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

Sustainability Development Goal 1: No Poverty

1:1 “By 2030, eradicate extreme poverty for all people everywhere, currently measured as people living on less than \$1.25 a day”

1:5 “By 2030, build the resilience of the poor and those in vulnerable situations and reduce their exposure and vulnerability to climate-related extreme events and other economic, social and environmental shocks and disasters”

Our report revealed that 42.4% of the LGBTQI+ participants were found to be living below the poverty line, showing that there is not enough being done to help the affected LGBTQI+ population. With this, it should be noted that there are currently no programmes in place to specifically help LGBTQI+ individuals in Ethiopia even though many United Nations organizations and broader NGOs are currently working in Ethiopia to alleviate poverty (NGO Base 2024). The criminalisation of such explicit support means a real risk exists of LGBTQ+ Ethiopians being left behind in such development efforts.

In addition, it should be noted that by providing quality education to LGBTQI+ individuals, this will lead to a decrease in the risk of living in poverty and homelessness by providing more job opportunities.

Goal 2: Zero Hunger

2:1 “By 2030, end hunger and ensure access by all people, in particular the poor and people in vulnerable situations, including infants, to safe, nutritious and sufficient food all year round”

Within Ethiopia, over half of our survey participants experienced some form of food insecurity. Vulnerable or underrepresented groups are not receiving additional help, as is evident with 34.7% of our participants stating that they were either often or always hungry. This is higher than the estimated national average of 22.2% as reported by the 2024 Global Hunger Index and indicates how societal and institutional prejudice and stigma against LGBTQ+ Ethiopian has ‘real world’ consequences in food provision. Whilst these broader statistics are damning for the Ethiopian government as a whole, it is clear that within this picture, the basic needs of LGBTQ+ Ethiopians are not being met

With this, it’s important to remember that while there were no participants from the Tigray region, it is likely that there are added fears of famine (The Guardian 2024), further exacerbating the issue for LGBTQI+ individuals living in the region.

Ethiopia and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

Sustainability Development Goal 3: Good Health and Well-Being

3:3 “By 2030, end the epidemics of AIDS, tuberculosis, malaria and neglected tropical diseases and combat hepatitis, water-borne diseases and other communicable diseases”

3:4 “By 2030, reduce by one third premature mortality from non-communicable diseases through prevention and treatment and promote mental health and well-being”

3:7 “By 2030, ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health-care services, including for family planning, information and education, and the integration of reproductive health into national strategies and programmes”

As stated earlier, there are unique healthcare needs that pertain to the LGBTQI+ community that are simply not being met, mainly due to discrimination and lack of education regarding LGBTQI+ healthcare. It was discovered that some members within the survey group found that being a member of the LGBTQI+ adversely affected both their physical and mental health. In addition, nearly half of our survey participants conveyed that they encountered barriers such as shame, stigma, and embarrassment when accessing healthcare. There also exists the fear of being outed to one's family and friends, which increases the likelihood of not seeking care. All this further indicates that even in the healthcare sector, there is no safe space for these individuals.

The fear of being shamed or discriminated against in the healthcare sector has also further exacerbated the delay in seeking healthcare as well as the lack of proper healthcare for LGBTQI+ individuals. As discussed in the literature review, the lack of access to adequate healthcare and the fear of seeking healthcare led to an increase of mental health issues. This then led to an increase of risky sexual behaviour, ultimately leading to an increase in HIV/AIDS, which is commonly believed to be a disease that can only be acquired through homosexual acts. While illnesses as HIV/AIDS should be treated promptly to avoid permanent complications or even death, due to this stigma, which is often heightened by doctors, as well as a fear of others finding out about their current identity status, these individuals often do not seek out healthcare.

Ethiopia and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

Goal 4: Quality Education:

4.a “Build and upgrade education facilities that are child, disability and gender sensitive and provide safe, non-violent, inclusive and effective learning environments for all”

It was found that Ethiopians who identified with the LGBTQ+ population struggled with seeking quality education due to consistent discrimination and bullying at school, ultimately leading to long-term consequences such as gaps in education. Providing quality education for LGBTQI+ individuals would ultimately lead to a decrease in poverty and increase in job security. The reduction of discrimination will lead to less bullying while also leading to an increase in mental health quality amongst these individuals. This would also allow anti-discrimination ideals to bleed into the prevention of discrimination in other areas further down the road, such as those within the media, due to LGBTQI+ individuals being more accepted and understood. It is clear from our survey that the Ethiopian government is failing in any attempt to meet this SDG.

Bridging SDGs 3 & 4, it is also clear that education on broader LGBTQI+ topics would further reduce discrimination and other stigmas towards LGBTQI+ individuals, specifically in the question of healthcare. Healthcare education would help reduce not only the stigma surrounding certain health problems such as HIV/AIDS, but it could also prevent HIV/AIDS from being spread. As stated in the literature review, it was noted that many sexually active homosexual men believed that HIV/AIDS could only be spread through heterosexual acts, which led to a reduced use of protection. Sexual health education could reduce these misconceptions for LGBTQI+ individuals, healthcare professionals, and other individuals providing an overall better understanding of sexual health.

Goal 6: Clean Water and Sanitation

6.1 “By 2030, achieve universal and equitable access to safe and affordable drinking water for all”

6.2 “By 2030, achieve access to adequate and equitable sanitation and hygiene for all and end open defecation, paying special attention to the needs of women and girls and those in vulnerable situations”

As discussed in Goals 1 and as will be discussed in Goal 13, it was found 30.3% of participants believed that access to clean water was an issue, one of which is further exacerbated by climate change. These issues are set to affect individuals who are the most marginalized and vulnerable as they are less likely to have regular access to housing.

Ethiopia and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

Goal 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth

8.8 “Protect labour rights and promote safe and secure working environments for all workers, including migrant workers, in particular women migrants, and those in precarious employment”

The survey found that 33.3% of participants experienced direct discrimination in a working environment, and included but was not limited to harassment, unfair dismissal, job rejection, and misgendering. Since there are no LGBTQI+ anti-discriminatory laws in Ethiopia, there is no protection for these individuals within the job sector. To maintain their job and a safe work environment, over half of these individuals remained closeted and did not share their status with their employers, colleagues, or clients.

Some LGBTQ+ individuals had to work in unsafe or unsecure working environments to support themselves, including jobs that potentially put their safety at risk, such as sex work. Despite these dangerous situations, almost half of all participants were still living below the poverty line on less than \$1.25 per day.

Goal 10: Reduce Inequality

10.1: “By 2030, progressively achieve and sustain income growth of the bottom 40 per cent of the population at a rate higher than the national average”

10.2: “By 2030, empower and promote the social, economic and political inclusion of all, irrespective of age, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion or economic or other status”

10.3: “Ensure equal opportunity and reduce inequalities of outcome, including by eliminating discriminatory laws, policies and practices and promoting appropriate legislation, policies and action in this regard”

10.4: “Adopt policies, especially fiscal, wage and social protection policies, and progressively achieve greater equality”

Inequality is very common in Ethiopia and discrimination towards LGBTQI+ individuals is very apparent. With no anti-discrimination laws in place to protect LGBTQI+ people, discrimination is reported in a number of different areas, including housing, education, employment, media, and healthcare. The Ethiopia Sustainable Development Report by the United Nations has acknowledged that there have been significant challenges that remain in regard to tackling inequality (United Nations Ethiopia, 2024).

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The report also stated that there is no trend information available regarding the progress towards SDG 10, showcasing an alarming lack of urgency in addressing this goal.

While trying to seek housing, the survey participants conveyed various forms of housing discrimination including denial of housing (40%) and unfair eviction due to identity status (40%). Several participants experienced educational discrimination (24.2%) which affected their life later, often through employment. Various forms of discrimination were experienced in the workplace, including abuse and/or harassment (32.1%), denied opportunities (17.9%), pay discrimination (17.9%), or refusal to be hired (50%). Discrimination is also found within healthcare, as LGBTQI+ healthcare needs are often not met and due to the shame surrounding topics such as HIV/AIDS in this community. This discrimination has often been spread through the media through encouragement of violence, harmful language, and online abuse towards LGBTQI+ individuals.

There is a clear indication that there has not been an effort to reduce inequality within the LGBTQI+ population as shown by the obvious lack of inequality progress reporting towards the LGBTQI+ population and with the continuance of outlawing homosexuality. This only demonstrates a massive step backwards from SDG 10 and indicating no progress towards LGBTQI+ rights.

Goal 13: Climate Change

13.b “Promote mechanisms for raising capacity for effective climate change-related planning and management in least developed countries and small island developing States, including focusing on women, youth and local and marginalized communities”

As outlined in the findings, it's evident that due to the lack of water sanitation, lack of nutritious food, and lack of housing, LGBTQI+ individuals are likely to be more affected by climate change events. Some of these climate change events include flooding, drought, and heat waves, all of which have been found to be linked to an increase of vector-borne diseases, water-borne diseases, and other various issues (World Health Organization, 2023). Within this survey, it was noted that 30.3% of participants believed that climate change affected them more than other groups in Ethiopia. This is primarily due to the precarious situations that they are more exposed to, including homelessness. This leads to an increased risk of exposure to the elements during a climate change event and increasing the risk of dying of exposure, likely affecting vulnerable individuals, such as sex workers, the most.

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Goal 16: Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions

16.1 “Significantly reduce all forms of violence and related death rates everywhere”

16.3 “Promote the rule of law at the national and international levels and ensure equal access to justice for all”

16.6 “Develop effective, accountable and transparent institutions at all levels”

16.10 “Ensure public access to information and protect fundamental freedoms, in accordance with national legislation and international agreements”

16.a “Strengthen relevant national institutions, including through international cooperation, for building capacity at all levels, in particular in developing countries, to prevent violence and combat terrorism and crime”

16.b “Promote and enforce non-discriminatory laws and policies for sustainable development”

Due to the consistent discrimination that LGBTQI+ individuals face, it is evident that Ethiopia is not taking the necessary measures to develop institutions at the national level to protect the rights and safety of LGBTQ+ individuals. In accordance with the previous findings in the literature review, Article 69 of the Charities and Societies Proclamation Law states that it is against the law in Ethiopia to develop groups that don't support “public morality” (House of Guramayle, 2024). Due to same-sex marriage being unlawful since 2004, developing organizations or institutions that support and protect LGBTQ+ individuals are considered illegal; this prohibits any help or support to be provided to these individuals, leading to more injustices, including discrimination, lack of housing, lack of food security, and water sanitation.

Instances of violence were conveyed by our participants, stating that violence from police, members of society, and family members were common. Often, the government would encourage these acts of violence and would encourage turning in people that they believed to be homosexual, stating that LGBTQI+ individuals were dangerous and perverted. In the instance of a peaceful government, these acts of violence would be criminalized and condemned and would instead take care of LGBTQI+ individuals.

Recommendations

With this information, we strongly recommend the Ethiopian government to rescind the new anti-LGBTQ+ law and allow for a more open and welcoming community. This would include implementing certain measures such as the closure of the hotline and the police task force. Further, greater visibility of police interactions with the LGBTQI+ community is essential.

It's incredibly important for the Ethiopian government to protect LGBTQI+ individuals from discrimination by implementing laws that criminalize discrimination, hate crimes, and other types of abuse towards LGBTQI+ individuals. In addition, allowing for the legalization of support and advocacy groups is incredibly important for LGBTQI+ individuals to feel accepted and protected within their community.

To streamline the implementation and enhancement of these new laws, it would be important to introduce inclusivity programmes in schools that would increase acceptance, tolerance, and understanding towards LGBTQI+ individuals. The implementation of safe sex programmes in school would also be able to provide individuals the tools they need to protect themselves and others.

Action must be taken to protect these individuals from further harm and discrimination.



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