

# **Social Needs and Discrimination of LGBTQ+ Young Adults in South Korea**

**Seong-Jo Jeong** | Dawoom & Rainbow Action (South Korea)

# Situation of LGBTQ+ People in S. Korea



## Increased Social Visibility

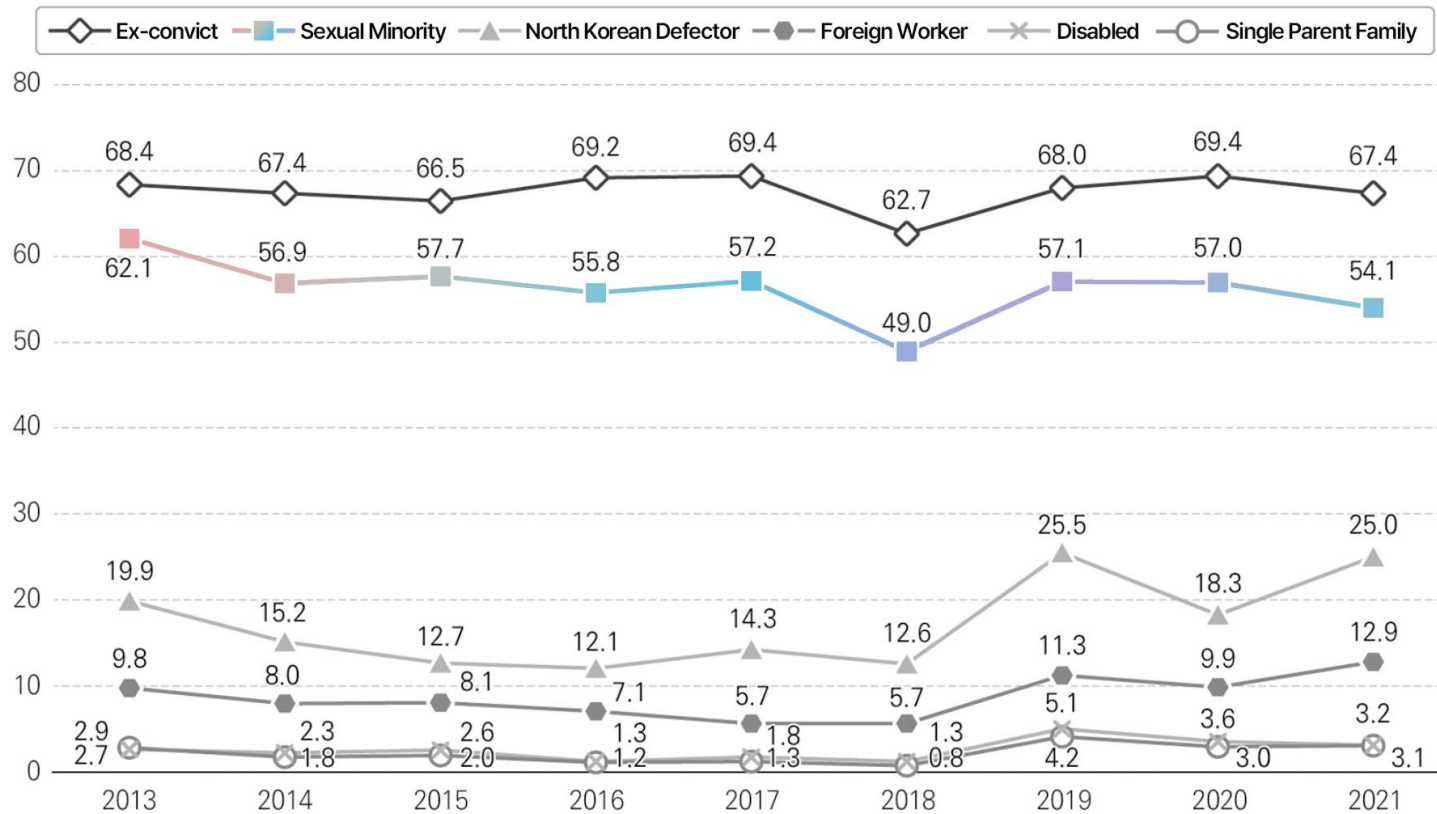
More than 100,000 people attend the Seoul Pride Parade every year. Queer movies and related cultural content are rapidly gaining popularity.



## No Legal Protection

There are no legal protections for LGBTQ+ people, and homosexual conduct in the military is punishable by law.

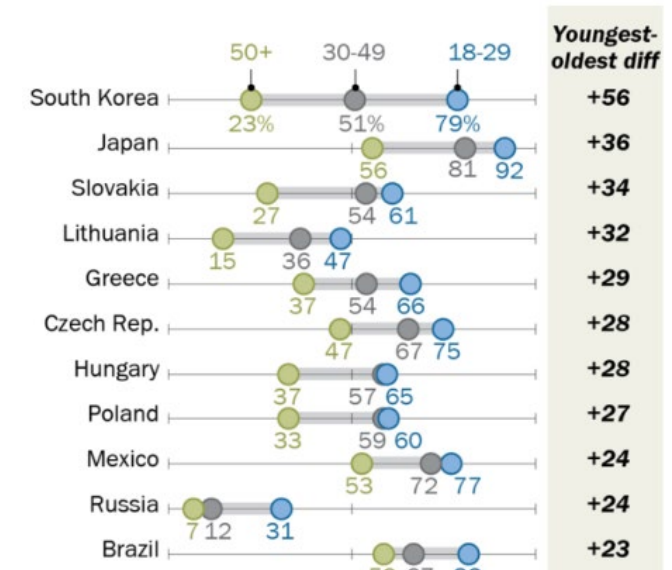
# Social Attitudes Toward Homosexuality in S. Korea



Minority Exclusion Perception Trends 2013-2021 (The Korea Institute of Public Administration)

## In many countries, younger generations more accepting of homosexuality

% who say homosexuality should be accepted by society



The Global Divide on Homosexuality Persists (Pew Research Center, 2019)



# 'Sexual Orientation' as a Main Battleground



## Politicized Homophobia

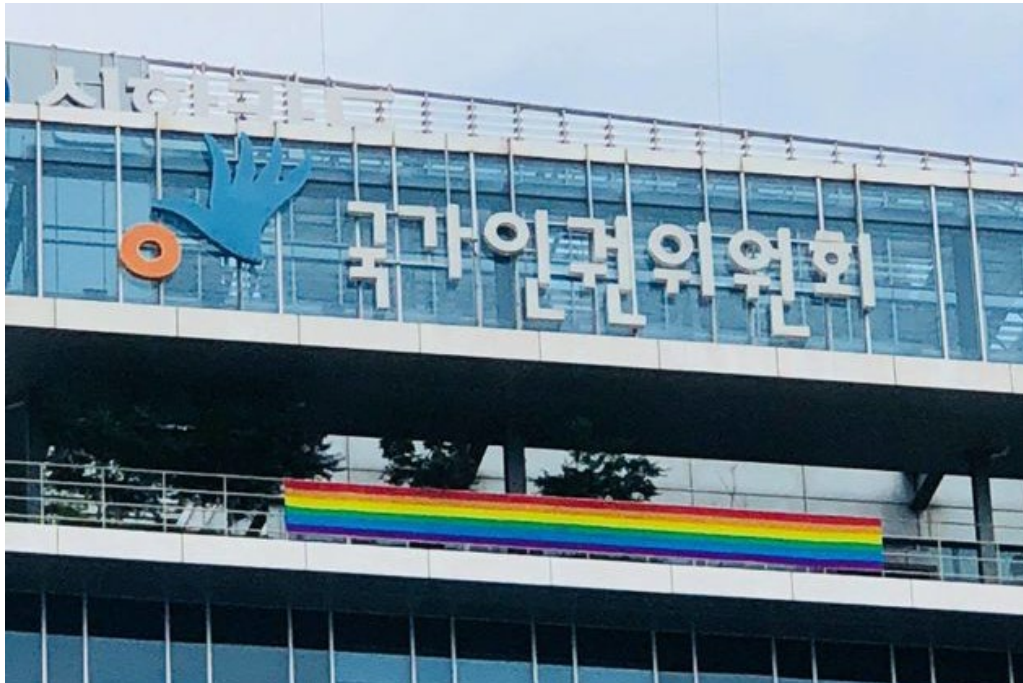
In the late 2000s, homophobia became politically organized under the conservative government, which fervently opposes anything to do with "sexual orientation".



## Delayed institutionalization of SOGI

Domestic civil society and international human rights institutions have been calling on the South Korean government to enact anti-discrimination legislation, including SOGI, for decades.

# Inadequacy of NHRCK



## LGBTQ+ Supportive Government Agency

The National Human Rights Commission of Korea has been advocating for LGBTQ+ rights under the principle of non-discrimination. It carried out LGBTQ surveys in 2014 and 2020.



## Insufficient Impact

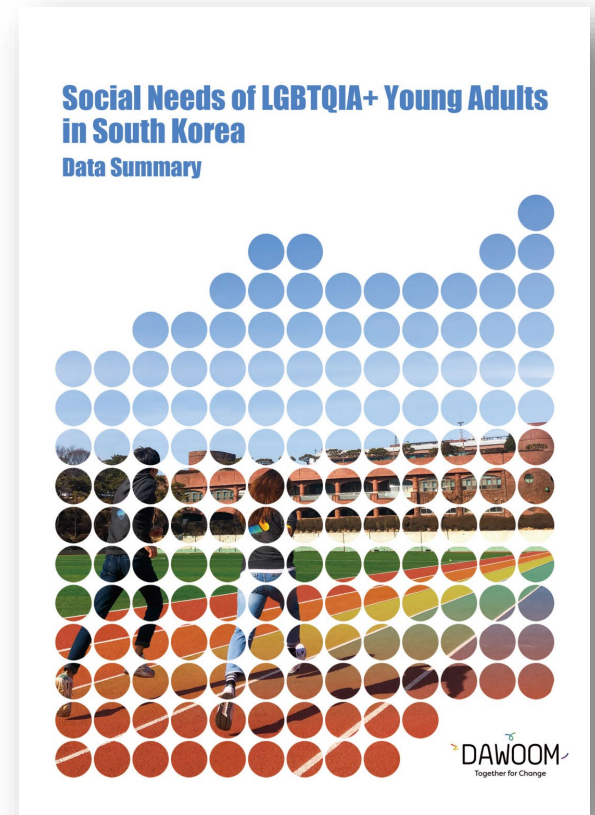
It is based on the only law that refers to sexual orientation and lacks substantive protections and penalties against discrimination. Currently, four anti-discrimination bills based on the NHRCK are pending in the National Assembly.



# Introduction to Survey

## Social Needs of LGBTQIA+ Young Adults in South Korea

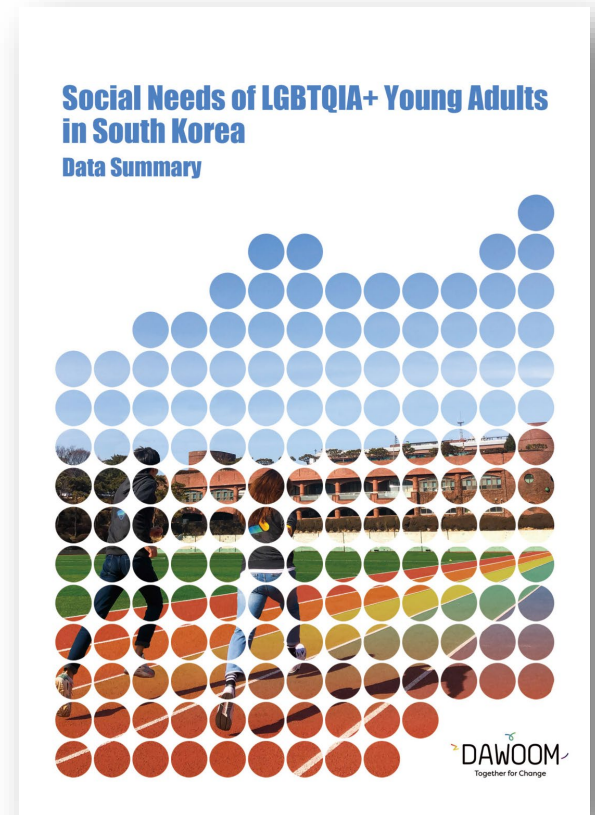
- DAWOOM is a young LGBTQ+ activist organization founded in 2020
- The survey funded by the Seoul Metropolitan Government's Youth Project Program in 2021
- The largest survey in South Korea with 3,911 participants in surveys and 50 participants in interviews
- The survey was conducted among young LGBTQ people aged 19 to 34 living in South Korea



# Introduction to Survey

## Social Needs of LGBTQIA+ Young Adults in South Korea

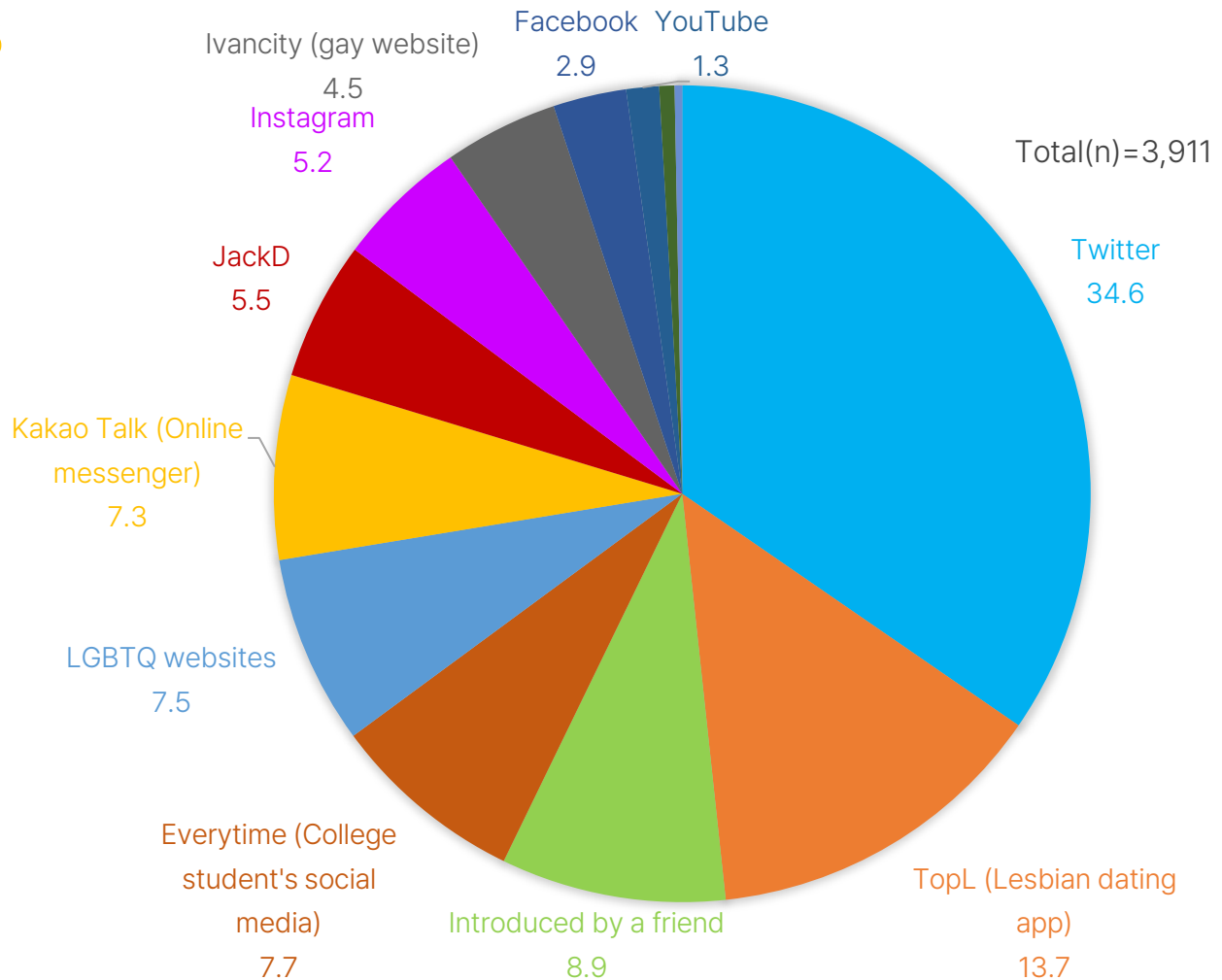
- For comparison, we utilized the same questions from the following survey
  - LGBTI Community Social Needs Survey (2014) conducted by gay organization Chingusai
  - Survey on Discrimination based on SOGI (2014), and Survey on Transgender Discrimination (2020) conducted by NHRCK
  - A long way to go for LGBTI equality (2020) conducted by European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA)
  - and Korean domestic welfare surveys for comparison with general youth



# Respondent Characteristics

## Participating channels

A relatively large number of participants come from Twitter, but a diverse mix of dating applications, university social media, etc.

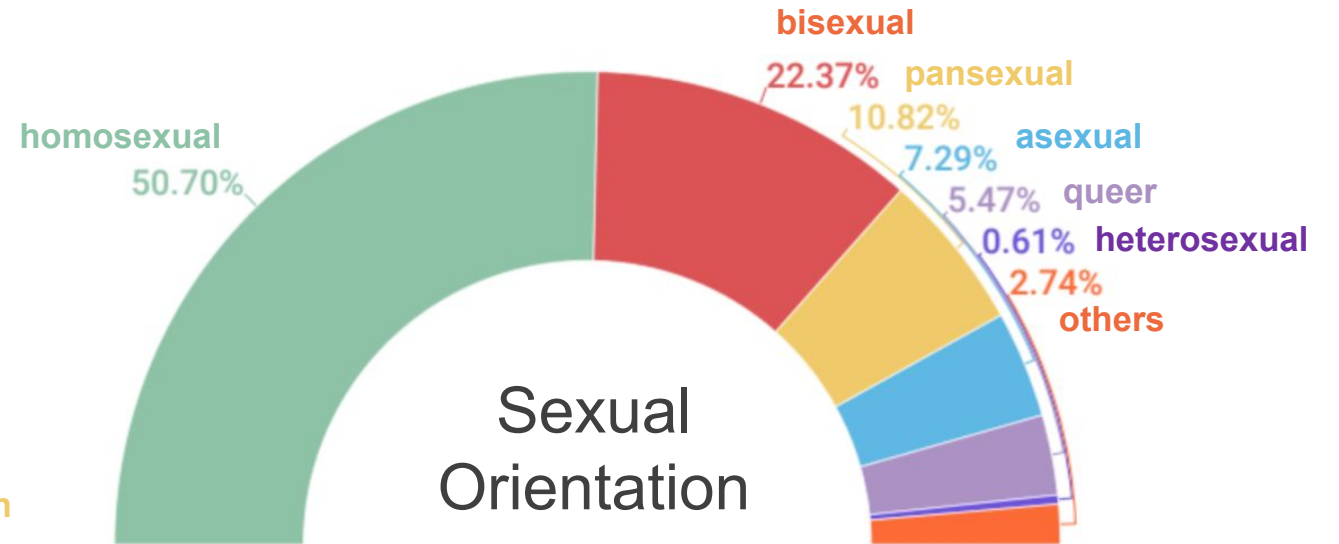
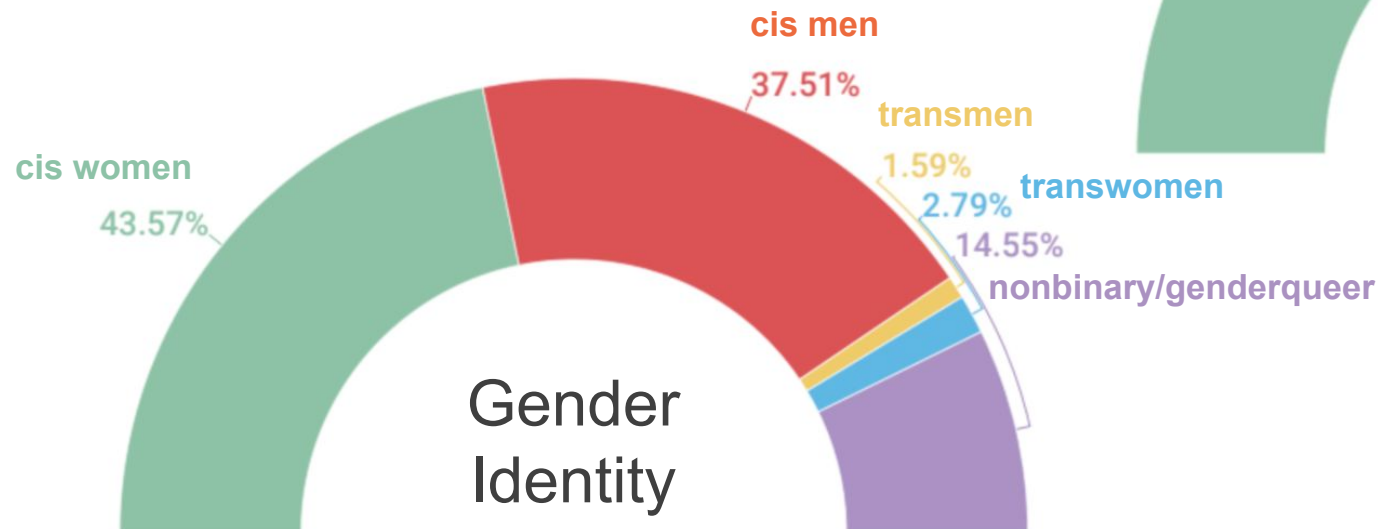




# Respondent Characteristics

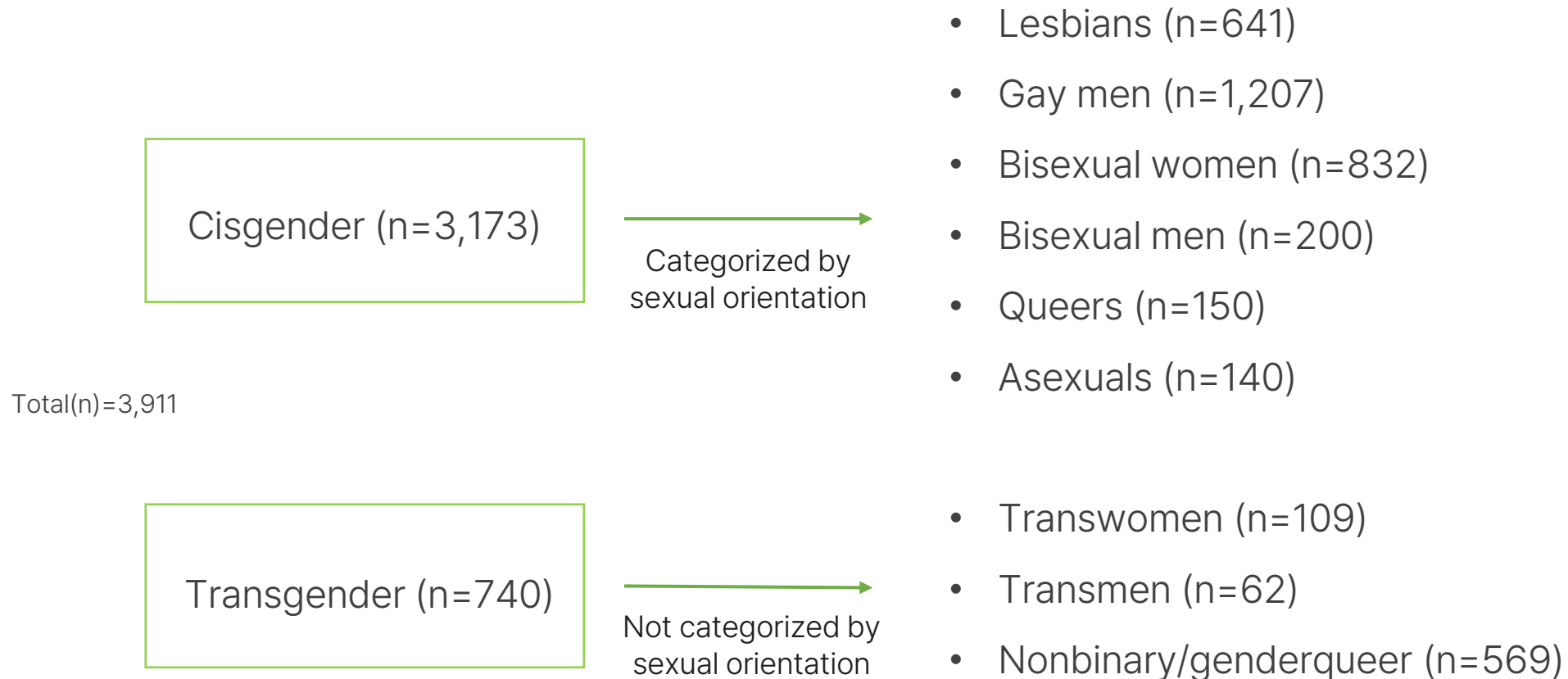
## Sexual and Gender Identities

Total(n)=3,911



# Respondent Characteristics

## Categorization for analysis



# Respondent Characteristics

## Demographic Information

N=3,911		N	%
Age	19–24	1,909	48.8
	25–29	1,270	32.5
	30–34	732	18.7
Education	High school graduate	718	18.4
	College student	1,457	37.3
	College graduate	1,329	34.0
	Graduate School	407	10.4
Marital Status	Single	3,884	99.3
	Married	24	0.6
	Divorced/bereaved	3	0.1

N=3,911		N	%
Religion	Buddhism	290	7.4
	Catholicism	291	7.4
	Protestantism	380	9.7
	No religion	2,905	74.3
Job Status	Employed	1,621	41.5
	Student	1,694	43.3
	Unemployed	596	15.2
Subjective Class Identification	5 (High)	99	2.5
	4	735	18.8
	3	1,437	36.7
	2	1,284	32.8
	1 (Low)	356	9.1



# Identities and Communities

## Coming Out



Age of First  
Coming Out

19.2

	Age
Total (n=3,451)	19.2
Lesbians (n=641)	18.4
Gay men (n=1,207)	19.8
Bisexual women (n=832)	19.0
Bisexual men (n=200)	20.0
Queers (n=150)	18.8
Asexuals (n=140)	20.8
Transwomen (n=109)	20.1
Transmen (n=62)	18.3
Nonbinary/genderqueer (n=569)	18.8

11.8% have never come out in their lives

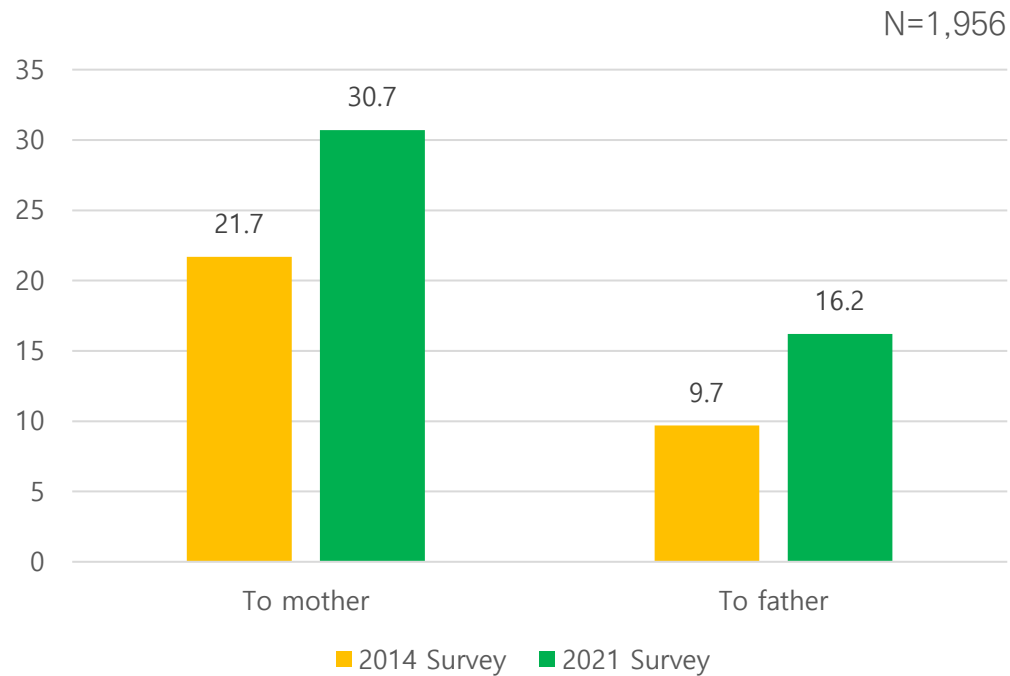
### Coming Out by Audience

N=3,451

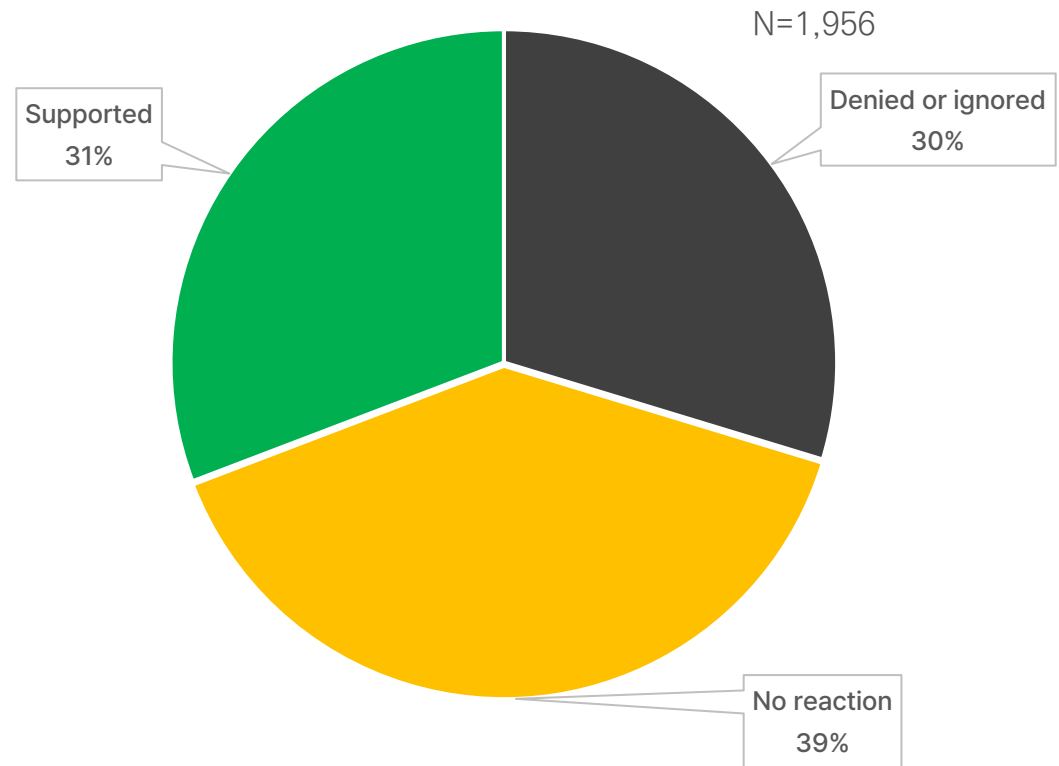
	Did	Did not	Not applicable
Mother	30.7	63.6	5.7
Father	16.2	74.8	9
Siblings	37.1	52.0	10.8
Friends	78.0	20.2	1.8
Co-workers	15.2	64.8	19.9
Superiors	7.3	71.3	21.5
Counselors	26.4	48.0	25.7
Doctors	17.9	58.6	23.6

# Identities and Communities

## Coming Out



**Coming out to parents**



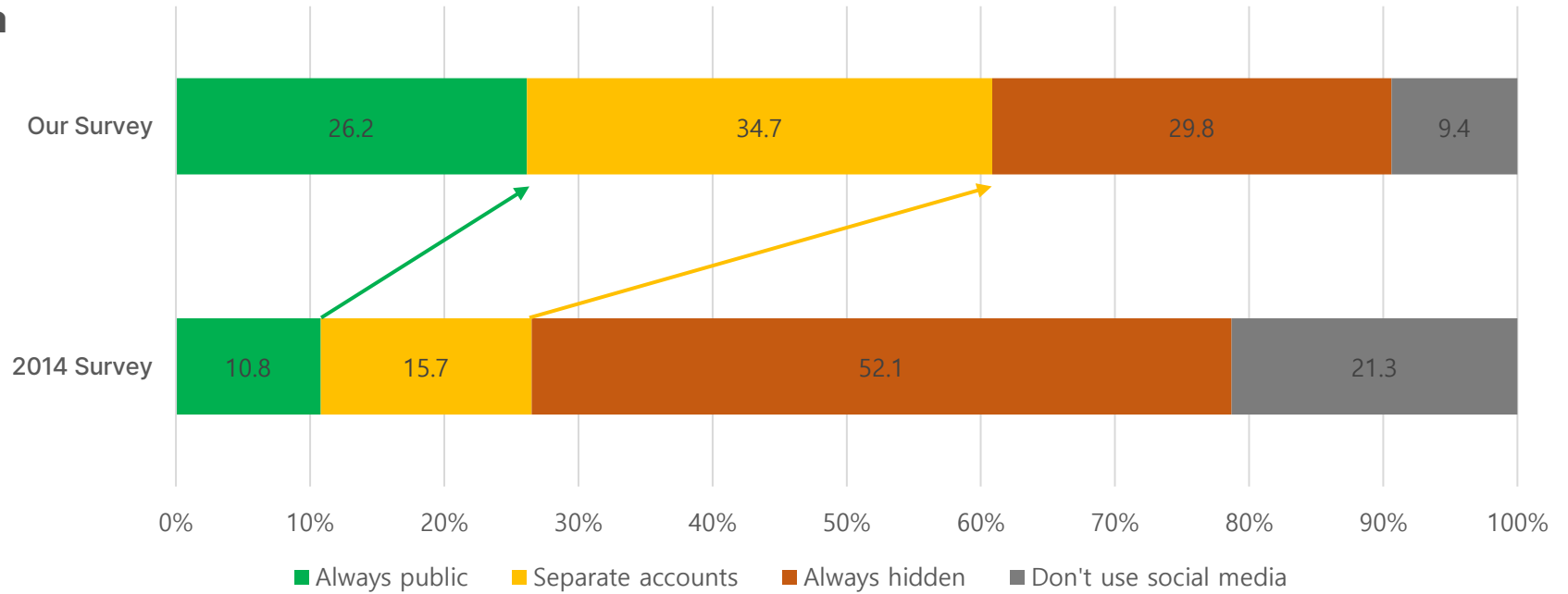
**Parents acceptance of coming out**

# Identities and Communities

## Online Community

### Identity disclosure on online social media

N=3,911





# Experiences of Discrimination

## Discrimination based on SOGI



**34%**

felt discriminated  
against in the year  
before the survey

Lesbians  37%

Gay men  25%

Bisexuals  33%

Asexuals  42%

Queers  49%

Cis women  31%

Cis men  23%

Transmen  71%

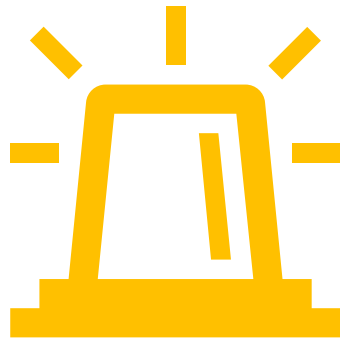
Transwomen  69%

Nonbinary/  
genderqueer  56%

N=3,911

# Experiences of Discrimination

## Reporting Discrimination



**Only 4%**

**of most recent incidents of discrimination  
were reported to the national equality body,  
police, or some other organizations**

In Europe, the response rate for the same question was 11% according to "A long way to go for LGBTI equality (2020)."

### I didn't report it, because...

N=1,115

*Multiple responses	N	%
it's not going to be changed	596	53.0
It happens all the time	596	53.0
I don't want to reveal my identity	434	38.6
I thought people might take it lightly	322	28.6
I didn't want to think about it again	211	18.8
I couldn't trust the organization/boss	186	16.5
I don't know where to report	153	13.6
I was afraid of retaliation from the perpetrator	69	6.1
I tried to solve the problem on my own or with someone close to me	45	4.0
others	47	4.2

# Experiences of Discrimination

## Look for a Job



**22.6%**

**felt discrimination  
in the job search process**

%	total (n=3,318)	Cis women (n=1,457)	Cis men (n=1,226)	Transmen (n=56)	Transwomen (n=97)	Nonbinary/ genderqueer (n=482)
---	--------------------	------------------------	----------------------	--------------------	----------------------	--------------------------------------

I have suffered discrimination, and/because ...	22.6	17.5	13.3	60.7	69.1	42.1
---	------	------	------	------	------	------

*multiple responses	total (n=722)	Cis women (n=255)	Cis men (n=163)	Transmen (n=34)	Transwomen (n=67)	Nonbinary/ genderqueer (n=203)
---------------------	------------------	----------------------	--------------------	--------------------	----------------------	--------------------------------------

I've heard negative comments about not being masculine/feminine enough in appearance, behavior, tone of voice, etc.	73.7	82.0	66.9	50.0	56.7	78.3
---	------	------	------	------	------	------

I gave up looking for a specific job	19.1	8.6	16.6	35.3	46.3	22.7
--------------------------------------	------	-----	------	------	------	------

I failed to prepare certain required documents.	16.6	6.3	16.6	29.4	47.8	17.2
---	------	-----	------	------	------	------

My legal sex did not match my gender	11.4	1.2	1.2	38.2	43.3	17.2
--------------------------------------	------	-----	-----	------	------	------

I've heard negative comments about why I don't get married	9.6	11.0	10.4	2.9	4.5	9.9
--	-----	------	------	-----	-----	-----

They were denied or canceled hiring after my identities were revealed.	5.4	2.7	2.5	8.8	17.9	6.4
--	-----	-----	-----	-----	------	-----

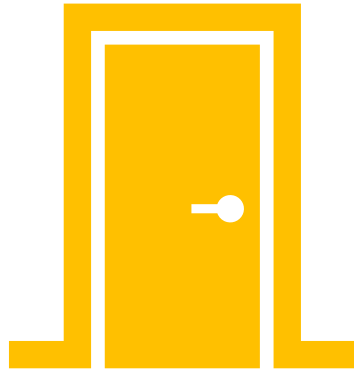
I gave up certain jobs because I had to provide legal identification documents	3.0	0.4	1.2	14.7	14.9	2.0
--	-----	-----	-----	------	------	-----

others	2.2	1.6	4.9	2.9	1.5	1.0
--------	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----



# Experiences of Discrimination

## In the workplace



**73.3%**

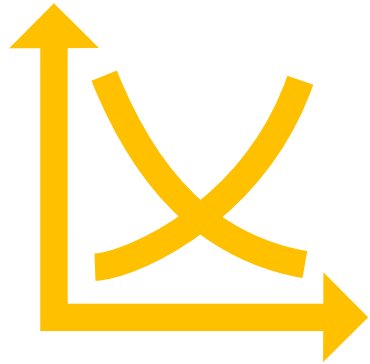
**hid or deceived  
their identity at work**

### At work, I ...

%	total (n=1,371)	Cis women (n=518)	Cis men (n=622)	transmen (n=20)	transwomen (n=38)	Nonbinary/ genderqueer (n=173)
came out	13.2	15.3	9.0	15.0	21.1	20.2
hide my LGBTQ identity	73.3	70.8	76.2	60.0	81.6	69.9
experienced negative words and actions because of being LGBTQ	12.3	10.6	12.9	15.0	13.2	14.5
witnessed a coworker being discriminated against for being LGBTQ.	20.7	18.5	22.7	20.0	21.1	20.2
experienced an overall negative atmosphere toward LGBTQ people	42.5	42.3	42.4	45.0	36.8	44.5

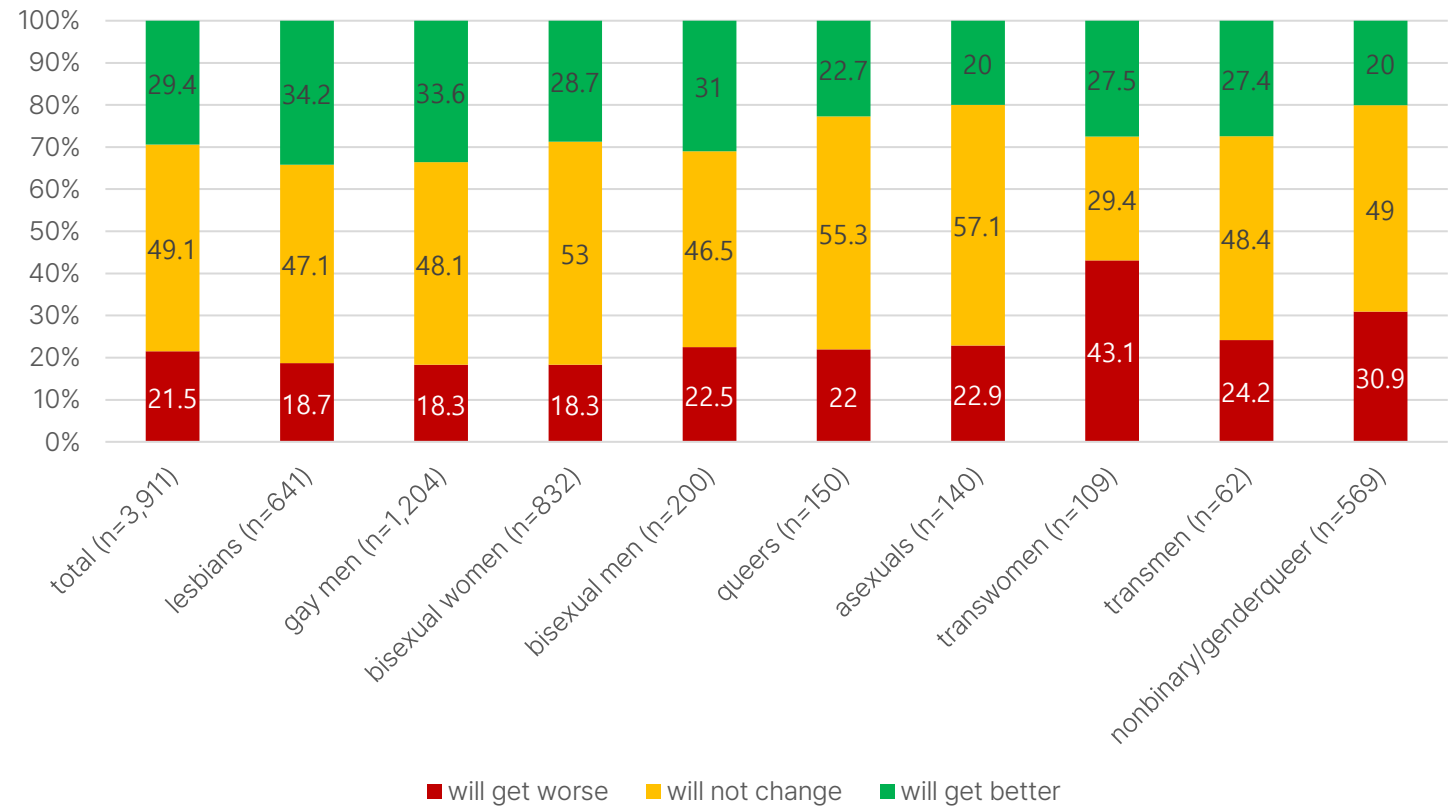
# Experiences of Discrimination

## Looking to the Future



**43.1%**  
**of transwomen**

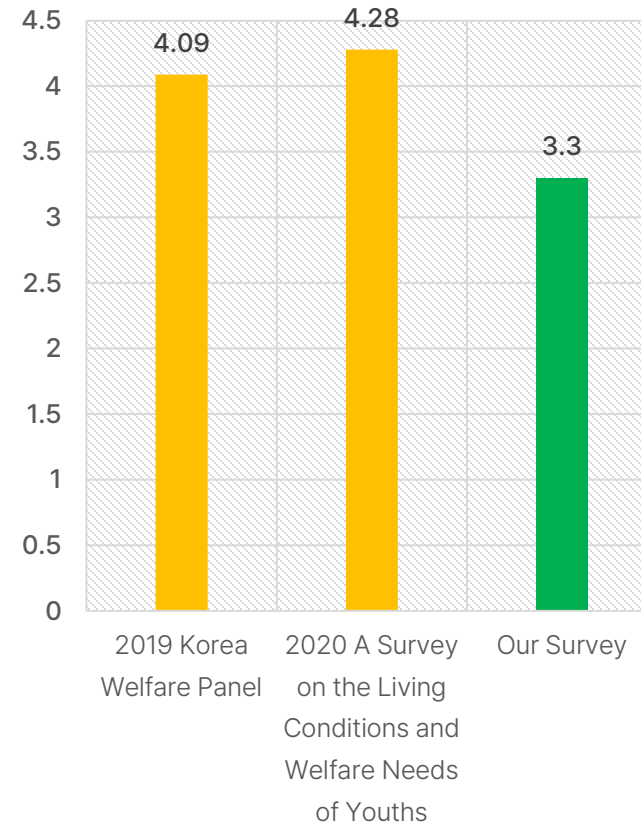
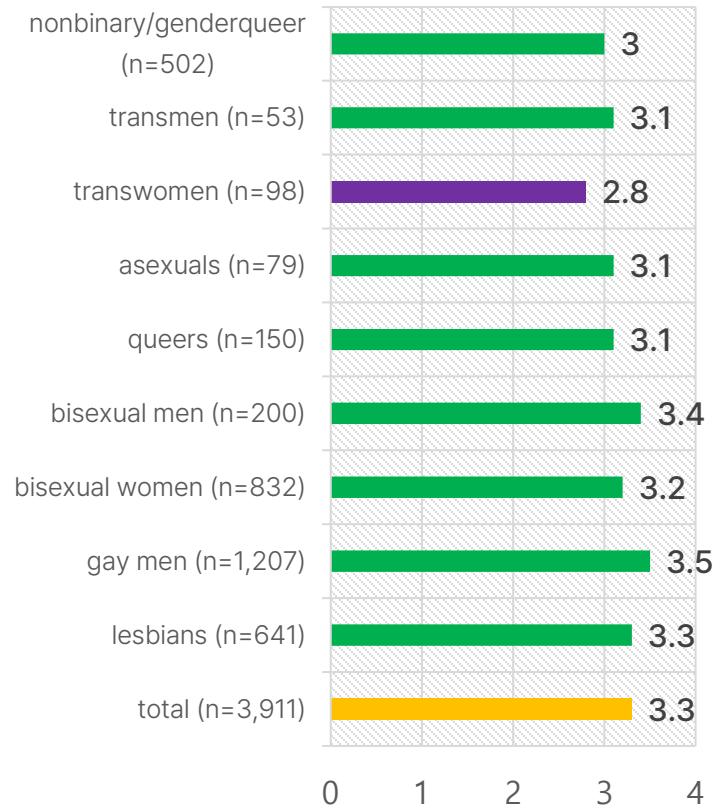
think that their financial situation  
is getting worse



# Health and Housing

## Subjective Health Status

1 to 5 points



\* The other two surveys were also limited to 19-34 for comparison.



# Health and Housing

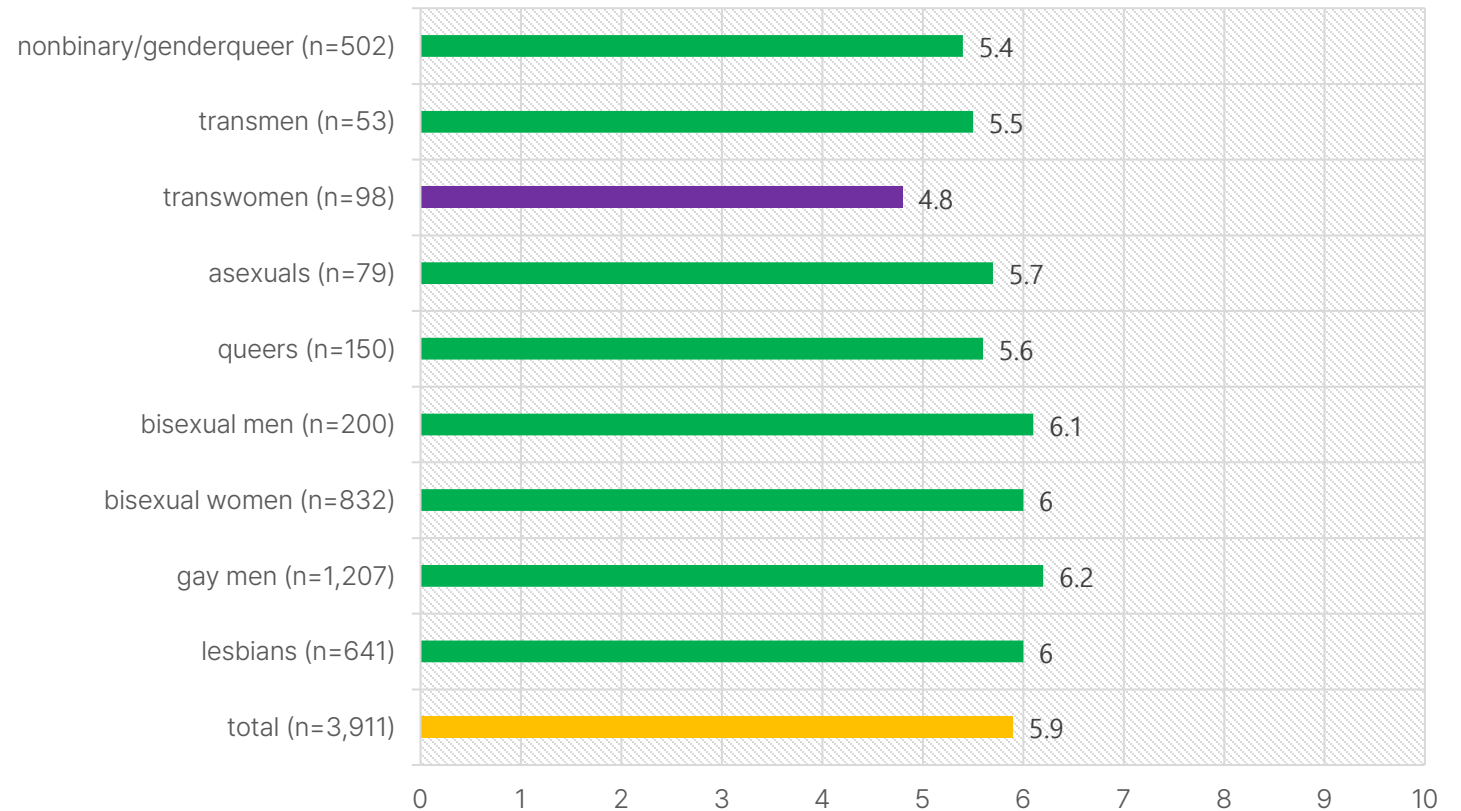
## Subjective Happiness



How happy were you yesterday?

**Transwomen average 4.8**

1 to 10 points



# Health and Housing

## Depression and Psychiatric Experiences



**49.8%**

has suspected depressive symptoms

%	Depressive symptoms (in the past week)	Psychiatric visit (in the past year)	Psychiatric medication (in the past year)
Total (n=3,911)	49.8	37.6	30.8
Lesbians (n=641)	47.4	35.1	28.5
Gay men (n=1,207)	39.9	26.0	20.7
Bisexual women (n=832)	51.0	39.5	32.1
Bisexual men (n=200)	42.0	30.0	23.5
Queers (n=150)	58.7	42.0	34.0
Asexuals (n=140)	49.3	41.4	28.6
Transwomen (n=109)	71.6	50.5	45.0
Transmen (n=62)	53.2	40.3	33.9
Nonbinary/genderqueer (n=569)	68.2	59.8	52.2

# Health and Housing

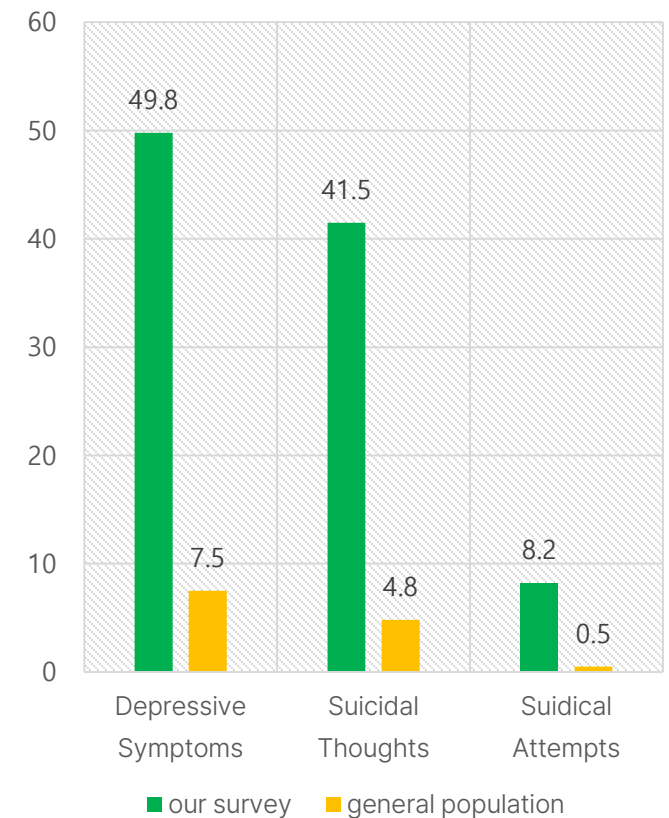
## Suicidal Thoughts and Attempts



**8.2%**

have attempted suicide  
in the past year

In the past year...	(%)	Suicidal Thoughts	Suicidal Attempts
Total (n=3,911)		41.5	8.2
Lesbians (n=641)		40.4	9.4
Gay men (n=1,207)		27.9	4.5
Bisexual women (n=832)		45.2	8.5
Bisexual men (n=200)		31.5	4.0
Queers (n=150)		44.7	10.0
Asexuals (n=140)		44.3	8.6
Transwomen (n=109)		58.7	20.2
Transmen (n=62)		59.7	12.9
Nonbinary/genderqueer (n=569)		62.9	12.1



Compared with data from the Korea Welfare Panel (2020) and the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (2019).

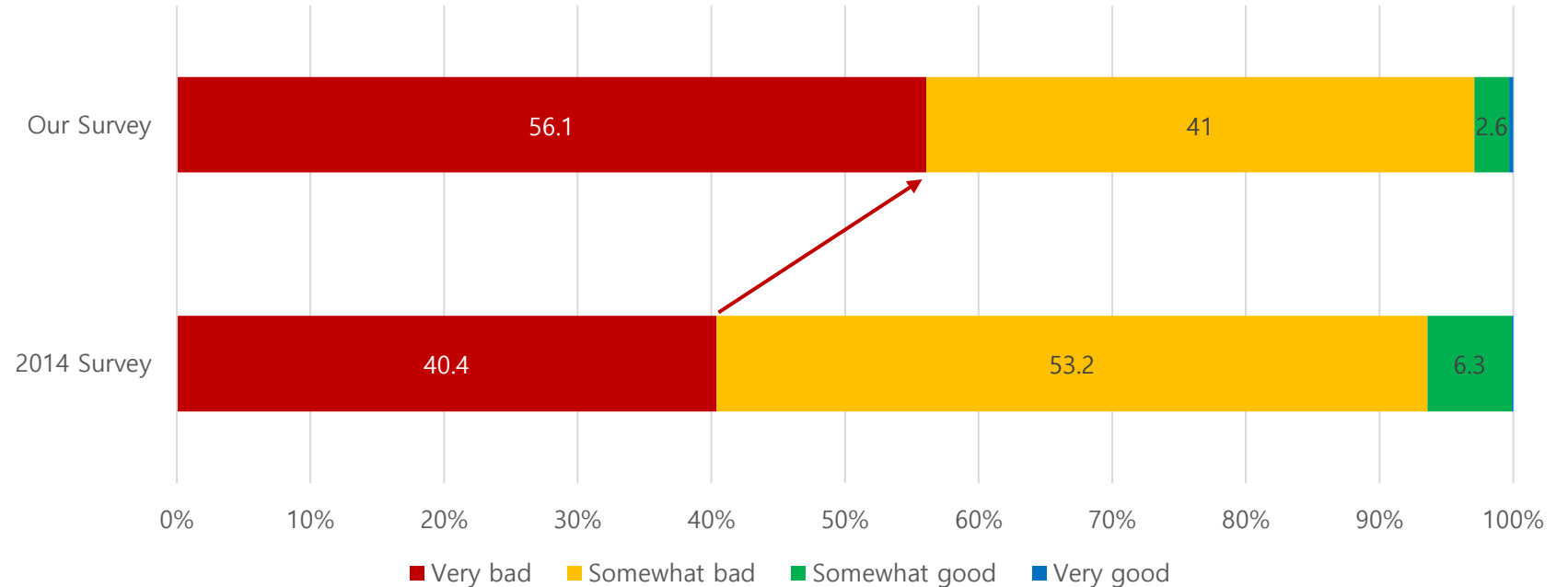
# Socio-political Needs

## Perception on the S. Korean Society



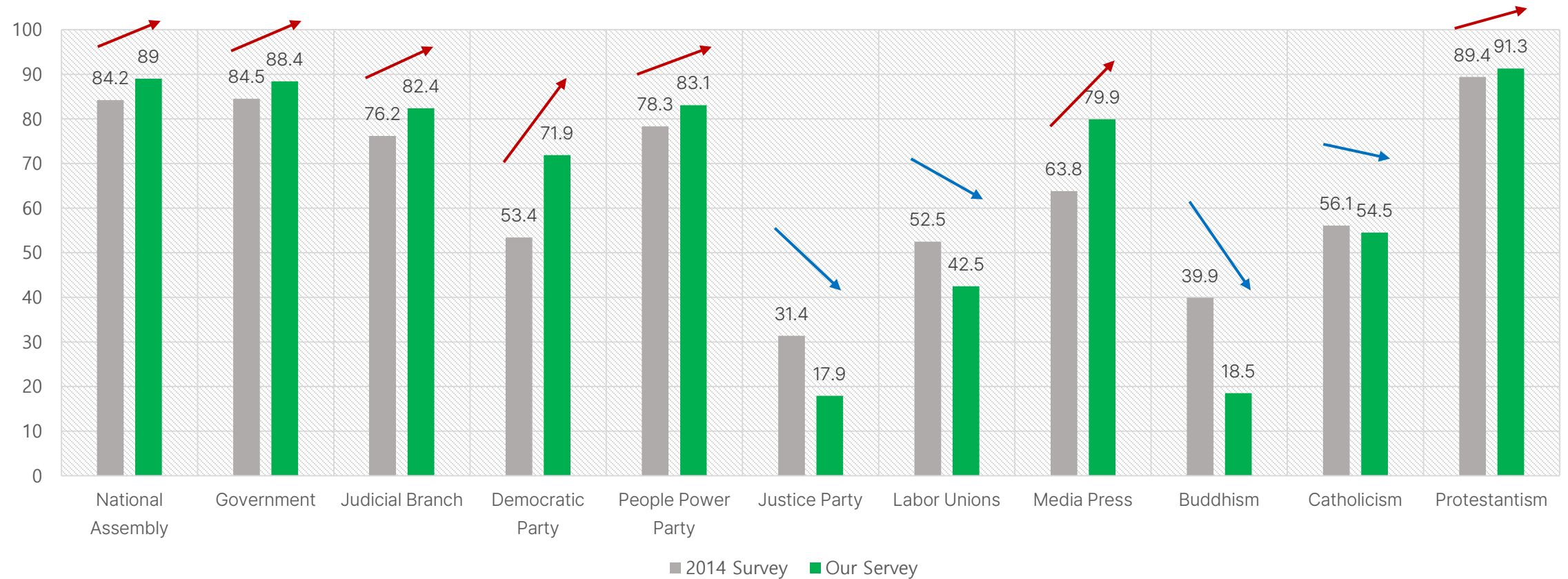
**97.1%**

think that South Korea  
is a bad place for  
LGBTQ people



# Socio-political Needs

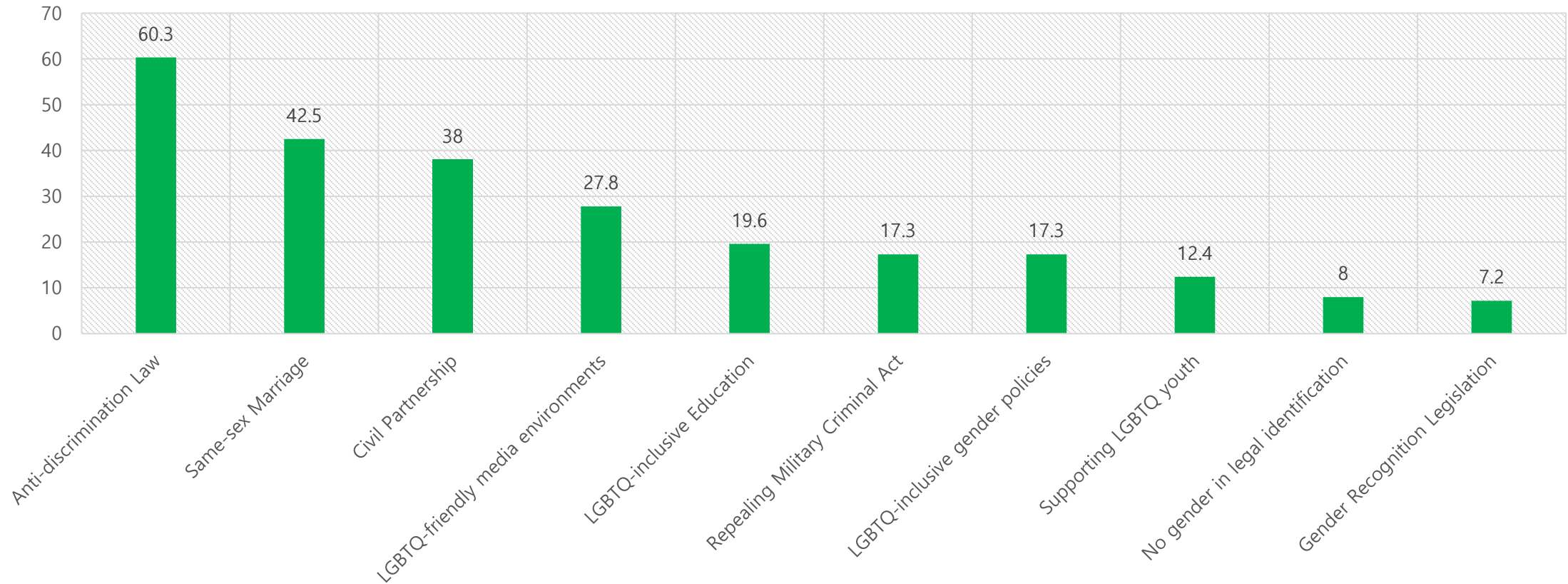
## Perceptions of Attitudes toward LGBTQ by Organizations



# Socio-political Needs

## Policy Priorities

\* Multiple responses





# Conclusion

## **It's obviously bad, but it's getting better.**

- The survey, which is the largest community-based survey of its kind in South Korea, shows both positive and negative results.
- LGBTQ youth are still vulnerable to discrimination, but they are more out than in the past. Specifically, more youth are expressing themselves that don't fit into traditional and binary categories.
- Many LGBTQ youth still experience discrimination in their families, daily lives, and workplaces. Most discrimination is not publicly recognized and addressed.
- The mental health of LGBTQ youth is very concerning, especially the mental health and economic situation of trans women.
- The majority of respondents felt that attitudes towards LGBTQ people in politics had deteriorated in recent years and called for anti-discrimination legislation and recognition of partnerships.

# Thank you!

**You can read the English summary on the web!**

[bit.ly/dawoom2023](https://bit.ly/dawoom2023)

