



I WAS BANNED

How the situation of Russian LGBTQ individuals and organizations has changed after the Russian full-scale invasion of Ukraine



Study Results

EQUAL
POSTOST

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The purpose of the conducted research is a systematic analysis of the changes in the position of LGBTQ individuals and organizations in Russia that occurred after the full-scale invasion of Ukraine by Russia on February 24, 2022. The authors examine the influence of state propaganda, the legal and psychological consequences of homophobic and transphobic laws, as well as the practice of applying new legislative norms. The study focuses on three particularly vulnerable groups: LGBTQ families with children, transgender individuals, and LGBTQ people from the North Caucasus. The issues of the migration of LGBTQ individuals forced to flee from Russia due to the state-sponsored homo-, bi-, and transphobic campaign that resulted in the deprivation of their rights against the background of the war are addressed. The research was conducted by the organization EQUAL PostOst e.V. with financial support from Civil Society Forum e.V.

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3 INTRODUCTION

4 GOALS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

4 STUDY METHODS

- 4 A desk study of discrimination, legislation and law enforcement
 - 5 The interviews of experts
 - 5 Online survey
 - 5 Psychological assessment of LGBTQ people's condition
-

6 STUDIES OF DISCRIMINATION

- 7 LGBTQ community's state before the conservative turn
 - 8 Transgender people's situation
 - 9 LGBTQ people's situation in the North Caucasus
 - 10 Situation of LGBTQ families with kids
-

12 ANALYSIS OF LEGISLATION AND OF ITS PRACTICAL APPLICATION

- 14 Regional Laws "On Gay Propaganda"
- 14 The first federal law "On banning gay propaganda among minors"
- 17 LGBTQ censorship
- 17 Hate crimes against LGBTQ people
- 19 Removing children from LGBTQ families
- 22 Campaign of LGBTQ+ people's murders and persecutions in the North Caucasus
- 23 Adolescent suicides
- 24 Impact of laws on "banning LGBT propaganda among minors"
- on decision-making authorities
- 25 LGBTQ people's insularity, lack of acceptance of their sexual orientation,
- and/or gender identity
- 26 Conversion therapy
- 27 The new federal law "on banning gay propaganda among all ages"
- 30 Incidents of violence against LGBTQ people
- 31 Introduction of total LGBTQ censorship in book publishing and bookselling,
- shows, films and TV programs
- 34 Introduction of total LGBTQ censorship on the Internet
- 36 The closure of LGBTQ+ centers and LGBTQ+ organizations
- 38 Ongoing violence against LGBTQ+ people in the North Caucasus
- 39 A decrease in the applied practice standards of the psychiatric profession
- 39 Cross-discrimination against LGBT people
- 43 Law "on banning transgender transition"
- 46 Recognition of the "international LGBT public movement" as an extremist organization,
- ban on its activities in Russia

48 SURVEY RESULTS: DISCRIMINATION, NEEDS AND CHANGES AFTER THE START OF THE MILITARY INVASION AND THE NEW "PROPAGANDA" LAW

- 49 Discrimination, problems, and needs of LGBTQ people living in Russia
 - 50 Socio-demographic portrait
 - 52 Needs
 - 53 Discrimination, harassment and risk avoidance
- 59 War, propaganda, and the past year's changes in Russia's territory
 - 59 Russia's full-scale military invasion of Ukraine
 - 64 A new law "on banning gay-propaganda among all ages"
 - 65 Future and plans to live
 - 67 Changes that could lead to a more comfortable life
- 67 The lives of LGBTQ people who left Russia after the start of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine
 - 68 Time of departure and geography
 - 70 Государства, куда после 24 февраля 2022 года эмигрировали участн_ицы опроса (на первом месте — большее количество участн_иц опроса, на последнем месте — меньшее количество участн_иц опроса):
 - 71 Sociodemographic portrait
 - 73 Reasons for departure, resources, and choice of country
 - 75 Emotional state
 - 77 Staying in a new country, safety, and experience of discrimination
 - 78 Plans and a possible return

79 PSYCHOLOGICAL STATE OF LGBTQ PEOPLE IN RUSSIA

- 80 Psychological state characteristics of LGBTQ people
 - 80 The intensity of depressive states
 - 82 Suicidal trends
 - 83 States of anxiety and fear
 - 85 Dissociative processes
 - 86 Worsening of previously diagnosed mental illnesses
 - 87 Breakdown of social ties, polarization
 - 88 Reflexivity of discrimination
- 89 Coping strategies of LGBTQ people in crisis conditions
 - 89 Asking for professional help from a psychologist and/or psychiatrist
 - 90 Departing or departure planning
 - 93 Supporting others
 - 94 Addictive behavior
 - 95 Denial
- 95 Expert Opinions: the possibility of providing psychological assistance to LGBTQ people in Russia and in emigration

97 CONCLUSIONS

98 RECOMENDATION

99 APPENDIX 1. REPORT LIST

101 APPENDIX 2. ARTICLE 6.21 OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION ADMINISTRATIVE OFFENSES CODE

103 APPENDIX 3. ARTICLE 6.21.2 OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION ADMINISTRATIVE OFFENSES CODE

INTRODUCTION

On February 24, 2022, the full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine began. These events have affected the lives of not only Ukrainian civilians but also selected social groups within Russia. Since that day, the Russian authorities, headed by Vladimir Putin, have intensified the persecution of LGBTQ people, and a new phase of reprisals against the LGBTQ community has become one of the main directions of domestic policy.

The officially chosen state narrative is dedicated to turning the Russian people's attention away from the military failure. This leads to the persecution of Russian society's members primarily on the basis of their membership in a social group rather than their actions and views.

Putin's regime put a massive resource into cultivating LGBTQ-community hatred. Such influence on public opinion contributes to more widespread repression. LGBTQ people face hate crimes and hate speeches. They have been denied medical treatment, they get fired from their jobs and expelled from their educational institutions, and they suffer from daily life discrimination and police abuse. The repressive measures are applied not only by the state itself within the framework of homophobic and transphobic legislation but also by Russian society.

Although authorities' attention to a particular group and incitement to hatred against a group on the basis of affiliation are not unique proceeds for Russia, the restrictions on LGBTQ people's rights and freedoms by law and on practices reach emergency proportions.

Mariana Katsarova, the UN's Special Rapporteur on Human Rights in the Russian Federation, responded to these changes. On September 20, 2023, she made the following points in her report¹, to the UN Human Rights Council:

- Since 2022, anti-LGBTQ laws have become a cornerstone of the Putin regime's policies.
- The laws «banning gay propaganda among all ages» and «the gender transition law» must be repealed.
- The ban on disseminating information on sexual orientation and gender identity, depriving transgender people of the right to transition (legal and medical), and prohibiting marriage, adoption, custody, or guardianship of children contravene Russia's human rights obligations.

EQUAL PostOst, a European human rights organization, conducted a study on the situation of LGBTQ people in 2023—both those who continue to live in Russia after the start of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine and those who were forced to flee the country. The purpose of the report is a detailed analysis of the changes that have occurred in the situation of LGBTQ people in Russia at the level of legislation, practices of its implementation, daily life, and psychological state of the community, as well as providing recommendations for the governments of LGBTQ-safe countries.

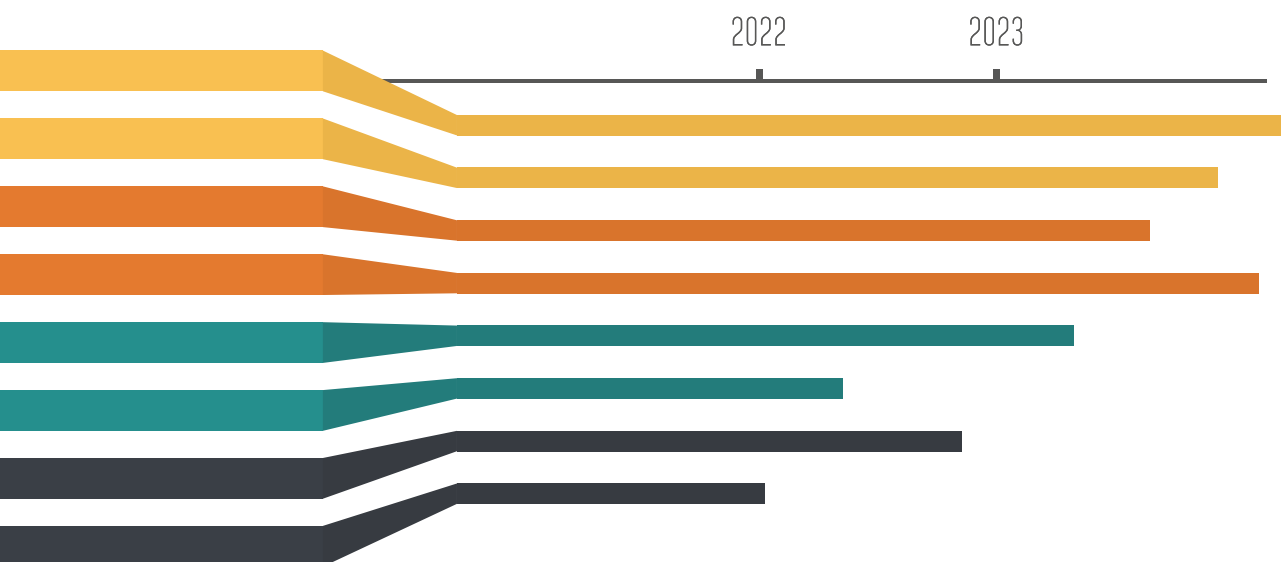
In the process of preparing the report, 30 experts working on the Russian LGBTQ agenda were interviewed. These included psychologists, lawyers, and human rights activists; specialists in migration and evacuation of LGBTQ people (including those from the North Caucasus); representatives of local aid organizations; activists involved in supporting transgender people; and LGBTQ families with children. An online survey was also conducted with the participation of 3,591 people, both those living in Russia and those who will be forced to leave Russia after February 2022.

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The goal of the study is to systematically analyze and describe the changes of the LGBTQ people's predicament in Russia after the start of the full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 and in the context of relevant Russian domestic policy, affecting the realization by LGBTQ people of their rights and freedoms, guaranteed by international human rights documents.

The objectives of the study are:

- ▲ To assess the current state of the rights of LGBTQ people in Russia;
- ▲ To define the level of the LGBTQ community's safety in the face of intense state propaganda and political pressure;
- ▲ To study the effects of homophobic and transphobic law adoption in Russia over the past year and a-half;
- ▲ To identify the practice of applying new legislative norms, to determine how repressive measures actually affect the daily lives of LGBTQ people;
- ▲ To analyze the influence of the intense pressure in the LGBTQ people's mental state;
- ▲ To make a recommendation for the governments of the countries that are safe for LGBTQ people.



STUDY METHODS

The report combines data collection and analysis methods, using several research approaches:

A desk study of discrimination, legislation and enforcement

The current study is framed within the broader context of analyzing homophobia and transphobia in Russia. To do this, the authors of the report looked to previously existing studies and other reports. Homophobia and transphobia are factors that directly impact discrimination against LGBTQ individuals. In the face of shifting the framework of the law the level of homophobia will likely grow.

In order to systematize information on forms of discrimination against LGBTQ people in the legal field, as well as on how changes in legislation affect their private, professional, social, and public lives, an analysis of legislation and law enforcement was conducted.

The interviews of experts

For a deeper understanding of the practices and effects of discrimination, interviews with experts were conducted: representatives of non-commercial organizations and civil society, human rights activists, support specialists, medical professionals, and psychologists working with LGBTQ issues in Russia and/or having to move after the start of full-scale Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

Approaching the experts helped to expand knowledge about LGBTQ people's discrimination and problems, keep up-to-date with the conclusions of existing reports and studies, and also triangulate the survey data. On the basis of the data, the study's authors have made recommendations for the governments of countries that are safe for LGBTQ people.

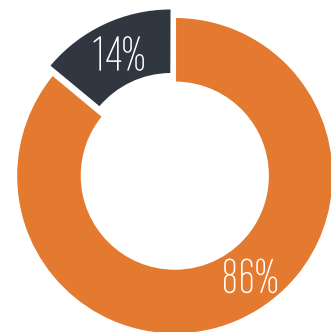
30 experts took part in the study. The interviews were conducted online and on condition of anonymity, mostly recorded on a voice recorder with subsequent decoding.

Online survey

To understand the scale of discrimination, an online survey of LGBTQ persons was conducted. This part of the study is necessary and important to a current situation assessment, although the approach has limitations and access in the Russian «field» is complicated.

Information about the survey was spread through the groups, chats, and telegram channels of friendly organizations and initiatives, so the sampling is conventional. Due to the lack of data on the general population, it was impossible to conduct the survey by random sampling. So the results of the study do not claim to be representative. However, they give an idea of LGBTQ situation both in Russia and emigration. Data collection took place from May through July 2023. 3,735 people participated in the survey. Responses of those who did not meet the conditions for participation in the study (respondents under 18 years) were removed from the analysis. The final sample, after cleaning the data from errors, amounted to 3,591 cases.

The respondents were offered to reply to the questions about their experience of discrimination, their needs, and the psychological and financial condition of LGBTQ people in Russia, as well as the open questions about changes in their lives after the start of the full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine in February 2022. The respondents who were located abroad were offered questions about their migration process, their needs, adaptation in a new country, and further plans. 3095 people who are in Russia (86% of respondents) and 496 people who are abroad have participated in the survey.



Psychological assessment of LGBTQ people's condition

For the assessment of LGBTQ people's condition, the following were used:

The Hospital Anxiety and Depression Scale intended for initial screening for anxiety and depression;
open questions about the psycho-emotional state;

interview with experts who work with the psychological and psychiatric requests of LGBTQ representatives living both in Russia and abroad after February 24, 2022.

Applying different research methods and working with several types of data allows us to talk about general trends in the lives of LGBTQ people in Russia, forms of discrimination and their experiences of it, as well as changes caused by the beginning of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine and the tightening of the law "on banning gay propaganda».

STUDIES OF DISCRIMINATION

Research on changes in the situation of LGBTQ people in Russia is impossible without relying on the work of last years' discrimination monitoring teams. Several organizations conduct the monitoring in Russia. The best known are the studies of the initiative group "Coming Out" the Russian LGBT Network, and the foundation "Sphere."

Annual reports by the "Coming Out" have been published since 2014 and describe offenses, cases of discrimination, and harassment of LGBTQ people in St. Petersburg. The "Sphere" Foundation monitors cases of discrimination across Russia together with the Russian LGBT Network. The first joint report was published in 2017. A full list of reports relied upon by the authors of the study is provided in Appendix 1.

This chapter examines the situation of the most vulnerable groups within the LGBTQ community and traces the trends reflected in the monitoring teams' reports on the rights of LGBTQ people in Russia. Analyzing the situation of transgender people, LGBTQ people from the North Caucasus, and LGBTQ families with children (biological, adopted, and under guardianship) is an opportunity not only to examine the manifestations of the Putin regime's repressive policies towards the LGBTQ community but also to present private examples of the impact of these policies on people.

LGBTQ COMMUNITY'S STATE BEFORE THE CONSERVATIVE TURN

After the collapse of the USSR in 1991, Russia became an independent state. At this moment, voluntary homosexual relations were considered a crime². This norm was repealed only in 1993, when Russia decided to become a member of the Council of Europe³. During this period, Russia removed legal norms that obviously contradicted the European approach to acknowledging the rights of LGBTQ people.

Since the late 1980s, the first LGBTQ organizations have been functioning in Russia. They conducted regular awareness-raising work to overcome prejudices against LGBTQ people, worked on advocacy for decriminalization of same-sex relationships, and debated the LGBTQ agenda⁴.

In the 1990s, equal rights for LGBTQ people were not an accepted idea. But the Russian authorities did not prevent the building of a society based on equality and diversity of people without regard to sexual orientation and gender identity. At this time, LGBTQ people in Russia, freely and without authorities' pressure, published literature, newspapers and magazines and held events such as conferences and film festivals. Russian society was gradually changing under the influence of the freedom and activities of LGBTQ organizations.

Since 1999, Russia has adapted and still applies at the national level the International Classification of Diseases, 10th revision. At that time, ICD-10 excluded homosexuality from the list of mental disorders, and doctors no longer had the right to diagnose homosexuality and prescribe treatment. At the same time, ICD-10 was not amended to include transgenderism; it was still perceived as a mental illness, which certainly pathologized transgender people.

In the late 2000s, following late-Soviet and early-Russian LGBTQ organizations, third-wave LGBTQ organizations emerged in Russia. They quickly became professional; they had staff and topical programs aimed at supporting and advocating on behalf of the LGBTQ community. These organizations primarily appeared in two major centers: Moscow and St. Petersburg

The country had dozens of dance clubs for homo- and bisexual people and a travesty culture was flourishing. The performers of the "Central Station" gay club took part in the "City Day" celebration program organized by the St. Petersburg mayor's office and staged a show on Nevsky Prospect.

The 2000s saw the growth of LGBTQ activism in Russia. Scientific information about homosexuality and transgenderism was freely spread. Doctors, educators, lawyers, politicians and public figures freely spoke out on LGBTQ issues. As the Internet developed, several nationwide information portals for LGBTQ people appeared.

The conservative turn was outlined in 2006, when the LGBTQ movement grew stronger and began to actively demand political and civil rights for LGBTQ people, declaring their needs and the unacceptability of stigmatization and discrimination. In response to the LGBTQ movement becoming truly visible, the Russian authorities invented the "concept of traditional values," which began to be broadcast in society in order to restrict the rights of LGBTQ people.

2 Article 121 of the RSFSR Criminal Code.

3 RF Law of 29.04.1993 N 4901-1: "On Amendments and Additions to the Criminal Code of the RSFSR, the Criminal Procedure Code of the RSFSR, and the Correctional Labor Code of the RSFSR".

4 Details: Olenichev, M.V., "Queer People in Russia: 30 Years of Hopes, Successes and Defeats", <https://ecom.ngo/news-eeca/kvir-ludi-v-rossii> (reference date: 05.10.2023).

KNOCK ON DOOR

"Since the introduction of the laws on military censorship and the laws on fake news, it was clear that the state was starting to pick on whoever it could. The feeling that there will be a knock on your door. And it does not matter why or what you will be knocked for—it is unclear where and how—but you will leave for 3-5 years, and all your plans and fantasies are turned into nothing by a state crowbar".

TRANSGENDER PEOPLE'S SITUATION

" They forbade her to sit down on a bench at the duty police station. Because the benches are for humans and not for such creatures as she is ".

Before the conservative turn in Russia, transgender individuals were in a relatively progressive position. The federal law "On Civil Status Acts," which was in effect since 1997, admitted the change of gender marker in documents after obtaining a certificate of a specified format from a medical institution. However, since a uniform certificate format had not been developed, practically the procedure did not work, and therefore, changing the gender marker in documents had to be done through the court system.

In 2018, the Ministry of Health of Russia approved an order for a unified certificate, which significantly simplified the procedure for changing the gender marker in documents; it became formalized and followed. Compared to many Western countries, the procedure was liberal and progressive.

The "Coming Out" report of 2014 stated that the rights of transgender people in St. Petersburg, compared to other cities in Russia, were generally implemented favorably⁵, during this period. However, in their report of 2016, the focus is on the particular vulnerability of transgender individuals, especially in the field of labor rights⁶. Labor discrimination against transgender individuals has an additional consequence: changing documents, hormone therapy, and necessary surgeries require a high level of income, while discrimination limits the possibility of obtaining them. This not only leads to dysphoria and a deterioration in the quality of life for transgender individuals but also increases the likelihood of encountering discrimination⁷.

5 Report on the results of monitoring of discrimination and violence on the grounds of sexual orientation and gender identity for 2014. St. Petersburg: Coming Out 2015. Page 9.

6 Report on the monitoring results of discrimination and violence on the grounds of sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression in St. Petersburg in 2016. St. Petersburg: Coming Out, 2017. Pp. 58.

7 Monitoring of discrimination and violence based on sexual orientation and gender identity in Russia in 2016–2017. Russian LGBT Network, 2017. Pp. 33.

The high level of discrimination against this group is evident in subsequent reports as well. For example, in 2017, cases of persecution by authorities were dominated by those involving transgender individuals⁸.

After the start of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, discrimination against transgender people increased, on the one hand, in the sphere of their rights and specific needs and, on the other hand, at the everyday level. Particularly, the procedure for changing and obtaining documents (including opening bank accounts) became more complicated, access to hormone therapy and gender affirmative surgeries became more difficult, and difficulties with employment increased⁹.

LGBTQ PEOPLE'S SITUATION IN THE NORTH CAUCASUS

"When you can be killed simply for your sexual orientation and without any legal repercussions, it's probably hard to imagine anything worse".

Persecution of LGBTQ persons in the Chechen Republic began to be highlighted in the monitoring teams' reports in 2017, following the Novaya Gazeta publication on increased persecution: massive arrests of homo- and bisexual men, torture in secret prisons, and extrajudicial executions in the region¹⁰.

However, as it noted in the "Report on facts of LGBTQ persecutions in the North Caucasus region," published by Russian LGBTQ Network in 2017, already since the late 2000s, some victims had faced the similar situations: illegal arrests and physical violence. Unlike the previous cases of harassment, the campaign that started in 2017 was a massive rather than selective¹¹.

The authors of the study draw a direct parallel between Stalinist terror and the current persecution of LGBTQ individuals, as well as the policies of Stalin and Ramzan Kadyrov in common. In the Chechen Republic, we can observe the same collective responsibility, repression based on blood relations, and the formation of a cult of personality¹².

According to the 2017 report by "Coming Out", the situation in Chechnya reflects the overall situation of LGBTQ rights in Russia: homophobic propaganda as part of the state's official ideology contributes to the increase in violence against the LGBTQ community, allows systemic violence to go unpunished, and facilitates the commission of crimes, including by state officials¹³.

8 Report on the results of monitoring discrimination and violence based on sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression in St. Petersburg in 2017. Coming Out, St. Petersburg, 2018. Pp. 9.

9 More: Trans life after the 24th. How the "special operation," sanctions, and anti-sanctions have affected trans people in Russia: results of the survey. T-Action, 2022. URL: <https://telegra.ph/Transzhizn-posle-24-go-06-21> (date of reference: 23.10.2023).

10 Killing of Honor: How the ambitions of a well-known LGBT activist awakened a horrible ancient custom in Chechnya. Novaya Gazeta, 2017. URL: <https://novyagazeta.ru/articles/2017/04/01/71983-ubiystvo-chesti> (date of reference: 23.10.2023).

11 Report on facts of LGBTQ persecutions in the North Caucasus region. Russian LGBTQ Network in cooperation with Novaya Gazeta special correspondent Elena Milashina. St. Petersburg, 2017. Pages. 6-7.

12 Ibid., p. 3.

13 Report on the findings of monitoring of discrimination and violence on the grounds of sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression in St. Petersburg in 2017. Coming Out, St. Petersburg, 2018. Pp. 16.

While in other regions, discrimination by law enforcement is more likely to be related to covering up or ignoring hate crimes against the LGBTQ community, in the North Caucasus Federal District, law enforcers themselves persecute LGBTQ individuals, attack them,¹⁴ torture them and do so on orders from above¹⁵.

The findings of the "Sphere" research are indicative. According to data from 2020, the North Caucasus Federal District appears to be the most "closed off" region: the percentage of respondents who completely hide information about their identity or orientation is highest, and the percentage of those who are open to their families is lowest in this very region. Due to the increased danger that LGBTQ individuals may face when participating in surveys in the NCFD, the region is underrepresented in the "Sphere" statistics, making the analysis of the situation not entirely representative. However, even based on these data, it is evident that representatives of the LGBTQ community in the North Caucasus are more frequently subjected to psychological, sexual, and physical violence, and the percentage of unlawful detentions is also higher.¹⁶ Similar situations are described in reports from other years as well.

The most detailed analysis of the situation in the region is presented in the report by the Initiative Support Group for Queer Women of the North Caucasus, published in 2020. The authors of the report note that the particular secrecy of LGBTQ individuals in the region hinders the formation of a community and reduces the level of possible support for its members, and the strong connections within diasporas even threaten those who leave the region, both within other cities in Russia and abroad.

According to the overall assessment of the report's authors, the Chechen Republic is the most dangerous region in Russia for LGBTQ individuals¹⁷. The situation of LGBTQ individuals in the North Caucasus (both in Chechnya and in other parts of the region, such as Dagestan and Ingushetia) is not so much a reflection, but rather the extreme level of Russia's general state policy towards the LGBTQ community.

" The whole of Russia is slowly becoming the North Caucasus "

SITUATION OF LGBTQ FAMILIES WITH KIDS

Year after year, researchers from the "Coming Out" group pay more and more attention to LGBTQ families with children, which likely corresponds to the growing government interest in this group.

For the first time, the topic of LGBTQ parenting appeared in the monitoring reports of the team in 2018. According to observations by "Coming Out," LGBTQ parents are on average older and more financially stable, but they have to lead a more closed lifestyle, which in turn leads to the invisibility of the issue even in the research field.¹⁸

According to a survey from 2018, 37% of parents face homophobic or transphobic attitudes from relatives, guardianship authorities and employees of medical or educational institutions. Although surveys from 2021 and 2022 show similar results, the latest report does not take into account new mechanisms of discrimination. In particular, EQUAL PostOst is aware of cases of intimidation of LGBTQ families and activation of guardianship authorities due to the anti-war stance of the parents.

¹⁴ Research on discrimination against LGBT+ people in Russia: qualitative data. Russian LGBT Network, 2021. URL: <https://lgbtnet.org/upload/iblock/09d/Diskriminatsiya.-Kachestvennyy-analiz.docx.pdf> [date of reference: 23.10.2023].

¹⁵ Report on facts of LGBTQ persecutions in the North Caucasus region. Russian LGBT Network in cooperation with Novaya Gazeta special correspondent Elena Milashina. St. Petersburg, 2017. P. 15.

¹⁶ Report: Quantitative data from the monitoring of discrimination against LGBTQ+ people, Russian LGBT Network, 2020. URL: https://lgbtnet.org/upload/iblock/c29/kolichestvennoe_issledovanie_monitoring_2019_0.pdf [date of access: 23.10.2023].

¹⁷ Survival Strategies of Homosexual, Bisexual Women and Transgender Persons in the North Caucasus: Report. Initiative Group for Support of Queer Women of the North Caucasus. Moscow, 2020. Pp. 44.

¹⁸ Report on the situation of the LGBTQ community in St. Petersburg in 2018. St. Petersburg: Exit, 2019. Pp. 69.

In this case, the LGBTQ community, especially LGBTQ families, are under pressure from two sides. Firstly, there is direct discrimination and failure of rights solely based on the sexual orientation and/or gender identity of parents. State pressure methods extend not only to children under guardianship or adoption but also to the biological children of one of the partners.

Secondly, homophobia and transphobia, firmly established in the legal field, serve as instruments for regulating public consciousness. By the current point, repressive tools have been well tested by the Russian state, and, according to the formulation by the "Coming Out" team, people have become used to vulnerability and perceive cases of violence and discrimination as the norm¹⁹. On the other hand, the fear caused by the chaotic and spontaneous practice of using developed legal provisions becomes a tool for controlling public opinion and promotes the spread of propaganda.

Regular reports by organizations on the situation of LGBTQ individuals show that these three defined groups are particularly vulnerable in the context of Russia's repressive policies, mainly due to multiple forms of discrimination. The increased danger for transgender people, LGBTQ+ individuals from the North Caucasus, and LGBTQ families with children leads to greater closure for these groups and makes it difficult to both research their situation and draw attention to their vulnerability. Thus, the suppression of the LGBTQ community becomes a convenient tool for Russian propaganda.



¹⁹ Report on the findings of monitoring of discrimination and violence on the grounds of sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression in St. Petersburg in 2017. Coming Out, St. Petersburg, 2018. P. 6.

ANALYSIS
OF LEGISLATION
AND
OF ITS PRACTICAL
APPLICATION

PROHIBIT

"No human being deserves to live in a state that is directly hostile [to them]. It is very convenient to fight against LGBTQ people under the cover of "traditional values," because they are not numerous and one of the most vulnerable social groups. But sooner or later, they will get to the others: the disabled, patients of the PNI²⁰, religious minorities, and anyone else. Then they will want to prohibit abortion and take away women's right to vote. And people will swallow it because they don't know how to react otherwise. Jokes about "Norther than North Korea" don't seem like jokes anymore".

Since February 24, 2022, when Russia launched a full-scale invasion of Ukraine, the Russian authorities have intensified discrimination against LGBT individuals and organizations, both at the legislative level and in the practice of law enforcement. Vladimir Putin²¹ personally declared the persecution of LGBT people as a cornerstone of his policy.

From this date on, the lives and positions of LGBTQ individuals in Russia have significantly changed. Within just 1.5 years, laws were enacted to stiffen the penalties for disseminating information about non-heterosexual orientation and non-cisgender identity, as well as a law prohibiting transgender transition. LGBTQ censorship has been strengthened. Key LGBTQ organizations have been labeled as "foreign agents." Tens of thousands of LGBTQ individuals have left Russia and moved to countries where they could legalize themselves, primarily Armenia, Georgia, Kazakhstan, and Kyrgyzstan.

This chapter examines the dynamics of changes in Russian legislation concerning sexual orientation and gender identity. Furthermore, through specific examples, it demonstrates how laws discriminating against LGBT individuals in Russia have affected their actual situation in the country and how Russia's war in Ukraine has intensified the stigmatization of LGBT individuals, allowing for an active phase of state-sponsored homophobic and transphobic campaigns against them.

Due to the limited volume of this report, the authors are unable to present a detailed analysis of the aforementioned issues but provide sufficient information to describe the main current trends and tendencies.

²⁰ A psychoneurological boarding house is a social-medical institution designed for permanent, temporary (for up to six months) and five-day-a-week residence and services for elderly citizens (men over 60 years of age and women over 55 years of age) and disabled persons (over 18 years of age) suffering from chronic mental illnesses and in need of permanent nursing care, ensuring the making of living conditions appropriate to their age and state of health, medical and social activities, nutrition and care, as well as the organizing of possible labor activity, rest and leisure.

²¹ Decree of the President of the Russian Federation of November 9, 2022, N 809, "On Approval of the Fundamentals of State Policy for the Preservation and Strengthening of Traditional Russian Spiritual and Moral Values". Start of action: 09.11.2022.

REGIONAL LAWS “ON GAY PROPAGANDA”

With the beginning of a conservative turn, the public climate towards LGBT individuals was gradually changing under the influence of the authorities. In 2003, members of the federal parliament first proposed to restore criminal responsibility for consensual same-sex relations. This initiative did not receive support in the federal parliament and was taken as marginal at the time.

In 2006, the country saw the first signs of state-sponsored homophobia and transphobia: the Moscow city administration denied initiators the opportunity to hold the first gay pride parade in Russia. This practice was repeated by the Moscow authorities in 2007–2010. Prohibitions on holding events were appealed by activists in the European Court of Human Rights²².

Against this background, local authorities in regions of Russia started to legislate restricting the dissemination of information about the needs and problems of LGBT people.

The first law “On the Prohibition of LGBT Propaganda” was adopted by deputies of the Ryazan region in 2006 and was practically not enforced. From 2011 to 2013, similar laws were adopted in 11 more regions of Russia. By 2013, 14% of all regions in Russia had homophobic and/or transphobic laws that were rarely enforced²³.

In 2012, the most intense discussion of the regional law “On the banning of LGBT Propaganda Among Minors” was held in St. Petersburg. The city saw debates, signature collections, and public actions, and parents of LGBT children made speeches in parliament. Nevertheless, the law was adopted and came into effect the same year.

Thus, in Russia, the concept of LGBT propaganda has emerged. It was assumed that if children learn about the existence of homosexual or transgender people, it will change their sexual orientation and gender identity. This construct contradicts modern scientific understanding of homosexuality, bisexuality, and transgenderism and is based solely on ideological preferences and the established culture of homophobia and transphobia in Russia.

Neither the laws nor the official statements in Russia noted what kind of actions or statements were considered LGBT propaganda. Nevertheless, this narrative has firmly entered the official rhetoric. It is used simultaneously to justify state-sponsored homophobia and transphobia and to manipulate public consciousness towards discrimination against LGBT people. It also incites hatred towards the regime's chosen internal enemy.

THE FIRST FEDERAL LAW “ON BANNING GAY PROPAGANDA AMONG MINORS”

The law was adopted by the federal parliament and signed by Vladimir Putin in 2013²⁴.

Formally, the bill was initiated by the Legislative Assembly of the Novosibirsk Region in March 2012²⁵, but it gained active promotion through deputies of the State Duma of Russia who supported Putin's policies: Yelena Mizulina²⁶, Olga Batalina²⁷, Olga Epifanova²⁸, Irina Yarovaya²⁹.

Initially, the bill proposed a ban on “propaganda of homosexuality among minors”. However, as mentioned above, Russia has been using the ICD-10 since January 1, 1999, and homosexuality has not been considered a disease for 13 years.

22 Information Note on the Court's case-law No. 134. URL: <https://hudoc.echr.coe.int/?i=002-790> [date of access: 23.10.2023].

23 This situation is reminiscent of the “LGBT-free zones” that existed in Poland. Only thanks to LGBTQ organizations in Poland and the intervention of the European Union was it possible to abolish these “hotbeds of discrimination” in Europe.

24 Federal Law of June 29, 2013 (N 135-FZ): “On Amending Article 5 of the Federal Law “On the Protection of Children from Information Harmful to Their Health and Development” and Certain Legislative Acts of the Russian Federation in order to protect children from information promoting the denial of traditional family values”.

25 Source: <https://sozd.duma.gov.ru/bill/44554-6> Official website of the State Duma of the Russian Federation [accessed on October 5, 2023].

26 One of the formal initiators of all homophobic and transphobic laws in Russia. Since 1995, she has been a deputy of the State Duma and then a senator of the Federation Council of the Russian Federation. She is under personal sanctions from 27 countries in the EU: Great Britain, the USA, Canada, Switzerland, Australia, Ukraine, New Zealand.

27 In 2012, she was Deputy of the State Duma, and from October 6, 2021, she was Deputy Minister of Labor and Social Development of the Russian Federation.

28 In 2012, she was Deputy of the State Duma and is now Senator of the Federation Council of the Russian Federation.

29 Since 2007, she has been Deputy of the State Duma and is now Deputy Chairman of the State Duma of the Russian Federation.

Initially, the bill proposed a ban on "propaganda of homosexuality among minors". However, as mentioned above, Russia has been using the ICD-10 since January 1, 1999, and homosexuality has not been considered a disease for 13 years.

Before the bill was adopted, it underwent changes: the emphasis in the title was shifted to "protecting children from information that promotes the denial of traditional family values". This was the first time the concept of "traditional family values" was used in the law without any definition for it.

At the same time, the bill inserted a ban on LGBT propaganda and the promotion of pedophilia. The correlation of these two categories implies an additional manipulation of public opinion, equating two clearly unrelated phenomena in public consciousness, and intends to legitimize the ban on "propaganda of homosexuality among minors".

The law introduced legal norms prohibiting the dissemination of information among children that "promote non-traditional sexual relations", mandated Russian government authorities to "take measures to protect children" from such information, and established administrative liability for violating these bans³⁰.

The legal provisions came into force on the day of the official publication of the law - June 30, 2013.

How did the authorities justify accepting the law on a federal level?

From the analysis of the explanatory note to the bill, it is evident that the bill served as a response to the widespread educational and advocacy activities of LGBTQ organizations in Russia. In the explanatory note, the authors of the draft law noted that "the propaganda of homosexuality has taken on a wide scale in modern Russia. This propaganda is carried out both through the media and through active public actions that promote homosexuality as a norm of behavior. It is especially dangerous for children and young people who are not yet able to critically approach the avalanche of information that is being unleashed on them every day. In this regard, it is necessary to establish measures aimed at ensuring the intellectual, moral, and mental safety of children, including banning actions aimed at popularizing homosexuality".³¹

Many draft laws in the past 20 years, which have tightened legislation and restricted constitutional rights of citizens, have been introduced into parliament under the guise of protecting children. However, the deputies have never conducted any assessment of the impact of these draft laws on improving the situation of children. Under the banner of protecting children, deputies have adopted new repressive laws, acting with goals that are different from improving the situation of minors³².

The key change was the implementation of Article 6.21 of the Code of the Russian Federation on Administrative Offenses³³. on June 30, 2013. According to this article, "propaganda of non-traditional sexual relationships among minors" became an administrative offense. At the same time, no definitions of the terms "traditional" and "non-traditional" sexual relationships were given in legislation or judicial practice, which did not prevent executive authorities from using the law to restrict the distribution of information about LGBT people in Russia or courts from holding individuals to administrative responsibility for such violations.

What was an administrative offense?

1. The dissemination of information aimed at forming minors:
 - ▲ "non-traditional sexual attitudes"
 - ▲ "attractiveness of non-traditional sexual relationships"
 - ▲ "distorted view of the social equivalence of traditional and non-traditional sexual relationships";
2. Or the imposition of information about non-traditional sexual relationships that arouses interest in such relationships.

The formulations of the law initially determined that there is a norm: "traditional sexual relationships," and there are other "non-traditional sexual relationships" that are not equivalent to it. Essentially, the law became the first in modern Russia that allowed the practical restriction of the rights of LGBT people in any field of activity.

³⁰ New Article 6.21 in the Code of Administrative Offenses of the Russian Federation.

³¹ Law "on banning homosexual propaganda". Rossiyskaya Gazeta, 2013. URL: <https://rg.ru/documents/2013/02/04/koap-homo-site-dok.html> [accessed on October 27, 2023].

³² For example, the "Dima Yakovlev Law" (Federal Law of 28.12.2012 N 272-FZ "On Measures of Influence on Persons Involved in Violations of Fundamental Human Rights and Freedoms, Rights, and Freedoms of Citizens of the Russian Federation"), which prohibited the adoption of children—citizens of Russia—by citizens of the United States of America.

³³ The full text of Article 6.21 of the Russian Federation Code of Administrative Offenses is provided in Appendix 2.

What punishments did the law provide for?

Administrative fines: from 4 to 5 thousand rubles (from 93 to 117 euros³⁴), for citizens, from 800 thousand to 1 million rubles (from 18,727 to 23,409 euros) for organizations for each violation.

If the actions were committed online, the fines were increased: from 50 thousand to 100 thousand rubles (1,170 to 2,340 euros) for citizens, 1 million rubles (23,409 euros), or administrative suspension of activities for up to 90 days for organizations.

For foreigners and stateless persons, in addition to the fine, the court was obliged to impose administrative expulsion³⁵ from Russia. Instead of a fine, the court could impose administrative arrest for up to 15 days.

In the first nine years of the existence of the law, Russian courts considered no more than 100³⁶ cases of administrative offenses. However, it was precisely with this law that an active stage in the campaign of state-sponsored homophobia and transphobia began. It reinforced stereotypes and prejudices against LGBTQ people, prohibiting them from disseminating information about their needs, violations of rights, and requirements for their observance.

How did the law change the lives of LGBTQ people in Russia?

The law created the risk of imposing huge fines on individuals and organizations, as well as legalizing homophobic and transphobic violence. Discrimination against LGBTQ people began to permeate all spheres of their public life, including labor, educational institutions, the service industry, and public safety. The country saw an increase in hate crimes, but none of them resulted in a conviction that took into account hatred towards LGBTQ people³⁷.

In practice, the law serves two main functions.

Firstly, it officially, at the federal level, approves the state's attitude towards LGBTQ+ people as second-class citizens (the law forbids shaping children's "distorted perception of the social equality of traditional and non-traditional sexual relationships").

Secondly, it creates a situation where people are afraid to openly discuss same-sex relationships due to growing homophobia in society and the threat of administrative liability³⁸.

In her first report published on September 15, 2023, the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Russian Federation, Mariana Katzarova, emphasized³⁹, that "even considering the fact that LGBTQ people in the Russian Federation have long faced persecution, threats, and discrimination, the level of open hostility towards them has increased after the adoption in 2013 of the law banning 'gay propaganda,' which establishes liability for 'propaganda of non-traditional sexual relationships' among minors. UN human rights experts have condemned this law as discriminatory and capable, among other things, of increasing the use of hate speech, hate crimes, and cruel treatment, including the treatment towards children"⁴⁰.

The consequences of the law did not take long to manifest. EQUAL PostOst experts highlight the following key (but not exclusive) problems that have arisen in the lives of LGBTQ people in Russia after its adoption.

34 As of the start date of the federal law "on the ban of gay propaganda" on June 30, 2013, the official rate of 1 euro amounted to 42.7180 rubles. Source: the official website of the Central Bank of the Russian Federation https://www.cbr.ru/currency_base/daily/?UniDbQuery.Posted=True&UniDbQuery.To=30.06.2013 (accessed: 25.09.2023).

At the same time, the average salary per person as of Q2 2013 in Russia amounted to 27,339 rubles, 40 kopecks, or, as of June 30, 2013, 640 euros. Source: <https://mojazarplata.ru/zarabotok/srednjaja-zarplata/2013> [date of circulation: 25.09.2023].

35 Forced and controlled movement of a person across the state border of the Russian Federation outside the Russian Federation or controlled independent departure of foreign citizens and stateless persons from the Russian Federation.

36 No laws will make gays and lesbians disappear. Meduza, 2022. URL: <https://meduza.io/feature/2022/10/19/nikakie-zakony-ne-zastavyat-geev-i-lesbijanok-ischeznut> (accessed on November 25, 2023).

37 This fact was confirmed by lawyers and advocates working in Russia in defense of LGBTQ people and interviewed in 2023 as part of the EQUAL PostOst survey.

38 Four years of state homophobia. Meduza, 2017. URL: <https://meduza.io/slides/chetyre-goda-gosudarstvennoy-gomofobii-v-rossii-uvolnyagut-unizhayut-izbivayut-pytayut-i-ubivayut-gomoseksualov-i-transgenderov> (accessed on October 5, 2023).

39 A/HRC/54/54, para. 37.

40 OPINION ON THE ISSUE OF THE PROHIBITION OF SO-CALLED "PROPAGANDA OF HOMOSEXUALITY" IN THE LIGHT OF RECENT LEGISLATION IN SOME MEMBER STATES OF THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE. URL: [https://www.venice.coe.int/webforms/documents/default.aspx?pdffile=COL-AD\[2013\]022-e](https://www.venice.coe.int/webforms/documents/default.aspx?pdffile=COL-AD[2013]022-e) (accessed on 05/10/2023).

LGBTQ CENSORSHIP

Websites of LGBT organizations have been subjected to censorship aimed at identifying information promoting "non-traditional sexual relationships among minors"⁴¹.

Almost all LGBT organizations in the country have refused to work with teenagers (persons under 18), fearing state pressure. "Children 404," one of the few initiative groups in Russia, formed a team of psychologists who supported LGBT teenagers online and published their letters on the Internet. The group faced multiple attacks from the government and was ultimately blocked in Russia on almost all information platforms. The court fined⁴² the founder of the group several times for a "gay propaganda" (essentially, for organizing psychological and informational support for them).

In 2017, the European Court of Human Rights, in the case of "Baev and others against Russia," concluded that the Russian regional laws "prohibiting LGBT propaganda" and the similar federal law violated the applicants' right to freedom of expression and the prohibition of discrimination⁴³.

During the case hearing, the Russian authorities provided justification for the enacted federal law. In their opinion, several facts justified the very existence of such a law. Firstly, the majority of the Russian population disapproves of homosexual relationships. Secondly, citizens support the adoption of such a law. Additionally, raising LGBT issues in Russian society is considered an insult to its morals and an obstacle to "instilling traditional family values." Furthermore, the Russian authorities claimed that the acceptance of homosexuality threatens the demographic situation in the country.

The European Court disagreed with the provided arguments. It concluded that "the authorities reinforce stigma and prejudice and promote homophobia, which is incompatible with concepts of equality, pluralism, and tolerance inherent in a democratic society, by enacting such laws."

The Court's reasoning did not convince the Russian authorities, and they refused to take measures to repeal the law as mandated by the Court's ruling.

HATE CRIMES AGAINST LGBTQ PEOPLE

Since the 2013 Russian authorities' homophobic and transphobic rhetoric has increased. So the hate attacks, law enforcement's refusal to investigate such crimes, blackmail, outings, and other negative consequences of the law have become widespread in the country.

In May 2013, in Volgograd, a best friend and two acquaintances killed 23-year-old Vlad Tornovoy⁴⁴, when he told them that he was gay. One of the killers, 27-year-old Anton Smolin, stated, "I took a bottle and inserted its neck into his anal opening, and Lyeha [best friend] kicked the bottle with his foot, after which it went in almost completely⁴⁵." After that, Smolin took a 21-kilogram boulder and hit the victim's head six times, as determined by the investigation. When asked why he did it, Anton Smolin replied, "Because he said he was a fag."

Human Rights Watch called on the Russian authorities to investigate the motives behind the murder. On December 6, 2013, Elton John dedicated a concert in Moscow to Vlad Tornovoy, condemning the law "on the ban of gay propaganda."

41 For example, in 2018, the Burlinsky District Court of Altai Krai blocked the health portal for LGBTQ people, "Guys Plus," for "denial of family values." Source: <https://parniplus.com/news/roskomnadzor-parni-plyus/> [accessed on October 5, 2023].

42 A detailed history of the persecution of the project by the Russian Federation authorities is described in the publication: <https://meduza.io/feature/2015/01/26/dolzha-byt-zakryta-unichtozhena-sterta-navsegda> [accessed on 05.10.2023].

43 CASE OF BAYEV AND OTHERS v. RUSSIA: JUDGMENT. URL: <https://hudoc.echr.coe.int/eng/?i=001-174422> [accessed on October 5, 2023].

44 The killers of Vlad Tornovoy have been brought to trial. Radio Liberty, 2013. URL: <https://www.svoboda.org/a/25199651.html> [accessed on October 5, 2023]

45 The recording of the episode, with the words of Anton Smolin, was shown in the media and published on YouTube. For ethical reasons, the link to the publication is not given.

The murder occurred against the background of heated debates in the federal parliament about the need for the law. The trial took place behind closed doors. The killers were convicted, but their sentencing is unknown.

In March 2016, journalist Dmitry Tsilikin⁴⁶ was killed in St. Petersburg. Shortly before the murder, he met a 21-year-old student, Sergei Kosyrev, on a dating website⁴⁷. The killer came to Tsilikin's home at his invitation. According to the investigation, he was prepared for the crime, bringing a hunting knife, a traumatic pistol, gloves, and a change of clothes⁴⁸. Knowing about Dmitry Tsilikin's homosexuality, the killer initially planned to compromise him and then blackmail him, but the meeting ended in murder. Dmitry died from blood loss in his apartment after 30 stab wounds⁴⁹.

Under the interrogation, the killer told the investigator to call him "The Cleaner"⁵⁰. He declared his life to be an anti-LGBTQ⁵¹ crusade. The investigation did not investigate the motive of hatred towards LGBT individuals, and the court did not consider it. The killer was sentenced to 8.5 years in prison.

Another incident occurred in 2017. Two transgender people were attacked in a bar because of a rainbow hand bracelet on one of them. The perpetrators attacked the victims. The establishment had surveillance cameras, but the police did not investigate the hate crime. In September 2023, the European Court of Human Rights admitted that law enforcement authorities did not conduct an effective investigation in the context of the prohibition of torture, inhuman and degrading treatment, and the violation of the prohibition of discrimination based on belonging to the LGBT community by Russian authorities. The court ordered the Russian Federation to pay compensation of 10,000 euros to each of the victims. However, on March 16, 2022, the Russian Federation was excluded from the Council of Europe's. Therefore, it refuses to comply with any decisions of the court that came into effect after March 15, 2022.

One of the types of hate crimes that have become widespread is "fake dating." Only in St. Petersburg in 2018, 22 crimes of this type⁵² were recorded. These crimes were carried out against homosexual and bisexual men by specially organized criminal groups. Under the guise of a date, the criminals lured the victim into an apartment, beat him, and forced him to confess on camera to fictitious involvement with a minor, as well as reveal his sexual orientation. By threatening to publish these materials on the Internet, the criminals extorted victims, sometimes for more than several million rubles. Extortion was profitable, as the criminals could receive monthly payments from the victims for several years. The victims themselves were afraid to turn to law enforcement, fearing outings and homophobic attitudes. The criminals took advantage of this, continuing to commit hate crimes motivated by homophobia.

These crimes are a direct consequence of the law "on the ban of LGBT propaganda among minors," which legalized violence against LGBT people in Russia. Reports of the activities of homophobic groups committing physical violence, robberies, and blackmail against LGBT people regularly appeared in the Russian news.

Among the criminals were current and former law enforcement officers from Russia and foreign countries, individuals with prior convictions for violent crimes, as well as their accomplices.

The defendants believed that since the government had passed the law "on the ban of homosexual propaganda among minors," they would not be prosecuted for crimes committed against LGBT people and directly stated their motivation in court. According to lawyers representing the victims in such cases, the criminals were usually motivated by the goal of public benefit to "purify Russian society."⁵³

In 2017, in Saint Petersburg, a criminal group committed robbery, extortion, and violence against A. They forced him to record a video about his sexual orientation at the crime scene. Since A. did not come out, he was forced to pay 1 million rubles (approximately 14.5 thousand euros) to prevent the video from being spread by the criminals. He took out a loan for this purpose. After the criminals demanded a new payment, he refused to pay and reported it to law enforcement. During the investigation, it was established that over 3 years, more than 100 people became victims of this criminal group, only 18 of whom were recognized as victims.

46 License to kill. Radio Liberty, 2016. URL: <https://www.svoboda.org/a/27702827.html> (accessed on October 5, 2023).

47 State homophobia in Russia is running rampant. Scat, 2022. URL: https://skat.media/post/russian_state_homophobia (accessed on October 5, 2023).

48 License to kill. Radio Liberty, 2016. URL: <https://www.svoboda.org/a/27702827.html> (accessed on October 5, 2023).

49 Killed out of hate: fake dates are increasing. Radio Liberty, 2021. URL: <https://www.severreal.org/a/31532651.html> (accessed on October 5, 2023).

50 The suspected killer of journalist Tsilikin called himself the Cleaner. Fontanka.ru, 2016. URL: <https://www.fontanka.ru/2016/04/07/094/> (accessed on October 5, 2023).

51 The investigation into the ritual murder of journalist Tsilikin was completed in St. Petersburg. Delovoy Peterburg, 2016. URL: https://www.dp.ru/a/2016/09/28/V_Peterburge_zaversheno_ra (accessed on May 5, 2023).

52 Report on the situation of the LGBT community in St. Petersburg in 2018. Johnny Jibladze, Polina Kisilitsyna, Max Olenichev. URL: <http://standpointspb.com/upload/iblock/bd7/bd7eb9e484a35c7ff7825b82c7223569.pdf> (accessed on October 5, 2023).

53 Information is provided by lawyers and advocates working in Russia in defense of LGBT people. The interviews were held in 2023 as part of the EQUAL PostOst survey.

The case was heard in court for 1.5 years, with 35 court sessions held, in which only 31 episodes of extortion, robbery, and assault against homosexual and bisexual men were considered. As a result, the court issued a guilty verdict: two criminals were sentenced to real imprisonment in a correctional colony for 6.5 and 4 years. The court did not recognize hatred towards LGBTQ+ people as a motive. The victims of the crimes did not receive any monetary compensation, nor did they receive the money taken by the criminals⁵⁴.

As a result of the extortion, one of the victims, who grew up in a patriarchal family, attended a military school, and had no source of income, took his own life due to fears of outing. No one was held responsible for driving him to suicide.

In 2018, S. was attacked by passersby because. According to the attackers, S., having a male gender marker in his documents, looked too feminine; he had makeup and long hair. The criminals assaulted S., guided by their notions of masculinity and femininity, fueled by state propaganda. Such cases are not uncommon in patriarchal societies. The police refused to investigate the attack. The criminals were not identified. No one was punished⁵⁵.

These examples are just the tip of the iceberg of hate violence towards LGBTQ people. Russian law enforcements generally do not conduct effective investigations. Criminals are not held accountable, and the victims do not receive compensation.

REMOVING CHILDREN FROM LGBTQ FAMILIES

KEEP QUIET

"He understood very well that he had to keep quiet because he was told all the time not to talk about what was going on at home, that if someone wanted to talk to him when his parents weren't there, you had to refuse, and if you couldn't, you had to babble something. We practiced with him how he would answer different questions. I don't think it's been good for his character, but it's required for his safety".

The implementation of the law "on banning of gay propaganda among minors" has resulted in state authorities violating the family rights of LGBTQ individuals, seeking to deprive them of their parental rights if their children were adopted or placed under guardianship. However, the authors of the report do not know of any cases where LGBTQ individuals have been deprived of their parental rights due to their sexual orientation or gender identity.

One participant in the EQUAL PostOst survey shared a widely held view on the birth and upbringing of children by LGBTQ individuals in Russia:

TAKE AWAY

"When the law against LGBT propaganda among minors was passed in 2013, I realized that I wouldn't be able to have a child in this country because of the fear that it could be taken away. The preparation took many years (due to personal reasons). I left only because of the persecution and pressure on LGBT citizens. After December 2022, I became even more convinced of the correctness of my decision."

One prominent example of the Russian government's attitude towards LGBT parenting is a case that occurred in Yekaterinburg. For several years, Yulia Savinovskikh served as a guardian for two children: K, who suffered from cerebral palsy, and D, who lived with HIV infection. At the moment she took guardianship of the children, they could not speak, walk, or take care of themselves. Through her care, the children socialized, and their health significantly improved.

In 2017, Yulia underwent a mastectomy and started a blog in the name of a transgender person⁵⁶. In August 2017, the administration of one of Yekaterinburg's districts decided that Yulia was a transgender man. The authorities revoked their own decision to place the children under her guardianship and removed them from the family. At that time, the children were 5 and 4.5 years old. Yulia appealed to the court, but after six months of legal proceedings, the courts sided with the authorities. Yulia never saw the children again. The court stated in its decision:

"Yulia V. Savinovskikh's identification as a representative of the male sex, considering her marital status with a man and her desire to assume a social role typical of the male sex, fundamentally contradicts the principles of family legislation in our country, traditions, and our society's mentality⁵⁷".

In all of this, Yulia did not change her passport information; her passport, which is the primary identification document in Russia, indicated her female gender marker. Only after the unsuccessful trials did she come out as a transgender man, changing her name to Francis⁵⁸.

⁵⁶ I see Russia turning into Iran. It's My City, 2021. URL: <https://itsmycity.ru/2021-07-23/kak-slozhilas-zhizn-samogo-izvestnogo-transgendera-rossii-yulii-savinovskikh-lishennoj-vekaterinburge-dete> (accessed on 05.10.2023).

⁵⁷ Yulia Savinovskikh, who had her breasts removed, never got her adopted children back. The court decided that she considers herself a man. Meduza, 2018. URL: <https://meduza.io/feature/2018/02/13/sud-snova-otkazalsya-vernut-priemnyh-detey-yulii-savinovskikh-kotoraya-udalila-sebe-grud-sudya-reshila-chto-ona-schitaet-sebya-muzhchinoy> (accessed on October 5, 2023); <https://meduza.io/feature/2018/02/13/sud-snova-otkazalsya-vernut-priemnyh-detey-yulii-savinovskikh-kotoraya-udalila-sebe-grud-sudya-reshila-chto-ona-schitaet-sebya-muzhchinoy> (accessed on October 5, 2023).

⁵⁸ Yulia Savinovskikh, who was deprived of her children, was recognized as a man in Spain. Radio Liberty, 2019. URL: <https://www.svoboda.org/a/29978344.html> (accessed on October 5, 2023)

This is the first known case in Russian court practice when the authorities removed children from the custody of a transgender person because of transgenderism. Additionally, at the time, the existing legislation did not prohibit transgender people from being guardians. In 2019, Francis lodged a complaint with the European Court of Human Rights. The complaint was commenced in 2021⁵⁹, but the case has not yet been resolved by the Court.

On July 3, 2013, a new law came into effect in Russia. It was passed by the federal parliament and signed by Vladimir Putin⁶⁰. According to this law, individuals cannot be adoptive parents or guardians if they are in a same-sex marriage. The same applies to individuals (regardless of sexual orientation) who are citizens of a country where same-sex marriages are legalized. The exception is if the candidate for adoption is in an opposite-sex marriage.

In the family of Andrei Vaganov and Yevgeny Erofeev, two sons were raised. Andrei adopted the boys before the law "on banning of gay propaganda among minors" came into effect: Denis in 2010 at the age of 3.5 years and Yura in 2012 at the age of 5.5 years.

The family of Andrei Vaganov and Yevgeny Erofeev formed in 2010. They got married only in 2016 in Denmark. In 2019, the Moscow authorities made an attempt to take away the adopted children. In June, the parents turned to the Roshal clinic; the child complained of stomach pains. The doctor asked the boy who he lived with. The child said, With two dads. The doctor reported this to the Russian Investigative Committee.

In July, a criminal case for negligence was opened against the employees of the social protection department in the Marino district. According to investigators, the department staff knew that a "local male resident was raising two adopted boys with another man"⁶¹. However, they "did not take proper measures to protect minors from information that harms their health and development." The Russian Investigative Committee made an explanation: "He [Andrew Vaganov, the adoptive father] promotes non-traditional relationships, forming in children distorted ideas about family values and harming their health, morals, and spiritual development"⁶².

The situation developed rapidly. On June 19, the parents visited the Roshal clinic with their child. On June 21, an investigator called the parents, demanding to question the child. It turned out that Anna Kuznetsova, the ombudswoman for children's rights under President Putin, was involved in the case. She is also known as the spouse of a Russian Orthodox Church priest who holds homophobic views. The case came under the personal control of the Chairman of the Russian Investigative Committee, Alexander Bastrykin, who never supported LGBTQ people⁶³.

On July 15th, Valentina Matviyenko, the Speaker of the Federation Council⁶⁴, expressed her opposition to same-sex couples adopting children. On the same day, Anna Kuznetsova, the Presidential Commissioner for Children's Rights, stated that she had applied to the prosecutor's office to remove children from a family. On July 16th, the Investigative Committee launched a criminal case for negligence against unknown officials from guardianship authorities. The information about this case appeared in the press on July 17th. On July 19th, a search⁶⁵ was conducted in the apartment of Andrei and Yevgeny in Moscow.

The Investigative Committee searched not only Evgeny and Andrei's apartment but also their parents' homes in Moscow and in the Urals. Immediately after the searches, the parents were taken to the Investigative Committee for questioning. The children's nanny was also questioned. She confirmed that Andrei and Yevgeny took care of the children and did not behave inappropriately in their presence.

Currently, all family members have obtained asylum in the United States⁶⁶. In 2021, a complaint was filed with the European Court of Human Rights, but it has not yet been panned.

59 URL: <https://hudoc.echr.coe.int/?i=001-208220> [accessed on October 5, 2023].

60 Federal Law No. 167-FZ of July 2, 2013: "On making amendments to certain legislative acts of the Russian Federation on the placement of orphans and children left without parental care".

61 The Criminal Investigation Committee filed a lawsuit against social security employees for raising adopted children by a same-sex couple. Medusa, 2019. URL: <https://meduza.io/news/2019/07/17/sk-zavel-delo-na-sotrudnikov-sotszaschity-iz-za-vozpitaniya-usynovlennyh-detey-odnopoloy-paroy> [accessed on October 10, 2023].

62 Ibid.

63 URL: <https://u.to/oPMxIA> [дата обращения: 05.10.2023].

64 House of the Federal Parliament in Russia.

65 There was life. And now there is no life. Medusa, 2019. URL: <https://meduza.io/feature/2019/08/12/byla-zhizn-a-teper-zhizni-net> [accessed on October 5, 2023].

66 We made a point: we can't stay in Russia because we are fearing for our lives. Medusa, 2019. <https://meduza.io/feature/2019/10/04/my-ukazali-ne-mozhem-ostavatsya-v-rossii-potomu-chto-boimsya-za-svoyu-zhizn> [accessed on October 5, 2023].

CAMPAIGN OF LGPTQ+ PEOPLE'S MURDERS AND PERSECUTIONS IN THE NORTH CAUCASUS

In 2017, it became known that the authorities of the Chechen Republic were conducting a campaign to eradicate the LGBTQ+ community, identifying LGBTQ+ individuals, detaining them, and torturing them. Rarely do they offer their relatives the opportunity to ransom them, after which the latter often kill them themselves⁶⁷. In February–March 2017 alone, according to media reports, law enforcement agencies detained hundreds of men suspected of homosexuality.

As reported by the human rights organization Human Rights Watch⁶⁸, homophobia is strongly expressed and widespread in conservative Chechen society, where the influence of Islam is strong. Having a family member with a homosexual orientation is considered a disgrace. In order to "wipe away the stain" and restore the family's honor, "honor killings" are practiced in the republic. Human Rights Watch has encountered cases of "honor killings" or threats of such killings against LGBT family members, including women and girls whose behavior was seen as immoral. The leaders of the republic, including Ramzan Kadyrov himself, have repeatedly expressed approval of the practice of "honor killings." According to experts, one of the reasons for these events is the existence of a law in Russia, "banning gay propaganda."

The campaign runs in Chechnya till now, and the victims are people of every gender. On March 16, 2017, law enforcement agencies detained Maxim Lapunov in Grozny. He was put in a secret prison, beaten and abused. After his release, he filed an application to the Investigative Committee of Russia, which did not investigate the crime.

According to the judgment of the European Court of Human Rights⁶⁹, of 12.09.2023, security officers, often dressed in civilian clothes, detained victims suspected of homosexuality in various locations and took them to police stations, detention centers, or unofficial secret prisons. They were then subjected to severe beatings, often with plastic rods, tubes, or cords, as well as insults and humiliation due to their homosexuality. They were often deprived of food and water, had no access to medical and legal aid, and their relatives were not notified of their detention. The aim was to force victims to recognize their homosexuality and/or to name other LGBTQ+ people.

Being held in unregistered detention, victims were often suffered daily violence for up to two weeks or until they signed a confession, informed on others or agreed to cooperate with the Chechen authorities in other ways. Some victims died as a result of torture. Those who survived detention and severe beatings were freed in a kind of ceremony to "shame them for their sins": the sexual orientation of the victims was revealed to their relatives, who were offered to "get rid of sick family members" and commit an "honor killing".

In 2017, the European Parliament condemned the situation in the European Council Guidelines on LGBTI persons, especially in relation to the persecution of "suspected" homosexual men in Chechnya. In 2018, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) adopted Resolution No. 2230 on "Persecution of LGBTI persons in the Chechen Republic (Russian Federation)". Also, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) published a report entitled "Report of the Moscow Mechanism Rapporteur on Alleged Human Rights Violations and Impunity in the Chechen Republic of the Russian Federation." The report concluded that the Moscow Mechanism, initiated by 14 OSCE states, confirmed the facts previously claimed by LGBTQ+ organizations and called on the Russian authorities to stop the homophobic campaign, investigate the crimes, and bring the perpetrators to justice⁷⁰. On September 12, 2023 The European Court of Justice accepted that the Russian authorities did not conduct an effective investigation of the tortures.

Human rights activists regularly report new kidnappings of homosexual and bisexual people born in Chechnya. At the same time, the Russian law enforcement system does not act. On the contrary, if escaped LGBTQ adults ask not to be searched for, Russian law enforcement agencies search for them throughout the country as missing persons and, if found, hand them over to relatives or police in Chechnya.

67 Novaya Gazeta: More than a hundred men were detained for homosexuality; three were killed in Chechnya. Meduza, 2017. URL: <https://meduza.io/news/2017/04/01/novaya-gazeta-v-chechne-bolee-sta-muzhchin-zaderzhany-za-gomoseksualnost> (accessed on October 5, 2023).

68 They have long arms, and they will find me. Human Rights Watch, 2017. URL: <https://www.hrw.org/ru/report/2017/05/26/304090> (accessed on November 5, 2023).

69 CASE OF LAPUNOV v. RUSSIA: JUDGMENT. URL: <https://hudoc.echr.coe.int/?i=001-226449> [date of access: 05.10.2023].

70 OSCE Rapporteur's Report under the Moscow Mechanism on alleged Human Rights Violations and Impunity in the Chechen Republic of the Russian Federation. URL: https://www.osce.org/files/Moscow%20Mechanism%20Document_ENG.pdf (date of access: 05.10.2023).

The state does not compile official statistics on teen suicides related to the non-acceptance of their sexual orientation or gender identity. In November 2014, Elena Klimova, a writer, conducted an online survey of 378 LGBTQ teenagers in Russia and neighboring countries⁷¹. To the question "Have you ever thought about suicide?" 62 people (16.4%) answered negatively, and 316 (83.6%) answered positively. Among them, 41 thought about suicide for a SOGI-related reason (sexual orientation and gender identity); 60 for a SOGI-related reason and other reasons; and 215 for other reasons. She found that 1 in 3 of those teens who had contemplated suicide (for any reason) had made a suicide attempt (110 of 316, or 34.8%; SOGI-related: 33 of 101, or 32.6%).

Since the law "on the ban of gay propaganda" prohibits adolescents from receiving information about sexual orientation and gender identity, they do not develop a scientifically adequate view of this issue. In the period of self-acceptance, they have numerous doubts about themselves and their identity; they face bullying from their acquaintances due to their "otherness," and in some cases, incomprehension from their relatives. This, according to psychologists, can lead to suicide.

In 2014, the Russian Federation's Constitutional Court⁷² permitted educators, doctors, and psychologists to discuss issues of sexual orientation and/or gender identity in a neutral manner, based on children's requests. However, Russian schools have no such experts. As for educators, medics, and psychologists working in educational institutions, they are not specially trained. There is no work to support LGBTQ+ teenagers in educational institutions.

71 Elena Klimova: Statesmen and stateswomen don't treat us well. Novaya gazeta, 2015. URL: <https://novayagazeta.ru/articles/2015/06/30/64735-elena-klimova-gosudarstvennye-171-muzhi-187-i-171-zheny-187-nas-ne-ochen-zhaluyut> [date of access: 05.10.2023].

72 The Russian Federation's Constitutional Court of September 23, 2014, N 24-P.

IMPACT OF LAWS ON "BANNING LGBT PROPAGANDA AMONG MINORS" ON DECISION-MAKING AUTHORITIES

" Every time I leave the house,
I have no guarantee that I will be back there ".

As part of this study, the authors interviewed several lawyers and advocates about how the law "on banning gay propaganda" has influenced the legal system in Russia.

One of the lawyers noted that in court cases, "judges agree with the assertion that any mention and discussion of sexual orientation is not harmful to children. But the pressure of the system is so intense that they make a judgment that children should be protected from this information [about non-heterosexual orientation and non-cisgender identity]. There are a lot of formulas that judges are willing to use in their decisions, but nevertheless the bottom line is that non-heterosexual orientation is seen by judges as something that is harmful to children." Other lawyers in Russia interviewed by EQUAL Post agreed.

During the interview, the expert noted that "the system of legislation stigmatizes gays and lesbians in Russia by talking about the prohibition of 'propaganda of non-traditional sexual orientation'. The law has a very clear message that such information is dangerous, harmful, and prohibited for children. In legal relationships where children may face information about gays and lesbians, it should be excluded in relation to children. If a school has an employee who is gay or lesbian, such public information must not be available to children. This is a result of the legislative stigmatization of relationships through the establishment of laws prohibiting propaganda."

However, experts interviewed by EQUAL PostOst agreed that in Russia, if a person openly identifies himself or herself as LGBTQ, the risks of prosecution under the law "on the ban of gay propaganda" increase. For instance, in an expert interview, one of the lawyers working with LGBTQ people in Russia pointed out that "in courts, surely, any open manifestation of homosexual orientation today is a step towards restricting parental rights. Any judge understands that he cannot speak positively or neutrally about [a person's] open homosexual orientation in today's conditions."

An expert noted that in a child residence court case, if one parent reveals the other parent's homosexuality, the court is likely to side with the non-LGBTQ person, even if it does not reference sexual orientation or gender identity in the writ.

An expert leading cases in Russia on the defense of LGBTQ people clarified that in 2023, a district court decided to determine the child's place of residence with the father because it considered that the mother's bisexual orientation could harm the child's psychological development. This decision has not entered into force and is under appeal. Previously, such court judgments were rare. But now this kind of negative practice against LGBTQ people has started to develop against the background of the state campaign to reinforce homophobia and transphobia in Russian society.

LGBTQ PEOPLE'S INSULARITY, LACK OF ACCEPTANCE OF THEIR SEXUAL ORIENTATION, AND/OR GENDER IDENTITY

Since the law was passed, information on sexual orientation and gender identity in Russia has become less accessible.

One EQUAL PostOst interviewee noted the inability to be protected by the state in the event of physical violence in an educational institution, at work, in the family, or in a public place.

CONFIDENCE

"In the situation of physical violence, homophobic bullying, [I have] a lack of confidence that I will get proper help from the staff of educational institutions/
bosses at work/law enforcement."

Another interviewee clarified that "many people live in secrecy, realizing that they will not survive violence against them".

CORRECT

"It is often called a center of "jinn expulsion." There is not necessarily any mention of LGBT people there. People come there, pay money, and hand over their children. And they are held there. And then a person will either correct or not".

After 2013, conversion therapy began to expand again in Russia. In the southern regions of Russia, where Islam is widespread, LGBTQ people are "treated" by reading the Koran to remove spirits from the human body. In Orthodoxy, they are "cured" in special centers, isolating people and impacting them with unscientific methods. In other centers⁷³, LGBTQ people are chained with handcuffs to lattices and hanged⁷⁴.

Psychiatrists who disagree with the fact that "homosexuality" is not a disease according to the ICD-10 in Russia act in the same way. They offer their own ways to affect people based on their own and their parents' internal homophobia or transphobia. Often, such psychiatrists require taking unknown drugs and using hypnosis. Such centers operate legally in several large Russian cities⁷⁵.

As far back as 2020, Victor Madrigal-Borlos, the UN independent expert on protection from violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity, emphasized that conversion therapy is torture and should be prohibited⁷⁶.

Thus, the 2013 Russian law "on banning gay propaganda among minors" not only increased stigmatization and discrimination against LGBTQ people, reinforced stereotypes and prejudices in society, but also led to numerous cases of violence against them in different areas of life.

73 Prayers for Gleb. Conversion therapy for LGBT people. Radio Liberty, 2023. URL: <https://www.svoboda.org/a/molitvy-za-gleba-konvercionnaya-terapiya-dlya-lgbt-lyudey/32472333.html> [accessed on 05.10.2023].

74 The new generation is not ready to tolerate violence. SC SOS crisis group on working in war. Radio Liberty, 2022. URL: <https://www.kavkazr.com/a/novoe-pokolenie-ne-gotovo-terpetj-nasilie-krizisnaya-gruppa-sk-sos-o-rabote-v-usloviyah-voiny/32046081.html> [accessed on 05.10.2023].

75 My Harrowing Journey Through Gay Conversion Therapy in Russia. GQ, 2022. URL: <https://www.gq.com/story/gay-conversion-therapy-russia> [date of reference: 05.10.2023].

76 Conversion therapy could amount to torture and should be banned, says a UN expert. OHCHR, 2020. URL: <https://www.ohchr.org/ru/stories/2020/07/conversion-therapy-can-amount-to-torture-and-should-be-banned-says-un-expert> [accessed on October 5, 2023].

"It feels as if the world around me continues to function, continues to live, and I fall out into some other reality where I'm being persecuted at the state level and told, say, you shouldn't be alive or you shouldn't exist".

Nine months after Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, the Russian authorities, having suppressed civil society in the country, began to intensify discrimination and stigmatization of vulnerable groups. This policy of suppressing otherness became most evident towards LGBTQ people.

On December 5, 2022, while the military intervention continued, Russia enacted a new law "banning gay propaganda among all ages." It consists of two separate laws.

The first one is on amendments to 7 federal laws on information, mass media, advertising, consumer protection, state support for cinematography, basic guarantees of children's rights, and protection of children from information harmful to their health and development⁷⁷.

Besides the existing restrictions described in the previous section of the report, the law enacted a number of new restrictions:

- obliged owners of social networks to monitor them to search for and remove information "promoting non-traditional sexual relationships and (or) preferences, gender transition" (a violation may be punished with a fine for legal entities ranging from 800,000 to 4 million rubles⁷⁸ and up to 8 million rubles for repeated violations⁷⁹),
- made it possible, without a court judgment, to block access to Internet resources that contain information "promoting non-traditional sexual relations and (or) preferences, gender reassignment",
- implemented state monitoring to search for "banned" (including LGBTQ) content and to take the above measures in case of its detection,
- prohibited the mass media from publishing information that "promote non-traditional sexual relationships and (or) preferences, gender reassignment,"
- prohibited to sell (online and offline) in Russia products, that "promote non-traditional sexual relationships and (or) preferences, gender reassignment,"
- banned films with LGBTQ themes from commercial distribution,
- obliged public authorities in Russia to take measures to protect children from information not only "promoting non-traditional sexual relationship" (this norm was implemented back in 2013), but also "demonstrating non-traditional sexual relationship and (or) preferences", and from "information that may cause children to want to change sex" (this norm may be applied in educational, cultural and any other institutions, in public space with the participation or presence of minors),
- prohibited advertising that contains information, that "promotes or demonstrates non-traditional sexual relationships and (or) preferences, gender reassignment,"
- prohibited the distribution among minors of any information "promoting or demonstrating non-traditional sexual relations and (or) preferences, or capable of causing children to desire a gender reassignment",
- prohibited the dissemination of such information on radio and television between 4.00 and 23.00,
- Implemented a rule that such information may be broadcast on television or broadcast on radio on channels that are accessible for a fee, with a mandatory prior age verification of persons accessing such information, and that such materials must be labeled 18+ on television and a similar voice warning must be broadcast on radio.

77 Federal Law of 05.12.2022 N 478-FZ "On Amendments to the Federal Law "On Information, Information Technologies and Information Protection" and Certain Legislative Acts of the Russian Federation". URL: <http://publication.pravo.gov.ru/Document/View/0001202212050019> [access date: 05.10.2023].

78 Part 2 of Article 13.50 of the Code of the Russian Federation on Administrative Offenses.

79 Part 3 of Article 13.50 of the Code of the Russian Federation on Administrative Offenses.

Essentially, the law intends to erase any mention of LGBTQ people⁸⁰, initiatives, acute social issues involving them, and the needs of LGBTQ people from the public space. The state tends to remove the LGBTQ⁸¹ agenda from the social agenda, making LGBTQ people and their needs invisible and thus non-existent.

In an expert interview with EQUAL PostOst, a Russian lawyer explained, "These laws prohibit any public conversation about the problems of LGBTQ people, about issues of gender transition, about issues of so-called 'non-traditional sexual orientation,' about issues related to homophobic violence, about homosexual teenagers and their psychological problems. In other words, they make all these issues excluded from the public space and from the public field, and in case someone wants to speak publicly about these issues, he or she risks administrative liability."

The second law is on amendments to the Code of Administrative Offenses of the Russian Federation⁸². It significantly expanded the content of the administrative offense of "gay propaganda" and also implemented a new prohibition on informing minors on issues of sexual orientation and gender identity (a new Article 6.21.2 was enacted)⁸³.

The law imposed a number of new restrictions:

- besides prohibiting "propaganda of non-traditional sexual relations," it also prohibited propaganda of "preferences for non-traditional sexual relations" and "gender reassignment",
- expanded the forms of "gay propaganda": by "gay propaganda," the law now means not only "dissemination of information" but also "committing public acts",
- prohibited such propaganda not only among minors but also among people of all ages,
- expanded the list of "gay propaganda" from 4 to 8,
- increased the amount of administrative fines in cases of "gay propaganda":

	Offline among persons aged 18 years and older	Offline among minors (under 18)	Via mass media and the Internet, for persons 18 years of age and older	Via mass media and the Internet, for minors (under 18)
Penalty for citizens of the Russian Federation	a fine equal to 50,000 – 100,000 rubles	a fine equal to 100 000 — 200 000 rubles	a fine equal to 100 000 — 200 000 rubles	a fine equal to 200 000 — 400 000 rubles
Penalty for officials	a fine equal to 100 000 — 200 000 rubles	a fine equal to 200 000 — 400 000 rubles	a fine equal to 200 000 — 400 000 rubles	a fine equal to 400 000 — 800 000 rubles
Penalty for legal entities	a fine equal to 800 000 — 1 000 000 rubles or suspension of activity for up to 90 days	a fine equal to 1 000 000 — 2 000 000 rubles or suspension of activity for up to 90 days	a fine equal to 1 000 000 — 4 000 000 rubles or suspension of activity for up to 90 days	a fine equal to 2 000 000 — 5 000 000 rubles or suspension of activity for up to 90 days
Penalties for foreign citizens and stateless persons	2 penalties at once: a fine equal to 50 000-100 000 rubles or administrative arrest for up to 15 days + administrative expulsion from the Russian Federation	2 penalties at once: a fine equal to 100 000-200 000 rubles or administrative arrest for up to 15 days + administrative expulsion from the Russian Federation	2 penalties at once: a fine equal to 100 000-200 000 rubles or administrative arrest for up to 15 days + administrative expulsion from the Russian Federation	2 penalties at once: a fine equal to 200 000-400 000 rubles or administrative arrest for up to 15 days + administrative expulsion from the Russian Federation

80 Will the new law ban talking about gays in Russia? Novaya Gazeta-Europe. 21.07.2022. URL: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S8grmwRW05E> [access date: 05.10.2023].

81 Draft laws erase mention of LGBT people. Guys PLUS, 2022. URL: <https://parniplus.com/lgbt-movement/zakonoproekty-stirayut-upominanie-lgbt-lyudej/> (date of reference: 05.10.2023).

82 Federal Law of 05.12.2022, N 479-FZ "On Amendments to the Administrative Offenses Code of the Russian Federation". URL: <http://publication.pravo.gov.ru/document/0001202212050020> [access date: 05.10.2023].

83 The full text of Article 6.21 of the Administrative Offenses Code of the Russian Federation is presented in the Annex 2.

Thus, the amount of the fine for each case of violation of the law was increased:

- for citizens: minimal — in 12,5 times (from 4 000 rubles to 50 000 rubles⁸⁴), maximal — in 4 times (from 100 000 rubles to 400 000 rubles⁸⁵),
- for officials: minimal — in 2,5 times (from 40 000 rubles to 100 000 rubles⁸⁷), maximal — in 4 times (from 200 000 rubles to 800 000 rubles⁸⁸),
- for legal entities: minimal — hasn't changed (800 000 rubles⁸⁹), maximal — in 5 times (from 1 000 000 rubles to 5 000 000 rubles⁹⁰),
- for foreign citizens and stateless persons: minimal — in 12,5 times (from 4 000 to 50 000 rubles⁹¹), maximal — in 4 times (from 100 000 rubles to 400 000 rubles⁹²).

First of all, the laws continued the restriction (and in fact, ban) on the dissemination of information about sexual orientation and gender identity offline and online, imposing total LGBTQ censorship and a ban on freedom of expression on LGBTQ issues as well:

- violated the prohibition of discrimination against people on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity,
- deprived minors of the right to access information on sexual orientation and gender identity,
- interfere with the right to respect for private and family life,
- contribute to the violation of the prohibition of torture, cruel, inhuman, and degrading treatment,
- may lead to interference with the right to liberty and security of person, freedom of thought and conscience, and peaceful assembly.

A participant in the EQUAL PostOst survey reported on the reaction of Russian authorities to peaceful protests during the adoption of a new homophobic law: "On November 10, 2022, for the first time in my life, I went to a solitary picket against the homophobic bill, where I had a conflict with law enforcement. A month later (right on my birthday), the police came straight to my house and searched it."

Both the previous and the new law "banning gay propaganda among all ages" limit the rights to freedom of expression not only of LGBTQ people but also of all participants in Russian society. Since the public is deprived of information about the existence of The new law on "banning gay propaganda among all ages" is already being actively enforced. There are currently no court statistics on the law's application, but its effects have gone far beyond the number of fines imposed. LGBTQ people, their agenda, they become invisible in Russian society. Thus, the state develops the narrative that LGBTQ people do not exist in Russia and that their needs will not be met by the state.

The new law on "banning gay propaganda among all ages" is already being actively enforced. There are currently no court statistics on the law's application, but its effects have gone far beyond the number of fines imposed.

84 The exchange rate of the euro on October 5, 2023, according to the data of the Central Bank of the Russian Federation, is 1 euro = 104.3024 rubles.

85 On October 5, 2023, 479 euros.

86 On October 5, 2023, 3 853 euros.

87 On October 5, 2023, 958 euros.

88 On October 5, 2023, 7 670 euros.

89 On October 5, 2023, 7 670 euros.

90 On October 5, 2023, 47 937 euros.

91 On October 5, 2023, 479 euros.

92 On October 5, 2023, 3 835 euros.

INCIDENTS OF VIOLENCE AGAINST LGBTQ PEOPLE

In May 2023, Pavel Kukin assaulted two girls in the St. Petersburg subway because they were lesbians⁹³. Before the incident, he, with his wife and child, went in the same carriage as the girls. When they got off the subway train, Pavel, leaving his wife and child behind, caught up with the girls. He tried to grab their belongings and then started beating them in a public place. After the attack in the subway, doctors detected dislocated shoulders and bruises on the girls' jaws and hands. At the same time, the girls explained that they did not identify themselves as LGBTQ. At the time of the attack, the aggressor shouted, "Fucking LGBT, my child should not see this sort of thing."⁹⁴

In the summer of 2023 in Makhachkala, a group of two attackers assaulted a homosexual man (28 years old) on a fake date. In addition to physical violence, the perpetrators (17 and 21 years old) threatened him with a knife and robbed the victim: they stole two phones, a gold bracelet and cash. One of the suspects stated his motive was hatred of the LGBTQ community. The second suspect has not been apprehended⁹⁵.

Aggressors often justify their actions by saying "I beat him up because he's gay. We can do this, we legally have a law against gays"⁹⁶.

93 Two girls were assaulted in the subway in St. Petersburg. Paper, 2023. URL: <https://paperpaper.io/papernews/2023/5/16/v-metro-peterburga-izbili-dvuh-devushe/> (accessed on October 5, 2023).

94 I beat him up because he is gay. We can, we have an anti-gay law. The Insider, 2023. URL: <https://theins.ru/news/261814> (accessed on October 5, 2023).

95 A gay masseur was beaten and robbed on a date in Dagestan. News Tracker, 2023. URL: <https://newstracker.ru/news/2023-07-24/geya-massazhista-izbili-i-ograbili-na-svidanii-v-dagestane-2993103> (accessed on October 5, 2023).

96 I beat him up because he is gay. We can, we have an anti-gay law. The Insider, 2023. URL: <https://theins.ru/news/261814> (accessed on October 5, 2023).

INTRODUCTION OF TOTAL LGBTQ CENSORSHIP IN BOOK PUBLISHING AND BOOKSELLING, SHOWS, FILMS AND TV PROGRAMS

Since the start of the new law in December 2022, fiction with LGBTQ characters has disappeared from bookstore shelves in Russia.

Earlier, in May 2022, Russian State Duma deputy Nina Ostanina took notice of Katerina Silvanova and Elena Malisova's book "Summer in a Pioneer Tie" (published by Popcorn Books), which tells of a pioneer falling in love with his counselor. The book was published in a record edition of 250 thousand copies in compliance with the existing restrictions of the law (marking 18+) and became the best-selling fiction in Russia for the first half of 2022⁹⁷.

Ostanina sent an appeal to Roskomnadzor to check the book's content⁹⁸. After that, a similar letter was sent by Ksenia Mishonova⁹⁹, the Commissioner for Children's Rights in the Moscow region. In August 2022, Roskomnadzor¹⁰⁰ found no violations of the law¹⁰¹. However, two weeks later, it demanded the Russian Book Union¹⁰² the largest organization in Russia uniting book publishers, in the absence of legal requirements to stop the distribution of LGBTQ literature in the framework of market self-regulation, to refuse to distribute books containing "propaganda of non-traditional sexual relations"¹⁰³ on the market. A week later, the Russian Book Union "sent a reminder to all bookstores and online stores in the country, as well as to publishers, to strictly comply with the law on marking and selling books with the 18+ mark addressed to adult audiences"¹⁰⁴.

Against this background, on July 18, 2022, the Russian State Duma's six deputies, including Nina Ostanina, introduced a bill in the Russian State Duma to ban the dissemination of information about "non-traditional sexual relationships," including in the media and movies¹⁰⁵. However, their political opponents seized the initiative, and on October 20, 2022, a bill "on banning gay propaganda among all ages" was submitted to the State Duma, which was subsequently adopted by the parliament and signed by Vladimir Putin. The bill was then initiated by 389 deputies out of 450 (86%)¹⁰⁶, including Vyacheslav Volodin, the Chairman of the Russian State Duma, and his deputy, Peter Tolstoy¹⁰⁷. The Russian government has responded the bill¹⁰⁸ positively, and Maria Lvova-Belova¹⁰⁹, Russian President Putin's Commissioner for Children's Rights, supported the bill's adoption¹¹⁰.

97 Summer as a Pioneer Tie is a book about a teenager in love with a counselor. Zakhar Prilepin and Nikita Mikhalkov opposed it. And now it is the main bestseller of the season in Russia. Meduza, 2022. URL: <https://meduza.io/feature/2022/08/06/let-o-v-pionerskom-galstuke-kniga-o-podrostke-vlyublennom-v-vozhatogo> (accessed on October 5, 2023).

98 Personal telegram channel of Russian State Duma deputy Nina Ostanina. URL: <https://t.me/ninaostanina/1532> (accessed on October 5, 2023).

99 Roskomnadzor found no violations in the publication of the book Summer in a pioneer tie. Meduza, 2022 URL: <https://meduza.io/news/2022/08/09/roskomnadzor-ne-nashel-narusheniy-pri-prodazhe-knigi-let-o-v-pionerskom-galstuke-kotoraya-rasskazyyvaet-o-podrostke-vlyublennom-v-vozhatogo> (accessed on October 5, 2023).

100 The Federal Service for Supervision in the Sphere of Communications, Information Technologies, and Mass Media is a Russian federal executive body that monitors compliance with legal prohibitions on the distribution of information offline and online.

101 Roskomnadzor found no violations in the publication of the book Summer in a pioneer tie. Meduza, 2022 URL: <https://meduza.io/news/2022/08/09/roskomnadzor-ne-nashel-narusheniy-pri-prodazhe-knigi-let-o-v-pionerskom-galstuke-kotoraya-rasskazyyvaet-o-podrostke-vlyublennom-v-vozhatogo> (accessed on October 5, 2023).

102 A non-governmental, non-commercial organization uniting Russian publishing houses, distributors of book products, printing and pulp and paper enterprises, libraries, and writers' organizations.

103 Roskomnadzor has called for a ban on the sale of books containing LGBT propaganda. Chalk, 2022 URL: <https://mel.fm/novosti/352941-roskomnadzor-prizval-zapretit-prodazhu-knig-soderzhashchikh-lgbt-propagandu> (accessed on October 5, 2023).

104 Official website of the Russian Book Union. URL: https://bookunion.ru/news/otvet_rossiyskogo_knizhnogo_soyuza_na_pismo_federalnoy_sluzhby_po_nadzoru_v_sfere_svyazi_informatsio/ (access date: 05.10.2023).

105 Bill No. 165975-8. URL: https://sozd.duma.gov.ru/bill/165975-8#bh_histras (accessed on October 5, 2023).

106 Bill #217471-8. URL: <https://sozd.duma.gov.ru/bill/217471-8> (accessed on October 5, 2023).

107 Vice-President of the Council of Europe's Parliamentary Assembly from January 28, 2020 to January 25, 2022. From January 27, 2017 to March 15, 2022, Head of the Delegation of the Federal Parliament of Russia to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe.

108 The law on banning LGBT propaganda will be presented in the State Duma. Paper, 2022. URL: <https://paperpaper.io/papernews/2022/10/14/zakon-o-zaprete-lgbt-propagandy-pre/> (date of reference: 05.10.2023).

109 17.03.2022The International Criminal Court issued a warrant for her arrest (along with Vladimir Putin) because she is "allegedly responsible for the war crime of illegally deporting the population (children) from the occupied territories of Ukraine to the Russian Federation" after Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine on February 24, 2022.

Source: <https://www.icc-cpi.int/news/situation-ukraine-icc-judges-issue-arrest-warrants-against-vladimir-vladimirovich-putin-and> (accessed on October 5, 2023).

110 Lvova-Belova made proposals for the draft law banning LGBT propaganda. RAPS, 2022. URL: https://rapsnews.ru/human_rights_protection_news/20221017/308380014.html (date of reference: 05.10.2023).

The authors of "Summer in a Pioneer Tie" received threats¹¹¹, after which they left Russia in the fall of 2022. The former owners of Popcorn Books, Alexei Dokuchaev and Andrei Baev¹¹² were declared "foreign agents" in October 2022, as the bill was being discussed. In December 2022, the publisher was denied the right to participate in Non/fiction¹¹³, the largest Moscow book fair. After the adoption of the law, the publisher had to stop publishing LGBTQ literature. In January 2023, one of the first cases was brought against the publisher "for banning gay propaganda among all ages"¹¹⁴. In February 2023, the authors of the book "Summer in a Pioneer Tie" were recognized as "foreign agents" for "promoting LGBT relations."¹¹⁵

Before the law was passed, the largest online stores began to remove books with LGBTQ themes from sale: "Labyrinth" in November 2022¹¹⁶ (as of November 23, 2022, there were 2027 books in the "youth books" section, and by November 25, 2022, less than 1800 works¹¹⁷), and "LitRes" in December 2022¹¹⁸, immediately after the new law began to take effect. Large domestic marketplaces began to censor books with possible "LGBT propaganda." Some works were labeled "for adults only," while the cover was completely hidden.¹¹⁹

On December 2, 2022, it became known that Moscow libraries had received a list of "banned books."¹²⁰ They were removed from the shelves, forbidden to order online, and stopped being given out on hand¹²¹. The media noted that "the books were ordered to be recycled—that is, eventually burned"¹²². Among them are "Introduction to Sexology" by sexologist Igor Kon, "People of Moonlight" by Vasily Rodionov.

05.12.2022 The largest book chains, "Chitai-Gorod" and "Bukvoid," removed LGBTQ literature from the sale.¹²³ Russia's largest online e-book service, "LitRes," asked 1 percent of authors to rewrite their books. Its explanation was this way: "We offer authors who may have LGBT propaganda in their books to change the text so that the work can be returned to sale after revisions and further moderation."¹²⁴

The introduction of LGBTQ censorship after the entry into force of the new law "on banning gay propaganda" was confirmed by the participants of the EQUAL PostOst survey. Thus, one female author reported: "My editor asked me to remove a small fragment from the book (not about LGBT persons), where LGBT persons were mentioned. Also, I'm making a game about LGBT people right now. And I feel very embarrassed. I can't distribute the game outside of Russia because of sanctions, and in Russia it's complicated by the new law."

111 The Ministry of Justice of the Russian Federation declared the authors of the novel Summer in a Pioneer Tie as foreign agents. Medusa, 2023. URL: <https://meduza.io/news/2023/02/03/minjust-rf-ob-yavil-inostrannymi-agentami-avtorov-romana-letu-v-pionerskom-galstuke> (date of address: 05.10.2023).

112 Register of the foreign agents. URL: https://minjust.gov.ru/uploaded/files/reestr-inostrannykh-agentov-15092023_qRmaqWh.pdf (date of access: 05.10.2023).

113 Telegram channel of Popcorn Books publishing house. URL: <https://t.me/popcornbookstg/365> (access date: 05.10.2023).

114 Eksmo has obtained control over the publishing house Popcorn Books. Medusa, 2023. URL: <https://meduza.io/news/2023/08/10/eksmo-poluchilo-kontrol-nad-izdatelstvom-popcorn-books-ono-vypuskalo-letu-v-pionerskom-galstuke> (access date: 05.10.2023).

115 The register of foreign agents has been supplemented. URL: <https://minjust.gov.ru/ru/events/49295/> (access date: 05.10.2023).

116 Book printing and LGBT propaganda. splattering of the law. Print Daily, 2022. URL: <https://printdaily.ru/traditsionnyj-ofset/tipografii-i-lgbt-bryzgi-zakona> (accessed on October 5, 2023).

117 Russia suspends sales of many books after a ban on LGBT propaganda. Championship, 2022. URL: <https://www.championat.com/cybersport/news-4905067-v-rossii-priostanovili-prodazhi-mnogih-knig-posle-zapreta-na-propagandu-lgbt.html> (access date: 05.10.2023).

118 LitRes will remove the LGBT law books from sale and ask authors to rewrite texts. Rules of Life, 2022. URL: <https://www.pravilamag.ru/news/politics-news/06-12-2022/688005-litres-snimet-s-prodazhi-knigi-podpadayushchie-pod-zakon-ob-lgbt-i-poprosit-avtorov-perepisat-teksty/> (accessed on October 5, 2023).

119 Russia suspends sales of many books after a ban on LGBT propaganda. Championship, 2022. URL: <https://www.championat.com/cybersport/news-4905067-v-rossii-priostanovili-prodazhi-mnogih-knig-posle-zapreta-na-propagandu-lgbt.html> (access date: 05.10.2023).

120 Source: <https://t.me/bookngrill/5453> (accessed on 05.10.2023).

121 Libraries are hiding the foreign agents' books from readers right now. The Village, 2022. URL: <https://www.the-village.ru/city/ob-yasnyaem/banned-books> (accessed on October 5, 2023).

122 Ibid.

123 Republic and Chitai-Gorod stores withdrew books with LGBT themes from sale after Putin signed the propaganda law. Novaya Gazeta Europa, 2022. URL: <https://novyagazeta.eu/articles/2022/12/05/magaziny-respublika-i-chitai-gorod-snali-s-prodazhi-knigi-s-lgbt-tematikoi-posle-podpisaniya-putinyem-zakona-o-propagande-news> (accessed on 05.10.2023).

124 LitRes service asks 1% of authors to rewrite books due to ban on LGBT propaganda. Medusa, 2022. URL: <https://meduza.io/news/2022/12/06/servis-litres-poprosit-1-avtorov-perepisat-knigi-iz-zapreta-propagandy-lgbt> (accessed on 05.10.2023).

On December 8, 2022, Amediatek (one of Russia's main streaming services for TV series and movies) cut out several dialogues about LGBTQ topics in the second season of the TV series "White Lotus" and edited a shot with naked male buttocks¹²⁵. Yevgeny Tikhonovich, editor-in-chief of RBC-style media, accurately noted the trend in the new law's application: "The word 'gay' is not pronounced in principle; it is replaced by the word "man". For example, when one of the characters on a yacht says "We are all gays here," in Russian it sounds like "We are all men here"¹²⁶.

In March 2023, the TV channel TNT Music aired the program "TOP CHART." It included a music clip by the artist ALMA for the track "Summer Really Hurts Us." According to the court, the clip contained "information demonstrating non-traditional sexual relations and/or preferences, which is prohibited for dissemination among children." As the court stated, "the demonstration was expressed by a visual component: the image of two persons of the same biological sex (female) kissing." In July 2023, the channel was fined 1 million rubles for the demonstration of the clip.

In March 2023, one of the TV channels showed the movie "Made in Italy," in the fifth episode of which "there is an image touching on the subject of non-traditional sexual relations, namely: the image of a kiss between two persons of the same biological sex (male)." This, according to the court, was enough to impose a fine of 500,000 rubles.

In April 2023, the TV-3 Russia channel aired the movie "Piranhas". As stated in a court ruling in July 2023, the film contains "scenes of demonstration of untraditional sexual relations, which is expressed by a visual component - visualization of sensual interaction between two persons of the same biological sex (female), namely:

- licking of salt by a girl from another girl's body;
- a prolonged kiss expressing sexual passion".

The court imposed a fine of 1 million rubles.

On February 16, 2023, the streaming service of PJSC "Vimpelcom" (trademark "Beeline") was held by a court administratively liable for a fine of 1 million rubles for allowing subscribers to watch a movie that contained "scenes with demonstration (description) of homosexual relations between men, as well as references to homosexual relations."

In July 2023, the largest movie streaming service Kinopoisk was fined 1 million rubles for allowing subscribers to watch films that had previously been in distribution: "Perfect Strangers," "Bridget Jones: The Edge of Reason," "Three More Weddings," "Easy A," "The Barber of England," "Coupe No. 6," "Greed," "Green Book," "Amusement Park," and "Dylda." According to Roskomnadzor and the court, they contained scenes of "non-traditional sexual relations." The company's general director was fined 200,000 rubles for the same violation.

On August 15, Kinopoisk was again fined 1 million rubles for providing access to the films "Dr. T and His Women," "Little Italy," "Alexander," and "Love, Love, Love, Love," which contained LGBTQ-themed information. On September 1, 2023, the court imposed a new fine of 1 million rubles on the campaign for providing access to the films "Roman Parting" and "Zils Maria."

In July 2023, a court also fined the movie streaming service Evie.ru 1 million rubles for showing the movie Perfect Strangers without an age limit for minors. According to the court, the movie contains information "demonstrating non-traditional sexual relations and/or preferences, which is prohibited for distribution among children, namely: scenes showing (or describing) homosexual relations between men, as well as references to homosexual relations."

¹²⁵ How the law banning LGBT propaganda affects book sales and the showing of TV series. Tinkoff Magazine, 2022. URL: <https://journal.tinkoff.ru/news/no-books-no-films> (accessed on October 5, 2023).

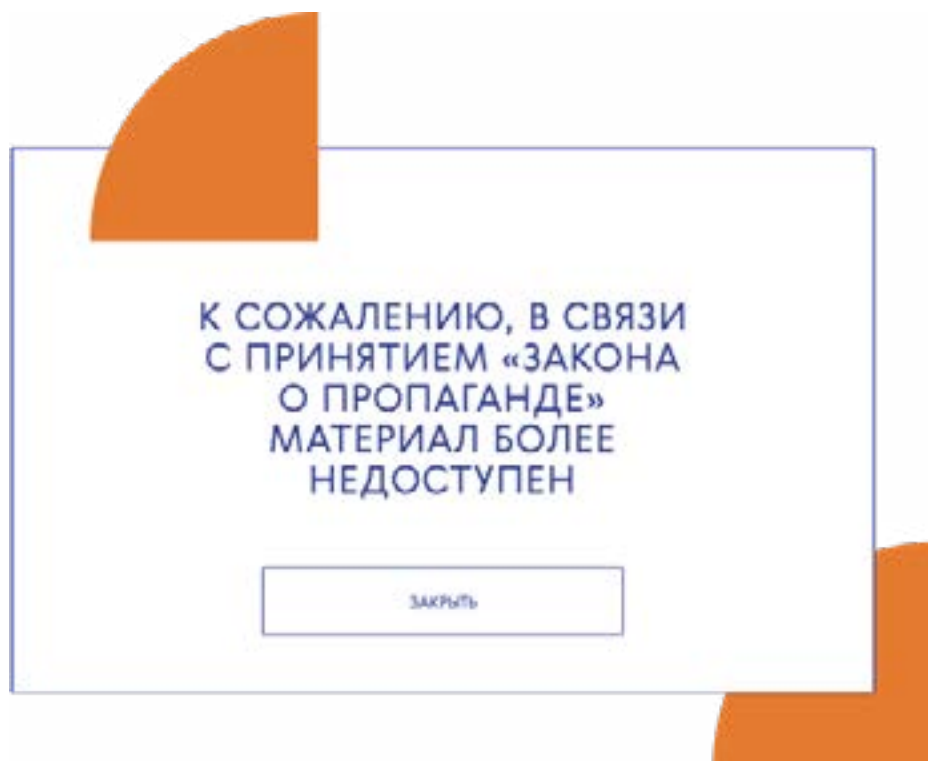
¹²⁶ Source: <https://t.me/tikhonovichme/7831> (accessed on October 5, 2023).

In September 2023, a court fined the streaming service "Wink" 1 million rubles for allowing minors to access three movies: "Bridget Jones. The Edge of Reason," "The Curse of Chucky," and "The Barber of England". According to the court, the first movie was found to contain a scene depicting "two characters of the same sex (female) kissing in a sexual context." In the movie "Curse of Chucky," the court found "two girls kissing," and its attention was also drawn to a scene "where the same girls are about to have virtual sex via web video link." In the movie "The Barber of England," the court saw "two characters of the same sex (female) kissing in a sexual context."

Online games have also been censored. For example, in December 2022, users noticed that in the Russian-language translation of the game "World Of Warcraft: Dragonflight" the marriage ceremony between two male centaurs was called "fraternization", and also changed the dialog between them¹²⁷.

INTRODUCTION OF TOTAL LGBTQ CENSORSHIP ON THE INTERNET

Since the new law obliged social networks to take measures when detecting LGBTQ content, Russia's largest social network Vkontakte began to post a special message before accessing such materials: "There may be controversial materials in the community. Some community materials may be considered unacceptable under the laws of the Russian Federation"¹²⁸. Similar notices began to appear on other media portals¹²⁹.



*A social network Vkontakte informs users that, because of the "propaganda law", the material is no longer available.

127 How the law banning LGBT propaganda affects the sales of books and the showing of TV series. Tinkoff Magazine, 2022. URL: <https://journal.tinkoff.ru/news/no-books-no-films> [access date: 05.10.2023].

128 Why does Vkontakte show a warning bar? Vkontakte, 2022. URL: <https://vk.com/@vk-notification> [access date: 05.10.2023].

129 Source: <https://theblueprint.ru/culture/industry/konversionnaa-terapiya> [accessed on October 5, 2023]

Since the beginning of December 2022 to the beginning of January 2023, in one month, Roskomnadzor has banned access to 306 websites on which it detected "LGBT propaganda"¹³⁰. The site of the LGBTQ initiative group "Rainbow World" (Perm Region, Russia), which contained information about psychological and legal aid offered to LGBTQ people¹³¹, events and programs, and monitoring data on violations of LGBTQ people's rights, was included in the list of banned sites. In July 2023, a Moscow district court rejected the site owner's request to declare Roskomnadzor's actions illegal, recognizing the fact of "gay propaganda".¹³² On February 8, 2023, Roskomnadzor also blocked the portal "Guys Plus"¹³³ at the request of Rosmolodezh. The portal focused on LGBTQ issues and HIV prevention in the community.

On February 27, 2023, Roskomnadzor approved six "criteria of gay propaganda"¹³⁴, which will guide it in blocking content. They started to be applied in September 2023. The criteria expand the scope of already-introduced legislative bans on the dissemination of "gay propaganda"¹³⁵. This is the presence of information:

- aiming to convince of non-traditional sexual relations, preferences, and attitudes, including the formation of a positive image of persons in non-traditional sexual relations due to their non-traditional sexual preferences and attitudes, or expressing a positive assessment or approval of non-traditional sexual relations, preferences, and attitudes,
- aiming to form a distorted view of the social equivalence of traditional and non-traditional sexual relationships, preferences and attitudes,
- justifying a rejection of traditional sexual relations, preferences and attitudes in favor of non-traditional sexual relations, preferences and attitudes,
- arousing interest in non-traditional sexual relations and aiming to change a negative attitude towards them into a positive one by imposing details of non-traditional sexual relations, including systematic dissemination of materials with non-episodic depiction and (or) description of non-traditional sexual relations, justifying the advantage of non-traditional sexual relationships over traditional sexual relationships,
- aiming to form a positive attitude towards the change of a person's sex, including those containing substantiation or justification of the permissibility of changing a person's sex, refusal of one's natural gender identity.

All criteria are of an assessment nature. The decision regarding which sites are to be blocked is made by Roskomnadzor, as a state authority. Attempts to appeal against such actions on the grounds that there is no "gay propaganda" are now failing.

On September 1, 2023, Roskomnadzor posted on its website a form for receiving complaints about LGBTQ content. Any Internet user can submit such an appeal, and no identification is required. If the presence of "gay propaganda" is confirmed, the site owner will be notified to immediately remove such content. In the event of failure to satisfy the requirement, the site or page will be blocked by Roskomnadzor within 24 hours. During the first day of the "gay propaganda criteria," Roskomnadzor blocked 23 websites with LGBTQ themes¹³⁶.

130 Roskomnadzor blocked 306 websites with LGBT propaganda. Bumaga, 2023. URL: <https://paperpaper.io/papernews/2023/1/16/vedomosti-bolee-300-sajtov-s-lgbt-pro/> (accessed on October 5, 2023).

131 Roskomnadzor has already blocked more than 300 sites for LGBT propaganda. Holod, 2023. URL: <https://holod.media/2023/01/16/roskomnadzor-zablokiroval-uzhe-bolee-300-sajtov-za-propagandu-lgbt/> (accessed on October 5, 2023).

132 Information on Case No. 02a-0355/2023: URL: <https://www.mos-gorsud.ru/rs/taganskij/services/cases/kas/details/73fcc041-ffa-11ed-8cb7-2f493dbb02fe?> (date of reference: 05.10.2023).

133 Roskomnadzor blocked the site Parni PLUS, dedicated to the sexual health of LGBT people. Novaya Gazeta Europa, 2023. URL: <https://novayagazeta.eu/articles/2023/02/09/roskomnadzor-zablokiroval-sait-parni-plus-posviashchennyi-seksualnomu-zdoroviu-lgbt-liudei-news> (date of reference: 05.10.2023).

134 Roskomnadzor order dated February 27, 2023 N 25.

135 Lawyer Olenichev: The state seeks to make millions of LGBT people in Russia invisible, but they will not disappear anywhere. The Insider, 2023. URL: <https://theins.ru/news/261099> (accessed on October 5, 2023).

136 Roskomnadzor has started blocking websites for LGBT content. RBC, 2023. URL: https://www.rbc.ru/technology_and_media/04/09/2023/64f60dd59a794761ce36b4a4 (accessed on October 5, 2023).

THE CLOSURE OF LGBTQ+ CENTERS AND LGBTQ+ ORGANIZATIONS

In November 2022, the only center for LGBTQ people in Kazan, "Acceptance", as well as its website and social media groups, closed down due to the law "on banning gay propaganda among all ages" that had been adopted but had not yet been enforced. The center ran support groups¹³⁷ for LGBTQ people and other events in support of the LGBTQ community.

In July 2023, the city's only community center for LGBTQ people, "Action," closed in St. Petersburg. The leaders of the Center wrote on social media: "Whatever the laws and times are, people like us remain. Keep loving, creating, enjoying, and finding each other. Also, don't give up and don't lose contact. We have always carried the ideas of solidarity, unity, and mutual support. And we hope that the Community Center will live in your memory thanks to every minute spent in its walls and every person you met there"¹³⁸.

As several leaders of Russian regional LGBTQ organizations working to support LGBTQ people told EQUAL PostOst, it was the inability to hold public events in support of LGBTQ people without fear of surprise police visits to the events and subsequent administrative fines for "gay propaganda" that led to the fact that LGBTQ organizations no longer hold openly accessible offline events. Some activities have completely moved online, and public offline events have either been abandoned or reduced drastically in number and turned into a semi-closed or closed format. There is a widespread practice of making preliminary acquaintances with candidates wishing to attend a meeting or film screening, interviewing them, and collecting recommendations from mutual friends before such people get the opportunity to attend a closed LGBTQ event.

At the same time, LGBTQ event organizers understand that they are not violating Russian law. The free activity of open public spaces in which the LGBTQ community can safely develop itself is practically impossible in Russia without the risk of administrative liability due to the law "on the prohibition of gay propaganda among all ages." Blocking LGBTQ-themed websites also makes it not always possible to work online.

The new law has limited the access of Russian LGBTQ people to online services for helping professionals, including psychologists, lawyers, and others. The new stage of the homophobic and transphobic campaign, launched by the authorities, has led to the isolation of LGBTQ people. In regions without LGBTQ organizations, they are essentially left alone with their problems, while in other Russian regions where LGBTQ initiatives continue to operate, the format of providing aid to members of the community has changed. The activities of LGBTQ initiatives in the country are still possible and successful, but often in a semi-closed format.

One EQUAL PostOst survey participant, for example, reported how the state's campaign of harassment of LGBTQ people led to the rejection of him by his relatives due to his LGBTQ identity:

"Relatives before all the discriminatory laws and initiatives were quite neutral towards me and LGBT+ people in general, until the total propaganda and harassment of anyone who is different began."

¹³⁷ Instagram of the Acceptance Center. URL: <https://www.instagram.com/accept.center/> [accessed on October 5, 2023].

¹³⁸ A community center for LGBT people in St. Petersburg has closed. Activatica, 2023. URL: <https://activatica.org/content/4a166a05-1119-4cef-97e1-558e7025e09f/zakrylsya-komyuniti-centr-dlya-lgbt-lyudej-v-peterburge> [accessed on October 05, 2023].

Another Equal PostOst interviewee reported a strong stigmatization of LGBTQ people and an inability to get help:

"Because of the new law on "LGBT propaganda", it has become more difficult to accept yourself, it has become more difficult to live because of the increased hatred towards LGBTQ people in the media, and the positive representation has decreased a lot. So it feels like you are alone, and no one can help you. It appears to be self-hatred. This law is even worse than I realized. People have become much more self-censoring. And it makes me very upset because I don't feel solidarity and support; I feel rejection and ostracism. All of this is very much undermining my psychological and moral state."



The new law has also drastically reduced the visibility of LGBTQ people in Russia. One EQUAL PostOst participant noted the common mood of LGBTQ people if they live closeted lives, not realizing their identity and fearing social and state persecution:

"This week, an adult man attacked and beat two girls in St. Petersburg in the afternoon in a public place, as he considered them to be lesbians. A young boy was raped with an improvised object by police while being detained because of his anti-war stance. His girlfriend was threatened with rape and abused. When they sued for police misconduct, the court denied them the complaint. I've been in the closet all my life; only my friends and my sibling sister know about my orientation; my parents don't know. I don't know what to say at my gynecologist's appointment every time, so I try to just not go there. I am rarely discriminated against on the basis of orientation (never physical violence) just because people do not know that I belong to the discriminated group".

ONGOING VIOLENCE AGAINST LGBTQ+ PEOPLE IN THE NORTH CAUCASUS

The persecution of LGBTQ people in Chechnya continues regardless of gender. Human rights activists report that 10–15 people¹³⁹ might be detained at once on the basis of their sexual orientation.

Elina Ukhmanova from Dagestan was often physically and psychologically abused at home. In July 2022, two unknown men kidnapped her and took her to the Alliance Recover Center. Elina's parents paid to have their daughter "cured" of bisexuality and atheism¹⁴⁰. From July 23, 2022, to November 23, 2022, she was held at the center, where she was punished¹⁴¹. Once, for violating the center's rules, she was made to "rewrite a text three hundred times: *"I am an irresponsible lazy junkie who cares nothing about my life and a lot of other things, who is used to living my own way without changing anything in my life. If I don't change anything, I will later die like a slouchy dog under the fence."* After an argument between two rehabilitants, she saw them being suspended with handcuffs to the railing. One of them hung from 11 p.m. to 4 a.m. As punishment, rehabilitants could be deprived of lunch and forced to do push-ups for obscenities¹⁴².

The police often torture people who are arrested on suspicion of homosexuality. Human rights activists name such methods as electric shocks through bare wires attached to fingers, beatings with sticks, and plastic pipes. Also, detainees are sometimes tied up, hung by their hands, and left hanging until they agree to confess or incriminate others. If the police consider the evidence of a person's "guilt" to be substantial, torture becomes more brutal. Detainees may be raped with various objects, beaten, and forced to fight each other.

Torture varies depending on the individual and the place of detention. In some police stations, detainees have had a metal tube with barbed wire inserted into the anus and then the tube removed, leaving the wire in the rectum. In one police department in Chechnya, gay men are sometimes turned into "Wahhabis" (followers of a religious doctrine that the Chechen authorities are fighting against). Men are forced to grow their hair and then "hunt" them in the forest¹⁴³.

Back in May 2018, acting Russian Justice Minister Alexander Kononov claimed that "the Russian Ministry of Justice conducted an inspection in the Chechen Republic and found no violations of the rights of the LGBT community in Chechnya, nor of the gays themselves"¹⁴⁴.

These cases are taking place in the 21st century in Russia, but the federal authorities do not intervene. Courts recognize as legitimate the refusal to initiate criminal proceedings for LGBTQ people's torture and kidnapping in the North Caucasus, while law enforcement agencies decline to investigate such cases^{145,146}.

139 BBC Investigation: How LGBT people are persecuted in Chechnya and how they escape. Nokta, 2022. URL: <https://nokta.md/presledovanie-lgbt-ljudej-v-chechne-i-kak-im-udaetsya-ottuda-sbezhat/> [accessed on October 5, 2023].

140 A resident of Dagestan complained about torture in a rehabilitation center. Kavkazsky Uzel, 2023. URL: <https://www.kavkaz-uzel.media/articles/384800> [accessed on October 5, 2023].

141 It is difficult to live your own life. This is the story of a 20-year-old girl from Dagestan who ran away from her family. Kavkaz Realii, 2023. URL: <https://www.kavkazr.com/a/slozhno-zhitj-ne-svoey-zhizniju-istoriya-sbezhashey-iz-semji-20-letney-devushki-iz-dagestana/32225097.html> [accessed on October 5, 2023].

142 How Elina Ukhmanova ran away from home. Holod, 2023. URL: <https://holod.media/2023/01/14/elina-ukhmanova> [accessed on October 5, 2023].

143 Torture and Blood Market. How the hunt for gays in Chechnya has become an industry. SC SOS, 2023. URL: <https://sksos.org/ohota-na-geev-v-chechne/> [accessed on May 05, 2023].

144 The Russian Justice Ministry says no gays were found in Chechnya. The Insider, 2018. URL: <https://theins.ru/news/102664> [accessed on October 5, 2023].

145 Maxim Lapunov, who claimed torture of gays in Chechnya, filed a complaint with the ECHR. Radio Svoboda, 2019. URL: <https://www.svoboda.org/a/29960924.html> [accessed on October 5, 2023].

146 The prosecutor's office canceled for the fourth time its refusal to initiate proceedings on the kidnapping of the gay case in Chechnya. Kavkaz Realii, 2023. URL: <https://www.kavkazr.com/a/prokuratura-v-chetvertyy-raz-otmenila-otkaz-v-vozbuzhdenii-dela-o-pohischenii-geya-iz-chechni/32373327.html> [accessed on October 5, 2023].

A DECREASE IN THE APPLIED PRACTICE STANDARDS OF THE PSYCHIATRIC PROFESSION

One of the transgender girls supplied the EQUAL PostOst team with a certificate from a medical center in Moscow, issued to her in September 2023. In the certificate, a doctor—a psychiatrist and sexologist, a candidate of medical sciences—offers her to be examined for "homosexuality," which has been absent in the Russian version of the ICD-10 for more than 23 years.

CROSS-DISCRIMINATION AGAINST LGBT PEOPLE

In January 2023, a month after the law "banning gay propaganda among all ages" came into force, Moscow police began enforcing it against transgender migrant female sex workers. Within the framework of monitoring the Internet "to prevent detection and suppression of propaganda about non-traditional relationships," police officers examined websites with such offers and then made acts of inspection of the Internet pages.

The advertisements contained photos of transgender migrant female sex workers and their phone numbers, so the police had no difficulty identifying them. Within 3 weeks alone, Moscow district courts considered 5 such cases based on the same model¹⁴⁷. In all cases, the migrants agreed with the charges, and the courts did not qualitatively analyze the presented evidence.

*of court casScreenshotes on migrants. All verdicts have enforced.

05-0210/2023	Привлекаемое лицо: Алжонов С.В.	Вступило в силу, 14.02.2023	Мазуров Н.А.	Ст. 6.21, Ч. 7
05-0145/2023	Привлекаемое лицо: Якубов Ж.О.	Вступило в силу, 04.02.2023	Арсеньева М.Н.	Ст. 6.21, Ч. 7
05-0141/2023	Привлекаемое лицо: Артиков А.М.	Вступило в силу, 07.02.2023	Левашова О.В.	Ст. 6.21, Ч. 7
05-0103/2023	Привлекаемое лицо: Хусаинов У.Ш.У.	Вступило в силу, 29.01.2023	Мазуров Н.А.	Ст. 6.21, Ч. 7
05-0210/2023	Привлекаемое лицо: Юсуфов Ш.Ю.У.	Вступило в силу, 27.01.2023	Мазуров Н.А.	Ст. 6.21, Ч. 7

In a Moscow district court ruling, police officers phrased the charge of "gay propaganda" as follows:

"... realized propaganda of non-traditional sexual relations and preferences by posting on an open page of the information and communication network "Internet" a questionnaire on the provision of intimate services of non-traditional sexual relations on the website... Yu being a male, wearing women's underwear, with bare breasts, dark hair, and makeup on his face.

In his profile, Yu publicly expresses an interest in the attractiveness of non-traditional relationships. Yu., being a male person, writes about himself in the feminine gender, specifying the presence of a male penis: "Well-groomed, feminine, transsexual with a large penis (19.5), breast size 5", is a citizen of the male gender. In his profile, he posted a photo of himself as a female with naked breasts, presumably in size 5".

The police, and subsequently the court, considered the placement of this text as "gay propaganda." In four cases, the courts imposed an administrative fine and expulsion from Russia. In one case, arrest for 5 days and administrative expulsion from Russia. In all cases, the defendants were placed in the Center for the Detention of Foreign Citizens under conditions of non-freedom while the court ruling came into force (according to the law, the deadline for appealing the ruling is 10 days, but since there were no defense lawyers involved in the cases, no complaints were filed)¹⁴⁸.

Migrant women in Russia face discrimination¹⁴⁹. In this case, the vulnerability of migrant women was also overlaid with other vulnerabilities, such as being LGBTQ and the applicants' occupation. With multiple forms of discrimination, they did not have the resources to seek legal assistance and protect their rights, which were exploited by the authorities.

According to EQUAL PostOst, the number of administrative offense cases considered by courts for "gay propaganda" increased in 2023. In Moscow alone, in the first 10 months of 2023, the courts heard at least 11 cases of administrative offenses, while the statistics on the application of the previous law "on the prohibition of gay propaganda among minors" (from July 2013 to June 2022) showed an average of no more than 14 cases per year in Russia as a whole.

According to the new article 6.21.2 of the Russian Code of Administrative Offenses "for informing minors" about sexual orientation or gender identity, 25 cases have already been considered in Moscow alone in 2023.

The law of 2013 "on banning gay propaganda among minors" labeled LGBTQ people in Russia as second-class people. In 10 years, Russian authorities have been able to reinforce stereotypes and prejudices against LGBTQ people in Russian society, despite the dedicated and quality work of LGBTQ organizations on behalf of LGBTQ people in Russia.

After the start of the full-scale invasion, the Russian state, led by Vladimir Putin, who makes no secret of his homophobic and transphobic views, launched a new phase of homophobic and transphobic campaigns. Its consequences demonstrate the high risk to the life, physical and mental health, and basic rights of LGBTQ people in Russia. At the same time, the 2022 law "on the ban of gay propaganda among all ages" significantly increased the consequences of legislative discrimination and stigmatization of LGBTQ people in Russia.

One participant in the EQUAL PostOst survey reported that "the policy chosen [by the state] regarding LGBTQ+ people deprives us of a base and a sense of safety and freedom of choice". And this is indeed the reality in Russia today: discrimination and stigmatization of LGBTQ people have been taken to an extremely high level.

As it was shown above, the homophobic and transphobic campaign involves representatives of the highest authorities and all their branches: legislative, executive, and judicial. In such a situation, LGBTQ people in Russia cannot expect the absence of stigmatization and discrimination on the part of the state.

The new law "on banning gay propaganda among all ages" was authored by almost all deputies of the State Duma (86%). Within a week, it was approved by the Federation Council, as the highest chamber of the Russian federal parliament, and signed by Vladimir Putin 5 days later. The law came into force without any transition period: immediately from the moment of publication and on the day of signing¹⁵⁰.

148 Information on Case No. 7-21171/2023. URL:

<https://www.mos-gorsud.ru/mgs/services/cases/review-not-yet/details/066cad10-4644-11ee-b80b-ffd51670c2ea?codex=6.21&formType=fullForm> (accessed on October 5, 2023).

149 UPR Report on the Situation in Russia: Racism and Discrimination on the Basis of Ethnicity, Migration Status, and Citizenship. Anti-Discrimination Center, 2023. URL:

<https://adcmemorial.org/novosti/doklad-v-ramkah-upo-o-situaczi-v-rossii-rasizm-i-diskriminacziya-na-osnovanii-etnicheskoj-prinadlezhnosti-migracziionogo-statusa-i-grazhdanstva/> (accessed on October 5, 2023).

150 Bill No. 217472-8. URL: <https://sozd.duma.gov.ru/bill/217472-8> (accessed on October 05, 2023)

In her first report published on September 15, 2023, UN Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights in the Russian Federation Mariana Katsarova emphasized that "since February 2022, even tougher laws aimed at the LGBTIQ+ community have been adopted, in line with the President's statements that an anti-LGBTIQ+ stance will be the cornerstone of his policy. The legislation extended the ban on "gay propaganda" not only to minors but also to any act considered to be promoting "non-traditional sexual relationships or preferences." This has led to condemnation by the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, who has called on Russian lawmakers to repeal, rather than expand, anti-LGBTIQ+ legislation"¹⁵¹.

Russia has become an unsafe country for LGBTQ people. While in Russia, LGBTQ people are constantly confronted with negative discriminatory legislation and practices: total LGBTQ censorship online and offline, cases of physical and psychological violence, torture, kidnapping, lack of effective investigation of hate crimes based on sexual orientation and/or gender identity, huge fines for dissemination of information on LGBTQ issues, attempts to remove children in guardianship and adopted children, stigmatization and discrimination, leading to the exacerbation of LGBTQ problems in the country and the inability of LGBTQ people to receive support and enjoy basic human rights and freedoms.

Tens of thousands of LGBTQ people have already become migrants, having left Russia after the start of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine and the new law "banning gay propaganda among all ages" came into force.

LGBTQ people in Russia are persecuted for who they are. In this situation, the state not only fails to support them but, on the contrary, uses the state machine to repress them. People are deprived of basic rights, harassed, and abused. They need help, including through the provision of support programs inside Russia and the possibility of exit and legalization in safe countries (e.g., in European states through the provision of humanitarian visas).

Law “on banning transgender transition”

“I was lucky enough to be able to change my documents before the transgender ban discussions, but I see how anxious and fearful young trans people are and how the authorities are fostering animosity against us”.

Next to the law “banning gay propaganda among all ages,” Russian authorities hastily initiated a new bill. The law banning the recognition of the gender identity of transgender people in Russia was enacted in July 2023.

Russia still follows ICD-10, in which transgenderism is psychopathologized (“diagnosis F 64.0”) and is considered a “gender identity disorder.” Previously, before the law was passed, all transgender transition procedures in Russia involved the establishment of such a “diagnosis” by medical specialists, after which the state allowed, at the person’s option, to change documents, receive hormone therapy, and/or make gender-affirmative treatments. On January 1, 2022, the World Health Organization recommended that states switch to ICD-11, which depathologizes transgenderism. At the same time, ICD-11 provides for a new concept of “gender incongruence,” appearing in the chapter on conditions related to sexual health. ICD-11 has not yet been introduced in Russia.

For example, one EQUAL PostOst survey participant reported a common practice of Russian doctors’ attitudes toward transgender people: “State psychiatry. I am treated for major depressive disorder, but every second doctor considers it his duty to treat me of my transgenderism”.

Since July 24, 2023, Russia has banned legal and significantly restricted medical transgenderism. In addition, transgender people have been struck down in family rights. This state-legalized discrimination has led to increased stigmatization of transgender people in Russian society and the impossibility of realizing basic human rights - the right to dignity and access to medical care.

Firstly, the law prohibits legal transgender transition. Before the law was introduced, Russian citizens could undergo a meeting of a special medical commission that consisted of a psychiatrist, a clinical psychologist, and a sexologist. If the commission confirmed that a transgender person had a diagnosis of “transsexualism,” the person received a certificate on the possibility of making changes to the birth certificate, namely changing the gender marker from male to female or vice versa. For this purpose, the transperson applied to the civil registry office, which made such changes and issued a new birth certificate. After that, the transperson would apply for a new passport and, after that, could change other documents with gender markers at her own will. In August 2023, all such medical commissions in Russia were disbanded.

Doubtless, such a law brings the issue of legal gender recognition for transgender people back 25 years to the situation that was acute at the time of the beginning of the struggle for their rights in Russia. Transgender people’s inability to change their documents has a direct impact on their psychological health and may lead to an increase in suicides. In addition, the inability to change documents leads in practice to denial of admission to education and employment (due to the discrepancy between a person’s real appearance and the photo in the passport), problems in checking documents by the police and state authorities, and an increase in violence and hate speech.

Secondly, the law banned medical interventions as part of transgender transition: “it is prohibited to implement medical interventions, including the use of medicines aimed at sex reassignment, including the formation of primary and (or) secondary sexual features of the other sex in a person. This means a total ban on gender affirmative surgeries in Russia as part of transgender transition, as well as a ban on prescribing hormone therapy to transgender people on the basis of transgenderism. Essentially, the law deprived transpersons of access to medical care, which can be regarded as a violation of the Russian Federation’s obligation under Article 7 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (“torture or cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment”).

Third, the law prohibited transpersons from being adoptive parents of children or taking them under guardianship.

Fourth, if one spouse transitions, the law provides for automatic annulment of the previous marriage; in other words, it deprives transgender people of their rights to legal recognition of even unions concluded between people of different genders.

On the eve of the adoption of the Russian law "banning transgender transition," one of the participants in the EQUAL PostOst survey, a transgender man, said:

I AM AFRAID

"I'm a t-male. I have changed my documents. I am very afraid of the bills that they want to introduce in the RF. I am very afraid that I will be forced to change my documents back to female, forced to be in the army or at war, forcibly sent to a mental institution or prosecuted. I am very afraid of being banned from surgery and hormone therapy. I haven't started zgt [hormone therapy] yet, but I will soon. I am afraid all the time in this country, I am very anxious, I cried a lot when I found out about the upcoming laws against transgender citizens. I often experience panic attacks, and suicidal thoughts don't leave me I am scared out of my mind..."

In 2022-2023 in Russia, court practice aimed at stopping marriages by court decision had already begun—at that time, in the absence of a law "on the prohibition of transgender transition." The initiators of such cases in court in defense of the public interest have always been the prosecutor's office. It received information about transgender transition from the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Russian Federation (as part of the procedure for replacing a transperson's passport of a citizen of the Russian Federation due to gender indication changes in the documents) and from the civil registry office.

Referring to the 2020 amendment to the Russian Constitution that "the protection of the marriage institution as a union of a man and a woman" is under the joint jurisdiction of the Russian Federation and its subjects¹⁵², courts have annulled marriages if one of the spouses transgendered. For example, in November 2022, a district court in the Tver region annulled marriages involving transgender people, and in March 2023, the Central District Court of the city of Tyumen annulled marriages involving transgender people¹⁵³.

"The court had the right to invalidate the marriage only if it didn't comply with the requirements of the law at the time of its conclusion. In this case, according to the documents, the marriage was originally concluded between a man and a woman. Subsequent transgender transitions did not change the legal nature of the marriage. There are no legally established conditions for its termination at the initiative of the state," believes human rights lawyer Maxim Olenichev¹⁵⁴.

In another case, in December 2022, the Samara district civil registry office refused to amend the birth record of a transgender person.

¹⁵² Article 72 of the Constitution of the Russian Federation.

¹⁵³ A family was not allowed to become same-sex. Kommersant, 2023. URL: <https://www.kommersant.ru/doc/5876250> (accessed on November 10, 2023).

¹⁵⁴ Ibi.

It referred to the fact that, as a result of changing the gender information in the birth record, the previously concluded marriage would become a same-sex marriage, which is not allowed under Russian law. In June 2023, the Leninsky District Court of the City of Samara dismissed the claim of a transperson who applied for her rights protection. In September and October 2023, the Samara Regional Court left such a court decision unchanged.

On August 16, 2023, in response to an Equal Post Ost letter, Mariana Katsarova, UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Russian Federation; Victor Madrigal-Borloz, UN Independent Expert on protection from violence against discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity; and Dorothy Estrada-Tank¹⁵⁵ Rapporteur Member of the Working Group on the issue of discrimination against women and girls, condemned the adoption of the law "on the prohibition of transgender transition" as contrary to Russia's human rights obligations and called on it to be enacted in accordance with Russia's human rights obligations.

In the first report on Russia published by Mariana Katsarova¹⁵⁶, UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Russian Federation in September 2023, a special section is devoted to "legislative persecution on the grounds of sexual orientation and gender identity." In it, she criticized the laws adopted in Russia "banning transgender transition" and "banning gay propaganda among all ages"¹⁵⁷, and recommended that the authorities of the Russian Federation "adopt a law on the prohibition of transgender transition" and "ban gay propaganda among all ages." She recommended the Russian authorities "take all necessary legislative and practical measures to prevent discrimination, stigmatization, hate speech, violence, and other human rights violations and persecution on the grounds of sexual orientation and gender identity, and to repeal existing legislation in this area that is incompatible with the state's international human rights obligations"¹⁵⁸.

Transgender people's situation in Russian society is still critical. Relatives, close friends, relatives, and public institutions often stigmatize and discriminate against transgender people on their own. This was reported by EQUAL PostOst survey participants:

KICKED OUT

"After my parents found out I was a transgender girl, I was declared a family enemy and kicked out on the street."

"I was able to get a job and rent a small apartment; later, I moved to live with my girlfriend in another city. And now I'm back with my parents to finish college, but with very harsh conditions (nothing feminine; you can't even have a trivial manicure; I get threats that they [the parents] will break my fingers)."

155 Mandates of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Russian Federation; the Independent Expert on Protection Against Violence and Discrimination Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity, and the Working Group on Discrimination Against Women and Girls. URL: <https://spcommreports.ohchr.org/TMResultsBase/DownloadPublicCommunicationFile?gld=28318> [accessed on 10.11.2023].

156 A/HRC/54/54.

157 A/HRC/54/54, paras. 37-41.

158 A/HRC/54/54, para. 112.

The stigmatization of transgender people is also widespread in the educational environment. One of the participants in the EQUAL PostOst survey said:

ПЫТАЮСЬ

"This is the second time I am trying to win at a university a topic for a research paper on transgender people, while most of the academic supervisors refer to the new law and say that we will all be deprived of accreditation because of me."

In Russia, there are widespread practices of hidden discrimination against transgender people, when they are deprived of basic rights because of their gender identity in the context of laws that do not allow them to realize themselves in society and force them to live under a mask.

RECOGNITION OF THE "INTERNATIONAL LGBT PUBLIC MOVEMENT" AS AN EXTREMIST ORGANIZATION, BAN ON ITS ACTIVITIES IN RUSSIA

On November 2, 2023, the Ministry of Justice of the Russian Federation sent a lawsuit to the Supreme Court of the Russian Federation. It contained an appeal to recognize the non-existent organization "International LGBT Public Movement" as extremist and ban its activities in Russia.

On November 17, the website of the Ministry of Justice of the Russian Federation published information about the reasons for such a decision: the state considered that the activities of the organization "revealed various signs and manifestations of extremist orientation, including incitement of social and religious discord.

The case was classified as "secret," therefore it was considered in a closed court session without the participation of the defendant. On November 30, Oleg Nefedov, a judge of the Supreme Court of the Russian Federation, fully satisfied the requirements of the Ministry of Justice of Russia in one court session, declaring the non-existent organization "International LGBT Public Movement" and its structural departments to be extremist and also banning its activities in Russia.

According to the court verdict, the court's decision to ban the organization's activities came into force immediately. The rest of the decision related to the recognition of the organization as extremist will come into force in one of two cases:

- ▲ in a month, if a process party or interested party fails to file an appeal or files one, it will not be accepted by the court,
- ▲ if the appeal is accepted by the court for consideration after it has been considered by the appeal panel of the Supreme Court of the Russian Federation.

Due to the fact that no representatives of the defendant participated in the trial, the Supreme Court of the Russian Federation will send a copy of the decision only to the plaintiff (the Ministry of Justice of Russia) and will not officially publish it. For LGBTQ activists and LGBTQ people, this means the following consequences (relevant from the moment the court decision comes into force):

1. Prohibition on the demonstration of symbols of an "extremist organization," including on the Internet in previously placed posts. For such a violation for the first time, there is administrative responsibility (a fine of 1,000 to 2,000 rubles or administrative arrest up to 15 days), and for the second time (within a year from the date of detection of the first violation), there is the risk of criminal liability (a maximum penalty of up to 4 years of imprisonment). The problem is that the symbols must be described in the charter of the "extremist organization." Since there is no such organization, there is no charter to rely on.
2. Prohibition to participate in the activities of the organization. Despite the fact that the court made a decision in relation to the specific organization "International LGBT Public Movement," during the closed trial, the existence of its "structural subdivisions" was established. Due to the absence of the text of the judicial act, it is unknown which independent LGBTQ initiatives the court considered to be part of the "extremist organization." In cases of continued participation in the activities of various initiatives, LGBTQ people and their supporters can be held criminally liable (maximum penalty: up to 6 years of imprisonment; in some cases, up to 12 years). Criminal activity for participation in such activities becomes possible after a court decision enters into force.
3. Ban the organizing activities of an "extremist organization." Organizers of events and coordinators of the work of LGBTQ initiatives in Russia can immediately be held to criminal liability (maximum penalty: up to 10 years in prison; in some cases, up to 12 years).
4. Involvement in the activities of an "extremist organization". Under this prohibition, the state takes into account such forms of activity as persuasion, requests, and proposals (including those made through the placement of materials on various media and dissemination through information and telecommunication networks). In essence, it is prohibited to work with supporters of LGBTQ initiatives. The maximum penalty for such an offense is 8 years of imprisonment.

The decision of the Supreme Court of the Russian Federation makes it impossible for LGBTQ initiatives to openly advocate for the rights of LGBTQ people in Russia because of the risk of administrative and criminal liability for participants and organizers.

At the moment, some LGBTQ initiatives remain active in Russia and are looking for new formats to support LGBTQ people in the country so that they will not be left alone with the homophobic and transphobic pressure of the state. Some LGBTQ activists and teams of LGBTQ initiatives have left Russia, fearing criminal prosecution.

The decision of the Russian Supreme Court is another step in the homophobic and transphobic state campaign after the adoption of the law "on banning gay propaganda among all ages" and the law "on banning transgender transition." It prohibits organized struggle for the civil rights of LGBTQ people in Russia and supports such activities.

SURVEY RESULTS:

DISCRIMINATION, NEEDS AND CHANGES AFTER THE START OF THE MILITARY INVASION AND THE NEW "PROPAGANDA" LAW

The online survey of LGBTQ people was conducted between May and July 2023. The questionnaire was shared via social media and channels of EQUAL PostOst and partner organizations in Russia through the professional and personal connections of community members.

The questionnaire was filled out 3,735 times; it was seen by over 8,700 unique users, including 6700 who started to fill out the questionnaire but stopped before finishing (a 55.5% drop rate). Respondents took an average of 35 minutes to complete the questionnaire. The authors of this report would like to once again thank those who invested their time and effort in completing the survey and shared their experiences, emotions, and personal stories.

The survey was conducted on the basis of conventional sampling, so its results do not claim to be representative. But they do provide insight into questions about the situation of LGBTQ people both in Russia and in emigration.

After cleaning the data from erroneous fills, suspicious cases, and missing answers to the filter questions, the dataset totaled 3,591 cases. Among them, 3,095 people permanently reside in Russia, and another 496 people left before or after the start of Russia's military invasion of Ukraine.

This chapter summarizes the main results of the survey. The situation of respondents who stayed in Russia and those who left the country is considered separately: needs, cases of discrimination, and reactions to legislative changes in Russia are described.

DISCRIMINATION, PROBLEMS, AND NEEDS OF LGBTQ PEOPLE LIVING IN RUSSIA

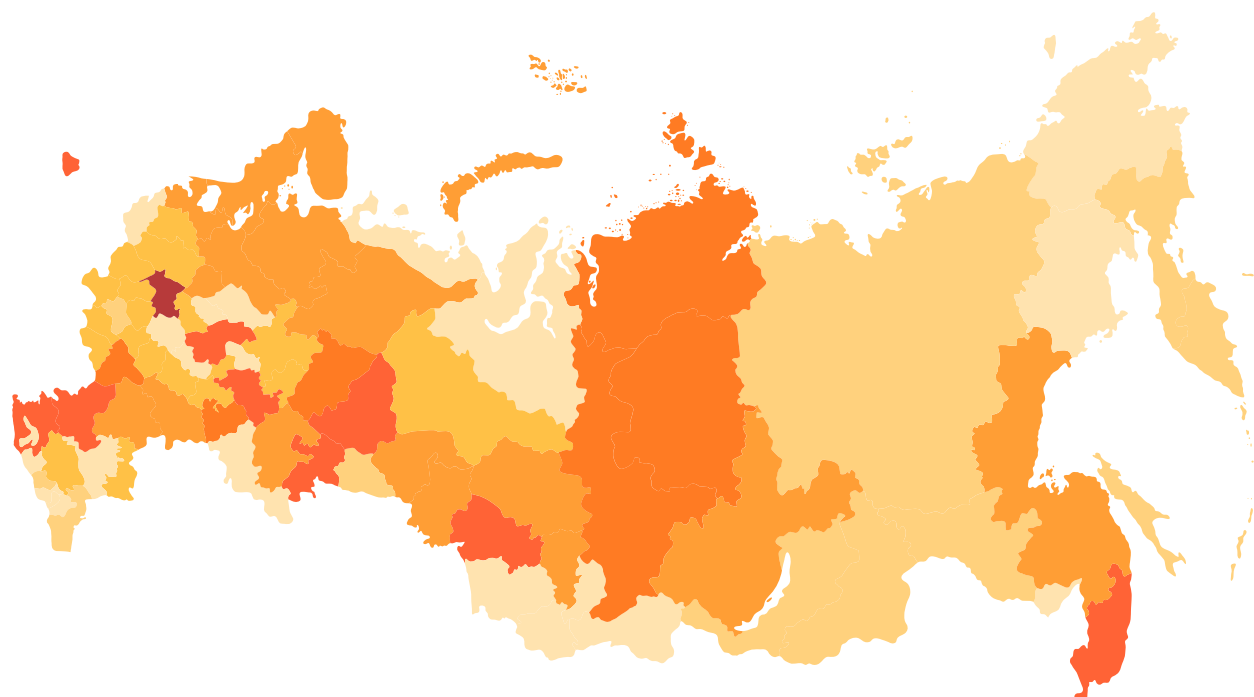
The study involved adult respondents living in Russia: their ages ranged from 18 to 59 years, with an average age of 25.6 years and a median age of 23 years. Most respondents (71.3%) were assigned female sex at birth and 28.7% were assigned male sex at birth.

The division of respondents by the parameter of gender self-identification is as follows:

- 32.5% of respondents identify as male,
- 47,2% as female,
- 17,6% as non-binary people,
- 2,7% respondents answered "other" to the question about gender identity (mainly agender people, intersex people, and genderfluid people fell into this category).

Among the study participants, 30.1% were transgender, 66.2% were cisgender, and another 3.7% indicated "other," which is possible when understanding gender as a continuum.

The geography of the research is extensive. The questionnaire was filled out in 79 out of 84 Russian regions (94% of all subjects of the Russian Federation) within the borders that existed before 2014 and are recognized by the international community (see map). A significant number of respondents live in Moscow (575 people, 18.6%), the Moscow Region (479 people, 15.5%), and St. Petersburg (500 people, 16.2%). To a large extent, this shift is due to both the questionnaire distribution strategies and the concentration of people living in these highly populated regions of the country. The average number of questionnaires filled out in one subject in the Russian Federation is 39.2; the median number is 11.



SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC PORTRAIT

Respondents are highly educated: 6.9% of the sample have an academic degree (Master, Candidate, or Doctor of Science), 32.2% have higher education (Specialist or Bachelor), 20.9% have incomplete higher education, 14.8% have received secondary vocational or specialized education, 1% have primary vocational education, 17.5% have graduated from 11th grade, and 5.2% have graduated from 9th grade. The category "other" (1.5%) when answering the question about the level of education included those informants who preferred to indicate that they are currently studying.

When asked about having a permanent paid job, 43.9% of respondents gave a negative answer and 49.4% gave a positive answer (another 6.8% answered "other" and described their employment as temporary, freelance, or as householders). Those survey participants who have a permanent job are employed in a variety of fields, including:

12,6%

IT and computer technology

10,4%

education, language teaching, and translation

9,7%

services (cosmetology, beauty, sports, and others)

9,6%

retail trade

8,7%

the medical field (including psychotherapy and psychological counseling)

8,5%

media, journalism, and telecommunications

6,9%

cultural institutions and arts-related projects

6,7%

industry and construction

6,6%

work with products and in catering, and also in economical sphere

3,2%

of respondents indicated that they do not work (although they answered positively to the previous question about permanent employment)

[3.8%] — in academia and research (2.7%), public and charitable organizations (2.1%), management positions (2.1%), law (1.3%), civil service (1.2%), freelancing (1.6%), and working in agricultural enterprises (0.3%);

0,2%

of respondents indicated part-time and temporary jobs as employment

1,7%

found it difficult to classify their work in any sphere

For the most accurate description of their financial situation and financial standing, respondents classified themselves into one of the following categories:

13,2%

"I live very frugally; I have enough money only for food"

29,5%

"I have enough money for daily expenses, but buying clothes is already difficult"

29,3%

"I have enough money for food and clothes, but I cannot afford to buy basic household appliances without saving/borrowing in advance"

19,6%

"If necessary, I can buy basic household appliances without borrowing money, but a car is a luxury for me"

1,7%

"I can afford a lot of things, such as buying a car or going on an expensive vacation"

0,1%

"I do not have any financial difficulties; if necessary, I can buy an apartment or a house"

6,6%

found it difficult to answer the question about their financial situation

The answers to the question about how the economic situation has changed over the last year were distributed as follows: for 1.8% of respondents, the situation has significantly improved; for 11.5%, it has improved; and for 23.7%, it has remained unchanged. The situation of 34.9% of the survey participants worsened in the past year; 8.4% worsened significantly. Another 19.7% of respondents could not answer the question.

The financial situation of survey participants can also be assessed by where and under what conditions they live. 27.1% of respondents live in their own apartment or house, 28.2% live in rented housing, and 38.6% live with friends and/or relatives. 45 respondents (1.5%) do not have permanent housing, and another 4.6% found it difficult to describe their housing situation.

Only 10.4% of respondents are involved in civic activities (members of non-profit organizations and/or civic initiatives).

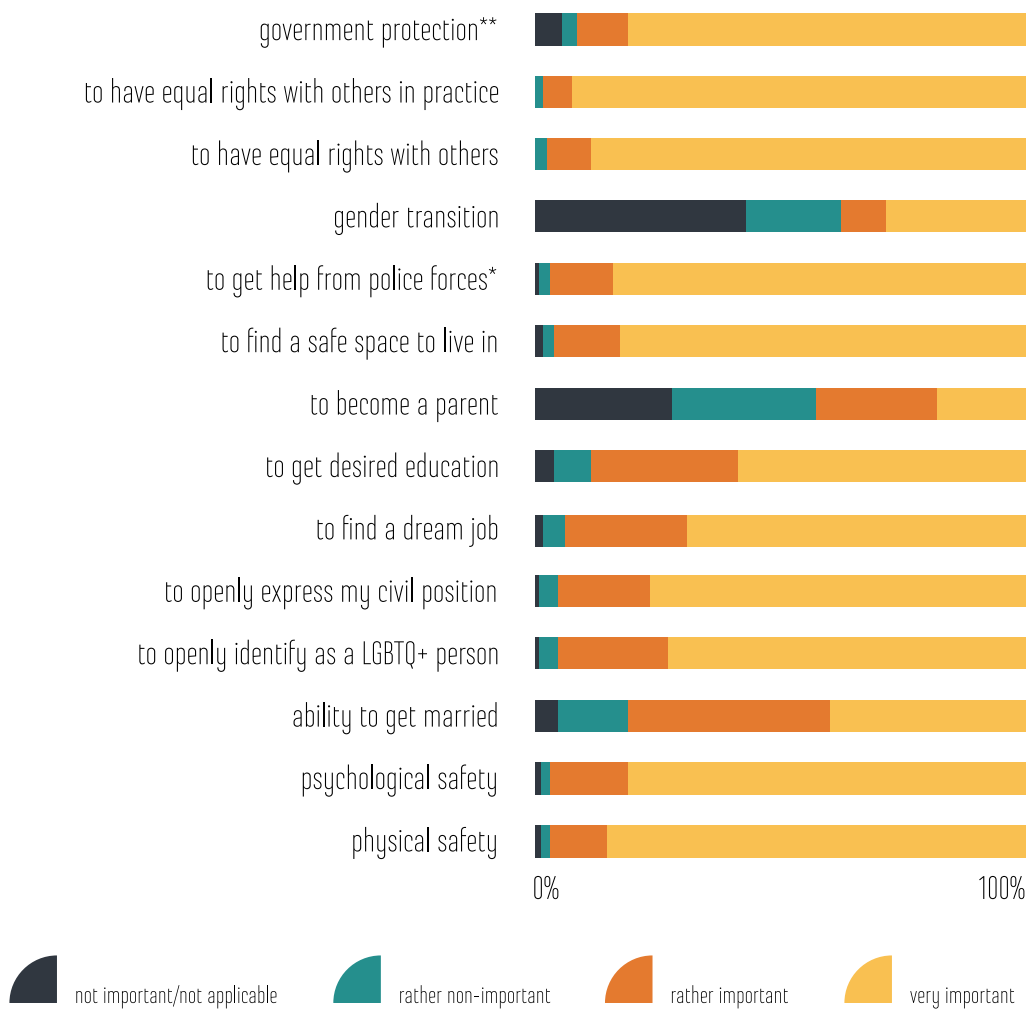
The survey authors didn't ask about official civil status but asked whether the respondents had a permanent partner. 47.3% of respondents are in a permanent relationship, while 49.1% of respondents answered that they don't have a permanent partner. Another 3.7% of responses fit into the category labeled "other."¹⁵⁹ 4.4% of respondents have minor children.

¹⁵⁹ Among the most common answers were "everything is complicated" or descriptions of current breakup cases. Also, there were stories of polyamorous unions, long-distance relationships, and other forms of relationships. This question prompted reflection on how the question about family structure, location, and relationships could be better formulated in future research to ensure that the situations of the greatest number of informants are included in the analysis.

NEEDS

One of the survey blocks was devoted to the needs of LGBTQ people. The authors of the study asked which of the listed phenomena and needs seemed to the respondents to be the most important in their lives. The "rating" of needs' importance¹⁶⁰ is as follows:

Level of importance of various needs for LGBTQ+ respondents



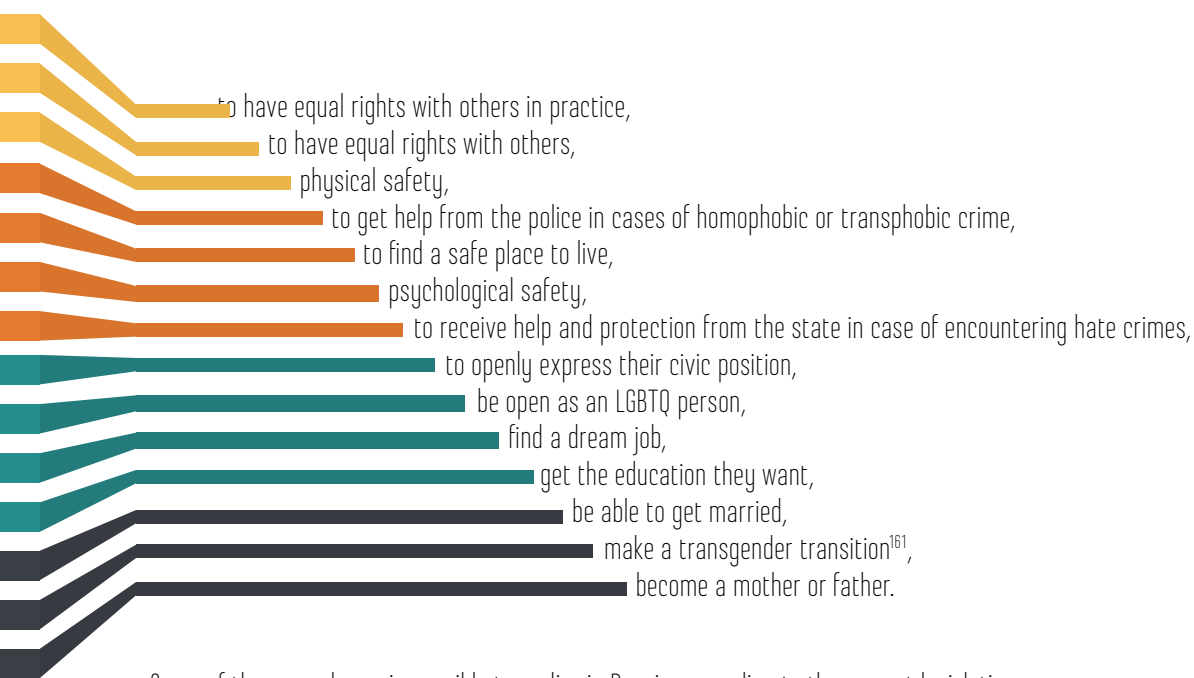
¹⁶⁰

Two needs mentioned in the diagram deserve additional comments:

* "to get help from the police" is a short version of the answer formulated as "to get help from the police in case of a homophobic/transphobic crime",

** "protection of the state" is a short version of the answer: "if a "hate crime" is committed against me, the state will find the perpetrators and protect me".

Thus, the survey participants considered important needs (in priority order: first - very important, then - less important):



Some of these needs are impossible to realize in Russia, according to the current legislation.

DISCRIMINATION, HARASSMENT AND RISK AVOIDANCE

In the respondents' perception, various practices that could undoubtedly be called discriminatory are widespread in Russia.

Thus, offensive language against LGBTQ people is considered a common norm by 85.1% of respondents (another 12.4% said that insults are relatively common). Jokes and anecdotes about LGBTQ people are common in everyday life, according to 57.4% of respondents (another 30.1% said that such jokes are relatively common). Public expressions of hatred towards LGBTQ persons are widespread according to 66.7% of respondents and relatively widespread according to another 27.5%. Attacks on LGBTQ people, physical violence against them, and harassment related to sexual orientation or gender identity are considered rare by only 8.6% (41.8% said that violence against LGBTQ people is "relatively common" and another 44.2% called it a common phenomenon). The dissemination of negative information about LGBTQ people and queer identities, which can have a negative impact on perceptions of queerness itself, was cited as common by 66.2% of people (another 18.8% said the presence and dissemination of discrediting information and "relatively common").

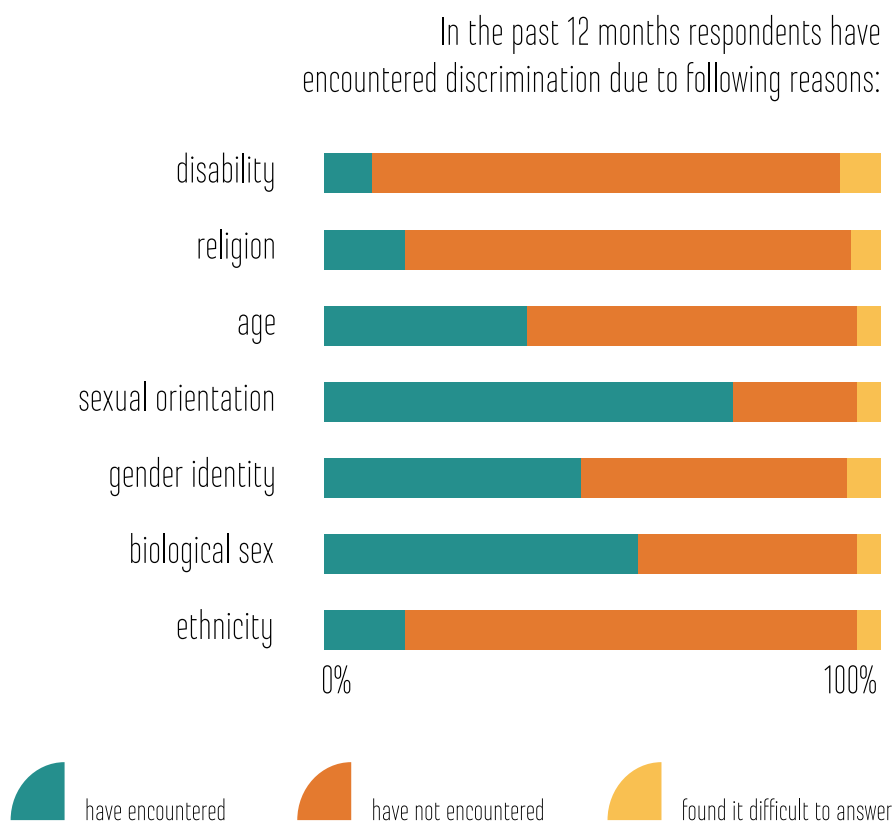
According to the survey participants, all major types of discrimination are widespread in Russia. People are discriminated against because of their ethnicity and roots (79.6% of respondents agreed with this statement), because of their sex (81.1%), gender identity (90.2%), and sexual orientation (96.2%).

¹⁶¹ 30.1% of respondents who participated in the survey are transgender. The authors of the survey did not ask whether the survey participants who reported themselves as transgender people had changed their documents or whether they considered their transgender transition to be completed. Therefore, the ranking of this need in the "rating of importance of needs for LGBTQ people" on the 13th place is nominal and does not reflect the real demand of transgender people for the realization of the need for transgender transition because this question was not studied within the framework of the research due to the limitations of the survey. The authors of the survey admit that the need for transgender transition can be high and occupy the first lines of the "chart of importance of needs for LGBTQ people." This is indirectly evidenced by the fact that 28% of all survey participants stated such a need.

The questionnaire included a question on whether discrimination related to a person's beliefs and religion is rare or common. 30% of respondents indicated that this form of discrimination is common, and 55.4% said it is very rare. Discrimination against people with disabilities is widespread, according to 54.1% of respondents. People in Russia may be discriminated against on the basis of their age, according to 30.2% of respondents..

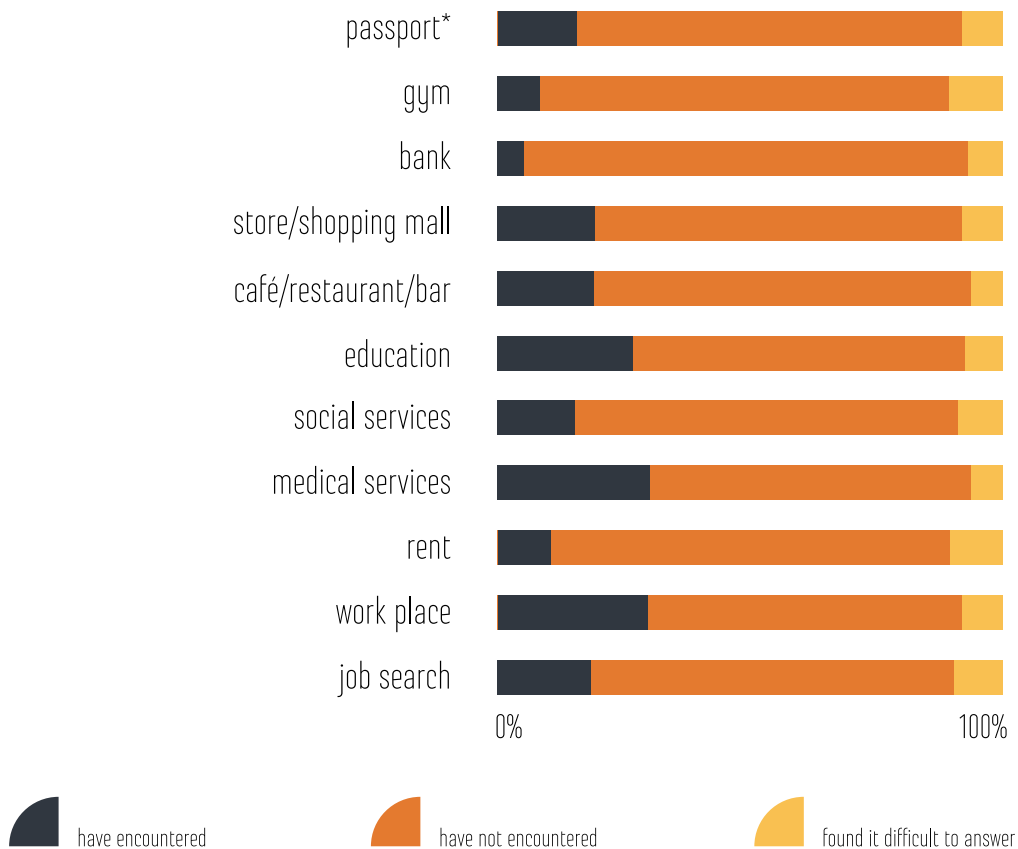
Since discrimination related to sexual orientation is considered to be the most widespread phenomenon, it was specified which groups, according to the respondents, are most subject to discrimination on this basis. According to the survey, homosexual men are the most discriminated group (97.6% of respondents); discrimination against transgender people is widespread (76.5% of respondents); for homosexual women, the risk of discrimination is lower than for other groups but still high (67.5% of respondents); and for bisexual people, it is 56.6%.

Respondents also answered which of the above-mentioned types of discrimination they had experienced in the last 12 months of their lives in Russia:



It is important to understand under what circumstances or in what social situations respondents have experienced discrimination. The vast majority (93.6%, or 2,898 people) had experienced discrimination in at least one of the listed situations, and only 6.4% (197 people) of respondents had not been discriminated against in any of the listed places in the past 12 months:

In the past 12 months respondents have encountered discrimination in following contexts:



In more than half of the cases (55.8% of respondents), people who experienced discrimination didn't report what happened to them anywhere. The reasons why study participants who experienced discrimination didn't report it include:

- Not wanting to discuss their sexuality or gender identity (29.7%),
- not believing that the appeal will be taken seriously (27.5%)
- disbelief in the possibility of change (31.8%)
- lack of information about where to appeal (16.7%),
- no reason to report something that happens all the time (14.8%),
- unwillingness to face additional problems (14.5%)
- lack of time and desire (9.6%)
- experiencing fear (7.1%),
- Another 10.6% of respondents said that they did not report the fact(s) of discrimination to anyone because they coped on their own and/or with the support of friends and family members, and another 8.4% said that they were too upset and depressed to complain.

WORKPLACE DISCRIMINATION

Discrimination related to sexual orientation and/or gender identity is quite common in workplaces and professional environments.

Among respondents living in Russia, more than two-thirds (73.9%) had been continuously employed in a paid job in the last five years. So the respondents were asked a series of questions about professional and team interactions. Among the respondents, 46.9% never and 33.5% rarely were open about their gender identity and/or sexual orientation with coworkers. When asked if they had to specifically hide their identity in the professional sphere, 41.2% responded "always" and another 31% responded "often." Direct negative comments about their work and related to their identity were encountered by 29.7% of respondents (18.9% rarely, 7.9% often, and 3% always).

In order to assess the toxicity/homophobic/transphobic atmosphere of professional relationships, the question was asked whether informants had heard negative comments about other people and their work because they were perceived as LGBTQ people: 51.7% of respondents were familiar with such comments (24.6% had heard them rarely, 20.4% had heard them often and 6.7% had heard them always).

In general, homophobic/transphobic atmospheres or negative attitudes towards LGBTQ people are quite common in professional relationships. Responses to the question about experiences of encountering prejudice against LGBTQ people in the workplace were distributed as follows: 21% responded "always," 35.2% responded "often," 23.5% responded "rarely," and 17.4% responded "never."

Gender identity and/or sexual orientation was the reason for unequal treatment by a superior or employer for 31.2% of respondents (rarely for 16.8%, often for 9.7%, and always for 4.7%).

DISCRIMINATION IN RECEIVING MEDICAL SERVICE

Medical institutions have traditionally become another place and another situation of social interaction in which respondents, more often than in other contexts, faced discrimination, disrespect, and unfair treatment. Transgender people are a particularly vulnerable group in this context.

Among the study participants:

41,5%

faced inappropriate curiosity (50.1% among transgender people)

27,1%

faced disregard for their needs

23,8%

had to stop treatment and/or medical services completely due to fear of discrimination and disrespect from medical personnel (35.7% among transgender people)

22,78%

had to change specialists due to negative reactions to their gender identity and/or sexual orientation (30.7% among transgender respondents)

17,9%

faced difficulties in accessing health services (27.1% among transgender people)

12,1%

faced pressure or coercion to undergo medical and/or psychological tests (18.3% among transgender people)

AVOIDING RISKS

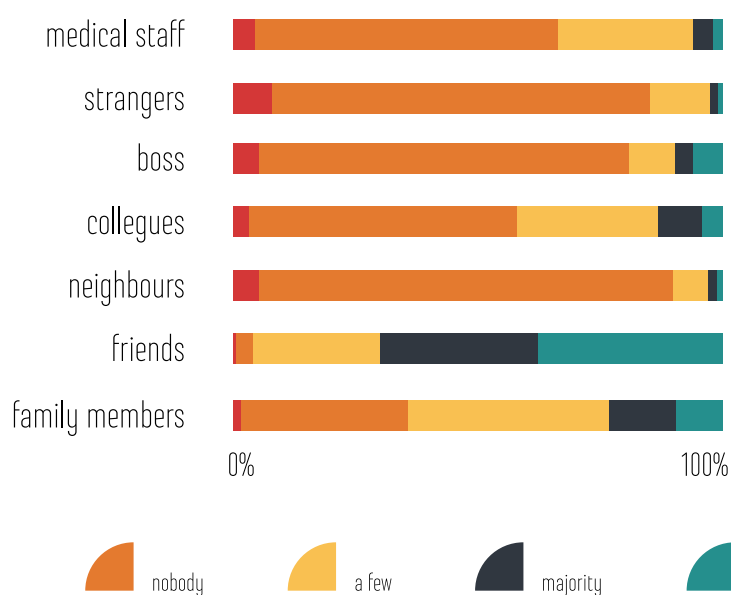
discrimination inevitably leads to avoiding risks and situations where the experience could be repeated. Half of the respondents avoid holding hands with their partner for fear of being attacked. 73.8% of respondents avoid certain places and locations where they believe they may encounter high levels of homophobic and transphobic violence. The authors of this study attempted to create a "ranking" of places and contexts in which respondents are afraid to speak openly about themselves as LGBTQ persons fearing assault, threats, or harassment:

- ▲ 60.1% avoid openness in public transport,
- ▲ 57.4% in public spaces, buildings, services,
- ▲ 51.8% in open public spaces (streets, parking lots) and 37.1% in parks,
- ▲ 42.1% in cafes, bars, restaurants and clubs,
- ▲ 37.7% at school/university, in the context of other educational institutions,
- ▲ 36.5% in sports institutions,
- ▲ 29% of study participants don't talk about themselves even at home.
- ▲ 7% among friends.

OPENNESS

Risk avoidance is directly related to the degree of openness about one's identity and sexual orientation that LGBTQ people are able to afford, fearing negative reactions, threats, harassment, and physical violence. The authors of the study assessed how open the study participants were with representatives of different social circles – family members, friends, neighbors, colleagues, and so on. The following results were obtained:

How many people in your circle know about your gender identity/ sexual orientation?



HARASSMENT

Among informants living in Russia, 1,219 people (39.4% of respondents) have experienced harassment at home or in public places in the last five years. Persecution and violence were related to the following activities, institutions, or people:

54,7%

faced psychological violence

39,4%

faced threats of physical violence

17,8%

experienced economic violence related to their gender identity and/or sexual orientation by their parents

17,5%

have experienced homophobic and transphobic violence at the hands of people not affiliated with the authorities

10,3%

experienced a refusal to agree on a research topic related to LGBTQ issues

9,7%

because of their anti-war activism

9,5%

¹⁶² experienced attempted child removal and/or termination of parental rights, in whole or in part, by child welfare authorities

7,1%

have been harassed by the authorities and the police because of their civil activism

8,9%

experienced dismissal or forced dismissal

5,7%

have been denied wages

3,7%

were forced to undergo conversion therapy

3,6%

experienced violence by police, officials, or other state agents

3,5%

experienced violence by a partner

3,2%

experienced expulsion from an educational institution

WAR, PROPAGANDA, AND THE PAST YEAR'S CHANGES IN RUSSIA'S TERRITORY

RUSSIA FULL-SCALE MILITARY INVASION OF UKRAINE LIFE CHANGES AND DIFFICULTIES

The war has significantly affected all aspects of the informants' lives: 90.1% confirm this by answering the questionnaire (the events of February 24, 2022, definitely changed the lives of 66.4% of respondents; 23.7% answered "rather, yes" to this question). Those who noted the fact of life change were asked how exactly the following parameters improved or worsened:

- feeling of confidence in the future decreased for 97.6% (for 91% decreased and for 6.6% rather decreased);
- feeling of security decreased for 97.4% (88.7% decreased for 88.7%, and 9% were more likely to decrease);
- state of calmness decreased for 96.9% (86.8% felt worse and 10.2% rather worse);
- psychological state worsened for 95% of respondents (worse for 76.4% and rather worse for 18.6%);
- openness as an LGBTQ person decreased for 90.7% (became more closed for 78.9%, rather became more closed for another 11.8%);
- relationships with friends and relatives changed for 77.9% of respondents (26.6% worsened, 35.8% rather worsened, 12.9% rather improved, and 2.6% improved);
- physical condition has worsened for 71% of respondents (40% have worsened and 31% have rather worsened);
- economic situation has worsened for 69.8% of respondents (worsened for 33.2% and rather worsened for 36.6%).

To better understand the changes in the lives of the study participants, we can turn to the analysis of the open-ended question about the difficulties¹⁶³, people faced after the start of Russia's full-scale military invasion of Ukraine.

HATE

"The hardest thing is the psychological state. There are no forces; life is black and meaningless. As a result of this, there is no strength to fight for a better material and physical condition. I lost 7 kg in a year from poverty and anxiety. Now I am also worried that the rest of the world hates us as Russians. In Russia, they hate us because of LGBT people; in the other world, it's because of the war..."

The respondents record the following difficulties:

- narrowing of the social circle and cooling or breaking of social ties; inability to maintain contacts; finding a common language with acquaintances and family members; problems with trust. The breakdown of social ties for many is connected with their anti-war position, which is not shared by their relatives, or with the departure of friends and acquaintances and the inability to effectively maintain ties at a distance:

"It is difficult to discuss with older relatives; they don't understand my anti-war stance. It is also difficult to communicate with strangers because you start filtering words, what you can say, and what you can't".

- Financial problems: loss of a job and/or forced dismissal; inability to take a loan; high cost of living; poverty; the deterioration of the financial situation. All of this survey participants attribute it to global processes such as inflation and price growth:

" Again, the greatest difficulties are related to the lack of money. The mental state deteriorates even without it, and in the absence of sufficient financial resources, the feeling of stability disappears. The most basic needs don't get satisfied, so there are difficulties with studies, social contacts, and relationships. Often, one has to choose between several things that are absolutely necessary for a person, such as dental treatment, groceries, and rent, or sacrifice one's health."

- problems related to mobility and the inability to move around the world:

" Travel abroad has become more difficult and expensive. Attitudes abroad towards me have deteriorated a lot, although I am not at war with anyone".

- access to medicines and medical products developed abroad has become difficult or impossible, and access to medical care, including psychological care, has deteriorated:

" My wife and I are hesitating to emigrate, also because of access to medicine. My wife has MS¹⁶⁴, and I have OST¹⁶⁵, In Russia, we know how to get medication, and we know how and where we can get medical help, although it can be difficult. The endocrinologist who was in charge of my therapy stopped contacting me (and quit the clinic) and apparently asked to remove her contacts from the [non-profit organization's] website. So I will have to look for a new endocrinologist".

- a loss of a sense of stability and confidence in the future; the unpredictability of social, political, and economic change that makes both long-term and short-term planning difficult:
 - " Things have become even less predictable. Russia is already not particularly stable, and the Russian government's policies only add to the uncertainty (economic isolation, mobilization, emigration of people, legislative initiatives)".

- deterioration of psychological state, depression, fear:
 - "A feeling of powerlessness. Fear to accidentally say something unnecessary in front of strangers. In general, it is safer to keep your point of view on what is happening secret. And I want to scream. And cry..."

- narrowing of the spectrum of civil action and the inability to openly express one's position and speak out against the military invasion without the risk of being subjected to administrative and/or criminal liability:
 - " Difficulties regarding the expression of one's civic position. This was impossible, as the police patrolled any possible protest place 24/7".

- restrictions on access to information:
 - " It is more difficult to access information about the war and LGBTQ+ content due to blocking and censorship".

- direct consequences of war, such as close relatives (fathers, stepfathers, brothers) returning from military service and coming face-to-face with their problems and behaviors:
 - " Stepfather was in the war; now that he came back, he couldn't stop drinking; my mom was depressed; I lost my home".

ATTITUDES TOWARD WAR, SELF-CENSORSHIP, PROTEST

The authors of the study did not ask the respondents about their political views and attitudes towards Russia's military invasion of Ukraine, but the analysis of the answers suggests that the majority of them are negative about the events. Many of them describe aggression and tension that characterize their current life situation, problems in the family due to political disagreements, and a lack of a way out. In this connection, the theme of self-censorship, limiting one's own statements for security reasons, often appears in the answers:

"I have to keep silent and constantly control my words because I don't want to sit down for words."

"[While I was in Russia], I had to keep silent about the war at university, at work, and in public spaces. You never know who might snitch on you, and to go to jail for an anti-war article while being gay at the same time is an obvious death sentence."

"The school authorities demanded that I keep quiet about my views until they contacted the 'right place'."

"Called to school because of daughter's anti-war stance, threatened to report to child welfare."

"Constant control of what I talk about and how I talk, as many people at work have z-views and hate and consider anyone who doesn't support what's going on to be a Nazi."

"It has become scary to voice my position because of what is happening in the world, because any fart against the state agenda can result in administrative and criminal liability".

For security reasons and taking into account the risks of the interviewees and those who distributed the questionnaire on social networks, questions about participation in anti-war activism were not asked. However, some of the interviewees are trying or have tried to take some actions to change their environment and oppose military actions:

" During this period, I received a huge number of threats for expressing my position in my social networks (threats were received for anti-war statements and for condemning the authorities for homophobic laws). I also received threats to initiate administrative and criminal proceedings because of this".

"I receive constant real threats of physical violence against me and my relatives on the grounds of homophobia and my civic position!"

"I have been threatened to get the police for protesting the flag-raising ruler."

"I was taken to a special detention center for my protest."

"I went to rallies against the war, was detained five times, and had three trials. I was assigned fines and lost the ability to use the services of banks. I was fired from my job for my anti-war stance".

"I have a small social media following, but I say something about LGBT or anti-war every day so my close circle doesn't succumb to propaganda. While I used to be able to cope with living in this country, but with difficulty, now it's almost an untenable level of stress for me. I don't have the strength anymore".

A NEW LAW "ON BANNING GAY-PROPAGANDA AMONG ALL AGES"

99.7% of respondents were aware (at the time of the survey) of the adoption in December 2022 of the new federal law "banning gay propaganda among all ages." 69.9% of them (both those living in Russia and those in emigration after February 2022) noted that the law had affected their lives:

95,7%

appeared or increased sense of danger

95,5%

became more anxious

92,1%

experienced or increased fear(s)

88,3%

felt that they were treated as second-class citizens

80,9%

had to consider moving to another country

51,7%

have changed their lifestyle

44,9%

had a reduced social circle

40,5%

have deteriorated health and are considering seeking medical help

22,5%

are under the threat of administrative prosecution

12,4%

have been subjected to outing

10,9%

have been economically abused

8,5%

are at risk of criminal prosecution

5,9%

think their children may be taken away from them or have their parental rights restricted because of their sexual orientation or gender identity

5,6%

have experienced physical violence

4,2%

have experienced a situation in which, when "hate" crimes were committed against them, public services and police did not find the perpetrators or provide protection

2,7%

lost their job

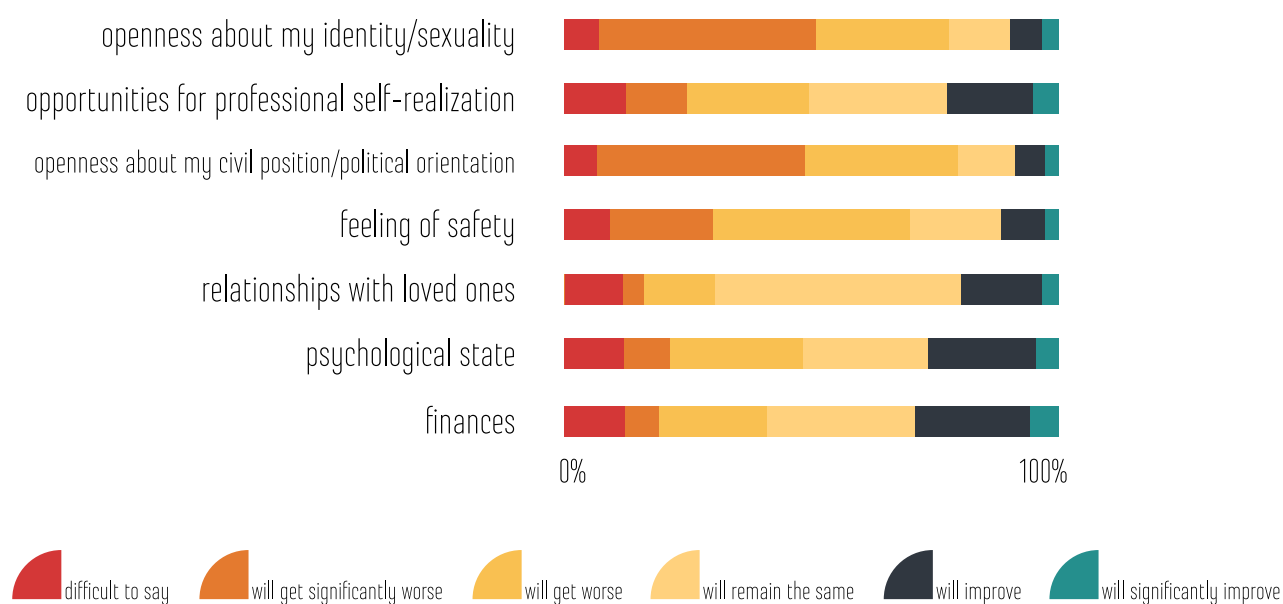
Military actions and constant propaganda against LGBTQ people supposedly lead to an increase in aggression in society. The majority (64.6%) of survey participants believe that the level of aggression against LGBTQ people in society has increased compared to the situation a year ago (32.9% believe that it has increased significantly, 31.7% believe that it has increased, 3.4% believe that it has decreased, and another 2.8% believe that it has decreased significantly).

LEAVENING

"I thought a lot about leavening or committing suicide".

At the end of the questionnaire, the participants were asked what they think about the future and how they see it for themselves and their relatives. Only 24.2% of the respondents look into the future positively; 42.2% - negatively, and another 33.6% could not describe their expectations.

In the upcoming year my ...



Leaving Russia has already become and still is a coping strategy in the context of Russia's military aggression against Ukraine for many activists, professional groups, and LGBTQ people. Among those who took part in the survey, 51.7% are thinking about leaving, 14.3% have already started planning their departure, 5.3% are collecting the necessary documents for emigration, and 1.5% are waiting for their departure date. Another 18.6% cannot leave for personal reasons, and 1.4% cannot leave because they are subject to military conscription/mobilization. Among the respondents, only 5.4% have not thought about leaving and have no plans to leave. Another 1.8% found it difficult to answer the question or answered "other." In other words, only 7.2% of respondents have not considered emigration from Russia, while the absolute majority (92.8%) of respondents are thinking about emigrating from Russia because of the changed situation but, for various reasons, cannot afford it.

In many open-ended questions—about emotional state, changes in life after February 24, 2022, needs, and others—the topic of leaving Russia as a possible way out of the current situation comes up constantly. Leaving Russia allows one to distance oneself from the tense, homophobic, and aggressive situation in Russia and makes it possible to express one's civic position in an anti-war protest. Many respondents, commenting on the kind of assistance they would like to receive from safe countries, mentioned relocation programs for LGBTQ people, the organization of assistance programs for emigration from Russia, the provision of political asylum, and the facilitation of citizenship procedures.

If such requests seem exaggerated, it is necessary to look at the situation from a different angle. Even those who are ready to leave Russia because of persecution, homophobia, transphobia or political position cannot do so. Financial difficulties and lack of additional resources for emigration, for example, prevent departure:

"I don't have visas, I don't have savings to leave the country either."

"If it were not for dependence on work, I would have left a long time ago".

Another restriction is related to the inability to leave family—elderly parents and other relatives, partners—if they are against leaving:

"I realized that I cannot leave my grandmother and father in Russia."

"The biggest difficulty is leaving with my husband, as he is now conscripted."

"Trying to leave. Returning because of elderly relatives who need care."

"The decision to leave entailed moving my parents into a retirement home. This is the hardest decision to make. It cannot be forgiven to myself".

Leaving the country is a serious decision that does not come easily, even in calmer circumstances, compared to war. People face closed-air services and difficulties in obtaining visas and other entry documents. Respondents often mention that they simply do not have the energy to plan and realize the move. Another problem that arises for every (potential) migrant is adaptation to a new country and reorganization of all spheres of life.

"You came to Europe, and you're nobody. Unless you get something somewhere, your life will not get better. You will go through six circles of hell, and it is good if you have the option to get psychological support, but people try to kill themselves, unfortunately. There are those who can't stand it and will come back".

CHANGES THAT COULD LEAD TO A MORE COMFORTABLE LIFE

The questionnaire included a question asking what changes in the structure of Russian society, according to respondents, would allow them to live more comfortably¹⁶⁶:

- for 87.8%, such a condition was the abolition of the law "on gay propaganda",
- for 87.6%—a guarantee of protection from the police and authorities in the event of homophobic and transphobic violence,
- 85.8% responded that education about the rights of LGBTQ people is needed for police and public officials,
- for 85.6% see measures respecting LGBTQ people at the level of social institutions as such a condition,
- 84.6% believe that the rights of LGBTQ people could be popularized by government officials, political parties and institutions,
- for 83.8% of respondents, the condition for positive changes is the change of legislation and legalization of same-sex marriages,
- for 82% of policies against discrimination related to gender identity and sexual orientation in the workplace and professional environment,
- for 80.6% of legal adoption rights for same-sex couples,
- for 78% of public people—politicians, athletes, and so on—about their sexual orientation and gender identity and expressing support for LGBTQ people in general.
- по мнению 65,5%, религиозные группы и общины могли бы делать больше для принятия ЛГБТК-людей.

In the realities of life, this question may seem strange: almost none of the listed items seem possible to the study's authors or to the experts interviewed. Although all of the experts spoke about the need to repeal the "gay propaganda" law, this doesn't seem realistic in the current Russian political climate. Religious communities, politicians, and public figures, if not produce, at least reproduce the homophobic and transphobic rhetoric prevalent in the media and public environment, and also cultivated by state propaganda.

THE LIVES OF LGBTQ PEOPLE WHO LEFT RUSSIA AFTER THE START OF RUSSIA'S FULL-SCALE INVASION OF UKRAINE

FORGOTTEN

"It is a colossal problem that people in Russia cannot get visas. With no tourist visa, you cannot get refugee status in a European country, because you simply cannot reach that officer, you cannot fly to him, you cannot reach him, you cannot magically find yourself at the German border and ask to be a refugee. You have to get to Germany, but they won't put you on a plane if you don't have a visa, and for some reason Europe has forgotten the fact of that".

¹⁶⁶ The question of what changes in society would allow LGBTQ people to live more comfortably in Russia is an adaptation of question B3 of the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights' international questionnaire: "In your view, what are the main reasons for the decrease in prejudice, intolerance, and violence?". The study "A long way to go for LGBTI equality" (A long way to go for LGBTI equality) was conducted in 2019 in 30 European countries (Russia is not among them). The most contributing factors to increasing or decreasing violence, intolerance, and prejudice against LGBTQ people included positive changes in state policy and the support of the public. URL: <https://fra.europa.eu/en/publication/2020/eu-lgbti-survey-results> (accessed on November 5, 2023).

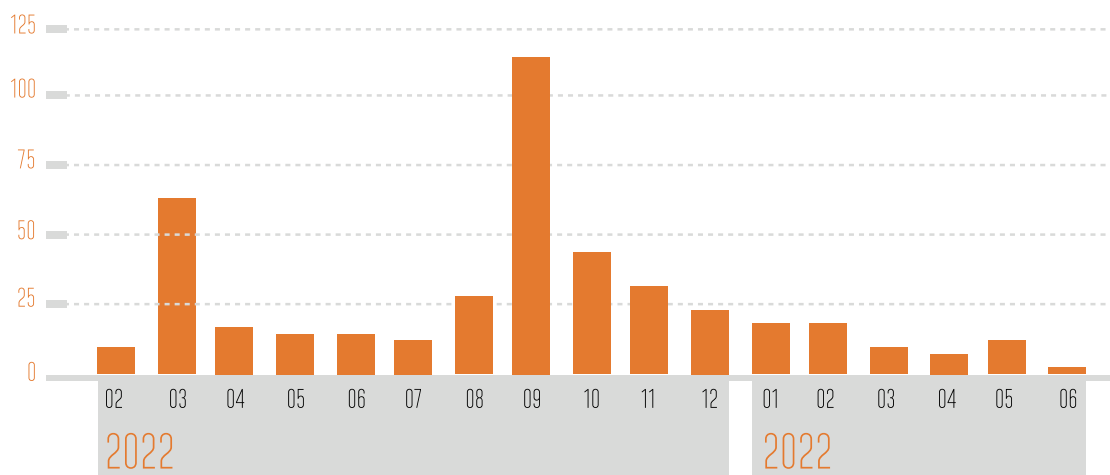
The survey includes not only those who still remain in Russia but also those who have left. To the question "do you currently live in Russia" 496 people (13.8% of the entire sample) answered negatively. Among those who left, 50 people (10.1%) left before Russia's military invasion of Ukraine, while 443 people (89.9%) left in February 2022 and later (377 people, or 85.1% in 2022, 66 people or 14.9% in 2023). Three did not provide a departure date. This section focuses only on those who left after February 24, 2022 (443 people).

TIME OF DEPARTURE AND GEOGRAPHY

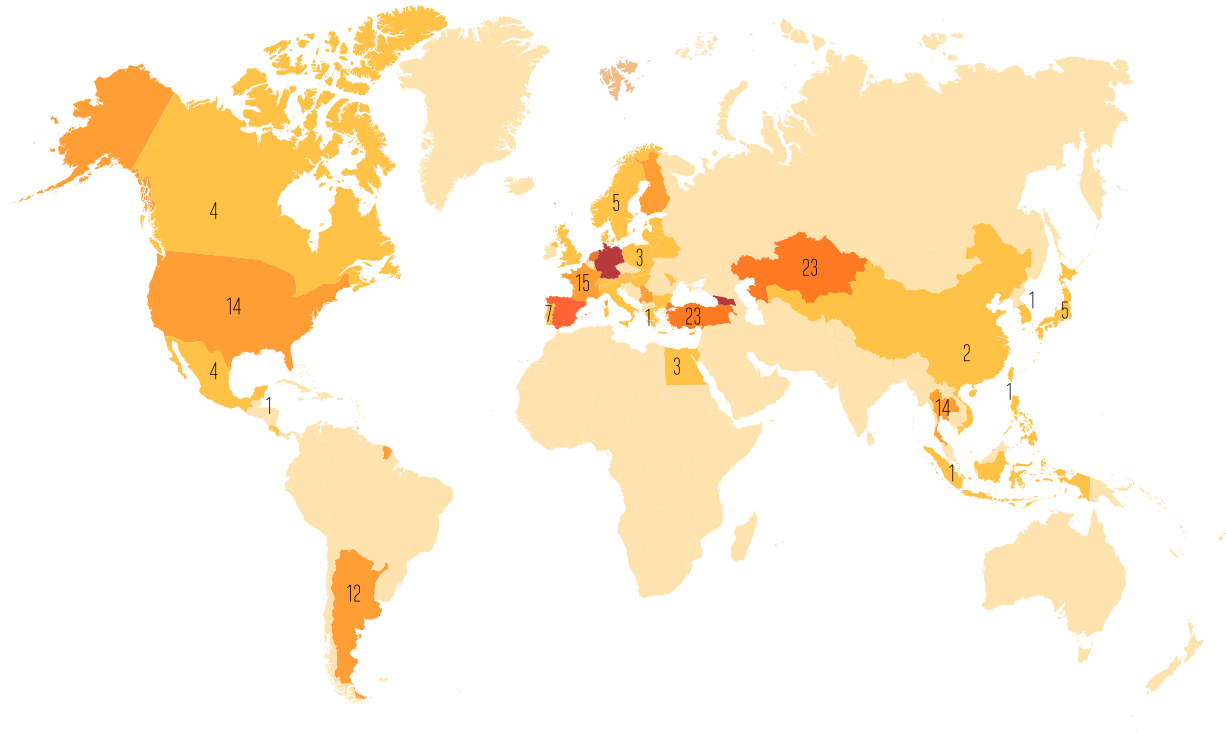
"The country most easily and quickly reached".

Among respondents, 36.3% left in February–August 2022, 35.9% in September–October 2022, and 27.8% from November 2022 to June 2023. Departure distribution by month:

Number of refugees and immigrants from Russia by month, 2022-2023

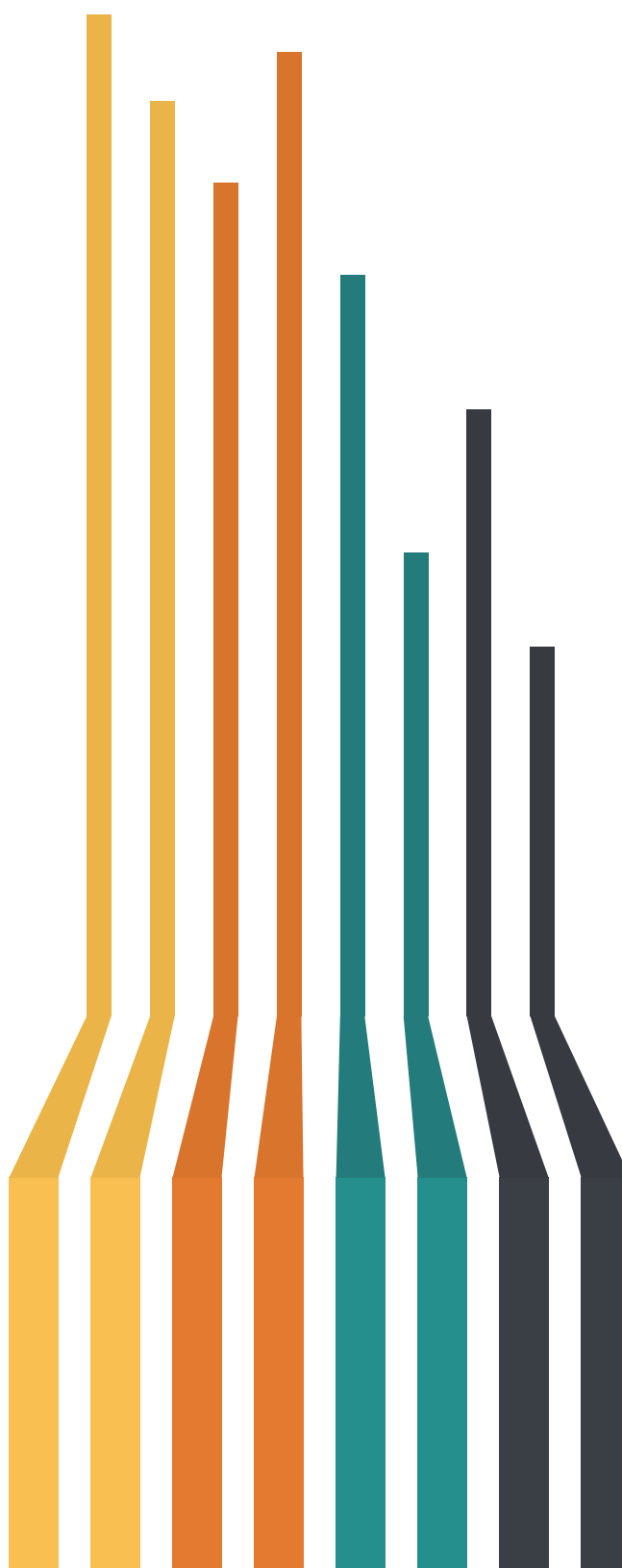


The geography of emigration, according to the answer to the question about the country in which the respondents are currently staying, is quite wide. At the same time, two respondents did not answer the question about the country of their stay.



States where survey participants have emigrated since February 24, 2022 (with more survey participants in first place and fewer survey participants in last place):

1. The Federal Republic of Germany,
2. Georgia
3. Spain
4. Armenia
5. Kazakhstan
6. Turkey
7. Israel
8. Netherlands
9. Serbia
10. Montenegro
11. France
12. Finland
13. Thailand
14. USA
15. Argentina
16. Italy
17. Cyprus
18. Lithuania
19. Portugal
20. Kyrgyzstan
21. Japan
22. Sweden
23. Canada
24. Mexico
25. Austria
26. Bulgaria
27. Egypt
28. Poland
29. Great Britain
30. China
31. Hungary
32. Taiwan
33. Belarus
34. Costa Rica
35. Denmark
36. Estonia
37. Greece
38. Indonesia
39. Latvia
40. Moldova
41. Northern Cyprus
42. Norway
43. Philippines
44. Slovakia
45. South Korea
46. Switzerland
47. Uzbekistan
48. Vietnam



SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC PORTRAIT

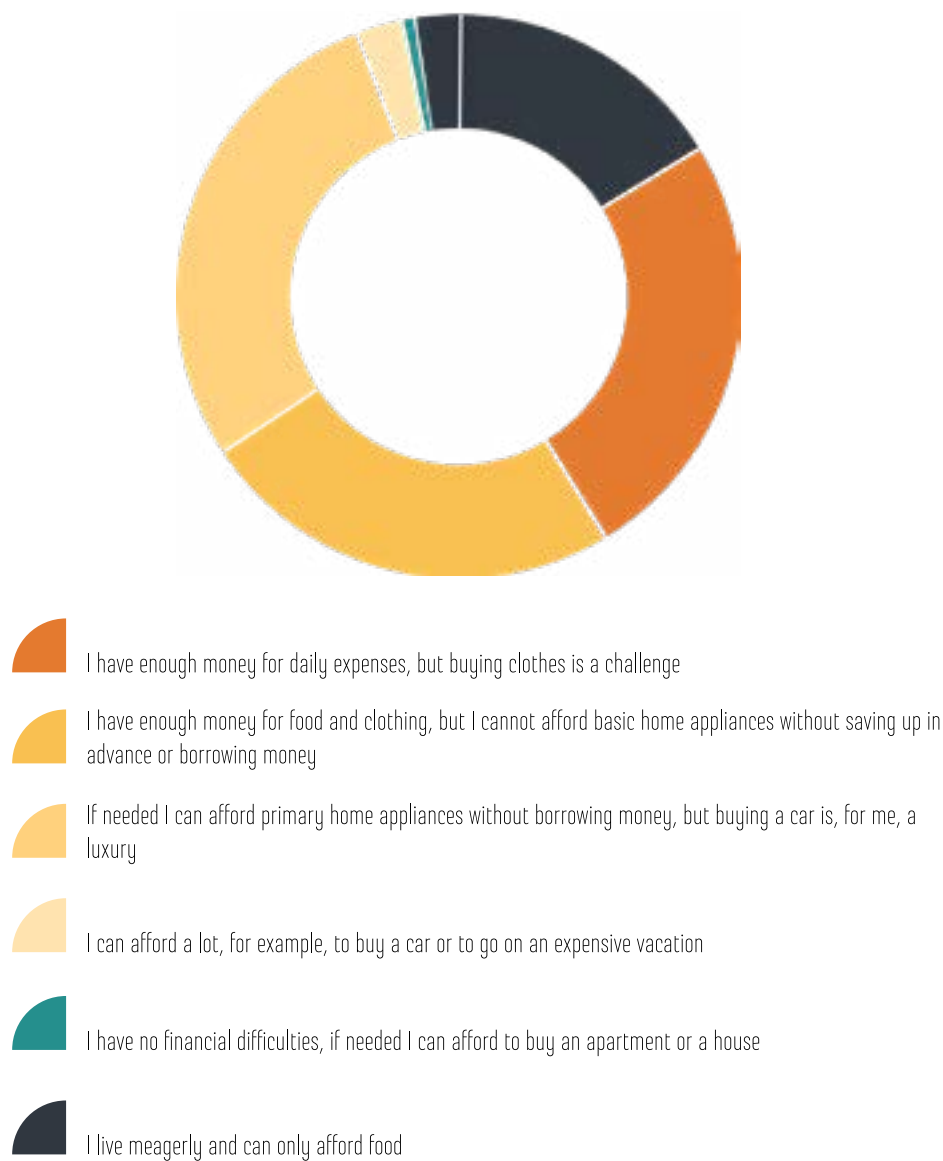
The average age of the departed is 30.9 years; the median age is 29 years. 50.6% of those who took part in the survey outside Russia identify themselves as men, 31.4% as women, 15.1% as non-binary persons, and 2.9% have a different gender identity. Among the respondents, 21.4% are transgender, and 75.6% are cisgender. 58.7% of respondents identified themselves as homosexual and 26.8% as bisexual; 2.7% were heterosexual, 3.2% were asexual, 4.3% were pansexual, and 4.3% of respondents with other sexual identities also participated in the survey.



45.2% of those who left have a permanent job and earnings, 47.6% don't work anywhere, and another 7.2% mentioned other types of employment (e.g., teaching, volunteering). Most of those who mentioned their field of work are employed in such fields as IT and computer technology (37.4%), media and journalism (16.5%), education, tutoring, and translation (7%), as well as in other fields (medicine, culture and the arts, services, science and research, industry, finance, and banking). In addition, almost a quarter of respondents are involved in various forms of activism and are members of civic organizations and initiatives (23.7%).

The described group of respondents has a rather high level of education: 14% of them have a degree (including Master's, Candidate's, and Doctor's degrees), 54.4% have completed higher education (a Bachelor's or Specialist's degree), 13% have incomplete higher education, 11% have completed 11 grades of school, 5.2% have received secondary vocational/specialized education, 0.45% have primary technical education, 0.68% have completed 9 grades of school, and 1.12% indicated "other" (for example, currently receiving education).

The financial situation of survey participants varies from extremely difficult (16.3%) to above average (0.7%). The distribution of respondents' answers is presented in the following diagram:



For the majority of respondents, their financial situation has worsened (40.9%) or significantly worsened (21.2%) over the past year; 16% of respondents improved their financial situation over the past year; 3.2% noted a significant improvement; and for 15.4% of respondents, the material aspect of life remained unchanged even after their departure. 74.9% of survey participants live in rented housing, 2.5% live in their own apartment or house, 7.9% stay with friends or relatives, 5.6% do not have permanent housing, and another 9% found it difficult to describe their housing situation.

The majority of those who participated in the survey have a permanent partner (63.9%), another 33.9% indicated that they do not have a partner, and 2.2% described their situation as more complicated and not fitting into the proposed framework of having or not having a partner. Only 7.9% of respondents who left Russia have minor children (92.1% have no minor children).

REASONS FOR DEPARTURE, RESOURCES, AND CHOICE OF COUNTRY

Reasons for LGBTQ people to leave Russia after February 24, 2022:

- For 54.4% of respondents, the main reason for leaving was personal freedom and security.
- for 16.3%—political reasons in general,
- for 12%—the growth of homophobia and transphobia in Russian society,
- for 6.8%, fear of mobilization,
- for 3.4% psychological reasons,
- for 2.7% economic reasons,
- less than 1% of the study participants left because they studied at foreign institutions and universities.
- for 0.7%, all reasons had the same weight.
- Another 3.2% left for other reasons (e.g., fear for children and family, search for a better life and new perspectives, threat to life and health, certain persecution and attacks, family and personal ties in Ukraine).

The survey participants were separately asked whether they associated their departure with the "partial mobilization" of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation declared in September 2022. 32.7%¹⁶⁷ of respondents answered positively to this question, 34.3% answered negatively, for 27.5% of participants this question is not applicable (e.g. they cannot be mobilized), another 4.3% answered "other"¹⁶⁸. 1.1% of respondents did not want to answer this question.

To avoid any danger to the distributors of the questionnaire and participants, the authors did not use the word "war" in the questions. However, when asked whether the departure is related to "the events of February 24, 2022", 89.6% of respondents answered positively, 4.3% answered negatively, another 2% refused to answer, and 4.1% chose "other"¹⁶⁹.

To avoid any danger to the distributors of the questionnaire and participants, the authors did not use the word "war" in the questions. However, when asked whether the departure is related to "the events of February 24, 2022", 89.6% of respondents answered positively, 4.3% answered negatively, another 2% refused to answer, and 4.1% chose "other"¹⁷⁰.

¹⁶⁷ At the same time, as mentioned above, 35.9% of respondents who reported that they left Russia after February 2022 departed the country in September–October 2022.

¹⁶⁸ Responses to this question, which were in the "other" category, allow us to see that the announcement of "partial mobilization" provoked and reinforced other fears, such as the fear of border closure and the inability to leave Russia in the future. Respondents noted that "mobilization" may not have threatened them personally, but their partners and/or family members, and this was the reason for leaving. Some of those who answered "other" mentioned that "mobilization" was the last straw in the decision to emigrate or, on the contrary, coincided with a long-planned departure.

¹⁶⁹ Mostly among the "other" answers, there are indications of a partial connection between the departure and the war (for example, that the war pushed those who had not decided to leave for a long time), the impossibility to stay in Russia for moral reasons, as well as the risks associated with the growth of homophobia and transphobia against the background of the war.

¹⁷⁰ Due to technical difficulties and the use of external resources for data collection, the authors of the survey had no opportunity to analyze these 11.5% of responses.

A block of questions in the study focused on what resources helped respondents successfully emigrate¹⁷¹. The factors contributing to successful emigration were:

- ▲ financial resources / money for the first time — for 61% of respondents;
- ▲ family and friends' help — for 47.4%;
- ▲ knowledge of foreign languages — for 45.4%;
- ▲ stable job and keeping a permanent income — for 35.2%;
- ▲ education and profession — for 31.6%;
- ▲ assistance from NGOs and human rights organizations — for 12%.

Among other resources helping to make the departure successful, the participants named repatriation programs and assistance from other states (for example, the opportunity to obtain Israeli citizenship); the opportunity to obtain political asylum; relocation and relocation of the employing company to another jurisdiction due to the start of Russia's military invasion of Ukraine; the availability of visas and foreign passports allowing them to leave; emotional and psychological resources—courage, determination, desire to protect loved ones; experience of travel and life abroad.

It was important for the authors of the study to understand how the participants chose their "destination"—the country of departure¹⁷². Responses to a series of questions about what was most important in choosing a country were divided as follows (multiple answers could be selected):

- ▲ the level of security for LGBTQ persons is higher than in Russia (45.6%),
- ▲ no need to obtain a visa (it was already there and/or departure to a visa-free country): 40%
- ▲ departure of social circle—friends and acquaintances—to the country—20.8%;
- ▲ experience of staying and/or living in the country: 18.1%;
- ▲ opportunity to realize their right to freedom and protest against the war (19.2%);
- ▲ affordable accommodation or low costs of staying in the country: 21%;
- ▲ Relocation or moving with a company or at the suggestion of an employer: 10.4%;
- ▲ relatives or partners who live in the country: 7.5%;
- ▲ having tickets for a specific date (4.1%);
- ▲ having citizenship of that country: 3.4%;
- ▲ no need to apply for a foreign passport (2.3%)¹⁷³.

The answers placed in the category "other" deepen the understanding of the attractiveness of countries to move to in the context of war, fear of closed borders, and limited resources: respondents went to those countries where they could find an educational program or professional application, where they could quickly and legally obtain a residence permit and/or a stay permit. Departure to EU countries is complicated by a rather complex migration regime, so programs such as the humanitarian visa in Germany (paragraph 22.2 of the Stay Permit Act) became a promising emigration opportunity for relevant groups (journalists, political activists, NGO workers, and people at risk of political persecution). Trans people who are looking to receive hormone therapy and have access to health care are particularly noteworthy in their responses.

171 The question "Which of the following resources do you think helped you to emigrate successfully?" was a semi-closed multiple-choice question: respondents could choose answers from a list of choices or tell about their experience by selecting "other." The sum of responses to this question is greater than 100%.

172 The question "How did you choose the country you are in now?" was a semi-closed multiple choice question: respondents could choose answers from a list of options or tell about their experience by selecting the answer "other". The sum of responses to this question is greater than 100%.

173 The importance of having a foreign passport is explained by the fact that Russian citizens can only enter most countries in the world if they have this document.

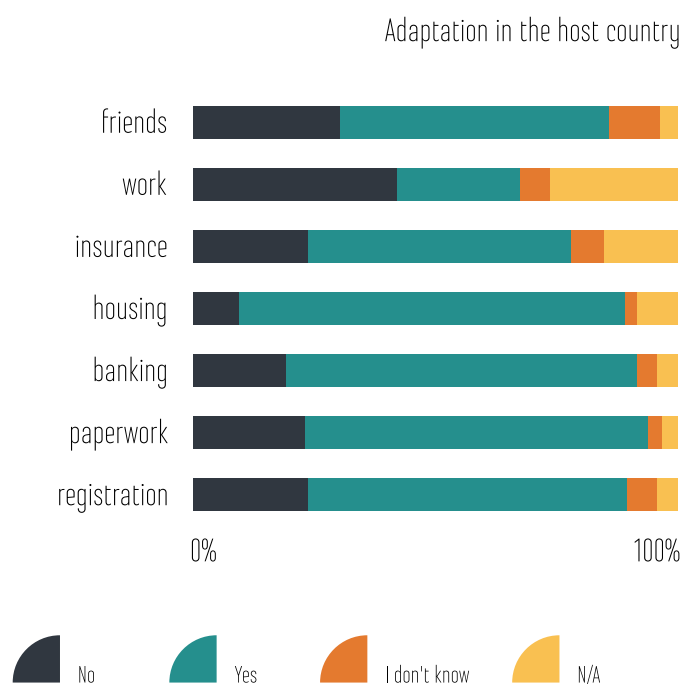
In order to assess the emotional state of those who left, the questionnaire included an open-ended question about how the participants felt in the last couple of weeks before their departure. Most of them describe extremely negative emotions - fear and panic, terror, feeling of increasing danger, stress. Many talk about their helplessness, depression, despair and hopelessness:

SCARED

"Disgusted, scared. Because the move felt forced, I had left my loved ones behind in Russia. It was scary that I would never see them again, and it was hard to go through the separation. The feeling of loss of stability and uncertainty. I was mentally not ready to change my way of life so radically. Although I had wanted to move from Russia for a long time, in this particular situation, the war pushed me to move—fear for my safety, fear of being and living in my own country, almost total impossibility to express my civic position safely. On top of this, a strong fatigue came from collecting documents and things. You live in one place for many years, and then it turns out that your whole life can be put into several backpacks and boxes."

STAYING IN A NEW COUNTRY, SAFETY, AND EXPERIENCE OF DISCRIMINATION

The authors of the study were also interested in the potential problems of new immigrants in the countries where they found themselves, so the participants were asked a series of questions about their legal status, finding housing, access to health services, and social circle¹⁷⁵. Responses about social status and legalization are illustrated in the following diagram:



The majority of respondents have not faced discrimination in the new country (57.2%). Among those who have faced discrimination, the reasons for discrimination are citizenship/nationality (14.6%), sexual orientation (5.2%), gender identity (2.48%), at least two reasons (8.8%) and other reasons (2.7%). Among the respondents, 9% are not sure whether they have experienced discrimination in the host country or not.

The respondents who had experienced discrimination were also asked in what form and in what places it took place. Four respondents noted that they had been refused services; two had experienced verbal discrimination (offensive comments, remarks, and jokes); one person had experienced physical violence/experienced assault; none of the respondents had experienced verbal threats of physical violence. The questionnaire offered some of the most common situations in which episodes of discrimination may occur: one person encountered discrimination when looking for housing, two when opening a bank account, two when applying to social services, one when enrolling in training, four in public institutions, one in cafes/restaurants/bars, four on the street and in everyday interactions. None of the interviewees noted episodes of discrimination when applying for a job or in the professional sphere, as well as when receiving medical services.

The absence of subjectively perceived discrimination may be suspicious and make the migration picture too "smooth," but in general, it coincides with the answers to other questions in the questionnaire. The majority of respondents feel safe in the country they are currently in (81.2%).

¹⁷⁵ The question was formulated as follows: "Please relate your experience of being in a new country to each of these items. In the country where I am now..."

a. I have to register at the place of stay.

b. I have to obtain documents (visa, residence permit, temporary/permanent residence permit).

I was able to open a bank account,

I was able to rent a place to live.

I was able to get health insurance,

I was able to get a job.

I was able to find new friends, acquaintances, and a social environment."

Each of the statements had several answer options: yes, no, don't know, does not apply to me.

PLANS AND A POSSIBLE RETURN

"Wanting never to return and longing to come back".

"New" emigrants from Russia are gradually adapting to the countries they moved to. Most of them have started or plan to start learning the language of the host country (70.5%) or are getting education to stay in this country (19.8%). On the other hand, some study participants are receiving education to leave for another country (10.6%). More than half don't enter the labor market where they live now (probably because they work remotely or consider other employment options).

When asked about their plans, 29.5% of respondents indicated that they are in the current country temporarily and plan to move, and 14% indicated that they plan to stay in the country permanently. Almost a quarter of respondents are not sure whether they will return or would not like to return (23.4%). Those who would like to return would do so only if the political situation changes and the war ends (12.6%), the level of discrimination against LGBTQ people in Russia decreases (11%), or the economic situation changes (0.23%). Only 1.58% plan to return in the near future. Among the answers "other" (7.7%), those that show the impossibility of planning as such deserve special attention: In the conditions of war, instability, toughening of the regime and repressions, and persecution of LGBTQ people, the return to Russia seems to the majority of respondents inexpedient, impossible, and unsafe:

MY HOME

"I would like to; there is my home there... There were people—many wonderful people. But I assess such chances as extremely unlikely, as I see no options for rapid improvement of the situation, and waiting for a decade of life will not be enough. In order to return, I see the need to change from dictatorship to democracy, destruction of the empire, re-establishment of the state, respect for human rights, empowerment of the regions, and in all of this, I know that no one will care about queer people."

Many of the respondents would like to have the opportunity to visit Russia and/or meet family and relatives in third countries.

Some respondents see returning to Russia as a possible scenario in a desperate situation—if they cannot find a job elsewhere, lose their job, or run out of money. For others, traveling to Russia is a necessity due to bureaucratic procedures or legal processes.

PSYCHOLOGICAL STATE OF LGBTQ PEOPLE IN RUSSIA

Based on the results of the survey and expert interviews, this chapter examines the nuances of the psychological state of LGBTQ people living in Russia at the time of the survey. It described the coping strategies of LGBTQ people, as well as the problems and risks faced by helping professionals, in addition to depressive, anxiety, and suicidal tendencies.

" I had the feeling of the Inquisition.
that they were about to come to me and burn me in the fire."

PSYCHOLOGICAL STATE CHARACTERISTICS OF LGBTQ PEOPLE

The psychological state of LGBTQ people was particularly affected by Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, as well as by the new law "banning gay propaganda among all ages." Based on the results of the survey, interviews, and testing, the following trends can be noted.

THE INTENSITY OF DEPRESSIVE STATES

Depressive states include hopelessness, apathy, despair, depression itself, or the deepening of existing depression. Respondents describe their condition as follows:

"I cried for the first two months [after Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine on February 24, 2022] every day. I was very angry and argued with my colleagues at work. I openly said that I was against the war. Now there is a growing feeling of helplessness, tiredness, and hopelessness. I am very worried about the people in Ukraine and my future."

"Depression, mope, and frequent hysteria because of laws on propaganda and banning of queer literature."

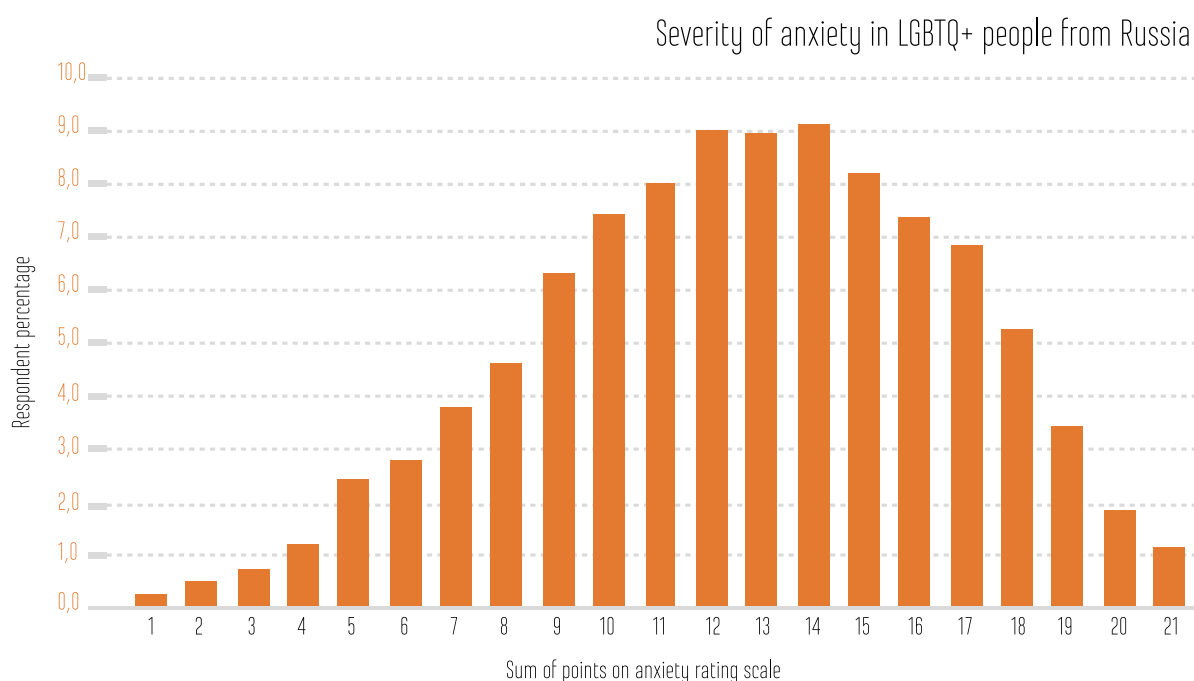
"Mental state deteriorated; after a few months, a psychiatrist diagnosed depression and started taking antidepressants; this state lasts for the moment."

"...denial, illusory, stiffness, apathy, lack of desire for anything at all."

"I had a very severe depressive episode from which I am still not fully recovered".

As one expert psychologist explains in an interview, based on her experience of helping LGBTQ clients after Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine on February 24, 2022, "there was a colossal surge of all kinds of psychosomatic and emotional reactions. These are these near-post-traumatic ones. <...> In general, pressed very strongly, put before the tasks of the level of survival, such as deep survival, physical <...> that is, there are such exacerbations of chronic diseases that it becomes a problem just to stay in life, because it is very painful, for example, or because you cannot walk or eat, some of these things".

According to the HADS scale, used by professional psychologists to diagnose depressive states, the average level of the depression index for the whole sample is 8.32 points. It falls into the zone of subclinically expressed depression. The following chart shows the distribution of depression severity levels, where 8 to 10 diagnoses a subclinical level of depression, and 11 and above diagnoses a clinical level of depression.



The predominant part of the sample has indicators of subclinically or clinically significant depression, which severely affects the quality of life and health of LGBTQ people. In free responses, interviewees often explicitly mention that their depression came as a result of their inability to resist the outbreak of war, mobilization, and the introduction of homophobic and transphobic laws. Since war and repression remain constant, depression can become protracted. Depression degrades the functioning of all humans' vital systems and leads to vegetative dysfunctions, somatic disorders, cognitive difficulties, and the inability to live a normal life. Extended depression caused by external factors is not normal and must be stopped. People need help.

SUICIDAL TRENDS

On top of the depression is the presence of suicidal tendencies. Extreme despair and inability to influence the situation lead LGBTQ people to consequences such as unwillingness to live, suicidal thoughts, and suicide attempts. In one case, a partner's suicide due to the situation in the country was mentioned:

I had suicidal thoughts. I still have them. That's why I'm on the pills now".

"The situation in psychological, economic, and social aspects has put me into depression with episodes of suicide".

"The first year I was scared of nuclear war, and last summer I became depressed over the death of my partner (he killed himself because of the situation in the country). At the moment, I am agonizingly scared (I don't want to go to prison just because of my existence), and I don't see a future here, although I would love to have one in this place".

"In the fall of 2022, I bumped into a Twitter post by an opposition journalist who had gone to Germany on a humanitarian visa and decided to apply as well, because I had thought about it before, but I didn't believe it was even possible. So I wrote to the Headquarters, and my form was accepted and submitted to the Foreign Ministry at the end of November. Since then, I live in complete uncertainty, because any day they could write that it's time to go to the embassy, buy a suitcase, and all of that. Meanwhile, they passed another law completely banning LGBT propaganda. Now I am in despair as I have been waiting for a visa for more than half a year, and I have no idea if I will get it because normally they do not send official refusals, simply ignoring submissions. I'm not aware of any cases of actual rejection. So it gives the impression that I am really the worst and do not deserve this visa. So I'm thinking of suicide in the event of rejection."

Respondents very often mention their state of helplessness and their inability to influence political circumstances (to stop the war, to cancel repressive laws, etc.). Even those who made attempts at resistance (coming out to actions, expressing their opinion) feel that their actions have no effect. In such circumstances, large groups of people can develop a sense of loss of subjectivity and the ability to influence the conditions of their own lives, as well as a growing sense of helplessness and powerlessness, which, in its extreme form, can lead to suicide as a way of ending the unbearable pain. Even in the absence of suicidal behavior, suicidal thoughts are an extremely burdensome factor that negatively affects the quality of life.

STATES OF ANXIETY AND FEAR

The states of anxiety and fear include not only anxiety and fear themselves but also such levels of fear expression as horror, panic, and shock. Respondents describe their condition in the following terms:

"I'm alarmed by the panic level. I'm really scared."

"In February itself, I was squashed and was in some kind of catatonia, in shock and horror."

"Every day, it gets scarier to live. The habit of avoiding authorities was ingrained in the subcortex, while the absence of loved ones and the feeling of confrontation with the world became habitual."

"I morally died in February 2022. My condition has hardly changed and fluctuates from constant anxiety to panic terror all the time".

It is psychophysiologically impossible to stay in a long-term state of shock; thus, the transition of fear into apathy is often mentioned. This is a transition to a basic level of psychological defense of the freeze type, which is activated when resistance is impossible or unrealistic. In fact, we are talking about forcibly plunging people into depression by taking away their ability to resist dictatorship:

"Total panic in the beginning, guilt, shame, anger, misunderstanding, fear. At some point it turned into a vegetable without any desires and thoughts, almost couldn't work."

"Constant fear and stress remained, terror turned into apathy."

"In February 22, anxiety and depression intensified. The next peak of their intensification occurred during the announcement of mobilization. Over time, these feelings dulled (because a person physically cannot be in a constant state of anxiety, there is an addiction), but only until the next terrible news. The feeling of approaching another terrible event has not left me since February 22.

The fear in the case of LGBTQ persons is justified because the "propaganda law" is formulated in such a way that any LGBTQ person is automatically defined as a second-class person, plus the law can be applied to any LGBTQ person due to the vagueness of the formulation:

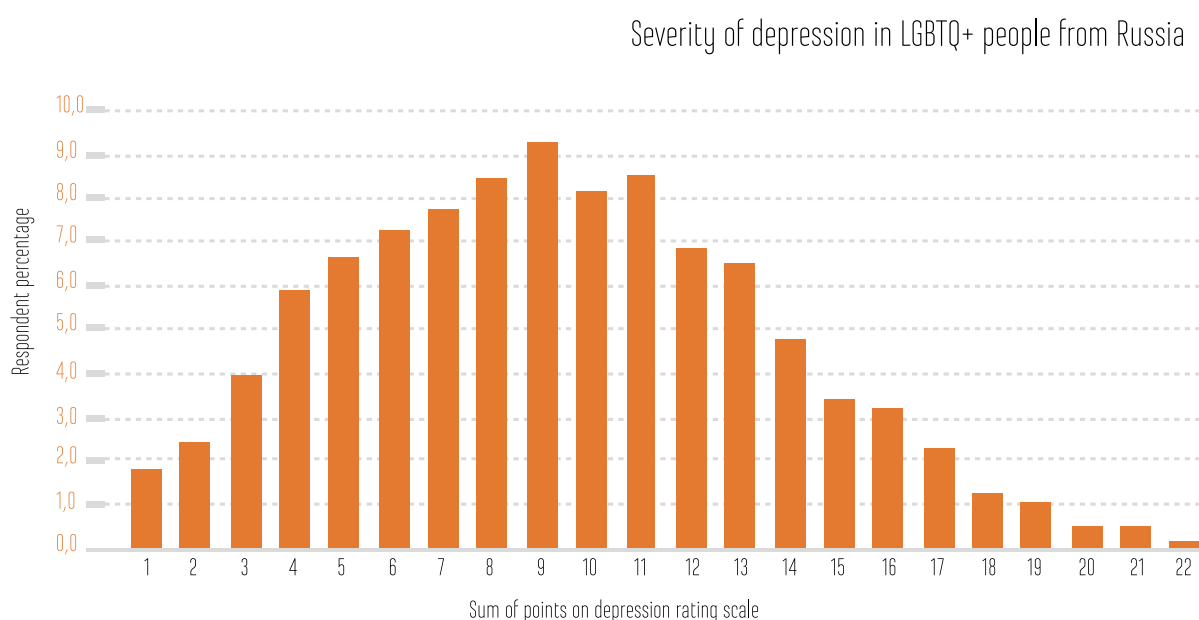
"... the propaganda law has killed me. Now I get scared just by the way I look, but I try not to betray myself and my values. I'm not in a relationship now, but if I were, I definitely wouldn't be able to behave openly in public places. The fear is overpowering and it doesn't go away."

" In the past, I and my partner could at least hold hands in the street, now it's scary. It puts pressure psychologically. In new places, with new people, you don't know how they might feel about your orientation and you prefer to hide it just in case, it doesn't make it better psychologically either. And in general it's very scary to realize that you're literally banned in your country; it's not safe here anymore; it's not your home anymore."

"When the policy of abolishing queer people started, I started having more frequent panic attacks. Basically, it became scarier for my future and the future of LGBTQ+ people in our country. It's scarier to mention topics indirectly related to queer people. It has become much more disturbing."

"I am afraid to talk in the street, and I started having nightmares about politics and police".

According to the HADS scale, the average level of the anxiety index for the whole sample is 12.46 points. I fall into the zone of clinically apparent anxiety. The following diagram shows the distribution of levels of anxiety severity, where from 8 to 10 is diagnosed as a subclinical level of anxiety, and from 11 and above is a clinical level. The chart shows that the majority of respondents are affected by severe anxiety. The difference between respondents who stayed in Russia and those who left is interesting: 12.6 and 11.7 points; however, this difference is not statistically confirmed.



Ongoing anxiety can lead to the formation of various personality disorders on the anxiety spectrum, cause autonomic disorders, and negatively affect all areas of human activity. Prolonged anxiety requires help and should be prevented or stopped.

DISSOCIATIVE PROCESSES

Dissociative processes are a defense mechanism for the extreme, utilizing the psyche's ability to "chip away" at a portion of an intolerable traumatic experience. There is frequent mention of a "fog" in the mind. Respondents describe their state as follows:

"Experiencing terror and derealization. Doomscrolling. I'm trying not to go crazy."

"Feeling completely surreal."

"At first there was uncontrollable anger, then I went to a special detention center and calmed down a bit, then suicidal depression due to guilt and constant dissociation, which is still going on to this day."

"Everything was on automatic. Since my girlfriend is from Mariupol".

The need to engage dissociation as a psychophysiological defense over the long term can further lead to persistent personality disorders of a dissociative nature. LGBTQ people who are under double pressure due to resistance to war and homophobic and transphobic repression are at risk for dissociative disorders.

DETERIORATION OF PREVIOUSLY DIAGNOSED MENTAL ILLNESSES

Separately, it should be noted that a portion of LGBTQ people who, before the war, should have already been coping with the presence of some form of mental illness, have had their mental illnesses exacerbated amidst a worsening political situation:

"Several exacerbations of mental disorders on top of severe stress and panic fear of the future." "My TRL¹⁷⁶ has been exacerbated".

"My depression relapsed; I started having frequent panic attacks; it was just hard for me to live and breathe".

BREAKDOWN OF SOCIAL TIES, POLARIZATION

Since the beginning of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, polarization processes have intensified for many people in Russia. Given that LGBTQ people in general are in a vulnerable position and constantly at risk of breaking social ties because of their gender or sexual identity, they have found themselves under double pressure. Increasing loneliness and feelings of isolation are also a leitmotif:

"Increased hatred for "vatniks" and those in favor of the special operation."

"Increased hatred for Z-patriots and the native state in general! I can't remember so many idiotic laws being passed in the country so quickly.

"Became more aggressive towards people who advocated Putin's regime and war."

"My family and some friends have turned their backs on me. The feeling of loneliness and helplessness increased".

"... some of my friends have left Russia, and it hurts me a lot that we will never see each other now".

"The need to be silent: you can't talk about anything or to anyone; it's very depressing.

REFLEXIVITY OF DISCRIMINATION

In the survey, there is also much direct testimony about LGBTQ people's experiences of discrimination in light of the new "propaganda" law and repression:

"... Due to the lack of real success in seizing foreign territories, the Russian government has started to increase pressure and discrimination against the LGBTQIAP+ community, to which I belong. The pressure was aimed at diverting the attention of ordinary people, which makes life in this country more and more dangerous and difficult for a person like me every day. In addition, every day, the fear of not being able to escape from this country, where I feel like a hostage and a prisoner, grows. Nevertheless, I don't give up, and every day I do my best to bring closer the moment when I will be able to break free from this captivity and breathe a full breath. "

"Plus, it is offensive and scary that propaganda makes internal enemies out of LGBT people, against whom Putin's state is trying to rally the entire Russian society".

"In public places, we pretend to be friends because we are afraid of aggression; at work, we also have to pretend and hide, regularly hearing jokes or aggression towards LGBT people."

"When the policy of abolishing queer people started, I started having more frequent panic attacks".

"Aside from politics, it is impossible to express your civil position on the rights of LGBTQ people without risking harassment; it is scary and leads to a complete lack of safety of expression".

It is important to note that since the early 2000s, thanks to the work of LGBTQ organizations and the development of LGBTQ communities in Russia, LGBTQ people have become more aware of their rights and more likely to notice and protest against discrimination. The report's statements confirm this. It is especially important not to lose these gains by supporting LGBTQ people in their identity and rights during this difficult period.

COPING STRATEGIES OF LGBTQ PEOPLE IN CRISIS CONDITIONS

Analyzing the respondents' answers, it was possible to identify several categories describing the main ways of coping with the current socio-political crisis. Despite the gravity of the situation, many LGBTQ people find ways of self-help and mutual support.

ASKING FOR PROFESSIONAL HELP FROM A PSYCHOLOGIST AND/OR PSYCHIATRIST

In Russia, LGBTQ people have an additional barrier: helping specialists' homophobia/transphobia due to the lack of necessary training for working with LGBTQ people and outdated norms used in the training of psychologists and psychiatrists. Nevertheless, many LGBTQ people see professional help as an option and utilize it:

" I am now working with a psychotherapist and taking antidepressants, so I am not as anxious, but sometimes I feel hopelessness."

"I went to a psychotherapist for help; she diagnosed me with borderline personality disorder and prescribed two types of antidepressants. Now my condition has improved again."

"My anxiety increased, which I was unable to cope with and had to seek help from a psychotherapist."

"I was forced to see a psychotherapist due to deteriorating health after the outbreak of war. The treatment helped over time, and there appeared strength to plan departure."

"Severe depression and anxiety disorder that required medical and psychological intervention".

This trend is confirmed in an expert interview with one female psychologist: "... the idea that I want to go to a psychologist: very many people said that it arose within a month or a week after the war started."

Unfortunately, in most cases, seeking help in Russia is paid for out of the income of the people seeking help themselves, in the absence of state financial support. Therefore, not all LGBTQ people have this opportunity. In addition, there are extra difficulties related to the inaccessibility of medicines due to the interruption of international relations:

"After the war started, we had to interrupt therapy with a psychiatrist because the necessary medications disappeared from pharmacies, and then the stable income disappeared".

In these circumstances, it is particularly important that most existing LGBTQ initiatives and NPOs keep on providing free psychological assistance to the community, in many cases moving to a remote mode but remaining accessible.

DEPARTING OR DEPARTURE PLANNING

"Shock-helplessness-depression-burnout-forced emigration-grieving".

A particularly important way to deal with the political crisis and protect our own safety is to depart from Russia. In this section, authors of the study describe the psychological state of people who were compelled to leave Russia after February 24, 2022.

It should be noted that we are talking about forced migration due to a critical insecurity; in other words, people have already left or are about to leave their home country because it is dangerous to stay there. In fact, we are talking about refugees. To describe departure, the words "break free", "make it in time", and "run away" are often used.

Some of the respondents have already left Russia and mostly note one or another improvement, even if there are other significant difficulties:

"In Russia, all parameters became worse. After moving across several countries to Europe, a number of indicators have improved."

" I was detained at a protest on February 24 and spent 5 days in a detention center. Then we agreed to come out only alternately with the girlfriend so that there would be someone to feed our pets. Later, attending court became an increasingly stressful event. Then my girlfriend left for work in another country, and I stayed in the Russian Federation to collect documents. I changed jobs to remote work. Right now, I'm in the same country as my girlfriend, but with a remote job in RF. I'm sure I won't get beat up for my orientation or political viewpoint, but I'm not sure I won't lose my income for the same reason."

"After leaving the Russian Federation in January 2023, it became so much easier. Now I am experiencing stress and anxiety due to exhaustion and difficulties with adaptation in a new country, but I still feel much better than in Russia."

" For the entire 22nd year before departure, there was apathy. After leaving, relief".

From a poll of LGBTQ respondents who left after the war began, it is clear that anxiety and all degrees of fear were the main drivers:

"... terrorized, I counted the minutes until I left the fascist country."

" It was scary to leave, but it was even scarier to stay. "

" The Federal Security Service came with a search and confiscated my stuff. I felt like playing Russian roulette because I didn't know if I would even be able to leave at all".

Some respondents are preparing for departure:

" I'm trying to do everything I can to get away from here when I get the chance "

" I'm looking for a way to leave, but it turns out my Russian passport is toxic; I was never considered a human being in Russia, and now for the whole world, I'm a Russian (or a russkie who hadn't overthrown putin). I'm ashamed of all the horror my country is performing".

" I had no confidence in the future; I wanted to stay in Russia, but now I am planning to leave in the future".

The need for emergency emigration creates additional crises:

" I'm torn between wanting to leave and wanting to stay. I'm afraid for the child".

An expert psychologist notes in the interview that a larger part of her LGBTQ clients doesn't believe it's possible to leave: "... most of these people don't believe it's even possible to leave Russia.

It's more like individual, very bright cases: people who left. Here, I find out that one person has already left, and I'm very happy about it. ". Another expert notes that migration's opposite strategy is "going underground". This strategy is familiar to LGBTQ people due to being a vulnerable group, but it is discriminatory, unfair, and harmful to the development of a healthy sexual and gender identity.

Unfortunately, at the moment, it is objectively unsafe for LGBTQ people to stay in Russia. Certain groups of LGBTQ people are under additional threat: in particular, transgender people, LGBTQ people with children, LGBTQ people in the North Caucasus, LGBTQ teenagers, and others. Experts make the following comments:

" For me, transgender people continue to be the most vulnerable group".
 " With the fact that nobody has canceled transgender teens yet right now, we predict that the number of suicides will increase".

Fleeing from danger is a normal, healthy reaction of a living being. Helping LGBTQ people who want to leave is an important line of work that can save lives, mental and physical well-being of these people. It is critical to inform LGBTQ people about opportunities to get support in evacuating from the danger zone.

SUPPORTING OTHERS

Despite the difficult political context and increased internal repression, some LGBTQ people rely on the need to help others and some form of association:

"I and my friends and family try to look out for each other and support initiatives that are not illegal and safe to support, but it is very challenging right now."

"As a person helping LGBTQ+ people inside Russia, I can't risk being active as an anti-war activist because then I would lose the opportunity to help. But we still try to counteract the war covertly; we provide gathering places for anti-war activists, and we help people from Ukraine. It's a little bit supportive."

"The stress of the war triggered my reflexivity towards gender transition. It became impossible to wear the mask of 'husband's wife' when you could be about to turn into a handful of nuclear ash. I'm beaten back, I guess. The old world has collapsed, and in the new one, this is who I am: an angry and scary trans man who is ready to fight for the similarly stigmatized."

"Right now, I am doing everything to make a better life for myself, my relatives in Russia, and my friend from Ukraine. Even though I don't believe in a bright future, I try to carry something good in the moment."

"Work, increased income, volunteering at a foundation for helping people with autism, and working at a center for children with special developmental needs, as well as moving preparations, helped me cope; it gave me a sense of meaningfulness".

The female expert psychologist's comment points out that even people who had not been involved in activism before started to unite: "self-organization comes from somewhere, and there are people who start to produce it, and they are outside the activist environment; they do it by instinct; they use their knowledge. Somebody's knowledge comes from business, marketing, and so on, as well as logistics and programming. They all come together, and it turns out to be something incredible."

Importantly, the experience of LGBTQ activism is also being utilized in the direction of anti-war activism. In Russia's LGBTQ community, various forms of associations and groups have grown and strengthened over the past 20 years. This is evidence of the development of the LGBTQ movement. To ensure that these achievements are not lost, it is especially important to support the LGBTQ movement inside Russia as well as initiatives and organizations outside of Russia to work with LGBTQ people in the country.

ADDICTIVE BEHAVIOR

Some respondents testify to turning to psychoactive substances, mainly the ones they have already had experience of using:

" I started smoking again after 5 years without nicotine. I smoked a lot and couldn't do anything about it for more than half a year."

"Mental state deteriorated after the move; relapse of self-harming behavior and substance use occurred after the announcement of partial mobilization."

"Due to stress, I relapsed back to using surfactants after remission."

"Saved by work projects and news that one of my friends had 'broken out' and alcohol (yes, it felt like there was more of it)".

DENIAL

This coping strategy is not frequently expressed in respondents' answers, but it is worth commenting on separately. It is well expressed in the following response:

"to be honest, I don't dive into this topic at all, and nothing bothers me".

Interestingly, the person who is "not bothered" by the situation did complete the full survey. It is important to know that the function of denial is protective, and if conditions were changed to a safer environment, the same person might form a different opinion. This fact is important to consider when assessing the situation in Russia: some people protect themselves from fear and helplessness by using denial, but this is not necessarily a reflection of the full picture of their consciousness.

EXPERT OPINIONS: THE POSSIBILITY OF PROVIDING PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSISTANCE TO LGBTQ PEOPLE IN RUSSIA AND IN EMIGRATION

As part of the expert interviews, three female expert psychologists with long-term experience in providing assistance to LGBTQ people, who have experience working with LGBTQ organizations or who were still working with them at the time of participation in the study, were interviewed. Based on the results of the interviews, a list of risks for psychologists working with LGBTQ clients in Russia was formed.

Risks of working with LGBTQ clients in Russia:

harassment in state workplaces, whistleblowing, inspections;
 recognition of psychologists of LGBTQ organizations as non-agents; work in non-agent organizations;
 Fear of partners cooperating (e.g., when organizing educational events on LGBTQ topics), impossibility of publishing the address of the events, danger of using LGBTQ abbreviations in the announcements;
 impossibility to use social networks to disseminate information due to their inaccessibility without VPN (Facebook, Instagram) or insecurity (VKontakte);
 disruptions, cancellations, closures of professional conferences and outreach events, attacks on volunteers and participants;
 psychologists' experiences of being assaulted because of their work and/or sexual/gender identity;
 disclosure of psychologists' personal data by homophobic people;
 danger of working with LGBTQ adolescents due to a lack of parental permission;
 homophobia in public positions, particularly the human rights ombudsman in the region, takes a homophobic stance;
 dangers of working in LGBTQ organizations: searches, interviews, and other law enforcement attention;
 impossibility to legalize one's own family, children, or other general dangers associated with psychologists' belonging to the LGBTQ community.

Additional challenges in the work of psychologists with the LGBTQ community after the outbreak of war:

- having to cope with their own feelings concerning the outbreak of the war at the same time as providing assistance to clients, in whom violence on such a scale actualized all past traumatic experiences: "in a certain sense it was just some kind of nuclear war emotionally";
- personal depressive experiences of professionals staying in Russia: "Now there is a feeling that <...> if we are moving, it is into a hopeless history. That is, as it is, the chthony is growing. This chthony, from which it seemed to me that we were leaving here, and it's frustrating for me, of course. It's depressing and infuriating at times";
- Much of the work is centered around the topic of emigration: supporting the decision to emigrate, relocation, and correspondence work with referring LGBTQ clients for information on emigration opportunities. "It was a tremendous amount of work. It was a tremendous amount of work that resulted in security for everyone I crossed paths with.
- loss of contact with clients during their relocation: "some part of the practice evaporates, goes online, or people disappear because they are in refugee camps; there is no communication there; and it was also something completely unfamiliar in terms of condition, in terms of experiences";
- support for the departed clients in their internal conflicts around the topic of returning to Russia: "it is a very difficult emigration, forced. Because "What am I doing here?" <...> there is no work, my whole life is left there, my friends are left there, my relatives are left there";
- increasing number of appeals from transgender persons in connection with the growing repression of this group: "I know for sure from my colleagues that the number of requests has increased"; "the number of requests from T-persons has certainly increased now, in my opinion, three times";
- Breaks in professional ties, outflow of specialists from Russia: "most of the collegial support has disappeared from the offline space; these people are somewhere, and it is difficult for them there in their own way; they are trying to adapt somehow";
- fears of being accused of "LGBT propaganda": "if a professional is afraid, his work cannot be effective". A number of psychologists no longer describe themselves as "LGBTQ-friendly," but others continue to do so, believing that it is important to;
- working with LGBTQ clients from flash points: "when it passed 24 hours after a shelling, and we are there with him, trying to make him feel a little bit better.

Recommendations of specialists on the LGBTQ people's relocation:

- availability of instructions, guidelines, algorithms for orientation at all stages of forced emigration;
- opportunity to receive assistance and have contacts with people who speak Russian (especially for those who do not know a foreign language);
- access to urgent consultations with psychologists, including online;
- the need for additional assistance for transgender clients.

Professional requests:

- professional union in a changed system, support for professional networking, intervention groups and other activities for professionals working with Russian-speaking LGBTQ people staying in Russia or in emigration;
- support for Russian-speaking LGBTQ projects in relocation areas, particularly in Germany.

CONCLUSIONS

This study makes it clear that Russian authorities led by Vladimir Putin have taken the pressure on LGBTQ people and the restriction of their rights in Russia to a new level by declaring state homo-, bi-, and trans-phobia as the cornerstone of their policies. Since Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine began on February 24, 2022, Russian authorities have reversed Russia's progress in recognizing the rights of homosexual, bisexual, and transgender people through two laws: the "ban on gay propaganda among all ages" and the "ban on transgender transition."

Instead of implementing policies of equality and non-discrimination, Russian authorities have introduced total LGBTQ censorship. Current Russian legislation supports and reinforces previously formed homophobic and transphobic narratives and violates human rights commitments made by the Russian authorities.

The current situation of the LGBTQ community in Russia is one of critical danger. There are tens of thousands of private tragedies of people deprived of basic rights, especially transgender people, LGBTQ families with children, activists working to support the community, and LGBTQ people in the North Caucasus, where state-sanctioned lawlessness is at its peak.

The consequence of this is the extreme depressiveness of the LGBTQ community in Russia, as evidenced on average by subclinical levels of depression accompanied by suicidal ideation and clinical levels of anxiety. Repression also cuts off the community's access to professional help, limiting the work of LGBTQ organizations.

Today, more than ever, LGBTQ people in Russia need support so that they are not left alone with their problems because of state and societal pressure on them for who they are. It is important to support the LGBTQ community in Russia, namely those activities that LGBTQ organizations can conduct more safely (online or offline), based on the assessment of the situation by LGBTQ initiatives themselves, their needs, and the needs of LGBTQ people in Russia.

It is important to note that the LGBTQ community in Russia shares anti-war values and sentiments and actively supports Ukraine whenever possible, even in a particularly vulnerable situation. The anti-war potential of LGBTQ individuals and organizations can be used by including them in anti-war coalitions and groups.

RECOMENDATION

Considering the above, EQUAL PostOst calls on governments of LGBTQ-safe countries to

appeal to the Russian authorities to stop repressions against LGBTQ people inside the country, cancel homophobic and transphobic laws, as well as the decision of the Supreme Court of the Russian Federation to declare the "International LGBT Public Movement" as an extremist organization;

develop programs to provide security and humanitarian visas to LGBTQ activists from Russia under persecution, LGBTQ families with children, trans people, especially those who are in danger of mobilization, LGBTQ people from the North Caucasus, as well as LGBTQ people from the occupied territories of Ukraine, including Crimea, who for some reason have been unable to obtain Ukrainian documents;

involve LGBTQ organizations working with the LGBTQ community in Russia and emigration in the development of LGBTQ support programs;

ensure LGBTQ people in danger are provided with access to the opportunity to request asylum in safe countries and to provide them with additional protection in refugee camps, in particular protection from violence, discrimination, and effective suicide prevention programs;

expedite the issuance of visas of any kind for LGBTQ people at risk or under persecution;

develop an understandable procedure for legal recognition of partnerships for LGBTQ people who were unable to conclude a marriage in Russia;

equalize the rights of same-sex families with heterosexual families, in particular with regard to family reunification procedures;

support LGBTQ organizations activity in Russia and in emigration for keeping and developing their expertise.

provide LGBTQ activists and refugee women with access to mental health care in their own language within the European Union.

APPENDIX 1.

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APPENDIX 2.

ARTICLE 6.21 OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION ADMINISTRATIVE OFFENSES CODE.

Propaganda of non-traditional sexual relations and (or) preferences, gender reassignment

(ed. by Federal Law 479-FZ, dated 5 Dec. 2022)

1. Propaganda of non-traditional sexual relations and (or) preferences, gender reassignment, expressed in dissemination of information and (or) public actions, actions aimed at the formation of non-traditional sexual attitudes, attraction of non-traditional sexual relations and/or preferences or gender reassignment or a distorted view of the social equivalence of traditional and non-traditional sexual relations and/or preferences, or imposition of information about non-traditional sexual relationships and/or preferences or gender reassignment that arouses interest in such relationships and/or preferences or gender reassignment, except for cases stipulated by Article 6.21.1 of this Code, if these actions do not contain signs of a criminal offense, — shall entail the imposition of an administrative fine on citizens in the amount of fifty thousand to one hundred thousand rubles; on officials in the amount of one hundred thousand to two hundred thousand rubles; on legal entities in the amount of eight hundred thousand to one million rubles or administrative suspension of activities for a period of up to ninety days.

2. Acts provided in Part 1 of this article of this article committed among minors, if these actions do not contain signs of a criminal offense, shall entail the imposition of an administrative fine on citizens in the amount of one hundred thousand to two hundred thousand rubles; on officials in the amount of two hundred thousand to four hundred thousand rubles; on legal entities in the amount of one million to two million rubles; or administrative suspension of activities for a period of up to ninety days.

3. Actions provided in Part 1 of this article, committed by using mass media and/or information and telecommunication networks (including the Internet), if these actions do not contain signs of a criminal offense, shall entail the imposition of an administrative fine on citizens in the amount of one hundred thousand to two hundred thousand rubles; on officials in the amount of two hundred thousand to four hundred thousand rubles; on legal entities in the amount of one million to four million rubles; or administrative suspension of activities for a period of up to ninety days.

4. Actions provided in Part 2 of this Article, committed by using mass media and/or information and telecommunication networks (including the Internet), if these actions do not contain signs of a criminal offense, shall entail the imposition of an administrative fine on citizens in the amount of from two hundred thousand to four hundred thousand rubles; on officials in the amount of from four hundred thousand to eight hundred thousand rubles; on legal entities in the amount of from two million to five million rubles; or administrative suspension of activities for a period of up to ninety days.

5. Actions provided in Part 1 of this article, committed by a foreign citizen or stateless person, if these actions do not contain signs of a criminal offense, shall entail the imposition of an administrative fine in the amount of fifty thousand to one hundred thousand rubles with administrative expulsion from the Russian Federation or administrative arrest for a period of up to fifteen days with administrative expulsion from the Russian Federation.

6. Actions provided in Part 2 of this article, committed by a foreign citizen or stateless person, if these actions do not contain signs of a criminal offense, shall entail the imposition of an administrative fine in the amount of one hundred thousand to two hundred thousand rubles with administrative expulsion from the Russian Federation or administrative arrest for a period of up to fifteen days with administrative expulsion from the Russian Federation.

7. Actions provided in Part 1 of this article, committed by a foreign citizen or stateless person by using mass media and/or information and telecommunication networks (including the Internet), if these actions do not contain signs of a criminal offense, shall entail the imposition of an administrative fine in the amount of one hundred thousand to two hundred thousand rubles with administrative expulsion from the Russian Federation or administrative arrest for a period of up to fifteen days with administrative expulsion from the Russian Federation.

8. Actions provided in Part 2 of this article, committed by a foreign citizen or stateless person by using mass media and/or information and telecommunication networks (including the Internet), if these actions do not contain signs of a criminal offense, shall entail an administrative fine in the amount of two hundred thousand to four hundred thousand rubles with administrative expulsion from the Russian Federation or administrative arrest for a period of up to fifteen days with administrative expulsion from the Russian Federation.

APPENDIX 3.

ARTICLE 6.21.2 OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION ADMINISTRATIVE OFFENSES CODE.

Dissemination among minors of information demonstrating non-traditional sexual relations and/or preferences or capable of arousing in minors a desire to change gender

(introduced by Federal Law 479-FZ, dated 5 Dec. 2022)

1. Dissemination among minors of information demonstrating non-traditional sexual relations and/or preferences, including description, image of non-traditional sexual relations and/or preferences, or capable of causing in minors a desire to change gender, except for cases provided in Part 2 of Article 6.21 of this Code, if these actions do not contain signs of criminal offense, shall entail the imposition of an administrative fine on citizens in the amount of fifty thousand to one hundred thousand rubles; for officials in the amount of one hundred thousand to two hundred thousand rubles; for legal entities in the amount of eight hundred thousand to one million rubles; or for administrative suspension of activities for a period of up to ninety days.

2. Actions provided in Part 1 of this Article, committed by using mass media and/or information and telecommunication networks (including the Internet), except for cases provided in Part 4 of Article 6.21 of this Code, if these actions do not contain signs of a criminal offense, shall entail the imposition of an administrative fine on citizens in the amount of one hundred thousand to two hundred thousand rubles; on officials in the amount of two hundred thousand to four hundred thousand rubles; on legal entities in the amount of one million to four million rubles; or administrative suspension of activities for a period of up to ninety days.

3. Actions provided in Part 1 of this Article, committed by a foreign citizen or stateless person, except for cases provided in Part 6 of Article 6.21 of this Code, if these actions do not contain signs of a criminal offense, shall entail the imposition of an administrative fine in the amount of fifty thousand to one hundred thousand rubles with administrative expulsion from the Russian Federation or administrative arrest for a period of up to fifteen days with administrative expulsion from the Russian Federation.

4. Actions provided in Part 1 of this Article, committed by a foreign citizen or stateless person by using mass media and/or information and telecommunication networks (including the Internet), except for cases provided in Part 8 of Article 6.21 of this Code, if these actions do not contain signs of a criminal offense, shall entail the imposition of an administrative fine in the amount of one hundred thousand to two hundred thousand rubles with administrative expulsion from the Russian Federation or administrative arrest for a period of up to fifteen days with administrative expulsion from the Russian Federation.



I was banned

How the situation of Russian LGBTQ individuals and organizations has changed after the Russian full-scale invasion of Ukraine

Study Results

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EQUAL PostOst (European Queer Alliance of PostOst Community) is a European human rights organization dedicated to supporting LGBTQ people from PostOst countries within the European Union. EQUAL PostOst strives to create a just world based on diversity, openness, and respect for human rights. The mission of the organization is to be the voice of LGBTQ people from post-Ost countries in Europe, to promote their unification, and to represent their interests.

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