



Observatory on Lesbophobia 2019-2022



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The Eurocentralasian Lesbian Community - EL*C is a lesbian feminist and intersectional network. We publish our own research focused on lesbians and we are present at an institutional level with our advocacy to ensure that lesbian needs are visible, heard and considered when creating policies and laws. For more information, please visit our website: www.europeanlesbianconference.com*



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ABOUT EL*C

The EL*C - EuroCentralAsian Lesbian* Community - started out of a self-organized space in 2017, recognizing the multitude of needs surrounding the rights, the visibility, and the well-being of lesbians throughout Europe and Central Asia.

EL*C use the term “lesbian” as inclusive of cis, trans and intersex women, and non-binary persons who self-identify as lesbian, bisexual and queer. For this reason, in the following report, unless otherwise specified, the term “lesbian” includes all non-heterosexual LBTIQ women. We will also refer to “lesbian organisations” to include all groups focused on and led by LBTIQ women.

For us, using the word “lesbian” is part of the political struggle for visibility, empowerment, and representation, having in mind that the word “lesbian” is one of the most stigmatized and invisibilized words. It has long been connected with shame and disgust, as well as sexual objectification and porn; historically hijacked and warped to distortion by the male gaze. It is time to shake off the stigma.

INTRODUCTION

The need for an Observatory on Lesbophobia arose from EL*C work and collaboration with its members, that have shared with us cases of lesbophobia, the need for awareness raising and for coordinated actions at European level. Lesbophobia is also often misunderstood in policy making concerning hate crime, hate speech and gender-based violence and not nominated because considered to be the same as homophobia. While lesbophobia and homophobia have many aspects in common, the term lesbophobia conceptualise the misogynistic and sexist expression of violence against people that identify or are perceived as non-heterosexual women.

Lesbophobia is a specific form of bias that encompasses misogyny and stigma on non-conforming sexual orientation. In particular, hate against lesbians is structured around three entrenched social norms: 1) lesbians with their sexual orientation and gender expression refute the social expectations and stereotypes concerning ‘male’ and ‘female’ gender roles, 2) lesbians disrupt the expectations that women are at the ‘disposal’ of men, especially because women’s sexuality is widely objectified, and 3) they compel society to confront widespread taboos related to female sexuality and to non-heterosexual sexual orientations. These biases and the resulting violence have an impact not only on the victims but also on society as a whole.

This report is drafted as an update of the 2021 EL*C report on Lesbophobia: an intersectional forms of violence¹ that aimed to give a first analysis of the phenomena at European and Central Asian level. It provides an analysis of the cases that were received

¹ EL*C (2021), Lesbophobia: an intersectional form of violence <https://europeanlesbianconference.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/Lesbophobia-3.pdf>

via the EL*C Observatory on Lesbophobia as well as of the results a survey conducted with EL*C members concerning access to justice and support systems for victims of lesbophobia and the social perception of lesbophobia in media and by political actors. For the 2022, the report a special focus was chosen and it is about lesbophobic aspects of harmful practices. The report contains also all the cases collected this year via the Observatory as well as a set of Recommendation for policymakers and public authorities at national, regional and international level, to take action in addressing lesbophobia, gender-based violence and hate crime against lesbians.

METHODOLOGY

In February 2022, the EL*C Observatory on lesbophobia was launched and cases of lesbophobic violence were collected from a pool of more than 50 interested collaborators. In April 2022, during the EL*C study visit to the EU Institutions, representatives from EL*C members discussed the methodology of the Observatory, the outcomes of its work and chose the special focus of the 2022 annual report on lesbophobia. The theme chosen was the impact of lesbophobia on victims/survivors of harmful practice.

The member organisations that provided cases, examples and data from their national contexts included ALFI (Italy), Bilitis Foundation (Bulgaria), Clube Safo (Portugal), Counselling for Lesbians (Serbia), Feminita (Kazakhstan), Grupo Lesbico Feminista Artemisa, Refugiada y Migrante (Spain), Insight LGBTI (Ukraine), L-Tour (Belgium), Labrisz (Hungary), Les Degommeuses (France), Lesbiche Bologna (Italy), Queer Sisterhood Cluj (Romania) and Queer Women of North Caucasus initiative (Russia), Dyke March Cologne (Germany), Action Transfeministe (Luxembourg) and 50 individual members involved in the Observatory.

In June 2022, data were collected from EL*C members specifically on harmful practice and in October 2022, a survey directed to EL*C members was published with the aim to further collect cases as well as to collect experiences concerning access to justice for victims/survivors of lesbophobic violence and to analyse the social perception of lesbophobia. The annual report was compiled in December 2022 and will be published in 2023.

I - LESBOPHOBIA: AN ANALYSIS OF THE DATA

Lesbophobia in public spaces

Of all the cases collected this year, 40% concerned cases of violence that happened in public spaces. A possible explanation for this prevalence is linked with the fact that the work of the observatory was based, at least partially, on cases of violence reported by the media and/or cases reported to EL*C member organisations by the victims. Violence happening in public is more likely to attract mediatic attention and it is more easily reported by survivors, especially when it involves people unknown to them. Other forms of violence might be more difficult to denounce (e.g. violence by family members) or are often not perceived as sufficiently “serious” to become a news (e.g. online violence).

It is however clear that public spaces constitute spaces that are especially complex for lesbians to navigate. This is linked with the fact that lesbophobia is an expression of stigma related to sexual orientation as well as misogyny. Expressions of affection in public between homosexual couples are often met with disgust, disapproval and attacks, while the risk of encountering violence and harassment is very concrete reality for women and people perceived as such. Lesbians are also confronted with the sexualisation of their relationships for the pleasure of male audience by mainstream pornography, so often lesbian couple are confronted with form of sexual harassment when kissing in public as well as with violence when refusing to accommodate male fantasies concerning their sexuality.

For this reason, most of the cases of violence in the public spaces registered this year concerned couples. This is confirmed also by national data. The NGO SOS Homophobie registered 134 cases of lesbophobia in **France** in the past year and reported that “Lesbian women are more stigmatized when they are in a relationship. Lesbophobic violence in public places concerns couples in 63% of cases. In the same way, the physical aggressions of lesbian people occur in more than a quarter of the cases when they are in couple²”. Many cases reported via the Observatory also exemplify the sexualisation of lesbian relationship, because attacks often followed the refusal by the couple to perform certain acts (e.g. kiss in front of the men) or to satisfy certain desires (e.g. let the man “join”)³. Violence against lesbian is gender-based violence and, in at least one of the cases reported this year, a woman was murdered after refusing a man that wanted to have a relationship with her⁴.

Attacks in the public spaces can also be triggered by the gender expression of lesbians and motivated by an intention to ‘police’ the behaviours and attitudes of women in public spaces, because of the apparent threat to stereotyped images of women and standards of femininity that lesbians pose. It is the cases of lesbians attacked because their gender expression clothes are judged too ‘masculine and women should not dress like men’ or because they “look like men and should fight like men”⁵.

Violence in public spaces can therefore be motivated by the intention of “police” the

2 SOS Homophobie, Annual report on LGBTI-phobia, https://ressource.sos-homophobie.org/Rapports-annuels/rapport_LGBTIphobies_2022.pdf

3 See for example <https://nltimes.nl/2019/08/06/lesbian-couple-attacked-pride-amsterdam> or the London bus case that global attracted mediatic attention <https://amp.theguardian.com/uk-news/2019/jul/25/four-teenagers-charged-over-homophobic-attack-on-london-bus>

4 See for example: https://www.corriere.it/cronache/20_agosto_24/elisa-pomarelli-oggi-funerali-ragazza-lesbica-uccisa-2019-il-suo-omicidio-non-verra-giudicato-come-femminicidio-768c9726-e56d-11ea-b5c1-ffe7ca7d9551.shtml

5 See for example: <https://imazpress.com/actus-reunion/le-tampon-une-jeune-femme-victime-dune-violente-agression-homophobe>

publish share and those that do not comply with gender roles and expectation. In **Bulgaria**, the lesbian organisation Bilitis Foundation has assisted the victims of a group of 14-15-year-old students from Plovdiv that organised and carried out a violent attack on other youth because of their perceived homosexual orientation. The boys' goal was to "clean up the city garden" in Plovdiv of people with the 'wrong' sexual orientation⁶.

The issue with navigating public spaces has worsened during the **COVID-19 pandemic**, due to the presence of factors that can be associated with feelings of environmental insecurity for women (e.g. the emptiness of streets), with almost one in six respondents to EL*C's Survey on the COVID-19 impact on lesbian communities reporting a feeling of insecurity in the public space because of their sexual orientation and one in four respondents reporting having experienced police abuse, state policy restrictions, and/or restrictions in their personal freedom during the pandemic. A significantly higher prevalence of abuse by state authorities was found in case of respondents who were trans, non-binary or otherwise did not identify as cisgender women (31% vs 22% of cisgender respondents). Although not statistically significant because of the reduced number of answers, the results suggest a higher risk of encountering state violence for respondents who are persons of colour or belong to an ethnic minority, are asylum seekers or have refugee status (31% vs 24% of the other respondents).⁷

Lesbophobia in the family

Several of the episodes collected this year concerned violence committed by family members. In at least two cases, the violence resulted in lesbophobic (and at least in one case transphobic) murders.

As demonstrated by the lesbophobic murder that happened in **Belgium**, violence can be the result of the discovery of a lesbian relationship by the husband, ex-husband or partner of one of the two women⁸. Violence can also be triggered by the fact that transgressing the boundaries of gender and/or sexual orientation and bringing 'shame' onto families and communities can be punished with violence and even with death, as shown by the young woman killed by her brother in a road accident in **Italy**. Just after the accident, the partner of the victim (present during the accident and who is a trans man) was assaulted by the brother. The latter declared that he did not want to kill his sister but needed to teach her a lesson because she had been "infected" by her trans partner⁹. Destructive and painful relationships with biological family members (parents, siblings, the grandparents, aunts and uncles) can trigger episodes of violence and abuse, including physical and sexual violence¹⁰. As further explored below, violence in the family is linked with "honour crimes", a form harmful practices meant to "rebuild" the family or community honour after the behaviour and sexual orientation of the

6 <https://balkaninsight.com/2020/10/02/plovdiv-attacks-highlight-bulgarias-unsolved-homophobia-problem>

7 EL*C (2020), Resistance as a way of living. Lesbian lives through the COVID-19 pandemic <https://europeanlesbianconference.org/resistance-as-a-way-of-living-lesbian-lives-through-the-covid-19-pandemic/>

8 <https://www.rtbef.be/article/double-femicide-a-gouvvy-c-est-un-homme-qui-a-tue-deux-femmes-parce-qu-elles-se-desiraient-10824858?id=10824858>

9 https://napoli.repubblica.it/cronaca/2020/09/13/news/sperona_e_uccide_la_sorella_nel_napoletano_ferito_il_compagno_trans-267102124/#:~:text=Su%20disposizione%20della%20Procura%20di,provocandone%20la%20caduta%20rivelatasi%20fatale

10 https://www.huffingtonpost.it/2019/03/07/meglio-una-figlia-morta-che-lesbicail-padre-la-stupra-per-punirla-la-famiglia-la-perseguita-per-anni_a_23686577/

lesbians have “tainted” it.

According to the NGO Counselling for Lesbians, in **Serbia** many lesbians still have psychological trauma about the violence they survived in their primary family. Young lesbians who contacted the association regarding this topic did it either when the situation was urgent (when immediately threatened with homelessness) or a long time after the violence happened.

The **COVID-19 pandemic** and measure of lockdowns and social distancing heighten the risks of being subject to violence within the family. According to EL*C COVID-19 Survey, one of the most common experiences for lesbians during the COVID-19 pandemic was feeling stressed because of the confinement in a heteronormative environment. This was the case for one fourth (26%) of the respondents. An explanation concerning this data is possible if we consider that a high proportion of respondents were obliged to go back to their families of origin, which meant, in some cases, enduring prolonged exposure to unaccepting and hostile family members. Almost one in five (18.50%) of the respondents had to relocate to their families.

Young age was a relevant factor in increasing the level of stress and even the exposure to domestic violence. 40% of younger lesbians (under 25) had to relocate to their family (against 8.77% of respondents over 25). 46% of them declared feeling stressed because of the confinement in a heteronormative environment (against 9% of older respondents). Younger respondents were also significantly more exposed to violence in the family with 8.5% of them experiencing abuse by another family member (against 0.76% of older respondents).¹¹

Lesbophobic online violence

Lesbian activists and groups contacted by EL*C reported an increase hate speech, especially in online spaces. Patriarchal and misogynistic behaviours have been transferred online, resulting in lesbophobic and sexist insults in comments, posts or tweets.

In addition, the word ‘lesbian’, in several EU languages, is often disadvantaged in online searches and social media by being linked to pornographic content. This alone has a severe impact on the visibility of those organisations, activities and events working positively in spaces that use the word ‘lesbian’ in their self-descriptions as well as other words used in different languages by lesbians to refer to themselves¹². In several European and Central Asian countries, the word ‘lesbian’ infringes the social media ethics rules, as discovered by the EL*C team in 2019 while trying to set up a username on Facebook.

Online hate speech against lesbians has serious consequences in real life. Sometimes it is part of a wider pattern of harassment and abuse in the lives of lesbians, for example, in the case of neighbours targeting a lesbian in her home and online. Women who are visible in public spheres, such as politicians, journalists and social media influencers, suffer

11 EL*C (2020), Resistance as a way of living. Lesbian lives through the COVID-19 pandemic <https://europeanlesbianconference.org/resistance-as-a-way-of-living-lesbian-lives-through-the-covid-19-pandemic/>

12 See for example an analysis how algorithms react lesbophobically to the word “sapatao” in Portuguese: <https://adiadorim.org/opiniao/2022/01/codigo-s4p4t40-lesbofobia-algoritmica-e-a-plataformizacao-da-vida/>

from heightened exposure to online gender-based violence. However, this situation is further intensified if the woman is also publicly visible for her sexual orientation, exposing her to specific attacks that are not only sexist but that specifically target her sexual orientation and gender expression.

Being subject to such waves of lesbophobic violence not only has an impact on mental and physical health, but also greatly limits their potential to freely express themselves on online platforms and spaces. National data from **Austria** and **Ireland** show that lesbians are more exposed to online hate speech than heterosexual women (28% of lesbians in comparison to 10% of straight women)¹³. The NGO Labrizs reported to EL*C several cases in **Hungary** of anonymous online verbal abuse because of gender-related issues, including threats of physical and sexual violence while the organisation Clube Safo reported a rise in online hate speech and harassment in **Portugal**, which is linked to an increase in online presence due to COVID-19 restrictions and related lockdown.

Lesbophobic political violence

Since 2020, in the EU and accession countries, numerous attacks, both online and offline, have been registered against lesbian human rights defenders, journalists and politicians as well as against community events, Pride marches, and lesbian, feminist and LGBTI organisations. Cases of violence against visible lesbians activists and organisations that occurred in **Hungary, Spain, Albania, Kazakhstan** and **France**¹⁴ were collected in the 2021 EL*C report on Lesbophobia.

Since the publication of that report in October 2021, more cases of violence against activists have been registered:

- In **Bulgaria**, a group of about 10 men stormed in the Rainbow Hub and vandalized the space, smashing equipment and furniture. The presidential candidate for the nationalist party punched one lesbian activists from Bilitis Foundation. Since Bulgaria does not have a legislation concerning hate crime, he was charged with hooliganism and no aggravating circumstances were retained¹⁵.
- In **Bulgaria**, the organisation Bilitis Foundation reported that the lesbian activists that organise Sofia Pride were received a photo with a rifle and a gun and the words “see you tomorrow” on the night before the pride march.
- In **Serbia**, several lesbian activists that attended the Europride in Belgrade were violently attacked after the march, that took place in a very tense context fuelled by the decision of the national government to ban the march and then allow it only few hours before the planned start of the demonstration¹⁶.
- In **Italy**, two doctors volunteering at an HIV center in Naples were threatened and insulted with lesbophobic slurs¹⁷.
- In **Germany**, a transgender man died in Münster after being violently beaten up during the local pride for responding to lesbophobic hatred. The assailants insulted

13 EL*C (2020), The State of lesbian organising and the lived realities of lesbians in the EU and the accession countries, page 27, <https://europeanlesbianconference.org/the-state-of-lesbian-organising-a-groundbreaking-research>

14 EL*C (2021), Lesbophobia: an intersectional form of violence <https://europeanlesbianconference.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/Lesbophobia-3.pdf>

15 <https://bilitis.org/en/2022/04/05/attack-on-rainbow-hub-community-centre/>

16 https://twitter.com/Xheni_Karaj/status/1571404954153148416

17 <https://www.fanpage.it/napoli/insulti-omofobi-a-due-dottoresse-a-napoli-stavano-eseguendo-test-hiv-gratis/>

several women at the festival, calling them “lesbian whores” and telling them to “piss off.” He intervened in their defence, and he was subject to a vicious attack that tragically resulted in his death¹⁸.

- In **Ukraine**, Olena Shevchenko a well-know lesbian activist and a leader the LGBTI movement in Ukraine, was attacked with tear in April 2022 in Lviv, while unloading a truck with humanitarian aids for the shelters organised by the lesbian organisation Insight NGO¹⁹.

Lesbophobic violence is a powerful political tactic used to limit and censor the voices of women, LGBTI people and other minorities and, therefore, to limit the space and freedom of expression that lesbian civil society enjoy in society. In this sense, the role of governments and national institutions is especially relevant, since violence and hate crime are especially dangerous when associated or followed with forms of censorship or limitation of rights acted by public authorities against those that are also subject to violent attacks.

For example, violent attacks were conducted in Hungary by far-rights groups and politicians against the children’s book “Fairyland is for everyone” edited by the lesbian NGO Labrisz. Attacks included a politician from the far-right party “Our Homeland” tearing the book apart and shredding it at a press conference, referring to it as “homosexual propaganda” while bookshops selling the book were subject to attacks and violence by far-right groups. The national government instead of condemning the acts of violence, obliged the publisher to add a warning that its stories contained ‘behaviour inconsistent with traditional gender roles’. The so-called “LGBTI propaganda law” was also approved, limiting the access of minors to content and advertisements that “promotes or portrays” the so-called “divergence from self-identity corresponding to sex at birth, sex change or homosexuality”. The censorship of the book and the “LGBTI propaganda law” has triggered infringement procedure against Hungary launched by the European Commission in July 2021 and a subsequent referral of the case to the Court of Justice²⁰.

18 <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/sep/02/transgender-man-dies-after-pride-parade-assault-in-germany>

19 <https://twitter.com/MarshZhinok/status/1514533189234135040>

20 https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/IP_22_2689

II - SURVEY ON LESBOPHOBIA

In the 2021 EL*C report on Lesbophobia, several gaps and challenges were identified both in access to justice and in the support system while lesbophobia continued to underestimate and misunderstood. In November 2022, EL*C submitted to its membership a **follow-up survey** focused in particular on those three topics.

Access to justice

In the 2021 report, members organisation signalled the fact that the main obstacle towards effective access to justice for many victims/survivors of lesbophobic violence comes from legislative gaps that in many countries prevent lesbophobic motives to be considered as aggravating circumstance in cases of violent crime against women and LGBTI people. Where the legal system does not include lesbophobic bias as an aggravating circumstance, perpetrators can be tried under procedures that often entail reduced sentences²¹. Finally, even when the legal framework includes the possibility to prosecute lesbophobic hate crimes, the actual investigation process might fail to recognize the nature of the crime.

In 2021, the European Court of Human Rights in **Sabalić v. Croatia**²² considered that Croatian authorities violated art. 3 (prohibition of inhuman and degrading treatment) and art. 14 (prohibition of discrimination) of the European Convention of Human Rights by inadequately responding to a lesbophobic attack against a woman who was violently assaulted after having refused the advances of a man and disclosed to him that she was a lesbian. The Court found that the minor-offence proceedings against the applicant's aggressor had not addressed the hate-crime element of the offence and had resulted in a derisory fine.

Such data appears to be confirmed by the respondents of the 2022 survey for EL*C members. One out of 3 respondents considered that the legal systems in their countries make it impossible to prosecute the crimes, while almost 40% of them considered the investigation/prosecution process to be biased (e.g. because complaints are not taken seriously or investigations are biased). There is also a general lack of awareness concerning lesbophobia and, as mentioned by one of the participant to the survey: "Prosecution is possible, however lesbophobia is less recognized as such. My impression is that it is less recognized then when men are attacked".

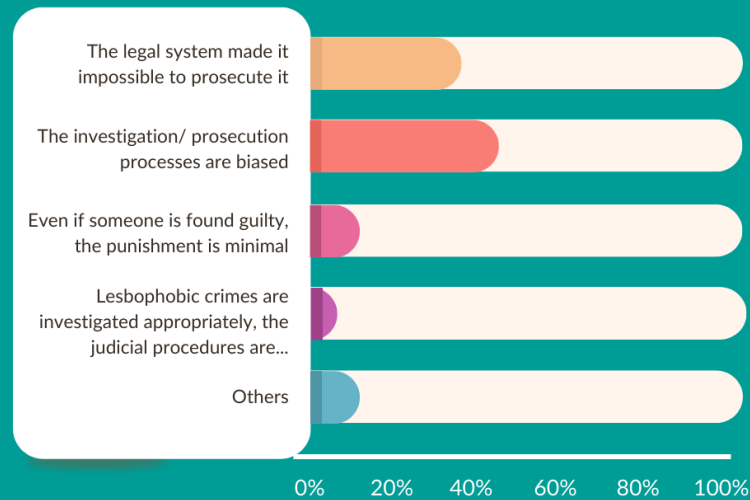
The 2021 Lesbophobia report considered also the fact that lesbians have some of the lowest reporting rate within the LGBTI community. For example, the **2019 FRA LGBTI Survey** found that lesbian and bisexual women, compared to the rest of the LGBTI population, have the lowest rates of reporting episodes of harassment and even of sexual and physical violence to any institutions. Numbers are particularly low where reporting rates to the police are concerned²³. One of the main explanations for this data lays in the fear of encountering secondary victimization and lesbophobia, especially when approaching law enforcement and judicial authorities.

21 See the case of the lesbophobic murder in Italy that was prosecuted under a summary judgment and resulted in a relevant reduction of sentence for the murderer: <https://www.ilpiacenza.it/cronaca/sentenza-appello-massimo-sebastiani-vent-anni.html>

22 ECHR, Sabalić v. Croatia, application number 50231/13, decision of the 14 January 2021

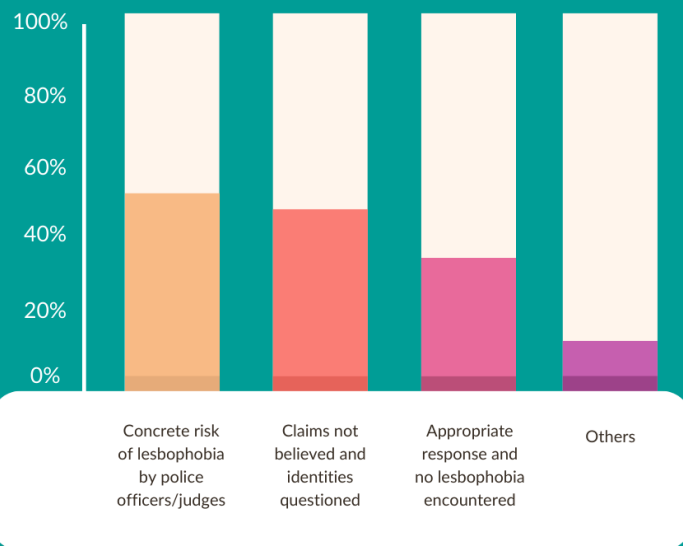
23 Fundamental Rights Agency of the European Union (2020), A long way to go for LGBTI equality, page 48 https://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra_uploads/fra-2020-lgbti-equality-1_en.pdf

Table 1. What happens if lesbophobic hate crimes, gender-based violence or domestic violence against lesbians are committed?



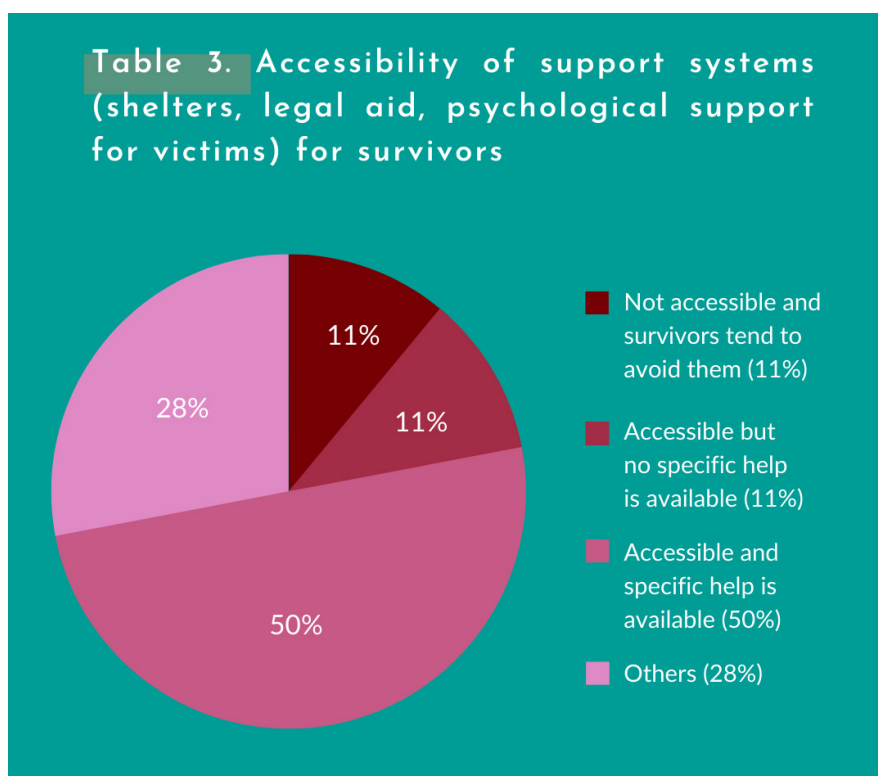
Such fears appear to be confirmed by our **2022 Survey**, with more than half (55%) of the respondents reported the concrete risk of encountering lesbophobia by police officers/judges, while almost half of them (45%) considered that there is a concrete risk of claims not being believed and the identity of the victim being questioned.

Table 2. How are lesbians treated by police and judges when they denounce lesbophobic hate crime, gender-based violence or domestic violence?



Support systems for survivors

In the 2021 EL*C report, the organisations consulted reported that support services for victims are not always able to appropriately accompany lesbian victims of violence. They observed a tendency to downplay the relevance of the victim's sexual orientation where the service was specialized in the assistance of women victims of gender-based violence, and conversely they downplay the role of misogyny in the violence where the service was specialized in assisting LGBTI people. From the answers collected in the **2022 Survey for EL*C members**, it is confirmed that those spaces (shelters, organisations offering legal or psychological support) are accessible while not being able to offer help tackling specifically the needs of lesbians.



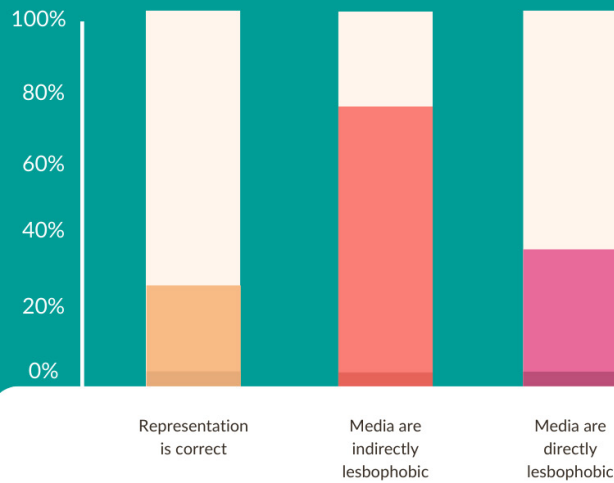
Social perception of lesbophobia

Another aspect addressed in the 2021 report concerned the lack of data and information on lesbophobic violence, because in order to adequately respond to a multi-faceted phenomenon such as lesbophobia, it is necessary to understand its dynamics. This concerns statistics that greatly underestimate the actual number and incidence of lesbophobic crimes, as well as the fact that lesbians continue to be greatly underrepresented in research and data collection.

Another important factor in increasing awareness concerning lesbophobia is the way in which media treats episodes of gender-based violence or hate crime involving lesbians. The overwhelming majority of the respondents to the 2022 Survey considered the media as being directly or indirectly lesbophobic. This includes both the cases in which a victim is blamed for the crime because of her sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression as well as cases where the identity of the victim is not mentioned even if it is relevant to the violence. Report of Medus3, the Italian observatory on lesbophobia, considers that the majority of the cases of lesbophobia that attracted mediatic attention in **Italy**, the lesbophobic element of the crime was either misrepresented or completely ignored²⁴.

24 <https://www.retemeduse.it/comunicati-stampa/report-lesbofobia-2022/>

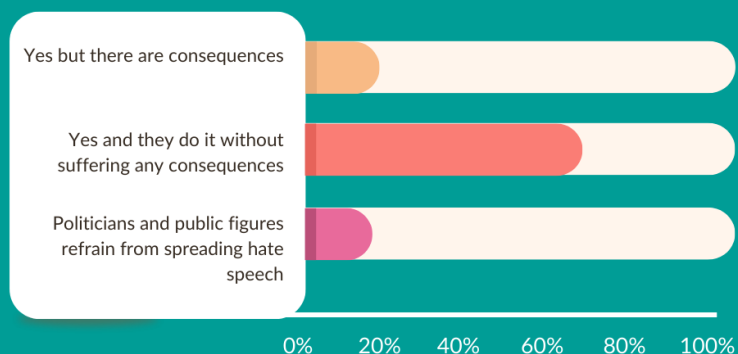
Table 4. What do you think about the way in which gender-based violence and hate crime involving lesbians is treated by the media?



Another important element in the prevention of lesbophobic violence is related to the type of public discourses and narratives that are promoted by people with big platforms (such as political figures). The political environment in Europe continues to register an increase in anti-human rights narratives, promoted in particular by the so-called “anti-gender” movement, with a direct impact on the wellbeing of lesbians. As exemplified by the cases mentioned above, lesbians organisations and visible activists belonging to both the feminist and LGBTI struggles, constitute the easiest target and often find themselves at the centre of violent attacks, both online and offline.

A overwhelming majority (73%) of the respondents to the 2022 Survey reported that politician and public figures spread hateful narrative against women, LGBTI people and other minorities without suffering any consequence.

Table 5. Are politicians or any other public figures spreading lesbophobic hate speech in your country?



III - SPECIAL FOCUS: HARMFUL PRACTICES

The **European Institute on Gender Equality (EIGE)** defines harmful practice as persistent practices and behaviors that are grounded on discrimination on the basis of sex, gender, age and other grounds as well as multiple and/or intersecting forms of discrimination that often involve violence and cause physical and/or psychological harm or suffering²⁵. Such behaviors are perceived as culturally acceptable in the social context where they are performed and deemed “normal” or necessary to comply with standard of honour and respectability.

The experience of lesbians is further complicated by lesbophobia, intended as a powerful combination of misogyny, sexism and stigma on non-conforming sexual orientation, that influences heavily both the experience of violence by lesbians and the response by support services, law enforcement and judicial systems. In particular because of the widespread lesbophobia in our societies, harmful practices that affect lesbians in Europe and Central Asia are therefore found in a broad spectrum of social, ethnic and cultural contexts.

Years of experience in the protection of women’s rights and LGBTIQ rights show us that without such specific mention and consideration, the realities of victims and survivors of harmful practices risk being reduced to those that are heterosexual. In this way, specific vulnerabilities of lesbians might not be considered, resulting in barriers when accessing justice as well as prevention and protection mechanisms

It is important to mention that this heteronormative approach is still predominant in national policies on combating gender-based violence and harmful practices. Worryingly lesbian civil society registers a general lack of information and good practices in the field of combating harmful practices. For this reason, this year report on Lesbophobia puts a specific focus on such phenomena and try to analyses the way in which lesbophobia is connect with them and impact the experiences of lesbians that are victims/survivors of such practices.

Impact on heteronormativity on the experience of harmful practices

Heteronormative considerations that the “standard” human being is heterosexual are particularly spread in the case of women and people who are socialised and perceived as such, because of widespread taboos related to female sexuality and of the expectation that women are at disposal of men, especially from a sexual point of view. The consequence of such attitudes is that women are “presumed” to be heterosexual because a woman’s sexuality that does not exclusively include men violates some of the gender stereotypes and gender roles that are the cornerstones on which our patriarchal societies are built.

These attitudes are widespread, and historically embedded in our societal narratives and, for this reason, they influence policymaking at all levels, including in the responses to gender-based violence and harmful practices. However, even if their experience is often made invisible lesbians are still victims and survivors of harmful practices that affect women and girls in general, including in case of FGM and honour-related crimes.

25 See here: <https://eige.europa.eu/thesaurus/terms/1233>

In case of **Female Genital Mutilations (FGM)**, specialized services exist in many countries for women living with FGM, but these **services are not always adapted to the needs of lesbians as well as transgender men and non-binary people living with FGM**²⁶. Additionally, because of the stigma described above, very little information is available and stories of lesbians living with FGM are starting to emerge but are still extremely rare²⁷. As a result, lesbians living with FGM might feel particularly isolated since they may not feel comfortable sharing about their specific experiences in LGBTQI spaces nor in spaces of their communities of origin, out of fear of lesbophobia, transphobia, and stigmatizing comments about FGM survivors.

GAMS Belgium, the main anti-FGM organization in the country, conducted a study with over 60 women living in Brussels on their sexual and reproductive health and rights and experiences of health services. They interviewed two women who identified as lesbian and found that they had limited spaces to speak about their experience of being a lesbian with FGM. On the one hand they did not feel like people in the LGBT community had knowledge on FGM and on the other hand they did not feel comfortable speaking about their sexual orientation in their communities of origin because of fear of potential lesbophobia and previous experience of lesbophobia. This situation led them to feel distressed and isolated²⁸.

Lesbians are also often victim of so-called **honour-related crimes**. Standards of 'honour' almost always include norms of sexual purity and having non-heterosexual love relationships can infringe gendered expectations for how women should behave and causing such 'punishments' from the family as sexual abuse, physical violence and sequestrations and 'honour' killing.

It is important to notice that, in Europe, such standards of "honour" affect lesbians from all ethnic backgrounds²⁹. Additionally, because of social expectations of women's traditional roles and society's failure to provide equality for women that enables full economic, social and legal independence, lesbians may be more likely to depend on their biological families and/or to find themselves obliged and socially conditioned to marry a man. As a result, families remain powerful site of violence against lesbians.

In France, a study from INED, the national institute of demographic studies, published in April 2020 focused on violence inside the family found that lesbian and bisexual girls were the two groups most affected by all types of intra-family violence (psychological, physical and sexual violence) compared to heterosexual girls and homosexual and bisexual boys. Young lesbians have reported to have been victim of subject to psychological violence three times more than gay and bisexual boys and straight girls. They reported physical

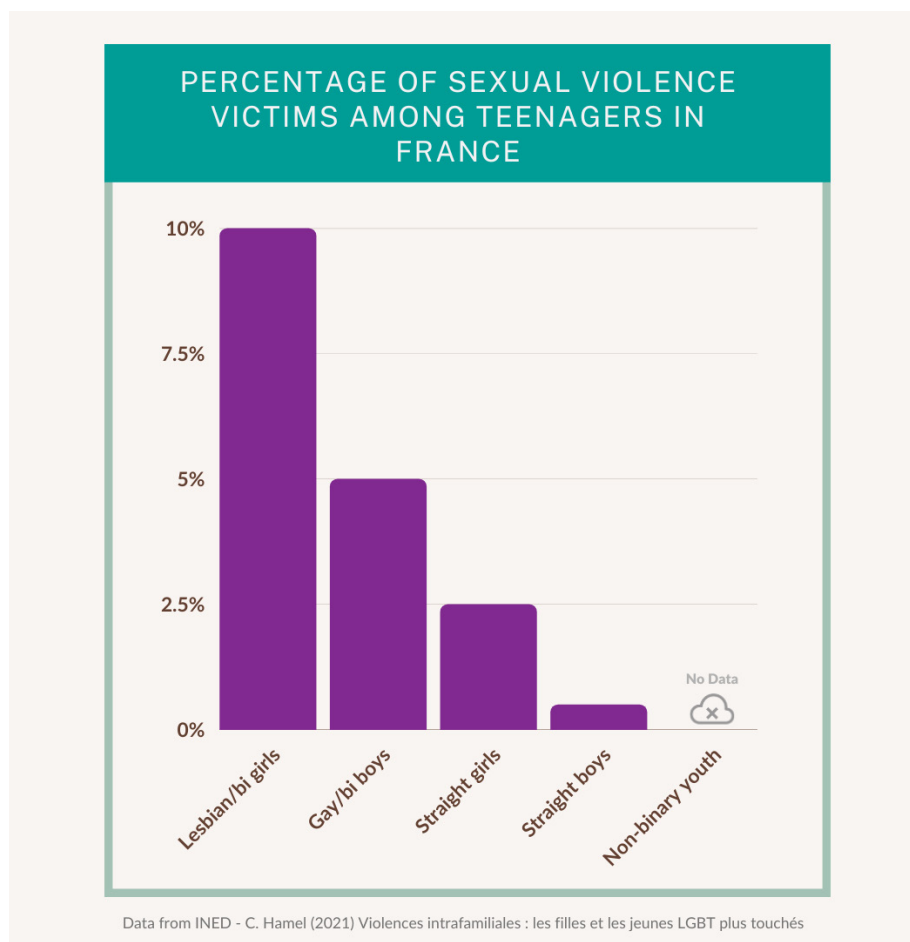
26 END FGM EUROPEAN NETWORK (2021) FGM and LGBTI rights: https://www.endfgm.eu/editor/0/Infographic_FGM_LGBTI_in_collab_with_ILGA_EU_1.pdf

27 See for example: Scarlet Udaan, November 2020 – Podcast on FGM and Intersectionality with Dena Igusti.

28 Florquin, Stéphanie (2021). Besoins et demandes en matière de santé et droits sexuels et reproductifs des femmes concernées par les mutilations génitales féminines en Région de Bruxelles-Capitale, Rapport du diagnostic communautaire mené dans le cadre du Réseau bruxellois contre les MGF. Bruxelles, Ed : GAMS Belgique

29 Media report on the crime in an Italian newspaper: https://napoli.repubblica.it/cronaca/2020/09/13/news/sperona_e_uccide_la_sorella_nel_napoletano_ferito_il_compagno_trans-267102124/#:~:text=Su%20disposizione%20della%20Procura%20di,provocandone%20la%20caduta%20rivelatasi%20fatale

violence two times more than gay and bisexual boys and three times more than straight girls. They are also more frequently victims of sexual violence with an incidence of around 10% of young lesbians against around 5% of gay and bisexual boys, 2.5% of straight girls and 0.5% of straight boys. Such startling figures were explained by the researcher: “the social control over girls mixed with the process of making them inferior and the social obligation to heterosexuality join together and contribute to make the family as an heterosexist environment. This is translated in certain families by violence that can put in danger the youth concerned, especially in the case of young lesbian and bisexual girls”³⁰.



Lesbophobia contributes also to make harmful practices and human rights violation against lesbian invisible. For this reason, often narratives concerning human rights violations against LGBTI people tend to focus specifically on gay/bisexual men. Furthermore, in especially difficult cultural contexts, the limited access to public spaces for women determines that their struggle against state-sponsored lesbophobia, oppressive family systems or particularly lesbophobic social context often stays in the shadows³¹. This includes criminalisation and abuse by state authorities as well as violence committed in the family, so-called “corrective therapies” and physical and sexual violence.

30 C. Hamel (2021) Violences intrafamiliales : les filles et les jeunes LGBT plus touchés, available at this link: https://juridique.defenseurdesdroits.fr/doc_num.php?explnum_id=19717

31 Global Philantropy Project (2016), Breaking the Silence. Criminalisation of lesbians and bisexual women and its impact. Available at: <https://www.humandignitytrust.org/resources/breaking-the-silence-the-criminalisation-of-lesbian-and-bisexual-women-and-its-impacts/>

Human rights violation against gay men in Chechnya and other areas of the **North Caucasus region of the Russian Federation** have obtained wide political and mediatic attention³². **Queer Women of North Caucasus** and other lesbian groups from that same area report that the situation for LBT women is particularly difficult resulting in exposure to violence, rapes, threats, forced marriage when they are outed to the family. This violence is often perpetrated with impunity, and often even with the assistance of law enforcement³³. Given the fact that women in general are subject to high rates of violence (including female genital mutilation in certain areas) and are controlled entirely by their male family members, LBTI women are often unable to leave the family home or the region without their family's authorization³⁴.

Lesbophobic harmful practices

As explained above, a crucial aspect of lesbophobia is the widespread belief that women who do not engage in sexual relationships with men are 'sick', 'abnormal' and that only the involvement of men will ensure an "healthy" sexual life.

The lesbophobic entanglement of beliefs around non-conforming sexual orientation and of misogynistic attitudes toward women is at the basis of sexual harassment and violence toward lesbians. For this reason, women who are not heterosexual appear to be particularly subject to sexual forms of violence. In the **FRA LGBTI Survey (2020)** around 40% of the cases of violence against lesbian and bisexual women were sexual attacks or included a sexual element, while this rate is around 23% for gay and bisexual men³⁵. In the **FRA Survey on Violence Against Women (2015)**, 78% of non-heterosexual women reported cases of sexual harassment compared to 55% of heterosexual women³⁶.

Consequently, "curing" or "correcting" a lesbian's sexual orientation often entails directly sexual harassment and, in the worst cases, takes the form of so-called 'corrective' rape. Corrective rape is defined as a hate crime in which one or more people are raped because of their perceived sexual orientation or gender identity³⁷.

32 The unbearable silence of Chechnya's lesbians (Opendemocracy 29 May 2019) <https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/odr/the-unbearable-silence-of-chechnyas-lesbians/>

33 The Advocates for Human Rights, & Moscow Community Centre for LGBT+ Initiatives (2020), Russian Federation's Compliance with Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women: Suggested List of Issues Relating to Discrimination Based on Sexual orientation, Gender Identity, and Gender Expression. Available at: https://www.theadvocatesforhumanrights.org/Res/russia_cedaw_loi_lgbt_rights_final.pdf

34 QWNC (2018). Violence against lesbian, bisexual and transgender women in the North Caucasus region of the Russian Federation <https://www.nhc.no/content/uploads/2019/02/Violence-against-LBT-women-in-North-Caucasus.pdf>

35 Data available via the FRA data explorer, available here: <https://fra.europa.eu/en/data-and-maps/2020/lgbti-survey-data-explorer>

36 Fundamental Rights Agency of the European Union (2015), Violence against women: an EU-wide survey. Main results report, page 186 https://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra_uploads/fra-2014-vaw-survey-main-results-apr14_en.pdf

37 The term corrective rape was coined in South Africa after well-known cases of corrective rapes (and murders) of lesbians such as Eudy Simelane (<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2009/sep/22/eudy-simelane-gangrape-and-murder>) and Zoliswa Nkonyana (<https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2011-12-09-well-make-you-a-real-woman-even-if-it-kills-you/>) became public.

In **France**, for the first time in 2019, the rape of a young lesbian woman with the explicit motive of ‘correcting’ and punishing her sexual orientation was considered by a criminal court as having specific lesbophobic motivation³⁸. As reported to EL*C, the French group **Les Dégommeuses** has assisted multiple victims of corrective rape, enlightening, in particular, the fact that all have migrant backgrounds and a masculine gender expression that make them easily identifiable in public as lesbians³⁹. In **Italy**, EL*C members **ALFI** and **Lesbiche Bologna** reported the case of young lesbian who was subject, after the parents discovered her sexual orientation, to years of abuse, including physical and sexual violence perpetrated by her father. As a result of this situation, she has suffered serious mental health issues and was able to denounce her family only after managing to escape⁴⁰.

Distorted beliefs and stereotypes concerning lesbians’ sexuality also expose lesbians to forms of lesbophobic gynaecological violence and discrimination, which negatively impact the access to healthcare systems especially in settings where sexual behaviours are particularly relevant.

In the FRA 2019 LGBTI Survey, lesbians were more likely than the total population to report that their specific needs were ignored (10.47% and 7.18%, respectively), with trans lesbians nearly 3 times as likely as the total population (19.67%) and intersex lesbians and lesbians with disabilities even higher (24.46%, respectively 23.8%). Lesbians also experienced elevated instances of inappropriate curiosity compared to the total population (17.89% and 14.24%, respectively), with trans lesbians and lesbians with disabilities most disproportionately affected (24.98% and 29.22%, respectively)⁴¹. The risk of discrimination is coupled with important disinformation and misconception concerning lesbians health needs. In 2020, EL*C conducted a content analysis of the representation of lesbians in health-related research on LGBTI populations. Of 230 health-related reviews eligible for inclusion in the analysis, 51% (118) focused exclusively on gay, bisexual, and other non-heterosexual men. Another 40% (93) focused on mixed populations, and only 8% (19) on lesbian, bisexual, and other non-heterosexual women⁴².

38 Media reports on the crime in a French newspaper: https://www.liberation.fr/societe/police-justice/pour-la-premiere-fois-un-viol-reconnu-comme-lesbophobe-aux-assises-20210528_7MQHANKA6JCQVFZ5PKOLADZ5AE/

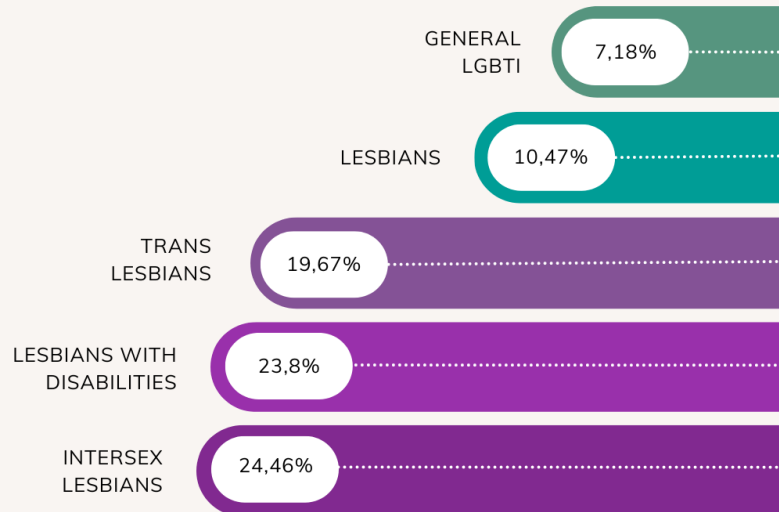
39 EL*C (2021), Lesbophobia as an intersectional form of violence, available at this link: <https://europeanlesbianconference.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/Lesbophobia-3.pdf>

40 Media report on the fact in an Italian media: https://www.huffingtonpost.it/2019/03/07/meglio-una-figlia-morta-che-lesbica-il-padre-la-stupra-per-punirla-la-famiglia-la-perseguita-per-anni_a_23686577/

41 An in depth analysis of FRA data has been conducted in 2022 by EL*C and Ilga Europe, <https://europeanlesbianconference.org/lesbian-analysis-2019-fra-lgbti-survey-ii/>

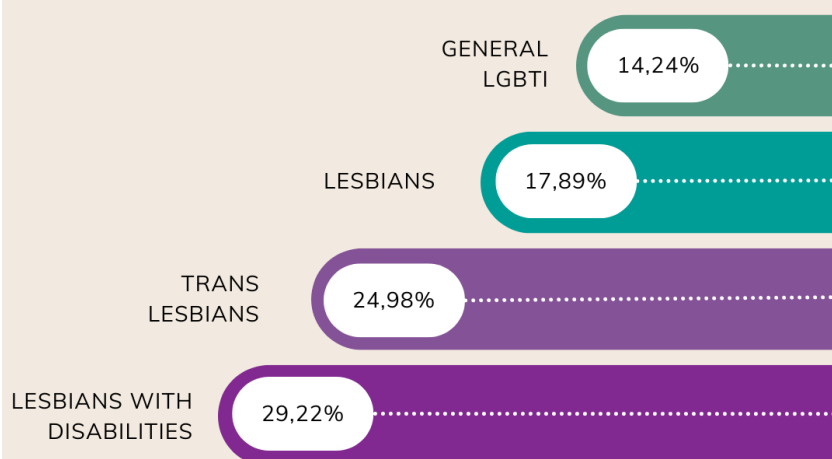
42 EL*C (2020), The state of lesbian organising and lesbian lived realities, p 23-25. Available from: <https://europeanlesbianconference.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/The-State-of-Lesbian-Organising-1.pdf>. Based on how studies focusing on sexual minority populations are historically conducted, it is very likely that the definitions of “gay and bisexual men” and “lesbian and bisexual women” refer only to cisgender, endosex LGBQ individuals.

FRA SURVEY 2019 DISCRIMINATION IN HEALTHCARE (SPECIFIC NEEDS IGNORED)

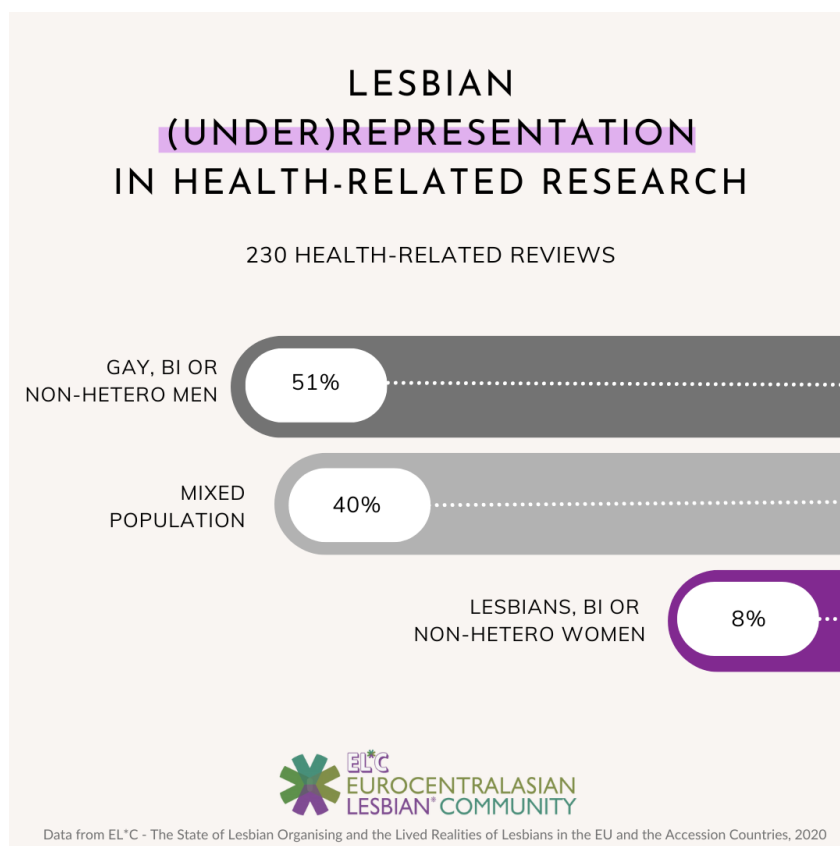


Data from ELC & ILGA Europe (2022) - LESBIAN ANALYSIS OF THE 2019 FRA LGBTI

FRA SURVEY 2019 DISCRIMINATION IN HEALTHCARE (INAPPROPRIATE CURIOSITY)



Data from ELC & ILGA Europe - LESBIAN ANALYSIS OF THE 2019 FRA LGBTI SURVEY II



Fear of mistreated and disinformation about lesbians' exposure to sexual transmissible diseases and to ovarian and cervical cancers result often in lesbians withdrawing treatment and avoiding healthcare settings all together. For example, a prevailing myth among some healthcare professionals and in lesbian communities holds that women with exclusively female sexual contacts are not at risk of a Human Papillomavirus infection and thus of developing cervical cancer⁴³. This results in lesbian being advised to not conduct tests and examinations even when they contract sexual transmissible diseases or report history of cervical anomalies⁴⁴.

In 2022, EL*C published the report [“A bitter pill to swallow: gaps and discriminations in healthcare for lesbians”](#) aimed at summarising the findings, data and information that we were able to collect in years of work and collaboration with researchers, activists, experts and civil society organisations engaging in countering the effects on lesbians of sexist and heteronormative oppression in healthcare. One of the objectives of the paper was to raise awareness and advocate for more comprehensive research and analysis on the experience of lesbians in healthcare settings.

43 Branstetter AJ, McRee A-L, Reiter PL. Correlates of human papillomavirus infection among a national sample of sexual minority women. *J Women's Heal.* 2017;26:1004–11.

44 Moegelin L, Nilsson B, Helstrm L. Reproductive health in lesbian and bisexual women in Sweden. *Acta Obstet Gynecol Scand.* 2010;89:205–9; Branstetter AJ, McRee A-L, Reiter PL. Correlates of human papillomavirus infection among a national sample of sexual minority women. *J Women's Heal.* 2017;26:1004–11; Hariri S, Unger ER, Sternberg M, Dunne EF, Swan D, Patel S, et al. Prevalence of genital human papillomavirus among females in the United States, the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey, 2003–2006. *J Infect Dis.* 2011;204:566–73

Hirsch O, Löltgen K, Becker A. Lesbian womens' access to healthcare, experiences with and expectations towards GPs in German primary care. *BMC Fam Pract.* 2016;17:1–9.

In a **German** study on access to healthcare for lesbians, negative experiences reported by the participants included: discrimination in the healthcare system, not being taken seriously when revealing their sexual orientation and even denial of examination or treatment because of the patients' sexual orientation⁴⁵. In **Portugal**, a survey of health practitioners identified heterosexist attitudes on issues such as same-sex marriage and reproduction, and a lack of professional knowledge in dealing with non-heterosexual women⁴⁶. As a result of such experiences, participants in a study conducted in **Finland** reported apprehensions about encountering stereotyping in healthcare and did not always disclose their sexual orientation, even when they considered it relevant for comprehensive treatment⁴⁷.

Actions from lesbian civil society organisations

As an effect of the underrepresentation of lesbians and the invisibility of their experiences of violence, good practices from public authorities targeting specifically the experience of harmful practices for lesbians are extremely rare. This is not an uncommon phenomenon, and it reflects a general “silos approach” in policy making that considers gender-related issues as separate and disconnected from LGBTIQ issues. On the other hand, EL*C collaborates with many organisations and groups who provide community-based support to the victims and survivors of harmful practices. Their practices can be a source of inspiration for public authorities.

These actions and initiatives include:

- Emergency lines for survivors of lesbophobic violence including domestic violence and “honour crime”, e.g. by the organisations Lesbiche Bologna and ALFI in **Italy**.
- Specific and community-based support for migrant lesbians, e.g. by the organisation Les Degommeuses in **France** and Artemisia refugiada y migrante in **Spain**.
- Monitoring of lesbophobic violence, e.g. the project Medus3 – Osservazioni sulla lesbofobia⁴⁸ in **Italy**, Observatoire de la lesbophobie⁴⁹ in France.
- Support, extraction, legal and psychological help for survivors of violence by the Queer Women of North Caucasus project in **Russia**⁵⁰.
- Dissemination of information on the health of lesbians, e.g. by the project “Tomber la coulotte”⁵¹ in **France**, and by the project “Salud integral de la mujeres diversas”⁵² of the Fundacion 26 Diciembre in **Spain**.
- Creation of database of gynaecologists and healthcare professionals trained in providing inclusive care and provision of such training, e.g. by the project “GotoGyneco”⁵³ in **Belgium**.

Those community-based support systems are fundamental to provide safe access to

45 Hirsch O, Löltgen K, Becker A. Lesbian womens' access to healthcare, experiences with and expectations towards GPs in German primary care. BMC Fam Pract. 2016;17:1–9.

46 De Oliveira JM, Almeida MJ, Nogueira C. Exploring medical personnel's discourses on the sexual health of lesbian and bisexual women in greater Lisbon, Portugal. Rev Colomb Psicol. 2014;23:297–309

47 Soinio JII, Paavilainen E, Kylmä JPO. Lesbian and bisexual women's experiences of health care: “Do not say, ‘husband’, say, ‘spouse.’” J Clin Nurs. 2020;29:94–106

48 See on their website: <https://www.retemeduse.it/osservatorio/>

49 See on their website: <https://www.observatoiredelesbophobie.org/>

50 See on their website: <http://www.qwnc.life/en/qwnc/>

51 See on their website: <https://www.sida-info-service.org/sexualite-coming-out-homophobie-panorama-des-appels-de-femmes-lesbiennes-bies-et-en-questionnement/>

52 See on their website: <https://fundacion26d.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/Guia-profesionales - Mujeres-Diversas.pdf>

53 See on their website: <https://gotogyneco.be>

key information, to organise support system that takes into consideration the specific vulnerabilities of survivors and to ensure that help reaches those more vulnerable in the lesbian communities. It is also worth noticing that these projects have developed despite a chronic lack of funding for services targeting lesbians⁵⁴, with governments providing only 8% of the total funding received by lesbian civil society organisations in the EU⁵⁵. These initiatives are therefore often possible thanks to private donations by community members and volunteer work by the activists. States should step up in this and concretely support and finance those efforts.

54 Lesbians organisations and groups in Europe and Central Asia survive with median annual budget of less than 5.000 euro while only 8% of global funds related to LGBTI project are directed toward LBQ women. See for example the research report "Vibrant yet under-resourced: the State of LBQ Movement" (https://www.mamacash.org/media/publications/astraea_mamacash_lbq_report_vdef.pdf) by the private foundation Astrea and Mamacash as well as the 2017-2018 report from the Global Philanthropy Project on Governamental and Philanthropic support for LGBTIQ Communities (https://web.archive.org/web/20211123085552/https://globalresourcesreport.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/GRR_2017-2018_Color.pdf) or the 2019-2020 version of the same report (https://web.archive.org/web/20230306174522/https://globalresourcesreport.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/GRR_2019-2020_EN_colour_double-page.pdf).

55 Data included in EL*C (2021), Resistance as a way of living: Lesbians through the COVID-19 pandemic, page 24 available at this link: <https://europeanlesbianconference.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/Covid-Report-final-1.pdf>

OBSERVATORY ON LESBOPHOBIA IN THE EU MEMBER STATES

Cases of lesbophobia violence collected by the EL*C Observatory and EL*C members

Cases/Data	Country	Type of violence
Xheni Karaj, leader of the LGBTI movement in Albania, has been subjected to numerous death and rape threats online. These followed a TV interview where she defended the right for two mothers to register their teens and both be recognised as mothers ⁵⁶ .	Albania	Violence against lesbian activist/ politician/journalist Online violence
Two women were killed by the ex-husband of one of the two, when he found out they were a couple ⁵⁷ .	Belgium	Violence by family members Lesbophobic murder
A pansexual woman was attacked in the Bruxelles city centre after the aggressors saw her kissing another woman. They then insulted her, calling her a “dirty dyke” and violently beat her ⁵⁸ .	Belgium	Violence in a public space
A group of 14-15-year-old students from Plovdiv that organised and carried out a violent attack on young girls of their perceived homosexual orientation. The boys’ goal was to “clean up the city garden” in Plovdiv of boys and girls with the ‘wrong’ sexual orientation. Several girls were viciously harassed, insulted, thrown eggs at, spat on, and finally beaten because of their appearance ⁵⁹ .	Bulgaria	Violence in a public space
Lesbians receive very often threatening messages from young men online. They ranged from “you’re abnormal” to “it’s shooting season, get ready!” ⁶⁰	Bulgaria	Online Violence

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56 <https://lgbti-ep.eu/2021/07/02/lesbophobic-violence-meps-address-questions-to-four-commissioners-for-clarification-on-follow-up-actions/>

57 <https://www.rtbef.be/article/double-femicide-a-gouvy-cest-un-homme-qui-a-tue-deux-femmes-parce-que-elles-se-desiraient-10824858>

58 <https://www.lesoir.be/323283/article/2020-09-06/lou-victime-dune-agression-lesbophobe-bruxelles-la-police-va-la-contacter-apres>

59 <https://balkaninsight.com/2020/10/02/plovdiv-attacks-highlight-bulgarias-unsolved-homophobia-problem>

60 Reported by EL*C Member Bilitis Foundation

The lesbian activist who organised Sofia pride march received a photo with a rifle and a gun and the words “see you tomorrow” on the night before the Pride march. ⁶¹	Bulgaria	Violence against lesbian activist/ politician/journalist
Rainbow Hub community center was attacked by far-right groups and the presidential candidate for the nationalist party punched one lesbian activist from Bilitis Foundation ⁶² .	Bulgaria	Violence against lesbian activist/ politician/journalist
A lesbian woman was violently attacked at a night club after having refused a man’s interest and disclosing that she was a lesbian ⁶³ .	Croatia	Violence in a public space
A young lesbian woman was raped with the explicit motive of ‘correcting’ and punishing her sexual orientation ⁶⁴ .	France	Violence in a public space Lesbophobic rape
The French group Les Dégommeuses has reported multiple victims of corrective rape against lesbians with migrant backgrounds and a masculine gender expression that make them easily identifiable in public as lesbians ⁶⁵ .	France	Lesbophobic murder
A study of the national institute of demographic studies and focusing on violence inside the family found that lesbian and bisexual girls were the two groups most affected by all types of intra-family violence (psychological, physical and sexual violence) compared to heterosexual girls and homosexual and bisexual boys ⁶⁶ .	France	Violence by family members
An event hosting Alice Coffin in June 2021, Board Member of the EL*C and well-known lesbian politician and activist, was interrupted in Rouen, France, by a group of men qualifying themselves as “The normals” by bursting on the scene and holding a sign that read “Don’t you like men, madame Coffin?”	France	Violence against lesbian activist/ politician/journalist

61 Reported by EL*C Member Bilitis Foundation

62 <https://bilitis.org/en/2022/04/05/attack-on-rainbow-hub-community-centre/>

63 ECHR, Sabalić v. Croatia, application number 50231/13, decision of the 14 January 2021

64 https://www.liberation.fr/societe/police-justice/pour-la-premiere-fois-un-viol-reconnu-comme-lesbophobe-aux-assises-20210528_7MQHANKA6JCQVFZ5PKOLADZ5AE/

65 Reported by EL*C Member Les Degommeuses

66 C. Hamel (2021) Violences intrafamiliales : les filles et les jeunes LGBT plus touchés, available at this link: https://juridique.defenseurdesdroits.fr/doc_num.php?explnum_id=19717

67 https://www.liberation.fr/checknews/slogans-et-banderoles-que-sest-il-passe-lors-de-lintervention-a-rouen-de-la-militante-alice-coffin-20210617_MAVVMQNZMNCFRFHGXGNVXCJX5B4/

<p>Alice Coffin has been on the receiving end of waves of lesbophobic hate speech, hateful public statements by politicians and by public figures as well as cyber violence. These include numerous lesbophobic and misogynistic insults and worrying death and rape threats. The latter obliged her to suspend her Twitter account and were considered serious enough to justify her being granted police protection⁶⁸.</p>	<p>France</p>	<p>Violence against lesbian activist/ politician/journalist</p> <p>Online violence</p>
<p>The French NGO SOS Homophobie reports 134 cases of lesbophobia, with almost a third of the cases concerning violence in the family, including kidnapping, violence, obligation to fast to be “purified”. Violence in the public spaces was registered in 1 case out of 6 and concerned most often lesbian couples, including insults, physical attacks and launch of bleach⁶⁹.</p>	<p>France</p>	<p>National Data</p>
<p>A woman was violently attacked at a bus stop in Paris while kissing her partner⁷⁰.</p>	<p>France</p>	<p>Violence in a public space</p>
<p>A young lesbian committed suicide after having been subject to continuous bullying and harassment because of her ethnic origin and her sexual orientation⁷¹.</p>	<p>France</p>	<p>Suicide as consequence of lesbophobic bullying/harassment</p>
<p>A lesbian woman was violently attacked by two men while walking in the street with her partner. The attackers insulted her for her gender expression and attacked her while claiming that “she looked like a man and should fight like a man”⁷²</p>	<p>France</p>	<p>Violence in a public space</p>
<p>A transgender man died in Münster after being violently beaten up during the local Pride for responding to lesbophobic hatred. The assailants insulted several women at the event, calling them “lesbian whores” and telling them to “piss off.” He intervened in their defence and he was subject to a vicious attack that tragically resulted in his death.⁷³</p>	<p>Germany</p>	<p>Violence against lesbian activist/ politician/journalist</p> <p>Transphobic murder</p>

68 <https://www.rfi.fr/en/france/20201119-feminist-advocacy-of-lesbian-genius-sends-france-into-frenzy-paris-lgbt-g%C3%A9nie-lesbien-book-separatism>

69 https://ressource.sos-homophobie.org/Rapports_annuels/rapport_LGBTIphobies_2022.pdf

70 <https://www.rtl.fr/actu/debats-societe/paris-une-femme-victime-d-une-agression-lesbophobe-enquete-ouverte-7795418099>

71 <https://france3-regions.francetvinfo.fr/grand-est/haut-rhin/mulhouse/affaire-dinah-deux-mois-apres-le-suicide-de-l-adolescente-la-procureure-fait-le-point-2371360.html>

72 <https://imazpress.com/actus-reunion/le-tampon-une-jeune-femme-victime-d-une-violente-agression-homophobe>

73 <https://www.dw.com/en/germany-25-year-old-transgender-man-dies-after-pride-event-attack/a-63003413>

<p>A lesbian couple was insulted and kicked out of a café after having kissed⁷⁴.</p>	<p>Germany</p>	<p>Violence in a public space</p>
<p>Several cases of anonymous online verbal abuse because of gender-related issues, including threats of physical and sexual violence⁷⁵.</p>	<p>Hungary</p>	<p>Online violence</p>
<p>The lesbian NGO Labrys published an educational book for children “Fairyland is for everyone” containing fairy tales aimed at explaining the existence of different kinds of families. A politician from the far-right fringe Our Homeland party tore the book apart and shredded it at a press conference, referring to it as “homosexual propaganda” while bookshops selling the book were subject to attacks and violence. Following the attacks of the far-right groups and politicians, the government obliged the publisher to add a warning that its stories contained ‘behaviour inconsistent with traditional gender roles</p>	<p>Hungary</p>	<p>Violence against lesbian activist/ politician/journalist Censorship by national government</p>
<p>Several episodes of lesbophobia were registered in the streets of Dublin, from stares and insults to negative reactions when lesbian couples kissed in public⁷⁶.</p>	<p>Ireland</p>	<p>Lesbophobia in the public space</p>
<p>Medus3, an observatory on lesbophobic violence launched by a coalition of lesbian organisations, is monitoring lesbophobic violence reported by the media. Between 2011-2021, they have registered around 10 cases per year of lesbophobic violence. An online questionnaire launched in 2022, registered 156 cases of lesbophobia in 2022⁷⁷.</p>	<p>Italy</p>	<p>National Data</p>
<p>A young lesbian was attacked and brutally murdered by a man after she refused to start a relationship with him⁷⁸.</p>	<p>Italy</p>	<p>Violence in a public space Lesbophobic murder</p>

74 <https://www.stern.de/panorama/wien--lesbisches-paar-nach-kuss-aus-caf%C3%A9-geworfen-3461090.html>

75 Reported by EL*C Member Labrisz Lesbian Organisation

76 <https://www.rte.ie/radio/radio1/clips/22140499/>

77 <https://www.retemeduse.it/comunicati-stampa/report-lesbofobia-2022/>

78 https://www.corriere.it/cronache/20_agosto_24/elisa-pomarelli-oggi-funerali-ragazza-lesbica-uccisa-2019-il-suo-omicidio-non-verra-giudicato-come-femminicidio-768c9726-e56d-11ea-b5c1-ffe7ca7d9551.shtml

<p>A 15-year-old lesbian was violently attacked in Turin by a man because she was wearing clothes judged too ‘masculine’⁷⁹.</p>	<p>Italy</p>	<p>Violence in a public space</p>
<p>A young woman was killed in a road accident caused by her brother. Just after the accident, the partner of the victim (present during the accident and who is a trans man) was assaulted by the brother. The latter declared that he did not want to kill his sister but needed to teach her a lesson because she had been “infected” by her trans partner⁸⁰.</p>	<p>Italy</p>	<p>Violence by family members Lesbophobic and transphobic murder</p>
<p>A young lesbian was subject, after the parents discovered her sexual orientation, to years of abuse, including physical and sexual violence perpetrated by her father⁸¹</p>	<p>Italy</p>	<p>Violence by family members Lesbophobic rape</p>
<p>Two doctors volunteering at an HIV center in Naples were threatened and insulted with lesbophobic slurs⁸².</p>	<p>Italy</p>	<p>Violence against lesbian activist/ politician/journalist</p>
<p>Two famous lesbian women were subject to waves of lesbophobic violence online after announcing the dates of their civil union⁸³.</p>	<p>Italy</p>	<p>Online violence</p>
<p>In Kazakhstan, Gulzada Serzhan and Zhanar Sekerbayeva, were violently attacked by a group of around 30 men at a feminist gathering they had organised with Feminita NGO, during which gender equality was discussed. Among others, they filmed and harassed participants, chanted religious calls and homophobic slurs, beat Zhanar and attacked Gulzada, destroying her possessions. The police present at the scene did not protect the activists and instead illegally detained them⁸⁴.</p>	<p>Kazakhstan</p>	<p>Violence against lesbian activist/ politician/journalist</p>

79 EL*C member ALFI – Associazione Lesbica Femminista Italiana

80 https://napoli.repubblica.it/cronaca/2020/09/13/news/sperona_e_uccide_la_sorella_nel_napoletano_ferito_il_compagno_trans-267102124/#:~:text=Su%20disposizione%20della%20Procura%20di.provocandone%20la%20caduta%20rivelatasi%20fatale

81 https://www.huffingtonpost.it/2019/03/07/meglio-una-figlia-morta-che-lesbica-il-padre-la-stupra-per-punirla-la-famiglia-la-perseguita-per-anni_a_23686577/

82 <https://www.fanpage.it/napoli/insulti-omofobi-a-due-dottoresse-a-napoli-stavano-eseguendo-test-hiv-gratis/>

83 <https://www.arcigaynapoli.org/2022/07/01/solidarieta-a-paola-turci-e-francesca-pascale-per-lattacco-lesbofobico-di-cui-sono-vittime/>

84 <https://lgbti-ep.eu/2021/07/02/lesbophobic-violence-meps-address-questions-to-four-commissioners-for-clarification-on-follow-up-actions/>

A lesbian couple was assaulted while leaving the Amsterdam pride after refusing to kiss in front of a group of men ⁸⁵ .	Netherlands	Violence in a public space
A woman was attacked and insulted by her Uber driver because in a ride from an LGBTI party, she kissed her girlfriend in the backseat of the car ⁸⁶	Netherlands	Violence in a public space
A lesbian couple was attacked in an asylum center in Amsterdam, the attackers insulted them and threw boiling water at them ⁸⁷ .	Netherlands	Violence in a public space
Clube Safo reported a rise in online hate speech and harassment in Portugal ⁸⁸ .	Portugal	Online violence
A woman was verbally and physically attacked in a Bucharest's metro station. The attackers insulted her for her gender expression and perceived sexual orientation, asked whether she was a man or a woman and said that they were coming for "the likes of you" ⁸⁹ .	Romania	Violence in a public space
Queer Women of North Caucasus and other lesbian groups from that same area report that the situation for LBT women is particularly difficult resulting in exposure to violence, rapes, threats, forced marriage when they are outed to the family. This violence is often perpetrated with impunity, and often even with the assistance of law enforcement ⁹⁰ .	Russian Federation	National Data
Several lesbian activists that attended the Europride in Belgrade were violently attacked after the march, that took place in a very tense context fuelled by the decision of the national government to ban the march and then allow it only few hours before the planned start of the demonstration ⁹¹ .	Serbia	Violence against lesbian activist/ politician/journalist

85 <https://nltimes.nl/2019/08/06/lesbian-couple-attacked-pride-amsterdam>

86 <https://nltimes.nl/2022/08/09/demonstration-anti-lgbtqia-violence-amsterdam-uber-assault>

87 <https://nltimes.nl/2020/08/11/lesbian-couple-attacked-boiling-water-asylum-center>

88 Reported by EL'C Member Clube Safo

89 <https://www.vice.com/ro/article/v7vya9/victima-abuz-metrou-bucuresti>

90 The Advocates for Human Rights, & Moscow Community Centre for LGBT+ Initiatives (2020), Russian Federation's Compliance with Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women: Suggested List of Issues Relating to Discrimination Based on Sexual orientation, Gender Identity, and Gender Expression. Available at: https://www.theadvocatesforhumanrights.org/Res/russia_cedaw_loi_lgbt_rights_final.pdf

91 https://twitter.com/Xheni_Karaj/status/1571404954153148416

<p>The lesbian journalist Irantzu Varela, and the magazine office for which she worked was attacked. The journalist was violently attacked multiple time, after having been called a “fucking lesbian” and a “whore”. The magazine office was, in the same days, vandalized twice by members of a far-right political party⁹².</p>	Spain	Violence against lesbian activist/ politician/journalist
<p>A lesbian couple was attacked in a Red Cross reception facility for asylum seekers by other residents because of their sexual orientation. The employee to which the couple reported the incident failed to address the problem directly and instead suggested that the couple should have avoided coming out to the other residents⁹³.</p>	Spain	Violence in a public space
<p>A lesbian trans woman was violently assaulted in the street of Bilbao⁹⁴</p>	Spain	Violence in a public space
<p>Journalist Irantzu Varela suffers a lesbophobic attack. Her neighbour punched her four times in the face while calling her a “fucking lesbian” and a “tomboy”⁹⁵.</p>	Spain	Violence against lesbian activist/ politician/journalist
<p>A lesbian couple was insulted because, pushed and punched. One of the women suffered various injuries and required medical assistance. Both filed a complaint with the police⁹⁶.</p>	Spain	Violence in a public space
<p>Four lesbian and bisexual women were punched and insulted with lesbophobic slurs by a group of men⁹⁷.</p>	Spain	Violence in a public space
<p>A lesbian couple was violently assaulted after publicly displaying affection while being sexually harassed and insulted.</p>	Spain	Violence in a public space

92 <https://www.publico.es/mujer/lgtbfobia-agresion-lesbofoba-periodista-irantzu-varela-lesbiana-mierda-has-contagiado.html>

93 Reported by EL*C Member Grupo Lesbico Feminista Artemisa, Refugiada y Migrante

94 <https://www.pikaramagazine.com/2019/06/agresion-sexual-transfoba-y-lesbofoba-a-una-medea/>

95 <https://www.pikaramagazine.com/2020/12/la-periodista-irantzu-varela-sufre-una-agresion-lesbofoba/>

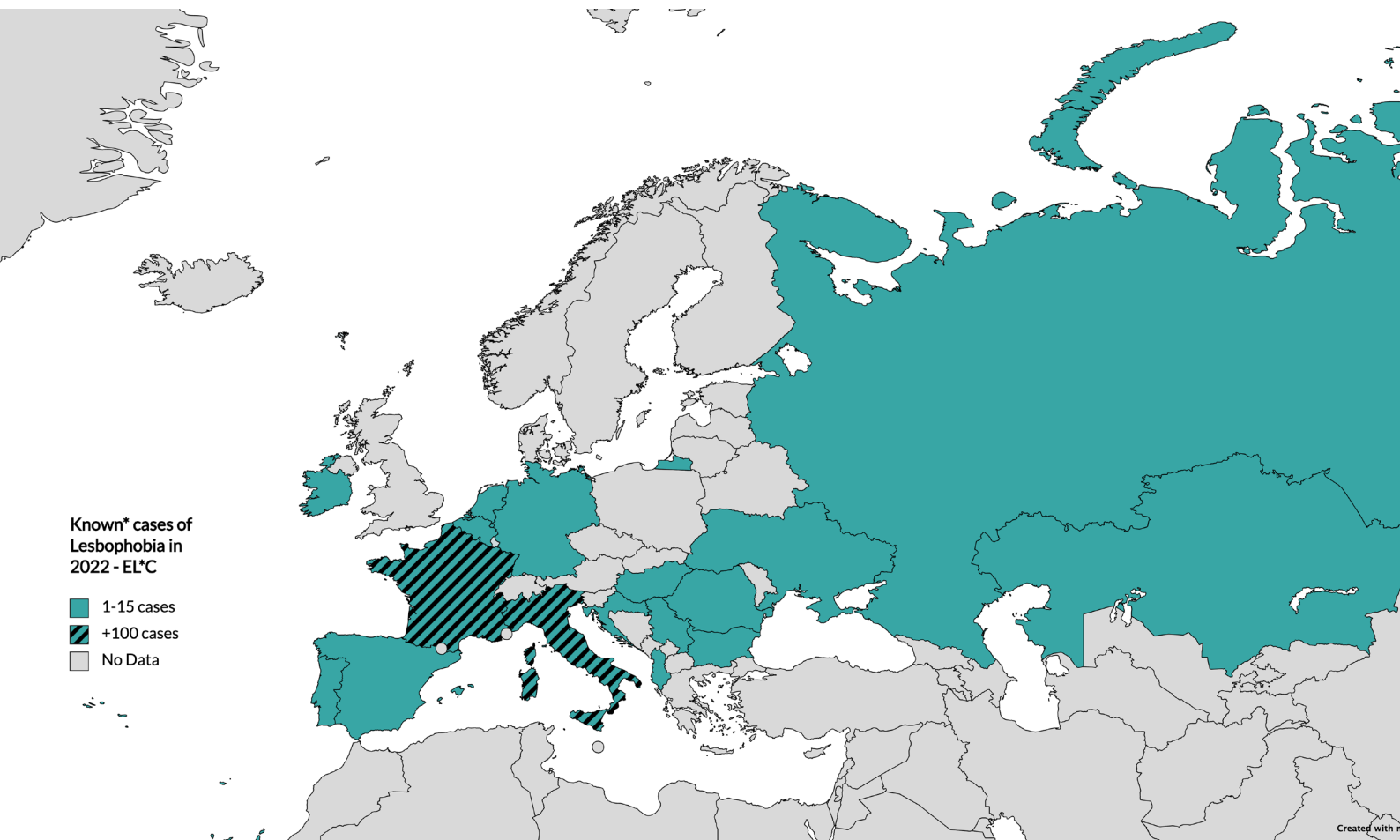
96 <https://www.diariodemallorca.es/sucesos/2021/08/30/pareja-lesbianas-denuncia-agresion-homofoba-56696663.html>

97 https://www.eldiario.es/catalunya/denuncian-agresion-homofoba-cuatro-mujeres-fiestas-badalona_1_8991449.html

Olena Shevchenko, a well-known lesbian activist and a leader of the LGBTI movement in Ukraine, was attacked with tear gas in April 2022 in Lviv, while unloading a truck with humanitarian aid for the shelters organised by the lesbian organisation Insight NGO⁹⁸.

Ukraine

Violence against lesbian activist/
politician/journalist



*Please note that the total number of cases reported does not reflect the extent of lesbophobic cases in the countries presented. The extent of reporting is influenced by each organization's capacity to register cases and the media's willingness to report on lesbophobia.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Explicitly identify lesbophobia as violence at the intersection of homophobia and misogyny and recognize that it is a type of violence with its own roots, patterns, modes, and consequences formed by this intersectional experience
2. Ensure that hate bias based on sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression are considered as aggravating circumstances in legislation aimed at criminalising gender-based violence, hate crime and hate speech.
3. Design and implement measures to combat harmful practices, especially FGM and “honour” crimes, taking into account that not all victims and survivors are heterosexual women and include concrete measure to avoid discrimination based on sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expressions by law enforcement, judicial authorities and support services.
4. Consider, in legislation concerning sexual violence, the increased risk for lesbians and include a specific attention to sexual harassment, rape and physical violence aimed at punishing or ‘correcting’ lesbians and women perceived as non-heterosexual.
5. Address, in legislation concerning domestic, intra-family violence and “honour crimes”, the specific vulnerabilities of lesbians and ensure that relevant services take into account their experience when providing support
6. Include, in the training of relevant professionals, notably law enforcement, judges and prosecutors, sensitization on the specific needs and challenges faced by lesbians that are victims of hate crime, gender-based violence, domestic violence and harmful practices.
7. Ensure that the training of relevant professionals, notably social services, and healthcare providers, include sensitization on the specific needs and challenges faced by lesbians that are survivors of harmful practice.
8. Design and implement measures to protect the rights of victims of violence without discrimination on the basis, among others, of sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression.
9. Adapt the psychological support and training of healthcare professionals and structures to the realities and difficulties experienced by lesbians and facilitate the reporting process of structures and health professionals who have demonstrated lesbophobic behaviour.
10. Ensure that all incidents of gender-based violence and domestic violence against lesbians are properly and effectively recorded, that disaggregated statistics on hate crimes, hate speech and discrimination are collected, analysed, and disseminated, and that specific studies and research on this phenomenon are funded.

11. Organise public campaigns, in collaboration with lesbian organisations, designed to counter violence experienced by lesbians in public spaces, in the family and online, and to encourage them to report such incidents to law enforcement and/or dedicated associations.
12. Encourage the private sector, especially online platforms, to ensure that the word 'lesbian' is not automatically associated with derogatory or hypersexualized and harmful content, especially in the design of measures intended to reduce illegal and harmful gender-related online content.
13. Encourage the media to review its approach to lesbophobic gender-based violence and hate crime, ensuring that lesbian identities of the victims are not erased when relevant to the motive of the crime and pay particular attention to the vocabulary used, the treatment of information and limit the appeal of sensationalism.
14. Ensure adequate, accessible, and reliable funding for projects and activities implemented by organisations focused on and led by lesbians, including smaller structures, and that are designed to counter lesbophobic rhetoric and narrative, to provide training to law enforcement and judicial authorities, as well as to ensure assistance and support for the victims of this violence.



CONTACT INFORMATION

Email: info@lesbiangenius.net

Web: www.europeanlesbianconference.org / www.lesbiangenius.net

Twitter: @EuroLesbianCon

Facebook: fb.com/EurocentralasianLesbianCommunity

Instagram: @elc_lesbiancommunity

TikTok: @elc_lesbiantok

