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1. Background: The SOGICA project¹

This report discusses the data gathered through two surveys carried out in the context of the SOGICA project. SOGICA – Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Claims of Asylum: A European human rights challenge – is a four-year (2016-2020) research project funded by the European Research Council (ERC) that explores the social and legal experiences of people across Europe claiming international protection on the basis of their sexual orientation or gender identity (SOGI).

SOGI-related human rights violations have been the basis of asylum claims for more than thirty years. Although there are no reliable statistics available, it is likely that SOGI asylum claims now amount to a significant number across Europe each year. These asylum claims are often treated in an insensitive manner, that is, based on inappropriate legal, cultural and social notions. SOGI claims are also of a striking complexity and significance for the purposes of assessing the efficiency and fairness of an asylum adjudication system.

Focusing on Germany, Italy and the UK as case studies, and analysing how SOGI related claims are addressed at European level – covering the European Union (EU) and Council of Europe (CoE) – the project seeks to determine how European asylum systems can treat asylum claims based on the claimant's SOGI more fairly. As part of developing a theoretically and empirically-grounded comparative and comprehensive picture of the status and experiences of this specific group of asylum claimants, two surveys were carried out. Although the SOGICA project focuses on three country case studies, these online surveys included participants from across Europe, contributing to a broader understanding of the situation of SOGI claimants in Europe. These surveys, alongside a range of other research methods (including semi-structured interviews, focus groups, judicial hearing observations, freedom of information

¹ Our deepest gratitude goes to the 239 people who took the time to fill in our surveys. Many thanks also to Natalie Pearson for helping us set up the survey, our placement student Marie Pritchard for giving useful feedback on this report and helping with the layout, and Charlotte Shmoon for assisting with formatting of the final version.



requests and documentary analysis), aim to provide the necessary evidence base to improve current law, policy and decision-making, ultimately contributing to the development of a more just and humane asylum process for individuals seeking refuge in Europe on the basis of SOGI.

This report complements a range of other outputs, including journal articles, blog posts, media pieces, videos, and a book, all of which can be found on the project's website.

For more information, see:

- <http://www.sogica.org>
- Ferreira, 'Sexuality and citizenship in Europe: socio-legal and human rights perspectives', 2018, *Social & Legal Studies*, Vol. 27(2), 253–265.

For a glossary of key terms, see <http://www.sogica.org/en/the-project/glossary/>

For the full list of outputs, see <http://www.sogica.org/en/publications/>



2. About the Surveys

Between August 2018 and March 2019, **SOGI asylum claimants and refugees in Europe, and those supporting them**, were invited to complete an online questionnaire about their experiences with SOGI asylum procedures and wider social experiences. There were two separate surveys: one for claimants,² and one for people who work with or support them.³ These surveys had the following aims: to provide some quantitative data and further qualitative material across Europe to complement the other research methods we employed; to provide complete anonymity to people who did not feel comfortable participating in individual interviews or focus groups, but wanted the chance to have their voices included in the research; to broaden the opportunities for contributing to the research to the many individuals who expressed an interest in the project and could not be accommodated throughout the fieldwork, both in the case study countries and in other countries.

We developed the questionnaires according to what is often described in the literature as a 'model questionnaire', including an introduction, body of survey and demographic questions. A first draft of the surveys was discussed with our Advisory Board, to make sure we were asking the right questions for gathering new and useful data about SOGI claims in Europe. The two surveys had some sections that were common and some that were different. The survey for claimants asked questions about respondents' experiences with their asylum claims as well as life outside of the legal process, and some demographic questions. The supporters' survey also included demographic questions as well as information about the location, work, and organisation of the respondents. The supporters' survey also asked respondents about their views on SOGI claims and appeals and life for SOGI claimants outside of the legal process from the perspective of their personal or work experience. In addition, the survey included some questions about the emotional and physical effects of working with people who may have experienced persecution and torture. In both surveys most of the questions were 'closed

² http://www.sogica.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/Qualtrics-survey_claimants.pdf.

³ http://www.sogica.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/Qualtrics-survey_supporters.pdf.

questions'. In other words, participants were able to choose from a range of options, but with the option to provide additional responses in free text form. Some questions had a sliding scale from one to ten (for instance, 'how easy/difficult is it...'). The surveys were made available in different languages,⁴ and participants were offered a document with a range of answers to potential queries they may have had about the surveys.⁵

Information about our research and links to the online survey were distributed through our website, social media, SOGICA's quarterly newsletters, our Project Friends,⁶ LGBTIQ+ and refugee mailing lists, and our professional networks. In total, **157 supporters and 82 claimants** filled in the online surveys, but not everyone answered all the questions.

The surveys were made available through Qualtrics Survey Software, which provides statistics based on the number of respondents who answers each question. Therefore, except for the demographics, the other sections of this report refer to the number of respondents who answered each question, not the total of survey respondents. We did not carry out any bivariate and multivariate analysis or statistical tests to measure the correlation between variables. For our purposes, univariate analysis (looking at only one variable at a time) was sufficient.

For more information, see:

- <http://www.sogica.org/en/fieldwork/>
- Chapter 2 in Danisi, Dustin, Ferreira and Held, *Queering Asylum in Europe* (Springer 2020).

⁴ The survey for claimants was available in Arabic, German, English, Italian, French, Spanish and the survey for supporters was available in English, German, Italian and Spanish. Translation was offered through Google Translate (owing to limited resources).

⁵ http://www.sogica.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/Qualtrics-survey_information.pdf.

⁶ <http://www.sogica.org/en/the-project/project-friends/>.

3. Key Findings

All themes explored in this report are analysed in greater detail in the project's other outputs, especially in the book *Queering Asylum in Europe: Legal and Social Experiences of Seeking International Protection on Grounds of Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity* (Danisi, Dustin, Ferreira, Held, Springer 2020). Themes raised by answers to surveys coincide to a great extent with the themes raised by our other methods and analysed in the project's book and other outputs.

Here is a summary of the key survey findings:

Demographics:

- The two European-wide surveys that were filled in by 82 SOGI claimants and 157 supporters reached a **diverse sample** of respondents in terms of gender identity, sexual orientation, religious identity and educational background.
- The majority of SOGI claimants (54%) who participated in the survey were claiming asylum in Germany, Italy and the UK and also the majority of supporters (65%) who filled in the survey worked in these countries. However, the issues addressed in this report relate to 16 other European countries, where respondents claimed asylum, or supporters worked or were based.⁷ SOGI claimants came from 23 different countries,⁸ demonstrating the wide-spread nature of persecution on grounds of SOGI.

Legal Process:

- Approximately one third of claimants **did not know** that they could claim asylum because of sexual orientation or gender identity when they arrived in Europe.

⁷ Austria, Belgium, Cyprus, Denmark, France, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Malta, Norway, Portugal, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland and the Netherlands.

⁸ Algeria, Armenia, Bangladesh, Cameroon, Egypt, El Salvador, Iran, Jamaica, Lebanon, Libya, Malaysia, Morocco, Nigeria, North Macedonia, Oman, Pakistan, Russia, South Africa, Sierra Leone, Syria, Turkey, Uganda and Zimbabwe.

- More than one third of claimants had had their asylum claims **refused**; 39% received some form of international protection, but almost one third of them only secured this status by **appealing** against a negative decision.
- According to the claimants, approximately one third of them saw their claims **refused** because the decision-maker did not believe their sexual orientation or gender identity was as stated. Supporters also believed that **credibility** was the main problem for SOGI claimants in the countries where they worked. More than half the supporter respondents perceived **differences** in the way that different SOGI-based asylum claims were treated by decision-makers, and believed that country of origin (62%), cultural background (53%), demeanour (clothes and mannerisms) (49%), educational background (46%), religion (45%), and gender (44%) were the main factors other than SOGI that played a role in decision-making for LGBTIQ+ people claiming asylum.
- The quality of **country of origin information (COI)** was also amongst one of the main concerns raised by our respondents: 40% of claimant respondents reported that the most common reason for refusal was that the decision-maker did not believe they were persecuted or at risk of persecution in their country of origin, connected with the fact that 48% of supporter respondents found that COI is the third most significant problem in SOGI claims.
- Almost half the claimants did not have a **legal advisor or representative** to help them with their asylum application and more than half the supporters believed that adequate and affordable legal services was unavailable for SOGI claimants.
- A large proportion – 39% – of claimants had to wait for more than six months for their main interview after the first/screening interview. Amongst the claimants who lodged an appeal against a negative decision, more than half had to wait more than six months for their appeal hearing.
- More than a third of claimants felt the asylum **interviewer** did not listen to their story and ask the right questions and only around one third believed the **appeal** gave them a fair opportunity to present their case.
- Sixty-four per cent of supporters found **interpreting services** available to SOGI

claimants were inappropriate and inadequate.

- Approximately one fifth of claimants were **detained** in the country where they had claimed asylum (of these, 8% were detained for more than six months).

Life Outside the Legal Process:

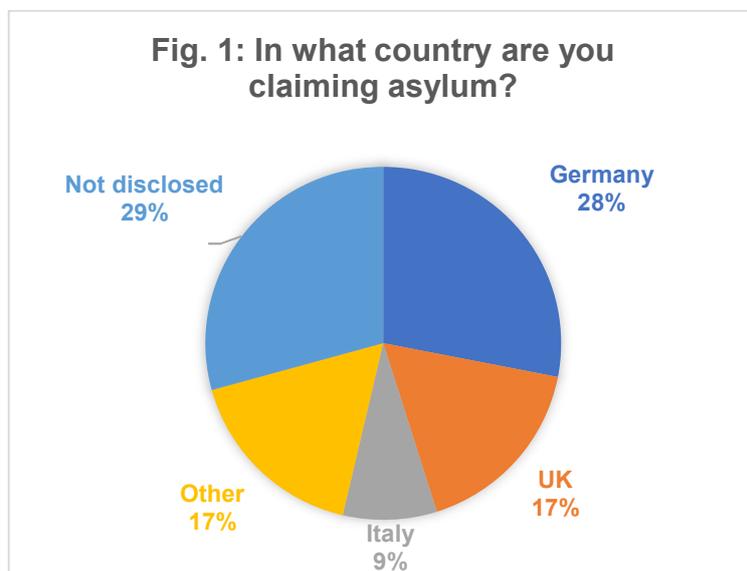
- More than half the claimants said that they had experienced **discrimination** in the host country and further elaborations suggested that this was on different grounds such as gender identity, sexual orientation or 'race' (or a combination of these). Eighty-three per cent of supporters stated that SOGI claimants they knew had experienced discrimination in the country where they claimed asylum.
- Despite the fear of experiencing homophobia and transphobia in their surroundings, the majority of claimants were open **about their SOGI** in their host country most of the time or sometime (only 7% were not open at all).
- 41% percent did not feel safe in their **accommodation**, be it in reception and accommodation centres, private rented accommodation, staying with family or friends, or other types of accommodation. The majority of supporters (65%) believed that specific accommodation for LGBTIQ+ claimants was a good idea.
- More than half the claimants had **physical or mental health** problems related to the persecution they experienced or the process of claiming asylum. From the claimants who said they received **support**, 59% were supported by LGBTIQ+ organisations.
- The majority of supporters (76%) were emotionally or physically **affected by their work** with people who may have experienced torture and persecution, but a third of them did not have counselling or other support available to them.

For more information, see Danisi, Dustin, Ferreira and Held, *Queering Asylum in Europe* (Springer 2020).

4. The SOGICA Survey for LGBTIQ+ People Claiming Asylum in Europe

4.1. Demographics

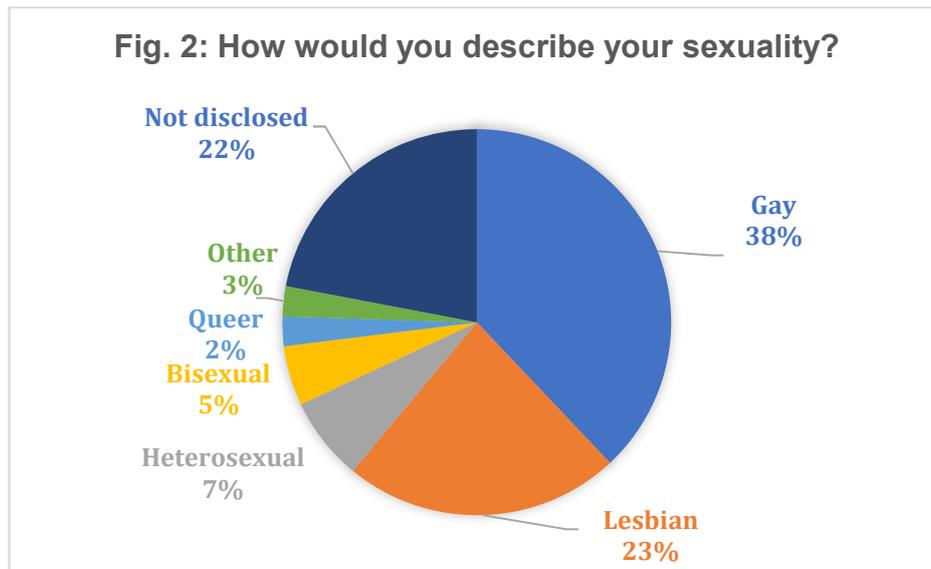
Perhaps unsurprisingly, the majority of the 82 SOGI claimants who answered the survey were claiming asylum in the three SOGICA case countries, as it was here that the SOGICA team had the most contacts (Fig. 1). It is likely that some of the SOGICA interview participants also participated in the survey. However, we also reached respondents in many other **European countries**. Seventeen percent of the respondents were claiming asylum in Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland and the Netherlands. Unfortunately, we do not know in which European country 29% of the respondents claimed asylum, as these respondents did not disclose that information.



Most respondents were from Uganda (16%), followed by Syria (9%), Nigeria (7%), and Jamaica (4%). Other **countries of origin** (28%) were Algeria, Armenia, Bangladesh, Cameroon, Egypt, El Salvador, Iran, Lebanon, Libya, Malaysia, Morocco, North Macedonia, Oman, Pakistan, Russia, South Africa, Sierra Leone, Turkey and Zimbabwe.⁹

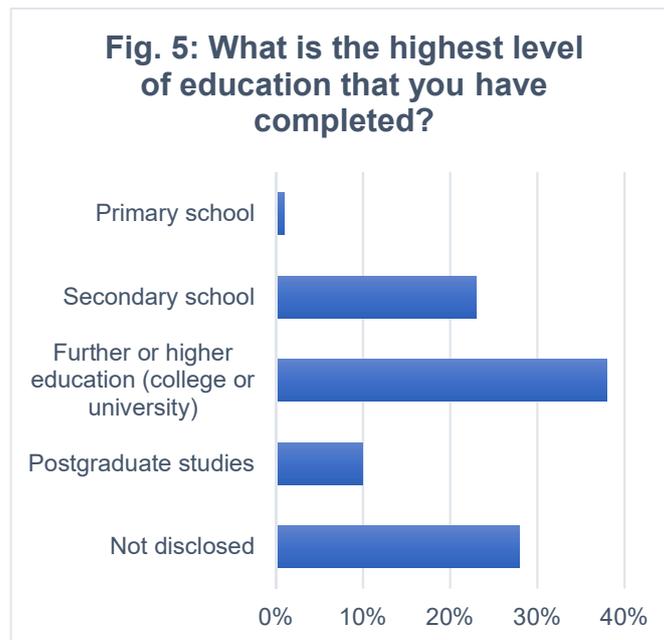
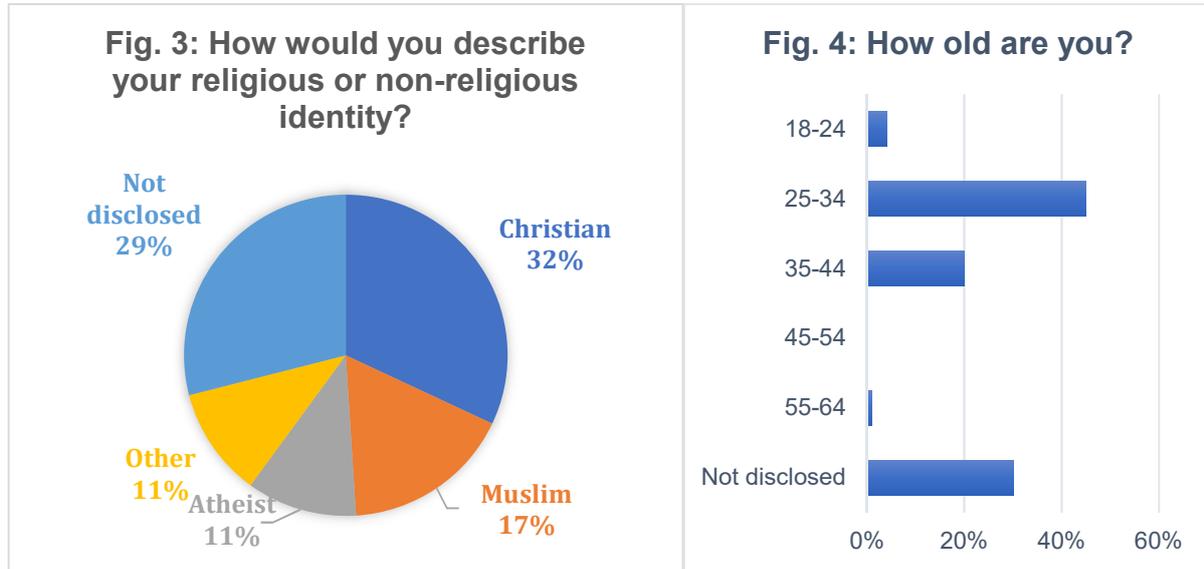
⁹ Thirty-six per cent of respondents did not disclose their country of origin.

Regarding **gender and gender identity**, the survey respondents identified as follows: 34% described their gender or gender identity as male, 23% as female, 7% as trans, 5% as queer, and 1% as ‘other’. As for their **sexual orientation**, see Fig. 2:¹⁰



The majority of respondents (72%) preferred not to disclose or did not answer the question about how they would describe their **ethnic identity or origin**, while 13% identified themselves as Arab, 6% as Black, 5% as North African, and 4% as ‘other’. In terms of **religious identity, age and educational background**, the majority were Christian (Fig. 3), between 25-34 years old (45%, Fig. 4), and their highest level of education completed was further or higher education (38%, Fig. 5).

¹⁰ Thirty per cent of respondents preferred not to disclose or did not provide information about their gender or gender identity.



When asked if they considered themselves to have a **disability**, 52% of respondents answered ‘no’, 7% ‘yes’, and 41% preferred not to disclose this information or did not answer. Forty-one per cent of respondents were single, 22% were in a relationship, 4% were married or in a civil partnership, 2% separated or divorced, and 31% preferred not to disclose or did not answer about their **family or marital status**. Fifty-two per cent did not have any **children**, while 16% had.¹¹

¹¹ Thirty-two preferred not to disclose this information or did not answer.

4.2. Experiences with the Legal Process¹²

The Asylum Claim

Sixty-three per cent of respondents claimed asylum or protection immediately after they arrived in the country where they made their claim, while 18% claimed it within three months, and 19% after three months.

'I [sought] asylum immediately [after] I arrived [in] Italy. I came in from Libya [in a] boat.'

Gay Nigerian asylum claimant in Italy who was appealing against a refusal.

'I claimed asylum within a month as I didn't know before the entry. But after failing to get a job because I didn't have the national insurance number, I went to [the] Home Office and I was arrested and from there I was asked why I left my country. I didn't have any idea about the asylum process.'

Gay Ugandan refugee in the UK.

'I claim[ed] after several years of [being] part of [the] LGBT community because I didn't know about this law.'

Gay Pakistani asylum claimant in the UK.

These figures and quotes illustrate the wide range of experiences that SOGI asylum claimants have in terms of applying for asylum. The majority applied at an early stage of their stay in the host country, which, while contributing to their 'credibility', meant that they had little time to gather the necessary evidence for their case and seek legal advice. Conversely, the significant number of claimants filing an asylum claim at a later stage may have benefitted

¹² The percentages in this and the following section refer to the number of respondents who answered each question, not the total of the survey respondents (82 people).

from having had more time to collect evidence and prepare their claim with legal advice, but they risked having their credibility called into question on the basis of making a ‘late’ claim.

For more information, see Chapters 5 (Section 4), 6 (Sections 1 and 2) and 7 (Sections 4 and 5) in Danisi, Dustin, Ferreira and Held, *Queering Asylum in Europe* (Springer 2020).

The Dublin Regulation

Seventeen per cent of respondents had been returned to a ‘first country of asylum’ or ‘safe country of passage’ under the Dublin Regulation.¹³

*‘It was very bad to return to a place I didn’t feel safe in, it was Greece in my case.’
MtF trans Egyptian refugee in Greece.*

Although a minority, there are still a significant number of SOGI asylum claimants affected by the Dublin system and the problematic transfers that come with it. This often entails negative consequences both in terms of legal adjudication of the asylum claim and social well-being and integration.

For more information, see:

- Chapter 6 (Section 7) in Danisi, Dustin, Ferreira and Held, *Queering Asylum in Europe* (Springer 2020);
- Ferreira, ‘Reforming the Common European Asylum System: enough rainbow for queer asylum seekers?’, *GenIUS – Rivista di studi giuridici sull’orientamento sessuale e sull’identità di genere*, 2018, No. 2, 25–42.

¹³ The Dublin Regulation sets out the relevant criteria to determine which EU Member State is responsible for adjudicating an asylum application: Regulation (EU) No 604/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 26 June 2013 establishing the criteria and mechanisms for determining the Member State responsible for examining an application for international protection lodged in one of the Member States by a third-country national or a stateless person, OJ L 180, 29.6.2013, p. 31–59.

Awareness of SOGI Asylum

Sixty-two per cent of respondents knew they could claim asylum because of sexual orientation or gender identity when they arrived, while 31% did not know, and 7% were not sure.

'I was told in Turkey that in Europe I [could] ask for asylum based on my trans issues.'

MtF trans Egyptian refugee in Greece.

'I didn't know whether you could even say it to anyone. I didn't know that you could seek asylum on sexual orientation. After what happened to me in Uganda, couldn't think that anyone or any government supports LGBTQI people.'

Gay Ugandan refugee in the UK.

More than a third of respondents did not know or were not sure that it was possible to file an asylum claim on grounds of SOGI after arriving to an EU Member State. This debunks the myth of SOGI asylum claimants carefully choosing 'queer havens' as their destination and seriously jeopardises their chances of filing an asylum claim in a timely and well-informed manner.

For more information, see:

- Chapter 5 (Section 4.1) in Danisi, Dustin, Ferreira and Held, *Queering Asylum in Europe* (Springer 2020);
- Danisi, '[What 'Safe Harbours' are there for sexual orientation and gender identity asylum claims? A human rights reading of international law of the sea and refugee law](#)', *Genius – Rivista di studi giuridici sull'orientamento sessuale e sull'identità di genere*, 2018, No. 2, 9–24.

Reasons for Claiming Asylum

Sixty-five per cent of respondents gave their sexual orientation as reason for claiming asylum, while 18% gave their gender identity, and 17% other reason.

'I gave sexual orientation because am a lesbian and in Uganda it's forbidden because that's where I come from. I have suffered for being a lesbian since I was young up to my age now.'

Lesbian Ugandan asylum claimant in Germany who was appealing against a refusal.

'I am coming from Pakistan... Pakistan is [an] Islamic country... I don't get respect from society and family... They want to kill me... because I am transgender, they think I am boy...'

MtF trans Pakistani asylum claimant in Germany.

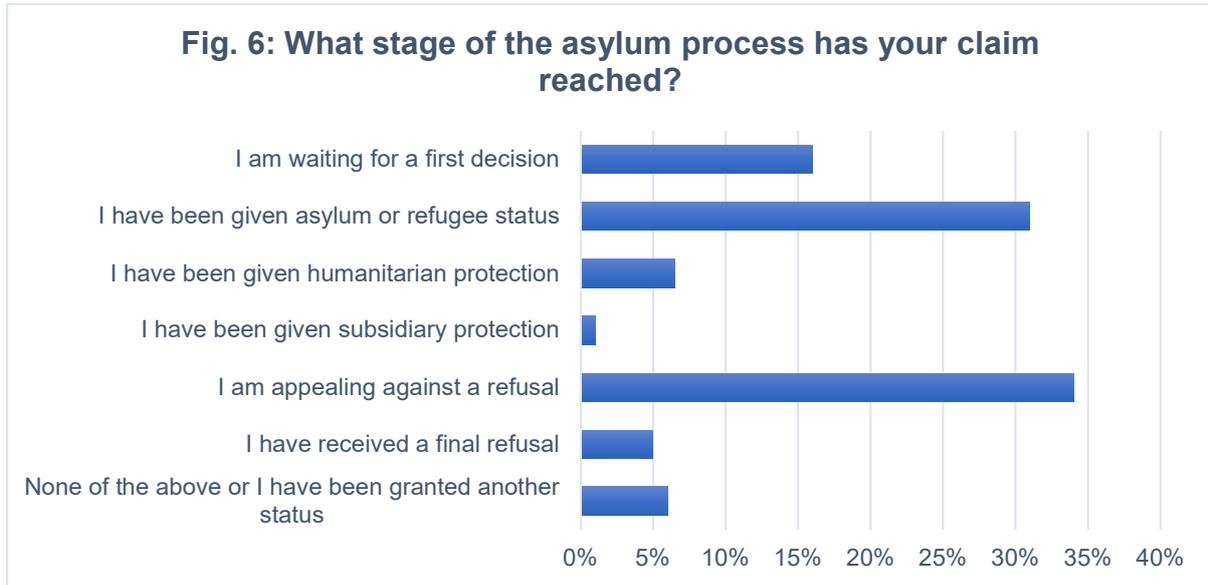
Although different grounds of the Refugee Convention are likely to apply to the experiences of SOGI claimants, these asylum claims are generally reduced to membership of a 'particular social group', rather than (also) using other Refugee Convention grounds such as political opinion or religious belief.

For more information, see Chapter 7 (Section 2.1) in Danisi, Dustin, Ferreira and Held, *Queering Asylum in Europe* (Springer 2020).

The Asylum Process

Eighty-five per cent of respondents claimed asylum on their own, while 8% did it with a partner, and 7% with another or other family members.

Sixteen per cent of respondents were waiting for a first decision on their claim, while 31% had been granted asylum or refugee status, 7% humanitarian protection, and 1% subsidiary protection. Thirty-four per cent were appealing against a refusal, and 5% had received a final refusal.



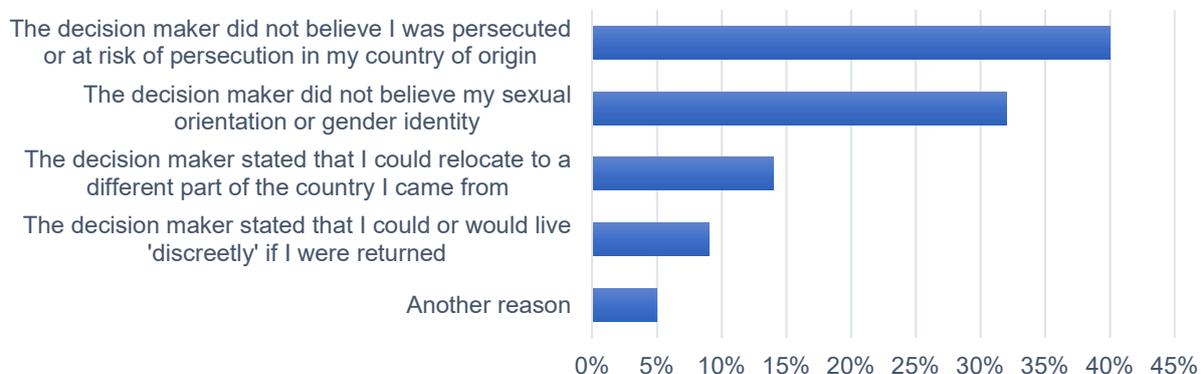
These figures are broadly in line with the limited SOGI asylum statistics and estimates available.

For more information, see Chapter 4 (Sections 1 and 5) in Danisi, Dustin, Ferreira and Held, *Queering Asylum in Europe* (Springer 2020).

Amongst the respondents who had been granted asylum or some form of international protection, 69% were granted that status when they made their first application for asylum, while 31% had their first application refused and were granted legal protection when they appealed.

Amongst the respondents who had their application refused at any time, the most common reason for refusal was that the decision-maker did not believe they were persecuted or at risk of persecution in their country of origin (40%), followed by the decision-maker's disbelief in the claimant's stated sexual orientation or gender identity (32%). A significant number of claims were also refused on the basis that there was an 'internal relocation alternative' (14%) and that the claimant could return and be safe by living 'discreetly' (9%).

Fig. 7: If your application has been refused at any time, what was the reason?



For more information, see:

- Chapter 7 in Danisi, Dustin, Ferreira and Held, *Queering Asylum in Europe* (Springer 2020);
- Dustin and Held, 'In or out? A queer intersectional approach to "particular social group" membership and credibility in SOGI asylum claims in Germany and the UK', *GenIUS – Rivista di studi giuridici sull'orientamento sessuale e sull'identita' di genere*, 2018, No. 2, 74–87.

Legal Representation and Aid

Fifty-four per cent of respondents had a legal advisor or representation to help them with their application, while 46% did not. Forty-three per cent were happy with the legal advice or representation they had.

Most respondents had their legal representation paid for by the state or through legal aid (48%), followed by those who paid for it themselves (33%), and the cases in which it was provided for free or 'pro bono' by the legal representative (19%).

'By that time I didn't know that I would need one [legal representative] because I was so sure of myself but after my rejection I then found a lawyer. So now I have one who advised me to appeal.'

Lesbian Ugandan asylum claimant in Germany who was appealing against a refusal.

'The lawyer never really talked to me, I couldn't communicate with her on my own, the translator did not speak English well, so till this day I have no idea what was truly communicated from my part, or exactly what her knowledge or experience were in such cases. I feel cheated and disrespected.'

FtM trans Iranian refugee in Hungary.

'At first I had a lawyer called [lawyer's name] in [name of town] but he was not reliable enough but I paid him up to 800 euros myself from my asylum money. So, I complained about him to my mentor at [organisation's name] one gay organization where I am a member. [Organisation's name] recommended me to a new lawyer called [lawyer's name] who requested for about 1000 euros. [Organisation's name] helped me pay the lawyer an amount of 300 euros as the starting fee and as for now I am still paying the new lawyer till today an amount of 50 euros every month.'

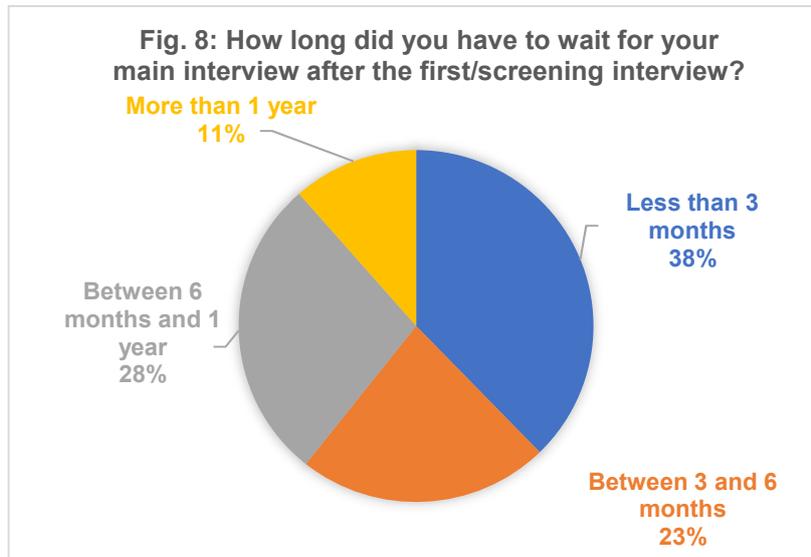
Gay Ugandan asylum claimant in Germany who was appealing against a refusal.

The impact of the quality of legal representation on the likelihood of success of an asylum claim has been well documented and analysed. It is therefore very concerning that almost half of respondents did not benefit from legal advice or representation, and that more than half had to pay for legal services or depend on pro bono legal advice and representation.

For more information, see Chapter 6 (Section 2) in Danisi, Dustin, Ferreira and Held, *Queering Asylum in Europe* (Springer 2020).

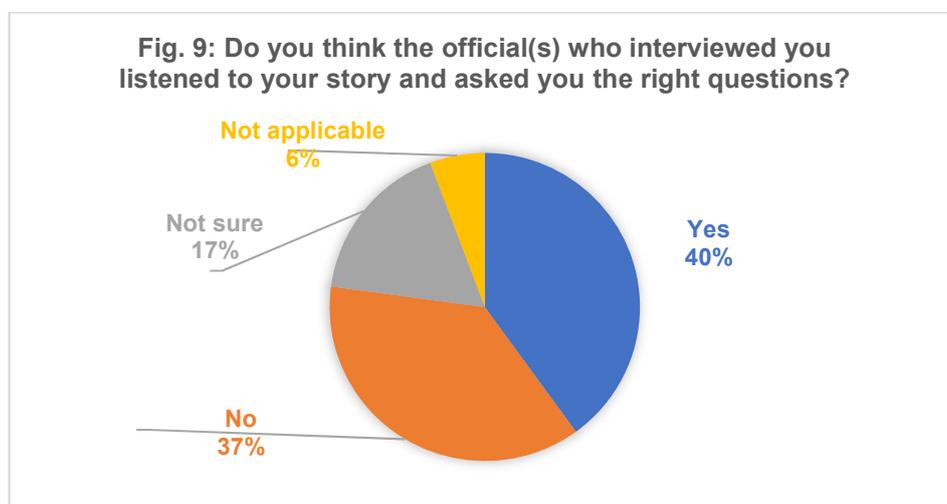
Main Interview

Thirty-eight per cent of respondents waited less than three months for their main interview after the first/screening interview, while 23% waited between three and six months, 28% between six months and a year, and 11% more than a year.



It is concerning that 39% of respondents had been waiting for more than six months for the main interview. This suggests that asylum authorities are working beyond capacity and are under-resourced. While it is important to ensure that decision-makers take the necessary time to produce good quality decisions, it should also be possible to carry out more timely adjudication.

Forty per cent of respondents considered that the official(s) who interviewed them listened to their story and asked the right questions, while 37% did not think so, and 17% were not sure.



The main interview is a crucial moment in the asylum adjudication, and it is imperative that officials are well prepared and adopt a sensitive and culturally appropriate line of questioning. That is clearly still not the case in a very significant number of SOGI claims.

Respondents also had negative experiences in terms of how they were treated overall:

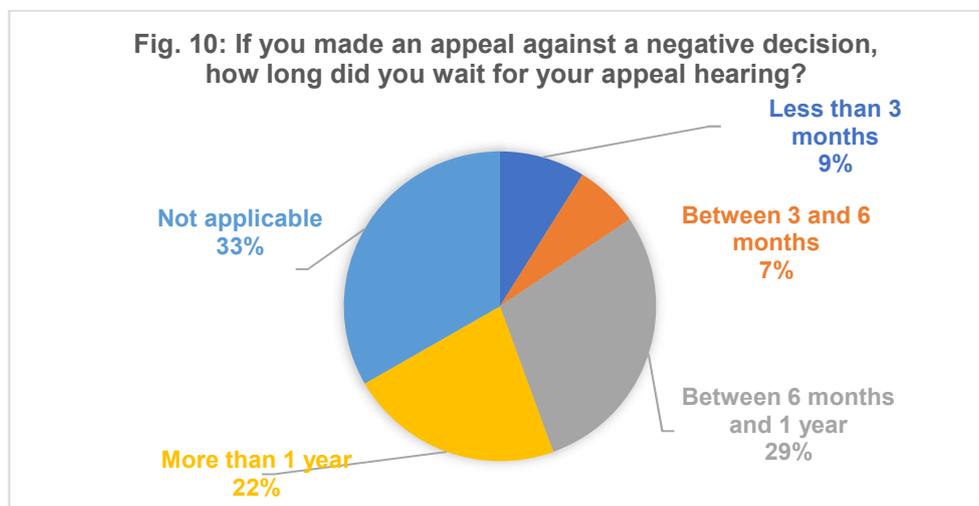
'In Sweden even though I told them that I am a trans woman and my pronoun is she and I gave them documents that I am transitioning they still referred to me as a man in all the papers they were sending to me. The migration board there is chaos and transphobic.'

Trans woman from North Macedonia in Sweden.

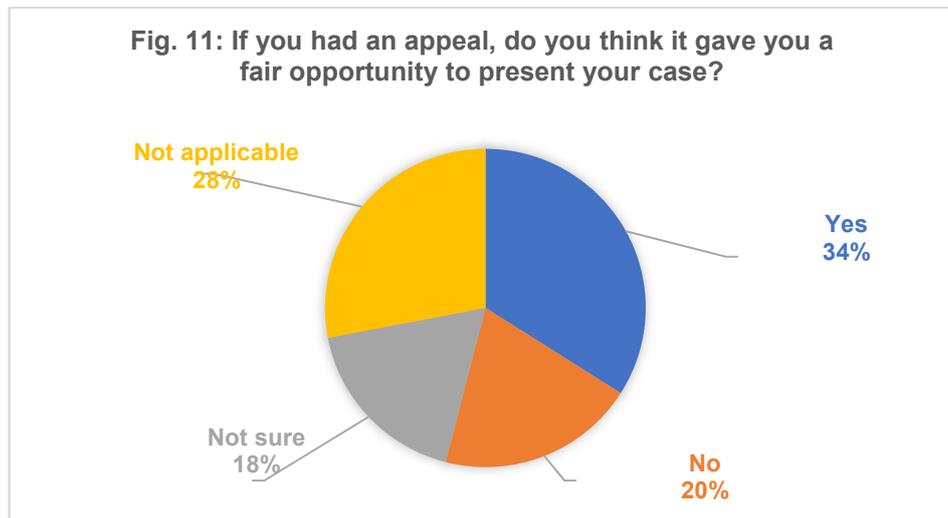
For more information, see Chapters 6 (Sections 1 and 3) and 7 (Section 4) in Danisi, Dustin, Ferreira and Held, *Queering Asylum in Europe* (Springer 2020).

Appeals

Amongst the respondents who lodged an appeal against a negative decision, 9% waited for less than three months for their appeal hearing, 7% between three and six months, 29% between six months and one year, and 22% for more than one year.



Thirty-four per cent considered that the appeal gave them a fair opportunity to present their case, while 20% do not think so, and 18% were not sure.



More than half of respondents waited for more than six months for their appeal hearing and only around a third believed the appeal gave them a fair opportunity to present their case. These figures leave considerable scope for improvement both in terms of procedural speed and substantive fairness of the appeal system.

For more information, see Chapter 6 (Section 4) in Danisi, Dustin, Ferreira and Held, *Queering Asylum in Europe* (Springer 2020).

Interpreters

Seventy-two per cent of respondents had an interpreter for one or more of their interviews or court hearings. Forty-three per cent were happy with the interpreting service, while 21% were not happy with it, and 19% were not sure.¹⁴

¹⁴ Seventeen per cent answered 'not applicable' to this question.

'[I had] a Nigerian lady [as my interpreter] and she is a very bad lady because she is against my [sexual] orientation!!'

Gay Nigerian asylum claimant in Italy who was appealing against a refusal.

'Although [the interpreter] was from Uganda, we don't come from [the] same tribe. She was not saying things as they said to her and when I tried to correct her that's when I was told that I keep on changing my story. I didn't trust her as most Ugandans don't like gay people. And as I was telling her what happened, she could tell back in my language that you can't say that.'

Gay Ugandan refugee in the UK.

'The translator at my interviews was a man from Afghanistan, so he didn't understand my Farsi well, which lead to some misunderstandings, and who knows what else was miscommunicated.'

FtM trans Iranian refugee in Hungary.

The poor quality of at least some interpretation services in the context of asylum, including on account of lack of linguistic skills and personal prejudice, is an issue that has been increasingly raised in scholarly and third sector literature. This data confirms these issues and widespread concern in this regard.

For more information, see Chapter 6 (Section 6) in Danisi, Dustin, Ferreira and Held, *Queering Asylum in Europe* (Springer 2020).

Detention

Seventy-seven per cent of respondents were not detained in the country where they claimed asylum, while 15% were detained for less than a month, and 8% for more than six months.

'It was overcrowded. No showering possibility, no benches to sleep on, we slept on the ground. No food.'

FtM trans Iranian refugee in Hungary.

'This was my worst nightmare. At first I was in [an] open dormitory with about 50 people. Just like beds in [a] hall. Then taken to another detention. To be honest I really don't want to talk about it. I was told to take off my clothes to be checked. I remained totally naked.'

Gay Ugandan refugee in the UK.

Detaining asylum claimants beyond exceptional and clearly legally delineated circumstances has been widely condemned by scholars and NGOs, and runs against international and EU legislation and guidance. The fact that 8% of respondents were detained for more than six months is extremely worrying, especially considering how many SOGI claimants will be particularly vulnerable in that context and may not have their rights and basic needs met.

For more information, see Chapters 4 (Section 4.2) and 8 (Section 9) in Danisi, Dustin, Ferreira and Held, *Queering Asylum in Europe* (Springer 2020).

4.3. Life Outside the Legal Process

Being Open About SOGI

Fifty-eight per cent of respondents were open about their sexual orientation or gender identity in the country where they claimed asylum, while 35% were open sometimes, and 7% were not open at all.

'I am very careful about when and where because I [know] some people who are homophobic.'

Bisexual Jamaican male asylum claimant in the UK who was appealing against a refusal.

'Yes I am [open] but it's difficult here like it is in everywhere in the world to be a gay person.'

Gay Nigerian asylum claimant in Italy who was appealing against a refusal.

'At my place of residence, I [live] with straight people and my roommates and the people around always talk evil things about gay people, and because of this reason I don't feel free to open up. But I always feel free when I am at [NGO] during our meetings.'

Gay Ugandan asylum claimant in Germany who was appealing against a refusal.

'It's not easy to open up about my sexual orientation because of the surrounding and the stigma.'

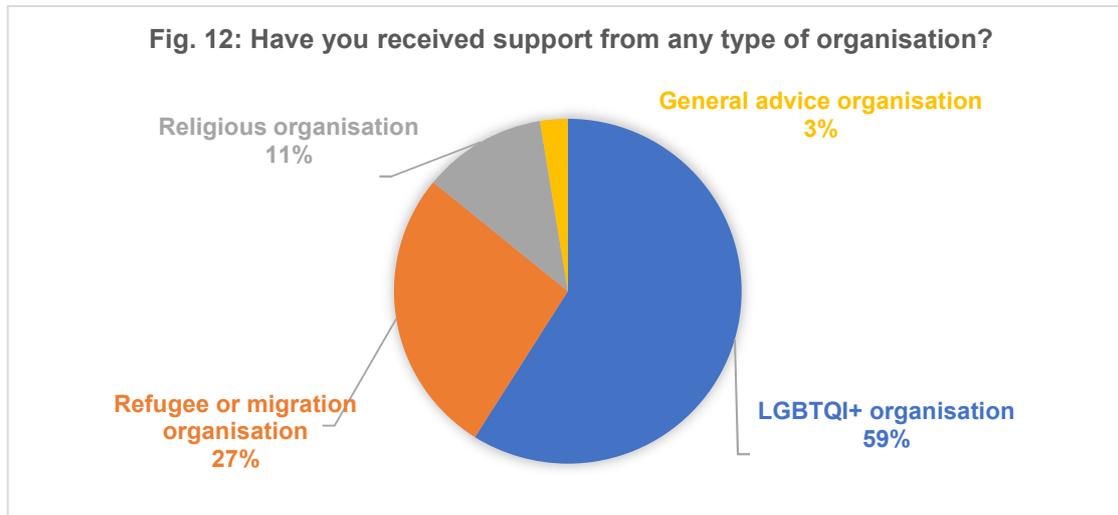
Lesbian Ugandan asylum claimant in Germany who was appealing against a refusal.

These individual experiences point to the fact that SOGI claimants leave their countries of origin to escape homophobia and transphobia, but are then only too often afraid of experiencing homophobia and transphobia again in their host country. This often leaves SOGI claimants socially isolated and in particularly vulnerable situations on account of their SOGI, ethnic origin and 'refugeeness', amongst other factors.

For more information, see Chapters 8 (Section 4) and 10 (Section 3) in Danisi, Dustin, Ferreira and Held, *Queering Asylum in Europe* (Springer 2020).

Support

From the respondents who said they received support, 59% were supported by LGBTIQ+ organisations and 41% by other organisations (Fig. 12):



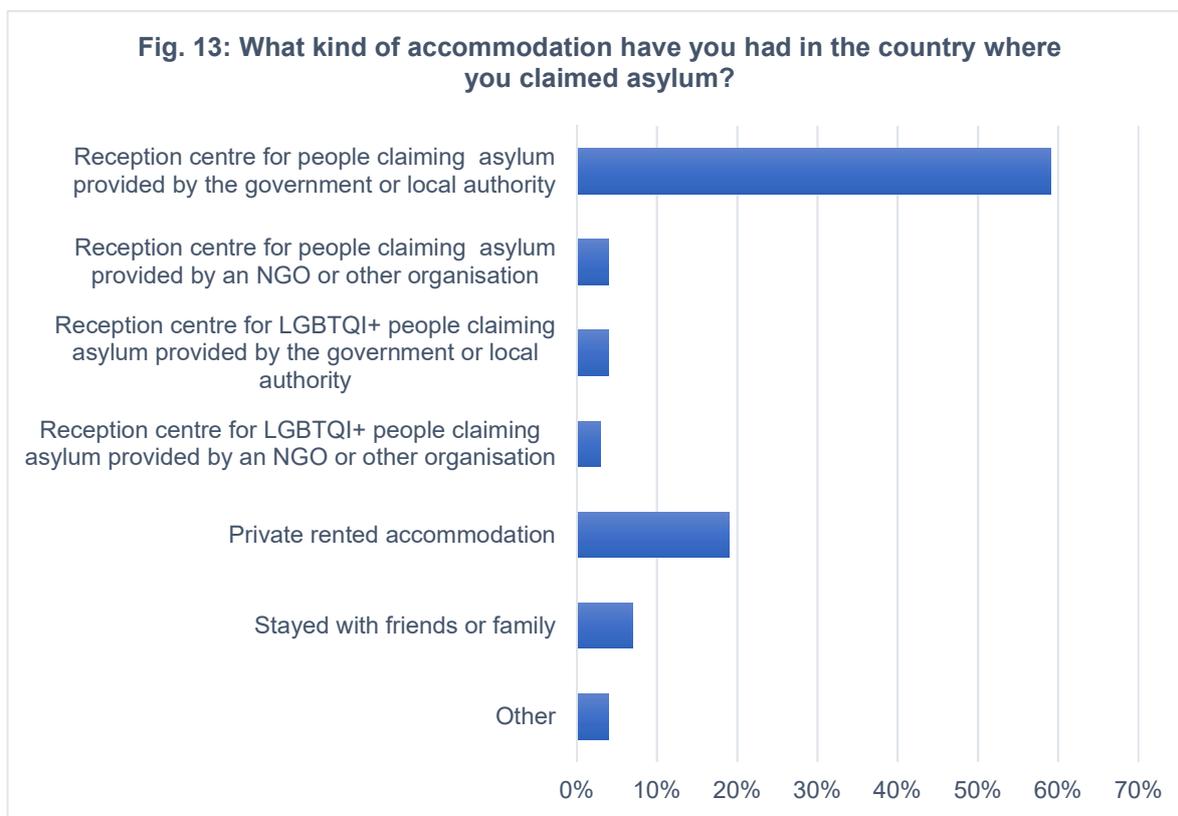
SOGI asylum claimants and refugees risk experiencing high degrees of social isolation and mental health issues. Therefore, it is fundamental that they can access appropriate and well-resourced support in the third sector and from other non-state actors. LGBTQI+ organisations thus seem to play a very important role in supporting SOGI asylum claimants and refugees.

For more information, see:

- Chapters 6 (Section 2.1) and 11 (Section 6) in Danisi, Dustin, Ferreira and Held, *Queering Asylum in Europe* (Springer 2020).
- Dustin, and Held, “‘They sent me to the mountain’”: The role of space, religion and support groups for LGBTQI+ asylum claimants’, in *Queer migration and asylum in Europe*, ed. by Richard C. M. Mole, UCL Press, forthcoming.

Accommodation

Most respondents (59%) had as accommodation reception and accommodation centres for people claiming asylum provided by the government or local authority, followed by private rented accommodation (19%), and those who stayed with friends or family (7%).



Forty-four per cent felt safe in their accommodation, while 41% did not feel safe, and 15% were not sure. Such a large percentage of respondents feeling unsafe is consistent with widespread concern about the lack of safety and appropriate conditions asylum claimants face in terms of accommodation, and reinforces the need to invest more in this regard.

For more information, see Chapters 5 (Section 4.3) and 8 in Danisi, Dustin, Ferreira and Held, *Queering Asylum in Europe* (Springer 2020).

Discrimination and Violence

Fifty-six per cent of respondents had experienced discrimination in the country where they claimed asylum, while 33% had not, and 11% were not sure. Regarding violence, 22% had experienced it in the country where they claimed asylum, while 68% had not, and 10% were not sure. Forty-one per cent reported the discrimination or violence they had experienced to someone, while 40% did not and 9% were not sure.

'Sometimes people stop associating with me after finding out [that I am trans]. Most organisations rejected my request for help with accommodation based on my gender issue. Most of my problems arise from the problem of not having a gender in my ID that supports my look.'

FtM trans Iranian refugee in Hungary.

'[There is] Homophobia and racism from the LGBTI community.'

Lesbian Zimbabwean refugee in the UK.

'In public places like bus stops and inside the train some White people don't just want to sit next to us. The moment you approach a seat, they intentionally get up and stand or look for another seat.'

Gay Ugandan asylum claimant in Germany who was appealing against a refusal.

'My roommate told me face to face that he wished all gay people would be denied asylum and that he wished the worse for all of us, a statement that can never go off my mind.'

Gay Ugandan asylum claimant in Germany who was appealing against a refusal.

'I haven't received any discrimination directly but it's always there somehow and especially for black people like me.'

Lesbian Ugandan asylum claimant in Germany who as appealing against a refusal.

'I face racial discrimination and xenophobia everyday of my life in Spain.'

Gay Sierra Leonean refugee in Spain.

As these accounts demonstrate, SOGI asylum claimants and refugees are often exposed to transphobia, racism, homophobia and xenophobia in their host countries. Such harrowing experiences add to the already often traumatising moments lived in countries of origin and

journeys towards Europe. Asylum law and policy needs to address more effectively such wider issues of discrimination and violence, both with and beyond the asylum system.

For more information, see:

- Chapter 10 (Section 3) in Danisi, Dustin, Ferreira and Held, *Queering Asylum in Europe* (Springer 2020).
- Dustin, and Held, ““They sent me to the mountain”: The role of space, religion and support groups for LGBTIQ+ asylum claimants’, in *Queer migration and asylum in Europe*, ed. by Richard C. M. Mole, UCL Press, forthcoming.

Health

Fifty-six per cent of respondents had physical or mental health problems related to the persecution they experienced or the process of claiming asylum, while 38% did not report this, and 6% were not sure.

‘Depression. Anxiety. I arrived with psychological difficulties, and not only were these not properly addressed, these years of waiting in the unknown are pulling me down and driving me crazier. Another major difficulty is that there are no Persian or Azeri speaking psychologists who could communicate with me in my mother tongue or second language.’

FtM trans Iranian refugee in Hungary.

‘My front teeth and right arm were broken and they hurt [from] time to time.’

Gay Ugandan asylum claimant in Germany who was appealing against a refusal.

‘I have developed a sickness mentally I think it's because of over thinking and I can no longer sleep. I have sleepless nights and am on drugs per now. If I don't take drugs I can't sleep.’

Lesbian Ugandan asylum claimant in Germany who was appealing against a refusal.

'(...) I was able to get a therapist because of my mental health problems. I still suffer also from body pains that the health doctors still find no cause. They are only advising me to do a lot of sport so as to overcome the pain, something that seems to be difficult on my side.'

Gay Ugandan asylum claimant in Germany who was appealing against a refusal.

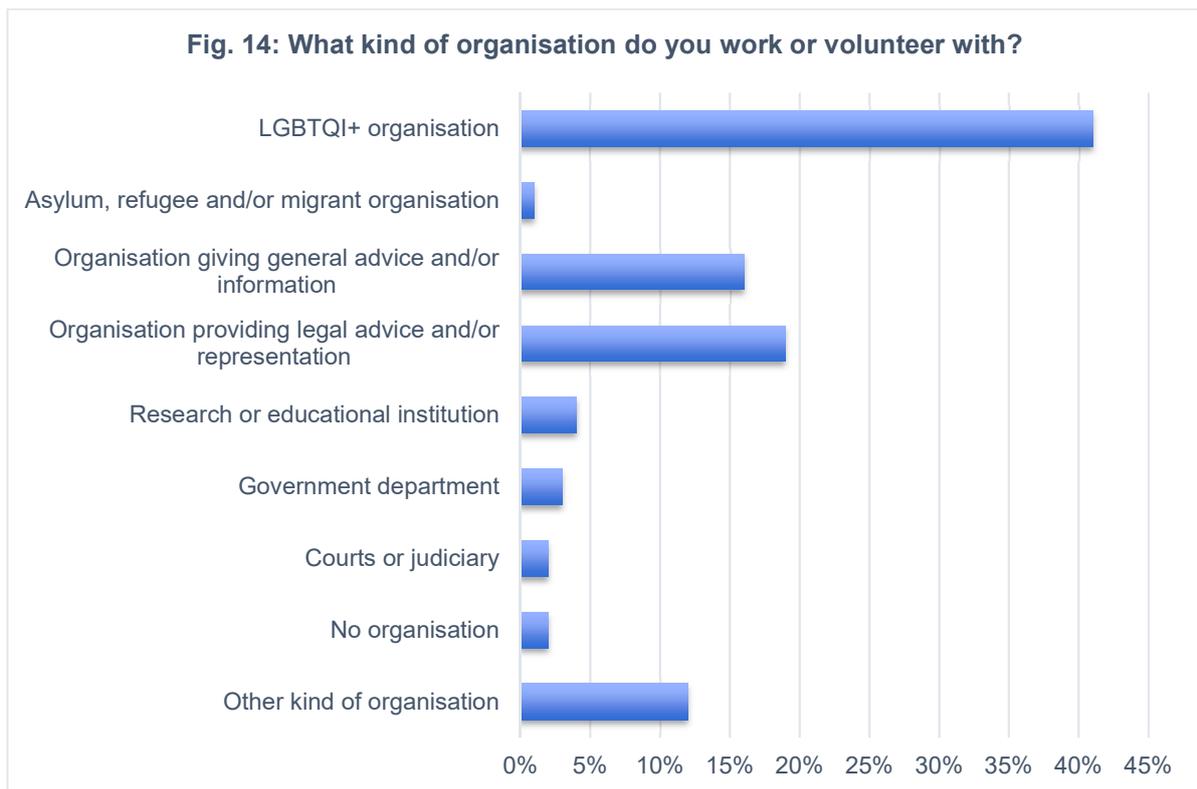
Access to health services is very limited and plagued with challenges across all European countries. Most countries limit such access to basic healthcare, which subjects asylum claimants to long waits, deteriorating health conditions and pressure to resort to unregulated and lower quality health services. Moreover, even when allowing access to services such as mental health support, the lengthy and harsh asylum process itself often worsens medical conditions.

For more information, see Chapter 9 (Section 2) in Danisi, Dustin, Ferreira and Held, *Queering Asylum in Europe* (Springer 2020).

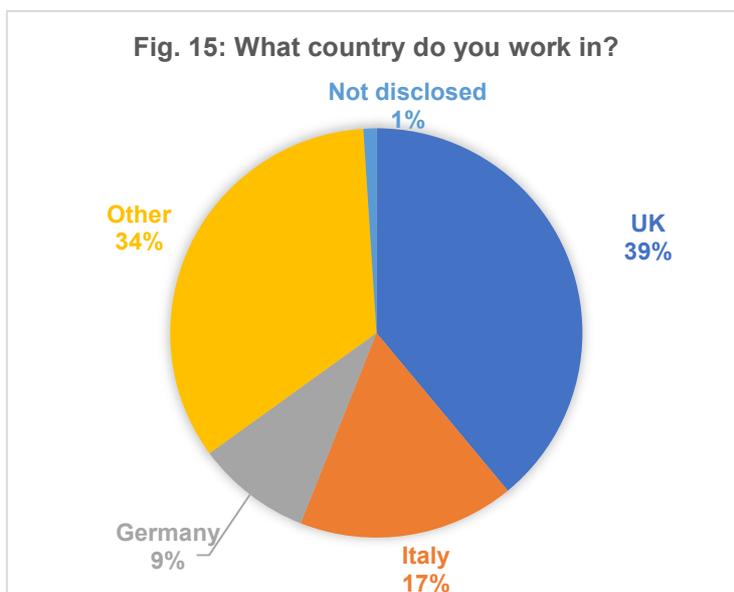
5. The SOGICA Survey for People who Work With or Support LGBTIQ+ People Claiming Asylum

5.1. Demographics

From the 157 people who answered this survey, the majority were working or volunteering with an LGBTIQ+ organisation or with an organisation providing legal advice and/or representation. Important to note here is the fact that some participants might have filled in both surveys as many SOGI refugees work or are active in the field of SOGI asylum.



Also here, perhaps unsurprisingly, 65% of these respondents were working either in the UK, Italy or Germany and it is likely that some of our interviewees participated in the survey. Other countries respondents worked were Austria, Belgium, Cyprus, Denmark, France, Greece, Ireland, Malta, Norway, Portugal, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, and the Netherlands.



Regarding self-identification, 51% of the respondents described their gender or gender identity as female, 29% as male, 7% as queer, 4% as non-binary, 3% as trans, and 1% as ‘other’.¹⁵ In relation to sexuality, 24% described themselves as gay, 24% as heterosexual, 17% as lesbian, 12% as bisexual, 8% as queer, and 7% as ‘other’.¹⁶ If we compare this to the self-identifications of the claimants’ respondents, then more supporters identify as female, heterosexual and bisexual, while less identify as trans.

The majority of respondents (92%) preferred not to disclose or did not answer how they would describe their ethnic identity or origin, while 8% identified themselves as Arab, North African, White, Latin, or ‘other’.¹⁷ Regarding religious or non-religious identity, 41% described themselves as Atheist, 20% as Agnostic, and 11% as Christian. Other identities (16%) included Buddhist, Muslim, Sikh, and ‘no religion’.¹⁸

¹⁵ Five per cent preferred not to disclose or did not answer the question about their gender or gender identity.

¹⁶ Eight per cent of the respondents preferred not to disclose or did not answer the question about their sexuality.

¹⁷ A reason for this could be that, outside of the UK, ‘ethnicity’ is not a category used in everyday public administration (in Germany or Italy, for instance).

¹⁸ Twelve per cent of respondents preferred not to disclose or did not answer the question about their (non)religious identity.

More than half of the respondents (52%) were between 25 and 44 years old, 31% between 45 and 74 years old, and 6% between 18 and 24 years old.¹⁹ When asked if they considered themselves to have a disability, 80% of respondents answered 'no', 7% 'yes', and 13% preferred not to disclose this information or did not answer.

Regarding the highest level of education completed, 50% of respondents have completed postgraduate studies, while 36% have completed higher education (college or university), 2% secondary school, and 1% primary school.²⁰

The average SOGI asylum supporter could thus be bluntly described as female, atheist, relatively young, able-bodied and well-educated, but the diversity in this field is also patent from the figures above.

For more information, see Chapters 6 (Section 2.1 and 2.3) and 11 (Section 6) in Danisi, Dustin, Ferreira and Held, *Queering Asylum in Europe* (Springer 2020).

5.2. Views on the Legal Process²¹

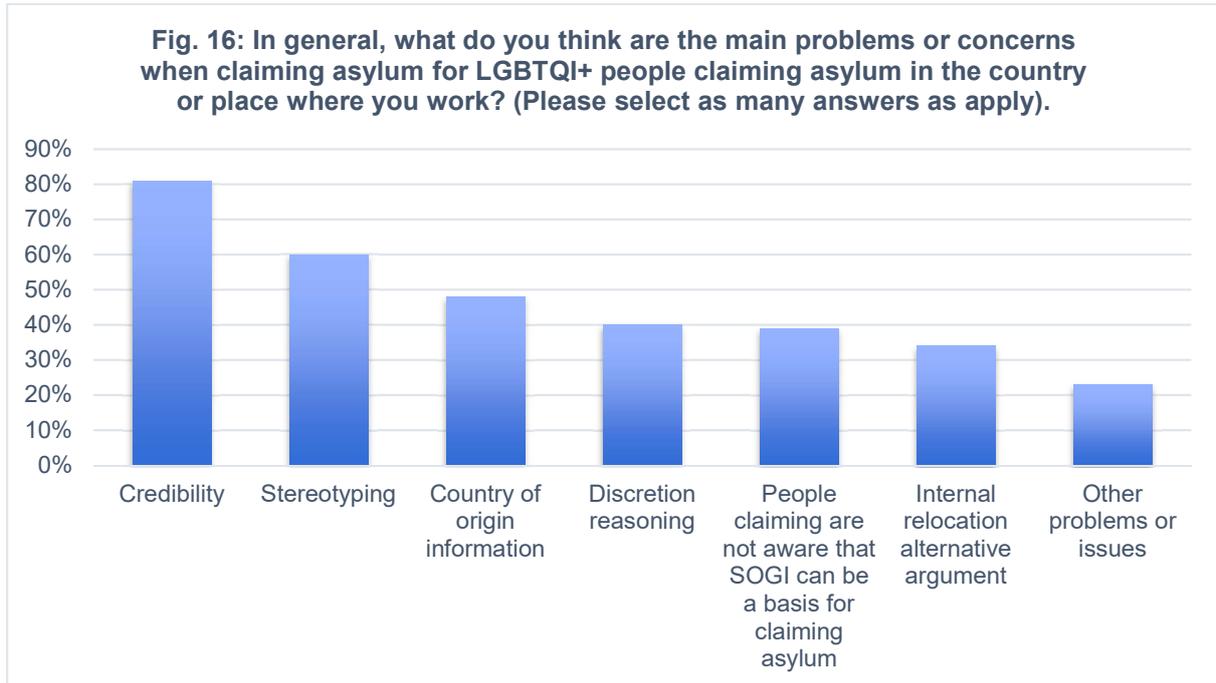
The Asylum Claim

Credibility was considered the main problem when claiming asylum for LGBTIQ+ people in the countries where respondents worked (81%), followed by stereotyping (60%), COI (48%), 'discretion' reasoning (40%), the claimants' unawareness that SOGI can be a basis for claiming asylum (39%), and the 'internal relocation alternative' argument (34%).

¹⁹ Eleven per cent preferred not to disclose or did not answer the question about their age.

²⁰ Eleven per cent preferred not to disclose or did not answer the question about their level of education.

²¹ The percentages in this and the following sections refer to the number of respondents who answered each question, not the total of the survey respondents (157 people). In some questions respondents could select more than one option; this is reflected on the percentages.



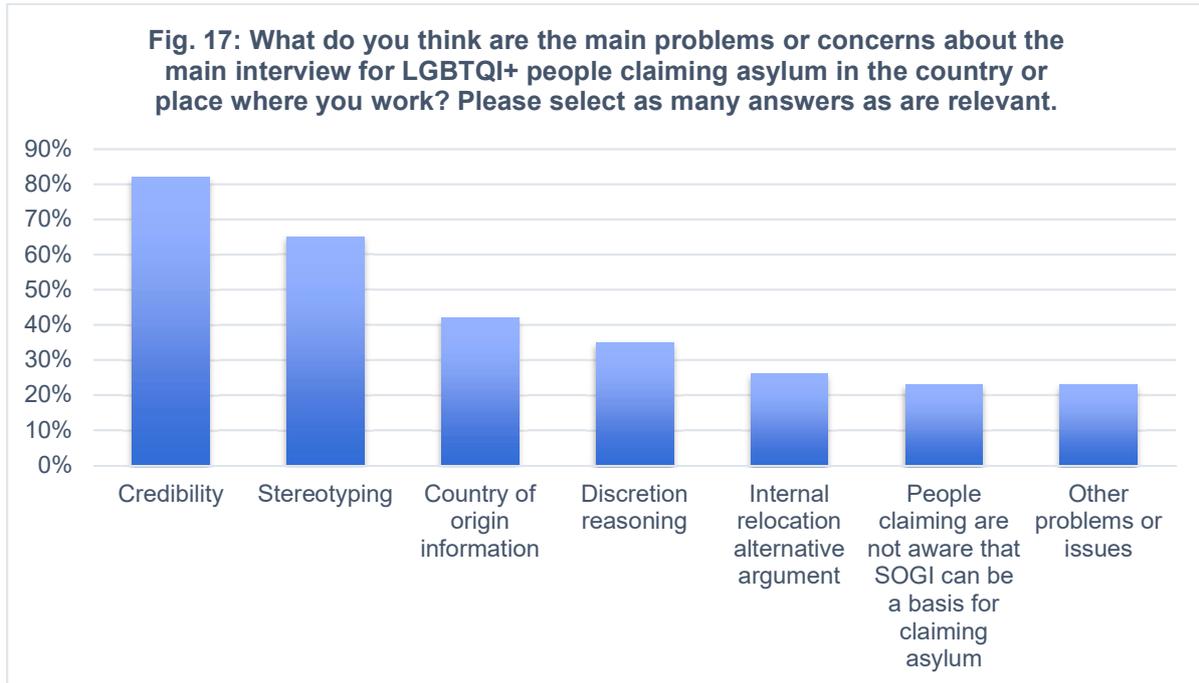
‘Judicial decision-makers struggle to make assessments on whether a person is LGBTQI+ or not. It is extremely difficult, and they do not have the tools to do so. Many decision-makers (and government functionaries cross-examining) have not had the opportunity or cause to question heteronormative assumptions and are unaware of their own assumptions and stereotypes. There is a real need for training.’

Barrister in the UK.

For more information, see Chapters 6 and 7 in Danisi, Dustin, Ferreira and Held, *Queering Asylum in Europe* (Springer 2020).

Main Interview

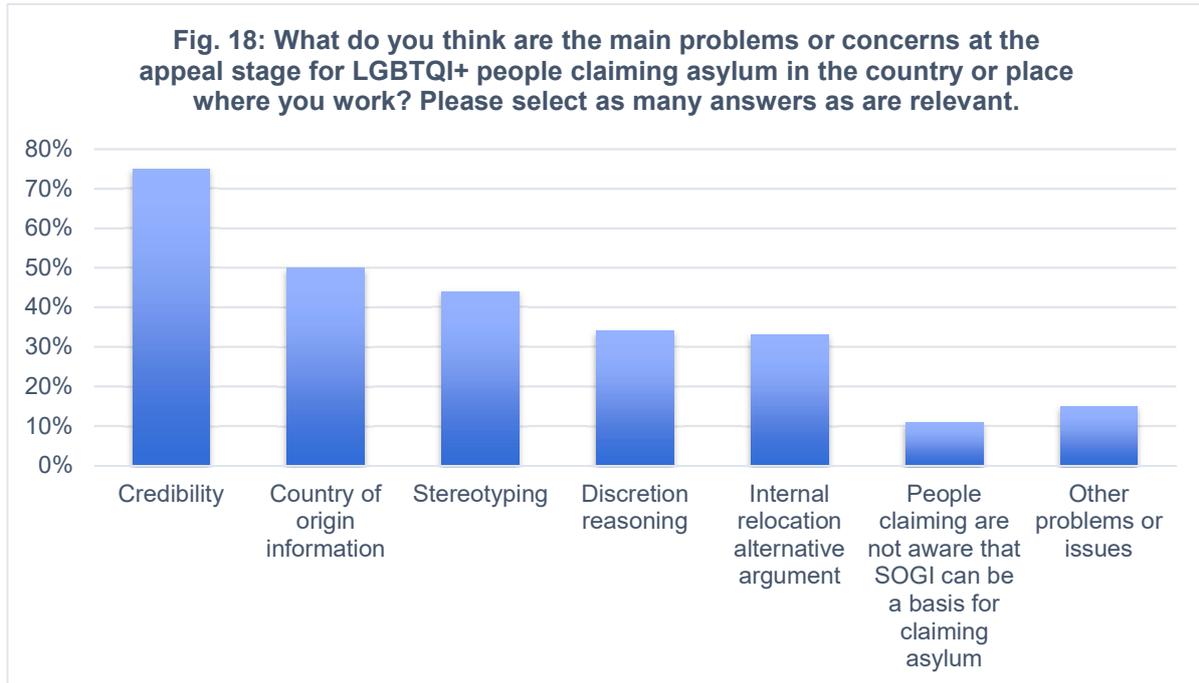
Regarding the main interview, credibility was considered the main problem (82%), followed by stereotyping (65%), COI (42%), ‘discretion’ reasoning (35%), the ‘internal relocation alternative’ argument (26%), and the claimants’ unawareness that SOGI can be a basis for claiming asylum (23%).



For more information, see Chapters 6 and 7 in Danisi, Dustin, Ferreira and Held, *Queering Asylum in Europe* (Springer 2020).

Appeals

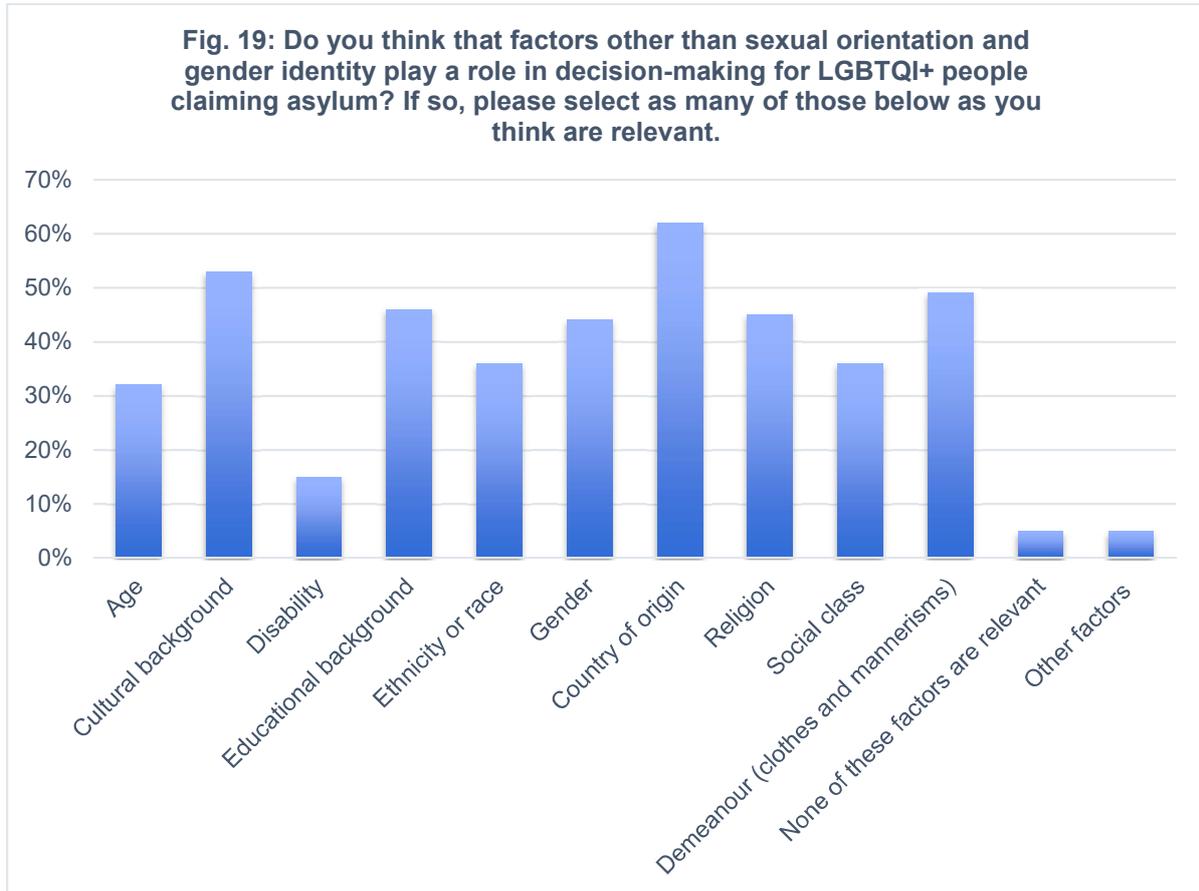
Credibility was also considered the main problem at the appeal stage for LGBTQI+ people claiming asylum in the countries where respondents worked (75%), followed by COI (50%), stereotyping (44%), ‘discretion’ reasoning (34%), the ‘internal relocation alternative’ argument (33%), and the claimants’ unawareness that SOGI can be a basis for claiming asylum (11%).



For more information, see Chapters 6 and 7 in Danisi, Dustin, Ferreira and Held, *Queering Asylum in Europe* (Springer 2020).

Decision-Making

Country of origin (62%), cultural background (53%), demeanour (clothes and mannerisms) (49%), educational background (46%), religion (45%), and gender (44%) were considered the main factors other than SOGI that play a role in decision-making for LGBTQI+ people claiming asylum.



Fifty-seven per cent of respondents saw some differences in the way that different LGBTQI+ based asylum claims are treated by decision-makers, while 10% did not, and 33% were not sure.

'It seems to me that people from certain countries are more frequently suspected of lying about their sexual orientation.'

LGBTIQ+ organisation volunteer in Italy.

'People who behave "gay" get better treatment. People from countries known for homophobic treatments (Afghanistan, Iran) get better treatments than people from "less known" countries (Gambia, Nigeria).'

LGBTIQ+ organisation member in Denmark.

Each SOGI claimant's characteristics intersect in a unique way to shape their experiences, how they present themselves and how they are perceived. Decision-makers are often influenced – in an unaccountable and unjustified manner – by claimants' country of origin, cultural background, demeanour, educational background, religion, gender, etc., and let stereotypes and prejudices about SOGI and a range of other characteristics influence the credibility assessment and other elements of the asylum adjudication procedure. Unconscious bias seems to play a key role in this context. There is still insufficient scrutiny of the influence of such inappropriate stereotypes and prejudices on the asylum process, suggesting the need for significant improvements to training and decision quality control.

For more information, see Chapters 3, 6 (Sections 3 and 4) and 7 (Sections 5 and 6) in Danisi, Dustin, Ferreira and Held, *Queering Asylum in Europe* (Springer 2020).

Legal Representation and Aid

Twenty-six per cent of respondents believed that there was adequate and affordable good quality legal advice and representation for the LGBTIQ+ people seeking asylum that they knew or worked with, while 56% did not think so, and 18% were not sure.

'Sweden provides free legal advice and representation, but those lawyers are overworked and there are no guarantees that the lawyer assigned to your case has any specific knowledge of or experience with LGBTIQI issues. This often hurts the asylum seekers case.'

LGBTIQ+ organisation member in Sweden.

'There is adequate and affordable good quality legal advice but too many asylum seekers do not know about it. Asylum seekers are place[d] on camps in the country side, the advice is in the capital.'

LGBTIQ+ organisation member in Denmark.

'It's becoming difficult to find a lawyer who still takes clients. The refugees themselves can't afford the costs so they have to find supporters and NGOs who help out with money'.

LGBTQI+ organisation member in Germany.

'Claims for asylum based on sexual orientation show differences from those based on (eg) religion or political grounds, because of the extremely personal circumstances discussed. They need to be handled by lawyers who are basically sympathetic and knowledgeable about this area of the law. With the decrease in legal aid funding, such lawyers are increasingly difficult to find.'

LGBTIQ+ organisation member in the UK.

Legal representation seems to be increasingly inadequate and of insufficient quality across Europe. This seriously hinders the chances of success of claimants and may damage SOGI claims beyond repair, with the right of appeal being insufficient to compensate for the harm done by poor or non-existent initial legal advice.

For more information, see Chapter 6 (Section 2.2) in Danisi, Dustin, Ferreira and Held, *Queering Asylum in Europe* (Springer 2020).

Interpreters

Twelve per cent of respondents considered that the interpreting services available to LGBTQI+ people seeking asylum were appropriate and adequate, while 64% did not think this was the case, and 24% were not sure. This is a considerably higher proportion of respondents unhappy with interpreting services that we saw above in relation to claimant respondents (where only 21% of those who had used interpreting services were not happy with them). This may be due to the fact that supporter respondents have experience with a much higher number of interpreters, thus being more familiar with the shortcomings in relation to this matter.

'While I have not experienced an interpreter expressing openly hostile views about an applicant's sexuality or gender identity, they do sometimes use hostile or derogatory terms, perhaps because they don't know any other word. Applicants themselves very often report feeling uncomfortable in the presence of the interpreter at interview.'

Lawyer in the UK.

'Anecdotally we have heard of cases where applicants are not comfortable sharing their whole story as they feel compromised by interpreters from the same cultural [background], can be same city, region... so people are afraid that their confidentiality will be compromised. Also they don't feel confident that words will be translated correctly as such words may not exist in their native language, or may not be known by translators.'

LGBTIQ+ organisation member in Ireland.

It is clear that the majority of the respondents believe that the quality of interpretation services in SOGI asylum procedures is insufficient. The recruitment and training of interpreters requires considerably more scrutiny and investment in many European countries, to allow SOGI claimants to feel confident about the fairness of the procedures and ensure decision-making is substantively fair as well.

For more information, see Chapter 6 (Section 6) in Danisi, Dustin, Ferreira and Held, *Queering Asylum in Europe* (Springer 2020).

5.3. Views on SOGI Claimants' Lives Outside the Legal Process

Accommodation

Sixty-five per cent of respondents believed the provision of separate accommodation for LGBTIQ+ people seeking asylum or who have been given asylum to be a good idea, while 8% did not think so, and 27% were not sure.

'LGBTQI asylum seekers need to have a place where they can feel safe and supported; this is often not the case where they are placed in NASS [National Asylum Support Service] housing, with potentially homophobic housemates, a situation which contributes to further stress and sometimes mental health problems.'

LGBTIQ+ organisation member in the UK.

'Yes [there needs to be separate SOGI asylum accommodation], especially transpeople. In our experience many LGBTQI asylum seekers feel unsafe in general housing and we have had several cases of our members being threatened and even assaulted by other, non-LGBTQI asylum seekers they live with. Even in separate LGBTQI housing, transpeople are sometimes made unsafe by cis-gender people, so transpeople should ideally have the option to have separate accommodations.'

LGBTIQ+ organisation member in Sweden.

'Depends on the situation; some feel safe[r] in separate housing some don't; it should be offered and then be up to the person.'

LGBTIQ+ organisation member in Germany.

'There is divided opinion on this among the LGBT asylum seekers we work with. Some do not want to be segregated, they want to be supported to be who they are among the mainstream asylum seeking community.'

LGBTIQ+ organisation member in Ireland.

'It would enable people to meet others in their situation, and to feel safer and more secure in their accommodation. One guest at work once told me "I came to this country to be myself, but I cannot be myself around these people".'

Coordinator of shelter for destitute asylum claimants in the UK.

'There should be a dedicated center for GLBTI people but only for those with specific needs and those who request it.'

LGBTIQ+ organisation migration coordinator in Italy.

'I'm conflicted on this. I've read arguments on both sides, how it can provide better safety but how it can be ghettoizing. I think it really depends on the circumstance of the individuals involved.'

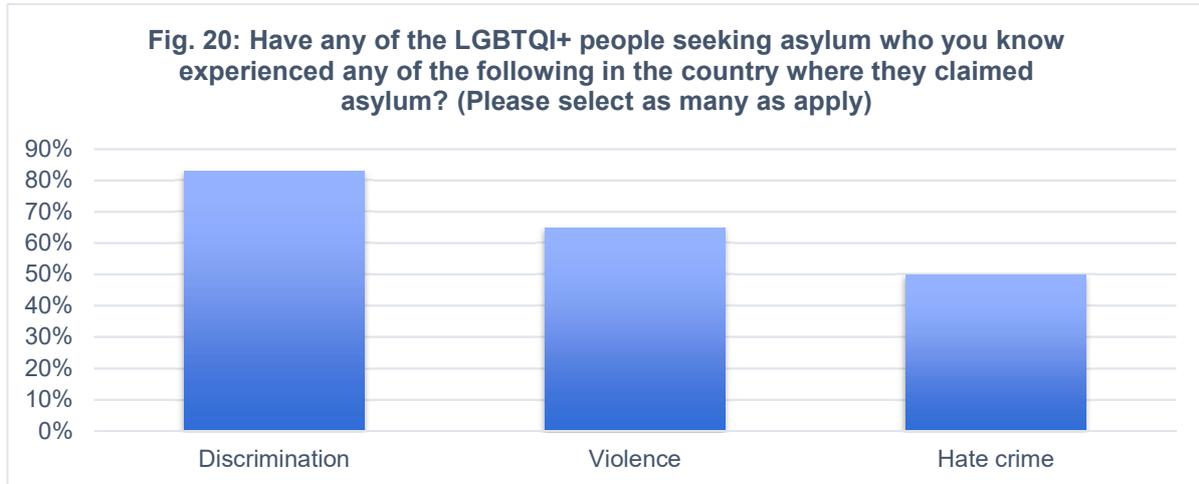
LGBTIQ+ asylum organisation member in Italy.

Although the majority of respondents were in favour of the existence of SOGI-specific accommodation, and some favoured separate accommodation for trans claimants specifically, upon closer analysis of their answers it becomes clear that 'choice' and tailored accommodation remain the key ingredients for an appropriate asylum accommodation policy.

For more information, see Chapter 8 (Section 8) in Danisi, Dustin, Ferreira and Held, *Queering Asylum in Europe* (Springer 2020).

Discrimination and Violence

Eighty-three per cent of respondents stated that LGBTIQ+ people seeking asylum they knew had experienced discrimination in the country where they claimed asylum. Regarding violence, the percentage was 65%, and in relation to hate crime, 50%.



These figures are extremely concerning, and reflect the poor degree of legal protection and social integration enjoyed by SOGI asylum claimants and refugees.

For more information, see Chapter 10 (Section 3) in Danisi, Dustin, Ferreira and Held, *Queering Asylum in Europe* (Springer 2020).

5.4. Worker and supporter wellbeing

Seventy-six per cent of the respondents were emotionally or physically affected by their work with people who may have experienced torture and persecution, while 14% said they were not affected, and 10% were not sure. Fifty-five per cent of the respondents had counselling or other support available to them and their colleagues, while 33% had not.²²

‘I have heard some harrowing stories – and I feel emotionally affected, at times I tell myself that if I feel this bad what on earth was it like for the person to go through such horrendous things – I realise that there are times when you can’t “walk in another person’s shoes” but you can listen, not judge people and try to make them feel safe in the moment.’

NHS Mental Health Trust member in the UK.

²² Twelve per cent were not sure there was counselling or other support available to them.

'It is stressful to be aware of the suffering people have endured and the truth of their claim and yet know how long they'll have to wait, and also to know that the support services they need are not close to them. Waiting lists for therapy etc. are too long.'
LGBTIQ+ organisation member in Ireland.

'Having clients in desperate situations which you can't always assist puts a huge moral burden. Some stories have a heavy impact – but then the fact that some don't – that you have become immune to hearing about horrific events – can be just as bad.'
Asylum lawyer in the UK.

'As a gay man, there are sometimes stories which horrify me because of the inhumanity and degree of cruelty, torture and rejection they have experienced from families or agents of the state and the very personal nature of such cruelty, arising from their sexual orientation.'
LGBTIQ+ organisation member in the UK.

'You hear such terrible stories, to not be affected at all doesn't seem human.'
LGBTIQ+ asylum organisation member in Italy.

'After 3 years, I am really asking myself if it is sane to continue...'
LGBTIQ+ asylum NGO worker in Switzerland.

'We're getting cases of people with serious mental health issues and this has affected our team. (...) We are still not prepared to deal with PTSD that many asylum seekers seem to have. This year, one of the first cases we accompanied some years ago committed suicide and this has surfaced many fears among our team.'
LGBTIQ+ NGO worker in Portugal.



The wellbeing of workers and supporters in the field of SOGI asylum is often ignored, so it was important for us to raise this matter. The replies we received vindicated our concern, as the great majority of the respondents had been emotionally or physically affected owing to their work in this field, and barely half of them had counselling or other support available to them. This needs to be addressed by greater public investment in the sector.

For more information, see Chapter 11 (Section 6) in Danisi, Dustin, Ferreira and Held, *Queering Asylum in Europe* (Springer 2020).

6. Conclusions and Respondents' Recommendations

The number of respondents to these surveys is not large by any measure and respondents were self-selecting, factors which constitute clear methodological limitations to this piece of research. The statistics explored above thus do not allow for a full-blown quantitative analysis. Yet, this report complements the extremely limited statistical evidence that exists in the field of SOGI asylum in Europe, not only because very few countries collect such statistics but also because the overwhelming academic and NGO work in this field has not produced this type of data so far. This report thus signals an important move towards increasingly producing and analysing quantitative data on SOGI asylum, to foreground this dynamic field of research and policy-making.

Respondents also contributed a number of important **recommendations** based on their personal and professional experience, with the aim of improving the asylum system, both from a legal and social perspective. To start with:

'(...) [t]he lack of statistics on LGBTI refugees case is a general problem that should be addressed by member states.'

NGO worker in Greece.

The **asylum legal procedure** should also be changed:

'(...) the default or starting position is not that every applicant for asylum is being untruthful.'

Social and legal counsellor in Austria.

'(...) [a]uthorities cannot base credibility assessment of applicants on stereotypical questioning.'

NGO worker in Greece.

Beyond the legal procedure, respondents were also concerned with **accommodation** conditions, suggesting, for example, that authorities should:

'(...) [m]ake showering possible behind closed doors, not only in the open space.'
FtM trans Iranian refugee in Hungary.

Health services were also at the forefront of respondents' minds:

'(...) one thing [that] can be improved is the cost of the operations for transpersons which cost a lot, because not all costs are reimbursed by the health insurance fund.'
FtM trans Syrian claimant in Belgium.

'(...) [p]rivate, confidential medical services with health professionals sensitized and trained to work specifically with these persons [SOGI claimants and refugees].'
Researcher in Switzerland.

Respondents also connected asylum claimants' and refugees' health – namely mental health – with their **right to work** and, more generally, to have opportunities to stay active:

'Keep them busy, that helps keep their minds off of their struggles.'
FtM trans Iranian refugee in Hungary.

Overall, **social integration** measures need to be increased and the overall asylum system should be more integrated, namely through:

'(...) individual integration support.'
Legal advisor in Malta.

'(...) holistic approach that includes legal, social and psychological support during the examination of the asylum application as well as beyond.'
Legal representative in Cyprus.

The importance of **NGOs and community support groups** in these social integration efforts was clear from our respondents' recommendations to other asylum claimants and refugees:

'Build a support network in order to overcome loneliness by participating in other (...) community or solidarity networks.'

Gay Sierra Leonean refugee in Spain.

It is, however, essential that all actors in the asylum system, be it at a legal or social integration level, receive appropriate and regular **training** and have access to all necessary **information**, including claimants and refugees themselves:

'First, most important step. Educate people in the camps about their rights.'

FtM trans Iranian refugee in Hungary.

'(...) private, confidential and appropriately interpret[ation] services with interpreters sensitized and trained to work specifically with these persons [SOGI claimants]'

Researcher in Switzerland.

'More training to the interpreters and to the committees so that they can be always up-to-date and culturally sensitized.'

NGO worker, Greece.

A greater level of training and information awareness of all actors in the asylum system should render it fairer and more effective, as well as empowering asylum claimants and refugees to vindicate their rights and satisfy their needs:

'(...) is important that even in the face of difficulty, LGBTQI migrants, refugees and asylum seekers take control over their own lives and advocate for their own rights.'

Gay Sierra Leonean refugee in Spain.

For more information, see Chapter 11 in Danisi, Dustin, Ferreira and Held, *Queering Asylum in Europe* (Springer 2020).



Thank you to all our respondents!

It is time to create a fairer asylum system in Europe!

- Check the SOGICA website <http://www.sogica.org> and join the SOGICA mailing list for updates
- Follow us on Twitter (@SOGICA1) and Facebook (@SOGICAProject)



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