

# Survey findings: Impact of Covid-19 & anti-LGBT narratives on LGBTQ+ persons in Malaysia

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Justice for Sisters, Diversity Malaysia,  
PLUHO (People Like Us Hang Out!), and Queer Lapis



This report is produced by Justice for Sisters, Diversity Malaysia, PLUHO (People Like Us Hang Out!), Queer Lapis with the support of LGBT human rights groups and human rights defenders.

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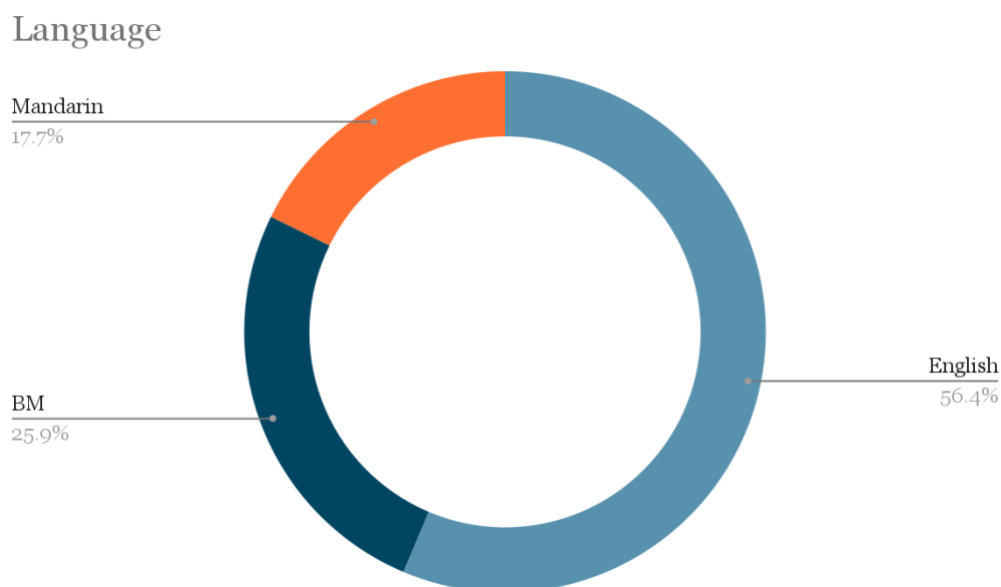
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## Background

Justice for Sisters, PLUHO (People Like Us Hang Out!), Diversity and Queer Lapis with the support of other LGBTIQ+ groups launched an online survey to collate information in relation to impact of Covid-19 and anti-LGBT narratives in Malaysia. Disseminated through LGBTIQ+ groups, the survey was open between 16 July and 7 August 2021, for 24 days.

A total of 220 people participated in the survey. The survey was made available in three language options - English, BM and Mandarin. 124 (56.4%) responded in English language, 59 (25.9%) in BM, and 39 (17.7%) responded in Mandarin.



These are some key findings from the survey:

- Increased minority stress, self-censorship, concerns over personal safety, and a widening trust deficit in government agencies are some of the highest scoring impacts of anti-LGBT narratives in Malaysia among the respondents. At least 85 respondents (38.6%) have thought of or made plans to migrate or seek asylum as a result of the increasing anti-LGBT sentiment.

At least one respondent showed **internalized LGBT-phobia**. Internalized LGBT-phobia is symptomatic of the increasing repression faced by LGBTQ persons in Malaysia. While the respondent identified as gay and a person who understands religion, yet they feel 'all religions do not accept' LGBTQ people, a popular phrase used by many politicians in Malaysia. The respondent sees themselves as a sinner who needs to repent.

While not all persons who experience internalized LGBT-phobia support the state's position or advocate for other LGBTQ persons to suppress their sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression, this respondent felt that LGBT activists should not demand for human rights of LGBT persons.

The Freedom of Expression and Gender Identity report by Justice for Sisters (2021) includes similar experiences of internalized transphobia. The report finds the pressure to change faced by the respondents coupled with lack of access to information; internalized notion of sin; internalized guilt, blame, shame and violence as a result of lack of support and affirmation of their identity contribute to varying levels of internalized LGBT-phobia and minority stress. In addition, the report also finds external pressures, concerns over personal safety, including arbitrary arrest and detention, and job security are among contributing factors in the trans women respondents' decision to 'de-transition' or 'return to the right path'.

- Comparatively, anti-LGBT statements by politicians and media sensationalism cause slightly higher level of stress among the respondents. Meanwhile, proposed anti-LGBT amendments and hate speech online show higher level of direct discrimination among the respondents.
- In total, only 5.9% - 11.4% respondents said that the four types of anti-LGBT narratives have no impact on them. The percentage of respondents who indicated that they experienced no impact at all because of anti-LGBT narratives in general remains low, at 5%.
- Only 13 respondents (5.9%) stated that media sensationalism of LGBT news has no impact on them. Among all four types of anti-LGBT narratives, media sensationalism scored lowest in terms of having no impact on the respondents, second highest level in relation to stress among respondents and highest level of multiple forms of discrimination or violence.
- The correlation is clear between the increasing anti-LGBT sentiments against the backdrop of lack of legal gender recognition in Malaysia for trans and gender diverse people, and criminalisation on access to redress and services.

At least 2 respondents shared additional information regarding **discrimination in the healthcare settings** when seeking general healthcare treatment and information of hormones or trans specific healthcare at a government hospital. In the first case, the respondent, who went to a hospital to seek treatment for diabetes was instead asked to take a HIV test presumably based on his gender expression and perceived sexual orientation. The respondent felt 'specialists seem not to be trained specifically in dealing with queer / LGBTQIA+ patients'.

- The findings also show the impact of the anti-LGBT narratives among their family members. 20% of the respondents noted that they experienced increased anti-LGBT conversations at home, family chat groups or among family members.

## Part 1: Background of the respondents

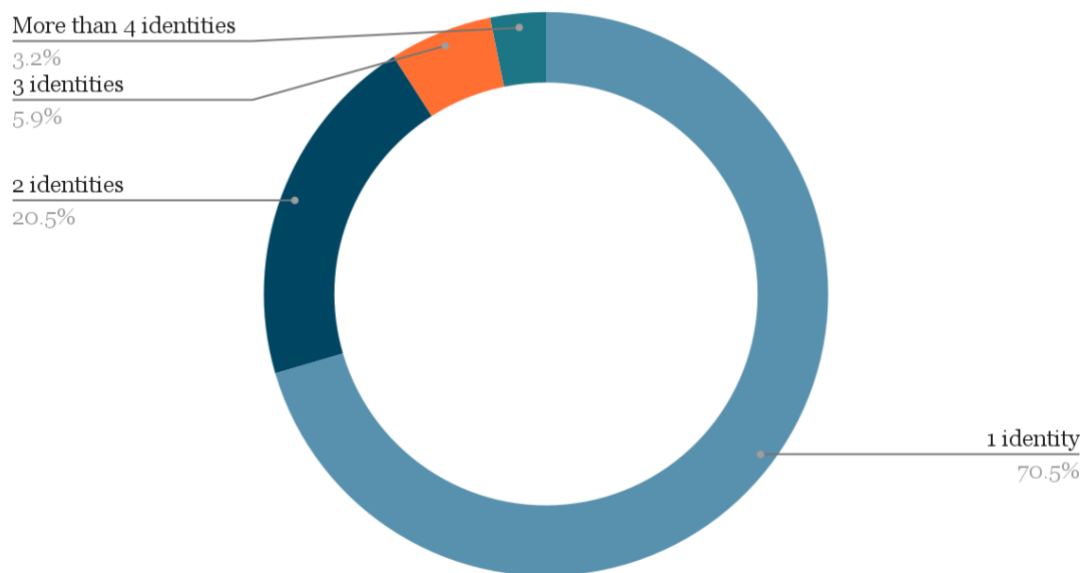
The survey asked four background or demographic questions –

- 1) gender, sex and sexual orientation,
- 2) age,
- 3) nationality, and
- 4) the state in which the respondents are currently living in.

### Gender, sex and sexual orientation

The respondents were allowed to select as many identity options that they identify with. The gender, sex and sexual orientation categories were not separated for the convenience of the respondents.

Number of identities selected by the respondents



Number of identities	Number of respondents
1 identity	155
2 identities	45
3 identities	13
More than 4 identities	7
Total	220

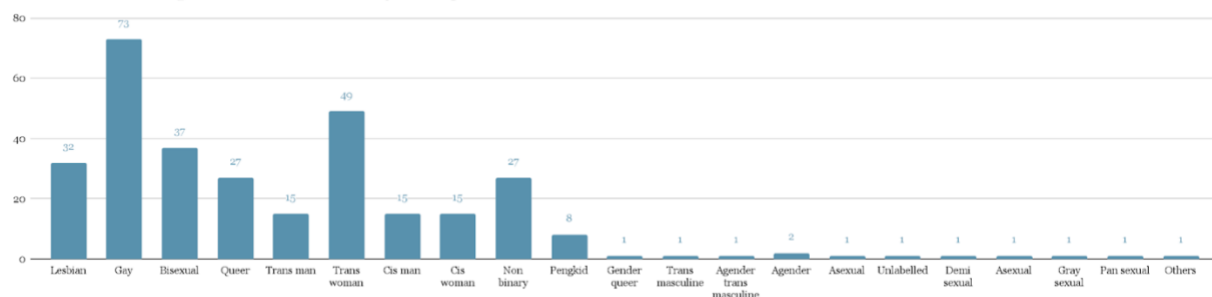
At least 65 respondents selected more than one identity that they identified with. The selections were a combination of:

- a gender identity and sexual orientation. For example, at least three respondents identified as cisgender woman and lesbian, at least six identified as cisgender woman and queer, at least two identified as trans woman and lesbian, at least five respondents selected cisgender man and gay.
- two or more sexual orientations. For example, a respondent selected bisexual, queer and cisgender woman; lesbian, gay, queer.
- two or more gender identities. For example, at least one respondent selected queer, cisgender woman, non-binary. Meanwhile, another respondent identifies as bisexual, trans man, non-binary, *pengkid*, agender transmasculine
- multiple gender identities or sexual orientation. For example, at least one respondent identified as bisexual, queer, non-binary and genderqueer. Another respondent selected lesbian, queer, non-binary and agender as their identities.

We note that queer can be used in the context of sexual orientation and gender identity as well as gender expression. The findings affirm that gender identities and sexual orientations are complex and may not neatly fall into one or two categories.

At least 73 respondents (33.2%) identified as gay. However, not all respondents who selected **gay** as their identity are gay cisgender men. At least four respondents who selected gay also identified as lesbian, bisexual, queer and trans man.

Sexual orientations & gender identities selected by the respondents



Meanwhile, 32 respondents (14.5%) identified as **lesbian**. At least 2 respondents identified as lesbian and trans woman. Meanwhile, a respondent identified as lesbian and *pengkid*. At least, two others identified as lesbian and non-binary.

At least 24 of the 27 respondents who selected **queer**, also selected one or more additional identities, including cisgender woman, non-binary, bisexual, asexual, genderqueer, agender, among others.

Similar to queer, *pengkid* was also used on in the context sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression. In Mandarin, *pengkid* was translated as tomboy or



masculine person assigned at birth. The 8 respondents who selected *pengkid* also selected lesbian and bisexual. One respondent who identified as *pengkid* also identified as agender transmasculine.

All respondents who selected **cisgender woman** selected a sexual orientation and/or gender identity. Of the 15 respondents who selected cisgender woman, at least four identified as lesbian, one identified as bisexual, six identifies as queer. Meanwhile, others identified with two or more sexual orientations and gender identities, including asexual and non-binary.

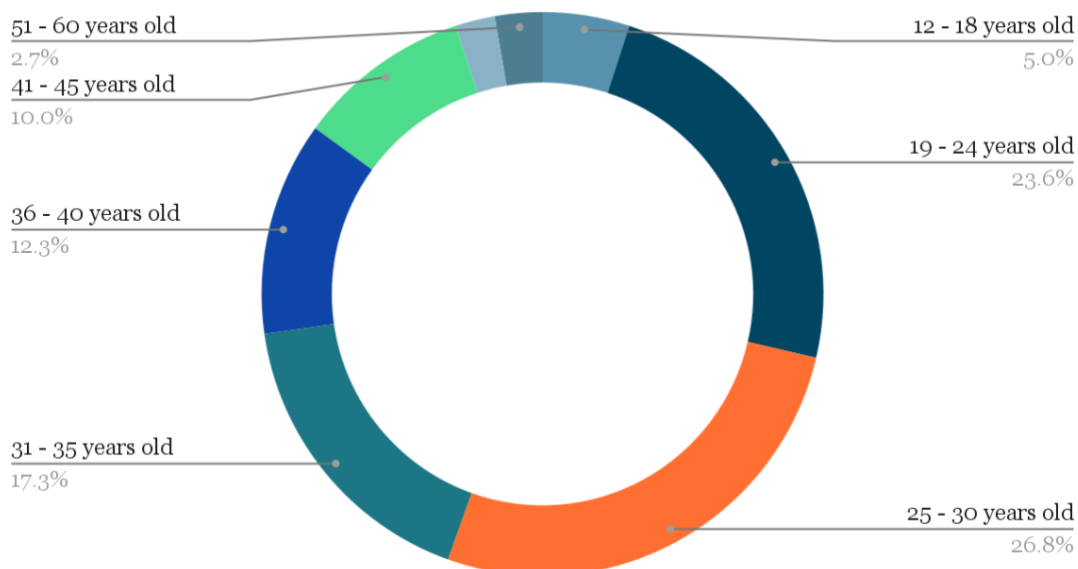
At least 49 respondents identified as **trans women**. Of which, two respondents identified as lesbian. 15 respondents identified as **trans men**. two of the 15 identified with a combination of bisexual, queer, non-binary, agender trans masculine and *pengkid*.

Fifteen respondents also selected **cisgender man**. All except one selected one or more additional identities, including gay, bisexual, and queer. At least 10 respondents who selected cisgender man selected gay, while two others selected bisexual. The rest selected a combination gay, bisexual and queer.

## Age

A majority of the respondents are between 19 - 24 years old (23.6%) and 25 - 30 years old (26.8%).

Respondents age group



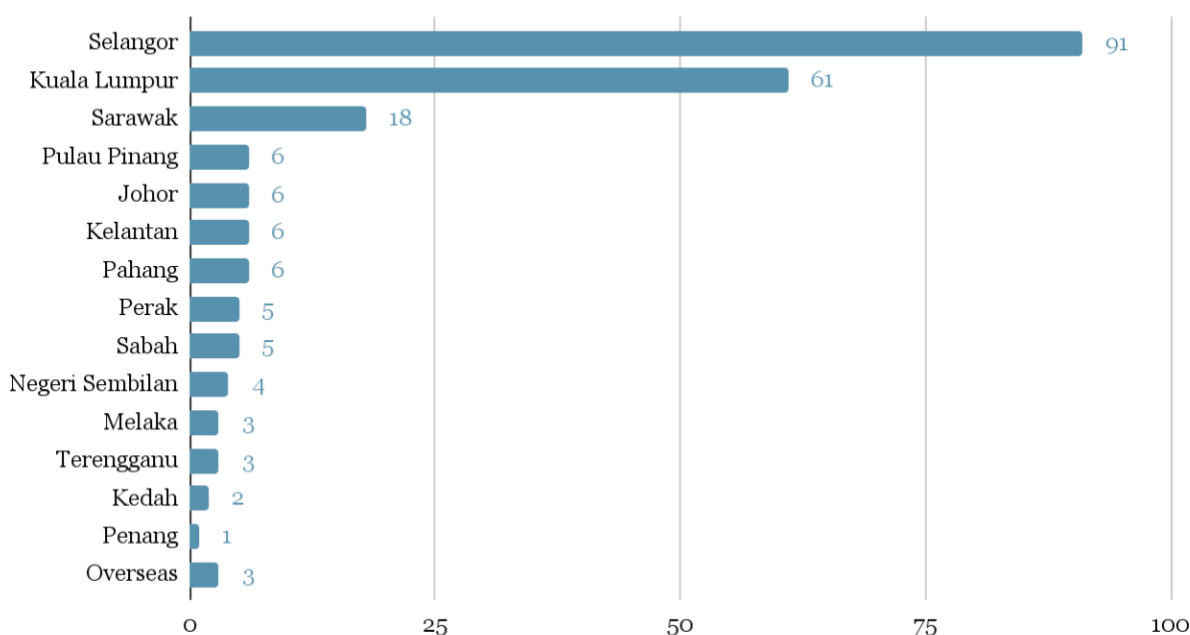


## State and nationality

Six of the 220 respondents identified as non-Malaysians. Four identified as expat, while two respondents selected others.

98.6% of the respondents are currently residing in Malaysia. Meanwhile, three respondents (1.4%) are currently living abroad. The respondents come from all 13 states and the Federal Territory Kuala Lumpur. Majority of the respondents, 41.4% of them, come from Selangor, followed by Kuala Lumpur with 27.7% respondents. 8.2% respondents, on the other hand, are from Sarawak.

### States in which the respondents are currently living in



## Part 2: Impact of Covid-19 on you

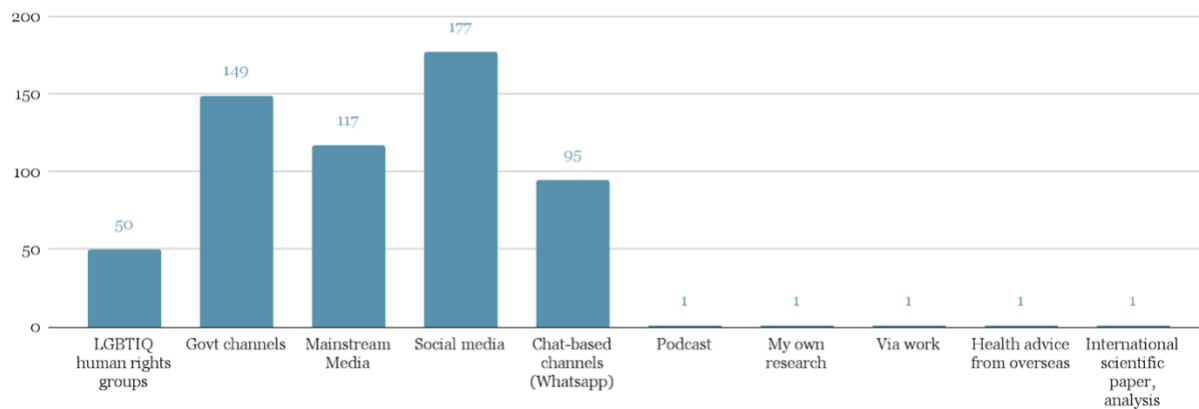
This section asked the following questions

- Where do the respondents access Covid-19 related information
- Status of vaccination
- Concerns regarding vaccination
- Experiences during the pandemic

### How do you access information regarding Covid-19?

The respondents accessed Covid-19 related information through multiple channels. 169 respondents (76.8%) selected more than one channel. Meanwhile, 51 respondents (23.2%) selected one response. Of which, 22 respondents relied on social media platforms for Covid-19 related information.

How do the respondents access Covid-19 related information?

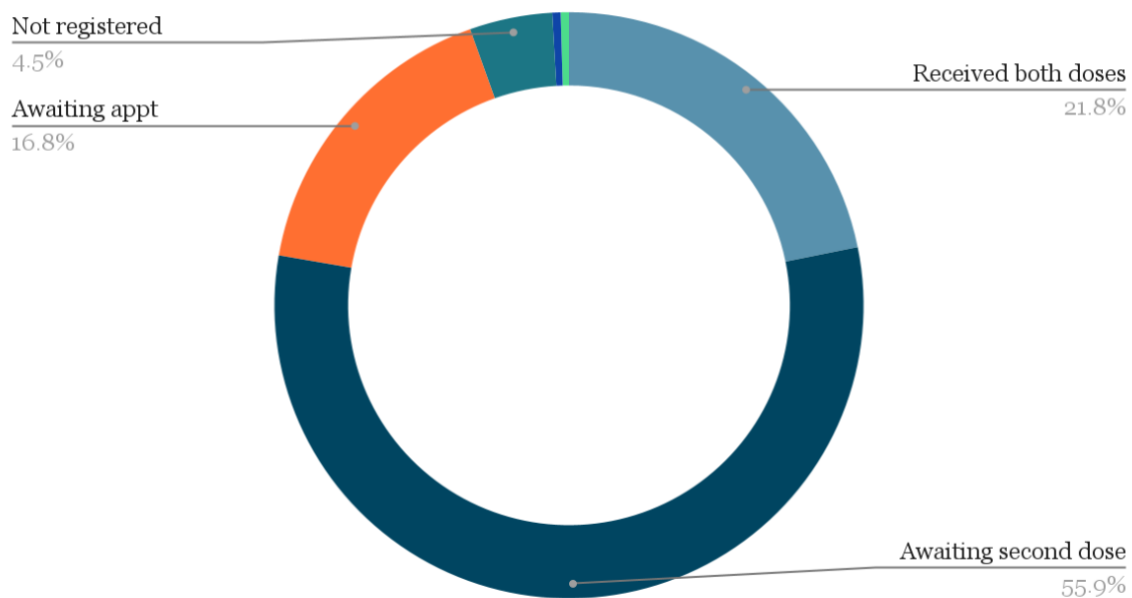


Social media is the most popular channel for information regarding Covid-19 with 177 respondents (80.5%) accessing Covid-19 related information through those platforms. This is followed by government channels, including MySejahtera (67%) and mainstream media (53.2%). 50 respondents (22.7%) also accessed Covid-19 related information from LGBT human rights groups.

## Status of vaccination

At the time of the survey, 123 respondents (55.9%) were awaiting their second dose, while 48 respondents (21.8%) had received both doses. 10 respondents (4.5%) had not registered. Of these, seven are between 12 - 24 years old. Meanwhile, three respondents cited concerns over interaction between hormones and vaccines, lack of trust in the government and not knowing how to register as reasons for not having registered.

Respondents' vaccination status



## Concerns regarding vaccines

While the respondents had general concerns over the vaccines and its impact on them, these concerns did not prevent them from being vaccinated as reflected in the previous question. 93.6% of the respondents only selected one response. 6.4% selected more than one response.

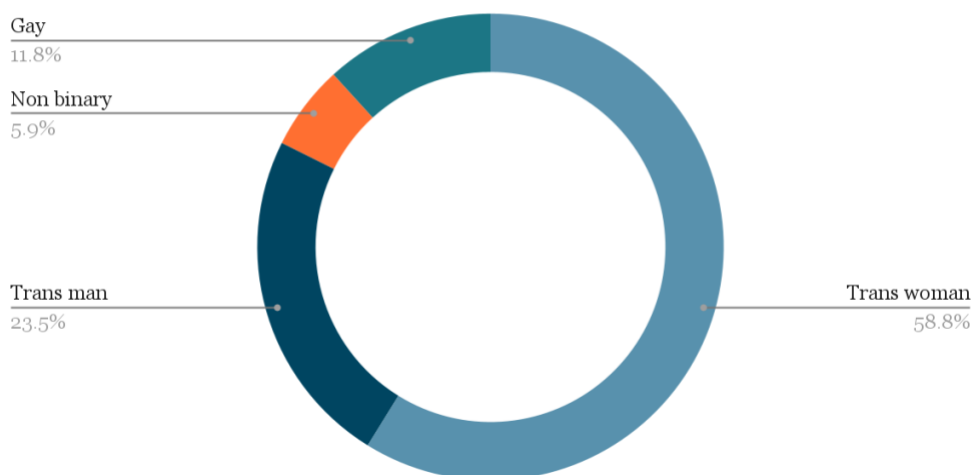
155 respondents (70.5%) stated that they did not have any concerns over getting vaccinated. Concerns by the respondents were related to:

Concerns	Percentage of respondents
Compatibility of vaccines with HRT and trans & non-binary health related issues	8.2%
Discrimination at vaccination center based on SOGIESC	7.7%
Compatibility of vaccines with HAART	3.7%
The use of MySejahtera and the militarized nature of the vaccination process	0.5%
Compatibility of the vaccine available in Malaysia with the country in which the respondent works	0.5%
Don't know how to register	0.5%
Trust deficit in government	0.5%

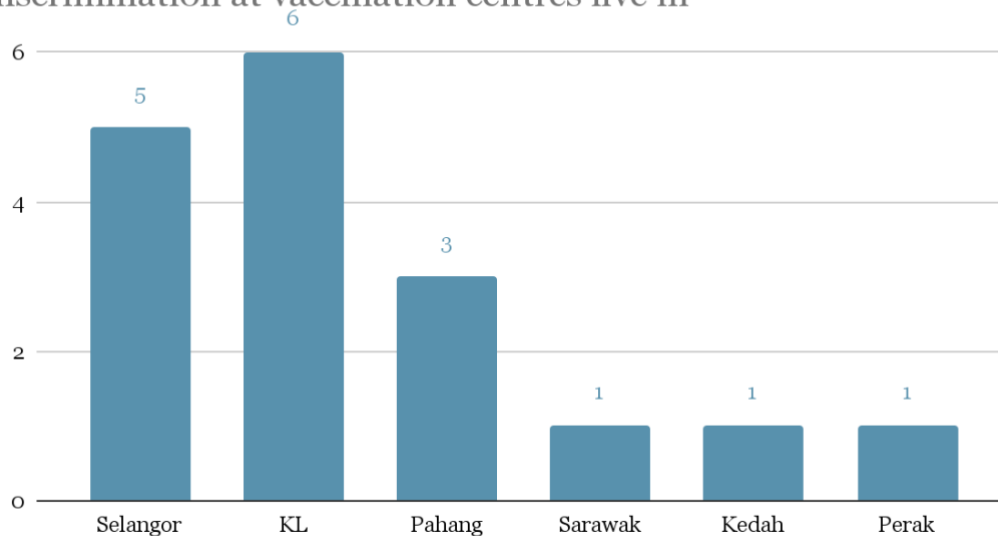
## Discrimination at vaccination center based on SOGIESC

Of the 17 respondents who indicated that they were concerned regarding discrimination at vaccination centers, 16 are Malaysians, while 1 respondent is a foreigner. 15 of the 17 identified as trans and non-binary persons. Meanwhile, the other two respondents identified as gay. The 17 respondents are from six states in Malaysia– Selangor, Kuala Lumpur, Pahang, Sarawak, Kedah and Perak.

Gender identities or sexual orientation of respondents who raised concerns re discrimination at the vaccination centre



States in which respondents' who raised concerns regarding discrimination at vaccination centres live in



A trans woman respondent highlighted that gender segregation based on the gender marker on the identification card at the quarantine centers resulted in trans women being placed in quarantine centres for men. The non-recognition of trans and gender diverse people under the law causes misgendering, miscategorization and degrading and humiliating treatment of all trans and gender diverse people. Suhakam's Study on Discrimination against Transgender Persons based in Kuala Lumpur and Selangor (2019) found 57 of 100 trans and intersex respondents experienced challenges in accessing services with government actors and departments because of their gender identity and gender expression.

These concerns show a correlation between the lack of legal gender recognition in Malaysia for trans and gender diverse people, criminalisation, increasing anti-LGBT sentiments and the increased challenges and stress in accessing public and government services.

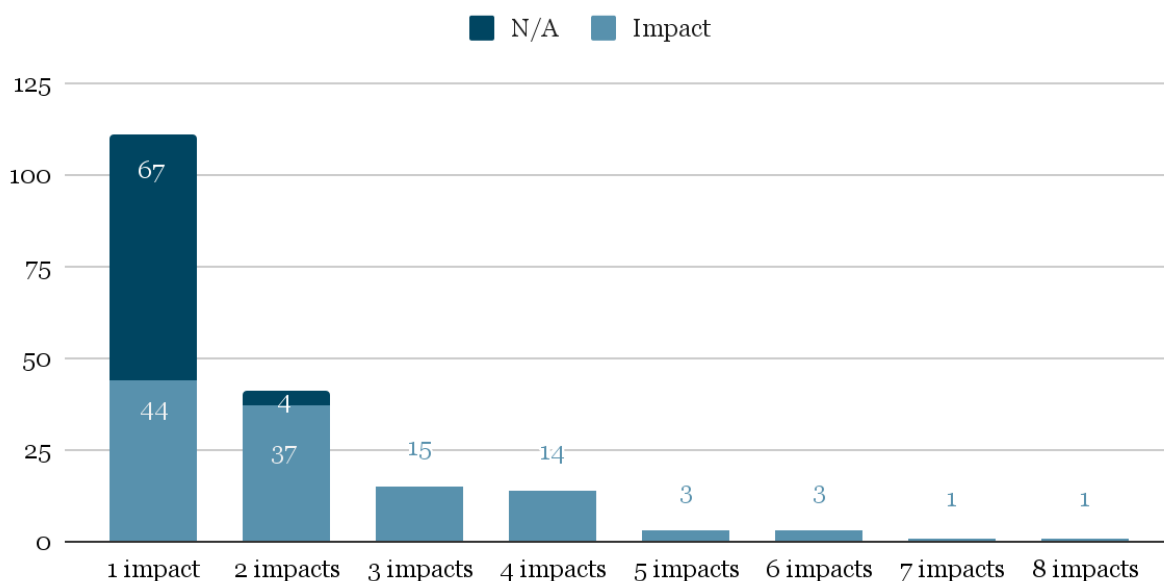
A respondent who had received both doses highlighted that they were concerned about having to deal with police and RELA at the vaccination center. Their response suggests that stress among LGBTQ persons could increase with the presence of law enforcement agencies given the criminalisation of LGBTQ persons in Malaysia.

These concerns underscore the urgent need for comprehensive legal reforms in relation to LGBTQ persons. This includes repeal of laws that criminalise LGBTQ persons and legal gender recognition for trans and gender diverse persons in Malaysia to alleviate stress and anxiety over being misgendered and being subjected to humiliating and degrading treatment. In addition, the findings also show a need for a guideline on providing gender sensitive and inclusive Covid-19 response.

## Impact of the pandemic

The respondents were allowed to pick more than one response for this question. In total 111 respondents (50.5%) selected only 1 response. Of which, 67 respondents (30.5%) selected not applicable. Four additional respondents also selected not applicable, however together with an impact. This brings the total of non-applicable responses to 71 responses (32.3%).

### Number of impacts of the pandemic selected by the respondents



18.6% of the respondents selected two impacts. Meanwhile, at least 8 respondents (3.6%) picked 5 or more impacts.

The respondents indicated that they experienced the following impacts over the period of the pandemic with deterioration of mental health and well-being over the pandemic being the highest impact among the respondents as indicated by 41.4% of the respondents.



The impact can be categorized into a few categories:

### 1. Health and well-being-related impacts

Impact	Percentage of respondents
Deterioration of mental health well-being	41.4%
Limited access to healthcare services, including mental health services	13.6%
Limited access to specific healthcare needs, including hormones, HAART	5.9%
Challenges to access aid because of actual or perceived SOGIESC, refugee status	1.4%
Loss of productivity, restlessness	0.9%
Diagnosed with health conditions	0.9%

### 2. Employment and income-related impacts

Impact	Percentage of respondents
Termination of employment or loss of income	26.8%
Pay cuts	0.9%
Furloughed due to pandemic	0.5%

At least five respondents shared additional information about the severe economic impact that they faced. One respondent shared that they were stressed over their ability to pay their rent. Another respondent shared that they lacked access to food because of rising cost of living during the pandemic and termination of employment during the pandemic. One respondent noted that they are grateful for SEED and other groups that have been providing support throughout the pandemic.

### 3. Discrimination, harassment and violence based on SOGIESC by state actors

Impact	Percentage of respondents
Harassment at roadblocks because of SOGIESC (e.g. phones being checked)	3.6%
Fear of going out because of police	0.5%
State reprisal	0.5%

All eight respondents (5 trans women, 2 gay men, 1 non-binary person) who reported harassment indicated that their experiences were made worse due to their gender expression and perceived and actual sexual orientation and gender identity. Four of the respondents shared their experiences with LGBT human rights groups. Meanwhile the other four did not take any action. Five of the eight respondents who reported harassment by the police were from Kuala Lumpur, while the rest were from Selangor (2) and Pahang (1).

### 4. Discrimination and harassment based on SOGIESC by non-state actors

Impact	Percentage of respondents
Harassment from people in your surroundings because of your SOGIESC (neighbours, work colleagues, friends, etc.)	3.2%
Online gender based violence & harassment	0.5%
Intimate partner violence	0.5%

A trans woman respondent shared that she was **disturbed by her neighbours** because of her gender identity. Although she reported the disturbance to the police and others, no action was taken. Nonetheless, it acts as a stop-gap measure to prevent further escalation.

Two respondents highlighted issues in relation to **online gender based violence** in the other sections of the survey. A trans woman respondent raised concerns over doxing and breach of privacy, particularly in relation to dissemination of personal information, including name as per identification card and legal documents on social media platforms.

The two respondents also highlighted the condemnation of LGBT persons and the degrading and toxic nature of conversations in relation to LGBT persons on social media platforms. A lesbian respondent shared that the situation makes them sad and isolated although people in general are not aware of their sexual orientation because she hides her identity.

## 5. Loss of support system

Impact	Percentage of respondents
Separation from intimate partner(s)	21.8%

## 6. Family-related impact

Impact	Percentage of respondents
Forced to move in with non-accepting family members	4.5%
Loss of familial support (being isolated, disowned, forced to move out, etc) because of SOGIESC	3.6%
Subjected to violence by family members because of SOGIESC, or because you were outed	2.7%

In total, 10 respondents were forced to move in with non-accepting family members. Of which, two respondents were between 12 - 18 years old and 21 - 24 years old respectively. While the rest were between 19 - 24 years old.

Of the 10 respondents, at least 3 respondents also selected that they experienced loss of employment or termination. This suggests that they may have been forced to move in with their non-accepting family members due to loss of employment during the pandemic. All 10 respondents noted that their mental health deteriorated.

Six respondents shared that they were **subjected to violence by their family members** during the pandemic. All respondents are Malaysians and based in

Selangor (3), Pulau Pinang (1), Kedah (1) and Sabah (1), The age groups of the respondents are as follows:

- 12 - 18 years old (1)
- 19 - 24 years old (2)
- 25 - 30 years old (3)

The 6 respondents identify as:

- lesbian, agender (1)
- Non-binary (2)
- Trans woman (1)
- Gay, bisexual (1)
- Bisexual, queer, cisgender woman (1)

Four of the six respondents also experienced harassment by people in their surroundings because of their sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression. Meanwhile, two were also terminated from employment.

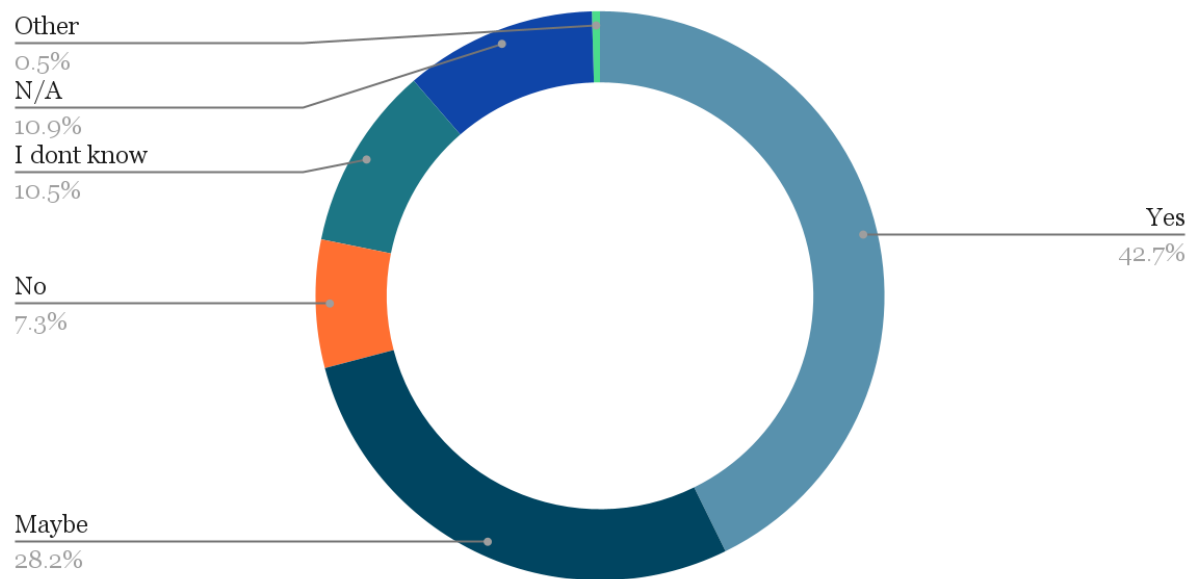
## 7. Impact as a result of administrative delays:

Impact	Percentage of respondents
Delayed renewal of visa delayed access to healthcare services	0.5%
Delayed Syariah Court processes made it difficult to file a complaint about violation of child custody order by other parent and enforce action	0.5%

Is there a correlation between the respondents’ experiences and increasing anti-LGBT narratives in Malaysia?

94 respondents (42.7% ) feel that the increasing anti-LGBT narratives exacerbated their experiences during the pandemic. Meanwhile, 62 respondents (28.2%) said maybe.

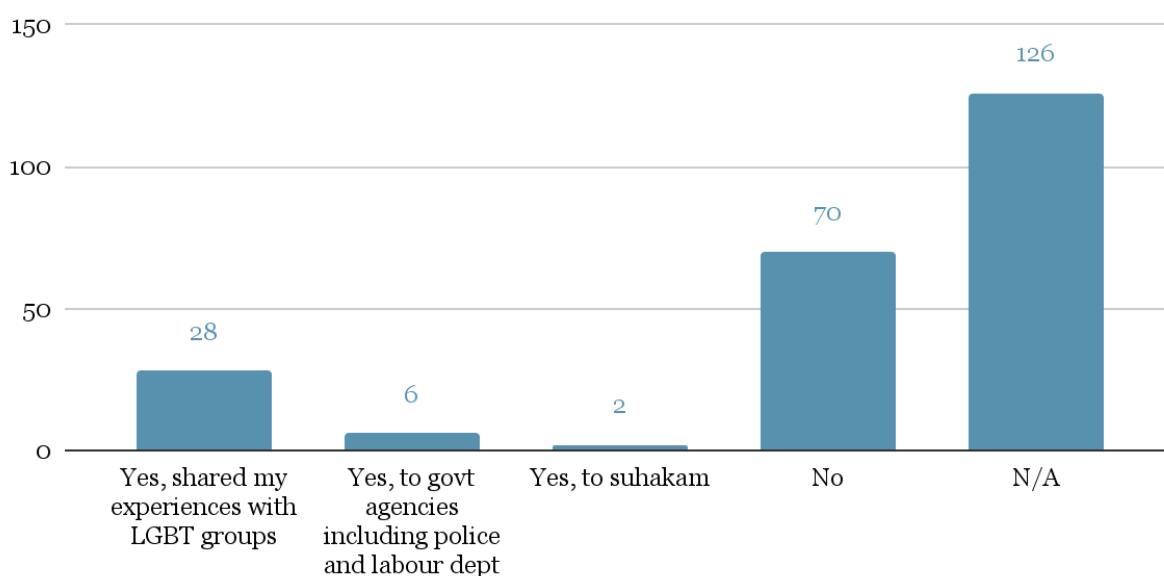
Do you think your experiences were made more challenging because of the increasing anti-LGBT narratives in Malaysia?



## Reporting cases of discrimination during the pandemic

When asked if the respondents reported cases of discrimination that they experienced during the pandemic, only six of the respondents (2.7%) said that they reported their cases of discrimination to the police or government agencies, such as the Labour Department. The two respondents who lodged complaints with Suhakam were trans women. Meanwhile, the respondents who lodged reports with the police and government agencies were trans women (2), gay men (2), bisexual (1) and lesbian (1).

### Number of respondents who reported their cases of discrimination and/or violence during the pandemic



70 respondents (31.8%) said no, of which five respondents selected no and not applicable. Meanwhile, two others selected no and shared their experiences with activists.

126 of the respondents (57.3%) said that the question was not relevant to them.

## Part 3: Impact of anti-LGBT narratives and sentiments

In this section, we asked the participants to:

1. Rate the impact of anti-LGBT narratives
2. Select impact that the respondents have experienced as a result of the anti-LGBT narratives

The following types of anti-LGBT narratives were shared as examples:

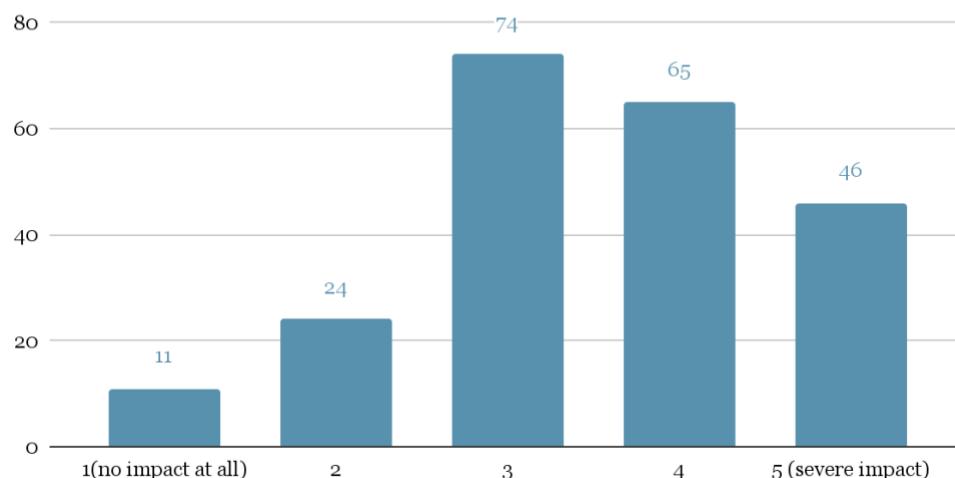
- Statements by politicians e.g. to arrest and rehabilitate trans people
- Proposed amendments to increase punishment against LGBTQ persons
- Misinformation by anti-LGBT groups
- General portrayal of LGBTQ persons in the media
- Increasing anti-LGBT sentiments online

### Impact of anti-LGBT narratives on the respondents on a scale of 1 - 5.

On a scale of 1 and 5, with 1 being no impact at all and 5 being severely impacted, the respondents were asked to rate the impact of the anti-LGBT narratives on them. Only 35 respondents (15.9%) rated impact between 1 and 2.

111 respondents (50.4%), on the other hand, selected 4 and 5, with 5 being severely impacted in relation to the impact of the anti-LGBT narratives on them.

The respondents' self assessment of impact of anti-LGBT narratives on them



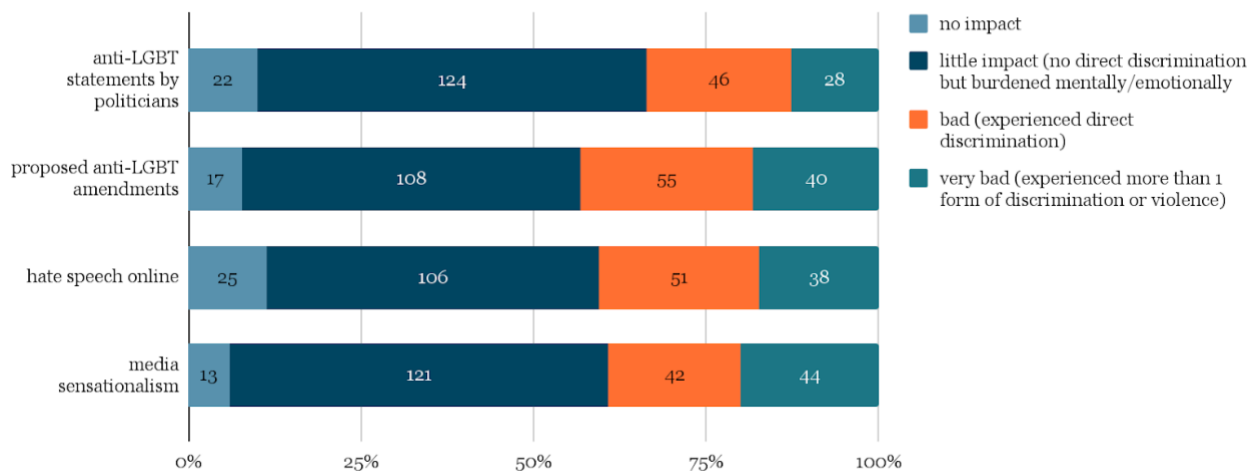


## Impact of four types of anti-LGBT narratives

The following question asked the participants to rate the impact four types of anti-LGBT narratives on them on a scale of 1 to 4:

- 1) no impact,
- 2) little impact (No direct discrimination but burdened or stressed mentally/emotionally),
- 3) bad (Experienced direct discrimination),
- 4) very bad (Experienced more than 1 form of discrimination or violence)

Impact of anti-LGBT narratives of the respondents



### Anti-LGBT statements by politicians

124 respondents (56.4%) stated that anti-LGBT statements by politicians caused them emotional and mental burden—the highest among all four types of anti-LGBT narratives.

46 (20.9%) on the other hand, said that they experienced direct discrimination, while 28 others (12.7%) stated that experienced more than one form of discrimination or violence.

Only 22 respondents (10%) said that statements by politicians had no impact on them.

The forms of discrimination did not fall within the scope of the survey, and could be further explored through other research.

## **Proposed anti-LGBT amendments**

Only 17 respondents (7.7%) said that the proposed anti-LGBT amendments had no impact on them.

In total, 95 respondents (43.2%) said that they experienced discrimination as a result of proposed anti-LGBT amendments, with 55 respondents (25%) experiencing direct discrimination, and 40 others (18.2%) experienced more than one form of discrimination or violence as a result of the proposed amendments.

108 respondents (49.1%) said that they experienced stress due to the proposed amendments.

## **Hate speech online**

25 respondents (11.4%) said that they experienced no impact from hate speech against LGBT people online.

Online hate speech is the second highest contributor to direct discrimination, with 51 respondents having experienced direct discrimination and 38 respondents having experienced one or more forms of discrimination and violence.

Meanwhile, 106 respondents said that they experienced emotional and mental burden as a result of online hate speech.

## **Media sensationalism**

Only 13 respondents (5.9%) stated that media sensationalism of LGBT news had no impact on them. Meanwhile, 121 respondents (55%) said that they faced little impact or were emotionally and mentally burdened as a result of media sensationalism. 86 respondents (39.1%) stated that media sensationalism led them to experience direct discrimination. Of which, 44 respondents (20%) said that they experienced more than one form of discrimination or violence.

Among all four types of anti-LGBT narratives, media sensationalism scored lowest in terms of having no impact on the respondents, second highest in relation to stress among respondents and highest level of multiple forms of discrimination or violence.

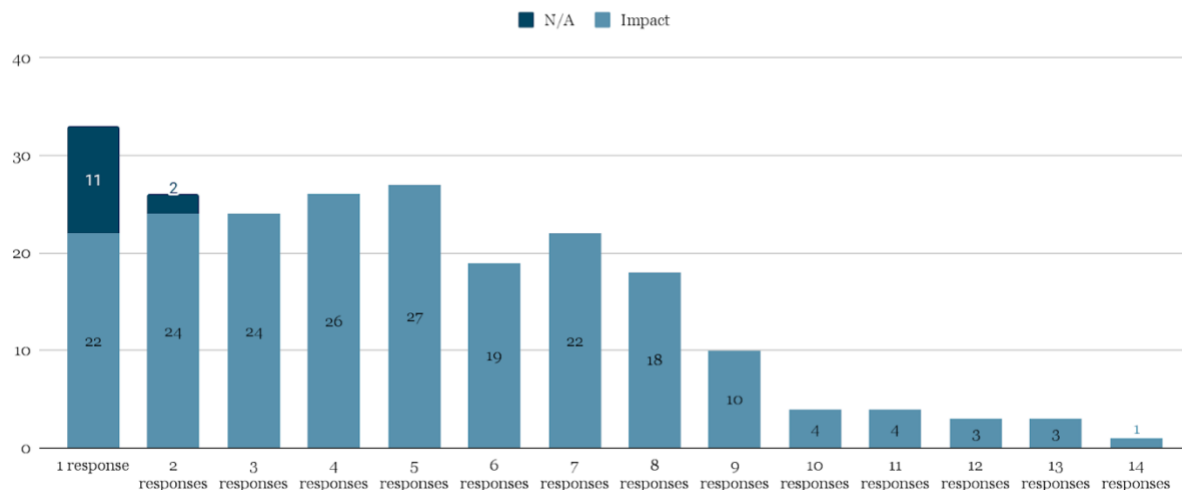
From the findings, it can be deduced that anti-LGBT narratives by state and non-state actors alike cause:

1. Increased minority stress among LGBT persons. Between 48% - 56% of the respondents experienced increased sense of stress as a result of the various manifestations of anti-LGBT narratives.
2. Multiple of forms of discrimination and violence against LGBT persons. Based on the findings between 74 - 95 respondents (37% - 43%) experienced at least one form of direct discrimination as a result of the anti-LGBT narratives by state and non-state actors
3. Comparatively, anti-LGBT statements by politicians and media sensationalism cause slightly higher level of stress among the respondents. Meanwhile, proposed anti-LGBT amendments and hate speech online show higher levels of direct discrimination among the respondents.

## Impact of anti-LGBT narratives

The findings show that the respondents faced multiple impacts as a result of anti-LGBT narratives. Only 33 respondents (15%) selected one response for this question. Of these, 11 respondents (5%) selected no impact at all. Two other respondents selected no impact and an impact. The rest of the respondents selected between 2 and 14 impacts.

Number of responses selected by the respondents as impacts of anti-LGBT narratives



The findings show that the anti-LGBT narratives increased stress, emotional and mental health burden, self censorship and a decreased sense of safety among respondents. Self censorship manifests in:

Impacts	Percentage of respondents
Toned down my 'gayness', 'queerness', 'transness' at home and/or other places to avoid trouble	47.7%
Reduced social media postings sharing of LGBT content	44.1%
Increased sense of fear to express affection publicly with intimate partner	35.5%
Increase sense of fear of being in LGBT spaces or attending LGBT events	32.3%
Increased sense of fear of being in public places	27.7%

20% of the respondents noted that they experienced increased anti-LGBT conversations at home, family chat groups or among family members.

At least 90 respondents (40.9%) stated that they felt more energised to organize or support other LGBT groups and persons. The desire and motivation to support other LGBT persons during the pandemic must be located within the context where LGBT are already criminalised, face increased anti-LGBT backlash, and lack access to social support services. As such, the respondents are also responding to these severe gaps, marginalisation and isolation faced by other LGBT persons in Malaysia.

One respondents shared that they were always told by others not to come out or be visible about their sexual orientation out of fear of them being threatened or losing his job as a counsellor. They faced multiple forms of censorship, including not being allowed to express that they are an LGBT-affirming counsellor. As a result, despite their desire to fill the much needed mental health gaps in the LGBT community, they felt that they “...can't effectively support the community AND make a living safely” and hoped to migrate out of Malaysia.

### Summary of impacts faced by the respondents due to anti-LGBT narratives:

Impacts	Percentage of respondents
Increased stress, unwanted emotions/reactions & mental health burden	55.9%
Toned down my 'gayness', 'queerness', 'transness' at home and/or other places to avoid trouble	47.7%
Reduced social media postings sharing of LGBT content	44.1%
Increased fear of being outed	41.4%
Increased fear of discrimination and/or violence by friends, neighbours, colleagues & public	41.4%
More energised to organize or support other LGBT groups & persons	40.9%
Thought of or made plans to migrate or seek asylum	38.6%
Increased sense of fear to express affection publicly with intimate partner	35.5%

Increase sense of fear of being in LGBT spaces or attending LGBT events	32.3%
Increased sense of fear of being in public places	27.7%
Increased anti-LGBT conversations at home, family chat groups or among family members	20.0%
Loss of familial support (being isolated, disowned, forced to move out, etc)	12.3%
Lost my job because of discrimination based on SOGIESC	11.4%
Subjected self to self harm	10.0%
Increased pressure to change my SOGIESC, including through marriage	9.5%
Harassment from people in your surrounding (neighbours, work colleagues, friends, etc.	9.5%
Violence by family members	2.7%
Increased need to protect closeted individuals	0.5%

## Part 4: Support

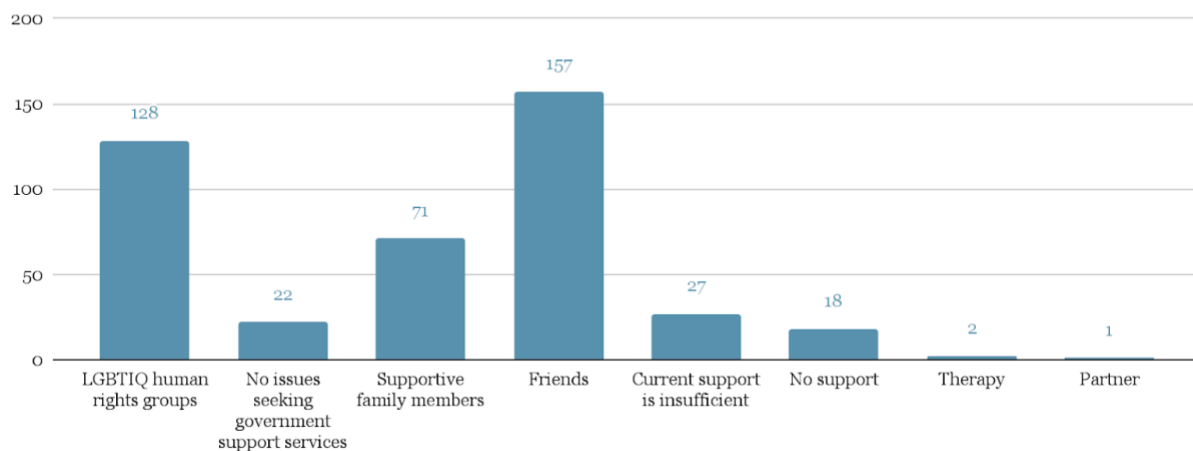
In this section, we asked the participants about the types of support that they have, their level of comfort in reporting cases of discrimination to government agencies and reasons for their discomfort.

### Existing support system

The respondents were allowed to select more than one response for this question. 88 respondents (40%) selected one response. Meanwhile, 132 respondents (60%) selected more than one response. Of which, 65 (29.5%) and 55 (25%) respondents selected two and three responses respectively. Friends are part of 157 respondents' (71.4%) support system, while 128 respondents (58.2%) have access to LGBT human rights groups.

71 respondents (32.3%) had supportive family members. 18 respondents (8.2%) on the other hand stated that they had no support, and 27 (12.3%) stated that support that they currently had was insufficient or inadequate.

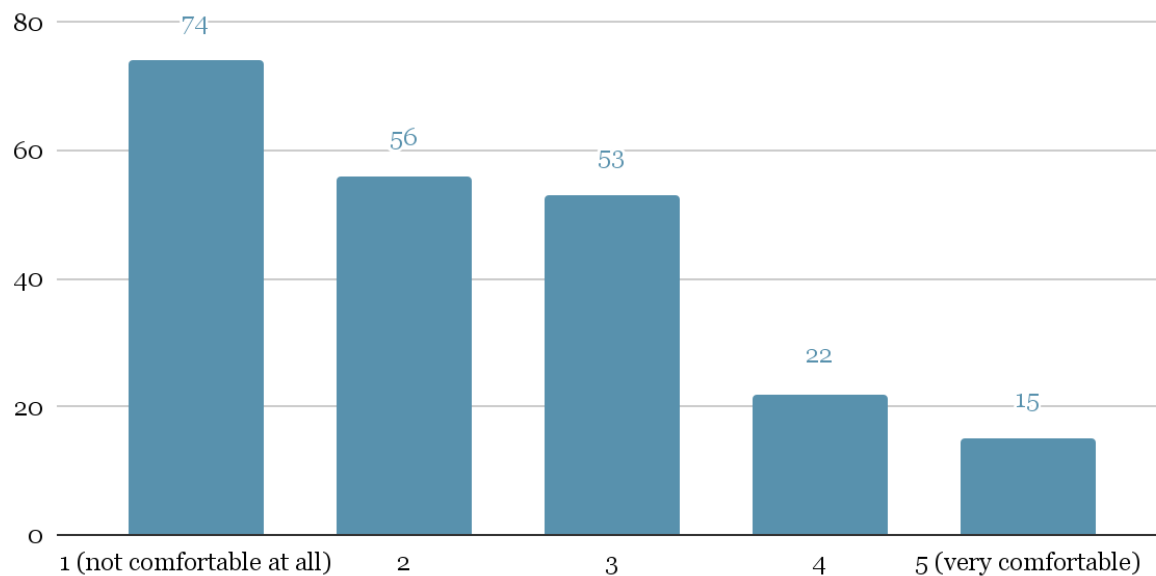
The respondents' access to support





## Are the respondents comfortable with reporting cases to government agencies on a scale of 1 to 5 (1 being not comfortable at all and 5 being very comfortable)

The respondents level of comfort in reporting cases of discrimination and violence to government agencies



Only 37 respondents (16.8%) selected 4 and 5, which indicates that they are comfortable and very comfortable respectively in reporting cases of discrimination and violence that they face to government agencies..

Meanwhile, 59.1% of the respondents noted that they were not comfortable reporting cases to government agencies, 74 respondents (33.6%) noted that they were not comfortable at all with lodging police reports, followed by 56 respondents (25.5%) who selected 2.

The findings shows that the respondents' experienced a trust deficit due to lack of protection from discrimination, fear of being outed and the impact of being outed, and the fear of being subjected to discrimination and media sensationalism. These all pose as substantive barriers towards seeking justice. These barriers exist against a backdrop of criminalisation of LGBT persons and increasing anti-LGBT sentiments by state and non-state actors. Therefore, the causal links are clear.

72.7% of the respondents noted that they did not think that the government agencies will take their case seriously, which indicates a high trust deficit towards the government agencies, including the police. Some comments include, 'Slim chance of anything being done by government agencies to mitigate the situation', 'I don't think they will care', 'I don't believe in police and I don't think LGBT people are covered under this country's

laws anyway...' and 'Not gonna share or report because it's not legal or acceptable in our country, it'll make me strange'.

A young trans woman respondent shared that they had not reported multiple sexual assaults that they experienced due to fear of being perceived as a sex worker and further subjected to arrest, although they are not a sex worker.

Another respondent who identified as gay shared that they were arbitrarily stopped and checked by police officers. The officers said to him, "do you know that gays are not allowed in this country?"

67 respondents (30.5%), on the other hand, noted that they were not sure of how to go about lodging a report.

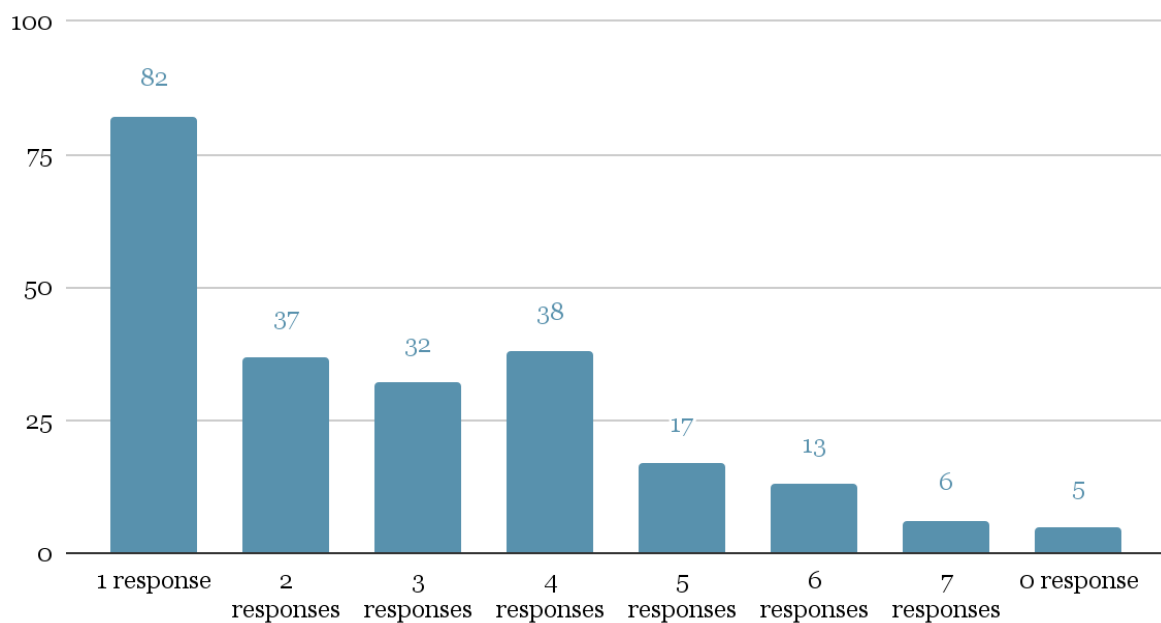
The respondents cited the following reasons as factors that prevented them from reporting cases of discrimination and violence to government agencies, including the police.

Reasons	Percentage of respondents
I don't think that they will take my case seriously	72.7%
I don't want to make things worse	32.3%
I am afraid the media will find out about my case	31.4%
I am not sure how to go about it	30.5%
I am not out yet, and I don't want people, especially my family members and friends to find out about my SOGIESC	28.2%
There is no guarantee of protection from discrimination by government agencies (0.5%)	0.5%
I'm afraid I'll be subjected to homophobia or transphobia in the event I have to disclose me gender/sexuality	0.5%
I am afraid they will directly discriminate me, including with violence	0.5%
Fear of losing my job	0.5%

Meanwhile, 18.6% of the respondents selected that their situation had not required intervention by government agencies. At least 5 respondents (2.3%) left the question blank. One respondent stated that they had not experienced any direct discrimination based on their sexual orientation or gender identity. However, they responded to the question.

At least 133 respondents (60.5%) selected more than one response. 87 respondents (37.3%), on the other hand, selected only one response.

### Number of responses selected by the respondents



# Recommendations

These are some recommendations based on the findings of the survey.

## Ministry of Health

1. Develop guidelines to ensure friendly, inclusive and non-discriminatory delivery of services at the vaccination center. This includes not misgendering trans and gender diverse persons
2. To adopt the [ASPIRE Guidelines](#) developed by the Independent Expert on SOGI, which introduces six fundamental actions to ensure a Covid-19 response free from violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity. ASPIRE stands for:
  - **Acknowledgement**, which includes the critical first step of acknowledging that LGBT persons are everywhere (and that they are hard-hit by the pandemic). As mentioned above, LGBT persons are diverse and have intersecting identities, which exacerbate the impact of Covid-19 on them.
  - **Support** the work of LGBT civil society and human rights defenders (and learn from their significant achievements).
  - **Protect** LGBT persons from violence and discrimination in the pandemic context (and prosecute perpetrators).
  - **Indirect** discrimination avoidance.
  - **Representation** of LGBT persons in the process of design, implementation and evaluation of COVID-19 specific measures is key (and reflect their voices).
  - **Evidence-gathering** concerning the impact of COVID-19 on LGBT persons must be gathered (and States must follow good practices).

## Ministry of Women, Development and Community and Ministry of Home Affairs

1. Introduce a gender recognition act to legally recognize and protect trans and gender diverse persons from discrimination on the basis of their gender identity. The discrimination at vaccination centers and reduced access to Covid-19 relief are closely linked to the lack of legal gender recognition. The right to health is a fundamental human right that must not be denied on the basis of gender
2. Repeal laws that criminalize LGBT persons based on sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression given the magnitude of its impact, especially on access to redress and remedies, ability to live with dignity, privacy and safety, among others
3. Carry out gender sensitivity, inclusivity and diversity trainings with law enforcement and government agencies.

## About Us



**Justice for Sisters** is a human rights group working towards meaningful protection, promotion and fulfilment of human rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, queer (LGBTIQ+) and gender diverse persons in Malaysia. For more information, please visit <https://justiceforsisters.wordpress.com>



**Diversity Malaysia** empowers the Mandarin speaking LGBTIQ community through education and community building initiatives. Diversity Malaysia also published Malaysia's first LGBT legal handbook.



**PLUHO, People Like Us Hang Out!** supports LGBTQ people in Malaysia through community-building, empowerment and services. PLUHO's key services include:

- The BlueBird project connects LGBTQ persons to LGBTQ affirming therapists.
- Rumah Angkat, an inclusive transitional home initiative co-run by PLUHO and Pelangi Campaign.

For more information, please email [general@pluho.org](mailto:general@pluho.org)



**Queer Lapis** aims to provide the queer family and our allies with queer views, queer voices, queer resources, queer history, queer randomness and queer us! Queer Lapis is brought to you by the LGBTQ community in Malaysia for the LGBTQ community and our allies. For more information, please visit <https://www.queerlapis.com>



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