

# Professionals' attitudes and knowledge on the specific needs of LGBTQI+ migrants & refugees

National Report –  
Poland



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## Fostering inclusion of LGBTQI+ migrants at local level

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# 1. INTRODUCTION

This report provides an in-depth analysis of the integration challenges and experiences of LGBTQI+ migrants and refugees in Poland, focusing on their access to services, social inclusion, and attitudes of local authorities, migrant organizations, and LGBTQI+ advocacy groups. The study is situated within the broader context of Poland's evolving migration landscape, marked by the influx of refugees from Ukraine and ongoing struggles for LGBTQI+ rights and recognition.

The report highlights the intersectional challenges faced by LGBTQI+ migrants and refugees, emphasizing their dual vulnerability as members of both LGBTQI+ community and migrant or refugee population. By examining current policies, practices, and data, the study identifies significant gaps in knowledge, systemic shortcomings, and societal prejudices that hinder their integration and access to basic rights.

Through a combination of desk research, surveys, and qualitative interviews, the study captures the lived experiences of LGBTQI+ individuals with migration backgrounds. It also sheds light on the perspectives of key stakeholders, including local government representatives and organizations supporting migrants and LGBTQI+ communities. The findings underscore the need for targeted training, policy development, and sensitization efforts to address the unique needs of LGBTQI+ migrants and refugees effectively.

This report serves as a resource for policymakers, practitioners, and researchers aiming to develop inclusive strategies that promote equality, protect human rights, and foster community cohesion. By bridging the knowledge gap, it aspires to contribute to a more supportive and inclusive environment for LGBTQI+ migrants and refugees in Poland.

## 2. METHODOLOGY

The report consists of three parts: a review of available data (desk research), survey data analysis and qualitative research, namely analysis of conducted interviews.

Desk research covered current legislation, the practice of applying the law, available policies, programs and guidelines, strategies and plans, as well as statistical data, studies and reports on LGBTQI+ migrants and refugees, as well as biases among local authorities and organizations, as well as knowledge gaps and the need to sensitize key actors.

Three surveys were implemented in the research - targeting representatives of local LGBTQI+ NGOs, migrant NGOs and representatives of local authorities.

The survey directed at migrant and LGBTQIA+ organizations was sent directly to them.

It was crucial that the responses came from individuals on the organizations' boards, employees, or volunteers. Invitations to complete the survey were sent via email and through group chats of various organizations (Messenger and WhatsApp). Due to difficulties in gathering responses from this group, direct requests were also made to individuals known to the research team, asking them to participate in the study. The survey was completed by 25 individuals from migrant organizations and 20 individuals from organizations supporting LGBTQI+ people.

The data was collected between September and November 2024.

Survey research with the representatives of the local authorities was conducted in a timeframe from September 30 till October 21, 2024. Computer-assisted web interviewing (CAWI) technique was applied to the research. Prompts containing an electronic link to the electronic survey form were sent to the employees of 24 departments and bureaus of the Wrocław municipal administration and Wrocław organizational units and cultural institutions. The key in selecting respondents was the substantive scope of the department/institution/unit, namely dealing with social, cultural and integration issues. It was also taken into account, whether the employees have contact with external clients on a daily basis, including persons with migration experience. Participation in the survey was anonymous and voluntary, respondents had an opportunity to withdraw their response at any moment before registration of the response. Ultimately, 145 responses were collected in the stated time frame.

Qualitative research was conducted through conducting 10 interviews with LGBTQI+ people with migration experience. All interviews were conducted in October, 2024 remotely, with people residing in Wrocław. The analysis of the in-depth interviews involved three stages. At first, guided by the principles of thematic content analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006), a network of categories taking into account recurring themes was created based on a careful and repeated reading of the collected material. Next, those categories were ordered according to

the research questions and the theoretical context. Those categories were then verified once more by comparing them to the transcription of interviews, which were later named and described.

## 3. OVERVIEW OF THE EXISTING LITERATURE

### 3. 1. Statistical information on LGBTQI+ persons with experience of migration

#### STATISTICAL INFORMATION ON LGBTQI+ PERSONS WITH EXPERIENCE OF MIGRATION

According to the latest data, Poland hosts a significant number of third-country nationals, with the largest groups being Ukrainians (522,133), Belarusians (139,544), Georgians (26,666), Indians (23,831), and Russians (18,817) (Urząd do spraw cudzoziemców (Office for Foreigners), 2024). Additionally, Poland has provided temporary protection to approximately 985,104 Ukrainian refugees as of November, 2024 (UNHCR 2024). This brings the total number of Ukrainians residing in Poland to over 1.5 million. By 2019, there are two known cases of granting refugee status due to persecution on the basis of sexual orientation (to a citizen of Morocco and a citizen of Uganda) and one due to persecution on the basis of gender identity (a citizen of Belarus) (Mazurczak, Mrowicki, Adamczewska-Stachura, 2019). In 2024, the Legal Intervention Association reported two more cases of granting international protection on the basis of homosexual orientation (a citizen of Turkmenistan and a citizen of an African country) (SIP, 2024). Such a small number suggests that providing guarantees for the realization of the right to apply for international protection by persons persecuted on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity may not be sufficient in Poland .

The Office for Foreigners does not make available to civil society organizations statistics on asylum applications filed on the basis of having suffered persecution on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity (Ibid.), so it is impossible to obtain information on what percentage of applications filed result in the granting of international protection.

#### STATISTICAL INFORMATION ON LGBTQI+ FOREIGNERS

No data on sexual orientation or gender identity is collected in the registries kept for the entry and stay of foreigners in the Republic of Poland (Law on Foreigners, 2024). However, assuming a conservative estimate that at least 5% of the population is LGBTQI+, and that there are currently about 2.5 million foreigners in Poland (Polish Economic Institute, 2024), at least 125,000 LGBTQI+ foreigners are currently living in Poland. This number may be an underestimate due to the fact that the reason for migration may be persecution based on sexual orientation or gender identity, so the percentage of non-heteronormative people among the foreign community may be higher than in the general population.



## 3. 2. Existing policy and legislative frameworks

According to Łodziński and Szonert (2023), Poland's migration policy has for years been characterized by a lack of specific goals and rules for their implementation. In 2016-2022, the goals of migration policy were created in the areas of other policies: labour market policy and social security policy - the issue of labour immigration; foreign policy - the issue of protection of foreigners; security policy - border protection and fighting border crime; social policy - integration of foreigners, etc. These goals were pursued around the current political context rather than around strategic objectives. This resulted in inconsistency and inter-ministerial competition. One could also observe contradictions between ideological assumptions and the actual effect of actions taken in various ministries. In July 2021, a draft government resolution was prepared for the adoption of the Migration Policy for 2021-2022, but the document was withdrawn, and the department under which it was prepared was dissolved (p. 18).

The first version of Poland's new migration strategy for 2025-2030 was due to be released in September, with the final version to be released in December 2024 (Ministry of the Interior and Administration, 2024). The document is expected to set Poland's strategic direction in terms of migration and migration policy, and the work on the strategy is expected to result in drafts of new legislation, including a law on foreigners, which is expected to close loopholes and create a coherent and coordinated system. Work on legislative changes, which are scheduled for 2025, will be carried out after the adoption of the strategy document (PAP/JP, 2024). In the absence of a general migration policy for the country, the lack of policies directly addressing foreigners from the LGBTQI+ community may not come as a surprise.

In the Rainbow Map of Europe, an ILGA-Europe ranking that measures the level of LGBTQI+ equality in Europe, Poland has ranked last among European Union countries for several years. In 2023, Poland scored 2 out of 6 possible points on the right to asylum. Points were awarded for the existence of the right to seek international protection on the basis of persecution based on sexual orientation and gender identity. No points were awarded, however, for the right to asylum for intergender persons and for the existence of national policies and/or other legal or non-legal measures positively related to asylum that include specific provisions for the needs and rights of LGBTQI+ refugees (e.g., consistent training frameworks for social workers, publicly available national guidelines prepared in cooperation with LGBTQI+ organizations, safe reception centers and accommodation options for LGBTQI+ persons) (ILGA-Europe, 2024).

### FAMILY LIFE

Additional complication for LGBTQI+ foreigners is lack of legal solutions for non-heteronormal Polish citizens. Due to the lack of opportunity to formalize same-sex relationship, Poland has not yet accepted civil unions or same-sex marriages. The transcript (registration) of the foreign certificate of same-sex marriage in Poland's civil state register is not possible (WSA, 2019), thus, in the eyes of the law, same-sex couples who have married abroad are strangers to each



other in Poland. This means that same-sex couples do not have the right on a par with different-sex couples to social security, tax benefits, inheritance, as well as the right to burial, the right to make medical decisions when a spouse is unconscious, etc.

## HOUSING

Poland also lacks effective protection against discrimination in the area of private housing rental. The so-called Equality Law (2011) stipulates the prohibition of discrimination based on gender, sexual orientation, race, ethnicity and nationality in the area of housing services, if offered to the public. It follows that public housing and municipal housing resources must be made available to foreigners on the same basis as Polish citizens. However, there is no consensus on whether renting a private apartment meets the definition of a publicly provided service, and landlords may argue that under private ownership they have the right to make their own risk assessment when deciding on a tenant (Prajsnar, 2023). A person who is discriminated against in the rental market can claim damages from the landlord in civil court, but the burden of proof is on the person (*ibid.*).

## EDUCATION

The formal education sector in Poland lacks thorough sexual education, anti-discriminational or intercultural education. In 2021, only 3% of LGBTQI+ youth in Poland confirmed the existence of institutions in their schools that support equal treatment and counter discrimination based on sexual orientation and 2% on gender identity (Winiewski, Malinowska, 2021). Among the most important needs of Ukrainian youth (the most numerous refugee group in Poland) is support from people with competencies in integration, multicultural education, such as intercultural assistants or assistants, which are in short supply in Poland (Tędziągowska, Walczak, & Żelazowska-Kosiorek, 2022).

## HEALTHCARE

In the area of healthcare, transgender people are in a particularly difficult situation, as medical procedures related to gender correction are not reimbursed in Poland. According to Skrzypczak, Bilarzewska and Niebudek (2022), the opinion process is sometimes prolonged, specialists refer to gender stereotypes as part of the diagnosis, and the patient's gender identity is undermined if they do not fit the stereotype. Transgender people also experience prejudice, non-recognition of nonbinarity, insensitivity or violence from professionals, such as the persistent use of forms inconsistent with the patient's identity. Lack of Polish language skills can be an additional barrier to accessing medical services.

### 3. 3. Challenges, prejudices and stereotypes

Most stereotypes and prejudice are phenomena that occur at an unconscious level, and it is extremely difficult to study them. No data is available on the level of prejudice against LGBTQI+ foreigners, especially among those working in various support institutions. What we do have,

however, is declarative data on the attitudes of Polish women and men toward refugees and toward same-sex couples.

As for declarations about Poland's willingness to accept refugees, they change depending on the current political context. The results of a poll for “Wyborcza” newspaper in June 2024 show that openness to refugees has decreased compared to the situation in 2022: 42% of those surveyed are against accepting refugees, 35% are in favor, but only from neighboring countries, such as Ukraine and Belarus, and 14% of those surveyed are in favor of accepting refugees from all over the world. Attitudes toward refugees depend to a large extent on the place of residence, both on the voivodeship (the Łódzkie voivodeship is the most open to refugees, the Świętokrzyskie voivodeship the least) and on the size of the locality (the most open are residents of the largest cities - 32% in favor of accepting refugees from all over the world, the least - residents of cities up to 20,000 - 8% and rural areas - 10%). Respondents also declared high acceptance of a refugee in the role of a doctor (78%) or trade and service worker (77%), but not in the role of a local politician (35%) (Chalimonik and Kortko, 2024).

On the other hand, acceptance towards gays and lesbians is increasing. According to a survey by the Public Opinion Research Center, Polish women and men are increasingly accepting of homosexuals (43%) and less frequently expressing dislike (36%). They are also increasingly likely to believe that gays and lesbians should have the right to show their way of life in public (43%) and to marry (44% - an increase of 10 percentage points over the past three years) (per PAP/zas, 2024).

LGBTQI+ migrants and refugees are one of the most vulnerable groups in society (Danisi et al., 2021). Their intersectional identity makes them vulnerable to discrimination and exclusion at a much higher rate than refugees and heteronormative migrants (Kim, 2022).

This is especially true in countries like Poland, where an anti-immigrant, anti-refugee and anti-LGBTQI+ discourse has been building for several years (Migration Consortium, 2024).

A foreigner is granted refugee status if, as a result of a well-founded fear of persecution in the country of origin on account of race, religion, nationality, political opinion or membership in a particular social group, he is unable or unwilling to take advantage of the protection of that country (Act of June 13, 2003 on granting protection to foreigners on the territory of the Republic of Poland, n.d.). Being an LGBTQI+ person means belonging to a particular social group, the members of which might be afraid of persecution, thus SOGI (Sexual Orientation and Gender Identification) is a basis for seeking international protection. Despite that sexual orientation and gender identity are rarely a basis for applying for international protection, rather they are additional information (Wiśniewska, 2022).

Inclusion of LGBTQI+ migrants and refugees on a local level can be a difficult process, due to the overall situation of LGBTQI+ persons in Poland. According to the report of European Union Agency For Fundamental Rights from 2024, 45% of LGBTQI+ respondents declared, that during the last 12 months before the survey they had experienced discrimination, 16% at least once

in the last 5 years had experienced a physical attack, 90% to some extent had been avoiding holding hands with their partner in public places. In opinion of 42% of the respondents, the level of prejudice and intolerance to LGBTQI+ people in Poland has increased during the last 5 years (European Union Agency For Fundamental Rights, 2024). This situation has its' sources in the lack of systematic solutions, which would "see" LGBTQI+ migrants and refugees as a separate group, that demands support, as well as in lack of appropriate legal protection and in negative attitudes reinforced by negative discourse. Many challenges encountered by local authorities have their source in higher state structures and national law.

## CHALLENGE 1: RECOGNIZING THE SCALE OF THE PHENOMENON

As mentioned, in Poland, there is no data regarding the number of LGBTQI+ migrants and refugees. This situation is not unique compared to other European countries (Danisi et al., 2021). Data on sexual orientation and gender identity (SOGI) are highly sensitive and, therefore, not collected even by actors who regularly support LGBTQI+ refugees and migrants (Danisi et al., 2021).

When it comes to LGBTQI+ refugees, even applications for international protection are not a reliable source of data, as not every LGBTQI+ individual applies for protection on the grounds of sexual orientation and/or gender identity (Danisi et al., 2021).

LGBTQI+ refugees and migrants may also choose not to disclose their sexual orientation and gender identity when seeking "regular" assistance for refugees and migrants. Such decisions may stem from the low sense of security experienced by LGBTQI+ individuals in Poland (Galwas, 2022) and a desire to avoid stigmatization (Bulska et al., 2021).

The inability to recognize the scale of the phenomenon makes it difficult for local authorities' ability to plan actions (their scope and volume) and budgeting expenses in this area. The lack of data may also be an obstacle in applying for external funding for initiatives supporting LGBTQI+ refugees and migrants, as a key component of grant applications involves justifying needs, defining the scale of assistance, and setting indicators. Without data, it is difficult to do this reliably and in a way that reflects the actual situation.

## CHALLENGE 2: THE LEGAL SITUATION OF LGBTQI+ INDIVIDUALS

As mentioned, in Poland, there are no legal regulations regarding same-sex partnerships, including the recognition of queer parents. This reflects the heteronormative, cisgender<sup>1</sup>, and nuclear<sup>2</sup> vision of family prevailing in Polish society and legislation. The Polish constitution

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<sup>1</sup> The term cisgender refers to individuals whose experience of gender identity aligns with the gender assigned to them at birth (Schilt & Westbrook, 2009)

<sup>2</sup> A family is defined as two or more individuals connected as husband and wife, cohabiting partners (of opposite sexes), or as parent and child. Thus, a family may include a couple without children, a couple with one or more children, or a single parent with one or more children (Central Statistical Office, 2024)

defines marriage as a relationship between a man and a woman. Same-sex couples are not allowed to officially adopt children. They may conceal their sexual orientation, allowing one partner to apply for adoption as a single parent. There is no legal right to gender recognition or affirmation. In Poland, an individual seeking recognition of a different gender must pursue a court case<sup>3</sup> and file a lawsuit against their parents. Furthermore, an individual wishing to undergo gender-affirming surgery can only do so after a court ruling in the case (against their parents) has been issued (Mizielińska, 2022; Office of the Commissioner for Human Rights, 2019a).

The lack of legal regulations can impact the inclusion (and support) of individuals, such as those undergoing gender transition. It may also affect assistance and inclusion for minors traveling with a non-biological parent from a same-sex relationship.

### CHALLENGE 3: LOCAL CONDITIONS

The third set of challenges is related to local conditions, including the attitudes of the local community, officials, and the financial and material resources of municipalities and non-governmental organizations. The arrival of a new beneficiary requires actors providing support to develop new methods and procedures for assistance as well as to establish new networks. Organizations experienced this following Russia's full-scale aggression against Ukraine, which resulted in forced migration of refugees on an unprecedented scale (Nowicka et al., 2024). According to UNHCR data, 6,191,800 Ukrainian refugees were registered in Europe, and 1,866,605 Ukrainians applied for some form of international protection in Poland (UNHCR, 2024). Among the Ukrainian refugees were individuals with special needs and particular vulnerabilities, such as persons with disabilities and LGBTQI+ individuals (Bieleninik 2022, Nowicka et al. 2024).

### PREJUDICES AND STEREOTYPES AMONG PUBLIC INSTITUTION REPRESENTATIVES

Prejudices and stereotypes held by representatives of public institutions (including at the local level) towards LGBTQI+ migrants and refugees influence their inclusion at the local level. There is a lack of data specific to Poland on this subject. The following considerations are an attempt to compile various data and predictions regarding how prejudice against LGBTQI+ migrants and refugees may manifest.

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<sup>3</sup> Changing the gender marker on a person's birth certificate is possible by making an additional note attached to the birth certificate. To achieve this, it is necessary to have a valid court ruling. The regulations do not provide for the possibility of making the above-mentioned note at the request of the interested person, which is why it is necessary to obtain a court decision by filing a lawsuit to establish a gender change. Since such a lawsuit must be filed against a specific other party, in cases of gender marker changes, the individual must sue their parents. This requirement often presents significant challenges, for example, if parents are unable to come to terms with their child's transgender identity and, as a result, may obstruct the court proceedings. Conversely, parental support can facilitate the process, reducing it to a formality.

## ATTITUDES TOWARD LGBTQI+ INDIVIDUALS

In Poland, 97% of LGBTQI+ individuals report experiencing microaggressions<sup>4</sup> (Bulska et al., 2021). The most common forms of microaggressions faced by LGBTQI+ individuals include homophobic or transphobic remarks (89%), statements that being heterosexual or cisgender is the only norm (89.1%), and assumptions that all LGBTQI+ individuals are the same (89.4%) (Bulska et al., 2021). Those most frequently encountering microaggressions were reported by LGBTQI+ individuals living in the Podlaskie and Warmian-Masurian voivodeships (northeastern Poland). Experiences of microaggressions correlate with lower life satisfaction, reduced self-esteem, increased symptoms of depression, and suicidal thoughts (Bulska et al., 2021).

The majority of surveyed LGBTQI+ individuals do not disclose their identity at work or in public institutions, fearing worse treatment. Within two years prior to the study, 53% of those who came out experienced discrimination (Bulska et al., 2021). This aligns with data from the EU LGBTQI+ Survey III, where 43% of respondents in Poland reported experiencing discrimination within 12 months of the survey (European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 2024).

Data from national studies (Office of the Commissioner for Human Rights, 2019a, 2019b; Bulska et al., 2021; Galwas, 2022; Górska, 2020; Mizielińska, 2022; Sydow, 2022) mirror those of the European Union LGBTQI+ Survey III. Compared to the EU average, the situation of LGBTQI+ individuals in Poland is significantly more difficult in all areas examined in the survey, including discrimination, violence and harassment, open lifestyle, health and mental health, LGBTQI+ families, education, societal attitudes, governmental responses, and socio-demographic issues (European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 2024).

Regarding societal attitudes, 19% of rural residents admit they would feel ashamed if they had a lesbian or gay family member, while 49% would not. Additionally, 52% of rural residents believe that gay and lesbian individuals should have the right to live according to their own principles. In urban areas, 72% of residents would not feel ashamed to have a gay or lesbian family member (European Social Survey, 10th Round, 2023).

The above findings reflect two different societal perspectives. The Social Situation of LGBTQI+ Individuals in Poland report (Bulska et al., 2021) and the European Union LGBTQI+ Survey III are based on studies involving LGBTQI+ individuals, focusing on their lived experiences, interactions, and perceptions of societal attitudes. These datasets reflect the lived experiences of LGBTQI+ individuals, and thus, they likely indicate a more pessimistic assessment of this group's situation.

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<sup>4</sup> Microaggressions can take the form of verbal or behavioral insults and may be expressed both at the interpersonal level (e.g., during conversations) and at the structural level (e.g., through policies that contribute to the discrimination of minorities) as well as at the cultural level (e.g., by presenting only representatives of the majority in television programs). Importantly, microaggressions do not have to be intentional. (Bulska et al., 2021)

In contrast, data from the European Social Survey are derived from nationally representative samples, where LGBTQI+ individuals are underrepresented. These data reflect society's declared perceptions of LGBTQI+ individuals, which likely results in a more optimistic portrayal of the situation for LGBTQI+ individuals in Poland.

## ATTITUDES TOWARD MIGRANTS

77% of rural residents have no objection to foreigners settling in Poland, if they belong to the same race<sup>5</sup> and ethnic group as Poles. At the same time, less than 30% of rural residents believe that migrants have a positive impact on the Polish economy and culture. 47% of rural residents declare that they would have no issue with migrants from different racial or ethnic groups coming to Poland. 90% of urban residents believe that migrants from the same race or ethnic group can settle in Poland, and 77% hold the same view regarding migrants from different racial or ethnic groups (European Social Survey 10th round, 2023).

In studies using the Bogardus scale (social distance scale), 94% of respondents would accept a person from Ukraine as a colleague, and 92% as a family member (Bilewicz, 2023), indicating a very high level of social acceptance.

## ATTEMPT TO EXTRAPOLATE THE RESULTS

In Polish migration literature, there is a lack of studies addressing the situation of LGBTQI+ migrants and refugees. There are also no works that have attempted to compare and contrast these two groups. An exception is a study on the attitudes of the City Councillors of Poznan during the 2014-2018 term regarding migrants, which also touches the LGBTQI+ issues. However, as the author herself notes, this was an unplanned thread that emerged spontaneously. Migrants and LGBTQI+ individuals are seen by local authorities as residents who are problematic and undesirable. However, these two groups are not perceived by the respondents as homogeneous: there are more acceptable migrants who assimilate and gay individuals from private circles who "don't demand anything," while on the other hand, refugees who are seen as a threat to culture and those provoking and imposing cultural changes, such as participants in pride parades. The negatively perceived groups are viewed as a threat to values associated with Polish identity (Sydow, 2022).

Considering the findings on attitudes toward migrants and refugees, as well as the findings on attitudes toward the LGBTQI+ community, there are grounds to assume that the least negative attitudes may be directed toward LGBTQI+ migrants and refugees who are not "loud" (i.e., visibly active) and are also culturally close.

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<sup>5</sup> Terminology used in the study "European Social Survey" (European Social Survey 10th Round, 2023)



### 3. 4. Main gaps and needs in knowledge and awareness

The needs in terms of knowledge and sensitization of local authorities, migrant organizations, and LGBTQI+ organizations regarding the support of LGBTQI+ migrants will vary depending on the nature of the organization, its area of operation, structure, organizational culture, and many other factors. Therefore, these needs should be examined within each specific organization in order to design training programs that address these needs.

In case of the local authorities, it is observed the lack of studies on the subject matter.

Taking into account the fact that officials have likely had limited contact with LGBTQI+ refugees and migrants, the main gaps and knowledge about clients' needs concern the specifics of this group: issues related to self-definition, the different perceptions of gender and sexual orientation across cultures, the needs of LGBTQI+ refugees and migrants, and the places where help can be obtained. Social actors who were supporting refugees with disabilities for the first time faced similar knowledge needs (Nowicka Monika et al., 2024).

In light of the increasing intercultural diversity in society (observed since 2014, with a sharp rise after 2022), actions have emerged within public administration aimed at supporting employees in terms of social diversity.

City officials in Wrocław regularly participate in training sessions aimed at strengthening intercultural competencies<sup>6</sup> (Intercultural Dialogue Wrocław, 2024). Employees of the Family Support Department at the Municipal Social Welfare Center in Wrocław, including social workers, family assistants, and psychologists, participated in training titled LGBTQ+ Basics – How to Work with and Support LGBTQ+ Community Members. Feedback after the training indicates the need for more similar sessions (Pełnomocniczka Prezydenta Wrocławia ds. Równego Traktowania/Representative of the Mayor of Wrocław for Equal Treatment, 2024).

Employees of the national Office for Foreigners participated in a training organized by the Migration Consortium. The training covered legal issues, the criminalization of LGBTQI+ individuals, as well as topics related to the role of translation when working with LGBTQI+ individuals and inclusive language (Migration Consortium, 2024).

The series of meetings titled Meetings on Orientations, Gender, and Allyship was also organized in Krakow. The meetings were aimed at a wide audience and representatives of the local institutions (Open Krakow, 2024).

The actions mentioned above are sporadic and depend on local authorities themselves. It is unclear how many municipalities in Poland implement similar initiatives. There is a lack of

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<sup>6</sup> In Wrocław, the Intercultural Integration and Education Program, which includes intercultural education training for public institution employees and public services, has been running since 2016



systemic solutions that would allow for increasing knowledge and raising awareness among public institution representatives on a national scale.

### 3. 5. Main risks and intersectional vulnerabilities faced by the LGBTQI+ migrant and refugee population

In 2021, among LGBTQI+ individuals living in Poland, there was an increase in trust towards LGBTQI+ organizations and other non-governmental organizations, while trust in the government, courts, and police decreased. 66% expressed distrust towards local authorities, 29% towards non-LGBTQI+ NGOs, and only 10% towards LGBTQI+ organizations (Górska, 2021). The highest level of trust in local authorities was declared by individuals living in large cities, older individuals, those with higher education, and those who perceived their material situation as better (Górska, 2021, pp. 241-242).

In the context of working environments, LGBTQI+ individuals in Poland feel the most freedom to disclose their gender identity or sexual orientation in the non-governmental sector, and the least in the public sector (Poniat, Skowrońska, 2021). This means that LGBTQI+ employees in the public sector are more likely to fear social stigmatization and worse treatment as a result of revealing their non-heteronormativity at work. As clients of the public sector, nine out of ten LGBTQI+ individuals do not disclose their sexual orientation or gender identity – 30% of LGBTQI+ individuals whose non-heteronormativity was known to public officials experienced discrimination from them (ibid., 2021). Among examples of mistreatment by officials, Poniat and Skowrońska (2021) mention denial of service, asking intimate questions unrelated to the matter at hand, or refusal to address the client by their proper name and gendered forms.

Data on the experience of discrimination faced by LGBTQI+ individuals from migrant organizations is either difficult to access or remains unexplored. The most comprehensive discussion of areas vulnerable to discrimination can be found in a report commissioned by the Campaign Against Homophobia (Bulska et al., 2021).

LGBTQI+ individuals experience discrimination in the following areas:

- Labour market
- Interactions with healthcare workers
- Relations with public officials
- Being in public spaces

Once again, these data do not account for the intersectionality of migration and belonging to the LGBTQI+ community. However, it can be assumed that migrants and refugees are likely to experience discrimination in the same areas of life.

### 3. 6. Methods, practices, local plans and strategies for developing more inclusive policies

The available literature lacks studies and data on local practices and strategies for including LGBTQI+ refugees and migrants in local communities. The following data on local practices is fragmentary (due to the available sources), while the data on local plans and strategies is general in nature (due to the absence of such plans and strategies that distinguish and address the specific needs of LGBTQI+ individuals).

#### LOCAL PRACTICES

Descriptions of activities aimed at LGBTQI+ refugees originate from journalistic articles and representatives of specific organizations. These accounts are fragmentary and highlight isolated efforts. It is difficult to determine how many assistance initiatives have been directed at LGBTQI+ migrants and refugees in Poland at the local level.

Support provided to LGBTQI+ refugees from Ukraine by the Azyl Library in Lublin included the following actions (Jastrzębska, 2022):

- LGBTQI+ refugees from Ukraine were assisted in finding housing, including two families relocated to Berlin.
- A graphic designer was provided with a laptop for work.
- A collection drive was organized for AIDS medications and hormones necessary to continue therapy.

In Warsaw, the Campaign Against Homophobia opened a community center for LGBTQI+ refugees, while Warsaw's Lambda organization launched a Support Center for LGBTQ+ Refugees from Ukraine (Bieleninik, 2022).

In Wrocław, from March 2022 to February 2023, the Kultura Równości Association ran the "LGBT+ Apartment" project, an intervention apartment dedicated to non-heteronormative individuals. This initiative also served LGBTQI+ refugees from Ukraine who were forced to migrate to Wrocław due to Russia's full-scale aggression in Ukraine. The association also trained psychologists working with this group, offered legal and medical support, provided Polish language classes, conducted numerous integration activities, and continues to offer ongoing psychological assistance for LGBTQI+ migrants and refugees (Wielokulturowy Wrocław/Intercultural Wrocław, 2024).

Local plans/strategies for developing inclusive policies for LGBTQI+ migrants/refugees:

Local governments and authorities play a very important role in the inclusion and integration of immigrants in Poland (PAP Local Government Service, 2018) and in Europe (European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions, 2021).

In Poland, only a few cities have adopted local plans/strategies addressing issues related to multicultural diversity, including policies towards incoming migrants and refugees. It is also worth mentioning that there is currently no national integration policy in Poland, and the announced government project (announced on October 21, 2024) only outlines the directions for future actions. Cities that have taken steps towards implementing local plans include Gdansk (Migrant Integration Model - 2016), Poznan (2023), and Wroclaw (2017). In Krakow, where there is a Multiculturalism and Migration Observatory, diagnoses regarding the situation of migrants in the city are being developed, and a program called "Open Krakow" has also been established. A review of available strategic documents on city websites shows that LGBTQI+ migrants and refugees are not identified as a separate group needing targeted support (Obserwatorium Wielokulturowości i Migracji/Multiculturalism and Migration Observatory, 2024; Gdansk City Portal, 2024; Poznan City Council, 2023; Intercultural Dialogue Wroclaw, 2024).

Some cities are funding the establishment of information centers and points for migrants and refugees (e.g., Krakow – Multicultural Center; Wroclaw – City Information Point for Migrants and Refugees WroMigrant operating also in the Dialogue Passage; Lublin – Baobab; Poznan – Migrant Info Point), where newly arrived individuals can seek various forms of support – legal, informational, psychological. Generally, all individuals can use the services of these points regardless of their residency status, age, origin, etc.

### 3. 7. Evaluating capacity building and sensitization programmes

Available plans/strategies have one common characteristic: they approach migrants as one homogenous group, without noticing their diversity. It's not just a question of resident statuses (resident status is a term that refers to the legal right of a foreigner to reside on a territory of a country; in Poland resident status can be confirmed with different documents, such as visa, temporary or permanent stay permit, and valid passport in case of citizens, who have the right to enter and stay visa-free (Office for Foreigners, 2024)), but also a question of their origin, cultural and linguistic distance, but also intersectional qualities, such as disabilities or being a part of LGBTQI+ community.

As existing strategies emphasize an integrational approach (Obserwatorium Wielokulturowości i Migracji/Multiculturalism and Migration Observatory, 2024; City of Gdansk Portal, 2024; City Council of Poznan, 2023; Intercultural Dialogue Wroclaw, 2024), i.e. focusing on activities aimed at both migrant groups and the host society, there seems to be space to level discriminatory attitudes, strengthen the sense of security of LGBTQI+ migrants and refugees and integrate this group into local communities.

The LGBTQI+ group was listed only once in the documents in question, as a group that requires special support in reducing discriminatory practices in the labor market (Homel et al., n.d.).

## 4. SUMMARY OF KEY DATA OBTAINED FROM THE SURVEYS

### 4. 1. Representatives of migrants' organizations/communities

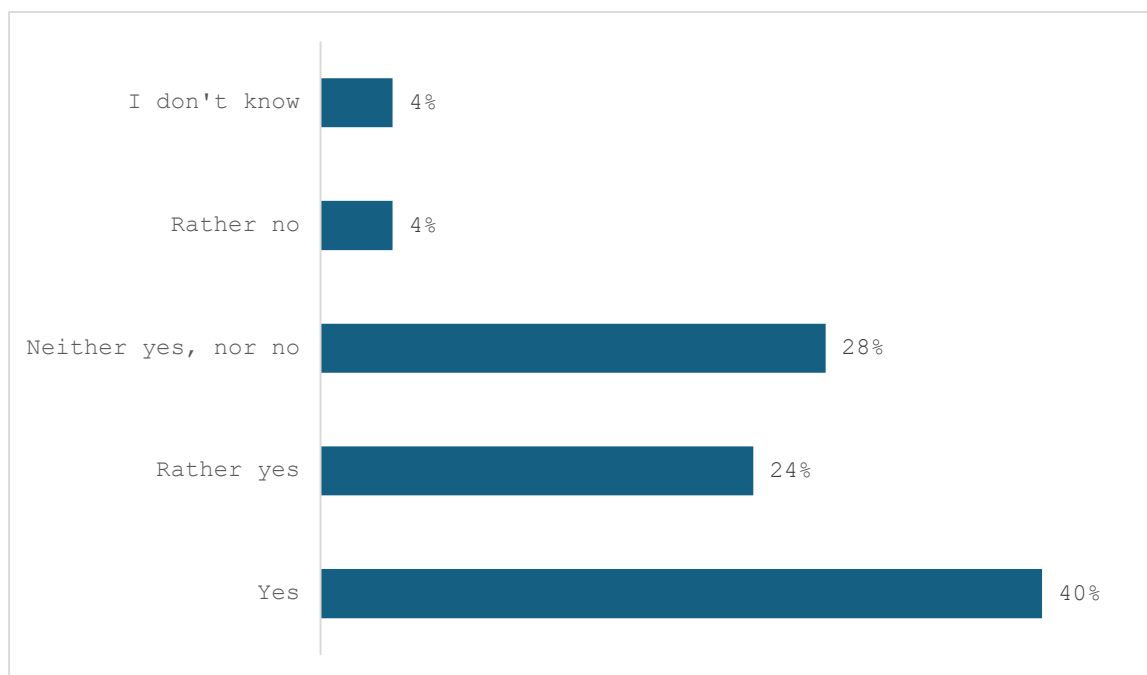
KEY DATA AND CONCLUSIONS OBTAINED AFTER CONDUCTING SURVEYS WITH REPRESENTATIVES OF MIGRANT ORGANIZATIONS AND PEOPLE WITH MIGRATION EXPERIENCE

25 people representing migrant organizations took part in the survey. The largest age group (60%) was represented by people aged 25-39, followed by young people aged 18-24 (24%). The least represented group was those aged 40-54 (16%). No person over the age of 54 took part in the survey. The overwhelming majority of respondents were women (92%), only two men took part in the survey. The sample was overwhelmingly made up of people with higher education (76%), two people had completed postgraduate studies (8%), two had received primary education (8%), one was in the process of studying (4%), and one preferred not to answer the question (4%). The geographic area of the organizations in which the respondents worked was mainly urban (88%), with only three people indicating a non-urban area (12%).

Regarding the roles performed in the organization, the largest group of people surveyed had administrative duties related to the integration of migrant and/or refugees (28%), 3 people dealt with project coordination and culture (12%), two people were involved in organizing events (8%). Single people dealt with: legal support and consultation, social support (including basic information about rights and obligations, communication and redirection to other organizations, entities, etc.), adult or youth education, anti-discrimination, recruitment, promotion, case work. One person was a volunteer, one was looking for a job and one indicated several roles. Nearly half of those surveyed provided support to LGBTQI+ migrants and/or refugees (48%), a third did not work with such a community (28%), and one in four (24%) indicated they did not know if they provided support to LGBTQI+ migrants. Among those who knowingly provided support to LGBTQI+ foreigners, the vast majority (83.33%) did so briefly: 0-3 years. One person provided support between 4-7 years and one between 12-16 years.

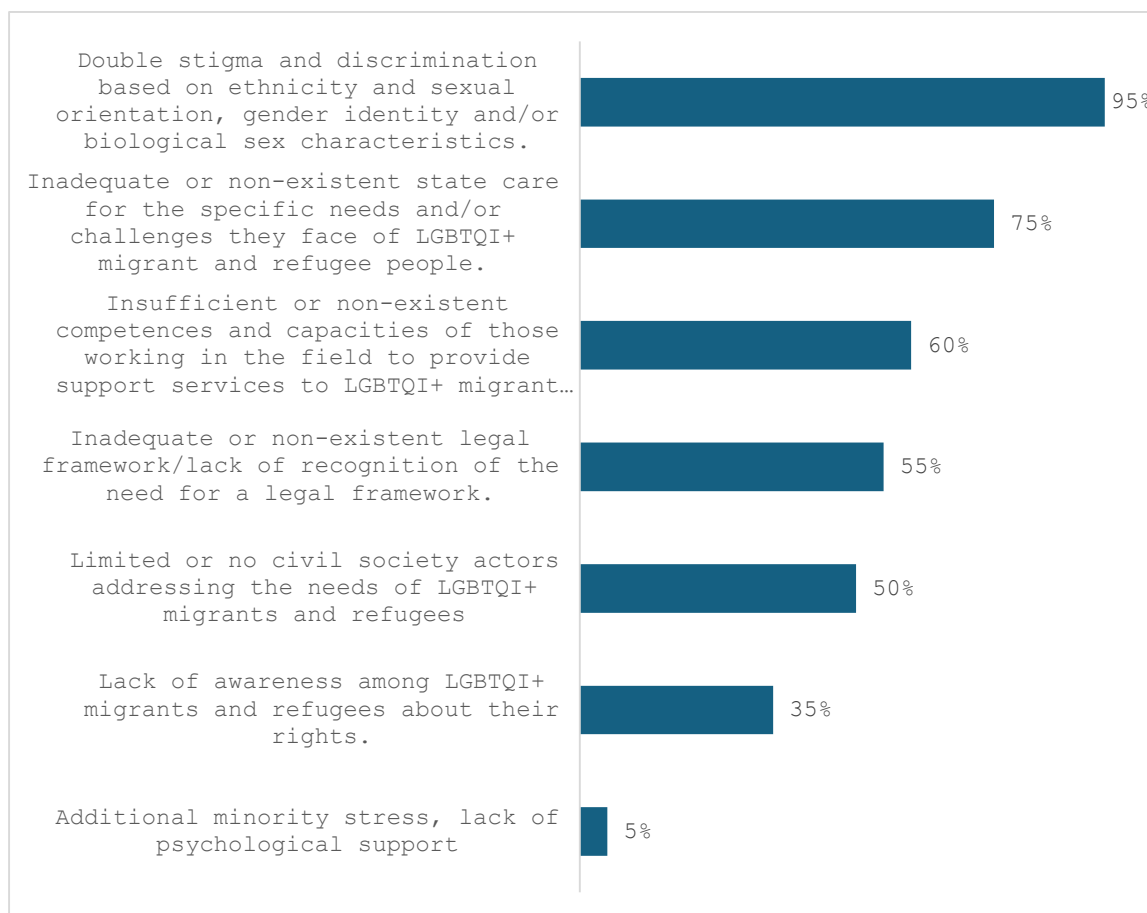
#### NEEDS OF SPECIALISTS PROVIDING SUPPORT TO LGBTQI+ FOREIGNERS

We first asked respondents for their opinion on whether LGBTQI+ migrants and refugees face social exclusion in Poland. 64% of respondents answered in the affirmative, with only one respondent answering in the negative, undecided. Seven people (28%) answered "neither yes nor no," one (4%) "I don't know."



*Figure 1. In your opinion, do LGBTQI+ migrants and refugees face social exclusion in Poland? (N=25)*

Among those who responded affirmatively (N=16), almost all (93.75%) indicated double stigma and discrimination based on ethnicity and sexual orientation, gender identity and/or biological sex characteristics. Three in four (75%) indicated inadequate or non-existent state care for the special needs of LGBTQI+ migrants and refugees and/or the challenges they face. The third most important challenge was the insufficient or non-existent competence and capacity of those working in the field to provide support services to LGBTQI+ migrants and refugees (62.5%).



*Figure 2. If from your perspective LGBTQI+ migrants and refugees are confronting with social exclusion in Poland, what are the main challenges they are encountering? (N=16)*

We later asked about communication challenges between specialists providing support and the beneficiaries. More than half of the respondents (56%) declared that LGBTQI+ migrants and refugees are not encountering communication challenges/problems in communication with support professionals in their organization. 4 persons (16%) mentioned challenges/problems, none of them was completely sure. These 4 respondents were asked, whether they have ever been in/witnessed a situation when a specialist was providing support to LGBTQI+ migrants in a particular way, and if yes, how was the specialist communicating with the beneficiary. Only one person responded affirmatively and marked the option “Behaved professionally/friendly, but was not interested in the needs of LGBTQI+ people despite the fact that their needs may be related to the services provided”.

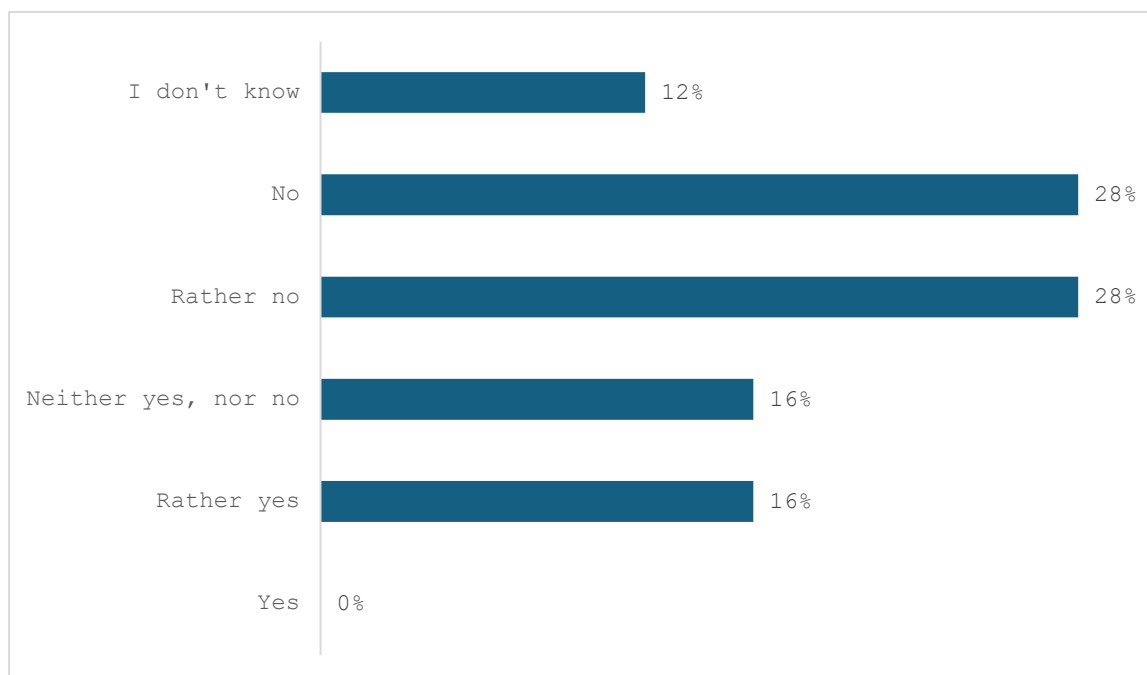


Figure 3. *In your experience, do LGBTQI+ migrants and refugees face challenges/problems in communicating with professional support service providers in your organization? (N=25)*

We asked the respondents, whether professional support service providers in their organization face challenges when providing support to LGBTQI+ migrants and refugees. 40% of the respondents answered affirmatively, 32% - negatively. 28% answered “neither yes, nor no”.

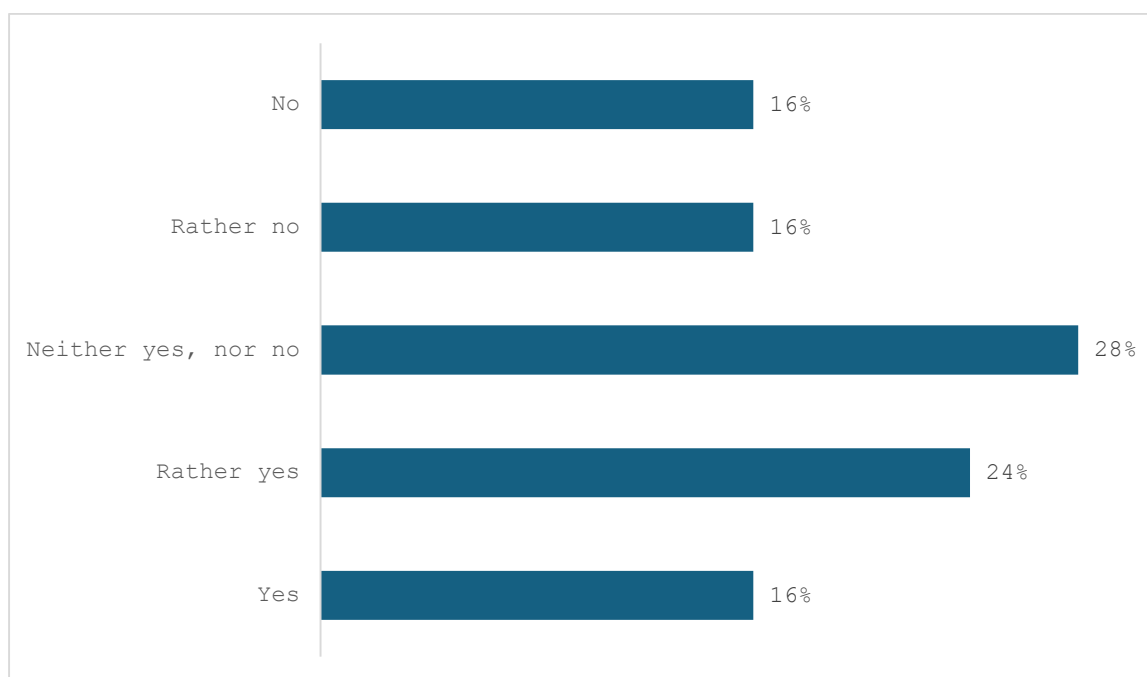
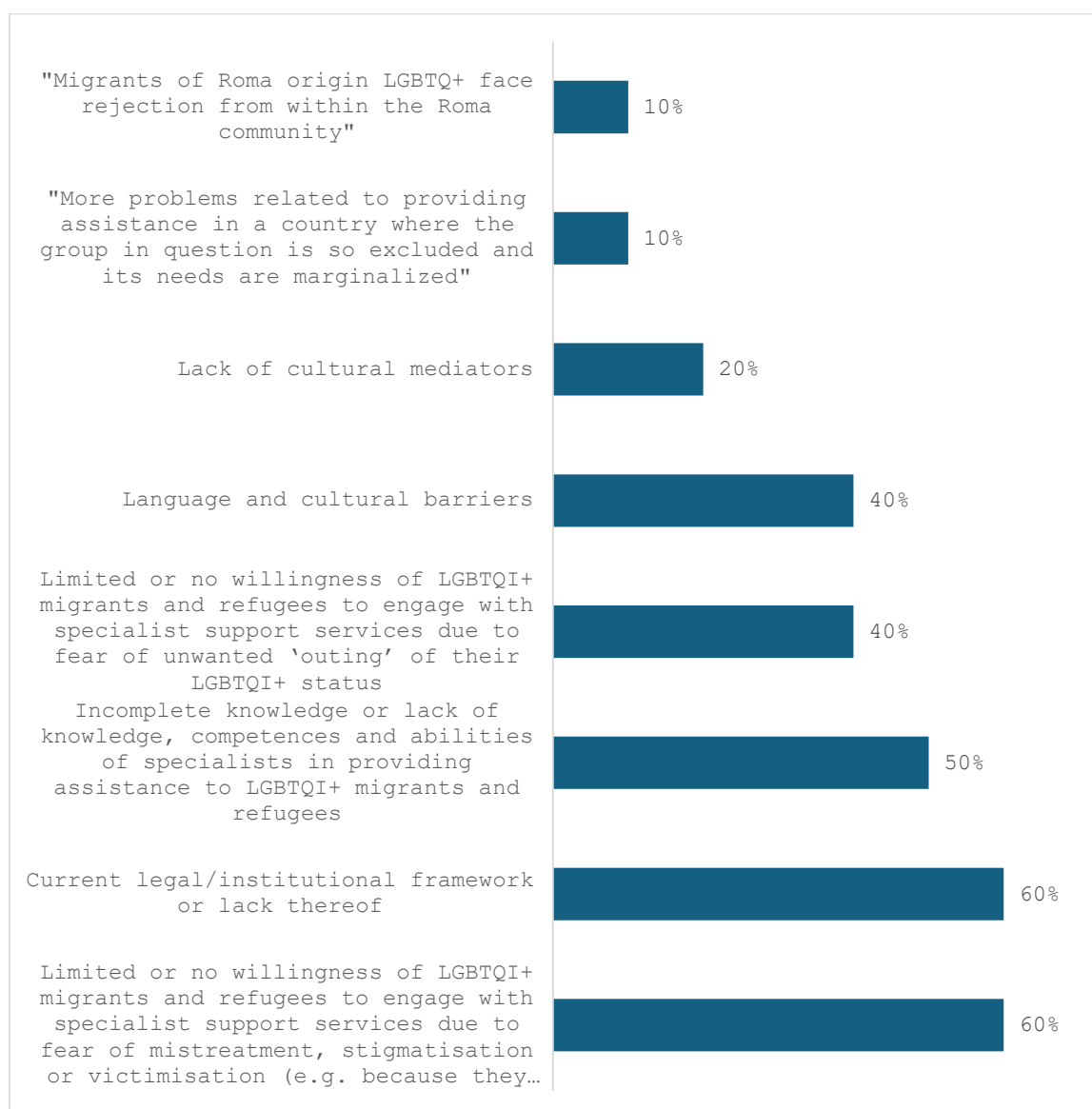


Figure 4. *In your opinion, do professional support service providers face challenges when providing support to LGBTQI+ migrants and refugees? (N=25)*

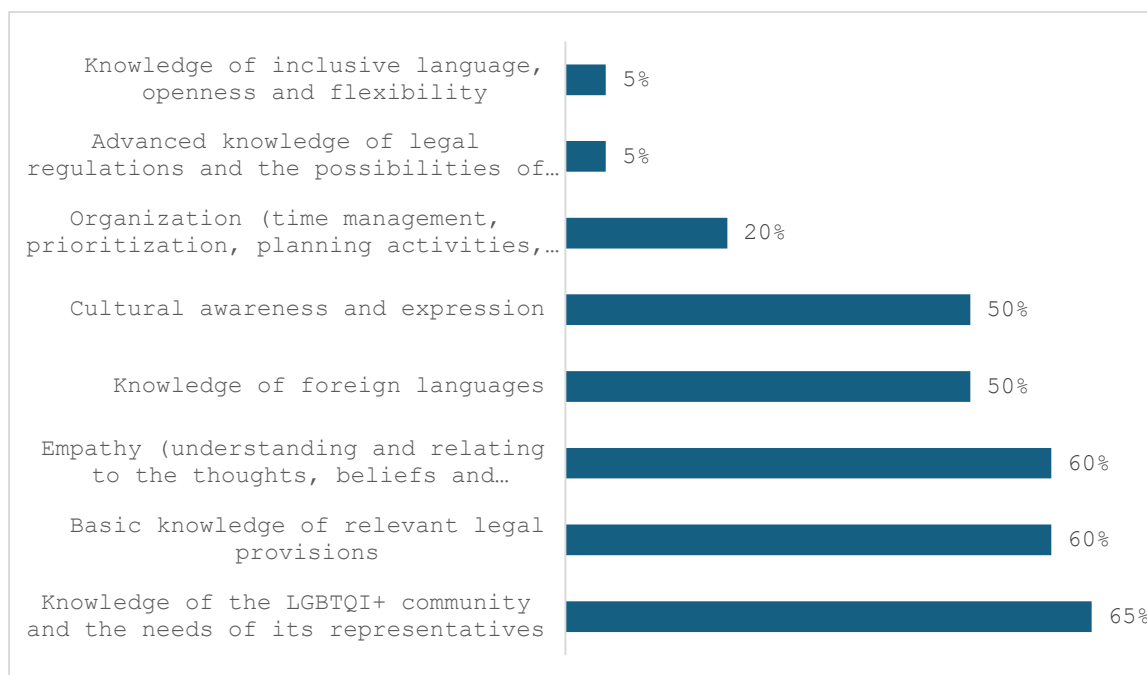


Current legal/institutional frames or their absence and fear of beneficiaries of mistreatment, stigmatization or victimization were cited most often.



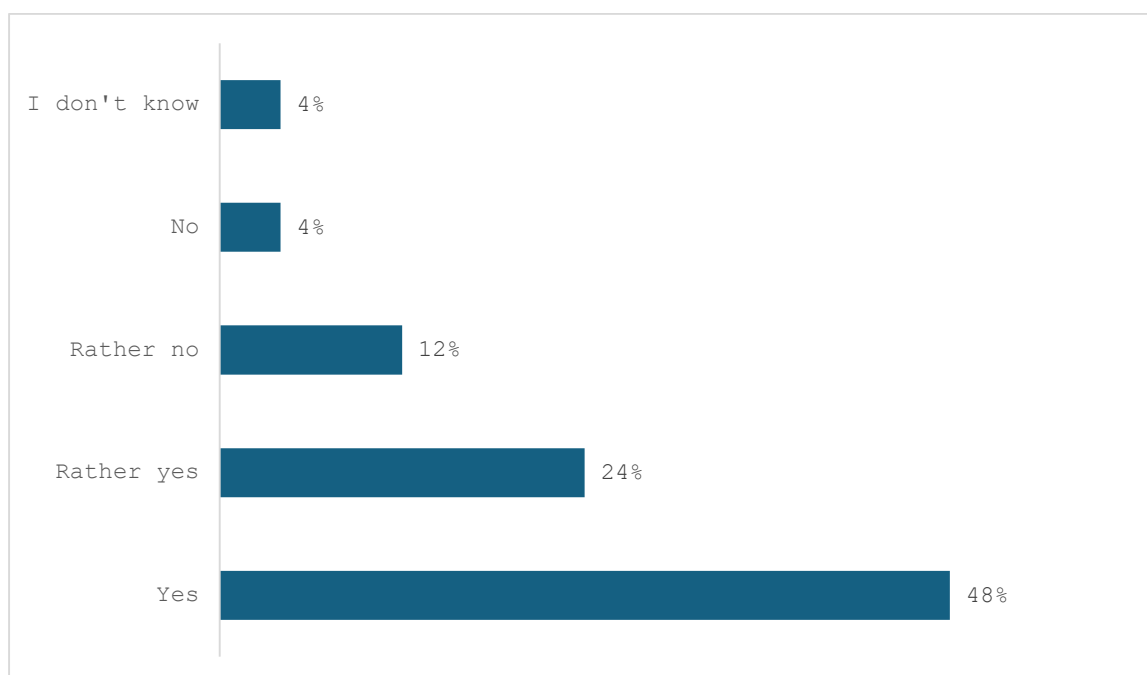
**Figure 5.** *If your organization's professionals face challenges providing support to LGBTQI+ migrants and refugees, what are those challenges? (N=10)*

Nearly three-fourths (71%) of those surveyed affirmed that the professionals providing services at their organization need specific skills and competencies to meet the needs of LGBTQI+ migrants and refugees, while 16% denied it. Among the skills needed, knowledge of the needs of the LGBTQI+ community, empathy, and basic knowledge of relevant laws were cited most often.



**Figure 6.** *If specialized service providers in your organization need specific skills and competencies to meet the needs of LGBTQI+ migrants and refugees, what are those skills? (N=18)*

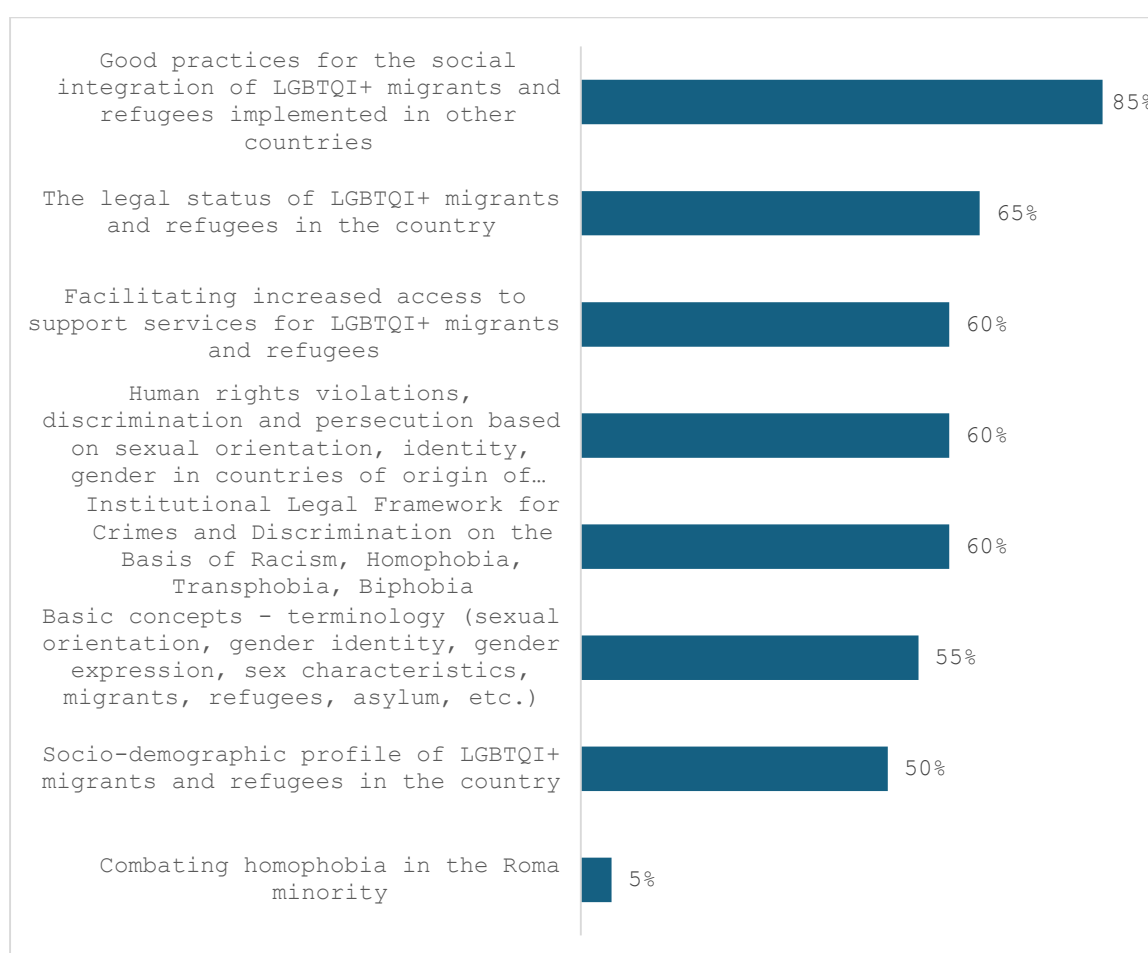
We also asked respondents for their opinion on whether professionals in their sector have the necessary knowledge, skills and abilities to provide assistance to LGBTQI+ migrants and refugees. More than half (52%) answered in the affirmative, 24% of respondents were undecided, and another 24% answered “rather not.”



**Figure 7.** *Do you think that specialist service providers in your organizations need specific skills and competencies to meet the needs of LGBTQI+ migrants and refugees?*

Finally, we asked respondents about their interest in training offerings focused on meeting the needs of LGBTQI+ migrants and refugees. The vast majority, 82%, of respondents were interested in participating in such training, 16% showed no interest, and the remaining 12% answered “neither yes nor no.” Those interested in training were asked about specific topics that should be covered. The most frequently mentioned were good practices of social integration of LGBTQI+ migrants and refugees implemented in other countries, and the legal status of LGBTQI+ migrants and refugees in the state .

16% (N=5) of the respondents, who showed no interest in participation in such training explained their choice by marking the following answers: “Not linked to actual duties”, “Lack of interest in the topic”, “Heavy workload”, “Other”.



*Figure 8. If you express interest in attending a training focused on meeting and addressing the needs of LGBTQI+ migrants and refugees, which topic should be covered at the training? (N=18)*

## 4. 2. Representatives of LGBTQI+ organizations

KEY DATA AND CONCLUSIONS OBTAINED AFTER CONDUCTING SURVEYS WITH REPRESENTATIVES OF LGBTQI+ ORGANIZATIONS

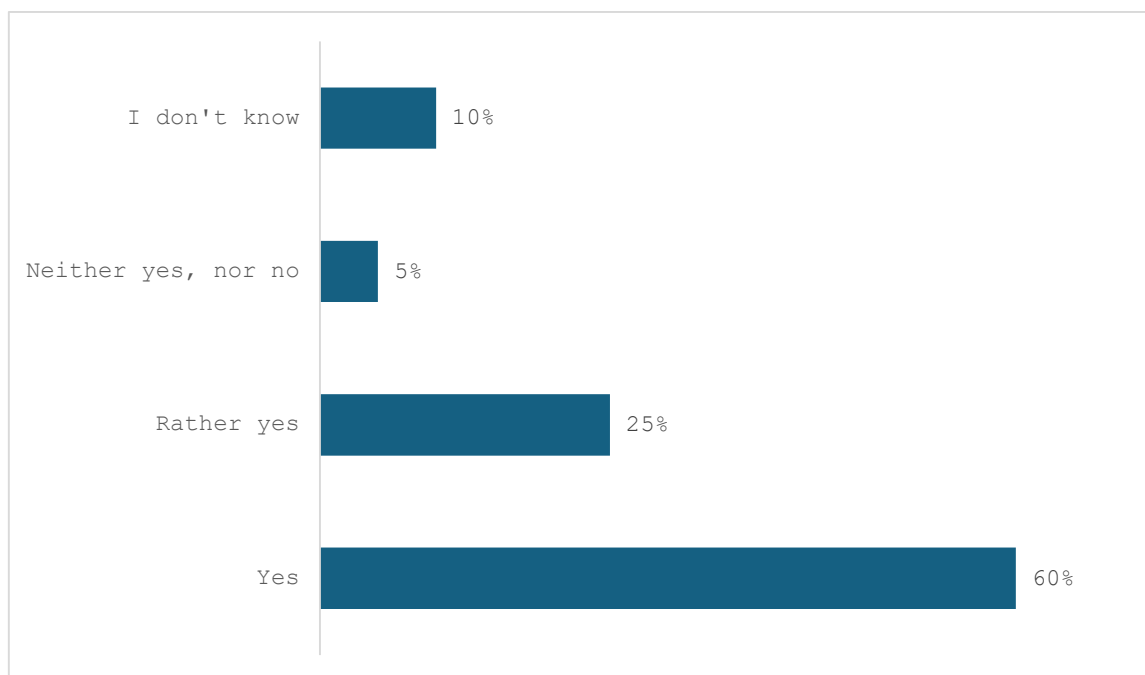
Twenty people representing LGBTQI+ organizations participated in the survey. The largest age group (50%) consisted of people aged 40-54, followed by those aged 25-39 (45%). One person (5%) was in the 18-24 age range. No person over 54 took part in the survey. The overwhelming majority of those surveyed were men (65%), followed by non-binary people (20%), and the smallest group was women (15%). The sample was overwhelmingly made up of people with higher education (60%), three had earned a high school degree (15%), one had earned an intermediate industry degree (5%), two had completed post-graduate studies (10%), one had earned a doctorate (5%), and one indicated an “Other” response (5%).

The geographic area of the organizations in which the respondents worked was mainly urban (90%) - only two people indicated a non-urban area (10%). As for the roles performed in the organization, the largest group of respondents carried out anti-discrimination activities (35%). Four people each indicated performing administrative duties related to the integration of migrant and/or refugee persons (20%) and social support (including basic information about rights and obligations, communication and redirection to other organizations, entities, etc.) (20%). Individuals indicated: the cultural sector, coordinating a support group, leading an organization, and volunteering.

More than half of the respondents provided support to LGBTQI+ migrants and/or refugees (60%), a third did not work with such a community (30%), and the remaining two answered “don't know.” Among those who provided support to LGBTQI+ foreigners, the vast majority (66.66%) did so for a short time: 0-3 years, a quarter provided support between 4 and 7 years, and one person (8.3%) between 8 and 11.

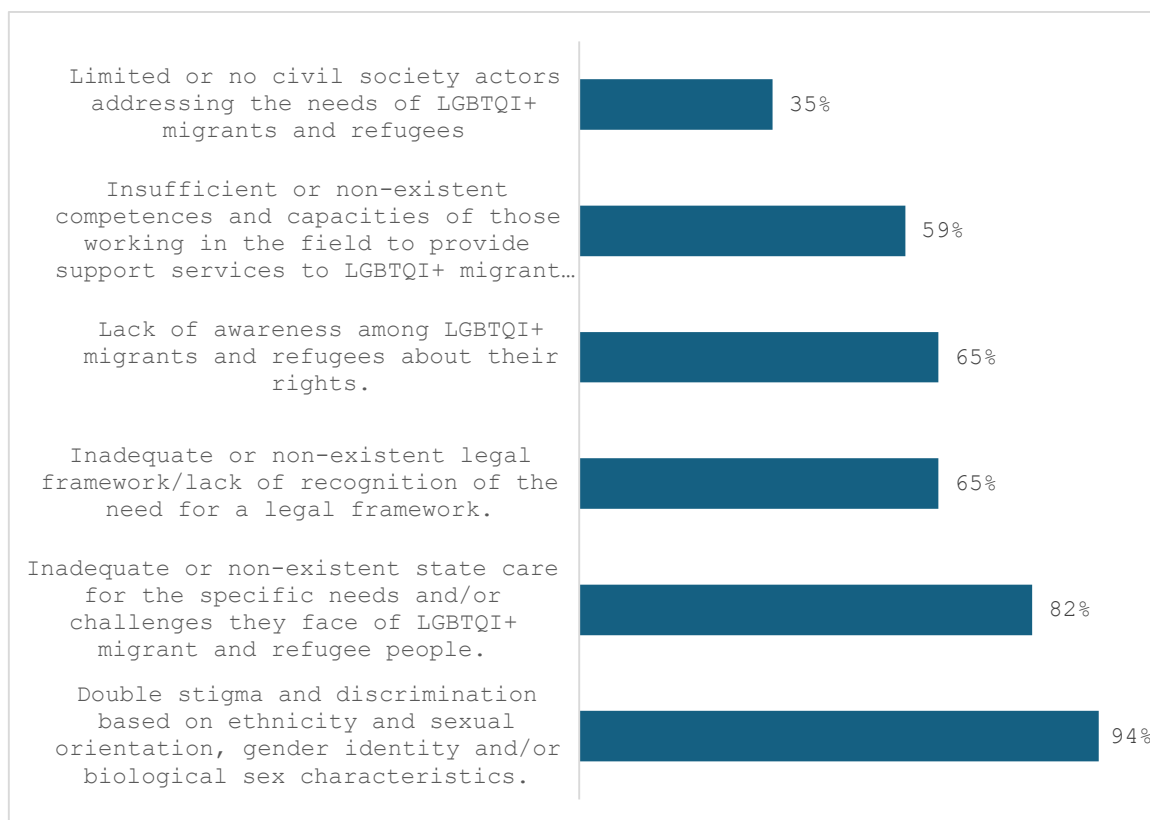
## NEEDS OF THOSE PROVIDING SUPPORT TO LGBTQI+ PEOPLE

We first asked respondents for their opinion on whether LGBTQI+ migrants and refugees face social exclusion in Poland. 85% of respondents answered in the affirmative, while 15% did not give a clear answer to this question. No person answered in the negative.



*Figure 9. In your opinion, do LGBTQI+ migrants and refugees face social exclusion in Poland? (N=20)*

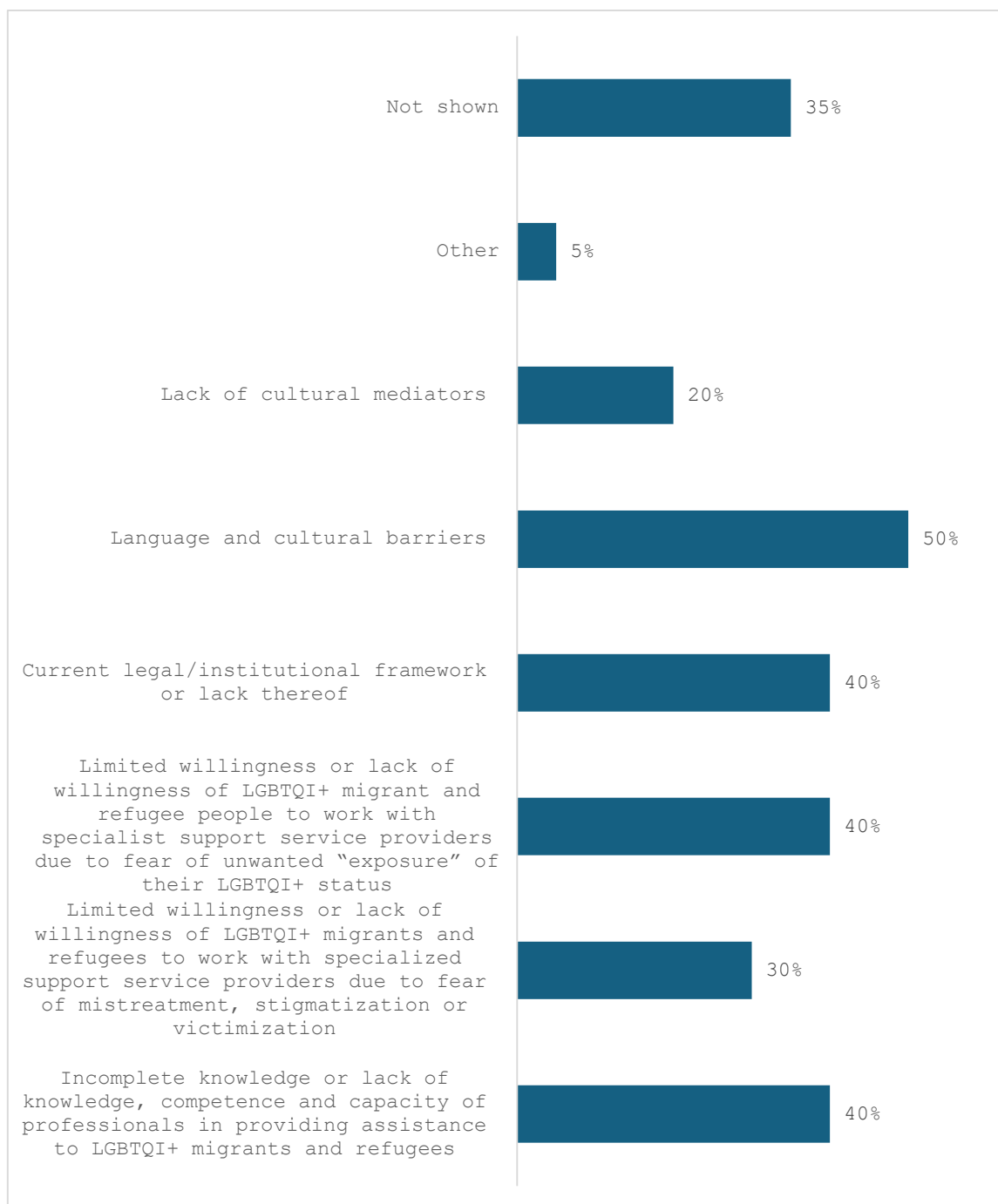
Among those who responded affirmatively (N=17), almost all (94.11%) indicated double stigma and discrimination based on ethnicity and sexual orientation, gender identity and/or biological sex characteristics. 82.35% indicated insufficient or non-existent state care for the special needs of LGBTQI + migrants and refugees and/or the challenges they face. Inadequate or non-existent legal framework/lack of recognition of the need for a legal framework (64.71%) and lack of knowledge of LGBTQI+ migrants and refugees about their rights (64.71%) were indicated ex aequo in third place. Finally, inadequate or non-existent competence and capacity of those working on the ground to provide support services to LGBTQI+ migrants and refugees (58.82%), and limited or no civil society actors addressing the needs of LGBTQI+ migrants and refugees (35.29%) were identified.



*Figure 10. If, in your opinion, LGBTQI+ migrants and refugees face social exclusion in Poland, what do you think are the challenges (you can select multiple points)? (N=14)*

Next, we asked about the existence of communication challenges between support providers and beneficiaries. The results were mixed - 40% answered affirmatively and 30% answered negatively, 25% had no knowledge in this regard, and 5% answered “neither yes nor no.”

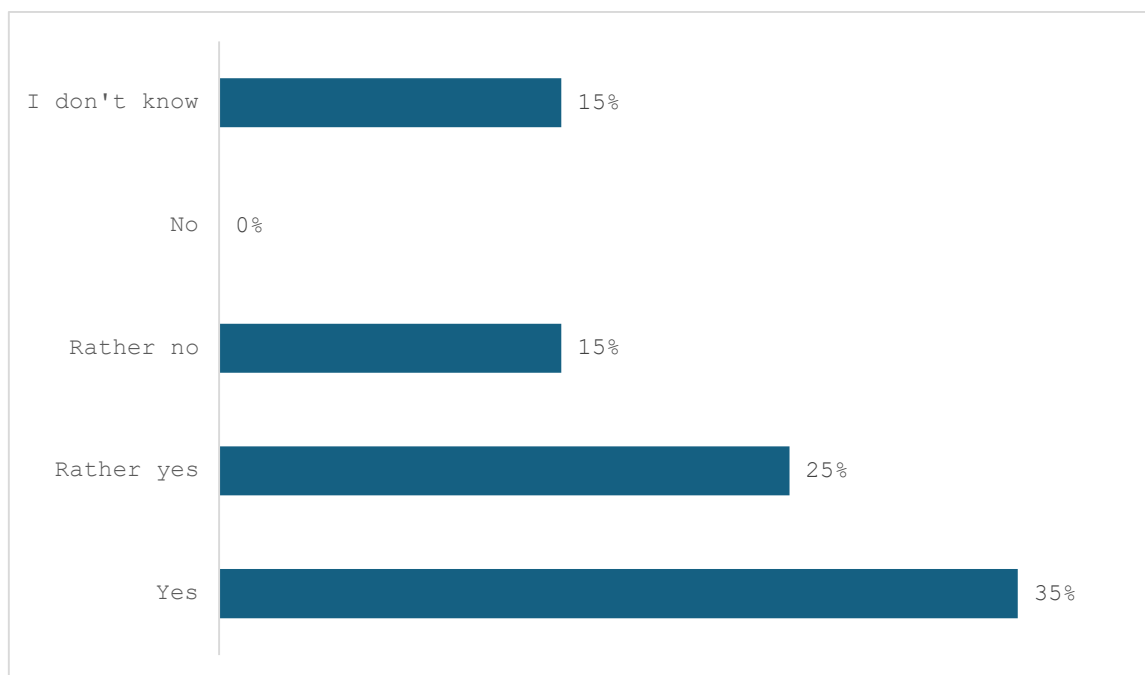
We asked the respondents whether the support persons in their organization encounter challenges. The vast majority perceived such challenges: 65% answered in the affirmative and 15% in the negative, while 20% answered “neither yes nor no.” Among the challenges, the most frequently cited were language and cultural barriers, followed equally by incomplete knowledge or lack of knowledge, competence and capacity of specialized persons in providing assistance to LGBTQI+ migrants and refugees; limited willingness or lack of willingness of LGBTQI+ migrants and refugees to cooperate with specialized persons providing support services due to fear of unwanted “disclosure” of their LGBTQI+ status; and the current legal/institutional framework or lack thereof. The least frequently indicated was the limited willingness or lack of willingness of LGBTQI+ migrants and refugees to work with specialized support service providers due to fear of mistreatment, stigmatization or victimization (e.g., because they are LGBTQI+), as well as the lack of cultural mediators. One person indicated a lack of financial resources in the option “Other”.



**Figure 11. If your organization's professionals face challenges providing support to LGBTQI+ migrants and refugees, what are those challenges? (N=13)**

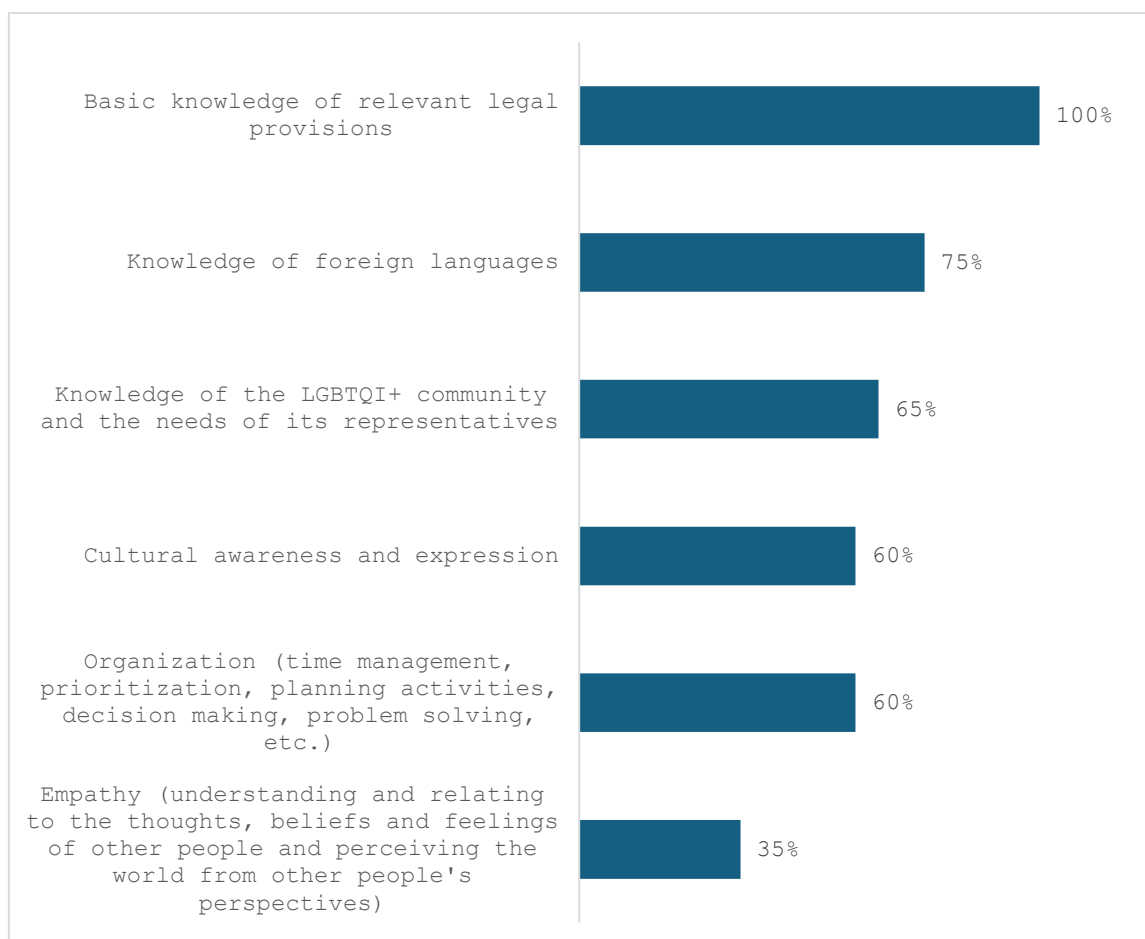
When asked whether the specialist persons providing services at their organization need specific skills and competencies to meet the needs of LGBTQI+ migrant and refugee people, the majority (60%) answered in the affirmative. Only three people answered "rather not" (15%), and the rest answered "don't know" (15%) or "neither yes nor no" (10%).





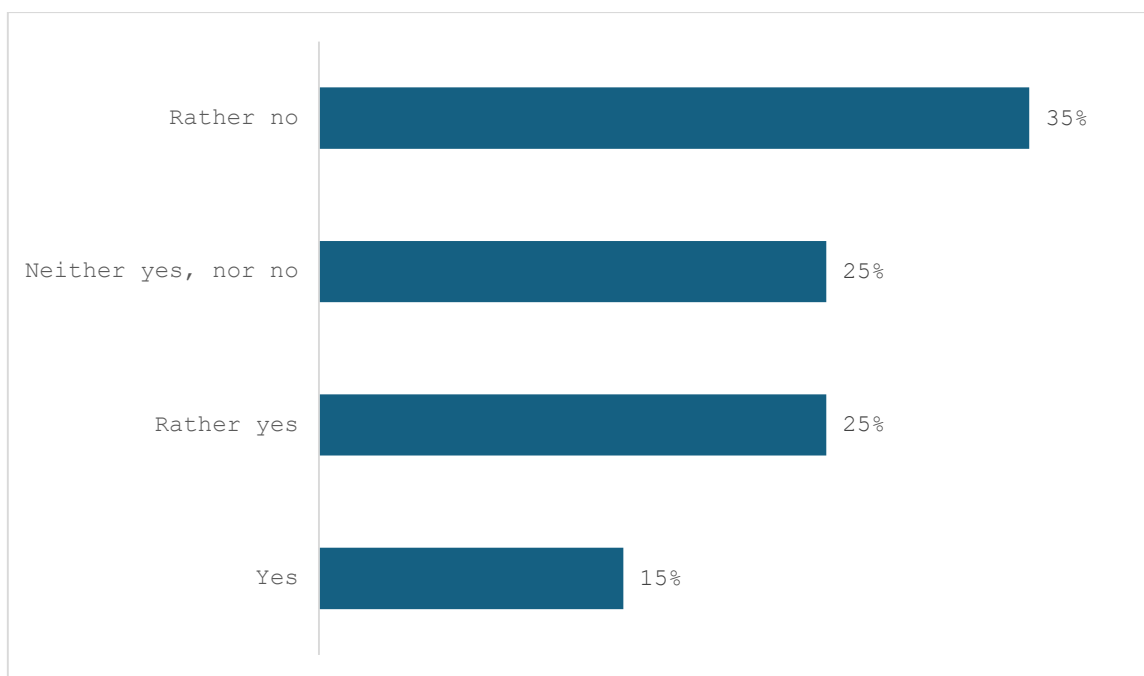
**Figure 12.** *Do you think that specialist service providers in your organizations need specific skills and competencies to meet the needs of LGBTIQ+ migrants and refugees?*

Among the skills needed, basic knowledge of relevant laws and foreign language skills were most often cited, while empathy was least often mentioned.

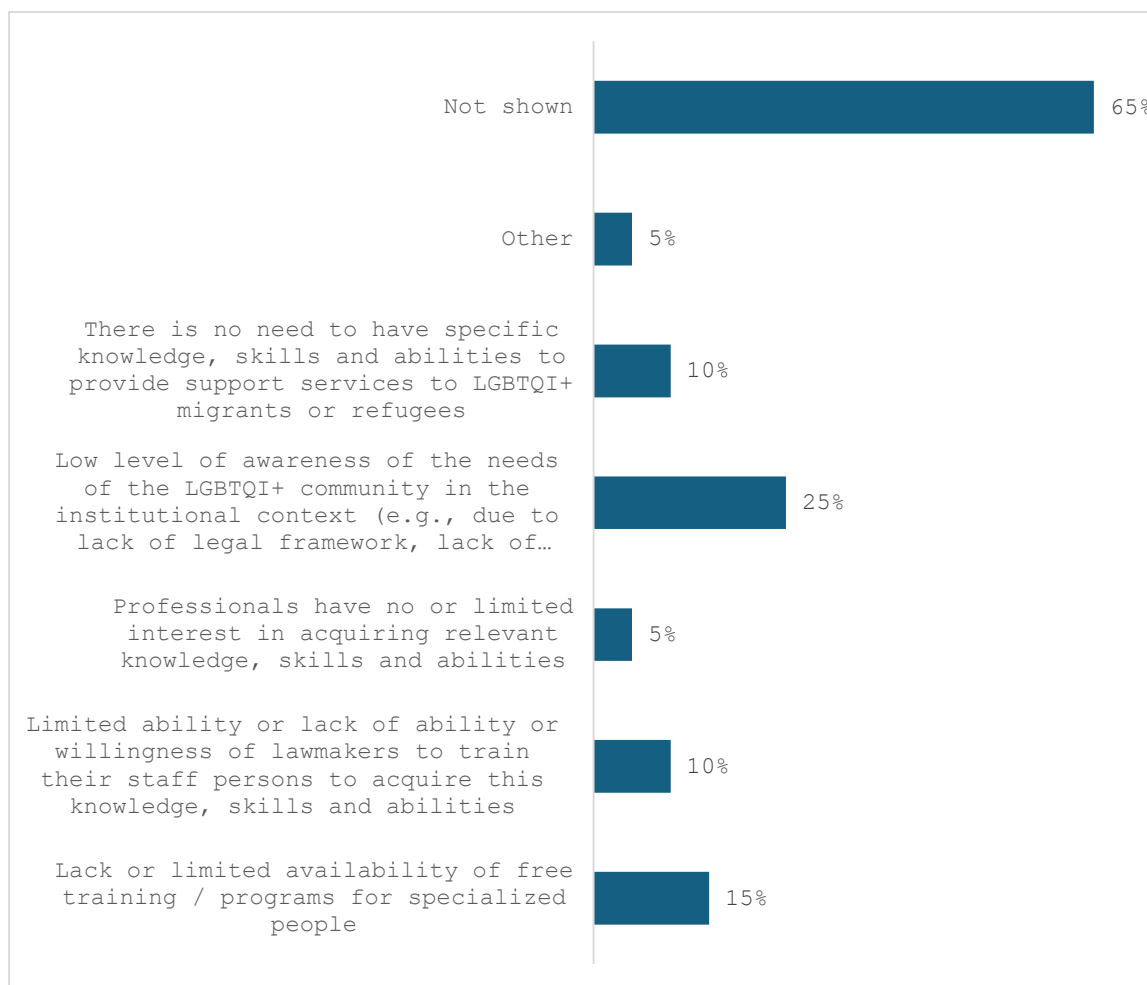


*Figure 13. If the specialists providing services at your organization need specific skills and competencies to meet the needs of LGBTQI+ migrants and refugees, what are those skills? (N=12)*

Respondents were also asked, whether the professional support service providers in their sector have necessary knowledge, skills and competences to provide support to LGBTQI+ migrants and refugees. The answers were ambiguous, what is shown in figure 14. Respondents, who noted, that support service providers don't need necessary knowledge and skills, marked following reasons: "No special skills or abilities needed", "Professionals should not or are not required to have special skills or abilities", "The skills and abilities that specialized individuals possess are sufficient", "Professionals are not interested in developing skills and abilities" (fig. 15).

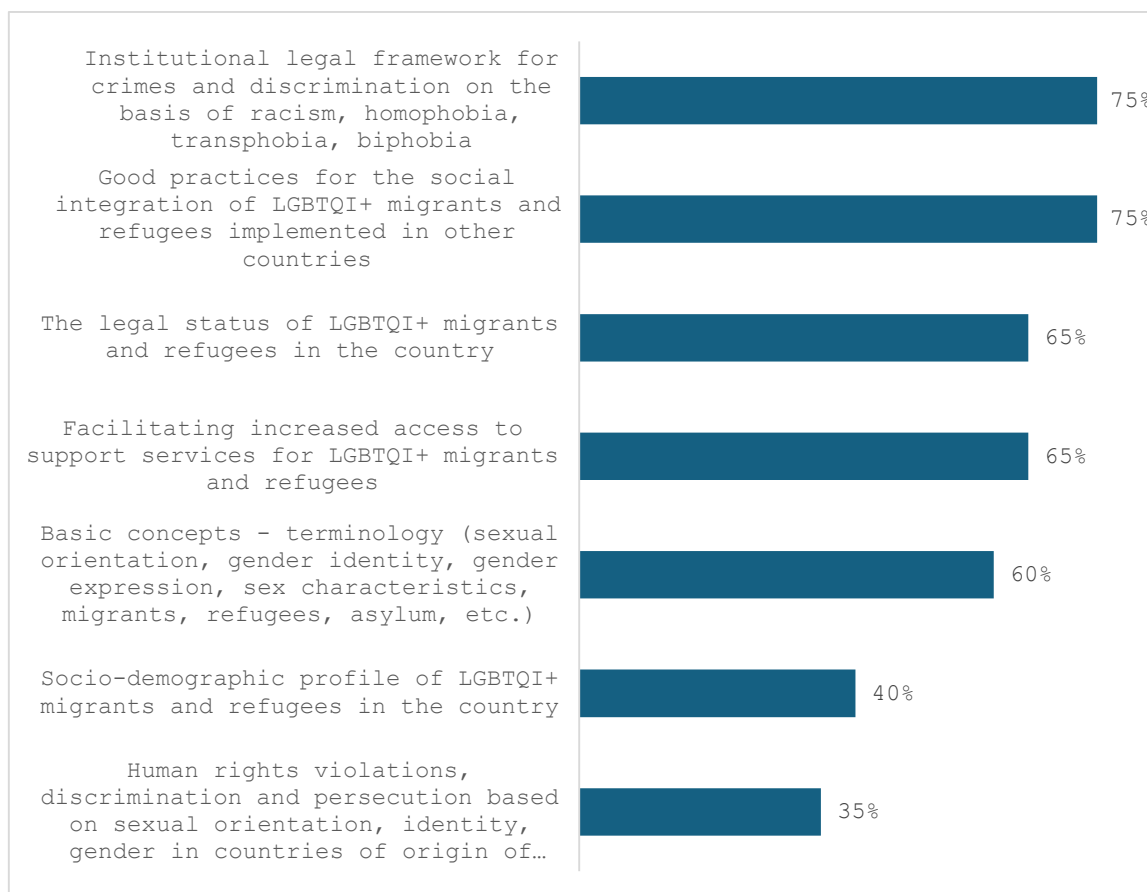


*Figure 14. In your opinion, do professionals providing support in your sector have necessary knowledge, skills and competences to provide support to LGBTQI+ migrants and refugees? (N=20)*



*Figure 15. If “no” or “rather not” was marked, what is the reason for this answer?*

Finally, we asked the respondents whether they are interested in participation in workshops focused on meeting the needs of LGBTIQ+ migrants and refugees. 60% were interested in participation in such workshops, 25% did not express interest, and the other 15% responded with “neither yes, nor no”. Respondents, who answered affirmatively, were asked about specific themes of the workshops. The most frequent topics were: institutional legal frames for crimes and discrimination motivated by racism, homophobia, transphobia, biphobia; best practices for social integration of LGBTIQ+ migrants and refugees implemented in other countries; facilitation of increasing access of LGBTIQ+ migrants and refugees to the support services; legal status of LGBTIQ+ migrants and refugees.



*Figure 16. If you express interest in attending a training focused on meeting and addressing the needs of LGBTQI+ migrants and refugees, which topic should be covered at the training? (N=12)*

We also asked about the reason for lack of interest in such training. Three responses each cited lack of connection to actual duties and heavy workload, and two cited lack of interest in the topic

### 4. 3. Representatives of local authorities

KEY DATA AND INSIGHTS COLLECTED FROM SURVEYS WITH THE REPRESENTATIVES OF LOCAL AUTHORITIES SUPPORTING LGBTQI+ PEOPLE WITH EXPERIENCE OF MIGRATION.

145 people representing local authorities took part in the survey. More than half (53%) of the survey participants were middle-aged, i.e. between 40 and 54 years old, and 34% were 25-39 years old. The oldest group (55+) was 8%, while the youngest group, 18-24 years old, was the least numerous, with 3% of respondents. In addition, three people (i.e. 2%) refused to answer the age question.

The gender distribution proved to be uneven. Women far outnumbered men (77%), while men accounted for 19% of respondents. The survey was also completed by two people (i.e. 1%) identifying themselves as non-binary, while another five people (i.e. 3%) preferred not to disclose their gender.

The geographic area of the workplace indicated by the respondents was mainly urban (97%) - only five people indicated a non-urban area (3%). The educational structure is by far dominated by those with higher education, with 59% of respondents indicating the answer “higher”, while additionally, 22% of survey participants have completed postgraduate studies, and 7% also have a doctorate. Respondents with a high school education total 8% of respondents (with 5% declaring a high school education and 3% a secondary vocational education). In addition, one person has post-secondary education, another indicated that they are in the process of studying, and three people chose not to disclose their education.

All those who completed the survey were employees of municipal institutions located in the urban area, with more than half of them (54%) indicating that they work in city administration, 12% in the cultural sector, 7% in the social welfare field, and 5% in education. The remaining 22% of survey participants included those responsible for various types of tasks (including support in meeting basic needs, such as housing, food and clothing, or providing legal and psychological consultation). Given the subject of the survey, it is worth noting that six (i.e., 4%) of the respondents professionally perform duties related to the integration of migrants/refugees, and another two people (i.e., 1%) carry out anti-discrimination tasks. It should be noted that all respondents are local government employees.

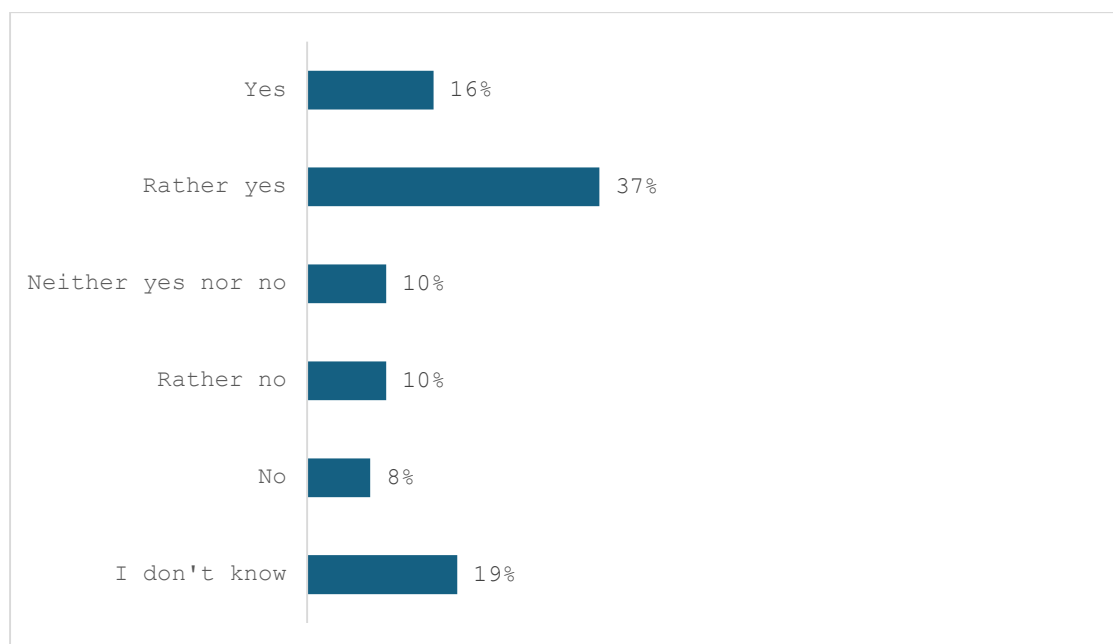
#### EXPERIENCE IN SUPPORTING LGBTIQ+ MIGRANTS

Nearly one in four respondents (23%) indicated that they had happened to provide support to LGBTIQ+ migrants and/or refugees in the course of their professional duties, 60% said they had never been in such a situation, and the remaining 17% were unable to say whether they had provided support to such a person. However, it is worth noting that, due to the low sense of security of LGBTIQ+ people in Poland (Galwas, 2022) and the desire to avoid stigmatization (Bulska et al., 2021), LGBTIQ+ refugees and migrants may choose not to disclose their sexual orientation and gender identity in the public sphere, leading to the hypothesis that some of the respondents declaring no experience of service contact with them simply had no such awareness. Those with experience in supporting LGBTIQ+ migrants/refugees (i.e., 33 respondents) were asked an additional question about how long they have been/are involved in such activities. The vast majority (89%) marked the period “0-3 years,” while the remaining 11% marked “4-7 years.” Given that, as a result of Russia's full-scale aggression against Ukraine in February 2022, the number of people with experience of migration from Ukraine increased in Wrocław to around 250,000 in May 2022 (Union of Polish Metropolises, 2022), it can be assumed that a significant portion of local government employees had their first contact with migrants (including LGBTIQ+ people) just then.

#### KEY FINDINGS AND INFORMATION GATHERED THROUGH SURVEYS WITH LOCAL AUTHORITIES

More than half (53%, or 78 people) of respondents believe that LGBTIQ+ migrants/refugees face social exclusion in Poland, with 16% of respondents indicating “yes” and 37% “rather yes.” Only one in five respondents (18%) disagree with this assessment of the situation, with

8% indicating “no” and 10% “rather not”. As many as 29% of respondents evaded taking a position on the issue, marking the answer “neither yes nor no” (10%) or “don't know” (19%) (see Fig. 17).



*Figure 17. Distribution of responses to the question “What is your opinion on whether LGBTQI+ migrants and/or refugees face social exclusion in Poland?” (n=145)*

Respondents who believe LGBTQI+ migrants/refugees face social exclusion in Poland (i.e., 78 people) were asked to indicate what kind of challenges they believe these are (the question was multiple-choice - the possibility of marking more than one answer). A clear standout here is the problem of double stigma and discrimination based on ethnicity and sexual orientation, gender identity and/or biological sex characteristics, the existence of which is recognized by almost all (90%) of the respondents in this group. Other significant challenges include “inadequate or non-existent laws and legal solutions; lack of recognition of the need for adequate laws” (51%) and “inadequate or non-existent state care for the special needs of LGBTQI+ migrants and refugees and the challenges they face” (40%). A significant proportion of those who spoke on this issue also point to a lack of knowledge among LGBTQI+ migrants and refugees about their rights (37%), as well as insufficient or inadequate competence among those working to provide support services to LGBTQI+ migrants and refugees (29%). The smallest group of respondents (17%) believes that the challenge is the limited number or complete lack of NGOs addressing the needs of LGBTQI+ migrants and refugees. In addition, one survey participant shared the observation that LGBTQI+ people furthermore face discrimination from other migrants and refugees, including from their own countrymen.

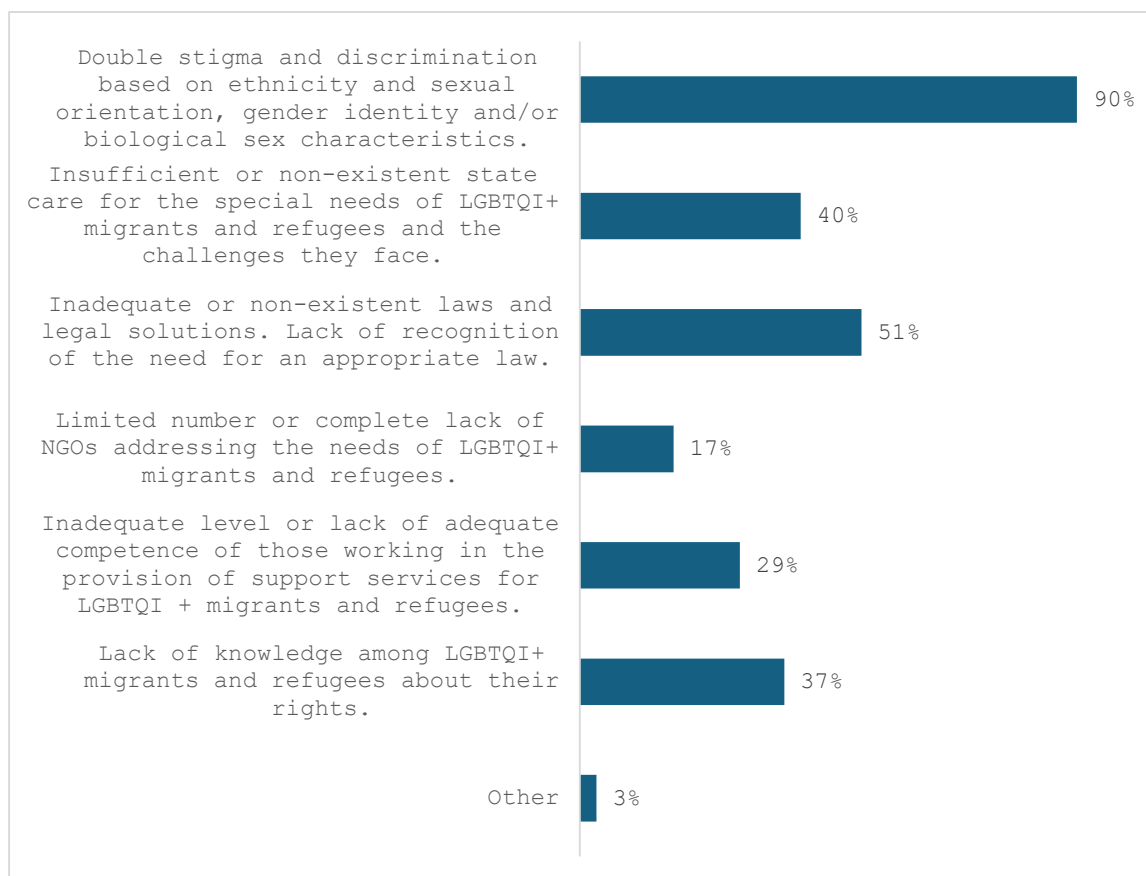
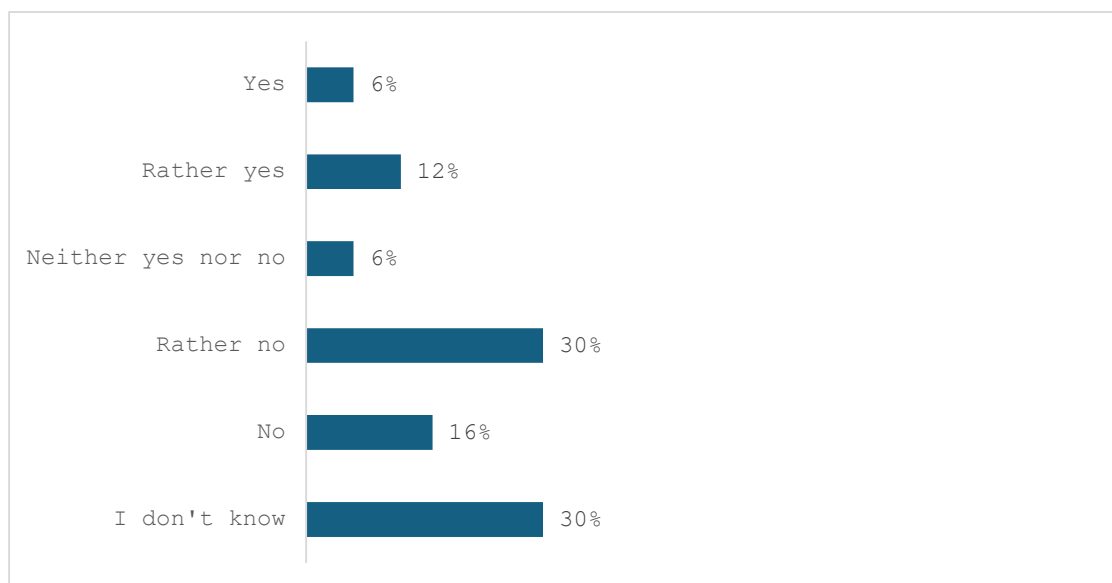


Figure 18. Indicated challenges faced by LGBTQI+ migrants/refugees in Poland (n=78).

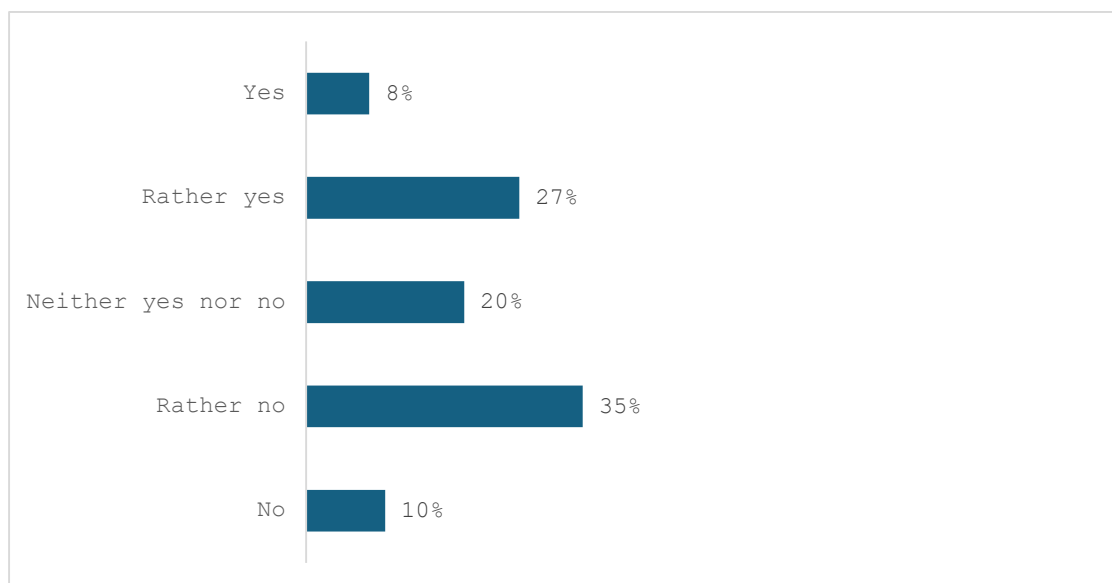
Respondents were then asked whether they believe that in the institutions that employ them, LGBTQI+ migrants/refugees face challenges/problems in communicating with professionals providing support services. Nearly half of the survey participants (46%) do not perceive that their clients face such difficulties (16% for the “no” answer and 30% - “rather not”). Significantly fewer believe that such challenges/problems occur: 6% marked “yes” and 12% “rather yes.” Slightly more than a third of respondents could not comment on the subject: 6% indicated a “neither yes nor no” answer, and as many as 30% outright admitted that they did not know.





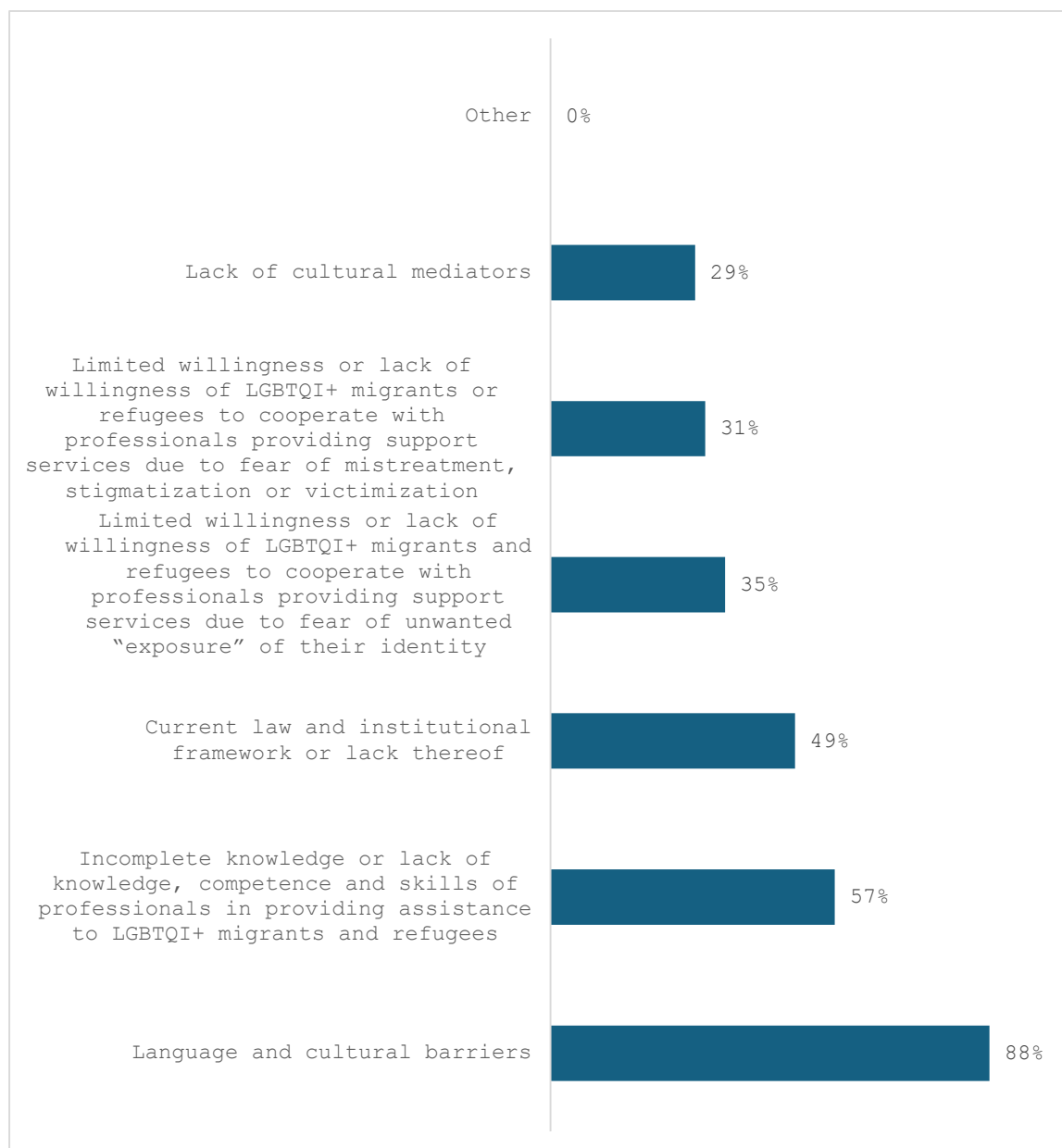
*Figure 19. Distribution of responses to the question “In your experience, do LGBTQI+ migrants and/or refugees face challenges/problems in communicating with professionals providing support services at your institution?” (n=145)*

Those who acknowledged that LGBTQI+ migrants/refugees face challenges/problems in communicating with professionals providing support services in the institutions that employ them (i.e., 26 respondents) were asked to indicate what type of problem they noticed. Three respondents (i.e., 12%) witnessed a situation in which a professional provided support services without proper involvement, another three respondents noted that the professional, despite behaving in a professional and friendly manner, was not interested in the needs of LGBTQI+ people, even though their needs could be related to the services provided, and one person (i.e., 1%) even encountered a professional denying LGBTQI+ people support. However, the majority of respondents (64%) said they had never witnessed the situations mentioned in the question and situations, and two people (i.e. 8%), indicated that the specialist was professional/friendly and took into account the needs of LGBTQI+ people. Respondents were also asked whether, in turn, it was the professionals employed by their institutions who encountered barriers and challenges when providing services to LGBTQI+ migrants and refugees. In this case, opinions were more or less evenly distributed, although slightly more respondents do not perceive such problems (“no” - 10% and “rather not” - 35%) than notice them (“yes” - 8% and “rather yes” - 27%). One in five survey participants could not make a clear statement on the subject (20% for “neither yes nor no” responses).



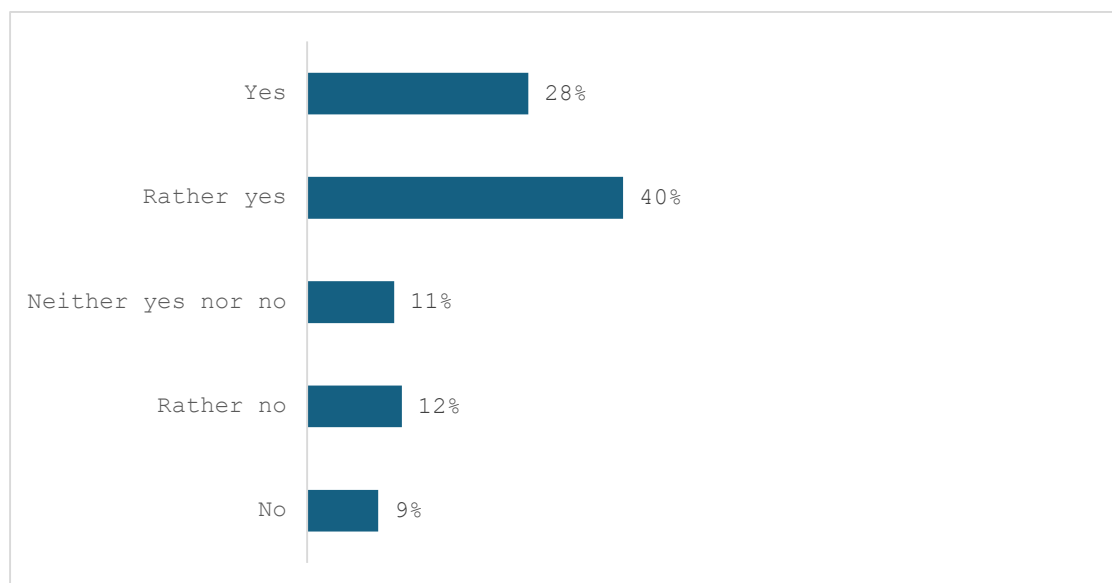
*Figure 20. Distribution of responses to the question “In your opinion, do professionals at your institution face barriers and challenges when providing services to LGBTIQ+ migrants and refugees?” (n=145)*

Those who believe that professionals employed by their institutions face challenges/problems when providing services to LGBTIQ+ migrants and refugees (i.e., 51 respondents) were asked to indicate what type of challenges they face (it was possible to select more than one of the options). The vast majority of those who commented note the existence of language and cultural barriers (88%). This is followed by “incomplete knowledge or lack of knowledge, competence and skills of professionals assisting LGBTIQ+ migrants and refugees” (57%), and third is “current law and institutional framework or lack thereof” (49%). Less than one in three respondents (29%) also indicated a lack of cultural mediators. About one in three respondents also see the source of difficulties in the attitudes of LGBTIQ+ migrants/refugees themselves: 35% indicate a limited willingness or lack of willingness of LGBTIQ+ migrants and refugees to cooperate with professionals providing support services due to fear of unwanted “exposure” of their identity, and 31% indicate a limited willingness or lack of willingness of LGBTIQ+ migrants or refugees to cooperate with professionals providing support services due to fear of mistreatment, stigmatization or victimization (e.g. because they belong to the LGBTIQ+ community).



**Figure 21. Types of challenges/problems faced by professionals providing services to LGBTIQ+ migrants/refugees (n=51)**

The vast majority of respondents believe that in order to respond to the needs of LGBTIQ+ migrants and refugees, professionals working in their institutions need specific skills, competencies, and knowledge. (A total of 68%, i.e. 28% "yes" and 40% "rather yes.") One in five respondents holds the opposite view (i.e. 21% - 9% for the answer "no" and 12% "rather no"), while one in ten (i.e. 11%) did not express a clear opinion, indicating the answer "neither yes nor no."



*Figure 22. Need/no need for specific skills, competencies and knowledge to respond to the needs of LGBTQI+ migrants/refugees (n=145)*

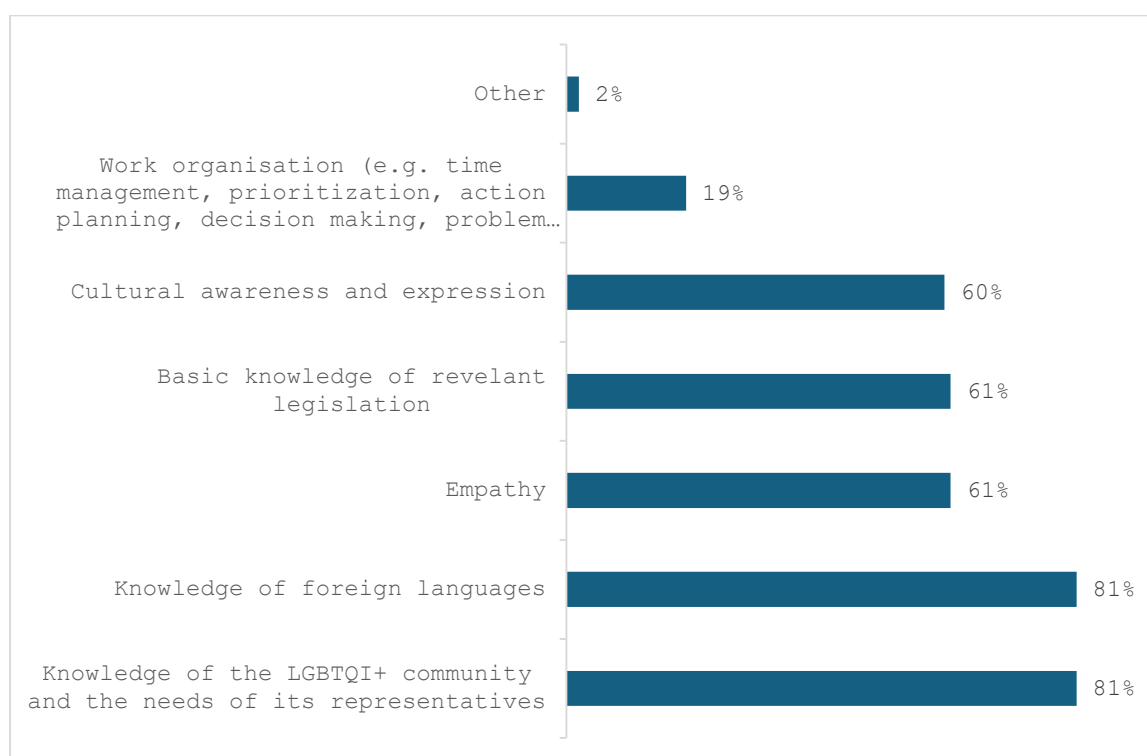
In a cross-analysis of the results of responses to the question with the variable “professional role performed”, the decidedly higher number of positive responses among social welfare workers (70% - “yes”, 20% “rather yes”) compared to the other professional categories is striking. Fewer respondents support the opinion that specific skills, competencies and knowledge are needed to handle migrants/refugees can be found even among those dealing with the integration of migrants/refugees (37.50% each - “yes”, “rather yes”, 12.50% each - “rather no” and “no”). The opinions of cultural professionals are the most divided, with as many as 29% indicating a “no” answer, 12% each “rather no,” “neither yes nor no” and “yes,” and 35% “rather yes.”

Respondents who believe that professionals working in their institutions can respond to the needs of LGBTQI+ migrants and refugees without possessing specific skills, competencies and knowledge (i.e., 30 people) were asked to indicate what, in their opinion, arguments support this. The largest number, 21 people (i.e., 70% of respondents), believe that the skills and competencies possessed by professionals are sufficient, while according to three respondents (i.e., 10%) there are no specific skills or competencies required to provide support services to LGBTQI+ migrants and refugees.

Respondents who felt that in order to meet the needs of LGBTQI+ migrants and refugees, professionals need specific skills, competencies and knowledge were asked which skills they had in mind (it was possible to select more than one of the options available in the survey). The vast majority of respondents indicated knowledge of the LGBTQI+ community and its needs, and knowledge of foreign languages (81% of responses each). The cross-analysis showed that the need for foreign language courses is very high in almost all professional groups (100% of social welfare workers, 87.50% of municipal administration and cultural sector employees), except for those dealing with integration of migrants/refugees or anti-discrimination - 38%. It

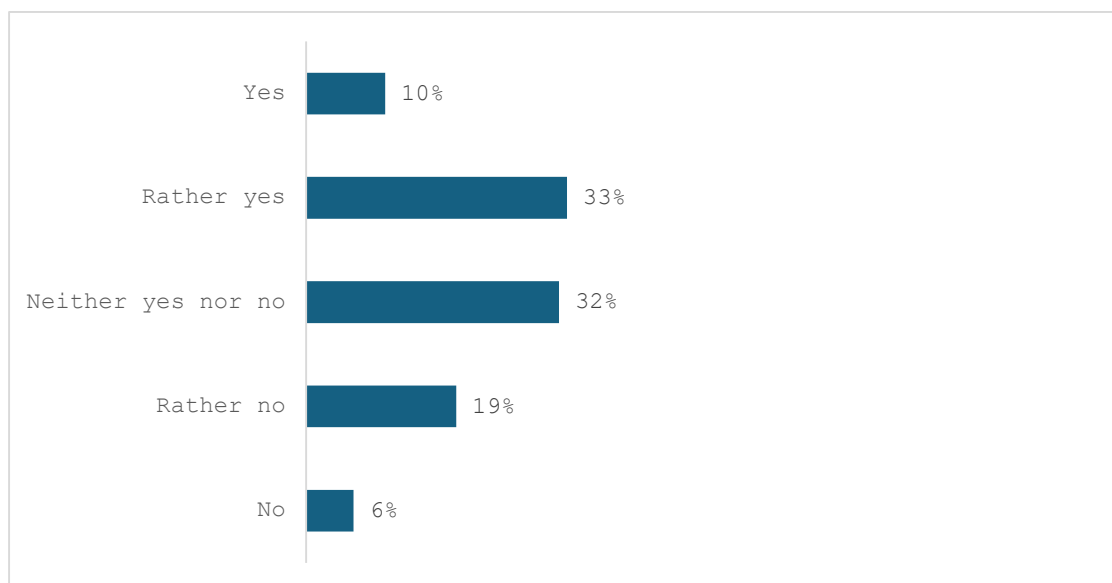
can be presumed that the lower interest in language courses in the latter group is due to the fact that its members are already fluent in languages of people with migration experience.

The next most cited competencies included empathy (61%), basic knowledge of relevant laws (61%), and cultural awareness and expression (60%). Nearly one in five respondents (19%) also see a need for training in work organization skills (e.g., time management, prioritization, action planning, decision making, problem-solving). One person added that they see a need for professionals to constantly expand their knowledge of cultural diversity, develop intercultural competence and the ability to spot stereotypes.



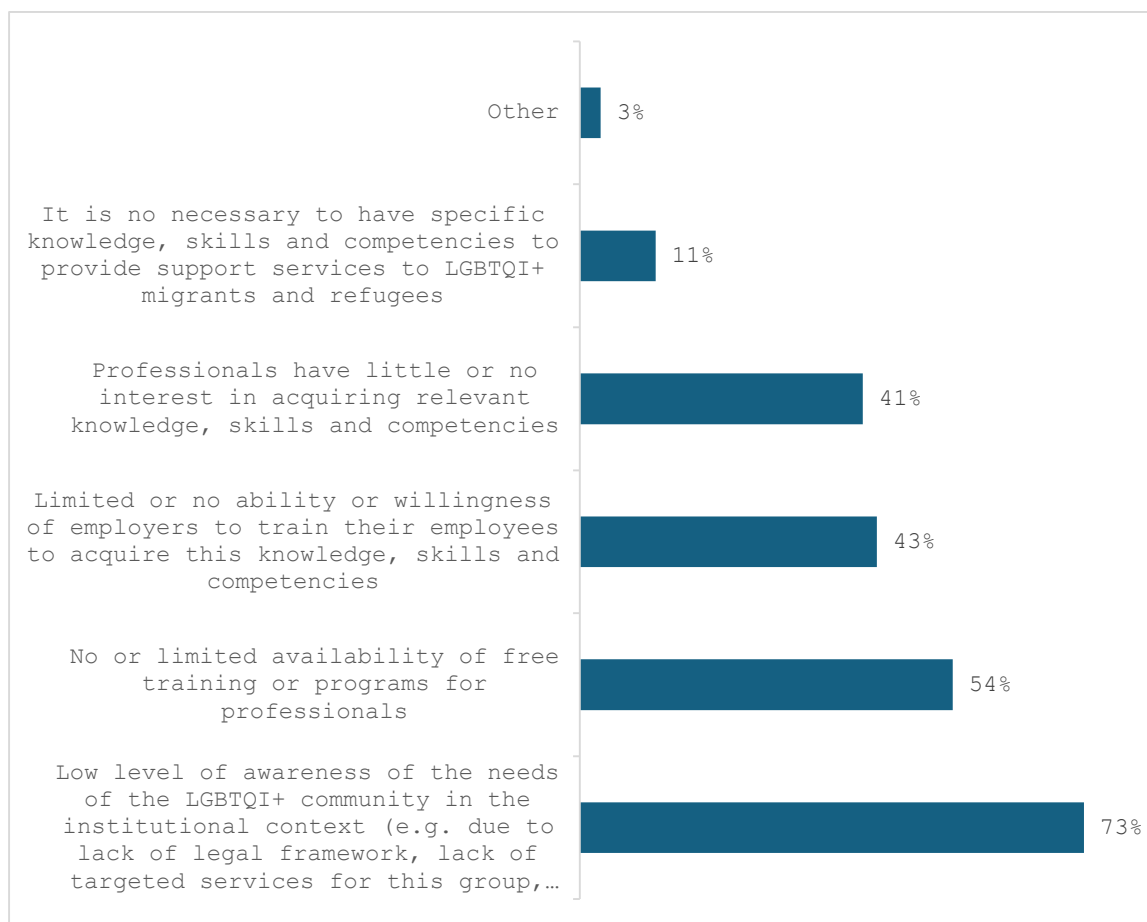
*Figure 23. Skills needed by professionals to respond to the needs of LGBTQI+ migrants/refugees (n=99)*

When asked whether professionals working in their sector have the necessary knowledge, skills and competencies to provide assistance to LGBTQI+ migrants and refugees, the largest group of respondents answered positively - a total of 43%, of which 10% marked “yes” and 33% “rather yes.” However, at the same time, one in four respondents had a different opinion - 6% “no” and 19% “rather no” - and as many as 32% did not explicitly respond to this question (“neither yes nor no”).



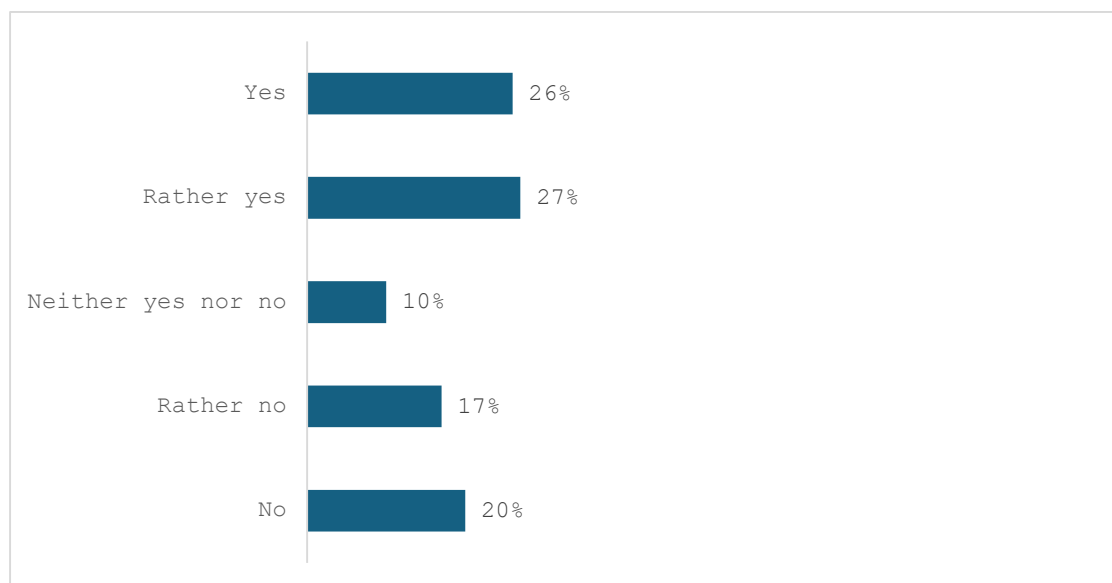
*Figure 24. Distribution of responses to the question “In your opinion, do professionals working in your sector have the necessary knowledge, skills and competencies to provide assistance to LGBTQI+ migrants and refugees?” (n=145)*

Respondents who expressed the opinion that professionals working in their sector lack the necessary knowledge, skills and competencies to provide assistance to LGBTQI+ migrants and refugees were asked to indicate the reasons for this situation. (Several answers were possible.) The vast majority (73%) see the source (or one of the sources) of this state of affairs in the low level of awareness of the needs of the LGBTQI+ community in the institutional context. More than half (54%) of respondents indicated a lack or limited availability of free training or programs for professionals, and 45% indicated a limited ability or lack of ability or willingness of employers to train their employees in this regard. In addition, 41% of respondents estimate that professionals have no or limited interest in acquiring relevant knowledge, skills and competencies, and one in ten respondents (11%) themselves believe that, in order to provide support services to LGBTQI+ migrants or refugees, there is no need for specific knowledge, skills or competencies.



*Figure 25. Distribution of responses to the question “What are the reasons for the lack of necessary knowledge, skills and competencies?” (n=37)*

Respondents are divided when it comes to their interest in attending a training focusing on the meeting and the topic of supporting the needs of LGBTIQ+ migrants and refugees. More than half of them would like to take part in it (26% “yes” and 27% - “rather yes” responses). In contrast, one in five (20%) is not interested in this type of training, and 17% “rather not” interested. One in ten respondents (10%) did not give a specific answer, marking “neither yes nor no.” A cross-analysis shows that those most interested in such training are those involved in migrant/refugee integration or anti-discrimination (63% - “yes”, 13% - “rather yes”) and social welfare workers (50% - “yes”, 10% - “rather yes”).



*Figure 26. Declared interest in participating in a training focusing on the meeting and the topic of supporting the needs of LGBTQI+ migrants and refugees (n=145).*

Respondents who expressed a lack of interest in attending the training (54 people) were asked the reason for this attitude (it was possible a multiple choice) The largest group, i.e. more than half (52%) of the respondents (said that the topics of such training would not be related to the actual duties of their position. On the other hand, 39% of respondents simply indicated that they were not interested in the topic, and one in four (26%) cited a heavy workload as the reason. In addition, one person added that the reason for his lack of interest in attending the training was that he judged his knowledge to be sufficient, and another respondent expressed the opinion that there was no need for it, as all clients are treated equally.

Respondents who expressed motivation to participate in the training (i.e., 77 people) were asked to indicate what topics would interest them the most you could mark several answers). All training topics proved to be attractive and/or needed - none of them captured the interest of fewer than four in ten respondents. The largest number of people (75%) would like to participate in a training on good practices of social integration of LGBTQI+ migrants and refugees implemented in other countries, a training on the law and legal solutions to crimes and discrimination based on racism, homophobia, transphobia and biphobia (71%), and a training providing knowledge about human rights violations, discrimination and persecution based on sexual orientation, identity, gender in the countries of origin of LGBTQI+ migrants and refugees (68%). Also in high demand would be training introducing basic terminology such as sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, gender characteristics, migrants, refugees, international protection (64%) and training on the legal status of LGBTQI+ migrants and refugees in Poland (62%). Slightly fewer, but still a significant number of respondents, would be interested in training to familiarize themselves with the socio-demographic profile of LGBTQI+ migrants and refugees in Poland (43%), as well as training on facilitation and increasing access to support services for LGBTQI+ migrants and refugees (42%).



Cross-analyses show that the greatest interest in training on the law and legal solutions to crimes and discrimination based on racism, homophobia, transphobia and biphobia is among respondents working in social welfare (100%), culture (88%) and migrant/refugee integration or anti-discrimination (83%). In contrast, good practices from other countries of social integration of LGBTQI+ migrants and refugees are of most interest to cultural workers (100%), while the demand for knowledge about the socio-demographic profile of LGBTQI+ migrants and refugees in Poland is significantly higher (83%) among workers in the social assistance field compared to all other professional categories.

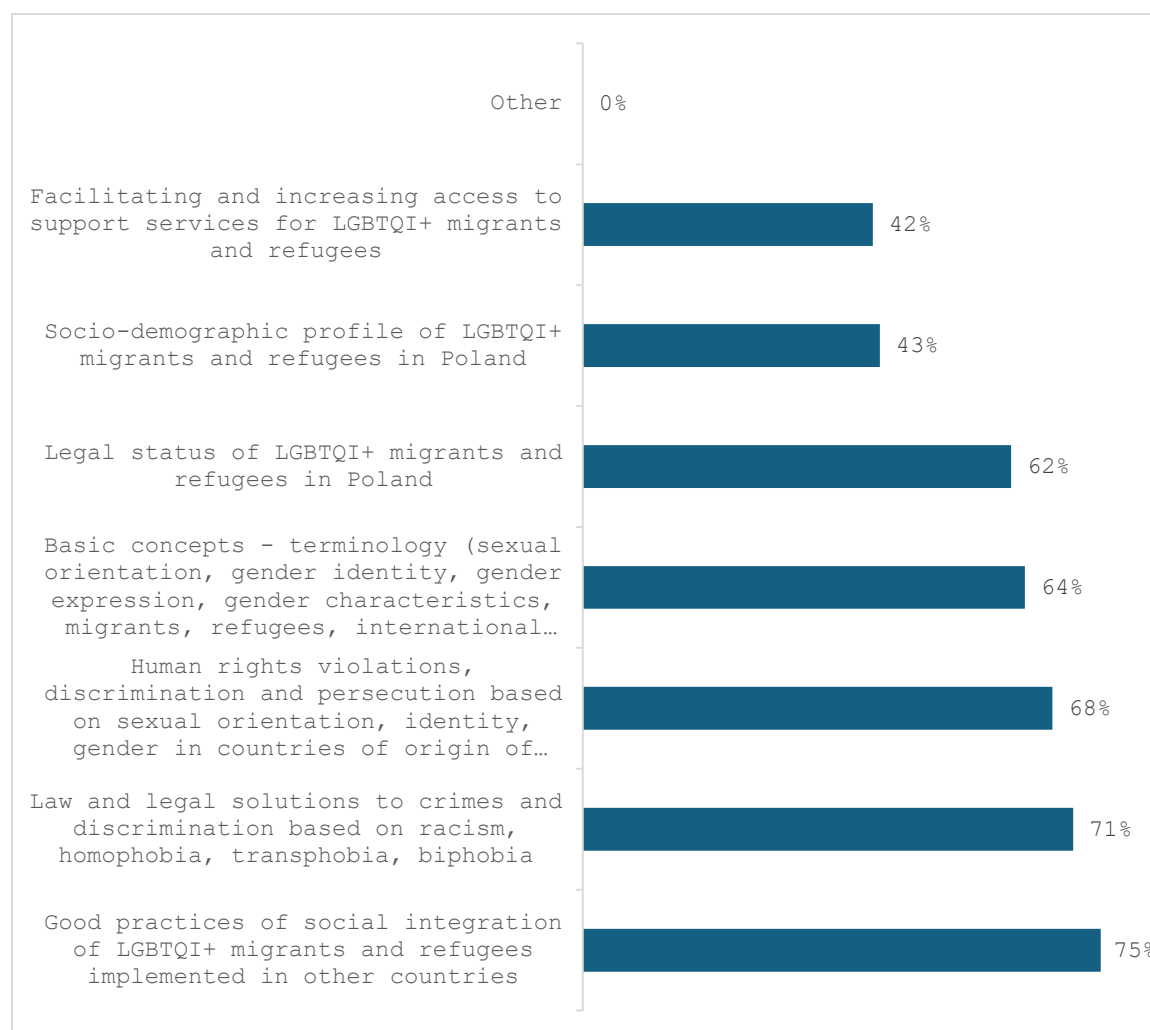


Figure 27. Demand for training topics (n=77)

## 4. 4. Conclusion

To sum up, the survey revealed significant gaps in the competencies of local administration employees in serving LGBTQI+ migrants and refugees, with 68% of respondents acknowledging the need for specific skills and knowledge. Language barriers (88%) and cultural differences (88%) were identified as primary challenges, compounded by a lack of accessible training programs. Awareness gaps are evident, as a notable portion of respondents (29%-36%) could not address key issues related to the social exclusion and needs of this group. Fear of identity

exposure (35%) and mistreatment (31%) were highlighted as major barriers faced by LGBTQI+ migrants and refugees in accessing services. There is strong interest in training on social integration practices, legal frameworks, and cultural competence, while empathy and cultural awareness are seen as essential soft skills. The findings emphasize the necessity of raising awareness among officials, addressing structural barriers, and including LGBTQI+ migrants and refugees in efforts to improve service delivery.

# 5. MAIN RESULTS FROM THE INTERVIEWS WITH LGBTQI+ MIGRANTS AND REFUGEES

## 5. 1. Characteristics of the people interviewed

Eight women and two non-binary people participated in the interviews. All individuals declared a non-heterosexual orientation. Two of the interviewees were aged 18-24, four - 25-39 and four - 40-60. Two participants were originally from Belarus - one was under international protection and the other had a temporary residence permit in Poland. The other female participants were from Ukraine and had a refugee status in Poland (so called PESEL UKR). Seven of the interviewees were atheists. Two declared a Christian denomination, and one indicated a religion other than the major world religions. Three participants had been in Poland for less than 3 years, three between 3 and 6 years, another three between 6 and 10 years, and one came to Poland more than 10 years ago. In terms of housing, two rented an apartment on their own. Six interviewees rented an apartment or room with other people (third parties or family). Two indicated that they lived in an independent accommodation. The employment status of the research sample varied widely, with four people declaring themselves employed on the basis of an employment contract, two self-employed, two employed on the basis of a contract of mandate, and two - unemployed. Three people were pursuing education, and the remaining seven were not studying. We also asked about the type of support the interviewees used while in Poland. Seven of them received mental health support, six received physical health support and six received legal advice. Four people received financial and educational support (mainly free Polish language courses). Two people also received employment and housing support.

## 5. 2. Key findings

### PERCEPTION OF POLAND AS A COUNTRY TO LIVE IN

Among female interviewees, Poland was perceived as a friendly and more open country compared to their countries of origin. It was repeatedly emphasized that Poland offers greater freedom in self-expression, especially in terms of appearance and identity, which allows for greater authenticity.

*When I moved to Poland, I tried to express myself visually a little more, because I can wear whatever I want, I can do anything with my hair or make-up. And almost nobody said anything about it. Maybe there were some girls or just some people, who would come up on the street and say something like: “ooo, you look cool”. - lesbian, 40-60 years old.*

Poland was also a place where some participants could better understand and develop their identity.

*And it was my exploration of myself that mostly took place in Poland. - lesbian, 18-24 years old.*

In general, the interviewees felt comfortable in Poland. They appreciated that Polish women and men were usually friendly and spoke English well, which made it easier to communicate and navigate daily life.

*In Poland, I feel that I can express myself freely, although there are some people with aggressive attitudes, but these are rather exceptions. In general, people here are friendly and speak English well, which makes communication easier. - lesbian, 25-39 years old.*

In addition, participants pointed to easy access to various forms of support, especially those offered by NGOs such as Kultura Równości (Culture of Equality) in Wrocław. This enabled the use of legal, psychological and integration assistance. Access to kindergartens and extra-curricular activities, both sports and arts, was also appreciated. Of symbolic importance to the interviewees was the presence of Ukrainian, Belarusian and rainbow flags in public spaces, which emphasized the atmosphere of support and solidarity.

However, not all experiences were unequivocally positive. Although the participants lived openly in their daily interactions, there were sometimes situations in which they had to hide their identities.

*In my daily life I live openly. My Polish friends know about my relationships and I have never experienced condemnation from them. The people I come into contact with react positively. However, there are situations where I have to hide parts of myself. For example, the cab drivers with whom I went to the Equality March asked a lot of questions, and I realized that I couldn't speak openly. The younger people are, the more tolerant they are. - lesbian, 25-39 years old.*

## REACHING OUT TO SUPPORT SERVICES

Interviewees spoke positively about the available support services they used through NGOs. Interestingly, no interview referred to the support offered by local government units.

*When it comes to non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that offer help and consultation, I always feel understood and supported. - non-binary person, 18-24 years old.*

*There are such various integration organizations here, that you can easily find some events for Ukrainians with Ukrainians, you can also find various supportive foundations that just help people in difficult situations either financially, or by providing help to people who have survived violence. And it's very supportive that there are a lot of such resources here. - lesbian, 25-39 years old.*

*I've benefited from help usually from either organizations or tolerant people, so I've only experienced good things overall. - lesbian, 25-39 years old.*

Upon arriving in Poland, the interviewees first reached out to close friends for help, and only secondly to NGOs. Information about the support offered by the third sector most often came to them through the so-called “grapevine communication”.

*In my case, I didn't have contact to any organization and all the help that I had, I got from friends, acquaintances. And later, once I found other people to contact and had time and resources, an opportunity to contact <name of organization> appeared and therefore.... It was so much easier <to receive support and> access to information through contacts, through other people.*  
- lesbian, 40-60 years old.

*When a person is in a stressful situation of forced emigration, it is very difficult to find out quickly and find out where to seek help. I learned about such opportunities and organizations during personal conversations with friends.* - non-binary person, 18-24 years old.

The paths to reach organizations varied. For those who communicated less fluently in Polish, organizations supporting the migrant and refugee community were the points of first contact. In contrast, those who communicated more freely in Polish sought support directly from LGBTQI+ organizations.

*For the first two years I had contact only with such Ukrainian organizations, because I was still a little afraid to communicate and I was existing in a little bubble of my own. Now I guess after that Equality March, which was in 2024, I found so many people and started to communicate properly and go to such different events and so on.* - lesbian, 40-60 years old.

Among Ukrainian refugee women who arrived in Poland shortly after Russia's February 2022 onslaught, social media was the main source of information about the aid offer.

*I found information about supportive organizations through social media, such as Instagram. Facebook groups were also helpful (...). The problem was the high demand for help, which meant that it was not always available immediately.* - lesbian, 25-39 years old.

Since the social capital of queer immigrants who have just arrived in a foreign country can be particularly poor, so-called outreach to the community, i.e. expanding communication channels to outdoor media, is very important.

*I was informed about <name of organization> by accidentally noticing a sign “Have you experienced sexual violence? All you have to do is write an email.” on a screen of a city tram. So I wrote an email.* - lesbian, 25-39 years old.

It is also important to communicate explicitly that the offer of assistance is directed to LGBTQI+ people, so that by revealing their sexual orientation or gender identity, a person will not face exclusion.

*For example, why I've never visited <name of organization>. I knew it existed. For so many years. But I never wanted to go there. Because... of the fact that I'm an LGBT person. And I don't know if <name of organization> is friendly to LGBT people. Because it was never written in the*

*<description> of their meetings, of their events (...). I really don't know if there are allies of LGBT people. - non-binary person, 18-24 years old.*

Sometimes a person receiving support services was referred to a particular organization by another friendly organization, which itself did not have the expertise or resources to provide adequate assistance. In order for the referral system to work adequately, it seems important to network support organizations and to have a good knowledge of the range of services provided by partner organizations.

*First we wrote and asked all our Ukrainian activists who we could write to. And there was another organization from Krakow who wrote to me that they could help. I said that I only want help with renting an apartment. They referred us to <name of organization>. And then < name of organization> referred us to other organizations. - non-binary person, 18-24 years old..*

Unfortunately, there have also been instances of discrimination by support organizations.

*The invitation there said that I can come with my partner and it doesn't matter what gender one is. If you are family, you can come. And in the queue in front of <name of organization> they told us no. "And if you are married, please show the papers. After all, there is no wedding either in Ukraine or Poland." And it's strange that a person who works at <name of organization> doesn't know this. - non-binary person, 18-24 years old.*

## HOUSING

The greatest number of barriers to operating freely in Poland was in the area of the rental market. When describing their experiences with renting apartments, female participants often mentioned direct discrimination already at the stage of publishing advertisements. Landlords are reluctant to rent to foreigners and those with children or pets.

*And there are very many job or housing advertisements, things you need on daily basis, in this advertisements it is precisely written, that they are looking for women without children, non-smokers and non-refugees. - lesbian, 25-39 years old.*

In addition, rental prices for housing are very high - out of line with income levels. Many times, the need to secure funds for housing means that interviewees do not have time to integrate into the local community.

*I miss contact with people, but on the other hand I don't have time for that, because I have to work. Otherwise there won't be enough money for an apartment. The rent is really high. - lesbian, 40-60 years old.*

Among other difficulties in this area, interviewees cited: unlawful rent increases; requiring a notarized affidavit that the tenant has a replacement unit to which he or she can move in case of contract termination; and high real estate agency commissions.

*And it's even worse when you have a child, for example, or children, and I was really appalled that now on top of all that you still have to have a babysitter, so to speak, you still have to pay a*

*commission to the agency. So it comes out that you have to have PLN 10 000 more or less to start with, just to find a place for you and pay all these costs. And as an independent person who can't find a job easily, well that's a big challenge. And you can't go back to your country. - lesbian, 25-39 years old.*

## ACCESS TO THE HEALTHCARE SYSTEM

The next most frequently cited as problematic was access to the healthcare system. Having medical insurance was one of the most important issues contributing to a sense of safety. However, participants did not always have access to it.

*All these years, as I was studying and getting higher education, I was not insured by my academy. The academy only insured people from Poland, and refugees just didn't have that option. So I actually came during COVID and it was really scary and very unpleasant. - lesbian, 25-39 years old.*

While private healthcare works well in the eyes of interviewees, public healthcare - even if you have access to it - does not meet basic needs.

*Sometimes I face difficulties because of the language barrier, but in general I have access to healthcare. I prefer to use private clinics, as dates of appointments at the National Health Fund can sometimes be distant. - lesbian, 25-39 years old.*

Respondents were more likely to experience discrimination in public clinics than in private ones. They mentioned, among other things, taking risky medical decisions without performing diagnostics, being mocked by medical staff, or addressing a transgender person with a so-called deadname.

*The healthcare system works quite well if you have good medical insurance. If you don't, I don't know how you can cope. I once came close to death because of the actions of medical personnel. I had a high temperature (40-41 degrees) for more than 24 hours. My partner called an ambulance. All I remember from the doctors' visit itself were derisive comments about my age and orientation. When my temperature dropped, I was told to go to the hospital on my own. At the hospital, I waited about three hours to be admitted. Without performing any tests or diagnostics, I was prescribed medications that I was supposed to buy by prescription. I took them for four days, until my condition deteriorated significantly (vomiting, heartache, confusion, severe apathy) and I went to another doctor. It turned out that the drugs prescribed at the hospital were for Parkinson's syndrome. The doctor said that I was lucky that my heart was healthy, otherwise the consequences could have been irreversible. I later learned that there was an unofficial theory circulating among doctors that these drugs should be prescribed for coronavirus. However, in my case, no tests or examinations were performed. I may have died due to a medical error. - non-binary person, 18-24 years old.*

*It was a big problem to get COVID vaccines when the disease was simply everywhere, I know that refugees could not take advantage of it so quickly and easily. - lesbian, 25-39 years old.*



*Especially at the National Health Fund clinics, they use the name that is on the documents and ignore all requests to address you by your proper name.* - transwoman, 18-24 years old.

Using private healthcare is very expensive. In case of financial deficits, one way to cope with health problems is self-medication.

*Appointments to doctors are so very expensive that I cannot afford them and I tend to lay sick at home and often treat myself on my own. I turned to specialists when situations were too risky. I also could never afford to do a certain test because it was too expensive for me.* - lesbian, 25-39 years old.

Another problem is the lack of knowledge of how to navigate the public healthcare system. The system is incomprehensible, fragmented, and lacks coordination and cooperation between doctors of different specialties.

*Sometimes I don't know what to do with my child, where to go. As a Ukrainian I could not have a regular family doctor. So, for example, if something happens, I have to wait in line, then they will admit me. But <I would like> so that there would be one doctor who would know everything about my child. And this is important for me, because (...) he has a heart defect.* - non-binary person, 18-24 years old.

## EXPERIENCE OF VIOLENCE

Female participants mentioned experiencing violence on the Internet, as well as verbal violence on the street. The violence was more often xenophobic than homophobic in nature. However, these experiences were not common; rather, they were considered exceptions.

*Neither on the part of professionals nor my surrounding did I experience discrimination. Only once I encountered a negative attitude from a person of low social status, who said "Ukrainians, go back home."* - lesbian, 25-39 years old.

*The sense of security is more influenced not by the fact that I'm LGBT, but by the fact that I'm Ukrainian (...) there were cases, (...) when I was talking with my Ukrainian friend in Ukrainian and some guy came up saying 'niepanimaju, you're in Poland, speak Polish.' And I don't know, it gives you a little bit of that kind of anxiety, because you don't know what kind of person means what, and it's very much needing a lot of effort to keep thinking and thinking about whether or not that person might be some kind of danger to me.* - non-binary person, 18-24 years old.

Reporting violence to the police can be problematic. While the police respond to on call requests, discrimination can be encountered when reporting crimes in person at the police station.

*I have never filed complaints personally, as I know of several cases where people have faced similar discrimination in the police.* - non-binary person, 18-24 years old.



Additional barriers to filing complaints of violence or discrimination include a lack of proficiency in Polish, or a lack of tools to file a complaint.

*For example, at the office, one of the employees shouted at me, refused to speak English and would not help. I did not complain because I do not know Polish well enough to explain the situation. In other institutions, employees are usually polite and professional. - lesbian, 25-39 years old.*

*Well I doubt that I could file anything against the police that the person does not address you with the right name, right? - transwoman, 18-24 years old.*

When experiencing peer violence at school, teaching staff do not always have the competence to deal with the situation effectively. Sometimes a child interrupts school to take care of their own safety.

*My son was not able to continue his education in a Polish school because of his experience of peer violence (bullying) due to the fact that he is Belarusian, and the school administration did not take sufficient measures to ensure his safety. He is currently studying in a Ukrainian-Belarusian online school. This fact deprives him of the opportunity to socialize and integrate into Polish society, as well as with peers his own age. - non-binary person, 18-24 years old.*

## ACCESS TO THE LABOR MARKET

The topic of complicated bureaucracy, which makes it difficult to get a job, came up repeatedly in interviews. The very long waiting time for processing documents related to the legality of residence in Poland threatens the stability of employment.

*I would like to have a better level generally, easier bureaucracy. Collection of documents, processing of documents, so that people don't wait several years each for proof of legal residence in the country, and then in a year all this, I don't know, documentation expires and nothing is left. And you have to do the same thing again, and it's quite expensive. Both psychologically and financially. - lesbian, 25-39 years old.*

*Employment was not easy either. First I had to work illegally and look for connections to find any work. I'm still looking for a job and I have a problem with employment, which is caused by the fact that the bureaucratic system has its holes where refugees simply can't find a place. - lesbian, 25-39 years old.*

Interviewees indicated that what could help would be to simplify procedures, such as those related to the nostrification of Belarusian university degrees issued after 2008, when Belarus left the Bologna system. Another solution would be to make free legal aid available.

*I would really like to see more support offers, more lawyers. If we already have such a bureaucracy, free lawyers, or places where you can get free legal help, that would be very helpful. - lesbian, 25-39 years old.*

Interviewees also brought up the topic of employment discrimination, for example, about being denied employment without cause. The topic of inferior treatment in the workplace did not come up in any interview, suggesting that discrimination most often occurs at the job search stage, even before a job is taken.

*In the professional sphere, I also feel discriminated against. Between a Belarusian woman and a Polish woman of equal competence, naturally, a Polish woman will be admitted to work.* - non-binary person, 18-24 years old.

In the case of transgender people, there is additional potential for discrimination in the disclosure of personal information from documents when signing a contract.

*In employment, I did not encounter problems. Perhaps it's because in my attempts to get hired the signing of the contract didn't happen, so I didn't give my personal information from my passport.* - transwoman, 18-24 years old.

## NEEDS IN THE AREA OF INTEGRATION

Integration is a key aspect of life for LGBTQI+ migrant women in Poland. Interviewees pointed out that loneliness and lack of contact with the local community can lead to social exclusion and limit the ability to fully participate in professional and social life. As one interviewee points out:

*Many people are lonely in a foreign country and need more integration and new friendships to simply survive* - lesbian, 25-39 years old.

Social integration not only enables relationships, but also influences a sense of security and belonging to a new community.

Participants undertook various ways to make new friends, such as attending community meetings and adopting a dog.

*My first attendance at the meetings was a key moment of my integration. People's support and friendly conversations helped me cope with stress and find support.* - lesbian, 25-39 years old.

*Integration was difficult at first, but the culture and contact with people made the process more interesting. For example, I adopted a dog, which helped me make new friends.* - lesbian, 25-39 years old.

## KNOWLEDGE OF THE POLISH LANGUAGE

The most important factor affecting the level of integration is knowledge of the Polish language. The ability to communicate in the local language not only removes barriers to access to work, healthcare or rental housing, but also enables the building of deeper relationships with the local community.

*Because of the fact that I speak Polish well and I can communicate, so people just don't feel this foreignness* - transwoman, 18-24 years old.

Instead, the lack of Polish language skills can lead to feelings of alienation and isolation.

*The only difficulty is that I work from home and have no opportunity to study and practice Polish. I would like more direct contacts with people.* - lesbian, 25-39 years old.

However, becoming fluent in a language requires both time and mental stability. In particular, people forced to work several hours a day, as well as those experiencing migration trauma, may have limited resources for learning the language.

*Additionally, learning the language requires mental stability and time, which I lack because I am forced to work 10-12 hours a day at best. This leads to enormous stress and psychological trauma, which is superimposed on previous experiences of forced emigration, repression, violence and torture in prison during and after the 2020 protests in Belarus.* – non-binary person, 18-24 years old.

For this reason, it is important to offer free and accessible language courses, adapted to working people.

## PSYCHOLOGICAL SUPPORT

The importance of mental health in the integration process was also emphasized by the participants. Experiences related to forced emigration, political repression or discrimination led to a deterioration of mental health, which in turn affected difficulties in establishing contacts and participating in social life.

*I'm a bit mentally unwell, so I need my therapist, medication, because it's hard to integrate when you're not stable.* - lesbian, 25-39 years old.

Therefore, it is crucial to increase access to free psychological help, especially in the context of supporting LGBTQI+ people, who often struggle with double stigmatisation – due to both their sexual orientation/gender identity and migration status.

## TIME AND FINANCIAL BARRIERS

The participants often mentioned the lack of time and financial resources, which prevent them from fully taking advantage of the integration offer. Full-time work, and in particular the need to provide funds for the high costs of renting apartments, means that participants have limited time to participate in cultural or social events. An additional barrier to using the offer of non-governmental organizations may also be the difficulty in organizing care for a child or other dependent person.

*And for example, there are a lot of different events, not only LGBT events, that I can't visit because it's late, for example, or dangerous, there are too many people, the child doesn't fit, the child is too loud. Because in my case it can be a technical thing, an organizational thing. And I won't look for a babysitter.* - lesbian, 40-60 years old.

Therefore, it is worth considering organizing integration events tailored to the needs of families, as well as providing childcare during such meetings.

## NEED FOR INFORMATION

The participants spoke about the need to improve information about the forms of support available. Local institutions can support integration activities by conducting information campaigns and promoting available forms of assistance in social media and traditional media, e.g. placing information about events of support organizations on the city office website. It is important for institutions to provide announcements and information in foreign languages, which will help reach people who do not speak Polish well. Translation in offices is particularly important. The official language can be complicated, and the quality of translation of materials often leaves much to be desired.

*It would be good if some information was in Ukrainian. For example, there are a lot of Ukrainians in Wrocław. They have problems with the <voivodeship> office all the time. Well, write something like that, understandable in Ukrainian. And I often translate using Google Translate. And it translates very badly into Ukrainian. And sometimes you are somewhere and there is some information in Ukrainian, but you just can't understand what it is about.* - non-binary person, 18-24 years old.

Materials and documents should be written in simple, understandable language.

## NEED FOR INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT

Interviewees also emphasised the importance of institutional support for the LGBTQI+ community from local authorities.

*I would like local authorities to officially declare their support for equality and civil partnerships. For example, representatives of Wrocław could publicly speak out in defense of the LGBT+ community.* – lesbian, 25-39 years old.

Support for LGBTQI+ and migrant community initiatives should be visible, for example by creating meeting places or adequate descriptions of events supplemented with information that they are dedicated to or friendly to the LGBTQI+ community.

*I only behave <freely> in places where something is written, where there is a small flag or some sign. Maybe if there were more of them, it would be better.* – non-binary person, 18-24 years old.

*I think there should be more funding for organizing meetings and providing places where you can meet. For example, meetings of refugees with LGBT+ people, workshops, art-therapy meetings. People want to have a place where they can talk, laugh, play games or draw something. Unfortunately, many of these activities have been limited recently.* – lesbian, 40-60 years old.

For offices to be truly friendly to the LGBTQI+ immigrant community, officials should undergo equality training.

*When I was at the office, I was doing a PESEL for a child and they asked me about the child's father, but he wasn't there. It was such an unpleasant situation. – non-binary person, 18-24 years old.*

*In offices, I sometimes encounter incompetence or rudeness, as in the case of refusing to update an address at the <municipal administration> office. – lesbian, 25-39 years old.*

## SENSITIZATION WORKSHOPS

The participants spoke about the need to sensitize society to the situation of refugees. These workshops can help reduce prejudices, especially among the older generation, which will contribute to a better understanding of the situation of refugees and migrants and to building a more open society.

*Organizing training against xenophobia to reduce prejudice, especially among the older generation. This will help better understand why Ukrainians come to Poland, and decrease tensions. – lesbian, 25-39 years old.*

*Maybe there should be some workshops? On tolerant conversation? On methods of talking to refugees from my country, because many people from there have PTSD or something else, and maybe some workshops on communicating with someone who has experienced violence, so as not to retraumatize them. – lesbian, 25-39 years old.*

## 6. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### 6. 1. Key findings from surveys and interviews

The research highlights the significant "double stigma" faced by LGBTQI+ migrants and refugees in Poland, arising from their sexual orientation or gender identity combined with their migration status. This dual stigma manifests in various forms, including discrimination in accessing housing, healthcare, and employment, as well as broader social exclusion. Surveys reveal that 64% of migrant organizations and 85% of LGBTQI+ organizations perceive high levels of social exclusion for LGBTQI+ migrants. Interviews also indicate that while some feel safer in Poland compared to their countries of origin, they continue to experience microaggressions, xenophobia, and homophobia in both public and institutional settings.

Barriers in key areas remain a challenge. In the housing market, LGBTQI+ migrants face discrimination along with high costs, forcing many to work long hours, which limits opportunities for social integration. Healthcare access is hindered by language barriers and poor experiences in public clinics, including instances of mistreatment such as deadnaming. Many LGBTQI+ migrants turn to expensive private services for adequate care. Employment is another obstacle, with complex bureaucratic procedures and systemic discrimination disproportionately affecting transgender individuals who must disclose personal details during job applications. Psychological distress, stemming from trauma, migration experiences, and social isolation, is prevalent, yet access to psychological care is limited and primarily provided by NGOs.

NGOs play a critical role in offering support, but gaps in coordination and the visibility of resources hinder accessibility. Surveys show that 40% of LGBTQI+ organization respondents observed challenges in communication between service providers and beneficiaries, often caused by language and cultural barriers. Furthermore, insufficient outreach and a lack of explicit inclusivity in messaging mean many LGBTQI+ migrants remain unaware of available resources and services.

### 6. 2. Main needs, issues, and gaps identified

Persistent prejudices and stereotypes create a hostile environment for LGBTQI+ migrants and refugees, particularly in rural areas and smaller towns. Among surveyed local authorities, 53% acknowledged widespread social exclusion of LGBTQI+ migrants, but many lack the cultural competence to address these challenges effectively. Stereotypes portraying LGBTQI+ migrants as "problematic" or "undesirable" exacerbate their marginalization and hinder

access to essential services.

The research also identifies gaps in training and awareness among professionals. While 68% of surveyed local authority employees expressed interest in targeted training, others exhibited limited understanding of the vulnerabilities faced by LGBTQI+ migrants. This lack of awareness or interest is reflected in the survey findings, where nearly one-third of respondents did not express an opinion on whether LGBTQI+ migrants face social exclusion or whether professionals in their institutions have the required skills to serve this group. The apathy underscores the need for systemic efforts to sensitize public officials and ensure they recognize and address the specific needs of LGBTQI+ migrants and refugees.

Systemic shortcomings compound these challenges. Poland's migration policies and legal frameworks fail to acknowledge or address the unique vulnerabilities of LGBTQI+ migrants. The lack of legal recognition for same-sex partnerships and the low success rate of asylum claims based on sexual orientation or gender identity further exacerbate these individuals' hardships, leaving them without adequate support or protection.

## 6. 3. Recommendations

To address the systemic issues identified, a comprehensive and multi-faceted approach is required to ensure the inclusion and well-being of LGBTQI+ migrants and refugees in Poland.

### COMPREHENSIVE TRAINING PROGRAMS

Tailored training programs for local authorities, migrant organizations, and LGBTQI+ advocacy groups are essential. These programs should address cultural competence, trauma-informed care, and legal frameworks, emphasizing the intersectional challenges faced by LGBTQI+ migrants. Topics such as effective communication strategies and inclusivity in service provision should also be prioritized. Survey data reveal a strong demand for such initiatives, with 75% of respondents interested in learning about good integration practices and 71% seeking training on anti-discrimination laws.

### INCLUSIVE POLICY DEVELOPMENT

Legal reforms must address the vulnerabilities faced by LGBTQI+ migrants. Key priorities include the legal recognition of same-sex partnerships and enhanced protections against discrimination in housing, healthcare, and employment. Simplified residency and work permit procedures are also necessary to reduce bureaucratic hurdles and promote equitable access.

### ENHANCED COMMUNITY SUPPORT STRUCTURES

The establishment of safe spaces and support centers tailored to the needs of LGBTQI+ migrants is critical. These centers should provide accessible psychological care, language courses, and integration programs, including social events and networking opportunities.



Collaboration with NGOs can ensure the consistency and quality of these services, addressing the pervasive isolation and marginalization faced by LGBTQI+ migrants.

## IMPROVED ACCESS TO INFORMATION

Awareness campaigns are needed to ensure LGBTQI+ migrants are informed about available services and resources. These campaigns should be multilingual and leverage diverse platforms such as social media, public advertisements, and community leaders to reach marginalized groups. Materials must explicitly indicate inclusivity to build trust and alleviate fears of discrimination.

## EMPOWERING LGBTQI+ MIGRANTS

Involving LGBTQI+ migrants in the design and evaluation of support programs is vital to ensuring these initiatives address their real needs. Advisory committees and focus groups can help shape culturally sensitive services while fostering a sense of agency and belonging within this community.

## NETWORKING AND COLLABORATION

Strengthened collaboration between migrant and LGBTQI+ organizations is essential for creating a unified support system. Regular forums, shared resources, and joint initiatives can enhance service provision and reduce duplication of efforts. Coordination between these groups can also improve the visibility and accessibility of resources for LGBTQI+ migrants.

## SPECIFIC NEEDS OF LOCAL AUTHORITIES

Local authorities require tailored support to address the unique needs of LGBTQI+ migrants. Training on language skills (88%), cultural competence (88%), and legal knowledge (62%) is particularly needed. Raising awareness of LGBTQI+ migrants' vulnerabilities and fostering empathy among public officials are crucial steps. Employing cultural mediators and incorporating LGBTQI+ perspectives into local policy-making can further enhance the inclusivity of public services.



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## 8. ATTACHMENTS

- a) File with data: Statistic-survey among migrants
- b) File with data: Statistic-survey among LGBTQI+
- c) File with data: Survey results charts among local authorities
- d) File with data: Cross tables survey results charts local authorities