

# THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC CONDITION OF LGBTQ PEOPLE IN MAURITIUS, 2022: *Survey findings†*

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## Introduction

In 2017, the Young Queer Alliance (YQA) expressed concern of the lack of evidence-based and informed policy making and programming for LGBTQ people in Mauritius in a global landscape where the condition and human rights of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Queer (LGBTQ) people and their struggles are ever increasingly on the agenda for a number of State and non-State stakeholders.

The YQA issued its first quantitative research “The socio-economic conditions of LGBTQ people in Mauritius” (2017) which has been the basis for a number of advocacy and initiatives in country as well as towards United Nation Treaty Bodies and Committees.

Five year later, the YQA has conducted the survey anew to measure changes during the past five years and to inform future actions.

This survey on “**the socio-economic condition of LGBTQ people in Mauritius, 2022**” seeks to understand:

- (i) the immediate social life of LGBTQ Mauritians;
- (ii) their education and employment status;
- (iii) the rates of discrimination, stigmatisation and violence they face due to their identities;
- (iv) their awareness of legislations and policies;
- (v) their priorities related to LGBTQ issues over the next five years; and
- (vi) the impact of COVID-19 on LGBTQ people.

## Limitations in survey

The survey poses some limitation as it does not explore qualitatively each of the responses of the participants. Moreover, the survey was filled online to enable LGBTQ people, which are often hard-to-reach, to be able to participate. 218 LGBTQ people from Mauritius participated in the survey. The responses obtained were filtered to exclude non-LGBTQ people. The responses did not filter Mauritians who were living abroad. Summarised below are the findings from the survey.

## Main comparisons 2017 v/s 2022

The main comparisons between the survey of 2017 and 2022 are as follows:

- the number of respondents reported living with their partner has doubled (5.6% in 2017 and 11.0% in 2022);
- respondents are more open to their siblings (53.5% in 2017 and 62.8% in 2022) and parents (29.0% in 2017 and 41.7% in 2022);
- respondents continue facing discrimination, stigmatisation and violence for being LGBTQ at home/within their family; in the society in general; in educational settings; in public transport/on the streets; and at workplace;
- legal literacy has increased in terms of being aware that LGBTQ people can donate blood in Mauritius (33.99% in 2017 and 59.63% in 2022); equal opportunities law (44.66% in 2017 and 59.17% in 2022); there are HIV and STI prevention services for LGBTQ people in Mauritius

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(35.96% in 2017 and 56.88% in 2022) and laws protecting from violence and hate apply to LGBTQ people and all citizens (31.74% in 2017 and 40.83% in 2022); and

- an overwhelmingly number of LGBTQ people saw as priority having access to civil partnership/marriage equality (78.37% in 2017 and 90.37% in 2022) and freedom to same-sex sexual activities (45.22% in 2017 and 66.51% in 2022).

## Immediate social life of LGBTQ Mauritians

Respondents were asked to provide self-identification in terms of their sex, sexual orientation, gender, age group, relationship status and housing condition. **Table 1** below details the responses of the participants.

36.2% of respondents were male, 56.0% female and 7.8% of the respondents identified as intersex.

In terms of sexual orientation, 20.6% of respondents self-identified as lesbian, 24.3% as gay, 46.3% as bisexual, 1.8% as heterosexual, 3.7% as questioning and 3.2% as other. As regards gender self-identification, 88.5% reported being cisgender and 11.5% trans.

80.3% of respondents were aged 18 – 30 years inclusive, 14.2% aged between 31 – 44 years inclusive and 4.1% aged below 18 years. Only 0.9% reported being aged 45 – 60 years inclusive and 0.5% above 60 years of age.

With regard to their relationship status, 58.7% of respondents were single, 37.2% reported being a couple, 2.3% in an open relationship and 1.8% married.

**Table 1: Participant's demographics**

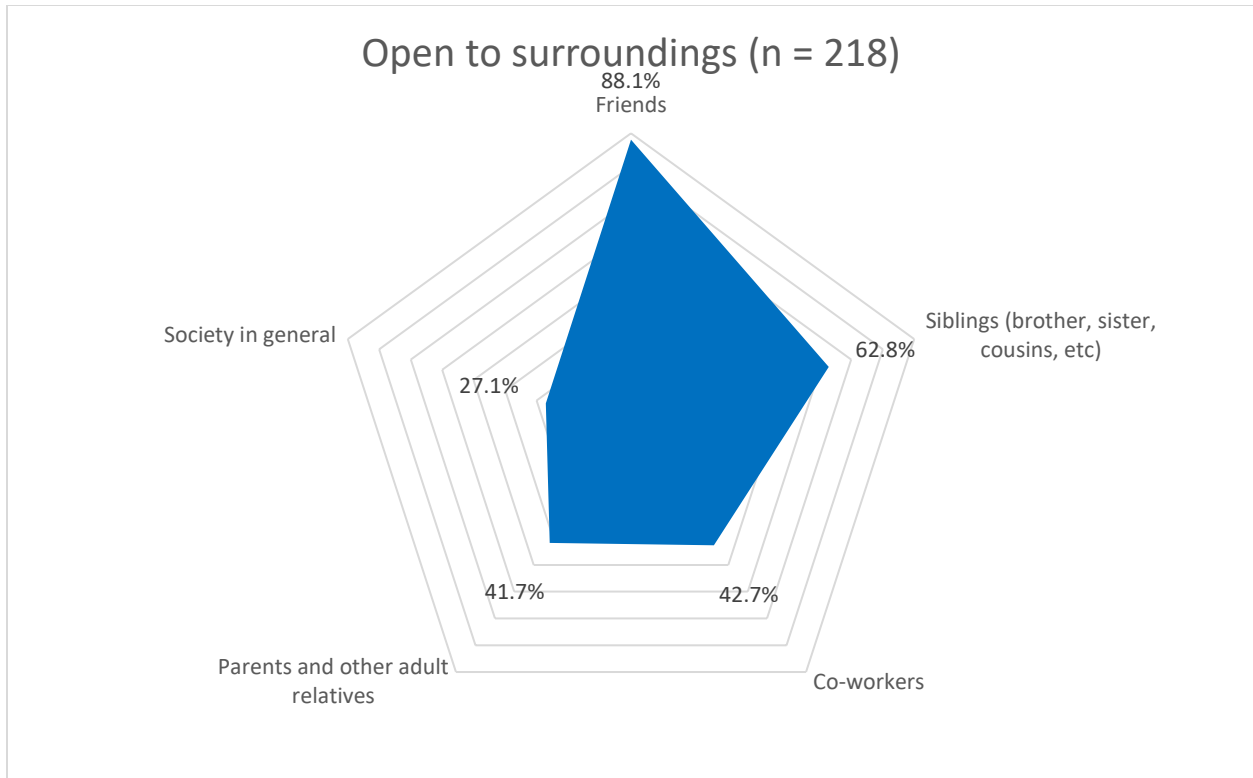
Participant's self-identification in percentage (n = 218)						
Sex (%)	Male		Female		Intersex	
		36.2		56.0		7.8
Sexual Orientation (%)	Lesbian	Gay	Bisexual	Hetero	Questioning	Other
	20.6	24.3	46.3	1.8	3.7	3.2
Gender (%)	Cisgender			Trans		
	88.5			11.5		
Age Group (%)	Below 18	18 to 30 inclusive	31 to 44 inclusive	45 to 60 inclusive	Above 60	
	4.1	80.3	14.2	0.9	0.5	
Relationship (%)	Single		Couple	Open relationship	Married	
	58.7		37.2	2.3	1.8	
Housing (%)	Alone		With parent (s)	With partner	With room-mate (sharing rent)	
	6.9		81.2	11.0	0.9	

Respondents were asked to whom in their surroundings they were openly LGBTQ. 88.1% of them were open to their friends and 62.8% to their siblings. Fewer were openly LGBTQ to their co-workers, their parents and other adult relatives and to society in general. **Figure 1** below provides the detailed responses of the respondents.

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*Figure 1: Open to surroundings*

The survey further shows that of the respondents reported living with their parents, only **29.8%** reported being open about their sexual orientation or gender identity and expression to their parents and other adult relatives. This creates a challenge for LGBTQ people to live fully in family settings by being themselves. This further creates challenges when it comes to rights to privacy, life in dignity and love; and further adds to the mental and emotional challenges that LGBTQ people face. In fact, **61.6%** of respondents living with their parents reported facing mental health issues such as anxiety or depression.

## Education

Respondents were asked to inform of their highest level of education they have reached. From **Figure 2**, it was observed that **96.79%** had a School Certificate (SC), **81.19%** a Higher School Certificate (HSC), **39.45%** a university degree and **10.55%** were post graduates.

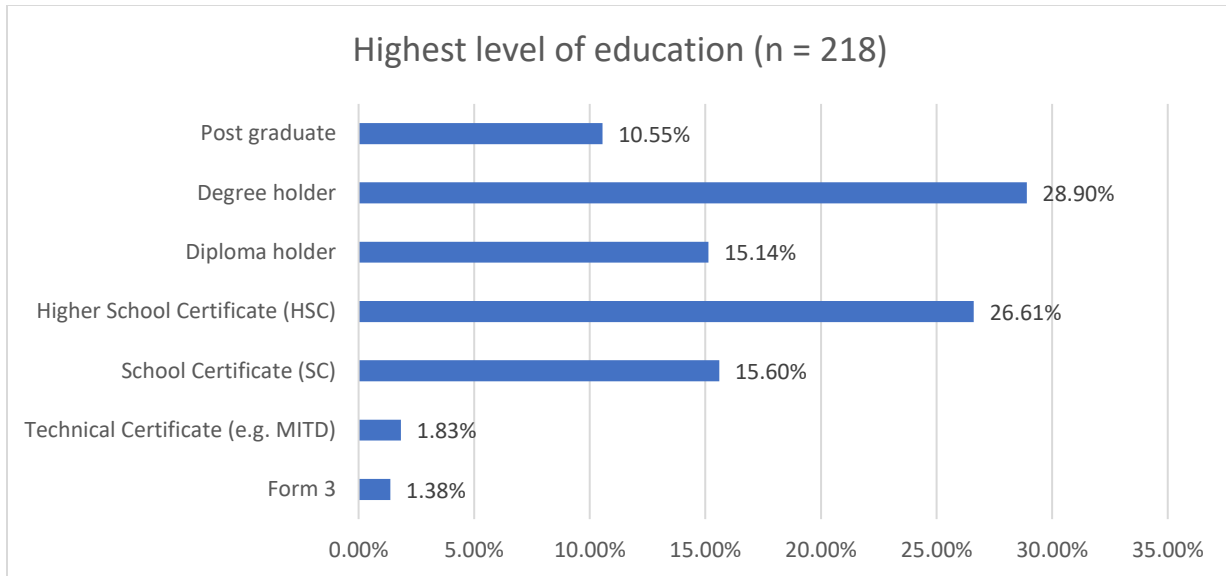


Figure 2: Highest level of education

## Occupation and employment

34.86% of respondents reported not working as they were either secondary school students (9.17%), undergoing skilled work traineeship (1.38%), enrolled as university student (18.81%) or unemployed (5.50%).

65.14% reported being employed and were either undergoing a paid training programme (4.13%) or were employed as a part-time worker (2.75%) or were a full-time worker (52.75%) or were self-employed (5.50%).

The unemployment rate in 2021 in Mauritius was around 9.1% and youth unemployment (16 to 24 years) was 27.7%. The low level of unemployment is explained by the fact that all respondents who were unemployed had at least a School Certificate as highest level of education whereas for the population in general, in 2021, 55% of the unemployed did not hold a Cambridge School Certificate.

Figure 3 below details the occupation of respondents.

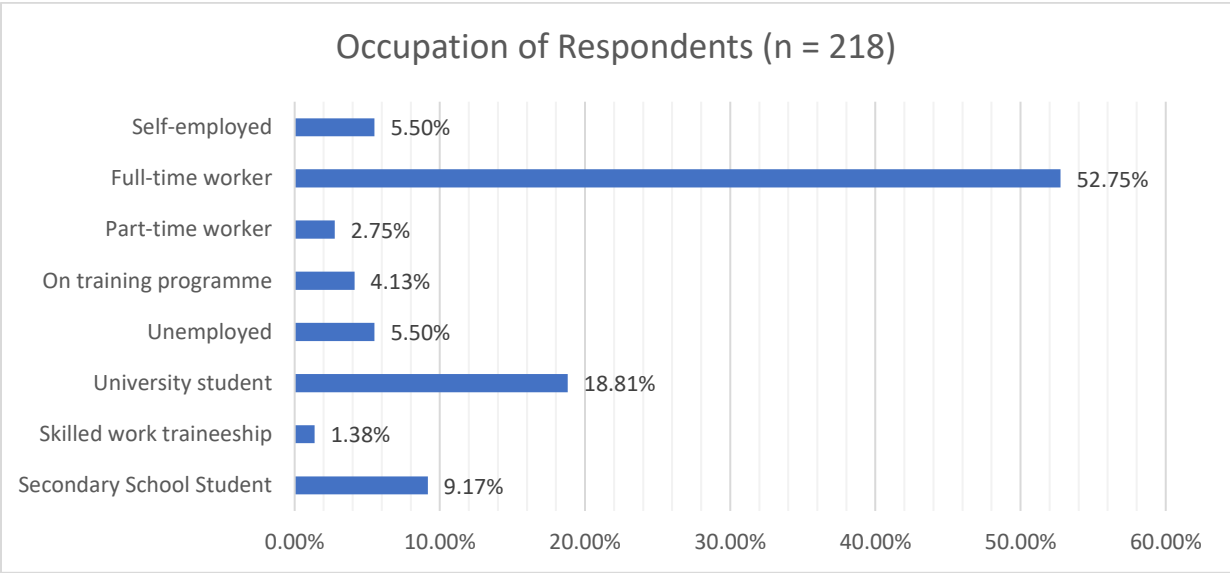


Figure 3: Occupation of respondents

The median monthly income of employees in 2021 was **MUR 16,000**. For respondents, the median monthly income was between **MUR 16,000 to MUR 21,500**.

The average monthly income for all sectors for the population in general in 2021 was **MUR 22,800** whereas, for respondents, the average monthly income was around **MUR 22,370** which shows no significant difference.

Figure 4 below shows a breakdown of the income range of respondents.

## Employment Status and income range (n = 218)

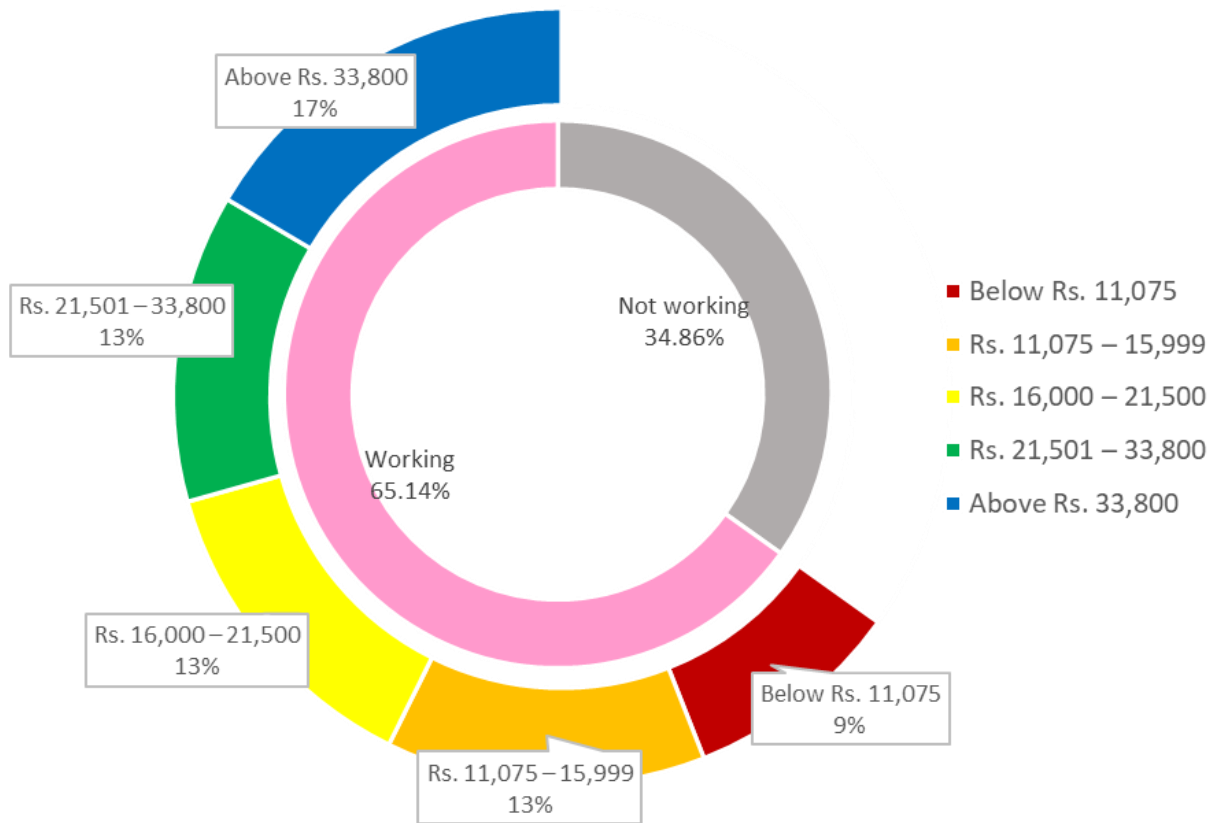


Figure 4: Employment status and income range

### LGBTQ-friendly places in Mauritius

57.80% of respondents reported that they were aware of at least one LGBTQ-friendly place in Mauritius. However, none of the spaces identified were found to be overwhelmingly LGBTQ-friendly.

Social media was reported to be the most LGBTQ-friendly (33.49%), followed by Non-Governmental Organisations (25.23%), Night clubs (22.48%) and Guest house and hotels (21.10%).

Figure 5 below shows in detail spaces which respondents have identified to be LGBTQ-friendly.

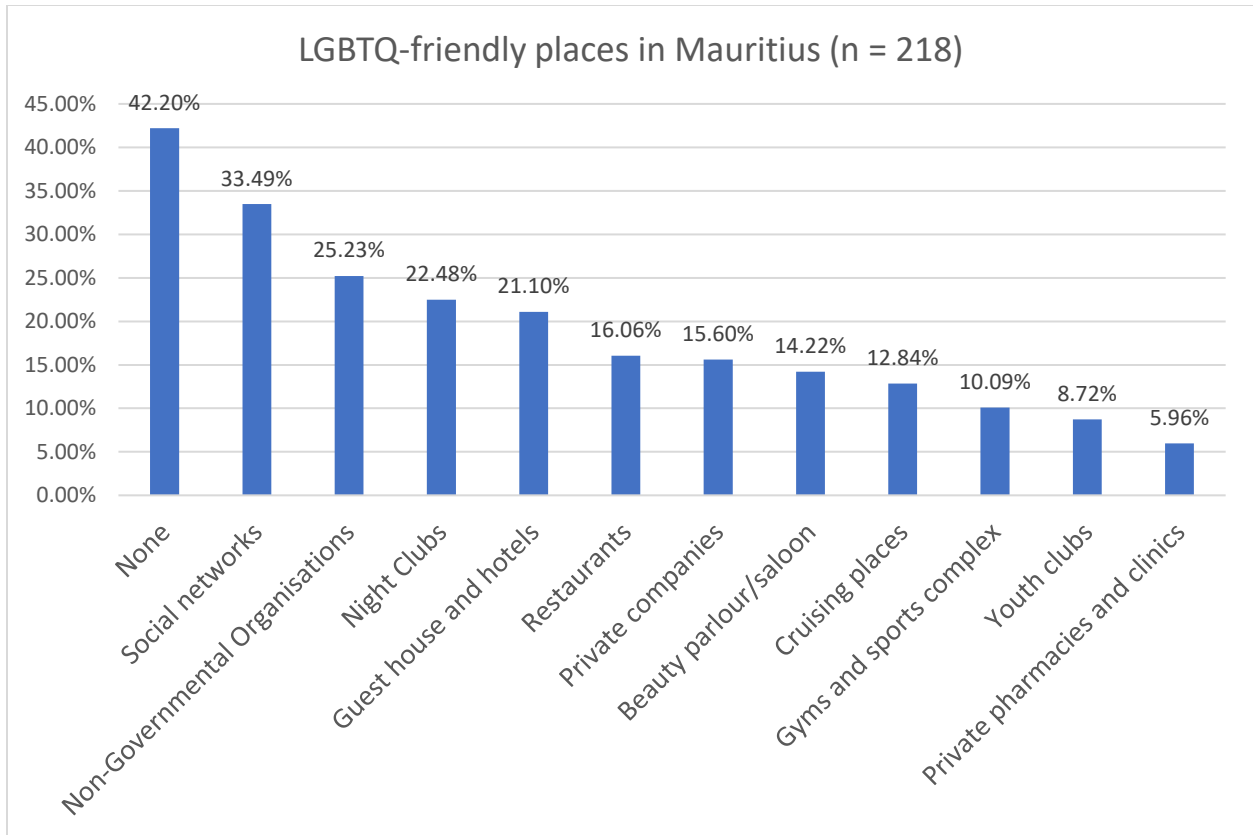


Figure 5: LGBTQ-friendly places in Mauritius

## Discrimination, stigmatisation and violence

Respondents were asked to inform whether they faced discrimination, stigmatisation and/or violence due to being LGBTQ.

61.5% of respondents reported that they have been victim of discrimination in at least one place, 67.9% of stigmatisation and 45.4% of violence due to their sexual orientation or gender identity and expression.

As illustrated in **Figure 6** below, the five main places where respondents faced discrimination, stigmatisation and violence are:

- (i) home/family;
- (ii) society in general;
- (iii) educational settings;
- (iv) in public transport/on the streets; and
- (v) at workplace.

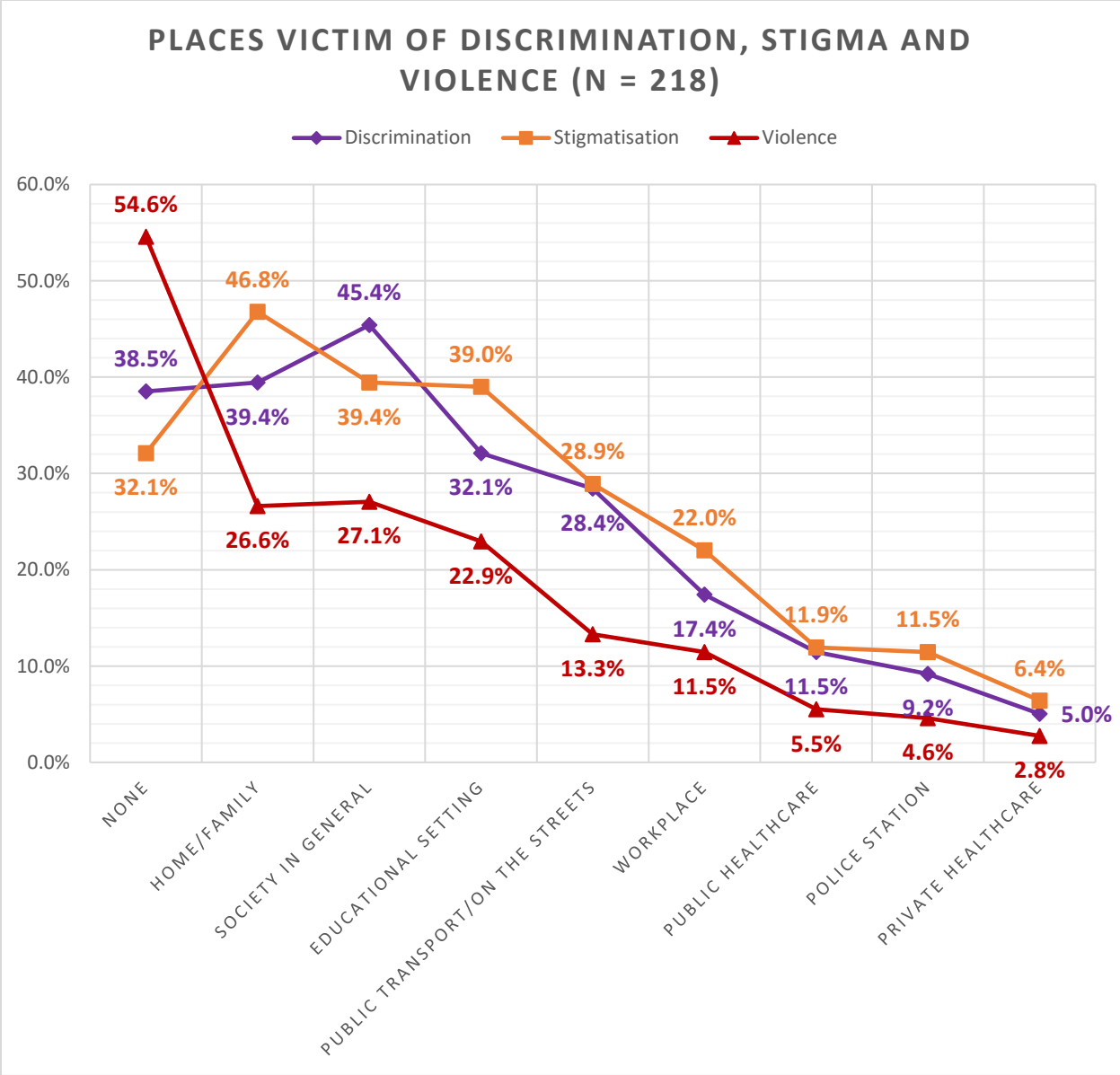


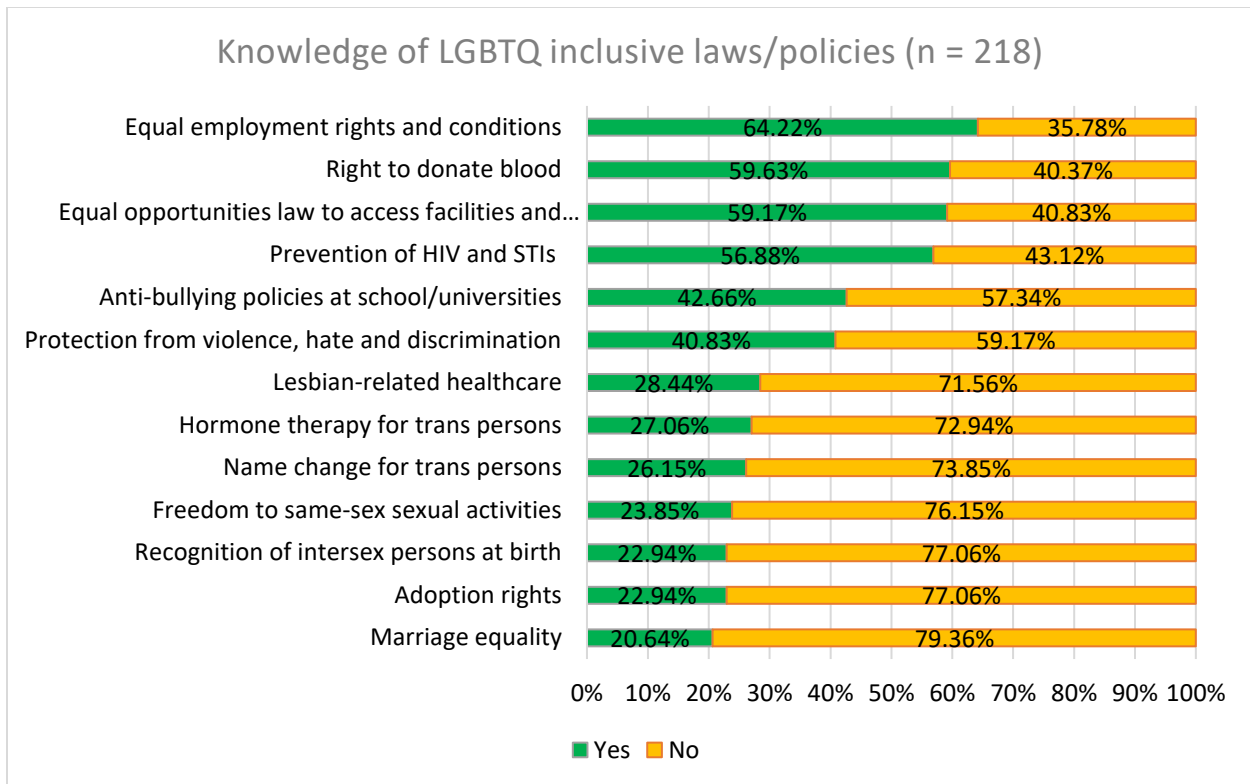
Figure 6: Victim of discrimination, stigmatisation and/or violence

### Laws and policies literacy

Mauritius was a French colony during 1715 – 1810 and subsequently became a British territory from 1810 – 1968 before gaining independence. After the French left Mauritius, the British possession of the island was confirmed four years later by the Treaty of Paris (1814) with the Napoleonic code of law maintained. Therefore, Mauritius has a hybrid constitution and legal system of mixed French codes – the amended Civil Code, the Criminal Code and the Code of Commerce – and the British law of procedure and evidence.

Respondents were asked which of the different laws and policies related to LGBTQ people were available in Mauritius. The responses are at **Figure 7** below.





*Figure 7: Knowledge of LGBTQ inclusive laws/policies*

From the responses, it was found that in terms of prevailing laws and policies for LGBTQ people in Mauritius:

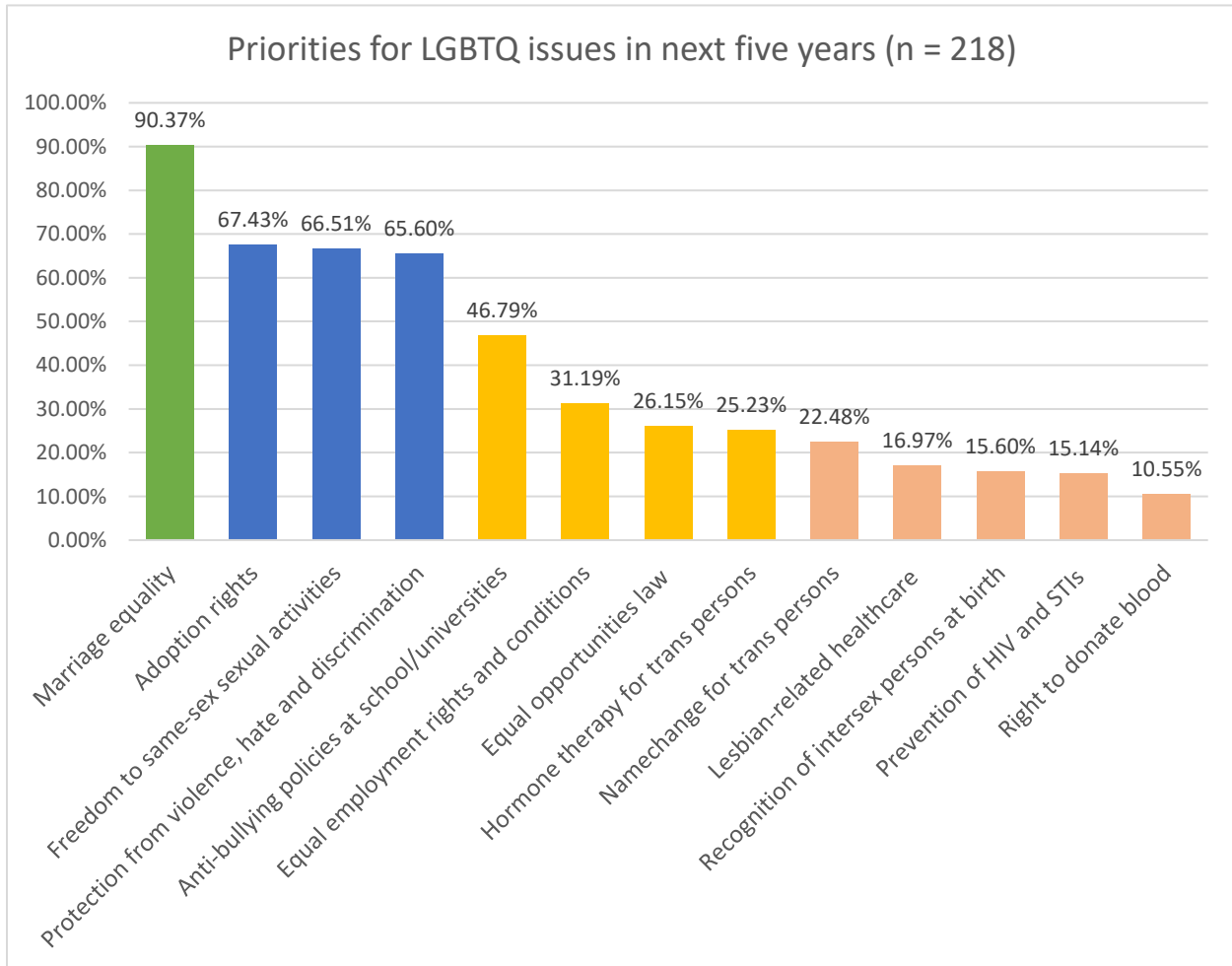
- **79.36%** of respondents are aware that marriage equality is not allowed;
- **77.06%** of respondents are aware that adoption by same-sex couples is not allowed;
- **76.15%** of respondents are aware that sodomy is criminalised;
- **71.56%** of respondents are aware that there is no specific healthcare related to LBT women;
- **64.22%** of respondents are aware that LGBTQ people have equal employment rights and conditions;
- **59.63%** of respondents are aware that LGBTQ people can donate blood in Mauritius;
- **59.17%** of respondents are aware that there are equal opportunities law for LGBTQ people in Mauritius;
- **57.34%** of respondents are aware that there are no anti-bullying policies for LGBTQ students in educational settings;
- **56.88%** of respondents are aware that there are HIV and STI prevention services for LGBTQ people in Mauritius;
- only **40.83%** of respondents are aware that laws protecting from violence and hate apply to LGBTQ people and all citizens;
- only **27.06%** of respondents are aware that trans persons have access to hormone therapy;
- only **26.15%** of respondents are aware that trans persons can change their name; and
- only **22.94%** of respondents are aware that intersex persons can be registered as “undetermined” at birth.

The responses show that an increasing number of LGBTQ people are becoming aware of their rights. However, lack of information concerning violence and hate laws, trans-related services and intersex rights still exist.

## Priorities for LGBTQ issues

Respondents were asked to select among specific issues which should be prioritised for LGBTQ people over the next five years (2022 – 2027). The top five priorities are more fully illustrated in **Figure 8** below and the top six priorities are as follows:

- (i) **Priority 1:** Civil partnership/marriage equality (90.37%);
- (ii) **Priority 2:** Adoption rights (67.43%);
- (iii) **Priority 3:** Freedom to same-sex sexual activities (66.51%).
- (iv) **Priority 4:** Protection from violence/hate/discrimination (65.60%); and
- (v) **Priority 5:** Anti-bullying policies at school/universities (46.79%).



*Figure 8: Priorities for LGBTQ issues in next five years (2022-2027)*

**Priorities 1, 2 and 3** point towards LGBTQ people wanting to form stable and loving relationships by being in families.

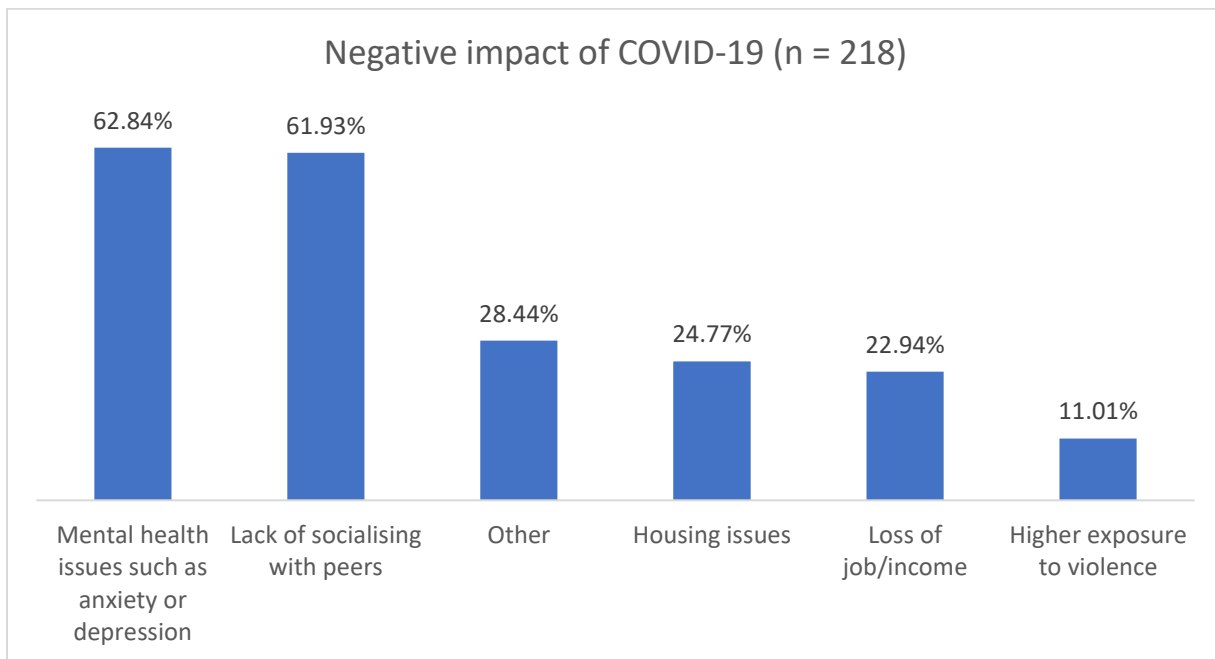
**Priorities 4 and 5** reflect upon the need to be protected from discrimination, stigmatisation and violence due to LGBTQ people facing same at home/family, in society in general, in educational settings, in public transport/on the streets and at workplace.

## Impact of COVID-19

Due to the survey being conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic, respondents were asked to identify the negative impact that COVID-19 had on them as shown in **Figure 9** below.

**62.84%** of respondents reported facing mental health issues such as anxiety or depression. This can be due to **80.29%** of respondents reporting facing mental health issues also reported lack of socialising with their peers.

**24.77%** of respondents also reported housing issues, **22.94%** reported loss of job/income and **11.01%** reported higher exposure to violence.



*Figure 9: Negative impact of COVID-19*

## Conclusion and recommendations

This study demonstrates that LGBTQ people in Mauritius contribute economically to society despite the socio-economic challenges they face. These challenges are:

- **81.2%** of respondents are living with their parents while only **29.8%** of the respondents are open about their sexual orientation or gender identity and expression to their parents and other adult relatives; creating challenges in terms of rights to privacy, life in dignity and love; and further adds to the mental and emotional challenges that LGBTQ people face;
- **37.2%** of respondents are in couple relationships but they cannot live their relationships fully as LGBTQ people still live with their parents;
- **88.1%** of respondents reported being open to their friends and **62.8%** to their siblings;
- the low level of unemployment (**5.50%**) is explained by the fact that unemployed LGBTQ people reported having at least a School Certificate as highest level of education when compared to the population in general where 55% of unemployed did not have a School Certificate;
- LGBTQ people reported a median monthly income between **MUR 16,000 to 21,500** and an average monthly income of **MUR 22,370** which are higher than the population in general;

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- there is no overwhelmingly **LGBTQ-friendly space** in Mauritius with social media (**33.49%**) being the most LGBTQ-friendly followed by Non-Governmental Organisations (**25.23%**);
- **61.5%** of respondents reported that they have been victim of discrimination in at least one space, **67.9%** of stigmatisation and **45.4%** of violence due to their sexual orientation or gender identity and expression;
- LGBTQ people **are victim of discrimination, stigmatisation and/or violence** mainly at home/family, in society in general and in educational settings;
- an increasing number of LGBTQ people **are becoming aware of their rights**;
- there lacks **legal literacy** concerning violence and hate laws, trans-related services and intersex rights;
- LGBTQ people want to **form stable and loving relationships** by being in families;
- LGBTQ people **need to be protected from discrimination, stigmatisation and violence** due to LGBTQ people facing same at home/family, in society in general and in educational settings; and
- due to **COVID-19**, **6** out of **10** LGBTQ people reported facing **anxiety or depression** and reduced socialising with their peers and **1** out of **10** LGBTQ people reported higher exposure to violence.

Based on the findings of the survey, the specific recommendations are as follows:

- recognise the socio-economic challenges and priorities of LGBTQ people and develop appropriate legislative and institutional mechanisms to address same;
- empower LGBTQ people to address challenges in their family settings;
- engage with employers to make working environments welcoming and inclusive of LGBTQ people;
- continue empowering LGBTQ people with legal and policy literacy; and
- conduct periodic follow-up researches to monitor progress made.

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