



## **Trans on the Labour Market in Romania**

A national report on the career paths, employability and workplace experiences of transgender, non-binary and intersex Romanians



unic<sup>♂</sup>orns<sup>♀</sup>@work

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## About the Report

The *2021 Trans Labour Survey* is the first ever survey to examine the experiences of transgender, non-binary, and intersex people (hereby referred to under the umbrella term ‘trans’) in Romania’s labour market. Conducted in June-July by MozaiQ LGBT Association, the survey was an anonymous online survey for trans Romanians of all ages, available in Romanian and Hungarian. The survey was conducted as part of TRANScendent project, funded between 2019 and 2021 by the IKEA Fund for Gender Equality, managed by the Bucharest Community Foundation. The aim of this report is to inform the general public and policymakers and shift views on the lives of trans people and the challenges, discrimination, and choices they face throughout their education and career.

This report traces trans experiences along the path towards the job market, from school days to job hunting to being in a variety of work environments. Different aspects of workplace culture are analysed, as well as trans people’s quality of life as a result of professional, social, and bureaucratic interactions. The survey also has special focus sections for (e)migration and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on trans people in Romania.

## Background

Trans people in Romania have been virtually invisible in research efforts, and there is little data to provide insight into their lived experiences and specific issues and needs. Solutions to commonly faced problems are only just starting to be incorporated in policy proposals. In 2020, the first nationwide survey regarding trans people in the country, released by the Accept Association,<sup>1</sup> found a plethora of issues that trans people face in discovering themselves, coming out, interacting

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<sup>1</sup> Popa, Maria, D. Dragomir Voicu, Iustina Ionescu, Ovidiu Voicu, Patrick Brăila, and Teodora Ion-Rotaru. 2020. *Trans in Romania*. Bucharest, Romania: Accept.

with medical professionals, and living freely. The high level of social rejection and fear of verbal or physical violence has led to 53% of their respondents considering suicide and 24% attempting it at least once.

In 2020, the National Council for Combating Discrimination (*Consiliul Național pentru Combaterea Discriminării*, CNCD) ruled in favour of a trans person for the first time in a case of discrimination on the grounds of gender identity in Romania<sup>2</sup> and issued an administrative fine to the director of a local institution for cancelling an event for young people that featured a transgender speaker.<sup>3</sup> Aside from this one case, no acts of discrimination on the grounds of gender identity have ever been sanctioned by the CNCD. This does not mean that discrimination does not take place, but rather points to its systematic acceptance and the lack of awareness or interest in identifying and combatting it.

Another survey that included data on Romanian trans people was the 2015 *Being Trans in the European Union* report by the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA)<sup>4</sup>, which found that trans people were far less likely to experience acceptance or positive environments in Romania compared to other Member States. In 2015, only one third of all employed trans respondents in Romania reported a positive work atmosphere towards LGBT people, compared to the EU average of 50%; only 23% considered that their educational setting was positive toward LGBT people; 19% experienced discrimination when accessing healthcare in the previous year, a figure that is lowered by the fact that trans people are

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<sup>2</sup> Iordache, Romanița, Iustina Ionescu, Daniela Tarnovschi, Ovidiu Voicu, and Oana Gîrlescu. 2021. *Franet National Contribution to the Fundamental Rights Report 2021*. Brussels, Belgium: FRA.

<sup>3</sup> *Hotărârea Nr. 690 Din 09.10.2019*. 2019.

<sup>4</sup> FRA – European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights. 2014. *Being Trans in the European Union*. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union.



generally reluctant toward healthcare services to begin with,<sup>5</sup> and rely on an informal network of trans-friendly specialists when they do.

In 2021, Transgender Europe found that Romania only has 1 of the 30 recommended legal measures needed for trans people to live freely and safely: the existence of legal measures for gender recognition.<sup>6</sup> Other measures to combat discrimination and hate speech, make medical, legal, or administrative transitioning more accessible, provide asylum, and protect families are non-existent, with Romania being the European country offering the fewest means of legal protection. Despite EU law and the European Convention of Human Rights requiring Romania to explicitly forbid certain practices or clarify its laws concerning discrimination, gender and family recognition, the state is lagging behind in implementing them and continues to be the Member State with the least protection for trans people in all areas of life.<sup>7,8</sup>

Due to the systemic discrimination and inequity that they face, trans people are at higher risk of poverty and economic vulnerability. This study surveyed trans Romanians with the objective of identifying key issues and solutions, by tracing their lives up to and beyond entering the workforce. By mapping out the realities of trans people on the employment market in Romania, we hope to inform public and private industries, as well as impact policies and practices towards better trans inclusion and employability. We conclude with a list of recommendations for necessary policies and practices to improve the issues we identified.

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<sup>5</sup> No such studies have been conducted in Romania, but it has been observed among community activists and across studies performed in countries that trans people are less likely to access general healthcare services. See (Alencar Albuquerque et al. 2016; Meyer IH, Brown TN, Herman JL, Reisner SL, Bockting WO. 2017)

<sup>6</sup> TGEU. 2021. 'TGEU Trans Rights Map'. Trans Rights Map. 2021. <https://transrightsmap.tgeu.org/>.

<sup>7</sup> Brink, Marjolein van den, and Peter Dunne. 2018. *Trans and Intersex Equality Rights in Europe: A Comparative Analysis*. Luxembourg: EU Publications Office. <https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2838/75428>.

<sup>8</sup> TransActual. 2021. *Trans Lives Survey 2021: Enduring the UK's Hostile Environment*. Online.

## Methodology

This national study is based on data from a non-probability-based sample of self-identified trans, non-binary, and intersex people (N= 127) and references the experiences of trans activists working within the community for more in-depth explanations of certain phenomena.

As a community-based survey, it was spread within existing LGBTQ+ communities via three routes:

1. Direct advertising by six LGBTQ+ organisations on their social media pages;
2. 30+ active LGBTQ+ Facebook groups and five dedicated WhatsApp groups;
3. Direct sharing of the survey to trans people via the snowball method.

In addition to the online survey, we hired and trained four trans people as peer research associates to make the survey more accessible by completing it in face-to-face interviews and offer any necessary assistance. Spread across four regions in Romania, our team also helped spread the survey geographically by distributing it in their local communities. Altogether they interviewed 24 individuals from vulnerable backgrounds, with limited access to the Internet, and/or facing language barriers or other challenges.<sup>9</sup>

To make the survey as inclusive as possible, three 2–3-hour long focus groups and three 45–60-minute individual interviews were conducted in preparation, in which

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<sup>9</sup> This methodology was informed by the Trans PULSE Canada report, released 10 March, 2020. Our advocacy coordinator Roxana Marin was supported by the Canadian Embassy in Bucharest to undertake a pre-doctoral field research visit, documenting First Nations and queer experiences in a (de)colonized context. The Trans Pulse Report was released during her visit there, and she was able to contact and learn more about the community-based research approach from Sharp Doppler, a First Nations trans research associate on this project.

17 trans people discussed their first-hand experiences in the educational system, training, the job-hunting process, and the workplace. Starting from the open question ‘what do you do at the moment, and how did you end up doing it?’ (to which respondents answered with 5–30-minute narratives), discussants were allowed to interrupt one another and ask additional questions, discuss shared experiences, and offer each other support and advice. Additional questions were asked if necessary to touch on more specific experiences. Some of the focus group responses will be referenced in the survey to provide added insight and possible explanations for some aspects and issues identified in the survey.

The interviews yielded 1600 in vivo codes (1041 unique), which were then split into overarching themes:

- *Community;*
- *Demographic Information;*
- *Education;*
- *Job-Hunting;*
- *Workplace Environment;*
- *Urban Migration;*
- *Emigration;*
- *Opinions (various);*
- *Future plans;*
- *Issues;*
- *The Pandemic;*
- *Employment and Employability;*
- *Sustainability;*
- *Transition;*
- *Life in General.*

*Community*, *Opinions*, and the larger part of *Life in General* were abandoned due to their irrelevance to the focus and will be used in future studies. For the information under the other themes, each one was then re-coded into a question with a possible answer which formed the skeleton of the survey. For example, ‘When we go on team-buildings they have multiple people in one room and they

never know what to do with me, so I always get my own room away from everyone else' would be coded into the theme *Issues* and become the 'Team building events' option for when/where our respondents face issues regarding their gender identity. Overtly similar questions were scrapped and, where intuitive, other potential answers and experiences were added to the survey (for example, even if no one in the focus groups had only primary education, the option was added to the Education section). Sections of the survey were programmed to be skipped depending on the respondent's employment status and history and current country of residence.

The survey received a total of 127 complete responses, of which 111 met the criteria to be considered valid (with the respondent identifying as trans, non-binary, or intersex; agreeing to have their data collected in the survey; and passing attention-check questions).

## **Limitations**

It is difficult to conduct a survey targeting trans people due to the lack of organizations and other institutions that could provide an infrastructure. Additionally, LGBTQ+ related materials and events in Romania are prone to being attacked by anti-LGBTQ+ groups, making distribution a more sensitive topic. We opted for a community-based approach, in which we outreached to the trans people who are already connected to community groups/members in some form (closed Facebook groups, WhatsApp groups, informal groups, TRANScendent project community).

Recruiting participants was a challenge, both due to the usual concerns regarding survey length, attention, availability, and visibility, but particularly due to trans people's feelings of who should complete such surveys.

We have had numerous people comment that they would share the survey but refused to complete it themselves, for reasons such as not being out at the workplace (and thus feeling inadequate as a respondent for the workplace aspect), considering themselves to ‘not be really trans’ due to not medically transitioning, being in the closet, or identifying as non-binary (and thus feeling inadequate as a trans respondent), not having experience in the Romanian workplace, and, perhaps most problematically, ‘not having had enough problems’ (for more economically integrated respondents) or ‘not having a workplace’ (for those with irregular employment, under the table employment, or sex workers). Despite numerous reassurances on all aspects when voiced in direct conversation, potential respondents still refused to participate to not pollute the data. We can only assume how many trans people refrained from completing the survey for the same reasons without telling us about it personally. The self-imposed gatekeeping is something that we must work with in the future to make the persons concerned feel empowered to represent themselves.

With regards to representation, the survey was heavily biased in two directions:

1. Due to its community-based approach, it directly targeted trans people who are already connected to and regularly check community forums. Unfortunately, this excludes the great majority—and, more problematically, the most likely to be marginalised and socially excluded. The respondents are thus more likely to be aware and accept their gender identity, have had access to more information regarding transition and social navigation, and presumably have had a more positive experience than the norm.
2. The use of the term ‘labour’ and ‘Romania’ in the survey, despite our team’s assurances that we target trans people regardless of level of experience, domain, and that it is sex-work inclusive, led to many

respondents shying away from completing it. This is especially seen in the underrepresentation of diaspora respondents, unemployed individuals, and sex workers, despite their visible presence in the community and positive response to hearing about the survey.

These two directions combined have led to an imperfect picture, where the respondents are better educated and more urban than the representative trans population in Romania. Additionally, an online survey invites a bias of self-selection.

These aspects must be kept in mind throughout reading the report; as concerning as some of its findings can be, this report **represents some of the more privileged members of the community, and our direct experience working with it assures us that the problems run far deeper.** Even so, we identified numerous problems in virtually all aspects of our respondents' life course.

# Demographic Information

This section presents the basic demographic data for respondents, including aspects such as age and ethnicity, gender identity and sexual orientation, and other relevant information to understand the respondents' background.

## Age groups and ethnicity

The respondents were mostly in line with the Romania's ethnic make-up, with 84% of respondents identifying as Romanian, 4% as Romani, 3% as Hungarian, and 2% as other (French and Ukrainian). 8% of respondents identified as Romanian in addition to other ethnicities such as Hungarian, Romani, German, or a combination thereof.



Figure 1. Ethnicity.

Most participants were under 30, with the 18–24 group being the most represented (41%). 26% participants were aged 25–34, 15% were 35–44, and 5% were 45–54, with no respondents aged 55 or more. The <18 population represents 13% of respondents. This segment will receive special attention, while also included in the general demographics and the educational section.

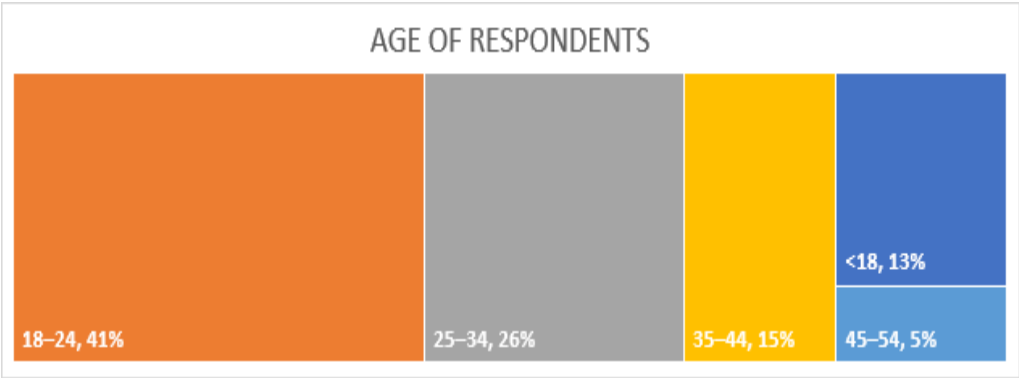


Figure 2. Age distribution.

The large number of younger trans people is to be expected, given the fairly recent emergence of most trans communities in the country, as well as the almost complete lack of access to information and resources existed before the Romanian trans community began to solidify in the 2010s. It is only in the past decade that the communities have established a trustworthy network of resources, information, and medical professionals experienced in caring for trans patients. Though as many people are trans in their 60s as in their teens, it is expected that the older generations would have dealt with dysphoria without identifying it or knowing about the possibility of transition, and even those who have found the communities might feel reluctant to participate given the age gap.

Gender identity and orientation

41% of the respondents identified as non-binary, with an additional 8% of respondents identifying as non-binary in addition to being transgender or intersex. The survey allowed respondents to choose multiple identities, including various identities under the non-binary spectrum such as agender, bigender, etc. These identities have been lumped together under the ‘non-binary’ label for statistical purposes. 4% of respondents are intersex, half of whom also identify as non-binary.



54% of respondents identified as transgender, either male, female, or in combination with non-binary. The comparatively low percent of female respondents is by far the present survey's most dire limitation, as trans women face extreme stigma in the community and make up a large part of the trans community that lives in poverty and/or engages in precarious work, including sex work.

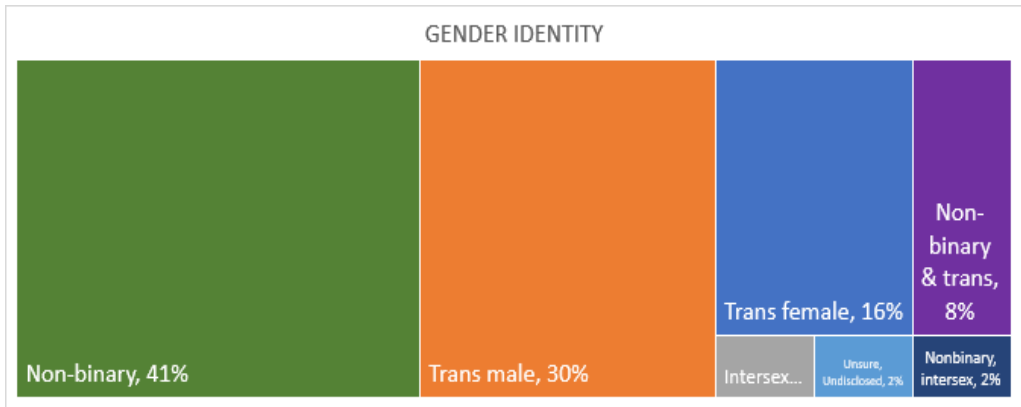


Figure 3. Gender Identity Distribution.

46% of respondents identify as bisexual or pansexual. 18% identify as heterosexual. 22% identify as gay or lesbian, and the rest were undecided or preferred not to answer.

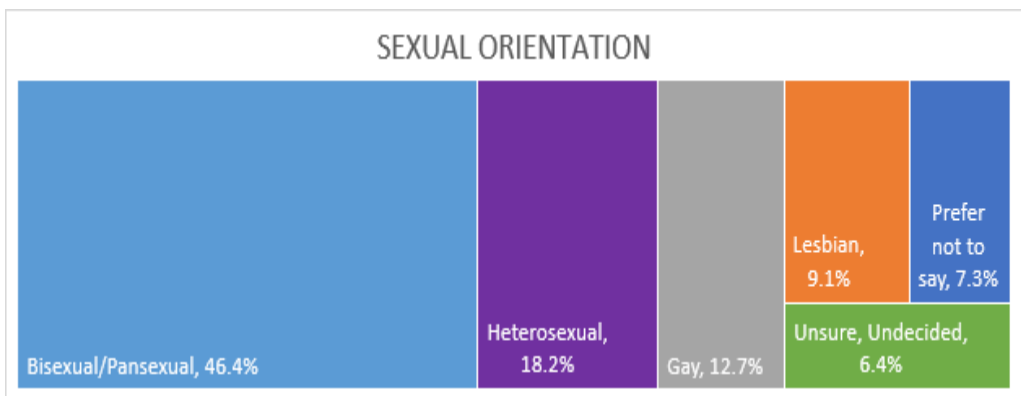
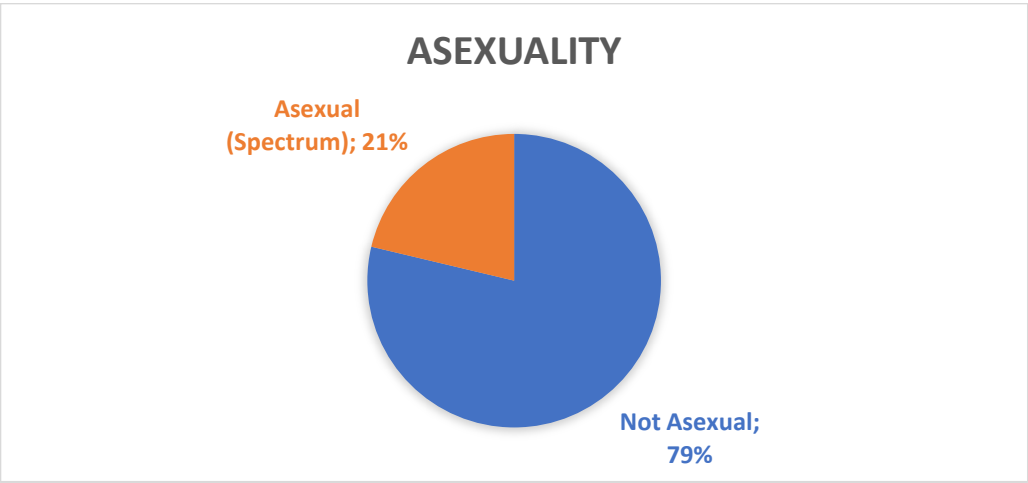


Figure 4. Sexual orientation distribution.

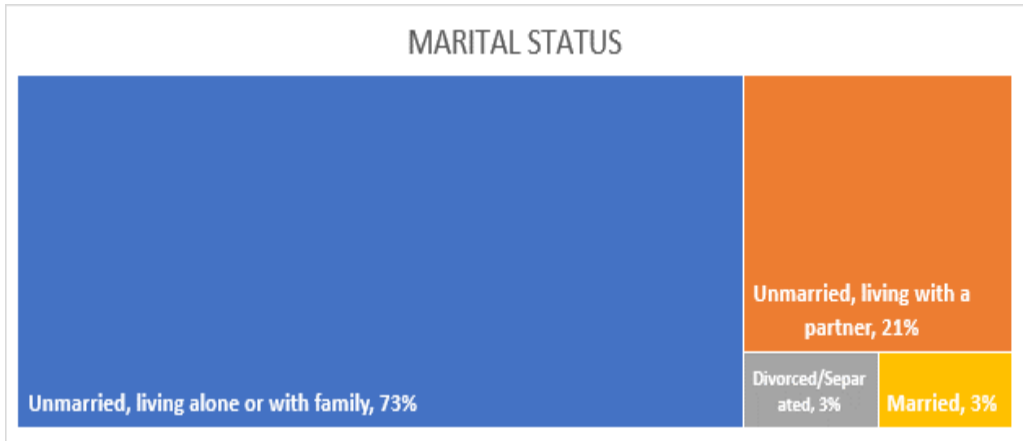
21% of respondents placed themselves on the asexual spectrum, either as asexual, demisexual, or aromantic,<sup>10</sup> far more than the 1% of the general population and 2% of the LGBTQ+ population that are usually estimated. While an interesting find and an accidental first representation of a significant Romanian asexual population, it is not expected to have any bearing on the overall survey.



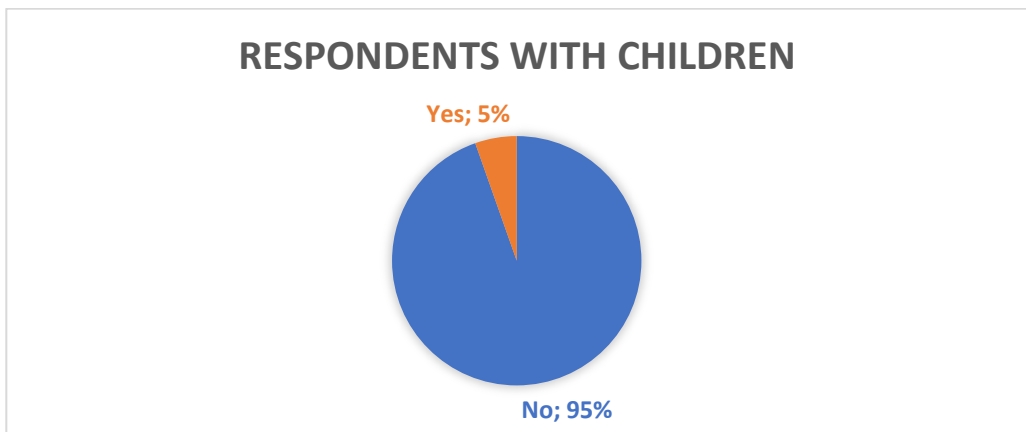
*Figure 5. Asexuality among respondents.*

The great majority of respondents were not married (94%), with only 3% reporting being married and another 3% being either divorced (2%) or married, yet separated (1%). 5% of respondents had children.

<sup>10</sup> The Williams Institute. 2019. ‘1.7% of Sexual Minority Adults Identify as Asexual’. Williams Institute. August 8, 2019. <https://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/press/sm-asexuals-press-release/>.



*Figure 6. Marital status.*



*Figure 7. Respondents with children.*

## Health

The majority of respondents reported suffering from mental health problems including mood and personality disorders and traumatic response. 24% reported suffering from eating disorders.

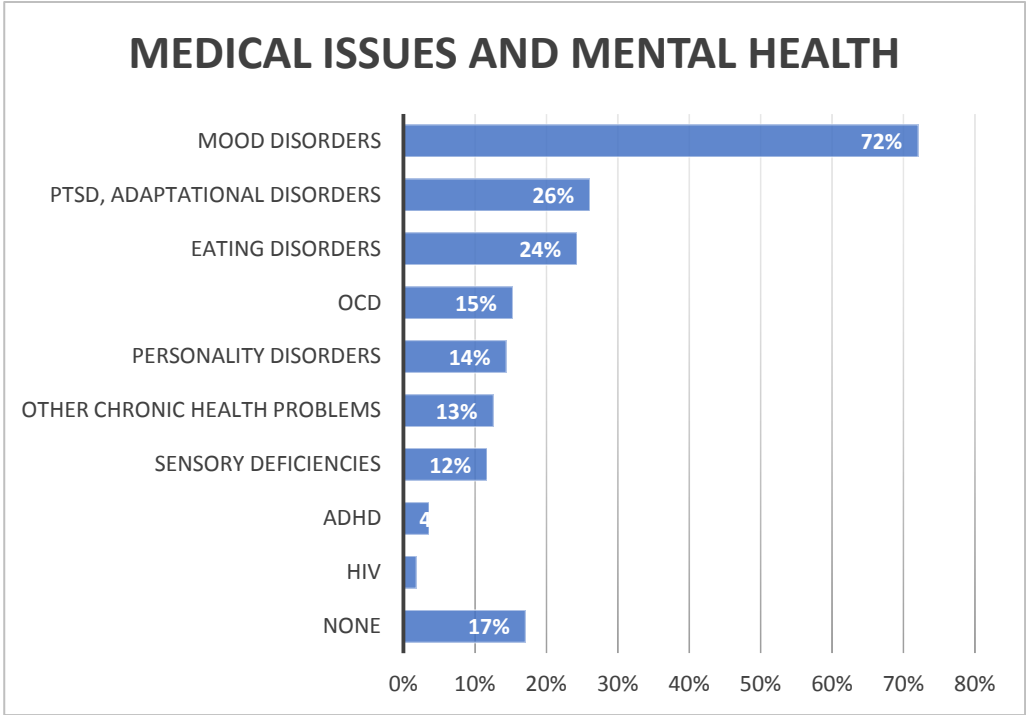


Figure 8. Medical Issues and mental health.

Globally, trans people have been found to be much more susceptible to mental health issues and disorders, an aspect usually attributed to the endemic stress linked to growing up with gender dysphoria and lacking acceptance, understanding, and specialised care.<sup>11</sup> While the percentage found among our respondents is higher than in similar surveys conducted in countries such as Norway or the U.S., this can be attributed to both the manner of conducting the survey (allowing self-diagnosis) and the differences in care experienced across countries.

Demographic Bias and Limitations

Overall, the majority of respondents are on the younger side and single, and the few outliers we had did not provide insight into their life with children or spouses.

<sup>11</sup> Anderssen, Norman, Børge Sivertsen, Kari Jussie Lønning, and Kirsti Malterud. 2020. 'Life Satisfaction and Mental Health among Transgender Students in Norway'. *BMC Public Health* 20 (1): 138. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12889-020-8228-5>.

Marriage and children in the older population can complicate matters extremely, both due to the need to support a family financially, the fear of one's children being bullied, and the complications arising from being married to a heterosexual partner as one's gender assigned at birth. Unfortunately, the report is limited in providing insight into those situations. In our focus groups, the respondents over 40 also introduced familial obligations such as caring for their elderly parents as issues affecting their transition, as well as personal and professional life, but those issues were not prevalent among our general respondents. The older population has also experienced growing up in an era where transitioning was impossible and homosexuality was a penal offense<sup>12</sup> and when few people had heard of trans people, the implications of which are not fully reflected in the report.

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<sup>12</sup> Legal transition became possible in 1996, and homosexuality was decriminalized in 2001. It should be noted that despite the legal possibility, it was not until the 2010s that legal transition became a more common practice.

## Key findings

**Transgender people experience stress, discomfort and anxiety and are at risk of bullying, social ostracization in the educational system,** where 8% receive bullying and verbal harassment from teachers and 23% are subject to physical violence or sexual harassment. More than 50% of young trans people have been subject to bullying from their peers.

**25% of trans people leave their hometowns** in order to feel accepted and/or transition. **44% of trans people from rural areas move in order to do so.**

**52% of trans people who have discontinued their education do not feel satisfied with their level of education.** 12% of those who discontinued their education did so due to transphobia.

**46% of trans people are considering leaving the country, 43% of them indefinitely.** Being accepted as a trans person motivates 92% of those who want to leave.

**Trans people are at risk of poverty, with 66% of working adults having had issues covering food and living expenses over the past year, and 50% relying on loans to cover them. 16% had been homeless for a period of a few months.** 84% lived with their families, with some adding that they had to move back due to their financial difficulties, or mentioning that they live with families which do not accept them.

**28% of trans people are worse off after the pandemic,** with 16% having been on furlough, 6% facing cuts in their work hours, 12% becoming unable to work and 10% losing their jobs without receiving unemployment benefits in 2020. **51% of the trans people enrolled in education in 2021/2021 had trouble due to online schooling in the pandemic.** 6% of working trans adults lost their homes during the pandemic.

**70% of trans people feel anxiety about their gender identity while job-hunting,** and many report discriminatory hiring practices such as being asked personal questions at job interviews, being denied employment once outed as trans, and facing issues over their legal and real gender and name. 18% have spent more than 6 months job-hunting before securing employment, reporting repeated denial of opportunities due to their gender identity throughout the job-hunting and hiring process. **Should they wish to come out, trans people must very carefully negotiate the timing of the action, with 32% preferring to be hired as the gender assigned at birth and disclosing their real identity in time.**

**38% trans people work in environments that they describe as conservative or misogynistic despite active efforts to seek out fields and companies that are more open. Homophobia, transphobia, sexism, and xenophobia are widespread in Romanian workplaces,** with only 12% of trans people never having heard their employer make sexist, xenophobic or homophobic remarks throughout their career, and only 6% never hearing such remarks from colleagues. **48% of trans people have had negative experiences at their workplace over their gender identity.** 44% have found their private life the subject of gossip among their colleagues and 37% among their employers. Because of this, **31% trans people have never tried discussing their gender identity with their employers, and 29% have never told anyone at their workplace that they are trans.** Though being fully out at one's workplace was identified to be a main cause of workplace satisfaction, **only 19% are openly out at their workplace. 20% of trans people who requested changes to documents or institutional e-mails, badges, etc. have had their request rejected.**

All the issues that they encountered throughout their education, formation, and career leads to unstable and unsustainable careers, with many either opting to change specialisations in order to pursue work environments that they find more

accepting, or settling with whatever jobs they find at the moment. Throughout their lives, **41% of trans people change careers, 19% have never had a stable job, and 29% work outside their field of choice.**



## Transition and Explanation of terms

We use the term 'trans' as an umbrella term referring to all gender minorities, and binary transgender to refer to people who identify as transgender in accordance with the male/female gender binary, in contrast with non-binary people (who identify outside the binary) and intersex people (who are born biologically outside binary norms).

Before moving on to the analysis, it is necessary to explain the various groups involved in the survey, as well as some fundamental concepts regarding the different types of transition and how they can affect the data.

Generally, a transition has three dimensions: **social**, **medical**, and **legal/administrative**. A person can choose to transition on either dimension, with some people wanting to transition on all of them and others on none. Being transgender or non-binary is fundamentally a matter of **identification** as one who is not perfectly aligned to the norms, appearances, and understanding of the gender that they were assigned at birth. There is great variation in how people express this identity in their physical appearance, mannerisms, and language, as well as in the medical procedures that they wish to pursue or not. **Intersex** people are rather different from this perspective, as being intersex is something that happens biologically and at birth; however, intersex people can opt to identify socially or personally as intersex rather than a binary gender, and many intersex people identify as a gender not assigned to them at birth. Each type of transition or identification process has different obstacles and courses.

**Social transition** implies living as the gender one identifies as. It involves acts such as dressing a certain way, using a different name, using certain pronouns or avoiding them altogether, and coming out to those around them. It does not have strict norms, as each person has different needs, desires, and environments.

The survey covers aspects related to social transition such as coming out to friends, family, co-workers, and employers, being known by those around them as the gender they identify with, and being able to use their chosen name is on name tags and other non-legally binding documents (for which a legal/administrative transition is necessary) at their workplace.

**Medical transition** refers to the act of using medical treatment such as Hormone Replacement Therapy (HRT) or surgeries (on breast tissue, genitals, reproductive organs, or for aesthetic purposes) to change one's appearance to affirm their gender. There are many steps involved in such a process, and not all trans people wish to undergo all (or any) of them. The survey refers to medical transition and obstacles (particularly financial ones) in pursuing it, but also to the consequences of not being able to pass as one's assigned-at-birth gender once the transition has begun. The financial burden of pursuing medical transition is also an important aspect: medical transition in Romania is currently an expensive and heavily gate-kept process, and not all forms of surgery and treatment are available. Very few doctors have even basic knowledge of trans needs and treatment guidelines, and it is not uncommon to be dismissed or even verbally abused by medical professionals. The pharmaceutical industry offers a limited range of HRT, and most notably does not have the most commonly used forms of testosterone, effectively forcing trans people to secure their treatment from the black market despite the illegality and dangers to their health. Only a limited number of surgeries are available in Romania and are handled by an extremely limited number of experienced professionals. The need to travel to another country, be on leave for long enough to recover, and afford surgery abroad makes such procedures inaccessible to many.

Regarding **legal/administrative transition** in Romania, changing one's legal gender is only possible via a judicial process. The option to change one's name to a

gender-neutral one (for example, from Alexandra/Alexandru to Alex) is possible via an administrative process, which many choose out of convenience, lack of better options, or by choice. The administrative name change is rather affordable and not an exceedingly difficult process, taking about 6 months to finish—though it is noteworthy that the name change can be denied by the local authorities for any reason. The judicial process is more complicated: Firstly, not many people and even lawyers know that the procedure is possible; secondly, few lawyers have experience documenting cases towards a favourable ruling; thirdly, there are no real guidelines regarding what is necessary or not, meaning that one can be denied the legal change due to judges’ personal interpretations of the law and understanding of the term ‘sex change’ —which is actually used in the law regulating the possibility of changing one’s legal name and gender marker. There is no unitary case-law based on precedents and predictable procedural steps to change one’s gender, leading many to seek needless medical and social ‘evidence’ of their need purely out of caution. While in recent years some cases have been approved in court quite speedily, the process continues to be largely trial-and-error, relying heavily on how fortunate the draw of the judge is. The European Court of Human rights in 2021 found Romania in breach of Article 8 of the European Convention for Human Rights for the absence of a clear procedure.<sup>13</sup>

**Coming out** refers to the act of disclosing one’s status as trans, non-heterosexual, or asexual to others.

**Passing** refers to the ability to be perceived as a cisgender person, occasionally as the gender assigned at birth but more commonly referring the gender one identifies as.

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<sup>13</sup> *X et Y c. Roumanie*. 2021. Strasbourg. [https://hudoc.echr.coe.int/eng#{%22itemid%22:\[%22001-207364%22\]}](https://hudoc.echr.coe.int/eng#{%22itemid%22:[%22001-207364%22]}).

**Stealth** refers to hiding one's status as trans for persons who already live as the gender they identify as. For example, a trans man who 'passes' as male might choose to not disclose the fact that he is trans in hopes of being treated like any other cisgender male. One can be stealth to only some people in their lives, for example divulging to their employer that they are trans and asking to have their identification at work use their chosen name, thus not revealing to co-workers that they are trans.

**Deadnames** refer to the names assigned at birth that one does not use because it does not match their gender identity.

**Gender dysphoria** refers to feelings of discomfort or unease that a trans person may have because of the mismatch between their gender assigned at birth, the social/legal perceptions of it, and their own actual gender identity.

Though binary transgender, non-binary, and intersex people are all found under the trans umbrella, inevitably there will be differences in their process of discovery, living true to oneself, and interacting with the world.

**Non-binary people** vary immensely in terms of their identification, history, and social, medical, and legal needs. What binds them together is the idea that they exist/identify outside the gender binary, being either both, a combination of, or neither gender. Some non-binary people feel the need to change their names or follow a number of medical procedures to affirm their gender, whereas others feel comfortable with their given name and body as it is. While some non-binary people present androgynously, one can be non-binary regardless of their appearance.

**Intersex** refers to people who are born not in perfect conformance with the binary understanding of gender, either due to mosaic chromosomes, the existence

of both or neither gendered biological features, or who have a certain number of genetic conditions which are understood to cross the gender binary line. It is an umbrella term for many types of bodies, genetic make-ups, and conditions. There are some intersex conditions which are life-threatening if not treated, but the majority of them are only considered 'disorders' for social reasons rather than medical ones.

There are no statistics in Romania for intersex individuals, and it is unknown how many cases are detected, what percentage are found at birth, how many people undergo medical treatment, and what the infant mortality caused by the lack of training and detection of the more dangerous conditions are. It is estimated that 2% of the population could be called intersex, and in the United States 1 in 2000 babies are born with genital differences that are sometimes 'treated' at birth to conform to gender norms.<sup>14</sup> Many intersex people spend their lives not knowing they are intersex, either because they were 'treated' at birth and not informed of it, or because they have a more typical gender appearance. Usually, intersex people find out they are intersex at critical points in time, such as puberty (if they begin developing androgynous or bigender features or miss milestones such as menstruation), when becoming sexually active, or when trying to conceive.

However, not all intersex people have conditions which affect these aspects, and some may never find out that they are intersex. Many intersex people choose to not identify as intersex, considering it a mere medical condition or detail in their medical history or appearance. Additionally, as it is a heavily medicalized concept, many consider it a private matter. For this reason, there are few known intersex individuals and even worldwide there are very few intersex activists. Our respondents include four intersex people, who will have a special focus section.

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<sup>14</sup> 'What Is Intersex? Frequently Asked Questions'. 2021. InterACT: Advocates for Intersex Youth. January 26, 2021. <https://interactadvocates.org/faq/>.

It is possible to hold multiple identities under the umbrella: for example, a person can identify as both a trans woman and non-binary (being assigned male at birth but feeling more comfortable with a female identity than with a male one), intersex and trans (being intersex but identifying with the gender not assigned at birth), intersex and non-binary, etc. Though there are some specific issues related to having multiple identities, they are beyond the scope of this survey.

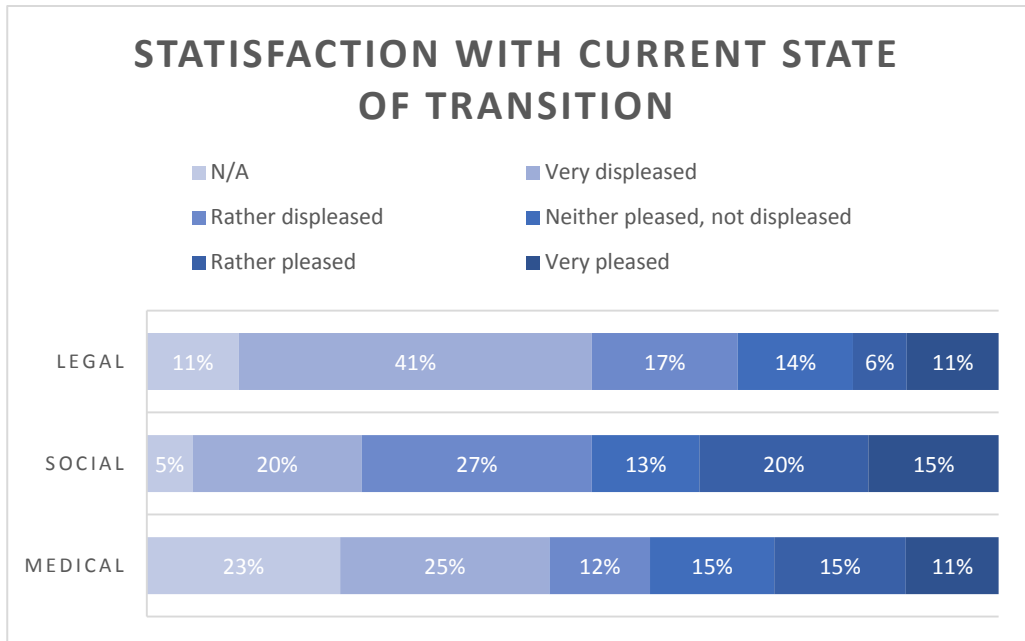
## **Transition and Coming Out**

Though coming out is generally seen as a landmark in the development of queer identities, as mentioned above, trans people have multiple dimensions that they navigate in order to live as themselves. We asked respondents regarding their transition on multiple levels, including social, medical, and administrative/legal, as well as about their coming out to various people in their lives and their satisfaction with their current personal and professional environments.

It should be again noted that medical and legal transition in Romania is a costly and time-consuming process, and that it is almost unheard of for trans people under 18 to pursue them.<sup>15</sup> At the time of the survey, 37% of respondents were more or less displeased with the state of their medical transition, either due to not being able to pursue it despite wanting to for various reasons (financial or social), because they are not pleased with the results, or because a medical transition can take years before one's body finishes transforming. The binary trans adult population sees a lower percentage of people who do not want to medically transition and a far higher percentage of people who are rather pleased with their current state. Only 17% of respondents are satisfied with their current legal status.

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<sup>15</sup> Underage trans people can and unfortunately many do procure HRT off the black market and follow it without any medical supervision.



*Figure 9. Satisfaction with current state of transition.*

Only 8% of respondents have had their name and gender changed legally, with 3% changing their names only. 12% had begun measures to change their name and/or gender, and 2% had had their request denied by the mayor or judge. 25% of respondents have no intent of changing their legal name and/or assigned gender. 50% plan to do so in the future, though they confess in the comments that they have reservations regarding family acceptance and financial stability.

Though legal transition became possible in 1996,<sup>16</sup> it has no standard procedures and guidelines, and it is only recently that trans people who have successfully changed their legal gender began being visible in the community; people who have tried legally transitioning before the 2010s report the process taking up to 10 years before finishing. Given the ambiguity of the legal text and the lack of judicial -

<sup>16</sup> Accept Romania, and Euroregional Center for Public Initiatives. 2014. *Persoane Trans În România: Recunoașterea Juridică a Identității de Gen*. Online.

guidelines, judges can and often do request proof of sterilization, or any other medical intervention that ‘confirms’ the petitioner’s determination to be a ‘true’ man or woman. To change one’s name administratively, one may also have to undergo a highly intrusive medico-legal examination, despite there being no medical or legal requirements for the procedure to be completed. The legal transition request can therefore be rejected by the mayor or judge based on purely personal understandings of such terms as ‘man,’ ‘woman’ or nonbinary.

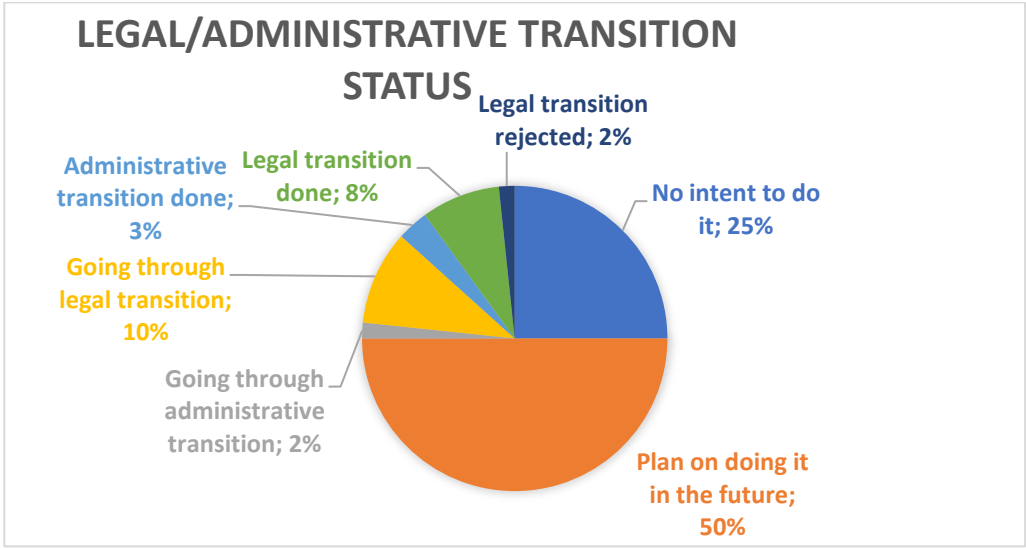
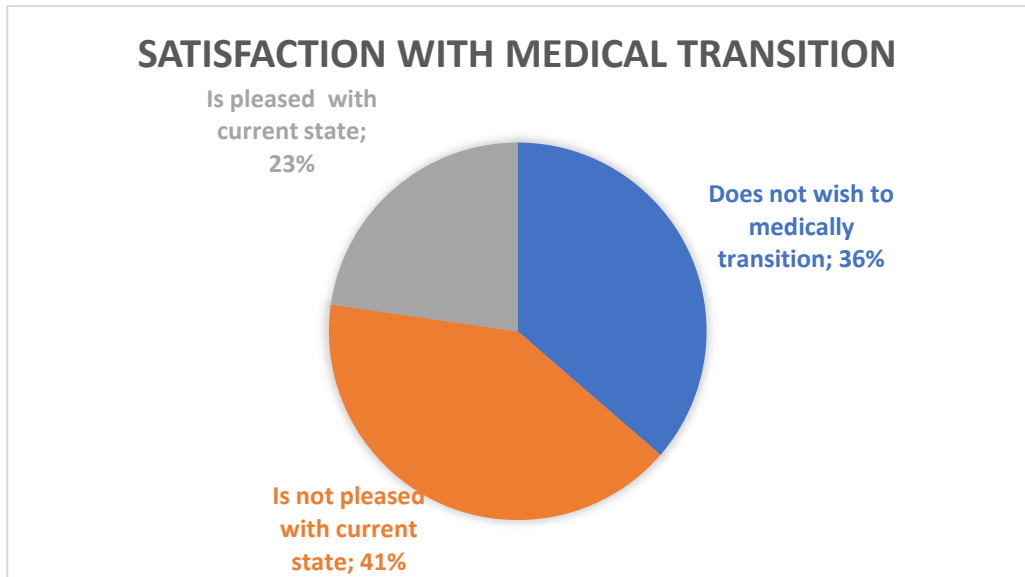


Figure 10. Legal/ administrative transition status.

A separate question was asked only among trans and non-binary respondents regarding their desire to medically transition and satisfaction with their current state. While 36% did not wish to pursue medical transition, 41% were displeased with their current state. While this can include aspects such as not pursuing medical transition due to fear of rejection or consequences, as well as pursuing medical transition but not being pleased with the results, it is likely that the financial burden of medically transitioning is to blame for a large part of the dissatisfaction.

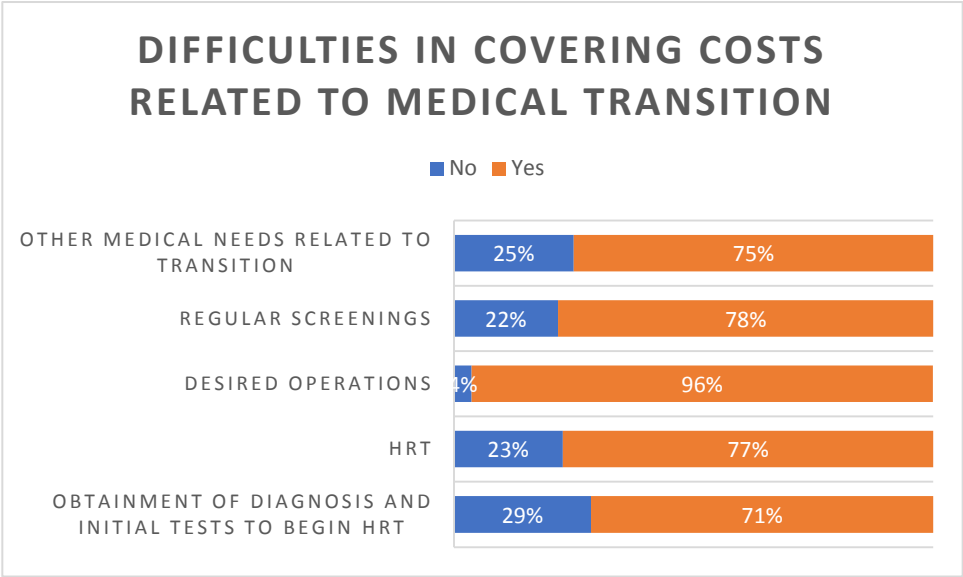




*Figure 11. Medical transition among trans/NB respondents.*

Excluding those who do not wish to transition or take any of the above-mentioned steps, the great majority of trans people struggle to financially cover the costs involved in it.

Concerningly, many necessary steps such as obtaining a diagnosis and regular screenings related to safely transitioning were listed as ‘not desired’ by some respondents who are on HRT, hinting at the widespread unsafe practices which can be often seen in the community, in which many trans people purchase HRT medication from the black market and pursue it without medical supervision.



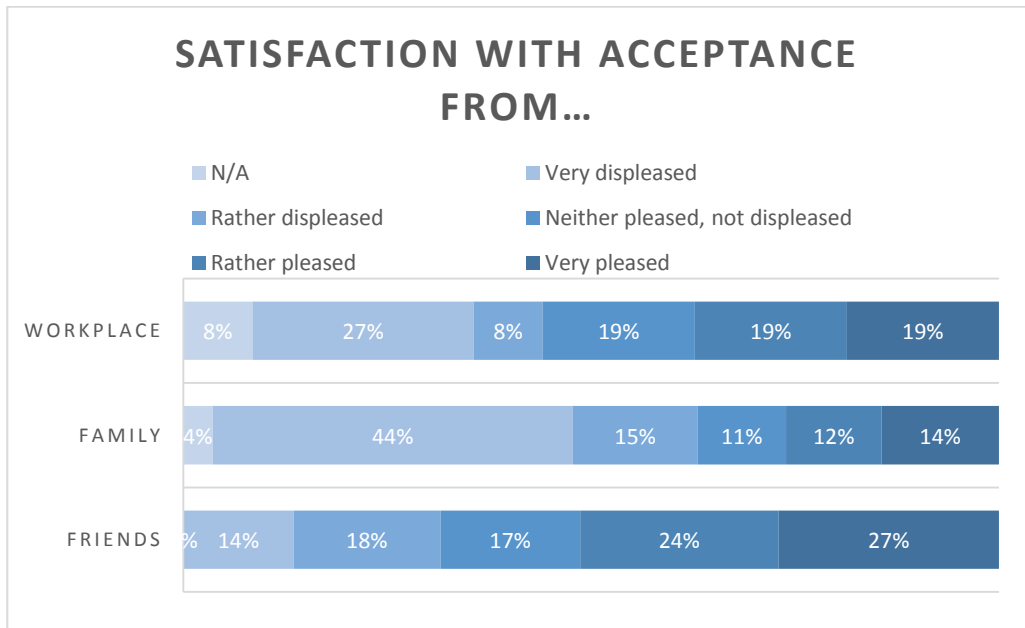
*Figure 12. Difficulties in covering costs related to medical transition for those who desire it.*

A ‘full’ medical transition including operations would require up to 5 years’ worth of Romanian average wages. Even ‘basic’ steps in transitioning can be cost-prohibitive for many, especially if following legal guidelines. As insurance is unlikely to cover most costs related to transition, many find themselves taking alternative routes to transition, including purchasing hormones off the black market, taking unsafe and inefficient alternatives such as birth control instead of oestrogen supplements, taking unsafe doses of hormone treatment due to lack of supervision from medical professionals, and having higher chances of undetected cardiovascular and liver diseases due to lack of regular screenings. Respondents also report lack of support from medical professionals and lack of financial ability to cover side-effects and extra needs resulting from their medical transition, such as back pain, low bone density, or poor emotional/mood regulation.

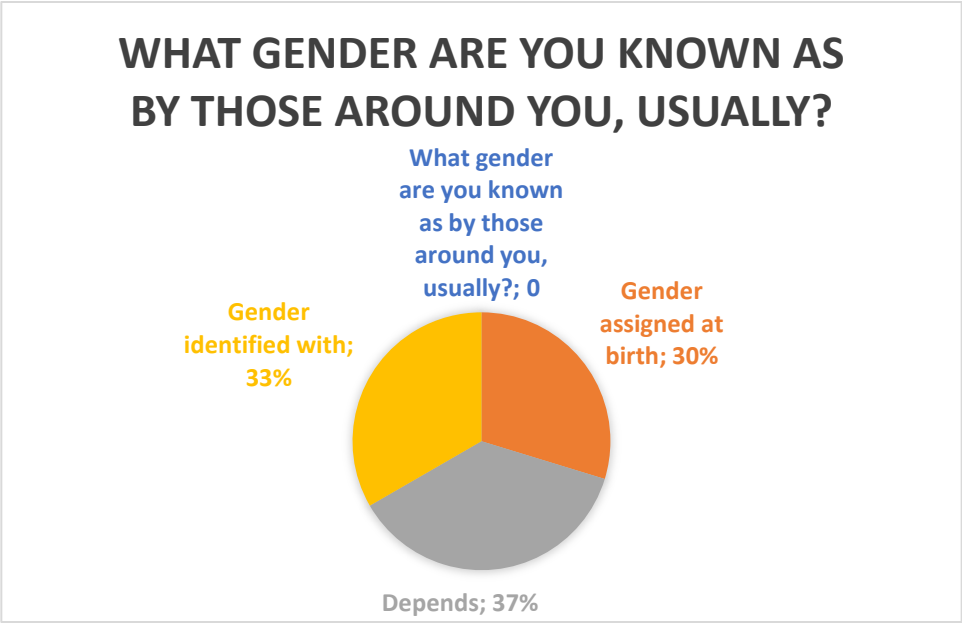
When it comes to acceptance, friends are the most likely to be accepting, with 51% of respondents pleased or very pleased with their level of acceptance and all of them having come out to some friends. Family is the likeliest to be a source of

strife, with 59% unhappy with how their family accepts their gender identity and only 14% being fully satisfied with their reception or openness (this includes respondents who have not come out to their families but do not feel the need to do so). The workplace is a hit or miss for most respondents. Overall, 35% are not pleased with their level of acceptance and 38% are pleased with it.

However, many of those who are pleased have chosen not to come out in the first place; rather, they have found compromises such as finding jobs that do not require much interaction to begin with or being able to be present more gender neutral. Respondents who have come out rate their acceptance on the reaction to it, whereas those who did not come out rate it based on the level of pressure that they feel from hiding their identity, with some of them content to keep their identity a private matter.



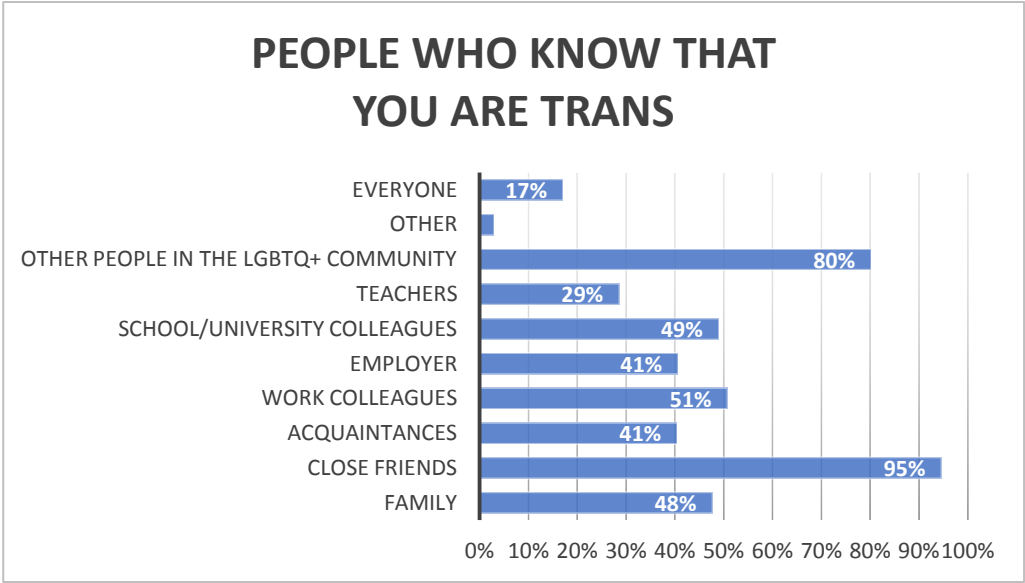
*Figure 13. Satisfaction with acceptance.*



*Figure 14. Gender presentation.*

When it comes to social transition, respondents present differently depending on their environment, though it should be of note that 47% are unhappy with the state of their social transition.

Respondents are almost equally divided between the gender that they present as usually, with one third each being known as the gender they identify as or as the gender assigned at birth by those around them, and one third varying depending on the situation.



*Figure 15. Who respondents are out to.*

Only 17% of respondents consider themselves out to everyone around them, with 83% choosing to disclose their identity based on the person and situation. The chart above includes those who are fully out in every category, and limits categories to those applicable (school colleagues and teachers only among students, and employer/work colleagues only among those currently employed).

Close friends are predictably the most likely to be confidants, though it should be of note that 5% of respondents have not come out to their close ones and have only discussed their identity with online friends or members of the community. Only 80% of respondents interact with the LGBTQ+ community enough to come out to them, a much higher percentage among those who have not come out to anyone else.

Among the population still in school, only 29% have come out to their teachers, almost all of them in tertiary education, and only 51% have come out to their

colleagues. Among the working population, only 41% have come out to their employers, and 51% to work colleagues.

Only 48% of trans people have come out to their families. Among those who only selectively disclose their identity, schoolteachers and employers are the least likely choices.

It should be noted that knowing they are trans does not imply acceptance, with many respondents reporting that, despite coming out, their identities are ignored by those around them, and many reporting negative experiences including being outed to others, bullying from peers, losing place of employment, pressure from family or even being kicked out of their homes.

Additionally, given that 33% are generally known by the gender they identify as but only 17% being out to everyone around them, we can assume that 16% of respondents have chosen to live stealthily, being recognized as the gender that they identify with but not known as being trans in addition to it.

# Education and Formation

This section is concerned with trans people’s experience in education, how being trans affects one’s educational experience and career path, and the obstacles trans people encounter along the way.

## Demographics

The respondents were considerably more educated than the average Romanian, with 45% having pursued tertiary education, compared to the national average of 25%<sup>17</sup> for the same age-group. Despite measures in place to make the survey more accessible to less educated individuals, it is thus extremely limited in showing the educational reality of trans Romanians.

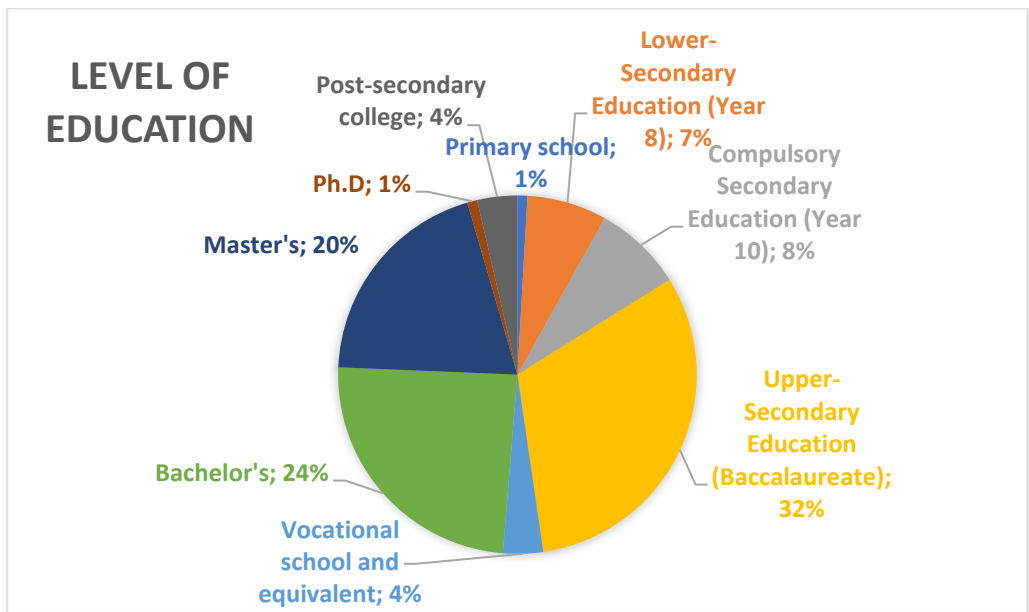


Figure 16. Highest level of education completed by all respondents.

<sup>17</sup> Eurostat. 2021. ‘Population Aged 25-34 with Tertiary Educational Attainment (ISCED 5-8), 2020’. June 25, 2021.

44% were still enrolled in educational or training programs.

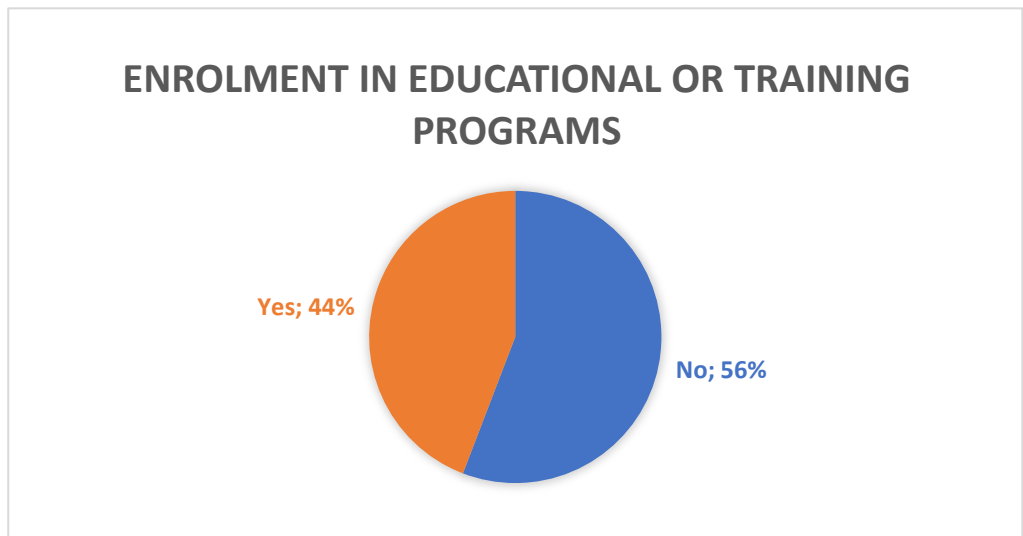


Figure 17. Enrolment in educational or training programs.

Of the currently enrolled students, 49% were pursuing bachelor’s degrees, 43% were enrolled in secondary education, 2% were pursuing postgraduate degrees, and 2% were enrolled in professional or training programs.

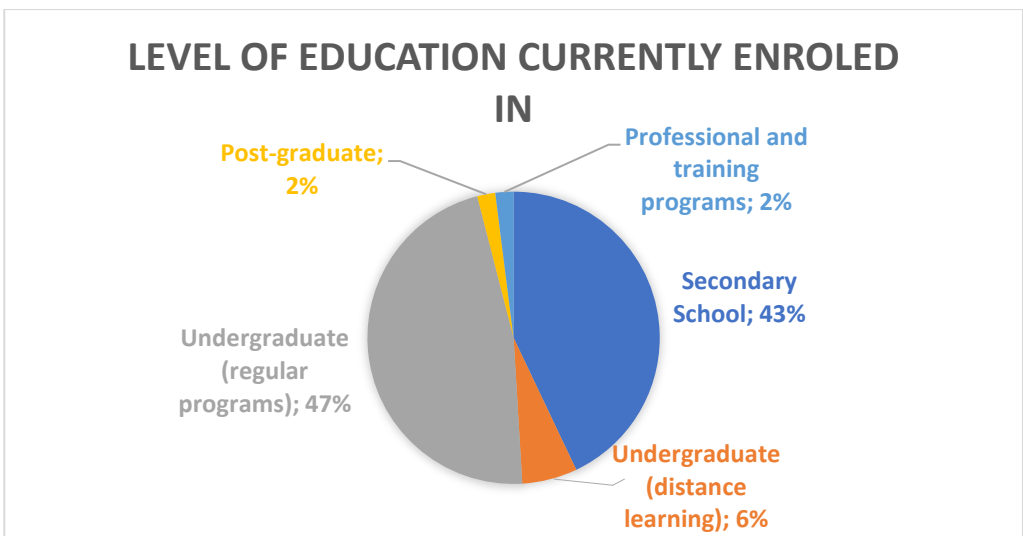


Figure 18. Level of education currently enrolled in.



Anxiety, bullying and other common problems

This section focuses on the respondents’ shared experiences and on issues they encountered in the educational system, regardless of their age or completed degree.

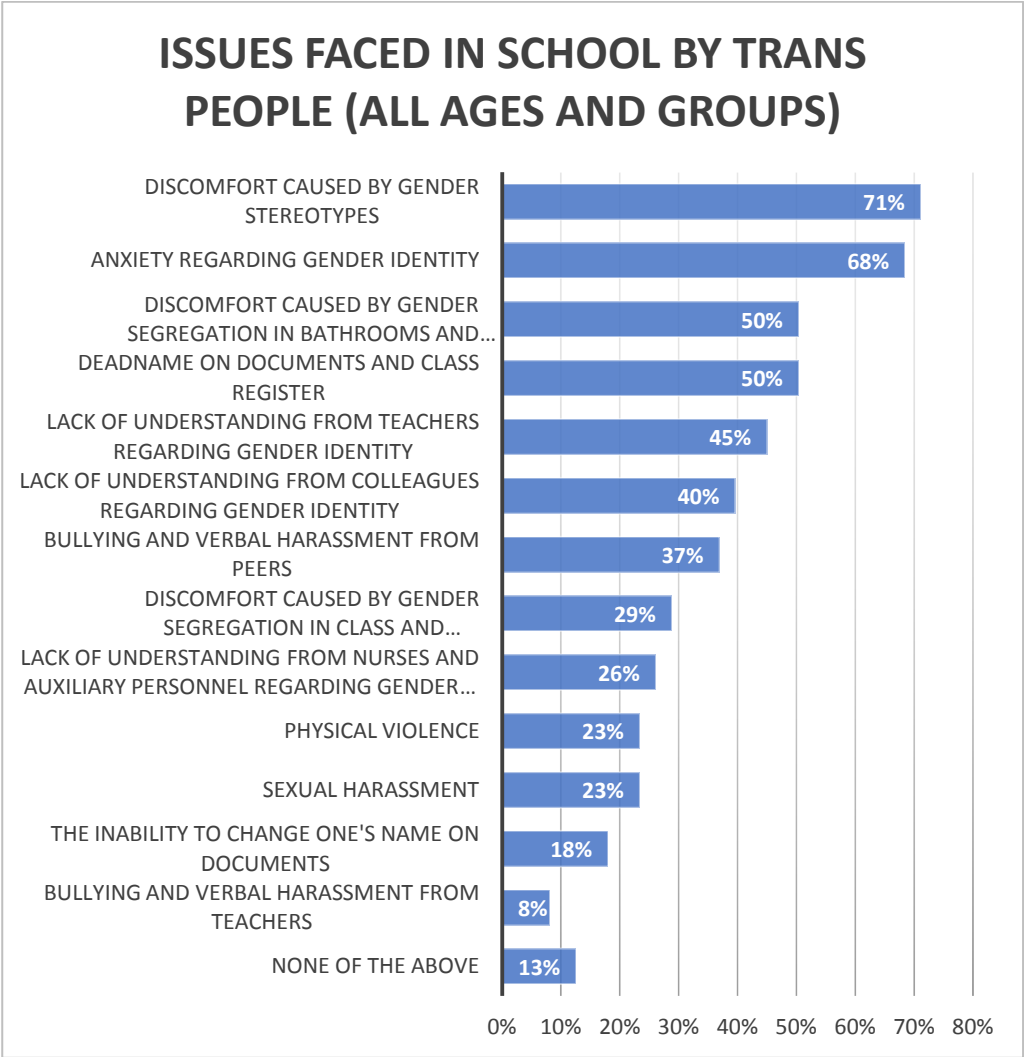


Figure 19. Issues faced in school by trans people (all ages and groups).

The Romanian educational system has often been criticized for its lack of school facilities and a curriculum that alienates and leaves students behind,<sup>18</sup> a matter reflected in Romania having among the lowest PISA scores in reading,<sup>19</sup> and a Baccalaureate pass rate of less than 70%,<sup>20</sup> with an immense gap in education between privileged and vulnerable populations. Romania also faces rampant bullying in schools, with 17% of 11-year-olds and 23% of 13 and 15-year-olds admitting to having bullied other children at least three times in the month preceding a WHO survey,<sup>21</sup> and half of Romanian children having experienced some sort of bullying.<sup>22</sup> Though bullying was criminalized in 2019, victims of bullying report having trouble reaching to adults, who often encourage or even participate in the bullying. In 2013, 87% of Romanian children reported having faced some sort of verbal abuse from teachers.<sup>23</sup>

Given how physical appearance and aspects that make one stand out are key factors in bullying behaviour, it is no surprise that 70% of our respondents felt anxiety and/or discomfort due to the gender stereotypes applied to them on top and despite their identity. Though very few trans Romanians are out while still in school, 60% had issues with their deadname being listed in the class register. Teachers' lack of awareness and acceptance of diverse gender identities was a source of strife for 45% of respondents, and 40% did not find support with their colleagues either. 37% of respondents had been verbally abused in school—many insisting on mentioning that this was despite the fact that they were not out and

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<sup>18</sup> Sava, Justina Alexandra. 2021. 'Main Problems Regarding the Educational System in Romania in 2018'. Statista. March 11, 2021.

<sup>19</sup> OECD. 2019. PISA 2018 Assessment and Analytical Framework. OECD. <https://doi.org/10.1787/b25efab8-en>.

<sup>20</sup> Sava, Justina Alexandra. 201AD. 'Pass Rate at the Baccalaureate Exam in Romania from 2017 to 2020'. Statista. July 27, 201AD.

<sup>21</sup> Erasmus+. 2017. Baseline Study on the State of Art of Bullying in Europe. Online: Erasmus+.

<sup>22</sup> Marica, Irina. 2016. 'Bullying in Romanian Schools: One in Four Children Are Humiliated in Front of Colleagues'. Romania Insider. May 11, 2016. <http://www.romania-insider.com/bullying-romanian-schools>.

<sup>23</sup> Save the Children Romania. 2013. *Abuzul și Neglijarea Copiilor în Familie: Studiu Sociologic la Nivel Național*. Bucharest, Romania: Speed Promotion.

were actively trying to hide their gender identity at the time. 25% cited issues with medical and auxiliary personnel in school when it came to gender identity, despite the fact that most respondents never sought help from them in the first place. 23% of respondents faced physical aggression from colleagues, and 23% experienced some sort of sexual aggression, including crude jokes, inappropriate touching, but also sexual assault.

8% of our respondents were bullied by their teachers, including being singled out and humiliated in class and even subject to disciplinary action for no clear reason. Of the respondents who told us about their reaction to it, all of them had their complaints ignored by the school.

➤ *I was especially verbally assaulted and frowned upon by both teachers and colleagues for being assigned male at birth, but having some more feminine features. [...] At one point a teacher in university actually told me to kill myself. I filed a complaint, but it was dismissed. They made me feel invisible.*

➤ *My French teacher spent an entire class making me look at how pretty the girls were in our class, asking me why I liked boys, asking me why I wanted to mutilate myself, etc. and assuring me that I am a man, not a woman.*

➤ *I got bullied heavily in school and that's affected me mentally in the long run. I had to listen to insensitive and discriminatory comments from teachers and colleagues about queer people, even when they knew I could hear them, but I was never capable of defending myself. I also had colleagues out me to teachers without permission or apology.*

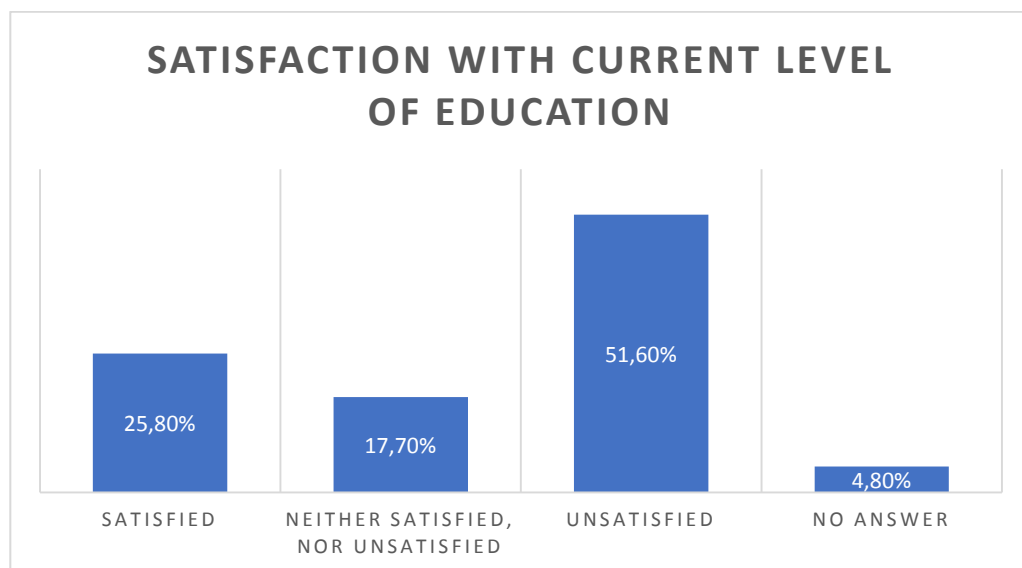
➤ *I was expelled during summer vacation in high school even though my grades were fine. I was not even told that I had been expelled during the vacation. My history teacher told me about it when I ran into him at the shop. Fortunately, the Ministry of Education investigated the matter after my father made a formal complaint and the issue was solved, but unfortunately, I still had to repeat 11<sup>th</sup> grade. Another thing that my teachers would do would be to call my friends' parents and tell them to not let their kids be my friends since I am a*

*degenerate. One of the teachers would call me 'Mister it' because I refused to choose a gender, but at least they cared about who I was. The majority didn't so they would address me with whatever they felt like. I would describe my high school experience like a Stanford experiment, I would say I was abused for 5 years, even that would be an understatement. And when people tell me that 'things have changed', it's as if my pain doesn't matter... Another time, my form teacher went to another class and told them she was happy with her class, aside from a few bad seeds: a colleague and me. This was at the beginning of 9th grade when she couldn't have known anything about my personality. Not to mention that one time I kissed a boy and a girl in school, and they called the girl's parents over to tell them what a degenerate I was (in their eyes), proposing that I be expelled. Of course, I wasn't a saint, I would skip class a lot, but who would want to spend time in a school where every week my colleagues would call me a different sexuality and gossip about my private life, and where the teachers would go out of their way to make me feel like a monster that had to be taken out by any means possible? I'm 39 and the feeling that I am the monster from Beauty and the Beast hasn't gone away, I'm still waiting for the villagers to show up at my door with burning torches. I've never even explained it to anyone. I didn't understand my sexuality or my gender myself. I didn't know yet how I was different compared to them. Intersexuality is not discussed in society, neither within the family. Even now, people make assumptions about who I am, as if a stranger like them could ever know and understand me better than I do myself. They're just strangers and they'll stay that way. They're not wearing my shoes nor carrying my cross.*

Only 13% of respondents never faced any issues over their gender identity—though some of them added that this was because they are cis-passing and had hidden their gender identity from others, or had no access to information about gender to discover their identity yet. However, reports of being bullied over their gender expression came even from respondents who had not come out or even figured out their gender identity yet.

## Satisfaction with level of education

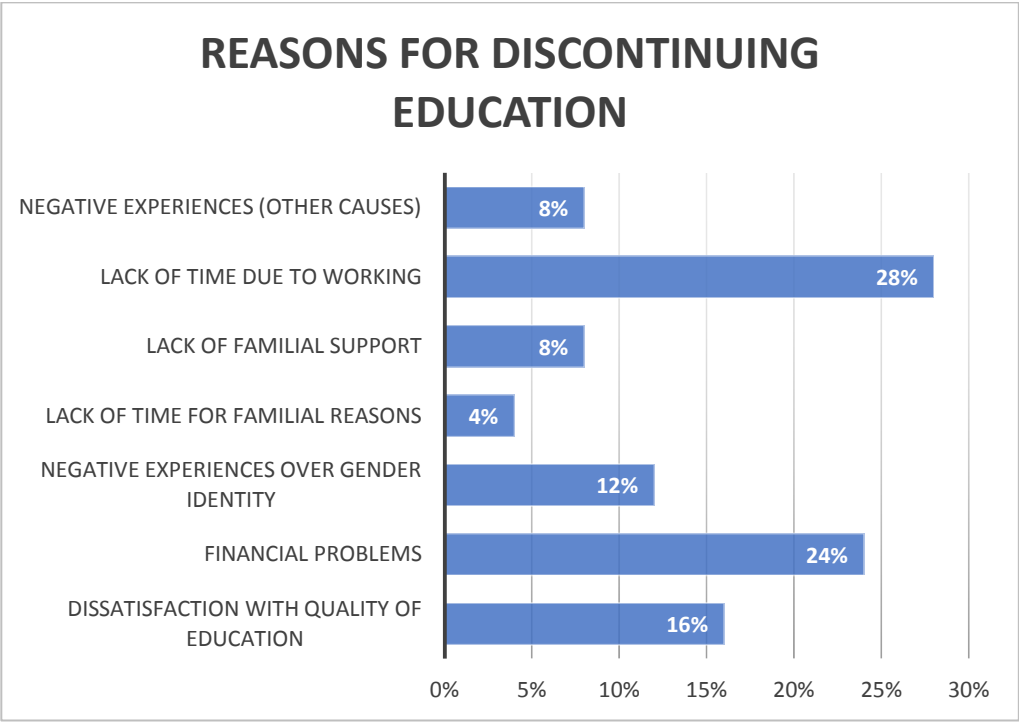
We asked respondents who are no longer pursuing education how they feel regarding their current level of education, finding that 52% of respondents were more or less unsatisfied with their level of education and would have liked to continue their studies.



*Figure 20. Satisfaction with current level of education among respondents who are no longer pursuing education.*

When asked why they did not pursue education despite wanting to, financial reasons were given as the main cause, either directly or indirectly due to the lack of time caused by having to work during their studies. While Romania does have a distance-learning option in some universities, they have few spots and must always be paid in full; because of this, low-income young adults are unable to pursue an undergraduate degree despite having the desire to do so or passing their entrance exams. Issues regarding the quality of education or the social environment in

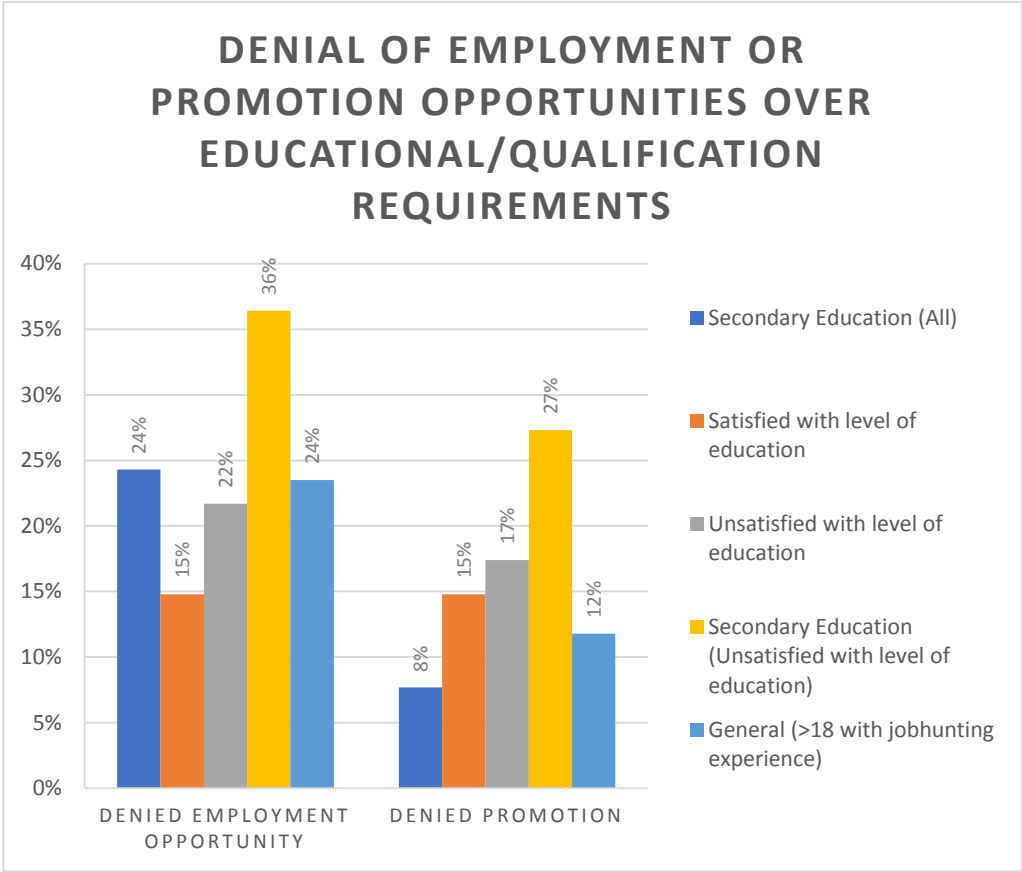
educational settings were also cited as important. 12% of respondents did not continue their education due to negative experience over their gender identity.



*Figure 21. Reasons for not pursuing further education among respondents unsatisfied with their level of education.*

Professional consequences such as ‘not being promoted due to lack of studies’ or ‘not being hired due to lack of studies’ affected whether one felt regret or desire to pursue education.

Both the unsatisfied, satisfied, and still in education cohorts had experiences of missing job opportunities or promotions due to their lack of education, especially among the cohort that (still) lacked tertiary education.



*Figure 22. Denial of employment or promotion opportunities over educational/ qualification requirements.*

However, it must be noted that our respondents are fairly young, and that a lack of undergraduate or postgraduate education is more likely to be an issue later in life.

During our focus groups, one of our respondents told us that they chose not to continue their undergraduate studies as they were already working full-time for a corporation in their late teens and moving upwards in the company.

Unfortunately, they hit the educational glass ceiling once they decided to change workplaces, because even though by their mid-20s they had accumulated 3+ years of management experience, they could not legally be employed as a

manager, as management-related NACE codes explicitly call for an undergraduate degree or higher. Such limitations brought on by NACE code requirements are far more likely to be felt after 5-10 years in the field, whereas 98% of our secondary education-level or lower respondents were entry or mid-level in their respective fields.



# Focus: Urban Migration and Emigration

## Urban Migration

The majority of respondents lived in urban areas, with 52% currently residing in Bucharest, 11% in major cities (Cluj-Napoca, Timișoara, Iași), and 19% in other cities. However, only 32% were originally from their current place of residence.

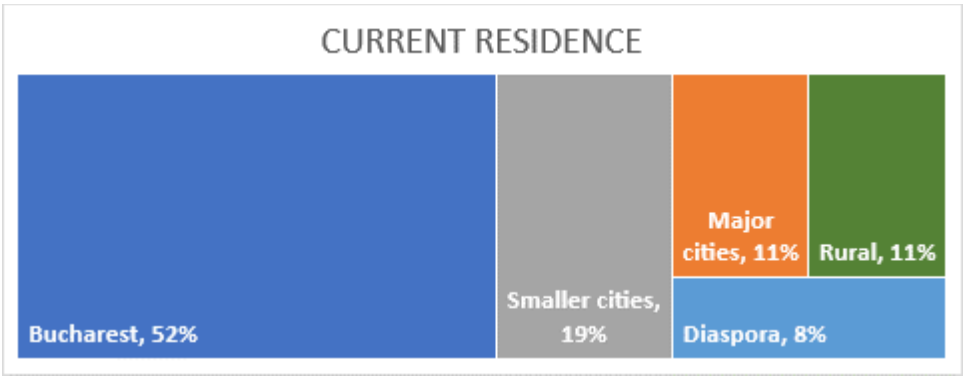


Figure 23. Current residence.

Though we did not go into detail regarding regions, we can observe urban migration at work, with most respondents moving to bigger cities or even abroad after they finish mandatory education or before.

The reason for the migration generally mirrors that of the general Romanian population, with those who moved to different cities citing reasons such as pursuing studies or professional opportunities. 63% of those in rural areas left their hometowns to continue their education. 27% of respondents considered that their hometown was not accepting enough and moved to bigger cities or even abroad to find acceptance, 44% of those from rural areas doing so.

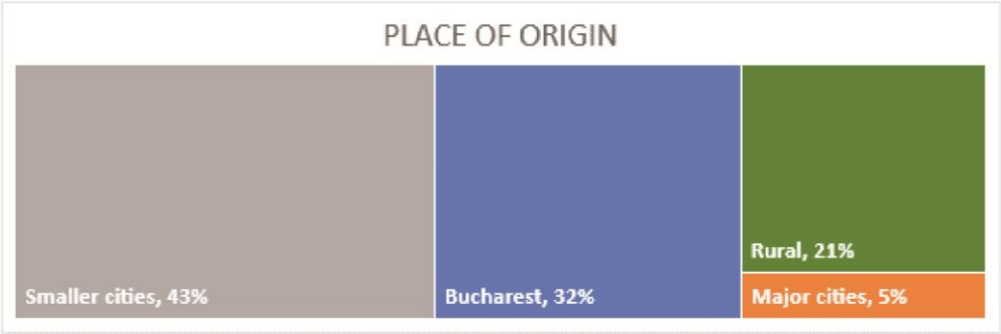


Figure 24. Place of Origin.

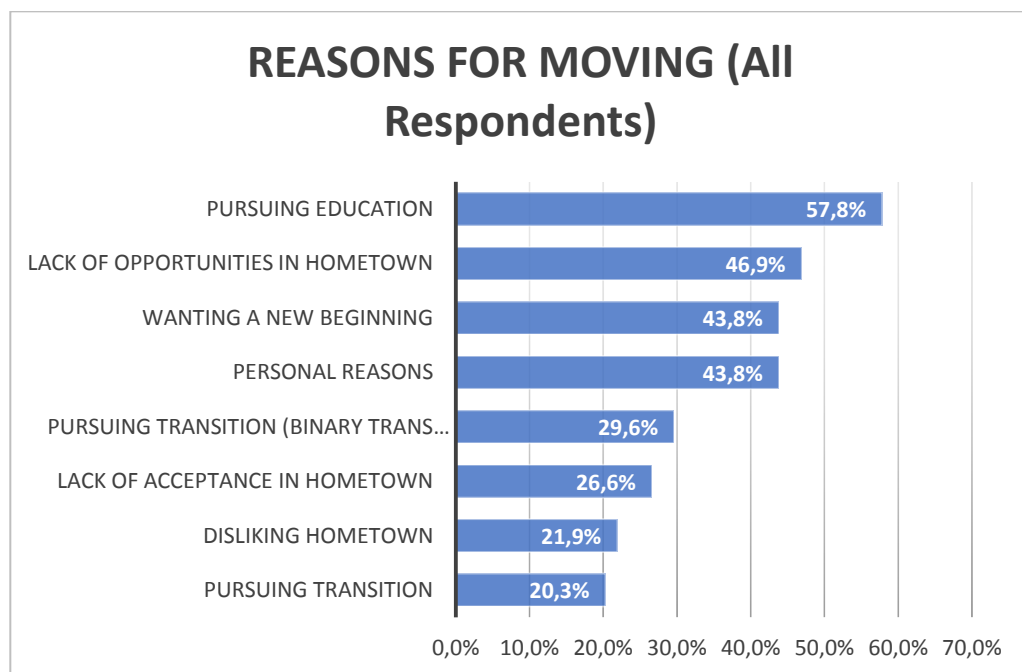
Rural and small urban depopulation in Romania is an ongoing issue, with many small cities and villages losing half or even the entirety of their population in the past 20 years<sup>24</sup>. While aspects such as economic, educational, and social opportunities have been credited for the urban migration, the well-known phenomenon of metronormativity—the urban migration of LGBTQ+ individuals in seeking societal acceptance<sup>25</sup>—has never been tackled/discussed by Romanian sociologists.

In our focus groups, many respondents from rural or small urban areas would refer to their hometowns in a derogatory manner, either scoffing and stating that ‘There is no need to explain how it was there’ or making similar remarks, or noting that moving to Bucharest or other larger cities was the only probable path they could take. When respondents living outside Bucharest would share their current issues with discrimination, other participants would invite them to move away from their hometowns. In Romania, this issue also extends to western-normativity, which assumes that LGBTQ+ people should emigrate or at least find employment

<sup>24</sup> Huzui-Stoiculescu, Alina. 2018. ‘Depopulation in Romanian Rural Areas’. In *ESPON/Fighting Depopulation in Rural Areas*.

<sup>25</sup> Abraham, Julie. 2009. *Metropolitan Lovers: The Homosexuality of Cities*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.

in foreign or multinational companies if they want to be accepted in society, an aspect which will be discussed in the following section.



*Figure 25. Reasons why respondents have moved from hometown, regardless of place of origin.*

The need for acceptance comes in addition to existing gaps in rural and small urban settings, including lack of access to primary and secondary education in many rural areas, and lack of access to tertiary education and employment in most cities. Lack of educational and professional opportunities accounts for the considerable migration from across the country towards Bucharest and university cities,<sup>26</sup> with smaller cities absorbing the population from nearby towns and villages in a continuous flux. However, the virtual depopulation of such cities of their LGBTQ+ community carries negative consequences, as it further fuels

<sup>26</sup> Andrei, Tudorel, and Andreea Mirică. 2019. 'Key Features of the Internal Migration Process in Romania - An Economic and Historical Perspective'. *Romanian Statistical Review* 2: 18.

stigma and isolation, and virtually freezes the possibilities of societal change in these regions.

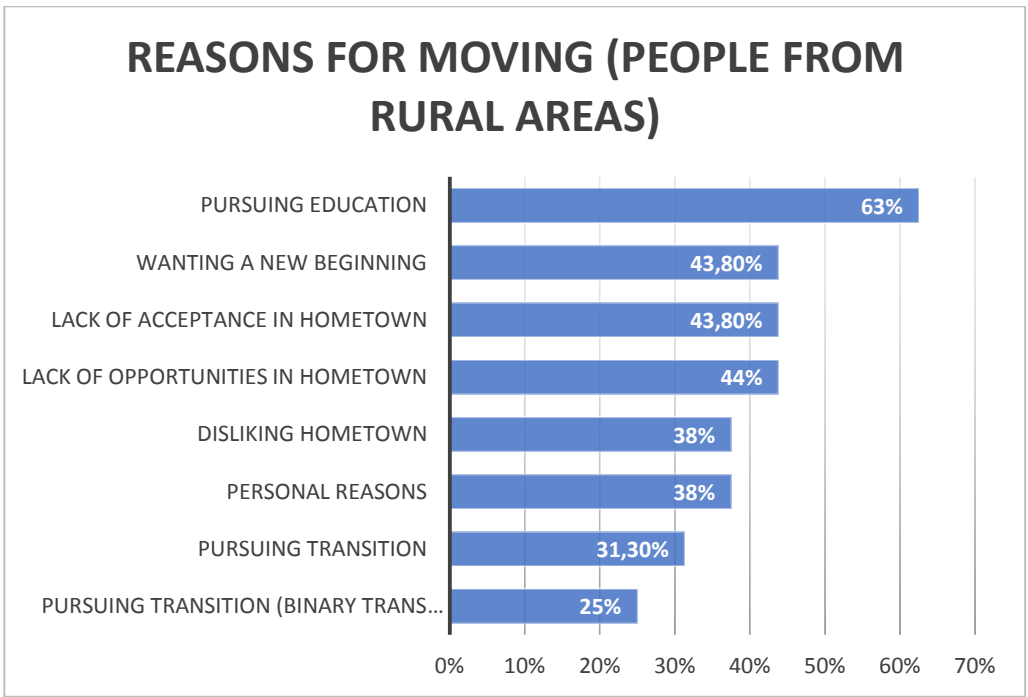


Figure 26. Reasons why respondents have moved from rural areas.

More than just being accepted, trans people find themselves having to migrate temporarily or permanently to pursue transition, due to the limited number of trans-friendly healthcare workers and necessary medical services being concentrated in Bucharest and occasionally in other larger cities. The work that the trans community does in these cities creates a loop in which all discovered or built resources are only available in limited areas, further encouraging migration toward them.

Without systemic intervention to equip rural and small urban areas with the necessary tools and opportunities, the phenomenon of migration will continue. However, trans people will continue to be born in those rural and depopulated

areas and will face societies that have not progressed away from transphobia, perpetuating the cycle and the belief that hiding and surviving until they are old enough to leave is their only option. Efforts must be made to educate rural educators and community workers about trans people and their needs.

## Emigration

One cannot talk about Romania's employment dynamics holistically without mentioning emigration.

Romania had the fifth-highest diaspora in OECD countries in 2015, after an estimated 18% of its population chose to emigrate between 2000–2018, bringing down Romania's population from 22.4 million in 2000 to 19.5 million in 2018 (not counting Romanians who live abroad temporarily or work abroad seasonally). Emigration is a major socio-economic phenomenon in Romania, bringing about issues such as quickening rural depopulation, children left to raise themselves while their parents work abroad, and brain drain—in which educated or talented youth choose to study or work abroad for higher salaries or what they consider better use of their talents.

We identified three common responses to trans people perceiving Romanian society as conservative:

1. Staying in the closet or carefully watching social cues as to whom one feels comfortable discussing the issues with;
2. Finding alternative circles in Romania such as urban areas or international corporations as perceived safer places, at times explicitly due to policies implemented from their international centres.;
3. Considering emigration as a viable (at times, *the only*) means of living as oneself.

Eight of the respondents already lived abroad, either temporarily or permanently. Among the 103 who still lived in Romania, 27% were yet undecided, 25% would prefer to stay in Romania, and 46% would rather move abroad.

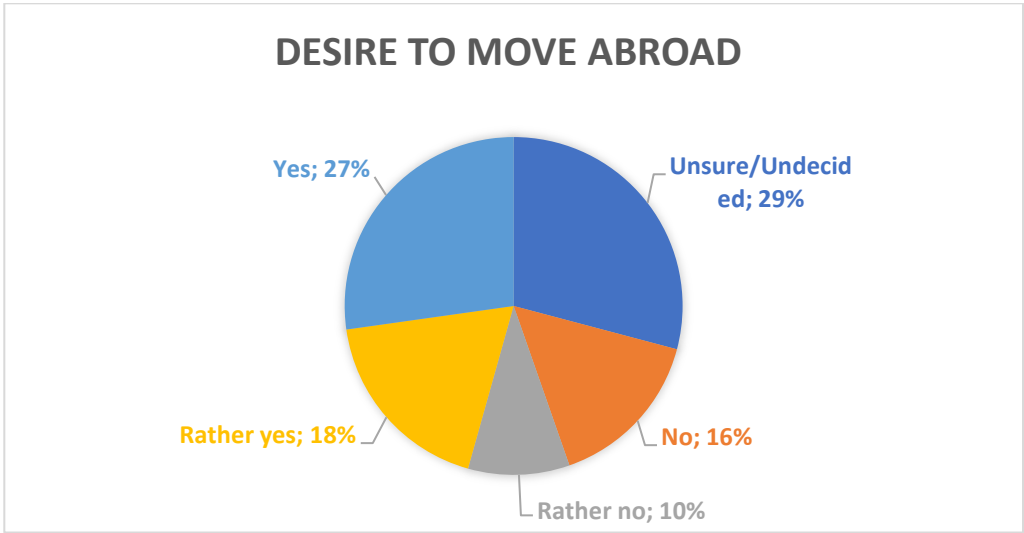


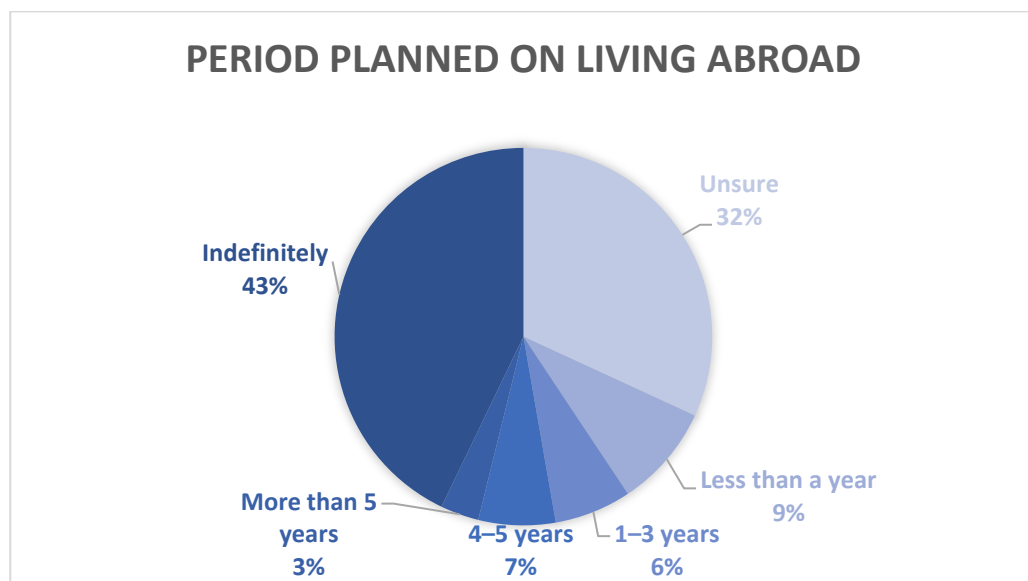
Figure 27. Desire to move abroad.

The survey was performed in 2021, after a year in which Romanians in the diaspora faced numerous high-profile issues including being forcefully deported or relocated at the outset of the pandemic, financial and social issues when returning (temporarily or permanently), reflecting the disproportionate effect that the pandemic has had on immigrants globally.<sup>27</sup>

While a decrease in the appeal of emigrating would have been expected, the number of trans Romanians who would move abroad is still comparable or higher

<sup>27</sup> Scarpetta, Stefano, Jean-Cristophe Dumont, and Thomas Liebig. 2020. *What Is the Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Immigrants and Their Children?* Online: OECD 2020.

than the national average of 26% in 2018<sup>28</sup>: **43% of those who expressed a desire to move abroad stated that they would emigrate indefinitely.**



*Figure 28. Period planned on living abroad.*

Asked for their reasons for wanting to emigrate, our respondents followed some predictable patterns<sup>29</sup> mirroring the general Romanian society, with higher income respondents wanting to emigrate for a sense of adventure, personal circumstance, or to pursue higher education, and lower income respondents placing more importance on medical care and salaries.

Respondents were asked to what extent their desire to emigrate was affected by factors such as education, personal or professional development, acceptance and transition, money, politics, and adventure. Ranked most important among all respondents were acceptance, money, and opportunities, followed by personal

<sup>28</sup> OECD. 2019. Talent Abroad: A Review of Romanian Emigrants. Paris, France: OECD Publishing.

<sup>29</sup> OECD. 2019. Talent Abroad: A Review of Romanian Emigrants. Paris, France: OECD Publishing.

opportunities and development, and medical/transition care; notably, the most important for binary transgender people were acceptance (83%), higher income (81%) and transition (72%).

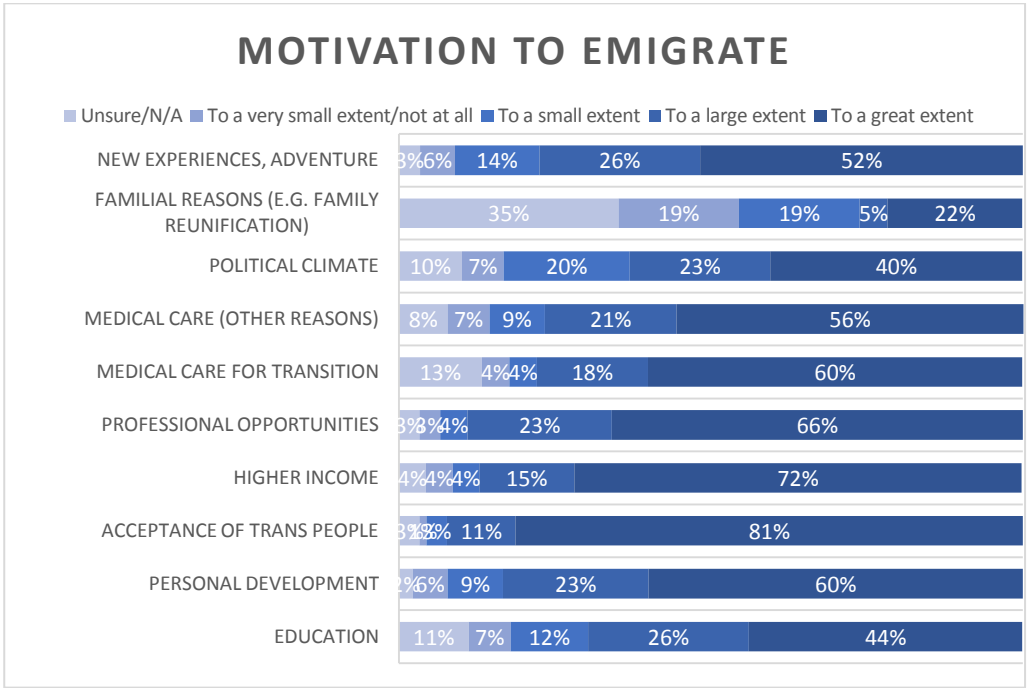


Figure 29. Motivation to emigrate.

While the average Romanian cites work opportunities as their main interest, we see a high desire to emigrate for social, political, and medical concerns among respondents, as metronormativity is extended to the idea that one must emigrate to live freely.

The concept has existed in Romania since before homosexuality was decriminalised, but it has been re-fuelled by a recent and substantial conservative wave that saw violence and disruption return to LGBTQ+ events and has led Romania to backtrack on measures taken in the early 2000s to improve sexual education, promote diversity, and accept ethnic and LGBTQ+ minorities.



Same-sex partnership recognition and easier access to medical and legal transition have not been implemented despite repeated demands from EU bodies. Instead, we have witnessed a referendum to explicitly forbid same-sex marriage in the Constitution in 2018, as well as initiatives to ban sexual education as a whole and even criminalise talks about gender identity in schools and universities in 2020 (the initiative is still pending review in 2021 following condemnation from the Constitutional Court). While these initiatives have so far failed, the lack of outcry from public institutions can be perceived as a soft approval of such values.

## **Focus: Trans Youth (<18). Will The Kids Be Alright?**

We decided to include young adults in the survey as experience working with the community has shown that many trans people begin working before their non-trans peers due to family ostracization or with the intent to move out earlier. We also wanted to see how younger trans people experience the educational system and whether a generational gap in acceptance truly exists, as observed by many respondents during the focus group: we see LGBTQ+ youth coming out earlier than ever before, many of them with more access to information and venues to build their confidence. How is that reflected in the survey?

14 respondents were underage (<18) and were able to offer us insight into what the educational system is like for young trans people. One of them has finished high school and is not currently in education, the others are still in secondary school. Only one is currently employed on a part-time basis. Four of them have already had jobs, with two starting to work before the legal employment age of 16. Two of them have already left their family homes. Except for one respondent (who was working before the legal age limit), they all come from families that 'get by' or are well off. Four live in rural areas, six in small urban areas, and four in the capital.

The respondent who has left school and is already employed reported anxiety and issues regarding their documentation during the job-hunting process, but managed to secure a job and in time even got promoted, albeit in a workplace climate that they describe as sexist, homophobic, and transphobic.

While trans youth are becoming more visible in Romania, only one of our <18 respondents is fully out. Aside from them, the only person who has told their family about their identity was forced to do so. None of the youth have come out to their teachers, and only four have come out to their peers in schools.

The great majority of them have only come out to close friends and members of the LGBTQ+ community (many respondents pointing to online venues for interaction).

The youth reported a remarkable number of problems in school and also provided details:

- *It happened once, in middle school [grades 5 to 8], when I was starting to understand myself... I had a classmate who was very supportive and somehow the teachers heard that I identify as a boy, this led to a pretty big scandal. The most disturbing part was that my form teacher told me it's not normal and that I have to tell my mother (who did not know about it at the time), that I really have to tell her, she put huge pressure on me, especially since I was not ready to tell her but I had to because of the teacher. She threatened to tell my mum herself if I didn't and that left a mark on me.*
- *I have to face gender stereotypes pretty often and questions like 'so what are you really?'*
- *From the get-go, I felt a huge difference in how people treat or see me when I even mention supporting the lgbtq+ community and people who are trans, non-binary, intersex, etc. I do not even mention that I myself am non-binary and there is already a stigma towards people who even tolerate them. Among teachers and colleagues, the 'opinion' of 'not agreeing with, but tolerating these people' is normalized, as if we are so beneath them that we should be grateful for even that amount of tolerance from 'normal' members of society. It makes me sick to think that my own existence is debated as if it were a dispute about food, as if heteronormative people have any right to debate my human rights right in front of me. In Romania this 'Christian' attitude is way too widespread towards the lgbtq+ community, the attitude is fascist if you ask me, but the country is not ready for this kind of discussion.*

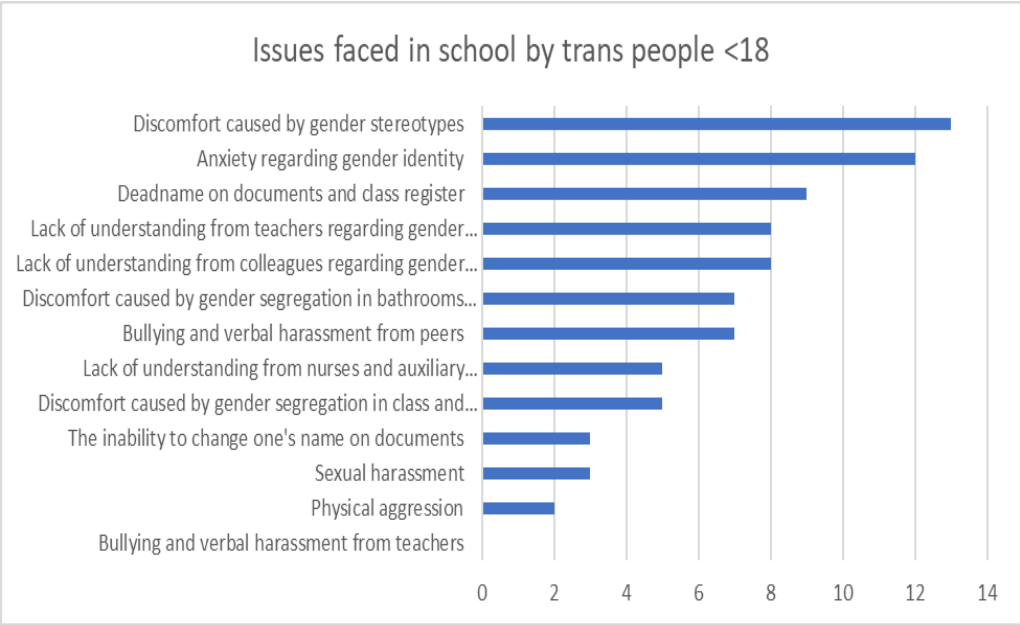


Figure 30. Issues faced in school by trans people.

Though the majority is undecided, 42% of the respondents stated that they want to leave the country. When asked why they would do so, if given the chance, 85% listed transitioning, acceptance, and the political climate as reasons, alongside more traditional motivation such as financial, educational, and professional opportunities.

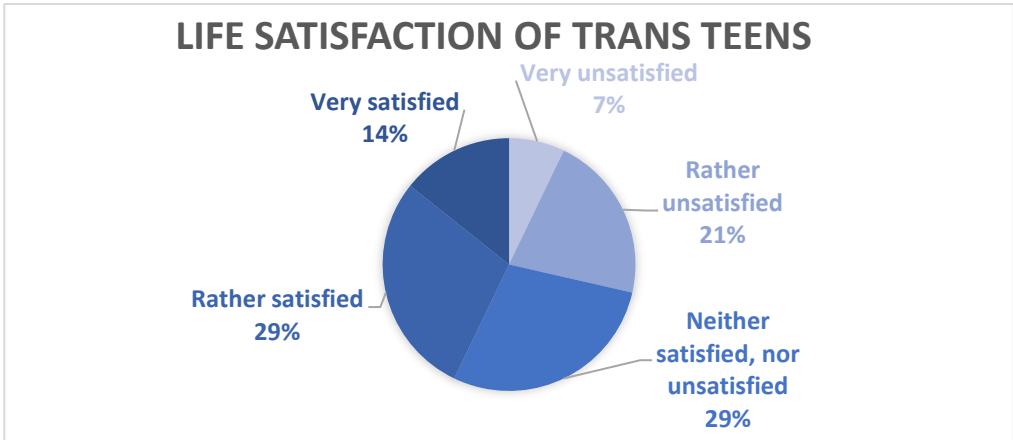
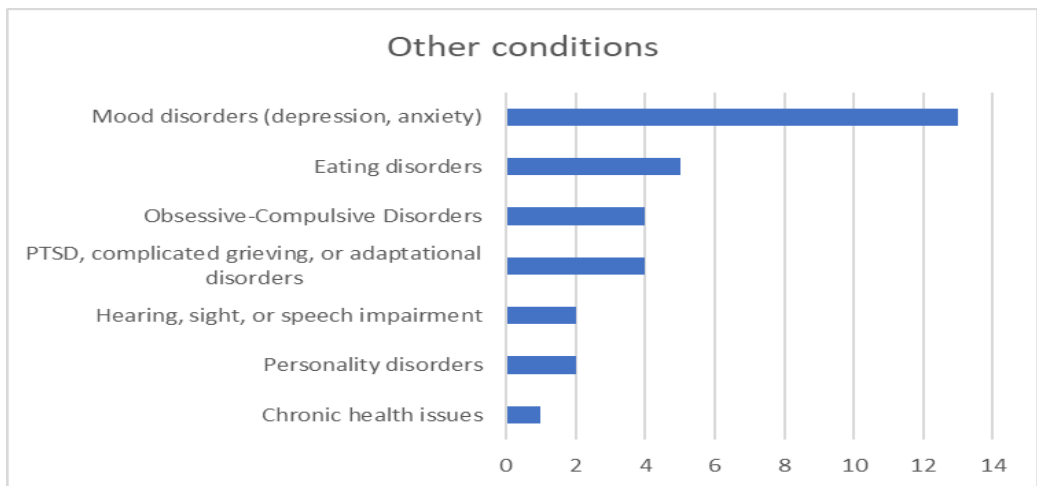


Figure 31. Satisfaction with life in general among trans teens.

**Concerningly**, 28% of respondents are unsatisfied with their lives.

Only one respondent is satisfied with their family's acceptance of their gender identity, though it is of note that person is not out to them. Only 30% are satisfied with their friends' acceptance of their gender, despite presumably only coming out to those who are accepting (as they are not out to everyone). Only two respondents are satisfied with their level of social transition.

Of the 14 respondents, 13 state that they suffer from mood disorders, and 6 from eating disorders. The presence of four respondents who state that they have PTSD is another cause for concern.



*Figure 32. Conditions reported by trans youth.*

### **Will the kids be alright?**

While the universal narrative has always been that the youth will move the world forward, and that the current generation has it easier than the ones before in terms of acceptance, our sample is not the most optimistic. Despite being part of a privileged group among their age group (aware and accepting of their identity,

connected enough to the LGBTQ+ community to find the survey, on their way to finishing high school, and coming from households that are not in poverty), the prevalence of anxiety and discomfort in the educational system and reported effects on their mental health point to an urgent need for our educational system to be addressing these issues, especially by training those working with youth to be equipped to adequately provide support. The reported transphobic environment in both school and youth-friendly workplaces also demonstrates a conservative climate even among the young. The inability to discuss their gender identity with their family further marginalises them.

Brain drain and seeing emigration as the only viable solution is a great problem in Romania. We can observe how trans youths are particularly prone to turning to it, seeing their current climate as unwelcoming and even impossible to grow as oneself in.

## **Focus: Intersex Respondents**

The survey had four intersex respondents, which is not enough to portray intersex reality extensively. All four respondents had vastly different experiences, are of different ethnicities, and have diverse backgrounds, making a quantitative approach to their portrayal inappropriate. However, they provided us with qualitative data to offer a glimpse into what it means to be intersex in Romania.

What all four respondents agree on is that being intersex is invisible both socially and even in the medical community in Romania. When asked what the biggest problem is for intersex people in Romania, one responded bluntly with 'the fact that they exist'. All four respondents cited a lack of knowledge from authorities and medical personnel regarding the very existence of intersex people, being met at best with a blasé attitude or curiosity and at worst with insults and being turned away by doctors unfit to care for them. One respondent added that visits to OB/GYNs are 'the worst, they leave you traumatized'.

A gender non-conforming respondent provided us with extensive details of the bullying they experienced throughout their life due to seeming gender non-conforming, which led to being expelled in secondary school for no reason and having to repeat a year, all the while being bullied by both peers and teachers. As an adult, they became the subject of gossip for the police during an investigation into their partner's suicide, with their private life infringed upon by tabloids over their gender identity.

The workplace experience mirrors the social one, with one respondent being accepted by two different companies and rejected the moment they sent their ID to sign the contract. Another respondent was physically and verbally assaulted at the workplace for 'not being normal'. Neither respondent reacted to the act of

discrimination, with one of them explaining that it would be a 'lost cause' as they have had negative experience in police stations as well.

It should be of note that most intersex people are not *out* as intersex in their everyday lives, though those who do not conform to the gender that they were assigned at birth put forward their non-binary or transgender identities as they find it easier for others to understand.

One of our respondents, who is non-binary and more masculine presenting, blames their androgynous appearance on thyroid/hormonal issues. However, another intersex respondent found that being called transgender was used against them, feeling highly offended that they would be judged for their appearance and forcefully classified into a category rather than being known as what they are; the fact that the forced classification was used as gossip in presenting them as an abnormality only fuelled the damage.

Though more data is needed to properly report on the situation, there are challenges and methodological limitations in collecting such data. The medical community has no centralized system and there are no guidelines in place for the caring and monitoring of intersex children, and the legal system forces them into the binary.

Due to lack of inclusion of the topic in health training in Romania, it is likely that most intersex people never become aware of being intersex—in the case of medically harmful conditions, it is likely that they are never discovered, or treated as unrelated to gender identity.

Even the LGBTQIA+ community has very few people who are openly intersex—a respondent who had heard we had multiple answers from intersex people asked us where they could find them, as they had never met another intersex person.



We can safely state that intersex people are isolated and live their lives without having the opportunity to learn about themselves or connect with their peers. It is imperative that the Romanian medical system trains its personnel to deal with intersex people, and that sexual education in Romania includes them.

## Focus: The Covid-19 Pandemic and Its Discontents

This survey was conducted in June 2021, 15 months after Romania met with the Covid-19 pandemic. Its effect on the population at large cannot be overstated. We will begin with a timeline of how Covid-19 and its inherent lockdown happened in Romania.

On 15 March 2020, the Government announced a total lockdown in an emergency ordinance. With no exact measures in place and little information about Covid circulating at the time, it was accompanied by mass hysteria and a deep fear of the military that was patrolling the cities. Fines were in place for leaving one's house without a valid reason, and poor government communication left people unsure of what a valid reason ensued: for example, one could go out for a walk, but there were no guidelines as to how far from the house they could go<sup>30</sup>. The forms one had to fill in to leave the house were released hastily and with little guidelines. To enforce the lockdown, the Government instituted fines of €1000 in a country where 28% of the workforce earns around €250/month<sup>31</sup> (minimum wage). Every day, thousands were fined for improperly filling forms or 'disregarding sanitary conditions', until the Constitutional Court decided the fines were unconstitutional and annulled them. By then, cases of people attempting suicide after receiving a fine had been reported.<sup>32</sup>

It is important to note that in Romania, people on any government help or assistance, including disability pensions, can have their assistance reduced or even cancelled if they have unpaid fines or taxes.

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<sup>30</sup> Editor's note: the author of this report was forced to leave Japan, where they were studying at tertiary level, in spring 2020. On abruptly returning to Romania, this was the reality that 'welcomed' them.

<sup>31</sup> Cornea, Ramona. 2021. 'Statistică: 1,58 Milioane de Angajați din România Lucrează pe Salariul Minim pe Economie:' *ZF.ro*, February 3, 2021, Online edition..

<sup>32</sup> 'Un Bărbat din Vaslui a Vrut să se Sinucidă după ce a Fost Amendat pentru că a ieșit din casă fără Declarație. Ce a Aflat la Spital'. 2020. April 23, 2020.

Economically, the pandemic affected Romanian workers disproportionately. While essential workers continued to work (with reduced hours due to the lockdown policy making stores close at 9PM) without bonus pay, most of the country found itself divided between those who could work from home and those who were sent on furlough. Though furlough promised part of the workers' pay as government assistance, it would arrive 2-3 months late, and many workers found themselves unable to apply for it for bureaucratic reasons. Additionally, as a large part of Romania's non-corporate workforce does not have its true income on paper, the unemployment benefits were rarely enough to pay for basic needs and rent. The service industry, which relies on tips, was hit by the difference in pay the most. Many businesses outright closed, rather than go on furlough for various reasons. And as many Romanians work under the table, with collaboration contracts rather than salaried positions, or in fields such as subsistence agriculture, much of the population found itself entirely without income. The Government was slow and inefficient in managing the economic crisis, with most businesses and employees never receiving any help to pass the crisis. Following the scandals surrounding fines, police treatment and the poor government communication, a new ultraconservative nationalist movement quickly appropriated disinformation and anti-lockdown/anti-mask discourse.<sup>33</sup>

Sex workers were among the most affected by the crisis, as their work immediately became impossible to do and there was no government help or interest in helping them get by.<sup>34</sup> As many countries banned sex work or made it impossible, 2020 also saw a wave of sex workers living abroad who had to return to Romania, some with no home, resources, or network to speak of. At the time, homeless shelters

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<sup>33</sup> Demianenco, Alexandru. 2021. 'The AUR and the Rise of Romanian Nationalism – a New Beginning or the Remnants of the Past?' *New Eastern Europe*, March 26, 2021. <https://neweasterneurope.eu/2021/03/26/the-aur-and-the-rise-of-romanian-nationalism-a-new-beginning-or-the-remnants-of-the-past/>.

<sup>34</sup> 'Impact of COVID-19 on Sex Workers in Europe'. 2020. Global Network of Sex Work Projects. July 6, 2020. <https://www.nswp.org/es/news/impact-covid-19-sex-workers-europe>.

were closed; however, a respondent noted that she managed to secure a month-long stay at a shelter at this time after reaching out to a local association, though it is unclear how many of such lodgings could be secured in time, and how many of the returnees had access to such networks.

Socially, many trans people were forced to move back to their families' houses, either due to no longer affording rent, or because schools and universities went online and closed their dorms. Many LGBTQ+ people reported issues in this period due to increased isolation, the need to go back into the closet, and the need to live with parents who did not accept their identity or even abused them.

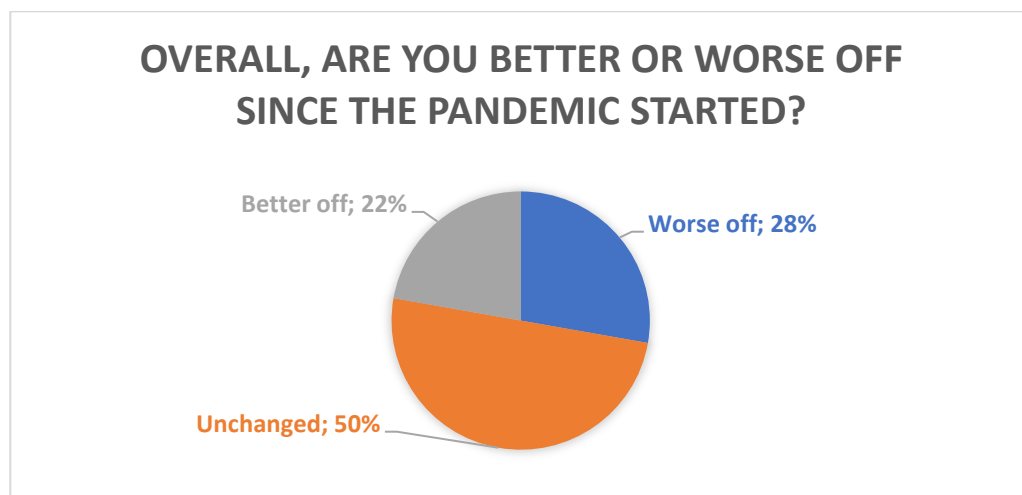
It is important to note that the pandemic has affected people disproportionately: while all the above factors were a shared reality, Romanians working jobs that could allow them to work from home without losing any of their income, those who had a secure and stable home, and those who had savings managed to avoid the economic repercussions in the country. Some people even enjoyed aspects such as the extra time gained from no longer having to commute, less interaction with their co-workers and colleagues, or even less social interaction in general.

The survey asked respondents three things:

- ✚ Whether the pandemic left them better or worse than before;
- ✚ How the pandemic affected them economically, and
- ✚ How it affected them socially.

While 28% of our respondents consider that they are worse off compared to March 2020, 22% consider that their overall situation has improved, and 50% stated that things are the same. The percentage is similar once excluding the underage cohort, with 22% thinking that the situation has improved, 30% finding that it has deteriorated, and 48% considering that it is the same. Once again, it is

important to remember that our population is limited in representing the most ostracized or vulnerable communities.



*Figure 33. Overall, are you better or worse off since the pandemic started?*

We asked respondents how the pandemic affected their work life. Among the >18 population living in Romania, 28% found that the pandemic did not affect them in any way. Only 7% had issues at work due to the lockdown, and 12% were sent to work from home temporarily. Another 19% were still working from home after a year. 15% of our respondents were sent on ‘technical unemployment’ receiving benefits, 11% did so without receiving benefits, and 9% were permanently dismissed from their workplace at the time. 5% found themselves on reduced hours or pay. 5% of our respondents were living abroad and had to move back to Romania because of the pandemic. 15% of our respondents were job hunting at the time and encountered a more difficult job-hunting environment, and the same percentage reported having to postpone professional development or cancel opportunities because of it.

**Only 12% of the population considered that they had enough information to seek out assistance or benefits for issues encountered during the pandemic.**

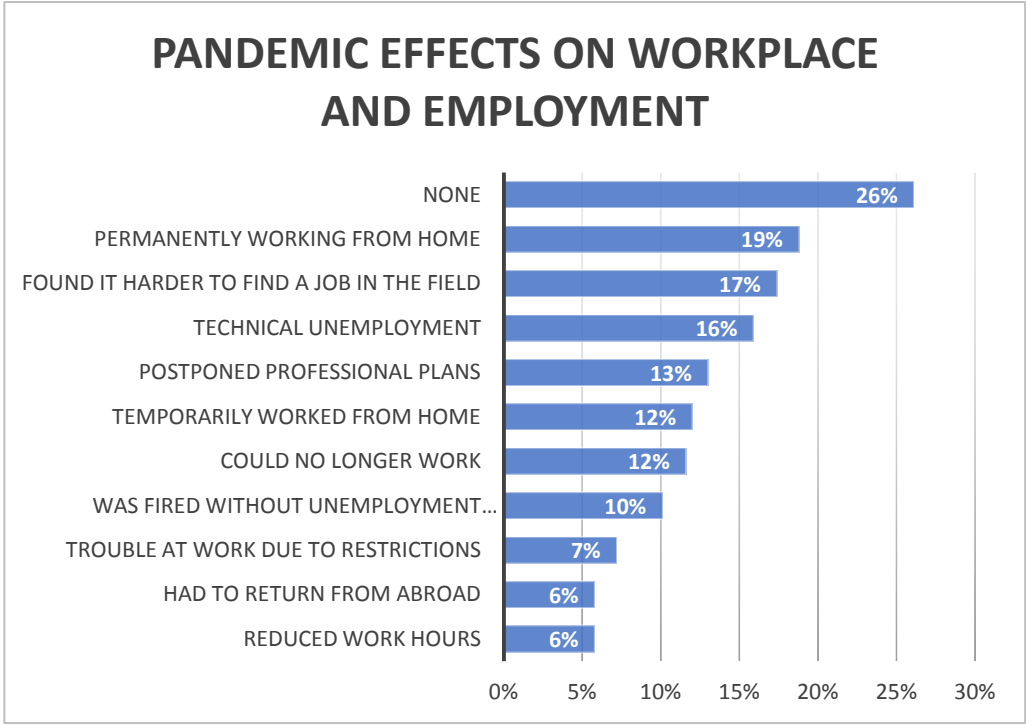


Figure 34. Pandemic effects on workplace and employment.

Socially, 61% felt isolated from their families during the pandemic. 15% had to hide their LGBTQIA+ memorabilia in Zoom calls. Wearing masks was often cited by trans people as affecting how those around them perceive them, with 13% being misgendered more often and 23% being misgendered less while wearing masks. 41% of respondents stated that they had more free time during the pandemic, but 17% found that they had less. 9% of respondents found that the pandemic helped them reduce their vices, notably because the lockdown saw casinos and other gambling slots closed. However, 15% stated that they had more vices. 22% had to take breaks from their hobbies, though 36% found themselves focusing more on hobbies and personal growth. 5% of respondents lost their homes during the pandemic. Though 23% of respondents found themselves more independent after the pandemic started, 8% lost their means of being independent. 15% of respondents had to postpone their studies due to the pandemic. Students’

response to online schooling varied. 33% stated that online schooling was better than in-person classes, whereas 51% stated that they had problems with it. Among the working population, 32% felt isolated on the job due to the pandemic.

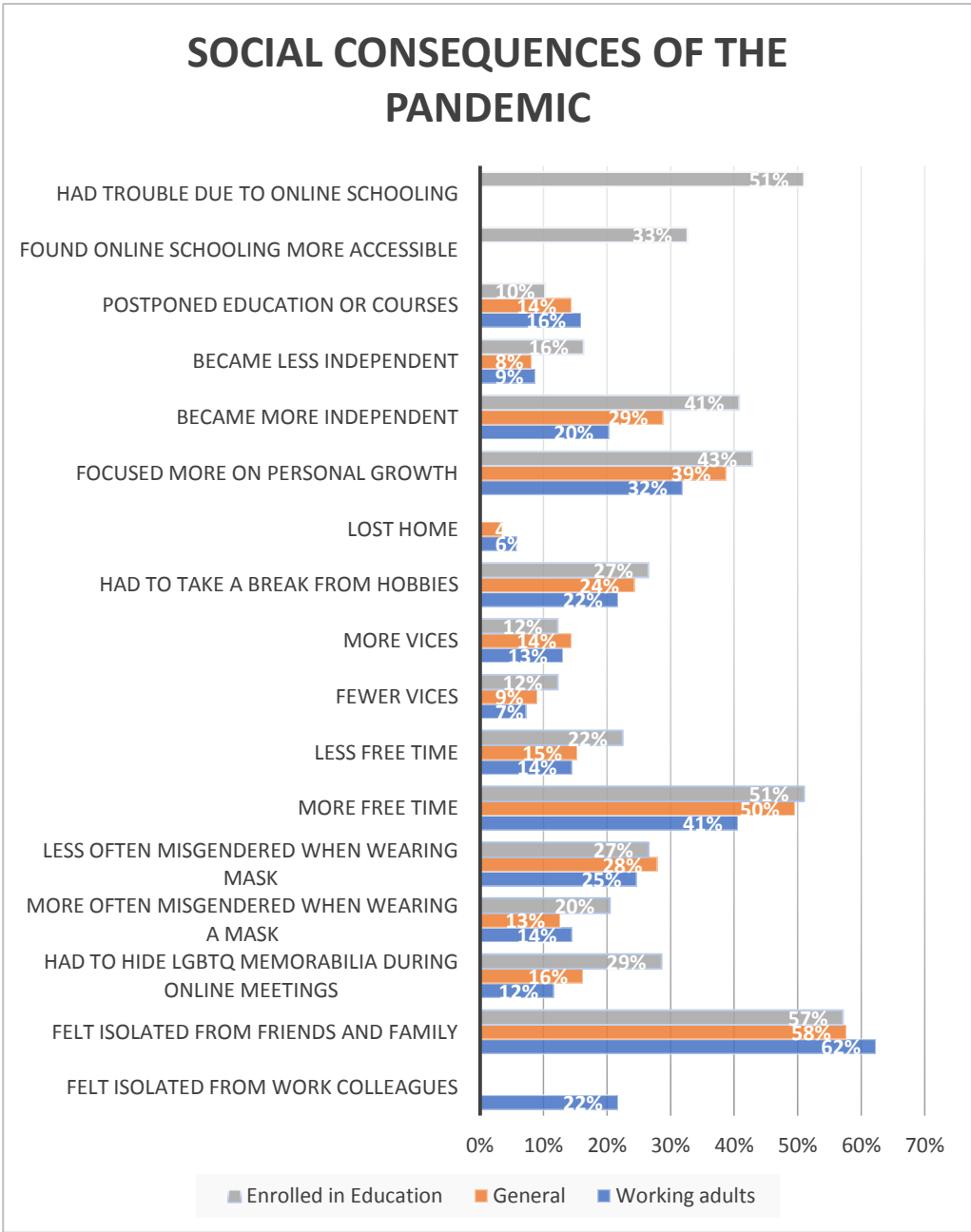


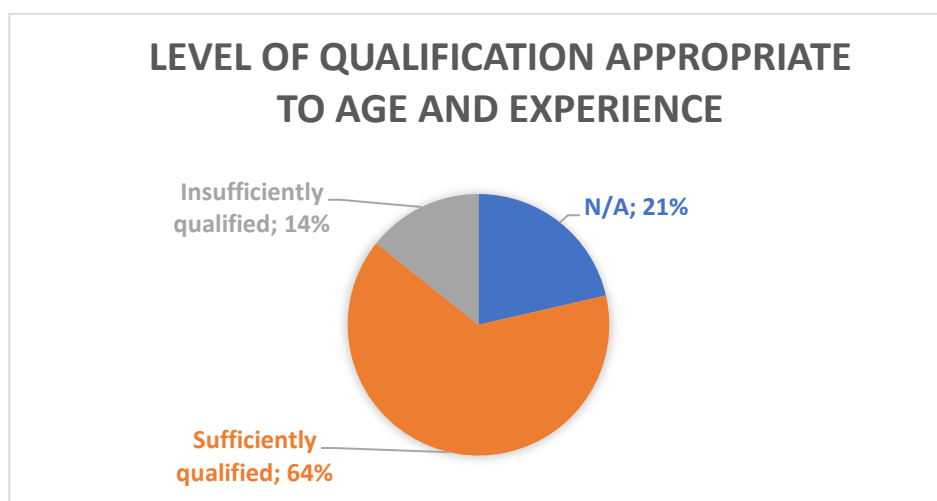
Figure 35. Social consequences of the pandemic.

# Job-hunting and Unemployment

## Job-hunting

This section concerns the job-hunting experience and employability levels of trans people over 18. We asked respondents regarding their levels of qualifications, difficulty of finding a job, and the issues that they encountered during job-hunting. Many respondents stated that finding a job was one of the biggest problems for trans people in Romania, both due to the issues they encountered before entering the job market and the issues they encounter during the hiring process.

Some respondents consider that they have gaps or incomplete education, with 21% working in jobs that do not require particular qualifications and 14% feeling unqualified given their age and experience. However, the majority believe that they are sufficiently qualified.

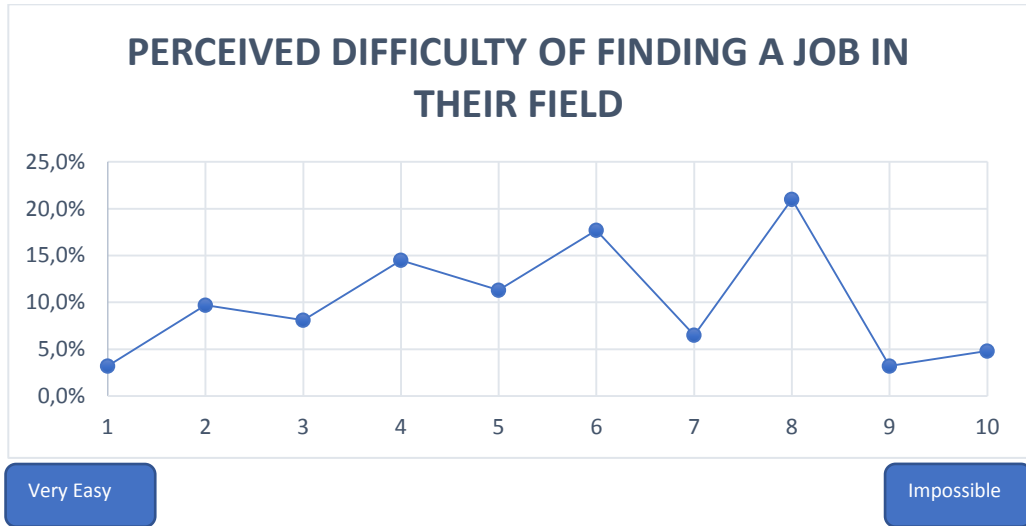


*Figure 36. Level of qualification appropriate to age and experience.*

Finding a job was considered the most difficult by those working in the IT, Legal, Medicine, Retail/Commerce, and Social/NGO sectors. Those working in the



service industry, education, and Marketing stated that it would be the easiest. Higher education was overall directly correlated with finding it easier to find a job in the field ( $p < 0.01$ ).



*Figure 37. Perceived difficulty of finding a job in their field.*

Though most respondents managed to find jobs within 3 months of active job hunting, or did not need to actively job hunt to begin with (receiving recommendations or being introduced to jobs by mutual friends, mentors, or teachers), 18% of respondents spent more than 6 months job-hunting, with a few respondents reporting that they have been looking for stable jobs for years.

In the meanwhile, they are supported by family, partners, or via odd temporary jobs, an issue to be discussed in the **Income and Sustainability** section. 15% have secured jobs via recommendation from teachers or friends, avoiding the job-hunting process altogether.

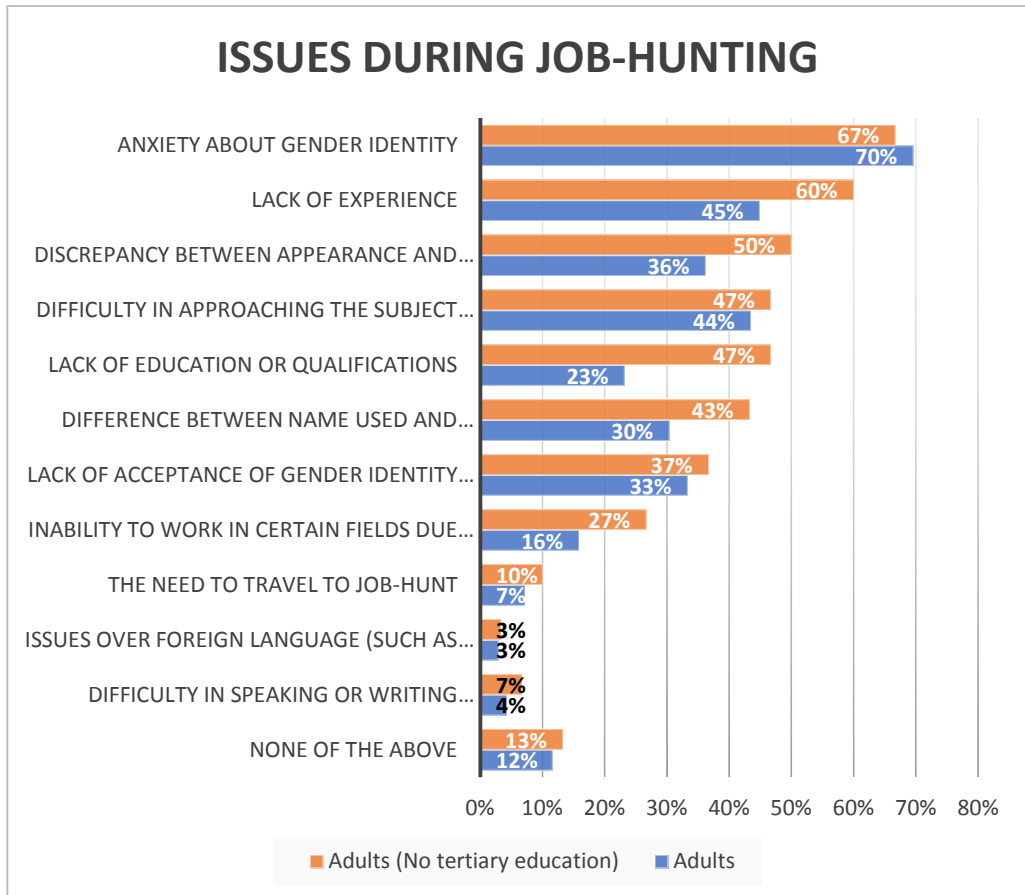


Figure 38. Time spent job-hunting before securing employment.

Job-hunting can be stressful before it even begins, especially for trans people who are concerned about their appearance and the environment that they would be working in.

70% of our respondents reported feeling anxiety about their gender identity during job hunts, and 36% have had issues due to the difference between their gender expression and their legal gender. 30% also encountered issues due to having different names in their ID. 44% reported having issues in approaching the subject of gender identity with employers, though notably a significant percentage of our respondents did not have these issues as they did not attempt to discuss them to begin with.

Those who finished their education without pursuing tertiary education reported higher percentages of anxiety and issues caused by their appearance or name used, and were predictably more likely to face barriers over their education, qualification, experience, and Romanian and foreign language ability.



*Figure 39. Issues during job-hunting.*

The job-hunting process is often prolonged by risk-prevention mechanisms such as discussing one's trans identity before the signing of the contract, with many who have socially or medically transitioned reporting that they were turned away or that things did not work out afterwards.

- *We are not wanted. We're not hired (at least not once you bring them your documents and they cancel the work contract that they had signed a day before; this has already happened to me twice).*
- *[One of the biggest challenges for trans people in Romania is] getting past the interview, or even being interviewed in the first place, given that what the employer sees is not what*

*shows up in the documents/CV. And if you add a picture to your CV to 'dampen the shock', they either don't call you or tell you that the job was taken, or they even tell you that they don't work with 'this kind of people'.*

- *[One of the biggest challenges for trans people in Romania is] Finding employers that are willing to take you into a welcoming environment*
- *I wish I could go to work, but when I get there I'm told: Sorry Boss, I spoke to a girl on the phone. And I'm like: I'm the Girl bitch.*

The difficulties and barriers encountered during job-hunting lead many to chronic unemployment or settling for jobs outside their fields or that have lower pay, but also fuel a sense of not belonging or inferiority. With unemployment benefits being rare and too little to cover basic expenses, many find themselves having to be supported by families or partners. As seen in the *Career* section below, many abandon their original careers in order to pursue ones in new fields that they perceive to be more accepting. This delays their career and places them behind peers of the same age who have already specialised in their field, leading many to work for lower pay given their age, education, and experience.

## Unemployment

As mentioned in the demographics, 28% of our respondents reported not having any income at the time, compared to a national unemployment rate of 6%.<sup>35</sup> However, it is to be noted that 45% of them are still continuing their education by being enrolled in undergraduate courses, leaving the real unemployment level at 6%, much closer to the national average.

33% of them had an undergraduate education and 66% had completed secondary education, making them more employable than a large part of Romania's

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<sup>35</sup> National Statistics Institute. n.d. 'Romania Unemployment Rate | 2021 Data |'. Trading Economics. Accessed November 3, 2021. <https://tradingeconomics.com/romania/unemployment-rate>.

unemployment population. Though few of them were satisfied with their level of education, none had encountered issues in employment and only one had issues in being promoted over their level of education. All of them reported changing jobs often or never having had a stable place of employment, and only one had never been employed.

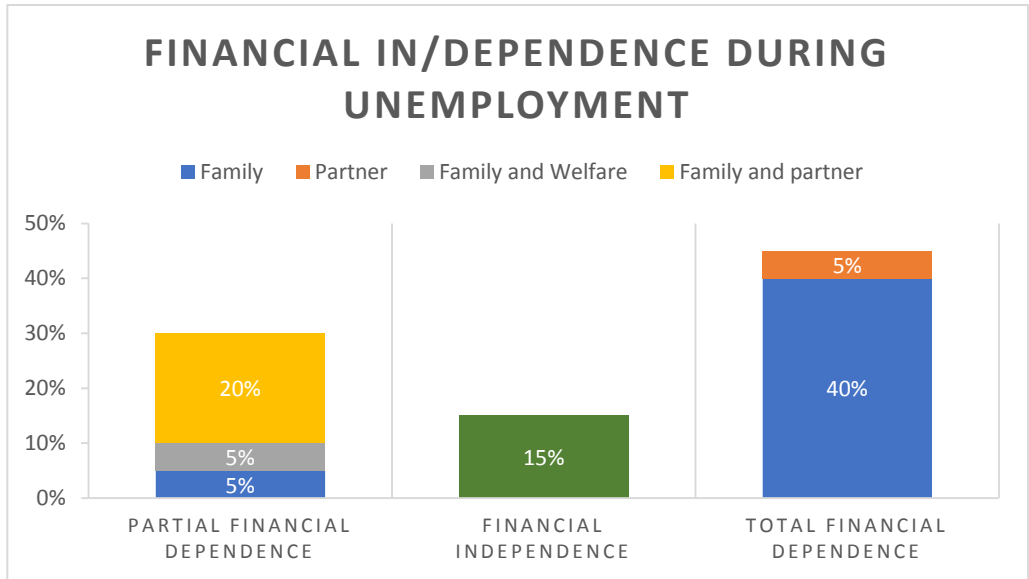
Given the issues encountered during job-hunting, they may experience more prolonged periods of unemployment compared to their cisgender peers despite being qualified and having work experience. In addition to the ‘regular’ job-hunting issues such as lack of qualifications or experience in the field reported by 33% of the currently unemployed, 66% struggled with trans issues such as not matching the picture/name in their ID or being rejected after revealing the gender marker on their ID. 83% of the respondents had anxiety over their gender identity while job hunting. The currently unemployed cohort was the likeliest to have never had employers or work colleagues who scored positively on aspects such as LGBTQ+ or trans awareness/acceptance and least likely to have had employers and work colleagues who were sexist, racist, or transphobic.

Romania does not provide enough social assistance to allow unemployed or vulnerable citizens to meet the bare minimum requirements to cover living and food expenses, leaving the unemployed to rely on familial or peer support in order to get by until they secure employment<sup>36</sup>. 66% of the unemployed have had issues covering food and living expenses over the past year, and 50% relied on loans from friends to cover them. 16% had been homeless for a period of a few months. 84% lived with their families, with some adding that they had to move back due to their financial difficulties.

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<sup>36</sup> Sava, Justina Alexandra. 2021. ‘Romania: Average Monthly Unemployment Benefit 2020’. Statista. June 29, 2021.

Among those who are currently without income, 65% relied on their families partially or fully, 25% on their partners, and only 15% had enough savings or occasional income to get by without help. An additional 10% relied on bank loans and borrowing money from others.



*Figure 40. Financial in/dependence during unemployment.*

For trans people, being unemployed places them at even higher risk, given the lack of familial support and acceptance found at large. Having to rely on familial income poses a problem for many trans people; among the >18 population that relied exclusively on their family for income, only 36% had come out to their families, and only 10% were satisfied with their families' position regarding their gender identity (including those who are not out and not bothered by it). Multiple respondents stated that they currently lived or relied on their families despite not being accepted by them, living in constant compromise regarding the names and pronouns that are used. While some members find compromise in hiding their identity from their family and receive support, trans people are a population that is very likely to be subject to verbal and physical abuse from family members and to be disowned and kicked out of their household.

# Employment

This section only includes respondents who are over 18, who have had work experience, and who currently reside in Romania. It is concerned with the respondents' experience at the workplace and their well-being, environment, sustainability, and work satisfaction.

## Demographics

Respondents were spread across 20 industries, including those who are still training in their respective fields.

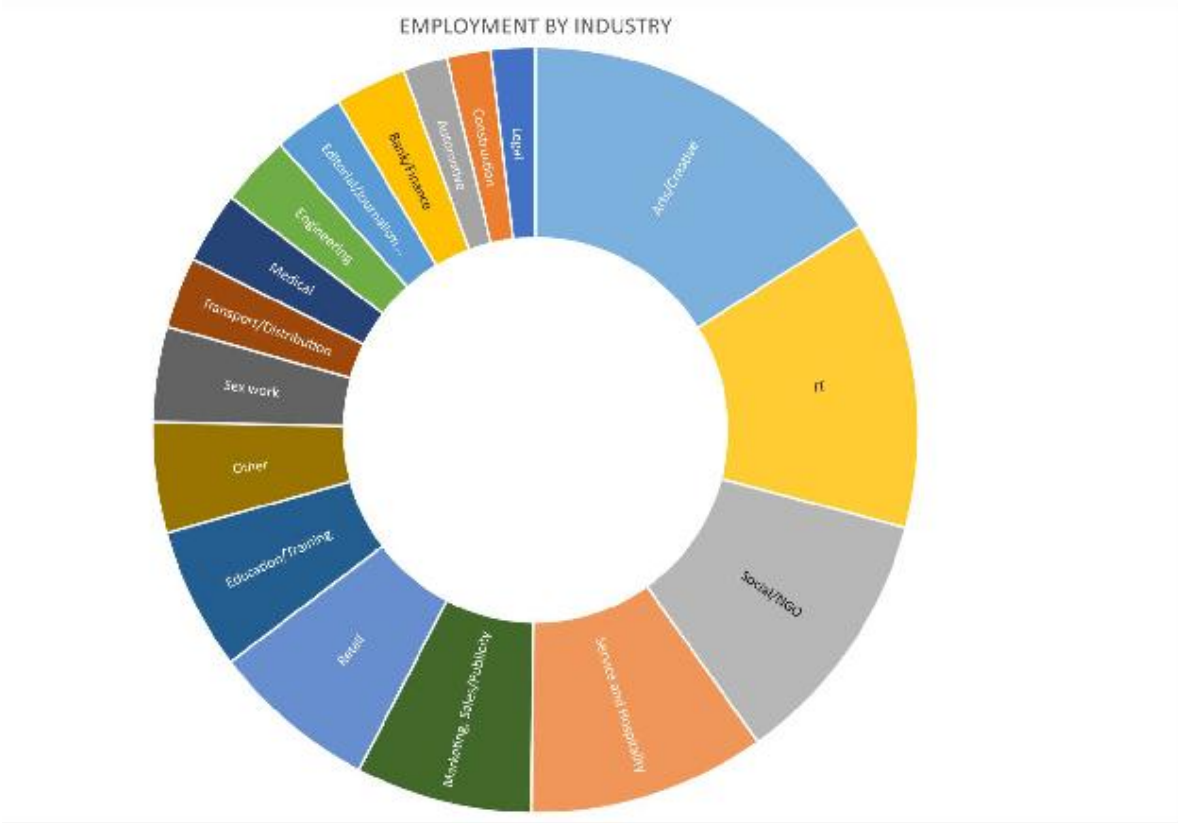


Figure 41. Employment by Industry.

68% of our respondents were currently employed at the time of the survey, though it should be noted that some freelancers explained that they are not working as they currently do not have any on-going projects.

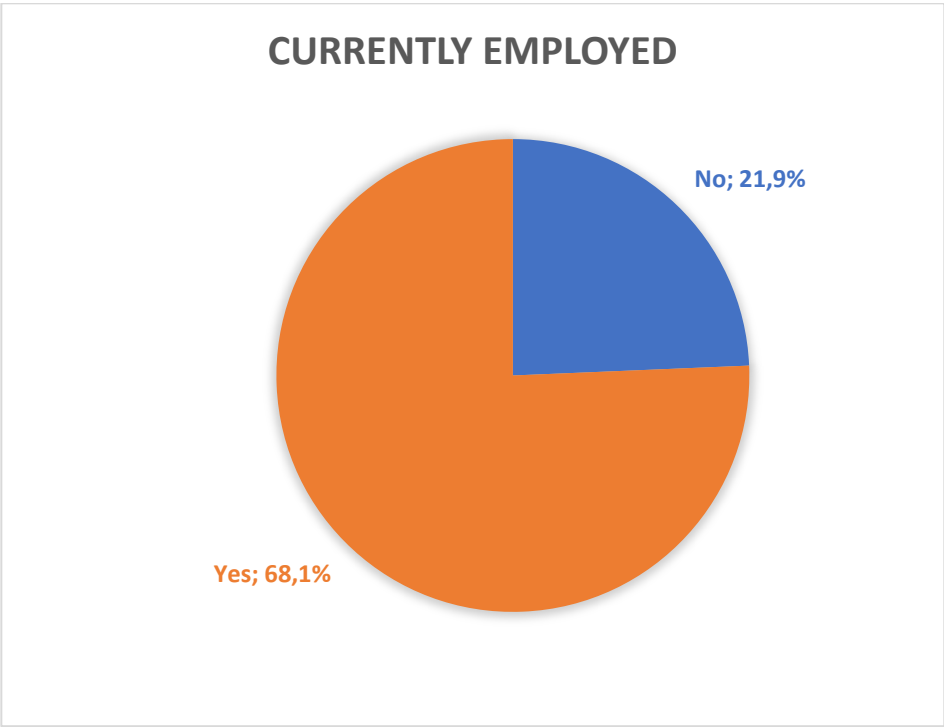
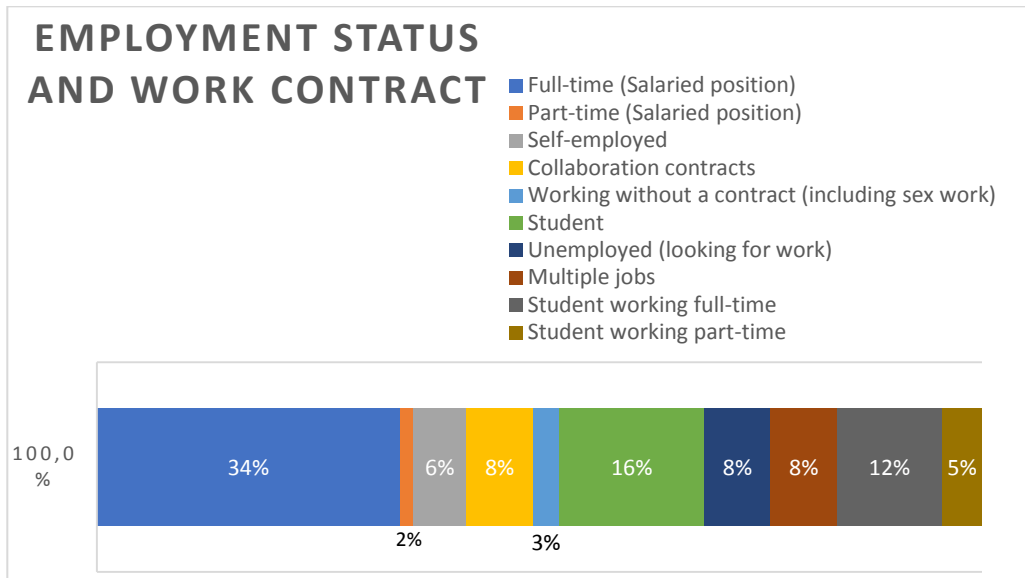


Figure 42. Employment status.

Among the employed respondents, 54% were working full-time with a salaried position, with 12% working full-time while pursuing their tertiary studies and 8% working extra jobs in addition to their full-time employment. 16% of the respondents were currently focused exclusively on pursuing tertiary or professional studies. Non-salaried positions accounted for 21% of the respondents' employment, including self-employment, freelance work, project-based contracts, and uncontracted work. 2% of part-time employees worked in a salaried position. 8% percent of our respondents were unemployed and currently looking for work.



The main difference between salaried and non-salaried positions in Romania consists in the payment of benefits, health insurance and pension contribution, which party pays for the income tax, the existence of paid leave, and of course the stability of the job.



*Figure 43. Employment status and work contract.*

Additionally, non-salaried positions are more limited in qualifying a person for loans or a credit card. A salaried employee will have their income tax, as well as their insurance and a 25% pension contribution covered by the employer, while possibly benefitting from extra income such as meal tickets or extra work protection. A contracted position would have the employer cover the 10% income tax, without additional benefits and with fewer legal protection measures. Working independently with one's own company as a freelancer has the person cover their own benefits and income tax and can require hiring legal or financial consultants. Non-contracted work is of course illegal and offers no benefits, and workers risk a fine if their work situation is discovered by the state.

Only 52% of respondents—fewer than the number of salaried respondents—stated that they have both pension contribution and insurance coverage, despite these contributions being mandatory in salaried positions. It is possible that some respondents chose the ‘full-time’ options despite not working a salaried position to reflect the hours worked, however. In Romania, pension contribution and state insurance coverage is mandatory for all salaried employees, as well as for those who make over the yearly minimum wage on contract pay.

30% of respondents have no insurance or pension contribution, either at the time or ever, and 1% of respondents had pension contributions but no insurance (possible when making less than the yearly minimum wage). An additional 16% of respondents benefitted from insurance due to their age, family insurance, or not making the minimum income necessary to pay for insurance.

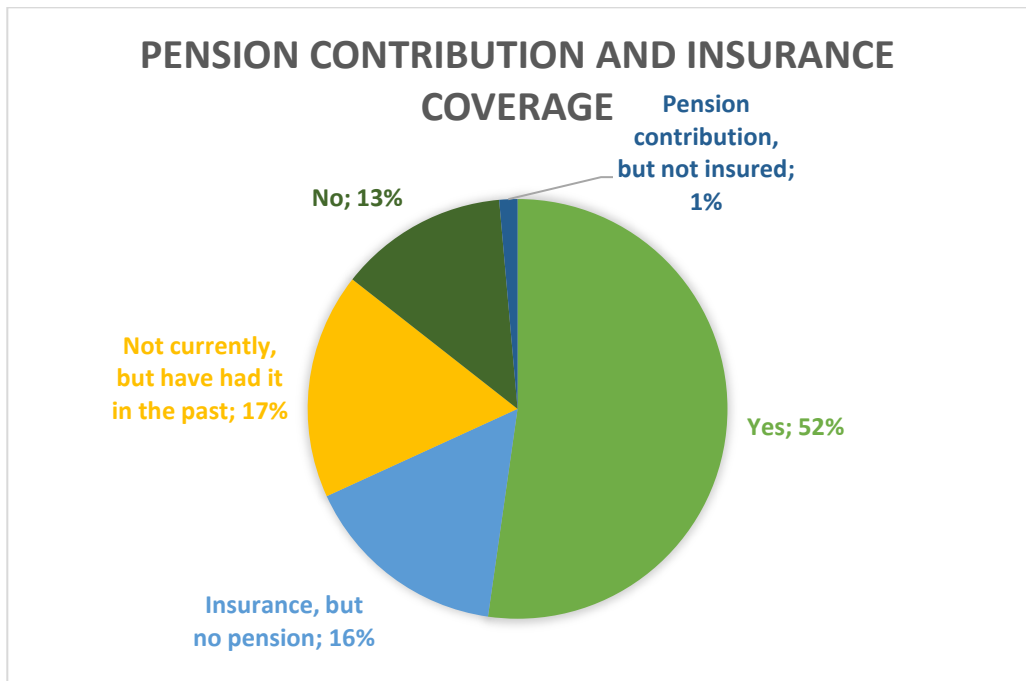


Figure 44. Pension contribution and insurance coverage.

Insurance is a particularly important subject for trans people as it can cover some of the costs of a medical transition.

The costs of obtaining a diagnosis without insurance or from a private health care provider considerably surpass the means of someone on minimum wage, and the costs involved in hormone replacement therapy are also high.

The financial barrier forces many trans people to rely on black market hormones, often without the guidance of a medical professional or the possibility to track medical complications and needs that may arise from HRT. The problem has been amplified by the recent criminalisation of possessing testosterone purchased from the black market.

It is important to note that hormone replacement therapy and treatment for gender dysphoria are not covered by insurance in Romania and that currently, the pharmaceutical market in Romania only offers prohibitively expensive testosterone (Nebido and gel), though HRT medication for trans women (Androcur, spironolactone) is relatively inexpensive.

When inquired about the point they are at in their career, 47% stated that they are entry-level in their careers, 32% mid-level, and 20% stated that they have more than 5 years' experience in their fields, with 6% in management or executive positions. It should be noted that the majority of those in management positions own their own company.

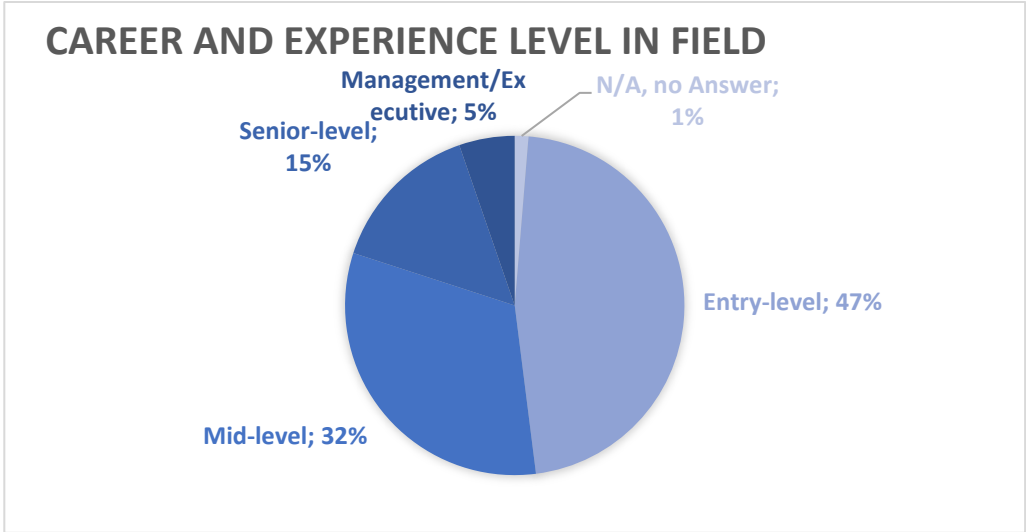


Figure 45. Career and Experience level in field.

11% of respondents had been at the same place of employment for over 5 years, and 19% for less than 3 months. 28% were still in their first year of employment, and 36% had been at the same workplace for 1–5 years.

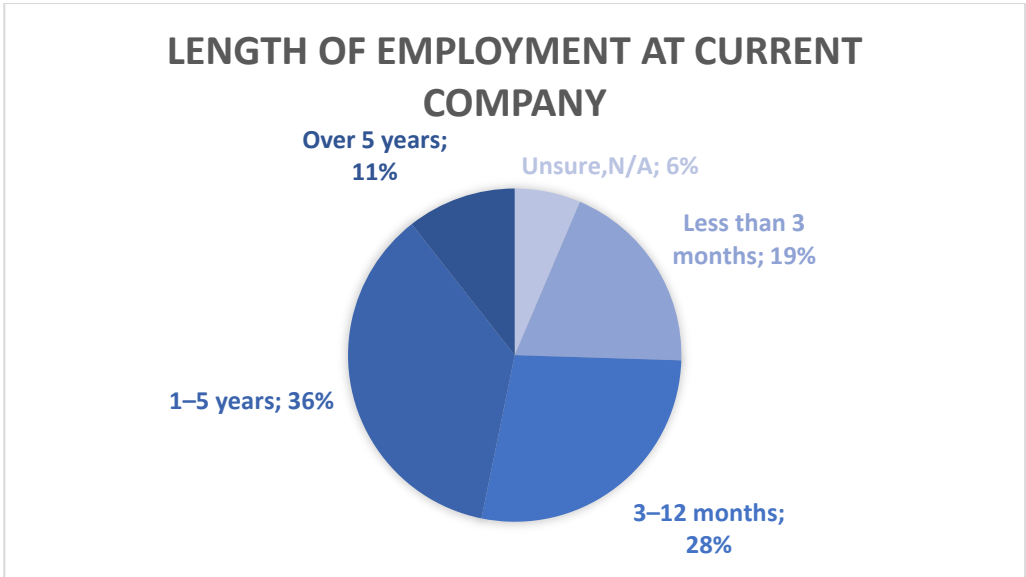
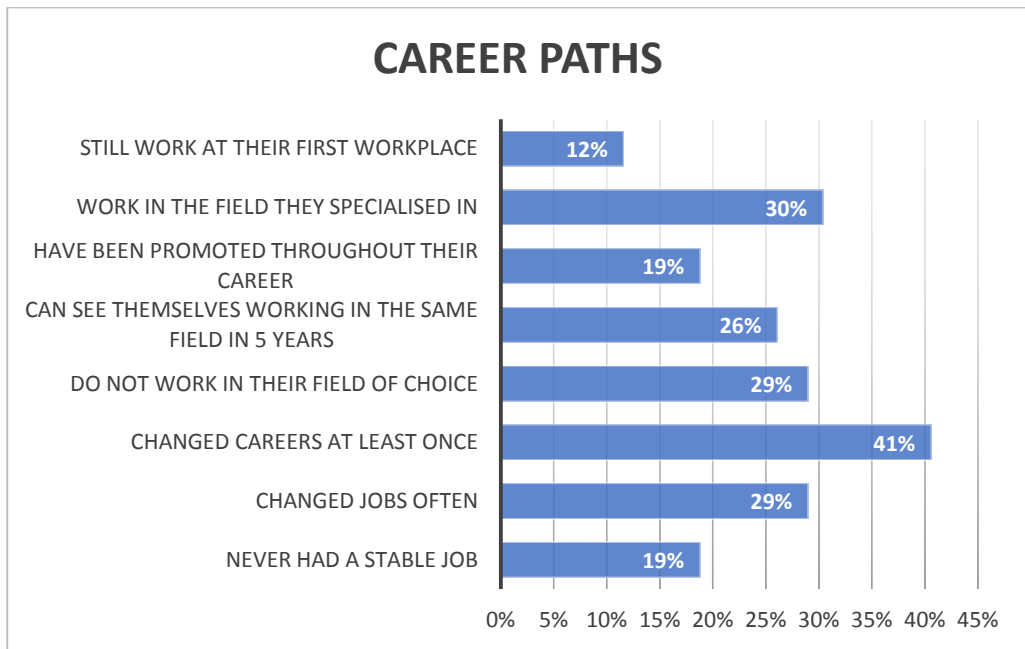


Figure 46. Length of employment at current company.

Among respondents who have work experience, 41% have changed careers at least once. Though we did not question their past specialisations, they are largely now working in the fields of IT, Education/Training, sex work, and the Social/NGO sector. Only 30% are working in the field they specialised in, and 29% work in their field of choice, having presumably specialised in a different field for practical or financial reasons.



*Figure 47. Career paths for employed respondents.*

Only 26% of respondents see themselves working in the same field in 5 years, either due to the lack of sustainability of income or work-life balance, or due to their belief that transitioning would mean having to abandon it. A higher percentage sees themselves staying in the field despite it not being their first choice. 19% have never had a stable job and 29% have changed jobs often, either due to issues encountered or for the common practice of receiving a higher pay. Only 19% have been promoted at least once throughout their career.

Negative experiences and issues

48% of respondents have had negative experiences at the workplace over their gender identity, with similar percentages across all gender identities, level of outness, or social/medical transition.

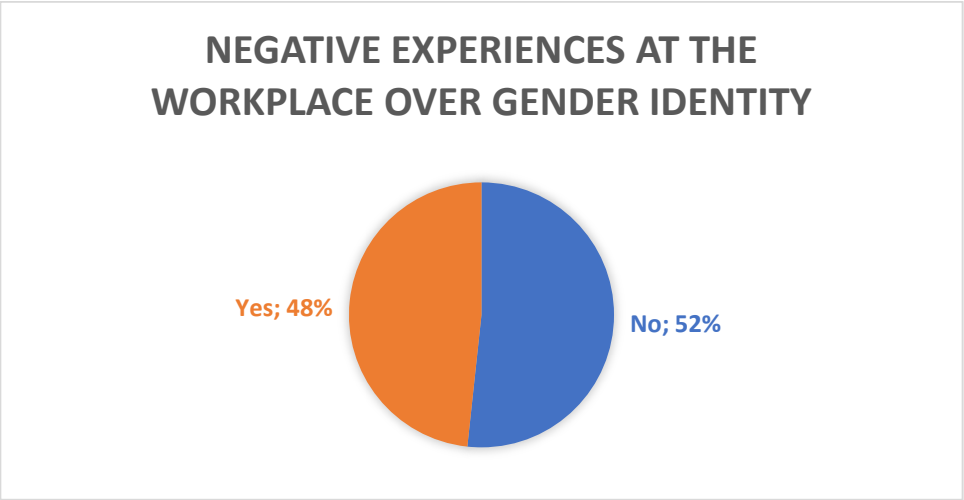


Figure 48. Negative experiences over gender identity at the workplace.

40% of those who had issues at the workplace reported encountering them in everyday interaction, with 22% citing recreation or smoking areas. 20% of respondents had negative experiences using the company bathroom. 25% of respondents encountered these issues during the hiring process, and a similar percentage when interacting with their employer. 16% have faced these issues during regular evaluation or promotion opportunities. Team-building events seemed to be the least likely to cause these experiences, though it should be of note that many companies do not have team building events and few make them mandatory.

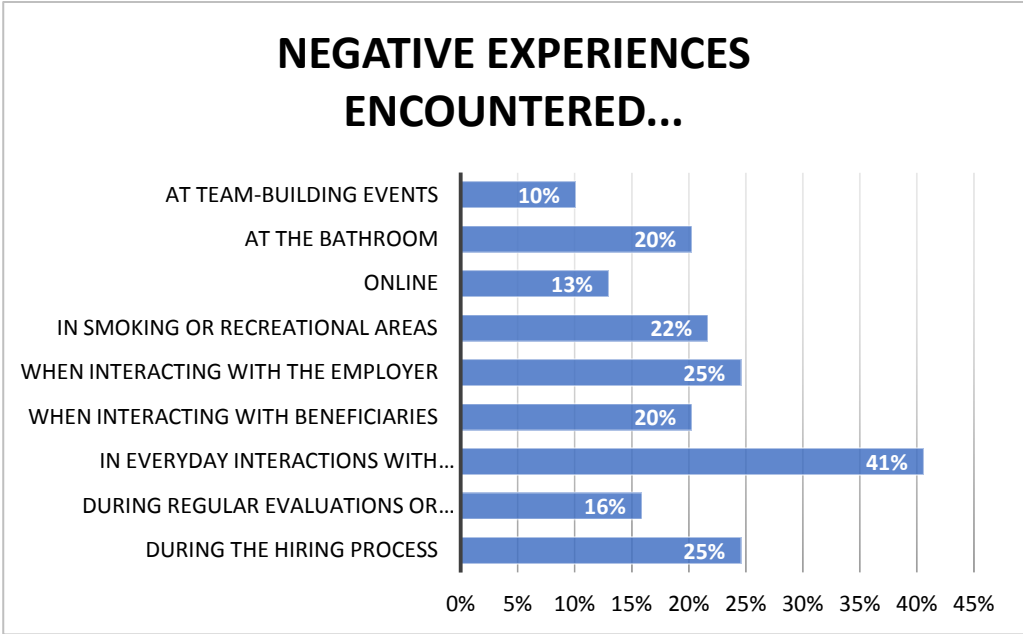


Figure 49. Location and timing of negative experiences.

During our focus groups, we have had multiple people expand on such issues:

- *When I was working [at a popular fast food place] at my first job when I was 16... the problem was that all this bullshit started about me being an orphan, being gay, being Roma. My clothes were ragged and I didn't fit their idea of a proper look. Even my work supervisor would make comments about me, expecting me to [be too dumb to] catch on. He would never intervene and stop what was happening. I quit soon afterwards... At my new job, I was more reserved at first, I kept to my own... My [new] colleagues haven't asked me what I am, but a part of me is still cautious...*
- *I don't tell [new employers] about it until the last moment [when I have to sign the contract] so they don't get a chance to complain, though they are curious and they look at me funny. Sometimes I couldn't get my username and stuff changed and I would struggle to hide it, like sometimes I would start my computer with the monitor turned off and input my username and password really quickly so no colleagues could see it.*

- *I've had people from my hometown get hired at the same workplace and they told our trainer that I'm trans, and she spread rumours about it at the workplace. My friends at the workplace told me that they heard I used to be a girl, that I've had operations and such, and I joked around and said 'yeah, look at me clearly I'm a girl!' and they fell for it, they don't know about it to this day. I didn't have my papers changed at the time so I'm lucky they didn't ask.*
- *At work, you need to be neutral and invisible.*
- *I've never had the chance... I actually didn't want to, I always avoided multinationals and really big companies. I've worked in medium and small companies, including in factories, I was even a syndicate leader back when people fought about it on the streets. So my workplace has always been homophobic, transphobic, I've never had a place that was the least bit LGBT-friendly, and I always felt that. Look at me, even without treatment or anything, I look very masculine, and everyone comments on it, they say I should do something about it, that it's not okay. So I was always rejected and isolated because I was not like everyone else. Even though I never said anything. I just looked different. This happened at every single workplace. At my last workplace, I was there for 10 years, but after the management changed, I bothered them. I wasn't even out! Just based on my looks, on the fact that I didn't have a family, they kept finding one thing or another to complain about until they sort of fired me, though we reached an agreement and I got severance pay.*
- *In team-buildings, they never know where to put me. Usually it's 2-3 people in a room, but with me... I'm always alone in the room. No one wants to be in the same room with me. I stopped going to them because I just felt so awful.*
- *I actually go to a different floor to use the bathroom, since no one feels comfortable with me on my floor.*
- *I was rejected from workplaces because 'I was one of them LGBTQIA people'*



- *I had a colleague [psychotherapist] who said that he is super happy if he manages to get a gay person to kill himself... he was reported and disciplined after 6 months [of stating that in public], but he didn't lose his license and he continues to be a big shot in the field*
- *I received a yearly performance review... which they couldn't have made since I had been working there for less than a year. It was illegally done and I got the lowest grade in the whole institution, [...]. I sued the institution to cancel the grade... and they finally cancelled it. After that, when I got my documents changed legally and brought them to work, they made comments such as 'you only got approved because the judge was gay', my colleagues put distance between us despite the fact that we had known each other since we were young... Being friends didn't save me from being marginalised, from being ridiculed... They did eventually change my documents in the system as they were legally obliged to, but they asked for the full sentence and other details... I think they wanted to have stuff to gossip about in the institute... Many colleagues have told me stuff like calling me a 'bearded lady', calling me 'he him whatever they are', told me that I have a vagina between my legs which makes me a woman and that I will die a woman, etc.*

## **Workplace environment and satisfaction**

We asked respondents to tell us about their workplace environment, referring to experiences such as explicit statements of support (colleagues calling themselves LGBTQ+ allies, company anti-discrimination policies and encouragement of their enforcement), implicit statements for lack of support (colleagues making homophobic, xenophobic, or sexist remarks, or not respecting private life), and interpersonal relationships (colleagues helping in time of need). We asked the question separately for employers/potential employers and work colleagues.

Throughout their job history, only 59% of our trans employees have worked in places that had anti-discrimination policies in place, with only 20% encountering them often or very often throughout their career; only 12% have found it often

that their employers actually report discrimination, surprisingly more supportive than work colleagues, where only 9% were often found to encourage formal complaints.

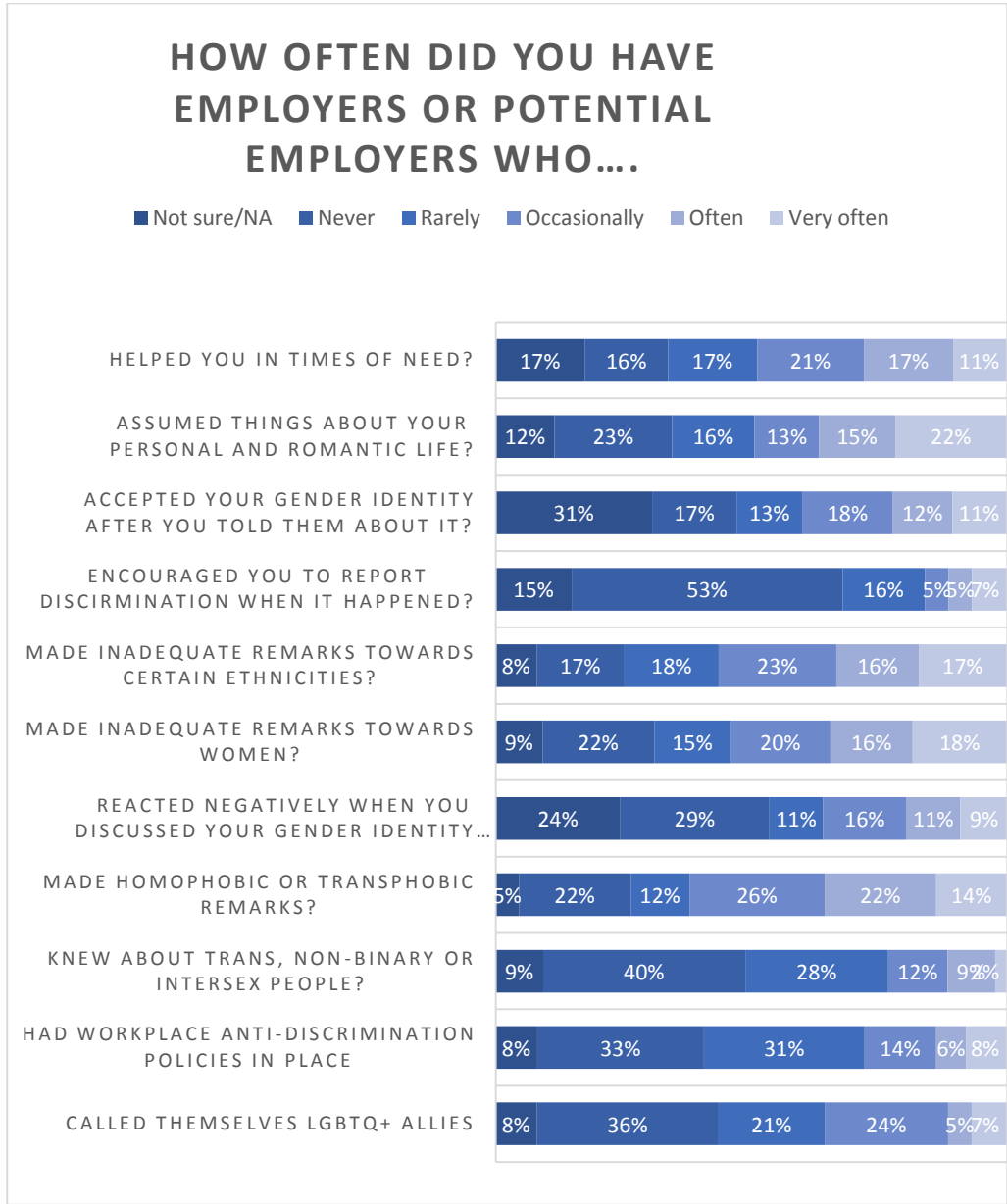


Figure 50. Experiences with employers.

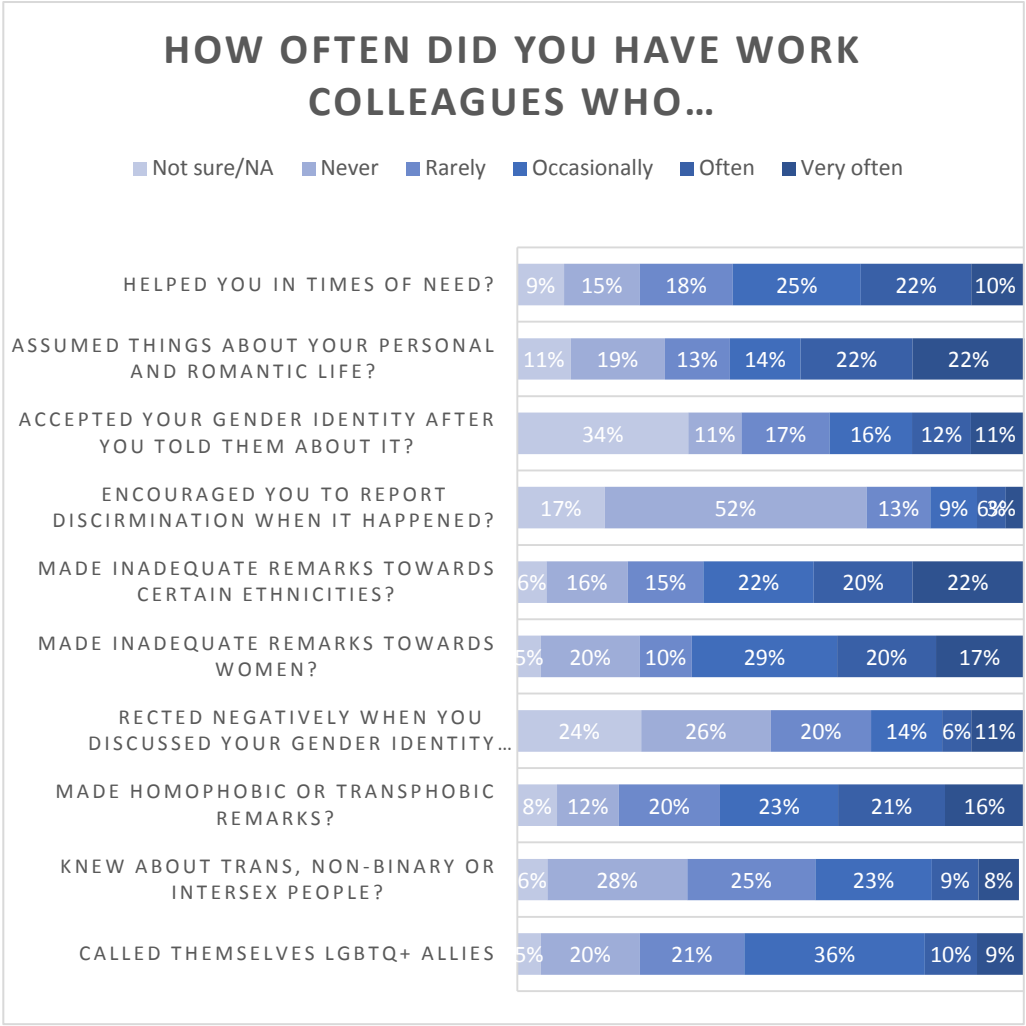


Figure 51. Experiences with work colleagues.

As regards the work environment, the majority of our respondents have heard inadequate remarks towards women, different ethnicities, and LGBTQ+ people on a regular basis, with only 12% of respondents reporting that they have never heard any employer make any biased remarks and 6% reporting that they had never heard any colleagues making such remarks. Instead, 44% of respondents found that colleagues would often or very often make remarks about their private life, and 37% had similar experience with their employers.

It is particularly important to consider people's perceptions of their workplace environment for multiple reasons:

- Sexist remarks are often based on gender stereotypes and reveal a rooted belief in differences (and often hierarchy) between 'the two genders,' hinting towards beliefs that said genders are binary and/or rooted in biological markers and the gender assigned at birth.
- Additionally, those assigned female at birth and those presenting as female suffer from sexism as much as any cisgender woman.
- Xenophobic, racist, and other discriminatory behaviour is often conflated. Though one can be transphobic without being xenophobic, for example, such remarks cue the listener on the values and need for uniformity and conformity, and thus hint towards possible transphobic beliefs. Additionally, trans people of said ethnicities suffer from those remarks as expected.
- While sexual orientation and gender identity are not necessarily linked, it can be safely assumed that a homophobic person would also be transphobic, especially given the lack of visibility and acknowledgement for trans people in mainstream discourse, in which they are all lumped under the term 'homosexual'. Trans people who are also gay/bisexual will suffer from homophobic remarks as any cisgender LGB person would.

Such remarks lead the listener to gauge the level of acceptance should they come out at the workplace, and their ubiquity could explain why 31% of respondents never even tried to discuss their gender identity with their employers and 34% never did so with any work colleagues. Such cues and gauging of the environment are important for any person thinking of coming out, as it is natural to want to reduce the risk of negative reactions and consequences that they face.

Even with the gauging and subsequent hiding or avoiding workplaces, only 29% of our respondents have never faced negative reactions when coming out to their employers, and 26% have never had such experiences with their colleagues.

Our respondents were also divided regarding work conditions and general satisfaction.

The gap in work conditions brought on by prioritising acceptance can be observed, with self-employed or stable employees being the least likely to have good work-life balance and days off. A generation gap is also visible among respondents, with the younger generation being less likely to consider work as important of an aspect of their life as the older generations.

When it comes to workplace satisfaction in general, our respondents were fairly divided. 51% of our employed respondents were overall pleased with their current workplace, and only 6% were very displeased with it. 36% were pleased with their current salary, 53% were pleased with its stability, 40% were pleased with their current workload and work hours, and 51% were pleased with their attributes.

What factors influenced the level of satisfaction? Respondents who were comfortably out to everyone were by far the most satisfied. 77% of the 'very satisfied' with their workplace in general are fully out. Respondents have pointed out in interviews and focus groups discussions that they actively seek out workplaces that are less conservative and less misogynistic. Due to the scarcity of those workplaces, however, 38% ended up working in environments that they consider conservative or misogynistic either way.

Interestingly, it was not the ones who have been at the same company for the longest that were the most satisfied with their workplaces. Entry-level workers were the most likely to have non-transphobic employers and colleagues, while

those who had been at their current place of employment for 1–5 years were the most satisfied with conditions regarding stability and interpersonal aspects. We can observe from the data that there are substantial differences in the levels of satisfaction of older versus younger trans persons.

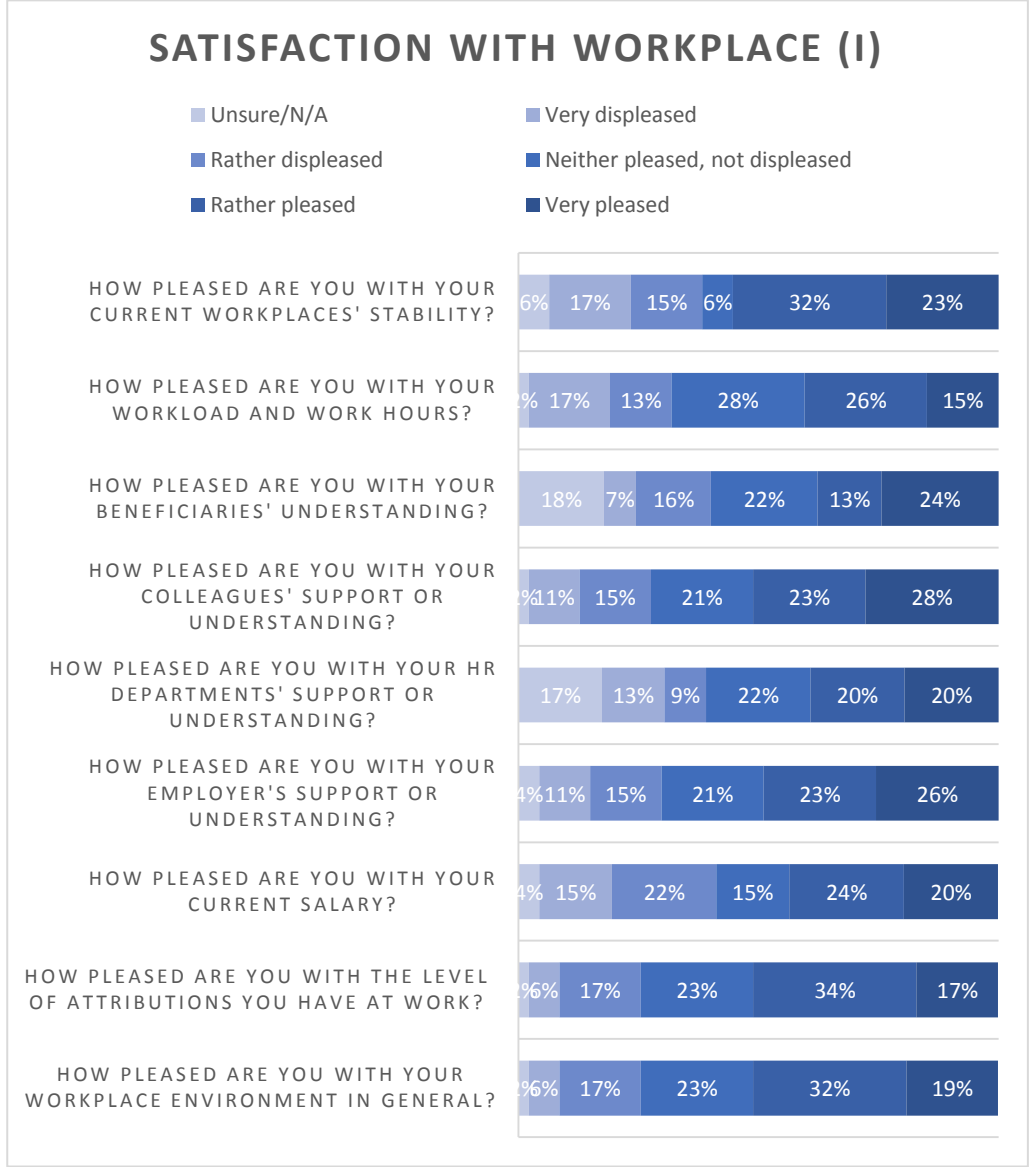


Figure 52. Satisfaction with current workplace (I).

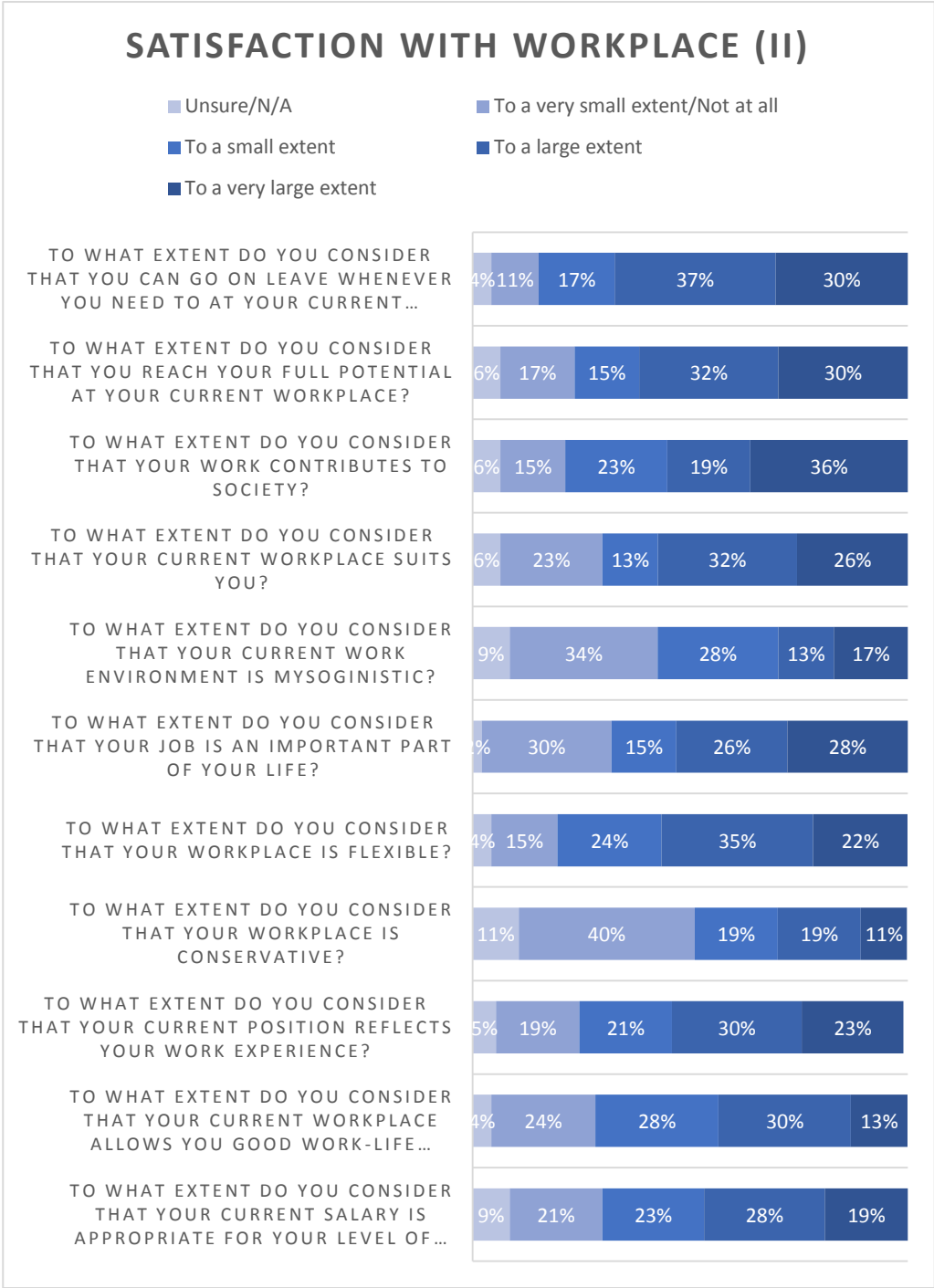


Figure 53. Satisfaction with current workplace (II).

## **Coming out at the workplace**

Coming out at the workplace plays a greater importance for trans people than for other LGBTQ+ groups, due to the need to adjust language, names used, and other social and bureaucratic aspects. It should be of note, however, that coming out as trans occurs on two different levels: coming out before transitioning socially/medically/judicially is an act that one needs to do as part of their transition if they want to adjust their workplace environment to their gender and name, whereas coming out in the case of a completed judicial transition when one can ‘pass’ as cisgender to colleagues is more of a choice of wanting to be known by others than a social or bureaucratic need.

The act in which a trans person who can ‘pass’ as cisgender chooses to not disclose their identity to others is commonly referred to in the community as going ‘stealth’. Reasons include belief that their trans identity is not relevant to their current social and professional situation, but also the fear of repercussions in case that identity is revealed to others.

For example, a transgender man can fully transition socially and judicially and seem no different from other cisgender man to an outsider, an intersex person can feel comfortable with identifying as the gender assigned at birth and not have considerable differences in appearance, and a non-binary person can feel comfortable with an appearance and pronouns that match the gender they were assigned at birth. In this case, disclosure of their trans identity is not necessary in order to be treated and referred to as the gender they identify with. In contrast, one who has not medically or judicially transitioned, who does not feel comfortable with the gender assigned at birth or with their given name, or who does not ‘pass’ as well needs to come out in order to be correctly addressed and treated by those around them.



Overall, 29% of working trans adults have not disclosed their identity to anyone at work. Those who have judicially transitioned were least likely to keep their identity entirely hidden, and have come out to people at their workplace before changing their documents, though it should be noted that the very low number of respondents (6) who are currently employed and have legally transitioned is likely to eschew the results. Those who have not socially transitioned were most likely to not tell anyone at their workplace about their identity. Even among those who have socially transitioned in general, 8% have not let it be known to anyone at the workplace. Given that these respondents stated that they have not changed their documents, nor medically transitioned, we can presume that they are treated as the gender assigned at birth at the workplace; however, they stated that they are happy with that situation - from which we may conclude that in some cases livelihood comes before being addressed correctly.

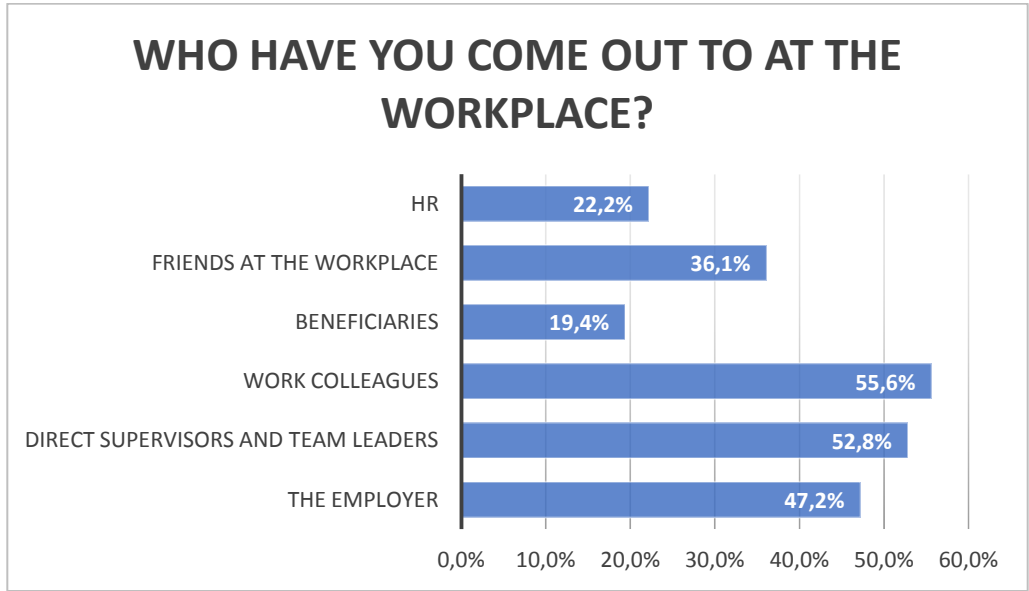


Figure 54. Coming out at the workplace.

Only 19% of all respondents have it known to everyone at the workplace that they are trans, with a much larger proportion opting to disclose that fact to a select few people. The graph below shows who trans people are more likely to disclose their

identity to (the percentage excludes those who have not come out to anyone, who have come out to everyone, or who have no work colleagues).

Colleagues were the likeliest to hear about one’s gender identity, while beneficiaries including clients, students, etc. were the least likely to know it. Interestingly, colleagues that one works with directly were more likely to know than one’s friends at the workplace, perhaps due to the increased exposure, likelihood of having one’s ID seen, or just the chance of being asked. The HR department was the least likely to know, but it should be noted that not all respondents had an HR department.



*Figure 55. Who trans people come out to at the workplace.*

34% of respondents were displeased with the level of acceptance they see at the workplace, whether they chose to come out or not. An impressive 48% were pleased with it, in part due to the active seeking out of trans-friendly workplaces, and in part due to the fact that some were content with not sharing their identity at the workplace.



*Figure 56. Satisfaction with acceptance at the workplace.*

49% of respondents had not come out to their employers. Among those who did, we inquired into their tactics of coming out, particularly regarding the stage in which they choose to do so. This aspect can be rather tricky for a number of reasons, as they have explained:

- ✚ Coming out in one's CV is arguably the safest way of filtering transphobic workplaces—assuming the interviewer notices, but it also places the applicant at risk of verbal abuse after application, joke interviews, or not being considered for work.
- ✚ Coming out during an interview would ensure that one's identity is known, but places the applicant in a vulnerable position with people he does not know very well, and again might lower chances of being hired.

- ✚ Many would prefer to come out in time after securing a job, but have to deal with the discrepancy between their appearance/chosen name and the gender marker/name in their identification, which is needed in order to sign a contract. For this reason, some opt to come out to the person signing the document. This option also seems more secure for some given how a refusal at that stage would be clearly done for a discriminatory purpose, but some respondents reported that they were rejected at that stage either way.
- ✚ Coming out shortly or immediately after being hired is a potential way to secure a job while also working as oneself, though most respondents chose ‘shortly after hiring’ rather than immediately without commenting on the option; given the stories we heard from respondents about being fired in training periods or following their first evaluation, one can assume it to be a reason.
- ✚ Coming out in time is a safe way to gauge potential negative reactions and protect one’s safety , but it can bring on gender dysphoria and discomfort, and also accustoms colleagues to using one’s deadname and wrong pronouns.

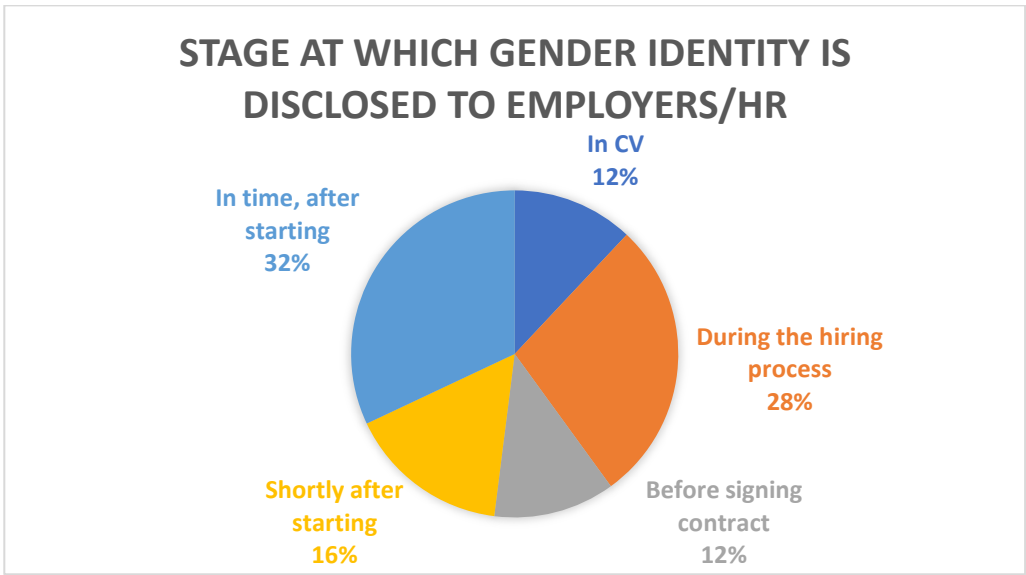


Figure 57. Stage at which gender identity is disclosed to employers and the HR department.

The amount of thought, filtering, choosing who one comes out to, and other factors that go into consideration before the act itself does not guarantee a positive reaction. Though 62% of those who do disclose their identity to their employer receive positive or very positive reactions, 16% of employers still respond in a negative manner.

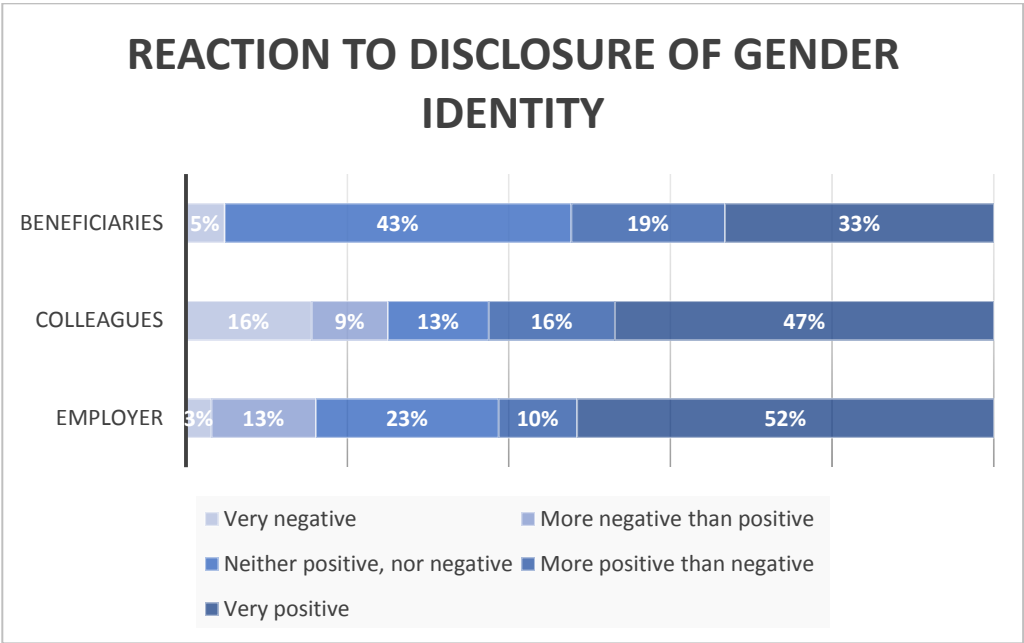


Figure 58. Reactions to the disclosure of gender identity at the workplace.

Among those who disclosed their identity to their employer/HR department requesting that documents or visible means of identification (usernames, badges, etc.) be changed, 20% had their request accepted and all documents changed (following legal transition), 60% had internal or external use documents and ID changed on request to some extent (contracts cannot be changed without legally transitioning), **and 20% saw their request completely rejected.** Some respondents noted that they were told ‘to come back once they have their documents changed’.

Income and Sustainability

This section discusses respondents’ income levels and financial well-being, while also delving into the sustainability of the current state of employment and career paths of those who have already entered the workforce.

Excluding the underage population and those who did not disclose their income, many respondents (28%) were still lacking personal income at the time of the survey. 22% of respondents earned between RON 2001-3000 (€400-600) per month, which is the average wage for Romanians in the workforce. 24% of them earned less than that, with a **concerning 15% earning below the minimum wage of RON 1300 (€466) per month**. 26% of respondents earned more than the average wage in the country, with 8% earning what would be considered top salaries in Romania (over RON 5000/€1000 per month).

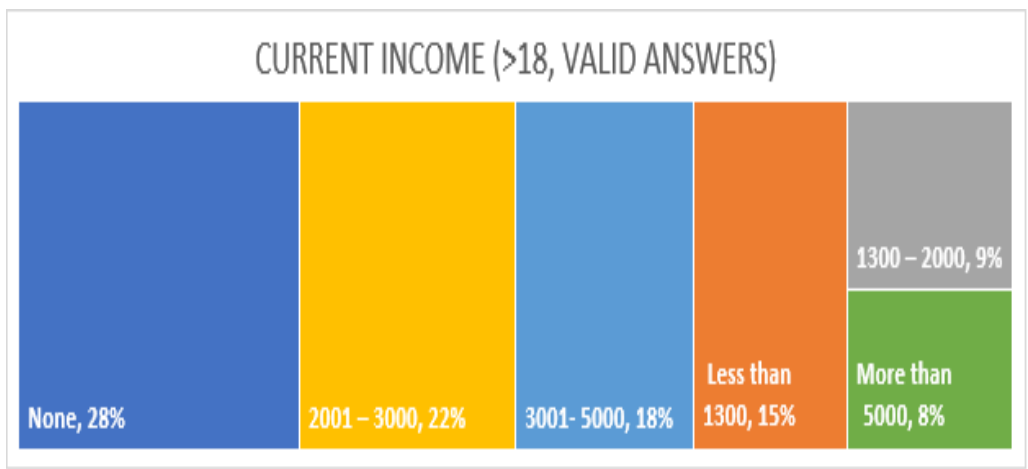


Figure 59. Current Income (>18, valid answers).

It must be noted that income inequality in Romania is a source of much strife in the country, with 50% of current workers earning minimum wage and only 11% of

Romanians earning over RON 5500/month.<sup>37</sup> The average monthly net income in Romania is RON 3541 (€715), a number that is heavily distorted by the limited number of high-income jobs (especially in the IT industry and multinational corporations) as well as the 1% of the population that earns more than €2000 per month<sup>38</sup>. The average wage for the hospitality industry, for example, is only 1900 RON/month (€380), including management positions.

The urban/rural divide is also a strong source of income inequality, with the average wage in Bucharest being RON 4563 (€921) and the lowest being registered in Teleorman county with RON 2.612 (€527)/month.<sup>39</sup> This number excludes the roughly 30% of the country's population, which engages in subsistence agriculture.<sup>40</sup>

Despite the low income in most sectors, it is estimated that the cost of living for a single person household in Romania is RON 2.818(€570) per month,<sup>41</sup> meaning that most Romanians live in relative or absolute poverty, and our respondents are in a similar bind. Only 60% of our trans adults are fully financially dependent, with 21% partially relying on family, partners, and welfare in addition to their income and savings, and 19% being fully financially dependent on their families and/or partners.

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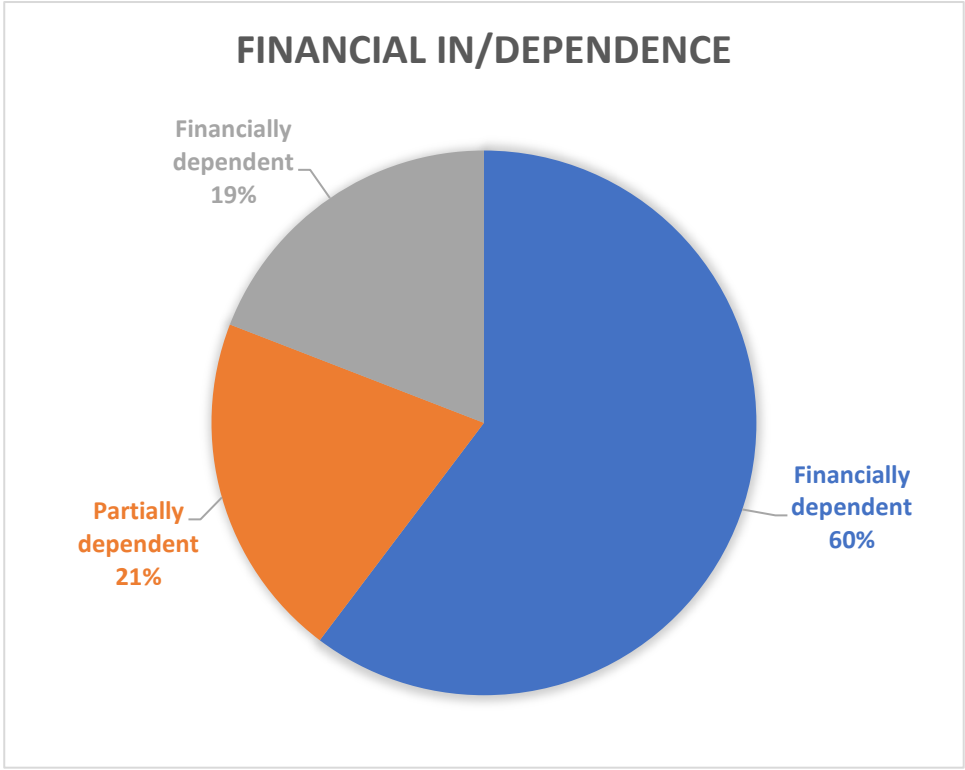
<sup>37</sup> Mihai. 2021. '1% din Totalul Românilor Câștigă peste 3.000 de Euro Net pe Lună. Datele Statistice Confirmă că România nu mai este o Destinație pentru Investiții cu Forță de Muncă Ieftină'. *ZF.ro*, August 14, 2021, Online edition.

<sup>38</sup> Rosu, Roxana. 2021. 'Salarii Colosale în România. Cât a Ajuns să Câștige un Programator'. *ZF.ro*. August 22, 2021.

<sup>39</sup> 'Statistici Romania'. n.d. Accessed November 3, 2021. <http://statisticiromania.ro/clasamente>.

<sup>40</sup> European Commission. 2021. *Factsheet on 2014-2020 Rural Development Programme for Romania*. Online.

<sup>41</sup> DP. 2020. 'Coșul Minim pentru un trai decent, Actualizat pentru Anul 2020. Cea mai mare Creștere a Cheltuielilor a fost la Capitolul Locuință - Finante - Banci'. *Hotnews*, November 19, 2020, Online edition.



*Figure 60. Financial in/dependence.*

Among the partially or fully financially dependent, the majority find themselves having to rely on their families, with 85% of them requiring help from their families to some extent to get by and 85% being fully dependent on their family (or both on their family and partner).

While financial dependence places anyone at risk, as explained in the unemployment section, many trans people have complicated relationships with their families, and it is expected that the financial help places pressure on them to conform to their families’ expectations of them.



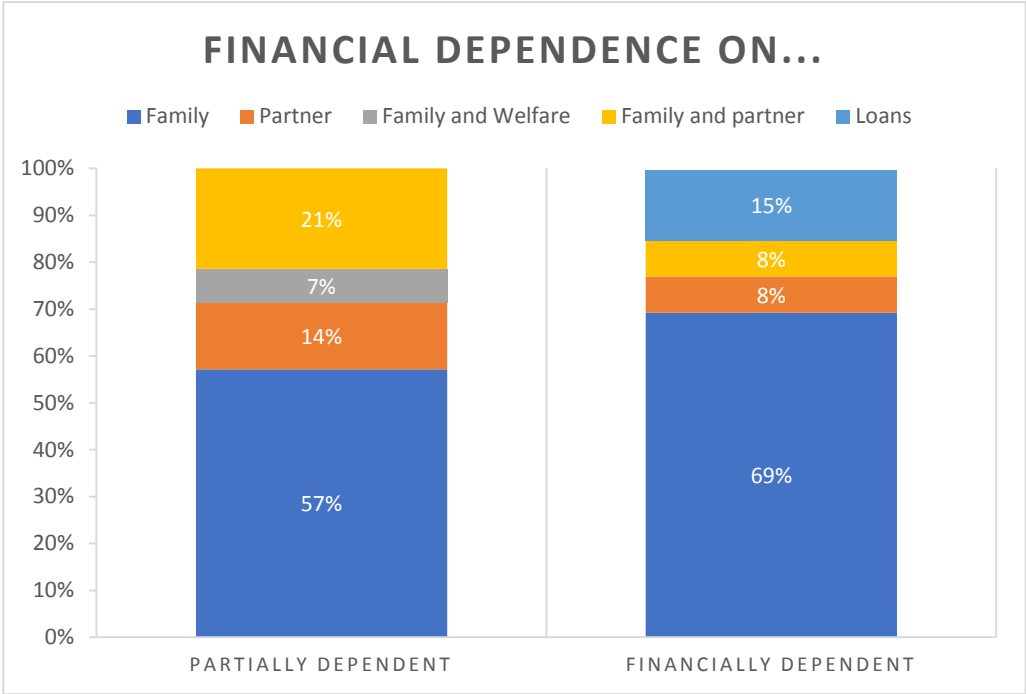


Figure 61. Financial Dependence.

Full or partial dependence, combined with the low wages and lack of social security in Romania, are one of the possible reasons for the fact that 20% of respondents to have experienced homelessness and staying in shelters, with 3% having spent months and even years in unstable living situations. One of our respondents was forced to leave her home in her teens after telling her parents that she is trans, and had lived in shelters or temporary lodgings for over five years.

While her social security benefits secure basic expenses, she had never set aside enough money to pay for a rent deposit, and had to rely on friends and partners. The issue of financial dependence on transphobic families is constantly brought up in the community, as younger trans people especially cannot afford to move out or finish their education without familial support that is dependent on them not transitioning.

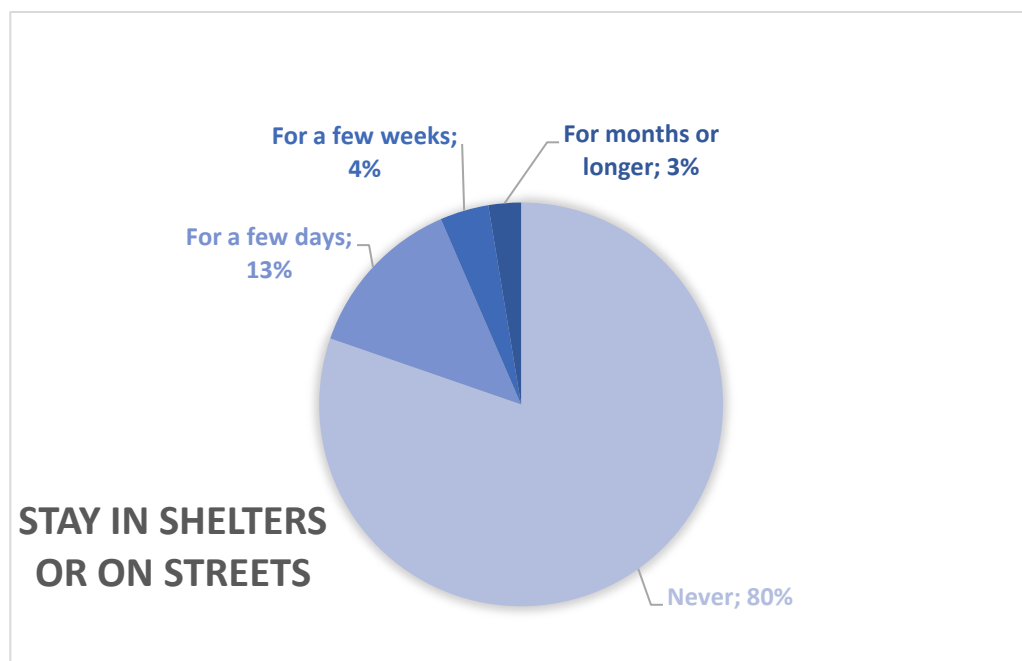
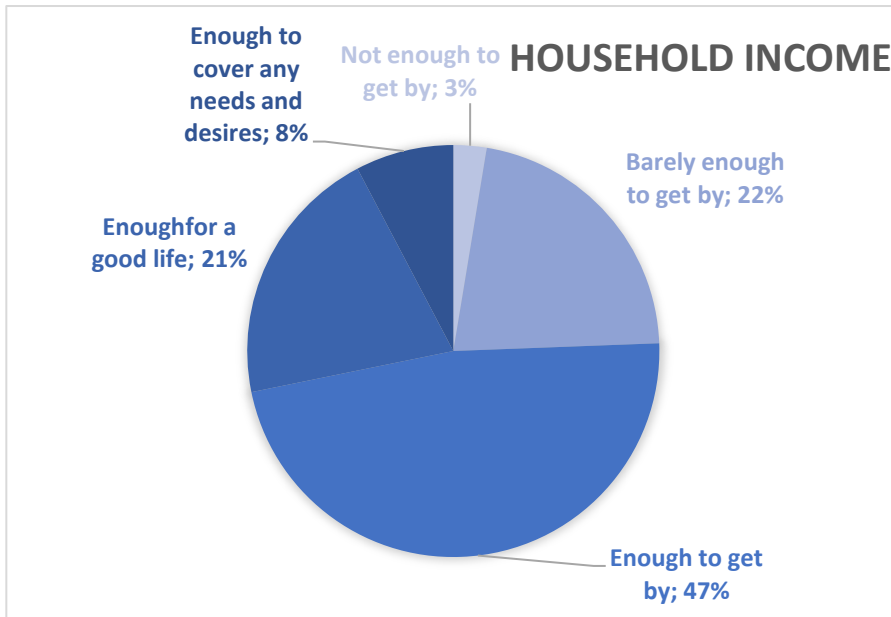


Figure 62. Stay in shelters.

Regarding their household, 3% of adult respondents' households did not make enough to cover basic expenses such as food or rent, and 22% stated that they barely make it from one month to the other.

It should be noted that a large part of in-person respondents refused to answer these questions, and that they represent people from more vulnerable populations. 47% of respondents make enough to get by. Only 8% of respondents make enough to satisfy any needs and desires. These statistics are in line with the Romanian average household income satisfaction,<sup>42</sup> though given the lack of children present in the great majority of respondents' households, it should be higher.

<sup>42</sup> România Durabilă. 2020. 'A. Distribuția Răspunsurilor La Întrebările Din Chestionarul de Opinie RD06'. In 'România Durabilă' - Dezvoltarea Cadrului Strategic Și Instituțional Pentru Implementarea Strategiei Naționale Pentru Dezvoltarea Durabilă a României 2030'.



*Figure 63. Household income.*

‘Getting by’ can be a subjective interpretation, as seen in the fact that of the total adult households, only 5% had never had issues covering food expenses in the past 12 months, and only 15% had not had issues covering living expenses—only 25% of which pay rent, with the rest living with their family, partner, or do not pay rent. 47% have had to borrow money in the past year, with 12% finding themselves having to do so every month. Only 14% of respondents consistently save money, 60% of whom do not need to pay rent.

Despite only setting money aside occasionally, 21% are content with the state of their savings at the time of the survey, though again the subjective interpretation of what a decent amount of savings would be for their age affects the level of satisfaction.

On average, Romanians make enough savings to get by 4–5 months if they were to lose their jobs, with 25% not having enough savings for a single month and 25%

having enough savings for more than 6 months<sup>43</sup>. Among respondents who stated that they are satisfied or even very satisfied with their savings, only 58% had not had issues covering living or food expenses in the past 12 months, and had not had to borrow money at all.

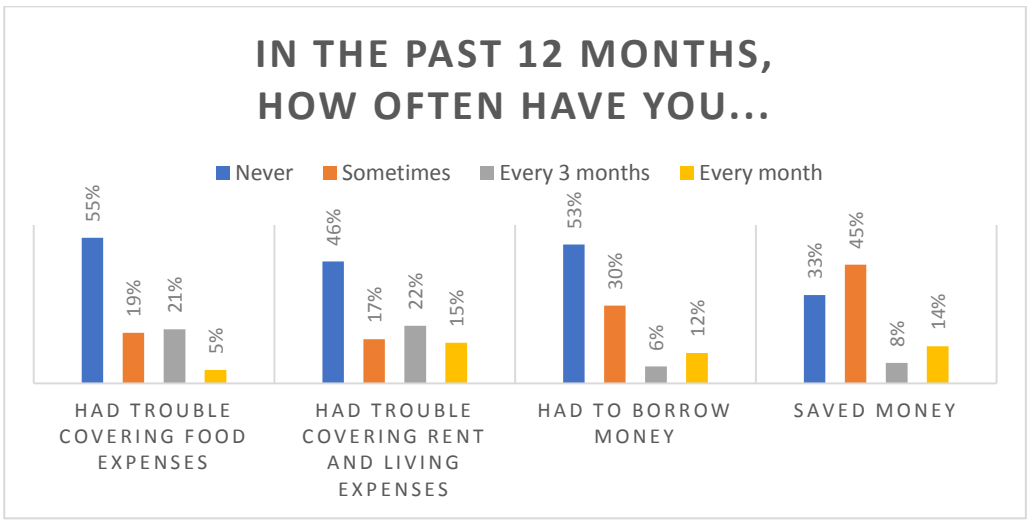


Figure 64. Financial situation for the past year.

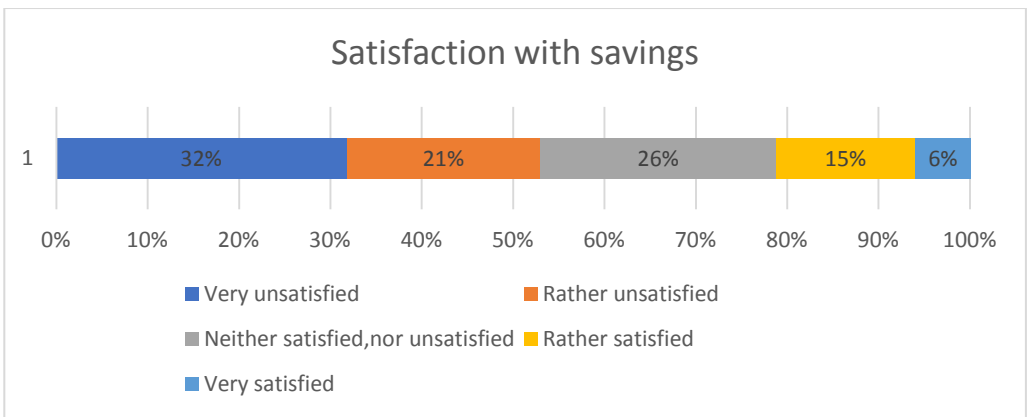


Figure 65. Satisfaction with savings.

<sup>43</sup> Mercury Research. 2020. *Financial Situation of Romanians during the COVID-19 Epidemic National Representative Survey March - April 2020*. Online.

## General life satisfaction

Very few respondents consider themselves very satisfied with their life at the time of the survey, with binary trans people being the least likely to be satisfied with it. About 40% of the respondents stated that they are somewhere in between, adding in comments that they are not happy with their situation, but that they have given up or do not allow themselves to care.

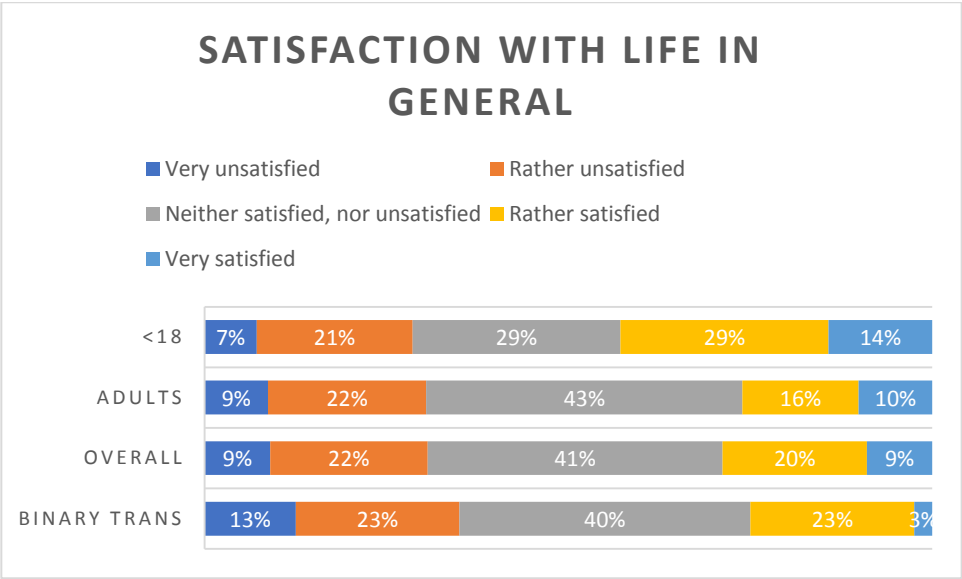


Figure 66. Life satisfaction.

What makes trans people so unsatisfied?

As seen throughout this report, they face numerous hurdles and difficulties throughout their life, starting from a young age in which they alternate between an education institution rife with bullying and strict norm enforcement, and households that do not accept them. Many of them lack peers or authority figures who understand them and added extensive commentary either on how difficult it is to discuss the issue with their parents, or on the control that is enforced to bring them back in the closet.

- *Not even my friends respect or use my pronouns, I always have to remind them that I'm an enby [non-binary]. My parents don't let me wear the clothes that make me feel comfortable, they tell me that I look like a boy. They don't even allow me to cut my hair for the same reason, they say it's too boyish.*
- *No one wants to understand, not even my own family.*

Those that do not lose out on educational opportunities due to the environment find themselves dealing with increased anxiety, self-consciousness, and vigilance as they carefully decide whether to hide or reveal their identity when they gauge potential employers and an abstract job market to reduce the risks involved in coming out. In the meantime, they must rely on others, often the very families that do not accept them.

- *I haven't told anyone because of the risk of being insulted, the risk of not being hired, the risk of not being accepted by society, the need to explain it to people who do not want to understand.*
- *Just existing as a trans/nb/intersex person is a challenge for the Romanian workplace. I feel inferior to others just because I feel that they see me as strange*

Once employed, trans people find themselves hearing remarks that they identify as signs that their identity would not be accepted, and they must choose between confrontation and hiding their identity from others. Many are aware from the beginning that they cannot reveal their identity at their workplace or even in their field.

The following section presents recommendations for making Romanian society in general, and education and employment in particular, more equitable and inclusive.

- *If I were ever seen wearing heels by my clients, my career in Romania would come to an end.*

- *I can't talk about it because I've been discriminated in the past [...] I need this job.*
- *Existing is the problem. All you need to do is go to the bathroom once and Boom! You're out.*

Overall, our respondents reported immense levels of stress and self-awareness in every aspect of their life.

- *Socially and professionally, the fact that my identity is not considered real by most of the population makes me hide it.*
- *So long as you are yourself in public, you will face enormous hurdles*
- *I still cannot describe all the things that I've been through...*

We again remind readers that our respondent sample is, demographically and bias wise, a privileged minority among the Romanian trans population in terms of education, income, and access to trans-related information and community. The following section presents recommendations that we have to improve their situation and make the Romanian workplace a more welcoming and accepting venue that allows all citizens equal rights and opportunities.

## Recommendations

To address the issues identified in the survey, we recommend implementing the following measures to improve trans lives and raise trans inclusivity in Romania's educational system and labour market. It is imperative that measures are taken in the educational system so as to increase the possibility that trans students complete their education successfully and thus have equal chances to be employed in a career path of their own choice (rather than out of acute need or precarity), and with the required level of expertise and necessary qualifications. Trans inclusivity in the educational system is a prerequisite of inclusivity in all spheres of society, including employment.

### **Improving trans inclusivity in the educational system can be increased by:**

- ✚ Measures to train and monitor teachers, school counsellors and administrative personnel regarding the existence and needs of trans students, so as to equip them with adequate information and skills to support trans students efficiently;
- ✚ Measures to reduce bullying and harassment in schools: reporting, investigating, and following up on the results of investigations. School boards must be held accountable for the abuse and failure of their trans students. Teachers must be held accountable for tacitly supporting transphobic aggressions when they occur in their presence;
- ✚ Making curricula inclusive: inclusion of trans and LGBTQ+ topics in health education, biology, society, humanities, sport, arts, and not only. Monitoring teachers to ensure they address these topics respectfully, with attention to the queer students present (though they may not be out);
- ✚ Making educational materials available to trans students to teach them about their bodies and specific needs, and to help them accept themselves;



- ✚ Making it known to the student body that trans and other minority students can turn to support services in confidence, without being outed or exposed to humiliation and risk;
- ✚ Respecting trans students' privacy by not outing them to their families if they have not done so themselves. While trans students are underage and their families are their legal guardians, it is important to bear in mind that outing them may result in them being locked up, interned in a mental facility, or being kicked out in the streets, which would be extremely detrimental for the livelihood and wellbeing of the minor. Social services are not an option either, as this may subject the trans kid to more abuse;
- ✚ Provision of gender-neutral bathrooms and facilities; where there are uniforms, give trans students the option to wear the one that best corresponds to their gender.

We hold such provisions to be the foundation for an equitable and inclusive education in regard to all minority students. These are vital for trans students, who have absolutely no support in the current Romanian educational system, leading them to lower chances of employment and having a good life.

While Romania sadly has other marginalized groups struggling with precarity, such as the Roma and people living with disabilities or HIV, there are some measures and systems in place for them: national strategies and agencies, local authority responsibilities, budget allocations for affirmative action or other ways to bridge gaps that affect these minority groups. Trans people in Romania currently have no national legislation or mechanisms specifically tailored to meet their urgent needs, therefore it is imperative that the education system sets in place the necessary controls and supports for higher educational success rates, and therefore employability.

### **Improving trans inclusivity at the workplace:**

- ✚ The inclusion of gender identity and gender expression among the categories protected through company-wide non-discrimination and antiharassment policies;
- ✚ Train Human Resources and hiring staff about transgender identities and harmful practices during recruitment and later during employment;
- ✚ Promote gender-neutral recruitment;
- ✚ Clear and predictable procedures to accommodate changes to documents, badges, e-mail address, etc.;
- ✚ Yearly Diversity training for all staff;
- ✚ Provision of gender-neutral bathrooms and facilities;
- ✚ Support structures for trans and LGB+ employees (employee networks, lgbt+ social calendar implemented in the company - IDAHOT, TDoV, TDoR);
- ✚ Leadership programmes for trans and LGB+ employees;
- ✚ Paid medical leave for transition-related absence;
- ✚ Coverage of psychological therapy in the basic healthcare coverage package;
- ✚ Support systems for transgender employees during transition (paid medical leave for surgeries and incapacitating dysphoria periods, senior management coaching);
- ✚ Gender neutral dress codes

### **Proposed state policies to improve trans employability and lives:**

The one most important barrier for trans Romanians to pursue/complete their studies (secondary or tertiary), and to pursue/maintain a place of employment is their ID, specifically the name and gender marker in their ID. While the administrative procedure is relatively straightforward, it still poses the risk of

rejection due to the personal beliefs of City Hall employees and Mayors. The legal process is prohibitive due to the costs of medical investigations and reports, lawyers' fees, and travel costs such as going back to one's hometown, where the petition must be filed.

Therefore, the most important and vital measure the authorities must take is listen to the voice of the community, engage in dialogue with community groups and associations (TRANSform, TransCore, MozaiQ, Identity Education, Rise Out, Pride Romania, HLGBTQIA Braşov, Accept and all others) in order to have **equitable gender recognition legislation which affords trans Romanians equal access to education, employment and dignity and respect in Romanian society**. This would be in compliance with Directive 54 (for which the deadline for implementation was 15 August 2008) and in line with the recent ECHR rulings against the Romanian state and in favour of two trans men from our country.

In addition to this essential and urgent measure, the Romanian authorities must ensure equal access to education, employment, and health services by amending the organic laws regulating these key domains so that specific measures are taken, thus:

**Education:** legal names of trans students must be protected; schools must support families of trans students so that the student is supported to complete their studies and be safe in the school environment and at home; aggressions against trans students must be prevented by training teachers and all staff yearly, by implementing awareness activities among students and by monitoring and sanctioning aggressors.

**Employment:** gender-blind recruitment must be promoted; name badges, email addresses and other company-related ID elements must respect the trans person's

expressed wish, an aspect that could be on contract signing or later; safe spaces for trans persons can be organized without much expense, from simple posters in common spaces (kitchen, lounge, etc.) to supporting community events or organising them in-company by trans and allied employee groups.

Additionally, without **equitable access to health services**, trans people cannot contribute to society and have a healthy and dignified life, therefore transition-related care and procedures (Hormone Replacement Therapy, psychotherapy, surgical interventions) need to be implemented in the Romanian national health plan, and services to that purpose must be made accessible and affordable throughout the country.

Finally, before passing these legislative steps and measures, the Romanian authorities such as the Ministry of Education, Health, Interior, Justice, Labour and Social Justice, must ensure that the current general protections against discrimination for Romanian citizens are respected and applied to trans Romanians too, and that **structural transphobia is curbed via monthly monitorization of trans-related hate speech and hate crime**. For this we salute the General Police Inspectorate's hate crime project, granted almost 3 mil. Euro by the SEE&Norwegian fund,<sup>44</sup> and express our sincerest hope that this big investment for quality police service will be complemented by strong police-civil society partnerships, including with us, LGBTQ+ community organizations. ***Without our feedback and contribution to any policies and measures taken for our good, any such good will be rendered illusory, and any efforts to combat homophobia, transphobia, racism, antisemitism, and all hate***

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<sup>44</sup> Inspectoratul General al Poliției Române (IGPR). n.d. "Proiect Predefinit Nr. 3 – „Combaterea Infracțiunilor Motivate de Ură Și a Extremismului Violent, Cu Accent Pe Populația Roma Și Creșterea Calității Serviciilor de Poliție”.” Granturi SEE Și Norvegiene 2014-2021. Accessed November 5, 2021. <https://norwaygrants-ro.mai.gov.ro/proiect/proiect-predefinit-nr-3-combaterea-infracțiunilor-motivate-de-ura-si-a-extremismului-violent-cu-accent-pe-populatia-roma-si-cresterea-calitatii-serviciilor-de-politie/>

*speech and hate crimes will not bear the fruit expected by donors, implementers - and especially the community.*

We hope that the substantial work put into this report by our trans research team, as well as these final recommendations and observations, will enter employers' and national authorities' radar of information and awareness. Furthermore, we bring them forth as our contribution to the fight against hate speech, hate crime, discrimination, and all forms of social injustice. We will continue to actively pursue this goal through research and community support, and hope to soon be joined by employers and national authorities.

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