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Resilient nations.*

# BEING LGBTI IN CHINA

A National Survey on Social Attitudes  
towards Sexual Orientation, Gender  
Identity and Gender Expression





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## To cite this publication:

Being LGBTI in China – A National Survey on Social Attitudes towards Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Gender Expression. 2016. United Nations Development Programme.

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*“There are 17 sustainable development goals, all based on a single guiding principle: to leave no one behind. We will only realize this vision if we reach all people, regardless of their sexual orientation and gender identity”*

– Ban Ki-Moon, UN Secretary General.

## Foreword:

Sexual and gender minority people represent some of the most marginalized and vulnerable populations in Asia and the Pacific, including China. Attention to their needs is therefore essential if we are to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), a key feature of which is the underlying principle and commitment to ‘leave no one behind’.

The SDGs offer a new paradigm in international development. Building upon the Millennium Development Goals, they seek to tackle the underlying causes of poverty, inequality and marginalization. They are designed to strengthen global partnerships for development and to promote inclusive development practices that ensure those previously absent from legal, policy, and development frameworks are no longer excluded from conversations about issues that affect them.

This report should serve as a valuable resource to better understand the overall social acceptance of sexual and gender minority people in China, as well as the marginalization and discrimination experienced by many lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) people.

The report draws on the largest national survey ever conducted on sexual and gender diversity issues in China. Over two months in late 2015, more than 30,000 people took the time to respond to questions designed to provide a thorough overview and analysis of the challenges faced by sexual and gender minorities, as well as understand how the rest of society sees them and their fight for equality and non-discrimination. With this survey, UNDP, together with Peking University Sociology Department, the Beijing LGBT Centre and a network of many social organizations across China, have created an important baseline of evidence that we hope will be used for many years to come.

The findings are clear. Sexual and gender minority people in China still live in the shadows, with only 5% of them willing to live their diversity openly. The majority of LGBTI people continue to face discrimination in many aspects of their lives, most importantly within the family, where the deepest forms of rejection and abuse reside. Access to health and social services remains difficult when one's sexual orientation or gender diversity is known to, or even just suspected by, service providers. This stigma is doubly reinforced for those sexual and gender minority people who are living with HIV, who continue to face hurdles in accessing prevention and treatment services as well as stigma-free psychosocial support and counseling.

On the other side though, this report also pictures a number of significant developments. The overwhelming majority of respondents think that sexual and gender minorities should be treated equally and should be able to access social services. The majority is also in favor of promoting specific policies that would recognize LGBTI people and protect them from discrimination.

Most importantly, however, the survey paints a country in transition, where the majority of people do not hold negative, nor stereotypical views of sexual and gender minorities. They simply "do not know". This provides an enormous opportunity to turn the undecided into supporters of equality. If they do not know where they stand, it's because they do not know enough about the issues, or the millions of people affected by them. This is why education and evidence-based information, including more realistic portrayals of sexual diversity in the media, have a pivotal role to play going forward.

History shows us that minorities do not count until they are counted. At UNDP we are committed to ending inequality and exclusion and this report represent an important effort in making sure that we, and everyone else, start counting.



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## Acknowledgements

This Report, *Being LGBTI in China – A National Survey on Social Attitudes towards Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Gender Expression*, was commissioned by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) “Being LGBTI in Asia” programme, and prepared by a research team led by **Prof. Wu Lijuan** of Peking University Sociology Department.

We are extremely grateful to **Prof. Wu** for writing this report. We are also grateful to the Beijing LGBT Center and a number of other LGBTI community organizations across China for their support in conducting this survey. We want to thank **Andrea Pastorelli**, Policy Specialist in the Poverty, Equity and Governance team of UNDP China, for the overall supervision and guidance. We want to thank **Prof. Liu Wenli** of Beijing Normal University, **Prof. Liu Xiaonan** of China University of Political Science and Law, and **Prof. Liu Minghui** of China Women’s University for their valuable insights for the survey and report. We also want to acknowledge **Xin Ying, Yang Shichang, John Shen, Karen Liao and James Yang** among others for their contributions to the research; **Wang Jinlei and Zhen Xian’an**, et al for the English translation; **Ning Xin** for the Chinese translation of the foreword and the executive summary, as well as **Liao Siqi** for the cover design of this report.

## Executive Summary:

### A challenging situation:

Sexual and gender minorities still have extremely low visibility in Chinese society. Only around 5% of them choose to disclose their sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression at school, in the workplace, or in the religious communities. More are choosing to come out to their close family members, but still no more than 15% have the courage to do so. Most strikingly, the workplace remains the last place where Chinese LGBTI people feel comfortable living openly.

Over half of sexual and gender minority people report having been unfairly treated or discriminated against. Family is the place where rejection and discrimination occur most frequently, followed by schools and the workplace. Discrimination continues to cost LGBTI people jobs, lower their career prospects and their learning potential in schools. Sexual and gender minorities suffer from lower job stability and higher unemployment rates.

Physical and emotional violence is still a reality, especially within the family. Most respondents admit to submit to family pressures to marry and have children. While most enter into heterosexual relationships, some decide to get into “cooperation marriages”. Family pressure and rejection can have more serious consequences, with some LGBTI people being forced into psychotherapy and sometimes even ‘conversion therapy’.

Unfortunately, the majority of sexual and gender minority people still make a direct correlation between ‘coming out’ and experiencing discrimination. This may be the reason why so very few people decide to come out. Over 70% of sexual and gender minority people have been emotionally troubled by their sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression.

Discrimination, however, doesn’t touch all LGBTI people in the same way. Trans people face the greatest forms and levels of discrimination, whether within the family, in schools or in workplaces. Lesbians, on the other hand, are more likely to be discriminated or rejected at home and in the workplace, whereas gay men are more likely to be discriminated against in schools and become victims of bullying.

All sexual and gender minorities, however, share grave concerns over discriminatory health and social services. The majority questions the reach and accessibility of HIV prevention and treatment services and the quality and friendliness of psychosocial and counseling services.

### The future is young:

There is a clear age-based difference in public opinion, with young people being more open towards and accepting of sexual and gender diversity. The younger the respondents, the higher the proportion of those opposed to the pathological view of homosexuality, stereotype-based prejudices, gender binary ideas, and even HIV-related stigma. Younger respondents also represented the highest proportion of those who would accept their own children as being LGBTI. Overall, it is clear that generational change represents the greatest opportunity for social emancipation of sexual and gender minorities in China.



The majority of people surveyed are generally open and accepting in their attitude towards sexual diversity. The overwhelming majority (70%) doesn't support the pathological view of homosexuality and stereotype-based prejudices against LGBTI people. Non-minority respondents are in favor of equal rights policies that recognize and protect sexual and gender minorities. They believe that minorities should be entitled to all types of social services and economic rights, including the same insurance benefits for their same-sex partners. Nearly 85% support legalization of same-sex marriage. In addition, over 80% opine that the law should clearly state that the rights of sexual minorities are protected.

While this may be related to the fact that the survey sample may be tilted in favor of sexual minority-friendly groups, this reflects the emergence of a public opinion environment that is somewhat opposed to prejudice against minorities, although its sphere of influence remains to be observed.

### **An opportunity to change hearts and minds:**

The survey paints a public opinion in transition, with a majority of positive, open-minded respondents (especially among the youth), together with a large portion of people who are still to make up their minds. They simply "do not know" where to stand. In many ways this represents an important opportunity for LGBTI people and depicts a society that could achieve rapid and profound change, especially if guided in the right direction by civil society, policymakers, academia, the media as well as sexual and gender minority people themselves.



# Introduction

## 1.1 Research objectives

As sexual and gender minorities are often perceived as 'unorthodox' by society, social acceptance and recognition is hard to obtain. Furthermore, lack of equal rights prevents full participation in social life, the economy and cultural development. Therefore, the elimination of discrimination based on sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression, as well as the achievement of full equal rights for sexual and gender minorities, is important in order to achieve a truly inclusive and equitable development.

In China, due to the lack of reliable research and data on sexual and gender minorities and their interaction with broader society and the State- from laws and policies, to education, employment and general public acceptance - people find it difficult to have a comprehensive and objective understanding of the reality, and in turn are in a poor position to take rational action. To help fill this gap in research, UNDP supported the Sociology Department at Peking University and the Beijing LGBT Centre in conducting a nationwide study of sexual and gender minorities based on a large-scale national survey, supplemented by in-depth interviews, with the goal of better understanding the living situations of this group of people. In addition, the study also surveyed those of 'orthodox' sexuality and gender, (non sexual and gender minorities), further revealing the social attitudes and institutional environments in which sexual and gender minorities live.

This study hopes to provide fundamental data for the current and future understanding of sexual and gender minorities in China among government departments, international organizations, community and social organizations, the media, academia, business and the private sector, social and health-care services,

and even religious organizations. Meanwhile, the study also hopes through its findings to provide the public with access to information on the living conditions of sexual and gender minorities, and in turn to promote the improvement of their social environment and equal participation of sexual and gender minorities in Chinese society.

## 1.2 Key concepts

Sexual orientation refers to the gender/s someone is sexually and emotionally attracted to. Only when an individual is attracted to the same sex, or at the same time attracted to more than one sex, or unsure of what sex they are attracted to, are they considered as belonging to a sexual minority.

Gender identity refers to the gender an individual feels they emotionally and psychologically belong to. When an individual's gender identity is not consistent with their biological sex at birth, he/she belongs to a gender minority. For example: someone whose biological sex is female, but identifies as male, or someone whose biological sex is male, but identifies as female.

Gender expression refers to how an individual expresses their gender through their appearance, demeanor, or through any other form of expression. When an individual's gender expression does not comply with society's norms, he/she belongs to a gender minority, for example a male who dresses as a woman or a female who dresses as a man.

Intersex is a general term used for a variety of conditions in which a person is born with a reproductive or sexual anatomy that doesn't seem to fit the typical definitions of female or male.

Sexual and gender minorities include those belonging to all minorities of sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression, including: lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and so on.

Cisgender heterosexual refers to someone whose gender identity is consistent with their gender identity assigned at birth, while at the same time adhering to the norms of gender expression promoted by society and being emotionally and sexually attracted to people of the opposite sex.

LGBTI: Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex.

## 1.3 Research methods

### 1.3.1 Origin of research methods

#### *(1) Survey participants*

The national survey was carried out online using multiple channels, including utilizing the 'forward' feature on Chinese social network platforms, a modern version of snowball sampling. Survey participants could complete and submit the survey in person on paper, online or even through mobile phone.

In order to prevent the snowball sampling from leading to too homogeneous a sample, the channels where

the survey was published were as diverse as possible. These primary channels included: 24 community organizations working with sexual and gender minorities, a number of educational institutions, Weibo and WeChat, 2 LGBTI social networks, UNDP's social media accounts, and the research team's personal social media accounts.

However, this type of snowball sampling method contained some clear weaknesses and restricted the research objectives' resources and structure. First of all, it is difficult to reach a true variety of respondents because of technical, funding and cultural reasons. For example, those who do not use the internet, older people, people who live in rural areas, and people with lower cultural and/or economic status. Another reason is that even amongst those who use the internet, the voluntary participation and forwarding nature of the survey creates a self-selection bias. Those not interested in the issues of sexual minorities or even the issues of marginalized people may not choose to participate in the survey or forward it, leading to a sample of people who are somewhat tolerant to sexual minorities and/or marginalized people.

In addition, the choice of primary channels inevitably has an effect on the overall survey sample. For example, because most of the LGBTI-friendly social network platforms that exist today are aimed predominately at gay men, in the end men dominated the sexual minorities in the sample.

## *(2) In-depth interview participants*

At the end of the survey, all participants could choose whether or not they were willing to provide their personal contact details and volunteer for a follow-up interview. Of the 19,209 survey participants, 9,545 left their personal contact details, a number beyond all expectations. The research team tried to select participants from different sub-groups, including sexual and gender identity, age, location, disability status, employment status, religious identity, sexual minorities who were "out" or not etc. The focus, however, was placed on shortlisting those who had lived and experienced serious unfairness and/or discrimination in different areas of their life. To deal with the possibility of interview refusals, the final number of interview candidates exceeded the number of interviews actually needed, and the candidates were ranked by priority, interviewers only contacting those at the top of the list first.

A total of 105 participants were contacted, and 34 successfully completed the interview. In addition, a further 10 acquaintances of the interviewees were recommended for interview. In total, 44 sexual minority individuals were interviewed.

## **1.3.2 Sample overview**

### *(1) Sample size*

By the end of October 2015, 30,910 questionnaires were submitted, 28,454 (92.1%) of which are considered valid after checking for completion rate and quality of responses. A total of 44 subjects were also interviewed, 34 of which were questionnaire respondents and 10 of which were recommended offline.

### *(2) Basic sample characteristics*

According to the responses to questions on sexual orientation, gender expression, and gender identity, the sample may be divided into two groups: sexual and gender minorities (including non-heterosexual,

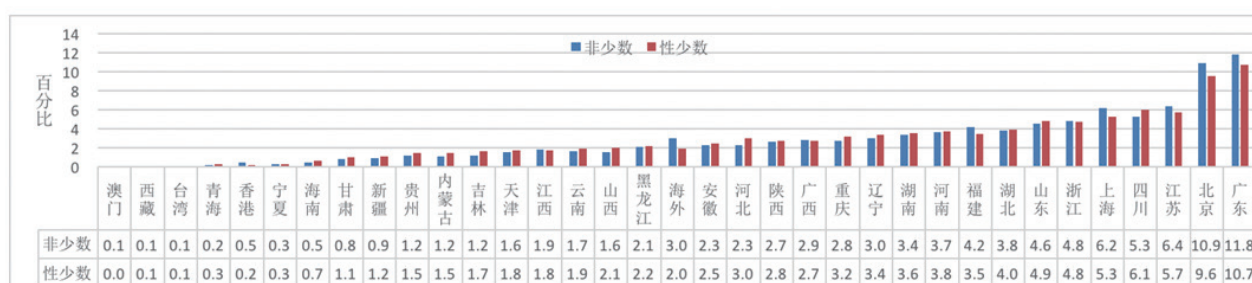
transgender, and intersex people) and those who do not belong to any of the above minority groups, i.e., non-minorities.

Table 1 shows the basic demographic characteristics of the questionnaire sample. The majority of respondents (62.2%) are identified as male on their ID cards; some (7.1%) are ethnic minorities. The average age of respondents is 22.7 and most (77.0%) were born in the 1990s, with those born in the 1980s making up only 20% of the total, and those born in the 1970s or before making up less than 4% of the total. As the sample's majority is relatively young, the average education level is very high: over half of respondents received a bachelor's degree or above. 50.6% of them are students, and the other half are or have been in the workforce. Over 80% of the sample live in a city, while fewer than 5% live in rural villages, and the remaining 15.3% live in a town or county seat. In conclusion, the sample of the present questionnaire is made up of individuals who are identified as male on their ID cards, live in cities, have a college education, and are predominantly very young, being born in the 1980s or 1990s.

A further comparison of the sexual minority and non-minority samples shows that the two have similar age, ethnicity, education level, area of residence, and student status makeup, but the non-minority sample has a more balanced gender makeup: 50.3% were identified as male on their ID cards and 49.7% as female. This is to say, the gender imbalance of the entire sample is due to the sexual and gender minority sample being made up of mostly male-identified people, while the non-minority sample is more balanced in gender makeup.

Fig. 1 shows the current area of residence of questionnaire respondents. The sample of the current questionnaire covers all provinces, direct-controlled municipalities, and autonomous regions of Mainland China, with some respondents also living in Hong Kong, Macau, Taiwan, or abroad. The 35 areas covered are listed along the horizontal axis of Fig. 1 from left to right in ascending order of percentage of respondents. Respondents from Guangdong and Beijing each make up over 10% of the total sample size, while Jiangsu, Sichuan, and Shanghai respondents each make up 5-10%. With minor differences in ordering, these are also the top five areas of residence for gender/sexual minority and non-minority samples. 38.6% of the total sample lives in these five areas, with a slightly higher proportion (40.7%) of the non-minority sample than the gender/sexual minority sample (37.4%), though both are over one-third. Generally, the geographic distribution of the sample is concentrated in eastern and central areas, with less of the sample being from northwestern areas.

Figure 1 Geographic distribution of the questionnaire sample (%)



### (3) Sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression composition of the sample

Table 2 shows the composition of gender assignment at birth, gender identity and expression, and the sexual orientation of the non-minority as well as thesexual and gender minority samples. The non-minority sample is cisgender and heterosexual: gender assignment at birth is the same as the aforementioned gender on ID cards; the gender ratio is generally balanced; all are cisgender in gender identity and heterosexual in sexual orientation.

It can be seen in the table that the sexual and gender minority sample is obviously more diverse in terms of gender assigned at birth, gender identity and expression, and sexual orientation. In addition to those declared male or female at birth, there is a small percentage of intersex people. In gender identity and expression there are 6.5% of respondents who identify as transgender. Homosexual men are the majority (58.8%) in terms of sexual orientation, with bisexual people (16.5%) and homosexual women (13.7%) following respectively in second and third place. There is a small proportion of pansexual, asexual, and questioning people. It should be noted that gender assigned at birth, gender identity and expression, and sexual orientation are not mutually exclusive categorizations and may, therefore, overlap. Therefore, the sexual and gender minority sample includes a small number of heterosexual people who are minorities as far as their gender identity or expression are concerned.

Table 2. Sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression composition of the sample

	Non-minority sample (n=10,366)	Gender/sexual minority sample (n=18,088)
Gender assigned at birth (%)		
Male	50.3	67.6
Female	49.7	30.6
Intersex	-----	1.8
Gender identity and expression (%)		
Cisgender	100.0	91.7
Transgender	-----	6.5
Sexual orientation (%)		
Heterosexual	100.0	2.3
Male homosexual	-----	58.8
Female homosexual	-----	13.7
Bisexual	-----	16.5
Pansexual	-----	4.0
Asexual	-----	2.6
Questioning	-----	2.1

Note: In the gender/sexual minority sample, the cisgender/transgender categorization is only applicable for those assigned male or female at birth; thus, the two do not sum to 100%.

### 1.3.3 Advantages and limitations of the present study

The main advantages of the study, as it was designed and implemented, are:

- (1) Comprehensive coverage of issues, including: general social attitudes, family, education, workplace, religion, access to health and social services, and portrayal in the media.
- (2) Multiple viewpoints used in the study; the living conditions and social environment of sexual and gender minorities were observed through objective situations, personal history, and subjective experiences of both gender/sexual minority and non-minority communities.
- (3) Wide geographic area covered. Subjects reside in all Mainland provinces, including cities, county seats, towns, and rural areas.
- (4) Diverse makeup of the sexual and gender minority subjects. The sample includes sexual orientation minorities, gender assignment minorities, and gender identification/expression minorities. Sexual orientation minorities include homosexual, bisexual, pansexual, asexual, and questioning orientations.
- (5) Large sample size, which mitigates the biased sample structure to a point, making it possible to categorize by age, area, identity, etc.

The limitations of the present study are mainly caused by the questionnaire distribution method and channels. As stated, online questionnaires being the majority may bias the sample. An analysis of the sample makeup shows the following unbalances:

- (1) Subjects tend to be young, mostly consisting of those born from 1980 to 1999;
- (2) Most subjects reside in a city;
- (3) In the sexual and gender minority sample, the proportion of men is significantly higher than that of women;
- (4) The sample may mainly consist of those who are open to and more accepting of sexual and gender minority issues.

Of the above, points 1, 2, and 4 may signify that the study's non-minority sample is generally more open-minded toward sexual and gender minorities and that the minority sample live in friendlier than average environments. Therefore, when analyzing the present study's results, the effects of the sample's bias should be noted: the study may underestimate the challenges that sexual and gender minorities face and overestimate the friendliness of the environment (especially social attitudes). Namely, the current study's results may represent a situation which is more positive than reality.



# Major Findings

## 2.1 Social Environment for Sexual and Gender Minorities

### 2.1.1 Daily Life

Respondents, minorities and non-minorities alike, were asked what the attitudes of their family, school, workplace or religious community were towards sexual and gender minorities. Figure 2 shows the rated attitudes of their family members, their junior, middle school and college teachers, their work supervisors and the clergy. In the social environment directly related to an individual's daily life experience, the degree of acceptance for minorities varies:

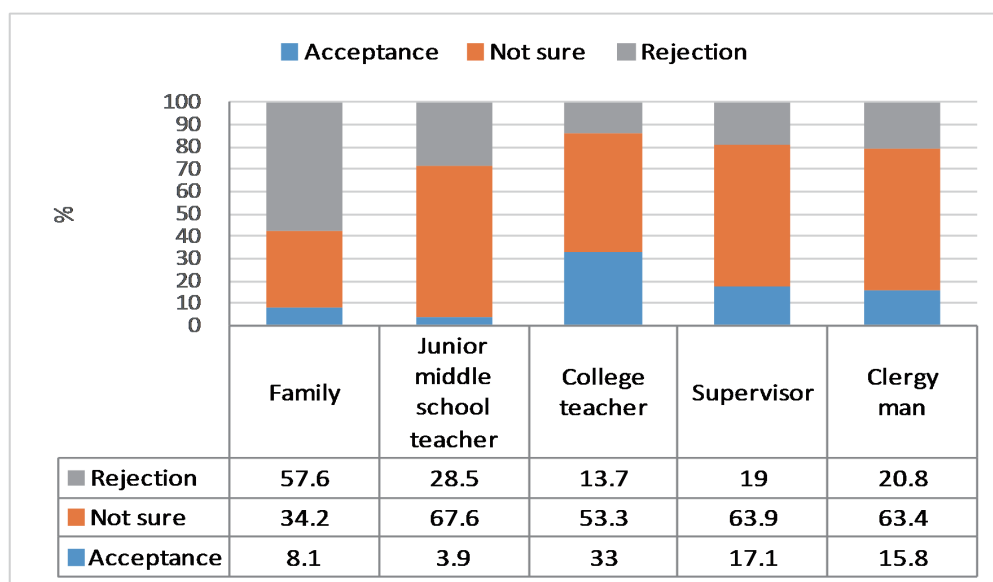
- (1) Families have the lowest degree of acceptance for minorities. Over half of the respondents chose "low acceptance" or "complete rejection" for their families. In contrast, only less than 30% chose "complete rejection" for their school teachers, their supervisors and clergy men.
- (2) Schools, workplaces and religious communities are ambiguous towards minorities. Over half of the respondents reported that their teachers, supervisors and clergy men were "not sure" towards minorities. The reasons may be two-fold. On the one hand, the topic of minorities may not have found its way to daily public life and the majority of minority respondents are not 'out' in these social contexts. As such respondents find it hard to identify the attitudes of those around them. On the other hand, the Chinese society may have no preexisting social and cultural factors (say, religion) that are unequivocally opposed to sexual and gender minorities or these factors only have very limited influence. As such, public attitudes



do not exhibit evident antagonism, leaving much room to ponder.

- (3) University campuses, on the other hand, have a relatively greater degree of acceptance for sexual and gender minorities. Nearly one in three respondents indicated that their college teachers' attitudes towards minorities fall under the category of "complete acceptance" or "moderate acceptance". But the higher acceptance among college teachers can only be put in relative terms, because the college teachers interviewed in the survey are still ambiguous towards minorities.

Figure 2 Acceptance of minorities in daily life (%)



## 2.2.2 Public opinions

The survey attempted to understand the attitudes of the respondents (minorities and non-minorities alike) using scale rating and hypothetical questions to explore the position of public opinion towards sexual and gender minorities. Analysis of the scale rating in Figure3 shows that:

- (1) Respondents are generally open and accepting in their attitudes towards sexual diversity. Non-minority respondents generally (70%) do not support the pathological view of homosexuals<sup>1</sup>, minority's stereotype-based prejudice, gender binary<sup>2</sup> ideas, and gay-related HIV stigma<sup>3</sup>, whereas an even higher proportion is observed among minorities. This result may be related to the fact that this survey is tilted in favor of sexual minority-friendly groups. But it also reflects the emergence of a public opinion environment that is somewhat opposed to prejudice against minorities, although its sphere of influence remains to be observed.
- (2) The overwhelming majority of respondents show great consensus on homosexual "depathologization" and are somewhat sensitive towards stereotype-based prejudice. Only 2.2% of the respondents agree

1. "The "pathological view" is expressed in the scale rating as: homosexuality is abnormal and homosexual tendencies should be corrected.

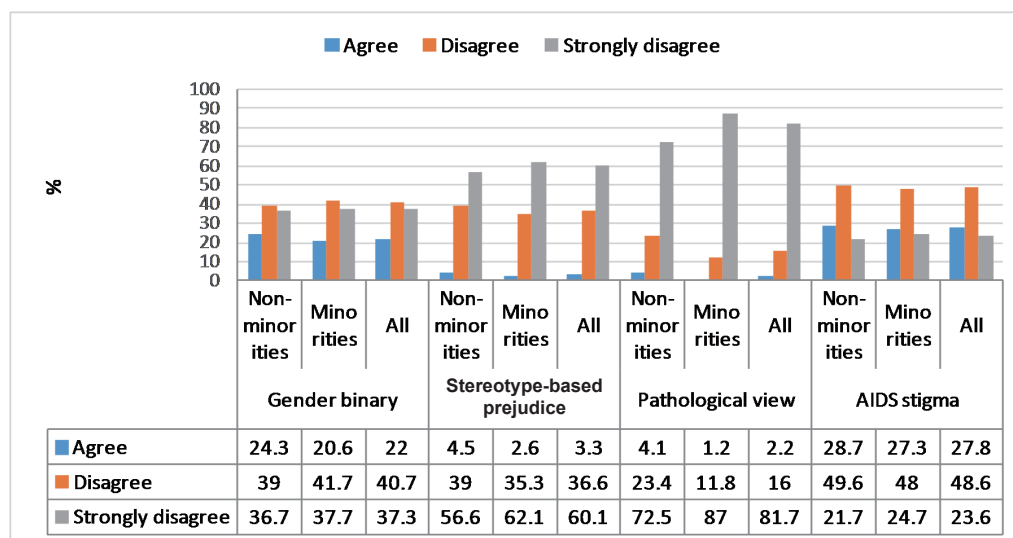
2. The "gender binary" is expressed in the scale rating as: there are only two genders—male and female; men should be masculine, and women feminine; transgender is abnormal; when a man turns into a woman, he is a ladyboy; transvestites (people who voluntarily wear clothing traditionally associated with the other sex) are mentally sick; transvestism should be kept behind closed doors and not put on public display; it is wrong to casually change back and forth one's sexual orientation; sexual minorities are caused by traumas.

3. The "gay-related HIV stigma" is expressed in the scale rating as: gay men are sexually promiscuous; gay men are extremely likely to get AIDs.

with the pathological view of homosexuality, whereas more than 80% are vehemently opposed to this idea. Likewise, a mere 3.3% of the respondents support stereotype-based prejudice, while over 60% are strongly against it.

- (3) Gender binary ideas and gay-related HIV stigma still carry some weight. Over one in five respondents agree with gender binary ideas and show some gay-related HIV stigma, and only approximately one in three are strongly opposed to this attitude. This stands in stark contrast with the strong opposition to the pathological view of homosexuality and stereotype-based prejudice and shows that more work needs to be done to de-link HIV infection from negative perceptions of homosexuality.

Figure 3 Respondents' attitudes towards minorities (%)



Respondents are more conservative when it comes to hypothetical questions such as whether they mind getting close to minorities, whether minorities are fit for raising children, and whether they would accept their child being a sexual or gender minority. Their conservatism is mainly reflected in the following:

- (4) Only one third of the respondents do not mind getting close to an LGBTI person or think that sexual and gender minorities are fit and able to raise children.
- (5) At least 10% of the respondents cannot accept the possibility of their child belonging to a minority. Around two in three respondents cannot accept their own children being transgender. A lesser proportion cannot accept their own children being homosexual or bisexual.

Figure 4 Respondents' answers to minorities-related hypothetical questions (%)

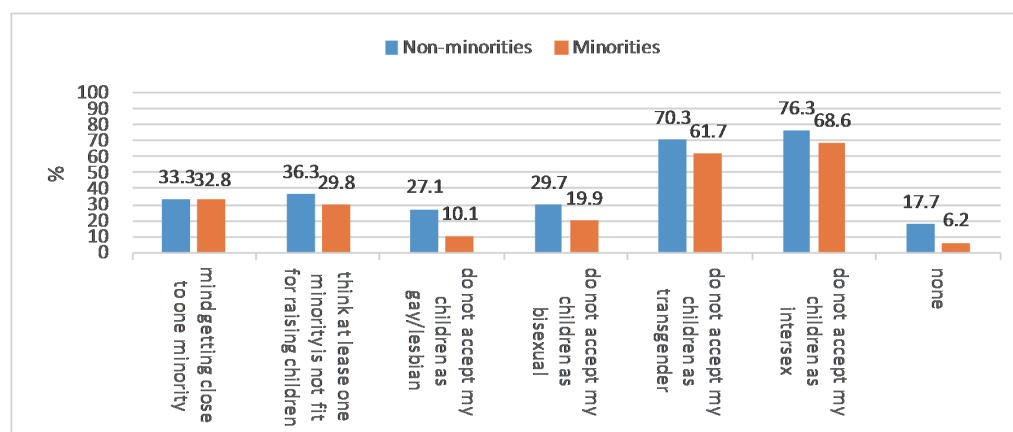


Figure 5 and Figure 6, graphing respondents' attitudes by age group, show that:

- (6) There appear to be an age-based difference in public opinion, with young people being more open towards and accepting of minorities. The younger the respondents, the higher the proportion of those opposed to the pathological view of homosexuality, stereotype-based prejudice, gender binary ideas, and gay-related HIV stigma, and the higher the proportion of those who accept their own children as minorities.

Figure 5 Respondents' attitudes towards minorities by age group (scale of rating) (%)

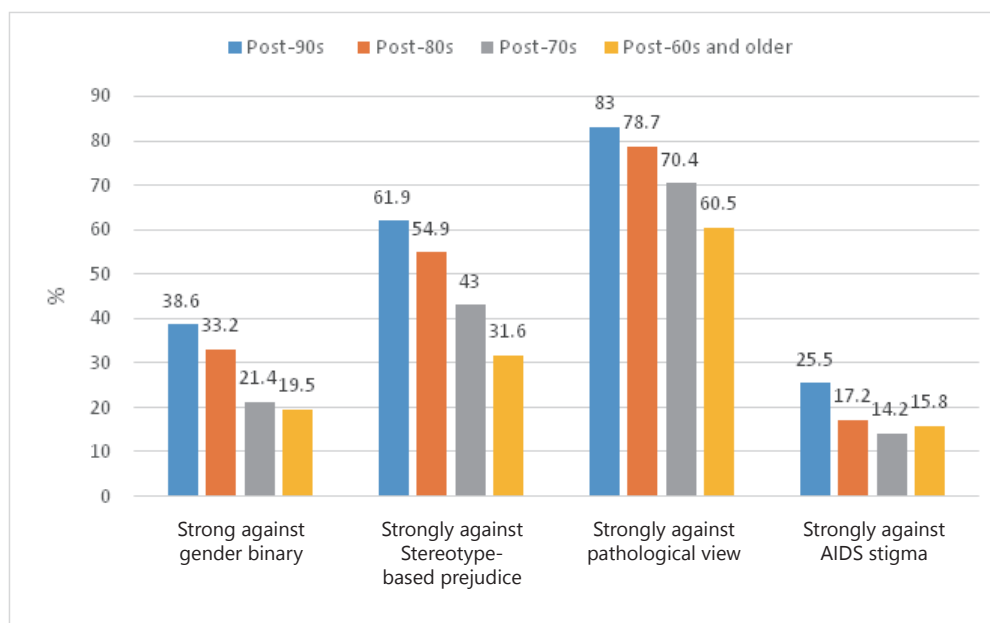


Figure 6 Respondents' attitudes towards minorities by age group (hypothetical questions) (%)

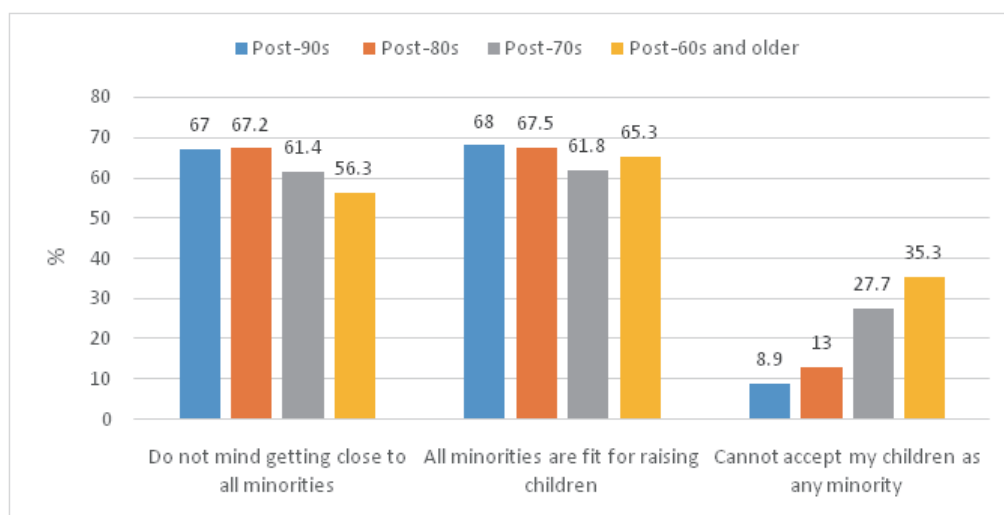


Figure 7 and Figure 8 rate the role of the media in the creation of a public opinion concerning sexual and gender minorities. Overall, the consensus is that the media has not played a positive role to date:

- (7) There is very low visibility for minorities in the media, especially traditional mass media. In particular, mass media has failed to produce positive portrayals of minorities that would fight and remove prejudices.

Figure 7 Visibility of minorities in different types of media (%)

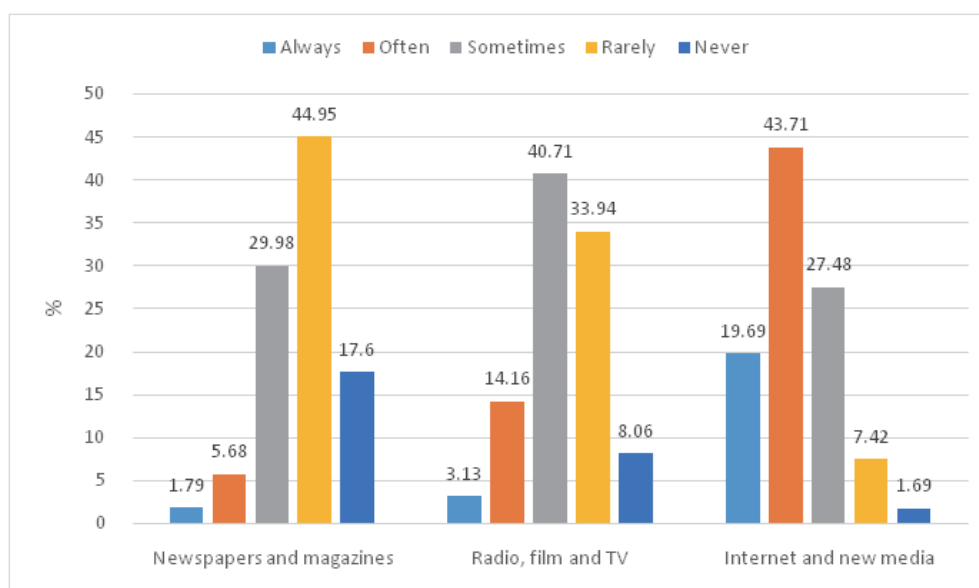
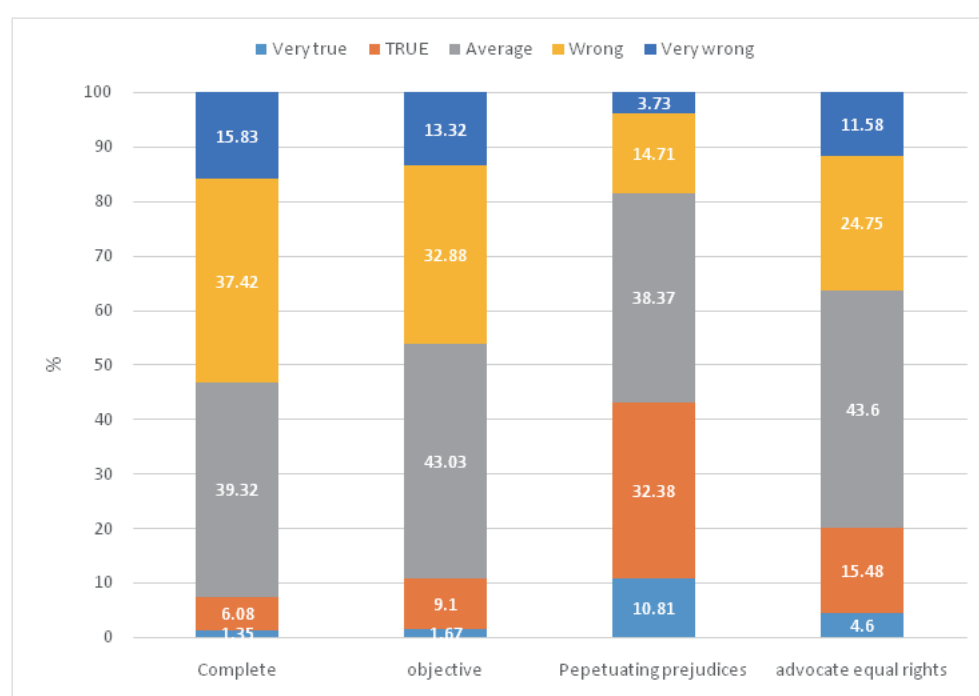


Figure 8 Images of minorities in mass media (%)

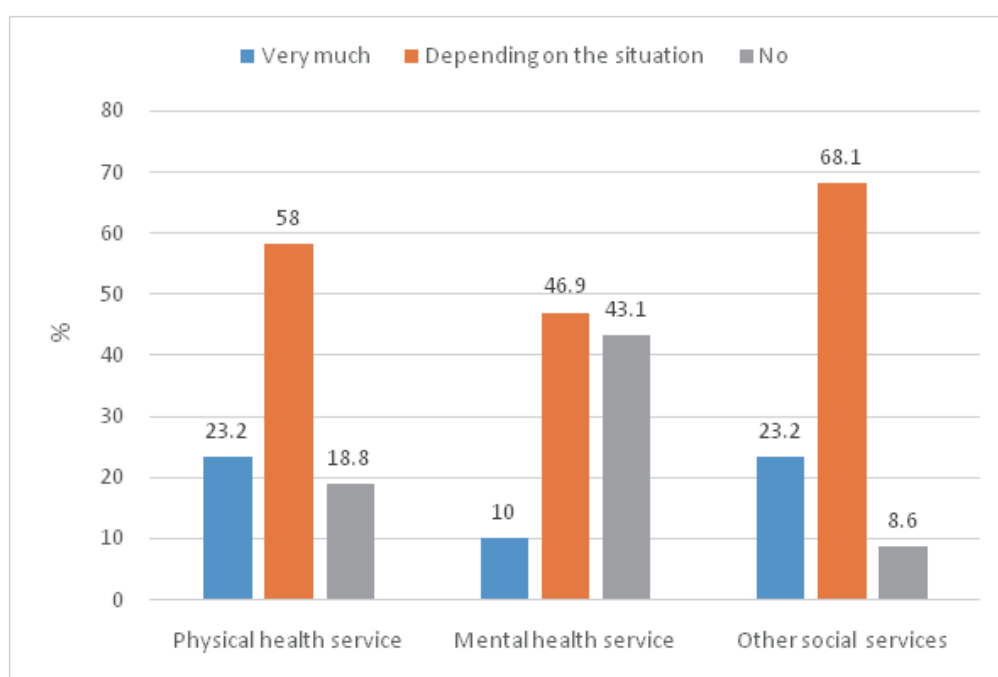


### 2.2.3 Health and Social Services Environment

Sexual and gender minority respondents were asked about their experiences in accessing physical health and mental health services and other social services. Their answers reflect the following situations:

- Figure 9 shows that sexual and gender minority respondents have grave concerns over whether the health and social services environment is friendly towards them. Only less than one in five respondents are open to disclosing their identities when they receive healthcare services, whereas only less than 10% choose to do so in other social services environments. Less than half do not mind disclosing their identities when they receive psychological health services. This may be because such services are more likely to touch upon topics like sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression.

Figure 9 Whether minorities mind disclosing their identity in social service environment (%)



- (2) While, on average, there is not a high proportion of sexual and gender minority respondents who have encountered difficulties when receiving health care or other social services, the majority of respondents perceive a clear weakness in the reach of HIV prevention and treatment services among sexual minorities, especially in rural areas. Transgender persons have more difficulties in the access to relevant healthcare and other social services. Furthermore, it is clear that among the various social services, public services are the most inaccessible for minority respondents. Interviews deepened this finding and showed that sexual and gender minority respondents often need to communicate with their peers to exchange information regarding positive service experiences and mutual support.
- (3) It is necessary for healthcare and mental health staff to improve their knowledge of minorities and increase their cultural sensitivity. Presumptions of heterosexuality are still widely held by medical staff, who are predisposed to HIV-related stigma and discrimination. The survey revealed how medical staff has deliberately avoided people living with HIV and even denied them treatment. In the mental health sector, while homosexuality has been taken off the official list of mental diseases in China, some mental health professionals still consider sexual and gender diversity as a medical problem. As a result, they often persuade their clients of the need to change their orientation or gender identity, and in some extreme cases they even provide so-called "correction therapy".

## 2.2.4 Legal and policy environment

China still lacks policies or laws that recognize sexual and gender minorities or protect them from discrimination and unfair treatment on the basis of their gender identity or sexual orientation. However, a number of institutional policies on healthcare and education, as well as school-based or workplace rules have an impact on their every day life. . Figure 10 and 11 show the institutional environment in schools and in the workplace:

- (1) The school system still lacks any comprehensive sexuality education, let alone any mention of gender diversity. However, around 10% of the respondents reported receiving gender diversity education at

school, mainly in their undergraduate studies and above. This was beyond expectation and shows a surprising improvement on the number of people who receive this type of education. However, it also points to the need for expanding gender diversity education, in order to reach more students at the same education stage, as well as students at other stages of their education.

- (2) Workplaces seldom integrate sexual minority-related knowledge into their professional training, or expressly stipulate that minority employees should be treated equally. Only less than 5% of the respondents reported that such training was available at their workplaces, and less than 10% confirmed the availability of such regulations.
- (3) The third sector, comprising social groups, private non-profit institutions and foundations, performs relatively well in terms of the supportiveness of their institutional environment and, in this, is followed by foreign enterprises. Over one in three respondents working in this sector indicated that their workplaces have in place relevant training and explicit rules. Around 20% of respondents working in foreign-owned enterprises reported that explicit rules are in place at their workplaces, and c.10% suggested that their workplaces offer relevant trainings.

Figure 10 Gender diversity education at school (%)

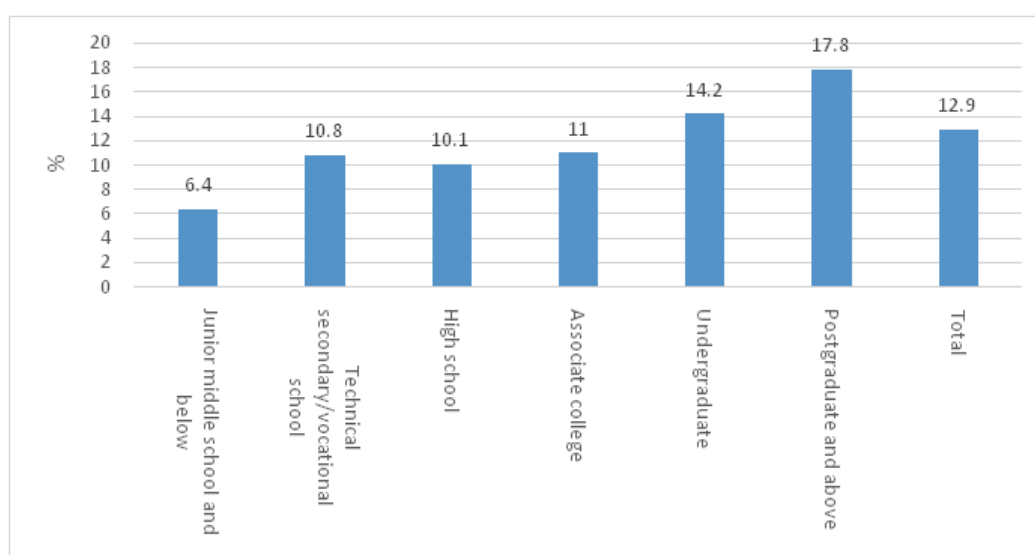
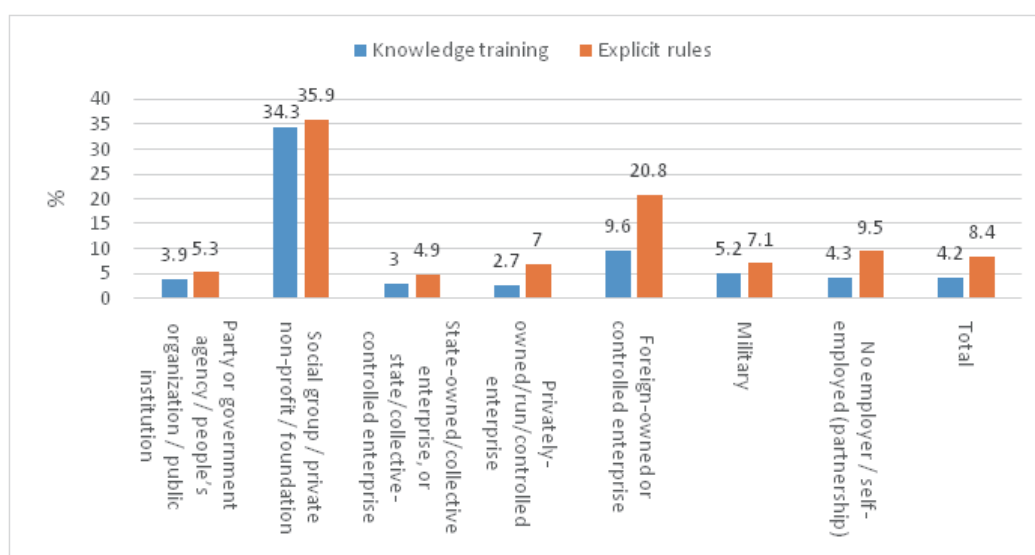


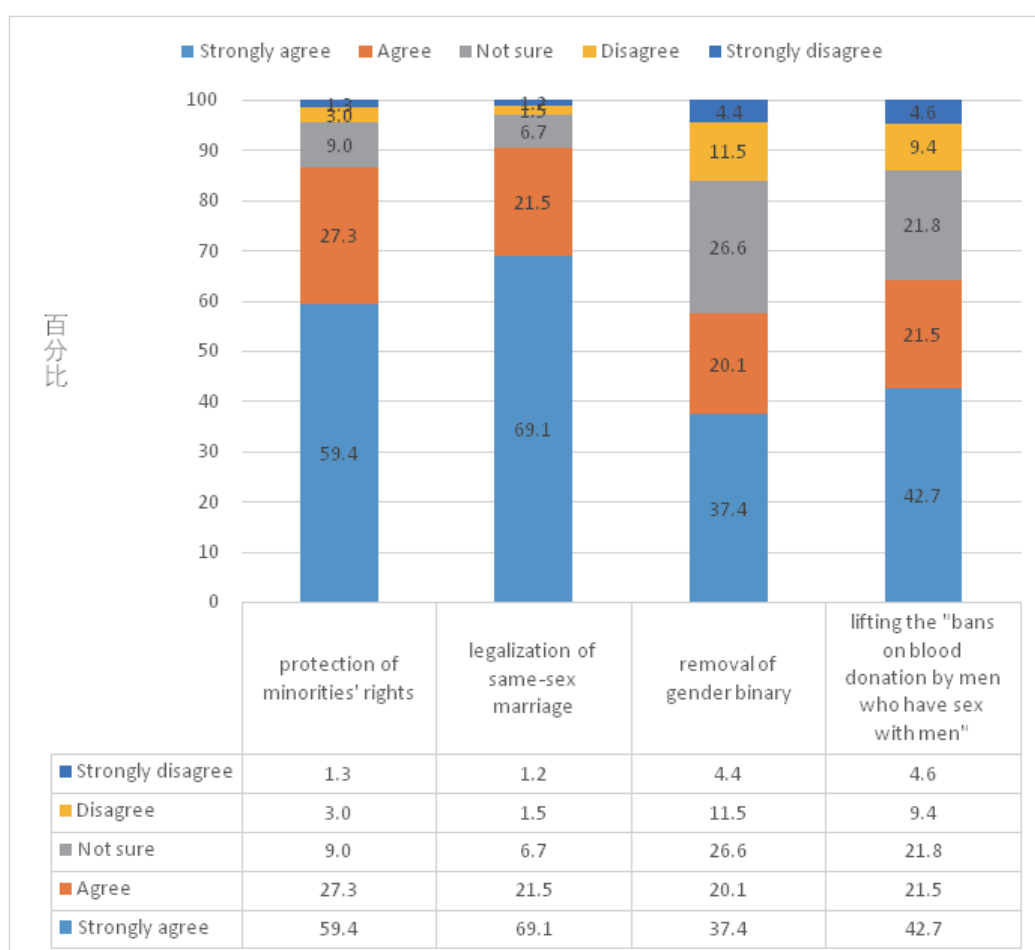
Figure 11 Minorities-specific knowledge training and anti-discrimination rules at workplace (%)



Non-minority respondents were also asked for their opinions on social services and equal rights policies for sexual and gender minorities:

- (4) Non-minorities generally argue that minorities should be entitled to all types of social services. They reach a particularly high consensus on equal treatment of minorities with regard to economic rights. But they lack understanding of the demand for transgender-related social services. More than 70% of the respondents agreed that minorities should be entitled to all types of social services. And more than 90% indicated that minorities should have access to social aid, same insurance benefits for their same-sex partners and reemployment services. In contrast, around 50% show support for transgender-related social services, and a large proportion are still “not sure”. This indicates a majority of positive, open minded respondents, together with some who are still to make up their minds. In many ways this shows an important opportunity for the LGBTI movement and depicts a society that is ready for change, if guided in the right direction by policymakers, academia and the media.
- (5) Non-minority respondents are also in favor of equal rights policies for minorities. Of those in support, nearly 85% support legalization of same-sex marriage. In addition, over 80% opine that the law should clearly state in principle that the rights of sexual minorities are protected. Over 50% of the respondents agree with the statement that “Bans on blood donation by men who have sex with men” should be lifted. Nearly 50% believe that the law should not endorse the male-female gender binary. There is not a relatively high consensus on the latter two equal rights policies. This may have something to do with the view of gender as a binary concept and gay-related HIV stigma.

Figure 12 Non-minorities' attitudes on equal rights policies for minorities (%)



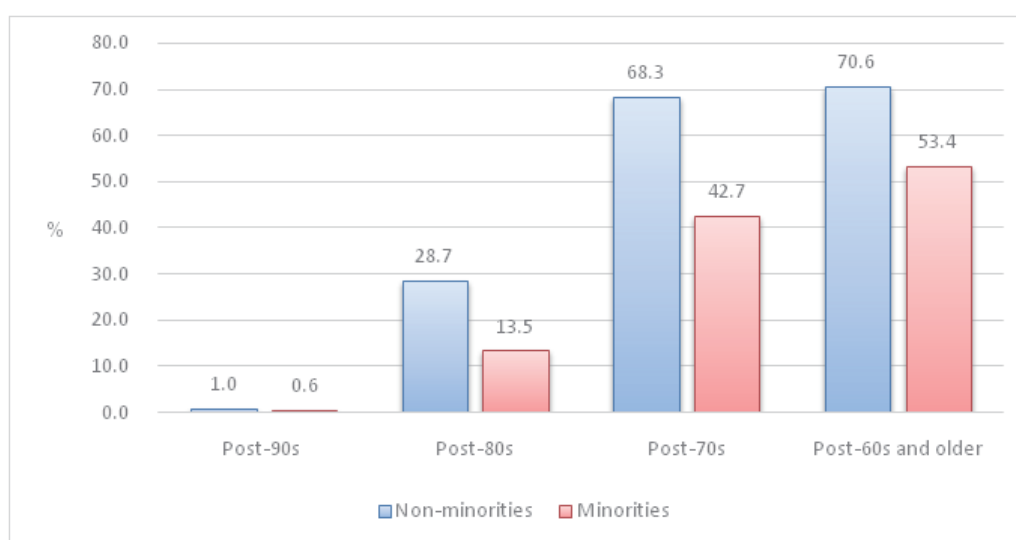
## 2.3 Living Conditions for Minorities

### 2.3.1 Living situations

How well do sexual and gender minorities live in our society? By comparing the minorities' sample and non-minorities' sample across marriage, education and employment, and inquiring about the mental health status of the former, the survey has made the following observations:

- (1) Compared with their same-age non-minority peers, marriage-age minorities have a much lower proportion of people entering married. Meanwhile, nearly two thirds of minority respondents suggest that they feel under great pressure from their families to get married and have children.
- (2) Among the married minority respondents, nearly 84.1% are married with heterosexuals<sup>4</sup>, 13.2 are in "marriages of convenience" and 2.6% in same-sex marriages registered in foreign countries. It can be seen that, on the one hand, minorities may avoid heterosexual marriages when they are young and that, on the other hand, the pressure to get married at all costs increases as they grow older. It can be argued that the lack of legal recognition of same-sex marriages and partnerships increases the likelihood of minorities entering into heterosexual marriages that are harmful to both parties in the marriage.

Figure 13 Marriage rate compared between non-minorities and minorities by age group (%)



- (3) Sexual and gender minorities are less educated than non-minorities on average. 49.4% of minority respondents and 52% of non-minority respondents are college educated or above. This may be ascribed to the fact that among minorities there is a higher proportion of people who received only partial college education, or who dropped out of school, which in turn affects their chances of obtaining a higher education. Among the minorities, intersex and transgender people are the most likely to see their academic performance negatively affected by their sexual identity, with over 20% of them having some college education but no degree.
- (4) Compared with non-minorities (Figure 14, 15 and 16), sexual and gender minorities suffer from lower job stability and a higher unemployment rate. Some are also affected by the types of workplaces they work in and receive lower benefits at work.

4. "Marriage of convenience", aka "MOC", refers to a formal registered marriage between a gay and a lesbian subject to prior agreement.



Figure 14 Employment situation compared between minorities and non-minorities (%)

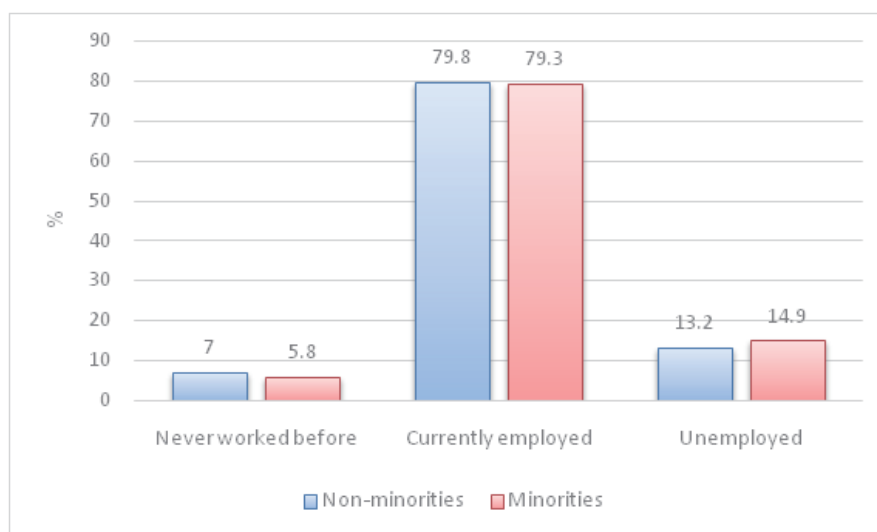
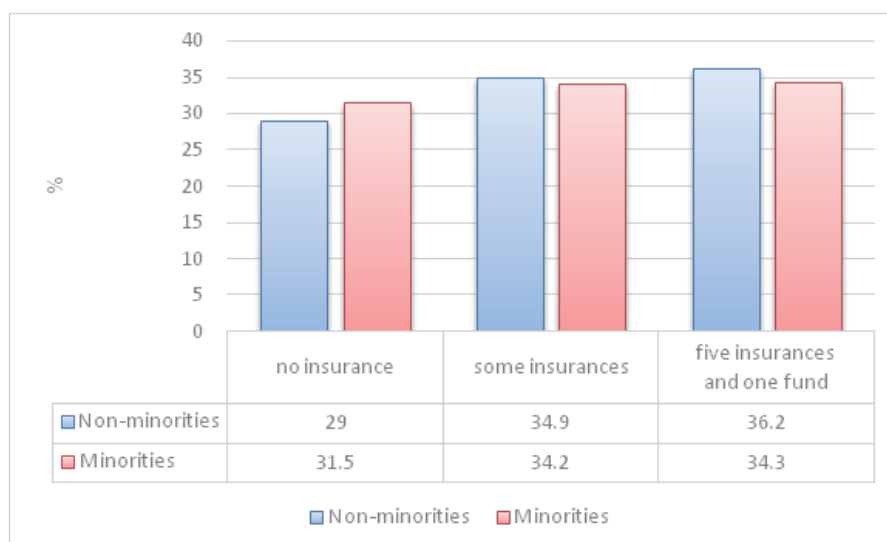


Figure 15 Work experience comparison between minorities and non-minorities (%)



Figure 16 In-work benefits comparison between minorities and non-minorities (%)



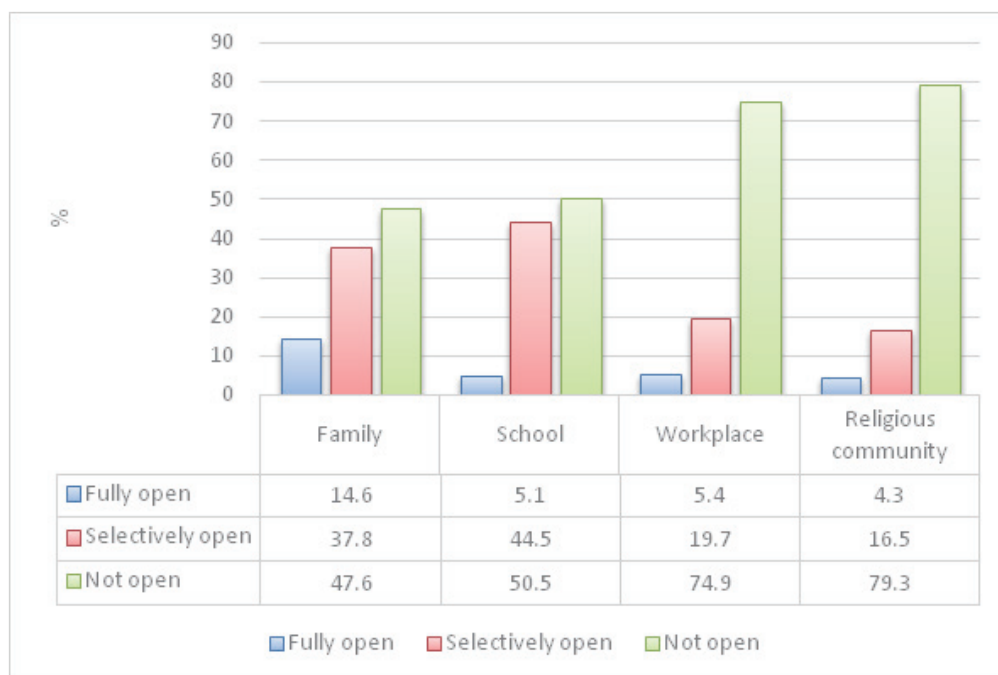
- (5) Over 70% of sexual and gender minority respondents have been emotionally troubled by their sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression. Interview recordings indicate that most of their mental distress, mainly in the form of self-identity related confusion and doubts, arose when they first perceived the difference between them and “others” (cisgenders). However, as they gained more knowledge on gender diversity and the existence of SOGIE peers, self-acceptance and empowerment improves.

### 2.3.2 “Coming out”

Minority respondents were asked whether they had disclosed their sexual or gender identity and/or expression in the family, at school, in the workplace, and in their religious community, and who they had disclosed it to. The results graphed in Figure 17 suggest that:

- (1) In general, minorities still have extremely low visibility in daily life. Only 5% of them disclosed their sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression at school, the workplace, and in the religious community. This figure is slightly higher with regard to family, but still no more than 15%.
- (2) In the family and in school, due to a high level of close daily communication, there is a relatively higher proportion of minority people living openly, mainly due to some of them being selectively open (i.e. opening up to closest friends and colleagues). Over one in three minority respondents were open to a chosen few family members, whereas less than half chose to do so at school. Within the family, some were open to relatives, probably peer relatives, but some only chose to be open to their parents rather than their relatives. At school, some were open to both teachers and schoolmates, but mainly schoolmates.
- (3) However, minorities have an extremely low degree of openness at the workplace and in their religious community, where there is a low level of communication and a high potential for public exposure. In these places, nearly 80% of minority respondents chose not to disclose their minority status.

Figure 17 “Coming out” of minorities in different daily life environments (%)



### 2.3.3 Discrimination

In the family, schools, workplaces and religious establishments, the following characteristics are observed concerning the unfair treatment of and discrimination against people based on SOGIE:

- (1) Figure 18 shows that discrimination occurred most frequently within the family, followed by schools. Over half of the minority respondents reported that they used to be unfairly treated or discriminated against due to SOGIE. Around 40% reported similar experiences at school. The occurrence of discrimination in the workplace and religious communities is relatively low, at c.20%.
- (2) Table 3 suggests that unfair treatment or discrimination within social circles follow a fixed pattern. The three forms of discrimination most frequently experienced within families, schools, workplaces and religious communities are: being reminded to watch their appearance, way of speaking and mannerism; being forced to change the ways in which they dressed, spoke or acted; and general verbal abuse and judgment.
- (3) Being forced to enter into heterosexual relationships is one of the top three unfair treatments or discrimination types that occur most frequently within the family. This suggests that the most frequently seen forms of unfair treatment of and discrimination against minorities are admonishments on behavior, including language and dressing style, and those on innate sexual orientation. Yet verbal attack is another form of frequently seen discrimination. Physical violence has also been recorded, especially within the family.

Figure 18 Occurrence of discrimination of minority respondents in daily life environments (%)

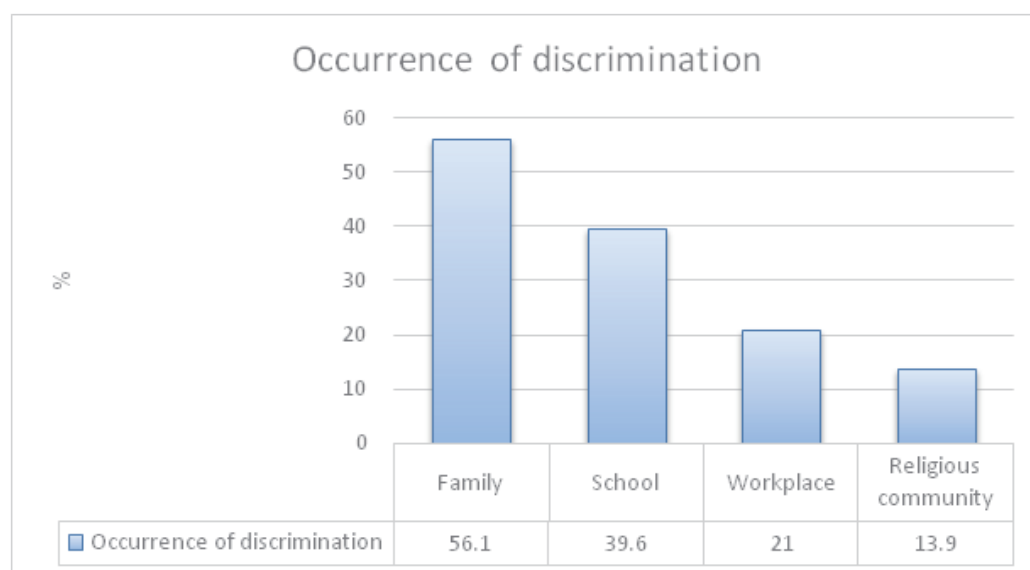


Table 3 Forms of discrimination of minority respondents in daily life environments (%)

Top3 forms of discriminations frequently seen			
	Top1	Top2	Top3
Family	being reminded to watch their appearance or the ways in which they spoke or acted	being forced to change the ways in which they dressed, spoke or acted	being forced to enter into heterosexual relationships
School	verbal abuse	being reminded to watch their appearance or the ways in which they spoke or acted	treated coldly or shunned by teachers/classmates
Workplace	being reminded to watch their appearance or the ways in which they spoke or acted	verbal abuse	being forced to change the ways in which they dressed, spoke or acted
Religious community	being reminded to watch their appearance or the ways in which they spoke or acted	verbal abuse	being forced to change the ways in which they dressed, spoke or acted

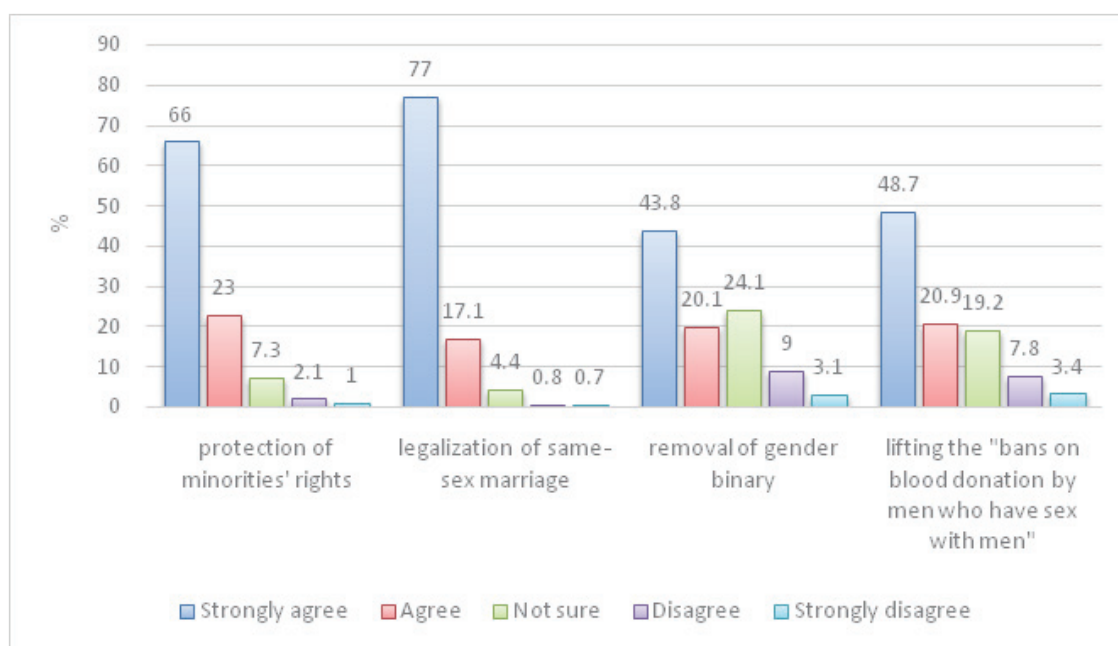
- (4) Generally, there is a direct correlation between “coming out” and the ensuing experience of discrimination within the family, in schools and religious communities. This may indicate that “coming out” may trigger various attempts to change respondents’ SOGIE. According to the survey, this is not true for people who come out in the workplace. This may indicate that minorities are more likely to come out in the other settings, whereas in the workplace “coming out” undergoes further consideration, in that people choose to “come out” only once they have confirmed that there is no risk to be discriminated against.
- (5) Compared with other minorities, it is clear that trans people face the highest levels of discrimination, especially within the family, in schools and workplaces. Lesbians are more likely to be discriminated against at home and in the workplace, whereas gay men are more likely to be discriminated against at school.

### 2.3.4 Prospect of the system

As expected, compared with non-minorities, sexual and gender minorities have a greater support for equal rights policies for minorities, as well as a clearer attitude. This reflects that minorities have a strong aspiration to have their rights guaranteed and to see discrimination removed:

- (1) Nearly 95% of minority respondents agree with the legalization of same-sex marriage, and 77% “strongly agree”.
- (2) Almost 90% of minority respondents agree with explicit legal protections for minorities’ rights, and two thirds “strongly agree”.
- (3) Over two thirds of minorities agree with the lifting of “bans on blood donation against men having sex with men”.
- (4) Nearly two thirds of minorities agree that the law should not explicitly endorse the male-female gender binary.

Figure 19 Minorities respondents' attitudes towards equal rights policies (%)



## 2.4 Experiences of discrimination and unjust treatment by sexual and gender minorities– selected quotes of interviewees:

### 2.4.1 In the family and at home

#### *Homosexual man TC6:*

My father somehow discovered I was in a relationship with a man and he called me several times, attacking homosexuals using abusive and violent words. He regarded homosexuality as a disease, and wanted to take me to someone who was specialized in "treating" this disease. To this day, my father still ignores this issue, which in return I'm reluctant to bring up. They (my parents) still introduce girls they know through relatives or colleagues to me, and hurry me to get married and then have a baby in a couple of years.

#### *Homosexual woman S2:*

They intervened before, mainly because they found me a little too man-like I think. My mother strongly suggested that I have long hair and wear skirts.

#### *Transgender man S5:*

A deep impression from my childhood was that my father once called me a "sissy boy". He was very angry when he did that, seated in front of all his friends. It was really humiliating to me, with a clear intention of degrading me, because he saw me as a shame.

### 2.4.2 At school

#### *Homosexual man ID7:*

Some classmates were not very supportive after I “come out”. They kept a distance from me, ignored me and acted negatively against me. For example, some of them deliberately ran into me, tripped me, or trapped me inside a circle for fun. Some said mean words. My academic performance was affected by such an environment, but later recovered as my classmates gradually accepted me.

#### *Homosexual woman C1:*

Back in my high school days, I was once caught kissing a girl in the bathroom. Perhaps the inspector was shocked or she couldn’t stand such a scene psychologically, as she really used some mean words such as “abnormal” and “pervert”. I didn’t really care about it, but she later informed my father of this, which triggered symptoms of high blood pressure on my poor old man.

### 2.4.3 Workplace

#### *Transgender woman S4:*

The biggest difficulty, in fact, lies in the job hunt. A major problem is the difference between the gender I checked on my resume (male) and my current gender (female). Even if I checked “female” on my resume and showed up as a female, the gender problem would still emerge when they checked my ID card. This represents the no. 1 problem I have in finding a formal job.

#### *Homosexual woman S1:*

In the company I worked before, I used to have lunch with a bunch of female colleagues. But after they knew I was a lesbian, although they said they could understand and accept me, they never invited me to lunch any more. At first, I would invite them to lunch instead, but they always gave me lame excuses like “I need to withdraw some cash today” or “I have to go somewhere tomorrow”. That’s when I sensed the problem. Since they were unwilling to have lunch with me and found me hard to accept, I stopped to approach them and have eaten alone ever since.

### 2.4.4 In the healthcare settings

#### *Transgender man S5:*

“Once I wanted to take a gynecological examination in Beijing, but got refused, as they claimed that men were forbidden from the gynecology department. When I said that I wanted to take a gynecological examination, they laughed at me. I had to formally reaffirm my intention to finally meet the doctor, who dismissed me quickly after asking me whether I had any lovers or sex life. I asked him why so fast, but he seemed very impatient, pushing me out while saying that he didn’t bother to explain. I insisted to know whether I had any problem, but he simply said “I just can’t explain to you. Just leave” while keep pushing me out. It was quite a scene, seemingly very amusing to the other people there”

*Bisexual woman C2:*

A routine question at gynecological examinations is “have you had sex lately?” And of course with men by default. I think it’s because heterosexual relationships represent the mainstream model in our society. I didn’t dispute with the doctor as I found it unnecessary.

*Intersex S1:*

I have a serious problem. When I was a kid, I had an operation to remove the remaining testicular tissues in me. But the operation was not complete, leaving some tissues inside me and therefore exposing me to cancer risks. When I went to college, I wanted to handle this problem with another operation, so I consulted a doctor at the college hospital about how I could get the reimbursement for relevant costs. I didn’t know whether he was professional enough, but he told me I couldn’t as my problem was a kind of genital malformation, which was not covered by the reimbursement policy. I also discussed this issue with a friend on the Internet. She said although my problem counted as genital malformation, the operation I needed to take also involved the removal of abnormal tissues, which was not part of the genital reshaping process and should therefore be covered by the reimbursement policy. She suggested that I consult the college hospital again, but I really didn’t want to relive what I had experienced before. The doctor I met may not be the director, or maybe he didn’t explain my condition clearly to the director, but I didn’t get to meet the director, and I gave up the idea to continue. This is by far the biggest problem I have encountered, and I still haven’t done this operation yet.

## 2.4.5 Psychological and counseling services

*Bisexual woman C1:*

My mother once dragged me to the psychiatry department, where two of the three doctors there suggested that we should consult the psychology department, as my condition didn’t qualify as a mental disease; the other recommended the electric shock treatment, a type of correction therapy.

*Bisexual man D1:*

Last year, my parents did a search on Baidu.com, finding that some doctors were against homosexuality or claimed to have measures to “cure” homosexuality. They then spent over RMB1,000 to consult a psychologist, who told them that he had to talk with me in person. I think that they (some psychologists) are biased against homosexuality or intend to tap this grey market by claiming that they can treat and change sexual orientation.

## 2.4.6 Other social services

### *Transgender man S5:*

I look very manly, so I feel nervous every time I have to go to the toilet. Imagine how many times you have to go there every day! It's OK when I'm at familiar places like the office, but when I'm in public venues like shopping malls, where I may need to queue to use the toilet, this issue can be terrifying, as if my self-confidence disappears as I approach the toilet. If there is no one in the toilet, I would feel relieved and finish my business fast. But if there is a queue... This pain will probably last throughout my life.

## 2.4.7 Religion

### *Homosexual man A1:*

During each mass, a brother would walk around with a box, inviting people to donate. But once a brother refused to accept my donation when he recognized me. That was quite a blow to me. I don't know whether he thought that money from people like me was dirty, but I haven't been to this church any more.

### *Bisexual woman C2:*

My family wasn't religious, but I became Christian in middle school. The Bible says that people who have sex with others of the same sex would go to hell, and this made me scared, becoming a source of mental pressure back then. Although I'm no longer religious, this memory would come back to me from time to time. In fact, the pressure it caused has remained. No matter whether I'm religious or not, I have been affected since I got to know the attitude of Christianity toward homosexuality.





# Conclusion and Discussion

Sexual and gender minority people, still have very low visibility within society. While they live across China and work in all types of occupations, only an extremely small number of them openly disclose their sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression in public spaces such as at school, at work or as they participate in religious activities. Even at home and in the family, those who manage to be completely “out” are in the very minority. At the same time, sexual and gender minority content scarcely appears in the mainstream media, such as in newspapers, magazines, or on the radio, the television, and in movies, which still lack not only positive, but any portrayals of diversity.

Undoubtedly, the fear of discrimination still prevents the majority of sexual and gender minority people to “come out” in their day-to-day lives, a fear based on real life experiences of the more courageous minority who has already done so. In fact, those who partially or completely disclose their sexual orientation or gender identity face higher levels of discrimination, especially at within the family, at school, when they access healthcare or social services and as they participate in religious activities. Many are still reluctant to disclose their sexual orientation or gender identity when dealing with health care workers, counselors or social service providers, as these are the settings where the majority of the discrimination

occurs. Interestingly, the workplace remains the last place where the majority of sexual and gender minority people would come out, highlighting the incredibly important role that the private sector has to play in LGBTI-related inclusion.

Unlike cisgender and heterosexual people, who can easily disclose their sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression, a sexual minority person who is “deeply closeted” or only “out” to some people will have to suppress or hide him/herself. Emotional/psychological troubles remain prevalent among the LGBTI community, with high percentages of sexual and gender minority people suffering from unfair treatment or discrimination due to their sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression. This often affects their academic and/or professional pursuits and careers, mostly because of emotional and psychological troubles and (often also linked to) discriminatory experiences.

Statistics reveal that the marriage rate of sexual and gender minority people is much lower than their non-SGM counterpart. As same sex marriage remains unrecognized in China, this shows that a significant number of SGM people, for a period of time, attempt to avoid entering into heterosexual marriages. However, faced with the pressure to marry from society and their families, and the consequences of “coming out”, which they are unable or unwilling to bear, many end up in heterosexual marriages.

The relationship with and life within the family for sexual and gender minority people in China is extremely complex. While they wish to open their hearts to, and be accepted by their families, they continue to experience discrimination, emotional and psychological pressures, and often even violence from these. Yet, the family remains the social context where the majority of sexual and gender minority people choose to live freely. This may explain why this is also the place where discrimination and unfair treatment are at their highest. Most people have to face the pressure of their families’ expectation to marry and have children. The complete or partial disclosure of diverse sexual or gender identities at home is correlated with the higher rate of discrimination and, as estimated by the respondents, family members also show the lowest level of acceptance.

The lack of visibility of diverse sexual orientations or gender identities in society means that most families do not know how to handle these issues when they arise. Some families attempt to change their family members by appealing to the ideal of filial piety or parental authority, which only further troubles and sometimes harms the people involved. It is clear that families are simply responding to and mirroring the broader social environment and social pressures.

However, the social environment is not static. In recent years, the international community has been paying more and more attention to the equal rights of sexual and gender minorities, and some countries and regions have been passing laws and implementing policies that respect and protect their rights and recognize their relationships. It is becoming more common to see LGBTI characters or issues being featured in international news and foreign films. China’s LGBTI community and its supporters have also put in great efforts to educate the public. These interlinked processes are slowly leading to some changes in social attitudes.

For example, the depathologization of sexual and gender diversity people has achieved near-consensus among all respondents. The majority of respondents also disagree with stereotype-based prejudices. However, on a deeper level, society’s gender views are still very much influenced by the binary gender system, which partially explains the difficulty that gender atypical people, including trans people, face in their social lives.

Behaviors and the perception of actual behaviors usually go through changes more slowly than the progress in knowledge and attitude. When asked whether they mind getting close to an LGBTI person, whether sexual and gender minority people are fit to raise children, and whether they can accept their own children being LGBTI, most people still hold a conservative attitude. It shows that society's real acceptance and equal treatment of sexual and gender minorities remains a long-term goal.

Furthermore, people's worry and fear of HIV are also reflected in their views and behaviors. A large portion of people still associate gay men with AIDS. This leads to situations like health care workers avoiding and even refusing to care for people living with HIV or generally gay men, irrespective of their HIV status.

What is worth noting above all though, is that there are characteristics of obvious positive intergenerational change in social attitudes. Young people are more progressive in their attitudes on all levels. Evidence suggests that generational change will bring a more friendly social view and attitude towards sexual and gender minorities.

In addition, a lot more work can be done to increase society's acceptance of LGBTI people. In the public sphere, such as at school and at work, most people do not display any clear opposition to, nor support for, sexual and gender diversity, but show a degree of ambiguity. This, in many ways, represents a great opportunity for the LGBTI community and their allies to change this ambiguity of the majority of the population into outright support and equal treatment. In other countries and regions of the world, public opinion is divided into strongly held opposing views, with a large portion of the population often openly against LGBTI rights or issues such as same-sex marriage. This portion of the population is often harder to convince in changing their views. In China, on the other hand, the presence of a large population of 'undecided' represents an opportunity to build a fairer and more equal society. Practically, to achieve this goal more education and evidence-based information is needed. At school and at work, gender diversity education and training are still scarce and scattered, rather than widespread. If these became more widespread, the ambiguity held by most people may become acceptance. In this, the mainstream media has an important role to play as well. Unfortunately to date the media has only helped to keep sexual and gender minorities in the shadows.

On the institutional level, while China still lacks clear laws, regulations, and policies protecting sexual and gender minorities from discrimination and recognizing their relationships, the study reveals that there is already a foundation of supporting public opinion upon which to push for some legal and policy changes. Many non-governmental organizations and foreign-owned enterprises have started to recognize and protect their employees and institutionalize the equal treatment of their LGBTI staff. These best practices may provide the premise and practical precedence for any future laws, regulations and policies.



# Recommendations

Regarding international human rights endeavors over the past decade, the United Nations and other international organizations have been increasingly concerned with LGBTI issues, and ensuring equal rights for sexual and gender minorities has become an integral component in these endeavors. Protective laws, policies and practices in this area are growing at both national and international level. The delegates of the Chinese government have also made a number of constructive comments on sexual and gender minority issues in a number of international venues. For example, in 2014, in the formal review of the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), Ms. Mu Hong, deputy director of the National Working Committee on Children and Women of the State Council (NWCCW), declared on behalf of the Chinese government that "Chinese citizens are protected by law regardless of their sexual orientation and nowadays in China the attitude towards homosexuality has become more liberal than in the past." More recently, during the official review of the UN Commission Against Torture (CAT), Yang Jian, a representative of the Chinese Ministry of Justice stated that "China does not view LGBTI as a mental disease or require compulsory treatment for LGBTI people. They will not be confined in mental hospitals either. Indeed, LGBTI people face some real challenges in terms of social acceptance, employment, education, health, and family life. This deserves our attention, but this does not fall within the scope of the Convention".

However, we must still admit that the equal rights issues for sexual and gender minority people remain

inadequately recognized among the general public, and have never entered the official government agenda. The Constitution of China states that "all citizens of the People's Republic of China are equal before the law" and "the state respects and protects human rights". With the progress and development of our society, we recommend that the Chinese government continue to lead the protection of human rights and prompt the general public to attend to the living conditions and rights of LGBTI people. The government should help to improve understandings, eliminate misconceptions, and create an environment that enables sexual and gender minorities to fully participate in social life and contribute to the economic and cultural development of China. The aim is to provide all individuals with equal opportunities to participate and develop, through fostering the tolerance that does the greatest good to both individuals and the society as a whole.

Based on the results of the current study, we recommend measures be taken in the following four aspects, in order to recognize and better protect the rights of sexual and gender minorities: eliminate misconceptions, promote education on gender diversity, improve the cultural and social environment, and strengthen legal protections.

## 4.1 Eliminate misconceptions about LGBTI people

Most respondents of the study strongly support the depathologization of sexual and gender minority people. Depathologization has already become the prevailing opinion within the Chinese and international scientific communities. Sexual orientation is no longer considered a mental disease in the International Classification of Diseases (ICD-10) as well as the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM), and psychiatrists in China also agree that homosexuality is not a psychological disorder. Nevertheless, since the update and propagation of new knowledge take time to take hold, Chinese society at times still regards LGBTI people as requiring treatment. Furthermore, some of these opinions originate from professionals and authorities and greatly influence the general public, making it difficult to rectify the erroneous understandings that still remain in society. Therefore, we recommend that the appropriate administrative bodies ensure that the outdated and inaccurate perceptions of SGM people be eradicated and pave way for spreading evidence based information and knowledge in this area.

### 4.1.1 Ensure the complete depathologization of SGM in psychiatry

We recommend that the public health authorities push for the amendment of "Chinese Classification of Mental Disorders, 3rd Edition" (CCMD-3) and rectify the entries of "sexual orientation disorder" to completely depathologize homosexuality and bisexuality. Meanwhile, the health and the commerce authorities should more actively supervise medical institutions and counseling agencies to make sure their mental health services are carried out in accordance with China's classification and criteria of mental disorders, so that illegal treatments such as "conversion therapy" can be wiped out in accordance to the Chinese Government's statement at the UN convention against torture.

### 4.1.2 Ensure the complete depathologization of SGM in textbooks at all levels

We recommend that the education authorities and the State Administration of Press, Publication, Radio, Film and Television inspect textbooks as well as supplementary materials throughout China and report the statistics of materials containing factual errors and stigmatizations. In addition, those faulty materials should be recalled by the publishers as soon as possible to terminate the spread of wrong information.

## 4.2 Promote education in gender diversity

Along with eliminating misconceptions around LGBTI people, education in gender diversity should be carried out throughout the society to foster a sense of equality regarding gender diversity, so that everyone would be able to understand the inherent diversity that exists in sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, and gender physiology. Society should be more aware of the different needs in terms of social or healthcare services of minorities, respect diversity, and treat LGBTI people equally.

### 4.2.1 Strengthen the awareness of gender diversity and gender equality in both government officials and grassroot level administrative personnel

The current study shows that sexual and gender diversity concerns are rarely covered in the staff training and internal regulations of government offices and government-backed organizations. The large gap here compared with other sectors shows that these institutions seriously fall behind in the knowledge of gender diversity and sense of gender equality.

The rights of SGM people are susceptible to infringement in all areas of social life. Therefore, as the primary advocate and guardian of the citizens' legitimate rights, the government should strengthen the awareness of gender diversity and gender equality in both officials and grassroot administrative personnel. We hence recommend that training on gender diversity be provided to officials and staffs of administrative departments, public security offices, as well as various other social service agencies at all levels. The awareness of gender diversity and gender equality should be enhanced in these audiences so that they may handle SGM-related issues with greater acceptance and respect.

### 4.2.2 Strengthen the awareness of gender diversity and gender equality in medical professionals, mental health specialists, social services staffs, etc.

The current study shows that the Chinese SGM people are rarely willing to disclose their gender identity when receiving healthcare and other social services, indicating that these areas are still not friendly enough to minorities. Besides, there are still professionals in the mental health sector that actively discriminate against them and still practice "conversion therapy". Therefore, we recommend that the respect and acceptance of sexual and gender diversity be put into standards and guidelines by the appropriate authorities and professional associations of medical services, mental health, social services, etc. The practitioners should receive training on gender diversity and enhance their awareness in gender equality. In addition, we recommend that GSM-related knowledge be included in appropriate qualification exams, to ensure that the professionals of these areas already have adequate knowledge in gender diversity and possess the sense of gender equality before entering their vocation.

### 4.2.3 Increasing educators' consciousness of diverse gender equality

The survey shows that due to lack of diverse gender education, discrimination and bullying based on sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression remain widespread in all level of schools, appearing as verbal assaults, physical violence, sexual harassment, sexual abuse and so on.

So there is a recommendation that education sectors regulate that teachers treat all students, including sexual minorities, equally into the ethical codes for teachers, and carry out diverse gender training on managers, executives and front-line educators in schools at all levels to increase existing educators'

consciousness of diverse gender equality. In addition, knowledge on gender diversities should be involved in teacher certificate examinations to ensure educator's consciousness of diverse gender equality during talent development and qualification.

In the meantime, it is suggested that comprehensive sexuality and gender identity education be included into curriculum standards of junior and senior high schools, thus helping adolescent students not only acquire the knowledge of sexual health and sex safety, but also learn about and deal with sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression issues.

Furthermore, relevant sectors including education sectors are supposed to attach more importance to opposing school violence by setting up specific teams, issue regulations, pay attention to the risks of school violence that sexual and gender minorities face, and take a firm stand against any school violence.

### **4.3 Improving the cultural and social environment for sexual minorities**

The majority of survey respondents think that the mainstream media practically ignores sexual minorities issues, and the few images and portrayals of sexual minorities are often negative or stereotypical in nature. What's more, it is somewhat difficult for sexual minorities to get access to social service organizations. So it is necessary to improve the cultural environment for sexual minorities, as well as to widen and deepen their social support network.

#### **4.3.1 Giving full play to the media**

Media dissemination plays an important role in eliminating prejudice against sexual minorities. Hence it is suggested that the media regulator allow the media to represent sexual minorities in a comprehensive and objective way, instead of restricting or prohibiting the media to report on these issues. Furthermore, the media should be encouraged to play an active part in disabusing people of wrong beliefs and gender stereotypes of all kinds.

#### **4.3.2 Encouraging social forces to participate in public service for sexual minorities**

On account of their different sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression, sexual minorities are always isolated and helpless, which is why they need the help and valuable social support of their peers and other people around them. It is recommended that restrictions on mutual support groups and social service organizations for sexual minorities be relaxed, especially in their registration and development processes.

### **4.4 Strengthening the legal protection for sexual minorities' rights**

At last, the protection of equal rights of sexual minorities ought to be written in the law. The survey shows that sexual minorities suffer from different degrees of discrimination and difficulties in social life, education, employment, medical treatment and psychological consultation. Because of lack of anti-discrimination legislation, the Chinese government encounters difficulties in forbidding discrimination based on sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression, and in dealing with discrimination disputes with the absence of relevant laws. It is therefore urgent to strengthen the legal protection sexual and gender minorities.

#### 4.4.1 Bringing sexual minorities into the scope of current laws and regulations

China has already passed a number of laws and regulations to protect citizens' rights in specific fields and ensure specific groups have equal rights, these include the Marriage Law, Labor Law, Employment Promotion Act, Law on the Protection of Minors, Law on the Protection of the Disabled, Law on the Protection of Women Rights and Interests, Law against Family Violence, etc. But existing laws do not apply to people of different sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression, so it is recommended for legislative authorities to revise and perfect some of the current laws and regulations to involve citizens who have different a sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression.

#### 4.4.2 Speeding up the legislative process of anti-discrimination laws

Legislative authorities should put anti-discrimination laws into upcoming legislation plans, and then draft and adopt an anti-discrimination law which should object to all forms of discrimination, including those based on sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression and other differences, and should provide effective supervision and punishment against discriminatory acts, so as to ensure all citizens enjoy equal rights.

The Chinese government should draw on foreign experience and best practices to achieve the four goals highlighted above: eliminating people's false beliefs around sexual minorities, promoting diverse gender education in different fields, improving the cultural and social environment for sexual minorities, and strengthening the legal protection for equal rights of sexual minorities. Only in this way can China actually improve the life for tens of millions of its citizens who are currently living in the shadows and guarantee that all the Chinese citizens share equal rights and interests regardless of their sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression.