

2021/2

RESEARCH SURVEY



RESEARCH

LGBTI+ GOZO & LEA JAKOB

LGBTI+ GOZO

LGBTI+ Gozo was formed in May 2015, for the purpose of promoting and raising awareness regarding the LGBTI+ community and issues affecting it, together with organizing events aimed that include all LGBTI+ peers and supporters. The idea for starting this NGO was motivated by after various LGBTI+ youths' idea of holding regular socials event for LGBTI+ youth in Gozo. So far various events have been and are being planned, in collaboration with different stakeholders. These include regular social events, awareness campaigns and informational meetings. LGBTI+ Gozo wishes not only to give understanding to LGBTI+ peers but also to build a community and a safe space where one can express their ideas without the fear of being judged.

GOZO 2021

A brief survey was designed to explore the state of situation in Gozo related to the thoughts, opinions and demographics of LGBTI+ individuals. The main goal of this survey is to collect, analyze and report data along with the implications of these findings in order to understand the needs of this population and propose the appropriate steps to be taken for improvement of subjective well-being of those who are faced with barriers.

The survey consisted of 30 questions covering key areas of demographics, issues faced with openly stating one's sexuality, needs of this population and availability of information related to LGBTI+ needs.

The survey was available online during December 2021. Data collected were analysed in a quantitative and qualitative way in order to provide a detailed overview of the topics in question.

The main findings are outlined below.

Main Findings



57 Gozitan Participants with the mean age being of 30 years
12 Expat or Maltese respondents living in Gozo average age of 43 years



Mean age of coming out was 20 years of age for Gozitans
Early adulthood (20-30 years of age) for Expats



64% of Gozitans found difficult to be open in Gozo
50% of Expats found it more difficult to be open than country of origin



77% feel that Malta is different than Gozo



Improvements Needed include

- Education, Open conversations & Fostering Acceptance
- Religious De-stigmatisation & Mentality
- Further enforcement of discrimination legislature



Participant Needs included

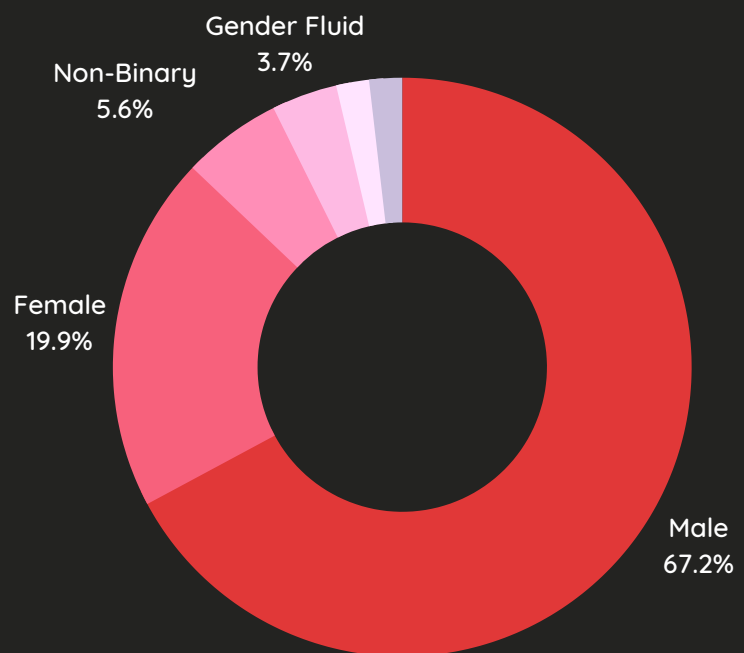
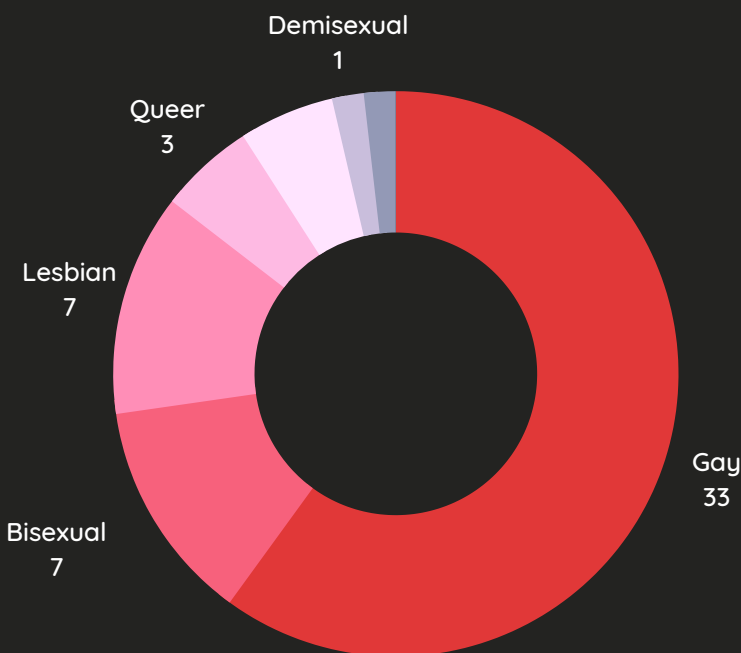
- Psycho Social Services
- Community spaces
- Support of friends & families
- Guidance of other LGBT individuals

Gozo Participants Demographics

SEXUAL & GENDER IDENTITY

The sample consists of 57 respondents with a mean age of 30 years. Of those who have responded to the question regarding the place of living, 19 live in Gozo, 5 in Malta, and 12 live in both places. On average, the majority of respondents came out around the age of 20, with a few not being out yet.

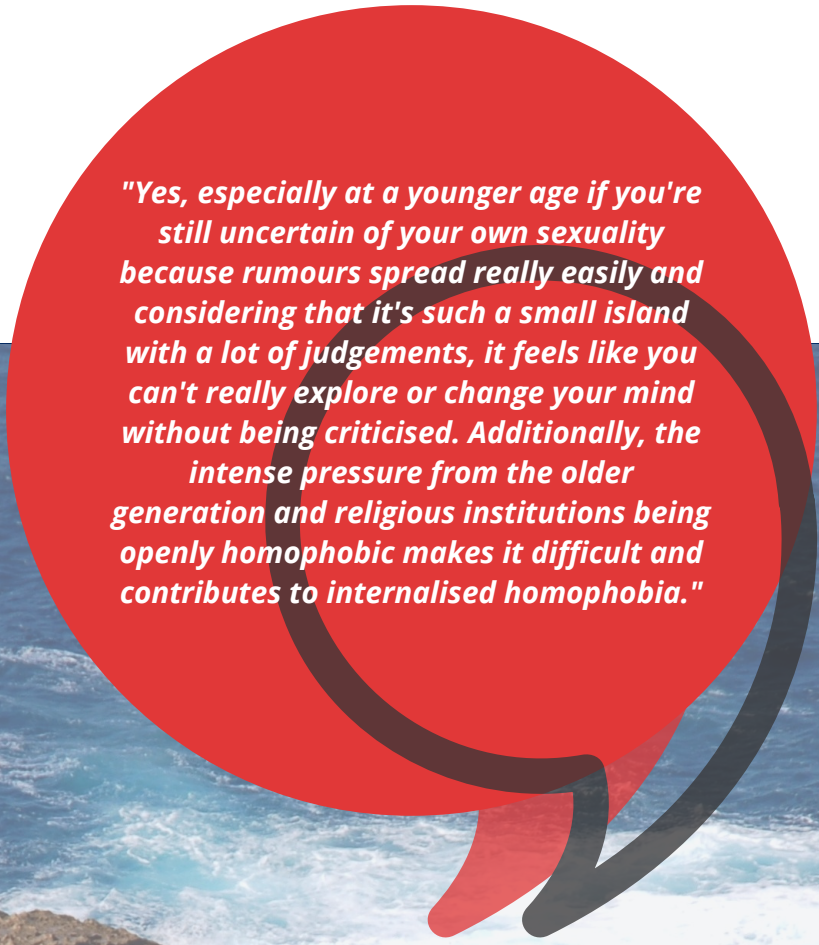
Considering gender identity, 37 respondents were male, 11 female, 3 were non-binary, 2 were gender fluid, and one trans and one androgynous. Considering sexual orientation, 33 respondents identified as gay, 7 as bisexual, 7 as lesbian, 3 as Queer, 3 as pansexual, one as female demisexual, and one as heterosexual.



Gozo Participants Perceptions

BARRIERS & LIMITATIONS

64% of the respondents felt it is difficult to be open in Gozo. The most often mentioned reasons are (1) lack of support from the society; including one's own family, (2) stigmatization which is more commonly expressed by older generations or religious individuals who are considered to be closeminded, (3) general mentality, and (4) lack of spaces where people can be open. The majority (77%) feel that Malta is different from Gozo. Whilst not concretely said whether more difficult or not, the assumption is feeling like there is a limitation in being equally open in Gozo.



"Yes, especially at a younger age if you're still uncertain of your own sexuality because rumours spread really easily and considering that it's such a small island with a lot of judgements, it feels like you can't really explore or change your mind without being criticised. Additionally, the intense pressure from the older generation and religious institutions being openly homophobic makes it difficult and contributes to internalised homophobia."

Gozo Participants Demographics

SHIFTING
MENTALITY

"In my opinion open conversations about LGBTQI+ people's experiences will help shift negative attitudes and change the mentality in Gozo to an island that is accepting and understanding of issues faced within our community."

Respondents feel that certain activities and changes would help in shifting the mentality towards LGBTI+ people in Gozo.

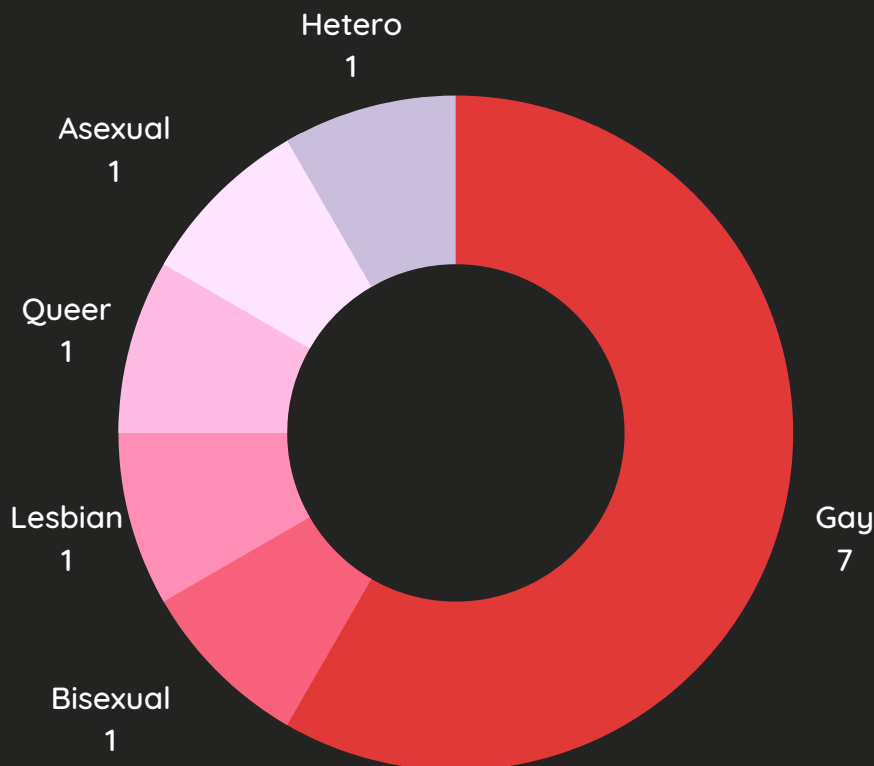
- The most often mentioned aspect was **Education** to raise the awareness of the *youth, adults*, and mainly the *elderly*
- **Open conversation** about experiences to shift negative attitudes and foster acceptance
- The respondents have often mentioned the negative influence of the **local religious organisations on stigmatisation** and they feel that having educational activities for individuals who are most encouraged to stigmatise could shift the mentality

EXPERIENCES

COMING
OUT



Considering the respondents' experience of coming out and the help they would have benefited from at that time, the respondents mentioned having access to counselling/therapy, safe space to meet and network, and the support of friends. Overall the education from fellow LGBTI+ individuals on how to best approach this experience and to provide mental support was mentioned as a valuable resource. Some of the respondents felt that there should be more opportunities for the members of the community to meet (both physical spaces and events) where they could share experiences and provide each other with support and guidance. Furthermore, the idea of educating younger generations that coming out is completely normal and should not be an embarrassing or shameful aspect of life would help in acceptance.



Expatriate Participants Demographics

SEXUAL & GENDER IDENTITY

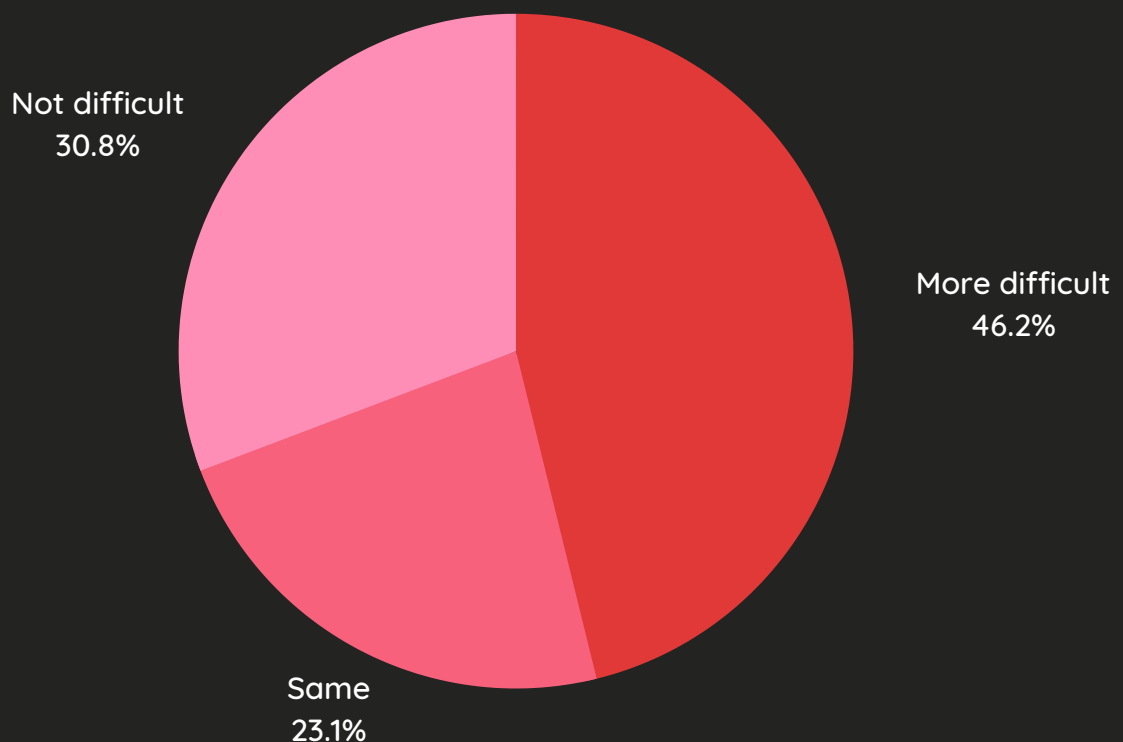
The sample consists of 12 respondents, with an average age of 43 years (range 26-65). The sexual orientation of the majority of the sample is gay (7/12), with Queer, Asexual, Lesbian, Bi, and hetero with experimentation being represented by one individual each. The majority of the respondents came out during their early adulthood (20-30 years of age) with one person not mentioning any specific age.

The majority has been living in Gozo for less than 10 years (1-7) with one person having resided in Gozo for 14 years. Of those, the majority were already fully open about their sexual orientation when they arrived in Gozo.

Expatriate Participants Demographics

BARRIERS & LIMITATIONS

When asked about the difficulty of being open about their own sexuality in Gozo, respondents felt that it was more difficult to be open, compared to their country of origin. Most often they mentioned reasons related to religious beliefs and mentality of the country. Most of the respondents felt that there is a difference between Malta and Gozo in this aspect, and have felt discriminated against in Gozo on the grounds of being an expatriate.



It is more difficult due to the general mentality of the average resident.

The same, but would be worse if I was one of the other LGBTQI sexualities. People have this thing about sex being a necessary part of life and relationships but there isn't much they can do other than talk.

I find that gozitans don't really care as long as you respect them. I never felt out of place or awkward in gozo. I'm not one for PDA anywhere I go and I volunteer and do a lot within the community so maybe it's easier for me

EXPERIENCES

EXPATS IN GOZO



The expat experience in Gozo involves most respondents feeling discriminated, with some mentioning condescension, always feeling as 'the foreign one' or being told to go back to their country. Some mentioned feeling this discrimination in employment, health care and being charged extra for goods.

"Yes. I've been told many times to go back to my own country."

"There is occasionally the sense that I am being regarded as a stupid foreigner. It is not blatant. By and large my demeanour is open and accepting of others no matter what their colour, appearance of origin, sex/gender identity, etc. - and I think this means that I too am regarded in a positive manner."

SHIFTING MENTALITY

Improvements

DIVERSITY

They felt that, in order to make Gozo more friendly, it would be necessary to encourage educational activities which would highlight the acceptance of diversity and understanding between people and to create concrete fines for discrimination.

"Improved education and awareness, inclusivity, amongst the general population towards anyone who is 'different' to the perceived norm in whatever way, nationality, gender, sexuality, disability etc. The politicians both local and national could do so much more and lead by example. Plus more reassurance from the police and authorities that instances of discrimination will be taken seriously."

SUPPORT

When it comes to what could be done to make the respondents feel more supported would be the wider population (beyond their friends and family) not discriminating against them. Being less scared to be labelled as “not normal” after coming out would help. They are happy with the organisation’s work but they would like to be more accepted.

"I think your org does a great job of bringing a sense of inclusion to anyone who wishes to participate. It would be nice to see more of that in other kinds of groups."





COVID-19

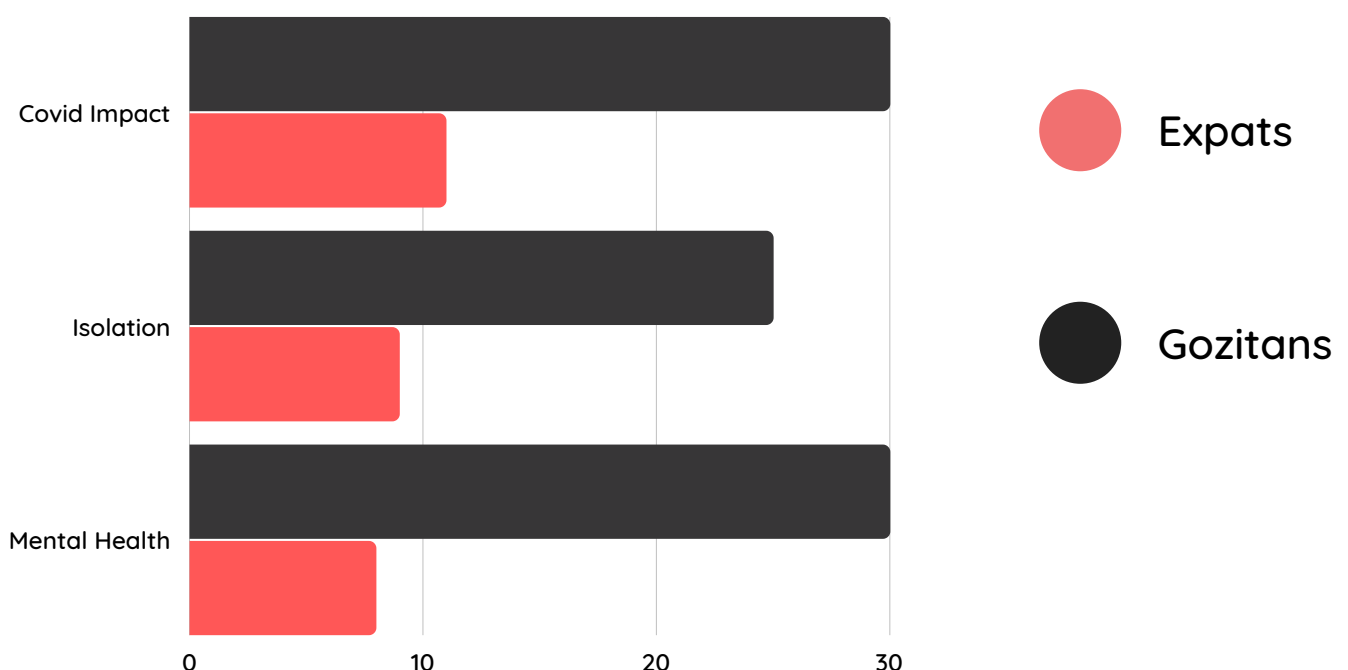
ИМПАКТ

NEGATIVE IMPACT ON EXPATS

The impact of COVID on the respondents has been negative. 92% were negatively impacted with 67% being impacted on their mental health. They have felt more **isolated**, **lacked support**, and had **poorer mental health**. Some had more time and were able to use it to learn new skills or explore the surrounding nature. During these times, as a **Queer person**, they would have benefited from having access to a **psychological counselor** and in general **overall support** by their friends or having more initiative in engaging in **online group activities and hangouts**.

SPLIT IN THE GOZITANS

There is a distinct split between the impact of this time on the respondents. They either felt **unaffected** or have felt the impact of **higher feelings of isolation and worry**, significantly impacting **their mental health**. They felt even more isolated from the community as they were not able to meet with their friends and family, either due to isolation or the usual spaces for socialisation being closed. Overall, often are mentioned the feelings of **increased anxiety**, **lower self-confidence**, and **struggle with loneliness**. 52% felt it has affected them in a negative way. A couple of respondents, on the other hand, mentioned they had an opportunity to rediscover themselves during this time or to work on their relationship with their close ones.





LGBTI+ GOZO SERVICES

59%

SERVICE LINE

of the respondents were aware of the
LGBTI+ GOZO service helpline

71%

QAWSALLA HUB

of the respondents were aware of the
QAWSALLA HUB

LGBTI+ GOZO RELATIONSHIP

When it comes to LGBTI+ Gozo as an organisation, the majority of respondents have heard about it (92%) either on social media (mainly Facebook), or a few from someone they know at an event. 40% would like to become active members of the organisation. Of the 57 Gozitan respondents, 28% have attended LGBTI+ Gozo events at some point.

All the expat respondents in this survey have previously heard of LGBTI+ Gozo, either through the internet, social media, friends, or other sources, and 50% would want to become an active member of the organisation. Almost half of the respondents have attended one or more of the LGBTI+ Gozo events, with a few that have never attended any, mentioning shyness as a reason. In general, the majority would be interested in attending an online event, mainly if it was focused on socialisation, community engagement, and self-care.

Following this data, the organisation will be building an action plan based on the needs and experiences of its respondents to adhere to offering the services, projects and initiatives needed, engage in collaborations and enhance educational practices through inclusivity, and to further build the community mentioned and much needed.



GOZO

GOZO

GOZO



LGBTI+ GOZO

website



LGBTI+ GOZO

Membership Form