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**ARMENIAN HELPING PROFESSIONALS ABOUT  
HOMOSEXUALITY AND LGBT COMMUNITY: THE LEVEL OF  
AWARENESS AND ATTITUDE**



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This brochure is noteworthy as it summarises the results and conclusions of a unique quantitative research conducted in Armenia which is about perceptions and attitudes on sexual diversity among Armenian helping professionals.

Thoughts and opinions of the author of this brochure are not necessarily congruent with the position of “Open Society Institute Assistance Foundation”, and the organization is not responsible for the content of the brochure.

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## Preamble

It is surely undeniable that alongside with other numerous factors the low level of public awareness also underlies different types of discrimination, since whatever is beyond human understanding, is different, unusual, or in general unknown, as a rule, favours to the formation of myths about the “unknown” phenomenon and brings forth fear or denial. Nevertheless, one should not identify all types of discrimination as one: ageism, sexism, racism, nazism, as well as discrimination against people with disabilities - ableism, discrimination against people based on income or the poor - classism, discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity (SOGI) and so on, because even if it were possible to find a common factor among those, nonetheless, each would have peculiarities, and there are different combination of factors underlying each peculiarity. In other words, people may be quite aware and have relatively objective information, for example, about this or that nation, but still be intolerant toward people of that nation, particularly toward their cultural values. That is, one cannot insist that low tolerance or discrimination of this or that social group is

conditioned only by the level of public awareness. Nevertheless, there are types of discrimination which are resulted generally by the low level of public awareness and distorted ideas in this or that society.

It seems the notion of “discrimination” does not indicate a negative shade in meaning when literally translated, as it means to differentiate, to see the difference. For example, if one can discriminate healthy and usefull food from unhealthy food, that is a positive phenomenon, of course. Whereas, if “discrimination” is interpreted from the viewpoint of legal, ethical or political context, then it definitely indicates a negative shade in meaning, that is unfair differentiation or separation. It is a process containing a highlight of differentiation and its application, as a basis of negative attitude or putting pressure on someone. That is, being “different” (in gender, race, ethnic belonging, SOGI and other preferences) in particular context becomes a basis for discrimination. [4]

Is it possible for people to live together in one society where there are different ethnicity, races, religions, cultures, values and political systems? This kind of diversity is possible where the practising political, civil norms are able to provide friendly and

peaceful coexistence of different social groups together. How is it possible to establish mutual respect and coexistence in such diversity? Until today the theoretical idea as well as the practical experience, find the solution of this question generally in protection and preach of principles of liberal democracy and tolerance. Such type of coexistence was established still from the period of enlightenment, according to which, despite their differences, people united around common truth and moral principles, among which tolerance and morality had their special importance.

Nowadays, tolerance is one of the most discussed notions. It has numerous interpretations, therefore the problem of clear definition of that notion is still remaining a modern one.

Tolerance can be defined as acceptance of diversity and human ability of recognizing own fears, objectively evaluating own attitude toward those people whose views, lifestyle, religion, nationality and other characteristics differ from that of one's own.  
[5]

Peaceful coexistence in a community depends on what people think about each other, and what kind of dispositions they have toward "other" underlying attitude and behavior. In context of cultural diversity, tolerance is interpreted as a substantial condition

and means for having a harmonious and peaceful community. Therefore, the idea of tolerance is directly connected with the idea of diversity, about which, for example, in UNESCO's constitution in 1945 is noted as Cultural Diversity (UNESCO, 1945, art. 1.2). At present, the meaning of that term has undergone some changes making a transition from acceptance of differentiating merely between cultures to equality of cultures and diversity of cultural self expression. [2; P. 129] If we want to form a viable diversity, then tolerance itself is not enough. It is necessary to accept not only the existence of diversity, but also the influence on each other. To realize and welcome the fact that the other is single, unique and at the same time equal to yourself presumes much more active participation, and not a simply neutral position. The readiness to learn from each other and about one another requires openmindedness and is connected with recognizing mutual equality. [2; P. 132]

In Armenia, the state officials, political powers highlighting the importance of national identity, the dispositions of pseudoconservatives and pseudonationalists, in particular abusing the idea of national security, as well as the influence of dominating culture and religion do not create an opportunity to recognize

diversity in terms of SOGI and developing tolerance toward LGBT individuals. Meanwhile, while solving many other problems the international constitution and documents regarding Human Rights are applied as legal and political tools in our country. Taking into consideration this factor and the fact that Armenia has ratified basic international documents referring to Human Rights, certain perspectives may be outlined specifically in terms of advocacy<sup>1</sup> of LGBT community representatives, since the rights fixed in those documents are unbreakable and are equally applied for all citizens. In this sense *the main problem* is to ground the necessity to follow those international criteria not only to the government and the decision makers in legal-political sphere, but also the Armenian society, especially in case of such citizens who are excluded from

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<sup>1</sup> «**Advocacy**» is taken for the English (advocacy or advocate) and is translated as suggestion, preaching, apologetics, active public protection, support, and argumentation and so on, whereas in everyday life the application of that notion can be translated as to support any kind of phenomenon. [1; C.10] (For example, to advocate for opening crematoriums in RA). In the context social problems/crisis advocacy has acquired a unique meaning, which is interpreted as special phasal process directed to influential, powerful or decision making people, groups, or policies, legislations, practices for solving problems applied by organizations, in other words to the change and improvement of their dispositions, actions and policy implementation. [3]

our society and are subject to labelling, discrimination, violation of rights and different types of violence just because their SOGI is different from that of others. *One must accept the other's right to be different, otherwise when this right is violated, people appear on the other side of periphery, become a victim of "inquisition", hence putting into danger public solidarity and maintenance of social fairness.*

Hence, the lack of objective information about LGBT individuals, their needs, relationships and lifestyle creates "fertile soil" to label them and make a victim of discrimination. The society which claims to be a civil society and adopts democratic values, should take steps and initiate activities to establish atmosphere tolerance and create opportunity to realize rights, specifically certain amendments in national legislation as well as through awareness raising and educational programs, which will influence objective information among different social groups, professional circles and in general in society, to revise ideas, perceptions on SOGI and to contribute to tolerance building.

## Methodology of Research

### *Purpose of Research*

This research is aimed at discovering the level of awareness of Armenian helping professionals<sup>2</sup> in sexual diversity, particularly in the conception of “homosexuality” and attitude towards LGBT individuals. One of the private issues of the research was to find out their information sources as well as to find out how these informational sources influence their ideas, myths, discrimination disposition or, the opposite, formation of tolerance toward LGBT individuals.

### *Problem Definition*

Inadequate perception and discrimination toward the LGBT individuals are widely spread in the Armenian reality due to insufficient education regarding the concept of “homosexuality,” stereotypes on the needs and behaviors of LGBT

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<sup>2</sup> “**Helping professions**” is a collective term which involves all professions aiming to support people, to understand and interpret their behavior, to disclose their needs and to overcome the problems theoretically and practically. These specializations include social work, social pedagogy, psychology, psychiatry, medicine, pedagogy, etc.

individuals, low level of awareness, incorrect and discriminative information disseminated by mass media as well as among helping professionals. For example, a doctor may give an interview on television and state that homosexuality is an illness which must be treated, a priest may note in his interview that LGBT individuals are guilty and need help “to step back from the wrong path”, and the lawyer may express a point that such individuals must be punished, and measures should be taken to fight against them. Based on the mentioned above it may be assumed that there is a necessity on awareness raising among the helping professionals who shall have objective information, maintain professional ethics and have cultural competency.<sup>3</sup>

### *Collection of information*

The questionnaire survey method was chosen to achieve the goal of this research. This method belongs to the quantitative sociological research methods and its tool was composed of semistandardized questionnaire of 19 questions. The survey was

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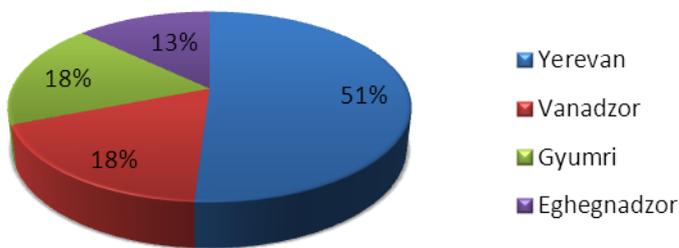
<sup>3</sup> "Cultural competency" is the ability to communicate with other people effectively in multicultural environment and the result of the process mutually to acknowledge and to understand the culture and lifestyle.

conducted among specialists from the cities Yerevan, Gyumri, Vanadzor and Yeghegnadzor. The respondents were doctors, nurses, educators in medical sciences, lawyers, attorneys, law educators, psychologists and psychology professors. For representativeness of research results different cities of Armenia were selected which have functioning intermediate vocational and higher educational institutions and, thus, there is a possibility to educate adequate professionals.

## Analysis of research results

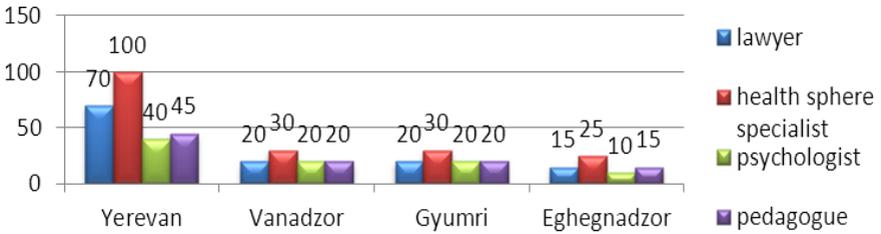
500 respondents were involved in this research - 255 specialists from Yerevan, 90 specialists from Gyumri, 90 specialists from Vanadzor and 65 specialists from Yeghegnadzor. Based on the fact that Lori and Shirak regions have an almost equal number of inhabitants and the cities of Vanadzor and Gyumri are regional centers, the number of respondents in both cities were the same. There have been dozens of cases of refusal based mainly on the low-interest or low awareness and, sometimes, extremely negative attitude towards LGBT individuals which they declare.

**Picture №1. The percentage of respondents in cities**



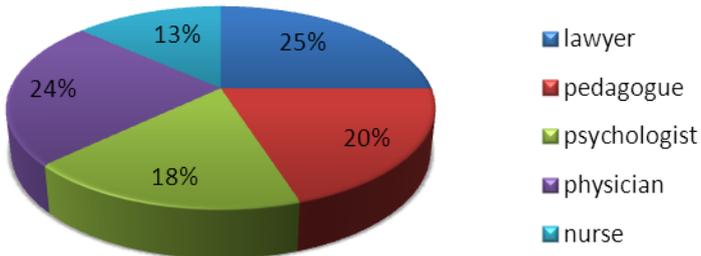
The following chart shows the number of specialists taken part in the research from different cities. Certainly, the number of specialists from Yerevan prevails.

**Picture №2. Dispersion of professionals in cities**



As shown in the chart below, 37% of respondents represent the health sector, 25% of respondents were lawyers, attorneys, notaries and other representatives of legislative system, 20% of respondents were pedagogues and 18% - psychologists.

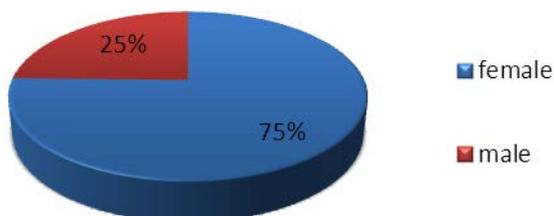
**Picture №3. The percentage of respondents by profession**



Respondents' selection is not distributed equally by gender because in the general population of Armenia women prevails men in numbers. Moreover, the number of women is

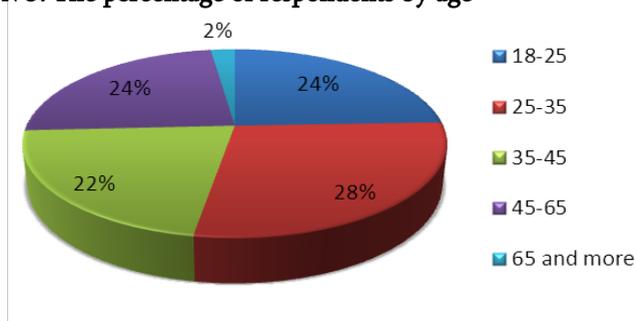
comparatively high in the health system, as well as among the pedagogues and psychologists. Thus, only the  $\frac{1}{4}$  of respondents were male representatives.

**Picture №4. The percentage of respondents by gender**



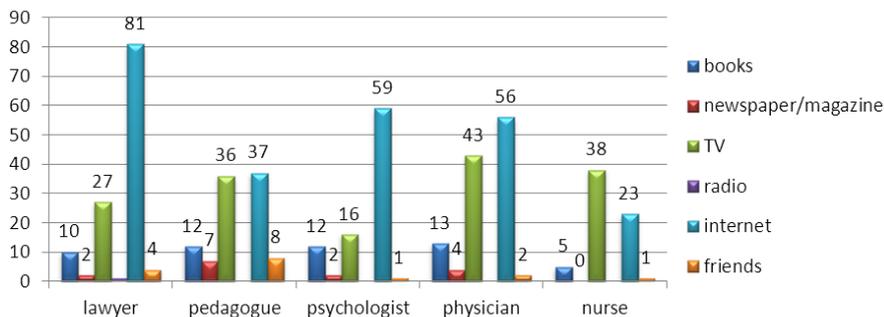
The age distribution of respondents is almost equal except the aged respondents who represent 2% of the total number of respondents. The minimum age of respondents was 18 years as they represent the future helping specialists, i.e. students aiming to have adequate qualifications. One of the goals of this research was also to reveal the knowledge and dispositions of this group.

**Picture №5. The percentage of respondents by age**



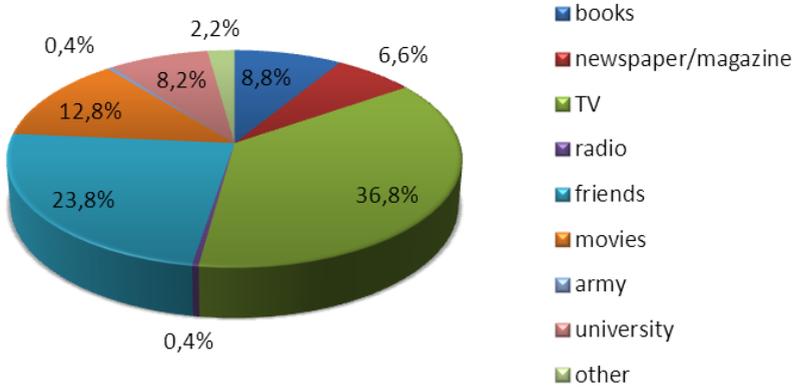
The specialists mainly point out television and the Internet as the primary sources for information. Lawyers and psychologists mostly use the Internet, doctors and pedagogues use both sources equally, while nurses get information mostly from television. By the way, the “book” option strangely is not widespread among the specialists having higher education.

**Picture №6. The primary source of information for professionals**



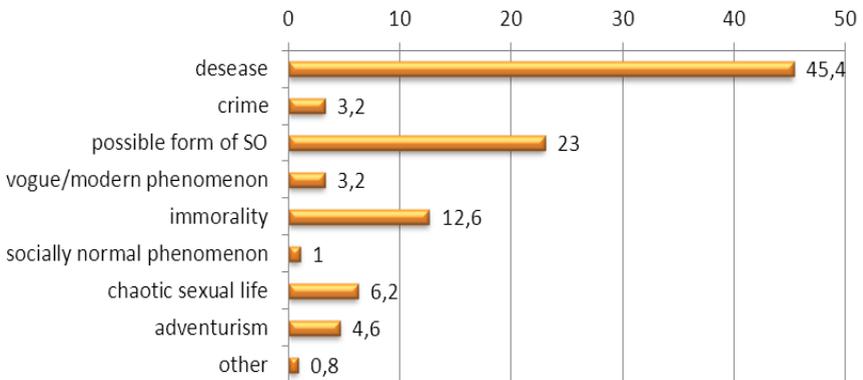
Only 9% of respondents mentioned the option “books” as response to “Where or from whom you first hear about homosexuality” question. The prevailing majority mentioned the option “television” (36.8%), 24% - friends and 13% - movies.

**Picture №7. First time about homosexuality**



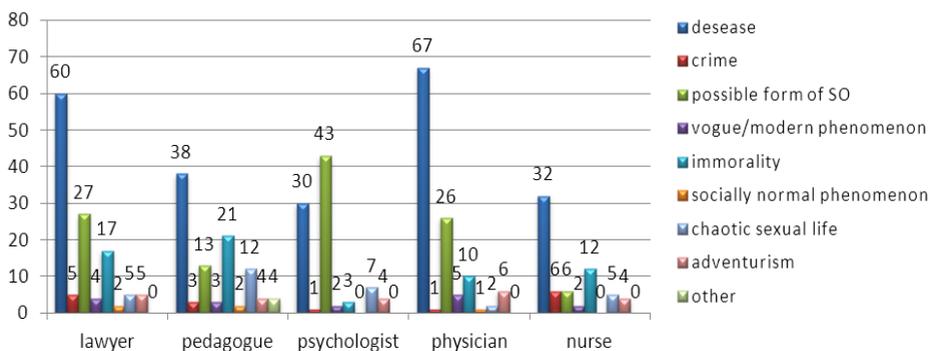
Almost half of respondents (45,4%) to the question “What is homosexuality?” answered that it is a disease. The second answer was that homosexuality is one of the forms of sexual orientation (23%). The third popular answer was “immorality” (12.6%).

**Picture №8. The perception of homosexuality**



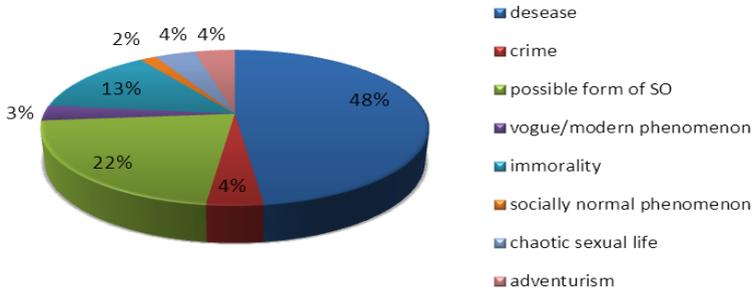
If we address the question how different specialists interpret homosexuality more thoroughly, then it would become clear that the majority of lawyers and pedagogues perceive homosexuality as disease, while many of psychologists interpret it as one of the form of sexual orientation. It shall specially be mentioned that 57% of doctors and 47% of nurses consider homosexuality as disease. There were respondents among lawyers who described homosexuality as a crime. The answer “immorality” is mostly given by pedagogues.

**Picture №9. The perception of homosexuality in different professional groups**

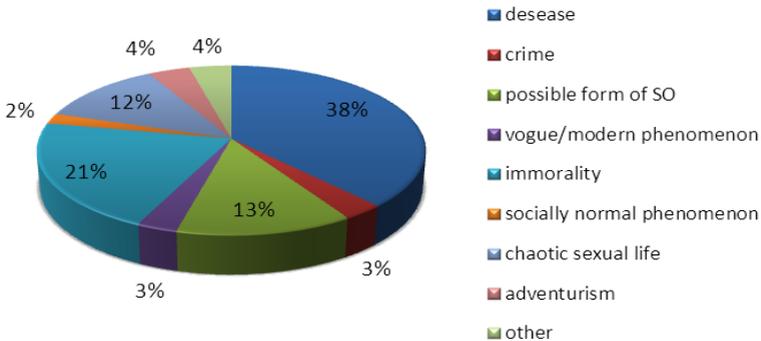


The charts below show the attitude of representatives of different specialisation towards the “homosexuality” phenomenon.

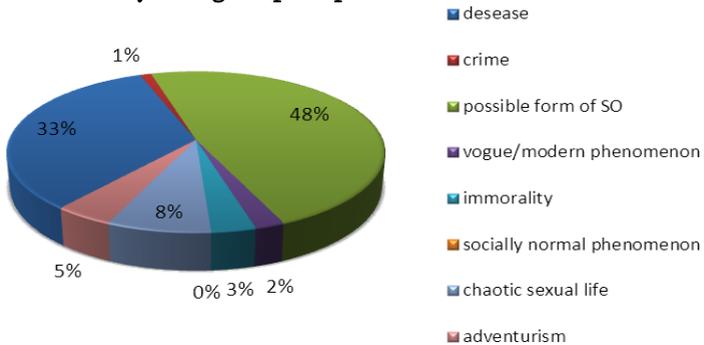
**Picture №10. Lawyer's perceptions**



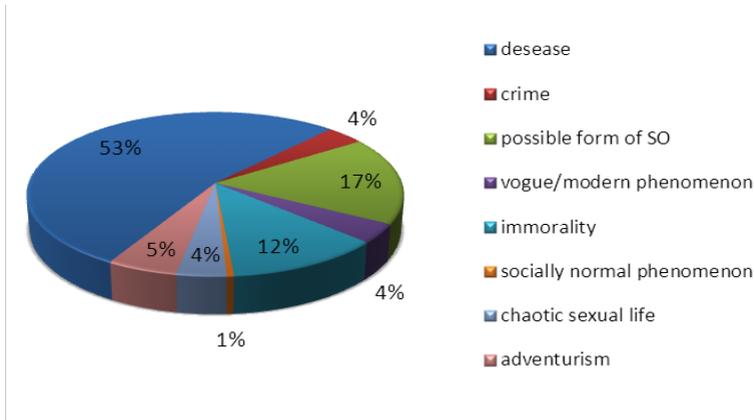
**Picture №11. Pedagogues' perceptions**



**Picture №12. Psychologists' perceptions**



**Picture №13. Health sphere specialists' perceptions**



Respondents were asked an open question in connection with the feelings, thoughts and associations when it comes to sexual diversity and LGBT individuals. The answers are very diverse, but it is possible to identify the most frequent of these formulations, as well as some answers deserving special attention. **69** respondents from 500 stated that LGBT individuals are just people like the others, **62** of them think that they are sick people (hormonal, physical or sexual deviation), while another **21** qualify them as mental patients, **47** respondents answered that they are distorted people, **43** of them said that they belong to other or "non-traditional" sexual orientation without interpreting their attitude towards LGBT individuals, **32** of them classified homosexuals as immoral people, **29** respondents called them

abnormal, 10 respondents considered them to be incomplete people, 7 people considered them just weird or obscure people, 6 of respondents called LGBT individuals useless and other 6 consider them unhappy people, 5 of them stated that they are unacceptable, asocial people, and 55 respondents could not answer the question or just overpass the question. The rest of the answers were given one or two times.

“They are primarily the degenerate persons resulted of psychological trauma.” *a lawyer from Gyumri*

“They are people who had bad childhood and friends having a negative impact on their sexual orientation. They are disgusting”. *a lawyer from Yerevan*

“They are dangerous animals, nature rag-tags”. *a lawyer from Yerevan*

“They are degenerate, depraved, gross people”. *a nurse from Yerevan*

“They are scabrous young people”. *a doctor from Yerevan*

“They are shame of our nation”. *a lawyer from Gyumri*

“They are individuals who need a help of a physitian or a psychologist”. *a pedagogue from Yeghegnadzor*

“LGBT people have sexual orientation inadequate to our social norms”. *a psychologist from Yeghegnadzor*

“They are deviated people and need the mercy of God”. *a psychologist from Yerevan*

“They are useless individuals of our society”. *a lawyer from Yeghegnadzor*

“They are full members of our society, they just have sexual deviations”. *a pedagogue from Yerevan*

“LGBT individuals are people who decide and chose their lifestyle themselves and do not follow accepted standards”. *A lawyer from Yerevan*

“They are sick people who in case of timely treatment will not have deviation”. *A pedagogue from Vanadzor*

“They are homosexual, immoral offals”. *A lawyer from Gyumri*

“They threaten the gene history and national values of our nation”. *A psychologist from Yeghegnadzor*

“They are sick and, can be called unhappy people who had to hide their sexual orientations. *A nurse from Yerevan*

“They are ordinary mortals who retain the right to live a full life”. *A psychologist from Gyumri*

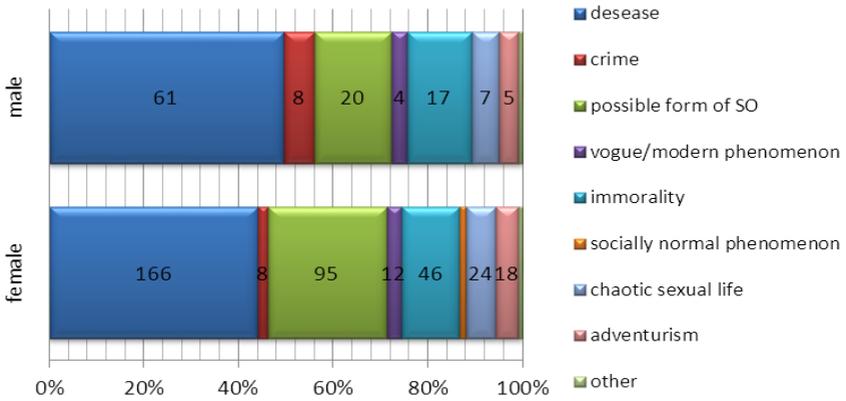
“They are results of bad environment and immoral”. *A doctor from Gyumri*

“They are deviated from the normal course of life, but in any case are members of our society”. *A pedagogue from Gyumri*

“They are people interested in chaotic sexual life”. *A pedagogue from Yeghegnadzor*

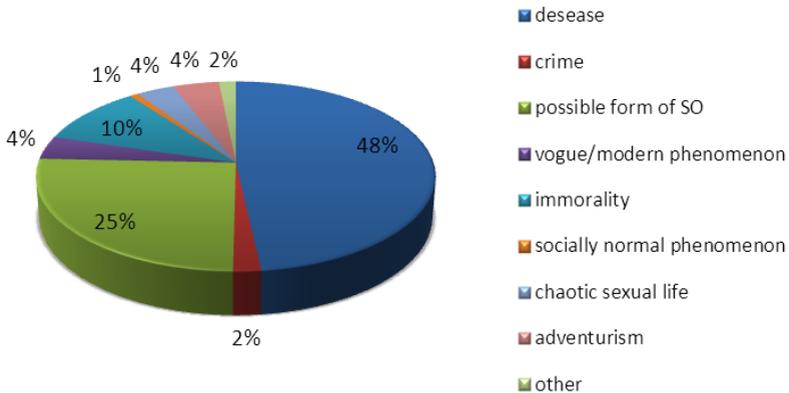
If we analyze the perception of homosexuality among helping professionals by sex, according to the survey, a greater percentage of men (compared to women respondents) perceive homosexuality as disease, while a larger percentage of female (compared to men respondents) interprets it as a possible sexual orientation.

**Picture №14. Men and women perceptions of homosexuality**

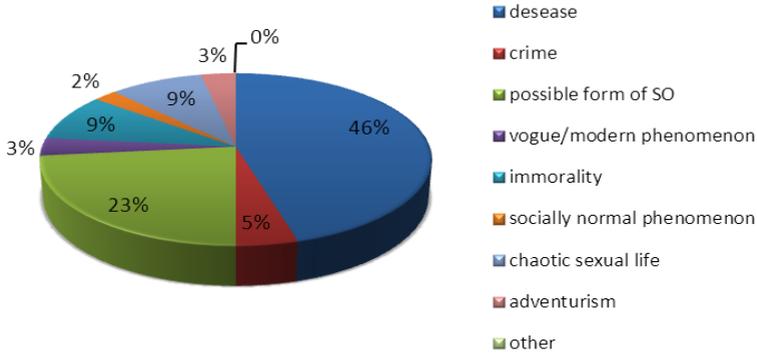


The charts below indicate which option of answer prevails to the perception of homosexuality in each city.

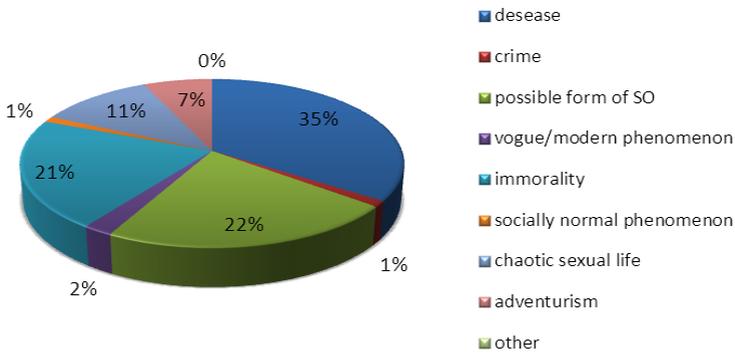
**Picture №15. Specialists' perceptions in Yerevan**



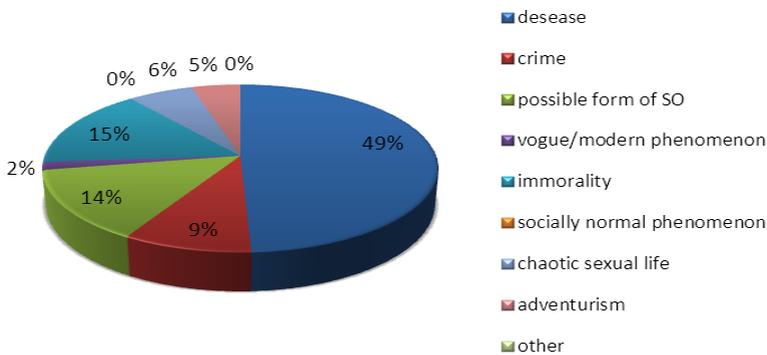
**Picture №16. Specialists' perceptions in Vanadzor**



**Picture №17. Specialists' perceptions in Gyumri**

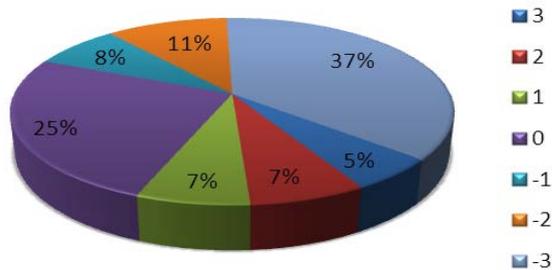


**Picture №18. Specialists' perceptions in Eghegnadzor**

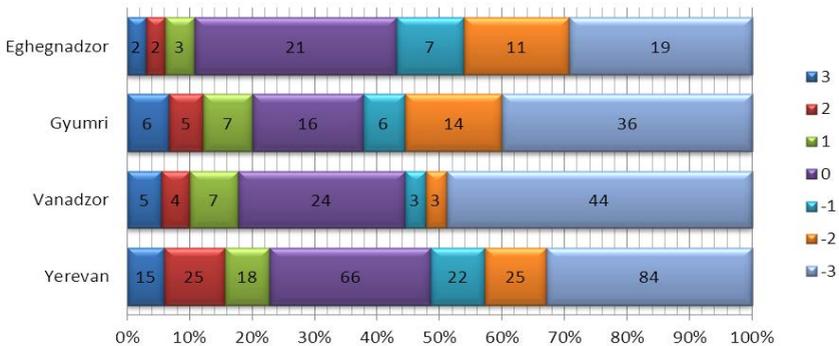


The respondents were suggested to indicate how tolerant or intolerant they are towards LGBT people according to tolerance scale (from 3 to -3). The 36% mentioned -3 option which means extremely intolerant up to death penalty. 11% is opposed to such extreme measures but they are for struggle against them – by curing, somehow punishing or other means. 8% of respondents were relatively in tolerant position - 1 option, 25% chose neutral position, 7% - relatively tolerant, 7% - largely tolerant and 6% - definitely tolerant.

**Picture №19. Respondents' level of tolerance**

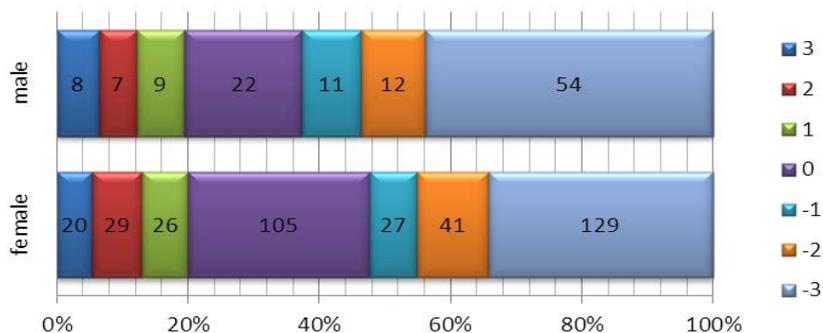


**Picture №20. The level of tolerance in cities**



If we try to analyze the tolerance level towards LGBT individuals by gender, then we will have the following picture. In fact, the percentage of largely and definitely tolerance among male and female representatives is almost equal (20%), while the number of extreme intolerant people dominates among the men and the neutral position is mostly typical to women.

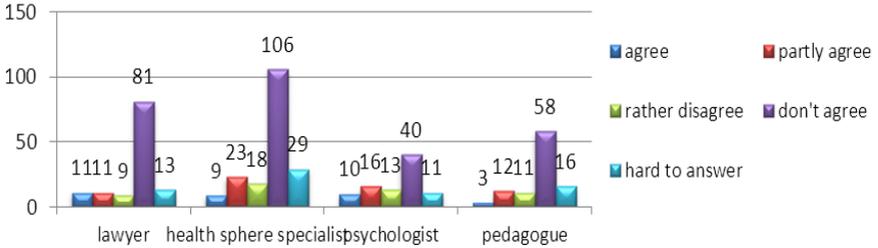
**Picture №21. The level of tolerance by gender**



Respondents were asked to answer whether they agree with the following statements. First statement refers to the marriage of homosexual couples. Specialists shall express their opinion on rights of men and women to legalize their homosexual marriage. Thus, the majority of lawyers and health care system specialists disagree with the “homosexuals shall have a right to marriage” statement. The answers of psychologists and pedagogues

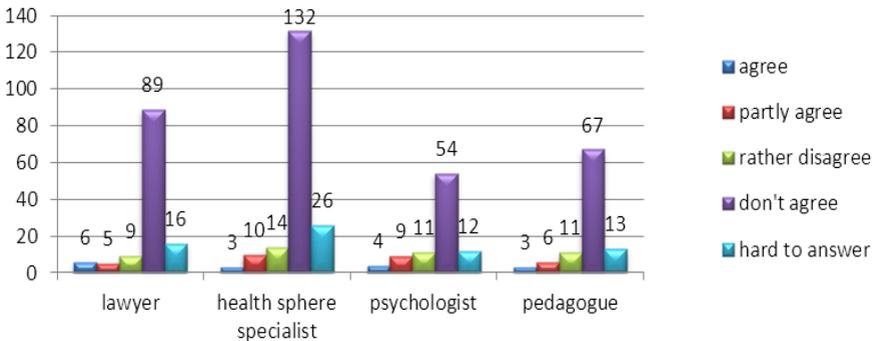
are diverse though the most common answer among them was also “completely disagree”.

**Picture №22. Attitude to their right to marriage**



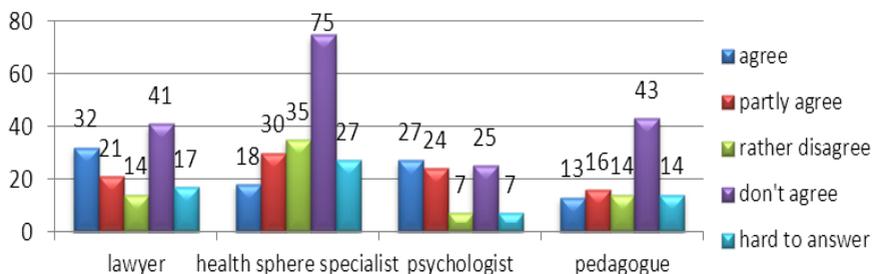
A considerable number of respondents disagreed with the statement that “Homosexual couples shall have the right to adopt/to have a child”, especially lawyers and health care system specialists, though the percentage of disagreed respondents among the pedagogues is also high (67%).

**Picture №23. Attitude to their right to become a parent**



The answer to the “Homosexuals shall retain the right to organize demonstrations” statement was quite diverse. As shown in the chart below, the health care system specialists and pedagogues are mostly disagree with this statement, but other answers were also identified, almost equally distributed. The psychologists often choose the answers “agree”, “partly agree”, “completely agree” and the majority answered positively to this question. The lawyers equally answered to options “agree” and “disagree”.

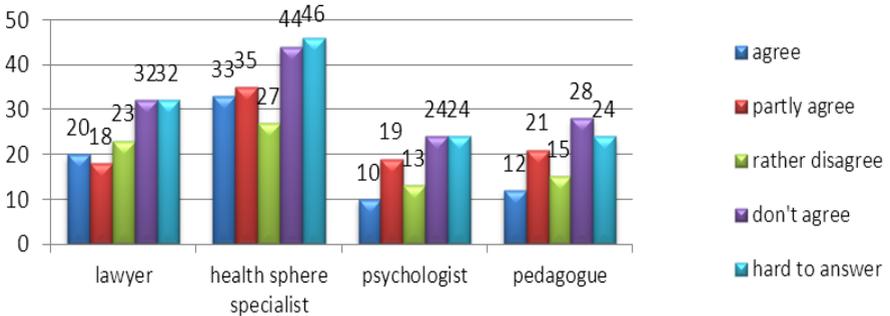
**Picture №24. Attitude to their right to organize prides**



The majority of specialists had difficulty to answer the "LGBT individuals generally manifest socially unacceptable behavior" (drug addiction, paid sexual services or to provide any other form of asocial behavior) statement. In particular, the lawyers and psychologists gave equal answers to this statement

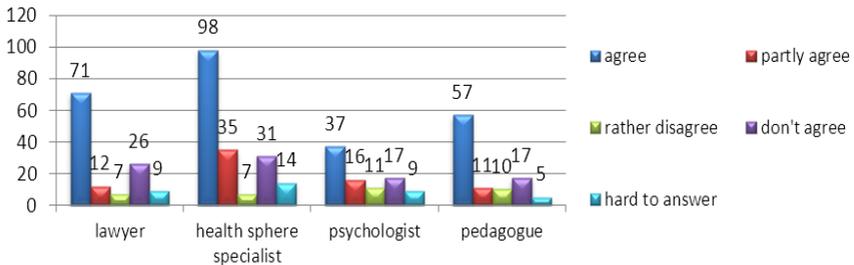
and also disagreed equally. In case of pedagogues the disagreement was dominant and in case of doctors all options have the same frequency of answers.

**Picture №25. Perceptions on LGBT people behaviour**



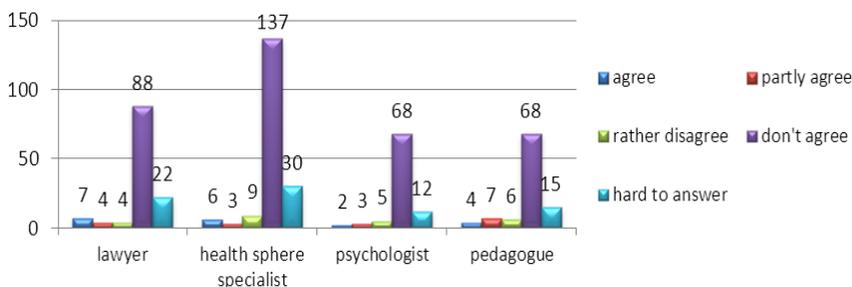
The majority of specialists agreed on the "LGBT individuals threaten our nation's gene history" statement. This is especially evident in the case of lawyers and health care system specialists.

**Picture №26. Regarding the influence on gene pool**



The majority did not agree "there are no homosexuals in our country" statement. The option "difficult to answer" is on the second place. It is interesting that there are specialists who believe that no homosexual lives in Armenia. Particularly, 7 lawyers expressed such point of view.

**Picture №27. The existance of homosexuals in Armenia**

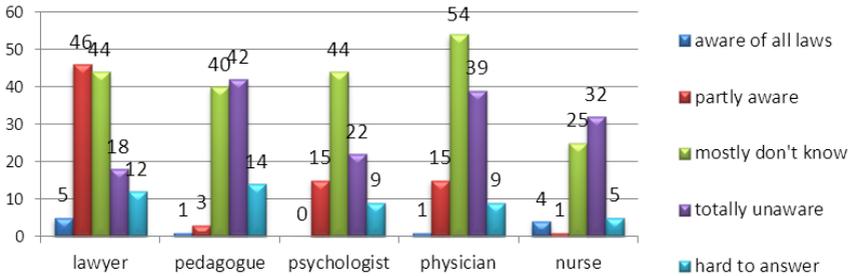


### *Laws and rights awareness*

Respondents asked to answer whether they agree to this or that statement. The awareness on the laws pertaining to the rights of LGBT individuals evidences that the most frequently encountered answer among lawyers is "I am mostly familiar with", among the doctors and psychologists prevails " I do not know basically " answer, among the nurses - "I am not familiar at all" answer and among the pedagogues "I do not know basically" and

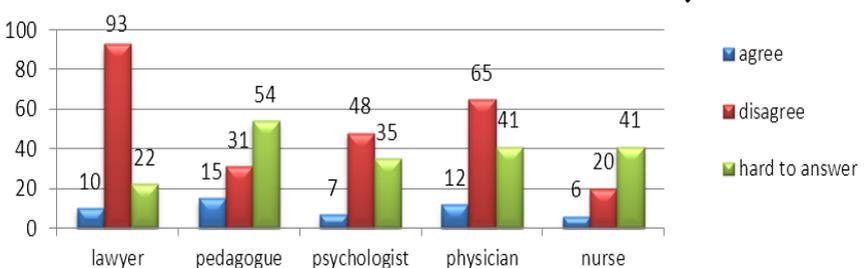
“I am not familiar at all” answers were chosen by almost the same number of respondents.

**Picture №28. The level of being aware of legislation**



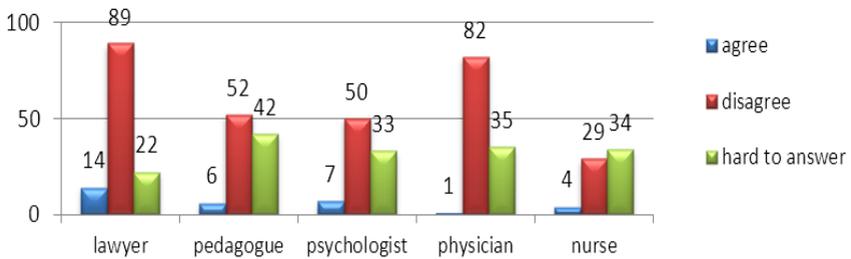
The following picture shows that the majority of lawyers do not agree with the statement, according to which "homosexuality is punishable under the Criminal Code of Armenia". In fact, the majority of lawyers deny this statement. The majority of doctors and psychologists disagreed but also a big number of specialists found it difficult to answer. The dominant part of nurses and pedagogues had difficulty to express an opinion on this statement.

**Picture №29. Statement about criminalization of homosexuality in RA**



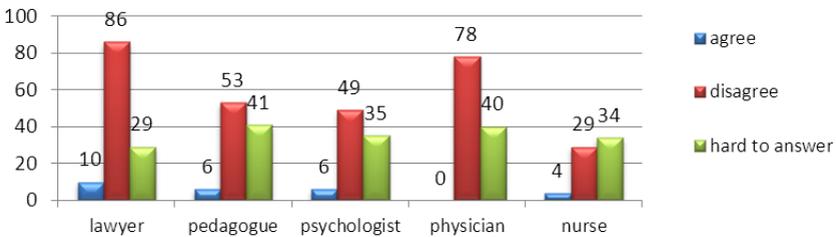
Many lawyers disagree with the “Homosexuals are allowed to register their marriage under the Laws of Armenia” statement, while the majority of nurses found it difficult to answer. Interestingly, 14 lawyer respondents agreed with this statement. According to them the registration of a homosexual couple is allowed in the Registry offices of Armenia.

**Picture №30. Statement about the right of homosexual couple to marry**



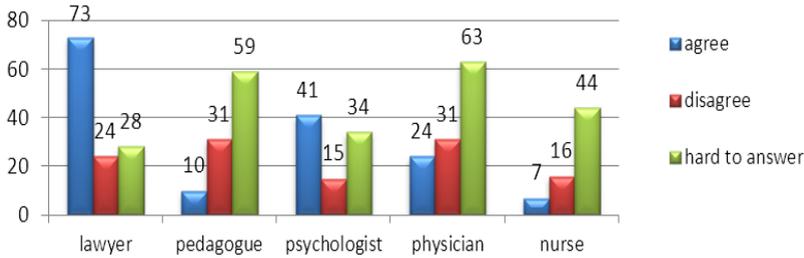
No doctor agreed with the “Homosexuals are allowed to adopt or to have a child under the laws of Armenia”, while some of the lawyers agreed with this statement.

**Picture №31. Statement about the right of homosexual couple to become a parent**



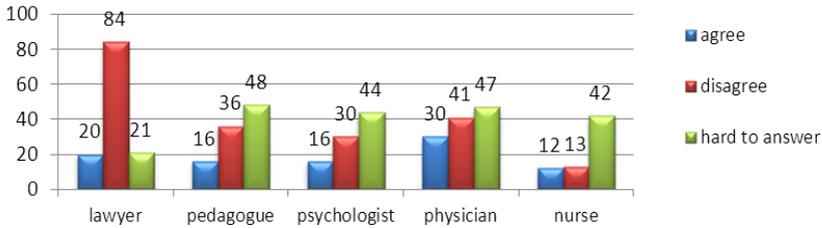
The situation is different in case of the “LGBT individuals are allowed to have association, organizations to protect their rights under the laws of Armenia” statement. The majority of lawyers agree with this statement though many of them found it difficult to answer. The majority of health care system specialists and pedagogues found it difficult to answer and psychologists equally choose the options “agree” and “difficult to answer”.

**Picture №32. Statement about the right of LGBT community to establish unions /community based organizations**



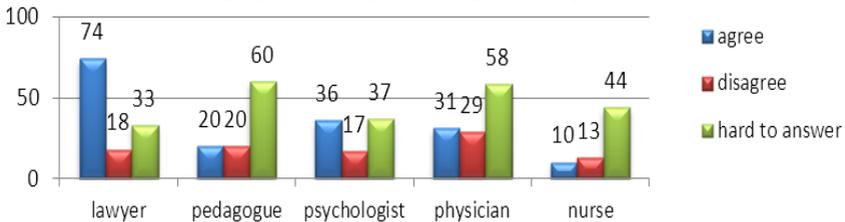
The majority of lawyers disagree with the “Homosexuals exempted from army service under the national law” statement. The doctors answered equally to all options, while nurses, psychologists and pedagogues mostly answered to the “difficult to answer” option.

**Picture №33. Statement about the right to serve in army of RA**



The majority of lawyers agreed to the “LGBT individuals retain the right to organize demonstrations, rallies for the protection of their rights under the laws of Armenia” statement. Psychologists equally indicated the options “agree” and “difficult to answer”. The most of the other experts found it difficult to answer.

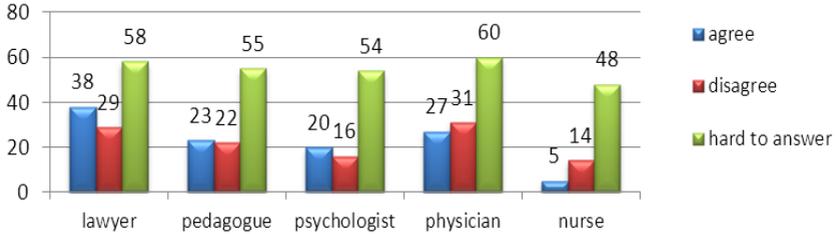
**Picture №34. Statement about the right of LGBT community to organize meetings/prides for protecting their rights**



In case of the “National law allows sex change by surgery” statement is very interesting to discover the awareness level of health care specialists, while the majority of them indicated

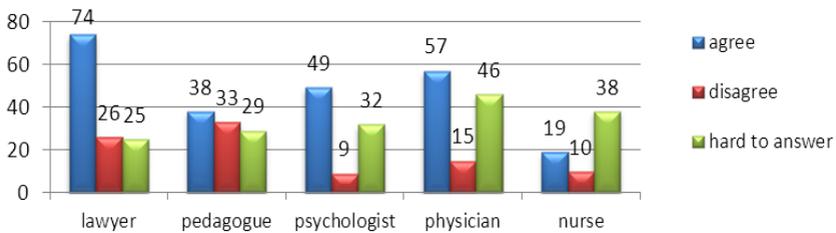
“difficult to answer” option. This option prevails among the other specialists though many of lawyers agreed with this statement.

**Picture №35. Statement about the right to have a surgery of changing a sex**



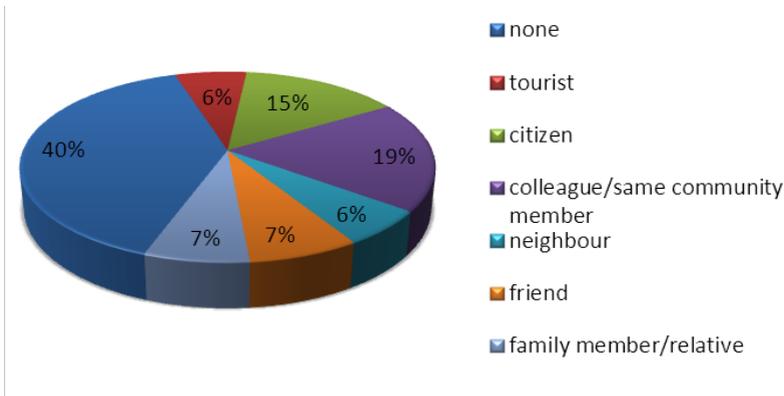
Almost all specialists agreed with the “LGBT individuals are equal members of our society in Armenia according to Law” though the answers were distributed equally among the pedagogues.

**Picture №36. Statement about being a full member of Armenian society by LGBT people**



The chart describing communication with LGBT people is presented below.

**Picture №37. Communication with LGBT people**

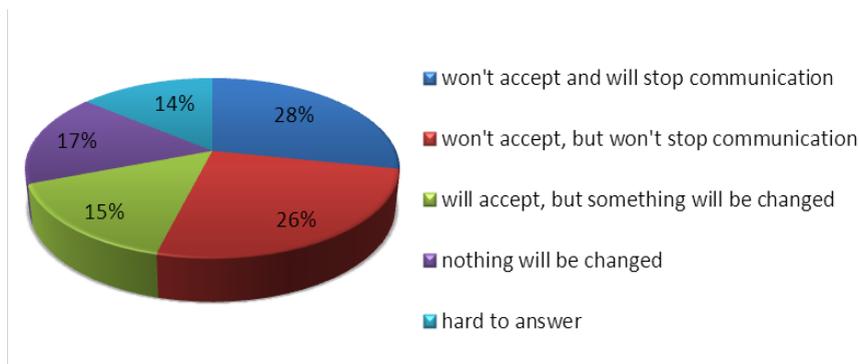


Thus, the majority of specialists would like never deal with LGBT people and only, 7% of respondents indicated that they may be accepted as a family member or relative.

Many respondents were asked to think about a close, significant person and answer the question what will happen to their relationship if suddenly appears that he/she has homosexual orientation. As observed in the chart below, 28% of respondents will stop communicating with a person at all, even with his/her own son or daughter. Almost the same number of respondents indicates that they will not accept his/her sexual orientation, will not understand him/her, but will not stop communication. By the way, there were also respondents who mentioned that they will try to help the homosexual person hoping that one day he/she will

change sexual orientation and become heterosexual, and in case of no success may be they will stop communication with them. Almost equal number of respondents indicated that “he/she will accept his/her sexual orientation as fact but it will affect our relationship somehow” and “no change will happen in our relationship” (15% and 17%) and 14% of respondents found it difficult to answer.

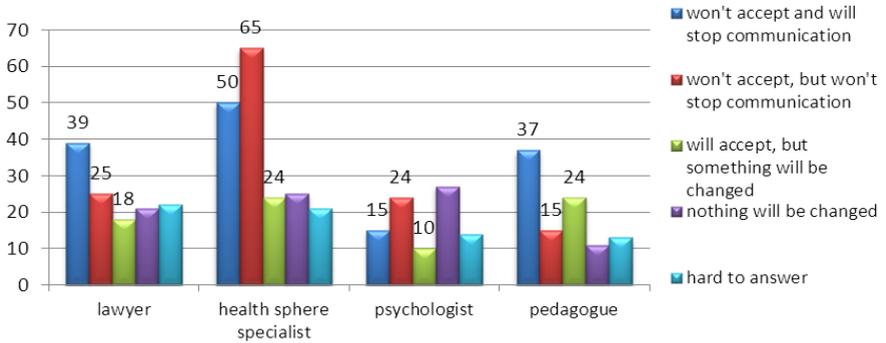
**Picture №38. Attitude towards significant person in case of identifying his/her “other” sexual orientation**



The chart below indicates that the answer “will not accept his/her sexual orientation and will stop communicating with him/her” is most common among lawyers and pedagogues. The second option dominates among the health care system specialists and in case of psychologists – “nothing will change in our

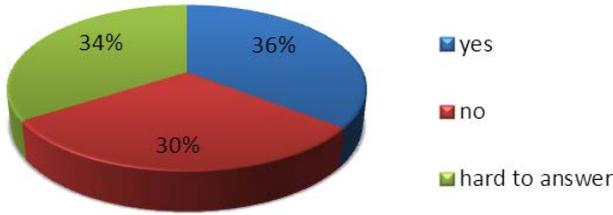
relationship” option though an equal number of psychologists indicated the second option.

**Picture №39. Attitude towards significant person in case of identifying his/her “other” sexual orientation in different professional groups**



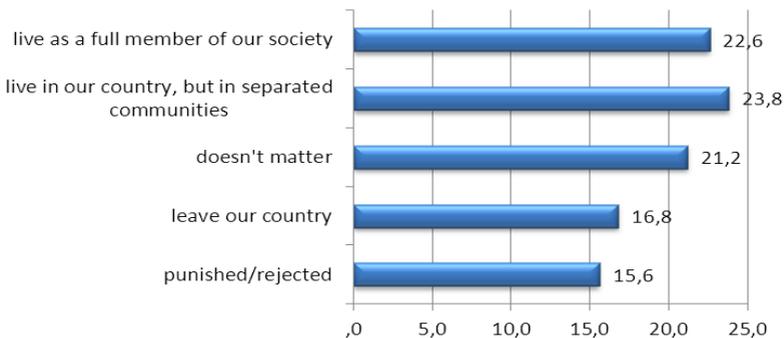
When asked whether they will benefit from the assistance of specialist services if it turns out that this specialist have homosexual orientation, the 36% of respondents answered positively arguing that the professional capabilities and professionalism have nothing to do with human SOGI. However, 34% of respondents found it difficult to answer the question, and 30% indicated that they will refuse the specialist services under different reasons (fear, uncertainty, nuisance feelings, negative attitude, "infection" and similar reasons).

**Picture №40. Applying for professional services**



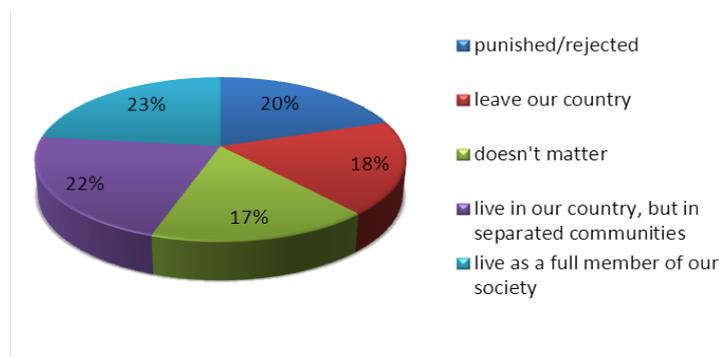
The points of views are very different on the role of LGBT people in the society. The first response is "let them live in our country, but far from us, in their own separate communities". Thus, these specialists accept the existence of LGBT individuals in our country but prefer to ignore them and deal with them as little as possible.

**Picture №41. Functioning of LGBT people in Armenain society**

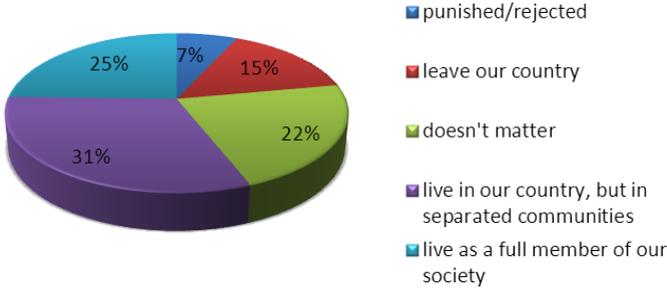


As it can be seen from the chart below, the perception of LGBT individuals as complete members of the society is most common among the psychologists. In case of the lawyers that variant is also common, but the following answer is almost equal: “let them live away from us, in their own communities.” Moreover, the disposition regarding the necessity of punishing the LGBT individuals is most common in the answers of lawyers, nurses and pedagogues. In case of nurses the variant “let them leave our country” is specifically dominant. Neutral attitude or ignorance toward this issue is expressed mostly by the psychologists as well as the pedagogues and doctors.

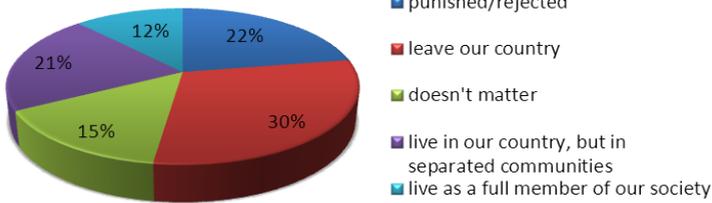
**Picture №42. Lawyers' attitudes**



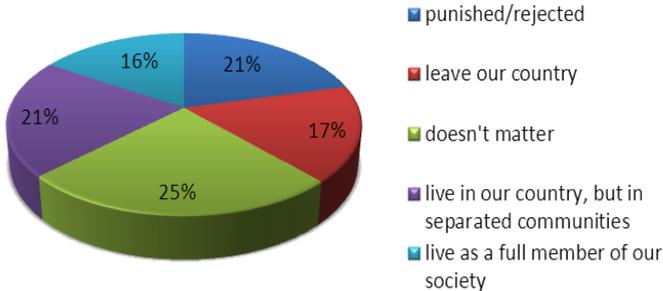
**Picture №43. Physicians' attitudes**



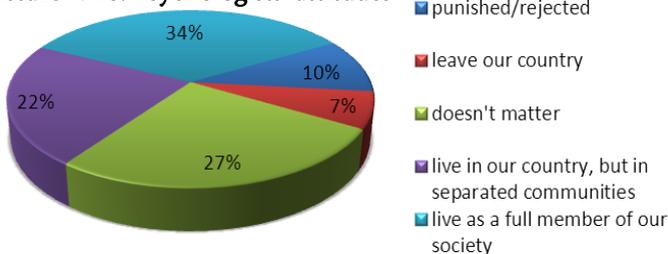
**Picture №44. Nurses attitudes**



**Picture №45. Pedagogues' attitudes**



**Picture №46. Psychologists' attitudes**



It should be noted that many of those who chose “LGBT individuals can live next to us as full members of our society” variant also commented in the section “other” that “it is desirable that they don’t demonstrate, speak out about their sexual orientation.” That is, though considering themselves tolerant, the vast majority of those specialists refer to the LGBT individuals with some subjectiveness and sometimes also carefulness.

Nonetheless, the results of the research indicate the fact that even the specialists with higher education, who are supposed to help people, provide them necessary services with no discrimination and stereotypes, may «classify» their clients, avoid communicating, work or just get into contact with a person just because the latter's sexual orientation is different or does not fit into widely accepted frameworks of heteronormatic paradigm. That is, a supporting specialist may wish a LGBT individual to be punished, be isolated, and be departed from the country only for that reason the evidence of which is shown in the presented picture (№41).

## Conclusion

Thus, the aim of the research was to identify various helping professionals': doctors', nurses', psychologists', lawyers', pedagogues' perceptions about the concepts of “sexual diversity”, “homosexuality”, factors affecting their formation, as well as the attitude toward the LGBT individuals in Armenia. The research showed that the lack of awareness about homosexuality and, in general, sexual diversity, as well as the hypothesis associated with the myths and stereotypes, debates and discussion around the topic, relevant education and awareness programs, and the need for the development of tolerance among those professional groups.

As a rule, in countries where exists cultural diversity among individuals, social groups, communities, tolerance becomes one of the most important preconditions for peaceful coexistence and for the formation of a healthy society. Although the Armenian society is accepted as a mono-ethnic and particularly not containing cultural diversity (as a result of random survey sample participated 496 Armenians, 1 Greek, 1 Georgian, 1 Ukrainian, 1 Russian), although in this era of intense globalization communication of cultures becomes more modern year by year,

cultural differences are being shaped even in such society where the majority are still one and the same ethnos.

The study of international experience shows that legislation, which encourages tolerance, clearly establishes norms of coexistence of different cultures, guarantees the realization of human rights, condemns discrimination, which is also a necessary precondition and a contributing factor for the formation of a tolerant environment in a society, that legislation definitely raises "useful activity coefficient" of those societies because all are equal before the law and have unbreakable rights. Any society cannot really have any "benefit" discriminating and alienating its individual members.

Whereas, the study results indicate that even among highly educated professionals with practical professional activities who are supposed to provide significant services, to satisfy their needs while maintaining professional ethic codes, there still exists discrimination and intolerance toward LGBT individuals, while the latter are also members of our society and have the same basic rights.

Meanwhile, it is interesting, that the answers of lawyers and nurses coincided in many aspects; the answers of the psychologists were different from others' with relatively tolerant disposition. In case of doctors', the most notable discovery was that a vast majority of them are not aware that the homosexuality is not listed as a disease. Whereas pedagogues, being not only the bearers of social norms, but also the disseminators (as a social institution, school is a most important agent of socialization), within the frames of their professional activities, can significantly affect the knowledge and perception of sexual diversity and homosexuality as well as the formation of attitude towards LGBT individuals. However, the survey results indicate that many pedagogues are in need of awareness, obtaining objective knowledge; therefore it is highly possible that pedagogues will have more negative impact on children in regard to homosexuality considering their own biased perceptions, knowledge and discrimination position. Nevertheless, it is clear that even in case of representatives of such specialists there is still need for fighting against discrimination, increasing level of tolerance, increasing objective level of information on sexual orientation issues.

So, in Armenia the actuality of responding to the problem of discrimination and violation of rights of LGBT community in different spheres of societal life is motivated by numerous factors, including the need to build civil society and the contemporary challenges existing in the context of Human Rights. In this regard it is important to have a positive change in terms of Armenian lawyers, psychologists, pedagogues and health professionals' perceptions and attitudes toward sexual diversity and LGBT individuals. They should have knowledge and cultural competency.

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