



# SOCIAL PERCEPTION SURVEY ON LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL, AND TRANSGENDER PERSONS' RIGHTS IN NIGERIA

*Conducted by: Silverchip Fox Consulting*







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# GLOSSARY OF TERMS

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**Cisgender:** The gender identity of a person whose sense of personal identity and gender corresponds with their sex assigned at birth.

**Conversion practices:** Term used to describe attempts to change, suppress, or divert one's sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression conducted by medical or mental health professionals, religious personnel, traditional or spiritual healers or practitioners, or other entities.

**Bisexual:** A person emotionally, romantically, sexually or relationally attracted to people of the same gender and other genders, though not necessarily simultaneously; a bisexual person may not be equally attracted to both sexes, and the degree of attraction may vary as sexual identity develops over time.

**Gay:** A synonym for homosexuality in many parts of the world. In this report, it is explicitly used to refer to a man whose primary emotional, romantic, sexual and relational attraction is to other men.

**Gender expression:** External manifestation of one's gender identity, usually expressed through masculine, feminine or gender-variant behaviour, clothing, haircut, voice or body characteristics. Typically, transgender persons seek to make their gender expression match their gender identity rather than their birth-assigned sex.

**Gender identity:** One's deeply rooted internal sense of their gender, i.e., being male or female, both, or something other than female and male. For most people, gender identity aligns with assigned sex, but this is not often the case for trans persons.

**Gender nonconforming:** Behaving or appearing in ways that do not fully correspond with socially prescribed and prevailing ideas about gender roles and norms.

**Heterosexual:** The sexual orientation of a person whose primary sexual and romantic attraction is toward people of another sex.

**Homophobia:** Fear of, hatred of, and/or discrimination against homosexuals or homosexuality, usually based on negative stereotypes of homosexuality.

**Homosexual:** A person emotionally, romantically, sexually or relationally attracted to people of the same sex.

**Intersex:** An umbrella term that refers to a range of biological traits that cause individuals to be born with chromosomes, gonads, and/or genitals that vary from what is considered typical for female and male bodies.

**Lesbian:** A woman emotionally, romantically, sexually or relationally attracted to other women.

**LGBTQ+:** An inclusive term that refers to people who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer, and other such categories. We use “LGBTQIA+” for issues that affect asexual people, and “LGBTQI” for issues impacting lesbian, gay, bisexual, queer, transgender, queer and intersex people.

**Outing:** Exposing someone’s sexual orientation as lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender without their permission. Outing someone can have serious employment/economic/safety/religious repercussions in some societies or situations.

**Sexual orientation:** An inherent or immutable enduring emotional, romantic, sexual or relational attraction to another person. It refers to the way or ways in which these desires and attractions are directed. The term describes whether an individual is primarily attracted to persons of the same sex, different sex, both sexes, or others. It is not to be confused with sexual preference, which is what a person likes or prefers to do sexually and can be a conscious recognition of choice.

**Sex characteristics:** These are physical traits which are indicative of a person’s biological sex. Primary sex characteristics are usually present at birth and comprise the external and internal genitalia, e.g., the penis and testes in males and the vagina and ovaries in females. Secondary sexual characteristics are those that emerge during the prepubescent through postpubescent phases.

**Transgender:** An umbrella term referring to an individual whose gender identity differs from the sex assigned at birth. It may include people who are not exclusively masculine or feminine and nonbinary or genderqueer, including no gender, gender fluid or agender people.





# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Initiative for Equal Rights (TIERS) commissioned Silverchip Fox Consulting to conduct a social perception survey to understand how the Nigerian public views lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender persons and their rights. This poll is the 5th in the biennial series, conducted across the 36 states in Nigeria, including the Federal Capacity Territory.

Perceptions about homosexuality and gender diversity have significantly changed within the last ten years. The enactment of the Same Sex Marriage Prohibition Act (SSMPA) led to increased human rights violations against lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ+) persons in Nigeria. The history and public perception of LGBTQ+ persons in Nigeria have experienced a notable shift in the past decade. Since the passing of the SSMPA, sexual and gender minorities have experienced increased exposure to violence. Previous findings indicate that the SSMPA is the main contributor to the increased violence perpetrated against LGBTQ+ persons in the country.<sup>1</sup>

This survey examines trends in society's perception of LGBTQ+ persons, their rights and statuses while evaluating the impact of advocacy efforts geared towards advancing equality in Nigeria. In conducting the 2022 poll on public perception of the rights and issues related to LGBTQ+ persons,

we disbursed questionnaires to persons aged 18 and above across the 36 states and the Federal Capital Territory. We also conducted key informant and qualitative interviews with a select group of experts to garner a robust understanding of the perception of relevant stakeholders who interact with LGBTQ+ persons. Our survey questions interrogated respondents' knowledge and beliefs about whether sexual orientation is innate, whether they would accept a family member or friend who is lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or queer and their awareness of laws that criminalise same-sex acts between consenting adults.

The research finds that:

1. Most respondents would still not accept a family member who is lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or queer. However, there is an increase in acceptance across the country. The 2019 poll recorded a 30% level of acceptance, while the 2022 study documents a 34% level of acceptance of a family member who is LGBTQ+. These figures show a growing, positive trend of accepting diverse sexual orientations and gender identities in Nigeria.
2. There is a decline in support for the SSMPA and the associated punishment for same-gender loving persons. In 2015, a year after

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.hrw.org/news/2016/10/20/nigeria-harsh-laws-severe-impact-lgbt-community>



the law came into force, 77% of respondents supported the SSSMPA. This reduced to 57% in the 2019 survey and has further declined to 48% in the 2022 poll, that is almost half of respondents supporting the law.

3. The 2022 poll also examined the reasons for the change in acceptance of LGBTQ+ persons among the respondents in the past five years. The results indicate that 34% of respondents who changed their opinions towards acceptance did so because of their growing awareness that all humans are equal and should be so treated. We can attribute this position to LGBTQI+ rights advocacy by organisations working towards normalising sexual and gender diversity in Nigeria.
4. Interviews with religious stakeholders revealed the intersection of religion and the significant role it plays in shaping the social perception of LGBTQ+ persons. With Christianity and Islam being the major religions in Nigeria, respondents stated that their religious doctrines, found in the Bible and Qur'an, form the singular source of their perception about LGBTQ+ persons and their rights, making them unwilling to accept homosexuality and gender diversity.
5. Religion also influences law and policymakers in Nigeria at all levels. In contrast, the healthcare professionals interviewed for this study expressed that all healthcare providers should treat LGBTQI+ persons equally in access to healthcare, regardless of their religious beliefs.

Respondents also cited exposure to diversity worldwide and education as factors that could lead to increased acceptance of LGBTQI+ persons

in Nigeria. Some stakeholders, including healthcare professionals, sought out knowledge on LGBTQI+ individuals by watching videos and reading social media posts on their experiences.

This research finds that an increasing number of Nigerians believe that sexual orientation is innate and natural; and that individuals do not choose their sexual orientations. Most people also do not think they have friends or acquaintances who are LGBTQI+. Most people would still not accept a family or friend being LGBTQI+. However, more people said they would accept a family, friend or acquaintance being LGBTQI+ in this 2022 survey than in the 2019 survey. Younger people are also more likely to accept homosexuality than those aged 55 and above.

Religion remains the driving force for rejecting sexual and gender minorities in Nigeria. Religious doctrines and norms dictate that cisgender identity and heterosexuality are the norms, ensuring that religious people follow these tenets and exclude sexual and gender minorities, leading to discrimination and violence. Still, support for the SSMPA appears to be declining, with 48% of respondents agreeing that society should punish people for their homosexuality or diverse gender identity/expression. Bias is still prevalent among healthcare professionals, as some respondents admitted that they would treat a gay person differently or less than others while providing treatment.

This research shows that there is still much work to be done in influencing social perceptions and attitudes from rejection and intolerance to inclusion and acceptance of sexual and gender diversity. Activists and organisations must work to demystify religious indoctrination, which forms the basis for most of these negative perceptions.



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# INTRODUCTION

In 2014, the former President of Nigeria, Goodluck Jonathan, signed the Same-Sex Marriage Prohibition Act (SSMPA) into law. The SSMPA criminalises consensual same-sex sexual activity, same-sex marriage and membership of gay rights groups, with a penalty of up to 14 years imprisonment.<sup>2</sup>

In the eight years since the enactment of this law, the lives of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ+) have been negatively impacted in terms of access to healthcare, employment opportunities, homelessness, physical and sexual harassment and other forms of violence and discrimination. LGBTQ+ persons have experienced killings, arbitrary arrests and detention, extortion, intimidation, kidnapping, blackmail, rape and other forms of sexual violence, mob attacks, beatings, isolations, and so on.<sup>3</sup>

Across many African countries, society's tolerance for individuals with diverse sexual orientations remains low.<sup>4</sup> In some instances, factors such as income levels, class, age and education influence

the acceptance or rejection of sexual and gender diversity. Notwithstanding, the Pew research indicates increased acceptance of LGBTQ+ individuals across countries, including South Africa, Kenya and Nigeria.<sup>5</sup>

The Initiative for Equal Rights (TIERs) began conducting a biennial survey on the social perception of LGBTQ+ persons' rights and the SSMPA in 2013. Since then, TIERs has published survey reports in 2015, 2017, and 2019. <sup>6</sup>This 2022 study is the 5th publication in the series.

This social perception survey adopted a mixed-method approach with a survey questionnaire distributed across Nigeria and interviews with persons with in-depth knowledge and experiences about LGBTQ+ issues in the country.

<sup>2</sup> *Criminal Code Act, Chapter 77 Laws of the Federation of Nigeria 1990. See section. 214 for 'carnal knowledge ... against the order of nature' and section 352 which provides that acts of 'gross indecency' between males carry a maximum sentence of three years.*

<sup>3</sup> *See The Initiative for Equal Rights, "Report: Human Rights Violations Based on Real or Perceived Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity/Expression and Sex Characteristics," 2021, <https://theinitiativeforequalrights.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/2021-Human-Rights-Violations-Report.pdf>.*

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.pewresearch.org/global/2020/06/25/global-divide-on-homosexuality-persists/>

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>6</sup> <https://theinitiativeforequalrights.org/resources/>.





# METHODOLOGY

## SCOPE

This research study covers the perception of the Nigerian population about persons who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, queer, transgender, and intersex in the country. It spanned 36 states, including the FCT, with respondents aged 18 to 56+ years.

The study aimed to assess the impact of advocacy activities to improve the acceptance of the study population by analysing the levels of acceptance of LGBT+ identities in the country.

Specifically, the objectives of the study are as follows:

- To observe the perceptions of Nigerians towards LGBTQTI persons and their rights and
- To carry out trend analysis on attitudes towards the SSMPA.

## DEVELOPING OF DATA COLLECTION TOOLS

Silverchip Fox Consulting and The Initiative for Equal Rights (TIERs) developed the survey questionnaire. The research team recruited and trained data enumerators and pre-tested the instrument across four randomly selected states: Abia, Abuja, Lagos, and Ogun. After the pre-testing phase, the research team refined and deployed the final questions across Nigeria.

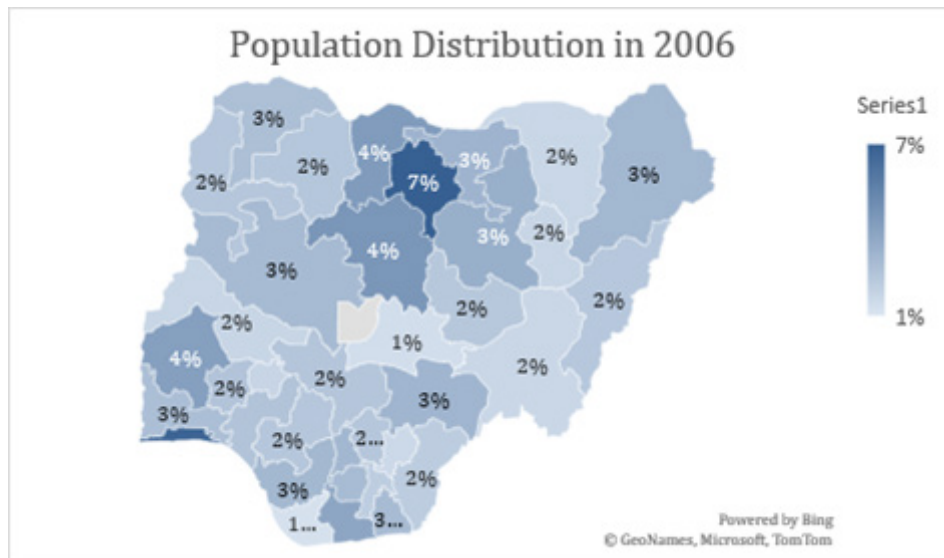
## DATA COLLECTION

### Sample Frame Selection

We designed this survey to obtain information on Nigerians' perception of LGBTQTI+ persons in Nigeria. The sample frame was intended to exclude all persons not resident in Nigeria, persons resident in Nigeria but aged below 18, and LGBTQTI+ persons resident in Nigeria.

The adult population was selected based on the official 2006 Nigerian population census, which placed the population of Nigeria at 140.43 million persons comprising 71.3 million people identifying as male and 69.0 million people identifying as female. The ratio of men to women in Nigeria at 31 to 30 encouraged random sampling. The Nigerian Bureau of Statistics disaggregates its data from a 5-year gap hence the target population reference for determining the overall sample begins from 15 years and above. This disaggregation put our target population at 97.2% of the total country population.

After reviewing responses from the 2019 survey, we noted that the respondents' gender, profession, educational background, and marital status had no bearing on their opinions. Hence, we excluded these data from this survey.



### Sampling By Age

Previous studies have noted a shift in acceptance levels of gender and sexual diversity through generations, with younger people showing more acceptance than older people.

For this study to be extensive and inclusive of all ages, we selected respondents from different age groups, 18-25, 26-35, 36-55, and 55 and above, with at least one person from each age group from all the states in Nigeria.

### Sample Size Selection

After reviewing closely related surveys and maintaining a lack of bias in the study, we chose a simple random sampling method with the desired margin of error at +/-5% with a 95% confidence interval. This calculation means that if 100 people in this study share the same opinion, a survey of the entire population will have either 95 or 105 persons with the same answer.

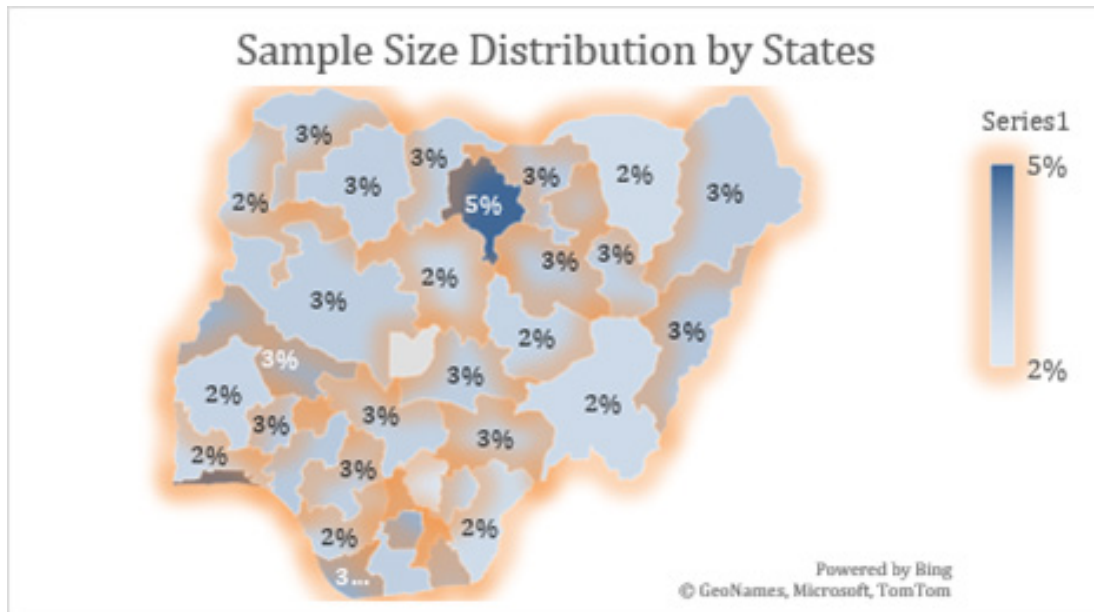
Given that this is an extensive population national survey, the overall sample size for each geopolitical zone was calculated using the Fishers' formula (Daniel, 1999).<sup>7</sup>

$N = N * X / (X + N - 1)$ , where  $X = Z_{\alpha/2} * p * (1-p) / MOE^2$ , and  $Z_{\alpha/2}$  is the critical value of the Normal distribution at  $\alpha/2$ , MOE is the margin of error,  $p$  is the sample proportion, and  $N$  is the population size. This formula brought the overall sample population to a minimum of 2401. The response reach was 9095, while the total responses received from the survey was 3006.

To ensure an even distribution of the overall sample methodology, we allocated primary sampling units to reflect the ratio of the population distribution from the 2006 census.

<sup>7</sup> Jung, Sin-Ho. (2014). Stratified Fisher's Exact Test and its Sample Size Calculation. *Biometrical journal. Biometrische Zeitschrift*. 56. 129-40. 10.1002/bimj.201300048.





*Figure 1: Sample size distribution by States*

### **Survey**

This study utilised a mixed-methods approach combining qualitative and quantitative methods with primary data collection. We conducted surveys and in-depth interviews with stakeholders to fully understand the current attitudes towards the study subjects.

### **Enumeration**

We also adopted the CAPI system of data collection. Surveys were conducted with 53 trained enumerators across the 36 states using the Survey Monkey Anywhere kiosk mode, allowing data collection even in areas with limited or no internet connectivity. This platform was selected specifically for this feature, enabling the study span hard to reach communities across the country. Each geographical region was assigned a supervisor who monitored the enumerators to maintain data quality.

### **In-Depth Interviews**

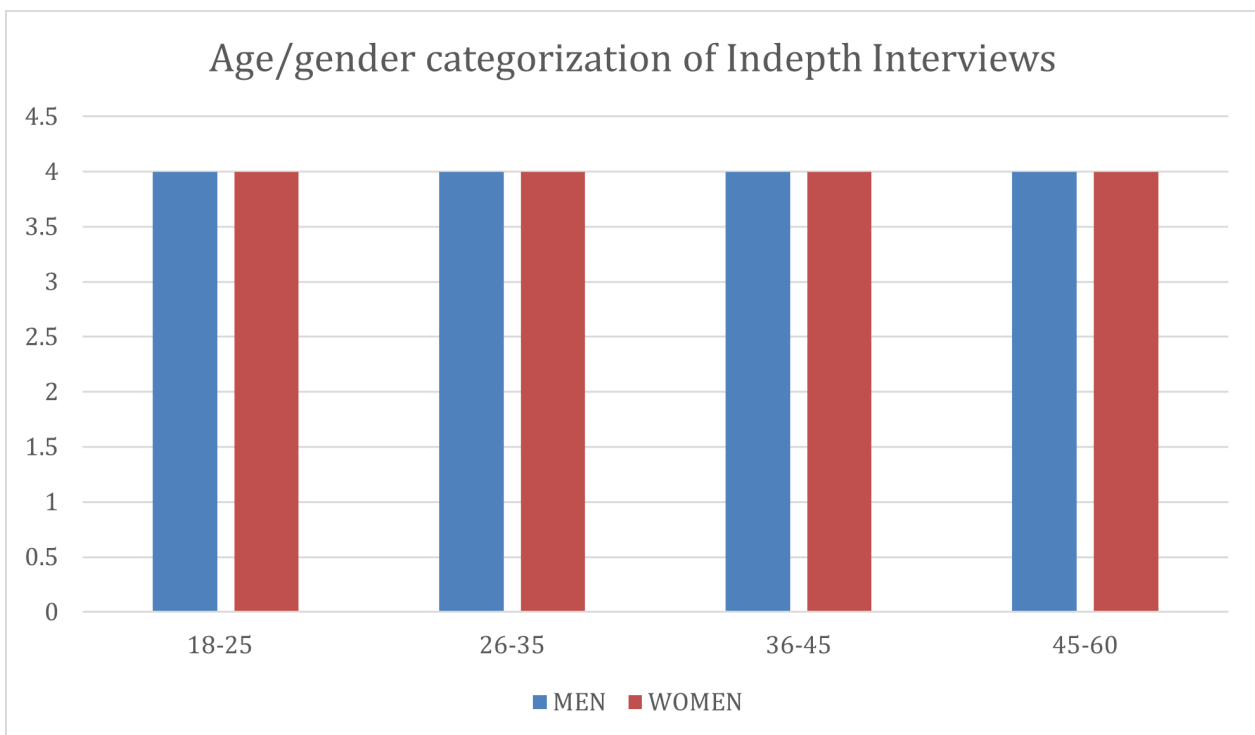
In-depth interviews were conducted over the phone to accommodate some stakeholders' availability, religious positions, and the nature of the study.

Presentation of the In-depth Interview Sample  
For in-depth Interviews, the sampling frame was determined by initial results from the sampling survey. The sampling frame excluded the same population excluded by the study and specifically targeted the following persons:

- a. Policymakers in selected regions
- b. Civil Society Campaigners
- c. Health workers (Psychiatrists/Psychologists/ Nurses)
- d. Religious leaders (Christianity, Islam, and traditional faith leaders)
- e. Social Workers
- f. Other randomly selected people who do not identify as LGBTQI+ people.

We contacted a total of 50 stakeholders for in-depth Interviews. After the selection process, which included basic questions regarding their occupation to determine eligibility for the interview, we interviewed 30 stakeholders. Three respondents opted out midway due to the topic's sensitive nature, citing their religious beliefs. The survey response rate was 99.3%.

### Categorisation Of In-Depth Interview Participants



## DATA COLLECTION

### Data Analysis

We analysed the quantitative data using Survey Monkey and Excel. The research team transcribed interviews for the qualitative data and coded and analysed responses using the NVivo analysis software.

### Method For Analysis

We analysed the results by disaggregating the state of residence and other demographic data, including age and religion. In-depth-Interviews were analysed thematically.

### Limitations

**Representation:** The sample size of respondents represents a limited percentage of the Nigerian population and should not be cited as a wholly accurate representative sample. Additionally, as this is a perception survey, results cannot be taken as fact but as perception.

**Sensitivity:** Given the nature of the research topic and the current criminalisation of same-sex acts under various criminal and shariah laws, as well as the provisions of the SSMPA, most respondents were initially hesitant to participate in the survey. The country's highest religious nature also informed participants' reluctance.

Enumerators also had to exercise caution to avoid being reported to security authorities.

**Civil unrest:** During data collection, civil unrest in some states was also challenging. In some areas, there were stay-at-home orders, impacting data collection and causing additional burdens on respondents in these regions in southern Nigeria. The situation was mitigated by creating unique links for enumerators to share with possible respondents to limit their exposure.

### **Ethical Considerations**

We considered specific ethical issues during this research study to safeguard respondents' rights and privileges.

**Informed Consent:** We obtained informed consent from all respondents, explaining the purpose of the interview, and told respondents that they could decline to answer any questions

or withdraw from the interview at any time. We also assured respondents of confidentiality and anonymity. Only participants who gave verbal consent continued to participate in the survey. All the names of the participants have also been kept confidential, and ages only utilised as demographic data.

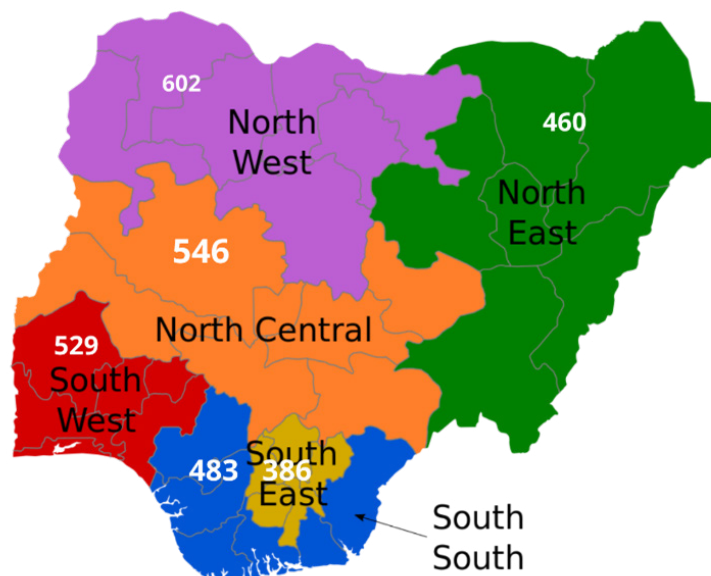
**Anonymisation:** The survey responses were anonymised: we did not record the identities and exact ages of the respondents. The respondents were also not coerced into answering any survey questions and could opt-out at any stage.

**Language:** The primary language of the questionnaires is English. In cases where it was required, enumerators translated the survey questions to Pidgin or local languages to facilitate comprehension.

### **Socio-Demographic Characteristics**

## **LOCATION OF RESPONDENTS**

**The respondents were categorised into six geographical zones.**



*Figure 2: Breakdown of response by Geopolitical zone*





Figure 3: Breakdown of responses by state

**Age Of Respondents**

The age group of the respondents spanned the adult Nigerian population, ranging from age 18 to 56+ years. Most respondents fell within the 26 to 35 age group at 35.7%, followed by the 36 to 55 age group (27.4%) and then the 18 to 25 age group (23.4%). The age category with the least proportion of respondents fell within the 56+ age group at 13.5%.

Age Distribution of Respondents

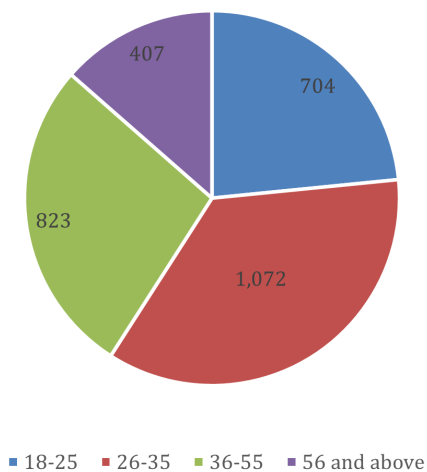
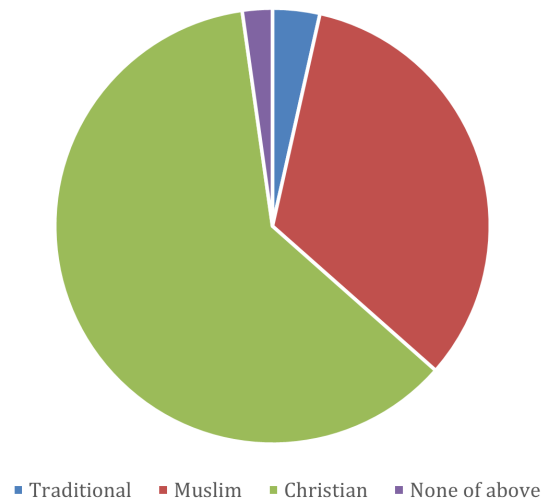


Figure 4: Age dispersion of respondents

### Religion Of Respondents

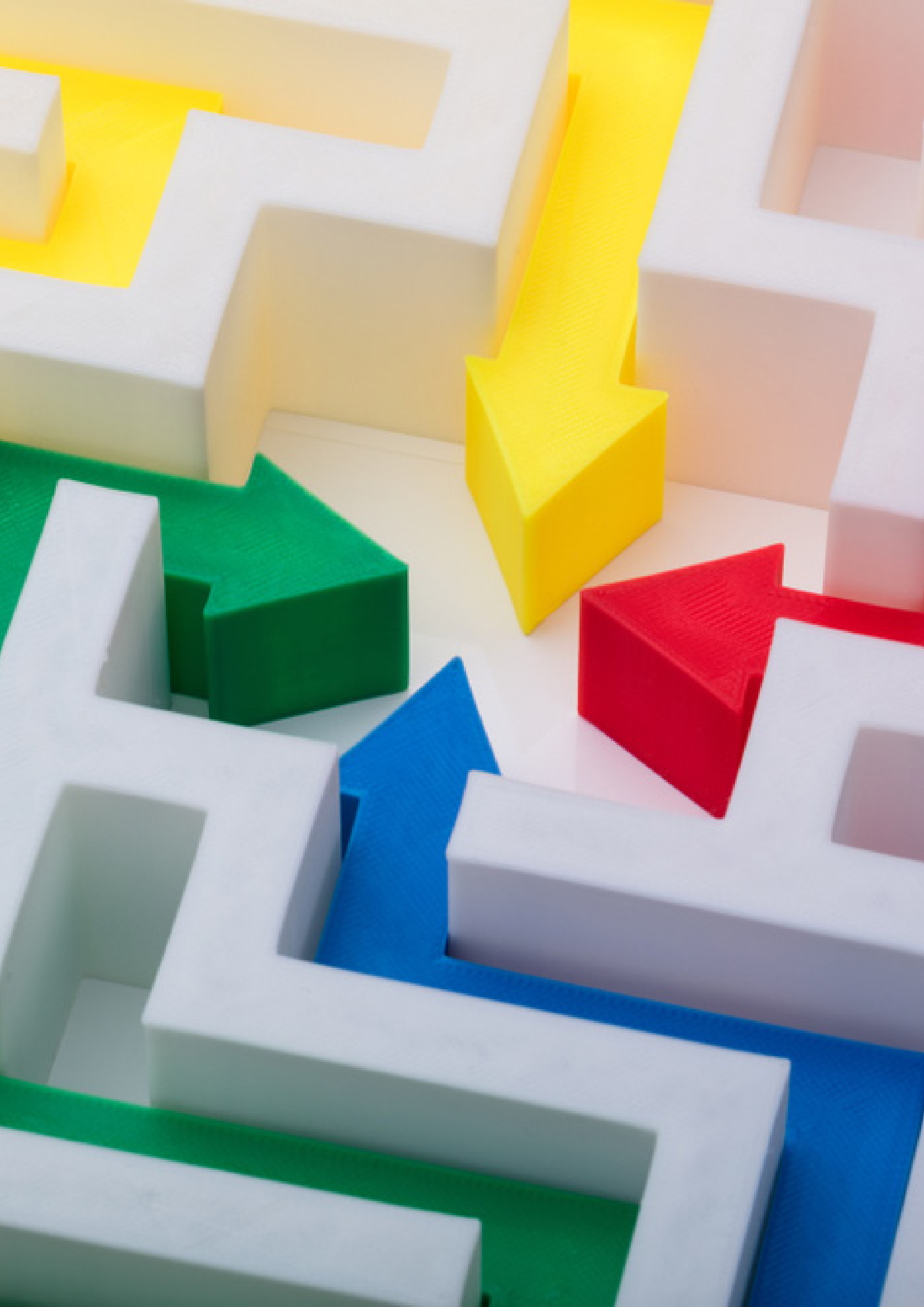
100% of the respondents affirmed that they identify with a religion. The table below shows the breakdown of the different religious affiliations of respondents. The majority of respondents identified as Christian at 61.0%, followed by Muslims at 33.0% and Traditionalists at 3.5%.

Religious Distribution of Respondents



*Figure 5: Breakdown of responses by religion*

Respondents who did not fall into any category were grouped into “none of the above”, with some responses including Judaism, Paganism, and Eckankar.





# FINDINGS

This section will detail the findings of the survey.

## HOMOSEXUALITY AS A CONDITION OF BIRTH

When asked, “Do you believe that individuals that are born with their sexual orientation?”, 59.2% of respondents answered ‘Yes’, and 40.8% answered ‘No’. One hundred and nineteen (119) participants declined to respond to this question. This question was not asked without elaboration. This question was translated and explained in different states to include local contexts that showcased same-sex relations using local language and colloquial. Some opinions were driven by the explanation and recollection of ‘dan daudus’ in the north-west and male entertainers in the south-east region. They wore flowing dresses and ‘two-step’ wrappers.

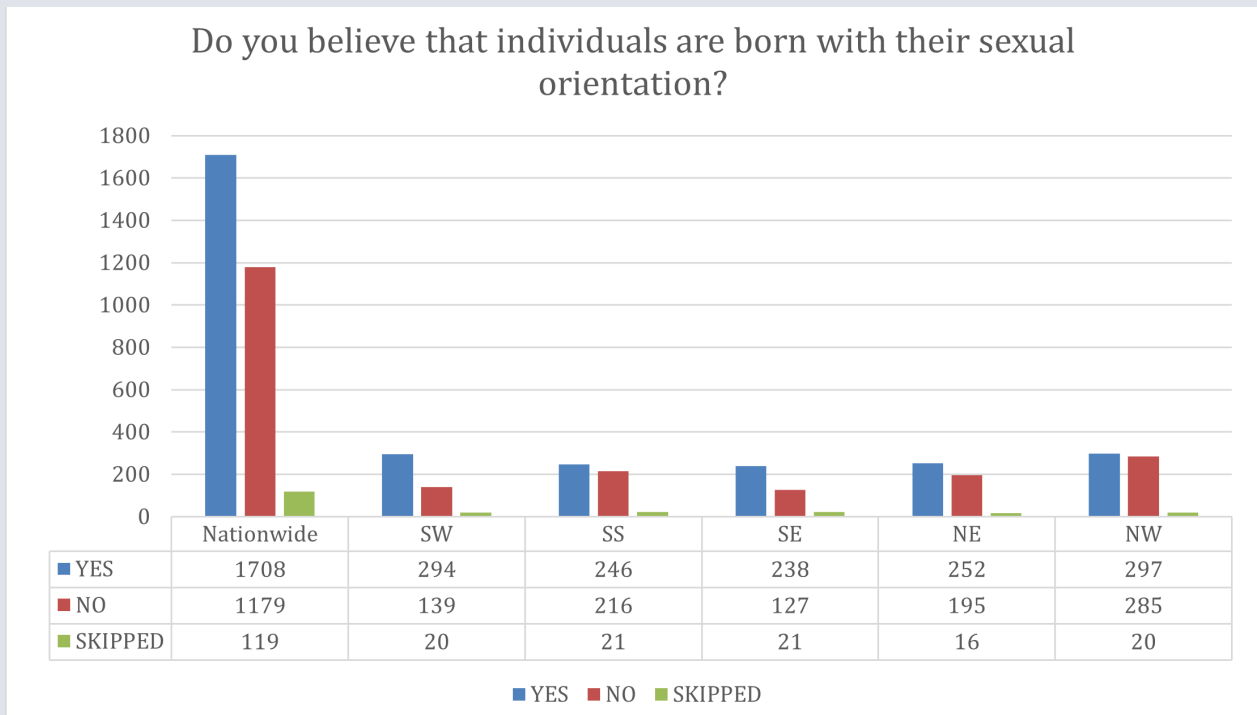
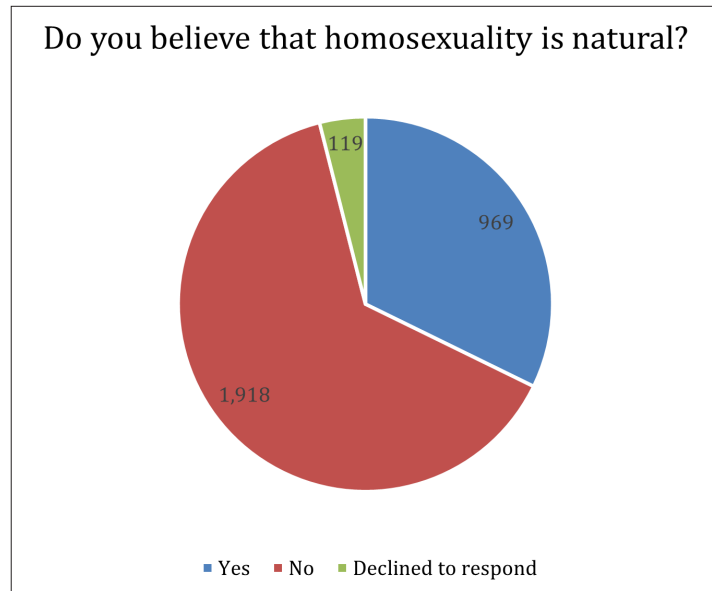
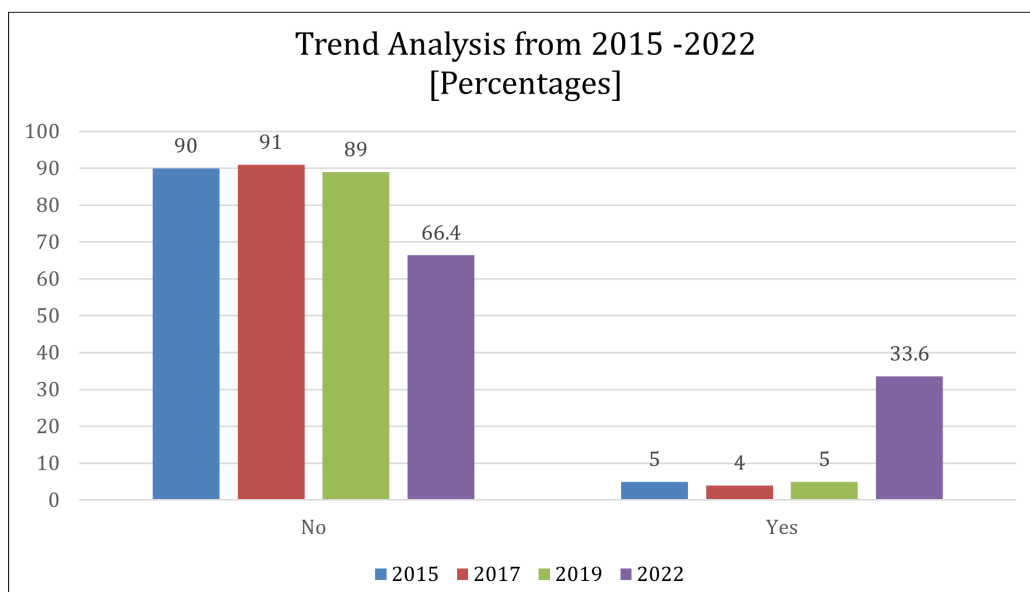


Figure 6: Homosexuality as a condition of birth

The responses varied among participants when the question was repeated: “Do you believe that homosexuality is natural?” 66.4% of participants responded “No”, and 33.6% answered “Yes”.



*Figure 7: Homosexuality as natural*

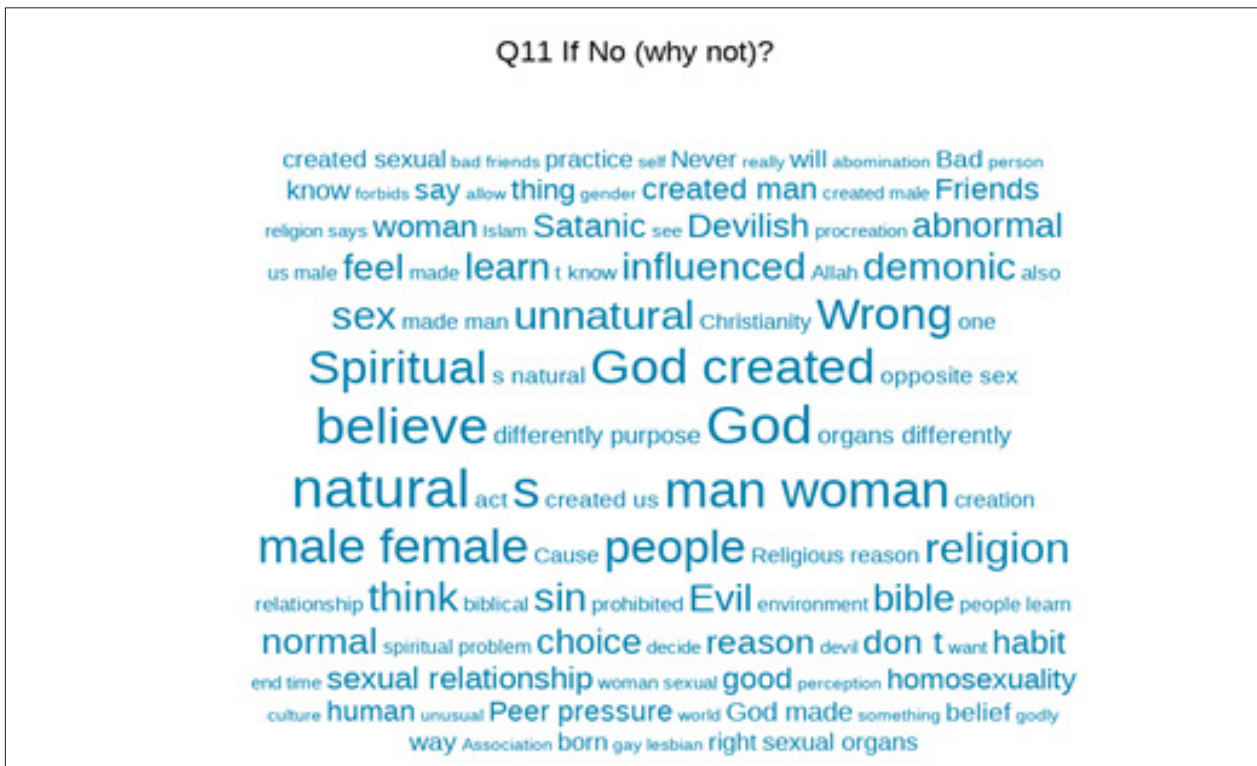


*Figure 8: Trend Analysis from 2015 - 2022*

The percentage of the respondents who believe that people can be born homosexual and that homosexuality is natural increased from 5.0% in 2019 to 33.6% in 2022. The findings indicate a significant positive shift in the social perception of the Nigerian populace about LGBTQI+ people, which is a 28.6% increase from the results seen in 2019. This shift can be attributed to the style of questioning used in the study, eliminating bias. We note this shift in the difference in responses to the two questions:

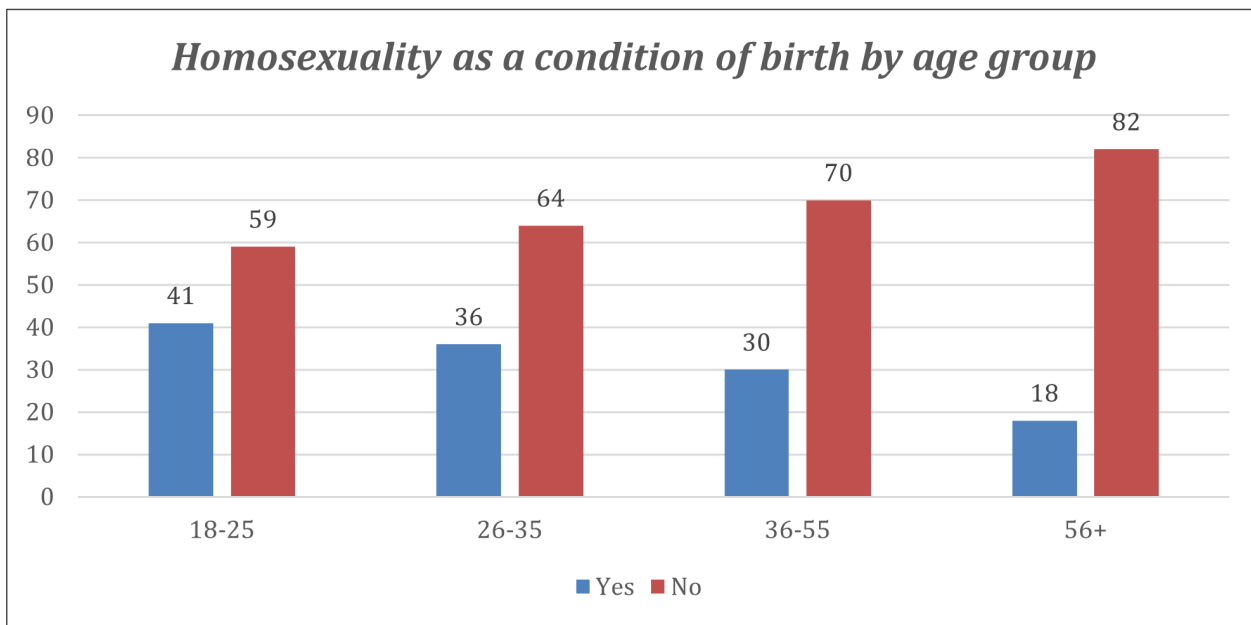
a. Do you believe people are born with their sexual orientation? (Eliminating the word 'homosexual' and incorporating local context)

b. Do you believe that homosexuality is natural? The word cloud below highlights the responses of participants who answered No in the current survey. The larger the font, the higher the mentions it received. The most prevalent reasons for respondents responding 'No' were religious, including the belief that homosexuality was a 'sin', 'devilish', 'satanic', and against their religious beliefs. Thus, making homosexual practices wrong. Additionally, about 85% of the respondents were taught by their religion that homosexuality is unnatural. In comparison, 15% of respondents believe that homosexuality happens due to peer pressure from friends, a circumstance of the environment, and is against the laws of nature and biology.



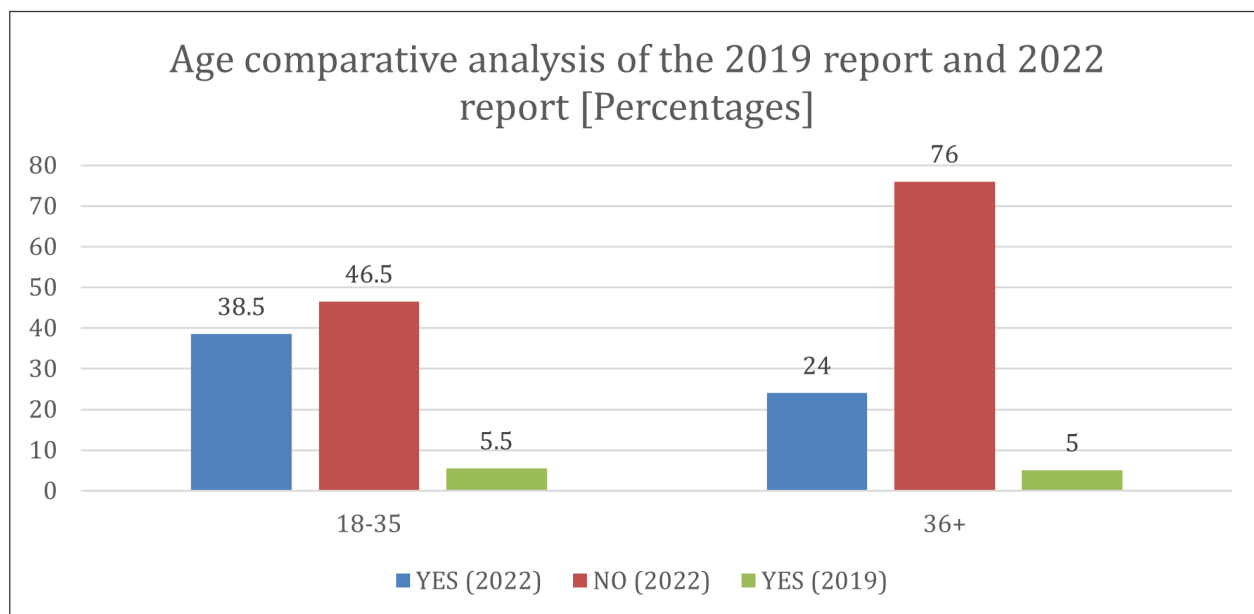
Source: SurveyMonkey

When compared across the age groups, 41% of those who fell within 18 to 25 years responded “Yes” to the statement “homosexuality as a condition of birth”. 36% of participants aged 26 to 35, 30% in the 35 to 55 age group, and 18% of participants aged 56 years and above also positively responded to the statement.



**Figure 9:** Breakdown of response to homosexuality as a condition of birth by age group

Here is how it compares to the TIERS 2019 Survey Report

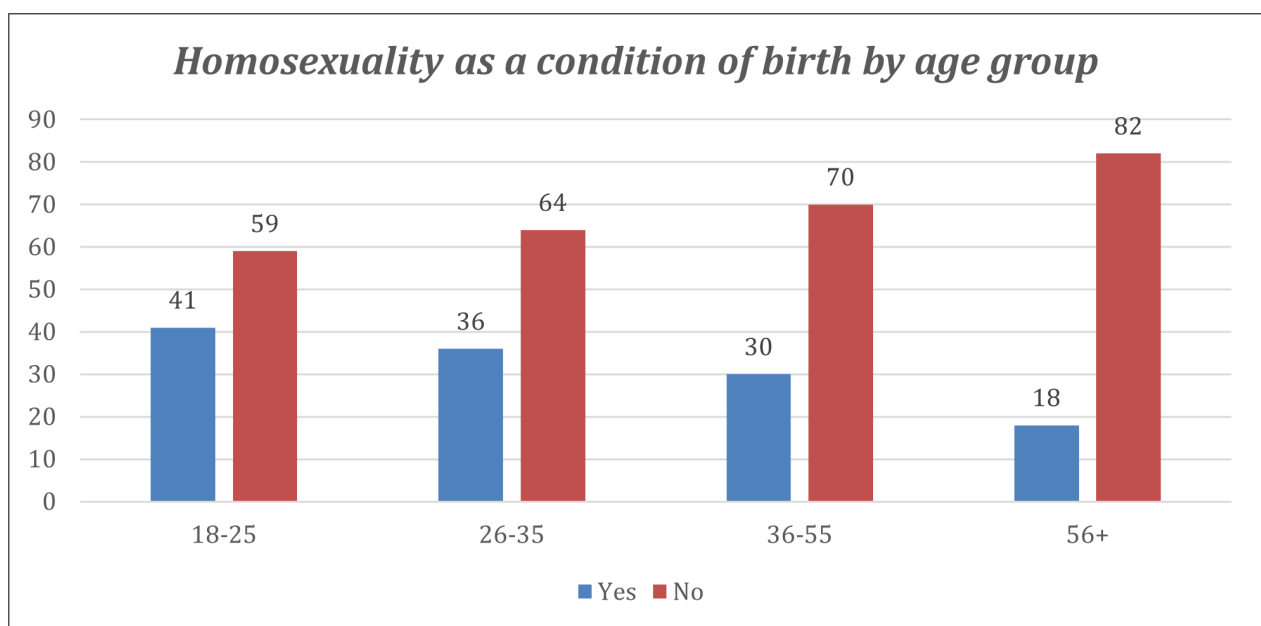


**Figure 10:** Comparative analysis of age group responses from the 2019 and 2022 perception study



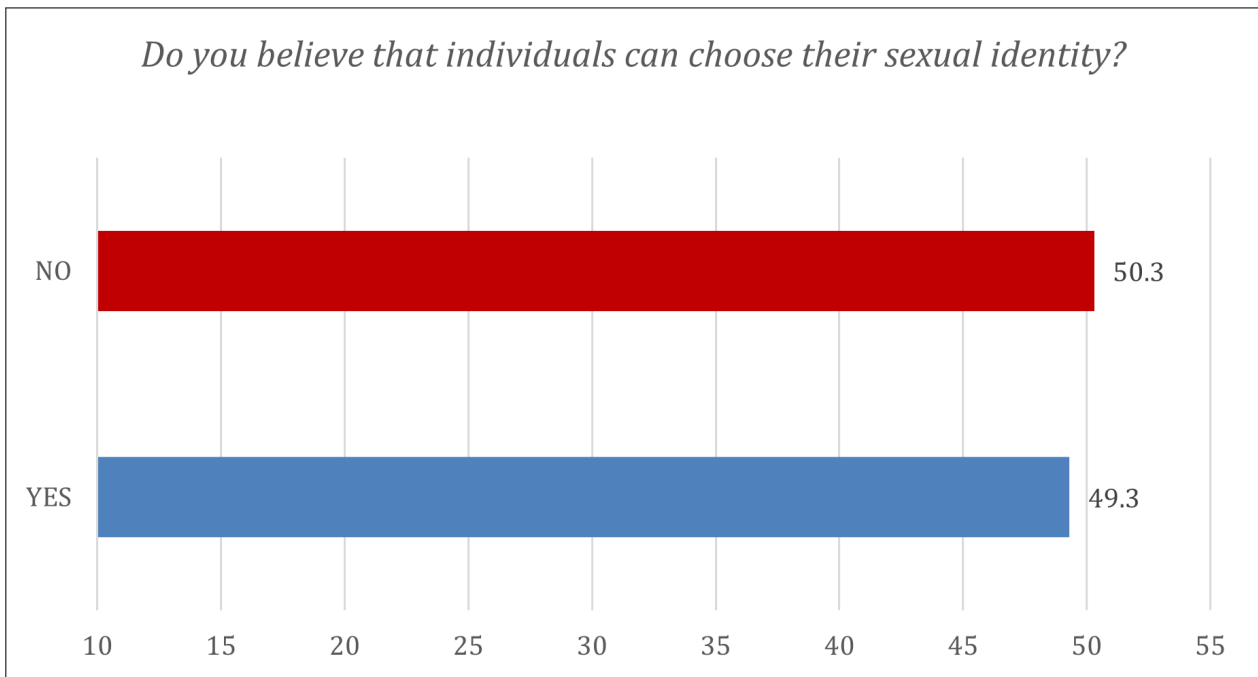
This study shows a significant drop in people across age groups who do not believe that people are born homosexual. While speculative, an in-depth interview with a civil society campaigner explained the normative work being done through campaigns designed around 'rights for all' and opined that this drop might result from interactions around similar programming.

Differences were also present across geographical regions and are detailed below. 42% of participants from the south-east region responded Yes, followed by 38% from the south-south region and 37% from the north-central part of Nigeria. The participants from the north-east presented the lowest number of Yes responses with 17%.



**Figure 11:** Breakdown of responses to 'Do you believe that homosexuality is natural' by geopolitical zones

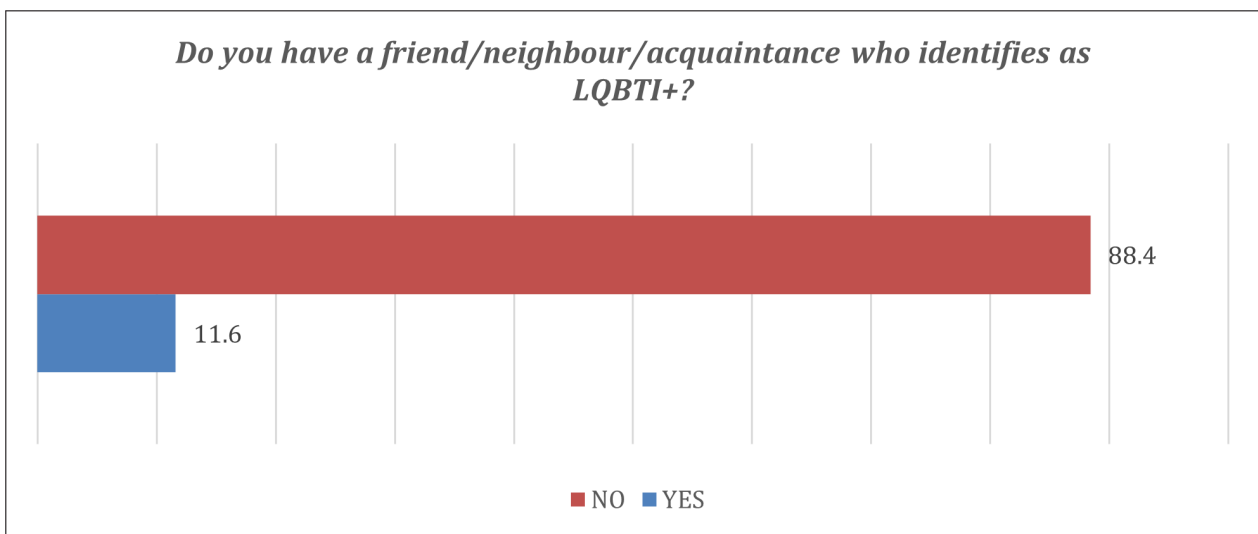
When asked, "Do you believe that individuals can choose their sexual identity?" there was an almost even split in responses, with 50.3% of participants responding with No and 49.7% responding with "Yes."



*Figure 12: Analysis of responses to ‘Do you believe that individuals can choose their sexual identity?’*

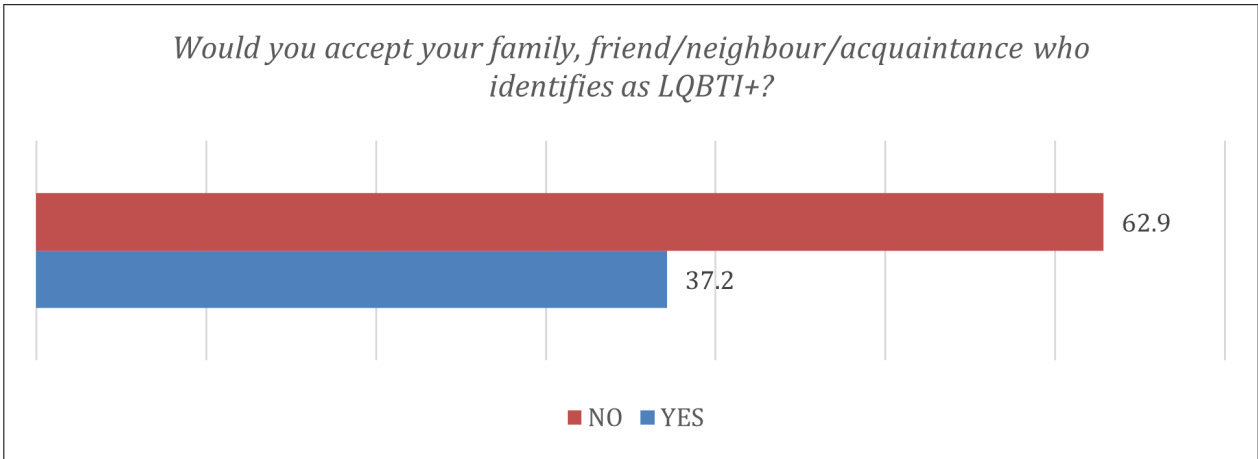
### **Acceptance Of Homosexuality Within The Family Unit**

When asked, “Do you have a friend/neighbour/acquaintance who identifies as LGBTQI+?” Only 2,887 persons responded, while 119 participants declined to answer the question. Of the responses received, 88.4% said ‘No’ while only 11.6% said ‘Yes’. Notes from the enumerators in Kano and Abia states indicate that at least three participants in each of the mentioned states who declined to answer were concerned about how they would be perceived as they were responding to the questions in the company of others.



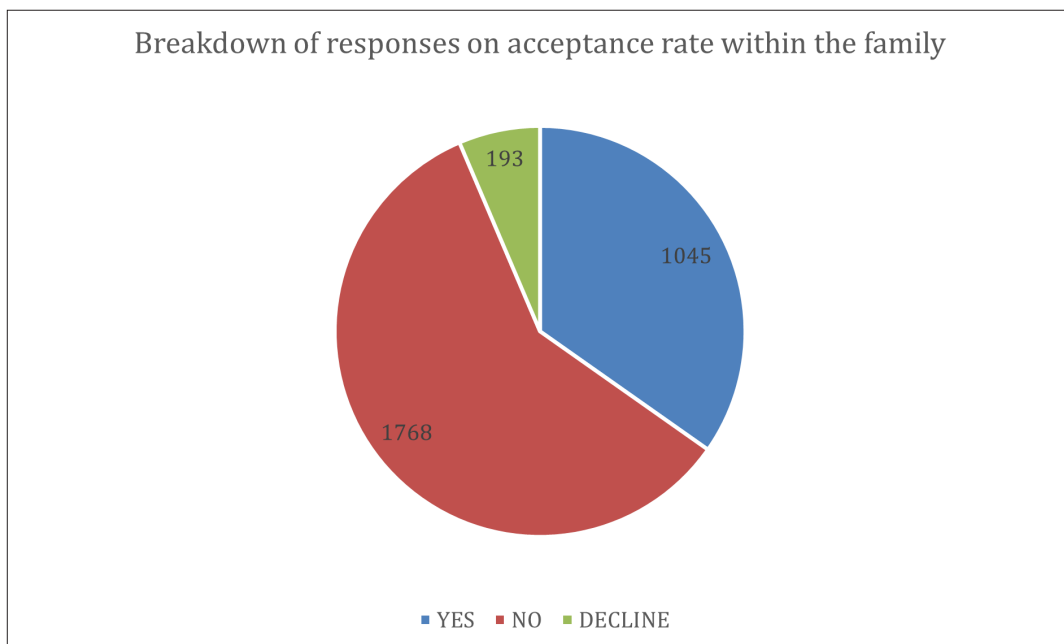
*Figure 13: Do you have a friend/neighbour/acquaintance who identifies as LGBTQI+?*

Respondents were asked, “Would you accept your family, friend/neighbour/acquaintance who identifies as LGBTQI+?” Two thousand eight hundred thirteen (2,813) participants responded, while 193 persons avoided these. Of the 2,813 persons, 62.9% of them answered ‘No’, while approximately 37.2% responded ‘Yes’.



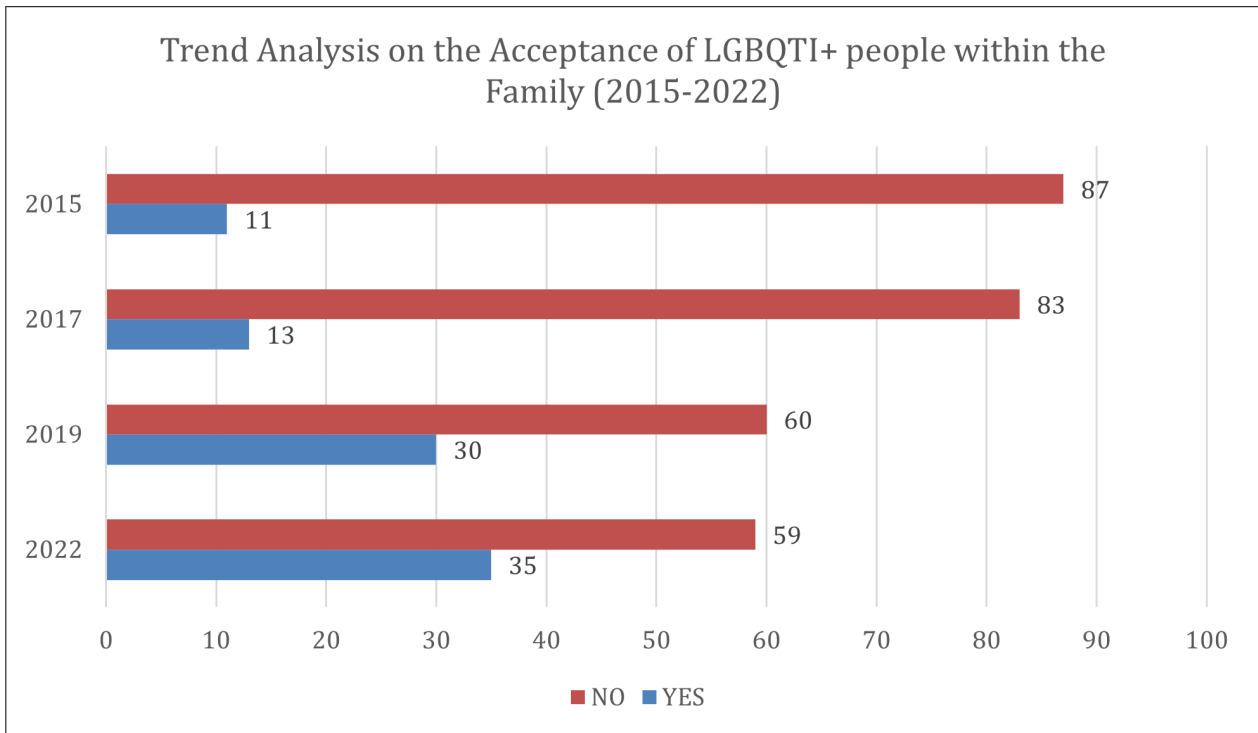
**Figure 14:** Analysis of responses to ‘Would you accept your family, friend/neighbour/acquaintance who identifies as LGBTQI+?’

To elicit comparable data, the response rate was weighted against the total number of participants, including the declined responses, bringing the ‘Yes’ responses to 35% and the ‘No’ responses to 59%. See analysis below.



**Figure 15:** Analysis of total responses on acceptance rate.

The study looked at the trend over the past five years. The percentage of acceptance of LGBTQI+ people within the family unit has increased from 11% in 2015 to 35% in 2022. The results indicate a 24% increase in the level of acceptance of LGBTQI+ persons within the family unit. Though relatively low, it is a significant increase considering that the SSMPA was passed in 2014. Despite the punitive laws, the acceptance rate has continuously increased since the 2015 survey.

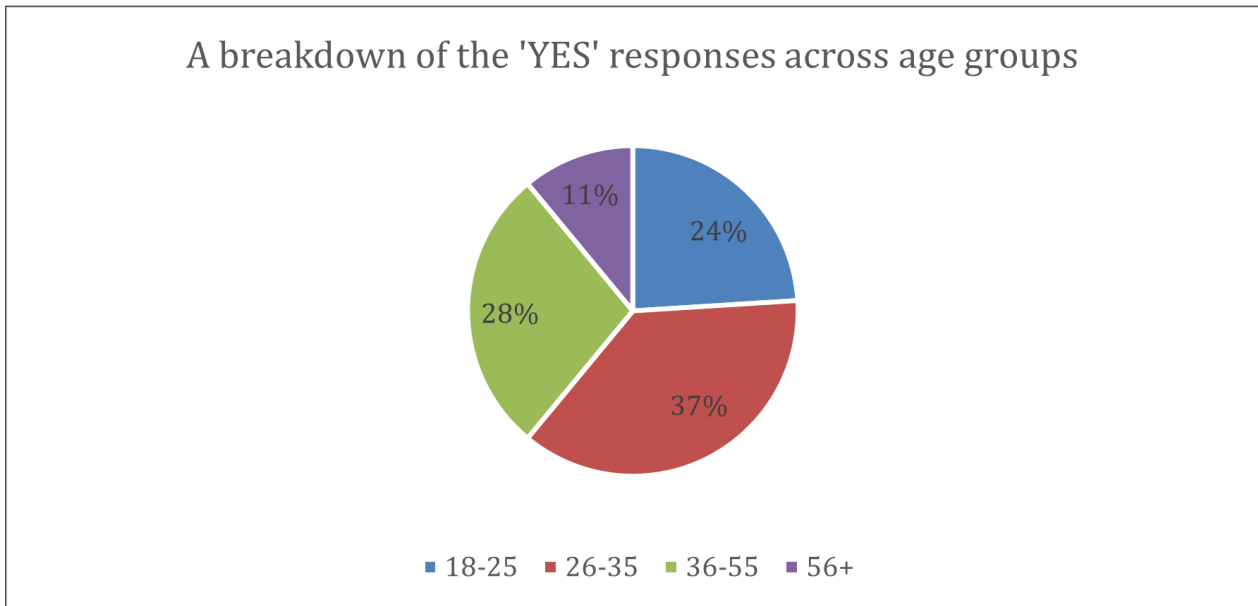


*Figure 16: Five-Year Trend Analysis on the Acceptance of LGBTQI+ persons within the family unit.*



### Which Age Groups Are More Or Less Likely To Be Accepting Of LGBTQI+ Persons Within The Family Unit?

Here is what a breakdown of the 'Yes' responses look like across the age groups

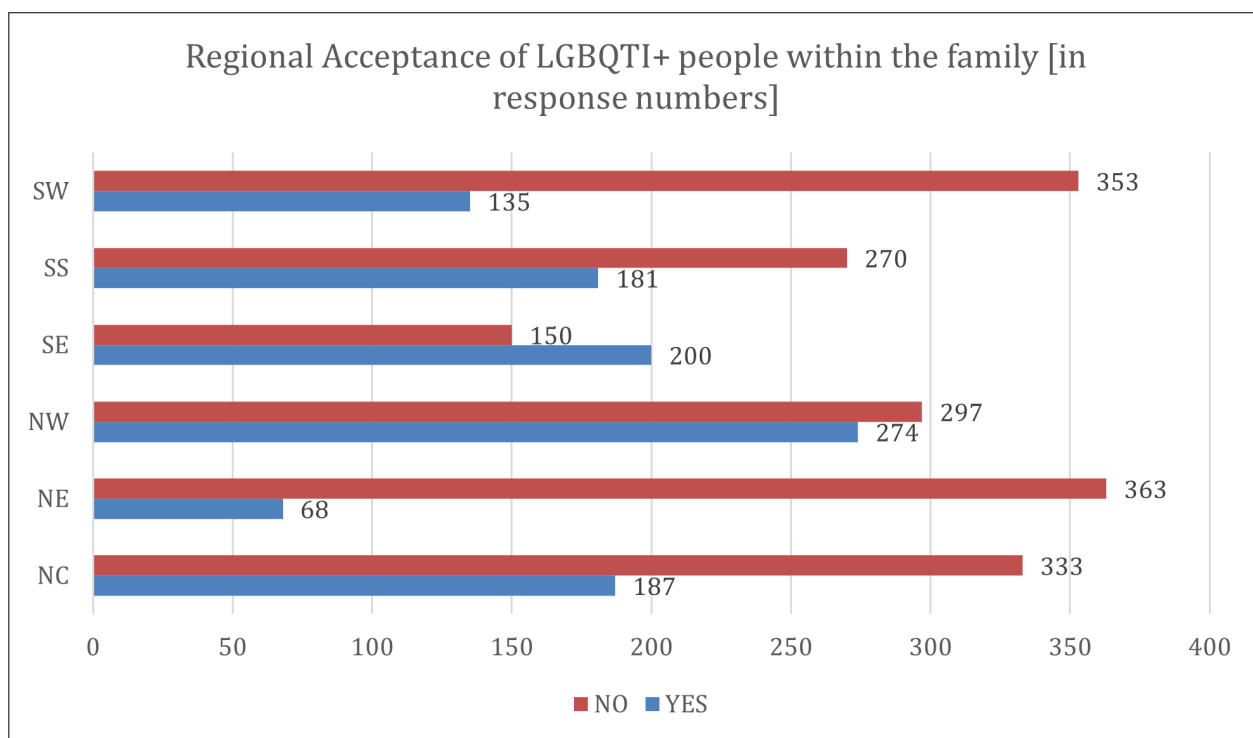


*Figure 17: Analysis of acceptance of homosexuality by age group*

When compared across the age groups, participants who responded to the question from the 26 to 35 and 36 to 55 age groups were most likely to accept an individual who identified as LGBTQI+ with a 37% and 28% acceptance rate, respectively. This was followed by the 18-25 age group owning 24% of the 'Yes' response. The older generation appears less likely to accept as they polled in 11% of the 'Yes' response only.

### Which Geopolitical Zones Are More Or Less Likely To Be Accepting Of LGBTQTI+ Persons Within The Family Unit?

The north-east region showed the lowest level of acceptance with only 7% of the 'yes' responses coming from the region, while the southwest recorded the highest level of acceptance at 34%. The graph below shows how the regions polled.



**Figure 18:** Regional analysis of acceptance of LGBTQTI+ people within the family unit

The survey further probed into reasons for accepting or refusing association with family members who identify as LGBTQTI+. Respondents who answered Yes/No were then asked their reasons for acceptance, as follows:

#### The 'Yes' Responses

Only 1032 persons who affirmed 'yes' gave reasons for their acceptance. 60%% out of this group who affirmed Yes said they would be accepting if the individual were their family. Only 2.6% based their acceptance on financial support from a family member who is LGBTQTI+. On the other hand,37.4% of persons affirmed that LGBTQTI+ persons were not different from them.

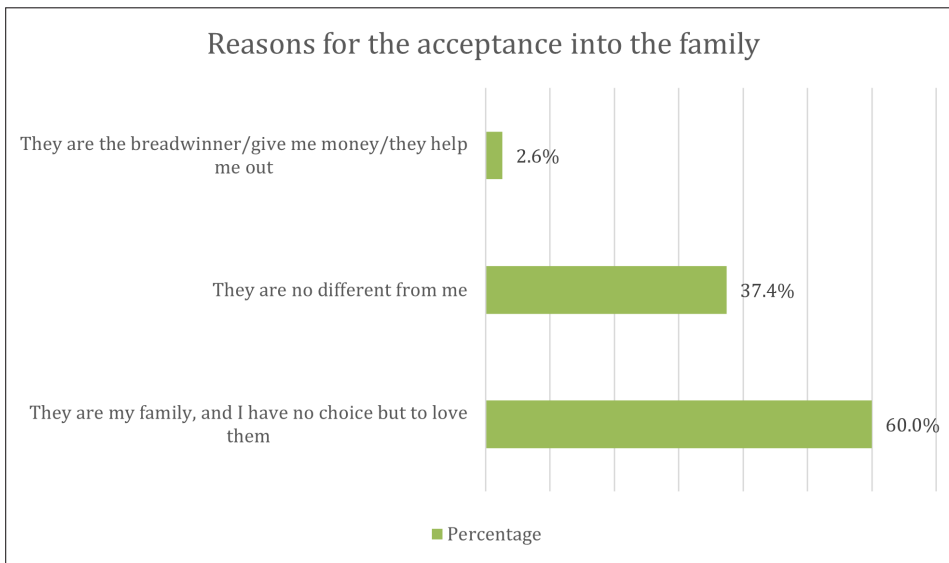


Figure 19: Graphic representation of acceptance reasons.

### The 'No' Responses

One thousand seven hundred eleven (1,711) persons who said “No” gave reasons for their response. The figure below details the reasons selected by respondents for lack of acceptance. 44.4% out of this group stated that their primary basis for not accepting LGBTQTI+ individuals is because it goes against their religious beliefs. This data further highlights the role of religion in determining how Nigerians navigate their daily lives and how they view other people and the world. 35.1% of the people who are not accepting of family members who are LGBTQTI+ believe it is ‘unnatural’ and can only understand heterosexual relationships. 13.3% in this group attributed their lack of acceptance of LGBTQTI+ family members to their cultural beliefs. Only about 7% of participants would not accept LGBTQTI+ individuals because it poses a risk to themselves or the individual.

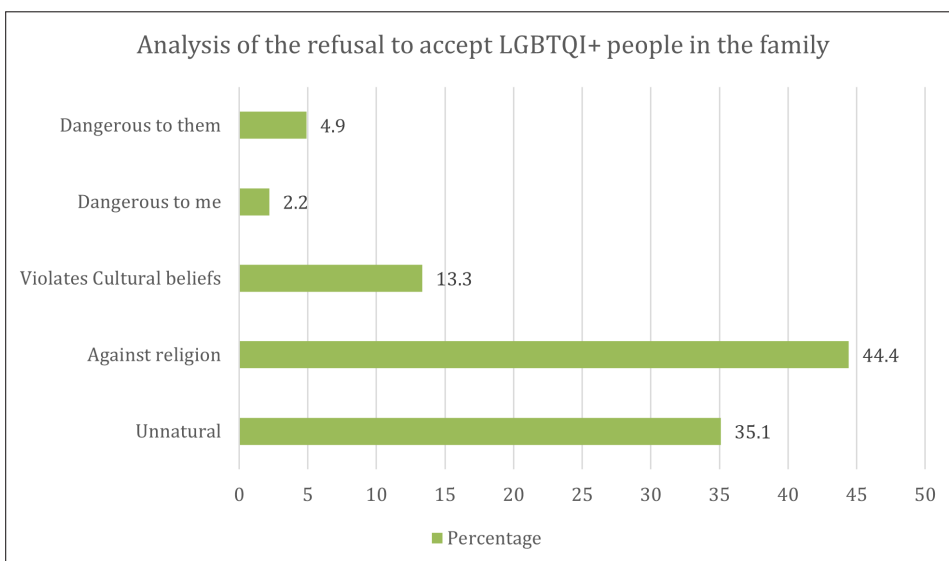


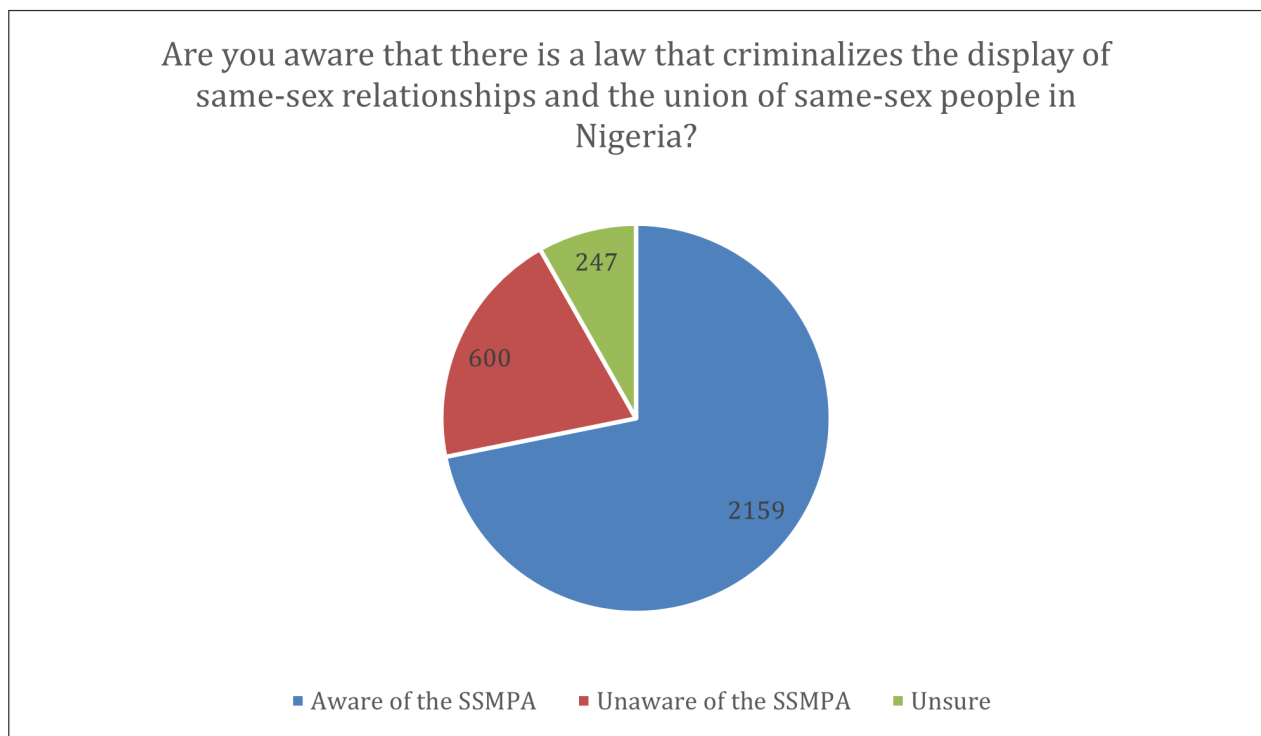
Figure 20: Graphic representation of lack of acceptance reasons.

# PERCEPTION OF DISCRIMINATION



## ATTITUDE AND KNOWLEDGE TOWARD THE SAME-SEX MARRIAGE PROHIBITION ACT (SSMPA)

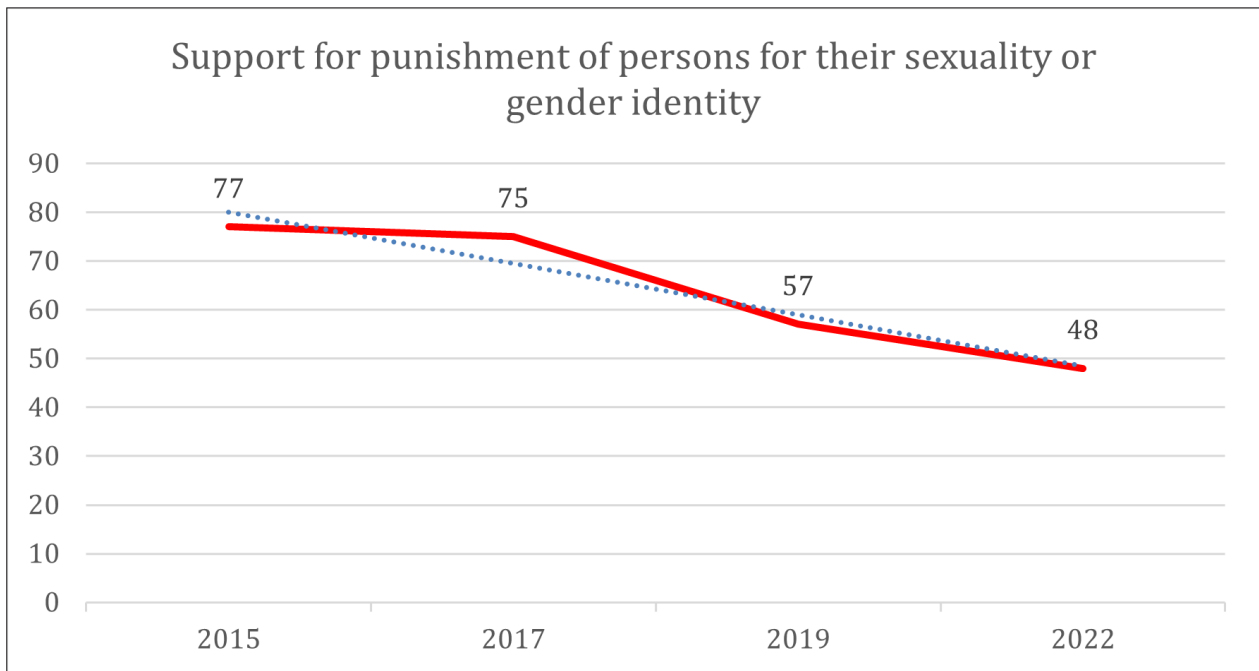
Participants were asked about their awareness of the SSMPA. We got responses from 2,759 people, while 247 declined as they were unsure how to respond. Out of the respondents, 78.3% indicated that they knew the law, while 22% said they did not know about the SSMPA. Fundamentally, this Act denies LGBTQI+ persons access to fundamental human rights, including the freedom of expression, and exposes them to dangerous situations, including a higher level of violence from members of society.



**Figure 21:** Graphical representation of awareness of the SSMPA

The participants were asked if people should be punished for being gay/lesbian; 248 were unsure how to respond and therefore declined to respond. Interestingly, the responses were nearly equally divided, with 51.5% of those who responded saying ‘No’ to punishment. In 2019, participants in a similar survey were asked about their support for the SSMPA; 57% of the responses showed strong support for the law. However, there has been a steady decline in support for the punishment of people for their sexual orientation or gender identity, from 77% in 2015 to 48% in 2022.

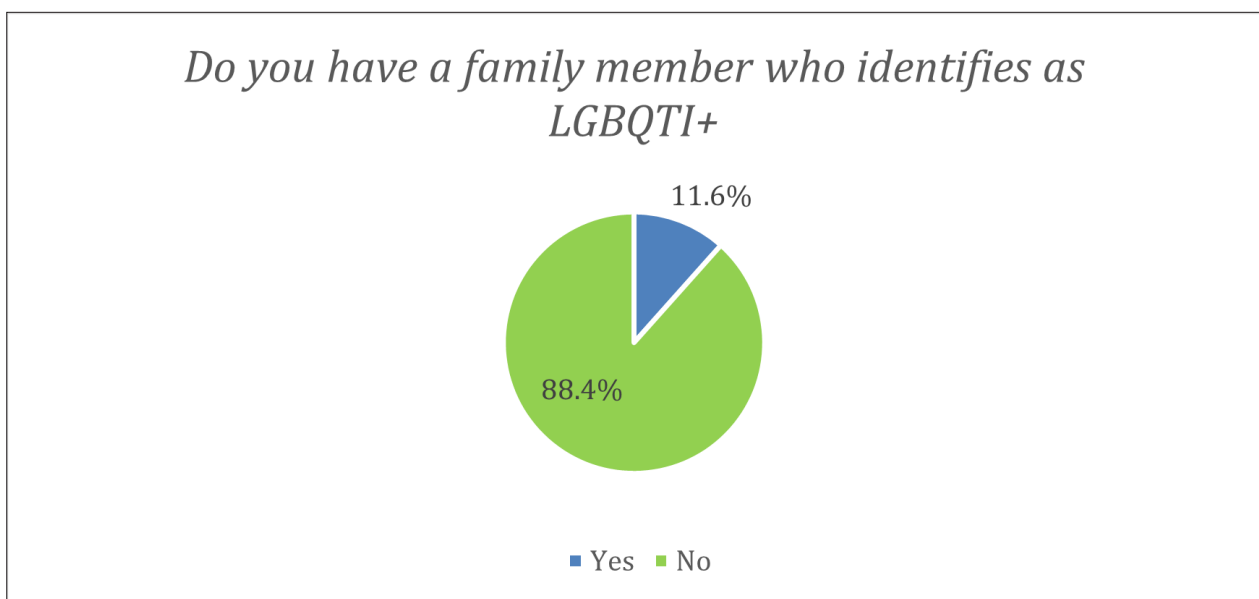




*Figure 22: Trend Analysis 2015-2022 on the support for the SSMPA*

### **Awareness Of Homosexuality In Nigeria**

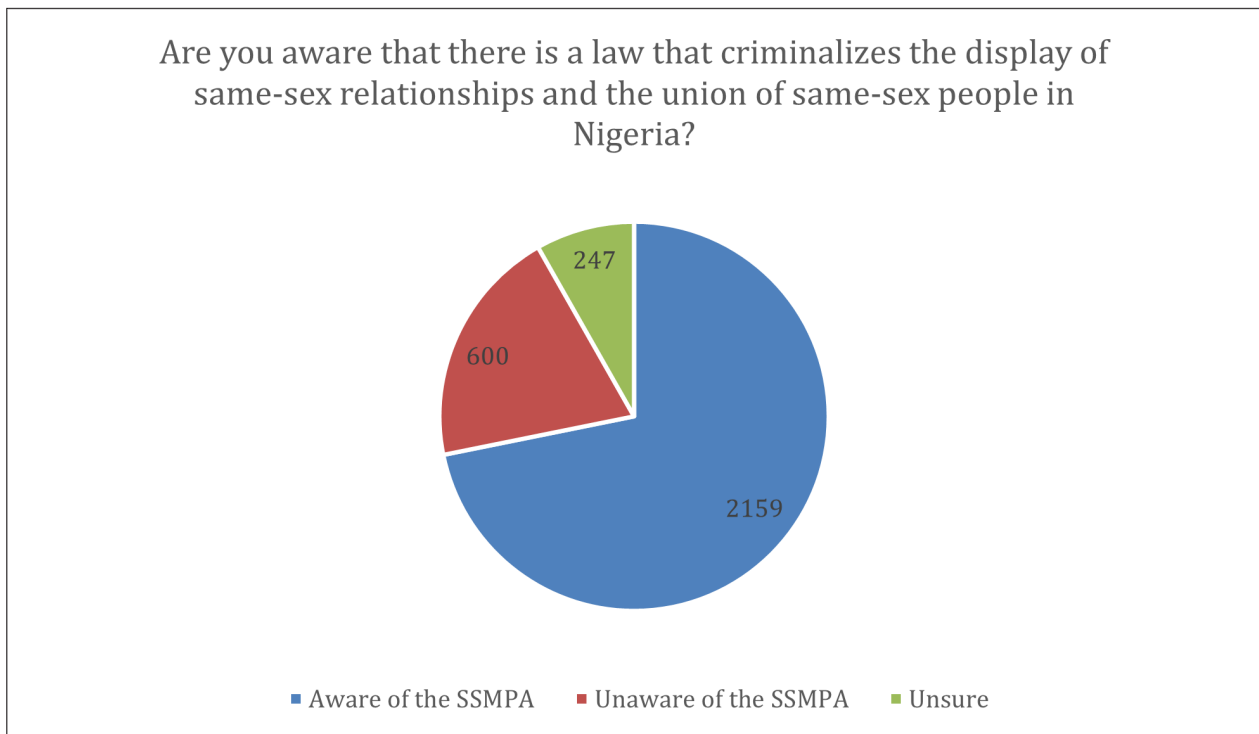
When asked, “Do you have a family member who identifies as LGBTQI+?” 88.4% of the participants responded ‘No’. In comparison, 11.6% affirm that they have a family member of the LGBTQI+ community.



*Figure 23: Awareness of LGQBTI persons within the family*

The level of awareness showed a sharp increase from only 2% in 2019 to 11% in 2022 among participants aware of an LGBTQI+ family member.

Participants were asked, 'Have you ever perceived anyone around you as gay?'. One hundred nineteen persons declined to respond. Amongst the respondents, 54.7% said 'Yes' while 45.3% said 'No'.



*Figure 24: Graph representation of perception of 'gay'.*

### Perception Of Homosexuality In Nigeria

The subset of participants who indicated that they had perceived a person around them as 'gay' was asked what influenced that perception. 2836 responded to this multi-choice question. This question was to clarify how people mete discrimination against persons in Nigeria based on their perceived sexuality or gender identity. 35.4% of respondents consider a person 'gay' when a person they perceive to be a boy likes what they believe girls should like. 28% of the respondents believe a person to be gay based on what they have learnt gay people should look like, while 20% believe you can tell a person is gay from their dress or gait. Cumulatively 83.5% based their perception on a person's appearance. In 2017, about 40 men were arrested by the Nigerian Police at a party in Lagos on perceptions of being 'gay'<sup>8</sup>. While the SSMPA and the Criminal Code of Lagos prohibit same-sex public display of affection, same-sex intercourse, and same-sex marriage, it does not have express prohibitions on a person's sexuality, dress, or gender.

<sup>8</sup> "Over 40 Men Have Been Arrested in Nigeria for Homosexual Acts". *Global Citizen*, 2017, <https://www.globalcitizen.org/fr/content/nigeria-police-arrest-men-for-homosexuality/>. Accessed 24 February, 2022.



Figure 25: Representation of where the perception comes from

Here are the detailed responses:

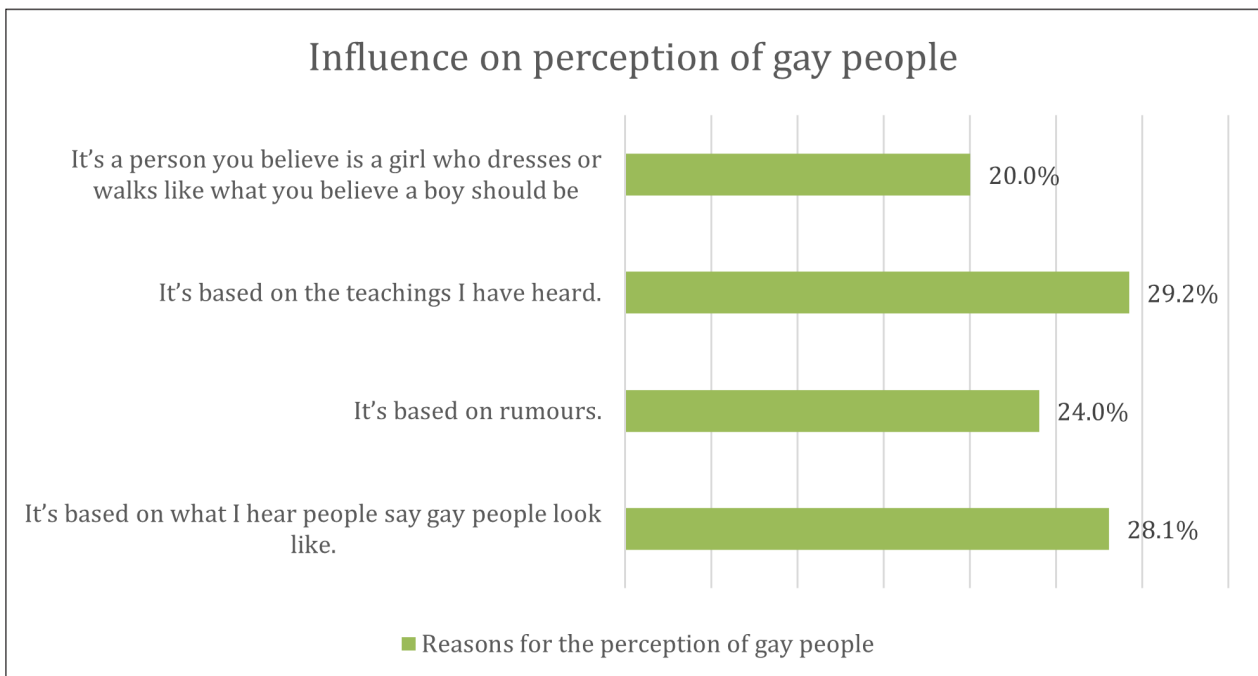


Figure 26: Categorised responses on influence on the perception of 'gayness'.

Respondents were asked about their feelings when around LGBTQI+ individuals. The most prevalent emotional response was indifferent, with 48% of participants responding that they would not feel any different, followed by negative emotions, including being annoyed with about 21% and being upset with 18.2%.

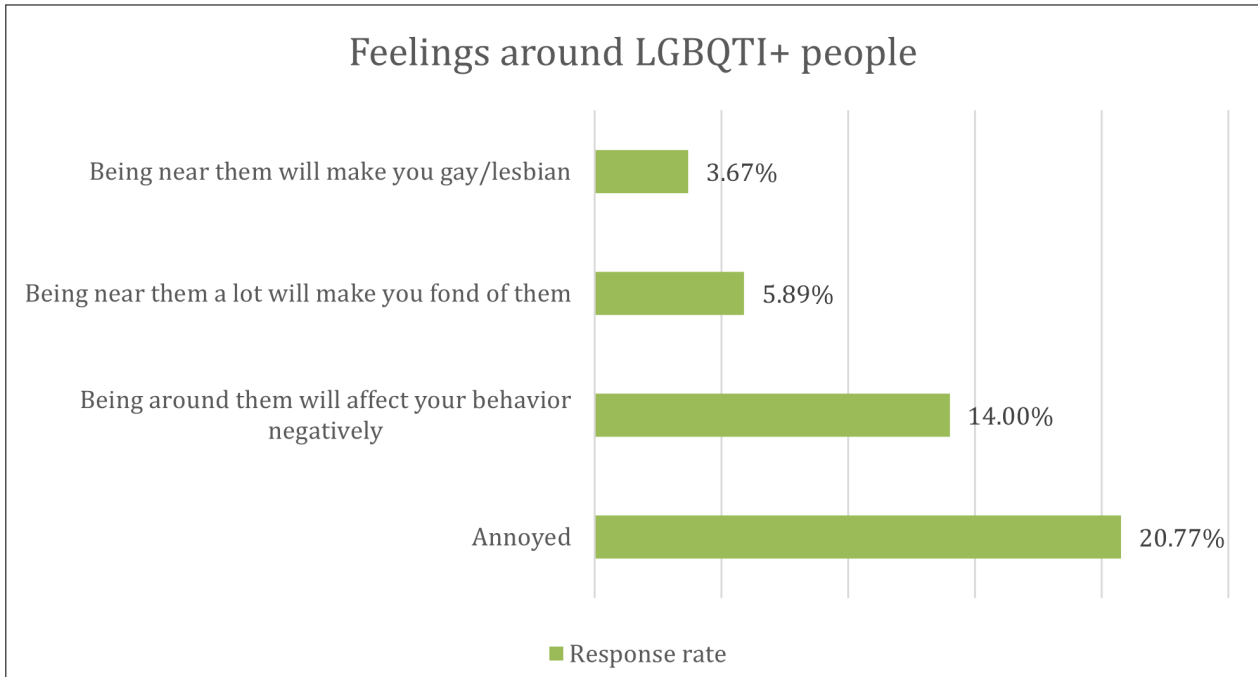


Figure 27: Feelings toward LGBTQI persons

### Discrimination By Service Providers

Participants were also asked, “How important is it to you for a person’s sexuality to align with your personal beliefs?” Two thousand seven hundred fifty-nine (2,759) people responded to this. Their responses are detailed below.

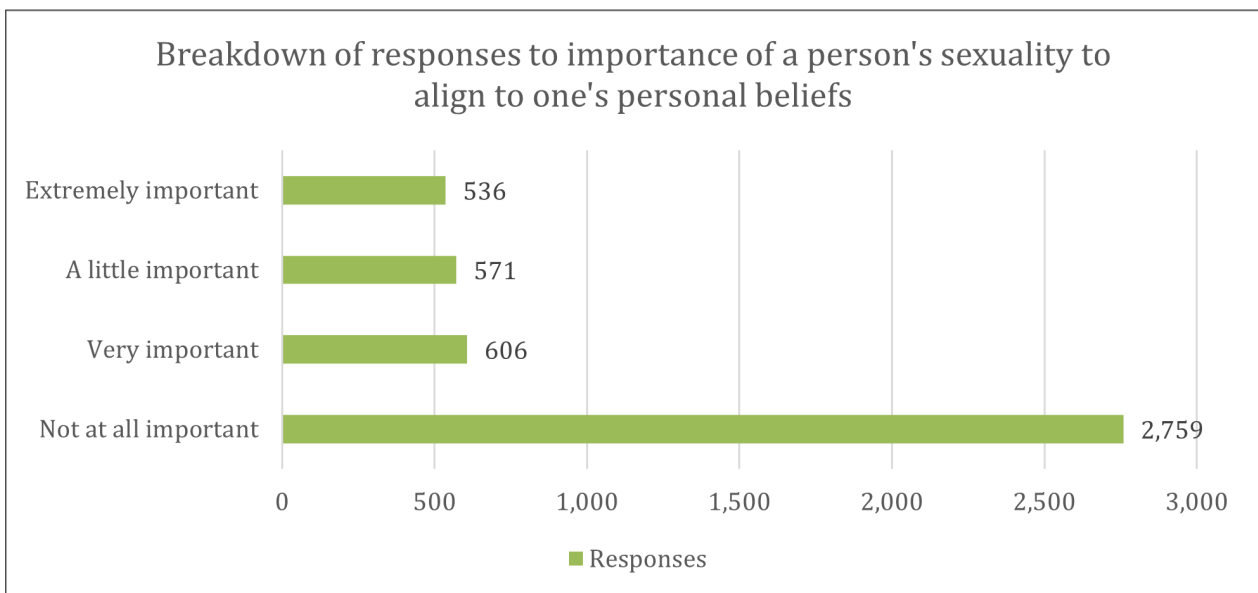


Figure 28: Importance of personal beliefs

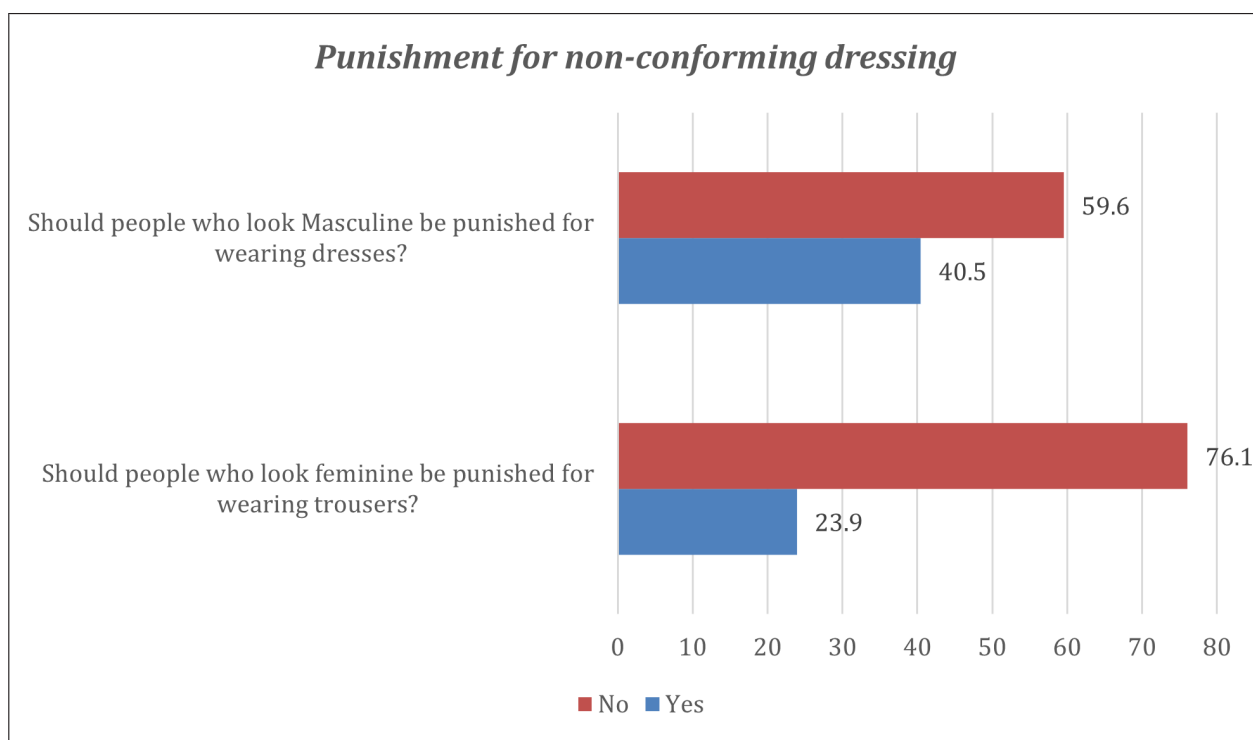


While 23.0% believe their personal beliefs should have no bearing on another person's sexuality, a nearly equal 22% feel strongly about this.

Stereotypes also play a significant part in profiling LGBTQI+ individuals, including the type of clothing, manner of speech, and body language. These factors contribute to how an individual is viewed, including inferences concerning their sexual identity. Earlier on in the study, participants had expressed that their perception of a person's sexuality was born out of the person's appearance. At the same time, only 48% agreed that people should be punished for their sexuality. The study further probed to see how far people living in Nigeria would go towards criminalising gender non-conformity.

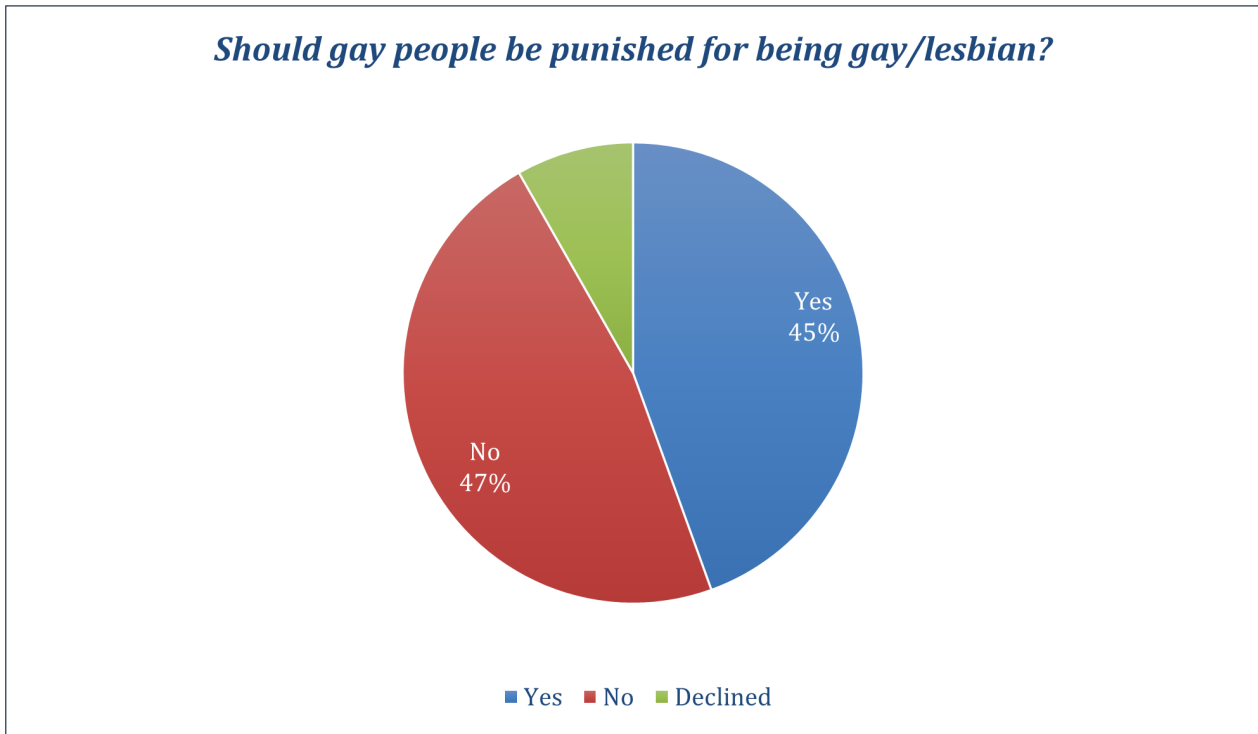
Participants were asked, "Should people who look masculine be punished for wearing dresses?" and "Should people who look feminine be punished for wearing trousers?"

There was an almost double variation in participants who felt people who looked masculine should be punished for wearing dresses compared to those who looked feminine and wore trousers.



**Figure 29: Punishment for nonconforming dressing**

Respondents were also asked if "... gay people be punished for being gay/lesbian? Two thousand seven hundred fifty-eight (2758) participants responded, while 248 declined to answer.



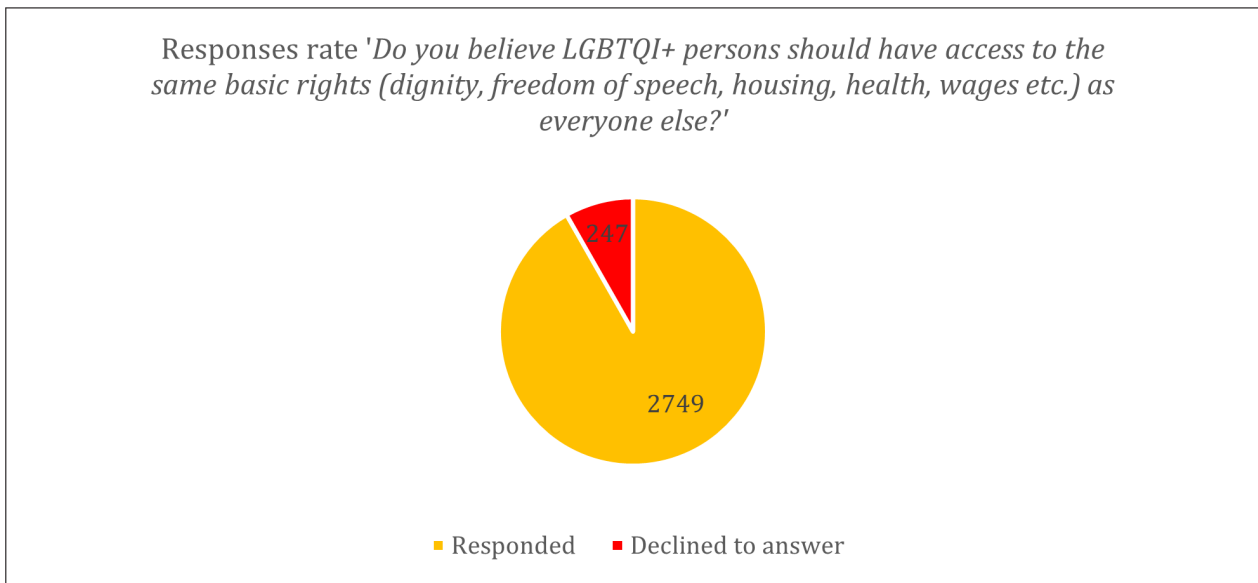
**Figure 30:** Graph showing Penalty for identity

Within the respondent group (2758 persons), 48.5% of participants responded, ‘Yes’ while 51.5% responded ‘No’.

### **Rights Of LGBTQI+ Persons**

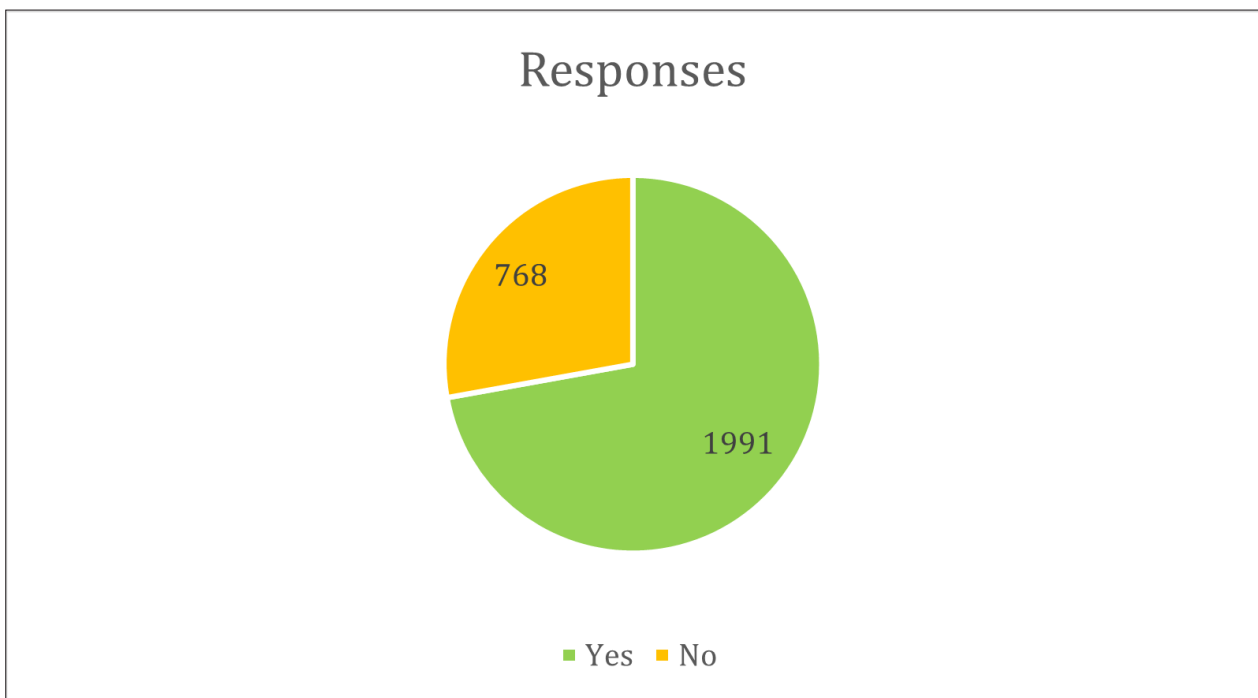
Research has shown that LGBTQI+ individuals will often face a higher level of discrimination and bias across various sectors of society due to their identities. We asked participants questions related to the rights of LGBTQI+ persons.

Participants were asked, ‘*Do you believe LGBTQI+ persons should have access to the same basic rights (dignity, freedom of speech, housing, health, wages, etc.) as everyone else?*’. For this question, only 2,749 persons responded out of 3006 participants. Two hundred forty-seven (247) persons declined to respond to the question.



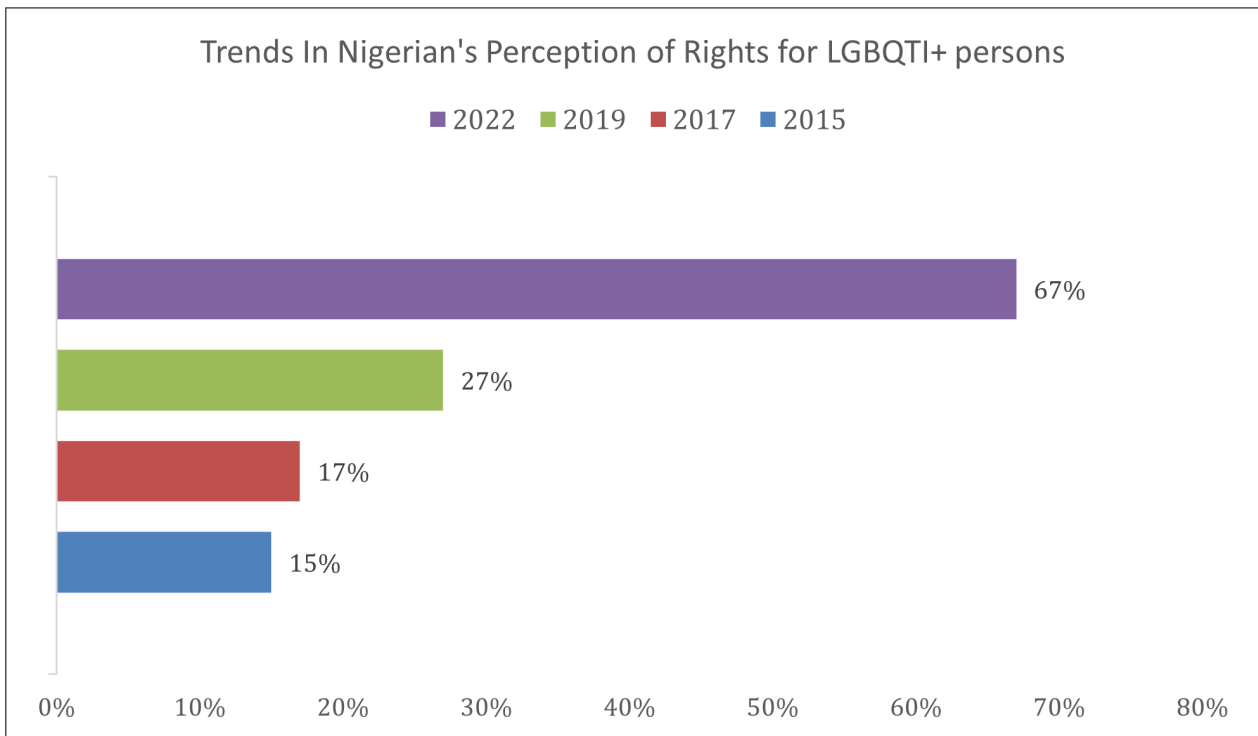
**Figure 31:** Response rate for 'Do you believe LGBTQI+ persons should have access to the same basic rights (dignity, freedom of speech, housing, health, wages, etc.) as everyone else?'

Within the group that responded, 72% said 'Yes', and 28% of participants responded 'No'.



**Figure 32:** Graphical representation of 'Do you believe LGBTQI+ persons should have access to the same basic rights (dignity, freedom of speech, housing, health, wages, etc.) as everyone else?'

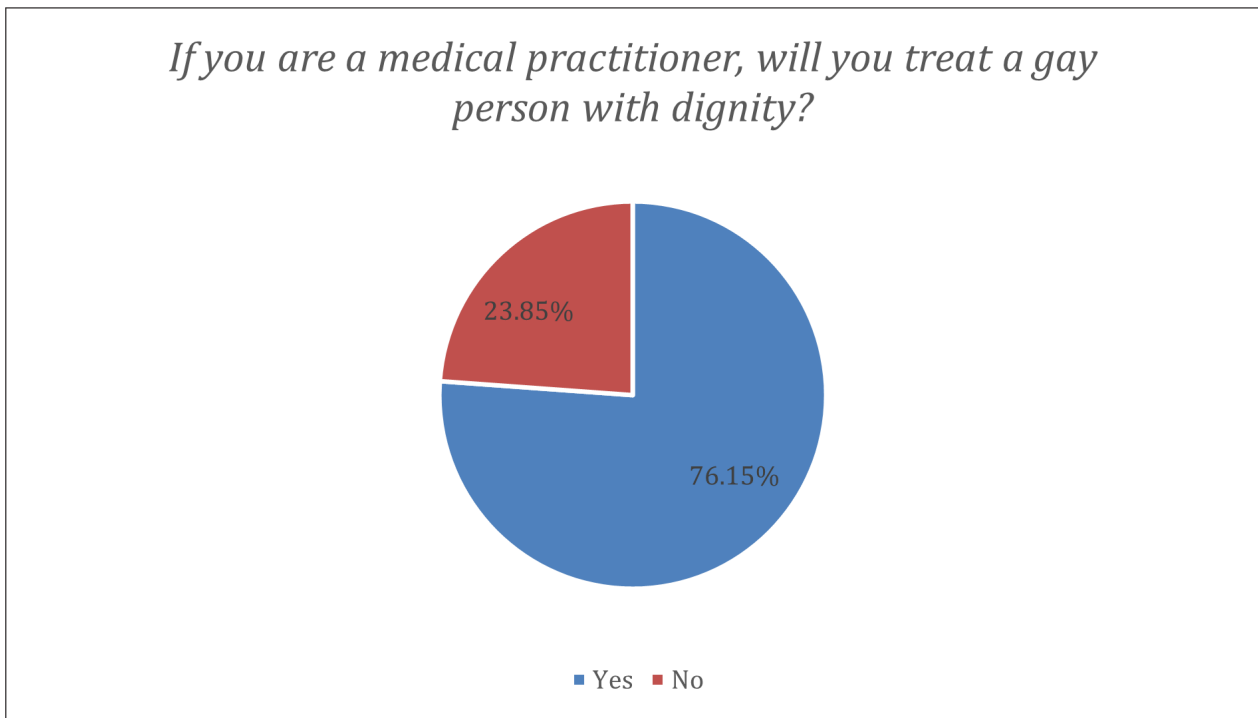
In 2017 about 17% of Nigerians felt that LGBTQI+ persons should have the same rights as all other Nigerians; this number increased slightly to 27% in 2017 and presently stands at 67%.



*Figure 33: Trends in Nigerian's Perception of Rights for LGBTQTI+ persons*

### **Healthcare Rights For LGBTQTI+ Persons**

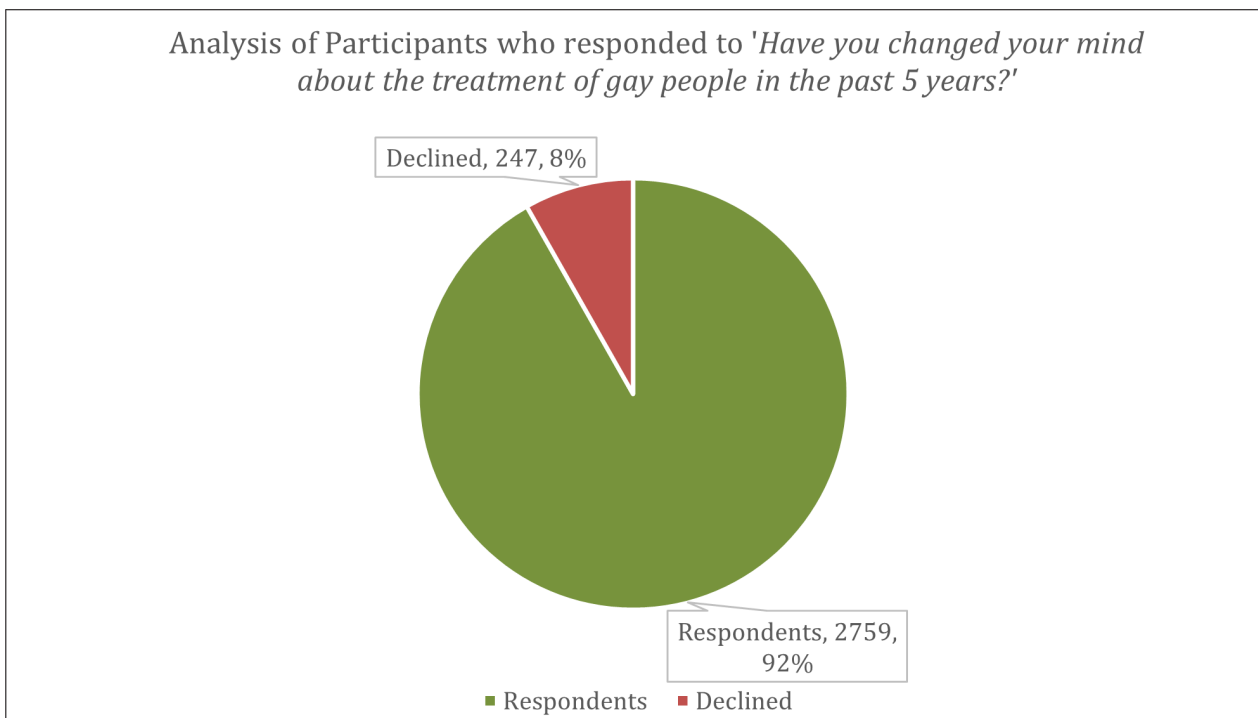
Healthcare professionals also form a part of society that treats persons differently and sometimes denies them access to care because of their sexual orientation, gender identity/expression and sex characteristics. Participants who fell in this category were asked, "If you are a medical practitioner, will you treat a gay person with dignity?" about 76% responded Yes, and approximately 24% of participants responded No.



*Figure 34: Perception of discrimination by health professionals*

### **Change In Perception Of LGBTQI Persons**

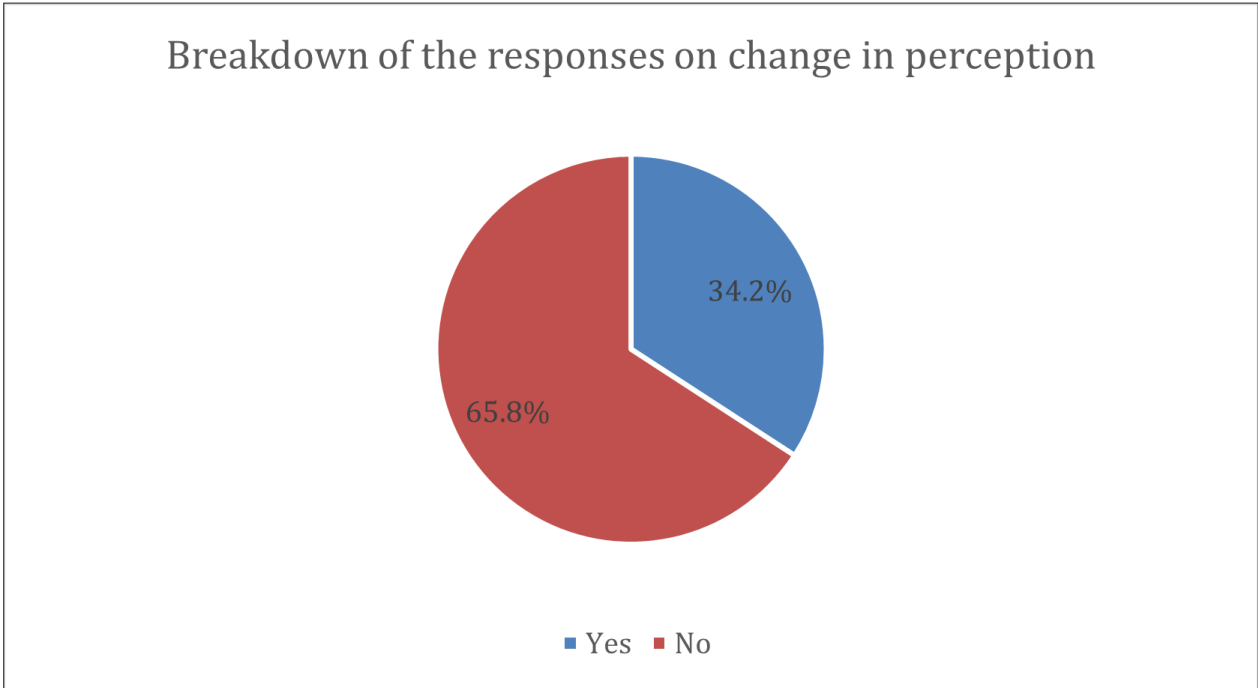
Respondents were asked, “Have you changed your mind about the treatment of gay people in the past 5 years?” Two thousand seven hundred fifty-nine (2759) participants responded to the question, while 247 persons declined to answer.



*Figure 35: Changes in perception*

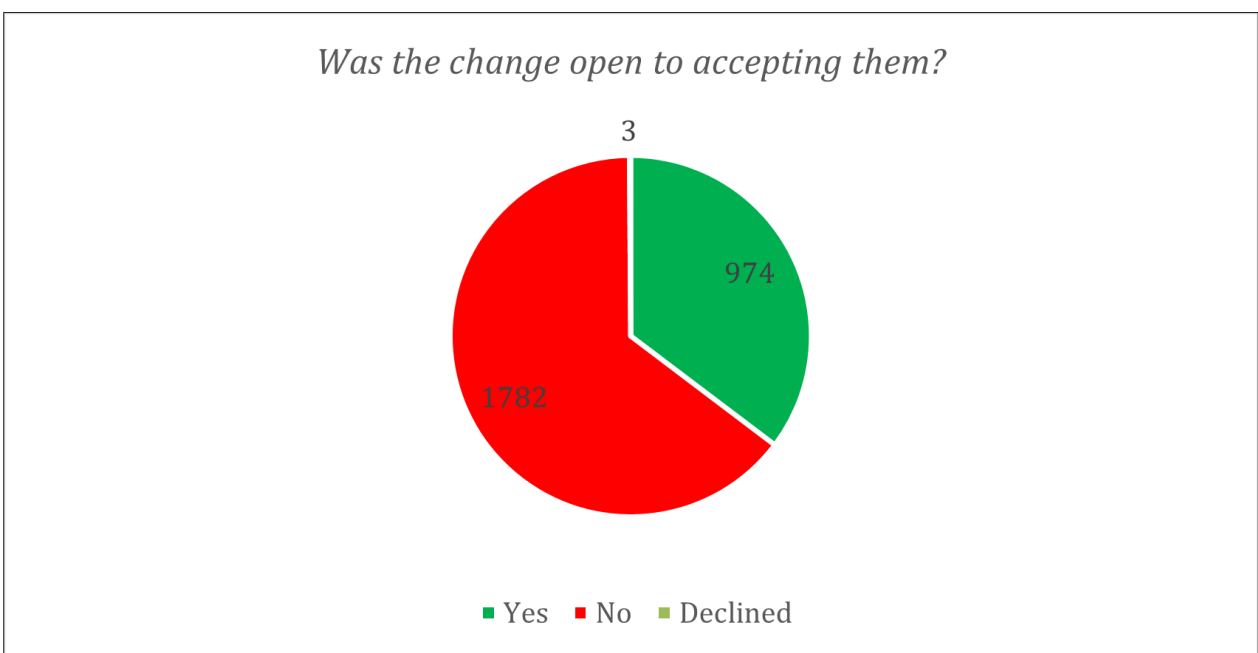


Within the group of respondents, 65.8% have not changed their minds about the treatment of gay people in Nigeria. Here is a detailed presentation of the responses.



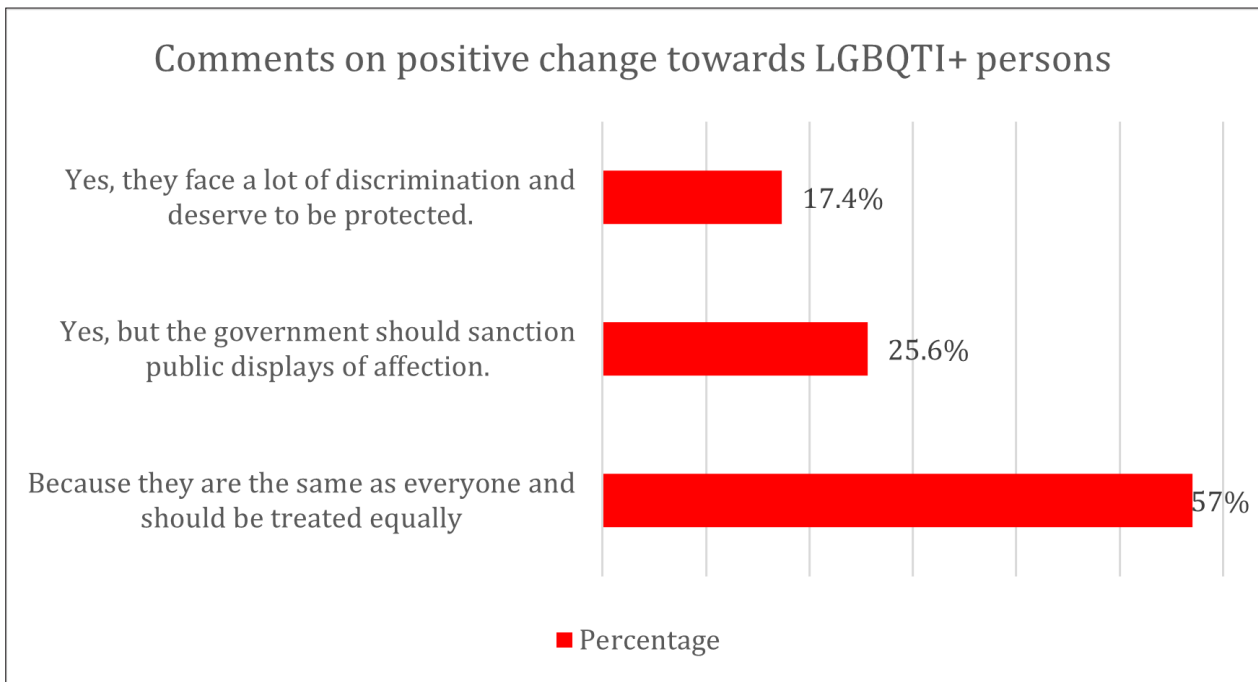
**Figure 36:** Breakdown of the responses on change in perception

The same group of respondents above (2759 people) asked if they had changed their minds were also asked, “Was the change open to accepting them?” 64.6% of this group of participants responded “No,” and about 35.3% answered “Yes.” Three participants within the group declined to respond.



**Figure 37:** Direction of change

We also questioned the reason for the change in their perception. Among the participants who positively changed towards LGBTQTI+ persons, 57% stated that they believed all individuals should be treated equally and thus would accept them. Alternatively, about 26% of participants stated that while they were accepting of LGBTQTI persons, the government should still sanction public displays of affection from this population.



**Figure 38: Breakdown of responses to positive perception change**

With the concern that 35.3% had changed negatively towards their perception of LGBTQTI+ people in Nigeria. Upon further probe, some of the participants who responded gave the reasons for their lack of acceptance. One thousand five hundred ninety-four (1594) persons stated that they lacked sufficient and accurate information regarding LGBTQTI+ persons.



# IN-DEPTH INTERVIEWS

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To develop a more in-depth understanding of the conclusions from the survey, we conducted in-depth interviews across specific stakeholder groups who often engage with the LGBTQI population, including health professionals, religious leaders, and policymakers.

## THE INTERSECTION BETWEEN RELIGION AND PERCEPTION TOWARDS LGBTQI+ PERSONS

The study interviewed religious leaders from the Christian and Muslim religions. There were similar ideologies across both faiths. All interviewees believed that their religion abhorred same-gender relations. They were unconvinced that people could have a gender assigned other than what ‘God-ordained at birth’. While the religious leaders do not support violence, the Christians copiously quoted the Bible, citing Sodom and Gomorrah as a reason not to associate with LGBTQI+ persons.

*“The [se] incidents happen because the Christians are rising more to normalise what the scripture says because there are certain things the world does that are against God’s purpose. If men do not rise up to speak on it, it can invoke the wrath of God. See Sodom and Gomorrah. What the church is doing is to set things right.”*

This opinion provides insight into teachings and their influence on LGBTQI+ persons’ decision to withhold their identities from family and friends.

Some respondents perceive the persecution as the duty of faithful adherents to carry out the will of their ‘God’ or ‘Allah’.

Policymakers are also influenced by religion in making laws that impact minorities directly.

*“It is because of belief in religion. Unlike the USA, that are vast and secular, they accept people the way they are. If we were born and told that it is good to be gay, people would have also accepted it, or if our religious leaders also told us that it is good, people would have accepted it.”*

## KNOWLEDGE THAT INFLUENCES ACCEPTANCE OF LGBTQI+ PERSONS

Religious leaders insisted that the Bible or the Qur’an is their reference on what to accept or reject and will not take any other form of teaching.

*“The Bible is my standard for checking. Whatever the scripture is not saying. I am not following it.”*

Law and policymakers believe that the family unit is the core of how people accept or reject others within society, including LGBTQI+ persons.

*“Whatever we don’t believe in, and someone close to us gets involved, there is always an impact. Some people tend to disown the person involved.”*

There was consensus that education and travel can positively influence how people think and act towards LGBTQTI+ people. A normative change will have to start from the family unit.

Healthcare professionals admitted to watching more YouTube videos and reading social media posts to understand better the challenges faced by LGBTQTI+.

## **RIGHTS OF LGBTQTI+ PERSONS**

While policymakers believe that laws should include protection towards minorities, they believe LGBTQTI+ persons are already protected under the Criminal Code and require no specialised protection.

Religious leaders were split in their attempt to distinguish that they do not support violence but often emphasised that this does not mean ‘they support gay people.’ These perceptions form the background for the belief in and prevalence of conversion practices in Nigeria. Religious leaders adopt talk therapy, counselling, prayers and other non-physically violent forms with the aim of ‘curing’ LGBTQ+ people of their nonconforming identities.

Religious healthcare professionals, including psychologists, who participated in this research stated that their beliefs do not align with the acceptance of LGBTQTI+ persons. They, however, alleged that their views do not impact their work as they will not impose their beliefs on others. When asked what will help their understanding of sexuality and gender, one respondent said:

*“If we are talking from my perspective as a health personnel - anatomically, people are either male or female. Some are saying gender is whatever you desire it to be. Now we are leaving anatomy part of it to a more social understanding of what gender is.”*

Another healthcare provider stated: “Personally, I try to watch LGBT people’s experiences, and I watch documentaries to try and educate myself. Sometimes we have to accept people for what they are. We cannot change them.”

## **THE INTERSECTION BETWEEN THE PERCEPTION OF LGBTQTI+ PERSONS AND HUMAN RIGHTS POLICIES**

Following the initial analysis of field responses, the research team interviewed lawmakers on the impact of perception and policymaking. In-depth interviews showed that religion and a lawmaker’s idea of morality influenced law-making and the type of bills they introduce. The lawmakers we spoke to were uncomfortable with women wearing short pants (shorts) but would condone women wearing long pants for their ‘safety’. When asked if they would be comfortable seeing men wearing long skirts, they responded that it would make them uncomfortable as it is not the ‘cultural norm’.

We found that personal beliefs influenced law-making. The lawmakers spoken to could not distinguish between personal beliefs, religion, culture, and norms.

In April 2022, Hon. Umar Muda proposed a bill to amend the SSMPA by prohibiting ‘cross-dressing’. This Bill seeks to punish people found guilty of cross-dressing with a jail term of six- months or the option of a fine or both. It is unclear what ‘cross-dressing’ means under the proposed Bill. However, if passed, this Bill will negatively impact transgender, gender nonconforming, gender diverse and intersex people in Nigeria.

# CON CLU SIONS

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- A comparative review of the previous study conducted in 2019 showed a sharp change in the perception of LGBTQTI+ rights. While people may gradually accept them within the family unit, there is a rapid upward climb in acceptance that their rights are the same as everyone else.
- The study shows a strong link between people's religious beliefs and their perception of LGBTQTI+ persons. We note that medical personnel are not very different from the rest of the Nigerian service providers regarding discrimination against LGBTQTI+ persons. The study showed that service providers very likely discriminate against LGBTQTI+ persons.
- The study showed that the older members of society (56+) still believe that LGBTQTI+ persons should be punished for their sexuality. We highlight this finding as a policymaking concern. The average age of a Nigerian Senator is 56.
- Regionally, intolerance of LGBTQTI+ in Nigeria remains higher in the north-east, with Yobe state having the lowest level of acceptance.
- While LGBTQTI+ persons continue to be profiled based on appearance, there appeared to be a general acceptance for feminine presenting persons wearing clothes that are ordinarily reserved for men.



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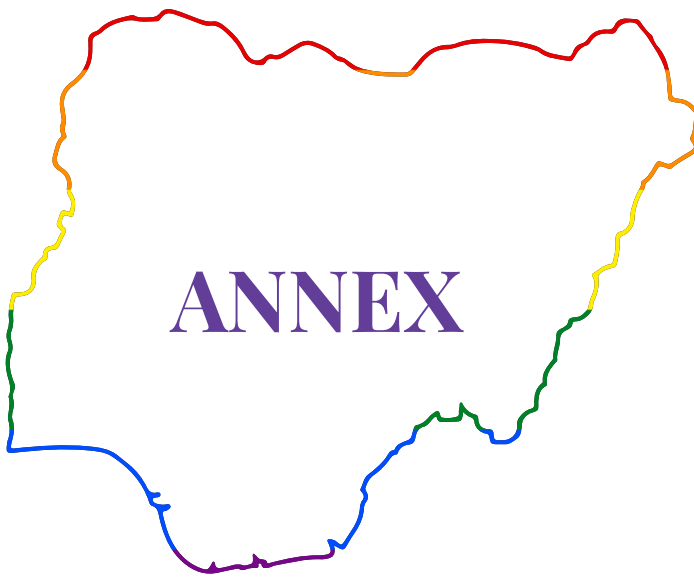
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