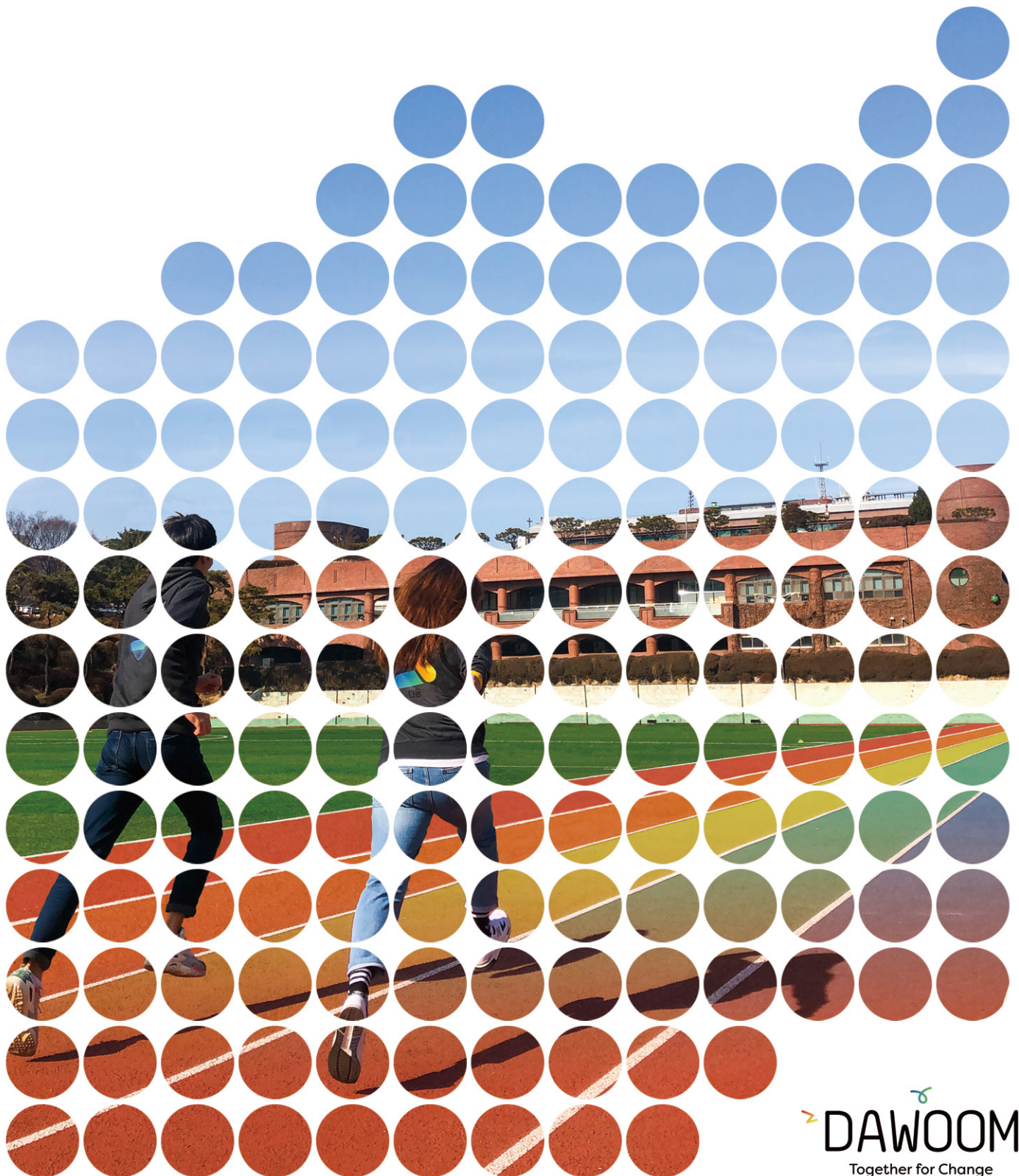


Social Needs of LGBTQIA+ Young Adults in South Korea

Data Summary



Executive Summary

A snapshot of LGBTQIA+ Young Adults in South Korea

In 2021, Dawoom conducted research to assess the extent of discrimination faced by young Korean individuals who identify as LGBTQIA+ and to gauge their socio-political needs.

Dawoom, established in 2020, is a organization that aims to promote diversity, foster youth leadership, and advocate for LGBTQIA+ rights in South Korea. The organization is dedicated to improving the well-being of LGBTQIA+ individuals and defending their rights, despite facing challenges such as political backlash and economic crises.

Overview of Data Collection Methods

Both **online surveys** (n=3,911) and **focus group interviews** (n=45) were utilized concurrently to obtain a comprehensive and thorough examination.

The initial survey was conducted from August 11th to 31st, 2021, followed by a supplementary survey from September 2nd to 7th, 2021 aimed at gathering additional information about transgender, nonbinary, and gender queer individuals. The online survey instrument used was Qualtrics.

The focus group interviews were based on semi-structured questionnaires and targeted individuals belonging to various

groups, including asexual, bisexual, pansexual, non-metropolitan residents, military dischargees, transgender, nonbinary, genderqueer, and people living with HIV among the survey participants. The interviews were conducted from September 17th to November 5th, 2021, and were executed via ZOOM due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The participants of the survey were restricted to individuals who have lived in South Korea for the past 10 years and were within the age range of 19 to 34, in accordance with the objectives of the survey.

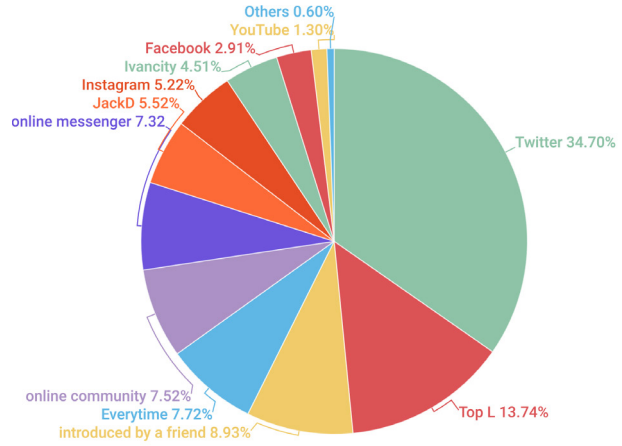
Summary Range

The survey questionnaire covered a range of topics, including **recognition of identity, community experience, discrimination, economic standing, housing, health, and socio-political needs**. Additionally, the focus group interviews explored marginalized experiences that were challenging to capture through survey responses alone.

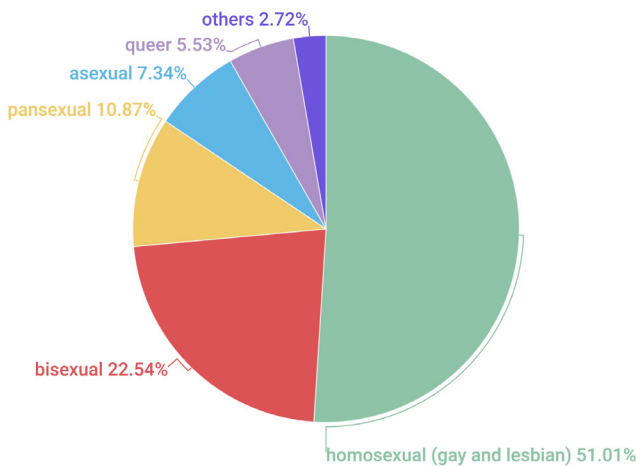
As a result of the research effort, which received support from the Seoul Metropolitan Government, a report was published in the Korean language on May 17, 2022. This summary highlights the eight main themes of the original report.

Participants Demographics

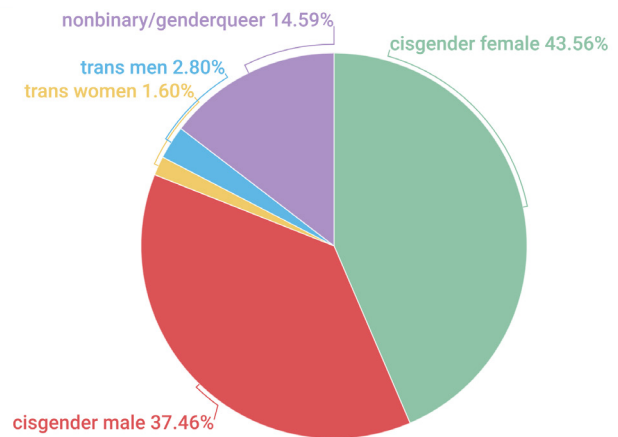
A total of 3,911 participants were recruited for the online survey through various channels. The majority of participants identified as cisgender and homosexual, but there was a significant increase in the proportion of nonbinary, genderqueer, pansexual, and asexual individuals. The majority of participants were in their early to mid-20s, and over half of them resided in the metropolitan area of Seoul. For the purposes of statistical analysis, the cisgender group was reclassified into gay, lesbian, bisexual (including pansexual), asexual, and queer categories. The non-cisgender group was classified into trans women, trans men, and nonbinary/genderqueer categories.



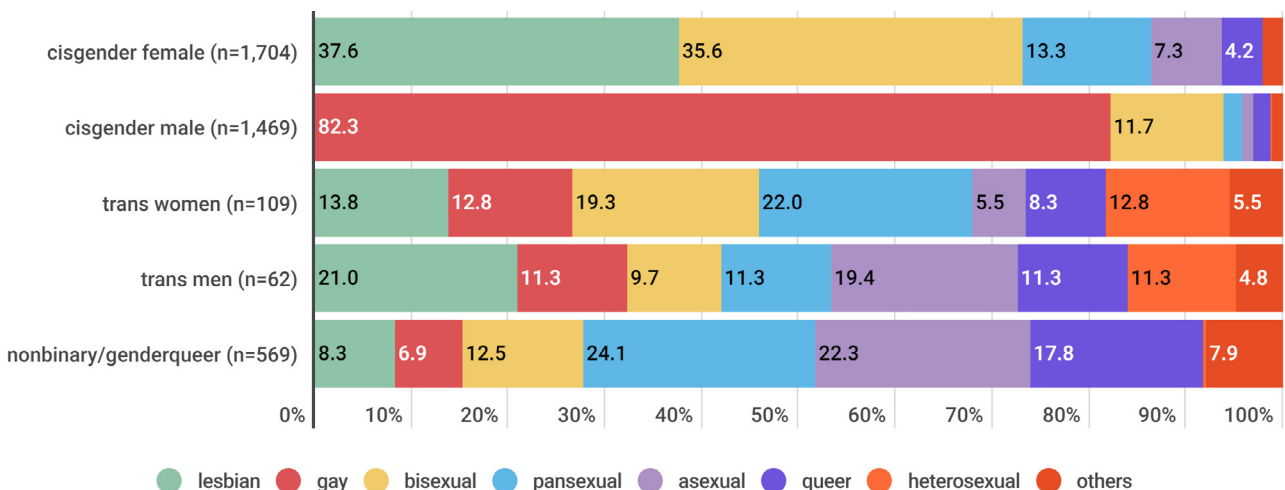
Participation Channels



Sexual Orientation

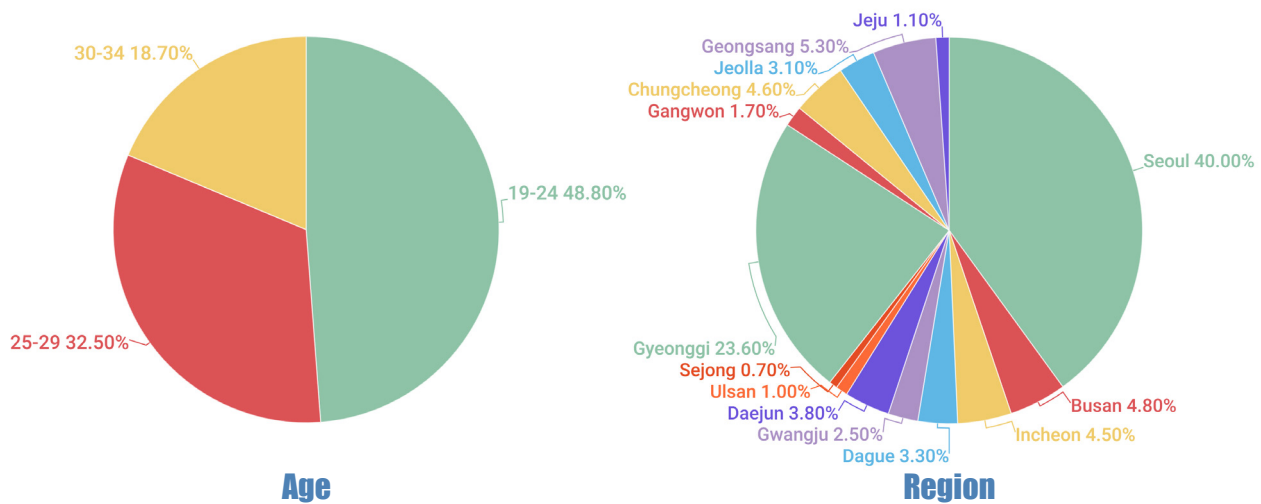


Gender Identity



Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

● lesbian ● gay ● bisexual ● pansexual ● asexual ● queer ● heterosexual ● others



Key Identified Themes

Diverse Identities

The understanding and expression of LGBTQIA+ identity among young adults has become **more diverse** in recent times. In the 2014 publication of "LGBTI Social Needs in South Korea," 90.2% of respondents aged 19-34 identified as cisgender and the category of gender-queer was not included. Approximately 6% identified as pansexual, asexual, or queer.

In this survey, a substantial number of respondents identified themselves as pansexual (10.8%), asexual (7.3%), queer (5.5%), and others (2.7%), in addition to conventional categories of homosexuality and bisexuality. There has also been a significant increase in the number of individuals identifying as nonbinary or genderqueer (14.6%). This trend towards increased diversity was especially noticeable among younger respondents. It is crucial that future research and policy considerations regarding LGBTQIA+ communities account for these evolving changes.

"Folks like me, we're not by ourselves."

lesbian trans woman, 22

Desire to Come Out

The respondents showed a strong desire to come out as LGBTQIA+, but many still remained closeted. 11.8% of the respondents reported that they have not disclosed their sexual or gender identity to anyone in their personal life. When they realized their sexual orientation or gender identity, a significant number of respondents (83.9%) expressed that their greatest concern was the potential **negative response from their family**, highlighting the low level of social tolerance for LGBTQIA+ individuals in South Korea.

Despite the fear of negative reactions, a majority of the respondents (88.2%) considered it important to identify as a member of the LGBTQIA+ community. 60.9% of the participants reported having an online social media account that publicly reveals their identity, a significant increase from the 2014 survey (26.5%).

Additionally, many participants (70.0%) believed that increased visibility of LGBTQIA+ individuals in daily life could drive societal progress.

"Everyone besides my family was accepting of me, which makes me sad because it's tough to be rejected by the very people who are meant to support me."

bisexual genderqueer, 23

Safe Community

The LGBTQIA+ community holds significant importance for individuals who cannot openly express their identity in their daily life. Respondents expressed a desire to connect with others who share similar experiences (68.0%) and to find a safe space (57.3%) by participating in the LGBTQIA+ community.

"A feeling of belonging as a member of queer community. A sense of comfort knowing that I'm not alone in my experiences."

trans man, 29

"I overheard, 'I ain't fond of bisexuals.' She don't take kindly to folks who've been with both men and women."

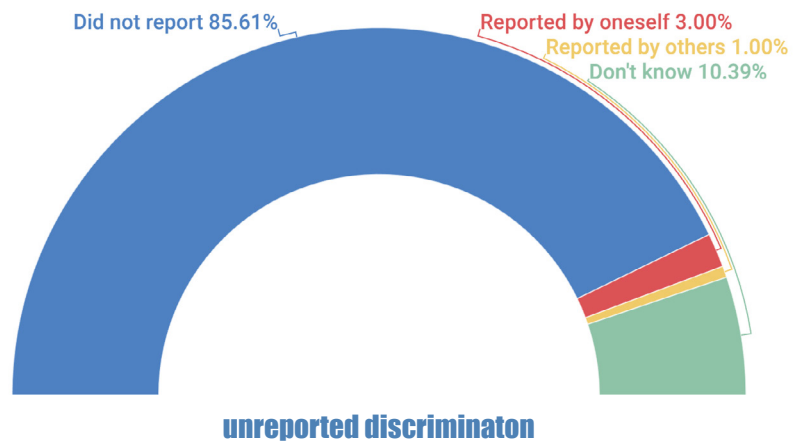
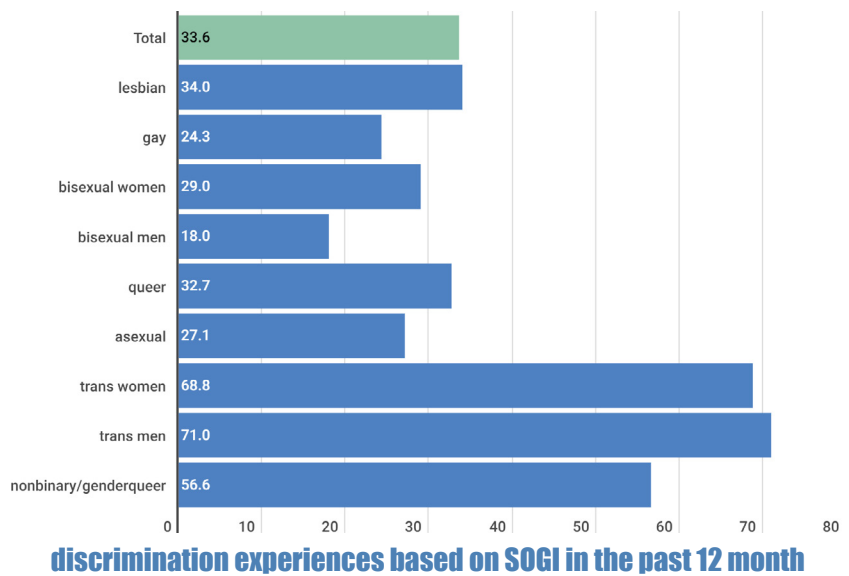
bisexual woman, 25

However, not all LGBTQIA+ individuals found the community to be a safe and welcoming environment. 75.4% of respondents reported difficulties in participating in the LGBTQIA+ community, especially those who identified as transgender, nonbinary, gender queer, or asexual, as they experienced **exclusion due to their marginalized identities**. Furthermore, the rise of trans-exclusionary feminism has had a negative impact on the LGBTQIA+ community.

Daily Discrimination

The results of the survey showed that **one in three respondents reported experiencing discrimination** based on their sexual orientation and gender identity in the past year. A higher percentage of trans men (71.0%) and trans women (68.8%) reported such experiences, which were twice as frequent as the average. These findings highlight the widespread discrimination against the LGBTQIA+ community in South Korean society and the low level of acceptance for various gender identities.

In South Korea, individuals whose legal gender is male are required to complete their military service. 56.7% of respondents who have served in the military reported experiencing hate speech targeting LGBTQIA+ individuals within their unit. 17.9% of respondents, whose LGBTQIA+ identity was known within their



"If you want to blend in, go along with what they're saying.' I felt like I had to pretend to agree with them when they made hateful comments about the gay community, and it was really heartbreaking."

gay man, 30

unit, reported experiencing **sexual harassment or violence** against themselves.

Most respondents who experienced discrimination due to their sexual orientation and gender identity did not report it to the authorities. The main reason behind this was

the belief that reporting would not lead to any change (53.0% *multiple response) and that the frequency of such discrimination made it seem unimportant to report (53.0%). These results indicate that participants had **low expectations of society's response to discrimination** against sexual and gender minorities, and they felt that the process of resolving the issue would require them to reveal their identity to the majority, which they considered to be a significant burden (38.6%).

Economic Precariousness

One of the four participants with job search experience reported that their LGBTQIA+ identity had a negative impact on the job search process. This was particularly the case for trans women (62.9%) and trans men (60.7%), with two out of three transgender respondents reporting discrimination. For example, 17.9% of trans women reported being denied or cancelled job opportunities once their gender identity was revealed.

Transgender respondents generally sought employment in positions that did not require specification of gender and allowed for solitary work. The employment status of trans women among the participants was notably poor, with a higher proportion of temporary and part-time employment (39.5%) compared to the overall average (24.3%), leading to a higher rate of negativity towards their economic future. A response of "it will get worse" was recorded for 43.1% of trans women, while the overall average was 21.5%.

"When they asked for either my resident registration or proof that I finished my military service, I withdrew my job application."

trans man, 29

The survey also found that LGBTQIA+ individuals face significant challenges in the workplace, with 73.3% of respondents reporting that they had to **hide or conceal their identity** at work. Furthermore, one in five participants reported hearing hate speech from a colleague, and 12.3% experienced negative treatment related to their sexual and gender identity. It has once again been established that an anti-discrimination law must be put into effect.

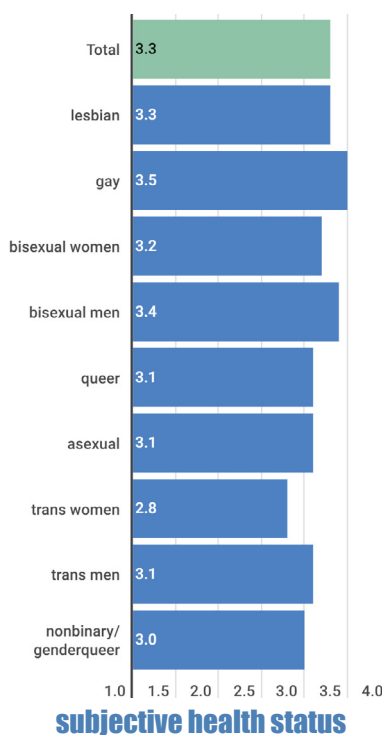
"It's tough havin' to be in the same room with family who don't show no respect for who I am."

Agender, 24

Inevitable Independence

The study found that LGBTQIA+ young adults in South Korea, where the age of independence from parents is relatively late, tend to strive for independence from their families earlier. One-third of the respondents living independently cited their sexual and gender minority status, particularly being trans women (62.3%) and trans men (54.2%), as a contributing factor in their decision to become independent.

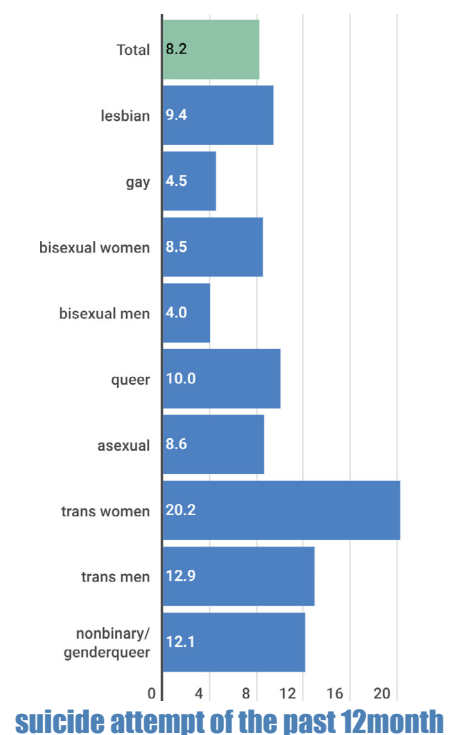
LGBTQIA+ individuals who feel uncomfortable or unsafe with their families often seek to establish their own lives for various reasons, such as negative attitudes from parents (31.8%), conflicts arising from coming out (15.7%), and experiences of verbal and physical violence (6.6%). They strive for independence to escape these negative family experiences.



Physical and Mental Health

The respondents generally reported poor health conditions. Their subjective health status (rated on a scale of 1 to 5) was rated an average of 3.3, significantly lower than the results of a nationwide young adults survey (4.28) conducted by the Korea Institute for Health and Social Affairs in 2020. Especially, trans men (3.1), nonbinary/gender queer (3.0), and trans women (2.9) reported a lower subjective health status compared to their cisgender counterparts.

Approximately half of the respondents reported experiencing **depressive symptoms** in the past week. 41.5% of participants stated that they had **seriously considered suicide** in the past year, with 8.2% reporting that they had **attempted suicide**. The responses of transgender and nonbinary/gender-queer individuals were 1.5 times higher than the overall average. South Korea has a high suicide rate compared to other OECD countries, with LGBTQIA+ young adults being particularly vulnerable.



Demand for Equal Rights

97.1% of the respondents viewed South Korea as an unfavorable place to live as LGBTQIA+. This is due to the historical exclusion of sexual and gender minorities by state institutions and policies, as well as social intolerance towards LGBTQIA+. The respondents recognized that the military (91.4%), the National Assembly (89.0%), the government (88.4%), and the judiciary (82.4%) held hostile attitudes towards LGBTQIA+. Notably, the negative perception of the Democratic Party of Korea (71.9%) increased by more than 20% compared to a survey conducted seven years prior, reflecting the Moon Jae-In administration's disappointing

performance on human rights issues such as delaying the enactment of comprehensive anti-discrimination laws under the pretext of "social consensus."

The majority of respondents expressed a desire for a society that recognizes diversity and does not tolerate discrimination, and aspire to be recognized as equal members of society. As a result, the implementation of a comprehensive anti-discrimination legislation that encompasses sexual orientation and gender identity was the top policy priority, with 60.3% of respondents selecting it as their priority (*multiple response). Despite being introduced in 2007, the

"I believe passing an anti-discrimination law is a crucial first step. It's becoming increasingly urgent to protect the human rights of transgender individuals from being violated."

asexual trans man, 28

law has yet to be enacted due to political opposition. There was also a high demand for a same-sex marriage (42.5%) or life partnership relations act (38.0%). Transgender respondents called for recognition of legal gender change through self-determination and health insurance coverage for hormone therapy and gender confirmation surgeries.

Concluding Recommendations

Based on the findings of this comprehensive research, the following ten recommendations are presented by Dawoom:

- **Implement a comprehensive anti-discrimination law that includes protection for sexual orientation and gender identity**
- **Establish a legislative framework that guarantees the rights of same-sex couples**
- **Create an educational system that is inclusive of LGBTQIA+ individuals**
- **Promote inclusiveness of LGBTQIA+ individuals in the public sector, including police, administrative agencies, and courts**
- **Ensure equal and safe workplace conditions for all, including the LGBTQIA+ community**
- **Develop a healthcare system that is welcoming and accommodating to the LGBTQIA+ community**
- **Foster an inclusive and equal military culture that values diversity**
- **Work towards creating a safe and inclusive community for all LGBTQIA+ individuals**
- **Implement a legislative framework that upholds the dignity of transgender individuals**
- **Incorporate sexual orientation and gender identity in national surveys to provide a comprehensive understanding of the LGBTQIA+ community**