

Students from the LGBTQI+ community in Student Mobility

Students were asked to self-identify their sexual orientation and could identify as heterosexual, bisexual, homosexual, other or indicate they preferred not to disclose.

We received significant number of answers for the first three categories (heterosexual 9791, bisexual 1100, homosexual 551), due to the limited sample, the other groups could not be included in the data analysis.

Key Findings

In general the responses of LGBTQI+ students follow the trends of the general population when it comes to access to information and financial support with the exception of up-front financing of the cost is considered more of a challenge.

Interactions with the community suggests that this is due to people from the LGBTQI+ community might be more estranged from their families; and responsible for their own living expenses. Overall cost of living during mobility are reported as higher by students from LGBTQI+ communities.

There is a reported higher percentage of students that are a member of the LGBTQI+ community coming from Group 1 and 2 as countries of departure; as well as countries of destination.

14% 1622 respondents from the LGBTQI+ community



17% of universities recognise students from the LGBTQI+ community as students with fewer opportunities.

Discrimination on exchange

Students from an LGBTQI+ background report are 15 times more likely to experience discrimination compared to their peers. The topic of discrimination and negative experiences comes more profoundly to the forefront for the LGBTQI+ community:

- students with an LGBTQI+ background report more often being treated unfairly by student and professors (40% versus 30%).
- 40% reported being having less access to opportunities compared to 26% of general respondents.
- 15% of students from LGBTQI+ background reported being discriminated because of their sexual orientation, compared to 0,7% of heterosexual respondents.
- Students from the LGBTQI+ community report fear of being lonely or isolated at a higher level than their straight peers.

Reflections from the community

The focus of young people with an LGBTQI+ background tends to be acceptance and safety. Young people from this background tend to choose more accepting countries to go on exchange (type 1 and 2 of Erasmus countries), usually western and northern Europe, which are also the more expensive countries; increasing mobility costs.

The difficulties experienced by this target group mentioned discrimination by society as well as institutions, teachers and, fellow students, which indicates a lack of understanding of their situation. Information should be distributed through social media as these might be considered more private or “safe” spaces for youth that have not yet come out, but worry about how they will be perceived in their host country.

To reach this group, a wide support network that can influence LGBTQI+ youth should be considered.



Recommendations

This target group can be hard to reach because they are afraid of not being accepted in other countries, they are scared of facing discrimination and repercussions for being who they are. They might hear a lot of hearsay/comments that a country/city/region is not LGBTQI+ friendly and see news about anti LGBTQI+ movements and violence.

More information should exist that shows the reality and acceptance around Europe, mobility information targeting this group should include:

- Activists and role models of the LGBTQ+ community around Europe
- Showcasing open-minded politicians and policies of different destination
- Hearing experience of LGBTQI+ peers who have been abroad.

An open community of peers where the person feels accepted and not as an exception, where the concept of non-straight love is accepted and normalized.

Universities can support these students with:

- A contact point to talk to when facing discrimination
- Equal rights and treatments as other exchange students
- Information about the country's laws and norms, and potential university policies that might be welcoming or work against their background.
- An environment where they can be themselves and where their preferred pronoun is accepted and used.

The data extracted in this fact sheet comes from the Social Inclusion & Engagement in Mobility (SIEM) research project run by Erasmus Student Network (ESN) funded by the Erasmus+ programme. An extensive research report that gathers input of 12.000 students and 750 staff members across Europe and beyond on the inclusion in international student exchanges.