



Gej Strejt Alijansa Gay Straight Alliance

PREJUDICES EXPOSED – HOMOPHOBIA IN SERBIA
Public opinion research report on LGBT population

Research conducted for Gay Straight Alliance by
Centre for Free Elections and Democracy (CeSID)
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Methodology of the research and description of the research sample:

A public opinion research to determine **attitudes towards homosexuality** was conducted between 13 and 19 February 2008. The research was based on a representative sample of 967 citizens on the territory of Serbia (excluding Kosovo and Metohija). Data was gathered by the direct interviews technique.

Firstly, 100 research points (i.e. polling stations corresponding to towns or parts of towns) were determined, representative at the level of Serbia. Within them, there was a random, systematic selection of 10 households according to the determined step principle. The selection of interviewees in households was also arbitrary and systematic, according to “the first following birthday” principle, and one person older than 15 was selected in each household.

Sex: female - 52%, male - 48%,

Age: 15 to 19 – 4%, 20 to 29 – 23%, 30 to 39 – 17%, 40 to 49 – 19%, 50 to 59 - 18%, over 60 - 19%.

Education: up to elementary school or completed elementary school – 19%, completed high school for skills - 13%, other type of high school completed – 50%, higher education – 18%.

Vocation: farmer - 6%, non- and pre-qualified worker - 8%, qualified and highly qualified worker - 21%, technician - 15%, administration - 12%, highly skilled - 14%, housewife - 12%, pupil or student - 12%;

Working status: private sector (owner) – 7%, private sector employee – 17%, public sector – 13%, unemployed – 18%, pensioner – 19%, farmer – 3%, housewife – 10%, pupil/student – 12%, other – 1%.

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1. Introduction

“If there exists a social group self-defining as Martians, and there are twelve of them, and they found an organisation – that’s great to me. But no, we have learnt that everything which is different is horrible and a threat to our shaky identity. A frightened animal is barking at everyone, a satisfied one is lying and watching the world go by.”

Vladimir Arsenijević, *A frightened animal is barking at everyone*, Glas javnosti, 15 May 2005

Public opinion research on homosexuality belongs to the domain of sociological attempts to determine social conditions and consequences of one reality, regardless of its origin. This research had the general population as a specimen, therefore the subject was to determine attitudes towards homosexuality, and not homosexuality as such.

Among people with “different” sexual orientation, along with the processes of emancipation and realisation that they are different, the need to determine the origin of homosexuality seizes and there is a stronger intention to sociologically analyse (non) acceptability of homosexuality and of the social groups which share the orientation, as well as to analyse identities that form on that basis. Contemporary sociology and empiricism are not trying to answer why someone is homosexual, but what kind of repercussions the fact has, the existence of which no-one can oppose or deny.

Homosexuality is a lot more than sexual attraction between members of the same sex¹; investigating the concept as a “social construct” demands classical sociological methods of research, one of which is certainly public opinion research. Such a research should answer questions like:

- 1) what is the scope and the strength of an attitude towards homosexuality
- 2) what is the relation between an attitude towards homosexuality and value orientations
- 3) what is the relation between an attitude towards homosexuality and attitudes towards other social concepts and occurrences
- 4) what is the relation between attitudes towards homosexuality and social and demographic characteristics of individuals and groups
- 5) is there and what is the scope of social distances towards homosexuals.

Answers to these questions should aid theoretical discussions on readiness of a society to call itself “open”, as well as to help discuss actions of individuals and organisations which work on strategies of integration of sexual minorities into the social system.

¹ “Homosexuality is, therefore, a social construct. Only a sexual intercourse between persons of the same sex is, as such, universal; everything else is an outcome of complex social processes. The very term “homosexuality”, as already said, exists only occasionally. What will be put into the definition of homosexuality and how the behaviour considered would be valued, which factors will influence the valuation – everything depends on the normative patterns of the society, which is created in the interaction of social practice and the reflections on it.” Ivana Spasić, *Homosexuality and sociology – from a pathological model to a social construct*, www.gay-serbia.com

2. General attitudes towards homosexuality

Societies that rest on values of the western, Christian civilisation are those that established heterosexuality as a universal norm of behaviour; a deviation from the norm in different periods implied different social, religious, even legal (criminal) sanctions. The development of the civilisation and science, and the progress of (self-)consciousness implies an increase of tensions between, on one hand, attempts to move the barrier with respect to these norms, and on the other hand, the growing resistance to moving the barriers. The tensions are peaking in physical attacks or lynching of people with different sexual orientation, as an extreme reaction of various neo-conservativisms.

Since homosexuality can be discussed on different levels (psychological, biological, socio-psychological, sociological), the very analysis of attitudes towards homosexuality has a plethora of dimensions. Questions testing attitudes towards homosexuality tried to touch upon a majority of issues in this research. Attitudes towards homosexuality were determined through 15 different statements, with options to agree with, disagree or express a neutral, or lack of, attitude. Out of 15 questions, eight had the positive connotation and seven the negative one. The following two tables summarise answers to the statements individually.

Table 1. (Dis)agreement with the negative statements on homosexuality (%)

	Agree	Disagree	Neutral	Total
Homosexuality is a disease	70	17	13	100
I think the Church is right to condemn homosexuality	60	18	22	100
The state institutions should work on preventing homosexuality	51	26	23	100
Homosexuality is very dangerous for the society	50	26	24	100
If a party I vote for started talking about the rights of homosexuals, I would stop voting for it	40	28	22	100
Homosexuality is a western construct to destroy a family and our tradition	36	40	24	100
The issue of homosexuality is imposed by various non-governmental organisations	28	40	32	100

Although science determined over thirty years ago that homosexuality is not a disease, a mental disorder or an emotional problem, the public opinion is far from agreeing with science! Science with its authority in the modern age has managed to make certain concepts acceptable, but that is not the case with homosexuality. We will not discuss reasons for this here since the research had for its goal to note down the public opinion attitudes and perhaps determine causes for them. In any case, it is worrying that in the set of negative claims the biggest agreement is with the claim that homosexuality is a disease. This stereotype is supported by socialisation and conformism, and a lot of time will pass before the number of those who think homosexuality is a disease is reduced to “at least” a half of the population.

As the Church has a high moral standing in our society, the finding that the position of this institution is appreciated on any issue was expected, and in particular on the issue of its attitude towards homosexuality.

It is interesting to analyse the stance on how the state and the society should treat homosexuality; although a half of the interviewees agrees with the claims that the state should intervene and that the society is endangered by the existence of homosexuals, in both cases there is a “strong” quarter of the interviewees who disagree. In an authoritarian and traditional society this quarter can be viewed as a “driving force” in forming neutral or positive attitudes towards homosexuality in the future.

When it comes to attitudes of political parties to homosexuality, the citizens of Serbia are less of “party soldiers” than with other issues proposed by the parties. A majority stated they would stop voting for a party if it started supporting the rights of homosexuals. Considering that this research established that 60% of the interviewees have the positive attitude towards some party, we come to the conclusion that a majority of them would turn their backs to their parties. However, there are significant differences between supporters of different parties, which will be discussed in a separate part of the report.

If anything positive can be concluded from the data, it is that a majority of the interviewees do not think that homosexuality as an issue is “imposed” from abroad or by the non-governmental organisations. This is consistent with some of the data from the following table, where it is “acknowledged” that homosexuality, whatever its origin, is immanent to every society and that it cannot be imposed or ignored.

Table 2. (Dis)agreement with the positive statements on homosexuality (%)

	Agree	Disagree	Neutral	Total
Homosexuality has existed from the earliest times, it was hidden before, and now it is talked about	67	12	21	100
Everyone has the right to their sexual orientation as long as they do not endanger others	65	14	21	100
Homosexuals are the same as everyone else	38	42	20	100
There should be places which are public and available for gatherings of homosexuals	22	53	23	100
Homosexuals are an endangered group in Serbia and should be helped to accomplish their rights	12	64	24	100
Homosexuals should be allowed to marry	10	77	13	100
Gay prides are a legitimate way of fighting for the rights of homosexuals and they should happen	8	73	19	100
Homosexuals should be allowed to adopt	5	86	9	100

When it comes to the positive claims, homosexuality is not only “acknowledged”, but is also considered to have existed since the beginning of time, and that it is only more publicly spoken of now. Such a high level of agreement occurs only with the statement that everyone has the right to their sexuality as long as they do not endanger others, or more precisely, as long as sexuality is kept private. Therefore, despite the fact that it is considered a disease, the individuals are also allowed to choose whether they would or would not seek “treatment.”

Already starting from the claim that homosexuals are the same as everyone else, disagreement overpowers agreement. A majority of the interviewees think that places of gathering for homosexuals should not exist, and gay prides are considered unwanted with almost three quarters of the interviewees. **Therefore, homosexuality as a private thing – yes, public expressions - unacceptable.**

This attitude explains the reactions to the gay pride held in 2001; it seems that even today reactions would not be any different, at least when it comes to attitudes of the public opinion on the issue!

Attitudes were particularly negative towards movements for and achievements in homosexual human rights which are believed to threaten the very foundations of the concept of a family and therefore the reproduction of the society. This attitude also largely explains why homosexuality in general is rejected. Every social phenomenon that deviates from the existing norms is judged and rejected because it is interpreted as a threat to the system. As “the intensity of a social reaction to an act of deviance is proportional to the significance of the place the norm assumes in the collective moral system” (Dirkem, 1972), therefore anything that is believed to endanger the basics of the reproduction of the society (being: family relationships, parents-children relationships...) is adamantly rejected. Our society is no exception, thus a large proportion of the interviewees think that gay marriages should not be allowed (77%), and especially adoption of children (83%). **Therefore, homosexuality as an individual act – yes (or at least maybe), homosexuality as endangering the “group or the collective being” - unacceptable!**

A general, synthetic table (a unique variable with 5 modalities) of attitudes towards homosexuality was created according to the aforementioned 15 claims, which will be used as such in the analysis of the correlatives of attitudes towards homosexuality. The synthetic table is:

- | |
|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">- 35% of the interviewees have the extremely negative attitude towards homosexuality;- 32% have the mostly negative attitude;- 22% have no attitude or are neutral;- 10% have the mostly positive attitude;- 1% have the extremely positive attitude towards homosexuality. |
|---|

3. Value orientations and attitudes towards homosexuality

According to the theories on consistency and stability of attitudes, the research took off from the assumption that attitudes towards homosexuality is closely related to other attitudes, especially to certain values and value orientations from which attitudes are derived. Values are sets of beliefs according to which a certain type of thinking and behaviour is desirable, and in line with them attitudes are formed on various issues which support such convictions.

Values (that is value orientations which form a set of values of the same “direction”) can always be observed and examined on a certain continuum which has its extremal points; regarding that, this research focused on four value orientations: traditionalism (non-traditionalism), authoritarianism (non-authoritarianism), conformism

(non-conformism) and nationalism (non-nationalism). These are the value orientations for which there is a strong assumption, i.e. a hypothesis that they are closely related to attitudes towards homosexuality, which proved correct as the statistical correlations found are extremely high.

Value orientations were tested through sequences of statements which were transformed into a synthetic table which indicates a certain orientation.

3.1. Traditionalism

When it comes to **traditionalism**, it was mainly tested through claims which examine roles of men and women in a family and in the society, and also through those that describe attitudes to morality and faith. Based on this, a finding was obtained according to which 17% of the interviewees have the extremely traditional orientation, 33% mostly traditional, 34% have no traditional or non-traditional stance, 11% have the mostly non-traditional attitude and 5% have the completely non-traditional attitude (one can also say that 16% of the interviewees have a “modernist” value orientation).

Table 3 shows the relation between traditionalism and attitudes towards homosexuality.

Table 3. Traditionalism² and attitudes towards homosexuality (%)

	Non-traditional	Mostly non-traditional	Neither	Mostly traditional	Traditional	Average
Positive attitude	8	1	1	0	0	1
Mostly positive attitude	35	20	15	2	1	10
Neutral attitude	41	39	28	14	12	22
Mostly negative attitude	10	25	32	39	30	32
Negative attitude	6	15	24	45	57	35
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100

Cc 0.45

The negative attitude towards homosexuality is directly related to the traditional value orientation. There is no-one among “traditionalists” who has the positive attitude towards this issue, whereas the negative attitude percentage is between 84% and 87%! There are higher numbers of those who have the positive or at least neutral attitude towards homosexuality among those who have the modernist values. However, even among them there are between 16% and 40% of those who have the mostly or the extremely negative attitude towards homosexuality. **That means that a part of the population which we can call non-traditional when it comes to understanding relationships between sexes or to non-acceptance of the traditional morality, is still traditional when it comes to attitudes towards homosexuality.** This form of “barrier” has not been overcome even by the “non-traditional” part of the population,

² **Traditionalism** was examined through the following claims: “Leading business positions should be held by men”, “The most important virtue of every woman is to be a good wife and mother”, “One should stick firmly to national customs and tradition”, “One should stick to morality preached by one’s religious community”, “Life in common-law union does not agree with the moral of our nation”

which means that the acceptance of homosexuality will be the corner-stone to mark the final defeat of traditionalism.

3.2. Authoritarianism

The second value orientation questioned was **(non-)authoritarianism**³. The research showed that our society is mostly authoritarian (17% have the extremely authoritarian orientation, 33% mostly authoritarian, 28% have a mixed orientation, 14% are mostly non-authoritarian, and 4% are completely non-authoritarian), and Table 4 shows a high correlation between this orientation and attitudes towards homosexuality.

Table 4. Authoritarianism and attitudes towards homosexuality (%)

	Non-authoritarian	Mostly non-authoritarian	Neither	Mostly authoritarian	Authoritarian	Average
Positive attitude	8	2	1	0	0	1
Mostly positive attitude	36	19	10	7	4	10
Neutral attitude	33	40	25	16	15	22
Mostly negative attitude	10	20	40	36	28	32
Negative attitude	13	19	24	41	53	35
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100

Cc 0.39

here too there was a high correlation between authoritarianism and attitudes towards homosexuality. The correlation is still smaller than in the case of traditionalism. Authoritarianism was examined more as a value determining forms of government, and not an arrangement of the private domain which is more sensitive to issues such as homosexuality; there are fewer those who are “authoritarians” and who have the negative attitude towards homosexuality than in the case of “traditionalists” who see homosexuality as a direct threat to traditional relations in the domains of personal and family lives (recall that there are up to 87% of those, whereas among authoritarian the number of those who have the negative attitude towards homosexuality is between 77% of moderate and 81% of extreme authoritarians).

Those who are non-authoritarian (provisionally, this could be called the democratic orientation), there are more those who accept homosexuality; acceptance of this issue exists also with 44% of those who are absolute non-authoritarians and with 21% of moderate non-authoritarians.

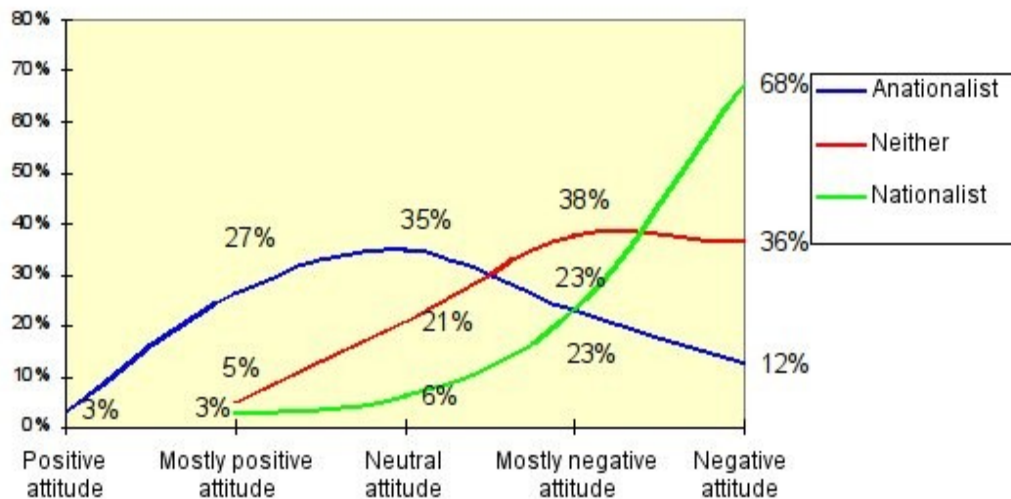
3.3. Nationalism

Nationalism in the context of attitudes towards homosexuality was not treated as a political or ideological stance, but as an attitude to the nation as an identification

³ Claims used to test **(non-)authoritarianism** are: “Children should be brought up in strict discipline”, “Teachers should be strict with pupils”, “Youth needs strict discipline, strong will and willingness to fight for family and homeland”, “This country needs a strong and courageous leader which the people will follow”, “Obedience to authority is the greatest virtue which children today should learn”.

reference point, as well as towards the assumed exclusiveness expressed by this form of identity in its extremal points. As the nation is understood in this country as a part of the “extended family”, the assumption was that there would be a high correlation between the negative attitude towards homosexuality and nationalism; this hypothesis was confirmed, and the correlation is similar as in the case of traditionalism. **Just as homosexuality was considered as a threat to the basic relations which lead to the reproduction of a society, it is considered to the same extent as a threat to the reproduction of a nation, which is often equated with the society in general.** Although the nation is often referred to as “the imaginary community”, it is obviously as important to the people in this country as “real communities”, such as a family and a class-social group, hence the reactions to potential attacks on the nation are no smaller than in the case of other groups (Graph 1).

Graph 1. Nationalism⁴ and attitudes towards homosexuality



Cc 0.44

A majority of those who do not attach significance to the nation do not see homosexuality as a threat, and therefore have mostly the positive or the neutral attitude. However, based on the size of groups which have a certain attitude to the nation, it is the most important to consider the attitude of those who have mixed feelings to the nation (stance “neither”, which on average exists in 62% of the population). They have more the negative attitude towards homosexuality than the average. Therefore everyone who has at least the positive attitude towards the nation has at the same time the mostly

⁴ **Nationalism** was given a considerable attention, and this form of value and ideological orientation was tested by as many as 16 claims, of which some are: “It is important to raise your children so that they know which nation they belong to”, “I am very much attached to my nation”, “Displaying national symbols is a sign of primitiveness”, “My nationality is completely irrelevant to me”, “I am willing to sacrifice myself for the interests and dignity of my nation”... The synthetic indicator created on the basis of these claims shows that there is mainly an ambivalent attitude to the nation in general in Serbia; 62% have mixed feelings, there are 13% of extreme nationalists, whereas there are 25% of those with the non-nationalistic value orientation.

or the extremely negative attitude towards homosexuality. The position of nationalists is pretty clear – as many as 90% of them have the mostly or the extremely negative attitude towards homosexuality.

3.4. Conformism

Conformism, as a type of behaviour and thinking which assumes non-critical acceptance of attitudes and behaviours of others (especially of the majority) is one of the good factors to explain not only the creation of attitudes, but also their preservation and passing on. Conformism is particularly strong when it comes to “traditionally” unacceptable issues such as homosexuality. Together with other value orientations analysed, conformism represents a firm barrier to the liberalisation of attitudes towards homosexuality (Table 5).

Table 5. Conformism⁵ and attitudes towards homosexuality (%)

	Non-conformist	Mostly non-conformist	Neither	Mostly conformist	Conformist	Average
Positive attitude	3	1	1	0	0	1
Mostly positive attitude	26	10	7	5	5	10
Neutral attitude	36	29	23	15	10	22
Mostly negative attitude	22	32	36	35	35	32
Negative attitude	13	28	33	45	51	35
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100

Cc 0.39

As homosexuality is viewed in general as a negative issue, it is accepted as a reality by the majority of conformists (80% to 86%). Among non-conformists there are more those who do not accept dominant behavioural patterns, and accordingly they accept homosexuality more (although this is the case only with those who are absolute rebels, but not with those who are mainly non-conformists).

Although it was not examined separately, **potential sources of violence towards homosexuals** can indirectly be established via other data, especially through value orientations. A public opinion research is not a convenient method to ask people whether they are ready to commit violence of any kind which is, in general, socially unacceptable form of behaviour. However, one can conclude that a society where there is a majority with the negative attitude towards homosexuality, and at the same time there are high levels of traditionalism, authoritarianism and nationalism, is a “fertile soil” for aggressive behaviour. The social milieu which we live in needs to channel out negative energy, and minority groups towards which there is the negative

⁵ Two claims were used to indicate conformism: “I do not like people who behave and think unlike the majority” and “I try to differ as least as possible from other people”; according to these claims, 19% of those interviewed are absolute conformists, 24% are mostly conformists, 19% are “in the middle”, 19% are mostly non-conformists, and also 19% are absolute non-conformists.

attitude are “ideal” for such a behaviour. Only a convenient cause is sought to act aggressively. In this context, a huge responsibility lies on politicians and decision-makers who, apart from creating public opinion, can use instruments in their possession to stop or tolerate aggressive behaviour towards sexual minorities (more on this can be found in reports from in-depth interviews with the “stakeholders”).

4. Psychological correlatives of attitudes towards homosexuality

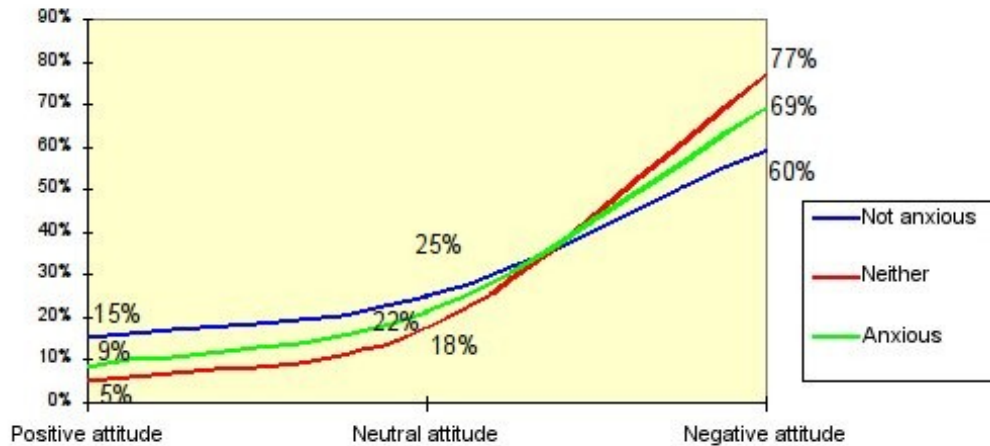
Reactions to homosexuality are related to psychological and emotional conditions. There were two areas in this research which were set in order to try find relations to attitudes towards homosexuality: anxiety and predominant moods.

4.1. Anxiety

Anxiety is commonly referred to as a latent and permanent sense of fear, a clear and sensible cause of which cannot be found; since the cause is unclear, anxious people use delayed rationalisation to seek for causes and through the they explain their fears. Based on that, various projections onto objects which realistically do not endanger them are created. This “game” generates new fears, enclosure, lack of trust to new and unknown things... Exactly because of that, it was tested whether and in which way anxiety influences attitudes towards homosexuality as a relatively unknown issue which is dreaded from and towards which there are many stereotypes and prejudices.

It was shown that such a relation exists but is not statistically that important (correlation coefficient is 0.19) as in the case of value orientations. Negative attitude towards homosexuality prevails with both anxious and non-anxious people. That number is greater with those who are more anxious (Graph 2) than with those who are not.

Graph 2. Anxiety⁶ and attitudes towards homosexuality



Cc 0.19

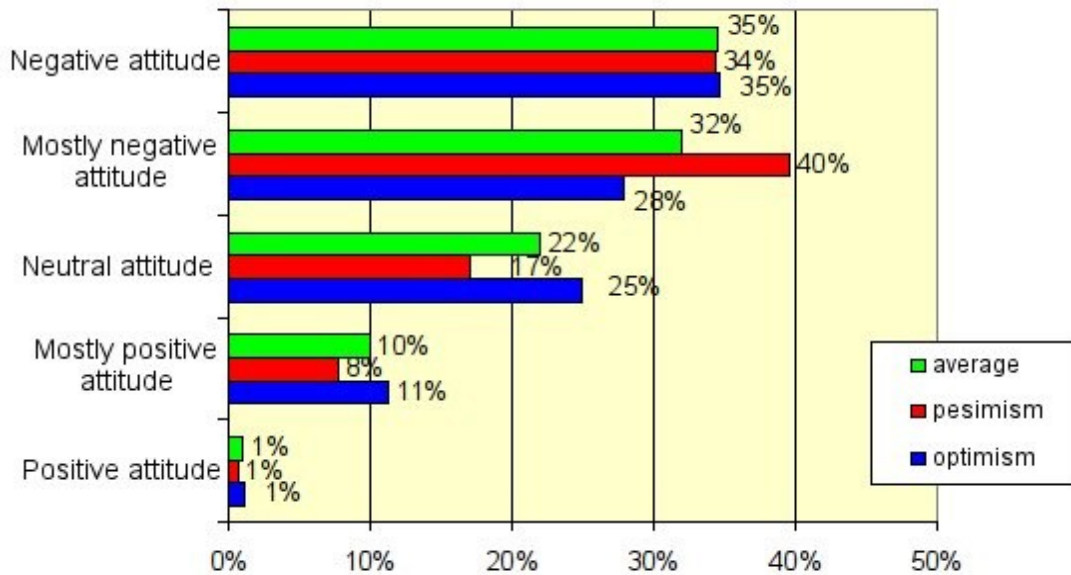
4.2. *Predominant moods*

For more than a year now in its research projects CeSID has been finding an increase in percentage of the interviewees who express positive, optimistic moods. Such a trend is continued in the findings obtained in this research; it was noted that almost two thirds of the interviewees (64%) mentioned a positive mood as a predominant one (fate in better future, hope, optimism, activism in changes). Unlike them, 36% mentioned a negative mood as a predominant (fear, indifference, powerlessness, anger, angst) or said they cannot determine their predominant mood.

When it comes to moods, there are more considerable relations between certain types of moods and attitudes towards homosexuality. There is a higher percentage of those who have the negative attitude towards homosexuality of those who express negative moods. In the category of those who have the mainly positive attitude towards homosexuality, there are considerably more “optimists”, whereas in the category of those who have the mostly negative attitude towards the issue there are considerably more “pessimists”.

⁶ Anxiety was tested through the claim “I often feel fear and cannot find a real cause for it”. According to this claim, there are 30% of those who are mostly or very anxious, 46% of those who are not and 24% who have no stance.

Graph 3. Moods and attitudes towards homosexuality



4.3. Dissatisfaction with life

A negative claim was used as a variable to measure dissatisfaction with personal life. Disagreeing with the claim meant that an interviewee is satisfied with life, whereas agreeing with it marks a person as dissatisfied with life. A research rule is that a percentage of interviewees who disagree with a negative claim is smaller than when they have to agree with the same claim formulated positively. Therefore the percentage of those satisfied with life is 43%⁷, 28% of the interviewees were neutral, whereas there are one percent point more those who are dissatisfied with life (29%).

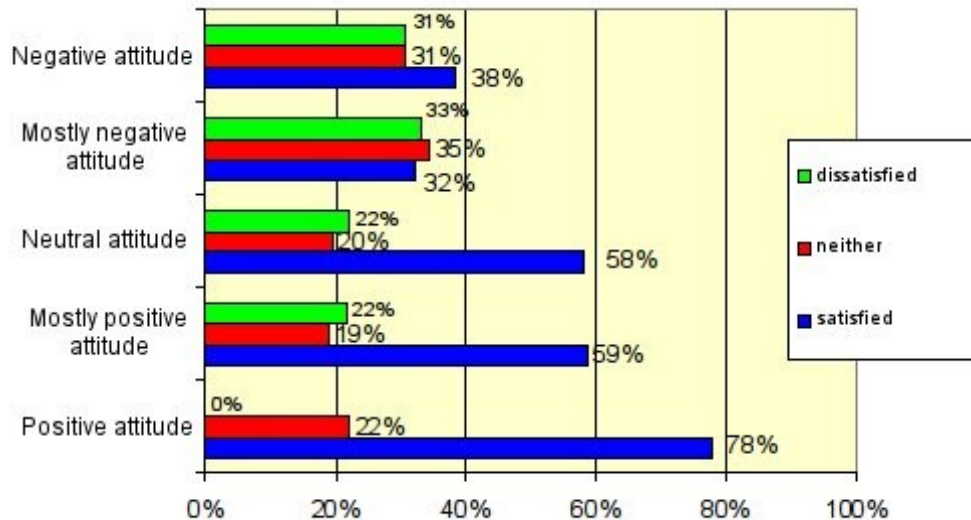
Just as in other topics examined, there is a high correlation between attitudes towards homosexuality and dissatisfaction with life. In the category of those who have the positive attitude towards homosexuality, there was not a single person who said they were dissatisfied with life. They are mainly concentrated in the categories of those who have the mostly negative (33%) and the very negative attitude (31%) towards homosexuality. Since the number of dissatisfied is considerably smaller than the number of those satisfied, it is clear that there is a concentration in the negative attitude towards homosexuality, more precisely 75% of them have the negative attitude towards homosexuality. Only 8% of those dissatisfied with their personal lives have the mildly positive attitude towards this issue, whereas 17% of them were neutral.

However, although there is in general the negative attitude towards homosexuality, in the category of those who are satisfied with life there is a smaller concentration of the negative attitude than in those dissatisfied with life or in those who are neither satisfied nor dissatisfied. From the total number of those satisfied with their personal lives (43%), 55% of them have the negative, and 16% the positive attitude

⁷ In a research where a positive claim was offered the percentage of agreement was around 60%.

towards homosexuality. There are twice as many those who have the positive attitude towards homosexuality in this group than in those dissatisfied with their personal lives.

Graph 4. Attitudes towards homosexuality and (dis)satisfaction with personal life

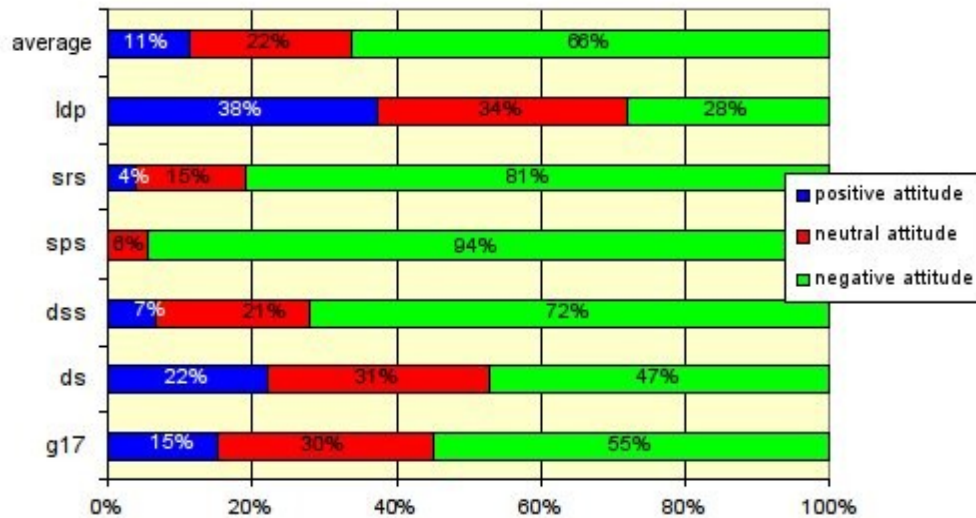


5. Attitudes towards political parties and trust in the institutions

There were 60% of the interviewees in this research who stated that there is a party close to them, whereas there were 40% of them who said no party is close to them. **It is interesting that the group of those who find that no party is close to them has more negative attitudes towards homosexuality than parties' "supporters"**. Only 9% of those who have no favourite party have the positive attitude towards the issue, whereas the corresponding percentage with parties' supporters is 13% (the average is 11%). The negative attitude towards homosexuality in the category of "indifferent" was as expected, and it is 69% (the average is 67%), which automatically brings "supporters" to the level of 65%.

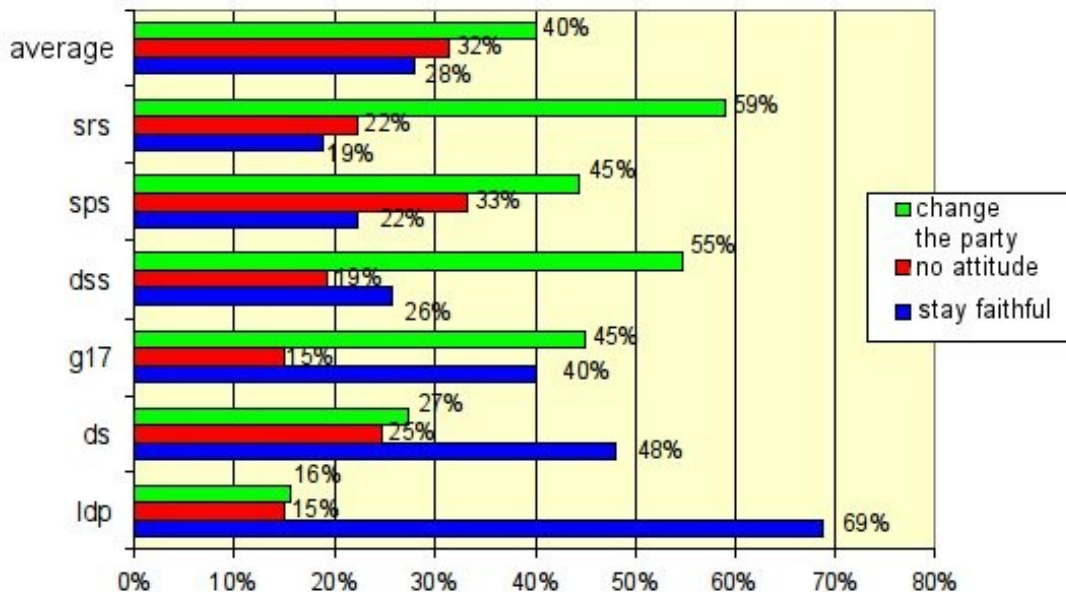
However, there is a significant discrepancy in the group of "parties' supporters" when attitudes towards homosexuality are compared to the party allegiance. The supporters of the Socialist Party of Serbia (SPS) are the most rigid on this issue since there was not a single person supporting this issue, and as many as 94% have the negative attitude. They are followed by the supporters of the Serbian Radical Party (SRS, 81% with the negative attitude), and the supporters of the Democratic Party of Serbia (DSS, 72% with the negative attitude). Then there are the supporters of the party G17 Plus (55%) and the supporters of the Democratic Party (DS, 47%). There is also a considerable number of supporters of these two parties who have the positive attitude (15% and 22% respectively) or neutral stance (30% and 31% respectively). Only with the supporters of the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) the percentage of those who have the positive attitude towards the issue is larger than the percentage of those with the negative attitude (38% and 28% respectively).

Graph 5. Party allegiance and attitudes towards homosexuality



Furthermore, we wanted to establish to which extent are there possibilities for the political parties' led affirmative action for the rights of homosexuals. We created a hypothetical situation in which the political party supported by an interviewee started publicly fighting for the rights of homosexuals; the answer was sought to the question how they would react to that, that is if they would stop voting for their party.

Graph 6. Party allegiance and attitudes towards a hypothetical party's affirmative action



It was expected that "faithfulness" to a party depended on fundamental values of the interviewees. Therefore frequencies in the parties' supporters are not an oddity. The

position of the SPS supporters is interesting, since although they expressed the negative attitude towards homosexuality, there is a higher possibility of going along with the change than with the supporters of the SRS and the DSS.

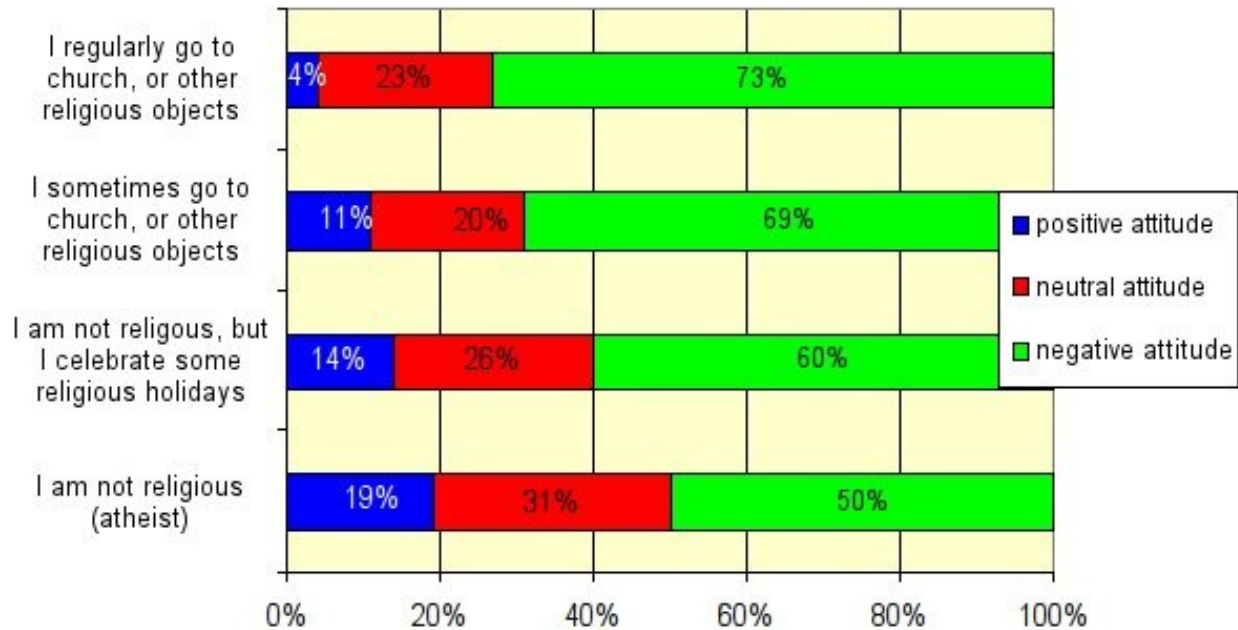
6. Attitudes towards religion

In developed Western democracies attitudes towards homosexuality are intertwined with attitudes towards religion. A clear opposition by representatives of predominant religions to every form of affirmative action with respect to homosexuality determines to a great extent positions of believers. In that context we touched upon two topics – whether there are significant differences in attitudes towards homosexuality in atheists and believers, and to which extent the position of the Church is important for believers, that is to which extent believers support the position.

Attitudes towards religion (that is the variable through which we define attitudes of the interviewees on the atheist-believer divide) were defined through five possibilities which a person can choose – from a non-believer (atheist) through various forms of attitudes towards the Church to the constant presence and activism within the institution. When talking about the distribution of answers in this questionnaire, there are 6% of atheists, 22% of non-believers who celebrate religious holidays, 58% of those are occasional church-goers, 13% of those who are regular church-goers and 1% of those who claim to be active in their church and in other religious communities.

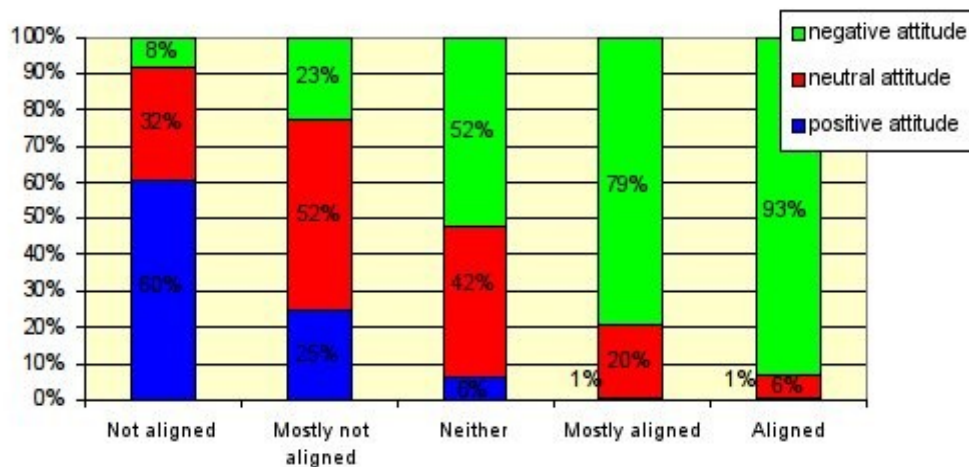
Results obtained when these data are compared to attitudes towards homosexuality are quite expected. There is the highest level of “understanding” for the issue in atheists (19% have the positive and 31% the neutral attitude), whereas in the group of “firm believers” (active in church and other religious communities) there is not a single person who has the positive attitude towards the issue (as many as 89% have the negative attitude, and only 11% are neutral). In the three transitioning alternatives, “homophobia” grows with the strengthening of the religious identity.

Graph 7. Attitudes towards religion and (non-)acceptance of homosexuality



Therefore the following finding was expected, that there is a high correlation between the acceptance of homosexuality and a low level of understanding of the Church's policies on the issue, that is the non-acceptance of homosexuality and the support to the Church's position on the issue. It is obvious that there is a high level of agreement between the official Church's position on the issue and the position of those who consider themselves members of the Church.

Graph 8. Attitudes towards the Church's policy and attitudes towards homosexuality



7. Acquaintances with homosexuals, explanation of “origins” of homosexuality and reactions to homosexuals

One of common points in the social theory and practice is that stereotypes and prejudices appear and are preserved by a lack of information and an insufficient knowledge on an issue. By having only partial information people fill in the gaps, often by false beliefs and wrong information, thus creating “twisted” attitudes, i.e. stereotypes.

The situation is similar with the so called taboo topics such as homosexuality. Various negative stereotypes are born by a lack of knowledge on the essence, origins and the need of social acceptance of this issue; they can be mellowed not only by gathering information on what homosexuality really is, but also by knowing homosexuals themselves. The negative blade edge towards this group is made blunter by realising that they are the same as others and that this type of affinity does not have to affect other social interactions in any way. The data in Table 6 show that among those who do not know anyone who is homosexual⁸ there is not a single person who has the positive attitude towards homosexuals! Furthermore, people who have homosexuals as acquaintances have a considerably more positive attitude. For example, among those who know people of homosexual orientation well, almost a half (45%) have the mostly or completely positive attitude towards homosexuality and only 26% the negative one, which is much lower than the average.

⁸ Frequencies to the question “Do you know someone who is homosexual?” were: does not know - 76%, knows of them, but not personally - 16%, knows them personally - 9%.

Table 6. Acquaintances with homosexuals and attitudes towards homosexuality (%)

	I do not know such a person	I know of them, but not personally	Some of them are good acquaintances	Average
Positive attitude	0	1	6	1
Mostly positive attitude	6	14	39	10
Neutral attitude	19	37	29	22
Mostly negative attitude	35	29	14	32
Negative attitude	40	19	12	35
Total	100	100	100	100

Cc 0.39

How do citizens of Serbia describe origins of homosexuality and how does that relate to their attitudes towards homosexuality? Firstly, **42% of the interviewees think it is a matter of nature, 15% that it is influenced by surroundings, 7% that it is fashionable, whereas 36% did not know how to answer this question.** This confirms the assumption that those who do not think about origins of homosexuality (and probably do not want to), that is they have “a lack of information”, are very negative towards homosexuality; the only more negative attitude is recorded with those who think homosexuality is fashionable. Neutral value judgement on the issue is predominant with those who have the most reasonable attitude towards the origin of homosexuality (however much such a position is simplified). Among them a little bit more than the average have at least the positive attitude towards homosexuality (21%); however the explanation of origins (at least when made operational in this way) is in a smaller statistical correlation than in the case of value orientations.

Table 7. Explanation of origins and attitudes towards homosexuality(%)

	Matter of nature and one cannot affect it	Affected by surroundings in which one lives in and is being brought up	Matter of fashion and nothing else	Does not know, no attitude	Average
Positive attitude	2	1	0	0	1
Mostly positive attitude	19	7	0	3	10
Neutral attitude	30	18	11	18	22
Mostly negative attitude	28	34	39	34	32
Negative attitude	21	40	50	45	35
Total	100	100	100	100	100

Cc 0.35

As was expected, there is a high correlation between attitudes towards homosexuality and possible reactions to finding that a close acquaintance is a homosexual. Various reactions are direct consequences to certain pre-formed attitudes towards homosexuals; those who have the positive attitude would support such people and similarly in the reverse situation. Of course, here too there is a smaller number of

those who have the positive attitude than those who have the negative one; the big discrepancy between these two groups is definitely not encouraging homosexuals to expect support from their surroundings.

Table 8. Relations between reactions to finding out that a close acquaintance is a homosexual and attitudes towards homosexuality (%)

	Would support them	Would pretend nothing was happening	Would try to persuade them it was wrong	Would stop contacting them	Does not know	Average
Positive attitude	7	2	0	0	0	1
Mostly positive attitude	61	13	4	1	3	10
Neutral attitude	26	39	19	5	22	22
Mostly negative attitude	6	34	33	25	42	32
Negative attitude	0	12	44	69	33	35
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100

Cc 0.59

8. Social distance towards homosexuals

Attitudes towards homosexuality were measured through various value dimensions, but the most visible parameter of an attitude is examining social distance towards this issue, that is towards individuals who “represent” it. There were eight different types of attitudes used to examine social distance towards people who are homosexual. The following table shows all eight levels of social interaction as well as the distribution of answers. Social interactions questioned started from the widest levels (compatriot, that is a citizen of the same country), through working relationships (coworker or a boss at work), to close social contacts (friends or family).

There is social acceptability only when assessing acceptance of people with homosexual orientation for **compatriots** and **co-citizens**. In the first case (compatriot) acceptability of this social arrangement in the general population is twice as large as non-acceptability, whereas already at the following level of more intensive social interaction (co-citizen, neighbour) it is much less acceptable (47% acceptability and 38% non-acceptability of this form of social communication). Replies to all other social interactions offered show a very high level of social distance towards people with homosexual orientation. In a working environment expressing homosexual orientation is unacceptable since almost a half of the interviewees (47%) would not like to have such a colleague at work, while 56% would not like to have a boss with such an orientation.

The more the levels of social interaction offered were closer to the interviewees, the higher the level of rejection, that is the social distance is bigger. Therefore being friends and visiting people with homosexual orientation is acceptable to a fifth of the population, while two thirds said they would not want to have such social contacts. Blood relations with people with homosexual orientation are unwanted with 70% of the interviewees, whereas less than a fifth (17%) would not see a problem in that. The greatest distance towards homosexuality was shown through the fact that three quarters

of the interviewees would not want to have people with homosexual orientation as teachers to their children, while only 14% found this an acceptable social engagement.

Table 9. Social distance towards people with homosexual orientation (%)

Would you object if a person with homosexual orientation was...	Would not want/like	Does not mind	Does not know, no attitude	Total
... a teacher to your children	75	14	11	100
... your blood relative	70	17	13	100
... your friend	64	24	12	100
... on a leadership position in the country	61	23	16	100
... your boss at work	56	30	14	100
... your coworker	47	38	15	100
... your neighbour or co-citizen	38	47	15	100
... living in your country, your compatriot	26	52	22	100

9. Characteristics of groups that do (not) accept homosexuality

We will try to show some demographic characteristics and habits of groups that do (not) accept homosexuality. Mentioning characteristics of certain groups should be understood as an attempt to create “ideal” types. That, above all, means that certain characteristics will be taken as predominant and the characterisation will be based on them. Take, for example, education – the conclusion is that more educated people are less homophobic, and less educated people are more homophobic. That does not mean that non-homophobes are not present in those less educated, but that there are far less of them in the group of those with lower education than in the structure of those who are more educated. We single out three groups characterised by the following:

1. The only group which has the predominantly positive attitude towards homosexuality has the following characteristics: they are predominantly women; they are younger or early middle aged (15-39); they have at least a finished high school, and by vocation they are students, clerks or highly skilled workers. According to the salary levels they belong to the upper middle class in the social hierarchy.

They use the Internet many times more above the average. They regularly read daily newspapers, mainly Danas (almost all readers of this daily come from this category), then Politika and Press. They regularly watch TV, and the TV channels they trust the most are B92 and Fox.

2. The following group has the predominantly negative or the neutral attitude towards homosexuality. Men are more prevalent than women. They are middle aged (30-49), and according to the level of education there are qualified workers, those with a finished high school, but also a significant number of those with higher education. By vocation they are qualified workers, clerks or highly skilled workers. In the social hierarchy they belong to the middle and the lower middle class.

Unlike the first group, they use the Internet less, but it cannot be said they do not use it. They read newspapers less than the first group, and the most read dailies are

Blic, Politika and Press. The TV is their favourite form of media and the highest viewing figures in this group go to Pink television.

3. The third group is characterised by the extremely negative attitude towards homosexuality. Men and women are equally distributed in this group. According to the age structure they are predominantly in older age groups (50 and above), although the number of younger people should not be neglected. The common point for this group is a low level of education, most often finished elementary school or high school for skills. By vocation they are mainly farmers, non-qualified workers, housewives (in the case of women). They can be put to the lower levels of the social pyramid according to their statements on salaries.

The Internet is something they are not even familiar with, let alone have they ever used it. They rarely read dailies, and if they do their favourite ones are Večernje novosti and Kurir. The TV is their favourite form of media and the TV channels most watched are the state TV and Pink.

Table 11. Characteristics of groups and their attitudes towards homosexuality

	Positive and neutral	Negative and neutral	Negative
Sex	More women than men	More men than women	Men and women equally
Education	High school and higher education	High schools and high schools for skills	Elementary school and below
Age	Younger	Middle aged	Older
Vocation	Highly skilled workers and clerks	Qualified workers and technicians	Workers, farmers and housewives
Social status	Higher middle class	Middle and lower middle class	Lower class
Internet	Often	Sometimes	Never
Daily newspapers	Regularly (Danas, Politika)	Sometimes (Blic, Press)	Rarely (Večernje novosti, Kurir)
TV channels	B92 and Fox	Pink	RTS and Pink

THE REPORT FROM IN-DEPTH INTERVIEWS

Attitudes of decision-makers and public opinion creators towards the issue of sexual minorities' human rights protection

In identifying attitudes of makers of social and political decisions, the research efforts were directed mainly to **political parties** as organisations that stand for (among other things) certain views of the world. Political parties are organisations which, after gaining power, “transform” their views (that is their ideologies and programmes) into concrete and practical policies, and therefore they are unavoidable factors which one has to count on in the process of solving certain problems. After gaining power, parties take into their control levers and instruments with which they become powerful players (sometimes too powerful), capable of crucially influencing individuals, groups, their interests, needs and problems. Parties are the main “mediator” of sovereignty of citizens to the government in all modern pluralist democracies, and Serbia is no different. It is a general scientific and public consensus that according to many parameters Serbia can be described as a *particracy*, that is as a country ruled by parties; identifying positions of political parties towards certain issues is therefore even more important, since the parties are the ones that govern social and political processes.

The diverse party spectrum of Serbia presents a vast specimen to examine attitudes of political parties (their ideologies and value directions) towards minorities' issues in general, and those of sexual minorities in particular. Everyone who is even remotely interested in political platforms of our political parties can indirectly, in general, grasp attitudes of different political parties on the issue. Therefore the interviews conducted were, on one hand, questioning and confirming pre-existing hypotheses, and on the other hand, determining whether our political parties have attitudes on the issue of protection of one of the minority groups.

Apart with the political parties, there was an attempt to identify attitudes of representatives of certain **state institutions** on the issue. However, it was only an attempt. Firstly, representatives of certain political parties are present in these institutions as makers and “deliverers” of policies, and they have nothing more to say than what was said by their party colleagues. Secondly, the current political moment, the collapse of the government and other circumstances of our (permanent) crisis, “disabled” the representatives of the institutions to say something (if anything!) to our non-governmental organisation on the issue of sexual minorities. This, however, should not be understood as a situation in which we were left short of certain information, since those information are either already known from replies of other interviewees, or they are contained in legislation guiding state institutions to which they have often referred to in their attempts to avoid direct conversations (“we have nothing to say beyond what is already defined in legal acts and norms”).

This report contains excerpts and interpretations of interviews conducted throughout March 2008 with representatives of seven parliamentary political parties (SRS, DS, DSS, NS, LDP, SPS and G17 Plus). The interviews were conducted with representatives of these parties at the national level, as well as with representatives of local branches of these parties in two municipalities in Serbia (Pančevo and Zaječar).

Such a method enables one to observe a party more clearly, to notice potential differences and fluctuations that exist in different parties' levels, as well as differences in the very knowledge of a certain topic (and knowledge of party policies, among other things!).

The interviews were conducted according to guidelines which had six parts:

- 1) The introductory part regarding determining the existence of party policies on minorities' human rights protection;
- 2) Determining the existence of party policies on sexual minorities' human rights;
- 3) Determining the policies' elements on sexual minorities' human rights, if any, that is reasons for the lack of them;
- 4) Identifying (non-)existence of awareness and attitudes on endangering sexual minorities' human rights, on causes and consequences of such an endangerment;
- 5) Attitude towards protective and affirmative actions of the state towards sexual minorities (protection from violence, introducing legislation etc.);
- 6) Attitude towards promotion of the rights of sexual minorities.

The reports on each party will follow the structure of interviews' guidelines.

In total 30 in-depth interviews were planned:

- with the representatives of seven parliamentary political parties (DS, DSS, SRS, SPS, LDP, NS and G17 Plus) on two levels (central and local) 21 interviews were planned in total (three times seven interviews – Belgrade, Pančevo and Zaječar);
- another nine interviews were planned in the following institutions: the Ministry of Interior, the Ministry of Justice and the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy.

Thirteen interviews were realised and all of them were with political parties' representatives. There were at least two interviews with each party (except with the Serbian Radical Party), and so the data regarding all seven parties are presented.

Interviews were not conducted in the state institutions for several reasons: in the Ministry of Interior they said they did not have anyone to talk on the issue with CeSID's associates; in the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy they expressed willingness to talk on the issue, but due to other obligations had no time, whereas there was an interview conducted in the Ministry of Justice but the answers were irrelevant from the point of view of the research.

1. Serbian Radical Party

Officials of the party with the status of the strongest one and with the most Members of Parliament in the current sitting, cooperate to a small extent (or not at all) with representatives of non-governmental organisations on any issue for various reasons. That was the case this time too, since the only party official we were able to reach was at the level of the party branch in Zaječar. The interviewee was Jovica Mihailović, the party's Zaječar branch president.

At this level (and there is no reason to believe it is different at any other level) several facts were established:

1. unwillingness to discuss sexual minorities' human rights protection
 2. the existence of the negative attitude towards the issue of (particular) protection of sexual minorities
 3. hiding attitudes by general rhetoric and phrases, which are “politically correct”, but do not say much about the essence.
-
- 1) “The SRS has a clearly defined policy of protection of minority groups, above all referring to **national** minorities.” Already from this reply one can see that in the Radicals' perception minorities are mainly understood **only** as national minorities.
 - 2) There does not exist a political programme on protection of the sexual minorities' rights, and the argument for that is that “a serious party of national orientation” should not have such a policy, i.e. that it has totally different priorities. Among those priorities are, according to the interviewee, a family and the nation, but not minorities.
 - 3) As there does not exist a policy of the sexual minorities' rights protection, an answer to this question was also not given; there was also no answer to why there was no such a policy. There was no clear answer to the question whether sexual minorities were endangered!
 - 4) “The state has a duty to protect everyone, and therefore those groups too, to the extent which guarantees safety of them and of everyone else, just as for other gatherings and events. No special protection is necessary since they are not special in any way to us, to the contrary, we think the state should take steps for their medical treatment.” This quotation says enough about how the state should “treat” the “rights” of sexual minorities!
 - 5) As with many other things, the representative of the SRS saw the issue of the sexual minorities' rights as the one “imposed from abroad”, with fertile soil in our non-governmental organisations.

2. Democratic Party

Interviews with representatives of the Democratic Party were conducted in Belgrade and Pančevo. The interviewees were Jelena Marković, the Democratic Party's spokesperson and Vesna Martinović, the president of the party's branch in Pančevo.

What can be concluded from the conversations with the Democratic Party's representatives is that there is a sensibility to the issues of sexual minorities, but also that there is a resistance to a more intensive engagement which, according to them, does not stem from the lack of their willingness, but from "unwillingness of the society to accept such a behaviour".

- 1) The Democratic Party has developed strategies and acts which involve the minorities' rights protection in general. Apart from the party's Programme and the Statute, the minorities' rights protection is made effective through other forms of organisation within the party, such as the Council for Aid and Protection of Disabled People and the Council for National Minorities. The interviewees stressed that protection of rights of neglected and discriminated social groups is one of fundamental ideological and practical elements of the policies of this party.
- 2) The party does not have a separate document which treats policies towards sexual minorities.
- 3) The non-existence of a separate policy was explained by the fact that the party gave the priority to protection of minority groups which have a bigger share in the population. In spite of that, the DS stands for introducing an anti-discriminatory law which would "cover" to a great extent problems of sexual minorities.
- 4) The DS representatives think that sexual minorities in our society are not endangered, but are discriminated against. They think that by the very fact of existence of discrimination in the society, there is a vast space for social action against discrimination. That should not only be a task of the non-governmental sector, the civic society and the political parties, but also of the state institutions. Discrimination is not organised, nor "directed", but is in the sphere of informal social contacts. The very fact that social prejudices exist and that people who belong to sexual minorities live "semi-secret lives" shows a certain extent of the existence of discrimination.
- 5) The Democratic Party's representatives think that the state should take both affirmative and protective steps to ensure protection of the sexual minorities' rights. Above all they stand for the introduction of an anti-discriminatory law and for obedience of existing laws which partly sanction discrimination. Further, the state should help "sensitise" the public opinion, by helping the civic sector which should promote the rights of sexual minorities. When it comes to physical protection of, e.g. events and gay prides, the position is that, in case they were organised, the levels of protection should be higher than usual. However, a doubt was cast over whether our society was ready to accept such happenings and that organising such events would have counter-effects.
- 6) When it comes to a position on active promotion of the rights of sexual minorities, one of the interviewees made a comparison with the women's rights promotion – it definitely improved women's position to the extent that women today are seen as equal in, for example, the public sphere. Through that analogy, it is considered

that it is necessary to talk about the rights of sexual minorities too, since in that way a change in the position of the public opinion towards this issue is made in time, which is necessary in order to stop discrimination. The position of this party is that, if we want to be called a normal democratic country and society, in time we have to accept the existence of the rights of sexual minorities. "This issue should not be something we are even discussing, it should be an integral part of our lives, that it is not so unusual but treated as a normal thing, that there does not exist special need for stressing the issue."

3. Democratic Party of Serbia

The Democratic Party of Serbia has contradicting attitudes towards protection of the rights of minorities; the contradiction is in unclear positions and answers to separate questions as well as in discrepancies between answers of representatives at the central and the local level. The contradiction also shows that contemplating the issue does not occur, let alone a separate policy or a clear attitude (positive or negative) regarding the sexual minorities' rights protection.

The interviewees from the DSS were Milica Vojić Marković, Member of Parliament and Jovan Penčić, president of the party's branch in Zaječar.

- 1) The representatives of this party believe that legal acts of the Republic of Serbia (constitution above all) provide sufficient and clear framework for protection of all minority rights and that they, as a political party, are working within the framework. However, recently and at least ad hoc, the party has started promoting minority rights more intensively. As an example, they mentioned the campaign for the 2007 parliamentary elections which had elements of promotion of the minorities' rights. Principles of the promotions were: general equality for minority groups, possibility of usage of national scripts, as well as all other rights that belong to all citizens of Serbia.
- 2) The party has no separate policies regarding the rights of sexual minorities.
- 3) Reasons for the non-existence of this kind of policy were expressed in two ways, which showed a huge difference in attitudes. Considering that an official position of the party on the issue does not exist, it can be concluded that attitudes towards the rights of sexual minorities are more that of an individual than that of the organisation. The Member of Parliament said that the reason for the absence of policies on sexual minorities is that the DSS is a "conservative party" which believes that issues of sexual freedoms should remain in the private domain and should not be expressed in public! The interviewee from Zaječar was much stricter, saying that no policy was needed on those who need medical treatment and no protection!
- 4) The interviewees do not find that sexual minorities are threatened in our country; it is "acknowledged" that our society has a problem with the lack of tolerance for being different, but that that was to be expected and that the state cannot do much about it. The lack of tolerance was justified by social circumstances, conflicts and traumas experienced by everyone who lives in the area. It all culminated and is expressed as intolerance to anything different, in particular to sexual minorities. In the more extreme case, that is in the conversation with the representative of the party's local branch, it was stated that not only that sexual minorities were not threatened, to the contrary, they were endangering the majority by their appearance, behaviour and over-stressing something that should remain in the private domain!
- 5) As mentioned in the answer to the previous question, the interviewees think that the state cannot do much on the issue of sexual minorities beyond what is already being done about other minorities or marginalised groups. The current legislation is sufficient, discrimination is regulated in various laws and there is no need to introduce a special act to deal with protection of the rights of sexual

minorities. The reason for that is the size of the sexual minorities' population which is, according to the interviewees, minimal, and therefore does not deserve any special efforts from the state. The interviewees believe that no public events of people with minority sexual orientations should be organised since in that way they are even more threatened and exposed to actions of the majority; however, if such events were to happen, the state should not provide more protection than for any other form of events.

- 6) There is no need for public promotion of the rights of sexual minorities since, as was said, it should remain in the private domain.

4. New Serbia

Attitudes of representatives of this party towards the sexual minorities' rights are very negative. The topic is treated as imposed, problems as made up, and public expressions of sexual orientation as unacceptable! Contemplating the issue is treated as a waste of time and distracting the public from "real" problems our society is facing.

The interviewees on behalf of the New Serbia were presidents of local branches in Pančevo (Miloš Đorđević) and Zaječar (Saša Dimitrijević).

- 1) The party in general stands for equality of all minority groups, although a separate document or policy on that do not exist. Incidentally, when minorities are mentioned, the representatives of this party as well as those of the majority of other parties think of national minorities first, not of any other!
- 2) No policy (and one can even say no attitude which should be a foundation of the policy!) towards the rights of sexual minorities exists. They are understood as a threat to a "healthy" society, as a factor of destruction of a family as the foundation of a society, and as a behaviour which upsets public morality.
- 3) No clear answer could be obtained to why no policy on protection of minorities exists, although it can be reached indirectly; in this party's view, it would be good if a document or policy against the rights of sexual minorities was not introduced!
- 4) The sexual minorities' members are not accepted by their families, let alone by anyone else. They are not threatened at all, to the contrary, they are endangering the "organic" understanding of a society nurtured by the representatives of this party – a society as an extended family which is being reproduced in heterosexual marriages and relationships and which suppresses every other form of sexual behaviour. There is a strong opposition to gay marriages and adoption of children by gay couples. It is considered to be an attack to society's reproduction and should not be allowed, should even be sanctioned.
- 5) The state should definitely spend no time or energy on the sexual minorities' rights! Our country cannot even deal with more important and bigger problems, which are more "real", let alone with something which is imposed and which actually is not a problem at all! Such an attitude says that different sexual orientations are acknowledged, but should not get "public acknowledgement."
- 6) Along with the aforementioned, something that threatens the "healthy" reproduction of families and the state should not be publicly promoted. Clubs where such individuals get together can exist, but they should not go out in the street and speak publicly since then no-one can guarantee their safety. The phrase was used that the police should protect all citizens, but behind it there was a stance that public events of people of different sexual orientations should not happen.

Introduction and promotion of the rights of sexual minorities are by no means an international standard we should conform to, but more of a trend which is presented as a standard. The main promoters of such a position are, according to the interviewees, non-governmental organisations, which have their own interests in that.

5. Liberal Democratic Party

As was expected, the LDP expressed the most liberal view on the rights of sexual minorities. This is the only party which has a separate policy on the issue, and all attitudes are derived from the policy. Therefore one can find clarity and consistency in attitudes of representatives of the party, which was not the case with representatives of parties which have no such a policy.

The interviewees from the LDP were Dejan Zdravković, president of the local branch in Zaječar, and Jovana Tavčar, member of the party's Presidency.

- 1) The interviewees mentioned policies on protection of minority groups and fighting against discrimination as one of the main characteristics of the Liberal Democratic Party. A separate chapter within the party's Programme defines more closely the party's attitude towards protection of minorities and the minority rights. Apart from the Programme, the interviewees stressed another party document (leaflet) under the title "Charter of Freedom" which determines the party's policies on the aforementioned problem more precisely.
- 2) The LDP in its Programme, and in the "Charter of Freedom" in particular, stands for the "right to a free love" and for the sexual minorities' rights. The rights of sexual minorities as well as of other minorities are threatened in our society because the "value system," inherited from the "period of Milošević," has not changed. This means, according to the interviewees, that the "system" constantly seeks for enemies most often recognised in minority groups, and even more often in sexual minorities. The cause for such a behaviour of the system is in the legacy of the political past and in values it stood for.
- 3) "The policy of protection of the rights of sexual minorities contains clear directions to prevent discrimination and violence against them, to enable their organising and public expressions of dissatisfaction."
- 4) The attitude is that sexual minorities in Serbia are endangered, by discrimination above all, but also by violence. Such a situation creates a fear in individuals who want to publicly express their orientation, which creates a vicious circle which is difficult to fight against. This party is the only which speaks about violence as a serious form of endangerment of people with sexual orientation different from the majority. Other parties, which talk about endangerment, mostly think of discrimination (the DS, the G17 Plus, and partly the SPS).
- 5) The attitude is that the state should be included in solving problems of sexual minorities as well as in promotion of their rights. The state has an obligation to protect everyone, and those groups in particular, to the extent which would guarantee safety of them and everyone else, secure places of gathering **more than for regular events**, since the experience shows that they are under attack of various extremist groups which endanger them even physically. Preventing violence against those groups should be particularly stressed, since they are particularly exposed to violence because of being different. When it comes to affirmative actions, the interviewees believe that the state should introduce legislation which would forbid discrimination of sexual minorities. The role of the state should also be in strict application of such laws. Before introducing such a legislation, public debates on the law should be organised so that the public could be more closely introduced to the problem and to possibly create a consensus on

its acceptance. Such a sequence of events would guarantee consistent application of the law. The importance of adoption of the Law on Protection of Sexual Minorities and Their Rights would be a clear message to this minority group that they have the protection from the state and that someone takes care of them. Ministries and another state institutions in charge could contribute more to promoting the rights of sexual minorities, for example through media actions. The member of the party's Presidency mentioned that the Ministry of Justice should be engaged in this direction, but also the President, the Prime Minister, the Parliament and politicians who would publicly promote the issue.

- 6) Along with the aforementioned, it is considered necessary to work on promotion of the rights of sexual minorities for many reasons: since it is right, so that we can be accepted by democratic countries etc. "We welcome all affirmative actions directed against discrimination of sexual minorities. Introducing appropriate legislation is inevitable, and we must deal with promotion of their rights in particular." Non-governmental organisations are viewed as important allies on this issue.

6. Socialist Party of Serbia

In the interviews with representatives of the SPS we got the feeling that there are problems realising certain ideological positions of the party in practice, as well as that there are difficulties in acceptance of the ideology by the membership of the party which aligns with it for different reasons. In any case, the positive attitude towards this issue is not negligible, to the contrary!

The interviewees from the Socialist Party of Serbia were Slavica Đukić Dejanović, vice-president of the SPS and Milan Nikolić, the local branch president in Pančevo. .

- 1) In the part of their Programme “Rights and Freedoms”, there is a segment regarding protection of minority groups, starting from national minorities to all individuals separately. A party group comprised of party enthusiasts and experts deals with this part of the Programme. They believe that the Programme is not equally applicable in all parts of Serbia and acknowledge that there are difficulties with acceptance of the Programme within the party itself. However, there is hope that the Programme will be affirmed by further promotion.
- 2) No written document and no separate policy on the rights of sexual minorities exist.
- 3) That is explained by the party's vice-president by the fact that our society, and until recently the party itself, have been reluctant to talk about sexual freedoms. However, a lot of young people in the SPS are “removing” taboos from the issues. Inner-party discussions on sexual freedoms, according to the interviewees, are more and more frequent and it is to be expected that in the near future there will be a written document on it. They added that all parliamentary parties are at the equally low level with respect to the issues and that it would be best if the Parliament would discuss protection of sexual minorities. “We as socialists have absolutely nothing against them expressing their views, and we are really sorry they face discrimination and in that respect, along with all other minority groups they have to have legal protection and be acknowledged in that way.”
- 4) When it comes to endangerment of sexual minorities, the interviewees accept it exists. People of different sexual orientation are considered as “second class people”, especially in a traditional country such as Serbia. The problem is in mutual misunderstanding between those who do not accept anything different and those who would like to change things in the society “over night” and in doing so “provoke” negative reactions from the traditional surroundings.
- 5) The role of the state in the protection of all minorities is undoubted and should be developed in several directions. The party's vice-president believes that the situation in the society demands from everyone to be educated, in the sense that “there is no collision between the traditional family and sexual freedoms.” She expressed an interesting statement that most citizens of Serbia, and most people who are members or voters of the SPS, stand “for the traditional family and traditional personal relations, including sexual relations.” The group within the party working on the Programme “Rights and Freedoms” took a stance that a form and ways of sexual satisfaction of one's sex drive is one's personal right, unless it violates “corporal and psychological” integrity of other people. The state

has to take serious steps - “we are after all talking about people who have their rights, rights regulated by laws and the Constitution, rights given by the international law, so in that respect the state has to react and has to ensure the national legislation agrees with the international law.”

- 6) There are reservations towards public promotions of the rights of sexual minorities, because that would cause a counter-effect in the still conservative Serbia. However, there is awareness that in time our society will get rid of prejudices and that promotion of this form of human rights will become “normal.”

7. G17 Plus

Representatives of this party have a liberal and open approach to the issue of the rights of sexual minorities. On certain aspects of the issue they are very close to the LDP. There are certain contradictions in the answers of interviewees, but that does not question the essentially positive approach to the issue. Social acceptance of the rights of sexual minorities is another issue, and on this the party's attitudes are similar to those of the Democratic Party.

The interviewees were presidents of local branches in Pančevo (Vladimir Pandurov) and in Zaječar (Dejan Perić).

- 1) G17 Plus has a policy on protection of minority groups, above all of national minorities as well as of other marginalised groups. Among other groups, there are particular policies on the rights of women and the rights of disabled people.
- 2) A separate document or policy on sexual minorities does not exist.
- 3) "When it comes to the gay population, a clear policy does not exist in the sense of certain quotas since that would be discriminatory; it's still a private matter... however, some of our members, who have freely declared their sexual orientation, are not only integrated in the party but also promoted within in the party, and we believe it's a focal point in the practical solution of their problems, that is in determining the position of the party with respect to the gay population." Here one can see that informal recognition is given priority to the formal development of certain policies.
- 4) In this party they believe that the most important form of endangerment of sexual minorities is in discrimination. "The greatest endangerment is in silent discrimination by the majority where people according to their personal feelings judge on sexual orientation of other people; they reach discriminatory decisions based on that, from employment to fulfilling other rights."
- 5) "The state has an obligation to protect everyone, and those groups in particular, to the extent which would guarantee safety of them and everyone else, provide protection for their places of gathering even more than for regular events, since experience tells us that they are under attack of certain extremist groups who abuse them physically." "We welcome all affirmative actions directed against discrimination of sexual minorities. In that respect introducing adequate legislation is inevitable. We, as a parliamentary party, will definitely support and vote for a law which would regulate the rights of sexual minorities."
- 6) There is the positive attitude towards promotion of the rights of sexual minorities, but that should be done by them and their associations, through initiatives supported, but not directly organised by the state. "Demands and public initiatives of minority groups are fully justified, we support all their initiatives and we are ready to help them additionally, so that they can draw attention to themselves and their problems. This also stands for sexual minorities."