

Sri Lanka: LGBTQI community deprived?

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Despite various efforts aimed at improving the rights of the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Questioning, and Intersex (LGBTQI) community in Sri Lanka, the societal treatment of the community has discouraged a considerable share of it from effectively engaging in civil and political activities due to discrimination, a recent report finds.

The report, titled 'A Brief Quantitative Research: Civil and Political Rights of the LGBT Community Living in Sri Lanka' issued by Équité Sri Lanka and the Social Scientists' Association, said that many LGBTQI persons had been deprived of their right to fair opportunities despite being qualified. The study, which saw the participation of 856 respondents, was launched recently.

The report said that many LGBTQI persons had also refrained from voting during the 2020 General Election due to discrimination based on sexual orientation and/or gender identity and past sexual and other forms of abuses at the hands of those who were present at the polling station. Compared to other members of this community, more transgender persons had expressed these concerns.

Of the cisgender respondents, around 58.2% cisgender lesbian persons and 54.9% cisgender bisexual men and women had stated that they had not participated in political meetings/rallies in their area. When it came to the transgender community, around 62.1% had expressed the same. Many in the community had also expressed that they were not interested in politics.

The respondents had said that they had not met a politician or a Government official to lodge a complaint about discrimination or unjust experiences, with the majority of them being cisgender lesbian, transgender heterosexual, and transgender gay persons.

When it comes to employment, it was mostly cisgender lesbian persons (28.6%) who had said that their sexual orientation and/or gender identity had been an issue when securing employment.

As per the study's findings, many were not satisfied with their job and had chosen their current job merely because that had been the only one that they could secure. Compared to cisgender lesbian, gay, and bisexual men and women, more transgender persons were unemployed.

Of various groups belonging to the LGBTQI community, more cisgender lesbian and transgender gay persons than other groups had said that due to discrimination, they avoided going to the Police despite having a need to obtain Police assistance.

Around 56% transgender persons who took part in the study had said that revealing their sexual orientation and/or gender identity would be disadvantageous when obtaining legal assistance, while some had expressed feeling unsafe when dealing with legal matters.

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