



# Mapping LGBT in Colombo, Kandy, Matara and Nuwara Eliya

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## **Abstract**

It is estimated that approximately 19.6% (753,973) of the adults aged 18-years and older living in Colombo, Matara, Nuwara Eliya and Kandy in 2017 are lesbian, gay, bisexual and/or transgender. The population was divided into a total of six strata based on ethnicity then the method of Simple Random Sampling was used to select the sample. The survey of 470 adults aged 18-years and older revealed that majority of these LGBT persons face stigma and discrimination in government services including education and healthcare. Some have also been physically attacked and verbally abused in public because of their sexual orientation and/or gender identity/expression. Stigma is deep rooted, and even though only a few, some LGBT persons themselves feel that they are mentally ill (8.7%) and/or abnormal (3.3%) because they identify as LGBT. However, even though the law criminalises consenting sexual relations between members of the same sex in Sri Lanka, no LGBT person believed they should be punished by law because of their sexual orientation.

## Mapping LGBT in Colombo, Kandy, Matara and Nuwara Eliya

EQUAL GROUND has undertaken this study to estimate the size of the population in four of Sri Lanka's districts; Matara, Colombo, Kandy and Nuwara Eliya, that identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT); and to further investigate the barriers and challenges that this community is faced with. It is necessary to gather such information in an attempt to inform policy and service improvement in Sri Lanka. However, it is most important in the developmental strategies of the country seeking to create a society free from discrimination and stigma. The Australian Human Rights Commission (2014) reported that even with the amendment of the Sex Discrimination Act of 1984 which made it illegal for one to be discriminated against on the basis of sexual orientation, intersex status and gender identity, LGBTI persons still face discrimination and hostility in the country on the basis of their sexual orientation or gender identity. The report further went on to clarify that this form of discrimination was not only prevalent in civil society but also in access to services, including healthcare. It is evident that whilst it is important to understanding where the challenges and barriers lie for members of the LGBT community, targeted intervention is necessary to eradicate stigma and discrimination.

In Sri Lanka, individuals who identify as LGBT are faced with many challenges and barriers. Members of the LGBT community are treated with prejudice and discrimination in government sectors and civil society alike and there is no protection or redress under the law. The law criminalises non-heterosexual sexual relations between consenting adults under Section 365 and 365A of the Sri Lankan Penal Code, and homosexuality is viewed as "western" and unnatural. While many postcolonial governments around the world, like South Africa for example, have made efforts to decriminalise sexual relations between consenting adults, Sri Lanka like many others continue to lag behind.

Efforts to afford equal rights under the law for LGBT persons in the country have been met with ridicule by politicians and policy makers who promote the idea that "Sri Lankans are not people of such mental illnesses" ("Homophobic Justice Minister," 2017).

Such a statement is discriminatory and suggests that there is no acceptance for LGBTIQ people in Sri Lanka and that LGBT persons do not deserve to be treated with respect and dignity. This lack of inclusion and acceptance of the LGBT identity has silenced the community, causing a lack of visibility and only a few brave ones will rear their heads and be counted. Hence there is difficulty in estimating the LGBT population size on a wide scale.

In this year alone (2017), the Sri Lankan government has been presented with many opportunities to take a vital step in eradicating stigma and discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity. The government fails to see or accept the need to change laws and policies at state level to afford LGBT Sri Lankans equal rights as their heterosexual counterparts. Many opportunities for policy change to promote equality, were presented within trade agreement negotiations with “the west” and were met with rejection and ridicule by the Sri Lankan government. Still, over 134 years since the homophobic law was imposed by “the west” on Sri Lanka, the Buggery Law is still being used by the state to oppress its citizens.

At present, there is no official data to substantiate the number of LGBT Sri Lankan’s living in the country. Even though various studies have been conducted which tells us that LGBT people do live in Sri Lanka, the population size for this group is unknown. Politicians, policy makers and program directors fail to acknowledge that there is need for improvement in both law and services to end discrimination against a significant proportion of the country’s citizens. Mapping LGBT individuals will provide objective proof that LGBT individuals are to be found in notable numbers in Sri Lanka. The study will further assess the characteristics of this group as well as the barriers that exist and challenges facing them. By providing a clear idea of the numbers and distribution of LGBT in different districts, programs can be better targeted to meet the needs of the group.

Countries like the United Kingdom, the United States and the Philippines have made efforts to assess the percentage of the population that are LGBT and countries like the United Kingdom for example afford equal rights to LGB individuals as they do heterosexual ones. The Office for National Statistics in the UK estimated that two percent (2.0%) of the UK population identified as LGB in 2016 (Knipe, E. 2016). A research conducted in the United States in 2011 estimated that 3.5% of the US population identified as LGB while 0.3% identified as transgender (Gates, G. 2011). The Gallup Poll of 2016 in the US reported that around 4.6% or 10 million US citizens were LGBT (Reynolds, D. 2017). At only 4.6%, this would be a sizeable portion of the population to ignore in the country's development strategies. The 2016 World Bank data reported that the population size of Sri Lanka was at 21.2 million. With a growth rate of 0.8% recorded in the same year, and a similar estimated percentage of around 4.6%, it would be expected that close to one million Sri Lankans are ignored in the developmental strategies of the country. With LGBT individuals fleeing their home countries for freedom from persecution, discrimination, and violence to seek refuge in other countries, it is expected that Sri Lanka is affected negatively and will continue to be affected should this community continue to be overlooked. If educated Sri Lankans leave or continue to leave to seek refuge in other countries, it is expected that this will add to brain-drain in the country.

Human Rights Watch (2016), claimed that LGBT persons face stigma and discrimination in housing, employment and healthcare. The results of the 2012 LGBT Stigma and Discrimination Index for Sri Lanka supported this claim but further went on to report that LGBT Sri Lankans faced stigma and discrimination in the education system as well as social and religious settings (EQUAL GROUND, 2012). In assessing challenges and barriers facing the LGBT community in this current study it would then be expected that the pattern would be similar.

Unlike countries like the UK where it is not a crime to be in a homosexual relationship, it is difficult to collect data on sexual orientation in Sri Lanka where according to

law one can be sentenced to a term in prison if found guilty of “gross indecency”. Gates and Newport (2013) expressed that LGBT persons who live in societies where they are more accepted would be more likely to disclose their sexual orientation or gender identity than those who don’t live in such societies. It would therefore be expected that less Sri Lankans would be likely to disclose their sexual orientation willingly. Measures were taken to promote respondents’ willingness to disclose this information. By allowing interviewers from LGBT friendly organizations working in the local district it was expected that individuals would feel more comfortable to respond honestly about their sexual orientation and/or gender identity on the questionnaire.

Due to the nature of the study, the research was focused on collecting data from adults over the age of 18-years-old in each of the four districts. It is however understood that people younger than 18-years-old will identify as LGBT. The results will substantiate the fact that members of the Sri Lankan population do identify as LGBT. The findings of this research have the power to challenge developmental strategies in Sri Lanka and promote the need for change by informing policy negotiations in the future. By estimating the population size of the LGBT community along with the characteristics of these individuals and the challenges and barriers they are faced with, an identity is formed; it is therefore possible to determine the needs of the community and inform strategies targeted to meet their needs.

## **Method**

This report is based on a survey of Sri Lankan citizens residing in Colombo, Kandy, Matara and Nuwara Eliya aged 18-years and older, conducted by EQUAL GROUND in October and November of 2017. The organisation employed the services of a research team consistent of; a research analyst, data capturers and interviewers. The interview team was selected on the basis of their previous work with EQUAL GROUND coupled with the

fact that they work primarily in the districts of interest. The survey was conducted through face-to-face interviews in English, Sinhala or Tamil.

A total number of 554 individuals who identified as lesbian, gay, bisexual, heterosexual and transgender took part in the study. The process was anonymous which improved the likelihood for respondents to disclose their sexual orientation and/or gender identity. Measures were taken to ensure that the sample size was representative of the population in the respective districts. In particular, “ethnicity” was used as the most relevant variable for association.

**Participants** - The participants in the study were individuals older than 18-years-old living in Colombo, Matara, Nuwara Eliya and Kandy. While a total of 554 individuals participated in the study, only 470 questionnaires were accepted for analysis. Of the 470; 1.00% of respondents identified as transgender, 56.6% identified as male and the remaining 42.3% were female. Majority of the respondents were aged between 18 and 24 while only a small percentage of 1.9% were over the age of 60-years-old. A mere 0.4% did not disclose their level of education. While only 4.3% reported having no formal education. The remaining respondents had at least gained primary education. Members from all ethnic groups participated in the study; 0.9% were Burghers or Eurasian and the same percentage identified as Malay. Sinhalese and Tamil accounted for 75.7% and 15.55% respectively, while Moors accounted for 6.8% and 0.2% identified as “mixed other”.

Over 70% of the respondents were employed in different types of employment including self-employment and over 55% of the participants earned at least LKR10,000.00 per month; 28.3% of the respondents did not disclose their earnings. The percentage of respondents who were single was greater than those who were married and 3.4% were divorced. Respondents identified as being either LGB or heterosexuals; 76.4% reported being heterosexuals.

The first language of the respondent was either English, Sinhala or Tamil. More than 80% of the respondents' first language was Sinhala while only 1.5% spoke English as their first language. Most of the respondents were Buddhist, accounting for 70% and 8.1% were Muslim.

**Measures** - The questionnaire was formulated in English as the research tool and translated into both Sinhala and Tamil to meet the needs of the participants (see Appendix A). The questionnaire was consistent of a consent form as its first page and two sections with a total of 13 questions. Neither the consent form nor the sections inside the questionnaires required any personal identifying information from the participants hence it was possible to maintain their anonymity.

Section 1 of the questionnaire required participants' demographical data and was consistent of a total of 10 questions which also included participants gender identity and sexual orientation. In Section 2, respondents were asked to disclose information about the challenges and barriers they are faced with. Questions 12 and 13 specifically asked respondents to disclose whether they faced any form of discrimination or abuse because of their sexual orientation and/or gender identity or expression.

**Procedure** - The data for this report was collected in October and November 2017 in Colombo, Matara, Kandy and Nuwara Eliya. The data was collected using a questionnaire in face-to-face interviews conducted by field officers who have worked with EQUAL GROUND on previous projects. This report is based on the data analysed from 470 of the 554 questionnaires collected in the survey. The remaining questionnaires were eliminated in the data cleaning process.

**Sampling** – Combined there is approximately 3,846,800 adults over the age of 18-years-old living in Colombo, Matara, Nuwara Eliya and Kandy in 2017. Using a margin of error of 5%, the associated Z-score of  $\pm 1.96$ , and a standard deviation of 0.5, it was determined that the least number of respondents to include in the study was 385 respondents. Human error and



response rate were taken into account and it was deemed necessary to increase the number of questionnaires to be completed so that after data cleaning there would be enough questionnaires to account for the minimum sample size. A 70% response rate was determined possible thereby increasing the number of questionnaires to be completed to 501. However, this did not take into account the sampling method to be employed. There were enough resources to increase the number of questionnaires to collect during the data collection process. It was determined that it would not be necessary to collect more than 600 questionnaires in total and not less than 510.

To estimate the percentage of the population identifying as LGBT it was necessary to randomly select participants to ensure that individuals who were LGBT and non-LGBT would be accounted for. The study employed a multilevel sampling method where the population was divided into strata based on ethnicity then participants were selected using the simple random sampling method. There was a total of six strata; Burgher/Eurasian, Malay, Moor, Sinhala, Tamil, and Other (including Mixed). No distinction was made between Sri Lankan and Indian Tamil. The percentage representation for each stratum was determined based on the statistics available in the Census of Population and Housing 2001. The following tables below demonstrate the percentage representation for each district based on the statistics for 2001.

Table 1.1. Calculated sample representation for Colombo

<b>Strata</b>	<b>Percentage</b>	<b>Count</b>
Burgher	0.7	2
Malay	1.0	3
Moors	9.0	21
Sinhalese	76.6	177
Tamil	12.1	28
Other	0.6	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>233</b>

Table 1.2. Calculated sample representation for Kandy

<b>Strata</b>	<b>Percentage</b>	<b>Count</b>
Burgher	0.2	1
Malay	0.2	1
Moors	13.1	17
Sinhalese	74.1	96
Tamil	12.2	16
Other	0.2	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>132</b>

Table 1.3. Calculated sample representation for Matara

<b>Strata</b>	<b>Percentage</b>	<b>Count</b>
Burgher	0.0	0
Malay	0.0	0
Moors	2.9	3
Sinhalese	94.2	73
Tamil	2.9	3
Other	0.0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>79</b>

Table 1.4. Calculated sample representation Nuwara Eliya

<b>Strata</b>	<b>Percentage</b>	<b>Count</b>
Burgher	0.1	0
Malay	0.2	1
Moors	2.4	2
Sinhalese	40.1	26
Tamil	57.1	37
Other	0.1	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>66</b>

Statistical tests for strata count revealed that the following number of surveys needed to be completed in each district to account for errors; Colombo 233, Kandy 132, Matara 79 and Nuwara Eliya 66. This brought the total minimum number of questionnaires to be completed to 510.

The interviewers were then directed to select participants randomly based on the requirements set out in tables above. The participants were asked to participate in passing and at different events hosted by the satellite offices, independent of this current study. They were advised of the nature of the study and asked to provide consent through a consent

form attached to the questionnaire as its first page. They were not asked to provide any identifying information about themselves so as to maintain their anonymity. Participants were not compensated for their involvement in the study and were informed that they could withdraw at anytime between starting the questionnaire and submitting it to the interviewer to be counted as part of the survey. They were asked to complete the questionnaires independently, however, assistance was provided by the interviewers to individuals who had difficulty completing the questionnaire on their own.

A pilot study was carried out to determine the usefulness of the questionnaire to meet the research objectives. At this stage of the study the interviewers were trained, and they signed a Confidentiality Agreement Form for the research (see Appendix C). Soon after analysis of the pilot questionnaires were concluded, and improvements made, the survey commenced.

Once all questionnaires were completed, they were returned to the researcher for data capturing, cleaning, analysis and reporting.

**Data cleaning** - A quality check process was put in place to eliminate irrelevant and incomplete data along with any errors. Due to the nature of the research it would not have been possible to accept a questionnaire where respondents' sexual orientation or gender identity was not declared. Whilst this would give information about participants unwillingness to disclose either, and therefore be useful to the research such questionnaires were eliminated if they failed to meet other requirements in the quality process; the most important being declaring that they consent to be part of the study by dating the consent form. A total of 470 questionnaires passed the quality tests (see Appendix B) and were therefore included in the analysis for this research report.

**Data capturing and analysis** - The data was captured in the developed SPSS data base, then checked for errors by two independent checkers. Errors were rectified, and the data was then analysed using the SPSS software. A second analysis was made in Microsoft Excel to confirm the results attained in SPSS.

## Results

The aim of this study is to estimate the population size, characteristics, and the challenges and barriers of the Sri Lankan LGBT community. In this section the results of the analysis are provided for review.

### Section 1 – Demographics

This section of the report is concerned with determining the characteristics of the survey sample. Only results will be provided here.

Table 2.1. Distribution of respondents by ethnicity and districts

District	Ethnicity						Total
	Burgher/Eurasian	Malay	Moor	Sinhalese	Tamil	Mixed Other	
Colombo	1	2	13	171	23	1	<b>211</b>
Kandy	2	1	14	86	15	0	<b>118</b>
Matara	0	0	3	76	2	0	<b>81</b>
Nuwara Eliya	1	1	2	23	33	0	<b>60</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>356</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>470</b>
<b>Percent</b>	<b>0.9</b>	<b>0.9</b>	<b>6.8</b>	<b>75.7</b>	<b>15.5</b>	<b>0.2</b>	<b>100</b>

Most of the respondents in the study were Sinhalese (75.7%). Only 0.2% were mixed; 0.9% were Malay, 15.5% Tamil, 6.8% Moor and 0.9% Burgher/Eurasian. The highest percentage of respondents were from Colombo and the lowest from Nuwara Eliya.

Table 2.2. Distribution of the districts respondents live in

District	Frequency	Percentage
Kandy	118	25.1
Colombo	211	44.9
Nuwara Eliya	60	12.8
Matara	81	17.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>470</b>	<b>100</b>

The distribution of the number of respondents surveyed in each district was based on the population size in each of the respective districts. Table 2.1 displays the distribution of the questionnaires that were accepted for analysis into this survey.

Table 2.3. Distribution of respondents' gender

Gender of respondents	Frequency	Percentage
Male	266	56.6
Female	199	42.3
Transgender MTF	2	0.4
Transgender FTM	3	0.6
Other	0	0.0
No response	0	0.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>470</b>	<b>100</b>

Most of the respondents in the study were male. Even though a total of 1% of the respondents identified as transgender, the majority 0.6% identified as female-to-male (FTM) transgender adding to the total number of males in the study. Females accounted for 42.7% of the sample size.

Table 2.4. Distribution of respondents' age

<b>Respondents' age</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
18-24	185	39.4
25-31	99	21.1
32-40	90	19.1
41-49	65	13.8
50-59	20	4.3
60 and older	9	1.9
No response	2	0.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>470</b>	<b>100</b>

Some respondents refused to disclose their age on the questionnaire and only 1.9% were aged 60-years or older. A large number of the respondents were 24-years-old or younger and almost 80% were less than 40 years old. Respondents aged 18-24 years accounted for a significant 39.4% of the sample.

Table 2.5. Distribution of respondents' ethnicity

<b>Respondents' ethnicity</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Burgher/Eurasian	4	0.9
Malay	4	0.9
Moor	32	6.8
Sinhalese	356	75.7
Tamil	73	15.5
Other	1	0.2
No response	0	0.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>470</b>	<b>100</b>

Only 0.2% of the respondents stated that they were of mixed race. Equal number of participants identified as Burgher/Eurasian as there were Malays in the study. The highest percentage of respondents were Sinhalese accounting for 75.7%. Moors and Tamils accounted for 6.8% and 15.5% respectively.

Table 2.6. Distribution of respondents' religion

<b>Respondents' religion</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Buddhism	329	70.0
Christianity	42	8.9
Hinduism	58	12.3
Islam	38	8.1
Other	1	0.2
No response	2	0.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>470</b>	<b>100</b>

Buddhists represented 70% of the sample size while Hindus accounted for 12.3%. Less than 1% of the respondents refused to declare their religious association and 0.2% declared a religion other than those included on the questionnaire. A further 8.1% reported being Muslim, and 8.9% Christian.

Table 2.7. Distribution of respondents' educational background

<b>Educational background</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
No formal education	20	4.3
Primary school	49	10.4
Secondary school	187	39.8
Professional qualification	73	15.5
University	139	29.6
Other	0	0.0
No response	2	0.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>470</b>	<b>100</b>

A small percentage of the respondents reported having had no formal education (4.3%). The great majority had been educated up to the secondary level (50.2%), while 15.5% had gained up to a professional qualification and 29.6% had attended university. Only 0.4% of the individuals refused to respond to this question.

Table 2.8. Distribution of respondents' first language

<b>Respondents' first language</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
English	7	1.5
Sinhala	377	80.2
Tamil	84	17.9
Other	0	0.0
No response	2	0.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>470</b>	<b>100</b>

Of the 470 respondents included in this report, 80.2% reported speaking Sinhala as their first language, 17.9% stated their first language was Tamil and only 1.5% spoke English as their first language. The remaining 0.4% of the respondents did not reveal their first language.

Table 2.9. Distribution of respondents' marital status

<b>Respondents' marital status</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Married	168	35.7
Divorced	16	3.4
Single	229	48.7
Widowed	4	0.9
In a relationship	51	10.9
Other	0	0.0
No response	2	0.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>470</b>	<b>100</b>

The table above displays respondents' marital status; with 48.7% being single, 35.7% married, 10.9% in a relationship, 3.4% divorced and 0.9% widowed.



Table 2.10. Distribution of respondents' employment status

<b>Respondents' employment status</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Full time employment	171	36.4
Part time employment	77	16.4
Internship	3	0.6
Self-employed full time	43	9.1
Self-employed part time	18	3.8
Unemployed looking for work	88	18.7
Unemployed not looking for work	19	4.0
Unpaid volunteer	13	2.8
Other	26	5.5
No response	12	2.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>470</b>	<b>100</b>

Only 458 of the respondents disclosed their employment status in the survey; 36.4% were in full-time employment; 16.4% were employed part-time; 12.9% were self-employed; 2.6% did not disclose; 22.7% were unemployed; 2.8% unpaid volunteers; 5.5% of the respondents stated that their employment status was not amongst the available selections and the remaining 0.6% were undertaking an internship.

Table 2.11. Distribution of respondents' current income

<b>Respondents' current income</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Below LKR 10,000	63	13.4
LKR 10,001 to 25,000	124	26.4
LKR 25,001 to 40,000	95	20.2
LKR 40,001 to 65,000	42	8.9
LKR 65,001 to 90,000	9	1.9
Above LKR 90,000	4	0.9
No response	133	28.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>470</b>	<b>100</b>

A significant 28.3% of the respondents refused to state their current monthly income; 13.4% of them earned below LKR 10,000.00; 40.6% earned between LKR 10,001.00 and LKR 40,000.00; while 11.7% earned above LKR 40,001.00.

Table 2.12. Distribution of respondents' sexual orientation

<b>Respondents' sexual orientation</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Asexual	23	4.9
Bisexual	29	6.2
Heterosexual	359	76.4
Gay	39	8.3
Lesbian	20	4.3
Other	0	0.0
No response	0	0.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>470</b>	<b>100</b>

Respondents were asked to disclose who they were emotionally and physically attracted to; from their response their sexual orientation was determined. While 76.4% of the respondents disclosed that they were heterosexuals, 4.9% stated they were asexual and the remaining 18.8% stated they were either lesbian, gay or bisexual.

**LGBT respondents** - Respondent who identify as LGBT are of interest to this study. Hence, it is necessary to look at the characteristics of this group. This section of the report therefore takes into account the responses from the 88 respondents who identified as LGB and the additional four who identified as transgender but not LGB. In some instances, only 88 respondents will be considered while in other there will be a total of 92 respondents considered. The data from respondents who identified as asexual will not be included in this section of the analysis on the basis that asexuality is readily acceptable in Sri Lanka.

Table 3.1. Distribution of the districts LGB respondents live in

District	Frequency	Percent
Kandy	19	21.6
Colombo	31	35.2
Nuwara Eliya	21	23.9
Matara	17	19.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>88</b>	<b>100</b>

Majority of the respondents who reported being LGB were from Colombo (35.2%). The difference between the percentage of respondents who are LGB living in Kandy and Nuwara Eliya is not significant and 19.3% of LGB respondents reported living in Matara.

Table 3.2. Gender distribution of LGB respondents

Gender	Frequency	Percent
Male	52	59.1
Female	35	39.8
Transgender	1	1.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>88</b>	<b>100</b>

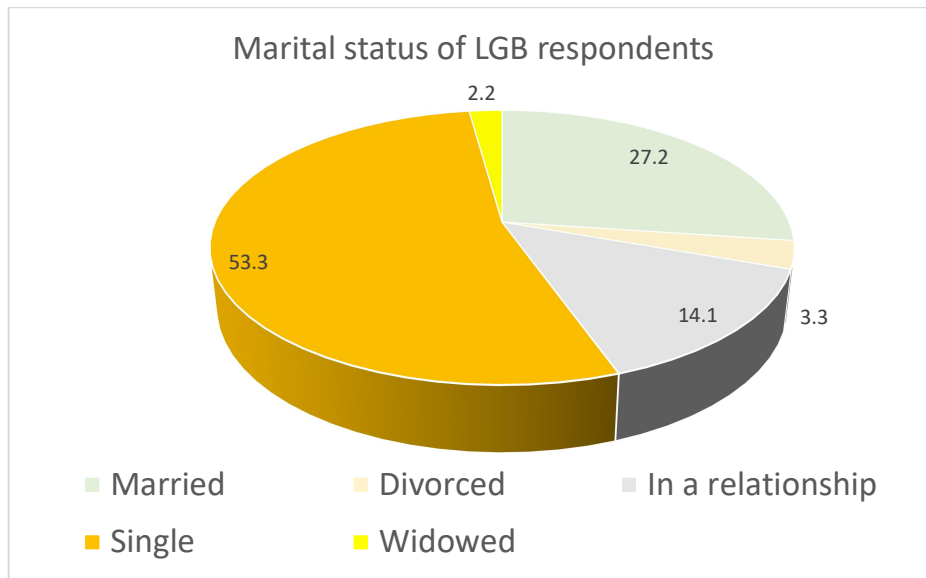
More males declared that they were either gay or bisexual. Only 1.1% of individuals who identify as LGB were transgender and 39.8% of the LGB respondents were female.

Table 3.3. Age range distribution of LGB respondents

Age	Frequency	Percent
18-24	30	34.1
25-31	16	18.2
32-40	21	23.9
41-49	13	14.8
50-59	6	6.8
60 and older	2	2.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>88</b>	<b>100</b>

Over 55% of the respondents who identified as LGB were older than 25-years-old and 34.1% were between the ages of 18 and 24.

Figure 1. Distribution of LGB respondents' marital status



Over 50% of the respondents who were LGB were single. Of the 92 respondents who reported to be LGB; 27.2% of them were married, 14.1% were in a relationship, 3.3% were divorced and 2.2% were widowed.

Table 3.4. Distribution of the educational level of LGB respondents

<b>Education</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
No formal education	3	3.4
Primary education	8	9.1
Secondary education	40	45.5
Professional qualification	11	12.5
University	26	29.5
Other	0	0
No response	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>88</b>	<b>100</b>

Majority of the respondents have been formally educated; with only 3.4% reporting that they had no formal education. Over 80% of the respondents have been educated at least to the secondary level.

Table 3.5. Distribution of the employment status of LGB respondents

<b>Employment status</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Full time employment	27	30.7
part-time employment	17	19.3
Internship	0	0.0
Self-employed full time	10	11.4
Self-employed part time	5	5.7
Unemployed looking for work	11	12.5
Unemployed not looking for work	6	6.8
Unpaid volunteer	2	2.3
Other	5	5.7
No response	5	5.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>88</b>	<b>100</b>

Majority of the respondents who were LGB were currently in some form of employment. Only 6.8% were unemployed and not looking for work, 5.7% did not disclose their employment status and the same number of respondents stated that their employment status was one that was not listed in the options provided on the questionnaire.

Table 3.6. Distribution of the current monthly income of LGB respondents

Income	Frequency	Percent
Below LKR 10 000	18	20.5
LKR 10 001 to LKR 25 000	17	19.3
LKR 25 001 to LKR 40 000	19	21.6
LKR 40 001 to LKR 65 000	9	10.2
LKR 65 001 to LKR 95 000	1	1.1
Above LKR 95 001	0	0.0
No response	24	27.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>88</b>	<b>100</b>

A significant number of respondents did not declare their current monthly income and 20.5% of the respondents who are LGB earned below LKR10,000.00 per month. None of the LGB respondents reported earnings of over LKR90,000.00 and only 11.3% earned above LKR40,000.00 monthly.

**Challenges and barriers** - Section two of the questionnaire recorded the challenges and barriers that respondents were faced with. The information below will account for the participants responses to the questions posed in this section and will take into account all respondents who were LGBT. In this instance the number of respondents to be accounted for is 92.

Table 4.1. Distribution of the challenges and barriers faced by LGB respondents

Challenge or barrier faced	Yes	No	No response	Total
Forced behaviour	43	48	1	92
Refused accommodation	12	78	2	92
Refused education	18	68	6	92
Refused medical assistance	20	69	3	92
Termination of employment	14	73	5	92
Police harassment	15	64	13	92
Refused participation in religious practices	15	75	2	92
Discriminated by friends	54	37	1	92
Physically or verbally abused in public spaces	48	42	2	92

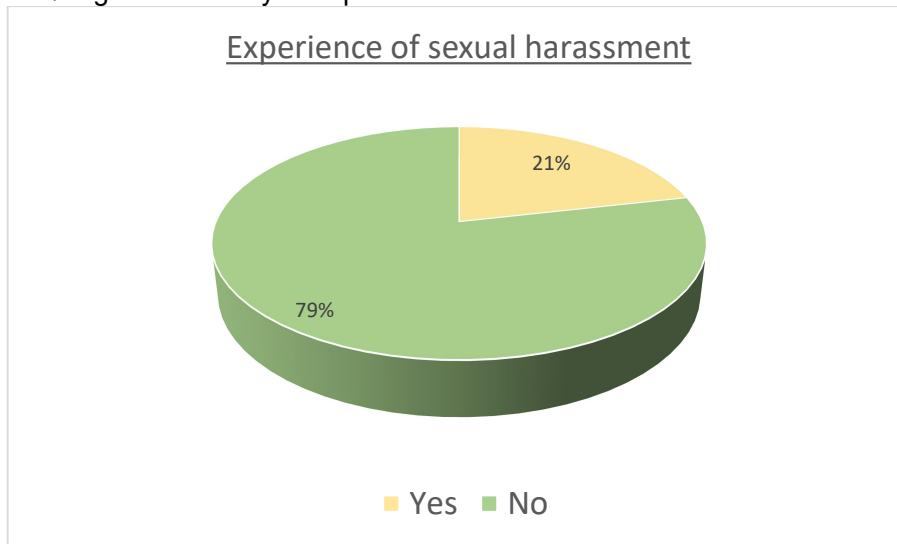
More than half of the respondents reported experiencing; discrimination by friends (58.7%), and physical or verbal abuse in public places (52.2%). Significant number of respondents reported facing other forms of challenges which included being barred for access to education, employment and health services. Majority of the respondents did not face any of the challenges and barriers listed.

Table 4.2. Distribution of whether respondents faced challenges or barriers because of their sexual orientation and/or gender identity

<b>Challenge or barrier faced</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>No response</b>	<b>Total</b>
Forced behaviour	31	9	3	43
Refused accommodation	5	7	0	12
Refused education	13	4	1	18
Refused medical assistance	14	6	0	20
Termination of employment	8	5	1	14
Police harassment	7	7	1	15
Refused participation in religious practices	9	5	1	15
Discriminated by friends	35	15	4	54
Physically or verbally abused in public spaces	31	13	4	48

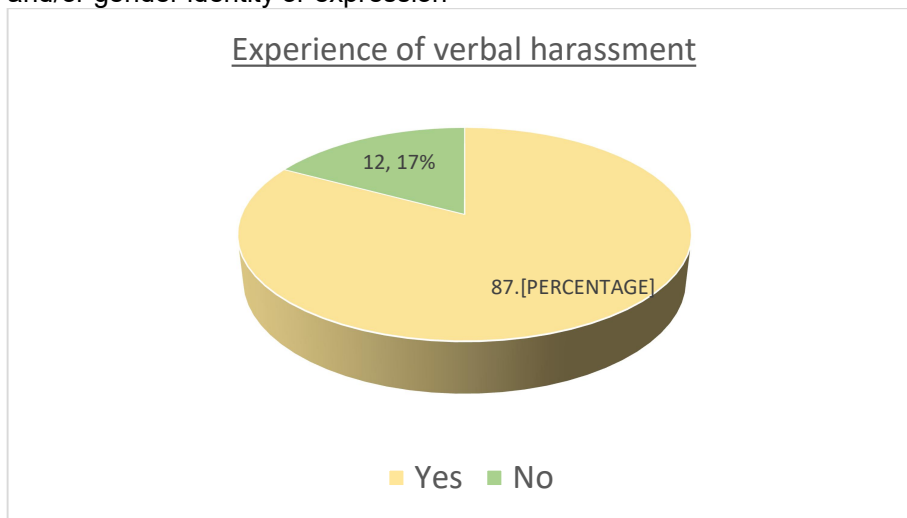
Respondents faced challenges and barriers within the last two years and most stated that this was because of their sexual orientation and/or gender identity or expression. Some respondents did not disclose whether their sexual orientation and/or gender identity was a factor. More than 70% of the respondents were forced to behave or engage in activities against their wishes; 46.7% faced police harassment; 64.8% were discriminated by friends; 64.5% were physically or verbally abused in public spaces; 72.2% were refused education; 57.14% had their employment terminated; 70% were refused medical assistance; 60% were refused participation in religious practices or events and 41.7% were refused education because of their sexual orientation and/or gender identity. The data revealed that a significant number of the LGBT respondents faced rejection, violence and harassment because of their sexual orientation and/or gender identity or expression.

Figure 2. Respondents' experience of sexual harassment because of their sexual orientation and/or gender identity or expression



Respondents were asked whether they experienced sexual harassment because of their sexual orientation and/or gender identity or expression; 79% of the respondents expressed having not faced this form of harassment.

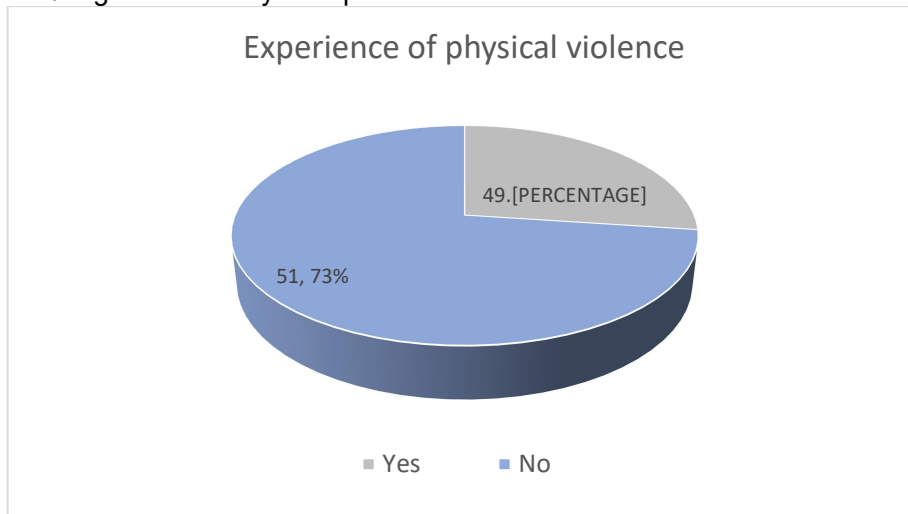
Figure 3. Respondents' experience of verbal harassment because of their sexual orientation and/or gender identity or expression



The pie-chart above reveals that 87.8% of the LGBT respondents faced verbal harassment because of their sexual orientation and/or gender identity or expression.

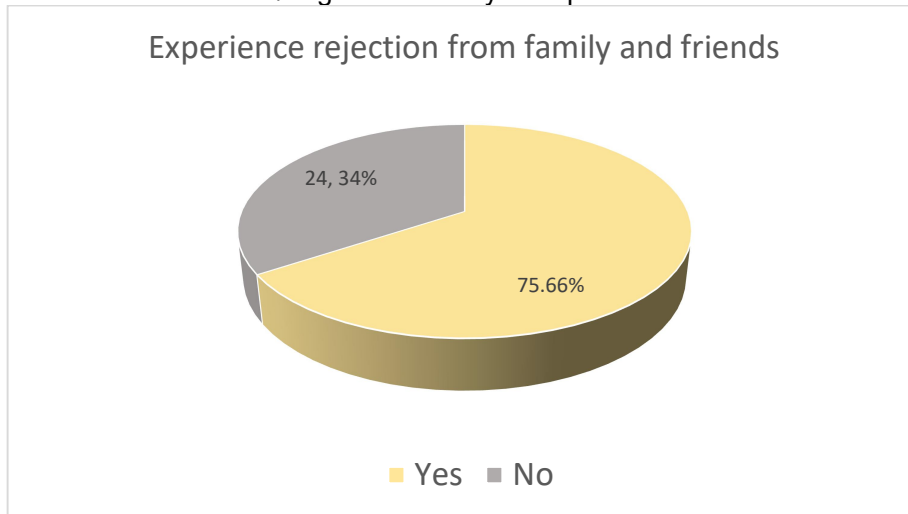


Figure 4. Respondents experience of physical violence because of their sexual orientation and/or gender identity or expression



Of the LGBT respondents who experienced physical violence, 49.3% stated that this was because of their sexual orientation and/or gender identity or expression.

Figure 5. Respondents experience of rejection from family and friends because of their sexual orientation and/or gender identity or expression



LGBT respondents experienced rejection from family and friends because of their sexual orientation and/or gender identity or expression. Approximately 24% did not experience this form of rejection based on their sexual orientation and/or gender identity/expression.

**Belief about self** - Respondents were asked about how they feel or what they believe about themselves because of their sexual orientation and/or gender identity. A total of six comparisons were made; for example, whether respondents believed they were abnormal or normal based on their sexual orientation and/or gender identity/expression. Below are the results of this section of the questionnaire.

Table 5.1. distribution of respondents' belief based on their sexual orientation and/or gender identity/expression

<b>Belief</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>No response</b>	<b>Total</b>
I am abnormal	3	73	16	92
	3.3	79.3	17.4	100
I should be punished by law	0	49	43	92
	0	53.3	46.7	100
I have committed a sin according to religion	5	41	46	92
	5.4	44.6	50	100
I feel I will be able to live the way I want / come out if I am in a better economic position	30	1	61	92
	32.6	1.1	66.3	100
I am mentally ill	8	43	41	92
	8.7	46.7	44.6	100
I should be treated equally with respect and dignity	48	0	44	92
	52.2	0	47.8	100

Of the 92 LGBT persons who responded to the survey; 3.3% felt that they are abnormal, 5.4% believe that by being LGBT they are committing a sin, 8.7% believe that they are mentally ill, 52.2% believe they should be treated equally with dignity and respect, 32.6% stated they would come out if they were in a better economic position and no respondent believe that they should be punished by law because of their LGBT status.

## Discussion

The aim of this study was to estimate the percentage of LGBT individuals living in Colombo, Kandy, Matara and Nuwara Eliya. The research objectives also included determining the challenges and barriers facing the LGBT community in these districts.

The population was divided into six strata based on ethnicity and the respondents for the survey sample was selected by simple random sampling from each stratum. The percentage representation of each stratum was determined in line with Sri Lanka's 2001 Census of Population and Housing.

Similar studies in the United States and the United Kingdom were conducted and found that the estimated percentages of LGBT people living in the respective countries were both below 5%. In this current study, the estimated percentages of individuals who are LGBT were found to be greater than 10%, with the highest percentage recorded in Nuwara Eliya being 35%. There is significant difference in these percentages and no local data is available for comparison. This suggests that bias has been introduced in data collection strategies; too many respondents surveyed were members of the LGBT community. This can be associated with the fact that the interviewers work with and had access to respondents who were known to them as LGBT individuals. Of the 470 respondents surveyed 19.6% of them were LGBT. This too is far greater than the estimates gathered in the US and the UK. Of the 92 respondents found to be LGBT; 21.6% were from Kandy, 35.2% from Colombo, 23.9% from Nuwara Eliya and the remaining 19.3% from Matara.

Overall, the characteristics of the entire sample and that of the LGB sample did not differ significantly in most cases. In terms of the respondents' age; there were more respondents between the ages of 18 and 24 who took part in the study. This group also accounted for 34.1% of the respondents who disclosed that they were members of the LGB community. The second highest percentage accounted for in the age range of the sample

were those aged 25-31, while in the LGB sample the second highest percentage were those aged between 32 and 40.

In both the sample containing heterosexuals and the one containing only LGBT, males accounted for the highest percentages of respondents while transgender accounted for the lowest percentages. There was significant difference between respondents who were female and declared that they were lesbian and bisexual than males who declared that they were gay and bisexual.

Of the respondents who reported being LGB, 27.2% of them were married. Homosexuality is deemed a crime in Sri Lanka and marriage between same sex couples is not permitted hence it is assumed that LGB respondents who reported being married exist in heterosexual relationships. No information was gathered to determine whether these respondents were existing in both their marriage and other lesbian or gay relationships simultaneously. Some respondents reported being forced to marry someone of the opposite sex even though; they were not physically or emotionally attracted to them and this was not inline with their sexual orientation.

Compared to the entire sample of 470 respondents, there were more respondents who were LGB and had attained at least secondary education. The percentage of LGB persons in the survey with no formal education was 3.4% and this was 1.1% less than the entire sample. There was a mere 0.1% difference between individuals who were LGB and attained university education and that of the entire sample. There was no significant difference between the proportion of LGB respondents who were employed and those in the entire sample. However, further analysis revealed that in some instances respondents' education and employment were affected by their sexual orientation and/or gender identity. Respondents reported being terminated from employment and refused entry to education and professional development because they are LGBT. Over 70% of the respondents who reported being refused entry to education and professional development stated that this was

because of their LGBT status and 57.14% stated that they were terminated from employment.

The data around barriers and challenges facing LGBT individuals in this current study was in line with that of the 2012 LGBT Stigma and Discrimination Index study conducted by EQUAL GROUND. In almost all cases, respondents who faced challenges and barriers were more likely to have done so because they identified as LGBT. There is evidence that within government services such as education and healthcare, individuals are discriminated against because they do not identify as heterosexuals or are transgender. LGBT persons are attacked both physically and verbally in public and are discriminated against by their families and friends. Respondents reported being forced to behave or engage in activities against their wishes; including getting married against their will to persons of the opposite sex.

While Section 365 and 365A of the Sri Lankan Penal Code criminalises sexual relations between consenting adults of the same sex, no LGBT respondents in the survey believed they should be punished by law for being LGBT. No respondent believed they should be treated unequally because of their sexual orientation and/or gender identity either. There was however, sign of internalised homophobia. Some LGBT respondents believed they are mentally ill (8.7%), committing a sin according to their religion (5.4%) and/or abnormal (3.3%). While this is cause for concern, it is expected in a society where individuals speak negatively openly about the LGBT identity.

Respondents economic welfare appeared to be an important factor in their willingness to be open about their LGBT status. A significant number of respondents in the study stated that they would be willing to disclose their sexual orientation or gender identity (come out) if they had better economic standings.

LGBT persons exist in significant numbers in Sri Lanka and face barriers and challenges because of their sexual orientation and/or gender identity/expression. Like the 2016 Human Rights Watch report, this study found that LGBT individuals face stigma and discrimination in housing, employment, and healthcare. The attacks on LGBT persons because of their gender identity/expression and/or their sexual orientation is cause for concern. All Sri Lankans deserve not only to be treated with dignity and respect, but to also feel safe and protected. Government is responsible for putting in place measures to protect ALL of its citizens regardless of the fact that they may not be in the majority.

It is necessary to first accept that LGBT persons exist within the Sri Lankan borders so that policies and services may be improved to meet the needs of this marginalised community.

**Limitations of the study** - The study's investigation took place in four of Sri Lanka's 25 districts; Colombo, Kandy, Matara and Nuwara Eliya. These districts were specifically chosen on the basis of EQUAL GROUND's relationship with field officers working in them. These field officers operate or work with independent organizations but partner with EQUAL GROUND to cater to the LGBT community in these districts. This means that LGBT persons are known to them and that they have developed trusting relationships with LGBT persons. Field officers were used as interviewers. While this increased the chances of LGBT individuals disclosing their LGBT identity, it also posed a problem for the survey. More LGBT persons would be interested in and took part in the study. For this reason, the estimated percentages for the size of the LGBT population in each of the districts along with the overall estimation (19.6%) might be biased.

Such a study can be improved on and the national estimate for the percentage of LGBT individuals in Sri Lanka can be established. To achieve this, all of the country's districts must be represented in the sample. This can be achieved either by taking a national

survey of all 25 districts or by accepting the surveying of one district as the representation for that district and others that have similar identifying characteristics such as for example; population size and identical or close to identical demographical characteristics and so on.

A more randomized strategy can be employed to achieve better results. The interviewers in the study knew of and had access to individuals who they knew to be members of the LGBT community. There are no previous studies to compare to hence it is unclear whether the percentage of the sample size revealed to be LGBT is significantly lower or higher than the “true value” is. For future studies, it would add value to the research if interviewers were not familiar with the LGBT community in terms of establishing the percentage. However, without measures put in place to make LGBT persons feel safer and more equal, there is a risk that they will not disclose their gender identity and/or sexual orientation.

**Conclusion** - Although the estimated percentage of this study is significantly higher than that of similar studies in the United States and the United Kingdom it proves that LGBT Sri Lankans do exist and are living in Sri Lanka. Approximately 19.6% (753,973) of the 3,846,800 adults 18-years and older living in Colombo, Kandy, Nuwara Eliya and Matara identify as LGBT. The vast majority of these individuals have faced some form of challenge or barrier because of their sexual orientation and/or gender identity/expression. They are discriminated against even in government services such as healthcare and education. They are marginalised in employment and housing by being denied access to both. LGBT persons face violence and harassment because they do not conform to heteronormativity and some are faced with internalised homophobia.

The attacks on LGBT persons because of their gender identity/expression and/or their sexual orientation is cause for concern and must be of importance to government and those who develop programs and strategies concerned with strategic development. All Sri

Lankans deserve not only to be treated with dignity and respect, but to also feel safe and protected within the borders. Government is responsible for putting in place measures to protect ALL of its citizens regardless of the fact that they may not fit into the majority.

It is necessary to first accept that LGBT persons exists in Sri Lankan so that policies and services may be improved to meet the needs of this community.



## List of tables and figures

### **Figures**

- Figure 1. Distribution of LGB respondents' marital status
- Figure 2. Respondents' experience of sexual harassment because of their sexual orientation and/or gender identity or expression
- Figure 3. Respondents' experience of verbal harassment because of their sexual orientation and/or gender identity or expression
- Figure 4. Respondents experience of physical violence because of their sexual orientation and/or gender identity or expression
- Figure 5. Respondents experience of rejection from family and friends because of their sexual orientation and/or gender identity or expression

### **Tables**

- Table 1.1 Calculated sample representation for Colombo
- Table 1.2. Calculated sample representation for Kandy
- Table 1.3. Calculated sample representation for Matara
- Table 1.4. Calculated sample representation Nuwara Eliya
- Table 2.1. Distribution of respondents by ethnicity and districts
- Table 2.2. Distribution of the districts respondents live in
- Table 2.3. Distribution of respondents' gender
- Table 2.4. Distribution of respondents' age
- Table 2.5. Distribution of respondents' ethnicity
- Table 2.6. Distribution of respondents' religion

- Table 2.7. Distribution of respondents' educational background
- Table 2.8. Distribution of respondents' first language
- Table 2.9. Distribution of respondents' marital status
- Table 2.10. Distribution of respondents' employment status
- Table 2.11. Distribution of respondents' current income
- Table 2.12. Distribution of respondents' sexual orientation
- Table 3.1. Distribution of the districts LGB respondents live in
- Table 3.2. Gender distribution of LGB respondents
- Table 3.3. Age range distribution of LGB respondents
- Table 3.4. Distribution of the educational level of LGB respondents
- Table 3.5. Distribution of the employment status of LGB respondents
- Table 3.6. Distribution of the current monthly income of LGB respondents
- Table 4.1. Distribution of the challenges and barriers faced by LGB respondents
- Table 4.2. Distribution of whether respondents faced challenges or barriers because of their sexual orientation and/or gender identity
- Table 5.1. Distribution of respondents' belief based on their sexual orientation and/or gender identity/expression

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## **Appendix A Mapping Questionnaire – English**

### Mapping Individual Identities in Sri Lanka 2017

#### **Consent Form**

The purpose of this research project is to gather information on the different identities and challenges facing individuals living in Colombo, Kandy, Matara and Nuwara Eliya. This is a research project being conducted by EQUAL GROUND. You are invited to participate in this research project because you live in one of the previously named four districts.

Your participation in this research study is entirely voluntary. No compensation will be awarded for your participation. You may choose not to participate. If you decide to participate in this research survey, you may withdraw at any time. You will not be penalised if you decide to withdraw from the study.

The procedure involves filling a printed or online questionnaire that will take approximately 15 minutes. Your responses will be confidential, and we do not collect identifying information such as your name, email address or IP address.

We will do our best to keep your information confidential. There is no personal identifying information requested. However, to protect your confidentiality, we will store all data in a password protected electronic format. The results of this study will be used for information gathering and reporting and may be shared with reputable individuals and organizations interested in understanding the characteristics outlined in the questionnaire.

By Signing today's date on the line below you hereby consent that;

- You have read and understood the above information
- You are not being forced to complete the questionnaire
- You are at least 18 years of age

\_\_\_\_\_  
Today's date

---

#### **For Official Use ONLY**

Interviewer's ID.				
District				
Date				

Thank you for agreeing to take part in this study. The questionnaire has only two sections. It is very important that you respond to **all the questions** in **BOTH** sections.

### Section 1 – Demographics

Please complete all fields in this section by ticking  ONE appropriate response under each category or writing your answer on the line provided.

First, indicate the district in which you live; Colombo  Kandy   
Matara  Nuwara Eliya

**1. Age**

\_\_\_\_\_

**2. Gender**

Male  Female

Transgender (specify) \_\_\_\_\_

Other (specify) \_\_\_\_\_

**3. Ethnicity**

Burgher/Eurasian

Malay  Moor

Sinhalese  Tamil

Other(specify) \_\_\_\_\_

**4. Religion**

Buddhism  Christianity

Hinduism  Islam

Other(specify) \_\_\_\_\_

**5. First Language**

English  Sinhalese

Tamil

Other(specify) \_\_\_\_\_

**6. Marital Status**

Divorced  Married

Single  Widowed

In a relationship

Other (specify) \_\_\_\_\_

**7. Highest level of education**

No formal education

Primary school

Secondary school

Professional qualification

University

Other (specify) \_\_\_\_\_

**8. Employment status**

In full time employment

In part-time employment

Internship

Self Employed full time

Self-employed part time

Unemployed and actively looking for work

Unemployed not looking for work

Unpaid volunteer

Retired

Other (specify) \_\_\_\_\_

**9. What is your current monthly income**

Below LKR 10,000

LKR 10,000 to 25,000

LKR 25,001 to 40,000

LKR 40,001 to 65,000

LKR 65,001 to 90,000

Above LKR 90,001

**10. Who are you physically and emotionally attracted to**

Male  Female

Neither  Both

Other(specify) \_\_\_\_\_

## Section 2 – Challenges and barriers you face

Please indicate your response with a  tick or by writing on the lines provided.

11a. In the last two (2) years, have you been;

- |   |                              |                             |
|---|------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| a. forced to behave/ engage in any activity that is against your wishes/ desires (e.g. choice of relationship, expressions, mannerisms) | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> |
| b. refused rented living accommodation:   | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> |
| c. refused entry to educational and personal development opportunities  | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> |
| d. had your employment terminated or asked/forced to resign   | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> |
| e. harassed/ discriminated against by the police  | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> |
| f. faced unfair treatment/ discriminated/ refused medical assistance  | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> |
| g. denied participation in religious/ cultural activities   | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> |
| h. stigmatized/ discriminated by your friends   | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> |
| i. faced physical/ verbal harassment/ abuse in public places  | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> |
| j. denied participation or faced discrimination/ harassment in other social or governmental environment ( <b>please specify</b> )       |                              |                             |

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11b. If you answered yes to **any of the above**, do you feel that this was because of your sexual orientation and/or gender identity and/or expression? Yes  No

If yes, please explain:

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---

---

12. Do you experience any of the following because of your sexual orientation or gender identity and/or gender expression?

- a. Sexual harassment
- b. Rejection from family and friends
- c. Physical violence
- d. Verbal harassment
- e. Other forms of discrimination or harassment (specify)

---

13. Tick as many of the below statements that you agree with.

Because of my sexual orientation and/or gender identity/expression, I believe that;

- a. I am abnormal
- b. I am "normal"
- c. I should be punished by law
- d. I should not be punished by law
- e. I am mentally ill
- f. I am not mentally ill
- g. I have committed a sin according to religion
- h. I have not committed a sin by "being who I am"
- i. I deserve to be treated unfairly and discriminated against
- j. I deserve to be treated equally and with respect and dignity
- k. I feel I will be able to live the way I want / come out if I am in a better economic position
- l. None of the above apply

**END**

Thank you, you have come to the end of the questionnaire.

## **Appendix B**

### **Quality Check Standards for the study**

#### **The questionnaire layout**

The questionnaire extends over four pages and has a consent form on the first page and two separate sections.

The consent form;

This form requests interviewers ID, district and date to be filled in by the interviewers themselves. If this section is not completed IN FULL; the questionnaire CANNOT enter the study.

The consent form explains to the interviewee what the study is about and require their consent for the information to be used by us as we require. To consent to this, interviewees MUST date the form in the space provided. If the form is not dated; the questionnaire CANNOT enter the study.

#### **Section 1**

This section collects demographical data about the interviewees. There is a total of ten data fields to be filled.

- a. **REJECT** any questionnaire that does not have “**AGE**” filled in – this could mean the respondent does not qualify for the survey
- b. If “ethnicity” is not filled, reject the questionnaire
- c. If “sexual orientation” is not filled, reject the questionnaire
- d. The questionnaire is still acceptable if any other field in this section except for the above three mentioned is not filled and **ALL other criteria are met**

#### **Section 2**

This section collects data about the challenges and barriers facing respondents. There is a total of four major data fields to fill.

11a. If any of the sub-fields under this have two responses for one statement, the data must be recorded as “no response”. The questionnaire is still ACCEPTABLE if ALL other criteria are met.

11b. If the interviewee responded yes to any of the sub data fields in 11a and didn't not respond to 11b, the data must be captured as “no response”. The questionnaire is still ACCEPTABLE if ALL other criteria are met.

13. If there are any contradicting responses, ex. A respondent has ticked both 13a and 13b; disregard both responses. Also, if the respondent ticked any of the responses in 13 including 13L; disregard ALL responses for 13. The questionnaire is still ACCEPTABLE if all other criteria are met.

#### **General**

Any data field not filled by interviewee where the questionnaire is NOT made UNACCEPTABLE; must be filled as “No response”.



## **Appendix C**

### **Confidentiality Agreement for Interviewers**

#### **Maintaining confidentiality of the interview process**

To the interviewer;

As an interviewer assigned by EQUAL GROUND in this research process for the named study above, you will have access to interviewees and confidential information. EQUAL GROUND considers the entire interview process to be confidential in nature; including any materials, questions or responses, comments, discussions, and recommendations made in connection with the interviews.

Because of the sensitivity of the research; you have an affirmative responsibility not to discuss or disclose any information relating to the interviews or the study to persons or parties who are not authorised by EQUAL GROUND, to be privy to such information. In accordance, your FULL cooperation in this matter will be highly appreciated.

Please sign the statement below indicating your agreement to keep, ALL matters relating to the study and the interviews confidential.

#### **Confidentiality agreement**

As an interviewer in this study and in accordance with the provisions of the study, I \_\_\_\_\_, agree to keep confidential, all matters relating to the interviews. I further agree not to discuss or disclose any information about the study itself, the interviewees, responses, comments, discussions or recommendations made during the interviews with persons or parties who are not authorised, by EQUAL GROUND, to be privy to such information. I will not record any personal identifying information about the interviewee on the questionnaire or otherwise.

I will ensure that the completed questionnaires are stored in a safe place and will carry out all instructions given to me by EQUAL GROUND on how to store, deliver or destroy any completed questionnaire.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date



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