



”I’m a very complex person with many identities that intersect...”

Experiences of foreign-origin sexual and gender minority individuals in Finland

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Queer migration?

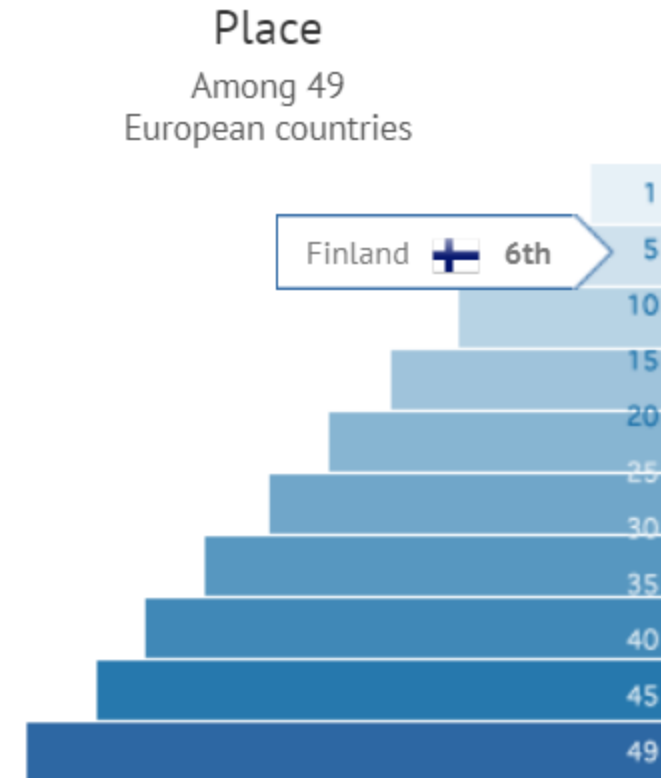
- cis-hetero migrants vs. queer citizens?
 - 1990s onwards → feminist scholarship challenging the heteronormative assumptions
 - queer migration in the Nordics is not new...
- How do we think about queer migration in Finland?
- What are the experiences and challenges of *minorities at the intersections*?

Queer identities...

- ...relate to the personal attributes of:
ethnicity, race or racialized identity, sex, sexual orientation, gender and gender identity, spirituality, age, (dis)ability
- ...are centered around family, studies, work, hobbies, etc.
- ...incorporate e.g., belief systems, interactions, and meanings that bind us together

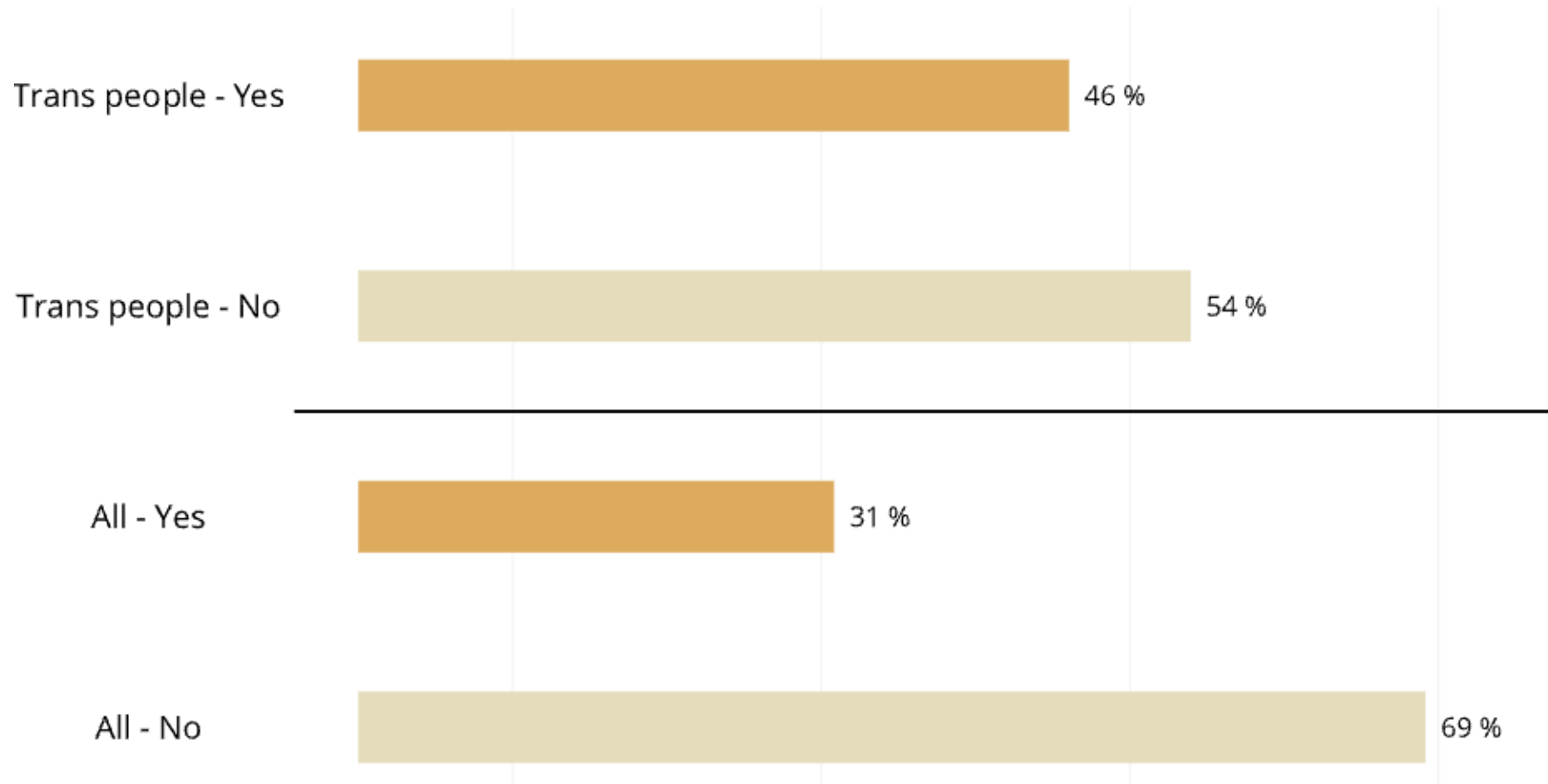
Is Finland a queer safe haven?

- The 2021 Rainbow Map and Index by ILGA:
6th among 49



Source: ILGA

In the past 12 months have you personally felt discriminated against due to being LGBTI in 8 areas* of life?



Source: EU FRA, LGBTI Survey II

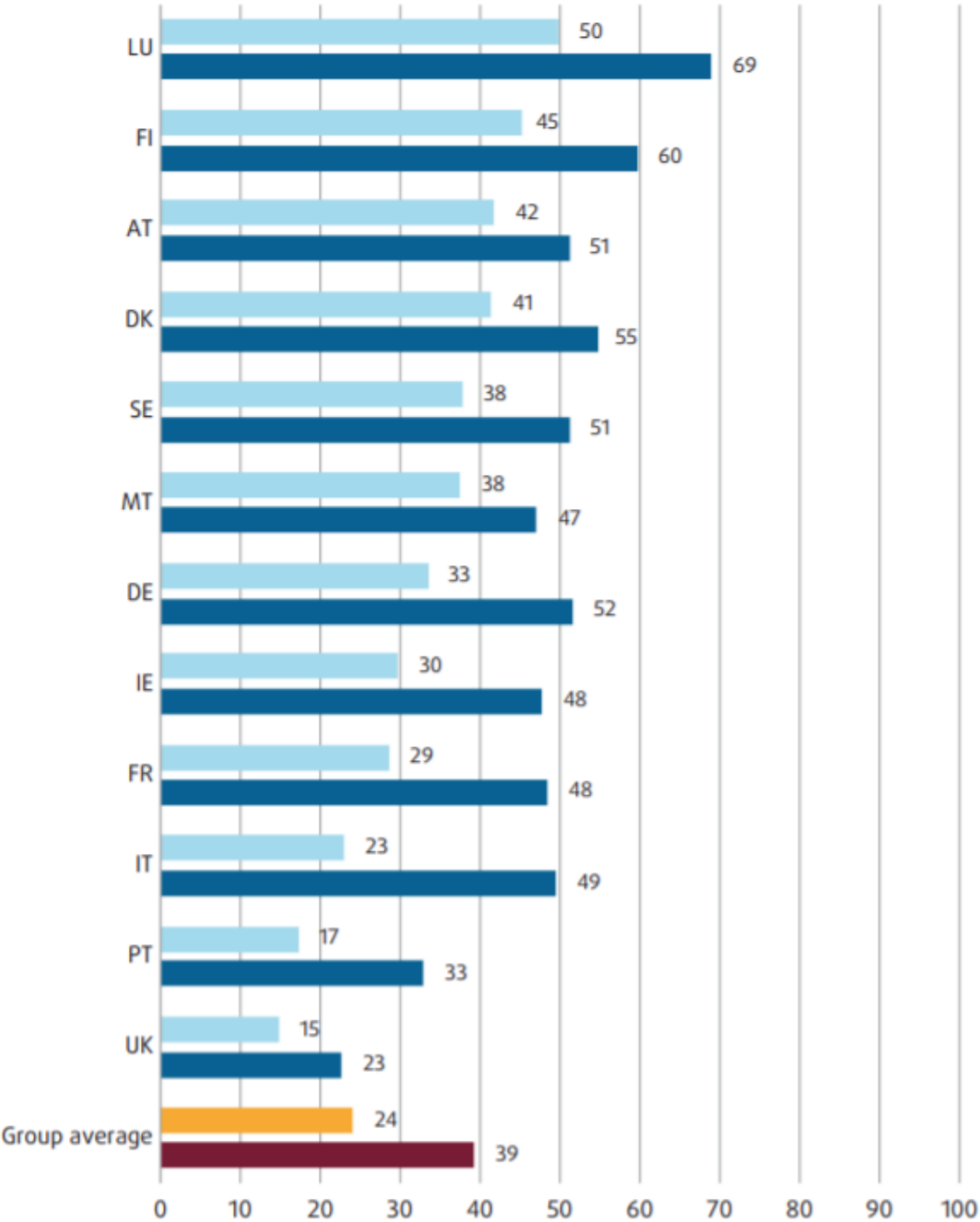
*The 8 areas include: looking for a job; at work; looking for housing; by healthcare or social services personnel; by school/university personnel; at a café, bar or nightclub; at a shop; when showing your ID or any official document that identifies your sex.

Overall prevalence of discrimination based on ‘ethnic or immigrant background’ in 12 months and 5 years before the survey, by country (%) *

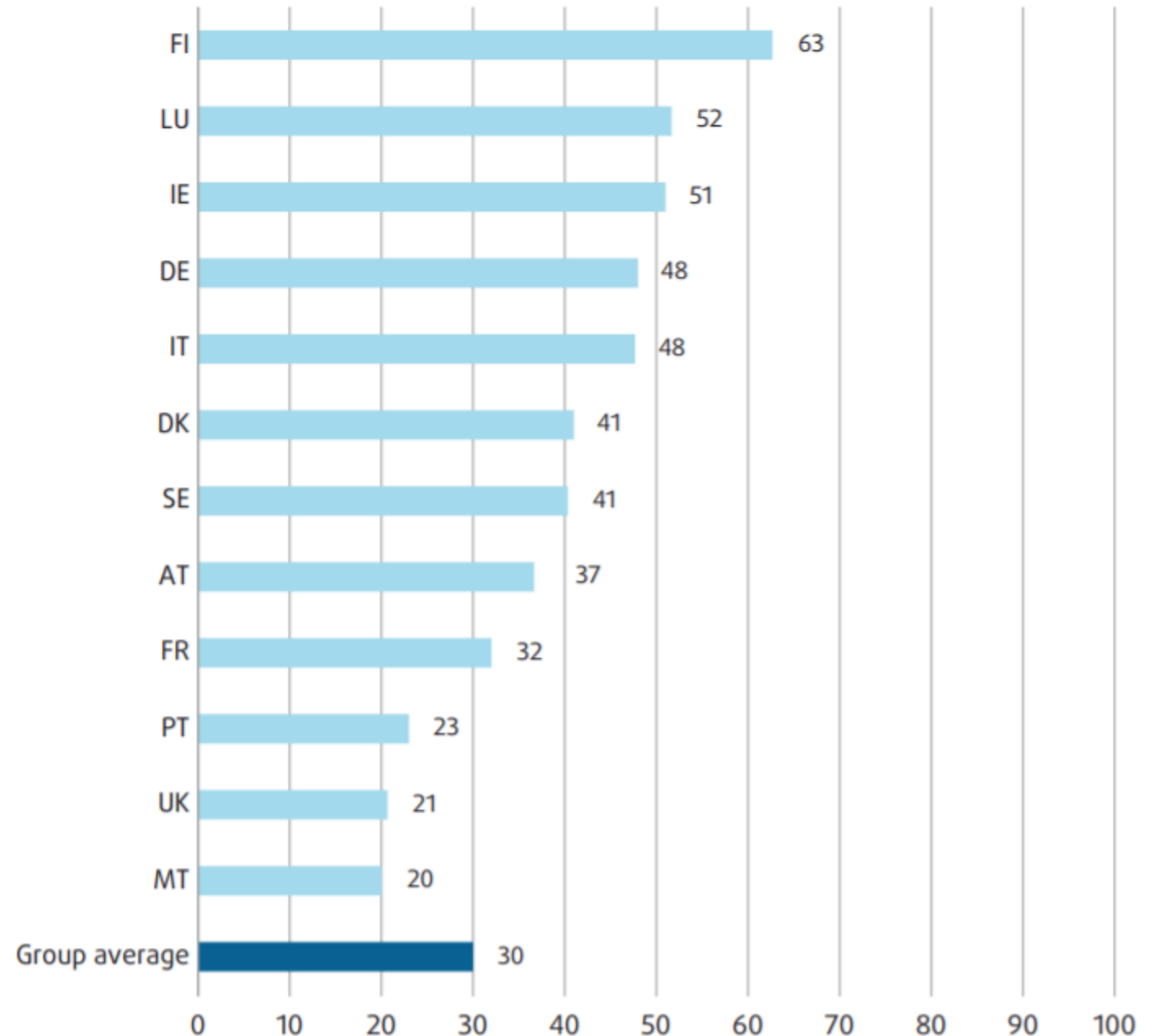
■ In the 12 months before the survey
■ In the 5 years before the survey

*Areas of life asked about in the survey: looking for work, at work, education (self or as parent), health, housing and other public or private services (public administration, restaurant or bar, public transport, shop) - health and health care were asked about only for the past 12 months.

Source: FRA, EU-MIDIS II 2016



Prevalence of perceived racist harassment in 5 years before the survey, by country (%)



Source: FRA, EU-MIDIS II 2016

Methods & theoretical framework

- participatory research
- intersectionality
- focus group interviews (n=8) with participants such as Helsinki Pride Community, Loisto Settlement, Seta, Anti-Racist Forum
- individual interviews (n=40) with voluntary migrants, involuntary migrants, individuals of "foreign backgrounds"

Results

Individual interviews:

- Queer asylum seekers and refugees
- Discrimination, microaggressions, and exclusion
- Health and wellbeing
- Religion

Focus group interviews:

- Recommendations



Discrimination, microaggressions, and exclusion

Experiences of microaggressions

- racial, ethnic microaggressions (regardless of the migration background)
- differentiation between certain migrants in Finland → migrant hierarchy
- systemic, environmental microaggressions (e.g. gendered restrooms, social and health providers lacking experience, etc.)

There was a nurse who said that they [the nurses] have been quarrelling about who would have the rights to work the days I am there. I was considered problematic because I am trans, I guess. I said “Okay, that's interesting,” like [they told] “we have never had a transgender patient here, you are the first transgender person I have even met!” It felt like in a zoo!

Discrimination, microaggressions, and exclusion

Overt discrimination on multiple grounds

- racial, ethnic microaggressions (regardless of the migration background)
- differentiation between certain migrants in Finland → migrant hierarchy
- systemic, environmental microaggressions (e.g. gendered restrooms, social and health providers lacking experience, etc.)

...I was doing my laundry [in a public laundromat]. There was an old lady, and she just started talking to me. [...] she started asking me where I am from, and then she started talking about how foreigners come and take the money, and they don't pay taxes, and Finland spends money on them. And I told her that I work, that I have work, and she just didn't believe me! She said I was lying, and she kept going on and on and on, and I was like...oh my God...

Discrimination, microaggressions, and exclusion

(Self-)constructed bubbles

- feelings of exclusion in- and outside Finnish "queer circles"
- feelings of not being welcome
- language boundary (bureaucracy, media, casual discussions, etc.)

...most people who come in [to Finland] from outside do the same, I guess...just make their bubbles because you have can have the least interaction possible with anybody who's from here. Like they don't really want to hang out. I managed to create my bubble every time I came here, I created my bubble and I have like my group of friends, and I have my activities even start businesses or whatever, like it's been working that way [...] it's like every time you meet somebody from here [from Finland] you have to give your life story. I'm a very complex person with many identities that intersect. So, meeting a person is like going through an audition, to see what parts they are OK with which parts they are not, and also, it's exhausting to put the time that it that it takes to present yourself into everything...

Recommendations

- Employment (e.g., implementing diversity enhancing recruitment processes)
- Healthcare and social services (e.g., strengthening the knowledge of health and social service professionals in relation to cultural diversity, or SOGIE)
- Trans rights (e.g., developing the trans law and gender-affirming healthcare)
- Immigration services (e.g., strengthening the immigration officers' and reception center personnel' about SOGIE)

Recommendations

- Police (e.g., introducing further measures of protection for victims of forms of abuse and e.g., honor-related violence, forced marriages, conversion practices, etc.)
- Religion (e.g., the harmful effects SOGIECE should be recognized and banned)
- Language (e.g., information in simplified languages, further training of professional interpreters)
- Research (e.g., research should account for SOGIE-related matters, and intersectionality)

Publications

- Czimbalmos, Mercédesz and Shadia Rask. 2022. (Dis)advantaged positions in accessing gender-affirming healthcare in Finland: an intersectional qualitative study of foreign-origin transgender people. *BMC Health Services Research* 22: 1287. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12913-022-08654-3>
- Czimbalmos, Mercédesz and Shadia Rask. 2022. *Sexual and Gender Minorities Among Foreign-Origin Populations in Finland*. An intersectional analysis. Report 10/2022. The Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare (THL). <http://urn.fi/URN:ISBN:978-952-343-912-2>
- Czimbalmos, Mercédesz, Sanna Nykänen, Hülya Yüksel, and Shadia Rask. 2021. “Health Service Experiences of the Foreign Origin SGMs in Finland: An Intersectional Analysis.” *European Journal of Public Health* 31, Supplement 3. <https://dx.doi.org/10.1093/eurpub/ckab164.876>.
- Czimbalmos, Mercédesz and Shadia Rask. 2022 (forthcoming). “Health Service Experiences of Transgender Individuals from Foreign Backgrounds in Finland.” *European Journal of Public Health* X. Supplement X.



Illustrations by Mire Mroué
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Thank you!

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