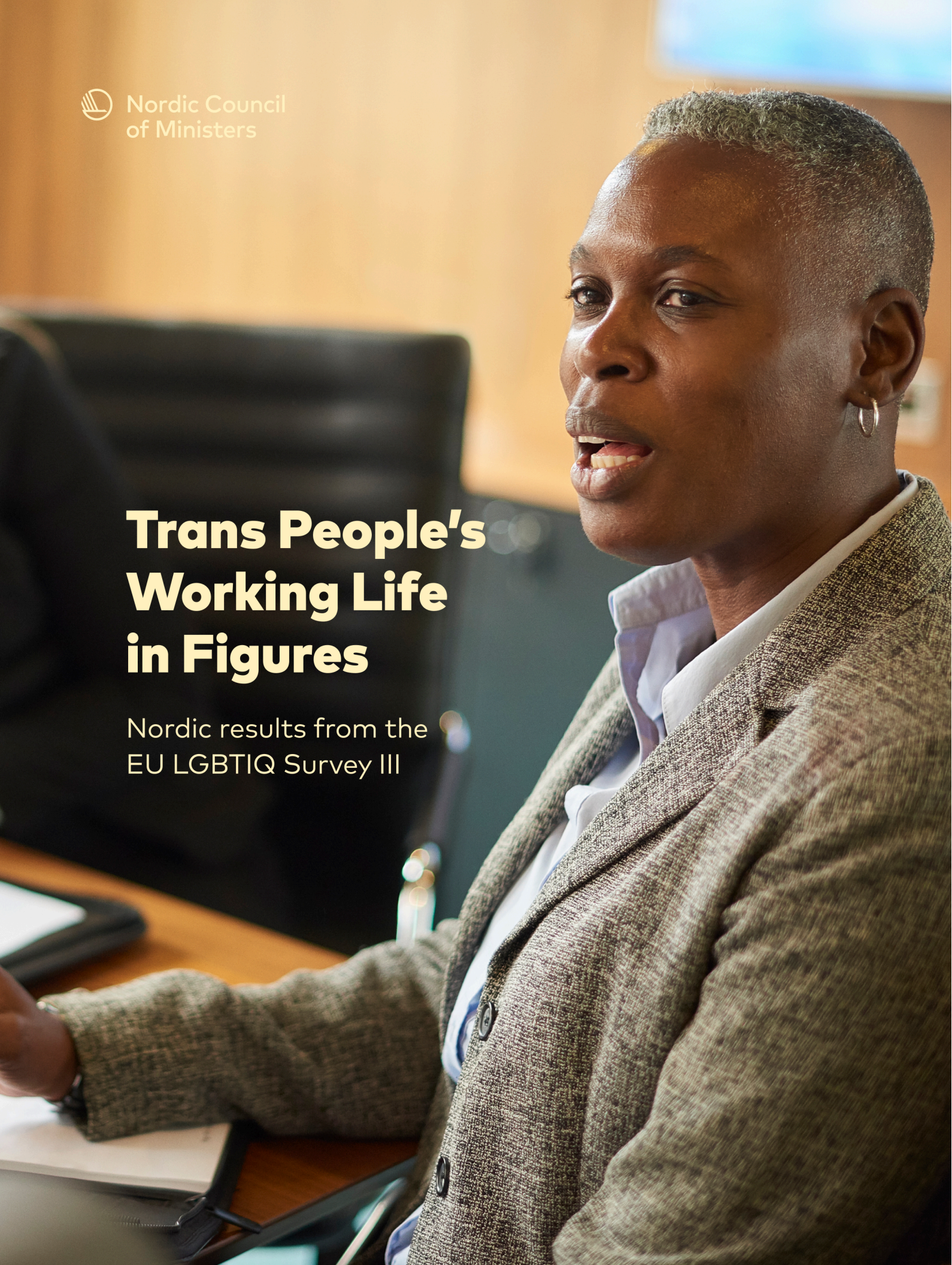




Nordic Council  
of Ministers

# **Trans People's Working Life in Figures**

Nordic results from the  
EU LGBTIQ Survey III





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This publication is also available online in a web-accessible version at:  
<https://pub.norden.org/nord2025-019>



# Results in brief

- Trans people are more likely to be unemployed than LGB people and the majority population. There is also a high proportion of trans people in the survey who report being outside the labour force due to long-term health problems. These figures are significantly higher among trans people who also belong to another minority group, the largest group in the survey being trans people with disabilities followed by trans people with migrant or ethnic minority backgrounds.
- Exclusion from the labour market can have serious economic consequences. Many of the trans respondents in the Nordic countries have experienced severe economic vulnerability, such as homelessness. In Sweden, 38% of trans women surveyed have experienced some form of homelessness, one of the highest rates across the EU in this category. Another alarming finding is that 10–22% of young trans people in Denmark, Finland and Sweden have experienced homelessness.
- Many trans people have experienced discrimination in recruitment processes. Among trans women, 22–33% of the respondents stated that they felt discriminated against when looking for work.
- About 90% of trans women, trans men and non-binary trans people in Denmark, Finland and Sweden said they did not report the most recent incident of discrimination they experienced. The most common reasons for this were feeling that nothing would come from reporting the incident, that it was not worth the time or that they would not be taken seriously.
- A high percentage of trans respondents have experienced general negative attitudes towards LGBTIQ people at work in the past 5 years. Non-binary trans people stand out in particular. In the included Nordic countries, 66–80% of the non-binary respondents state that they have experienced negative attitudes towards LGBTIQ people at work.
- The overwhelming majority of trans respondents have in some way hidden or disguised their trans identity at work. This was slightly more common among non-binary trans people and trans men than trans women. In several of the groups, up to 80% of respondents stated that they had hidden or disguised their trans identity in some way.



# Key messages

- Policymakers should develop measures aimed at making conditions more inclusive for trans people in working life. Targeted support measures for trans people outside the labour market are needed, as well as specific measures for young trans people. Policy measures to improve conditions in related areas, such as housing and health care, are also needed.
- Labour market actors, employers and trade unions have significant responsibility to improve conditions for trans people in Nordic workplaces. This goes for both recruitment processes and work environments.
- Workplace culture is a crucial risk and health factor for trans people in work environments. The results show that labour market actors, not least employers, have important work to do with regard to attitudes and workplace culture to create more inclusive workplaces.
- Workplace policies must be established before it is known that an employee is trans. It is important to create a positive work environment for openly trans people, as well as those who are not openly trans. There are trans people throughout society, so it should always be assumed that a trans person might be listening. In addition, workplaces may include parents, siblings, children, and partners of trans people, who are also affected by negative rhetoric.
- Anti-discrimination ombudsmen and other equality bodies should further analyse the low rates of reporting in cases of discrimination and the reasons for this.
- More knowledge is needed about conditions for different groups under the trans umbrella. Neither the FRA survey design nor previous Nordic surveys allow for more elaborate intersectional analyses of trans people's experiences. More extensive knowledge about trans people with disabilities, migrant trans people and trans people with ethnic minority backgrounds, as well as other groups and intersections, is needed.



# Glossary

## Binary trans person

Collective term for experiencing oneself as being a woman or a man and being trans. Binary refers to something that is divided into, composed of, or related to two parts, and in this context refers to the division of people into two sexes, women, or men. A binary trans person does not identify with the legal gender they were assigned at birth but identifies as either a woman or man. The terms *trans woman* and *trans man* are often used.

## Cis person

A person whose gender identity corresponds to the (legal) gender they were assigned at birth. In simple terms, a cis person is someone who is not trans. The term was created to describe the norm. The word 'cis' is Latin and means 'on this side of'.

## LGBTI

LGBTI is an abbreviation for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, and Intersex. Following a decision by the Nordic Ministers for Gender Equality and LGBTI, the term is used in official Nordic cooperation.

## Non-binary person

A person who experiences being neither a woman nor a man. There are many ways people experience being non-binary, for example being both man and woman or being in-between or moving fluidly between man and woman; others experience being a third gender or completely beyond gender categories. Many non-binary people see themselves as trans, but not all do. Gender diverse is a related term used to refer to multiple types of gender identities that fall outside cisgender and binary understandings of gender. In the referenced data in this publication results for non-binary and gender-diverse people are presented together.

## Trans person

An umbrella term for various individuals who experience that the legal gender they were assigned at birth does not match their gender identity and/or gender expression. The term includes both binary and non-binary gender identities.





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# Introduction

In the Nordic countries, as in the rest of the world, the living conditions of many LGBTI people are worse than those of the majority population. Trans people are a particularly vulnerable group who face various obstacles in life, not least working life. Prejudice and poor treatment affect recruitment processes, working environments and opportunities for career development. These conditions, characterised by significant barriers, can have serious consequences for trans people's financial situation, quality of life and health. This publication summarises data on the working life conditions of trans people in the Nordic countries produced by the European Union Agency for Human Rights (FRA). In 2024, FRA published the third edition of the *EU LGBTIQ Survey*, one of the largest surveys on the conditions faced by LGBTIQ people. The abbreviation LGBTI is used in official Nordic cooperation, following a decision by the Nordic Ministers for Gender Equality and LGBTI, and hence this abbreviation is used here in general. LGBTIQ is the abbreviation for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, Intersex and Queer. This abbreviation is used by FRA in the survey and in this publication when referring to the survey results.

Overall, the findings show that LGBTIQ people, and in particular trans and intersex people, continue to face hate-motivated violence, direct and indirect discrimination, and other forms of victimisation, despite legal protections. At the same time, the findings also show signs of progress on some indicators of openness and safety. For example, fewer LGBTQI people than before report avoiding certain places out of fear or avoiding holding hands with a partner in public (FRA, 2024).

The purpose of this publication is to specifically highlight the study's findings on the conditions of trans people in relation to working life in Denmark, Finland, and Sweden. These are the three Nordic countries included in the survey. Additional insights are also provided into national studies in the field from Iceland and Norway.

Previous reports by NIKK show the need to shed further light on how working life conditions are linked to other living conditions, and the possible consequences for health, housing, and other conditions for living a safe and decent life. It is also shown that it is important to highlight differences and variations within the trans group, as well as to show how specific gender identities affect trans people's experiences in working life.

This publication therefore presents separate data for trans women, trans men and non-binary/gender diverse people as groups. Particular attention is also paid to examining in more detail the conditions of groups that are known from previous research to be particularly vulnerable, such as young trans people and trans people who belong to at least one other minority group, for example those with migrant backgrounds or disabilities.

This publication has been produced by Nordic Information on Gender (NIKK), a Nordic co-operation body under the Nordic Council of Ministers. NIKK collects, disseminates, and analyses knowledge about policy and practice, data and research in the field of gender equality and LGBTI rights with a Nordic and cross-sectoral perspective.



# About EU LGBTIQ Survey III

The EU LGBTIQ Survey III is the third survey on the conditions of LGBTIQ people in the EU, conducted by the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA). The two previous surveys were conducted in 2012 and 2019 respectively. The survey is the largest ever conducted on the conditions of LGBTIQ people in the EU, and one of the largest globally. In total, 100,577 LGBTIQ people aged 15 and over from across Europe responded to a wide range of questions about their living conditions. The EU LGBTIQ Survey III aims to present comparable data on the living conditions and perceptions of LGBTIQ people and the extent to which they enjoy fundamental rights in the EU and the candidate countries Albania, North Macedonia, and Serbia. Below is the number of respondents for each group of trans people in the survey from the three Nordic countries included in the study. Sometimes the groups of trans people are compared to the overall LGBTIQ group; therefore the total number of respondents in these groups is also reported. The data in the EU LGBTIQ Survey III is weighted to account for differences in the estimated size of each LGBTIQ group for each survey country and age group. This is done based on information on the LGBTIQ population from previous LGBTIQ surveys conducted by different institutions and organisations in the EU. Data is also weighted to account for respondents' affiliation with LGBTIQ organisations and their participation in other LGBTIQ surveys (FRA, 2024).

Many trans people in the various groups report also belonging to another minority group. Here the patterns differ between countries. In Denmark and Sweden, 49–71% of trans respondents also belong to another minority, while in Finland the corresponding figure is 32–47%. Among trans people who belong to another minority, the largest group by far is those with a disability. Between 29 and 48% of the various groups of trans people in Denmark and Sweden report having a disability. In Finland, the corresponding proportion is 14–17% for the various groups of trans people. The second largest minority group is those with a migrant background and/or who belong to an ethnic minority. Between 7 and 15% of trans respondents in Sweden and Denmark report belonging to an ethnic minority or having a migrant background; the corresponding figure in Finland is 4–6%.

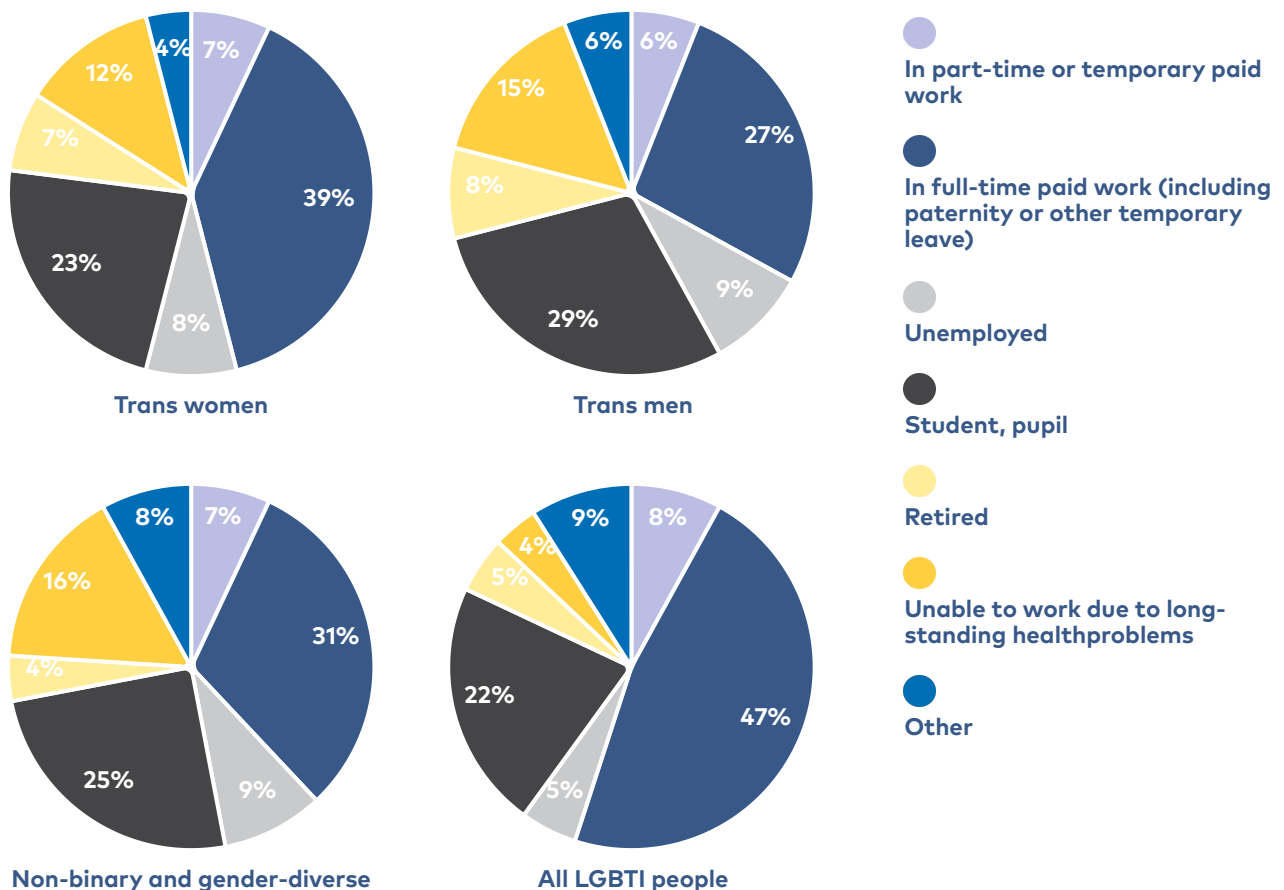
Country	Number of respondents identifying as trans women	Number of respondents identifying as trans men	Number of respondents identifying as non-binary or gender diverse	Total number of respondents identifying as LGBTIQ
Denmark	125	121	441	2,217
Finland	306	758	2,238	8,597
Sweden	343	298	788	3,162

# What are the conditions for trans people in the labour market?

Conditions for trans people in the labour market are worse than those of cis people in a number of ways. The various aspects of working life conditions described show that exclusionary practices, such as discrimination and a negative, transphobic climate, are common obstacles to a safe and fulfilling working life. This is true both when searching for a job and in workplace environments.

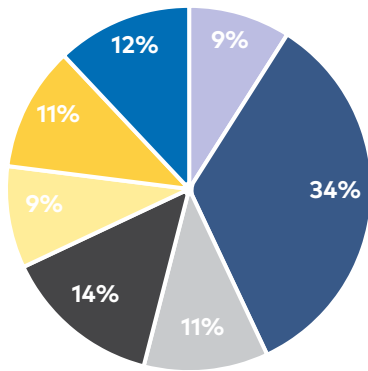
## Employment status

### DENMARK

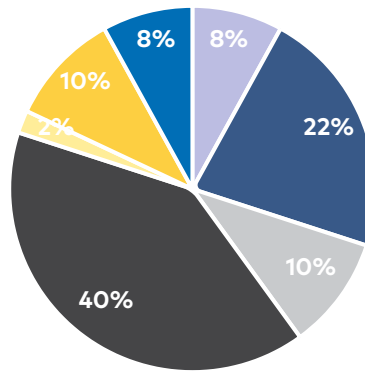




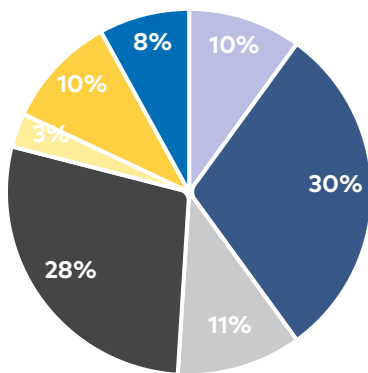
## FINLAND



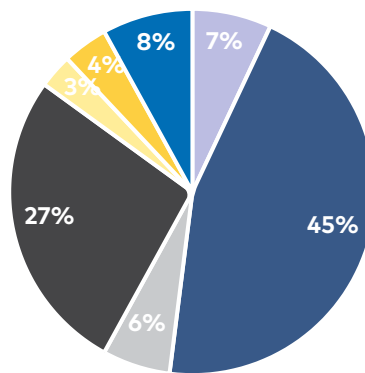
Trans women



Trans men

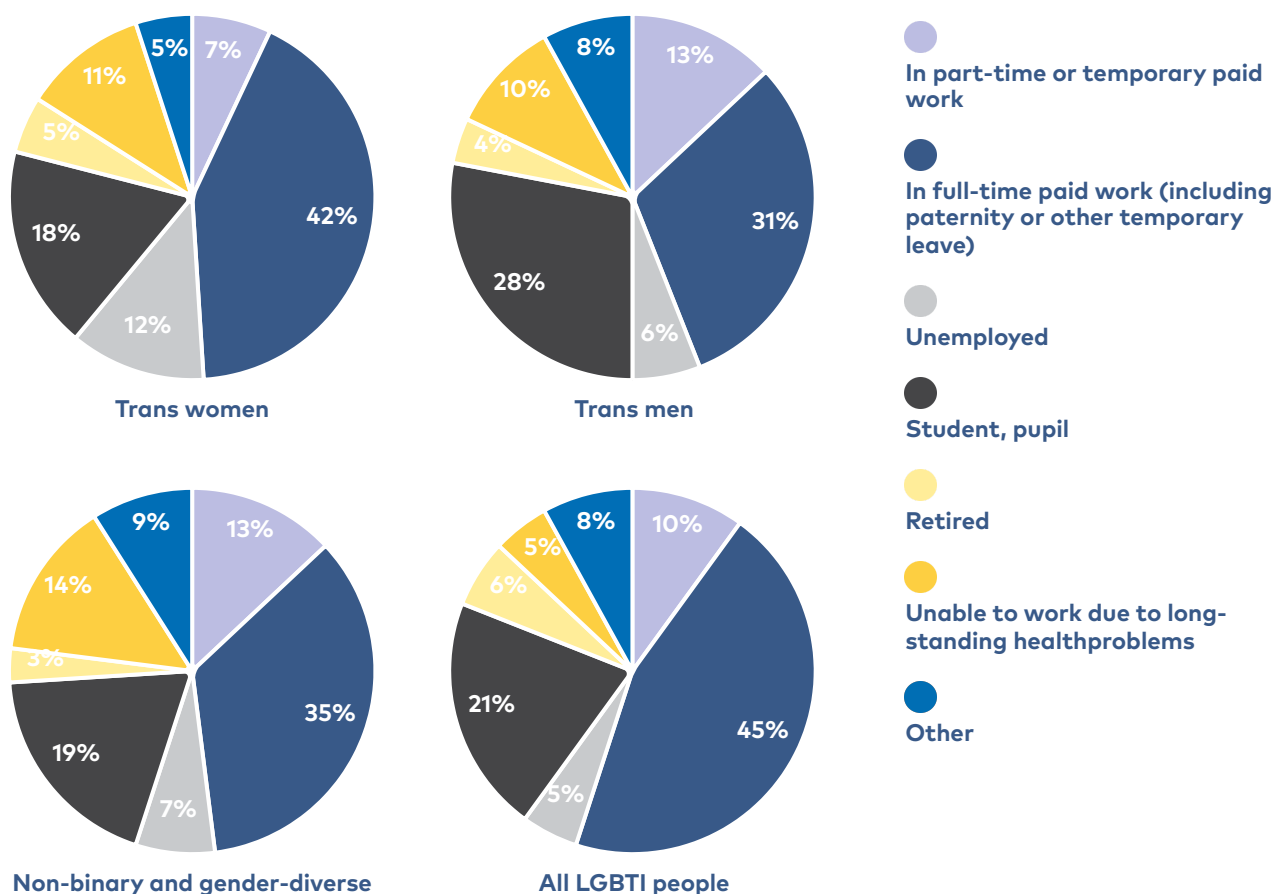


Non-binary and gender-diverse



All LGBTI people





**Figure 1** Which of the following best describes your employment status?

The vast majority of respondents reported that they are currently working or studying. A particular feature of the trans group is the high proportion of those who report being outside the labour force due to long-term health problems. The pattern is the same in all countries and across all three groups of trans people. Among those who belong to another minority, where the largest minority group in the survey is trans people with disabilities, these figures are significantly higher than for those who do not belong to a minority group.

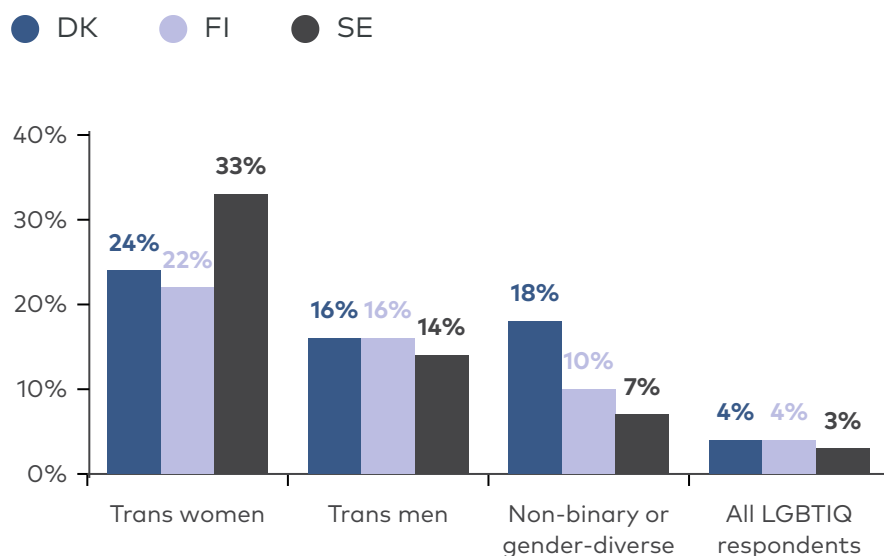
In all countries, the proportion of trans people who are unemployed is high in relation to the LGBTIQ group as a whole. Trans people are also significantly less likely to work full time than the LGBTIQ group in general. Trans men and non-binary people are less likely to work full time than trans women. In some cases, but not all, the figures show that respondents in these groups are more likely to instead work part time. For readability, options where the largest group is less than 7% are summarised as 'Other' in the figures. These options include self-employed; unpaid or voluntary work; fulfilling domestic tasks; compulsory military or civilian service and other, where 'self-employed' is the largest group.

## Discrimination

Previous international as well as Nordic research shows that trans people are discriminated against in the labour market, both in recruitment processes and in the workplace. Studies reveal severe consequences of discrimination, negative attitudes and microaggressions, including emotional exhaustion, lower work engagement and stress. They also show that trans people do not want to be open about their gender identity for fear that it will negatively affect their career or choose to downplay aspects of their gender identity in environments where they are at risk of discrimination (Eriksson et al., 2022).

The EU LGBTIQ Survey III measures self-perceived discrimination in recruitment and in the workplace through the following questions: 'In the past 12 months have you ever felt discriminated against due to being LGBTIQ when looking for a job?' and 'In the past 12 months have you ever felt discriminated against due to being LGBTIQ when at work?'

### Respondents who felt discriminated in the past 12 months when looking for work



**Figure 2** In the past 12 months have you ever felt discriminated against due to being LGBTIQ when looking for a job?

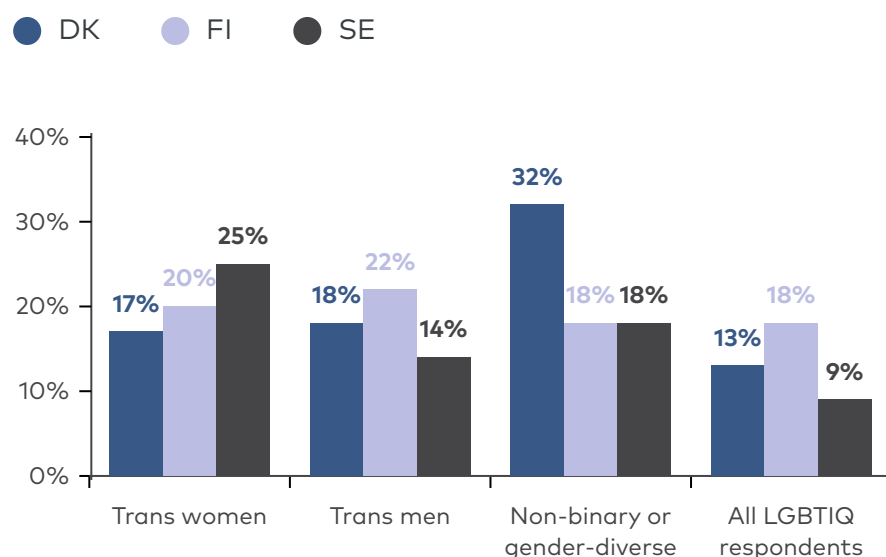
Among the trans group as a whole, the experience of being discriminated against in recruitment processes is very common. This is especially true among trans women respondents, 22–33% of whom have experienced discrimination in recruitment processes in the past year. Even among trans men and non-binary/gender-diverse trans respondents, this is a relatively common experience.



## Intersectional discrimination leaves some people particularly vulnerable

Among those who state that they also belong to another minority, in addition to being trans, a higher proportion state having experienced discrimination in recruitment. These groups are subject to several forms of discrimination and marginalisation based on, for example, racism, homophobia, and ableism. While the responses vary across countries and groups, similar patterns can be seen throughout. Among respondents belonging to at least one other minority, 4–16% more people in each group report experiencing discrimination in recruitment processes, compared to the trans group as a whole. Previously published findings show that it is common for people in this group not to know exactly on which grounds they are being discriminated against. Discrimination may also occur based on intersections of multiple grounds of discrimination under the law, rather than on the basis of individual grounds of discrimination.

### Respondents who felt discriminated in the past 12 months at work



**Figure 3** In the past 12 months have you ever felt discriminated against due to being LGBTIQ when at work?

A large proportion of trans people have experienced discrimination in their workplace in the past year. The patterns between the different groups of trans people are relatively similar, although non-binary trans people in Denmark stand out as a group in particular, with over 30% of respondents reporting experiencing workplace discrimination. Discrimination in the workplace is a more common experience among trans people than the LGBTIQ group as a whole.

Among trans people who also belong to another minority, a slightly higher proportion had experienced discrimination than across the groups as a whole. However, trans men who also belong to another minority in Finland stand out in particular, with 39% stating that they had been discriminated against at work in the past year, compared to 22% of trans men overall in Finland.

## **Reporting discrimination**

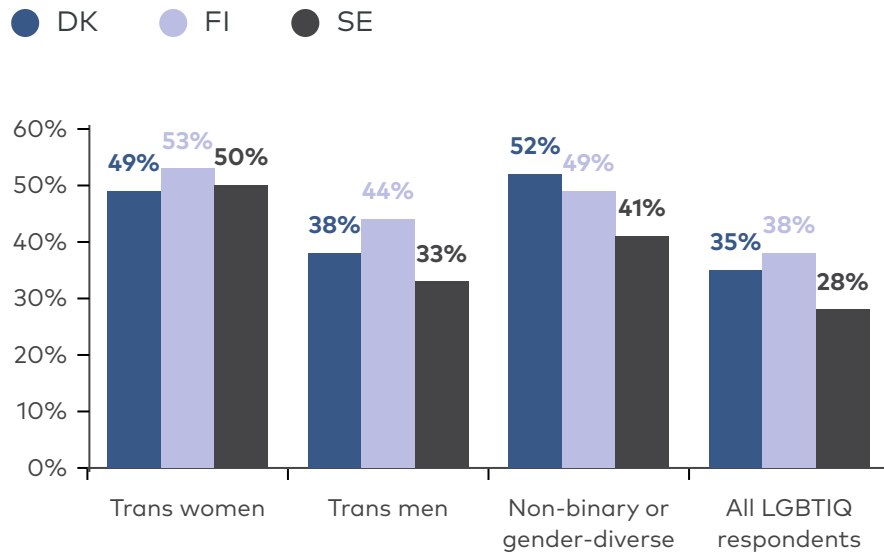
About 90% of trans women, trans men and non-binary trans respondents in the three Nordic countries stated that they had not reported the most recent incident of discrimination they experienced. Of those who had reported the discrimination, most reported it to their employer, followed by the venue where the discrimination occurred. A smaller proportion reported the incident to their trade union.

Among the large group that did not report discrimination, the most common reasons given were that they felt that nothing would happen as a result, it was not worth the time or that they would not be taken seriously. Multiple responses could be given in answer to these questions. A relatively large group, about a third, said that they did not trust authorities. Between 20 and 25% said they did not know how or where to report discrimination, and an equal number said they were too traumatised, stressed or annoyed to take the incident further.

## **Negative experiences at work**

Many trans people have experienced negative treatment in the workplace, such as negative comments and misgendering. Previous research shows that negative comments and other so-called microaggressions, i.e. subtle negative behaviours, such as looks and comments that reflect lack of understanding or prejudice, can lead to reduced work engagement and workplace stress. This also applies to negative comments and jokes about trans and LGB people in general, not necessarily directed at an individual. Among people who are not open in the workplace, it can also be difficult to challenge disrespectful behaviour and homophobic and transphobic comments for fear of 'being exposed' (Lehtonen, 2016).

### Respondents who experienced negative comments or conduct at work because of being LGBTI

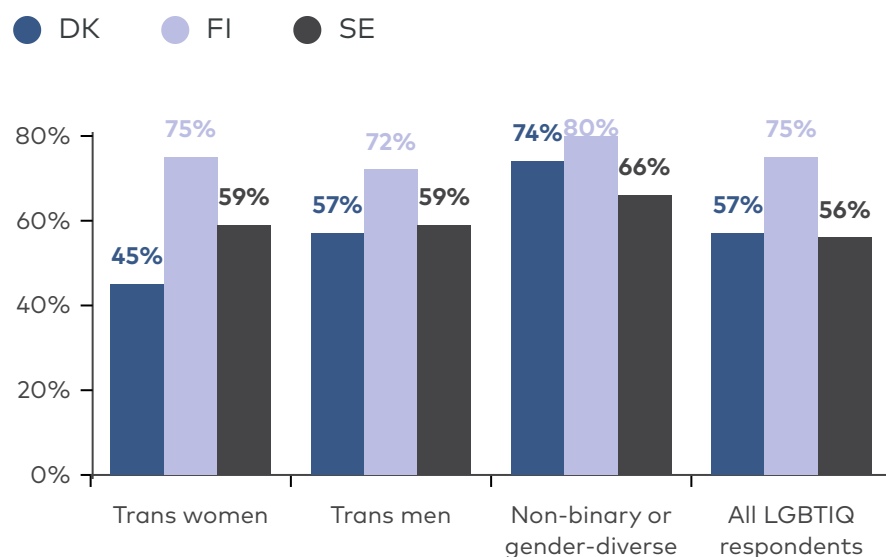


**Figure 4** In the past 5 years have you experienced negative comments or conduct at work because you are LGBTIQ?

The EU LGBTIQ Survey III asked respondents whether they had experienced negative comments or treatment at work in the last five years due to being LGBTIQ. The response options were 'never', 'rarely', 'often' and 'always'. Here, the proportion of respondents who had experienced negative comments or treatment at work in the last five years has been combined, i.e. all except those who answered 'never'. A high proportion of respondents have experienced negative experiences among all trans groups. Trans women and non-binary/gender-diverse people stand out in particular, with over 50% of respondents having had these experiences in several cases.



## Respondents who experienced a general negative attitude at work against LGBTI



**Figure 5** In the past 5 years have you experienced a general negative attitude at work against people because they are lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and/or intersex?

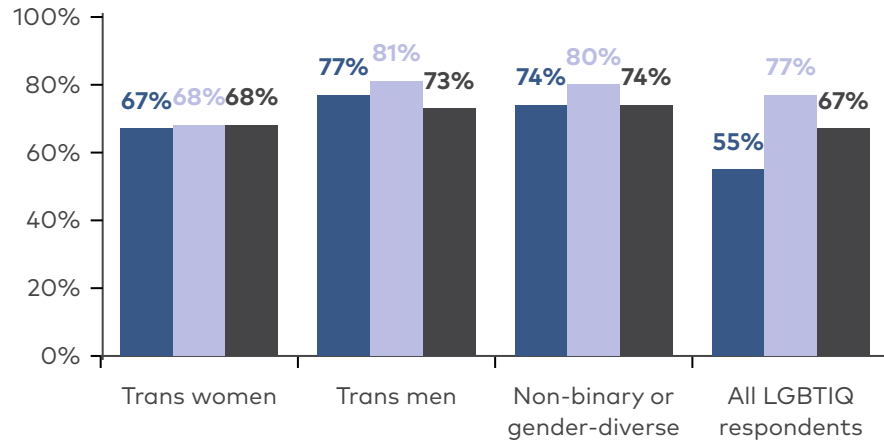
The EU LGBTIQ Survey III examines general negative attitudes towards trans and other LGBTI people. When asked if respondents had experienced a generally negative attitude in the workplace towards people who are LGBTIQ in the last 5 years, a large majority answered yes. Non-binary trans people stand out in particular, with 66–80% of non-binary respondents saying they have experienced negative attitudes towards LGBTIQ people at work.

## Openness in the workplace

Previous research indicates that there is generally a link between being able to be open in the workplace and well-being and job satisfaction. The association between openness and well-being at work applies to trans people as well as the rest of the LGBTI group. Studies whose findings did not associate openness with positive health outcomes showed an interaction with risks of exposure to discrimination and harassment (Eriksson et al., 2022).

### Respondents who have been hiding or disguising being LGBTI from people at work

DK FI SE



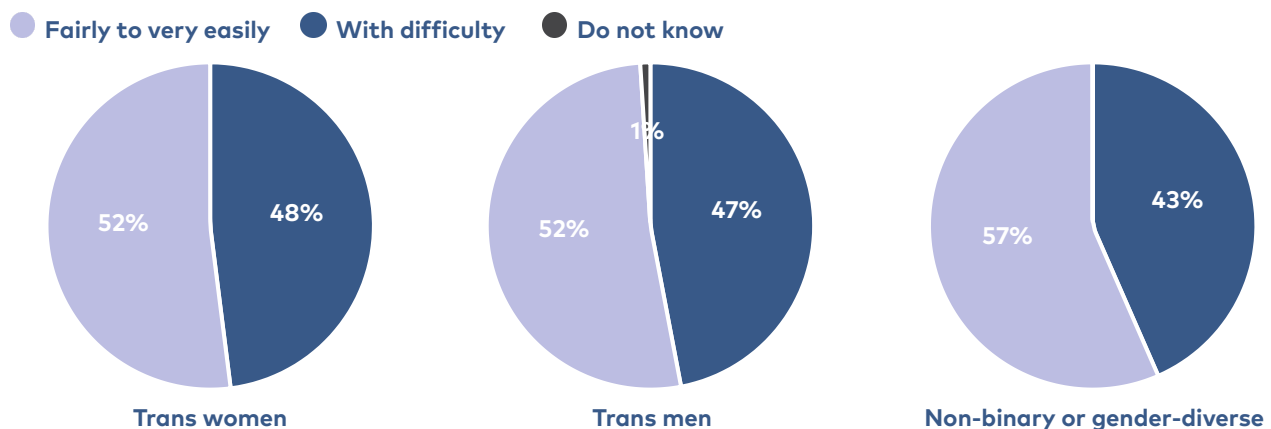
**Figure 6** In the past 5 years have you hidden or disguised that you are LGBTIQ from people you meet at work?

An overwhelming majority of trans respondents have in some way hidden their trans identity at work. In several of the groups, up to 80% of respondents stated that they had hidden their trans identity in some way. Hiding that one belongs to the LGBTIQ group is also a common experience for the LGBTIQ respondents in general.

# Consequences for life and finances

Work and life conditions are always closely linked. The results of the EU LGBTIQ Survey III indicate that trans people are more likely than the majority population to experience difficulties earning a living and being at risk of or living in poverty and economic vulnerability. This picture is also reflected in previous Nordic findings on the overrepresentation of trans people in terms of unemployment, exposure to discrimination (including in recruitment), health problems that affect work ability and poor employment conditions, such as precarious employment and low pay (Young Håkansson, 2024).

## All respondents financial situation in terms of making ends meet

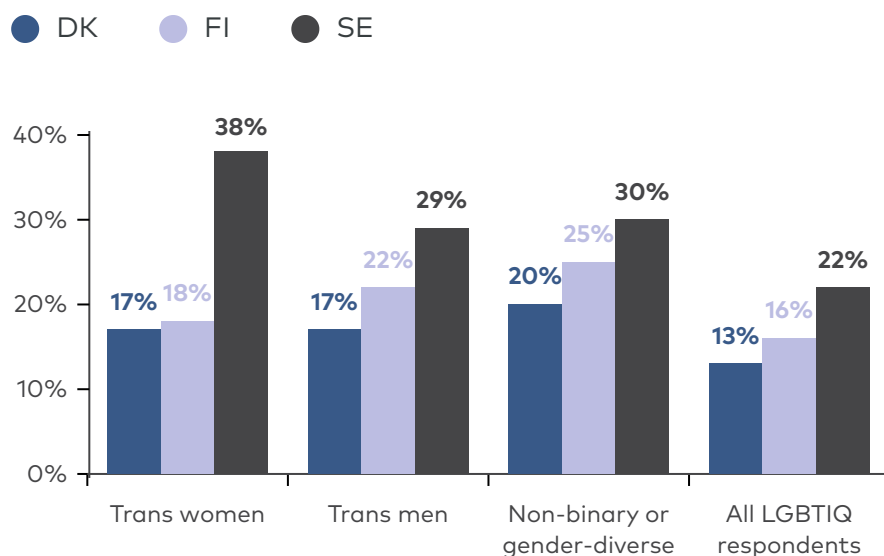


**Figure 7** Making ends meet. Answers from EU.

The EU LGBTI Survey III uses the measure 'making ends meet', with a scale ranging from 'fairly to very easily', 'with some difficulty', 'with difficulty' to 'with great difficulty'. The measure is used as a background variable of a respondent's financial situation. The results show that a large proportion of trans people, almost half of respondents, across the EU only make ends meet with some degree of difficulty. In comparison, 30–35% of cis men and women belonging to sexual minorities (LGB) in the survey stated that they make ends meet with some degree of difficulty.



## Respondents who have experienced housing difficulties



**Figure 8** Have you ever experienced any of the following housing difficulties? Respondents were able to choose multiple options.

Many of the trans respondents in the Nordic countries have experienced severe economic vulnerability, such as homelessness. Different forms of homelessness include having to 'sleep rough' or sleep in a public place, stay with a friend or relative, stay in a place not intended as a permanent home or in emergency or temporary accommodation. Sweden stands out in particular, where 29–38% of trans women, trans men and non-binary trans people have experienced some form of homelessness, one of the highest rates across EU countries. The EU average is 17–19% across the different groups. Among trans people who also belong to another minority, the percentage is slightly higher for each group. It is also alarming that 10–22% of young trans people, aged 18–24, across the different groups and in the three Nordic countries have experienced homelessness.

In Denmark and Finland, those who had experienced homelessness reported that this period lasted about 6–10 months, depending on the trans group, and in Sweden the period was about 10–13 months. The most common reasons stated for homelessness were financial problems and insufficient income or unemployment, followed by family and relationship problems, and health problems.

# Knowledge about trans people's working life conditions from Norway and Iceland

Norway and Iceland are not included in the EU LGBTIQ Survey. However, knowledge about trans people's working life conditions in these countries has been produced in recent years. In this section, two reports are summarised briefly. The full reports are only available in Norwegian and Icelandic.

The report *"Jeg vil ikke ha oppmerksomhet, men jeg vil ikke være usynlig"* (I don't want attention, but I don't want to be invisible) investigates the experiences of trans people and people with gender incongruence in working life (Lundberg et al., 2024). The study maps experiences of openness, transition, discrimination and challenges and measures for inclusion among employers. It is based on interviews with trans people, HR staff, managers, and union representatives, who all work in the area of state agreement. The Labour Research Institute and the Department of Social Sciences at OsloMet produced the report on behalf of the Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development (KDD).

The study shows that openness in the workplace can both be a source of support and present a risk of discrimination. Many informants chose to be open for their own mental health, feeling that this was their only choice, but the timing and way in which they came out at work varied. In some cases, supportive managers and colleagues facilitated the process, while some informants were met with silence or negative reactions. Several informants reported harassment and a lack of understanding from managers and colleagues, including repeated use of the incorrect pronouns and intrusive questions about medical treatment and sexuality. The lack of gender-neutral toilets was also a problem.

Managers and HR staff often felt uncertain about how to handle trans issues in the workplace. Many were afraid of saying the wrong thing and therefore chose silence, which in itself can be exclusionary. At the same time, the study showed that employers who dared to ask questions and have an open dialogue were seen positively by their employees.

Another key issue was the boundary between work life and private life, especially for trans people who regularly met external people in their professional roles. For some, their trans identity could be a resource, for example in meetings with people with similar life experiences. At the same time, public debate about trans people and minority stress could negatively affect the work environment. The study emphasises the importance of clear guidelines and active support from employers to create a safe and inclusive workplace.

The Icelandic report *Hinsegin fólk á vinnumarkaði* (Queer people in the labour market) examines the situation for LGBTI people in the labour market (Zoega, 2023). It was produced by Statistics Iceland and the University of Iceland on behalf of BHM, an Icelandic trade union for academics. The report, which is based on a survey, found that 70% of the trans people in the study had been unemployed at some point in their careers, compared to 42% of cisgender LGB people. The report also examined the pay of trans people based on tax returns. It shows that the pay of trans women is on average significantly lower than those of LGB cisgender people, who were also surveyed. The number of respondents who identified as trans men was deemed too small to be included in the results.

The study also found that the trans and the LGB people surveyed were unlikely to hold management positions in the labour market. Two per cent of the trans people in the study held some type of management position, compared to four per cent of LGB people. Many of the LGBTI respondents stated that they were not fully open about their gender identity or sexuality at work, and this was particularly true for trans people, with only 36% stating that they were open about their trans identity at work. Among those who were open, many experienced that their colleagues overemphasised their queerness and/or gender identity. The majority of respondents said that they experienced various forms of micro aggressions at work. A common experience was that their managers and colleagues expected them to be experts in LGBTI issues.

## Recommendations for employers

- Provide competence-raising courses to increase the knowledge of managers, HR representatives, deputies, and safety representatives about trans people and people with gender incongruence. In particular, the study shows a need for expertise on transitioning.
- Ensure follow-ups for trans people and people with gender incongruence that is oriented around the individual, flexible and conducted on the individual's terms.
- Develop trust-based diversity management to give trans people and people with gender incongruence the courage to talk and be open when they want and need.
- Promote gender-neutral changing rooms/toilets/uniforms.
- Ensure correct use of personal pronouns.
- Raise awareness among managers, HR representatives, deputies, and safety representatives about the polarised and sometimes offensive public debate about trans people and people with gender incongruence, which can also affect the work environment.

**Source** *Jeg vil ikke ha oppmerksomhet, men jeg vil ikke være usynlig* (I don't want attention, but I don't want to be invisible).



# Read more



[LGBTIQ equality at a crossroads: progress and challenges](#)  
Published by FRA



[Trans people's working life conditions in the Nordic region](#)  
Published by NIKK



[A better working life for trans people](#),  
Published by NIKK



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# About this publication

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Nordic co-operation is one of the world's most extensive forms of regional collaboration, involving Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Sweden, and the Faroe Islands, Greenland and Åland.

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