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# Mind the Gap! LGBTQ + Population's Perceptions of Discrimination and of Legal Innovation

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## Abstract

**Introduction** Homosexuality was decriminalized in Portugal in 1982, and several legislative changes have emerged since the beginning of the twenty-first century. However, 2010 marked the beginning of the approval of fundamental laws for the life of LGBTQ + people, such as same-sex marriage, access to parenthood and the right to self-determination of gender identity. Despite these advances, discrimination is still present in Portuguese society.

**Methods** The aim of this investigation is to study the processes and experiences of discrimination of LGBTQ + people in their daily lives, analyzing the perception of the discrepancy between legislation and the experiences of participants. Its aim is also to analyze the strategies suggested by the participants to reduce this discrepancy. To this end, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 21 LGBTQ + participants, of various sexual orientations (six gay men, three lesbian women, six bisexual persons, five pansexual individuals, and one who identified as "other") and gender identities (six transgender participants, including two trans men, two non-binary persons, one trans woman, and one genderqueer participant).

**Results** Content analysis of these interviews resulted in 828 units of analysis coded in 30 categories. The participants reported that they have gone through multiple experiences of discrimination in different contexts and that they recognize forces of resistance to legal innovation.

**Conclusion** There is a gap between legal advances and the experiences of LGBTQ+ people in Portugal, who still report discrimination experiences in many domains of daily life.

**Policy Implications** Implications for research and public policies are presented, particularly considering the need to inform and provide training to both strategic audiences and stakeholders and to inform the larger population to promote social change.

**Keywords** Sexual orientation · Gender identity and expression · Discrimination · Resistance to legal innovation

Discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity has different consequences for LGBTQ + people. This discrimination can occur in a variety of contexts such as family, work, health, and education. Furthermore, discrimination can be increased through resistance to societal change and resistance to legal innovation.

## Discrimination Due to Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

Non-heterosexual people are exposed to minority stress (when they are a member of a heteronormative society, they are exposed to chronic stress related to their stigmatization; Meyer, 1995). Stressors can be identified in four distinct processes in a continuum from distal to proximal: (a) objective and external stressful events and conditions, (b) expectations of these events and the vigilance that these expectations require, (c) identity hide for fear of harm, and (d) internalization of negative attitudes in society (Meyer, 2003). For gender minorities (i.e., non-cisgender people), gender dysphoria can also be added as a proximal stressor (Lindley & Galupo, 2020). Distal stressors are objective and do not depend on individuals' perceptions and appreciations; however, the more proximal the stress processes, the more

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subjective they are and the more related to the individual's own identity (Meyer, 2003). Thus, minority stress can be used as a context to mental health issues.

Based on the perception of their sexual orientation and gender identity people can suffer discrimination. Discrimination is defined as the materialization of mental perceptions and negative attitudes towards a person, based on the belief that this person has the specific and negative characteristics associated with a group (Allport, 1954; Masiero, 2013) and is expressed through increased levels of violence (Allport, 1954). For instance, homophobic bullying goes beyond sexual orientation and may be directed to those who differ from the traditional gender role system (e.g., Elipe, Muñoz & Del Rey, 2018). Indeed, research demonstrated that besides sexual minority youth, homophobic bullying might be directed to heterosexual youth who may somehow be perceived as being different in terms of traditional gender role expectations (e.g., Poteat & Espelage, 2005, 2007). Thus, attitudes also have a major influence on behaviors (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975), such as discriminatory behaviors. Negative attitudes related to prejudice highlight the social context in which attitudes are developed and maintained (Herek, 1984). Simultaneously, discrimination takes the form of social exclusion and differentiation (Tajfel et al., 1979).

Hence, groups and collective identity play a complex role in reducing prejudice (Binder et al., 2009), as well as in developing and reinforcing biases and disparities between groups (Dovidio et al., 2009). When collective identity is salient, the distinction between "us" (one's own group) and "them" (other groups) is a consequence of social recategorization and has a profound influence on social perceptions, cognitions, and behaviors. Thus, the individual differences of members of the same group are minimized, with a loss of focus on individual qualities and personalized interactions. However, while members of majority groups tend to focus on their similarities, assuming a single identity (i.e., a single superordinate category), members of minority groups assume a dual identity representation (i.e., maintaining the original identity, emphasizing both the superordinate category of the group and the original categories), recognizing their differences (Dovidio et al., 2001; Guerra et al., 2013). Changing the recategorization of "us" and "them" to "we" has strong empirical support in the impact of different identity representations on reducing intergroup prejudice and discrimination (António et al., 2020; Dovidio et al., 2009, 2016; Gaertner et al., 2016).

## Discrimination in Different Contexts

Family is a central source of social support and is important to well-being, adjustment, and development (Pearson & Wilkinson, 2013). Their acceptance or rejection is important for understanding minority stress experiences and health impacts (Katz-Wise et al., 2016; Meyer, 2015). Acceptance is associated with good mental and physical health, serving as protection against depression, substance abuse, and suicidal ideation and behaviors, while rejection is associated with consequences whose acceptance serves as protection (Ryan et al., 2010).

Furthermore, LGBTQ + people have more difficulties accessing health services, receive poorer health care, and often suffer from discrimination within the health system (Nama et al., 2017; Pieri & Brilhante, 2022). One of the problems encountered by patients is health professionals' initial assumption that they are heterosexual (Marques et al., 2014) and, by not considering other possibilities besides cis/heteronormativity, the other existences are erased and made invalid, promoting the marginalization and stigma (Pieri & Brilhante, 2022). This idea may hold, since LGBTQ + people often prefer not to disclose their sexual orientation and/or gender identity to healthcare professionals because they are uncomfortable or perceive barriers (e.g., inappropriate questions; Brooks et al., 2018; Göçmen & Yılmaz, 2017). In Portugal, despite legal changes, this theme is neglected in academic training and professional intervention (Gomes et al., 2023; Marques et al., 2014). Nonetheless, according to Gomes et al. (2023), Portuguese nurses tend to have a positive social attitude towards LGBTQ + people.

In addition, educational institutions are not described as very inclusive, and students show various patterns of homophobia (Nama et al., 2017). The lack of encouragement of discussions about gender and sexuality at school contributes to the persistence of inequality and social discrimination, and to expressions of violence. Silence regarding situations of discrimination also contributes to an unequal and unfair order (Lopes & Brandão, 2018). In Portugal, teachers indicated that school contexts are prevalently homophobic and both teachers and LGBTQ + youth recognized the need of training about sexual diversity as there is a lack of sexual and gender diversity information in school curriculum (Gato & Fontaine, 2012; Rodrigues et al., 2015). Despite the existing legislation in Portugal, the pervasiveness of prejudice and discrimination are found in schools (Fernandes et al., 2023). LGBTQ + students are often targets of negative and discriminatory comments and show fear of revealing their sexual orientation due to the fear of rejection and being stereotyped and/or discriminated (Göçmen & Yılmaz, 2017; Nama et al., 2017).

Discrimination at work is also a reality for LGBTQ + people and may lead to economic instability due to wage differences and poverty (Mallory et al., 2017). Workers perceive less discrimination when there are anti-discriminatory policies and laws in their workplace (Ragins & Cornwell, 2001). However, labor discrimination is frequent (Göçmen & Yılmaz, 2017), even in earlier stages, namely in recruitment,

with LGBTQ + people not being invited to an interview or showing performance deficits due to discrimination (Hebl et al., 2016; Tilcsik, 2011).

## Impacts of Discrimination

LGBTQ + people experience a greater variety of health outcomes and health-related risk factors (Mallory et al., 2017). Mood and anxiety disorders, suicide attempts, and self-mutilation are more frequent in LGBTQ + people, especially transgender people, compared to cis/heterosexual people (e.g., Pinna et al., 2022; Plöderl & Tremblay, 2015), since minority stress is related to negative mental health outcomes, including a higher prevalence of many psychiatric disorders (e.g., Mallory et al., 2017). LGBTQ + people, compared to cis/heterosexual people, are also more likely to report substance use (Gattis et al., 2014) as drinking and smoking may be used as coping responses to stress (Mallory et al., 2017). Literature has linked this wider range of outcomes to anti-LGBTQ + policies and unsupportive social climates (Mallory et al., 2017), also mentioning that LGBTQ + people have higher rates of discrimination, from being the target of derogatory comments to being victims of physical violence (Gattis et al., 2014).

## Societal Change and Resistance to Legal Innovation

Societal change and resistance to legal innovation can make it difficult to reduce discrimination, and it is important to consider the change of attitudes and behaviors. In Fishbein and Ajzen (1975) model, it is argued that a change in behavior is preceded by the intention to change behavior. This intention depends on the conformity of the subjective norm (i.e., the combination of normative beliefs, which are the expectations that others have regarding behavior and value, with the value of these same beliefs for the individual) and attitudes, influenced by their importance to the individual. Changes in behavior may be motivated by anti-discriminatory laws, as discriminatory behavior is reduced due to describing moral rules of conduct and/or revealing social expectations (Hebl et al., 2016). This substantiates that anti-discrimination legislation can create social norms that will educate people about what is acceptable behavior and is essential in reducing discrimination against LGBTQ + people (Hebl et al., 2016). However, empirical evidence is needed to prove the effectiveness of this legislation (Hebrew et al., 2016).

At least one criterion is necessary for these laws to be effective and successful: knowledge of the legislation by people in general and how effective public campaigns and media coverage help to create awareness about these laws (Hebl et al., 2016). This requires adequate dissemination of information and legislation, supported by media and advertising. Advertising can be used to persuade (i.e., changing individuals' mental states to change their behavior) and lead to changes in people's behavior by aligning the information sharing strategy with the cognitive processes that drive such changes (Pereira & Inglesias, 2020). In other words, since behavior is an expression of attitudes (i.e., actions demonstrate attitudes), it is important to consider and understand attitude change (Eagly & Chaiken, 1993).

Even with adequate fulfillment of the prior mentioned criteria, and despite advances in terms of equalitarian laws, political-legal innovations may not reach a collective consensus. If they fail to reach consensus, they may remain unreachable for long periods of time, since, despite investment (of work and money), some goals take a long time to be achieved. Even when these innovations receive public support, sometimes influenced by minority movements, it is necessary to assume that they will also encounter resistance and that, sometimes, even adjustment can mean resistance. Even after reaching a high collective consensus, this may not be reflected in practice and there will be no change in people's practices (Castro, 2012).

Castro (2012) states that a temporal perspective is essential to understand societal change, and a four-step model can help organize the development of legal innovation. In the first stage—Emergency—an innovative idea or concern emerges in society, often proposed by a minority, and starts to spread with a bottom-up direction. When this happens, a new set of values and discourses are organized around an idea, and if these reach a certain level of social consensus and legitimacy, further societal measures may follow. In the second stage—Institutionalization—the consensus is translated into a set of legal, political, and institutional innovations, and the different groups try to shape the laws in different ways. The third stage—Generalization—occurs when laws are applied and, consecutively, when legal innovations are proposed to society through campaigns and other initiatives that aim to transform ideas and coordinate them with practice. From this moment on, the direction of change becomes top-down, and this step becomes crucial, since resistance factors can slow down the process of implementing laws (Castro, 2012). Thus, it is extremely relevant to consider the role of the legal system in introducing legal innovations into society. Furthermore, it is important to consider how resistance to change can be a form of interference and play a key role during this phase of the generalization of new laws (Castro & Batel, 2008). Finally, when action and speech are coordinated, the fourth and final stage takes place—Stabilization. However, this stage can take a long time to reach, as legal innovation may initially only impact the level of action or discourse and these may take time to

coordinate. It is also important to understand that all types of norms or values can be re-interpreted and re-signified, and it is from this re-interpretation and representation that social discourses evolve and change (Castro, 2012).

According to Castro and Batel (2008), different mechanisms can be used during resistance, such as emphasizing that the resisting group is not at fault (and that it has already made changes) versus the other group being to blame. When these two mechanisms are combined, a strong argument is built for the previous positions to be maintained and for the public without a formulated position to support the resisting group, stabilizing representations regarding the problem. The resisting group can also use the argument that changes have already been made and that they were carried out with consensus. The use of this mechanism can prevent the discussion of further transformations. However, during this process, the voices of the protesting group carry transcendent representations and can, in the long run, contribute to making these representations intrinsic (Castro & Batel, 2008). There are other factors that can lead to legal resistance, not just from society. Radicalization processes can lead to this, as they are based on social factors such as discrimination and exclusion. Radicalization is a process that increases acceptance of violence and explains extremist behavior and the exclusion of other groups based on the belief that they are morally inferior and need to be eliminated (de Graaf & van den Bos, 2021). Radicalization is influenced by personal and existential feelings of uncertainty, injustice, outrageous attitudes, guilt, and narcissism, but these feelings need to be transformed into beliefs and narratives (e.g., religious) in order to trigger these behaviors, especially among individuals who engage in group forms of extremism (de Graaf & van den Bos, 2021). Thus, this radicalization, which can even lead to the creation of radical groups, can take place in the political and religious landscape of countries and can lead to legal resistance (de Graaf & van den Bos, 2021; Jonathan, 2008).

### Political Radicalization

Political radicalization can lead to legal resistance, with far-right parties being highlighted in this resistance due to their being conservative, especially in relation to topics such as gender and sexuality (Spierings, 2020). These parties remain conservative and resistant on LGBTQ + -related topics, opposing marriage equality, same-sex adoption, sexual and reproductive rights, sex education, and other topics that could affect LGBTQ + people due to their intersectionality, such as protection against gender-based violence (Schmincke, 2020; Spierings, 2020). This resistance becomes even clearer when it focuses on trans people, namely through the public judgment of attempts to remove gender from discourse and the attempt to withdraw the country's support in the costs of gender affirmation surgeries (Spierings, 2020). Thus, one of the strategies used by far-right parties to prevent legal innovation and lead to legal resistance from society is based on exposing advances in LGBTQ + rights as harmful to the rights of "ordinary" people. These parties can also demonstrate how the "political elite" goes "too far" to protect minority rights, such as LGBTQ + people (Spierings, 2020). Furthermore, far-right populism is based on the construction of an internal enemy (in which LGBTQ + activists are inserted) and an external enemy (in which the "gender ideology" is inserted), in order to polarize the opinions of society (Dietze & Roth, 2020).

### Religious Radicalization

Literature suggests that religious radicalization (e.g., religious fundamentalism) is also related to negative attitudes towards LGBTQ + people and their rights and is a strong predictor of explicit negative attitudes (Jonathan, 2008). According to de Graaf and van den Bos (2021), there are strong associations between radicalized religious attitudes and ideologies and violent behavior, as individuals' feelings and emotions need a narrative to become radical (e.g., social discourses of threat). Considering this, individuals who hold specific beliefs about the immorality of homosexuality and bisexuality demonstrate stronger negative attitudes (compared to those who do not; Jonathan, 2008). These theological beliefs also contribute to the general antipathy towards the outgroup – LGBTQ + people (Jonathan, 2008). In this way, religious fundamentalism can be constituted as a mechanism of resistance to legal changes.

## The Portuguese Legal Context

In Portugal, homosexuality was decriminalized in 1982 (Law nº 400/82, DR 221/1982, but it was not until 2001 that same-sex relationships were legally recognized with similar legal rights to marriage (Law nº 7/2001, DR 109/2001). In 2003, changes to the Labor Code established a single regime for equality and non-discrimination, including the prohibition of discriminatory acts based on sexual orientation (Law nº 99/2003, DR 197/2003). In 2004, the amendment to the Principle of Equality in Article 13 of the Constitution of the Republic followed, expressly stating that "no one may be privileged, benefited, harmed, deprived of any right or exempted from any duty on the grounds of (…) sexual orientation." In 2007, the aggravation of hate crimes based on the victim's sexual orientation was legislated (Law nº 59/2007, DR 170/2007).

The last decade was marked by significant legal changes. In 2010, same-sex civil marriage was approved (Law nº 9/2010, DR 105/2010), and in 2011, the procedure for

changing sex and first name in the civil registry was created (Law nº 7/2011, DR 52/2011). In 2013, the Penal Code was amended, making gender identity an aggravating factor in penalties and a discriminatory factor for the purposes of the crime of discrimination (Law nº 19/2013, DR 37/2013), which already included sexual orientation. In 2016, discrimination in access to adoption and other family legal relationships was eliminated (Law nº 2/2016, DR 41/2016), and beneficiaries of medically assisted procreation techniques were extended, removing discrimination based on sexual orientation and marital status (Law nº 17/2016, DR 116/2016). In 2018, the right to self-determination of gender identity and gender expression was granted, as was the protection of each person's sexual characteristics (Law nº 38/2018, DR 151/2018). Since then, self-determination of people aged 16 or older in possible in legal documents, and social use of chosen name and pronouns is affirmed for children and youths regardless of age, requiring schools to implement measures to ensure safety, privacy, and respect for all students. Finally, in 2019, parental responsibility and adoption rights were extended to same-sex couples (Law nº 90/2019, DR 169/2019). Thus, in this decade, Portugal has been ranked between 7 and 9th in reflecting the legal and human rights situation of nearly 50 countries by Ilga-Europe (Rainbow Map).

## The Current Study

Despite the existence of a vast body of literature on the LGBTQ + population, studies have rarely explored the relationship between legal advances and experiences of discrimination in this population. Therefore, this study aims to understand the extent to which LGBTQ + people experience multiple forms of discrimination in their daily lives and in specific areas/contexts. It also aims to survey perceptions about possible strategies to reduce discrimination against LGBTQ + people in Portugal; i.e., how to reduce the gap between legislation and its daily practice, promoting the generalization and stabilization of legal innovation in this area.

Thus, the general objectives were to study the processes and experiences of discrimination against LGBTQ + people and the perception of its prevalence in society and to analyze the strategies to promote the practice of legal innovation suggested by the participants. The specific objectives were to understand and analyze (a) the experiences (e.g., severe and/or subtle) and contexts of discrimination (e.g., health, education), (b) the individual characteristics that may be most associated with experiences of discrimination, (c) the participants' management of experiences of discrimination, (d) their perception of the degree of prevalence of discrimination, (e) their perception of the legal context, including legal changes and resistance to changes, and (f) suggested strategies for reducing discrimination.

## Method

### Sample

People who identified with LGBTQ + identities (non-heterosexual and/or non-cisgender) participated voluntarily in this study, sharing their individual views and speaking on an individual level (independently of having connections with LGBTQ + associations or not). The final sample consisted of 21 participants with ages between 19 and 48 years ($M = 28.76$; $SD = 7.87$). Regarding their sexual orientation, six participants identified as gay, three participants identified as lesbian, six participants identified as bisexual, five participants identified as pansexual, and one participant identified as having another sexual orientation. Of these 21 participants, 12 (57.1%) identified their assigned sex at birth as female and nine (42.9%) as male. Regarding gender identity, six participants (28.55%) identified as transgender (among whom two identified as trans men, two as non-binary people, one as a trans woman, and one as genderqueer), with the remaining 15 participants identifying as cisgender. Regarding reported ethnic identity, 19 participants identified as Caucasian, one as Black, and one as biracial. Considering the district of residence, twelve participants lived in a city (urban area) and nine lived in a town (suburban or rural areas) (Table 1).

### Instruments

Two instruments were used in this study, namely, to characterize the sample and to engage participants in exploring their experiences:

a) Brief Sociodemographic Questionnaire: sociodemographic questions such as age, sex assigned at birth, gender identity, sexual orientation, ethnicity, nationality, place of birth, district of residence, and education level.
b) Semi-structured Interview, adapted from Klinke (2014): open questions divided into three distinct blocks: "Current Experiences and Settings of Discrimination" (with seven questions; e.g., "Can you tell me some examples of discrimination experiences that you may have gone through in the last year?"); "Changes in Discrimination in Portugal throughout the Last Decade" (with seven questions; e.g., thinking about Portugal 10 years ago, how would you describe the differences and/or similarities in the experiences of discrimination?"); and "Strategies to Reduce Discrimination in Face of Legal Innovation" (with three questions; e.g., "in your opinion,

**Table 1** Sample's demographic characterization

| Participant | Gender identity | Sexual orientation | Age | Reported ethnical identity | Education |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Man | Gay | 28 | Caucasian | High school |
| 2 | Woman | Bisexual | 25 | Caucasian | Postgraduate |
| 3 | Woman | Bisexual | 28 | Caucasian | Master's |
| 4 | Man | Gay | 25 | Caucasian | Bachelor |
| 5 | Woman | Pansexual | 23 | Caucasian | Bachelor |
| 6 | Woman | Lesbian | 25 | Caucasian | Master's |
| 7 | Man | Gay | 23 | Caucasian | High school |
| 8 | Trans woman | Pansexual | 22 | Caucasian | High school |
| 9 | Woman | Bisexual | 23 | Caucasian | Bachelor |
| 10 | Non-binary | Indescribable | 34 | Caucasian | Bachelor |
| 11 | Trans man | Bisexual | 21 | Black | High school |
| 12 | Woman | Lesbian | 32 | Caucasian | Postgraduate |
| 13 | Woman | Bisexual | 29 | - | Bachelor |
| 14 | Genderqueer | Pansexual | 25 | Caucasian | Master's |
| 15 | Man | Gay | 43 | Caucasian | High school |
| 16 | Man | Gay | 31 | Caucasian | Bachelor |
| 17 | Woman | Bisexual | 23 | Caucasian | Bachelor |
| 18 | Woman | Lesbian | 48 | Caucasian | Postgraduate |
| 19 | Trans man | Pansexual | 19 | Biracial | High school |
| 20 | Trans woman, NB | Pansexual | 34 | Caucasian | High school |
| 21 | Man | Gay | 43 | Caucasian | Master's |

which strategies would be most relevant to reduce discrimination in Portugal?).

## Procedure

Participants were recruited through a convenience sampling process (snowball sampling), with 21 interviews based on the objectives of the study. The study followed the guidelines of the ethics committee at the university and was conducted following the international ethical standards (e.g., American Psychological Association; European Commission). All participants gave free and informed consent, and their participation was anonymous and voluntary. The interviews were conducted online by the research team between January and February 2021 and audio recorded. They were later transcribed, and voice recordings were eliminated. A sociodemographic questionnaire was also carried out. Collection ceased after theoretical saturation was reached (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

Content analysis by Bardin (2008) was used to analyze the data. This analysis gave rise to four different domains: (1) experiences and contexts of discrimination; (2) perception of the degree of discrimination prevalence; (3) legal context; (4) strategies to reduce discrimination. After defining the domains, the analysis established categories and sub-categories in a bottom-up approach, also attributing clear definitions to each category and sub-category (i.e., a dictionary of categories and sub-categories was developed). The first domain (experiences and contexts of discrimination) included as categories and sub-categories (1.1) experiences of discrimination in the last year, (1.2) type of discrimination (subtle or severe), (1.3) family experiences, (1.4) education, (1.5) work, (1.6) social life, (1.7) health, (1.8) other contexts, (1.9) contexts with greatest difficulties, (1.10) contexts with less difficulties; the second domain (perception of the degree of discrimination prevalence) included (2.1) perception of the existence of homophobia and transphobia, (2.2) differences of discrimination, (2.3) differences of discrimination contexts, (2.4) differences in the perception of the frequency of discrimination; the third domain (legal context) included (3.1) proper implementation of laws, (3.2) most assimilated legal processes, (3.3) resistance to legal changes (most salient resistance processes and society as a resistance); and the forth domain (strategies to reduce discrimination) included (4.1) necessity of strategies, (4.2) concrete suggestions of strategies, (4.3) recalled strategies, (4.4) how and whom should be involved in the strategies.

In order to meet the quality criteria of qualitative studies, we tried to increase the precision of the present analysis. For this purpose, a complementary coding was carried out by an independent coder, who had access to 25% of the data (random sample) and the dictionary of categories to support the coding. After coding, the agreement rate of the inter-judge agreement was performed, confirming that there was 87.9%

agreement, and disagreements were resolved by consensus in the research team. Thus, we consider that this agreement rate is a very good indicator of the accuracy of the analysis performed.

Qualitative research acknowledges the researchers' personal and epistemological reflexivity influencing and shaping the research process (Willig, 2013). Thus, it is relevant to note that the research team is comprised by open members and allies of the LGBTQI + community and that the recruitment, rapport-building in interviews, and willingness of participants to disclose experiences and suggestions, as well as the analysis of transcripts and interpretation of results may also reflect the positionality and subjectivity of the researchers.

## Results

Analysis of the transcripts resulted in 828 units of analysis, coded in 30 categories and sub-categories in one of the four domains: (1) experiences and contexts of discrimination; (2) perception of the degree of discrimination prevalence; (3) legal context; and (4) strategies to reduce discrimination (Table 2).

**Table 2** Main results of the topics under analysis

| | Total frequency of units | Total % |
|---|---|---|
| 1. Experiences and contexts of discrimination | | |
| 1.1. Subtle discrimination | 15 | 1.81 |
| 1.2. Severe discrimination | 22 | 2.66 |
| 1.3. Discrimination formats | 9 | 1.09 |
| 1.4. Social life context | 29 | 3.50 |
| 1.5. Work context | 25 | 3.02 |
| 1.6. Educational context | 31 | 3.74 |
| 1.7. Family context | 21 | 2.54 |
| 1.8. Health context | 19 | 2.29 |
| 1.9. Other contexts | 25 | 3.02 |
| 1.10. Contexts with most difficulties | 35 | 4.23 |
| 1.11. Contexts with less difficulties | 29 | 3.50 |
| Total | 260 | 31.40 |
| 2. Perception of the degree of discrimination prevalence | | |
| 2.1. Homophobia and transphobia | 57 | 6.88 |
| 2.1.1. Moderate/high prevalence | | 90.48 |
| 2.1.2. Low prevalence | | 9.52 |
| 2.2. Discrimination differences | 67 | 8.09 |
| 2.3. Discrimination contexts | 61 | 7.37 |
| 2.4. Discrimination frequency | 28 | 3.38 |
| Total | 213 | 25.72 |
| 3. Legal context | | |
| 3.1. Properly implemented laws | 3 | 3.99 |
| 3.1.1. Concordance | | 28.57 |
| 3.1.2. Discordance | | 71.43 |
| 3.2. Most assimilated legal processes | 32 | 3.86 |
| 3.3. Most salient processes of resistance | 29 | 3.50 |
| 3.4. Society as resistance | 64 | 7.73 |
| 3.4.1. Concordance | | 61.91 |
| 3.4.2. Discordance | | 38.09 |
| Total | 158 | 19.08 |
| 4. Strategies to reduce discrimination | | |
| 4.1. Need to have strategies | 39 | 4.71 |
| 4.2. Suggested | 71 | 8.57 |
| 4.3. Remembered | 7 | 0.85 |
| 4.4. Who should be involved | 24 | 2.90 |
| Total | 141 | 17.03 |

According to the participants, discrimination can take different forms, namely differentiated treatment due to people's individual characteristics, that is, due to sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression. Participants reported that discrimination translates into a lack of protection, opportunities, and/or rights, such as physical and/or psychological aggression. They also mentioned that this discrimination can be expressed through not being hired in labor recruitment processes and through ridiculing someone being LGBTQ+. The greatest difficulties in accessing services (e.g., health) were also named as examples.

## Experiences and Contexts of Discrimination

Most participants ($n=20$) reported having experienced discrimination in 2020, despite the atypicality of this period due to the pandemic situation and the consequent decrease of social experiences. About half ($n=10$) identified experiences of subtle discrimination (i.e., non-direct confrontations) and the majority ($n=15$) identified experiences of severe discrimination (i.e., direct confrontations such as physical and/or psychological aggression). Some participants ($n=7$) identified a higher incidence of discrimination (e.g., discriminatory comments) through digital media, such as social media, due to the pandemic. Participant 13 (29 years old, cisgender, bisexual person in sub-urban/rural area, non-reported ethnicity) revealed that "I do hospital internships and frequently there are jokes (…) there are more aggressive comments towards people who are apparently gay or bisexual or whatever. In terms of experience with trans people, it is even more complicated because in these environments there is a lot of hostility."

Discrimination contexts were analyzed and questioned in relation to the experiences of discrimination that the participants went through in their lives and not just in the last year. Participants reported experiences of discrimination: in social life ($n=17$), experienced on the street, in bars and cafes, in social relationships, and even in the social environment among LGBTQ+people; at work ($n=15$), based not only on discriminatory acts by colleagues and clients but also on not being hired and fired for reasons of sexual orientation and/or gender identity; in education ($n=14$), practiced by peers, teachers, and staff, at different levels of education, especially through *bullying*; in the family ($n=14$), through the dissemination of discriminatory comments, lack of security, avoidance or denial of sexuality/identity and rejection; in health ($n=12$), by different health professionals (i.e., doctors, nurses, and psychologists), namely in access to blood donation; and in other specific contexts such as internet (e.g., dating apps), media and legal context ($n=7$). Participant 18 (Caucasian 48-year-old cisgender lesbian woman, in suburban/rural area) declared that "I've been through situations where I've been told 'I would rather you die than be in this live'… This was said to my face when I was in my 20 s by people who were very emotionally significant to me… It was very difficult".

Of these contexts, the participants reported that those who presented the greatest difficulties when experiencing discrimination were the family context ($n=8$), the work context ($n=7$), and the health context ($n=6$). Several participants mentioned more than a single context, which suggests a plurality of contexts with difficulties. On the contrary, social life ($n=8$) was presented as the context with less difficulties, due to less friendships, but also due to less difficulties in socializing, making relationships with LGBTQ+people and LGBTQ+spaces. Participant 11 (Black 21-year-old, bisexual trans man, in a suburban/rural area) said that "One of my bosses kept insisting on treating me with female nouns and pronouns, even after I told her 'my name is [male name], it says that in my file that my name is [male name], I'm going to ask you to treat me that way', she said 'okay, okay' and then kept misgendering me and making up female names because she wasn't going to treat me by [male name] because it 'didn't made sense to her'".

## Perception of the Prevalence Degree of Discrimination

This category included participants' perception of the existence of homophobia and transphobia in Portugal and a retrospective of the experiences of discrimination from 11 years ago. The overwhelming majority of participants ($n=19$) considered Portugal a country with a lot of homophobia and transphobia, referring that transphobia is even more expressed, evident, and aggressive than homophobia. In terms of looking back at the experiences of discrimination from 11 years ago, general differences in discrimination were questioned and analyzed, with the following being identified: access to information, education, and training on issues of sexual orientation and gender identity ($n=11$); the decrease in physical aggression ($n=9$), despite the increase in aggression in spoken and/or written form (e.g., social media); and the creation of protective laws for LGBTQ+people ($n=8$). This last difference was referred to as a facilitator of other differences (e.g., a decrease in physical aggression due to it being considered a hate crime and being legally punished) and as a facilitator from the decrease in discrimination in different contexts (e.g., due to protection in contexts such as work). Participant 8 (Caucasian 22-year-old pansexual transgender person) mentioned that "I think that today it is less violent, in the physical sense, I think that discrimination today focuses more on verbal violence and not so much on physical violence. It is still very serious, of course!".

Differences in discrimination contexts were also questioned and analyzed, with contexts being identified in which

discrimination is better, equal and worse: better—education ($n=12$), health ($n=12$) and work ($n=11$), with participants stating that these changes are mainly due to the greater dissemination of information and knowledge about sexual orientation and gender identity, as well as the existence of protective laws in these contexts; equal—some participants ($n=4$) reported that in social context (e.g., friendships and on the street) and in a family context, discrimination remains the same, with no improvements being observed, and being more complicated areas to change; worse—social media ($n=4$). Participant 20 (Caucasian 34-year-old, pansexual trans person from an urban area) revealed that "I feel, at least from my personal perspective, that at the same time, for example, there's more information. This visibility has also brought this violence, but it's also brought visibility of information, there's already there's a certain section of the population that understands these issues and is making an effort, for example, to do training, to have spaces for discussion, etc., etc., this is super important and it's something that didn't exist 10 years ago".

Finally, the differences in the perception of the frequency of discrimination were questioned and analyzed. More than half of the participants ($n=12$) considered that discrimination happens less frequently nowadays. However, some of these participants ($n=4$) believe that, despite being less frequent, it still happens quite frequently, having decreased only a little. The remaining participants ($n=9$) considered that, in terms of frequency, discrimination is the same and/or that it has increased. In general, the participants mentioned that discrimination is carried out in different ways. Participant 19 (Biracial 19-year-old, pansexual and transgender person from an urban area) mentioned that "I think there's less discrimination, but I don't think it's much less. It's less and it's in a different way".

## Legal Context

Participants' perceptions of legal changes were analyzed, including their perception of the proper implementation of laws and the most assimilated legal processes. We also analyzed their perceptions of possible resistance to legal changes, both in terms of more salient resistance processes and in terms of society as a resistance to these changes.

Regarding the proper implementation of the laws, most of the participants ($n=15$) considered that the laws are not being properly implemented and that, despite the legislation being adequate, its implementation and control are not being carried out adequately, resulting in complications (e.g., resistance from registry offices to performing same-sex marriages and/or to dealing with requests for a change of sex in legal documents). The remaining participants ($n=3$) considered that only some laws are being properly implemented or that they are being properly implemented because they reported not knowing indicators that report the opposite ($n=3$). Participant 10 (Caucasian, non-binary 34-year-old from an urban area) claimed that "There are laws that are not being implemented. Just recently with the self-determination [of gender identity] law, we received a complaint from trans people who are in schools and don't have these rights to be themselves… They are not being able to exercise these rights, so there are things that are not being implemented (…) the people are protected in the law, but they are not physically protected".

As for the most assimilated legal processes, most participants ($n=14$) considered same-sex marriage to be the most assimilated legal process, claiming that it allowed others to have more visibility and acceptance. About half of the participants ($n=11$) mentioned the possibility of starting a family as the next most important milestone (such as adoption by same-sex couples and medically assisted procreation). The third legal process most mentioned by the participants ($n=9$) was the self-determination of gender identity, because this process greatly facilitated the recognition of transgender people. Participant 12 (Caucasian, 32 years old, cisgender lesbian woman from an urban area) declared that "I think that marriage and adoption, no doubt, are those that are milestones in society, those that have contributed the most to the mentality changes, so they are the most positive and I think they are those that are already being… I think they are peaceful in society".

The most salient processes of resistance were also mentioned. Most participants ($n=15$) associated the most salient resistance processes with political, religious, and societal conservatism. They identified political conservatism as the greatest source of resistance, nominating political parties considered to be right wing or to be far-right wing. Their growth and attempts to reverse the legal changes already carried out caused special concern for participants. In terms of religious conservatism, the participants identified the Catholic Church as one of the most salient forces of resistance in Portugal as it is resistant to several changes, from marriage to the self-determination of gender identity. The participants ($n=7$) also identified organized movements of citizens and certain services (e.g., conservatories) as salient processes of resistance in Portugal, and the association of this resistance with the conservatism present in society was also mentioned. Participant 14 (Caucasian, 25 years old, self-identified genderqueer and pansexual, from a suburban/rural area) declared that "There are resistance forces, far-right wing forces, a political party that has in its electoral program that wants to end the reimbursement of surgeries for trans people and end with same-sex marriage as we know it."

Finally, society was analyzed as resistance, and none of the participants considered that the mentality of Portuguese citizens had fully followed the political changes that had taken place. Most participants ($n=13$) considered that

society, as a group and as individual citizens, constitutes a strong resistance to legal changes, and this resistance was associated with conservative forces. The remaining participants ($n = 8$) considered that society is not a force of resistance to legal changes; however, they consider that it still does not follow the state of the legislation. Thus, they considered that, since the mentality has not changed completely, there has been an evolutionary process. Participant 20 (Caucasian 34-year-old, trans pansexual person) revealed that "There were many movements of parents and many movements of people who are considered important in this area saying "no", that the law should not go ahead [gender self-determination]. There are feminist movements that continue to claim that trans identities don't exist and that trans women are men in drag and much more, not to mention more serious discourses. (…) On top of that, the 2018 law had a certain group from the trans community also against the law itself precisely because of fear, and this is something that is cruel for us to think that many people prefer to have the weight of medicalization or feel that they would lose everything with self-determination".

### Strategies to Reduce Discrimination

All participants ($n = 21$) mentioned the need for strategies to reduce discrimination against LGBTQ + people in Portugal, mentioning that these strategies will be necessary while there is discrimination and they highlighted the importance of (and need for) informing and training the population in general so discrimination can be reduced nationally. Participant 4 (Caucasian 25-year-old cisgender gay man, suburban/rural area) claimed that "If there are no strategies to reduce discrimination, discrimination is going to continue to be accepted. However, it's a minority of people, this minority is still there and accepts that status quo… those sexist, homophobic and transphobic behaviors."

Participants also identified concrete strategies, suggested and remembered, and people and/or specific identities to be involved in these strategies. As for the suggested strategies, the majority of the participants ($n = 17$) focused on training. This suggestion is in line with the aforementioned needs, focusing on the information and training needs of the general population, mentioning caregivers (e.g., parents) and professionals from different areas of activity (i.e., health, safety and education professionals, employers). These participants also suggested formal training in educational institutions, suitable for the ages of children/adolescents/young adults, in order to disseminate appropriate information about sexual orientation and gender identity. Participant 14 (Caucasian genderqueer pansexual person, 25 years old in a suburban/rural area) suggested that "Giving education to children, all age groups and adapting to the ages. Obviously a 5-year-old child is not going to understand the exact definition, as it is in the books, of gender expression and identity, but they will understand that blue isn't just for boys and pink isn't just for girls. Age-appropriate education, from an early age, from the first year."

As for the recalled strategies, few participants ($n = 6$) recalled strategies that had already been implemented in Portugal. However, the strategies recalled focused on education and information, namely in classes with guests from LGBTQ + associations. Participant 6 (Caucasian, 25-years-old, cisgender lesbian woman, in an urban area) indicated that "Mainly in schools, for example, rede ex aequo [NGO] has done a lot of awareness-raising activities in schools and other associations too."

Finally, regarding who should be involved in the strategies, the participants considered that different entities and/or people should be involved in it. About half of the participants ($n = 13$) considered that educational institutions (i.e., elementary and secondary schools, universities, and their respective teachers) should be involved. This was the most mentioned type of entity, justifying that information needs to be disseminated from an early age and in formal education institutions. More specifically, the need to teach about LGBTQ + issues in universities was also mentioned, based on research in the social sciences. The state, which includes the government and all associated ministries (Ministry of Health, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Justice…), was the second most mentioned entity ($n = 7$), justified with the need for nationwide strategies. Participant 19 (Biracial 19-year-old pansexual trans person, urban area) indicated that "I think that schools are a priority, colleges… Health centers and medical professionals in general, not just the professionals who deal directly with trans people in their gender affirmation processes, but the professionals in general; because they all contact with trans people, whether they know it or not, whether it's more or less frequent. And also employers, yes, in terms of workplace and promoting diversity".

## Discussion

Our results indicate that our participants went through different experiences of discrimination, from the most subtle to the most serious, during different moments of their lives, including in the last year. They also indicated that our participants experienced discrimination more regularly in the context of social life, work, education, family, and health. These results are consistent with the literature (e.g., Beatriz & Pereira, 2022; Göçmen & Yılmaz, 2017; Neves et al., 2023), since multiple contexts where discrimination can occur are identified, including those mentioned by the participants.

Discrimination in social life, referred to by participants as experiences of discrimination in places such as streets, bars, and social relationships in general, has been reported in the literature (Haines et al., 2018). In work, the participants mentioned discriminatory acts by colleagues and/or clients, which is consistent with Göçmen and Yılmaz's (2017) investigation that states that about half of LGBTQ + people always or often experience negative attitudes against them. Participants also mentioned not being hired and/or being fired and the experience of micro-aggressions due to their sexual orientation and/or gender identity, which is consistent with several studies that report that LGBTQ + people have greater difficulty in finding a job (Beatriz & Pereira, 2022; Tilcsik, 2011). In education, the participants mainly mentioned the bullying practiced against them, both by colleagues and by teachers or staff, something that has been found in the literature. Students reported the existence of jokes, rumors, and bullying against LGBTQ + people (Nama et al., 2017) and teachers reporting the prevalence of the school context as homophobic (Rodrigues et al., 2015) and not very inclusive (Nama et al., 2017). In family, the literature indicates that one of the biggest problems is the (non) acceptance of sexual orientation and/or gender identity by family members, especially due to the association of this nonacceptance with serious and negative consequences, such as a decrease in perception protection and well-being (Pearson & Wilkinson, 2013; Ryan et al., 2010). According to Pinto and Moleiro (2012), it is not uncommon, especially for trans people, to be the target of discrimination and psychological abuse in family relationships. This is in line with what was reported by the participants in the present study, since they identified the dissemination of discriminatory comments, the lack of security in the family, and the avoidance, denial, and/or rejection of sexuality/identity as discriminatory experiences lived in their families. In health, where participants reported experiences of discrimination carried out by different health professionals, the training of these professionals in sexuality/identity issues has been neglected as they identify the insufficient inclusion of LGBTQ + issues in their academic courses (Gomes et al., 2023; Marques et al., 2014). However, even when health professionals have adequate knowledge, treatment can be inappropriate, as professionals are not free from stereotypes and prejudices (Pinto & Moleiro, 2012).

The participants identified the family, work, and health contexts as the contexts with the most difficulties in terms of discrimination. Discrimination in the family context is related to minority stress and mental and physical health (Meyer, 2015; Ryan et al., 2010), in the work context with performance deficits (Hebl et al., 2016) and in the health context with reduced access to health services, including mental health services (Göçmen & Yılmaz, 2017), which can lead to a decrease in the health of LGBTQ + people. However, the context that the participants identified as having least difficulties was social life, especially when inserted in LGBTQ + contexts, which may be related to the identification of the members of this group and their focus on their common characteristics (Dovidio et al., 2001).

When anti-discriminatory laws are created and implemented, individuals' discriminatory behavior is reduced through behavioral change. This change occurs because moral conduct rules and social expectations indicate that discrimination should not occur (Hebl et al., 2016). Thus, the creation and implementation of laws may have motivated the differences in discrimination that the participants referred to and may have motivated a reduction of discrimination in specific contexts such as education, health, and work (e.g., workers perceive less discrimination when anti-discriminatory policies and laws exist; Ragins & Cornwell, 2001). Regarding the perception of the frequency of discrimination, the participants were divided, although most considered that the frequency of discrimination is lower. This is consistent with the importance of the role of civil society in the fight against discrimination highlighted by Nunes (2005), since discrimination cannot be solved only by introducing laws, but needs to be combined with good practices in everyday life and societies' social behaviors of inclusion. The majority of the participants consider that society resists legal changes of anti-discriminatory laws and that Portugal continues to have high levels of homophobia and transphobia, so despite the importance of the legislative aspect, a behavioral change is needed to reduce discrimination and to translate legal changes to the lives of LGBTQ + people (Hebl et al., 2016; Nunes, 2005; Saleiro, 2022).

In terms of the legal context, the participants consider that the laws are not being properly implemented, which is congruent with the gap between the formal and practical levels also identified by Saleiro (2022) and with the perception of the existence of salient processes of resistance and the perception of society as resistance. According to the participants, this inadequacy in the implementation of laws is observed in the lack of control and in the complications that arise from this, namely the resistance of the entities to complying with the legislation (e.g., the resistance of the registry offices to dealing with sex change requests in legal documents). In Portugal, other studies identified difficulties to the proper application of laws and the denial of fundamental rights, namely in the workplace and in the family system (Beatriz & Pereira, 2022; Leitão et al., 2022; Neves et al., 2023). According to Castro (2012), even after reaching a collective consensus, what is described in the legislation may not be observed in practice, with no changes in people's practices. Thus, legislation can be created properly, and its approval may be (relatively) consensual, but there are still difficulties in implementing and practicing legislation. Considering the four stages of legal innovation development

proposed by Castro (2012), that is, emergence, institutionalization, generalization, and stabilization, we suggest that the legislation concerning LGBTQ + people has not yet reached the full stabilization stage in Portugal. Legislation seems to have already emerged from an idea or concern of society (emergency), which spread and was reflected in legal, political, and institutional innovations (institutionalization); however, the stage of applying the legislation and proposing it to society through campaigns and plans (generalization) and the stage of coordinating society's action and discourse (stabilization) seem to have greater difficulties. These two phases are commonly more problematic, since resistance factors can slow down the process of implementing laws and it can be complicated and time-consuming to coordinate society's action and discourse (Castro, 2012).

Resistance processes (e.g., political forces) and society (as a group and/or as individual citizens) can cause difficulties to legal innovation and implementation of the law. Regardless of the origin of the resistance, those who resist can use several arguments (e.g., "many changes have already been made, there is no need for more") to prevent the opening of space for the discussion of further transformations and to reiterate the prevalent representation of the public (Castro & Batel, 2008). In the present study, the participants considered that, in terms of resistance processes, those that stand out most involve political, religious (i.e., political and religious radicalization), and societal conservatism. In terms of societal resistance, they considered that this resistance is equally aligned with conservative force and, in terms of process or society, this resistance is always based on conservative radicalization. In fact, radicalization can take place in the political and religious landscape of countries, giving rise to political and religious radicalization, and leading to legal resistance (de Graaf & van den Bos, 2021; Jonathan, 2008). As mentioned by the participants, the far-right-wing parties are the most prominent in the resistance to changes in anti-discriminatory legislation due to their conservatism, opposing all of this legislation, from same-sex marriage to reproductive rights, becoming even more salient when it focuses on trans people (Spierings, 2020). Religious radicalization can also influence resistance to legal changes, as suggested by participants, as this radicalization is related to negative attitudes towards LGBTQ + people and their rights (Jonathan, 2008). Given the existence of strong associations between radical religious ideologies and violent behavior, individuals use this radicalization as a narrative to demonstrate stronger negative attitudes and apathy towards LGBTQ + people in general, resulting in resistance and opposition to their rights (de Graaf & van den Bos, 2021; Jonathan, 2008).

However, the participants consider that, despite the poor implementation of laws and the existing resistance to them, it is possible to highlight the most assimilated legal processes. Thus, the most mentioned legal processes were same-sex marriage, followed by the possibility of constituting a same-sex family and, finally, the self-determination of gender identity. According to the participants, same-sex marriage allowed the remaining legal processes to have more visibility and acceptance. Since these legislative processes had high media coverage, this may have contributed to the success of the legislation (Hebl et al., 2016). It should be noted that, after the approval of same-sex marriage, many other legal processes were approved, namely the introduction of the procedure for changing sex and name in the civil registry, which guaranteed trans people's rights. Nevertheless, it is important to continue to be attentive to the implementation of laws and the forces that resist them, taking into account that the participants report experiences of discrimination and perceive a high prevalence of discrimination in Portugal.

## Implications and Suggestions for Reducing the Gap Between Discrimination and Legal Issues

The participants in the present study highlighted the importance of having strategies implemented in society to reduce discrimination, which is in line with the importance of social change and not just legislative change (Nunes, 2005). The most suggested strategy was based on the need for information and training of the general population and strategic audiences (including professionals from different areas). The lack of information and misinformation on the part of the population and, specifically, on the part of health and education professionals, perpetuates discrimination and stereotypes, increasing abuse of the physical and mental health of LGBTQ + people (IPsyNet, 2018). In this way, the use of training and information to reduce discrimination seems to be adjusted, due to the importance of knowledge and understanding of sexual orientation and gender identity issues (e.g., correct terminology), which help to express respect for LGBTQ + people (Macedo, 2018). Also, dissemination of information on LGBTQ + issues and anti-discriminatory legislation in the media can create awareness among the population (Hebl et al., 2016). Using this same strategy applied to specific segments such as advertising, it would be possible to change the mental states of individuals in order to change their behaviors (Pereira & Inglesias, 2020), educating people to have more acceptable behaviors (Hebl et al., 2016). Thereby, resistance to legal innovation could be reduced, facilitating the transition from the stage of generalization to stabilizing legal innovation and coordinating legislation with people's practice (Castro, 2012).

It was evident that, despite changes in discrimination against LGBTQ + people in Portugal in recent years, it is still necessary to take additional measures on this issue. It seems that legal changes effectively had an impact on discrimination, even in specific contexts for which specific legislation

was created (such as the work context). However, it is necessary to ensure proper implementation of these laws so that their benefits can be greater and more effective. It is also necessary to reduce the lack of framework and coordination between the legislation and the daily life experiences of LGBTQ + people in Portugal, since despite the legislation appearing to have had an impact, LGBTQ + people continue to experience discrimination in their daily life and resistance to legal innovation continues to exist.

This study contributes to the discussion about the importance of legal innovation in reducing discrimination against LGBTQ + people, as well as to the discussion about resistance to legal innovation in this type of discrimination. It was also possible to provide a space to hear the voices of the participants and understand the multiple, first-person experiences of discrimination that LGBTQ + people have gone through and continue to go through in their daily lives, translating the gap between legislation and social practices. Furthermore, the present study highlights the importance of designing and implementing a project to give training and information to the population on issues of sexual orientation and gender identity, covering different age groups, levels of educational attainment, and locations in the country.

## Limitations of the Current Study

While adding to the literature on LGBTQ + people and the surrounding legal context, we recognize some limitations of the current study. First, we recognize that, despite the attempt to cover participants with different individual characteristics, the average age of the participants was relatively low (i.e., around 29 years old), people over 50 years old were not reached, and the participants' education level was high, as 67% of them had qualifications equivalent to higher education. Furthermore, no intersex people were present in the sample, which would be relevant not only due to the inclusion of intersex people in the LGBTQ + community but also due to the stigmatization of sexual characteristics and the lack of information about these people. These sample characteristics and recruitment may reflect, on the one hand, the methodology (given the fact that the interviews were conducted online), and on the other hand, also the positionality of the researcher who conducted the interviews (as a young university student). Thus, there are some limitations in the representativeness of the sample and in the possible generalization of the results obtained.

## Future Directions

It is essential to continue to give voice to LGBTQ + people, considering their intersectionality, looking for broad samples in terms of sexual orientation and gender identity, as well as in terms of expression of gender, ethnicity, age, and educational attainment. Different methodologies could be used, such as a quantitative methodology using an online questionnaire to reach a greater number of participants, and/or a qualitative methodology with focus groups to generate discussion on this topic among participants with different characteristics and backgrounds.

Regarding the perception of discrimination and resistance to legal changes in different contexts, it would be important to study the daily lives of LGBTQ + people in order to better understand how legislation is reflected in the daily lives and practices of people in general. In this way, it would be interesting to try to understand the perception of the community in general, studying discrimination in LGBTQ + people and resistance to legal changes with a sample that, while not being LGBTQ + , should consider the different individual characteristics of people. It would also be interesting to try to understand the perception of political actors (e.g., deputies) on this topic, given their involvement in the creation and regulation of legislation. The perception of human resources professionals would be interesting as well, due to their involvement in the organizational culture and in the hiring and firing of employees. Finally, the study of health professionals' perception and skills in this area, due to the importance of adequate health services (from medicine to psychology, considering areas such as nursing and dentistry), and education professionals, given the importance of school in the lives of children, adolescents, and young adults, would also be extremely relevant.

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## Declarations

**Ethical approval** Complied with Ethical Standards of the Iscte-Iul Ethical Committee.

**Informed consent** Informed and free consent was obtained from participants using templates and guidelines by the Iscte-iul Ethical Committee.

**Conflict of interest** The authors declare no competing interests.

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