

TÁMOP-5.5.5/08/1 Combating Discrimination – Shaping Societal Attitude and Strengthening the Work of the Authority

**Extent of Gaining Knowledge of One's Rights as a Victim of Discrimination
– With Special Focus on Women, Roma, People with Disabilities, and LGBT people**

Research Report

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Recent study has been prepared by the Institute of Sociology Hungarian Academy of Sciences entrusted by the Equal Treatment Authority in the scope of its project called „TAMOP- 5.5.5/08/1 Combating Discrimination, Shaping Societal Attitude and Strengthening the Work of the Authority”

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Executive Summary

The major objective of the research was to measure the extent of knowledge of one's rights as a victim of discrimination and the different experiences people have related to discrimination on a representative national sample of 1000 respondents, and three sub-samples comprised of people with disabilities, Roma, and LGBT people. This research report is the summary of the first wave results of a two-stage research project.

According to our hypothesis, in the recent developments of the Hungarian society gender inequalities have been reproduced resulting in a wider gender gap, tensions among minorities and the majority grew, vulnerability on the labour market effected larger segments of the population, furthermore, exclusion and stigmatisation increased against people of different sexual orientation.

Socio-demographic characteristics of respondents in the representative sample

The results of the first wave included the socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents, with a special focus on employment and income figures.

Nearly half of the sample were active in employment, one-tenth of the respondents were unemployed, whereas two-fifths of the sample population was inactive on the labour market. Women were clearly at a disadvantage on the labour market as they had a lower activity rate and a much higher inactivity rate. (17% difference among women and men.) Unemployment rates were similar for both women and men.

The major source of income was wages and salary for both men and women. The second most important income source turned out to be the pension, and the third was income from some kind of entrepreneurial activity. Average level of incomes and subjective perception of living standards proved to be somewhat more advantageous for men. The location of people, followed by income levels had a determining impact on the quality of life of the survey respondents.

Values and attitudes in relation to discrimination

We asked the respondents to identify potential causes of social inequalities. The most important factor leading to a disadvantaged situation according to the respondents was alcoholism, followed by other forms of addiction, the malfunctioning of the economic system, as well as the disadvantageous nature of the place of location. The research results have confirmed that respondents can be split into two distinct groups: one the one hand, those who attribute social inequalities to personal reasons and on the other hand, those who associate them with social and structural causes.

Regarding the value preferences of respondents, the research results identified three major value orientations with regard to civil rights: equality, conservative-meritocratic, and orientation based on equity. Respondents could most frequently identify themselves with the

principles of equality (on a scale of five it received 4.5), the second most frequent orientation to which respondents adhered was labelled conservative-meritocratic (with a score of 4.3). Finally, the least frequently chosen value orientation was the principle of equity implying also the positive action for minorities (reaching an average score of 3.7).

Applying factor analysis, three major types of orientations were identified in relation to achieving social justice. The first was called conservative-meritocratic, the second, human rights, finally, the third was labelled redistributionist. Typically, women were more redistributionist in their approach to achieve social justice than men. Furthermore, results showed a rather conservative-meritocratic orientation of people living in villages, while inhabitants of Budapest were most typically characterised by adhering to a human rights approach.

An important aspect of the research was to reveal the attitude of people towards positive action and positive discrimination. The highest degree of agreement (85.9%) was measured in relation to providing barrier-free services for people with disabilities. All other provisions split the group of respondents more radically. Somewhat more than half of the respondents agreed with the idea of employing roma graduates in the civil services, to implement integrated education for children with learning difficulties, to introduce a quota for women in Parliament, or to sanction segregation of roma children at school.

In order to measure attitudes toward positive discrimination, an indicator was created differentiating those who are actively accepting positive action, those who can accept positive action to some degree, those who are neutral, and finally those who reject any type of positive discrimination. Attitudes to positive discrimination varied significantly according to age, gender, place of location, and level of education. Roughly 40 percent of the respondents showed an accepting attitude towards positive discrimination, one-third of the sample was neutral, and a quarter of the respondents were clearly against any positive action.

Personal experiences of discrimination

The central issue of the survey was to gain representative data on personal experiences of discrimination. Overall, more than one-third (36%) of the respondents suffered from discrimination at least on one occasion in the course of their lives. The ratio was not significantly different for men and women. Regarding the personal experiences of discrimination in the last 12 months 14.9 of the respondents reported an event of discrimination. Most typically, people experienced discrimination at their workplace (10.3%) which was followed by institutions of social and health care services (6.9%).

Examining the importance of discrimination on different grounds, the research found *age* to be the most important factor leading to discrimination (15%). The second most important ground of discrimination was *social background* (8.9%); the third most important ground of discrimination was related to *health status* (8.3%). Interestingly, there were only two grounds of discrimination for which men and women were affected significantly differently: gender and marital status.

The phenomenon of multiple discrimination was also uncovered in the research. More than one-fifth of the respondents experienced discrimination on more than one ground. To identify typical groupings of different grounds of discrimination a factor analysis was conducted, leading to the identification of four factors. In order of significance, these factors were labelled as follows: grounds of discrimination linked to *life-cycle and family* (age, gender,

marital status, motherhood) which affected 13.7% of the sample; secondly, *social and ethnic background* (11.7%), thirdly, *health status and disability* (8,1%); and finally, *citizenship and human rights* (including nationality, mother tongue, sexual orientation and identity) which hit 3.3% of the sample. Significant difference was found exclusively in the case of the first factor of life-cycle and family affecting women to a greater extent (16.4% versus 10.5% for men).

Comparing the group of respondents affected and not affected by discrimination, the research revealed no significant differences among group members according to the level of education, gender, and age. On the contrary, the two groups significantly differed in terms of type of location, income levels, and labour market status. The research thus reinforced the previously detected process that discrimination – primarily in employment – leads to worse labour market status and thus to systematically lower income levels.

The perception of discrimination within society

The research aimed to collect updated data on the perception of discrimination within society. Regarding the question on what grounds did respondents personally witness discrimination in the last 12 months, the highest percentage of people reported witnessing discrimination on the ground of ethnic origin, namely against Roma people (18.5%). The second most frequently mentioned ground of discrimination mentioned was age (11.4%), and the third most frequently mentioned ground of discrimination was disability (7.9%).

Respondents of the representative sample had to evaluate the risk of discrimination in different spheres of life ranging from different work-related processes like hiring, pay, firing, etc., to receiving educational, social and commercial services, transportation, or interacting with the police for all three focus groups, Roma, people with disabilities and LGBT people. Except for transportation, Roma people were found to be most at risk to be subject to discrimination. According to the perception of the Hungarian population, Roma people are most at risk for discriminative treatment at the workplace when dismissals are carried out (57%), at the police (56%) and at the hiring process (53%).

Knowledge of the law on equal treatment

More than half (58,8%) of the respondents had heard about the Law on Equal Treatment enacted in 2004 . Knowing about the law on equal treatment was most probable among people with a higher education diploma (77%) and secondary school education (70%), entrepreneurs (67%), students (67%), and the middle generation aged 40-49 years (67%). Among people with a lower level of education, in a vulnerable labour market situation, and of mature age the knowledge of the law was much less frequent. Unfortunately knowledge of the law on equal treatment was less frequent among those who were affected by discrimination (52.0% compared to 59.9% of those who were not affected by discrimination).

Reporting discrimination and legal actions

Despite the high occurrence rate of discrimination and other forms of harassment only very few of the respondents actually reported their case, or made a complaint of any kind. A typical reason given for this behaviour was not knowing to whom they could report their case, or they were sceptical about receiving effective care and support without aggravating their present situation.

To create a typology of reactions given to discrimination the following questions were taken into consideration:

- Did you tell anybody about the discrimination case?
- Did you get informed what you could do in such a case?
- Do you see the rationale for reporting the case?
- Did you actually report your case?

Based on the above responses, a typology of reactions to discrimination was created. As can be seen in the table below, *the passive, the passive lonely, and the resigned* categories of behaviour were the most frequent. The only exception to the general display of behaviour was observed among LGBT people who were most likely to “retreat” from reporting despite seeing the rationale in doing so.

Short name	Description	National sample
Passive lonely	did not tell anybody, no orientation, useless to report, did not report	18.3
Resigned lonely	did not tell anybody, oriented, useless to report, did not report	2.9
Passive	did tell somebody, no orientation, useless to report, did not report	51.0
Resigned	did tell somebody, oriented, useless to report, did not report	12.5
“Windmill warrior”	did tell somebody, no orientation, useless to report, reported	5.8
“Retreated”	did tell somebody, no orientation, useful to report, did not report	1.0
“Informed windmill warrior”	did tell somebody, oriented, useless to report, reported	3.8
“Informed retreatter”	did tell somebody, oriented, useful to report, did not report	1.0
Active	did tell somebody, oriented, useful to report, reported	3.8
		100

Views on the importance of discrimination

One-third of the population considers the issue of discrimination and equal treatment *very important* (33.9%), and roughly half of the respondents consider it *important* (49.2%).

A majority of the respondents (56.9%) consider it a positive idea to ask questions related to roma origin, sexual orientation, and disability of people in the framework of the national census in order to decrease discrimination in the long run. Nevertheless, people do not advocate registering the sexual orientation of people.

Knowledge on the Equal Treatment Authority and the sources of information

Based on the data of the representative sample 30 percent of people have heard about the existence of the Equal Treatment Authority in Hungary, i.e. every third citizen of the country knows about the institution.

The Authority was known to the highest degree among people with higher levels of education (42%), those living in the capital (38%), as well as entrepreneurs (46%). On the other hand, people living in villages, both members of the younger and older generation (31%), and unemployed (20%) and other disadvantaged groups on the labour market tend to have less information about the Authority.

Those who knew of the Equal Treatment Authority accessed information primarily through the television (60%). Other channels of information were much less frequently mentioned, like the radio (18%), friends/acquaintances (17.3%), and newspapers (18%). Among the different channels of television M1 and RTL KLab were the most frequently mentioned sources of information on the Authority. Among the radio channels MR1 Kossuth radio was highlighted.

The Authority itself turned out to be better known than its slogan. 16 percent of respondents knew the slogan „Nem vagy egyedül” (You are not alone) of the Authority.

Nearly 70 percent of the national sample respondents agreed with the idea to make cases and complaints of discrimination publicly available as a means to combat discrimination. There was no considerable difference among men and women in this respect. Similarly, people also agree with the idea of publishing the name of the organisation that has committed the discriminatory act.

The large majority of the respondents have shown trust towards the Authority as 71 percent had already recommended it to their acquaintances or would do so in the future.

Research results related to the subsamples

Roma subsample

More than two-thirds of respondents of the Roma subsample declared that they have already experienced prejudice in their life course. Roma people have to be faced with discrimination in a wide range of fields, with a greater frequency compared with members of our representative sample. Almost three-quarter of Roma respondents have felt racial discrimination, two-thirds of them suffered disadvantage because of skin-colour, 60 percent because of their ethnic minority background, and almost half of them because of their low socio-economic status. Reasons of discrimination varied on a large scale. Among typical reasons of discrimination, being members of a racial-ethnic minority community or having a different skin-colour was frequently mentioned. Stories of experienced discrimination

testified the occurrence of similar examples of unjust treatment from the various fields of life of Roma people as expressed through quantitative data, for example: “*Roma children are separated from non-Roma students in schools*”, “*they were treated differently from majority people by the police*”, “*they were conspicuously observed during shopping*”, “*since he was dismissed because of ethnic background he is not able to find a job*”, etc.

Despite of the wide range of injustice, personal or institutional discrimination destroying the self-esteem of Roma respondents, more than a quarter of them declared that they have never complained about these negative experiences. The few people giving voice of their grievances shared these experiences only with family members, or with close friends. Turning to relevant authorities because of disadvantageous treatment was almost never mentioned.

15 percent of Roma respondents expressed a high level, and 45% a milder level of anxiousness because of becoming a victim of discrimination in the future. Roma respondents seemed to be pessimistic about the future, and this feeling is understandable seeing the lack of equal treatment at the workplace, surviving violent attacks, abusive behaviour, disadvantageous differentiation from the majority of society. They have no hope that this tendency will change in our society.

Despite of the frequently experienced discrimination suffered in different fields of their life, despite the lack of equal treatment, and the high level of prejudice, passivity among Roma respondents can be explained first of all by the lack of information.

Looking back at the last ten years, Roma respondents felt that their situation has worsened instead of improved. Two-thirds of them declared that nothing happened in favour of achieving equal chances for the Roma. It was declared that Roma are the losers of the worsening economical situation: poverty and the level of unemployment have increased, criminality because of deprivation became widespread, and hatred, prejudice against Roma had intensified.

People with disabilities subsample

Respondents living with disabilities encounter serious problems in various aspects of their life. Among the seven groups represented within the subsample, respondents clearly face barriers in the field of work and education, in addition to problems linked to their everyday life. People with physical disabilities were the most likely to assess their situation as problematic (66% in everyday life versus 42% at work and in education), people with hearing loss were the group to report the second highest ratio of barriers experienced (30-17.5%), the third group was people living with sight impairments that experienced barriers (21-13%), they were followed by people with communication impairments and disorders (5.5-10.5%), people with chronic diseases (12.5-19.5%), people with psychiatric diseases (7-11.5%), and those living with unstable mental diseases (8-12.5%). The last four groups' disabilities and impairment are not visible, thus we might infer that these people are leading a life similar to other members of the society.

Obstacles for developing a barrier-free environment raise considerable disadvantages for social integration and the implementation of equal opportunities for people with disabilities. Only 4 percent of the respondents agreed with the statement that institutions and individuals are prepared for the inclusion of people with disabilities. 21 percent of the respondents stated that institutions and individuals are more or less prepared, whereas 38.5% of respondents only agreed with a partial preparedness of the institutions and individuals.

Respondents had to name determining factors of improving the likeliness of social inclusion of people with disabilities. The most important factor identified was the inclusiveness of the majority in society both in terms of attitudes and skills (10.5%). The second most important factor mentioned was the ethical behaviour of workplaces and decision and policy makers (5%). Other factors mentioned were the media (4%), the government (4.5%), and the role of the state (5.5%).

LGBT sample

Within the LGBT sample concerning trust in institutions, trust in educational institutions was the highest, though it was still lower than that of the representative sample. The relatively low level of trust of LGBT respondents in educational institutions can indicate that “Othered” people do not perceive the school environment as tolerant as it should be. LGBT respondents were characterised by a lower than average level of trust in churches and the police, and higher than average level of trust in non-governmental advocacy organisations.

When measuring the agreement level (on a 1 to 5 scale) with the different types of categorization of homosexuality by LGBT respondents, the highest level of agreement was expressed towards the statement that *having a same-sex partner is a basic human right* (mean: 4.7; median: 5), followed by a similarly high level of agreement with defining homosexuality as a private matter (mean: 4.0, median: 5). Defining homosexuality as a *form of behaviour deviating from social norms and rules* was received with a medium level of agreement (mean: 2.8; median: 3), while definitions of homosexuality as a form of sickness or sin against God or society was received with high levels of disagreement (indicated by mean values of 1.5-1.3, and median values of 1).

Concerning the categorization of homosexuality in the representative sample the highest level of agreement was found with the view that homosexuality is a private matter (mean: 4,2), closely followed by the definition of homosexuality as being a *form of behaviour deviating from social norms and rules* (4,04). Defining homosexuality as a *form of sickness* and the view that *having a same-sex partner is a basic human right* reflected the same – relatively high – level of agreement (3.68), while definitions of homosexuality being a sin against God or society were received with the lowest levels of agreement (mean: 2.54; 2.5).

The difference in the categorization preferences among the LGBT and the representative samples reflects different sets of interpretational frameworks related to homosexuality: while the human rights based approach becomes a very relevant one in the LGBT responses, among non-LGBT respondents the medicalisation approach keeps being influential (despite the decades old arguments of the WHO and other professional bodies, emphasising that homosexuality in itself is not an illness).

LGBT respondents reported primarily on verbal attacks: *during the Gay Pride March vulgar words were shouted at them and they were intimidated, with their homophobic neighbours a debate developed into an assault, people made comments about them when they were walking hand in hand* - but discriminative behaviour could also appear during municipal administration or within the family (one can suffer from disadvantages when dividing family goods because of one’s sexual orientation).

According to our LGBT respondents (especially men) discrimination occurs most often in the fields of education, employment and leisure activities, while bureaucratic administration as a potential scene of discrimination of LGBT people was mentioned very rarely.

About half of the LGBT sample reported on experiences of discrimination – mainly on the ground of sexual orientation (72%), 25% mentioned “other grounds”, 24% referred to their gender, while 17% mentioned their age being the potential cause of discrimination. The most often mentioned forms of discrimination included verbal harassment (63%), followed by humiliation (49%), threats of violence (28%) and public humiliation (24%). Reports on being threatened by violence, harassed by offensive graffiti, pelted, assaulted and raped were significantly more widespread among LGBT respondents than in the representative sample.

The more self-conscious members of the LGBT sample (40%) would see the point of reporting cases of discrimination – however, less than 10 per cent of them actually did so. At the same time 20% of them did not tell anyone about their experiences of discrimination. According to most LGBT respondents (50%), the views and the behaviour of society at large should change in order to decrease discrimination of LGBT people. About a quarter of them think that both LGBT people and the majority should try to accommodate themselves to each other, while according to 9% LGBT people should make more efforts in order to contribute to their own social inclusion.

Closing remarks

The present study explored opinions and attitudes concerning disadvantageous differentiation of citizens, and different forms and frequencies of personally experienced or perceived discrimination of different social groups. Both the analysis of the representative survey and of the sub-samples proved that both the fact of discrimination or the perception and opinions related to the unequal differentiation was strongly determined by the social status of the given respondent, depending of his or her level of education, economic and working situation, age group, gender, or ethnic origin, health status or sexual orientation different from the majority population. Prohibition of disadvantageous differentiation, requirement of equal treatment is an idealistic goal that expresses the endeavour of equalizing chances despite of existing differences, based either on structural causes or individual choices.

The research project proved that interdiction of discrimination and the ideal of equal chances exist only in legal documents nowadays in Hungary. Different groups of citizens, although to different extents, suffer from the various forms of discrimination, arising from social inequality and realized through intolerance and prejudice residing in the human way of thinking, while they have only restricted means of fighting against injustice and achieving equitable treatment which is theoretically a right for all. If confidence in different institutions serving citizens strengthened and law-awareness among people increased, familiarity with and frequency of turning to the Equal Treatment Authority could be heightened. Only when all the above conditions are fulfilled can we expect that human equity will achieve a central role in the public discourse.