



FIRST COMPREHENSIVE STUDY OF LGBT+ SERVICE MEMBERS IN UKRAINE



Kingdom of the Netherlands



Donor Disclaimer

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The Situation of LGBT+ Military in Ukraine

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List of abbreviations

AFU	Armed Forces of Ukraine
AIDS	Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome
ART therapy	Antiretroviral therapy
DFU	Defense Forces of Ukraine
ECHR	European Convention on Human Rights (Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms)
ECtHR	European Court of Human Rights
HIV	Human immunodeficiency virus
ICD	International Statistical Classification of Diseases and Related Health Problems
LGBT+	Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and other queer people
MMP	Military medical panel
MoD	Ministry of Defense of Ukraine
NGO	Non-governmental organization
NGU	National Guard of Ukraine
SOGI	Sexual orientation and gender identity
TAHR	Table of Additional Health Requirements
TCRSS	Territorial Center of Recruitment and Social Support
UK	United Kingdom
USA	United States of America

Introduction

Hanna Hrytsenko

The issue of military servants' rights is crucial in the context of maintaining and developing democratic freedoms in Ukrainian society. Despite almost eleven years of war, including three years of its full-scale impact across the entire territory of Ukraine, Ukrainian society has been working on its own democratic development, studying pressing issues and making improvements to facilitate Euro-Atlantic integration and contribute to respect for human rights and freedoms in general.

In the context of the full-scale war, the security and defense sector is one of the country's biggest employers, while military servants are public leaders and agents of democratic social change. For instance, the grassroots campaign Invisible Battalion¹, launched in 2015 as a study of women's situation in the then-anti-terrorist operation² and demands to make combat positions available to women in the military, contributed to subsequent broader work on gender equality and respect for human rights in the AFU, removal of legislative restrictions for women on physically challenging civilian jobs, and broader visibility of women in stereotypically "male" domains. It also encouraged tens of thousands of women to join the AFU.

The issue of respecting human rights in military service should also be viewed in terms of overall performance and professionalism in the military. Mutual respect, equal treatment, trust among fellow soldiers, and respect for everyone's dignity create an effective corporate culture that values professionalism and real contribution and does not disrespect anyone due to their individuality. This will contribute to more effective recruitment and directly impact the use of government funds invested into the soldier's training, the results on the battlefield, and the overall combat capacity of a specific unit and the entire DFU.

The DFU are a cross-section of society, just like any structure that unites different people. According to a study by the Williams Institute, 5.5% of the US adult population identified as LGBT in 2020–2021.³ According to LGBT+ Pride 2021 Global Survey, conducted in 27 countries, 7% of respondents are attracted exclusively or mostly to people of the same sex, 4% equally to both sexes, 83% exclusively to the opposite sex, and 6% were unsure or unwilling to answer. In addition, 1% to 4% of people in each country identified as neither man nor woman (transgender,

1 Invisible Battalion / <https://invisiblebattalion.org/>

2 Martsenyuk, Tamara, Hrytsenko, Hanna, Kvit, Anna, and Berlinska, Mariia, "Invisible Battalion": Women's Participation in Military Operations in the ATO. Kyiv, 2016. / https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1zB8qsXYsQr_bwZ4hw4tpNU1pdUCdoyUG. (in Ukrainian)

3 Flores, Andrew R. "Adult LGBT Population in the United States". Williams Institute, December 2023. <https://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/wp-content/uploads/LGBT-Adult-US-Pop-Dec-2023.pdf>

non-binary, gender-fluid etc., or they refused to answer).⁴ No such surveys have been held in Ukraine, so no data is available. However, assuming that these figures are not country-specific and that Ukraine would have similar proportions, and considering the fact that, in the absence of discrimination against lesbians, gays, and bisexuals at the recruitment stage, they also join the military service in line with their percentages in the population, we can safely assume that 5–10% of military servants out of the 880 thousand members of the AFU⁵ (i.e., at least 44 thousand people) identify as gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgender, and thus constitute the target audience of relevant anti-discrimination policies. However, this figure only comes from extrapolating data from other countries to Ukraine, and more specific information would be impossible to obtain, as many of these people are “closeted” (do not disclose information about their sexual orientation or gender identity) due to homophobia, transphobia, fear of discrimination, and concerns about losing their military career. In addition, there are over 600 members in the association of LGBT+ Ukrainian military servants (as of January 2025), and it verified the presence of LGBT+ in at least 59 units (as of July 2023).⁶

This is the first comprehensive interdisciplinary study of the situation of LGBT+ people who are currently serving in the Ukrainian military or used to do so. It will help to tell society about its defenders and lend more prominence to a largely invisible group of people who perform their service and combat duties alongside others. It also explains the needs, vulnerabilities, and obstacles faced by the LGBT+ people in the military.

Chapter 1 provides an overview of the prior research dedicated to LGBT+ military in Ukraine. Chapter 2 analyzes data of a nationwide representative survey of Ukrainians regarding the adult population's attitude to LGBT+ military servants. Chapter 3 provides an overview of non-discrimination policies towards LGBT+ military personnel in different countries around the world, as well as an overview of the LGBT Military Index analytical tool. Chapter 4 analyzes the legal framework for LGBT+ people serving in the military. Chapter 5 examines coverage of LGBT+ military servants in the media and popular blogs during the full-scale war (a total of 33 media articles published after February 24, 2022, and 7 blogs with an audience of at least 2,000 people). Chapter 6 analyzes data from interviews with six Ukrainian experts. Chapter 7 analyzes data from in-depth semi-structured interviews with LGBT+ military servants (the sample includes gay and bisexual men, lesbian and bisexual women, transgender, non-binary, and bigender people, a total of 22 individuals). Chapter 8 is dedicated to honoring the memory of LGBT+ military personnel.

This study also indirectly refers to the subjects of HIV prevention in the military.

4 “LGBT+ Pride 2021 Global Survey”. IPSOS, 2021. <https://www.ipsos.com/sites/default/files/LGBT%20Pride%202021%20Global%20Survey%20Report%20-%20US%20Version.pdf>

5 Zoryk, Mykola. “33 Years of the AFU: From an Army of a Million to an Army of a Million Again.” Ukrinform. December 6, 2024. <https://www.ukrinform.ua/rubric-ato/3934951-33-roki-zsu-vid-miljonnoi-armii-do-znovu-miljonnoi-armii.html> (in Ukrainian)

6 LGBTIQ+ Military. <https://t.me/lgbtiqmilitary/1611> (in Ukrainian)

In the conditions of combat, due to the increased number of injuries, wounds, exposure to blood, and inability to ensure infection control in all situations, the risks of contracting HIV and viral hepatitis increase. According to the latest data of the Public Health Center on the ways of HIV infection (March 2024), out of 1,038 new HIV cases registered in that month, 772 cases of infection occurred through heterosexual contact and only 31 through homosexual contact, which illustrates that HIV is not specific to people who engage in same-sex intercourse.⁷

However, there is still a stigma around HIV, such as the belief that HIV only affects certain populations, for instance, gay men. This results in discrimination manifested through bullying and isolation, among other things.⁸ The media covered a story of a man engaged in military contract service who found out he was HIV-positive during a scheduled medical exam and reported this to the head of the medical unit, which resulted in a disclosure of his medical information and subsequent threats. Stereotypes that acquired immunodeficiency is a disease of gay men reinforce homophobia in general, create an intersection of discrimination in the event that a homosexual man is indeed HIV-positive, and can complicate access to prevention and testing. In addition, there is a history of HIV prevention practiced in the community of men who have sex with men. Therefore, this study minimally covers the subject of HIV prevention and stigmatization of HIV-positive people in military service, which can be studied in more detail in the future.

The research team is grateful to all respondents, experts, and government agencies who provided information, as well as to Yevheniia Zahrebniuk, Mariia Zviahintseva, Maksym Potapovych, and each and every member of the Ukrainian LGBT+ military community defending this country. First and foremost, the research team is thankful to the Defense Forces of Ukraine for the opportunity to do this work.

7 Public Health Center of Ukraine. <https://www.facebook.com/phc.org.ua/posts/pfbid026HA3svUaCnN39n3RZTw5TKocxYwHFUKDtCPM53dqTvNBhPUQ2DYaKUo5Wzy7FnpDI> (in Ukrainian)

8 Public Health Center of the Ministry of Health of Ukraine. "Why Mental Health Is an Important Factor to Combat HIV/AIDS," December 3, 2024, 2024. <https://www.phc.org.ua/news/chomu-psikhichne-zdorovya-e-vazhlivim-faktorom-u-borotbi-z-vilsnidom> (in Ukrainian)

Methodology

The purpose of the study is to explore the situation of LGBT+ military servants in Ukraine, and its main objectives are to identify the most common problems they face at the service and afterward and to develop recommendations on overcoming them. In addition, the materials of this study will be used to develop an online course for military servants meant to raise awareness of LGBT+ people among AFU personnel and to provide practical advice on the inclusion of this community.

The study was conducted from October to December 2024. It consists of two parts: desk research and field (empirical) research. Desk research includes an overview of some specialized Ukrainian and international studies, including a study of the LGBT+ military community conducted in 2021–2022; an analysis of international experience and best practices of LGBT+ inclusion in the military; analysis of information available in the media; an overview of the legal framework for the service of LGBT+ people in the DFU; results of inquiries sent to central bodies of executive power, including the Ministry of Health, the Public Health Center, and the MoD.

The empirical part of the study was conducted using qualitative and quantitative sociological methods.

The objective of the **quantitative** aspect is to find out public opinion about LGBT+ military personnel. This was done by means of a nationwide survey, carried out by the Info Sapiens company via an omnibus, with the November wave taking place on November 15–27, 2024. The survey was conducted using the CATI (computer-assisted telephone interviewing) method based on a random sample of cell phone numbers and encompassed all regions of Ukraine, except for the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine and territories without Ukrainian cell service. The study sample consists of 1,000 interviews and is representative of Ukrainian men and women aged 16 and over. The theoretical margin of error does not exceed 3.1%, with a probability of 0.95%. Data control was carried out by a controller listening to 10% of the interviews and using logical control of all interviews using special software. Control results verified that all interviews were carried out logically and correctly. Subsequently, the data was processed by converting questionnaires into an SPSS array and application of the weighting procedure by age, sex, region, size of locality, and oblast, to ensure that the distribution of the population aligned with the latest data of the State Statistics Service (as of January 1, 2022). During further analysis of the responses received, the respondents were classified by sex, age, and region of residence.

The objective of the **qualitative** component was to study the personal experience of LGBT+ military servants, the experience that support professionals have with this category, and the representation of LGBT+ military servants in the media. The research team conducted in-depth semi-structured interviews with 10 cisgender men, 4 cisgender women, 1 transgender man, 4 transgender women,

and 3 individuals who identify as non-binary or bigender. Interviews were conducted from October to December 2024 via video and audio communication in Ukrainian and English. The research sample was formed using the key informant method, with respondents being selected from the LGBT+ military association, and the "snowball" method, i.e., respondents were asked to share information about the study with other people who could potentially be interested in participating. The method that was used has certain limitations; for instance, people who do not maintain contact with the community and have no other acquaintances who represent the LGBT+ military could not be interviewed as part of this research. These features of the sample should be taken into account while interpreting research findings.

Respondents were officially informed that the input received from them would be used either on the basis of anonymity and confidentiality, in which case personal information would be removed from quotes in the text, or publicly in a subsequent advocacy campaign. In addition, on grounds of confidentiality and in order to avoid retraumatizing survivors, the text avoids providing detailed descriptions of specific events that would make it possible to recognize a specific event or experience the painful situation again. Respondents were also invited to refuse to answer specific questions if they preferred that, or to end the interview at any point.

The questions were about manifestations of homophobia or transphobia, sexism, and misogyny during military service, the portrait of perpetrators, attempts to resolve these situations; HIV prevention; the need for registered civil partnerships; participation in the association of LGBT+ military servants; relationships with civilians etc.

In addition, six expert interviews were conducted from October to December 2024 as part of this study. The specialists who participated in the study specialize in law, psychology, sexology, and psychiatry. The research sample was formed using the key informant method among experts who are already working with the LGBT+ military association, and the "snowball" method, i.e., respondents were asked to share information about the study with other people who could potentially be interested in participating. The criterion for inclusion was experience with clients who were LGBT+ military servants, and the main research question was about the requests they typically had. However, the experts noted that the sample of openly LGBT+ military servants who had received services from them was quite low, and sometimes, these were isolated cases. This limitation of the study, as well as the low number of "friendly" experts who have experience with the community, should be taken into account while reading the study further.

Key informant and snowball methods were used to find respondents.

To analyze media materials, 33 items were selected from general national and regional media published after the full-scale invasion (October 2022 – December 2024), as well as seven blogs with at least 2,000 followers. Materials for analysis were selected through primary relevant search queries ("LGBT" "LGBT military" etc.) and using the "snowball" method (through related hyperlinks in the primar-

ily selected materials).

Combining several research methods (triangulation) made it possible to collect a range of diverse data and to obtain a more comprehensive picture.

The list of experts is available in **Appendix A**. The list of media materials included in the analysis is available in **Appendix B**. Guidelines for military servants on the course of action if their rights are violated are available in **Appendix C**.



Section 1

Findings of the Study Regarding the Situation of LGBT+ Military Servants in Ukrainian Society

Dzvenyslava Shcherba, Hanna Hrytsenko

Since some military servants do not disclose that they identify as LGBT+ and the subject is overall delicate, the situation and needs of LGBT+ military in Ukraine remain under-researched. However, there was still some pre-existing groundwork.

In 2019, Fulcrum NGO and InMind conducted a study titled LGBT+ Military Servants and Veterans: Visibility and Perception by the Military Fraternity.⁹ The study included focus groups (separately with straight and gay military servants) and in-depth interviews. Straight military servants were found to value primarily the professional skills and traits of character necessary during the service and did not tend to refuse to serve with LGBT+ fellow soldiers, though they are wary of open representatives of the community and are rather not ready for them coming out. They indicated a low awareness of LGBT+ issues (especially transgender issues, since this was a completely unfamiliar subject for some of the participants) and discrimination during military service; however, they are interested in learning more.

The problem of bullying and negative attitudes by colleagues due to homophobia or transphobia were partially raised in the 2020 study Invisible Battalion 3.0. Sexual Harassment in Ukraine's Military Sector.¹⁰ Therein, one gay man and one transgender woman who started military service before transitioning reported being harassed by their colleagues based on their sexual orientation and gender identity, particularly a significant deterioration of attitudes to the non-straight person after them coming out and without any other grounds, threats seemingly not aimed at anyone in particular in the presence of LGBT+ people, a homophobic attitude to people suspected of being gay due to the lack of visible sexual attention to women.

9 "LGBT+ Military and Veterans: Visibility and Perception by the Military Fraternity." NGO Fulcrum, InMind, 2021. https://genderindetail.org.ua/netcat_files/51/59/InMind_fulcrum_ARMY_2019_fin.pdf (in Ukrainian)

10 Martsenyuk, Tamara, et al. Invisible Battalion 3.0. Sexual Harassment in the Military Sphere in Ukraine. Kyiv, 2021. https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/tzB8gsXYsQr_bwZ4hw4tpNU1pdUCdoyUG (in Ukrainian)

In 2021, a Sociology student of the fourth year at the National University of Kyiv-Mohyla Academy, Marta Bodnaruk, defended her bachelor's paper Homophobia against LGBT+ Military in the Armed Forces of Ukraine.¹¹ Her work provides an overview of cases of public homophobia against LGBT+ military servants and describes the activities of NGO Ukrainian LGBT Military for Equal Rights. It also includes materials from in-depth interviews with LGBT+ military servants and expert interviews. The researcher examines the causes of homophobia in the Armed Forces of Ukraine from a cultural (culture, norms and values, stereotypes, religiosity) and psychodynamic perspective (fear of the unknown, fear of otherness, fear of societal reaction, latent homosexuality). According to the researcher, manifestations of homophobia in the Armed Forces are aggravated due to the closed and inaccessible nature of the military, the prevalence of predominantly masculine values, the presence of people who are ideologically hostile to LGBT+, and the lack of response to cases of homophobia in practice.

During January and February 2022, NGO Institute of Gender Programs carried out a small exploratory study commissioned by NGO Ukrainian LGBT Military for Equal Rights to identify problems facing this category of military servants. The study was not published in full, but its results were used for a material published in Gender in Detail.¹² It included 10 in-depth semi-structured interviews with 7 men and 3 women who were on active military duty and belonged to the LGBT+ community. This number was objectively limited due to the beginning of the full-scale Russian aggression, when the respondents were significantly busy in preparation for it, and could not communicate at all after it broke out. The respondents reported that they had encountered negative attitudes towards themselves due to their sexual orientation, i.e. manifestations of homophobia, and subjectively identified this as a common problem.

"Overall, I noticed even back in my unit that nobody accepts it, neither women nor men, nor senior leadership. That is, you have to pretend to be someone else just to avoid being humiliated. I am not out in my unit, so to speak, but I do try to hear people's opinions just to be safe, so to speak. People are essentially negatively minded. As for gay men, this is an entirely different story; it is simply dangerous for them to be here because once they hear there is a gay in the unit or, say, in Lviv, he will not be able to live here."¹³

The respondents believe that military servants responsible for morale and psychological support are currently unable to provide qualified assistance to LGBT+

11 Bodnaruk, Marta. "Homophobia towards LGBT+ military in the Armed Forces of Ukraine." NaUKMA, 2021. <https://ekmair.ukma.edu.ua/server/api/core/bitstreams/6bc74ce7-20f9-47df-b06f-daa0e671e3c9/content> (in Ukrainian)

12 Hrytsenko, Hanna. "Defending the Motherland without Discrimination: LGBT+ People in the Armies of the World and Ukraine." Gender in Detail. 16 August 2023 <https://genderindetail.org.ua/season-topic/dosvidy-viyny/lgbt-lyudi-v-armiyah-svitu-ta-ukraini.html> (in Ukrainian)

13 Ibid.

military servants, and harassment based on sexual orientation is considered one of the numerous shortcomings in the organizational structure within the Armed Forces.

A 2023 study of the Independent Anti-Corruption Commission Discrimination of Different Social Groups in the Armed Forces of Ukraine: Views of the Military and Civilians showed that overall people have a better attitude to LGBT+ military servants than to civilians, and that the attitudes improved since 2014 overall. However, there are cases of unequal attitudes and discrimination during the service, which have little formal manifestation, though certain units even have a reputation of refusing to work with LGBT+ people. The most common problem found by the study was psychological and emotional pressure.¹⁴

Based on the analysis of existing work, it is possible to identify certain patterns characteristic of the LGBT+ military community, apart from the obvious one, which is the fact that they encounter homophobia and transphobia.

First, according to the research,¹⁵ most respondents who identified as part of the Ukrainian LGBT+ military community had enlisted voluntarily, some of them back in 2014, or were contract military servants or regular conscripts at the beginning of the full-scale Russia-Ukraine war.

Secondly, there are differences among the military when it comes to the openness of their sexual orientation or gender identity (SOGI) in their unit, as well as in the attitude of their fellow soldiers after they learned about said identity. The majority of military servants remain closeted during military service to avoid potential conflict or misunderstanding and do not publicly disclose their SOGI. On the other hand, some military servants do openly speak about their identity and non-heterosexuality and are supported and understood. It should be noted that experiences can vary, and it is fairly common for attitude to a military servant in their unit to deteriorate after information about their SOGI becomes public knowledge. However, according to prior research, such cases are not necessarily a trend.

Thirdly, a significant challenge for LGBT+ military in Ukraine is the lack of an opportunity to legally formalize their relationship with their partner.¹⁶ Currently, this opportunity could be provided by the institution of registered civil partnerships (see Chapter 4 for more information).

Overall, the visible movement of LGBT+ military in Ukraine is a precedent that impacts the discourse on LGBT+ people during wars. Western research primar-

14 "Discrimination of Different Social Groups in the AFU: Views of the Military and Civilians." Independent Anti-Corruption Commission, 2023. https://nako.org.ua/storage/pdf/2023-06-06--07:30:08-for%20print%20UA%20RG_NAKO_ComprehensiveResearch.pdf (in Ukrainian)

15 Kasianchuk, Maksym, et al. "Ukrainian LGBT in the Context of the War." Kyiv, Tallinn: IS NAS of Ukraine, KyivPride, Donbas Social Project, 2023. P. 58. (in Ukrainian)

16 "The Situation of LGBTQ in Ukraine in January – June 2024." Human Rights Center "Nash Svit," 2024. <https://gay.org.ua/blog/2024/07/21/stanovyshche-lgbtq-v-ukraini-u-sichni-cherivni-2024-roku> (in Ukrainian)

ily looks at this issue through a rather victimized lens: LGBT+ people are usually depicted as (potential) survivors of homophobic violence and persecution by radical militarized groups.¹⁷ This perspective is partly affected by the fact that researchers have mostly been focusing on military conflict in the Middle East, Africa, and Latin America. For instance, in Syria and Iraq, homophobic violence was not only a tactic used by radical Islamist groups but also part of deliberate government policy which manifested itself in the forms of detention, extrajudicial execution, physical and sexual violence against men and women suspected of being homosexual or transgender.¹⁸

In Ukraine, however, this context is slightly different. LGBT+ people indeed face all the challenges of the war, including persecution, kidnapping, and torture on the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine.¹⁹ However, in addition to that, many LGBT+ people actively engaged in resistance to the Russian military aggression,²⁰ participating in the volunteer movement and activism or joining the Armed Forces of Ukraine. An important role in the visibility of LGBT+ military servants was played by the NGO Ukrainian LGBT+ Military for Equal Rights, registered by the LGBT+ military community in Ukraine – the only organization of its kind in Eastern Europe, which contributes to the visibility of LGBT+ military servants and changing social attitudes to LGBT+ people in Ukraine.

For instance, according to the survey²¹ carried out by the Kyiv International Institute of Sociology "Perception of LGBT People and Their Rights" during May 26–June 1, 2024, 70.4% of the respondents agreed that LGBT people in Ukraine should have equal rights to other Ukrainian citizens. In contrast, as of February 2016, only 33.4% of respondents believed that LGBT+ people in Ukraine should have equal rights to other Ukrainian citizens.²² As of May 2022, this figure had increased to 63.7%.²³ Thus, even since 2022, the number of people who support equal rights for LGBT+ people in Ukraine has been growing.

In addition, according to a telephone survey conducted during May 13–18, 2022, by the Kyiv International Institute of Sociology,²⁴ about 66% of respondents had a

17 Margalit, Alon. "Still a blind spot: The protection of LGBT persons during armed conflict and other situations of violence." *International Review of the Red Cross*, 2019: 1–29.

18 Daigle, Megan, & Henri Myrtilinen. "Bringing diverse sexual orientation and gender identity (SOGI) into peacebuilding policy and practice." *Gender & Development*, no. 26(1) (2018): 103–120.

19 Kasianchuk, Maksym, et al. "Ukrainian LGBT in the Context of the War." Kyiv, Tallinn: IS NAS of Ukraine, KyivPride, Donbas Social Project, 2023. P. 32–50. (in Ukrainian)

20 Iryskina, Inna. "Not the End of the Story: What's Wrong with the Western View of the Ukrainian LGBT+ Community during the War," *Gender in Detail*. 28 June 2022. <https://genderindetail.org.ua/season-topic/dosvidy-viyny/scho-ne-tak-iz-zahidnym-pohlyadom-na-lgbt-pid-chas-viyny.html> (in Ukrainian)

21 KIIS. "Perception of LGBT People and Their Rights in Ukraine: Results of a Phone Interview Held on May 26 – June 1, 2024," 2024. <https://www.kiis.com.ua/?lang=ukr&cat=reports&id=1417&page=1> (in Ukrainian)

22 KIIS. "Attitudes to Gay People: February 2016," 2016. <https://gay.org.ua/publications/soc-poll2016.pdf> (in Ukrainian)

23 KIIS. "Perception of LGBT People and Their Rights in Ukraine: May 2022," 2022. https://gay.org.ua/publications/AReport_NashSvit_May2022.pdf (in Ukrainian)

24 KIIS. "Perception of LGBT People and Their Rights in Ukraine: Results of a Phone Interview Held on May 13–18," 2022. <https://www.kiis.com.ua/?lang=ukr&cat=news&id=1116&page=1> (in Ukrainian)

positive attitude to the participation of LGBT+ people in the defense of Ukraine against Russia's military aggression. In 2023, the figures increased as follows:²⁵ 68% of those surveyed had a positive attitude towards the participation of LGBT+ people in defending Ukraine from Russian military aggression, and 67% agreed with the statement that LGBT+ people should have equal rights as other citizens of Ukraine. After that, in 2024,²⁶ 68% of respondents still had a positive attitude to LGBT+ people's participation in the defense of Ukraine. Thus, we can see that the level of positive attitudes to LGBT+ people engaged in the defense of Ukraine during Russia's full-scale war against Ukraine remains high.

Overall, this change in attitudes can also be explained by processes of European integration:²⁷ homophobia and the narrative on the so-called "traditional family values" contrasted against Western concepts of human rights, gender equality, protection of LGBT people's rights and non-discrimination are typically associated with the concept of the "Russian world" that is, in its turn, actively used by Russian propagandists to justify the war, occupation of Ukrainian cities, and Russia's overall imperial policy towards neighboring nations. Thus, this is also about differences in values.

25 KIIS. "Perception of LGBT People and Their Rights in Ukraine: Results of a Phone Interview Held on May 26 – June 5, 2023," <https://kiis.com.ua/?lang=rus&cat=reports&id=1248&page=1> (in Ukrainian)

26 KIIS. "Perception of LGBT People and Their Rights in Ukraine: Results of a Phone Interview Held on May 26 – June 1, 2024," 2024. <https://www.kiis.com.ua/?lang=ukr&cat=reports&id=1417&page=1> (in Ukrainian)

27 Martsenyuk, Tamara. "To be or not to be: Attitudes of Ukrainian society about gender equality and diversity after Russia's invasion of Ukraine." In *Narrative of Russo-Ukrainian War. A Look Within and Without*, ibidem Press, 2025: 105–112.

Section 2

Public Opinion about LGBT+ Military in Ukraine

Dzvenyslava Shcherba

To obtain data on public opinion about LGBT+ military servants in Ukraine, the research team asked the respondents questions related to egalitarian values, equal rights and opportunities, implementing mechanisms against the discrimination of LGBT+ military servants in the Armed Forces of Ukraine, and European integration processes in Ukraine. In the questions “Do you agree that...” the statement was phrased in a way that did not reproduce homophobia or transphobia.

As Table 1.1 shows, among those surveyed, **19.2% personally know a gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgender person**. 78.6% of respondents answered this question negatively. The highest number of respondents who know a person from the LGBT+ community was found in the 16–19 age category (57.9% of the surveyed answered positively) and 20–29 (37.3%), which may indicate that young LGBT+ people are more likely to speak about their sexual orientation or gender identity openly with their environment. Speaking about the regional aspect, the highest number of respondents who answered positively live in Kyiv, and the lowest – in the east (12.6%).

Table 1.1. **Answers to the question "Do you personally know a lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender person?"** Info Sapiens, November 2024, N=1000

Classification of respondents		Yes	No	Difficult to say
Sex	Female	18,9%	79,5%	1,6%
	Male	19,7%	77,6%	2,7%
Age	16–19	57,9%	42,1%	0,0%
	20–29	37,3%	62,7%	0,0%
	30–39	25,8%	72,8%	1,4%
	40–49	17,2%	80,1%	2,7%
	50–59	13,9%	83,4%	2,7%
	60 +	4,3%	92,2%	3,5%
Region	Kyiv	46,7%	52,6%	0,7%
	Center	17,5%	79,7%	2,8%
	North	17,1%	78,0%	4,9%
	West	15,8%	82,7%	1,5%
	East	12,6%	86,0%	1,4%
	South	20,8%	77,8%	1,4%
Total		19,2%	78,6%	2,2%

Most respondents agreed with the statement that gay, bisexual, and transgender people take part in the country's defense and civic activities just as much as straight people do (see Table 1.2). Namely, 41.3% of respondents completely agreed with this statement, while 30.5% mostly agreed. The largest share of such respondents can be seen in age groups 16–19 (a total of 83.2%) and 20–29 (81%). In the regional aspect, the highest percentage of those who agreed with this statement belongs to Kyiv – 90.5%, but in other regions, this indicator is quite high, too: 73.3% for the North, 70.2% for the Center, 76.7% for the South, and 75.5% for the East. In the west of Ukraine, this indicator is lower than in the other regions – 61%. However, despite these minor differences, we can see overall that most respondents agree that LGBT+ people are engaged in the resistance to the Russian aggression. This contrasts with the narrative spread by opponents of the LGBT+ movement in Ukraine that LGBT+ people are indifferent to the fate of Ukraine and are in no way involved in serving in the ranks of the Armed Forces of Ukraine or volunteering. In addition, this number of positive responses can be explained by the increasing visibility of Ukrainian LGBT+ military servants in society, particularly in the media.

Table 1.2. **Attitude to the statement "Gay, bisexual, and transgender people take part in the country's defense and civic activities just as much as straight people do."** Info Sapiens, November 2024, N=1000

Classification of respondents		Completely agree	Rather agree	Rather disagree	Completely disagree	Difficult to say
Sex	Female	47,5%	29,7%	6,7%	9,9%	6,2%
	Male	34,0%	31,4%	7,6%	18,0%	9,0%
Age	16–19	52,9%	30,3%	8,5%	8,3%	0,0%
	20–29	51,0%	30,0%	2,8%	9,0%	7,1%
	30–39	44,9%	25,4%	10,7%	13,5%	5,5%
	40–49	41,5%	31,3%	11,0%	11,0%	5,2%
	50–59	37,0%	35,3%	4,9%	13,2%	9,6%
	60 +	34,8%	30,9%	5,1%	18,6%	10,6%
Region	Kyiv	56,3%	34,2%	2,9%	3,0%	3,6%
	Center	39,1%	31,1%	6,8%	12,8%	10,2%
	North	45,3%	28,0%	4,7%	11,1%	10,9%
	West	29,7%	31,4%	7,3%	23,5%	8,1%
	East	46,1%	29,4%	6,8%	12,9%	4,8%
	South	47,7%	29,0%	11,5%	8,0%	3,8%
Total		41,3%	30,5%	7,1%	13,6%	7,5%

63.3% of respondents completely or partially agreed with the statement **"Partners of deceased gay, bisexual, and transgender military servants should be considered their family members"** (see Table 1.3). This indicator may also illustrate the general support of military servants and their families, since in all the other questions regarding anti-discrimination policies at the level of the army institution, the percentage of those who agreed with the statement was somewhat lower. In general, as in other questions, within age categories, the highest percentage of respondents who agreed with the statement was recorded in the age categories 16–19 (95.8%) and 20–29 years (69.1%). In the regional aspect, the highest number of positive responses was recorded in Kyiv (77.7%).

Table 1.3. **Attitude to the statement "Partners of deceased gay, bisexual, and transgender military servants should be considered their family members."** Info Sapiens, November 2024, N=1000

Classification of respondents		Completely agree	Rather agree	Rather disagree	Completely disagree	Difficult to say
Sex	Female	40,2%	30,1%	7,7%	11,2%	10,8%
	Male	28,9%	26%	9,9%	20,0%	15,2%
Age	16–19	60,4%	35,4%	0,0%	4,2%	0,0%
	20–29	44,9%	24,2%	7,3%	15,1%	8,5%
	30–39	36,3%	29,1%	12,5%	14,1%	8,0%
	40–49	31,5%	32,0%	13,4%	12,3%	10,8%
	50–59	34,9%	26,5%	5,8%	18,2%	14,6%
	60 +	27,9%	27,0%	6,8%	17,9%	20,4%
Region	Kyiv	55,5%	22,2%	4,4%	5,6%	12,3%
	Center	34,5%	30,7%	7,2%	16,7%	10,9%
	North	36,4%	32,3%	5,3%	13,2%	12,8%
	West	27,6%	23,8%	11,7%	21,4%	15,5%
	East	32,6%	25,6%	13,7%	16,1%	12,0%
	South	38,0%	32,8%	7,4%	9,3%	12,5%
Total		35,0%	28,3%	8,7%	15,2%	12,8%

Answering the question of whether they agreed with the statement "The state should compensate for damage incurred by military servants who experienced repressions in their service due to their sexual orientation or gender identity," **about 57.4% of respondents agreed (28.6% completely agreed, 28.8% rather agreed)** (see Table 1.4). The highest percentage of those who agreed, again, remains in the age category 16–19 (75.7%), but for age categories 20–29 and 30–39, this percentage remains high, too: 63.6% and 64.8%, respectively. In the regional aspect, the highest percentage of respondents who completely or mostly agreed with this statement is the highest for Kyiv – about 68.4%; for other regions, this percentage was quite uniform, with minimal variations: 56.8% for the North, 55.1% for the West, 58.6% for the Center, 58.1% for the South, and 52.7% for the East.

Table 1.4. **Attitude to the statement "The state should compensate for damage incurred by military servants who experienced repressions in their service due to their sexual orientation or gender identity."** Info Sapiens, November 2024, N=1000

Classification of respondents		Completely agree	Rather agree	Rather disagree	Completely disagree	Difficult to say
Sex	Female		30,1%	13,2%	13,2%	14,6%
	Male	28,3%	27,3%	15,0%	18,5%	10,9%
Age	16–19	37,5%	38,2%	14,5%	6,2%	3,6%
	20–29	33,8%	29,8%	14,1%	14,4%	7,9%
	30–39	33,6%	31,2%	16,3%	12,2%	6,7%
	40–49	28,2%	25,4%	17,5%	16,1%	12,8%
	50–59	22,4%	33,3%	14,0%	14,2%	16,1%
	60 +	25,0%	25,0%	10,2%	20,5%	19,3%
Region	Kyiv	40,7%	27,7%	8,9%	10,1%	12,6%
	Center	30,1%	28,5%	15,1%	16,2%	10,1%
	North	26,4%	30,4%	14,4%	15,2%	13,6%
	West	26,5%	28,6%	15,6%	14,4%	14,9%
	East	21,7%	31,0%	12,8%	20,3%	14,2%
	South	30,9%	27,2%	13,5%	15,5%	12,9%
Total		28,6%	28,8%	14,1%	15,6%	12,9%

34.6% of the respondents completely agreed with the statement that "The norms, rules and statutes of the Armed Forces of Ukraine must protect the rights of gay, bisexual and transgender military personnel," another 28.4% rather agreed (see Table 1.5). **Accordingly, the percentage of respondents who agreed with this statement is 62.9%.** As with the previous question, the highest percentage of respondents who agreed with this statement is from the 16–19 age category – 94.7%. However, the percentages of those who agreed with this are relatively uniform in other categories as well: 69.5% for age category 20–29, 62.8% for 30–39, 56.6% for 40–49, 59.7% for 50–59, and 60.7% for 60 and above. Thus, from these responses, we can see that the respondents of different ages mostly supported the statement on the importance of protecting the rights of LGBT+ military servants in the ranks of the Armed Forces of Ukraine. In terms of the regional breakdown, the highest percentage of respondents who agreed with the statement was from Kyiv (74.1%). In the other regions of Ukraine, the responses varied approximately between 63% and 66%: 62.7% for the North, 66.1% for the Center, 62.9% for the South, and 64.6% for the East. In the western region, 55.3% of respondents agreed with this statement.

Table 1.5. **Attitude to the statement "The norms, rules and statutes of the Armed Forces of Ukraine must protect the rights of gay, bisexual and transgender military personnel."** Info Sapiens, November 2024, N=1000

Classification of respondents		Completely agree	Rather agree	Rather disagree	Completely disagree	Difficult to say
Sex	Female	38,4%	30,6%	10,7%	9,6%	10,7%
	Male	30%	25,6%	14%	17,2%	13,2%
Age	16–19	50,9%	43,8%	1,7%	3,6%	0,0%
	20–29	47,8%	21,7%	12,1%	9,4%	9,0%
	30–39	36,7%	26,1%	19,9%	10,5%	6,8%
	40–49	33,4%	23,2%	14,0%	18,6%	10,8%
	50–59	27,8%	31,9%	13,5%	11,6%	15,2%
	60 +	29,0%	31,7%	6,7%	15,4%	17,2%
Region	Kyiv	40,3%	33,8%	6,4%	10,2%	9,3%
	Center	35,3%	30,8%	12,6%	11,8%	9,5%
	North	37,1%	25,6%	10,3%	16,1%	10,9%
	West	28,4%	26,9%	13,3%	14%	17,4%
	East	34,4%	30,2%	9,8%	13,8%	11,8%
	South	38,0%	24,9%	16,0%	12,0%	9,1%
Total		34,6%	28,4%	12,2%	13,0%	11,8%

Finally, 46.7% of the respondents agreed with the statement "The norms, rules and statutes of the Armed Forces of Ukraine that protect the rights of gay, bisexual and transgender military personnel can make the Armed Forces stronger and more effective" (see Table 1.6). Within the age categories, the highest percentage of affirmative responses was found among the respondents of age categories 16–19 (63.8%) and 20–29 (60.3%), and the lowest – 60+ (39.9%). In terms of the regional breakdown, the highest percentage of affirmative responses was found in Kyiv (57.1%). In other regions, the responses vary between about 47% and 53%: 52.7% for the North, 47.8% for the Center, 49.7% for the South, and 47.7% for the East. The lowest percentage of affirmative responses was found in the western region – 36.3%.

Such a decrease in the percentage of affirmative responses compared to the previous questions may indicate that some of the respondents do not fully realize the connection between the combat capability of the army and a non-discriminatory atmosphere in this institution, which is actually relevant not only for LGBT+ people, but for everyone who joins the ranks of the Armed Forces of Ukraine.

Table 1.6. Attitude to the statement "The norms, rules and statutes of the Armed Forces of Ukraine that protect the rights of gay, bisexual and transgender military personnel can make the Armed Forces stronger and more effective." Info Sapiens, November 2024, N=1000

Classification of respondents		Completely agree	Rather agree	Rather disagree	Completely disagree	Difficult to say
Sex	Female	20,9%	31,4%	18,1%	16,3%	13,3%
	Male	17,7%	22,3%	21,1%	26,9%	12,0%
Age	16–19	17,4%	46,4%	22,0%	6,6%	7,6%
	20–29	24,7%	35,6%	19,0%	12,7%	8,0%
	30–39	23,7%	27,8%	24,5%	17,6%	6,4%
	40–49	15,1%	25,0%	21,3%	26,0%	12,6%
	50–59	18,5%	25,7%	21,4%	17,3%	17,1%
	60 +	17,5%	22,4%	13,4%	28,9%	17,8%
Region	Kyiv	23,8%	33,3%	21,4%	12,3%	9,2%
	Center	22,9%	24,9%	16,7%	20,3%	15,2%
	North	19,5%	33,2%	17,1%	20,1%	10,1%
	West	11,5%	24,8%	20,8%	26,5%	16,4%
	East	22,2%	25,2%	20,8%	23,8%	8,0%
	South	21,1%	28,6%	21,5%	17,5%	11,3%
Total		19,4%	27,3%	19,5%	21,1%	12,7%

The general results of the survey regarding the attitude of Ukrainian society towards LGBT+ military servants and the implementation of anti-discrimination norms and practices in the Armed Forces of Ukraine are illustrated in the generalized infographic (see Infographic 1.7).

Statement

Gay, bisexual, and transgender people take part in the country's defense and civic activities just as much as straight people do.



Partners of deceased gay, bisexual, and transgender military servants should be considered their family members.



The state should compensate for damage incurred by military servants who experienced repressions in their service due to their SOGI.



The norms, rules and statutes of the Armed Forces of Ukraine must protect the rights of LGBT+ military servants.



The norms, rules, and statutes of the AFU that protect the rights of gay, bisexual and transgender military personnel can make the Armed Forces stronger and more effective.



Agreement %  Disagreement % 

Overall, the survey found that Ukrainians tend to support expanding the rights of LGBT+ people, particularly those in military service. They agree that LGBT+ people are just as involved in armed resistance to the Russian military aggression and volunteer work as heterosexual people.

The majority of respondents agreed that the rights of LGBT+ military servants should be protected, and those affected by intolerance or discrimination should be eligible for compensation for the damage.

Even though the percentage of respondents who agreed that the protection of LGBT+ people's rights in the Armed Forces of Ukraine can strengthen the AFU is lower compared to the results for other questions, this figure is still quite high.

In addition, survey results illustrated that the youth tends to have a more positive overall attitude to LGBT+ people. This is illustrated by the responses received within the age categories of 16–19 and 20–29.

Similarly, it was found that the highest percentage of respondents who agreed with the proposed statements was in Kyiv; however, in the other regions, even in the west, where the figures were relatively lower compared to the others, the majority of the respondents agreed with the statements proposed during the survey.

Accordingly, based on the results of the survey, we can conclude that Ukrainians, in general, are more supportive rather than hostile towards the protection of LGBT+ military rights in Ukraine.

Section 3

Non-Discrimination Policies Towards LGBT+ Military Personnel in Different Countries. LGBT Military Index

Ivan Diachenko

Policies to protect the rights of LGBT+ people in the military began to spread across Europe and the Americas alongside the LGBT+ community fighting for their rights in various areas; however, it was not always chronologically aligned. In some countries, such as Canada or Sweden, the decriminalization of homosexuality and subsequent policies to combat discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity have contributed to raising the issue in the military. In some other countries, new policies to protect the rights of gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender people during service have resulted from the activities of human rights groups, veteran communities, and organizations focused on LGBT+. Admittedly, first the issues of gay and bisexual men were raised, and only when women were included in the army did the conversation begin about lesbians' rights. As for transgender people, in many countries across the world, they still face insecurity, suspension from service, or danger from their fellow soldiers.²⁸

Implementing policies of inclusion and non-discrimination towards LGBT+ people in the armed forces of various countries is a complex and long-term process, which entails changes not only in official rules, but also in the cultural and social norms in the military environment. This is evidenced by the research of LGBT military servants' experience in the US army in 2016–2018 (after the main steps for LGBT integration in the army were implemented in 2010) – it found that even after certain policies were introduced, there was a lack of role models among the soldiers who would openly speak about their sexual orientation.²⁹ As the experience of different countries has shown, it is usually not enough to fight against the direct exclusion of LGBT+ people from the army to address the issue. Stigma and stereotypes, fellow soldiers' attitude to homosexuality, and the ability to come out all affect the mental state and performance of military servants.

Representatives of minorities, particularly LGBT+ people, face increased stress

28 Dietert, Michelle, & Dianne Dentice. "The Transgender Military Experience: Their Battle for Workplace Rights." Sage Open Vol. 5, no. 2 (April 2015). <https://doi.org/10.1177/2158244015584231>

29 McNamara, Kathleen A. et al. "'Even If the Policy Changes, the Culture Remains the Same': A Mixed Methods Analysis of LGBT Service Members' Outness Patterns". Armed Forces & Society 47, no. 3 (July 2021): 505–29. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0095327X20952136>

levels³⁰ due to the negative perception of their identity in society and in service. This increases the level of mental disorders, particularly depression and suicidal tendencies, which is particularly noticeable among LGBT+ veterans, who tend to struggle much more with their mental health compared to their heterosexual colleagues. Experiencing sexual harassment or bullying while serving only makes the situation worse, as few people seek help due to fear of being outed and possible consequences.

The practices and policies outlined below describe the experience of Canada, Sweden, the US, and the UK. This section also examines the LGBT Military Index as a tool and a study that provides recommendations on the implementation of non-discrimination and inclusion of LGBT+ people in different armies of the world.

3.1. Sweden

Sweden decriminalized same-sex relationships after the end of World War II. Then, the attitude of society and politicians towards homosexuality changed, and it was mostly viewed as a mental disorder. Despite the legality of same-sex relationships, gays, lesbians, and bisexuals were not allowed to serve in the Swedish Armed Forces due to homosexuality and "sexual abnormalities" being on the list of diagnoses in the military medical protocol. Although this did not always apply even to openly gay people, this was still a structural issue that was used to remove them from high positions or to keep them from military service on the grounds of their sexual orientation.

Change began in 1970s–1980s. In 1979, RFSL (the Swedish Federation for Sexual Equality; now the Swedish Federation for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer Rights) accomplished the exclusion of homosexuality from the national list of mental disorders and illnesses, which meant that it could no longer be a reason to stop people from serving in the Armed Forces. Previously, RFSL had been helping gay people who had been dismissed from military service for their orientation to defend their rights and had even won a few cases. Eventually, in 1976, "sexual abnormalities" were removed from the military medical protocol, and being gay or transgender was recognized to be a disease that did not disqualify one from military service. In the 1980 version of the protocol, mentions of homosexuality were removed entirely, citing its removal from the national list of mental illnesses in 1979. Being transgender was still considered a mental illness, but it was indicated that a person with this diagnosis could still qualify to serve in the military if so determined by a medical professional.

Speeches made by the Commander-in-Chief of Sweden also indicate an improvement of LGBT+ people's situation in the army. In 1979, the Commander-in-Chief of the Swedish Armed Forces first spoke about sexual orientation in the military, stating that gay people were perfectly fit for service. At the time,

30 Conway, Morgan A. et al. "The Role of Perceived Support and Perceived Prejudice in the Health of LGBT Soldiers." *Sexuality Research and Social Policy* 18 (25, July 2020): 547–554. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s13178-020-00479-1>

such interventions were necessary not only to improve the legal framework to protect LGBT+ rights in the army, but also to reduce stigma surrounding this issue. It was believed that homosexual people were more susceptible to blackmail and hiding their sexual orientation endangered them. Therefore, it was important not only to allow people to serve in the army regardless of their sexual reputation, but also to create a positive environment in the army for all openly gay people, as well as those who may want to come out at some point.

However, in the 1980s, the trend of protecting the rights of LGBT+ people in the army began to decline. The Swedish Armed Forces Medical Department re-issued the military medical protocol in 1981, listing homosexuality as a diagnosis. Thanks to the efforts made by activists and the aforementioned organization RSFL, changes to the protocol were rolled back in 1983. However, this only came into force in 1989, which meant that a person could be barred from military service due to their sexual orientation for almost ten more years. While the issue of gay military servants was actively discussed, bisexuality as a sexual identity remained unregulated, and the issue of lesbian military servants was mostly irrelevant due to the overall limited access of women to military service, particularly as officers. By 1990s, most gay men in the army were still closeted due to fear of non-acceptance and stigma in the armed forces.

At the time, Sweden adopted a number of civil policies in the 1980s and 1990s that prohibited discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation. The Parliament introduced the position of an Ombudsman (Parliament Commissioner) for Discrimination Based on Sexual Orientation, and the institute of registered partnerships equated same-sex couples to heterosexual ones. With all these changes and an increased representation of openly LGBT+ people in all areas of life, Sweden saw a growing number of complaints about everyday discrimination and violence targeting LGBT+ people in the military, both from within and from outside. During this period, several more statements were issued by commanders-in-chief of the Swedish army, reiterating the right of everyone to serve, regardless of their sexual orientation; however, they noted that Swedish society had to overcome stigma to make military service easier on such people.

The situation began to change in the 2000s due to a series of events and increased public attention to these issues. The first event took place in 2001, when the selection of a military attaché – an official diplomatic position in the Swedish Armed Forces – was restricted and offered only to married men, even though women were already actively engaged in the Armed Forces on all levels. This case is considered the last instance of structural discrimination based on gender identity and sexual orientation in Sweden. It was considered by the Ombudsman for Discrimination Based on Sexual Orientation and the Ombudsman for Gender equality, who prohibited this approach. In addition, in 2001, officer Krister Fahlstedt,³¹ an openly gay military servant, published an article describing his expe-

31 Fahlstedt, Krister. "Föreningen Hof. Nätverk för homosexuella." *Försvarets Forum*, issue 5 (2001): 33–34, mentioned in Sundevall, Fia, & Alma Persson. "LGBT in the Military: Policy Development in Sweden 1944–2014." *Sexuality Research and Social Policy* 13 (2016): 119–129. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s13178-015-0217-6>

rience of discrimination while enrolled in the officer's program at the National Defense College. In the article, he urged LGBT+ soldiers to unite into an organization to defend their rights, which launched the creation of an LGBT+ military organization in the Swedish army.

Due to these and other factors, the new speech of then-commander-in-chief in 2002 regarding sexual orientation significantly differed from the previous ones. It contained not only the standard recognition of the right of LGBT+ people to serve in the military, but also an acknowledgement of his own responsibility for creating a tolerant and supportive environment within the armed forces. At that time, the army introduced the position of LGBT Inclusion Advisor, who was supposed to monitor the implementation of policies for the inclusion of gays, lesbians, and bisexuals in the army structure. The army began to openly participate in equality parades, allowing its soldiers to speak or to be present at such events wearing their military uniform.

The inclusion of transgender people in the Swedish army was a longer, more complicated process, since this issue had even more stigma attached to it. It was only in 2008 that "transgender identity and expression" were added to the anti-discrimination act, and in 2013, previously mandatory sterilization as a prerequisite for legal transition was cancelled.

Thus, the Swedish army underwent significant changes, from banning LGBT+ people from military service to their recognition and inclusion in the defense and security sector. This process was enabled by action both "from above" (official regulations and laws) and "from below" (informal appeals, recognition, permissions, and activists fighting for LGBT+ rights alongside veteran organizations). In many ways, Sweden has curated an image³² as a leading country in protecting human rights and, in line with this image, it tries to implement policies of inclusion and non-discrimination among the first worldwide.

3.2. United States of America³³

Since World War I, LGBT+ people could be banned from the US Army, removed from high positions, suspended to non-combat positions; in addition, military servants could be punished for manifesting "homosexual behavior" to improve morals and discipline. However, in 1990s, the US introduced the Don't Ask Don't Tell policy (DaDt), which prohibited the armed forces from asking about military servants' sexual orientation in any way and thus discriminated against gay, lesbian, and bisexual military servants. This policy also created a safe space for active duty military personnel whose orientation was already known and who had been dismissed from their positions in line with the previous policies. Such people were transferred to new reserve positions until the new policies were imple-

32 Schaffer, Johan Karlsson. "The Self-Exempting Activist: Sweden and the International Human Rights Regime." *Nordic Journal of Human Rights* 38, no. 1 (2020): 40–60. <https://doi.org/10.1080/18918131.2020.1773065>

33 Goodhart, Andrew, & Jami K. Taylor. "LGBT Military Service Policies in the United States." In *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Politics*, 29 May 2020.

mented.

Sexual acts while on duty were still prohibited and punishable under this policy; however, while previously heterosexual sexual behavior had faced much more lenient punishment, now it was equated to homosexual acts. And even though homosexuality was now treated mostly as a private matter, policies still prohibited any homosexual behavior, homosexual relations, and open recognition of one's non-heterosexual orientation. Those whose orientation was already known were allowed into service as long as they refrained from mentioning their orientation and from any homosexual behavior in the future.

In 2010, politics began to change. The army stopped accepting anonymous reports on the orientation of a particular military servant. Another thing happened at the time. While previously, the DaDt policy was implemented by a presidential decree, in 2010, it was adopted by the Constitutional Court and signed by the president. The policy thus entered into force in a new form. The law now allowed openly gay and bisexual people to serve in the army; however, "sodomy," that is, sexual relations between men, while on duty, was considered a criminal offense up to 2014. Eventually, this, too, was decriminalized. Later that year, gay spouses in the army were granted the same benefits as heterosexual spouses.

The policies described above worked well with gay, lesbian, and bisexual people, but did not apply to transgender people. They were still subject to bans and were prohibited from military service. The situation changed in 2016, when the US Deputy Secretary of Defense introduced a ban on denial of military service based on a person's gender identity. As a result, transgender people already in service could no longer be discharged or transferred because of their transgender status, and they were also allowed to transition to their desired gender without restrictions from the army. However, they could still be transferred for other reasons. Service members who were in the process of transitioning or with a history of gender dysphoria were required to have completed transition and demonstrated clinical stability for 18 months prior to service. The first administration of US President Donald Trump, during his 2016–2019 term, tried to roll back the changes, but failed due to clashes with the constitutional court. However, immediately after Trump's reelection, this ban was lifted again.

Thus, inclusion and non-discrimination policies in the US are still at the stage of implementation and formation, and given the election of Donald Trump as US President, LGBT+ people may once again face structural restrictions in the US military.

3.3. The UK

In the UK, the ban on military service for gay people remained in place until 2000 under the pretext of protecting discipline and morale in the military,³⁴ as

34 Bowring, Michele, Jo Brewis. "Navigating Service and Sexuality in the Canadian, UK and US militaries." *B Sexual Orientation at Work: Contemporary Issues and Perspectives*, 29–30. Routledge, 2014.

mentioned in the 1996 report of UK Defense Ministry: "homosexual behavior can cause offense, polarize relationships, induce ill-discipline, and, as a consequence, damage morale and unit effectiveness."³⁵

The ban in the British army was lifted due to a series of court investigations. Back then, military personnel were suspended from service when their sexual orientation was discovered. But some of them went to court to defend their right to serve, since homosexuality was decriminalized in the UK back in the 1960s. The case then went through all levels of the United Kingdom court system and reached the European Court of Human Rights, which recognized this suspension to be an interference with the applicants' personal lives. After 10 years of court proceedings, the ban on service for gay people was lifted.

The movement for LGBT+ support in the army is associated with the activities of the human rights organization Stonewall, because after court hearings supported by them, the British army began to work with Stonewall Diversity Champions (companies that had already implemented such policies) to implement equality policies in the place of duty. After gay people were allowed to serve, the Marines and other units began actively recruiting them, and gays and lesbians started participating in equality parades in full military uniform.

In contrast to other countries, both researchers and the armed forces themselves have stated at various times that the implementation of policies to include LGBT+ people in the army structure did not cause any resistance from official structures or society, nor were there any difficulties. Indeed, non-discrimination policies were received positively, likely due to the many years of anti-discrimination laws concerning LGBT+ people that had been in place in the UK. The assistance of civil society organizations in this process, such as Stonewall, made it possible to engage the necessary experts and use their experience to implement the relevant policies effectively. Indeed, the UK Armed Forces still rank high as an employer in terms of workplace inclusivity.

3.4. Canada

In 2017, the Canadian Government formally apologized to all military personnel, police officers, and public servants who were affected by the government's prior discriminatory policies.³⁶

"Now imagine, if you will, being told that the very country you would willingly lay down your life to defend doesn't want you. Doesn't accept you. Sees you as defective. Sees you as a threat to our national security. Not because you can't do the job, or because you lack patriotism or courage—no, because of who you

35 "Report of the Homosexuality Policy Assessment Team." Ministry of Defence, 1996. [https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/ukgwa/20121026055214// http://www.mod.uk/NR/rdonlyres/C801AAED-2EFE-4D33-A845-EFD-103438BF2/0/HPAT_report_Feb_1996.pdf](https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/ukgwa/20121026055214//http://www.mod.uk/NR/rdonlyres/C801AAED-2EFE-4D33-A845-EFD-103438BF2/0/HPAT_report_Feb_1996.pdf).

36 Bowring, Michele, Jo Brewis. "Navigating Service and Sexuality in the Canadian, UK and US militaries." *B Sexual Orientation at Work: Contemporary Issues and Perspectives*, 27–29. Routledge, 2014.

are as a person, and because of who your sexual partners are." (Justin Trudeau, 2017)³⁷

Trudeau mentioned the discrimination of gay, bisexual, and transgender people by the government and by other people starting from 1940s. After 1988, Canada allowed service for LGBT+ people, and in 1992, anti-discrimination and accessibility policies began to be developed. While many openly gay men still did not join the military due to the risk of discrimination and intolerance, those who had already served and came out as LGBT+ were not discharged, but were sometimes removed from their positions or transferred, allegedly for security reasons. In the 2000s, the rules for responding to sexual harassment were changed to explicitly include that both men and women can be affected by sexual harassment, and both can be perpetrators, regardless of sexual orientation. Such changes were intended to reduce the stigma surrounding homosexuality in the military and provide necessary protection for survivors of sexual violence.

A 2000 study examining the effects of lifting of the ban on military service in the Canadian Armed Forces for gay people also found that the percentage of women service members who had experienced sexual harassment in the previous 12 months had almost halved since the lifting of the ban, in part because after the ban was lifted, women were able to freely report violence without fear of being blamed and subsequently dismissed as lesbians.³⁸

3.5. LGBT Military Index

The LGBT Military Index 2014 is one of the first large-scale reports to assess the level of inclusion and protection of LGBT+ rights in the armies of various countries. This index was developed by the International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, and Intersex Association and other human rights organizations to analyze how inclusive the armed forces in different countries are towards LGBT+ people and how they adhere to non-discrimination principles. This index is not only a tool for measuring the openness of the world's armies towards LGBT+ people, but is also part of a larger study on strategies for including LGBT+ people in the world's armies (LGBT Military Personnel: A Strategic Vision of Inclusion³⁹).

This study divides global policies regarding LGBT+ people in the military into 5 groups according to the dominant principle:

37 Trudeau, Justin. Remarks by Prime Minister Justin Trudeau to apologize to LGBTQ2 Canadians, 2017. <https://www.pm.gc.ca/en/news/speeches/2017/11/28/remarks-prime-minister-justin-trudeau-apologize-lgbtq2-canadians>.

38 Belkin, Aaron, & Jason McNichol. "Effects of the 1992 Lifting of Restrictions on Gay and Lesbian Service in the Canadian Forces: Appraising the Evidence." Santa Barbara: University of California, 2000. https://web.archive.org/web/20110725185044/http://www.palmcenter.org/publications/dadt/effects_of_the_1992_lifting_of_restrictions_on_gay_and_lesbian_service_in_the_canadian_forces_appraising_the_e

39 Polchar, Joshua, Tim Sweijts, Philipp Marten, & Jan Galdiga. LGBT Military Personnel: A Strategic Vision for Inclusion. The Hague, The Netherlands: The Hague Centre for Strategic Studies, 2014.

1. Inclusion: Maximum inclusion of individuals into the system for its effective functioning. The principle of inclusion not only allows LGBT+ people to freely serve in the army, but also provides all the necessary rights in the army regardless of sexual orientation. This principle also includes informal institutional support and working with culture in the military to reduce stigma around the LGBT+ community.

2. Admission: LGBT+ individuals are allowed to serve and acknowledged, but their engagement, inclusion, and creating a safe space for them are not necessarily taken into account.

3. Tolerance as a principle means that homosexual behavior and the option to choose gender identity in the army are tolerated, but there are often structural restrictions on the service of openly gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgender individuals at higher levels.

4. Exclusion is a principle when LGBT+ people are barred from serving in the army. Being homosexual or transgender is considered an illness incompatible with military service.

5. Persecution as a principle not only prohibits LGBT+ people from serving in the military, but also persecutes and punishes any manifestations of homosexual behavior within the military.

Accordingly, in this distribution, inclusion is considered the best principle for building anti-discrimination policies concerning LGBT+ people in the military and describes the best practices.

Leadership, training and code describe working with armed forces personnel to prevent and eliminate harassment, discrimination, hate speech or violence based on people's sexual orientation or gender identity. Fostering a culture of inclusion among leaders can be effective, given that hierarchy and respect play a key role in the military. Therefore, implementing training for personnel and incorporating non-discrimination policies into codes can lay the structural foundation for policies for the inclusion of LGBT+ people in the military.

Support networks and mentors: the practice of uniting people for peer-to-peer learning. Creating networks of LGBT+ people in the military helps strengthen a sense of community, contribution, and security. LGBT+ military networks, organizations, and associations can provide the necessary legal protection, create support and interaction groups. Such groups often establish NGOs and work with the army.

Antidiscrimination as a practice recognizes the existence of discrimination and prohibits it at all levels. The key here is not only the existence of antidiscrimination policies, but also specifying non-discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity, which becomes the basis for protecting the rights of LGBT+ people in the army.

Recognition of relationships means affording LGBT people in same-sex rela-

tionships the opportunity to have their relationships officially recognized equally to heterosexual ones. It primarily means that there is an official mechanism to record a relationship, from the institution of cohabitation or registered partnerships to legalization of same-sex marriages. The key aspect is equal rights for same-sex couples with straight couples. Recognizing them as equals and providing equal opportunities reduces the stigma surrounding the LGBT+ community, makes it easier for people to stay in the military when they no longer have to worry about the safety of their partners if their relationship is discovered, and also opens up access to a wider range of social support for same-sex couples.

Recognition of gender is a practice that mostly concerns transgender people and their identities. Enabling transgender people to serve in the military in their preferred gender without undergoing additional medical procedures or obtaining court approvals contributes to their better inclusion in the military. The fewer structural barriers to recognizing the change in an individual's gender expression, the easier it is for transgender people to be included in the general structure of the army.

The study also pays special attention to international cooperation and foreign service of LGBT+ military personnel. Since military personnel may serve in other countries, conduct overseas training, or participate in such training, it is important for the governments of such countries to work together in order to protect the rights of LGBT+ military personnel based overseas or on active duty overseas.

Therefore, policies on the inclusion and non-discrimination of LGBT+ people in the armies of different countries around the world are associated with increasing the visibility of gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender people in all areas of social life. LGBT+ people's fight for their rights in all the cases reviewed in this section became the starting point for the introduction and implementation of new approaches in the armed forces. However, army institutions are also interested in including all social groups, and the new policies of non-discrimination and support of LGBT+ military servants have a pragmatic foundation as well, since LGBT+ people can effectively serve in the military and perform their duties regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity. The implementation of policies to include LGBT+ people in the army has contributed not only to the fight for LGBT+ rights in this area, but also to improving the performance of the army at all levels.

When new policies were introduced and implemented, the key aspects included not only formal changes in the legislation, military statutes, or medical standards, but also informal statements of support and official recognition by the government of mistakes and discrimination faced by LGBT+ military servants. These measures were strengthened by the attendance of pride parades by LGBT+ military associations and the cooperation of the armed forces with human rights organizations and LGBT+ veteran groups. This cooperation provided armies with the necessary experience of including LGBT+ people.

Section 4

The Legal Status of LGBT+ People in the Military

Olha Poliakova, Nataliia Radionova

This section addresses the general legal framework under which LGBT+ people serve in the military, as well as the specific legal issues they may face. Addressing these problems will be a significant step towards respecting human rights.

4.1. Legal Framework for Gay and Bisexual People's Military Service

Ukraine's national legislation does not have any restrictions or prohibitions regarding access of gay and bisexual people to military service (nor did the legislation of the Ukrainian SSR), unlike some other countries, where such restrictions used to be in place (see examples above in Chapter 3). This indicates that there is no discrimination or legal obstacles to join military service.

4.2. Legal Framework for Transgender People's Military Service

The issue of whether transgender people in Ukraine are fit for military service is quite contentious, particularly during martial law. People who start gender transition are diagnosed by medical professionals with "transsexualism" or "gender dysphoria" (F64.0 and F64.8, respectively, according to the 10th version of the International Classification of Diseases, hereinafter ICD-10).⁴⁰ They indicate that a person is completely unfit for military service, but only in peacetime. This is taken into account if these characteristics are prominent. However, if the outside manifestations are more subtle, these diagnoses can make a person unfit for service in peacetime, but fit to a certain degree during wartime. In practice, this is determined by a specialized medical commission, for example, at a regional psychiatric hospital.

Without a medical opinion, transgender women whose documents indicate that they are male are subject to conscription into military service. Transgender people can also enlist voluntarily regardless of their documents.

According to the Order of the MoD No. 402,⁴¹ the military medical panel shall

40 ICD-10 Version:2019 <https://icd.who.int/browse10/2019/en>

41 Order of the Ministry of Defense of Ukraine No. 402 of 14.08.2008 "On Approving the Regulation on the Military Medical Expertise in the Armed Forces of Ukraine" <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/z1109-08#Text> (in Ukrainian)

make its decisions based on the Schedule of Diseases, Conditions, and Physical Defects, which determine the degree of fitness for military service (hereinafter Schedule of Diseases, Appendix 1 to the order), explanations on the provisions in the document (Appendix 2), and tables of additional health requirements (hereinafter – TAHR) (Appendix 3). The current Schedule of Diseases was developed in line with the requirements of ICD-10.

When a person has made the physical and hormonal transition but has not completed the legal steps, that is, has not yet changed the personal documents, they can be found unfit for service by a specialized commission if summoned to a military medical panel. However, a person who completed their transition and obtained the new documents, in the absence of other medical conditions indicated in the Schedule, may be recognized fit for military service.

In response to an inquiry sent by NGO Gender Stream, the Health Department under the MoD reported (outgoing No. 220/20/VykhZVH/66 of December 5, 2024) also reported: "Transsexuality is formally recorded in the International Statistical Classification of Diseases and Related Health Problems (ICD) of the 10th version as a diagnosis encoded F64.0 'Transsexualism.' According to Article 18 of Appendix 1 to the Regulations on Military Medical Examination in the Armed Forces of Ukraine, 'On Approval of the Regulations on Military Medical Examination in the Armed Forces of Ukraine', persons with such a diagnosis are unfit for military service in the presence of a grave disorder, with a tendency to repeated prolonged decompensations or pathological reactions, or fit for service in military support units, such as recruitment centers, higher educational establishments, training centers, institutions (establishments), medical units; logistics, communications, operational support, security units, in the case of a moderately expressed disorder with unstable compensation or fully compensated."

Additionally, it is reported that the content and procedure for applying the articles of the Schedule of Diseases were determined by the main experts of all medical specializations of the Armed Forces of Ukraine and the Ministry of Health of Ukraine based on years of research and dynamic observations of military servants' health.

After ICD-11 is implemented in Ukraine, the Schedule of Diseases and, accordingly, the health-related criteria for transgender or HIV-positive people serving in the military will be reviewed in accordance with the due procedure.

4.3. Legal Framework for HIV-Positive People's Military Service

The Schedule of Diseases (Appendix 2) to the Order of the Ministry of Defense No. 402 "On Approval of the Regulation on Military Medical Examination in the Armed Forces of Ukraine," Article 5 determines the issue of individuals' fitness for military service if they have HIV, (B20–B24) or are asymptomatic HIV carriers (Z21). In accordance with the Schedule, individuals are fit for military service if they have a stable HIV-related condition or are asymptomatic carriers of HIV with immune compensation (Art. 5V); that is, such individuals must have a controlled level of viral load in their blood, which is possible to accomplish with regular ART

therapy, and the disease itself must be asymptomatic, that is, in stage 1 or 2.

If a person has an HIV-related disease with immune subcompensation (i.e., with existing non-critical changes in certain body systems, due to which he or she may have certain restrictions regarding the conditions of service and permissible workload, including physical load), such a person is recognized fit for service in military support units, recruitment centers, higher educational establishments, training centers, institutions (establishments), medical units; logistics, communications, operational support, and security units (Article 5-V), i.e., only where there is no need to participate in combat missions.

People with advanced HIV disease, with immune decompensation, usually clinical stage 4 (AIDS), in which developed disorders and serious diseases caused by the presence of HIV are established, are recognized as unfit for military service and are excluded from military registration.

To date, there is no separate legislative mechanism enabling military servants' access to uninterrupted ART-therapy with regard to the conditions of their military service and performance of combat missions. This is evidenced, among other things, by the response of the Public Health Center under the Ministry of Health of Ukraine of December 4, 2024, to the inquiry of NGO Gender Stream, which says, "As for the existing procedures and policies for military servants' access to ART. In Ukraine, military personnel living with HIV have access to ART in accordance with the legislation of Ukraine, like any other person staying on the territory of Ukraine" – and no specific mechanism or reference to regulatory acts that would specifically establish military personnel's access to ART was provided.

4.4. Legal Issues Faced by LGBT+ Military Personnel

Despite the lack of legislative recognition of same-sex partnerships, there are discussions⁴²⁴³ underway in Ukraine on the implementation of civil (registered) partnerships, which may improve such couples' legal standing. For LGBT+ military personnel, the ability to register a partnership is crucial, as this would enable their partners to visit them in hospital or retain partner rights in case of their death. The petition in support of the draft law on civil partnerships No. 9103, initiated by military servant Petro Zherukha, received the 25,000 votes necessary for consideration and received a response from the President of Ukraine that he had asked the Speaker of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine to consider the issue

42 "Stefanchuk Criticizes Current Version of Draft Law on Civil Partnerships." Ukrinform, 27 July 2024. https://www.ukrinform.ua/rubric-other_news/3895687-stefancuk-rozkritikuvav-ninisnu-redakciu-zakonoprojektu-pro-civilni-partnerstva.html. (in Ukrainian)

43 Yuzyk, Iryna. "Red Light for European Integration: How MPs Block Law on Civil Partnerships." ZMINA. 10 July 2024. <https://zmina.info/articles/chervone-svitlo-yevrointegracziyi-yak-narodni-obranczi-blokuyut-yevrointegracziynyj-zakon-pro-czyvilni-partnerstva/>. (in Ukrainian)

raised in the electronic petition.⁴⁴ In addition, this draft law is one of the legislative changes that the European Union expects Ukraine to implement.⁴⁵

There are gradual steps being taken towards reforming legislation aimed at expanding the rights of the LGBT+ community. The proposed draft laws on civil partnerships could bring the country closer to international human rights standards, meeting European Union requirements and democratic principles.

However, draft law 9103 on civil partnerships, proposed in 2023 by a group of MPs,⁴⁶ has not yet been adopted by Ukrainian lawmakers, which, in turn, leads to a situation when, due to the ban on entering into partnerships or marriage, gay, bisexual, and transgender Ukrainians are deprived of a number of rights that heterosexual couples enjoy. They cannot receive inheritance, use jointly acquired property or divide it in the event of divorce, and they are not entitled to make medical decisions for their partner. In practice, this means that partners may simply not be admitted to the hospital, may not be allowed to participate in identifying the body in the event of death, or may not even have the right to receive their deceased partner's body for burial. Such partners do not have access to any benefits or the opportunity to apply for monetary compensation while the person is in captivity, or the right to receive monetary benefits in the event if their partner goes missing in action; furthermore, they cannot use the right to receive monetary compensation in the event of their partner's death. Under current legislation, the state unconditionally grants these rights to family members of the military servant only: spouse, parents, children, dependents. The regulatory framework does not provide for any category of persons who may be actual partners of military servants. This leads to discrimination against such families and partners on the basis of sexual orientation.

The only alternative in this uncertain situation for civil partners to access at least part of the due payments in the event of a partner being captured, missing in action during service, or death, is the recent legislative changes introduced to allow military servants to identify individuals when drawing up personal orders to receive the one-time financial assistance in the event of their death (Law of Ukraine "On Amendments to Certain Legislative Acts of Ukraine Regarding the Assignment and Payment of a One-Time Financial Assistance" No. 3515-IX of December 9, 2023, as amended on March 29, 2024)⁴⁷ or financial support in case if the military servant is taken prisoner or goes missing in action. These innovations

44 Zherukha, Petro. "For Registered Partnerships for Same-Sex and Opposite-Sex Couples, in Support of Draft Law No. 9103 'On the Institution of Registered Partnerships.'" Electronic petitions. Official Online Office of the President of Ukraine, 2023. <https://petition.president.gov.ua/petition/185864>. (in Ukrainian)

45 Yuzyk, Iryna. "Red Light for European Integration: How MPs Block Law on Civil Partnerships." ZMINA. 10 July 2024. <https://zmina.info/articles/chervone-svitlo-yevrointegracziyi-yak-narodni-obranczi-blokuyut-yevrointegracziynyj-zakon-pro-czyvilni-partnerstva/>. (in Ukrainian)

46 Draft Law "On the Institution of Registered Partnerships" No. 9103 of 13.03.2023 <https://itd.rada.gov.ua/BILLINFO/Bills/Card/41497> (in Ukrainian)

47 Law of Ukraine "On Amendments to Certain Legislative Acts of Ukraine Regarding the Assignment and Payment of a One-Time Financial Assistance" No. 3515-IX of December 9, 2023. <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/3515-20#Text> (in Ukrainian)

were the first case when military servants were granted the right to choose the individuals who can act in the capacity of their family members other than the established list of persons recognized as family members in the Family Code of Ukraine. That is, now, military servants can make personal orders to assign these cash payments fully or partially to civil partners. This partially compensates for the current situation when there is no legislation recognizing the rights and obligations of civil partners in this context.

The Law of Ukraine No. 3995-IX of October 8, 2024,⁴⁸ approved by the Parliament and signed by the President (enters into force in two months after the date of its publication and is put into effect from the first day of the subsequent month), which amended Article 9 of the Law of Ukraine "On Social and Legal Protection of Military Servants and Members of Their Families," will enable service members to identify family members or other people (not considered family members according to the Ukrainian legislation) at their own discretion who are entitled to their monetary compensation if they are taken prisoner or go missing in action.

According to the document, military servants taken prisoner or hostage, as well as interned to neutral states or gone missing, remain entitled to monetary benefits until the establishment of all circumstances, but no longer than the day of removal of such a military servant from the staffing list of the respective military unit.

To do this, the military servant must draw up a personal order, determining the shares to be received by such persons or the recipient of the entire payment, and submit it to the commander of the military unit.

In the absence of such an order, the payment of cash benefits will be made in equal shares in order of priority among family members (i.e., partners who are not spouses cannot be included).

The original personal order shall be stored in the military servant's file.

The situation with the rights of civil (registered) partners of military servants can be improved with the adoption of draft law No. 12252 "On Amendments to Certain Legislative Acts of Ukraine for Their Alignment with the Requirements of Article 8 and 14 of the ECHR and Council (EU) Regulation 2016/1104 on implementation of enhanced cooperation in the area of jurisdiction, applicable law and the recognition and enforcement of decisions in matters of the property consequences of registered partnerships."⁴⁹ This draft law proposes introducing the

48 Law of Ukraine "On Amendments to Article 9, clause 6 of the Law of Ukraine 'On Social and Legal Protection of Military Personnel and Members of Their Families' Regarding Financial Compensation of Military Servants Taken Prisoner or Hostage, as well as Interned in Neutral States or Gone Missing in Action" No. 3995-IX of 08.10.2024 <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/3995-20#Text> (in Ukrainian)

49 Draft law "On Amendments to Certain Legislative Acts of Ukraine for Their Alignment with the Requirements of Article 8 and 14 of the ECHR and Council (EU) Regulation 2016/1104 on implementation of enhanced cooperation in the area of jurisdiction, applicable law and the recognition and enforcement of decisions in matters of the property consequences of registered partnerships" No. 12252 of 27.11.2024. <https://itd.rada.gov.ua/billinfo/Bills/Card/45293> (in Ukrainian)

institution of registered partnerships, which will be available to both heterosexual and same-sex couples. If adopted, this draft law will align Ukraine's legislation with the requirements of Articles 8 and 14 of the ECHR and will end the violation recognized by the ECtHR decision in "Maymulakhin and Markiv v. Ukraine."⁵⁰ The case concerns two men who have been living together since 2010 and believe that their lack of opportunity to marry or enter into any other type of civil union constitutes discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation. After the outbreak of the full-scale war, one of the applicants joined the National Guard of Ukraine, where he learned that in the absence of a wife, in the event of his death, the information would be shared with his mother. The ECtHR ruled in its decision that the lack of legal recognition and protection for same-sex couples violates the ECHR, namely Article 14 (prohibition of discrimination) in conjunction with Article 8 (right to respect for private and family life).

The draft law contains amendments to 47 legislative acts, including the Family Code of Ukraine, the Labor Code of Ukraine, the Economic Code of Ukraine, the Economic Procedural Code of Ukraine, the Civil Procedural Code of Ukraine, as well as Laws of Ukraine "On Private International Law," "On State Registration of Civil Status Acts," "On Social and Legal Protection of Military Servants and Their Family Members," "On the Status of War Veterans, Guarantees of Their Social Protection" etc.

The draft law defines a registered partnership as a civil status act subject to state registration for the purpose of official recognition and confirmation by the state of the legal relationship between two adults, their mutual rights and obligations.

This draft law initiates the inclusion of registered partners in the list of close relatives/family members of a military servant, who, in the event of their disappearance, capture, or death, will have the right to receive financial support, payment of one-time assistance, as well as the right to a leave from work for family reasons in the event of a serious health condition or death of the registered partner, and will also establish privileges in access to health care and medical services for registered partners of military servants, as well as other social benefits that are currently defined by law only for members of the military servant's family.

Among grounds for deferment of military conscription in peacetime, this draft law includes pregnancy of the registered partner; it also adds grounds to be dismissed from military service due to constant care for an ill registered partner or

50 Case "Maymulakhin and Markiv v. Ukraine" (European Court of Human Rights, 1 June 2023). <https://hudoc.echr.coe.int/eng?i=001-230201>

having a registered partner with disability of category 1 or 2; appoints a pension for registered partners in the event of losing the breadwinner, and regulates the institution of joint property ownership.

The implementation of such changes to the legislation will become an important positive step to recognize the institute of registered partnerships and protect the rights of military servants' partners, contributing to Ukraine's further integration into the European legal space.

4.5. Inclusion of LGBT+ People in the Military

Current statutes and other internal documents that govern the issue of service in all types of military, as well as existing legislation on the rights and benefits of veterans (Law of Ukraine "On the Status of Military Service Veterans, Veterans of Internal Affairs Bodies, Veterans of the National Police and Certain Other Persons and Their Social Protection" of dated March 24, 1998, No. 203/98-VR, as amended on March 31, 2023)⁵¹ are not inclusive of LGBT+ people, as they do not contain recognition of such groups of people and their needs. Nor do they include any other specific groups, only including the general category of military servants in the legislation, thus having uniform rights, obligations, and benefits for all groups. At the same time, neither do they contain any discriminatory restrictions nor prohibitions for the LGBT+ community on access to military service or to the rights and benefits of military servants and veterans; however, they also do not regulate access of such military servants' and veterans' partners to benefits, only reserving that right for family members defined by the current Ukrainian legislation, which has not recognized the institution of civil partnership as of now.

There is no formalized special mechanism that would be enshrined in the law to prevent and combat SOGI-based bullying in military service as of January 2025. Offenses committed by military personnel against other military personnel during their service are considered "non-statutory relations," and depending on the severity of the consequences, the offender may face disciplinary or even criminal liability.

At the same time, in response to an inquiry by Gender Stream about a mechanism to prevent and combat SOGI-based bullying in military service, the Health Department of the MoD responded (outgoing. No. 220/20/VykhZVH/66 of 05.12.2024) that in its activities concerning this issue, the MoD is guided by the Constitution of Ukraine, Laws of Ukraine "On Public Service," "On the Principles of Prevention and Combating of Discrimination in Ukraine," "On Ensuring Equal Rights and Opportunities of Women and Men," And the State Strategy for Ensuring

⁵¹ Law of Ukraine "On the Status of Military Service Veterans, Veterans of Internal Affairs Bodies, the National Police, and Certain Other Individuals and Their Social Protection" of March 24, 1998, <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/203/98-вр> (in Ukrainian)

ing Equal Rights and Opportunities for Women and Men Until 2030, approved by the Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine No. 752-r of August 12, 2022.

Paragraph 82 of the Regulation on the Ministry of Defense of Ukraine, approved by the Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine of November 26, 2014, No. 671 (as amended by the Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine of October 19, 2016, No. 730)⁵², provides that the Ministry of Defense shall ensure the observance of equal rights and opportunities of women and men, as well as the prevention and counteraction of discrimination based on health status, sexual orientation or gender identity.

MoD order No. 346 of 22.09.2020 defines the duties of the authorized official (coordinator for ensuring equal rights of women and men, preventing and combating violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity).

The Regulations on Structural Units, developed in accordance with the Model Regulation on Structural Units of the Ministry of Defense, approved by Order of the Ministry of Defense No. 191 of April 9, 2016 (as amended by Order of the Ministry of Defense No. 100 of March 7, 2019),⁵³ do not contain any norms that violate the principle of equal rights and opportunities for women and men, or norms that contain or create grounds for discrimination based on health status, sexual orientation, or gender identity.

In their official activities, in order to ensure equal rights and opportunities and combat discrimination based on health status, sexual orientation and gender identity, civil servants are guided by the General Rules of Ethical Conduct of Civil Servants and Local Government Officials, approved by the Order of the National Agency of Ukraine for Civil Service No. 158 of August 5, 2016 (as amended by the Order of the National Agency of Ukraine for Civil Service of April 28, 2021, No. 72–21), registered with the Ministry of Justice of Ukraine on August 31, 2016 under No. 1203/29333.⁵⁴

Based on the gender audit conducted in the Central Apparatus of the MoD,⁵⁵ "no cases of gender-based discrimination or gender-based violence were found, nor any manifestations of inappropriate behavior of a sexual nature in the workplace."

A mechanism for preventing and combating SOGI-based bullying in military

52 Regulation on the Ministry of Defense of Ukraine <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/671-2014-n#Text> (in Ukrainian)

53 Model Regulation on Structural Units of the Ministry of Defense. <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/rada/show/v0191322-16#Text> (in Ukrainian)

54 Order of the National Agency of Ukraine for Civil Service "On Approval of the General Rules of Ethical Conduct of Civil Servants and Local Government Officials," No. 158 of August 5, 2016. <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/z1203-16#Text> (in Ukrainian)

55 Report on the Gender Audit of the Apparatus of the Ministry of Defense of Ukraine." Ministry of Defense of Ukraine, 2022. https://www.mil.gov.ua/content/gender/zvit_gender_audit.zip (in Ukrainian)

service can be implemented alongside the new position of a "military ombudsman," who is authorized to respond to cases of discrimination and hate-related offenses. This is an independent and effective mechanism for response, prevention, and ensuring further liability.

4.6. Countering Hate Crimes against LGBT+ People in the Military

Draft Law No. 5488 "On Amendments to the Code of Ukraine on Administrative Offenses and the Criminal Code of Ukraine As Required to Combat Discrimination," of May 13, 2021,⁵⁶ if adopted, may also apply to the commission of discrimination-related or criminal offenses based on intolerance, particularly against military servants based on their SOGI. It does not contain any exceptions to its application. The disciplinary statutes of different branches of the military stipulate the obligation of military servants to adhere not only to specialized legislation that regulates military service, but also to the general national legislation. In addition, crimes committed by suspected/accused military servants classified as hate crimes will also be grounds for liability under the updated Criminal and Administrative Codes amended by draft law 5488.

In case of a hate crime in military service where the perpetrator, too, is a military servant, the guilty persons will face criminal liability under Art. 161 of the Criminal Code of Ukraine "Violating the equality of citizens based on their race, nationality, region, religious beliefs, disability, and other characteristics," since these crimes are harmful and threatening to the entire society and are not specifically related to the military service per se; therefore, no additional legislation is required. As of now, no NGO is monitoring such crimes. Also, in response to the inquiry made by NGO Ukrainian LGBT Military for Equal Rights (Outgoing No. 6715/ZPI of November 1, 2024), the Central Department for the Protection of Military Servants' Rights of the MoD reported that this information is classified.

4.7. Practical Aspects of Protecting LGBT+ Military Servants' Rights

For protection against SOGI-based discrimination, military servants who experienced such violations can use the following guidelines.

First and foremost, make sure to **record and save evidence** of the violation committed. This may include screenshots, pictures, audio recordings of conversations or threats, written eyewitness accounts, or even physical evidence. It is also helpful to record the circumstances of such an incident: date, time, location; information of individuals involved in the incident and eyewitnesses; briefly describe the situation to avoid forgetting important details that may later be

⁵⁶ Draft Law "On Amendments to the Code of Ukraine on Administrative Offenses and the Criminal Code of Ukraine as Required to Combat Discrimination," No. 5488 of May 13, 2021, http://w1.c1.rada.gov.ua/pls/zweb2/webproc4_1?pf3511=71891 (in Ukrainian)

used to draft a report on the incident or even report the violation to the police or the military law enforcement service.

The next step would be to file a report with the **direct commander**, and if they are involved in the violation, contact the **high command**. The report must indicate the time and circumstances of the offense, refer to possible witnesses, indicate and attach evidence, if available, indicate what the offense was and what rights were violated, include the personal data of the offender(s), and request an official investigation. Two copies of the report are to be completed, so that during further registration, a note can be made on your copy about registration alongside information on entering the data into the incoming correspondence journal, or about the date of receipt and the information of the person who accepted your report.

If the offense involves violence or other criminal activity, you must contact the police and file a report with them.

More information about the procedure for filing a complaint and step-by-step instructions on what to do in the event of a SOGI-based offense committed against a military servant can be found in **Appendix C**.

Section 5

Representation of LGBT+ Military in Ukrainian Media

Hanna Hrytsenko

This section is devoted to the analysis of representation of LGBT+ military servants in Ukrainian media and blogs. Detector Media researchers believe that the high public trust in the Armed Forces of Ukraine leads to military themes appearing in discussions related to LGBT+ rights. "The army is discredited through LGBTQIA, protected from LGBTQIA, used as an argument in favor of LGBTQIA rights."⁵⁷ The objective of this section is to find out how LGBT+ military personnel are represented in the media environment. The first part of this section is dedicated to the image of LGBT+ military in the media, which turned out rather positive, as the analysis found. The second part examines the negative image of LGBT+ military personnel, shaped by their political opponents, with blog materials reviewed for this purpose.

5.1. Positive Representation

Russia's attack on Ukraine in 2014, followed by the full-scale war in 2022, exacerbated the risk of death or serious injury for all Ukrainians. However, LGBT+ military servants, unlike the heterosexual majority, cannot officially register their same-sex relationship and have an increased risk of death or injury compared to civilians – that is, of ending up in a situation where such a partnership is crucial either for the military servant, or for their partner. In addition, the nature of military service may aggravate the experience of homophobia or transphobia, since the range of possible reactions of those affected is limited. Ukrainian media have responded to the severity of this problem (also taking into account the fact that LGBT+ military servants mostly do not maintain big public blogs about their lives) and often focus on personal experience in the military and stories of discrimination, as well as on legislative gaps, generally portraying their heroes and heroines

⁵⁷ Bidochko, Lesya et al. "Homophobia on Social Media: Between Russian Propaganda and Ukrainians' Debates about Values." Detector Media, 30 August 2023. <https://detector.media/infospace/article/216182/2023-08-30-gomofobiya-v-sotsialnykh-merezhakh-mizh-rosiyskoyu-propagandoyu-ta-superechkamy-ukraintsiv-pro-tsinnosti/>. (in Ukrainian)

from the community in a positive light. **LGBT+ military servants' contribution to the victory** is emphasized ("striking the Kremlin"⁵⁸). Journalists can compare the trials of war and experiences of discrimination as LGBT+ representatives. The materials mention the **fight of LGBT+ military personnel for their civil rights**, emphasizing their **agency**. The most commonly mentioned name is Viktor Pylypenko, the leader of the LGBT+ military association.

"Brave Ukrainians fight in the ranks of the Armed Forces of Ukraine. Everyone faces their own trials. But many of them have one thing in common – they cannot legally marry their partner."

(Rubryka, 2022)⁵⁹

Despite the generally positive attitude to people portrayed in the materials, not all journalists use correct language and accurate phrasing. Same-sex partnerships are sometimes portrayed in contrast to "traditional" ones, though it would be better to describe them as straight or heterosexual.⁶⁰ Instead of saying "homosexual," "gay," or "bisexual," all of which are words describing a fact, "non-traditional sexual orientation" is occasionally used.⁶¹ This choice of words is judgmental and may create an impression that heterosexuality is more "correct" and "natural" for Ukrainian society, while other sexual orientations are something bizarre and new. In some cases, the media build a **victimization narrative**, not simply highlighting the facts of discrimination, but focusing primarily on suffering and other forms of negative experience. One such example is BBC News, which put the pathos of suffering right into the headline: "I Will Not Wait 30 More Years Because I May Not Live That Long." How LGBT Military Servants in Ukraine Are Harassed, generally focusing on death, a lack of rights, threats from the far right, and hopelessness.⁶²

Media materials also lack a **broader context for placing discrimination against LGBT+ military personnel** – for example, highlighting how an atmosphere of intolerance at the place of service can negatively affect the combat capability of the Defense Forces or how the lack of the right to register a partnership affects Ukraine's European integration and the country's image in partner countries that are more accepting of the community. There is also a lack of attention to the aspect that homophobia, transphobia, and patriarchy are consistent components

58 Vovk, Yevheniia. "How Ukrainian LGBT+ Military Servants Are Striking the Kremlin." Rubryka. 27 October 2023. <https://rubryka.com/article/ukrainian-lgbt-military/> (in Ukrainian)

59 Pavlii, Inha. "Not Only Straight People Defend Ukraine: How the Rights of LGBT+ Military Servants Are (Not) Protected." Rubryka. 8 December 2022. <https://rubryka.com/article/prava-lgbt-vijskovyh/> (in Ukrainian)

60 Krakhmatova, Diana, Kravchenko, Andrii, Vorona, Kateryna. An interview with Inna Sovsun – author of the draft law that allows to legally register same-sex relationships. Suspilne Sumy. 22 August 2023. <https://suspiilne.media/sumy/555661-intervu-z-innou-sovsun-avtorkou-proektu-zakonu-so-dozvolae-uzakonuvati-stosunki-v-odnostatevih-parah/> (in Ukrainian)

61 "They get NO RIGHTS and are HARASSED! LGBT soldiers HAVE their own FIGHT." Fakty ICTV. 30 December 2023. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MCKZ8KjoO44> (in Ukrainian)

62 Mackenzie, Jean. "'I'm Not Waiting Another 30 Years Because I May Not Live to See That.' How LGBT Military Servants in Ukraine Suffer from Harassment." BBC News. 26 June 2024. <https://www.bbc.com/ukrainian/articles/c7225zy2r-n5o> (in Ukrainian)

of the policy of the aggressor state.

5.1.1. Personal Stories

"The second powerful moment like that was when I took the oath. I expressed my devotion to the Ukrainian people out loud, took an oath to defend the country and its territorial integrity. I physically felt it – it changed me as a citizen.

It's not easy because you've spent your whole life learning to choose yourself, developing yourself and your personality, and here your personality, your life is in the hands of the Armed Forces of Ukraine. My therapist has told me that there are moments when one part of the personality becomes dominant, without the others losing out. This is a moment when Petro the soldier is serving, building a different lifestyle, other habits, gaining certain experience, while Petro the musician is waiting safely alongside the entire spectrum of free will.

I love my country so much that I would give up all the personal independence I have spent my life fighting for in a second to protect my country and everyone I love in it."

(Village, 2023)⁶³

Often, media materials follow the same pattern – starting out from a personal story, they then proceed to generalize the needs of the LGBT+ community for marriage equality and protection from discrimination, and then share information about the LGBT+ military association to which the heroes or heroines of the material may belong.

After fellow soldiers find out that Oleh is gay, some limit their communication, but for the most part, the attitude remains the same.

Oleh is the youngest one in his unit.

"Some people say, chill, you'll grow out of it. Others are sure that this is a temporary thing. One man said, 'I also thought I liked guys for two days, but then Natalia showed up, and I realized it wasn't true,'" says the soldier.

The man pours out all his emotions and worries on paper. He says that keeping a diary helps maintain normal mental health.

⁶³ Vyhovska, Iryna. "There Are LGBT Military Servants in Ukraine; Their Rights Must Be Protected. Three Stories to Prove It." Village. 19 May 2023. <https://www.village.com.ua/village/city/war/339171-u-zsu-e-lgbt-viyskovyi-yihni-prava-treba-zahischati-tri-istoriyi-na-pidverdzhennya> (in Ukrainian)

Oleh likes to talk about his problems with a therapist and shares personal experiences or affections with his friend, a woman who also serves in the army"

(Ukrainska Pravda. Life, 2023).⁶⁴

Media materials often help their heroes and heroines to articulate specific problems they encounter more clearly and comprehensively, to voice them.

Anna knows many LGBT couples who are also defending Ukraine right now. And they are all deprived of the rights that heterosexual couples have. For example, when a person comes to serve in a regiment, they are asked for the contacts of their closest relatives – their husband or wife, children, or parents.

Thus, she emphasizes, a military servant from the community cannot provide their partner's contact information because legally, they are strangers.

"If a citizen of Ukraine is ready to give his life for the freedom of their country, then they are entitled to having the person they love take care of their children, inherit their property, go to the ICU, or bury their body. I'm not even saying about things like receiving news of the person's death – is that too much to ask?" the servicewoman wonders

(Radio Svoboda, 2022).⁶⁵

However, there is another type of materials, which do not spell out a positive attitude the community, but rather focus on portraying an interesting hero, give the LGBT+ military servant visibility and agency.

"A 31-year-old military servant from the Mykolaiv oblast, Vladyslav Polishchuk, is openly gay. The man realized that he was queer at the age of 19 and later came out to his family. Now, he serves in the ranks of the Territorial Defense, does not hide his orientation from fellow soldiers, and finds their attitude tolerant"

(Suspilne Mykolaiv).⁶⁶

5.1.2. Draft Law on Civil Partnerships

64 Poia, Anastasiia. "Before, They Called Me Vibrator, Now – Gentle." How the Military Reacts to LGBT People." Ukrainska Pravda. Life. 6 October 2023. <https://life.pravda.com.ua/society/2023/10/06/256907/> (in Ukrainian)

65 Aredova, Anhelina "'We Defend the Country Alongside Others.' LGBT Military Servants on the Importance of Legalizing Same-Sex Relationships." Radio Free Europe. 15 December 2022. <https://www.radiosvoboda.org/a/32176270.html> (in Ukrainian)

66 Titurenko, Yana. "LGBTQ Military Servant from Mykolaiv Region 'Anubis' Talks about Society's Attitude, Service, and Civil Partnerships." Suspilne Mykolaiv. 17 May 2024. <https://suspilne.media/mykolaiv/699944-lgbt-vijskovosluzbovec-z-mikolaivsini-anubis-pro-vijnu-stavlenna-suspilstva-ta-civilni-partnerstva/> (in Ukrainian)

An additional topic of media materials is coverage of 2023 draft law No. 9103 on civil partnerships (explained in more detail in Chapter 4) and clarification of what it entails, particularly, why it can be important for LGBT+ military servants.

"LGBT service members regularly highlight the stories of members of their community and the challenges they face. The story of a military couple, Ivan and Mykola, who are engaged but cannot marry due to the requirements of the Constitution, has gone public. Mykola lost his arm defending Ukraine. But the state still does not recognize Mykola's family and has not found an opportunity to protect it,"

says the author of the petition [to support the draft law] Petro Zherukha.

According to Zherukha, some LGBT military servants did not live long enough to be able to formalize their relationships" (Suspilne).⁶⁷

5.1.3. Ignoring Military Specifics: the Case of Maymulakhin and Markiv

In June 2023, the ECtHR found that Ukraine was violating the ECHR by failing to respect equality of rights on the basis of sexual orientation, ruling in the case of Maimulakhin and Markiv v. Ukraine, where one of the applicants was a military servant (more on this in Chapter 4). This information is publicly available in Ukrainian on the Parliament website.⁶⁸

Media materials provide a brief overview of this decision; however, the fact that one of the applicants serves in the National Guard of Ukraine, and thus the violation of partners' mortal rights, was fully ignored by most media, except Village⁶⁹ and Grunt.⁷⁰

67 Mykhailov, Dmytro. "A Petition in Support of Draft Law on Registered Partnerships Appears on the Presidential Website." Suspilne. 29 March 2023. <https://suspilne.media/429408-na-sajti-prezidenta-zavilas-peticia-na-pidtrimku-zakonu-pro-reestrovani-partnerstva/> (in Ukrainian)

68 Case "Maymulakhin and Markiv v. Ukraine" (European Court of Human Rights, 1 June 2023). <https://hudoc.echr.coe.int/eng?i=001-230201>

69 Kikhtenko, Viktoriia. "Gay Couple Wins against Ukraine in European Court for Human Rights for the First Time. They Sued Because they Could Not Get Married." Village. 5 June 2023. <https://www.village.com.ua/village/city/city-news/339797-upershe-ukrayinska-gey-para-vigrala-sud-proti-ukrayini-sudilisya-bo-ne-mozhut-uklasti-shlyub> (in Ukrainian)

70 GRUNT. 1 June 2023. <https://x.com/grntmedia/status/1664345340848250899> (in Ukrainian)

5.1.4. Other Topics

Other stories about LGBT+ military personnel covered by the media included:

- beating of a transgender servicewoman;⁷¹
- the controversial behavior of the UOC of Kyiv Patriarchate, which initially awarded serviceman Viktor Pylypenko, but later revoked the award after learning that he was gay;⁷²
- vandalism of LGBT+ military servants' portraits;⁷³
- death of openly queer Artur Snitkus on the front line and memorial events;⁷⁴
- opening of a hub for LGBT+ military servants.^{75/76}

5.2. Negative Portrayal

The European Parliament report Disinformation Campaigns about LGBTI+ People in the EU and External Influence⁷⁷ emphasizes negative othering as a well-known narrative of disinformation about LGBT+ people spreading from outside the EU, with Russia being the main actor in the systematic harmful influence. "The Russian government's interference is motivated by a desire to ensure long-term regime security and the resurrection of its world-power status, which are contingent on a weakened EU and NATO (Karlsen 2019). The West and Europe is consequently targeted using a divide-and-rule approach, where identifying and exploiting divisive social issues is a core strategy. Equal rights for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex people (LGBTI+) appear to have been singled

71 Sadlovska, Kateryna. "Court Finds Rivne Resident Guilty of Beating a Transgender Servicewoman in Lviv." *Suspilne Lviv*. 2 November 2023. <https://suspilne.media/lviv/608033-sud-viznav-vinnim-rivnanina-u-pobitti-transgendernoi-vijskovoi-u-lvovi/> (in Ukrainian)

72 Yakovenko, Iryna. "UOC of the Kyiv Patriarchate Annuls Award to Soldier for Being Openly Gay." *Village*. 26 February 2024. <https://www.village.com.ua/village/life/edu-news/348145-vijskovomu-upts-anulyuvala-nagorodu-cherez-te-scho-vin-vidkritiy-gey> (in Ukrainian)

73 "In Kyiv, Kharkiv, and Lviv, Unknown Individuals Vandalize Portraits of LGBTQ+ Military Servants." *Wonder Ukraine*. 27 May 2024. <https://www.wonderzine.me/wonderzine/life/news/20219-u-kievi-harkovi-ta-lvovi-nevidomi-spaplyuzhili-portreti-lgbtk-viyskovih> (in Ukrainian)

74 Morhun, Iryna, Burak, Taras. "'He Was a Ray of Sunshine': Ternopil Bids Farewell to Artur Snitkus." *Suspilne Ternopil*. 13 June 2024. <https://suspilne.media/ternopil/767871-vin-buv-ludinou-svatom-u-ternopoli-poprosalisa-z-arturom-snitkusom/> (in Ukrainian)

75 Hrynenko, Vika. "First One in Eastern Europe. A Veteran Hub for LGBTQ+ Military Personnel Has Opened in Kyiv." *Village*. 18 July 2024. <https://www.village.com.ua/village/city/city-news/352905-pershii-u-shidniy-evropi-veteranskiy-hab-dlya-lgbtk-viyskovih-vidkrili-v-kievi> (in Ukrainian)

76 Horchynska, Oleksandra. "First One in Eastern Europe. How the Recently Opened Hub for LGBT+ Military Works in Kyiv." *NV Life*. 28 August 2024. <https://life.nv.ua/ukr/socium/viyskovi-lgbt-v-ukrajini-yak-i-de-pracyuye-hab-dlya-dopomogi-i-reabilitacii-ta-yaki-problemi-dolayut-50446172.html> (in Ukrainian)

77 Strand, Cecilia, Svensson, Jakob. Disinformation campaigns about LGBTI+ people in the EU and foreign influence. European Parliament. 2021. [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2021/653644/EXPO_BRI\(2021\)653644_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2021/653644/EXPO_BRI(2021)653644_EN.pdf)

out as a particularly opportune topic to sow friction and disunity between EU Member States," says the report. However, as part of its broader anti-liberal policies, Russia additionally focuses on the discrimination of the LGBT+ community domestically, which makes it an attractive partner for ultra-right movements of other countries.⁷⁸

A 2020 study by the Ukrainian Women's Fund shows that in Ukraine, the dissemination of narratives favorable to Russia, at least until 2013, but also after 2014, took place through related structures (in particular, the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate), through the media, and other religious and conservative organizations and initiatives. Researchers noted the rapid emergence of certain narratives in Ukraine immediately after very similar ones appeared in the Russian information space. For instance, a wave of narratives that family values are equal to Christian values and that the state must protect the family from encroachments by the LGBT+ community spread in Ukraine in September-October 2015, immediately after they were voiced in Russia by the well-known conservative speaker, deputy of the Legislative Assembly of St. Petersburg, Vitaly Milonov.⁷⁹ There are also known facts that foreign organizations, indirectly funded by Russian conservative oligarchs, operated in Ukraine and developed cooperation with the conservative environment.⁸⁰

At the same time, despite the generally positive tone of most media, there is still some negative attitude to LGBT+ military, which comes from blogs maintained by conservative figures, including ones in the military. Obviously, they share homophobic narratives on their own initiative, but this can absolutely sync up with the needs of Russia and should be viewed in the broader context indicated above.

5.2.1. "Nobody Saw" LGBT+ Military Servants on the Front Line

The main message in such blogs about LGBT+ military servants is the **idea that there are no representatives of the LGBT+ community in the military**, that, allegedly, "nobody saw them," and confirmed cases of open community representatives in military service are isolated attempts to "soil the AFU and well-known units,"⁸¹ while it is allegedly nationalists who form the main backbone of the mil-

78 Hrytsenko, Hanna. "Gendered Disinformation and Rape Culture." Gender in Detail. 3 December 2023. <https://genderindetail.org.ua/library/osobiste-yak-politichne/genderne-nasilstvo/genderna-dezinformatsiya-i-kultura-z-valtuvannya.html> (in Ukrainian)

79 "Gender or Anti-Gender: Who Is Attacking Democracy in Ukraine?" Kyiv. Ukrainian Women' Fund, 2020. https://uwf.org.ua/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/210_210_short.pdf. (in Ukrainian)

80 Hrytsenko, Hanna. "Gendered Disinformation and Rape Culture." Gender in Detail. 3 December 2023. <https://genderindetail.org.ua/library/osobiste-yak-politichne/genderne-nasilstvo/genderna-dezinformatsiya-i-kultura-z-valtuvannya.html> (in Ukrainian)

81 Yevhen Karas. https://t.me/karas_evgen/9282 (in Ukrainian)

itary.⁸²⁸³ Some servicemen even tried to compile a list of units where, allegedly, there are no LGBT+ people (the so-called Frost's Manifesto), which was partly debunked by the LGBT+ military community.⁸⁴

"Since 2014, the so-called 'LGBT community' has consistently stayed very far away from the front line and the war."⁸⁵

(Zhorin Third Assault Brigade)

"I never met a single real military servant who would be okay with LGBT propaganda, a single military servant who is fighting for Ukraine's ephemeral accession to the EU, a single military servant who would replace the imposition of the Eastern barbaric system of values with the Western sodomite one."

(The Kukharchuk)

Additionally, a common narrative is **groundlessly linking the LGBT+ community to left-wing ideas** (usually without detailing what is understood by this). For instance, in September 2024, military servant of the Third Separate Assault Brigade Viktor Rozoviy posted a patch with the symbols of feminism, the LGBT+ movement, and LGBT+ military, writing "At the war, I never saw this leftist bullsh*t."⁸⁶ In the subsequent discussion, LGBT+ military servants themselves contradicted Viktor's idea,⁸⁷ but with little success.

Viktor was supported by the deputy commander of this brigade, Maksym Zhorin, who ignored these objections and commented on the situation as follows:

"Leftists once again attacked Vitia Rozoviy. They are already writing angry comments to him, mostly from somewhere around Poland.

Unlike all these commenters and representatives of the 'lgbt military community,' Vitia was actually at war, and he got a completely real injury."⁸⁸

(Zhorin Third Assault Brigade)

82 Zhorin Third Assault Brigade. <https://t.me/MaksymZhorin/5376> (in Ukrainian)

83 Yevhen Karas. https://t.me/karas_evgen/9763 (in Ukrainian)

84 LGBTIQ+ Military. <https://t.me/lgbtiqmilitary/1611> (in Ukrainian)

85 Zhorin Third Assault Brigade. <https://t.me/MaksymZhorin/4535> (in Ukrainian)

86 Victor Rozoviy. https://x.com/victor_rozoviy/status/1838600726433485164 (in Ukrainian)

87 Oleksandr Zhuhan. <https://x.com/TseyYenotKusaye/status/1838649746790981776> (in Ukrainian)

88 Zhorin Third Assault Brigade. <https://t.me/MaksymZhorin/5378> (in Ukrainian)

5.2.2. Associating Homosexuality with Russia

Another frequently used argument is the attempt to **associate LGBT+ military servants with Russia** – alleging that homosexuality harms Ukrainian society and thus benefits the Kremlin.⁸⁹

A vivid example is the interview of serviceman Yurii Syrotiuk, one of the leaders of the All-Ukraine Union Svoboda, with conservative activist Ruslan Kukharchuk.

Syrotiuk: I don't know, maybe they're fighting. I haven't seen them. Maybe they do...

Kukharchuk: You didn't see them.

Syrotiuk: Yeah no, I didn't see or meet them. Maybe they do fight at war. Maybe they are very heroic people. But that's not what this is about. This is not about protecting their rights. This is about what Putin wants – to destroy Ukrainian identity" (the All Together Movement).⁹⁰

"They don't give a damn about the war, about the demographic crises, about the Ukrainian traditions"

(Call sign School).⁹¹

5.2.3. Looking for Damaging Information

Conservative influencers also get hung up on individual actions of people they consider part of the LGBT+ community, such as the story of the openly gay man Oleksandr, who did not update his data with the territorial recruitment center and was forced to mobilize,⁹² or the controversial action of absence without official leave of Serhii Hnezdilov, founder of NGO Ukrainian LGBT Military and Veterans for Equal Rights, to draw attention to the absence of clear terms of military service.⁹³

Conservative activists may simultaneously disseminate **misogyny and gender disinformation**. After journalist Iryna Sampan signed a statement of protest against the calendar with naked journalists published by 5 Kanal, she became the target of gender harassment by the far-right group C14, which was doing it simultaneously with national pro-Kremlin media in Russia. The former tried to buy Iryna's nude pictures from her acquaintances and sent her husband negative messages about her, while the latter called her an "escort" and "Zaluzhnyi's lov-

⁸⁹ The Kukharchuk. <https://t.me/SlipioCkUa/4274> (in Ukrainian)

⁹⁰ All Together Movement. <https://t.me/vsirazom/1309> (in Ukrainian)

⁹¹ Callsign School. <https://t.me/shkola88/1092> (in Ukrainian)

⁹² STALKERUA. https://t.me/ua_stalker/5219 (in Ukrainian)

⁹³ Yevhen Karas. https://t.me/karas_evgen/9549 (in Ukrainian)

er."⁹⁴ Another example of this combination is comparing women in the military to children and dogs,⁹⁵ done by the same author who was mentioned above saying that he saw no feminists and LGBT+ people at war and considered them to be "leftist bullsh*t."⁹⁶

Overall, the analysis of information materials found a clear distinction between two categories of such materials. Official media are generally friendly to the community, even if they do not always use correct vocabulary or focus on giving their heroes agency. Conservative homophobic figures disseminate homophobia from their private pages.

94 Kuzmenko, Liza and Kompantseva, Larysa. "An Underestimated Threat: Gendered Disinformation on Ukrainian Women Journalists," 2023. <https://cje.org.ua/library/doslidzhennia-nedootsinena-zahroza-henderna-dezinformatsiia-shchodo-ukrainskykh-zhurnalistok>. (in Ukrainian)

95 "At a YouTube Show, Soldiers from the 3rd Separate Assault Brigade Manifested Sexism by Comparing Women in the Army to Children and Dogs." ZMINA. 31 October 2023. <https://zmina.info/news/na-yutub-shou-bijczi-3-yi-okremoyi-shturmovoyi-brygady-vdalysya-do-seksyzmu-porivnyavshy-zhinok-v-armiyi-z-ditmy-ta-sobakamy/> (in Ukrainian)

96 Victor Rozoviy. https://x.com/victor_rozoviy/status/1838600726433485164 (in Ukrainian)

Section 6

Results of Expert Interviews

Hanna Hrytsenko

This chapter analyzes interviews with experts who provide services to the LGBT+ military community. This part of the study aims to identify problems faced by this category of military servants which prompt them to seek professional help.

The general idea expressed in expert interviews is that LGBT+ military servants often approach them with the same requests (more on them below) as heterosexual military servants. However, additionally, they encounter homophobia and transphobia, and **these phenomena alongside the negative experience of the war may reinforce each other.**

"Very often we encounter the fact that war trauma is superimposed on previous traumatic events, rather than acting as a single criterion for the development of the illness. Therefore, of course, if a person, say, has encountered homophobia or non-acceptance in society or in the family throughout their life, this is not a completely solid, healthy ground, because the person encounters this throughout their entire life. Therefore, of course, when the situation around you deteriorates, such a person can very easily decompensate and have a decline in their condition."

(Expert 6)

6.1. Requests of LGBT+ Military Servants to Supporting Specialists

The lawyer said that his work is related to **providing legal consultations on the circumstances of the military service** – such as getting examined by the military medical panel, the pathway of reports in the document flow system, grounds for dismissal, grounds for deferment of military service etc. Psychologists and sexologists work with general life difficulties, sexual desire disorders, relationship problems, including long-distance relationships, and eating disorders. The clients of psychiatrists are people with psychiatric and neurological disorders, such as acute stress reaction, post-traumatic stress disorder, adjustment disorder, organic disorders related to traumatic brain injuries or blast inju-

ries, as well as exacerbation of bipolar or depressive disorders that their clients had before starting military service. Regardless of the specialist's profession, the common sentiment of most clients is general exhaustion and desire to have a replacement in service, which is no different for heterosexual and cisgender military servants. Part of the indicated problems affect the military, while others only emerge during service or are exacerbated by it.

Women military servants also ask for help with issues related to gender-based discrimination, such as sexism, sexual harassment etc. An additional significant problem is that the military **are reluctant to seek psychological help** as they would rather not undermine the idea of themselves as strong people who successfully handle challenges.

The homophobia that the interviewees' clients face also creates or exacerbates problems, being, in various cases, both the main cause of the problem and an aggravating circumstance. In some cases, the material for professional psychological work is a conflict with the family (most often with parents) due to rejection, which began in civilian life and continues during the service. Parents essentially continue to project their expectations onto their adult child, even when the child is facing the challenging circumstances of military service.

Overall, according to the interviewees, homophobia, or transphobia in military service occurs both in overt forms, such as attempts to "educate" the person or initiate a conflict, and in milder forms – for instance, the client may link their lack of confidence and difficulties with communication to their sexual orientation.

"It happened that people would mention, 'these didn't accept me, those didn't understand me,' but it's definitely not a major problem. At least with the people I worked with."

(Expert 2)

"Those who see me are usually referred to by psychologists, since those are the first people they approach, and when military servants come to me, that is about issues with anxiety and depression disorders. There is a lot of PTSD, too, considering the war. Few military servants complain about homophobia because they come to me with other issues, but if that does exist in service, it certainly aggravates their condition."

(Expert 4)

Experts emphasize that the discomfort of their LGBT+ clients is not caused by their sexual orientation or gender identity per se, but by the homophobia or transphobia manifested by their environment.

"In general, people in the LGBT community do not feel uncomfortable about their orientation. They accept it, they understand what is happening, they like their situation as is. They don't know any oth-

er life. But there are environments with a low level of tolerance. Not everyone is like that, but some people are. They try to re-educate those who do not meet the correct standards, in their opinion.

We have situations when somebody talks to LGBT like, "I'll show you how to live the right way. You are in such circumstances now that it'll beat all the stupid out of you." So there are statements of that kind, they exist in civilian life, when people are not accepted by those around them, and they exist among military servants, too."

(Expert 5)

6.2. Professional Work with Requests from LGBT+ Military Personnel

"Honestly, I don't know if we're right or not, but in any case, I don't see the point in drawing a distinction. For me, it's the same patient with the same symptoms, and I treat them the same way. Of course, you have to control certain things – your language, the way you address the person, you have to remember about their background and prior difficulties that the person encountered throughout their life. But is there a difference in the treatment of this patient, psychotherapeutically or medically? Not really, because for a psychiatrist, it makes no difference how you identify and what your gender is. You are somebody who needs help."

(Expert 6)

According to those surveyed, whether the atmosphere in a unit is homophobic or favorable **depends largely on the position of the commander**. The interviewees observed that when the commander is not accepting, fellow soldiers are divided into two "camps": those who support the commander because it brings more benefits, and those who side with the LGBT+ people targeted.

Another problem is the general lack of awareness among Armed Forces personnel regarding tolerance, which, in turn, should stem from general public awareness. Experts also emphasize the need to **conduct psychoeducation in society**, explaining that people lack knowledge and materials about this – for instance, there are hardly ever guidebooks explaining what problems military servants may face or how they can act in case of sexual harassment.

The lawyer said he also works with situations where an evident conflict took place due to homophobia, such as a situation of physical violence or the demand from the direct commander to transfer to another unit due to sexual orientation.

Strengthening criminal liability for hate crimes is regulated by draft law No. 5488, which as of January 2025 is under consideration in the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine. But as for special legislation, it establishes only administrative liability of military personnel for violating legislation in the field of preventing and

combating discrimination, and changes in liability for hate crime offenses are established only in general legislation, but not in special legislation (more on this in Chapter 4). According to a lawyer who has actually encountered a situation of a hate crime committed by one military servant against another, changes to special legislation are not essential, and **existing legislation is completely adequate to defend survivors' interests**. However, the specialist sees a bigger problem in the fact that the **law enforcement system is ineffective**, plagued by red tape and essentially "paralyzed." The problems of this system are overload, fear of taking responsibility for a possible mistake, low pay, and quantitative indicators of case completion.

"We actually have good legislation, but we have a very big problem with its implementation, since it can be interpreted quite liberally, which means that certain categories, under certain conditions, can avoid that liability. The problem here is with execution."

(Expert 1)

The psychologist points out that there are problems with the **tolerance of psychologists** who work with representatives of the LGBT+ military community themselves. Although tolerance is included in the necessary list of soft skills for representatives of the profession, in reality, non-acceptance of a person's sexual orientation by professionals does occur and can cause significant harm.

"In order for psychologists to be tolerant, we have to make that they were tolerant from the start, before they joined the profession. A psychologist is a person who should not be intolerant. Outside of work, you can be anyone. But at work, you have to accept absolutely everyone, even if you cannot personally comprehend it. Unfortunately, I know cases when guys and girls come in and say, sorry, I used to have a psychologist who traumatized me because of my orientation. And that's just, no comments."

(Expert 3)

Another source of difficulty is the low qualification of specialists and the absence of professional government licensing, which would guarantee a certain level of professionalism and individual limitations for experts who do not understand a specific topic or do not feel comfortable with it. Another expert has pointed out an overall shortage of psychologists who specialize in military psychology. Thus, specializing in the issues faced by LGBT+ military servants is even narrower and barely exists in practice.

Section 7

Voices of LGBT+



Hanna Hrytsenko

This chapter offers an analysis of in-depth interviews with LGBT+ people who used to be or currently are in military service. The objective of this part of the study is to examine the personal experiences of this category of military servants — whether they are comfortable serving, whether they encounter homophobia and transphobia in military service, how and under what circumstances homophobia or transphobia occurs, what impact it has, etc.

Overall, the respondents showed a strong desire to be in service; many of them, especially women, enlisted voluntarily. The choice to defend the country is seen as absolutely obvious or is explicitly explained by the need to protect the values of diversity.

"The story of the occupation of Crimea radicalized me greatly, and together with the awareness of my identity, it greatly influenced me as a person, in the sense that it became clear to me that if I don't fight for my freedom and defend my own rights, the situation will not improve by itself. As they say, those who choose bread over freedom will have neither freedom nor bread. That's exactly what happened. And it became obvious to me then that hiding your identity and not being yourself, and submitting to the idea pushed by a totalitarian state or any other state is also a path to nowhere. [...]"

In fact, the situation with homophobia, transphobia, and sexism in the Armed Forces is very sad, but many people turn a blind eye to it and say that, well, the army is the army, it is a masculine phenomenon, a very masculine environment in general, in which you cannot be weak, in which you cannot be different. But I don't agree with that. And it shouldn't be like that. In a way, we are moving towards change, because there are many different people in the Armed Forces and overall in the Defense Forces, with different experiences. And these are mostly people who are mobilized, and the regular military personnel are a minority. Thus, people who came from civilian life also have many different opinions regarding various socio-political phenomena. It is this so-called diversity that saves us, that makes us very different from the enemy army. And I think it's very important for people to realize that we are not Russia and we are not a prison state: **we have many different people, and many different people serve in the Defense Forces, and we should be proud of them."**

(Respondent 22)

We also have to mention the fact that curse words "pid*r," "pid*r*s," something like "f*ggot," used to describe gay men and also people to whom the speaker has an extremely negative attitude have firmly taken root in the military environment to refer to the enemy (on both sides of the hostilities, witnesses say). The respondents to this study who were asked about this are generally okay with

this fact, believing that the word is gradually losing its homosexual connotation. However, these results should not be perceived as encouragement to use such language, since people with different opinions may have been left out of the study. In addition, as interview results show, this word is still used to refer to a gay person.

Respondent: "Let's think about it. What does the word pid*r mean?"

Interviewer: "The word pid*or means both a gay person and an enemy."

Respondent: "In the army, it is only used about Russians. The conversation usually goes like, gays are our people, they just f*ck and don't touch anyone. And pid*r is someone who's against us; they came here to take our land, kill civilians. That is the common attitude in the Armed Forces."

(Respondent 8)

7.1. The Prevalence of Homophobia and Transphobia in Military Service

"Well, I haven't encountered any direct homophobia, but I've always felt it."

(Respondent 3)

In general, some respondents or their acquaintances may hold an expectation that it may be difficult for gay people to serve.

"But when I was interviewed by the head of the military recruitment center where I enlisted, he, well, asked about this, I guess my mom told him or... But I cannot know for sure where he got this information. He asked me, I answered very neutrally, I understood that he understood and said that military service may be difficult for me. And I was like, 'Well, what can I do? I'll serve.'"

(Respondent 2)

"I notice that every year, so to speak, the war is dragging on longer and longer, and many of the people I know from our communities, many... even my acquaintances have already joined the army. **And they say they don't feel comfortable. They understand that they have to hide.** Besides the fact that, you know, I wouldn't say they were illegally drafted, they went to the army, they didn't resist, they understood. They say, that's what it is, we have to go because there's no one else who can. They understand this perfectly well. But people are more afraid of the attitude they'll face if they are accidentally outed. You know, there's a double fear, besides the fear of the

army, because we, let's say, don't understand everything here, how it works, and then there's the fear that somebody may find out accidentally, see or hear something. So a person from our community has this different kind of worry. About the service, and also about how others will perceive them if they accidentally find out what the person isn't ready to share."

(Respondent 13)

Some respondents did not encounter overt homophobia or transphobia from their fellow soldiers or the command directly. In some cases, they decided to come out, which was perceived more or less positively. There are also positive examples of **military leadership** when command emphasizes the need for acceptance of the person and puts an end to discrimination.

"There just came a moment when I started talking more with my guys, fellow soldiers, and the moment came when I decided to say it because I felt comfortable in this environment. And I was also very lucky that my guys turned out to be very, well, normal about it. And everyone who didn't die in [...] and was not taken prisoner, we still all talk and meet up."

(Respondent 11)

In other cases, respondents encountered unfriendly homophobic or transphobic behavior in various manifestations. Such manifestations vary. Some manifestations of homophobia or transphobia are not targeted; they are generic comments that appear in conversations or during small talk, jokes etc., expressions of certain expectations regarding heterosexuality, homosexuality, femininity, masculinity, being transgender etc. This atmosphere in the unit generally does not promote openness and creates immediate discomfort for LGBT+ people.

"Yeah, overall, the big picture in the army is quite homophobic. I hoped, of course, that the generation I served with, my fellow soldiers, I thought they were more modern, more tolerant towards all this. But somehow it was still like that, set up in a general way, that is, every time this topic was brought up, even if it was a joke, it was immediately pushed aside, the topic was stopped very rigidly, and people tried not to talk about it."

(Respondent 2)

"Most of the time, I would say, even from my own experience, you can't be open with people, and you hide a lot inside yourself. And this depresses you very much psychologically. Because you are playing a role that is not who you are, so to say. You are trying to play a role, as they say, to conform to the community you are in. And psychologically, it's very hard."

(Respondent 13)



Stereotypical expectations about LGBT+ people that they have voiced can be related to perceptions of appearance (careful grooming can lead to suspicions of homosexual orientation), behavior, or political stance (allegedly LGBT+ people are not “authentic Ukrainians”). In some cases, gay women are tolerated, but not men.

“Lesbians are great, gays are disgusting. That's the thing, basically. It is present everywhere. Homophobia is most often directed only at GBT guys.”

(Respondent 3)

“I mean, I joined the army as a civilian, and I probably had a more, how shall I put this, free style in communication, in clothing, and in, how do I say it correctly – I mean, haircut, a certain entourage. [...] Well, and, in fact, it was precisely on this basis, regarding my image, that there were all kinds of homophobic jabs, I cut them off very harshly, even cruelly, on the spot, but actually such incidents did happen to me. That is, I didn't disclose information about my sexuality, because that's not their damn business, they can stay out of it. But there were certain remarks about my image anyway.”

(Respondent 12)

If a person's sexual orientation or gender identity becomes public knowledge, homophobes and transphobes of the unit can proceed from generic comments to targeted harm. In this study, manifestations of homophobia or transphobia are not ranked clearly from “milder” to “more severe,” as the specific harm caused to a particular person is always individual. However, some manifestations merely create an unpleasant atmosphere or constitute a disciplinary violation, while others entail criminal liability.

The transition from general homophobic or transphobic views to explicit homophobia or transphobia directed at a specific person begins when information about a person's sexual orientation or gender identity becomes known to the team in which that person serves (or the team begins to suspect it).

“Since we had a very strong hazing culture, I had to somehow blend in with the boys so that they wouldn't know who I was. But still some aspects of my behavior gave me away. And they always asked me, ‘Are you gay?’ I would say, ‘No, I'm not.’ And they were like, ‘It's obvious that you are gay.’ I would say, ‘No, I'm not.’ After that, some time passed, maybe four or five months, and I was chatting with one guy. The commander called me to see him, and I left my phone in the room and forgot to switch it off. I came back into the room, and they were reading my messages. I mean, fellow soldiers who served with me were reading my messages. There. I walked in and said, ‘What's going on?’ And they were holding my phone and said, ‘You are a f*g-”

got, we knew it!' and so on. They began to express major homophobia, bullying me etc. There were different instances, it was physical force, then psychological pressure and so on."

(Respondent 14)

Leaving aside situations where a person does not hide their identity themselves, for example, openly talks about it in a team setting or on social media, this data can be obtained, for instance, by violating a person's privacy, for example, if they left their phone unlocked. The lack of personal space characteristic of military service contributes to the blurring of personal boundaries between people and facilitates the violation of these boundaries.

"Since there's very little personal space, usually someone can look at your phone and see some inappropriate photos or GIFs, and rumors start, some gossip starts, some whispering starts. But the regular military service taught me how to get out of this situation, that is, you turn it into some kind of joke, you start making really dark jokes yourself, avoid victimizing yourself, then the guys become uninterested, and they very quickly change the subject."

(Respondent 6)

If the information becomes known only to one or a few people on the team, this can lead to **outing** (disclosure of information about a person being gay, bisexual, or transgender without their consent), when this is shared with more people than intended, some of whom may have a rather hostile attitude.

"Well, I told him about my orientation. Well, it didn't remain a secret, everyone found out about it. And so it began... Like, mockery. They started trolling me, basically bullying me. Making jokes. The commander started to overload me with work. I kind of lost the status of a human in his eyes. And he started treating me very badly."

(Respondent 1)

"It's just our commander and our unit psychologist are so 'wonderful' that when this information was supposed to be in this narrow circle, it ended up known to everyone."

(Respondent 5)



"And it was really hard, all this petty transphobia, like, 'you are not a real woman,' and they could not say hello when I said hello to them. Especially after that *sshole [...] told everyone that '[last name] is not a real woman,' obviously, a lot of people stopped saying hello to me. Obviously, I didn't hide my transgender status, but I did not tell anyone right off the bat that I was trans, either. I'm not stupid, I know plenty of people have a negative attitude to this. But that *sshole started telling everyone just because he had nothing better to do."

(Respondent 10)

Manifestations of hostility can include an **unfriendly attitude, incorrect assumptions**, the idea that differences in sexual orientation or gender identity **go beyond the psychological norm**, the use of offensive words, ridicule, and bullying.

"Nobody said anything, but all these actions, looks, whispering behind my back, that kind of thing."

(Respondent 3)

"I had a case where a guy from our community was open. Well, he wasn't, how do I put it, spared the mockery, because there were constantly jokes about him, quite mean ones, like, 'you are this and that.' I will not describe it further because you can guess, of course, 'backdoored' and so on. Not very pleasant things. Without any physical manifestations, more verbally. People don't understand why you became like this, why it's like this, how it works... As they say, you know, when you talk to people, they say that it's probably a psychological deviation, a psychological trauma or something like that."

(Respondent 13)

In some cases, homophobia or transphobia manifests itself as **physical violence**.

"There was a situation when one [soldier] just went ahead and beat me up. [...] Just like that. I asked, 'Why are you doing this, what have I done wrong?' He just beat me up because, he said, 'I wanted to.'"

(Respondent 14)

In a significant number of cases, homophobic or transphobic actions came from **the command** (often direct, but also higher-level). Commanders who display homophobia or transphobia towards subordinates, unlike their fellow soldiers, have the opportunity to exercise their power over subordinates in a negative way. They may **show contempt**, may **exert pressure in moments that are not related to the effectiveness of the service**, may use **physical violence** against

subordinates or **attempt to dismiss them from their unit.**

"[Representatives of the branch of military command] began to put pressure on the command of my brigade to have me transferred to another position, to another unit, to try to silence me in general."

(Respondent 4)

"Except for the unit commander. He actually hates me. When he found out about this, he sent me [...] to get examined by a psychiatrist. Then by the military medical panel. Then it was the panel the second time, now the third time to have me dismissed. And we have [...] a unit, like our own security service. They told me from that moment on not to show up to the service [...] because, they said, people had wild reactions to me."

(Respondent 5)

"Sometimes they pressured me to terminate the contract."

(Respondent 7)

"The guys said that there were problems because of their orientation, because the battalion leadership, upon finding out, began to discriminate against them in terms of their position. [...] The battalion leadership took on the performance of their duties because, for some reason, they thought that the performance of a certain person's duties depended on their orientation, that is, whether he was capable of performing them. It's just, it's 2025, it's the 21st century, and there are still questions that have nothing to do with their work and performance of their duties."

(Respondent 15)

Since being transgender is still formally considered a mental illness (find out more in Chapter 4), it can become formal grounds to demand the dismissal of such a person. For example, according to the Order of the Ministry of Health of Ukraine and the Security Service of Ukraine No. 174/136 of May 13, 2002, "On Approval of the List of Mental Illnesses (Disorders) That May Cause Harm to the Protection of State Secrets and in the Presence of Which a Citizen is Not Granted Access to State Secrets",⁹⁷ mentally ill people cannot have access to state secrets. One of the transgender respondents of the study found herself precisely in such a situation.

97 Order of the Ministry of Health of Ukraine and the Security Service of Ukraine No. 174/136 of May 13, 2002, "On Approval of the List of Mental Illnesses (Disorders) That May Cause Harm to the Protection of State Secrets and in the Presence of Which a Citizen is Not Granted Access to State Secrets" <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/z0458-02#Text> (in Ukrainian)

"And at that time, the commander dug out that we had this law on state secret [...] with the list of mental illnesses and disorders that prevent access to state secrets. And so, in short, based on this order, I was deprived of access to state secrets, and we don't have officer positions without access, so now an order has come to remove me from the staff until I am fired because I cannot perform any functional duties. That is, even if I were told to return to service, I still can't do anything because we have these laws."

(Respondent 5)

Another type of discrimination brought up by respondents are cases when both partners are in military service and would prefer to serve in the same unit. However, they are denied transfer, and the respondent believes it is precisely due to sexual orientation.

"For example, I can't get my girlfriend and me into the same unit. Either she gets transferred somewhere, or I get transferred, and we can't be in the same unit. The reason they gave was that 'we will never allow the two of you to be in the same unit.' Why not? They think that we will, I don't know, behave in some [...] improper way. [...] No, we will do our job just the same, still perform our assignments, but morally and psychologically, we will have a much easier time."

(Respondent 21)

7.2. Circumstances of Homophobia or Transphobia and a Portrait of the Perpetrators

People from certain conservative social or political backgrounds may voice stereotypical expectations regarding sexual orientation, gender identity, and expressions of masculinity or femininity. However, the study did not identify any clear patterns in this regard. One respondent said that in his case, stereotypical expectations were brought up by fellow soldiers from a rural background, while colleagues from cities rather tended to support him. Other respondents linked homophobic remarks more to **nationalism**, which requires representatives of the nation to create heterosexual families with subsequent reproduction, or to apparent (not supported by real actions) concern for the Ukrainian population. However, according to respondents, cases of homophobia or transphobia specifically for nationalist reasons do not occur very often, and nationalists themselves do not constitute a visible majority in the Defense Forces.



"[A popular conservative blogger] said that he, as a guy, was on the front lines, in combat, and he had never seen such nonsense as LGBT. Although, again, if you don't see it, that doesn't mean it doesn't exist. Maybe you just don't know. [...] In our chat, 'Achilles Brotherhood,' they said that one guy served with him as a medic, and he actually got him out, saved his life. And this guy said, if [that blogger] had known who was saving his life, he probably would have slit his wrists on the spot [out of embarrassment]."

(Respondent 2)

"The Armed Forces are not a gathering of nationalists, as they are sometimes portrayed. There aren't very many nationalists like that. As a rule, these are ordinary men and women, from the village or the city. Mostly blue-collar. [...] Average age 30–40."

(Respondent 8)

"I mostly saw no disrespect towards me. However, when I was a soldier at the age of 21–22, I served with two individuals who could say something. They talked some nonsense about a demographic crisis, though they didn't care about their own children. And eventually, they quit. When fights for [locality] started, they refused to fight. Precisely those two. And I'll say it in general — for decent people, everyone is equal. Regardless of their characteristics. And some kind of human... contempt for signs of otherness, including orientation, was a rare thing in my units. I remember only two such people, who didn't show themselves in the best way in terms of service and the war. Unfortunately, they have now been forgiven and are still serving in my former brigade. Nevertheless, fellow soldiers already knew what they were like. So there's that."

(Respondent 9)

"There was this statement, not like overtly negative, but something about the nation. And the context was that there is the nation, and there's the people. And the nation is basically really cool Ukrainians, and the people consists of everyone. The cool and the uncool. And there was a hint that those who go to gay parades are considered bad Ukrainians."

(Respondent 16)

In the experience of one of the respondents, the perpetrators were conscripts who had been drafted before him. In general, according to some respondents, military servants who take an active direct part in combat are less likely to get bothered by the sexual orientation or gender identity of those around them, and **the problem is more likely to be caused by those serving in the rear.**

"During active service at the front, there were never any problems. [...] I am very disappointed with the people in Kyiv."

(Respondent 17)

"I came out in this company in May. [...] And the reaction was quite neutral. In some cases even, 'Yeah? Whatever.' That is, most of my fellow soldiers, with whom we had been in the trenches multiple times, spent entire days and nights there, they didn't give a damn, to be honest. They saw me as a warrior, as a military servant, and everything else was less important. Some shied away a little, but over time, even their reaction became more... They didn't discuss it as something negative. How to say it correctly? They calmed down a bit, stopped focusing on it, and we went back to the same kind of communication and service as before they'd learned I was gay."

(Respondent 19)

Transgender people may generally face somewhat less transphobia if they undergo a **full gender transition** before starting service, including changing their documents and carefully adjusting their appearance. However, not everyone makes such a decision before starting service or wants to carefully hide this fact of their biography, and besides, this does not guarantee that the very fact of the transition will not be disclosed.

"I'm not really good at hiding things. And I don't like hiding, it annoys me. Those people who hid it... I know some [...] who all hid their transgender status in the army. And for me, it was somehow difficult, I didn't want to, I felt it was crazy to hide. Like, I'm not a criminal, I'm not a pedophile, some kind of maniac, a murderer."

(Respondent 10)

"I can recommend something that helped me a lot – surgery. When I got different cheeks, a different nose etc., different lips, I had 90% fewer problems in the army. This is a fact. Of course, I still have some issues, but transphobia almost disappeared."

(Respondent 10)



7.3. Sexism and Misogyny

The research team believes that homophobia and transphobia as manifestations of certain expectations regarding the gender roles of men and women can be a component of multiple discrimination, along with sexism, gender bias, misogyny, hatred of women. In view of the above, as part of this study, respondents who identify or are perceived by their units as women were also asked whether they had encountered manifestations of sexism or misogyny during their service.

In some cases, the absence of transphobia towards a transgender woman meant that her full acceptance as a woman resulted in stereotypical gender expectations of her as a woman (for example, the expectation that she would clean up after men). Some respondents also experienced misogyny and transmisogyny (a combination of misogyny and transphobia), which could include, among other things, **sexual harassment**.

"There were situations where a guy from my battalion could come up and start asking, like, 'Are you a real woman? Are you not a real woman? Maybe you aren't real?' There was also sexual harassment. For some reason, in the Ukrainian army, and in general, Ukrainian men think that if you are some kind of ugly girl, or a fat girl, or if you are a trans girl, that's it, that means you are available."

(Respondent 10)

7.4. LGBT+ Military Servants' Responses to Homophobia and Transphobia and Combating These Phenomena

"I don't downplay my status as a fighter against homophobia in the army. I fight it as much as I can."

(Respondent 11)

As noted above, raising the topic of being gay or transgender in the military can begin with ordinary "small talk" on general topics, which, in the case of manifestations of transphobia or homophobia, forces the homosexual or transgender person in whose presence this occurs to decide how to respond, whether to ignore this topic of discussion, or to engage in clarification. Some respondents consider it necessary to **ignore** such conversations, others, on the contrary, try to **defend their point of view in favor of equality**, and still others **turn the situation into a joke**, expecting that open confrontation may have more negative consequences.

"When they heard a conversation or just talked to the guys about general things, they would also hear like, no f*ggots need to be removed immediately, they have no place in the service, they are not even men, and so on. Like they shouldn't even exist. So I tried my

best not to give myself away. But also not to support this, I said, 'I am a modern and tolerant person.' So I basically waved it away as long as it didn't affect me directly. And that's it. Like that. I kept switching to a neutral subject. And I keep doing that to this day."

(Respondent 2)

"There were various arguments, including the fact that I was told that there are no gays in the army in principle. I thought, okay, I'm not the kind of person who is really interested in proving something to somebody."

(Respondent 16)

"I just turned it into a joke because if you respond, that will harm your relationships with those people, they will feel more aggressive towards you and so on. So I kind of turned it into a joke, and then they got over it."

(Respondent 20)

Some respondents show agency and consider it necessary to independently engage in the prevention of discrimination and the education of tolerance. Others do not do that, but overall respondents all agree that this would be beneficial or even necessary. Respondents believe it is necessary to start combating homophobia and transphobia with **education and fostering tolerance**, and to instill such tolerance since childhood.

In some cases, respondents resort to attempts to resolve a conflict-related discriminatory situation through official mechanisms, sometimes more or less successfully, in other cases not. It is unknown how many cases of reports to resolve such situations have been registered and how many of them have been successfully resolved, since, as indicated in Chapter 4, such information is confidential. There is currently no institutional mechanism for considering conflict situations that would explicitly consider SOGI as a protected characteristic.

"I filed a report with the help of the group of LGBT military personnel. [...] They didn't let me go back, but they kept asking me for help because I was very good at organizing documents and keeping track of everything. They weren't. 'Do you know where this document is?' And I was like, no. If you don't want to see me in your battalion, then you don't need my work. Good luck. So the report was filed. The head of [the branch of the military] then reviewed it and conducted an investigation. They acknowledged the existence of evidence of homophobia and discrimination against me. Then one commander was demoted and others, as far as I know, were reprimanded for what had happened."

(Respondent 7)

"Well, civilians said, you have to understand the guys, they are curious about sexual harassment. About physical harassment, physical attack [...] I was actually promised he would end up in jail. But the investigation hit a dead end somewhere; there was no evidence. Although there was evidence of the attack, because I had bruises. But for some reason, the military police and prosecutor's office decided to ignore this evidence. 'We don't know what these bruises are from.' So in that situation it actually went nowhere. Then I was very busy, and there were no updates about the investigation. I don't even know how I'm supposed to find out what the outcome of this investigation was. But I know for a fact that no one was put in jail, no one was punished. And [the perpetrator] simply said: 'This is all untrue, it didn't happen, I don't even know who she is, she's transgender, why would you believe a transgender person, what kind of nonsense is this?' And they would say, 'Right, indeed, that's LGBT for you,' so it was like that. I was present there, I listened, and I was like, okay, I see, I need to serve in some other army."

(Respondent 10)

"And the hotline that I contacted about various work-related reasons and difficulties at that time didn't actually solve anything because at that time, they couldn't offer me anything. I was only supported by my friends, and I was the only one who suffered the consequences, psychological and otherwise, not the perpetrators. Actually, the solution to this issue was that I was able to transfer to another unit, but this is not the merit of the command, but only my own initiative, so to speak."

(Respondent 22)

In other cases of obvious conflicts, respondents have to rely **on informal mechanisms to protect themselves**, including finding other people on the team who could protect them.

Respondent: "After that I went to see my friend, [...] she talked to the other [soldier]. Everyone in the unit was afraid of him because he was a big guy, like, a large man. Even his own conscripts were afraid of him. And [my friend] asked him to protect me. After that, he [...] beat up the guy who was beating me. That's how it went. And after that, no one touched me anymore because they knew I had protection. So, yeah."

Interviewer: "Sort of informal protection mechanisms."

Respondent: "He who takes the sword will perish by the sword."

(Respondent 14)



According to the respondents, non-discrimination of LGBT+ people in the military has to be enshrined in the regulatory framework, and sexual orientation and gender identity should be protected characteristics. Respondents welcome communicating the need for equality, tolerance, and non-discrimination, which is sometimes voiced by the country's leadership, but they consider it to be insufficient to overcome discrimination.

"Well, as a person with a law degree, I can say that everything must be legally formalized. It is not enough to simply say at the state level that this is all normal. As we see, the current position of our president, when the LGBT community turns to him and asks if he will make any amendments to laws and so on, he says, 'I support LGBT people,' but that is not enough. People don't listen to his position or what he says. They listen to the letter of the law. I would like to contribute to some specific laws, orders, and so on, which would allow me to serve freely. If somebody says this is not a place for me, I say, 'Sorry, there's this and this law, which says I can serve the same as others,' like it was in the civilian sphere, where you cannot [discriminate against] LGBT people. I think this is what is effective. And this is what we should strive for, to enshrine it all in the law."

(Respondent 18)

However, the respondents also place responsibility for combating homophobia and transphobia on the command, which, as indicated above, can either have the leverage to counteract these phenomena and use them, or ignore the problem or contribute to destructive discriminatory processes.

"What's missing is that the commanders themselves avoid talking about it. They do not handle the problems in the team."

(Respondent 20)

"You write an official report that in my unit, for this and this reason, people treat me a certain way, that there is bullying, harassment, depending on the situation. And the chiefs of staff, brigade commander, battalion commander, they have no right to ignore this. But at this moment they need to put aside their masculine considerations and be guided only by this law, this rule. It must protect the soldiers."

(Respondent 21)

Respondents believe that there should be **disciplinary liability** for promoting manifestations of homophobia or transphobia.

"In general, we need to talk about this and consistently introduce some rules, like laws in the army itself. When there is bullying, and the commander, battalion commander, brigade commander, they cover it up, they engage in even more mockery, and that behavior should be punished."

(Respondent 21)

Respondents consider the **visibility of the community** with the personal accomplishments of each person from the community to be an important point in the process of combating homophobia and transphobia.

"I would say in this lapidary way that the issue of discrimination can be resolved not so much by glorification of gays, but by gayification of heroes if they are gay. That is, these are two different processes. Glorifying gays is one thing, but gayifying heroes is another."

(Respondent 12)

7.5. Registered Partnerships

Even though not all LGBT+ service members face homophobia or transphobia from their peers or command, they still face the issue of the absence of registered partnerships as an institution (see more in Chapter 4). Not all respondents need such an institution right now, but they all agree that it should be implemented as soon as possible.

- Needs faced by respondents or their LGBT+ military acquaintances in same-sex relationships:
- the need to openly spend holidays together without hiding, especially when both partners are in the military;
- the need to jointly register a land plot or business ownership;
- the need to be allowed to visit the partner in the ICU and make informed decisions regarding their condition;
- the need to be considered first-degree relatives of their partners, which includes the right to attend funerals, the right to inheritance, and more.

"So I had a medic. One of ours, but not in the community. She lived with her girlfriend. [...] Suffered a major injury. She spent eight days in intensive care. Her parents were with her. Naturally, her parents were there. As for the girlfriend, formally, they are 'friends.' The opposite situation: a guy from an adjacent company was also injured. He had a limb torn off. He was still with us at the medical hub. I bandaged him up myself. And during treatment he registered his marriage. With a fellow soldier, a woman from the mortar battery. And he's fine. She visited him. Again, I was saying, at any second we can be injured or killed, like any 'traditional' straight people. But their loved ones get compensations, ours don't. [...] Ignoring this law is

unfair and immoral in terms of equality of citizens, which is dictated by the Constitution. [...] This is veiled dehumanization. **Indeed, some people are deprived of basic rights on the grounds of otherness.** This is just as absurd as prohibiting me from getting married because my eyes are black, not blue. Am I not the same kind of citizen?"

(Respondent 9)

"I don't currently have a strong enough relationship that I would be ready to formalize it with one specific person, but it would be very nice, when I am offered to go see my partner, not to say it's a man, not to hide. Like, when they ask me, I would like to be able to say honestly that I want to see my girlfriend. Say it to the command."

(Respondent 18)

"When I was in the Donetsk oblast, I just wanted my partner to know what would happen to me, for example. To be able to visit, or to fill out some documents, or something else. This is really necessary because, in some matters, things are very difficult otherwise. [...] That is, I cannot take a leave on family grounds if my partner is sick, and I have to go help her immediately, they will not be able to let me go because that's not family. By their standards, this is a completely irrelevant person. Like, why should we let you go?"

(Respondent 20)

"Just simply enough, when I was in hospital, they asked her to leave the ward during the doctor's visit. If she were my sister, or mother, or husband, she wouldn't have been kicked out. But since she was 'just a friend,' they asked her to leave the room. This document would make it possible for her to stay in the hospital with me. I could officially go see her when I'm on holiday on family circumstances, not try to arrange things that either I go to her [to an area of hostilities] or she is going to see me closer to the contact line [another area of hostilities]."

(Respondent 21)

Splitting vacations in a couple due to the inability to register a partnership may result in the need for one partner to visit the other close to their place of service. This, in turn, may cause suspicion and misunderstanding among the controlling bodies (in particular, the Military Law Enforcement Service) as to why a military servant claims to want to spend their vacation in relative proximity to the contact line. The lack of the right to register a partnership results in decreased motivation to defend the country that does not provide the rights it should provide. This situation is viewed as injustice, a failure by the state to fulfill its part of the social contract.

"I felt the absence of this bill very acutely during my medical treatment. At that time, I had a boyfriend, and I was in the hospital, I had a bunch of surgeries, and he just couldn't see me. That is, I had to arrange it with nurses, with doctors, so they would let him visit. Because when you have another guy in the ward, he has a wife who supports him, who is always there to help, and you are going through this alone. And that's not enough. And you understand that for some reason, when the state needed my support, my protection, I stood up for it, I defended it. And now, when I need the same support and protection from the state, I don't get it. The state essentially says, 'You gave me something, but I don't want to give you anything because you somehow don't meet my standards, my criteria.'"

(Respondent 6)

"At the very least, if I die somewhere, the person won't even be able to come to my funeral. They will simply not let him leave because this person is nobody to me, legally. In principle, given the time at which draft law 9103 is considered, I understand that... I will sooner get a serious injury or die than see it adopted. But in the future, I think a lot of military servants, how shall I put it correctly... will not be very motivated if their partner, regardless of whether they are a civilian or a military person, dies, and they don't even let you go see their unit, you will be turned down. So for me, it's quite critical in terms of... In terms of death, roughly speaking. This is probably the most critical moment, because I'm not considering any options for myself right now in terms of housing, payments, this is of little concern to me right now. What does concern me is the fact that if my partner dies or if I die, we won't even be able to attend the funeral, then why are we defending this country that says no to you? You give it almost everything, and it can still tell you no. It shouldn't be like that."

(Respondent 19)

7.6. HIV Prevention

Gay people may be further stigmatized due to the stereotypical association with HIV incidence, although statistically, no evidence has been found.

"A lot of people think that HIV is a disease, as they say, excuse the language, of sexual minorities."

(Respondent 13)

Male respondents were asked whether their unit had HIV prevention measures, and whether they were aware of any cases of discrimination due to the HIV-positive status, cases of hidden infection etc. Overall, from their experience, HIV prevention is rather absent than present in military service. In units engaged in active combat there may not be enough time for preventive measures, though considering the increased risk of injury, they are the ones that need it most.



"We definitely didn't have that. And I know that in our country there is a very big problem with sex education. And many people don't understand at all what HIV is, how it's transmitted, and people still hold the stereotypical idea that HIV can only be contracted by gay people, lesbians, LGBT, and 'normal' people cannot get it. That is, we have massive gaps in terms of sexual education, in terms of communication about HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases. Perhaps, in combat units, there is more work on that now, but when I was serving, nothing like that was done."

(Respondent 6)

"As for HIV, AIDS, no. We don't have any such conversations or preventive measures. We have combat work, we don't have time for that — let's be honest."

(Respondent 12)

"As for informing, it's the same... The maximum information, well, what information — in my brigade, it was, 'Use gloves if a fellow soldier is injured since you don't know his health issues.' That was the most we heard."

(Respondent 13)

"As for such measures, I think they wouldn't be critical for rear units. But for combat units, where people, primarily medics, combat medics, come into contact with blood literally 30 days a month, this would be quite relevant. But it's very difficult to organize because sometimes, the unit is scattered almost all over the front line, part here, part there, and it's only somewhere on some rotation, if you can just get half an hour or make the psychologists work a little to hand out information leaflets, then it would make sense."

(Respondent 19)

Although not all forms of HIV positive status allow serving in combat units, respondents say such things still happen in practice due to inadequate work of recruitment center employees or military medical panels, which send non-diagnosed HIV-positive people to combat units.

"Look, I still spend most of my time in 'paper' basements, but a relative of mine is a combat medic, and she has encountered cases where a person was HIV-infected, and it wasn't reported. You probably know this mechanism, when they grab someone off the street and quickly formalize everything, and then this is only found out

when the person has been injured. I mean, I know of cases like that. [...] Recruitment centers do go overboard in terms of getting more people. I won't say it's common, but such cases do happen."

(Respondent 11)

According to the survey respondents, there may be a discriminatory, negative attitude towards HIV-positive people if they join the ranks of the Defense Forces. Because of this, such people may hide their HIV-positive status and only share it with those they trust. Information about a person's HIV status is generally confidential, although in practice such confidentiality is not always maintained and cases of **outing** do occur.

"By the way, I have friends who are HIV-infected, also in the military, they hide it. [...] I know that a person who is HIV-infected and takes medication is safe for other people. I know this very well, I have good knowledge about this. But most people don't know. For them, HIV is like leprosy. It doesn't matter if the person takes medication and is being treated, they still have HIV. It's like a warning sign. Everyone shuns them. But most of the time, for example, even with my acquaintance, he hides it as much as possible. I only recently found out myself. He said he was afraid to tell me because, he said, 'I don't know how people will respond. Sometimes okay, and sometimes they have very negative reactions. They immediately start avoiding me, even though we talked for a very long time and had very good communication. Once they find out, it's over.' That's why people avoid talking about it."

(Respondent 13)

"I have personal acquaintances who serve with HIV-positive or neutral status. By neutral, I mean that you cannot find out even through a blood test. They take medication and have been serving for almost three years now. But they don't announce it because they serve in special forces, where higher-ups and even their immediate superiors don't need to know this."

(Respondent 14)

7.7. Participation in the LGBT+ Military Community

"And here you find yourself in a circle of people who understand you, who don't say you're sick, that you're wrong. You understand you're among your kind of people."

(Respondent 6)

The initial recruitment of respondents for the study took place through the **NGO Ukrainian LGBT Military for Equal Rights**, so a significant number of respondents are united around this association, receive services from specialists recommended by the NGO, and communicate in group chats. Almost all of them spoke positively about the association, indicating that it advocates for their rights, provides professional services, and simply serves as a community of acceptance and mutual support, where you can share your pain, ask for help, and discuss everyday issues of the service, particularly when these things cannot be discussed with heterosexual people. Some form relationships through the community.

"It had a positive impact on my belief that equal rights are possible and that we can achieve it. What have I gotten out of it? Support of the organizers, support of peers, awareness of LGBT+ people's rights, draft laws, help to LGBT+ military servants if needed from psychologists, sexologists, lawyers, massage therapists."

(Respondent 3)

"And you get the support you need when you need it most, in your hardest moments. It was through the organization LGBT Military for Equal Rights that I came out because I realized that my life was too short, it could end at any moment. And I cannot live a free, full life, cannot fully breathe without this step of coming out. And then, again, I saw a lot of examples of guys coming out in the LGBT Military, and that helped me take a step towards coming out, towards opening up, towards final acceptance of myself."

(Respondent 6)

"No matter if somebody says that 'people like that' don't serve in the army. They do, they really do, and sometimes better than regular straight guys. It's a kind of separate community where you can support someone. And you can ask for support when you are having a hard time and not everyone is open enough. I can make a joke sometimes about my orientation, it's not a problem in my unit. But some have to hide for months, even years. And you can have a problem with your relationship, too. One girl's girlfriend quit her job, their child got sick, and she cannot discuss it with her fellow soldiers in the unit."

(Respondent 19)

"In this community, we can be on the same wavelength, we can be in different places and still support each other, joke and be ourselves completely, that is, not hide somewhere behind the bushes, somewhere behind some walls, so that no one hears us, sees us, or even knows about our problems, experiences, fun, even that."

(Respondent 19)

"There is no such thing in the heterosexual society. You don't get that kind of chat where you can say, like, I need a bulletproof vest, they ask around, they send you one. Or somebody can offer you accommodation for the night for free."

(Respondent 20)

7.8. Attitude of Civilian Acquaintances to LGBT+ Military Personnel

Respondents were also asked whether they encounter homophobia from civilians. Although it is sometimes believed that military personnel are protected from criticism or negative attitudes from civilians, in practice, when it comes to sexual orientation or gender identity, negative attitudes can occur and even result in hate attacks.⁹⁸ However, respondents also reported equal treatment, as well as the fact that they may be treated worse by the military than by civilians, in particular because the majority of military personnel are men (more details about gender differences in attitudes to LGBT+ people were provided in Chapter 2).

"I was walking hand in hand with my boyfriend on New Year's Eve, down Khreshchatyk Street, and there were lots of rude drunk people. I still didn't care if someone would say something."

(Respondent 12)

"With the military, it's much harder because military servants are mostly men. Men tend to have a worse attitude towards our community."

(Respondent 13)

In general, the personal experiences of respondents are quite varied, ranging from acceptance in the unit to critical rejection. However, they agree on the need for non-discriminatory military leadership and the need for equal civil rights.

98 Sadlovska, Kateryna. "Court Finds Rivne Resident Guilty of Beating a Transgender Servicewoman in Lviv." *Suspilne Lviv*. 2 November 2023. <https://suspilne.media/lviv/608033-sud-viznav-vinnim-rivnanina-u-pobitti-transgendernoi-vijskovoi-u-lvovi/> (in Ukrainian)

Section 8

Honoring the Memory of Fallen LGBT+ Soldiers

Hanna Hrytsenko

Memorial practices in Ukraine are largely not standardized, and those standards that exist and apply to defenders of Ukraine have been developed quite recently. Ukrainian society is still searching for an adequate form of commemoration appropriate to the local context. The specificity of the Ukrainian context is the non-standardization of forms of memorialization of those killed in previous wars, as well as, given the prevalence of grassroots forms of armed self-organization, the somewhat blurred line between military and civilians.⁹⁹ Commemoration practices are dominated by a humanistic, personalized approach—an attempt, to the extent possible, to honor each and every person.¹⁰⁰

To commemorate those who died in the Russia-Ukraine war, the 2019 decree of the President of Ukraine established the Day of Remembrance of the Defenders of Ukraine who died in the struggle for the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine, which takes place annually on August 29 — the anniversary of the tragedy near Ilovaisk.¹⁰¹ In July 2021, the procedure for conducting

99 Herasym, Halyna. "From Symbol to Name: In Search of Our Own Models of a Military Cemetery." *Mistosite*. 19 November 2024. <https://mistosite.org.ua/uk/articles/vid-symvolu-do-imeni-u-poshuku-vlasnykh-modelei-viiskovoho-tsvyntaria> (in Ukrainian)

100 Martsenyuk, Tamara. "Policies and Practices for Commemoration of the Memory of Fallen Soldiers in the Russia-Ukraine War in the East of Ukraine." Kyiv, 2021. <https://ekmair.ukma.edu.ua/server/api/core/bitstreams/ddb62f12-f703-432a-9f04-26effe22bc22/content>. (in Ukrainian)

101 Order of the President of Ukraine No. 621/2019 "On the Day of Remembrance of the Defenders of Ukraine who died in the struggle for the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine" <https://www.president.gov.ua/documents/6212019-29269> (in Ukrainian)

a military funeral ritual was updated.¹⁰² In March 2022, a decree of the President of Ukraine established a nationwide minute of silence – every day at 9:00. In August 2024, the Concept of Honoring the Memory of the Fallen (Deceased) Defenders of Ukraine in the Ministry of Defense System was approved.¹⁰³ The concept is quite succinct and does not address diversity among military servants.

LGBT+ military servants die in fights for Ukraine alongside cisgender and heterosexual soldiers, or will eventually pass in a natural way after being demobilized. This raises the question of honoring them alongside everyone else, taking into account diversity. For example, the grassroots project “Book of Memory of Those Who Died for Ukraine” sorts the dead by place of birth and place of burial, by age, gender, units, and target groups (veterans of the war in Afghanistan, professional athletes, foreign citizens etc.), but there are no categories based on sexual orientation or gender identity yet.¹⁰⁴ It should also be taken into account that some LGBT+ soldiers die closeted, with their identity known only to a limited circle of people. This requires identifying forms of commemoration that would reconcile the individual need for privacy with the need of the community to be visible overall.

Global practices provide few examples. In the United Kingdom, in 2021, LGBT+ veterans were invited for the first time to a ceremony honoring those who died in two world wars and later conflicts (Remembrance Sunday).¹⁰⁵ A large memorial to LGBT+ military personnel is currently under development, funded by the state and scheduled to open in the summer or fall of 2025.¹⁰⁶ The first openly gay man in the US military, Leonard Matlovich, who died in 1988, chose a private plot of Congressional Cemetery in Washington as his burial place, which allowed him to step away from the unified type of monument and instead of a personal stele, create a stele in memory of all LGBT+ service members.¹⁰⁷ In 2000, a memorial was erected at the National Memorial Cemetery in Arizona to “all veterans who served with courage and pride.”¹⁰⁸ A monument to fallen LGBT+ service members was erected at Abraham Lincoln National Cemetery in the United States in 2015.¹⁰⁹ All of these monuments bear the symbol of the pink triangle, which was originally used in Nazi Germany to designate gay concentration camp prisoners, and

102 Law of Ukraine “On Amendments to the Law of Ukraine ‘On the Statute of the Garrison and Guard Services of the Armed Forces of Ukraine’ Regarding the Military Funeral Ritual.” <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/1622-20#Text> (in Ukrainian)

103 Order of the Ministry of Defense of Ukraine No. 544 of August 12, 2024, “On Approving the Concept of Commemorating the Fallen Defenders of Ukraine in the System of the Ministry of Defense of Ukraine of Ukraine” <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/rada/show/v0544322-24#Text> (in Ukrainian)

104 Book of Memory of Those Who Died for Ukraine. <https://memorybook.org.ua/indexfile/statgroup.htm> (in Ukrainian)

105 LGBT veterans march at the Cenotaph Remembrance Sunday service. Fighting with Pride. <https://www.fightingwithpride.org.uk/news/lgbt-veterans-march-at-the-cenotaph-remembrance-sunday-service>

106 LGBT Armed Forces Community Memorial. Fighting with Pride. <https://www.fightingwithpride.org.uk/lgbt-armed-forces-community-memorial/>

107 Object 82: LGBTQ+ Monument in Abraham Lincoln National Cemetery. U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. <https://department.va.gov/history/100-objects/082-lgbtq-monument/>

108 Ibid.

109 Ibid.

was later appropriated by the LGBT+ community. In Ukraine, however, the pink triangle is rarely used, and the LGBT+ military community has developed its own symbol – a unicorn encircled in a heart, which can be seen on the association's logo.¹¹⁰ However, it is not yet used for burial purposes.

Despite the lack of established official practices, grassroots practices of commemoration that reflect diversity are gradually emerging in Ukraine. For instance, in the private group chat for gay and bisexual military servants "Achilles' Brotherhood," a form of preserving the memory of deceased or missing comrades is to preserve their accounts in the chat.¹¹¹ In a selection of photo portraits of LGBT+ military personnel, prepared jointly by photographer Alim Yakubov and the NGO Ukrainian LGBT+ Military Personnel and Veterans for Equal Rights, the faces of the deceased who did not have a chance to reveal their identity during their lifetime are hidden to prevent outing after death. 2023 was marked by an exhibition dedicated to the memory of the deceased gay soldier Roman Tkachenko.

At the funeral of openly queer Artur Snitkus, held in June 2024, colored pyrotechnics were used, referencing the LGBT+ flag.¹¹² A friend of the deceased soldier describes this as follows:

"Artur was a ray of sunshine. Artur would not have approved of most of the procedures that took place during the memorial service and funeral. And yesterday, when everyone left after the memorial service, we sat down and started reminiscing. His mom finally started to smile, remembering some interesting moments. It felt very warm. We decided that in the end, Artur would have definitely wanted a performance, some kind of a show. And we came up with the idea of making his farewell as bright as he was. We wanted there to be lots of sparkles, we wanted there to be fireworks, we wanted it to be lighthearted. I think this relieved the heavy funeral atmosphere, and now we see that the cemetery looks rather unconventional, different. I'm sure that Artur would have approved of it. This is probably our last tribute to him, our last gift."¹¹³

On June 16, 2024, Ukrainian LGBT+ Military for Equal Rights and KyivPride held a joint memorial event for LGBTQ+ servicemen on the Independence Square in Kyiv.¹¹⁴ In Kharkiv, on September 14, the Kharkiv Pride community held an event to honor the memory of the fallen LGBT+ soldiers next to the monument "To the

110 LGBTIQ+ Military. <https://t.me/lgbtiqmilitary/> (in Ukrainian)

111 LGBTIQ+ Military. <https://t.me/lgbtiqmilitary/1363> (in Ukrainian)

112 FeministsUA. <https://x.com/FeministsUa/status/1803015888582451292> (in Ukrainian)

113 Morhun, Iryna, Burak, Taras. "'He Was a Ray of Sunshine': Ternopil Bids Farewell to Artur Snitkus." Suspilne Ternopil. 13 June 2024. <https://suspilne.media/ternopil/767871-vin-buv-ludinou-svatom-u-ternopoli-poprosalisa-z-arturom-snitkusom/> (in Ukrainian)

114 KyivPride. <https://t.me/kyivpride/3810> (in Ukrainian)

Defenders of Ukraine."¹¹⁵

This limited number of memorial events and other practices to commemorate LGBT+ military servants does not yet provide for an opportunity to generalize and identify patterns.

¹¹⁵ "A Memorial Event for LGBT+ Military Held in Kharkiv within Pride Week." ZMINA, 14 September 2024. <https://zmina.info/news/u-harkovi-v-mezhah-prajd-tyzhnya-projshla-akcziya-pamyati-zagyblyh-lgbt-vijskovyh/> (in Ukrainian)

Conclusions

Since the beginning of Russia's war against Ukraine (2014), LGBT+ people have been and remain in the military, where they perform their duties in the same way as cisgender and heterosexual military servants. However, due to homophobic and transphobic attitudes in society, the visibility of this group in the military remains limited. Since 2018, after the first public events and comings-out, an LGBT+ military community began to take shape, which as of January 2025 includes over 600 soldiers. Even more, probably several percents of the Defense Forces, that is, tens of thousands of people, are not part of the association.

This is the first comprehensive study about LGBT+ military personnel in Ukraine, despite the fact that some other studies have partially touched upon this topic or were exploratory. In general, LGBT+ people can and do serve in the Defense Forces, but not without difficulties.

In general, Ukrainian society has become increasingly willing to see LGBT+ people in the military in recent years and is increasingly inclined to believe that their service should be legally protected from discrimination. Society generally agrees that the rights of LGBT+ military personnel should be protected and those affected by discrimination should receive compensation for the damages caused, but agrees somewhat less with the idea that protecting the rights of LGBT+ military personnel can enhance the overall effectiveness of the Armed Forces. Notably, 63% support the statement that partners of deceased gay, bisexual, and transgender military servants should be considered their family members. Also 63% agree that the norms, rules and statutes of the Armed Forces of Ukraine must protect the rights of LGBT+ military servants.

Residents of Kyiv and young people tend to be the most accepting of LGBT+ military, and residents of the west of Ukraine the least, although they, too, overall agree that the rights of LGBT+ military servants should be upheld. Despite the general understanding that military service should be inclusive for LGBT+ people, Ukrainians still do not clearly link the inclusivity of military structures to their overall effectiveness. The percentage of support for this statement drops to 47%.

Experience of other countries (Sweden, USA, the UK, Canada) shows that implementing policies of inclusion and non-discrimination towards LGBT+ people in the armed forces is a complex and long-term process, which entails not only changes in official rules, but also reconsideration of certain behavioral standards. Overall, this experience is successful and proves that such policies improve the atmosphere in the service as a whole. Inclusion as a guiding principle, the role of military leadership, recognition of diversity, and support for community networking are important factors in strengthening the military.

Gay and bisexual people generally do not have formal obstacles to joining the military, but for transgender people, the Ukrainian legislation's understanding of gender dysphoria as a mental illness, which needs to be changed, may become an obstacle to military service. The rights of LGBT+ military personnel are also generally affected by the draft laws on civil registered partnerships and the draft law on hate crimes. They are awaiting approval by the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine.

The representation of LGBT+ soldiers in the media during the full-scale war is generally positive, with media coverage highlighting their personal stories, the difficulties they face, showcasing their self-organization, and supporting their advocacy efforts. However, there are still overtly homophobic narratives at the level of personal blogs in the Ukrainian media environment.

In general, LGBT+ military personnel face the same challenges as cisgender heterosexual military personnel, but homophobia or transphobia may exacerbate them. There is a general shortage of support professionals who are willing to work with the military; what is more, not all of them are tolerant and understand the nature of work with LGBT+ people, which, in turn, requires training of specialists and psychoeducation of society as a whole.

Homophobia and transphobia in military service, while not encountered by all LGBT+ service members, can generally be subjectively perceived as widespread and occur in various forms, from general "thoughts on the subject" or non-targeted inappropriate remarks to acts of physical violence or attempts to have the target transferred or dismissed from the unit. The overall friendly or unfriendly atmosphere largely depends on the unit command, which can either insist on a friendly, inclusive, equal atmosphere or, conversely, become a source of the problem.

Currently, there is a lack of effective formal mechanisms for resolving the problem of homophobia or transphobia in the Armed Forces of Ukraine, and if those affected want to resolve the conflict in a formal manner, they have to do so on general grounds, without being able to use SOGI as a protected characteristic. In addition to unfriendly treatment in the unit, LGBT+ servicemen also face the inability to register their partnerships, which is a problem for LGBT+ civilians as well, but for the military, this problem becomes particularly acute given the significantly higher risks to life and health.

Self-organization and community building for LGBT+ military personnel is a worthwhile practice that alleviates the hardships of service and serves as a source of moral support.

Honoring the memory of LGBT+ military personnel is still happening in a spontaneous, non-uniform manner, as is typical of such practices for other categories of military personnel. However, there is a search for certain commemoration practices that could reflect the visibility of the community as one that dies for Ukraine on an equal footing with other fighters.

Recommendations

Recommendations for the MoD

- Introduce mechanisms for anonymous and confidential reporting of harassment or discrimination on various grounds, including sexual orientation and gender identity, and a procedure for consideration of such complaints.
- Provide regular educational programs on non-discrimination (on the basis of sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, and others) for cadets in training centers and military educational institutions, for commanders and military personnel.
- Provide LGBT+ military personnel with access to free legal, professional psychological, and specialized medical care.
- Resolve the issue of unhindered access to ART (antiretroviral therapy) for HIV-positive military personnel at their place of service.
- Implement regular gender audits in military units to identify discriminatory practices.
- Study and implement best practices on equality and non-discrimination used in other countries' armed forces and corporate environments.
- Ensure openness in the development and implementation of inclusion policies.
- Cooperate with international organizations to obtain expert assistance.
- Develop a mechanism for monitoring the effectiveness of respecting the rights of military personnel based on sexual orientation and gender identity.

Recommendations for the General Staff

- Develop internal instructions for military units that will clearly regulate non-discrimination on various grounds, including sexual orientation and gender identity.
- Ensure a rapid response to cases of harassment and bullying, with punishment of perpetrators, as well as further measures to prevent such cases among unit personnel.
- Guarantee military personnel confidential access to medical, psychological, and social services without discrimination.
- Establish a regular dialogue with civil society organizations on the situation with the protection of LGBT+ military servants' rights.

Recommendations for the Ministry of Health of Ukraine

- Adopt ICD-11 and align all necessary regulatory framework.
- Promote the training of specialists (psychologists, psychiatrists, etc.) who could work with military personnel, including LGBT+ military personnel.
- Conduct psychoeducational work for society regarding communication with military personnel, including LGBT+ military personnel.

Recommendations for the Ministry of Veterans of Ukraine

- Network and exchange experiences, develop joint projects with international organizations aimed at improving the legal and social status of LGBT+ veterans.
- Ensure the inclusion of LGBT+ people in veteran organizations and organizations working with military families.
- Establish a regular dialogue with civil society organizations on the situation with the protection of LGBT+ veterans' rights.

Recommendations for the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine

- Adopt draft law No. 5488, which establishes liability for hate crimes, including in the military sphere.
- Accelerate the consideration of legislative initiatives on registered civil partnerships, which will allow for the regulation of the rights of LGBT+ military servants' partners.
- Amend the Disciplinary Statute of the Armed Forces of Ukraine to integrate the principles of non-discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity.
- Develop legal protection mechanisms for LGBT+ military personnel, including safeguards for filing complaints.
- Introduce parliamentary oversight over the implementation of equality and non-discrimination policies in the military.
- Ensure compliance of national legislation with international standards in the field of human rights and non-discrimination.
- Ensure that the population is informed about legislative initiatives in the field of human rights.
- When developing a regulatory framework for the institution of a military ombudsman, include sexual orientation and gender identity as protected characteristics.

Recommendations for the Media

- Professionally cover the participation of LGBT+ military personnel in the defense of Ukraine, their contribution to the security of the state, and use professional and sensitive terminology when covering topics related to the LGBT+ community.
- Disseminate information about draft laws related to LGBT+ rights, especially those that have an impact on the military.
- Develop and publish available methodological recommendations on professional coverage of subjects of sexual orientation and gender identity and the situation of LGBT+ military personnel.
- Avoid stigmatization and sensationalism when preparing materials on LGBT+ topics.

Recommendations for Civil Society

- Develop a mechanism for monitoring the effectiveness of respecting the rights of military personnel based on sexual orientation and gender identity.
- Organize the provision of psychological assistance (support) to LGBT+ military personnel who have experienced harassment or discrimination.
- Organize training of psychologists to develop special skills for working with LGBT+ military personnel.
- Publish materials on the mechanisms of rights protection, particularly in military service.
- Collect and document cases of discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity in the military sector.
- Lobby for the adoption of draft laws that protect the rights of LGBT+ military personnel, initiate the creation of new legislative initiatives to support partners of LGBT+ military servants.
- Network with other human rights organizations for effective advocacy and support.

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Appendix A

List of Experts

1. **Oleksandr Danylov** - Lawyer, coordinator of the public reception center of the Ukrainian Helsinki Human Rights Group in Kherson
2. **Volodymyr Yushmanov** - Sexologist, psychologist
3. **Tetiana Pavlova** - Member of the American Psychological Association, military psychologist, coordinator of the psychological service of the Women's March
4. **Mariia Vovna** - Psychiatrist
5. **Liana Kolesnyk-Tsapenko** - Psychologist, sexologist, founder of the mental health space "Family Center"
6. **Anonymous** - Psychiatrist

Appendix B

Analyzed Media Materials

B1. Mass media publications (in chronological order)

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B2. Blogs

Description of the online source

- Yevhen Karas. https://t.me/karas_evgen (in Ukrainian)
- Zhorin Third Assault Brigade. <https://t.me/MaksymZhorin> (in Ukrainian)
- Call sign School. <https://t.me/shkola88> (in Ukrainian)
- All Together Movement. <https://t.me/vsirazom> (in Ukrainian)
- The Kukharchuk. <https://t.me/SlipioCKUa> (in Ukrainian)
- STALKERUA. https://t.me/ua_stalker (in Ukrainian)
- Victor Rozoviy. https://x.com/victor_rozoviy (in Ukrainian)

Appendix C

Guidelines for LGBT+ Military Personnel on Protecting Their Rights

Record the Violation:

- Evidence: Keep any available evidence of discrimination, such as screenshots of messages, audio or video recordings, photos, or written eyewitness accounts.
- Incident details: Record the date, time, location, description of the situation, and names of all persons involved. This will make it easier to file a report later.

Report it to the command:

- Whom to contact: Report directly to your unit commander, and if the commander is involved in the violation, contact higher-ups.
- What to include in the report:
- Your full name, title, and position.
- Description of the situation: where, when and how the violation occurred.
- Which of your rights were violated (based on the Constitution, the Criminal Code of Ukraine, the Law "On the Principles of Preventing and Counteracting Discrimination in Ukraine").
- Demands: indicate that you would like an investigation conducted, the perpetrators brought to liability, and safe conditions for further service.

How to register your report:

- Bring the report to the office of your military unit.
- Ask to register the report in the incoming correspondence journal.
- Make sure to receive a copy of your report with the mark of acceptance.
- Here is what acceptance looks like: the report copy must have the incoming number, date, signature, and last name of the person who accepted your report.

Reporting the incident to law enforcement agencies:

- If the incident involves violence or other criminal activities, contact the police.
- Here is your course of actions:
- Go to the nearest National Police precinct.
- Describe the situation, indicate that this is a hate crime based on SOGI.
- Provide all available evidence.
- Demand that your report is registered in the Unified Register of Pre-Trial Investigations and receive the corresponding extract.

Get support from human rights organizations:

- Contact friendly NGOs (for example, Gender Stream) for legal or psychological support.
- The organization can assist you with document preparation, legal services, or representation of your interests.

Monitor progress in your case:

- After submitting the report, monitor its review. Ask the office or command about the status of the investigation.
- In case of delay or inaction, demand an official explanation.

Appeal illegal decisions:

- If you are not satisfied with the outcome of the review, go to court.
- To accomplish this, prepare a lawsuit, attach evidence, and, if necessary, get a lawyer involved.

