



UNITED NATIONS  
DOMINICAN REPUBLIC



COVID-19  
RESPONSE

REPORT ON THE

# IMPACT OF COVID-19 IN LGBTI PEOPLE IN THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC



## DISCLAIMER:

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This report was prepared by Cristhian Manuel Jiménez, Technical Assistant for the Being LGBTI Project in the Caribbean, UNDP; Jean Luis Sano, Technical Assistant for Inclusion and Human Rights, UNDP; Loeny Santana, Community-Based Protection Associate, UNHCR; and Yordana Dolores, Strategic Information Advisor, UNAIDS.

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# INTRODUCTION

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This report is presented by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV / AIDS (UNAIDS) in order to inform the Independent Expert on protection against violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity regarding the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on LGBTI people, communities or populations in the Dominican Republic.

This document aims to provide information on the identified needs of the LGBTI population through surveys and services provided by UNDP, UNHCR and UNAIDS since the beginning of the pandemic. Furthermore, the paper informs about the support the UN has provided to LGBTI CSOs and the Dominican government in order to include LGBTI people in government responses to the pandemic.



## GENERAL SITUATION OF THE LGBTI PEOPLE DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC



In the Dominican Republic, the socio-economic impact of COVID-19 on LGBTI people has been particularly negative. Before the pandemic, 42.7% of gay men and trans women received a monthly income of less than 6,000.00 Dominican pesos (\$105.40)<sup>1</sup>. As many LGBTI people are experiencing a reduction of income due to the pandemic, their unsustainable financial situation is threatening their well-being considering that the cost of the basic Dominican family basket for the first quintile of income (the poorest people) was 14,476.91 Dominican pesos (US\$254.31) in March 2020<sup>2</sup>.

The lack of a normative framework that recognizes the gender identity of trans people, families made up of same-sex couples, and explicit protection against discrimination based on sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, and sexual characteristics continues to represent a challenge in countries like the Dominican Republic. Also, there is an urgent need to include the LGBTI people in the responses of social protection, universal health coverage, education, and access to justice without discrimination and protection against domestic and gender-based violence.

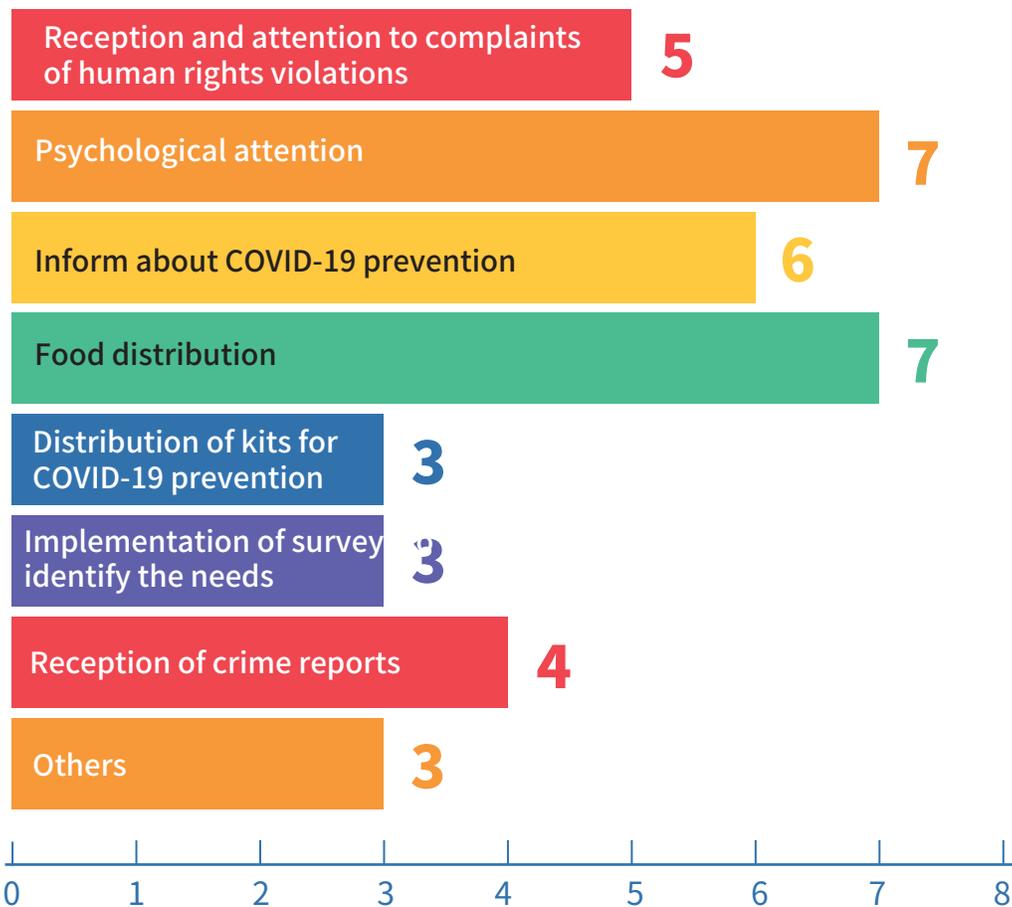
1 Segunda encuesta de vigilancia de comportamiento con vinculación serológica en poblaciones claves: Gais, Trans y Hombres que tienen Sexo con Hombres (GTH), Trabajadoras Sexuales (TRSX), Usuarios de Drogas (UD). Santo Domingo: CONAVIHSIDA, 2014. Página 57.

2 Costo Canasta Familiar por Quintiles y Nacional, 2011-2020, Banco Central de la República Dominicana. Enlace: <https://www.bancentral.gov.do/a/d/2534-precios>



In an online survey conducted by UNDP from April 9 to 14, 2020 to identify the needs of LGBTI non-governmental organizations, it was found that, among the eight participating organizations, the main activities they carried out to respond to their target populations included food distribution and referral to psychological care as established in figure 1.

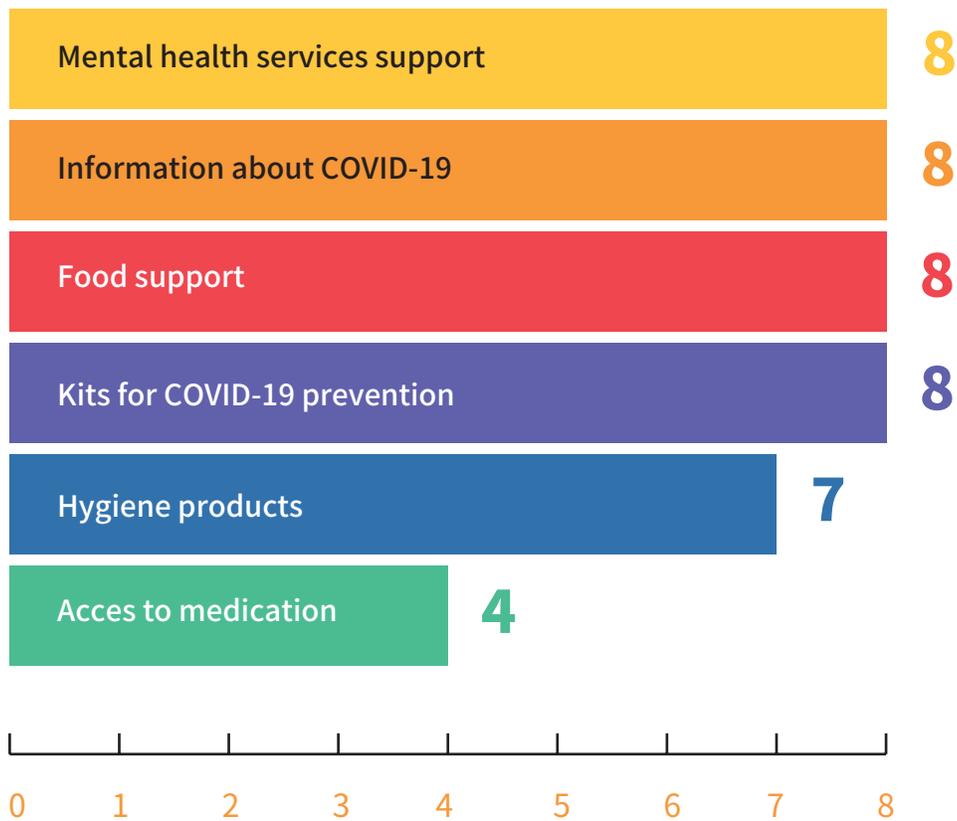
Figure 1. Activities carried out by LGBTI NGOs during the COVID-19 pandemic



Source: Survey of LGBTI organizations about their needs during the COVID-19 emergency. UNDP.

Also, it was identified that the greatest demands received by organizations from the populations they serve included food and nutrition support, psychological care, preventive information on COVID-19 and distribution of personal protection equipment as shown in the figure 2.

Figure 2. Demands received by LGBTI NGOs during the COVID-19 pandemic

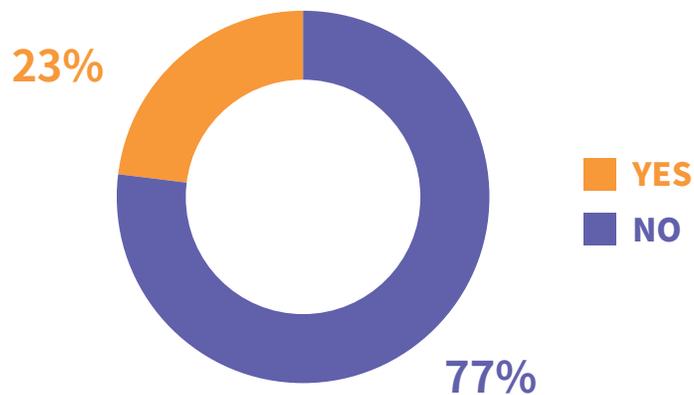


Source: Survey of LGBTI organizations about their needs during the COVID-19 emergency. UNDP.

UNDP alongside the Cabinet for the Coordination of Social Policies (GCPS), UNICEF, UNFPA, and, IOM conducted a Socio-Economic Impact Assessment (SEIA)<sup>3</sup> aiming to have a real-time diagnostic of the living conditions in the Dominican households during the COVID-19 pandemic. This initiative was implemented with the participation of civil society organizations including Diversidad Dominicana (an LGBTI organization) that identified 42 LGBTI households. Some of the findings regarding these households indicated that:

Only 23% of the households with at least one LGBTI person have received the Solidarity Card or have been included in the Stay Home Program established by the government in response to COVID-19 as shown in figure 3.

Figure 3. Receive benefits - Stay at Home Program / Solidarity Card <sup>4,5</sup>



Source: Socio-Economic Impact Assessment. PNUD, OIM, UNFPA y UNICEF.

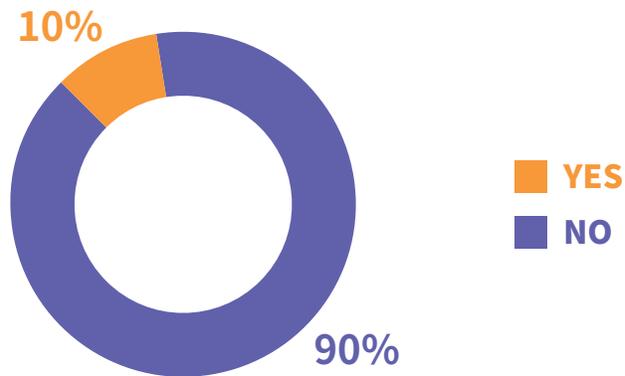
3 As a result of its implementation it is expected: To collect monthly information on the needs of the most affected population, with an emphasis on vulnerable groups. Provide policy makers in the Social Policy Coordination Cabinet (GCPS) and other government entities with relevant information that allows them to adapt and improve the impact of public interventions. Strengthen the empowerment of civil society organizations and communities as entities of change, promoting social cohesion through the implementation of response and recovery actions for affected families.

4 Dominican Government subsidy card intended for families that fall under the extreme poverty classification and run in businesses determined in the same environment as the user and belonging to the RAS. Source: <http://www.adess.gob.do/subsidios-sociales/sistema-de-pago/>

5 Through the implementation of the Stay at Home program, the Dominican Government seeks to protect the income and food of impoverished families and whose heads of families are informal workers during the coronavirus emergency period (COVID-19). Source: <https://presidencia.gob.do/coronavirusrd>

Similarly, only 10% of households where there is at least one LGBTI person have been integrated into the Employee Solidarity Assistance Fund (FASE) implemented by the government in a joint effort with the private sector as the figure 4 indicates.

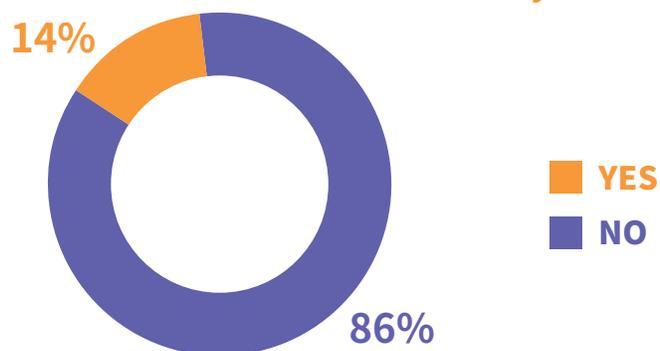
Figure 4. Benefits - Employee Solidarity Assistance Fund (FASE)<sup>6</sup>



Source: Socio-Economic Impact Assessment. PNUD, OIM, UNFPA y UNICEF.

Likewise, only 14% of households where there is at least one LGBTI person have received food rations from the Social Plan of the Presidency as show in figure 5.

Figure 5. Receive benefits - Food rations from the Social Plan of the Presidency<sup>7</sup>



Source: Socio-Economic Impact Assessment. PNUD, OIM, UNFPA y UNICEF.

6 The Employee Solidarity Assistance Fund (FASE) has been created by the Dominican Government to financially support the workers who have been affected by the measures adopted before COVID-19 in the country. Source: <https://presidencia.gob.do/coronavirusrd/fase>

7 This institution aims to provide food, health, shelter and education to sectors and people living below poverty levels. Source: <http://www.pasp.gob.do/index.php/sobre-nosotros/quienes-somos>

In 54% of households where there is at least one LGBTI person, the number of meals per day had to be reduced due to the reduction in household income as a result of low economic activity in the productive sectors. The survey shows that only 27% of the heads of households where there is at least one LGBTI person work in the private sector.

Figure 6. Reduction in the number of meals per day due to reduced income

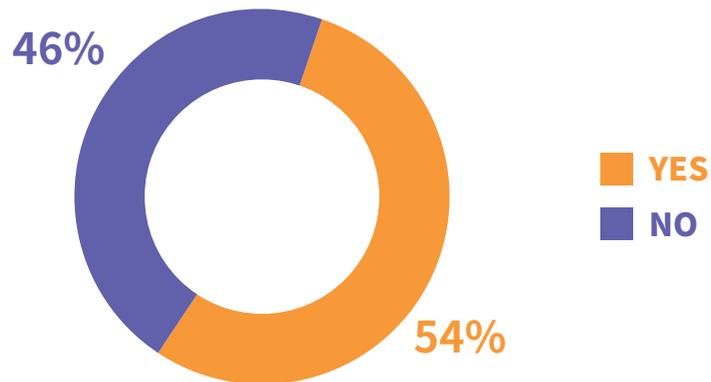
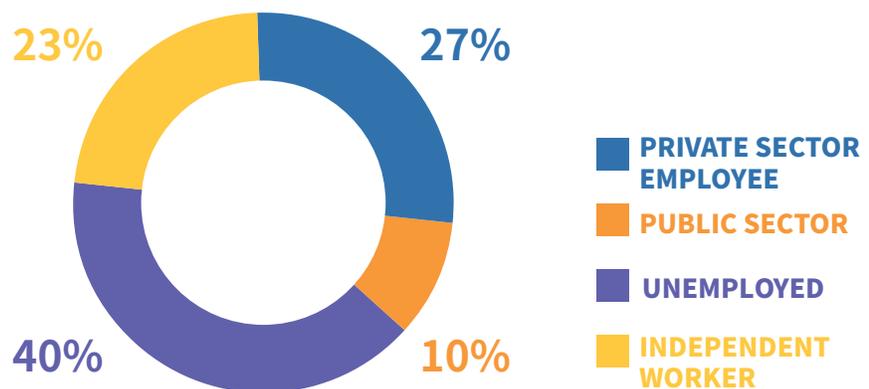


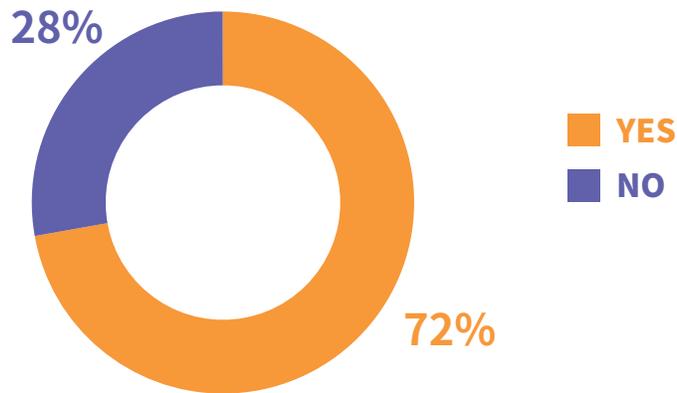
Figure 7. Employment situation



Source: Socio-Economic Impact Assessment. PNUD, OIM, UNFPA y UNICEF.

▶ 72% of households where there is at least one LGBTI person have had difficulty accessing protective equipment such as masks and gloves. ◀

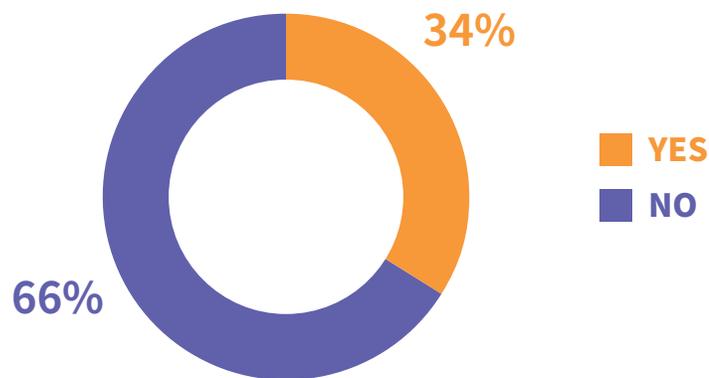
Figure 8. Faced difficulties accessing masks and gloves



Source: Socio-Economic Impact Assessment. PNUD, OIM, UNFPA y UNICEF.

▶ 34% of households with at least one LGBTI person have difficulty accessing drinking water while 45% of households indicated that household members who need regular treatment have not been able to access health services. ◀

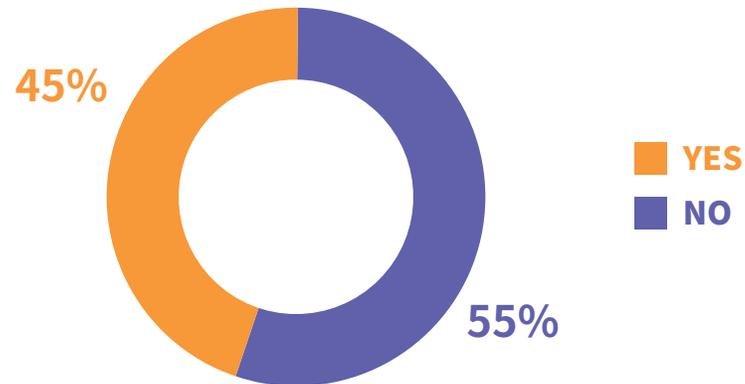
Figure 9. Faced difficulties in accessing drinking water



Source: Socio-Economic Impact Assessment. PNUD, OIM, UNFPA y UNICEF.



Figure 10. People who need regular medical treatment have been able to access health services?

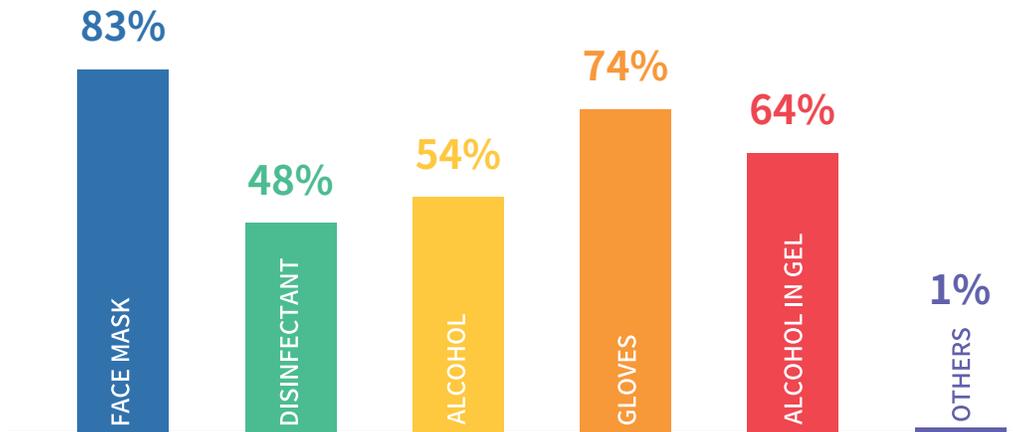


Source: Socio-Economic Impact Assessment. PNUD, OIM, UNFPA y UNICEF.



The survey indicated that LGBTI people did not have access to the necessary personal protective equipment to follow the security measures implemented by the Dominican government in response to the pandemic. According to 83% of the population, masks are among the most necessary but least available items, followed by gloves, with 74% as shown in figure 11.

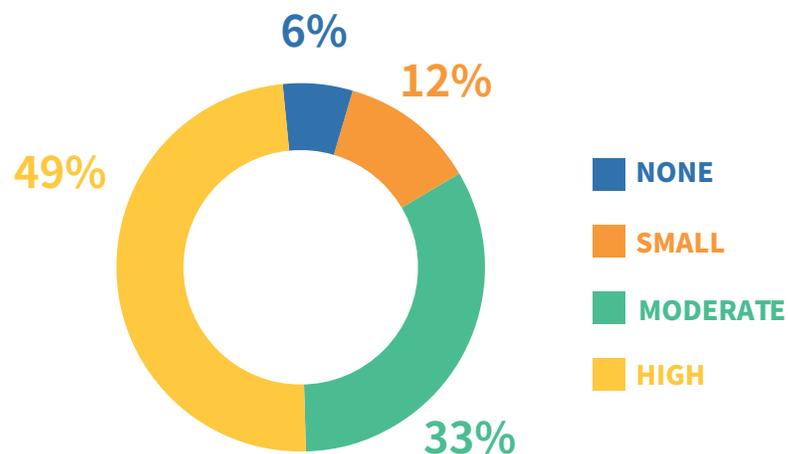
Figure 11. Protective items much needed but not available



Source: UNAIDS, 2020

According to the survey, most LGBTI people understand that COVID-19 presents a risk to their health. As shown in graph 12, 49% of the population considered that this risk was high and 33% understood it moderate.

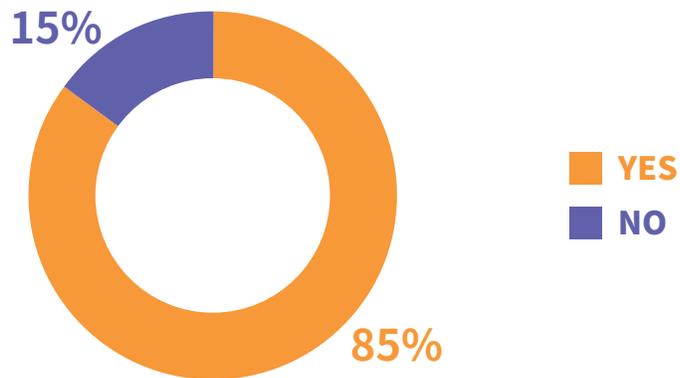
Figure 12. Risk percentage



Source: UNAIDS, 2020

▶ 85% of the LGBTI people living with HIV who were surveyed indicated that their confidentiality was violated due to COVID-19. ◀

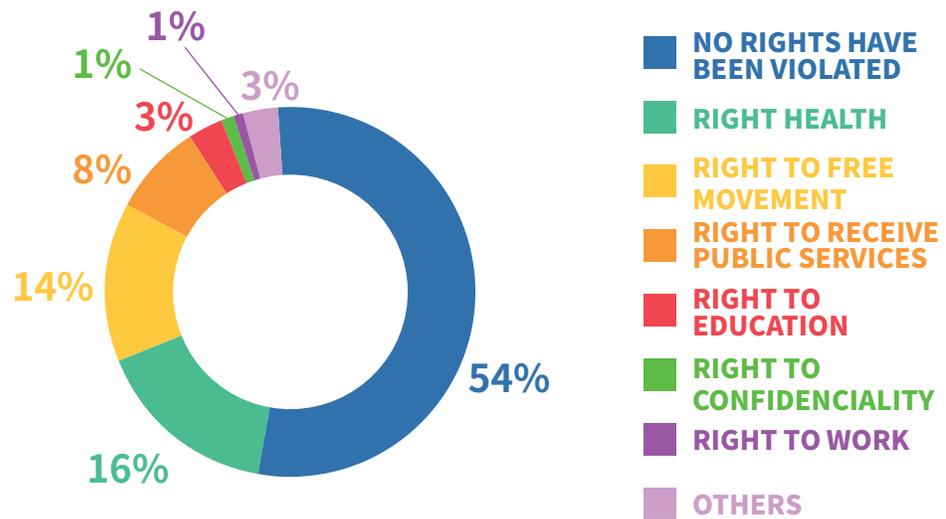
Figure 13. Confidentiality was violated



Source: UNAIDS, 2020

▶ Although more than half of LGBTI people did not see their rights violated in the midst of the pandemic, 16% indicated that their right to health were violated, just as 14% stated that their right to free transit was affected, this was most likely due to the state of national emergency implemented in the country. According to the respondents, other rights that were violated include the right to receive public services and education, as illustrated in figure 14. ◀

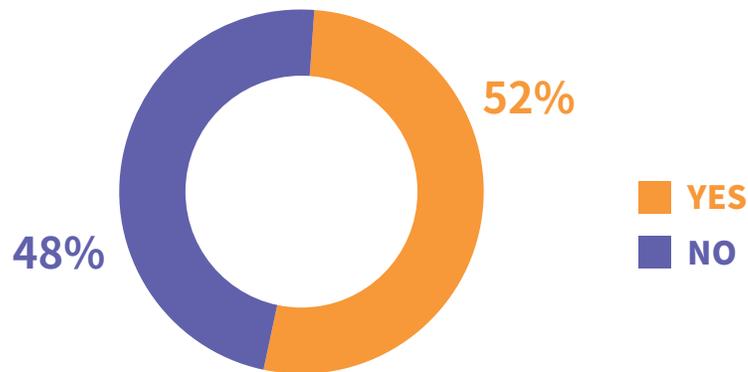
Figure 14. Rights were violated



Source: UNAIDS, 2020

48% of the LGBTI people living with HIV surveyed indicated that they had not experienced physical, psychological or verbal violence, which reflects that 52% of the remaining people suffered some type of violence during the confinement established by the government.

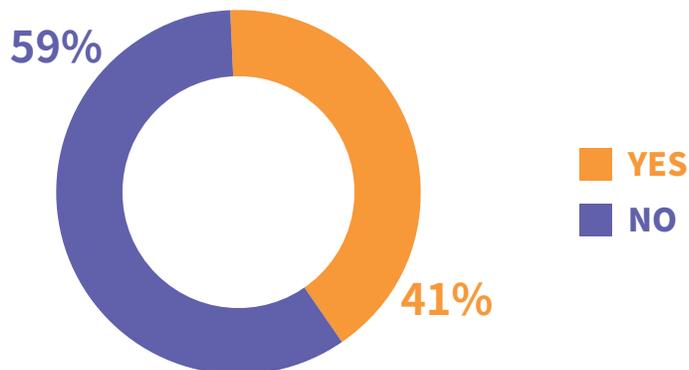
Figure 15. Experiences of physical, psychological or verbal violence



Source: UNAIDS, 2020

In this sense, 59% of the people surveyed indicated that they did not know where to go if they suffered any type of violence, so it can be inferred that a considerable number of people who were violated did not report their cases or seek out support services, taking into account the statistics of victims of violence previously presented.

Figure 16. Know where to go in case of experiencing violence



Source: UNAIDS, 2020



## IMPACT OF THE PANDEMIC ON LGBTI REFUGEES



According to UNHCR in the Dominican Republic, LGBTI asylum seekers and refugees face challenges and protection risks based on their sexual orientation or gender identity and forced migration to the country. During this pandemic, the following risks have been identified:

- Closed public services (example, civil registry) or performed remotely with little information available.
- Obstacles for people of interest to request asylum, access the territory and / or return to their countries of origin.
- Due to the lack of regular documentation, most people of concern are not included in the social protection program such as “Stay at Home” or the FASE program.
- Unemployment and loss of access to livelihood activities affected the population.





## GOOD PRACTICES



This crisis has also demonstrated the strength of Dominican LGBTI organizations, which are providing services, making the needs of this population visible and advocating for inclusive public policies. The following actions have been carried out by UNDP, UNHCR and UNAIDS to provide support to civil society organizations in their efforts to reach the LGBTI people most impacted by the socio-economic crisis caused by the COVID-19:

- The Being LGBTI in the Caribbean Project is implemented by UNDP Dominican Republic. Some of the activities carried out by the project to address the needs identified during the pandemic include dialogues and training for public institutions in order to promote the inclusion of LGBTI people in their responses to the crisis. This included a meeting at a technical level with personnel from the Ministry of Women to promote the inclusion of LGBTI people in the gender violence hotline, which is a State service for the reception and processing of complaints of violence against women, especially the reception of human rights violations against LBT women. Also, there was a participation in online classes on access to justice for prosecutors, addressing the challenges of access to justice for LGBTI people.





- UNDP carried out a survey of LGBTI non-governmental organizations<sup>8</sup> with the aim of knowing and reporting on the demands of the populations that serve strategic partners.
- UNDP released of a Directory on mental health and other services for the LGBTI population during COVID-19.
- UNDP distributed 437 food and biosecurity kits to LGBTI people identified by LGBTI organizations<sup>9</sup>.
- UNDP alongside the Cabinet for the Coordination of Social Policies (GCPS), UNICEF, UNFPA, and, IOM conducted a Socio-Economic Impact Assessment (SEIA)<sup>10</sup> aiming to have a real-time diagnostic of the living conditions in the Dominican households during the COVID-19 pandemic. This initiative was implemented with the participation of civil society organizations including Diversidad Dominicana (an LGBTI organization) that identified 42 households where there are LGBTI people.
- Within the framework of the UNDP alliance with the National District Mayor's Office (ADN) "Santo Domingo Always Transparent and Inclusive", the Santo Domingo Aliado program was launched, an initiative in partnership with the private sector for the delivery of one million (1,000,000) of masks and gloves in the city of the National District. Within the framework of this initiative, six thousand (6,000) masks and gloves were delivered to LGBTI organizations<sup>11</sup> for distribution to LGBTI persons.
- UNDP developed a workshop for the membership of the Dominican Association of Psychology Professionals to raise awareness of the needs of the LGBTI population, given that this guild is giving psychological support to the entire population free of charge.

<sup>8</sup> COLESDOM, REVASA, TRANSSA, COTRAVETD, Diversidad Dominicana, Observatorio de DDHH para Grupos Vulnerabilizados, Voluntariado GLBT Dominicano y Grupo de Apoyo Este Amor.

<sup>9</sup> TRANSSA, REVASA, Observatorio de Derechos Humanos de Grupos Vulnerabilizados, Grupo Este Amor, Diversidad Dominicana, Voluntariado GLBT Dominicano, COLESDOM y COTRAVETD.

<sup>10</sup> As a result of its implementation it is expected: To collect monthly information on the needs of the most affected population, with an emphasis on vulnerable groups. Provide policy makers in the Social Policy Coordination Cabinet (GCPS) and other government entities with relevant information that allows them to adapt and improve the impact of public interventions. Strengthen the empowerment of civil society organizations and communities as entities of change, promoting social cohesion through the implementation of response and recovery actions for affected families.

<sup>11</sup> Amigos Siempre Amigos (ASA) y Red de Voluntarios de Amigos Siempre Amigos (REVASA).





- UNDP delivered 475 reusable face masks to the Amigos Siempre Amigos (ASA) and the Amigos Siempre Amigos Volunteer Network (REVASA) as part of the LGBTI 2020 Pride celebration to be distributed.
- UNDP made recommendations through the public consultation carried out by the Judiciary in order to include LGBTI people and other marginalized groups in their responses to preserve the health of users of the justice system, judges and judicial officials. The purpose of this consultation was to provide knowledge for the preparation of two documents that will be part of the new methodology of judicial processes during the COVID-19 pandemic: 1) service guide for interviews with vulnerable people, victims or witnesses of crimes, through closed circuit television, Gesell Camera or other technological means and 2) the Protocol of action of interview centers for people in vulnerable conditions, victims or witnesses of crimes, through closed circuit television, Camera Gesell or other technological means<sup>12</sup>.
- UNAIDS promoted in the High-Level Commission<sup>13</sup> made up of the country's government agencies to adopt and monitor the measures on COVID-19 the inclusion of PLHIV in social protection plans, such as FASE and Stay at Home.
- UNAIDS promoted at the highest level for the country to adopt the ARV drug delivery strategy for more than three months. Following which, the guidelines for the care and support of PLHIV at the time of COVID-19 were released. These guidelines include six-month medication delivery for stable patients and three months for all others.
- UNAIDS delivered food rations to PLHIV through different LGBTI civil society organizations and networks of people living with HIV.
- UNAIDS developed a survey on the needs of PLHIV in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic together with the Joint Team on HIV/AIDS. Key populations participated in it, with a high participation of LGBTI people.

12 The Judiciary Branch published two documents for open consultation. Poder Judicial. Link: <https://www.poderjudicial.gob.do/noticia?IdNoticia=1835>

13 To coordinate the actions of the Dominican Government in the execution of the protocols for the protection and prevention of the population against the coronavirus (COVID-19), President Danilo Medina created this commission by decree 132-20. Source: <https://presidencia.gob.do/coronavirusrd/comision-de-alto-nivel>





- UNHCR has made cash transfers for humanitarian health care, rent payments, medical tests and hygiene kits.
- UNHCR has provided individual legal and psychological assistance through telephone lines.
- UNHCR has mobilized community-based training through key contacts with grassroots organizations in five provinces to identify and refer LGBTI people at risk.
- UNHCR has produced informative material in Spanish and Creole on violence prevention, complaints channels, eviction prevention and basic State services in the framework of the emergency caused by COVID-19.





# COVID-19 RESPONSE

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**UNHCR**  
**ACNUR**

La Agencia de la ONU para los Refugiados



**UNAIDS** | 

