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The IDEM Project: Achieving greater Diversity, Inclusion and Equality in SMEs Management



Final report for Lithuania

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IDEM TOOL: Achieving greater Diversity, Inclusion and Equality in SMEs Management

Final Report for LITHUANIA

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Abbreviations

CSR – Corporate Social Responsibility

D&I – Diversity and Inclusion

LGBTQ - Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer

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1. Overview

Diversity is an everlasting process with non-exhaustive list of indicators and features, which creates challenges to assess and evaluate the process. It also provides never-ending social, cultural, and economic resources to companies and societies to drive socioeconomic innovations forward to ensure non-selective approach to human rights and cohesive societies. In the current context of polarized societies and fragmented solidarity, recognizing the significant role and contribution the businesses have in shaping public discourse around diversity-related issues, assessment of D&I policies and practices is especially significant.

The survey of 10 Lithuanian companies, which took place from 2022 January to 2022 June, provides an important baseline for the situation of possible discrimination, equality, diversity and inclusion in the work environment in Lithuania. This report is the first evidence-based attempt to start evaluating diversity and inclusion in corporate environment. The evaluation was based on employees' experience and prevailing attitudes, all of which was reflected while respondents answered mostly closed questions of an online survey. A wide range of diversity - gender identity, sex, religion or faith, disability, ethnicity, sexual orientation and age – aspects were covered.

Employees from fields of business consultancy, hospitality services, art management, media, insurance, recruitment, cosmetics, IT and catering, answered the questions. The results from the questionnaire highlight some important questions/issues that should be explored further, including the complexity of intersectional issues.

The results show that most companies do not have any strategies or action plans to ensure D&I, do not participate neither in international, nor local organisations to help them ensure equality, diversity, and inclusion. 85% of the respondents think that the values of the company and their personal ones are often very similar, 91% feel that their colleagues value them as a person, 94% have not experienced bullying or harassment in their current workplace.

We can see from the results that recruitment process did not fully ensure gender equality, as significantly more women than men were asked about their family status and related plans. While analysing respondents as a group, it can be noticed that most of the respondents were heterosexuals (75%), with no disabilities (94%), educated (86% have higher education), middle aged people (85% being in the 35-54 age group) and hence not a very diverse group on its own.

2. Key recommendations

Introduce safe and confidential reporting channels. Having a safe, well known and maintained reporting system is crucial. **Only two out of ten companies specified having a confidential reporting system** that is accessible to all employees and just **22% of the respondents answered that their company does have one.** Under-reporting and scarcity of data makes it difficult to assess the actual situation and measure the exact scale of problems.

Ensure fair and transparent recruitment of candidates. **17% of women and 2% of men were asked questions concerning their family status** and related plans, during recruitment process. Starting with job advertisements, which need to speak with broad range of candidates, to fair screening process, the transparency and equal opportunities should be ensured from this point and onward. Blind resume reviews and automated shortlisting tools could be considered. Candidates from the resume assessment to the interviewing process have to be treated fairly and by the same criteria.

Ensure continuous monitoring. Even though **40% of the company's state that they currently implement monitoring,** only 19% of the respondents said their company monitor the composition of the workforce in the company to assess the representation of different groups of the society. The surveys conducted on a team, departmental or organizational scale can be a tool to determine if the goals of the strategy have been fulfilled. The provided data may be analysed and improve the situation. Wage gap audit is a tool to ensure that positions and jobs are assessed according to neutral criteria, completely distancing themselves from the employee. The same tool makes it possible to prevent unequal payment of wages, which may be unreasonably determined by the gender, age, disability of other characteristics of the employee. Recruitment, selection, promotion, training and complaint handling procedures should be constantly audited as well. Running different style surveys helps companies to gather insights that are needed to make actionable changes and improvements to the processes like diversity recruiting.

3. Methodology

There is a significant amount of knowledge and literature on evaluation and assessment of D&I policies and practices in companies and at workplaces. As any scientific or applied research, assessment of D&I strategies has various tools and methodologies. Although accurate data collection is necessary to make informed business decisions, ensure quality assurance and keep research integrity, the ecosystem of businesses is complex and grasping this complexity, especially then it comes to diversity, is not a simple task. Since there is no perfect solution and methodology to assess and evaluate D&I policies and practices in companies and at workplaces, IDEM tool serves as an accessible survey tool to collect the data on key questions.

Questionnaires are a straightforward data collection method and IDEM Tool strives to create comparative index of D&I policies for companies to be able to identify their strengths and weaknesses, while also developing D&I policies based on existing good practices. This particular tool is also designed to develop common D&I standards to be implemented in the organization while also going far beyond the workplace environment and understanding the internal climate and personnel's support to various D&I initiatives. The data analysis allows to reveal what types of company-specific D&I actions could be implemented considering the prevailing attitudes, stereotypes, prejudices and views towards various types of diversity. Additionally, the collected data can help facilitate internal dialogue in the company among the personnel and (senior) management on various D&I issues by using evidence-based approach.

To create a representative sample, an online survey/questionnaire targeted all existing stages of SMEs' management: from executive boards to regular employees. The IDEM survey was completed by employees of 10 Lithuanian companies, in the fields of business consultancy, hospitality services, art management, media, insurance, recruitment, cosmetics, IT and catering. The data was collected on www.surveymonkey.com, from 2022 January to June.

The one-time survey consisted of Yes/No questions, as well as two Agree/Disagree inquiries and 5-point scale questions, designed to reveal what types of company-specific D&I actions could be implemented considering prevailing attitudes, stereotypes, prejudices, and views towards various types of diversity. While identifying biggest challenges/gaps and opportunities as well as

focusing on the monitoring of societal distance and attitudes, prejudices and stereotypes towards various social, ethnic and religious groups in the society as a whole and in the workplace itself. The questions varied from current workplace issues, to general beliefs, to recruitment process and even hypothetical situations. The responses for each question seem to be consistent across constructs.

Overall number of respondents were 129, of which 61% identifies as females, 34% as males and 5% preferred not to specify their sex. No respondents were older than 54. There are two main age groups, 18-34 and 35-54. 85% of the respondents being 35 and older. 75% of respondents identify as straight, even though 16% preferred not to disclose the information about their sexual orientation.

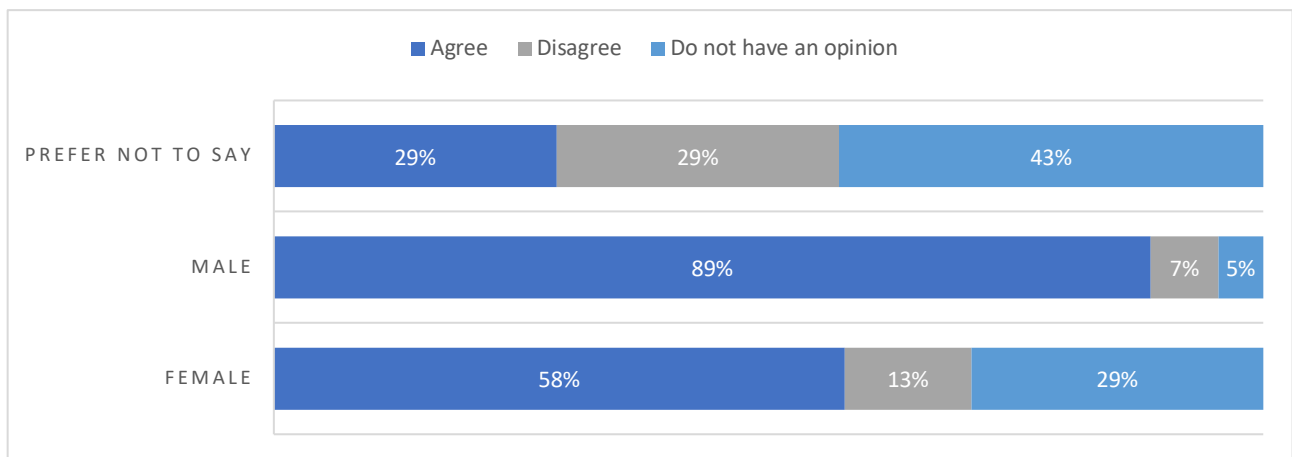
Out of all the respondents 86% have acquired higher education. 32% have high positions in their workplace. 2% mentioned having a disability, 42% consider themselves being religious, and 28% do not.

4. Workplace 'climate' on diversity and inclusion in assessed companies

Although social exclusion has decreased for many ethnic groups, individuals of certain nationalities still continue to be more disadvantaged than others. According to a representative survey of public attitudes conducted in 2019, more than a third (36%) of respondents would not want to live in a neighbourhood with a Muslim, 15% would not be fond of a black neighbour, two-thirds (63%) indicated their unwillingness to have Roma in the neighbourhood. Although social exclusion towards Muslims and blacks is not so prominent as it was, attitudes towards Roma have hardly changed (Lietuvos socialinių tyrimo centro Etninių tyrimų institutas, 2019: 1-2).

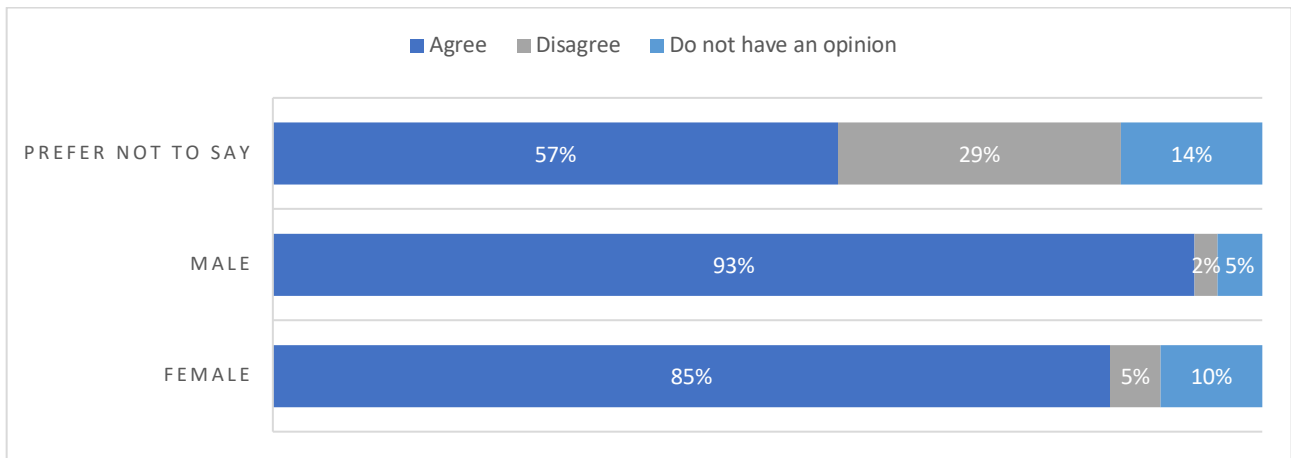
In the assessed companies the situation is very similar. People are way more likely to work with people of various races and ethnic groups but do not to live with them in the same neighbourhoods. As seen from the survey results, Figure 1 and Figure 2, **12% of the respondents would not want to live in a neighbourhood with a Muslim, and 7% would not want to work in the same company with one.** 99% of respondents would be okay with black neighbours and only 2% would prefer not to have a black colleague. The survey confirms that the most disadvantaged ethnic group is still Roma people - **28% of respondents do not want to have a Roma neighbour and 13% would prefer not to have a colleague who is Roma.** It is important to highlight that a climate of inclusion is one in which policies, procedures, and actions of people in power positions, are consistent with fair treatment of all social groups, with particular attention to groups that have had fewer opportunities and that are stigmatized in the society we live in.

Figure 1: Would you agree or disagree to live in a neighbourhood with Muslims?



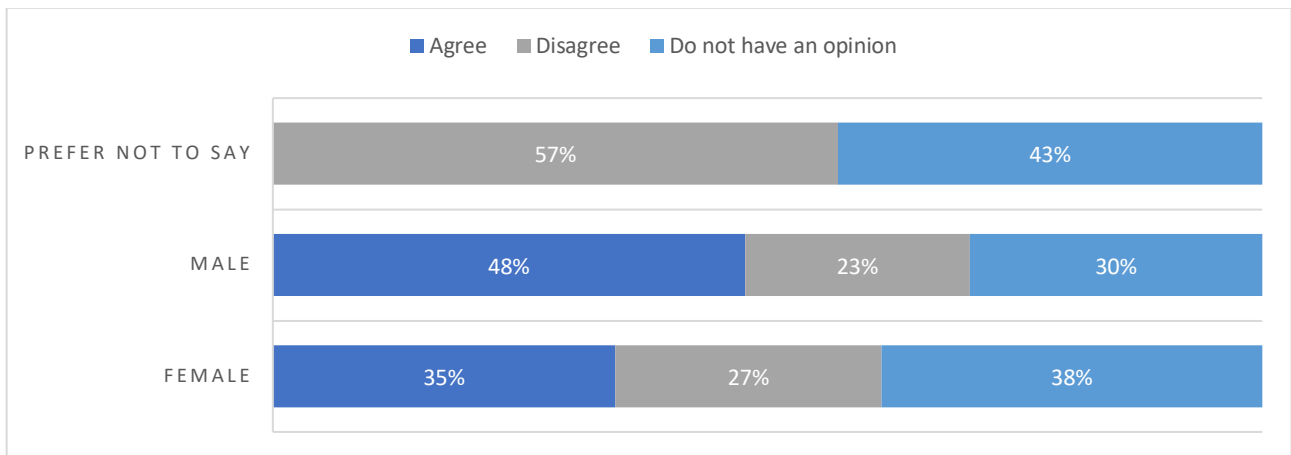
Source: IDEM Tool Survey

Figure 2: Would you agree or disagree to work in the same company with Muslims?



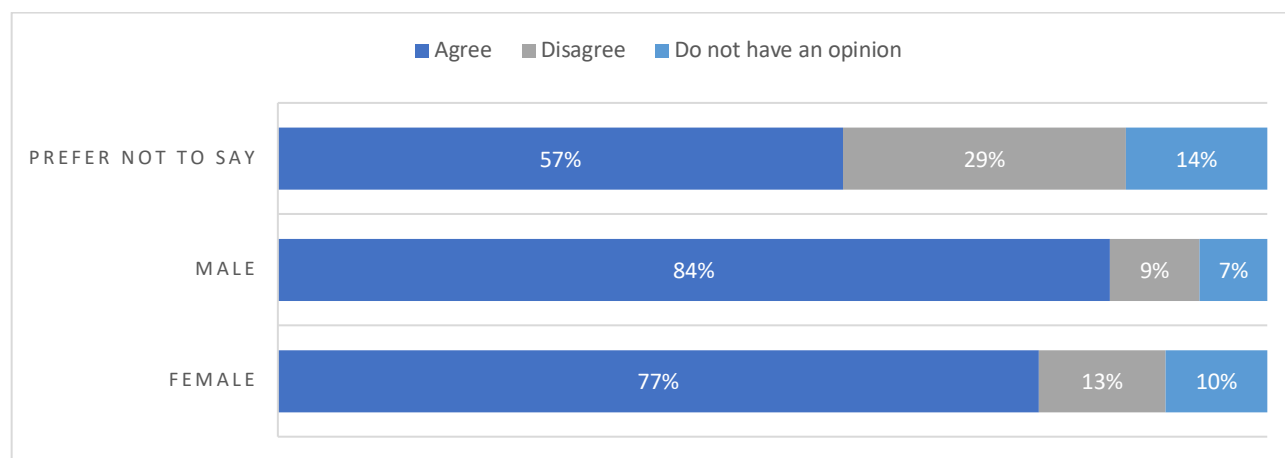
Source: IDEM Tool Survey

Figure 3: Would you agree or disagree to live in a neighbourhood with Roma people?



Source: IDEM Tool Survey

Figure 4: Would you agree or disagree to work in the same company with Roma People?



Source: IDEM Tool Survey

Only with a positive change of personal views we can expect actual change in the workplace too. In the case of Lithuania, had people had a chance to be in the employer's place, 3% of the population would agree to employ people who grew up in orphanages, or people with disabilities. (Gruževskis – apie nurašytus asmenis, 2019). Nevertheless, despite prevailing unwillingness to have more inclusive workplaces, together with increasing number of initiatives for further D&I cultivation¹ and, to some extent, changes in the regulatory framework², there have been positive changes in the employers' perceptions towards various ethnic and social groups, and their inclusion in the labour market. In some cases, the examples of companies ("Pirmas blynas", "Krapas ir burokėlis", "Mano Guru") serve as good practices and likely to inspire other businesses to introduce D&I policies and strategies.

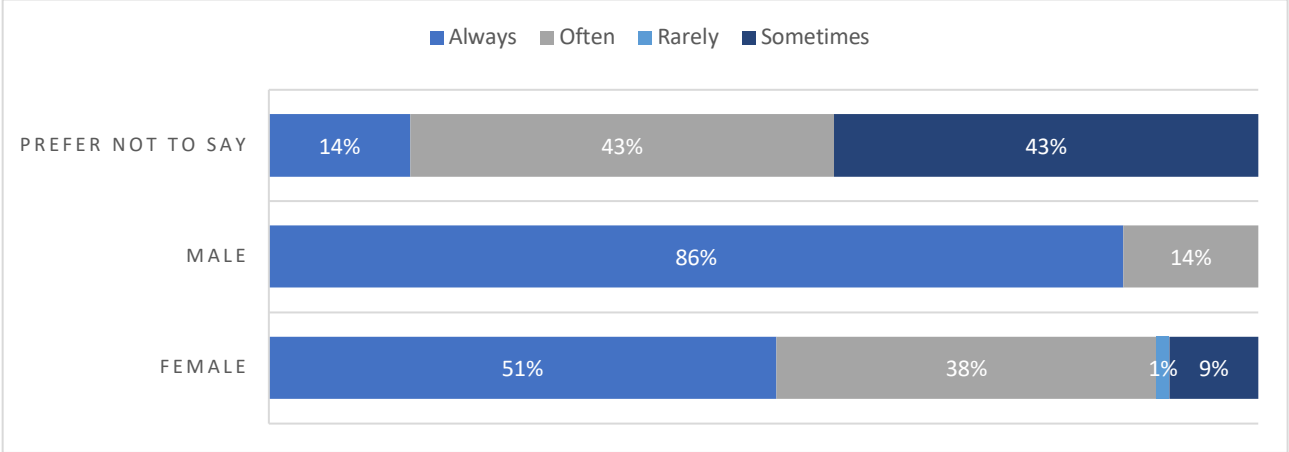
Most respondents (93%) feel supported in their job and that their colleagues respect them as a person (91%). 71% feel that they are paid what they deserve. 85% feel that often or even always

¹ Initiatives for D&I cultivation in the labour market: *Diversity Charter* (<http://www.ivairove.lt/>), *Wings of Equality* (<https://bit.ly/35ksSMf>), *Equal Opportunities Ruler* (<https://lygybe.lt/lt/lygiu-galimybiu-liniuote/>), *Questionnaires for Gender Equality Ruler* (<https://www.lygybe.lt/lt/lyciu-lygybes-liniuotes-anketos/792>), *Sustainability Index* (<https://asociacijalava.lt/tvarumo-indeksas/>), *Business Sustainability and Responsibility Index* ([https://socmin.lrv.lt/uploads/socmin/documents/files/VTAI%20pristatymas\(1\).pdf](https://socmin.lrv.lt/uploads/socmin/documents/files/VTAI%20pristatymas(1).pdf)), *The most equal workplace* (<http://www.lygus.lt/rakta%C5%BEod%C5%BEiai/lygiausia-darboviete/>), *National Equality and Diversity Awards* (<https://www.lygybe.lt/index.php/lt/nacionaliniai-lygybes-ir-ivairoves-apdovanojimai>).

² New amendments to the Labour Code.

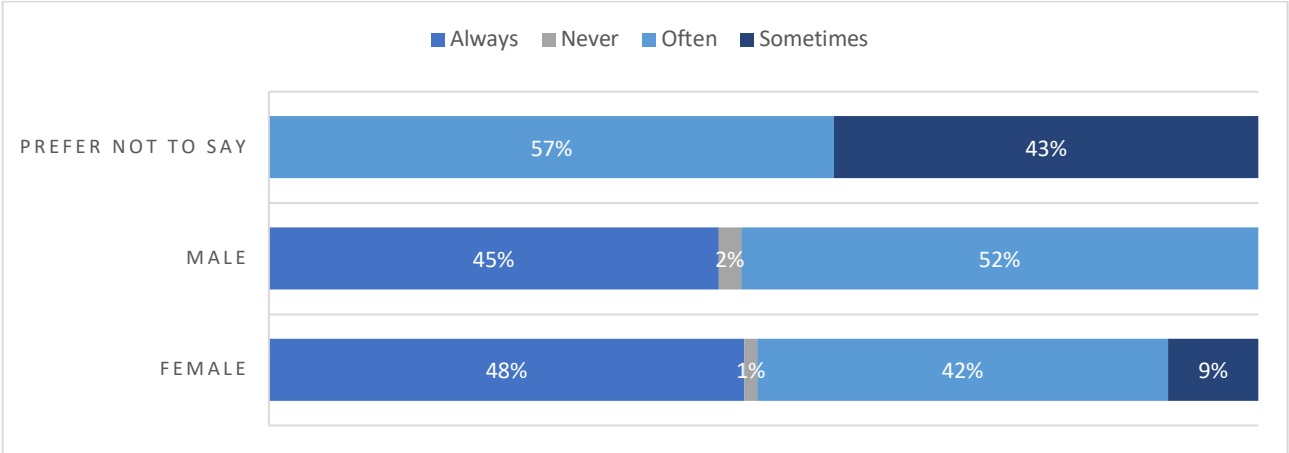
their values and the organisation’s values are very similar. **74% feel that they would be confident talking to their manager about a mental health problem** (which might include anxiety, stress, depression, etc.). Majority of the employees feel rather positive in their current company. They feel respected and valued. Individuals seems to feel included and also feel free to retain their uniqueness within the work group. 47% of respondents would like to get D&I training. (51% already have D&I training at work).

Figure 5: I feel well and supported in my job.



Source: IDEM Tool Survey

Figure 6: My colleagues respect me as a person.



Source: IDEM Tool Survey

4.1 Employees' experience

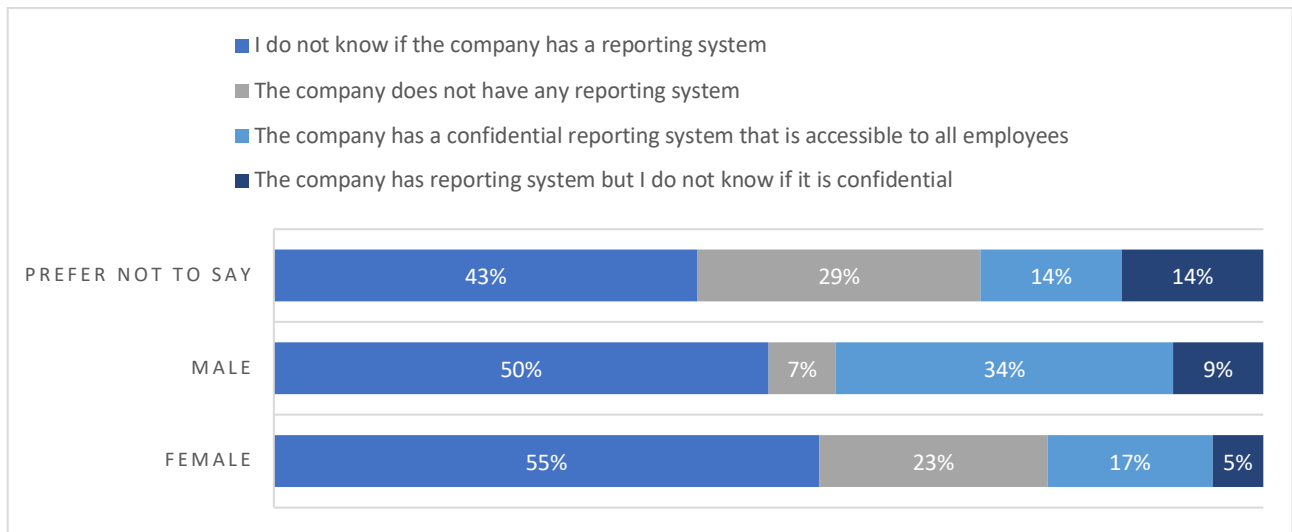
Public surveys and the types of complaints on discrimination indicate that in Lithuania discriminatory acts are most often associated with labour relations. When asked to identify discriminatory situations, the highest percentage (over 92%) of the respondents considered recruitment, dismissal and salary differences as examples of discriminatory acts (Janušauskienė, 2019). Discrimination in the Lithuanian labour market exists on various grounds and continues to hinder the attraction and integration of additional labour force. Consequently, reducing employees' motivation and limiting their ability to contribute to economic and social well-being. When asked why people who have experienced discrimination do not defend their rights, more than three quarters of respondents (78%) said that it is likely to cause them dismissal, and slightly less people (69%) feared that it could affect their relations with fellow colleagues (Janušauskienė, 2019).³

Out of all respondents in this survey, **3% have been subjected to bullying or harassment** in the current workplace. 1% know a colleague(s) who have experienced discrimination because of their ethnic and/or racial origin. With only 1 in 5 companies having any kind of reporting system, only **22% of respondents answered that their current workplace has a safe and confidential channel to report any incidents. And 7% said they are not sure if the reporting system is confidential. Out of those 3% who admitted that they have experienced bullying or harassment, most of them also answered that their company does not have a reporting system at all**, with only 1 person answering that the company they work for, has a reporting system but it is unknown to them whether it is confidential. It is unclear under what circumstances these incidents would have been reported, even though 79% out of all respondents, stated that in the case of discrimination towards them or their colleague, they would be willing to report, with only 2% saying they would not report the incident.

³ The article focuses more on general situation rather than addresses the tools and mechanisms for safe reporting in companies, in Lithuania. To be more precise, the article refers to the general reporting culture in Lithuania and indicates that people tend to, first, deal with the offender on their own (63%) or consider contacting a boss, an employer or other responsible person (60%) to resolve the situation. Only then they look out for institutions like police, the OEOO, ministries, municipalities etc. for the purpose of reporting on discriminatory situations. And this is done in the cases when people choose to report.

In general, the situation in Lithuania showcases that **employees usually choose to not report** at all, majority of people do not want their case to go public (77%), 78% feel that they may lose their job sooner or later, 69% are afraid the relationship with their colleagues might be harmed. (Janušauskienė, 2019). Even though 21% of the population state that they would report the case of fraudulent conduct, only 4% actually reported. ⁴

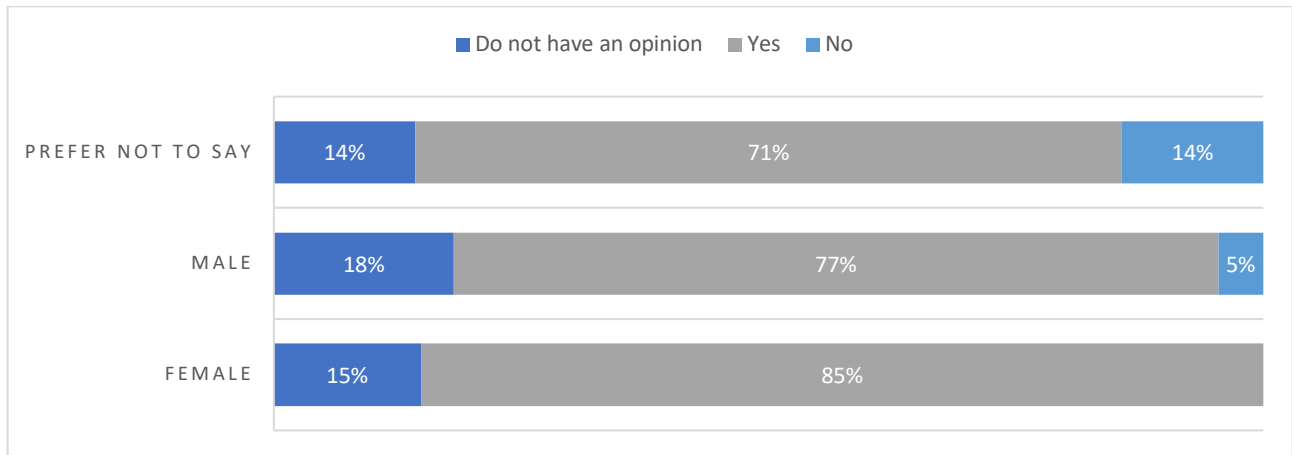
Figure 7: Does your current workplace have a safe reporting system?



Source: IDEM Tool Survey

⁴ Lithuanian map of corruption 2021: <https://www.stt.lt/analitine-antikorupecine-zvalgyba/lietuvos-korupcijos-zemelapis/7437>

Figure 8: In a case of discrimination towards you or your (potential) colleague, would you be willing to report it?



Source: IDEM Tool Survey

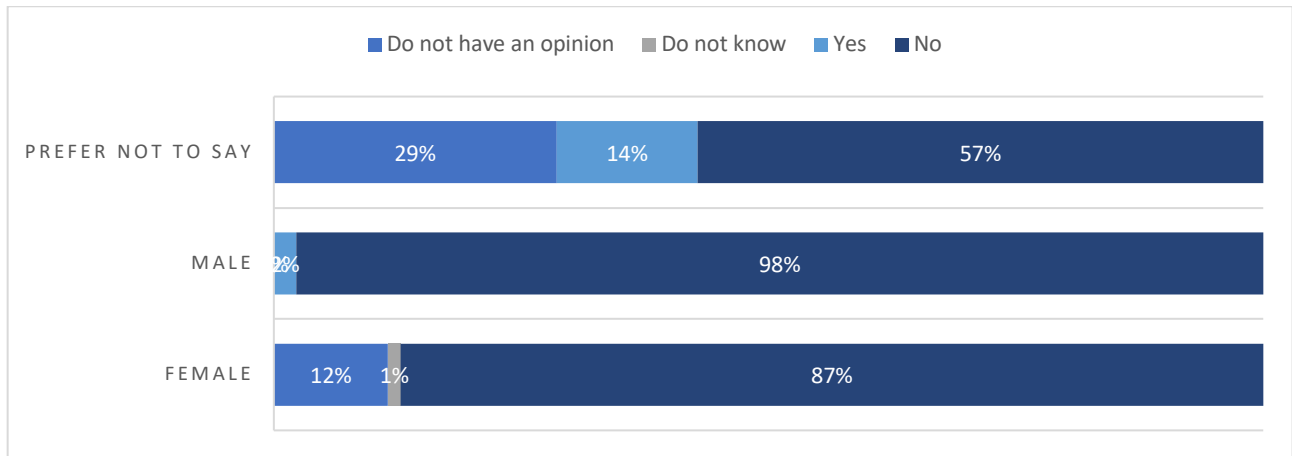
4.2 Employees' experience | Age

The 2018 Barometer of Discrimination in the Lithuanian Labour Market, presented by Vilmoris, indicates that 57% of respondents had personally experienced discrimination in employment and more than 40% of respondents said they knew at least one person who experienced age discrimination in employment (Grigaitė-Mockevičienė, 2019: 9). Similarly, the results of Special Eurobarometer on discrimination show that almost a half of the population (45%) in Lithuania believe that the age discrimination is still a predominant phenomenon when looking for a job. More than a half of the population (59%) indicate that age, either being too young or too old, might be a reason why, yet a skilled candidate, would not get a job (European Commission, 2019). In 2021 the reports of discrimination due to age were 11% out of all the complaints. (Lygių galimybių kontrolieriaus tarnyba, 2021). The general situation in Lithuania is that older workers are more likely to face discriminatory and disrespectful employment relationships, be under pressure to retire before retirement age, or end up unjustifiably dismissed (Brazienė, 2018: 54-57).

Respondents from all 10 companies would agree both to work and live in the same neighbourhood as elderly people, only 1% disagrees to work with elderly people. None of the

respondents have been discriminated due to their age, nor know any colleagues who have been discriminated because of their age. Age discrimination is particularly pronounced among those aged 50-55 age group, deeming them as passive, unproductive, unable to adapt to innovation and unwilling to learn. 10% of the respondents think that if the company, they currently work for, wants to hire someone new and has a choice between two candidates with equal skills and qualifications, the candidate's age (being too young or too old), would put that candidate in a disadvantageous position. It is unclear why even though people seem to be positive towards elderly people, they feel that age may become a disadvantage while pursuing a position in their current company.

Figure 9: Do you know any colleague(s) who have experienced discrimination because of their age?



Source: IDEM Tool Survey

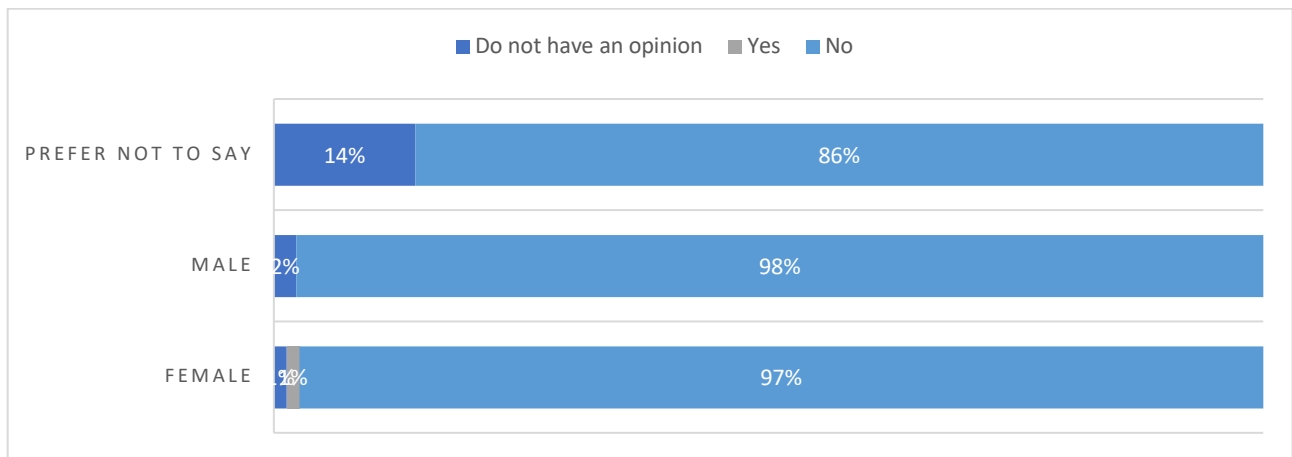
4.3 Employees' experience | Sex

Gender segregation, both vertically (occupations) and horizontally (occupational distribution areas) remains a challenge in Lithuania (Litvinaitė, 2020: 55-5). It is visible in educational institutions as well as general distribution of jobs (Dargužaitė & Litvinaitė, 2018). Furthermore, there are challenges linked to the possibilities to combine work and family responsibilities. Although the Labour Code states that mothers / fathers must be allowed to combine work and family responsibilities, in practice it is much more difficult to implement. Currently, there are no sufficient mechanisms that would ensure flexible working hours and / or in other ways meet the needs of an employee who seek to combine family and work responsibilities. And while there

are 27,900 (75,6%) women who drop out of labour market due to this reason, only 9,000 (24,4%) men take the decision to take care for family members, thus leading to the situation where women again face more challenges than men (Lygių galimybių kontrolieriaus tarnyba, 2021).

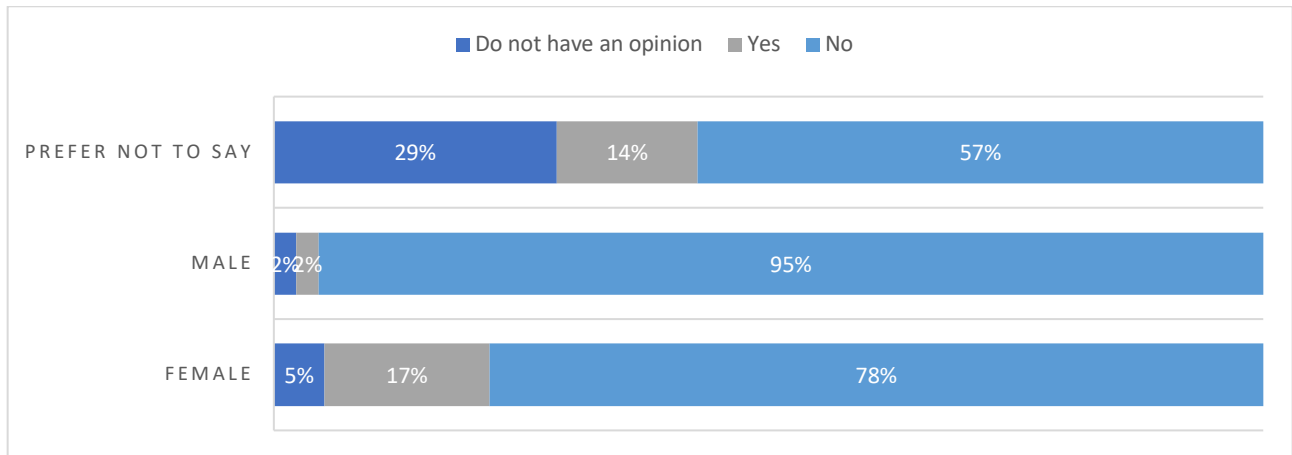
Only respondents who identify as female has admitted to experiencing discrimination because of their gender. 17% of women were asked questions concerning their family status too. 28% of all respondents answered that their current work place is taking measures to reduce gender pay gap, though 25% would like their company to introduce such D&I measures to solve the unequal pay issues.

Figure 10: Have you experienced discrimination or been treated unfairly in your current workplace because of your gender?



Source: IDEM Tool Survey

Figure 11: In the recruitment process, have you been asked questions concerning Your family status and related plans?



Source: IDEM Tool Survey

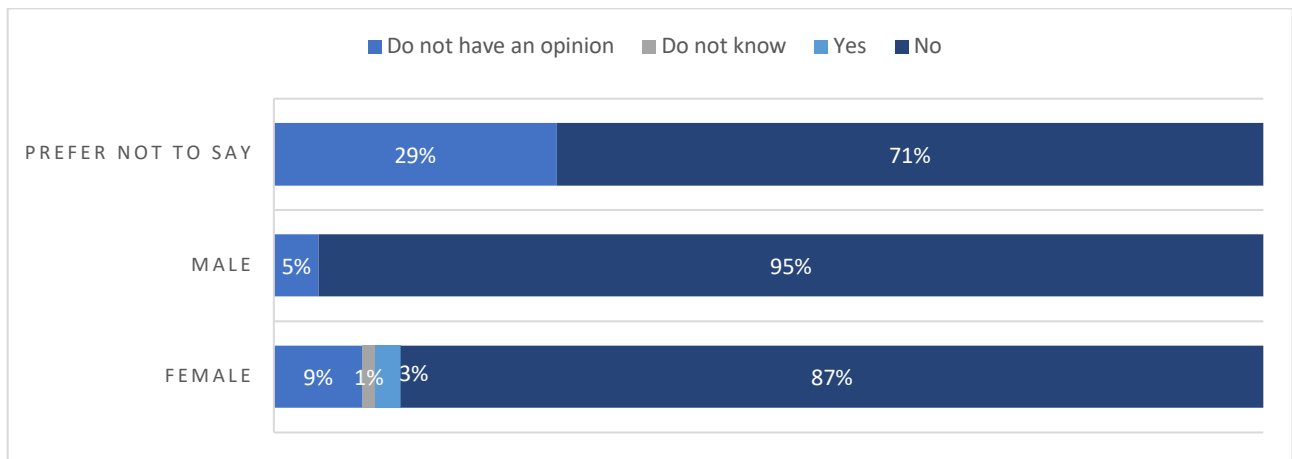
4.4 Employees' experience | LGBTQ+

Sexual orientation as a separate ground for discrimination was included in Lithuanian legislation in 2003, gender identity is still not included. In Lithuania LGBTQ+ persons are discriminated against the most in the EU context (EU FRA, 2013). Also, according to the survey, 58% of LGBTQ+ people in Lithuania have not confessed to their sexual orientation at work in the last 5 years. Currently, more than a half (53%) of population in Lithuania agree with a statement that homosexuals and bisexuals should have equal rights to the rest of population in the country. Yet, however, 44% of population would feel uncomfortable if a gay, lesbian or bisexual person had been elected in the highest political position (European Commission, 2019). If we take a closer look at transgender people, 28% of population would feel uncomfortable working with transgender people in one workplace. Yet, 64% would agree to work in one workplace with a transgender person (Lygių galimybių kontrolieriaus tarnyba, 2019:7).

Male respondents would agree to work with people who have different sexual orientation and different gender identity from them but are less likely to agree to live in the same neighbourhood (2% would prefer not to), contrary to female respondents, with 2% being against the same workplace, but only 1% disagreeing to live in the same neighbourhood.

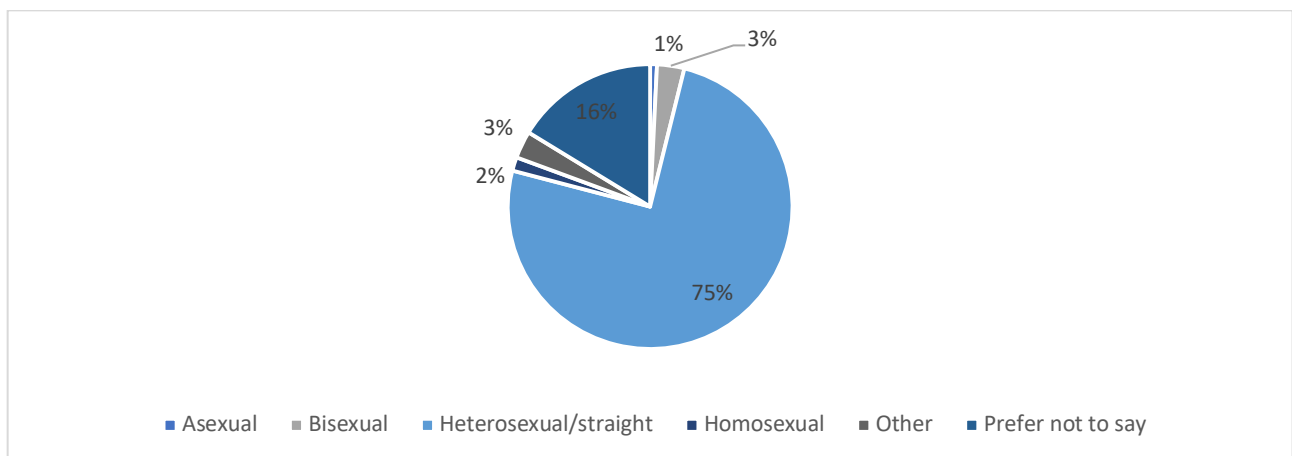
1% out of all respondents have experienced discrimination or been treated unfairly because of their sexual orientation or gender identity. 2% know of a colleague who have experienced discrimination because of their sexual orientation and gender identity. And 3% think that if the company they currently work for had a choice between two candidates with equal skills and qualifications, the candidate's sexual orientation and gender identity could put them in a disadvantageous position. The general situation, considering LGBT+ in these 10 companies, seem to be better than the average in Lithuania, though even 16% chose not to disclose their sexual orientation in the survey.

Figure 12: Do you know any colleague(s) who have experienced discrimination because of their sexual orientation and gender identity?



Source: IDEM Tool Survey

Figure 63: What is your sexual orientation?



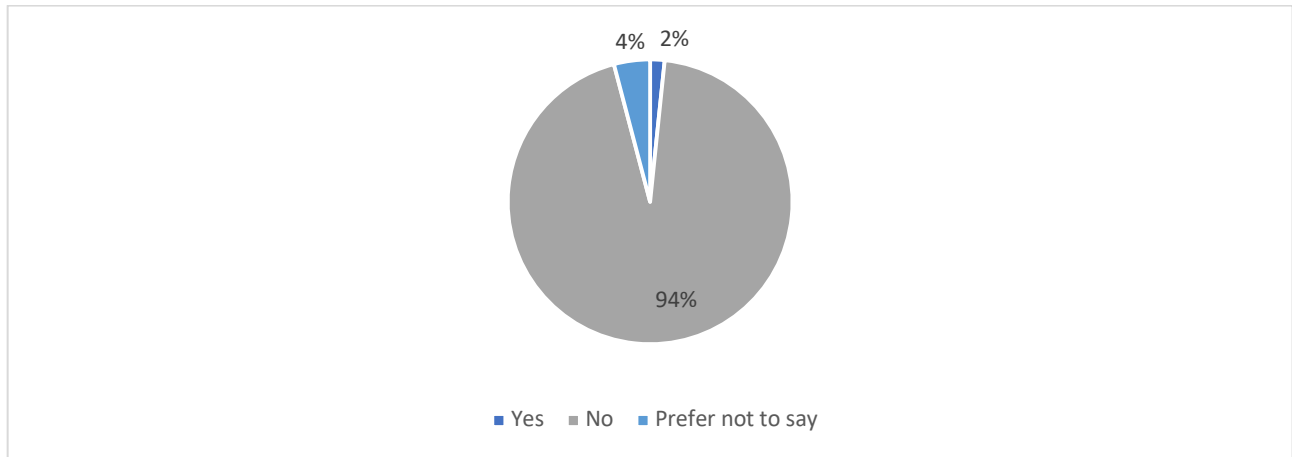
Source: IDEM Tool Survey

4.5 Employees' experience | (Dis)Ability

There is a concern that statistics collected in Lithuania to reveal the situation of people with disabilities are insufficient and fail to present the actual situation on the inclusion of people with disabilities in the labour market. After consulting the experts, Grigaitė-Mockevičienė (2019: 10-12) reports that people with disabilities face the greatest discrimination when trying to find employment - when they are simply not invited to job interviews due to employers' fears, prejudices or simply ignorance, such as the possibility to book a sign language interpreter for a deaf candidate for free.

Respondents of the survey are more open to people with physical disabilities, as opposed to mental disabilities. While only 1% of respondents would not like to work in the same company as people with physical disabilities, 8% would not agree to work in the same company as people with mental disabilities. To the question of how effective the employer's measures are to prevent discrimination at work due to mental situation/disability and physical disability, 54% answered that the measures are effective, and 31% that there are no actual measures taken by the employer or they are absolutely ineffective. None of the respondents have experienced discrimination because of their mental or physical disability. Even so, it is important to state again, that only 2% out of all respondents have a disability. And it is important to mention, that to the question if one knows of a colleague who has experienced discrimination because of physical ability, 1% of respondents answered 'Yes', even though nobody admitted to having experiences discrimination or harassment because of their disability.

Figure 74: Do you have a disability?



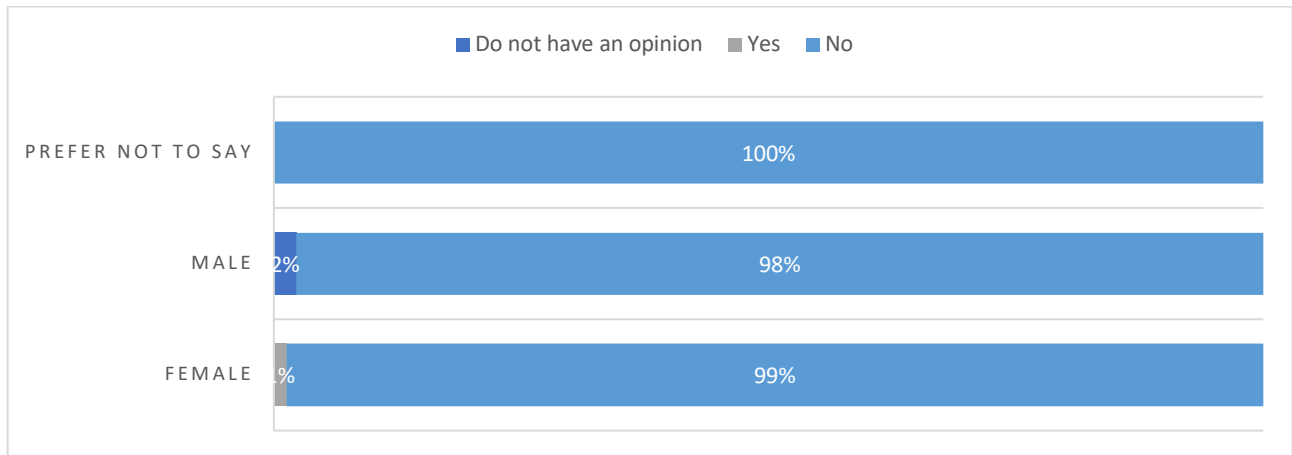
Source: IDEM Tool Survey

4.6 Employees' experience | Religion

According to a public survey conducted in 2018, 37% of Lithuanians did not want to work with Muslims, more than 20% with Jehovah's Witnesses, and nearly 18% with Hindus and Buddhists (Ališauskienė, 2020; Grigaitė-Mockevičienė, 2019). 42% of the respondents identify with being religious. Only 1% has experienced discrimination due to religion. It is clearly seen from the results that Christians are favoured against Muslims in overwhelming manner.

As seen before, 12% of the respondents would not want to live in a neighbourhood with a Muslim, and 7% would not want to work in the same company with one. None of the respondents were asked about their religious beliefs in the recruitment process. 9% think that if the company they currently work for wants to hire someone new and has a choice between two candidates with equal skills and qualifications, the candidate's expression of a religious belief (wearing visible religious symbols), would put that candidate in a disadvantageous position.

Figure 85: Have you experienced discrimination or been treated unfairly in your current workplace because of your religious beliefs?



Source: IDEM Tool Survey

5. Companies' framework on diversity and inclusion

The IDEM Tool methodology is based on the analysis of existing legal frameworks, country specific information, EU context overview and existing D&I practices. **57% of the surveyed companies do not have a D&I strategy at all, 29% do have it and 14% have it only at HR level.**

However, even among those that do have a strategy, employees are less likely to be aware of it, as opposed to business leaders and HR professionals, who are likely to get the data. Even though the analysis allows to reveal what types of company-specific D&I actions could be designed and implemented considering prevailing attitudes, stereotypes, prejudices and views towards various types of diversity. The analysis allows to identify biggest challenges/gaps and opportunities as well as tailor D&I action plans and targeted activities according to a company-specific climate, including awareness raising, training and capacity building. Additionally, such data can help to facilitate internal dialogue in the company among personnel and (senior) management on various D&I issues by using evidence-based approach and enhancing the dialogue as a two-way-process.

Since only **14% of the companies do have D&I as part of their main business strategy,** and only 29% have an in-house team or person working with D&I and equality plans. IDEM Tool monitors and screens internal policies and procedures with the focus on the lifecycle of the employee in

the company with the emphasis on: overall strategic thinking; human resource (HR) strategies and recruitment procedures (only 14% do a regular review of their recruitment process.); post-employment situation and inclusive (or exclusive) workplace environment as well as retention strategies; external and internal communication, including such elements as Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), awareness raising activities, training and capacity building; finally, branding and marketing strategies.

Overall, the IDEM Tool aims to develop holistic methodology and fosters holistic thinking on D&I in SMEs, encompassing 5 essential elements of SMEs lifecycle: strategies/action plans, workplace, workforce, markets and community. The IDEM Tool places employees at the forefront of the assessment by focusing on personnel's well-being and nonselective approach to diversity. It helps SMEs to develop D&I action plans and create follow-up activities according to existing situation within the company by using evidence-based approach. The IDEM Tool has been created as a user-friendly methodology, allowing SMEs to use this as self-evaluation tool in a longitudinal perspective by tracing the progress made and identifying additional/further actions needed. Questionnaires are designed in a way for companies to be able to get ready-made data, which will be self-explanatory to work on the follow-up process. As a more holistic approach, follow-up discussions with relevant experts on planning, development and implementation of specific D&I actions would bring D&I thinking to a more strategic level.

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