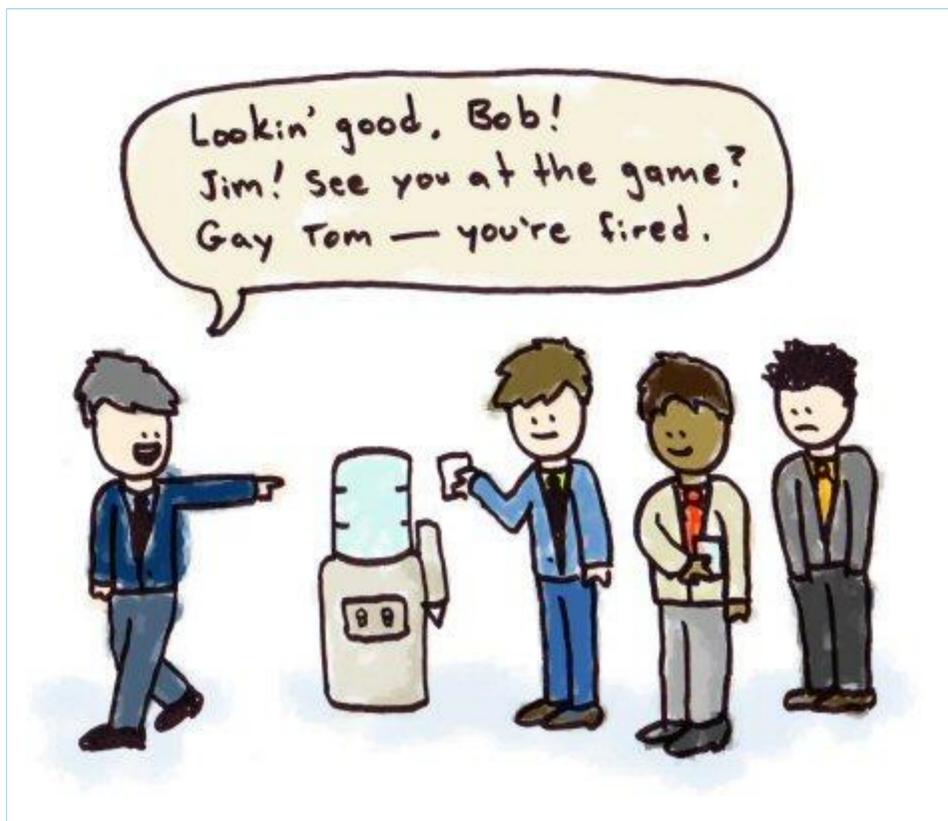


# SURVEY ON THE PERCEPTION OF DISCRIMINATIONS IN THE WORKPLACE BY ITALIAN HOMOSEXUALS

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## Participants and their characteristics

The survey has involved 774 Italian homosexual workers, 555 (71.7%) males (mean age: 37.4 years; SD: 8.7) and 219 (28.3%) females (mean age: 36.0 years; SD: 8.9). Groups were constructed on the basis of being out or not, the title of study and the kind of job. 28 males (5.0%) out of 555 have children, 51 females (23.3%) out of 219 have children.

## Instrument

Instrument is an ad hoc questionnaire divided in 2 parts. See right window.

## Data analysis

In this poster, we report the factor analysis conducted on the answers to the 11 items (table 1) and the comparisons between groups carried out by ANOVA. See table 1.

First component gathers items referring to discriminatory behaviors self-directed (Express themselves negatively about myself as a lesbian/gay, Call me using nicknames I don't approve of, referring to my homosexuality, Complain about my presence as a lesbian/gay in the workplace, Organize a dinner without inviting me on account of my homosexuality). On this component, males and people who are out have higher means compared to females and people who are not out ( $p < .001$ ). Even people with lower education have higher means than people with higher education ( $p < .001$ ).

Finally, those who have a temporary job ( $p < .001$ ) and those who have a part-time job ( $p < .001$ ) have higher means than those who have regular and full-time jobs.

Second component gathers items referring to discriminatory behaviors other-directed (Express themselves negatively about gay people in general other than myself, Use vulgar words instead of "lesbian/gay person" to offend someone other than myself, Tell distasteful/unappreciated jokes about gay people, Complain about the presence of gay people in general on the workplace). These are the items with the highest means. There are no statistically significant differences between groups ( $p > .05$ ), even if females and people who are not out tend to have the highest means.

Third component gathers items referring to supportive behaviors (Express something positive about gay people other than myself, Express solidarity with the cause of gay people in general, Express solidarity in my regard as a lesbian/gay person). It discriminates between being out and being in ( $p < .001$ ), those with lower and higher education ( $p < .001$ ), those with full-time and part-time jobs ( $p < .001$ ): people who are out, graduated and with full-time jobs have higher means than people who are not out, under-graduated and with part-time jobs.

	Component 1	Component 2	Component 3
Item 7	.85		
Item 2	.80		
Item 3	.79		
Item 8	.77		
Item 1		.88	
Item 4		.87	
Item 5		.81	
Item 6		.53	
Item 10			.90
Item 9			.83
Item 11			.81
Variance explained	26.0%	23.6%	19.7%
Cronbach's Alpha	.83	.83	.80

Table 1: Principal Component Matrix extracted from the 11 items (Varimax rotation, cut-off = .50), with the proportion of variance explained and Cronbach's Alpha indices

## Introduction

Italy, where an anti-discrimination law on the basis of the sexual orientation has existed since 2003 (D.lgs. 216/2003), is still considered the second most homophobic Country in the European Union (European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 2011): it has no law against homophobia and no equality body covering sexual orientation discrimination in the workplace.

In 1998, Gianfranco Fini, founder of Alleanza Nazionale, an Italian conservative political party, expressed the following opinion regarding a certain relation between homosexuality and work: "a primary school teacher who is openly gay cannot be a primary school teacher". This statement was in line with the opinion expressed by a number varying from 25% and 50% of English respondents who stated it was unacceptable that gays and lesbians could be teachers, social workers or doctors (Snape, Thomson, & Chetwynd, 1995). It is interesting to notice that surveys by Greasley (1986), Taylor (1986) and Palmer (1993) point out that about 50% of respondents have a job in teaching, social assistance or health, even if, according to Palmer (1993), about 25% of homosexual people would avoid those kinds of jobs just because they know there is a stigma related to their sexual orientation. In 2004, Mirko Tremaglia, Minister for Italians in the World, commented the fact that the European Parliament voted against the nomination of Rocco Buttiglione as a European Commissioner (his ideas in the fields of family, civil unions and homosexuals were considered too conservative) like this: "Poor Europe: fagots are the majority". In 2005, Lega Nord, another Italian conservative party, in order to protest against an homosexual manifestation, organizes a Via Crucis in Verona whose participants wear t-shirts with such stripes as: "We Romeo and Juliet / You Sodom and Gomorra".

Between 2004 and 2005, still in Verona, Forza Nuova, an extremely conservative party, papers the whole city with such leaflets as: "Homosexuals in the Arena? Yes, with the lions!". In 2006, Alessandra Mussolini at the journalistic television program Porta a porta says to transsexual Vladimir Luxuria: "better fascist than fagot". In 2007, mayor of Treviso (Veneto) Giancarlo Gentilini, on a Regional Radio says: "I'll straight away give orders that an ethnic cleansing must be done of fagots.

They cannot live here. They must go away and live in other cities". In 2010, Silvio Berlusconi, Prime Minister, declares: "better to be fond of girls than be gay". Finally, Dossier Homophobia Italia 2008 by Arcigay counts 45 aggressions and 9 murders. Dossier 2009, 52 aggressions and 8 murders.

## Research questions

Given this Italian picture, which is characterized by the lack of a law against homophobia and by political figures who externalize their hostile positions against gays and lesbians, how do Italian homosexual people perceive they are treated in the workplace? Do they feel they can come out of the closet? And finally do they feel they can count on some kind of social support coming from heterosexual colleagues?

## Instrument

Instrument is an ad hoc questionnaire divided in 2 parts. First part is composed of 13 personal data (included coming out). Second part is introduced by this sentence

**What is the frequency with which colleagues (customers, users, management, etc.) have displayed the behaviours reported in the following list? (If the situation is not applicable to your work context, please answer "never")**

and is composed of 11 items (rating scale: 0 = Never, 1 = Rarely, 2 = Sometimes, 3 = Often, 4 = Always.):

- Express themselves negatively about gay people in general other than myself
- Express themselves negatively about myself as a lesbian/gay
- Call me using nicknames I don't approve of, referring to my homosexuality
- Use vulgar words instead of "lesbian/gay person" to offend someone other than myself
- Tell distasteful/unappreciated jokes about gay people
- Complain about the presence of gay people in general on the workplace
- Complain about my presence as a lesbian/gay in the workplace
- Organise a dinner without inviting me on account of my homosexuality
- Express something positive about gay people other than myself
- Express solidarity with the cause of gay people in general (e.g. on account of being victims of violence and/or discrimination)
- Express solidarity in my regard as a lesbian/gay person (because vulnerable to violence and/or discrimination)

First 8 items refer to discriminatory behaviors; last 3 are examples of supportive behaviors.

Finally, participants are asked the following question:

**On the whole, I feel that my colleagues (customers, users, managers etc.):**

- treat me worse than others  
 treat me like others  
 treat me better than others

## Conclusions and discussion

### Coming out

40.2% of the sample (36.9% of the males and 48.4% of the females) is not out in the workplace. These figures can be explained by both individual (example: title of study) and contextual characteristics (example: to have children). It could be the most convincing evidence that even today it is better not to come out of the closet in some organizations if one wants to avoid discriminations and negative consequences on career.

### Discriminations

Participants report rather low frequencies for the 8 discriminatory behaviors: means vary from 0.1 of item 7, which means "practically never", to 1.4 of item 1 which is in the middle of "rarely" and "sometimes". Moreover, they tend to evaluate as more frequent the other-directed ("sometimes") than the self-directed discriminatory behaviors ("practically never"). Basically, the perceive discriminatory behaviors in their workplaces, but they tend to declare that they are against the others.

Males, people who are out at work, with diploma, working in private sectors, with temporary and part-time jobs declare more discriminations than females, people who are not out at work, graduates, working in public sectors, with regular and full-time jobs.

### Social support

Means of the 3 supportive behaviors vary from 1.1 of item 11 to 1.6 of item 10, which means that the supportive behaviors are evaluate as more frequent than the discriminatory behaviors. people who are out at work, graduates, with regular jobs declare more support than people who are not out at work, with diploma, and temporary jobs.

## Main References

- References  
 Snape, D., Thompson, K., & Chetwynd, M. (1995). *Discrimination against gay men and lesbians: A study of the nature and extent of discrimination against homosexual men and women in Britain today*. London: Social and Community Planning Research.  
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