Situation of Transgender Persons in Ukraine

Research report

Kyiv 2010
The research and publication were accomplished with the financial support of Astraea Lesbian Foundation for Justice and ILGA-Europe Human Rights Violations Documentation Fund within the framework of “Transgender Research Project” implemented by Insight non-governmental organization.
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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This research report was written by Svetlana Ivantchenko, Kandidat of Psychology. It is based on the research accomplished by Insight non-governmental organization in Ukraine in 2009.

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Insight NGO considers all transgender people who participated in this research its co-authors. We are sincerely grateful to everyone for being brave enough to share their experiences and feelings with us and we regret we cannot list all of their names.

We are deeply thankful to all the staff members, volunteers and friends of Insight who transcribed the interviews, which often was not an easy task.

We also thank all the organizations, activists, respondents and their partners and friends in the research regions who helped organize meetings, hosted the interviewer and offered tea. In particular, Insight thanks NA LGB LiGA (Mykolaiv), Youth Public Movement Partner (Odessa), and Women Association Sphere (Kharkiv) for their significant assistance in organizing the research process.

We are very thankful to all people who helped, provided advice and inspired our work. Among others, we thank Kateryna Cheremnyh for useful comments in editing the text of the report, Vera Polushkina for proofreading the Russian text and Serhiy Ponomaryov for proofreading the English translation; Anastasia Madjere for warm reception in Kharkiv and assistance with searching for respondents, Alexander Sidelnikov for photos and Crimean hospitality. We also thank Alex Budin, Lida Mikhailova, and Olga Liv for providing their photography works for the publication.

Insight is grateful to Astraea Lesbian Foundation for Justice and ILGA-Europe for financial support of the research that made it possible.
GLOSSARY

**Agender** is a person who does not have a sense of belonging to any gender and who usually rejects the importance of gender differences.

**Androgyne** is a person who combines characteristics of male and female genders and experiences their identity on a continuum between the masculine and the feminine.

**Bigender**, like androgyne, is a person who combines female and male qualities, though their identity can change over time and depending on the circumstances can shift from masculine to feminine and backwards.

**Cross-dresser** is a person who wears clothing commonly associated with the other gender. Usually the term is used as a synonym for ‘dual-role transvestite’.

**Gender** refers to the social sex, socially determined roles, identities and occupations of men and women depending not on the biological differences but on the societal structure.

**Genderqueer** is the person who rejects the gender binary and the borders defined by the traditional notions of gender in the society and whose gender identity is usually non-fixed and “fluid”.

**Gender dysphoria** is a state of dissatisfaction with one's biological sex and assigned gender, often characterized by overall despondency, depression and even suicidal tendencies.

**Gender identity** is each person's deeply felt internal and individual experience of gender, which may or may not correspond with the sex assigned at birth, and includes the personal sense of the body and other expressions of gender (i.e. ‘gender expression’) such as dress, speech and mannerisms.

**Intersex** is a person whose body combines physical features of both sexes developed to various degrees. Previously the term ‘hermaphrodite’ was used to describe this phenomenon but now it is regarded as politically incorrect.

**Sexual orientation** refers to each person’s capacity for profound emotional, affectional and sexual attraction to, and intimate and sexual relations with, individuals of a different gender or the same gender or more than one gender (heterosexuality, homosexuality and bisexuality).

**Transgender** is a general term applied to a variety of individuals whose gender identity deviates from the sex assigned at birth. This category includes people who identify as, or desire to live and be accepted as, members of the sex opposite to that assigned at birth (transsexuals), and also transvestites, cross-dressers, androgynes, intersex and bigenders.

**Transition** refers to the process of a transsexual person’s moving from the sex assigned at birth to the perceived one. Usually transition consists of three stages, the so called ‘triad’: hormone replacement therapy (HRT), real life experience and surgical body correction. Most often these stages go in the described order but not necessarily so (similarly, not all of the stages are necessarily present).

**Transvestite** is a person who cross-dresses and behaves like a person of the opposite sex. There are two types of transvestites: dual-role transvestites (usually identified as cross-dressers) and transvestites-fetishists. The fetishist’s major motif for cross-dressing is the achievement of sexual satisfaction. Dual-role transvestites/cross-dressers do not simply wear the clothing of another gender, but for the time fully transform into a person of that gender, usually with the purpose of gaining mental comfort.

**Transsexual** is the person whose gender identity is opposite to the sex assigned at birth, and who desires to bring his or her body in accordance with the preferred gender - usually by the means of hormonal and surgical correction. MtF (male-to-female) transsexual is a person who was born into a male body but identifies as a woman; FtM (female-to-male) transsexual is a person who was born into a female body but has a male identity. In terms of surgery, there are pre-op transsexuals (preparing to
have a surgery); post-op (already had surgery); and non-op (cannot have sex reassignment surgery for a number of reasons or do not want to).

**Transsexualism** is a medical diagnosis in the International Statistical Classification of Diseases and Related Health Problems (ICD-10) coded F64.0 that falls under the category of gender identity disorders in the class of mental and behavioural disorders.

**Transsexuality** is a state of conflict between biological sex and gender identity of a person characterized by the desire to bring one’s body in line with one’s gender identity.

**Transphobia** refers to irrational fear and/or hostility against transgender persons or those who transgress the traditional gender boundaries in other ways. Transphobia often takes the form of denying one the right to express their gender identity.

**She-male** is a person who was born into a male body and changed his physical appearance to female with hormones but retained his genitalia. Originally, the term had a negative connotation and referred to prostitutes but with the lapse of time it began to be used as a self-identification marker by many MtF non-op transsexuals.

**Abbreviations**

- **LGBT** – lesbians, gays, bisexuals and transgenders
- **HRT** – hormone replacement therapy
- **SRS** – sex reassignment surgery
INTRODUCTION

This research is aimed at collecting information about the lives of transgender people in Ukraine, about their needs and the problems they face because of their gender identity. At present, transgender persons belong to a closed invisible group, whose needs are greatly ignored by the state and the rights are violated.

Transgender (transsexual) phenomenon in Ukraine is a silenced issue and is not on the public agenda. Unlike other stigmatized groups, transgender people themselves do not stand up for their rights and recognition, they do not attempt to organize into initiative groups. In most cases they silently fight their problems tête-à-tête, often without understanding or even with total rejection by their close people, lack of qualified medical help and refusal in the right to be who they feel they are.

Because of the group invisibility, the rights and freedoms of transgender persons are constantly violated, they are discriminated against in all spheres of life. Particularly, it should be noted that sex reassignment1 is oftentimes difficult and sometimes impossible for transgender people. The permission for sex reassignment is officially granted by the permanent Sex Reassignment (Correction) Commission under the Ministry of Health of Ukraine. However, even though the Commission is supposed to meet at least once every three months, in reality its meetings have taken place much more rarely – between the last two meetings of the Commission passed more than two and a half years2. The fact that the Commission works irregularly is largely explained by the fact that the Ministry of Health for over a year has been working on a new draft of Sex Reassignment (Correction) Regulatory Act and once it enters into force, possibly, the mandate and composure of the Commission will change. However, approval of the new Regulatory Act at the Ministry of Health itself and coordination of its approval by other institutions has been delayed and as a result many transgender persons found themselves in a “suspended condition” - members of the old Commission do not want to review their cases anymore, and the new Commission does not yet exist. Also at present, according to the law, a person cannot change her or his documents prior to the surgery and transgender persons who take hormones are forced to live with the original documents that do not reflect their current status and their gender performance. The present Regulatory Act imposes discriminatory limitations onto the citizens’ rights: the surgery is prohibited to individuals under 25, to individuals with children, married, transvestites and individuals with “anti-social behaviour” or homosexual orientation.

The public opinion is also against transgender persons. They are regarded as mentally ill, “abnormal”, and due to the lack of information in the society there are a number of negative ideas and stereotypes that often result into various forms of transphobia.

This research is of practical nature and aims neither to study nature of transgender phenomenon nor to explain it from medical or biological perspectives. In this research we use human rights approach and view transgender phenomenon as a social reality, which we should study, identify the existing problems and search for their solutions so that transgender people are not excluded from the society and can live full-fledged lives.

1 We use the term ‘sex reassignment’ to translate the Russian term “смена пола” most closely, while we are aware that the more appropriate term in English to describe the procedure would be ‘gender reassignment’ – translator’s note.

2 Since December 22, 2006 the next meeting of the Commission took place on July 3, 2009 and as of April 2010 there is no information on when next meeting of the Commission is scheduled.
1. METHODOLOGY OF THE RESEARCH

The structure of this research is based on interviews with representatives of transgender community in Ukraine with different gender identities. The collected data was analyzed and on the basis of this analysis recommendations for governmental bodies and non-governmental organizations were developed.

Research goals: to put the issues of transgender persons on the public agenda, to attract attention of the state to their problems, to develop a strategy to combat discrimination and to develop an advocacy plan to protect the rights of transgender people in Ukraine.

Research method: in-depth interview and qualitative analysis of the data and its interpretation. Respondents were chosen by the “snowball” sampling method. Interview questions included personal history (family, close environment, school/university), process of self-identification as a transgender person, transition, sexuality, cases of discrimination faced in the family, school, and at work, health care and medical issues, and transgender people needs assessment.

The research was conducted in two stages. During the first stage the interview guide was developed and a pilot research conducted (march-April 2009). After that the guide was finalized and interviews were conducted in the major regions of Ukraine - Western, Central, Eastern and Southern oblasts and in the city of Kyiv.

Sampling

We interviewed 37 people between the ages of 18 and 51, which included 23 FtM transgender respondents, 12 MtF transgender respondents, 2 respondents identified as cross-dressers. The majority of respondents came predominantly from the capital and oblast centers (Kyiv, Kirovograd, Donetsk, Luhansk, Mykolaiv, Odessa, Simferopol, Khmelnitsky, Kharkiv, Kherson). In the sample, 5 respondents had already made surgical sex correction and changed their documents, 2 respondents had only changed their documents, and 23 persons are planning their sex reassignment in the near future.
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2. ANALYSIS OF THE DATA

2.1. Self-awareness and identification

Transgender manifestation

Transgender phenomenon is, first of all, about identity - it is the discrepancy between the experienced self-identification and sex assigned at birth. Usually awareness of one’s sexual identity comes very early in life, when the formation of the child’s self begins. This self is usually already gender-marked and the child knows for sure who he or she is. Being transgender children early start noticing that something is different with them or they do not find the correlation between their inclinations and feelings on the one hand and expectations of the close people on the other. However, the situation might be also differently and a child may not have any special feelings or experiences of his or her sex before puberty or adolescence. One of the interview questions was on how early the respondents started questioning their sexual (gender) identity.

A part of the respondents noted that first feelings and doubts about their sexual belonging they had in their early childhood.

My mom told me that when I was three I would walk around asking: “Am I a boy or a girl?” (Y., 25, Donetsk obl.).

When I was 4 I was once asked: “Sweetie, who do you want to be?” I looked up at the man asking the question and answered: “I want to be Lyosha.” (S., 23, Kyiv obl.)

For the first time it happened after the sleeping hour when I tried to take a dress away from a girl. Because I did not like my clothes. (M., 34, Kyiv obl.).

When I went to school we were standing at the ‘first bell’ with my Mom. I asked her why I had neither bows like all the girls nor a dress.” (N., 24, Kyiv obl.).

When the child realizes that something is wrong and what exactly this ‘wrong’ is about, he or she for some time still has a hope that everything would change by itself as she or he wishes.

I kept believing that a miracle would happen and I would wake up, say, after my birthday, and would be a boy already. This thought stayed with me from 8 till 16, and even though I did not really believe in this I was forcing myself to believe since I did not see any other way to act (B., 29, Kyiv obl.).

I had a dream when I was a child, a very stupid dream - that either aliens would come and steal me and then change something; or a magician and I would become a boy. Later I had to grow up and realize that I would not become a boy that easily (M., 24, Khmenytsky obl.).

In the search engine I typed “sex change.” And I got to the webpage transsexual.ru where they described the phenomenon of transsexualism, what it is, why is happens and what should be done. Then it seemed very unreal to me. I distanced from it. And started hoping that I was having a temporary problem and it would pass by itself. (Y., 24, Kharkiv obl.).

Some individuals realize they are transgender during their puberty or adolescence.

It happened exactly when I was 15-16. It was the period when I tried to prove to myself that I was a normal woman (S., 24, Odessa obl.).

As long as I remember myself I have had hard time associating myself with the female gender. It was not about me. And since I had very conservative parents I could hardly explore any “wrong” experiences. Finally I became aware of myself when I was 18 or 19 (M., 24, Khmelnytsky obl.).

I realized that I wanted to be a girl, look like girls yet when I was 4. But certainly, then I had no idea who transsexuals were. And only when I was 24, I realized that I was not alone in this small
community (Y., 25, Kharkiv obl.).

Some transgender people, particularly of the older age, whose childhood and youth passed in the Soviet time when no information was available, were able to identify themselves only in their middle age.

Until last year I did not know who I was. I thought I was a transvestite. And then when I ... learned what the Internet was, the first thing that I did was finding people like myself (V., 44, Khmelnytsk obl.).

Many transgender persons first try to create a “normal” family and make a “normal” career.

My Mom started [lecturing] me and my classmates: “all [girls] are already hanging out with boys.” For me it was the time when I wanted to find myself, to make sure I was a normal person. And the fact that I did not like boys but liked girls, and that I felt more comfortable in men’s clothes, all these things made me feel and realize already... that something was wrong with me. I wanted to take away this ‘wrong’, to eradicate it in myself. And I actively tried to convince myself that I was a proper girl that was having these proper conversations with others even though I felt like yawning and running away, and that I could have normal relationships with guys. Normal [relationships] did not happen. (S., 24, Odessa obl.).

When I was a senior I met a woman with two children and we got married. And we lived together for 12 years... After a year she learned [about my identity] and never supported me nor approved of my actions. And I lived this way, suffering for 12-13 year until I left home (V., 35, Kirovograd obl.).

I am very uncomfortable about having such an experience, that I had a wife. Not because she was a bad person. She was a normal woman, but that is exactly the case, that she was normal woman and I was not a man. I can do many male things, but these are two big differences - to be a man and to look like a man, as they say in Odessa (Zh., 45, Kharkiv obl.).

In certain cases MtF transgenders choose to perform male work, get married as men several times:

Three times I tried to create a family, I tried it with women but then realized that I felt as a woman and I needed a man. I always had conflicts with my wives. They did not understand me (S., 45, Kyiv obl.).

I have this job, I work as a guard, and I also have another job - car body repairs. Well, even if I get these changes how will I undress in summer when it’s hot? How will I? (V., 44, Khmelnytsk obl.).

Self-identification

To the question how they identify at present, the majority of respondents usually firmly stated they identified either as men or as women but their biological sex did not correspond with their identity. For the majority of respondents it is an uncomfortable, controversial, and difficult experience of a “person being in a wrong body.”

Sometimes I have this mixed feeling that... my documents are male, but my feelings are mostly female (A., 26, Mykolaiv obl.).

For me it is the feeling that my body is not normal. All my desires, all my thoughts, my entire life - I would like them to be different, and the body prevents this (S., 24, Kyiv obl.).

I perceived it as a mental disorder. And I was perceived as a person with a mental disorder (S., 18, Kharkiv obl.).

It seems like according to social stereotypes, I fit neither into the notion of male social role, nor into female social role (E., 21, Odessa obl.).

I just feel myself a bit on a different side of the bridge, in a wrong place, sort of (V., 35, Mykolaiv obl.).
Some respondents, on the other hand, did not have a firmly defined self-identity and growing up they had to choose what was more comfortable for them.

I did not have a strict feeling of belonging to something, but when the society forces you, I mean, when they try to define you, push you into a certain niche, then you start to resist... No female emotions, no way of life, I do not know how to put it. No fantasies, I do not have anything like that. That is why I had a defined feeling that I was a guy. But then as for social roles, I did not have a desire, I did not feel that I wanted to perform heavy physical labor, I did not want to go anywhere, posture myself this way, demonstrate super-masculinity, express myself in the way that nobody would have any doubts [about me]. I did not have this fixed feeling (L., 31, Kharkiv obl.).

I did not think who I was when I was a child. In my childhood I did not care who I was, I think. I was interested in other things, in something new: going to the forest, something else. I liked girls. As a boy I liked girls. They seemed very mysterious creatures to me (S., 30, Crimea).

Some respondents have kept their mixed identity for many years: I would identify as 70 percent woman and 30 percent man (O., 51, Dnipropetrovsk obl.).

Social markers of sex (name, clothes, make-up, accessories)

Name is at the core of a person’s self-identification. In the case of transgender, one of the early signs of discrepancy between self-identity and external identification of a child on the grounds of gender is the child’s desire to be called a name of the opposite gender. For instance, one FtM respondent, when a child, asked to call him Raul. Such situation is quite typical.

I was not called the way I liked. I liked when I was called Joe. I knew what my name was. I was quite young when I learned to write and started signing. My initials were “J.B.”, “J.B.K.” (S., 30, Crimea).

It got more difficult when I was 13-14, when girls started being interested in me. They came to my place and asked: “Is Roma home?” (M., 38, Poltava obl.).

Clothes and other appearance attributes play a significant role in identifying oneself with the members of “your” sex. Many transgender persons noted that since childhood they were interested in the clothing and other attributes of the opposite sex.

At first I was interested in women’s clothes and I could not explain myself where it came from. When I was alone at home I opened Mom’s wardrobe and tried on [her clothes], assessed how I looked in it. Then I started having fantasies about being a girl for some time. I had a feeling something was wrong about it all. I could not explain this, I did not know what to do about it (I., 31, Kyiv obl.).

Since my early childhood I wanted to be a girl. I envied girls, how they dressed, these dresses, stockings, skirts (S., 45, Kyiv obl.).

For transgender people, wearing clothes that does not match their identity is traumatic.

I was dressed as a girl and I always had a feeling that I looked ugly, looked horrible. As if I felt disgusted because of how I was dressed. It was all the time. And when I was 14 and got some male clothes it was cool! By that time I did not have anything female. Then for the first time I felt that I look good and everything was cool. Before that I constantly had had the feeling of disgust (S., 24, Kyiv obl.).

I had never fought with them about my name till recently. But I did so about my clothing. I had lots of fight over this, particularly in my adolescence. Once I even had a real fight with my father with consequences [the father smashed up is right lung – interviewer’s note] (V., 27, Kharkov obl.).

My clothes... yeah, my parents nailed the bow to my head and so I went... I felt terribly uncomfortable. I loved physical education classes, on the one hand, since there I could change into sports wear and it immediately made me feel better. But on the other hand, I could not stand this changing in the [common] changing rooms. It was something horrible for me (S., 26, Kyiv obl.).
Coming home, I would throw off this damned male clothes and put on mom’s dresses and wear it until my mom would come (S., 45, Kyiv obl.).

Besides clothes, transgender kids differ from “normal” kids in choosing games and plays traditionally assigned to the opposite gender.

It was easier to communicate with girls. I felt uncomfortable with boys. Moreover, with my brothers I never felt myself a man. I never wanted to do the things they did (A., 26, Mykolaiv obl.).

I never liked these “male” games: football, fray, all these fights they made... I could never relate to it and still do not want to. And girls usually invited me to their games, I had more friends among girls, they took me as if I were their girlfriend (S., 45, Kyiv obl.).

**Forced gender socialization**

The child that does not fit into the conventional frames ‘boy - girl’ is being brought to the commonly accepted norm by all social institutions starting with the family, kindergarten and up to informal relations. Parents try to instill the ‘correct’ behavior in the child with various means, such as persuasion, threats, and even physical violence. At kindergarten and school, transgender kids become objects of ridicule, isolation, verbal and physical aggression.

The strongest pressure transgender persons experience from their parents and family members.

They used a strap, a hose, a wire to make a man out of me. And since then the word “muzhik” is a swear word for me (O., 51, Dnipropetrovsk obl.).

Once I found somebody’s nail polish and painted only one fingernail. Then my Mom noticed it, even though the nail polish was transparent, and she made such a scandal that I lost any desire to express myself until better times (Y., Kharkov obl.).

Another MtF respondent reported that when she was little she often used make-up but hid it from her parents. When her mother suddenly found her doing this, the mother’s reaction was inadequately harsh:

She almost crashed my face on the bath tub, pushing it there as if to wash it. At first she pushed me in the sink, but as I was small and could not reach it, she changed for bath tub... And she kept saying: “I will teach you a good lesson about wearing make-up, you are a boy, you are a future man!” (Zh., 45, Kharkiv obl.).

Social stereotypes of male/female behavior start to pressure children quite early: already in the kindergarten transgender kids face the division of children into boys and girls, and any attempts to cross this boundary stumble upon disapproval and sanctions. In the kindergarten, counselors and other kids also affect the “ugly ducking.”

I have always felt myself a girl, as long as I remember myself, know myself... Probably, since my kindergarten years. I was always with girls, playing dolls and the like... My counselor would often forcefully drag me to the boys (V., 35, Mykolaiv obl.).

In the kindergarten and at school, boys would hurt me a lot. They insulted and humiliated me, and event beat me up. And threw away from their games (S., 45, Kyiv obl.).

I cannot put on a skirt and all that. For me it is like giving me tremor in my whole body. I cannot. Since childhood I have been forced to wear skirts. Even in the kindergarten, my mom told me how she would dress me in the skirt. When I would come to the kindergarten I would tuck the skirt in my stockings (S., 24, Odessa obl.).

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4 Muzhik is a Russian slang for rough man – translator’s note.
Later, teachers and classmates take on this role. Children mock at transgender pupils if they try to assert themselves in the preferred role.

When I was transferred to another school I came there as a boy, fully. And the teacher called me to the desk [with my female name], it was a shock for the kids. They started laughing at me... Then on the same day I entered the man’s toilet. They laughed even more at me (S., 24, Odessa obl).

Particularly clear you feel it already at school, when there is a harsh division between boys and girls. Girls do not let you in their group anymore, and boys understand that something is wrong here... They start to educate you: “Be a man!” (V., 35, Mykolaiv obl.).

At the professional college, there was a fully female group, and they would laugh at me: “Why don’t you wear make-up? Don’t you do your hair? Why don’t you date boys?” (S., 24, Odessa obl.).

Yeah, I felt the burden that they would start blaming me. There was no one like me. Not that it was bad, but it was about me, that I was a girl, not a boy. And if I told this they would simply harass me (V., 35, Mykolaiv obl.).

While in the beginning transgender kids try to become “like everyone else” under the influence of relatives, teachers and peers, by their teenage years they form an internal desire to fit the social expectations.

On the contrary, I wanted to become like everyone else. To try to accept my biological sex and live with it further on. For several months I was wearing women’s clothes, changed my behavior as much as I could. I even tried to build relationships with the opposite gender. But it all did not end so well - I developed great depression. It was horrible to live wearing a mask (S., 26, Kyiv obl.)

And then I thought that I needed a family, needed to live the right way, I could not be like that anymore! However, this did not bring me self-realization, did not bring what I wanted to... I realized those were the desires of others, not mine. I tried to do better but it turned out so that I did not do any good for myself. I did not see myself as a father, as the head of the family, as it was accepted... and this feeling that I had to kill in myself, it brought me into a state of deep depression. I became addicted to light antidepressants and antianxiety drugs (A., 26, Mykolaiv obl.).

I did not want to be an outcast. I was very afraid. I was even scared to admit to myself that I was not interested in the future family, in the perspectives to give birth to a child - it was horrible. I was afraid to admit that what was normal for me when I was a child I now had to look at it differently. I became very scared (М., 24, Khmelnytsky obl.).

Double life

To avoid social sanctions, transgender persons have to disguise, hide their real face. I was doing my very best just not to give any hints with my actions (Zh., 45, Kharkiv obl.)

I tried not to be visible too much. Because I really waited and waited. And I was 15-16, and I waited and waited until it would pass. I was not coming out, I was wearing unisex [clothes]. But when I told them directly, in principle, most of them just laughed (S., 18, Kharkiv obl.).

Many transgender people are forced to go to work or to school every day and pretend to be those whom the society is ready to accept. Some transgender persons behave in public according to their sex assigned at birth, and at home act in a preferred gender; others cannot behave openly in front of their relatives and come out only before their intimate partners.

I lived a double life. At work I was Alena Aleksandrovna5, because I had to, otherwise I would be left without a piece of bread, and for my wife and friends I was Andrei6 (A., 25, Kyiv obl.)

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5 The name and patronymic name of the respondent is changed.
6 The name is changed.
Until certain time I lived a double life, yes. At the academia I played the role of a girl, a specific girl, and in my community I was what I was (V., 23, Kyiv obl.).

At home I have the persona my parents identify me with. When I am with my girlfriend I am what I identify myself because I can have intimate relationships only with the person whom I can open my deepest feelings to (E., 21, Odessa obl.).

In the very end, I was sort of his wife and he was my husband. It was good and pleasant for me. I was leading a double life. In the military, I was a strict officer, even though I did not manage it well, but I needed to be strict at the position of a squadron commander (V., 44, Khmelnytskyi obl.)

Transgender persons have valid reasons to hide their belonging to transgender community, since disclosure of their status can cause negative consequences not only for the person him or herself but for their family and relatives.

And why would I tell? I had an experience from my last family when everybody knew. They started fights, broke my teeth and so on. Because I was a pervert. The father of my previous wife beat me up and I was hospitalized for a month with brain concussion. They called me a hermaphrodite! They terrorized my parents. Police was called. They said that I had killed their daughter and buried in the garden - total bullshit! They came to me to the internship venue, and would go on my nerves at the university! They did it all so that I would leave their daughter (А., 31, Crimea).

Self-concept and self-esteem
The situations described above result in the fact that a transgender person does not feel self-confident, he or she has low self-esteem and forms of a negative self-concept. Usually transgender people are dissatisfied with their bodies and social roles and following the society they learn to hate their bodies and certain its parts.

I never liked my body. I doubt that I would like it after the surgery (S., 30, Crimea).

My body has totally depressed me, always. Absolutely. The feeling that I have breasts - it is horrible… (S., 23, Kyiv obl.).

I did not accept my body, I felt disgusted to see the forms that the nature gave me (L., 31, Kharkiv obl.).

I felt disgusted that I had this thing. It should not be there (N., 24, Kyiv obl.).

I very much would want to get rid of what is there between my legs (V., 44, Khemnytskyi obl.).

I constantly wanted to be a young woman, a girl. And then, with time, when I was watching what I became and how girls changed… I wanted to commit suicide when I was looking at beautiful girls (Y., 24, Kharkov obl.).

A transgender person may reject not only certain parts of his or her body or the entire body, but also her or his personality in general:

I simply realized that somebody else lived instead of me... This person laughed when I wanted to cry. The feeling was like I died, I do not know how to explain... It is like in those horror movies, there are films when aliens get into your head, and then there is another person, another entity that walks and talks [instead of you] (O., 51, Dnipropetrovsk obl.).

The awareness of inconsistency between innate perception and external belonging to a certain gender is described by the respondents as the feeling of being ‘wrong’, and as a result transgender people form negative self-perception, sense of guilt, desire to disappear, to destroy oneself.
I did not want to talk to anyone. I had such moments when I was sitting at the window sill at the end of the classroom, watching the guys and thinking - it is either I was different, or they were... (S., 23, Kyiv obl.).

I was probably around 15-16 when I realized I could not do anything about it, and that I liked girls, and all male things in general. I thought it was an absolute perversion. I should not have lived that way, it just could not exist. And I needed to destroy myself. Yeah, I came to this conclusion that I had to urgently wipe out myself, because I only spoiled the overall picture (Y., 36, Donetsk obl.).

Somewhere around 11-14 I had this feeling that a concrete plate weighting 4 tons fell upon me. I talked about it but could not sense it. It was a terrible psychological pressure. And I tell you honestly, the closer I get to my goal, to sex reassignment, the smaller, and smaller, and smaller this 'plate' becomes. And when I moved to Full-Time, a great part of this wall was destroyed (S., 23, Kyiv obl.).

I promised [not to wear women's clothes]. And as I was an honest child by nature, I tried to keep my promise. And the sense of abnormality became stronger. That something was not OK about it. But I could not live up to my promise, I violated it. I had to hide it and the sense of abnormality doubled. I tried to suppress this in myself, but the stronger I pressured the stronger it became (I., 31, Kyiv obl.).

After transgender persons start their transition, and the first external attributes of the preferred gender appear, their well-being greatly improves and self-esteem rises. I would never be able to live like that - to be a man at work and at home... No, I could not live today one way, and tomorrow another way, no. I did not feel myself a man. Maybe 10 percent, or 20, maybe, in some situations... In past, I would come to the mirror: 'Gosh, what is it?' And now when I come: Wow! My skin is shining. I have a butt and all that. I have it all in me. It is about self-sentiment. Sense of worth probably appeared (V., 35, Mykolaiv obl.).

I felt depressed because of constant mood change and irritation. Particularly when they addressed me as a woman. Now, when somebody would call me a woman, I would not care. They can call me anything. Because I clearly know who I am. When you start transition you realize that it is not like being born again, but only coming closer to something. At first comes the period of discord, but then you come down, though everyone experiences it differently. Now I live in harmony (S., 26, Kyiv obl.).

It is extremely important for me that female hormones flow in me. Physically I feel OK... Mentally - I like my body that is changing (V., 35, Kirovograd obl.).

Thus the research data demonstrates that self-awareness as a transgender person can start in the early childhood, in adolescence, and in certain cases - at an older age. Gender identity is being formed in the intolerant environment, with the lack of understanding and acceptance of others. This process is accompanied by persistent attempts of the social surrounding to 'normalize' the person, bring it back into the traditional gender boundaries. In these situations transgender persons often experience strong negative feelings about themselves, open or hidden conflicts with others, traumatic situations. In the result they are forced to live a double life and do not have an opportunity to realize themselves as fully legitimate citizens.
2.2. SOCIAL NETWORKS AND RELATIONS

2.2.1. Family

Family is one of the strongest socialization agents of a child. Influence of the family on a transgender child is often destructive since parents and other relatives try to ‘normalize’ the child, bring him or her back to the social norms, prescribing rigid regulations of gender behavior.

Overall, family influence can be both positive, supportive and negative. Few respondents reported about receiving support from their families. These were the cases where the parents had sufficient knowledge and were resistible to the pressure of the others’ appraisal.

In the majority of cases parents do not accept any deviations from the social standards or, following the social norms, try to fit the child within the socially accepted boundaries. In some cases they intentionally or unintentionally do not notice problems or ‘otherness’ of their child. Such type of relations is called ‘ignoring’.

*My parents did not want to notice it; usually the close relatives or people in the street noticed. My father would scold me, saying things like “behave yourself” (I., 33, Kyiv obl.).*

*I live with my mom. She was either hiding the fact that she noticed or did not notice. I desperately wanted her to notice this, but she did not see anything at all. It seemed to me that there were enough hints for her to notice, but still there was no reaction on her side. I wanted her to notice and take me to the doctor. I was ashamed to go there. My soul was crying, I wanted her to notice this, but it was not happening (S., 24, Kyiv obl.).*

It is sometimes extremely difficult for children to share their worries with their parents. However, even if the child dares, parents may just ignore this, not pay enough attention to her or his problem.

*And this was the family I had: my father was quite a tough, difficult man, he worked at the Internal Affairs bodies. My mother, well, like a mother. I mean, when I was trying to say “I'm not a boy,” she would answer “He will outgrow this” (V., 35, Mykolaiv obl.).*

*I stopped talking to my parents already when I was 5-6 years old. I decided for myself that it was their fault. It was because of them that I was born this way. And that is why I did not talk to them for half a year. Only ‘yes’ and ‘no’. It was OK with them. Well, the child was growing... I started to pee standing, very blatantly. Well, they thought the child would outgrow this... In other words, nobody took this seriously (А., 31, Crimea).*

*People did not understand and did not accept me... some time later, when I started paying attention to women, when they started paying attention to me, there was a problem that I did not have anybody. Not friends, not anyone. I did not go out, stayed at home alone. And my parents also had not been aware until I was 16 (S., 24, Kharkov obl.).*

*Sometimes parents do not pay attention to the problems of their child even when they happen outside their family.*

*When my Grandma died, I had no one to share [my problems with], I was about to commit suicide... I talked to my Biology teacher. But then the school Principle asked my parents to come to school. She said: “Show your child to a psychiatrist.” I thought, well, that was it, I should better keep to myself. And I did. ... I do not know what she told the Principle. I do not know what the Principle told my parents. But then the parents told me, “They say, we need to take you to the psychiatrist. What did you tell them?” I said, “No, nothing, I was just kidding, no problem.” They believed (S., 34, Kharkiv obl.).*

*In other cases parents themselves depend a lot on the public opinion, they are afraid of “what people will say” and actively try to prevent changes in their child. For*
this, they use arguments, threats up to intimidations and real physical violence.

I remember that I tried to explain that I was like “enchanted”, so that she would not be scared if I suddenly became a boy. My mom, of course, did not take me seriously, but her reaction was quite aggressive. And later I was afraid to talk to her about this (B., 29, Kyiv obl.).

I have a family, mom and dad - we always had difficult relationships... They started quarrels about the way I dressed. We had huge scandals but then she allegedly accepted it, though she did not understand why I asked for it (D., 23, Kyiv obl.).

When he [father] found women’s clothes in my room he started beating me. These scandals lasted almost until 2006 (I., 33, Kyiv obl.).

[My mother] and the step father thrashed me with the belt, and with the jumping rope on the back almost every week so that traces could hardly disappear till next time (Y., 24, Kharkiv obl.).

Behaviour of a transgender person depends on the attitude of the parents: if he or she knows that they will not find understanding, then they usually do not inform parents and live a double life. As a rule, a transgender person moves to another city and then appears before his or her family in the gender their family is used to.

Our communication totally narrowed down to rare phone calls. If I want to visit them, I should wear only man’s clothes! Without any manifestations! (A., 26, Mykolaiv obl.).

If a transgender person keeps insisting on gender reassignment, he or she can face active or passive resistance of his or her relatives, up to declaring the person mentally ill.

After several years it kept rising and rising and once reached the critical point when I really did not care what others would say, what would happen next. And then I came out to my parents, friends, classmates. Certainly, their reaction was horrible. They wanted to take me to the mental clinic (S., 18, Kharkiv obl.).

My parents would hide my belongings, make scandals with Mom’s screaming “I will not let you go anywhere!”, “Please, for my sake!” “You want my death!” In other words, we have been through blackmailing and everything else... (A., 31, Crimea).

**Coming out**

When a transgender person decides to disclose her or his status to their relatives, the latter are usually shocked. Some are shocked because they had not suspected anything and turned out not to be ready to take the news. Others cannot understand the reason why their child takes such a risk thinking that he or she damages their health and ruins their life.

I think their first reaction was like this because it is a serious step; it was about surgery, health, all of these things. They just believed these people could not be happy since they were dependent on medicines for their entire lives (S., 18, Kharkiv obl.).

However, the major argument of relatives usually states that the decision to change one’s sex goes against the social norms and rules and exposes the entire family.

It is not only about my health... it is also about my life, with this choice I endanger my family and my relatives. **I should not be that different!** (A., 26, Mykolaiv obl.).

Parents are concerned not only about health consequences of the transition for their child; for many it is important what other people would say about them. The main argument against the changes a transgender person is seeking is public opinion, ‘shame on the family’.

At first it was shock for her, she would say: “I thought you were a normal person.” Now she says she does not care what I do or how I identify, she just does not want others to know about this. She does not want me to go out into the streets wearing women’s clothes. She simply does not want me to become an outcast in the society (E., 21, Odessa obl.).
I decided to talk with my parents. It was a very stupid mistake. A huge mistake... First I decided to talk to my mom. She was crying and screaming. I was mostly hurt with her screaming: “Just think what people will say! It is a sin. It is against God.” She even did not ask “How do you feel?” She shouted: “What will people say?” It hurt a lot. And the next morning my dad came, took away my modem and said that the Internet was evil. They made a scandal and promised that ... if I do not stop this they would bring me to the nut-house (М., 24, Khmelnysk obl.).

Often parents do not understand, simply turn a blind eye, do not accept and do not support their child.

My parents, I have told them about this long time ago. They did not understand. Did not want to understand. They simply turned a blind eye, as if it did not exist. They refused to discuss this topic with me... I was thinking about showing films and programs on this issue to them. I even brought my dad the “Boys Don’t Cry,” saying: “Dad, watch this.” I sent him by email three of my stories, an article about transgender. I wanted to get his attention in the end. He did not say me a word to me about this. And about the “Boys Don’t Cry” he said: “What a bullshit!”, simply “I brought him bushtit” (S., 30, Simferopol obl).

My parents are very conservative people and thus it is important for them that their program, what they had implanted, would be realized. Until the last moment they would not accept me. They would address me by my passport name, with the female endings (S., 23, Kyiv obl.).

2.2.2. Social environment

Public regulation of private life is particularly harsh when it is about child’s life. Children that do not fit into the accepted community rules of appearance, behavior, and means of self-expression are often subject to sanctions by the group.

Since my school years I remember being alone, an outcast. Not exactly an outcast but somewhere outside. Actually, I had one friend. A Jewish guy. We met in the third grade. I was mocked at as well as he was. A Jewish boy, he was quite plump and he was the object of bullying even more than myself. He was alone and I was alone. And on this ground we came together and then became friends (О., 51, Dnipropetrovsk obl.).

Transgender persons, as a rule, become objects of bullying by peers and teachers during the entire school period, and during puberty this bullying usually exacerbates.

At school, I was constantly bullied. Nobody wanted to be friends with me. Once I was even quite beaten up for wearing sneakers of my female cousin. Once I was badly beaten up. After school, by the guys from our yard. I hid this fact, did not say anything, because my Dad - a real man, he would come and seriously punish the guys and I did not want him to. When it happened I came home, lay in bed, stayed there for a while, came to consciousness and that was it (М., 34, Kyiv obl.).

Not only at home, at school and in the workplace, but in the society in general prevails the negative attitude toward transgender people. The social opinion grants this group with most miserable, unnatural features and transgender persons are qualified as abnormal.

The reaction of my parents and other people that I come across is based on the information that says that people like us are abnormal (B., 29, Kyiv obl.).

In other words, who cares about trans people?... Now we come out into the streets and any person, not any but the majority would say: “I wish they all died, we will breath more freely.” This is the public opinion, the prevailing public opinion. You may disagree with me but it is a fact. Because they do not know us. Because they think we are bad people. Because we are guilty for the degradation of male population (V., 35, Mykolaiv obl.).
2.2.3. Intimate relationships

Many transgender persons have to make this decision - to follow their feelings, to comply with the assigned gender role or to find a “compromise” and to live as a gay man or lesbian. However usually the “compromise” does not work since their ‘otherness’ is grounded not on the sexual desire for the persons of the same gender but on the discrepancy between their psychological gender and biological sex. Particularly traumatic for transgender persons is their experience with the “opposite” gender: first attempts of sympathies, desires, love often stumble upon rejection, aggression and lack of understanding.

At the professional college, I dated my [female] classmate, we had a turbulent affair. Then we broke up. The entire college knew this. I was almost expelled. I even cut my veins (A., 32, Crimea).

I was very reserved, did not go out. I separated with my girlfriend whom I loved. I had a big trauma because I was in a cage and did not know how to get out of it (A., 25, Luhansk obl.).

Nevertheless, many respondents reported that at the beginning they tried to follow the socially approved norms of behavior, FtM transgenders dated boys, while MtF transgenders dated girls.

When we were just friends everything was OK, but then it was not OK, I felt uncomfortable. Actually it was more than that, it was there that I realized that something was really wrong with me (S., 24, Odessa obl.).

Many transgender persons under the pressure from their relatives and society make an attempt to build “right” relationships and even enter heterosexual marriage according to their biological sex.

My Mom manipulated me very wisely. There was even a moment when I said: “OK, let it be as you wish…” I started dating a boy, we had a relationship. She [mother] would simply fall down on her knees: “Please, do try! Please! You just don’t know…” They created all the conditions for me to try (A., 32, Crimea).

However in most cases these attempts are deemed to fail, or the transgender person will highly pay for supporting a seemingly happy image.

And I realized that what I felt for girls was different from just friendship feelings. At 12, I had my first sexual experience and I definitely realized that I was not a girl. But who I was I did not know… Nobody explained anything (A., 25, Luhansk obl.).

I had intimate relationships with a boy. And since then I definitely realized that it was absolutely not for me. I had simply decided to give it a try, to see how it would be. As they told me: “Try and you will like.” I still had an internal struggle. I could not understand who I was. I met a guy and we had sex. I did not like it then. I cannot even explain these feelings. It was like you feel dirty after this. I do not know how to explain. I felt unclean, terribly uncomfortable. I tried to forget about it (S., 24, Odessa obl.).

And her petting, to be honest, did not make me feel anything, it was even worse, even more uncomfortable. Because I could pretend, I could perform some physiological function, more precisely - I could until I started taking antiandrogens. But it is still impossible to behave in a [male] manner, at least I cannot. I could not step over myself in sex, you see? Function is one thing and feelings, senses are the very other (O., 51, Dnipropetrovsk obl.).

I had a desire to be “like everyone else”. I was certain, it was something unhealthy, as if some parallel unhealthy line was inside me that could be cured with marriage or regular sexual relations. But the further it went, the worse it got (V., 35, Mykolaiv obl.).

Transgender children early face social disapproval and thus for some time try not to be
visible, but at the age of puberty the problem of gender identification is again on the agenda. While at
the preschool age transgender kids limit themselves with cross-dressing and games, in adolescence their
sexual identity if formed and they are highly focused on their sexual orientation. Since transgender
persons sometimes develop sexual desire for persons of the same biological sex they at first consider
themselves lesbian or gay.

At first, I simply wanted to believe that I was a lesbian (М., 24, Khmelnytsk obl.).
Actually, I had a period when I thought that I was probably gay. I thought it would be
better. I tried to fit myself in the social standards (А., 26, Mykolaiv obl.).
My Mom’s reaction was bad. We could never find the common ground. We quarreled all the
time. And once she called me a lesbian. She said I was a lesbian because I liked girls. I told her that if it
was called ‘a lesbian’ then I was a lesbian (А., 25, Luhansk obl.).
I explored myself for a long time. I wanted to understand who I was. Whether I had some
perversion or what. Was I a girl, a lesbian, or a boy? I did not know all these terms... but still. I wanted
to sort out my preferences (А., 32, Crimea).
My relatives could accept me as a gay man but not as a woman (І., 33, Kyiv obl.).
For some transgender persons it seems ‘a lesser evil’ to present oneself as a homosexual
person rather than as a transgender person (many transgender people till now do not even know what
it means).

I never felt as a lesbian. Simply for some time I was thinking about finding a girlfriend on the
[lesbian] scene. I thought they might understand me better, the way I was (С., 30, Crimea).
Trying to present oneself as a gay or lesbian and by hanging out in the gay community
transgender persons start feeling uncomfortable and understand that this does not satisfy their needs.

At a certain point, when you just relax and manifest yourself the way you feel the gay
community tells you: hey dude, you are going too far. Something is wrong here. And then you think that
something is really wrong because you feel uncomfortable here... (С., 23, Kyiv obl.).

Before I realized I was transsexual I tried to fit into something and was thinking for some time
that I was a lesbian, some hard butch. I tried it, started hanging out with girls. It was OK, they accepted
me, we had good relations. But I constantly compared myself to butch lesbians and realized that it was
close but not quite it (С., 26, Kyiv obl.).
Thus transgender persons face an unsolvable problem: no matter how hard they try they
cannot be the way the society wants to see them. And the society does not accept them the way they
want to be.
Author: Alexander Sidelnikov
Author: Alex Budin. “Different Look” photoproject, 2008. Insight NGO
Author: Alex Budin. “Different Look” photoproject, 2008. Insight NGO
2.3. THE PROBLEM OF TRANSITION AND SEX REASSIGNMENT

While in adolescence the formation of gender identity of transgender persons results in negative identity, gender confusion and gender dysphoria, at the second stage they develop a conscious desire to correct their sex as a result of the necessity to constantly hide their real self and live a double life.

The majority of transgender persons see only one way out of this dead-end situation - surgical sex correction. However, a person has to go through several stages of medical examinations, commissions, to obtain an official permission - it is a long and complicated process associated with legal, economic, and other obstacles.

The problem of gender reassignment has several aspects - medical, legal, financial, and socio-psychological.

Medical sphere

Medically, the transition is extremely complicated and risky because of the lasting hormonal treatment and surgical intervention. Besides treatment is preceded by a lengthy stage of preliminary examinations of the applicant by a special commission to check the persons' health, psychiatric and psychological condition, and the permission for sex correction is granted by a special commission. Overall, the preparatory stage may take many years - up to 10 and more. It is another factor that decreases the quality of life for transgender persons along with the lack of qualified help, stigma and discrimination. Besides, significant cost for surgeries and treatment make the desired transition hardly real for many.

There are objective barriers to sex reassignment. The decision is made by a special commission that works on the basis of the Regulatory Act of the Ministry of Health. But the Commission has not convened for two and a half years and during this time permissions were not granted. Also the Commission's work is hindered by the new Regulatory Act, which has not been adopted yet. As one of the respondents noted, the present Regulatory Act stipulates that “the mandatory condition [for sex reassignment] is the risk of suicide, and if the person is not inclined to suicide the surgery should not be done. And there is also recommendation that the doctor should do psychotherapeutical work aimed at dissuading the patient from the surgery.” The respondents confirmed in their interviews that such work was indeed conducted and when a transgender person turns to a doctor or a mental health specialist they try to discourage them from sex reassignment.

I had an appointment with him [a psychologist], we started talking and till the last moment he did not understand who was in front of him; that is why he was nice to me. And then he told me he did not understand what my problem was. I explained to him. He asked why I wanted to do something if I could only change my passport and everybody will take me according to my passport gender. It was winter. And what shall I do in summer with my third breast size?! (S., 26, Kyiv obl.).

Besides the attempt to make transgender persons change their mind, doctors also frighten them with various possible complications, saying: “We can definitely guarantee you 10 years, you will live for 10 years, but you will still have problems with your health, with your liver! The heart is enlarging, the liver is enlarging, and all these will stick out (S., 34, Donetsk obl.).

Among other problems in the medial sphere respondents often named bureaucratization of the preparation process; the fact that the Sex Reassignment (Correction) Commission in Ukraine did not work for a long time; high cost of treatment; lack of health care services for transgender people.

There is simply no Commission and the feeling of waiting had a negative impact on me, I felt

1 Ukrainian breast size system starts with “0”; thus “3” means quite a large breast.
very bad then. Now I feel so much relieved, I have got some sense in my life and I feel much more comfortable. Emotionally I feel cheery and cozy. Back then it was a torture, 24 hours a day I was in bad mood, had psychosis, all I could think about was the Commission - when would it finally convene (S., 24, Kyiv obl.).

Obtaining a diagnosis that is required to apply to the commission also is often challenging because of the resistance of medical workers.

They told me: “Yes, please, you can get admitted [at the hospital for mental health examination]. You should pay for a separate ward. You will stay here for a week. And we will give you a diagnosis. But consider that one out of 10000 [people] get this diagnosis. So you should not count on getting it that easily. You should understand that there are many schizophrenics and sick people in your cohort!” And he started inquiring what my passport name was. “Whatever you’ve made up for your name is what you’ve made up, and what is your real name?” I told him: “V. is my real name!” “Ok, let it be V.” And exactly because of this ‘let is be’ it was easier for him to diagnose schizophrenia in me. And then cure me till my pension on a paid basis (V., 35, Mykolaiv obl.).

Until now there exists the problem that formally medical help can be obtained only at the place of registered residence. Giving the fact that it is only in Kyiv that they actually work with the transgender issues and people come there from all over the country, they can be rejected on this formal ground.

He told me: “You can’t make an appointment with me because you are not from Kyiv! It was Korol who would take anyone. Now forget it! Go to where you are assigned to according to your registered residence. Get examined wherever you like!” This is what he said! (А., 25, Luhanks obl.).

Moreover, at the regional level there are very few cities which have medical institutions that have experience or at least theoretically know how to work with transgender persons. In Ukraine, there are only one or two centers where such surgeries are possible and the quality of the service is not always satisfactory there.

She said it was possible to do it in Ukraine but also noted that the results were not very good. It is better in Russia… In addition, it is difficult to pass the commission here. Only very few people get the permission. Usually the majority of applicants are rejected (S., 34, Donetsk obl.).

Legal sphere

Even if medical problems are solved, this does not solve the entire problem, but brings up legal issues - change of documents. In Ukraine, documents can be changed only after the surgery. Even though many transgender persons start hormonal treatment and look opposite to their passport sex even before the surgery (if it is planned at all), they have to live with their original documents, which results in various problems when contacting state institutions, applying for a job, at educational institutions.

There is another legal casus regarding the change of documents: one can arbitrary change her or his first and last name but cannot change the patronymic and the sex marker. Thus, without any permission a person can change his or her documents and this would look like, for example, “Irina Petrovich Ivanova, man” (name and last name are female, patronymic and sex marker indicate male gender). (This is applied only to situations when documents are changed without the permission from the Commission).

I went to the Civil Registry Office to change my documents. But it turned out that according
to the new legislation I could change only my first and last name. Two Articles define change of patronymic name: change of the father’s name and adoption. One could not change his or her patronymic name arbitrary. So it remained in my passport with the male ending... And the sex marker also stayed as it was - male (Y., 24, Kharkiv obl.).

Time aspect

Another difficulty of transition is a long period of time that is needed to collect the required tests, go through examination, and receive permission for surgery.

At 11-12, when it all started from the conflict with my parents, it is then that I began the process. Of course, at that time I was literally killed with the age limit - 25 years. I was 12 then and it meant I needed [to wait] as much time and a bit more. When you are 12, the time ... [flows] in a different way... But the thing is that ... like in my case, you lose roughly 10 years of your life (B., 29, Kyiv obl.).

Many are afraid of the duration of the entire process when a person realizes that he wants to have the change immediately and the result is possible only after quite some time (I., 33, Kyiv obl.).

Transgender persons who are older note also that their age, families, careers are obstacles for them on the way of transition.

First, my age, I am already 44. We do not live abroad and I simply do not have that much money. You need to have a separate living place. I would need to have such income option that I would not have to work and would live only on dividends or simply would leave the country... But again - my family, parents, I can not give them up (V., 44, Kmelnysk obl.).

I am 45 now and in our country the Soviet bureaucracy still exists... Now I have got a question: I have two diplomas, professional college and institute. They will not change them for me, it is obvious. Then, the work record book. Let us imagine after sex change I apply for a job and my work record book indicates male gender [the respondent is female]. This means I have to come out again and tell about myself, and you understand, some might take it and others will not (S., 45, Kyiv obl.).

Barriers created by relatives

Parents’ reaction to a transgender person’s decision to undergo sex correction is usually negative (at least, in the beginning) and ranges from ridicule and condemnation to disallowance and attempts to keep away from making this step.

“Do not take any medicines yet. You have not consulted any doctors, have not talked to anyone. Maybe you are just gay? Or maybe you are just a transvestite? You can dress up, if you like, as a clown when you are at home. Verka Serduchka8, for example, dresses up and does not suffer much” (V., 35, Mykolaiv obl.).

My mom is a person slightly hipped on religion. And she did not recognize transsexualism as a phenomenon and explained it all with demons. She even took me to Dnepropetrovsk city to some church to exorcize them (Y., 24, Kharkiv obl.).

Sometimes parents manage to stop a transgender person from transition; they use such strong arguments as threat to life to family members: “You will make four corpses with your actions.” Relatives sometimes use threats and blackmail.

I quarreled with my mom. Though it was not discrimination, it was simply her way of saying that I had a temporary crazy idea. That I will grow out of this, that I will want to have a husband and all that. We quarrel only on this ground. My father keeps silent. He does not understand this at all. In the beginning, he was shouting that such [people] should be burned, they were monsters... (S., 24, Odessa obl.).

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8 Popular Ukrainian travesty artist.
I started getting threats from my mother. My mother said: “If you dare to do something I will kill myself.” And then my grandma died and it all stopped. But I got very scared for my mother. Because she was my mother regardless of anything. I thought I had to wait. And I waited, and waited, and waited. And I was falling deeper and deeper into the abyss (S., 24, Odessa obl.).

My mom went off into hysterics. She sprinkled my room with holy water. Everyone else simply turned sulky and turned away. They pretended I did not exist (Y., 24, Kharkiv obl.).

In some cases it is easier for relatives to accept the idea their child is mentally ill rather than he or she is transgender. As one of the respondents noted, when she was going through examinations at PND, her relatives insisted on a psychiatric diagnosis:

My brother and mom came and insisted that I had paranoid schizophrenia. It would be a much better option for them if I got such a diagnosis (М., 34, Kyiv obl.).

Very often parents’ ultimatum simply drives the transgender person into a corner. I do not know how to live further. I cannot give up on my parents but I also cannot abandon myself as it will simply kill me (М., 24, Khmelnytsk obl.).

For the sake of my mom I was ready to live as I was, only so that nobody would interfere with my life. In this state you constantly feel guilty, doomed, and it is very hard (М., 38, Poltava obl.).

Socio-psychological problems

Once transition has started, transgender persons often face problems of how their close surrounding perceives them. Hormonal treatment causes visible changes in a person’s appearance after a certain period and this may lead to adverse reactions of others, particularly if they do not know what is happening.

When a person changes, his colleagues notice this. Particularly when the person cannot wear the old clothing anymore and has to change to new one. Usually, at work, one faces great difficulties with this (Y., 24, Kharkiv obl.).

However, even if others are informed they often find it difficult to accept these changes. If they knew a person whose name was Pyotr and at a certain point it is already Natalia, it is difficult to change one’s attitude and adaptation to a new situation takes some time. Parents experience particular challenges: they had a son and now they should address him as a daughter. Intimate partners of transgender persons experience even greater difficulties as not everyone is able to accept the transition of their husband or wife into a person of the same gender.

She is working on it, she is trying, she is really trying. But it is difficult for her. She finds it hard even to kiss me. Even simply to kiss. I mean, if I try to kiss her she says: “I’m not a lesbi” (О., 51, Dnipropetrovsk obl.).

Thus, transition to a desired gender for transgender persons is linked with many legal, media and socio-psychological challenges. The majority of respondents see only one option for themselves - to bring their body in accordance with their gender. However, the urge to solve the problem radically, with surgical body correction, is greatly dictated by the pressure of the society, not always by personal desire. Many transgender persons strive to surgically correct their bodies because the society does not accept them as they are: “It is difficult to live this way, to hide and conceal something. I wanted to stop living in constant fear” (S., 26, Kyiv obl.).

Since in Ukraine there exists only one official version of transgenderness - the medical one (marked with ‘transexualism’ diagnosis), transgender persons are often convinced their condition is a disorder.

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9 Psychoneurologic dispensary.
This is a type of a disease. The disease is inborn and can be cured only with surgery, there is no other way (N., 24, Kyiv obl.).

What is shameful about it?! That was made a disease! But there is no other way. Because if it is not classified as a disease the state will not help you and one should be well aware of it. It is not quite a disease - it is an anomaly! Someone who was really smart realized: these people could be helped only if the phenomenon would be defined as a disease. Otherwise how could we operate or otherwise use medicine for these people if they are not ill?! (V., 23, Kyiv obl.).

One of the reasons explaining why that transgender persons so persistently seek surgery is the social pressure and the norms that do not allow for more than two genders to exist. If the society were more tolerant to people crossing the boundaries of gender “norms”, many of them would be satisfied with the change of documents only, and possibly partial body correction.

I do not have this bee in the bonnet, like many boys do, when it is the goal of their life - to undergo surgery. Because in the very end, surgery does not change anything. I have always said that I am originally already a man, it is not the surgery that can make me a man (V., 24, Kyiv obl.).

I have a beloved person, a family, and I feel comfortable, also in the sexual sphere. And I do not need surgery as much as others might do... I want to change exactly my documents. I think I could be satisfied with it (D., 23, Kyiv obl.).

I do not have any problems with sex. Everyone is satisfied with everything. I do not see any reason to change anything down there if it is not functional. Some believe that if you do not have it down there you are not a real man. I do not think so. A magic wand and a fairy do not exist. Everyone sets their own priorities. Everyone has their own fixations. For example, I got married and then divorced in two months. But I was married. Many [transgender people] believe surgery will solve all the problems, but it is not true, the problems stay (S., 26, Kyiv obl.).

My milk glands still make me feel uncomfortable in summer. I cannot afford to wear a t-shirt, I need to bandage. But in principle, if I had now a possibility to change my documents without any surgery I would go for it (V., 24, Kyiv obl.).

Overall, the position of the majority of transgender persons on body correction was expressed by one respondent:

When a person sees for himself any limitations like “I want to enter only in a civil union” or “I definitely want to change my body,” in this case the person does not say what he really wants but instead he says what his conscience allows him [to say] before his close people, and lack of fears before the surrounding allow (E., 21, Odessa obl.).

It is possible to change the present situation in the society - overcoming transphobia will allow transgender persons to live in a desired gender without any mandatory body correction. By far not all of the respondents expressed their readiness for body surgery. For many of them this decision is caused by the fact that the state refuses to acknowledge their gender identity if it does not correspond with their physical sex.
2.4. HEALTH CARE AND MEDICAL ISSUES

2.4.1. Accessibility of medical consultation and help

Health issues have a particular meaning for transgender people since they are closely related to mental diagnosis, hormonal treatment and surgical interventions. However even a usual visit to a therapist is often challenging for transgender persons because of their ambiguous status.

Almost all of the respondents verbalize the need for medical assistance but very few of them have access to qualified medical services. The respondents report that they often faced lack of understanding and biased attitude on the part of the medical workers, many experienced low level of the medical workers’ qualification, and lack of knowledge on the transgender phenomenon. In some cases the medical personnel treated transgender clients with disdain and negligence.

General medicine

It is quite difficult for transgender persons to turn for medical help even in case of a “simple” illness such as cold or flu.

Now I avoid them [doctors] at all, because I felt very uncomfortable when my breast grew. I did not have problems with the pediatrician but with the therapist it was horrible for me to get ill. I almost never had sick leaves; I always tried to get around as much as I could. Once I even had pneumonia because of it. I was scared that she [the doctor] would examine me and would see all this horror. That was how I got pneumonia (S., 24, Kyiv obl.).

The situation is particularly critical in case of a gynecologist or urologist.

I visited two gynecologists. They were young though. One of them started panicking, even peeped. She said she did not know what to do with me and how to do the check up. I said: “As of an ordinary person, an ordinary woman, a simple check up and that’s it.” And then I went to another woman, the mature one, almost a pensioner. She examined me. But it was still obvious it was abnormal for her. She checked me to see where my beard grows. I mean she did not understand this. She believed that if you want to become a boy, for example, you should have a beard (S., 24, Odessa obl.).

It is even more difficult to receive consultations of specialists on transgender issues - as a rule, such services are absolutely unavailable in the regions.

The guys from Mykolaiv turned to oblast psychotherapist at the place of their registered residence. He told them: “You made it all up for yourself!” And he addressed them with their passport names. They said the clinics did not have such a range of services (A., 26, Mykolaiv obl.).

When I came to my home town I had to visit 7 oblast hospitals. It turned out that, first of all, doctors were afraid as they had never faced this [such situations] before. They recommended going to Kyiv but even did not refer to a specific medical institution since they did not have this kind of information (S., 23, Kyiv obl.).

I can definitely say that medical workers acquainted with the current version of the Regulatory Act should know the addresses of Kyiv medical institutions working on this issue. However I faced the situation that doctors in my town did not have even this information. Although the Regulatory Act in force specifies the procedure according to which a person identifying as transsexual should turn to a sexopathologist at the place of his or her registered residence and the doctor, in turn, should write a referral for the patient to either the Family Planning Center or to the Institute for Urology and Andrology, which can be used to make an appointment with the doctor. Based on the result of my communication with the state hospitals I found that they do not have such information, and consequently do not have experience in working with
Hormonal treatment

One of the most critical problems faced by transgender people in the health care system is lack of consultation on transgender issues by sexopathologists and endocrinologists. In fact, in Ukraine there are no endocrinologists who specialize on transgender issues and the respondents who tried to find these specialists confirmed this fact.

Endocrinologists as such, our local ones, have not ever come across these issues at all, they even did not know such words (Zh., 24, Kyiv obl.).

I visited the endocrinologist once but after she told me things that I knew were not true I decided I did not need such doctors (I., 31, Kyiv obl.).

I kept trying to find a way to start HRT. I went to Kirovograd to see a sexopathologist who recommended me to take “Metandrestenalon” for some reason. And I realized it was not right. I realized it was a male hormone. I did not come back there anymore. I started to search for another doctor. Next time I went to the oblast hospital, this time to an endocrinologist. I explained to her that I wanted to start HRT and I needed advice which hormones to take. She said they did not provide advice on this matter. I had to go to Kyiv. She did not say where exactly though, did not give any contacts. I simply had to go to Kyiv (V., 35, Kirovograd obl.).

There are no specialists. I am looking for one at the moment. I told you that my father recommended me an endocrinologist, but he was young and tenderfoot. He looked at me and said: “I don’t know what to do, he said, go to a different hospital” (S., 24, Odessa obl.).

You know how the endocrinologists are [in our country]. You know, I doubt they even suspect that transsexual people exist. They mainly work with people with diabetes (E., 21, Odessa obl.).

Not having received the necessary advice and prescriptions, transgender persons start taking hormones by themselves; drugs and doses are selected through trial and error, with the advice of friends and information on the Internet.

I visited some websites. I met N.P. from the city of Rivne, who has made SRS. It was the first person I talked to on the Internet. It was she who recommended me to start my HRT with “Mikrofollin.” For three months, following her advice I was taking these hormones and then I had a breakdown because of large doses... Because N. was not a specialist and her advice was based on her own experience. My blood pressure went up abruptly, they called the ambulance. Certainly, I kept silent about what was going with me and why (V., 35, Kirovograd obl.).

I tried to start taking hormones. However, at that time, to be honest, I knew very little. And I took hormones in such a way that my blood pressure was jumping, it would not go below 140, usually it was 190, and I did not know how many times I fainted. It lasted for over a month. And only after some days fell out of my memory, I totally did not remember some days, I had to stop and then was recovering for half a year (O., 51, Dnipropetrovsk obl.).

I have not consulted any doctors, again because of the fact that I am very reserved; to my regret it has been a while, I am trying to work on it. But I am very uncompanionable person, it happened so. I find it difficult to start a conversation with anyone, to go to doctors and to tell them about myself so directly [is scary]. I failed to make myself [do this], to get over myself (L., 31, Kharkiv obl.).

I could not wait and I prescribed hormones myself. I simply went out and bought them. It turned out I chose very correct doses, which I then gradually increased under L’s* control (Y., 24, Kharkiv obl.).

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10 Type of a hormone – translator’s note.
11 The respondent is a trans-woman – translator’s note.
As one can see from the quotes above, the lack of opportunity to consult professional endocrinologists leads to uncontrolled use of hormonal drugs and very often leads to negative health consequences.

### 2.4.2. Consequences for mental and physical health

Living a double or hidden life leads to the constant state of distress and causes development of different forms of mental disorders. Most frequently transgender persons suffer from depression and nervous breakdown. The respondents reported cases of suicidal thoughts and attempts. It is worth noting that the greatest risk of suicide is observed at teenage age and adolescence, usually accompanied by unhappy love or conflict with parents. Later, as a transgender person finds his or her niche and learns to live balancing between the two genders, other problems take the lead - coming out to other people, transition, and sex reassignment itself.

Generally, I was shy at school, but would also go there rarely. The local pediatrician did not even discharge me, as a rule. She did not want to let me go to school because I would faint. It was psychological, because I was OK walking in the street but as soon as I would go to school I would start shaking (B., 29, Kyiv obl.).

I used to have nervous breakdowns. I could take my stuff and leave the technical college I studied at for several days. The rules were very strict there, one could not leave easily like this. I would collect my things and leave for several days, simply to travel around on electric trains (M., 24, Khmelnytskyi obl.).

Gradually I became aggressive. At first I felt general aversion to all this. I totally did not understand why it all happened, why I could not do what I wanted and the way I wanted (S., 18, Kharkiv obl.).

It resulted in absolute complexes. Since they laughed at me already in the kindergarten. I started realizing it… I started hiding, but of course I failed to hide everything (M., 34, Kyiv obl.).

#### Depressions

Many respondents reported having depressions caused by loneliness, restraint, and negative emotions because of the impossibility to assert their identities. Usually such states are typical for teenage and adolescence age.

I was depressed, I almost did not go out. At all. I mean, I could go downstairs to get cigarettes. To buy cigarettes and that was it. I was living online. That was it. I did not go out, did not hang out with friends, did not talk to anyone, told everyone to go away (S., 24, Odessa obl.).

I simply started having psychoses, nervous breakdowns, depression. Then they turned into a heavy form… I was at the day hospital because I simply had this condition - I came and asked: “Send me somewhere to a mental hospital, far away from everybody, because I cannot live like this anymore” (M., 34, Kyiv obl.).

#### Alcohol abuse

One of the respondents reported abusing alcohol because of her unresolved gender problems. I am very sensitive by nature, and because I had been insulted in my childhood I developed complexes, inferiority complex, you see. I felt lonely. And some 20 years ago, somewhere in 1989, I started drinking because of it. At first they offered me drinks at work, in the group, and then I started buying alcohol myself. I kept increasing the dose. And last year I was on the verge of having the rats. I felt more and
more lonely... And I kept drinking, I felt emptiness in my soul and drowned it in alcohol (S., 45, Kyiv obl.).

Suicidal thoughts and attempts

The risk of suicide is relatively high among transgender persons. Usually suicidal thoughts and attempts take place in adolescence. The respondents reported their suicidal thoughts because of the problems with their identification, lack of understanding and conflicts with relatives.

Back then, at 10-12, it was the beginning. When I was 16, it was the middle, when I realized. Then I had a depression, I even wanted to commit suicide because I was forbidden to date girls (А., 24, Luhansk obl.).

I felt very uncomfortable with how they perceived me. I had a feeling it was not right. I did not know then how to change it. My Grandma died and I thought I would feel better in the next life. I mean, the next time I am born I will be OK (S., 34, Kharkiv obl.).

Several respondents reported their suicidal attempts at the school age.

I had a suicidal attempt somewhere in the 7-8 grade. I hanged myself and at that moment the neighbor came in and took me down (N., 24, Kyiv obl.).

At 11-12, exactly when it all started with the conflict with my parents, then actually they started doing this... My first suicidal attempt was because of it (V., 27, Kharkiv obl.).

Self-castration attempts

Some respondents told that they tried to solve the problem of “extra organs” themselves. In some cases it happened in their childhood, unwittingly, in others - in the adult age.

I was taken to the doctor in the fifth or six grade when I tried to cut my “odd” organ with a knife. I thought I would cut it with one sweep but instead made a big scar, it hurt and for the second time I had to take an axe. They took me to the hospital, stitched up, I stayed for 3 nights at the hospital, then the psychiatrist had a talk with me. I told him as it was but he did not understand. In the Soviet Union, they were taught totally differently, such a problem did not exist and he had not come across it before then, 100% (N., 24, Kyiv obl.).

I decided I could not handle it anymore and dared to make a self-castration attempt. I made a “thorough” preparation - Analgin, spirit, cotton wool, lancet, and that was it... I decided to tell it was an accident, with a nail and board. In fact, I did not invent it, I heard this story. It was told with such a horror: the person jumped, impaled himself on a nail, then he was castrated. The story was told with such a horror. And I thought, my God, why was not it myself?! (О., 51, Dnipropetrovsk obl.).

Thus, internal and external conflicts of transgender persons have a negative impact on their well-being, deteriorate their mental health and the quality of life.

2.4.3. Surgery and rehabilitation

In the research sample 5 of the respondents have already undergone surgical body correction, 23 respondents are planning to do this. The majority of transgender persons dream to bring their bodies in accordance with their psychological identity by surgical sex correction. Only 8 respondents reported that they did not plan to make any changes.

Surgery that is regarded by many transgender persons as an escape in fact does solve certain problems but creates a number of others. First of all, these are health problems, the quality of the surgeries, and after-surgery complications.

The surgery lasted for about 9.5 hours. It took me long to recover from anesthesia because
I had a weak heart. Naturally, I had not told anyone about this otherwise they simply would not take me. My heart almost stopped. My poor anesthesiologist’s hair almost went grey... And then when I was recovering from anesthesia I started vomiting badly and I torn off internal stitches and the internal bleeding started (A., 31, Crimea).

I woke up during the surgery... I could feel [the doctor] cutting me. But I was paralyzed and could not even open my eyes. In a few seconds I lost conscience from the pain shock. And then I woke up already after the surgery... I talked to the anesthesiologist about this. He said they purposefully chose the dose to be on the verge. So that the person would not feel bad afterwards but also that he or she would not feel pain. But seems like it had a slightly weaker effect on me than on others (Y., 24, Kharkiv obl.).

The respondents also reported problems arising during the rehabilitation process. I can say it took me about a year to feel myself again in the right shape, so to say. Since, my quality of life has abruptly worsened. I mean maybe the rehabilitation process itself was not that long, but it caused lack of energy, drowsiness, fatigue. It was not post-surgery depression, simply the quality of life decreased (Y., 36, Donetsk obl.).

Thus, transgender persons have limited access to medical help and services, in the regions there are practically no medical specialists and centers specialized on transgender issues. When transgender persons turn to medical facilities they often face ignorant, disparaging and offensive behavior of the medical personnel.
2.5. DISCRIMINATION AGAINST TRANSGENDER PERSONS

2.5.1. Spheres where transgender persons face discrimination

Transgender persons face discrimination in all spheres: at home, school, workplace, in public places and in the street, in health care, and even in church. The very need to hide one's identity is a form of discrimination.

*Now I do not go full time in the street, do not go full time to the university... This is already discrimination* (E., 21, Odessa obl.).

**By family members**

Sometimes transgender persons face discrimination and violence in their own families. Parents demand that their transgender child abandon her or his decision to undergo sex reassignment, they do not allow their child to live in a preferred gender, do not accept a transgender person in the way he or she presents him/herself. They use threats, blackmail, physical violence, intimidation, threat of mental illness diagnosis.

*After my mom learned [about it] she decided to come to my place and make peace. But somehow it was not for real. Because she made a reservation at a mental health facility. She called a brigade from Luhansk oblast psychoneurologic dispensary; arranged it with the guys. The brigade came and waited around the corner. She came in and said: “Let’s make peace. Everything will be all right. Let’s go home!” I agreed at first, even though I was very afraid of her knowing that this person can do anything to me... But nevertheless I went with her. They caught me, took to the nut-house as if I were some schizophrenic... The doctor that was there took me around the entire hospital, showed its most horrible places where I could stay for long if I would not reconcile with my mother, would not throw out of my head all this ["bullshit"] and would not start a normal way of life... At that time I had no choice. Certainly, I deceived him and said that I would go home and everything would be all right. When we were going home, then 4 days... Those 4 days were totally horrible for me... Because my mother bought a box of vodka and simply beat me up for 4 days so that I would throw this stuff out of my head. And if I would not do this, the nut-house would be always there for me. On the first call (A., 24, Luhansk obl.).*

*Here is another example of transphobia that transgender persons may face in their own families. One female respondent told about her brother’s reaction to her coming out as a transgender person after going through psychiatrical expertise:*

*First of all, my brother decided to come around a little. He came when I went out of the hospital and was at home. He said he talked there to some important person who held a high position in psychiatry. He threw me a thick printout and said it was all nonsense and it did not exist. He said it was ridiculous, that I had a mental substitution for reality or something like that. But in fact when I started reading the printout I recalled somebody saying about some forum on this topic. I searched and found out that all the information had been taken from transfob.ru website. All this information he had taken from there, these myths about transsexualism. Certainly, he had shown it to my mom and then both of them totally ganged up on me (M., 34, Kyiv obl.).*

*When a transgender person starts taking hormones and changes become visible with the naked eye, some parents try to counteract this. They knew and observed changes in me. At first, when finding hormones they would throw them away, but now it is OK (I., 33, Kyiv obl.).*
In healthcare

Discrimination and violation of the rights of transgender persons in medical sphere take the forms of refusal to provide medical help, negligent and scornful attitude, accusing treatment, and moral pressure.

I went to a sexopathologist and started telling about my feelings, that I needed a surgery... She said: “Wait a little”... Two more doctors came in...who were not sexopathologists at all. They sat down and listened. I stopped, the sexopathologist said: “Do not pay attention to them, they are my colleagues, do go on.” They laughed. At that moment I wished the earth would swallow me. I simply stood up and left the cabinet and then heard the laughter already from the sexopathologist himself (Zh., 45, Kharkiv obl.).

All these commissions I considered discrimination... First of all, they have an age limit - 25 years. [By this time] everything has already been formed by the hormones the body produces. Secondly, the larger part of youth is already behind. Before 25 and with old documents and all this you cannot get a job. I still explain to the road police why my driver’s license has a female name on it... Then all these examinations. 30 days in the nut-house is [hard] in itself, moreover at the in-patient hospital. But most of all I was outraged with the gynecological examination with the third persons present in the room (V., 27, Kharkiv obl.).

I was first sent to a regular doctor-endocrinologist, and then the regular doctor sent me to the commission to the head of the department. She gathered 5-6 people, they undressed me there, and made me exercise, and morally pressured... She started talking about God. “And how about God?” She pressed me that I was so stupid, did not understand that the God would punish me, that I would never be a full-fledged man anyway. She tried to talk me out of it with all means. And when she read in my card that I was an orphan, that my mom had died long time ago, she said these words: “That is why the poor mother died, she could not handle it!” I had a trauma already at that time, after my mother's funeral. And now some... doctor starts telling me something about it... It was horrible! What right did she have to judge me, and to say such things? What if I would cling and would have hanged myself, since nobody cared anyway...?! (A., 24, Luhansk obl.).

One doctor at PND... She had a bad attitude to me from the very beginning, meaning I was already 30 and still did foolish things. Though once you put fifty hryvnas¹² people begin to understand you... (M., 38, Poltava obl.).

Often transgender persons face problems in healthcare sphere because of their legal status. This winter I had a severe flu with complications and since my condition worsened I was taken in by the ambulance. When we arrived to the hospital they could not put me neither to a man's ward as I had woman's documents nor to woman's ward as women could not have hoarse voice and bristle (S., 23, Kyiv obl.).

At educational institutions

Gender based discrimination in education may take such forms as refusing acceptance to the educational institution, denying to change the name in the diploma (after the legal name change), denying to issue certificates and other documents.

In 2000, I called Boichuk Institute¹³ to ask about application conditions and they replied to me (obviously, based on my voice) that they “did not accept faggots” (I., 33, Kyiv obl.).

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¹² Ukrainian currency – translator’s note.
¹³ State Institute of Decorative and Applied arts and Designed named by M.Boichuk – editor’s note.
I had a problem at my institute. They did not want to issue me a certificate that I had studied there for 2 years. Why? They could not explain it. They would wear me out for a while, I had to see rectors and pro-rectors. They simply did not want to change my name and surname. I kept my surname but the name they did not want to change (N., 24, Kyiv obl.).

At school, particularly in middle school, the phenomenon of bullying (ridicule, harassment, and violence from peers at school) is widespread, and usually its victims are quiet, shy kids that somehow differ from others. Transgender kids often happen to be among them.

I was a kind of local attraction, I mean as soon as I would pass by some group of kids they would start discussing something, usually very loudly, screaming out different things; once they even threw stones at me but missed. They were afraid to touch me as once I had beaten up several people and now they kept distance. I was always an object of derisions, jokes about sex and gender; street gangers somehow found it funny to call a person in a neuter gender (V., 27, Kharkiv obl.).

May respondents noted that they had not faced direct physical violence but quite regularly faced other forms of discriminatory treatment.

Imagine you are walking along the school corridor and everyone is whispering. You ride on a bus and people around look sideways at you and you realize what they are talking about. 5 minutes after one of them comes to you are asks: “Are you a lad or girl?”(V., 22, Kharkiv obl.).

Not only peers but teachers as well discriminate against transgender teenagers.

They would not let me into the school, they made me go and change my clothes. I would go through back doors, was late for classes, but attended the school in the clothes I wore. Every morning the school principal stood at the front door and watched who was wearing what. And she always let me in. But then one of the teachers came up to her and said that I was a girl. Then it all started. They would not let me anywhere, even in the 9th grade they did not let me come to the history exam. They told me to go and change. And I simply did not have anything to change to, all my clothes was like this. She told me to go and borrow from my mom. I came home in tears. My father came to school with me and took me to the class. I got a “C” for the exam (S., 26, Kyiv obl.).

In my last school grades one of the teachers thought that my friend and me were a couple [gay couple - translator’s note] and demanded that we left the school, that she would not tolerate it (I., 33, Kyiv obl.).

In the workplace

Workplace discrimination, as a rule, is related to employment procedure - in other words, already at the stage of applying for a job transgender persons face difficulties, mainly because of the discrepancy between their appearance and passport data.

Before I changed my documents I was extremely scared. I purposefully was looking for a job where I would not need not show my documents even though I realized that in this case I would not have any social protection (V., 22, Kharkiv obl.).

There were situations that I would pass three interview stages and at the stage of signing a job contract I would say that I had this peculiarity, and after this the employer would refuse me placement arguing that my documents would not go through the security service or bringing up another reason. And it was not a single case (S., 23, Kyiv obl.).

I cannot also get a normal job as my appearance is totally male and my documents indicate the female gender. I cannot go abroad as law enforcement officers doubt the validity of my documents. Consequently, it creates a ground for difficulties with the law enforcement bodies. I had a couple of such cases (S., 23, Kyiv obl.).
I passed an interview, nobody asked for my documents. They talked to me like to a specialist. Three times I was offered a job when the competition was quite high. Then I left my previous workplace. And then with the documents I would come and say: “Dear colleagues, there is one thing, I am transsexual.” I did not see anything difficult or special in introducing such a person as I was to the staff. They turned me down. Once, a famous company “Olymp” told me that they would hire me; at that time I was a bank employee. I checked with them several times, having said that I was transsexual and my documents were in the process of change. They told me it did not matter and everything was OK. After I left my previous workplace and came to that company on the next day they told me: “We are sorry but we cannot take you” (V., 23, Kyiv obl.).

They would throw me out of the job exactly because of this. I started working at the shopping mall. The senior salesperson responsible for personnel selection was away. I was hired by a senior cashier officer. She told me: “We need a shop assistant, I take you.” The woman took me because I could work. I worked there for a week. Then this senior salesperson came and said: “Get out of here.” I asked: “Why?” He answered: “I don’t need a boy-girl working for me.” I did not suit him (S., 24, Odessa obl.).

Besides, discrimination is when an employer uses the vulnerable position of transgender persons (work without signing a job contract) offering them lower salary or worse working conditions. For example, while I am selling - this is one thing. People come and ask: “Lady, please show this, turn that on.” “Yes, please, how much does it cost?” The pressure started after. When a van came, for instance, and the goods had to be unloaded. And among the goods were refrigerators and gas ovens. My boss said: “Let’s go unload.” I said: “No, I will not.” “I took you, he said, as you are not fully a girl.” I asked: “And who am I? A fag, or what? Who do you take me for?” “I don’t know who you are, he said. But until you have a penis in your pants do unload the van otherwise I will sack you” (V., 35, Mykolaiv obl.).

The Director at first… well, he learned the truth from me on the very first day to avoid any misunderstandings. “Well, he said, no problems here. The only thing I care for is that the person would sit and work. This is it. I do not care. I can put even a Kolobok14, if he works, then it’s all right.” But these were simply words. In fact they wore me out. They promised I would get the probation period salary for one, maximum for two months. The salary was 600 hryvnas, two years ago. Five months in a row I received 600 hryvnas15. And then already at the end of the fifth month I said: “Andrei, as I remember, we had agreed. How can one survive with this money at all?” “It is easier to fire you, he said. Your work performance is poor.” …He probably took advantage of the situation, I mean: “Where would you go, dear? Who else will need you?” (V., 35, Mykolaiv obl.).

For example, a company needs an electronic engineer, with computer skills, technical English, ability to work with the station. I came and asked what they needed. They said. I told them: “I have this and that work experience, I have a university degree.” He said: “Give me your documents.” I said: “You see, here is the situation. I am a transsexual, I still have documents of a man.” He said: “Wait, so you are a man?” I said: “Do I look like a man?” He said: “No. I understand: there is a man, there is a woman, and there is a fag such as you are.” Straightforward like this. “Fags never worked for me, do not work, and will never work” (V., 35, Mykolaiv obl.).

The respondents also reported the cases of stigmatizing. At one job I had a conflict with my coworker who said that his friends would stop talking to him if they learned he was working with me. Applying to another job I already came not as I* [but

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14 A protagonist made of bread in a Russian fairy tale – translator’s note.
15 Around 70-80 euro – translator’s note.
according to my passport gender] in order to avoid problems. Again, the colleagues would rather tolerate gay people but not trans... (I., 33, Kyiv obl.).

At institutions

Transgender persons face problems at various institutions when they need to make up their documents or because of the inconsistency between their looks and their passport data.

Ungrounded refusal in making documents is the most common case. For instance, with the name change, with the change of diploma or obtaining a visa.

I came to the registry office not considering the situation particularly: “I want to change my name.” “Give me your passport.” They open my passport, looked at me, then looked at what was written in the passport. “And what name do you want?” “Vladimir”\textsuperscript{16}. “No, you cannot do this.” Then they started screaming. The woman obviously tried to master herself, tried to speak to me politely but she totally failed. She yelled that this was not possible because it could never be possible. Somewhere in a month I was ready again, I talked to my sister, to someone else. I came to that same registry office and went straight to the administrator. “Last time I came with such a request and your people yelled at me here.” I was speaking in a harsh manner, I was not asking. The administrator even sat down. She said; “You know, we probably, do not have the right to do this. But I don’t know for sure.” “If you cannot do it for some reason, issue me an official paper with a denial.” “Excuse us, but we cannot. Why don’t you first go to oblast registry office and see what they tell you there. We are afraid to take on such a responsibility.” With this I left (V., 27, Kharkiv obl.).

My mom asked me to buy something in Donetsk and transferred the money. I could hardly withdraw it from bank. It was such a huge scandal (Y., 25, Donetsk obl.).

Also problems arise when crossing the border, obtaining visas.

Once I was going to Russia to see my grandma. I had only the certificate that I was a transsexual with me. They put me off the train, asked to undress. I took up my t-shirt and showed them my scars. They were probably curious. Nobody compensated me the ticket, of course, I had to buy a new one and take a later train (S., 26, Kyiv obl.).

Even at the customs they did not want to let me through. When I went with my father to the funeral of my grandma in Belarus the customs officer was yelling that it was not me in the passport. He checked several times and yelled it was not me. My father said: “It is my child coming with me.” But he did not believe us. Until the senior officer came and said: “The eyes do not change, look at the eye, it is the same person” (S., 24, Odessa obl.).

We tried to get a visa [to Germany] but they did not issue me a visa. They explained [the refusal]. They spelled it out on 4 pages how much they respected and loved me. That in case of any discrimination they were ready to accept me at their embassy, offer tea, but you understand that... The reason? I had money in travel checks, I had a certificate from work that I had a salary. First of all, they said they still believed I would not come back. Secondly, they wrote, they calculated, I had enough money for everything except for the trip back” (M., 35, Mykolaiv obl.).

Transgender people face discrimination not only at state institutions but also in informal sphere, and in the sphere of religion.

I was a victim of discrimination myself, when LGBT community discriminated against me... They did not want to accept me as I was. They would say: “Look at you, you are a

\textsuperscript{16} The respondent is FtM and the suggested name is male – translator’s note.
girl.” I said: “No.” Then they said: “Well, OK, then you are a moral monster” (V., 23, Kyiv obl.).

My girlfriend and I are going through the period of churcning. Christianity, namely the Orthodox church, does not accept transsexuals in any form. And it denies them [the right to have] a family and the right to love. Yes, you can love each other, who can prohibit you to love? However no sexual relationships, no family - all these things are forbidden, it is a sin and so on (Y., 36, Donetsk obl.).

In the street, in public places

Most harsh, offensive and direct attacks on transgender persons take place in the street and public places at the hands of strangers.

I had fights and was beaten up because I looked gay, and they would come and ask “So, if you are a guy, why you have such a big ass?” I faced different situations... Once at the dorm I stood up for a girl. A guy said to me: “Hey, lad, do go your own way.” They tore a shirt on me. “Wow! So you are also a girl!!!” Well, it was, gently speaking, a very unpleasant experience... They knocked my teeth out... (A., 32, Crimea).

I was even threatened with a knife... We were sitting at the bar with my male and female friends. And the personnel at that bar knew me. They knew me with my biological name. By that time I had already been already dressing up as a guy, all fine. So we were sitting and I asked the girl to dance. We started dancing and people in the bar started whispering and whispering behind us. Then a guy, drunk enough, came up to me and started asking: “So, who are you, a girl or a boy?” I told him straightforward: “It's none of your business.” He took a knife and said: “I will tear you apart now.” I told him: “OK, go ahead.” Finally they carried him out of the bar (S., 24, Odessa obl.).

At the bus stop, I remember, I was going to work, and there was this guy standing there, selling mobile cards. And then I would come, and he saw people every day, and he noticed that at some point I was already not a boy but a girl. From that moment he started attacking me verbally, we could even had a fight... It was the first time: I was approaching the bus stop. He was standing there, selling these cards, he noticed me and started yelling: “This is a fag, this is a fag! Look here everyone! This is a fag! Yeah, you fag, I will smash your face”... And then he did the same thing next time. I once ignored him, then twice, and for the third time... I did not see him at all. He either left his job or was standing at another place. And then, maybe half a year later, I was coming out of a shop and he was walking with some girl. And he screamed at me: “Hey, you, faggot, get away from here” (V., 35, Mykolaiv obl.).

They yelled that I was a fag. I cannot repeat the words they told me. Those were all swear words, and they beat me up. Once they took away my bag when I actually did not have anything. They expected I kept money and the mobile phone in it (S., 45, Kyiv obl.).

In summer, I dressed as a woman. So, I was walking like this, in a great mood. And then somebody grabbed me by the hand near my house. And we had this very unpleasant talk. He [the guy who grabbed me] was irritated with long-haired men, obviously. And it was in such an aggressive form. He said if he had a gun he would kill me on the spot. The horror was that later I saw this guy very-very often and thus tried not to come back late at night (O., 36, Kyiv obl.).

In the street, before I started the hormonal treatment, when one could still identify me and I was wearing women’s clothes. I was in the movies, was coming back home and on my way some teenagers started harassing me, at first verbally with the jokes. I approached the bus stop. I wanted to take a trolley but they started pulling me away. They insulted me, started beating me, I entered into a fight with one of them, the other grabbed my bag and ran away... People around were watching but nobody interfered. They were simply observing to see what would happen (I., 31, Kyiv obl.).

In general, stigma and discrimination against transgender persons are common in all
spheres of public and private life. Most often they are discriminated in the workplace, but in this case the discrimination has a covert nature. And most overt forms of harassment and discrimination happen in the street and in public places.

2.5.2. Information and services for transgender people

One of the problems that transgender persons face is the lack of information. Due to this fact many persons for long time live with the sense of deficiency, wrongly perceive themselves as gay men or lesbians and think they are mentally ill.

I realized I could not live in a normal society. Moreover, since I could not give an explanation to this myself. Up until I was 20 I had believed it was some kind of strange disease or nature anomaly. I had realized people would not accept it (M., 34, Kyiv obl.).

I totally did not understand what was going on with me. I started understanding some bits only when I became 30-31, when I came across an article from Kobeta and Jitse “Former Men” (O., 51, Dnipropetrovsk obl.).

Those were the times when one [transsexual] could hardly realize oneself or even could hardly imagine that one could do it, that one could change one’s sex. Even on the social level, not talking about the surgery, there was absolutely no information then (V., 35, Mykolaiv obl.).

Sources of information

Answering the question where they learned about transsexuality and sex reassignment methods the respondents most frequently named the media - newspapers, magazines, television.

I clearly remember, I was 17 when I saw a program on TV about trans people (S., 23, Kyiv obl.).

When I was 16, I watched TV all the time, and there was a program on Discovery channel on how such surgeries are being done. And it motivated me, and I said that once I would undergo one as well (A., 25, Luhanks obl.).

I remember that in 1984, the journal “Science and Life” published an article on transsexualism. Then I had a thought: now everyone would read it and would realize who I was (I., 33, Kyiv obl.).

I read an article called “Alice waiting for a wonder.” It was a bomb for me! I remember that when I read it I was shocked (V., 35, Kirovograd obl.).

There was also this article in “SPID-Info” and it said…No, not true, I simply came to Kyiv, just like this, haphazardly, called the information center and said I needed a center on transsexualism or something like it. Everyone just shrugged their shoulders. Then I bought a brochure “Medical facilities of Kyiv” but did not find anything there except for the hot line number (V., 35, Kirovograd obl.).

When I was 15, I came across an article by Belkin about surgeries in the journal “Technology of Youth”. Then I got a bee in my bonnet, or rather a dream. I decided I had to undergo a surgery. But then again, it was like a dream. I mean, then I really did not have an opportunity, when my parents pressured me a lot, and I had almost no money (S., 34, Donetsk obl.).

Only when I was already 17 I came across an article on FtM [transgender] who underwent a surgery in India. I cut this article and showed it to my female friend… But I did realize that it was not possible in our country, that I was doomed (M., 38, Poltava obl.).

For the first time I heard about it on TV, then I only knew about the Internet at second hand.
I do not remember what program it was, or maybe it was a film, where the term ‘transsexual’ was used to denote the person who changes his sex. They also mentioned the word ‘transvestite’ but I had already known it. After this I began to understand what the terms ‘transsexualism’ and ‘transvestism’ meant, what the difference was. Before, I had thought of myself as a transvestite (P., 24, Kherson obl.).

For the majority of the respondents this information was the only source of knowledge on transgender issues (especially during Soviet times). However, the majority of publications and programs on this issue were for non-specialist readers and thus could not give answers to the existing questions.

Many people get information from the media where these issues are not covered adequately and where they, in fact, say these are problems of individual people (B., 29, Kyiv obl.).

Particularly the problem is distorted by entertaining TV programs that offer scandalous facts. “Moreover, since they will still cut out the best part and will show what the viewer is interested in, and the viewer is not usually interested in real life” (S., 34, Donetsk obl.).

Dramatically the situation has changed only with the arrival of the Internet that replaced consultations of specialists for transgender persons, opened access to medical and legal information, and provided opportunities to find new social networks.

As soon as I got a computer and Internet access, my first desire was [to learn] - what are these people and how is it done? How can it be? This is a guy but he looks so much like a girl. It cannot be true!... Later I learned on the Internet that hormones can really impact secondary sex characters. And if one takes hormones of the opposite sex one can attain these secondary sex characteristics. In a day I was already at the pharmacy buying hormones (V., 35, Mykolaiv obl.).

Lack of qualified medical consultation, particularly with regard to taking hormones, results in the situation when transgender persons start prescribing hormones themselves or follow the advice of other people.

When I was a sophomore I went to an Internet-club to type a course paper and in search engines I searched for all these things - with the key words of ‘transsexualism’, ‘transsexual’, and so on. I found some website, transsexuals.ru, it still exists. The website was about hormones and all that stuff. Then I started looking for medical websites, how those pills were called and how to take them. In the morning, I went out of the Internet-club and spent all the money I had with me on Microfollin17 (N., 24, Kyiv obl.).

It was the year 2004. I gave up on all my classes and spent nights at the Internet-club, slept during the day, found some people from Moscow who advised me how to take pills, because I had been taking hormones according to the product label. At first I felt like experimenting with myself. I experimented with various drugs, took so much of them as nobody else did (N., 24, Kyiv obl.).

There is a lot of information about this, and there are many people who give advice (E., 21, Odessa obl.).

2.5.3. Needs of transgender persons

The major need of transgender persons is the need for the state and society to understand and recognize their right to be who they are, the right to their gender identity. In the very end, it is the right to be equal and full-fledged members of the society.

I want to be a full-fledged member of the society and I want to register my relationship with

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17 Microfollin is a female hormone – translator’s note.
the beloved person. I want so that wherever you would go - either to a travel agency, to a doctor, to whomever, or if you apply for a job and show your documents, they would treat you the way you treat yourself (D., 23, Kyiv obl.).

Equally crucial is the need for information and consultations that would help transgender persons understand who they are and what they should do with their problems.

Probably, I am in need of information about myself. I need information on whether there is a psychologist that would work with me for a certain price. I cannot pay 100 hryvnas per session, this is it. At the moment it is the most crucial thing for me (E., 21, Odessa obl.).

Besides, the respondents most often verbalized the following needs:

1. For qualified assistance of doctors, psychologists.

   It would be great if there were some facility, like at Shulyavka metro station that would competently deal with the issues of such people. If this is an endocrinologist, he should help you instead of shrugging his shoulders: if this is a gynecologist, he should use psychologically wise approach not to traumatize you. [There is a need for] psychologists that would not merely test you, but whom you could really talk to. Because there are people that really need such support of a specialist. There are transsexuals that simply cannot deal with this transition and simply commit suicide (A., 25, Luhanks obl.).

   In the first place, there is a need to inform all the, let’s say, pediatricians and physicians. These are the doctors that children are often brought to. They should be informed that there is such a diagnosis (I doubt they are aware of this) and that they would notice it. Because a child is not always able to say this, and parents do not always notice, or do not want to start all this (S., 24, Kyiv obl.).

   A month ago I had to visit a gynecologist, I felt terribly uncomfortable that they addressed me as a woman. I wish there were such organizations with qualified good specialists who could treat these people decently. I realize the doctor did not mean to hurt me but it was a huge trauma for me (D., 23, Kyiv obl.).

   I think it would be better if doctors on a regional level could do it. I wish the doctors would be qualified enough to do it. The state should prepare the specialists, endocrinologists, psychiatrists. I believe any psychotherapist and psychiatrist should be informed about this (I., 31, Kyiv obl.).

2. For endocrinological consultation and availability of hormonal drugs.

   [I wish] we had an opportunity to choose, it would be also nice if they [hormones] were available. However, this is the question rather to pharmaceutical industry and suppliers. And also in the light of this crisis it would be nice if we could somehow influence the availability of Omnadren and Sustanon, that it would be like for diabetics [the medicines secured at the hospitals]. Because so far, as I know, this is all that I was recommended by the knowledgeable people, and when pharmacies will run out of Omnadren and Sustanon, then we will have to turn to these... drugs for bodybuilders. Healthy nutrition, something like that. So if I come to this pharmacy and say I am from Vanya from the town of Enakievo they will immediately sell me Sustanon. The smuggled one (Y., 36, Donetsk obl.).

   I want to be treated by the doctor instead of searching for answers from other people on the Internet (E., 21, Odessa obl.).

3. For accurate work of the Sex Reassignment (Correction) Commission

   Let me before the commission. I have been waiting for two year, here is my condition - I quarreled with my husband, went and cut my hair ... got drunk then, it was horrible (Zh., 45, Kharkiv obl.).
In my opinion, most important points that should be done to secure transgender persons’ rights are: first - to finish [and adopt] the Regulatory Act, second - to establish the Commission, third - to make this entire mechanism work (S., 23, Kyiv obl.).

First of all, this is the Commission, there should be at least three of them: in Kyiv, in Lviv, in Dnipropetrovsk. The Commission should include at least one transsexual person (N., 24, Kyiv obl.).

4. For changes to the Ministry of Health Regulatory Act “On provision of medical assistance to persons in need for sex reassignments (correction)

There will be time when my documents will not correspond with my appearance, absolutely. It is like the person exists, but not really. It would probably make sense if they issued [new] documents earlier. As soon as the person starts their HRT, after several months … one would receive new documents. Not after the surgery but before (S., 30, Crimea).

5. For social recognition

The only thing I want is to be perceived as Viktor, not as Katya, Masha, or Sveta. I build relationships as a man (V., 23, Kyiv obl.)

Now it is sufficient [for me] to dress up and walk around in women’s clothes, but most of all I want to be perceived as a woman. And of course, to find a life partner among men. To find a man. Because since I am a woman I have a natural sexual desire for men. I want to get united in civil marriage, create a family with him so that we could be a husband and a wife with him, that he would see me as a woman. This is my most cherished wish (S., 45, Kyiv obl.).

2.5.4. Protecting the rights of transgender persons

Because of the high level of stigmatization of transgender persons, closed nature of the group and almost total lack of information on these issues in the society the rights of transgender people in Ukraine are often violated. Unlike other discriminated groups transgender persons are not active as a group and do not attempt to change the situation. They also do not have defenders among their relatives (like, for instance, mental health patients do, whose rights are defended by their relatives) or sympathizers.

The low level of social activity of transgender people, their reluctance to actively appear in the media, take part in actions, stand up for their rights can be explained by the intolerant attitude of the society toward this group and their desire to forget their negative sex reassignment experience as soon as possible.

I do not want to remind others every time that I am a transsexual. Even this word does not evoke a flow of positive emotions (Y., 36, Donetsk obl.).

Another reason for the low level of social activity of transgender persons is the fear that becoming visible they will become objects of aggression that they already quite often face even more: “I don’t want to then face violence, don’t want them to meet me later in dark alleys.” Particularly this is true for those who live in small towns where stigma is stronger, people in the town know each other and gossips spread quickly.

I am OK with everything that is not about my home town. Anywhere else I can introduce myself the way I want to. And I can do whatever I want. I only do not want my parents to learn about

18 Name of the respondent is changed.
this and then the parents of my girlfriend (S., 34, Donetsk obl.).

The first step in raising awareness about transgender issues in the society should become an increase in the activity of transgender people themselves to protect their rights and interests. As one of the respondents noted, they should be taken out of the closet.

They simply should get out of their flats. Even to start these examinations, medicine and all that. The main thing is not to lose people, you see? Because some people know that it exists. Others, like me, for instance, did not know anything before 18. It results in suicides and all the rest. I think there should be more information so that they would know they are not the only ones in Ukraine. In fact, there are a lot of us. And then, I think, the more of us will be there the more will come out. The medicine will be more loyal to us, and at work it will be easier, and so on. Since in Odessa there are 2-3 people who are open, the discrimination will certainly be there, you know. Take, for instance, lesbians in Kyiv - nobody pays attention to them anymore (S., 24, Odessa obl.).

In other words, to solve the problems of transgender people in Ukraine, first of all, there is a need to increase awareness among the transgender persons themselves. These are the civil society organizations and professional communities (of medical workers, in the first place) that should take the leading role in accomplishing this task and start dealing with transgender issues.

In this regard, the transgender-related activities of Insight non-governmental organization should be mentioned. Insight published a brochure describing key terms related to transgender issues, its members cooperated with the media in preparing a number of articles and video programs about transgender persons. Besides, Insight is supporting a website (http://insight-ukraine.org.ua/) where one can find materials on transgender issues, including contacts and addresses of medical facilities and specialists that work with transgender persons.
CONCLUSIONS

Overall, transgender persons may first experience the incompatibility of their biological sex and gender identity at different age: some go through this at 3-5 years, others at puberty (11-13 years), and yet others at 18-25.

At puberty, the gender identity issues are on the agenda again. While at pre-school age transgender kids contented themselves with cross-dressing and role game, at teenage age their sexual identity is formed and their sexual orientation is in focus.

Expressing themselves in a way different from what the society expects from them, transgender persons often face lack of understanding, rejection, and even aggression from their family members, peers, teachers, and intimate partners. The desire to live up to the expectations of others makes the transgender persons attempt to fit into the gender stereotypes, but their internal resistance to it does not let them reach harmony. Therefore, transgender persons often suffer from low self-esteem, negative self-concept, uncertainly about their gender belonging, up to total self-rejection.

The formation of transgender persons’ gender identity is often hampered as they are before the unsolvable dilemma: they cannot be the way the society wants to see them, no matter how hard they try. On the other hand, the society does not accept them the way they are.

The growing dissonance leads to depressions, suicidal attempts, increasing number of psychotic symptoms on the one hand, and on the other - to the growing awareness on the need to make a radical decision of sex reassignment.

Decision about sex reassignment can be hampered by the relatives and social environment and is often accompanied by the lack of information on the procedures and services for transgender people, unqualified work of medical centers and hospitals, and legal challenges.

The major problem of transgender people in Ukraine is the lack of institutions where they can turn for help and support - there are no medical, social, and legal facilities; civil society organizations protecting the rights of transgender persons are very few.

One of the most negative consequences of the lack of sufficient information and adequate medical consultation is the fact that transgender persons independently self-prescribe and take hormones.

Stigma and discrimination of transgender persons are present in all spheres of their lives; its agents are family members, friends, colleagues, employers, medical workers, state officials, and simply strangers; they start from the early childhood and stay with transgender persons for their entire lives.
RECOMMENDATIONS

**To the state**
- To ensure the development, introduction and monitoring of implementation of legal acts that would prohibit discrimination on the ground of gender identity.
- To ensure training on transgender issues for health care system employees.
- To organize a system of regional medical centers dealing with transgender people.
- To include the issues of gender, including transgender aspects, in the curricula of respective university specializations (medical workers, psychologists, lawyers).

**To the ministry of health of Ukraine**
- To develop and introduce training programs for medical workers dealing with transgender people (endocrinologists, gynecologists, urologists, and also specialists in the fields of sexology, psychology and psychiatry).
- To adopt the new Regulatory Act of the Ministry of Health of Ukraine including recommendations of the experts, i.e.: to allow change of the documents without the prerequisite surgical body correction, to decrease the minimal age for sex reassignment to 18, and also to exclude from the list of indications and contraindications a number of discriminatory provisions.
- To expand the geography of the Sex Reassignment (Correction) Commission’s work by establishing its branches in the regions.
- To include one transgender person into these Commissions.
- To secure transparency of the Commissions’ work, to develop cooperation between the Commissions and civil society organizations.

**To legal institutions**
- To allow change of the identification documents for transgender persons with the mandatory surgical body correction. (The change of documents is recommended after the diagnosis. The diagnosis ‘transsexualism’ should be the ground for official change of the documents, surgery and hormonal treatment should be left at the persons’ discretion.)
- To develop clear procedures for changing all of the major identification documents for transgender persons.
- To ensure constant monitoring of human rights violations on the ground of gender identity by law enforcement bodies.

**To civil society organizations**
- To carry out informational and advocacy work to protect the rights and combat discrimination against transgender people.
- To disseminate objective and adequate information on transgender issues both within the LGBT community and in the society in general.
- To implement constant monitoring of human rights violations of the ground of gender identity.
- To involve transgender persons in actions and programs targeted at combating stigma and discrimination against transgender people.
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Insight NGO is a Ukrainian non-governmental organization founded in June 2007 and officially registered on May 26, 2008.

**Mission**
To improve the quality of life of homosexual, bisexual, transgender and queer (LGBTQ) people in Ukraine by empowering them, providing with services and implementing other informational, social, psychological, medical, cultural, legal and human rights activities.

**Vision**
The society where people are equal regardless of their sexual orientation, gender identity, racial or ethnic belonging, age, sex, gender or any other characteristics and where diversity is a common social value.

**Strategic program areas:**
1. Organizational capacity building;
2. Health;
3. Information and education;
4. Lobby and advocacy.

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