



Monitoring of hate speech in relation to LGBTQ+ in the Belarusian media in 2025

Results for January-October 2025

‘Journalists for Tolerance’ Human Rights Initiative

2025

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Introduction

The 'Journalists for Tolerance' (further – J4t) research team regularly monitors hate speech against vulnerable groups in the Belarusian media, including annual monitoring of rhetoric in relation to LGBTQ+. In 2025, the J4t researchers team monitored rhetorical fallacies and hate speech in relation to LGBTQ+ within the 10-months' period from the beginning of January till the end of October.

The purpose of the monitoring study is to provide a systematic review of the use of incorrect vocabulary and manifestations of hate speech in the Belarusian media in relation to the LGBTQ+ community as one of vulnerable groups. Special attention was paid to the expressions that stigmatize the LGBTQ+ people.

What is hate speech?

We understand the notion of 'hate speech' as a special way of linguistic construction of models and practices of social inequality¹ and we take it as an axiom that incorrect rhetorical strategies can strengthen (and, at the extreme, generate) discriminatory practices. We believe the opposite is also true: correct rhetoric can facilitate building relationships between representatives of different social groups based on the principles of equality and mutual respect.

In accordance with the methodological recommendations of human rights organizations in Belarus² the research team distinguished between 'hate speech' and 'incorrect vocabulary' within the framework of this monitoring study.

By 'incorrect vocabulary' we mean stereotypical expressions regarding vulnerable groups of population that do not pose a threat to security, do not contain calls for violence and do not dehumanize people from vulnerable groups. The non-critical use of stereotypes by journalists can create fertile ground for the manifestations of more dangerous forms of 'hate speech'. However, there should be no legal responsibility for such expressions.

By 'hate speech' we mean statements that pose a threat to public safety, incite hatred and dehumanize certain groups of people. We divide conditionally hate speech manifestations into three groups, which differ in the threshold of seriousness in the expression of hate:

- direct calls to incite hatred, incitement to genocide, discrimination and violence,
- threats or insults motivated by a discriminatory attitude,
- statements containing discriminatory and stigmatizing attitudes.

Thus, certain publications included in the monitoring study may be encoded as containing incorrect vocabulary or as containing hate speech. We believe that even certain signs of incorrect rhetoric, being widespread, acceptable and accepted by default, can support existing discriminatory practices. Therefore, we strive to register and pay attention to any manifestations of incorrect rhetoric, regardless of their severity.

¹ Индекс (ин)толерантности прессы. Э. Понарин, Д. Дубровский, А. Толкачева, Р. Акифьева // Язык вражды против общества/ Сост. А.Верховенский. - Москва: Центр «Сова», 2007.

² [Hate Speech. Methodical Recommendations of Human Rights Organizations in Belarus.](#)

If the research team classifies a publication in the framework of the monitoring study as containing hate speech, it means that the particular journalistic material contradicts the corporate standards of the Belarusian media sphere and requires a response from the journalistic community.

What mass media are monitored?

The monitoring study focuses on the texts circulating in the Belarusian media space. The list of media outlets is formed in accordance with the following criteria:

1. The media has a website or a Telegram channel.
2. The media appeals to a wide audience (i.e., the 'Glavnyi Bukhgalter' (Chief Accountant) magazine and the like were removed from the list; publications for men and women as target audiences were kept on the list, a newspaper for teenagers was also kept on the list as directed towards the audience, which is sensitive to the topic of sexuality and gender identity).
3. The media publishes materials on socio-political topics (i.e., a newspaper of advertisements or jokes could not be included in the list).

In 2019, we identified over 200 media outlets that met these criteria and divided them into 4 clusters depending on the scale (national and local) and the average monthly number of publications (up to 300 publications, 300 and more publications a month).

The Belarusian media field has changed dramatically since August 2020. Lukashenka's regime closed the largest Web-portal tut.by, labeled it as well as other independent media as 'extremist' and blocked / criminalized their operation in Belarus. More than half of the media outlets, which were included in our monitoring study, are currently blocked, and they are only accessible on social media/messengers or via VPN. However, the list of media outlets compiled in 2019 remained the basis for the selection of the sample.

In 2024, there appeared a need to revise the list of Belarusian media outlets from which the sample is formed, to bring it to a more accurate representation of the current media field in Belarus. The J4t research team conducted a new 'census' of Belarusian media and compiled a new list of media from which the sample is formed for regular monitoring studies and eventual non-periodic J4t's research projects in the next 5 years (2024-2028).

First of all, new media that emerged in the forced exile were added to the list, and the list of Telegram channels that can be included in the monitoring sample was expanded. Secondly, all independent media are currently divided into those that have been labeled as 'extremist' in the Republic of Belarus and those that have not been labeled as 'extremist' there. This criterion is also taken into consideration, while the sample is formed nowadays.

The mass media sample 2025 by 85% coincides with the previous year's sample.

The questions answered by the monitoring study and the addresses of its outcome

The following issues have been analyzed in detail within the monitoring study:

1. Which categories of media are more likely to use incorrect rhetoric against LGBTQ+ (and, consequently, which media authors should be the main target group of educational and awareness-raising events)?
2. Which incorrect rhetorical strategies are the most common (and, therefore, what should be the content of educational seminars, manuals for journalists, etc.)?
3. How has the use of incorrect rhetoric against LGBTQ+ in the Belarusian media changed compared to previous years (and, consequently, how effective are educational events, educational seminars, manuals for journalists)?

The monitoring results are addressed to the journalistic community, human rights defenders, representatives of vulnerable groups (the LGBTQ+ community, in this particular case), as well as educational organizations and awareness-raising initiatives working with the issue of counteraction to hate speech.

Methodology and data collection

The study is based on a cluster stratified sample representing online media in Belarus. Both websites and Telegram channels are considered as online media.

In 2025, the following media outlets were included in the list of monitored Web-resources:

Websites	Telegram channels
http://www.sb.by/ SB. Belarus Today	https://t.me/pul_1 Pool Pervogo
https://sputnik.by/ Sputnik Belarus	https://t.me/sewerfsefsd ZhS Premium
http://www.vecherniy-mogilev.by/ Vecherniy Mogilev (Mahilou)	https://t.me/gajdukevichh Gajdukevich Oleg
http://www.ostrovets.by/ Astravetskaya Prauda (Astravets)	https://t.me/s/brest_basar Brestskiy Basar
www.onliner.by Onliner	https://t.me/nic_and_mike Nic and Mike
https://www.zerkalo.io/ Zerkalo	https://t.me/s/novosti_belorusskie Belarus in shock!
https://mostmedia.io/ MOST	https://t.me/s/gorodmozyr MOZYR
https://hrodna.life/ Hrodna.life	https://t.me/s/flagshtok Flagshtok
http://belta.by/ Belarus News (BeITA)	https://t.me/belarusian_silovik Belarusian silovik
http://www.aif.by/ Arguments and facts in Byelorussia	https://t.me/AzarenokCTV Azarenok. CTV. Belarus
https://sozh.info/ Our Homiel (Homiel)	https://t.me/s/thisminsk This is Minsk, Baby
http://www.budni.by/ Rayonnya Budni (Pruzhan district)	https://t.me/s/grodnosliv Hrodna slivy – Hrodna News
https://www.belarus.kp.ru/ Komsomolskaya Pravda in Byelorussia	https://t.me/nexta_live NEXTA Live
http://www.nn.by/ Nasha Niva	https://t.me/belteanews

https://media-polesye.com Media-Palessie (Luninets)	Tea with raspberry jam
https://gomel.media Strong News (Homiel)	https://t.me/GlavnyNewsBelarus Glavnya [Main] News Belarus
https://tochka.by/ Tochka	https://t.me/s/molodechno About Molodechno
https://palatno.media/ Palatno	https://t.me/gomel_region_gov Gomel Region Officially
	https://t.me/vitebsk Vitebsk. The Main News!

A keyword search was conducted in the materials published in these media from the beginning of January till the end of October 2025. After the initial selection of all publications on the LGBTQ+ issue, all relevant materials were analyzed for the presence of incorrect vocabulary. Each publication containing incorrect vocabulary was additionally analyzed for the presence of hate speech manifestations.

Due to the presence of archived monitoring findings of the media coverage of LGBTQ+ issues in previous years³, the J4t research team was able to compare the situation in 2025 with the data from 2019-2024.

The consolidated database of all publications selected for the media monitoring study is attached to this report — see the file ‘Appendix. Hate Speech Monitoring 2025.xlsx’.

³ See the section "Our research" on the website of the "Journalists for Tolerance" human rights initiative: <https://j4t.info/research>

Coverage of LGBTQ+ issues in Belarusian Mass Media

In January–October 2025, 20 out of 32 Belarusian online media selected for monitoring published at least one material on the topic of LGBTQ+. The number of media outlets is by 25 percentage points less compared to 2024.

In total, 997 materials published during the specified period were monitored. It is 20 percentage points more than a year before.

Thus, fewer media outlets were covering LGBTQ issues, but those that continued to do so were doing it more intensively. In general, it was observed that local media started writing less on the topic, which may indicate a change in their role in the media space.

- It is important to keep in mind that only 36% of the monitored publications were completely devoted to LGBTQ+ people or LGBTQ+ issues, whereas in the overwhelming majority of materials this topic was touched upon only in one or two sentences or in a paragraph.
- In January-October 2025, the media with national coverage published 12 times more materials on LGBTQ+-related topics than local media. In 2024, the gap was nearly twice as less, which indicates that the LGBTQ+ issue is going out of focus of regional media.
- In 2025, the share of correct materials exceeded the share of incorrect publications: 52% of publications contained incorrect vocabulary regarding LGBTQ+, while 48% of publications contained correct vocabulary. Our monitoring study showed a steady decline in the share of correct materials already in 2020-2021. However, then their share still exceeded the share of incorrect publications. In 2022, it was registered by the J4t research team for the first time after 2018 that the share of incorrect publications exceeded the share of correct materials in the monitored Belarusian mass media. The results of the monitoring studies in 2023-2024 showed that the trend of the recent years was not established completely by then. The situation aggravated in 2025.
- Nine out of every ten publications that contain incorrect vocabulary *also contain hate speech manifestations* in the form of stigmatizing or discriminating expressions. If previously the presence of incorrect vocabulary in publications was not necessarily associated with incitement to hatred, the connection became extremely strong in 2025.
- Moreover, 7% of publications with formally correct vocabulary nevertheless contained hate speech manifestations in 2025. For the first time, we observed such a situation during the monitoring study in 2022. It remained the same in the year of 2023. And it was twice as frequently observed in 2024 in comparison to the previous year. In 2025, the situation returned to the level of 2023.
- A bit more than a half of monitored publications (51%) on the LGBTQ+ issues in the Belarusian media contained hate speech manifestations in 2025. It is slightly more than in 2022-2024, when hate speech indicators were observed in 44-48% of publications. And this is considerably more than in 2021, when hate speech manifestations were observed in 24% of monitored materials. It seems that hate speech in relation to LGBTQ+ in the Belarusian media has reached its maximum, as the Belarusian regime in power seriously promoted the issue of struggle against “LGBT propaganda” on all fronts in 2023-2025.

Although, the alternative representation of the LGBTQ+ community in the independent media is present as before, hate speech in relation to the queer community in the Belarusian media space prevails.

Since the second half year of 2020, the J4t research team has noticed that the predominance of correct vocabulary over incorrect in the Belarusian media became less stable and continued to weaken in 2021, until the picture changed completely to the negative in 2022.

In relatively recent waves of monitoring studies (before the political crisis in 2020), it was observed that the nation-wide media used correct vocabulary in relation to LGBTQ+ more and more frequently, while in local media the use of incorrect vocabulary remained unchanged.

In 2022, the difference between nation-wide and local media was not noticed, and the share of incorrect publications in both kinds of media remained the same. In 2023, it was observed that local media largely used incorrect rhetoric, including hate speech, in relation to LGBTQ+, while in the national media the negative trend was reversed to some extent, and the situation remained the same in 2024.

However, the situation changed in 2025. The presence of incorrect rhetoric in local media decreased due to the generally lower attention to the topic, as mentioned above, while on the contrary in the national media it increased, due to the continued use of this topic in political struggles.

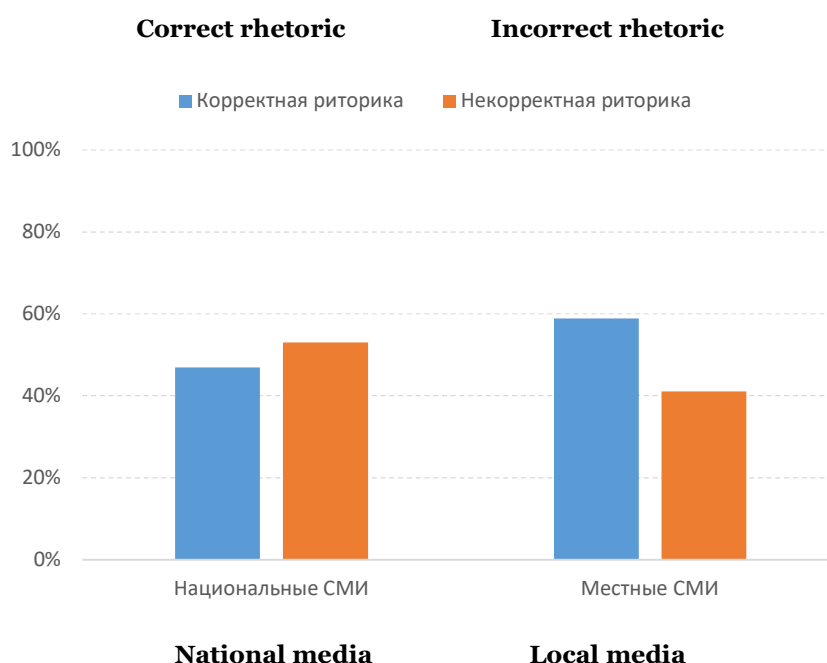


Chart 1. *Breakdown of correct and incorrect LGBTQ+ publications depending on the media coverage*

In 2022, the J4t research team registered the drastic reduction of the share of correct vocabulary in the publications about LGBTQ+ people and other LGBTQ issues.

If earlier the publications that were entirely dedicated to LGBTQ+ people or LGBTQ+ topics contained correct vocabulary in almost 90% of cases, in 2022, this share

significantly dropped. In 2023-2024, the situation remained unchanged. The J4t research team noticed that the publications that deeply cover the issue and contain incorrect vocabulary and hate speech manifestations appeared regularly in the monitored Belarusian media during the period under review.

This phenomenon became an obvious regression even compared to the situation in 2021.

In 2025, it can be confidently stated that the split between correct and incorrect representation of LGBT issues in the media was established and that it didn't depend on the publication format at all.

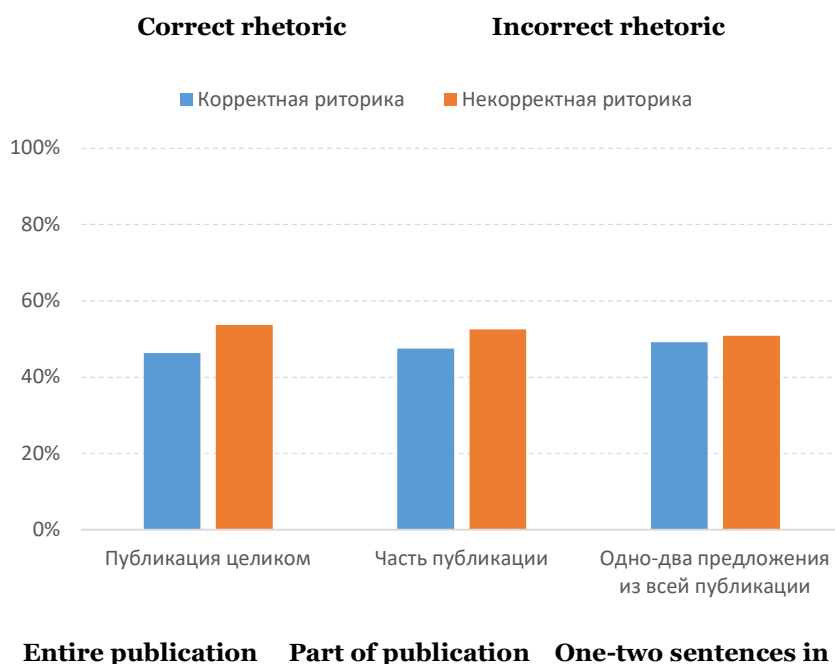


Chart 2. Breakdown of correct and incorrect publications on the topic of LGBTQ+, depending on the share devoted to the issue

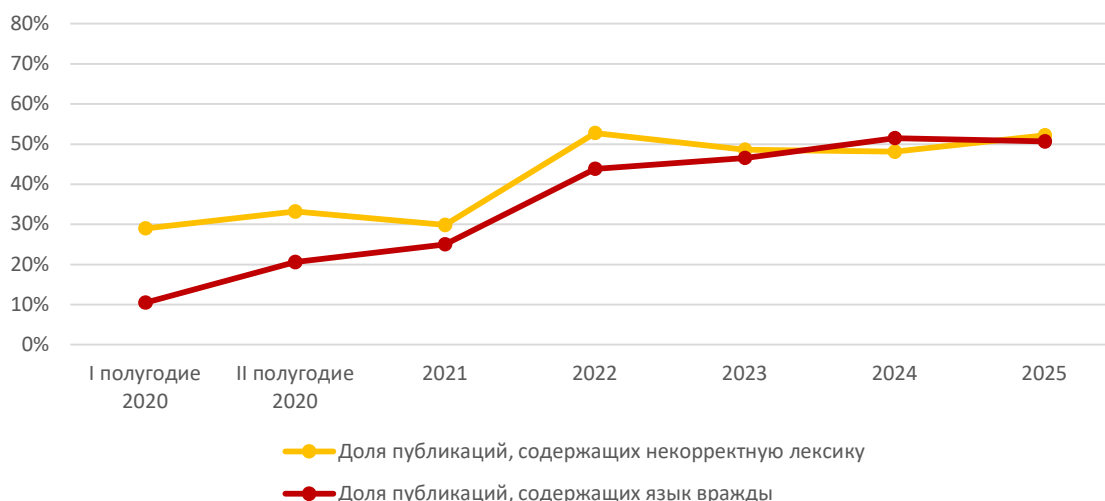
The decrease in the number of publications on LGBTQ+, recorded by the J4t research team since the beginning of March 2020, was steadily accompanied by a simultaneous increase in the share of publications containing hate speech. Moreover, with an increase in the share of publications with incorrect vocabulary of more than 50%, the share of publications containing hate speech manifestations also increased dramatically — almost twice when compared to the monitoring outcome in 2021.

In 2023, the J4t research team observed almost complete coincidence of the use of incorrect rhetoric and manifestations of hate speech and the unprecedented level of incitement to hatred in the state media. At the same time, the use of hate speech against LGBTQ+ people didn't increase significantly in general in comparison with 2022, since parallelly there was observed the larger number of publications with correct rhetoric on the issue in the independent media.

In 2024, the picture was similar to the previous year. However, it was observed for the first time in the entire history of these monitoring studies that the share of hate speech exceeded the share of incorrect expressions (since, as mentioned above, the number and

share of publications in which hatred was incited with the use of correct vocabulary increased significantly).

In 2025, there was observed the continued negative trend from the previous years.



1st half 2020 2nd half of 2020 Jan-Oct 2021 Jan-Oct 2022 Jan-Oct 2023 Jan-Oct 2024 Jan-Oct 2025

Share of publications containing incorrect vocabulary

Share of publications containing hate speech

Chart 3. *Dynamics of the share of publications containing incorrect vocabulary and hate speech in 2020-2025.*

The situation with representation of LGBTQ-community in the Belarusian mass media continues to aggravate. It was only every 25th publication on this issue that reproduced and supported the stigmatizing or discriminating attitudes towards LGBT people before the COVID-19 pandemic. After the beginning of the first wave of COVID-19, every seventh publication on the topic contained manifestations of hate speech. It was every fifth publication after the beginning of the political crisis, every fourth – in 2021, and practically every second publication in 2022-2025 that contained hate speech in relation to LGBTQ+ people at that.

Hate speech in the so-called ‘extremist’ and ‘non-extremist’ mass media

The mass media that have been labeled by the regime in power in Belarus as “extremist” cover the LGBTQ+ issues in the utterly correct way. On the contrary, the “non-extremist” media are inclined to inciting hatred.

The J4t research team managed to collect the sufficient amount of publications in 2024 and 2025, which was enough to compare the coverage of LGBTQ+ issues by the so-called “extremist” and other mass media in Belarus.

The 2025 media monitoring outcome shows that 91% of publications about LGBT-people in the so-called “extremist” mass media were correct and that only 9% of such publications contained incorrect vocabulary and 3% of publications contained hate speech there.

At the same time, “non-extremist” media, predominantly adhering to the official position of the regime in power, covered correctly the LGBTQ+ issues in 22% of publications and incorrectly in 78% of publications. As far as the manifestations of hate speech is concerned, they can be observed in 80% of publications, i.e. out of every 10 materials on the LGBT+ issue in pro-governmental media, there can be found 8 publications that incite hatred towards LGBT people.

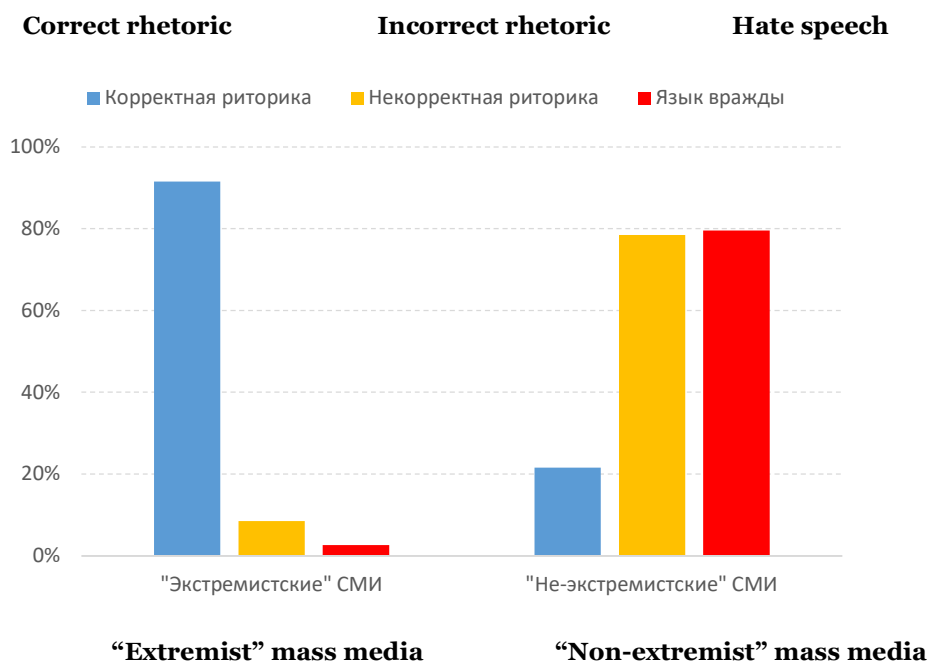


Chart 4. Distribution of correct and incorrect publications on the LGBTQ+ issues, as well as the presence of hate speech in relation to the LGBTQ+ people, depending on the status of the media

Chart 4 looks completely Orwellian. Additional analysis shows that in addition to differences in media status, the LGBTQ+ topic is handled differently on the web and in Telegram. Thus, hate speech is contained in as many as 28% of publications on the topic on websites and 75% of publications in Telegram channels.

LGBTQ+ groups visibility

The J4t research team interprets the difference in frequency of mentioning keywords as manifestation of different levels of visibility of groups within LGBTQ+. The monitoring data till 2020 indicated the consolidation and use of *LGBT* and *gays* as synonyms of two key categories, often representing LGBTQ+ as a whole. However, since 2021 till the

present moment of time, it has been possible to observe the predominance of the LGBT category over the rest. The outcome of media monitoring 2025 proved that, too.

Moreover, the TOP 5 categories included 'transgender', 'same-sex relationships/marriages', and 'non-traditional values' in 2025.

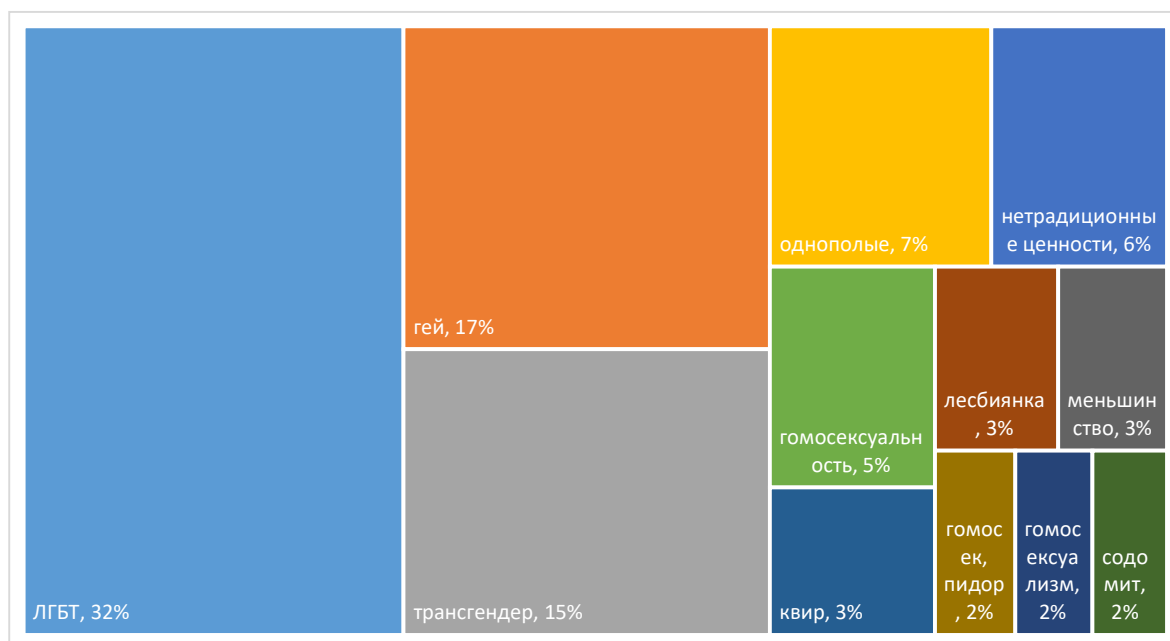


Chart 5. Keywords mentioning⁴ in the LGBTQ+ related publications

LGBT – 32%

Gay – 17%

Transgender – 15%

Same-sex – 7%

Non-traditional values – 6%

Homosexuality – 5%

Lesbian – 3%

Queer – 3%

Minority – 3%

Homosexualism – 2%

Homo – 2%

Sodomite – 2%

The use of incorrect expressions “non-traditional orientation”, “sexual minority” and “homosexualism” occurred in 11% of cases in 2025 just like a year before. These categories

⁴ This chart shows the ratio of individual keywords mentioning in individual publications that touch on LGBTQ+ issues. Information about the absolute values for this indicator can be found in the database consolidation, attached to this report – see file ‘Appendix. Hate Speech Monitoring 2025.xlsx’

of keywords were actively used by the journalists from state-owned media, who indulged in criticizing the lifestyle in the Western countries. These concepts have begun to be replaced by the increasingly popular category of 'LGBT propaganda' in the recent years. Just like in the previous year, the J4t research team observed the use of such notions as 'rainbow', 'sodomite' and 'tranny' to describe LGBTQ+ people in 2025. Absolutely abusive expressions were still found, too.

Summary

- In 2025, the share of incorrect materials slightly exceeded the share of correct publications: 48% of publications contained incorrect vocabulary regarding LGBTQ+, while 52% of publications contained incorrect vocabulary.
- Just like in 2022-2024, practically every second publication on the LGBTQ+ issue contained manifestations of hate speech in 2025.
- Just like in 2022-2024, the J4t research team observed the situation, when correct vocabulary was used in some Belarusian mass media to incite hatred towards LGBTQ+ people in 2025. As for the use of incorrect vocabulary, it was registered again that it was accompanied by manifestations of hate speech in the overwhelming majority of cases.
- The mass media that have been labeled by the regime in power in Belarus as 'extremist' cover the LGBTQ+ issues in the utterly correct way in 2025. On the contrary, the 'non-extremist' media are inclined to inciting hatred.

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