

# SUMMARY REPORT

The state of knowledge about LGBTQI migrants living in Canada



## MAIN RESEARCH QUESTION

What is the state of knowledge about lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, queer and intersex (LGBTQI) migrants living in Canada? What does this knowledge say about Canada's role within the global LGBTQI rights agenda?

## MAIN OBJECTIVES

Critically assess the state of knowledge about LGBTQI migrants living in Canada and globally

Examine the extent, range and nature of qualitative literature

Map out key themes and tensions

Contrast and compare policy and practice implications

Identify knowledge strengths and gaps, key areas for future research

Assess links between literature about (1) LGBTQI people living in the Global South and (2) LGBTQI migrants living in Canada and Global North

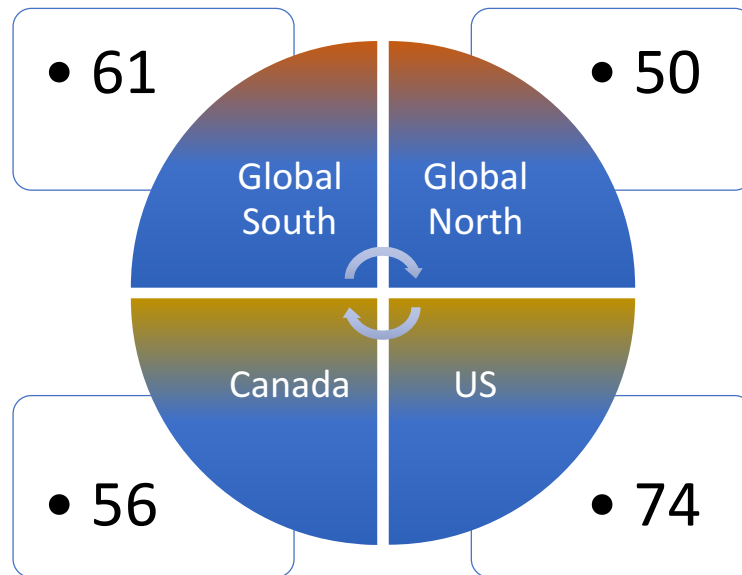
### The limits of English language terms

*We recognize the terms "LGBTQI" are limited. Other terms used in English include: **Sexual and Gender Minority (SGM)**, **Sexually and Gender Non-Conforming (SGN)** (ORAM, 2013d) or **Non-Normative Sexualities and Genders (NNSG)** (CTDC, 2017). We recommend thoughtful engagement with any term, depending on the particular site and context in which the term is being used.*

## RESULTS

**TOTAL PUBLICATIONS: 241**

**Publications separated into 4 sections**



### LGBTQI people living in the Global South

- LGBTQI people in the Global South encounter family, community and state-sanctioned homophobic and transphobic violence
- Each country's economic (poverty, etc.) and political climate (i.e. civil unrest, organized violence (militia), generalized violence (gangs), gendered violence (sexual assault, etc.) and religious extremism) shapes how LGBTQI people are exposed to homophobic and transphobic violence
- **CHALLENGES:** Securing employment, stable housing, equitable access to education, health and social services
- In countries with human rights protections that include sexual orientation and/or gender identity, LGBTQI people still vulnerable to violence (authorities not responding adequately or at all)
- **MYTH:** All gay and lesbian citizens are affluent
- The multiple identities that shape the lives of LGBTQI people were always situated within geopolitical and regional contexts that are shaped by global neo-liberal policies, colonial legacies, nationalisms, civil war, armed conflict, police violence, state corruption, religious extremism, etc
- Underrepresentation in literature on experiences of cis women, trans and intersex realities

## LGBTQI migrants living in Canada

- Majority of Canadian literature focused on LGBTQI refugees and how the refugee claimant process assess SOGIE-based claims
- **2007 to 2010:** majority of publications about LGBTQI refugees from legal scholars to assess the degree to which Canadian refugee law (sometimes in comparison to other Global North countries) accounted for sexual orientation based refugee claims
- **2011 onwards:** shift with scholarship focusing more on the social, political and economic dimensions of the refugee process
- **Since 2014:** wider variety of disciplines producing knowledge about LGBTQI refugees and a shift in focus from refugee to precarious status and/or newcomer / immigrant categories and focus on multiple community belonging (i.e. migrant, LGBTQI, etc.) and structural barriers (i.e. employment, housing, education, health / social services, political life, etc.)
- Living with either temporary and/or undocumented status often results in increased stress and are based on laws and policies that restrict ability to have political voice, access essential services and maintain employment
- **Trans migrants:** A small number of publications focus on trans migrants, those who engage in sex work face particular forms of structural violence from police and immigration authorities
- Quebec is only province where trans migrants are unable to change their gender marker and name until becoming a citizen

## LGBTQI migrants living in the US

- Refugee status not explicitly reported with the category of 'immigrant', although refugees and undocumented people were included in the participant sample
- **HIV-related research:** Life conditions of being a LGBTQI migrant within the notion of well-being (i.e. physical, mental health, etc.), especially with respect to HIV risk and prevention for MSM Latinos and to a smaller degree trans Latina migrants
- Trans Latina migrants experience structural barriers, but also have strong support networks comprised of family and friends
- Chosen families, especially peer support groups, broke social isolation and fostered belonging
- Multiple identity-based discriminations block access to housing and health and social services, along with fear of being profiled and detained by immigration officials
- LGBTQI undocumented people are at forefront of migrant justice organizing in the US (i.e. developing intersectional initiatives such as the 'undocuqueer' slogan)

## LGBTQI migrants living elsewhere in the Global North

- **Areas of focus:** (1) decision making process of refugee claims due to a person's membership to a 'particular social group', based on (SOGIE) and (2) multiple discrimination experienced by asylum seekers and refugees currently living in Global North countries
- LGBTQI refugees often report difficulties in maintaining relationships with families and community due to fear of rejection, many navigate difficult mental health impacts of pre-migration trauma and post-migration barriers
- Positive experiences were also reported by those who access support groups and specialized services
- UK studies suggest that refugee detention centres have a detrimental impact on the mental health of LGBTQI refugees, increases exposure to homophobic and transphobic violence

### Key research methodologies

- **Qualitative research:** semi-structured interviews, focus groups, mixed methods with directly affected people and/or service providers and publicly accessible case decisions
- Studies with migrant interviews tend to be smaller samples who were accessed through existing connections with LGBTQI refugee serving organizations, may not reflect the experiences of those who are not connected to these organizations
- **Innovative methodologies:** Intervention research, community-based and/or participatory research methodologies, such as Photovoice

### Key theoretical frameworks

- **Disciplines:** Sociology, public health, psychology, social work, etc
- **Theories:** Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory, minority stress model, multicultural feminist framework, social determinants of health, critical theories (feminist, sexuality, indigenous, migration, refugee, ethnic studies)
- **Key theory in Canada and US :** Intersectionality



## Knowledge strengths and gaps

Canadian knowledge produced about LGBTQI refugees over the past decade along with community driven advocacy has resulted in policy and practice change, especially regarding the refugee determination system and the recent implementation of SOGIE-based guidelines

- **Knowledge strengths:** Use of community-based and participatory research methodologies as well as intersectionality theory
- **Policy impact:** The Canadian *Immigration and Refugee Board* (IRB) has implemented SOGIE-based guidelines for decision makers to apply, with an intersectional analysis
- **Knowledge gap - Canada:** Lack of knowledge produced about the realities of LGBTQI immigrants and migrants with precarious status
- **Knowledge gap - International:** Discrepancy between how LGBTQI realities in the Global South are articulated within Canadian-specific literature and the complex conditions that are presented in most of the Global South scholarship

## Research, Policy and Practice Implications

### Research Recommendations

- Continue to engage in community-based and/or participatory research, especially longer-term (3+ years) projects (cultivate community capacity with directly affected community members)
- Better understand shifting realities and needs of LGBTQI refugees with a focus on cis women, trans and intersex people
- Focus on non-refugee experiences (i.e. migrants with precarious status, permanent residents, etc)
- Focus on LGBTQI migrants who are outside of the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) and/or develop projects with multiple sites that include large and small cities where LGBTQI migrants reside
- Develop research projects on an international scale (i.e. experiences of LGBTQI migrants in Canada, US and UK) and include non-English languages
- Draw from the US research related to HIV research, in particular its participatory and intervention research with Latino/a communities.
- Address the issue of migrant / ethnic / racial categorization to address overlap between migrant experiences and the realities of racialized communities and racialized people who have been living in Canada for one or many generations

## National Policy

**Gaps:** Distribution of public funding and resources across geographic regions in Canada, inconsistencies between Canadian and provincial policies and practices, lack of public funding to increase programs, services and training in this area

**POLICY GAP EXAMPLE :** Trans migrants are able to change their gender marker and name on legal documents at the federal level as permanent residents and in every province except for Quebec, where only citizens can make these changes

## Key Recommendation

- Closer collaboration between national and provincial policy-makers to address inconsistent and inequitable policies

## International Policy Implications

- It is essential for Canadian policy makers, especially those involved in developing Canada's international role in LGBTQI human rights, to take into consideration the complexities presented in the literature about LGBTQI realities in the Global South
- Even in countries that have human rights protections for LGBTQI people, there continues to be a gap between improved legislation and the actual level of safety experienced by LGBTQI people

## Practice Recommendations

- Increased collaboration between settlement, health, youth and LGBTQI specific services
- Service provider training across sectors to promote increased awareness of the multiple barriers faced by LGBTQI migrants
- Institute anti-racism / anti-homophobia / anti-transphobia training for all staff members within organizations and institutions in order to reduce heterosexist and cissexist service delivery
- Develop specialized services and programs for LGBTQI migrants
- Fund additional arts-based programs and sexual health education for LGBTQI migrants
- Adapt mental health services in order to apply a trauma-informed approach and recognize the role of childhood trauma in how LGBTQI migrants navigate their realities post-migration
- Foster trauma-informed and anti-oppressive practice that attends to intersectional realities
- Develop strategies on how to interact with hostile police and immigration authorities

# Acknowledgements

## Research Team



### Principal Investigator

Edward Ou Jin Lee, Assistant Professor, School of Social Work, Université de Montréal

### Co-researchers

Dr. Trish Hafford-Letchfield, Professor of Social Care, Middlesex University, UK

Dr. Annie Pullen Sansfaçon, Associate Professor, Université de Montréal

### Research coordinator

Olivia Kamgain, doctoral student, University of Ottawa



### Research assistant

Helen Gleeson, PhD, Middlesex University, UK

### Undergraduate research assistant

François Luu, undergraduate student, school of social work, Université de Montréal

## WEBSITE / GRAPHIC DESIGN

The website with findings from this report will be online starting in December 2017 at: <http://migrants-lgbtqi.ca>. Created by Grégory Brossat and Shane Bill.

Shane Bill: [www.beesonabike.com](http://www.beesonabike.com) / [shane@beesonabike.com](mailto:shane@beesonabike.com)

Grégory Brossat : [www.gregorybrossat.com](http://www.gregorybrossat.com) / [gregorybrossat@gmail.com](mailto:gregorybrossat@gmail.com)

To cite: Lee, E.O., Hafford-Letchfield, T., Pullen Sansfaçon, A., Kamgain, O., Gleeson, H. (2017). *The state of knowledge about LGBTQI migrants living in Canada in relation to the global LGBTQI rights agenda*. Montréal: Université de Montréal.

This scoping review project was supported by a knowledge synthesis grant awarded to the research team by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC).



Social Sciences and Humanities  
Research Council of Canada

Conseil de recherches en  
sciences humaines du Canada

Canada