



# Violence and discrimination experienced by lesbian, bisexual, and queer (LBQ) women

*Submission to the Independent Expert on protection against violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity*

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**With the support of:**

LESLAC: Red de organizaciones de lesbianas y mujeres bisexuales de Latinoamérica y el Caribe

Women Enabled International

Equal Namibia

Fundación Leswarmi (mujeres lesbianas y bisexuales de comunidades indígenas)

Asociación Gitanas Feministas por la Diversidad

and Individual Human Rights Defenders from Nigeria

This document has been prepared by ILGA World as a response to the [call for inputs](#) published by the Independent Expert on protection against violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity. It focuses on the current challenges that LBQ<sup>1</sup> women face in relation to intersectional oppression, criminalization, forced invisibility, gender-based violence, institutional violence, economic insecurity and data collection gaps on LBQ women issues. ILGA world used desk research methodologies and

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<sup>1</sup>For the purposes of this submission, we use the term LBQ as a broad and inclusive descriptor encompassing lesbian, bisexual, and queer women, whether cisgender, transgender, or intersex, as well as non-binary and gender-diverse individuals who identify with, or are connected to, LBQ experiences and communities. We acknowledge that terminology continues to evolve and that no single label can fully reflect the diversity and complexity of people's identities and lived realities. We also recognise that different cultural and linguistic contexts shape how communities name and understand themselves, and that translations may not always capture these nuances. In this sense, the use of LBQ acronym in this report intends to create shared ground, linking experiences across gender and sexuality. This definition is in line with Outright International submission to this call. See also Outright International, "Global LBQ Program," <https://outrightinternational.org/global-lesbian-bisexual-and-queer-lbq-program>

gathered community driven data from its members' network<sup>2</sup>. The ILGA World database was also a prominent source for legal background and jurisprudence.

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### I. Intersecting Systems of Structural Oppression and Discrimination

Human rights Treaty Bodies and Special Procedures have consistently affirmed that international prohibitions of discrimination encompass sexual orientation, gender identity, and sex characteristics.<sup>3</sup> They have further clarified that the prohibition of discrimination on the basis of sex includes gender-based discrimination<sup>4</sup>. Central to this framework is the recognition that discrimination is often intersectional in nature. Women and gender-diverse persons do not experience inequality along a single axis; rather, SOGIESC<sup>5</sup>, race, class, migration status,

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<sup>2</sup>The geographical scope of this submission is Global with a particular focus on LAC, Europe and Africa, however we refer to other submissions made by the following organizations to the Independent Expert for more in-depth regional and national analysis: EL<sup>+</sup>C (Europe and Central Asia), LESLAC (Latin America), Asian LBQ Network (Asia), Outright International (Global South and East).

<sup>3</sup> CEDAW Committee, General Recommendation No. 19 on Violence against Women (1992); CEDAW Committee, General Recommendation No. 35 on Gender-Based Violence against Women, U.N. Doc. CEDAW/C/GC/35 (2017); CEDAW Committee, General Recommendation No. 28 on the Core Obligations of States Parties under Article 2 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, U.N. Doc. CEDAW/C/GC/28 (2010), para. 18; CEDAW Committee, General Recommendation No. 33 on Women’s Access to Justice, U.N. Doc. CEDAW/C/GC/33 (2015), para. 8; Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR Committee), General Comment No. 20: Non-Discrimination in Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, U.N. Doc. E/C.12/GC/20 (2009), para. 32; Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC Committee), General Comment No. 4: Adolescent Health and Development in the Context of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, U.N. Doc. CRC/GC/2003/4 (2003), para. 6; CRC Committee, General Comment No. 9: The Rights of Children with Disabilities, U.N. Doc. CRC/C/GC/9 (2007), para. 8; Committee against Torture (CAT Committee), General Comment No. 2: Implementation of Article 2 by States Parties, U.N. Doc. CAT/C/GC/2 (2008), para. 21; CAT Committee, General Comment No. 3: Implementation of Article 14 by States Parties, U.N. Doc. CAT/C/GC/3 (2012), paras. 32, 39.

<sup>4</sup> CEDAW Committee, General Recommendation No. 28 on the Core Obligations of States Parties under Article 2 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, U.N. Doc. CEDAW/C/GC/28 (2010), para. 5 (“Although the CEDAW Convention only refers to sex-based discrimination, interpreting article 1 together with articles 2(f) and 5(a) indicates that the Convention covers gender-based discrimination against women. ... The application of the Convention to gender-based discrimination is made clear by the definition of discrimination contained in article 1.”); CEDAW Committee, Gen. Rec. No. 19 (supra note 9) (“In 1992, the Committee ... used the phrase ‘gender-based violence’ in its general recommendation No. 19 on violence against women.”); UN Human Rights Council, Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Intersection of Race and Gender Discrimination in Sport, U.N. Doc. A/HRC/44/26 (2020), para. 54(b) (“National anti-discrimination law is adequate to address discrimination on the basis of gender, as well as compounded discrimination on the basis of gender and race or other prohibited grounds, including discrimination on the basis of particular intersex variations or on the basis of sex characteristics.”).

<sup>5</sup> Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity, Gender Expression and Sex Characteristics.

disability, age, and other characteristics intersect to produce compounded and distinct forms of marginalization.<sup>6</sup>

However, States frequently fail to adopt intersectional public policies or effective responses to discrimination, rendering invisible the identities and structural conditions that shape lived experiences of oppression. This is particularly evident among LBQ migrant women from racialized and economically marginalized communities, some of whom have endured sexual violence in silence to preserve their only source of income or out of fear of being reported due to their undocumented status.<sup>7</sup>

In Spain, legal frameworks address racism and LGBTIphobia as separate categories and refer to “multiple discrimination” in generic terms, without acknowledging the specific and compounded violence experienced by racialised LBQ persons. By failing to recognise the intersection between racism and lesbophobia, the State overlooks a critical dimension of structural inequality.<sup>8</sup>

Another example is rural LBQ women, for whom security implies an interrelationship between psychological, physical, food, human, and economic security, access to housing, and the fight against territorial contexts of exclusion. For instance, when it comes to rural LBQ women in Colombia they are often associated with criminality, promiscuity, and perversion, being considered deviant or abnormal women who must be corrected, reinforcing entrenched social prejudice and deepening their vulnerability.<sup>9</sup>

These intersectional dynamics are starkly illustrated in the lived experiences of LBQ women in Nigeria, where structural criminalization, entrenched gender norms, and pervasive social stigma converge to produce conditions of forced invisibility. These issues are further intensified for LBQ women facing compounded vulnerabilities, including those living in rural areas with limited support networks, young women residing in family environments characterized by control and monitoring, low-income women employed in sectors where harassment is normalized, women with disabilities, and gender-nonconforming or masculine-presenting women who are more readily profiled. The cumulative impact of these intersecting pressures creates environments of profound isolation and insecurity, reinforcing systemic exclusion and severely restricting LBQ women’s access to safety, autonomy, and fundamental rights.<sup>10</sup>

As with other LBQ women, LBQ women with disabilities are routinely compelled to conceal their sexual orientation. However, this concealment is further reinforced by fears of being

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<sup>6</sup> See Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), *General Recommendation No. 28 on the core obligations of States parties under article 2 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women*, CEDAW/C/GC/28 (2010), para. 18 (recognizing that discrimination against women is “inextricably linked with other factors that affect women, such as race, ethnicity, religion or belief, health, status, age, class, caste, sexual orientation and gender identity”); CEDAW, *General Recommendation No. 35 on gender-based violence against women*, CEDAW/C/GC/35 (2017), paras. 12 and 26 (acknowledging intersecting forms of discrimination); Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR), *General Comment No. 20 on non-discrimination in economic, social and cultural rights*, E/C.12/GC/20 (2009), para. 17 (recognizing multiple discrimination).

<sup>7</sup> Inputs provided by Leswarmi Foundation (lesbian and bisexual women from indigenous communities) together with La Grupa Trans; the Crisálida public library on gender and affective-sexual diversity run by the Bienvenides Foundation; the organization Familias Diversas (Diverse Families); and the Trabajando Community Center for lesbian and bisexual women

<sup>8</sup> See: [Observatorio de Lesbofobia Hacia Personas Racializadas en España](#) (Documento, Político, 2025), Asociación Gitanas Feministas por la Diversidad.

<sup>9</sup> Caribe Afirmativo, *Enterezas en Resistencia: Resonamos todas* (2024), available at: <https://enterezas.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/ENTEREZAS-EN-RESISTENCIA-2024-DIGITAL.pdf> p. 36

<sup>10</sup> Inputs received from individual human rights defenders in Nigeria. The most recent developments gathered by ILGA World’s Database in the country, indicate that in January 2025 the Federal Government of Nigeria revised its military regulations under the *Harmonised Armed Forces Terms and Conditions of Service (2025)* to explicitly prohibit homosexuality, cross-dressing, and affiliation with LGBTQIA2S+ groups, stating that military personnel “must not engage in homosexuality, lesbianism or bestiality” nor “belong to, or engage in activities of” LGBTQIA2S+ groups.

denied essential care, assistance, or disability-related support necessary for daily living. Gender-based violence laws, in practice, frequently fail LBQ women with disabilities who experience violence, particularly when abuse is perpetrated by caregivers or intimate partners. In the vast majority of countries, disability and queer affirmative legal remedies remain absent. In cases of intimate partner violence within same-sex relationships, survivors frequently have no safe or accessible avenues for protection or redress.<sup>11</sup> Even in States that formally recognize same-sex relationships, LBQ women with disabilities frequently do not enjoy full marriage equality. In some jurisdictions, marriage results in the termination or reduction of disability-related social protection benefits, forcing LBQ women with disabilities to choose between legal recognition of their relationships and access to essential social protection and services.<sup>12</sup>

LBQ women with disabilities also disproportionately delay or avoid accessing sexual and reproductive health services, including gynaecological care, due to fear of discriminatory treatment, involuntary disclosure of sexual orientation, breaches of confidentiality, physical inaccessibility of healthcare facilities, and harmful assumptions regarding their capacity or desire for parenthood. Sexuality-affirming health care remains limited, and there are documented cases in which women with disabilities have been denied disability-related health services or rehabilitation following disclosure of their sexual orientation or association with LGBTI communities.<sup>13</sup>

## II. Criminalization, Public Hostility, and Forced Invisibility

Consensual same-sex relationships remain criminalized in 63 countries by law and in two de facto.<sup>14</sup> Of these criminalising jurisdictions, at least 40 (more than 60 per cent) criminalise same-sex sexual conduct between females. Even in jurisdictions that do not explicitly have laws against female same-sex sexual conduct, lesbians and bisexual women have been subjected to arrest or threat of arrest.<sup>15</sup> Gender expression also plays a key role in these forms of criminalization, as binary and essentialist notions of gender make queer and non-binary women prone to being targeted for so-called “same-sex” sexual acts.<sup>16</sup> Moreover, the criminalisation of lesbians and bisexual women is often amplified by other criminal laws that have a disproportionate impact on women and girls, such as laws criminalising adultery, abortion and sex-work, and laws that permit child marriage and rape within marriage.<sup>17</sup>

Criminalization, public hostility, and forced invisibility operate as mutually reinforcing mechanisms that place LBQ women and other LGBTI persons at heightened risk of violence,

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<sup>11</sup> Inputs provided by Women Enabled International: Women Enabled International, Fact Sheet: The Right of Women and Girls with Disabilities to be Free from Gender-Based Violence, <https://womenenabled.org/reports/wei-fact-sheet-gbv/>.

<sup>12</sup> Inputs provided by Women Enabled International. See also: <https://now.org/blog/the-cost-of-love-marriage-equality-for-disabled-lgbtqia-people/>

<sup>13</sup> Inputs provided by Women Enabled International. See also: Wołowicz, A., Król, A. & Struzik, J. Disabled Women, Care Regimes, and Institutionalised Homophobia: a Case Study From Poland . *Sex Res Soc Policy* 19, 777–789 (2022). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s13178-021-00586-7>

<sup>14</sup> ILGA World Database, Criminalisation of Consensual Same-Sex Sexual Acts, <https://database.ilga.org/criminalisation-consensual-same-sex-sexual-acts> (last visited Jan. 21, 2026).

<sup>15</sup> Human Dignity Trust, *Breaking the Silence: The Criminalisation of Lesbians and Bisexual Women and its Impacts* (Second Edition, 2024) p. 5

<sup>16</sup> ILGA World: Kellyn Botha, *Our identities under arrest: A global overview on the enforcement of laws criminalising consensual same-sex sexual acts between adults and diverse gender expressions*, 2nd Edition (Geneva: ILGA, November 2023), p.18.

<sup>17</sup> Human Dignity Trust, *Breaking the Silence: The Criminalisation of Lesbians and Bisexual Women and its Impacts* (Second Edition, 2024) p. 5

including lethal violence, across diverse national contexts. In Colombia, the urgency of this pattern is underscored by the alarming number of killings targeting LGBTI people.<sup>18</sup>

In some jurisdictions, disability is explicitly instrumentalized within anti-LGBTI legislative frameworks, resulting in heightened criminalization and severe consequences for LBQ women with disabilities. Uganda's Anti-Homosexuality Act, for instance, introduces the concept of "aggravated homosexuality," which includes consensual sexual relations involving a person with a disability. This provision exposes LBQ women with disabilities to extreme and disproportionate harm, as disclosure of a consensual relationship may place their partners at risk of capital punishment.<sup>19</sup>

Beyond formal criminalization, State-endorsed or State-tolerated public hostility plays a central role in producing conditions of forced invisibility and legitimizing violence. In Argentina, civil society organizations have documented a marked increase in discriminatory acts fuelled by hostile rhetoric disseminated through social media and mainstream media by the current government and its officials.<sup>20</sup> These discourses have rapidly translated into concrete acts of violence, including notable cases such as the attack in Cañuelas<sup>21</sup>, demonstrating the direct link between stigmatizing narratives and material harm. The dissolution of institutional mechanisms dedicated to women and gender diversity has further exacerbated this vulnerability, leaving LBQ women particularly exposed to hate speech, harassment, and attacks by both State and non-State actors.

At the same time, the expansion of evangelical sectors actively promoting so-called "conversion practices," often with the support or acquiescence of local authorities, has intensified risks for LBQ women<sup>22</sup>. These practices disproportionately target lesbian, bisexual, and queer women, including children and adolescents, and are reinforced by disciplining hate narratives aimed at feminist activists, women in same-sex relationships, and those who are visibly queer<sup>23</sup>.

### III. Gender-Based Violence Patterns: Sexualized, "Corrective," and Punitive

Gender-based violence against LBQ women and gender-diverse persons frequently manifests in sexualized, "corrective," and punitive forms, driven by entrenched gender norms, heteronormativity, and State-tolerated moral regulation. So-called "conversion practices" constitute a particularly severe expression of this violence. Civil society organizations have documented how families are subjected to sustained fear and distress through hostile narratives disseminated via social media and official channels, portraying sexual orientation and gender diversity as threats that must be corrected or eradicated. Alarming, suicide rates

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<sup>18</sup> Inputs received from LESLAC: The Network of Lesbian and Bisexual Women's Organizations of Latin America and the Caribbean to the advancement of the rights of the LGBTIQ+ population in Colombia

<sup>19</sup> Inputs received by Women Enabled International. See also: Amnesty International, 2023, Uganda: Authorities must drop charges in death penalty case under Anti-Homosexuality Act, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2023/08/uganda-authorities-must-drop-charges-in-death-penalty-case-under-anti-homosexuality-act/>

<sup>20</sup> There is an increase in anti-LGBTI rhetoric in the country propagated by the national government. The statement with the most serious institutional and political impact was President Javier Milei's speech at the Davos International Forum on January 23, 2025, associating homosexuality with pedophilia. See: <https://www.casarosada.gob.ar/informacion/discursos/50848-discurso-del-presidente-de-la-nacion-javier-milei-desde-el-foro-de-davos-suiza>

<sup>21</sup> See: <https://www.hrw.org/es/news/2024/05/14/prenden-fuego-mujeres-lesbianas-durante-ataque-en-argentina>

<sup>22</sup> See: <https://abyayalasoberana.org/movilizacion/terapias-de-conversion-la-deshumanizada-accion-de-los-grupos-religiosos/>

<sup>23</sup> See: <https://abyayalasoberana.org/movilizacion/terapias-de-conversion-la-deshumanizada-accion-de-los-grupos-religiosos/>

Inputs provided by Leswarmi Foundation (lesbian and bisexual women from indigenous communities) together with La Grupa Trans; the Crisálida public library on gender and affective-sexual diversity run by the Bienvenides Foundation; the organization Familias Diversas (Diverse Families); and the Trabajando Community Center for lesbian and bisexual women

among women and gender-diverse persons have increased significantly, with documented cases linked directly to conversion practices or to prolonged harassment based on SOGIESC.<sup>24</sup>

International human rights bodies, medical associations, and mental health experts have widely recognized conversion therapy as a form of violence and as cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment.<sup>25</sup> Nevertheless, gaps in legal protections persist, particularly for groups whose experiences remain marginalized within dominant frameworks.<sup>26</sup> LBQ women are especially vulnerable to both interpersonal violence and conversion practices, yet they are frequently excluded from legislative and policy initiatives aimed at prohibiting such practices.<sup>27</sup> For instance, for asexual women, this exclusion reflects broader patterns of erasure and misunderstanding of asexuality, which often lead to pathologization rather than protection.<sup>28</sup>

Research indicates that conversion practices targeting asexual people are less likely to be religiously motivated and are more commonly perpetrated within healthcare settings. The *Ace in the UK* report further reveals that asexual women and people assigned female at birth face a heightened risk of medicalized conversion practices, often facilitated through general practitioners, mental health services, and reproductive healthcare providers.<sup>29</sup>

Moreover, Lesbians and bisexual women are also particularly vulnerable to violence, control and abuse within their own families and by people they know. They frequently experience targeted rape, through which abusers purport to ‘correct’ a victim’s sexual orientation. The criminalisation of their sexuality means that lesbians and bisexual women are often afraid to report these crimes or, if they do, that the crimes are not investigated.<sup>30</sup>

For instance, in Bolivia, lesbian and bisexual women and trans men are subjected to so-called “corrective rape”. Despite the gravity of this practice, it remains underreported and insufficiently researched, particularly regarding its consequences, including unwanted pregnancies. Survivors face significant barriers in accessing legal abortion, reproductive healthcare, family planning services, and post-abortion mental health support, reflecting systemic gaps in legal frameworks and service provision.<sup>31</sup> In Namibia, this is one of the most severe forms of violence experienced by lesbian and bisexual women. Survivors report rape perpetrated by known community members, acquaintances, or family associates, accompanied by statements asserting that sexual violence will “make them real women” or force heterosexuality.<sup>32</sup>

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24 See: <https://www.eltucumano.com/amp/noticia/actualidad/315114/tucuman-registra-la-mayor-tasa-de-suicidios-del-noa-y-preocupa-el-aumento-de-casos-entre-mujeres>

25 See examples: General comment No. 22 (2016) on the right to sexual and reproductive health (article 12 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights): Likewise, regulations requiring that lesbian, gay, bisexual transgender and intersex persons be treated as mental or psychiatric patients, or requiring that they be “cured” by so-called “treatment”, are a clear violation of their right to sexual and reproductive health.

Report of the Special Rapporteur on the right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health (2021) Strategic priorities of work: [LGBTI+ persons] are subjected to hormone therapy and genital normalizing surgeries under the guise of so-called “reparative/conversion therapies”. These medical procedures are hardly ever medically necessary, and they can cause scarring, loss of sexual sensation, pain, incontinence and lifelong depression. Such procedures may also be unscientific, harmful and, in all cases, contribute to stigma.p.58

26 See <https://database.ilga.org/conversion-therapies-lgbti>

27 See ILGA World: Lucas Ramon Mendos, *Curbing Deception: A world survey on legal regulation of so-called “conversion therapies”* (Geneva: ILGA World, 2020).

28 Information provided by individual human rights defenders from the asexual community.

29 *The Ace In The UK (2023) Report*, Stonewall.

30 Human Dignity Trust, *Breaking the Silence: The Criminalisation of Lesbians and Bisexual Women and its Impacts* (Second Edition, 2024) p. 6

31 Information provided by Manodiversa, Bolivia

32 Information provided by Equal Namibia

#### IV. Institutional Violence and Secondary Victimization

Lesbians and bisexual women can face arbitrary arrests and detainment, blackmail by law enforcement, and physical and sexual violence by public authorities.<sup>33</sup> In Colombia's Caribbean and Pacific regions, law enforcement officials have also perpetrated violence against LBQ women. Abuses of power include arbitrary arrests, degrading treatment, mockery, and identity-based humiliation. Civil society organizations have documented cases of torture, forced nudity, and physical abuse committed by police and military personnel.<sup>34</sup> In Namibia, LBQ women experience institutional violence through dismissive, hostile, or abusive treatment by police, healthcare providers, and judicial officers, which includes, refusal to open case dockets, mockery or verbal abuse, forced disclosure of sexual orientation, threats of arrest or outing.<sup>35</sup>

Moreover, LBQ women and gender-diverse persons, in general, are routinely subjected to institutional violence and secondary victimization within healthcare and other public systems, particularly in medical and sexual and reproductive health contexts. Documented abuses include coercive or harmful medical practices, forced sterilization, non-consensual examinations, and medically unnecessary interventions<sup>36</sup>.

Empirical evidence highlights the scale of discrimination within healthcare systems. In Haiti, 32 per cent of LBQ women and trans masculine persons reported receiving poorer healthcare services, while 27 per cent experienced insults or denial of care based on sexual orientation, gender identity or expression.<sup>37</sup> In Finland, studies on lesbian and bisexual women's health indicate that many avoid healthcare services due to pervasive heteronormativity and frequently refrain from disclosing their sexual orientation, even when such disclosure is medically relevant, due to fear of stigma or mistreatment.<sup>38</sup>

Moreover, LBQ and gender non-conforming women are frequently excluded from national SRHR strategies, public health campaigns, and educational policies, remaining invisible under stigmatizing assumptions about gender and sexuality. In Chile, for example, SRHR services continue to focus predominantly on cisgender heterosexual women. While some isolated initiatives have emerged within hospitals and regional health centers, such as working groups dedicated to the sexual health of lesbian and bisexual women, these efforts remain limited in scope and sustainability.<sup>39</sup>

In Egypt, access to healthcare for LBQ women and gender-diverse persons is severely constrained by criminalization and pathologization. Same-sex sexual acts are prosecuted under charges of "debauchery". These conditions foster institutional violence, including torture, discrimination, and arbitrary detention, deterring LBQ women and gender diverse persons from

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<sup>33</sup> Human Dignity Trust, *Breaking the Silence: The Criminalisation of Lesbians and Bisexual Women and its Impacts* (Second Edition, 2024) p. 34

<sup>34</sup> Caribe Afirmativo, *Enterezas en Resistencia: Resonamos todas* (2024), available at: <https://enterezas.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/ENTEREZAS-EN-RESISTENCIA-2024-DIGITAL.pdf> p.29

<sup>35</sup> Information provided by Equal Namibia

<sup>36</sup> UN Human Rights Council, Report of the Independent Expert on Protection Against Violence and Discrimination Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity, U.N. Doc. A/HRC/35/36 (2017), para. 14.

<sup>37</sup> FACSDIS, OTRAH, St. Vil, D., Theron, L., Carrillo, K., and Joseph, E. (2020) '[From Fringes to Focus - "A deep dive into the lived-realities of Lesbian, Bisexual and Queer women and Trans Masculine Persons in 8 Caribbean Countries"](#)'. Amsterdam: COC Netherlands.

<sup>38</sup> Soinio JII, Paavilainen E, Kylmä JPO. [Lesbian and bisexual women's experiences of health care: "Do not say, 'husband', say, 'spouse.'" J Clin Nurs. 2020; 29:94–106.](#)

<sup>39</sup> Information shared by Agrupación Lésbica Rompiendo el Silencio. See <https://sstalcahuano.cl/atencion-de-salud-online-para-mujeres-lesbianas-y-bisexuales/>

seeking medical or psychological assistance and significantly increasing risks to physical and mental health.<sup>40</sup>

In Argentina, meaningful progress was achieved after the establishment of the Ministry of Women, Gender and Diversity in 2019, which advanced public policies supporting women and gender-diverse populations. However, following the change in government in December 2023, the Ministry was dissolved in early 2024 amid a sustained campaign of stigmatization targeting gender equality institutions<sup>41</sup>. Government narratives have portrayed such bodies as responsible for the country's economic crisis, fostering hostile environments and weakening institutional safeguards for LBQ women and gender-diverse persons. Regressive measures have included the dismantling of diversity-focused institutions (such as the Undersecretariat for Diversity Policies and the SOGI representation within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs<sup>42</sup>), the closure of the National Institute against Discrimination, Xenophobia and Racism (INADI<sup>43</sup>), executive modifications affecting the Gender Identity Law<sup>44</sup>, the prohibition of inclusive language within the National Public Administration and armed forces<sup>45</sup>, non-compliance with public sector trans employment quotas<sup>46</sup>, and the symbolic removal of spaces honoring women and LGBTI figures in government buildings<sup>47</sup>.

## V. Economic Insecurity and Workplace Discrimination

Economic insecurity and workplace discrimination constitute pervasive and interrelated forms of structural violence against LBQ women. Women in general are disadvantaged economically in many societies, for example by inequality in family structures, labour markets and laws on property and inheritance.<sup>48</sup> Economic disadvantage, combined with pervasive societal expectations that women marry and form heterosexual families, compels many lesbians and bisexual women to enter heterosexual unions they would not otherwise choose. In some contexts, disclosure of their sexual orientation exposes them to coercion or forced marriage by family members.<sup>49</sup> According to interviews Human Rights Watch conducted with 66 lesbian, bisexual, and queer (LBQ) activists, researchers, lawyers, and movement leaders in 26 countries, forced marriage is one of ten key areas of human rights abuses most affecting LBQ women's lives.<sup>50</sup>

In many contexts, LBQ women are compelled to suppress or conceal their identities to survive within professional environments. Testimonies consistently describe the necessity of "shrinking" oneself, leaving one's identity outside the workplace, as a condition for continued

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<sup>40</sup> HRW (2020) [Egypt: Security Forces Abuse, Torture LGBT People. Arbitrary Arrests, Discrimination, Entrapment, Privacy Violations](#)

<sup>41</sup> Inputs received by Leswarmi Foundation (lesbian and bisexual women from indigenous communities) together with La Grupa Trans; the Crisálida public library on gender and affective-sexual diversity run by the Bienvenides Foundation; the organization Familias Diversas (Diverse Families); and the Trabajando Community Center for lesbian and bisexual women, and the Frente Nacional Orgullo y Lucha- ILGALAC

<sup>42</sup> See <https://conurbanes.org/comunicado/>

<sup>43</sup> See Decreto Presidencial 696/24 available in: <https://www.boletinoficial.gov.ar/detalleAviso/primera/311795/20240806>

<sup>44</sup> See Decreto Presidencial N° 62/25 available in:

<https://www.boletinoficial.gov.ar/detalleAviso/primera/5846621/20250206?suplemento=1>

<sup>45</sup> See <https://www.boletinoficial.gov.ar/detalleAviso/primera/304017/20240226>

<sup>46</sup> See [https://www.pagina12.com.ar/732959-que-esta-pasando-con-la-ley-de-cupo-laboral-travesti-trans`](https://www.pagina12.com.ar/732959-que-esta-pasando-con-la-ley-de-cupo-laboral-travesti-trans)

<sup>47</sup> See <https://www.infobae.com/politica/2024/03/08/el-gobierno-anuncio-que-cambiara-el-nombre-del-salon-de-las-mujeres-de-la-casa-rosada/>

<sup>48</sup> UN Women: [Gender equality in 2025: Gains, gaps, and the USD 342 trillion choice](#)

<sup>49</sup> Human Dignity Trust, *Breaking the Silence: The Criminalisation of Lesbians and Bisexual Women and its Impacts* (Second Edition, 2024), p. 5

<sup>50</sup> Human Rights Watch, "This Is Why We Became Activists": *Violence Against Lesbian, Bisexual, and Queer Women and Non-Binary People* (2023), available at: <https://www.hrw.org/report/2023/02/14/why-we-became-activists/violence-against-lesbian-bisexual-and-queer-women-and-non-binary-people>

employment. Masculine-presenting women are subjected to heightened surveillance and policing of gender expression from the moment they enter professional spaces, rendering them especially vulnerable to harassment, exclusion, and retaliation. For instance, LBQ activists in Argentina, El Salvador, and Kyrgyzstan have shared stories about masculine-presenting LBQ women in their communities being routinely pushed into precarious jobs with poor labor rights practices (farm work, sex work, and auto shops, respectively) or primarily male-dominated fields where they face further forms of abuse.<sup>51</sup>

Workplace discrimination frequently manifests through sexualized harassment and gendered punishment. These dynamics contribute to hostile work environments in which gossip, social exclusion, and coordinated efforts to marginalize or expel LBQ women from employment are commonplace. As a result, economic insecurity becomes both a consequence of discrimination and a tool of coercion, reinforcing silence and compliance while limiting the ability of LBQ women to seek redress or exit abusive situations.<sup>52</sup>

## VI. Data and Documentation Gaps (A Consistent Structural Barrier)

Persistent gaps in data collection and research constitute a structural barrier to recognizing and addressing violence and discrimination against LBQ women. A 2020 global analysis by the EuroCentralAsian Lesbian\* Community (EL\*C) found that lesbian and other non-heterosexual women remain significantly underrepresented in health-related research, even within studies focused on sexual minority populations.<sup>53</sup> This systematic exclusion from research contributes to policy blind spots and reinforces the marginalization of LBQ women.

The extent of invisibility surrounding violence against LBQ women became particularly evident through investigations conducted by LESLAC between 2021 and 2022 in Peru, Ecuador, Bolivia, Mexico, and Colombia.<sup>54</sup> Official State data further entrenches this invisibility. National statistics on violence, including homicides and femicides, rarely record information on the sexual orientation or gender identity of victims. This omission renders specific forms of violence, such as lesbicide,<sup>55</sup> largely invisible within official records. Even in countries with advanced legal frameworks criminalizing femicide or femicide, State information systems routinely fail to disaggregate data according to SOGIESC. As a result, killings of lesbian and bisexual women are frequently classified solely as femicides or generic homicides, erasing the differential factors and bias motivations that characterize these crimes.<sup>56</sup>

In countries like, Chile, Bolivia, and Honduras the production of disaggregated data on LBQ women is non-existent or scarce. This lack of official records obscures the specific needs of the group and hinders the design of public policies<sup>57</sup>. Moreover, data invisibility perpetuates stigma

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<sup>51</sup> Human Rights Watch, "This Is Why We Became Activists": Violence Against Lesbian, Bisexual, and Queer Women and Non-Binary People (2023), available at: <https://www.hrw.org/report/2023/02/14/why-we-became-activists/violence-against-lesbian-bisexual-and-queer-women-and-non-binary-people>, p.90.

<sup>52</sup> Information provided by Human Rights Defenders from Nigeria

<sup>53</sup> Eurocentralasian Lesbian\* Community (2020) [The state of lesbian organizing and the lived realities of lesbians in the EU and the accession countries.](#)

<sup>54</sup> Red de Organizaciones de Lesbianas y Mujeres Bisexuales en América Latina y el Caribe (LESLAC), *Informe Regional sobre Realidades, Resistencias y Estrategias LBQ+* (2025), available at: <https://mujerymujer.org.ec/wp-content/uploads/2025/12/Informe-Regional-LBQ-2025.pdf>

<sup>55</sup> García Sanabria, L. (2020). Lesbofemicidios en Latinoamérica: entre la vitalidad y el riesgo de la existencia lesbiana. *Tramas y Redes*, 4(8), 133-156. <https://tramasyredes-ojs.clacso.org/ojs/index.php/tyr/article/view/80>

<sup>56</sup> Inputs received from LESLAC: The Network of Lesbian and Bisexual Women's Organizations of Latin America and the Caribbean to the advancement of the rights of the LGBTIQ+ population in Colombia

<sup>57</sup> Red de Organizaciones de Lesbianas y Mujeres Bisexuales en América Latina y el Caribe (LESLAC), *Informe Regional sobre Realidades, Resistencias y Estrategias LBQ+* (2025), available at: <https://mujerymujer.org.ec/wp-content/uploads/2025/12/Informe-Regional-LBQ-2025.pdf>

and prejudice within society, fostering hostile environments that reinforce isolation, silence, and systemic neglect. Without comprehensive, disaggregated, and intersectional data, violence against LBQ women remains structurally normalized, unaddressed, and effectively denied.<sup>58</sup>

## VII. Promising Practices and Strategic Recommendations

Across regions, community-led initiatives and allied institutions have developed innovative and rights-based responses to address the structural exclusion of LBQ women and gender-diverse persons.<sup>59</sup> However, ILGA World was unable to identify significant State-led good practices specifically targeting LBQ women. Despite limited institutional support, LBQ communities continue to demonstrate strong resilience through informal peer networks that provide emotional support, crisis response, referrals to healthcare and legal aid, and emergency housing guidance. These experiences highlight the urgent need for sustained funding, institutional recognition, and formal partnerships between States and LBQ-led organizations

### Key Recommendations

#### To States

1. Repeal laws criminalizing consensual same-sex relations and eliminate discriminatory provisions based on SOGIESC.
2. Adopt and enforce comprehensive anti-discrimination laws covering healthcare, education, employment, housing, and public services for LBQ women.
3. Ensure survivor-centred access to justice, including effective investigations and accountability for official misconduct.
4. Provide mandatory training for public officials on sexual orientation, gender-based violence, and human rights standards.
5. Guarantee non-discriminatory access to healthcare and ban conversion practices in all settings.
6. Allocate sustained funding for inclusive shelters, housing, social protection, and victim support services for LBQ women.

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<sup>58</sup>Inputs received from LESLAC: The Network of Lesbian and Bisexual Women's Organizations of Latin America and the Caribbean to the advancement of the rights of the LGBTIQ+ population in Colombia

<sup>59</sup>Targeted psychosocial support projects, such as initiatives providing mental health assistance to lesbian and non-heterosexual women in Russian-speaking countries, have ensured access to safe and confidential counseling in highly restrictive contexts. For more information see <https://europeanlesbianconference.org/locked-down-lesbians-listening-for-russian-speakinglesbians-and-mental-health-issues/>

Similarly, the GotoGyneco project in Belgium has established referral networks connecting lesbian, bisexual, non-binary, and trans persons with healthcare professionals trained in inclusive and non-discriminatory care, while also delivering awareness-raising trainings for medical practitioners. For more information see <https://gotogyneco.be>

In France, civil society organizations such as SOS Homophobie developed accessible sexual health materials tailored to lesbian communities, addressing critical information gaps. For more information see <https://www.sos-homophobie.org/article/sur-le-bout-des-levres>

In Germany, the Lesbian and Queer Counseling Center of Cologne provides specialized psychological support and therapeutic services to lesbian and non-heterosexual women, including migrants facing severe precarity. For more information see <https://www.cologne-counseling.com>

7. Strengthen collection and publication of disaggregated data on gender-based violence, including by SOGIESC.

**To Service Providers (Health, Legal Aid, Shelters, Psychosocial and Social Services)**

1. Implement clear non-discrimination and confidentiality policies to ensure safe access for LBQ survivors.
2. Ensure gender-based violence services explicitly address violence in same-sex relationships.
3. Provide affirmative, evidence-based healthcare and psychosocial support without discrimination.
4. Strengthen partnerships with LBQ-led organizations through referral systems and community-based support mechanisms.