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BARBADOS, WEST INDIES



# **NATIONAL LGBTI SURVEY: BARBADOS**

MAY 2023



5.2	Ethical Considerations	54
5.3	Limitations	55
5.4	Data Analysis	56
5.4.1	Quantitative Analysis	56
5.4.2	Qualitative Analysis	56
5.5	Analytical Approach: Intersectionality	57
<b>6</b>	<b>Qualitative and Quantitative Findings and Analysis</b>	<b>58</b>
6.1	Intersectional Marginalization and Discrimination	59
<b>7</b>	<b>Results</b>	<b>63</b>
7.1	Survey Sample Characteristics	64
7.2	Citizen Security	68
7.2.1	ID Accuracy	69
7.2.2	Rights, Law Reform and Support for LGBTQ+	69
7.2.3	Access to Assistance	72
7.2.4	Day-to-Day Experiences of Citizen Insecurity	73
7.2.5	Migration Consideration Due to Being LGBTQ+	77
7.2.6	Social Change and Citizen Security	77
7.3	Education	80
7.3.1	Discrimination and Exclusion	80
7.3.2	The Role of Teachers	81
7.3.3	Learning about Issues and Concerns related to LGBTQ+	83
7.3.4	Support Systems at School	86
7.4	Employment	87
7.4.1	Openness about Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity at Work	88
7.4.2	Exclusion and Harassment at Work	89
7.4.3	Workplace Environment and LGBTQ+ Employee Retention	92
7.5	Health	92
7.5.1	Health Conditions	93
7.5.2	Utilization of Services	94
7.5.3	Awareness of Public Health Services for LGBTQ+ People	95
7.5.4	Experiences in Healthcare Settings	97

7.5.5	Self-Acceptance	103
7.5.6	Suicidal Ideation and Suicide Attempts	104
7.6	Housing	105
7.6.1	Living Conditions	107
7.6.2	Experience with Homelessness	108
7.6.3	Support Systems	108
7.7	Violence	110
7.7.1	Types of Violence Experienced Due to Being LGBTQ+	112
7.7.2	Harassment from Police or Other Security Forces in Barbados	113
7.7.3	Service Denial and Discrimination	113
7.7.4	Victim of a Crime	114
7.8	Access to Justice	114
7.8.1	Limited Rights	117
7.8.2	Major Issues facing LGBTQ+ People	118
7.9	Political Participation	119
7.9.1	Active Citizenship and Activism	120
7.9.2	Perceived Barriers to Participating	123
<b>8 Conclusion and Recommendations</b>		<b>125</b>
8.1	General	127
8.2	Specific Recommendations	127
<b>9 References</b>		<b>132</b>

## **TABLES**

<b>Table 1:</b> Age Distribution of the Sample	64
<b>Table 2:</b> Respondent's Gender and Sexual Orientation	65
<b>Table 3:</b> Respondents by Ethnic Groups	66
<b>Table 4:</b> Respondents by their Level of Education	66
<b>Table 5:</b> Work Status in the Last 30 Days	67
<b>Table 6:</b> Share of Respondents who Experienced Discrimination and Exclusion in Education by Gender Identity	81
<b>Table 7:</b> Respondents' Views on whether Teachers Promote Messages of Inclusion and Respect for LGBTQ+ People	82
<b>Table 8:</b> Percentage of Respondents Who Did Not Seek Medical Attention When Unwell by Age	95
<b>Table 9:</b> Respondent's Feelings About Their SOGIE by Age, Gender Identity and Sexual Orientation	103
<b>Table 10:</b> Openness with Family by Sexual Orientation and Age	109
<b>Table 11:</b> Rationale for their Participation and Lack of Participation in Citizen Space	119

## **FIGURES**

<b>Figure 1:</b> Percentage of the Population Identifying with a Christian Denomination	30
<b>Figure 2:</b> Rights and Support for LGBTQ+	71
<b>Figure 3:</b> Importance of Legislation and Reforms	71
<b>Figure 4:</b> Right to Subsidies/Financial Assistance Available in Barbados	72
<b>Figure 5:</b> Comfort with Public Displays of Affection	75
<b>Figure 6:</b> Reasons for Discomfort with Public Displays of Affection	76
<b>Figure 7:</b> Places Where Survey Respondents Feel Comfortable Showing Affection	76
<b>Figure 8:</b> Information about Sexual Orientation or Gender Identity by Level of Schooling	84
<b>Figure 9:</b> Nature of Information about Sexual Orientation or Gender Identity by Level of Schooling	84
<b>Figure 10:</b> Openness about Being LGBTQ+ at Work	88
<b>Figure 11:</b> Percentage of Cisgender Respondents who Completely Hide their SOGIE at Work by Sexual Orientation	89
<b>Figure 12:</b> Incidents of Discrimination at Work Due to Being LGBTQ+	90
<b>Figure 13:</b> Reasons for Not Reporting Incidents in the Workplace	91
<b>Figure 14:</b> Types of Health-Related Issues Experienced by Respondents in the Last 12 Months	93
<b>Figure 15:</b> Type of Healthcare Facility Visited When Needed	94
<b>Figure 16:</b> Awareness about Public Health Programs for LGBTQ+ People	95
<b>Figure 17:</b> Types of LGBTQ+ Public Health Programs Cited by Respondents	97
<b>Figure 18:</b> Experiences When Obtaining Medical Attention by Gender Identity	98
<b>Figure 19:</b> Suicidal Ideation and Suicidal Behaviours	104
<b>Figure 20:</b> Responses to the Question: With Whom Do You Currently Live?	108
<b>Figure 21:</b> Reasons for Not Being Open with Family	109
<b>Figure 22:</b> Types of Violence Experienced in the 12 months Preceding the Survey	112
<b>Figure 23:</b> Reasons for Not Seeking Legal Assistance After Being Violated	113
<b>Figure 24:</b> Places Where Incidents of Discrimination Occurred	114
<b>Figure 25:</b> Main Issues facing the LGBTQ+ Community	118
<b>Figure 26:</b> Voter Turnout	120

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# **KEYWORDS**

**Lesbian; gay; bisexual; transgender; queer; intersex; intersectionality; gender expression; gender identity; sexual orientation; social exclusion; stigmatization; discrimination; Barbados; education; employment; health; housing; justice; citizen security; violence; political participation**

# LIST OF ACRONYMS

<b>AIDS</b>	Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome
<b>BFPA</b>	Barbados Family Planning Association
<b>CRC</b>	Constitutional Reform Commission of Barbados
<b>CSE</b>	Comprehensive sexuality education
<b>CSO</b>	Civil society organization
<b>HFLE</b>	Health and Family Life Education curriculum
<b>HIV</b>	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
<b>LGBT</b>	Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender
<b>LGBTI</b>	Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex
<b>LGBTQ+</b>	Acronym for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer. The plus sign represents people with diverse sexual orientations, gender identities, gender expressions and sex characteristics who do not identify using other terms.
<b>MSM</b>	Men who have sex with men
<b>NGO</b>	Non-governmental organization
<b>SALISES</b>	Sir Arthur Lewis Institute of Social and Economic Studies
<b>SOGIE</b>	Sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression
<b>SOGIESC</b>	Sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression and sex characteristics
<b>UWI</b>	University of the West Indies
<b>UNDP</b>	United Nations Development Programme
<b>YAM</b>	Youth Advocacy Movement
<b>UNFPA</b>	United Nations Population Fund
<b>UNICEF</b>	United Nations Children’s Fund



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The National LGBTI Survey in Barbados was a collaboration between the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Sir Arthur Lewis Institute of Social and Economic Studies (SALISES) at the University of the West Indies (UWI), Cave Hill Campus. The research seeks to foster greater collaboration between various entities with the aim of increasing knowledge about LGBTQI+ experiences related to social exclusion, stigmatization and discrimination, as well as human rights and citizen rights that may be used to support inclusive policies. To this end, the researchers would like to acknowledge the invaluable contributions made by the following entities. First, UNDP and, specifically, the UNDP Being LGBTI in the Caribbean project team for their inclusion of Barbados, facilitation of research and invaluable recommendations. Second, staff at UWI that assisted in promoting and disseminating the research instrument and implementing the research in general.

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# TERMINOLOGY

## 1.1 LGBTQI+

The words lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and intersex (LGBTQI+) are used in this study. There are many different local and regional terms—some of which are deemed pejorative—informed by factors such as language variation, age and culture that are used to talk about diverse gender identities and sexual orientations within the Anglophone Caribbean. However, the use of LGBTQI+ is considered appropriate for this study, as it is widely recognized and used within the region, including by local activists. This study is entitled the “National LGBTI Survey: Barbados”; however, the authors use the LGBTQI+ acronym to broaden the scope of inclusion. Although the aim was to ensure inclusivity, not all groups are equally represented in the qualitative and quantitative research findings; as such, the report also makes frequent references to LGBTQ+, especially when referring to the reviewed literature and to the accounts of interview respondents. References are also made to specific groups within this acronym to reflect the specificity of the data.

This research adopted unmodified definitions of each of these terms from the UN Free & Equal Campaign and the International Labour Organization’s (ILO) 2022 report on the “Inclusion of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and queer (LGBTIQ+) persons in the world of work: A learning guide.”<sup>1</sup> The definitions adopted from ILO are as follows:

**LGBTQI+:** acronym for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and intersex. The plus sign represents people with diverse sexual orientations, gender identities, gender expressions and sex characteristics who do not identify using other terms.

**Lesbian:** woman whose enduring romantic, emotional and/or physical attraction is to women.

**Gay:** men whose enduring romantic, emotional and/or physical attraction is to men; also, women who are attracted to other women.

**Bisexual:** person who has the capacity for romantic, emotional and/or physical attraction to people of more than one gender.

**Queer:** traditionally a negative term, it has been reclaimed by some people and is considered inclusive of a wide range of diverse sexual orientations, gender identities and expressions. It may be used as an umbrella term for people with diverse sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression and sex characteristics (SOGIESC), or as an alternative to the phrase “people with diverse SOGIESC” or the acronym LGBT. Queer is used by many people who feel they do not conform to a given society’s economic, social and political norms based on their sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression.

UN Free & Equal offers the following relevant definitions:

**Transgender:** (sometimes shortened to “trans”) is an umbrella term used to describe a wide range of identities whose appearance and characteristics are perceived as gender atypical, including transsexual people, crossdressers (sometimes referred to as “transvestites”) and people who identify as third gender. Trans women identify as women but were classified as males when they were born; trans men identify as men but were classified female when they were born, while other transgender people don’t identify with the gender binary at all. Some transgender people seek surgery or take hormones to bring their body into alignment with their gender identity; others do not.

<sup>1</sup> Available at: [https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---gender/documents/publication/wcms\\_846108.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---gender/documents/publication/wcms_846108.pdf)  
See also: <https://www.unfe.org/definitions/>

**Intersex:** an umbrella term used to refer to a person born with physical or biological sex characteristics, such as sexual anatomy, reproductive organs, hormonal patterns and/or chromosomal patterns, which do not fit the typical definitions of male or female. These characteristics may be apparent at birth or emerge later in life, often at puberty. Intersex people can have any sexual orientation or gender identity.

UN Free & Equal also provides the following definitions for other widely used concepts in this report:

## **1.2 Sexual Orientation**

Sexual Orientation refers to a person's physical, romantic and/or emotional attraction to other people. Everyone has a sexual orientation, which is part of their identity. Gay men and lesbian women are attracted to individuals of the same sex as themselves. Heterosexual people are attracted to individuals of a different sex from themselves. Bisexual (sometimes shortened to "bi") people may be attracted to individuals of the same or different sex. Sexual orientation is not related to gender identity or sex characteristics.

## **1.3 Gender Identity**

Gender Identity reflects a deeply experienced sense of one's own gender. Everyone has a gender identity, which is part of their overall identity. A person's gender identity is typically aligned with the sex assigned to them at birth. Transgender (sometimes shortened to "trans") is an umbrella term used to describe people with a wide range of identities, including transsexual people, crossdressers (sometimes referred to as "transvestites"), people who identify as third gender and others whose appearance and characteristics are seen as gender atypical and whose sense of their own gender is different from

the sex they were assigned at birth. Transgender women identify as women but were registered as males when they were born. Transgender men identify as men but were registered female when they were born. Cisgender is a term used to describe people whose sense of their own gender is aligned with the sex that they were assigned at birth. Gender identity is distinct from sexual orientation and sex characteristics.

## **1.4 Gender Expression**

Gender expression is the way we express our gender through actions and appearance. Gender expression can be any combination of masculine, feminine or androgynous. For many people, their gender expression follows the ideas our societies deem to be appropriate for their gender. For other people it does not. People whose gender expression does not fit into society's norms and expectations, such as men perceived as "feminine" and women perceived as "masculine," often face harsh treatment, including physical, sexual and psychological violence and bullying. A person's gender expression is not always linked to the person's biological sex, gender identity or sexual orientation.

## **1.5 Social Exclusion**

The study aims to produce knowledge and assess personal costs related to LGBTQI+ people's experiences related to social exclusion, stigma and discrimination. Indeed, research has shown: "People who have identities that do not fit with mainstream conceptions of gender and sexuality face disadvantage in a wide range of ways" (Monro 2005, 43), experiencing, for example, social exclusion, stigma and discrimination.

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**“People who have identities that do not fit with mainstream conceptions of gender and sexuality face disadvantage in a wide range of ways.”**

**— *Monro, 2005***

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Social exclusion, like stigma and discrimination, occurs in various ways, circumstances and spaces. It also has far-reaching impacts on the individual and/or group/community, as it affects an individual's or a group's/community's ability to fully participate in the economic, sociocultural and political ways of life in their society. Social exclusion thus negatively impacts individual's and/or a group's/community's ability to meaningfully and consistently shape certain societal processes and to obtain equal benefits from participation. According to Surya Monro (2005), “Social exclusion is not just a description of the adverse consequences of disadvantage, but of the process by which people become distanced from the benefits of participating in modern society” (45). Moreover, organizations such as UNDP have also made a connection between social exclusion and human rights. Specifically, the term is conceptualized as “a lack of recognition of basic rights, or where the recognition existed, lack of access to political and legal systems necessary to make those rights a reality” (ibid.). In this research, social exclusion is thus understood as a multidimensional phenomenon replete with complex processes and complex relationships to power, with both material and nonmaterial manifestations and implications.

## **1.6 Stigma**

Stigma, like social exclusion, is a contested concept; that is, it is defined in various ways (Link and Phelan 2001). This research draws on the sociological definition of stigma that is put forward by Link and Phelan (2001). They note that stigma can be understood as the convergence of the following five components or processes:

- 1.** People distinguish and label human differences;
- 2.** Dominant cultural beliefs link labelled persons to undesirable characteristics;
- 3.** Labelled persons are placed into categories to accomplish separation of “us” from “them”;
- 4.** Labelled persons experience status loss, discrimination, rejection and exclusion, which lead to negative outcomes such as demoralization, restricted social networks, and reduced earnings;
- 5.** Stigmatization is entirely contingent on access to social, economic and political power that allows the identification of differentness, the construction of stereotypes, the separation of labelled persons into distinct categories and the full execution of disapproval, rejection, exclusion and discrimination (367).

## 1.7 Discrimination

Discrimination is also understood as multidimensional, direct and indirect, and informed by complex relationships to power and inequalities. Discrimination has both negative and positive components; individuals or groups may, for instance, obtain benefits, directly or indirectly, based on any arbitrary grounds such as race, gender, sexuality, age, colour, religion, marital status or socioeconomic background. Discrimination is conceptualized in this research as being “the unequal treatment of similar individuals placed in the same situation but who differ by one or several characteristics, such as race, ethnicity, gender, (dis)ability, sexual orientation or other categorical statuses” (Fibbi, Midtbøen and Simon 2021, 13).

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**“The unequal treatment of similar individuals placed in the same situation but who differ by one or several characteristics, such as race, ethnicity, gender, (dis)ability, sexual orientation or other categorical statuses...”**

**— Fibbi, Midtbøen and Simon, 2021**

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However, equal treatment may also result in discrimination if there is no critical consideration of differences in identities, positionality and circumstances. In sum, “Discrimination may result from an explicit reservation or exclusion” based on one or more characteristics or socially constructed identities “or be the outcome of seemingly neutral rules or procedures that disproportionately disadvantage certain individuals or groups compared to others. These disadvantages might spur from organizational or societal cultures that favour some groups over others due to historical legacies, laws or public policies” (ibid.).

Importantly, in seeking to understand and contribute to the knowledge on LGBTQI+ people’s experiences related to social exclusion, stigma and discrimination in Barbados, this research moves beyond academic theorizations of these concepts to focus on participants’ experiences to avoid producing unsubstantiated accounts or misrepresentations.

## 1.8 Intersectionality

Intersectionality moves away from a single-axis analysis to consider the ways in which multiple positions or identities overlap in complex ways to shape an individual’s lived realities (Crenshaw 1989). In other words, this conceptual and theoretical approach to understanding identity highlights “that different identity categories can intersect and coexist in the same individual in a way which creates a qualitatively different experience when compared to any of the individual characteristics involved” (Smith 2016, 73).

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**“Different identity categories can intersect and coexist in the same individual in a way which creates a qualitatively different experience when compared to any of the individual characteristics involved.”**

**— Smith, 2016**

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# **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

In August of 2022, UNDP commissioned the Sir Arthur Lewis Institute of Social and Economic Studies (SALISES) at the University of the West Indies (UWI), Cave Hill Campus to undertake a National LGBTI Survey for Barbados as part of UNDP's regional project: Being LGBTI in the Caribbean.

The National LGBTI Survey sought to ascertain the lived realities of LGBTQI+ people in Barbados. Specifically, the study aimed to (1) produce knowledge and assess personal costs related to LGBTQI+ people's experiences of social exclusion, stigma and discrimination; and (2) make useful recommendations that may inform the development and implementation of inclusive public policies. The research considers eight areas where exclusion, stigma and discrimination may be experienced:

- 1. Citizen Security**
- 2. Education**
- 3. Employment**
- 4. Health**
- 5. Housing**
- 6. Violence**
- 7. Access to Justice**
- 8. Political Participation**

### ***Methods***

A mixed methods approach was adopted. Specifically, in addition to the national survey, the research team conducted a desk review and carried out several consultations and in-depth, semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders. Emphasis was placed on representatives of the various LGBTQI+ communities to ensure that the researchers are speaking with, rather than for, those whose lived realities were being discussed and investigated.

### ***Survey Instrument***

The National LGBTI Survey used an adapted version of a questionnaire previously developed for a similar study by UNDP in Dominican Republic. The survey was adapted using information from the desk research and input from select local stakeholders. The key local stakeholders included:

- Representatives from LGBTQI+ groups such as Equals Barbados and Butterfly Trans Barbados
- Gender and sexuality researchers and advocates from the University of the West Indies, Cave Hill Campus

The survey was conducted online from 15 December 2022 to 5 February 2023. The survey was disseminated via various social media platforms of UNDP, SALISES and UWI. A variety of local LGBTQI+ stakeholders also promoted the research via their social media platforms. In the latter part of the data-gathering process, the survey was distributed by means of a social media blast (via Facebook and Instagram) and SMS.

There was no determined sample size for this study, as the LGBTQI+ population in Barbados is unknown. The target population for the study was LGBTQI+ people aged 18 and older living in Barbados at the time of the study. The final sample consisted of a total of 338 Barbadian residents between the ages of 18 and 67. The average age was 29.5 and 90.2% of survey respondents were under 45. As the survey sample is not probabilistic, the survey results cannot be generalized to the entire LGBTQI+ population in Barbados.



Cisgender individuals represented 82.2% of respondents (41.4% were women and 40.8% were men), 1.8% of respondents identified as transgender and 12.1% identified as genderqueer, nonbinary or gender-fluid. Due to the small size, transgender, genderqueer, nonbinary and gender-fluid participants were grouped and denoted as “transgender and nonbinary.” Though intersex people are included as a target population, only one survey participant identified as intersex. Approximately half (47.8%) of the sample identified as gay or lesbian, 34.4% as bisexual and 11.0% as queer. A small share of the sample identified as pansexual (2.7%) or asexual (1.8%) and 1.8% of respondents reported that they did not know their sexual orientation or preferred not to disclose it.

### ***Interviews***

A total of seven in-depth, semi-structured interviews with key informants/stakeholders in Barbados were conducted between November 2022 and January 2023. Interviewees were recruited from known LGBTQI+ organizations, as well as by snowball sampling. All interviewees identified as LGBTQ+ and/or had in-depth knowledge about the social barriers to full citizenship and the enjoyment of human rights for LGBTQI+ people, based on their extant work. However, none of the seven interview respondents identified as intersex or had in-depth knowledge about intersex people’s activism or experiences in Barbados.

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## SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

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**Although the aim was to ensure inclusivity, not all groups are equally represented in the qualitative and quantitative research findings. As such, the report also makes frequent references to LGBTQ+. References are also made to specific groups within this acronym to reflect the data.**

### *Citizen Security*

Roughly 55% of survey respondents do not believe that government officials support and protect LGBTQ+ people and very few feel protected under the Barbados Constitution and laws (6.6%). Moreover, a general belief is that religious institutions, as will be discussed in more detail below, are a strong veto player in the politics of LGBTQ+ rights in Barbados: 84.2% of the sample agreed with the statement “Some religious groups pose an obstacle to the LGBTQ+ population’s enjoyment of human rights.” Likewise, nearly 70% of respondents do not believe that LGBTQ+ people can freely express their views in the mainstream media and other public forums. Many participants believed that the media could freely express negative views about LGBT people without fear of retaliation (72.8%), but were not free to express positive views about LGBT people (66.3%).

Extending basic rights and social protections to LGBTQ+ people is integral to helping them feel secure and protected under the law. Not surprisingly, most respondents (86%–96%) assign some level of importance to reforming the Barbados Constitution to include discrimination based on SOGIE, to the recent decisions to decriminalize buggery and serious indecency<sup>2</sup>, and to marriage equality laws and gender identity legislation. Moreover, though law reform was identified as significant for promoting inclusivity, other changes were also deemed necessary. According to survey respondents, the most critical areas are: (1) LGBTQ+ rights and inclusion

measures in public policies (62.5%), (2) training and awareness of public servants regarding topics related to sexual and gender diversity and non-discrimination (56.4%), and (3) social campaigns promoting respect for sexual and gender diversity (45.0%).

Discussions on security and rights, including citizen security, often focus on the role of the State and the relationship between the State and its people, especially as it pertains to the existence of laws. However, the role and influence of non-State institutions, systems of power and interpersonal relationships are also integral to safeguarding citizen security. Interviewees spoke about citizen security and insecurity in terms of having greater inclusivity within society that goes beyond tolerance. They also spoke about the importance of legal recognition, the ability to participate in various sectors without fear of discrimination and violence, having a decent livelihood, social support and an enjoyment of human rights. Therefore, citizen security is, from their accounts, an overarching concept that covers various intersecting dimensions of people’s everyday realities.

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<sup>2</sup> Barbados Sexual Offences Act, chap. 154, sec. 9 and 12.

# CITIZEN SECURITY



**96%**

assigned some level of importance to **including protections against discrimination based on SOGIE\*** in the Constitution

**55%**

**do not believe that government officials support and protect LGBTI people**

**84.2%**

agreed that **some religious groups pose an obstacle** to LGBTI people's enjoyment of their human rights



**70%**

**do not believe that LGBTI people can freely express their views in the mainstream media and other public forums**

**72%**

agreed that **the media could freely express negative views about LGBTI people without fear of retaliation**



**77%**

**considered leaving Barbados due to their SOGIE\***

\*SOGIE: Sexual orientation, gender identity and expression.

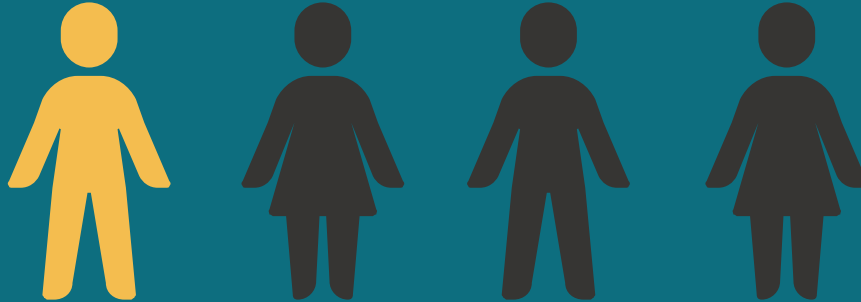
## ***Education***

Roughly one out of every four respondents who was raised in Barbados experienced discrimination or exclusion at school at some point. This incidence was higher among cisgender men (31.2%) than transgender and gender nonconforming respondents (26.2%) or than cisgender women (17.5%). Reports of cisgender men having more negative experiences than cisgender women are in line with several statements that men are more likely to be targets of sexual prejudice than women. However, it is somewhat surprising that transgender and gender nonconforming respondents were less likely to report negative experiences during their school life than cisgender respondents. The finding that transgender and nonbinary respondents were less likely than cisgender respondents to experience discrimination and exclusion at school could be related to the fact that many transgender and gender nonconforming respondents in the sample noted that they began their transition between the ages of 18 and 27, after the age of schooling.

Opportunities to teach LGBTQ+ inclusive lessons in schools are frequent, but these opportunities are regularly missed. For instance, sex education is present in schools, but it is not fully comprehensive and it is often exclusionary. Notwithstanding, some respondents still received information about sexual orientation or gender identity as part of the curriculum at primary (10.6%) and secondary school (29.6%).

Interviewees also emphasized silences in the existing curriculum, especially regarding sex, non-normative expressions of gender and diverse sexual orientations. They explained that while groups such as Dance4Life Barbados, Youth Advocacy Movement (YAM) and Barbados Family Planning Association (BFPA) provide some focus on gender and sexuality within certain schools in the country, there is still resistance to a consistent implementation of comprehensive sex education.

# EDUCATION



1 of every 4 participants experienced **discrimination or exclusion at school** at some point in their school life



**44.9%**

reported that **support was available** from guidance counsellors



**47.6%**

stated that **support came from friends**



**26.8%**

**did not have any support** during their school life

## ***Employment***

Most interview respondents expressed that some LGBTQ+ people are still likely to experience some form of exclusion and/or discrimination in employment, especially within certain spaces in the public and private sectors, because of their gender and/or sexual orientation. Interviewees, however, also stressed that experiences with employment differ depending on several factors, including the convergence of multiple systems of power, as well as the effects of visibility and invisibility in certain public spaces.

Roughly, 40.4% of LGBTQI+ survey respondents experienced some form of exclusion or harassment at some point in their work lives, with gay and lesbian participants (52.5% and 55.8%, respectively) generally reporting higher rates of exclusion and harassment than bisexual (26.6%), queer (37.8%) and respondents with other sexual identities (20.0%). The most common incidents experienced by survey participants were someone disclosing their sexual or gender identity without permission (27.2%) and verbal harassment, insults or other hurtful comments (26.5%). Some respondents also experienced sexual harassment (8.0%) and threats of physical or sexual harassment or violence (5.6%).

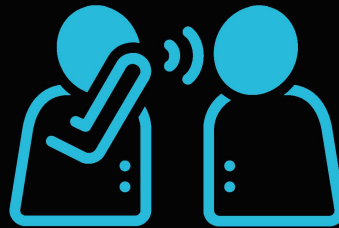
Very few respondents who experienced exclusion or harassment reported the incident (13.6%), and even fewer indicated that the incident was reported by someone else (3.0%). Even the more serious types of incidents (such as sexual harassment, threats or physical harassment) were unlikely to be reported, with only 21.6% of respondents noting that they or someone else reported these incidents. The most cited reason for not reporting any type of exclusion or harassment incident was because respondents did not think it was worth it or they thought nothing would change (50.5%).

# EMPLOYMENT



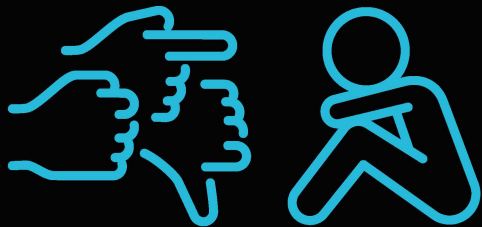
**40.4%**

of LGBTI workers experienced some form of **exclusion or harassment** at work at some point in their lives



**27.2%**

stated that **someone disclosed their sexual orientation or gender identity** without their consent in the workplace



**26.5%**

reported experiences of **verbal harassment, insults or other hurtful comments** in the workplace



**21.6%**

noted that they or someone else **reported serious incidents** (sexual harassment, threats or physical harassment)

## **Health**

Health services are freely available to all Barbados residents at the point of service delivery in the public sector, regardless of sociodemographic status. However, there are no health regulations which explicitly prohibit discrimination against LGBTQ+ people in Barbados. Discrimination in healthcare settings can impede access to care and worsen the health outcomes for LGBTQ+ people.

Respondents were asked to recall any issues they have faced when seeking medical attention during their life. Nearly three out of ten (25.2%) respondents had a negative experience when seeking medical attention at some point in their life and this statistic did not vary by type of service used by participants. However, it did vary by gender identity: transgender and nonbinary respondents were more likely to have a negative experience while obtaining medical care than cisgender respondents. The most common issues among respondents were having to hide their sexual or gender identity (18.2%) and staff making them feel uncomfortable (7.9%).

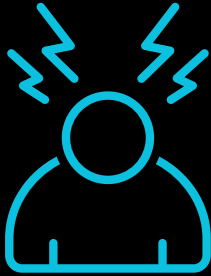
Health was also widely discussed by interview respondents, who shared nuanced accounts of LGBTQ+ people's experiences with accessing private and public healthcare in Barbados. Generally, interviewees noted that, in theory, most LGBTQ+ people in Barbados have some type of access to healthcare. Interviewees spoke about LGBTQ+-friendly healthcare centres, but also recalled instances of bias, misinformation and stigmatization within medicine, which were often a result of negative stereotyping linking LGBT bodies and certain sexual practices to danger, recklessness and disease. Some interviewees thus identified experiences of stigma, misinformation and hostility of healthcare providers as obstacles. However, they also suggested that fear, apprehension and mistrust

form part of the discourse about access and use of the healthcare services, especially those offered by the public sector, in Barbados.

The findings from the survey also point to a need to address mental health and provide psychosocial support: 31.7% of respondents experienced mental health issues in the 12 months preceding the survey, while 29.9% reported health issues related to stress. Moreover, nearly 70% of all survey respondents (68.6%) said they experienced suicidal thoughts and 27.4% said they had attempted to take their life at some point. These rates differ markedly by gender identities and sexual orientation. More than 90% of transgender and nonbinary respondents said they experienced suicidal ideation (compared to 64.2% of cisgender respondents), and 62.2% noted that they had attempted to end their life, which is three times more than the share of cisgender respondents who reported that they had attempted suicide (21.4%). With respect to sexuality, queer respondents and individuals grouped in the "other sexual identities" category reported disproportionately higher rates of suicidal ideation and suicide attempts. Between 85% and 87% of these respondents said they experienced suicidal thoughts, and 43%–46% said they had attempted to take their life. In comparison, 56%–74% of gay, lesbian and bisexual respondents reported suicidal thoughts, and 16%–38% had attempted to take their life.



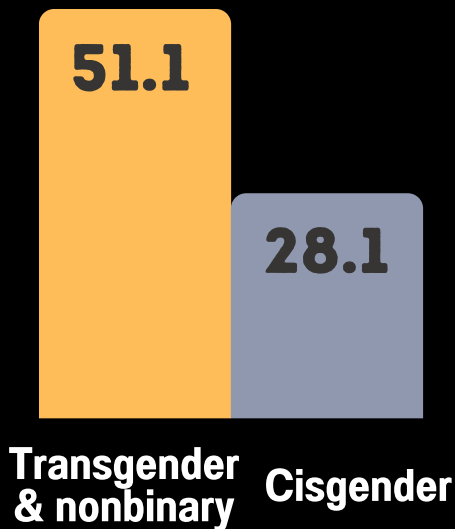
# HEALTH



**25.2%**

reported **negative experiences** when seeking medical attention

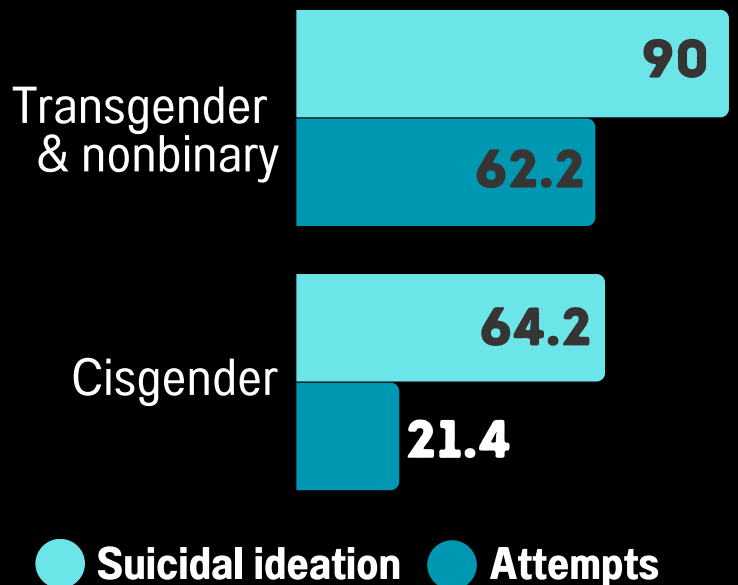
Likelihood to report recent issues with mental health (%)



**68.6%**

of all respondents said they experienced **suicidal ideation**

Suicidal ideation and attempts among **transgender and cisgender people (%)**



## ***Housing***

All interviewees shared various personal and/or collective challenges linked to accessing housing. In these accounts, interviewees suggested that several factors impact LGBTQ+ access to housing in Barbados. These include people's socioeconomic circumstances, lack of family support, discrimination from property owners, stigmatization, harassment, policies and laws that do not recognize same-sex relationships, and lack of systematic government support in addressing certain issues. Importantly, some interviewees emphasized that though housing was indeed a problematic area for some LGBTQ+ people, this was also the case for many other Barbados residents, especially for those with low or no income.

Roughly 5% of respondents (4.8%) were experiencing homelessness, though 12.8% of the sample noted they had experienced it at some point in their lives. Among those who were forced to leave their home, the most cited reasons were abuse in the home (46.5%), eviction (39.5%) and feeling unsafe due to their SOGIE (25.6%)<sup>3</sup>. As a result of being unable to stay in their home, many respondents stayed at a relative's house (55.8%) and/or a friend's couch (46.5%). Some respondents lived in their car (11.6%), outdoors or on the streets (9.3%), and/or in a vacant building (9.3%)<sup>4</sup>. The finding that most respondents stayed with a relative after being forced to leave home highlights the importance of familial support and acceptance in ensuring housing stability.

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<sup>3</sup> Respondents could select as many reasons for leaving home as applicable.

<sup>4</sup> Respondents could select as many response options as applicable.



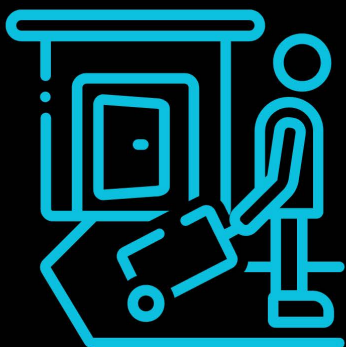
**USAID**  
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE



**UWI**



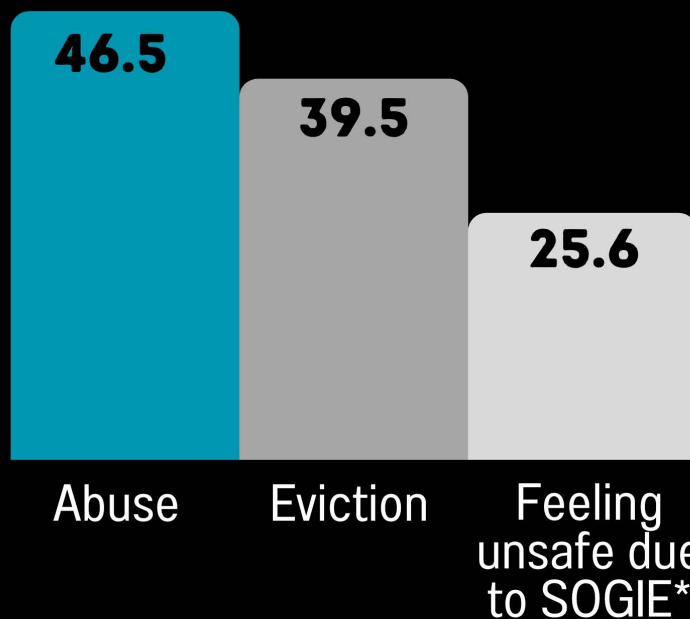
# HOUSING



## 12.8%

noted that at some point in their lives, **they were forced to leave home**

Reasons for **leaving**, among those who were forced to leave (%)



## 37.2%

of those forced to leave home said that this occurred **when they were under 18**

\*SOGIE: Sexual orientation, gender identity and expression.

## **Violence**

The study took a broad view of the term “violence” and thus focused on physical and non-physical acts. Indeed, the study acknowledges that violence, like social exclusion and discrimination, can take many forms, all of which may impact people’s enjoyment of human rights and sense of security.

Most interviewees identified that safety remained a concern for many LGBTQ+ people. Interviewees believed violence is both direct and indirect, institutionalized as well as committed by individuals. The survey results also show the multiple, complex ways in which violence manifests and is experienced. Approximately 17% of survey respondents said they recently experienced some form of violence due to their SOGIE, while 12.3% were unsure or preferred not to answer. Transgender and nonbinary respondents (35.6%) were more likely to suffer an act of violence than cisgender respondents (13.8%). The most common forms of violence experienced were verbal (21.6%), psychological (14.4%), religious (9.6%), sexual assault and harassment (8.7%), and media discrimination (7.8%).

Most respondents on the receiving end of violence did not seek legal assistance to bring action against their perpetrators (83.5%). This finding held for even the more serious violations, such as sexual assault and harassment or physical violence. Respondents gave a variety of reasons for why they did not seek legal assistance, chief among these were general fear (37.0%), fear of public attention/scrutiny (32.1%) and the lack of legal protections for LGBTQ+ people (28.4%). Of the few respondents who did seek legal assistance after being violated, 44.4% noted that they received no assistance.

A significant subset of the sample (41.5%) reported being discriminated against due to their SOGIE within the 12 months preceding the survey. Recent episodes of discrimination varied across cisgender/transgender identities: 68.1% of transgender and nonbinary participants recalled a recent incident of discrimination compared to 41.6% of cisgender men and 31.9% of cisgender women. Those who reported incidents of discrimination largely experienced it in their neighbourhood/community (42.3%), entertainment centres (32.4%), media houses (32.4%), work (26.6%), religious institutions (25.2%) and from family (27.3%).

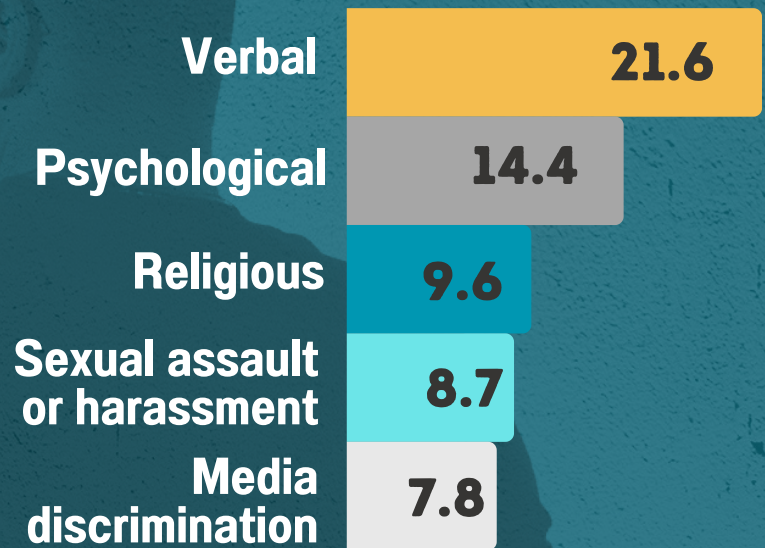
# VIOLENCE



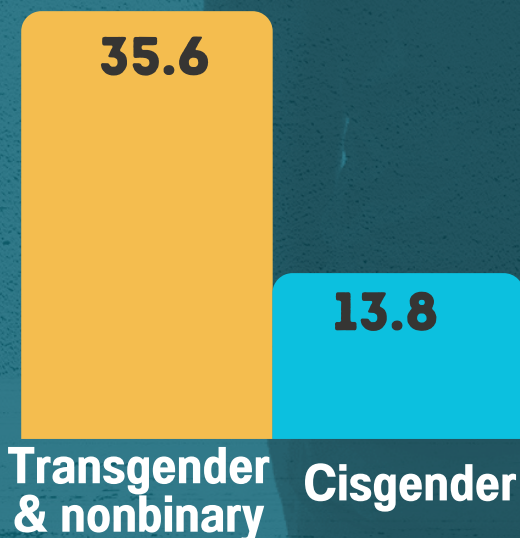
**17%**

said they recently experienced some form of violence **due to their sexual orientation, gender identity and expression**

## Most common forms of violence (%)



## Likelihood to suffer an act of violence (%)



**83.5%**

**did not seek legal assistance** to bring action against their perpetrators

## ***Access to Justice***

Most interview respondents, as stated earlier, mentioned that LGBTQ+ people generally have concerns about safety and the lack of redress available to them. One interviewee noted that LGBTQ+ people often do not seek redress in the courts because they may fear the situation escalating and being ridiculed in the media or in public. Similarly, another interviewee suggested that depending on their social status, some people may not go to court and “the police don’t take statements, don’t take you seriously. The police are homophobic and violent themselves.” For some interviewees, the lack of policies, related legal reform issues and societal attitudes also make it difficult to seek redress on certain matters.

Although most interviewees believed that legal reforms were necessary, they also emphasized that these should be paired with consistent and meaningful public education initiatives in order to be effective. Indeed, several scholars have pointed out that legal reform, though necessary, may not always be enough to secure societal change and respect for human rights.

Very few survey respondents felt that LGBTQ+ people enjoy the same rights as the rest of the Barbados population (7.8%), with a majority of the sample stating their rights were less protected than the rights of the general population. Similarly, all interviewees suggested that despite recent legal changes, human rights are not equally enjoyed by all people within society, and LGBTQ+ people are certainly denied various rights that are seen as uncontested rights for others. However, they shared mixed views on whether they believe there was greater awareness of human rights, including gender and sexual rights, amongst the public in recent years. Importantly, most interviewees also emphasized that change is by no means uniform or consistent across society. Equally, the more critical interviewees argued that greater awareness and

tolerance does not necessarily translate to better understanding or acceptance, and so more must be done in the struggle for equal rights.

Survey respondents were asked to list what they believed the top three issues facing LGBTQ+ people in Barbados are. The most cited were: difficulty freely expressing one’s SOGIE (60.0%), lack of support in society (54.6%) and lack of family support (40.6%). Likewise, most of the interview respondents also shared concerns about the lack of consistent social support, including family support, available to certain vulnerable LGBTQ+ groups. A significant portion of survey respondents also placed violence against LGBTQ+ people (26.9%), limited legal recognition/protection (26.0%) and discrimination in the workplace (22.7%) in their list of the top three issues facing the LGBTQ+ community.

# JUSTICE



**12.3%**

believed that the **government cooperated** with LGBTI organizations to design inclusive public policies



**20.5%**

agreed that LGBTI people can **freely organize as a community** without fear of retaliation



**7.8%**

stated that they **enjoy the same rights** as the rest of the Barbados population



**18.1%**

believed that LGBTI people **have equal opportunities to participate actively** in politics and decision-making processes

## ***Political Participation***

Political participation was operationalized in this study as inclusive of people's participation in formal political processes, as well as broader forms of citizen participation. Approximately 86% of survey participants assign a level of importance to greater citizen participation among LGBTQI+ people. Like most survey respondents, all interviewees acknowledged the importance of LGBTQI+ citizens' active participation in decision-making processes or other avenues for enacting social change. However, they also noted that there was still minimal representation of LGBTQI+ people actively participating, for instance, in public debates and other decision-making processes. This was corroborated by the survey findings, with only 44.3% of respondents actively participating as citizens. The most cited reasons for participating in citizen space were: to participate in dialogue in the public space (32.4%) and influence inclusive public policies (29.6%). However, those who did not participate as citizens either felt unsafe publicly participating in dialogue (31.5%) or did not believe their participation would influence policy (27.4%).

Less than 20% of survey respondents (18.1%) believed that LGBTQI+ people have equal opportunities to participate actively in politics and decision-making activities. Cisgender men (28.7%) were less likely to think that there were barriers to political participation than cisgender women (11.2%), and transgender and nonbinary respondents (6.8%). Likewise, the interviewees recognized the complexities associated with the ability to participate. Some, for example, commented that occupying a position of privilege makes it easier to actively participate.

The low level of activism amongst survey respondents could be related to fear of retaliation or the perceived unwillingness of public officials to cooperate with the LGBTQI+ community. When asked whether LGBTQI+ people can freely organize as a community without fear,

only 20.5% agreed with this statement. Even fewer respondents (12.3%) believed that, in practice, the Barbados government cooperates with the LGBTQI+ organizations to design public policies. This finding is somewhat in contrast to the information obtained from the interviews, where most interviewees acknowledged that participation and involvement in certain decision-making processes have been encouraged and made easier in recent years by various arms of government. Additionally, some pointed to the engagements with various ministries in the government. Generally, they noted that though there are limitations to these forms of engagement, they nevertheless indicate the government's attempts to encourage active participation of this minority population but state the greater share of change stems from the nuanced ways in which the LGBTQI+ activists enact a degree of agency in their negotiations as citizens.

However, greater societal awareness, as previously stated, does not necessarily translate to wider acceptance of LGBTQI+ people and respect of their rights. Efforts to legally recognize and include LGBTQI+ people in society are still accompanied by vocal opposition and the circulation of essentializing misinformation about gender and sexuality, primarily by conservative, fundamentalist Christian individuals and groups.




# FAMILY

Of respondents **who are open to their families** about being LGBTI...

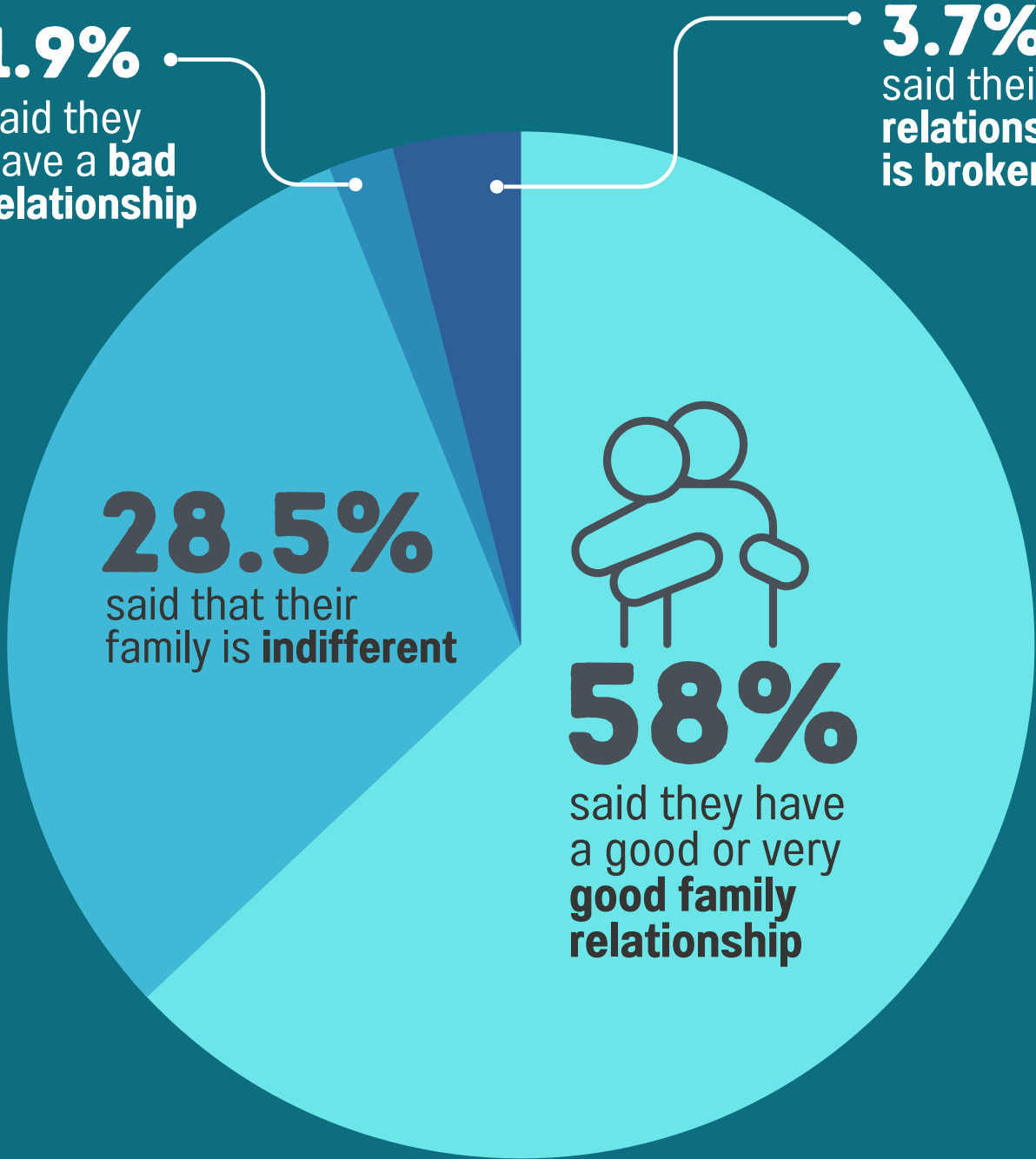
**1.9%**  
said they have a **bad relationship**

**3.7%**  
said their **relationship is broken**

**28.5%**  
said that their family is **indifferent**



**58%**  
said they have a good or very **good family relationship**



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## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

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The National LGBTI Survey and the related qualitative components of the study (that is, the interviews and desk research) revealed that social exclusion, stigmatization and discrimination continue to be experienced by some LGBTQ+ people in Barbados. Based on the qualitative and quantitative findings, the following recommendations are suggested to move towards greater inclusion of LGBTQ+ people in Barbados.

### ***Recommendations***

#### Education

- The Ministry of Education, Technological and Vocational Training should seek a consistent partnership with broader human rights and LGBTIQ+ organizations to ensure the implementation of regular sensitization activities for teachers and guidance counsellors that cover human rights, gender identity and sexual orientation.
- The Ministry of Education, Technological and Vocational Training should collaborate with locally based non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to create, adopt and implement policies to address issues of bullying and discrimination including based on gender identity and sexual orientation in education settings.
- The Ministry of Education, Technological and Vocational Training, in collaboration with UWI and United Nations agencies such as the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) should create updated, age-appropriate, culturally relevant, evidence-based, comprehensive sex education programmes for youth who are both in and out of school.

### ***Employment***

- The government should encourage the sensitization of employers and employees in both the public and private sectors concerning human rights and relevant national laws aimed at creating a safe and inclusive workplace, specifically the Employment Sexual Harassment (Prevention) Act 2017, and the more recent Employment (Prevention of Discrimination) Act 2020.
- Revise the Employment (Prevention of Discrimination) Act 2020 to extend protection based on gender. Likewise, the Employment Sexual Harassment (Prevention) Act 2017 should be amended to include the ways in which gender and sexual orientation impact experiences and manifestations of harassment.

### ***Housing***

- In collaboration with the government, local CSOs, for instance, the Barbados Alliance to End Homelessness and the Barbados Vagrants and Homeless Society should consider two evidence-based solutions: (1) increase affordable housing initiatives and ensure that they are accessible to vulnerable populations, especially those who are low-income and unhoused and (2) increasing the number of shelters and housing facilities and ensuring that these institutions provide culturally competent services and respect human rights.

## **Health**

- The Ministry of Health and Wellness and the Mental Health and Wellness Committee should further increase accessibility to mental health services by creating mental health support teams at schools/colleges and in the public sector. Steps would need to be taken to ensure that team members are trained on the mental health needs of LGBTQ+ individuals and the importance of cultural competency.

## Justice and Violence

- The government should introduce legal protections and penalties for hate crimes, including those based on sexual orientation and gender identity.

## Citizen Security and Political Participation

- The government should take appropriate measures to guarantee the full recognition of an individual's gender identity or expression by removing the hurdles transgender and nonbinary people face in securing identity documents with the name and gender marker that accurately reflect their identity.

# INTRODUCTION

### **3.1 Study Background**

**In August of 2022, UNDP commissioned SALISES at UWI, Cave Hill Campus to undertake a National LGBTI Survey for Barbados as part of the UNDP regional project, Being LGBTI in the Caribbean, which focuses on four countries within the region: Barbados, Dominican Republic, Haiti and Jamaica.**

The Being LGBTI in the Caribbean project seeks to foster collaboration with “governments, civil society, regional institutions (such as UWI) and other stakeholders to promote the social inclusion” of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) people (UNDP 2022, 2). The first phase seeks to achieve this goal by expanding on the existing knowledge and data on the lived realities of LGBTIQ+ people in Barbados, especially regarding the recognition and enjoyment of their fundamental human rights, and experiences of inclusion and exclusion within various segments of society. The goal of this proposed research is to: “Strengthen knowledge and data on the rights of LGBTI people and improve the capacity of governments, civil society and LGBTI organizations to address and reduce the inequality, exclusion, violence and discrimination suffered by LGBTI people” (ibid.).

The “National LGBTI Survey: Barbados” specifically aims to:

- (1) produce knowledge and assess personal costs related to LGBTIQ+ people’s experiences related to social exclusion, stigma and discrimination; and
- (2) make useful recommendations that may inform the development and implementation of inclusive and empowering policies.

To fulfil the above aims, SALISES was asked to execute a study to garner both quantitative and qualitative data. This included conducting a national online survey, as well as consultations

and in-depth, semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders from the various local LGBTIQ+ organizations and those who, because of the nature of their work and collaborations, have knowledge of the experiences of LGBTIQ+ people.

### **3.2 Study Context: Being LGBTIQ+ in Barbados**

#### **3.2.1 SOCIORELIGIOUS CONTEXT**

LGBT people face discrimination in employment, housing, education and healthcare. Civil society noted that LGBT people are vulnerable to threats, crime and destruction of property both at the hands of police and broader society. (Human Dignity Trust n.d.)

The Anglophone, or English-speaking, Caribbean region has been repeatedly labelled by various international human rights groups as one of the most hostile, dangerous and homophobic places for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people (Grey and Attai 2019). This representation is problematic as it reproduces certain imperialistic and colonial discourses about brown and black spaces, cultures and people, and overlooks the complexities of English-speaking Caribbean people’s experiences. Moreover, some regional advocates have noted that this representation minimizes the nuanced ways in which Caribbean lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer people actualize agency through their navigation and transgressions of dominant heteronormative expectations of gender and sexuality (Grey and Attai 2019). The representation, nonetheless, is also partly informed by, and draws critical attention to, the discrimination, social exclusion and acts of direct, cultural and systematic violence that are in fact routinely experienced by LGBTQ+ people in the region (Pere and Baynes Henry 2018).

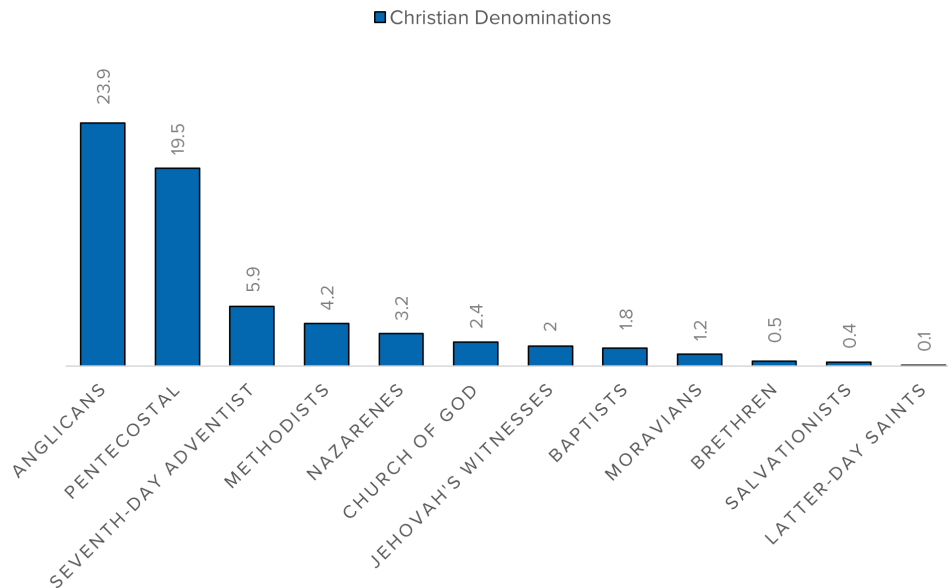
Activists, academics, and NGOs have given much critical attention to various matters relating to the experiences and treatment of LGBTQ+ people in countries such as Barbados (Jackman 2016a; Murray 2012); noticeably, however, the experiences of intersex people have been largely overlooked in the existing literature. Typically, much of the attention has focused on public perceptions, as well as on the marginalization and social exclusion of gay, lesbian and gender-diverse people because of various discriminatory socioeconomic, religious and cultural practices, beliefs and norms. For example, Jackman (2016a), points out:

**...individuals who identified as being active in their religion were more likely to think that same-sex behaviours needed to be admonished to protect society's morals, stop the spread of homosexuality and protect young children from abuse than those who identified as passive in their religion. Persons whose views on sexuality came from religious sources were also more likely to believe that the laws are important from a moral perspective and were more likely to think the laws protect young persons from abuse... Given that several religious doctrines characterize same-sex intimate acts as sinful, it seems logical that those with greater religious exposure, or for whom religion is more salient, would be more likely to view homosexuality in a negative light (12).**

In a later publication, Jackman (2020) finds: "Barbadians whose views on sexuality were theologically based were less likely to support restrictions on same-sex intimacy when they have a close relationship with a gay man or lesbian. However, this decline in support for the laws brought about by meaningful contact did not translate to support for gay and lesbian rights among the religiously inclined. Rather, it manifested itself as a state of attitudinal ambivalence" (1512). Others have identified conservative religious teachings, particularly within fundamentalist Christianity, as one of the major factors influencing negative perceptions and treatment of LGBTQ people within the region. (Lazarus 2015; Perkins 2016)

There are nuances and complexities in the role of religion within Barbados society and changes to the religious landscape have been observed in recent years. However, religion still has a far-reaching influence in many people's everyday lives, and maintains a symbolic, ideological and material significance in an array of spaces. This is perhaps unsurprising as most of the population identify with some form of religion. According to the 2010 Barbados Population Census, 75.6% of the population identifies with Christianity (see figure 1 for a breakdown of affiliation based on denomination). Only 2.6% of the population identify with a non-Christian religion (1% Rastafarian, 0.7% Muslim, 0.5% Hindus, 0.05% Jews, Bahá'í 0.04%), while 20.6% identify as having no religion.

**FIGURE 1: PERCENTAGE OF THE POPULATION IDENTIFYING WITH A CHRISTIAN DENOMINATION**



Source: 2010 Barbados Population Census.

### 3.2.2 LEGAL CONTEXT

The existence in most independent English-speaking Caribbean countries of discriminatory colonial-inherited laws that criminalize certain sexual acts deemed deviant and unnatural also influences and legitimizes the marginalization and exclusion of LGBTQ+ people. James notes: “‘Homosexuality’ is not a crime in the Caribbean, but laws criminalize same-sex conduct. Even though colonies in the Caribbean adopted British laws outlawing same-sex intimacy, they vary in language, the types of acts prohibited and the punishments imposed. Whatever the various incarnations, they are often referred to as ‘sodomy’ or ‘buggery’ laws” (Human Rights

Watch 2018, 13).<sup>5</sup> Under Sections 9 and 12 of the Barbados Sexual Offences Act, Chapter 154, acts of “buggery” and “serious indecency” are criminalized and carry maximum penalties of life imprisonment, in the case of the former, and up to 15 years for the latter (ibid.):

#### **BUGGERY**

**9. Any person who commits buggery is guilty of an offence and is liable on conviction on indictment to imprisonment for life.**

<sup>5</sup> Human Rights Watch, 2018. Available at: <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2018>

## SERIOUS INDECENCY

12. (1) A person who commits an act of serious indecency on or towards another or incites another to commit that act with the person or with another person is guilty of an offence and, if committed on or towards a person 16 years of age or more or if the person incited is of 16 years of age or more, is liable on conviction to imprisonment for a term of 10 years.

(2) A person who commits an act of serious indecency with or towards a child under the age of 16 or incites the child under that age to such an act with him or another, is guilty of an offence and is liable on conviction to imprisonment for a term of 15 years.

(3) An act of “serious indecency” is an act, whether natural or unnatural by a person involving the use of the genital organs for the purpose of arousing or gratifying sexual desire.<sup>6</sup>

Although these provisions are presented in gender-neutral language, advocates indicate that these are primarily targeting and criminalizing consensual same-sex relations between men and between women. Academics and human rights defenders assert that these laws serve the purpose of “reminding LGBT people that they are falling short of claims to legality merely by virtue of their sexual and gendered practices” (Grey and Attai 2019, 1). Others argue: “While these laws are rarely enforced, their mere existence has been deemed a violation of human rights which ‘underpins further acts of discrimination’ and various forms of violence” (Human Dignity Trust n.d.).

In Barbados, as in other parts of the region, there have been numerous public calls for the legal reform of the Sexual Offences Act, as well as for legal recognition and protection of the rights of LGBT people, in keeping with international treaties and standards. For example, in 2018, a petition was filed by three Barbadians and sent to the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) and the Organization of American States (OAS) for a decision recommending the repeal of Sections 9 and 12 of the Barbados Sexual Offences Act pertaining to buggery and serious indecency. The petitioners argued that the presence of the laws violated various rights outlined in the American Convention on Human Rights. One of the petitioners, Alexa Hoffman, explained: “With these laws, we have been stripped of the freedom to enjoy one of the most important aspects of any romantic relationship—intimacy.”<sup>7</sup> Similar to the Human Rights Watch Report (2018), Hoffman further stated that many LGBT Barbadians face stigma, discrimination and abuse on an everyday basis, which are legitimized by the existence of these laws: “I have seen many of my friends simply pack their bags and leave Barbados, even though our Constitution was designed to protect everyone as equals. These laws must be relegated to the dustbins of history.”<sup>8</sup> A 2018 document, “International Challenge to Barbadian Laws Criminalising LGBTQ People: Questions & Answers,” prepared by Trans Advocacy & Agitation Barbados, the Canadian HIV/AIDS Legal Network and the University of Toronto’s International Human Rights Program<sup>9</sup> explains that the buggery and serious indecency laws are being challenged, since they not only invade individual privacy, but also undermine the right to health, with “particularly discriminatory effect on LGBTQ people.” Changing such laws is important for safeguarding both human rights and public health:

<sup>6</sup> *Sexual Offences Act*, chap. 154. Available at: <https://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/hrc/docs/ngos/lgbti2.pdf>

<sup>7</sup> “Call to Repeal Sexual Offences Act: Petition Filed,” *Loop News*, 7 June 2018. Available at: <https://barbados.loopnews.com/content/call-repeal-sexual-offences-act-petition-filed>

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>9</sup> “International Challenge to Barbadian Laws Criminalising LGBTQ People: Questions & Answers,” June 2018. Available at: [https://ihrp.law.utoronto.ca/sites/default/files/media/Barbados-IACHR\\_QA\\_June-6\\_FINAL\\_updated.pdf](https://ihrp.law.utoronto.ca/sites/default/files/media/Barbados-IACHR_QA_June-6_FINAL_updated.pdf)



**They create a hostile climate for LGBTQ Barbadians who seek any kind of health services, particularly sexual health services. Among other things, such laws, and the stigma and discrimination they contribute to, deter trans people, gay men and other men who have sex with men (MSM) from seeking critical HIV services, including testing, treatment, care and support services. This undermines an effective national response to the pandemic.<sup>10</sup>**

This case has not yet been finalized, nor has it received significant local public attention or support.

“Savings clauses” feature in the constitutions of Commonwealth Caribbean countries and attract continuous criticism. A savings clause is a provision in a constitution protecting any law that was validly in force before the country’s adoption of the constitution. It is a legacy of colonial rule that protects laws that might otherwise be struck down as unconstitutional on human rights grounds.<sup>11</sup> The historical purpose of savings clauses was to secure “an orderly transition from colonial rule to independence.”<sup>12</sup> The savings clauses “were intended to smooth the transition, not to freeze standards forever.”<sup>13</sup> With the presence of savings clauses, laws such as buggery and serious indecency, for example sections 9 and 12 of the Sexual Offences Act are ever-present and preserved throughout the region.

In this regard, it is significant to note that the Caribbean Court of Justice (CCJ) in the much-needed judgment *Nervais v R* [2018] CCJ 19 (AJ), held section 11(c) of the Barbados Constitution provides an independently enforceable fundamental right which is immune from the savings clause; and that section 4(1) of the 1966 Independence Order may be used to modify a law which is saved by the savings clause. The impact of this ruling is visible considering the High Court of Barbados’s ruling in December 2022 to strike down the country’s colonial-era buggery and serious indecency laws that criminalized consensual same-sex relations. The case was brought by Equals Barbados, and Butterfly Trans Barbados with support from the Eastern Caribbean Alliance for Diversity and Equality (ECADE).

Barbados is now one of three countries in the Eastern Caribbean to strike down these discriminatory laws.<sup>14</sup> This is because of the legal challenges made by local and regional civil society organizations, specifically ECADE. Upon announcement of the legal victory, one local activist stated, “This is a step in the right direction for the protection of LGBTQ+ people in Barbados as we continue to ensure stigma-free access to services and positive inclusion in society.”<sup>15</sup> It should be noted here that the State could still appeal this December 2022 legal ruling, as suggested in the following statement by the Barbados Attorney General:

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Adrai Kayne, “Constitutional ‘Savings Clauses’ following the decision of the JCPC in *Chandler*” (2022). Available at: <https://www.libertaschambers.com/media-hub/constitutional-savings-clauses-revisited/>

<sup>12</sup> *Watson v. R*, 64 WLR 241, per Lord Hope, 2004.

<sup>13</sup> *Matthew v State of Trinidad and Tobago*, UKPC 33, per Lord Nichols, dissenting judgment, 2004.

<sup>14</sup> Antigua and Barbuda and Saint Kitts and Nevis previously struck down the equivalent sections of their legislations, in July 2022 and August 2022, respectively.

<sup>15</sup> Sherrylyne Clarke, “Buggery Laws Struck Down by Supreme Court” *Nation News* (17 December 2022). Available at: <https://www.nationnews.com/2022/12/13/buggery-laws-struck-supreme-court/>

**I do have some immediate concerns in relation to the striking down of the offences created in section 12 since that section concerns, among other things, indecent sexual conduct with minors. I am awaiting the perfected order and also the written decision of Justice Weekes and unfortunately, that decision will not be available until early in the new year, but when we see the written decision, we would then be able to analyse her legal reasoning and make a decision on whether we appeal or not.<sup>16</sup>**

There have been similar legal challenges brought by LGBT people against other Anglophone Caribbean states in local, regional and international courts in attempts to remedy human rights abuses and amend these discriminatory laws. For example, the rulings by High Courts in both Belize and Trinidad and Tobago have been widely publicized. These and the December 2022 ruling by the Supreme Court of Barbados are indeed examples of successful strategic litigation within the region. Strategic litigation highlights the actualization of agency by local LGBTQ+ people and provides opportunities for mobilization and active engagement as citizens. Furthermore, strategic litigation, despite its drawbacks, also potentially publicizes, in and out of the courts, the experiences of discrimination and rights abuses experienced by LGBTQ+ people (Bulkan and Robinson 2016). However, legal reforms, though extremely important, cannot alone guarantee meaningful sociocultural changes relating to the inclusion and exclusion of marginalized groups within the wider society. Instead, what is also necessary for bringing about positive social

change are increased opportunities to share experiences, shape/construct knowledge and policy responses, as well as ongoing meaningful collaboration with various stakeholders and public engagement, education and sensitization.

### **3.2.3 SOCIO-LEGAL ADVANCEMENTS**

#### **3.2.3.1 SOCIAL JUSTICE COMMITTEE**

Prior to the Supreme Court of Barbados's 2022 ruling that the country's buggery and serious indecency laws were "null and void," there were other significant changes being made relating to the inclusion of LGBTQI+ people within society. In 2019, the Minister of Labour, Social Security and Third Sector broadened the tri-partite Social Partnership<sup>17</sup> with the introduction of a Social Justice Committee. The Social Justice Committee comprises representatives from the LGBTQI+, sex-workers and disability communities, as well as from faith-based institutions. Its main goal is to "consider and make recommendations to Government, directly through the Social Partnership and Cabinet, on social justice issues," relating to "poverty alleviation; the role of the family in fostering cultural and social norms and values; discrimination; access to education; integration of people with disabilities; access to employment; safety and security and the environment."<sup>18</sup> Though this effort to include a wider cross section of the population, including marginalized and stigmatized groups, into the esteemed Social Partnership is indeed commendable, it is worth noting that the committee only has one LGBTQI+ representative. The diversity and complexities within this strategic grouping may therefore be overlooked or downplayed.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> The Barbados Social Partnership is a tri-partite governing mechanism comprising representatives of government, labour and the private sector. It was instituted in the 1990s to address social and, particularly, economic (in)securities and development.

<sup>18</sup> Marlon Madden, "New 'Social Justice Group' in Partnership," *Barbados Today* (28 March 2022). Available at: <https://barbadostoday.bb/2019/03/28/new-social-justice-group-in-partnership/>

### **3.2.3.2 EMPLOYMENT (PREVENTION OF DISCRIMINATION) ACT 2020**

Other significant changes include an amendment to the country's Employment Act, which was adopted by the Parliament of Barbados on 5 August 2020. Specifically, the Employment (Prevention of Discrimination) Act 2020, which is to be read and interpreted in conjunction with the Employment Rights Act 2012, explicitly addresses the issue of employment discrimination and identifies nineteen grounds—including sex, sexual orientation, medical condition, marital status, domestic partnership status and family responsibility—on which to extend protection from direct or indirect and intentional or unintentional acts of discrimination. Unlike the 2012 Act, the 2020 Act identifies the family as comprising domestic partners, with the following definitions provided to aid interpretation:

“domestic partnership” means the relationship between two persons each at least 18 years of age, who live together on a genuine domestic basis but does not include

- (a) the relationship between a married couple;
- (b) a relationship where one of the persons provides the other with domestic support or personal care or both for a fee or reward, and “domestic partner” shall be construed accordingly;

“domestic partnership status” means the state of being a domestic partner; or

the domestic partner or the former domestic partner of a particular individual.<sup>19</sup>

The Employment (Prevention of Discrimination) Act 2020 is significant, as it addresses concerns about discrimination, inclusion, recognition and protection on the basis of sexual orientation. Importantly, the Employment (Prevention of Discrimination) Act 2020 includes sex and sexual orientation, but it makes no reference to gender.

On the one hand, the Act may be read as being progressive in its recognition that individuals' sexuality, sex and intimate relationships shape experiences of marginalization and discrimination; on the other hand, it fails to recognize the ways in which perceptions and beliefs about gender identity and expression continue to inform people's access to, and day-to-day experiences in, employment. This Act is nevertheless considered by some local and international observers and sexual rights activists to be a positive step towards acknowledging people of diverse sexual orientations and family structures, possibly improving the livelihoods of those who often face marginalization and fostering greater inclusivity within employment. In August 2022, Parliamentarians for Global Action (PGA) published the following statement:

PGA commends members of Parliament for this important initiative that will guarantee, by law, equal access to employment and adequate redress in case of discrimination for many Barbadians, and looks forward to working with MPs and local civil society to guarantee that transgender and gender non-conforming people are also protected from discrimination in the workplace.

Legal protections for equal and non-discriminatory access to employment for all individuals promote individual well-being, a path to decent work and livelihoods, and inclusive economic growth.

Barbados, a state party to the American Convention on Human Rights, is a step closer to fulfilling its obligations to prevent all forms of discrimination, including on the grounds of sexual orientation as well as gender identity and expression, and could become a model of commitment to equality and inclusion of all individuals in the Caribbean.

<sup>19</sup> International Labour Organization, “Barbados” (n.d.). Available at: [https://www.ilo.org/dyn/natlex/natlex4.detail?p\\_lang=en&p\\_isn=110880](https://www.ilo.org/dyn/natlex/natlex4.detail?p_lang=en&p_isn=110880)

The Employment (Prevention of Discrimination) Act 2020 is seen as a step in the right direction by human rights activists. It has, however, also faced criticisms. Besides those who question the exclusion of gender as grounds for protection, more conservative voices within society have critiqued the inclusion of provisions such as domestic partnership as grounds for protection against discrimination. Various groups and individuals have questioned the intended purpose of this provision, highlighting that they run counter to the Sexual Offences Act, the Marriage Act and other legislation that only recognizes marriage and unions between a man and a woman. They have thus queried whether the intention is to pave the way for these laws to be undermined.<sup>20</sup>

### **3.2.3.3 THE BARBADOS WELCOME STAMP**

Since the COVID-19 pandemic, there have been other pertinent socio-legal developments in Barbados relating to sexuality and gender. The challenges resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic further foregrounded the necessity for Barbados to re-evaluate its global image and relations, as well as local practices, policies and systems to rebuild a sustainable and resilient socioeconomic environment. Indeed, when the government of Barbados introduced its Welcome Stamp in July 2020<sup>21</sup> as a part of its economic recovery strategy, there were questions raised by local and international observers about the country's buggery and indecency laws, as well as about other heteronormative laws/practices that exclude LGBTQ individuals and their families and create a hostile environment for them. The existence of discriminatory laws, some argue, would

possibly undermine the economic potential of the Welcome Stamp program.<sup>22</sup> On 21 July 2020, in response to the concerns about who could apply for the Welcome Stamp, the government declared in the House of Parliament that Barbados would welcome all regardless of their race, gender or sexual orientation:

I want to say that as long as I am prime minister of this nation, we welcome all. Everyone... This country that has been forged regrettably in the bowels of discrimination cannot want to discriminate against anybody for any reason, all must breathe in this world, all must breathe in this country.<sup>23</sup>

Further, in addressing the concerns about exclusion of LGBTQ+ families, amendments were made to the eligibility requirements for the Welcome Stamp. Specifically, the notion of a family was broadened to include the term "partner" and the previous definition of spouse, which was originally identified as a union between a man and a woman, was deleted. These changes garnered mixed reactions: on the one hand, there was criticism from some religious segments, and on the other hand, it was commended as a positive change. The rapid response of the government as a result of having an international audience and a pressing need to revitalize the struggling economy did not, however, go unnoticed by local LGBTQ+ people. The cofounder of Barbados, Gays and Lesbians Against Discrimination (B-GLAD), for example, underscored the unequal response of the government to the needs of marginalized LGBTQ people who live in Barbados, stating:

**20** Anesta Henry, "PDP Raises Questions about Domestic Partnership," *Barbados Today* (8 August 2020). Available at: <https://barbadostoday.bb/2020/08/08/pdp-raises-questions-about-domestic-partnerships/?fbclid=IwAR1Ewmc72XKclPCNxhdL3U6ai09gxy8wPcliSrv4oCX-3dcatJNWnKuUfAY>

**21** The Barbados Welcome Stamp, which was legislated on 24 July 2020 by the Parliament of Barbados as the Remote Employment Act, 2020 refers to a 12-month permit that is extended to non-nationals (individuals and their families) to live, attend school and work remotely in Barbados.

**22** Marlon Madden, "Barbados Missing Out on LGBT Community," *Barbados Today*, (22 July 2020). Available at: <https://barbadostoday.bb/2020/07/22/barbados-missing-out-on-lgbt-community/>

**23** "Mottley on 12-month Welcome Stamp: 'We Welcome All, Everyone,'" (21 July 2020). Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HDjxbQxgflf>

I hope the way in which this language was updated [in the Welcome Stamp] quickly and easily, so too can the language in policies and legislation which cause disenfranchisement to LGBTQ people who have to navigate Barbados every day. The most marginalized LGBTQ people who live here with legislation that criminalizes their identities and fails to protect them from discrimination deserve to be heard and met with respect from the State as well.<sup>24</sup>

Some observers have pointed out that the introduction of the Welcome Stamp Programme influenced the Employment (Prevention of Discrimination) Act 2020; however, some activists have pointed out that efforts to create the amendments were being made long before the COVID-19 pandemic and the passage of the Welcome Stamp Programme.

### **3.2.3.4 REIMAGINING THE NEW REPUBLIC: CHARTER OF BARBADOS AND CONSTITUTIONAL REFORM PROCESS**

Besides these developments, there have been notable declarations by senior representatives of the State that indicate a possible commitment to securing greater inclusivity in society. For example, in September 2020, Her Excellency Dame Sandra Mason, the then Governor General and now President of the new Republic of Barbados, delivered the Speech from the Throne, which marks the opening of Parliament. In this speech, Dame Sandra reiterated that the government intended to make certain changes relating to sexuality:

My government is prepared to recognize a form of civil unions for couples of the same gender so as to ensure that no human being in Barbados will be discriminated against, in

exercise of civil rights that ought to be theirs. The settlement of Barbados was birthed and fostered in discrimination, but the time has come for us to end discrimination in all forms. I wish to emphasize that my government is not allowing any form of same-sex marriage and will put this matter to a public referendum. My government will accept and be guided by the vote of the public as promised in the manifesto.<sup>25</sup>

Despite this official pledge to enact legal changes that may foster greater inclusivity, there are nevertheless limits being placed on both the degree of change that will be permitted and the avenue for enacting it. The Speech from the Throne reveals the political tension between fostering social transformation and safeguarding long-standing traditions and ideologies, especially when these are still embraced by the majority. However, the proposed changes are deemed necessary, not only for economic reasons, but because of the imperative to respect human rights and, equally, to ensure that Barbados maintains its positive reputation and leadership position on the international stage:

If we wish to be considered among the progressive nations of the world, Barbados cannot afford to lose its international leadership place and reputation. Nor can a society as tolerant as ours allow itself to be “blacklisted” for human and civil rights abuses or discrimination on the matter of how we treat human sexuality and relations. My government will do the right thing, understanding that this too will attract controversy. Equally, it is our hope that with the passage of time, the changes we now propose will be part of the fabric of our country’s record of law, human rights and social justice.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>24</sup> Daveny Ellis, “LGBTQ Hopeful after Barbados Welcome Stamp Requirements Change,” *Loop News* (21 July 2020). Available at: <https://barbados.loopnews.com/content/barbados-welcome-stamp-application-changed-after-lgbtq-criticism>

<sup>25</sup> Her Excellency Dame Sandra Mason, GCMG DA QC, “Speech from the Throne,” Barbados Parliament, 15 September 2020. Available at: [https://www.barbadosparliament.com/uploads/quick\\_link/d75dd5f579f78066eaefc7d131e15153.pdf](https://www.barbadosparliament.com/uploads/quick_link/d75dd5f579f78066eaefc7d131e15153.pdf)

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

A similar intent to foster a respect for the human rights of all Barbadians and to ensure a more inclusive society is communicated in the new symbolic Charter of Barbados, which was presented to Parliament in November 2021, one week before the country transitioned from being a constitutional monarchy to a republic.<sup>27</sup> The Charter of Barbados covers five articles, the first of which states: “All Barbadians are born free and are equal in human dignity and rights regardless of age, race, ethnicity, faith, class, cultural and educational background, ability, sex, gender or sexual orientation.”<sup>28</sup> Though not legally binding, Prime Minister Mottley argued that the document “promotes the concept of active citizenship and is a guide for how people should treat each other and the country.”<sup>29</sup> Furthermore, it provides a guideline

**...to ensure that we must never, never, never, never reflect any ounce of discrimination against any human being in this nation if we are to be fair to the battles and to honour the battles fought by our ancestors and if we are to be fair to the precepts of human dignity that we believe in, whether as a nation or spiritually so...<sup>30</sup>**

To reflect the commitment to achieving inclusivity, the Charter, like the Employment (Prevention of Discrimination) Act 2020, was crafted after consultation with various stakeholders, including members of the local LGBTQI+ community and faith-based organizations.

In 2022, the country took another step towards reimagining the new republic by commencing the process of constitutional reform. This entailed the establishment of a Constitutional Reform Commission of Barbados and the undertaking of a series of virtual and in-person public consultations to allow a wide range of people to participate in the shaping of the “modern” Nation-State.<sup>31</sup> At present, there are no representatives from the LGBTQI+ community on the Constitutional Reform Commission of Barbados. Though the selected commission members represent a diverse cross section of society, there are nonetheless groups and voices that are not directly represented. In particular, the absence of a visible representative from the LGBTQI+ community, as well as from the main opposition political parties and the Rastafarian minority religious community, has not gone unnoticed. Indeed:

Critics contend that the CRC could have been more reflective of an inclusive microcosm of Barbadian society had there been an open and democratic consultation with the parliament and civil society. The notable absence of such crucial representation and democratic consultation could give rise to the public perception that the CRC is, for all intents and purposes, a political and not a technical CRC (Barrow Giles and Yearwood 2022).

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<sup>27</sup> This transition means that after 55 years of independence from England, Barbados has become one of four Anglophone Caribbean countries to have removed the English monarch as the head of state. The new head of state is a Barbadian-elected President.

<sup>28</sup> Sherrylyn Clarke, “The Charter of Barbados,” *Nation News* (23 November 2021). Available at: <https://www.nationnews.com/2021/11/23/the-charter-of-barbados/>

<sup>29</sup> Dwane Parris, “PM: Charter of Barbados ‘Promotes Active Citizenship,’” *Barbados Today* (24 November 2021). Available at: <https://barbados.today.bb/2021/11/24/pm-charter-of-barbados-promotes-active-citizenship/>

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Julie Carrington, “Constitutional Reform Commission Members Sworn In,” Government Information Service (20 June 2022). Available at: <https://gisbarbados.gov.bb/blog/constitutional-reform-commission-members-sworn-in/>

LGBTQI+ activists, like other stakeholders, have nevertheless been presenting their views and experiences at various constitutional town hall meetings. Their participation in these public consultation initiatives has been met with vocal opposition from segments of the population that are invested in maintaining and protecting a socio-legal heteronormative configuration of society.<sup>32</sup> Lazarus (2018) suggests that one could use a “call and response” explanation to understand this type of interaction between sexual rights activists and those in opposition, as

**...there appears to be an “anticipatory countermobilization” by Evangelicals as well as like-minded lay individuals against perceived impending threats to the traditional heterosexual family and by extension the nation. These perceived “threats” are naturally not seen as figurative or the product of paranoia by those who subscribe and translate these views in the local setting, since they are already the “realities” observable in Western societies, which are seen as having the power to exert influence on economically strained societies. Furthermore, this countermobilization is not only a response to changes internationally but it is also wedded to existing endogenous anxieties as well as local and regional discussions relating to sexual and reproductive rights (401).**

Despite vocal opposition and at times a verbally hostile environment, LGBTQI+ activists continue to bring attention during these town hall meetings to experiences of individual and systemic

marginalization, exclusion and violence, as well as to the limited legal recognition and protection within the society, which hinders LGBTQI+ people’s ability to live as full and equal contributing citizens. The constitutional reform process is ongoing and as such, it is still too early to know for certain how gender and sexuality will ultimately be configured in this pivotal legal document that outlines the rights and responsibilities of all citizens, or the potential impact of this nation-building endeavour on the local LGBTQI+ community. However, the public engagements, paired with the official statements about securing greater inclusivity and the previously mentioned legal changes generate a climate of impending social change, though discrimination inevitably remains.

Although there are common experiences of stigma, discrimination, exclusion and violence that place tremendous limits on many LGBTQI+ people’s abilities to enjoy their human rights and to live as full and equal citizens, it is also vital to understand that individuals have complex and nuanced experiences. To this end, the Barbados National LGBTI Survey project seeks to contribute to the production of knowledge about LGBTQI+ people in Barbados, especially as it pertains to their experiences with the following interconnected areas:

- 1. Citizen Security**
- 2. Education**
- 3. Employment**
- 4. Health**
- 5. Housing**
- 6. Violence**
- 7. Justice**
- 8. Political Participation**

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<sup>32</sup> Bert Wilkinson, “Bajans Attend Constitutional Reform Hearings,” *Caribbean Life* (11 November 2022). Available at: <https://www.caribbeanlife.com/bajans-attend-constitutional-reform-hearings/>

These areas warrant critical attention for several reasons. Specifically, they have been repeatedly identified, anecdotally as well as in various types of publications, as areas in which minorities, including gender and sexual minority groups, often experience stigma and marginalization. Moreover, critical examination of these areas may provide useful insights into (1) people's differential experiences as citizens; and (2) the various avenues for, and barriers to, the realization of human rights in specific local settings. This research thus seeks to produce knowledge in this regard, as well as to shed further light on the various manifestations of power and inequalities within society that continue to inform people's experiences. Furthermore, the research seeks to produce knowledge and recommendations that may guide meaningful policy interventions aimed at increasing greater inclusivity and improving the lives of LGBTQI+ people in Barbados.



# LITERATURE REVIEW

## 4.1 Intersex People as a Hidden Population

The literature review undertaken for this study, comprising several academic and policy-related sources published within the region between 2015 and 2022, reveals the varied experiences of, and attitudes towards, LGBTQ+ people in the Eastern Caribbean and Barbados more specifically; however, these sources dedicate no attention to the experiences of intersex people. Indeed, a 2021 UNDP Report on “Human Rights of Intersex Persons in Barbados, Dominican Republic, Haiti and Jamaica” states:

**In general terms, a lack of information and knowledge about intersex people results in intersex people being largely invisible. This, within the broader context of existing prejudice and discrimination on the grounds of gender identity and expression and sexual orientation, results in intersex people being excluded and facing the same patterns of discrimination as LGBT people in Barbados (20).**

This 2021 UNDP Report further notes that the Barbados State does not explicitly recognize intersex people nor have specific medical protocols or legal provisions in place for ensuring their integrity, protection and inclusion within society; thus, they remain misunderstood, invisibilized, pathologized and stigmatized (ibid., 22). One could therefore conclude that in doing research on gender and sexual orientation in countries such as Barbados, intersex people comprise a hidden subpopulation within a larger hidden population. Lazarus (2013) explains that within research, a hidden population

**...is largely a contextually situated categorization, based on people having certain experiences and/or identities that are considered extremely “private,” “deviant” and tabooed, or...even being criminalized because they counter dominant norms and value systems within specific communities and their larger societies. Consequently, these people become further silenced, marginalized, stigmatized, shamed and thus perpetually forced to remain “hidden” in their coexistence with the perceived unsympathetic and scrutinising “majority” (21–22).**

Factors such as a lack of knowledge, stigma, discrimination, violence, stereotypes, misinformation and surgical interventions performed during infancy in an attempt to fit individuals into the ideal sex-binary categorizations are identified, in studies from outside the region, as contributing to intersex people remaining a hidden population. Consequently, intersex people’s experiences of social inclusion and exclusion remain largely under-researched and thus misunderstood within many societies (Garland and Travis 2018; Rosenwohl-Mack, *et al.*, 2020). Moreover, though there has been a move since 2013 towards the legal recognition of intersex in some parts of the world, many States still do not legally recognize intersex people and as such, their human rights continue to be violated (Garland and Travis 2018).

Similarly, Mestre (2022), in a comparative examination of the treatment of intersex people in Latin America and Europe, argues that various States in both continents have made legal advances that have contributed to greater visibility and inclusion of intersex people.<sup>33</sup> However, there is still much to be done in addressing the difficulties faced. Indeed, Mestre (2022) highlights that “although regional, cultural and social landscapes differ in both continents, intersex groups are subject to constant violations of their human rights, and they struggle for recognition and for their bodies to be respected outside the binary categories of sex and gender” (1). Very little is known or reported about intersex people’s experiences of social inclusion and exclusion as well as the enjoyment of their human rights within the Anglophone Caribbean. The National LGBTI Survey thus seeks to offer some insight into their experiences or the reasons for their invisibility in Barbados.

## 4.2 Socio-Legal Inclusion and Exclusion

LGBT people’s experiences of violence, stigma, marginalization and exclusion from various institutions and sectors within the region are a common thematic focus within the reviewed literature. Human Rights Watch (2018), for example, reported that within the Eastern Caribbean,

**Discrimination and stigma against LGBT people seep[s] into everyday activities, whether it be availing oneself of services such as healthcare, school or riding a bus, or social activities such as going to the movies or shopping. Ordinary social encounters can be menacing. Some LGBT individuals**

**described changing their lifestyle and behaviours to avoid contact with hostile members of their family, church or community, while others described having to endure physical attacks. Some people opted to socialize only with a few trusted friends in the safety of their homes (3).**

Though earlier studies and publications on LGBTQ+ people’s experiences within the Anglophone Caribbean were predominantly on gay men, men who have sex with men (MSM) and, to a lesser extent, lesbian women, there is now a growing body of work on transgender and gender-diverse people. For example, a report on “Discrimination at Every Turn: The Experience of Trans and Gender-Diverse People in Eleven Caribbean Countries” underscores:

**For transgender and gender-diverse people, nearly every aspect of daily life—including access to education, employment, housing, healthcare, and public goods and services, as well as the ability to move freely through the streets without facing violence and discrimination—can depend on the ability to present valid government-issued identification that aligns with their gender identity and expression (UCTRANS and OutRight Action International 2022, 1).**

To date, Cuba is the only Caribbean country that legally allows transgender people to make changes to their assigned gender marker on official documents.

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<sup>33</sup> The advances achieved in Latin American countries such as Mexico and Colombia have occurred through national courts and The Inter-American Commission of Human Rights (IACHR), and not as a result of regionalized strategies, as observed in parts of Europe (Mestre 2022, 14).

Moreover, the UCTRANS study found that the key challenges faced by Caribbean transgender and gender-diverse people are discrimination in employment and with health services, as well as a lack of legal recognition. The executive director of UCTRANS, Alexis D'Marco, asserts that experiences of legal and social discrimination not only fuel the HIV pandemic but also contribute to an array of other personal challenges.<sup>34</sup> In a similar vein, an article published by Lanham, *et al.* (2019), based on 76 interviews conducted with transgender women in a number of Caribbean countries including Barbados, points to trans women's negative experiences of: (1) discrimination from various State institutions and non-State service providers; and (2) gender-based violence, including emotional (which was most commonly experienced), sexual, economic and physical violence, as well as other human rights violations based on respondents' gender expression and identity. The authors thus conclude:

**Although international and regional resolutions call for the legal protection of transgender people, States do not meet these obligations. To respect, promote and fulfil trans women's human rights, governments should enact and enforce antidiscrimination and gender-affirming laws and policies. Governments should also sensitize providers to deliver gender-affirming services (Lanham, *et al.* 2019, 37–38).**

Besides drawing attention to the marginalization, exclusion and violence endured in everyday life, the legal system and related institutions that support national laws and justice are repeatedly identified as key areas for seeking intervention

and change. The Barbados 2021 Human Rights report published by the U.S. Department of State avers that although there was no evidence of the buggery and serious indecency laws being enforced during the reporting year, there was evidence of LGBTQI+ people experiencing acts of violence and being denied access to justice:

**An NGO reported that authorities did not take seriously reports of sexual and homophobic harassment. In some cases, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and intersex (LGBTQI+) persons identified perpetrators of harassment but were deterred from reporting these experiences or prevented from seeking justice... Civil society groups reported that LGBTQI+ persons faced verbal abuse at home and in public.**

As noted above in the Introduction, the legal system is considered a primary area of concern since discriminatory legislation that criminalizes, overlooks, silences and erases LGBTQ+ people's existence and realities also legitimizes other forms of social and economic discrimination, violence (individual and systemic), stigmatization and exclusion (Beck *et al.*, 2017; Griffith and Jackman 2022). Indeed, Human Rights Watch notes that the discriminatory buggery and serious/gross indecency laws:

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<sup>34</sup> *Caribbean News Now*, "Study Reveals Struggles of Under-protected Caribbean Transgender Community" (1 April 2021). Available at: <https://thecaribbeannewsnow.com/study-reveals-struggles-of-under-protected-caribbean-transgender-community/>

**Have broad latitude, are vaguely worded, and serve to legitimize discrimination and hostility towards LGBT people in the Eastern Caribbean. They are rarely enforced by way of criminal prosecutions, but all share one common trait: by singling out, in a discriminatory manner, a vulnerable social group they give social and legal sanction for discrimination, violence, stigma and prejudice against LGBT individuals (Human Rights Watch 2018, 1).**

It is therefore unsurprising that there are also several studies, for example those conducted by the Caribbean Development Research Services (CADRE), that are aimed at understanding the public perceptions and motivations for maintaining discriminatory legislation such as the buggery and serious/gross indecency laws (Jackman 2016(a), 2016(b), 2020).

#### **4.2.1 SEXUAL CITIZENSHIP AND CITIZEN SECURITY**

Arguably, many of the studies and reports that draw attention to LGBTQ+ people's socio-legal inclusion and exclusion within the Caribbean contribute to an understanding of sexual citizenship within the region. This includes an interrogation of the interpretations of sexual and reproductive rights, as well as an examination of LGBTQ+ people's enactment of citizenship and agency through various forms of activism (Bulkan and Robinson 2016; Gosine 2015; Grey and Attai 2019; James 2018; UNAIDS 2022). Sexual citizenship goes beyond an examination of the legal constructs of citizenship to considering other realities including the restrictions on, and enjoyment of, human rights. Lazarus (2015) writes:

**The concept of sexual citizenship, which includes sexuality and gender concerns and their intersections with other categories such as “race” and class, alerts us to “new concerns, hitherto marginalized in public discourse: with the body, its possibilities, needs and pleasures; with new sexualized [and gendered] identities; and with the forces that inhibit their free, consensual development in a democratic polity committed to full and equal citizenship... It has a positive content, in the articulation of new claims to rights and ‘sexual justice’ (Kaplan, 1997 [cited in Weeks, 1998: 37–38]). But it also offers a sharp critique of traditional discourses on citizenship, and on the occlusions and hesitations of contemporary debates” (Weeks 1998, 37–38 quoted in Lazarus 2015, 112–113).**

The analysis of sexual citizenship thus entails an assessment of citizen security through its focus on the struggles for social inclusion, recognition and protection, as well the enjoyment of human rights and the ability to live as equal and full citizens (Lazarus 2015; Grey and Attai 2019). For example, James (2018) argues that the legal victories against antigay discriminatory legislations, in the cases of *Caleb Orozco v AG of Belize* and *Jovil Williams and Jason Campbell v AG of St. Christopher* and *Nevis Chief of Police*, are significant because they “hold substantial promise towards the making of a meaningful sexual citizenship in the Caribbean; a citizenship which protects the sexual autonomy of citizens and prevents or redresses the invasion or breach of these rights” (237).

Grey and Attai (2019) similarly argue that the recent legal cases brought by LGBTQ+ activists and individuals against discriminatory laws in countries such as Guyana—and one could now add Barbados, Antigua and Barbuda, as well as Saint Kitts—suggest that the region’s

**Citizens are having a difficult conversation about what kind of environment they want to build for its citizens and what that will look like for people who are queer. Like many of its neighbours, the Caribbean Nation-State is young and still reckoning with the ongoing effects of colonialism.**

Grey and Attai’s work highlights not only the realities of marginalization, exclusion and violence within the region, but also the nuanced ways in which sexuality and gender intersect with other identity categories such as race, nationality, ethnicity and socioeconomic class to inform people’s experiences and enjoyment of human rights. Moreover, their work critically demonstrates the ways in which colonial power relations and ideologies continue to shape Caribbean people’s lives. They note that international activists and countries within the Global North continue to position themselves as saviours of LGBT+ people who live in the homophobic countries of the Global South. They suggest resisting such constructs and indeed, the very idea of a universal gay rights framework that “privileges those identities that coalesce at axes of power, specifically race, class, gender and citizenship, and are insufficient for taking into account the multiple ways that LGBT people are affected by and challenge dominant ideas of gender and sexuality in the region” (Grey and Attai 2019, 2).

## **4.3 Socioeconomic Inclusion and Exclusion**

### **4.3.1 INDIVIDUAL LOSSES**

In addition to being a human rights concern, LGBTQ+ exclusion can also have negative economic repercussions. At the individual level, the economic costs of discrimination and violence against LGBTQ+ people include (but are not limited to) losses associated with undereducation, health disparities, inefficient labour allocation and lost worker productivity (Badgett *et al.* 2019).

As is well documented, LGBTQ+ people are particularly vulnerable to bullying at school, as well as discrimination from teachers and school administrators (Badgett 2020; Goodboy and Martin 2018; Okanlawon 2017). SOGIE-based bullying and discrimination have been linked to reduced quality of education and interest in learning (Badgett 2020). This can lead to a decline in academic performance and increased absenteeism, ultimately leading to school failure or dropping out altogether (Domínguez-Martínez and Robles 2019).

Recent work suggests that LGBTQI+ Caribbean students experience exclusion due to their SOGIE. Crehan *et al.* (2021) conducted a large-scale survey capturing the experiences of LGBT+ people in the twelve independent English-speaking CARICOM Member States:<sup>35</sup> 39% of LGB respondents and 51% of transgender respondents reported unfair treatment from teachers, while 57% of LGB respondents and 68% of transgender respondents were harassed or bullied by their peers. Given the potential barriers that bullying and discrimination pose to individual education outcomes, the prevalence of SOGIE-based bullying in Caribbean educational settings is worrying. The connection between education and individual labour market outcomes in Barbados is widely documented: education is associated with better employment prospects, greater worker productivity and higher wages (Jackman *et al.* 2020; Jackman and Bynoe 2014). As such, the SOGIE-based bullying experienced by Caribbean LGBTQI+ youth can have long-term economic consequences.

Various sources also document that regular encounters with stigma, discrimination and rejection negatively affect the health and well-being of LGBTQI+ people (Badgett *et al.* 2019; Badgett 2020). Like many other Caribbean states, LGBTQ+ people in Barbados are more likely to have poor physical and mental health relative to their cisgender heterosexual peers (Crehan *et al.* 2021). The stress associated with LGBTQ+ stigma, discrimination and violence could prompt a range of feelings from self-doubt to self-hatred—which is related to risky behaviours such as substance abuse and unprotected sex (Logie *et al.* 2017). Similar to global findings, studies on HIV infection and its epidemiology in Barbados and the wider Caribbean indicate that the burden of HIV and AIDS disproportionately affects gay, bisexual and other men who have sex with men (MSM) and transgender women (Best and Rambarran 2021; Logie *et al.* 2017). Moreover, global estimates

from Breyer *et al.* (2012) point to large regional differences in prevalence rates among MSM, with the highest HIV rates among MSM being recorded in the Caribbean.

Health disparities are also often rooted in discrimination when accessing care and inadequate preventative health services. For example, Rambarran and Grenfell (2016) find that general practitioners in Barbados

**...showed limited awareness of LGBT patients' mental health and routine screening needs...and, although equal treatment of LGBT patients is well-intentioned, it risks culturally incompetent healthcare for this group... Medical school training on LGBT health was almost non-existent in participants' experience...almost all participants articulated need for under- and post-graduate training in this area.**

In addition, Mohammed *et al.*'s 2020 study investigating the realities of lesbian, bisexual, queer and transmasculine people in Barbados when accessing health services revealed that 25% of respondents reported receiving poor services due to their SOGIE, 14% noted they had been called insulting names and 6% had been denied services.

Like education, health is a form of human capital; thus, an individual's health influences their labour market outcomes. The prevalence of health disparities between the LGBTQI+ community and the general population is, therefore, another channel through which exclusion affects the economic potential of LGBTQI+ persons.

<sup>35</sup> That is, Antigua and Barbuda, Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, Jamaica, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, and Trinidad and Tobago.

The previously mentioned individual losses in employment and worker productivity accrued due to LGBTQI+ exclusion in educational settings and health-related contexts are often further exacerbated by the discrimination LGBTQI+ people face in the workplace. Badgett *et al.* (2019) note:

**LGBT people may be working in less productive positions than they are qualified for—such as jobs in the informal sector—because employers refuse to hire them or because (if transgender) they do not have the proper identification documents to be hired in more productive jobs.**

Reports based on large-scale surveys, as well as reports based on personal narratives, document the existence of LGBTQ+ employment discrimination in the Caribbean results in reduced prospects for promotion, and increased risk for termination and unemployment (Crehan *et al.* 2021; Caribbean Policy Research Institute).

#### **4.3.2 MACROECONOMIC LOSSES**

The analysis thus far has focused on the damage to the education, job and health outcomes of LGBTQ+ people. However, the exclusion of LGBTQI+ people not only limits their prospects, it also diminishes the capacity of LGBT+ people within the economy and prevents the country from reaching its full potential. Specifically, LGBT+ exclusion deprives countries of skills, knowledge and abilities that could improve economies and societies (Badgett 2020). In this way, individual losses quickly add up to high economic costs. For instance, education and health have long been viewed as important vehicles for growth and development. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (adopted by the United Nations Member States in 2015) reiterated the importance of education and health for sustainable development. Goal 3 of the

Sustainable Development Goals aims to “ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages,” and Goal 4 aims to “ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.” The Agenda also presents inclusion in education and health as integral to achieving other goals, most notably those related to full employment, poverty eradication and growth.

LGBT exclusion could also affect international business. A country’s international reputation has become a significant factor in the global competitiveness of an economy. Governments are increasingly under the spotlight of international organizations and are often shamed for human rights abuses (Vadlamannati, Janz, Berntsen 2018). Accordingly, LGBTQI+ exclusion could damage a country’s brand reputation and could reduce a country’s attractiveness to foreign investors, trade partners and even tourists. The possible link between LGBTQ+ exclusion and tourism should be of particular concern for policymakers in Barbados, given the importance of tourism to the Barbados economy. According to the World Travel and Tourism Council, tourism’s total contribution (direct + indirect + induced) to the Barbadian GDP in 2019 was 29.5% (World Travel and Tourism Council, 2022), placing Barbados among the top 20 most tourism-dependent countries in the world in terms of the sector’s total contribution to GDP. At the same time, Barbados can be classified as a mature tourism destination (Potter and Phillips 2004). As such, the Barbados tourism authorities are constantly looking for ways to rejuvenate the sector through product innovation and by identifying new markets. As is well documented, LGBTQI+ tourism is growing (World Tourism Organization 2017). However, Barbados may be unable to capitalize on this market segment due to its reputation for high levels of SOGIE-based discrimination.



According to the Spartacus World Gay Travel Index (Spartacus World 2021) and the LGBTQ+ Travel Safety Index (Fergusson and Fergusson 2022)—both of which provide measures on a destination's LGBTQ+ inclusion—Barbados consistently lies on the negative end of the LGBTQ+-friendly spectrum.

Recent studies on the Caribbean provide clear evidence that individual and reputational losses from LGBT+ exclusion add up and result in substantial economic losses at the country level. According to a 2019 report from the Caribbean Policy Research Institute, the costs of losses from economic production and excess government expenditure due to LGBT+ exclusion in employment and health disparities in Jamaica is approximately US\$79 million per annum. Meanwhile, Crehan *et al.* (2021) estimated the economic costs associated with LGBT exclusion in the 12 independent English-speaking CARICOM Member States. Their model suggests that these 12 Caribbean states collectively lose between US\$1.5 billion and US\$4.2 billion annually, or 2.1% to 5.7% of their GDP, due to: (1) labour market discrimination against LGBT+ people (which amounted to losses between US\$32.1 million and US\$272.3 million a year); (2) depression, anxiety and HIV due to LGBTI+ exclusion (US\$699.4 million to US\$2.1 billion per year); (3) self-harm and interpersonal violence against LGBT+ people (US\$383.0 million to US\$1.2 million per year) and (4) constraints on tourism (US\$422.5 million to US\$688.9 million per year).

The sources reviewed for this study reveal nuanced insights into Caribbean LGBTQ+ people's experiences of inclusion and exclusion in an array of sectors. Specifically, the literature on local/regional LGBTQ+ activism and ensuing legal developments within the region, as well as the relationship between local and international strategies for inclusion and change constitutes a critical contribution to understanding Caribbean LGBTQ+ people's enactment of agency and struggles for full citizenship and respect for their human rights. While legal changes are indeed important, the literature also highlights the importance of wider sociocultural interventions to achieve a more inclusive society. Thus, more work is needed to understand not only the far-reaching implications of the recent legal reforms on the experiences of LGBTQ+ people, but also the sociocultural changes that are occurring across the region and in Barbados. Additionally, the large economic losses showcase how failure to address the exclusion of LGBTQ+ people in various settings limits prospects for economic growth and sustainable development in Barbados. These developments and gaps in knowledge demonstrate the need for continuous research on the lived socioeconomic realities of LGBTQI+ people which would highlight their challenges and aid in the design of policy interventions in support of the community.

# **METHODOLOGY AND WORKPLAN**

**The National LGBTI Survey seeks to ascertain the lived realities of LGBTIQ+ people in Barbados, including their experiences related to social inclusion and exclusion within that society, as well as the enjoyment of their human rights, focusing primarily on eight broad thematic areas:**

- 1. Citizen Security**
- 2. Education**
- 3. Employment**
- 4. Health**
- 5. Housing**
- 6. Violence**
- 7. Justice**
- 8. Political Participation**

The study aims to: (1) produce knowledge and assess the personal costs related to LGBTIQ+ people's experiences related to social exclusion, stigma and discrimination; and (2) make useful recommendations that may inform the development and implementation of inclusive public policies.

Based on the aims of the study, a mixed methods approach was considered most suitable for garnering both quantitative and qualitative data. This approach contributes to the limited statistical data pertaining to the lived realities of LGBTIQ+ people in Barbados, as well as providing an opportunity to hear, in their own words, the individual and collective experiences of LGBTIQ+ activists. Specifically, in addition to the national online survey, the research team conducted consultations and in-depth, semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders, with an emphasis placed on representatives from the various LGBTIQ+ communities, to ensure that the researchers are speaking with, rather than for,

those whose lived realities are being discussed and investigated. This is in keeping with the UNDP's objective of engaging in meaningful collaboration for knowledge production and social change.

## **5.1 Quantitative Approach: National Survey**

The Barbados National LGBTI Survey uses an adapted version of a questionnaire previously developed for a similar study by UNDP in Dominican Republic<sup>36</sup> (see Appendix A for a copy of the questions that were analysed in this report). This is an online survey, with two primary aims:

- 1. Identifying the socio-demographic characteristics of the LGBTIQ+ population in Barbados: recognizing the ways in which factors such as race, education, location, socioeconomic class, amongst other identity constructs, intersect in complex ways with gender and sexuality to shape lived realities.**
- 2. Assessing the lived realities of LGBTIQ+ people, especially as these relate to:**
  - 1. Identifying structural barriers in the areas of health, employment, education, justice system, economy, family, politics, religion, culture and housing to the experience and exercise of full citizenship, including having access to rights, as well as fair representation and the ability to perform duties and actively participate in various public and private arenas.**
  - 2. Measuring the impact of these structural barriers and development gaps on the recognition and enjoyment of human rights. (UNDP 2022, 2).**

<sup>36</sup> Four questions relating to lived experiences at work came from the Government Equalities Office National LGBT survey. Available at: [www.gov.uk/government/consultations/national-lgbt-survey](http://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/national-lgbt-survey).

In keeping with these aims, the survey sought to include a wide range of LGBTQI+ people, aged 18 and over, from all communities across the eleven parishes. It should be noted that given the limited focus on intersex people in previous research and their marginality within existing civil society groups, we anticipated that they would be underrepresented in this study. Nonetheless, precisely because of the generally limited knowledge on the lived realities of this population in Barbados and the wider English-speaking Caribbean, it was deemed beneficial to include those self-identifying as intersex people in a study of this type, as any emergent data and knowledge, though not generalizable, may provide useful insights to guide further research and engagements.

#### **5.1.1.1 ADAPTATION OF THE SURVEY INSTRUMENT**

Before submission for ethics approval from the UWI Institutional Review Board, the survey instrument was adapted to ensure its relevance to the Barbados context. The adaptation was informed by the information garnered from the desk research conducted by the team and input from select local stakeholders. The survey instrument was shared with eight local key stakeholders who had previous knowledge about UNDP's project "Being LGBTI in the Caribbean," of which this study is a part. The key local stakeholders that were consulted included:

- Representatives from LGBTQI+ groups such as Equals Barbados, and Butterfly Trans Barbados
- Gender and sexuality researchers and advocates from UWI, Cave Hill Campus

Consultation with these key stakeholders was considered necessary for several reasons. First, they were helpful in the adaptation of the existing questionnaire. Second, their experiences and knowledge aided in understanding the nuances around the various issues being analysed. Third, some have taken on the role of gatekeepers, providing, where necessary and possible, useful connections with other stakeholders who may otherwise be difficult to identify or contact. Additionally, they have assisted in publicizing the online national survey through their respective organizations. Finally, their feedback and validation of the draft report and final product were crucial in seeing through the second phase of contributing to knowledge that informs policy and other avenues for social change.

Following feedback from the initial stakeholder consultation meeting, some questions were either eliminated from the questionnaire or new ones included, based on relevance to the local context. Because the questionnaire was initially translated from Spanish to English, attention was also given to the use of language, rephrasing some questions to ensure clarity and appropriate wording. The adapted questionnaire was then formatted and uploaded to REDCap by the research assistant/IT Specialist and tested by the research team and representatives from the UNDP Being LGBTI in the Caribbean project team. REDCap is run from a server that has a sector dedicated to working with sensitive data and is compliant with local and international data security regulations. This open-source system is utilized at UWI for similar projects and meets all security requirements.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> See <https://projectredcap.org/> for details on the survey system.

### 5.1.1.2 DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURE

Once ethics approval was obtained, the survey was advertised to recruit possible respondents via the social media platforms (websites, Instagram, Facebook and Twitter) of UNDP, SALISES and UWI. Various local LGBTQI+ stakeholders, such as Equals Barbados<sup>38</sup> and the Barbados Disability Council were also contacted and asked to promote the research via their social media platforms to increase inclusivity.<sup>39</sup> Survey respondents were also recruited by word of mouth. In the latter part of the data gathering process, the survey was distributed by means of a social media blast (via Facebook and Instagram) and SMS. For these techniques, the promotional material and link to the survey were randomly sent to residents of Barbados over the age of 18, with the aim of extending the reach of the survey to reach additional respondents who are not necessarily affiliated with institutions actively promoting the research (UNDP, SALISES, UWI or Equals Barbados).

The survey was administered online from 15 December 2022 to 5 February 2023, and respondents were able to access the survey link from either a computer, tablet or smartphone. The survey took approximately 45 minutes to complete. There was no determined sample size for this study, as the LGBTQI+ population size in Barbados is not known. However, a respondent must be aged 18 or older and identify as a resident or citizen of Barbados. Participation was completely confidential and voluntary. Respondents were informed before they began the questionnaire that they may choose to end the study at any time; they could also choose to pause or stop their participation and return to the survey

at a later time within the allotted data collection period of the survey.<sup>40</sup> Though respondents were able to save and return to the survey, it is crucial to emphasize here that REDCap did not collect any identifying information (including email) or save respondents' IP addresses.

### 5.1.2 QUALITATIVE APPROACH: REVIEW OF EXISTING LITERATURE AND INTERVIEWS

The research team undertook a desk review of existing relevant studies on LGBTQI+ people in Barbados and the Eastern Caribbean over the last five years (2017–2022), identifying thematic areas and gaps within these studies. The following resources were reviewed:

- Academic publications on gender and sexuality
- Reports published by local and international NGOs
- Relevant laws of Barbados and policy documents
- Relevant newspaper and social media coverage, as well as government communications

The information gleaned from this desk research informed the analysis and discussion of the present study's qualitative and quantitative findings.

<sup>38</sup> "Equals Barbados is an organization dedicated to working with and for the LGBTQI community, providing, linking and developing services and advocating for rights." Available at: [https://www.facebook.com/equals246/about/?ref=page\\_internal](https://www.facebook.com/equals246/about/?ref=page_internal)

<sup>39</sup> It should be noted that although the Barbados Disability Council was contacted, they did not promote the survey on their social media platforms.

<sup>40</sup> REDCap offers a "Save & Return Later" button on each survey page, which allows respondents to save their progress and return at a future time to where they left off to complete the survey. When the respondent clicks the "Save & Return Later" button, they are given a validation code, which they must remember. To return, the respondent returns to the original link, clicks on the "Returning" box and enters the previously provided validation code.

In addition to a review of relevant studies and reports, a total of seven in-depth, semi-structured interviews with key informants/stakeholders in Barbados were conducted between November 2022 and January 2023. The researchers sought to include respondents who identified as LGBTQI+ and/or have in-depth knowledge about the social barriers to full citizenship and the enjoyment of human rights for LGBTQI+ people, based on their extant work. However, none of the seven interview respondents identified as intersex or had in-depth knowledge about intersex people's activism or lived experiences within Barbados. Nevertheless, they were all involved, in different ways, in some type of activism relating to gender justice and/or sexual rights within Barbados. Importantly, the differences among the respondents meant that they were able to provide various accounts relating to the eight thematic areas under review. Because of their positionalities, some respondents were able to address all eight areas, while others only spoke about specific areas.

Moreover, interviewees were recruited from known LGBTQI+ organizations, as well as by snowball sampling. This non-probability sampling technique is commonly used as an informal method in qualitative, exploratory, descriptive research where the target population is marginalized, isolated, criminalized or otherwise difficult to reach within a given society (Atkinson and Flint 2001). Atkinson and Flint (2001) point out:

**Snowball sampling can be placed within a wider set of link-tracing methodologies (Spren 1992) which seek to take advantage of the social networks of identified respondents to provide a researcher with an ever-expanding set of potential contacts (Thomson 1997). This process is based on the assumption that a “bond” or “link” exists between the initial sample and others in the same target population, allowing a series of referrals to be made within a circle of acquaintance (Berg 1988) (Quoted in Atkinson and Flint 2001, 1).**

Interview respondents were not selected based on being a respondent to the survey. Additionally, they were not required or compelled to take part in the survey component of the research. Although the interviews are not generalizable, they nonetheless provided some insights into these activists' experiences, observations and viewpoints on the issues being investigated. There are similarities in what was shared, but more importantly, the interviews also highlighted areas for further research.

### **5.1.2.1 INTERVIEW PROCEDURE**

Each interview was approximately 50–60 minutes long and each respondent participated in a single interview. Respondents were given the option of participating either in-person or via Zoom, based on what was most convenient or comfortable for the respondent. Most of the respondents chose to participate via Zoom. The principal investigator emailed potential respondents to introduce the study or provide additional details, and to request their participation in an in-depth interview. The interviews focused on participants' experiences and knowledge of LGBTQI+ activism, inclusion and exclusion in Barbados, discussing the structural barriers to the enjoyment of human rights and full citizenship, as well as on social changes and developments that may impact these matters. Moreover, the interviews were initially conceived as a possible avenue for exploring the factors informing intersex people's "invisibility" in LGBTQI+ organizing and research within Barbados. Therefore, the interviews may provide insights into key areas of concern, recent developments and identification of other structural barriers that were not considered by this research team (see Appendix B for a draft Interview Guide).

Similar to the survey, participation in the interview was completely voluntary and confidential. This means that neither respondents' names nor any other identifying information including the name of their affiliated institutions/organizations will be made public or disclosed in any reporting or dissemination of the findings. Additionally, respondents' names and any other identifying information were not recorded or stored alongside their voice recordings, research notes or transcripts of their interviews. During transcriptions, no identifying information was included in the transcripts that were prepared for analysis by the research team. Respondents were informed that they may choose not to answer a question or to end the interview at any time.

Interviews, with consent, were digitally recorded and later transcribed. The interview data were then analysed using thematic discourse analysis.

## **5.2 Ethical Considerations**

Before conducting the interviews and national survey, the research team sought ethics approval from UWI, Cave Hill Campus's Institutional Review Board. It is crucial when doing research with LGBTQI+ people or any other marginalized or vulnerable populations to pay careful and ongoing attention to ethical issues that may emerge before, during and even after the execution of the research to avoid causing or intensifying harm, with particular attention in this case to the risk of furthering social exclusion, marginalization, stigma and discrimination against those who are the primary focus of the study. In this research there were a few foreseen ethical issues that were considered and steps were taken to mitigate these.

First, the researchers were cognizant of the importance of safeguarding the data and privacy of all participants to ensure that the research does not contribute to negative stereotyping, deepen stigma, identify respondents or create unwanted visibility (Lazarus 2013). For example, to ensure privacy, participation in both the online survey and the in-depth interviews was not only voluntary but also anonymous. Although visibility is sometimes important, anonymity was deemed necessary to ensure not only privacy, but also to safeguard against an individual's likelihood of experiencing negative outcomes as a result of their participation. Consequently, pseudonyms are used in this report whenever a respondent is quoted.

Second, attention was given to the act of representation, with care taken throughout all phases of the research to avoid misrepresentations and appropriation of voices. Additionally, critical attention was paid to who was given authority to speak, and who was able to contribute to and shape the various stages of the research (Lazarus 2013). The collaboration with local stakeholders and the commitment to include LGBTQI+ groups and individuals from the initial stages of the research was therefore crucial. Third, “although researchers may be dependent on the assistance and knowledge of gatekeepers...we were aware that often there may in turn be various degrees of power imbalances in the relations between us and the gatekeepers,” as well as between gatekeepers and other potential participants (Lazarus 2013, 6–7). Consequently, it was critical to ensure that voluntary informed consent was given by all participants; moreover, consent was ongoing throughout the research process (ibid.).

### **5.3 Limitations**

Although this research gleaned some important insights, there were also limitations. Some of these were anticipated prior to the study’s execution and attempts were made to remedy them, and others emerged during its execution. First, though intersex is included as a target population, they were not, as was anticipated, represented in the interviews, and only one survey participant identified as intersex. This reflects the invisibility of intersex people in Barbados, but may also be a result of some people not identifying with the label “intersex” or wishing to associate with the LGBTQI+ acronym. During the interviews with key stakeholders, attempts were made to ascertain information about intersex people’s experiences and involvement in LGBTQI+ organizations within the country, but minimal information was obtained. This silence highlights a gap in the current research and an avenue for further research. Second, though the research also aimed to understand

transgender people’s complex experiences, this population was minimally represented in both the survey and interviews. The research team sought to mitigate this shortcoming by seeking collaboration with Butterfly Trans Barbados, a local civil society organization, however, this was also unsuccessful. There are strengths and shortcomings associated with the snowball sampling technique for obtaining participants in the interviews and, to a lesser extent, the survey. As previously stated, this is a valid technique for reaching “hidden” or hard-to-reach marginalized populations; but it also has problems with representativeness (Atkinson and Flint 2001). To mitigate this problem, there was an effort made to include interview respondents from different institutions. Additionally, the promotion of the survey via a social media blast and SMS were seen as suitable strategies for including a wider range of people who may not be affiliated with either UNDP, UWI or stakeholder organizations such as Equals Barbados.

Third, the survey component of the research was administered online and only in one language: English. English is the official language of Barbados and an online survey was deemed suitable for reaching people who are marginalized, stigmatized and may therefore wish to remain anonymous. However, this choice may have resulted in some people being excluded from participation, particularly those who were not fluent in English, those with visual impairment or other learning disabilities, those without access to the required technology and those who were not comfortable participating online. Follow-up studies should therefore consider expanding the mode of delivery to increase inclusivity.



## **5.4 Data Analysis**

As noted, the research findings are disaggregated according to the following eight thematic areas:

- 1. Citizen Security**
- 2. Education**
- 3. Employment**
- 4. Health**
- 5. Housing**
- 6. Violence**
- 7. Justice**
- 8. Political Participation**

Analysis of these thematic areas further includes, where relevant, disaggregation based on socio-demographic characteristics such as socioeconomic level, sexual orientation, gender identity and age. Furthermore, analysis also includes critical assessment of existing public policy relating to the eight thematic areas, highlighting where these address or contribute to experiences of inclusion and exclusion due to sexual orientation and gender identity.

### **5.4.1 QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS**

The data collected from the online survey was cleaned, collated and uploaded to Stata. Descriptive and inferential statistics are utilized to present the data in keeping with the eight thematic areas. The analysis of each survey item was first conducted on all valid responses. These responses were then grouped by sexual orientation, gender identity, age and household financial situation to highlight the different issues and experiences for groups within the LGBTQ+ community. Graphical and tabular representations were presented where appropriate. Responses by subgroup were only presented if there was evidence of statistically significant differences between groups at the 5% level of testing.

### **5.4.2 QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS**

Thematic discourse analysis (a marrying of thematic and discourse analysis) was used to analyse the interview data as well as the data from the open-ended survey questions. Thematic analysis refers to “a method for identifying, analysing and reporting repeated patterns of meaning across a dataset and involves repetitive coding and re-coding of text and aggregation of these codes into larger themes” (Botelle and Willott 2020, 2). While there are various approaches to discourse analysis, it is commonly understood to be a deconstructive approach that involves the analysis of written and verbal texts to understand the ways in which people frame and construct meanings to make sense of social life. As an inductive method, thematic discourse analysis creates and critically analyses themes that are strongly linked with or derived from the research data (Botelle and Willott 2020). In other words, the data was disaggregated by the eight previously mentioned thematic areas and codes or sub-themes relating to these eight areas were created. These codes or sub-themes derived from the available data were not based on preconceived notions or expectations. In sum, the analysis of the qualitative data involved first identifying patterns and themes in what people were saying about the eight thematic areas of interest. Second, the identified patterns and themes were analysed for nuances, variations and inconsistencies, and were assessed on how they relate to wider social discourses, including those presented in reviewed existing relevant literature/studies on the topic.

## **5.5 Analytical Approach: Intersectionality**

Intersectionality was used in the analysis process of both the qualitative and quantitative data. This theoretical and methodological approach has long been used by feminist researchers to understand “the distribution of power and other resources,” structures of inequality and their impact on people’s everyday lived experiences (Yuval-Davis 2015, 93). As earlier stated, intersectionality moves away from a single-axis analysis to consider the ways in which multiple positions or identities constitute each other and overlap in complex ways to shape an individual’s lived realities (Crenshaw 1989).

The concept—developed by black, legal, feminist scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw to explicate the experiences of black women in the legal system—is now commonly used to understand the intersection of a wide range of social identity markers or positions, such as race, sex, gender, sexual orientation, location and socioeconomic status (Smith 2016). It highlights that social identities and positions are shaped by, and in turn inform, experiences with structural systems and

power relations. For example, it emphasizes: “as social position intersects at the individual level (e.g., race and gender), experiences at those intersections are influenced by larger interpersonal and structural systems of oppressions such as racism and sexism (Bauer *et al.* 2021, 2). More recently, intersectionality has also been used in analysing quantitative data, including to explore heterogeneity within populations (Bauer *et al.* 2021). While intersectionality resists homogenizing and reductive tendencies in studies of identities, inequalities and marginalization, its use does not prevent a critical focus on commonalities or on shared experiences. In sum, intersectionality is beneficial in understanding the lived realities of inclusion and exclusion of LGBTQI+ people with various demographic backgrounds, and the nuanced ways in which structural barriers impact their enjoyment of human rights and experiences of full citizenship. This approach thus coheres with the aims of the interviews and survey to produce knowledge that will influence the creation of sound, comprehensive policy recommendations.

# **QUALITATIVE AND QUANTITATIVE FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS**

## 6.1 Intersectional Marginalization and Discrimination

Social exclusion, stigma and discrimination are multidimensional phenomena that manifest and are reinforced in ideological, material and non-material ways. They are experienced individually and/or collectively, directly and indirectly, and may occur in various forms and spaces. The research considers eight areas where exclusion, stigma and discrimination may be experienced:

1. Citizen Security
2. Education
3. Employment
4. Health
5. Housing
6. Violence
7. Justice
8. Political Participation

The qualitative and quantitative data reveal that although there are some common experiences, there are also significant nuances regarding people's experiences with these eight thematic areas. For example, all seven interview respondents (interviewees) identified that LGBTQ+ people in Barbados faced or may potentially face some difficulties in the above eight areas because of existing cultural, legal and institutional ideologies and structures. Importantly, none of the respondents could speak definitively about the experiences of those who may identify as intersex. Indeed, some interviewees pointed out that though intersex people are theoretically included in local LGBTQI+ groups, they remain "hidden." For example, Jasmin explained:

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**"We don't have a lot of numbers and statistics on intersex people, but we know that they exist, and we know that we serve them in some capacity. But we don't have concrete numbers on that specific community, but we continue to include them and create space if they choose to come... The issue is that they do corrective surgery without...it's really complex."**

**— Jasmin, 18 November 2022**

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The complexity around intersex's inclusion and visibility in local LGBTQI+ organizations is further reiterated by Aisha, as seen in the following statement:

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**"Of course, there are intersex people in Barbados, but none of them have made themselves known to anybody in the LGBTQ community... As to their marginalization, I mean, technically, they are not a sexuality or gender identity. So until I hear from an intersex person, you know, that this is what they want... But we still advocate for them, I mean..."**

**— Aisha, 13 January 2023**

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Aisha, who has years of experience with activism in the region, stressed that it was unknown if intersex people want to visibly associate with LGBTQ+ organizations or if they view group inclusion as strategically beneficial. The problem of intersex people's inclusion in LGBTQ+ organizations, especially if this is simply an empty gesture, is not unique to respondents like Aisha. Indeed, similar concerns are reflected in debates occurring elsewhere. Emi Koyama, founder of Intersex Initiative,<sup>41</sup> accentuates that there are strategic and logical reasons for adding intersex to the popular acronym. Specifically, intersex bodies, like the treatment of gay, lesbian and transgender people, are often pathologized, misunderstood and invisibilized because of dominant heterosexist, misogynistic, transphobic and homophobic ideologies circulating in medicine, politics, law and the wider society that dictate what may be considered "appropriate" bodily functions and ways of being. Nevertheless, Koyama notes that there are some concerns raised by intersex activists:

First, some people fear that adding the "I" would give the wrong impression that all or most intersex people are lesbian, gay, bisexual and/or transgender...there is a concern that the association with LGBT would drive away parents of intersex children who would otherwise seek out information and resources about intersex conditions. Worse, the misperception might push parents to demand more surgeries to ease their concern about the child's future sexuality or gender identity.

Second, there is already a lot of conflation between LGBT and intersex in society, and constantly being combined with LGBT might prevent intersex from getting its own visibility, or make it hard for intersex people to find intersex-specific resources...

Similar to this, there is also a concern that adding the "I" would make it appear as if what intersex people need is the same thing that LGBT people need...

Lastly, the model of organizing is very different. People with intersex conditions generally do not organize around the "identity" or "pride" of being intersex; "intersex" is a useful word to address political and human rights issues, but there is yet to be an intersex "community" or "culture" the way we can talk about LGBT communities (although this may change in the future).<sup>42</sup>

Aisha's concern thus reflects an awareness of wider international debates on this topic and highlights an important gap in knowledge pertaining to intersex people. Specifically, the interview and most of the survey respondents did not identify as intersex (only one survey respondent identified as intersex); as such, it is unknown if, and to what extent, similar debates are occurring locally or regionally among intersex people.

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<sup>41</sup> "Intersex Initiative (IPDX) is a Portland, Oregon based national activist and advocacy organization for people born with intersex conditions. It was founded by Emi Koyama, a multi-issue social justice activist and former intern at Intersex Society of North America," Centers for Educational Justice and Community Engagement, UC Berkeley, 2001–2002. Available at: <https://cejce.berkeley.edu/geneq/resources/lgbtq-resources/intersex>

<sup>42</sup> Available at: <http://www.intersexinitiative.org/articles/lgbti.html>

All interview respondents emphasized that individual experiences related to access, privilege, social exclusion, stigmatization and discrimination could not be adequately represented in any single-axis analysis which would reduce, homogenize and essentialize experiences and identities. Instead, they stressed that an individual's experiences of these phenomena are influenced by context, an array of circumstances and intersecting identities, which means that there are degrees of "protection" and vulnerability within the local LGBTQ+ community. Most interview respondents identified socioeconomic class, gender expression, age, disability and health status as intersecting with gender identity and sexual orientation to inform differential experiences for LGBTQ+ people in Barbados. According to Smith (2016), "Intersectional discrimination is one form of multiple discrimination, the other being additive discrimination. Examples of multiple discrimination are concerned with discrimination experiences with more than one basis, but only intersectional discrimination can offer an adequate analysis of the lived experiences of intersectional identity" (80). The idea of intersectional marginalization and discrimination is astutely captured in the following explanation:

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**"I am a man, cisgender who is mostly masculine presenting. I get away with a lot of things because I have a certain level of education, and because of the particular shade of my skin. I can get away with a lot of things with people [saying] like he's just being bougie or whatever. Somebody who is more working class or darker skin, or more fem presenting, it is much harder for them to get jobs, in some cases, actually, they are presented with physical threats, with physical violence."**

**— Vincent, 17 November 2022**

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Like Vincent, Zi stressed the importance of recognizing the role of socioeconomic class in shaping people's day-to-day experiences, including with homophobia and lesbophobia, in Barbados. Zi, who identifies as she, he or they and dresses in what would be considered more "masculine" fashion, noted:

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**"class is important in postcolonial countries like Barbados. I don't have to be in certain spaces or circles, I don't have to walk through town, for example, and I also now associate with a lot of people who have lived elsewhere and are accepting of differences, and as such, I do not regularly experience open forms of stigma and discrimination."**

**— Zi, 27 January 2023**

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Moreover, Laila, a transgender activist, emphasized the importance of acknowledging and understanding the implications of differences between and within groups. She noted that, though there have been some attempts by the present government to engage with the LGBTQ+ community in Barbados, the differences within the groups are often not being considered:

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**“It’s because it is LGBT, but that doesn’t mean we have the same experiences. Our experiences are right, peculiar. So I mean, even already within the T, there are different groups, different persons who want different things... You have different groups and based on your social standing, some groups will never face what other groups face, based on your social standing, and so on; and there are persons who could be concealed. They may be able to conceal who they are, and move along through society pretty well, and access certain civil liberties, rights...”**

**— Laila, 2 December 2022**

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For the interview respondents, there are differences in the individual’s ability to live freely and to easily access certain benefits within society that cannot be overlooked in any critical examination of LGBTQ+ people’s experiences. Moreover, the impact of societal and institutional social exclusion, stigmatization and discrimination are, as emphasized by most interview respondents, also heightened for individuals who have inconsistent or no access to support networks or systems. Bearing in mind intersectional marginalization and discrimination, the ensuing paragraphs detail the knowledge and experiences of survey and interview respondents, highlighting commonalities and nuances where relevant.

# RESULTS



## 7.1 Survey Sample Characteristics

As is generally the case with online surveys, there were more completion attempts than actual questionnaires completed. There were 1,053 attempts, but the final sample size was 338. The following responses were discarded: incomplete attempts, responses from people who did not meet the inclusion criteria (for instance, cisgender heterosexuals), inconsistent responses and responses from persons undermining the survey. Most respondents

indicated that they were born and raised in Barbados (82.5%). With respect to citizenry, 93.2% of respondents were Barbadian citizens.

Participants were between 18 and 67 years old. The mean age was 29.5, and 90.2% of respondents were under age 45. Compared to the general population, young people were overrepresented in the survey. According to the 2010 Barbados Population and Housing Census, individuals under 45 comprise 49.5% of the Barbadian population over 18 years old (Table 1). The young profile of the respondents could be partly due to the survey being conducted online.

**TABLE 1: AGE DISTRIBUTION OF THE SAMPLE**

Age group	Sample		General population (18+) in 2010	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
18 to 24	121	39.7	21,337	12.4
25 to 44	154	50.5	63,968	37.1
45+	30	9.8	86,946	50.5

Cisgender people represented 82.2% of respondents (41.4% were women and 40.8% were men), 1.8% of respondents identified as transgender and 12.1% identified as genderqueer, nonbinary or gender-fluid. Due to the small size, transgender, genderqueer, nonbinary and gender-fluid participants were grouped and denoted as “transgender and nonbinary.” Roughly 26% of transgender and nonbinary respondents noted that they had begun some form of transition, with most (60%) noting they began transitioning when they were aged 18 or over and 30% noting they began transitioning at age 16. Young respondents were more likely than older respondents to identify as transgender or nonbinary, with 21.5% of respondents under 25 identifying as transgender or nonbinary, compared with 10.3% of respondents aged 25 or over.

Approximately half (47.8%) of the sample identified as gay or lesbian, 34.4% as bisexual and 11.0% as queer. A small share of the sample identified as pansexual (2.7%) or asexual (1.8%) and 1.8% of respondents reported that they did not know their sexual orientation or preferred not to disclose it. Transgender and nonbinary respondents were less likely to identify as gay or lesbian or bisexual (55.3%) than cisgender respondents (87.4%), but much more likely to identify as queer (31.9% v. 6.9%).

**TABLE 2: RESPONDENT'S GENDER AND SEXUAL ORIENTATION**

	Number of responses	Percentage of sample (%)
<b>Gender identity (n = 338)</b>		
Transgender man	1	0.3
Transgender woman	5	1.5
Cisgender woman	140	41.4
Cisgender man	138	40.8
Gender queer, nonbinary or gender fluid	41	12.1
Prefer not to disclose	3	0.9
Not sure or questioning	9	2.7
Other gender identity	1	0.3
<b>Sexual orientation (n = 337)</b>		
Gay	103	30.6
Lesbian	58	17.2
Bisexual	116	34.4
Queer	37	11.0
Don't know	4	1.2
Prefer not to answer	2	0.6
Other sexual identities	17	5.0
Of which: Heterosexual	1	0.3
Asexual	6	1.8
Pansexual	9	2.7
Sexually fluid	1	0.3

Seventy-five percent of respondents were of African descent, and 13.7% identified as mixed (see Table 3). The ethnic makeup of the sample is, to some extent, similar to the general population, which according to the 2010 census,

is predominantly black (92.4%), with the second largest ethnic group being mixed (3.1%) followed by white (2.7%).

**TABLE 3: RESPONDENTS BY ETHNIC GROUPS**

Ethnic Group	Frequency	Share of respondents (%)
Afro-descendant	251	74.9
Indo-descendant	12	3.6
Euro-descendant	18	5.4
Asian	4	1.2
Mixed	46	13.7
Indigenous	2	0.6
Other	2	0.6

All respondents completed secondary school. This contrasts with national statistics from the 2010 Barbados Population and Housing Census (which reported the highest level of education for 13.9% was primary school). However, it is not surprising given the non-probability sampling procedure. Moreover, since the 1960s, the Government of Barbados has been bearing the cost of education at the primary, secondary and tertiary levels<sup>43</sup> (Hinds 2016). The State’s commitment to free education and legislation that mandates a compulsory age for schooling has translated to high completion rates. According to the World Bank, in 2021,

Barbados’s lower secondary completion rate was 101.7%. However, tertiary-educated individuals were overrepresented in the survey: 41% of the sample completed an undergraduate degree, and 19.5% completed a post-graduate degree (Table 4). The survey participants were more educated than the general population. According to estimates from the 2010 Barbados Population and Housing Census, 11% of Barbados residents earned a bachelor’s degree or equivalent, or higher qualifications. Cisgender respondents were more likely to complete post-secondary education than transgender and nonbinary respondents.

**TABLE 4: RESPONDENTS BY THEIR LEVEL OF EDUCATION**

Highest level of education completed	Full sample (%) (n = 338)	Transgender and nonbinary (%) (n = 47)	Cisgender (%) (n = 278)
None	0.0	0.0	0.0
Primary	0.0	0.0	0.0
Secondary	26.3	40.4	22.3
Bachelor’s or Other Undergraduate Degree	44.1	38.3	46.8
Postgraduate (Master’s, Doctorate)	19.5	10.6	21.2
Vocational/technical training	5.9	2.1	6.1
Other, please specify	2.1	2.1	2.2
Don’t know/Prefer not to answer	2.1	6.4	1.4

<sup>43</sup> In the 2014 budget, the Government of Barbados announced that effective September 2014, university students will be required to pay 20% of tuition fees. This decision was reversed in the budget of June 2018.

With respect to employment, nearly 60% of the sample was employed on a full-time basis in the 30 days preceding the survey and 12.1% on a part-time basis. There is some evidence of a gender gap in employment favouring cisgender men.

Specifically, cisgender men are more likely to be employed than cisgender women or transgender and nonbinary respondents, particularly on a full-time basis (Table 5).

**TABLE 5: WORK STATUS IN THE LAST 30 DAYS**

Status	Full sample (%) (n = 322)	Transgender and nonbinary (%) (n = 43)	Cisgender women (%) (n = 134)	Cisgender men (%) (n = 134)
Full-time	58.7	41.9	50.8	73.9
Part-time	12.7	11.6	14.2	11.2
Occasional odd jobs	3.4	4.7	6.0	0.8
Apprentice	0.3	0.0	0.0	0.8
Seasonal Worker	1.6	2.3	0.8	2.2
Prefer not to say	1.2	4.7	1.5	0.0
Other	1.6	7.0	2.2	0.0
Did not work	20.5	27.9	25.4	11.2

Respondents in the sample are significantly less religious than the general population. As indicated earlier, 21.6% of the Barbados population does not claim a religious identity and most of the religiously affiliated population are Christian (76%). In contrast, only 30.5% of survey respondents identified as Christian and a majority of the sample (58.3%) was religiously unaffiliated. Specifically, 22.2% of individuals noted they were believers without a religion, 17.8% cited “none” when asked about their religious/spiritual practice, 12.7% identified as agnostic, and 5.6% as atheists.

Regarding disabilities, 28.5% of respondents reported having a disability (compared with 5.1% of the general population in 2010<sup>44</sup>) and 9.9% were unsure if they had a disability.<sup>45</sup> Among those with disabilities (n = 95), mental health or emotional disabilities were the most cited (76.8%), followed by learning disabilities (23.2%) and physical disabilities (12.6%).<sup>46</sup>

<sup>44</sup> Based on the 2010 population census.

<sup>45</sup> Based on 333 responses.

<sup>46</sup> Respondents could select all disabilities as applicable.

## 7.2 Citizen Security

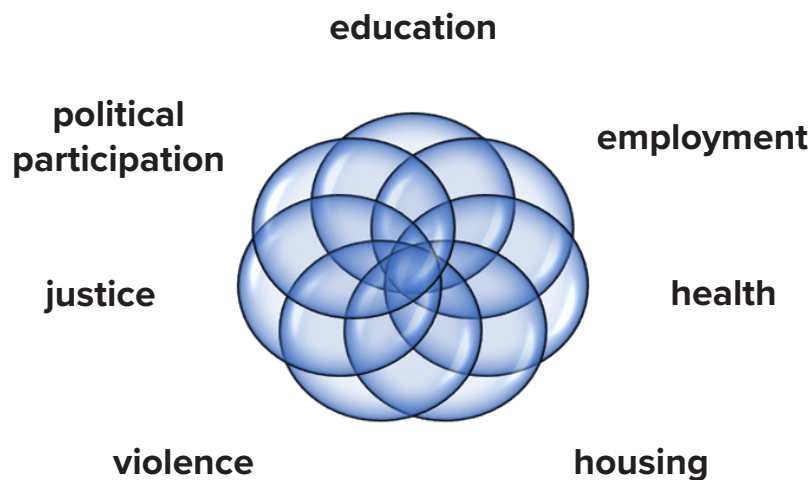
In discussing the findings as they relate to the eight thematic areas, it is worth mentioning that citizen security was considered to be an overarching

concept consisting of various components: education, employment, health, housing, violence, justice and political participation:



The seven thematic areas that are being considered as components of citizen security are also intimately interconnected; that is, the areas may also intersect and inform each other in complex ways:

These thematic relationships were indeed captured in the qualitative and quantitative findings.



Occurrences of social inclusion/exclusion, stigmatization and discrimination provide certain insights into people’s experiences of citizen security. UNDP (1994) defines citizen security as:

the social situation in which all persons are free to enjoy their fundamental rights and public institutions have sufficient capacity, against a backdrop of the rule of law, to guarantee the exercise of those rights and respond efficiently when they are violated... Thus, the citizenry is the principal focus of the State’s protection. Summing up, citizen security becomes a necessary—albeit not sufficient—condition of human security that in the end is the ultimate guarantee of *human* development (UNDP, quoted from Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, n.d., chap. 11, No. 17).

There is frequently a predominant focus on the role of the State and the relationship between the State and its people, especially as it pertains to the existence of laws in discussions of security, rights and citizen security. However, the role and influence of non-State institutions, systems of power and interpersonal relationships are also integral to realizing and safeguarding citizen security. This research thus draws on UNDP’s definition of citizen security, but it also considers the influences of non-State, non-public actors, as well as formal and informal constructs.

### **7.2.1 ID ACCURACY**

Access to official documents that accurately reflect one’s gender identity is a fundamental human right and an integral component of citizen security. Social stigma and widespread belief in traditional views about gender mean that transgender and nonbinary persons are very susceptible to this human rights violation. Even though Barbados does not currently allow individuals to change their gender marker, some 26.7% of transgender and nonbinary respondents note that they have an ID issued by the Government of Barbados that reflects their chosen name and gender identity. This is an interesting finding, as persons cannot currently change their gender marker on legal identification documentations in Barbados. One possibility is that these respondents are naturalized citizens and/or have dual citizenship.

### **7.2.2 RIGHTS, LAW REFORM AND SUPPORT FOR LGBTQ+**

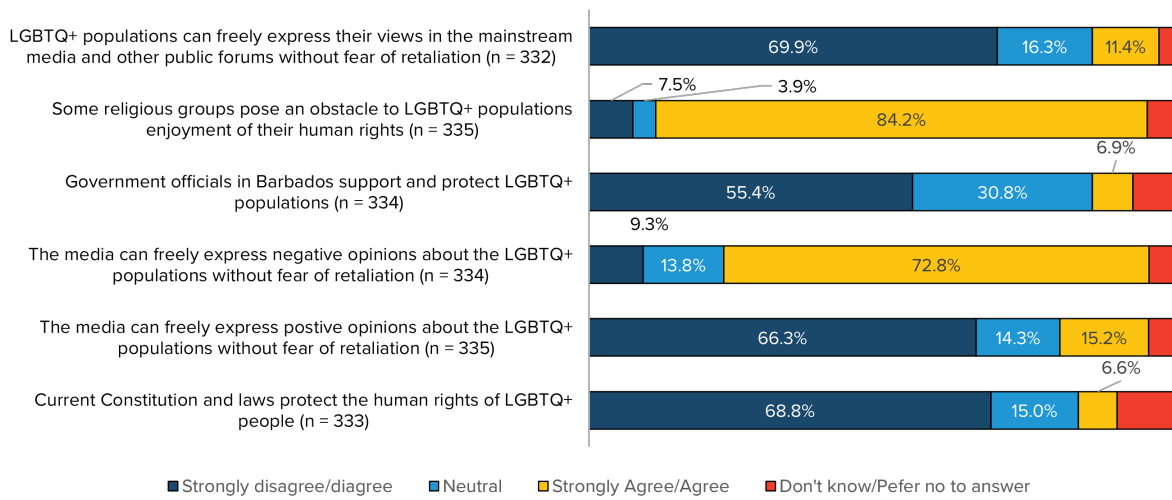
Citizen security includes enjoyment and protection of human rights, as well as feelings of inclusion and belonging within society, which is linked in part to the existence of laws and policies, but also to equitable representation. Roughly 55% of survey respondents do not believe that government officials support and protect LGBTQ+ people and very few feel protected under the Barbados Constitution and laws (6.6%). Moreover, a general belief is that religious institutions, as will be discussed in more detail below, are a strong veto player in the politics of LGBTQ+ rights in Barbados: 84.2% of the sample agreed with the statement “Some religious groups pose an obstacle to the LGBTQ+ population’s enjoyment of human rights” (see Figure 2).

Likewise, nearly 70% of respondents do not believe that LGBTQ+ populations can freely express their views in the mainstream media and other public forums. Respondents were also asked about the media's freedom to express positive or negative views about the LGBTQ+ community (Figure 2). Many participants agreed that the media could freely express negative views about the LGBT population without fear of retaliation (72.8%), but were not free to express positive views about LGBT people (66.3%). This is not surprising. The professionals who create or own the local media content are members of society and are likely to be influenced by the context in which they live (Adamczyk, Kim and Paradis 2015). In this way, media content largely reflects the heteronormative status quo. Importantly, in contrast to the survey, the interviews provided a more nuanced overview of the complexities within the local media. Specifically, interviewees all believed that there was indeed a need for improvement and greater accountability within the local media, which still largely reflects and reinforces the status quo. However, some discussed the differences that exist between media houses and the various observed changes in terms of LGBTQ+ representation. Consider, as an example, the following statement by one interviewee with first-hand experience in this area:

I think stories that are written now are less sensational and more, kind of attempt to be balanced at least. I think one of the issues sometimes is a lot of media houses try, in their attempt to be balanced and have both sides, will allow people to say things from both sides as if they are equally true. That is... I think that is a problem, because there's no kind of putting things in context for people. So, if a scientist or a sociologist says one thing, and then a priest who's not a sociologist says another thing, they're both treated as if they are the same... And so, our media could do more to actually put things in context for people and explain, you know, like really explain stuff for the public, and they don't do that, and that attempt to give both sides air sometimes is actually more detrimental (Vincent 17 November 2022).

Definitely increased coverage over the years and slanting to a little bit more neutral. But then there's like newspaper biases. Like the... don't really touch these things much. And then again, I think it's also like, personal—who is the reporter? Like there are certain reporters that have no issue covering this stuff, and then if that reporter ain't there, then you'd see like huge gaps in reporting from this newspaper. They just don't talk about that... (Aisha 13 January 2023).

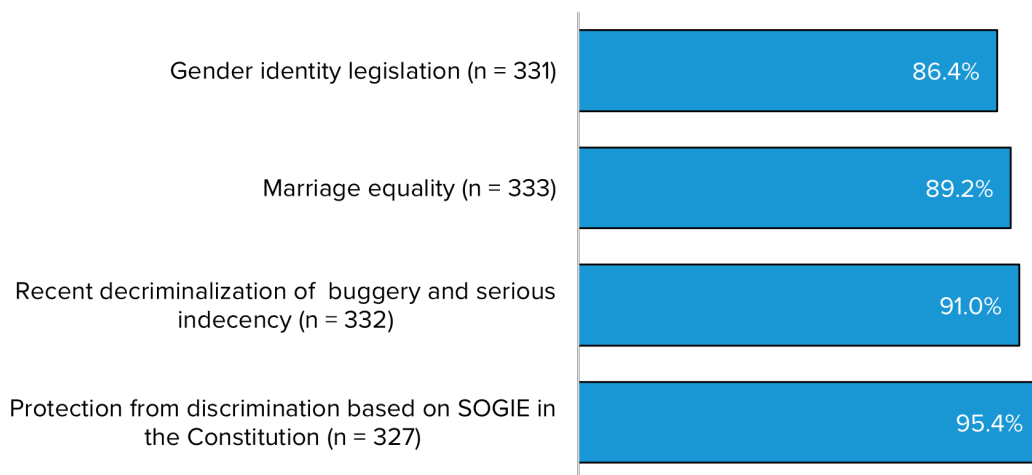
**FIGURE 2: RIGHTS AND SUPPORT FOR LGBTQ+**



As is well documented, laws are essentially socializing agents: they are key mechanisms through which policymakers signal what are “good” values or what the “acceptable” norm is (Gileber and Hayashi 2021). Extending basic rights and social protections to LGBTQ+ people is a first step to helping them feel secure and protected

under the law. A vast majority of respondents (86%–96%) assigned some level of importance to the following: reforming the Constitution to include protection against discrimination based on SOGIE, the recent decision to decriminalize buggery and serious indecency, marriage equality laws and gender identity legislation (Figure 3).

**FIGURE 3: IMPORTANCE OF LEGISLATION AND REFORMS**





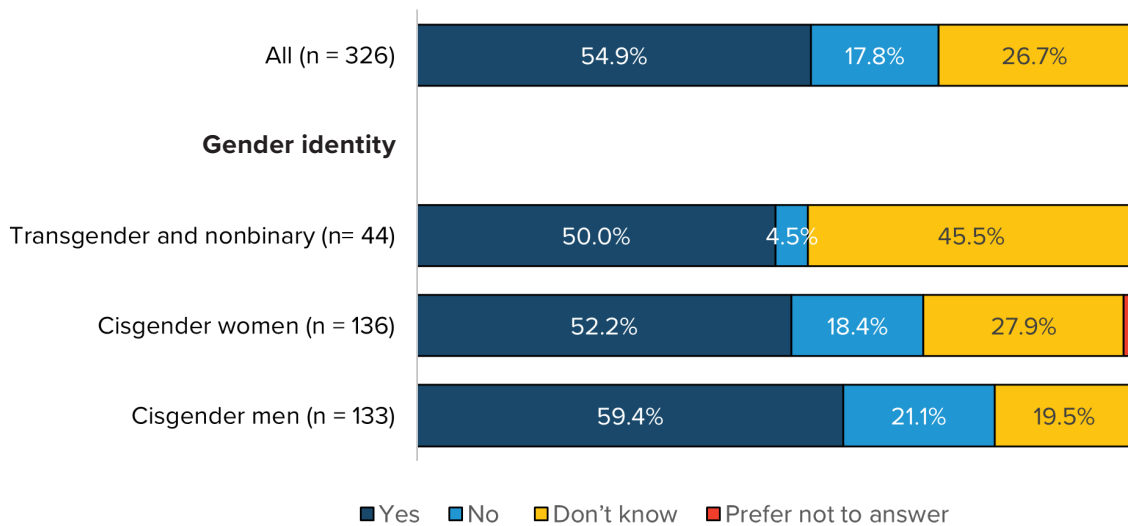
Survey respondents were also asked to indicate the three most important measures to promote respect, acceptance and non-discrimination of LGBTQ+ people in Barbados. Based on their responses, the most critical areas identified are: (1) LGBTQ+ rights and inclusion measures in public policies (62.5%), (2) training and awareness of public servants on topics related to sexual and gender diversity, and non-discrimination (56.5%), and (3) social campaigns promoting respect for sexual and gender diversity (45.0%).

### 7.2.3 ACCESS TO ASSISTANCE

Access and utilization of resources that are aimed at safeguarding human rights and improving people’s day-to-day quality of life are also

significant in assessing citizen security. Less than 5% of the sample (3.3%) were receiving government assistance at the time the survey was administered; however, less than 1% of the sample recalled being denied government assistance due to their SOGIE in the 12 months preceding the survey. Interestingly, as shown in Figure 4, a significant subset of respondents either did not believe they had the right to subsidies/financial assistance available in Barbados (17.8%) or were unsure about their right (26.7%). Generally, transgender and nonbinary respondents were least likely to state that they have no right to financial assistance and the most likely to be unsure about their right to assistance.

**FIGURE 4: RIGHT TO SUBSIDIES/FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE AVAILABLE IN BARBADOS**



#### **7.2.4 DAY-TO-DAY EXPERIENCES OF CITIZEN INSECURITY**

Interview respondents also adopted a nuanced understanding of citizen security in their accounts of personal and collective experiences as citizens and/or residents of Barbados. Specifically, interviewees spoke about citizen security and insecurity in terms of having greater inclusivity within society that goes beyond tolerance. They also spoke about the importance of legal recognition, the ability to participate in various sectors without fear of discrimination and violence, having a decent livelihood, social support, and an enjoyment of human rights. Therefore, citizen security is, from their accounts, an overarching concept that covers various intersecting dimensions of people's everyday lived realities. It is about an individual's quality of life; additionally, it has broader group and societal implications.

Importantly, LGBTQ+ people in the Caribbean, including in Barbados, do “engage, challenge, redefine and dissociate from laws and policies that mark their [gender expression and identity as well as] sexuality as antagonistic to nationhood” (Grey and Attai 2020, 1). Nevertheless, most interviewees spoke in detail about citizen insecurity, which is rooted in and, in turn, reinforces inequalities within a society. Although attention is given to citizen insecurity, most of the interviewees also recognized that some people have more security than others. The following statements reveal some of their concerns about citizen security and the complex experiences with citizen insecurity:

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“...there's the...issues of existing, you know, people want families, people want to live, quote, end quote, normal lives. People want to be able to pass [die] knowing that if something happens to me my partner is okay and the law recognizes them as legitimate...”

— *Jasmin, 18 November 2022*

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Jasmine further elaborated:

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“...could I have a child with my partner... you can't even, sometimes you can't even imagine it... When you think about what a queer young guy or bisexual man or a trans man or a trans woman, how they must navigate society, they are not awarded that luxury of just existing and being themselves. You are constantly either dipping and dodging and hiding, or in fear, or have anxiety. You know, you say you come out once but no, you're constantly coming out, you're constantly coming out to people, deciding whether I pretend...because this person thinks I'm straight...there's so much mental gymnastics that you have to do in a society like Barbados!”

— *Jasmin, 18 November 2022*

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Like Jasmin, Zi also discussed the difficulties associated with making plans and accumulating assets with one's intimate same-sex partner, she explained: "In buying a car, I had to do this alone, and we want to get a house, and again, might have to do that alone" (Zi 27 January 2023).

Similar to Jasmin's description of "dipping and dodging and hiding," Carmen spoke about citizenship security in terms of visibility and invisibility; that is, people are okay if they remain "hidden":

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"...the vast majority of LGBT youth in Barbados can thrive...if they stay closeted. Unfortunately. If they don't disclose... If you go into a place of employment, and you don't disclose anything about your personal life, you'll be fine. No one will know your business. But then, from the time that, you know, people start asking about, you know partners, or let's say you live with someone, and they drop off something, it's like questions start being asked, and then attitudes start to change. So, in all areas, LGBT youth, people can...really do well once they are closeted. But I think, as soon as that like veil is lifted, that's when the problem starts to, that's when they begin..."

— *Carmen, 21 November 2022*

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Remaining invisible is neither desirable nor an available option for everyone. Indeed, most respondents including Laila spoke about some transgender people and those who do not express gender in normative ways being discriminately denied opportunities and the right to exist and participate in certain public spaces because they cannot remain invisible or conceal their identity:

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"Yeah, and I'll be honest, at times it is okay, because you know, you get past the stage with the staring and people asking questions. You get comfortable with yourself... But there are times you sit down and recognize your reality, and it hurts! It hurts to the point that society says that this is what the boxes you need to check to be seen as a— go to school, get a decent education, so you can get a good job and have a certain lifestyle. But you did do these things and continue to do them and you recognize that, you know, society is not ready yet. I couldn't say they haven't made small steps and there are provisions made, but I'm saying, in terms of feeling free, and your participation is, you freely participate in all civil liberties and such like. It isn't there yet."

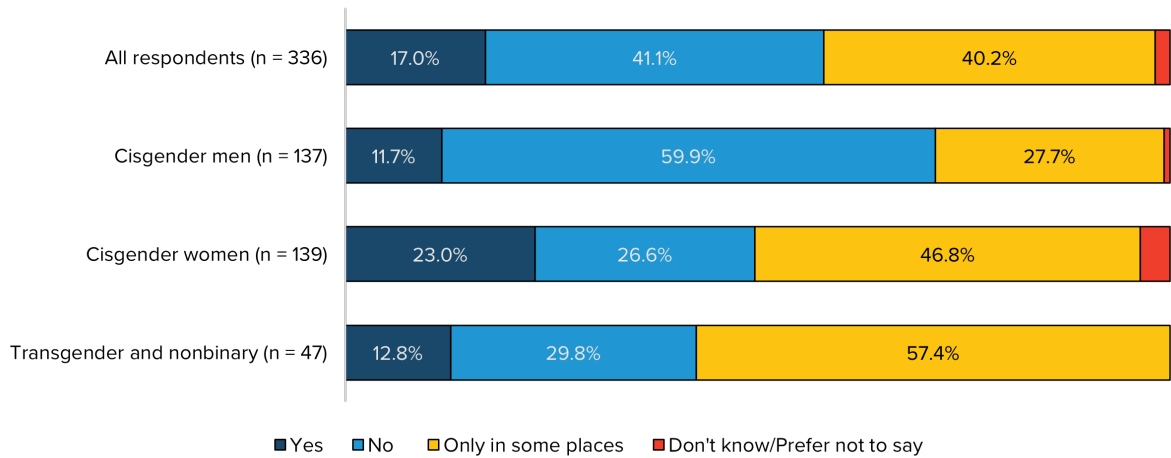
— *Laila, 2 December 2022*

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Visibility and invisibility are, of course, intimately connected to safety, claiming rights, the ability to freely mobilize, as well as to participate and express oneself in various spaces. This also includes feeling comfortable and free to publicly express affection with one’s intimate partner. On this point, roughly 41% of survey respondents

stated that they were uncomfortable publicly sharing affection with their partners, with a plurality of individuals being comfortable in some places (40.2%). Cisgender women reported the greatest level of comfort, while cisgender men were the least comfortable with public displays of affection (Figure 5).

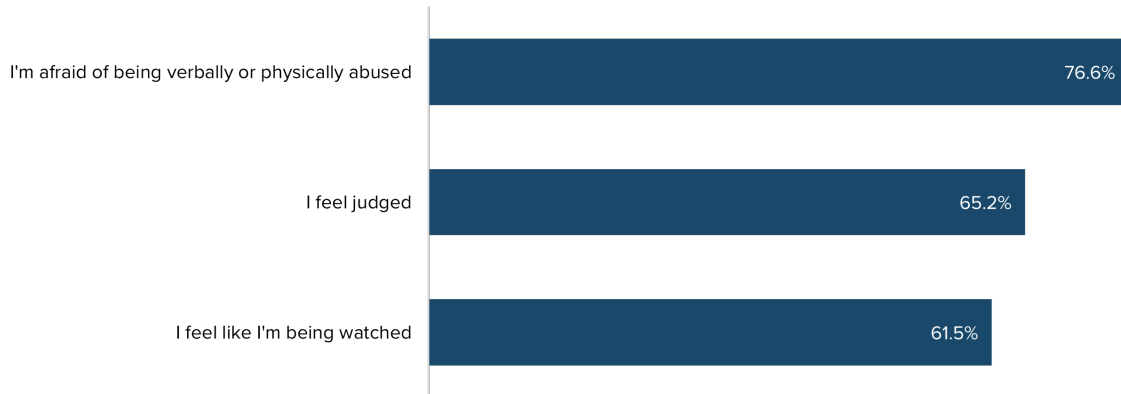
**FIGURE 5: COMFORT WITH PUBLIC DISPLAYS OF AFFECTION**



The subset of respondents who were either only partially comfortable or uncomfortable with public displays of affection provided several reasons for their discomfort (Figure 6). The most cited reason was fear of verbal or physical abuse (76.6%), and the fear of adverse reactions was much higher

for cisgender men (83.3%) and transgender respondents (80.5%) than for cisgender women (68.6%). A significant portion of respondents were also uncomfortable as they felt they were being judged (65.2%) or watched (61.5%).

## FIGURE 6: REASONS FOR DISCOMFORT WITH PUBLIC DISPLAYS OF AFFECTION

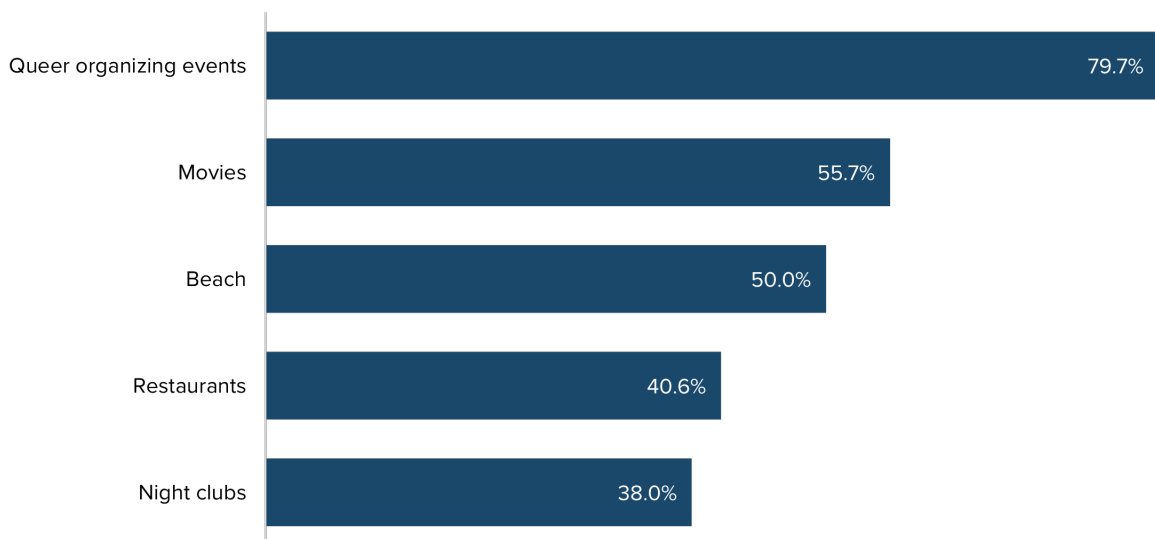


**Note:** Based on 273 responses. Respondents could select as many reasons for discomfort as applicable.

Comfort with affection-sharing experiences varies significantly with the location. Most respondents (79.7%) who reported some level of comfort with public displays of affection were comfortable being publicly affectionate at queer organizing

events (Figure 7). They were considerably less comfortable being openly affectionate at the movies (55.7%), beach (50.0%), restaurants (40.6%) or nightclubs (38.0%).

## FIGURE 7: PLACES WHERE SURVEY RESPONDENTS FEEL COMFORTABLE SHOWING AFFECTION



**Notes:** Based on 192 responses. Respondents could select as many locations as applicable.

### **7.2.5 MIGRATION CONSIDERATION DUE TO BEING LGBTQ+**

Considering the fundamental importance of citizen security, it is perhaps unsurprising that some interviewees suggested that citizen insecurity has both material and psychological effects. It also results in some people migrating, if they can, which contributes to the wider socioeconomic problem of brain drain:

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**“I think mental health issues in general across the board from youth to elderly to everybody. I think that there is a bit of a brain drain happening in Barbados, where queer people are sick of living the lives that they live, of being bullied or being threatened, and they leave, and they go to other countries that are like Canada where, you know, there are programs there and obviously, society is incredibly progressive. But we’re losing, we’re losing people.”**

**— Jasmin, 18 November 2022**

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Migration, as a coping strategy emerged in other interviewees’ accounts, with some stating that there are LGBTQ+ people from Barbados who migrate via the Rainbow Railway, for example,<sup>47</sup> to countries such as Canada to live and work more freely. Likewise, most survey respondents saw migration as an appealing alternative to life in Barbados: 77.0% of respondents considered leaving due to their SOGIE. This hints that LGBTQI+ discrimination could affect human capital retention in Barbados. Given the sample’s education profile, these findings imply that Barbados could

be susceptible to losing a significant proportion of the LGBTQI+ community with a high level of human capital.

### **7.2.6 SOCIAL CHANGE AND CITIZEN SECURITY**

Citizen insecurity has implications for societal development and is influenced by several factors that fuel inequalities and hardships. It is, as some interviewees noted, also experienced by other marginalized and vulnerable groups within society:

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<sup>47</sup> The Railway Rainbow “is a global not-for-profit organization that helps LGTBQI+ people facing persecution based on their sexual orientation, gender identity and sex characteristics.” Available at: <https://www.rainbowrailroad.org/about#mission>

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“...it feels to me like for the most part, maybe it’s slightly different now, everyone would like LGBT people in the Caribbean and in Barbados to not be vocal, and then everybody would be okay. And that comes partly because, as a society, we want very little confrontation from any sector. We don’t want women to act for rights and we don’t want to recognize the rights of minors, and we don’t want to kind of have discussions about people who are disabled. We just want to feel kind of sad for them, and we similarly don’t want LGBT people to kind of ask for more. You know, we want them to kind of just be happy that we allow them to exist. And so, when there is kind of a more vocal move towards equality from LGBT people, there does to me feel like an “oh we want to kind of stop that, like you should just not be vocal and then in turn, we won’t knock you down, you know... We want to tolerate you, but we don’t want to actually have any move towards equality, yeah.”

— *Vincent, 17 November 2022*

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“I could say in general now, and which obviously include queer people. I feel like since, it is eroding a little bit with the whole economic situation, and that ties into you know, violence and just general violence, like gun violence in Barbados...every time...I just see somebody complaining about stuff, and how things are hard and everything is going up.”

— *Aisha, 13 January 2023*

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Despite providing accounts of citizenship insecurity, some interviewees nevertheless pointed out that recent advances have been made to address some of these concerns:

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“Well, with the current government, I believe they’re trying...you know, all citizens should be treated fairly... I believe we’re making some level of progress in terms of that. And with the legislation, I think with the anti-discrimination policy...that is a step in the right direction. So with this current government, I think there have been some steps taken to address certain areas which...will have a domino effect...but...when you look at legal, the constitutional reform, to address that, you have to address many different issues, and I just remain hopeful and optimistic that they will continue to address them. And that we will have a fair and just society.”

— *Laila, 2 December 2022*

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Indeed, the various socio-legal developments that were previously discussed in the Introduction of this report represent, for some local and international human rights advocates, a move in the right direction for securing a more inclusive and just society for all people. Similarly, some interviewees highlighted developments such as the passing of the Employment (Prevention of Discrimination) Act 2020, the Prime Minister’s call for a just and fair society for all in Barbados and the promise of the recognition of civil unions as well as the inclusion of sexual orientation and gender in the Barbados Charter as positive, progressive changes. Additionally, other initiatives such as the increased consultations with LGBTQI+ activists by certain political leaders were seen by most respondents as significant changes that signalled, in part, an intent, at least by certain arms of the government, to move towards greater inclusivity and the recognition of all people’s human rights. For example, one interviewee stated:

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**“Barbados is in no position to be turning away people based on their sexual preferences, or somebody bringing their partner and their family [this is in reference to the earlier mentioned Welcome Stamp Programme that was introduced as an economic recovery strategy in 2021].... You know what I mean? So, they [the government and private sector] want, at that point they wanted anybody who would come. So it was advantageous for them to say, look at us, we’re non-discriminatory.”**

**— Jasmin, 18 November 2022**

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Nevertheless, most interviewees had a certain dissatisfaction with the politicization of certain issues, as well as the oppositions and limitations placed on realizing greater inclusivity around gender and sexuality:

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**“And I think the [political] parties, all of them...try and play it both ways, in so far as you have this government saying that they’re going to put civil unions in place, but they’re going to have a referendum on gay marriage... most referendums do not pass... So then, you know, right away you’re probably not going to have gay marriage, and you can say to people, well, the public says we’re not ready for that. But at the same time, you’re going to have civil unions...and so you can say to LGBT citizens, well, yes, we recognize that you exist. And you can say to people who are coming here for the Welcome Stamp or for visas that we are a progressive country, and we recognize everyone and blah, blah, blah.”**

**— Vincent, 17 November 2022**

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Consequently, while some interviewees were optimistic, they also expressed reservations about whether these developments, including constitutional reform, will translate into meaningful changes:



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“...This, the Constitution, even if we do get protections with gender identity, gender, sexuality that can only be enforceable by, and on the State; as in, there’s only recourse if the State infringes upon your rights, but not if a private entity does it. So there’s still so much to be done.”

— *Jordan, 5 December 2022*

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Of course, it is presently too soon to say with any certainty what lasting impacts these socio-legal changes will have on LGBTQ+ people’s lives. Through an examination of the seven remaining thematic areas, further information is provided about specific experiences pertaining to the enjoyment of human rights and navigation of citizen security and insecurity.

## **7.3 Education**

Schools, by definition, are institutions designed to educate students. These institutions place special emphasis on equipping students with current, interdisciplinary knowledge and creating an environment conducive to the personal growth of each student (Dora and Mijas 2014). Based on this description, one would assume that educational systems would promote and foster diversity. However, globally, educational institutions are often listed as places where members of the LGBTQ+ community experience discrimination or are made invisible in terms of discourse or curricular representation (Reilly 2007). This section speaks to the experiences of LGBTQ+ people in Barbados primary and secondary schools. As such, this section focuses on the answers from respondents who indicated that they were raised in Barbados (n = 294).

### **7.3.1 DISCRIMINATION AND EXCLUSION**

There are no explicit provisions prohibiting discrimination or exclusion in schools based on gender identity or sexual orientation. Given the lack of provisions to ensure inclusion, the survey sought to determine the extent to which respondents were discriminated against or denied access to education during their school life.

None of the respondents noted that they were denied or had access restricted to study or continued studying within the 12 months preceding the survey. However, roughly one out of every four participants experienced discrimination or exclusion at school at some point during their school life (see Table 6), and this incidence was higher among cisgender men (31.2%) than transgender and gender nonconforming respondents (26.2%) or than cisgender women (17.5%). Reports of cisgender men experiencing more negative experiences than cisgender women are in line with several accounts that men are more likely to be the targets of sexual prejudice than women (Bettinsoli, Suppes and Napier 2020). However, it is somewhat surprising that transgender and gender nonconforming respondents were less likely to report negative experiences during their school life than cisgender respondents. The finding that transgender and gender nonbinary participants were less likely than cisgender respondents to experience discrimination and exclusion at school could be related to the fact that many transgender people and gender nonconforming people in the sample noted that they began their transition when they were 18 or older, outside of the age of compulsory schooling.

**TABLE 6: SHARE OF RESPONDENTS WHO EXPERIENCED DISCRIMINATION AND EXCLUSION IN EDUCATION BY GENDER IDENTITY**

	Percent (%)
All respondents (n = 290)	24.8
Cisgender respondents (n = 236)	24.6
Men (n = 122)	31.2
Women (n = 114)	17.5
Transgender and nonbinary respondents (n = 42)	26.2

In a similar vein to the above findings from the survey, there was consensus among the interview respondents that most LGBTQ+ people in Barbados have access to some form of education. Despite this, those who were most vocal recognized that there are still areas for improvement, especially as it relates to the support provided to LGBTQ+ students:

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**“...But I would say in secondary school that is...in public secondary school...it’s [talking about one’s sexual orientation or gender identity] still very much covered up. It’s still, you know, don’t talk about it...like let’s pretend that doesn’t exist, we’re not dealing with that, we’re not uncovering that, that’s just how it, how it was at my school.”**

**— Carmen, 21 November 2022**

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**“...I’m quite concerned about queer youth and their access to mental health services and safe spaces within schools...”**

**— Jasmin, 18 November 2022**

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Moreover, unlike the survey data, most interviewees stated that transgender youth or those who visibly express gender in non-normative ways are more likely to experience discrimination and marginalization in certain school environments. The interviewees’ comments on access and experience within education show that more research is needed in this area to gain a greater understanding of how LGBTQI+ youth are positioned and in turn navigate the various levels of the education system in Barbados.

### **7.3.2 THE ROLE OF TEACHERS**

Teachers have the power to help improve conditions for LGBTQ+ youth by mitigating the effect of prejudiced environments by promoting inclusion and respect for LGBTQ+ people (Gorski, Davis and Reiter 2013). However, most survey respondents said that Barbados teachers with whom they had interacted had not encouraged inclusion or respect for LGBTQ+ people (see Table 7), with a subset of respondents noting that messages from teachers were violent (8.2%), stigmatizing (33.0%) and/or religiously condemnatory (36.4%).

**TABLE 7: RESPONDENTS' VIEWS ON WHETHER TEACHERS PROMOTE MESSAGES OF INCLUSION AND RESPECT FOR LGBTQ+ PEOPLE**

	Primary school (n = 292)	Secondary school (n = 290)
Promote inclusion and respect	2.1%	6.9%
Do not promote inclusion and respect	69.2%	67.6%
Don't know	27.4%	25.2%
Prefer not to say	1.4%	0.3%

Interviewees also shared mixed reviews of the role of teachers in creating an inclusive environment. Specifically, interviewees were not aware of any current collaboration between the Ministry of Education, Technological and Vocational Training and locally based LGBTQI+ organizations. However, a few identified that experiences were not the same across the board in terms of teachers' attitudes towards LGBTQ+ students. According to Jordan, there are individual professors or teachers who are progressive, but it's not systemic:

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**“Some schools have really progressive guidance counsellors or principals. So you see that they are inclusive in their classes and in the school, but it's not across the board. This is literally an individual decision.”**

**— Jordan, 21 November 2022**

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Similarly, Aisha, shared:

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**“There is a small number of people talking...but from reading like stories, you know, social media postings, and whatever of people who are in the education sector, I think, like the youth start getting...a little more progressive than this generation. So, it's a little better. But again, I think that might also be a function of class, so like the schools, or among circles that are lower socioeconomic, there might be more issues. But to be fair, I mean, like you don't really hear much in Barbados like compared to...where it's like bullying in schools is a big thing... But here you don't really hear too much of it...”**

**— Aisha, 13 January 2023**

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Aisha also stated that she has heard of some teachers offering support to LGBTQ+ students. Interestingly, though some interviewees identified that the very young may be among the more vulnerable, there is also a perception that they are more progressive and knowledgeable. However, their experiences remain largely unknown.

In addition, a few interviewees contrasted their secondary school experiences to their experience at tertiary institutions. Carmen spoke about a more progressive ethos at the tertiary level:

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**“...I will definitely say at university, I think, like the tide has changed a little bit where people are more unapologetically themselves. Where I’ll have, I’ll be like sitting in a class, and we’re having a class discussion, and, you know, a guy would be like, you know, just talk about his experience as an openly gay male in Barbados, and I’m like wow! Like that, I don’t think that would have happened about five, six years ago, because no one is going to be talking about their business.”**

**— Carmen, 21 November 2022**

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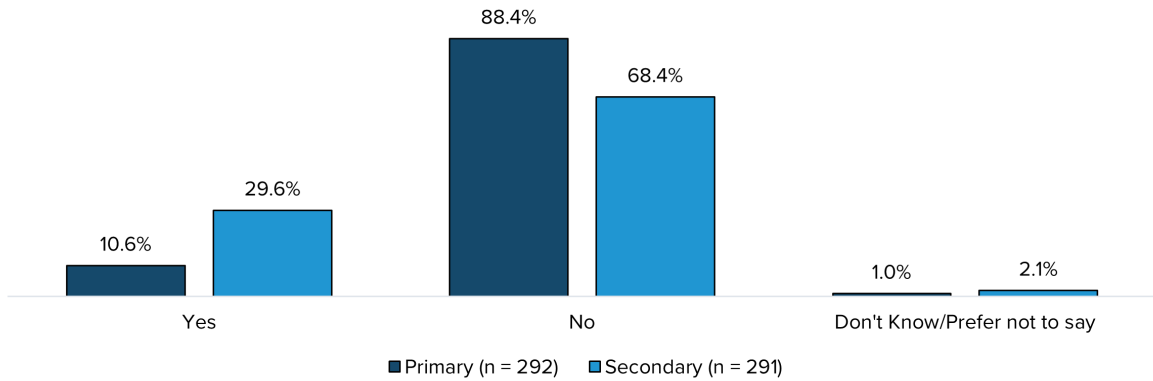
Laila shared a more nuanced overview, noting that she had to navigate and negotiate space, for example bathroom use, and at times dealt with those who were not always knowledgeable or respectful. She, however, received support from some members of staff, including senior administration, though having established policies on gender diversity would have made certain situations easier to navigate. It is important to note that the ability of teachers to foster LGBTQ+ inclusion not only depends on their own views on

sexuality and gender, but also on whether they have the support and tools necessary to disrupt LGBTQ+ prejudices. The findings point to a need for interventions to help aid teachers in overcoming their prejudices and prepare teachers to foster an environment of inclusion for all students.

### **7.3.3 LEARNING ABOUT ISSUES AND CONCERNS RELATED TO LGBTQ+**

Opportunities to teach LGBTQ+-inclusive lessons in schools are frequent, but these opportunities are regularly missed. For instance, sex education is present in Barbados schools, but it is not fully comprehensive and often exclusionary. In their assessment of sex education in the Caribbean, UNFPA Caribbean found that LGBTQ+ concerns are largely absent from the curriculum: the content is often ciscentric with no mentions of non-heterosexual sexual orientations and identities (UNFPA Caribbean 2022). Though the Barbados school system lacks comprehensive sexuality and gender diversity education, some respondents still received information about sexual orientation or gender identity as part of the curriculum at primary (10.6%) and secondary school (29.6%), as shown in Figure 8. Respondents who received information shared that the information was presented mainly in general discussions (73.9%), with the remainder noting that the information was provided in a specific class or module in the curriculum, such as religious studies, guidance and health, and family life education.

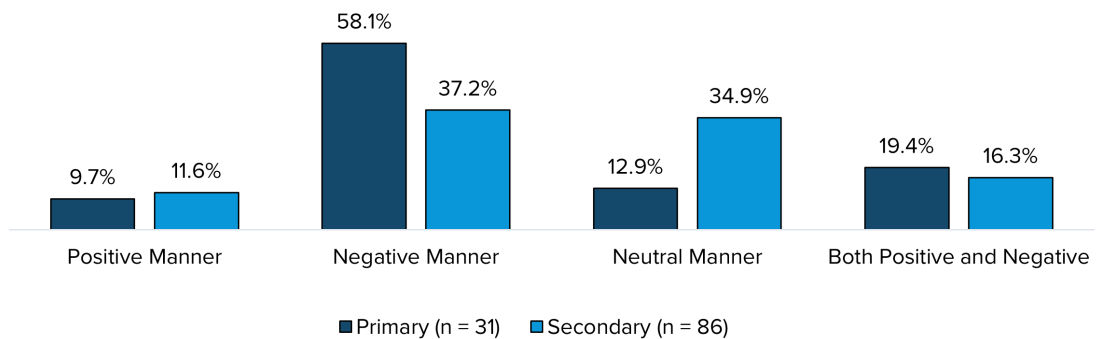
**FIGURE 8: INFORMATION ABOUT SEXUAL ORIENTATION OR GENDER IDENTITY BY LEVEL OF SCHOOLING**



While survey respondents acknowledge receiving information on sexual orientation or gender identity, their responses about the nature of said information indicate that many lessons fell short of their potential. Among respondents who were given information about sexual orientation or gender identity, less than 15% of respondents

reported receiving only positive messages at either primary or secondary school (see Figure 9). Respondents were most likely to receive negative information at the primary school level (58.1% compared to 37.2% for secondary schools) and often likely to be presented with information in a neutral manner at secondary school (34.9%).

**FIGURE 9: NATURE OF INFORMATION ABOUT SEXUAL ORIENTATION OR GENDER IDENTITY BY LEVEL OF SCHOOLING**



Like the survey findings, the chosen emphasis and even more importantly, the silences in the existing curriculum, especially as it pertains to sex, nonnormative expressions of gender and diverse sexual orientations, were also discussed by some interviewees. Consider the following experience voiced by Carmen about the approach to sexuality in the Health and Family Life Education (HFLE) curriculum at her former public secondary school:

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**“...because, I just remember learning about STIs and STDs and I’m like, is this it? Is this everything? And she’s like, no, we’re gonna, we’re gonna learn more in like fourth form or fifth form... And I got into fourth form and fifth form, and it was still questions on STIs and STDs and condoms, and I’m like we haven’t even gotten into anything yet. So...I’m very grateful for the family and the community that I have...to be able to know, and, you know, discover myself so early, and all those things. But what happens to people who have no idea?”**

**— Carmen, 21 November 2022**

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Carmen paints a picture of missed opportunities to, on the one hand, discuss diverse gender identities and sexual orientations, and, on the other hand, to expand the discourse to include pleasure and desires, and not just danger, disease and pregnancy. Carmen and Jasmin both explained that groups such as Dance4Life Barbados,<sup>48</sup> Youth Advocacy Movement (YAM) and Barbados Family Planning Association (BFPA) do provide a more comprehensive focus on gender and sexuality within some schools in the country. However, there is still resistance to a consistent implementation of comprehensive sexuality education (CSE) (Lazarus 2019). Jasmin notes:

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**“So, I know that they [the above-named NGOs] have done work and they’re doing work, and they’re continuing to grow and evolve the work that they’re doing to be as inclusive as possible, and that’s positive. But beyond that, this is going to be the major fight, you know...they conflate, you know my queerness with maybe paedophilia, or something crazy like that.”**

**— Jasmin, 18 November 2022**

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<sup>48</sup> Dance4Life “is a registered charity aiming to reduce the incidence of HIV, STIs and unplanned pregnancies among young people by providing comprehensive adolescent sexual and reproductive health education. Dance4life ultimately aims to create young, civic-minded leaders empowered to make positive decisions about their futures.” Available at: <https://www.facebook.com/dance4lifeBarbados>

In 2022 there was renewed public opposition to the introduction of CSE in local schools following a controversial computer science pre-test that asked 11-year-old students about their sexuality, substance use and gender identity, among other things. That research was designed by the International Development Bank (IDB) and administered in collaboration with the Ministry of Education, Technological and Vocational Training, without parental consent. Despite clear ethical issues around consent and the research procedures, critics also focused on the reasons for asking children the specific questions about sex, sexuality and gender, with some noting that there was a sinister attempt being made to implement an unwanted curriculum in local schools.<sup>49</sup> The argument that CSE is a dangerous, externally-driven initiative is repeatedly made, though research has shown its effectiveness in other contexts and local stakeholders have argued its benefits. Equally, some interviewees noted that societal anxieties about sex, gender identity and sexual orientation may impede collaborations between LGBTQI+ groups and the Ministry of Education, Technological and Vocational Training, which makes it difficult to ascertain and attend to the specific needs of the younger LGBTQI+ population. Jasmin stated: “We tried to approach the Ministry of Education to do sensitivity training with guidance counsellors, but we’ve been, they’ve been mute on that. No response at all. But there have been prior engagements before...” (Jasmin 18 November 2022). This lack of recent collaboration, as one interviewee reasoned, is in part linked to there being “a big stigma with associating with people under the age of 18, and it [engagement] will be seen as pushing the “agenda” [the queer agenda] onto children, and there is that stigmatization. So there’s no like engagement with school age children...” (Aisha 13 January 2023).

Taken together, the interviews and survey results imply that the educational curriculum largely renders LGBTQI+ people invisible, and in the few instances that information about sexual orientation and gender identity are shared, it is unlikely to deviate from the presupposed “heterosexual norm” or binary gender identities. This is worrying, as messages received in schools can either mitigate or exacerbate heterosexism and gender norms at school and, in turn, can affect various aspects of LGBTQI+ school life, including safety, well-being, learning and sense of self-worth.

### **7.3.4 SUPPORT SYSTEMS AT SCHOOL**

Thus far, the analysis has provided an overview of the experiences of LGBTQ+ adults during their school lives and indicates the obstacles that lie ahead for advocates seeking to promote equity and inclusion. However, the situation is not monolithic. Many survey respondents reported access to various types of support within their schools, with a significant share of respondents reporting that support was available from guidance counsellors (44.9%) or friends (47.6%) and to a lesser extent, teachers (23.5%) or social clubs (14.3%).<sup>50</sup> Conversely, roughly 26.8% of survey respondents did not have any support during their school life.

<sup>49</sup> Emmanuel Joseph, “Big Benefits.” Barbados Today (12 October 2022). Available at: <https://barbadostoday.bb/2022/10/12/big-benefits-2/>  
See also: [https://m.facebook.com/story.php?story\\_fbid=10159418291553191&id=246784233190&m\\_entstream\\_source=permalink&\\_se\\_imp=0gfg2qDMsRv5ZG9Ya](https://m.facebook.com/story.php?story_fbid=10159418291553191&id=246784233190&m_entstream_source=permalink&_se_imp=0gfg2qDMsRv5ZG9Ya)

<sup>50</sup> Respondents were allowed to select more than one response item.

## 7.4 Employment

The workplace is another area where LGBTQ+ individuals may experience discrimination, exclusion and harassment. Indeed, most interview respondents expressed that some LGBTQ+ people are still likely to experience some form of exclusion and/or discrimination in employment, especially within certain spaces in the public and private sectors, because of their gender and/or sexual orientation. Interviewees, however, also stressed that experiences with employment differ, depending on several factors, including the convergence of multiple systems of power as well as the effects of visibility and invisibility in certain public spaces:

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“Yeah, so I think, for the most part, a lot of people who are queer in Barbados can access employment unless they are fem-presenting or trans, and then they very much cannot. Or if they are queer and disabled because they are disabled, people who can’t, you know, or they’re relegated to certain jobs.”

— *Vincent, 17 November 2022*

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“...particularly trans women and gay men have a hard time keeping their job if they are perceived as gay, or if they eventually come out, and what have you. As it pertains to masculine-presenting women, I mean they can hold down jobs depending on the level of job... But I’ve seen people who entered the corporate world without prompt from their employers, or anything ought to wear feminine clothing to not risk being fired, right... They’re not given specific instructions from their employer, but they know through experience that they really got to wear a skirt or something like that. So it is one of those things.”

— *Jordan, November 2022*

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Vincent and Jordan both shared that some LGBTQ+ people, especially in certain forms of employment, may indeed conceal, if they can, certain aspects of their identities within the workspace. The survey findings similarly reveal that LGBTQ+ employees often take steps to avoid work-related incidents. This often involves concealing one’s SOGIE to conform to the status quo.

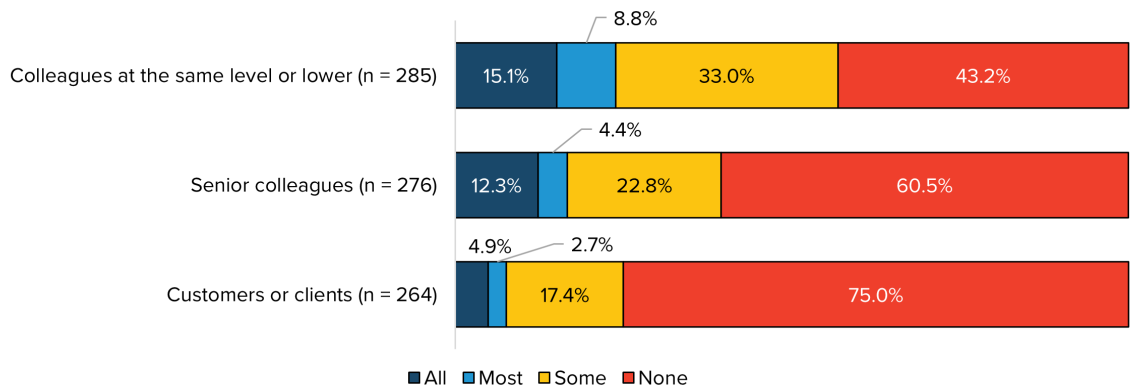


### 7.4.1 OPENNESS ABOUT SEXUAL ORIENTATION AND GENDER IDENTITY AT WORK

Survey respondents were most open with colleagues at the same level or lower, with 56.8% of respondents noting they were open to at least some of this group. Respondents were

less open with senior colleagues (60.5% were not open with anyone in this group) and even less so with customers or clients, with three quarters of the sample noting that they were not open to any clients or customers (see Figure 10).

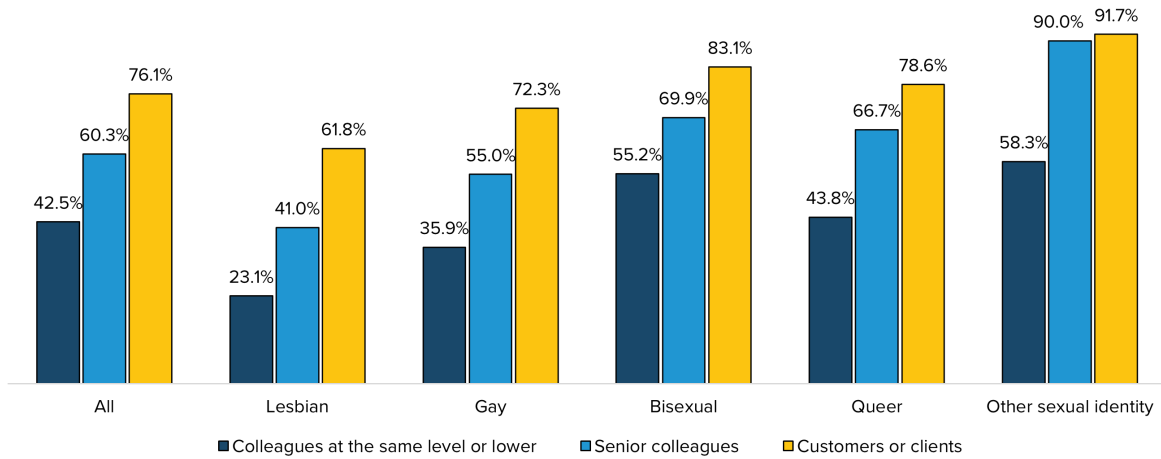
**FIGURE 10: OPENNESS ABOUT BEING LGBTQ+ AT WORK**



Openness with customers and clients was the only area that varied with age, where older respondents were the least likely to hide their SOGIE. Specifically, 56% of respondents aged 45 and over were not open with any of customers and clients, compared to 73.5% and 82.1% of respondents aged 25 to 44 and 18 to 24, respectively. Patterns of openness were generally similar across cisgender/transgender identities.

However, openness varied markedly by sexual orientation among cisgender respondents, with gay and lesbian workers consistently having the lowest likelihood of hiding their SOGIE (Figure 11).

**FIGURE 11: PERCENTAGE OF CISGENDER RESPONDENTS WHO COMPLETELY HIDE THEIR SOGIE AT WORK BY SEXUAL ORIENTATION**

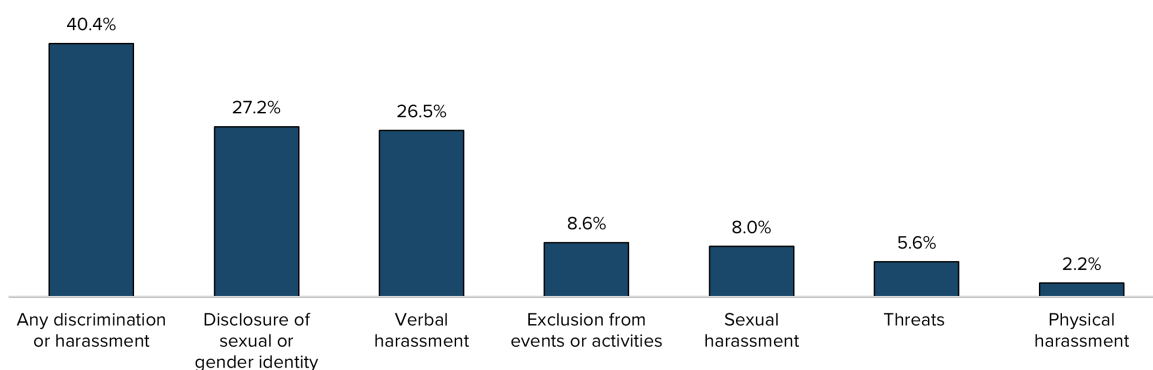


#### 7.4.2 EXCLUSION AND HARASSMENT AT WORK

Approximately 5% of the sample said they were denied the opportunity to work or obtain a promotion due to their SOGIE in the 12 months preceding the survey. However, 40.4% of LGBTQI+ workers experienced some form of exclusion or harassment at work at some point in their lives (see Figure 12), with gay and lesbian respondents (52.5% and 55.8%, respectively) generally reporting higher rates of exclusion and harassment than bisexual (26.6%), queer (37.8%) and respondents with other sexual identities (20.0%). Experiences at work varied with age.

LGBTQI+ workers under age 25 were less likely to experience negative incidents at work (27.9%) than workers aged 25 to 44 (44.4%) or those aged 45 and over (50.0%). The most common incidents experienced by survey respondents were someone disclosing their sexual or gender identity without permission (27.2%) and verbal harassment, insults or other hurtful comments (26.5%). Some respondents also experienced sexual harassment (8.0%) and threats of physical or sexual harassment or violence (5.6%). Very few respondents experienced physical harassment or [physical] violence at work (Figure 12).

**FIGURE 12: INCIDENTS OF DISCRIMINATION AT WORK DUE TO BEING LGBTQ+**

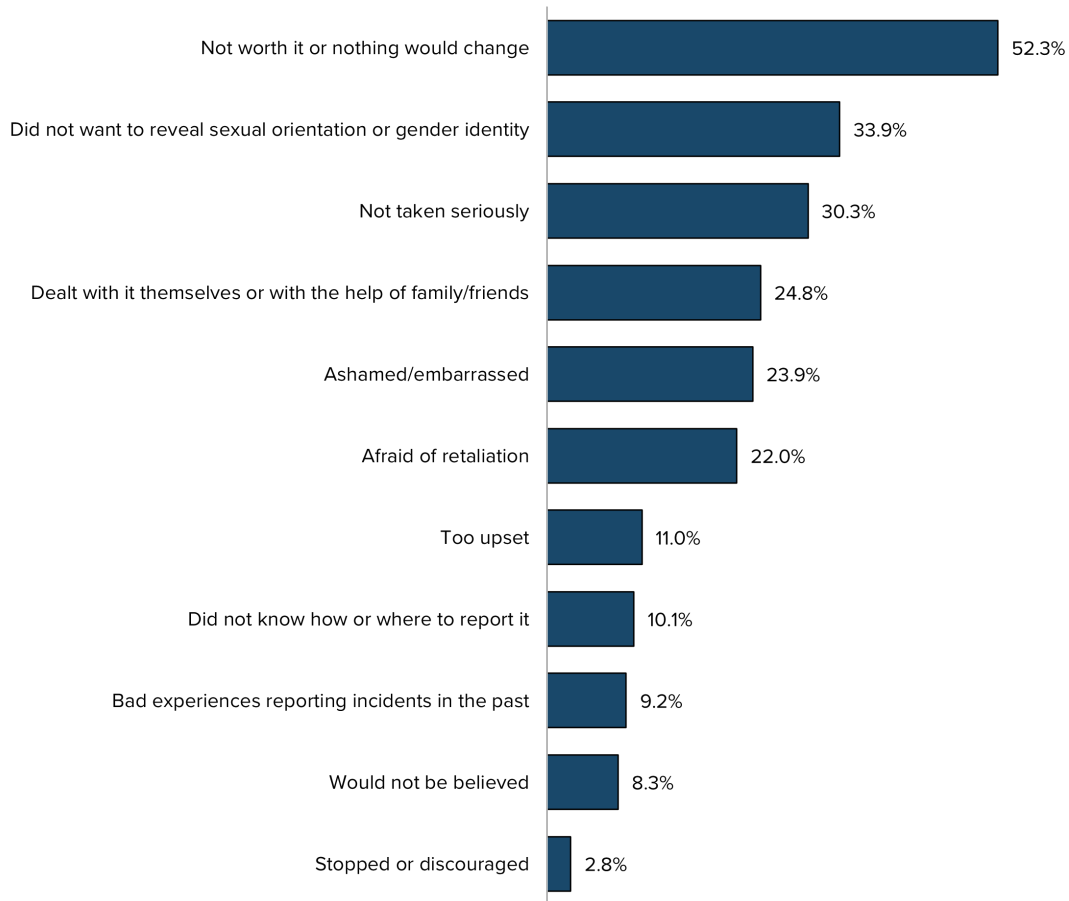


**Notes:** Based on 294 responses. Respondents could select as many experiences as applicable.

Incidents in the workplace due to sexual or gender identity often go unreported. Very few respondents who experienced exclusion or harassment reported the incident (13.6%), and even fewer reported that the incident was reported by someone else (3.0%). Even the more serious types of incidents (such as sexual harassment, threats or physical harassment) were unlikely to be reported, with only 21.6% of respondents noting that they or someone else reported these incidents. The most cited reason for not reporting any type of incident of exclusion and harassment was because respondents did not think it was worth it or thought that nothing would change (50.5%). Other often-cited reasons

why incidents at work are likely to go unreported included: (1) respondents did not want to reveal their sexual orientation or gender identity; (2) respondents believed that the incident would not be taken seriously; (3) respondents opted to deal with it themselves, with the help of family or friends; (4) respondents felt embarrassed and did not want anyone to know; and (5) respondents were afraid of retaliation (see Figure 13). In the few instances where incidents were reported (n = 22), respondents noted that their organization was only somewhat helpful (40.9%), not very helpful (36.4%) or not helpful at all (22.7%).

**FIGURE 13: REASONS FOR NOT REPORTING INCIDENTS IN THE WORKPLACE**



**Notes:** Based on 109 responses. Respondents could select as many reasons as applicable.

Importantly, in discussing protection against workplace discrimination, most interviewees pointed to the Employment (Prevention of Discrimination) Act 2020 as a positive development. They were nonetheless also aware of its shortcomings. For example, some respondents noted that though the LGBTQ+ community was consulted regarding the amendment to the

Employment Act and tried to lobby for the inclusion of both gender identity and sexual orientation as grounds for protection, gender identity does not appear in the final document. This means that transgender people are not being included, and thus are still vulnerable to discriminatory practices in the workplace:

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“Oh, definitely. So the Employment Discrimination Act does not include gender identity. So trans people absolutely are discriminated against... there are many trans women who have been denied jobs for sure. And again, it pushes that community into sex work. So you find trans women engaging in sex work for money more than they would because they just simply don't have those kinds of opportunities. There are no protections against discrimination in the workplace.”

— *Jasmin, 18 November 2022*

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#### **7.4.3 WORKPLACE ENVIRONMENT AND LGBTQ+ EMPLOYEE RETENTION**

The findings thus far suggest that a significant share of LGBTQ+ employees experienced exclusion or harassment at some point in their working lives and are not open about being LGBTQ+. Generally, one would expect that unsupportive workplace environments would lead to poor retention of LGBTQ+ employees. Survey respondents were thus asked about the reason for leaving their last job (n = 323). Very few (3.4%) of respondents noted that they left their last job because of how they were personally treated based on their SOGIE.

## **7.5 Health**

Like education, maintaining an equitable, efficient and accessible healthcare system is a priority in Barbados. Access to healthcare in Barbados is based on the principle of universality.<sup>51</sup> Health services are freely available to all residents at the point of service delivery in the public sector, regardless of sociodemographic status. However, LGBTQ+ people may not fully benefit from the country's universal system. As mentioned in the literature review, LGBTQ+ people often face barriers to healthcare, such as stigma and a general lack of knowledge amongst healthcare staff about the specific health needs and concerns of various segments of the LGBTQ+ community. More than this, there are no regulations that explicitly prohibit discrimination against LGBTQ+ people in healthcare in Barbados, and so, should discrimination occur, LGBTQ+ patients are left with little recourse. Against this backdrop, this section evaluates the health conditions, healthcare needs and experiences of LGBTQ+ people in Barbados, which can aid in developing policies to address barriers and facilitate access to care.

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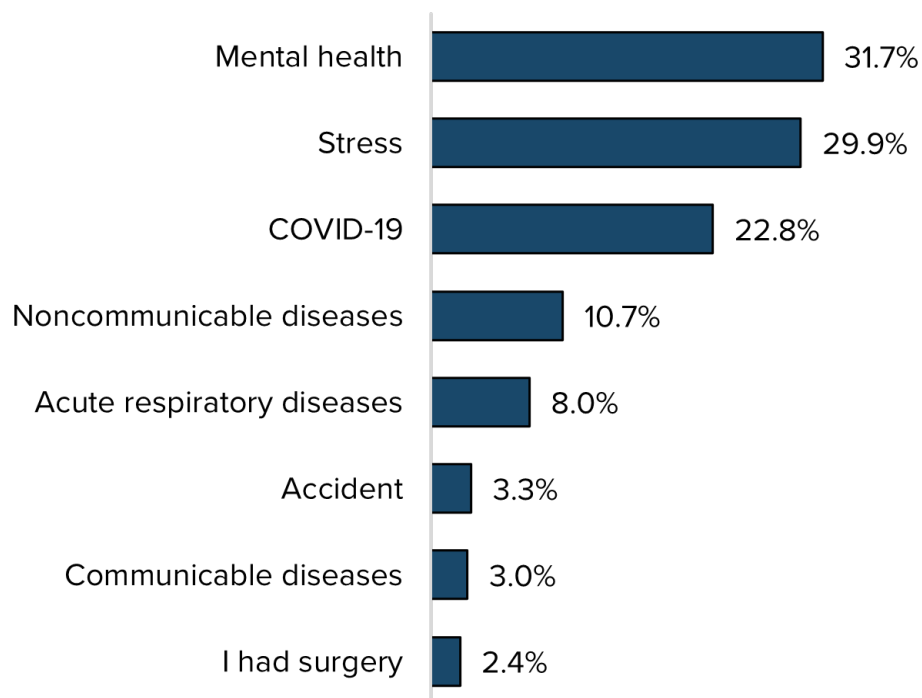
<sup>51</sup> Government of Barbados, *Barbados Strategic Plan for Health, 2002–2012*.

### 7.5.1 HEALTH CONDITIONS

Nearly half (46.8%) of survey respondents experienced a health issue in the 12 months preceding the survey. Less than 15% of health issues reported were related to noncommunicable diseases (NCDs), even though NCDs are the leading cause of death in Barbados.<sup>52</sup> The low prevalence of NCDs observed likely reflects the disproportionate number of respondents under 25. The two most reported issues were related to mental health (31.7% of respondents) and stress (29.9%) (Figure 14). These findings are in line with minority stress theory, which suggests that

because of stigma, prejudice and discrimination, LGBTQ+ people are at high risk of stress and poor mental health outcomes (Mongelli *et al.* 2019; Meyer and Frost 2013). Transgender and nonbinary respondents were the most likely to report recent issues with mental health (51.1% compared to 28.1% for cisgender people) or stress-related health issues (40.4% compared to 27.7% for cisgender people), and this is in line with research that finds that transgender and nonbinary persons have higher odds of mental health and stress-related health incidents than cisgender people (Green, Price and Dorison 2022).

**FIGURE 14: TYPES OF HEALTH-RELATED ISSUES EXPERIENCED BY RESPONDENTS IN THE LAST 12 MONTHS**



**Note:** Based on 338 responses. Respondents could select as many health-related issues as applicable.

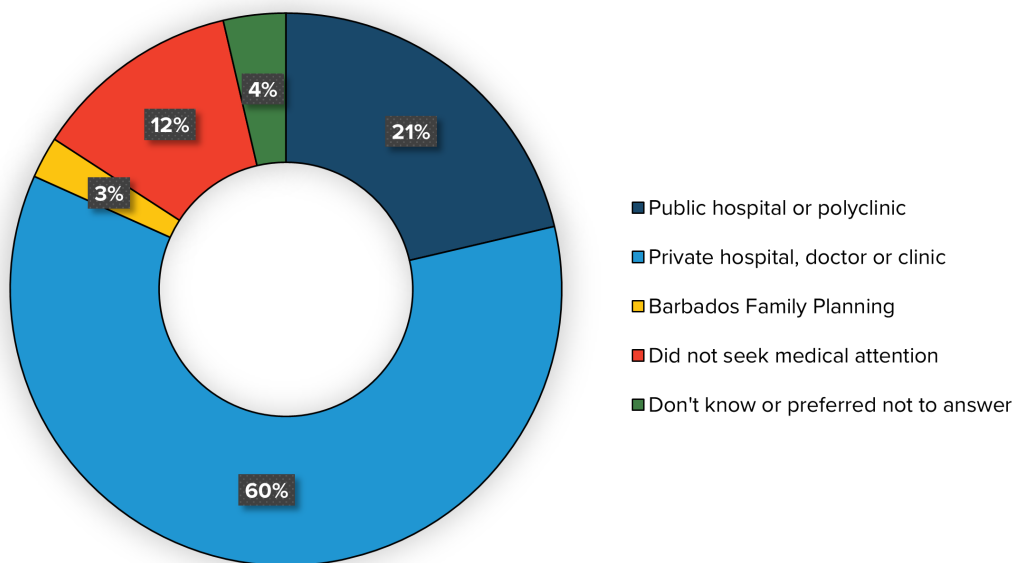
<sup>52</sup> Available at: <https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/259689/WHO-NMH-NMA-17.97-eng.pdf?sequence=1>

### 7.5.2 UTILIZATION OF SERVICES

Respondents who reported a recent health issue were asked about the type of medical facility they visited. Figure 15 shows that most respondents chose a private healthcare facility (60.4%) over a public one (21.3%). The preference for private healthcare services over public services held across gender identities, sexual orientation, age groups and household financial situations.

It should be noted that even in the general population, there is a strong demand for private healthcare services despite the provision of free healthcare services. Estimates from the 2016 Barbados Survey of Living Conditions suggest that for most Barbadians, the last medical facility visited was a private one, with less than 35% of persons reporting that they visited publicly owned health facilities.

**FIGURE 15: TYPE OF HEALTHCARE FACILITY VISITED WHEN NEEDED**



**Note:** Based on 164 responses.

A significant subset of individuals (12.2%) did not seek medical attention for a health issue, and this statistic varied with age (Table 8), with younger persons (18–24) being the most likely to forego medical attention. The primary reasons for not seeking medical attention are financial reasons (35.0%), that is, respondents either reported no private insurance, inability to afford medication

or they did not have the means to seek private care. Nearly half of the respondents without the financial means to access private care also noted that they did not trust public services. Thus, a subset of respondents would rather go without care than access the free healthcare services offered by the public sector.

**TABLE 8: PERCENTAGE OF RESPONDENTS WHO DID NOT SEEK MEDICAL ATTENTION WHEN UNWELL BY AGE**

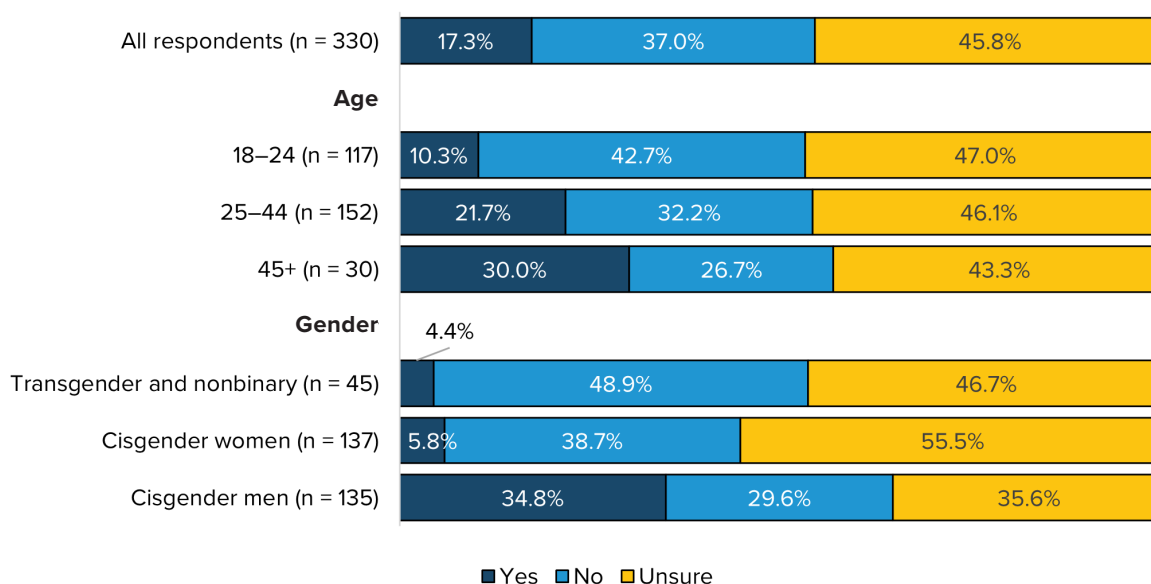
Age	Sought medical attention	Did not seek medical attention	Don't know/Prefer not to say
18 to 24 (n = 62)	67.7%	24.2%	8.1%
25 to 44 (n = 77)	92.2%	6.5%	1.3%
45+ (n = 11)	100%	0.0%	0.0%

### 7.5.3 AWARENESS OF PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICES FOR LGBTQ+ PEOPLE

A lack of awareness about available health services can lead to underutilization of healthcare services and even exacerbate health problems. As such, respondents were asked about their knowledge of LGBTQ+-focused public health programmes. A plurality of respondents was either unsure (45.8%)

about whether public health entities in Barbados offered programmes targeting LGBTQ+ people or did not believe such programmes were available (37.0%). Awareness varied with age and gender, with respondents in the 45+ age group and cisgender men being the most likely to be aware of public health programmes aimed at LGBTQ+ people (Figure 16).

**FIGURE 16: AWARENESS ABOUT PUBLIC HEALTH PROGRAMS FOR LGBTQ+ PEOPLE**





Concerning the type of LGBTQ+ programmes (Figure 17), respondents were most aware of programmes related to HIV (16.9% of the full sample) and sexual and reproductive health (9.5% of the full sample). This finding may, in part, be reflective of the ongoing collaboration between LGBTQI groups, other NGOs and the Ministry of Health and Wellness as it relates to responding to HIV and other sexually transmitted infections (STIs). Most of the interview respondents, for instance, pointed to the collaborations between the Ministry of Health and Wellness and groups such as Equals Barbados, especially as it relates to STI testing and HIV and AIDS care for MSM and queer men. Equally, some interviewees spoke about the sensitization training of medical staff in the country's public clinics, and at the premier regional medical school, UWI, Cave Hill Campus. Aisha, for example, spoke about some of the positive changes occurring:

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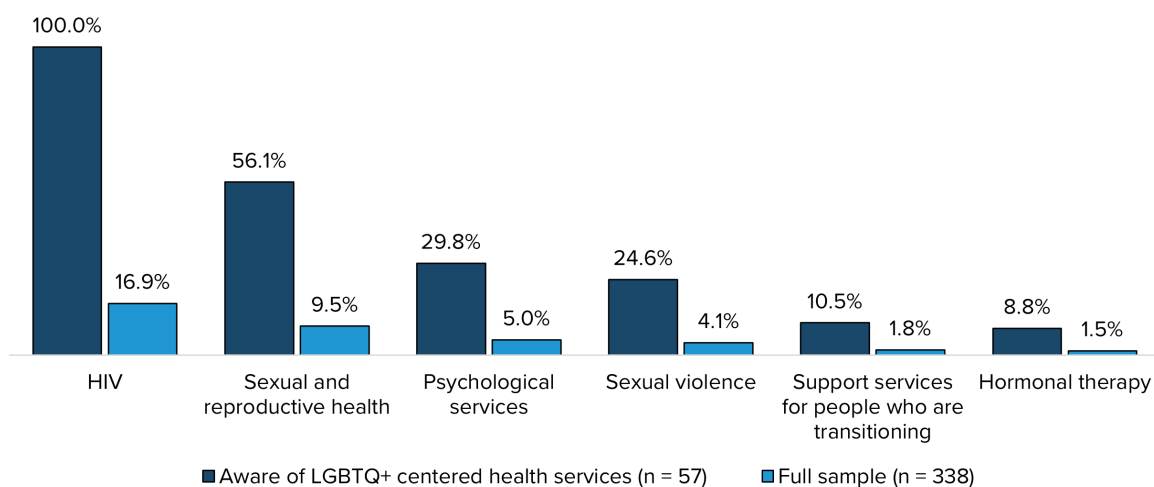
**“Healthcare is a little bit of an issue, but you get away with that...we’ve done some trainings and with the family doctors, you know, doing training, and actually incorporating it into the UWI family medicine curriculum, just kind of making slow progress in that area, and then...there are certain very LGBTQ friendly polyclinics...”**

**— Aisha, 13 January 2023**

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Though these collaborations exist, there is also a need for greater intervention and focus. For Jasmin, the mental health of the very young and elderly, especially those who lack a consistent social support system, was of major concern. Consequently, respondents like Jasmin spoke about the need for collaborating not only with those who attend to the body, but also to people's emotions, mind and material needs. The importance of attending to mental health is also supported by the survey results. For example, very few survey respondents were aware of psychological services aimed at LGBTQ+ people (5.0%). This is quite worrying, as mental health or stress-related issues were respondents' two most cited health issues. The results thus suggest that those most in need of these services may not be aware of their availability. Likewise, the below findings on self-acceptance, suicidal ideation and suicide attempts among respondents also indicate a pressing need for greater attention to and collaboration in addressing mental health.

**FIGURE 17: TYPES OF LGBTQ+ PUBLIC HEALTH PROGRAMS CITED BY RESPONDENTS**



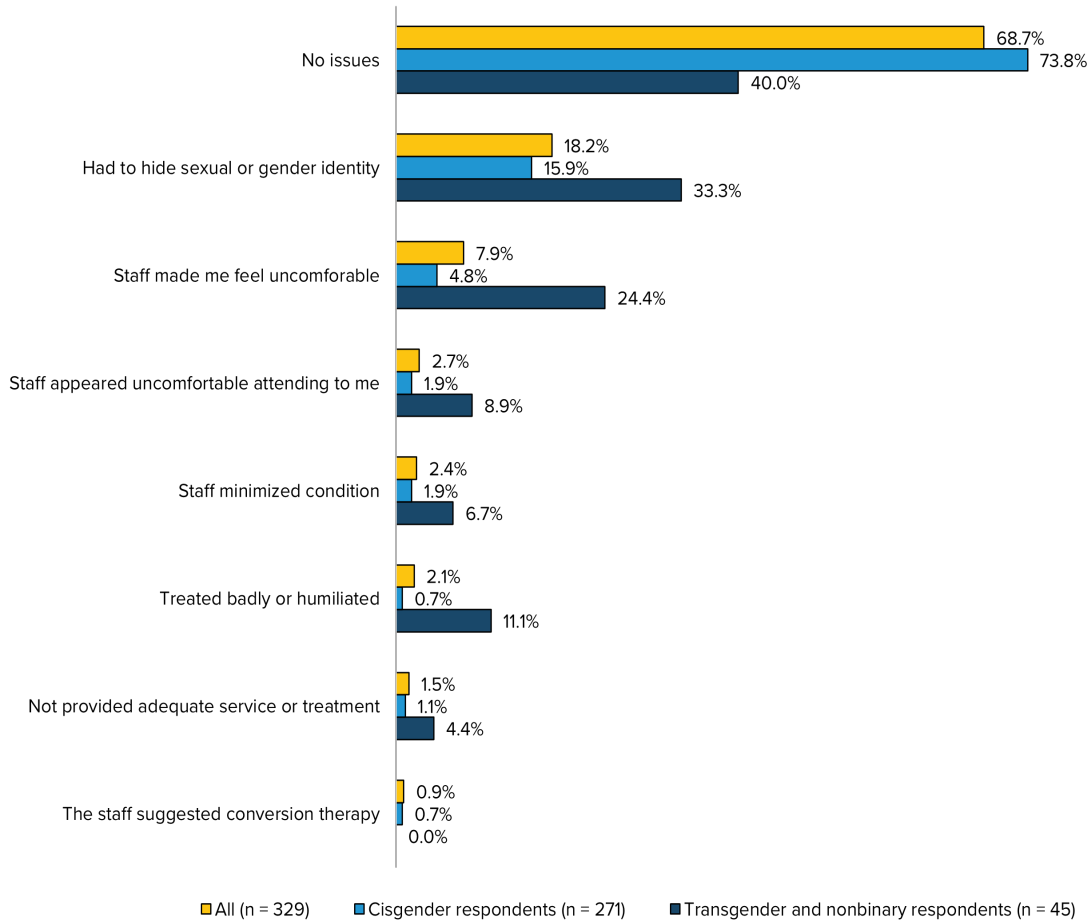
**Note:** Respondents can select as many programmes as applicable.

#### 7.5.4 EXPERIENCES IN HEALTHCARE SETTINGS

Discrimination in healthcare settings can impede access to care and worsen health outcomes for LGBTQI+ people. Respondents were asked if they faced any difficulties obtaining medical attention due to their SOGIE in the 12 months preceding the survey. Less than 1% of the sample reported having difficulties. Respondents were also asked to recall any issues they faced when seeking medical attention over their lifespan. Less than three out of ten (25.2%) respondents reported

negative experiences when seeking medical attention and this statistic did not vary by type of service utilized by participants. However, it did vary by gender identity, where transgender and nonbinary respondents were more likely to report negative experiences obtaining medical attention than cisgender respondents, as seen in Figure 18. The most common issues among respondents were having to hide their sexual or gender identity (18.2%) and employees making them feel uncomfortable (7.9%).

**FIGURE 18: EXPERIENCES WHEN OBTAINING MEDICAL ATTENTION BY GENDER IDENTITY**



**Note:** Respondents could select as many experiences as applicable.

Health was also widely discussed by interview respondents, who shared nuanced accounts of LGBTQ+ people’s experiences of accessing private and public healthcare in Barbados. Generally, interviewees noted that, in theory, most LGBTQ+ people in Barbados have some type of access to healthcare, either through the Ministry of Health and Wellness, BFPA and CSOs such as Equals Barbados or private medical practices:

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“I’ve never had a problem accessing healthcare as a queer person. There is the PrEP Program for men who have sex with men, which the government does, its Ministry of Health. I don’t think the Ministry of Health is saying publicly that they’re doing that, but it is still providing PrEP for free for men. That is also available through Equals. There is HIV testing, there is access for that kind of stuff. My own doctor is fine with it. I think a lot of people are mostly okay..”

— *Vincent, 17 November 2022*

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Like Vincent, other interviewees also spoke about individual doctors, and in one interview, a particular polyclinic in a rural parish that is known for being LGBTQI+ friendly. These accounts are in line with the survey findings that less than 1% of respondents encountered difficulties in seeking medical attention over the last 12 months preceding the study as a result of their SOGIE. Nevertheless, interviewees also recalled instances of bias, misinformation and stigmatization within medicine, which were often a result of negative stereotyping that link LGBT bodies and certain sexual practices to danger, recklessness and disease. Carmen, for example, explained:

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“like being able to go to the doctor is a human right. But there are a lot of people who are uncomfortable who are like, well, if I go and I say this, then I don’t know who, you know, I don’t know if I’m gonna be able to continue getting the care, I don’t know if my doctor will, you know, drop me or abandon me, I don’t know who’s gonna know my business. You never know, and that’s a fear that they live with, that we live in every day. So...”

— *Carmen, 21 November 2022*

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When asked to elaborate, Carmen stated:

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“...I do find there’s still, you know, stigma and discrimination against certain diseases that are, they like HIV and AIDS, like it’s still being correlated with the LGBT community. And a lot of people still, that misinformation is still very rampant...”

— *Carmen, 21 November 2022*

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Likewise, Jordan stated:

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“I could give real life examples, you know, especially if you need STI testing...depends on how you look... there’s already a negative attitude already towards testing for the general public. So you added a layer of sexuality, it just makes things more confusing.”

— *Jordan, 5 December 2022*

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Some interviewees thus identified experiences of stigma, misinformation and hostility by healthcare providers as obstacles. However, they also suggested that fear, apprehension and mistrust also form part of the discourse about access and utilization of the healthcare services, especially those offered by the public sector, in Barbados. This somewhat reflects the survey findings, which shows that a subset of respondents had a level of mistrust for public medical services and may even choose to do without medical care if this was the only available option. For example, Jasmin shared concerns about meeting the needs, including medical needs of elderly queer people and the very young:

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“You know, that’s a generation that is not accustomed to, you know, the out and proud. You know, we’re living in a different time from what it was in the sixties, seventies, eighties even. And so there’s a lot of isolation within the elderly community, and self-isolation and mistrust with the medical system and shame. And you know, I’ve heard some pretty horrible stories of queer men, you know, falling ill and not reaching out to people because of fear of discrimination. So definitely, elderly people are...vulnerable, and again queer youth, and trans youth are particularly vulnerable. But again, there’s this balancing act...it’s hard to go into communities saying that you’re an LGBT organization, and you’re here to help. Nobody wants to affiliate themselves. Nobody wants to be outed in their communities.”

— *Jasmin, 18 November 2022*

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The view that some queer men may not seek medical attention because of an expectation that they will experience stigma and discrimination were shared by other interviewees, as were concerns about elderly people. Laila, for example, suggested that some transgender people may have apprehensions about utilizing the medical system in Barbados, especially the public system, because of an expectation that they will be mistreated:

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“I mean, in terms of healthcare, where we look at the social services, sometimes many may perceive that you’d be stigmatized or discriminated against...[They] don’t want to go. It is not that it will happen, but you have had it so much that [you] are not accessing the service because you have this perception within you that it will happen. And sometimes it doesn’t happen. But sometimes it does happen...sometimes based on where you live and your status. There’s a behaviour that comes when you feel that you’re attacked. Sometimes you approach systems, and you have this way...this defence mechanism...”

— *Laila, 2 December 2022*

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The fear of stigmatization and discrimination may not be unwarranted (Griffith and Jackman 2022). It is also the case that expectations of mistreatment, especially among some gay men, transgender people and those living with HIV or AIDS, are sometimes based on previous personal experiences or the experiences of others within the community:

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“...Polyclinics are problematic for a variety of reasons. I think that people faced a lot of discrimination then [before sensitivity training was introduced]. Some people, you know, choose to go and pay for private doctors, so that they can have access to their medication, to hormone replacement therapy, or you know, once they find a private doctor that is willing to affirm them in a particular way then, you know, figure out a way to, to pay for that service. It’s better than going to a polyclinic, getting a random person, and you don’t know what you’re going to expect, what to expect when you enter the system there.”

— *Jasmin, 18 November 2022*

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In a similar vein, some interviewees explained that transgender people in Barbados have very complex, and at times, negative experiences when accessing appropriate quality healthcare, especially when they require specific specialized care:

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“A good thing is that Equals is doing sensitization training for the healthcare practitioners, both mental and physiological, you know... However, the reason why Equals has that in the first place is because people were not being treated properly...it really depends on who you are. And again, trans women have it harder... I think trans people in general require things such as hormone replacement and, in some cases, medical interventions... but they [doctors] are not socially prepared to deal with those types of patients. So, those people usually leave [migrate or travel overseas] if they seek medical interventions...if they can afford to, and that’s another thing. I know of friends who have transitioned...but they have higher socioeconomic status...or have dual citizenship or something like that... What about those who can’t leave? They just, they are left to fend for themselves.”

— *Jordan, 5 December 2022*

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Indeed, Laila addressed the complexities around accessing quality care, noting that besides those in the medical field, at times, not wanting to treat transgender people, there is also definitely a general lack of knowledge and expertise relating to psychological or physiological care for transgender people:

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“...for psychologist, sometimes it’s hard to get an understanding of how to facilitate services to trans persons...in terms of having a clear understanding of trans people...you wish for a society where you are understood. Socially and biologically and psychologically, you will hope that...”

— *Laila, 2 December 2022*

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These accounts are in line with the previously mentioned survey findings that transgender and nonbinary respondents were more likely to have negative experiences when seeking medical attention than cisgender respondents.

Laila’s comments, like others, point to the ways in which socioeconomic class and the ability to move across geographical borders benefit some transgender people who are otherwise unable to access appropriate care within Barbados. In other words, such statements shore up the intimate connections between socioeconomic class and the ability to live in dignity. Moreover, the above statements shed light on the long-lasting negative impact that institutionalized discriminatory discourses and behaviours may have on people, even when there are efforts to implement change.

### 7.5.5 SELF-ACCEPTANCE

Attention to self-acceptance, suicidal ideation and suicide attempts are of significance, as these may shed light on people’s mental health and overall psychosocial well-being. Members of the LGBTQ+ community often face discrimination, prejudice and stigma due to their sexual orientation, which can lead to difficulty accepting their sexuality or gender identity. The survey thus sought to illicit respondents’ feelings about their SOGIE. As shown in Table 9, most of the survey respondents reported that they were either

happy with themselves or accepted themselves (84.3%), particularly respondents over age 44 (96.2%) and cisgender women (90.2%). A smaller (though significant) share of persons noted that while comfortable with themselves, they would prefer that no one else knew about their identity. This response was particularly popular among cisgender men (20.7%) and respondents aged 25 to 44 (16.9%). It is possible that some respondents may not be willing to be open about their sexuality or gender identity to avoid discrimination and harassment.

**TABLE 9: RESPONDENT’S FEELINGS ABOUT THEIR SOGIE BY AGE, GENDER IDENTITY AND SEXUAL ORIENTATION**

	I'm happy with who I am	I accept myself for who I am	I am not uncomfortable with who I am; however, I'd prefer if no one else found out	I don't accept myself or like who I am
<b>All respondents (n = 319)</b>	55.8%	28.5%	14.1%	1.7%
<b>Age</b>				
<b>18 to 24 (n = 111)</b>	50.5%	36.0%	10.8%	2.7%
<b>25 to 44 (n = 146)</b>	58.9%	24.7%	16.4%	0.0%
<b>45+ (n = 30)</b>	70.0%	23.3%	3.3%	3.3%
<b>Gender identity</b>				
<b>Transgender and nonbinary (n = 40)</b>	50.0%	37.5%	10.0%	2.5%
<b>Cisgender women (n = 132)</b>	62.9%	27.3%	8.3%	1.5%
<b>Cisgender men (n = 135)</b>	51.1%	26.7%	20.7%	1.5%
<b>Sexual orientation</b>				
<b>Lesbian (n = 55)</b>	80.0%	16.4%	0.0%	3.6%
<b>Gay (n = 101)</b>	59.4%	25.7%	14.9%	0.0%
<b>Bisexual (n = 112)</b>	46.4%	33.9%	17.9%	1.8%
<b>Queer (n = 31)</b>	48.4%	38.7%	12.9%	0.0%
<b>Other sexual orientation (n = 19)</b>	36.8%	26.3%	31.6%	5.3%

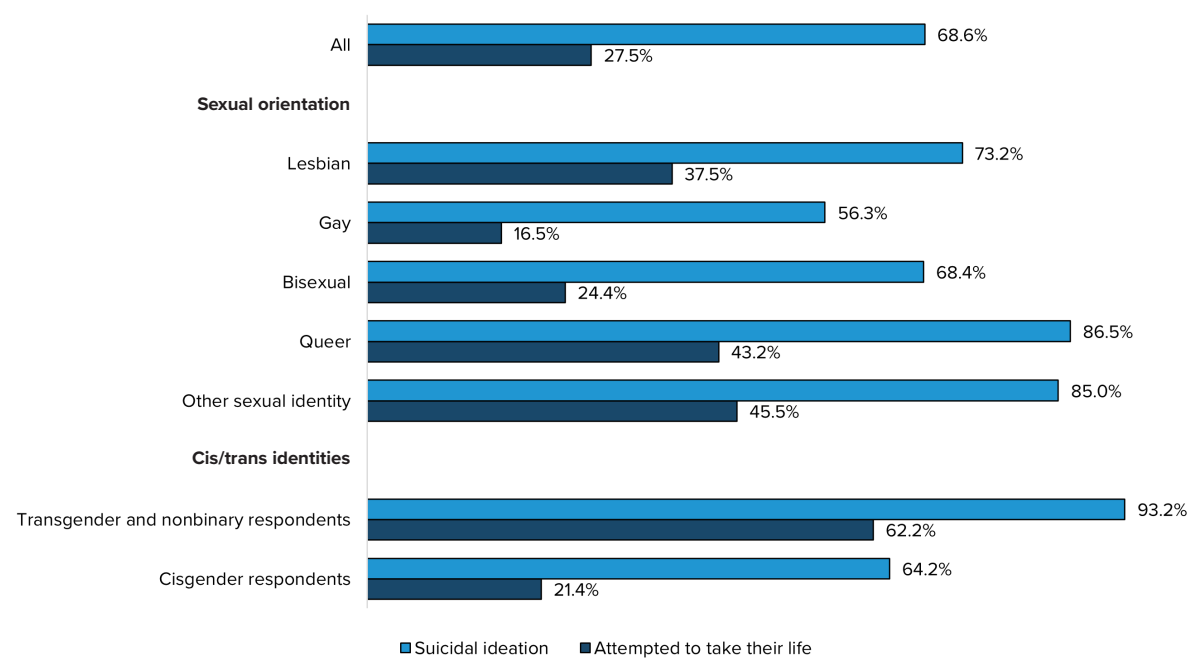


### 7.5.6 SUICIDAL IDEATION AND SUICIDE ATTEMPTS

Nearly 70% of all survey respondents (68.6%) said they experienced suicidal thoughts and 27.4% said they attempted to take their life at some point. These rates differ markedly by gender identities and sexual orientation, as shown in Figure 19. More than 90% of transgender and nonbinary respondents said they experienced suicidal ideation (compared to 64.2% of cisgender respondents), and 62.2% noted that they attempted to end their life, which is three times

more than the share of cisgender respondents who reported that they attempted suicide (21.4%). With respect to sexuality, queer respondents and individuals grouped in the “other sexual identities” category reported disproportionately higher rates of suicidal ideation and suicide attempts. Between 85% and 87% of these respondents said they experienced suicidal thoughts, and 43%–46% said they had attempted to take their life. In comparison, 56%–74% of gay, lesbian and bisexual respondents reported having suicidal thoughts, and 16%–38% had attempted to take their life.

**FIGURE 19: SUICIDAL IDEATION AND SUICIDAL BEHAVIOURS**



In Barbados, the COVID-19 pandemic and the related socioeconomic downturn drew attention to the necessity of addressing isolation, loneliness and marginalization especially among certain vulnerable groups within the wider society. In addition to experiencing the stressors relating to these events, some LGBTQ+ people, especially

those lacking consistent and appropriate social support systems, also live with an array of other extreme stressors. The findings, as mentioned above, highlight the pressing need for furthering multisectoral initiatives to address mental health and provide psychosocial support for those in need.

## 7.6 Housing

Like the previous areas, access to safe and adequate housing is fundamental to human well-being. A consensus in the literature is that LGBTQ+ people are very susceptible to housing instability and may experience homelessness, largely reflecting their vulnerability to familial rejection and discrimination from landlords and other housing providers due to their sexuality or gender identity (Beams, Wilson and Russell 2019; Ecker, Aubry and Sylvestre 2019). This is of significant concern, given that housing instability and homelessness increase susceptibility to victimization, exploitation and poor health (Romero, Goldberg and Vasquez 2020). Similar concerns are also expressed by interview respondents.

All interviewees shared various personal and/or collective challenges linked to accessing housing. In these accounts, interviewees suggested that numerous factors inform LGBTQ+ access to housing in Barbados. These include such things as people's socioeconomic circumstances, lack of family support, discrimination from property owners, stigmatization, harassment, policies and laws that do not recognize same-sex relationships, and lack of systematic government support in addressing certain issues. Importantly, some interviewees emphasized that though housing was indeed a problematic area for some LGBTQ+ people, this was also the case for many other residents in Barbados, especially for those with low or no income:

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“Okay, so I think the issue with housing is the same issue that everyone has, in that housing in Barbados is expensive for everyone, not just LGBT people. I think the issue is that for LGBT people, they don't, in some cases they don't have the same support of being able to have a partner, and the two of them live together in a house that a hetero couple might have. So then they are less likely to be able to buy a house because they don't, they can't have that unit... So either they're living with their parents, or you know, living on their own renting, but for the ability to like, buy a house, it's very difficult, but that's the same for a lot of people in Barbados. I think there's just that extra hurdle that they don't have those societal, you know, norms that allow you to kind of get a house together as a unit, you know...”

— *Vincent, 17 November 2022*

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Though housing may be an issue for many people, the situation is even more complicated when gender and sexual orientation are considered:

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“I have heard of landlords terminating leases after figuring out people’s sexuality, and that is primarily with gay males and... I would also include trans women in that because of how people perceive people. And I’ve also known of people who are reluctant to even seek government welfare because of that reason... We know that statistically trans men or trans women tend to be the most houseless within the community... And therefore, when there’s a serious act of God, like environmental issue or COVID, whatever, their housing insecurity increases ten-fold...”

— *Jordan, 4 December 2022*

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The idea of being at the mercy of the property owner who may be homophobic was repeated by other interviewees. Jasmin, for example, stated:

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“...there is discrimination... People seeing two men living in a home together, you know. You know people. I’ve heard stories of people being thrown out of their apartments because people are like, this man is coming in and out of your house late at night, and it’s not appropriate. It’s not godly. I think there’s a range of experiences that are happening there.”

— *Jasmin, 18 November 2022*

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In discussing challenges to housing, three common populations were identified by interviewees as being particularly vulnerable, young gay men, women with a gender expression perceived as masculine and transgender men and women. Lacking family or social support or having a low socioeconomic status made these groups especially vulnerable. Some interviewees shared that LGBTQ+ youth sometimes experience a lack of support from family members once their identities are confirmed or suspected. Consequently, they may experience, if they do not have access to other social networks, some form of homelessness. This is also the case in other contexts (Shelton and Bond 2016). Consider the following account about youth and homelessness:

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“I could have been homeless, and I’m sure that happens to other people all the time, but it’s not recorded, and there’s no—and the thing is also, a lot of parents don’t want to kick out their kids, but they don’t want the kids also to be gay. So then the kids are living, or young people, like young adults, living with their parents, and there’s a whole tension of that, and so eventually they’re going to move out so that they can live comfortably.”

— *Vincent, 17 November 2022*

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Vincent’s experience is not unusual; indeed, he recalled at least two instances when he had to offer shelter, in the first case, to a young gay man and in the second, to a young transgender woman who eventually migrated. In both instances, the individuals had been rejected by family members.

In the following statement, Aisha also sheds light on resilience and coping with neglect and lack of family support:

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“Yeah, well, I mean, during my time from 2014 to now [homelessness] is definitely something that comes up every so often. Somebody gets kicked out of their home...somebody turns up and you realize like this person is not getting nutrition, like proper food. They are not getting fed properly. So, we [at Equals] at one point had a cupboard with food, so that when somebody comes in and they are hungry, they can just, you know, go to the cupboard and take something and eat... This was before Barbados got bad with the pandemic and the economic stuff. So yeah, it’s especially for younger men. I feel like maybe it was happening to women. But remember before SHE, we weren’t really seeing a lot of them...”

— *Aisha, 13 January 2023*

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In Aisha’s account, LGBTQI+ groups such as Equals Barbados offer some assistance; indeed, Vincent noted that the young adults that he assisted came to him through that organization. While CSOs are indeed necessary, they also face resource scarcity. What is also needed are more government initiatives that address unemployment and homelessness, including among LGBTQI+ people. One interviewee shared that she would like to see:

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“secure housing, as in no discrimination, if, like housing with governmental support, as in like, if it be governmental housing, but also legislation with housing to make sure that there is no discrimination...”

— *Carmen, 21 November 2022*

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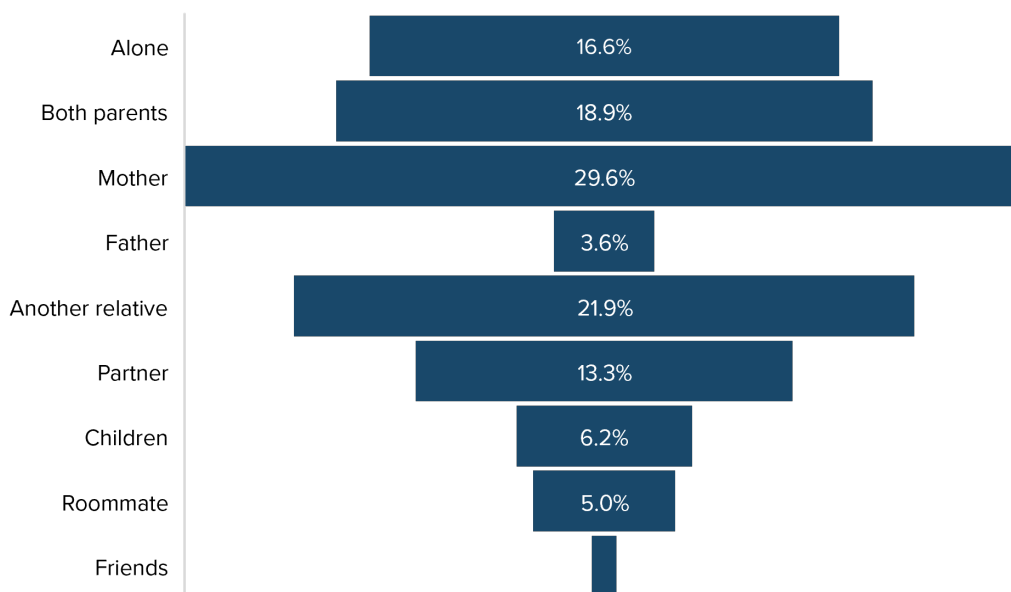
Moreover, all interviewees stressed the importance of family and social support especially for youth, which is also accentuated in the survey findings.

### **7.6.1 LIVING CONDITIONS**

As a starting point, survey respondents were asked to describe their living conditions. More than half (50.6%) of participants live in a family-owned house or apartment, 28.7% rent a house or apartment and 17.8% own/co-own their house or apartment. The high level of persons living in family houses or apartments largely reflects the over-representation of young people in the sample. As would be expected, home ownership increases with age, with 60% of respondents aged 45 and over noting they own their house or apartment, compared to 19.5% of respondents aged 25 to 44 and 3.3% of respondents under age 25.

As shown in Figure 20, a relatively large share of the sample lived with at least one of their parents (52.1%) or another relative (21.9%). Less than 20% of the sample lived alone, while 13.3% lived with a partner. The likelihood of a respondent living alone or with a partner increased with age. The results also suggest that cisgender respondents were more likely to live with a partner (15.5%) than transgender and nonbinary respondents (4.3%). There is little evidence of excess crowding in homes: less than 2% of respondents reported living in accommodations with more than two people per bedroom.

**FIGURE 20: RESPONSES TO THE QUESTION: WITH WHOM DO YOU CURRENTLY LIVE?**



**Note:** Based on 338 responses. Respondents could select as many response options as applicable.

### 7.6.2 EXPERIENCE WITH HOMELESSNESS

Less than 5% of respondents (4.8%) were experiencing homelessness, though 12.8% of the sample (n = 43) noted that at some point in their lives, they were forced to leave home, some at a very young age: 37.2% said that they were forced to leave home when they were under 18. Among those who were forced to leave, the most-cited reasons were abuse in the home (46.5%), eviction (39.5%) and feeling unsafe due to their SOGIE (25.6%)<sup>53</sup>. As a result of being unable to stay at home, many respondents stayed at a relative’s house (55.8%) and/or a friend’s couch (46.5%). Some respondents lived in their car (11.6%), outdoors or on the streets (9.3%), and/or in a vacant building (9.3%)<sup>54</sup>. The finding that most respondents stayed with a relative after being

forced to leave home highlights the importance of familial support and acceptance in ensuring housing stability.

### 7.6.3 SUPPORT SYSTEMS

Survey respondents were asked about the attitudes of people who are aware of their SOGIE: 71.3% said their social circles accepted them, 17.2% said that individuals were indifferent while 2.1% faced rejection. Many respondents are also open about being LGBTQ+ with family, with 63.8% stating that all or some of their families were aware of their SOGIE. Openness with family varied significantly with sexual orientation and age, with older respondents and gay and lesbian respondents being the most likely to be open with family about their SOGIE (Table 10).

<sup>53</sup> Respondents could select as many reasons for leaving home as applicable.

<sup>54</sup> Respondents could select as many response options as applicable.

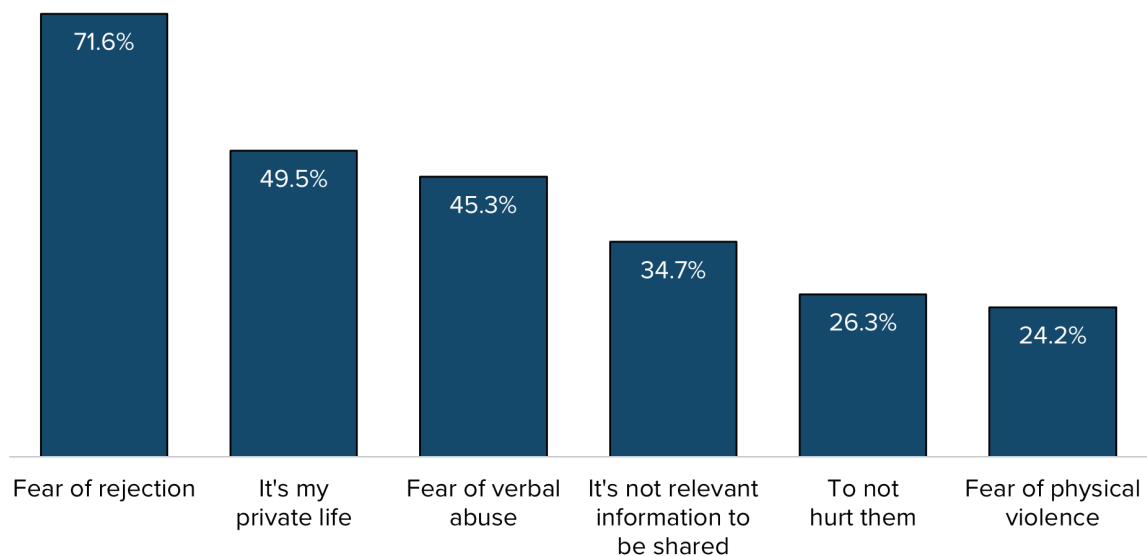
**TABLE 10: OPENNESS WITH FAMILY BY SEXUAL ORIENTATION AND AGE**

	All aware	Some are aware	Not aware	Don't know/Preferred not to answer
<b>All respondents (n = 337)</b>	21.4	42.4	28.2	8.1
<b>Sexual orientation</b>				
Lesbian (n = 58)	41.4	39.7	13.8	5.2
Gay (n = 103)	27.2	39.8	16.5	16.5
Bisexual (n = 116)	12.1	43.1	40.5	4.3
Queer (n = 37)	13.5	54.1	27.0	5.4
Other (n = 22)	4.6	40.9	54.6	0.0
<b>Age</b>				
18 to 24 (n = 120)	11.7	42.5	40.8	5.0
25 to 44 (n = 154)	27.3	44.2	18.8	9.7
50+ (n = 30)	43.3	36.7	10.0	10.0

Many respondents who were open about being LGBTQ+ with family (n = 214) said their current relationship with their family was good or very good (58.9%), while a significant share of them reported that their family was indifferent (28.5%). A small share said their relationship was bad (1.9%)

or broken (3.7%). Respondents who were not open about their SOGIE with their family (n = 95) were asked to provide reasons for not disclosing. Frequently reported reasons (Figure 21) were fear of rejection (71.6%), followed by “it is my private life” (49.5%) and fear of verbal abuse (45.3%).

**FIGURE 21: REASONS FOR NOT BEING OPEN WITH FAMILY**



**Note:** Based on 95 responses. Respondents could select as many reasons as applicable.

## 7.7 Violence

This subsection analyses the violence experienced by members of the LGBTQ+ community while residing in Barbados. The study takes a broad view of the term “violence” and thus focuses on physical and non-physical acts of violence. Indeed, the study acknowledges that violence, like social exclusion and discrimination, can take many forms, all of which may impact people’s enjoyment of human rights and sense of security. DeRoy and Henry (2018), in their examination of sexuality, violence and the law in Guyana, explain that LGBT people frequently experience direct and indirect forms of violence. They write that violence may be understood, as “any physical, emotional, verbal, institutional, structural or spiritual behaviour, attitude, policy or condition that diminishes, dominates or destroys others and ourselves” (Bobichand 2012, 1, quoted in DeRoy and Henry 2018, 164). Moreover, these scholars note that the “threat of violence is also violence” (ibid.). This simple, but comprehensive definition of violence aligns with most of the interview respondents’ experiences and observations on the treatment of LGBTQ+ people in Barbados.

Most of the interviewees identified that safety remained an area of concern for many LGBTQ+ people:

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“...I think that violence and discrimination is always something that’s concerning. You know, there’s this narrative that... Barbados is this really safe place and people leave queer people alone. But, you know, the police don’t even accurately collect information and again, people are reluctant to go to the police when it comes to these issues. So that’s another area, safety, especially when it comes to law enforcement.”

— *Jasmin, 18 November 2022*

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“I think the first [thing] that comes to mind is safety.... Safety in homes, in work, safety with, you know, even sometimes not crimes... It’s just like if somebody’s house burns down and they find out that you’re living with, you know your same-sex partner, how the police handle that situation, so safety in being able to know I can call the authorities and get the help that I need.”

— *Carmen, 21 November 2022*

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For these interviewees, violence is both direct and indirect, institutionalized as well as committed by individuals. Vincent, like Jasmin, explicitly contested the narrative that LGBTQ+ people do not experience violence in Barbados. Vincent reasoned:

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“...but people are not being met with physical violence per se... She [a trans woman who was kicked out of her home] doesn’t have a home, she doesn’t have support, so then she can be exploited, she can be put into sex work, or physically, in a physically or abusive relationship, or just someone who...you are homeless without money, then the threat of, the threat of your life is there, so someone doesn’t have to be physically beating you for that to be an issue.”

— *Vincent, 17 November 2022*

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Vincent further suggested that while physical violence does occur, other forms of violence are perhaps more frequently experienced. Additionally, violence manifests in multiple ways and is experienced differently depending on people’s identities and circumstances:

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“...people experience violence... I think a lot of it is more like intimidation or verbal, or like I said, just making sure that your way of life is threatened in a different way... I think most of the time it’s verbal. But again, I think if you are fem-presenting, it happens more often. If you’re working class, it happens more often.”

— *Vincent, 17 November 2022*

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Like Vincent, others noted that violence may take the form of rejection from loved ones, neglect, as well as exclusion from culturally “safe” spaces such as religious communities:

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“...in the past, you know, don’t forget, the religious spaces have been a really traumatizing place for many people in the community. So it’s not the first place that you would necessarily go to try to, you know, be buddy, buddy with. So, you know, a lot of people in the community have experienced a lot of traumatic things, and have been thrown out of their churches, so it’s a real sore spot in the community.”

— *Jasmin, 18 November 2022*

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Moreover, by adopting a broad understanding of violence, interviewees were able to discuss its occurrence in relation to the other thematic areas. In these accounts, respondents showed the complex ways in which violence manifests in LGBTQ+ people’s daily lives, as well as the intimate interconnections between the various thematic areas. For example, in discussing citizen insecurity, attention was given to institutional violence that exist when certain groups are denied legal protections, thus leaving them vulnerable to direct forms of violence, such as verbal, economic, emotional and physical abuse. Furthermore, insights into institutionalized, structural violence are gained in discussions about social exclusion from certain types of formal employment and the stigmatization and discrimination that pose challenges to accessing appropriate medical care. The survey results also show the multiple and complex ways in which violence is manifested and experienced.

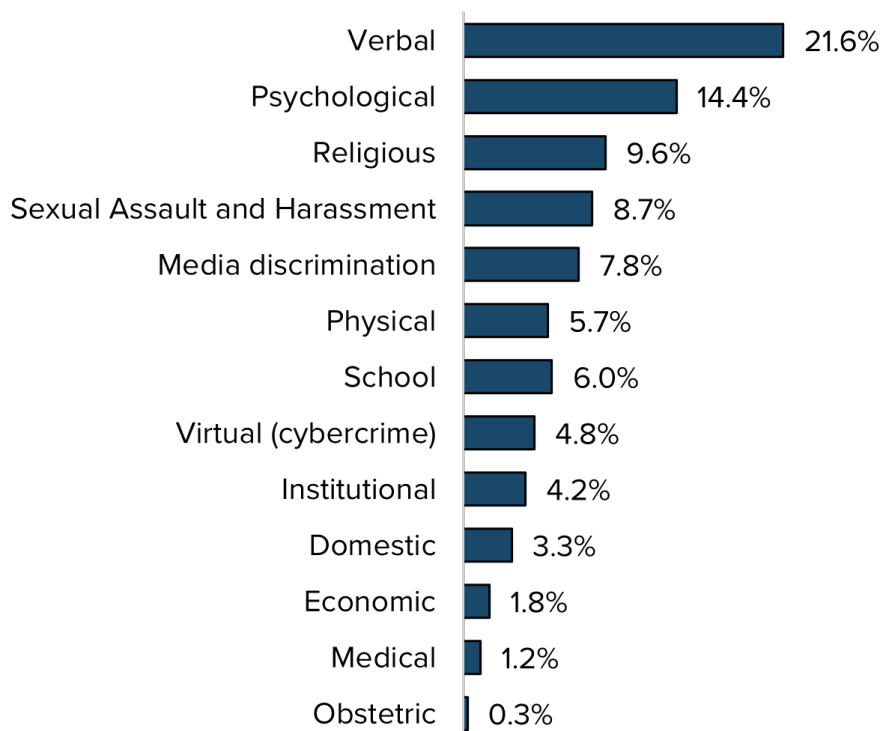


### 7.7.1 TYPES OF VIOLENCE EXPERIENCED DUE TO BEING LGBTQ+

Respondents were asked whether their rights or they themselves had been violated due to being LGBTQ+ in the 12 months preceding the survey. Approximately 17% of respondents said they recently experienced some form of violence due to their SOGIE, while 12.3% were unsure or preferred

not to answer. Transgender and nonbinary respondents (35.6%) were more likely to suffer an act of violence than cisgender respondents (13.8%). Figure 22 shows that the most common forms of violence experienced were verbal (21.6%), psychological (14.4%), religious (9.6%), sexual assault and harassment (8.7%), and media discrimination (7.8%).

**FIGURE 22: TYPES OF VIOLENCE EXPERIENCED IN THE 12 MONTHS PRECEDING THE SURVEY**

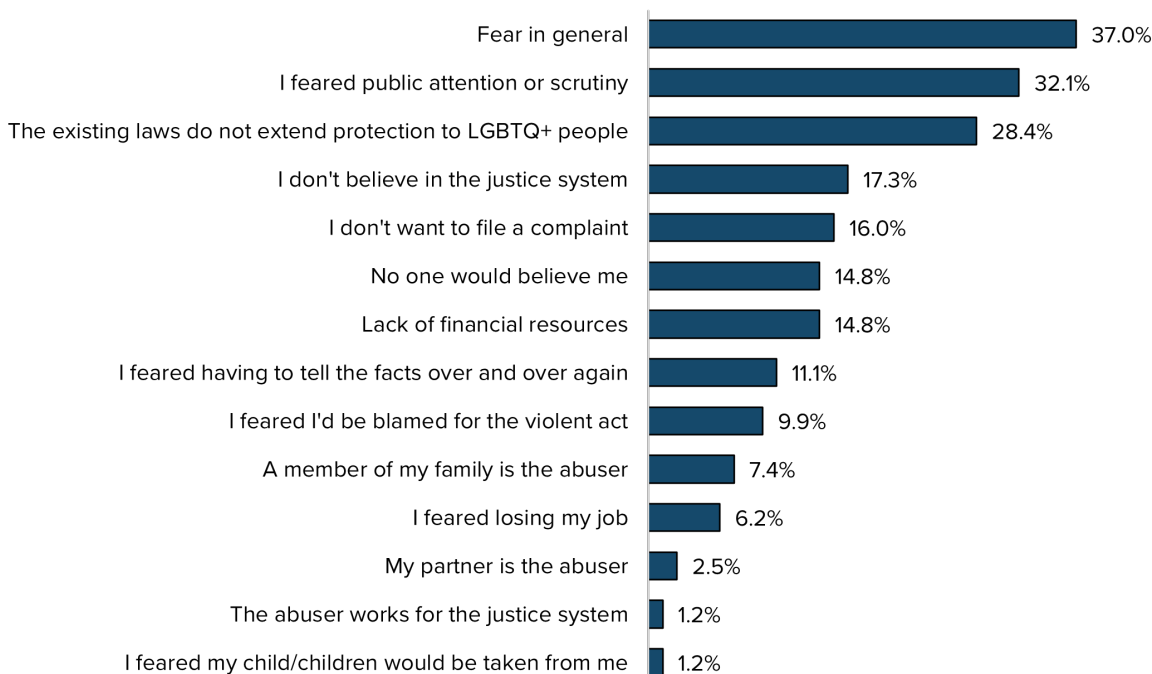


**Note:** Based on 333 responses. Respondents could select as many violent experiences as applicable.

Most of the respondents on the receiving end of violence did not seek legal assistance to bring action against their perpetrators (83.5%). This finding held for even the more serious violations, such as sexual assault and harassment or physical violence. Respondents gave a variety of reasons as to why they did not seek legal assistance

(Figure 23), chief among which were general fear (37.0%), fear of public attention/scrutiny (32.1%) and the lack of legal protections of LGBTQ+ people (28.4%). Of the few respondents who did seek legal assistance after being violated, 44.4% noted that they received no assistance.

**FIGURE 23: REASONS FOR NOT SEEKING LEGAL ASSISTANCE AFTER BEING VIOLATED**



**Note:** Based on 81 responses. Respondents could select as many reasons as applicable.

### 7.7.2 HARASSMENT FROM POLICE OR OTHER SECURITY FORCES IN BARBADOS

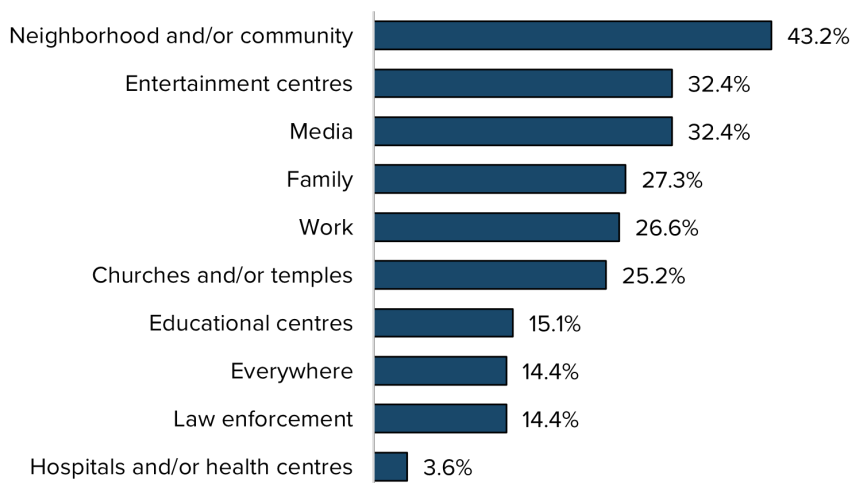
Most respondents did not report any negative interactions with police or security forces due to their SOGIE. One to three percent of respondents recall being stopped on the street, interrogated at a police station, or being physically or verbally assaulted by the police or other security forces due to being LGBTQ+. Less than 1% of respondents reported being put into a patrol car by force due to their SOGIE.

### 7.7.3 SERVICE DENIAL AND DISCRIMINATION

Few respondents (less than 2%) recall being denied services at governmental offices, food and entertainment establishments or financial

institutions recently. However, 41.5% of the sample reported being discriminated against due to their SOGIE within the 12 months preceding the survey. Recent episodes of discrimination varied across cisgender/transgender identities: 68.1% of transgender and nonbinary respondents recalled a recent incident of discrimination compared to 41.6% of cisgender men and 31.9% of cisgender women. Those who reported incidents of discrimination largely experienced it in their neighbourhood/community (42.3%), entertainment centres (32.4%), media houses (32.4%), work (26.6%), religious institutions (25.2%) and from family (27.3%). Respondents were less likely to experience incidents of discrimination at healthcare facilities (Figure 24).

**FIGURE 24: PLACES WHERE INCIDENTS OF DISCRIMINATION OCCURRED**



**Notes:** Based on 139 observations. Respondents could select as many places as applicable.

#### 7.7.4 VICTIM OF A CRIME

Roughly 5% of respondents were recent victims of a crime, largely psychological violence at their homes. To gauge the extent of LGBTQ+ homicide, respondents were also asked if they were aware of any members of their community who recently died in a violent manner due to their SOGIE. Roughly 5% of respondents were aware of LGBTQ+ homicides in the review period.

#### 7.8 Access to Justice

As mentioned in the Introduction, Barbados, like many other independent Anglophone Caribbean countries, had in place, prior to December 2022, colonial inherited buggery and serious indecency laws. Additionally, the Barbados State, though a signatory to a number of relevant human rights conventions, only recently legally recognized or offered protection against discrimination to people with diverse sexual orientations. Within this context, the legal system, as detailed in the literature review, was and is still seen as ideologically and materially reinforcing and legitimizing wider social exclusion and discrimination, thus curtailing, in

complex ways, LGBTQ+ people's human rights and ability to live and contribute as active citizens within their society.

Most interview respondents, as stated earlier, mentioned that LGBTQ+ people generally have concerns about safety and the lack of redress available to them. This is especially the case if these individuals also have limited access to financial resources and strong social support. Consider, for instance, the following statement made by Vincent:

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**“I think, for the most part, if you are physically or verbally assaulted, for example, or lose your job because you are queer, for the most part people avoid getting into that [seeking legal redress], because they feel that they’re not going to be successful or that they will be put in danger...”**

**— Vincent, 17 November 2022**

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In this account, Vincent reasoned that people often do not seek redress in the court because they may fear the situation escalating and being ridiculed in the media or public. Some, he suggested, may even assume that the outcome in court would not be beneficial to them. When asked about the experiences with the police, Vincent stated:

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**“...I think people, though, sometimes report [to] the police, I think people do it more so now, but I think for the most part queer people shrug it off and assume that it’s going to be part of what they experience.”**

**— Vincent, 17 November 2022**

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In a similar vein, another interviewee suggested that some people, depending on their social status, may not go to the court and “the Police don’t take statements, don’t take you seriously. The police themselves are homophobic and violent themselves” (Jordan 5 December 2022). This interviewee further underscored the ways in which differential access to resources and power shape access to justice, by pointing out that violence does not come from a lone source, and “it is difficult to even see recourse if the person who is the abuser has a position of power” (ibid.). Vincent and Jordan thus revealed that some LGBTQ+ people have negative experiences with the courts and police because of experiences of discrimination, contempt and poor policing procedures.

In discussing access to justice in terms of reporting crimes to the police, Jasmin explained: “...we are [LGBTQI+ CSOs] doing what we can to fight for legal rights and protections. Law enforcement is a whole other issue to tackle. And we are...definitely not doing great in that area” (Jasmin 18 November 2022). However, Jasmin and others have noted that Equals Barbados has made attempts to address shortcomings relating to data collection on the occurrence of violence and in assisting people who have these experiences:

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**“There’s an incident database that we use to collect information... when an occurrence happens, an issue of violence and discrimination, or anything, we encourage people to report it via Equals and there are people who are trained to interview you and collect this information. But we do have, there are some statistics around many different kinds of discrimination, from verbal and violence and what have you, but what that shows is that there, that it’s happening, and it’s happening frequently...”**

**— Jasmin, 18 November 2022**

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Though this initiative exists, some interviewees voiced concerns about the wider LGBTQ+ community’s knowledge about this resource and their utilization of it.

Other nuances emerged from the interviews regarding access to justice. Laila suggested that the police, at least in her community, just generally did not come out for some things, noting, “I don’t see it as an LGBT thing, I see as, if it is not guns, drugs and so on, and murder, the police seldomly do respond” (Laila 2 December 2022). Likewise, Zi noted the general inefficiency within the police force in attending to certain violations outside of physical violence (Zi 27 January 2023), though she admitted that further sensitization and anti-hate crime legislation may be needed to address issues around discrimination and abuse of people’s human rights. For some interviewees, discussions around justice cannot, therefore, be relegated to experiences with the police. As Laila argued, the lack of policies also makes it difficult to seek redress on certain matters:

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**“...there is violence based on certain communities... They throw stones and such. So these are the things that are still there, you know, that [affect] access to services, and there are no policies to address these...but I think there are some now around discrimination, yeah, but the lack of policies and such like does not allow you to fully participate and engage... If something happened, you can’t have recourse and address when it doesn’t go right.”**

**— Laila, 2 December 2022**

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Likewise, Jordan not only spoke about the court and police, but also addressed related issues of legal reform and societal attitudes. In discussing the recent Employment (Prevention of Discrimination) Act 2020, for example, Jordan shared some reservations about its potential effectiveness, as well as the limits placed on the guarantee of protection within the Constitution:

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**“As far as I’m concerned, you still need to go through the Barbadian Labour Office, and they themselves might be homophobic, maybe one or two people in there who are not. I can see it from experience. So it’s one of those things where there are so many hurdles for the enforcement of law and the people who are required to report infringements.”**

**— Jordan, 5 December 2022**

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Although most interviewees believed that legal reforms were necessary, they also emphasized that these should be paired with consistent and meaningful public education initiatives to be effective. This aligns with the argument forwarded by several scholars who suggest that legal reform, though necessary, may not always be enough for securing societal change and respect for human rights. Carolin (2014), in a study on poverty law reform in Canada, argues that a focus on law reform as the end goal is extremely narrow, as this “constructs the law itself as the social injustice. This leads to two subsidiary problems. First, law reform campaigns ignore the underlying sociopolitical context that produced the law, foregoing opportunities for broader societal transformation. Second, law reform campaigns position lawyers as the agents for social change, missing an opportunity for movement building and even disempowering affected communities” (107). Moreover, having laws in place do not necessarily translate to having easy access to justice. As one respondent declared, it has only now been accepted that a man can in fact rape another man. This declaration is in reference to the matter of *Commissioner of Police v Stephen Alleyne [2022] CCJ 2 (AJ) BB*, where in February 2022, the Caribbean Court of Justice (CCJ) ruled that based on Barbados’s laws [under Section 3 (1) and (6) of the Sexual Offences Act] a man can in fact rape another man.<sup>55</sup>

The survey and interview findings provide further insights into LGBTQ+ views about their enjoyment of human and legal rights. Specifically, survey and interview respondents commonly expressed that there is an uneven enjoyment of human rights within society. Some interviewees suggested that this remains the case even though there is an increased awareness of human rights within various sectors of society. Enjoyment of human rights, like legal rights, is crucial in assessing people’s actual or perceived access to justice and more generally, citizen security.

### **7.8.1 LIMITED RIGHTS**

Very few survey respondents felt that LGBTQ+ people enjoy the same rights as the rest of the Barbados population (7.8%), with a majority of the sample stating their rights were less protected than the rights of the general population. Similarly, all interviewees suggested that despite recent legal changes, human rights are not equally enjoyed by all people within society, and LGBTQ+ people are certainly denied various rights that are seen as uncontested rights for others. However, they shared mixed views on whether they believe there was greater awareness of human rights, including gender and sexual rights, among the public in recent years.

Interviewees compared their present experiences and observations of various sectors to past occurrences:

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<sup>55</sup> Commissioner of Police v Stephen Alleyne [2022] CCJ 2 (AJ) BB.

“...it is not easy, but it’s easier to be queer, I would say, in comparison to ten years ago, right? I literally can feel—because I left the island, and I came back. I had lived overseas...and I can literally really feel the difference. Whether that be government attitudes and what have you... And so, you know, I mean, people in positions of power who are not homophobic, and then in the broader society, you know, you see more queer, more queer involvement in day-to-day civil life...”

— Jordan, 5 December 2022

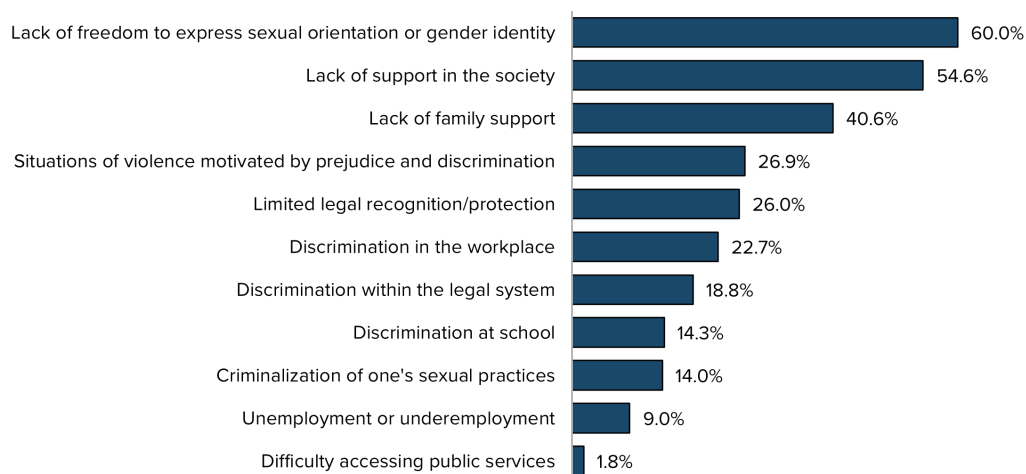
Importantly, most interviewees also emphasized that change is by no means uniform or consistent across society. Equally, the more critical interviewees argued that greater awareness and

tolerance does not necessarily translate to better understanding or acceptance and so more must be done in the struggle for equal rights.

### 7.8.2 MAJOR ISSUES FACING LGBTQ+ PEOPLE

Survey respondents were asked their opinions on the three major issues facing LGBTQ+ people in Barbados. Difficulty in freely expressing one’s SOGIE (60.0%), lack of support in society (54.6%) and lack of family support (40.6%) were the most cited. Likewise, most of the interview respondents also shared concerns about the lack of consistent social support, including family support, that is available to some vulnerable LGBTQ+ groups. A significant portion of survey respondents also placed violence against LGBTQI+ persons (26.9%), limited legal recognition/protection (26.0%) and discrimination in the workplace (22.7%) in their list of the top three issues facing the LGBTQ+ community (Figure 25). Generally, the rankings did vary substantially by SOGIE.

**FIGURE 25: MAIN ISSUES FACING THE LGBTQ+ COMMUNITY**



**Note:** Based on 335 responses. Respondents could select up to three major issues.

## 7.9 Political Participation

Political participation was operationalized in this study as inclusive of people’s participation in formal political processes, as well as broader forms of citizen participation. Citizen participation entails empowering or creating opportunities and spaces for citizens to participate in public decision-making processes that affect their lives. Approximately 86% of survey participants assign a level of importance to greater citizen

participation among LGBTQI+ people. However, only 44.3% of respondents actively participate as citizens. The most cited reasons for participating in citizen space were to participate in dialogue in the public space (32.4%) and influence inclusive public policies (29.6%). However, those who did not participate in citizen space either felt unsafe publicly participating in dialogue (31.5%) or did not believe that their participation would influence policy (27.4%).

**TABLE 11: RATIONALE FOR THEIR PARTICIPATION AND LACK OF PARTICIPATION IN CITIZEN SPACE**

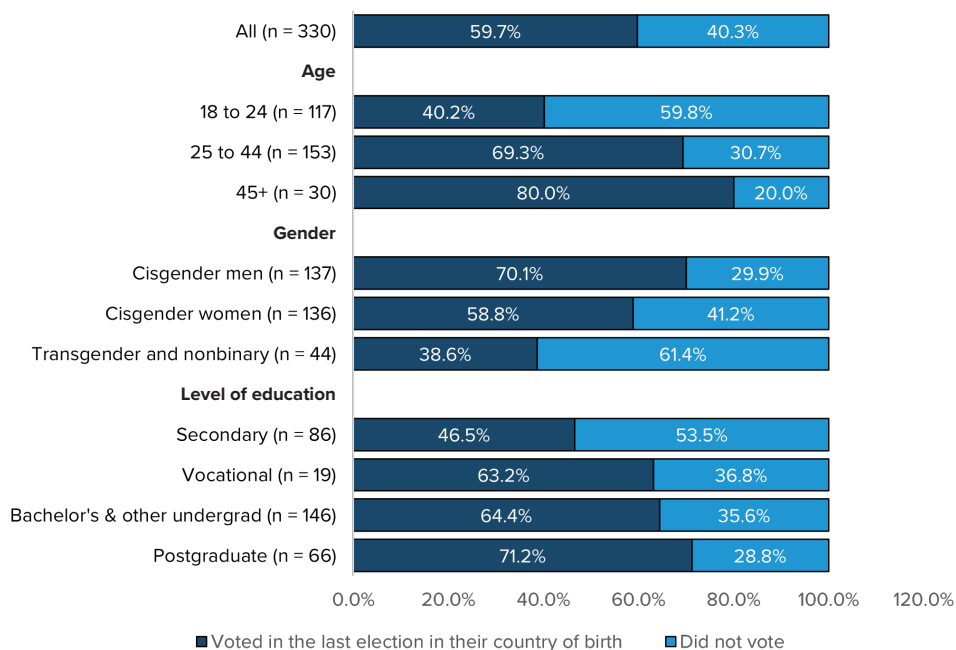
Reasons for participating in citizen space (n = 142)	%
To participate in dialogue in the public space	32.4
To influence inclusive public policies	29.6
To promote LGBTQ+ visibility	19.0
To raise specific needs	9.9
Other	0.7
Don't know/Prefer not to answer	8.5
<b>Reasons for not participating in citizen space (n = 124)</b>	
Do not feel safe participating in dialogue in the public space	31.5
Do not believe that this will influence public policies	27.4
Have no opportunity to participate in such spaces	16.1
Other reasons	4.8
Don't know/Prefer not to answer	20.2

Political inclusion is essential for the functioning of democracies. Research suggests that equal political participation opportunities are associated with improved representation, increased transparency and accountability and greater empowerment of individuals and communities (Carothers 2002). The ability to freely participate in policies and decision-making that affect one’s life is thus essential for marginalized groups. Accordingly, nearly 60% of respondents voted in the last national election in their birth country. The voter turnout for Barbadian-born participants was 65.1%, much higher than the turnout for the general population, which was 42.8%. The main

factors influencing voting behaviours are age, gender and education. Older cohorts (aged 45 and older) have greater turnout rates than younger cohorts (80.0% compared to 69.3% for those aged 25–44 and 40.2% for 18–24-year-olds). The share of cisgender men (70.1%) who voted exceeded that of cisgender women (58.8%) and transgender and nonbinary respondents (38.6%). The low turnout rate for transgender respondents could be related to barriers they face in obtaining an ID that reflects their gender identity and expression (see subsection 7.2.1). Finally, there is evidence that the odds of electoral participation increase with education (Figure 26).



**FIGURE 26: VOTER TURNOUT**



**7.9.1 ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP AND ACTIVISM**

Citizen participation commonly assumes and is promoted by the fostering of active citizenship. Active citizenship goes beyond voting in elections and instead “encompasses not only various forms of formal and informal sociocultural engagements by individuals and groups within their society, but also...include[s] forms of political and civic engagement” (Lazarus 2020, 368). In other words, active citizenship includes several forms of engagement such as direct, formal participation in organized political entities, strategic mobilization as stakeholders or special interest groups, as well as involvement in various types of individual or collective activism. Although active citizenship is encouraged locally and widely considered as ideal for ensuring democracy and good governance,<sup>56</sup>

it is nevertheless not always feasible for certain individuals and marginalized groups. Lazarus (2020) argues:

Generally, a number of factors, including “race,” socioeconomic class, ethnicity, language, gender and sexual expression, may work to complicate and outright exclude some groups from engaging equally, or at all, in activities that were meant to be inclusive. Equally, not all activities and forms of engagements may be seen as being of equal importance. In sum, the ability to publicly mobilize and participate as an active citizen with the intent of shaping formal processes may not be an easy endeavour for all. (369)

<sup>56</sup> Adriel, “Mottley says ‘Active Citizenship’ Critical to Democracy,” *Nation News* (12 December 2021). Available at: <https://www.nationnews.com/2021/12/12/mottley-says-active-citizenship-critical-democracy/>

Indeed, less than 20% of survey respondents (18.1%) believed that LGBTQI+ people have equal opportunities to actively participate in politics and decision-making activities. Cisgender men (28.7%) were less likely to think that there were barriers to political participation than cisgender women (11.2%) and transgender and nonbinary respondents (6.8%). Likewise, the interviewees recognized the complexities associated with the ability to participate. Some, for example, commented that occupying a position of privilege makes it easier to actively participate.

All interviewees, like most survey respondents, acknowledged the importance of LGBTQ+ citizens' active participation in decision-making processes or other avenues for enacting social change. However, they also noted that there is still minimal representation of LGBTQ+ people actively participating, for instance, in public debates and other decision-making processes. It was suggested that this was largely due to societal stigmatization and discrimination. These types of participation require visibility, which may mean exposure to negative outcomes:

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**“There are people who are out and proud, and are willing to engage in the political process very publicly... I think it really, it comes down to the individual and whether you want to out yourself. As a gay person trying to engage politically, you know, for many of us these past few weeks [taking part in the various town hall meetings as part of the Constitutional Reform Process], you know, before we went on that, to that meeting, there are many in the background that you didn't see that were shaking in their pants because they were about to out themselves publicly... So I think it depends on the individuals, how safe it is to politically participate, you know.”**

**— Jasmin, 18 November 2022**

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In a similar vein, 59.2% of survey respondents stated that they were willing to take part in a public defence of LGBTQ+ rights, but only 20.7% participated in a march or any political activity supporting the LGBTQI+ community. The only significant determinant of LGBTQI+ activism was age, where activism increased with age.

While some interview respondents spoke about the minimal visible public political participation by LGBTQ+ people in general, it was also acknowledged that engagement, and specifically activism, takes various forms:

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**“I can’t speak of anyone below the age of 18. There is a LGBTQ+ organization that is at UWI, for example, and they’ve been volunteering for recent activities with Equals... There’s a couple of photojournalists who have their own initiative... So there are little pockets of people that are not necessarily connected to the bigger organizations that are doing their own things in their own way, and it’s very creative and cool.”**

**— Jordan, 5 December 2022**

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Moreover, engagement may not always be public and visible. This may also strategically take place behind the scenes or in less public forums. To demonstrate this point, some respondents spoke about the involvement of LGBTQI+ groups in amending the Employment Act, as well as in drafting the Charter of Barbados:

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**“So last year, when there was the process of doing the charter, we were heavily involved in that consultation. And so we would have frequent meetings with the committee, and they would send us documents where we could give our input about language.”**

**— Jasmin, 18 November 2022**

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Furthermore, one’s approach to participation also depends on the issues at hand and the opportunities for engagement:

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**“...in the past...the approach to activism was sort of quiet and in the background. We tried not to engage too much in a public platform, because we knew that there would be backlash to anything...so some, most of the work is done very quietly... So that’s sort of the approach thus far. Now that the constitutional reform stuff is taking place, we realize that we have to be more vocal for our community, so that they see that we are trying our best to advocate for them.”**

**— Jasmin, 18 November 2022**

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Most interviewees, nevertheless, stated that there was a need for more people to engage as active citizens in the current Constitutional Reform Process to have an influence on the drafting of this pivotal legally binding document that outlines the protections, duties and rights of all people living in Barbados. As such, some respondents viewed this reform process as a crucial historical moment for working towards a just and fair society, or re-establishing the exclusionary, heteropatriarchal status quo.

## 7.9.2 PERCEIVED BARRIERS TO PARTICIPATING

The low level of activism among survey respondents could be related to fear of retaliation or the perceived unwillingness of public officials to cooperate with the LGBTQI+ community. When asked whether LGBTQI+ populations can freely organize as a community without fear, only 20.5% agreed with this statement. Even fewer respondents (12.3%) believed that, in practice, the Barbadian government cooperated with LGBTQI+ organizations to design public policies. This finding is somewhat in contrast to the information obtained from the interviews, where most interviewees acknowledged that participation and involvement in certain decision-making processes have been encouraged and made easier in recent years by various arms of government. Specifically, they highlighted the opportunities to participate in consultations and dialogues around the amendment to the Employment Act, the Charter of Barbados and, presently, the Constitutional Reform Process as examples of the government's attempts to create opportunities for greater involvement of LGBTQI+ people. Additionally, some pointed to the engagements with various ministries within the government, including the Ministry of Health and Wellness, and to a lesser extent, the Office of the Ombudsman,<sup>57</sup> and the Ministry of Labour, Social Security and Third Sector. Although there are limitations to these forms of engagement, they nevertheless indicate the government's attempts to encourage active participation by this minority population, but, even more so, the nuanced ways in which LGBTQI+ activists enact a degree of agency in their negotiation of citizenship. Furthermore, some respondents reasoned that the greater awareness of human rights (including gender and sexual rights) within various sectors of society makes participation somewhat easier. However,

greater societal awareness does not necessarily translate to wider acceptance of LGBTQI+ people and respect of their rights.

Efforts to legally recognize and include LGBTQI+ people in society are still accompanied by vocal opposition and the circulation of essentializing misinformation about gender and sexuality by, primarily, conservative and fundamentalist Christian individuals and groups. For example, CIVICUS reports that in 2018,

...religious backlash became apparent when LGBTQI+ people made their public presence felt at the first Pride march in 2018. Local church leaders, particularly from the evangelical New Testament Church, denounced what they called the LGBTQI+ "agenda" to make "homosexual preferences" a human right, characterizing it as a form of "neocolonialism"—even though what was rooted in colonialism was the denial of rights. Anti-rights forces pressured the authorities to try to get them to deny authorization for the Pride march. (CIVICUS 20 December 2022)

<sup>57</sup> "The Office of the Ombudsman was established in 1987 to provide a safeguard against maladministration and to protect its rights and interests of citizens. This office seeks to investigate and settle grievances against government agencies, make recommendations for corrective measures when investigations reveal unlawful or unreasonable administrative procedures; and provide recommendations where appropriate for the improvement of administrative systems and their operations." Available at: <https://www.ombudsmanbarbadosbb.com>

Similarly, in October 2020, Family-Faith-Freedom Barbados<sup>58</sup> organized a public protest in response to a declaration made in the Speech from the Throne, where the then-Governor General announced that her government was prepared to recognize civil unions for couples of the same gender and put the matter of same-sex marriage to a public referendum. At this event, the Christian supporters argued that any recognition of same-sex marriage or union would destroy the very moral fabric of the society.<sup>59</sup> This argument has been made on various other occasions within this country and elsewhere in the Anglophone Caribbean (Jackman 2016(a); Lazarus 2015, 2018; Perkins 2016). Moreover, most interviewees suggested that this type of opposition continues to pose a challenge to LGBTQ+ people's political participation, as well as other forms of public engagement:

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**“Right, so yeah, I find that the people [for example fundamentalist Christians] who are so against this idea that sexual identity will be included in the Charter, then potentially in the Constitution, have been so vehement, and they’re showing up in such large numbers that it’s kind of, it’s a little bit alarming... And so yeah, I find it alarming, and therefore it’s motivated me to want to be even more active...”**

**— Vincent, 17 November 2022**

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Differences in ideologies and beliefs, as well as the freedom to mobilize and share opposing viewpoints are in fact an integral part of the democratic process. However, certain forms of discursive engagements may indeed be interpreted as acts of direct or indirect violence, especially if these further marginalize, stigmatize and in some cases, endanger, others. In an examination of conservative and fundamentalist Christians' mobilization against sexual rights campaigners in Jamaica, Lazarus (2015) concludes that certain espoused ideologies about gender, sexuality and the family “may be used to morally justify or promote silence against various forms of violence carried out by others. Or, arguably, that there are aspects of their messages that constitute forms of violence, in and of itself, against any person who reject or cannot conform to the heteronormative, patriarchal and Christian norms being espoused” (136). It should, however, be emphasized that though there is vocal opposition by some fundamentalist Christian individuals and groups, they are not representative of Christianity within Barbados. Equally, their viewpoints do not capture the complexities in beliefs and practices that exist within and across various Christian denominations and society in general. Interviewees were thus still hopeful and optimistic that further socio-legal changes that could foster greater inclusion of LGBTQ+ people in society may be achieved with continuous engagement, including political participation.

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<sup>58</sup> Family-Faith-Freedom Barbados is a Christian organization that professes to be “dedicated to promoting and defending the natural family, faith in God and the true freedom that comes with such faith.” Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/@FamilyFaithFreedomBarbados/about>

<sup>59</sup> Anesta Henry, “Opposing Groups March Over Proposal to Legalize Same-sex Unions,” *Barbados Today* (25 October 2020). Available at: <https://barbadostoday.bb/2020/10/25/opposing-groups-march-over-proposal-to-legalize-same-sex-unions/>

# **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

**The National LGBTI Survey and the related qualitative components of the study (that is, the interviews and desk research) revealed that social exclusion, stigmatization and discrimination continue to be experienced by some LGBTQ+ people in Barbados as it relates to the eight reviewed thematic areas:**

- 1. Citizen Security**
- 2. Education**
- 3. Employment**
- 4. Health**
- 5. Housing**
- 6. Violence**
- 7. Justice**
- 8. Political Participation**

The survey results suggest that LGBTQ+ persons experience stigma and discrimination in various areas, including the workplace and educational institutions. Many survey respondents are not open about their SOGIE and often grapple with heightened vigilance, constantly monitoring the reactions of the general population to avoid discrimination and harassment. Nearly 17% of LGBTQ+ people were on the receiving end of a violent act in the 12 months preceding the survey, and many of these incidents go unreported. Such experiences have a negative impact on the mental health of LGBTQ individuals: nearly 70% of all survey respondents experienced suicidal ideation and 24.7% said they attempted to take their life at some point.

However, interview respondents emphasized that an individual's experiences of exclusion, stigma and discrimination in these areas are influenced by intersecting identities, socioeconomic status, and an array of other circumstances including access to a strong social/family support system. There are therefore degrees of "protection" and vulnerability within the local LGBTQ+ community

based on individuals' positionality within society. Moreover, even though the research seeks to produce knowledge about LGBTQI+ people's experiences of social exclusion, stigma and discrimination, it is crucial to also emphasize the socio-legal changes that are occurring within the society, as well as the resilience and enactment of critical agency by this population.

This study offered various insights into experiences within the eight areas under investigation, but it also draws attention to avenues for further research. First, the research yielded little to no insights into the experiences of intersex people. Consequently, their experiences of inclusion and/or exclusion as it relates to the eight thematic areas are unknown, as well as their broader experiences with the enjoyment of human rights and navigation of citizen security within this Nation-State. Equally, further research is needed to understand the factors influencing intersex people's invisibility both within LGBTQI+ organizations and society. Second, most of the survey and interview respondents were between the ages of 18 and 30, and predominantly identified as lesbian, gay or bisexual. Additionally, cisgender individuals represented 82.2% of respondents (41.4% were women and 40.8% were men), 1.8% of respondents identified as transgender and 12.1% identified as genderqueer, nonbinary or gender-fluid. This means that there remains a gap in knowledge about the experiences of transgender people and elderly LGBTQ+ people. Further research is thus needed to understand the ways in which they enact agency and navigate citizen security in their daily lives.

Based on the qualitative and quantitative findings, the following recommendations are suggested to move towards greater inclusion of LGBTQI+ people in Barbados.

## 8.1 General

- LGBTQI+ organizations to continue engaging in initiatives that foster meaningful collaboration with research institutions such as UWI, Cave Hill Campus, and development partners to gather consistent, up-to-date, and reliable data on LGBTQI+ people's lived experiences. This will be beneficial for promoting evidence-based public policies, laws and programmes, public education campaigns and other relevant interventions. This initiative may indeed be costly, but feasible. For example, researchers at UWI who are already doing research in gender and sexualities may be encouraged to incorporate this work into their existing research agenda. On the one hand, collaboration with LGBTQI+ organizations would be an advantage to many of these researchers who often struggle to reach such marginalized populations. These researchers have access to pre-existing funding for research or may be situated to access grants for academic and policy-oriented work. Researchers and activists would thus formalize their research relationship in this area through the formation of a Research Cluster, which in the UWI system bestows institutional recognition on a given area of research, thereby facilitating funding and other access to resources. This is also in consonance with UWI's continuing emphasis in its recently launched Strategic Plan 2022–2027, on its status as an Activist University responding to the varied developmental needs of the region.
- Partnership between feminist and LGBTQI+ groups and the private and public sectors to produce creative, culturally appropriate public education information campaigns. These campaigns will be aimed at sensitizing the public about citizen security and human rights, and the benefits of being an inclusive society (not only focusing on the economic side of

development, but also the wider benefits for the preservation of families, communities and the nation). This initiative could be facilitated through the Social Justice Committee under the Ministry of Labour and Social Partnership Relations, which in turn might provide a forum for other strategic partnerships and coalition building between these organizations, beyond the realm of public education, facilitating interventions in legal reform processes and other civic society engagements.

## 8.2 Specific Recommendations

### Education

- Similar to the existing collaboration between Equals Barbados and the Ministry of Health and Wellness on the sensitization of medical practitioners, the Ministry of Education, Technological and Vocational Training should seek a consistent partnership with sexual and gender justice organizations to ensure the implementation of regular sensitization activities for teachers and guidance counsellors that cover human rights, gender identity and sexual orientation. Specific emphasis should be placed on training on LGBTQI+ inclusion, gender and reproductive justice, and how to respond to instances of discrimination and harassment. This will help to ensure that teachers and school administrators are equipped to create a welcoming and inclusive classroom/school environment.



- The Ministry of Education, Technological and Vocational Training in collaboration with locally based NGOs, such as Dance4Life Barbados, to create, adopt and implement policies to address issues of bullying and discrimination in the school context, including based on gender identity and sexual orientation. These policies should address interactions in various relationships in the school environment, for example, among students and staff, and between student and staff. The need for similar initiatives has been highlighted in other reports. In 2019, Equals Generation published an assessment report on Barbados's progress in implementing the Beijing Platform for Action that was adopted at the Fourth World Conference of Women held in Beijing, China in September 1995. In this report they noted the necessity of addressing violence in schools as it relates to bullying. Though there was an increased presence of guidance counsellors and social workers, the report authors emphasized the need for greater sensitivity and awareness about the “gendered nature of violence and bullying in the school system” (7).<sup>60</sup>
- The Ministry of Education, Technological and Vocational Training in collaboration with UWI and NGOs such as UNICEF and UNFPA should create updated, age-appropriate, culturally relevant, evidence-based, comprehensive sexuality education programmes for youths who are both in and out of school. These entities were instrumental in the creation of the existing Health and Family Life Education (HFLE) curriculum. However, researchers and activists have pointed to the need for an updated and much more expansive curriculum/programme (Lazarus 2019), which would consider a wider range of topics around well-being, gender and sexuality, as well as identifying effective and engaging teaching and learning strategies

for content delivery. This updated curriculum/ programme should be uniform, consistent and systematically implemented across the targeted school population.

The effective implementation of this curriculum requires collaboration between various groups, including government, educators in both the public and private schools, human rights activists and researchers, and trained educators to deliver this curriculum. Similar recommendations have also been forwarded in other reports. For example, a Formative Assessment Report, which was completed in 2022, recommended the implementation of an updated evidence-based CSE programme for youth in and out of school within the Caribbean.

## Employment

- Government, particularly the Office of the Attorney General, the Bureau of Gender Affairs, the Ministry of Labour, Social Security and Third Sector should encourage the sensitization of employers and employees in both the public and private sectors concerning human rights and relevant national laws aimed at creating a safe and inclusive workplace, specifically the Employment Sexual Harassment (Prevention) Act 2017, and the Employment (Prevention of Discrimination) Employment Act 2020. All employees should be presented with copies of this legislation and steps should be taken to ensure that employees have a sound understanding of these laws and the recourses available.

<sup>60</sup> Available at: <https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/Headquarters/Attachments/Sections/CSW/64/National-reviews/Barbados.pdf>

- The Office of the Attorney General and the Ministry of Labour, Social Security and Third Sector should encourage, where this is not in place, the adaptation and implementation of workplace sexual harassment prevention policies, within both the public and private sectors that are consistent with relevant national laws such as the Employment Sexual Harassment (Prevention) Act 2017. Workplace policies should consider harassment and discrimination based on sexual orientation, gender expression and/or identity. In line with the Employment Sexual Harassment (Prevention) Act 2017, workplaces should include the introduction of a framework for appropriate reporting and an outline of procedures for resolving instances of harassment. Moreover, there should be appropriate data-gathering mechanisms instituted and regular ongoing training to ensure employees are aware of, and understand, the national laws, as well as the specific established workplace policies and reporting mechanisms to foster safe and inclusive workplaces.
- The Ministry of Labour, Social Security and Third Sector should consider amendments and enforcement of the Employment (Prevention of Discrimination) Employment Act 2020 and the Employment Sexual Harassment (Prevention) Act 2017. The Employment (Prevention of Discrimination) Employment Act 2020, section 3 should be amended to include gender identity as a basis for discrimination. In addition, the Employment Sexual Harassment (Prevention) Act 2017 should be amended to explicitly include sexual orientation or gender identity within section 3(1) which stipulates the meaning of sexual harassment. It is unlawful to subject an employee to workplace harassment based on sexual orientation or gender identity. Harassment could include derogatory remarks about sexual orientation.
- The Employment Sexual Harassment (Prevention) Act 2017, section 4 also states that employers should ensure there is a clear written policy statement against sexual harassment within the workplace. In a similar regard, employers should ensure their policy statements include harassment based on sexual orientation or gender identity. And these statements should be presented to their employees with similar procedures to assist employees in understanding the policy statement. Employers can consider adopting the Sexual Harassment Policy Statement which the IMPACT Justice Project published given that the Act does not include a policy statement. However, as mentioned, this policy statement must include harassment based on sexual orientation or gender identity.
- Government should also prioritize the introduction of a national gender policy, ensuring consultations are held with LGBTI people beforehand to convey their lived realities of discrimination and harassment.
- The government should initiate an incentive scheme allowing organizations and institutions to brand themselves “Barbados inclusive” upon compliance with prescribed inclusivity standards. This would be an incentive for the private sector to also adopt and implement the above-mentioned policies. These standards should be developed in close collaboration with the Barbados Social Partnership and should reflect international best practices for workplace inclusion and representation.

## Housing

- Though homelessness and difficulties with housing was not identified as a current personal experience by most respondents, there was still an indication that LGBTQI+ youth and those who lack social/family support may experience challenges with housing, which is seen as a wider societal problem. Attention should be given to the vulnerable populations in housing distribution initiated by the Barbados National Housing Cooperation, which is responsible for finding affordable and acceptable housing solutions.
- Additionally, in collaboration with government and local CSOs, for instance, the Barbados Alliance to End Homelessness and the Barbados Vagrants and Homeless Society should consider two evidence-based solutions: (1) increase affordable housing initiatives and ensure that they are accessible to vulnerable populations, especially those who are low-income and experiencing homelessness and, (2) increasing the number of shelters and housing facilities and ensuring that these institutions provide culturally competent services and respect for human rights. The second initiative directly addresses the need for short-term transitional housing accommodations, which, as indicated from the findings in this study, would be a necessary resource or support for those who are forced to leave their homes or places of residence because of their gender or sexual orientation.

## Health

- Equals Barbados and the Ministry of Health and Wellness have already started collaboration in the sensitization of medical practitioners to improve their understanding and interactions with the LGBTQI+ community to improve access to HIV and AIDS care, as well as to other available healthcare services. In addition,

Equals Barbados has sought to increase knowledge and awareness among mental healthcare professionals on LGBTQI+ issues and on methods for combatting implicit biases around gender and sexual orientation, with the aim of increasing access to mental health services for the LGBTQI+ community through a framework of empowerment and sensitization. On that note, Equals Barbados, as well as other local LGBTQI+ organizations, should maintain, and increase where necessary, collaborations with the Ministry of Health and Wellness to provide ongoing sensitization training in both the private and public sectors for those offering medical and psychosocial services. Collaboration with LGBTQI+ organizations can also seek to raise awareness about public health programmes or LGBTQI+ affirming healthcare providers and develop strategies to address the health needs of LGBTQI+ people.

- The Ministry of Health and Wellness and the Mental Health and Wellness Committee established under the Ministry of Education, Technological and Vocational Training should increase the accessibility of mental health services by creating mental health support teams at schools/colleges and in the public sector. Steps would need to be taken to ensure that team members are trained on the mental healthcare needs of LGBTQI+ people and the importance of cultural competency.
- UWI and other tertiary education institutions to include training of medical, psychology and social work students in topics of social exclusion, gender, sexuality and human rights as a consistent part of the existing medical school curriculum and as supplementary certification courses available to graduates.

Additionally, the following recommendations made in the 2021 UNDP Report on “Human Rights of Intersex Persons in Barbados, Dominican Republic, Haiti and Jamaica” are suggested:

- “Monitor and generate statistical and disaggregated information to know the human rights situation of intersex people in the countries in order to inform the design of inclusive public policies.” (45)
- “Adopt and implement, in consultation with intersex people, a comprehensive care protocol, applicable in all health centres in the country, which establishes standardized steps to be followed by health professionals in the treatment of intersex people. Such protocols should include psychosocial support to the family of the intersex person, so that, through access to quality information, they can understand the condition and counteract the prejudices and confusion they may have about it, and thus influence to generate safer family circles, which serve as support for intersex people.” (ibid.)
- “Direct training efforts to medical and psychosocial support staff in different health centres in the country, both public and private, on issues related to the human rights of intersex people and standards of informed consent and provide quality information to counteract social prejudices surrounding bodily diversity and sexual characteristics that deviate from the binaristic social norm.” (ibid.)

### **Justice and Violence**

- Collaboration with the Ministry of Home Affairs, UWI, Institute of Gender and Development Studies and the Centre for Criminal Justice and Security, and other relevant NGOs to increase sensitization training on gender, sexuality, human rights and discrimination to all employees working in various sectors of the judicial system, including courts, police and prosecutors.
- For the government to introduce legal protections and penalties for hate crimes against the LGBTQ+ community.

### **Citizen Security and Political Participation**

- The Government should take appropriate measures to guarantee the full recognition of an individual’s gender identity or expression by removing the hurdles transgender and nonbinary people face in securing identity documents with their name and gender marker that accurately reflect their identity.

LGBTQI+ organizations and advocates should amplify their voices in the political arena by seeking collaboration with like-minded locally based gender and human rights organizations to share resources, where possible, and access to space.

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