

LGBTQ+ Persons in Latin America and the Caribbean: Measuring Population Sizes and Obstacles to Economic and Social Inclusion

RG-K1198

I. Background

Despite a lack of knowledge, we have good reasons to believe that discrimination likely plays an important role in the lives of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender/Transsexual, Queer and other (LGBTQ+) people. First, governments impose different (and often more restrictive) legal regulations on LGBTQ+ people. If the legal status of same-sex relationships is not recognized, for example, this may adversely impact partnership stability, employment, and the wellbeing of LGBTQ+ people (Sansone, 2019; Hamermesh and Delhommer, 2021). Second, the general public holds negative attitudes towards LGBTQ+ people, which is likely to spill over to the workplace. LGBTQ+ people, for example, tend to shy away from occupations seen as prejudiced against them (Plug, Webbink, and Martin, 2014). Third, there is overwhelming evidence outside Latin American and Caribbean countries that LGBTQ+ people are discriminated against. Valvort (2017) offers the most extensive literature to date, showing that LGBTQ+ people are treated differently and as a result experience worse outcomes in many (but not all) dimensions important for LGBTQ+ wellbeing, including family life, education, employment, and health.

Unfortunately, LGBTQ+ people remain largely invisible in available statistics, perpetuating prejudiced beliefs and attitudes (Badgett et al., 2014). Portraying a more complete picture of the LGBTQ+ community is a crucial step toward giving greater visibility to these groups and their challenges and designing effective public policies that can address the obstacles to economic and social inclusion in the societies where they live. The latter objective is important not only from an equality and equity perspective, but also from an economic perspective. When LGBTQ+ people are discriminated against and denied access to social institutions (such as education, employment, family, and health care), the social exclusion of LGBTQ+ people likely has a harmful effect on a country's level of economic development (Badgett et al., 2014).

What do we know about LGBTQ+ people in Latin America and the Caribbean? Legal protections for LGBTQ+ populations vary widely across the region, from countries like Argentina and Uruguay that allow same-sex unions to countries such as Belize and Jamaica that outlaw same-sex sexual relations. According to the most recent regional comparison for Latin America and the Caribbean, approximately half of the Inter-American Development Bank's (IDB) borrowing member countries (12 of 23)¹ have approved sexual orientation and gender identity (SOGI) anti-discrimination legislation.

The Global Index on Legal Recognition of Homosexual Orientation (GILRHO) developed by Waaldijk (2009) provides a useful measure for comparing the status of LGBTQ+ inclusion across countries. This index considers eight categories of LGBTQ+ rights, and countries

¹ Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, El Salvador, Mexico, Nicaragua, Peru, Uruguay and Venezuela. In Argentina, no national law exists that penalizes LGBTQ+ discrimination; only in certain provinces have legal protection measures been put in place.

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receive a score of 8 if there is protective legislation across all dimensions. Argentina, Brazil and Mexico are the countries in the region with the most complete legal framework for protecting LGBTQ+ rights (with scores of 7, 7, and 5.5 in 2014, respectively). Countries like Chile, Guatemala, Honduras, and Peru have had persistent scores of 2 or 3 between 2012 and 2014.

The Pew Research Center (2013) conducted a global attitudes survey in 39 countries asking respondents whether they thought society should accept homosexuality. Public opinion on homosexuality was in general positive within Latin America and the Caribbean. In Argentina, about three-quarters (74%) said homosexuality should be accepted, as do clear majorities in Chile (68%), Mexico (61%) and Brazil (60%). In contrast, 62% of Salvadorans say homosexuality should be rejected by society, as do nearly half of Bolivians (49%). Data for the 2014 round of the LAPOP project showed that higher public support for same-sex couples' right to marry is found in countries that have enacted legislation allowing same-sex unions or marriage (Uruguay with 71.1, Argentina with 57.5, Brazil with 45.5, and Chile with 44.7).

Data on LGBTQ+ populations are extremely scarce in the region, since questions about SOGI are infrequently asked in statistically representative surveys. Recent data collection initiatives in the region include efforts to add questions about same-sex partnerships in national censuses (Brazil, Mexico, Argentina, and Uruguay), representative household surveys, surveys of individuals using snowball sampling methods, and online surveys. While these efforts are commendable, they face several limitations. In the case of census data, they likely underestimate LGBTQ+ populations because they neither include those who have partners of a different sex, nor include those who are not partnered. Also, the brevity of census instruments provides very limited socio-economic data on the LGBTQ+ population. Household surveys try to deal with this problem, but their sampling methods sometimes exclude certain marginalized populations such as transgender and transsexual individuals.² They also face important issues of misreporting, particularly in contexts of high SOGI-based discrimination and exclusion. Surveys of individuals using snowball sampling methods have the advantage of being able to reach more LGBTQ+ persons and learn about the gaps they face, but they do so at the cost of losing national or local representativeness. Finally, online surveys may offer ways to deal with misreporting biases and sampling issues, but they require high levels of connectivity and access to digital platforms/smartphones to guarantee representativeness.

In sum, there is a need for research on LGBTQ+ people in Latin America and the Caribbean. At the IDB, the Sector Framework for Gender and Diversity, which includes LGBTQ+ as a form of diversity (GN-2800-4), mentions among its knowledge activities the possibility of conducting research on the social exclusion faced by these populations. Moreover, a central pillar of the IDB's Vision 2025 is the promotion of gender equality and the inclusion of diverse groups in our operations in the region. More accurate data on the size and socioeconomic situation of LGBTQ+ populations would increase the IDB's ability to: i) conduct quality empirical research; ii) improve the design of future projects that would address the needs of these populations, including social sector projects to improve the delivery of specialized services; and iii) provide better policy recommendations to combat

² Geijtenbeek and Plug (2018) is the only available study on the labor market position of transgender people using representative data (from the Netherlands).

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discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity. This call for proposals thus supports Vision 2025 and its mission to promote sustainable and equitable development in the region. Information on the types of exclusion based on SOGI may be of particular interest to both sectoral ministries (i.e., labor, health) and the finance and planning ministries. Additionally, the learning process of data collection and harmonization would serve as a basis for the replication of similar processes in the region.

This call for proposals is part of the effort to measure the size of the LGBTQ+ population (or subpopulations) in Latin America and the Caribbean as well as to understand their socio-demographic conditions, education, occupation and employment, social exclusion, perceptions of wellbeing, and access to resources and services. The country studies funded by this call will contribute to the region's understanding of the sources of discrimination and exclusion and to identify public policy interventions that can lower the barriers that LGBTQ+ populations face.

II. Objectives

We seek proposals that measure the size of the LGBTQ+ population (and/or subpopulations) in Latin America and the Caribbean and/or identify forms of exclusion they face in the labor, education, and housing markets as well as in terms of access to financial and health services. We are looking for proposals of significant ambition and scope. While we do not seek to be prescriptive, we will give priority to proposals that:

- Rely on representative data (primary data collection is encouraged).
- Incorporate innovations in the instrument, application protocol, or sampling procedure.
- Estimate exclusion gaps using quasi-experimental or experimental approaches.
- Provide valuable inputs to the design of public policy.

III. Methodology and Scope

We expect the proposed country studies to follow a rigorous quantitative approach.

In the case of measurement studies, the methodology section in the proposals should include the following:

1. Instrument design and application protocol, focusing on the elements aimed at reducing misreporting.
2. Ethical and security considerations as well as measures taken in the field to guarantee participants' safety and confidentiality.
3. Sampling procedures.
4. In the case of primary data collection efforts, team composition, facilities and experience in the implementation of the proposed design.

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In the case of studies trying to identify SOGI-based exclusion, the methodology section in the proposals should include the following:

1. Description of the data sources and sampling procedures.
2. Research design (e.g., audit studies).
3. Team composition, facilities and experience in the implementation of the proposed design.

The scope of the studies should be individual countries (or areas within countries) in Latin America and the Caribbean, parts of the region, or the whole region.

IV. Content of the Studies

1. Brief analysis/diagnosis of the evolution of the topic in the region and in the setting specific to the study. What is the motivation of the study?
2. Brief literature review of the research topic and methodology. Describe the novelty and contribution of the proposed study.
3. Description of the research plan and design:
 - a) Diagnosis of the problem.
 - b) Description of the data.
 - c) Methodology.
4. Results:
 - d) Assessment and interpretation.
 - e) Exposition of potential heterogeneous results.
5. Conclusions:
 - a) Expected policy lessons.
 - b) Limitations of the study.

V. Content of the Research Proposals

Research institutions must submit a proposal detailing the following:

- Relevance of the proposed study to the questions raised by this call, specifying if the proposal will focus on measurement, identification of forms of exclusion, or both.
- Brief explanation of the contribution of the study to the status of the topic in the region, specifying the country or countries of interest.
- Methodology, including a proposal for the evaluation of an internal review board in issues of human subject research (in the case of primary data collection or quasi-experimental or experimental designs). In the case of primary data collection, please include instruments and application protocols.
- Potential relevance of the lessons and conclusions to be extracted for the public policy debate in the country or countries considered.

In addition, proposals must include:

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- A list of the researchers (in a separate annex) who will be involved in the project. The research center should present a research team justification of their capacity to meet the objectives of the project, including relevance of prior experience. Curriculum vitae of the researchers should be included. Subsequent substitutions for researchers originally specified in the proposal may be made with prior approval from the IDB Network coordinator, but the project leader should lead the entire project to completion.
- A budget (in a separate annex) indicating the time and resources that will be used within the context of the research work plan must be included. The budget proposed by the research center should disaggregate items financed by the IDB contribution and those financed by the research center. The budget should distinguish among amounts assigned to professional honoraria, data collection, “overhead” and other major categories of research expenditures.

Note: Proposals must be submitted in English.

VI. Selection Criteria

Research institutions only (including think tanks) may present proposals. The research teams will be selected according to three main factors:

1. Relevance and motivation.
2. Methodological rigor and persuasiveness of the identification strategy.
3. Team Experience. The relevance of the team’s experience for the proposed project will be a very important criterion in the selection process.

VII. Proposal Registration

Proposing research institutions should be registered as Research Network members (contact Elton Mancilla at eltonma@iadb.org) and should be based in the Latin American and Caribbean region. Institutions from other parts of the world do not qualify as members of the Research Network. However, researchers not based in Latin American and Caribbean institutions can participate with research teams from proposing institutions.

Proposals should be submitted using the Web Submission Form that is provided in the Call for Proposals announcement. Proposals are due **September 30, 2021**. Please note that there are two options within the submission form: one for institutions and another for individual researchers. Please make sure to choose the institutions option.

VIII. Coordination and Schedule

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The project will be administered by the Research Department (IDB/RES), under the technical coordination of Samuel Berlinski (IDB/RES), Verónica Frisancho (IDB/RES), and Erik Plug (University of Amsterdam), as external advisor.

The tentative schedule of activities is as follows:

- **September 30, 2021:** Due date for receiving proposals. Institutions should ensure that the complete documentation is submitted to the evaluation committee. Complete documentation includes registration form with all the information requested; the research proposal, budget, and curriculum vitae (CVs up to three pages long).
- **October 15, 2021:** Announcement of selected research proposals.
- **November 16-17, 2021: First Discussion Seminar** to be held via Zoom, with the Technical Directors of the projects and the coordinating committee for the purposes of presenting the proposal and the methodology to be used in the study, as well as brief preliminary discussions.
- **December 10, 2021:** Due date for receiving **revised proposals**, incorporating the changes associated with the feedback received during the seminar.
- **July (TBD), 2022:** Deadline for a **first draft** of the research papers.
- **July (TBD), 2022: Second Discussion Seminar** in Washington, D.C. or location to be determined with the Technical Directors of the projects and the coordinating committee to discuss the **first draft** of the research papers.
- **September (TBD), 2022:** Deadline for a **revised version** of the research papers. Research papers must follow the IDB Manual of Style for working papers. Studies that are of good quality at this stage will be considered for publication in the IDB Working Papers series.

IX. Financial Contribution and Payment Schedule

The IDB will contribute up to **US\$30,000** or its equivalent in local currency as a contribution to the total budget of each study, depending on the number of studies selected (exceptional proposals that require more funding will also be considered).³ The payment schedule is as follows:

- 40 percent within 30 days of presentation and approval by the IDB of the revised proposal.
- 30 percent within 30 days of presentation and approval by the IDB of the first draft of the research paper.
- 30 percent within 30 days of presenting and approving by the IDB of the revised version of the research paper and completion of the conditions of the terms of reference.

³ Additional funding will be considered in cases that are merited by the scope of the studies (e.g., they covered multiple countries) or the complexity of field work.

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X. References

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