



# MAKING IT WORK

## LESBIAN, BISEXUAL AND TRANSGENDER WOMEN'S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT IN THE PHILIPPINES

galang

OSI



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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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Women's economic empowerment is critical for the achievement of women's human and economic rights and gender justice and is embedded in the related targets in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to which the Philippines is a signatory. Yet lesbian, bisexual and transgender (LBT) women in the Philippines have remained invisible to policymakers due to a lack of focused attention on their voices, priorities and needs, exemplified by an absence of official statistics, disaggregated by sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression (SOGIE).

This report seeks to fill this gap, bringing together findings from research designed to further understanding of the current socio-economic situation of LBT women in the Philippines, with the goal of informing future advocacy, programming and policymaking in the country. We draw on multiple data sources – including a literature review, focus group discussions (FGDs) in urban and rural areas of Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao, key informant interviews (KIIs) and an online survey (with 159 respondents) – to shed light on what economic empowerment means to them and the priority actions needed to support their individual and collective economic advancement. This research reveals a mixed picture around many of the key components of economic empowerment – namely, the extent to which LBT women in the Philippines are able to experience choice, independence and control in their economic lives, and the extent to which individual and structural factors act at family, community and national levels to support or constrain their economic advancement.

**Legal and policy frameworks in the Philippines promoting the rights of LBT women in relation to economic empowerment are different at the national and local level.** At the national level, there is no law explicitly protecting citizens from discrimination on the basis of SOGIE. Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) rights advocates have sought to pass a national Anti-Discrimination Bill (ADB), also known as the SOGIE Equality Bill, since 1999. For many of the LBT women participants, the passage of this Bill was a key priority. Encouragingly, policy frameworks at the local level appear to be advancing at a far faster pace than at the national level. Local anti-discrimination ordinances (ADOs)

– guaranteeing protection against discrimination based on sexual orientation – exist in 22 cities, 2 municipalities, 3 barangay <sup>1</sup> and 6 provinces in the Philippines. However, even in these areas, ADOs are not fully implemented or enforced – meaning LBT women are still face discrimination. There is an overall lack of awareness among government functionaries as well as LBT women themselves about ADOs in their area.

**Economic insecurity was a very common experience among the LBT women** in our study. Our online survey indicated that 43 percent of respondents frequently worried about being able to financially support their dependents, despite the fact that nearly 72 percent of LBT women in our sample were employed full-time. Consequently, LBT women developed coping strategies to respond to economic insecurity by maintaining a patchwork of different, often simultaneous livelihoods to maintain a level of adequate income. Perceptions of employment security varied among FGD respondents, with LBT women with waged employment in the government or private sector appearing to feel most secure. Some lesbian, rural women participating in FGDs felt that an employment contract of three to six months was “secure,” even if they were uncertain if there would be a subsequent contract. Among LBT women, transgender women spoke most clearly of economic insecurity in meeting basic needs, including housing and food.

**LBT women were generally engaged in a few key sectors of employment:** education (as students or teachers), government, private sector office work, micro- or subsistence enterprises (e.g. farmers, food stalls, tricycles, jeepneys <sup>2</sup>) and creative (writing) and service industries (e.g. beauty, make-up, chefs, bartenders, call centres, laundry, security, escort/sex services). The precarious nature of many participants' income meant they relied on an informal loan system called ‘Five-Six’ or ‘Torko’ (which charges 20 percent interest) to get by. Respondents reported needing financial support from informal networks (e.g. from partners or borrowing initially to start informal enterprises) and overall, there was limited access to formal financial services to start or grow businesses.

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1 A barangay is the smallest administrative division in the Philippines.

2 A jeep-like form of public transport in the Philippines.

**Experiences of discrimination vary among LBT women with transgender women reporting a higher level of discrimination.** Some lesbian and bisexual women perceived transgender women to be more discriminated against than themselves. The imposition of dress codes in the workplace is a common form of discrimination experienced by LBT women, which can lead to skills mismatches as LBT women choose to take up jobs in which they can express themselves more freely in their dress and presentation, even when that role requires a lower level of skills and/or qualifications than those they hold. Consequently, **occupational segregation is a notable feature of LBT women's work** whereby lesbian women often find themselves working in stereotypically 'masculine' jobs such as a security guards and transgender women end up working in stereotypically 'feminine' jobs in salons, beauty pageants and/or in commercial sex work.

**Bullying and discrimination in the education system by both students and teachers is a key experience of LBT women,** despite anti-bullying legislation in the country. Hostility can cut short LBT women's education, limiting their employment opportunities later in life. In several cases, being identified as LBT, or self-expressing openly as LBT, led to discrimination, abuse and other harmful behaviour. Only 57 percent of our online survey respondents claim to have never been threatened or physically harmed on account of gender identity or sexual orientation while 42 percent had experienced some degree of physical threat – of which 24 percent experienced it frequently or sometimes. Transgender women reported facing such threats more often than lesbian or bisexual women. However, our findings point to encouraging signs of changes in social attitudes towards LBT women, with most younger LBT women (i.e. below the age of 25 years) increasingly citing a positive experience of coming out to their families and other immediate networks, as well as acceptance in the workplace

**The conceptualization of the family as a heteronormative unit in the Filipino Family Code and in society in general poses a key barrier to LBT women's full and equal enjoyment of social protection rights.** LBT women have been identified as marginalized within key policies by PhilHealth (the Philippines' national health insurance programme) and in access to post-disaster relief by the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD). Older LBT women were seen to be particularly marginalized as a result of not having children and having the responsibility to provide for family. A fairly frequently articulated concern across all groups was what would happen to LBT women when they get older, particularly if they do not have a partner or children.

At the same time, LBT women often end up as carers, performing unpaid care and domestic work for aging relatives since LBT women may not have children or families of their own, compared to siblings with offspring. Limitation in access to health service provision for LBT women feeds into a lack of knowledge, awareness and understanding of the health issues experienced among LBT women by health providers. Transgender women in particular reported difficulty in accessing health care, experiencing high levels of stigma and discrimination in hospitals and other medical facilities.

**Participants identified very few initiatives specifically targeted at supporting LBT women, and LBT women were excluded or sidelined from policies and programmes targeted at women or marginalized populations more widely.** When asked about government initiatives aimed at them, most rural LBT participants spoke of post-disaster relief, explaining that relief was provided after some (but not all) natural disasters, although there was evidence that there was some discrimination towards LBT couples. LBT women in our study were unaware of initiatives such as the Gender-Responsive Economic Actions for the Transformation of Women (GREAT Women) initiative aimed at improving the sustainability, productivity and competitiveness of women's micro-enterprises. Transgender women in the FGDs typically reported being members of a transgender women and gay organization, though lesbian and bisexual women felt that LGBT organizations did not particularly cater to their needs. Overall, the evidence pointed to lesbian and bisexual women being the least visible among LGBT groups and had the least strong civil society activity or advocacy. LBT respondents were largely unaware of private sector initiatives aimed at supporting LBT women. Those who worked for private companies said that while anti-discrimination policies often existed in such companies, they were not fully implemented in practice.

Given the critical role played by women's rights organizations and LGBT organizations in advancing economic empowerment in the Philippines in the view of the participants (and supported by our research), it will be vital to extend support to the actors at the forefront of advancing LBT women's economic rights and empowerment. With this in mind, efforts to support economic empowerment should rest on a central tenet of positive changes in LBT women's personal lives based on their personal starting points and priorities. Such an approach will respond to the enablers and constraints to LBT women's economic empowerment at both the individual and structural level, and incorporate a concerted effort to leave no one behind by ensuring that the most hidden and marginalized LBT women are identified and supported through the priority actions outlined below:

## Recommendations for national government:

- Strengthen the national legal framework for the economic empowerment of LBT women, notably by amending the Magna Carta of Women to ensure it is inclusive of LBT women, and that SOGIE is explicitly named as grounds for discrimination against women falling under the remit of the law's scope; supporting passage and implementation of the ADB/SOGIE Equality Bill; and supporting passage of equal marriage laws for LGBT people.
- Ensure LBT women's full and equal access to education, training and skills development, notably by increasing capacity and collaboration between the Department of Education (DepEd), the Commission on Higher Education and the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA) to improve access to people with diverse SOGIE; integrating SOGIE awareness into the academic curriculum; ensuring freedom of expression in educational institutions at all levels, notably by penalizing the imposition of gender conformity criteria, such as concerning uniforms and hair length and stipulations around dress codes deemed 'appropriate' according to gender; and provide confidential counselling to LBT students.
- Support access to quality employment in line with LBT women's priorities, notably by: developing initiatives to support access to diverse livelihoods; developing innovative partnerships with the education and skills development sectors (for example through increasing LBT women's access to online courses such as those run by TESDA); supporting collaboration between local LBT organizations and the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) to develop and implement activities that promote employment of LBT populations; and ratifying and fully implementing the International Labour Organization (ILO) Violence and Harassment Convention, 2019 (No. 190).
- Ensure LBT women's full access to quality health care, notably by eliminating discrimination against LBT women in health services; developing tailored programmes to support the psychological and mental health of LGBT populations; investing in outreach around HIV and AIDS, including prevention, diagnosis and treatment; and including LBT partners as beneficiaries for PhilHealth and mandating the recognition of same-sex partners as valid beneficiaries across public and private schemes with provisions for spousal and partner treatment.
- Ensure LBT women's full and equal access to social protection, notably by recognizing LBT partners as beneficiaries for social spending on an equal basis to heterosexual partners and spouses; providing support in the case of economic shocks and natural disasters; and developing an integrated care infrastructure that

considers the specific experiences and needs of LBT women across the life course.

- Expand initiatives to increase public awareness of SOGIE (for example, through the creation of a national LGBT commission) and to eliminate discriminatory attitudes and behaviours, notably by tackling all forms of violence against LBT women.
- Invest in improving the capacity of the Philippine Statistics Authority to gather robust sex- and gender-disaggregated data on LGBT populations in the Philippines.
- Tackle violence, abuse and harassment by ensuring all initiatives aimed at prevention of and response to violence against women and girls fully consider the needs of LBT women.
- Improve the rights of migrant LBT women workers by ensuring safe and legal migration pathways leading to quality employment opportunities for migrant workers.
- Ensure all programmes to support LBT women are sustainably funded, including by ensuring adequate fiscal space within key government services (notably education, health, labour and skills development, and social protection), and ensuring the allocation and disbursement of funds of existing budgets (such as the Gender and Development budget) include LBT women-focused initiatives.

## Recommendations for local government

- Improve coordination between statutory, voluntary and private entities to ensure the adoption and implementation of ADOs.
- Ensure effective, enforceable and adequately staffed reportorial and redress mechanisms are in place under ADOs for LBT women that have been discriminated against.
- Increase knowledge of ADOs among key implementing stakeholders.
- Identify and support 'champions' and other allies and develop an official mandate and framework within which to improve adoption and implementation of ADOs, including at the highest political levels and within the community.
- Institute and build the capacity of barangay LGBT helpdesks.
- Ensure that public infrastructure is inclusive of diverse SOGIE groups, including by making available gender-inclusive restrooms and changing facilities.
- Ensure initiatives to support LBT women are up to date and respond to their evolving lived realities by engaging LBT organizations in regular and meaningful dialogue on emerging challenges and proposals to address them.

### **Recommendations for private sector**

- Ensure SOGIE-responsive workplace environments, including gender-inclusive restrooms and actively supporting freedom of gender expression in relation to LBT women's self-expression and dress codes.
- Develop and enact inclusive workplace policies and procedures, and SOGIE sensitization trainings to tackle workplace discrimination at all stages of employment, including recruitment, retention and promotion.
- Take steps to share information on good practice and 'success stories' for initiatives which have worked to increase inclusion and meet the needs of LBT women among public and private sector stakeholders.

### **Recommendations for civil society**

- Conduct a mapping of formal and informal support available to LBT women across the Philippines, taking into account the needs, priorities and extent of support available to the most invisible and marginalized groups with the aim of understanding and filling gaps, and to provide evidence to donors about critical areas for investment.
- Forge strategic alliances with champions within government, women's organizations and LGBT activists to further LBT women's economic empowerment, to share expertise and learnings and develop joint initiatives, including advocacy at all levels.
- Support the incorporation of analysis of the specific challenges faced by LBT women and the priority actions needed to address them into wider movement advocacy and programming.

### **Recommendations for the international community, including donors, international institutions and other allies (e.g. academics and researchers)**

- Provide core, flexible and sustainable funding to LBT women's movement organizations, in line with the projects and programmes they prioritize to boost the economic empowerment of those they work with.
- Engage meaningfully with LBT movement actors in the Philippines to understand their priorities and needs.
- Actively seek opportunities to amplify the voices of LBT movement representatives, for example in expert meetings and during policy and programme development and media and policy engagement.
- Invest in further research and knowledge-building on the evolving context and lived experiences of LBT women's economic empowerment.

### **All actors**

- Ensure that approaches to LBT women's economic empowerment are rooted in LBT women's own priorities, needs and understandings and respond to their evolving lived realities by engaging LBT organizations in regular and meaningful dialogue and ensure their voices inform policies and programmes.

# ACRONYMS

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<b>ADB</b>	Anti-Discrimination Bill
<b>ADO</b>	Anti-Discrimination Ordinance
<b>AFP</b>	Armed Forces of the Philippines
<b>BPO</b>	Business Process Outsourcing
<b>CCADC</b>	Cebu City Anti-Discrimination Commission
<b>CEDAW</b>	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
<b>CSC</b>	Civil Service Commission
<b>DepEd</b>	Department of Education
<b>DOLE</b>	Department of Labor and Employment
<b>DSWD</b>	Department of Social Welfare and Development
<b>DTI</b>	Department of Trade and Industry
<b>ECCD</b>	Early Childhood Care and Development
<b>FGD</b>	Focus Group Discussion
<b>GDP</b>	Gross Domestic Product
<b>GREAT Women</b>	Gender-Responsive Economic Actions for the Transformation of Women
<b>GSIS</b>	Government Service Insurance System
<b>HDMF</b>	Home Development Mutual Fund
<b>IDS</b>	Institute of Development Studies
<b>ILO</b>	International Labour Organization
<b>IRR</b>	Implementing Rules and Regulations
<b>KII</b>	Key Informant Interview
<b>LeAPI</b>	Lesbian Advocates Philippines
<b>LBT</b>	Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender
<b>LGBT</b>	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender
<b>LGBTI</b>	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex
<b>LGU</b>	Local Government Unit
<b>MSME</b>	Micro, Small, and Medium-Sized Enterprises
<b>NGO</b>	Non-Governmental Organization
<b>ODI</b>	Overseas Development Institute
<b>OFW</b>	Overseas Filipino Worker
<b>PAP</b>	Psychological Association of the Philippines
<b>PESO</b>	Public Employment Service Office
<b>PLHIV</b>	People Living with HIV
<b>PSA</b>	Philippine Statistics Authority
<b>PSW</b>	Public Social Worker
<b>SDG</b>	Sustainable Development Goal
<b>SOGIE</b>	Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Gender Expression
<b>SSS</b>	Social Security System
<b>TESDA</b>	Technical Education and Skills Development Authority
<b>UDHF</b>	Urban Development and Housing Framework
<b>UN</b>	United Nations
<b>UNDP</b>	United Nations Development Programme
<b>UN Women</b>	United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women
<b>UNESCO</b>	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
<b>USAID</b>	United States Agency for International Development
<b>WEE</b>	Women's Economic Empowerment

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## INTRODUCTION

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Women's economic empowerment is first and foremost critical for the achievement of women's human and economic rights, with wider positive effects also identified for families, societies and economies (Hunt and Samman, 2016; UN High Level Panel, 2016). Yet lesbian, bisexual and transgender (LBT) women in the Philippines have often remained invisible to policymakers due to a lack of focused attention on their voices, priorities and needs, exemplified by an absence of official statistics disaggregated by sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression (SOGIE), and a lack of focus on LBT women within the global literature on women's economic empowerment.

This report seeks to fill this gap, bringing together findings from research designed to advance understanding of the current socio-economic situation of LBT women in the Philippines, with the goal of informing future advocacy, programming and policymaking in the country. Drawing on multiple data sources – including a literature review, focus group discussions, key informant interviews and an online survey – we seek to foreground LBT women's needs, priorities and experiences, shedding light on what economic empowerment means to them and the priority

actions needed to support their individual and collective economic advancement.

This research reveals a mixed picture around many of the key components of economic empowerment – namely, the extent to which LBT women are able to experience choice, independence and control in their economic lives, and the extent to which individual and structural factors act at family, community and national levels to support or constrain their economic advancement. Some promising signs emerged, including indications of changes in social attitudes towards the increased acceptance of LBT women. However, we also identified a range of deeply entrenched challenges, including economic insecurity stemming from the concentration of LBT women in insecure, poor-quality paid work, with many higher-quality economic opportunities inaccessible to them, notably due to persistent discrimination in hiring, promotions and treatment in the workplace, as well as physical infrastructure which serves to limit options and exclude some groups, such as through strict gender-based stipulations around access to restrooms and accommodation. LBT women frequently experience violence, abuse and harassment, denials of public

health and social services, and limits on their freedom of expression which can cut short their education – with negative effects during later labour market trajectories.

These persistent challenges are compounded by a lack of targeted, comprehensive efforts to further LBT women's economic empowerment. While civil society initiatives are a key source of support, even initiatives ostensibly aimed at improving the rights of LBT women fall short in practice. For example, despite promising legislative and policy advances, including the increasing adoption of local anti-discrimination ordinances (ADOs) across the Philippines, implementation and accountability remains weak, and key national legislation to protect the rights of LBT women remains stalled.

Yet the time has never been more ripe to secure LBT women's full economic rights and equality. Women's economic empowerment has become a global policy priority in recent years, as seen in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), notably goals on gender equality (SDG 5) and decent work (SDG 8). Furthermore, the 2030 Agenda commitment to "leave no one behind" provides a sharp focus on the need to develop intersectional approaches that focus on excluded and marginalized populations to bring them to the forefront of development policy and programming. This report aims to be a tool to help achieve this, presenting new evidence on the lives of LBT women and identifying priority areas for action to further their economic empowerment – to be implemented by key actors committed to the achievement of the SDGs, namely national and local government, private sector, civil society and development partners.

The report is structured as follows:

**Chapter One** has presented a background to the research.

**Chapter Two** provides an overview of the methodology employed in this study.

**Chapter Three** features a discussion of definitions and conceptualizations of women's economic empowerment, and their relevance to LBT women.

**Chapter Four** discusses aspects of the legal and policy framework relevant to the protection of LBT women's rights in the Philippines.

**Chapter Five** explores LBT women's economic situation, highlighting the economic insecurity in which many live.

**Chapter Six** discusses the main characteristics of LBT women's employment, their experiences of structural discrimination in the labour market and labour migration, and their engagement in unpaid work and care.

**Chapter Seven** discusses LBT women's access to and experiences of basic services, with particular focus on their ability to access education, skills development and training support, social protection, housing and health services; we also shed light on their experiences of violence, harassment and abuse as well as their ability to express self-determination and exercise choice and freedom in all spheres of life, including around their family and in the community.

**Chapter Eight** discusses the initiatives that exist to further the economic empowerment of LBT women, highlighting key sources of support such as civil society groups, as well as key gaps within the public services and the private sector.

**Chapter Nine** draws the findings together and discusses their implications for LBT women's lives now and in the years to come.

**Chapter Ten** makes recommendations with a set of priority actions for those seeking to support LBT women's economic empowerment in the Philippines.



## METHODOLOGY

Given the exploratory nature of this study, we employed four strategies to gather data and then we triangulated findings from each data stream. The strategies were a literature review, focus group discussions, key informant interviews and an online survey. After an initial draft of findings was developed, we conducted validation workshops to triangulate our findings.

**Literature review:** A search protocol was developed to guide the literature search. Search strings included keywords (and their synonyms) closely linked to four categories: 'economic sector', 'sub-population', 'employment experience' and 'regions'. Table 1 in Annex I provides the search terms which emerged from the original research questions for this project and the initial desk review, and which were refined following input from United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and other stakeholders including GALANG.

**Focus Group Discussions (FGDs):** We undertook 18 FGDs in both urban and rural settings in locations across the island groups of Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao – in both Tagalog and English depending on participant preference. The FGDs were conducted in six areas (Cebu

City, Albay, Davao, Eastern Samar, Dinagat and Metro Manila). Of the FGDs, six were with lesbian women, six with transgender women, and six with bisexual women. A total of 142 respondents participated in FGDs that lasted from 2 to 4 hours each. The criteria for the selection of the cities, the distribution of participants across the FGDs, the topic guide and the semi-structured questionnaire for the FGDs were all co-developed with GALANG who in turn worked closely with representatives of LBT women in each of the selected sites. They are available in Annex II and III.

The focus of the FGDs was to explore the lived experience of LBT women in seeking employment, their participation in economic decision-making at home, access to assets, the challenges of daily engagement with the economic sector, and existing mechanisms that help them and how they can be improved. The FGDs also focused on eliciting the attitudes, expectations and norms experienced by participants around gender roles in their immediate social settings as well as in the Philippines in general. The FGDs worked with the participants to identify the nature of employment discrimination experienced by LBT women and how they deal with it, as well as

good practice examples of organizational policies and recommendations on how to address existing challenges and promote the inclusion of LBT women in the workforce. As explained in Annex II, the FGDs relied on participants who were linked to local LGBT organizations. Thus, a limitation of the study is the bias towards LBT women who were relatively well-connected within their local communities, thus perhaps reflecting a different lived experience from LBT women who did not have such a network.

**Key Informant Interviews (KIs):** The purpose of the KIs was to triangulate data gathered through secondary research and to provide an up-to-date assessment of the stakeholders involved in the government and non-governmental sectors working on economic empowerment and the definition of LBT economic empowerment that is used in their discourse and work. We conducted four key informant interviews: with a senator, a local government representative from Cebu, a gender expert and the executive director of a Pride organization. KI response was affected during the time of fieldwork by ongoing election campaigns which concluded in the penultimate week of May 2019.

**Online survey:** An online survey, conducted through the SurveyMonkey platform, was made available directly through email messaging as well as through the Facebook Messenger social media platform. The online survey conducted through April 2019 was made available in two languages in both portals: English and Filipino. 159 respondents completed the bulk of the survey questions, primarily through the web version (see Annex V for an overview of the composition of the survey respondents). The online surveys were advertised and promoted through the GALANG Facebook page and through direct emails from GALANG to LBT women, LBT community groups and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). This streamlined announcements through known LBT women and LBT women, which minimized the possibility of non-LBT women participating in these online surveys.

There are a few notable limitations of using online surveys relevant to this study. First, they are not random sample surveys, and hence the results from the responses are illustrative, but not statistically representative of LBT women. Second, although there is nearly 90 percent coverage of mobile phone coverage in the Philippines, our response rate in rural localities was limited by slow or poor bandwidth.<sup>3</sup> The online survey required higher throughput rates of data and some types of phones posed a challenge in remote as well as poorer localities.

Third, the demographic spread of respondents for the online version was limited, as anticipated. They were primarily from urban locations (city and towns) rather than rural (villages), educated (most had a college education) and were also younger in age (18–35 years).

The other key limitation is partly methodological and partly conceptual. Although the scope of the study set by UNDP focused on LBT women – as is also prevalent in common parlance, the classification of respondents as into these three mutually exclusive groups of lesbians, bisexual or transgender women is conceptually not feasible as they involve two different domains: sexual orientation (lesbian, bisexual, other) and gender identity (cisgender, transgender, gender-queer, other) that overlap. For instance, lesbian women could be transgender or cisgender, and conversely, transgender women could classify their sexual orientation as lesbian or bisexual or other. Listing all 15 possible combinations of SOGIE would have fragmented the online survey sample of 159 respondents. Hence, we adopted the use of four distinct groups, reflecting the identifying criteria that our local partners indicated that LBT women could most readily identify with. The four groups used in our report are:

- Lesbian women, but only if their gender identity was not 'transgender'
- Bisexual women, regardless of their gender identity
- Transgender women, regardless of their sexual orientation
- Other

This helped maintain conformity with the classifications used in the literature review, as well as in the FGDs. The 'other' category includes respondents who are neither lesbian or bisexual women in sexual orientation, nor are transgender in their gender identity. This group also had the smallest sample size in the online-survey: only six of a possible total of 159 respondents (3.8 percent of total sample) were classified as 'other'. We include this group in the figures and tables for completeness and consistency.

Bearing these challenges in mind, we would urge caution in extrapolating from the online survey to extend definitive conclusions for the entire community of LBT women. The results expand our understanding of the lived experiences of some segments of LBT women in the Philippines (young, urban, educated) but not of those who do not match these characteristics.

<sup>3</sup> World Bank reports 99 percent population coverage ([https://tcdata360.worldbank.org/indicators/entrp.mob.cov?country=PHL&indicator=3403&viz=line\\_chart&years=2012,2016](https://tcdata360.worldbank.org/indicators/entrp.mob.cov?country=PHL&indicator=3403&viz=line_chart&years=2012,2016)); another industry source cites lower coverage, particularly of high-speed services such as the 4G network (<https://www.gsmaintelligence.com/research/?file=e245c423854fcfd38eeae0a918cc91c8&download>).

Similarly, we urge caution when interpreting direct comparisons and contrasts between the responses of lesbian, bisexual and transgender women as these combinations of sexual orientation and gender identity are not always distinct but overlap.

**Validation workshops:** A draft of findings from an analysis of the data was then used to conduct 8 validation workshops over August and September 2019. Two workshops were held in Manila separately: one with government and international organization representatives and one with civil society representatives of LGBT groups. Six validation workshops were held in each site where FGDs were originally held. These validation workshops gathered – to the degree possible – the same participants as were present during the FGDs (details on the composition of validation workshops can be seen in Annex IV).



## DEFINITIONS AND CONCEPTUALIZATIONS OF ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT

### Key messages

- Furthering women's economic empowerment requires a holistic approach, taking into account women's individual priorities and needs, alongside the wider structural conditions that determine women's individual or collective lived experiences. Homogeneity between women mean there is no single 'one size fits all' intervention which is effective for all.
- Tailored interventions, based on the realities, preferences and needs of Filipina LBT women, requires insight into their own subjective understandings of empowerment – which this research aimed to ascertain as a starting point. But very few participants gave a description of empowerment and what it means to them, indicating a lack of shared vocabulary and understanding around the concepts of empowerment among LBT women in the Philippines.
- There is a paucity of existing literature focused on Filipina LBT women's economic empowerment; that which exists identifies good conditions of paid work, and economic independence and autonomy, as critical.
- Secondary literature identifies that having a job and earning an income is a source of pride and increased self-esteem for LBT women, increasing their financial independence and ability to contribute to the family financial well-being. These contributions can also lead to LBT women's increased autonomy in the family sphere.

One of the aims of this research is to explore operational definitions of economic empowerment for LBT women in the Philippines. In reviewing the relevant literature, we found that discussion on definitions and conceptualizations

is more focused on positioning or establishing the group(s) treated within that literature than on defining or conceptualizing economic empowerment in the lives of women – including LBT women – in the Philippines.

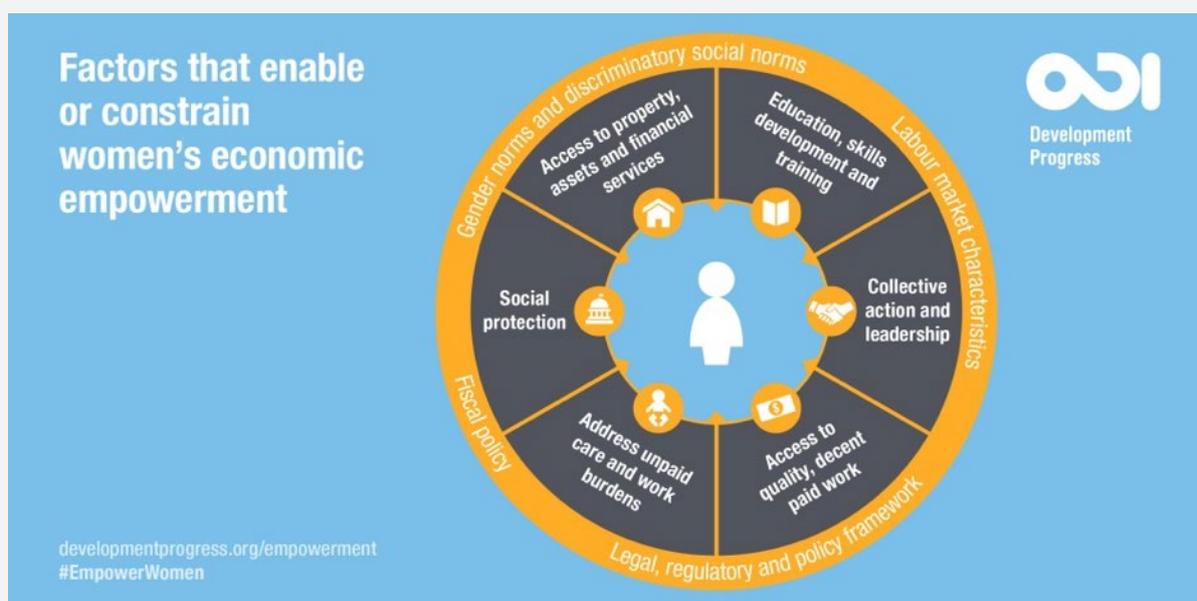
Therefore, we found it pertinent to consider, first, the global discussion in this area to try to ascertain the core elements common across the literature as well as in development policy and practice. Here, too, the lack of a clear definition has been identified, which sees development actors expand on the concept in different ways.

Despite increased attention to the subject in recent years, there is no universally agreed definition of women's economic empowerment. There is consensus in international development organizations that at its core economic empowerment requires women's ability to succeed and advance economically and the power to make and act on economic decisions (Golla et al., 2011). Some international development institutions expand this understanding to encompass the fairness of terms on which women enter the labour market, the value assigned to their contributions to the economy as well as their ability to negotiate a fairer deal for themselves (Eyben et al., 2008, Eyben, 2011 cited in Hunt and Samman, 2016).

In response to these ambiguities, empowerment frameworks that are comprehensive and transformative – by which we mean they address the structural barriers to gender justice and generate shifts in unequal power relations – have emerged to conceptualize the key elements of empowerment, as well as to provide guidance on 'entry points' and priority action for those seeking to support women's economic empowerment, including policymakers and other development actors.

One relevant example for this research is the framework used by the Overseas Development Institute (ODI) which highlights the hugely complex nature of women's economic empowerment and that the lack of homogeneity between women means there is no single 'one size fits all' intervention which is effective for all – with support necessarily differing between countries and between different groups of women within then (Hunt and Samman, 2016). In practice, this means taking a holistic approach, focusing on boosting independence, choice and control at the individual level, as well as focusing on the social, economic and political factors that directly and indirectly affect women's economic empowerment. The development of an enabling environment for women's economic empowerment requires changes in their personal lives (e.g. in their capability, knowledge and self-esteem); in the communities and institutions in which they are embedded (including norms and behaviour); in markets and value chains; and in the wider political and legal environment (Golla et al., 2011). Therefore, Hunt and Samman (2016) identify a set of 'enablers' or 'building blocks' that could have a pivotal, positive effect, comprising direct factors linked to women's individual or collective lived experiences, alongside the underlying factors that are the wider structural conditions that determine women's individual or collective lived experiences (see Figure 1).

**Figure 1: Factors that enable or constrain women's economic empowerment**



The rationale for each of the factors as necessary to women's economic empowerment (WEE) is given below (adapted from Hunt and Samman, 2016).

### Direct factors

- *Education, skills development and training:* Education and training matter throughout the life cycle and access to quality education has important spillover effects in breaking intergenerational poverty cycles.
- *Access to quality, decent paid work:* Improving women's economic status requires increasing their access to the jobs they want. However, solely increasing women's labour market participation is not enough to achieve transformative economic empowerment – ensuring access to quality jobs with good working conditions, also known as access to 'decent work', is critical given its inherent importance to women's well-being and ability to advance in areas such as acquiring income and assets. The International Labour Organization (ILO) defines decent work as work that "involves opportunities for work that is productive and delivers a fair income, security in the workplace and social protection for families, better prospects for personal development and social integration, freedom for people to express their concerns, organize and participate in the decisions that affect their lives and equality of opportunity and treatment for all women and men."<sup>4</sup>
- *Address unpaid care and work burdens:* Unpaid care and domestic work, disproportionately carried out by women, is crucial to human well-being and maintaining the labour force (Cook and Razavi, 2012). Yet, unpaid work is often unrecognized in dominant economic approaches; for example, it is largely uncounted in official gross domestic product (GDP) calculations even though a recent conservative estimate valued it at roughly 13 percent of the global GDP (McKinsey & Company, 2018). The lack of recognition of the role of women in the care economy significantly constrains women's paid labour market engagement.
- *Access to property, assets and financial services:* Access to and control over assets – physical and financial – and property are crucial for women's financial security and underpin individual and household economic development. A wealth of evidence confirms the importance of control of household resources, including land and housing, for women's "greater self-esteem, respect from other family members, economic opportunities, mobility outside of the home, and decision-making power" (Klugman et al., 2014: 125).

- *Collective action and leadership:* Collective action takes myriad forms and is strongly associated with improved productivity, income and working conditions, through changes to workers' rights, wages, social protection and benefits. For example, women's rights organizations and movements have played key roles in advancing gender justice, including building solidarity and shifting gendered power relations and supporting women's self-esteem and recovery from violence and abuse, often forming strategic alliances with labour, economic justice, environmental and other movements to secure gains related to economic empowerment.
- *Social protection:* Social protection can further women's economic empowerment by alleviating poverty, reducing vulnerability to economic risks and supporting women to overcome barriers that prevent their economic participation, such as caring responsibilities.

### Underlying factors

- *Labour market characteristics:* Labour markets are "complex institutions shaped by social norms, discriminatory forces and power inequalities" (Cook and Razavi, 2012: 3). Many of the barriers to women's access to quality employment are found within local labour markets.
- *Fiscal policy:* Decisions about budgetary spending directly affect women's ability to overcome barriers to labour market inclusion by determining the extent and coverage of essential public services available to support them and their families (UN Women, 2015).
- *Legal, regulatory and policy framework:* Providing women with equal economic opportunities requires an integrated set of laws and policies, which are relevant across every domain of women's economic empowerment. Conversely, restrictive environments significantly constrain women's economic choices.
- *Gender norms and discriminatory social norms:* Gender norms refer to contextually specific social traditions about what behaviours, preferences and knowledge are appropriate for women and men. As such, they are the core means by which "gender-inequitable ideologies, relationships and social institutions are maintained" (Marcus and Harper, 2014).

In order to further women's economic empowerment, by tailoring interventions to the realities, preferences and needs of Filipina LBT women, it is required to understand their own subjective understandings of empowerment – which this research aimed to ascertain as a starting point. Some points of alignment with the framework proposed above clearly emerged, for example, one key informant

4 See: <https://www.ilo.org/global/topics/decent-work/lang--en/index.htm>

proposed that empowerment entails the fulfilment of LBT women's rights and equality, and spans interrelated economic, political and social domains:

*I think women's empowerment means for each one of us, from birth as a girl and then as we grow up, to know that we have equal dignity to men as well as among other women and therefore springing from that equal rights and entitlements as women of whatever SOGIE as citizens. And it should flow into political representation, participation and leadership and it should flow into opportunities for economic participation and wealth generation for ourselves. So, it's everything!*

Yet evidence suggests that the holistic achievement of economic empowerment among LBT women in the Philippines remains far from reality. Existing evidence suggests that this cohort remains systematically deprived of decent jobs, with basic poverty alleviation and survival often the reality. Finding a job and putting food on the table are the most pressing concerns of many (GALANG and IDS, 2013). Indeed, in one key informant's view, empowerment processes happen at the individual and collective levels, but 'empowerment' is not a term that many women in the Philippines would recognize – because there is no equivalent in the Filipino language, but also because agency does not come into the life experiences of many poor women:

*The way we understand empowerment in English does not have a comparative word in Filipino. Most of the women I have met will not be able to answer the question at all. Some of this is because they are [focused on] survival and subsistence level. It is often hard for them to imagine beyond that survival. For very poor people – men or women – their own agency does not come into play because of the day to day survival ... LBT women's issues are not different. It is still about survival. Still about income. The lack of income that stops them from accessing housing, food etc.*

There was also a suggestion by key informants that 'empowerment' is aligned with gender and feminist conversations, but income and class-related discourses and concepts are potentially more salient to many poor women (which includes many LBT women) than gender-

related advancement concepts. One view from the workshops with LBT women was that empowerment in the Philippines is currently only about survival:

*We may think that we are economically stable, yet we still think of the necessities that must accumulate. In a sense, empowerment is just a façade for some people.*

During the FGDs, very few participants gave a description of 'empowerment' and what it means to them. Those who did highlighted self-development, equality/freedom and economic independence, as well as being able to meaningfully deploy what is gained through an empowerment process:

*It is not just the work, not just the stature in life. You are not limited to what you can do. Develop yourself.*

*Equal playing field for all. Hopefully, it is not only the privileged who gets to experience good conditions.*

*If you are PWD [a person living with disabilities], either your family will support you or yourself because the government will not support you. So, economic empowerment for me personally is if I am able to support myself without depending on my family, financially.*

*Using the capabilities for meaningful things  
It's like freedom.*

Given the relative paucity of strong views from LBT participants on what constitutes their empowerment, consideration of other literature can help further illuminate the context. Similar to the focus of wider global literature, notions of paid work and its link to economic independence and autonomy also feature significantly in Philippines-focused literature. For example, Filipina LBT respondents in other studies have identified that having a job and earning their own income is a source of pride and increased self-esteem, both for their associated increased ability to be financially independent and because of their positive view of being able to contribute to the financial well-being of their families – or at the very least not being dependent or a burden on them (GALANG and IDS, 2015). These contributions have been identified as a "currency to gain acceptance" in the family, also highlighting that

contributing financially can lead parents and siblings to be less likely to push them to marry (Thoreson, 2011) and suggesting that increased income can also lead to LBT women's increased autonomy in the family sphere.

Some existing studies focus on women's own perceptions in relation to empowerment. Aside from good working conditions and associated economic security, increased independence and autonomy can be seen as critical elements of women's economic empowerment (Hunt and Samman, 2016), including for LBT women. It clearly emerges that perceptions and subjectivities relating to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, questioning/queer and intersex identities vary significantly within and across cultures (Thoreson, 2011) and has an impact on how they are seen to be situated in their local national, political and social contexts.

One of the few authors to identify core components of economic empowerment in the context of our focus population is Thoreson, who in papers from 2009 and 2011 uses a capabilities approach to discuss different aspects of economic empowerment of queer [can be interpreted as LGBT<sup>5</sup>] persons in the Philippines, including both gay and lesbian respondents. Thoreson (2011) suggests that a capabilities approach focused on "the missing dimensions of poverty"<sup>6</sup> can shed light on the lives and experiences of queer people living in poverty, and situate them within wider society (Thoreson, 2011).

Robeyns (2006) finds the capability framework useful for examining gender inequality particularly because capabilities are seen as properties of individuals and the framework does not focus on purely market settings but also recognizes the significance of race, age, gender, sexuality and geographical context in empowerment. Amartya Sen's capability approach (Sen, 2005) thus offers an understanding of the process of empowerment as one that expands the individual's freedom or set of valuable capabilities (Botbaul-Baum, 2013). Furthermore, this approach is posited to be of particular utility to development initiatives seeking to increase empowerment, as it goes further than improving access to material and symbolic resources as a means to improve economic rights and visibility, by also tackling the lack of control that often accompanies material or symbolic deprivation emanating from poverty and/or homophobia (Thoreson, 2009). 'Bakla' and 'tomboy' refer to "two gendered forms of queerness that are indigenous to the Philippines" (Tan, 1995; Garcia, 1996, pp. xviii– xix;). Bakla

are considered male-bodied at birth but are recognized by their feminine gender expression. [...] Bakla are defined by their femininity, and traditionally, have formed romantic or sexual relationships with 'real men' but considered it taboo to do so with other bakla (Garcia, 1996, p. xviii; Manalansan, 2006, p. 25). A rough analogue for those who are considered female-bodied at birth are tomboys, who are recognized by their masculine gender expression (Tan, 2001, p. 122). "Of course, these descriptions are simplifications – not all bakla or tomboys express their gender according to this neat paradigm" (Thoreson, 2011: 495).

It is clear, then, that furthering economic empowerment is a complex endeavour because of the multiple impacts it has on different facets of women's lives, and that consideration of women's economic empowerment must take into account different groups' lived realities and understandings. Participants' views and existing literature provide salient direction around how the WEE framework can be tailored to the specific experiences of Filipina LBT women; notably, tackling the root causes of disempowerment of this group necessitates addressing the multiple and specific sources of deprivations and lack of control they experience, notably the entrenched discrimination and homophobia leading to poverty and 'survivalism' due to exclusion from quality paid work, a lack of financial independence, and limited freedom of expression in line with LBT women's SOGIE. With these core elements in mind, in subsequent chapters we present the research findings, and then return to a discussion of their implications for those seeking to support empowerment advances in the lives of Filipina LBT women.

5 In switching between the terms LGBTI, LGBT, Queer, LGBTQI, the text refers to the exact terminology used by different authors and/or respondents. Differences in conceptualisation mean literature is not always directly comparable, but the paucity of literature means we have drawn on sources which cover one or more of our focus constituency of L B and T (as we have conceptualised them). The authors uses LGBT in their own material since that is the focus of this study.

6 Specifically, these dimensions are employment (Lugo, 2007), agency and empowerment (Ibrahim and Alkire, 2007), safety and security (Diprose, 2007), going about without shame (Reyles, 2007), and psychological and subjective well-being (Samman, 2007)



## LEGAL AND POLICY FRAMEWORK PROTECTING AND PROMOTING THE RIGHTS OF LBT WOMEN IN RELATION TO ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT

### Key messages

- Legal and policy frameworks promoting the rights of LBT women in relation to economic empowerment are different at the national and local level in the Philippines, and between employment sectors.
- At the national level, there is no law explicitly protecting citizens from discrimination on the basis of SOGIE. LGBT rights advocates have sought to pass a national Anti-Discrimination Bill (ADB), also known as the SOGIE Equality Bill, since 1999. For many of the LBT women participants, the passage of this Bill was a key priority.
- New and existing policy frameworks at the local level appear to be advancing at a far faster pace than at the national level. Local ADOs – guaranteeing protection against discrimination based on sexual orientation – exist in 22 cities, 2 municipalities, 3 barangay and 6 provinces in the Philippines.
- However, even in these areas, ADOs are not fully implemented or enforced – meaning LBT women remain discriminated against. There is an overall lack of awareness among government functionaries as well as LBT women themselves about ADOs in their area.

### Overarching legal framework

At the national level, there is no law explicitly protecting citizens from discrimination on the basis of SOGIE. A few laws and policies relevant to the economic empowerment of LBT women go some way towards addressing the

challenges they face, but the overall protection framework remains incomplete. For example, the Labor Code of the Philippines (1974) is the overarching standard of the rights of workers, establishing the State's duty to afford "protection to labor, promote full employment, ensure equal work opportunities regardless of sex, race or

creed and regulate the relations between workers and employers” – although it remains silent on SOGIE.

Importantly, the prohibition of discrimination in work is core to the Labor Code’s chapter on women, with Article 135 declaring it “unlawful for any employer to discriminate against any woman employee with respect to terms and conditions of employment solely on account of her sex.” Some have argued that although this is not expanded further, and does not explicitly mention SOGIE, the clause mentioning ‘sex’ provides a positive opportunity for broader interpretation and application by those seeking to advance LBT economic rights and empowerment (GALANG and IDS, 2015).

Interestingly though, discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation is addressed directly in the Republic Act No. 9433 and its Implementing Rules and Regulations provides for the Magna Carta for public social workers (PSWs) only (and thus not across the labour market). The Act guarantees public social workers “protection from discrimination on the grounds of sex, sexual orientation, age, political or religious beliefs, civil status, physical characteristics/disability or ethnicity.”

The recently passed Republic Act No. 11166 or the Philippine HIV and AIDS Policy of 2018, which repealed Republic Act No. 8504 of the Philippine AIDS Prevention and Control Act of 1998, is the only national law that reflects SOGIE and which can be considered to be relevant to the LGBT community, as it provides some scope to limit stereotyping or discrimination based on actual or perceived HIV status. Similar to the Republic Act No. 8504, the new HIV and AIDS law prohibits compulsory HIV testing as a precondition to employment. Prior to the enactment of Republic Act No. 11166, there were still documented cases where HIV-positive employees were forced to undergo medical tests forcing them to disclose their HIV status, leading them to end their employment with companies, and Filipinos working abroad are often obliged to provide proof of being HIV-negative (ILO, 2009; UNDP and USAID, 2014).

Some sector-level initiatives have also taken place but remain few and far between, and knowledge of them is lacking where they do exist. Examples include the Psychological Association of the Philippines (PAP), which in 2011 aligned with “global initiatives to remove the stigma of mental illness that has long been associated with diverse sexualities and to promote the well-being of LGBT people.” The PAP Code of Ethics (2010) calls for Filipino psychologists to “respect the diversity among persons and peoples” (UNDP and USAID, 2014). This also extends

to the public sector; the Civil Service Commission’s (CSC) Office Memorandum 29-2010 forbids discrimination against LGBT people applying for civil service examinations,<sup>7</sup> and the CSC also previously launched a Revised Policies on Merit Promotion Plan aimed at preventing discrimination based on various criteria, including gender, during employee selection (UNDP and USAID, 2014; Ocampo, 2011). The Philippine Corporate SOGIE Diversity and Inclusiveness Index (Philippine LGBT Chamber of Commerce, 2018) revealed that only 17 percent of the respondents – all companies headquartered outside the Philippines – have anti-discrimination policies that counteract gender discrimination. These policies explicitly prohibit actions such as misgendering, ‘outing’ an employee’s SOGIE status without consent, and using slurs against LGBT employees.

Critically, though, there have been concrete cases where ‘accepted’ expectations on behaviour have been invoked in workplace policies to specifically discriminate against LGBT people, even where this is in contradiction with established declarations. For example, a notable case is the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP), which in 2009 stated that the Philippines has zero tolerance for discrimination within the military ranks. Yet provisions in the AFP Code of Ethics states in Article 5 (Military Professionalism), Section 4.3 (Unethical Acts): “Military personnel shall likewise be recommended for discharge/ separation for reason of unsuitability due to all acts or omissions which deviate from established and accepted ethical and moral standards of behavior and performance as set forth in the AFP Code of Ethics. The following are examples: Fornication, Adultery, Concubinage, Homosexuality, Lesbianism, and Pedophilia.” This is a clear example of discrimination against lesbian and gay military staff (UNDP and USAID, 2014).

Although the government of the Philippines has endeavoured to further women’s participation in the economic sphere through enactment of legislation such as the Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD) Act 2000 which established the national ECCD framework, there is scant knowledge on the degree to how LBT women are affected by the legislation. From 2000 to 2008, 79 out of the 80 targeted provinces and all 28 targeted highly urbanized cities had established ECCD systems, though no information exists on how many of these systems – and their associated services – are accessible to LBT women who have children.

In the workplace, the Republic Act No. 7877, also known as the Anti-Sexual Harassment Act of 1995, defines and penalizes sexual harassment in the workplace, or in an

7 Based on data available from the CSC, the Philippines had a workforce of 2,301,191 in July 2016. [https://www.ituc-csi.org/IMG/pdf/190506\\_workers\\_group\\_feedback\\_-\\_pnvr\\_on\\_sdgs\\_-\\_final.pdf](https://www.ituc-csi.org/IMG/pdf/190506_workers_group_feedback_-_pnvr_on_sdgs_-_final.pdf)

education or training environment. In its definition of sexual harassment,<sup>8</sup> the Act refers to “any person” so does not directly address SOGIE but could be interpreted to do so since it does not exclude SOGIE either. In July 2019, the Safe Spaces Act (Republic Act No. 11313) was published to cover sexual harassment in public spaces (including educational institutions and workplaces) by explicitly banning groping, transphobic, homophobic and sexist slurs, cat-calling, wolf-whistling, stalking and making repeated unwanted sexual remarks or advances in all public spaces. It is at present difficult to comment on the efficacy of the 1995 law since authors have not come across a study on the frequency with which the law has been invoked and its efficacy either for women in general or women across multiple gender expressions.

Overall a review of laws by the Asian Development Bank (2013) on gender equality in the Philippines noted that “The Philippines legislation on equal remuneration does not conform to Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) or to ILO Convention 100, which refers to work that is ‘identical or substantially identical’ or to work that is ‘substantially equal’ ... The regional tripartite wages and productivity boards are not required to take into account the circumstances of women, nor is there a need to ensure that the principle of equal remuneration for work of equal value is applied” (p. 52). However, secondary data are unavailable on the gender pay gap between women across different gender expressions.

## The role of anti-discrimination ordinances

At the national level, a notable case highlighting the contested space for LBT women in the public sphere is the national anti-discrimination bill (or SOGIE Equality Bill), which LGBT human rights advocates have sought to pass since 1999. In 2017, the bill was passed through its third and final reading in the House of Representatives and, in 2018, it passed committee scrutiny in the Senate yet was archived in June 2019 to be reintroduced in the next session. Secondary data and our primary fieldwork support the notion that the SOGIE Equality Bill continues to be stymied by opposition from a strong national religious base that has significant political presence in the Senate. Opposition to the bill from local politicians and national religious groups have occurred on the basis that the bill curtails religious freedoms by enforcing religious institutions to change their operations and views, consequently paving the way for same-sex marriage

(Terrazola, 2018; Torregoza, 2019). In the face of inaction on the national bill, LGBT activists and allies in the Philippines have focused more efforts towards advocating for anti-discrimination ordinances in selected cities, towns and municipalities. A key informant noted how the Bill has not been able to get through the interpolation and negotiation stages in the Senate as part of a systemic effort to delay passage of amendments which would make the Bill into law:

*We got it to the plenary in the Senate for the first time in 20 years but then it's been there for more than two years. I've been arguing to SP [Sangguniang Panlalawigan, 'Provincial Board' [member]] Sotto and Senator Joe Villanueva – the scion of this Christian community in the Philippines – because they have not asked any more new questions in two years, they schedule and then the advocates wait, and they don't proceed, or they schedule and finally they interpolate and then they repeat the same old questions. I have been appealing to them, please let's close the period of interpolation and move into the period of amendment because that's where the real test comes. Whatever amendments you propose that the community can accept, I'll accept; those that I have to reject you can put to the court [...] I think they know, that per our mapping, if we were to take the vote today, we could win. That's why their only way to win is to delay [...] Our problem is that of these two oppositors [sic], actually the one SP is strategically located to block further progress – this is the Senate president.*

For many of the LBT women participants who were cognisant of national policy processes, the passage of the SOGIE Equality Bill was a key priority – to include the right to legal self-determination and gender recognition – alongside the passage of equal marriage laws for LGBT people and laws that allow lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people to adopt children and have access to surrogacy. Respondents also highlighted the need for conjugal property law for those in same-sex marriages to make division of property clear.

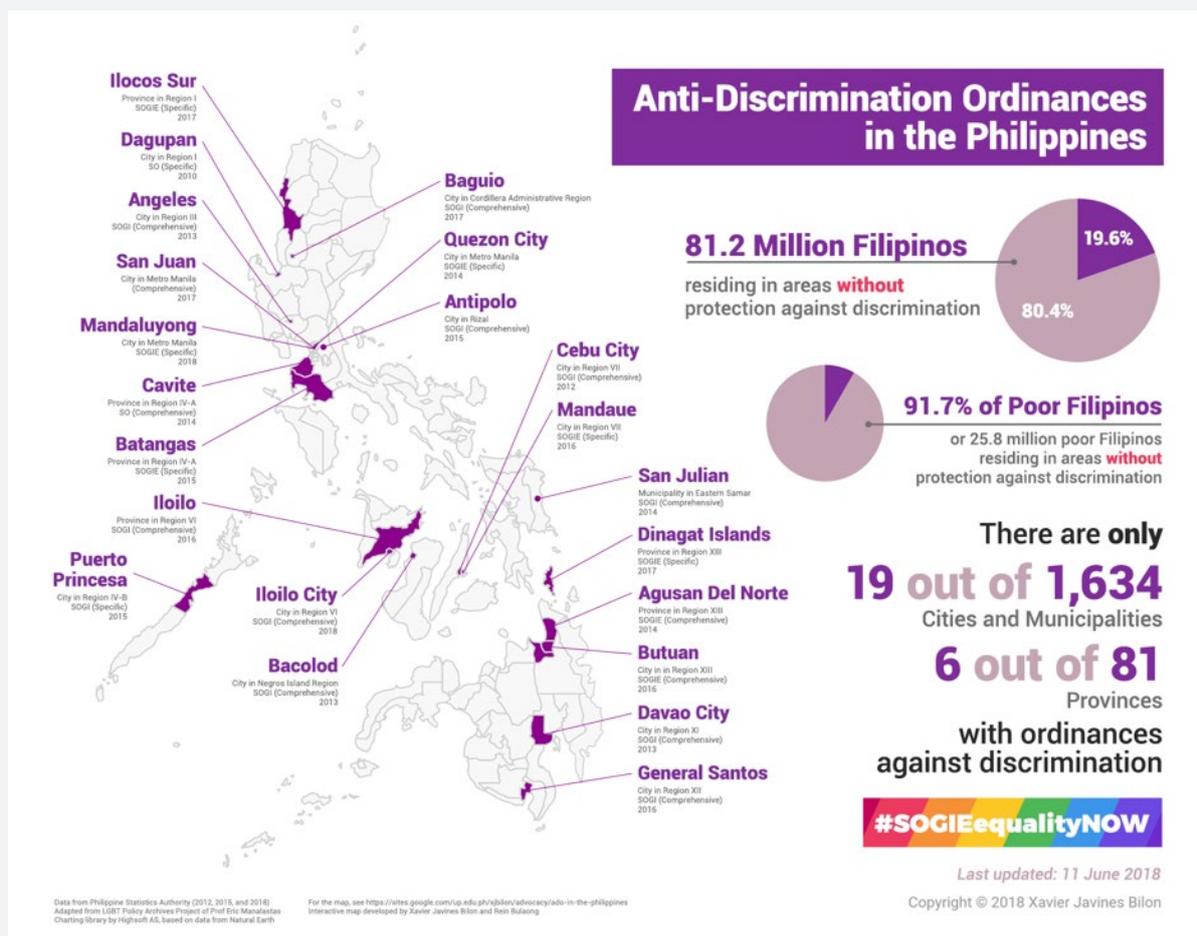
8 As an act “committed by an employer, employee, manager, supervisor, agent of the employer, teacher, instructor, professor, coach, trainer, or any other person who, having authority, influence or moral ascendancy over another in a work or training or education environment, demands, requests or otherwise requires any sexual favour from the other, regardless of whether the demand, request or requirement for submission is accepted by the object of said act.”

A key informant advised:

*The biggest issue for us at the moment is the need for a clear policy recognizing LBT women within all policies that deal with women. The national women’s policy needs to be inclusive of LGBT women, all programmes on women’s policies need to include LBT women. There should not be differentiation between women. That’s the best recommendation is for the Filipino government to act on the Philippines Commission for Women. I would highly recommend a new law to include LBT women in all women’s programmes in the country.*

Most encouragingly, there has been a wave of local ADOs, guaranteeing protection against discrimination based on sexual orientation in 22 cities, 2 municipalities, 3 barangay and 6 provinces (for example, Quezon City in 2003 and 2014, Cebu City in 2012, Agusan del Norte in 2014, Batangas in 2015, Dinagat Islands in 2016, Iloilo in 2016, Ilocos Sur in 2017, Mandaluyong in 2018 and Cavite in 2018 – see Box 1 for an overview). Some of these local ordinances specifically refer to LGBT people’s economic lives – for example, Quezon City enacted an ordinance in 2003 aimed at protecting LGBT people from discrimination in the workplace (City Ordinance No. 1309, Series of 2003), “prohibiting all discriminatory acts committed against homosexuals in the matter of hiring, treatment, promotion or dismissal in any office in Quezon City, whether in the government or private sector”, with contraventions punishable by fine or prison sentence (Lim, 2011: 3). Following this, in 2014, the

**Box 1: Anti-Discrimination Ordinances in the Philippines**



Source: Interactive map developed by Xavier Javines Bilon and Rein Bulaong (2019) based on statistics obtained from the Philippine Statistics Authority.

Quezon City legislation council expanded these provisions by enacting the 'Gender-Fair Ordinance' (formally the Quezon City Ordinance No. SP-2357 [series of 2004]) which aims to address violence and discrimination, including by encouraging barangay help desks to address and document gender-based violence committed against LGBT people, and institutionalize sensitization training for law enforcers (GALANG and IDS, 2015).

New and existing policy frameworks at the local level appear to be advancing at a far faster pace than at the national level. Several provinces, cities and barangays prohibit discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity. However, for a person to claim redress under the local ordinance, accompanying implementing rules and regulations (IRR) are needed. Yet an ADO can often be in place without an accompanying IRR, limiting the weight and efficacy of an ADO. To date, only Quezon City and Cebu City have their own IRR.

Conversations with participants in FGDs and KIIs indicated that in practice, the high turnover of representation in political office often becomes a hindrance to the implementation of an ADO:

*An ADO, or any ordinance for that matter, has to be institutionalized through IRRs written up through the start of implementation and it can be too tied up with the personality of one council member and if he/she doesn't run again or is not elected, [it] leaves the ordinance loose.*

#### **KII with official for Cebu City**

A key informant pointed out that in Cebu City, there was a lengthy gap between the ADO and IRRs because of the absence of a 'champion' for the LGBT movement:

*The ADO was issued in 2012 and it took us five years, up to October 2018 to draft the Implementing Rules and Regulations. You need champions. Until we had a local executive who was interested in the ADO, nobody was obliged to do anything. Once we had a local executive (the mayor Tomas Osmeña) who was interested, he mandated an IRR and the Regulations were signed by the mayor in 2018.*

However, while political champions of all SOGIE that support LGBT rights in the government are critical, they are, in actual numbers, limited. Access to national high-level political positions is challenging in general, and the few openly LGBT women in such roles have connections

with and/or come from political families. As one key informant observed, this can help them both access the position in the first place, and enjoy a level of acceptance once there, which would not be as feasible for the wider LGBT community:

*There are LGBT women in politics, though I know mostly of transgender women who are in political office. They are able to overcome discrimination or issues in politics because they are dynastic. They come from rich families with a history of being in politics, for example, Geraldine Roman, who has recently been elected. You saw images of her being kissed on the cheek in congress by male members, but they would never treat an ordinary transgender woman the same way. Acceptance is not difficult if your family is rich.*

However, they were quick to emphasise that ADO implementation has advanced where LGBT organizations have carried out strategic advocacy and engagement:

*San Julian Pride is the most active LGBT organization in the locality which ensures the effective implementation of the Ordinance. We have spread knowledge of it to schools and workplaces for protection of LGBT people. The Regulations that operationalize the Ordinance were passed in December 2018, but it has been a challenge to enforce because there is still very low knowledge among the public about the presence of the Ordinance.*

#### **Key informant in San Julian**

Some efforts have been made to increase ADO efficacy. For example, a key informant from the government pointed out that the Cebu City Anti-Discrimination Commission (CCADC) was currently in the process of conducting trainings for LGBT advocates in Cebu City. This included sensitization training on SOGIE for youth leaders, deaf community members and representatives from call centres, and people living with HIV (PLHIV), but this has not yet included other target groups and sites which have been identified as critical, including government workers or within the education system.

However, the story emerging was of an overall lack of awareness, hampering progress. In the FGD with

transgender women in Cebu City, respondents noted that awareness about the ADO was not high enough across all the sectors and actors to whom it applies, and that they had not encountered any ADO implementation efforts in the city. From their perspective, this made the ADO weak and unenforceable. Respondents noted that often relevant government authorities lacked awareness that an ADO was in force in their jurisdiction and were unaware of how it should be implemented, a fact highlighted by the arrest and imprisonment by police officers in Quezon City (an area where an ADO and IRRs are both active) of a transgender woman for attempting to use the women's toilets in a mall (Talabong, 2019). A bisexual respondent noted that:

*We see the fun stuff, like the pride parades and whatever. But in terms of serious business, like real implementation, things [violation of the ADO] happening in the workplace, or things happening just on the road, on a roadside basis [sic], or even how the police would treat homosexuals or gay men or women – they have zero idea that there is such a thing as the anti-discrimination ordinance.*

**Bisexual participant, Manila**

Critically, however, some participants were unaware of ADOs in their area. Lesbian women in Dinagat Island (where an ADO has been in place since 2016) mentioned that they were unaware of any ADO ordinance in the area. This suggests that progress may be further hampered in such areas as a result of the LBT community not pushing for implementation and that raising awareness about ADOs among these groups is important going forward, to enable them to decide if they wish to lend their voices to ADO adoption and implementation as a priority strategy for their equal rights.

Finally, there was a perception that inadequate sanctions for contraventions were limiting effectiveness of the ADOs. A participant in an FGD noted that she and her lesbian partner were denied housing. She said they felt the ADO couldn't help, even though on paper that type of discrimination is not allowed:

*That's it, we asked them, how much is the room here, they responded that ... it was not allowed to have girl-girl [living there].*

**Bisexual participant, Davao City**

When the FGD facilitator observed that under the city ordinance, such a denial would carry a minimum fine of PHP (Philippine peso) 1,000 and a maximum of PHP

5,000, the participant remarked on the low level of the fine was one factor that made enforcement of ADOs weak:

*That's why it is nothing to them. It is not too strong.*

**Bisexual participant, Davao City**

As a result, FGD participants wished to see poor ADO implementation redressed through robust measures being taken by public authorities to ensure implementation and penalize non-compliance.



## ECONOMIC SECURITY AND INSECURITY AMONG LBT WOMEN

### Key messages

- LBT women remain invisible in official statistics, including because there is no publicly available database which systematically records and assesses the economic situation of LBT women in the Philippines. Our primary research showed that institutional constraints play a role in this paucity of official data.
- Economic insecurity was common among LBT women in our study. Our online survey indicated that 43 percent of respondents frequently worried about being able to financially support their dependents, even though nearly 72 percent of LBT women in our sample were employed full-time.
- Consequently, LBT women developed coping strategies to respond to economic insecurity by maintaining a patchwork of different, often simultaneous livelihoods to maintain a level of adequate income.
- Employment security varied among FGD respondents, with LBT women with waged employment in the government or private sector appearing to feel most secure. Some lesbian rural women FGD participants felt that an employment contract of three to six months employment was “secure,” even if they were uncertain if there would be a subsequent contract.
- Transgender women spoke most clearly of economic insecurity in meeting basic needs, including housing and food.

There seems to be no publicly available database, nor do we know of any other quantitative data that exist, which systematically records and assesses the lived experiences of LBT women in the Philippines, including their

economic situation. Reports citing experiences of LBT women (and their challenges faced) are largely based on qualitative data obtained through dialogues with lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and questioning

(LGBTIQ+) community NGOs (UNDP and USAID, 2014; GALANG and IDS, 2015).<sup>9</sup>

There have been ongoing efforts since 2015 by UNDP and the World Bank to create an LGBT (Inclusion) Index. They have finalized the data gathering framework by determining the dimensions and contributing indicators for this index (see Annex in Badgett and Sell, 2018). This methodological framework intends to utilize existing data sources where available, encouraging governments, statistics offices and other relevant stakeholders to contribute to populate the index. It will, however, take time for this process to yield a robust index, as there are inadequate data for most indicators and collecting such data presents significant challenges. A few sporadic surveys have been carried out in recent years in select European Union accession countries on discrimination against specific groups – including LGBT groups (for example, see European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 2014). But their scope does not cover the Philippines, nor LBT women in particular. The empirical study undertaken by UNDP of employment discrimination based on SOGIE in China, the Philippines and Thailand uses survey-based quantitative data (UNDP, 2018).<sup>10</sup> We use data and results from this study to compare and validate the analysis from the online survey data for this report.

The other data gap is that these initiatives focus on the provision of legal statutes and law enforcement, human rights and prevention of violence/abuse of LGBT communities, but do not fully shed light on all of the key dimensions of economic empowerment. There are some data on attitudes in the general population towards the LGBT community (or sometimes some constituent groups based on different SOGIE dimensions) – as opposed to the survey of perspectives of individuals who belong to the LGBT community (e.g. a survey by Pew Research Center, 2013).

*While there may be a few LGBT-owned businesses in the Philippines, ownership may not be fully exclusive, as they may partner with foreign nationals. There are no available official records on this from the Philippine Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) and the Philippine Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) as they do not have a category that identifies an establishment exclusively catering to the LGBT community (UNDP and USAID, 2014; p. 38).*

It emerged that institutional constraints play a role in the paucity of comprehensive data. During one validation workshop conducted during this study, government representatives declared that they were bound by the rules of the civil service commission in their actions and in the kind of data they were allowed to collect. They indicated that collecting data at a disaggregated level for all gender identities would provoke an audit of the department in question from the government if the data exercise did not meet regulations and was seen to extend beyond the current remit.

Our findings go some way towards shedding light on the economic situation of LBT women. One of the chief findings was high levels of economic insecurity among participants. The findings from our online survey found that LBT women felt their incomes to be inadequate to meet their needs (see Figure 2) even when they were employed (nearly 72 percent of LBT women in our sample reported being employed full-time which we discuss further in the next section), with transgender women reporting the highest levels of income insecurity to ensure access to housing and food.

An academic key informant observed that this reflected the conditions of the majority of women in the Philippines in general:

*Sufficient income is the biggest problem though, the absence of regular and sufficient income. Everyone's preference is to work in the formal sector but there are very limited employment opportunities. The informal sector is irregular, and jobs are often only available seasonal without any accompanying social protection. Urban communities have sari-sari stores, but if you walk around you will see that there is a sari-sari store just one to two stores down from each other. Poor people tend to prefer this as a livelihood project because they are able to use what they sell in the households. However, customers often don't pay in cash, because they are selling to other poor people. So, people pay on credit, what is known as 'lista' here because no one really has cash to spend.*

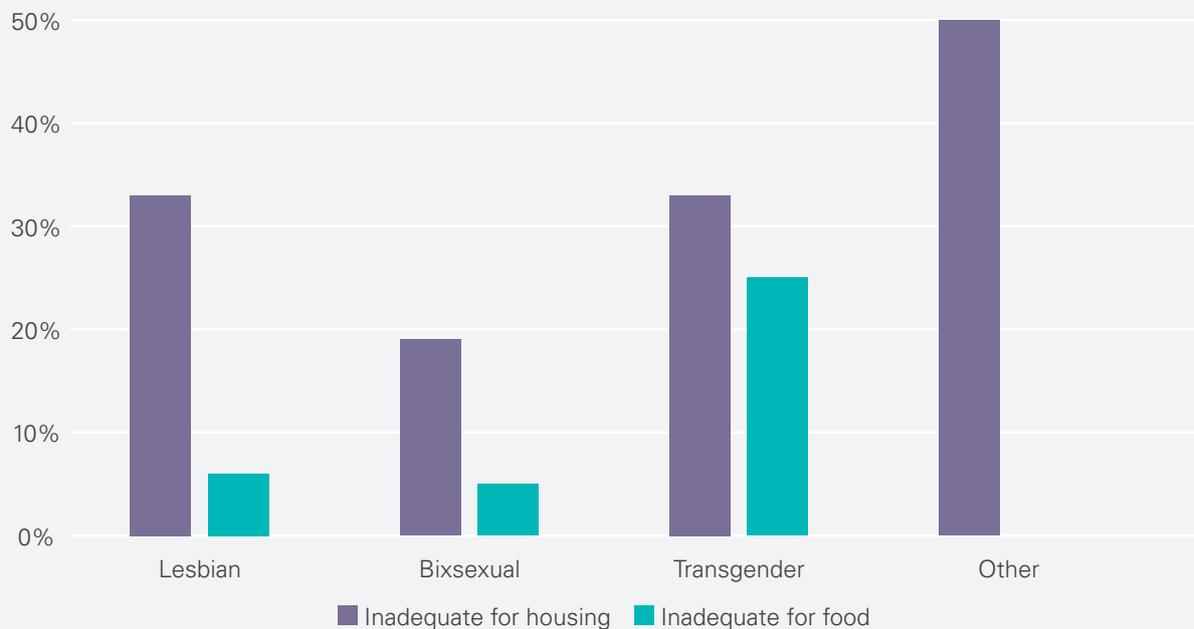
<sup>9</sup> Since the sample group is different across studies, they are not always directly comparable due to different conceptualizations.

<sup>10</sup> The demographic composition of 540 respondents in Philippines in that survey – although more than half of them are non-LBT women – map closely to our respondent sample in age (predominantly below the age of 35), relatively low to middle-income (below an annual household income of PHP 50,000), education (relatively highly educated with 78 percent with college degree or above), and physical location (96 percent of respondents living in urban centres/towns). While this makes comparisons more robust, the downside is that the data does not complement the large sections of population that neither quantitative survey could reach.

Online survey results indicate that 43 percent of respondents report frequently worrying about being able to financially support their dependents, and another 49 percent worry sometimes (see Figure 3).

**Figure 2: Income adequacy for meeting basic needs**

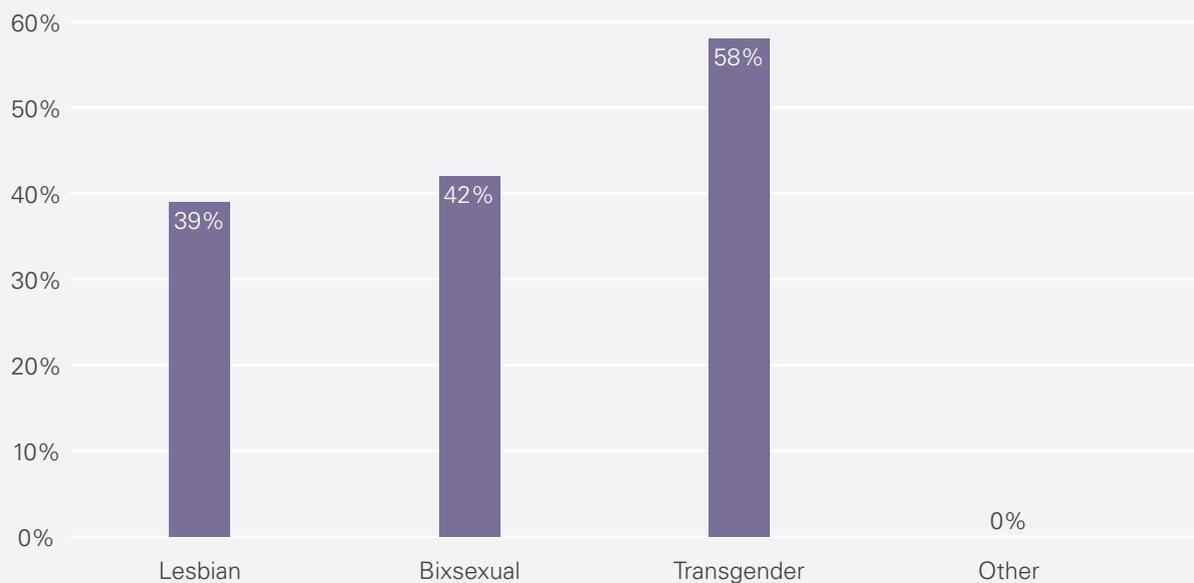
Proportion of online survey respondents who report income as “inadequate” for housing and food, by SOGIE classification (sample size = 159)



Source: Online survey designed for this study.

**Figure 3: Worry about being able to support dependents financially**

Proportion of online survey respondents who report worrying “frequently”, by SOGIE classification (sample size = 153)



Source: Online survey designed for this study.

Concepts of security of employment also varied among FGD respondents. Those with waged employment in the government or private sector (e.g. working in call centres) in some cases appeared to feel most secure. Some rural lesbian women who participated in FGDs felt that an employment contract of three to six months was “secure”, even if they were uncertain if there would be a subsequent contract. Many now or previously participated in work that is subject to short-term contracts. In some cases, “if the boss likes us, they will renew,” noted a respondent in an FGD with bisexual women. Some participants would like to stay in the same place after their contract ends (and have their contract renewed) but don’t express a strong preference for where they will go afterwards if it is not renewed. If there were no new contract forthcoming, the women indicated that they would ask friends and other networks for help to get new work “for an easier application”.

There was evidence that particular sectors carry specific income insecurities. For example, in the security sector, some of the respondents who worked as security guards noted that they needed to be in constant training every three years to maintain a security licence, without which they were not eligible to work. However, workplaces did not always pay for these trainings, adding to the cost and potential insecurity of employment for affected participants.

A few typical coping strategies to respond to economic insecurity emerged. Notably, among the FGD respondents who were in paid work (both full-time and part-time), many maintained a patchwork of different, often simultaneous livelihoods to maintain a level of adequate income. One transgender woman respondent explained that although she had a job working in the government in her area:

*The income is okay, because I have a sideline. If I don’t have a sideline, who can be able to live on an income of PHP 11,000 a month?*

**Transgender woman participant, Cebu City**

Some respondents expressed a desire to move into self-employment to reduce employment uncertainty and insecurity while others wanted to become self-employed because they did not like the rules or atmosphere in their current employment. For example, a transgender woman respondent described pursuing her passion to become a make-up artist and doing pageants because when she worked in City Hall as a contractor, her wage payments were not delivered to her on time. Some participants in FGDs expressed that a shift in employment was often made to gain more autonomy and freedom of choice and

expression, as well as to pursue sectors and jobs that they find more interesting and/or fulfilling. For example, a few transgender women respondents indicated that they had decided to take up make-up, hospitality and catering work to gain freedom in how they dress on a daily basis and to keep their hair long (as employers often asked them to cut their hair).

Of all online survey participants, transgender women spoke most clearly of economic insecurity in meeting basic needs, including housing and food – despite a large number of them not being the head of the household or the spouse of the head. In our FGDs, several transgender women spoke clearly about work in the sex industry having little income guarantee as a result of the intermittent nature of the work, as well as high levels of wage theft from clients. This matches with our finding from the online survey that transgender women feel higher income inadequacy (Figure 2) and also the prevalence of financial worry is highest among transgender women compared to lesbian or bisexual women (Figure 3).

Many (but not all) transgender women articulated how their low and irregular incomes made it hard to save, which, coupled with obligations to financially support their family, meant they could struggle. A transgender woman noted in one FGD:

*In our line of work, the income is not consistent. There are months that we do not have work. Yes, you can save somehow. But sometimes I give allowance for my nephews and nieces. Whatever I saved is still being used.*

**Transgender woman participant, Cebu City**

These findings clearly highlight that the type of economic opportunities available to LBT women are intrinsically linked to their frequent economic insecurity. Therefore, a focused exploration of the paid working lives of this group would be useful to shed further light on the realities they face in the labour market, and the extent to which they are able to access quality paid work in line with their preferences. It is to this we now turn.



## CHARACTERISTICS OF EMPLOYMENT FOR LBT WOMEN

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### Key messages

- LBT women in the Philippines are predominantly found in low-wage, precarious jobs and the use of short-term contracts is frequent. LBT women in our FGDs and online survey sample work in full-time and part-time employment, often mixing full-time work with freelance work. Of those who were unemployed, most were students.
- LBT women were generally engaged in a few key sectors of employment: education (as students or teachers), government, private sector office work, micro- or subsistence enterprises (e.g. farmers, food stalls, tricycles, jeepneys) and creative (writing) and service industries (e.g. beauty, make-up, chefs, bartenders, call centres, laundry, security and escort/sex services).
- The precarious nature of many participants' income meant they relied on an informal loan system called 'Five-Six' or 'Turko' (which charges 20 percent interest) to get by. Respondents reported needing financial support from informal networks (e.g. from partners or borrowing initially to start informal enterprises). Overall, there was limited access to formal financial services to start or grow businesses.
- Experiences of discrimination vary among LBT women with transgender women reporting a higher level of discrimination. Some lesbian and bisexual women perceived transgender women to be more discriminated against than themselves.
- The imposition of dress codes in the workplace is a common form of discrimination experienced by LBT women, which can lead to skills mismatches as LBT women choose to take up jobs in which they can express themselves more freely in their dress and presentation, even when that role requires a lower level of skills and/or qualifications than those they hold. Consequently, occupational segregation is a notable feature of LBT women's work whereby lesbian women often find themselves working in stereotypically 'masculine' jobs such as security guards and transgender women end up working in stereotypically 'feminine' jobs in salons, beauty pageants and/or in commercial sex work.
- Unpaid care and domestic work is largely shared among women where FGD participants living in an extended family household with no dependents or families of their own reported taking on a larger share of care duties towards parents, nephews and nieces, compared to siblings with offspring.

In this section we present our findings to build a profile of LBT women's employment situation in the Philippines. We discuss the types of employment – both by hours and by sector as well as evidence of occupation segregation among LBT women. We then move on to discussing the nature of self-employment among LBT women, which coincides more with the definition of subsistence-level own-account work. We then highlight the different experiences of LBT women in facing discrimination during employment as well as how unpaid care work is experienced by respondents.

## 6.1. Types of employment

Work by Thoreson (2011) and GALANG and IDS (2015) suggest that LGBT people in the Philippines are predominantly found in low-wage, precarious jobs. In addition, for LGBT workers, unpaid overtime, payment under the legal minimum wage, wage withholding and theft and the use of short-term contracts – so employers can avoid paying social benefit contributions and terminate employment in line with their business needs – are routine in the private sector (GALANG and IDS, 2015). Department Order No. 18-A (2011), issued by the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE), amended rules on contracting and subcontracting arrangements which imposed penalties on employers and subcontractors who repeatedly hire employees under rotating five-month contracts; however, LBT respondents in our FGDs did not reference the law as a provision to which they had recourse, potential reasons for which are discussed below.

Although we included questions on annual household income in our online survey, there was a significant mismatch between the income distribution pattern of our survey respondents and that of the general population. We are unable to conclusively assess if this is due to inherent differences in the income patterns of families with LBT women; anomalies on account of an atypical sample of those responding to our online survey; errors in interpreting and responding to the question; or a combination of all these contributing factors. The conclusion we draw from this assessment is that we are unable to explain the observed pattern in household income distribution in our sample, and thus avoid using this metric to categorize respondents (see Annex VI for further discussion).

LBT activists have highlighted that in the Philippines, employers in small-scale enterprises rarely comply

with established labour standards such as the 1974 Labor Code. The scarcity of jobs means that employees rarely complain (UNDP and USAID, 2014). Participants in a national dialogue in the Philippines confirmed that LGBT people can face poor working conditions precisely because of their SOGIE. This involves instances of being recruited to be intentionally exploited, for example in call centres which have been accused of hiring LGBT people knowing they are legally unable to marry, and subsequently obliging them to work during undesirable hours because they are not seen as having families to return home to (UNDP and USAID, 2014).

Our primary data revealed diversity in the pattern of labour market participation among participants. The profile of participants in the FGDs was mixed in terms of full-time employment, part-time employment and unemployment.<sup>11</sup> They often mixed full-time salaried work or full-time self-employment with freelance work. Nearly 72 percent of LBT women indicated in the online survey that they worked full-time in their primary employment; fewer transgender women in our sample worked full-time (Figure 4); however, this does not exclude that the same women also had part-time work outside their primary occupation. On the other hand, part-time work constituted only 15 percent of employment for LBT women. When compared with the national estimate of 30 percent of women in the Philippines working part-time, this indicates that a higher proportion of LBT women in our online survey worked in full-time occupations.<sup>12</sup>

In our online survey, which was a largely urban sample, 74 percent of our respondents reported that they were currently employed (Figure 5). Another 15 percent indicated that they were currently unemployed but had been employed sometime in the past 5 years. Bisexual women were least likely to be employed in our survey sample – although still about 57 percent were. Nearly 89 percent of the lesbian women in our sample were employed; this level dropped to 75 percent for transgender women.

LBT respondents in FGDs in both urban and rural areas were mostly between the ages of 18 and 42 and engaged in a few key sectors of employment: education (as students or teachers), government, micro- or subsistence enterprises (e.g. farmers, food stalls, tricycles, jeepneys) and creative (e.g. writing) and service industries (e.g. beauty, make-up, chefs, bartenders, call centres, laundry, security and escort/sex services). Among the survey respondents – who were predominantly college-educated and below 45 years in age – the main occupation reported

11 We define full-time as working 8 hours per day or 40 hours per week, as per the labour standards in Philippines (last confirmed as law by the Philippine Congress in 2017); part-time is working for fewer hours in the day or week.

12 World Development Indicators (World Bank) ILO estimates.

**Figure 4: Type of primary employment: full-time or part-time**

Proportion of online survey respondents, by SOGIE classification (sample size = 159)

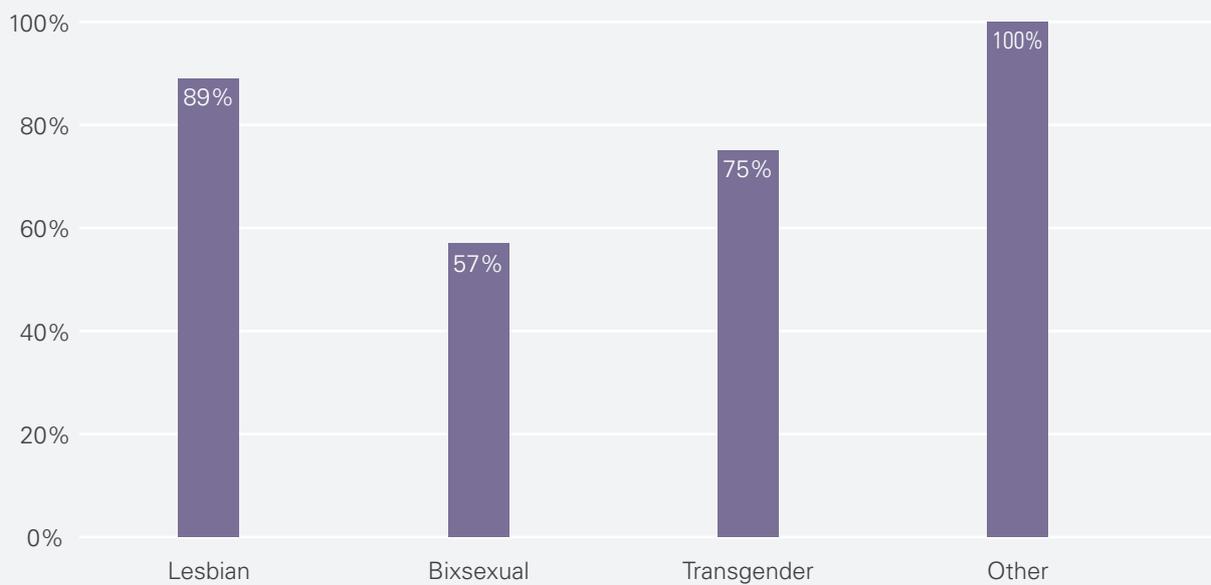


Source: Online survey designed for this study.

Note: The 'other' category includes respondents who are neither lesbian or bisexual women in sexual orientation, nor are transgender in their gender identity.

**Figure 5: Current employment status**

Proportion of online survey sample currently employed, by SOGIE classification (sample size = 159)



Source: Online survey designed for this study.

Note: The 'other' category includes respondents who are neither lesbian or bisexual women in sexual orientation, nor are transgender in their gender identity.

for LBT women was that of office workers. The other prominent employment roles were as a 'Manager/Executive/Official' (especially for lesbian women) and as a 'Service Worker'. Only some bisexual and transgender women reported as self-employed business owners (Figure 6).

Among LBT women, a larger proportion of transgender women appear to be employed in the services sector (25 percent) than among lesbian (11 percent) and bisexual women (0 percent), but it is still lower than the national female employment in services (34 percent).

Secondary literature supports the notion that occupational segregation of LBT women is deeply entrenched, both in various sectors and in specific roles within those sectors where LBT women are active. The roles and sectors appear to be highly determined by socio-cultural norms, themselves informed by prevalent stereotypes and expectations around the role of LBT women in the labour market. Primary among prevalent stereotypes and expectations is that LBT women have a reputation for being hard-working and holding strong skills, which has a material effect on the economic opportunities they are able to access. Queer respondents in a study by

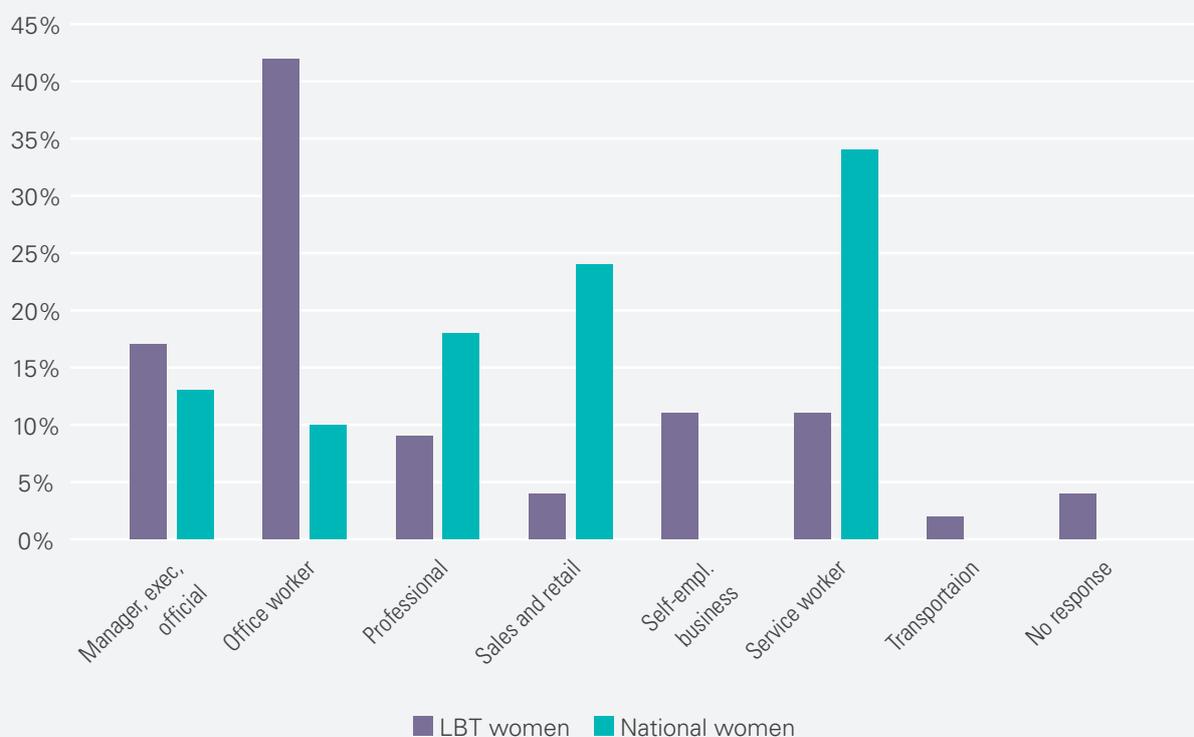
Thoreson (2011) reported a preference for employment "appropriate" to their subjective or ascribed identity of bakla, tomboy or LGBT worker.

However, respondents also identified a pressure to engage in employment that is socially recognized and rewarded as 'queer work' (i.e. work considered to be gender appropriate or stereotypical), even if it meant that their gender expression precluded their access to higher education and higher-paid jobs, given that jobs stereotyped as 'queer' are often highly precarious and offer remuneration below the poverty line.

Our fieldwork findings corroborate our literature review as indicated by the survey above and indicated by FGD fieldwork. An FGD respondent during fieldwork laughingly noted that she had not realized that there could be security guards that were not lesbian, as in her experience all guards were lesbian women. Other lesbian participants in our FGDs indicated they worked in roles seen as masculine such as jeepney drivers. Occupational segregation was particularly clear during FGDs conducted with transgender women who across all regions said they were engaged in providing beauty services as a side or main business. Transgender women across the 18 FGDs

**Figure 6: Occupational categories of working women in the Philippines**

Proportion of working women in different roles



Source: Authors' calculations based on the Philippine National Labor and Employment Survey, 2018–19 and the Philippines Population Census (2015) of the Philippines Statistics Authority along with the online survey designed for this study.

showed the most alignment with each other in sectors and occupations. It seems that this segregation can be reinforced by LBT women themselves, and by wider societal perceptions of them and their aptitudes. When a key informant was asked to comment on the trend, she noted that:

*Transgender women are just very creative by nature, so they will go into make-up. It helps express their creativity.*

**Transgender woman participant, San Julian**

Another transgender woman from Albay, in conversation demonstrated the role social expectations had in determining which sectors of work were open to her:

*When I applied for work, I was told to cut my hair. I asserted that I can do the job and questioned why (I have to do that). The company (told me that) their reason was my physical appearance. It's has been always the same for me, so I got fed up and decided that I did not want to be 'plamunin' [dependent for her food] anymore. So I thought of something I want and can do, which is why I became a make-up artist. Then ventured into foodpark (Kantorini) also [a park with food stalls], then just proceeded, there were no complaints or discrimination. That's when I learned that it's possible. I was always employee of the month.*

**Transgender woman participant, Albay**

Discussion on preferences for employment and motivations for working in the current sector revealed a mixture of views. Some respondents prefer to be employed by an organization or business, while those who wanted to be self-employed cited a range of possibilities such as running a grocery store or Airbnb letting. Those who wanted to be self-employed cited flexibility of time as a big motivator though they recognized that income can often be less stable. Respondents who preferred to be in employment with an organization said they wanted a job where they had potential for growth.

Some respondents cited jobs they would rather be doing than what they currently were doing, to meet their aspirations and interests and not solely to earn a better income. For example, a respondent in one of the FGDs of lesbian women mentioned that her previous job as a

digital worker was better paid but had no social relevance in her eyes:

*It was very busy. Even if well compensated, it ruined my peace of mind, and the sacrifices were not worth it.*

**Lesbian participant, Quezon City**

As a result, she changed her job to work in an NGO. Another lesbian woman also noted that she used to work for an NGO but currently works freelance for a food company where she can be creative. Many transgender women across FGDs also worked as escorts in businesses, bars or in the city government and spoke of shifting between these multiple kinds of work for a higher income.

## 6.2. Self-employment

Small businesses form a large proportion of business enterprises in the Philippines. Of the 830,000 business enterprises estimated to be in existence in the country in 2011 (Evangelista, 2013), 99.6 percent are classified as micro-, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSME), which are responsible for 38 percent of total job growth. However, self-employment only accounted for about 17 percent of survey respondents while only 10 percent reported being business owners (owning stores, factories or other productive economic entities). Meanwhile, a profile overview of the 142 FGD respondents showed that there were a variety of occupations LBT women in the group engaged in, but a number were largely reminiscent of own-account work – that is, they were small scale, individual-level operations – for example, freelance make-up artists or freelance writers.

Respondents were often engaged in multiple small-scale livelihoods, for example, one respondent worked as a pedicab driver as well as a seasonal farmer. Some respondents noted that they lived with families and hence shared in bills and costs which helped with managing their income. The precarious nature of many participants' income was a recurring theme – for example, women who ran salons or worked as make-up artists mentioned that often their work was not enough to provide predictable income from month to month and they relied on a loan system called 'Five-Six' or 'Torko' to get by. Five-Six, or Torko, is an informal lending system whereby people borrow money with an interest rate of 20 percent.

Many respondents suggested that businesses are hard to make profitable, which could be one explanation for why many have multiple livelihoods, including waged work. A large proportion of women in developing countries are classified as 'own account workers' (ILO, 2016) across a continuum of women's self-employment with informal, 'survival-oriented income generation' at one end, and 'formal, growth-oriented' enterprise at the other. The description of the work given by LBT women in FGDs echoed those of self-employed women who are predominantly found closer to the survival, distress-driven end, where opportunities to increase profitability are limited and "there is very little evidence of active choice" (Kabeer, 2012: 24). For example, one respondent in a group of bisexual women said:

*Before I get [sic] married, I was a salesclerk at SM. I also have a store in San Julian. But I left it because I had a hard time managing my time. I worked in the store for six years. We sold pork, fish, etc. and we also have karaoke. It's just hard when people who buy do not pay on time.*

**Bisexual participant, San Julian**

Respondents often reported needing financial support from informal networks (e.g. from partners or borrowing initially to start a business such as a food cart). Overall, there was very little mention of access to formal financial services to start or grow a business. Access to credit and financial services can be critical to start and grow businesses, but LBT women often find themselves unable to access financial support and investment due to a lack of access to collateral or a low income. Even though laws such as the Republic Act No. 9501: Magna Carta for MSMEs and the Republic Act No. 9178, also known as the Barangay Micro Business Enterprises Act of 2002, exist to specifically lend financial assistance to enterprises, on the ground it is difficult to obtain funds. Women in the Philippines have unequal access to business start-up support and finance, and there is no disaggregated government data for LBT women. One key informant noted:

*I don't know why but the microenterprises programmes are scattered around different departments [e.g. DOLE, Department of Trade and Industry (DTI)]. They have different windows, but the DTI should have consolidated data.*

Key informants noted that for LBT entrepreneurs, the challenge is to scale up their operations and ensure the sustainability of their various ventures to keep themselves

and their families out of poverty and that LBT women, similar to other Filipina women, needed training and knowledge on how to integrate their businesses into existing markets in the area. The same key informant commented:

*Women microentrepreneurs say they have a harder time accessing credit and also accessing just business programmes to learn about how to forward and backward integrate their enterprises in the local economy ... to do a market study and not to have same businesses in one barangay – how to access credit, how to access inputs specially in agriculture, how to do the marketing and how to link their produce or products to the market.*

The level of economic insecurity implied by short-term contracts for a number of the participants across the FGDs meant that some indicated that although they are currently in employment, they wanted to become self-employed:

*I do not have a contract with my current employment, so it is not secured. I tried to find another work. I asked if they accept lesbians, and they said that it's possible. But I was not comfortable with their rules, so I did not proceed. After my partner graduates from college, I want to start a business but for the meantime, I will still continue with my current work.*

**Lesbian participant, Albay**

### 6.3. Structural discrimination in the labour market

While no large-scale robust quantitative data exist to identify the extent of SOGIE-related discrimination in the Philippines (Ocampo, 2011), literature review has shown that LBT people in the Philippines encounter discriminatory practices that affect their economic opportunities and outcomes (despite the Labor Code aimed at the fair treatment of all workers) with little recourse to legal complaint (Lim, 2011; UNDP and USAID, 2014). Accounts of discrimination exist at all stages of employment; for example, in the case of lesbian employees, Lesbian Advocates Philippines (LeAP!) (2004) reports that "discrimination can occur in the process of hiring, in the assigning of wages, in the granting

of benefits and promotions, and the retention of ... employees.”

However, our fieldwork has indicated a mix of experiences by LBT respondents at different stages of employment indicating that discrimination is variable with transgender women reporting a higher level of discrimination and lesbian and bisexual women also perceiving transgender women to be more discriminated against (compared to themselves). This is further corroborated by our findings on structural discrimination in the form of violence, abuse and harassment, which are experienced particularly acutely by transgender women, including in the workplace, as discussed in more detail in Section 6.5 below.

### Experience in search for employment

LBT respondents from the 18 FGDs recounted mixed experiences in their search for employment or customers. One lesbian respondent searching for employment at a hotel recalled that,

*[T]hey told me that they do not accept lesbians in the hotel, just male and female. I just accepted what they said to me.*

Lesbian participant, Dinagat

A transgender woman who worked as a make-up artist recalled that once she had been booked to provide make-up services, but the client cancelled when they “found out (I was) not a woman”. As noted in the preceding section, transgender women had also reported mixed experiences of seeking employment with government. While there were reports of respondents who have been successful, other transgender women had said that offices would require them to alter their personal appearance in a heteronormative manner to gain employment. Evidence from the online survey indicates that 38 percent of LBT women report having frequently or sometimes experienced discrimination. Among LBT women, transgender women were the only ones who reported face such challenges “frequently,” as well as overall more often than lesbian and bisexual women (Figure 7). The proportion of LBT women who frequently or sometimes face discrimination (44 percent) match UNDP (2018) survey reports that 44.5 percent of LGBT people have faced discrimination when seeking employment.

**Figure 7: Discrimination faced personally when seeking employment opportunities**

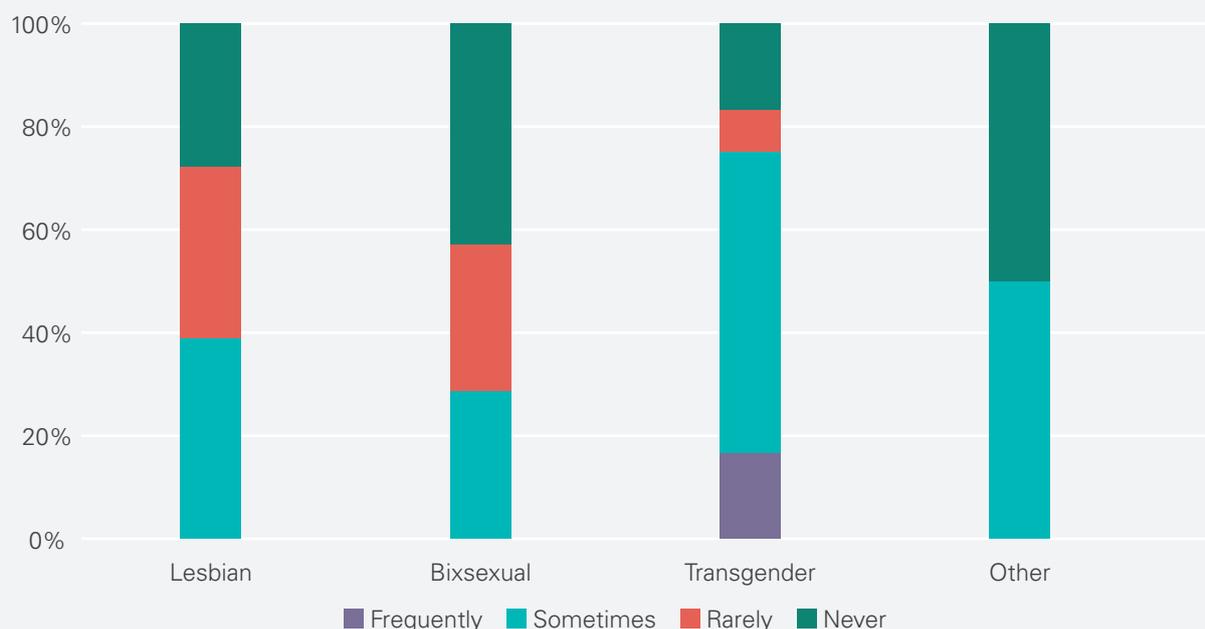
Proportion of online survey respondents, by SOGIE classification (sample size = 150)



Source: Online survey designed for this study.

**Figure 8: Experience of discrimination faced personally at work**

Proportion of online survey respondents, by SOGIE classification (sample size = 159)



Source: Online survey designed for this study.

Note: The 'other' category includes respondents who are neither lesbian or bisexual women in sexual orientation, nor are transgender in their gender identity.

### The role of connections

Among participants, there was a mix in practice between applying for a job and being introduced by a friend or colleague who was already known or employed by the prospective workplace. However, it clearly emerged that having connections was overall seen as a benefit, and in many cases essential to getting the paid work that participants would want or need.

One lesbian respondent recalling her experience of applying to her current job in the government said:

*I was able to work in an LGU [Local Government Unit] because their secretary is our family friend.*

**Lesbian participant, San Julian**

There were several examples from interviews of participants, both urban and rural, knowing business owners or the person to whom they would report before starting work in that place, including in one case a governor's office

Respondents felt that they necessarily needed these connections to get jobs because their SOGIE (and in one case disability) status would otherwise have seen

them rejected from the position. A lesbian woman who presented masculine in appearance observed that without a 'backer', she would not get work; a transgender woman said her brother-in-law had helped her get her position in a government office.

As discussed in the section on economic security, even those in full-time paid work, such as government jobs, still maintained side businesses to meet their needs, for example, the transgender woman respondent mentioned above, despite her work in government, also had a sideline business selling beauty products.

### Experiences of discrimination during employment

Our online survey results, together with the responses from FGDs, reveal experiences of discrimination at work on account of LBT women's SOGIE. Forty-four percent of LBT women reported experiences of discrimination at least "sometimes". Our findings are corroborated by similar levels of "negative treatment" reported in the UNDP (2018) survey of LGBT respondents in the Philippines and are slightly higher than the levels reported in another survey of employed women (HR Asia, 2017;

McKinsey Global Institute, 2018).<sup>13</sup> Transgender women experienced a higher frequency of discrimination than lesbian or bisexual women; they were also the only group that report facing such discrimination at work frequently (Figure 8). This mirrors the pattern of discrimination experienced during employment-seeking, compounding the challenges faced by transgender women, as discussed in the section above.

This corroborates material from secondary literature and FGDs, in which LBT women reported experiencing various forms of discrimination. In the literature, LBT women who were already employed and had disclosed their SOGIE were either denied promotions or opportunities for learning and growth, and in some cases were even prohibited from interacting with their colleagues in other offices (OutRight Action International, 2014). It emerged during FGD discussions that LBT women can be excluded from higher-paying roles within a sector, e.g. a transgender woman recounted the experience of another transgender woman with promotion in a university:

*A very close friend, she was supposed to be appointed as our college dean ... And then she was summoned by our university president, who didn't have a Davao context that the LGBT movement is really at the forefront, he didn't have that context. So, she was told that "it has come to my attention that you are joining pageants" [reference to their SOGIE status as a transgender woman]. So, to cut the long story short, she was given a post [as only] assistant dean. So yes, discrimination happens even in the most open university.*

**Transgender woman participant, Davao City**

The imposition of dress codes, whether explicit or implicit, is another form of discrimination experienced by LBT women, including before they move into employment. Secondary literature documents LBT women reporting on being forced to dress in a 'feminine' manner in some workplaces. For example, the hospitality industry requires female hotel and restaurant trainees and staff to wear skirts, heels and make-up, thereby deterring LBT women with a masculine gender identity and expression who might otherwise wish to seek a job in this sector. This can lead to skills mismatches as LBT women choose to take up jobs which offer more scope

for them to adhere to their preferred style of dress and presentation, even where that preferred role requires a lower level of skills and/or qualifications than those they hold (UNDP and USAID, 2014; GALANG and IDS, 2015; Isis International, 2010).

FGD respondents and key informants were in consensus that the imposition of dress codes was a clear form of discrimination experienced by LBT women. LBT women in the FGDs often reported their manner of dressing as a factor that elicited comments during hiring (even if they did end up getting hired) while transgender women reported being forced to cut their hair for pictures (including passport pictures). For one bisexual woman, the conditions of employment forced her to marry a man in order to retain her employment:

*Yes, so I'm a teacher by profession, so I practised teaching for a little over four years and then there was discrimination. I have one child, then I got married as well. The reason I got married is because of the discrimination. Back in 2010, I think there was still no Bill ... Anti-Discrimination something ... of Davao City, so I got married. I really asked the father, "Marry me, because it is needed in the school". I was an Adviser of grade 4 and grade 6 back then.*

**Bisexual participant, Davao City**

Interestingly, FGD respondents articulated mixed experiences of discrimination at work. Some expressed clearly that they did not experience discrimination, proposing various explanations for why that may be the case: some worked in organizations where a number of other employees identified as LGBT, which respondents believed made a difference to the overall level of acceptance in the employment environment. For some respondents, discrimination did not enter their experience because they did not work for someone else but owned small businesses and/or were freelancers. In one case, a transgender woman noted that because she had gained her job in a company through a connection:

*I did not experience or find it difficult to access my job, because I had a backer.*

**Transgender woman participant, Davao City**

<sup>13</sup> Human resources in Asia reports from a survey of 900 employed women in Philippines conducted by online employment portal Monster.com. It reported that 16 to 39 percent of respondents faced at least one of the four forms of gender discrimination at work. The McKinsey Global Institute (2018) reported on different manifestations of such discrimination women experienced at the workplace; their analysis however does not investigate the specific experiences of LBT women.

The mixed nature of the response could also be due to a particular idea of what discrimination entails, i.e. discrimination as a tangible action that prevents or deeply affects LBT women's everyday work life rather than institutionalized discrimination (i.e. discrimination embedded in everyday social practices of an institution and its members) that can occur in the form of innuendos and/or in decisions over promotions (which they may not be party to). As one FGD respondent in Manila mused near the end of the discussion,

*Sometimes I don't realize that I am already being discriminated [against].*

**Bisexual participant, Quezon City**

Validation workshops conducted in the course of this study corroborated this view with representatives from government as well as civil society, noting that overall, discrimination as a term is not how respondents and women in general in the Philippines understand institutionalized discrimination and/or micro-aggressions.

This became clear as some respondents in the FGDs, who had said they did not experience discrimination when asked directly, went on to recount an experience that would fall under the definition of the term. For example, one respondent from an FGD with lesbian women noted,

*I did not feel any discrimination in the way they treated me, but my salary was lesser than the female employees, even if I was doing more work than they were. I did not [experience discrimination] as a bartender, I was just invited and hired. The customers treat me okay also.*

**Lesbian participant, Albay**

Similarly, another respondent recounted how male colleagues at her workplace would jokingly ask her why she was a lesbian when she was a 'pretty' woman. A bisexual respondent who taught at a school explained,

*I am open about my sexuality in our school. My co-teacher said to me, "You're a teacher, why are you having a same-sex relationship?" There are also comments from the students like "you're so pretty, why do you like girls?" But there are also students who show their support.*

**Bisexual participant, San Julian**

Similar to those who worked as employees, there were mixed experiences around the public expression of individual SOGIE among those who were self-employed and owned businesses. Some owners were open about their SOGIE in their businesses; others were concerned about implications of being open or identified. Others were neither open about their SOGIE nor took measures to hide it, but felt that some clients may still react negatively to them as a result. A bisexual FGD participant reported that,

*It's really mixed. When we see some of them, because we're very open about what we are to each other. We just don't care because it's not their concern. It's our life. I'm not disrespecting your opinion, of course. But it doesn't stop them from eating at our restaurant. Although, you do see that there's that look [but] no sermon. No, nothing about the Bible. No Bible thumpers telling you that "It's a sin!" None of that.*

**Bisexual participant, Cebu City**

There were a range of different experiences of discrimination reported by women in the FGDs. Some discrimination took the form of casting doubt on the ability of an LBT woman to perform the work, e.g. one lesbian respondent spoke of how, as the only woman on her team, her male colleagues questioned if she did or could do the same level of work. One transgender woman noted discrimination from a lesbian woman in the bank where she was employed and where she was accused of being a 'scammer'. Another transgender woman worked at a resort for six years but left when she found out she was being discriminated against by one of the directors of the company, and as a result was not receiving the same workplace benefits as others of her grade. Consequently, she moved out of that employment to become a make-up artist.

According to a KII, a key element of difference between rural and urban areas<sup>14</sup> revolved around the perception and treatment of transgender women:

*The dynamics in rural areas around transgender women is different compared to urban. People are more conservative and have less exposure.*

<sup>14</sup> Unfortunately, with only 5 percent of our online survey sample being that of rural LBT women, we are unable to compare the urban (city and town) residents to those in rural (village) communities.

FGD respondents were largely positive about experiences in government employment compared to other organizations; a transgender woman working for the local government in Albay observed that she did not face any:

*discrimination because I am more known in the office. I was friends with the department heads. I still needed an endorser. It was necessary that they know you because that's politics. But there was no discrimination.*

**Transgender woman participant, Albay**

Another FGD respondent working for the local government noted that,

*someone endorsed me so I can enter the government. Eight years in the LGU in the city planning office in [name of area redacted to preserve anonymity]. No discrimination. Contractual work, every six months.*

**Transgender woman participant, Albay**

This contrasted directly with the experience of some other transgender women in the FGDs who acknowledged that a government job is better than working as a make-up artist. However,

*if you apply in government offices, like in SSS [Social Security System], even if you are educated, graduated with all the honours and everything, they will still see you as like minimal ... second-class citizens. They will require you to look like a male.*

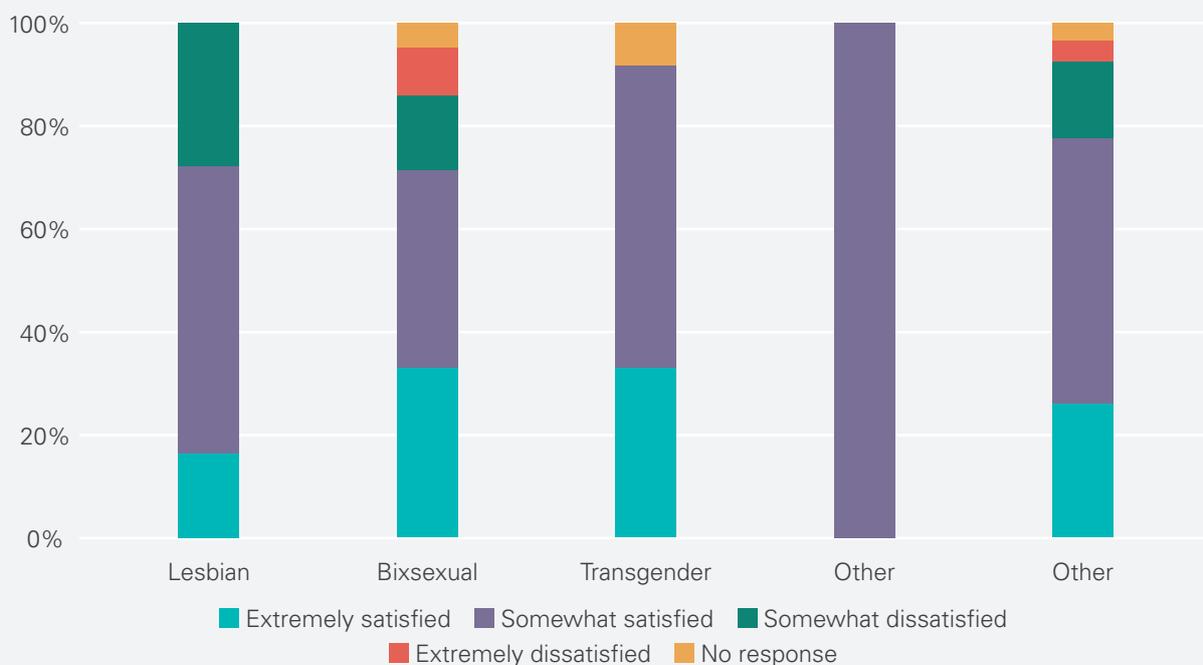
**Transgender woman participant, Cebu City**

However, the challenges reported above faced by LBT women in the workplace did not appear to have a large impact on how online survey respondents reported on their personal satisfaction with their work, as more than 77 percent of employed LBT women respondents reported some degree of satisfaction with their current work (Figure 9), only slightly lower than the 81 percent of women in the Philippines who reported some level of satisfaction from their current job.<sup>15</sup>

15 Gallup World Poll, 2006–2008

**Figure 9: Extent of satisfaction with current work**

Proportion of online survey respondents, by SOGIE classification (sample size = 159)



Source: Online survey designed for this study.

Note: The 'other' category includes respondents who are neither lesbian or bisexual women in sexual orientation, nor are transgender in their gender identity.

One possible explanation for this dichotomy could be that respondents feel satisfied with the work they do as an individual; it is perhaps not necessarily a reflection of the workplace environment. Another explanation is that respondents' perception of satisfaction is oriented towards their current job and work, whereas the experience reported of discrimination, threat or abuse at work was not restricted to their current work. This could possibly explain why transgender women, who face the most discrimination in seeking employment and at work, do not report any degree of dissatisfaction with work. Finally, individuals having faced discrimination at work may move to employment in which they no longer face this challenge.

In response to the challenges faced by LBT women in the labour market, the most common recommendation made during FGDs was for the government to provide livelihood support in the form of vocational training and in the search for jobs, with some feeling that tackling discrimination against transgender people in the workplace should be a priority.

## 6.4. Labour migration

A well-established route to employment for LBT women, as with the Filipino population more widely, is to migrate for work. The Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) in 2017 estimated the total number of Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) at 2.3 million over 2016–2017 with the majority working in other countries in East Asia, followed by Western Asia (countries such as Kuwait, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and United Arab Emirates). A majority of the OFWs work in occupations described as 'elementary' which the PSA defines as those jobs which "involve the performance of simple and routine tasks which may require the use of handheld tools and considerable physical effort". Data on the size of the LBT population among overseas Filipino workers is subsumed within data on the wider population.

Incentives to work abroad are largely driven by a lack of quality employment opportunities in home communities and the subsequent opportunity to earn more abroad than in the local labour market, as well as wishing to escape labour market discrimination in the Philippines by seeking employment in countries they perceive as more tolerant to LBT people. For LBT women, becoming a breadwinner or providing the family with a higher income than what they can earn locally has been identified as a means to gain increased acceptance from their families, where they had previously been subject to poor treatment. Some LBT women who become the family's primary income generator also experience an increase in household decision-making power (GALANG and IDS, 2015).

Yet, migrant workers who experience precarious working conditions are left in a vulnerable position while overseas: "women migrant workers face further discrimination and exploitation on the basis of their sex, and some women are further persecuted for their non-traditional SOGIE"; an experience that may be particularly acute in countries where discrimination, exploitation and criminalization of LGBT populations is commonplace and which receive a high number of Filipino migrant workers, such as Saudi Arabia (GALANG and IDS, 2015: 11). As a result, many Filipina LBT women working abroad, notably those in conservative Middle Eastern states, hide their sexual orientation or gender identity to avoid persecution, prioritizing alleviation of the material aspects of poverty over their right to freedom of expression. High remittances from abroad create a disincentive for the Filipino government to address a chronic lack of quality employment and widespread skills gaps and mismatches within its borders. This also sees overseas LBT women active in jobs traditionally seen as 'feminine', such as domestic work.

Secondary research has shown that many LBT workers would choose to remain and work in the Philippines if good jobs were available to them (ibid.). Indeed, some cite other reasons to stay. A study of low-income queer (gay and lesbian) Filipinos found that the most common reasons for staying in the Philippines included a lack of opportunities or money to go abroad, family or a partner in the Philippines, present employment commitments, young age and/or inexperience in travelling abroad (Thoreson, 2009).

There was mixed evidence and preferences across all groups around international migration. Some ruled it out entirely, and others said they might want to migrate to have a new experience (not necessarily just for work) – which could include experiences of travel and learning about new cultures. In several cases, this was directly related to their SOGIE expression, and the sense that participants saw an opportunity for increased self-expression away from their home location. A respondent from an FGD with lesbian women spoke about her experience of travelling to Japan and how she was able to dress how she wanted, in a style more 'masculine' than she had been able to dress at home. Another lesbian woman explained that even though her family supported her SOGIE, they still encouraged her to wear dresses for school. She later went to Japan for work and there felt able to start expressing who she was ("even if wearing dresses") and started a relationship with her girlfriend.

Transgender women participating in the FGDs recounted several experiences of migrating to engage in sex work but encountered cases of deception, violence and wage theft while there. One transgender woman reported

that during her work in Dubai, she met with clients who pretended to be police officers to get free sex.

A number of respondents reported relying on the earnings of a parent or sibling working overseas but did not, when probed, indicate any desire to go abroad themselves for work. Some wanted to stay in their community where they had circles of friends.

Within the Philippines, there are often more economic opportunities in urban areas, leading people to migrate internally, and a few respondents indicated they had worked in Manila for a couple of months at some point in their life.

## 6.5. Unpaid work and care

There is scant existing literature on the contribution of LBT women to unpaid care, partly due to the absence of disaggregated data among women. According to a Gallup and ILO (2017) poll on men's and women's opinion on women's role in paid and unpaid work, 47 percent of the women questioned in the Philippines indicated they would prefer to stay at home compared to 15 percent who indicated they would prefer to work at a paid job. Meanwhile 43 percent of the men indicated that they would prefer women in their family to stay at home, while 30 percent indicated they would prefer the women to work at a paid job. The poll highlighted the existing norms around women's role in taking on unpaid care, with both men and women showing a preference for women staying at home rather than working at a paid job.

More recently, research in the Philippines and elsewhere, such as in Canada, has specifically approached the issue of unpaid care for LGBT populations from the perspective of aging LGBT individuals and systems of care available to them (Grigorovich, 2015; Guevara, 2015). In the context of the Philippines, Guevara (2015) reports on a social protection landscape where reliance is based on family because of lack of options (see Section 6.2). Her fieldwork showed that

*the effect of the disclosure of one's gender identity to his/her family ties determines how the family would 'give back' to their non-heteronorm[ative] conforming member. Whether they accept his/her identity contributes largely to the quality of support given to their non-heteronorm[ative] conforming member, which is crucial to his/her survival especially while aging (p. 49).*

The literature above identified a concern that LGBT population in this social protection landscapes were not guaranteed to be supported during old age in a situation where they may not have children and could be alienated from their families.

During primary fieldwork, various activities were mentioned in relation to unpaid care and domestic work, though overall relatively few participants discussed unpaid care and domestic work. Some participants cited volunteer work, community work and work in their faith community as unpaid work. Many participants reported being involved in voluntary community work for no financial compensation (except perhaps expenses and at times subsistence) – with many citing a sense of fulfilment and/or pleasure in participating in these activities. Participants reported working with and being involved in church groups, early childhood educator groups, community organizations conducting SOGIE training and youth organizations, among other activities.

However, in one FGD a lesbian couple spoke about caring for two adopted children but did not appear to register that response as unpaid care. Similarly, in another FGD a respondent indicated they were caring for an aging grandparent but chose to mention volunteering their time for a charity working on hunger. When questioned about unpaid work, they stated that “it doesn't affect the work I do” (lesbian participant, Cebu City). Similarly, some respondents mentioned caring for ill parents.

The pattern was echoed in the online survey, with few respondents declaring taking up unpaid work at home – those that did reported that family necessity and the absence of anyone else was the prime reason for this decision, rather than financial necessity or it being more expensive to get hired help. In a validation workshop, one participant pointed out that,

*Unpaid care work is a Western concept, and here care work is more of an obligation instead of work, especially if it is for family and relatives.*

In line with findings from other studies on women's unpaid care loads in different contexts (Razavi, 2016; Samuels et al. 2018), there is evidence that unpaid care and domestic work was taken on by and/or largely shared between women where FGD participants reported living in an extended family household. Participants rarely mentioned male members of the family in their discussion on work in the house, instead noting that housework was done by themselves, or their mother or grandmother. A lesbian woman reported that in her household,

*I do the laundry, after cooking and selling. My mom is 87 years old and lives on her own, but my house is just beside hers, I am the one who gives her food. I have siblings but they don't take care of our mom because they know I am here to take care of her. My other siblings have their own families already.*

**Lesbian participant, Dinagat**

Participants who lived with extended families or with partners reported that they would do childcare if they were not working and their family or partner was working – for example, one lesbian woman in an FGD said she spent time taking care of her niece and nephew as she was currently unemployed, but she would need to stop that role if she got another job.

Care appears less of a responsibility and easier to manage alongside paid work for those in multigenerational and extended households. FGD respondents who were students appear to still be “cared for” as they live in larger households. A participant in an FGD with lesbian women said her mother was “understanding” that she was tired from her studies and did not require the participant to do any domestic work.



## DIFFERENCES IN ACCESS TO AND EXPERIENCES OF BASIC SERVICES AND FREEDOM TO EXERCISE CHOICE

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### Key messages

- Bullying and discrimination in the education system by both students and teachers is a common experience of LBT women despite anti-bullying legislation. Hostility can cut short LBT women's education, limiting their employment opportunities later in life.
- The conceptualization of the family as a heteronormative unit in the Filipino Family Code and in society in general poses a key barrier to LBT women's full and equal enjoyment of social protection rights. LBT women have been identified as marginalized within key policies by PhilHealth and in access to post-disaster relief by the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD).
- Older LBT women were seen to be particularly marginalized as a result of not having children and having responsibility to provide for family. A fairly frequently articulated concern across all groups was what would happen to LBT women when they get older, particularly if they do not have a partner or children.
- Limitation in access to health service provision for LBT women feeds into a lack of knowledge, awareness and understanding of the health issues experienced among LBT women by health providers. Transgender women in particular reported difficulty in accessing health care, experiencing high levels of stigma and discrimination in hospitals and other medical facilities.
- LBT women felt financial independence was a way of showing to their families that their SOGIE did not hold them back from success in life, as was assumed to be the case by the parents of several participants. LBT women expressed a large sense of responsibility to financially support their family (notably older parents and younger siblings and nieces).
- In several cases, being identified as LBT or self-expressing openly as LBT led to discrimination, abuse and other harmful behaviour. Only 57 percent of our online survey respondents claim to have never been threatened or physically harmed on account of gender identity or sexual orientation while 42 percent had experienced some degree of physical threat – of which 24 percent experienced it "frequently" or "sometimes." Transgender women reported facing such threats more often than lesbian or bisexual women.

## 7.1. Education, skills and training

### Schooling

Students who are lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender too often find that their education trajectory is marred by bullying, discrimination, lack of access to LGBT-related information, and in some cases, physical or sexual assault (UNESCO, 2018). Lawmakers and school administrators in the Philippines have recognized that bullying of LGBT youth is a serious problem, and have designed interventions to address it. In 2012, the Department of Education (DoE) issued a Child Protection Policy designed to address bullying and discrimination in schools, including on the basis of SOGIE. In 2013, Congress passed the Anti-Bullying Law of 2013, with implementing rules and regulations that list SOGIE as banned grounds for bullying and harassment. The 2017 Gender-Responsive Basic Education Policy specifically recognizes gender-based discrimination that occurs on the basis of sexual orientation and mandates the DepEd to be gender-responsive in its strategies.

Despite prohibitions on bullying, FGD respondents (some who had left school in the last five years as well as those who had been in school more than 10 years ago) spoke at length about bullying and discrimination in school by peers and teachers, rather than discrimination at work. A bisexual respondent in one of the FGDs commented on how her school responded to her gender identity at school:

*Before, in high school, school was really hard. [My partner] and I got involved in this big scandal. It's not a really big scandal really. What happened was we both kind of got caught with our girlfriends. Our school, by the way, is not a Catholic school. It's a public school, and you don't see any major red flags. It wasn't a public thing that happened. It was like a student teacher saw us that we were holding hands, and then reported to our principal. So, the principal called our advisers, telling them about it. It was a big thing. We were so embarrassed. We were so lost. I was in high school, and then they interrogated us. I remember telling the adviser, "Wait, you can't interrogate us without our parents because we're minors." And then they got really mad [...] From then on, the advisers would be a bit harder on us. Prom, where you get to pick your date right?*

*Both of us, we were assigned dates just to make sure we go with guys. [My partner] was way more mad because she wanted to wear a tux, but she wasn't allowed to.*

**Bisexual participant, Cebu City**

The DepEd has been documenting cases of discrimination in schools, but this has not been acted on by the government – although allies in Congress are interested in such evidence to support their political advocacy. A key informant noted that,

The DepEd have, though, worked on the antidiscrimination bill and documented in some schools where they have LGBT organization and champions. They have been documenting and engaging in cases of discrimination against LGBTI [people], for example, public universities that force gay boys to sign pink slips promising they will dress like boys and will not have relationships among themselves. Or schools where they make accreditation process[es] very difficult or impossible for them. Or the admin[istration] doesn't address cases of sexual harassment against LGBT [people]. There, the community has been actively engaging in filing complaints etc. or at least us[ing] documents to bolster [the] need for Congress to take action.

During one of the validation workshops, however, a local official from the DepEd noted that they do not hear of SOGIE-based bullying incidents. Discussion in the workshop indicated that there was a possibility school administration would block the reporting of the incident as SOGIE-related to maintain a good reputation for the school.

Statistics on LBT education are hard to come by – one KII from an organization for transgender women in Eastern Samar noted (as was mentioned earlier) that of around 50 members, 70 percent finished schooling up to post-secondary level, while 30 percent of their members have education up to secondary school, after which they drop out. Our findings corroborate previous studies (e.g. UNESCO 2018) identifying a high drop-out rate of LBT women from education due to discrimination in dress codes (e.g. transgender women being made to cut their hair and uniforms imposed on them based on the gender assigned to them at birth) and poor treatment within educational settings, including stigmatization, violence and abuse. Although some schools do now allow students to dress according to their SOGIE, many schools still continue to exclude them due to "close-minded teachers and school policies." One transgender woman respondent noted that,

*Usually, very many trans youth are college dropouts because of the policy of the schools are not trans friendly. Many are*

*not allowed to be trans, and not allowed to grow their hair long. Instead of the school being promoted as your second home, you don't feel comfortable going there as a trans because the school policies are not inclusive.*

**Transgender woman participant, Cebu City**

A key informant interview with a parliamentarian who was working on the SOGIE Bill noted that gender neutral school uniforms and public bathrooms are among the most controversial issues in the bill and receiving the greatest opposition:

*Vicente Sotto, our SP... he said in [the] media, surprisingly he said, and I say surprisingly because until then he had been and still is one of the two most ardent oppositor (sic), he came out in the media suddenly saying there may still be a chance for the SOGIE Bill except for some controversial issues ... he identifies as controversial issues...uniforms in school, where boys and girls are required to wear one set of uniforms or the other but where transgirls or transboys may want to wear their own uniform. Then SP Sotto also said another controversial issue is gender-neutral bathrooms.*

Conversely, more tolerant or supportive schools are seen as very attractive by participants. A transgender woman respondent in one FGD wanted to stay at the same school she currently attended because "they aren't strict with the hair policy".

Respondents widely agreed on the need for SOGIE (as well as sex education and disability-awareness) to be made part of the academic curriculum, and for SOGIE orientation and training in schools in order to have a widely covered discussion about LGBT. Participants also pressed for schools to have LBT support groups to provide a normalizing environment for students who may be struggling with SOGIE at home and in school.

## Training

Government initiatives to support education and skills development exist in the Philippines, but gaps in their ability to fully support the LBT population are identified in the literature. In 1994, the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA) Act was passed, following which the TESDA Women's Center (TWC) was

established to support the development of high-quality Filipino "middle-level manpower" [sic] in line with the Philippines' development goals and priorities. Support furnished includes (1) providing "relevant, accessible, high quality and efficient technical education and skills development"; and (2) encouraging "active participation of various concerned sectors, particularly private enterprises" to "inculcate desirable values through the development of moral character with emphasis on work ethic, self-discipline, self-reliance and nationalism" (Sec. 3, e). Yet while broadly welcoming support aimed at women, LBT women have raised concerns that reference to "desirable values" and "moral character" could lead to discriminatory stereotypes and behaviour against LBT women being reinforced (GALANG and IDS, 2015).

Indeed, such policy slippage has been shown in other statutory initiatives, including those established to support access to work with programmes like employability enhancement trainings, but which have been shown to be inadequate for LBT women. For example, the Quezon City Public Employment Service Office (QC PESO) was established via the Quezon City Ordinance No. SP-1307, pursuant to the Public Employment Service Office Act of 1999, to support the city's employment programmes instead of the Industrial Relations Office. Yet while the law and subsequent ordinance contain provisions for employment facilitation services without distinction on the basis of SOGIE, QC PESO agents are not specifically required to provide services without discrimination, nor are employers encouraged to ensure SOGIE diversity in their workforce, meaning that even if LBT applicants are referred by QC PESO for an interview, they are often refused employment on the basis of their actual or perceived sexuality (GALANG and IDS, 2015).

Some respondents would have preferred to continue studying but did not have the financial capability to continue their studies. Consequently, those constrained by finance in their education (or in one case, because parents did not give permission to move away from home for further education) often ended up doing on-the-job training. A respondent from an FGD with lesbian women who was doing on-the-job training said to the facilitator,

*I don't have an option, ma'am. I used to study civil engineering. That's why I studies [sic] longer. I was an incoming third year student when they dissolved the course in Don Jose. They find it hard to look for a Dean, and the school doesn't have a budget to pay for the Dean. My parents didn't allow me to go to the city to study so I just stayed here.*

**Lesbian participant, Dinagat**

During FGDs, the link between education systems and employment was emphasized, with transgender women respondents in particular noting how a hostile school environment led to a high drop-out rate and had a knock-on effect on the employment opportunities available to transgender women. Therefore, participants also noted the importance of the education system in improving their employment prospects and suggested the implementation of more programmes such as TESDA which offers online courses in the Philippines.

## 7.2. Social protection

Available literature indicates that social protection and other related legislation in the Philippines, notably the Family Code, is exclusionary and restrictive with regards to the LBT population. As a social protection policy audit carried out by GALANG and IDS (2013) illustrates, social protection is provided in most cases only to a recognized scheme member's designated dependants or beneficiaries (e.g. in the Government Service Insurance System (GSIS) and the Social Security Act) who are, by default, often understood to be family members by blood or marriage<sup>16</sup> – a definition largely informed by the country's Family Code and maintained by highly conservative forces who have significant sway over policymaking and other aspects of political life in the Philippines (see Box 2). This is a reason for much contestation, especially among non-traditional

families whose dependants and beneficiaries may be unrecognized by the legal framework's heteronormative bias.

The conceptualization of the dependants and beneficiaries of scheme members, informed by the Family Code, poses a significant barrier to LBT women's full and equal enjoyment of social protection rights, as follows:

*Under the Social Security Act, employers are required to deduct from the employees' wages their (the employees') monthly contributions, pay the employer's share of contributions, and remit these to the SSS (Secs. 18–19). Ultimately, however, whether LBT workers and their families of choice benefit from these hard-earned savings is determined by their choice of dependants and beneficiaries (p. 19).*

The mandate of the SSS set up by the SSA is to provide protection to workers and their families in the specific contingencies of old age, disability, death, sickness, maternity and employment injury. The Act refers to employees as "any person" (and does not specify a gender); however, it only recognizes a legal spouse as a dependent (p. 12), effectively sidelining LGBT couples who currently cannot be legally married in the country.

16 Under the SS Act, 'dependants' include the following: 1. The legal spouse entitled by law to receive support from the member; 2. the legitimate, legitimated, or legally adopted, and illegitimate child who is unmarried, not gainfully employed and has not reached 21 years of age or, if over 21, is congenitally or while still a minor has been permanently incapacitated and incapable of self-support, physically or mentally; and 3. the parent who is receiving regular support from the member (Sec. 8). Similarly, 'dependants' under the GSIS Act refer to: 1. The legitimate spouse dependent for support upon the member or pensioner; 2. the legitimate, legitimated, legally adopted child, including the illegitimate child, who is unmarried, not gainfully employed, not over the age of majority, or is over the age of majority but incapacitated and incapable of self-support due to a mental or physical defect acquired prior to age of majority; and 3. the parents dependent upon the member for support (Sec. 2f) (GALANG and IDS, 2013).

### Box 2: The Family Code

The Family Code legally establishes and normalizes heteronormativity, thereby reinforcing "the [cultural] notion that the only form of family is heterosexual" (Pagaduan, 2013 in interview with GALANG and IDS, 2013). In it, marriage is defined as "a special contract of permanent union between a man and a woman entered into in accordance with law for the establishment of conjugal and family life" (Art. 1). It mentions the words 'lesbianism' and 'homosexuality' exactly twice each, and both times with reference to challenges they pose to heterosexual marriages. The Code also echoes the constitutional declaration that the family is the foundation of the nation, continuing to note that family is a basic social institution that must be cherished and protected, such that no custom, practice or agreement destructive of the family shall be recognized or given effect (Art. 149). Under the law, family relations exist (1) between husband and wife, (2) between parents and children, and (3) among brothers and sisters, whether of full or half-blood (Art. 50). The Family Code excludes people in non-normative relationships (and privileges a narrow conception of parenthood, both of which are exclusionary towards LGBTQ+ people in general and LBT women in particular. Many lesbian focus group participants taking part in the study stated that their same-sex partner was an integral part of their families, despite the limited and exclusionary definition provided by the law.

In December 2018, the government of the Philippines passed a Bill in the Senate extending maternity leave for women to 105 days for female workers in government and the private sector (including the informal sector) regardless of civil status or the legitimacy of the child. In a key informant interview, a government representative who advocated for the legislation stated that the language was kept deliberately vague to allow same-sex couples with adopted children to be able to take the leave. This includes the provision that the main caregiver can allow up to seven days of leave to be transferred to any alternative carer.

Primary reasons for the lack of direct access among LBT women to social protection related to the contributory nature of the system, and the high share of the group being active in the informal economy:

*Most LBT women in GALANG partner communities who are currently or were recently active in the workforce belong to the informal economy where membership in the SSS is not compulsory and their minimal earnings discourage them from availing of voluntary social security coverage. Some work as domestic helpers whose employers are required to enrol them in the SSS but rarely comply with labour law requirements, owing to the lax enforcement of these regulations (p. 19).*

The current set up of social protection, therefore, has impacts on how LBT women and their families deal with economic shocks such as natural disasters (e.g. typhoons in the Philippines) that destroy assets such as houses and have associated household expenditures (e.g. on health). A lesbian respondent narrated her household's situation:

*We had an eatery in Manila, but we decided to go home. When we got home, our business flourished. But when we got hit by [Super] Typhoon Yolanda, the house that we built was destroyed. We then thought of going back to Manila but someone told us not to go and helped us start our life again. We were also given housing then started selling again. My eyesight was deteriorating, and I thought my loved ones would leave me. I had a surgery because I had [a] cataract due to diabetes. Now, we have our eatery again and are slowly getting better.*

**Lesbian participant, San Julian**

Another respondent described the following:

*Our coconut plantation was destroyed by [Super] Typhoon Yolanda and we weren't able to rehabilitate it for three or four years. I manage my land; my coconut farm is my own. It was DSWD [the Department of Social Welfare and Development] who processed the housing benefits and lesbian households were not given housing.*

**Lesbian participant, San Julian**

The former experience is supported by Somera and Abawag (2016) who, in the aftermath of Typhoon Haiyan (known in the Philippines as Super Typhoon Yolanda) recorded that displaced LGBT persons had to deal with discriminatory comments, were blocked access to sanitation facilities, and were excluded from disaster relief and livelihood initiatives.

During a validation workshop with representatives of the government and representatives of international organizations, participants indicated that DSWD considered families within a household rather than individuals. When questioned whether they would consider a lesbian couple as a family, officials were unclear as to what their mandate allowed them to do but did indicate that the DSWD itself was an LGBT-friendly employer with an active LGBT community within the organization.

The lack of a social protection system in times of economic shocks meant that participants spoke of external coping mechanisms. Respondents from FGDs noted that their extended family was the most reliable source of economic support as well as partners (particularly for those in cohabiting relationships). Some participants said they would rely on their savings if they had to face a period of unemployment. Another participant said their family has land on which they do subsistence farming, but occasionally the crop is good enough that they can sell a few sacks to pay family debts since families are "in it together".

Some, though not all, noted that friends could be a source of support when needed. A lesbian woman in one FGD said,

*If it weren't because of my friends, I would have lost my hope and faith. They gave us things we need, and they lend us money. We were able to start again with the help of our friends.*

**Lesbian participant, San Julian**

However, the overall reliability and extent of support from friends was highly mixed among the FGD participants and some respondents felt that friends were not likely to lend financial support. This held particularly true for responses from transgender women who indicated that friends were more likely to help in-kind (i.e. give food, shelter or emotional support) rather than financially. This could be a reflection on the precarity of transgender women's economic conditions overall.

A fairly frequently articulated concern across all groups was what would happen to LBT women when they get older, particularly if they do not have a partner. This was reiterated by a key informant during an interview who noted that older LBT women are particularly marginalized if they do not have children and have the responsibility to provide for their families:

*When I think of marginalized groups though, I think of elderly LBT women, who do not have children that they can rely on and often have to depend on nephews and nieces as their support income. This happens despite that fact that for older LBT women, they had to justify their SOGIE status often by taking on a larger share of income-earning in the households they lived in.*

Among transgender women in the FGDs, there was a strong sense of the transience of beauty with age which in turn would affect their ability to work in pageants (beauty and style contests from which prize money provides a source of income for many). They expressed concerns about lack of work in pageants supporting their income in the long-run and were aware of needing to find other options. This was one reason why a number of transgender women had sideline businesses so that they could build other sources of income for the future in contrast to lesbian and bisexual women who were more likely to discuss sidelines as a strategy to meet immediate economic needs.

Respondents from the FGDs had various recommendations for strengthening social protection for LBT women. One of the main recommendations was the need to institute insurance policies that provide unemployed people with statutory support, so they did not have to rely on their families. This would have impact on both individuals whose families are financially unable to support them, as well as those individuals whose families are hostile to their SOGIE and may withhold support.

Some respondents recommended improving care infrastructure for older LBT women, including retirement homes for elderly LBT women who may not be able

to rely on children to support them along the informal system of support in the Philippines. One participant suggested a

*Home for the golden gays – because a lot of gays are growing old without someone they can be with at home. We are planning to do that in our organization so there will be someone to take care of us when we get old.*

**Transgender woman participant, San Julian**

Respondents also wanted existing social protection and insurance to be made available to LBT partners as beneficiaries:

*because it is unfair if the partner will not benefit from what I worked hard for. What if my family is not my priority to receive ... it will all go to them, when my partner would need it more.*

**Lesbian participant, Albay**

## 7.3. Housing

The policy review carried out by GALANG and IDS (2013) examined two housing schemes – the National Urban Development and Housing Framework (2009–2016) and the Home Development Mutual Fund (HDMF) – finding significant gaps in LBT women's access to them.

The 2009–2016 National Urban Development and Housing Framework was reviewed, finding “no mention of sex or SOGIE as a requirement for coverage under the government's social housing programmes and there seems to be no reason for the law to be applied unequally on the basis of any of these categories” (p. 24). However, primary data were used to report that in practice, lesbian-headed households, previously living in informal dwellings, were systematically deprioritized during a resettlement process in Quezon City. Indeed, a representative of the Resettlement and Development Services Department of the National Housing Authority confirmed this de facto discrimination as, “families are prioritized during relocation, and same-sex couples are not considered family because they do not have legal papers to support this claim” (ibid.). The representative also confirmed no equality policy was in place. Our own brief review of the updated Urban Development and Housing Framework (2017–2022) confirmed that neither sex nor SOGIE are mentioned in the government's current flagship housing strategy document.

The HDMF, also popularly known as the Pag-IBIG Fund, was created in 1978 and updated following the 2009

HDMF Law. It is a government tax-exempt provident savings fund aimed at improving Filipino workers' access to finance for housing. Membership is mandatory for those covered by the SSS and GSIS; uniformed members of the Armed Forces of the Philippines, the Bureau of Jail Management and Penology, and the Philippine National Police; and Filipinos employed by foreign-based employers, whether deployed locally or abroad (Sec. 1). "(S)ouples who devote full time to managing the household and family affairs" are also allowed to become members of the Fund "provided that the person is at least eighteen (18) years old but not more than sixty-five (65) years old" (Sec. 3). The dependant(s) or beneficiary(s) of a member are entitled to receive benefits and the value of their contributions, following the member's death. However, the Pag-IBIG Fund displays similar traits as the other social policy instruments reviewed by GALANG and IDS, excluding LBT women and their dependents. Awareness of the fund and its benefits remains low among this group, and any surviving same-sex partner is prevented from being named as a legal dependant. Interestingly, both as a signal of the arguably limited efficacy of the Pag-IBIG Fund among the LBT population, and as an economic empowerment indicator, all focus group participants in the GALANG and IDS study reported "living in homes built on somebody else's land, whether owned by the government or private entities" (p. 26). Given the centrality of access to and ownership of land and other assets to the achievement of economic empowerment (Hunt and Samman, 2016), this appears to be an important avenue for further exploration.

## 7.4. Health

Turning to concerns about physical health, Lim (2011) notes three "pressing problems" among the LBT community: unemployment, harmful and unhealthy habits exacerbated through a lack of health care access, and sexual and physical violence – identifying a link between these three problems and low self-esteem among low-income LBT women. Having already discussed issues related to unemployment and underemployment above, in this and the next section we turn to the available evidence base relating to health and violence, abuse and harassment.

Several studies identified during our literature review have revealed gaps in LBT women's access to health care. These gaps can be seen across several key areas: exclusion from policies; health professionals' lack of knowledge and/or understanding of LBT health-related issues; and barriers faced by LBT women in accessing professional health care.

LBT women have been identified as marginalized within key policies. This includes CEDAW, whose provisions on

sexual and reproductive health do not explicitly address lesbians' specific health care needs, which may go some way towards explaining the lack of comprehensive health care for this group as the Convention is implemented (Isis International, 2010). Within the Philippines, the Philippine Health Insurance Corporation delivers the PhilHealth scheme, a national health insurance programme benefitting members whose contributions have been paid with packages including hospital care, outpatient care, emergency services and "other health care services that may be deemed appropriate and cost-effective" (Sec. 10, Art. III). However, gaps in PhilHealth have been identified for women as it does not cover vital violence support services, including gender confirmation surgery, psychotherapy and counselling, and other rehabilitation services to meet the scale of the need (Ermi Amor Figueroa Yap, quoted in Aragon-Choudhury 1998: 19).

A similar blind spot exists for members' dependants, as that noted earlier in relation to government social protection and housing schemes; in PhilHealth, a same-sex partner is not protected as a 'dependent spouse' under the PhilHealth Law as same-sex partners are not recognized as dependants, leaving them excluded from the government's main health care system (GALANG and IDS, 2013). FGD respondents raised this as a main concern when asked about their access to health, with a respondent saying

*We hope that beneficiaries for SSS and PhilHealth can be the bisexual/lesbian partner.*

**Bisexual participant, Albay**

Limitation in access to service provision feeds into a lack of knowledge, awareness and understanding of the health issues experienced among LBT women by health providers, a key issue identified in the literature. A report by Isis International (2010) presents a range of challenges in this area: lesbians and transgender people criticized health professionals for a lack of knowledge and expertise on lesbian and transgender health care, perceiving health services as "inappropriate, insensitive, and inaccessible" (p. 95), which discourages LBT women from seeking health care and leads to a lack of education among the LBT community about relevant issues, such as safe sex despite an increasing number of cases of sexually transmitted infections, and the safe use of hormone pills. Pervasive discrimination displayed by health care professionals has also been identified, for example where transphobic service providers have declined to serve transgender people – a problem compounded by medical ailments directly caused by a lack of wider societal acceptance of transgender people, such as urinary tract infections arising as a result of not being able to use public restrooms (ibid.).

During FGDs, transgender women in particular reported difficulty in accessing health care, experiencing high levels of stigma and discrimination in hospitals and other medical facilities, including for receiving services but also when trying to contribute, e.g. by giving blood. Even where there are health programmes in place, discrimination by health service providers can limit access. One transgender woman reported,

*There are elderly gays who travelled so far only to be treated that way by the doctor. She has a lot of reasons and excuses instead of just doing her responsibility. She [the doctor] will even shout at you when you disturb her. I don't know [why she is still there]... I told the mayor that there are lots of other doctors that are better and are near the place, so we don't have to wait for so long when there is an emergency.*

**Transgender woman participant, San Julian**

A key informant from a transgender women's organization reported that,

*It is harder for us to go to the provincial health officer who is a very religious person and has been against the distribution of condoms, arguing that people should promote abstinence ... A number of the transgender women in our organizations are going through transitions and they do not have resources or health services in San Julian that specially cater to them about the different pills and hormones, so the knowledge is often just crowdsourced from each other about who to go to and where.*

The effects of these barriers on transgender women were clear in discussion – several transgender women would take hormone pills without consulting doctors, sometimes experiencing side effects from unregulated doses, including taking pills ahead of beauty pageants, which were identified by many transgender women participants as a key means of supplementing income. Therefore, it can be seen that the limited economic opportunities open to trans women, coupled with limited health care, poses a significant health risk.

One respondent mentioned how she and her circle of friends would have to travel to the adjoining district to obtain condoms because the local health centre refused to stock them. Consequently, the local LGBT organization started stocking condoms at make-up and hair salons

to allow women easy access. Other FGD respondents stated that they often relied on word of mouth to obtain the pills they needed for transitioning.

Systemic barriers to accessing comprehensive health care services also include pay-as-you-go costs. The precarious financial situation of many LBT people means out-of-pocket expenses can significantly limit their ability to access services where payment is required, and in some cases mean that some self-medicate, such as transgender individuals who may self-prescribe medications such as hormone pills (Isis International, 2010).

Health insurance, when participants have it, is also not fit for purpose in supporting transgender women's realities, according to a transgender woman respondent:

*There are companies now that are advancing as well in line with equality globally. There are BPO [Business Process Outsourcing] companies as well that already promote inclusion in the work areas. I think the challenge that we are facing right now as trans people is with health care, because it's not part of our insurance. For example, on my end, I'm taking hormones. So, the requirement that I seek help from an endocrinologist or a psychologist, if any ... that's not part of our insurance companies. Say, for example, you've already undergone SRS [sex reassignment surgery], and you seek help from an ob-gyn, that's still not part of it because you're still labelled male. So, you can only get the benefits that the males are getting. So, there's no programme designed specifically for trans people. Even with the access to medication like hormones, we don't have that. For other companies, they are having a hard time implementing that because of the government of the Philippines as well.*

**Transgender woman participant, Cebu City**

LBT women in our online survey reported higher levels of subjective well-being – both current as well as that anticipated over the next 5 years – when compared to the corresponding levels from a nationally representative sample of Filipina women for an 11-year period (using Gallup World Poll, 2006–2016) (Figure 10). LBT women respondents to our online survey perceived their quality of life as appreciably higher than women nationally do and were uniformly also more optimistic about their well-being prospects over the next five years. This is an interesting

finding, despite the challenges LBT women face in their social, domestic and economic interactions. While we cannot conclusively explain the observed differences in levels, the pattern we see conforms to a combination of a few known drivers of well-being. The age of the respondents has a U-shaped/convex relationship with well-being; as our online survey sample consists largely of younger adults, they would naturally have a higher average level of well-being than the entire adult population (Graham and Pozuelo, 2017). The relatively high level of education among the online survey respondents is yet another possible factor for the higher level of well-being observed; education level is a robust predictor of household income which in turn is highly correlated with subjective well-being among women (Graham and Chattopadhyay, 2013). The other established facet is that individuals who face persistent adverse situations – in this case, discrimination, threats and even physical violence that LBT women face – over time, get conditioned and adapt to these circumstances (Graham, 2011). Recurrence of such adverse episodes and incidents fail to shock the system or lower their well-being appreciably. The distribution below is also consistent with the established pattern that most individuals remain innately optimistic about future prospects, even when facing adverse conditions at present.

## 7.5. Violence, abuse and harassment

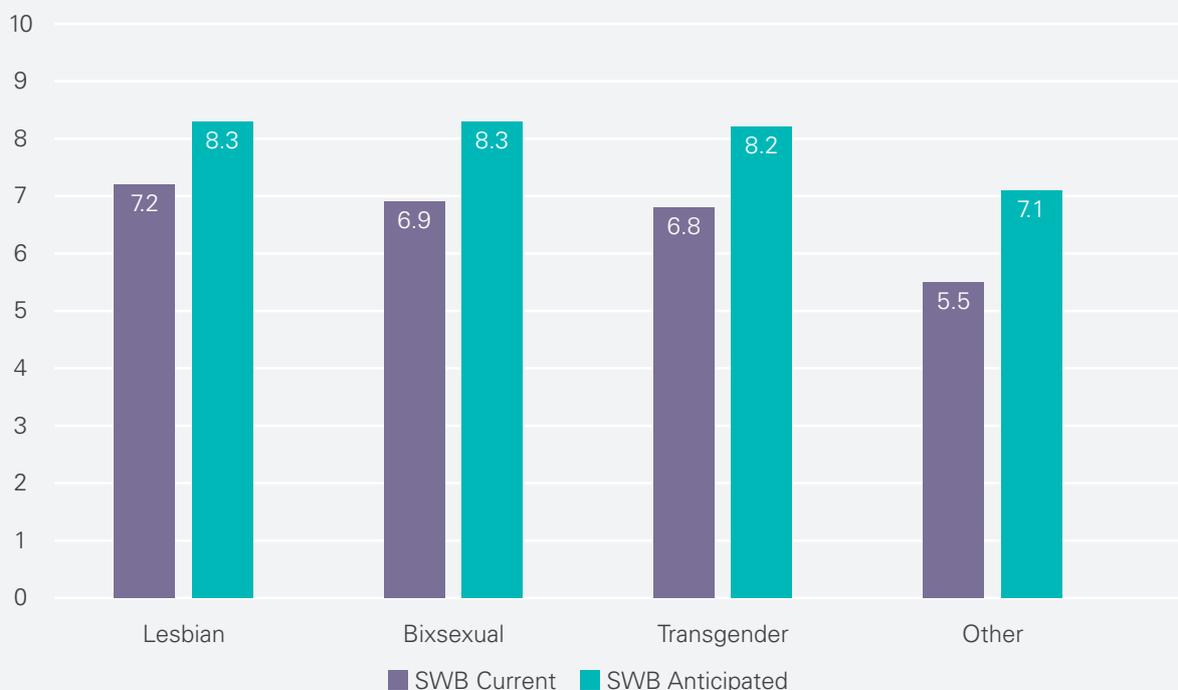
Our findings reveal widespread experience of different forms of violence against LBT women as adults and children, echoing UNICEF’s (2016) finding that the proportion of physical violence was highest (75%) among LGBT people compared to heterosexual males (65.9%) and females (61.8%) in the Philippines.

Among survey respondents, only 57 percent of respondents claim to have never been threatened or physically harmed on account of their gender identity or sexual orientation while 42 percent had experienced some degree of physical threat – of which 24 percent experienced it frequently or sometimes. When disaggregated into different groups, our online survey results showed that transgender women faced such threats (at home, as well as at the workplace and the local community) more often than lesbian or bisexual women (Figure 11).

In his work, Thoreson (2011) notes that queer individuals including LBT women face physical danger in “distant, unfamiliar environments and jobs that imperil or negate their gender identity and therefore put them in danger.”

**Figure 10: Subjective well-being among LBT women and women nationally**

Average levels on a 0–10 Cantril Self-Anchoring Scale across different groups, by SOGIE classification



Source: Online survey designed for this study; Statistics for women, nationally, is from Gallup World Poll (2006–2016).

Note: Sample size for online survey = 153. ‘Women’ reflect the scores for all women in the Philippines in Gallup World Poll surveys (2006–2016).

However, respondents in our FGDs noted that they had normally experienced violence at the hands of family members rather than neighbours or community members. One transgender woman recounted that her father asked her if she was trans/gay “but [I] could not answer as he was holding a belt.” A transgender woman participant from Quezon City reported that her father “doesn’t like soft manners.” A lesbian woman was beaten by her father when she came out to her family. Her father told her that her SOGIE was against God and told her to save money since she would not inherit any assets or finances from her parents.

Another FGD respondent indicated how her text messages to other bisexual women were revealed to the family:

*[What] my cousin did was to get all the numbers and texted them, and sent [a] message like, you also have a vagina, come here I will prove to you that you also have a vagina.*

**Bisexual participant, San Julian**

Moreover, the experience of violence in private settings was more common among older LBT women, with younger LBT women (i.e. below the age of 25 years) stating their coming out was usually conflict-free (discussed further in relationships with family in the subsequent section).

Nonetheless, experiences of violence, abuse and harassment in the workplace were frequently recounted during this research, corroborating previous studies. OutRight Action International (2014) has documented individual case studies describing instances of extreme violence against LBT women in the Philippines. During our fieldwork, transgender women in particular recounted similar experiences, reporting violence while engaged in sex work, with newer transgender women sex workers more likely to experience violence. They typically reported needing an older or more experienced transgender woman to look out for them, but not all of them had someone who could do this. One transgender woman asked a gay friend to watch over her when she was engaging in sex work “because something might happen.” She then treats the friend to food in recompense.

Transgender women engaged in sex work following migration abroad to seek paid work were particularly at risk of the effects of violence, typically having little recourse to support in such instances, as this account demonstrates:

*I have [had] a lot of [difficult experiences at work], actually. [The] latest was when I was in Taiwan. Someone tried to pay me fake money. The money was really fake. I calmly said, “get out.” He was going out, when he*

**Figure 11: Threat of violence or physical harm faced by LBT women**

Proportion of online survey respondents, by SOGIE classification (sample size = 153)



Source: Online survey designed for this study.

*suddenly grabbed me. He would push me to the wall, then would want to rape me. What I did was to fight back. Then, I started shouting. I was able to beat him. I thought that I would have killed him then. I choked him. Then I yelled in his face, he ran. That was my first time when I was working, my first time in the industry of escorting. I was raped by an Indian. I was in Hongkong that time. He pretended to be a customer. He hit me in the stomach. I mean ... he choked me, then he did so many things to me. I cannot do any action because of my work. The kind of work I'm doing is illegal. We do not have a manager. I have friends that preceded me. Because, like, in our industry, it's territorial. We do not easily bring in newbie harbatera [a 'snatcher'] as they break the current set-up, eh? Because to be honest, some are thieves, and [this] extremely lowers the prices. So, we want them to enter, join. We are territorial. There are others who were tied up after they were hold [sic] up. In Malaysia. Yes. Pretending to be a customer. They were aimed at and tied up. Took all of it. Sometimes, beaten up. Because of the nature of work, sometimes it is like that. Lots of risks.*

**Transgender woman participant, Cebu City**

Although the forms of violence reported were less extreme, lesbian and bisexual women also reported experiences of abuse and harassment while engaged in paid work. For lesbian women, harassment at work constituted being asked to “prove” or discuss their sexuality at work:

*Some guys ask me why I choose to have a relationship with a lesbian. They tell me they can love me better, make me happier, but I answer them, and I don't let them just make comments like that. I have the right to speak for myself because sometimes they say obscene words. At first, I get hurt with those kinds of comments but now I know how to answer back.*

**Bisexual participant, San Julian**

A bisexual respondent in an FGD noted that while such comments are common in the beginning after a while, workmates “get used to it”; harking back to our discussion in Section 5.3 on how discrimination in the form of speech would often become normalized in the work environment.

The high rate and prevalence of violence experienced by LBT women was recognized as a priority area for policy action. For example, one key informant felt that one of the most important issues for all women in the Philippines was the experience of different forms of violence and that the government has a key role to play in bringing about awareness and initiatives to

*counter [all forms of] violence against all women. Like still the forcing of lesbian women to be feminine. The forcing of bisexual women to keep the other half of their life, their relationships and personhood in the dark and in the closet.*

## 7.6. Relationships with family and community: self-determination, choice and freedom

As discussed in Chapter Three, LBT women's self-determination, choice and freedom of expression across the public and private spheres is key to their economic empowerment. Interestingly, there is some evidence from general surveys carried out in the Philippines of increased acceptance and tolerance towards people from minority SOGIE groups. Exploring this issue from the perspective of the general population (not LBT women specifically), a survey by Pew Research Center (2013) found that nearly 73 percent of respondents in the Philippines felt that “society should accept homosexuality” – making it among the most accepting societies (in the Pew study) both regionally and globally. This sentiment of acceptance was also more prevalent in the younger age cohorts of respondents (78 percent) as opposed to the more elderly (68 percent). Furthermore, the Gallup World Poll survey indicates that general attitudes towards the LGBT community in the Philippines have gradually grown more tolerant over 2006–2016.<sup>17</sup>

Freedom to express oneself (or not) in speech and otherwise operates at different levels within a society – household, public spaces (such as workplaces, schools and communal areas), community and at the local and

17 Graham and Chattopadhyay (2019) using Gallup World Poll 2006–2016 data.

national government levels. However, despite survey-based indications of increased tolerance towards LGBT groups, significant challenges to self-determination, choice and freedom of expression remain in practice. As GALANG and IDS (2013: p 7) observed, “Today, although Philippine law does not criminalize consensual same-sex acts and the principle of equality and non-discrimination are enshrined in the Constitution, homosexuality is policed by various social institutions, including the nuclear family, which often eschew any sexual behaviour that takes place outside the context of marriage and family life”.

We probed various aspects in relation to LBT women’s self-determination, choice and freedom of expression, with financial decision-making emerging as an important site of both opportunity and challenge, including due to close interlinkages between participants’ financial contributions and acceptance by their family. Our online survey explored LBT women’s freedom with regards to their income and financial resources in both regular, day-to-day functions as well as those that have significant long-term implications (Figure 12). Encouragingly, nearly 80 percent of our respondents reported that they are highly involved (always or most of the time) in making financial decisions that affect their personal expenditure.

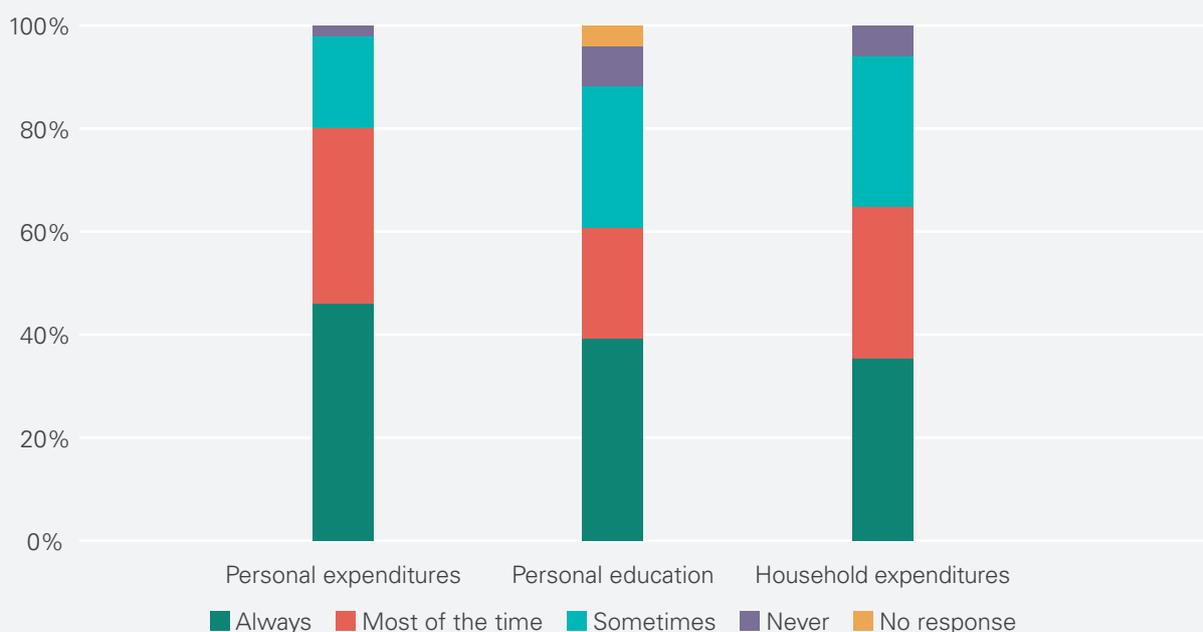
Online survey respondents in higher age groups expressed more control over decisions of personal expenditure, with those in the 25–34 age group having less independence than LBT women in other age groups (Figure 13).

However, LBT women were slightly less in control when making decisions about their education – although about 60 percent are still involved always or most of the time. Nearly 77 percent of LBT women made choices on whether to seek employment – regardless of whether full-time or part-time employment – “always” or “most of the time”; a similar proportion reported making decisions on the type of employment they seek. Yet the degree of independence in making household financial decisions was far lower for our online survey sample than autonomy in personal decisions. In fact, the degree of autonomy we would have expected to see increasing with age does not appear to hold for the small sample of respondents in the 45–54 age cohort (Figure 14) – a finding which merits further investigation in future studies.

Overall, respondents across the FGDs with LBT women expressed a large sense of responsibility to financially support their family (notably older parents and younger siblings and nieces) but how this economic relationship is enacted in practice differs among extended families.

**Figure 12: Frequency of making key personal and household decisions by LBT women**

Proportion of online survey respondents (sample size = 150)

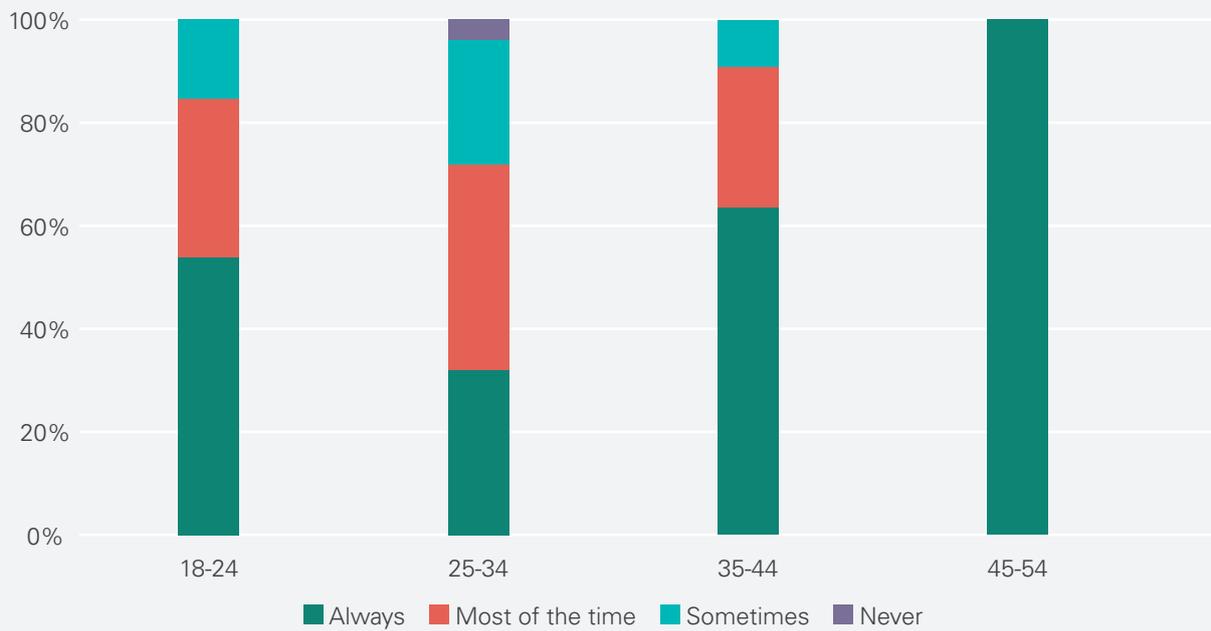


Source: Online survey designed for this study.

Note: The figure excludes the ‘other’ category of respondents.

**Figure 13: Frequency of making personal expenditure decisions by LBT women, disaggregated by age**

Proportion of online survey respondents by age category (sample size = 150)

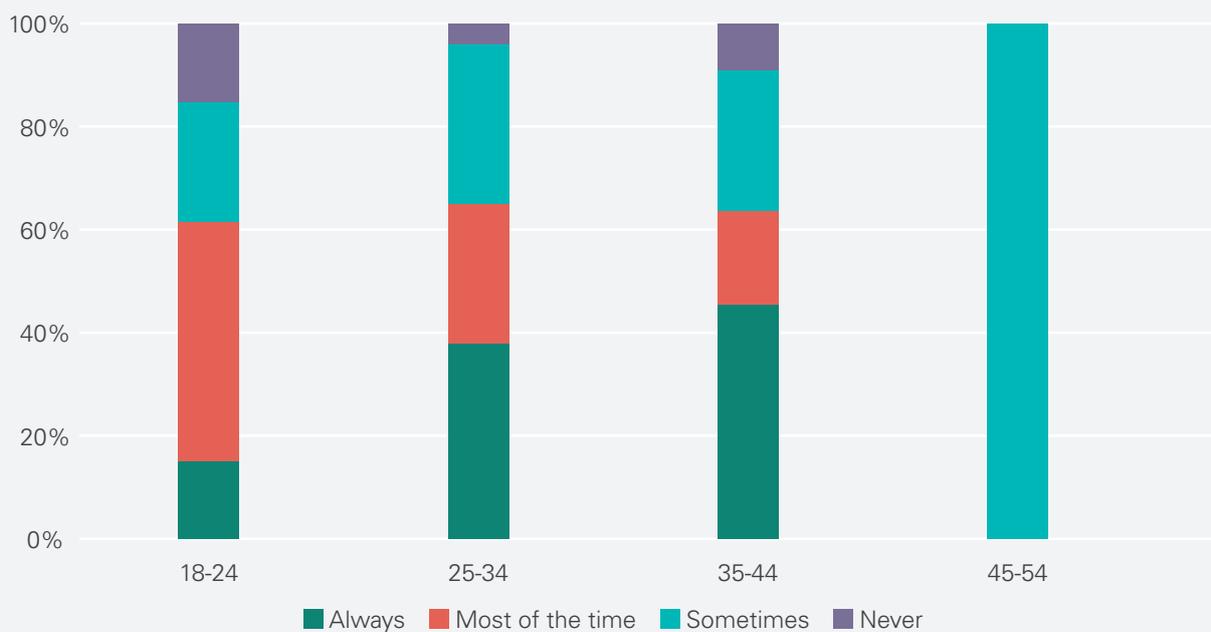


Source: Online survey designed for this study.

Note: The figure excludes the 'other' category of respondents.

**Figure 14: Frequency of household expenditure decisions by LBT women, disaggregated by age**

Proportion of survey respondents by age categories



Source: Online survey designed for this study.

Note: The figure excludes the 'other' category of respondents.

A significant share of respondents lived in extended family households and would contribute to housing and other expenses as and when they could. Those who were students or unemployed were rarely expected to contribute. If participants were employed or living with a partner, they often reported sending money to family members living elsewhere. Financial responsibilities extended beyond immediate family to include nephews and nieces (e.g. one participant was supporting a niece who lived with her).

Participants with children prioritized their own offspring above others in their extended family; conversely, many of those without their own family (a husband or wife and children) often had more responsibility for supporting parents and other members of extended family:

*We are five siblings, [of] which I am the youngest. I am the only one that does not have a family. So around 80 percent is my contribution to the family right now since I started working. Because my siblings told me that ... they have their different families already ... they said that, "you are the only one without a family, you will take care of them." So, when I was working, I would be saving. When I stopped in September, my savings, I gave it to my mother to be the capital for our sari-sari [neighbourhood convenience] store.*

**Bisexual participant, Cebu City**

However, at the same time only a small minority of participants were entirely financially independent, notably because of obligations or desires to support their immediate or extended family. In some cases, this meant that LBT women can take on debt from systems such as the 'Five-Six' scheme discussed above to support their families. A key informant noted,

Some [LBT women] live with families [that] are of 10 to 12 people and the joint income is not enough. And since you are the single person in your family, you have to take good care of your parents and it's the transgender women who have to take care of aging parents.

A clear finding emerged that participants of this study largely conform to widespread social norms to provide financial support to families. This came from the sense of responsibility frequently articulated by respondents, as well as from the online survey responses that identified a lower degree of independence in making household financial decisions; in fact, it was far lower than the autonomy in other spheres of decision-making.

Furthermore, corroborating with previous studies, financial contributions to families sometimes played a role in some participants' SOGIE being more accepted by their families – although this did not apply across the board. This statement from a transgender woman exemplifies comments made by several other FGD participants on the link between financial contributions and familial acceptance:

*When I started to cross-dress, I was afraid to go out or for my dad to see me. I would just go outside if there were no people anymore. Now there is no problem because it's me who mostly pays the bills ... as well as the marriage of my sibling, I spent for it. They are not asking but they got used to me providing [for] them.*

**Transgender woman participant, Davao City**

Some participants noted that becoming financially independent – by earning their own income and managing their own finances – was a deliberate strategy to be able to express their SOGIE freely, as noted by a bisexual respondent:

*Uhm, I still also live with my family. So, I came out two years ago, right? I was still in school. But before that, when I started college, I made it a point to not accept money from my parents. Like they'd put money in my account for enrolment and everything, for allowance, but I never took any of it because I really wanted to earn for myself. And then a big part of it was because I was kind of preparing myself that this is it, I wanna be open about it. And I don't wanna make it a big deal. I don't want them to hold that against me because it's the usual thing, "You still live in this house, we are feeding you, we give you, so you have to respect, you have to follow. You can't be a lesbian, you can't be bisexual." My thinking was starting college, I will not accept money from my parents because I don't want that to be had against me.*

**Bisexual participant, Cebu City**

Some participants noted that financial independence was a way of showing to their families that their SOGIE did not hold them back from success in life, as was assumed to be the case by the parents of several participants. Therefore, markers of success such as an education,

a job and an income “proved family wrong”. A bisexual respondent highlighted:

*My mom even told me that you will not achieve anything, you will not graduate, you will just get pregnant outside, such comments ... so now I proved that I am not like that ... I was able to do a lot in my life.*

**Bisexual participant, Davao City**

A transgender woman respondent shared monthly bills with her family, but also financially supported her young nieces and nephews as a way of maintaining a good relationship with them and to continue to be accepted now in her family and in the future:

*I do help my nephews because they make me not tired. I don't want that time comes that your nieces and nephews will ignore you. So, while they were young, I just embrace their needs. With my identity, I am proud that my niece says, “This is my aunt.”*

**Transgender woman participant, Davao City**

Participants gave varied responses around what would happen if they did not have an income or contribute financially to the family. In some cases, respondents said that the lack of a financial income would make their family think negatively about them. In other cases, respondents said that while families may have had more respect for them had they been earning, it would not make a difference in their material life since they would be financially supported by the family. One lesbian woman said that she had come out to her family and been accepted by them before she started earning money and her income has not made a difference to their relationship. But, as one transgender woman respondent observed, having pride in a child bringing in income may just be because LBT women are growing up and have to stand on own, suggesting some of the acceptance may also be part of a normal process of parents accepting the independence of their child who is becoming an adult.

Nonetheless, acceptance was not always complete within families, regardless of participants' financial situation. Some lesbian and bisexual FGD respondents reported that their families “hoped” they would get over the “phase” of being a lesbian or bisexual soon, and FGDs highlighted several cases of families ostensibly accepting the sexuality of LBT women but then stopping short of accepting their partners:

*There are still spare rooms in [my parents'] house, but my partner and I decided not to live there to avoid unnecessary comments..*

**Lesbian participant, San Julian**

In some cases, the strength of heteronormative models in Filipino society mean that participants were subject to traumatic experiences by their families, even if their families later come to accept their SOGIE. One FGD respondent who now has a good relationship with her family talked about how, when her family discovered her gender identity at around the age of 11, she went through significant abuse:

*Like, I just gave them a knife and I asked them “Just kill me anyway, you gave birth to me. Who am I anyway? You don't like me anyway, so just kill me!” I went through so much depression because of it, included in the reason I was depressed was because I was not accepted.*

**Transgender woman participant, San Julian**

In our online survey, only 54 percent of respondents reported that they felt accepted at home, indicating that acceptance in the most intimate living domain remained a challenge for LBT women. Within the wider cohort, transgender women indicated a much higher degree of such acceptance at home – contrary to their greater vulnerability experienced at workplace, as discussed above (Figure 15). This pattern possibly suggests a higher acceptance for diversity in gender identity – some of which may be physical – than when it is more commonly deemed as an issue of sexual preference, as reflected in one sentiment expressed in the FGDs that the individual could “get over the phase of being a lesbian or bisexual.”

However, the situation is clearly complex, with diverse family views in evidence. Two FGD respondents (a lesbian woman and bisexual women) noted separately that their families would not accept them if they came out as trans. As one noted:

*I don't have a partner right now ... My mom said that it's okay because if I had a boyfriend, I might get pregnant. They don't like transgenders. They told me not to become one.*

**Bisexual participant, San Julian**

Corroborating findings discussed above on how heteronormative models limit LBT women's expression outside the home (see Section 6.1 on uniforms and dressing on schooling and Section 5.3 on the impact of appearances on job search), respondents in FGDs discussed attempts by families to dictate to participants how to express themselves and live outside the house, even in households where families ostensibly accepted their SOGIE. A transgender woman said she was accepted in her house, but her family did not want her

to cross-dress outside the home. Another transgender woman said that early in her transition, she would dress as a man and change once she had left home, but now her family accepts her appearance. Other respondents reported self-censoring their appearances out of shame:

*When I leave the house, I dress as a man. Not because they do not accept it, but because I felt like I was ashamed to dress feminine in our house before. So, when I go out, I bring women's clothes. I change my clothes in my cousin's house.*

**Transgender woman participant, Cebu City**

The public sphere is also a site of complexity, notably in terms of acceptance and freedom of expression in the community and in public institutions. Our largely urban-based online survey revealed that the level of acceptance of transgender women in the community is perceived by respondents to be fairly high, while that of bisexual women is perceived to be lower in the community than at home – again pointing to the possibility that diversity in sexual orientation and preference is less accepted than that of gender identity (Figure 16).

Yet there remained evidence that the heteronormative idea of the family, and the role of the woman and man within it, can dominate and constrain gender expressions of FGD respondents when participating in community activities, such as those associated with religious institutions. In several cases, being identified or self-expressing openly as LBT led to discrimination, abuse and other harmful behaviour from religious groups. One bisexual FGD respondent with a masculine expression recounted an incident where she and other LBT women were taking part in a choral competition in the church and she was told,

*The chorale competition, it should just only be for men and women only ... if you sing alto, [then you should] should be a real woman. If you sing bass, it should really be [a man], so that's not allowed.*

**Bisexual participant, Davao City**

**Figure 15: Do LBT women feel accepted at home?**

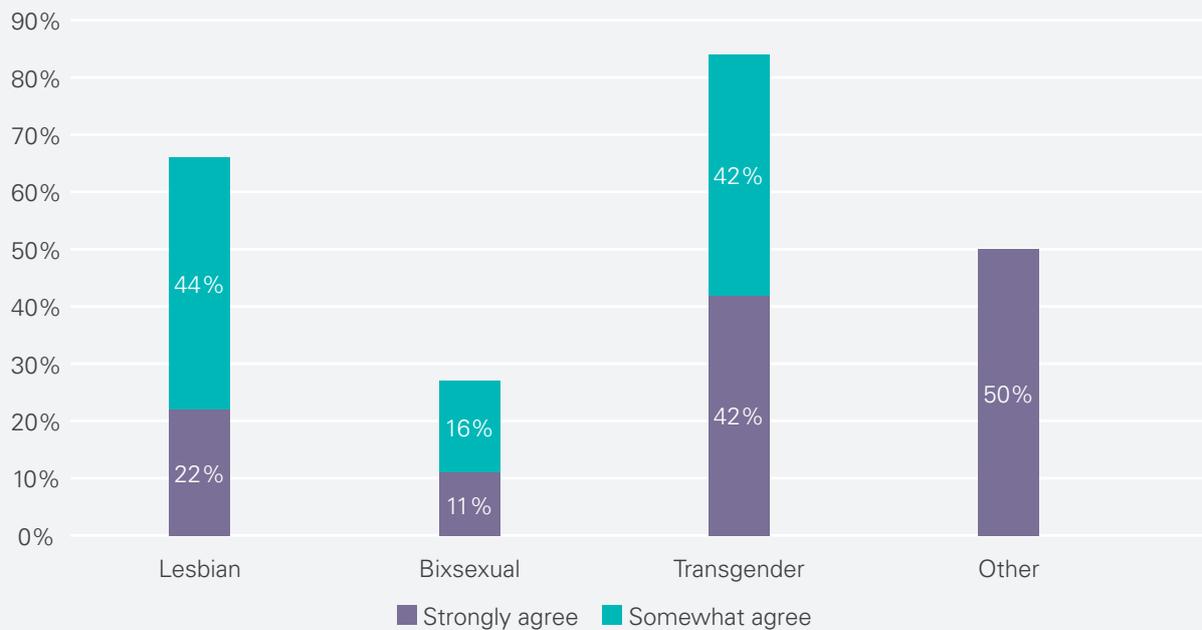
Proportion of online survey respondents who either “strongly agree” or “somewhat agree” that LBT women feel accepted at home (sample size = 150)



Source: Online survey designed for this study.

**Figure 16: Do LBT women feel accepted in the local community?**

Proportion of online survey respondents who either “strongly agree” or “somewhat agree” that LBT women feel accepted in the local community (sample size = 150)



Source: Online survey designed for this study.



## FINDINGS ON INITIATIVES IN THE PHILIPPINES FOR ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT OF LBT WOMEN

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### Key messages

- With the exception of civil society projects or support groups created by LBT women themselves, we identified very few initiatives specifically targeted at supporting LBT women, and LBT women were often excluded or sidelined from wider policies and programmes targeted at women or marginalized populations.
- When asked about government initiatives aimed at them, most rural LBT participants spoke of post-disaster relief, explaining that relief was provided after some (but not all) natural disasters, although there was evidence that there was some discrimination towards LBT couples which has been supported in secondary literature. LBT women in our study were unaware of initiatives such as the Gender-Responsive Economic Actions for the Transformation of Women (GREAT Women) initiative aimed at improving the sustainability, productivity and competitiveness of women's micro-enterprises.
- Transgender women in the FGDs typically reported being members of a transgender women's and/or gay organization. Lesbian and bisexual women felt that LGBT organizations did not cater particularly to their needs. Overall, the evidence pointed to lesbian and bisexual women being the least visible among LBT women and had the least strong civil society activity or advocacy.
- LBT respondents were largely unaware of private sector initiatives aimed at supporting LBT women. Those who worked for private companies said that while anti-discrimination policies often existed in such companies, they were not fully implemented in practice.

LBT women in our study were often not aware of initiatives (apart from ADOs discussed in Chapter Four in some cases and civil society interventions) for women's economic empowerment (WEE) in the Philippines by the government or private sector. Our findings, laid out below, demonstrated a significant gap in the support functionally available to LBT women.

## Government initiatives

Several FGDs with participants based in rural areas discussed statutory provision for relief following natural disasters. They explained that relief was provided after some (but not all) natural disasters, although there was evidence that there was some discrimination towards LBT couples, which has been supported in secondary literature (Somera and Abawag, 2016). During an FGD with bisexual women in Eastern Samar, several participants described receiving relief after a typhoon. Almost all participants lived with extended families and thus benefited from it as result of wider family registration which limited their exposure to possible discrimination in entitlement and allocation on the basis of being LBT. A participant in an FGD in rural Albay reported discrimination though:

*We were affected by a typhoon, but we did not get relief services since according to them LGBT couples are not a priority.*

**Lesbian participant, Albay**

FGD participants highlighted perceptions of discrimination in relief given by their local barangay following natural disasters, and while it was not clear that the issue related specifically to LBT identity, that conclusion cannot be ruled out. A respondent from an FGD with lesbian women explained what happened in her locality following a typhoon:

*Maybe, because they really pick who they give the relief goods to, if they are close with the certain family, then they give them the relief goods. There were cases that they'll include you in the list but will not give you the goods, but they will cross you out of the list regardless. They give housing to those whose house was partially or totally damaged. There was a lot of aid donated but the problem lies within the barangay, not the municipality. People from the LGU [local government unit] help in distributing the goods but their treatment [of people in need of goods] was unfair. There wasn't much issue on same-sex couples, but the problem*

*is, if you aren't close with the people giving the aid, you will not receive any.*

**Lesbian participant, San Julian**

In relation to this, FGD participants raised the issue of the current practice in government-provided disaster relief whereby support is offered to those who hold the DSWD-issued Disaster Affected Families Access Card (DAFAC). Currently the card is only registered to economically impoverished heteronormative families or single-parent families, thus excluding LBT women (Junio, 2017). As such, participants recommended that support should be made available per person rather than per family.

Neither participants in the FGDs nor participants in the government and CSO validation workshops held in Manila mentioned or discussed the GREAT Women projects (I or II) aimed at improving the sustainability, productivity and competitiveness of women's micro-enterprises. The absence in discussions is likely to indicate a coverage gap in the programme and/or limited effectiveness among LBT women engaging in micro-enterprises.

In Davao City, respondents in the FGDs noted the presence of a gender complaints desk at the local government but it lacked an IRR that would otherwise render it operational. However, according to one respondent,

*Our contemplation for the longest time is to really have a SOGIE-specific anti-discrimination ordinance. The government also has been pushing for free HIV testing. The local government also has been generous in supporting the advocacy of the coalition in pushing for the creation of the LGBT affairs commission. We've been doing national consultation.*

**Transgender woman participant, Davao City**

Another noted that,

*In our barangay they really take care of the LGBT community, they have livelihood programs for us.*

**Transgender woman participant, Davao City**

A key informant noted that government programmes needed more data to ensure that government programmes address the specific needs of all women rather than treating all women as homogeneous:

*The government at the centre should not be prioritizing one kind of woman over the other. All women should be equally eligible for all programmes.*

However, given the political implications of recognizing non-binary SOGIE identities such as bisexuals in policy (pushback and protest), it is unclear if disaggregated data at the local level would be sufficient to adapt local programmes to LBT women.

## Civil society or non-governmental initiatives

A key finding of this research is that civil society organizations are a critical source of support for LBT women, including because of a lack of availability or access to formal support mechanisms. For example, transgender women FGD participants typically reported being members of a transgender women and/or gay organization. Some women, such as those in Eastern Samar, felt they would be supported by their community and voluntary organizations in the aftermath of natural disasters and/or economic shocks:

*Our group, TGIS, experienced having one member lose a loved one. We also contributed to be able to donate and they did the same to me when my father died. We can also depend on each other financially. That is the main type of help we give each other.*

**Transgender woman participant, San Julian**

Some voluntary organizations were better able to offer emotional support rather than other forms of support due to lack of funds. A respondent in Davao noted that her local organization may help her with “coping” if she lost her job but would not be able to do so financially. Some organizations help their members find work. A lesbian woman spoke about her organization:

*[We] started an LGBT group, Kabataan and Can Avid. There are lots of gays in Can Avid and we want to give them the opportunity, mostly runway models and pageant goers. We give them support to enhance their talents. We also do feeding programmes for children and donate school supplies. The frequency of such programmes depends on our budget. We don't push through if we lack budget. Sometimes, the money comes from our personal savings. But we really hope that at least once a month, we'll be able to conduct such programmes.*

**Lesbian participant, San Julian**

Some transgender women were less sure about the degree to which they could rely on organizations in their community. Lesbian and bisexual women in some FGDs felt that LGBT organizations did not provide similar levels of support to all groups. For instance, lesbian and bisexual respondents in Eastern Samar did not report having their own organizations and felt that the main organization in the region provided more support to transgender women and gay men. In an FGD with bisexual women, participants noted that the local LGBT group has more gay members than lesbians and that organizations of gay men are often the first to emerge and gain access to support. Several lesbian women in different FGDs discussed how they would like to start a lesbian support group, including because there are already more gay men's groups and support for men:

*We don't have lesbian and transgender women organizations, but we are planning to make LGBT organizations, hopefully this year. We are confident about the population.*

**Lesbian participant, San Julian**

In some cases, it is hard for an organization to get off the ground when there is an absence of sponsorship and LBT women were busy in paid, unpaid and domestic work:

*What they want is for us lesbians to have our own organization – conduct our own election, who we want to be our president, for us to have unity. But the president of the gay's organization asked us to register in their organization. I told them ours is different, we want our own association. Until now, we don't have our own group yet. We aren't able to establish it yet, we rarely meet each other. We only see each other during night time, during the day, all of us are busy. During weekends, we do our laundry and household chores. But now, a lot of us cannot commit yet because of competing priorities like taking care of parents, cooking, etc. We need a sponsor, it's hard when we don't have our sponsor. We have to give snacks to our members ... without snacks they will not come [...] So it's hard to organize when we don't have anything to serve for them. We have to feed them.*

**Lesbian participant, Dinagat**

Overall, the evidence pointed to lesbian and bisexual women being the least visible among LBT women and having the least strong civil society activity or advocacy. A key informant noted that such a phenomenon could be tied in with dominant gendered notions of women's self-expression. This is the idea that feminine women (and masculine men) are more acceptable in society, and therefore their voices are heard more clearly, compared with masculine women or feminine men.

*Transgender women are so assertive because of privileging of feminine women [...] Because there are gay men who present as masculine, metrosexual, here is some space and protection for them in that sense, though it springs from a non-enlightened worldview that affords transgender women some space. There are some critical things about the platform that transgender women use to forward their agenda and that of the broader LGBTI. They have their dynamic and they have their inequality also, but I also see a lot of solidarity among them. It's really beautiful to see the unity of their struggle and how they share it among themselves.*

The solidarity shown by community organizations was critical for some participants:

*My mom came from a poor family, so she's used to the inconvenience of life, we were also trained for that situation. I think my friends and I will be helping each other. In our organization, when a member loses a loved one, we are there to help our member financially.*

**Lesbian participant, San Julian**

One respondent noted that for LBT women, organizations were significant because

*Those who grow old without a partner or children, we want to help them. We want to build a home for the aged.*

**Lesbian participant, San Julian**

Finally, echoing the discussion in Chapter Four on the importance of strategic advocacy by civil society to further ADO implementation, building strong relationships between public authorities and LBT women's

organizations is critical to ensure that this constituency's needs and priorities are articulated and responded to. Participants gave various suggestions for how this could be realized in practice (which were corroborated or built upon by validation workshop participants), including ensuring that LBT women's organizations are identified and recognized as key stakeholders by policymakers at all administrative levels and ensuring formal channels are established for regular and meaningful dialogue with them. Turning dialogue into meaningful action was also felt to be critical, including by recognizing LBT women's organizations as specialist organizations which are often best placed to design and deliver programmes aimed at supporting the economic empowerment of their constituency. Therefore, it is important to ensure that public and other donors' funds are channelled towards the most legitimate, accountable and representative LBT women's organizations.

## Private sector initiatives

Respondents were largely unaware of private sector initiatives aimed at supporting LBT women, which may be because few participants in the FGDs were involved in the formal private sector. Among those respondents who did engage with the formal private sector, they noted that Business Processing Outsourcing (BPO) companies such as call centres<sup>18</sup> were the most open to hiring LBT women, as long as they were not locally owned by a religious leader or another entrepreneur with strong religious convictions – this often led to LBT women's exclusion from or discrimination against them in the business. Indeed, some BPOs were noted for promising initiatives which provided support to LBT women, for example the partnership with an organization supporting blind people highlighted by Mary (see Box 3) – although it should be noted that this partnership was primarily aimed at blind jobseekers, not necessarily those with a minority SOGIE identity.

Respondents otherwise reflected that although most private companies had anti-discrimination policies, they were not being carried out in practice. A transgender woman noted that a colleague referred to her as "Sir" even when she was dressed in a feminine manner.

18 Referred to interchangeably as BPOs and call centres by participants during fieldwork and by authors in this report.

### **Box 3: Profile of Mary**

Mary (not her real name) is a 32-year-old blind lesbian woman in Manila. She is studying for a Master's degree and, at the same time, working in a call centre in Bonifacio Global City (BGC), Taguig. She started working and studying in 2017. Previously, she worked at a financial services company as a customer service agent before moving onto work in the human resources (HR) unit. Before this, she worked in the sales centre of another call centre in Quezon City. She has also held jobs as a freelance transcript writer and an online coach in English.

She is much happier in her current job and school. She says as a lesbian she does not encounter any discrimination at her work and her employers and colleagues are indifferent to her sexuality as long as she performs her work. She proudly notes that both she and another blind friend applied with many others to work at her current BPO but only she and her friend were accepted. At the call centre in Quezon City, she gained her position because she had been referred by an organization for the blind that was in partnership with the call centre. In the past, she had applied for a number of jobs online, but she felt that when she disclosed her disability, she was not considered for the job because of a prejudice that her blindness would impede her ability to do online work.

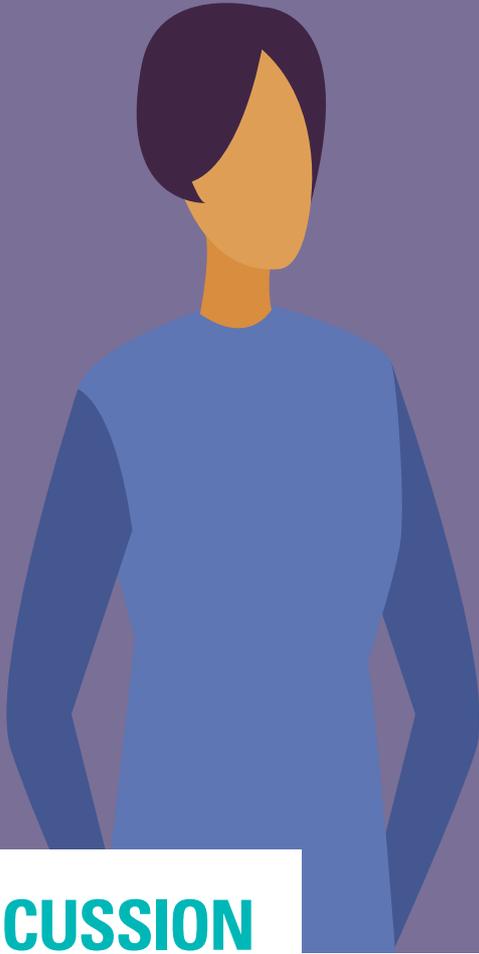
She recounts not having experienced discrimination on the basis of her sexuality at her workplace; she is, however, conscious of transgender women experiencing the environment differently:

*What I see as a problem is for trans, they resign from BPOs because they are harassed by the guard when they use the CR [the restroom also known as the comfort room in the Philippines]. They are being bullied by the supervisors and teammates. But for me as a lesbian, there is no discrimination. Also, there is no discrimination as to my disability.*

Mary does not need to send any money home because her father and two younger male siblings are all working. She does not see it as her obligation in these circumstances though she notes her contribution to be in the form of the health care for her mother, which her company pays for. Her family had always accepted her whether she has a job or does not have a job. Her mother, though, "doesn't like" when Mary brings home a female lover. At the same time, Mary perceives that as a person living with a disability, she cannot count on the government to support her in times of need and she can only realistically count on her family or herself. For those reasons, Mary explains,

*economic empowerment for me personally is if I am able to support myself without depending on my family, financially.*

Mary is unaware of the ADO in effect in Quezon City explaining, "I am not active, I do not go out often. I do not have any idea as to government programmes." She feels that the government can make the biggest difference by making education inclusive for LGBT people in the country and wanted to see ideas coming from a conference convened for that purpose.



## DISCUSSION

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This research has aimed to shed light on the extent of the economic empowerment of LBT women in the Philippines, with the aim of increasing understanding of their realities, preferences and needs. The findings reveal a somewhat mixed picture around many of the key components of economic empowerment as conceptualized at the start of this report – namely, the extent to which they experience choice, independence and control in their economic lives, and the extent to which individual and structural factors act at family, community and national levels to support or constrain their economic advancement. It has also revealed strong links between different factors contributing to women’s economic empowerment as conceptualized in the framework guiding this study, for example, that short educational trajectories hinder labour market opportunities or that structural discrimination and negative social norms and attitudes pose barriers to LBT women’s entry into quality jobs they are qualified for. Urgently addressing the challenges identified is critical to realize the SDG promise to leave no one behind and ensure that the economic empowerment of *all* women is realized.

Significant sites of progress, along with some cautious glimmers of hope, provide cause for optimism about the overall trajectory of WEE in the Philippines. Nonetheless, these are often matched with ever-present constraints to progress. Key examples of such contradictory findings include the legal and policy environment for LBT women’s rights, which has seen progress at the local level with a wave of local ADOs guaranteeing protection against discrimination based on sexual orientation being adopted by local governments. Yet full implementation of many of the ADOs remains elusive in practice. At the national level, the stalled ADB/SOGIE Equality Bill provides a stark reminder of entrenched political and social barriers to the advancement of a progressive agenda to advance the rights of those with diverse SOGIE.

Similarly, our findings point to encouraging signs of changes in social attitudes towards LBT women, with younger LBT women (i.e. below the age of 25 years) increasingly citing a positive experience of coming out to their families and other immediate networks, as well as acceptance in the workplace. However, such progress cannot obscure deeply entrenched challenges faced by other LBT women cohorts, notably experiences of

violence, abuse and harassment – with 42 percent of respondents to our online survey having experienced some degree of physical threat and interpersonal violence in the domestic setting, notably among older LBT women. There were also various accounts from LBT women of violence and harassment experienced across their diverse workplaces. While labour exploitation and abuse is undoubtedly a significant feature of LBT women’s migration experiences, some participants felt migration provided an opportunity for increased freedom of expression of their SOGIE, which in turn led to increased self-esteem and confidence, including upon return back to the Philippines.

This research confirms that the employment landscape has a significant influence on LBT women’s economic empowerment, with ability to access quality paid work critical to economic security and well-being. Overall, while some positive examples of support to increase the inclusion and advancement of LBT women in the workplace emerged, the lack of decent work remains widespread among LBT women, with many subject to occupational segregation and leading them to create a patchwork of livelihoods as a means of attempting to achieve economic security. Of all participants, transgender women spoke most clearly of economic insecurity, including as a result of limited economic opportunities. They were concentrated into highly precarious and exploitative sectors including the sex industry, where they had a low and irregular income and faced frequent wage thefts from clients, with little recourse to improve conditions. Importantly, even where there was some evidence of the realization of LBT women’s choice and control over their income-generating activity – such as transgender women indicating choosing courses that would allow them to express their SOGIE (e.g. maintaining long hair and dressing according to their gender) – this was often in highly stereotyped occupations accompanied by job precarity and poor working conditions. In this context, it is clear that ‘choice’ often remains highly constrained in practice for many LBT women, with many higher-quality economic opportunities inaccessible to them, notably due to persistent discrimination in hiring, promotions and treatment in the workplace, as well as physical infrastructure which serves to limit options and exclude some groups, such as by strict gender-based stipulations around access to restrooms and accommodation.

Some sectors emerged as critical sites of discrimination against LBT women – notably education and health, and in statutory policies and services such as social protection. The education system in particular emerged as an area of significant concern given the negative experiences recounted by participants, including bullying and

discrimination by both students and teachers in schools, which, in some cases, makes LBT women drop out of school, despite laws such as the Anti-Bullying Law of 2013 in the Philippines. While there was some evidence of personal autonomy around education – nearly 60 percent of our online survey respondents (in the age cohort 25–34 years) said they make all or most decisions pertaining to their personal education. Our FGDs showed LBT women’s choices about education are constrained by the external environment of discrimination which determines how long they stay in formal education and also which disciplines they choose. The more SOGIE friendly a school or a discipline, the more likely LBT women in our sample were likely to continue with formal education. Aside from the immediate harm this causes LBT women, failure to tackle such systemic challenges poses a significant barrier to LBT women’s economic advancement in the long-term due to limited labour market engagement options caused by education cut short.

Clearly, then, there is an urgent need to redress the myriad entrenched barriers to LBT women’s economic empowerment. However, the findings of this research clearly demonstrate the heterogeneity of experiences of LBT women in the Philippines, corroborating the central tenet of our framework that there is no ‘one size fits all’ approach that can be employed by those looking to support their economic empowerment. First and foremost, some LBT women remain invisible and often inaccessible, meaning ascertaining their priorities and needs is an acute challenge. Indeed, our own work is testament to this challenge: in conducting this research, we encountered significant difficulty in identifying participants from some of the potentially most marginalized cohorts of LBT women, such as older LBT women and those from religious minorities. This clearly signals that concerted, sustained effort is required to ensure no one is left behind as initiatives ostensibly aimed at supporting LBT women are developed and implemented. This will require innovative and sustained funding, including by ensuring adequate fiscal space for public programme implementation and ensuring public funds are channelled to support LBT women, as well as the institution of strategic development partnerships.

Relatedly, diversity in LBT women’s lived realities mean that they have very different starting points in their economic lives. A key example is their family situation, which affects different aspects of empowerment including their level of independence, choice and control over economic resources. Overall, respondents across the FGDs expressed a large sense of responsibility to financially support their family (notably older parents and younger siblings and nieces), while others were supported by their family, and others were more

independent – either through voluntarily making new living arrangements or involuntarily because they were asked to leave their household after disclosing their SOGIE. Only a small minority of participants were entirely financially independent, and did financially support their immediate or extended family, thus making their own individual economic circumstances precarious. Indeed, increased economic independence and security can play a positive role in improving LBT women’s self-expression, with our primary evidence corroborating previous studies that financial contributions to families played a role in some participants’ SOGIE being more accepted by their families.

Compounding the challenge is that economic opportunities between LBT women are clearly not equal, with some better placed than others to navigate the economic landscape than others. Central to this are the less tangible supports available to some women, notably the role of informal networks of family and relatives. The role of connections in accessing paid work emerged as critical for many LBT women jobseekers, particularly for some of the jobs viewed relatively more favourably by participants, including government jobs and in some parts of the private sector. Although this can be seen as an endemic reality to be navigated within the labour market for all jobseekers, it also means that those without such social capital remain excluded. Similarly, those who are better known or better placed in their workplaces perceived that they experienced less discrimination. In addition, respondents often reported needing to take advantage of financial support from informal networks – including friends, family and community groups – for example, in the absence of formal lending mechanisms when starting or growing an enterprise, or when facing an economic shock. However, again, their recourse to such informal support was highly variable, with some better able to rely on such informal sources of help than others. It is clear that more equal, formal and accessible structures are critical to boost LBT women’s equal access to economic opportunities and stability, notably those of the most marginalized groups without access to such informal support.

A final key challenge arising from this research to those seeking to further women’s economic empowerment is the critical need to base efforts and support on LBT women’s own understandings of their situations. However, evidence uncovered during this research draws attention to some of the inherent challenges in reconciling predefined concepts in relation to women’s economic empowerment, rights and equality with women’s own priorities and understandings. For example, very few LBT participants articulated what the concept of empowerment meant to them directly, possibly as a result of a lack of resonance of ‘empowerment’ as a

concept in their lives. Similarly, participants in a validation workshop in Albay felt that SOGIE was an alien term which was not used locally in practice, despite the institution of an ADO based on concepts aligned with SOGIE, with local terms gaining more traction such as ‘*Binabae*’ for a transgender woman.

Other examples included gaps between aspects of economic empowerment increasingly prioritized by international actors as a result of inclusion in the SDGs and other global policy frameworks (e.g. the ILO Decent Work framework) and participants’ own understandings of priority areas for change – such as unpaid care, which forms a key part of the SDG agenda and was identified as a reality in participants’ lives, but which they did not see as a burden and therefore not a priority. A final example is that of discrimination in the workplace: participants recounted experiences that they themselves did not identify as discrimination, but which were classified as such by other participants, or even policy frameworks aimed at reducing the frequency and impact of such discrimination.

Clearly then, efforts to support economic empowerment will have limited meaning and impact in LBT women’s lives if gaps in understanding – including those between concepts and language used in some local policy frameworks and LBT women’s own understandings of the issues affecting their lives – are not bridged, with concerted effort made to ensure that changes sought are meaningful to those affected.

Going forward, then, we reiterate that efforts to support economic empowerment should rest on a central tenet of positive changes in LBT women’s personal lives, based on their own personal starting points and priorities. Such an approach will be holistic, meaning that it directly responds to individual- and structural-level enablers and constraints to LBT women’s economic empowerment, and incorporates a concerted effort to leave no one behind by ensuring that the most hidden and marginalized LBT women are identified and supported.

In practice, a critical means to achieve this will be through concerted action by a coalition of actors, including governments and public institutions, the private sector, civil society and international institutions. Notably, it will be critical to extend support to the actors at the forefront of advancing LBT women’s economic rights and empowerment, including to those who are there as a result of being deeply rooted in the communities in which LBT women reside. Traditionally, women’s rights organizations and movements have played a key role in advancing economic empowerment. They have often done this through strategies based on the principle of gender justice, including building solidarity, shifting

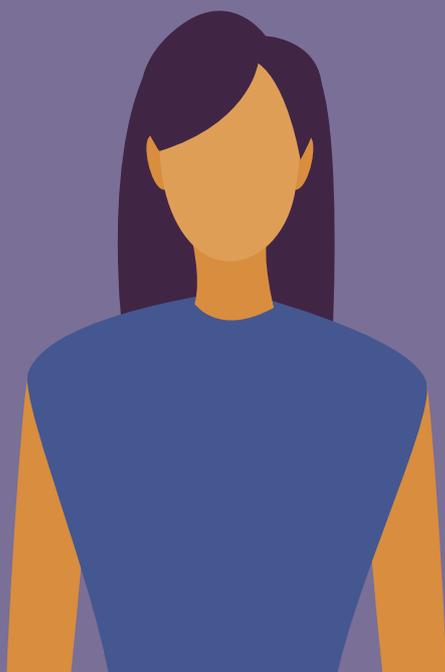
gendered power relations and supporting women's self-esteem and recovery from violence and abuse; and often through joint strategic work with labour, economic justice environmental and other movements to secure gains related to economic empowerment.

This research has shown that critical to the lives of LBT women is collective action by civil society and movement actors, including specialist LBT organizations which are composed and representative of LBT women themselves. Identifying these organizations and supporting their work will be critical for the economic advancement of their constituents, as will enabling them to build strategic alliances with wider justice movement allies. Ensuring the incorporation of analysis of the specific challenges faced by LBT women and the priority actions needed to address them into the work of these wider movements – including women's rights organizations which have not traditionally focused specifically on LBT women's priorities – will be critical in building broad-based support.

Finally, it is critical to remain vigilant around the potentially profound changes underway across economic, social, political and environmental domains. Concerns around climate change and the impacts of a radically different

future of work have led to high-level policy discussions globally around how to ensure policy and practice are able to meet the needs of populations in the face of impending change. The case of LBT women in the Philippines is no different. For example, this research hints at current challenges linked to intergenerational economic relationships, which may be amplified in years to come as LBT women without children or with their partners not recognized as their family are assigned ever more responsibility for supporting ageing parents and other members of extended family through their paid and unpaid work – but without necessarily benefitting from similar guarantees to meet their own economic and care needs when they themselves get older, particularly in cases where they do not have partners and/or children. Therefore, there is the need to remain adaptive and responsive, and ensure that support for women's economic empowerment is well-targeted and effective in the present, while also remaining fit for purpose and able to meet the major challenges that may arise in LBT women's lives in the future.

With this in mind, we now present a set of priority recommendations for action.



## RECOMMENDATIONS TO FURTHER THE ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT OF LBT WOMEN IN THE PHILIPPINES

### Recommendations for national government

- Strengthen the national legal framework for the economic empowerment of LBT women, notably by:
  - Amending the Magna Carta of Women (Republic Act No. 9710) to ensure it is inclusive of LBT women, and that SOGIE is explicitly named as a recognised grounds of discrimination against women under the law's scope.
  - Supporting the passage and implementation of the Anti-Discrimination Bill/SOGIE Equality Bill and ensure the Bill
    - Includes provisions on the penalization of discriminatory acts against people with diverse SOGIE, including non-hiring or dismissal; workplace violence and discrimination; refusal of admission to or services from public institutions including those providing educational, training and skills development, and health and social services; and denial of access to establishments or facilities.
    - Ensures full gender recognition, including the right to change gender identity in official documentation and/or recognition that sex assignment at birth is separate from gender assignment.
    - Supporting passage of equal marriage laws for LGBT people, including clear provisions on division of property within same-sex marriages, and laws that allow LGBT people to adopt children and access surrogacy.
- Ensure LBT women's full and equal access to education, training and skills development, notably by:
  - Increasing capacity and collaboration between the DoE, the Commission on Higher Education and TESDA to improve access to and the quality of education for people with diverse SOGIE.
  - Integrating SOGIE awareness into the academic curriculum, including sex and relationships education and information about minority LBT women (e.g. disabled LBT women, LBT women from religious minorities and ethnic groups), as well as working with LBT women to develop and

- implement SOGIE orientation and training across all educational institutions.
- Ensuring freedom of expression in educational institutions at all levels, notably by penalizing the imposition of gender conformity criteria such as uniforms, hair length and stipulations around dress codes deemed ‘appropriate’ according to gender.
  - Providing confidential counselling to LBT students, including as they navigate disclosing their SOGIE identity (‘coming out’), and ensuring support in the event of violence, abuse or harassment.
- Support access to quality employment in line with LBT women’s priorities, including those of groups of LBT women who may face additional labour market barriers such as disabled or older LBT women, notably by:
    - Developing initiatives to support access to diverse livelihoods – including waged and self-employment – particularly training and skills development for LBT women in line with their preferences.
    - Developing innovative partnerships with education and skills development sectors (statutory and non-statutory providers) to expand and improve choice and the accessibility of training and skills development, for example through increasing LBT women’s access to online courses such as those run by TESDA.
    - Supporting collaboration between local LBT organizations and DOLE to develop and implementing activities that promote the employment of LBT populations, such as enabling access to funds for microenterprises run by the LBT population.
    - Developing partnerships with employers, including in informal enterprises, to implement workplace-based initiatives countering workplace discrimination and harassment, and supporting LBT women’s equal opportunities and treatment in all aspects of their working lives, including recruitment, retention and promotion.
    - Ratifying and fully implementing the ILO Violence and Harassment Convention, 2019 (No. 190).
  - Ensure LBT women’s full access to quality health care, notably by:
    - Eliminating discrimination against LBT women in health services, including by developing LBT sensitization guidelines and implementation training to be delivered to all health care providers, and instituting sanctions for discriminatory treatment against LBT women within health care services.
    - Developing tailored programmes to support the psychological and mental health of LBT populations.
  - Investing in outreach around HIV and AIDS, including prevention, diagnosis and treatment.
  - Including LBT partners as beneficiaries for PhilHealth and mandating the recognition of same-sex partners as valid beneficiaries across public and private schemes with provisions for spousal/partner treatment.
- Ensure LBT women’s full and equal access to social protection, notably by:
    - Recognizing LBT partners as beneficiaries for social spending on an equal basis to heterosexual partners and spouses.
    - Providing support in the case of economic shocks and natural disasters, including as a result of unemployment, ill health or unemployment.
    - Ensuring their economic security during routine life events such as maternity, childbirth and older age.
    - Developing integrated care infrastructure based on
      - The right to receive care for those requiring services, including early childhood education, childcare and care for older persons, and
      - The right to recognition and decent working standards for care providers, which considers the specific experiences and needs of LBT women across the life course.
  - Expand initiatives to increase public awareness of SOGIE (for example, through the creation of a national LGBT commission) and to eliminate discriminatory attitudes and behaviours, notably by tackling all forms of violence against LBT women.
  - Invest in improving the capacity of the Philippine Statistics Authority to gather robust sex- and gender-disaggregated data on LGBT populations in the Philippines.
  - Tackle violence, abuse and harassment by ensuring all initiatives aimed at prevention of and response to violence against women and girls fully consider the needs of LBT women, and support specialist LBT organizations to develop prevention initiatives and provide comprehensive support to survivors of violence.
  - Improve the rights of migrant LBT women workers by ensuring safe and legal migration pathways leading to quality employment opportunities for migrant workers, including through strengthened collaboration between DOLE, the Philippine Overseas Employment Administration, civil society (including LBT and migrant workers’ groups), recruiters, employers and host country governments, among others.
  - Ensure all programmes to support LBT women are sustainably funded, including by ensuring adequate

fiscal space within key government services (notably education, health, labour and skills development and social protection), and ensuring the allocation and disbursement of funds of existing budgets (such as the Gender and Development budget) includes LBT women-focused initiatives.

- Ensure reportorial and redress mechanisms are in place for LBT women that have been discriminated against. Ensure these mechanisms are effective, enforceable, and adequately staffed. Special care should be taken to ensure safety for LBT women who speak out on instances of discrimination.

## Recommendations for local government

- Improve coordination between statutory, voluntary and private entities to ensure the adoption and implementation of ADOs, with comprehensive implementation plans developed through a process of meaningful engagement with LBT representatives, and which are fully costed, monitored and evaluated, with measures in place to ensure their continuity and sustainability in the event of administrative changes.
- Ensure reportorial and redress mechanisms are in place for LBT women that have been discriminated against in non-compliance with ADOs. Ensure these mechanisms are effective, enforceable, and adequately staffed. Special care should be taken to ensure safety for LBT women who speak out on instances of discrimination.
- Increase knowledge of ADOs among key implementing stakeholders, including by sharing information on good practice and 'success stories' for initiatives which have worked to further progress ADO implementation, share learning on opportunities and challenges and galvanize action among others.
- Identify and support 'champions' and other allies and develop an official mandate and framework within which to improve the adoption and implementation of ADOs, including at the highest political levels and within the community.
- Institute and build the capacity of barangay LGBT helpdesks, ensuring they are staffed with SOGIE-expert staff, as a one-stop source of information and guidance to those seeking to further LBT rights and economic empowerment.
- Ensure that public infrastructure is inclusive of diverse SOGIE groups, including by making gender-inclusive restrooms and changing facilities available.
- Ensure initiatives to support LBT women are up to date and respond to their evolving lived realities by engaging LBT organizations in regular and meaningful dialogue on emerging challenges and proposals to address them.

## Recommendations for private sector

- Ensure SOGIE-responsive workplace infrastructure, including gender-inclusive restrooms and actively supporting freedom of gender expression in relation to LBT women's self-expression and dress codes.
- Develop pro-SOGIE policies and procedures to be enacted at all stages of employment, including recruitment, retention and promotion. This should include workplace sensitization for all employees on SOGIE, ideally developed and carried out in partnership with LBT women's organizations, workplace SOGIE advisory working groups and/or champions with a mandate for meaningful engagement at all levels of the enterprise or company, and the development of a robust policy framework including clear sanctions for discriminatory or harmful attitudes, action or behaviour towards employees and contractors from SOGIE groups.
- Take steps to share information on good practice and 'success stories' for initiatives which have worked to increase inclusion and meet the needs of LBT women among public and private sector stakeholders, share learning on opportunities and challenges and galvanize action among others.

## Recommendations for civil society

- Conduct a mapping of formal and informal support available to LBT women across the Philippines, taking into account the needs, priorities and extent of support available to the most invisible and marginalized groups (e.g. older LBT women, those from religious minorities, disabled LBT women), with the aim of understanding and filling gaps, and to provide evidence to donors about critical areas for investment.
- Develop strategic alliances between diverse movement actors with a role in furthering LBT women's economic empowerment, including LGBT organizations and movement actors, trade unions and other worker groups (including those for informal and self-employed workers), women's rights organizations and migrant rights groups, to share expertise and learning, as well as to identify common priority areas for joint initiatives, including advocacy at all levels (including towards national government, regional development councils, and local government) and capacity-building.
- Support the incorporation of analysis of the specific challenges faced by LBT women and the priority actions needed to address them into wider movement advocacy and programming – including that carried out by women's rights organizations which have not traditionally focused specifically on LBT women's priorities.

## Recommendations for the international community, including donors, international institutions and other allies (e.g. academics and researchers)

- Provide core, flexible and sustainable funding to LBT women's movement organizations, in line with the projects and programmes they prioritize to boost the economic empowerment of those they work with (which could include direct support to LBT women; local, national or international advocacy, campaigns and awareness-raising; research and evidence development; coalition building; convening and strategic dialogue among movement allies; and learning and exchanges with LBT women's movement actors from different countries or regions).
- Engage meaningfully with LBT women's movement actors in the Philippines to understand their priorities and needs, and – where organizational mandate allows – proactively support these priorities, for example through joint advocacy initiatives.
- Actively seek opportunities to amplify the voices of LBT women's movement representatives, for example in expert meetings and during policy and programme development, media engagement and policy engagement.
- Invest in further research and knowledge-building on the evolving context and lived experiences of LBT women's economic empowerment and seek opportunities to amplify the findings and recommendations among audiences that may not be active on LBT women's issues.

## Recommendations for all actors

- Ensure that approaches to LBT women's economic empowerment are rooted in LBT women's own priorities, needs and understandings and respond to their evolving lived realities by engaging LBT organizations in regular and meaningful dialogue and ensure their voices inform policies and programmes.

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# ANNEX I: LITERATURE REVIEW SEARCH TERMS AND INCLUSION AND EXCLUSION CRITERIA

A search protocol was developed to guide the literature search. Search strings were developed, which included keywords (and their synonyms) closely linked to four categories: 'economic sector', 'subpopulation', 'employment experience' and 'regions'. Table 1 below provides the search terms which emerged from the original research questions for this project and the initial desk review, and which were refined following input from UNDP and other stakeholders including GALANG.

Inclusion and exclusion criteria were also developed for the literature used in the review, as follows:

## Inclusion criteria

*Kind of studies:* Journal articles, academic articles, reports, Master's theses, PhD dissertations, working papers, government policy documents and briefings, editorials and brief communication pieces, blogs, literature produced by civil society organizations.

*Studies' methodology:* Experimental, quasi-experimental, quantitative, qualitative

*Languages:* English and Tagalog.

*Time limit/cut-off for the studies:* All literature published between 2000 and 2018, to reflect the recent and current situation.

## Exclusion criteria

Studies that are conducted beyond the Philippines.

**Table 1: Search terms (and strings) uses in the literature review**

Category	Search terms combined with AND
<b>Economic sector</b>	'public works' OR 'social sector' OR 'public sector' OR 'civil service' OR 'private sector' OR 'sex work' OR 'sex worker' OR 'private sector' OR 'private sectors' OR 'rural work' OR 'rural worker' OR 'rural employment' OR 'urban employment' OR "call centre" OR 'call centres' OR 'service sector' OR 'entertainment' OR 'armed forces' OR 'army' OR 'education' OR 'prostitution' OR 'prostitute'
<b>Subpopulation</b>	'bisexuality' OR 'bisexuals' OR 'gay' OR 'gays' OR 'homosexual' OR 'homosexualities' OR 'homosexuality' OR 'homosexuals' OR 'intersex' OR 'lesbian' OR 'lesbianism' OR 'lesbians' OR 'LBT' or 'bisexual' OR 'bisexuals' OR 'bisexuality' OR 'bisexualism' OR 'women who have sex with women' OR 'queer' OR 'sexual minorities' OR 'sexual minority' OR 'sexual orientation' OR 'transgender' OR 'transgendered' OR 'transgenders' OR 'transsexual' OR 'transsexualism' OR 'transsexualism' OR 'transsexuality' OR 'transsexuals' OR 'women loving women' OR 'trans*' OR 'transsex' OR 'transsexual'
<b>Employment experience</b>	'women's empowerment' OR 'gender empowerment' OR 'lesbians in employment' OR 'transgender women in employment' OR 'bisexual women in employment' OR 'economic empowerment' OR 'empowerment' OR 'labour force participation' OR 'labour market participation' OR 'work' OR 'paid work' OR 'unpaid work' OR 'labour' OR 'occupation' OR 'occupational segregation' OR 'informal work' OR 'informal sector'
<b>Regions</b>	Philippines, Luzon, Visayas, Mindanao, Quezon City, Metro Manila, Albay Province, Bicol Cebu City, Cebu, San Julian, Eastern Samar, Davao City, Davao del Sur, Province of Dinagat Islands, Caraga

# ANNEX II: DETAILS ON FGD SITE SELECTION

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Our proposed choice of locations was based on the confluence of multiple considerations. First, they reflected a breadth of conditions between urban and rural, central and provincial locations. Second, they were also locations where in some cases there have been recent policy developments – whereas in others there have not been such developments. The project sites identified have organization members of the Lesbian and Gay Legislative Advocacy Network – Philippines (LAGABLAB) wherein GALANG is also a member, and one of the steering committee members as well. The majority of the sites also have existing local laws or ordinances protecting and upholding the rights of LGBT persons.

The GALANG team coordinated with local NGOs and CSOs in each of the project sites, and requested the local coordinators to look for participants who are at least 16 years old, since this is the employable age in the Philippines. Invited participants were self-identifying LBT women who were currently employed or had been employed for the last six months, and those engaged in businesses/self-employed. All of the FGD participants are members of local NGOs/CSOs who have lobbied for the passage of local laws in the sites with existing anti-discrimination ordinances.

## Luzon

### 1. Quezon City, Metro Manila (urban project site)

Quezon City is the largest and most populous city in Metro Manila, National Capital Region of the Philippines. It is also the most populous city in the country. As per the August 2015 census, the City's total population is 2,936,116 (male population of 1.4 million, and female population of 1.5 million) wherein 69.5 percent of the total population are 15 to 64 years old. Quezon City has a 98.3 percent literacy rate wherein more females have attained higher levels of education. The major occupation groups are in service and sales, followed by elementary occupations, and clerical support workers.

Quezon City is the very first locality that passed its Anti-Discrimination Ordinance in 2003. Then, the City ratified a more comprehensive Ordinance – the QC Gender-Fair Ordinance – in 2014 with its implementing rules and regulations (IRR) enacted in 2015. Currently, Quezon City is the only local government unit that has institutionalized 142 Barangay Pride Councils (BPC), which oversee and implement the QC Gender-Fair Ordinance. The BPCs include representatives from the LGBT sector, and other community stakeholders.

### 2. Albay Province, Bicol (rural project site)

Albay is one of the provinces in the Bicol Region (Region V) in south-eastern Luzon of the Philippines. As of the August 2015 (census), Albay has a total population of 1,314,826 (male population of 665,143, and female population of 649,683) wherein 60.5 percent of the total population are 15 to 64 years old. The Province has a 94.19 percent literacy rate wherein more females have attained higher levels of education. The major occupation groups are labourers, followed by skilled agriculture, and services and sales personnel.

Bikol is the native language but English and Tagalog are also commonly used.

Although the province does not have an anti-discrimination ordinance, it has one of the largest and most active LGBT organizations (GAYon), which is also a member of an LGBT network in the region. Bicol is also the region to which the current Vice-President belongs, and she has been active in LGBT advocacy, particularly in pushing for the SOGIE Equality Bill when she was still in the House of Representatives.

## Visayas

### 1. Cebu City, Cebu (urban project site)

The City of Cebu is a highly urbanized city in the province of Cebu, Central Visayas Region (Region VII).

As of August 2015 (census), the City's total population was 922,611 (male population of 458,003, and female population of 464,608) with the median age of 23.6 years. The City has a 99.3 percent literacy rate wherein more females have attained higher levels of education. Almost three in every five persons aged 15 years and over are engaged in a gainful activity. The major occupation groups are in service and sales, followed by elementary occupations, and clerical support workers.

Cebuano is the native language but English and Tagalog are widely used, particularly in businesses and the academe. Cebu was the first city where the Spanish colonizers settled and is considered the origin of Christianity in the Far East.

Despite being a primarily Catholic town, Cebu passed its Anti-Discrimination Ordinance (No. 2239) in October 2012.

## 2. San Julian, Eastern Samar (rural project site)

The Municipality of San Julian is a 5th class municipality in the province of Eastern Samar, Eastern Visayas Region (Region VIII).

As of August 2015 (census), San Julian's total population was 14,498 (male population of 7,524, and female population of 6,974) wherein 58.2 percent of the total population are 15 to 64 years old. The major economic resource in the Province of Eastern Samar is agriculture and fishery. Waray is the native tongue but Cebuano is also widely used.

The Anti-Discrimination Ordinance (Municipal Order No. 05 s.2014) of San Julian, Eastern Samar was passed in October 2014. San Julian Pride is the most active LGBT organization in the locality which ensures the effective implementation of the said ordinance.

## Mindanao

### 1. Davao City, Davao del Sur (urban project site)

The City of Davao is a highly urbanized city in the province of Davao del Sur, Davao Region (Region XI).

As of August 2015 (census), the City is the third most populous area with a total population of 1,632,991 (51.4 percent are male, and 48.6 percent are female), and a median age of 22.86 years old. The Region has a 97.9 percent literacy rate wherein more females have attained higher levels of education. On the other hand, almost three in every five persons aged 15 years and over are engaged in a gainful activity. The major occupation groups are skilled agricultural workers, followed by service and sales workers.

Spoken languages in the City are Davaoeño (Native and Chavacano), Cebuano, Kalagan, Filipino, and English. Notably, the current President served as a mayor and vice-mayor of Davao City for 22 years.

In 2012, the Anti-Discrimination Ordinance of Davao City (No. 0417-12) was enacted, which was amended this year to include discrimination based on a person's health status.

### 2. Province of Dinagat Islands, Caraga (rural project site)

The Province of Dinagat Islands is a 3rd class province in the Caraga Region (Region XIII).

As of August 2015 (census), the Province's total population was 127,152 (64,786 males, and 62,366 females), with a median age of 24.2 years old. Dinagat Islands' literacy rate was recorded at 98.5 percent wherein more females have attained higher levels of education. On the other hand, more than half of the population aged 15 years and over are engaged in a gainful activity. The major occupation groups are skilled agricultural workers, followed by elementary occupations, and service and sales workers.

The primary spoken languages are Surigaonon, Cebuano, Filipino and English. Notably, the primary author of the SOGIE Equality Bill in the current (17th) Congress, Representative Arlene 'Kaka' Bag-ao serves as the Representative of the lone district of Dinagat Islands. The Province's Anti-Discrimination Ordinance was passed in January 2017.

## Research permissions and clearance

Consent and communication with LBT participants were ensured by adhering to the ODI research and ethics policy on engaging with vulnerable communities, which includes a full review of the project proposal and methodology to obtain clearance from ODI's Research Ethics Committee. This includes ensuring that the vulnerable adult understands exactly what they are participating in and the purpose of the research; using minimal technical language; testing understanding where possible, by asking the vulnerable adult to explain back their notion of what is being asked; and clearly communicating the freedom to refusal to participate or withdraw from research without any consequence. The location for FGDs were specifically selected to minimize potential harm to participants arising from security or other health and safety risks and were assessed through a risk assessment involving security checks with local experts and representatives of the LBT community in each site.

## Recruitment channels for FGDs

### For Luzon

GALANG's area of operation is mainly in Quezon City, Metro Manila, thus the selection of participants were through our local community LBT organizations. As mentioned in the profile, GAYon is one of the largest LGBT organizations in Albay, Bicol, and a member of LAGABLAB; they were our local partner who assisted in identifying study participants.

### For Mindanao

Social Health of Inter-Ethic LGBT Networks for Empowerment or SHINE were our local partner for identifying study participants for Davao City. The office of Representative Kaka Bag-ao was our primary partner and contact in Dinagat Islands.

### For Visayas

In Cebu City, the Cebu United LGBT Sector (CURLS) was one of our local partners. CURLS is also a member of LAGABLAB. The San Julian Pride, a member of LAGABLAB, was our local partner in the municipality.

# ANNEX III: FGD AND KII TOOLS

## FGD Topic Guide

### A. Engagement in labour market

- Are you doing any work for pay at the moment? What kind of work is it? (*Probes: For those who say they are not, inquire if they have done paid work in the past year*)
- How did you end up doing this work? (*Probes: their education led them to it, their contacts led them to it, or out of necessity? Did you feel this was the only option available to you? If so, why?*)
- What challenges did you face in finding this work?
- Do you face any challenges in this work (*Probes, for instance, could be around hours of work, is the work dangerous either physically or emotionally, what are the possibility of promotions if it is an office job, do they feel safe and supported?*) What are they? Do you have support in addressing them?
- Do you feel this work is secure? (*Probe if they have a contract, if they feel it will be enforced or do they feel insecure despite a contract. If they don't have a contract, do other people at their jobs have contract?*)
- Are you doing any unpaid work at the moment? What kind of work is it? (*Probes: For those who say they are not inquire if they have done unpaid work in the past year*)
- Do you have responsibilities of care at home or elsewhere, i.e. are you taking care of anyone else? Why do you do this work? How much time does it take up overall? How do you feel about this kind of work? Do you receive any help in this work? Does this have any effect on your ability to do paid work? Are you able to manage or do you feel like you are struggling? What kind of help do you need in this?
- What kind of domestic work are you engaged in? Why do you do this work? How much time does it take up overall? How do you feel about this kind of work? Do you receive any help or assistance in this work? Does this have any effect on your ability to do paid work? Are you able to manage or do you feel like you are struggling? What kind of help do you need in this?

### B. Household dynamics

- How does having paid work affect your standing within your household? How does it make you feel personally? Do you feel the same about unpaid work? Do you think people perceive you differently before and after paid work?
- How do you use the money you make from paid work?
- Do you think doing paid work affects how you engage with people in your neighborhood or community (online or otherwise)? (*Probes: do you think people perceive you differently since you have been in paid work? Or if you were in paid work before but are no longer in paid work?*)

### C. Support and help

- What kind of support do you have in your work and in your community (this can be online or any other network)?
- What aspects of your life are the networks you have identified involved with (e.g. helping find work, providing economic support, social life, providing emotional support)? What is their role in your life? What do they do? How often do you rely upon them?
- Do you feel that if you were to lose your job tomorrow, or risk losing your house, you have people and networks you can turn to for support and help? What kind of support do they offer? Have you ever had to reach out to them in the past and how have they been able to help you? (*Probe for examples*)
- Are you aware of any government initiatives such as help or services that can help you in situations of insecurity or danger, e.g. if you are harassed, if you are unwell? (*Probe further by citing area-specific initiatives and legislation to check whether participants are aware of their existence and if there is any practical outcome from having the legislation or initiative in place*) Are you able to access these in practice? What are your experiences of accessing or trying to access them?

ODI warmly invites you to take part in a research study, entitled 'Research Study on Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender Women's Economic Empowerment in the Philippines'.

1. Give verbal overview of the research and the organizations involved
2. Check they received the respondent information sheet emailed to them and if they have any questions
3. Say you aim for the interview to be a maximum one hour and ask if they are okay with that
4. Go through the consent form and check how they want to be quoted
5. Tell them verbally how research will be used and that quotations will be checked with them, point out contact addresses
6. Ask for permission to contact for follow-up questions (ask for best way to do this – phone or email?)

### Overarching semi-structured questions

Q1. Could you talk a little bit about how long you have been working at \_\_\_\_\_ and what is the nature of your work at \_\_\_\_\_?

Q2. What is the degree to which your work and organization has engaged with LGBTQ groups in the Philippines overall? In specific, could you after that talk about what engagement has been like with lesbian, bisexual and transgender (LBT) women in the country? (Probe on understanding LBT SOGIE. Then move onto where their work focuses, i.e. urban/rural; how they reach out to LBT women; how and when did they focus on LBT women and when and why did they start focusing on them)

Q3. In your experience, how do LBT women earn an income, i.e. what are the kind of sectors in which LBT women work? (Probe for key differences and similarities between i) the three groups of women and ii) between the employment trends in the Philippines in general and the employment trends of LBT women?)

Q4. If I used the phrase economic empowerment, how would you understand it? [FOLLOW UP] and do you think that LBT women would think about or articulate it in the same way based on your experience at work?

Q5. What do you think are the biggest challenges faced by LBT women in achieving \_\_\_\_\_ [insert the components of empowerment identified above] [FOLLOW UP] What do they perceive as the greatest barriers with regards to economic empowerment? (Possible issues for discussion: Probe on barriers at

levels of the family, workplace, public policy sphere around starting jobs, reaching out for financial help, sustainability of work, migration)

Q6. What are the key differences and similarities in your experiences between the three groups of women in this aspect?

Q7. What are the social norms and cultural expectation in the Philippines that hinder or promote LBT women's economic empowerment (as defined in Q4.)? How do they differ from impact on cisgender, heterosexual women? (e.g. around marriage, around childbearing, around maternity leave,

Q8. Do you think LBT women have equal access to public services in the country as women overall and the general population overall? (Probe for social services, e.g. health, education, social protection, access to cash transfers, access to justice system)

Q9. A number of places in the Philippines have issued ADOs but others have not. Why do you think there are different versions and different timings around the issuance of these ordinances? Do you think they are enforced in practice (probe for examples and check if there is difference across LBT women in who invokes the ordinance)? Why is there a delay in ordinances issuing ensuing IRRs? (Probe for a best practice case of legislation development) Which of the existing ordinances do you think best covers economic sector employment?

Q10. To what extent are past and current initiatives aimed at economic empowerment of women inclusive of and effective for LBT women? (Ask about government policies and initiatives as well as civil society or development partner's programmes and advocacy initiatives. In particular, discuss the degree to which disaster responses include or exclude LBT women).

Q11. What do you think are the main differences experienced by LBT women living in rural and urban areas in terms of economic sectors they work and their economic power overall? (Are there other dimensions of difference, probe about socio-economic class, religion, ethnicity, across island groupings).

Q12. I'd like a quick response to finish, what do you see as the top priority for further advocacy, programming and policymaking for furthering LBT women's economic empowerment? [if not clear in the response – who needs to be involved to make that happen, e.g. the government, civil society, development partners and private sector?]

# ANNEX IV: COMPOSITION OF VALIDATION WORKSHOPS

The validation sessions aimed to present the initial and emerging research findings and results from the discussions previously held, and to gain insights and comments from the participants to improve the final project report and outputs. Participants during the validation workshops were composed of individuals who participated in the initial FGDs conducted in February and March, representatives from the local government units, and representatives from local civil society organizations (CSOs) and non-government organizations.

The research team (GALANG) requested the local coordinators to invite representatives from local government offices which are primarily involved in women and LGBT+ concerns and issues, including but not limited to Barangay Pride Councils, Gender and Development, Women's (Rights) Desks/Offices, Population Offices, Health Offices, and Social Services and Development

Offices. Participation of these government units are deemed essential since these are the offices that should and could have programmes and projects in relation to the economic empowerment of LBT women.

Likewise, representatives from other CSOs and NGOs in the project sites were invited to help provide a clearer picture of the dynamics within the project sites. The majority of the participants came from local LGBT+ organizations that lobbied for the enactment of anti-discrimination ordinances and other local policies and programmes that uphold LGBT and women's rights.

Participants from the previous FGDs were invited as well, but there were several individuals who were not available during the validation workshop. Notably, two of the participants from the Province of Dinagat Islands have already left the project site to continue their studies.

Project Site	Date & Time	Venue	Participants
<b>Albay (Ru_2)</b>	24 August 2019 1pm to 5pm	Ninong's Hotel, Legaspi, Albay	Total = 13 Provincial Government of Albay: 1 GAYON Inc. (CSO): 3 From previous FGDs: 9
<b>Eastern Samar (Ru_3)</b>	31 August 2019 9am to 2pm	Boro Bay Hotel, Borongan City, Eastern Samar	Total = 18 Municipal Government of San Julian, Eastern Samar: 1 San Julian Pride (CSO): 1 From previous FGDs: 16
<b>Province of Dinagat Island (Ru_1)</b>	7 September 2019 9am to 2pm	Provincial Capital of Dinagat Islands	Total = 25 Provincial Government of Dinagat: 4 LGBT Federation of Dinagat: 6 From previous FGDs: 15
<b>Cebu City (Ur_3)</b>	15 September 2019 11am to 2pm	Castle Peak Hotel, Cebu City	Total = 23 Local Government of Cebu City: 2 CURLS (CSO): 2 Repos Angels (CSO): 1 S.A.F.E. (CSO): 8 From previous FGDs: 10
<b>Metro Manila (Ur_2)</b>	21 September 2019 1pm to 4pm	Max's Restaurant, QC Memorial Circle, QC	Total = 19 Barangay Pride Councils: 2 Barangay personnel: 7 From previous FGDs: 10
<b>Davao City (Ur_1)</b>	22 September 2019 11am to 3pm	Max's Restaurant, SM Lanang, Davao City	Total = 26 Davao LGBT Coalition (CSO): 6 Family Planning of the Philippines (CSO): 1 From previous FGDs: 19

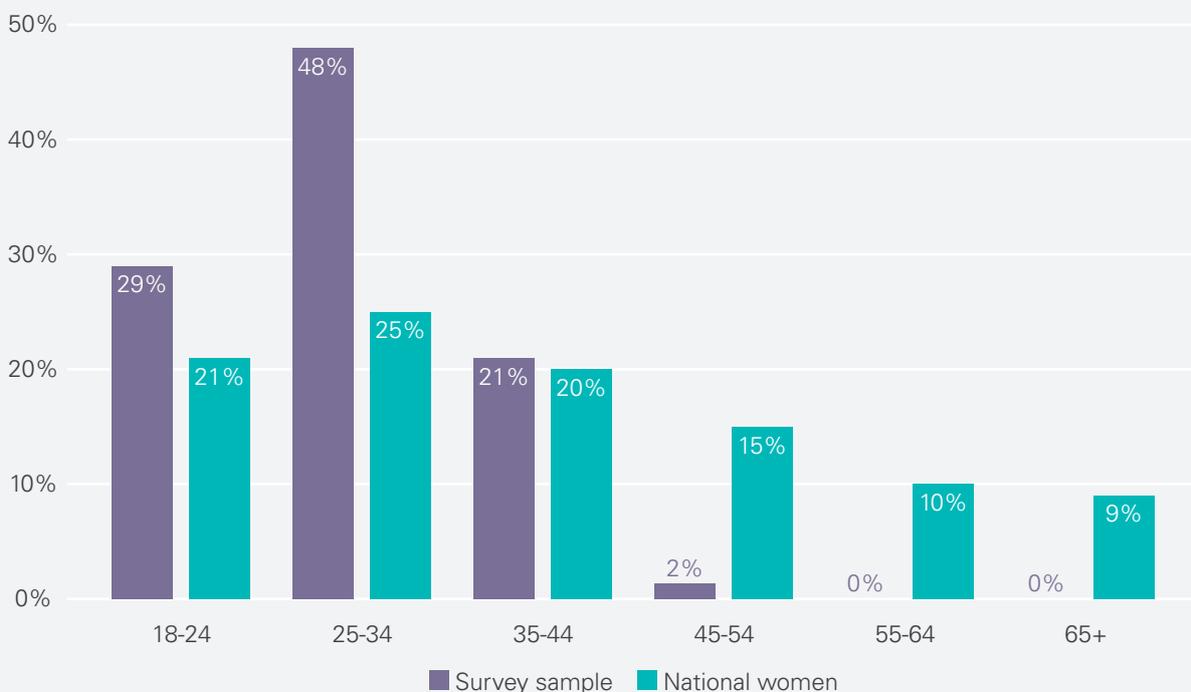
# ANNEX V: DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF ONLINE SURVEY RESPONDENTS

The following figures show the profile of those who responded to our survey (Figure i). The bulk of the respondents – 98 percent – were between 18 and 44. This, compared to the proportion of these age groups of the adult women population using the Philippines Population Census (2015) published by the Philippines Statistics Authority (PSA),<sup>19</sup> indicates that our sample is predominantly younger than the overall population – with the 18–24 and 25–34 age groups disproportionately larger compared to the older population of 35 years and above. We highlight the low response rate particularly for those aged 45 and above, and hence urge caution when interpreting and extrapolating from the survey data.

The survey respondents also had a high level of education, with 83 percent of them having completed some college education and no one not having had any education (Figure ii). These levels of education match with those of the Philippine Standard Classification of Education 2017 PSCED<sup>20</sup> as well as PSA classification, whereby elementary education comprises of grades 1 to 6, and high school includes grades 7 to 12. Unfortunately, the PSA data summary does not offer a category for vocational training – and hence that option is not comparable.

**Figure i: Age profile of online survey respondents compared to adult women nationally**

Proportion of sample and population in age categories (sample size of online survey = 156)

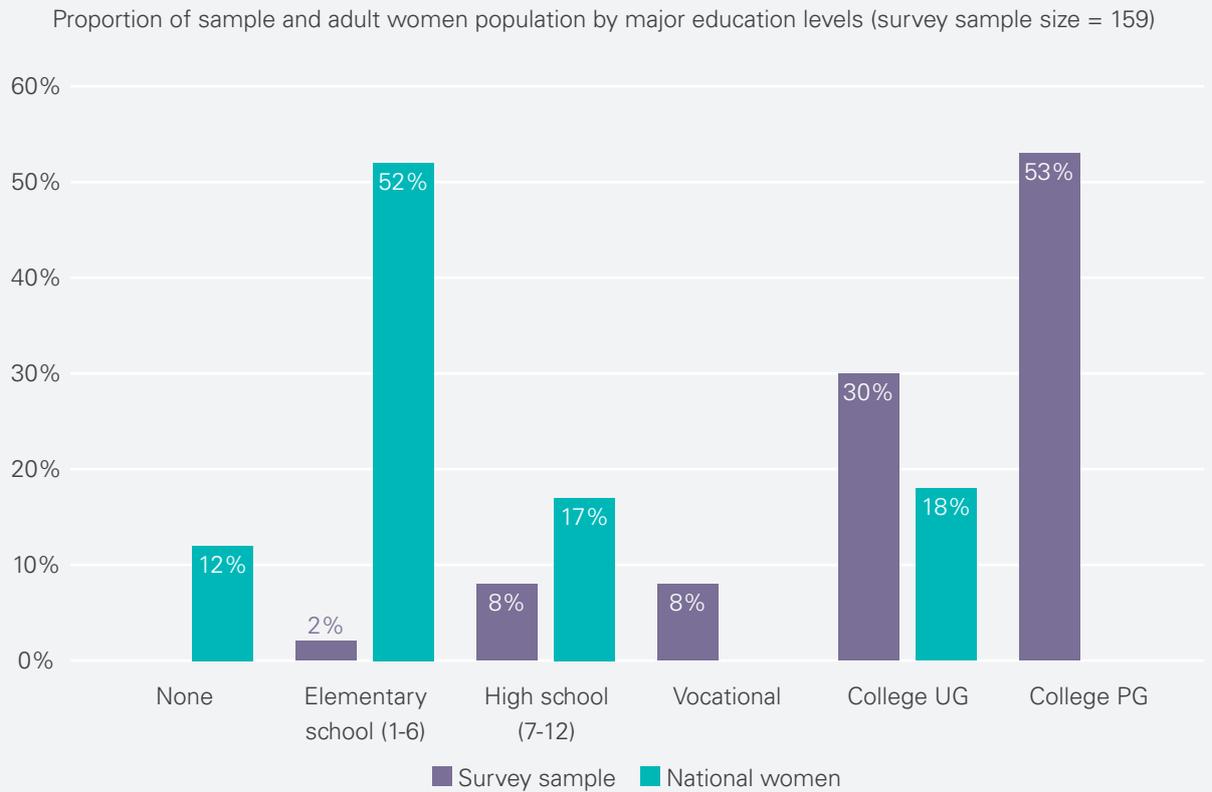


Source: Online survey designed for the report and the Philippines Population Census (2015) of Philippines Statistics Authority (PSA).

19 See Table 2 of *Philippines Statistical Tables (2015)*, Philippines Statistics Authority.

20 [https://psa.gov.ph/sites/default/files/PSCED Publication\\_13Jul2018.pdf](https://psa.gov.ph/sites/default/files/PSCED%20Publication_13Jul2018.pdf)

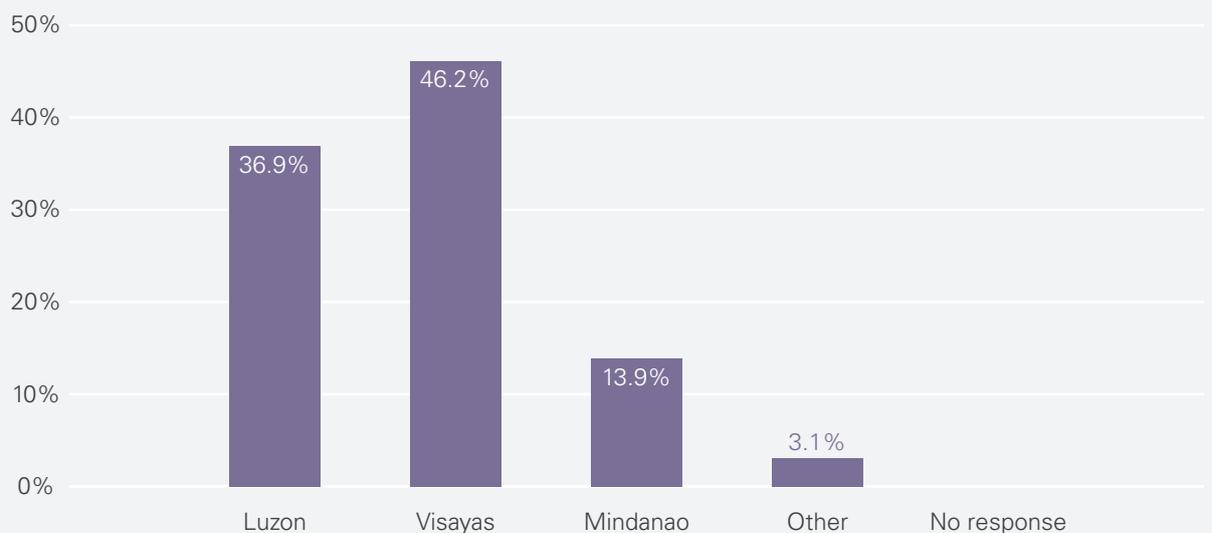
**Figure ii: Highest level of education completed by online survey respondents compared to national adult women population**



Source: Online survey designed for the report and computations based on the Philippines Population Census (2015) of PSA.  
 Note: UG = undergraduate; PG = postgraduate

**Figure iii: Location of online survey respondents**

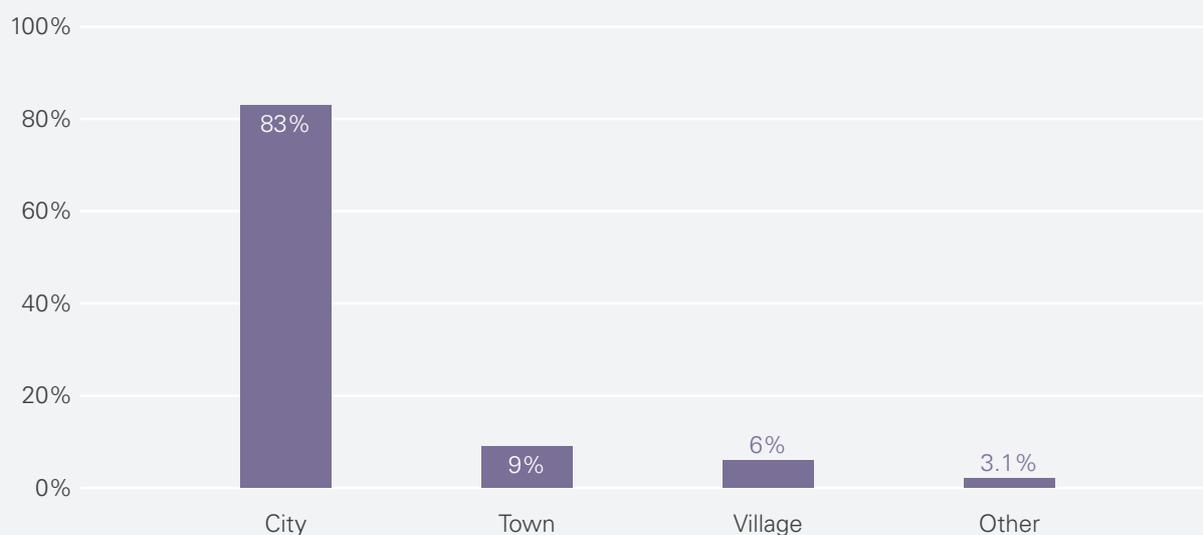
Proportion of sample by main island groups in the Philippines (sample size = 159)



Source: Online survey designed for the report.

**Figure iv: Type of community online survey respondents live in**

Proportion of sample by community size categories (sample size = 159)



Source: Online survey designed for the report.

This, when compared to the overall national statistics of the education profile of adult women in the Philippines (using the Philippines Population Census, 2018), indicates that our sample has a much higher educational attainment than the overall women (and even total) population in the Philippines. Assuming the national adult women's education profile mirrors that of adult LBT women, the survey underrepresents the number of those who have no education, only completed elementary or have graduated from high school and overrepresents college undergraduates and graduates. This, we expect, would have implications on the types of vocations and sectors of employment, employability, financial literacy, experiences at workplace and earning capacity as well as expectations at home, workplace and in the local community.

Most survey respondents currently live in Visayas and Luzon; only 14 percent of respondents live in Mindanao and another 3 percent report that they live in some other island group (Figure iii).

Nearly 83 percent live in cities, whereas 9 percent live in locations they self-designate as towns, and a smaller proportion of 6 percent live in villages (Figure iv).

According to national statistics from the 2015 census,<sup>21</sup> the overall urban population is 51.2 percent. While the urban population is growing at about 4.6 percent per annum, it is still far short of 66 percent. Hence, our survey sample is heavily biased in favour of urban respondents.

Nearly half of our respondents were children of the head of the household. The other notable categories were head/joint head of the household at 20 percent, and sibling of the head of the household at 15 percent. Our survey sample is thus younger in age and bear less filial responsibility in the household. This is in contrast to FGD participants which had a substantive group of those living in extended families, some alone and some with their partners. There is thus a low overlap in the demographics of those in FGDs and those responding to the survey. The survey sample can only offer limited insights into the perspectives of economic independence and empowerment of LBT women who are more likely to live outside their parental/sibling family home; those who are young and living with parents will likely have very different perspectives and experiences from such older cohorts living independently.

21 <http://www.psa.gov.ph/content/urban-population-philippines-results-2015-census-population>

## Classification of survey respondents by sexual orientation and gender identity

As mentioned in the discussion on the limitations of quantitative analysis above, we indicated the classification of LBT women we have adopted. Based on a combination of sexual orientation and gender identity that overlap and are not mutually exclusive, our sample of 159 survey respondents fall into the following four categories (Figure v):

- Lesbian women, but only if their gender identity was not 'Transgender'
- Bisexual women, regardless of gender identity
- Transgender women, regardless of their sexual orientation
- Other

In doing so, there is no overlap in the sample between the four categories, and we are able to compare the results across the most pertinent and matching groups consistently between the different strands of analysis.

The category of 'Other' includes those who identify their sexual orientation as 'other' and subsequently their gender identity also as 'other' or 'genderqueer'. This is a relatively small group comprising of only 6 respondents (3.7 percent of the sample) and hence is not a major category.

In the absence of any systematic national-level data on these groups of women, we are unable to assess whether the distribution of those represented in our survey sample matches the overall population proportions of these categories or not.

**Figure v: Classification of survey respondents by SOGIE categories**

Number of respondents (sample size = 159)



Source: Online survey designed for the report.

# ANNEX VI: DATA ON HOUSEHOLD INCOME FROM THE ONLINE SURVEY

Of the 159 respondents to our online survey, nearly 40 percent reported having an annual household income of PHP (Philippines peso) 250,000 or more, and another 21 percent with the other extreme of less than PHP 40,000. This bimodal distribution coincides with the demographic pattern of the respondents: half of the respondents were in the age group 25–34, another half had received a college education, and 80 percent lived in cities. We chose these income categories to match the income categories used by the Philippine Statistics Authority in its 2015 Family Income and Expenditure Survey.

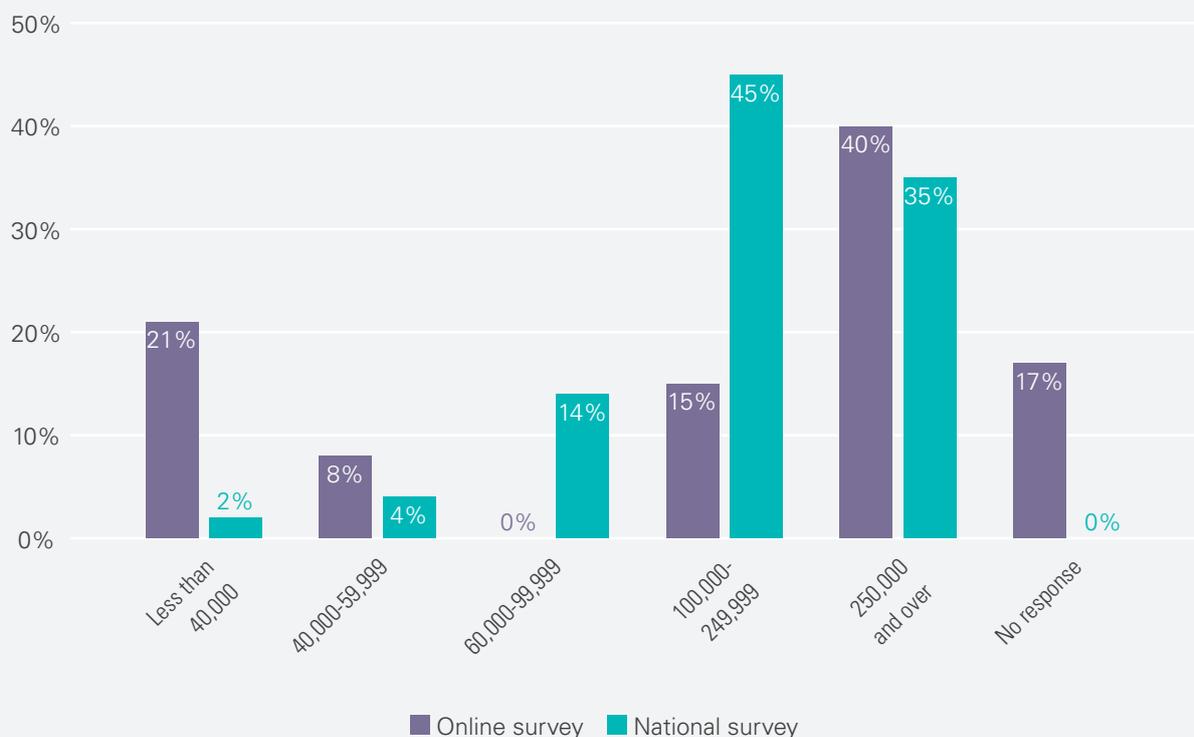
This pattern, particularly the large proportion reporting annual household incomes below PHP 60,000 (29 percent in the online survey) does not match the national

distribution of annual household incomes as reported by the national statistical survey cited above (that has only 6 percent of households below the same income threshold).

While it can be feasible that this truly is the nature of the household income profile of LBT women, there could be other possible explanations for why this observed pattern does not match with the general household income distribution of the national population. The general household income distribution above is in itself atypical. Most countries have a positively skewed household income distribution pattern wherein there is a higher proportion of households in the relatively lower income levels and fewer households at the top ends of income

**Figure vi: Annual household income distribution of survey respondents vis-à-vis national survey statistics**

Proportions of survey sample (sample size = 159) and households in national survey; annual household income in PHP.



Source: Online survey designed for the report and Family Income and Expenditure Survey, 2015; Philippine Statistics Authority.

categories. Data from the Family Income and Expenditure Survey, however, indicate that the Philippines does not conform to such a pattern of income distribution; the distribution of household income nationally is negatively skewed – although this may also be partly due to the endpoints of income categories that the Philippine Statistics Authority uses.

We are thus unable to assess whether the observed income distribution pattern of our survey respondents is due to anomalies in the national income distribution or whether it is solely on account of an atypical sample of those responding. Complicating our inability to conclusively comment on the income distribution, there is also robust empirical evidence across multiple countries that the education level of adults in the households is high, correlated with (and a good proxy for) household income levels. Since the education level of our survey respondents is negatively skewed – implying a large proportion of respondents have high education levels, by that reasoning, the national distribution of income appears more consistent with our survey respondent profile.

As a consequence, there is a distinct possibility that the observed household income distribution in our survey reflects that some respondents might have interpreted this question as their personal – and not household – income, or their personal contribution to the household income. This would indicate the disproportionately larger number of responses reporting annual incomes below PHP 60,000. Another possible explanation is that as a large group of respondents indicate that they are children of the head of the household, they may be less well-informed of the household income than if they were the head or the spouse of the head of the household. The conclusion we draw from this assessment is that we are unable to explain the observed pattern in household income distribution in our sample, and thus avoid using this metric to categorize respondents. Although we wanted to compare LBT women in poor versus those in rich households, we advised against doing so due to the unexplained income distribution pattern we observe.





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