LGBT people living in poverty in Rio de Janeiro

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Micro Rainbow International

Micro Rainbow International (MRI) is a not for profit social enterprise founded by social entrepreneur and LGBTI activist @SebastianRocca in 2012. MRI is dedicated to improving the livelihoods of LGBTI people who are discriminated against because of their sexual orientation, gender identity, or intersex status. It addresses the situation of poverty of LGBTI people worldwide by making policy recommendations and by devising tools and actions that can enable them to step out of poverty.

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Following our first report on the situation of poverty of lesbian and gay refugees in the UK, we are delighted to publish our second paper on the situation of poverty of LGBT people in Rio de Janeiro (Brazil).

This report is the result of a great team effort. We would like to thank each and every one of the 46 LGBT people who committed their time to the research and shared their stories, feelings and personal situations of poverty. We, the project team, feel privileged to have met with them and to have witnessed their strength, resilience and dignity.

We also want to acknowledge the support of our local partners, without whom we would not have been able to conduct this research. They are: Grupo Conexão G, Associação de Travestis e Transexuais do Estado do Rio de Janeiro (Astra-Rio), Grupo de Emancipação e Luta pela Livre Orientação Sexual (Grupo Ellos), Empório Almir Franca, Grupo Arco-Íris and Rio sem Homofobia from the Government of the State of Rio de Janeiro. We are thankful for their support in outreaching to LGBT people living in poverty, for organising some of the interviews and for taking care of the local logistics. A special thank you goes to Marjorie Marchi for her personal input in outreaching to the trans community.

We are particularly grateful for the support that we have received throughout the research project from Claudio do Nascimento Silva (Superintendente de Direitos Individuais Coletivos e Difusos, Secretaria de Estado de Assistência Social e Direitos Humanos - Rio de Janeiro, Coordenador do Programa Estadual Rio Sem Homofobia) and for his contribution in writing the Foreword below.

This research has enabled us to establish a very solid and efficient partnership and we are excited about the prospect of continuing working with our local partners not only to take forward some of the recommendations made in this report but also to improve the lives of some of those LGBT people who live in poverty in Rio de Janeiro.

A special thank you to our International Research and Business Development Coordinator, Lucas Paoli Itaborahy, for leading this research with genuine commitment and professionalism, for his painstaking work in drafting the questionnaire, undertaking interviews, coordinating the local partners, analysing the data, and drafting the report.

Finally, we want to thank our external consultant, Ruth Baldacchino, for revising and editing the report, and our incredible volunteers, including Dr Corinne Lennox for advising us on the field work questionnaire and Jill Power for proofreading the report within a very tight timescale.

The issue of poverty among the LGBT community has been long neglected by key actors around the world, including by the international LGBT movement, which has extensively focused on marriage and other rights of same-sex couples in some countries, while
in other places people still fight a battle to decriminalise homosexuality and outlaw discrimination. Whatever the domestic and regional priorities are, more attention must be paid and more resources must be allocated to alleviate the situation of poverty of LGBT people worldwide in order to achieve the socioeconomic development desired by most countries.

We hope that this report will start a conversation that is desperately needed - a dialogue that is not only about equal rights, equal opportunities and equal access to services but also about living with dignity.

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FOREWORD

I am pleased to write this foreword for Micro Rainbow International in relation to this much needed report on poverty of the LGBT community in Rio de Janeiro.

Homosexuality is criminalised in 77 countries worldwide and many other countries and societies persecute and discriminate against LGBTI people. In Brazil, LGBT rights together with all human rights matter. Unfortunately discrimination and prejudice are still a feature of our society today. The country has a very structured belief system that has contributed to generating high levels of violence against the LGBT community. It is important and urgent to have this debate now. Religious and political fundamentalism is on the increase, our society continues to be a conservative one, and the widespread concept of moral cleansing point towards the possible increase of unacceptable homophobic violence.

The Government of Rio de Janeiro is fully committed to tackling homophobia and transphobia in Rio and condemns any act of violence and discrimination against LGBT people. Through our programme “Rio without Homophobia” we fight discrimination and violence not only through education and the dissemination of information about LGBT rights but also through the implementation and monitoring of pro-LGBT public policies in all areas of government.

The reason why this report is important is because it forces all of us, including policy makers and civil society, to reflect on the terrible impact that hate and prejudice have on the lives of LGBT people and to look at our own responsibilities for improving it. The report amongst other things highlights how poverty, isolation, destitution, lack of access to public services, abuse by the community, discrimination at school and at work as well as by some religious leaders all affect the lives of LGBT people in Rio. Until such time when each one of us can live in equality regardless of who we love and who we are, the work of INGOs like Micro Rainbow International and of the public authorities must continue.

Finally I want to applaud Micro Rainbow International for its collaborative approach, for establishing solid local partnerships and for giving a voice to the many LGBT people who live in poverty, who are isolated, discriminated against and far too often severely violated. We look forward to continuing to support the much needed work of Micro Rainbow International, and to improving the lives of LGBT people in the state of Rio de Janeiro.

Claudio Nascimento Silva
Superintendente de Direitos Individuais, Coletivos e Difusos
Coordenador do Programa Rio Sem Homofobia
Secretaria de Estado de Assistência Social e Direitos Humanos
Governo do Estado do Rio de Janeiro
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Poverty knows no regional, racial, sexual, gender and age boundaries, and those living in poverty are defined as living with an income of less than $1.25 a day. Reports and statistics that focus on poverty tend to generalise “low-income populations”, thus marginalising sections of the population that might require different approaches or considerations. One such section that is further marginalised and left out of the ‘poverty rhetoric’ is the lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans* (LGBT) population. This report aims to provide a glimpse into the lives of LGBT people living in poverty in Rio de Janeiro.

The social and political contexts of Brazil provide the backdrop to these people’s lives, further accentuating the premise that LGBT people are not unlikely to be different, and in some contexts, are more likely to experience poverty than non-LGBT people. Lack or limited access to employment opportunities and/or discrimination at work, lack or decreased family support and lack of trust from banks and/or other financial institutions are amongst the identified reasons that either drive LGBT people into poverty or disempower them by not providing any way out of poverty.

In this report, we analyse data coming from forty six structured interviews with LGBT individuals living in poverty in Rio de Janeiro, with eight identifying as lesbians, fourteen as gay men, two as bisexual, ten as transsexual women, and twelve as travestis.

Main findings

1. **Education**: None of the respondents were able to complete university studies, and half of the respondents said they left school due to lack of financial means and the need to find employment to support their families and themselves. A number of respondents left school as a result of the discrimination they suffered due to their sexual orientation and gender identity. The lack of education and/or qualifications impact on the opportunities in the job markets and the respondents’ living arrangements.

2. **Living Arrangements**: 41% of the respondents said they could not afford their living expenses, which include food, bills, transport and rent. Over half of the respondents rely on some form of support from family members or friends, even though for most of these the support is in kind (e.g. food and housing) rather than financial.

3. **Occupation**: The lack of employment or unstable source of income is a factor in the living arrangements of the respondents. Only 39% of the respondents have jobs, most of which are low-paying jobs. Fear of discrimination and stigmatization on the basis of their sexuality and/or gender identity is another reason given by respondents for the lack of a job. Sex work remains the most common source of income for the trans* respondents, irrespective of whether they choose to do sex work or because they do not have any other options. The feelings of
helplessness and powerlessness are also reflected by a number of the respondents, who do not believe there is a way out from living in poverty and the realities of discrimination, abuse and violence as a result of their sexual orientation and/or gender identity.

4. **Labour Market**: Their experience with employment supports the common perception among the respondents that there is inequality in the labour market. 86% of the respondents believe that (cisgender) heterosexual people enjoy more opportunities because they face less prejudice, stigma and discrimination. Respondents identifying as lesbian, gay or bisexual believe they have more opportunities than trans* people, emphasising that it’s the heteronormative looking individuals who are more likely to enjoy more opportunities, thus reinforcing the argument that hiding one’s non-normative sexuality and/or gender identities allows for better access to job opportunities.

5. **Access to Credit**: 40% of the respondents do not have a bank account because they do not earn enough money to open an account and save the money in a bank. The majority (65%) have never applied for a bank loan for different reasons, including paperwork and bureaucracy, and are unable to plan the loan repayment due to the instability of their job or income.

6. **Social Benefits**: Half of the respondents have received some form of social benefits, which they use for household expenses, paying bills, investing in their studies and other personal expenses. Half of the respondents also received other forms of benefit on the basis of their sexual orientation and/or gender identity through the provision of services (e.g. counselling, legal advice, job advice)

7. **Discrimination**: 87% of the interviewees said that they have been discriminated against in various public places and by a variety of perpetrators, including service providers, as a result of the respondents’ sexual orientation and/or gender identity. 61% of the respondents reported discrimination at school. The interviewees who said they did not experience discrimination at school either did not go to school or were not out at school. Linked to the situation in the labour market, the respondents affirmed that to be out as LGBT at work puts more pressure on them, and they feel they have to work in fear of being treated differently or worse, the risk of harm as a result.

**Implications**

Research on LGBT people living in poverty challenges the ‘myth’ that all lesbian and gay people are affluent, a normative assumption that does not take into account the complexities and intersectionalities of LGBT people’s lives. According to Albelda et al. (2009), lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans* individuals “are as likely to be poor as are heterosexuals”, or as our research will try to show, could be even more vulnerable to poverty situations, due to the stigma and multiple types of discrimination they face throughout their lives.

Through this report, we call on authorities as well as academics and activists to be inclusive of low-income LGBT people’s realities when collecting data on LGBT populations, on poverty or developing anti-poverty policies, strategies and initiatives. This is done by removing heteronormative
assumptions and practices that continue to exclude LGBT people and their families from the ‘hegemonic poverty discourses’ adopted by governments and relevant institutions.

This report shows that LGBT citizens face poverty as well, and thus must be part of any policies targeting the alleviation of poverty in all the countries of the world, including in Brazil.
1. INTRODUCTION: POVERTY, SEXUAL ORIENTATION AND GENDER IDENTITY IN BRAZIL

Brazil is a country internationally known for having a very liberal society, which often displays attitudes of sexual openness and allows a great freedom of expression. However, when it comes to lesbians, gays, bisexuals, and trans* people (LGBT), Brazilian society can be discriminatory and intolerant. This could be due to the persistent presence of religious and moral conservatism, which aggravated by high levels of poverty and lack of formal education, creates a “reality of massive inequality” (Vianna and Carrara, 2007).

According to a recent estimate from Grupo Gay da Bahia (GGB), one of the oldest NGOs that monitors hate crimes in the LGBT community in Brazil, approximately one LGBT person is murdered every 26 hours in the country (GGB, 2013). Travestis⁴ and transsexuals⁵ are the biggest target due to social stigmatization and marginalization, which may lead them into sex work and/or drug trafficking⁶ - situations that often expose them to violence and abuse. Moreover, the human rights helpline of the Brazilian Government registered an average of 13,29 victims of homophobic violence per day in 2012 (Brasil, 2013, p.18), including physical, sexual, psychological and institutional violence (e.g. from the police) and discrimination.

At the federal level, the country lacks laws that protect LGBT people against hate speech, hate crimes and against discrimination based on sexual orientation.
and gender identity, making the situation more difficult for LGBT people. Whilst official surveys and demographic data show the steady shrinkage of the Catholic population in Brazil, and despite the fact that Brazil became a secular state, as declared by the 1988 Constitution, radical Catholic and Evangelical politicians are strong opponents to LGBT rights. As a result, essential bills of law, such as those for the criminalisation of homophobia (initially proposed in 2006) and the recognition of same-sex unions (firstly proposed in 1995), remain unapproved (Lorea, 2009; Mello, 2006).

To make matters worse, the Brazilian LGBT community is far from reaching full citizenship and is indeed affected by the current economic inequality that pervades the whole society and the frequency of social discrimination incidents may have an impact on their income and economic conditions. Referring to Santos, who was writing in the late 1970s, Mello argues that “in post-1930 Brazil, citizenship came to be based on a system of occupational stratification defined by legal norms” and citizens were recognised according to the occupations defined by law (2006, p. 11). Whilst the 1988 Constitution changed this form of regulation, on a social level LGBT people are still subjected to social regulations that seek to recognise them as equal citizens. Mello argues that today this is done through the recognition of marriage/civil partnership rights. However, we know that LGBT citizenship goes beyond this, and there are currently several socio-economic issues affecting the LGBT population in Brazil and stopping them from obtaining full citizenship. Therefore, using the same argument raised by Mello, the following question is asked: how are LGBT people living in poverty recognised as citizens and, more importantly, are they recognised at all?

This report aims to show and explain the situation of social and economic inequality experienced by low income LGBT people living in Brazil, more specifically in Rio de Janeiro, where our research was based. Chapter 2 examines the levels of poverty in the country and provides a brief overview of the current situation and recent initiatives and challenges to tackle poverty. Chapter 3 explores the intersection of poverty with sexual orientation and gender identity, by looking at consequences of income inequality in the lives of lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans* people in the city of Rio de Janeiro. It discusses this intersectionality as an approach to understanding the context and lived realities of those living in poverty situations.

Chapter 4 provides an overview of the social situation of LGBT people in Brazil as a way to contextualise the report’s objectives and subsequent findings. It discusses issues of violence and discrimination against the LGBT community, both in the whole country and particularly in Rio, by presenting data and figures from several sources, including government agencies and civil society organisations. Chapter 5 outlines in detail the methods used, as well as the limitations and challenges encountered whilst carrying out this research. Chapter 6 presents and discusses the findings of the fieldwork carried out with LGBT people living in poverty in Rio de Janeiro.

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7 Lorea (2009) points out that whilst the Catholic population has been decreasing, the number of Evangelicals grew significantly (followed by those without religion).

8 Nevertheless, in May 2011, the Federal Supreme Court recognised same-sex couples living in stable unions as family units. See Appendix for more information on LGBT rights in Brazil.
It also examines identified factors and the emergent trends that mark these people’s lives.

Finally, the report takes on these issues and concludes by developing a number of recommendations for organisations, employers, policy makers, service providers and others, to help LGBT people step out of poverty in Brazil and improve their livelihoods.

Majorie Marchi, trans* activist and programme officer at Rio sem Homofobia
2. POVERTY IN BRAZIL

2.1 An overview of the poverty levels since the 1960s

In comparison with the previous century, the poverty situation in Brazil has changed dramatically in the last few decades. At the end of 1960s, during the most hard-line period of the military dictatorship, the country experienced a sudden economic growth, known as the “economic miracle” (1968-73), which was financed mostly by international funding agencies and foreign investment that took advantage of the current repression of labour and political dissent (Alves, 1985; Itaborahy, 2012). Immediately after this period, Brazil felt the impact of the world economic crises of the 1970s and the level of poverty increased significantly and as a result, the percentage of the population living in poverty rose to about 50% between 1983 and 1984 (Paes de Barros et al., 2011).

This scenario changed with the re-democratisation process that started in 1986 and “in the 1990s the country sought to integrate into globalisation and followed the neoliberal instructions of the IMF and World Bank regarding economic policies and poverty reduction” (Tratz, 2012, p.7). The neoliberal reforms of the 1990s had positive results in fighting poverty in Brazil and the country witnessed one of the highest levels of economic development in Latin America.

As a matter of fact, in the late 1990s the issue of poverty began to play a central role in international politics, as pointed out by Tratz (2012), and the eradication of poverty became one of the biggest aims of most governments, especially after the United Nations launched the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in 2001 and declared its first goal was to “eradicate extreme poverty and hunger” (2001). To achieve this goal, two specific targets were defined for the period between 1990 and 2015: these were to halve the proportion of people whose income is less than US$1.25 a day and halve the proportion of people who suffer from hunger. Since President Lula took office in 2002, Brazil embraced the first MDG and the government engaged in countless efforts to eradicate poverty and successfully met one of the targets before the UN deadline. In 1990, 25.6% of Brazil’s population had an income below the international extreme poverty line of US$1.25/day (Tratz, 2012), while in 2008 this percentage dropped to only 4.8%, according to the 2010 National Monitoring Report of the Millennium Goals. By 2010, around 28 million of Brazilians had already been lifted out of the extreme poverty line and another 36 million had attained an improved standard of living, rising up into the middle class (Brasil, 2010).

According to the National Institute for

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Applied Economic Research (IPEA), in 2009 the state of Rio de Janeiro was the seventh federative state with the lowest rate of extreme poverty with 3.9% of its population - equivalent to 547,020 people living in such condition. However, there were still almost two million people (13.48% of the population) living under the poverty line.

2.2 Recent efforts of the Brazilian government to eradicate poverty

In 2002, President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, the first president from a left-wing party, announced that the main priority of his administration was to end hunger. In order to achieve this, he established and intensified a series of income transfer programmes, such as the Programa Fome Zero (Zero Hunger Programme) and the Bolsa Família programme, focusing on poverty reduction and improving the social and economic condition of the low income population in the country (Brasil, 2012a).

According to Tratz, “Brazil was one of the first countries to develop and implement this kind of policy and currently boasts the largest cash transfer programmes in the world” (2012, p.37). The author points out that such programmes were very efficient in eradicating extreme poverty and providing great social mobility, since they improved the life conditions of the lower classes and thus enlarged the middle class. He also states that the Bolsa Família programme was responsible for improving health and education, as well as for creating better conditions for workers to join the labour market.

The success of these policies had an impact on the international efforts against poverty, and served as inspiration for similar programmes by other countries and multilateral institutions (Brasil, 2012a). The World Bank, for example, has designed an international plan to combat poverty based on the Bolsa Família. However, Tratz (2012) argues that the extraordinary results of President Lula’s policies were only possible due to the macroeconomic framework laid by the previous administration and the creation of the earlier cash transfer programmes. The Institute for Applied Economic Research highlights other factors responsible for the reduction of poverty in the country, such as the achievement of monetary stability and economic expansion, real increase in the minimum wage and the strengthening of public policies aimed at improving living conditions (IPEA, 2010).

Regardless of such claims, it is incontestable that the Lula government developed a “new social development strategy” and by 2006, Brazil had experienced a significant growth in the economy and its public policies, an increase in formal jobs and achieved balance in public accounts (Brasil, 2012a). Moreover, he laid the basis for the following president, Dilma Roussef,
to launch the *Programa Brasil Sem Miséria* (Brasil Without Extreme Poverty) in 2010: an ambitious and innovative plan targeting the complete eradication of extreme poverty by 2014 (Brasil, 2010). President Dilma also established the *Brasil Carinhoso* action: “a drastic measure that allows the immediate reduction of 40% in the number of families in a situation of extreme poverty, with 2.7 million children from 0 to 6 being saved from misery” (Brasil, 2012a, p.3). After all, in a country of 190.7 million people, there were still 16.2 million people living in poverty situations in 2010 and half of them were living in rural areas, according to the Brazilian Institute for Geography and Statistics.\(^\text{17}\)

In 2011, the Federal Government developed the *Programa Crescer*, which aimed to offer microcredit products to low-income populations in Brazil by “facilitating access to microcredit for small businesses with the aim to generate employment and income”.\(^\text{18}\) This micro-entrepreneurial plan “has improved the conditions and expanded productive micro-credit by the associate public bank. [...] The crossing of *Crescer* and *Cadastro Unico* reveals that, from August to December 2011, approximately 200 thousand extremely poor families benefitted from 203,473 micro-oriented productive operations.” (Brasil, 2012a, p. 30).

### 2.3 The remaining challenges

The development of these social programmes was the main reason behind the success of the Brazilian Government’s efforts to fight poverty. However, such significant results have not yet been consolidated uniformly in all regions, as argued by Santos and Arcoverde (2011), and the country still remains “vulnerable to economic fluctuations and dependent on cash transfer programmes” (Tratz, 2012, p. 38). Henriques argues that the compensatory nature of such programmes is only short-term with limited responses, which must be complemented with structural policies of economic redistribution that would allow the “eradication of poverty from the reduction of inequality” (2003, p.68). After all, Brazilian society still faces high levels of unequal income distribution and other social challenges, such as urban violence, drug trafficking and social discrimination, to name a few, as well as precarious quality and unequal access to public health, education, housing, employment, among others (Santos and Arcoverde, 2011).

Even though the country has the sixth biggest GDP in the world, and is a middle-ranking country in terms of average GDP per capita, according to the Brazilian Institute for Geography and Statistics,\(^\text{19}\) Brazil still displays extreme economic and social inequalities. A 2012 report by UN Habitat shows that Brazil is the fourth country in Latin America with the largest gap in income distribution, which means that inequalities between the rich and the poor are still a sore reality in Brazilian society. The same report indicates that 10% of the richest population absorbs 50.6% of all income, while 10% of the poorest absorb only 0.8% (UN Habitat, 2012).


\(^\text{18}\) For more information on Crescer, see: http://www.mds.gov.br/falemds/ perguntas-frequentes/superacao-da-extrema-pobreza%20/inclusao-produtiva-urbana/programa-crescer

In this sense, the Gini coefficient\textsuperscript{20} - the most commonly used measure of economic inequality - shows that the main problem is still the high degree of inequality in the distribution of national resources and a consequent high concentration of wealth, which has not changed in Brazil much over the last few years, as illustrated in chart 1 above.

The high levels of income inequality in Brazil over the last decades are also revealed in chart 2 below presented by the Economist in 2012, when comparing Brazil to other countries in the world by using the Gini coefficient.

It should be pointed out that despite the relative success of the poverty reduction strategies in the last two decades, the Brazilian Government has failed to address the situation of poverty of specific groups, such as LGBT people. Both the Fome Zero and Bolsa Família programmes (2003) and the Brasil Carinhoso (2010), for instance, were centred around the heterosexual family unit and therefore did not reach LGBT families and/or LGBT individuals directly. Co-habiting same-sex couples only started being considered and recognised as family units by the Supreme Court in 2011\textsuperscript{21} and therefore, they may not have benefited fully from such poverty reduction programmes or were not even eligible due to the lack of recognition of their unions. Additionally, many LGBT people living in poverty could not access the benefits of such programmes because they had been victims of rejection and ostracism, among other problems, from their parents and family members.

\textsuperscript{20} According to the World Bank, the Gini coefficient (or Gini index) measures the extent to which the distribution of income or consumption expenditure among individuals or households within an economy deviates from a perfectly equal distribution. The coefficient varies between 0, which reflects complete equality and 1, which indicates complete inequality. For more information, see: http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SL.POV.GINI

\textsuperscript{21} See Appendix for more information on LGBT Rights.
In sum, further to eradicating extreme poverty, *Brazil must also address and reduce the existing social and economic inequalities, so that all citizens can achieve higher standards of living, regardless of their sexual orientation and/or gender identity, and create a more equal and less discriminatory society.*

**CHART 2**

![Income inequality, Gini coefficient chart](http://www.economist.com/node/21564414)

*Source: The Economist.*
*Retrieved from: http://www.economist.com/node/21564414*
3. POVERTY AND THE LGBT COMMUNITY IN RIO DE JANEIRO

3.1 Measuring the LGBT population

Studies on the prevalence of homosexuality, bisexuality and transexuality have been carried out in different contexts, countries and using different methodologies. There are several recorded challenges associated with collecting and measuring the “LGBT population”. Whilst the need to understand the size of the LGBT population is considered essential for public policies and some research topics, attempts to measure the LGBT population presents several conceptual and methodological challenges. As Gary J. Gates points out:

“estimates of the size of the LGBT community vary for a variety of reasons...including differences in the definitions of who is included in the LGBT population, differences in survey methods, and a lack of consistent questions asked in a particular survey over time.” (Gates, 2010, p.2)

For these reasons and others, it is difficult to quantify the LGBT population of any country. The Census from the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE) incorporated for the first time in 2010 a question that was inclusive of same-sex couples and found out that there are 60,000 lesbian and gay couples living together in Brazil. The State of Rio de Janeiro has the largest number with 10,170 same-sex couples (Álvares and Mariz, 2011).

Another survey called Mosaico Brasil, carried out in 2008 in all Brazilian capitals, reveals that the city of Rio de Janeiro has the largest percentage of gay men in the country, and the second largest for lesbians. More precisely, 19.3% of Rio’s population is made up of gay and bisexual men, and 9.3% lesbian and bisexual women (Abdo, 2008, p.9). If we apply this percentage to the latest records of IBGE, which shows that Rio has a total of 6,320,446 habitants, it would mean that there are over 1.8 million gays, lesbians and bisexuals living in the city.

3.2 Income inequality and LGBT people in Rio de Janeiro

Although Brazil has lifted 33 million people out of the extreme poverty line in the last fifteen years, as explained in the previous chapter, it is still a country with extreme economic and social inequalities. According to a 2012 report by UN-Habitat, Brazil is the fourth country in Latin America with the largest gap in income distribution, which means that inequalities between the rich and the poor are still a living reality in Brazilian society.

This wide income inequality also seems to affect the LGBT community in various ways. Marsiaj (2003) claims that

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differences in social classes in Brazil have a deep impact on the lives of LGBT people, thus making them more vulnerable to conditions of poverty, while a study presented by Siagg (2011) and Silva (2011) in the city of Rio de Janeiro demonstrates that low-income LGBT people are more vulnerable to violence and discrimination. From the above mentioned studies, we can observe several intersections between income inequality and sexual orientation and/or gender identity, and their impacts on the livelihoods of the LGBT community in Brazil, particularly in Rio.

Income inequality and subsequent large gaps between social classes have had a strong impact on the geographical distribution of the LGBT community and large concentration of economic, political and cultural resources marked the whole process of urbanization of the country in the middle of the twentieth century in big urban centres (Oxhorn, 1995). As a result, large cities like São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro not only concentrated power and wealth, becoming the country’s administrative and economic poles, but also attracted lesbians and gays from all over the country, thus establishing the most solid LGBT communities (Marsiaj, 2003). As a matter of fact, the impact of urbanisation and the rise of wage labour and the importance and function of the (nuclear) family facilitate the establishment of the ‘urban’ gay identities (D’Emilio, 1993), and lesbian and gay rights movements around the world have evolved around these identities, prioritising issues like economic inequalities and other social justice issues.

Income inequality also impacts on the way LGBT people interact and establish relationships, and Marsiaj (2003) argues that differences in social classes may affect the possibilities for establishment of affective relationships and social networks among LGBT people by pointing out that,

“For popular sectors in Brazil, the economic function of the family holds great importance. The income of lower classes is irregular and small, making it very difficult for individuals to obtain economic independence in relation to their family. The economic survival, both for the individual and for the family as a whole, depends on the permanence of children in the family until they marry (and in several cases even after marriage due to lack of a place to live)” (Marsiaj, 2003, p.139-140).

Following this logic, it could be argued then that it is easier for lesbians and gays belonging to upper classes to become financially independent from their families and/or to have better socioeconomic conditions to live their sexuality more openly and establish same-sex relationships. It does not mean, however, that they might not face hostility, prejudice or even exclusion by family members and the society at large.

Furthermore, income inequality also determines the places where LGBT people socialise and this is seen by the fact that...
most gay clubs, bars and parties in Brazil are usually expensive and have become entertainment places for middle and higher classes, who can afford to go there, pay for the entrance fees and drinks. This does not mean that LGBT people living in poverty do not have entertainment options or places to exercise their “homo-sociability” (Marsiaj, 2003), however similar to society in general, class distinctions are found within LGBT communities too, reinforcing a class hierarchy that is reflected on the city spaces with distinguished establishments catering for those coming from upper classes and others for lower classes (Albuquerque Júnior and Ceballos, 2002).

Richard Parker (1999) claims that the city of Rio de Janeiro is a good example of such hierarchy, since the use of public places in the city changes dramatically according to the social class. Marsiaj observes “there are clear distinctions in the levels of safety, acceptance and glamor of public spaces in noble neighbourhoods like Ipanema and Leblon, and those in the most popular neighbourhoods in the North Zone and West Zone” (2003, p.142). The intersection of class with sexuality results in the same class hierarchy and segregation that reinforces the marginalisation of poorer classes.

This leads to our last observation regarding the impacts of unequal income distribution within the LGBT community. The interrelationship of class with sexual orientation and/or gender identity produces a reality of considerable discrimination. Since it is established that being LGBT produces its hardships due to social prejudices and stigmatization, one could argue that the living reality for those who are LGBT and poor becomes harder and more complex, subjecting these individuals to multiple layers of injustices (whether it is due to their social class and/or their sexual orientation or gender identity, gender, race and other types of discrimination). Marsiaj summarises this aspect by pointing that, "lower class individuals suffer most from violence by police officers in and out of service, vigilantes, death squads and lynching. Homophobia and discrimination intersect and gays and lesbians from lower classes carry the burden of this violent reality" (2003, p.143).

Mahomed Siagg (2011) and Wilson H. da Silva (2011) corroborate this observation by underscoring the risks that poor LGBT people suffer in Brazil, particularly in the city of Rio de Janeiro. They both rely on a survey, carried out by Conexão G, a non-governmental organisation based in the Maré slum, which states that impoverished LGBT communities in Rio currently suffer hostility and brutal aggressions by paramilitaries, drug dealers and the police. The situation is even worse for afro-descendant lesbians and transwomen due to the persistence of racism and machismo, confirming the arguments made earlier on the multiple types of discrimination suffered by the LGBT community.

However, travestis and transsexuals are the ones living in a more vulnerable situation and as Silva (2011) argues, due to higher levels of visibility in the society,  

25 Original text: “Existem claras diferenças nos níveis de segurança, aceitação e glamour entre os espaços públicos em bairros mais nobres como Ipanema e Leblon, e aqueles em bairros mais populares na Zona Norte e Zona Oeste.”

26 Original text: “Indivíduos de classe mais baixa sofrem a maior parte da violência praticada por policiais em e fora de serviço, justiçadores, esquadrões da morte e linchamentos. Homofobia e discriminação social se cruzam e gays e lésbicas de classes mais baixas carregam o maior peso dessa realidade violenta.”
they cannot hide their gender identity as easily as (cisgender\textsuperscript{27}) lesbians and gays can hide their sexual orientation. Therefore, they are constantly victims of torture and murders, besides being often pushed to marginalization, prostitution and even involvement in drug trafficking, as a result of the prejudice and discrimination they suffer. In fact, Brazil concentrated 40\% of the murders of travestis and transsexuals in the world in 2013, according to GGB (2014), and these numbers might be higher due to underreporting as a result of lack of trust in the authorities and to the constant persecution by police officers themselves, as illustrated above by Marsiaj. Both Silva (2011) and Siagg (2011) agree that \textit{it is much harder for low-income LGBT people to report the situations of violence experienced than it is for heterosexuals living in the favelas and poor communities}. They highlight that LGBT people are afraid of suffering homophobic reactions and retaliation from the police and thus do not reveal their sexual orientation or gender identity or decide not to report the cases at all.

In conclusion, this chapter illustrates that LGBT people living in poverty in Brazil have more vulnerable social conditions due to the impacts of the very high levels of unequal income distribution between social classes present in the Brazilian society. Income inequality, as discussed in this chapter, seems to be responsible for:

1. producing conditions for multiple types of discrimination and violence due to intersecting identities and realities;
2. hindering the establishment of same-sex loving relationships and forcing LGBT people, mostly those from lower classes, to stay longer with their families due to issues of economic dependence;
3. creating a hierarchy of entertainment options according to their social class and reinforcing the segregation and marginalization of lower classes; and,
4. placing more solid LGBT communities in big urban centres like São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro;

\textsuperscript{27} Cisgender refers to a person’s whose gender identity matches the behavior or role considered appropriate for one’s sex. Kristen Schilt and Laurel Westbrook defined “cisgender” as a label for “individuals who have a match between their gender assigned at birth, their bodies, and their personal identity”, complementing trans* (2009, p. 441).
4. DISCRIMINATION AND VIOLENCE AGAINST LGBT PEOPLE IN BRAZIL

4.1 Overview

Despite being well-known for their sexual openness and having one of the biggest pride parades in the world, Brazilians are still victims of discrimination based on their sexual orientation or gender identity. In many big cities such as São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro, where the LGBT community is better organised, as mentioned in the previous chapter, and the “pink tourism” attracts people from several parts of the country and beyond, it is very common to find gay owned restaurants, bars, clubs etc. However, outside these gay-friendly places and in smaller towns, LGBT people are still subject to hostility, prejudice and discrimination.

Although homosexuality is not a crime in Brazil, there is no legislation that prevents hate crimes and hate speech against lesbians, gays, bisexuals and trans* people, and the LGBT community still faces situations of physical violence, verbal abuse, discrimination and even murder:

"Violência contra LGBTs está presente em várias esferas de convívio social e de definição de identidades. Suas consequências se fazem sentir no universo familiar, nas escolas, nos ambientes de trabalho, nas forças armadas, na justiça, na polícia, em diversas esferas do poder público" (Brasil, 2013, p.11).  

Such negative reactions towards LGBT people are often motivated by manifestations of machismo and sexism that still prevail in conservative sectors of the society and even within the authorities and institutions: a phenomenon often identified as ‘institutional homophobia’.

Moreover, the LGBT community suffers from the opposition of some religious voices who constantly display their homophobic attitudes and can be outspoken against people of diverse sexual orientations and gender identities.

As a matter of fact, religious sectors of the Parliament have long blocked the advancement of LGBT rights in the country. Evangelical and Pentecostal politicians, backed up by right-wing parties, constitute a threat to human rights and full citizenship as they engage in public statements against sexual, gender and even racial equality. This was clearly noted when a right-wing Pentecostal pastor, known for his homophobic and racist comments, was elected president of the Human Rights and Minorities’ Commission of the Chamber of Deputies in March 2013, resulting in a series of negative reactions towards LGBT people in Brazil.
of manifestations and rallies throughout the country in defence of secularism and democracy and calling for his resignation.32

4.2 Homophobia and transphobia in Brazil

In order to prevent and eliminate homophobic and transphobic violence and discrimination in Brazil, the Federal Government has engaged in several efforts in the last decade. In 2004, the Ministry of Human Rights created the Brasil sem Homofobia (Brazil Without Homophobia) programme.33 In 2009, it launched the Plano Nacional de Promoção da Cidadania e Direitos Humanos de Lésbicas, Gays, Bissexuais, Travestis e Transexuais (National Plan for Promotion of Citizenship and Human Rights of LGBT people).34

In the following year, the government established the Coordenação Geral de Promoção dos Direitos LGBT (General Coordination for Promotion of LGBT Rights) and the Conselho Nacional de Combate à Discriminação e Promoção dos Direitos LGBT (National Council to Fight Discrimination and Promote LGBT Rights) to implement and monitor the actions agreed in that Plan.35

In 2012 and 2013, the first official reports on homophobic violence were published, in collaboration with civil society. They shed light on the current situation of LGBT people in Brazil, based on data collected in 2011 and 2012 by the Human Rights Helpline (Disk 100), the Police, State Secretaries, ministries and other public bodies, as well as the press (Brasil, 2012b; 2013). They revealed that in 2012, there were 3,084 reports of 9,982 violations against the LGBT population. Such violations involved a total of 4,851 victims and 4,784 suspects. In other words, there was an average of 3.23 homophobic violations per victim and a total of 27.34 violations per day in that year (Brasil, 2013, p.18). The report shows that cases involving psychological violence and discrimination are the most frequent ones, followed by physical violence, which includes murders, as shown in the graph below.

![Chart 3](image)

Adapted from: Brasil (2013, p.32)

It is important to notice that this does not mean that the states with higher amounts of violations are necessarily the most homophobic or transphobic ones. The numbers in the report correspond only to the violations which were reported to the authorities, but there is a high probability that many cases are not actually reported, due to fear of exposure or...
re-victimization, while some are not even properly recorded as homophobic violations (Brasil, 2013).

An analysis on the profile of the victims, as reported to the authorities, allows us to draw a few observations. First of all, 60.44% of the victims identified as gays, 37.59% as lesbians, 1.47% identified as travestis and 0.49% as transsexuals, as shown in the graphic below.

**CHART 4**

![Identity of victims](image)

*Adapted from: Brasil (2013, p.24)*

However, these numbers significantly contrast the data gathered by civil society and press (included in the same report), which show more than half of the victims identified as travestis (51.86 %). One possible explanation given by the authors of the mentioned report for this data discrepancy is that travestis do not always report their violations to the authorities because they fear retaliations and police abuse (Brasil, 2012b). It also may be that authorities are not trained to properly record such types of violations and often classify travestis as gays erroneously.

Another point worth mentioning is that 40.55 % of the victims were afro-descendants (7.50% identified as black and 33.05% as pardo36), while only 26.84% identified as white, highlighting arguments made by Waiselfisz (2012) that afro-descendants are still the population most vulnerable to violence in Brazil.

**CHART 5**

![Race/colour of victims](image)

*Adapted from: Brasil (2013, p.25)*

As a result, we can conclude that most victims were travestis and Afro-descendants, which substantiate the point made in Chapter 3, regarding the intersectional type of discrimination faced by the LGBT community in Brazil, where one’s race/ethnic heritage, sexual identity, and sexual orientation intersect in complex ways to result in increased vulnerability to violence.

36 Pardo is a Portuguese word created by the IBGE in 1976. According to their definition, it encompasses various shades of ‘brown’ colours, ranging from white to black and is used in its census as a broad category for multiracial Brazilians.
orientation and gender identity creates a hierarchy of power and discrimination within both the LGBT communities and Brazilian society in general.

Similarly, Avelar, Brito & Mello (2010) argue that women, afro-descendants and the poor are even more vulnerable to situations of discrimination in Brazil when such discrimination is associated to their sexual orientation and gender identity. This is further substantiated by Frankel (2013) who examined human rights violations against the Afro-Brazilian trans* population in Brazil. The author found that the most urgent violations include discrimination and violence based on race and gender identity, violence perpetrated by the police, inadequate access to education and employment due to racial and gender-based discrimination, lack of legal recognition and protection on the basis of gender identity and expression.

These violations take place in various forms, such as verbal and sexual harassment, hate speech, threats, torture, extrajudicial killings and represent a “culmination of deeply seated intersections of racism and transphobia” that are manifested and “represented by the constant flows of violence, humiliation and exclusion that Afro-descendant trans women are constantly subjected to” (Frankel, 2013, p.26). Lack of political representation in activism together with the lack of legal protections exacerbates the struggle of Afro-Brazilian trans* population which remains largely invisible as it is systematically marginalised by the insufficient recognition of the intersectionality of race/ethnic heritage, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression.

It is also important to mention that, according to the above mentioned government reports (Brasil, 2012b; 2013), the most suspected perpetrators of homophobic acts are presumed to be heterosexual men (see graphs below), which supports further the idea that “Brazilian society is still extremely sexist, machoist and misogynist” (Brasil, 2012b, p.116) and that those who escape from this heteronormativity may be punished with violence and discrimination. Heterosexuals may also be victims of homophobia and transphobia if they are perceived to have a different sexual orientation and/or gender identity which does not conform to the heteronormative expectations of society (Brasil, 2013, p.11).

**CHART 6**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Suspects, according to gender identity, 2011</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male 30,6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female 22,1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Travesti 0,4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not informed 46,9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Adapted from: Brasil (2012b, p.32)
4.3 Murders of LGBT people

So far we have discussed the official records of violence against LGBT people as shown in the recent reports of the Brazilian Government. Civil society organisations have been monitoring the situation since the 1980s, particularly keeping track of murders of LGBT people. The most renowned data available has been annually collected by Grupo Gay da Bahia (GGB) and their 2013 report revealed a total of 338 murders of lesbians, gays, bisexuals and trans* people in the country, 27% more than in the previous year. The majority of the victims were gays (56%), followed by travestis (37%), lesbians (5%) and bisexuals (1%) (GGB, 2013, p.1), confirming trends observed in the earlier discussed government’s reports.

The GGB report shows that the Northeast region is the most homophobic/transphobic one, since a significant proportion (45%) of the total of murders took place there. Rio de Janeiro, located in the Southeast region, is among the states with fewer murders – 0.8 deaths for every million inhabitants. Overall, there is an average of 1.7 LGBT victims of murder to each million inhabitants in the country (GGB, 2013, p.2).

According to the coordinator of the research and longtime LGBTI activist, Professor Luiz Mott, these numbers correspond to only a percentage of the real amount of the murders committed against the LGBT community, since they are mostly based on data published on newspapers, on the Internet and recorded by other civil society organisations. He also highlights the fact that only 27% of the murders in 2012 were solved and suspects identified, which reveals a “high rate of impunity in these hate crimes and severe institutional/police homophobia and transphobia which results in the police not investigating in depth such homicides” (GGB, 2013, p.2).

It may be relevant to highlight a trend observed in the GGB reports, where most of the gay men were murdered in their own houses, which indicates that the victims probably knew the suspects, and most of the travestis were murdered on the streets, which indicates that probably the crimes were related to sex work. In fact, the research shows that 45% of the victims were sex workers (GGB, 2013, p.3), which corroborates our point made in the previous chapter regarding the vulnerability of such group. Sex workers, and especially trans* sex workers, are more exposed to violence since they often work on the streets and in very precarious and unsafe conditions.

Finally, the report concludes that 99% of these murders against LGBT people were motivated by different types of homophobia,
“(...) individual homophobia, when the killer has not resolved their own sexuality and want to wash his repressed desire with blood; or cultural homophobia, practicing bullying and expelling travestis to the margins of society where violence is endemic; or institutional homophobia, when the government does not ensure the safety of spaces frequented by the community (...)” (GGB, 2013, p.4).

Most of the academic work on the issue of violence against LGBT people in Brazil suggests that the largest problem in the country is the lack of laws preventing hate crimes motivated by homophobia and transphobia and inefficiency from the side of the police when attempting to solve such crimes and punishing the aggressors as observed by the 2013 GGB report. Martins, Fernandes and Nascimento (2010) explain that such problems contribute to perpetuate discrimination and violence based on sexual orientation or gender identity, leaving such groups in a very vulnerable position in the Brazilian society. These authors underscore the urgent need for reinforcing public security measures in order to fight and eradicate homophobic/transphobic violence and guarantee the safety of all LGBT people in Brazil.

4.4 Homophobia and transphobia in Rio de Janeiro

Rio de Janeiro is considered Brazil’s gay capital, not only because it is the most popular destination for LGBT tourists, but also because it attracts a huge flow of business related to LGBT people making it Brazil’s most gay-friendly city. Nevertheless, it is not free from homophobic and transphobic discrimination and violence.

In the above mentioned government reports about homophobic violence in Brazil, the state of Rio de Janeiro registered a total of 217 reports related to 544 different violations against the LGBT population in 2012, among which 217 refer to psychological violence, 198 to discrimination, 96 to physical violence, 16 to negligence, seven to sexual violence, six to institutional violence and four to financial and economic abuse (Brasil, 2013, p.78).

The Rio sem Homofobia (Rio without Homophobia) programme from the government of the State of Rio recently published the results of a research based on the data collected in 2012 by its LGBT Citizenship Helpline and the LGBT Reference Centres on cases of homophobic/transphobic violence in the state of Rio de Janeiro.

The results show that from all the calls received, the LGBT Helpline registered 29.8% of the reports as homophobic violence, out of which over than half (52.6%) were cases of verbal abuse and 7.8% of physical violence. The location of the reported homophobic and transphobic cases also illustrate that such abuse is

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37 Original text: “(...) homofobia individual, quando o assassino tem mal resolvida sua própria sexualidade e quer lavar com o sangue seu desejo reprimido; seja a homofobia cultural, que pratica bullying e expulsa as travestis para as margens da sociedade onde a violência é endêmica; seja a homofobia institucional, quando o Governo não garante a segurança dos espaços frequentados pela comunidade LGBT(…)”.

38 See Appendix for more information on LGBT rights in Brazil.


40 Centres funded by the State government of Rio to provide legal, psychological and social services to the LGBT community free of charge, while helping to prevent homophobia and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity.
widespread, with 19.2% of the cases taking place in religious places, 16.9% at work, 15.9% within families and 15.7% in the neighbourhood (Rio de Janeiro, 2012, p.41).

From all the cases received by the LGBT Reference Centres, 45.2% referred to verbal abuse and 38.2% to physical violence. The majority of the cases took place in the family unit (26.6%) or at the workplace (16.7%), and 62.7% of the suspected perpetrators were male, confirming trends observed in the rest of the country by the Brazilian government report. The crimes were further described by type, including 36.3% that were ‘crimes against physical integrity’ (comprising of 27 homicides and 262 cases with physical injuries), 29.1% were crimes against the “honour of the person”, and 22.5% involved criminal acts against private property (Rio de Janeiro, 2012, p.45).

Furthermore, during a survey carried out at the 2011 Pride Parade, 66% reported having already suffered some sort of discrimination based on their sexual orientation or gender identity, either at school, work, in their homes or neighbourhoods. A similar study produced by the Latin American Centre for Sexuality and Human Rights in the 2004 Parade shows that 33.5% of the interviewees suffered discrimination from friends or neighbours, 27% from family members, 26.8% at school/university, 20.6% at church, 18% in businesses (establishments that provide services, such as restaurants, shops, etc.) or places of leisure, 11.7% in the workplace and 11.15% by healthcare service providers (Carrara and Ramos, 2005, p.77), as shown in the following chart:

### Chart 8

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Context or location of discrimination (multiple answers)</th>
<th>0,00</th>
<th>20,00</th>
<th>40,00</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Friends or neighbours</td>
<td>33,5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family environment</td>
<td>27,0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School/university</td>
<td>26,8</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious environment</td>
<td>20,6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shops/Leisure places</td>
<td>18,0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work</td>
<td>11,7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health services</td>
<td>11,1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Adapted from: Carrara and Ramos, 2005, p.77.

The data also reveals that both in their families and in their neighbourhoods, lesbians suffer more exclusion or marginalization, followed by trans* people. When it comes to discrimination in the workplace or in healthcare services, trans* people suffer the most with 35.3% and 25% of trans* respondents experiencing discrimination in the respective areas (Carrara and Ramos, 2005). These numbers confirm the above-mentioned data from the Brazilian government which revealed that homophobic and transphobic violence are also gendered, and those identified
with the female gender are the biggest victims, thus supporting the statement that Brazilian society is still highly sexist and misogynistic.

Furthermore, this study introduces data on situations of physical violence experienced by LGBT people and highlights that gay men and trans* people, particularly travestis, are mostly at risk, as illustrated in the chart below.

To make matters worse, only a small percentage of victims reported the cases to the authorities (9.8%). The majority often prefers talking to friends (39.9%) or family members (15.5%), afraid of being exposed and face the risk of suffering even more discrimination (Carrara and Ramos, 2005, p.97), confirming the earlier discussion on unreported cases, as confirmed by the chart below:

Adapted from: Carrara and Ramos, 2005, p.86.  
Adapted from: Carrara and Ramos, 2005, p.97.
5. METHODOLOGY

5.1 Introduction: overall methodological approach

This empirical research aimed to generate objective knowledge about the relationship between poverty, sexual orientation and/or gender identity in Rio de Janeiro, using existing research and reports on the situation of poverty in Brazil and Rio and the social situation of LGBT people in Brazil, as a foundation for this research's objectives. This study adopted a qualitative approach, which was deemed as most appropriate for the topic of this report, as this enabled the Micro Rainbow International (MRI) team to engage directly with LGBT individuals living in poverty, which would have otherwise been difficult to reach out to. A qualitative method to gathering this kind of data also allowed the MRI team to draw upon the individuals' life experience to support the arguments made throughout the report.

5.2 Research methods

In order to guide the interviews, the MRI team prepared a draft questionnaire, which was reviewed by a group of academics and activists to ensure its relevance. It was translated into Portuguese and tested and revised before being mainstreamed to the sample group. The questionnaire contained 40 questions divided into 4 sections, aiming at gathering data on the interviewees' personal and social lives, their experience of discrimination based on sexual orientation and/or gender identity and their current economic and employment situation. Every individual who consented to speak to us and to share their story received a small financial contribution towards their time and transport costs. Some of the interviews were performed in loco (at the partners’ offices or in the favelas), with the assistance of the fieldwork partners, and others were carried out at the office of the Reference Centre for LGBT Citizenship from the programme Rio sem Homofobia.

5.3 Data analysis

From January until May 2013, the questionnaires gathered during the fieldwork in Rio de Janeiro were reviewed and translated to English, since they were carried out in Portuguese. The collected data was then analysed, using a descriptive analytical perspective that helped interpret the replies provided in the questionnaires, and against the framework of the report's objectives. The data analysis and the report writing took place between June and December 2013. The draft was then reviewed by an external consultant between February and May 2014.

5.4 Location and timeframe

The fieldwork was carried out between September and December 2012 in the city of Rio de Janeiro. In September and October, the focus was on researching the poverty situation of LGBT people in Rio de Janeiro, where Micro Rainbow International teamed up with local partners that assisted in creating the sample group and administering the questionnaire.
During this time, a questionnaire to guide our interviews was also prepared, and this was used throughout November. A decision was taken to focus on urban poverty because it would have been difficult to reach LGBT people living in poverty in rural areas given the resources available and that the fieldwork partners have no experience in reaching out to rural LGBT people. However, with the assistance of such partners, the research team was able to reach out to people living both in metropolitan and remote areas of Rio (including the complex of favelas in Maré and the Baixada Fluminense).

5.5 Fieldwork partners

In September 2012, the MRI team approached the programme Rio sem Homofobia from the Government of the State of Rio de Janeiro to discuss fieldwork ideas. The underlying thought was to connect with a local governmental agency with the networks, experience and knowledge on the research topic to improve the chances of creating a robust sample and carrying out a successful fieldwork. The team met with the coordinator of the programme, Cláudio Nascimento, a former LGBT activist in Brazil who currently holds the position of Superintendente de Direitos Individuais, Coletivos e Diffusos da Secretaria de Assistência Social e Direitos Humanos. Cláudio Nascimento welcomed the research and assisted the team in creating the sample group and appointed one of his officers, Majorie Marchi, who is also a trans* activist and founder of the trans* organisation Astra-Rio. Majorie Marchi connected the MRI team with local organisations who reached out to LGBT people living in poverty in Rio and who were willing to be interviewed.

The following organisations have collaborated in this research: Grupo Conexão G, Associação de Travestis e Transexuais do Estado do Rio de Janeiro (Astra-Rio), Grupo de Emancipação e Luta pela Livre Orientação Sexual (Grupo Ellos), Empório Almir França and Grupo Arco-Íris. Astra-Rio helped with the reaching out to the majority of transsexuals and travestis interviewed; Conexão G, which is the only organisation working directly with LGBT people from the favelas connected the team with people living in the complex of favelas in Maré; Empório Almir França, a fashion atelier which employs young LGBT people and helps them to step out of poverty, opened its doors for the MRI team to interview its staff; and Grupo Ellos, located in the city of Nova Iguaçu (at the Baixada Fluminense), outside the metropolitan area of Rio, brought some of its members to speak to the research team. Finally, we consulted Grupo Arco-Íris, the oldest LGBT organisation in Rio, on a variety of issues concerning the LGBT community in the city.

5.6 Participants

With the assistance of Cláudio Nascimento and Majorie Marchi, we first mapped some areas in Rio de Janeiro where we could find a reasonable number of lesbians, gays, bisexuals and trans* people living in situations of poverty. Cláudio Nascimento then suggested that we target people living mostly under social classes C, D and F.

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42 Superintendente de Direitos Individuais, Coletivos e Diffusos da Secretaria de Assistência Social e Direitos Humanos
43 Association of Travestis and Transsexuals of the State of Rio De Janeiro
44 Group of Emancipation and Fight for Free Sexual Orientation.
E in the following areas: Downtown, the favelas of Alemão and Maré, Zona Oeste, and Baixada Fluminense. They assisted us in liaising with organisations that were interested in facilitating the interviews and scheduled meetings with them as well as appointments with prospective interviewees in those areas. The Reference Centre for LGBT Citizenship from the programme Rio sem Homofobia also helped us identity people who were willing to be interviewed and allowed us to use their facilities for some of the interviews.

5.7 Study limitations

We interviewed 46 people living in situations of poverty in Rio de Janeiro. Whilst it is acknowledged that the group is relatively small, it should be pointed out that the aim at this stage is to create awareness and a research space that highlights the situation of LGBT people living in poverty in Rio, rather than creating a large statistical analysis on the topic. This study also aimed at giving a better picture of these lived realities since it is an area which is not very explored. It highlights possible trends as well as identifying areas that need further research.

45 The National Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE) defines the social classes in Brazil in 5 broad categories, divided according to the monthly family income, as expressed in the amount of minimum wages (mw): A (more than 20 mw), B (from 10 to 20 mw), C (from 4 to 10 mw), D (from 2 to 4 mw) and E (below 2 mw). For more information, see: http://www.ibge.gov.br/
6. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

6.1 Demographics: respondents’ profile

A total of forty-six people were interviewed: eight of them identified themselves as lesbians, fourteen as gay men, two as bisexual, ten as transsexuals, and twelve as travestis.

Regarding their ages, the majority of our respondents (41) were between eighteen and forty-five years old and only five were older than forty-six.

When asked which area of Rio they live, nineteen people said they live in the North Zone, five in the West Zone and ten in the Baixada Fluminense (all of these areas are often known for being inhabited by people on low-income). Ten people answered that they live in Downtown while only two live in the South Zone (which is considered to be among one of the prestigious regions of the city).

In order to find out their ethnic/racial background, we used the same categories used by the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE) in their national demographic census. According to this classification, nine of the respondents answered they were ‘white’, thirteen were ‘black’ and twenty-four were ‘pardo’.

6.2 Education

Only three of the forty-six respondents had not been to school. Of the forty-three who had been, twenty-seven had been to public schools, five had been to both public and private schools and eleven did not know or did not want to say whether their schools were public or private.

The quality of public education in Brazil has been known for many years to be low and only those from middle and upper

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46 For more information, see: http://www.ibge.gov.br/english/

47 Pardo is a Portuguese word created by the IBGE in 1976. According to their definition, it encompasses various shades of ‘brown’ colours, ranging from white to black and is used in its census as a broad category for multiracial Brazilians.
classes are able to go to private schools. It is important to notice that none of the respondents stated to have been to private schools, which could indicate that they had been living in poverty situations and/or could not afford to pay for their education.

Another indication of poverty is the fact that none of the respondents who went to university had been able to complete it. In addition, sixteen respondents had only completed primary school and twenty-five had completed high school. The most common reason for people to have left school (mentioned by twenty-three of the interviews) is the lack of financial means and the need to find employment to support themselves and/or their families. Six people left school because of discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity while others left because of health issues and family problems. The following excerpts show some of the respondents’ reasons for not continuing their studies:

**“Why did you stop studying?”**

*I didn’t consider going to university because I was going through my transitioning process and had to cope with so many things*

*I quit my studies because I had no emotional stability, I was constantly a victim of prejudice for being a trans* person. In addition, I began doing sex work at night and couldn’t attend the classes*

*I had to do sex work in order to help my brothers and at 8 years old I got involved with drug dealing as well*

*Because I had to work and did not receive support from family*

*I did not go to college because I had no money to pay for my studies*

**6.3 Living arrangements**

When asked about their living arrangements, twenty-five of the respondents said that they live with their family, four live with their boyfriend or girlfriend and six live with their friends. From those, sixteen live with only one person, another sixteen live with two to four people and three said they live with more than four people. Ten of our respondents live on their own while one person is homeless.

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48 See Estevan (2012) for a more detailed discussion on the issue.
When asked about their monthly living expenses, twenty seven answered they can afford them, while nineteen (41%) said they could not afford their expenses. The main reasons given can be summarised in one of the answers given by a respondent:

“…because I don’t have a fixed income, I don’t receive social benefits, and sometimes I need to do sex work to earn some money”.

The main expenses identified by the respondents are food, bills, transport and rent. Only two people mentioned ‘education’ as one of their monthly expenses.

When asked whether they receive any kind of support from their family members, friends, or partners, in order to afford their living expenses, over half of the respondents (57%) people said ‘yes’ whilst the rest (43%) responded in the negative. From those who answered positively, eighteen said they receive support from their family members, four from their partners, one from friends and one receives a basic food basket from the government as part of the programme supporting people living with HIV. However, out of the eighteen people who receive support, only four reported receiving money, while the rest receive other kinds of support (mainly food and housing).

Moreover, from the 57% of our respondents that receive some kind of support in order to afford their living expenses, 69% received this support mostly from their family members. This data indicates that because our respondents are living in poverty situations, those who are not rejected by their families depend on them in meeting some basic needs such as food and housing”.

**Chart 13**

**Who do you live with?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>No.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Homeless</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friends</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partner</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family members</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alone</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Chart 14**

**Why can’t you afford the monthly expenses?**

- Earn very little: 37%
- Carry out sex work and have unstable income: 20%
- Unemployed: 37%
In addition, 54% of our respondents still live with their families whilst 41% cannot afford their monthly living expenses because they are unemployed (37%) or earn very little (37%). It is important to mention those respondents who are sex workers and thus have a very unstable source of income (26%).

6.4 Occupation

Only eighteen (39%) of our respondents answered that they have a job. Their jobs vary and the most common were secretary, shop assistant and working for NGOs. Other jobs include events producer, teacher, waiter and hairdresser.

Salaries vary and three people reported earning below R$800 monthly (nearly US$330) which means slightly above the minimum wage (currently, the minimum wage in Brazil is R$678). Six people reported earning from R$800 to R$1000 and another six people earn from R$1000 to R$1200, with only one respondent earning more than R$1200. Four respondents did not provide any information on their earnings.

When asked for the reasons that they do not have a job, the other twenty eight respondents’ most common answers were that they are illiterate or do not have any qualifications (7); they lack opportunities in the job market (5); or that they have got health problems (4) which stops them from performing well at work. Two people mentioned that they cannot find jobs because they are afraid of suffering discrimination based on their sexual orientation or gender identity at work and they prefer to do other informal jobs.

It is important to notice here that five of the respondents answered that the reason they do not have a job is because they are travestis, which prevents them from finding other jobs besides sex work. This is a common situation for many travestis in Brazil and elsewhere, as discussed in previous chapters. Being victims of stigmatisation and discrimination, they become socially and economically marginalised and as a result, the only source of income they can find is the use of their own bodies for sex work.

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49 A paid position of regular employment, either full time or part time.

50 For more information on the minimum wage, see: http://br.advfn.com/indicadores/salario-minimo

51 See Garcia (2008) for a more detailed discussion on the involvement of travestis with sex work in Brazil.
There is also an issue of low self-esteem present in their answers. The five of them answered very similarly stating first that because they are *trasvestis*, they can only do sex work. These common answers also indicate that their level of self-esteem is so low that they do not think they could have any job other than doing sex work.52

As a matter of fact, when we asked the respondents what other paid activities they perform (casual or occasional jobs), the most common answer was ‘sex work’, mentioned by eleven people. Other common answers included babysitting (3), waitressing (2) and performing in shows (2).

The issue of low self-esteem was also present in the answers to the question “Do you think you should earn more?” 10 people said ‘no’ because they don’t think they could get a better job and thus earn a better salary. There could be a combination of reasons for the low self-esteem that becomes imbued in these people’s lives. It is known that people living in poverty feel helpless about their hardships, and do not believe they could get out of it due to the continuous marginalisation (economic and social) that leaves them powerless. This powerlessness could be further exacerbated when intersecting their sexual orientation and/or gender identity – realities that are marginalised even further due to the homophobic and transphobic attitudes of Brazilian society. Such complexities alienate individuals from the means and/or opportunities required by society to step out of poverty and realities of discrimination, abuse and violence.

On the other hand, thirty six people think they could earn more, including: if the found “a decent job” (7), if they opened their own business (6), if they worked as a hairdresser (4), as a cook (3), as a teacher (2) or for an NGO (2). Only two people said that if they had more qualifications they would be able to earn more and another two believed that if they did sex work abroad they could have a higher income.

From the replies received it appears that LGBT people living in poverty in Rio de Janeiro are often in precarious job situations. It also seems that they are likely to perform occasional and casual income generating activities and have informal sources of income as opposed to being employed, which, in turn, might expose them to more exploitation and increased poverty.

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52 We believe that sex workers in Brazil, like in many other countries, are in a very vulnerable and marginalised position in society and work in very dangerous conditions. They are subject to violence and abuse, including by the police and do not have their workers’ rights recognised.

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Gilmar Santos, president of Conexão G, one of our partner organizations in Rio de Janeiro
6.5 Labour market

There is a common perception among our respondents of inequality in the labour market. When we asked them if they thought heterosexual people have more, less or the same opportunities in finding jobs than LGBT people, 86% (forty people) answered ‘more’ and only 14% (six people) said ‘the same’.

From those forty people, twenty two think that heterosexual people have more job opportunities because they face less prejudice, stigma and discrimination in comparison to LGBT people.

Nine of our respondents who identified as lesbian, gay or bisexual believe that they have more opportunities only in relation to trans* people, because the latter are very stigmatised and “cannot hide who they are, while lesbian and gays can be more discreet and look ‘normal’ if they wish” (an interviewee, aged between 26 – 35 who identifies as transsexual). The other six mentioned that only “masculine lesbians or effeminate gays” have fewer opportunities than normative-looking lesbian, gay or bisexual people.

This reinforces the argument that hiding one’s sexual orientation and/or gender identity – non-normative ones – allows for better access to job opportunities. Passing as a heterosexual cisgender person provides not only more opportunities but also an increase in people’s self-esteem that they have access to the labour market. It was clearly expressed by fifteen of the respondents that heteronormative expectations on appearances, behaviours and attitudes exclude those LGBT individuals who do not fit such rigid norms. This affirms societal and LGBT people’s perceptions that their opportunities and the jobs available are fewer. This is corroborated by the following replies of our respondents, who believe they are offered low-paid jobs simply for who they are and how they look, as shown in the table below:

Because there are many negative stereotypes associated with gays, and which are aggregated to other types of prejudice (for being poor, black, living in a ‘favela’). Beside that, LGBT people are restricted to the same kinds of jobs: beauty parlours, NGOs etc. There are more stigmas if the person is an effeminate gay and thus he will have even less opportunities.

It depends on how they dress, how they behave. If she dresses like a man, in a masculine way, no one will hire her.

Because they [trans] are very stigmatised especially travestis. People think they will steal, sleep with their husbands etc.
I believe that many gays and trans* are way better and more capable than heteros, but they have fewer opportunities due to prejudice.

Not only heteros, but also gays and lesbians who are discreet and fit in the heteronormative standards also have more advantages. However, for travestis and transsexuals stigma is bigger because they do not follow socially acceptable patterns and it is not possible to hide their transexuality.

Because the world is hypocritical! Obviously!

Discrimination against gays begins with the job interviews, there is always a homophobic comment/candidate and they always prefer to hire heterosexuals.

Only in relation to trans*, because they are stigmatised and associated with prostitution and disorder. People do not take them seriously.

Many LGBTs become self-employed because they find it hard to access the labour market, due to prejudice and pathologisation.

Because society is very “macho” and worries too much about how people look/behave, about the “good morals”.

It depends more on the appearance and the way people dress than on their sexual orientation. Lesbians who are more masculine have more difficulties than those who are discreet.

When asked if they ever felt that being LGBT made them earn more, less or equal to heterosexuals, only four answered ‘more’. Twenty five people answered they have always earned the same as their heterosexual workmates, while seventeen believe they have earned less. From these seventeen, seven believe they earn less because they feel that employers are prejudiced against trans* people, especially travestis, again due to their stigmatisation; four believe they had a lower wage than their heterosexual workmates because of their sexual orientation; and two because they lack formal education. The other two did not provide any reason.

From those who answered ‘more’, three did not give a specific reason and one explained that because he is gay, he feels the need to make more effort to perform a good job and to stand out from his workmates; therefore he ends up earning more. Read some extracts from their replies in the box below:

Because employers do not appreciate trans* people (they do not hire them formally, give them benefits, social security etc) and when they give them a job, they think they’re doing them a favour.

Because us trans* people are degraded, considered inferior to heterosexuals, as if we did not deserve to earn the same.

I have always been offered lower salaries than the average, and I believe this is due to my gender identity.
I have lost many job opportunities and was dismissed in selection processes for being trans*.

Salaries (for LGBT people) are still very low in relation to other positions and it is hard to find LGBTs, mainly T, in important positions.

Because I’m gay, I have always worked harder, always wanted to be the best, and therefore always stood out from my hetero workmates and was always invited to do extra shifts and extra jobs.

I have once lost a position I was applying for when I told them I was gay.

My salary as a teacher was less than the other teachers with the same qualifications, and I believe that’s because I’m a lesbian.

6.6 Access to credit

40% of our respondents (eighteen people) do not have a bank account and 26% (twelve people) have a basic bank account with no overdraft facilities. Only 28% of our respondents (thirteen people) have a credit card and 6% (three people) have also overdraft facilities. When the people without a bank account were asked for the reason they did not have one, the general response was that they do not earn enough money to justify opening a bank account and keeping the money in a bank, which highlights the situation of poverty they are living in.

The majority of people spoken to (65%) have never applied for a bank loan. Sixteen people have applied for a loan in the past, of which eleven applied only once, three applied twice and the other two more than twice. The general feeling from those who did not apply for a loan despite needing financial assistance is that they think loans usually require too much paperwork and bureaucracy, so they prefer to borrow money from friends or family members. A few people also mentioned that they do not think they would be able to repay the loan on a regular or long-term basis because they do not have a regular job.

Of those sixteen people that applied for a loan, two people were rejected because they did not have enough income and fourteen people were accepted. From these, four people asked for between R$500 - 1000
LGBT PEOPLE LIVING IN POVERTY IN RIO DE JANEIRO

(approximately US$205 - 410), three asked for more than R$1000 and only one asked for below R$500. The other six did not want to disclose the amount they applied for. When asked for the reason that they applied for a loan, five said they needed to pay bills or debts, three wanted to invest in their businesses or start a new one, two wanted to renovate/improve their houses and the other four wanted to use the money for personal expenses. Thirteen of the respondents applied for their loans at a bank and one through a loan shark. Five of them have not paid it back yet because they do not have enough income, seven have already paid and two are still repaying the debt.

6.7 Social benefits

50% of our respondents have received some kind of social benefits in the form of government grants (11), which include cash transfer programmes, scholarships (6), different kinds of pensions (4), health insurance (1) and some other form of benefit (1).

When asked how they used the money, five answered they used it for household expenses, four to pay bills, four invested in their studies, and two used it for personal expenses. Six of the respondents mentioned receiving a scholarship from the DAMAS project and nine mentioned receiving from *Bolsa Familia*.

Besides the six who are part of the DAMAS project, 50% of our respondents mentioned that they had received some benefits or services due to their sexual orientation or gender identity, including counselling (8), legal advice (6), HIV tests (2), assistance with job hunting (1). These services/benefits were provided either by NGOS (8), government (14), or university (1). All of the services/benefits were free.

6.8 Discrimination

87% of the interviewees (forty people) said that they have been discriminated on the grounds of sexual orientation and/or gender identity. The episodes of discrimination that they have mentioned happened in public places (32), at schools (28), at work (20), in the services sector (15), at home (9), on public transport (3), at healthcare facilities (2).

They have been discriminated by a variety of actors, including service providers (22), community members (21), strangers (17), their families (8), security guards (6), the police (5) and religious leaders (2).

Episodes of discrimination

Below we share extracts of some accounts of discrimination that our interviewees faced by the society at large. We include episodes of discrimination in public places (including

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53 See Chapter 2 for a discussion on those cash transfer programmes, such as *Bolsa Familia* and *Fome Zero*

54 A pioneer project from the City of Rio which focusing on increasing employment and labour inclusion of trans* people. Since 2003, it has allowed social and professional inclusion of travestis and transsexuals through training and promoting education and employability.
Within the family, in public places, by the authorities and religious leaders

3 years ago drug traffickers approached me and when they realised I was gay they started to harass me sexually, made jokes and threatened me with a gun.

In 2005, in Nova Iguaçu, I was tied upside down on a bridge for almost an hour by a group of teenagers who wanted to frighten me until a couple passed by and saved me. (trans*)

8 years ago I was threatened to death after having sex with a policeman and I suffered violent aggressions and ended up in a hospital. (trans*)

When I tried to rent an apt, the landlord didn’t want to give me the flat after he realised I was a trans* woman. That happened other times too.

This week a passenger in a bus threatened to kick me out of the bus because I was talking to my travestis friends. This kind of thing happens frequently.

During childhood and my teen years, my mom and stepdad wouldn’t accept I was gay and I would suffer humiliations and verbal assaults at my own house.

1 year ago, my hotel reservation was cancelled after they noticed we were a lesbian couple.

Last year I was beaten up by homophobic strangers on the streets, suddenly without any reason. (gay)

I was on a bus and when they noticed I was gay, a guy began to harass me, touching me with his penis to make me uncomfortable and calling me “faggot” and other horrible names.

In 2012 I had a corneal ulcer and didn’t receive the appropriate treatment from a public hospital because I was a travesti.

In 2010, while leaving a party in a favela, I was assaulted by 9 “Funkeiros” (a Brazilian subculture from the favelas who follow the music genre called conscience on the floor. (trans*)

When I was in jail, I was forced to take off my clothes and walk naked in front of the prisoners. Afterwards I would be “auctioned” by the guards. (trans*)

In 2006 I was prohibited from going to church when they found out I was lesbian.

55 Although 9 of interviewees have reported suffering discrimination at home, they did not want to share the stories in detail, probably because most of them still live with and/or depend on their families, as previously discussed.
Recently, a guy sat next to me on the bus with a knife and tried to violate me and assault me physically. (gay)

I am always a victim of hate speech from pastors and religious people at the Sans Pena Square. (lesbian)

The other day the bar owner prohibited me from sitting in his bar for being gay.

At school

61% of the respondents (twenty eight people) reported having been discriminated at school. Of the eighteen people who replied no to this answer, three did not go to school, thirteen were not out at school and pretended to be straight and three were discriminated for other reasons. Below we set out some of the most common answers that were given when asked, “Have you ever been bullied at school because of your sexual orientation or gender identity?”

When I was 14-15 years old I suffered sexual harassment, other students would rub their penises against me to make me uncomfortable and humiliate me.

When I was a child, the doorman would force me to have sex with him in exchange for food/snacks at school. And he would threaten to tell the others if I refused. A rich classmate would also do the same, and trade sex for gifts, money and food.

I was verbally abused by other students who would throw things and food at me.

During all childhood I would suffer verbal and physical abuses by students and teachers.

At 5ª grade I was chased after school by other students calling me “dyke”.

I have been yelled at, stoned and humiliated by older students during primary school.

I have been locked in the toilet by other students and humiliated by teachers.

I was kicked out from school at 5th grade by the principal.

At work

Thirty-nine of our respondents affirmed to being out as lesbian, gay, bisexual or trans* at work56 (of which twenty one are trans*, eleven are gays, six are lesbians, and one is bisexual). When we asked those who are not out why they haven’t revealed their sexual orientation or gender identity in the workplace, four said they were afraid of their boss’ and colleagues’ reactions, two do not feel like telling anyone because this is part of their private life and one is not even out to their family yet.

56 It includes formal employment and informal/irregular activities.
When asked if they have had any problems at work due to their sexual orientation or gender identity, twenty people said "yes": twelve of these were trans*, five were gays and three were lesbians. Three trans* people revealed they had already been victims of jokes and transphobia at their workplace. The other nine mentioned that they had to do sex work because they couldn’t find jobs or stay in the same job for too long, from which seven reported having suffered physical violence from clients while doing sex work.

From the eight lesbians or gays who answered affirmatively, three mentioned they have been victims of jokes and homophobic comments in their workplace and five revealed that they had been fired or had to leave their jobs after their sexuality was disclosed.

It is worth noting here, that four trans* people emphasised that they did not have any problems “when they still looked like a boy” and two lesbians stressed that the reason why they think they do not have problems is because they are “very discreet about their sexuality”. These comments shed light on Brazilian heteronormative society that expects all to fall within and follow the established norms. By doing so, LGBT people, amongst others, will be less likely to be discriminated at work.

Below we share some insightful answers involving discrimination at work or while looking for jobs:

**It has always been a nightmare. Every time I would look for jobs at shops and beauty salons, when they noticed I was trans*, people would simply dismiss me and would never call me back for an interview.**

**I have felt prejudice during job interviews when they realised my social name does not match my birth name... Nobody ever seemed to understand that and I was never able to get to the end of the recruitment processes.**

**I have gone through many unpleasant and embarrassing moments with my clients... if I refused to do something or satisfy their wishes, they would always throw transphobic comments at me... I have already suffered physical abuse by some clients when they realised I had a penis... sometimes they made me do things I didn’t want to or even refused to pay. I was always scared of their violent reactions!**

**My workmates always play jokes with me, calling me names and trying to ruin my image. I have lost count of how many degrading comments I have heard just for being gay.**
A long time ago, I had so many difficulties while trying to find a job just because I am a travesti, so the only solution was to do sex work. Things only changed when I began to fight for my rights and became an activist. But after I found out I had AIDS, it all went downhill and I could never find a decent job again.

When I was working as a saleswoman, my boss forbade me to wear make-up and dress like a woman. He wanted me to be discreet and behave like a dude, otherwise I would be fired.

When I worked at a beauty salon, some workmates always felt the need to tell the clients I was trans* and that would always put me in uncomfortable situations... It got to a point where many refused to be my clients and my salary decreased dramatically.

I have had problems with workmates who stopped talking to me when they realised I was a transsexual. It hurt me really badly because you feel like you cannot trust or be friends with anyone at work.

I have worked for 8 years in the same job and because I was the only travesti there, the other men would always call me names and make stupid jokes.

Once I worked as a doorman and the moment people began to realise I was gay, everything changed. I was given less shifts than the other doormen, I would constantly hear jokes and homophobic comments, up until the point my boss fired me without an apparent reason.

The parents of my students convoked a meeting with the principal to prohibit me from teaching there because I was a “masculine lesbian”. As a result, I was forced to resign.

At my former job, my workmates would make homophobic jokes and I was fired for being gay.

From 2008 to 2011, while doing tests to work in a beauty parlour, I was always dismissed when they found out I was trans*.

Nevertheless, we were surprised to hear that fourteen people have received some kind of advantage at work because of their sexual orientation or gender identity. Eight of them said that they only got their jobs because they were lesbian, gay or trans* and three mentioned that their sexual orientation or gender identity enabled them to succeed at their job and stand out from their workmates. The other three feel that customers admire them because they are open about their sexuality and therefore always buy things from them.

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57 Two gays and two lesbians got their jobs at the Almir Franca fashion atelier; one transsexual was invited to produce a TV show exactly because of her transsexuality; two transsexuals got their job after completing the DAMAS project; the other gay man thinks his boss hired him because he is also gay.

58 One transsexual model, one gay activist and one lesbian activist.
Although our interviewees feel it is advantageous to find those jobs because of their sexual or gender identity, ideally they should be able to find jobs anywhere, not only in those places well known for being LGBT inclusive, which may end up reinforcing certain stereotypes associated to that population. Or even more seriously, it may have the unintended consequence of limiting their employment options and creating a sense that they can only do those types of jobs. In the recommendations section, this report will present ways to tackle this issue and increase employment opportunities to the LGBT community.

Read below some of the most insightful answers:

**In my current job (model), being transsexual is an advantage because I stand out from the others for my androgynous/exotic looks. I have already been to TV shows to talk about that.**

**Because I am “out” and work with LGBT issues, it makes me more confident to stand before society, besides that I feel that I face less risks of being discriminated doing this job. People fear that I will tell everyone or call the police.**

**People always admire me for being out of the closet, so I always have many clients and they are very supportive.**

**When I worked as a social worker, I was able to perform an excellent job and help other trans* people... that’s why I received an award from the city hall for my work at the Secretary for Sexual Diversity of Rio de Janeiro.**

**I was invited to produce a TV show about sexuality because they knew I am a transsexual woman and wanted someone like me. For the first time I felt that being trans* could be an advantage in my professional life.**
7. FINAL REMARKS

This research allowed us to look into the lives of LGBT people living in poverty in the city of Rio de Janeiro. We met and interviewed forty-six individuals who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transsexual or travesti. Their lived realities and experiences in different aspects of their lives provide a clearer picture of what it means to have a low income and to be LGBT in Brazil.

Our research confirmed that this group of people is more likely to become and/or remain poor due to the stigma, prejudice and discrimination they face on the basis of their sexual orientation and/or gender identity. Our interviews revealed that LGBT people who live in poverty in Rio de Janeiro often deal with verbal, physical and sexual violence, and other abuses motivated by homophobia and transphobia. These forms of violence and discrimination take place at work, in public places, private establishments, bars and even within their families and communities. We argue that the lack of social and legal recognition of LGBT people, coupled with exclusionary policies on poverty provide a context that maintains the invisibility and structural marginalization of LGBT people living in poverty.

The majority of the people we spoke to believe that they are more vulnerable to poverty than cisgender heterosexual people because the latter do not face as much prejudice and discrimination. As a result, they have access to more employment opportunities and receive better treatment and, in some cases, even a higher income. Our research revealed that LGBT people living in poverty in Rio have to deal with precarious job situations, unequal and unfair treatment, informal work and irregular income, which makes them more vulnerable to poverty and exploitation.

The evidence indicates that employers still have prejudice against this population, especially against trans* people, who are often stigmatised and marginalised in the labour market.

As a matter of fact, we found out that trans* people, especially travestis, often have to resort to sex work because they cannot find other work opportunities and better wages. Those who are involved in sex work are also subjected to transphobic violence, harassment and sexual abuse from clients and other people from their communities, which deeply affect their wellbeing and health, while limiting their dreams and aspirations for the future.

Furthermore, our research revealed that most LGBT people living in poverty in Rio suffer from low self-esteem and lack confidence, due to the verbal, psychological, physical and sexual abuses they are continuously subject to because of their sexual orientation and/or gender identity. On top of this, none of the people we interviewed have completed university studies, while others lack professional skills and qualifications or are illiterate, which makes it even harder for them to find a decent job and increase their prospects of income. Consequently, they must rely heavily on their families and friends for housing and other living expenses, which is not always possible since many are
rejected and ostracised by members of their own families.

In conclusion, we were able to prove the various intersections among poverty, sexual orientation and gender identity and how these issues affect the lives of LGBT people in Rio de Janeiro, resulting in inadequate access to education, housing, employment, healthcare, public services and economic opportunities. It is important to note that poverty may affect the LGBT community as much as it affects heterosexual people. However, when combined with multiple forms of discrimination, such as gender, race, class and, most importantly, sexual orientation or gender identity, it creates a reality of massive socioeconomic inequality and exclusion, and the LGBT population pays a higher price to step out of it.

We therefore, call upon governments and government agencies, policy makers, employers, service providers and civil society organisations to address the realities of LGBT people living in poverty, and whose well-being is at jeopardy as a result of the continuous exclusions. Low income LGBT people experience discrimination in several aspects of their lives – such as employment, education and family - and additionally, are socially and economically excluded from anti-poverty as well as from LGBT-rights discourses.
8. RECOMMENDATIONS

Taking into consideration the critical situation of these people's lives, we list a number of recommendations for employers, policy makers, government agencies, service providers and civil society organisations, as a way to effectively improve the lives of LGBT people living in poverty in Rio de Janeiro and in Brazil.

8.1 For government agencies and policy makers

Our research supports the argument that many trans* people, especially travestis, are often involved in sex work and thus subject to discrimination and transphobic violence from clients and other citizens. Government agencies, including the police, should guarantee the safety of all sex workers, including trans* people, and take necessary measures to eradicate transphobia and combat street violence. Policy makers should take necessary action to regulate sex work in Brazil and legally recognise sex work as a profession. This would enable sex workers to have the same workers rights as any other professional.

Our interviews indicate that trans* sex workers often do sex work because they cannot find better wages and work opportunities, given the stigma and social marginalization they face. Policy makers and government officials should take urgent action to eliminate discrimination against trans* people in the workplace, including by promoting training and employment schemes that would increase their access to the labour market and help those who want to, to quit sex work and step out of poverty.

None of the LGBT people we interviewed have completed university studies, and 35% only completed primary school", mainly due to lack of money mainly due to lack of money and the need to start working at an early age. Government agencies should offer scholarships and public grants to motivate LGBT people to complete their studies. Policy makers should design educational campaigns and other initiatives to increase LGBT people's access to formal education.

The research also suggested that many LGBT people living in poverty in Rio de Janeiro cannot find a job mostly because they are illiterate or lack professional qualifications. Government agencies should offer placements, training options and skills-building workshops to motivate LGBT people living in poverty in pursuing more professional qualifications.

Our interviews showed that the majority of LGBT people living in poverty in Rio de Janeiro cannot afford their living expenses and must rely heavily on their families for housing and other support, which is not always possible since some could be excluded and ostracised by their family members. Policy makers should include LGBT people in their poverty reduction strategies and social inclusion programmes, which have long failed to do so due to their focus on the heterosexual
family unit. Government agencies should also increase the number of social benefits available to the LGBT community and promote their access to the existing ones. At the same time, they should offer proper training to social workers in order to increase and strengthen the social protection networks for the LGBT population. Moreover, policy makers should commit to and engage in conversations with civil society organisations in order to understand how to improve the support systems for LGBT people and help them to step out of poverty.

The majority of the LGBT people we interviewed have already experienced different levels of homophobia in society, including in the workplace. Policy makers should take the necessary measures to approve the existing bill of law, which criminalises homophobia. Local government agencies should enforce the existing laws that protect citizens from sexual orientation or gender identity discrimination and design campaigns aimed at eliminating sexual orientation and gender identity discrimination at the workplace.

8.2 For employers

Our research revealed that employers in Rio de Janeiro still show prejudice against LGBT people, especially against trans* people, who are often stigmatised and marginalised in the job market. Employers should not discriminate against their employees on the basis of their sexual orientation and/or gender identity. They should also change negative views towards trans* people and provide them with fair treatment, decent work and equal wages.

Some respondents have reported earning less than their heterosexual workmates. Employers should offer the same wage and compensation for the same job to all employees, regardless of their sexual orientation and/or gender identity.

8.3 For service providers

Several LGBT people interviewed for this research would consider starting small commercial activities, often in response to the lack of employment opportunities available to them. The interviews informing this research support the view that there is a need to provide credit to those people with entrepreneurial inclinations in spite of the fact that they might not have a credit history or the usual credentials required by high street banks to assess them.

The research reveals that LGBT people living in poverty suffer from low self-esteem and lack confidence. They should have access to self-esteem and confidence-building training and opportunities. Increased self-esteem would not only increase their chances of earning an income and/or improving their skills but also would improve their emotional wellbeing and reduce the risk of poverty.
8.4 For LGBT organisations and other civil society organisations

The evidence of our research strongly supports the argument that lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans* people living in poverty in Rio de Janeiro are more likely to remain poor due to the discrimination and stigma they face based on their sexual orientation and/or gender identity. LGBT organisations should raise awareness on the situation of poverty experienced by many LGBT people in Rio de Janeiro and the need to change negative social attitudes towards this group of people. LGBT organisations should also be more aware of the needs of this particular group and access resources that would enable them to offer material support to help LGBT people step out of poverty.

Our research reveals that LGBT people living in poverty in Rio de Janeiro have to deal with precarious jobs situations and irregular income, which makes them more vulnerable to poverty and exploitation. LGBT organisations should have access to funding for the creation of schemes that would help LGBT people find decent employment opportunities and regular income. LGBT organisations should also provide training to employers on sexual orientation and gender identity issues so that they can offer LGBT people equal access to the labour market.

Our interviews revealed that LGBT people living in poverty in Rio de Janeiro often deal with episodes of discrimination and violence based on their sexual orientation and/or gender identity. These episodes take place at work, at public places, private establishments, bars and even in their families and communities. LGBT organisations should report those cases to the authorities and ensure that LGBT people who are victims of discrimination and violence are provided with legal aid and remedies.

Our research supports the argument that trans* people, especially travestis, often have to do sex work because they cannot find other work opportunities and
better wages. LGBT organisations should have access to funding that would enable them to engage in actions that raise the confidence and self-esteem of the trans* community, including through campaigns and support groups. They should also have the means to refer trans* people to capacity building workshops and other opportunities to develop and improve their skills.

Given the multiple forms of social discrimination to which LGBT people living in poverty are subject, it is important to provide training, information, advice and guidance in sexual orientation and gender identity issues for employers, policy makers, government agencies, service providers, support organisations and groups that could improve the life opportunities of these individuals.

8.5 Further research

Our research showed that trans* people experience different situations of poverty compared with lesbians, gays or bisexuals. However we did not focus extensively on such differences. There is a need for research on how the trans* community is particularly affected by poverty and what could be done to improve their living conditions.

During our fieldwork, we were not able to interview intersex people living in poverty in Rio de Janeiro. Further research is needed to highlight the specific realities faced by intersex people, particularly how they are affected by poverty.

During our research, we identified the need to investigate the situation of poverty of LGBT people using a rights-based approach, in order to examine how poverty effects the realization of basic human rights for such population.
Decriminalisation and depathologisation of homosexuality

Sodomy was decriminalised in Brazil in 1830, eight years after its independence from Portugal, when the Imperial Penal Code was approved. Green (1999) argues the French Penal Code of 1791, the Neapolitan Code of 1819 and the Napoleonic Code of 1810, which decriminalised sexual relations between consenting adults, largely influenced this legislation.

Homosexuality was removed from the Federal Medical Council’s list of diseases in 1985, after activists directed a petition to the federal government in 1981 to suspend the application in Brazil of Paragraph 302.0 of the World Health Organisation’s International Classification of Diseases, which at the time still categorised homosexuality under “deviance and sexual disorder” (Dehesa, 2010).

Anti-discrimination law

The Federal Constitution of 1988, considered by many the first democratic constitution of Brazil and a benchmark for human rights in the country, did not include sexual orientation in its anti-discrimination clauses, although it states in Art. 3, paragraph IV that one of its fundamental objectives is “to promote the well being of all people, without prejudices based on origin, race, sex, colour, age and any other forms of discrimination.”

Despite this, the constitutions of six Brazilian states prohibit sexual orientation discrimination, and 10 states and nearly 80 municipalities have passed laws which prohibit such type of discrimination, including the state and the city of Rio de Janeiro.

A bill criminalizing homophobia (PL 5003) was proposed to the Chamber of Deputies in 2001 and then under another name (PLC 122) reintroduced in the Senate in 2006. Despite being presented and discussed, constant religious opposition to the bill has postponed its voting numerous times.
since then, until it was completely dropped off at the end of 2013.\textsuperscript{67}

**Recognition of same-sex couples**

In 1995, Marta Suplicy, a deputy from the Workers Party at that time, proposed and subsequently, introduced a bill to legalise same-sex domestic partnerships in Parliament – the *parceria civil registrada* (PCR) bill\textsuperscript{68}. Nevertheless, just like PLC 122, religious sectors of the Chamber of Deputies have repeatedly blocked the vote on the bill.

On 5 May 2011, the Brazilian Constitutional Court (*Supremo Tribunal Federal*) unanimously decided that same-sex couples who live in a stable union legally qualify as a family unit and are thus entitled to the same rights as different-sex couples living in the same kind of union, such as inclusion in health plans, social security, division of property acquired during the union, the right to inherit, a life estate in the property of the deceased partners, to name a few.\textsuperscript{69}

After this decision, notaries from Brazilian states (14 out of 27) have allowed same-sex couples to convert their stable unions into civil marriage and a campaign was launched in 2012 to legalise equal marriage across the country. In May 2013, the National Council of Justice passed a resolution, which stated that public notaries in Brazil could no longer refuse to convert stable unions into marriage or perform same-sex marriage ceremonies.\textsuperscript{70}

Nevertheless, legislation still needs to be approved in Parliament to amend the Brazilian Constitution and the Civil Code in order to fully legalise same-sex marriage, ensuring the full recognition and protections granted by marriage legislation in Brazil.

**Recognition of other rights**

Since the mid-1990s, a growing body of jurisprudence has recognised several rights of lesbians and gays in the areas of adoption, immigration, child custody, insurance, pension benefits, as well as the rights of transsexuals to change their name and gender on official documents, in some parts of the country (Vianna and Lacerda, 2007), creating a gap in rights and protections among states and especially for trans\* and intersex people. Moreover, since 2007, Brazil’s public health system provides free gender reassignment operations in some hospitals.\textsuperscript{71}

\textsuperscript{67} For more information about the bill, see: http://www.plc122.com.br.

\textsuperscript{68} The original text of the Bill can be found here: http://www.ggb.org.br/projetolei_1151.html

\textsuperscript{69} See Rios (2011) for a legal analysis on this decision.

\textsuperscript{70} See Resolution Nº 175, retrieved from: http://www.cnj.jus.br/atos-administrativos/atos-da-presidencia/resolucoespresidencia/24675-resolucao-n-175-de-14-de-maio-de-2013

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