**This submission is based on two Caribbean research projects.**

From Fringes to Focus

In the Caribbean, there is limited substantial data that documents the experiences of lesbian, bi-women and persons of trans masculine experiences. Historically and culturally the patriarchal patterns of the Caribbean heteronormative society leave women, regardless of their sexual orientation and gender identity/expression, vulnerable to all forms of social ills ranging from violence, harassment, abuse, poverty, oppression, neglect to limited access to quality health and social essential services. Sexual orientation and gender identity are not health hazards per se, but the social exclusion of LGBTI people leads to significant health disparities. [This study](https://international.coc.nl/from-fringes-to-focus/) seeks to document the situation of lesbian, bi, and queer women including persons of trans masculine experiences within the context of a culture that oppresses women and discriminates against persons of diverse sexual orientations and gender identities/expressions. The rationale for this study is the need for evidence that justifies greater attention and investment in addressing the situation of these marginalized populations in the Caribbean region.

Over-Policed, under protected

[This report](https://outrightinternational.org/sites/default/files/UTRANSOutRightDraft.pdf) seeks to give context to trans and gender diverse realities in the Caribbean. UCTRANS and OutRight Action International launched the first holistic survey that looks at trans and gender diverse lives in the Caribbean. In total 119 responses were collected from 11 countries. Significant outcomes of the survey include a 1) the ability to change one’s name legally if one is **unable to change one’s gender marker**, 2) a clear indication that trans and gender diverse people face a bigger chance of **unemployment**, 3) **self-medication** and no subsequent medical monitoring, and 4) the **political will** to recognize gender identity is significantly low.

The most significant and glaring challenge trans and gender diverse individuals struggle with on a daily basis is due to gender marker matters. Every aspect of a trans and gender diverse person’s social life – including economically (education and employment) housing and access to comprehensive, competent trans-specific health services – depends on the ability to show a valid identity card or documentation that aligns with gender identity and expression.

Inputs are welcome in response to the following questions:

\*We included additional comments from the research partners (From Fringes to Focus), from St Lucia, Guyana and Suriname. With this regard we focused on question 1 – 3.

## Research: understanding the health care needs of LGTBI and GNC people

## Does the State (or other stakeholders) gather data, including data disaggregated by sexual orientation and/or gender identity, on:

## access to and/or delivery of health services

* + - [St Lucia]: Various NGOs on island do gather such data for example [Raise Your Voice St. Lucia.](https://ryvslu.org/)
    - [Suriname]: the government doesn't gather this data but local NGOs and CBOs are the ones who usually do that such as [Suriname Men United](https://www.facebook.com/surinamemenunited/), [Plus.Sr](https://www.facebook.com/pluspuntsuriname/), [Chances for Life](https://www.linkedin.com/in/chances-for-life-cfl-184177174/?originalSubdomain=sr) & [Women's Way Foundation](https://womenswayfoundation.com/)
    - [Guyana]: various NGOs do gather this information for example [Guyana Trans United](https://www.facebook.com/Guyana-Trans-United-GTU-148525782006659/?ref=page_internal)

## the number of new HIV infections per 1000 uninfected population?

* + - [St Lucia]: Yes the state does gather such information from various testing sites
    - [Suriname]: In Suriname the NAP; “Nationaal Aids Programma Suriname” and the Ministry of Health gather that information and also NGOs like [St.Lobi](https://www.lobisuriname.org/) , CCM and [Double Positive](https://www.facebook.com/StichtingDoublePositive/)
    - [Guyana]: This information is Gathered by NGOs for example [SASOD](https://sasod.org.gy/) and Guyana Trans United

## The suicide mortality rate?

* + - [St Lucia]: Unaware that the state collects this information
    - [Suriname]: The government in Suriname does and also [Kinderen jongeren Telefoon](https://www.facebook.com/bel123.org/) (KJT)
    - [Guyana]: Unaware this this information is collected

## Coverage of treatment interventions for substance use disorders?

* + - [St Lucia]: No
    - [Suriname]: in Suriname America stichting "[De stem](https://www.dbsuriname.com/2021/02/03/stichting-de-stem-start-ambulante-zorg-voor-gokverslaafden/)" and Chances for Life work with those groups and the Ministry of Health
    - [Guyana]: Guyana Trans united seeks funding to assist Trans Women

## Harmful use of alcohol?

* + - [St Lucia]: No
    - [Suriname]: The Ministry of Health
    - [Guyana]: No

## Access to sexual and reproductive health care?

* + - [St Lucia]: Various NGO on island gather this information
    - [Suriname]: A lot of NGOs do that but Still.Lobi is the oldest and St. [OvaPlus](http://ovaplus.com/contact) is a fairly new NGO who also included family planning for same sex couples
    - [Guyana]: Guyana Trans United is allied with the Health care system to provide some assistance yes

## Coverage of essential health services?

* + - [St Lucia]: No
    - [Guyana]: Yes, the Government provides public hospital where anyone can access health services

What steps have been taken to research and understand the health care needs of LGTBI and GNC people of all ages at the national level?

[Suriname]: Women's way foundation gives 10 free sessions to all LBQTM who need psycho-social help with a psychologist of their choice or our in house psychologist who belongs to the community.

## What steps have been taken to research and understand the health care needs of LGTBI and GNC people of all ages at the national level?

[St. Lucia]: No steps have been taken by the state however, a research project was conducted two years ago focusing on LBQT persons across the island (<https://international.coc.nl/from-fringes-to-focus/>)

[Suriname] the government has not made any attempts to do so. But Women's Way Foundation in collaboration with Women's Right Centre, The LGBT platform and Paho have worked on various research and data collecting initiatives. <https://womenswayfoundation.com/onderzoek/>

[Guyana]: No steps have been taken by the state however, a research project was conducted two years ago focusing on LBQT persons in the state (<https://international.coc.nl/from-fringes-to-focus/>)

\*We would like to mention, that above mentioned research (“From Fringes to Focus - A deep dive into the lived realities of Lesbian, Bisexual and Queer women and Trans Masculine persons” was conducted in 8 Caribbean countries; Barbados, Belize, Guyana, Haiti, Jamaica, Saint Lucia, Suriname and Trinidad and Tobago. All of these are available at the [provided URL](https://international.coc.nl/from-fringes-to-focus/).

\*\*We would also like to mention another Caribbean research, (not conducted by this same group of organizations, however please note: “[Over-Policed, Under Protected - Experiences of Trans and Gender Diverse Communities in the Caribbean](https://outrightinternational.org/content/over-policed-under-protected)”, this study included trans and gender non-conforming research participants from 11 countries and also cover topics such as stigma, discrimination, health and mental health.

\*\*\* Both sets of research reports (the 8 Caribbean countries, individually in the “From the Fringes to Focus”research as well as the Caribbean trans research “Over-Policed, Under Protected” has case studies that provide qualitative details.

## Is this data analyzed through an intersectional lens, such as by disaggregating data by sexual orientation and/or gender identity, as well as intersecting identities including social or geographic origin, ethnicity, socio-economic status, nationality or migration status, minority, disability, and indigenous or other identity or status?

[St. Lucia]: No it is not by the state, however above mentioned research did use an intersectional lens.

[Suriname]: the NGOs do use intersectional approaches.

[Guyana]: No it is not by the state, however above mentioned research did use an intersectional lens.

## Inclusion: LGTBI and GNC people in the decision-making process

## What measures have been put in place to consult with and include persons affected by violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity in law and policy making in relation to the right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health, and in relation to realising the SDGs?

[St. Lucia]: No measure have been put in place

[Guyana]: Measures are yet to be put in place.

## To what extent are persons affected by violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity included in policies and practice around sexual and reproductive health care?

[St. Lucia]: See research “From Fringes to Focus” across all 8 countries, as this was one thematic area of the research. The Regional report summarizes across the 8 countries, whereas each country dives deeper into the topic.

[Suriname]: The Ministry of Health has since 2020 been working with NGOs. NGOs in collaboration with UNFPA have created a referral pathway for service providers and health workers on how to handle and document gender based violence.

[Caribbean Trans research: “Over-Policed, Under Protected”]: This shares case studies and details of the impact on trans women.

## What support or technical assistance is needed to ensure that the health care needs of persons affected by violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity people are comprehensively addressed and included in relevant laws, policies, and practices?

[St. Lucia]: SOGI and Basic Human Rights training needs to be arranged for government officials including those leading the various departments.

[Caribbean Trans research: “[Over-Policed, Under Protected](https://outrightinternational.org/sites/default/files/UTRANSOutRightDraft.pdf)”]: Various recommendations highlighted in the report, (page 33 and 34)

## What are the main barriers, in law or practice, for persons affected by violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity to receive care that meets their physical and mental health needs and rights?

[St. Lucia]: A major barrier is that St. Lucia’s criminal code still criminalizes consensual same sex activities and relations. As a result, there are no policies in place to protect LGBTQI and GNC persons or prohibit discrimination against LGBTQI and GNC persons.

[Guyana]: A major barrier is that Guyana’s laws still criminalizes consensual same sex activities and relations. There are basic human rights policies in place to protect LGBTQI and GNC persons and prohibit discrimination against LGBTQI and GNC persons, but the laws are most time used against us. An example can be found in the case study (Over-Policed, Under Reported, page 24):

“The Discrimination Act does not include grounds of sexual orientation or gender identity. HIV+ people continue to be discriminated against, and there are no workplace protections. If HIV+ status is known, the person may be demoted to positions that are not in contact with the public, which often leads to a decrease in salary. This practice is continuously being used to target trans and gender diverse people. LGBTIQ and trans and gender diverse people are specifically targeted through buggery and vagrancy laws. Sex workers, and trans sex workers are specifically targeted through subsections of the vagrancy law for soliciting sex. Police use laws to search suspect persons for drugs or weapons and specifically target trans and gender diverse people. There are reports of an increase in police searches after the cross-dressing law was overturned”.

\*Each of the 8 research reports, (From Fringes to Focus) highlight the country-specific barriers.

[Caribbean Trans research: “Over-Policed, Under Protected”]: Gender Marker changes throughout the Caribbean prove to be the main barrier to access in all aspects of life, ranging from employment, health services, education, housing and reporting of crimes, or discrimination. It even impacted the ability of a trans person accessing humanitarian aid and care packages during the pandemic, or other similar cricises, such as earthquakes or the hurricane in Haiti, 2021. Presently, there is no legislative framework that allows for gender marker changes on legal documents within the Caribbean. While Guyana was the only country to criminalize cross-dressing, there are laws across the region about fraud and impersonation that could affect trans people, particularly with their inability to update the gender markers on their legal documents.

## Access: ensuring that LGTBI and GNC people have access to health care

## What measures have been taken to ensure access to affordable non-discriminatory health care services for persons affected by violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity?

[St. Lucia]: Some training has been conducted through local NGOs, Raise Your Voice and United and Strong being the institutions on the ground to facilitate such training workshops. However, due to limited funding, NGOs are not able to conduct such training regularly despite the urgent need. Additionally, it is noteworthy that many of the health care and front line professionals who have participated in such training have since been promoted, moved to other departments or have migrated altogether.

[Guyana]: Some training was done with the Guyana police force to better equip them to handle matters with persons of the LGBTQT community as it relates to violence and Discrimination, but the time spent educating them has proven futile.

## What policies or programmes exist to address the mental health care needs of persons affected by violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity, specifically around depression and anxiety, suicidal ideation, and substance abuse?

[St. Lucia]: There are currently no policies to address such however, there are NGOs who develop mental health care programs and assist survivors.

[Guyana]: There are currently no policies to address such however, there are NGOs who offer counseling sessions for persons affected for example [GuyBow](https://equalityfund.ca/wvl-grantee/guyana-rainbow-foundation/), SASOD and Guyana trans United.

## What policies or programmes exist to assist the health care needs of persons affected by violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity following the experience of assault or gender-based violence?

[St. Lucia]: No policies or programs exist.

[Guyana]: None

## Have adequate human and financial resources been allocated to implement those policies and/or programmes?

[St. Lucia]: None

[Guyana]: None

## Training and Education: health care professionals and educational institutions

## Are sexual orientation and gender identity, and the specific health needs of persons affected by violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity , included in training and education of health care professionals?

[St. Lucia]: This training is only conducted through NGOs when they receive funding for these programs

[Guyana]: The same situation as with St. Lucia, however such programmes came to a halt, since donors mostly seized financial support to organizations in Guyana, due to its financial ranking and economic classification. This proves a challenge for minority organizations, such as LGBTQ, since the government does not support them either.

## What measures are being taken to provide age-appropriate comprehensive sexuality education inclusive of sexual and gender diversity in educational institutions?

[St. Lucia]: NONE

[Guyana]: None

## Are evidence-based and up-to-date guidelines that include SOGI issues available? How are they used to influence health related decisions on policy, programming, services including diagnostic manuals, and practices within the health care institutions?

[St. Lucia]: No guidelines are available

[Guyana]: None

## Sustainable Development Goals

## Where the State measures its progress against SDG3, does it make reference to the health outcomes and needs of persons affected by violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity?

## Does the State measure progress against any of the following SDG3 indicators for persons affected by violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity? If so, please comment on whether health outcomes are improving or declining:

* + - Indicator 3.3.1: Number of new HIV infections per 1,000 uninfected population, by sex, age and key populations;
    - Indicator 3.4.2: Suicide mortality rate;
    - Indicator 3.5.1: Coverage of treatment interventions (pharmacological, psychosocial and rehabilitation and aftercare services) for substance use disorders;
    - Indicator 3.5.2: Harmful use of alcohol, defined according to the national context as alcohol per capita consumption (aged 15 years and older) within a calendar year in litres of pure alcohol
    - Indicator 3.7.1: Proportion of women of reproductive age (aged 15-49 years) who have their need for family planning satisfied with modern methods, including lesbian and bisexual women, and trans persons;
    - Indicator 3.7.2: Adolescent birth rate (aged 10-14 years; aged 15-19 years) per 1,000 women and trans men in that age group, particularly among LBT and GNC young individuals;
    - Indicator 3.8.1: Coverage of essential health services (defined as the average coverage of essential services based on tracer interventions that include reproductive, maternal, newborn and child health, infectious diseases, non-communicable diseases and service capacity and access, among the general and the most disadvantaged population); and
    - Indicator 3.8.2: Proportion of population with large household expenditures on health as a share of total household expenditure or income.

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A coalition of Caribbean organizations across 8 countries comprised of Barbados – SHE, Sexuality Health Empowerment, Belize - PETAL, Promoting Empowerment through awareness for Les/bi women, Guyana – GUYBOW, Guyana Rainbow Foundation, Haiti – FACSDIS, Femme en Action Contre la Stigmatisation el la Discrimination Sexuelle, OTRAH, Organisation Trans d'Haiti, Jamaica - WE-Change, Women’s Empowerment for Change, Saint Lucia - United and Strong, Suriname – WSW, Women’s Way Foundation and Trinidad and Tobago - I am One undertook this participatory research for lesbian, bisexual and queer women as well as trans masculine persons. This community-led research project was carried out with the technical support of Kennedy Carrillo Consultancy and Liesl Theron with the involvement of the Eastern Caribbean Alliance.

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\*Each country specific research report indicates its own citation suggestion.

**Contributors Over-Policed, under protected:**

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