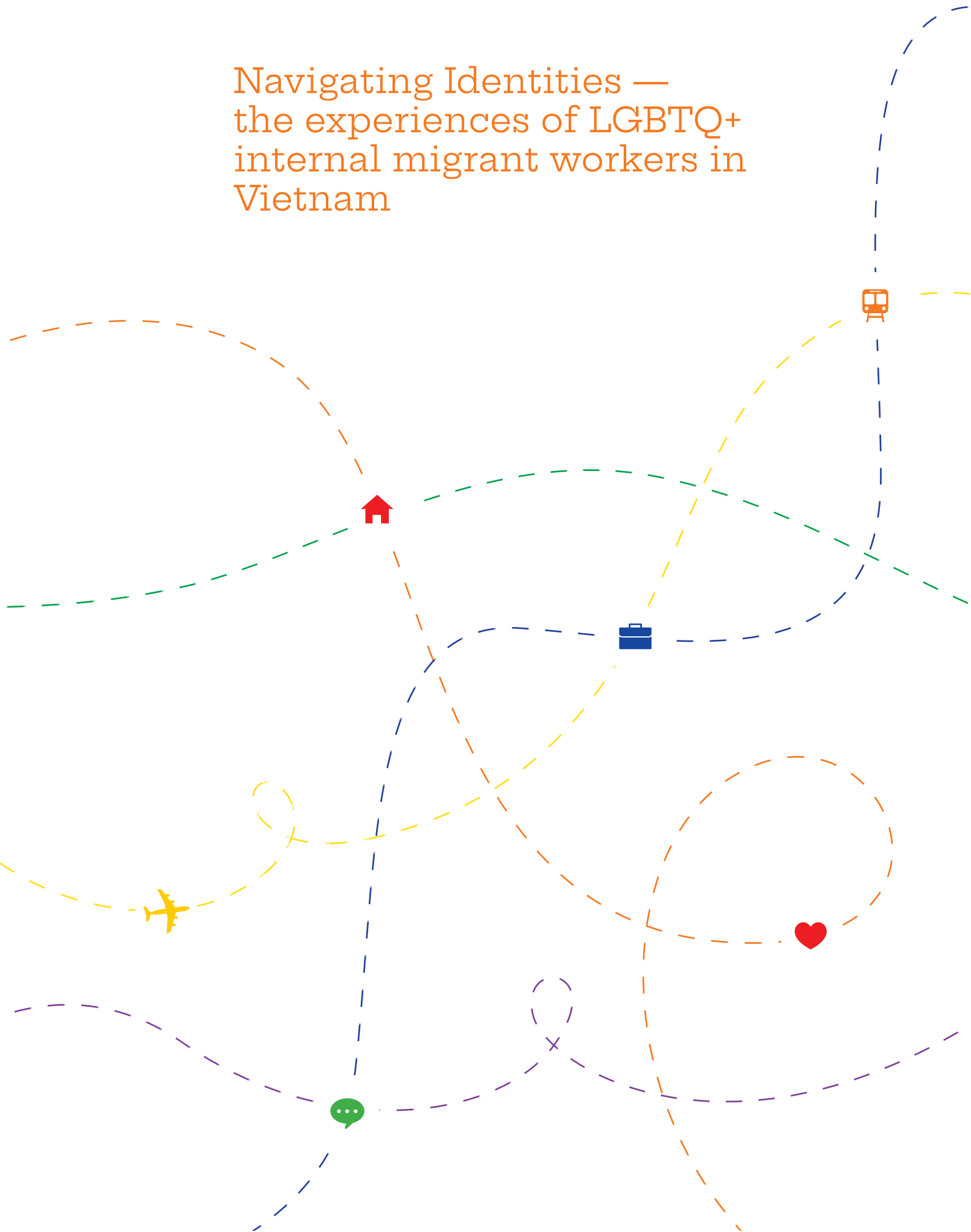


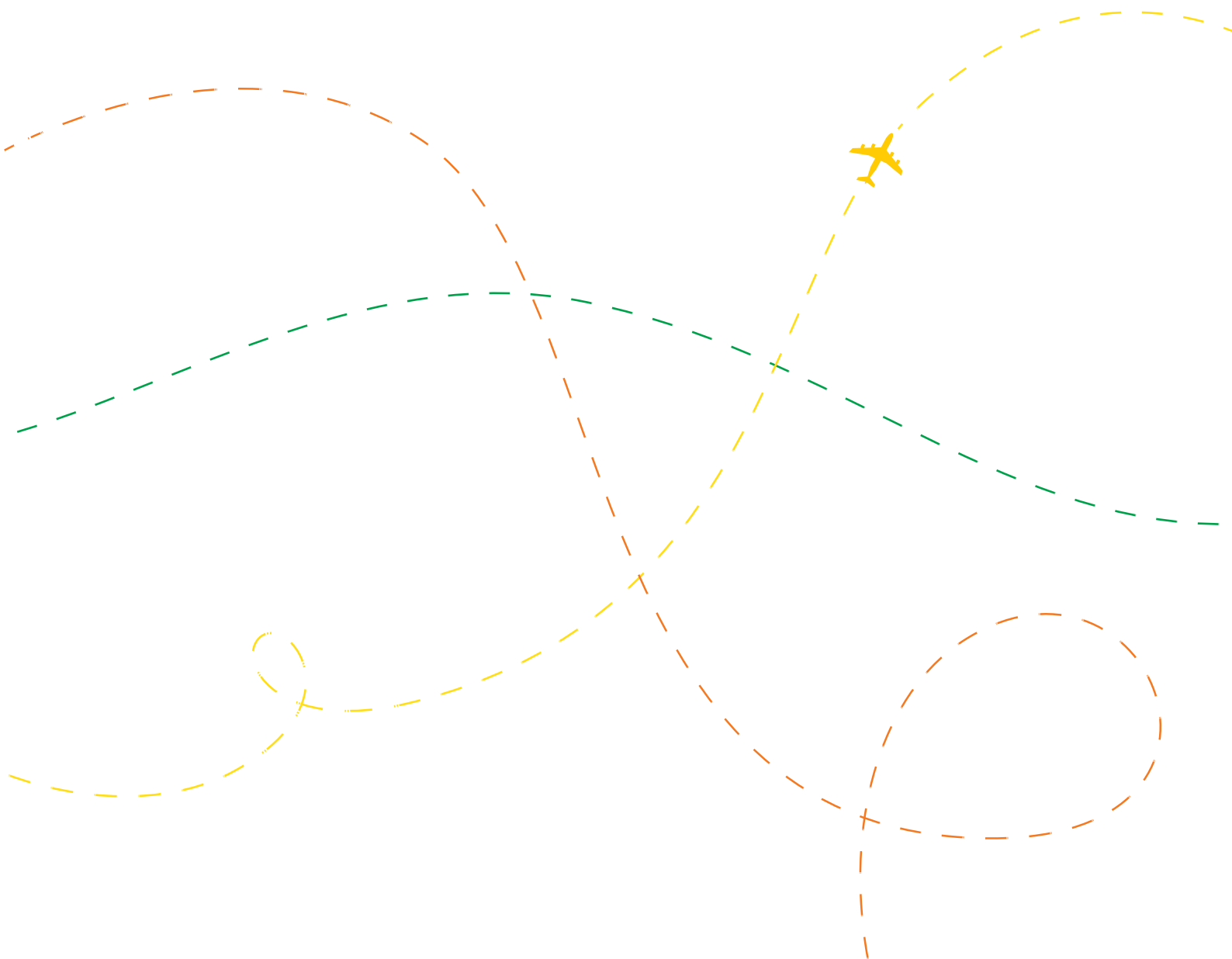
# Navigating Identities — the experiences of LGBTQ+ internal migrant workers in Vietnam



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—

**Yen Hoang Ha**



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On behalf of Research team,

**Yen Hoang Ha**  
*Independent researcher*



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# Glossary

LGB/LGBTQ+	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual/Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer
UN	United Nation
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
F&B	Food and Beverage
SOGIE	Sexual orientation, Gender identity and Expression
HNxx/HCMCxx/BDxx/ ĐNxx/LAxx	Encrypted information to strictly maintain participants' anonymity

# Introduction

Throughout Vietnam's historical timeline, migration has been a pervasive and ongoing phenomenon, which is anticipated to persist into the future. The motivations and patterns of migration have evolved over time, marked by significant events and policy shifts. While the academic literature has extensively examined the migration and its trajectories, the specific experiences of LGBTQ+ labour migrants within the internal boundaries of Vietnam remain underexplored. Internal migration affords individuals a certain degree of self-determination which is absent in international transit, due to the relative ease of movement within familiar cultural and linguistic landscapes. However, this shift from the known to the new, particularly from rural origins to urban centres, presents a series of formidable challenges that are amplified for LGBTQ+ labour migrants.

In this research, a “internal labour migrant” refers to an individual who relocates within their own country to seek employment opportunities, in a variety of sectors. This form of migration is often driven by economic necessity, with individuals moving from rural to urban areas or between regions to find better-paying jobs or more stable employment. According to the International Labour Organization (ILO), internal labour migration is a significant component of internal migration patterns, contributing to urbanization and economic development. Studies, such as those by Castles and Miller (2009), highlight that internal labour migrants often face challenges such as precarious working conditions, lack of social protection, and limited access to public services. These migrants play a crucial role in the labour market by filling essential roles that are often undervalued and underpaid, as noted by scholars like Hugo (2005) and Skeldon (2012). Despite their contributions, internal labour migrants frequently encounter social and economic marginalization, necessitating policy interventions to improve their working and living conditions.

This study aims to investigate the intricate dynamics between sexual and gender identity within the context of internal migrant labour, particularly focusing on the experiences of LGBTQ+ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer) individuals. Central to this inquiry is the identification and analysis of pivotal challenges and requirements encountered by internal LGBTQ+ migrant workers. In pursuit of this aim, the research scrutinizes factors such as economic motivations driving migration, instances of discrimination and constraints on personal liberties, and variances within demographic subsets based on sexual and gender identity. Moreover, the inquiry encompasses an exploration of differences stemming from diverse geographical origins and locales, among other relevant considerations.

Respectively, the study addresses the following research questions:

Within internal migration in Vietnam:

- 1. What are the primary economic and social factors motivating labour migration of LGBTQ+ individuals?**
- 2. What are the current issues and needs of the migrant workers at the destination? What specific challenges are LGBTQ+ internal migrant workers encountering?**
- 3. What improvements are needed to address the unique needs and better facilitate their integration into life and work at the destination?**

# Literature Review

Vietnam, like many of its Southeast Asian neighbours, has witnessed a significant increase in migratory movements starting from the 1990s, with an even more pronounced rise observed in the 2000s. The overview of internal migration in Vietnam reveals a complex landscape where individuals and families make strategic decisions influenced by economic opportunities, personal aspirations, and socio-cultural factors. The internal migration has significant implications for the development of both rural and urban areas, contributing to the transformation of Vietnam's socio-economic fabric, and presenting both opportunities and challenges for policymakers.

## MIGRATION DEMOGRAPHICS AND PATTERNS IN VIETNAM

Since the introduction of the Doi Moi reforms in the 1980s, which included the de-collectivization in the agricultural sector and market liberation, and subsequently Vietnam's entry into the WTO in 2007, the country has experienced rapid industrialization and urbanization with increased foreign investment (Dang et al, 2003). There has been a rise in geographical labour mobility, both internationally and internally. According to Coxhead et al. (2019), most migrants move within the country. Vietnam's Population and Housing Census (2019) reported around 6.4 million individuals aged five and older as migrants, which is 7.3% of the population. While internal migration spurs socio-economic development, it also presents challenges such as overurbanization and demographic imbalances that exert pressure on urban infrastructure and services.

A youthful demographic characterizes Vietnam's migrant population, with 61.8% aged between 20 and 39 years and a median age of 28, compared to 31 for non-migrants (UNFPA, 2019). The feminization of migration is also noticeable, with females comprising 55% of the migrant population. These shifts are accompanied by an increase in school attendance among migrants aged 11-18 years, demonstrating improved educational engagement. Migrant networks play a critical role in sustaining migration by providing social and economic support, thereby reducing perceived risks and enhancing the appeal of migration (Hoang, 2022).

Migration drivers in developing countries, including Vietnam, can be understood through a mix of macro and micro factors. Lucas (cited in Celi & Sica, 2015) identified ten key drivers for this process: (1) development and job creation strategy, (2) spatial income gaps, (3) rural-to-rural work relocation, (4) risk management, (5) amenities availability and quality, (6) education, (7) climate change and natural disasters, (8) forced migration and violence, (9) return and circular migration, and (10) family-related reasons. In Vietnam, household characteristics, including income levels, familial size, the age and educational attainment of household heads, are pivotal in shaping migration decisions. This suggests that migration is often a collective strategy households adopt to navigate socioeconomic challenges rather than isolated individual choices (Binh & Nhan 2014). Rural-to-urban migration remains the most significant trend, driven by higher per capita incomes and better living standards in urban areas (Celi & Sica, 2023). Economic opportunities and family-related reasons are the primary motivations for internal migration in Vietnam, accounting for 36.8% and 35.5% of migrants, respectively (UNFPA, 2019). Popular destinations include major urban centers like Ho Chi Minh City and Ha Noi, as well as rapidly industrialized cities such as Bac Ninh and Hai Phong in the North, and Binh Duong, Dong Nai, and Long An in the South. These regions are characterized by concentrated foreign investment and industrial activities, fostering migration through economic polarization and inequalities between rural and urbanized, industrialized areas. Many bring higher educational qualifications and ambitions to improve their living and working conditions, thereby contributing significantly to the human capital of their new locales (UNFPA). However, other motivations remain under-researched in the scholarship related to internal migration in Vietnam, such as migrants' sexuality and gender.

The internal migration process in Vietnam has been largely shaped by the social and economic processes, specific to its context. Beyond the macro and microeconomic factors, it is essential to consider the lived experiences and subjectivities of migrants.

## Literature Review (cont.)

### THE URBAN SOCIAL, POLITICAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL CONDITIONS FOR INTERNAL MIGRANT WORKERS IN VIETNAM

Recent studies are focusing on the experiences of rural migrants in Vietnamese cities, focusing on their challenging working conditions, limited access to housing, public services, and social protection (e.g., Locke et al., 2008; Van Quyet & Van Kham, 2016). Others have explored the lived experiences of migrants, including their well-being in cities (Pham et al., 2018) and how factors like gender influence their migratory journeys (Nguyen & Locke, 2014).

Discrimination against these workers is deeply intertwined with the socio-economic fabric of urban societies. Internal migrants in Vietnam frequently encounter systemic barriers in urban labor markets. As noted by Li et al. (2020) and Dang, Nguyen, and Tran (2019), they are often confined to informal sectors characterized by low wages, job insecurity, and a lack of social protections. This disparity not only limits their earning potential but also hampers their long-term economic mobility. Furthermore, Castles and Miller (2014) note the social exclusion and marginalization experienced by these individuals in accessing essential services such as healthcare and education.

A significant hurdle for internal migrants in Vietnam stems from the hộ khẩu/household registration system policies. This system discriminates based on one's official place of residence, effectively marginalizing non-residents (Le, Booth, & Zinn, 2020). As a result, migrants with temporary or no registration find themselves unable to fully access the services they require, such as obtaining healthcare and enrolling their children in schools, which significantly affects their quality of life and integration into new communities (UNFPA 2016). Housing is another critical issue for internal migrants, many of whom are compelled to live in substandard accommodations. Rural youth migrants in Ha Noi have two common housing arrangements: sleeping at their worksite or workplace, or renting a simple room in a guesthouse or makeshift boarding house called a 'nhà trọ' (Labbé, Turner & Pham, 2022: 5). Migrant rentals in Ha Noi are concentrated in lower socioeconomic areas, characterized by a lack of public amenities and restricted mobility.

The stigmatization of migrants is another pervasive challenge. It is rooted in stereotypes and social prejudices, often leading to social isolation, impacting their psychological well-being and integration into urban communities (Zhao, 2019). Long-term Ha Noians, politicians and the media often hold negative perceptions of rural-to-urban migrants, including the notion that they cause overpopulation, disorder, and safety in cities (Turner & Schoenberger, 2012) or discriminating against their low socioeconomic status, rural accent, and appearance (Karis, 2013; Van Quyet & Van Kham, 2016). There is a strong belief about the strong correlations between low-skilled employment and migrant status (Pulliat, 2013). These prejudices extend into the workplace, as Van Quyet and Van Kham (2016) found that a third of respondents reported being intimidated at their workplace, attributed to their internal migrant status.

The current governmental policies have been criticized for their inadequacy in addressing the rights and needs of internal migrants. Despite constitutional guarantees, the policies in place often fall short of providing sufficient protection and support for this vulnerable population (UNFPA, 2019). Compounding these challenges is the dearth of detailed and accurate data on internal migrants. Many migrants are underrepresented in official surveys, which hampers the ability of policymakers and planners to fully understand the scope of migration and to devise effective interventions (UNFPA 2007).

The scholarship highlighted the predicament of the urban-bound migrant population in Vietnam regarding their integration into social and political urban life. At the same time, "migrants in the city" also are beyond "victims of economic exploitation, institutional discrimination and social stigmatization" (Labbé, Turner & Pham, 2022: 9) - they are also actively navigating and constructing the urban environment.



# Literature Review (cont.)

## QUEER MIGRATION AND THE LGBTI RIGHTS LANDSCAPE IN VIETNAM

Queer migration scholarship explores how sexuality and migration intersect in the construction of individual identities, community formation, and broader social structures. Queer, as an umbrella term encompassing lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and other identities, highlights the diversity of sexual practices and subjectivities that inform the migration and integration experience, with heavy policy implications for social diversity and inclusivity. Queer migration is suggested by Mole (2021) as not only where non-heterosexual individuals decide to migrate on the grounds of their queer identities, practices and performances (Gorman-Murray in Mole, 2021: 3) but also a “dynamic, two-way process, whereby the experience of migration can also influence sexuality”. This duality underscores the importance of examining queer migrant experiences, from motivations, opportunities and costs to institutional impacts.

The rural-urban processes have been crucial to queer migration patterns, where globally, large cities are often viewed as safe havens for queer individuals regarding opportunities for self-expression, anonymity, and connection with peers and communities (Gorman-Murray, 2009). Globally, LGBTIQ+ migrants are frequently driven by the marginalization and abuse they experience in their home location to migrate, including sexual and physical abuse, rejection from family, homelessness, and discrimination at work (UN Women, 2023). Rubin (1993) linked the development of urban-industrial labor markets, spurred by urbanization to the formation of queer communities and self-consciousness. Previously vulnerable and isolated queer individuals in rural areas found themselves congregating in urban areas, particularly sexually constituted communities. Vietnam’s urban centers, particularly Hà Nội and Ho Chi Minh City, Đà Nẵng, and surrounding areas such as Binh Duong, mirror this dynamic.

The journey of LGBTQ+ rights advocacy in Vietnam has made significant strides over the years. One of the earliest breakthroughs came in 2013, with Government Decree 110/2013/ND-CP, which removed fines for same-sex weddings, signaling a shift in state attitudes towards LGBTQ+ relationships. In 2016, Vietnam, then a member of the United Nations Human Rights Council, voted in favor of a resolution calling for protections against violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity. Further advances came with Article 37 of the Civil Code 2015, which legalized the right to legal gender recognition, and Directive 4132/BYT-PC from the Ministry of Health, which affirmed that being homosexual or transgender is not a disease.

Despite these achievements, discrimination against LGBTQ+ individuals remains a significant challenge, persisting for decades across various social spaces, particularly in the home and school environments. LGBTQ+ students experience significant physical and verbal abuse in schools, with perpetrators often including not only fellow students but also teachers and other school staff members (HRW, 2020). Home environments offer little improvement for many LGBTQ+ individuals, as studies reveal that home life can be equally, if not more, hostile. Family members often fail to provide essential support and empathy, leading to cases of abandonment and sustained psychological hardship. Transgender individuals, in particular, face even greater levels of stigma and discrimination compared to their LGB counterparts (CCHIP, 2012; ISEE, 2015, 2023).

The compounded layer of vulnerability, intersecting issues of migration with sexual orientation and gender identity for LGBTQ+ migrant workers is present. Throughout the migration journey, LGBTIQ+ people face multiple challenges by a wide range of actors, including security agencies, traffickers and other migrants (UN Women, 2023). Reports by UN (2012) and further elaborated by ISEE (2016) suggest that LGBTQ+ migrants are navigating a complex matrix of discrimination, whose needs and vulnerabilities often remain unrecognized in labor studies and migration policy. Intersecting forms of discrimination at all stages of migration should be addressed by joint actions from governments and development actors.

A critical examination into the lived experiences of LGBTI migrants in Vietnam unravels unique challenges, strategies, and aspirations of LGBTI migrants, as well as the power dynamics that LGBTI migrants encounter through migration. It offers deeper insights into their quest for self-expression, safety, and belonging and highlights the deeply personal, gendered and political dimensions of the queer migration journey. Such an inquiry also underscores the critical role of community networks and social support systems.

# Methodology

To achieve the objectives, this research consists of desk review as well as qualitative data collection. Firstly, a comprehensive desk review examines the extant body of research, inclusive of academic literature, reports and documents from non-governmental organizations and governmental entities, focusing on the phenomenon of internal migration within Vietnam. This review pays a particular attention to the socio-economic conditions of LGBTQ+ individuals in Vietnam, with an emphasis on their experiences related to internal migration. Gathering a contemporary understanding of the situations pertaining to LGBTQ+ migration through this desk research facilitates the development of data collection instruments that are both well-informed and insightful. Following the desk review, the research utilises qualitative methods in the form of in-depth interviews with individuals who are migrant workers and identify as LGBTQ+.

## STUDY SITE, SAMPLING AND PARTICIPANTS

Aiming to capture a sample of the study population, the research employed a stratified random sampling approach, further supported by snowball sampling to enhance participant diversity. Recruitment took place across both physical and digital environments, spanning from May to October 2024.

Online recruitment methods, especially leveraging social media platforms, were strategically utilized to improve accessibility and reach for individuals who might otherwise encounter barriers, such as low prevalence within certain demographics, geographical isolation, or institutional constraints that could hinder direct participation. This digital approach involved disseminating a targeted survey through well-frequented social media pages, designed to attract individuals fitting the research criteria among the platform's regular audience. As a result, we collected 81 responses in totality.

In addition to digital outreach, the study engaged directly with various organizations focused on supporting factory workers and individuals in informal employment. These organizations were integral in facilitating connections with potential participants, providing an introduction to the research, and fostering trust in the study's objectives. This multifaceted recruitment strategy aimed not only to enrich the diversity of the sample but also to include voices from typically underrepresented groups, thus bolstering the study's relevance and inclusivity.

The selection criteria for the participants are carefully crafted to prioritize a wide-ranging demographic, with an emphasis on incorporating new perspectives and experiences. To qualify as participants for this study, individuals had to meet 4 criteria: (1) must be older than 18, (2) be an internal migrant worker within Vietnam (3) have work experience at their new location and (4) self-identify as part of the LGBTQ+ community. This approach is designed to capture the multifaceted experiences of LGBTQ+ migrant workers, ensuring that the research encompasses the breadth of challenges and narratives that exist within this group. Through this approach, the study aims to create a balanced and comprehensive understanding of the varied experiences of LGBTQ+ internal migrant workers within the context of their destination.

A short digital recruitment survey, which was distributed on social media platforms, was successful in connecting with some segments of the target population, youths with diverse gender identities and sexual orientations. The participants in the study identified with a range of diverse labels, including gay, lesbian, transgender, bisexual, non-binary, asexual, pansexual, sapphic, and more. This variety reflects the rich spectrum of gender identities and sexual orientations within the LGBTQ+ community, offering valuable insights into the unique experiences and challenges faced by individuals across these identities. And individuals who were most responsive and easily accessible were gay men, and transgender women, a finding that aligns with observations from various other studies. Their active participation in this research could also be explained by their involvement with the LGBTQ+ communities, particularly in relation to health-related issues.

## Methodology (cont.)

The study included participants from both targeted and untargeted provinces, with the goal of representing three regions of Vietnam: North, Central, and South. Firstly, among the targeted provinces are Hà Nội, Hồ Chí Minh City, Đà Nẵng and prominent industrial zones in North and South of Vietnam with high concentration of industrial zones. These places are chosen based on their high rates of in-migration, particularly for labour purposes, which provide a representative sample of the internal migrant worker population. Hà Nội, Hồ Chí Minh City and Đà Nẵng are urban centres known for their progressive social dynamics and have been the most prominent in terms of activity and visibility of the LGBTQ+ community. Moreover, these cities have been acknowledged for their higher concentration of events, organizations, and support systems relating to LGBTQ+ issues, which are expected to significantly influence the experiences of LGBTQ+ internal migrant workers. The intersection of these factors makes Hà Nội, Hồ Chí Minh City, Đà Nẵng ideal locations for conducting comprehensive research on the subject matter, offering a broad perspective on the varied and complex realities faced by LGBTQ+ migrants within Vietnam's rapidly changing urban landscape. Additionally, the literature suggests that migrants are often drawn to regions with a significant presence of industrial zones. The study aimed at finding participants in Bình Dương which is experiencing the highest levels of in-migration and other areas that show relatively high rates as well. Gathering data from provinces with a high concentration of industrial zones provides an opportunity to explore the experiences of a distinct demographic employed in factories. These locations are also interesting to explore due to the fact that the visibility of the LGBTQ+ community and related events is considerably lower compared to major urban centres. Additionally, the study encouraged participants from other provinces to join in order to enrich the diversity of perspectives, provided they met the research criteria.

Recruiting LGBTQ+ individuals from Central Vietnam posed the most significant challenge, as this region often experiences fewer support networks and digital engagement channels for these communities. Fortunately, the research team was able to leverage the Institute for Studies of Society, Economy and Environment (iSEE)'s established connections with several organizations based in Central Vietnam. Through these partnerships, the team succeeded in reaching migrant workers to the cities of Đà Nẵng and Vinh (Nghệ An province). This progress represents a valuable contribution to the study's diversity, capturing perspectives from a traditionally underrepresented geographical and social demographic.

As a result, the study interviewed 40 individuals meeting the study criteria. The table below presents a detailed sample of the study and the profile of the participants:

STUDY SITE	HO CHI MINH CITY	HA NOI	BÌNH DƯƠNG	LONG AN	DA NANG	SON LA	NGHE AN	TOTAL
Employment group								
Worker (Factory, Manufacturing Zone)	2		4	5				11
Independent work (sex worker, bar/pub owner, barista, pharmacist, kitchen staff, small businessman, make-up artist, marketing freelancer, masseuse, lô-tô performer)	5	3	1		3	4	1	17
White Collar	6	5	1			5		12
	13	8	6	5	3	9	1	45

# Methodology (cont.)

## ETHICS AND PARTICIPANT CONSIDERATION

**Informed Consent:** Participants were briefed about the study's aims, methodology, and their right to privacy before consenting to participate. They were informed of their right to withdraw or retract shared information at any time without consequences and were not obligated to answer any questions that made them uncomfortable. Participants were asked for verbal consent to minimize personal data collection, ensuring participants' awareness of their rights and the confidentiality measures in place.

**Participant Incentives:** To express appreciation for participation and to reimburse any associated costs, a monetary incentive of VND 100,000 was provided to participants after the interview, without prior notice to ensure the voluntariness of their involvement. Additionally, if interviews are conducted in public venues such as coffee shops, the costs of the participants' drinks were also covered.

**Confidentiality and Privacy:** The study strictly maintained participants' anonymity, with no personal information disclosed to third parties. Data is anonymized and securely stored, accessible only to the research team, ensuring no individual can be identified from the data used for analysis.

**Support Referrals:** Participants encountering distressing content were directed to local helplines, and contact information for the research team was provided for any further inquiries or feedback.

## CHALLENGES AND LIMITATIONS

This study employs a qualitative methodology, which inherently restricts the ability to generalize findings to a larger population. Qualitative studies typically involve smaller sample sizes, which may limit the representativeness of the findings and potentially overlook important perspectives. The experiences documented are specific to the sample and do not encompass the full range of LGBTQ+ individuals. Consequently, while the research illuminates significant experiences related to LGBTQ+ identity, these findings should be contextualized within the sampled group, acknowledging the broader diversity of experiences within the LGBTQ+ community.

Accessing participants posed additional challenges, as many LGBTQ+ labour migrants were hesitant to engage in the research due to concerns about privacy, discrimination, and potential impacts on their livelihoods. Building trust and ensuring confidentiality were critical yet difficult, particularly since many participants were unfamiliar with the research process and the concept of being interviewed.

Despite concerted efforts to increase inclusivity through both digital surveys and snowball sampling, recruiting bisexual men and transgender men (female-to-male) proved to be considerably more difficult. The lower visibility and social engagement of bisexual men and transgender men in certain online spaces may have contributed to their underrepresentation in responses. Similarly, snowball sampling—where existing participants or contacts refer others who may qualify—did not yield significant engagement from these groups. Factors such as fewer networks of openly bisexual men and transgender men within existing LGBTQ+ circles, potential concerns over privacy, and distinct social challenges could have influenced this limited reach.

Recruitment challenges also arose due to the age demographics of the regular audience on iSEE's social media platforms, where responses primarily came from LGBTQ+ youth, with very few participants over the age of 30. This younger audience reflects the digital engagement trends among youth but created a notable gap in gathering insights from older LGBTQ+ individuals, whose perspectives and experiences could add critical depth to the study.

## Methodology (cont.)

Additionally, attempts to reach LGBTQ+ factory and manufacturing workers proved difficult. Recruitment efforts through digital platforms yielded minimal engagement from these workers, particularly those in Northern Vietnam, who were essentially absent from the sample. Despite leveraging internal connections within people working in industrial zones, potential LGBTQ+ participants were hesitant to publicly participate. This reluctance, especially prevalent among LGBTQ+ individuals in factory settings, highlights potential privacy concerns, social stigma, or fear of disclosure that could impact their willingness to engage in research.

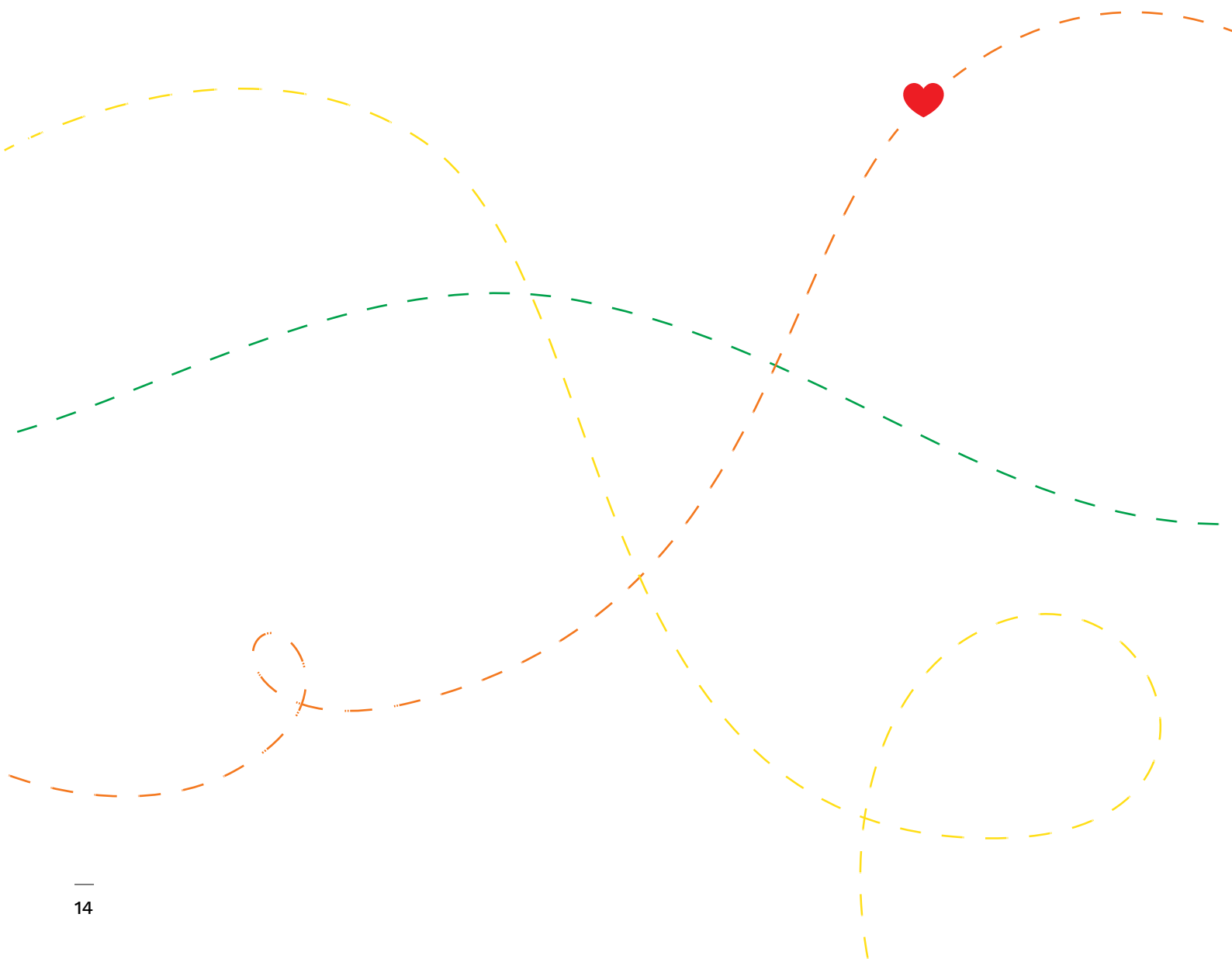
These obstacles emphasize the need for more discrete, trust-building recruitment approaches tailored to older participants and LGBTQ+ individuals in industrial and manufacturing sectors, and other areas.

One of the biggest challenges during the recruitment phase was the complete absence of individuals from the intersex group in survey responses. Despite extensive outreach efforts, no participants identifying as intersex engaged with the study, highlighting a significant gap in representation for this group. Consequently, for this research, we have opted to use the term LGBTQ+ to more accurately reflect the participant population and findings.

Overall, participants often possess multiple identities that interact in complex ways, complicating the analysis and interpretation of their experiences. This intersectionality must be considered when evaluating the findings.

# Main Findings

This section explores the multifaceted experiences of LGBTQ+ migrant workers, focusing on their motivations, preparations, challenges, and strategies for navigating their new lives. Key topics include job search, workplace experiences, social integration, and the challenges of expressing LGBTQ+ identity in a new environment.



# Motivations and preparation for migration

The narratives provided by the participants reflect a complex interplay of motivations driving their migration to the new destinations. Through qualitative analysis, several common patterns emerge alongside unique individual circumstances that highlight a multifaceted nature, reflecting a blend of personal aspirations, economic needs, and social factors. The most common motivations for migration were (1) economic opportunities, (2) the desire to escape hostile environments in their place of origin, (3) pursuit of education, and (4) yearning for self-development through autonomy and new lifestyle.

Firstly, the pursuit of economic advancement was a central driver for many participants. The promise of higher wages, greater job opportunities, and improved living standards in the new destination was a significant factor in their decision to migrate. This in turn was motivated by the need for financial independence and support for family obligations is another significant motivator. Many participants indicated a strong desire to earn money to help their families, particularly those who came from agricultural households where income is limited. In addition to the motivation to support their families, many participants sought financial independence, which they believed could only be achieved by migrating to the city. This goal was particularly significant for transgender individuals, who needed to secure funds for medical intervention, as well as for men who have sex with men living with an HIV diagnosis.

The analysis revealed distinct priorities among participants based on age and educational background. Younger individuals demonstrated a greater inclination towards education and personal development, viewing these as essential components of their future. In contrast, older participants tended to prioritize economic opportunities, often driven by the need to support their families. Moreover, those participants with higher levels of education were more likely to seek advanced studies or specialized careers in urban centres.

Secondly, the narratives reveal a strong desire to escape negative familial and social environments characterized by various forms of direct and indirect discrimination due to their LGBTQ+ identity. The extent of discrimination varied among individuals; however, it consistently served as a motivating factor for migration. Living with their families often necessitated conformity to traditional gender norms, which included societal pressures related to marriage and the expectation of starting a family, as well as restrictions on gender expression. These expectations can create significant stress for LGBTQ+ individuals, who may feel unable to align with such norms. In seeking migration to urban areas, participants aimed to achieve greater autonomy and the ability to express their identities more freely. Relocating to cities symbolizes an opportunity to redefine oneself, liberating individuals from the constraints imposed by their hometowns and familial expectations.



When I was a student, generally speaking, everyone experienced some level of stigma. No one, whether part of the LGBTQ+ community or identifying as transgender, was seen in a normal light.

***BD05 - An Giang to Bình Dương, transgender, office work***

In this motivation, the role of family in migration decisions varies significantly among participants. For some, familial connections in urban areas provided the necessary support and motivation to facilitate their move. Others faced familial opposition but still pursued migration for educational or employment reasons, indicating a tension between familial expectations and personal ambitions.



## Motivations and preparation for migration (cont.)

Thirdly, a predominant theme among participants is the pursuit of education which consequently would lead to career opportunities. Many expressed a desire to attend university, aligning with participants' aspirations to secure better futures through academic qualifications. The migration process is often framed as a pathway to personal development, enabling them to gain knowledge and skills that are less accessible in their rural origins.



Like many others go to Hanoi to enter university and find a life that more exciting and freer.

*Hai Phong to Hà Nội, gay man, F&B*

Moreover, several participants emphasized the importance of migration for personal development and self-discovery, particularly in relation to their sexual orientation and identity. The transition to urban environments is perceived as an opportunity for individuals to explore their identities more freely and to connect with like-minded peers. Additionally, urban settings provide access to diverse sources of information. For those who have not yet clearly identified as LGBTQ+ or who lack comprehensive knowledge about their identities, the ability to seek out information serves as a significant motivating factor for migration.



In rural areas, the process of understanding one's sexual orientation can be more challenging and less comfortable. In the city, you can encounter many people who are more open about expressing their sexual orientation. Being in an urban environment also meant early access to the internet, which allows me to explore and understand myself better. My mother can't monitor my online activities as closely as when I was in the city, giving me the time and space to learn and explain more about my identity. Of course, I can also interact more (with information about LGBTQ+) and thus identify my sexual orientation.

*HCMC01 - Bến Tre to Hồ Chí Minh City, working in media, gay man*

The choice of the destination was both intentional and strategic. Urban centres like Hồ Chí Minh City or Hà Nội and industrial areas such as Bình Dương or Long An are perceived as offering a wider range of job opportunities and higher wages, thereby serving as attractive destinations for those seeking to improve their economic circumstances. The specific job market in different urban areas influences migration choices. For instance, some participants opted for Bình Dương due to its reputation for offering jobs that do not require advanced qualifications. In contrast, Hà Nội is viewed as more office-oriented, while Hồ Chí Minh City is considered more competitive but also offers a greater diversity of employment opportunities. Many participants emphasized that their migration must lead to major cities like Hà Nội or Hồ Chí Minh City. They were motivated by the potential for career advancement as well as the opportunity to express and develop their LGBTQ+ identity. This pragmatic approach reflects a calculated decision-making process driven by immediate economic needs as well as long-term aspirations.



## Motivations and preparation for migration (cont.)



I can't speak for others, but for me, once I left my hometown, I felt I needed to move to a more developed area. At that time, I associated development with a big city. Since I was from Yên Bái, just a town, not even Yên Bái city, I never considered it a real city. I felt compelled to go to a city for my education, it had to be either to Hà Nội or Hồ Chí Minh City. I had aspirations to study in Hồ Chí Minh City. I also had a program of choice in Hồ Chí Minh City. I'm not entirely sure how others from urban areas and from my province perceive things, but discovering my sexual orientation made me feel very different from everyone else. In my town, there were only one or two people like me, and the prevailing mindset was very traditional and conservative. I felt like my hometown was not truly where I belonged.

*HN08 - Yên Bái to Hà Nội, bisexual woman, pharmacist*

In short, the motivations for migration among the participants are shaped by a blend of educational aspirations, economic necessity, the wish to leave the hostile environment and the pursuit of personal autonomy. While common patterns emerge—such as the drive for better educational and job opportunities—individual circumstances, including family dynamics and the specific nature of urban job markets, significantly influence their migration decisions. These narratives not only illustrate the personal motivations behind migration but also reflect broader socio-economic trends within Vietnam, highlighting the complexity of human mobility in the context of globalization and local development.

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## Preparation for life in the city

Overall, the majority of participants exhibited a low level of preparation for migration, which was not comprehensive. Nevertheless, some individuals did engage in specific preparatory strategies, such as leveraging personal networks, utilizing online resources, and ensuring financial readiness. Each of these components is critical in influencing the overall migration experience.

One of the most prominent issues was leveraging personal networks, mainly familiar connections and friendships. Many participants emphasized the critical role of family in their migration journey. Having relatives in the destination cities provided not only emotional support but also practical insights into the landscape of the destination. For instance, a sibling or cousin could share valuable information about affordable housing options, reliable job openings, and even local customs or challenges. This familial safety net often alleviated fears of isolation, as newcomers felt they had a built-in support system to help them navigate the initial transition. Furthermore, familial relationships foster trust, as participants felt more comfortable relying on advice from loved ones who had firsthand experience in the city.

## Preparation for life in the city (cont)

In addition to family, friendships played a significant role in easing the migration process. Participants recounted how friends who had previously migrated shared their experiences and offered recommendations on jobs or living arrangements. This peer support was crucial, as it often provided a sense of company and reassurance. Moreover, friends could introduce newcomers to their social circles, facilitating quicker integration into the community. The presence of familiar faces in an unfamiliar city can significantly mitigate feelings of loneliness and disconnection, making the adjustment period smoother.

Another important resource for information and preparation for migration is utilizing online resources. Social media platforms emerged as essential tools for information gathering and community building. Participants often joined Facebook groups such as “Một Nhà Bê Đê”, “X Gei”, “Cộng đồng - LGBT Bách hợp” or online forums that focused on specific cities or interests. These platforms allowed them to ask questions, share experiences, and gather insights from others who had undergone similar migrations. For example, participants might inquire about the best neighbourhoods to live in or seek advice on job applications. This online engagement not only provided practical information but also created a sense of belonging, as participants connected with others who understood their circumstances.

In addition, many participants reported conducting thorough online research about educational institutions, job markets, and local amenities before making the move. This included visiting official university websites, checking job listings, and reading reviews about different neighbourhoods. By preparing in advance, they could develop a clearer plan and set realistic expectations for their new lives. This proactive approach to research demonstrated an awareness of the importance of informed decision-making in the migration process. For instance, knowing about available public transportation options, or cultural events could significantly enhance their adaptation to the new environment.

In addition to saving money, many participants actively sought employment opportunities before migrating. This involved applying for jobs or internships in their destination cities, often leveraging their networks to gain leads on potential positions. By securing a job prior to their move, they could alleviate some financial pressure and create a smoother transition into city life. Understanding the job market and having a plan for employment underscored their commitment to achieving stability and self-sufficiency in their new environment.

Financial preparation was also an important aspect in preparation for migration. Financial readiness was also seen in the narratives. Participants mentioned receiving some funds from their parents or setting aside savings to cover initial expenses such as rent, food, and transportation. This financial preparation was often accompanied by a budgeting strategy, ensuring they could sustain themselves during the transition period, particularly if they were job hunting. This foresight into financial needs highlights a pragmatic approach to migration, where individuals recognized the importance of economic stability as a foundation for successful adaptation to urban life.

While many participants made substantial logistical preparations, emotional readiness varied widely. Some expressed a strong determination to relocate, driven by aspirations for personal growth and independence. In contrast, others faced significant challenges such as homesickness or anxiety about fitting into a new environment. Emotional readiness prior to migration is influenced by the extent of connections and information individuals possess. Specifically, those who have established more social ties and gathered relevant information prior to their relocation tend to demonstrate higher levels of emotional preparedness for the challenges associated with migration. Recognizing these emotional aspects is essential, as they can profoundly impact an individual's ability to adapt and thrive in a new city. Participants who acknowledged their feelings often sought support from friends or family, which could help mitigate the emotional strain of migration.

# Living experiences at a new destination

## ACCOMMODATION

A common theme among participants was the reliance on social networks and social media for finding accommodation. Many sought assistance from friends, family, or colleagues, as well as participated in many groups on Facebook. Participants reported a range of accommodation options, reflecting both financial constraints and personal preferences. Many individuals opted for shared living arrangements, whether with family members, friends, or romantic partners. For instance, several participants lived with relatives or close friends, which often provided both emotional support and financial relief. Many participants highlighted the transitional nature of housing choices based on evolving personal circumstances. Interestingly, in some instances, participants' LGBTQ+ identity significantly influenced their housing choices. Dormitories were often the least preferred option due to their crowded conditions and lack of personal space. Moreover, individuals who disclosed their LGBTQ+ identity to their roommates, frequently encountered stigma or isolation from them, prompting them to seek alternative accommodations. Another common scenario involved participants moving out of relatives' homes, which they initially chose for convenience, in pursuit of greater freedom and the opportunity for self-exploration—key motivations for their migration. However, participants expressed frustration with the prevalence of scams targeting newcomers, highlighting the vulnerability of individuals who lack local knowledge. The difficulty in securing a safe and affordable place to live adds to the stress of transitioning to a new environment and can lead to feelings of isolation and helplessness.



Yes, that's right, it's a bit difficult to find on your own, because you're from the countryside and have just come to Binh Duong to start a business, and to find a room that you like is really difficult, because now there are a lot of scams, you can find it mainly through social networking sites, and if you go there, it's a scam, they ask for a deposit a lot, you guys come here and you don't know anything so you ask for a deposit, but I've been here for many years, so when I come to see the house, I have to see the house first before I make a deposit, I'm not in a hurry, I make a deposit first, so that's also a difficulty for you guys if you're from the countryside and have just come here.

**HN08 - Yên Bái to Hà Nội, bisexual woman, pharmacist**

The cost of accommodation and personal expenses varied significantly among participants. On average, monthly spending ranged from 4 million to 5 million VND, with some individuals paying as little as 500,000 VND and others up to 7 million VND for housing. Many participants opted to share rental accommodations to reduce costs, highlighting the importance of budget-friendly living arrangements. However, this frugality often compromised their privacy and comfort, as evidenced by the cramped conditions in shared rooms described by participants. Conversely, some individuals preferred living alone, citing discomfort with shared spaces and a desire for independence. This preference frequently resulted in higher living expenses, particularly for those renting single rooms or apartments. Thus, a tension emerged between financial constraints and personal preferences, with participants emphasizing the importance of living arrangements that provided comfort and acceptance regarding their sexual orientation and gender identity (SOGIE).

## Living experiences at a new destination (cont.)

### ACCOMODATION (CONT.)

Except dormitory living, participants generally reported that they did not experience discrimination from their landlords or neighbours due to their sexual orientation and gender identity. While some individuals encountered misunderstandings regarding their relationships with roommates, these instances were not significant enough to cause discomfort or necessitate explanations. Overall, participants felt a level of acceptance in their housing situations.



Here, most people are quite accepting of LGBTQ+ matters. In the rental houses I used to live in, it was very normal; the landlords were really supportive of us.

*HCMC12 - Vĩnh Long to HCMC, Gender-fluid pansexual, multiple freelance jobs*



I have been living with my partner for five years, and when we express affection in public, we don't feel judged or scrutinized. Our neighbours go about their lives without paying much attention to our relationship, and it feels like there's no concern about such matters.

*HCMC01 - Bến Tre to HCMC, working in media, gay man*



Here, I share a room with a woman who is also a freelancer. Sometimes, we go out together for meals or she asks me to drive her to meet clients. I didn't think much of it until I heard some people suggesting that we were a couple. I typically don't feel the need to explain myself, but think it shouldn't be like that

*HCMC04 - Đà Lạt to HCMC, bisexual woman, Marketing*

### FINANCES

Participants faced diverse financial challenges, with income levels and expenses varying widely. The financial situations of participants were often precarious, characterized by a reliance on unstable incomes and external support. The cost of living in urban areas, particularly in major cities like Hồ Chí Minh City, was a significant factor influencing financial stability. Many reported their salaries being just sufficient to cover living expenses, with little to no surplus for savings or emergencies. Transgender individuals were the group that struggled the most among the diverse SOGIE community, particularly due to additional high costs associated with medical treatments and interventions. Moreover, participants in this study noted the necessity of sending financial support to their families, which further constraints their ability to save. It is crucial to emphasize that, despite facing financial hardships, sending even small amounts of money home holds significant importance for these individuals. This practice not only demonstrates their financial independence from their families but also contributes to their hope of recognition of LGBTQ+ identities. Collectively, these factors underscore the difficulties that individuals encounter in managing their personal finances while fulfilling financial obligations to support families in rural areas.

# Living experiences at a new destination (cont.)

## FINANCES (CONT.)



My parents occasionally give me some money, but it's not enough, especially considering the rent and the costs of medication.

**HN01 - Phú Thọ to Hà Nội, transgender man, working in education**

The analysis revealed that participants often employed various strategies to navigate their financial situations. Some utilized credit cards, after-pay options or had to borrow money from family members or friends to supplement their income, while others actively sought out affordable living arrangements to mitigate costs. This financial strain was compounded for those in lower-paying jobs, who often found themselves in a cycle of borrowing and repayment.

## ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURES

The process of settling into a new destination often involves navigating a complex array of administrative procedures. A recurring theme among participants was the complexity and bureaucracy associated with administrative procedures. Many expressed frustrations with the time-consuming nature of these tasks, particularly for those who were unfamiliar with the local regulations and requirements. The communication style also posted significant challenges for some participants, as they struggled to communicate effectively with government officials.



I feel that LGBTQ+ individuals are not completely outside the law, but the distinction between what is legitimate and illegitimate remains unclear. I am also very hesitant when it comes to dealing with administrative procedures, such as having to present who I am, what I do and what my identity is, which makes me feel very anxious. My experiences living with people from rural areas, coupled with not having extensive connections in Hà Nội, lead me to have low expectations of administrative procedures, especially in cases of theft at the dormitory and thief I mentioned before.

**HN02 - Hải Dương to Hà Nội, transgender woman, technical specialist at public office**

The reluctance to engage with complex procedures was evident as participants perceived the registration processes as cumbersome. One participant reflected on their hesitation: "The procedure is a bit complicated, so it is like I am also hesitant." This sentiment was echoed by others who indicated a tendency to ignore registration altogether unless absolutely necessary, suggesting a broader pattern of avoidance among individuals feeling overwhelmed by bureaucratic demands.

## Living experiences at a new destination (cont.)

### ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURES (CONT.)



The requirements for a lot of paperwork or various certifications are excessive. The issue is that where I live, I have to contact the local police, and they require me to have the consent of the property owner. At that time, the owner hadn't fully transferred ownership to someone else, so I didn't know how to find that person, which made things a bit complicated. Additionally, I was living in another place and then moved here, which added to the complexity. I kept going back and forth to the police station and felt it was quite troublesome, so I decided to stop pursuing it for now. However, in the future, I plan to register because I need some form of documentation. If I've been tied to this land for 11 years, I definitely need some paperwork to make it somewhat legal.

***HCMC02 - Nha Trang to HCMC, bisexual woman, F&B***

A recurrent theme in the narratives is the varying level of support provided by landlords and property managers in handling administrative procedures. Many participants reported that their landlords played a crucial role in facilitating temporary and permanent residence registrations. For instance, some indicated that knowledgeable landlords took the initiative to manage the registration process, requiring only basic documentation from tenants. One participant shared, "When going to the new place, the landlord will do temporary residence registration for you," highlighting the convenience that can arise from a proactive landlord. Conversely, instances of landlords neglecting to register tenants were also noted. This practice, while illegal, was not uncommon, and participants often found themselves in situations where they were unable to obtain the necessary documentation. Participants expressed concerns about the potential consequences of unregistered residency, including fines and bureaucratic complications. One individual mentioned, "Sometimes the owner does not register temporary and permanent residence, not being able to register sometimes leads to being fined but I can't do it myself" indicating a fear of administrative penalties that emerge over individuals who find themselves in less supportive housing situations.

Transgender individuals face administrative hurdles related to identification documents. Because they were unable to obtain new identification cards reflecting their chosen name and gender, they faced difficulties accessing essential services. Additionally, some individuals found themselves without identification documents due to unforeseen circumstances, such as leaving home without them and being unable to return. These challenges further compounded the difficulties faced by transgender individuals in navigating bureaucratic processes.

Despite the challenges, some participants exhibited a proactive approach to navigating administrative systems. Acknowledging the potential for systemic shortcomings, one individual mentioned, "Although there are many systematic shortcomings in handling documents due to being an outsider and not having information, it can still be done." This perspective underscores the resilience and resourcefulness of individuals as they adapt to new environments. This suggests that while individual landlord support is critical, broader institutional support mechanisms can significantly alleviate the burdens associated with administrative procedures.



# Living experiences at a new destination (cont.)

## SOCIAL RELATIONSHIPS AND SUPPORT NETWORK

Participants frequently identified support networks as crucial in managing their accommodation and financial situations. Many relied on family members, friends, or colleagues for assistance during challenging times. For example, one individual mentioned receiving support from their networks in the city, which alleviated some financial pressure during their initial period of relocation. Another participant highlighted the importance of friends, noting their significant support during stressful times. The role of social media and community networks also emerged as significant in securing necessary support and information about life in the city. Several participants mentioned finding useful information on social networking platforms, showcasing how digital connections can facilitate access to resources that may not be available through traditional channels.

A noteworthy theme emerging from the narratives is the complexity of forming and maintaining social connections in urban settings. They reported that their social networks largely consist of colleagues and individuals met through professional environments. Participants noted that most of their close friendships were formed prior to their relocation, indicating a continuity of these relationships from their home environment. However, some participants highlighted that the downsides of maintaining these friendships include a lack of understanding regarding the migrant experience and the physical distance, which can hinder the level of support they receive. Many participants expressed difficulty in forming deep friendships and social connections in their new cities. Factors such as fear of strangers, cultural differences, and limited time outside of work contributed to challenges in connecting with individuals from urban backgrounds, suggesting a complexity in social integration tied to regional identities. However, some participants found ways to overcome these obstacles and build meaningful relationships. This suggests that while urban new destinations offer opportunities for new relationships, many individuals retain strong ties to their hometowns.

Moreover, the use of digital platforms, particularly dating apps and social media, has become a prominent means of forming relationships. One participant described using “dating apps as a tool to find relationships of the same sex,” indicating that technology serves as a bridge to connect with others, especially within marginalized communities. This reliance on digital spaces underscores a contemporary approach to relationship-building, particularly for those who may find face-to-face interactions daunting due to anxiety or fear of rejection. Social media platforms, including dating apps, played a role in connecting individuals with others who shared similar interests and identities. For LGBTQ+ individuals, these platforms provided a space to connect with the community and find acceptance.

Joining community groups and organizations can be an effective way to meet new people and build a sense of belonging. Participants who were active in LGBTQ+ community groups often reported positive experiences and strong social connections. These groups provided a supportive environment where individuals could be themselves and connect with others who shared similar experiences. However, overall the study participants did not exhibit a strong inclination to engage in LGBTQ+ events at a national or local level. They did not express a significant need or interest to participate in events such as Pride parades or other local LGBTQ+ gatherings. This finding stands in stark contrast with a study conducted in 2017-2018 (Ha 2021), which indicated that participation in LGBTQ+ events was not only one of the primary motivators for migration to the city but also a catalyst for active engagement in such events once there. In the previous study, these individuals sought to deepen their understanding of their sexual orientation, gender identity, and expression (SOGIE) and to forge connections with other members of the LGBTQ+ community.

Their SOGIE identities also hinder their ability to form meaningful connections, as they often feel restricted in expressing themselves, especially around strangers or colleagues. Furthermore, the limited understanding of the LGBTQ+ community among many individuals in their new environments exacerbates participants’ reluctance to open up and engage with others.

## Living experiences at a new destination (cont.)

### SOCIAL RELATIONSHIPS AND SUPPORT NETWORK (CONT.)



It's not so much discrimination, but rather the way they talk about others, as if they're discussing someone through someone else. For example, they might say something like, "This girl likes that girl," and then everyone reacts with surprise, asking, "Oh, really? So she's a lesbian? Wow, that's interesting." It's kind of like that.

***HCMC2 - Nha Trang to HCMC, bisexual woman, F&B***

Even within the LGBTQ+ community, a dualistic perspective often prevails, primarily recognizing gay and lesbian identities while marginalizing others. This narrow understanding restricts the ability of those who do not identify as gay or lesbian to forge connections and build relationships.



In my community, there's this guy who's a bit older—born in '93— he's gay. To me, he seems quite similar to straight men and women. It feels like his perspective is just slightly broader (than heterosexual), encompassing gay and lesbian identities, but when it comes to other aspects, he says he doesn't understand and doesn't want to understand.

***HCMC05 - Sóc Trăng to HCMC, non-binary, Social work***

### FREEDOM TO EXPRESS LGBTQ+ IDENTITY

Despite the numerous challenges associated with migrating to new locations, participants identified a significant benefit: the ability to express their SOGIE identities and connect with other members of the LGBTQ+ community in cities such as Hà Nội, Hồ Chí Minh City, Bình Dương, and Long An. In their home provinces, they often faced control and restrictions imposed by their families and surrounding communities. In contrast, the urban environment provided them with greater freedom to explore and express their identities without conforming to societal expectations. More importantly, they have encountered individuals both within and outside the LGBTQ+ community, allowing them to share their experiences and identities more freely.



As for my expression, in the past, I didn't have much freedom to express myself at home. However, when I came to Hà Nội, I was able to choose clothes that truly reflected my personality, no longer feeling confined to a formal style. Sometimes, my choices became quite flamboyant. I also started to experiment with makeup; once I entered university, my friends helped me with it, making it easier to learn. I began taking care of my skin and wanted to be a bit more stylish. Overall, this environment allowed me to express my sexual orientation more openly without feeling restricted.

***HCMC05 - Sóc Trăng to HCMC, non-binary, Social work***



## Living experiences at a new destination (cont.)

### FREEDOM TO EXPRESS LGBTQ+ IDENTITY (CONT.)

The narratives collected from participants delve into the multifaceted experiences of internal migrants in their new destinations, focusing on their post-migration employment journeys. The stories reveal a complex interplay of job transitions, challenges in job search, the significance of benefits and contracts, and unique experiences related to their LGBTQ+ identities.

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## Work experiences at a new destination

### JOB SEEKING, TRANSITIONS, AND RECRUITMENT PROCESS

The job search processes utilized by participants were diverse but primarily digital. Several participants secured employment through referrals from family members or acquaintances who had already moved to the city or had connections there; this approach was especially common among factory workers. Additionally, factory employees often found job opportunities by applying directly at the factories, where they could see banners displaying job descriptions. However, the majority of participants relied on social media platforms, such as Facebook, and job search websites to obtain job leads. This digital engagement highlights a broader trend in job hunting, where online resources have become the primary tools for seeking employment. Unlike international migrant workers, none of the participants in this study, regardless of their occupation, utilized broker agencies to find and secure employment. Unfortunately, there were instances in which individuals, driven by a strong desire to leave their homes, became entangled in illegal occupations, such as sex work, due to insufficient information and an excessive reliance on their social networks. The working conditions in these roles are often extremely poor, subjecting individuals to significant levels of abuse.



I was lured [into sex work].

***SL01 - Sơn La remote area to Sơn La city, gay man, self-employed and sex worker***

Despite the majority of participants highlighting the effectiveness of the job search strategies, participants emphasized the systemic exclusion faced by marginalized groups throughout the application and recruitment processes. Some companies openly discriminated against individuals based on gender identity or sexual orientation, creating an unwelcoming atmosphere that undermined confidence and morale. Many LGBTQ+ individuals felt compelled to suppress their identities to secure employment, resulting in significant mental and emotional strain. LGBTQ+ individuals faced particularly severe discrimination when seeking government jobs or other stable employment.

The narratives revealed that discrimination and feelings of being overlooked were common during the recruitment process. This was often due to discrepancies between their appearance and official documentation, as well as concerns regarding their health status. Moreover, rejections often stemmed from societal biases related to appearance or identity, particularly affecting transgender individuals who frequently encountered prejudice that hampered their job prospects. One participant recounted experiencing direct discrimination when denied a job, while others chose to conceal their gender identity to avoid potential stigma or unfair treatment.

## Work experiences at a new destination (cont.)

### JOB SEEKING, TRANSITIONS, AND RECRUITMENT PROCESS (CONT.)



After applying for the job, the man there told her that they had enough people and were no longer hiring. However, her friend got accepted and they were still hiring others. I felt that I was purposely dismissed.

*BD05 - An Giang to Bình Dương, transgender, office work*



During the interview, I didn't mention anything (about my gender identity). I didn't tell them about my identity, which isn't necessarily a form of discrimination, but they might have an incomplete or unfriendly view of LGBTQ+ individuals, so I didn't want to take any risk. I see this as a common cultural aspect in society, so I'm not too strict about it. I only respond if they say something that feels discriminatory; otherwise, I don't express my private matters.

*HN02 - Hải Dương to Hà Nội, transgender woman, technical specialist at public office*



The hotel owners replied that they were very sorry, because it's a family-run hotel. Their concern was about the difference in my gender. They worried about potential trouble. I explained to them that I worked in large corporations and companies, and they don't ask those kinds of questions. But the owner said large businesses are used to it, but there's no one like me working here, so they were very scared of employing me.

*HN01 - Phú Thọ to Hà Nội, transgender man, working in education*

Moreover, discrimination in the recruitment process is particularly evident among men who have sex with men (MSM) who are HIV positive. These individuals assert that their HIV status does not affect their ability to perform their jobs, and they believe that disclosing this information should not be a requirement for employment. However, in instances where companies mandate health checks that include HIV testing, these individuals are often excluded from consideration for recruitment, effectively limiting their employment opportunities. A factory worker from Vĩnh Long that moved to Long An and identifies as a gay man shared:



LA01: Typically, when employers find out (about HIV status), they do not get hired, especially in industries like food processing and beverages—those industries absolutely do not hire.

## Work experiences at a new destination (cont.)

### JOB SEEKING, TRANSITIONS, AND RECRUITMENT PROCESS (CONT.)



Interviewer: Are there specific regulations about this?



LA01: Yes, there are. When companies hire, they require candidates to undergo blood tests first. Nowadays, many companies do not require HIV testing, because it is unrelated. Other companies, they only conduct regular health checks for workers, which means it doesn't include HIV tests. That testing is voluntary; they can only conduct it if the individual consents. If the applicants don't mention it, the company won't know.

From what I know, many companies are able to be flexible about this, but many others do not accept it. They fear transmission and such, and who wouldn't be afraid? My friends have mentioned that the companies are strict about dismissals and often create difficulties when someone leaves, deducting several hundred thousand from their pay, along with other expenses. If you take one day off, you can lose about six or seven hundred thousand.

The need for transparency in hiring practices was emphasized, with several participants noting experiences where they felt misled about job availability or faced biases based on personal attributes. Such experiences highlight systemic issues within the job market that complicate the search for employment and recruitment, particularly for marginalized groups.

#### STORY OF TRANSGENDER OFFICE WORKER WHO MIGRATED FROM AN GIANG TO BÌNH DƯƠNG

When I moved to Bình Dương, I experienced discrimination, and then I had to go meet the manager directly. I said to her, 'Why do I see that you're still interviewing while you say you have enough people? Is there something about me that doesn't fit the job? Could you share that with me?' She told me that based on the information I submitted, I registered as male, but she saw my appearance as female, so she couldn't accept me. They don't hire people like that. I replied, 'Thank you for letting me know. I just wanted to understand the reason because anyone can do the job, regardless of gender.' She seemed embarrassed and apologized, but I felt like even though I was strong and told her how I felt, I was really heartbroken.

Later, after I applied for teaching positions, I faced constant rejections for no reason. I was repeatedly turned down and couldn't even get a position, even for something as simple as being a subject teacher. Eventually, I decided to move to Hồ Chí Minh City to work in District 9. My first job was at Samsung, where I passed my probation period for a month. The company then transferred me to a different location to work as a manager. While managing, I encountered a situation with the production manager, who was Vietnamese but spoke Korean. The Korean director was very discriminatory towards me; no matter how well I performed, he always found faults in my work.

After that, the production manager tried to undermine me. We even got into a fight. I believe that when someone is pushed too hard, they will fight back. I told him, 'No matter what, I still work well. You can't protect your subordinates from harming me like this; I won't accept it. Moreover, you're living in Vietnam. If I fight you, that's fine; if you fight me, you can't go back to your country.' I didn't actually hit him; I was just threatening him. I'm not a docile person, but I know how to handle situations. After the fight, I quit.

## Work experiences at a new destination (cont.)

### JOB SEEKING, TRANSITIONS, AND RECRUITMENT PROCESS (CONT.)

Currently, I applied to another company, and received a very harsh response: 'We don't hire *bê đê* people here.' I asked, 'Do you know where the term '*bê đê*' comes from?' She said, 'Everyone calls them that.' I replied, 'You should educate yourself; the term comes from French those who commit child sexual abuse.' I told her that if she didn't have this knowledge, she shouldn't judge others. If you're capable, then you can judge others. Honestly, if she speaks like that, she isn't a good person either. She claimed that it was the manager who discriminated, not her. I told her that if the manager isn't good, they will hire bad employees, leading to today's discrimination.

I honestly told her that I could handle the job pressure, but I cannot accept this level of discrimination. Those words hurt me deeply, mentally. I thanked her for arranging the interview, and I said that next time she calls someone for an interview, she should read the CV and learn more about the person beforehand. Then I left.

A notable pattern emerged among participants regarding frequent job changes, primarily driven by dissatisfaction with their initial positions. On average, each participant reported changing jobs 2-3 times, irrespective of their work history length. This dissatisfaction was often attributed to poor working conditions, limited opportunities for advancement, financial instability, low wages, discrimination, and exploitative work environments. These factors prompted a quest for a supportive work environment, resulting in a cycle of transitions between various types of employment, including manual labour, administrative roles, and freelance opportunities. Individuals working in fields such as sex work, drag performances, or massage therapy especially face significant challenges, including discrimination based on sexual orientation, gender identity, and age. For instance, transgender women who relocated to cities to work as a *lô-tô* performer and masseuse had to frequently change her location to avoid discrimination and hostility.



As we get older, it's harder to sustain a career in singing. And for massage work, well, who's going to hire an older woman for that?

***ĐN01 - Quy Nhơn to Đà Nẵng, transgender woman working as a masseuse and lô-tô performer***



I was forced to move frequently due to the stigma associated with my work.

***Sơn La - remote area to Sơn La city, gay man, self-employed and sex worker***

The challenges of securing stable employment were frequently highlighted, with many participants expressing a desire for consistency amid economic uncertainty. This need for stability was underscored by the perception that many available jobs did not align with their personal values or preferred work styles, leading to ongoing searches for more suitable positions. Moreover, participants with higher education degrees fared better than those with only a high school diploma, who often found themselves in low-paying, unstable jobs. However, this continuous pursuit of new opportunities contributed to a sense of precariousness among participants, particularly affecting labour migrants. For many of these individuals, economic motivations drive their migration, and employment precarity undermines their ability to achieve their migration goals, further exacerbating their overall instability.

## Work experiences at a new destination (cont.)

### JOB SEEKING, TRANSITIONS, AND RECRUITMENT PROCESS (CONT.)



Going back to my hometown or traveling to other provinces isn't really a good option, because when it comes to work, having a long-term commitment leads to stability. Working for just one or two months doesn't provide any real stability at all.

***BD04 - Cà Mau to Bình Dương, gay man, engineer***

Participants adopted various strategies when evaluating their options. For instance, many opted for freelance work, which enabled them to reduce interactions—from the recruitment process to daily engagements—and offered the flexibility to undertake multiple jobs. However, this choice also introduced considerable precarity.



The difficulties associated with freelance work primarily stem from the nature of being replaceable. This means that one day, someone else could take over my job. To address this challenge, I need to develop unique approaches for myself. For example, if I'm currently the main writer for a particular account and I write in a standard style or simply fulfill orders, I become easily replaceable. To mitigate this risk, I must develop a distinct writing voice so that if I were to be replaced, it would significantly diminish the credibility of that account. This uniqueness is essential to prevent the perception that my role has been easily substituted.

***HCM04 - Đà Lạt to HCMC, bisexual woman, Marketing***

### ON-BOARDING, CONTRACTS, AND BENEFITS AT WORK

The experiences of onboarding and training varied significantly among participants. Only few participants reported comprehensive training programs, which equipped them with necessary skills and a clear understanding of their roles. Conversely, others described minimal to no onboarding support, leading to feelings of confusion and lack of preparedness. This inconsistency in training experiences suggests a need for standardization in onboarding processes to ensure all employees feel adequately supported and create welcoming work environments as they transition into new roles.

Access to benefits, contracts, and insurance varied widely among participants. Participants expressed a heightened awareness of the importance of these factors in securing stable jobs. Those who found positions with full contracts and health benefits reported significantly improved job satisfaction compared to those in informal or unstable work environments. For example, one participant noted the advantages of working for a company that provided comprehensive health insurance and supportive policies, contrasting sharply with experiences in workplaces lacking formal agreements.

## Work experiences at a new destination (cont.)

### ON-BOARDING, CONTRACTS, AND BENEFITS AT WORK (CONT.)

The varying levels of benefits across different employment settings highlighted systemic inequalities, with some participants receiving preferential treatment while others struggled with inadequate support. Moreover, the participants had a limited understanding of the significance and details of contracts and various types of insurance. Their knowledge was primarily trivial, particularly regarding health insurance, while their comprehension of social insurance and personal accident insurance was even less developed. These findings underscore the importance of advocating for better labour practices and protections, especially for vulnerable populations as well as training regarding knowledge on different benefits and types of insurances. Interestingly, the participants that worked for the factories in the industrial zone had more comprehensive contracts than many of their peers in the city.



In the company, although my official records still list me as male, during the health check, the company recognizes my gender as female. Firstly, this means I receive all the benefits applicable to women, including a one-and-a-half-day menstrual leave each month, which is counted as paid time off if I don't take a break. Additionally, I receive gifts on International Women's Day (March 8) and Vietnamese Women's Day (October 20). I am assessed according to my identity as a woman, which makes me feel very comfortable at work. The HR department offered this, as I had initially informed the director about my situation. He may have taken the initiative on his own, so I didn't need to elaborate further. During the interview, I clearly explained everything, and I stated that if I were accepted, that would be great; if not, I would simply withdraw my application, as I didn't want to waste anyone's time.

#### ***BD05 - An Giang to Bình Dương, transgender, office work***

LGBTQ+ migrant workers face a complex array of challenges in their professional lives, navigating the intersections of their identities, workplace cultures, and societal expectations. This section explores the diverse experiences of LGBTQ+ migrant workers, highlighting the unique obstacles they encounter and the strategies they employ to overcome them. LGBTQ+ migrant workers report a wide range of experiences related to their identities and workplace interactions. A clear distinction exists between the social environment outside of work and the more controlled workplace setting. Participants generally feel freer to express their identity in society compared to their professional environments, where they must engage with various groups including management, colleagues, partners, and clients across different locations.



# Work experiences at a new destination (cont.)

## WORKPLACE EXPERIENCES BEING A LGBTQ+ MIGRANT WORKER

### Workplace Culture and Disclosure

The workplace environment significantly influences LGBTQ+ migrant workers' willingness to be open about their identities. More progressive and inclusive workplaces create a sense of safety and acceptance, enabling individuals to express their identities without fear.



I remember during the recent Lunar New Year, I went through a crisis and decided to come out to my boss. Part of the reason was that I felt the need to come out so I could have a more comfortable presence at work. I hadn't fully come out at the office, but I did tell my boss. Another part of it was that I was a bit worried about my contract; after my internship, I planned to apply for a position at the institute, and there are many steps in the process to secure a formal job. So, I felt it was important to discuss with my boss first that I am a transgender woman. My boss responded that it was okay; there is no issue with being transgender.

***HN02 - Hải Dương to Hà Nội, transgender woman, technical specialist at public office***

However, the majority choose to remain ambiguous or not disclose their sexual orientation due to concerns about potential discrimination or misunderstanding. The narratives reveal a workplace culture where open discussion of LGBTQ+ issues is often discouraged, and negative attitudes are prevalent. Participants frequently find it necessary to address and counter prevalent misconceptions about the LGBTQ+ community, challenging harmful associations rooted in traditional mindsets. This highlights the societal stigma surrounding LGBTQ+ identities and the potential consequences of challenging discriminatory attitudes in the workplace.



People sometimes use mocking terms when reading certain stories in the news, and I notice that during discussions at work, they are not open about these issues and are quite extreme if this becomes known in the company. [When discussing an LGBTQ+ client], a colleague expressed disgust and reacted negatively, and others in the room agreed with that sentiment. However, my close friend and I, sitting next to each other, said that we found it completely normal and had no issues with it. My friend occasionally scrolls through the news and sees such couples, and she is quite vocal in defending the idea that we find this normal. Yet, this colleague, who works in a purchasing role and is known for being quite opinionated, still maintained her harsh stance.

***HN07 - Thanh Hoá to Hà Nội, lesbian woman, Office worker***

## Work experiences at a new destination (cont.)

### WORKPLACE EXPERIENCES BEING A LGBTQ+ MIGRANT WORKER (CONT.)



At work, sometimes there are a few people who bring up news about transgender individuals, and they talk to me about it. In those moments, I have to navigate the conversation carefully. I mention that I have many transgender friends within my social circle because I want to reduce their stigma. At that time, people were thinking about transgender individuals as somewhat linked to sex work or sexual services. I clarified that the people I know work regular office jobs or are involved in the arts; they are just ordinary individuals who seek a place to live and a fulfilling job like everyone else. I believe that by sharing this, I can help lessen their prejudices, but I don't expect too much change. After all, these are traditional mindsets, and I don't think I can change them completely. There are times when I dress in a somewhat androgynous way at work, and people comment on my style change. I just smile and don't elaborate further.

***HN02 - Hải Dương to Hà Nội, transgender woman, technical specialist at public office***

Even within the LGBTQ+ community, there can be a lack of understanding and acceptance of different identities and experiences, pointing to internalized homophobia. These experiences highlight a generational divide in understanding, particularly regarding issues of self-identification and the importance of labels.



I feel like if I hear a straight man or a straight woman say something, I'll think, 'They don't understand.' But when I hear someone from my own community say something bad about LGBTQ+, I feel like there's a huge gap in terms of awareness, even within our own community. Even among educated people, there is also a lot of misinformation. For instance, my boss is very aware and intelligent, he's extremely capable, but he doesn't accept LGBTQ+ community. He says, 'What you have now is enough, why do we have to keep demanding more?' It means he doesn't accept that people should be more aware of different labels. Because now, my generation, or let's say Gen Z, has a lot of issues, especially the issue of self-identification. If he doesn't understand, he won't understand a lot of what Gen Z is going through.

***HCMC05 - Sóc Trăng to HCMC, non-binary, Social work***



## Work experiences at a new destination (cont.)

### WORKPLACE EXPERIENCES BEING A LGBTQ+ MIGRANT WORKER (CONT.)

LGBTQ+ migrant workers face complex emotional and practical considerations regarding their gender and sexual identity in the workplace. Coming out is often seen as necessary for achieving comfort and authenticity in their professional environment, reflecting a desire for acceptance and understanding. While supportive work environments foster inclusivity, an underlying fear of discrimination persists. Any sign of “difference” or “non-conformity” can prompt colleagues and business partners to inquire about an individual’s sexual orientation. While this reflects a certain level of openness regarding discussions of sexual identity, it can also have implications for how individuals are perceived professionally.



As for me, due to my appearance, the colleagues generally speak frankly. Some partners in the hospital have even asked me whether I prefer boys or girls.

#### *HCMC05 - Sóc Trăng to HCMC, non-binary, Social work*

Workplace sexism, evidenced by discriminatory language and behaviours, creates a hostile environment for LGBTQ+ migrant workers. Participants felt the need to carefully navigate potential consequences, including strained interpersonal relationships, discrimination, or even job loss. One individual recounted a particularly appalling incident involving a sexist comment made by a superior, which they challenged. This act of defiance, while courageous, ultimately led to their dismissal.



There was another guy who was very sexist, and no one dared to argue with him. And when I first started there, I had only been there for a few days and I didn't know who he was. I didn't know he was the finance director. So, when he said something, I snapped back. It was something like, 'What's with women? When you get married, you should just stay at home and cook or whatever, but if a woman works and then gets depressed and jumps off a building, she deserves it.' I remember that, I can't remember exactly, but I remember it was something like that. When I heard that, I was really triggered. I was like, 'So what about those men who get depressed from working and jump off buildings? Are they women too?' I don't remember exactly what I said but I was very aggressive. I was really upset. He looked at me because usually when he came in and said random things like that, the other women would just put up with it and not dare to reply, just smiling and nodding. But when I came in, I snapped back and he was shocked, everyone was shocked. Later, he asked me something, of course he didn't say it directly, but I felt like he was looking down on me, like I wasn't good enough. Something like, 'You didn't go to university, did you?'

## Work experiences at a new destination (cont.)

### WORKPLACE EXPERIENCES BEING A LGBTQ+ MIGRANT WORKER (CONT.)

So I said, 'No, I have a university degree, a medical degree. Ms. A from the Physical Therapy Association introduced me there. I'm her student, and she doesn't often introduce people.' When I said that, he was silent. And then I was fired.

#### *HCMC05 - Sóc Trăng to HCMC, non-binary, Social work*

The level of acceptance and tolerance can vary significantly across different workplaces, influenced by factors such as age and customer demographics. Foreign managers, supervisors, or partners tend to create more trust and ease for LGBTQ+ migrant workers to come out.

#### **Forms of Discrimination and Challenge**

##### **LEGAL FRAMEWORK ON ANTI-DISCRIMINATION IN THE WORKPLACE IN VIETNAM**

Vietnam's Labor Code (2019) establishes a legal framework to ensure equal employment opportunities and prohibits workplace discrimination. Discrimination based on race, ethnicity, gender (not explicitly mention SOGIESC), age, pregnancy, marital status, religion, disability, family responsibilities, HIV status, trade union participation, or other similar factors is expressly forbidden. Violations may lead to administrative fines between VND 5,000,000 and VND 20,000,000, potential lawsuits, and damage to an employer's reputation.

LGBTQ+ individuals, particularly those in professions commonly associated with the LGBTQ+ community (e.g., drag performances), often face societal fear and suspicion. The actions of a few individuals within the LGBTQ+ community can be generalized to the entire group, perpetuating harmful stereotypes and occupational stigma that not only discriminate against LGBTQ+ individuals but also limit their employment prospects.



I think there will be people who really like us and also people who don't like drag queens that do lottery performances (lô-tô) and those who do drag. Meaning there will be very clear prejudices and stereotypes about drag queens like us. Sometimes we encounter people who are afraid of us, and sometimes they say that being a drag queen is not good. I think this is also a difficulty when people discriminate against us and treat us differently based on our profession and gender.

#### *BD06 - Bình Dương to multiple locations, non-binary pansexual, lô-tô performer*

Negative generalizations about the entire LGBTQ+ community, based on the actions of a few individuals, are common. These stereotypes often portray LGBTQ+ people in a negative light, associating them with behaviours such as theft or untrustworthiness, damaging the reputation of the entire group. Such societal pressure and prejudice can significantly impact the lives and careers of LGBTQ+ individuals, especially in large corporations.

## Work experiences at a new destination (cont.)

### WORKPLACE EXPERIENCES BEING A LGBTQ+ MIGRANT WORKER (CONT.)



Some people have prejudices against our community, like thinking that a certain person is this way or that way. I experienced this at a factory where I worked. When it comes to money, people would stereotype and then they would generalize, thinking that everyone in the LGBTQ+ community is a thief or something like that. Because in a company of a hundred people, if just one or two people are not doing things properly, and if those one or two people say bad things about the community, it will reflect badly on everyone else. So people's perceptions from the outside are influenced by these negative stereotypes.

**LA02 - Sóc Trăng to Long An, gay man, factory worker**

Additionally, stereotypes include expectations and norms regarding appearance, expression, and abilities of LGBTQ+ individuals. There's an underlying anxiety about how one's appearance, if differing from conventional norms, might affect the reception of their professional opinions and overall workplace acceptance. These expectations extend not only to appearance and behaviour but also to life and career choices, where family building is often prioritized over career and educational advancement.



Currently, I'm still on a probationary contract and will probably sign a full-time contract there next month. Another thing that it's also a small concern, is that when someone looks a bit different from the conventional image people are used to, how will people react when such a person gives their opinion? Because probably since I was 20, I've been aware of the fact that my body is a female body, and from then on, people started to have expectations of a woman in society, like choosing a career, getting married, having children, why go for a master's degree instead of staying at home and getting married, that kind of thing. So this time I'm a bit more concerned about that part, and like talking about having a female body, meaning just a female body and not knowing about gender yet, that alone can come as a shock. Just having a female body makes you more vulnerable in this society. So it's like a very, very contradictory thought. I can't say I shave my armpits and then say armpit hair is normal. But if I don't, I also have to be ready to accept very negative comments from others.

**HN03 - Nghe An to Hà Nội, gender-neutral, working in education sector**

## Work experiences at a new destination (cont.)

### WORKPLACE EXPERIENCES BEING A LGBTQ+ MIGRANT WORKER (CONT.)

Moreover, a common issue faced by participants is being misgendered by colleagues or supervisors, who repeatedly use their former names and pronouns despite knowing their preferred name and gender identity. This creates deep emotional distress, especially for transgender and gender non-conforming individuals, leading to feelings of isolation and exclusion.

In some cases, heterosexual colleagues demonstrate overt fear and prejudice towards LGBTQ+ individuals, engaging in avoidance behaviours or intentionally causing verbal harm. Misconceptions about gender identity and sexual orientation are prevalent, leading to disrespectful remarks and discriminatory actions, creating a hostile and intolerant work environment.



There's still people who are kind of scared. For example, when I worked in F&B, when people knew (about my sexual identity), there were a few straight girls who were scared, and then they would be like, 'Hey, make sure you don't have a crush on me or like me, I'm not like that,' and I was like, 'Oh my god, do you think I'm omnivorous? Only animals are omnivorous, humans aren't omnivorous, honey.' And then they would get annoyed at me, and then they would together isolate me..

***HCMC12 - Vĩnh Long to HCMC, Gender-fluid pansexual, multiple freelance jobs***

Non-binary individuals who do not conform to binary gender norms face particular discrimination and challenges in navigating gendered spaces. This highlights the theme of social policing in the workplace, where individuals are subjected to judgment and gossip, creating an environment of discomfort and fear.



People often pry on me when I go to the men's washroom. I usually face barriers, and when I enter the workplace, others gossip about it.

***HCMC03 - Bình Dương to Hồ Chí Minh City, non-binary bisexual, F&B worker, motorbike taxi driver***

Discrimination against LGBTQ+ individuals in the workplace can extend to sexual harassment, particularly in the entertainment, service and hospitality industry. Participants report uncomfortable and inappropriate interactions with both supervisors and customers, including boundary violations and sexual harassment. These experiences range from invasions of personal space to sexually suggestive comments, creating a hostile work environment. One participant shared an incident of sexual harassment by a guest, underscoring the prevalence of discriminatory behaviour towards marginalized individuals. The participant described how compliments on their appearance from customers led to an unwelcome encounter.

## Work experiences at a new destination (cont.)

### WORKPLACE EXPERIENCES BEING A LGBTQ+ MIGRANT WORKER (CONT.)



I want to share a little bit about a bad experience... that left me so shocked... when I encountered an international guest. It was during my night shift, from 3 PM to 11 PM. There were only a few people in front of me. They called for beer to be delivered to their room. When I took the order down to their room, they were naked and did some inappropriate things. Luckily, I managed to get out... In other places like cruise ship, where most of the customers are students and young, there's more discrimination. So, places like cruise ships and my current workplace, where I interact with older people, their perspectives might be different from younger people. Like in the coffee shop, my co-workers were all students, so they might have encountered people like me before and found it easier to talk to me. However, in my current place or on cruise ships, I interact with older people, even the managers, so they might be a bit stricter about how I express my gender.

**LA02 - Sóc Trăng to Long An, gay man, factory worker**

Another participant experienced verbal abuse and dehumanizing treatment, illustrating how derogatory comments can undermine a person's sense of self-worth. It also emphasizes the importance of resilience and the refusal to accept disrespect, underlining the need for mutual respect and dignity in all professional interactions:



There were times when I performed at fairs and people would insult me, and it would really hurt. But as I got older, I became more resilient. I'd think to myself, 'So what if they call me a queer? I'll show them.' But there were some guys who were just too disrespectful. I remember one time, right after I finished singing, this guy said something really hurtful. I mean, I was interested in him, but his comment made me so angry. It was like, 'Just because I'm queer doesn't mean I'll accept any kind of treatment.' I value respect...He treated me like an object, like a machine to fulfil his desires. It was dehumanizing.

**ĐN02 - Hồ Chí Minh City to Đà Nẵng, transgender woman, lô-tô performer**

## Work experiences at a new destination (cont.)

### WORKPLACE EXPERIENCES BEING A LGBTQ+ MIGRANT WORKER (CONT.)

The experiences of LGBTQ+ migrant workers are compounded by regional bias, highlighting the intersectionality of various forms of discrimination. There is a complex interplay of geographical origin, socioeconomic status, and prejudice within the Vietnamese workspace, with clear bias against people from certain regions, particularly Central and Southern Vietnam. This bias is often rooted in stereotypes about work ethic, education, and cultural practices. People from rural areas or less developed regions are more likely to face discrimination. Migrant workers often face microaggressions in the form of verbal discrimination, jokes, and stereotypes targeted at their specific province or at being an outsider in general.

#### STORY OF TRANSGENDER OFFICE WORKER WHO A STORY OF A GENDER-FLUID PANSEXUAL INDIVIDUAL WHO WORKS MULTIPLE FREELANCE JOBS AND MOVED FROM VĨNH LONG TO HỒ CHÍ MINH CITY MIGRATED FROM AN GIANG TO BÌNH DƯƠNG

There's a geographical prejudice, you know. For example, there are people who really, really dislike people from Central Vietnam, like Quảng Ngãi. I've met quite a few employers who really dislike people from Quảng Ngãi. And generally speaking, people from that region, they have a prejudice, and those from the far south of the Mekong Delta, like Cà Mau, they might be seen by employers as lazy or something like that. People from the North are seen as more stable, and they're highly valued for their work ethic. It's just that I haven't seen any place that discriminates against people from the North, but I have seen discrimination against people from Central and Southern Vietnam. Yeah, like sometimes, people from the Mekong Delta, you'll often meet people who discriminate against those from the countryside. They say things like, 'People from the Mekong Delta drop out of school early to get married and stuff like that. Actually, I feel lucky because I've never really experienced those situations. Sometimes they'll joke around, they'll say something a bit rude, but it's okay. Like they'll say things like, 'People from the Mekong Delta are like this and that, right? You wear so much gold, why aren't you wearing any?' So, I just laugh it off. I'm lucky because the area I'm in has less discrimination. It's more like, for example, people from the North, like Thanh Hoá, Nghệ An, or Hải Phòng, they face more discrimination when they come here. Those are the people who experience discrimination when job hunting. Some people see a resume from Thanh Hoá and they just pass.

#### Impact on Career and Opportunities

LGBTQ+ individuals experience discrimination and bias in the workplace, including perceptions of lower competence and worth by others in their professional surroundings. Their abilities and credibility may be questioned or undermined due to their sexual identity. Even without openly disclosing personal information, non-conformance to traditional gender norms and expectations can lead to undervaluation, contributing to feelings of marginalization and isolation.



That's right, and even when working with contractors, they would look at me as if I wasn't very impressive. It's like, if there's me and another colleague in the same position, people would usually value the other position more and respect that position more, something like that.

#### *HCMC08 - Nghệ An to HCMC, gay man, working in real estate*

As a result, several participants reported that their LGBTQ+ identity led to missed opportunities for advancement at work, including training, new clients, or promotions.

## Work experiences at a new destination (cont.)

### WORKPLACE EXPERIENCES BEING A LGBTQ+ MIGRANT WORKER (CONT.)



I feel people are watching me; they didn't promote me even after a year. When I file complaints, they think it's jealousy. It's really difficult. I've been at one job for over a year, earning only about six and a half million, which isn't enough, so I left. At my second job, I was laid off after a month because they were struggling. At my third job, I found a better opportunity.

***HCMC03 - Bình Dương to Saigon, non-binary bisexual, F&B worker, motorbike taxi driver***

#### Coping Strategies and Identity Negotiation

Participants employ various strategies to overcome workplace challenges through negotiations of personal identity. For instance, they may choose to dress in a manner that is ambiguous to some extent, conforming to expectations while expressing their personal needs. The importance of coming out at work varies greatly among participants, with no specific type of work being more welcoming than others. Therefore, participants need to make decisions about coming out and choose a selective disclosure.

Some participants express a cautious approach to openness, revealing a desire to be authentic while recognizing the potential risks involved in sharing their identity. The hesitance to disclose their sexual orientation, for example to students' parents, suggests a fear of judgment or mistrust. This reflects a broader struggle many LGBTQ+ individuals face in balancing authenticity with the necessity of self-protection in various social contexts.



In my company right now, I am not fully open with everyone. I am open with a few friends, but not widely, and I am definitely not open with my students' parents. The reason I say I am not fully open is that I believe being open shouldn't be a problem, but I am not sure if many parents from different backgrounds would have enough trust in me as a person like that. So, I feel I must keep some aspects of myself private to ensure my own safety. It's really just a part of my secret.

***HN01 - Phú Thọ to Hà Nội, trans man, working in education***

Some participants choose not to come out publicly, not out of fear, but due to discomfort stemming from others' perceptions and questions. This highlights a broader struggle for belonging and validation, emphasizing that even relative privilege in facing fewer struggles does not shield one from feelings of isolation.



## Work experiences at a new destination (cont.)

### WORKPLACE EXPERIENCES BEING A LGBTQ+ MIGRANT WORKER (CONT.)



It's not that I don't come out; it's just that I find it uncomfortable because of the questions that follow. For example, there was a time when I told someone I'm close to, who is also part of the community, but she thought I didn't really count. She knows there's a guy, and I seem normal on the outside, but when she said that, I felt uneasy. Even though I don't face as many struggles as others in the community, feeling that kind of separation is still a bit jarring for me...

*HCMC07 - Nha Trang to HCMC, asexual woman, admin support*

#### Conclusion

The experiences of LGBTQ+ migrant workers highlight the ongoing challenges faced by this community in professional settings which reveals a multifaceted aspect of workplace discrimination against LGBTQ+ individuals, particularly in personal interactions and deeply ingrained prejudices. The varying degrees of acceptance, the presence of supportive colleagues, and the overall workplace culture significantly influence their experiences. These narratives underscore the importance of understanding the complex factors that shape the experiences of migrant workers, particularly those from marginalized communities in order to foster inclusive workplace cultures through continued education and awareness to recognize and address discrimination and harassment. By understanding and addressing these complex issues, we can work towards creating more equitable and inclusive work environments for all individuals, regardless of their sexual orientation, gender identity, or migrant status.



# Support And Advices

The transition to a new environment after migration can be daunting, especially for individuals seeking to establish their lives in unfamiliar urban settings. The narratives collected from participants illuminate their experience with support systems that assist migrants in navigating their new realities. This analysis identifies key sources of support, the importance of community, and the resilience that many individuals exhibit despite the challenges they face. In this part, the advices for the future LGBTQ+ labour migrants from research participants are also presented.

## SUPPORT

### Peer and Community Support

A prominent theme in the narratives is the critical role of close friends and neighbours in providing immediate support. Many participants emphasized the importance of having a reliable social network that they can turn to for assistance, especially when settling into a new area. Close friends and family emerged as crucial sources of support for many migrants. These relationships provided emotional comfort, practical assistance, and a sense of belonging in a foreign land. Participants emphasized the value of having a trusted network to rely on during difficult times. Some migrants benefited from community-based support online networks, which provided assistance with various needs, including housing, employment, and mental health support. Furthermore, participants reported that living in shared houses fostered a sense of friendship and mutual support among neighbours. This informal network often proves invaluable in times of need, whether for sharing local knowledge or providing emotional encouragement. The willingness to help one another reflects a collective resilience that can significantly ease the stress of migration. Participants highlighted the importance of these networks in fostering a sense of belonging and providing a safety net.

For example, one participant noted the necessity of having backup plans for housing, indicating a proactive approach to potential conflicts or changes in circumstances, such as a friend's marriage or personal disagreements. This readiness to seek alternative accommodations underscores the importance of social networks in ensuring stability.

The only cases where in-person organizations and networks were emphasized were voluntary associations and social work organizations focused on health-related issues like HIV. The availability and distribution of support services emphasizes the concentration of resources in Long An and industrial areas. It illustrates a strong sense of community and mutual support among members, who actively lead and encourage one another. However, it also points out the gaps in support in other provinces, where resources and community connections are lacking.



I had the opportunity to get tested for HIV... I'm grateful for the support of my LGBTQ+ community.

*ĐN02 - Hồ Chí Minh City to Đà Nẵng, transgender woman, lô-tô performer*



Currently, there are many support services available (for HIV patients), with numerous social work initiatives and volunteer organizations spread across various districts. They provide assistance primarily in Long An and neighbouring provinces. Within our groups, for instance, when someone has a situation, we lead and support them, share experiences, and encourage them. [...]

# Support And Advices (cont.)

## SUPPORT (CONT.)



[...] However, in many other provinces, there is a significant lack of support personnel, and the communities are also sparse. Most of our community is concentrated around industrial zones, so I think establishing an office near these areas would be more suitable. This way, sharing and connecting with the community becomes easier, as sometimes people are unaware of the support available. For example, if someone makes a mistake, they might struggle to find help at that moment, and there may be no one to share their burden with.

**LA01 - Vĩnh Long to Long An, gay man, factory worker**

The urban-rural divide in service access leaves many individuals in rural areas without the support they need. However, a strong community leadership can drive the development of essential services, particularly in areas of high need.

### Information Networks and Resource Sharing

Migrants often face an overwhelming amount of information when searching for housing, resources and employment in a new city. Some online platforms were important in providing information and connecting migrants with others facing similar challenges. Participants shared experiences, advice, and recommendations through online forums and social media groups. However, they also cautioned against relying solely on online information and emphasized the importance of verifying information through trusted sources. Participants expressed a cautious approach toward online information, preferring to rely on advice from friends or those with prior experience in the area. Many noted that they sought out direct support rather than relying on digital platforms, emphasizing the need for accurate and trustworthy information.



I dream of creating a safe space for older LGBTQ+ women, a place where we can care for each other.

**ĐN01 - Quy Nhơn to Đà Nẵng, transgender woman working as a masseuse and lô-tô performer**

The establishment of local groups and networks serves as a practical solution for newcomers. Participants highlighted the importance of connecting with those who have migrated before them, suggesting that experiential knowledge is often more reliable than online resources. This peer-led approach to information sharing helps newcomers navigate the complexities of urban living, particularly regarding housing, transportation, and local services.

### Psychological Support and Emotional Well-Being

The narratives reveal a desire for direct psychological support, as many participants prefer face-to-face interactions over virtual consultations. This preference speaks to the importance of building trust and rapport in a supportive relationship. Participants emphasized the need for a community that offers emotional assistance, particularly in a new and potentially isolating environment.

# Support And Advices (cont.)

## SUPPORT (CONT.)

Additionally, the presence of voluntary associations focused on social work can provide essential resources for mental health support. These organizations often serve as hubs for migrants, offering workshops, counselling, and community-building activities that foster a sense of belonging. By creating spaces where individuals can connect and share experiences, these initiatives contribute significantly to the emotional well-being of migrants.

### Self-Reliance and Resourcefulness

While community support is crucial, many participants also highlighted the importance of self-reliance. This mindset of self-sufficiency is a common trait among migrants, as many express a strong desire to solve their problems independently. One participant articulated a philosophy of empowerment, stating that they strive to do everything within their reach without relying heavily on others. This attitude reflects a broader theme of resilience, as individuals navigate the complexities of their new lives. Moreover, participants indicated that self-reliance does not preclude seeking assistance when necessary. Many expressed a willingness to ask friends for help, illustrating a balanced approach to independence and community support. This dual strategy allows migrants to maintain their autonomy while also benefiting from the resources available within their social networks.

### Conclusion

The experiences of migrants in new destinations reveal a complex interplay of support systems that significantly impact their ability to adapt and thrive. Close friendships, community networks, and the sharing of reliable information are vital resources that help individuals navigate the challenges of migration. Additionally, the desire for psychological support and a strong sense of self-reliance further underscore the resilience of these individuals. By fostering supportive environments and leveraging personal resourcefulness, migrants can better overcome the obstacles they face, ultimately enhancing their quality of life in their new homes.

## ADVICES

Migrating to a new destination often entails navigating a complex landscape of challenges and opportunities. The narratives collected from participants reveal a rich tapestry of strategies and support mechanisms that facilitate adaptation and success in unfamiliar environments. This analysis synthesizes the key themes related to preparation, community engagement, and personal resilience, highlighting how these elements work together to support migrants in their new contexts.

### Preparation and Knowledge Acquisition

A fundamental aspect of successful migration is thorough preparation. Participants emphasized the importance of equipping oneself with both practical knowledge and life skills before embarking on their journey. This preparation includes understanding the new environment, identifying potential living situations, and acquiring basic navigation skills, such as reading maps and using online resources effectively. One participant noted the need to research not just the logistics of moving but also the social and cultural aspects of the destination. This proactive approach enables migrants to develop a clearer sense of purpose and direction, reducing feelings of overwhelm once they arrive.

Moreover, participants highlighted the significance of setting personal goals and maintaining focus amidst the distractions of a new city. For instance, a participant cautioned against getting lost in the allure of urban life, suggesting that having a defined purpose can help individuals resist the temptation to engage in potentially unproductive activities. This foresight is crucial in helping migrants remain grounded and goal oriented.

# Support And Advices (cont.)

## ADVICES (CONT.)

### Community Engagement and Support Networks

Migrants rely heavily on community support for survival and well-being. Participants described how forming connections with others, especially those who share similar backgrounds or experiences, fosters a supportive environment that can ease the transition into a new place. This network serves as both a source of practical assistance—such as job referrals and housing tips—and emotional support, offering reassurance and encouragement during challenging times.

Additionally, the notion of treating community members as family emerged prominently. Participants emphasized that building relationships based on trust and mutual respect can create a sense of belonging and security. However, they also acknowledged the need for discernment in choosing whom to trust, as not everyone may have altruistic intentions. This dual awareness of vulnerability and strength reflects the complexities of social interactions in a new environment.

### Positive Mindset and Resilience

A recurring theme in the narratives is the role of a positive mindset in navigating the challenges of migration. Participants emphasized that maintaining a sense of optimism not only benefits individual well-being but also enhances the community's overall morale. One participant noted that a positive attitude can create an uplifting atmosphere, making it easier for others to adapt and thrive.

Moreover, the idea of giving back to the community emerged as a vital source of motivation and purpose. Many participants expressed a desire to support others who face similar struggles, reflecting a sense of solidarity and responsibility. This reciprocal relationship between individual growth and community support creates a cycle of empowerment that benefits all involved.

### Self-Reliance and Personal Agency

While community support is invaluable, many participants also underscored the importance of self-reliance. The narratives revealed a strong belief in the value of taking initiative and being proactive in one's pursuits. Participants described their journeys of finding jobs and settling into their new lives, often relying on their resourcefulness and determination.

This sense of agency is crucial in helping migrants navigate the uncertainties of their new environments. One participant shared their personal experience of transitioning from rural life to an urban setting, illustrating the challenges they faced and the proactive steps they took to overcome them. This narrative exemplifies how self-reliance, combined with community support, can lead to successful adaptation and resilience.

### Conclusion

The experiences of migrants, as captured in these narratives, highlight the multifaceted nature of support systems that facilitate successful adaptation to new destinations. Through thorough preparation, community engagement, a positive mindset, and self-reliance, individuals can navigate the complexities of migration more effectively. These insights not only reflect the challenges faced by migrants but also underscore their resilience and capacity for growth in unfamiliar environments. As communities continue to evolve, fostering supportive networks and promoting personal agency will be essential in helping migrants thrive in their new homes.

# Support And Advices (cont.)

## ADVICES (CONT.)

*"I need to figure out where I am and what suits the place I'm studying. I'll research thoroughly, as much as possible. At least, I need to equip myself with basic knowledge, like reading a map. I need to find out where I'll be staying, what it's like, who I'll be living with, and what essentials I'll need in Hanoi. Who can I call if something goes wrong? For work, in this online era, I can apply for jobs online. Based on my abilities, I want to do a job that I'm interested in. Initially, I'll try to find a job through friends and relatives. How can I research this further? Is there anything else a new student needs? What else does a fresh graduate need?"*

*"You need to have a direction for yourself, and once you've set my direction, you'll stick to it. Don't be swayed by the glitz and glamour of Saigon, because once you're there, you'll be overwhelmed. There are so many things to do and see, and with friends around, you might get carried away. Then you'll forget why you came here in the first place."*

*"Keep your personal identification documents safe."*

*"Before you look for a new environment, you need to understand what that place is like. First, you need to research. Second, you need knowledge: life skills, soft skills, and job-related knowledge. That will help you do better at work. Third, you need to know how to interact with people. Your approach should be to treat others as family, and they'll treat you the same. But you need to be selective about who you consider family, because some people will take advantage of your trust."*

*"Having a positive energy and connecting with the community makes life easier. Don't overthink things. Society has developed, it's not like the old days. For example, be more optimistic."*

*"People can always ask for help, because I've been in their shoes. I've also struggled to find a job. I know how difficult it is, so I want to help others. As long as I can support the community, I will."*

*"Search for a job as soon as you come to the city. Or even before that. It's very competitive out there and also if you do not have income then everything else will go downhill."*

# Future Plans Of Migrants: Aspirations And Goals Post-Migration



I don't regret the decision to leave. There's no turning back. I'm determined to succeed before I return.

*BD01 - Kiên Giang to Bình Dương, gay man, factory worker*

While financial constraints, limited opportunities, discrimination, and personal challenges arise and overcoming these challenges will require resilience, perseverance, and support from others, participants demonstrated strong aspirations for the future. The narratives collected from study participants reveal a diverse array of future plans and aspirations following their migration to new destinations. These plans reflect a combination of personal ambitions, familial responsibilities, and the desire for a balanced and fulfilling life.

## EDUCATIONAL ASPIRATIONS AND CAREER DEVELOPMENT

A significant theme among participants is the pursuit of education as a pathway to career advancement. Several individuals expressed a clear intention to further their studies in specific fields, such as nursing, law, and psychology. For instance, one participant plans to study nursing with the ambition of eventually opening their own healthcare facility, while another aims to become a lawyer while maintaining their current job. Additionally, one participant expressed intentions to pursue a second degree in psychology and later a master's degree. This commitment to education highlights a broader trend among migrants who recognize the value of qualifications in achieving long-term career goals.

Career development is another focal point, with participants aiming for promotions and new opportunities. One individual hopes to be promoted to a management position in their current role, while another envisions moving to high-end apartments for a more comfortable life after achieving a double salary. The desire for career advancement, including ambitions to work in high-profile locations such as Silicon Valley, indicates a proactive approach to personal and professional development, as well as an awareness of global opportunities.

## RETURNING HOME AND FAMILIAL RESPONSIBILITIES

Family ties and responsibilities emerged as significant factors influencing participants' future plans. Many individuals expressed intentions to return to their hometowns, motivated by a desire to care for aging parents or to create a more nurturing environment for their families. For example, a participant noted their commitment to returning to Bao Loc to provide a better life for their pets and potentially expand their family. Another individual mentioned the desire to take care of their parents, highlighting the deep-rooted cultural values associated with familial duty.

The inclination to return home often intertwines with aspirations for a simpler, more fulfilling lifestyle. Several participants envisioned opening small businesses, such as coffee shops or vegetarian restaurants, as a means of achieving both financial stability and personal satisfaction. One participant explicitly stated their intention to open a coffee shop in their hometown once they have sufficient resources. Such plans reflect a desire to establish a sense of community and a connection to one's roots while creating a livelihood that aligns with personal values.

# Future Plans Of Migrants: Aspirations And Goals Post-Migration

## RELATIONSHIP GOALS AND PERSONAL CONNECTIONS

The narratives also revealed aspirations related to personal relationships and family life. Many participants expressed hopes of finding a life partner, starting a family, and creating a loving home. For instance, one individual envisioned a future together with a partner, including plans for a wedding, while another hoped to provide care and companionship to someone special. This sentiment underscores the importance of interpersonal connections and the desire for stability in personal relationships.

Some participants articulated a wish to come out to particular people or even “go public” with their identities when they feel ready, indicating a nuanced relationship with societal acceptance and personal maturity. These sentiments illustrate a desire for authenticity while also reflecting the challenges that come with navigating familial expectations and societal norms.

## MENTAL HEALTH AND COMMUNITY SUPPORT

Participants expressed a clear need for enhanced mental health support and community engagement. Many suggested the establishment of mental support groups, emphasizing the importance of emotional well-being in their lives. This call for more support networks highlights the understanding that mental health is a crucial aspect of overall stability and success in their new environments.

Additionally, some participants are committed to uplifting their communities, particularly for marginalized groups such as the LGBTQ+ community. Several participants expressed a desire to contribute to their communities, make a positive impact and expressed the aspiration to develop programs that provide career guidance and resources for gender and sexual minorities, reflecting a strong sense of social responsibility. This included plans to volunteer, participate in community organizations, or start their own initiatives. Some participants also expressed a desire to return to their hometowns and contribute to the development of their local LGBTQ+ communities.

## ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND INDEPENDENT LIVING

A recurring theme among the narratives is the aspiration for entrepreneurship and self-sufficiency. Many participants expressed interest in opening their own businesses, such as beauty salons or cafes. This entrepreneurial spirit is often motivated by the desire for independence and the ability to create a work-life balance that aligns with personal values.

Participants also highlighted their desire to maintain a manageable lifestyle, choosing to work in environments that do not overwhelm them. The focus on simplicity and satisfaction rather than excessive ambition underscores a growing trend among migrants to seek fulfilment through meaningful work and personal well-being.

## CONCLUSION

The future plans articulated by participants in this study illuminate a complex interplay of aspirations shaped by educational goals, familial responsibilities, relationship desires, mental health needs, and entrepreneurial ambitions. These narratives reveal that, while the challenges of migration are significant, the potential for growth and fulfilment is equally pronounced. By prioritizing education, nurturing family connections, pursuing personal relationships, and embracing entrepreneurship, migrants are actively crafting futures that resonate with their values and aspirations. As they navigate these multifaceted goals, the insights gleaned from their experiences can inform policies and support systems aimed at facilitating successful integration and enhancing the quality of life for migrant populations.



# Discussions

Industrial zones in Southern Vietnam, such as Long An, Bình Dương, are emerging as promising destinations for LGBTQ+ migrant workers. Contrary to previous study by iSEE (2015) suggesting that highly educated environments or major urban centers are more suitable for the LGBTQ+ community, these industrial zones now offer not only stable job opportunities but also supportive and inclusive workplaces. LGBTQ+ workers often find allies and peers within their workplaces in these zones. This sense of connection not only helps them feel accepted but also provides valuable emotional support. Moreover, the wages in industrial zones are generally higher compared to what they could earn in their hometowns, enabling them to improve their quality of life and achieve greater financial independence. Although industrial zones may lack the comprehensive social infrastructure and specialized services for the LGBTQ+ community found in larger cities, they still allow LGBTQ+ workers to maintain close geographical ties to their families while enjoying the freedom and opportunities to express themselves authentically. This shift highlights a positive transformation in how LGBTQ+ individuals are being received and supported in traditional labor-focused areas.

In contrast, metropolitan areas such as Hồ Chí Minh City and Hanoi are marked by a highly competitive job market, which, while offering numerous employment opportunities, also results in a higher unemployment rate. This environment can be daunting for migrants, particularly those from LGBTQ+ backgrounds who may already face additional barriers to employment. Although facing those most competitive job markets in Vietnam, LGBTQ+ individuals can pursue multiple part-time jobs. This flexibility can be advantageous for migrant workers, allowing them to navigate the job market while maintaining a degree of financial stability and personal freedom.

The support systems for internal migrant workers seem less accessible for those seeking to migrate for LGBT-related reasons. This significantly differs from a 2022 study on international LGBTQ+ labour migrants (ILO 2022), who utilized service centres and brokers to secure employment and facilitate their transition to new destinations. The lack of visible support suggests a gap in the resources available to this community. It becomes crucial to investigate the services that are indeed relevant and accessible to LGBTQ+ migrant workers to navigate a new sphere.

Besides, the intersection of labour migrant identity and LGBTQ+ identity reveals a compelling motivation behind many individuals' decisions to leave their communities. For many, the desire to live authentically as an LGBTQ+ person is a driving force in their migration journey. This quest for self-acceptance often outweighs the risks and uncertainties associated with leaving familiar surroundings. Moreover, LGBTQ+ individuals often migrate due to societal pressures and discrimination. Lesbian women face familial pressure to conform to heteronormative expectations, leading to feelings of isolation. Gay men encounter homophobia and discrimination, particularly in conservative environments. Transgender individuals meet family rejection and social stigma. Non-binary individuals often lack understanding and acceptance, making it difficult to navigate social and professional settings. While all participants sought to escape these pressures, lesbian and gay individuals often prioritized educational and career aspirations, whereas transgender and non-binary individuals were more likely to prioritize finding inclusive and accepting environments. In addition, the experiences of LGBTQ+ individuals can vary widely depending on factors such as age, socioeconomic status, and geographic location. However, the common themes of discrimination, stigma, and marginalization are prevalent across different groups.

The majority of participants reported greater acceptance in their living arrangements at new destinations, which were often more diverse and open-minded environments. The supportive attitudes of landlords and the overall inclusivity within certain rental communities indicate a positive trend towards acceptance. However, specific groups, such as bisexual women, often face societal assumptions and gossip regarding their relationships with their female roommates. Non-binary individuals frequently encounter a lack of understanding of their self-identification within their everyday community and even within LGBTQ+ community contexts. Transgender individuals face significant challenges related to legal recognition and administrative processes at a new destination. Moreover, they also struggle with the financial burden of medical support and may experience anxiety.

## Discussions

Regarding job hunting and recruitment, transgender individuals frequently experience considerable discrimination in this process which impacts their ability to secure and maintain employment. This discrimination often stems from prejudice, stereotypes, and a general lack of understanding of their gender identity. Furthermore, they encounter legal and administrative challenges, particularly in obtaining identification documents that accurately reflect their gender identity and chosen name to submit with their job application. These barriers have significantly limited employment opportunities across various sectors. Additionally, gay men living with HIV experience complex layers of stigma and discrimination during the job search and recruitment process due to their health status, resulting in social isolation and restricted access to professional opportunities.

All individuals across various SOGIE identities encounter stigma and discrimination in the workplace. Specifically, lesbian women and gay men often experience harassment and bullying in professional settings. Gay men, in particular, may face restricted opportunities for advancement due to prevailing stereotypes that portray them as weak or overly feminine. Additionally, non-binary and transgender individuals frequently encounter challenges in expressing their gender identity, especially in conservative environments. Across various occupations, individuals encounter distinct experiences shaped by their work environments. Freelancers often opt for casual employment to minimize interpersonal interactions; however, they face significant challenges in establishing their professional identities and securing consistent work opportunities. LGBTQ+ individuals employed in office settings may experience a spectrum of outcomes, ranging from acceptance and inclusion to instances of discrimination and harassment. These experiences are heavily influenced by organizational culture, management practices, and the dynamics of relationships with colleagues. In blue-collar industries, LGBTQ+ workers often confront pronounced challenges, including discrimination, harassment, and violence. The inherently physical nature of these jobs can exacerbate the risks associated with such discrimination. Similarly, LGBTQ+ individuals in the service sector may experience bias from both customers and employers, resulting in a hostile work environment. This group, along with sex workers, faces considerable stigma, discrimination, and sexual violence, while simultaneously having limited access to healthcare, legal protections, and social support resources.

# Research Recap

## EVERYDAY CHALLENGES IN THE NEW ENVIRONMENT

- **Accommodation:** Finding affordable and safe housing, especially welcoming LGBTQ+ individuals.
- **Financial Stability:** Managing expenses, particularly for transgender individuals who require medical treatments.
- **Administrative Procedures:** Navigating complex and time-consuming bureaucratic processes.
- **Social Integration:** Building relationships and overcoming social barriers, especially for LGBTQ+ individuals.
- **Health and Well-being:** Accessing healthcare, including mental health services, and addressing specific health needs of LGBTQ+ individuals.

## CHALLENGES RELATED TO WORK

### **Discrimination and Stigma:**

- **Workplace Discrimination:** Facing discrimination based on sexual orientation, gender identity, and HIV status.
- **Social Stigma:** Experiencing social exclusion and prejudice, particularly in conservative areas.
- **Lack of Understanding:** Limited understanding and acceptance of LGBTQ+ identities within workplaces and communities.

### **Economic Challenges:**

- **Job Insecurity:** Facing job instability and limited opportunities due to discrimination and stigma.
- **Low Wages:** Receiving lower wages compared to non-LGBTQ+ workers.
- **Financial Constraints:** Struggling to meet basic needs and save for the future.

### **Mental Health and Well-being:**

- **Stress and Anxiety:** Experiencing high levels of stress and anxiety due to discrimination and social isolation.

## SERVICES

### **Limited Access to Support Services:**

- **Lack of Awareness:** LGBTQ+ individuals' limited awareness of available support services.
- **Lack of Specialized Support:** Few organizations specifically cater to the needs of LGBTQ+ internal migrant workers.
- **Stigma and Discrimination:** Fear of stigma and discrimination when seeking help.
- **Inadequate Services:** Insufficient and ineffective support services for LGBTQ+ individuals.
- **Limited Geographical Reach:** Services are often concentrated in urban areas, leaving individuals in remote areas underserved.

# Recommendation

While there are some existing support services for LGBTQ+ individuals in Vietnam, they are often limited in scope and accessibility. Many LGBTQ+ migrants, particularly those from rural areas, lack awareness of these services or face barriers in accessing them. Proposed enhancements to services:

## 1. Expand Existing Services

- Train existing service providers on SOGIE related issues.
- Expand the geographic reach of services to cover more regions.
- Enhance outreach efforts to reach marginalized communities.
- Provide job training and placement services to help individuals find employment.

## 2. Develop New Services

- Establish specialized services for LGBTQ+ internal migrant workers, addressing their unique needs.
- Provide legal aid to help navigate complex legal issues, such as: labor definition, labor code, labor welfare, unemployment insurance, labor contract review,...
- Offer financial assistance and scholarships for education and training.
- Create safe spaces and community centres for LGBTQ+ individuals.

## 3. Strengthen Partnerships

- Collaborate with government agencies, NGOs, and international organizations to coordinate efforts.
- Engage with employers and businesses to promote inclusive workplaces.
- Partner with healthcare providers to improve access to quality healthcare.

## 4. Raise Awareness

- Conduct public awareness campaigns to challenge stereotypes and promote understanding.
- Educate policymakers, employers, and the general public about LGBTQ+ issues.
- Empower LGBTQ+ individuals to advocate for their rights.

# General Recommendations

## WORKPLACE CULTURE AND POLICIES

- Organizations should implement comprehensive anti-discrimination policies that explicitly protect LGBTQ+ individuals from harassment, discrimination, and unfair treatment.
- Diversity and inclusion training should be mandatory for all employees to foster a culture of respect and understanding. Educate employees about LGBTQ+ issues, including gender identity, sexual orientation, and the challenges faced by marginalized communities. This can help to create a more informed and inclusive workplace culture.
- Establish support services for LGBTQ+ employees, such as employee resource groups, counselling services, and legal assistance. These resources can provide a safe space for LGBTQ+ employees to connect, share experiences, and seek support.

# General Recommendations (cont.)

## SOCIETAL STIGMA AND ADVOCACY

- Public education campaigns should be launched to challenge harmful stereotypes and promote understanding of LGBTQ+ issues.
- Policymakers should advocate for legislative changes to strengthen protections for LGBTQ+ individuals and address systemic discrimination.
- Community-based organizations should be supported and invested in to provide resources, advocacy, and support for LGBTQ+ individuals.

## SUPPORT FOR LGBTQ+ MIGRANT WORKERS

- Policies should be implemented to address economic disparities and ensure access to affordable housing, healthcare, and financial services for migrant workers.
- Support networks and community organizations should be established to provide assistance and resources to migrant workers, particularly those from marginalized communities.
- Efforts should be made to improve access to legal services and ensure that migrant workers are aware of their rights and have avenues for recourse.
- Educational and awareness campaign and trainings should be conducted to service providers in order to understand unique experiences of LGBTQ+ community especially in terms of job search and work experiences.

## ADDITIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS

- Comprehensive data collection and research on migration types (e.g., permanent, with or without household registration), patterns, and segregated data (e.g., differences by sexual orientation, age) are essential to understanding the relationship between poverty, social inequality, and migration, particularly for LGBTQ+ individuals, to inform effective policy and targeted interventions.
- Partnerships between organizations can strengthen efforts to address workplace discrimination and promote inclusivity.
- Mentorship programs and strengthened community-building efforts, especially through social media, can provide invaluable guidance, support, and solidarity for LGBTQ+ migrant workers.
- Cultural competency training can help to create a more inclusive and understanding workplace environment.

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