

FROM AND FOR OUR OWN:

Needs analysis of the French-speaking LGBTQ2S Community in Manitoba

COLLECTIF
LGBTQ* DU MANITOBA

Université de
Saint-Boniface
Une éducation supérieure depuis 1818

An initiative of
Le Collectif LGBTQ* du Manitoba

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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This study, initiated by the Collectif LGBTQ du Manitoba, is the first to survey the needs of French-speaking LGBTQ2S Manitobans (the "Community" hereinafter). Its **primary objective** was to gain a better understanding of the realities that members of this Community face regarding: 1) their sociodemographic and ethnocultural profile; 2) their social support and healthcare needs; 3) their sense of discrimination and stigmatization against their spoken language, sexual orientation and gender identities; and 4) their priorities for the future. The Community communicated its most pressing needs via an online survey, with particular emphasis on mental health and social support resources.*

LITERATURE REVIEW

French-speaking Manitobans represent 8.6 percent of the total provincial population. Today, they form a thriving linguistic cultural community, the result of painstaking efforts undertaken by their forebears, language rights legislation, and the development of a wide range of French-language services in healthcare, education, culture, and the financial sector. The Franco-Manitoban identity continues to evolve, due to a growing influx of French-speaking immigrants and graduates of French immersion schools. Nevertheless, this minority population still feels the impact of francophobia, healthcare inequities, and linguistic insecurity.

Canada's LGBTQ2S community has also undergone gradual yet significant changes in recent years. Movements championing social change have led to critical gains for LGBTQ2S people as a whole, with significant victories in social and legislative spheres; however, pervasive stigmatization and discrimination against sexual minorities in Canada persist. In Manitoba, a handful of organizations serve the LGBTQ2S community, although these services and resources are offered almost exclusively in English. The *Collectif LGBTQ* du Manitoba*, a grassroots, volunteer-run, non-profit organization, is the only entity dedicated to the health and well-being of French-speaking LGBTQ2S people in this province.¹

The issues encountered by French-speaking LGBTQ2S people in Manitoba's official linguistic minority setting reflect the intersectionality of the Community's spoken language and their sexual and gender identities. Their problems are often compounded by additional minority identifiers such as age, ethnocultural or spiritual identity, health status, rural or urban contexts, disabilities, socioeconomic status, or social standing, which can further exacerbate the effects of inequities experienced by this Community. LGBTQ2S people also are at a higher risk of experiencing discrimination and stigmatization. When experienced on a chronic basis, the social constructs of systemic homophobia and

¹Learn more about the Collectif LGBTQ* du Manitoba here: collectiflgbtq.ca

heteronormativity can lead to minority stress and, consequently, to the development of psychological issues. The complex intersection at which members of this Community find themselves defines the uniqueness of their experience and may put them at greater risk of developing mental and physical health problems compared to the general Canadian population. LGBTQ2S adults are also more vulnerable to housing and food insecurity, and they present a greater occurrence of disabilities and unhealthy coping strategies. That said, like anyone else, LGBTQ2S people who have access to robust social supports and who enjoy a sense of resilience and self-sufficiency can experience excellent mental and physical health, fully flourishing as individuals and free to express their sexual and gender identities.

METHODOLOGY

This study's methodology was primarily quantitative: advertisements for an online survey targeting French-speaking LGBTQ2S adults in Manitoba were distributed via social media and through Francophone and LGBTQ2S community organizations during the first wave of the COVID-19 pandemic, in June 2020. An invitation to participate in the online survey was also broadcast through local media, further broadening the scope of participant recruitment. The survey was comprised of 38 questions, focusing on participants' sociodemographic profile, their use of services, and their perceptions of discrimination and stigmatization. Eighty LGBTQ2S French-speaking adults residing in Manitoba responded to the survey. Statistical analyses provided for data comparison between age groups.

RESULTS

Data pertaining to respondents' sociodemographic profile reveal that half the participants were between 18 and 34 years of age, and 48.8 percent of respondents identified as women. The majority identified as gay, lesbian, or bisexual. There was a fairly even split between single and married respondents and most resided in urban settings. In terms of their ethnolinguistic profile, the majority of participants identified as white, were born in Canada, and possessed advanced proficiency in both official languages. Regarding their socioeconomic realities, the vast majority of participants were post-secondary graduates, currently employed, or students, with adequate household incomes. The profile generated by this sample therefore reflects those Community members who are relatively well off and whose essential needs are largely satisfied.

The **most widespread challenge highlighted by respondents** was their difficulty in obtaining information on French-language LGBTQ2S healthcare and community services. The services most used by respondents were financial and banking services, government services, healthcare, and training programs. Approximately half of these services were obtained fully or at partially in French. Nearly 70 percent of participants reported having consulted a mental health professional at least once and primarily in English; most participants reported high satisfaction levels with respect to the mental healthcare services they obtained. A little more than half the respondents opted for services in English rather than French, even when French-language services were available, either because they felt this was a faster and easier option, or because the service provider's French-language skills were inadequate. The majority of participants indicated that providers seldom actively offer services in French.

Half the respondents reported not revealing their sexual orientation or gender identity to service providers. Reasons given include: the topic was not relevant in the context of the interaction, this information was irrelevant to their service access, or it was not the service provider's concern. More often than not, **respondents reported feeling respected by service providers** regarding their sexual orientation or gender identity.

The services that respondents found most useful were those related to social activities, mental health support, gatherings to discuss LGBTQ2S issues, physical health services, and sexual health resources. Many respondents reported experiencing isolation and difficulties in building relationships or making friends, due to a lack of connection with peers. Respondents underscored the **absence of a French-language LGBTQ2S network** and the challenge of finding safe spaces (online or in person) to help them thrive as French-speaking LGBTQ2S people in Manitoba. Moreover, many respondents reported experiencing a **dual rejection, both from the French-speaking community in Manitoba towards LGBTQ2S people, and inversely, from Manitoba's LGBTQ2S community towards French speakers**. Respondents often reported being the target of discrimination based both on their sexual orientation and their identity as French speakers.

DISCUSSION

Data pertaining to social and healthcare services point to a significant shortage of **mental health support services**: almost all participants highlighted the persistent need within the Community for such services in French, in an environment that recognizes their unique needs.

The greatest obstacle to accessing French-language services seems to be related to the lack of an **active service offer in French**. Trends related to the use of services in French seem to differ between age groups: different generations of respondents seem to express their linguistic belonging and identities differently. Many participants also reported an almost complete lack of LGBTQ2S French-language sexual health resources.

A number of respondents reported a perception of encroachment on their **linguistic and sexual security**. Although many participants felt respected by service providers regarding their sexual orientation or gender identity, nearly half the respondents never or almost never reveal their sexual orientation or gender identity to service providers. It is therefore crucial to raise awareness among healthcare and other service providers about the unique needs of LGBTQ2S clients and the importance of proactively offering LGBTQ2S-friendly services that address LGBTQ2S needs and issues.

In light of the general trends revealed through this study, we have identified **five priority areas** in which French-language services should be offered, in an environment that is proactively safe and affirming of diverse sexual and gender identities: social activities, mental health support services, opportunities for LGBTQ2S group discussions, physical health services, and sexual health resources. These areas are further grouped into two larger categories: community and interpersonal growth, and support for health and well-being.

It is important to note that the present sample is not an exhaustive representation of all Community members. Certain subgroups were underrepresented or not represented at all in this sample, such as seniors, minors, racialized people, and Indigenous peoples, among others. Further steps are required to better understand these subgroups' unique needs, given the complex intersectionality of factors that further exacerbate their marginalization. However, this study represents an invaluable starting point towards a better understanding of the needs and realities faced by members of the Community. The generated data offer evidence to inform future projects targeting members of this Community.



RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the data collected through this survey and in consultation with the multidisciplinary scientific committee (formed to advise researchers) and the *Collectif LGBTQ* du Manitoba*, the study's authors have formulated three main recommendations. Although not exhaustive, these recommendations are meant to lay a foundation for discussions and for future initiatives targeting this Community. They are the result of close consultations with the Community, whose members must continue to play an active role in their implementation to ensure that any future initiative adequately meets their needs.

1 CONTINUE with this needs assessment to reach underrepresented populations

Given the homogenous participant profile, it is vital to actively explore the needs of sub-populations who are underrepresented or not represented in the present survey sample, including **minors** (primarily in school settings), **seniors**, **Indigenous** peoples, **racialized** people, individuals living in **rural** settings, people living with **disabilities**, and those living in **precarious socioeconomic conditions**, among others. It would also be worthwhile to consult with **allies** and **families** of Community members. A continuation of the needs assessment using qualitative research methods is therefore recommended, in order to better understand the complexities of these subgroups' experiences.

2 FOSTER the interpersonal and community well-being of French-speaking LGBTQ2S Manitobans

Short term

- **Continue to facilitate gatherings in French for LGBTQ2S individuals**, in collaboration with other French-language and LGBTQ2S organizations in Manitoba, to encourage fellowship and build social connections.
- **Develop a diverse communication strategy using the existing network and website of the Collectif LGBTQ**, along with social media, to better inform the Community about gatherings, activities, and other available resources.

Medium term

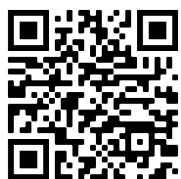
- **Advocate for more diversity and for the active inclusion of Community members within the greater French-language community**, as well as within the larger LGBTQ2S community, to counteract the homophobia in French-language services and the francophobia in LGBTQ2S organizations.
- **Establish a social support network using properly trained facilitators or mentors**, to encourage discussion, build friendships, and forge interpersonal connections and support networks.
- **Ensure the Community's presence at Pride Winnipeg and other regional Pride events**, to encourage the expression of French-speaking LGBTQ2S people's unique identity.
- **Encourage the Community's representation and participation in various Francophone community and cultural events**, to foster LGBTQ2S people's inclusion and the expression of their identity.

Long term

- **Establish a physical meeting place, such as a community centre**, to help raise the Community's visibility and affirm the identity of its members, while also providing services catering to their social, mental, and physical health needs.

IMPROVE

access to healthcare
and social services
in French, in a
proactively inclusive
and safe environment
for all LGBTQ2S
people



Download the
complete report (in
French) by scanning
this QR code with
your mobile device!

Short term

- **Promote the Manitoba French-language services directory issued by the Société de la francophonie manitobaine (an association that represents French-speaking Manitobans),** and include a section on services and businesses that actively promote the inclusion of LGBTQ2S people and that adhere to best practices in linguistic and sexual security.

Medium term

- **Collaborate with healthcare and social service providers,** to promote the active offer of services in French and to encourage their use by LGBTQ2S individuals through the implementation of best practices in linguistic and sexual security.
- **Develop and promote sexual health resources in French** that are geared towards LGBTQ2S people.
- **Regularly evaluate all services provided to members of the Community** to ensure they meet standards for linguistic and sexual security.

Long term

- **Establish a formal mental health support service for French-speaking LGBTQ2S people** or collaborate with organizations that already offer such services.
- **Promote French-language healthcare education** in psychology, social work, medicine, and nursing **to French-speaking LGBTQ2S youth.**

CONCLUSION

The Community's needs are numerous and complex. It is important to address any gaps, particularly those that are most urgent, in a stepwise manner and on an ongoing basis. This report is the outcome of a new grassroots initiative that seeks to affirm every aspect of French-speaking LGBTQ2S people's identities. Their needs are indeed palpable, but by building on the results of this analysis, and thanks to the Community's enduring strength and resilience, a promising future lies ahead.