Introduction

Surveying LGBTQIA+ population has its challenges, especially regarding representativity. Since most surveys do not include questions about gender and sexual identity, the alternatives are mainly to collect primary data on this population. Even when such questions are included, as in Brazil's 2019 National Health Survey (PNS), visibility remains partial: only 1.8% of respondents identified as homosexual or bisexual, while 3.4% either did not know or preferred not to answer. Non-response was especially high among younger adults (18–29 years), women, and individuals with lower education. This pattern suggests that social desirability bias and structural inequalities continue to shape disclosure and visibility.

These limitations are compounded by the fragmented nature of Brazilian data sources. While the PNS incorporates questions on sexual orientation, it provides little insight into labor market dynamics and faces significant non-response bias. Conversely, the Continuous National Household Sample Survey (PNAD Contínua) offers detailed labor market indicators but lacks variables identifying LGBTQIA+ individuals. This disconnect between demographic visibility and socioeconomic measurement underscores the need for complementary research strategies capable of bridging both dimensions and capturing the mechanisms of inequality and exclusion affecting sexual and gender minorities in the labor market.

In response to this gap, the *Economic Cost of Exclusion in Brazil Survey (ECOE 2025)* was designed to integrate both dimensions, visibility and socioeconomic analysis, through an inclusive and adaptive national framework. The aim of this paper is to discuss the development of an innovative participatory and adaptive sampling design that aims to ensure comparability with the general population, enabling a national mixed-methods study of a group largely absent from official statistics. It addresses the research question: What steps are required to create a more LGBTQIA+ inclusive sample in surveys that focus on labor market outcomes? The design represents the Brazilian adaptation of a broader international initiative conducted under the World Bank's *Equality of Opportunity for Sexual and Gender Minorities (EQOSOGI)* framework, implemented previously in Serbia and North Macedonia (Flores, Koehler & Lucchetti, 2025), but redesigned to reflect Brazil's demographic, socioeconomic, and territorial heterogeneity.

Theoretical framework

The methodology adopts a life-course (Elder Jr.; Shanahan, 2007) and intersectional perspective (Crenshaw, 1989; Collins, 2000), situating labor market exclusion as a cumulative process shaped by interactions among gender identity, sexual orientation, race/color, and class position (Akotirene, 2019). In contexts like Brazil, marked by high informality, racialized labor hierarchies, and territorial inequality, these processes unfold through differentiated access to education, employment, and social protection.

Drawing on frameworks of intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1989; Collins, 2000) and cumulative disadvantage, the study conceptualizes the labor market not as a static site of inequality but as a space where biographical trajectories are shaped by structural

barriers and moments of inclusion or exclusion. This approach aligns with the demographic agenda on gender and sexuality, expanding traditional labor market analyses to include underrepresented identities and non-normative life courses (Akotirene, 2019).

Data and Methods

To address the complex objectives of understanding labor market exclusion among LGBTQIA+ populations, the *ECoE Brazil Survey (2025)* adopted a mixed-methods approach grounded in the integration of quantitative and qualitative evidence (Axinn & Pearce, 2006; Mertens, 2007; Creswell, 2010). This design followed what Creswell (2010) defines as a *sequential explanatory model*, in which a large-scale survey generates a demographic and socioeconomic overview subsequently deepened by qualitative inquiry.

Survey Design

The sampling strategy, although non-probabilistic, was guided by continuous and adaptive monitoring to maintain proximity to the national population composition. This monitoring relied on benchmarks from the Continuous National Household Sample Survey (PNAD Contínua, 2023), and the 2022 Brazilian Demographic Census. These datasets informed the establishment of composition targets for key variables, age, sex assigned at birth, race/color, and region, allowing the sample to remain socio-demographically coherent with the broader population despite its community-based nature.

The methodological innovation of *ECOE Brazil* lies in its participatory and adaptive sampling framework, the project combined multiple entry points: community networks, social media campaigns, and active outreach in territories with strong local organization. Community organizations played a central role in implementing the sampling design. Drawing on the outreach strategies, ten priority states were identified based on (1) concentration of traditional communities and favela residents; (2) geographic diversity encompassing urban, and rural zones; and (3) operational feasibility given existing mobilization infrastructure. Examples include Maranhão (3.7% quilombola population), Amazonas (32.4% of residents in informal settlements), and metropolitan peripheries such as São Paulo's ABC region and Rio de Janeiro's Baixada Fluminense.

Weekly monitoring reports compared the evolving sample to the national distribution, guiding real-time adjustments in communication and field mobilization. When underrepresentation was detected, for example, of transmasculine or rural participants, teams intensified outreach through targeted campaigns, partnerships with local collectives, and expansion of offline collection using tablets.

The local organizations reported the operational complexity of this hybrid model: online dissemination through digital platforms (reaching over 28,000 followers) was complemented by direct engagement in shelters, street circuits, bars, and cultural centers to reach participants with limited internet access. This two-pronged approach mitigated

digital exclusion and expanded access among groups historically absent from online research.

Throughout fieldwork, iterative validation procedures were implemented at successive milestones (5,000, 7,500, and 10,000). Each validation compared cumulative sample characteristics to national parameters, identifying potential deviations and guiding outreach adjustments. At each control point, the inclusion of priority groups, such as trans and travesti people, Black and Pardo respondents, and residents of peripheral or traditional territories, was evaluated to ensure that their incorporation did not introduce composition bias or distort the overall demographic structure of the sample. This procedure allowed the team to verify that targeted outreach expanded diversity without compromising comparability to the general population.

Ethical procedures followed strict protocols: informed consent, anonymity, and respect for participants' self-identification. Local teams were trained on safety in sensitive areas and on inclusive, non-pathologizing language. These principles were essential to balance research integrity with protection of participants in contexts of heightened vulnerability.

Qualitative component

The qualitative phase was designed as a complementary and interpretive stage (Mertens, 2007), following the methodological plan. Sixteen focus groups were conducted across four metropolitan areas (Salvador, Belém, Rio de Janeiro, and São Paulo) to explore the subjective meanings of work, discrimination, and economic participation across gender identities, racial backgrounds, generations, and territories.This work was conducted by local partner organizations, under the coordination of a national institute in charge of the research in the country.

In line with Axinn and Pearce (2006), the integration of both phases yields a multidimensional understanding of social exclusion processes, bridging demographic rigor with community-centered insight, and situating Brazil's LGBTQIA+ population within the broader framework of life-course and inequality studies.

Preliminary Findings

The online survey reached 11,206 valid respondents aged 18 and older, distributed all Brazilian macroregions, with coverage ratios close to the national population structure. The Southeast concentrated 48.6% of participants, followed by the Northeast (21.2%), South (11.7%), North (10.4%), and Central-West (8.0%). These proportions align closely with census distributions, confirming wide territorial reach, including participants from quilombola and Indigenous communities (4.8% and 1.6%, respectively).

The demographic structure shows a young and economically active population, with nearly 70% aged 20–39. Racial and territorial heterogeneity is also evident, 49.7% white, 28.6% pardo, 17.9% Black, 2.5% Indigenous, and 1.3% Asian-descendant, with over one-fifth of respondents living in peripheral or informal urban areas.

Gender and sexuality diversity is strongly represented: 39% identify as cisgender men, 29.7% as cisgender women, 8.1% as trans women, 4.4% as travestis, 7.3% as non-binary, 6.4% as trans men, 2.2% as transmasculine, 1,8% other identities e 1,1% as preferred not to answer. In terms of sexual orientation, gay (37.7%), bisexual (22%), lesbian (18.3%), pansexual (9.8%), heterosexual (8,5%) identities predominate.

These descriptive patterns highlight how a participatory, adaptive, and community-driven sampling design can overcome the compositional biases observed in official surveys. While the PNS tends to overrepresent highly educated, urban, and higher-income respondents who are more likely to disclose their identities, the *ECOE 2025* sample achieved broader representativity across education levels, territories, and gender identities. By reaching participants from quilombola and Indigenous communities, peripheral urban areas, and regions with limited digital access, the survey captured Brazil's sociodemographic and territorial diversity within an LGBTQIA+ framework. This balance between inclusivity and demographic coherence reinforces the potential of participatory and adaptive methodologies to generate more accurate and intersectionally grounded demographic analyses of gender, sexuality, inequality, and life-course trajectories in the labor market. Next steps include advancing multivariate analyses and engaging stakeholders to translate findings into inclusive policy recommendations.

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