

How Do You Say Gay?

Language Interpretation for **Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity and Expression (SOGIE)** Refugees in Canada

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This report is based on **60* interviews** with **refugee interpreters in Toronto, Vancouver, and Montreal** in 2019 and 2023. Forty-eight (80%) of those we interviewed actively **worked with the Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada (IRB)**.

**Totals may not add up to 60 as N/A data was excluded.*

Language interpreters who work with refugees are overwhelmingly **immigrants and from racialized countries/regions.**

■ Middle East & North Africa	15
■ Africa	7
■ East Asia	7
■ North America	2
■ Latin America	11
■ South Asia	4
■ Eastern Europe	9
■ Europe	5

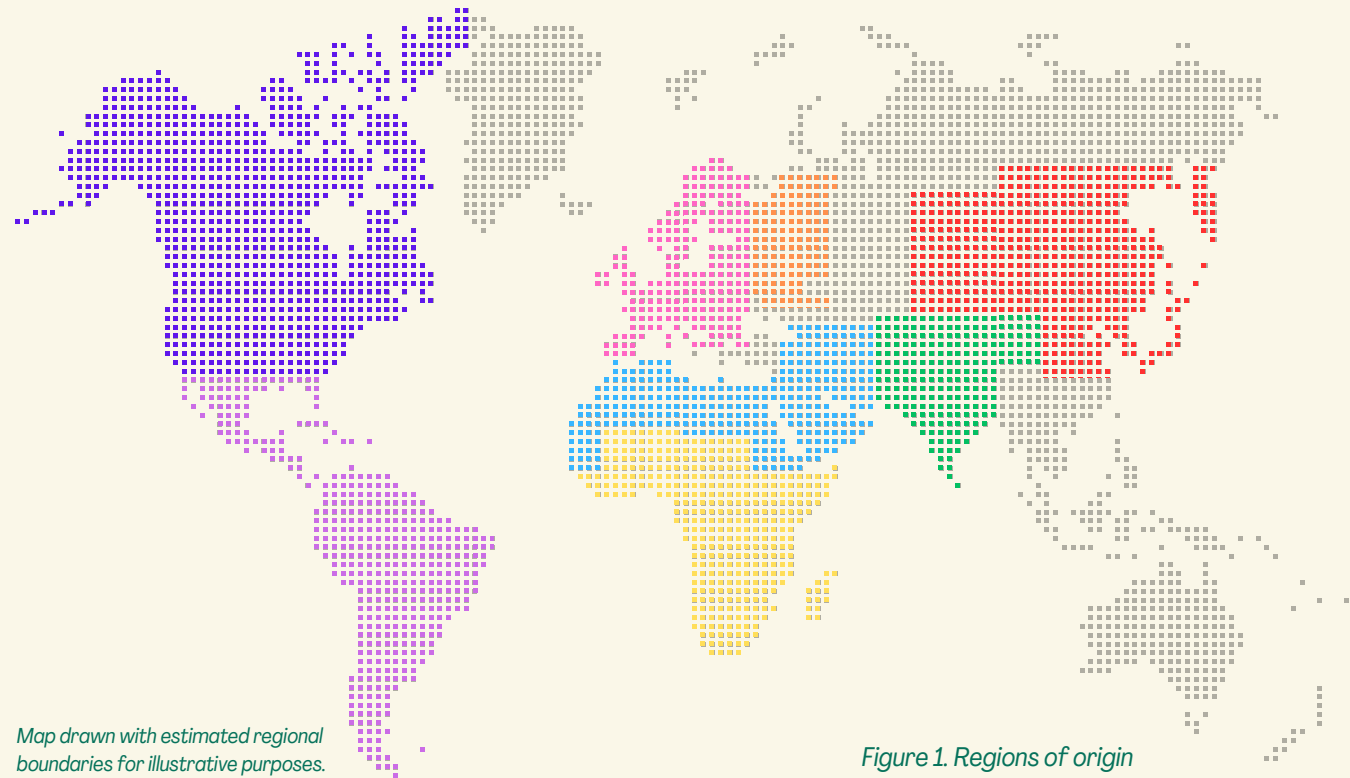




Figure 2. Educational level

Refugee interpreters are often **highly educated**. Many hold **multiple university degrees**, and several hold degrees in fields relating to **language, language teaching, and translation**.



Figure 3. Frequency of work

Refugee interpretation work is highly **precarious and unreliable**. As a result, many interpreters approach this work not as a profession, but a ‘gig’ or even a hobby.

Unfortunately, the majority of refugee interpreters **lack fulsome knowledge** of common **English terminologies** pertaining to **gender and sexual diversity**, and consistently **misunderstand** some terms. Some even use **derogatory words** when interpreting English terms into other languages.

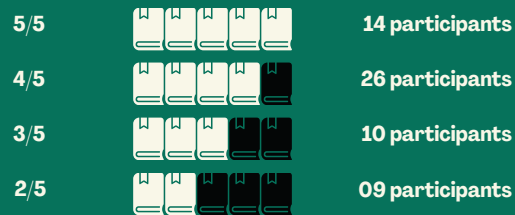


Figure 4. Knowledge of L.G.B.T.I. terms

Further, a large portion had no or very **limited encounters with 2SLGBTQIA+ persons** in their personal lives.

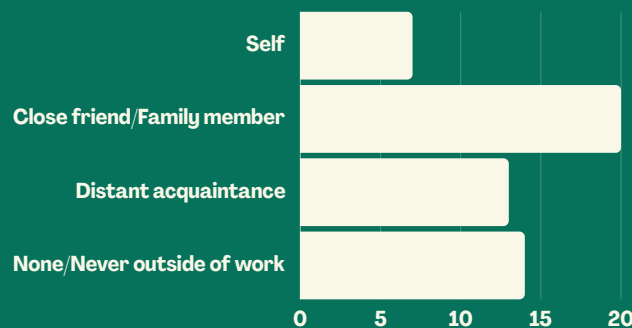


Figure 5. Connection with 2SLGBTQIA+ community

Alarmingly, a **large number exhibited mild to severe levels of homophobia and transphobia** when recalling their experiences with SOGIE claimants or speaking about 2SLGBTQIA+ persons.

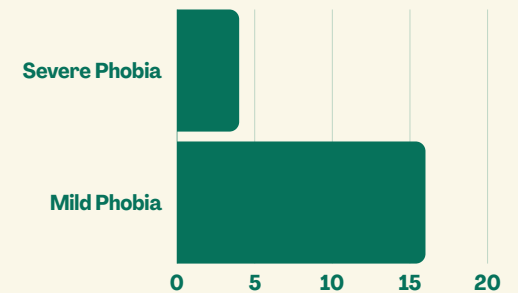


Figure 6. Levels of homophobia and transphobia

These findings suggest an urgent **need for improving the employment conditions of refugee interpreters and introducing culturally sensitive gender and sexual diversity trainings** for those who will be working with SOGIE refugees and refugee claimants.



For our open access culturally sensitive gender and sexual diversity training, **scan the QR CODE or [click here](#)**